



# Telling Our Story

## ANNUAL REPORT TO THE MEMBERS 2002

### The Spirit of Our Founders 60 Years Ago

THE BIRMINGHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY, a voluntary association, was organized on November 5, 1942, by citizens of Birmingham, Alabama, who were interested in the preservation of the history and traditions of the City and Jefferson County. They met at the Birmingham Public Library.

By 1954, when the Society incorporated, membership had grown to approximately 200 "service-minded" members (i.e. the members execute the services (projects), not paid staff). The purpose of the Society stated in the incorporation documents was to institute and encourage historical inquiry and the study of history, to collect and preserve, and to mark records and places of historical interest.

Among the Officers of the Society in the 1940s and 1950s were John Henley, William H. Brantley, Hill Ferguson, William M. Spencer, and R. N. Hawkins, Jr.

Trustees of the Society in this era included: John C. Henley, Jr., Carolyn Garrett, Dr. C. B. Glenn, Lydia Eustis Rogers, Mary Kirkpatrick Crawford, Hugh Cardon, W. F. Franke, Frank C. Spain, Florence E. Donaldson, Samuel L. Earle, Henry R. Howze, Mrs. A. M. Throckmorton, Mittie Owen McDavid, James F. Sulzby, Jr., Caroline Prowell Engstfeld, Frances Bradley, Robert B. Henkell, John L. Carter, Robert Jemison, Jr., Alex C. Montgomery, Stuart Mims, and Thomas E. Huey.

#### Accomplishments of the Early Society

- Many documents and data of historical interest pertaining to Birmingham and the state collected and donated to the Birmingham Public Library and the Department of Archives and History of the State of Alabama in Montgomery in the name of the Society, including the original Constitution of the Confederate States of America.
- Historical highway markers placed throughout the city and the state.
- Documents drafted, collected, and placed in the cornerstone of Birmingham's new City Hall, 1950. This collection became known as "the Hill Ferguson Collection," although many contributed materials.
- Assisted in securing the donation from Republic Iron & Steel Company to the University of Alabama of 60 acres on which the Tannehill Furnace is located.
- Led a campaign resulting in the City of Birmingham purchasing Arlington as a place of historic interest.



Jim Terry and his children ponder 16th century Spanish maps (left) as Sara Ruiz de Molina (right) shares French "Floride" with her daughter



Christina and Jim Emison. The MAPS 1540 to Today Exhibit from the Rucker Agee Collection opened at the Library Gallery on Nov. 3.



Founding participants of the Junior Patrons group, Mary Elizabeth Mays, Jeremy Erdreich, and Melissa Slaughter, pose in an "historic manner" at the SnapShot Exhibit at the Library Gallery. Jim Strickland recorded the inaugural gathering for the Society and for deposit at the BPL Archives.



Junior Patron Organizers: Edgar Marx, Jr., Regina Ammon, and Frederick Smith, Jr.

# Activities of the Past 25 Years

Since the Bicentennial of the American Revolution, the Society's stated mission has been to contribute to the quality of life in our city by preserving, learning from, and celebrating our community's past while helping shape its future. Programs research and interpret our history, provide strong educational programs for children and adults, and initiate and support the preservation of historic places.

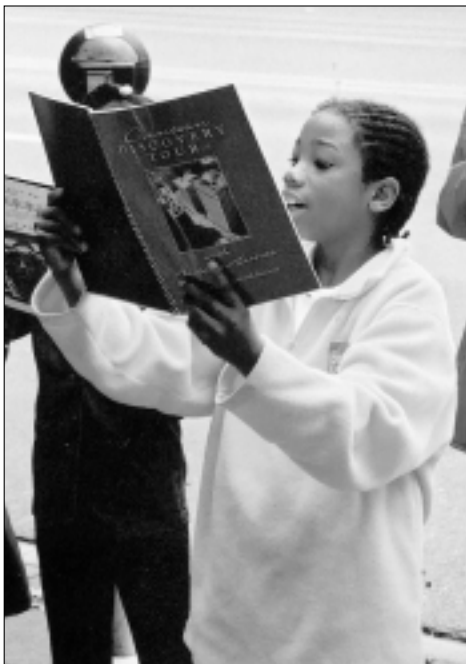
The Society accomplishes its work through minimal expense and maximum volunteer effort. Annual events include the annual meeting, a spring church tour, Preservation Awards and a fall publication and exhibit.



