

PINTLALA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Next Meeting:

October 19, 2025 at 2:30 p.m.
Pintlala Baptist Church



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

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October 2025



**The Boyd/Whigham/
Henry House**

photo courtesy
Alice Carter

The Moseley/Wilsford House

photo courtesy
Tony Hopper



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President's Message

As summer gives way to autumn, we are reminded of the rich rhythm of the seasons that has always shaped life here in central Alabama. The cooler mornings, the turning of the leaves, and the harvest traditions all echo the heritage we strive to preserve at the Pintlala Historical Association. This change of season offers us a natural moment to pause, reflect, and give thanks for the blessings of our shared history, while also anticipating the opportunities ahead to learn and grow together.

With that spirit in mind, I am pleased to share that our October quarterly meeting is just around the corner. It promises to be a meaningful time of fellowship, discovery, and learning as we continue our mission of honoring and preserving the stories of Pintlala and its people. I encourage each of you to mark your calendars, invite a friend, and come ready to engage with history that is both deeply local and richly significant. Together, let us welcome this new season with enthusiasm and gratitude.

Thanks,
Frank Ellis

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTION

In memory of Mr. Vaughan Johnson of
Letohatchee, Alabama
By Mr. and Mrs. Chuck Stanfield

October 2025 PHA Program



Ryan Blocker

Pintlala Historical Association will meet on Sunday, October 19th at 2:30 in the Fellowship Hall of Pintlala Baptist Church. Our program will be presented by Ryan Blocker, Museum Collections Coordinator at the Alabama Department of Archives and History. Ryan has served in various positions at Archives for the past fifteen years. As Museum Collections Coordinator she is responsible for the care and preservation of a diverse collection of artifacts. In addition to her responsibilities at Archives, Ryan is a past President of the Alabama Museums Association and was appointed by Governor Ivy to serve on the Governor's Mansion Authority Board.

Ryan is a graduate of Auburn University at Montgomery with a B. A. degree in History and was certified in Collections Care through the International Preservation Studies Center. Her focus for this program was on Textile Conservation and Preservation.

Ryan will discuss a quilt made by a Lee County resident using fabrics from clothing belonging to her extended family.

THE SUGGS HOUSE, PART II

By Dr. Tony Hopper

MOVING THE SUGGS HOUSE

In the July 2025 edition of this newsletter, there was discussion of the biographical history of Dr. Samuel David Suggs and the house and property which he owned in the vicinity of what was originally known as McGehee's Switch, additionally discussed were Dr. Suggs' failed quest for oil, the Suggs Pond, and the sale of the house to Lester and Naomi Stokes.

In Part II of this article, there is discussion of some details of moving the house, results of current research of its early history, and attempts to determine its approximate age and original owner.

The plan was to move the Suggs house across connecting fields and pastures, after obtaining consent of all landowners, one of whom was this writer. The map on page 17 of Part I of this article shows both its original location and its destination on West McLean Road where it stands in 2025. With an estimated weight of over 125 tons, and dimensions of approximately 50 ft x 50 ft, the move was not an easy task. The two I-beams on which the house rested were connected to a heavy-duty winch truck, and I was asked to assist by pulling the truck with a farm tractor (which belonged to my father-in-law, Joe Hall). It went well until midway across the fields, the wet prairie soil would not bear the weight, and the house became stuck. This writer brought in two bulldozers to push from the rear, and after some effort, we succeeded in freeing the house. The Alabama Power Company raised two power lines, then we were able to bring the house, still intact and with only minor exterior damage, to its desired resting place.

Prior to the move, new owner Lester Stokes had prepared a concrete foundation, but, as one might imagine, there was no way the movers could have stopped the house in exact



Suggs house in midst of move to West McLean Road, photos courtesy Tony Hopper

alignment with the foundation. We could move it either forward or backward a bit, but not at all sideways. There was no way it could have been rotated by the machinery. Lester Stokes, who is talented at performing mechanical tasks which would be deemed almost impossible, already had a solution in his mind.

Stokes went to Montgomery and purchased a load of $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood and two five-gallon buckets of heavy-duty grease. The house was jacked up again, and a single sheet of plywood was placed under each of the four sets of tires. An abundant amount of grease was placed on each of the four sheets of plywood, which were then topped by another sheet of plywood, creating a "grease sandwich". The house was lowered onto the grease sandwiches. With the right amount of pressure, the house could then be moved or turned as desired so that it was square and properly aligned with the foundation. At one point, according to Stokes, it was necessary to run a cable to the nearby L & N Railroad track to act as a pulling point, thereby allowing the house to be moved a few inches (as the top sheets of plywood slipped) with the aid of a heavy "come-along" jack.

