

Persimmon Grove Chapel* and Cemetery

The Persimmon Grove Cemetery was located northwest of Athens along Buck Island Road, north of its intersection with Fort Hampton Road. In the first half of the 20th century, this area was referred to as Persimmon Grove. It is unknown when the church organized, but the sign to the cemetery indicates the burial ground was established in 1810, suggesting the chapel was as well. The chapel is labeled on the 1936 topographic map, along with the cemetery, but by 1948, the chapel was absent.

The Persimmon Grove Cemetery is an African American burial ground with about 120 marked graves and, probably, numerous unmarked graves. The earliest marked burial is that of Lucy Lotic (1872-1881). Local African American landowner, farmer, and organizer of the Alabama Fork School, Sam Barbee, Sr. (1869-1952) is buried here along with his wife and several of their children, as are landowner, John McDonald (1857-1934) and several of his family members. McDonald owned a farm by at least 1900. Another grave is that of Rev. Henry Fairrer, chairman of a committee to organize the Big Creek School. Other common surnames at this cemetery are Horton – there are 32 members buried here – Murrah, and Turner.

(Below) Excerpt from the 1940 U.S. Census Showing the Household of John McDonald



(Top Left) 1936 USGS Topographic Map Showing the Oakland United Methodist Church (Left) 1963 USGS Topographic Map Showing the Oakland United Methodist Church (Above) Students and Teachers of the Oakland School

In 1923 Mr. A.F. Lofty was the teacher at Oakland School. As enrollment increased, two teachers were needed. Mrs. Minnie Dinkins was teaching in 1947. The building was said to be painted inside and out, well-kept, and well-equipped.



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|---------------|----------|---|---|-----|------|----|---|---|---------|---------|---------|----|--------|----|---|----|----|----|---|---|---|-----|
| 169 | 167 | McDonald John | Head | B | M | Mar | 1854 | 40 | M | 1 | Alabama | Alabama | Alabama | 46 | 191-2 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 0 | M | J | 162 |
| | | Anna | Wife | B | F | Jan | 1867 | 33 | M | 1 | Alabama | Alabama | Alabama | 33 | | | | 20 | 20 | 20 | | | | |
| | | John | Son | B | M | Oct | 1882 | 17 | S | | Alabama | Alabama | Alabama | 17 | Farmer | 0 | 0 | 40 | 40 | 40 | | | | |
| | | William | Son | B | M | Apr | 1887 | 13 | S | | Alabama | Alabama | Alabama | 13 | Farmer | 10 | 2 | 20 | 20 | 20 | | | | |
| | | Luke | Son | B | M | Feb | 1896 | 4 | S | | Alabama | Alabama | Alabama | 4 | | | | 20 | 20 | 20 | | | | |
| | | Carrie | Daughter | B | F | Aug | 1897 | 2 | S | | Alabama | Alabama | Alabama | 2 | | | | 20 | 20 | 20 | | | | |
| | | Donna | Daughter | B | F | Jan | 1907 | 12 | S | | Alabama | Alabama | Alabama | 12 | | | | 20 | 20 | 20 | | | | |