

# Untold Stories of Black Montevallo

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A local anthology profiling the hidden histories and lost legacies of Black life in Montevallo.



Created by the Montevallo Legacy Project.

## ABOUT COVER PHOTO

The boy with his bicycle on the cover is Franklin Fluker, born in 1943, the only son of Onnie Dell Fluker and Rance Pittman Fluker. This poignant snapshot was probably taken sometime in the early fifties at the Main St home of O. C. and Mary Cunningham in the Jacksonville community. The photographer, a shadowed presence in the picture, may be Franklin's mother, the beloved educator Onnie Dell Fluker. Franklin's son, Rance Gaddis, calls her Mama Dell. Rance now lives in the Island St home that was once a two-room "little school" attended by scores of Black children in the 1930s. The Cunninghams converted the schoolhouse into a nine-room dwelling, and it became Mama Dell's home for the rest of her long life. When young Rance visited, he could always count on coconut cake and ice cream. He tells us that Mama Dell, though very short, played basketball at Alabama State.

Franklin Fluker served in Vietnam from 1964-67. He was injured in a jeep accident that, according to his son, caused him to have seizures for a while. He went on to lead a fairly normal life, with a "good and strong mind." However, he resented not receiving compensation for the accident and head injury and was troubled by the racism and discrimination he experienced when he returned to the States. For a brief time, while living in California, he was involved with the Black Panthers. He returned to Montevallo to live with his mother on Island St and to be buried, in 2006, in the Montevallo city cemetery.

The bicycle in the picture is a curiosity. A local man who knows something about these things wrote, "What an odd bike! No saddle, just a metal seat, coaster brakes." The coaster brakes would put the bike in the earlier part of the century. He recalls photos from the 20's with a similar frame geometry -- kid type bikes. "It could definitely be an older bike that was kept around and maintained."

The cover photograph is an untold story in itself.

*We thank James Salter for sharing the snapshot and Rance Gaddis for sharing memories of his father and his Mama Dell. The assessment of the bicycle comes from Arthur Herbert of Vallocycle Bike Share. Cover design by Justin Wayne Lutz.*

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## Preface

This little booklet brings together the first 16 instalments of the Untold Stories of Black Montevallo published monthly since October 2021 in the Chamber Chatter. From the start, we have sought to give voice and visibility to people of African descent in and around Montevallo. Some stories include dark moments in our town's history. Taken together, however, the stories display for all to see the dignity, pride, resourcefulness, kindness, and hospitality of the African American community.

Gathering these materials has been a labor of love, and we hope you enjoy revisiting or making first acquaintance with the Untold Stories. They are presented in order of publication.

Some of these stories are not exactly "untold," it must be said, at least not to everyone in our town. A citizen descended from Black families who have lived and worked here for generations confessed to feeling a little hurt reading some of them. "It's hard knowing that others will be surprised by recollections we are so familiar with. We, or rather I, forget that other people don't know 'this' Montevallo" -- the Montevallo of the Jim Crow era, for example. Some of the more troubling stories -- insults to the dignity of Rev. Albert Jones, for instance, when he went to register to vote -- were already well known within many African American circles. Perhaps such stories should remain untold? Perhaps unpleasant truths would prompt an ugly backlash? "But then I think, 'it is time.' Let the veil be lifted. We all love Montevallo, but let's all be a little more honest about who we were so that we can all be better together in the future."

Positive responses have come from White readers, as well. We loved the message sent by a young man, a college student, struggling with doubts about whether to remain in Alabama after graduating. The stories give him hope: "Thank you for revealing the positive image of this state by sharing the untold stories of those who have not yet had a voice."

Responses like these encourage us to hope that stories coming out of the Black community will help forge connections between communities that have not always known how to see, hear, recognize, and respect each other. Perhaps we can rewrite Tony Horwitz's bleak 1998 reading of the South: a region with "two pasts and two presents; one white, one black, separate and unreconcilable" (Confederates in the Attic). Stories alone cannot heal racial divisions but they can promote understandings that strengthen trust, shared pride, and mutual respect.

The idea for the Untold Stories originated several years ago in the Montevallo Historic Preservation Commission chaired by Joyce Jones. Late in 2020, the Commission decided to direct its preservationist energies toward creating an African American Heritage Trail. The vision at first was to recognize structures of historic significance starting with Ward Chapel AME Church and Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, both established in the 19th century, and Montevallo Middle School, site of the beloved Negro high school named after Joseph Prentice.

Two Commission members in particular were eager to do the research needed to properly commemorate these three sites. Anitka Stewart Sims, Montevallo born and bred, a member of Shiloh Baptist and a Black graduate of Montevallo HS, knew the importance of preserving the histories passed down by word of mouth in African American families, churches, and friendship circles. She was joined by Kathy King, a retired UM professor, a White woman with no family in the area but with training in literary history and a passion for archival research. Together, they laughingly assured one another, they made a strong team.

Though shaped by different sets of experience, they both understood that African American history has an alarming way of disappearing. Historically significant structures need preservation, of course. But at least as important is the need to preserve the stories of local Black experience in danger of being lost. Anitka was especially aware of the erosive effects of the passage of time on Black memories. Details go fuzzy and are forgotten; people pass on and another little piece of history dies with them. It seemed crucial to get still-living memories into writing both for their intrinsic value and for the way they provide building blocks for the fuller, more inclusive history of our town that remains to be written.

As a literary historian trained in uncovering hidden histories, Kathy was alert to the untold in many written accounts of Montevallo's history. Where were the people of color? Surely they are a part of our history? Some Black families in our area date back to the era of enslavement in the antebellum period. Surely their descendants have stories to share? As Kathy took oral histories she came to realize that Black history was out there but unknown to much of the community -- due, she suspected, to a combination of White indifference, Black self-protection, and mutual distrust.

The richness and complexity of Black life has been right in front of us all along, there but unseen. Along with the African American Heritage Trail recently approved by our mayor and city council, the Untold Stories seek to make our town's Black history visible.

Team Untold soon discovered that Black experience in Montevallo was more richly layered than they had first imagined. Even Anitka, a life-long resident, had not heard of the "little school" on Island Street where "colored" children were educated through the 1930s. (Kathlyn Lathion still recalls walking to school there from her home, a mile away, "across the creek.") Or that the surrounding neighborhood, known then as Jacksonville, was home to several generations of Black families. Or that many of these families were forcibly displaced in the 1940s and 1950s to make room for an all-White housing project and then an all-White elementary school. The full history of Jacksonville needs to be written, but two of the Untold Stories offer a first look at a largely erased chapter in our town's history.

As the Untold Stories began to come out monthly, people began to come forward with their stories. We were able to preserve family memories of several local sports heroes, the baseball players Raymond "Lefty" Haggins and Clifford "Duby" DuBose, and the Prentice Dragon's basketball star Lawrence "Butch" Lilly. Oral histories preserved in the University of Montevallo archives made it possible to preserve, in their own words, the community activism of Rev. Jones and the splendid courage of that phenomenal woman, Barbara Belisle, who endured much to become the first and, in time, the much revered Black teacher at a previously all-White high school.

Written sources have also been valuable. A little-visited cabinet in the microfilm collection at Samford University yielded issues of a Black-edited newspaper that, remarkably, was published for as many as seven years from the coal-mining community of Aldrich. The *Time-Piece*, an unusual title for a paper, sought to promote racial pride and independence. Showing the influence of famed educator Booker T. Washington (the paper's editor, born Benjamin, renamed himself Booker Lester), this weekly paper offers glimpses of an educationally progressive Black community in the Old Camp of Aldrich. Members established the town's first Baptist church, Epsibeth (1873), which doubled during the weekdays as a highly regarded grammar school. It included, for its 7th graders, instruction in "Negro History." We also get surprising glimpses of Joseph Prentice, including the information that he went into business with at least one of his sons, opening up a grocery store "for the accommodation of all" -- especially, we might speculate, Black mining families -- located near the Time-Piece office. Likely this store, along with Epsibeth Church, was the center of Black life in Aldrich.

So much is untold, we discovered! And storytelling has a long history of bringing people together. Thus the impetus for publishing a series of Untold Stories of Black Montevallo available in monthly instalments in the Chamber Chatter, a publication picked up at one time or another by nearly everyone in this town.

Read on and let us hear from you. Become part of a community of shared storytelling. Send your stories, or ideas for an Untold Story, to [Moaltrail@gmail.com](mailto:Moaltrail@gmail.com).

TEAM UNTOLD STORIES

Kathy King

Anitka Stewart Sims

1 February 2023

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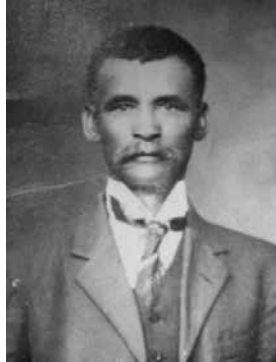
## MONTEVALLO HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION PRESENTS

*Untold Stories of Black Montevallo:*

### The Remarkable Life of Rev. Joseph Sidney Prentice

This untold story focuses on the preacher and early champion of education for African Americans for whom Montevallo's "Negro" high school was named in 1954. Prentice High School stood at the site of what became Montevallo Middle School in 1970, marking the end of segregated schools in the City of Montevallo.

Born into slavery in 1857 in Aldrich, Joseph Sidney Prentice belonged to the first generation of freedmen. During his long and remarkable life -- he lived to be 86 -- he was a miner, farmer, merchant, husband and father of eleven, property owner, registered voter, Mason, pastor of a host of Baptist churches in at least three counties, and leading figure in the Bibb County District Association for over four decades.



Prentice bravely navigated an uncommon life for a man of color during the Jim Crow era and his story should be known. We will begin by highlighting some things we have learned about his contributions in the local area as a religious leader.

