Ollie Greene’s Historic Response

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Historical Paper
2,484 Words
“Deal justly with all. Speak Evil of none.” Ollie Greene Lewis

Prologue

When Ollie Greene Lewis, a middle-aged African American woman, read the newspaper article, dated January 24, 1934, she must have been shocked. The very title of it was disgusting: “Nigger Ridge and Its Early Settlers.” It was a short history of Pleasant Ridge, the African American community where she lived.

The use of the N-word in print brought Ollie to a fork in the road. She could either ignore it and accept the vile name, but that would allow the author to disgrace her community. Or, she could confront the author and risk a potential backlash from the larger community. Ollie’s response proved she had what it takes to break barriers.

Early Years

Born on December 20, 1889, Olive, “Ollie,” Greene was the daughter of Thomas and Hattie (Shepard) Greene. Her father had escaped slavery during the Civil War, and her mother was a child of a slave and a free black woman. After relocating to Wisconsin, they lived and worked as farmers in an area known as Pleasant Ridge. Located five miles west of Lancaster, Wisconsin, Pleasant Ridge was started in the 1850s by a small group of former slaves. It reached its peak population of about 60 people in 1885. After that date, its population had decreased.

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1 Ollie Greene Lewis, “Psalm of Life,” Canto Composition No. 35, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection, circa 1920-1925.
3 Ollie Greene Lewis, Certificate of Death, Grant County Register of Deeds, Vol. 46, 256.
5 1885 Wisconsin Population Census, Town of Beetown, Grant County, WI, 6-7; Wisconsin Population Census, Town of Lancaster, Grant County, WI, 3, 7, 11.
The youngest of nine siblings, Ollie was born and raised in her parent’s log cabin. The land records show that her father grew corn and wheat on his 80 acres. He also raised pigs, cattle, and chickens. Having five older sisters, Ollie probably wore plenty of hand-me-down clothes. Young photographs of Ollie show a happy, teenage girl wearing early 1900 hats and feeding chickens, probably one of her childhood chores.

Like other people of the early 1900s, she collected postcards. Three postcard albums of Ollie’s survived containing more than 200 postcards from friends and family pertaining to Christmas, Easter, and birthdays. There were even postcards of touring African American baseball teams.

School Years

Ollie attended the one-room school at Pleasant Ridge, School #5. This school holds the distinction of being one of the earliest racially integrated schools in Wisconsin. Established in 1873 by the neighborhood, both black and white, it remained integrated during its fifty years of existence.

School records show Ollie to be a punctual, studious pupil. Her grades in 1905, for example, list her as receiving the following: reading 95%, writing 98%, algebra 100%, orthography 100%, and U.S. history 100%. She graduated from the eighth grade in 1906.

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6 1870 US Census, Town of Beetown, Grant County, WI, 23; 1880 US Census, Town of Beetown, Grant County, WI, 13-14; 1900 US Census, Town of Beetown, Grant County WI, 10.
7 Thomas Greene Log Cabin Photograph, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, circa 1910.
8 1880 US Productions of Agriculture Census, Town of Beetown, Grant County, WI, 11; Town of Beetown Property Tax Rolls, Grant Series 9, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, UW-Platteville Area Research Center, 1898.
9 Olive Greene Photograph, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, circa 1915.
10 Olive Greene Postcard Albums, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, circa 1906-1912.
Ollie attended high school in Lancaster, which was located five miles away. There were no school buses at the time, so Ollie would have lived in Lancaster with relatives while she attended school. She probably stayed with her older sister Emma who was married to Walter Grimes.  

In addition to general studies (algebra, US history, geology, botany, physical geography), Ollie elected to major in what was called the English-German Course, which consisted of a full-year of studying the German language.  

Ollie was, moreover, a trusted classmate. In March 1910, for example, Alice Heigle, who was at home recovering from an accident, sent a postcard to her “Friend Ollie” asking her “a little favor.” She wanted Ollie to retrieve “my History [paper?] from my desk” and send it to her through the mail.  

