

PINTLALA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Next Meeting:

July 20, 2025 at 2:30 p.m.
Pintlala Baptist Church



*c/o Pintlala Public Library
255 Federal Road
Hope Hull, Alabama 36043*

Volume XXXIX, Number 3

www.pintlalahistoricalassociation.com

July 2025



L to R: Tony Hopper, Lance Hopper, Byron Garner, ca. 1977
Shellcrackers and bluegill caught in Suggs Pond. Photo courtesy Tony Hopper

2025 OFFICERS

President.....	Frank Elis	(334)315-8927
Program Chairperson.....	Alice T. Carter	(334)281-3708
Secretary	Karon Bailey	(334)224-9631
Treasurer	Ina Slade	(334)284-0337
Parliamentarian & Place 3.....	Jerrie Burton.....	(334)328-6661
Members at Large Place 1.....	Patsy Davis.....	(334)220-7004
Place 2.....	Daisy Anne Brady...	(334)398-0636
Place 4.....	Alan Davis	(334)270-8657

TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Message	Page 2
July PHA Program	Page 2
The Suggs House—Part 1.....	Page 3
Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church Celebrates 135 Years.....	Page 10

President's Message

Welcome to the summer edition of our newsletter. I would like to thank you for renewing your membership with the PHA. We could not produce and mail this newsletter without your support through your membership dues. We are looking forward to our next meeting on July 20th.

We are pleased and excited to introduce an additional researcher/writer for future PHA Newsletters—Dr. Tony Hopper. Tony comes to Montgomery County through marriage to Hope Hull native, Iva Kate Hall in 1965. He is from Jackson, Tennessee, a graduate of David Lipscomb College and the University of Tennessee. He earned both Masters and Doctorate degrees in Electrical Engineering from Auburn University. He worked for several private engineering firms in the southeast, served as University professor at four different schools in Alabama and Florida, and established his own Site Work Company in Hope Hull along with a beef cattle operation. He has authored and published four books. If all of these accomplishments were not enough, he became a performing member of the Montgomery Symphony Orchestra (2010-2022, violin), and made ten Mission Trips to Mexico and Africa. He and Iva Kate are members of Vaughan Park Church of Christ in Montgomery. Tony and Iva Kate are parents of two children, grandparents of five and great grandparents of one. I think it safe to say Tony has enjoyed researching and writing about his adopted home community of Hope Hull. Thank you, Tony for adding your talents to our PHA team!

Thanks,
Frank Ellis

July 2025 PHA Program

Our summer program on July 20th at 2:30 pm will feature Tisha Rhodes, Executive Director of the Montgomery County Historical Society, whose headquarters are in the Figh/Pickett House on South Court Street in Montgomery. Tisha served as Special Events Coordinator at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts for seventeen years, followed by five years as Director of Development. She has held other positions in the development arena with the Family Sunshine Center. She was Director of Operations for Jennie Weller Catering and Events for two years.

Her program for PHA will center on the series of exhibitions in 2025 at the Figh/Pickett House.

Please come meet Tisha and learn about our companion organization in the field of local history. Bring a friend! !



Tisha Rhodes

The Suggs House

Part I

By Dr. Tony Hopper

When my wife Iva Kate and I moved to Hope Hull in 1975, we lived for several years at 1240 Wasden Road. I was a newcomer to Alabama, having been born and raised in Jackson, Tennessee. Just a few hundred feet north of the driveway to 1240 Wasden Road, there is a rather tricky curve where over the years there have been many accidents. Right in the center of that tricky curve, on the east side, is a graveled road that led to a big, white house, that was generally referred to as “the Suggs house”. The house sat about 100 yards off Wasden Road on a slight rise with remnants of a small dairy barn and a concrete water trough nearby.

Samuel David Suggs was born in 1881, died in 1959, and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Montgomery, according to *Ancestry.com*. His father was Joel Suggs (1831-1886) and his mother was Mary Lenora Hood (1853-1928). Samuel Suggs graduated from the Medical College of Alabama in Mobile in 1905. Six years later, *Ancestry.com* documents that Dr. Suggs married Alice Belle Chesnutt (1887-1971) in New Orleans. He became a well-known and prominent physician in Montgomery. PHA member Jack Hornaday remembers Suggs had an upstairs office on Lee Street over Price Drugs. In 1955, the Medical Association of the State of Alabama awarded Certificates of Distinction to a group of Alabama physicians who had practiced medicine for over fifty years—including Dr. Samuel Suggs. Dr. Suggs had a wide range of interests, business, and otherwise, which will be examined in this article.

