

Across the river in Limestone County, the 1930 census names a specific precinct “Slough.” According to the 1940 census precinct map, this area would have been west and southwest of Athens. In the margin of the census page, it is noted: “by road from Huntsville-Browns Ferry to Lucas Ferry Road/Negro Settlement.” This community may have been located in what would be east of Tanners Crossroads today. The residents of the area were overwhelmingly African American. One of the residents on the 1930 census is Mat Walker, African American farmer and landowner, and grandfather of Col. James L. Walker. Walker describes his grandfather as living in the vicinity of Tanner and the road names suggest that is the area of this “Negro Settlement.”

Limestone County has two other references to African American communities in the early 20th century. George Ruffin Bridgeforth, an African American farmer and landowner brought together a community in the 1930s. It was in the area of Beulah and included a couple of churches and a school. Similar in spirit, though perhaps not in execution to Cedar Lake, the Beulah community was quite successful. The Bridgeforth family continues to own and operate a farm in this area. Also, the Negro Year Book for 1921-1922 names a settlement in Limestone called “Small Farms.” Although the exact location is not known, it is possible that it is the same settlement in Tanners Crossroads.

