

“How Did Alabama Dry Dock  
and Shipbuilding Company Help  
Shape The Future of Mobile, Alabama”

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Individual Documentary

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The topic of Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company and its history in Mobile, Alabama, came to mind when the topic of people, places, and frontiers were mentioned as the overall theme of the project. I thought about my hometown, Mobile, Alabama, and significant events that happened here. I already knew that in my city and state, there were a lot of issues dealing with racism, but what place or event stood out the most the issues that happened at Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company with Black workers unfortunately receiving bad treatment by the white workers of the company for working a job that was deemed only for the white people. But not only was that significant to the city of Mobile, but it also helped Mobile with its economy while also creating new opportunities for the people of Mobile as well as the push towards equality for people of color at the time.

I had to research using scholarly websites such as Google scholar, to find old newspapers, articles, or people who documented the entire event that were present on that day. I was torn between either a paper or a documentary but with the amount of time that I had, I felt as if I could create a very well put together documentary about my topic in order to really express and show my viewing of how ADDSCO really fits under the category of people, places and frontiers.

I believe that the race riot that occurred on May 25, 1943, and Alabama Dry Dock and Shipping Company really opened the opportunities for Black workers in Mobile, Alabama, causing more of a push for Black workers to excel into the more “advance” jobs at the time for the race of African Americans. I do believe events such as this really helped Black people to try and push for more equal opportunity and being able to seek the same treatment that Whites received rather than being always mistreated due to the perception that Blacks had during slavery which passed down post-slavery.

I think in the fact of Alabama history, more so the history of Mobile, it shows me that things like this happened in the place that I stay and it’s good to know the history and how the city advanced after events such as this race riot and eventually how Blacks and Whites started to come together, and learn to live in one another’s world, rather than continuing to be separated from each other.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Primary Sources:

*"Playing Into Hitler's Hand."* 1943; Records of the War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211. <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/newspaper-clipping-relating-to-the-disturbance-at-the-alabama-dry-dock-and-shipbuilding-co-between-white-and-negro-employees>. Accessed 19 Oct. 2022.

Written as an editorial, they talk about how there was a recent clash due to racial tension, but the editorial sees a bigger picture. They mention that the members that were going at it should be more mindful to not tearing each other down because that only tears the United States down which helps Hitler's case to "disrupt America's industrial production" if people continue to fight over a race. Lastly, the editorial believes that people in Mobile must bring peace within each other to be able to go farther as a whole to cooperate to take care of a war "we MUST win!".

*"Situation Quiet After Fighting At ADDSCO Yard."* 1943; Records of the War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211.

<https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/newspaper-clipping-relating-to-the-disturbance-at-the-alabama-dry-dock-and-shipbuilding-co-between-white-and-negro-employees>. Accessed 19 Oct. 2022.

After the dispute between the black and white workers at ADDSCO, there was a call of the police as well as soldiers from Governor Chauncey Sparks, that also closed all liquor shops until further notice. ADDSCO claimed they had everything under control even though some of the black workers were laid off after not doing anything wrong besides working and retaliating after the white workers were feeling some type of way.

“The Four Towns: Mobile.” PBS, Public Broadcasting Service,

<https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/the-war/mobile>. Accessed 26 Nov. 2022.

An excerpt talking about how Mobile increased in population greatly during World War II and how there was drastic changes within the city. However, looking back on the riot that occurred at Alabama Dry Dock Shipping Company, a man John Gray, a worker during the time states that African Americans were scared to go back into work, due to the intimidation of the white workers who would have weapons, frightening the black workers. It really made the community as a whole, a very bad environment with the amount of tension that was in the air, and black and white workers would have to be separated and black people needed protection for them to even come into work.

“The War.” *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, 22 Sept. 2007, <https://www.pbs.org/video/war-mobile-shipyards/>.

The documentary by Ken Burns, with the certain expert expressing about how Mobile played a role during World War II. Ken has Clyde Odom tell how when 12 black people were allowed to become welders in the field, which was only a white people job. Clyde says that when the first shift was over for the 12 new welders, the white workers were very “agitated”, and the workers took strikes at these new black workers with sticks and a uproar of white people physically hurting these black people. Some of the black people would jump of the pier and swim the river to get away.