Ollie’s high school years, however, must have been very challenging because of a couple family crises. In April 1908, Sarah, Ollie’s oldest sibling, died of an unknown cause at the age of thirty-seven. Born in 1870, Sarah had been the first member of the family to graduate from high school, 1889, graduate from college, 1899, and had worked as a grade school teacher for several years. Sarah would have been a role model for Ollie.  

Less than two years later, during Ollie’s senior year, a second tragedy struck her family.

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12 1910 US Census, Town of North Lancaster, Grant County, WI, 6.  
14 Alice Heigle to Olive Greene. Olive Greene Postcard Albums, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, March 25, 1910.  
15 “Obituary—Green.” Grant County Herald, April 25, 1908, 4.
On February 3, 1910, Ollie’s mother, Hattie, died. Still, Ollie kept going and graduated in June 1910. Her class motto was: “The world is all before us.”

For Ollie, her world became her family’s farm. When she graduated, she moved back to her father’s farmhouse. At the time, the Greene family was still struggling with her mother’s loss. Her mother’s death probably ended any plans Ollie may have had to get a job and move out of her father’s house. Her father, 67, was getting old and would have needed help to work the farm. In addition, Ollie and a couple of her siblings were raising two nieces, Verna, 14, and Mildred, 4. Ollie would remain living at the Greene family farm for the rest of her life. In November 1921, she married Richard Lewis of Iowa, but they never had any children.

**Autumn Leaf Club**

Remaining at home did not keep Ollie from breaking barriers in her own way. One initiative she became deeply involved in was the Autumn Leaf Club. Organized at her sister Emma Grimes’ house in October 1906, the club was established to provide better communication amongst the Pleasant Ridge community at a time when many members were relocating to Madison and other cities. As Emma Grimes’ son, Walter, wrote, the Autumn Leaf Club was created “to band themselves closer together and improve the coming generation by giving them the opportunities they were deprived of.” The club met every three weeks at members’ houses.

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16 “Passing of a Good Woman.” *Grant County Herald*, February 16, 1910, 1.
17 “Lancaster Graduates Class of Twenty-Five.” *Grant County Herald*, June 8, 1910, 1.
18 1910 US Census, Town of Beetown, Grant County WI, 2A; “Last Member of Freedom Colony Dies.” *Grant County Independent*, February 26, 1959, 1.
19 Olive Greene and Richard Lewis, Certificate of Marriage, Grant County Register of Deeds, Vol. 20, 115; Olive Greene and Richard Lewis, Marriage Certification, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society.
Barbeque & Picnic

The Autumn Leaf Club’s biggest event of the year was the “Barbeque & Picnic,” held at Ollie’s father’s farm. Everyone from the surrounding area was welcome. It became a huge success, upwards of 3,000 people attended. The attendees ate “barbequed pork, beef, or chicken,” listened to music, and watched plays. Ollie used the event to spread good will and inclusiveness and often spoke or performed at the barbeques. In 1917, for example, Ollie performed in a play at the picnic. 21

A good example of inclusiveness would be the 1928 barbeque. The planning committee consisted of Ollie and her two nieces, Gertrude Grimes and Verna Green. The speaker they scheduled for the day was Otto F. Christenson, a Lancaster attorney. A white man, Mr. Christenson spoke on the “Progress and Achievements of the Negro Race.” 22

In 1930, the planning committee was able to secure George Abernathy’s Royal Knights as the main entertainment. A popular African American orchestra from Milwaukee, the Royal Knights performed across Wisconsin and were advertised as “The hottest combination of Radio Entertainers, Singers and Musicians on tour.” 23

Racial Confrontation

While Ollie was president of the Autumn Leaf Club, she faced an ugly racial incident that arose just ten miles away in the village of Bloomington.

