

## 2. DETAILS OF PLACES OF INTEREST

### 1 ■ Adkins Cemetery

The Adkins Cemetery is small, about the size of a suburban front lawn. It lies next to Sandlin Road in a fenced area directly in front of a Ranch house. There are 23 burials, the oldest dating to Rachel Harris (1872-1908) and her husband, Charlie Harris (1869-1902). Some members of the extensive Garth family are buried here, as well as John B. Johnson (1859-1931), large Cedar Lake landowner and farmer. The cemetery is adjacent to land owned by Carrie and Jim Adkins in the early 20th century.

### 2 ■ Blackwell Cemetery

This cemetery is one of two named Blackwell on the Decatur Country Club golf course. It is located northeast of the town of Cedar Lake. This cemetery shows up on both the 1936 and most current USGS topographic maps, but it is not labeled. It is located just below the other Blackwell Cemetery. The Morgan County Land Book from 1920-1928 for this section has a small square outlined in red pencil marked "Col Cemetery." However, it appears that the first burials, that of George Steptoe Blackwell Wilkinson (1815-1887) and his wife, Sophia Jane Dewoody Wilkinson (1815-1904), belonged to the white landowners.

**(Top Right)** 1936 USGS/TVA Topographic Map, Decatur Quadrangle, Showing Blackwell Cemetery (in Red) and the Cedar Lake Community



Most of the 72 known burials are members of the African American community, including several of the landowners of Cedar Lake, such as: Nadie Baker (1890-1969); Thomas Baker (died 1922), a member of the Lone Star Circle No. 1060; Nathaniel Gill, Jr. (1896-1970), who was employed by the L&N Railroad for 53 impressive years; Selia Gill (1868-1951), Nathaniel's mother; Elsa Malone (1856-1934); and Sam T. Tapscott (1909-1988).

### 3 ■ Breeding Plantation\*

The Breeding Plantation was in east Morgan County, east of Somerville and south of Talucah. An 1827 land patent was awarded to Samuel Breeding, as assignee of William Smith, for 80 acres in the west half of the southeast quarter of section 15 in Township 6, Range 2 (No. 1935). In an 1852 land patent, Samuel's son, William Breeding, received 40 acres in the Southwest quarter of the Northeast quarter of Section 14, Township 6 South, Range 2 West (No. 16,787). While there were other Breedings in the area and William is known to have approximately 2,000 acres upon his death in 1899, these were the earliest recorded holdings in the Breeding family.

The extensive land holdings are remarkable for being involved in a turn-of-the-20th-century court case over the will of William Breeding. The land was awarded to his heir, his half-white-half-black son, Millard – a rare occurrence at the time.

### 4 ■ Campground Cemetery

The Campground Cemetery is a large cemetery nestled between two churches. Named for Campground Hill, or Mountain, and presently situated on the north side of Highway 157 and Campground Road, the cemetery is associated with Provident (Providence) Missionary Baptist Church. Here, there are over 400 graves with several of the earlier burials bearing no inscription. The earliest inscribed burial is



that of Nancy Bibb (1833-1879). Other family names that appear frequently within the cemetery are Elliott, Orr, and Sharpley. This cemetery is still in use.

### 5 ■ Carver Elementary School

The Carver Elementary School has changed names several times over the decades, having previously been called Gibbs Street Colored School, as well as East End School. In 1935, the principal of the Carver School was Rev. Professor William Jenkins Wilson. William's wife, Louise France Murdock Wilson, was a teacher at this school when it was the East End School. The entire Wilson family was pivotally involved with Decatur and Morgan County education in the early 20th century. William's brother, John Allen Wilson, was the principal of Decatur Negro High School and graduated from Alabama A&M.

Ms. Athelyne C. Banks was the school's first female principal during her 42 years of service with the Decatur City Schools.

### 6 ■ Cedar Lake

The community of Cedar Lake was originally designed as a city solely for African American inhabitants, known as the Cedar Lake Colony. The brainchild of millionaire-philanthropist Lilian Ray Nelson and her husband, George Asa Nelson, the community was platted in 1897. The self-sufficient, agricultural community complete with a school, church, cotton factory and gin, and hundreds of acres of farmable land, never fulfilled the lofty ideals of its creators. However, the plan did succeed in creating a town completely occupied by African Americans, with about half of the land and houses owned by the African American community.