*"With Mobile Negro shipyard workers."* 27 May 1943; Records of the War Manpower

Commission, Record Group 211. <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/draft-news-release-relating-to-the-recent-disturbances-in-mobile-at-the-alabama-dry-dock-and-shipbuilding-corporation>. Accessed 19 Oct. 2022.

There was an issue that occurred when Dr. Burton Morley, an area director, decided hire Black people for an exclusive job at the docks, with creating a ship, the white workers took offence to the hiring of the black people, so they had a bit of a fight, with 1/7 of the Black workers who were sent home after the fight, applying to be released from their jobs, but Dr. Morley in a bit of a dilemma with a shortage in labor.

Secondary Sources:

“A Salute to Freedom.” *The National WWII Museum | A Salute To Freedom*,

<https://salutetofreedom.org/al.html>. Accessed 26 Nov. 2022.

With the war being so demanding in supplies, women would quit teaching to work on the Shipping Docks and African Americans were able presented with new opportunities with jobs and pushing towards the freedoms and to be united as a whole, instead of segregated. The riots at Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company helped with the Civil Right Movement, pushing to be able to finally create these new laws and opportunities of African Americans. Not only does this source show the frontier, but it also focuses on the aspect of new opportunities for African Americans.

“Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company (ADDSCO).” *Encyclopedia of Alabama*,

<http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1475>. Accessed 20 Oct. 2022.

ADDSCO was the pioneer for later companies after closing in 1988. After being split into 4 different companies, it created room for new companies to take over the dock and import and export of things in Mobile, helping with the city’s economy with being bring things in but also ship things out or make things for profit.

*“Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company Records #170.”* The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL.

<https://www.southalabama.edu/libraries/mccallarchives/resources/addsco170.pdf>.

Accessed 19 Oct. 2022.

ADDSCO was created by David Richardson Dunlap and his cousin, George H. Dunlap on December 29, 1916. ADDSCO was in business during WWI due to the importance of need ships and other war materials created then as well as during WWII, with them creating ships and later also building submarines towards the 1970’s.

Foster, Dave. “Alabama Dry Dock and Shipping: Asbestos Exposure and Litigation.”

*Mesothelioma.net*, 21 June 2022, <https://mesothelioma.net/alabama-dry-dock-and-shipping-company-addsco/>. Accessed 19 Oct. 2022.

ADDSCO wasn’t a safe place to work due to the racial tension but as well as the working conditions. They required workers to use asbestos to create the ships which would hurt some of the workers after inhaling asbestos fibers for so long, which was a toxin and being exposed to these fibers with no protection, created the potential for death of these workers, mostly with lung cancer.

Madeo, "May 25, 1943: White Workers Riot after Black Workers Promoted in Mobile, Alabama." *Home*, <https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/may/25>. Accessed 20 Oct. 2022.

May 25, 1943, was when a riot at Alabama Dry Dock Shipping Company took place after 12 black people were promoted an exclusive position. At first in 1941, Black people were only hired to unskilled jobs, not really working or manufacturing anything with ships at all, until 1943 due to President Roosevelt's Fair Employment Practice Committee, which led to the 12 Black workers being promoted which did not sit right with the white workers because it was a welding job "reserved" for white workers only. The first day of promoted Black workers, there were 4,000 white workers with weapons to hurt any and every black worker they saw and led to black workers not being able to work for several weeks.

Lynch, Angela. "The Women of World War II Mobile." *National D-Day Memorial*, 12 May 2017, <https://www.dday.org/2017/03/12/the-women-of-world-war-ii-mobile/>. Accessed 26 Nov. 2022.

Angela Lynch focuses on explain how there were little women working in the field during World War II, specifically anything but teaching. With the war came demands for supplies for the war, so women had a chance to be able to have expand in the job field. Emma Bell Petcher was a prime example of a woman who pushed to better the job fields for women in Mobile and in the south. This helps with being able to show how ADDSCO opened the doors for lady workers in the south and in general.

Trammell, Victor. "May 25: On This Date in 1943, Angry White Mobs Started the Alabama Dry Dock Riot." *Black Then*, 27 May 2022, [blackthen.com/may-25-on-this-date-in-1943-angry-white-mobs-started-the-alabama-dry-dock-riot/](https://blackthen.com/may-25-on-this-date-in-1943-angry-white-mobs-started-the-alabama-dry-dock-riot/).

Trammell explains how the riot at ADDSCO created the segregation and proved how far more white people deemed themselves over the African American in every aspect there was.