

Voices From the Plains: The Black Legacies of Auburn Alabama

By

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## Abstract

This study explores the legacies of African Americans in Auburn Alabama beginning with the city's founding and ending with desegregation of Auburn's schools. The first section focuses on slavery, the migration of African Americans into Auburn, their experiences, and the surviving plantation houses in the area. The second section explores community. It highlights experiences during segregation, African American businesses, and culture. The third section is about education. It also looks at the experiences of African Americans under segregation but also the impact of the schools on their graduates, and the impact of desegregation to the developed community. The content of this study primarily comes from oral histories and documents obtained through history harvests. Supplementary data was obtained through primary and secondary sources.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to send a special thanks to the members of my committee, Dr. Monique Laney, Dr. Elijah Gaddis, and Dr. Keith Hebert for your support and encouragement through this process. Thank you for forcing me outside of my comfort zone and encouraging me to take risks and try new techniques.

I would also like to thank the Auburn community who donated their time, stories, memories, and documents. They were the foundation of this project and none of it would have been possible without them as well as the Auburn graduate students who offered their time to conduct the interviews.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	2
Acknowledgments .....	3
List of Illustrations .....	5
Introduction .....	7
Chapter 1 Slavery and its Legacy in Auburn .....	9
Plantations .....	11
The University .....	14
Chapter 3 Community and Culture .....	17
Chapter 4 Education .....	23
Chapter 5 Archives and Resources .....	26
Omeka Links .....	26
Oral Histories .....	26
Bibliography .....	26
Proxi .....	27
Archives .....	27
References .....	28

## List of Illustrations

Figure 1 (Downtown Auburn, 1910) .....	7
Figure 2 (Downtown Auburn 1900s).....	8
Figure 3 (Dowdell Plantation) .....	9
Figure 4 (Pebble Hill) .....	11
Figure 5 (1850 Slave Census).....	12
Figure 6 (1860 Slave Census).....	12
Figure 7 (Noble Hall) .....	13
Figure 8 (Sunny Slope) .....	13
Figure 9 (Langdon Hall Construction).....	14
Figure 10 (Langdon Hall) .....	15
Figure 11 (University Chapel 1900s) .....	16
Figure 12 (University Chapel) .....	16
Figure 13 (Baptist Hill).....	18
Figure 14 (Baptist Hill) .....	18
Figure 15 (Baptist Hill) .....	19
Figure 16 (Dr JW Darden) .....	19
Figure 17 (Darden Newspaper Clipping).....	20
Figure 18 (Dr. Darden and Family) .....	21
Figure 19 (Tiger Theater).....	22
Figure 20 (Drake Graduate) .....	24

Figure 21 (Drake Football Players) ..... 24

## Introduction

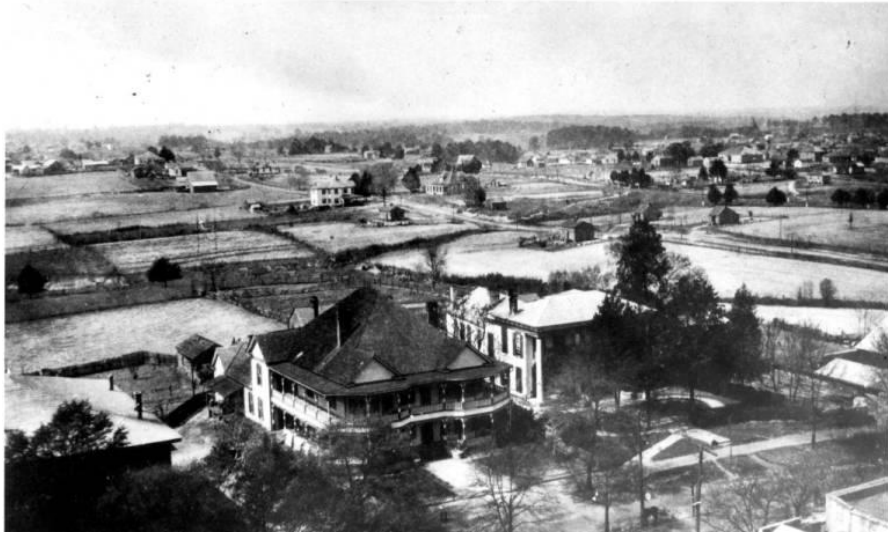
This project delves into the untold stories of Auburn, Alabama, to shed light on its lesser-known history. It is the result of a collaborative endeavor by Auburn's African American descendent-community, made possible by individuals who generously shared their time, documents, photos, and stories.



