"Powder Springs Has Some Deep Roots In It"

An Oral History Portrait of an African American Community

By
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"Powder Springs has some deep roots in it"

Powder Springs, Georgia, was a relatively rural community in the early twentieth century. As one resident put it, "Back then, most of the people living here was farming. Wasn't too many houses around here then." Still, within this seemingly quieter context, it was a community in which "deep roots" were forming. Stories of these individual communities are essential to understanding the history of southern community life.

Powder Springs has had a legacy of blacks and whites living side by side since at least the 1860s. In the late nineteenth century, development intensified on land situated south of Marietta Street. This neighborhood on the south side of town eventually became the hub of black community life within Powder Springs. It is this particular community that is the focus of this study.

The early twentieth century saw the advent of an economic depression, and times were hard for all. The added burden of a social system in which the color line was considered "just the way it was" increased the challenge African Americans faced in obtaining an education, decent housing, and substantial work through which to support their families. However, the residents of this community proved very resourceful in building a network of opportunities and services that extended well beyond the parameters of the neighborhood and addressing economic challenges with hard work and determination. With the desegregation of schools and businesses in the 1960s, African Americans in Powder Springs joined other black people throughout the South in stepping across the color line.

The Waldon Family around 1911.

Friends Horace Penn and Harry Watts.

A child of the community.

Sweethearts Willie Clark and Lionel Watts grew up in the community together.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, residents of Powder Springs lived in a segregated society. For most, the drawing of the color line meant a lifetime of low wage labor and underemployment. Yet, many of the African American residents of this community—some of whom have lived in Powder Springs for generations—have made it clear that they consider themselves fortunate to have called Powder Springs home. One resident remembered the town as the kind of small place where everybody was just one family, whether they were white or black. "The whole city was your family," recalled another. "We didn't have any strangers here."

> "I grew up loving these people because these people cared for me. And I tell people today, if you get to know someone, I don't see how you could hate because of the difference in the color when you know a person's heart."

They also remember their particular neighborhood as a close-knit community in which raising and training children and caring for neighbors was a joint effort. In spite of the inevitable conflicts that accompany community life, most residents remained committed to helping and supporting one another. "Everybody watched after each other's family," said one, and "honored what other people told them about their children." Said another resident, "There was a lot of love there. . . . I'm thankful that it was that way."

William Turner and niece, Fletrice.

This feeling continued even when neighbors were away. One resident who was serving in the Army overseas called home at a prearranged time to find that a number of his neighbors had gathered at his house. They all wanted to talk to him, and he remembers that it made him feel good about where he was and what he was doing. In this community, residents valued friendships, family names, and kinship connections.

> "Neighbors were neighbors then."

> "When my mother, father was coming up, the next door neighbor had a problem, they had one too. Cause they were going to see after them."

Even though Powder Springs was a small place, the memories generated by this single black community reflect the intensity with which they interacted with their family, friends, and neighbors and involved themselves in the life of the town. This study is primarily based on oral history interviews, but information has been drawn from other sources as well.

The oral portrait we present here is a collaboration between Powder Springs residents and students and faculty at the University of West Georgia. We have organized this book around the important facets of community as residents defined them. Family heritage, church, education, hard work, and fun are central themes. Drawn together, these memories tell a story of a community of people bound together by time, place, and experience.

Ruby Penn

"My mother always told me, do unto others as you would have them do unto you, not before they do it to you."

Twins Stella and Della Austin.

(l-r) Charity, Lanail, and Petrice Turner

"[My daddy] was a very strict man. We used to repeat a scripture in the Bible –in my house there are many mansions. We used to say, 'Well, in my daddy's house, there are many rules.'"

"Everybody around here is kinfolks"

This African American community in Powder Springs emerged in the late nineteenth century but gained its greatest momentum in the first half of the twentieth century.

Family outing, Powder Springs, late nineteenth century. Photograph courtesy of Seven Springs Museum.

The earliest white settlers who moved to western Cobb County after Indian Removal brought slaves to clear the land, construct buildings, work the fields, manage livestock, and perform household duties. As farm production increased, so did the demand for slaves. By 1860, 483 slaves lived within the Powder Springs district.

After the Civil War, many freedmen continued to farm as sharecroppers, tenants, and farm laborers. Some left plantations and relocated to towns such as Powder Springs for new work opportunities. A few African Americans purchased their own land. As early as 1869, the Barnwell, Glaze, and Broadnax families acquired property on the outskirts of Powder Springs.

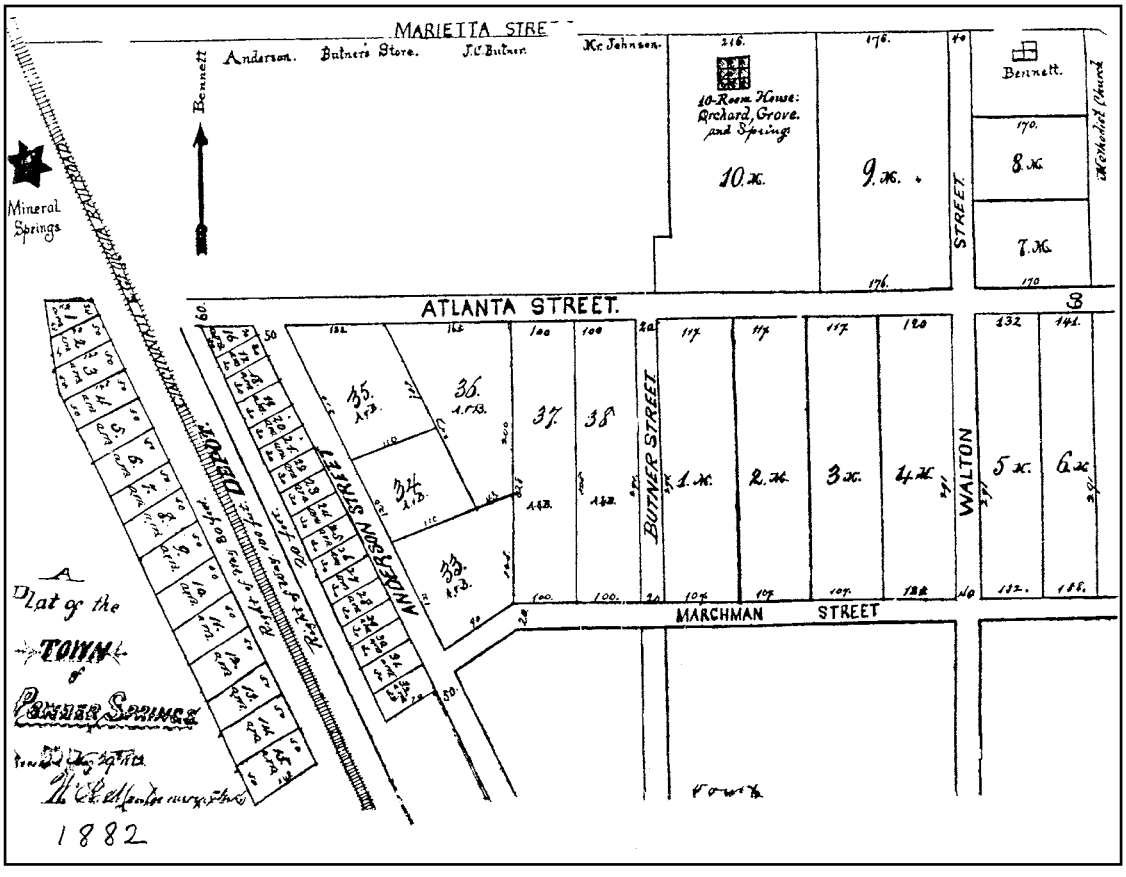
African Americans settled throughout the town, often alongside or behind the homes of the people for whom they worked. Some blacks made their homes along the northeastern boundary of town near present-day Dillard Street, where an African American school and a church, Davis Chapel, were established. This community would eventually become known as "the Seaboard" after the Seaboard Railroad constructed a rail line, depot, and section housing for workers here in 1905. Blacks also lived along Macland Road and Oglesby Road and on the Florence Farm west of Powder Springs.

"She said back during the years through the Civil War that she could hear the guns, them big cannons being fired off, you know. She was in the slave times back there, and then she come here."

A number of blacks began to move into the area around the Southern Railroad Depot—the focus of this study—in the late nineteenth century. After the railroad established its track and depot at the end of Atlanta Street around 1882, several adjacent landowners developed plats and began to sell lots here. Around the same time, the railroad constructed "section housing" for its African American workers at the intersection of present-day Butner and Lewis streets. These duplex houses, now gone, had two rooms in each unit.

Southern Railroad Depot and the flats. Courtesy of Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, COB 096.

"The men had got tired of [farming], they had wised up, you know. This is not a living for my family, they didn't own the land, and they was coming out. Most of the farmers, they daddies maybe stayed on, but the young men, when the opportunity come to get them a house and get off the farm, they did, and they went to working on the railroad. That was the best job going back then. So I think that's what happened because they found out they could make more money."

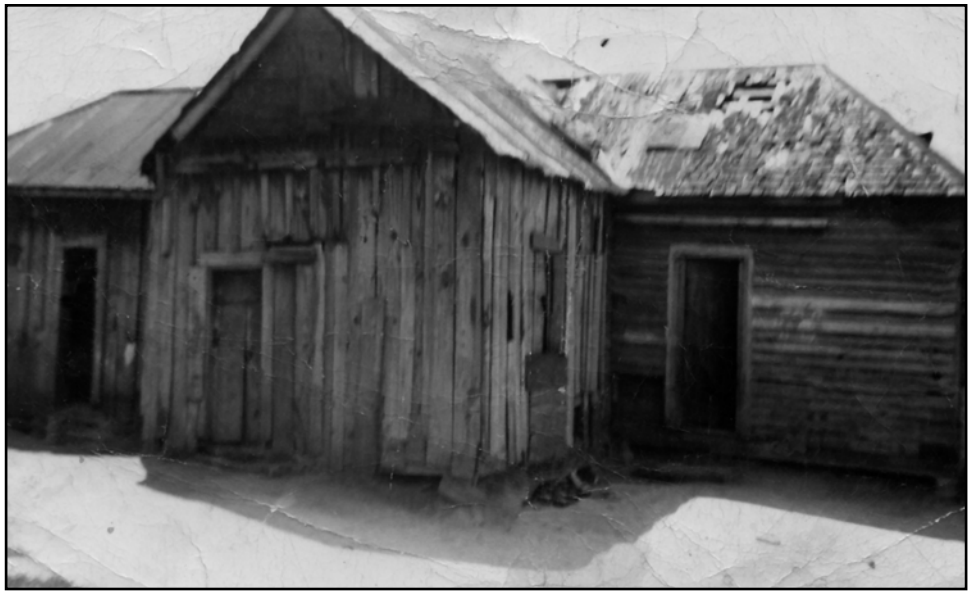


Map of Powder Springs, 1882. Courtesy of Seven Springs Museum.

"After harvest time, if you didn't have a little money, you were stuck, you were broke. And I think the men really got tired of living like that, and when a job opened up and houses were built, that's when they left the farm and come to town and start doing permanent work."

By the first decade of the twentieth century, some African Americans had begun to purchase lots in the community, including the Penn, Middlebrooks, Weddington, and Kite families. A growing number of people began to move here, most living in rental homes. While many residents worked in town, some still farmed. By 1906, community members had established an AME church called Kite's Chapel on Butner Street. This small but growing community would become known as "the flats," a common term given to communities established on the flat land along the rail line. Local residents called the area along Atlanta and Butner streets "the hill."

