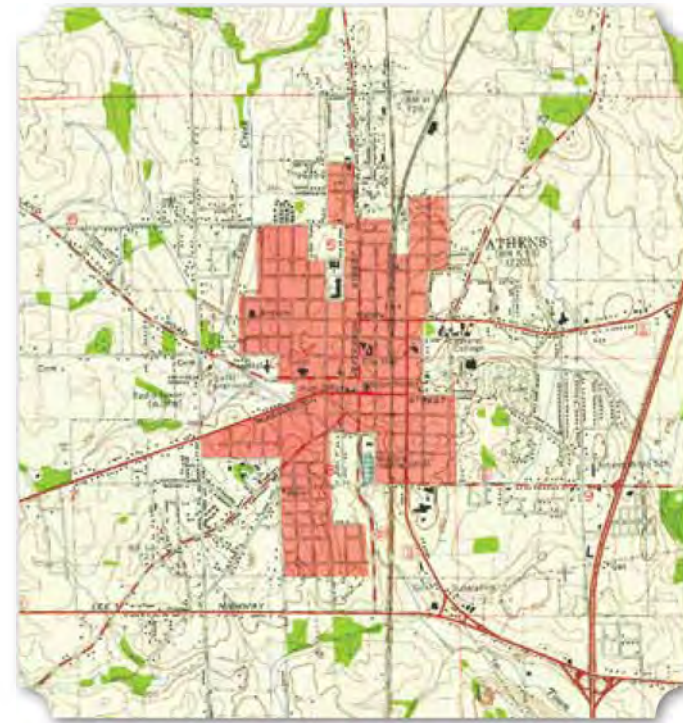
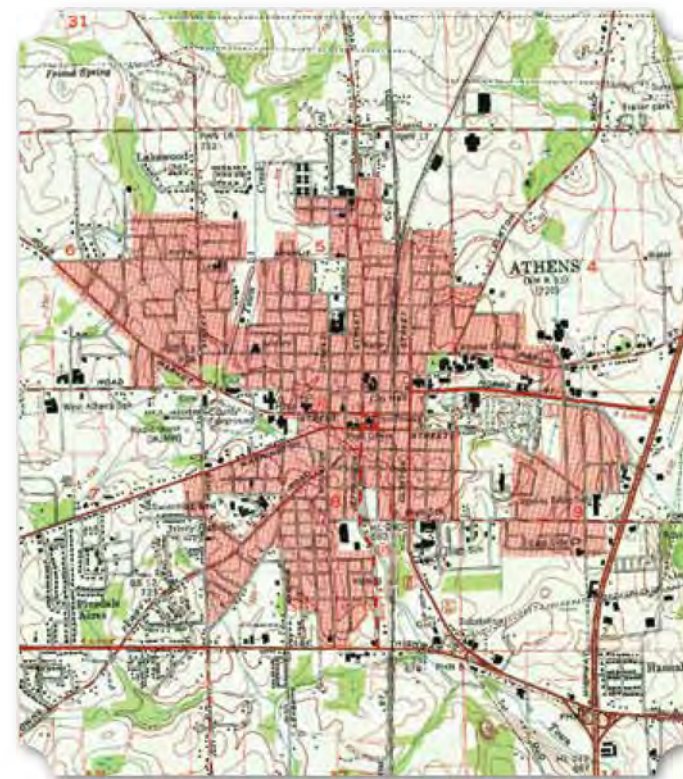
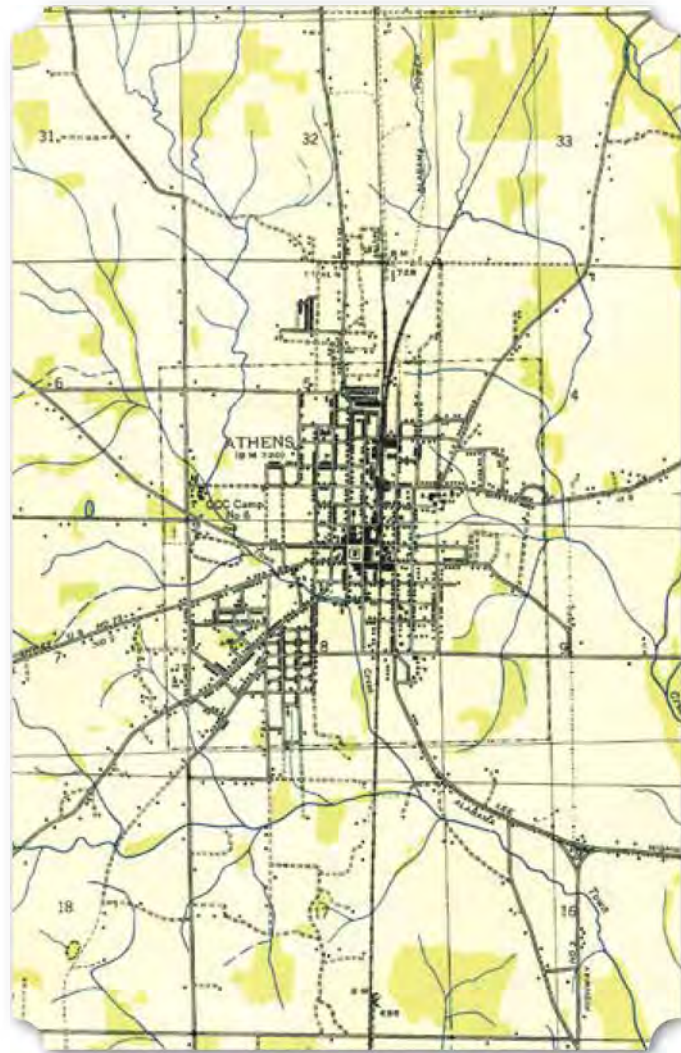