21 Ibid; “Barbeque & Picnic” flyer, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, 1928; Autumn Leaf Club Photograph, August 4, 1917, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society.
22 “Barbeque & Picnic” flyer, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, 1928; “Autumn Leaf Picnic.” Grant County Herald, August 8, 1928, 1.
It began on January 24, 1934, when *The Bloomington Record* newspaper printed an article by Harley J. Starrett about the history of Pleasant Ridge. He entitled it “Nigger Ridge and Its Early Settlers.” The article itself was mostly accurate, but Starrett referred to the residents in vile terms: “darkies” and “darky settlement or ‘Nigger Ridge.’”

Ollie personal papers give no indication of her initial reaction, but she must have been outraged. After consulting with other members of the Pleasant Ridge community, Ollie decided to confront the author with a letter-to-the-editor of *The Bloomington Record*. Ollie’s powerful response, written February 19th, is as follows:

> “as the Autumn Leaf club is the organized voice of the Negro in this community, we wish to protest the manner and wording in the article referring directly to us . . . From a historical point it is true and of interest, but the writer could have been more tactful in his choice of words and names, as we are human, and have feelings as to what we are called . . . We look with pride among the younger generation, who got their start in what the writer called “Nigger Ridge;” have educated their children in the public schools, those left on the Ridge are still farming their ancestor’s farms. We have records of service to our country in times of war and none of violence . . . we have always worked for the improvement of our race in the community in which we live.

> We ask that a copy of this be published to prove to your readers that we are intelligent enough to know that such form of writing is obsolete in this day and age.

> Very truly yours

> AUTUMN LEAF CLUB

> Mrs. Olive Greene Lewis, President”

Ollie’s response compelled the editor of the newspaper to not only publish Ollie’s letter, but also apologize: “We regret that the article they mention was interpreted as unkind, especially since we know the author had no such intention.”

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26 Ibid.
article, was also apologetic: the “motives in entitling the article ‘Nigger Ridge’ were far from those ascribed to us by the writer . . . he has had no intention of offering offense to any person of any race. He used the old time name by which he has known the Ridge from childhood, and used it with no thought of disrespect.”

Ollie’s letter-to-the-editor broke barriers. The easy thing for her to do would have been to ignore it, but that would have been acknowledging those words as acceptable. The harder choice was to respond by confronting the author about those words. To do that, however, meant standing up against the local white establishment and the risks that might entail. The Ku Klux Klan had marched in Madison less than a decade before. Ollie courageously chose to confront it, and in the process, she backed down two leading figures of the local establishment. The vile N-word was never used again in local newspapers.

Historian

Ollie had a love for history. She left notes on a wide range of topics: “The Negro,” President McKinley, “The Colored Y.M.C.A.,” and “How the date of Easter is set.” Her strongest interest in history, however, was the history of Pleasant Ridge.

The earliest surviving evidence of her interest in Pleasant Ridge is in a notebook of hers, written around 1920. In this notebook, Ollie wrote an outline of the community. Her subjects included: first settlers, farming, lumbering, home life, and so forth. What is impressive was her detail. She not only outlined such things as lumbering, but also “kinds of trees,” “method of

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28 “Wisconsin and the KKK.” Wisconsin Then and Now, April 1969.
29 Ollie Greene Lewis, Canto Composition No. 35, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, circa 1920-1925.
cutting, “prices,” and so forth.  

She wrote her first history of Pleasant Ridge in 1922, a five-page paper entitled “History of Negro Pioneer Settlers of Grant Co.” Ollie wrote about the families that came to Grant County and settled what became known as Pleasant Ridge. She read the paper at that year’s Barbeque & Picnic on August 4th. 

Over the next two decades, Ollie compiled a large collection of Pleasant Ridge memorabilia: letters, photographs, manuscripts, property tax receipts, and postcards. She also spoke to or wrote letters to older family members about the community. One of those interviewed was her aunt Lillie Greene Richmond. Lillie’s family, the Greenes, had been enslaved in Missouri. In 1863, as a baby, Lillie had been carried to freedom from Missouri to Wisconsin by her family. 