The area that is now College St cir. 1910.  
Courtesy of Auburn University

This website explores Auburn's African American history, aiming to share community members' experiences. The story begins with Auburn's reliance on the labor of enslaved individuals to build the town and the experiences of those enslaved who lived in Auburn. It then shifts to the post-emancipation and Jim Crow experiences and ends with the story of desegregation.

Information for this project was obtained from community members as well as archival sources. Community "history harvests" were held and brought the descendent community together to share their photos, documents, newspapers, and voices. The interviews were led by Auburn graduate students and took place at the Boykin Community Center. In these interviews, individuals shared memories of their childhoods, going to school, social lives, their families, and interactions with their community. The goal for the website is to use their contributions to create a historical narrative driven by personal experience. This is by no means a comprehensive account. Rather, it is a starting point of a much larger history, intended to expand as more community members add their voices.



Aerial photo of Downtown Auburn cir. 1900s.  
Images courtesy of Auburn University

The pages of the website include interactive maps that allow users to click on specific points to learn about the locations and histories of various sites. Users can create an account through the map host, Proxi, which allows for the tracking of site they have visited. The Proxi maps contain more information and photos of the sites discussed on the website as well as others that were not brought up in the narrative itself. Additionally, each page includes a link to an Omeka collection that serves as a curated archive. These archive collections contain photos, documents, newspaper clippings, and other artifacts that were gathered by archival research or were shared through history harvests. The Archives and Resources page contains more information on Omeka and Proxi as well as features a comment box, encouraging readers to contribute to the story by sharing their own experiences and memories.



## Slavery and Its Legacy in Auburn

Although Auburn's legacy is closely tied to that of Auburn University, the city's foundations rest on the labor of enslaved individuals and the financial support of their enslavers. The establishment of Auburn dates back to 1832, with enslaved individuals among its earliest inhabitants. As the Civil War loomed, Auburn's population included over 700 enslaved individuals and around 1,000 whites, with the largest household owning around 250 slaves.

Enslaved laborers' tasks varied based on the plantation they belonged to; though certain responsibilities were common across plantations. Women predominantly undertook household chores like sewing, cooking, cleaning, and tending to animals. They also engaged in activities such as weaving and washing. In contrast, men were responsible for repairs, construction, cobbling, carpentry, and agricultural work. While men were typically associated with agricultural labor, some plantations saw a sharing of tasks between genders.

Auburn had both urban and rural slavery. Many of the prominent plantations in the area were located directly in the middle of the town. While these slaves would have also performed agricultural work, urban slavery had more diversity in the roles these individuals were forced to undertake. Rural slavery consisted mostly of agricultural and domestic labor. Slaves were tasked with tending to the fields and the house. Any labor that was needed to make sure the plantation could function was done largely by the enslaved. In urban settings, slaves would also take care of the home, but they would also be "hired out" to work inside the towns. Blacksmithing, construction, rail laying, tailors, and factory work largely consisted of the enslaved. There were cases of crossover. During the off season, slaveholders would hire out the "skilled" laborers to the cities for them to return once agricultural activities began again. In urban environments, such as Auburn, some plantations also participated in agriculture.

James Dowdell and his wife, Sarah Dowdell, owned approximately 150 to 200 slaves. James Dowdell, a lawyer and politician, represented Congress from 1853 to 1855, advocating for Southern rights and the expansion of slavery into Kansas. He was also a signer of the Alabama Ordinance of Secession. Sarah Dowdell managed their household during his Civil War involvement. After the war and the emancipation of slaves, the Dowdells faced a lack of labor and financial turmoil from which they never fully recovered. James Dowdell later became the second president of East Alabama Male College, known today as Auburn University.



Dowdell home located in Chambers County.  
Image courtesy of Auburn University

The plantation sits around 45 minutes from Auburn University. Enslaved individuals on the Dowdell plantation lived in small houses consisting of two rooms, with a modest front porch and a chimney dividing the living spaces. These homes had basic furniture as well as trunks and boxes that the slaves used to store feeble belongings. Women would prepare breakfast before starting their work for the day, and then cook dinner in the evenings. Diseases were prevalent; in one instance around forty people contracted typhoid fever.