Preservation Awards Presentation in Judge Thorne's Courtroom, Jefferson County Courthouse

## Accomplishments

- Fostered an appreciation for our civic heritage.
- Spearheaded and supported the preservation of downtown Birmingham, Five Points South, Sloss Furnaces, Sloss Quarters, Rickwood Field, Vulcan & His Park, Civil Rights churches, and many other sites and historic neighborhoods.
- Documented more than 1,000 historic sites for the National Register of Historic Places.
- Built up a superb collection of data on our city, county and regional heritage, most of it deposited with the Library of Congress and the Birmingham Public Library.
- Published 70 books.
- Sold books across the globe.
- Conducted 2,000 Downtown Discovery Tours.
- Conducted more than 1,800 tours of sacred places and neighborhoods.
- Conducted 300 special events showcasing our city.
- Conducted 16 Preservation Week parades.
- Conducted 80 Buddy Up (building cardboard landmarks) projects in area schools.
- Encouraged preservation through annual Awards
- Informed decision making processes.
- Preserved 9 historic buildings through preservation easements.
- Instilled pride in our community.



Great guides and students make for fun learning experiences on the Discovery Tours, supported this year by the National Bank of Commerce and the City of Birmingham. Pictured are third graders from McElwain and Mountain Brook Elementary schools.

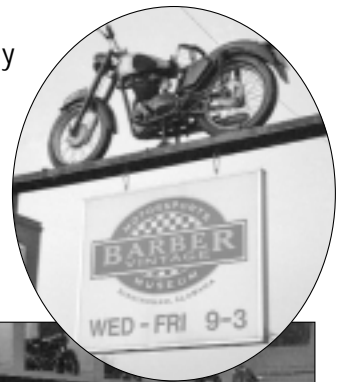


Volunteer guides (left) include Beverly Miller (above at the top of the NBC Bank, a tour highlight, Julie Parker, Marina Hobbs, Nancy Cox, Ehney Camp IV, Doug Shaddix, Jeff Johnston, and Bruce Lanier (above with the all-stars at the Florentine Bldg.).

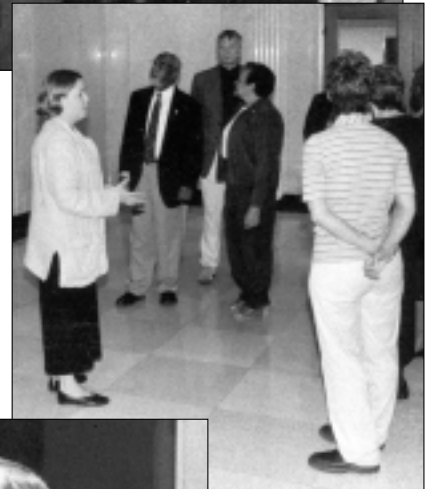
# Accomplishments 2002

- Significantly increased membership and giving to the Society.
- Researched motorcycles and conducted the Annual Meeting at the Barber Motorsports Museum.
- Conducted volunteer-led Discovery Tours, sponsored by National Bank of Commerce, spring and fall.
- Conducted the annual tour of scared places with Dr. John Schnorrenberg leading over three hundred persons to the downtown churches.
- Conducted Preservation Awards at the newly restored Jefferson County Courthouse. Giatinna Fischer Aycok Architects, Inc. led tours.
- Hosted the annual Heritage Society Party at the homes of Tony and Margaret Serra and Stewart Dansby on Crest Road overlooking the city.
- Organized and mounted an exhibit of 60 maps from the Birmingham Public Library's Rucker Agee Collection, with Amanda Adams Schedler assisting.
- Coordinated *Maps 1540 to Today* at the Birmingham Public Library Library Gallery, November 1 to December 31, 2002.
- Developed activities for third and fourth graders to use historic maps in the study of Birmingham and Alabama history, with Beverly Miller assisting.
- Completed a context document for the proposed Birmingham National Historic Landmark Civil Rights Districts, assisting Dr. C. Van West of the Middle Tennessee Center for Historic Preservation.
- Organized a Junior Patrons group.

- Researched the history of Birmingham parks, especially Avondale, East Lake, and Ensley.
- Organized and catalogued Society research and records, under the guidance of Peggy Balch.



*Lowe family members gathered at the Annual Meeting with Marzette Bolivar to celebrate the release of her book on musician-educator J. L. Lowe.*



*Trustee Kelly McLaughlin AIA leads a tour of the courthouse following Preservation Awards.*

*Congenial host Stewart Dansby also opened his home for the springtime Heritage Society fete.*



*Heritage Society members Louise McPhillips, and Marjorie White, and our hostess Margaret Serra enjoy the view from the highest spot on Red Mountain (the Serra's home).*



*Dr. John Schnorrenberg led an admiring throng on a "billed as his last" tour of downtown churches. Dr. Schnorrenberg has retired*

*from the Art Department at UAB and with his wife Barbara heads to Washington soon.*