First, a quick summary of his leadership role within the local and state Black Baptist Associations. From 1903 until his death in 1944, he was Moderator of the Bibb County Baptist Association. He was also President of the Sunday School District Convention, Member of the State Mission Board, Member of the Publishing Board, and pastor of numerous churches in Bibb, Shelby, and Chilton counties for nearly half a century. Among them were Ebenezer in Ashby, Rising Star in West Blocton, New Convert in Maplesville, St. Mark in Calera, Hopewell in Clanton, Epsibeth in Aldrich, and his home church, New Hope, in Randolph.

According to the 1870 Census, Joseph, aged 12, was a farm laborer who could not read or write. The 1880 Census records that he was an illiterate miner. At some point, clearly, he acquired literacy skills. By around thirty he began preaching, probably in Randolph, in Bibb County, where he had family ties. By 1891, he was pastor of record at New Hope Baptist Church in Randolph. The first New Hope Church building is believed to have burned down. The second New Hope Church building was erected on June 15, 1908 under Prentice's guidance. (New Hope Church history courtesy of Larrhea Sims.)

Randolph boasted four Black Baptist churches with more than 340 members altogether. New Hope had the largest congregation, with a reported membership of 184 the year Prentice was installed as pastor. By 1894, it had nearly 200 members. In 1893 Prentice was paid an annual salary of \$150 making him the best-paid pastor in the Association.



His powers as a dynamic speaker were soon recognized outside Randolph. "Rev. Prentice certainly is at home when placed in the sacred desk," wrote an attendee of the annual Association meeting in 1892; "his audience [was held] spell-bound." The following year, he preached a "masterly" sermon that "added greatly" to his reputation as a compelling speaker. "Too much cannot be said of Rev. Prentice as a preacher." (Bibb Co. Assn. Minutes, 1892, 1893, 1894.)

Prentice was also an acclaimed church singer. He was especially associated with an AME song entitled "No Compromise" that simultaneously declares defiance of sin and white supremacy. One of its verses proclaims, "Look, a mighty host advances / Now, see the proud oppressors flee; / See, our country breaks its fetters, / And sets her captives free." It ends: "Thine oppressors bend to thee." (Shelby Springs Assn. Minutes, 1899.)

He played important roles in two Montevallo churches. The annual statistics compiled by the Shelby Springs Baptist Association show that in 1894 and 1895 when Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church had only 12 to 13 members, Prentice was pastor of record. He was evidently helping the fledgling group get started. In 1899, the membership had grown to 42 and Shiloh was officially established and pastored by Rev. Isaac Witherspoon. In 1908, Prentice was installed as pastor of Epsibeth Baptist Church in his home town of Aldrich. According to current pastor, Rev. Lorenzo Mitchell, the original name of the church was Hepzibah, but the spelling went through multiple variations before settling into "Epsibeth."



Recent accounts of Prentice stress his advocacy of education, and rightly so. Like others in the first-freed generation, he believed fervently in the power of education to uplift "the race"; as a Baptist leader, he promoted the urgency of learning at every opportunity. A statement that he signed in 1893 speaks volumes: "Let us do all in our power to educate ourselves and our children"; by this "we shall be able to compete with any race of men intellectually, morally and religiously" (Bibb Co. Assn Minutes.)

Toward the end of Prentice's life, as he approached eighty, the *Shelby County Reporter* published a tribute to the man known to his friends as "Uncle Joe." It summarized the very remarkable record of his "service to his people" (Ap 15, 1937). Rev. Prentice, life-long resident of Aldrich, earned the respect of Montevallo's leading white citizenry and the love of the Black community he served, tirelessly, for five decades. It is time to consider restoring his name to the Middle School that stands at the site of the former Prentice High School.

Submitted by Kathy King & Anitka Stewart Sims  
Contact us at [Movaltrail@gmail.com](mailto:Movaltrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of any errors of fact or interpretation.

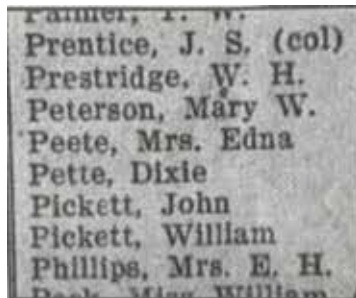
## UNTOLD STORIES OF BLACK MONTEVALLO:

### Rev. J. S. Prentice: "A Good and Useful Citizen"

A 1937 tribute to the Rev. Joseph Prentice in the *Shelby County Reporter* states, "He has proved himself a good and useful citizen" (April 15). This month we relay the untold story of this remarkable man's challenges to second-class status during the Jim Crow era.

Prentice was born enslaved, denied all rights of citizenship by the Dred Scott decision (handed down in 1857, the year of his birth). He was prohibited from learning to read and write by Alabama law. But Aldrich, Alabama was good soil for a man called to serve his people. The village organized the first Black Baptist church in this area, and Epsibeth Church was blessed with capable leaders strongly committed to education. A man of Prentice's talent and race pride would be attracted to the church and its educational mission. It offered leadership opportunities for a man of color and was a powerful vehicle for racial uplift.

Prentice also involved himself in public affairs. In 1924 the *Shelby County Reporter* (April 10) published a list of qualified voters in District 4, and he was the only person of color listed. This means he would have passed the literacy test, had the means to pay the poll tax, and owned more than the \$300 in property required to register. Family tradition has it that he owned considerable farmland along County Road 204, better known as Dairy Road. Deeds and tax records tell us that in 1907 he purchased slightly more than 11 acres of agricultural land (the "Henry Goode Place") now part of Reafaire Farm. At around this time he began buying up properties on Valley St near Ward Chapel AME Church (the first African American church in Montevallo). By 1924 he owned at least six lots on Valley St, in addition to his farmland.



List of registered voters from *Shelby County Reporter*, April 10, 1924.

He would also have needed the support of an influential white man, someone to vouch for him. Engineer and mine operator William F. Aldrich, a transplanted New Yorker, now enters the story. In 1874 he joined his older brother Truman to form the Montevallo Coal and Transportation Company. In 1880 he would take over management of the Aldrich coal mines.

William Aldrich, a three-term Republican congressman, had progressive ideas on matters of race. *The Colored American*, a "National Negro Newspaper," published an admiring profile in 1899, praising him for securing "for many of our race, honorable political recognition." Henry A. Emfinger recalls that he turned the mining camp into a planned "model" community with trees, rolling green hills and an attractive

informal layout. In Aldrich "white and black employees lived in perfect harmony" (*The Story of My Hometown*, 1969).

By the 1890s the community was recognized as a hive of educational activity for people of color. Boothe's *Cyclopedia of the Colored Baptists of Alabama* (1895) notes that D.L. Prentice of Aldrich (no known relation to Joseph) had done "very effective work in the school room, and the people of his town bear the marks of his pedagogic labors." His work was carried on by B.L. ("Booker") Lester, principal of the Aldrich Grammar School. He also edited the local weekly paper, the *Alabama Time-Piece*. The paper, which vigorously campaigned for William Aldrich in 1898, was probably funded by Aldrich. He may also have supplied the printing press and a space in which to house it the machinery and parts.



Mattie Josephine Kemp Prentice (1857-1934). Compliments of Justina Grant.

We believe that Prentice recognized William Aldrich as a benefactor. Joseph and William lived in the same small community, and were roughly the same age. Prentice was charismatic; a handsome, light-skinned man. He worked for a time in the mines, as did most of the residents for at least part of the year. His intelligence, energy, and work ethic would have impressed a man like Aldrich. The fact that Joseph and his wife Mattie named their first child Herbert Aldrich Prentice (b. 1879) seems an acknowledgement of William's support for the Prentice family and the community.

African Americans know all too well from family stories that exercise of full citizenship could come at a terrible cost. Churches were burnt, families chased off their farmland, unprotected Black men lynched. It is within this context that Prentice emerged as a good and useful citizen as well as a leader of his race. He benefited from white support, but his focus was always upon building a healthier, better educated, more spiritual, and more prosperous Black community.

Submitted by Kathy King & Anitka Stewart Sims

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## UNTOLD STORIES OF BLACK MONTEVALLO:

### THE PRENTICE FAMILY

In Old Camp of the coal-mining community of Aldrich, Joseph and Mattie Prentice raised a large family of at least 11 children. (A family account adds a twelfth child.) Some pursued work that took them far afield, from the coal fields of Pennsylvania to downtown Los Angeles. The two daughters married and settled in Topeka, Kansas and Little Rock, Arkansas. A few of the sons stayed closer to home to carry on their father's life of service to the local Black community. This instalment of Untold Stories highlights the positive impact on their communities of four of the Prentice sons.



The eldest, Herbert Prentice (1879-1961), went into business with his father in Aldrich. They advertised as "J. S. Prentice & Son, Dealers in General Groceries and Notions." The opening was announced March 11, 1898 in the *Alabama Time-Piece*, a black-edited newspaper published weekly in Aldrich. The grocery store opened on the Prentice lot at some distance from the centrally located company store. It offered special prices to Sabbath Schools and Secret Societies, and low prices to all: "There are but few people who know / That our prices are so low." A later notice in *Time-Piece* says, "Call and see them. They will treat you right" (May 5, 1898).

Joe Jr (1885-1960) was an acclaimed chef in this part of the world. In the 1910s and 20s he had a devoted following at the St George Hotel, which stood at the corner of Main and N. Boundary where TrustMark Bank is today. He was famous for his chicken pie and spoon bread. One traveling salesman called the spoon bread "the best he ever ate." His wife never forgot the delicious Southern fried chicken and gorgeous baked apples, the most beautiful "she had ever seen." He was a snappy dresser, serving his celebrated meals dressed in white trousers and bright silk shirts. According to a 1950 story in the *Montevallo Times*, traveling salesmen "tried to make the St. George a regular Saturday night stop because of the extraordinary food."

