

Rosalind Lee Walton-Russell, MSW, LCSW, ACP
1280 CR 3220
Quitman, Texas 75783
Mobile: 903-413-3808
rlwr45@peoplescom.net

November 21, 2023

The Honorable Jayne Lankford
Mineola City Council
Officers and Members
300 Greenville Avenue
Mineola, TX 75773

Dear Mayor Lankford and City Council officers and members:

RE: Recommendations for Street Dedication in Mineola, Texas

Further to my October 27, 2023, letter, I provide the attached information about my hope that this will ignite a spark of hope and encourage our youth and others to continue to record our African American history. Street naming and dedication are way to memorialize and honor prominent Mineola African Americans. At the November 27, 2023, Mineola City Council, I intend to further address my concerns about including African Americans in governance and remembering our families in street naming and dedication.

For the past two centuries dating to enslavement, the Walton family has resided in East Texas, Wood County, even before Mineola City was founded. Born in Mineola, educated in segregated Mineola public schools, married in Mineola, my late husband James Russell and I raised our children in Mineola and Quitman, and I taught social work at Texas College and provided health care service throughout East Texas for over 35 years, I am a Walton family member. Throughout oppression, enslavement, the fight for freedom, Jim Crow, and segregation, we as other Black Mineolians, not only have survived, but have thrived. Each of us can stand tall and say, "through it all I arise".

The Walton family has owned and continues to own real property in Mineola for over the past two centuries. As Private First Class my father Marvin Ashwell Walton proudly served in World War II, deployed to Germany after completing the Alaskan Highway assignment. My uncle George Spencer Walton served in World War II, Black men and Caucasian Men were not allowed to serve side by side in the Armed forces. They served in so called "Colored" brigades. I served as a Captain in the US Air Force. Sargeant Mark Darrell Gunter, my son, served in the US Marine Corp and the US Army Reserve. Cleophas Walton, Jr, was Sargeant in the US Army. My paternal grandfather George Spencer Walton, Sr. registered for the draft in 1917 in World War I. Howard Ashwell Walton, my brother, served in the US Army. Many Black soldiers served in the renowned 761st all Black Army regiment, known as "The 761st 'Black Panther' Tank Battalion in World War II". Cleophas Walton, Sr. was an outstanding photographer in Mineola.

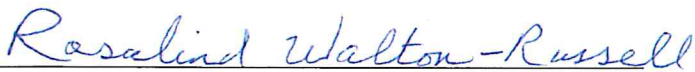
African American Mineolians have provided military, education, healthcare, business, domestic work, childcare, and religious services to all of us.

Recommendation for street names and dedication

My Uncle Cleophas lived and died on 329 Walton Drive, Mineola, Texas. Our recommendation is to change that street name to Walton Drive rather than Tuck Drive. African American resided in South-side Mineola, headed east toward Tyler, Texas. From Padgett Street to Belcher Street is a short unnamed street that we recommend be named and dedicated Cora Hickman Lane. Cora Hickman was a kind sweet spiritual Black woman. She had resolve and determination, as a businesswoman, to operate a recreation center and café on Padgett Street, Mineola. She served the most delicious hamburgers, fries and soft drinks to children, teenagers, and young adults. They could dance, sing, and enjoy wholesome experiences together. Cora's café and rec center was the sole facility available to Black youth. She didn't seek recognition or praise but was a small business owner wanting to provide a living for self and others. Ms. Hickman is worthy of honor and a street named and dedicated in her memory.

"Lest We Forget", we deem it paramount to memorialize distinguished African American Mineolians by honoring them through dedicating streets, monuments, churches, and public buildings in their memory. Contributions that Black Minnesotans have made toward the growth and the development of Mineola needs to be chronicled and documented. African American culture and heritage are important parts of Texas and American history. We Mineolians are forever grateful to our ancestors and current citizens for their driving force and determinations, despite obstacles, to preserve our democracy and to keep all Americans safe and secure. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Rosalind Lee Walton-Russell, MSW, LCSW-ACP
Advanced Clinical Practitioner

Attachments