Unfortunately, Ollie never completed a history of Pleasant Ridge, but her work on this was significant. Her interest in the documentation of the Pleasant Ridge community was an early form of social history. 

Well into the twentieth-century, historians had been writing what Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle called the “Great Man Theory” of history. In short, only great men make history.

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Louis Shepard paper, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, 1934.
American historians mirrored this with biographies of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln.  

Ollie’s interviews of Pleasant Ridge individuals were an early form of social history, which began in the 1960s. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines social history as a “branch of history that emphasizes social structures and the interaction of different groups in society rather than affairs of state.”

Ollie’s love for Pleasant Ridge’s history and her desire to see it preserved eventually led to her donating her research materials to the Grant County Historical Society.

Farm Years

The irony of Ollie’s life is that while she became a pillar of Pleasant Ridge, Pleasant Ridge gradually became a memory. By the 1930s, only the Grimes and Greene families remained.

The rest had either died or moved away. In 1937, for example, Ollie’s father died. In the 1940s the Grimes family sold their farm. In 1950, Ollie’s husband, Dick, died. To help with the work, Ollie had Charlie Green, an in-law from Lancaster, live and work on the farm.

Ollie’s last years on her farm are best seen through the eyes of Maury McLean. As a young boy growing up on a farm just across the valley from Ollie’s farm, Maury became friends with Ollie. As Maury said, “She just treated me real well, always, and looked after me if she

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36 Town of Beetown Property Tax Rolls, Grant Series 9, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, UW-Platteville Area Research Center, 1920-1940; 1930 US Census, Town of Beetown, Grant County WI, 1A; 1940 US Census, Town of Beetown, Grant County WI, 1A.
37 Thomas Greene, Certificate of Death, Grant County Register of Deeds, Vol. 26, 519.
38 Richard Lewis, Certificate of Death, Grant County Register of Deeds, Vol. 36, 276.
39 McLean, Maury Interview by Violet Hibbard, July 18, 2019.
thought I was headed in the wrong direction in something; I discovered when I was six or seven years old that Tuesday was bread day at her house, so I’d show up quite often on Tuesday [for homemade bread] and hot fried donuts.”  

Baking was one of Ollie’s enjoyments. Her recipe collection contains everything from “Fruit Cake” and “Molasses Drop Cookies” to “Orange Sunshine Cake” and “Prune cake.”

One of Maury’s special moments with Ollie was getting the mail. “We’d walk up [the driveway] and get the mail, and that was quite a deal for me . . . I would get to carry the mail for her; that was a big deal for me.”

Maury remembers Ollie as a very hard-working woman. “Social life was quite closely bonded” back then and “the neighbors all pitched in and she was always right out there putting her hand in whatever had to be done [on the farm].”

A religious person, Ollie attended the United Methodist Church in Lancaster. She could drive a car, but did not like to, so Maury, who also attended the same church, drove her to church. As he recalled, “I picked her up a few times to go into church; she went to Methodist Church too.”

Maury had one last special moment with Ollie. During Christmas season of 1958, Maury brought his fiancé, Martha, to see Ollie. At the time, Ollie was bedridden, sick with cancer.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{40}}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{41}}\text{Olive Greene Recipes, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{42}}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{43}}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{44}}\text{Ibid.}\]
Upon seeing Maury and Martha, Ollie said, “‘Oh, what a lovely couple.’”

In the Lancaster Hospital, two months later, on the night of February 21st, Ollie sang hymns with a hospital employee. The next day, February 22, 1959, Ollie died. As the last African American living at Pleasant Ridge, Ollie’s death brought an end to the historic settlement. She was buried in the Pleasant Ridge Cemetery, located on her farm.

Ollie’s life was the definition of breaking barriers. She graduated from high school when many students stopped at 8th grade. She confronted racism when it occurred. She practiced social history before it was in style. Perhaps most importantly, she ensured Pleasant Ridge would not be forgotten by donating her research materials.