Joe, never married, lived in 1940 in a house he owned on Valley St near the Ward Chapel AME Church. In his youth he had worked in Aldrich mines (as did his father and most of his brothers at one time or another). He may have been active in the local chapter of the United Mine Workers. In

1907 a Joseph S. Prentice was named treasurer of Aldrich Local No. 367 (*Birmingham News*, 28 Dec). Joe Jr would have been about 22 at this time.



Frank Herman (1889-1971) was the only Prentice son who followed his father into the ministry. He seems to have inherited Joseph Sr's charisma, energy, and passion for education. He completed at least one year of college. After a stint as a Baptist minister in Cherokee, Kansas, he accepted in 1925 the pastorate of the Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles, where he served until 1958. The church history describes him as "a great pastor, leader and preacher, dearly loved by Mount Zion." Under his leadership membership grew to 1,800, and the church school and choirs were considered among the best in the city. "He was called the "sweetheart" of the Foreign Mission Board and "prince of preachers" of the National Baptist Convention.

Robert (1891-1965) inherited some of his father's leadership skills and shared his older brother's creativity in the kitchen. He graduated from Alabama A&M College in 1913 with a degree in printing. When offered work as an assistant degree in printing. When offered work as an assistant cook, he accepted and two years later was made College Chef. He served in that position for 33 years. He seems to have been a good-hearted soul, providing loans to "scores of young men" who fell into financial difficulties. Robert was a beloved figure at Alabama A&M. The campus bulletin described him as "truly one of the landmarks" of the university. "White-haired and matter-of-fact in point of view, Mr. Prentice is a realist. Says he, 'Shucks, you have to do something for a living; and taking everything into consideration, I don't think I've done so badly.'"

After Robert's death the dining facility at A&M was named Prentice Dining Hall. The name disappeared when the old dining hall was razed and replaced. Here in Montevallo the Prentice name disappeared when the "negro" Prentice High School, named for Joseph Sr, was folded into the integrated Montevallo HS. Perhaps these Untold Stories will help to bring the Prentice name and family back into the visibility they deserve.

*Submitted by Kathy King & Anitka Stewart Sims*

Contact us at [Moaltrail@gmail.com](mailto:Moaltrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome corrections of errors of fact or interpretation.

## Untold Stories of Black Montevallo:

### ALDRICH GRAMMAR SCHOOL IN 1898

Since this is Black History Month, it is exciting to be able to present new information about the Aldrich Grammar School. This announcement, which ran in the *Alabama Time-Piece* in 1898, provides a rare look at a local “negro” school’s course of study and fairly bursts with insight into the yearning for real education felt by Aldrich’s African American community at the turn of the century.

The curriculum might be said to embody aspirations summed up by this humorous “Resolved”: “That we, as a colored race of people, strive to have our hearts filled with the love of God, our heads filled with education and our pockets filled with money” (*Bibb Co. Baptist Assn. Minutes*, 1893).

It shows the influence of the educational aims promoted by Tuskegee’s Booker T. Washington, a man “who is nobody’s fool,” as contemporary poet Tyehimba Jess puts it, a “Race Ambassador who trained up teachers in troops.” Aldrich instruction was remarkably comprehensive. It included instruction in basic literacy skills (penmanship, reading and writing) and mathematics (including bookkeeping), as well as broad forms of knowledge: geography, anatomy and physiology, and American history -- culminating in an emphasis on “Negro history.” Racial pride was part of the curriculum.

The principal of the school, B. L. Lester -- born Benjamin, he renamed himself Booker -- was dedicated to its success. He worked through the Baptist Church and was active in the Bibb County and Shelby Springs Baptist Associations. He was lauded as one of several fine teachers who “are struggling to bring our people up, along this educational line.” The Bibb County Association hailed him as “a hero in our Sunday School Work” (*Minutes* 1894). In addition, he edited the weekly *Time-Piece*.



B. L. “Booker” Lester,  
principal of Aldrich Grammar  
School and editor of  
*Alabama Time-Piece*

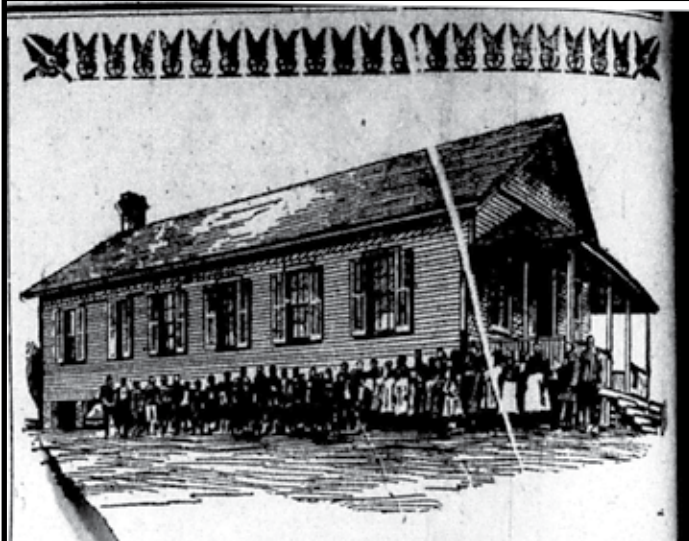
The unusually long school year, from mid-September to the end of May, underlines the strength of Lester’s and the community’s commitment to learning. State-funded “negro” schools, chronically and grievously underfunded, seldom went for more than three months, if that. Aldrich provided at least twice that. The exceptional nature of the education offered in Aldrich could not be clearer.

The building is probably the original Epsibeth Baptist, established in 1873, the first church in Aldrich. It exemplifies the desire of freed Blacks to create their own churches during the decades following the Civil War. Stories handed down in the Aldrich community confirm that on weekdays the church doubled as a school for children of color. Here as in so many ways the Black church provided opportunities for building

stronger, more resilient, more successful communities -- and education was a key part of that. Writes historian Wilson Fallin: “No issue concerned black Baptists more than education. Coming out of slavery, blacks craved formal education.”

Submitted by Kathy King & Anitka Stewart Sims

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**ANNOUNCEMENT**  
OF THE  
**ALDRICH : GRAMMAR : SCHOOL,**  
Aldrich, Ala.  
School Opens Sept. 12, 1898; Closes May 23, 29 & 30, 1899.

**COURSE OF STUDY.**

**I. PRIMARY DEPARTMENT.**

**FIRST GRADE**—First Reader, Counting, Spelling, Making Letters and Figures  
**SECOND GRADE**—Second Reader, Sanford’s Intermediate Arithmetic, Swinton’s Word Primer, Penmanship.  
**THIRD GRADE**—Third Reader, Sanford’s Intermediate Arithmetic (beginning at Fractions), Swinton’s Word Primer, Language Lessons, Monteith’s Primary Geography, Penmanship, House I Live In.

**II. GRAMMAR DEPARTMENT.**

**FOURTH GRADE**—Fourth Reader, Sanford’s Common School Arithmetic, Harvey’s Elementary Grammar, Swinton’s Word Book, Steel’s Physiology and Hygiene, Monteith’s Second Geography, Penmanship.  
**FIFTH GRADE**—Barnes’ Primary History of the United States (finish), Sanford’s Common School Arithmetic (beginning at Fractions), Monteith’s Geography, Harvey’s Elementary Grammar, Swinton’s Word-Book, Steel’s Physiology, Penmanship.  
**SIXTH GRADE**—Barnes’ Complete History of the United States, Monteith’s Complete Geography, White’s Complete Arithmetic, Harvey’s Complete Grammar, National Speller, Steel’s Complete Physiology and Hygiene.  
**SEVENTH GRADE**—Negro History, Bookkeeping (Rice’s Practical), and complete all the studies in the sixth grade.

**REMARKS.**  
Tuition for boarding students is 75 cents per month.  
Thorough work and obedience to teachers are sustained by Board of Directors: E. D. Taylor, president, G. T. Jones, secretary.

**B. L. LESTER, Principal.**

Aldrich Grammar School, from *Alabama Time-Piece*, 1898

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## MONTEVALLO HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION PRESENTS UNTOLD STORIES OF BLACK MONTEVALLO

### Baseball: The Best Game Ever

*Seems like we've been playing baseball for a mighty long time. At least as long as we've been free. Baseball's the best game there ever was.* -- Kadir Nelson

The best game ever: that's what baseball was for Montevallo's two inductees into the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City. Raymond "Lefty" Haggins and Clifford "Duby" DuBose, former Birmingham Black Barons, are not exactly an untold story. In 2014 the city named two ballfields at Stephens Park in their honor. But their almost forgotten achievements need to be retold. What they did on and off the field in the last century was a source of great pride to Black folks throughout the region. Their legacy could inspire a new generation. This sketch draws from published interviews as well as memories of two descendants, Faye Haggins and Cliff DuBose, Jr.

#### Raymond "Lefty" Haggins (1929-2020)

Born Sept 5, 1929 in Coleanor (Bibb County)

**Teams:** House of David, Memphis Red Sox, Birmingham Black Barons

**Career:** 1949-1958

**Honors:** Congressional Certificate of Recognition for contribution to Negro Leagues Baseball (1995), Letter of Commendation from President Clinton (1995), Key to the City of Birmingham.



Raymond "Lefty" Haggins

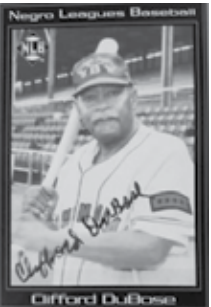
#### Clifford ("Pop," "Duby") DuBose (1937-2013)

Born July 16, 1937 in Montevallo

**Teams:** Memphis Red Sox, Birmingham Black Barons

**Career:** 1957-1959

**Honors:** Miles College Honors, Key to the City of Birmingham



Clifford "Duby" DuBose

A theme in the story of both men is belief in themselves. Haggins's daughter, Faye, tells us that when her father told people he would play professionally they would say something like, yeah, right, but he always believed he would make it and he did. When he graduated from high school, he walked across the stage to receive his diploma and when he reached the other side, he took off his cap and gown and gave them back, picked up his luggage and left for Spring Training.

