



ALABAMA AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

BEYOND

THE BOOK

THE ALABAMA BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION
AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMITTEE

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In 2019, The Alabama Bicentennial Commission African American Heritage Committee published ***The Future Emerges from the Past: Celebrating 200 Years of Alabama African American History and Culture***. This book highlights the history, people, events, institutions, and movements that contributed to the Great State of Alabama, the nation, and world during the state's first 200 years.

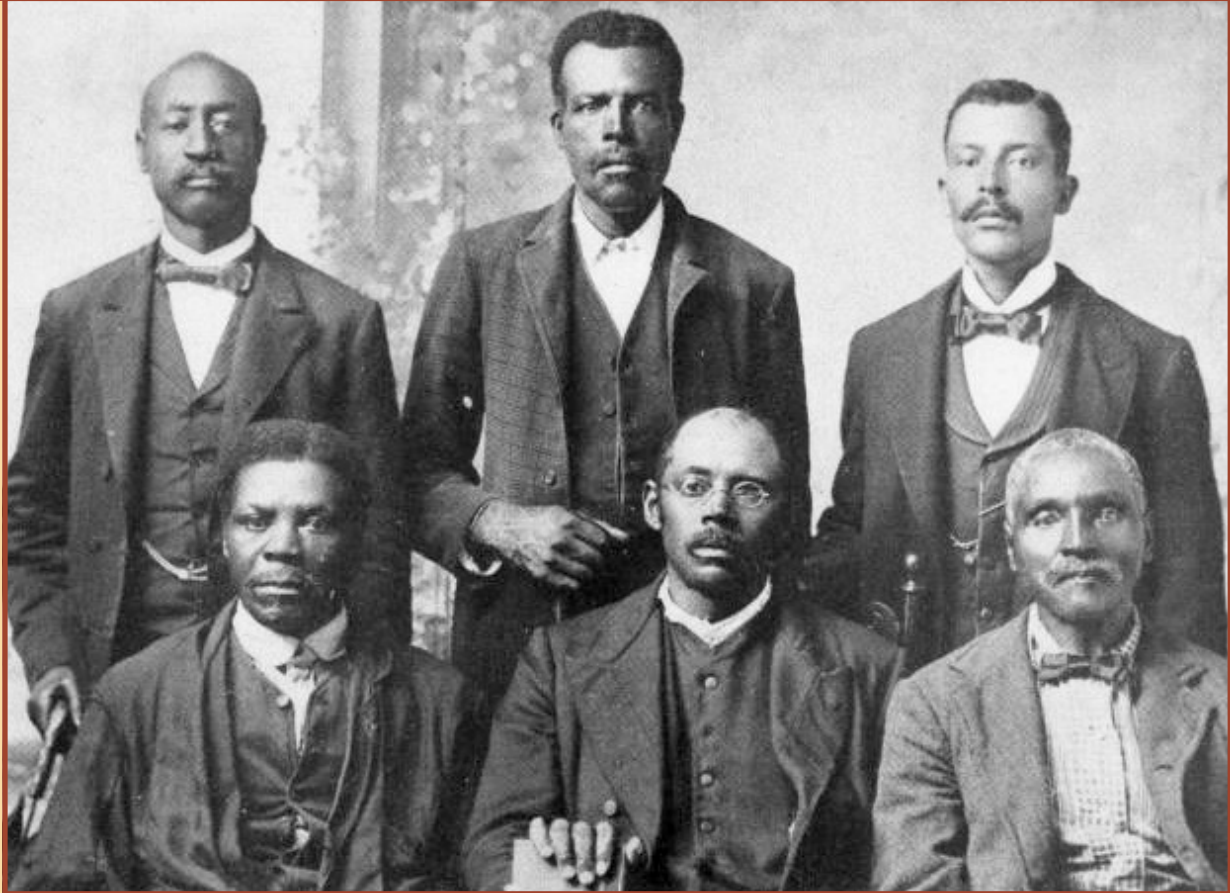
The **Alabama African American History Beyond the Book** website continues the journey and goes beyond what could be included in the book's 244 pages. On a monthly basis this site will not only highlight past Alabama African American history makers and events, it will also contain present day icons, unsung heroes/heroines, and current events. Short articles along with links to videos, photos, reference material, and additional information will be uploaded monthly for all to enjoy.

The website's goal is the same as the book's: to inspire the young and young at heart to dream big and never allow obstacles to stop their march toward achieving those dreams.