The experience of enslaved individuals was not universal and varied from plantation to plantation. However, many lived in simple one-room quarters, using flowers and other plants for decorations and having limited, rudimentary furniture. Cooking was done in fireplaces, and cleaning was accomplished using brooms made from collected plant materials such as straw and twigs. In the midst of their challenging circumstances, a strong sense of community emerged. Elder members often took on the responsibility of looking after children, and music played a pivotal role in fostering unity. Songs and music were a part of their daily lives, accompanying activities like walks, meals, and leisure time. Religion also played a unifying role. Churches allocated seats for Black worshippers and preachers would visit the plantations. Music became an integral part of their religious observances, with dancing, chants, and clapping adding to the worship experience.

Enslaved individuals also engaged in friendly competition with each other. Tasks such as shucking corn or sorting produce became opportunities for them to compete to determine who could complete the tasks more quickly with rewards going to the winners. While men typically handled tasks like shucking, women occasionally organized quilting parties. The ability to participate in activities depended, however, on the specific plantation and the rules set by the owner.

Enslaved individuals often married, although the formal recognition of these unions was notably inconsistent. The ceremonial aspect varied, ranging from the involvement of a Black minister officiating the proceedings to couples autonomously declaring their commitment. In some cases, couples sought official approval from their enslavers to formalize their relationship. On occasion, marital ties were allowed to be extended beyond the boundaries of a single plantation, and a pass allowing one spouse intermittent visits to the other was granted. Children born from these unions were typically considered the legal property of the mother's owner, underscoring the complex dynamics of slavery for families.

Slaves faced a range of punitive measures, which varied significantly based on different slave owners. Both overseers and owners closely supervised the actions of enslaved people. When leaving the plantation, they needed an official pass indicating when they could depart and return. If they didn't follow these pass rules or lacked a pass, they often received corporal punishment, typically lashings. The maltreatment of enslaved people differed widely between plantations, ranging from inadequate clothing, limited food, excessive work demands, to severe punishments for minor infractions.

Most of the slave trading in Auburn was local. Slaves would move from plantation to plantation, but sales outside of the community were uncommon. Slaves would arrive with new settlers and were exchanged from family to family through marriages. Apart from contributing to the town's

development, these enslaved individuals also took care of homesteads and land until the landowners officially settled. Unfortunately, lack of documentation, lost documentation, and lack of accounts from the enslaved obscure their identities. Yet, their impact remains evident in the physical structures they helped construct. These buildings, representing specific historical periods, serve as lasting reminders of resilience and heritage. In the present day, these structures remain significant as some of the city's oldest landmarks, many of which are still used by the University. They offer a tangible link between past stories and present realities. The following exploration will delve into the crucial role of enslaved labor in establishing the foundation of the “Loveliest Village on the Plains.”

### Plantations



Pebble Hill.

Image courtesy of Auburn University Library

Pebble Hill stands as the focal point for the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities and also serves as an event space for the university. Situated on DeBardeleben Street, its history traces back to 1847, when it was originally established as the home of Nathaniel and Mary Scott. The Scotts played an indispensable role in shaping the early development of Auburn. Along with serving in the state and federal government, Nathaniel Scott's half-brother founded the city. The Scotts were pivotal for financing construction, founding educational institutions, and supporting the town's religious foundations. During their tenure, they owned nearly 70 enslaved individuals. After Nathaniel's passing, Mary assumed the dual responsibilities of managing both the household and the agricultural estate. Her stewardship endured until the emancipation period, when she made the decision to sell the property.

STATE 2 - Slave Inhabitants in *North Carolina* in the County of *Rockingham* State

*Rockingham* enumerated by me, on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of *August*, 1850. *Wm. H. Rouse*

SLAVES OF WHITE PERSONS										SLAVES OF COLOR PERSONS									
NAME	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	PROPERTY	REMARKS	NAME	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	PROPERTY	REMARKS	NAME	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	PROPERTY	REMARKS		
																		1	2
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	30				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	10				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	10					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	25				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	15				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	15					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	20				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	20				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	20					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	15				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	15				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	15					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	10				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	10				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	10					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	5				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	5				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	5					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	1				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	1				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	1					

1850 Slave Census showing the slaves owned by the Scotts.  
Image courtesy of Auburn University Library

Page No. *22*

STATE 2 - Slave Inhabitants in *North Carolina* in the County of *Rockingham* State