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Appendix A

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45 Ibid.
46 Ollie Hattie Lewis, Certificate of Death, Grant County Register of Deeds, Vol. 46, 256.
Ollie Greene, circa 1906. Possibly photobooth photographs.

Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, Lancaster, WI.
Appendix B

*Ollie Greene Feeding Chickens, circa 1903.*

Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, Lancaster, WI.
Appendix C

Thomas Greene’s (Ollie’s father) Personal Property Tax Roll Listing, 1898.

In 1898 Thomas Greene had five horses, five cattle, 15 hogs, and two wagons. Note, the Greene’s even had one piano/organ/melodeon.

Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville
Appendix D

**Ollie Greene’s Grade School Attendance and Grades, April – June 1905.**

UW-Platteville Teacher’s Daily Record, April 1899 – June 1907,
Rollo Jamison Collection, SW Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville.


Thomas & Hattie Greene’s Log Cabin, circa 1910. Ollie Greene and her siblings were raised in this cabin.

Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, Lancaster, WI.
Appendix F

Ollie Greene at Lancaster High School, circa 1908.

Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, Lancaster, WI.
Appendix G

*Ollie Greene Lewis (in middle, striped dress) with Autumn Leaf Club Members, circa 1925.*

Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, Lancaster, WI.
Appendix H

*Ollie Greene Lewis with her father, Thomas Greene, circa 1930.*

Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, Lancaster, WI.
Appendix I

SOUTH OF TOWN
H. J. Starrett

Nigger Ridge and Its Early Settlers.

On the Lancaster road as we take the ridge road out of Shaltown, we enter what is known as the darkly settlement or "Nigger Ridge." In early years a Southern slave owner built the stone house which still stands near the Knollwood schoolhouse, known in earlier days as the Rhodes school. Horner's name is famous as is the man who brought the first blacks. As Horner came several years previous to the admission of the state to the Union, there were some early settlers who believed that his original notice was a part of a scheme to introduce slavery into different parts of the territory. However, if this be true the idea never gained headway. Horner freed his slaves and gave them a free hand. Later another Southern named Moses came with several families of negroes, whom he freed and gave land. The best known of the Horner darkies to later generations were the Sheppards and of the Roman Catholic the Gilmores were probably most known in later days. Later came the Greeds who escaped bondage and followed the Erie. The Richmond were also well known in late years. There were several other families at the time of the first settlement. Although Gordon Day had nothing to do with the bringing in of darkies, he employed them a good deal and there were certain blacks who were intermittently in his employment whom we knew as "Day's Niggers."

As an attempt to form a successful colored farm colony this venture was never a success. Being forced in bondage was no doubt a handicap to those of the first generation, but a later generation raised beside good schools, never deplorably and in many ways particularly favored proved even more successful than those older. Isaac Sheppard was a successful farmer and made good use of the land and opportunities given him, but after his death his estate failed away. The younger generation drifted from the farms and few darkies are left on the Ridge. For any people who came into the Ridge even three decades after the war, however, the Ridge was a real home for the back man, where he lived his life amid the customs and environment which he brought with him from the Southland. Such arts as were his prerogative, his religion was the religion of the Ridge, and the old log church on the Lancaster-Shalfowne road rang with the wild balalaikas of overtasted goods.

AUTUMN LEAF CLUB

Below is a letter from the president of the Autumn Leaf club, a negro organization at Lancaster. We regret that the article they mention was interpreted as unkind, especially since we know the author had no such intention. We of another race are familiar with the racial characteristics of good humor and jolliness, and are perhaps apt to speak too familiarly because of it. A better knowledge of one another would probably remove any trace of distrust or misinterpretation from the attitude of each race.

Lancaster, Wis., Feb. 10, 1924.

