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Lipscomb Plantation* and Hancock Cemetery

According to historian John P. Rankin, Richard Lipscomb bought the land in Section 24, Township 4, Range 2 West in 1846. He also bought portions of Section 14, where Green Grove Cemetery is located, from Benjamin Bledsoe in 1838 and 1840. While Richard's son, John T., sold the land in 1870, it appears that a few of the former slaves continued to reside in the area as of 1880. Richard Lipscomb passed away by 1850. His estate, run by his son, included 34 slaves, 28 by 1860, the Lipscombs had 28 slaves.

While some resources mention the burial of slaves in the Lipscomb family cemetery, there is no evidence of burials on the old Lipscomb Plantation besides those marked. The people enslaved here were most likely buried in the Hancock Cemetery, a small unmarked burial ground located on an adjacent property.

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Madison

Located in west Madison County, the town of Madison was established in 1857 along the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, specifically halfway between Huntsville and Decatur. It was originally called Madison Station for the railroad, but by 1869, when the town was incorporated, it dropped the "Station" part of the name.

According to the census, the town of Madison was 50-70% people of color in the first half of the 20th century. Throughout those four decades, about 6% of the total number of households were farms owned by people of color, with the exception of 1930 when only nine (3%) people of color owned farms.

In 1920, the vast majority of the 318 households of color were described as "mulatto." Also, that year,



(Above) 1936 USGS/TVA Topographic Map of Madison, Greenbrier and Madison, Alabama Quadrangles

there was a noticeable number of households of color whose ownership was unknown. The number of people of color decreased in 1930, while the percentage of households of color with unknown ownership increased. In 1930, there were only nine people of color that owned property in the rural area outside of town, and all nine were farmers. This is significant as 65% of the households of color lived outside of the town of Madison that year.

The population of Madison greatly increased in 1940, possibly because the census began to include the area north of Triana. The census enumerated 766 households in 1940; 523 (or 68%) of them were people of color. Including the Triana area added 50 landowning farmers of color in 1940. These 50 farmers represented 10% of the population of color and 60% of all households of color that owned

property. Almost all of these farmers were on the south side of Madison, which had the majority of people of color and renters. On the north side, there were only four farms owned by people of color, three of which were owned by the Ragland family. Other landowning families of color of note are the Betts and Fletcher families. The Betts owned two farms in 1900, and by 1940, seven Betts family members owned a farm. The Fletcher family owned at least two farms in the early 20th century.

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McCrary Plantation and McCrary-Wright Cemetery

Also referred to simply as the McCrary Farm, what was once the McCrary Plantation is the oldest farm in the state of Alabama. On November 2, 1809, Thomas McCrary purchased 480 acres from the federal government in what would become Madison County, then Mississippi Territory.

The house built in 1873 remains on the now 500-acre property. According to the 1981 nomination to the National Register for Historic Places, "the land surrounding the house has been cultivated by the same family since a decade before Alabama entered the Union: first as a cotton plantation with slave—then tenant, labor; today as a diversified and mechanized farm. Thus, the house and its setting symbolize, on the one hand, a continuity of use stretching back to the earliest days of settlement; and on the other, the metamorphosis itself which has occurred in Alabama agriculture over a century and a half."

On the 1830 census, Thomas McCrary lived in a large household with 68 slaves and 16 other people. By 1850, McCrary owned an additional 20 slaves. Slaveholder John Wright is listed next to McCrary on the slave schedules, indicating adjacent plantations.

The property also includes a cemetery with many unmarked burials believed to be those of slaves from the former plantation. The cemetery includes the

burial of Thomas McCrary and his family; however, there is some indication that the graves may have been moved from their original site south of the current cemetery. The enslaved people of both the Wright and McCrary plantations may have been interred here originally, and the other graves and monuments relocated to this area.

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Meridianville

Meridianville is located north of Huntsville along what was established as the meridian for land surveying in the early 19th century when the U.S. government first began selling land in the new Mississippi Territory. In the early 20th century, it was a community of farmers with vast agricultural lands surrounding the small town. For most of this period, the majority of those farmers were people of color, and a relatively high percentage of them owned land. The farmers of color around Meridianville may have benefited from the proximity of Normal and Alabama A&M University.

The number of households in Meridianville increased from 522 in 1900 to 627 in 1940. During this time, the majority of the population were people of color, about 72% of all households. This percentage peaked at 95% households of color in 1920 before falling to about 55% of all households in 1930 and 1940. Throughout the early 20th century, the percentage of landownership among people of color remained between 13% and 22%. Although the total percentage of households of color is lowest in 1940 (54%), there is also a high of 22% of all households of color that own property that same year.

The total number of farms owned by people of color remained relatively high during the early 20th century, between 56 and 79 farms each year. The lowest number of farms owned by people of color was 56 in 1910, representing 13% of the homeowners in the community of color. In 1920, there were 79 farms – or 14% of the landowning households of color. Only 13% of households of color owned property in 1920 even though 95% of the population were people of color.