

## Sol Hollis

My mother's family migrated to Springfield in 1953. My grandmother's sister Minnie Pearl Spencer Smith (1936-1993) was the first relative to move to Springfield along with her husband Robert Molton Smith, (1929-2005) who was in the air force at the time. In 1957 my great-grandparents Henry (1902-1980) and Mary Elizabeth Rebecca 'Lizzie' (Hollis) Spencer (1906-1985) moved to Springfield. In 1959 my great aunt Mary and her husband Willie Kyles, moved to Springfield, along with my great uncle Henry Spencer Jr. My grandmother would remain in Alabama until 1962, when she moved to Louisville, Kentucky with her new husband Rufus Paul Duncan. Grandpa Henry and Grandma Lizzie were both employees of the Paramount theatre until their deaths. Grandma Lizzie was from a very well to do family in Alabama, family lore says that when she married a sharecropper (Henry) her relatives chided her. Lizzie's paternal grandfather was a very influential person to the white and black communities of Pike county Alabama. His name was Solomon 'Sol' Hollis and he was my great-great-great grandfather.

Sol Hollis was the patriarch of the Hollis clan. He was the son of a white slave owner Ezekiel Hollis (1820-1886), who was a Major in the Pike county Home guards during the Civil War. His mother a slave named Yassia who was half Creek Indian (muskogean tribe) and Black. Sol's maternal grandfather was a full blooded Indian who was forced to leave Georgia during the Trail of Tears with certain members of his family Sol's mother had to stay for one reason only; her mother had been a slave so she was a slave from the day she was born. Grandpa Sol was born in Marion County, Georgia in the Kinchaoponee district which was Creek lands before and during White settlement He was born in December of 1843, although some census records say 1844. Sol grew up in Russell county Alabama, until Ezekiel moved to Pike County Grandpa Sol was trained as a blacksmith which was a good profession for a Negro at the time. Sol's mother died when he was a teenager Since he was his mother's only child he was left somewhat alone. Most of his mother's family had been forced to leave the south. However he and his father would develop a fair relationship over the years. Family lore says that at some point it was discovered that grandpa Sol was part Indian, and in order to stay in Alabama he had to marry another slave. He jumped the broom with Ann Carrol Smith in 1863 on the plantation of Sam Carrol. In 1865 he and Ann would legally marry at the courthouse. Ann was the daughter of Charles Smith (1818-after 1880) and Mariah Jane Carrol (1835-1874) The two were slaves from North and South Carolina; Mariah had been sold on the auction block at five years old to Nathan Carrol. He bought her to be a companion for his elderly mother. Some time after the civil war Ezekiel gave Sol and Ann land and a small amount of money to get started, Ezekiel began to cut his ties with his son with this act of kindness. On his 100 acre farm Sol grew corn, cotton, and wheat; he also was the blacksmith for the community of Tanyard, Alabama. Sol was a very family orientated person who instilled a sense of pride into his children. Sol and his wife had fourteen children, but only twelve survived infancy The children's names were Mack, John, Josephine, Zeke, Mariah, Solomon jr., Minnie, Lemmie, Bethany, Forest, Allie, Lomie.

Before Sol died he divided his land and possessions among his children. His son John built him a smaller house on his farm in Troy, Alabama. Ann would stay six months with each of her children; she and Sol were too ornery to be together in their old age. Grandpa Sol was also known to be a bee keeper and some sort of a medicine man. It also was said that before he died he let his silky gray hair grow out and he wore it in two long ponytails, as to not deny his Indian heritage anymore. On May 23, 1926 in Banks, Alabama tragedy struck, Sol died of a heart attack at the age of eighty-two. He was buried at Antioch cemetery three days later. When Sol died he had fifty-four grandchildren, and 15 or so great- grandchildren. He left a huge legacy to his descendants; many of his grandchildren would go on to become teachers, porters, doctors, engineers, and nurses in the north. Sol guided his family through a dark period in history for minorities in the south. He also managed to acquire wealth in a society that didn't tolerate mulattoes or any person of color having more wealth than a white man. Grandma Ann settled with her oldest son Mack before she died on July 10, 1932 at the age of eighty-four. Ann is buried at the Hollis family plot next to Sol at Antioch cemetery in pike county, Alabama. In May of 1970 my mother Joyce Ann hall (1952-2006) left Alabaster, Alabama for Springfield. Her first job was at Spalding and later the American Bosh. She was a graduate of Elms College. Springfield served its purpose over the years as a safe haven for many people in search of jobs and beautiful homes. It continues to attract people although many jobs have left the city