



(Above) 1936 USGS Topographic Map of Decatur with Predominately African American Sections Highlighted in Blue. Decatur, Tanner, Trinity, and Stewart Cross Roads, Alabama Quadrangles.

records detailing the lives of North Alabamians in every way possible. Because one of the promised objectives of the TVA was to ensure that people, households, and communities of color were proportionally represented, the authority collected extensive data on race. However, TVA and its projects, particularly its several large dam projects, employed segregated crews. Despite being driven by Democratic FDR and his New Deal, the authority was not prepared to force integration of workers in any manner. The status quo of “separate, but equal” continued to stand through the Great Depression and into World War II.

Segregation & Discrimination in Lawrence County

Courtland is one of two towns in Lawrence County that are majority African American – along with Hillsboro. This has been the case since at least 1900. According to the census records, from 1900 to 1940, Courtland consisted, on average, of 68% households of color; the highest percentage being 80% in 1920 and the lowest being 54% in 1940. The census record divides the town into north and south of the Tuscumbia, Courtland, & Decatur Railroad that has connected those towns for the better part of two centuries. While the town of Courtland as a whole has long been majority African American, the north portion

is almost exclusively so. The north side of Courtland has been upwards of 90% African American households since 1900 – with the exception of 1940, when it was 80% African American. This community has remained substantial enough that the town of North Courtland was incorporated in 1981. The 0.5-square-mile-town was 97.5% African American in 2010, compared with 40.4% African American households in Courtland that same year.

Nearby Town Creek is another community and census district that was distinctly divided north and south. Town Creek is west of Courtland, but the same railroad divides the area in half. According to the 1940 census, the north half of Town Creek was predominately African American with large areas of only people of color. Of the 180 households on the north side, 121 (67%) of them were households of color. Conversely, the south side, which had substantially more households, was predominately white. There were 270 households south of Town Creek, of which only 35 (13%) of them were African American households. Within the town itself there were more African American households than the south side – 18% of the 173 households, or 35 families of color. What is surprising about Town Creek is that despite the segregation of households, there were 11 African American-owned farms in both the north and the south sides of town. Because of the low percentage of African American households on the south side, African American-owned farms account for a significant percentage of the population – 31% of all households.

Moulton is the seat of Lawrence County and its largest town after 1920. In the 1940 census, the Moulton district was divided into three precincts as well as the town proper. Of the total 982 households in Moulton, 178 of them, or 18%, were African American; of those households, 120 of them were located in the precinct east of Moulton. This includes the area southeast of Moulton where churches, schools, and cemeteries of the community of color were, and still are, concentrated. On the census, this area is referred to as “Negro Church Road.” There are 48 African American-owned farms in the Moulton district; 46 of them were in this precinct.