

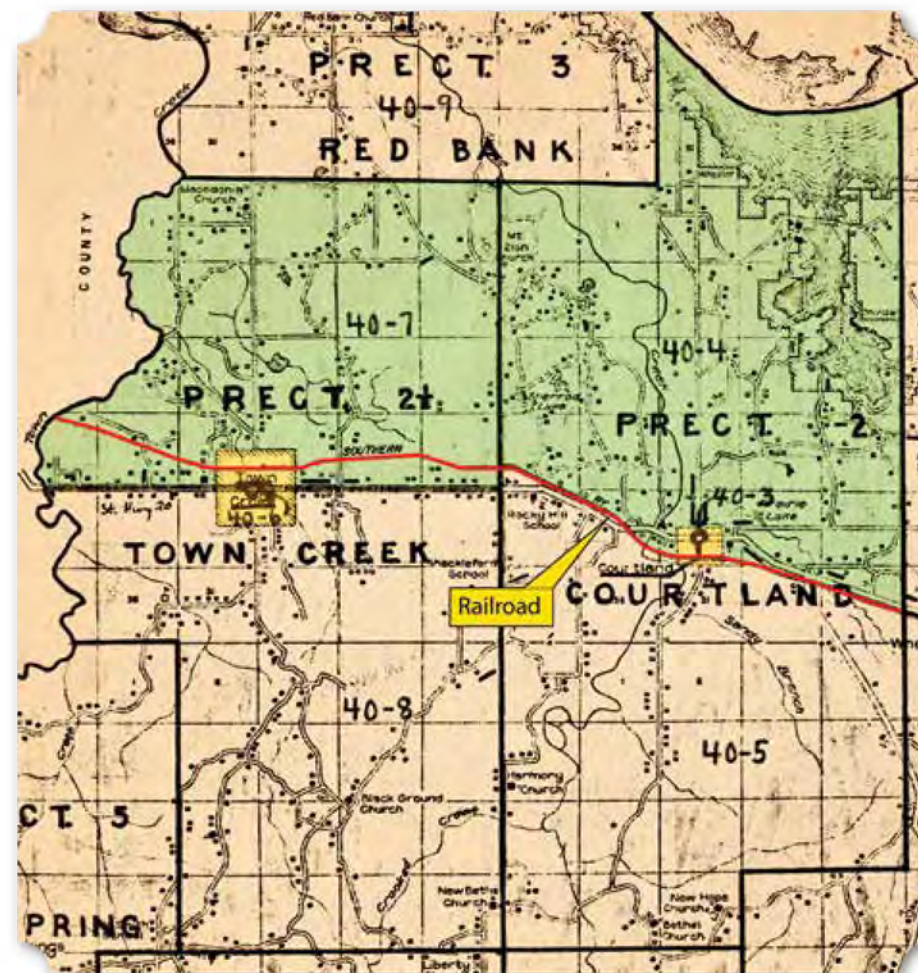
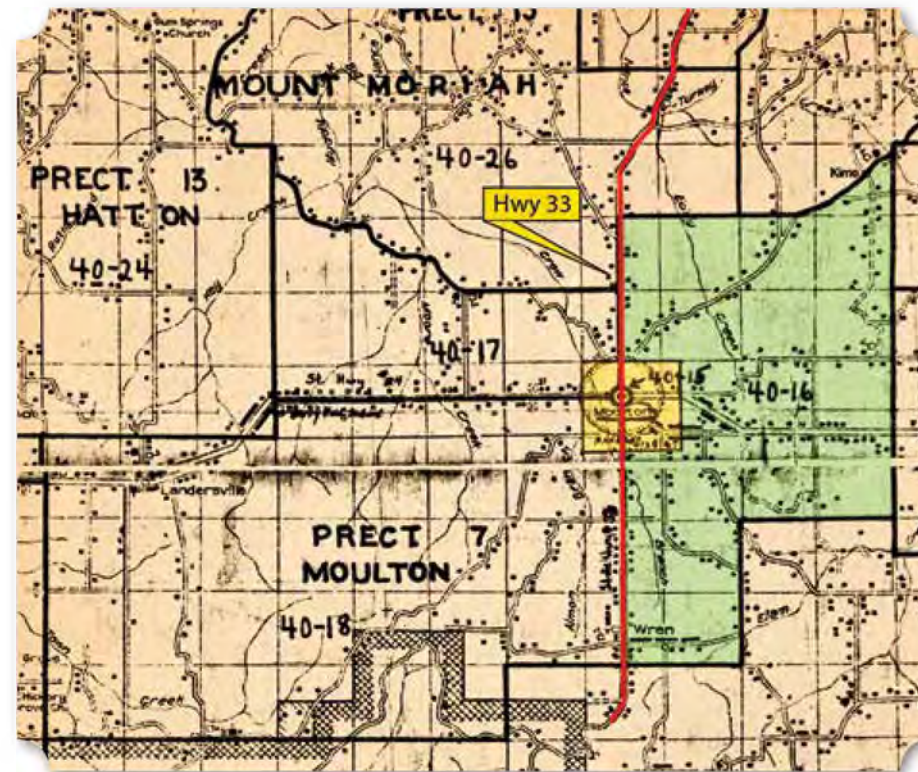
## Personal Tales of Discrimination