During the Depression years of the 1930s, many black families in the South left farms, some in response to new agricultural programs that benefited farm owners over sharecroppers and tenants. African Americans moved to towns to find work, but housing for blacks in Powder Springs was in short supply. The migration off the farm continued with World War II, as blacks sought employment in new war-time industries such as Bell Aircraft in nearby Marietta.



House built by the White family on Butner Street in the early twentieth century.

Entrepreneur Sallie Hardage, the wife of prominent town merchant G. M. Hardage, saw an opportunity to build better housing in the black neighborhood. She purchased lots in the community, beginning in the 1930s, and began to build four-room, wooden houses to rent to black families, particularly along Anderson, Butner, and Marchman streets. Community residents still remember Sallie Hardage walking through the neighborhood on Saturday mornings to collect the rent. By the 1960s, she began to encourage residents to buy the houses where they lived. Hardage helped finance the mortgage, often installing indoor plumbing and bathrooms at that time.

"She just had a circle that she owned and built and the black folks started moving in. And some of them come from the farm and come in there and start renting from her... I think she was pretty nice at that time. Because you think about it, she was the only one concerned about housing the black people in decent homes."

"She was a nice lady, a friendly lady. Everybody got along with her good, far as I know of. She was good to the blacks 'round there. Needed anything, she always try to help you. Whatever you need. And she was all the time telling peoples that 'You know, you're renting, you should buy.' Right then, she started letting them pay so much by the week. Wasn't no money back there then. Whatever you made, I guess, you just start buying."

Sallie Lewis Hardage, who built many houses in the community, is to the far left in the back row of the J. A. Lewis family photograph, 1915. Photograph courtesy of Seven Springs Museum.

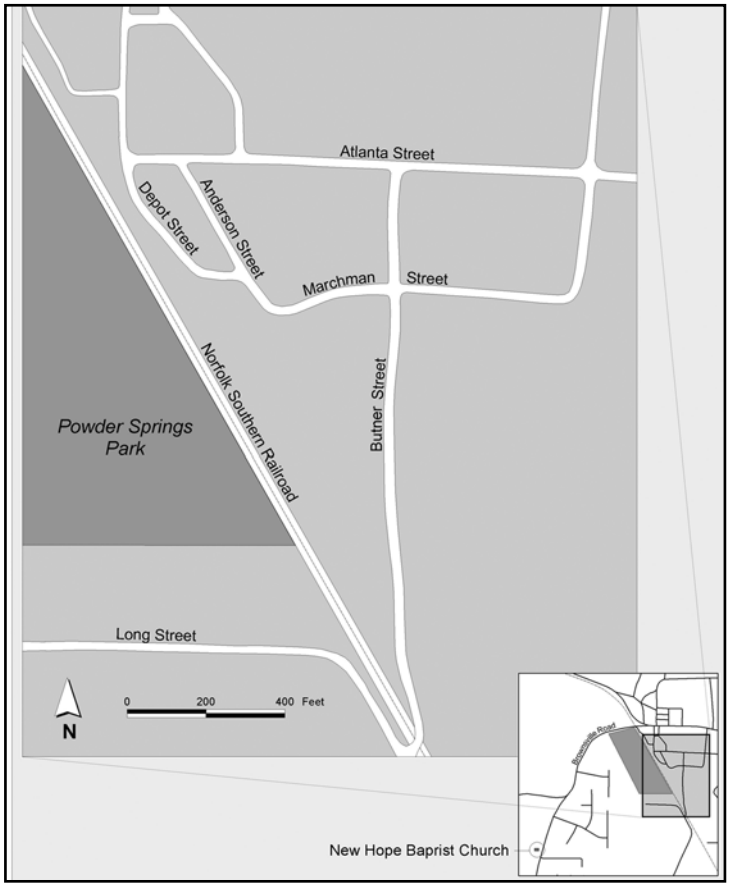
Houses that Sallie Hardage built on Marchman Street, late 1940s. Photographs by Mary Swinchett.

"After the war, all the guys come back home. They didn't want to stay at home with their daddy and help them farm. 'Oh, I got money, I'm going to town.' Well, what they did. They packed up and left. And everybody started thinning out."

Housing demand remained high among African Americans after the war. To help meet this need, the vacant cotton gin near the depot was remodeled into eight apartments around 1947. The last major addition to the community occurred in 1952 when Long Street was divided into lots. Referenced in the deed book as the "Minnie Holcombe Subdivision," this new tract was named after a long-time black resident who lived there at the time.

This new Long Street neighborhood attracted some community members as well as blacks relocating from the Seaboard community. Most built new homes, but a few lived in older houses moved here from Marietta. Community residents established two churches on Long Street, the Powder Springs Church of God in Christ in 1954, and a Holiness Church, the House of Prayer, in the early 1970s.

Although new houses have been built in vacant lots and older homes have been remodeled and sometimes torn down, the neighborhood has not changed dramatically since the 1960s. Many local residents are still connected by family ties, sometimes living in their homes for several generations.



Community map. Prepared by John Congleton, Department of Geosciences, University of West Georgia.

"Most everybody up here is just about related, to tell you the truth. If you really go to the history and start finding out just about anybody related. That's the reason I tell them I like to have family reunions so I can find out who I'm some kin to!"

"They would [go and] come from every which a way"

Through traveling for school, church, jobs, services, and recreation and marrying people from other places, African American residents of Powder Springs created a community that extended beyond the boundaries of their neighborhood.

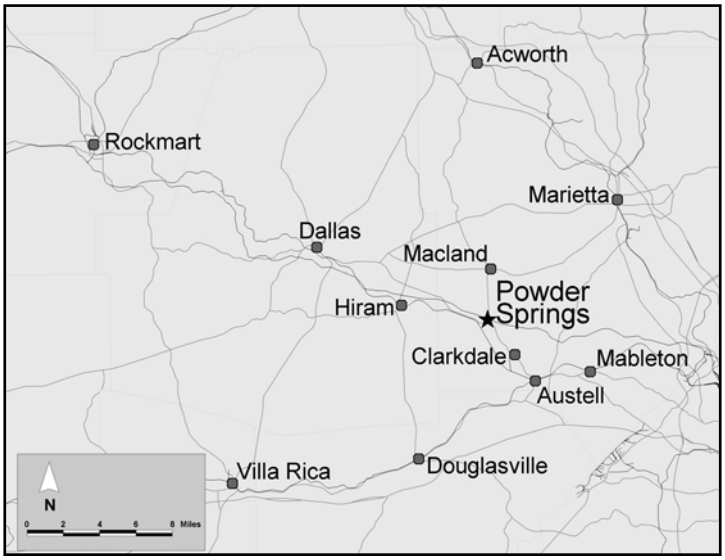
Midwife, 1941 Greene County, Georgia. Photograph by Jack Delano, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection, LC-USF34-046571-E.

Residents were part of a broader network of African American communities both close to Powder Springs and miles away. Within this network were the nearby communities of Macedonia, Florence Farm, and Macland and the more distant towns of Acworth, Atlanta, Austell, Clarkdale, Dallas, Douglasville, Hiram, Mableton, Marietta, Rockmart, and Villa Rica.

The nature of these connections varied over time, but for most of the twentieth century, the ties between these communities acted as a bulwark against segregation. Residents of Powder Springs and these other areas pooled their resources by sharing ministers, trading goods and services, and inter-marrying.

"People back then—they'd get out and walk four or five or six miles, especially if they had a girlfriend. They'd start walking that morning. You could see them that night."

"There used to be a [railroad] station [in Powder Springs] where people could ride the train back and forth to Atlanta and wherever they wanted to go in that time."



Map of the larger community. Prepared by John Congleton, Department of Geosciences, University of West Georgia.

"[My daddy] hitched up [a] two-horse wagon to take my mother to bring these peoples in the world—their children. Anytime their children were born, my mother and daddy had to hitch up the wagon and go. If it was night. Didn't care if it was cold and raining or snowing. They went. They went—cause I was old enough to know it."

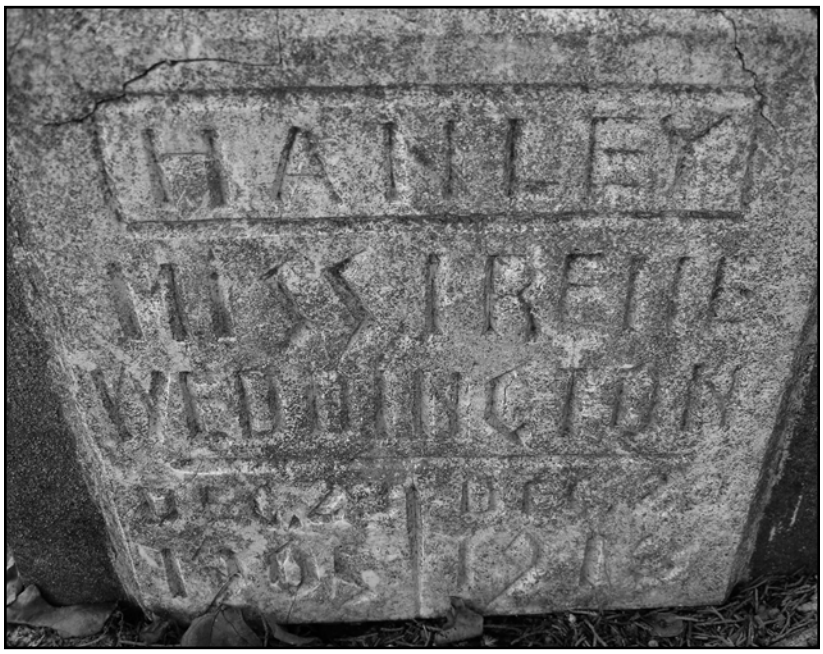
In earlier years, the same black midwives who delivered babies in Powder Springs also did so in a number of these towns. In a later period, many of the black children of Powder Springs were delivered in a little hospital in Austell. Even in death, members of the Powder Springs community relied on their nearby neighbors. When a resident died, Handley Funeral Home in Marietta usually handled the arrangements.

In addition to sharing resources, people in Powder Springs interacted with their neighbors through recreational activities. Youth participated on softball teams that played in different towns. On summer weekends, many residents went to watch the Clarkdale Eagles baseball team play in that community. The movie theater in Austell was a destination all year long.

Friends and family visit with each other at Florence Farm.

"We used to go out of town and play softball and stuff. We went like Villa Rica, Paulding County, Rockmart. Everybody just get on the back of a truck and just ride. Sometimes they have vans and stuff like that—picking everybody and go. We had a nice time, though."

"If you was dating someone around here, you had to bring them before your family to find out if they're related to you or not, so we decided we would go to Douglasville. . . . If it's a third or fourth cousin, you still was too close."



When a resident died, arrangements were handled by funeral homes in other towns, with one of the most prominent being Handley in Marietta. Photograph by Mary Swinchett and William T. Nesbitt, Jr.

Excluded from white-owned eating and entertainment establishments by Jim Crow laws, African Americans throughout the South opened their own restaurants and clubs, where they could relax and socialize. Neighborhood cafés in Powder Springs served as meeting places for people from surrounding communities. Likewise, residents of Powder Springs traveled to other towns to listen to music and dance.

"There would be two or three hundred people out there in that street dancing around that café back then. . . . Cars be parked all down Butner Street . . . and they would come down the railroad track. Be coming from everywhere."

Johnny Wilburn and Walter Harris have their photo made at the studio around 1965.

"In the area at Austell was a theater. It was segregated. Back then, when you went to the theater, the whites were downstairs, and the Negroes had to go up stairways up top and sit and watch the movie. Every Wednesday night and Saturday night, we were able to go to the movie."

Many residents had their photographs taken at a studio located in the railroad terminal in Atlanta. In the photograph above, Floyd Penn has his picture taken.