To the Editor of the Bloomingtong Record:

A copy of your paper of Wednesday, January 24, was handed us, and as the Autumn Leaf Club is the organized voice of the Negro in this community, we wish to protest the manner and wording in the article referring directly to us, was published. From a historical point it is true and of interest, but the writer could have been more tactful, in his choice of words and names, as we are human and have feelings as to what we are called. We have tried to be good citizens, and are taxpayers in this county. We look with pride among the younger generation, who got their start in what the writer called "Nigger Ridge," have become properly guided elsewhere, have educated their children, in the public schools; those left on the Ridge are still farming their ancestor's farms. We have records of service to our country in times of war and none of violence. Our club has been organized twenty-seven years; we have always worked for the improvement of our race in the community in which we live.

Very truly yours,

AUTUMN LEAF CLUB,

Mrs. Olive Greene Lewis, President.
Appendix J

I. The First Settlers.
1. From where and when?
2. Why they came?
4. What they brought.
5. Why was the particular site chosen for settlement?

II. The First Industries.
1. Farming
   a. clearing land
   b. crops
   c. source of supplies
   d. implements
   e. buildings
   f. market
   g. finance
2. Lumbering
   a. kinds of trees
   b. cutting
   c. hauling
   d. sawing
   e. method of cutting
   f. shipping
   g. burned or dried pieces
One Page of Ollie Greene’s Outline of Pleasant Ridge Community, circa 1922
Canto Composition No. 35, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, Lancaster, WI.

Appendix K

Ollie Greene Lewis Interviewing Lillie Richmond for her Pleasant Ridge history, 1947.

Appendix L

- **School #5 = Pleasant Ridge School**
- **T. Green** = Thomas Greene, Olive Greene’s Father’s 40 Acre Farm

1895 Plat Map of Pleasant Ridge area of Beetown Township
Mrs. A. Lewis 79.30 Acre Farm = Ollie Greene Lewis’ Farm

Ollie’s name was often misspelled as Allie because of pronunciation

- Paul McLean = Maury McLean’s childhood/present house.

1959 Plat Map of Section 11 of Beetown Township.

Both Plat Maps: Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville
Appendix M

Ollie Greene Lewis’ Fruit Cake Recipe, 1949.

Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, Lancaster, WI.
Appendix N


Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, Lancaster, WI.
Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

“Announce Elks Ball.” *Stevens Point Daily Journal*, 3 April 1930, p. 3.

This was an article on George Abernathy’s Royal Knights, the African American Band that played at the Autumn Leaf Club’s 1930 Barbeque & Picnic.


This is the first atlas to show the Greene family’s name listed on the map.


This article listed the names of the Autumn Leaf Barbeque Picnic committee members.

“Barbeque & Picnic” Flyer, 1928, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This flyer was significant for it provided the correct title of the event, Barbeque & Picnic, correct location—Thomas Greene’s farm, and correct date, August 4, 1928.


These ledgers list where everyone lived throughout the years, paid taxes, and sometimes what personal property they owned, such as horses, pigs, and pianos.


This article showed Ollie Greene Lewis as a Pleasant Ridge researcher, interviewing Lillie Richmond for her Pleasant Ridge history.

*1850 US Census, Grant County, Wisconsin*. Microfilm. Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

*1860 US Census, Grant County, Wisconsin*. Microfilm. Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

*1870 US Census, Grant County, Wisconsin*. Microfilm. Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville, Platteville, WI.
1880 US Census, Grant County, Wisconsin. Microfilm. Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

1880 US Productions of Agriculture Census, Grant County, Wisconsin. Microfilm. Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

1885 Wisconsin Census, Grant County, Wisconsin. Microfilm. Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

1900 US Census, Grant County, Wisconsin. Microfilm. Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

1910 US Census, Grant County, Wisconsin. Microfilm. Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

1920 US Census, Grant County, Wisconsin. Microfilm. Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

1930 US Census, Grant County, Wisconsin. Microfilm. Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

1940 US Census, Grant County, Wisconsin. Microfilm. Southwest Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

The above censuses were used to help figure out where the Pleasant Ridge individuals lived, how many individuals lived at Pleasant Ridge, what their ages were, who their children were, and the family relationships.