A treasured citizen of Moulton, Ms. Pearl Jackson Green recently shared her remarkable life story with the *Moulton Advertiser* and in an impromptu interview for this book. Ms. Pearl is a composed, well-dressed, and highly energetic woman. She has kept her chin up and her resolve firm as she made her way through her education and career as an educator, among many other responsibilities. Her accomplishments are even more astounding when you consider the time and place she lived in. As a woman of color in Alabama in the mid-20th century, Ms. Jackson Green has several stories that illustrate the everyday experiences of people of color in the South. Her stories contain cases of both distressing discrimination and heartwarming compassion shown by others, sometimes absolute strangers.

Despite her immaculate fashion sense or her poised and polite manner, Ms. Pearl still found herself the victim of several despicable acts of racism and discrimination. As a young girl, she was used to experiencing the restrictions of segregation. She was only allowed to drink from “colored” water fountains, use “colored” restrooms, sit in the “colored” section of the theatre, go to restaurants and other establishments that would accept people of color. She and her six siblings attended a segregated school, the local Rosenwald school. The oldest of the children, Ms. Pearl ensured that she and her siblings arrived at school each school day – rain or shine. While the white children had buses ferrying them to and fro, Ms. Pearl and her family walked. Education, no matter how disproportionately lacking in funding or supplies, was paramount in her mind.

On one occasion, Ms. Jackson was heading home to the Decatur bus station from Montgomery where she attended Alabama State College. A white man and stranger offered her his seat, a nonchalant act of kindness. The bus driver was outraged and after some time of yelling

**(Right)** 1940 Census Map Series of Towns and Communities of Color in North Alabama. Note the Railroad, Major Highway, or Waterway that Divides the Area. Green Highlights are Areas of Predominately African American, Yellow Highlights are of Town Limits. (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com) **(Top)** Moulton, Lawrence County **(Bottom)** Town Creek and Courtland, Lawrence County



with the man, the driver ordered Ms. Jackson off the bus – in the middle of nowhere, at 8:00 p.m. at night. The stranger whispered to her to hide in the ditch and someone would come for her. Dressed for traveling in a lady’s suit and heels with a suitcase and a hat box, Ms. Pearl settled down in the cold dark in a ditch on the side of the highway. She couldn’t be certain, but she thinks she was near Cullman and waited for about seven hours. Eventually, sometime around 3:00 a.m. another bus approached from the south. It stopped exactly where she was hiding. She boarded the bus and took her seat. No one said a word, no one asked for her ticket or why she was out there in the ditch. Everyone rode in silence to Decatur.

Another instance of discrimination occurred when Ms. Jackson returned to Lawrence County after graduating from college. Unfortunately, her experience is not uncommon. When attempting to register to vote, Ms. Pearl did as she usually did, she got dressed in her best outfit, complete with hoses, heels, and hat. She carried herself into the Lawrence County Courthouse in Moulton and was subjected to a series of offensive tests based solely on the color of her skin. First, the clerk behind the desk required her to cite several articles of the U.S. Constitution – a task that few people could randomly perform today. As it happens, Ms. Pearl’s teacher at the Rosenwald school prepared her and other students for this particular test. Although it may have seemed arbitrary and tedious at the time, children were taught to memorize and recite such patriotic trivia. Thus, when a grown Ms. Pearl was asked for the articles while an older white man pointed at her and referred to her by derogatory names, she quickly and precisely stated the articles which established the three-branch form of federal government.

A young white man, a stranger to Ms. Pearl, overheard her recitation and inquired about the necessary requirements for registration – probably nervous about not knowing the U.S. Constitution articles. He was quickly reassured that nothing was required of him, only Ms. Pearl because of the color of her skin. To everyone’s surprise, the young man became incensed on Ms. Pearl’s behalf. He and the registrar became angry and started yelling at each other. This escalated to a fist fight and the young man was hauled off to the jail across the street; but the man was not