made Athens a military target during the Civil War. The city was the scene of a destructive rampage by Union troops called the Sack of Athens in 1862 and an attack by Confederate forces known as the Battle of Athens in 1864.

While agriculture was essential to Limestone County and Athens, by the 1930s, it was on the decline and many county residents were looking to industries linked to power generation, the military, and, later, aerospace. The TVA brought ideas of modernization and diversification to Athens and in 1934, the city became the first in Alabama to receive electricity from the TVA. During World War II, many county residents took up jobs at the nearby Redstone Arsenal, part of the greater Huntsville area and later a unit in the aerospace industry. The Browns Ferry



(Left) 1935 USGS/TVA Topographic Map of Athens, Athens, Alabama Quadrangle **(Above)** 1958 USGS/TVA Topographic Map of Athens, Athens, Alabama Quadrangle **(Below)** 1967 USGS/TVA Topographic Map of Athens, Athens, Alabama Quadrangle



Nuclear Plant opened in Limestone County in 1973. It was the TVA's first nuclear plant and the largest in the world at the time. Limestone County no longer relied on agriculture for its economy. In the 21st century, agricultural jobs account for less than 1% of the county's employment.

Census records for the Athens area from 1900 to 1940 showed consistency in land ownership among African American farmers as well as the effects of the changing economy. Excluding the city proper in 1900, there were 685 households living in vicinity of Athens. Of these, 11.5% were African American farmer-landowners. By 1920, 12.5% of the 736 households outside of the Athens city limits were African American-owned farms. The onset of the Great Depression, the growth of the city, and changes in employment caused a decline in the percentage of African American farms so that by 1930, of more than 1,000 households outside of the city, only 77, or around 8%, were on farms owned by African Americans. The number of African American farms remained the same in 1940, but made up only 6.8% of owner-operated farms.

Throughout the early 20th century, numerous members of the Cain family owned farms in the area. The Cains owned nine farms around Athens in 1900 and at least 13 by 1920. Mirroring the economic trajectory of the county, the number of Cain family farms declined to six in 1930 and three in 1940. Other families who were successful in acquiring farmland were the Joneses, who owned eight farms in 1900; the Barbee, Harris, Johnes, Malone and Wiggins families, each with four farms between 1910 and 1940; and the David and Garrison families who owned three farms in 1940.

Hine and Hobbs Street Cemetery

The Hine and Hobbs Street Cemetery is located in west Athens. The burial ground contains about 275 marked graves. It was in place by 1870, when Roney Fraser (1857-1870) was interred there. At that time the cemetery was west of the town limits. Even in the 1930s, this area was only barely within the city and remained sparsely populated.

Two of the most notable African American citizens of Limestone County are buried here: George Ruffin Bridgeforth (1872-1955) and Patti J. Malone (1855-1897). Other surnames common in the Hine and Hobbs Street Cemetery are those seen elsewhere in Limestone County, such as Allen, Coleman, Davis, Grisby, Howell, Jones, Mason, Moore, Payne, Redus, Sloss, Turner, and Yarbrough.

Trinity School

Trinity School was founded by the American Missionary Association directly following the Civil War with the goal of educating the children of former slaves. While, the AMA set up a number of philanthropic schools and missions throughout the South, the Trinity School in Athens was a particularly long-lived success. The school began in 1865 as a co-educational and normal school. Ms. Mary Frances Wells of the AMA became principal and served until 1892. Classes were first held in a frame building near the railroad depot in downtown Athens, which, unfortunately, was destroyed by fire in 1879. The AMA was preparing to abandon the school, but the local African American community came together and pooled \$2,000 for a new building. A three-story brick school house was erected in 1881 but it also burned in 1907.

Following this fire, the school moved to a four-acre parcel purchased from Dr. John R. Hoffman on the west side of Athens. The school was able to expand in this new location into a campus with additional buildings. The new site was on the former Coleman Hill plantation near old Fort Henderson. While Union forces built the fort, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forest captured and imprisoned the 106th, 110th, and 111th USCI here during the Battle of Athens. The journey from slave to soldier to student is often evoked by this land.

During the first decades after slavery, there were as many adult students as there were children who were eager to learn. When Athens opened a public elementary school for African American children around the early 20th century, the school dropped the first six grades and became Trinity High School. In