"The only time I went to Austell was to have my hair fixed on Washington Street right across from the gas station down there. Lois White had it in her home. She had a little shop on the side of the house. Everybody went down there then. My grandmomma., my auntie, Willie G, Kathleen, and them all used to go down there. Didn't nobody do hair back then but Lois from Austell."

"Sweet Home, that's right. I go there every Sunday, and my wife and children goes over here to New Hope."

Essie Hightower was seventeen when her family moved from Hiram to Powder Springs where her aunt lived. She has many fond memories of growing up in Hiram's Sweet Home Baptist Church, becoming involved at Powder Spring's New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, and visiting other churches in the area.

"It was a black school in Austell called Washington Street. Well, the first one was Lemon Street in Marietta, and then they made Washington Street over here and everybody from this side of Cobb County went to Washington Street. . . . If you were black, you went to that school."

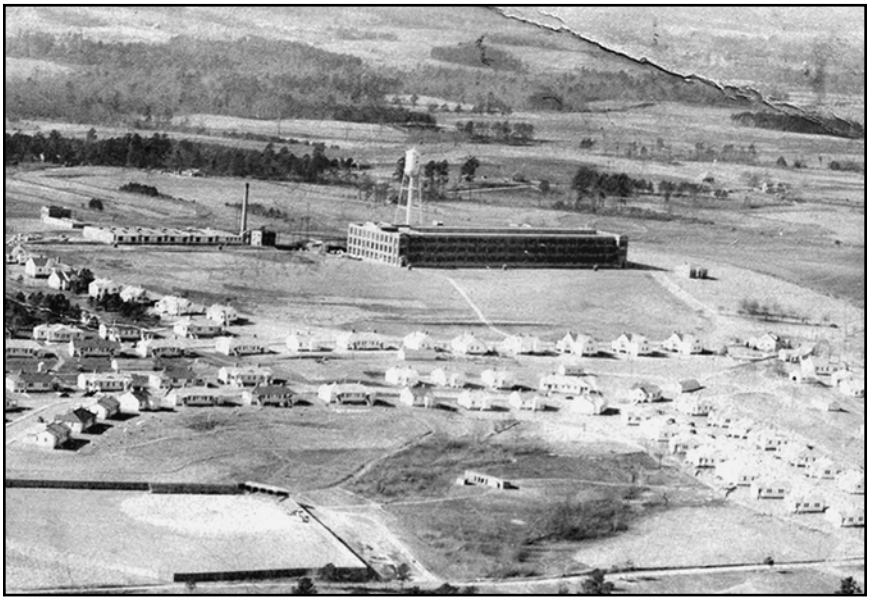
"Everybody could they tried their best to get on down there Coats and Clark because they had a regular job."

In addition to meeting for fun, community members from Powder Springs and the surrounding areas also met for worship. Some of those who had moved from outlying communities to Powder Springs returned to their home churches for decades. Church congregations in a number of communities "visited" each other regularly.

Prior to school desegregation in 1968, young people often attended schools in Austell and Marietta. Thus, children from throughout Cobb met in the schoolyard.

Work also brought members of the various black communities together. Employment was sought in whatever community offered the best opportunity, whether it was at the lumber yard in Marietta, in other industrial and factory positions, on the railroad, within the homes of white mill workers in Clarkdale, in health care, or as textile mill workers at Coats and Clark Thread Mill.

"If you had transportation and all, you could visit other churches. At that time, just about everybody was beginning to have an automobile."



Coats and Clark Thread Mill in the newly-created town of Clarkdale. Many residents of the community traveled there to work. Photograph courtesy of Seven Springs Museum.

"Going back and forth to church, that was the first priority"

The black church played a central role in many community members' lives by providing a venue in which they could fellowship with one another, serving as a buffer against outside pressures, and giving spiritual guidance to its members.

Oldest known photograph of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church.

Most residents of the community have strong church connections. Some residents who moved from other communities maintained their affiliations with their childhood congregations in towns such as Hiram and Rockmart.

Others were members of small churches of various denominations in the area, some of which are no longer in existence. These included Kite's Chapel on Butner Street and the Powder Springs Church of God in Christ and The House of Prayer, both located on Long Street. However, most families in the community have been affiliated for several generations with New Hope Missionary Baptist Church. New Hope was built soon after the Civil War when ex-slaves insisted on having independent houses of worship. It still stands today on Brownsville Road as a testament to the labor of love of former slaves and their progeny.

"Always at church, now that was never left out. Going back and forth to church, that was the first priority."

Church on Long Street that has housed several congregations and continues to do so.

"Our whole roots on both sides basically came from the church."

The House of Prayer on Long Street built in the early 1970s.

"After church, you might stand around maybe a hour outside fellowshipping and talking to your neighbors and things because that's about the only time we got a chance to see each other."

Scenes from New Hope Missionary Baptist Church.

The Adult Choir at New Hope Missionary Baptist Church in 1967.

"It was just a lot of love in their heart for their neighbors, each and every one, and everybody knew everybody in New Hope. . . . If sickness was in your family or death was in your family, they came to visit you–contact you someway or another."

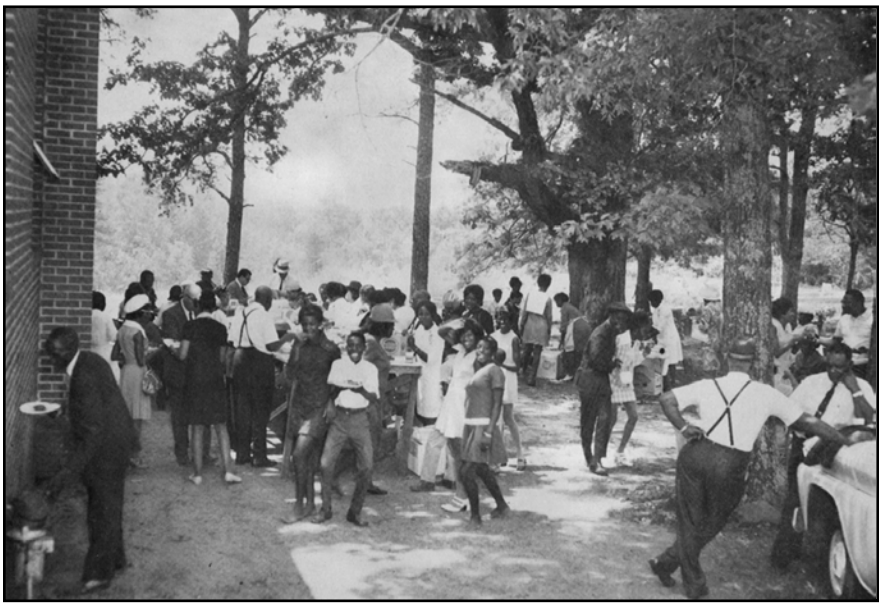
In the years before churches hired full-time ministers, residents frequently traveled to wherever services were being held. Even as times changed, congregations continued their relationships with other churches through the tradition of "visiting." Visiting helped to bind Powder Springs residents to African American congregations in nearby towns, such as Sweet Home Baptist Church in Hiram, Bethesda Baptist Church in Austell, Macedonia Baptist Church in that community, and "Big Bethel" on Powder Springs Road. Some members also traveled together to visit churches in other states.

Even those who left the community stayed connected by attending homecomings and church anniversaries. These annual events were times of reunion and fellowship. Homecoming, especially, was noted as a time of good food and as the primary occasion when the "children" who had left would "come home" from distant places.

"On Homecoming Day . . . we would have visitors from other churches. You were just glad to be with those people. And they prepared dinner and invite you to eat with them. It was just a blessing. It was really a good time. That's what it was. It was just a good time then."

Sweet Home Baptist Church, 2007. Photograph by Catherine Hendricks.

"Our church [is] affiliated with a lot of other churches. When we [are] invited, we always visit."



Dinner-on-the-grounds at New Hope.

"I mean it'd be people there [on Homecoming Day]. Some people I ain't seen in thirty-five and forty years, but that's eating time and they coming. They call it soul food, and them folks go out there and cook that corn and them beans and things and Lord have mercy, folks that up the country [up there in Detroit], been gone here, I guess, I was a kid—they come back. I mean they loading them plates up."

"Reverend Field was preaching one night and I'm the only one on the pew [mourners' bench]. They kept singing and he kept walking back and forth in front of me. And I'm standing there looking at him. After we went outside, he said, 'Daughter, I thought we had you tonight.' But you don't join 'til you ready."

Many parents and grandparents made sure their children had the experience of being part of the church. Young people attending New Hope were incorporated through Sunday school, Bible study, and the choir. As young adults, they were frequently placed in leadership roles, such as ushering for the church. Several have served as deacons and deaconesses for decades. Education and political consciousness were also considered very much within the purview of the church. One resident remembered joining the NAACP at church, and New Hope has operated a school for a number of years.

"I sang in the choir and ushered too."

Children dressed for Easter.

Young people involved in activities at New Hope. The photograph above shows the Junior Choir. Pictured at bottom is the Young Adult Usher Board.

"Earlier—especially when I came along and when my children were small, you had many mothers and fathers. They kept us straight."

"I wouldn't give anything for being a member of Sweet Home Baptist Church. They trained you. They loved you. They wanted you to learn. They just wanted you to be what you supposed to be."

As adults, members assumed the primary roles of working with the youth and serving as trustees and in other leadership positions.

Baptism was a pivotal event in the lives of members. In past days, baptisms were conducted once a year. At New Hope, that date was the first Sunday in September. Though New Hope now has an indoor baptismal pool, older members of the church have fond memories of being baptized at "the culvert" off Lost Mountain Road. Many consider the culvert a spot of great personal meaning and some consider it the most important place in Powder Springs.

> "[Where] the stream used to come under the Seaboard Railroad is where we were all baptized."

For many Powder Springs community members, their churches have played a pivotal role from the beginning to the end of their lives. In speaking about the cemetery at New Hope, where many who have belonged to the church are buried, one member said, "I know if I die tomorrow, I'm going behind New Hope."

New Hope Missionary Church, 139 years after its founding. Photograph by Catherine Hendricks.

> "I can show you all my family over there, in just a few steps, and see all my family from my grandfather, my grandmother, my sisters and brothers, all us buried at New Hope, so we're expecting everybody to go there. . . . Well, anybody that want to come back home, we got a place for you."

The oldest members of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church participate in the ribbon-cutting ceremony dedicating the new sanctuary in 1995.

> "Before they made the inside baptismal pool, we all used to be baptized at what we called 'the culvert'. . . . Out of all the places around, if you want to consider one spot being, I guess, personal, or the best place to describe Powder Springs, I would think it is the culvert cause that's where we all were baptized."

For many years, New Hope Missionary Baptist Church held baptisms once at year at "the culvert" off Lost Mountain Road. This is a spot that has deep meaning for many of the members who were baptized there. Photograph by Patrick J. Healey.

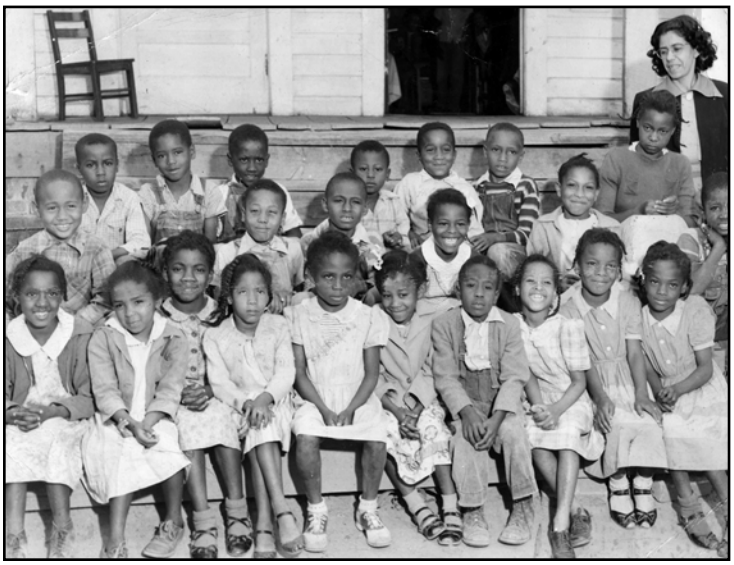
"We loved our students and our students seemingly loved us"

School photograph of Willie G Watts.