*Rockingham* enumerated by me, on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of *August*, 1860. *Wm. H. Rouse*

SLAVES OF WHITE PERSONS										SLAVES OF COLOR PERSONS									
NAME	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	PROPERTY	REMARKS	NAME	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	PROPERTY	REMARKS	NAME	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	PROPERTY	REMARKS		
																		1	2
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	35				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	15				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	15					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	30				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	20				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	20					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	25				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	15				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	15					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	20				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	10				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	10					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	15				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	5				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	5					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	10				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	1				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	1					
<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	5				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	1				<i>Wm. H. Rouse</i>	M	1					

1860 Slave Census showing the slaves owned by the Scotts.  
Image courtesy of Auburn University Library



Noble Hall.

Image courtesy of Janice Hand

Another one of Auburn's architectural icons, Noble Hall, was founded in 1854 by the Fraizers with the intent of turning it into a cotton plantation. When slaves completed the work on the home, they were tasked with caring for it until the Fraizer family could move in. At its peak, the plantation was run by around a hundred enslaved individuals. It stands today on Shelton Mill Road.



Sunny Slope.

Image curtesy of Alabama Cultural Resource Survey

Constructed in 1857, Sunny Slope emerged as a prominent establishment in its time. As was the case with numerous plantations in the vicinity, this residence stood as the center of a vast 2,500-acre cotton plantation. It was built by notable Auburn figure, William Samford. Originally part of his wife's Susan Dowdell's estate, the land came into Samford's possession after they married.



At the height of the plantation, the Samfords owned around 67 enslaved individuals. While cotton production constituted the primary enterprise, historical records document instances of Samford and his enslaved laborers engaging in the sale of wood and contributing to the construction of the railroad.

William Samford staunchly advocated for secession and vigorously championed the institution of slavery in the South. In the years before the Civil War, Sunny Slope became a hub for discussions revolving around slavery and secession. Right after the outbreak of the war in 1861, the home and property were transformed into a camp for Confederate troops and the Samfords fled Auburn. The Samfords eventually returned to Auburn after the war; however, they opted not to take up residence at Sunny Slope.

### The University

While the enslaved population of Auburn lived on the plantations, their contributions extended beyond the cotton fields and residential areas. As a part of urban slavery, many were also tasked with working on various construction projects such as building the town and the university.

East Alabama Male College, established in 1856 by the Methodist Church and funded by wealthy slaveholders, was intended to cater to the needs of the local settlers. In 1859, the college commenced its operations, aiming to uphold and instill “southern culture and values”. In order to build the new college, slaves were loaned out from the surrounding plantations. The college underwent several transformations, evolving into Alabama Polytechnic Institute in 1899 and later becoming Auburn University in the 1960s. In 1964, the university admitted its first Black student.

As the university expanded, it acquired various buildings from the surrounding community, including former plantation houses. However, this acquisition was not limited to such residences.



Langdon Hall during construction.  
Image courtesy of Auburn University



Langdon Hall.  
Image courtesy of Auburn University

Langdon Hall is currently the oldest standing building in Auburn and now functions as a lecture hall for Auburn University. However, its historical significance reaches beyond its current role. Erected in 1846, this structure originally served as a chapel and auditorium for Auburn Female College before transitioning to the University's ownership in 1883 when the building was physically moved to its modern location. Prior to this shift in ownership, the auditorium played host to pivotal discussions concerning secession and slavery in Alabama. While the explicit documentation regarding Langdon Hall's construction by slaves is lacking, its legacy is intertwined with critical debates about Alabama's future.

During the Civil War, Langdon Hall was repurposed as a hospital and subsequently readapted for classroom and laboratory use. Subsequently, it metamorphosed into a cultural and entertainment nexus within the University community before assuming its present-day function as a lecture hall.

Predating the establishment of East Alabama Male College, the University Chapel had its origins as the inaugural Presbyterian Church in the region. This venerable structure remains situated on its original site, bearing testament to the passage of time. The chapel's construction, completed in 1851, owed its realization to the toil of enslaved individuals. These laborers meticulously crafted the chapel's bricks, which were then transported via rail to the construction site and subsequently laid by the very hands that shaped them. The workforce was predominantly comprised of individuals from Edwin Reese's plantation.

