

# BIRMINGHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NOVEMBER 5, 1942



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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2017

- Formally created the Birmingham Historical Society Endowment Fund and transferred \$1.3 million to the fund that will help support the Society's educational programs in future years.
- Continued to build our digital collection with the Alabama Department of Archives and History online Digital Library.
- Conducted the Annual Meeting and feted Frances Robb's *Shot in Alabama—A History of Photography, 1839-1941* and tasted members' Heirloom Cakes.
- Hosted the annual Heritage Society Gathering at the Crawford Johnson Residence, the recently restored home of Maye and Bernard Frei.
- Photographed Shades Creek from the springs where it originates to its confluence with the Cahaba River, and researched historical happenings.
- Almost completed Historic American Engineering Record documentation of the Ross Creek Culvert, built late 1863 as part of the Confederate government's development of industrial infrastructure in Shades Valley and today the centerpiece of the Ross Bridge community.
- Researched and prepared a newsletter on the history of the Sloss Quarters from the opening of the furnaces in the 1880s to today's recreation.
- Hosted Robin Karson, editor of *Warren H. Manning—Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner* (the 2017 Members' book) at a public lecture.
- Continued to grow Grandmother's Garden using heirloom plants and practices. Saturday Walks and Talks featured historical and medicinal plant use, and Alabama Plein Air Artists painted in the garden.
- Celebrated the Society's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a gathering at the Birmingham Printing Company Buildings, now home to ArchitectureWorks.

## FOUNDING THE SOCIETY 1942

### CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FORMED

#### Group Plans To Gather First-Hand Data For Archives

Birmingham's first historical society was organized this week at a meeting in the Public Library, at which time temporary officers were elected and plans made for drawing up a constitution and by-laws.

John C. Henley, Jr., presiding as temporary president, said the purpose of the society would be to preserve material objects pertaining to the history of Birmingham and to encourage a wide study of both city and county.

Henley pointed out that Birmingham, whose claim to being the youngest city in America for its size, was recently verified by officials of the U. S. Census Bureau, is unique, in that several citizens can recall the actual founding of the town, whose 71st birthday fell on the 19th day of December.

"This indicates," he said, "that we still have time, and the splendid opportunity, to preserve historical facts in their fullest accuracy, instead of allowing them to become forever garbled by the passing of time and the day when base sources of information will have disappeared."



Founding President,  
author, speaker, philosopher, historian  
John C. Henley Jr. (1880-1949)

### Preserving Our History

Birmingham shows signs of maturing. It has become conscious of its history. More important, it has become conscious that history can be preserved only in records, and that unless some person or some group makes a point of preserving the records, history is lost, or distorted.

The organization of the Birmingham Historical Society is evidence of the city's maturity. It grows out of a realization that the time has come to compile and record the facts of the city's early life before it is too late. There are still a few pioneers in the city, persons whose lives go back to the 1870s when Birmingham was but a sprawling and quarreling mining town. Their assistance in compiling records of the city's early history will be valuable and should be utilized now.

It is good to note, however, that the society, even though its work deals with the past, has a forward look. History is of value to man only when it enriches his understanding of the present or points the way to a better future. The Birmingham Historical Society proposes to make its work valuable now and in the future by assuming such tasks as marking historic sites around the city and by preserving material objects for later study.

Let a word of commendation be said, also, for the Birmingham Public Library, which sponsored the organization of the society. A great library, it has been said, contains the diary of the human race. The Birmingham Public Library should at least house the diary of Birmingham.