African Americans in Powder Springs made the schools a central part of their lives.

Since teaching African Americans, whether free or enslaved, was illegal in the state of Georgia prior to emancipation, literacy was central to ex-slaves' conception of freedom. Throughout the South, black people opened makeshift schools, some as early as 1862 when the Union Army gained control of coastal South Carolina. Others, like the residents of Powder Springs, had to wait until the Civil War actually ended.

Children at Powder Springs School.



In 1867, Elisha Lindley leased a half acre of land to blacks in Powder Springs to use for the purpose of building a school. The various black churches often opened their own denominational schools, and this also appears to have been the case in Powder Springs. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, African Americans in Powder Springs bought land adjoining their churches to be used for schools. It is unclear how many children attended these church schools and how many attended public schools during the sixty years following the Civil War.

In 1928, the Trustees of the Powder Springs School District purchased land on Brownsville Road adjacent to New Hope Missionary Church to build a public school for the black children of the town. The children walked to this one-room wooden structure and were initially educated through the seventh grade. By the early 1940s, Powder Springs School for black children had added an eighth and, soon after, a ninth grade year.

To accommodate the growing number of students, the single classroom was partitioned over time into two, three, and later four rooms. By the mid-1940s, Powder Springs School had the largest population of the black schools within Cobb County outside of Marietta, reaching a peak of 151 students at the end of the decade.

While the physical structures, supplies, and educational opportunities in black segregated schools were inferior to those provided white children, the students of Powder Springs School remember the camaraderie of being in class together and the efforts their teachers made to provide them with the best education possible. The school often had a staff of four teachers, and it is thought to be the only school outside Marietta that offered a minimal high school education to black children.

Upon completing school in Powder Springs, black youth could continue their education at Lemon Street High School in Marietta but securing transportation was difficult. In the early 1930s, Lemon Street High School secured funds from the National Youth Administration, an initiative of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, to purchase a bus and transport students from Powder Springs and several other Cobb County communities to school.

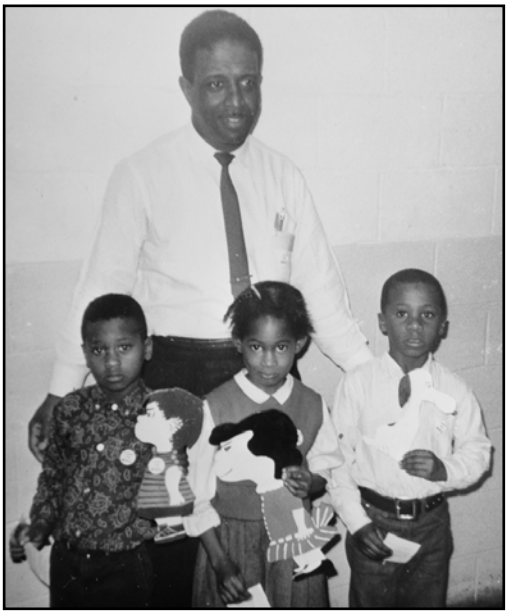
When this special arrangement ended, blacks students were left to find their own way to school. The Cobb County school system did not provide bus service to Lemon Street High School until the late-1940s. Many black residents of Powder Springs wanted to further their education, but were unable to do so due to the lack of transportation.

Rural white schools had begun closing down their one-room schools and consolidating during the early 1940s to provide greater educational opportunities for students in farming areas. Black students continued to attend makeshift schools with rooms added on as their numbers grew. However, in anticipation of the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, in which legalized segregation was declared unconstitutional, many southern states began modernizing blacks schools. They hoped to prove that they were indeed providing a "separate but equal" education.

At the end of the 1952-53 school year, Powder Springs School was closed. Thereafter, the children were bused to Washington Street School, a consolidated school in Austell, until the Cobb County school system was desegregated in 1968. Students completing Washington Street School continued to commute to Lemon Street High School in Marietta to receive a secondary education.

School photograph of Benny Watts.

"Well, you know, we was using the old books from the white folks what they used to have. We really didn't have no new books. You know how that is. We was using the old books. Whadn't nothing in there about no black, less Dr. George Washington Carver or somebody like that. You might run across that. That was about it. I can't remember nothing else. And Dr. Xing hadn't come along at that time."



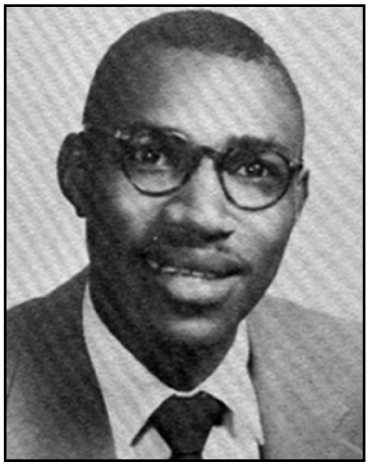
Professor Jones, principal of Washington Street School in Austell, with students. Photograph courtesy of Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, COB 532.

"What I remember most about my school days were my teachers. Teachers were strict then. You learned."

"Didn't have no transportation to get to Marietta to Lemon Street, see. And only time you got a chance to go to Lemon Street, your parents' friends had cars and back then, when I come up, didn't too many people have cars. And so, we were going to try to go to Lemon Street, you got to put about four or five in one car and take them up there and you got a job, well, you can't hardly go and get them, so we had a hard time getting kids to high school."

Until the end of the segregation era, Lemon Street High School, a unit of the Marietta City Schools, was the only public school in Cobb County where young black people could complete a high school education. The school was established in 1930, its brick structure built through monies obtained in part from the Rosenwald Fund. The Rosenwald Fund helped build schools throughout the South in the early twentieth century to address deficiencies in the education provided black youth. Like the schools established and maintained by black churches, Rosenwald schools also depended upon aid from the black community. The Rosenwald Foundation would not provide any monies until local African Americans had raised enough to match the amount requested from the Foundation.

"The blacks were bussed right by white county high schools to come here."



Professor Lewis Scott, a favorite teacher at Lemon Street High School.

Built largely through their own efforts, Cobb County blacks took great pride in Lemon Street High School. Many Powder Springs residents who attended Lemon Street remember it as a place where teachers cared about their education and personal welfare. Under the leadership of Principal M.J. Woods, teachers such as Lewis Scott, John James, and Mary Fredd had high standards and ideals and got, as one student put it, "the best out of their students." Though the students got "hand-me-down" books and sports equipment from white Marietta High School, many said that the teachers made the difference. Parents were very involved in the school and gave the teachers their full support.

"[Teachers] got the best out of you. They would tell you, you can do better and you will do better. They sure would."

"And some kids like myself didn't get to go to high school. The [white] high school was right up the street from where my mama lived at. Could have walked up there, but [we] were black—couldn't go. . . . If I could have got an education, I would have jumped on it in a heartbeat. It was there, but we couldn't get it. They kept it from us."

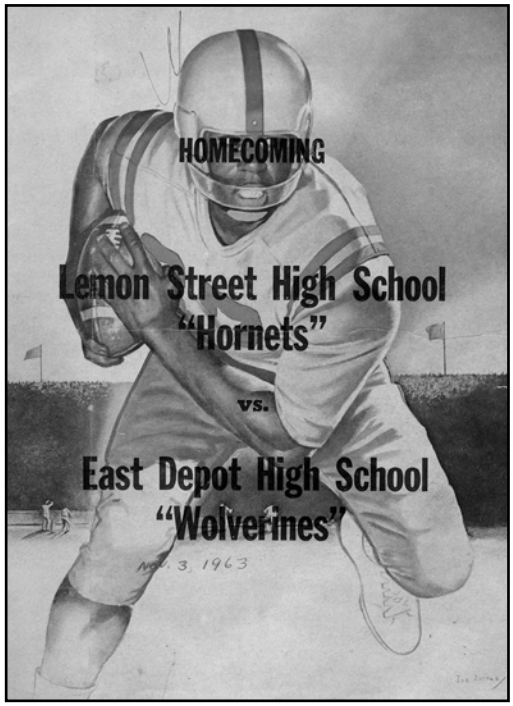
Lemon Street High School in Marietta.

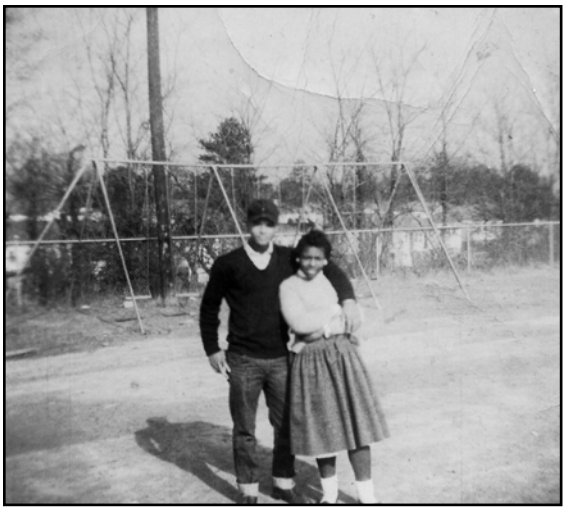
Lemon Street High School became a center of black community life in the region and remained so for over three decades. It fielded excellent football and basketball teams and had an "awesome" band that attracted all age groups. The musical skills of the band attracted whites and blacks to the half time shows. Members of the black community also attended other programs at Lemon Street High School, including glee club concerts, fundraisers, and graduations.

Fourteen years after the Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal has no place" in the field of education, the Cobb County schools began the long process of desegregation. In 1968, Lemon Street High School was closed and black youth in Powder Springs were bused to McEachern High School. A Powder Springs resident who had attended the segregated Powder Springs School and was unable to secure the transportation necessary to continue his education at Lemon Street, ensured that a new generation of African Americans would not miss out on their opportunity to further their education. He drove the bus that transported the first group of black students onto the campus of McEachern High School. While many welcomed the long awaited desegregation of schools, the closing of Lemon Street School meant the loss of an important community center for African Americans in Cobb County.

"The high school was a central gathering place. It was a center point of black activity."

"During the time I taught at Lemon Street, the teachers–all of us–seemed to have really had a genuine interest in our students and wanted them to become the best they could become."





Lionel Watts was quarterback for the Lemon Street High School Hornets. Here he is with girlfriend Willie G.

Alvin and Greg Turner, members of the McEachern High School Band. Early 1970s.

"They had a geat, great football team, basketball team, and I think the biggest thing about them was their band. . . . And I tell white kids now that during the days that I was going to Lemon Street there wouldn't hardly be whites there at the games when it began or when it'd end, but at half time, white people from all over would come for the half time show, every game, because they had the best band I know in the state of Georgia. People have always bragged about how good they were."

"All of us were workers"

"I been doing work ever since my legs and arms and hands were strong enough for me to lift and balance myself."

From the end of the Civil War through the beginning of World War II, rigid segregation laws and cultural practices restricted blacks to less-skilled jobs in farming, housekeeping, and industrial work.

