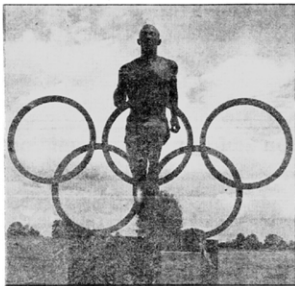


Trips Close To Home: Jesse Owens

Jesse Owens Embarrassed Hitler at 1936 Olympics



Olympic Rings at Jesse Owens Park & Museum near Moulton

By Randall Shedd
Hitler's pride took a one-two punch from two men from Alabama - Jesse Owens in the 1936 Olympics and Joe Louis in the 1938 World Heavyweight Boxing Championship.

Just up the road from Cullman County is the birthplace of a great American hero who embarrassed Adolph Hitler before the whole world at the 1936 Olympics in Germany.

James Cleveland Owens, one of 10 children was born in Oakman, Alabama (Lawrence County) just north of Alabama Highway 157. The family called him J. C.

Are you wondering then how he became known worldwide as Jesse? So did

Owens shattered Hitler's theory and embarrassed Hitler before the whole world on August 3, 1936. This was when he won his first Gold Medal running the 100-meter dash in 10.3 seconds - a record that stood until 1992 when ¹Christie Owens of Great Britain ran it in 9.96 seconds.

Then, the next day, Jesse Owens won his second Gold Medal in the Long Jump.

August 5, 1936, Jesse Owens won his third Gold Medal in three days with a 20.7 second 200-meter sprint and on August 9, 1936, to the dismay of Hitler, Jesse Owens won his fourth Gold Medal in 400-meter leg of the 400-meter relay.

If you have a chance to visit the Jesse Owens Park and Museum near Moulton, Alabama, watch the film and see Hitler's expressions as Jesse Owens won his medals.

Unfortunately, for a long time Jesse Owens did not get the recognition he deserved back home in the United States. He never was able to earn a living from his Olympic success.

In 1976, Jesse Owens received the Medal of Honor from President Gerald Ford, our nation's highest civilian honor.

When you visit the Jesse Owens Museum near Moulton, you can do like me and watch in awe the accomplishments of this great American.

The committee did a wonderful job developing the park and documenting this historic event.

You can jump the long jump, see Olympic rings, but if you are like me, you may be most impressed by the replica of the home Jesse Owens grew up in.

Now remember, this is 1920's in Alabama. You'll find a 3 room wood-board house with a tin roof and a small front porch just like Jesse Owens grew up in (except it is handicap accessible).

You can press a button on the front porch and hear Jesse Owens' brother, Sylvester talk about 10 children growing up in a small house like this one.

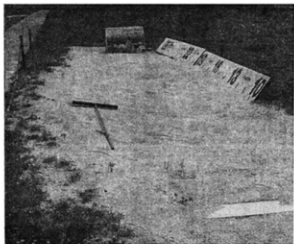
"In December, we'd butcher a hog," Sylvester says on the audio. "We'd grow our own vegetables and all the family

helped with the garden."

As you look in the children's room, you will see quilts on the tongue and groove wooden floor like the ones the children sleep on. Only the parents had a bed. You will see overalls hanging on a nail on the wall and a pick sack for picking cotton. You will see a smoothing iron and ironing board, a coal bucket, and a fireplace popcorn popper.

In the parent's room, you will see a double bed with iron head and foot boards, a quilt on top of the mattress and his hat and her bonnet on a nail on the wall along with a pair of overalls. As you look around, you will see a quilt tree and shoe iron.

In the kitchen, you will see a plank board eating



Do a long jump, like Jesse Owens at the Jesse Owens Park & Museum near Moulton

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table, a wood stove, pans, coffee pot, and clothes pins (a wash tub hangs on the back porch).

In the kitchen, you will also see a wooden water bucket, iron teak, sifter, cotton apron, slab of bacon, and iron skillet.

They had a wood-burning stove for cooking and heating the house.

For breakfast, the menu was usually corn bread, molasses, butter and bacon.

"After a hard days work, we'd all wash up for supper and then enjoy the family on the front porch," you will hear Sylvester say.

The park and museum are interesting to see. If you want to see it for yourself see the information below for times, cost, contact information and directions.

How The Jesse Owens Museum Came About

According to the Jesse Owens Memorial Park web site, in 1991, Therman White, an Oakville, Alabama

resident visited the Lawrence County office of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in Moulton, Alabama to discuss the development of a park to honor Jesse Owens.

He met with James Pinion, County Agent Coordinator, who had procured land across the street markers that honored Jesse Owens. The two became a dynamic force to raise money and develop the park.

Dr. Tom Chestnut, Auburn University Tourism Specialist, designed the park's development plan, and the park was underway. Fundraising was slow until James Pinion decided to petition the Olympic Torch Committee to reroute the Olympic torch through the park en route to the Olympic games in Atlanta. The committee agreed and funds for the park began to pour in, and the race was on to finish the park.

Therman White and James

Pinion, working through Auburn University raised more than \$2 million for the development and construction of the park.

The Jesse Owens Memorial Park was completed just a few days before the arrival of the Olympic Torch. The park was dedicated June 29, 1996.

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How To Get There

From Interstate 65 exit 310, travel Alabama Highway 157 North toward Moulton 24.8 miles then turn right onto County Road 187 then travel 1.5 miles.

Hours, Admissions and Contact Information

Open: **Monday - Saturday 10 am to 4 pm**
& **Sunday 1 pm to 4:30 pm**

Cost: **\$2 per person donation is appreciated**

Telephone: **256-974-3636**

Email: jesseowensinfo@charter.net

Website: www.jesseowensmuseum.org

Address: **7019 County Road 203**
Danville, AL 35619