In 1926 Dr. Suggs conceived the idea of a million-dollar hotel in downtown Montgomery, a project which became a reality beginning in 1927, and when completed the hotel was named the Jefferson Davis Hotel. For years it was a beacon of what was advertised as “Old South Hospitality”. The *Montgomery Advertiser* published an article on September 28, 1930, revealing: “Dr. S.D. Suggs, a prominent physician, was struck down by an automobile and severely but not dangerously hurt yesterday about 3 a.m. at Montgomery and Catoma Streets. ... He was taken to Fitts Hill hospital where an examination revealed that five ribs were broken.”

In 1935 Dr. Suggs became the administrator of the Methodist Hospital in Montgomery. This hospital was formerly the Montgomery Memorial Hospital, which had been closed for several years, until in 1935 the Methodist-Episcopal Church, South, awarded Dr. Suggs a ten-year lease with “equal distribution of net profits between the conference and Dr. Suggs”, according to an article in the *Montgomery Advertiser* on November 23, 1935.

An *Advertiser* article on January 9, 1937, stated that Dr. and Mrs. Suggs lived at 1401 South Perry Street. Their daughter Mary Frances Suggs married Thomas Wesley Sewell, Sr. Their wedding was at the Catoma Street Church of Christ, with the reception at the Suggs’ home on South Perry Street.

Dr. Suggs was an avid outdoorsman, hunter and fisherman, and in 1940 he organized a group named the “Farmers and Sportmen’s Club of Alabama”, a story reported by the *Advertiser* for the first time on April 14, 1940. The organizational meeting was held at the Jeff

Davis Hotel, and the purpose of the group, according to Dr. Suggs was “the revision of present game laws, which constitute an abomination on the intelligence of the Game and Fish Department.”

DR. SUGGS' QUEST FOR OIL

In April of 1946, the *Alabama Journal* featured an article about Dr. Suggs' “Quest For Oil” on his land in Hope Hull where the Suggs home was located. The article began: “Hopeful that a veritable ‘lake of oil’ lies only 1,100 feet below the surface of his Montgomery County farm, Dr. S. D. Suggs of Montgomery, will launch Monday a \$15,000 gamble possibly destined to put the city and county on the map from an oil-producing standpoint.” His hopes, according to the article, were based on a survey completed by C.L. Williams, a geologist who had conducted several such surveys. “The farm is located to the south of the city, near the L & N Railroad's McGehee Junction.” His farm was documented as being 735 acres, and Dr. Suggs was moving forward with the drilling even though a report from the University of Alabama geologists “had said that no oil was believed to be in the county”. According to reports published by the *Montgomery Advertiser*, there were numerous other efforts going on in various locations of the state during that time, and drilling began on Suggs No. 1 in late April 1946. Drilling on Suggs No. 1 was reported by *Montgomery Advertiser* as being “temporarily halted” more than once “awaiting a shipment of pipe” and once due to the illness of the driller, whose name was never mentioned. Drilling continued intermittently until *Montgomery Advertiser* reported on January 6, 1947, that “Suggs Well Shut Down” at 1516 feet.

I remember my wife's uncle, J. P. Henry, Jr. speaking about Dr. Suggs drilling for oil, which resulted in two broken bits and no oil. I have personally seen and know where these drilling efforts took place. In both places, there is a thick-walled, ten-inch diameter steel pipe which is visible just a few inches below grade. Suggs No. 1 is roughly a hundred yards south of where the house was located. Suggs No. 2 is behind the northern end of a dam which forms a lake of approximately 80 acres. I found no newspaper reports on Suggs No. 2.

In a recent conversation with Bob Bolling, son of Humphrey Bolling, long-time Hope Hull resident and neighbor of Dr. Suggs, Bob says his father told him about a conversation regarding the quest for oil in Hope Hull. Dr. Suggs informed Mr. Bolling that he was drilling for oil, and that “If I find oil, they'll call me a genius. If I get no oil, they'll be calling me a damn fool!”

DR. SUGGS-----A MAN OF MANY INTERESTS

On October 7, 1947, the *Montgomery Advertiser* reported on a meeting of the Montgomery County Board of Revenue. One of the items for discussion was a letter sent to the Board by Dr. S. D. Suggs which “drew attention to an accident which had taken place ‘on the bridges’ below his farm at McGehee Switch. ‘This was the seventh automobile that has run off the bridges in the last year,’ Dr. Suggs alleged. He said, ‘the people, ..., were very much incensed’ and referred to ‘the bad condition of the three bridges in the swamp.’” Dr. Suggs said in this letter that “there may be proceedings against the county for \$50,000 as a result of this last accident.”