Picking cotton in Georgia. Photograph courtesy of Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-45067.

Even though they lived in town, most community residents worked on farms through the early twentieth century. A few families owned their own land, but the majority raised cotton as sharecroppers or laborers on other people's farms. Many African American families worked on the Florence Farm, just west of town.

"We picked cotton... [It] was mostly a black thing... They would plant cotton and have us to come pick it for them. If you got [a] long bag, they'd knock ten pounds off the bag. If you did it in a basket, it was seven pounds knocked off. But you never did get that hundred pounds.... Anything that was in the farm department, we did it."

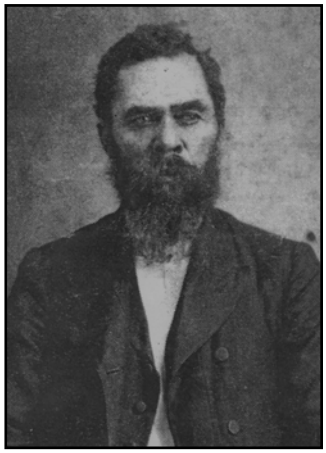
"I went into mail handling. We handled all the parcel post mail, the railroad did. So I run from Atlanta to Chattanooga, and put off the mail at Rockmart, Rome, and Dalton, and Cohutta."

A. W. Young working on a railroad car.

Some African American men worked for the railroad. While white men assumed jobs as engineers, agents, conductors, and section foremen, African American men were often section laborers, but one or two served as "yard porters" at the depot. The porters assisted people up on the train and helped them with their needs. They wore pressed suits, and their hair was cut and shoes shined.

"So we was the only three out of Powder Springs worked for the railroad in a way handling on the train. Now, back way then, Mr. John Henry Clark, he was on the track. And Mr. Leonard Hunter, he was on the track. And Emmett Hunter... that was some hard work. I couldn't have stood that now... Picking up stuff—that's just hard work."

A few men pursued more professional occupations, including teaching and the ministry, although the latter was most often a part-time job. According to the census records, some followed trades such as blacksmithing, carpentry, and or barbering, while others worked as chauffeurs, dray drivers, or "private servants." The census listed many men as laborers, who might be performing "odd jobs" or working at the lumber mill, the cotton gins, or the Lindley Hotel. A few men worked in the bale room or kept the grounds at the segregated Coats and Clark Thread Mill after it opened in 1931.



Alex Penn, minister.

"My granddaddy was the first barber. He did it up here in Powder Springs up there, but he cut everybody's hair. He was the only barber up there at that time."

"My first job was working down here at Bob Landers'. He had a planing mill. It was down here on the corner. People brought their trees to be cut up into lumber, and he was dealing with gravel, concrete, sand, and all of that. We would go down there and work if he had work for us to do. And we was getting seventy-five cents an hour."

Doing laundry, Cobb County. Photograph courtesy of Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, COB 027.

Black women had fewer opportunities, and most utilized their traditional homemaking skills. Many worked as laundresses in their homes, often with the assistance of their daughters or other children. Others cooked or worked in the hotel and in the homes of white families, initially in Powder Springs but by the 1930s in the mill village at Clarkdale. "That's the only money that was down there," recalled one resident. A few women, including Agnes Austin and Pocia White, gained notoriety as midwives who delivered babies for both white and black families. "Anytime they wanted somebody delivered or something, they'd come get her," recalled one of Anges Austin's family members.

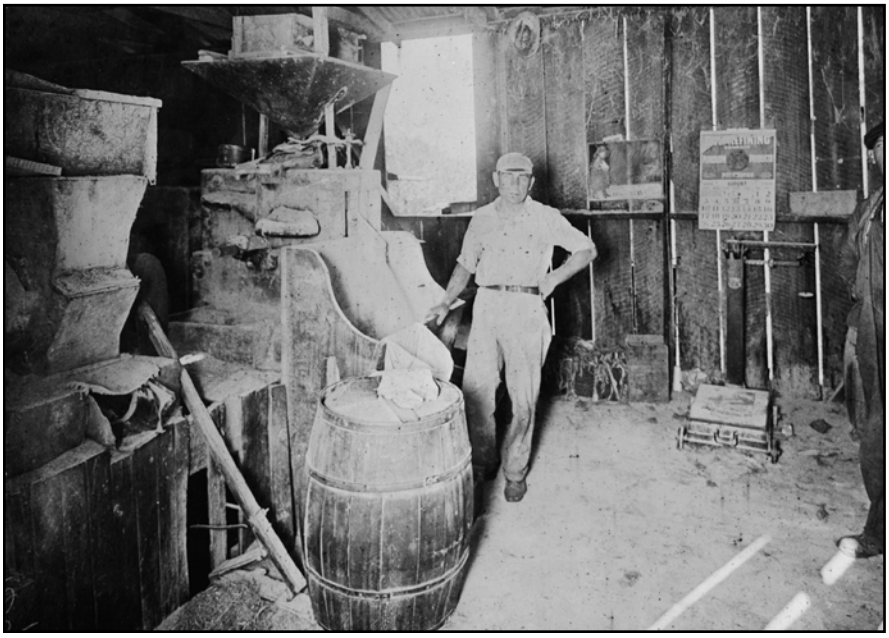
Midwife Pocia White

Midwife Agnes Mae Waldon Austin

"I remember my mama going to work for them probably around 8:00 in the morning. She would be there and sometime it would be 8:00 before she would get back. Because each one would get up different time and have breakfast. And breakfast was fixed for each one."

"They had children that loved her as a mother because she pretty much took care of them."

"She would go down there [to Clarkdale] and keep people's children that wasn't old enough to go to school. Clean up for them down there."



Murray Landrum at his grist mill, Powder Springs. Photograph courtesy of Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, COB 051.

Children also contributed to the family economy. Early-twentieth century census records list boys as young as ten as farm laborers and girls ages thirteen and older as private family servants. Even when they did not have a regular occupation, children helped their family with their paying work, especially the substantial loads of laundry. They might earn a small amount of money by helping to chop or pick cotton, "toting coal" to people's homes, or cleaning up at the corn mill or stores in town.

"Our little mill was up there 'cause I used to work up there for [Murray Landrum]. I was little. I used to go up there and kind of help clean up and do round up there before he died."

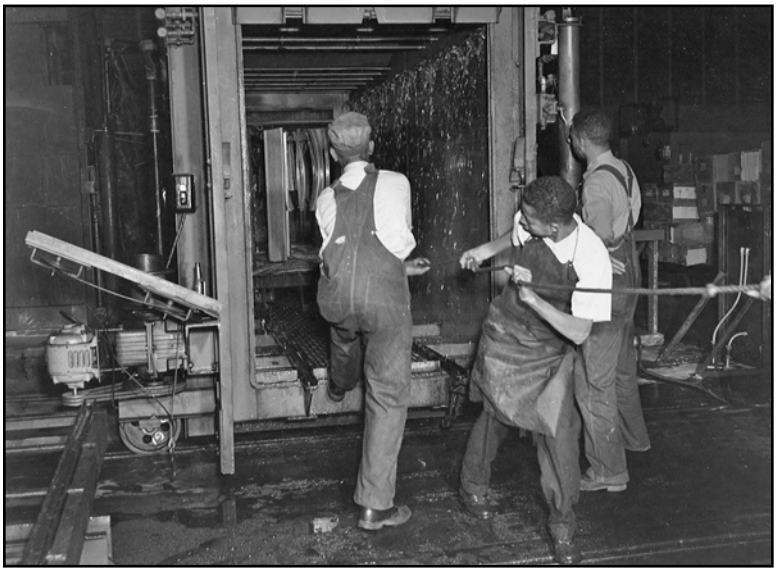
Lindley Hotel, where many community members worked. Photograph courtesy of Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, COB 585.

"I had to get up a lot of mornings. It'd be cold. But I get up there [at the Lindley Hotel] and get that fire started. My auntie, she'd get up there around about 4:30 or 5:00 'cause she was the only one cooking in that old sink back there... When she'd get through cooking, I'd put some dishes and wash them and put them over there and rinse them off... But you had to be careful. They was good dishes there. One would slip out of your hand, it would get away from you... I had a little apron on. I was going around, setting the plates on the table. And go around, set a bowl here, bowl there, and bowl there, and I'd come back there and set the bread here, bread there, bread there, and they had them big old glasses like that, well, set them on the table. I'd go on and pour that tea in there sometimes before I'd get the table set. 'Tea!' I had to go back and put more tea in there... They come in and eat at dinner time, they come back at supper and eat. And I had to be right there to do the same thing and then had to get them dishes. I wouldn't get from around up there 'til around about 8:00 sometimes at night. But right back there that morning... I had to get up early to get up there to cook, 'cause it'd take us two hours to get all the food cooked."

World War II opened up new job opportunities for African Americans in Powder Springs, but it was not until the 1960s, when the federal government passed new civil rights legislation, that they had access to a wider variety of occupations.

War-time industries provided new opportunities for both African Americans and women. As one resident recalled, many of the farmers proclaimed, "I'm getting out of here," and "they got out." One of the largest regional industries proved to be Bell Aircraft in Marietta, located only a short distance from Powder Springs. Both black men and women went to Bell Aircraft to seek better-paying jobs when it opened in 1942. These jobs disappeared when the war ended and the company closed.

Many African Americans who had worked on the home front or fought overseas had higher expectations after the war. With better transportation, they could now work farther from home, including Marietta, where they could earn more pay. Still, men could only find jobs in traditional occupations: laboring for the railroad, working at Stephens Lumber Company in Marietta or the Landers planing mill on the railroad flat, performing janitorial or construction work, and delivering ice.



Bell Aircraft in Marietta employed two thousand African American workers by early 1945, but the plant was still segregated. Most black employees held maintenance and service positions. The eight hundred black employees in skilled positions worked on separate assembly lines and often in separate buildings. Above, men unload a furnace; to the right, women are working on the plating and dipping line.

Pay was often low for construction jobs, and employees could not work when weather was bad. One resident, who worried about trying to raise his family without knowing how much he would get on his weekly paycheck, had a friend working at a dry cleaning business. He "would slip in the back door and try to learn how to press clothes." He kept trying to learn how to do the work although the owner said he didn't need anybody. "So directly, I finally learned how to do it. . . . And so he finally give me a job for $32.00 a week."

Some men worked multiple jobs to provide for their families. As one resident said, "You leave one job and go to another one, but I guess... you about had to." One man recalled working his day job from 5:00 in the morning to 4:00 in the afternoon. After work, he would go back home, get the dust off his face, change shoes, get a cup of coffee, and then go right to his second job which began at 4:30.

After the War, black women drew upon their domestic skills but carved out work with more autonomy. Several women founds jobs in the school cafeteria, rather than cooking in private homes. A few opened up beauty shops in their homes, while others began doing housework, ironing, or cleaning as day work for different families, instead of working in one person's home. The most common occupation in previous years—laundry—moved out to dry cleaners, and some African American women followed this trade out of the home. A few women became nurses.

Charity Penn babysitting the daughter of the Tapp family.

"My mama was a beautician, not licensed. People would come by her house and get their hair fixed. And then mama got too old to do it, my sister started doing the same thing. People would come by and she would do their hair.

Ruthie White, right, worked as a nurse for Dr. A J. Griffith at Powder Springs Hospital for 28 years.

"My mom was not a registered nurse, but everything he asked of her she could do it and would do it. She did x-rays. She administered shots. Basically anything that an RN could do, my mom could do that and more... I think she was a great nurse because everybody always bragged about how good she was."

Ethel Lee Clark prepares a coconut cake in her Butner Street kitchen, 1956. Photograph courtesy of Seven Springs Museum.

