



were six in 1936 and four in 1963. The locations and names of all of them is not certain.

An interesting tradition was recently revived by the Belle Mina African American churches. Known as "Belle Mina in May," the tradition is said to date back to the 1870s. On the third Saturday of May, people from all over – some as far as Chicago, Illinois – return home to Belle Mina to worship, sing, eat, and be baptized. Once held at the Jerusalem Primitive Baptist

(Left) 1936/1938 USGS/TVA Topographic Map of Belle Mina, Tanner and Greenbrier, Alabama Quadrangles

Church, the custom began to decline in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and eventually ceased altogether. In 2013, members of Jerusalem, Morning Star, New Heaven, and New Zion came together to participate in the revival of this deep-rooted community tradition.

Belle Mina School*

Besides plantations and churches, another significant historic piece of the community is the Belle Mina School. The Belle Mina School was located off Mooresville Road south of town. For many years classes were held in the Masonic Lodge in town and later at various churches. In the 1920s, members of the community, including Rev. John Page, Mr. Eldridge Jones, Mr. William McComb, and Mr. Daniel Washington approached the Rosenwald Fund for assistance in building a new school. According to the Rosenwald-Fisk database, the school was approved for the year 1929-1930. The two-teacher school cost a total of \$3,450, with \$1,200 donated by the local African American community, \$350 from the local white community, \$1,400 from public school funds, and \$500 from the Rosenwald Fund. The school was insured for \$2,325.

One of the first teachers was Ms. Annie D. Mitchell, a graduate of Talladega College. Other teachers



(Above) Photograph of Belle Mina School in 1930s (Fisk University – Rosenwald Foundation)

include Ms. Minnie Dinkins, Ms. Ora Battle, Mr. John O. Mason, Mr. Bennie Crittenton, and Mrs. Johnnie Crittenton. In 1947, the teachers were Mrs. Odell Smith and Mrs. Lucy Crook, principal.

Limestone County records show that John Henry Peebles (1851-1931) was a white landowner who owned the tract on which the school was built. The Peebles family still owned considerable land and several farms around Mooresville. The four men who approached Rosenwald were African Americans living in the Belle Mina-Mooresville area. Census records reveal that John Page owned a farm in the area from

at least 1900 to 1940. Eldridge Jones owned a farm in 1930 and Daniel Washington owned a farm from at least 1930 to 1940. William McComb rented his farm but lived along Mooresville-Belle Mina Road. Today there is a road in the school vicinity named Will McComb Drive. McComb might have rented land from Peebles and helped negotiate the donation of the land for the school.

The school expanded over the 20th century and a modern building, complete with a gymnasium, was built. It closed in 1991 because the area population did not warrant its own school. The building has sat vacant for 20 years.

(Below) Excerpts from the 1920 and 1930 Federal Census Showing Page, Jones, McComb, and Washington (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com)

83	188/188	Page John	Head	0	1880	20	21	20	20	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
84		Mattie	Wife							Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
85		Harlowe	Daughter							Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
86		Page	Wife							Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
9	191/203	Jones Eldridge	Head	0	1880	20	21	20	20	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
10		Anna M	Wife							Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
11	192/204	Page John	Head	0	1880	20	21	20	20	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
12		Mattie	Wife							Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
13		Harlowe	Daughter							Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
23	185/185	Washington Daniel	Head	0	1880	20	21	20	20	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
24		Harlowe	Wife							Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
45	187/187	McComb William	Head	R	1880	20	21	20	20	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
46		John	Wife							Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880
47		Thomas W	Wife							Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	John	Thomas	Sam	1880