On November 17, 1963, the *Montgomery Advertiser* published an announcement that Dr. S.D. Suggs, owner of Dixie Broadcasting Company had sold the 1000-watt clear channel Radio Station WMGY to J.H. McCormick, a Montgomery businessman, subject to approval of the Federal Communications Commission. The purchase price was not revealed, and it was noted that WMGY operates only in the daytime. This action was another example of Dr. Suggs' business endeavors.



Dr. Samuel David Suggs, date unknown
photo courtesy Katherine Taylor

SUGGS POND

Dr. Suggs is best known for the previously mentioned 80-acre lake named "Suggs Pond" on most Alabama maps. This lake was constructed, according to eyewitness Kay Wilson, in the early 1940s. Ms. Wilson, who currently resides on West McLean Road, remembers her grandfather, Clarence Braddock Thames, took her to watch the dam being constructed by teams of mules with "slip pans". According to a notice published in *Montgomery Advertiser* on April 9, 1948, "Suggs fish pond" was opened to the public by Dr. Suggs on Saturday, April 10, 1948: "Caretaker will be on hand at daylight. Daily permits \$1.00, boats \$1.00. Annual individual permits \$30 in advance. Annual family permits \$50 in advance. Bring your boat and paddle as we have a limited number of boats. Bring your wading clothes and shoes."

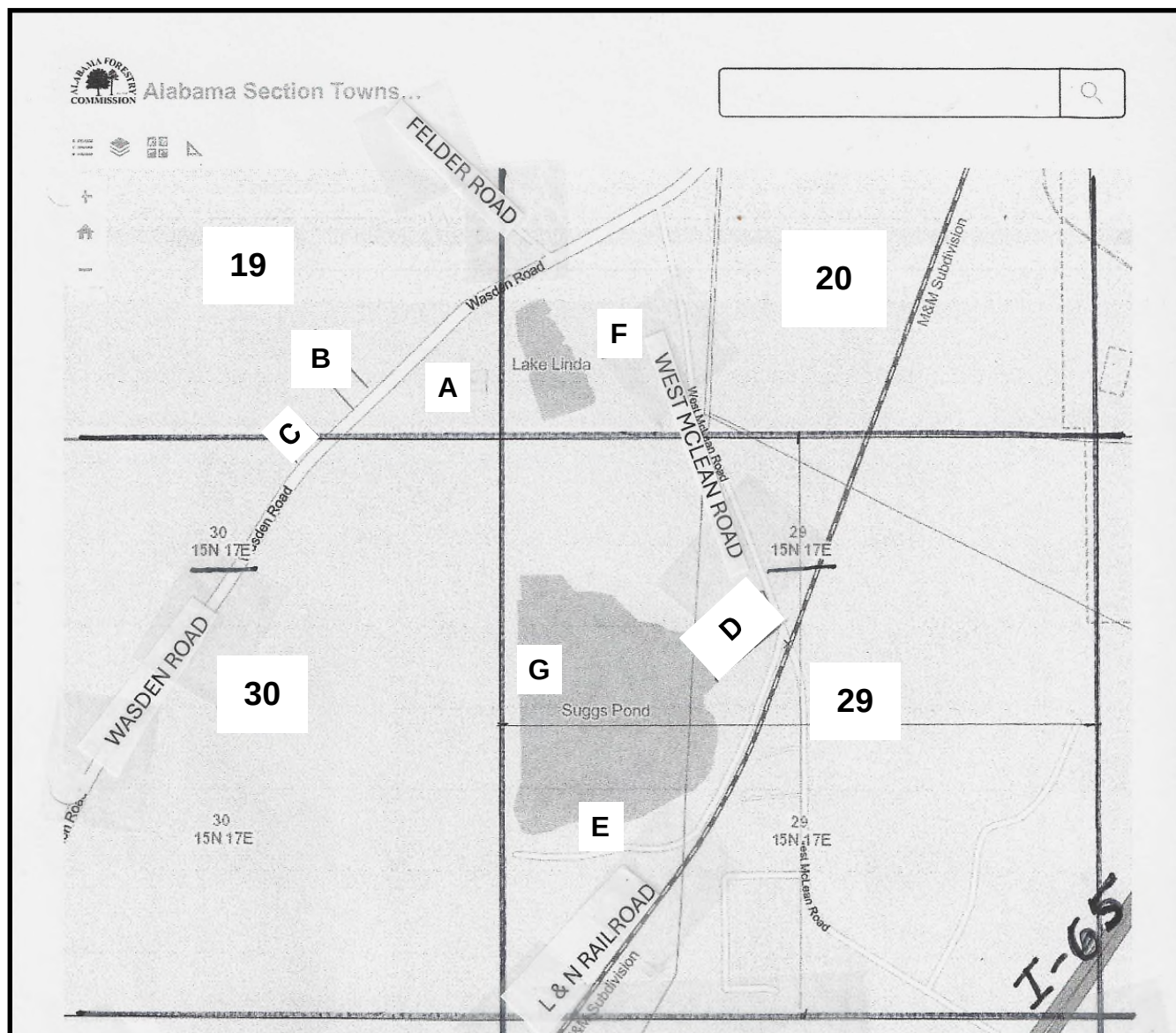
Suggs Pond was a very popular place for outings from Montgomery during the 1950s, and there were many newspaper reports of good catches of crappie, bluegill, and bass. A report of a 13-pound 9-ounce largemouth bass was published on August 10, 1950. There were "fishing rodeos" for youth, with kids brought out in buses from various locations in Montgomery.