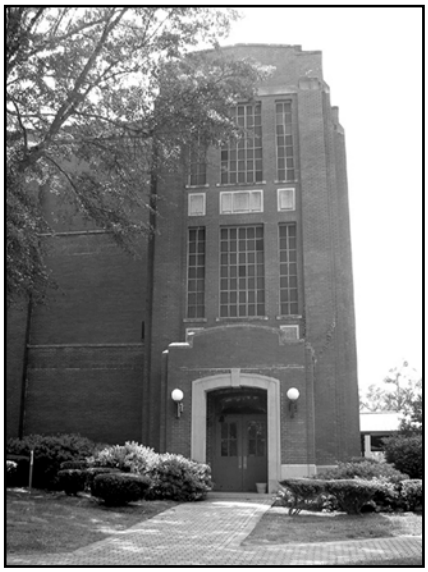
Sisters Rena and Ethel Clark started a popular local baking business producing pies and cakes. As one neighbor recalled, "She'll make them and then she'd call you, let you know she done made them. Come pick them up." Willie G Watts learned how to make fried pies, filled with fruit or sweet potatoes and fried to a crisp in vegetable oil, from her mother and her aunt Ethel. Since her aunt died in 1993 at age 81, Watts has continued the family tradition: she still makes and sells her famous apple and peach fried pies at Johnny's Steaks and Bar-B-Que in Powder Springs.

After the Civil Rights Act of 1964, black men and women found new jobs at industries such as Lockheed Martin, the former Bell Aircraft plant, which offered some of the best pay in the area. One of the most popular new employers became Coats and Clark Thread Mill, in neighboring Clarkdale. After the mill integrated in 1964, African men and women could obtain better jobs, often through family and community networks.

At these new industrial positions, blacks found steady pay, opportunities for advancement, and good benefits. At Clarkdale, "You got paid every Friday. They had [a] credit union, Christmas Club, and stuff like that. They had real good insurance," recalled one former community member. Another long-time employee added, "People working at Coats and Clark, well they wasn't making much money, but they know how to handle their budget."

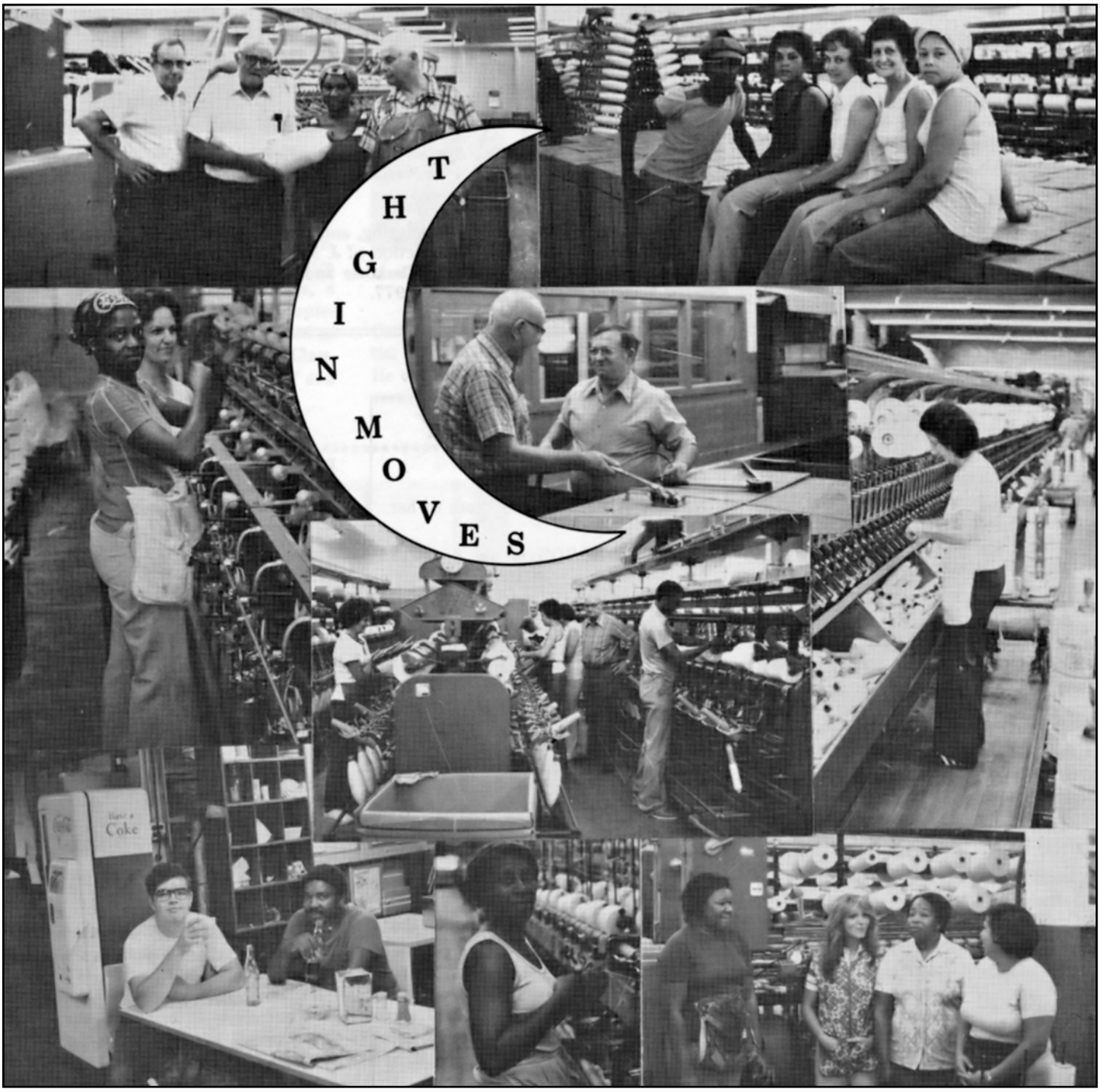
"Everybody around here that didn't have some form of skill, that was the closest place that you could go to get a job—that you could pretty much work forty hours a week. I think most all the young people around here, and quite a few older people, that's how they probably got started out in working, was working at Coats and Clark."

"It was real nice down at Coats and Clark. They used to have cook-outs and all that stuff... Your family come down and get a plate. They had fish, potato salad, coleslaw, baked beans, and potato chips... on a Saturday. They had games for the kids. I think it was in October, September one when they used to have fish fries."



Clarkdale Mill tower. Photograph by William T. Nesbitt, Jr.

When Coats and Clark closed in 1983, "it hurt everybody," said one employee. Still, blacks had been making steady advancements in other areas of employment. A few began to open their own businesses. Some women moved into retail positions at Sears and other stores. "Most all" of the women worked outside the home, remembered another woman. "That was just the way it was." Both women and men worked hard to make a living for their families.



Page from Coats and Clark Thread Mill newsletter. Courtesy of Seven Springs Museum.

"We all met down there and gathered round like most people do"

"They at one time had three cafes there in Powder Springs. That's how popular they was. They came from everywhere. That was a booming place."

Restricted from restaurants and other places of entertainment because of segregation and discrimination, African Americans operated their own roadhouses. These cafes, sometimes called "juke joints" at night, provided one of the few places for African Americans to eat, enjoy music, and socialize with their neighbors and people from other communities.

The cafés in Powder Springs became among the most popular throughout the region. People traveled from Hiram, Austell, Marietta, Douglasville, Dallas, Rockmart, Acworth, Villa Rica, and Mableton to enjoy tasty dishes, the latest rhythm and blues records on the piccolo or juke box, and fellowship among friends. "That's the only place that we had to go, if we wanted to get a sandwich or something like that," recalled one community member.

"The Café in the flat was the main topic for people. That's where everybody wanted to come...It was a nice place where people could come and have fun. It was away from all the other rigamaroll that was going on in other places, and people could just come here and enjoy their self and feel good about being out"

"On friday and Saturday nights, everybody would always say, 'I wanna go to Powder Town... They come to the Café down there. They would come from every which a way. They were fun days."

The Café on the flats, 2006. Photograph by Jihan George.

Young people in the neighborhood remember the Café on the railroad flat, operated from the late 1940s through 1986, as a place to meet and date other young people. Although the room was small, they moved the piccolo and tables so that they could have room to dance. On Friday nights, they brought the juke box outside, remembered one resident. "We blocked the road out and danced in the road." Recalled another, "That was our hang-out place. Back then, we didn't have places, McDonalds and things like that, like we have now. So we all went around and just hung around the Café."

Many young people gathered here to play games, such as pinball. "Mama always taught us to be the best at everything we try to do, so I'd get down there, and I tear Harvey's pinball machine up," recalled one of the most skilled players who got it up to ninety-nine free games. Harvey Young, the business owner at the time, would have to unplug the machine after this young man left or let everyone play free. "Harvey would say, 'Young man, I don't know what you doing to that machine—can't nobody do that like you but you, so when you finish, unplug that game 'cause I can't make no money!'"

"They had a juke box, that was big time, a juke box, 'cause I used to love to dance. We had the broomstick skirts and the crinolines. I used to take mine and if it wasn't big enough, I would take it and starch it."

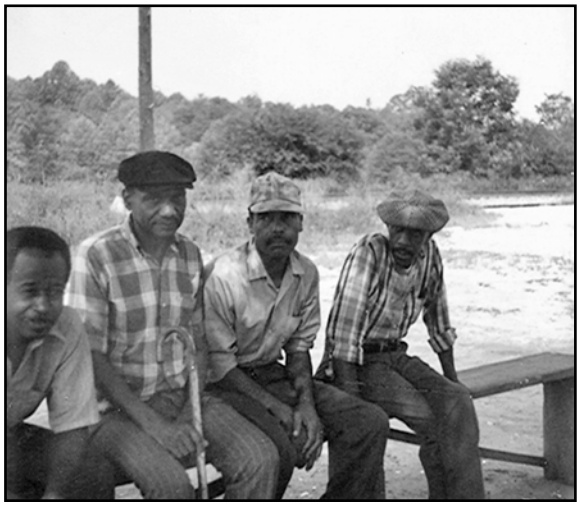
Baseball and softball teams gathered at the Café on the flat before and after their games. "Most of the time we meet up down there at the Café, and we practiced down there across the railroad in the ball field down there," recalled one community member. After playing games, the youth softball teams would congregate at the Café, where the team members "partied and told them we won the game."

The front of the Café on the flats, 2006. Photograph by William T. Nesbitt, Jr. and Mary Swinchett.

"We used to have a good time back then! A crowd of girls would get together and we would all go down there and just put us a nickel in and dance. And get us a dill pickle out of the jar or... those pickled pigs feet."

Jitterbugging, Memphis, Tennessee. Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress, USF34-052589-D.

"Everybody get off out there at the [railroad] station and the Café is right there."



Walter Harris, Marvin Lee Young, Ruben White, and Morris Florence, left to right, visiting on a bench outside the Café on the flats, 1969.

"Then, later on, Arthur Young built a café and a dance floor. And that's why we called that the juke joint cause we could dance down there. People came from everywhere...because that's the only place they had like that."

Dancing at a café on Saturday night, Clarksdale, Mississippi. Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress, USF34-052486-D.

"They had more fun going on in Powder Springs than they did in Marietta because after about 8:00 on friday, Saturday night, they come to Powder Springs. That would be the place down there. They called it 'jumping place.' Everybody in Marietta come to Powder Springs."

Saturday afternoon at a café in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress, USF34-052483-D.

The cafes served the young and old, although the youth had to be out by 7:00 p.m. on Friday nights because "that's when the grown ups were coming in." On weekend nights, the Café became a "jumping place" primarily for adults. They put the piccolo outside and it played until midnight, when the owner had to pull the plug. In the late 1940s and 1950s, as many as two or three hundred people would gather in the streets to listen to the music, dance, and enjoy spending time with friends.