Hobson City

First all-African American governed municipality in the state of Alabama



Mayor and councilmen of Hobson City, Alabama, 1902. *Seated, left to right: Peter Doyle, Mayor S.L. Davis, C.C. Snow*
Standing, left to right: Young Pyles, Jesse Cunningham, Edward Pearce

By Theo Moore II

Hobson City, established in 1899, is recognized as the first all-African American governed municipality in Alabama.

Before the establishment of Hobson City, the black settlement in Oxford, Alabama was known as **Mooree Quarters**. Although socially excluded, Mooree Quarters' citizens were permitted to participate in city and county elections.

In 1899, Oxford's mayor petitioned the state to redraw the city's boundaries to exclude Mooree Quarters after an African American man was elected as a justice of the peace.

On July 20, 1899, Mooree Quarters citizens petitioned the county court to incorporate Hobson City, named after Spanish-American War hero **Richmond Pearson Hobson**.



The main entrance of Hobson City, Alabama, circa 1960s.

In 1901, **S.L. Davis**, the first Mayor of Hobson City, spoke at the **National Negro Business League** (founded by Booker T. Washington) in Chicago, Illinois.

In his speech, entitled “Founding of a Negro City,” he shared the methods of establishing and sustaining a Black municipality to professionals in attendance at the annual conference. This gained Hobson City attention amongst Black communities across the nation.

Specifically, S.L Davis was able to get the attention of Booker T. Washington, who would later assist in the city’s efforts of establishing a school for Blacks in Hobson City and neighboring rural communities.

In 1905, **Professor Charles Edgar Hanna** established the first school in Hobson City called the Hobson City and Oxford Academy. It served the community for over 10 years until a fire destroyed the school building.

After the destruction of the school, a proposal for a new building came into fruition through the **Rosenwald Initiative**. The Rosenwald Initiative was a program that began in 1917 by Sears and Roebuck president **Julius Rosenwald** to build schools for African Americans across the South.

With the financial assistance of Rosenwald, the support of Booker T. Washington, and money raised by the Hobson City community, the Rosenwald structure was built in 1923. The school was re-named **Calhoun County Training School**, which gained recognition from the State and County for its bricklaying, carpentry, sewing, and bicycle mechanics.



Above, right: Cosmetology and typewriting classes at Calhoun County Training School, Hobson City, Alabama, 1964.



Over the decades, Hobson City experienced growth. There were developments of homes, businesses, recreational facilities, social clubs, and churches.



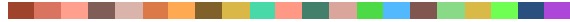
Anniston Star newspaper highlighting the progression of Hobson City, Alabama, mid-1960s.

Unfortunately, the progression of Hobson City coexisted with the tension of segregation in the South. It was not until 1972 when the federal government forced the state of Alabama to integrate.

As a result, the Calhoun County Training School integrated with Oxford City Schools. Calhoun County Training School, a grade 1-12 school, became an elementary school serving both black and white children in the first through sixth grades. A few years later, the school was renamed **C. E. Hanna Elementary School** after **Professor Charles Edgar Hanna**.

Due to the drastic changes in the 1970s, Hobson City's citizens began to experience a social and economic decline that has continued into the 21st century.

Despite the gradual decline since the 1970s, Hobson City still stands with unwavering pride under the leadership of Mayor Alberta McCrory.



Left: Grand opening of Hobson City's City Hall building, May 1980. Mayor Willie Maude Snow, the first female Mayor of Hobson City, cuts the ribbon in the opening ceremony.

Center: Mayor Judge L. Stringer shakes hands with Governor George Wallace. Wallace had been shot in Laurel, Maryland in 1972 while campaigning for president, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. Wallace later apologized for his pro-segregation stances and reached out to black communities such as Hobson City, to help the community efforts in building parks and facilities for the city.

Right: Mayor Judge L. Stringer talking with James Brown at a Calhoun County Training School event. Brown, and other notable Black celebrities during this time, were genuine supporters of Hobson City.



Images of Hobson City life. (*Far right*) Hobson City Heritage Walk, circa 1970s.

In 2019, Hobson City partnered with Hiztorical Vision Productions to create a short film documentary called *Hobson City: From Peril to Promise* that highlights the city's inspiring history and present-day revitalization efforts.

Theo M. Moore II is the Founder and Executive Director of Hiztorical Vision Productions

Watch full documentary here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byUHSHlieT0>

Resources:

Encyclopedia of Alabama: Hobson City
Hobson City Library, History Room