The *Alabama Journal* published an article on February 15, 1956, with a photo which began: "ARMY GENERAL LANDS WHOPPER AT SUGGS' LAKE. Brig. Gen. C. G. Dodge gave the Air Force fishermen at Maxwell Field something to think about...a 25-pound carp."

Dr. Suggs' obituary was printed in the *Montgomery Advertiser* on September 26, 1959: "Dr. Samuel David Suggs, who practiced medicine here for over half a century, died at his home at 3405 Gilmer Ave. Friday after a long illness. Born in south Montgomery County, he lived for a long time in Hope Hull."

SUGGS HOUSE INFORMATION PROVES ELUSIVE

The original site for the Suggs house was located in the Southeast Quarter of Section 19, Township 15, Range 17. (see map below)



Legend

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| A. Suggs House
ORIGINAL LOCATION | E. Site of Russell Cabin on Suggs Road |
| B. Cabin at 1240 Wasden Road | F. First Southern Baptist Church |
| C. Hopper residence, 1380 Wasden Road | G. Suggs Pond |
| D. Current site of Suggs house | |

The Montgomery County Probate Office Land Book Archives has provided the following list showing ownership of that quarter section:

- 1889—J F F Brewster
- 1890-1892—Records Missing
- 1893-1896—N. J. Bell
- 1897-1900—E B Chesnutt and J T Chesnutt
- 1901-1934—E B Chesnutt
- 1935-1940—A C Harris
- 1941-1959—S D Suggs
- 1960-1970--Frances S. Appleton and Thomas W. Sewell, Jr. (grandchildren of S.D. Suggs)
- 1971-2025—Ernest Wayne Russell, Jr.

Based on the above information, the land was owned by Suggs' father-in-law, E.B. (Edwin Bowen) Chesnutt and his brother J.T. Chesnutt jointly and then solely by E.B. Chesnutt. Prior to the Chesnutt brothers, who came from Lowndes County, this land was owned by N.J. Bell, a well-known businessman who owned several thousand acres of land in Montgomery and Lowndes County. Prior to that, it is unclear who the owner was, but a notice filed in the *Montgomery Advertiser* on October 30, 1879, shows that an auction of a portion of the land which Dr. Suggs owned (the western half of Section 29, T 15, R 17, which contains Suggs Pond) was to be put up for public auction by Bunberry Flinn, as administrator of the estate of Josephine Flinn.

Bunberry Flinn (1805-1895) and his brother Oliver Flinn, offered their services to the well-known Abner McGehee, who owned several thousand acres of land around what was then known as McGehee's Switch, later named Hope Hull. The Flinns received land as payment for serving as overseers for Abner McGehee.¹

According to a recent email received from Mr. Bob Gamble, Senior Architectural Historian (retired), Alabama Historical Commission, the Bureau of Land Management office records (on-line) show that the first patentee of the original house site (as described above) was Abner McGehee on April 9, 1827. Part II of this Article will further probe the mystery of the date of and the original owner of the Suggs house.

SUGGS HOUSE SOLD AND MOVED

In 1971, 540 acres of Dr. S.D. Suggs' estate were sold to Ernest Wayne Russell, Jr. This tract contained the land where the Suggs house was originally located but did not include the 80-acre lake. Prior to the sale of the 540 acres, six lots with frontage on the western side of West McLean Road were sold to different owners, as were some lots on the eastern side of West McLean Road and some other lots on the eastern side of the L & N Railroad. These lots and the 540-acre tract were sold by Thomas W. Sewell, Jr. and sister Frances S.