"They'd take the piccolo out of the Café, set it on the street, block the street off, and get a street dance. You know the crowd's coming. Powder Springs was popular back then... There would be two or three hundred people out there in that street dancing around that Café back then... That thing never stopped playing."

Arthur "Foots" and Mattie Lou Young operated another cafe on Butner Street. Mattie Lou cooked the food, which included "fried chicken and real food." The "Fall-Out," as it was called, also served beer and attracted an adult clientele. It stayed open until midnight on weekends, and "everybody hang out around there."

"On the weekend, they knew they were gonna have a crowd there. She'd get about three or four hundred people. Keep the dishes washed up, and they had them big old deep fryers and things like that, and it don't take long to cook stuff. And had people to wait on, had tables sitting out here, and you'd come in, sit down and eat, and they'd wait on them. Of course, they was selling beer there too. And when you selling beer and stuff, that's when your crowd gonna come, where they can drink. But it wasn't no violent place; you just sit down and drink."

"We used to play a lot of baseball"

Baseball, "America's favorite pastime," became one of the favorite entertainments in this community.

Baseball drew local residents together for fun and recreation, linked this neighborhood to other African American communities, and brought notoriety to several community members. As one former resident recalled, "Baseball was the only thing they had to do out there."

"Back then, we didn't have no Little Leagues. We just got up a team and played."

Children grew up playing baseball at school recess and at home in their backyards and nearby pastures. "This is what we did. This was all our recreation," recalled one resident. Another community member remembered his father buying him a little baseball glove and a rubber ball, which he threw against the house and caught, just like he was playing ball.

"Back then, you didn't have parks and things. We'd get down in the cow pasture or the mule pasture, and we'd have us a baseball game. Somebody do something we didn't like, we'd just fight. Get it over, and then rest, and go back and play baseball."

"Harvey Young was the sponsor of the Clarkdale Eagles, and he still sponsored us after we moved to Marietta. He just loved baseball so that he just took us under his wings and made sure that every year that we were ready to play, when the season began."

The Clarkdale Eagles baseball team.

"We had a lot of black employees that was working at the Coats and Clark, and that's one reason I think we was able to play there, because we didn't have integrated baseball teams. We just had blacks play blacks, that's all."

Many community members played with the Clarkdale Eagles baseball team which began in the late 1940s. The Eagles played at the Clarkdale baseball field from June through September. Crowds of up to two hundred spectators might attend the games, which became important social events for visiting and courting. The Clarkdale Eagles played in the Branch Rookie League and the Georgia Cracker League, and competed against teams in Atlanta, Dallas, Hiram, Cartersville, Rome, and Chattanooga. The team later moved to Marietta to play at Larry Bell Park and became the Marietta Eagles.

"Back then, if you couldn't throw a baseball a hundred miles an hour, you didn't get the chance to pitch. Has been some outstanding baseball players in this area."

A. W. Young played for the Atlanta Black Crackers. Photograph courtesy of Seven Springs Museum.

"The baseball field at Clarkdale "was fantastic. It was nice... The field at Clarkdale was just like the Atlanta Braves field now. They kept that field up, I mean it was nice."

"Everybody would just be hollerin' and cheerin' their team and have a good time."

The Clarkdale baseball field, where the Eagles played. Photograph courtesy of Seven Springs Museum.

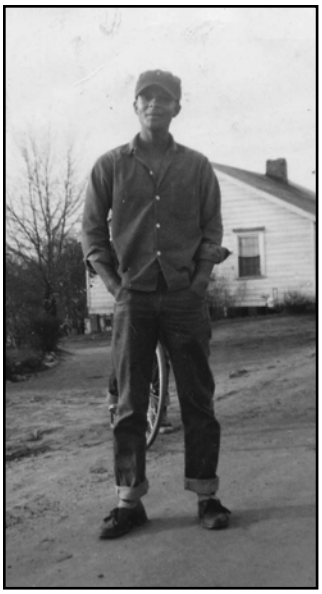
Baseball brought notoriety to several of the Eagles. A.W. Young and Melvin Austin went on to play semi-professional baseball with the Atlanta Black Crackers, a member of the Negro American League. Young might have been able to play professionally "if they'd have been taking the blacks at that time, but they wasn't taking them. He had to work, so he had to give it up." The National Baseball Congress recognized Lionel Watts as an all-star player for several years, and selected him for the All-League Baseball Team for the Georgia Cracker League.

"We used to go out of town and play softball and stuff. We went like Villa Rica, Paulding County, Rockmart. Everybody just get on the back of a truck and just ride. Sometimes they have vans and stuff like that—picking everybody and go. We had a nice time."

The excitement about baseball spread into the community with the creation of baseball and softball teams for the neighborhood children after World War II. William and Lionel Watts coached teams for both boys and girls. They played on the field in Powder Springs Park, and then the children walked up to the café to socialize afterwards. These teams often traveled to other towns to play games. When they returned, they might have a picnic at the park, enjoy a parade for all of the players, or gather at the Café on the flat to socialize.

"Most of the time, we meet up down there at the Café. And we practiced down there across the railroad in that ball field down there."

"The field they built now used to be the black-only field. We used to have little softball tournaments down there. All the blacks in the surroundings get together, get their little teams, and we go down there and play."



Lionel Watts

CERTIFICATE OF MERIT

All-League Player

1969

NATIONAL BASEBALL CONGRESS OF AMERICA

This Certifies That LONELL WATTS was officially selected on the All-League Baseball Team, composed of 16 players, in the GEORGIA CRACKER League, affiliated with the National Baseball Congress for year designated above. This selection was approved by the National Baseball Congress.

Signed: Raymond Dumont PRESIDENT

Lionel Watts' Certificate

"We entertained each other"

"I'd come home with a big bag of marbles, and my grandmother would get on to me. She'd say, 'You quit playing marbles and play with the girls. Don't play with the boys.' That was a boy's game, shooting marbles. But I was in the boy's game... And I got a lot of whippings because whatever my brother did, that's what I would do. If he climbed a tree, I climbed a tree. I caught myself trying anyway."

Community members created much of their own entertainment, enjoying time with friends and family.

Children played games in their yard and around the neighborhood, including stick ball, baseball, basketball, hopscotch, jackstones, horseshoes, and other games that required them to "use our own imaginations." Sometimes they rode bikes or skated in the street. Girls made dolls with grass hair out of Pepsi and Coke bottles. Some children went fishing, swimming, and "took the inner tube out."

"We were always used to going to the creeks and swimming, because we were always out picking berries or just out in the woods doing things. And whenever we wanted to go swimming, we'd just jump in the creek. We didn't have to worry about nobody bothering us or anybody saying anything to us, so that's what we did."

Sandra, Harriett, and Fletrice Turner, May 1955, near their house on the corner of Anderson and Atlanta streets.

"We'd have a good time! We used to play the rain games, like Little Sally Walker and London Bridge, and all those."

Children playing along Butner Street.

Many people traveled to the theater at Austell to go to the movies. One resident remembers paying ten cents to go to a "little movie theater" in downtown Powder Springs, where they put up a "little screen." Whites sat on one side of the aisle and blacks sat on the other.

"On Saturday evenings, a lot of the time, we all used to get together in a crowd and walk uptown, get us an ice cream cone."

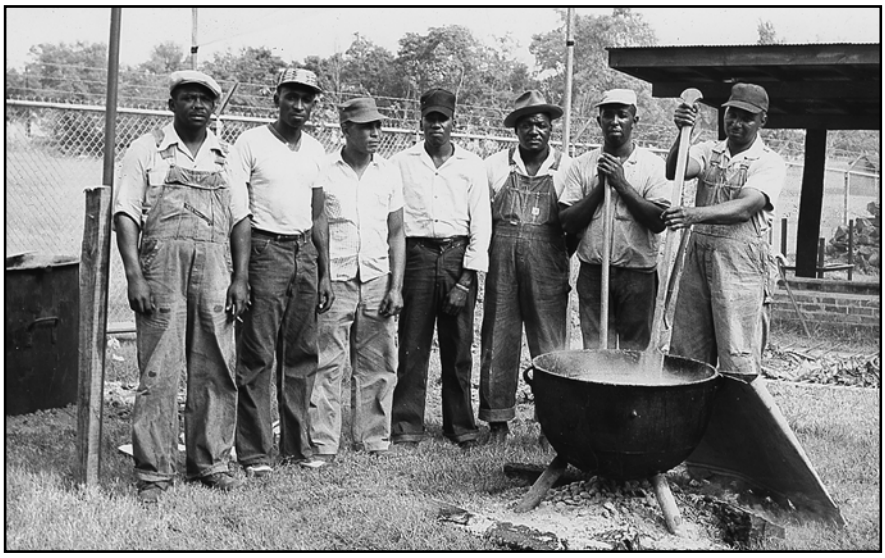
This building, 3880 Broad Street, once housed the "little theater" in Powder Springs, where community members watched movies. Photograph by Mary Swinchett.

One of the most popular community events that brought family and friends in the neighborhood together was Hattie White's Easter egg hunt. "When Easter used to be coming, Ms. Hattie White, she'd hide eggs down there," recalled one resident. "They had a place right down there by the sanctified church. And Hattie White, she'd hide eggs for the children."

Hattie White

Nobody did anything on Easter but come to my mama's house. I mean everybody in that neighborhood, old and young. And they would bring their eggs to my mama's house and would hide Easter eggs. Mama would hide the eggs, she and maybe two or three other old people, but they would have to bring them to mama's house. Some of the young people were still grown and had kids of their own, and they were bringing their kids to Mama's house for Easter. The last time mama hid the eggs was over right back of Ms. Essie's house where they have built a school. Mama did that as long as I can remember. That was one of the things that she did that stood out in the neighborhood was hiding the Easter eggs for everybody."

"Many residents fondly remember the barbeques sponsored by Coats and Clark Thread Mill. "People would come down to the ballpark," recalled one former employee. "They'd start around about 9:00 in the morning. And start serving plates and things, I mean, it was really good food down there."



Luther Arnold, Melvin Bostic, Ervin Penn, Joseph Burr, Rufus Luster, Roger Pinkston, and Willie Foster (left to right) preparing barbeque for Coats and Clark Thread Mill's Twenty-fifth Anniversary, 1958. Photograph courtesy of Seven Springs Museum.

"It was the only place to get a haircut unless you wanted your mother to do it herself. He used a straight razor and then he slopped that witch hazel on you. It wasn't a happy experience."

"People would go there, get their hair cut. Then, they'd come over [to the cafe] and get them a sandwich, listen to music, watch people play foosball, watch people play pool, play cards, play checkers. I mean we pretty much did everything down there."

The barber shop became a popular place for men to socialize. Emanuel Sims operated a one-chair barber shop in a small room behind the cafe. "He had a real serious receding hairline and I guess he wanted everybody else to join him!" remembered one community member.

"It was a typical barber shop like you see on TV where everybody just sit around and ain't nobody getting a haircut. They're just talking."

Working on cars

Sometimes men gathered together to work on cars on the weekends and in the evenings during the long summer days, including friends A. C. "Mickey" Turner and W. R. Hunter. Mickey was "the Powder Springs mechanic," remembered his son. "Everybody around brought their cars up here... parked left and right, waiting for daddy to get over [to] them."