*The Birmingham News*, January 1, 1943





# KEEPING BUSY



**Hosting meetings with speakers** (1942– )

**Publishing** bulletins and newsletters (1940s– ), journals (1960–1977), studies (1980–1993), books (1977– ), website, bhistorical.org (2002– )

**Collecting records for libraries**, especially Birmingham Public Library (1942–1960s+) and Alabama Archives

**Designating historic sites with markers** (1950s–1980s) and **banners** (1987–1990s)

**Initiating preservation of historic sites**

- Tannehill Furnaces (1950)
- Arlington (1950)
- Sloss Furnaces (1978–1985+)
- Vulcan and His Park (1993–1999)
- Rickwood Field (1994)
- Bethel Baptist Church (1996– )
- 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church (1993+)
- Railroad Park (beginning 1989)
- Red Mountain Park (c. 2005)
- Ross Bridge (2017)

**Documenting landmarks, districts, and neighborhoods**

- **National Register surveys and nominations:** Downtown, Five Points, Southside, Smithfield, Pratt City, Thomas, Roebuck Springs (1979–1987); Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights Mass Meeting Churches, Birmingham Civil Rights District, Center Street–Dynamite Hill District, Graymont School (1994–2006)
- **National Park Service:** The five-county Birmingham Industrial Heritage District (studies, 1992–1993)

- **Historic American Buildings Survey** (1993–1998)
- **Historic American Engineering Record** (1993–1998, 2017)
- **National Landmark Nominations** (initiated 1993, listed 2005, 2006)
- **World Heritage Nominations** (2007)
- **Historic American Landscapes Survey:** Mountain Brook (2010–2013)

**Conducting tours, special events, and exhibits**

- **Tours:** Downtown Discovery Tours (1977–2008), Highland Avenue Bike Ride (1980s), Heritage Houses (1993– )
- **Events:** Ghost tellings (1978–1989), Preservation Week Parade (1985–2000), A Day in Old Birmingham (1987–1991), Preservation Awards (1995–2009), Palm Sunday Church Tours (1986–2000), Second Saturdays at Sloss Walks and Talks (2016– )
- **Exhibits:** Beginning with *Buildings Reborn: New Uses, Old Places* (1983– )

**Accepting façade easements**, beginning with the Redmont Hotel and the rooftop sign (1984–1991) and earmarking funds received for an endowment

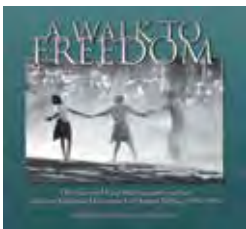
**Moving and renovating Duncan House** as the Society's offices at Sloss Furnaces (1985–1986, 2015–2017)

**Growing Grandmother's Garden** at Sloss Quarters (2006– )

**Building a digital collection**, Alabama Department of Archives & History Digital Library (2015–2017)

# PUBLISHING

(not including issues of the BHS *Journal*)