After the Stokes couple had their old house over its foundation, with the front of the house facing the 80-acre Suggs Pond, they decided to add a basement. The house once again was jacked up and placed on blocks. Stokes rented a skid steer loader and went in under the house and excavated the dirt, making room for a full basement. The Stokes worked on the house for years and made many changes, including a spiral staircase inside, two curved staircases on either side of the new front porch, and a new back porch. Lester Stokes was a big fan of Country Music star Conway Twitty, who was at the time building a house in Tennessee. Four columns made for Twitty's house were defective, and Stokes purchased the columns, repaired them, and added them to the front of the house.

DETERMINING THE APPROXIMATE AGE OF THE SUGGS HOUSE

In a recent interview by this writer with Lester Stokes, he reported that the main beams of the house are a full twelve-inch by full twelve-inch heart pine, and that "the termites could not touch it". Stokes also said the main beams and the floor joists, which are also a full two-inch by full twelve-inch heart pine, are constructed using wooden pegs and square nails. Also, the original front porch had square columns. The original windows were rectangular (not curved at the top). Stokes stated that the large exterior cornice brackets are original to the house, notwithstanding the fact that he replaced missing cornices by making copies of the originals.

After working on the house while living in it for twenty-five years, in 2005 the Stokes sold the house (and lot) back to Wayne Russell, and the Suggs House is currently part of Wayne Russell's estate. (The Stokes had purchased that lot on West McLean Road from the estate of the heirs of Dr. Suggs.)

Of particular interest in the quest to date the construction of the Suggs House, Stokes stated during his work on the inside walls, he discovered a board on which was written, in pencil, a name and the date 1850. He does not recall the name, but he is emphatic about the date being 1850. Unfortunately, this board has been lost or covered with new interior construction, and its location, if still inside the house, is unknown.

Part I of this article shared research from the Montgomery County Probate Office records, establishing that S.D. Suggs was the owner of the land where the Suggs house was origi-

nally located as early as 1941. Records also show that the property where the house was located had been owned by E.B. Chesnutt and J. T. Chesnutt from 1897-1900 and in the single ownership of E. B. Chesnutt from 1901-1934. In an article published by *Montgomery Advertiser* on May 7, 1911, it documents that Dr. S.D. Suggs married E.B. Chesnutt's daughter Alice Belle Chesnutt. Hence, the name "Chesnutt" is connected to the house's history. It is also probable that E. B. Chesnutt and his wife lived in that house because a newspaper article published in *Montgomery Advertiser* on June 11, 1905, described the wedding of the Chesnutts' daughter Frances to A.C. Harris. Of particular interest are details in the article about the house. It was described as a "pleasant country home" and "near here" (referring to McGehees' Switch). The ceremony was performed in "the large open hall", and the flower girls (one of whom was Belle Chesnutt) "came slowly up the long hall", followed by the bride and groom. The original location of the Suggs House on Wasden Road is approximately a mile from the McGehees' Switch Station on the L. & N. Railroad. A recent visit by this writer to the Suggs House at its current location on West McLean Road verified that the description "long hall" matches the entrance hall of the house, which measures approximately sixteen feet wide and thirty feet long. From numerous articles and from Ancestry.com, it is clear that E.B. Chesnutt and his siblings came from Lowndes County, and that some of them moved to Montgomery County around 1896.

Local resident Kay Wilson states that her grandmother Maude Chesnutt Thames lived in a house on the Felder Road where Laslie Hall now resides. Her grandmother Maude Chesnutt Thames was the daughter of J.C. Chesnutt, who was E.B. Chesnutt's brother. Wilson also has stated recently that her grandfather Clarence Braddock Thames (Maude's husband) gave pecan seedlings to someone (name not recalled) who lived on the hill where this writer now resides, not far from the original location of the Suggs house. I can attest that there is one very large pecan tree on my property, there were three other very large, old pecan trees in my front yard which have succumbed to old age, and there are about a dozen other live pecan trees on our five-acre plot. Further, Laslie Hall also has pecan trees on his property, and there are still several pecan trees very near where the Suggs house was originally located. The evidence of the living pecan trees in all three locations is consistent with the fact that the Chesnutts and their relatives lived on these properties.

In 1978 the Alabama Historical Commission published a book, *Alabama's Tapestry of Historic Places*, and the Suggs house was included as a notable Montgomery County landmark.



The Suggs' House in its current, vacant state on West McLean Road, photo courtesy Tony Hopper.

