

Hamburg, Germany as a mezzo-soprano. Now known as the “First Lady of Music in Limestone County,” Malone and the Jubilee Singers toured the United States and the world, visiting Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, and performed for German Emperor Wilhelm I.

Malone often returned home to Athens. In 1884, she bought property there and built The Oaks, a house in which her mother and sister lived and where she was known to have often entertained African American members of the community. Her unexpected death at 41 in Omaha, Nebraska, was a shock and many people from around the world wrote newspaper articles and letters to the family expressing sorrow at her passing. She made her final trip home to be buried at the Hine and Hobbs Street Cemetery in Athens.

Mud Creek School*

The location of the Mud Creek School is uncertain except that it was most likely along Mud Creek between Athens and Beulahland. The school was established about 1881. In 1897 Mrs. Julia Hull was the teacher. Mud Creek School may also be known as Muddy Creek, but neither name was found on any known maps.

Opportunity Schools

Opportunity schools were created as part of the largest educational reform package in the Alabama state legislature’s history to that time, 1927. That year, the state approved a budget of \$25 million for four years, an amount that was two and a half times higher than any previous allocation. The reform package also created mandatory seven-month long school terms for both white and African American schools, started a new division within the Department of Education specifically for African American institutions, and raised the average wage for teachers.

The law included the creation of an Opportunity School in each county that expected at least 15 students to enroll. The schools were for individuals aged 21 and older and intended to combat and

correct the high rate of illiteracy in the state, particularly among African Americans. A decade earlier, the Russell Sage Foundation released a report entitled Social Problems of Alabama. Among other things, it concluded that despite Alabama’s industrial boom and economic success in the early 20th century, the education system had badly failed the children. The illiteracy rate among children 10 and over was 12.1%. Among white children, only 6.4% were illiterate, but among African American children, the rate was an astonishing 31.2% and by 1927, Alabama ranked 45th of 48 states in literacy.

The Opportunity Schools were an effort to fight chronic underfunding, especially for rural schools and schools for children of color, to assist low-income parents having to balance work and home, and to see that rural children attended school more than a couple of months each year. While there was a law passed in 1907 that required every Alabama county to have a high school, these were most often for white students only. The “separate but equal” laws were practically ignored by the state, which left the majority of African Americans with a sixth to eighth grade education. The Opportunity Schools allowed adults that did not complete higher grades to go back to school to learn basic reading and writing.

Ezekiel School in Limestone County was one of the state’s Opportunity Schools. In 1930 it had the second highest enrollment and those who completed 90 hours of classes were awarded a certificate. The school was located west of Tanner and Beulahland, possibly at or near Ezekiel Church.

St. Andrew School*

Once located on Limestone County Road, this school operated for seven years. Mr. Kirby was one of the first trustees and his daughter was the first teacher. In 1947, Mrs. Margaret Phillips taught four grades, and Mr. Ballard, Mr. Scott, and Mr. Haywood Barks were trustees.

Although there is a photograph of children who attended the school, little is known about it. The school’s location is not known. The only full name



(Above) Students and Teacher of the St. Andrews School

associated with it, Mrs. Margaret Phillips, was not found residing in Limestone County in the 1940 Federal census. Finding Mrs. Phillips’ residence around the time she taught there could help identify the school’s location.

TVA Removal Records

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is a federally organized corporation created as part of the New Deal by the TVA Act of 1933. The TVA’s mission has been to produce power and control flooding, erosion, and deforestation by constructing dams, nuclear power plants, and much more. A unique obligation of the TVA was that for each issue it sought to resolve, it conducted extensive studies to understand its effects. Therefore, before building the dams along the Middle Tennessee River in North Alabama, the TVA studied who and what would be impacted and how.

In the process of building dams along the Tennessee River, the TVA needed to acquire much of the land alongside the river that would be flooded. A major part of the TVA’s work was the relocation of roads, utilities, landowners, tenants, and cemeteries. Owners and renters were consulted to assess their options and ensure they were properly resettled.

The TVA’s work along the Tennessee River had a big impact on African American communities in the area.

The TVA completed a survey of each cemetery in the areas that would be flooded. More than 69,000 graves were mapped and over 20,000 were moved. For each cemetery or grave, the nearest living relatives were contacted and involved in the decision as to whether or not the burial ground should be left in place. Often, cemeteries were already on higher ground and families decided to leave them alone even though the surrounding area would be flooded, leaving the cemetery difficult to reach. When cemeteries were relocated, TVA would clean, repair, and reset monuments and headstones.

According to the TVA cemetery removal records, 72 cemeteries in eight North Alabama counties were considered for removal. Of those, only 21 were completely or partially relocated. Also, 14 of the 72 cemeteries were strictly for African Americans, although only one of these is known to have been moved – Campbell Cemetery in Lawrence County. The only known African American burial grounds surveyed by the TVA are McGuire and Patton cemeteries in Lauderdale County; Campbell, Hampton, and Robinson’s Quarter cemeteries in Lawrence County; Bridgeforth, Center Hill, Center Star, Lucas, and McDonald cemeteries in Limestone County; J.B. Harris, Mary Toney, and Sam Moore cemeteries in