Greene, Olive, Postcard Albums, Pleasant Ridge Collection, Grant County Historical Society, circa 1906-1912.

These three albums are a gold mine. They are filled with postcards addressed to Ollie Greene from her family members and friends. They contain postcards on Christmas, Easter, birthdays, holidays, and other fun things. It is fun to see who wrote what to Ollie.


This document is Ollie and Richard Lewis’ official Certificate of Marriage kept in the Grant County Courthouse.


This is the fancy marriage certificate signed at Ollie and Richard Lewis’ wedding.

This document is the official Certificate of Death kept in the Grant County Courthouse.

“Lancaster Graduates Class of Twenty-Five.” Grant County Herald, 8 June 1910, p. 1.

This article listed Ollie Greene as a high school graduate and that she majored in the English-German course.

“Last Member of Freedom Colony Dies.” Grant County Independent, 26 February 1959, p. 1.

This is Ollie Greene Lewis’ obituary.


This article is Ollie Greene Lewis’ response to Starrett’s N-word article.

Lewis, Ollie Greene. Canto Composition No. 35, circa 1920-1925, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This composition book was Ollie Greene’s. It was very significant for my research. In it she wrote her outline of Pleasant Ridge, her first history of Pleasant Ridge, religion, African American history, presidents McKinley and Washington, the date of Easter, and so forth.


This is Ollie’s first attempt at a history of Pleasant Ridge. It is five pages and is in her composition book.


This is on the first page of Ollie Greene’s composition book.


This document is Ollie Greene Lewis’ official Certificate of Death kept in the Grant County Courthouse.


On that date, I interviewed Maury McLean at his house. Maury has lived on the same farm all his life. I learned a lot about Ollie for this paper from Maury. Maury also drove me around the area, showing me where some of the old Pleasant Ridge buildings were located, such as the Pleasant Ridge School. That same day, I also attended a funeral with Maury at the Pleasant Ridge Cemetery. A relative of Ollie’s was buried that day. It was a very emotional day.


This plat book listed “Mrs. A. Lewis” as owner of the Greene farm.

“Obituary—Green.” *Grant County Herald*, 25 April 1908, p. 4.

This is Sarah Greene’s obituary. Sarah was Ollie’s oldest sibling.


In this article Ollie Greene Lewis was interviewed about Pleasant Ridge by the journalist and it featured a photograph of Ollie at the Pleasant Ridge Cemetery.


This plat book listed “Dick Lewis,” Ollie’s husband as owner of the Greene farm.


This is Hattie Greene’s obituary. Hattie was Ollie’s mother.

Photograph, Pleasant Ridge Play, 1917, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This photograph shows Ollie Greene performing in a play at the Barbeque & Picnic.

Photograph, Ollie Greene at Lancaster High School, circa 1908, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.
This is the Appendix F photograph, showing Ollie Greene with her high school classmates.

Photograph, Ollie Greene with Chickens, circa 1903, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This is the Appendix B photograph. It shows a young Ollie Greene feeding chickens.

Photograph, Ollie Greene Wearing Hat, circa 1906, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This is the Appendix A photograph. This is a series of four photographs placed in a homemade frame. The photographs show a young Ollie Greene. Her happy personality shows in all of them.

Photograph, Ollie Greene Lewis Standing next to her Maternal Aunt Emma & Uncle Thomas Grimes’ Headstone, Pleasant Ridge Cemetery, 1957, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This is the Appendix N photograph. This photograph was used in the 1957 newspaper article listed above: “Old Negro Cemetery ‘Tells’ Story.”

Photograph, Ollie Greene Lewis (striped dress) with Autumn Leaf Club Members, circa 1930, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This is the Appendix H photograph, showing Ollie Greene Lewis with the Autumn Leaf Club members.