This writer has recently spoken with a well-respected architecture authority regarding the Suggs House, retired Chief Architectural Historian of the Alabama Historical Commission, Robert Gamble. Gamble has studied several photographs of the Suggs House during its move and photographs of the house in its present state. He has made the following statement: *As a house type, the one-story, hipped roof cottage, usually square—but sometimes oblong—enjoyed a good deal of popularity in and around Montgomery starting about 1850 and lasting into the early 1870's. Typically, the wide eaves were trimmed with decorative brackets in the so-called Italian manner, with some brackets more elaborate than others. After 1880, under the onslaught of a raft of new architectural books and magazines that could now be easily printed and widely circulated, popular house styles all across the country, including in and around Montgomery and Montgomery County, tilted rather quickly toward what most people today call the 'Victorian' look, with asymmetrical fronts (as opposed to the symmetry of the Suggs house) and often an eclectic mix of materials, steep gables, gingerbread porches, with a corner tower or turret sometimes thrown in. Obviously such houses differed substantially from dwellings such as the Suggs House.*

Mr. Gamble continues: *Incidentally, if you look closely, you'll see that the Suggs House and the other cottages you describe so well in Part II (of this article) are smaller 'architectural cousins' of larger, two-story, hipped-roof houses like—for one example—the First White House of the Confederacy in Montgomery.*

A recent inspection by this writer of three other historic homes in the Hope Hull/Pintlala area reveals that these three houses also fit the description of the “cottage” style described by Mr. Gamble.



First White House of the Confederacy, Montgomery, Alabama
internet source

- 1) The Moseley House: located on Pintlala Old Road has a date of 1872 on its front entrance gate. This house is like the Suggs in shape and roof style. It is square, “boxy”, if you will, single-story, hip-roofed, and with a small front porch with square columns, all of which are like the original Suggs House.
- 2) The Boyd/Whigham/Henry House: briefly discussed in an article in the PHA Newsletter of July 1998, which included an early photo of the house. This house is also single-story, “boxy”, with a hip roof, and a small front porch with square columns. The article also says that a letter written by Mrs. Mamie Thorington suggests that the Boyd/Whigham/Henry House was built “between 1817 and 1853” but goes on to say: “.... It is thought that the house was built closer to 1853 because it closely resembles other old houses built by slave labor at that time. The house is put together with pegs instead of nails; the floor is hand hewn and the hinges are handmade.”
- 3) The Sankey House: This writer recently visited the John T. Sankey House on Butler Mill Road and can verify similarities to the two houses on the cover. It also is single-story, boxy, hip-roofed, with a small front porch with square columns. The Sankey House has ele-

gant cornices much like those on the Suggs House, but somewhat smaller. Nancy Dean Cutts, a living descendant of the Sankeys, says she remembers visiting her grandmother in that house, and Nancy believes that the Sankey House dates to 1844, a date verified by one of its more recent owners, Carolyn Snow.

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Dr. S.D. Suggs was quite successful in his business endeavors, one of which was the construction and operation of the Suggs Pond, which has been a source of enjoyment for many people. Unfortunately, his efforts to find the coveted “lake of oil” were a total failure. Somewhere in between those two extremes are where we find our efforts to determine the original owner(s) and time frame of the Suggs House, which very clearly predates Dr. Suggs, who acquired the land from his wife’s family, the Chesnutts. It’s somewhat obvious, therefore, that the name “Suggs House” is not sufficient, and the name “Chesnutt/Suggs House” is better. However, based on other research and evidence, it appears that the house also predates the Chesnutts.

Recent research from the Land Patent Records of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management have shown that the well-known and somewhat famous Abner McGehee, who owned more than fifteen sections (over 10,000 acres) in Montgomery County, was the original Land Patentee (its first deeded owner). Robert Gamble states: *Based on the forensic evidence that I can see as an architectural historian, I would place it within a span of time, say the twenty five years between 1850 and 1875.* Further research is needed to substantiate this postulate, but clearly the name Suggs House is insufficient. Although it cannot be determined at this time, it seems likely that the house was built by Abner McGehee or one of his descendants. If that is so, then a more historically correct name for the old house which is now located on West McLean Road, facing the 80-acre Suggs Pond, would be the McGehee House.

Anyone who has information about the house is encouraged to get in touch with either Alice Carter or Tony Hopper through the Pintlala Historical Association.



Photograph of painting of John T. Sankey House,
courtesy Nancy Dean Cutts

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ASSOCIATION**

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255 Federal Road
Hope Hull, AL 36043*

NEXT MEETING**OCTOBER 19, 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

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Areas of Interest _____

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

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