Appleton, the heirs of Dr. S. D. Suggs (his grandchildren). In a separate sale in 1976, Ernest Wayne Russell, Jr. also purchased the 80-acre Suggs Pond and the balance of land around the pond from Suggs' heirs.

In 1980, after several years of vacancy and neglect, Lester Stokes and his wife Naomi of Hope Hull became interested in purchasing the Suggs house. During an inspection visit their son, Mark, opened a closed door inside the house and was extremely frightened by the sight of skeletal remains. Screaming and scared, he shouted to his parents to come and see the sight before him. As it turned out, the bones were the remains of several goats that had apparently been trapped inside the vacant house. The goats belonged to Joe Hall, who had rented the land from Wayne Russell for several years.

Lester and Naomi Stokes bought the Suggs house and hired a man from Sylacauga to move it for them to one of the lots on the western side of West McLean Road, with plans to return it to livable condition. This lot was one of five waterfront lots bordering the Suggs Pond. The house was jacked up and placed on a set of I-beams supported by heavy axles and tires, ready to be moved.

In Part Two of this article, which will be in the October 2025 PHA Newsletter, the adventure of moving the Suggs house will be described, and the task of finding its date and the original owner/builder will be further explored.

Readers with any information related to the Suggs house, Suggs Pond and land, please contact either Dr. Tony Hopper or Mrs. Alice Carter.



Lester and Naomi Stokes on Front Steps of Suggs House in 2000.
Photo courtesy Lester Stokes

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Author would like to thank the following for their assistance in the preparation of this article: Lester Stokes, Margery Henry, Kay Wilson, Steve Sewell, Katherine Suggs Taylor, Dr. Bob Gamble

References

¹The Montgomery County Heritage Book Committee. *The Heritage of Montgomery County, Alabama*. Clanton, Alabama: Heritage Publishing Consultants, Inc., 2001.

Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church

2334 Pettus Road - Hope Hull, Alabama 36043

Vernon Gordon, Pastor

Celebrating



CHURCH ANNIVERSARY

Sunday, May 18, 2025 - Time: 1:30 p.m.

Theme: From Generation to Generation, the church shall praise Him!

Scripture: Psalm 145:4: One Generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

Guest Speaker

Rev. Frederick Palmer, Sr., Pastor

New Providence Missionary Baptist Church
15840 Woodley Road - Ramer, Alabama 36069

Brief History of Mt. Sinai Missionary

This church was organized in the late 1800s. It was known to many as the Hill church. Older members of the Church relate that in the beginning it was a Bush Arbor Church. First they shared a minister with Friendship Church on Ada-Union Academy Road. This minister was Named Ben Cole.

Mt. Sinai was built on a one acre lot owned by Mr. Joe Samuel Sellers. This Church is located on Pettus Road most often known as Fleta Road. In 1972, heirs of Mr. Joe Sellers namely John A Reddoch, Isabelle Reddoch and Mrs. John A. Sellers (Beuna Mae) signed a quit claim deed in the office of Attorney Knox McLaney. In 1975, it was incorporated by Attorney Knox McLaney and the abstract given to Warren Mathews.

Over the years, there were many Ministers namely:

1. Rev. Ben Cole
2. Rev. Jim Irvin
3. Rev. Frank Taylor
4. Rev. Abraham H. Hogan
5. Rev. ? Watkins

Rev. J.H. Patterson who as of May 1992 has served in the pulpit 37 years. There were Deacons over the years namely:

1. Warren Mathews
2. Austin Poole
3. ?? Sankey
4. Frank Johnson
5. Ardique Johnson
6. Harrison Johnson

A familiar scene on big days at the Church was Aunt Fronia McQueen with many good home cooked foods for sale such as Fish, Pigs feet, Pig tails. The crowd quickly gathered to purchase items. Information furnished by deacon Ardique Johnson. Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church. **Information furnished by** Deacon Ardique Johnson, Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church.

Submitted by Vera Kraus, Fleta News Coordinator.

Note: Bush Arbor churches are also called Brush Arbor churches.

**PINTLALA HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION**

*c/o Pintlala Public Library
255 Federal Road
Hope Hull, AL 36043*

NEXT MEETING

**JULY 20, 2025
2:30 P.M.
PINTLALA BAPTIST
CHURCH**

Join the Pintlala Historical Association

Please mail completed form & dues to:

Pintlala Historical Association

Ina Slade, Treasurer

15212 Highway 31

Hope Hull, Alabama 36043

Name _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____

Phone (Home & Office) _____

E-Mail Address _____

Areas of Interest _____

If you are interested in genealogy, please indicate family surnames _____

\$25.00 Annual Dues