In 1887, the Chapel assumed a new purpose, serving as a classroom venue for East Alabama Male College. Subsequently, it was officially acquired by the Alabama Polytechnic Institute in 1900 and has since remained under Auburn University's ownership.



University Chapel cir. 1900s.

Image courtesy of Research to Preserve African American Stories and Traditions



University Chapel.

Image courtesy of Auburn University

Emancipation spread through the South after the ratification of the 13th Amendment. This did not mean, however, that the former enslaved were free. With the institution of Jim Crow Laws, Blacks were forced to live still separated from White society. The result of this was African Americans bannin together to build a tight knit community.



## Community and Culture

Though emancipation spread throughout the South, that did not end the struggles of the former enslaved. Due to Jim Crow Laws, Auburn remained a segregated city. Shopping, education, entertainment, and socializing for African Americans was separate from the white population of Auburn. This meant that African Americans had limited opportunities for community participation. However, it was the separation that drew the Black community closer together. Black-owned stores and churches became the focal point of the community, serving as a support network. Black-owned businesses became gathering places and African American schools also became refuges for students to learn about their history and express themselves without fear of retaliation from the white citizens of Auburn.

Ebenezer Missionary Baptist was the first Black church established in Auburn shortly after the Civil War. Bell Missionary and White Street Churches were established alongside it, serving as not only places to strengthen familial bonds but also as extended family networks. Churches were refuges where Black citizens were able to engage without restriction. Education, politics, history, and community fellowship were often rooted in one's local congregation.

With the establishment of Ebenezer Baptist, a local Black cemetery called Baptist Hill Cemetery was also created, named after the nearby church. It is not exactly known who owned the cemetery when. The land the cemetery was on was given to the Black community by a white resident in the 1870s. However, many early burials were done without headstones. The oldest marker dates to 1879. The land was community owned and taken care of by the families of the interned. It is now managed by the City of Auburn which actively maintains it. There are over 500 markers on the site which is still in use.

The earliest individuals buried in Baptist Hill were congregational members of Ebenezer Baptist who were laid to rest in unmarked graves. In the earliest years, many were formerly enslaved, with those owned by the Fraizers, Samfords, and Reeses making up a large portion of internments.



Baptist Hill Cemetery.  
Image courtesy of the City of Auburn



Baptist Hill.  
Image courtesy of Chloe Moon



Baptist Hill.

Image courtesy of Chloe Moon

In addition to religious and community sites, businesses served as important social spaces, where African Americans could gather, connect, and find solace in a community that understood their struggles. They offered more than just economic transactions; they provided places for socializing, sharing stories, and nurturing a sense of belonging. These spaces became pillars of strength and resilience, where individuals could find encouragement and inspiration amidst the challenges of Jim Crow.

After facing challenges in finding medical care for his sister, JW Darden resolved to become a physician himself. His journey began in North Carolina, where he grew up as the son of the state's pioneering Black undertaker. Darden was born in 1879. When Darden was 13, his family was unable to find a physician to take care of his sister. It was then that he decided to pursue a career in medicine. With a strong commitment to education, Darden's family ensured that he and his siblings were sent to another city to attend high school, eventually leading him to pursue his medical training in New York.

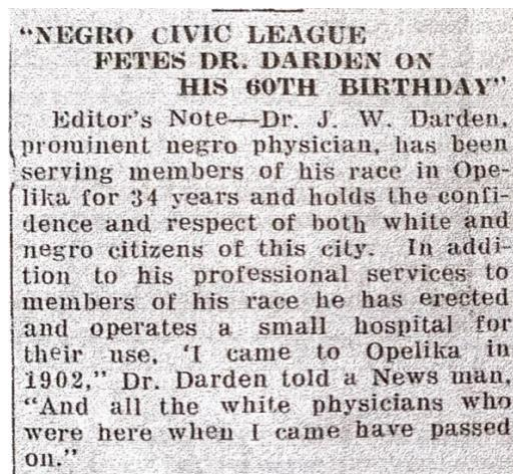


Dr. JW Darden.

Image courtesy of the *Opelika Observer*

A friend then suggested an appealing opportunity in a quaint Alabama town. In 1903, JW relocated to Opelika, becoming the first Black physician in the area. With the help and skills of fellow church members, he oversaw the construction of his residence on acquired land. While providing medical care to the Opelika and Auburn area, Darden also embarked on a dynamic career as a traveling physician, providing medical assistance to underserved rural regions and the inmates of Lee County Jail.

