

## **“In The Colored Village” from Mascot Concentrates Magazine**

The C.M. McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library digitized and made publicly available copies of “Mascot Concentrates” Magazine. That publication was produced for the residents of Mascot and employees of the American Zinc Company of Tennessee to express interesting news and information about the town and draw everyone in Mascot closer together and improve conditions all around.” This collection consists of magazines from 1919 to 1920 and with-in those company newsletters were articles dedicated to the Mascot’s Black Community, often entitled [“In The Colored Village”](#). Here is a brief summary of information sourced from those articles.

The Mascot Colored Village, as it was called, was a tight knit mining community in East Knox County, Tennessee. The segregated neighborhood was founded by the American Zinc Company (AZC). AZC began its mining operations in the area in 1913 that spanned across Knox and Jefferson Counties. The company was a major employer and developed the community members of Mascot. The Black workers, with-in Mascot Concentrates magazine, emphasized that the AZC was one of the best advantages to living in the area. The company provided mostly safe and stable jobs in the mining field and families could support themselves and build their own community. There was even a Colored House of Representatives, a fourteen member group that maintained industrial democracy and ensured the security of the company and the safety of the workers. The AZC also developed and funded the Colored Community Hall. This space was built for the purpose of gathering and enjoyment of the Black workers. Built from the remains of an old elm tree, the hall provided an area for dancing, singing, and gaming. There were performing jazz artists such as “Andrew” and “Little George”. There, community members played games such as checkers, rumme, dominoes and more. The hall hosted events and competitions which included “tackiest dressed” and many Christmas affairs.

Mascot Colored School also provided important social as well as educational support for the community. The school first opened on August 30th, 1920 and on its opening day, parents and children were invited to experience the festivities. A devotional to the song “America” was performed, as were a piano solo, and the recitation of the poem “A Haunted House”. Community members also spoke at the events giving their support and encouragement to both teachers and students. The school hosted an array of activities which included plays such as “Uncle Si and the Sunbeam Club”. The average student population was 38 children. The head teacher was Miss Daisy Kincaid who was from Clinton, TN. The school was highly regarded both inside and outside the Mascot’s Black community. The students would chant “Knowledge is Power” as the school motto.

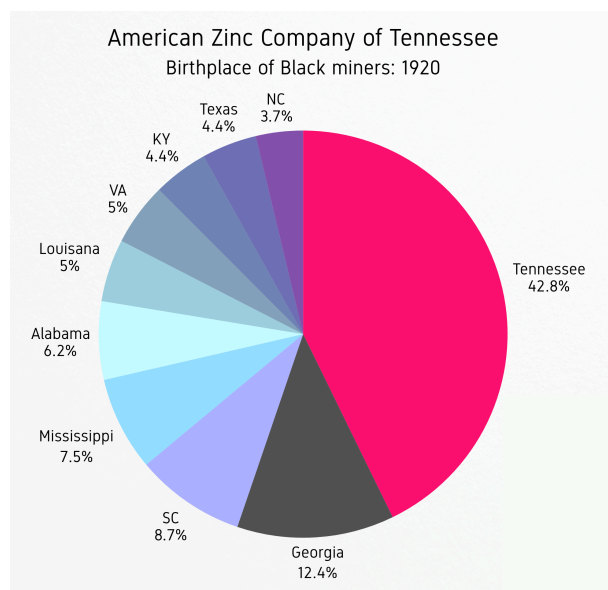
While there is no recorded name for the community’s church, the “Mascot Concentrates” listed several religious services and activities. There were celebrations for Easter and Christmas

in which the youth would perform. People were invited to attend one session on the Lord's day. Sunday school would occur 9 am and prayer service at 7pm.

The Mascot Colored Community was close knit with some individuals of note. There was Uncle Tom Foster who worked at the Mill and No. 1 Mine. When age prevented that, he transferred over to the role of the town's "best mail deliverer." While Landon Mynatt was the first Black man to have worked at the No. 1 Mine. Uncle Jim was the one who had the best hogs for eating during the winter months. Landon Mynatt and Will Branner both hailed from Sunrise TN , a nearby Black community. Mynatt and Branner both traveled to Mascot for work during the day. In Mascot Concentrates, you could hear about "Drinking Biscuit Bill" whose breakfast would be reported in the morning news. Finally, Miss Ruby and Ruth King were young college students who attended local Historic Black Colleges, Morriston and Knoxville.

During the summer, everyone would participate in the town's Gala Day July 5th. It was their way of celebrating Independence Day. The event took place at the baseball park. The Famous Columbia Band from the Dixie Theatre Knoxville would come and play. There would be competitions such as yard dashes, sack races, prettiest baby, ugliest man, and more. There were sport games as well that were played by the Mascot Red Socks.

Mascot's Black community appeared, at least through the lens of Mascot Concentrates, to be a well functioning neighborhood. With the support from the AZC and dedicated members, the community managed to build sustainable institutions such as a school, church, and community center. That infrastructure, in conjunction with stable employment, provided economic opportunities for families beyond the surrounding agricultural enterprises. That stability, as illustrated by the In The Colored Village articles, allowed for opportunities beyond the mines with some of the children of those workers moving on to attend area HBCUs such as Morristown and Knoxville Colleges.



The information provided by Mascot Concentrates Magazine was a point of entry to look a little deeper into the Black population employed at American Zinc Company. Utilizing the 1920 US Census and looking at Knox County's 13th District, we can see that there were 160 Black workers listed as working at the Zinc Mine. One of the more surprising pieces of data is the birth places of the workers. 43% were Tennessee natives with Georgia providing the largest out of state labor at 12.5% or 20 workers.

Other birthplaces included Ohio, Illinois & Indiana.

Additionally, we already know that a few people at the mines didn't live in the company town-proper, but lived in the nearby Black farming enclave known as Sunrise. Their listing in the census expands the scope of mine's economy and diversifies the numbers on housing. Twelve workers, or 7.5%, were homeowners, while the vast majority of American Zinc Company employees were renters, 92.5%. All of the homeowners lived in the area of Washington Pike, Rutledge Pike and Millertown Road while 50% of all workers were boarders in the homes of others.

The 1920 census also gave the real names of some of the workers labeled in Mascot Concentrates as "Uncle". As progressive as the magazine may have been in providing space for the reporting of Black happenings in the company town, it was 1920 and the tendency to call unrelated Black men and women "Aunt" and "Uncle" persisted. For example, "Uncle" Wash Johnson may have been an employee at the formation of the zinc mines in Mascot in 1913. In 1920, he was listed as married, but no wife was indicated in the census. He was a native of Tennessee, born in 1853. "Uncle Tom", was really Tom Foster, born in North Carolina was 54 years old in 1920 when he worked as a mail carrier. He was married to Nannie Black, a native of Virginia and they had a grown daughter living at home, Nettie. His mother-in-law was also a resident, Mrs. Anna Black, an 89 year old widow.