

1898 located at the Morgan County Archives, shows the cemetery without the Steers, Brown, or full Humes additions. The Humes Addition is the largest, comprising well over 50% of the entire cemetery. On this plat, the Humes Addition does not extend past Western Avenue and only half way past Northern Avenue. It also depicts an elaborate chapel in the center of what is now the Brown Addition. The plat map was commissioned and signed by the Decatur Cemetery Association – W.W. Littlejohn, President; J.D. Wyker, Secretary; and Calvin Brown, Surveyor.

Early African American burials are located near the original entrance of the cemetery, where many Masonic members purchased plots in the 19th century. Due to the rewriting of the state constitution in 1901, African Americans were not allowed to be buried in the city cemetery until the 1960s. Once this statute was revoked, the Sterrs Addition, named for Dr. Willis and Eva Sterrs, was platted out on the southeastern extent of the cemetery, adding approximately five acres of burial ground. Although African Americans were buried throughout the cemetery and the Sterrs Addition was not strictly used by African Americans burials, it is predominately an African American burial section.

Notable members of the Decatur African American community buried at the city cemetery include:

- Athelyne Celest Banks;*
- Matthew Hewlett Banks;*
- Dr. Newlyn Edwin Cashin;*
- Herschel Vivian Cashin;*
- Lafayette Garth;*
- Robert Murphy;*
- George Asa and Lilian Ray Nelson; and*
- Dr. Willis Sterrs and Eva Sterrs*.*

**Due to the Decatur City Cemetery having previously been known as Oakwood Cemetery and the coincidence that there is also a large cemetery named Oakwood in Montgomery, where Dr. Sterrs was born, there is some confusion as to whether he and Mrs. Sterrs are buried in Decatur or in Montgomery.*

12 ■ Decatur Negro High School*

From 1889-1912, the Decatur Board of Education appointed someone to supervise the two-story schoolhouse for African American children that became known as Decatur Negro High School in 1924. The county plat books indicate that the school was owned by the city and located within the R.B. White neighborhood. Although educational grade levels were different in the early 20th century, the high school only served to the 10th grade until 1928.

On June 2, 1935, the graduating class of Decatur Negro High School was addressed by none other than Dr. George Washington Carver. The speech, given at the Princess Theatre in downtown Decatur, was attended by an integrated gathering of over a thousand people. The principal at the time was Clifford Joel Hurston – the brother of famed African American author and anthropologist, Zora Neal Hurston.

Decatur Negro High became Lakeside High School in 1954. The school building later served as Cherry Street Elementary School until it was razed, sometime in the late 1980s or early 1990s.



(Above) Photograph of the Decatur Negro High School, Circa 1930 (Morgan County Archives, Decatur, Alabama)

SURVEY		R. B. WHITE		TOWNSHIP		RANGE		SECTION		MAP RECORDED IN	
		Decatur								Map Book Page	
LOT	BLK	IMPROVEMENTS	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932
1	4										
2											
3											
4		City Negro School									
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12		City Negro School									
13											
14											
15											

(Above) Morgan County Plat Books, 1924-1927, R.B. White Neighborhood, Decatur (Morgan County Archives, Decatur, Alabama)

“I attended school here in Decatur, Alabama. First, Cherry Street School and then Lakeside High School. 1969 was the last graduating class for Lakeside High School, so those students had to transfer to Decatur High School or Austin High School. Of course, I went to Decatur High School. I always call myself a product of integration, so I did have the privilege of attending both an all-black school and then the integrated white school.”

- Ms. Peggy Allen Towns

13 ■ Draper-Chatman Cemetery

The Draper-Chatman Cemetery is located in the community of Talucah on the east side of Stewart Road in Section 36 of Township 5 South, Range 2 West. It has about 200 known burials, the first of which is Dolphus Middleton (1849-1909). Other family names besides Draper and Chatman/Chatmon include Black, Jackson, Romine, and Toney. This cemetery may also be known as Talucah Cemetery and is still in use.