Both came from close-knit mining families. From his father Haggins gained a lifelong love of reading, and from his mother an appreciation of the value of education, honesty and respect for all persons. A Montevallo native, DuBose grew up one of ten children. He spoke often of his mother's "kind-heart and caring ways." Some will still remember her as a lunchroom cook at Almont Elementary until the closing of the school in 1970. She also took in wash and ironing -- and was her son's biggest fan.

"Lefty" Haggins grew up in Bibb County but moved to Jefferson County to take advantage of the greater baseball

opportunities. His passion for the game emerged early. His daughter Faye remembers his mother saying she couldn't keep a mop or broom in the house because young Ray would cut off the wooden handles and get out in her flower bed and swing at the bees. To play ball he and other kids in the neighborhood used whatever materials were at hand -- tin cans, rocks, other homemade balls. In high school, he played sandlot ball on Saturdays. One time, after a game-changing hit, "the fans tossed money onto the field for him" as he rounded the bases. "What a thrill! He had enough cash to take his girlfriend to the movies that night." (Baseball in *Living Color*, #121)

Haggins would go on to barnstorm with the House of David (Minneapolis), playing all over the Midwest and Ontario. After a stint in the army, he went into spring training with the Black Barons but, due to a set lineup, went north to play with the Memphis Red Sox.

Asked in 1995 if he had enjoyed his career he answered, "I loved it. Loved it." (His wife Eunice: "He loves baseball. That's all he talked about, really.") The game gave him a chance to travel and to play in most of the major league parks. At one point he roomed with country singer-to-be Charlie Pride. The story is told that the owner of the Birmingham Barons traded him for ... a bus! Why? Because on the team bus he was always picking on his guitar and keeping the guys awake.

His finest memory? "Hitting a home run in Yankee Stadium," he chuckles. (You can listen to this interview online in the *Birmingham Black Barons Oral History Collection*, BPLONLINE).

"Duby" DuBose shared Haggins' passion for the game. He too had to be inventive. Games took place in the street in front of Almont Elementary, where he went to grade school. The first step was always "hunting down an old tennis ball and a worn-out walking stick." He went on to play ball at Prentice High School. He debuted professionally in 1958 at 3rd base with the Black Barons. Later that year he was traded to the Memphis Red Sox. He was given a tryout with the Brooklyn Dodgers but due to an injury returned home. He continued to play in the Industrial Leagues of Birmingham after his professional retirement. As for a game highlight, "I hit two game winning home runs for the Stockham Championship, a local semi-pro team." (Source: *NLBM eMuseum*.)

What did baseball mean to DuBose? Cliff Jr. says "it meant the world to him. He loved the game." His heroes were Hank Aaron and Jackie Robinson because they broke the color barrier. Seeing men of color in the majors inspired him. After retirement from professional baseball, he devoted much of his time to helping young baseball players follow their passion. He coached sandlot baseball in Montevallo for 15 years, and was proud, that last year, to throw out the first pitch of the season. If he could talk to kids today, he would tell them, "Work hard. Love your craft. Be true to the game."

*Submitted by Kathy King & Anita Stewart Sims. Contact us at [Moaltrail@gmail.com](mailto:Moaltrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of errors of fact or interpretation.*

## UNTOLD STORIES OF BLACK MONTEVALLO

presented by the Montevallo Historic Preservation Commission

### PRENTICE DRAGONS CROSS THE COLOR LINE

**1969.** It was a momentous year in Alabama high school basketball. The papers were calling the February tournaments the “most interesting ever.” Why? For the first time they included Negro schools. A star player on one of those breakthrough teams was Montevallo’s own Lawrence “Butch” Lilly, center for the Prentice High School Dragons. Black teams claimed victory in two of the four championship divisions that year. Prentice’s Dragons lost in the first round, but Lilly made the All-Tournament team and went on to distinguish himself as a 7-foot rebounding phenomenon for the Alabama State Hornets. (“If that ball left your hand I was at it.”) In 1973 he was drafted by the New York Knicks.

His professional career was cut short by a knee injury and to this day he regards the injury as a blessing. He was not prepared to handle the fame and temptations of the NBA life. He advises kids who want to play basketball at the college and professional level “not to leave home without God. Work hard and be committed to playing basketball.” Commitment to the game lives on in the family. Lawrence and his wife Catherine (Abston), his college sweetheart, have a granddaughter, Lauryn, who plays guard for the University of West Alabama Tigers Women’s Basketball Team.

“Butch” Lilly, who still resides in Montevallo, told us recently that playing basketball “was a way to establish himself.” He grew up in Brierfield, went to Seven Pines Elementary, and then attended Prentice, soon to be merged with the all-white Montevallo High School just down the road. He didn’t start playing until the tenth grade. “I didn’t like basketball,” he recalls, “but after I learned the basics it went on from there. I used the gift of height that was given to me.”



**LAWRENCE “BUTCH” LILLY**

He was encouraged to believe in himself as a player by his B-Team coach at Prentice, Mr. Tommie Frederick, and his high school coach, Mr. Arthur Greenlee. Some of his best memories turn on his rivalry with James Powell (nickname “Bull”) from Alabaster during his high school years. Games between their schools were known as Butch vs. Bull.



**CENTER FOR THE ASU HORNETS**

Interviewed by Bill Plott in 1999, he remembered what it was like to be part of the first all-black team to play in the newly integrated state tournament in Memorial Coliseum in Tuscaloosa. “I’m sure we were nervous and playing in the coliseum was awesome. We had been playing in much smaller places, nothing like that.” It may have added to the stress that his team was crossing a long guarded color line. Herman (Bubba) Scott of the Alabama High School Athletic Assn. predicted that the inclusion of Black athletes would “revolutionize” basketball in the state. “The game is going to be faster and better than ever.” White teams will have to play “a faster, run and shoot type of game . . . because they know they’ll have to play that way against some of the other teams.” For spectators the game will be “more exciting and appealing . . . than ever before.”

Civil rights legislation passed in the 1960s brought vastly important social changes to our country. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 sought to end segregation in the South and prohibit discrimination everywhere in housing, voting, and other areas. There was resistance of course, and it continues. But a wonderful and immediately visible change occurred in gyms and coliseums across the state where young men like Montevallo’s “Butch” Lilly ushered in a new era of basketball. It was a newly thrilling game that brought onto the court young people of all colors and generated shared enthusiasm in the stands.

We are grateful to Lawrence and Catherine Lilly for providing photos and memories. We draw also from “A Prediction is Made. . .,” *Montgomery Advertiser*, Mar 16, 1969 and Bill Plott’s interview with Mr Lilly in “A Piece of History,” *Birmingham News*, Feb 28, 1999.

Submitted by Kathy King & Anitka Stewart Sims. Contact us at [Movaltrail@gmail.com](mailto:Movaltrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of fact or interpretation.

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## UNTOLD STORIES OF BLACK MONTEVALLO

*presented by the Montevallo Historic Preservation Commission*

### THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF SHOAL CREEK BAPTIST

A neglected graveyard in a little-visited corner of Shoal Creek Park on Highway 119 may turn out to be the first stop on Montevallo's African American Heritage Trail. The rough-hewn stones, some barely visible in the underbrush, mark burial sites of members of the oldest Baptist church in Shelby County. The church was established in 1817. A log cabin meeting house stood on the site from 1820. It may surprise some to learn that the Baptist Church of Shoal Creek welcomed people of color into its fellowship from the start.

The Church minutes, covering the years 1820 to 1857, have been transcribed in full by local historian Marty Everse. They provide names and, in some cases, glimpses of the lives of early African American members of the church. By convention enslaved persons were identified by first name followed by their owner's full name. Thus we find Hannah, a slave of William Moore; Polly, a black woman belonging to David Meredith; Fill, a servant of Joseph D. Lee. The word servant is often used in place of slave. Several "servants" belonged to the church clerk, Edmund King, the wealthy planter and financier whose slave-built house, King House, dating from 1823, still stands on the UM campus. It was added to the National Historic Register in 1972 with no mention of its historic significance as a site of slave labor.

The minutes hint at untold stories of two men owned by King. Brothers Nelson and Jacob were probably among the fifteen enslaved persons inherited as property when King's father died in 1817. They seemed to have had unusual speaking powers and both sought an active role in the Sunday worship. In 1822 they gained authorization to "exercise their gift" -- that is, to preach -- the second Sunday of each month. Remarkably, white members of the church were instructed "to attend and hear" so as "to approve or disapprove of their gifts."

Away from the church, probably in the slave quarters at King House, Nelson and Jacob had a falling out serious enough to get themselves excommunicated. They managed, doubtless with assistance from their influential owner, to get restored to fellowship. Brother Jacob subsequently had his preaching role reaffirmed: he was approved as a public speaker "so far as heard by the Church." Brother Nelson, on the other hand, seemed destined for perpetual difficulties. In 1827, he was charged with "disorderly conduct" and subjected to a "trial" by the white leadership. They found him guilty of improper relations ("incontinency and licentious conduct") with "King's Suckey." He was again excommunicated and, despite later efforts to be reinstated, continued to be excluded. Suckey was owned by King for decades to come. As property she could and was deeded from one owner to another. A surviving quitclaim deed tells

us that "King's Suckey" was about eighteen at the time of the troubles. Hannah, Polly, Fill, Jacob, Nelson, Suckey: these enslaved persons had passions, conflicts, regrets, ambitions, desires -- complex emotional lives. Their very existence was nearly lost to history.