Upon achieving a professional foundation, Darden bought more land and established a pharmacy. His brother, JB Darden, who had recently attained a pharmacy degree joined him in this endeavor. The pharmacy swiftly transformed into a central community gathering point, attracting locals who relished the convivial atmosphere while indulging in homemade ice cream and soda on weekends.



Newspaper clipping detailing Darden's Practice.  
Image courtesy the *Wilson Daily Times*

Maude Jean, JW's wife, made notable contributions as well. During intervals when she wasn't accompanying her husband on his professional travels, she fervently championed education. Holding the position of Director of Christian Education at their church, she also undertook the responsibility of instructing young girls within their home.

While the Dardens were well respected in their community, practicing as an African American physician in the 20th century was not easy. Black doctors were not allowed to join any professional medical association and or participate in many educational resources such as seminars, lectures, or have access to the newest medical resources. Along with this, in many cases it was hard to obtain professional consideration from their white colleagues.

JW Darden passed away in 1949. Two years later, the first black high school in Opelika opened and was named in his honor. It merged with Opelika High School in 1971. Maude Jean Darden outlived her husband, passing away in 1976.





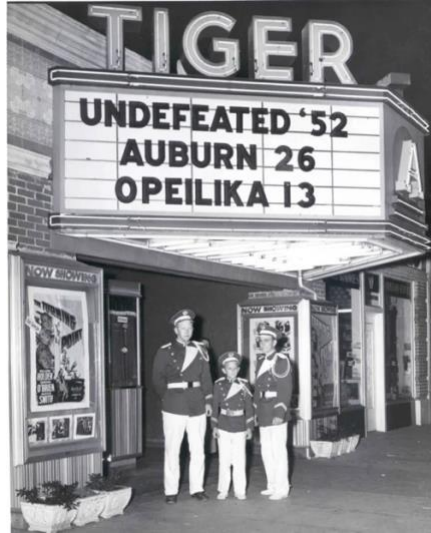
JW Darden pictured with his family.  
Image courtesy of Black Wide-Awake

In the face of adversity posed by the onerous and discriminatory Jim Crow laws, African Americans demonstrated remarkable tenacity. They forged autonomous economic networks that not only met their essential needs but also fostered social unity, empowerment, and a semblance of normalcy within their communities.

The idea of Black-owned businesses serving as focal points for the community was not limited to Dr. Darden. Similar to Dr. Darden's practice and pharmacy, confectionery shops, grocery stores, and various other establishments formed the cornerstone of the community. For instance, Pop Raine's Beverage Shack along Hwy 29S emerged as a bustling meeting spot during the 1950s and 1960s. While it was a favored locale for socializing and beverages, the Raine family also made their home within the establishment behind the counter. Parallel to the role of churches, these businesses played a vital role in creating safe havens for the Black community. They facilitated access to resources that might have otherwise been beyond reach.

The mix of emancipation and segregation also led to the need for places to live. In Auburn, neighborhoods where African Americans lived started popping up. Moton Apartments, built in 1952 on Martin Luther King Dr., were developed by the Housing Authority specifically for African American individuals. Moton served as the residence of many interviewees for this project as they grew up. Another spot that became a hub was Draketown, centered around North Gay St. While the exact borders are unknown, the area was a community hotspot.

During those days, many Black residents lived in fear. They felt safe when they were in their community stores, but there was also a worry that Black people might go missing or end up in unsafe parts of the city. White citizens tried to control where Black citizens could go in numerous ways. Whites used threats, violence, and even physical attacks to make it hard for Black neighbors to move around like everyone else.



Tiger Theater.

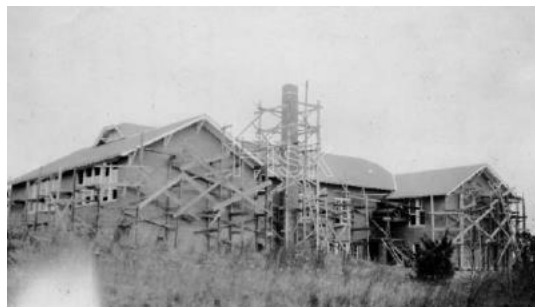
Image courtesy of Movie Rankings

Initially, Tiger Theater did not permit Black patrons to attend their movie screenings. However, there were instances where Black individuals were permitted to stand at the rear of the theater. On the other hand, the Martin Theater in Opelika provided a separate entrance for Black patrons and designated seating in the balcony area. Like other commercial enterprises, a Black-owned theater was developed to meet demand. Phillip Foster and Otis Adams established a theater in 1944 catering specifically to Black audiences.