"People walk by, you don't know who they are"

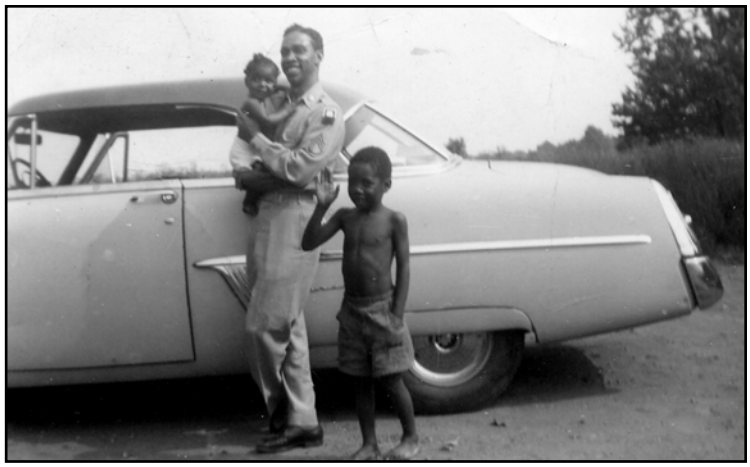
Although a small community made up of a number of close-knit families for most of its history, the neighborhood in Powder Springs has not been immune to the massive social, political, and economic changes witnessed by American society during the twentieth century.

Residents were profoundly affected by World War II and the Vietnam War as well as by the end of legalized segregation in the South. In addition to taking advantage of the new job opportunities that became available to African Americans as a result of the nation's entrance into World War II, many of the men in Powder Springs served in the military during this period. While most black men were drafted, others volunteered.

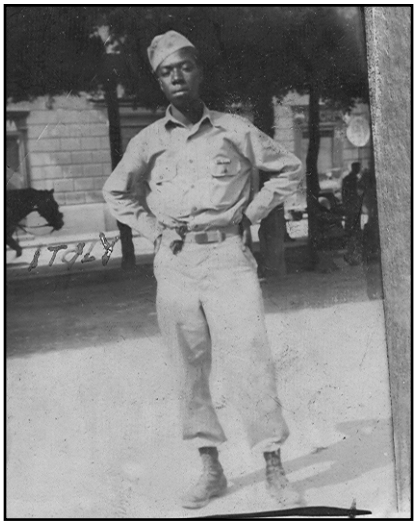
One resident recalled his mixture of joy and disappointment when he was turned down by the draft board, "I got drafted to go be examined, but I never was drafted in the Army."

Some residents, too young to serve, wished that they could follow friends and relatives into the military. Although grave markers in church cemeteries such as New Hope's reflect that many men who served returned home to live long lives, there were others who were not as fortunate.

The second world war opened the door for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Black residents



A.J. Penn



Serving overseas.

A.C. *Turner (at left) and friend.*

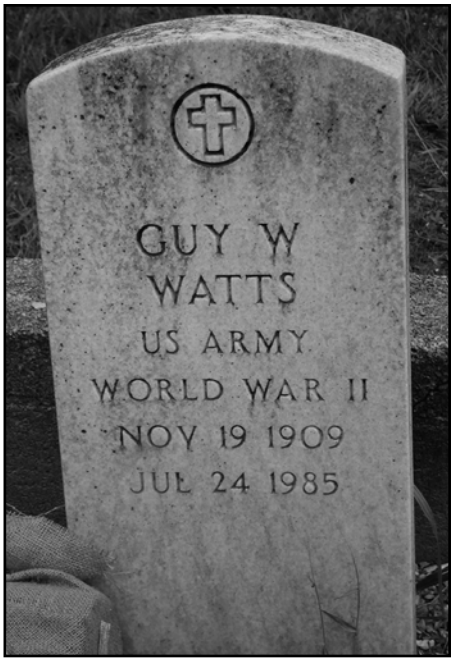
Derrick Arnold

"This was the thing that was taught to me while I was in the Army. I did have rights and that people were depriving me of the rights that I had, but I didn't really care about those rights because I wasn't interested in doing those things 'til I went off."

of Powder Springs took advantage of the new occupational and educational opportunities that resulted from the break down of Jim Crow laws. While the Coats and Clark Thread Mill in Clarkdale had employed African Americans in selected positions since its establishment in 1931, it did not fully desegregate its workforce until 1964. By 1968, the Cobb County school system was finally following suit.

At the tail end of the Civil Rights Movement, America increased its presence in Vietnam. Black men were overrepresented in the number of troops drafted for military service. Some returned from the experience determined to receive the rights to which they were entitled as American citizens. For Aaron White, military service would have a deep impact, revealing the ways in which his rights were being denied. According to White, "My eyes were open to things that I was due as a citizen and as a human being. . . . I felt like since I had served my country, I was equal to any—to all men."

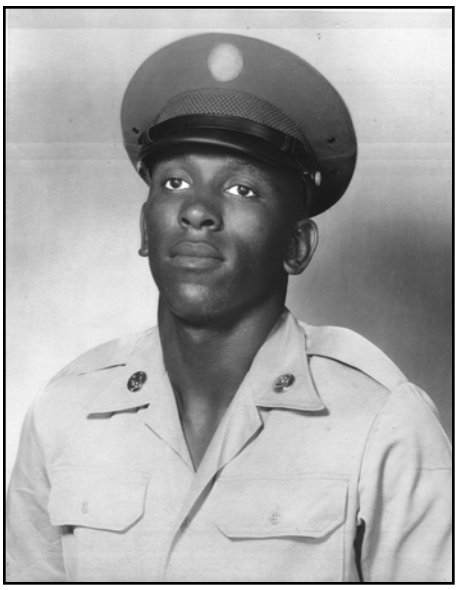
After being discharged from the Army, White returned to Powder Springs in 1970 to find a part of the town was still segregated. The swimming pool in Powder Springs Park did not admit blacks. When White insisted to the owner that he and his cousin should be permitted entrance, the police supported him. Despite finding broken glass at the bottom of the pool, White and others persevered and the pool was finally opened to all of the people in Powder Springs.



Headstones in New Hope Missionary Baptist Church cemetery. Photographs by William T. Nesbitt, Jr., and Mary Swinchett

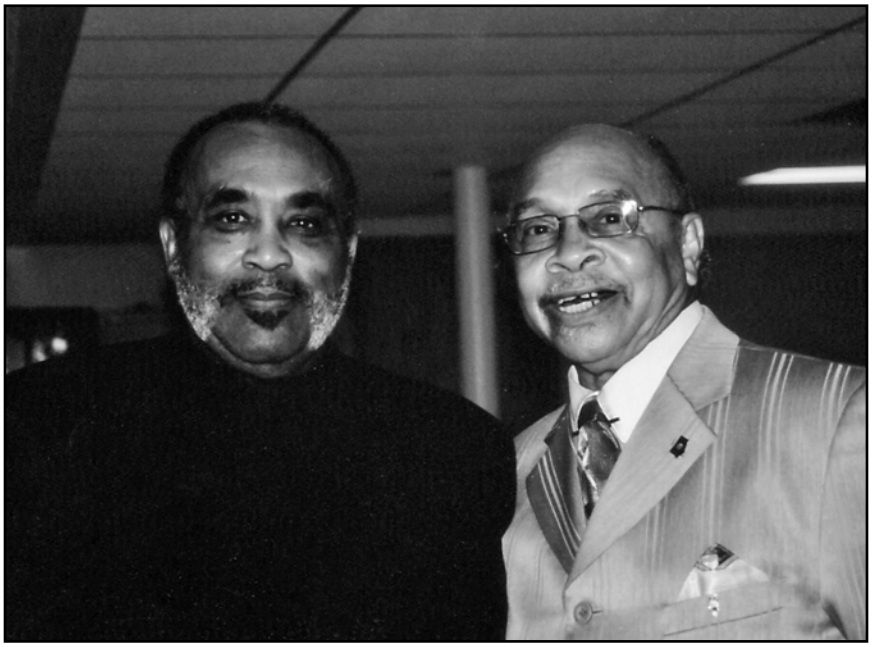
As one resident commented, Powder Springs has grown from a "little old town to big stores and shopping centers and grocery stores" in the matter of just a few decades. The people of this town have joined much of the rest of the nation in being part of a faster-paced, transient culture. New residential developments dot what was once surrounding farmland. Whereas every passer-by was once instantly recognized, now, as one community member put it, "people walk by, you don't know who they are." Many of the community's past traditions are falling by the wayside as reflected in the comment by another resident that "back then people had the respect of their neighbors to discipline their children which we don't have anymore." Many of the children have moved off to other places and, increasingly, stories and memories are of members of the community who are "no longer living."

This experience of change makes it all the more important to reflect on the history of this community and to note that despite drastic growth, it is still held together by a core of families who hold dear the bonds formed over time by church, school, kinship, work, and recreation. Floyd Penn, who was one of the children who moved off to another place, has made sure that he maintains this connection by returning every week to be with friends and family at New Hope Missionary Baptist Church. Powder Springs "is home," he said, "either way you want to look at it. . . . It's just like a family reunion every time I come out here."



Aaron (Bo) White

"I took my cousin and I went to the pool and I asked this guy, 'How much you charge to get in?' And he said fifty cents. So, I gave the guy a dollar, and I put it up on the counter and he looked at me, and he didn't want to take the money. . . . He said, 'Well, you can't go in.' I said, 'Well, if I can't go in, then you have to close the pool.' I said, 'This is a public pool, I am a citizen of this town. I live in the city limits, and you have no right to tell me I can't go in.'"



School mates and longtime friends, John Stephens and Floyd Penn. Photograph by Ann McCleary.

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All projects at the Center for Public History are collaborative endeavors involving faculty and students. For each of us involved in this Powder Springs community study, our work was a labor of love. Many students exceeded class requirements because of their dedication to the project and to the community members with whom we worked. We all feel privileged to have been able to help the community collect and preserve its history.

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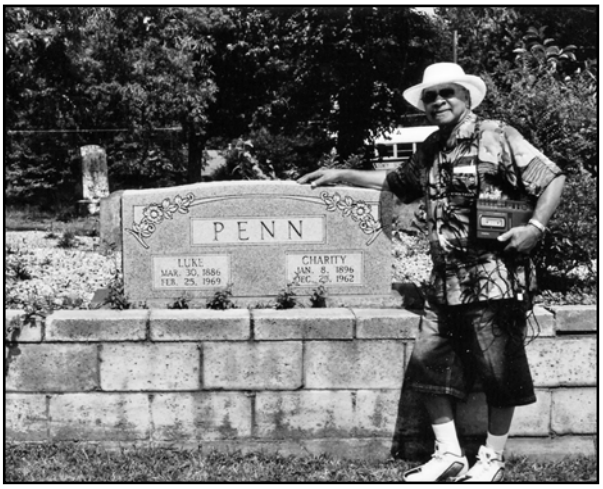
The Center for Public History researches, documents, preserves, and promotes public discussion of the history and resources—architectural, cultural, and folklife—of western Georgia and the surrounding region. The Center creates and maintains an archive for all of its research and fieldwork activities. For more information about the Center for Public History, call 678-839-6141 or contact us by mail at Center for Public History, Department of History, University of West Georgia, Carrollton, Georgia, 30118. Our website address is www.westga.edu/~history/center.htm

Doris Turner and Charity Turner with project directors Ann McCleary and Catherine Hendricks. Photograph by Calvin Cruce, *Atlanta-Journal Constitution.*

Doris Turner. Photograph by Calvin Cruce, *Atlanta-Journal Constitution.*



Floyd Penn. Photograph by Catherine Hendricks.

Willie G Watts, Lauretta Hannon, and University of West Georgia students Barron Hamlin and Michelle Mannie. Photograph by Catherine Hendricks.

Essie Young. Photograph by Calvin Cruce, *Atlanta-Journal Constitution.*

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Railroad crossing at Butner Street.


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