Scholars of the early Baptist Church in Alabama would not be surprised by these findings. Historians have long known that, especially in the 1820s, white Baptists took seriously the immortality of the souls of people of color and some even questioned the morality of slavery. Blacks and whites often worshiped together. But ambivalence regarding slave ownership (think about the oft-used substitution of servant for slave in the Church minutes) soon hardened into pro-slavery positions. Why? Cotton production became increasingly profitable and profits depended on slave labor. Historian Wilson Fallin writes: "As Alabama Baptists became prosperous cotton farmers and increased their slaves, they began to defend slavery and project it as a positive good" (Uplifting the People, 10).



*The first meeting house of Shoal Creek Baptist Church would have resembled the Claybank Church near Ozark in Dale County, Alabama.*

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Records of the Shoal Creek Baptist Church make visible African American presence during our town's pioneer era. They cannot restore lost voices -- for that we must look to novelists and poets -- but they do invite contemplation of the individuality of persons once lumped together as nameless "slaves." Some are likely buried somewhere in the Shoal Creek graveyard. It is a site that demands recognition for what it is: sacred ground in the African American Heritage Trail.

We are grateful to Marty Everse for sharing his transcription of the Church minutes and for supplying us with the photograph of the Claybank log cabin church.

Submitted by Kathy King & Anitka Stewart Sims. Contact us at [Moaltrail@gmail.com](mailto:Moaltrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of fact or interpretation.

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# UNTOLD STORIES OF BLACK MONTEVALLO

presented by the Montevallo Historic Preservation Commission

## BARBARA BELISLE'S LONG WALK TO THE SCHOOLHOUSE DOOR

In Sept 1967, the Montevallo HS newspaper, the *Spotlight*, announced that Barbara Belisle, a graduate of Prentice HS, had joined the teaching staff as a social studies instructor. There was nothing to suggest the momentous nature of this hire: Belisle had agreed to become the first Black person to teach in an all-white school in Shelby County. Nor did the paper hint at the truth concealed by the principal's description of the beginning of the school year as "the smoothest" he had known.

Belisle had a different story to tell, and she wanted that story to be known. She provided a candid and detailed account of her first days at Montevallo HS in *A Long Time Learning: A Story of Change in a Small Town*, a memoir she self-published in 2007.

The story begins in spring of 1967 when, as Belisle humorously puts it, "Forced integration had come to the heart of Dixie!" The school board recruited her to be a kind of test case in a county where "they didn't want them to integrate, they didn't want to integrate, nobody wanted to integrate." Everybody expected trouble. She had graduated just two years earlier from Miles College, where, perhaps unbeknownst to the school board, she had taken part in sit-ins and demonstrations in Birmingham. But she was pretty, poised, mild-mannered, and polite, and, as she dryly notes, she impressed a member of the board "with my ability to speak well and converse intelligently." (She can't resist adding: "And this from someone who had made several grammatical errors in the few minutes I had been there.")

Driving to school in the fall for teachers' meetings she was already feeling the stress. She felt nauseous, her hands shook, her head ached. She was struck by the difference between this beautiful brick school, with wide halls and tall white columns, and the wooden school she had attended with its creosote-treated floor and wood-burning stoves.

She enjoyed the opportunity to address her new colleagues. "Give me an audience, and I come alive." She felt proud to be "representing all black people, and I wanted these people to know that we're not dumb, stupid, lazy, and valueless as I knew many whites thought." Gazing out at her audience she could see sincere good-will in the eyes of some and hatred in a few. But the rest of the day went well, except for the discouraging news that two or three faculty members had requested transfers or planned to resign to escape having to work with a Black person.

But nothing prepared her for the first morning of classes. She arrived to find a milling crowd massed outside the school. There were students, grown-ups, some Klansmen, photographers, local and county police, and a couple of state troopers with lights flashing. "White people everywhere!" And she was alone.

The crowd parted just enough to create a narrow aisle leading up to the schoolhouse door. Her walk to the door was harrowing:



### A PHENOMENAL WOMAN IN HER CLASSROOM

Barbara Belisle from the 1967-68 Montevallo HS yearbook

*As I walked proudly and defiantly toward the door, I could smell a nauseating combination of odors -- bad breath, tobacco, cologne, body odor, and miscellaneous other scents. I remember hearing the rasping sound of emphysema and thinking, 'That person ought to be in bed.' Feeling a little queasy, I thought if they wanted me dead, the aisle needed to be just a little bit longer.*

*While my knees debated whether to buckle outside or inside, I put on a cheerful smile and said "Good morning" several times. Immediately, I heard several cheerful "Good mornings" in response. I couldn't believe it! "Maybe it won't be too bad," I said to myself. Then, just as I opened the door, I heard, "Don't be saying 'Good morning' to no gawd damn nigger, stupid." A few people laughed. . . . Why I didn't just turn around and run back to my car and to the safety of my home and family, I don't know."*

Barbara Belisle did not turn and run as many of us would. She stuck it out and the world around her changed. She, along with her students and their families, learned over the years to work together to make racial integration work.

Her death in February 2021, aged 84, brought forth a torrent of tributes. People remembered a woman beloved by her students, her colleagues, and her community; a beautiful, elegant, gracious woman; a life-long educator who had earned countless honors and awards. She was Montevallo's incarnation of Maya Angelou's "phenomenal woman." She could say, with the poet, "I don't shout or jump about / Or have to talk real loud. / When you see me passing, / It ought to make you proud."

This phenomenal woman was also a Civil Rights trailblazer, a freedom fighter on education's frontline. When our town needed a teacher of heroic courage to walk that long walk by herself, Barbara Belisle rose to the occasion. Public education in Shelby County would never be the same.

Sources: We relied on Belisle's memoir, *A Long Time of Learning*, supplemented by an oral history interview dated April 30, 2014. Both are preserved in UM's Milner Archives and Special Collections. Thanks to Carey Heatherly, Archivist, for his assistance.

Submitted by Kathy King & Anitka Stewart Sims  
Contact us at [Movaltrail@gmail.com](mailto:Movaltrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of any errors of fact or interpretation.

# Untold Stories

OF BLACK MONTEVALLO

presented by the Montevallo Historic Preservation Commission



## IT JUST WASN'T RIGHT : REV. ALBERT L. JONES IN HIS OWN WORDS

A little told story of civil rights activism in Montevallo can be pieced together from an oral history interview of Rev. Albert L. Jones (1938-2022) recorded in 2019. His own words reveal a man energized by love of God's word and commitment to doing the right thing. "I knew what we were going through. It just wasn't right." "I just thought that all peoples ought to be treated right." Pride, dignity, decency, and a powerful sense of justice propelled him to the front of the civil rights struggle in our town in the 1960s and 1970s.

He was one of the co-founders of the local Suburban League, a "step down," as he put it, from the better-known National Urban League. Their mission was specific: to work for equal employment opportunities in our area. Other members included Leon Harris (Sr), E. E. Vassar, George Craig, and Rodger Smitherman. Three of the leaders -- Vassar, Craig, and Jones -- were preachers. Rodger Smitherman, the only member still living, is now a state senator.

An early effort was to move beyond the menial jobs assigned to African Americans in grocery stores. "Black folks wasn't doing nothing but cleaning up, sweeping up, mopping, stacking groceries. Why can't they be on the cash register?" The threat of a boycott was enough to convince one grocery store owner to let Black citizens work the registers. Amazing. Black folks calculating sums, handling money, and working directly with customers of all races. A small change, perhaps, but with huge implications.

A campaign addressing discrimination in the school system produced an episode of racial intimidation not uncommon in the Jim Crow South: a front-yard cross-burning.

The trouble began when Jones and others went to the principal to protest unequal treatment at Montevallo HS. A federal decree had ended segregation but "there wasn't a black principal nowhere. There wasn't a black assistant principal nowhere. They took all the coaches, all of them white. They took all the cheerleaders, they had to be white. The majorettes were white." Black students complained: "That's not right." Jones agreed. But it was the plight of an aggrieved lunchroom lady that spurred confrontation with the principal. For years she had been lunchroom supervisor at the "Negro" Prentice HS. Now she was stuck with wiping up dirty dishes. "Integration" turned a supervisor into a dish washer. That wasn't right either.

*And you know at this time I didn't really care what my life been no more, I mean, things that wasn't right, I mean you got to really feel it, the things that was going on, the injustice was going on. So we go over . . . and said, look here, black folk been pushed into the corner, and now you all gonna make this girl wash dishes.*

The principal declined to take action, so the group walked out. "That night they burnt a cross in my yard. Right there in my yard, right there." His wife and children were terrified. "They see that big ole cross a-burning out there, and all the



**REV. ALBERT JONES**

barking, all the dogs barking and everything." Jones got out his gun.

He was told the cross was the work of the local police. His mother-in-law up the street, outside at 2 AM to use the outhouse, recalled seeing "a police car coming down here, and they had lights on in the inside and they was laughing, coming on down driving slow and laughing." Jones took up the matter with the mayor and police chief, and that brought an end to cross burnings. Some police came and cleaned up the charred remains and promised it would not happen again. It didn't.

The League was effective in other ways. A biracial grievance committee was formed at the HS to address conflicts. The school agreed to include Black students in the cheerleading and majorette squads and came up with a plan to introduce Black students into the student government. It took work, a lot of work, but integration started to penetrate more deeply into the experience of students and faculty at Montevallo HS.

Eventually the practice of hiring Blacks to work grocery cash registers spread throughout the county. Bank tellers were next. The League helped place a man who became our first Black mail carrier, according to Leon Harris Jr. Its leaders worked with Mayor Ralph Sears to get roads paved in our African American communities and to name streets with "mostly black names," especially "some of the forefounders."