Photograph, Ollie Greene Lewis with her father, Thomas Greene, circa 1925, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This is the Appendix G photograph, showing Ollie with her father, Thomas Greene.

Photograph, Thomas Greene Log Cabin, circa 1910, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This is the Appendix E photograph. The Greene family log cabin.

Plat Book of Grant County, Wisconsin, Minneapolis, Minn.: C.M. Foote & J.W. Henion, 1895.

This plat book listed Thomas Greene, Ollie’s father as owner of the Greene farm.

Postcard, Alice Heigle to Ollie Greene. 25 March 1910, Ollie Greene Postcard Albums, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This is the postcard sent by Alice Heigle, Ollie’s school friend, asking for Ollie to send her history work through the mail.
Postcard, “Brown’s Tennessee Rats” circa 1910, Ollie Greene Postcard Albums, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This is another postcard of Ollie Greene’s. It shows “Brown’s Tennessee Rats” African American baseball team. They are all identified on the back.

Recipe, Ollie Greene Lewis “Fruit Cake,” 1949, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

This is the Appendix M illustration.

Recipe, Ollie Greene Lewis “Molasses Drop Cookies,” Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

Recipe, Ollie Greene Lewis “Orange Sunshine Cake,” Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

Recipe, Ollie Greene Lewis “Pickle Peaches,” Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

Recipe, Ollie Greene Lewis “Prune Cake,” Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

Recipe, Ollie Greene Lewis Snow Pudding, Grant County Historical Society Pleasant Ridge Collection.

The above six recipes were Ollie Greene Lewis’. They are handwritten. They are fascinating because they are a window into Ollie’s personal life. These are the recipes that she liked to bake and eat.


This letter is important for it shows that Ollie Greene Lewis wrote to relatives and other Pleasant Ridge individuals asking about Pleasant Ridge. This was part of her research for her history of Pleasant Ridge. An early social historian, Ollie was interested in the daily lives of the Pleasant Ridge individuals.


This was an advertisement for George Abernathy’s Royal Knights, the African American band that played at the Autumn Leaf Club’s 1930 Barbeque & Picnic.


This plat book listed Thomas Greene as owner of the Greene farm.

This is Starrlett’s N-word article that Ollie Greene Lewis responded to.


This is Starrlett’s apology to Ollie Greene Lewis’ February 19, 1934, letter-to-the-editor.

Teacher’s Daily Record, April 1899 – June 1907, Rollo Jamison Collection, SW Wisconsin Room, UW-Platteville.

This record book contained Ollie Greene’s attendance and grades.


The above two Storm Center (1903, 1917) yearbooks, along with the 1910 “Lancaster Graduates Class of Twenty-Five” article (above) provided information on Ollie Greene’s high school courses.

**Secondary Sources**


This booklet contains a short history of the Pleasant Ridge community.

Butterfield, C. W. *History of Grant County, Wisconsin*, Chicago, Ill.: Western Historical Company, 1881.

This is the first major history of Grant County. It contains a lot of information on the county’s early years, including Beetown Township where Pleasant Ridge was located.


This is a good overview on the history of Pleasant Ridge. It was especially useful in understanding the early history of the Greene family.


This is a useful article on the history of the Autumn Leaf Club.
Holford, Castello N. *History of Grant County, Wisconsin*, Lancaster, WI: The Teller Print, 1900.

This is the second major history of Grant County. It contains useful information on Beetown Township where Pleasant Ridge was located.


This article gives a good history of the social history movement.


This booklet lists the graduates of Lancaster High School, including Ollie Greene.


This booklet contains a short history of Pleasant Ridge and a photograph of Ollie Greene Lewis in her home.


This is a general history of the state of Wisconsin.

[www.villanovau.com/resources/leadership/great-man-theory](http://www.villanovau.com/resources/leadership/great-man-theory)

This source gives a good overview of the “Great Man Theory” of history.