Schools became another extension of the community for Auburn's younger residents. Here, students could develop community among peers, but also find mentorship among their teachers.

## Education

Segregation didn't only affect public places; it also reached into the education system. When the Lee County Training School shut down, Boykin Elementary and Drake High School took on the role of being key institutions for Black education, welcoming students from various parts of Lee County and East Alabama.



Lee Co Training School.  
Image courtesy of Auburn University Library

The Lee County Training School served as a vocational-centered institution, catering not only to Lee County but also to the neighboring counties. Established in 1929, the school covered all twelve grades, focusing primarily on preparing students for future careers. Over time, the curriculum expanded beyond vocational training to include subjects like art, history, science, philosophy, and math, reflecting a more comprehensive educational approach. Following their time at the Lee County Training School, many students pursued higher education at institutions such as the Tuskegee Institute and Alabama A&M. Lee County Training School was situated on Byrd Street, where the present-day Martin Luther King Jr. Park is located. A pavilion, designed in the shape of the school, now stands as a marker of its educational legacy.

In 1957, as Boykin Elementary and Drake High School opened their doors to students, the Lee County Training School ceased operations, marking the end of an era in its educational journey.

Established in 1951, Boykin Elementary School originally served as a grammar school for African American students and was situated on Boykin Street. Initially functioning as an elementary school, it underwent a transformation into a middle school after desegregation. However, its operations concluded in 1983. Following its closure, the premises remained unused until 2020, when it underwent a revitalization and was repurposed into the Boykin Community Center.

Much like Boykin, Drake High School had a broader mission to serve students from various East Alabama counties. It commenced its inaugural academic year in 1958. Beyond academics, Drake High School provided a supportive environment for students to engage in sports, clubs, music, and theater, enabling them to freely express themselves without fearing the reactions of the White community. Within the school's walls, students found not only companionship and guidance but also a valuable education and, notably, an exploration of Black history.

At the schools, students had the chance to engage in various artistic pursuits, theater performances, and sports activities, all while honing skills that could prove beneficial in their future careers. The process of desegregation extended to Auburn's schools in 1970. Both Drake and Boykin ceased operations that same year, as they became integrated into the broader Auburn school systems.

Drake held significant importance in the lives of numerous African Americans. It served as a tightly-knit community of friends and guides, offering a space to discover their heritage and freely express themselves. For many, separating from Drake felt like losing a part of who they were. Even after leaving the school, they sought ways to retain their connection.



Drake graduate.

Image courtesy of Auburn University



Drake High School football players.

Image courtesy of Auburn University

When integration started, many people were unsure about it. Moving to Auburn High School meant not only leaving behind their close-knit community but also having fewer opportunities than before. Students weren't allowed to join student government, attend formal events, or play sports. They also didn't have the same teachers they were fond of from their old schools. However, these challenges didn't stop the students. Inspired by the larger Civil Rights Movement, they decided to stand up for their rights. They organized walk-outs from their classes and even from the school itself. While parents and teachers might not have agreed at first, the students saw this as a way to regain what they felt they had lost. Even after the students left its



halls, Drake remained a cherished part of their memory and their community. Students still gather for reunions and look back fondly on their time at Drake.

## Archives and Resources

### Omeka Links

Below are the links to the Auburn University Omeka pages. The first link is the general page that contains documents, photos, and other resources related to East Alabama History, African American history, and the history of Auburn. Below the University link is the link to the individual collections of documents that were also linked at the bottom of each corresponding page.

- [Auburn University Omeka](#)
- [Slavery](#)
- [Community and Culture](#)
- [Education](#)

### Oral Histories

[Drive Folder for Oral Histories](#)

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### Proxi

Proxi's map hosting service can be used with or without an account. Without an account, users can view the locations on the maps as well as the information and the documents that go with each location. By creating an account, a the site unlocks a feature that allows the user to track which locations they have visited.

### Archives

- Alabama Department of Archives and History
- Auburn University Omeka
- United States Library of Congress
- Auburn University
- The United States Census

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