The work of the Suburban League went on for years. It was a struggle, but a nonviolent and necessary one inspired by Martin Luther King:

*There wasn't nobody really stepping in front trying to get change. There's got to be somebody up front trying to get it changed if you're going to get it changed. So we knew a lot of things wasn't right, you know . . . So we wanted to do it peaceful and keep God in front . . . because with God with us we could get things done.*

Rev Jones answered the call to step in front for change. "I just wanted things to be fair, now, for my children, my children's children."

**Sources:** We relied on an oral history interview recorded in Feb. and Dec. 2019 at Rev. Jones's home and preserved in UM's Milner Archives and Special Collections. Thanks are due to Carey Heatherly, Archivist, for his assistance.

*Submitted by Kathy King & Anitka Stewart Sims. Contact us at [Moaltrail@gmail.com](mailto:Moaltrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of any errors of fact or interpretation.*

# Untold Stories

## OF BLACK MONTEVALLO

presented by the Montevallo Historic Preservation Commission



“Get me in a voting booth”: Tales of Jim Crow Montevallo

At the height of the Jim Crow era, in the 40s, 50s, and early 60s, African Americans who could afford to travel routinely consulted the Green Book, a travel guide offering “Assured Protection for the Negro Traveler.” It told folks where they would be welcome and where, by implication, they might encounter hostility and even violence. Entries for friendly establishments in Alabama were scant. Travelers could expect “Food & Rest” in Birmingham, churches of all denominations in Mobile, and a safe service station in Huntsville. But Montevallo? Not a single establishment made the Green Book listing.

Stories of hardships in Montevallo during the Jim Crow days still circulate in the Black community. “It was a life of segregation of course,” recalled Barbara Belisle, and “there were signs all over town ‘colored’ ‘whites only,’ things like that.” Some remember having to let white people get in front of them in a line, no matter how long they had been standing there. Of having to stand on the bus even when traveling to Birmingham to have a painful leg injury treated. Of collecting orders at the back door of a restaurant or the side window of the Dari-Dee. Of having to wait for school busses that may or may not show up to get to them to the ill-equipped negro elementary school in Almont.

But you can also hear stories about defeating the absurdities of Jim Crow. At the Strand movie theater Blacks had to enter through a separate door and make their way upstairs to the colored balcony. (When he came to town in 1965 enroute to a voting rights march in Selma, Andrew Young, future Atlanta mayor and Ambassador to the UN, sat with his wife in the balcony.) The Strand “had no restroom for ‘colored’,” so “we had to go outside in back of the theater behind a tree -- night or day,” recalled Belisle. Her younger cousin Vanessa Cottingham laughingly remembers the bathroom situation. “Until I was a teenager I didn’t even know that the theater had a bathroom or a lobby in the bottom section.” But instead of using the tree out back, “we could at least run up to City Hall and go to the bathroom there.”

Jim Crow craziness may have kept them from buying treats in the lobby and availing themselves of the indoor plumbing but Black kids would not be robbed of their pleasures. They brought their own candy and popcorn, made their way to the tree out back or to City Hall to relieve themselves, and doubtless had good times in the balcony, where, it was said, they enjoyed a better view than the white patrons downstairs.

Still, the Jim Crow system was hurtful and deeply unjust. Local civil rights activists in the 60s such as Rev. Albert Jones, Rev. Earnest E. Vassar, and Leon Harris Sr. began to insist that the white establishment live up to the nation’s promise of justice and equal rights for all. Voting rights became a huge issue. News of the cross-burning in Rev. Jones’s front yard, thought to be the work of the police, provoked an indignant response from Leon Harris: “Police supposed to be protecting all the citizen,” Jones quotes him

as saying; “now they’re going to do a thing like this, put a burning cross in a citizen yard. Get me in a voting booth.”

Rev. Vassar managed to get himself registered to vote by 1962. Barbara Belisle helped her father, William Mayweather, prepare for the notoriously unfair “literacy test” that blocked much of the Black vote. “I remember helping him memorize portions of the Constitution so he could recite them to a person who would let him register to vote -- or not. I can’t remember how many times he tried before they let him register.” But he kept going back. Aided by his daughter and his own resolve, Mr. Mayweather secured the right to enter a voting booth.



Strand Theater in the early 60s. The recessed door on the right led to the colored balcony.

In his oral history Rev. Jones details his experience of registering to vote at the courthouse in Columbiana when he returned from military service in the mid-60s. For starters, he had to provide names of white people who could vouch for him. Next came payment of the poll tax. He produced a twenty dollar bill, more than enough to cover the \$2.50 tax, but was told he would have to go to a store for change. To a chorus of laughter, as he headed for the door, one of the white men “started spraying behind me.” (Lysol Disinfectant Spray was first marketed in 1962). He returned with the correct change. Next, the infamous literacy test. He was ready and eager to begin: “Yes, sir. I know how to read and write.” But first he would have to go back to the store to buy a pen, even though, as he pointed out, there’s a “stack of pens in the little ole cup there.” “These white folks pens.” So off he goes, and again the spraying behind him. More petty harassment ensued but he was finally able to take and pass the test. The Rev. Jones, now a registered voter, was subjected one last time to the spray treatment. “Every time I leave out, he spray behind me. It was kinda . . . really sickening.”

Montevallo was not listed as a safe place for the “Negro Traveler” in the *Green Book*. Humiliations and indignities were a feature of daily life in our town in the Jim Crow days, but the Black community stayed strong. The courage, resolve, and resourcefulness of African Americans of those days is a legacy we can all celebrate today.

**Sources:** We relied on oral history interviews preserved in UM’s Milner Archives and Special Collections and a StoryCorps interview available online via PBS.

*Submitted by Kathy King & Anitka Stewart Sims. Contact us at [MoValTrail@gmail.com](mailto:MoValTrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of any errors of fact or interpretation.*



# Untold Stories

## OF BLACK MONTEVALLO



*Everybody's stories matter. It's not just a matter of nostalgia, it powers us into the present and the future. -- Barack Obama*

### THE "LITTLE SCHOOL" ON ISLAND STREET

In towns all over the South, the schools in Black communities were a source of pride that inspired loyalty. -- Annette Gordon-Reed, *On Juneteenth*

A small wooden school house for negro children once stood at the corner of Island and Bloch Streets in a Black community then known as Jacksonville. This school, nearly forgotten today, taught some of Montevallo's most admired female teachers, among them Barbara Belisle, the first African American to teach at Montevallo HS, and Kathlyn Lathion, a retired special ed teacher, recently honored as a "Hometown Hero." The "little school," as it was affectionately known, set these little girls on a path where they would become outstanding lifelong educators.

Equally deserving of admiration is Onnie Dell Fluker, a "little school" student who would go on to teach and to write a history of early Black education in Shelby County. Her nephew, James Salter, remembers his Aunt Dell as "a very soft-spoken person and teacher who always found an opportunity to teach a lesson . . . whether it was at home, the school house, or the church house. It is why her hundreds of students loved her."



*Onnie Dell Fluker, a lifelong teacher, 1918-2015*

This soft-spoken teacher exemplifies the fierce pride women of her generation took in their profession. After she retired in 1980, she wrote "Schools for Blacks in Shelby County," most likely because she feared this history might be forgotten. Remarkably, her account has been preserved in a folder of loose papers in the archives in Columbiana, two-and-a-half typewritten pages signed "Onnie Dell Fluker, a retired teacher." She saw to it that the story of Black schools did not go untold.

"Before and during the early twenties," she writes, "there were 'colored' schools dotted all over Shelby County. Most were held in churches. A few had school houses." Montevallo was one of the few. As early as 1924, our town was fortunate to have a two-room school house furnished with potbelly heaters and two salaried teachers paid by the county. (They made \$40-\$45 a month.) The facility was primitive, however. "None of the early schools had running water or indoor plumbing. There were no electric lights.

The building was in such bad shape that in 1932 the state board of education marked it for "immediate abandonment."

It would continue in use through 1939, however, when an elementary school in Almont opened. Until then children from all over Montevallo, even those "across the creek," walked to the school in Jacksonville. Kathlyn Lathion remembers vividly the horrible day in April 1939 when a tornado ripped through town, destroying Shiloh Missionary Baptist on Selma Road. There were so many powerlines down she had to be carried home on the back of her cousin Willie Bell. She still recalls the fear of being carried over the wooden bridge above Shoal Creek.



*A typical two-room wooden school house like the one on Island Street.*

After 1939, the little wooden school house fell into disuse. Long-time resident Patricia Walker, known to many today as "Miss Trish," remembers how as a curious child she played in the abandoned school house. She describes it as "fallen in," a "shanty," a tiny space with a stage at one end, benches (no desks), and a blackboard on the wall.

In the late 40s, Fluker's parents, O. C. and Mary Eliza Cunningham, were forced to sell their house on Main Street to make way for the FHA housing that opened in 1952. They bought the nearby school house property, added onto and fixed up the building, and turned it into the family dwelling. It seems fitting that for the rest of her life Fluker would make her home in the renovated school house.

The opening of the all-white Montevallo Elementary School across the street in 1964 created provocative ironies. She later reflected on her complicated feelings about integration:

*Several years ago, we purchased the 'Little School House' and remodeled it into a dwelling house, where we now live. In front, on a hill, sits a new formerly all-white school. I was often teased about teaching there where I could walk to school. When integration came to the county, I was invited by the Principal and the Supt. to teach there. I was also approached by several business people who suggested that I should be the one to "Cross over" there.*

But she would not be the one to "cross over": "I feel that I belong with my people. I understand them and their problems" ("Mini Revelations: A Short Autobiography").

In 2011, aged 93, Onnie Dell Fluker was presented the key to the City of Montevallo, and rightly so. This soft-spoken woman, a lifelong teacher, kept alive her pride in her people and her dedication to the history of their schooling.