- 1978 *Downtown Birmingham: Architectural and Historical Walking Tour Guide*  
1978 *Downtown Discovery Tour*  
1978 *The Ghost in the Sloss Furnaces*  
1980 *Birmingham Heritage Hike Guide and Patch*  
1981 *The Birmingham District: An Industrial History and Guide*  
1982 *Town Within A City: The Five Points South Neighborhood, 1880–1930*  
1983 *Five Points Heritage Hike and Patch*  
1984 *Old Birmingham, New Architecture: Student Projects for an Historic Downtown Context*  
1985 *Go To Town, Birmingham: A Public Forum on a Vital City Center*  
1986 *Image of the City*  
1988 *House Detective: A Guide to Researching Birmingham Buildings*  
1989 *Buildings Against Cities: The Struggle to Make Places*  
1989 *Designs on Birmingham: A Landscape History of a Southern City and Its Suburbs*  
1990 *Cinderella Stories: Transformations of Historic Birmingham Buildings*  
1991 *Judge Clarence Allgood: His Brother's Keeper*  
1991 *Mountain Brook Estates* (reprint of 1926 publication)  
1992 *True Tales of Birmingham*  
1994 *The Birmingham Industrial Heritage District Map*  
1995 *Vulcan and His Times*  
1995 *Birmingham's Vulcan* (reprint of 1938 booklet)  
1996 *Birmingham View: Through the Years in Photographs*  
1997 *Birmingham Bound: An Atlas of the South's Premier Industrial Region, 1850–Present*  
1998 *A Walk to Freedom: The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, 1956–1964*  
1998 *Low Virtues: The Value of Human Scale Architecture to Birmingham Urbanism*  
1998 *In Celebration of the Restoration of Alabama Power Company's 1925 Tower*  
1999 *Vive Vulcan!*  
1999 *Walking Tours of Birmingham Churches Conducted from 1990 to 1999*  
2001 *A Pizzella View: Governor Braxton Bragg Comer and His Family*  
2001 *Aspiration: Birmingham's Historic Houses of Worship*  
2003 *A Guide to Architectural Styles Featuring Birmingham Homes*  
2004 *Art of the New South: Women Artists of Birmingham, 1890–1950*  
2005 *A Park System for Birmingham* (reprint of 1925 Olmsted Brothers plan)  
2006 *The Olmsted Vision: Parks for Birmingham*  
2007 *Hand Down Unharmd: Olmsted Files on Birmingham Parks, 1920–1925*  
2008 *D. O. Whilldin: Alabama Architect*  
2009 *Mountain Brook Village: Then and Now*  
2010 *Digging Out of the Great Depression: Federal Programs at Work in and Around Birmingham*  
2011 *The Jemison Magazine and The Selling of Birmingham, 1910–1914* (journal reprint)  
2012 *The Jemison Magazine: Birmingham and Mountain Brook, 1926–1930* (journal reprint)  
2013 *MINUTES—Central Committee, 1963: Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and Southern Christian Leadership Conference*  
2014 *Mountain Brook: A Historic American Landscape*  
2015 *Bob Moody's Birmingham: A City in Watercolor*  
2016 *For Science and Humanity: Building Southern Research*  
2016 *Birmingham, 1915*  
2017 *Warren H. Manning's City Plan of Birmingham* (reprint of 1919 report)

# BUILDING A DIGITAL COLLECTION

In April 2017, the Alabama Department of Archives & History agreed to host PDFs (searchable and ready to download) of BHS newsletters, Journals, and selected publications (see below). They are located on the web at [digital.archives.alabama.gov](http://digital.archives.alabama.gov) / Alabama Genealogy and History Publications / Birmingham Historical Society.

The screenshot displays the Alabama Department of Archives & History website interface. At the top, the logo and name "Alabama DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY" are visible. Below the navigation bar, a search bar contains the query "Alabama Birmingham Historical Society". The search results are displayed in a grid format, showing various publications such as "Quarterly Bulletin of the Birmingham Historical Society", "The Journal of the Birmingham Historical Society", and "Birmingham Historical Society Newsletter". Each result includes a thumbnail image of the document cover and a title with date information. On the left side, there are filters for "Location", "Creator", and "Date". The top left corner has navigation links for "Digital Collections Home", "Genealogy and History Home", and "Browse All".



# REPORT ON MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

November 1, 2016 to December 1, 2017

The following donors have generously supported the Society at levels above the general membership dues. We acknowledge their support and express our gratitude.

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## DONORS TO SOCIETY PROJECTS

**Providing Storage for Society Books**  
 Edgar Marx Jr. and Marx Brothers, Inc.

## Shades Creek Project

Anonymous, Anonymous, Mary Smith Slaughter Fund.

Birmingham Historical Society is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to contribute to the quality of life in Birmingham by preserving, learning from, and celebrating the city's past while helping to shape its future. Members receive newsletters, invitations to events and the annual publication. Those members joining at the Heritage Society level receive invitations to additional events. To purchase Society publications, see the BHS web-site [www.bhistorical.org](http://www.bhistorical.org) or [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) for titles available or contact us at One Sloss Quarters, Birmingham, Alabama, 35222, t. 205-251-1880. The Society mails book orders.

**Membership is for the calendar year: January–December.**

**Members must pay 2018 dues to receive the 2018 annual publication.**

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