



(Above) St. John African Methodist Episcopal Church (Huntsville Revisited Facebook Page)

The Lakeside AME Church appears on an 1888 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map as "Colored M. E. Church and School." Two other churches are noted on the map as well, a "Colored Baptist Church" and another "African M. E. Church."

The "African M. E. Church" noted on the Sanborn map is the original location of the St. John AME Church. This AME Church was organized in 1885 by Dr. William Hooper Council. The first meetings were held in a barber shop on the corner of Miller and West Holmes streets until 1900 when the first church building was constructed. Dr. Council was ordained an elder for the church along with others.

The church that stands on the corner of Church and Monroe streets today was constructed in 1971. Over the 130 plus years of St. John AME Church's history, it has served as a center point for the community hosting meetings and programs for the NAACP and the City of Huntsville, as well as Fellowship conferences. It retains strong ties with Alabama A&M.

Huntsville Population

As the largest city in Madison County, Huntsville's population is enumerated in several districts and wards for the federal census. In order to evaluate the rural population and how many farmers of color owned land around Huntsville, the downtown wards

were excluded from this study. The rural population of Huntsville consisted of 47% households of color in 1900 and consistently fell to 28% households of color by 1940. Although the number of households of color was relatively constant through the decades, the percentage of families of color living in rural Huntsville declined. This indicates that early 20th century growth around the city was mostly due to white households.

Farm ownership among households of color around Huntsville has a less definable trend. Farm ownership by people of color in rural Huntsville reflects the overall trend of high ownership at the turn of the century, followed by a short decline in 1910, a peak in 1920, and the sharpest drop by 1930. Between 100 and 150 families of color owned their property from 1900-1920. When compared to the entire population, households of color that owned a farm in rural Huntsville accounted for no more than 3% or 4% of the total population, with the exception of 1920 when that percentage was 8% of all households. That year also had the highest percentage of landowning farmers among the households of color: 17% of all households of color in 1920 were landowning

farmers. Between 1920 and 1930, more than half of those farms were either lost or the families had moved.

The rural area around Huntsville at times included Pond Beat and Mullins Flat. Many of the landowning farmers of color have familiar names or surnames, such as Paris Branford, who owned his farm from at least 1900-1940. Others include Everett Horton and other family members, and Mose and Darphus Love. The McDonald family had four members who owned a farm in 1920 through to 1940, and the Cabiness family had three members who owned farms in 1920.

In the 21st century, Huntsville is still a major city of Alabama. It is the third largest city in the state and the largest of the North Alabama region. As of 2010, the metro area had over 414,000 people, of which 31% identified as African American. The city of

(Below) Excerpts from 1900 Federal Census of Huntsville, Madison County, Example of a Community of Landowning Farmers Who are All Neighbors on Clinton Street in West Huntsville

463	483	Porter	Abner	Head	13	M	June	1871	28	M	6	1	5	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Farmer	0-0-4	Yes	Yes	Yes	0	7	7	113
			Anna	Wife	13	F	Jan	1872	28	M	6	4	3	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama			Yes	Yes	Yes				
464	484	Porter	Henry	Head	13	M	Nov	1850	49	M	25			Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Farmer	0-4-4	Yes	No	Yes	0	7	7	114
			Manna	Wife	13	F	Jan	1855	45	M	25	13	9	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama		6	No	No	Yes				
465	485	Lane	Frank	Head	13	M	Feb	1851	49	M	21			Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Day Laborer	0-3-0	No	No	Yes	0	7	7	115
			Fannie	Wife	13	F	June	1863	37	M	21	4	2	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Farmer	0	Yes	Yes	Yes	0	7	7	115
467	487	Lightfoot	John	Head	13	M	June	1852	47	M	28			Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Farmer	0-5-2	No	No	Yes	0	7	7	116
			Callie	Wife	13	F	Aug	1852	47	M	28	14	10	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Laundry	0	Yes	Yes	Yes				
468	488	Lightfoot	Joe	Head	13	M	Feb	1875	25	M	4			Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Miner	0-3-0	Yes	Yes	Yes	0	7	7	117
			Nancy	Wife	13	F	June	1876	24	M	4	3	2	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama			Yes	Yes	Yes				
472	492	Brandon	Alfred	Head	13	M	Oct	1852	47	M	24			Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Farmer	0-6-7	Yes	Yes	Yes	0	7	7	118
			Nancy	Wife	13	F	Jan	1853	47	M	24	11	8	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama			Yes	Yes	Yes				

KEY

- COMMUNITIES
- CEMETERIES
- CHURCHES
- PLANTATIONS
- SCHOOLS

* Indicates a Historical - Non-Extant Resource