*Photos courtesy of James Salter.*

*Submitted by Kathy King & Anita Stewart Sims. Contact us at [MoValtrail@gmail.com](mailto:MoValtrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of any errors of fact or interpretation.*

# Untold Stories

OF BLACK MONTEVALLO



*Everybody's stories matter. It's not just a matter of nostalgia, it powers us into the present and the future. -- Barack Obama*

## SUNDAY AFTERNOON IN JACKSONVILLE

Only a few people today remember the once vibrant Black community of Jacksonville located on and just off Main Street where Jack's and the former Eclipse are now located. A few houses from the Jacksonville era survive on Island Street. Starting in 1952, many families were displaced by eminent domain to make way for FHA apartments and later Montevallo Elementary School.

The joy of growing up among kinfolk in Jacksonville is highlighted by a descendent of preacher Jesse Brazier. (He helped establish A.M.E Ward Chapel Church in 1872.) "All of Grandpa Jesse's children grew up in Jacksonville. Their children married and built their homes and reared their children there. You don't know the fun and joy of growing up with all your cousins, with your aunts having a hand in loving you and punishing you too. Aunt Mary sitting on her back porch seeing everything we kids did and reporting to our mothers if we did wrong. We had birthday parties with lemonade and ginger snaps. The children would always be in our yard." James Salter recalls playing hide-and-seek with the Jones children, Herman Jay, Marla and LuAnn. "We would run from one yard to the other trying to tag each other. Those were the days!!!"

As a way of honoring this almost forgotten black enclave, we present Jacksonville in pictures highlighting the people, homes, and a Sunday afternoon gathering in the back yards of the Cunningham and McGinnis families. The tables, according to Mrs. Patricia Walker, would have been loaded with soul food: Fried chicken and dressing, collard greens, black eye peas, macaroni and cheese, potato salad, cornbread, cake, Kool Aid and Lemonade.



Franklin Fluker beside the Cunningham house on Main Street



O.C. Cunningham and his dog Danny



Sunday afternoon in Jacksonville



Jacksonville is one of countless communities of color impacted by eminent domain. "Cities often target these communities for condemnations, as government officials know the residents there rarely have the

political clout or the financial means to fight back." See the Institute for Justice: <https://ij.org/issues/private-property/eminent-domain/alabama-eminent-domain-laws/>.



*Photos courtesy of James Salter. Submitted by Kathy King & Anitka Stewart Sims. Contact us at [Movaltrail@gmail.com](mailto:Movaltrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of any errors of fact or interpretation.*

# Untold Stories

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### Keeping Times with the Times: The Aldrich Time-Piece

From 1895 to 1902, in the coal mining town of Aldrich, a Black-edited newspaper was published weekly. The *Aldrich Time-Piece* is an untold story of African American initiative and self-expression in the post-Reconstruction period. Remarkably, it put Black experience at the center of an enterprise that boldly proclaimed its desire to be read "in every home in Alabama."



The *Time-Piece* was published every Friday by the Aldrich Publishing Co. A number of issues from 1898 have survived on microfilm. The paper, which declared itself to be the official organ of the Shelby county GOP, was probably subsidized by William F. Aldrich, the coal-mine operator who gave his name to the town and who was three times elected to Congress from the 4th District. The *Time-Piece* campaigned hard for Aldrich, a Republican, during election season. As the editor wrote, "The negro must vote with the party which set him free, when other parties were beating the very life out of him" (14 Oct).

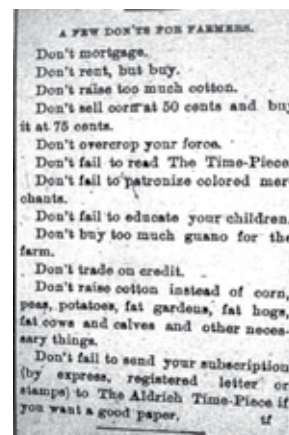
A key figure in the *Time-Piece* story is its editor, B. L. "Booker" Lester. An energetic young man with a passion for education, Lester served also as principal of Aldrich Grammar School and may have been responsible for its ambitious progressive curriculum. The Bibb County Baptist Association hailed him as one of several fine teachers "struggling to bring our people up, along this educational line" and a "hero in our Sunday School work."



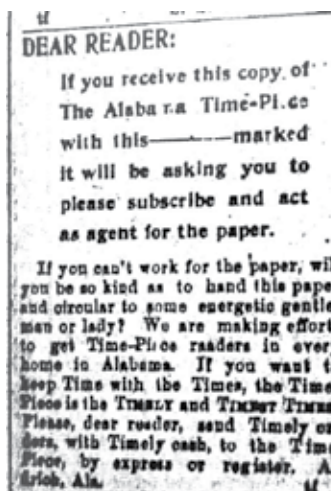
Booker Lester, editor of *Time-Piece* and educational activist

To get a taste of the style of Lester's editorship, in particular his humorous approach to the theme of Black betterment, consider this excerpt from "A Few Don'ts for Farmers."

This wry advice to local farmers illustrates his emphasis on economic self-sufficiency and education. "Don't fail to patronise colored merchants," he urges; "Don't fail to educate your children." And, finally, "don't fail to subscribe to the *Time-Piece*!"



Every surviving issue of *Time-Piece* highlights Black business enterprises in the area. A large ad that ran every week promotes a "Negro Store" in nearby Randolph. The language pleads its own cause of racial independence: "We are not in opposition to white's stores," it begins reassuringly, "but we Negroes want to DO SOMETHING, accomplish SOMETHING and TURN UP SOMETHING" by selling our own goods to our own people. A section entitled Local and Personal (May 5) leads with an account of the general merchandise store recently opened in Aldrich by Rev. Prentice & Son. (Prentice is the same esteemed religious leader for whom the all-Negro Montevallo HS was later named.) The store offered Black mining families an alternative to the more expensive company store, and it promised that patrons would be treated with respect. "Call and see them. They will treat you right."



To promote his own enterprise, Lester uses a teasing, whimsical language that amuses while presenting a non-threatening face to his white supporters. He urges his readers to act as subscription agents. The *Time-Piece* should be read "in every home in Alabama." He indulges in a little lively word play: "If you want to keep Times with the Times, the *Time-Piece* is the TIMELY and TIMIEST TIMES. Please, dear reader, send Timely orders, with Timely cash, to the *Time Piece*."

It is a sign of the vitality of the Black coal mining community at Aldrich that for nearly seven years it nourished the educational and economic activism of Booker Lester and the *Time-Piece*. The story continues next month.

Photos from microfilm consulted in Samford University Special Collections. Submitted by Kathy King & Anita Stewart Sims. Contact us at [Movaltrail@gmail.com](mailto:Movaltrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of any errors of fact or interpretation.



# Untold Stories

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### IN PRAISE OF THE POCKET WATCH: ALDRICH'S TIME-PIECE (PART 2)

Last month we began the story of a Black-edited paper published every Friday beginning in 1895 in the nearby coal-mining community of Aldrich. *Alabama Time-Piece* was one of nearly 100 African American newspapers circulating at the turn of the century but the only one originating in our area. It brings into view a vibrant community in Aldrich's Old Camp, a Black settlement within a racially mixed village not two miles from downtown Montevallo.

The *Time-Piece's* masthead is dominated by the image of a pocket watch with the motto "One Size" designed specifically for the paper. It reflects a key message its editor, B. L. "Booker" Lester, wanted to communicate. This is our time, he insists, we must take advantage of the times. "If you want to keep Time with the Times, the *Time-Piece* is the TIMELY and TIMEEST TIMES" ("Dear Reader"). How best to keep time with the times? Learn to "live more economically, get homes, save time, means and money, and educate our children" ("Editorial Notes," 14 Oct 1898).

The pocket watch in the newspaper's title and on its masthead may symbolize the role the newspaper played in promoting self-sufficiency and prosperity among its readers, many of them members of the first-freed generation. Pocket watches were luxury items, beautifully crafted and expensive. They were markers of wealth and status. . . and during the period of enslavement they were beyond the reach of most people of color.



How wonderful then to find a pocket watch as the logo of an African American paper! A paper bought and read by formerly enslaved persons and their children. How fitting that a paper promoting Black prosperity as a tool of racial advancement would adopt the time-piece for its title. The motto "one size" just might point toward ideals -- equality, unity, self-ownership -- to which *Time-Piece* readers might aspire.

During the Reconstruction period the African American community that took up residence at Old Camp began its collective freedom journey. Epsibeth (originally Hepzibah), the first of four Baptist churches to be established in Aldrich, was started in 1873 by former slaves. Like other Black churches that sprang up in the 1870s, it enabled newly emancipated people to worship as they pleased. (By turn of the century Epsibeth boasted 165 members.) Men and women could now raise children without fear of family separations. Formerly enslaved men could count on regular wages for their labor in the mines. Because coal mining was to some extent seasonal, they could continue to farm during the summer months, many on land they owned. (*Time-Piece* repeatedly urged smart farming practices. Don't grow cotton! Don't sharecrop! Purchase your own land!)

The Old Camp community in Aldrich quickly developed a reputation for high-quality education under the leadership of Selma-educated Baptist preacher-teachers. One in particular, the Rev. D. L. Prentice (no known relation to Rev. Joseph Prentice), was lauded for "very effective work in the school room." His strenuous "pedagogic labors" invigorated the whole community, wrote historian C. O. Boothe in 1895 (*Cyclopedia*). Such vigor persuaded the likes of Booker Lester to cast his lot with a network of educational activists in Aldrich. The *Time-Piece* and the Negro Grammar School, which he guided as principal, were sites of his activism.

*Alabama Time-Piece* is a crucial piece of an inspiring story. The pocket watch proudly brandished on the front page and masthead of this "TIMELY and TIMEEST" paper tells a small part of a great transformation, a local moment in the up-from-slavery journey of four million African Americans. People went from being owned to being owners, from being property to being persons. Persons at liberty to subscribe to a *Time-Piece* of their own.

