

18 ■ Hills Chapel Christian Presbyterian Church

This is one of the three churches in the community of Cedar Lake. Located off Ray Avenue, the church is situated on land that was once owned by Ms. Lilian Ray Nelson and rented out to African American tenants. The church has served the community since at least the 1930s.

19 ■ King's Memorial United Methodist Church

According to the Decatur Tourism Commission, King's Memorial was one of the oldest African American churches in Morgan County. The Reverend Richard "Dick" Rather was pastor in 1854. A few years earlier, in 1850, bi-racial members met at the First Methodist Episcopal Church just south of King's Memorial in a wooden building. The church is located on McCartney Street between Vine and Lafayette streets.

Formerly known as St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church, King's Memorial was home to the first private school for African American children in Morgan County after a fire forced its move from St. Stephen Primitive Baptist Church.

20 ■ Leader's School*

Sometime referred to as "Leadus" School, this school was once located in Talucah on the land of African American farmer Winfrey Chapman. County land records from 1920-1928 show that Chapman gave three acres to the school. According to historic maps, this school served the African American children of Talucah into the 1960s.

21 ■ Lylewood Plantation

This house, known as the Ratliff-Lyle House, was built by James Thomas Ratliff, Sr. in 1847. According to the census data, James Thomas Ratliff, Sr. owned the land the house was built on and had six slaves in 1840. By 1850, he deeded parcels of his land to his sons, who owned an additional 16 slaves. According to the Alabama Historical Commission, the Ratliff slaves lived in small houses south of the main house that still stands. James Ratliff died in 1853. He and some of his family are buried in the Ratliff Cemetery on the property. While it was historically known as the Lylewood Plantation, it was not until the early 20th century that Ras and Annie May Lyle, descendants of the Ratliffs, purchased the property.

The southwest quarter of Section 8, Township 6 South, Range 3 West, was originally awarded to James Ratliff and John McKinley in 1832 (no. 430).

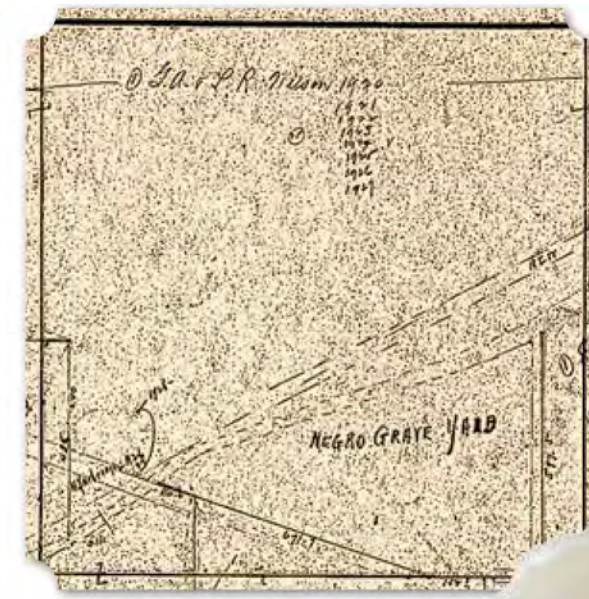
22 ■ Magnolia-Sykes Cemetery

In response to the changes made to the 1901 Alabama State Constitution that segregated cemeteries, James J. Sykes (the son of S.S. Sykes) bought over eight acres of land on the west side of West Decatur for a cemetery. One of Sykes' many business adventures was a part ownership of a funeral home. He saw a need for a place for the African American community to lay their dead to rest. The cemetery was originally named Magnolia and opened in 1903. It was the primary burial space for the African American community until 1965 for everyone from former slaves, educators, physicians, business owners, ministers, farmers, and war veterans to current residents. Oddly enough, one of the great mysteries of Decatur history is where

A Negro Graveyard.
A great deal has been said about the purchase by J. J. Sykes of a plot of ground on the Moulton road, just outside the city limits, at Moulton Heights, which he says he will use as a negro cemetery. This has made quite a stir among the residents of that locality, but Mr. Sykes says he is strictly within the law, and as there has been no other place offered, and as the owners of property in other localities have refused to sell to him for that purpose, and as the negroes must bury their dead some where, what are they to do? Mr. Sykes is a negro undertaker, and he offers to trade the lot for some other site for a cemetery, but none is offered him. He even offers to sell at a moderate profit, but no purchaser appears.

The matter was brought before the County Commissioners, but they say they have no authority to act in the matter. We were told that the good people of that vicinity were going to petition the City Council last Tuesday, but we don't see anything about it in their proceedings.

If the people are really in earnest, we have no doubt that they will find a way out of the difficulty, but if they are indifferent, then no one else has any cause to complain. A good solid petition, addressed to the City Council, signed by all the people of West Decatur, will certainly have a remedial effect, if not effect a complete cure.



(Left) Magnolia Cemetery on Plat Map of Section 24, R5S R5W, 1920-1928 (Morgan County Archives, Decatur, Alabama)

(Left) J. J. Sykes and the Magnolia Cemetery (Newspapers.com, New Decatur Advertiser, Oct. 4, 1901, P.5) (Below) 1905 Plat Map of Magnolia Cemetery (Morgan County Archives, Decatur, Alabama)



KEY

- COMMUNITIES
- CEMETERIES
- CHURCHES
- PLANTATIONS
- SCHOOLS