Images from microfilm in Samford University Special Collections. Submitted by Kathy King & Anitka Stewart Sims. Contact us at [Movaltrail@gmail.com](mailto:Movaltrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of any errors of fact or interpretation.

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### **"Not a problem, we got this": From Birmingham to Selma**

Everyone knows it began at Brown Chapel AME Church in Selma, that epic 54-mile march for voting rights in March 1965. The Selma to Montgomery march, recognized around the world as a turning point in America's struggle for civil rights, is now a designated national historic trail with interpretive centers operated by the National Park Service.

The march actually began in Birmingham, however. Marchers, perhaps 20 strong, walked to Alabaster for an overnight stay, picked up more folks there, passed through Montevallo and then Centerville and at last arrived in Selma, their numbers growing as they went. The grit and courage of the marchers, along with the love and resourcefulness of supporters along the way, are a story that needs to be told.

We can begin to piece together that story from a conversation recorded late last October with Elvie Schooley, best known to Montevallans as visionary founder of local nonprofit DRUM the Program. Elvie inherited her activism and boundless energy from her parents, Eloise and Rev. Jimmy R. Underwood, founding members (along with Robert Tolbert and Elizabeth Taylor) of the Alabaster Suburban League, a civil rights organization with a mission to expand local voting rights. When the League got wind of a major voting rights march being organized in Selma, its leaders, including Elvie's parents, got to work planning an overnight stop for marchers from Birmingham.

Elvie was too young to be directly involved, but her parents and one of her older sisters took part in the march. Their remembrances became the family stories which she has recently shared.

"The plan was, that when the marchers arrived, the Alabaster School, which was the Black school, right there on 31" -- site of the Shelby County Resource Center today -- "would be where they would host them. They had organized all the community members that would cook, prepare the food for them, and the bedding, and all that kind of stuff, all that stuff was set in motion." But things did not go as planned. "Daddy said that when it was time for the marchers to arrive, the city of Alabaster cut off the electricity and the water at the school." So there the marchers were, weary and footsore, obliged to shelter in a building with no heat, light, or water.

The response of the organizers? "Not a problem, we got this." Elvie explains: "You had this organization of people, especially women, who were already activated, already organized, and all it took was 'we got this.' So they brought in everything that they needed, candles, flashlights, water, food, bedding, and they fed and housed the marchers. They

didn't have any problems you know from Klans members at this point of time, at the school." The next morning they were off to Montevallo and then on to Centerville.

Did the marchers face problems at other sheltering sites? None that Elvie heard about, although there have been unconfirmed reports of stomach sickness, perhaps food poisoning, connected with stops in Montevallo and Centerville. Others with memories of the march from Montevallo onwards may be able to help us fill out the story.



Asked why so few have heard about the march from Birmingham, Elvie was unhesitating and to the point. The "heavy hitters" were in Selma: "then it became a thing." But people need to know that civil rights activism was taking place outside Birmingham, outside Selma and Montgomery: "People were doing it at their own local level." Knowing this "adds so much value to our small towns."

It was "people along the way" who created "the momentum and the energy" that fed events in Selma. For young people especially voting rights and the civil rights struggle were basic to who they were, to the changes they knew had to come. The struggle was "what you did back then. . . , it was huge, it was part of the movement, it was in the music, it was in the social scene, you know" and you had to use "whatever tools you had to add to the conversation around it."

The story of the voting rights march of 1965 offers more than the expected scenes of brutality and evil at Pettus Bridge; of suffering and sacrifice in the Black community. The marchers who made their way through Alabaster and Montevallo attracted no reporters, no television cameras, none of the cruelty publicized by the national media. Family stories like Elvie's create a different legacy. They bring into view the acts of kindness of everyday folks who joined forces for the freedom to vote. They illuminate the get-it-doneness of ordinary people in small towns who offered candles, bedding, and flashlights when the electricity was turned off. "We got this."

*Image from the digital collection of Alabama Department of Archives and History. We are grateful to Elvie Schooley for sharing this story. Submitted by Kathy King & Anita Stewart Sims. Contact us at [MoValtrail@gmail.com](mailto:MoValtrail@gmail.com). We want to hear your stories and welcome correction of any errors of fact or interpretation.*

## Afterword

When I first heard of the Untold Stories of Black Montevallo, I was reminded of a project I did in junior high, where I had to interview an older person about the great depression. I interviewed my great-grandmother, Nanny, and was amazed by all of the things that I'd never bothered to ask. Suddenly, my dominoes-loving, pound-cake baking Nanny was transformed into someone with a massive life story that I hadn't even realized I didn't know. To this day, one of my greatest regrets is that I no longer have the recording of my interview with her.

As I grew older, I started to pay more attention to my family history, and was amazed by the things I learned.

My great-grandfather was one of the first — possibly the first — Black refrigerator repairmen in Alabama. That was just one of the many things that Pawpaw did in his life. From the family stories I've been told, I know that he was also a butcher, a good shot with a rifle and that he built several buildings. At least one of these is still standing and owned by my grandmother.

I never got to know Pawpaw, but I find the stories that others tell about him fascinating. Those aren't stories that I ever want to let die, but unfortunately they exist only in the memories of all those who loved him.

Both Pawpaw and Nanny lived through unique struggles due to the color of their skin. They faced discrimination that was coded into the law, and they lived to see their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren gain far more rights than either of them ever had.

Growing up and hearing some of the stories about their lives, I was constantly struck by how fortunate I was to have so many people who fought so hard for the rights that I now have. And as I grew older, I realized that many of my friends and classmates had never heard many of the stories that I had.

Reading through this compilation, I have once again found myself amazed by some of the incredible stories that I had never heard. In particular, I was amazed to learn about the Suburban League and the work that they did. I found the story inspiring, but it also made me realize just how easily that this story might have been lost forever to history.

A day spent researching the Suburban League turned up nothing more than several obituaries. The members of the Suburban League have been passing away, and their story was in danger of being lost along with them.

So many stories of African American people have been passed among family and friends, but lost outside of those circles. They go unheard by many who could benefit from hearing them.

The reality is, none of us can guarantee that those family stories we tell will make it to the next generation. I know in my family, certain details of stories have been lost to time.

This is why the Untold Stories of Black Montevallo are so important. Because while we might remember for a time, this collection of stories that you hold in your hand represents a promise to make sure these stories are told and not forgotten.

The work that has been done here is amazing, but there are far too many stories for just two people to record on their own. I encourage you to view this collection as a call to action.

We each bear a responsibility to make sure the past, good or bad, is not forgotten. There are stories that beg to be told, and you can help us find them.

If you have a story, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. These stories matter, and we want to make sure that they aren't forgotten.

-Harrison W. Neville

Communications director for The Montevallo Legacy Project and Editor in chief for *The Sunrise News*.



The MLP logo was designed by Justin Wayne Lutz. He wanted something that connoted history and the passage of time, and also paid homage to the *Aldrich Time-Piece*, but without using the exact same imagery. He settled on this hand-drawn sketch of a sundial as the guiding metaphor. It connotes the passage of time, but unlike a pocket watch, the sundial marks the passing of time at a certain place. The element of place is at the heart of a local legacy project like the MLP.

## Acknowledgements

If it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes an entire community of people to recover memories and stories at risk of disappearing. Many people have already stepped forward to share memories, family stories, news clippings, and photos. We are deeply grateful. Most will find themselves named within the Untold Stories themselves.

Others deserve mention. The origins of this series can be traced back to a proposal some years ago from Rev. Kenny Dukes for an African American Heritage Trail. The idea was taken up first by Mayor Holly Cost and then by her successor Rusty Nix. He and Steve Gilbert, City Clerk, shepherded a resolution establishing the Trail through city council with support of the Historic Preservation Commission. All have our thanks.

The series that became the Untold Stories of Black Montevallo originated in research undertaken by members of the Historic Preservation Commission under the leadership of Joyce Jones and then Justin Lutz. Joyce has continued to be a supporter of the project, supplying leads, counsel, and encouragement whenever we asked, and Justin has assisted with creative visualizations. Many others have been crucial to our research efforts. Car-ey Heatherly, UM Archivist, has been almost a silent partner, supplying news clippings, photographs, oral history transcripts, and jolly advice. Others who have shared generously of their extensive knowledge of local history are Marty Everse and Clay Nordan of the Montevallo Historical Society. Shelley Davis of the Shelby County Board of Education spent untold hours delving into records relating to the “little school” in Jacksonville. James Salter, of Ward Chapel AME church, and Kathlyn Lathion, of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, have shared their work on their historic churches as well as information about Black family histories. Dr. Wilson Fallin, foremost scholar of the Black Baptist church in Alabama, has been an invaluable source of knowledge and encouragement. President John Stewart of UM has offered unfailing support. To them and to everyone else who has said, in one way or another, “well done,” our great thanks.

It takes unheralded labor to produce even a modest booklet such as this. Thanks are due to Adele Nelson of the Chamber Chatter and Iris Smitherman Kish of the Type Shop, both of whom backed the Untold Stories from the start and have done much to contribute to its success.

The Untold Stories project continues today under the umbrella of a newly formed community group, the Montevallo Legacy Project (MLP). The MLP promotes awareness of forgotten, little known, or undertold local histories. The project is guided by a belief in the healing power of stories and story-telling. Its mission is to preserve stories of the past, foster community unity and cultural diversity, and make available empowering legacies for the future. The MLP is supported by Friends of the Montevallo Legacy Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We invite others to join us in the effort of creating narratives that imagine and foster a more inclusive future for members of all communities. For further information write us at [MontevalloLegacy@gmail.com](mailto:MontevalloLegacy@gmail.com).

