

BIRMINGHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

February 2005

Reflections on Art of the New South

Women Artists of Birmingham, 1890-1950

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY. Julius Linn Jr., Heather McPherson and Marjorie White will speak about our eight, arty women. Linn's recollections will include memories of visits to their Five Points studios. McPherson will review the national and international art context in which the women became successful, professional artists. White will comment on their intent of 1907, the year they formed the Birmingham Art Club, to make of Birmingham "an art center." Slides and original pieces of art will accompany the 7 p.m. talks at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens on February 21.

Dr. Linn, editor of U.A.B. medical publications, grew up visiting Great Aunt Carrie Hill's studio and taking her on "painting picnics" in the county. A connoisseur and collector of art, Dr. Linn

also kept and donated (to the Birmingham Public Library) records documenting Hill's professional career. Through his efforts, many of Carrie's paintings have been located in public and private collections, and many published in the Society's 2004 book.

Art historian, Dr. McPherson — self-described as a "modernist" and engaged, principally, in the study of English and French art from the 18th to the 20th centuries — teaches, writes, and lectures from her post at U. A. B. Dr. McPherson also directs Graduate Studies in Art History, jointly administering a Masters Program with the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. She supported the M. A. thesis of Vicki Ingham, author of *Art of the New South*. Marjorie White, Director, of the Society, coordinated the publication and exhibition of *Art of the New South*.



The Olmsted Vision

This year's annual publication explores the Olmsted legacy for our region — a vision of scenic places — designed for public and private clients during the early 20th century. The vision includes parks, grounds for educational institutions, private estates, and most especially: greenways across our ridges and creek beds.

Frederic Law Olmsted is widely known as the father of landscape architecture in America and famous for his designs of Central Park in New York City, the Biltmore Estate and the U. S. Capitol Grounds. His son John Charles and his nephew Frederic Law Olmsted Jr. established the Olmsted Brothers firm of Brookline, Mass. Olmsted Brothers became the premier park planning firm in the nation in the 1910s and 1920s, with extensive work in Baltimore, Louisville, Seattle, and California. The firm published a plan, actually a shopping list for land acquisition, for the Birmingham park board in 1925 and drafted hundreds of pages of advice and suggestions in correspondence to Birmingham park advocates. We will publish the plan, together with selected correspondence, and an analysis of implementation during the 1920s and 1930s.

The fall exhibit at the Birmingham Public Library will showcase current park and greenway projects, completed and proposed. Says, Heather McArn, BHS Trustee researching projects, "There are so many exciting ventures — the Shades Creek Greenways; the Vulcan Trail on Red Mountain, the Turkey Creek Preserve, the Ruffner Mountain Preserve, U. S. Steel's proposed Red Mountain Park . . . and the many acquisitions of the Black Warrior Cahaba Rivers Land Trust . . . to name a few. We look forward to identifying and sharing these projects with the public."

SOCIETY CALENDAR

**Reflections on
*Art of the New South***
The Annual Meeting
Talks, Slides and Small Art Show
February 21, 2005, 7:00 p.m.
Birmingham Botanical Gardens

Preservation Awards
May 12, 2005, 5:00 p.m.

Heritage Society Party
June 12, 2005, 4:00 p.m.
"Woodside," Limestone County
Residence of Carol and Sam Frazier

The Olmsted Vision
Publication Celebration
Exhibit Opening
November 6, 2005, 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Library Gallery
Birmingham Public Library

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Endowment Thriving

The Endowment increased to \$478,772 during 2004 thanks to the contributions of \$28,000 by 31 Members and investment gains of almost \$50,000. Endowment funds are invested until the Endowment reaches \$1.2 million and thereafter a certain percent of interest may support Society needs. Thank you. Thank you to donors and investors.

Trustees & Officers to be Elected

The Society's Nominating Committee presents the following candidates to serve as Officers and Trustees: Marjorie White, Chairman; Richard W. Sprague, President; Art Beattie, Pat Camp, Lillie Fincher, Edgar Marx Jr., Douglas Stockham, Vice Presidents; Richard Bowron, Secretary; Carol Slaughter, Assistant Secretary. New Trustees for terms 2005-2007: Lewis Burks, Will French, Bo Grisham, Sara Ruiz de Molina, Brian Rushing, and Hanson Slaughter. Members will vote on the Nominees at the Annual Meeting on February 21. Additional nominations must be received in the Society's offices two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting.

Amy Murphy indexing BHS books

Look for indexes to BHS publications on our web-site (www.bhistorical.org), soon. Amy, a librarian with lots of experience in information management, is volunteering her services as a professional indexer to help us get better access to our publications. We are most appreciative. Amy can be reached at amy@murphyindexing.com.

Stony the Road We Trod Workshops

Teachers from across the nation will be gathering once again this summer for four sessions of week-long study of civil rights activities. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and organized by Martha Bouyer, curriculum specialist with Jefferson County Schools, the workshop sessions led Members Dr. Glenn Eskew, Odessa Woolfolk, and Marjorie White. Local teachers may be able to participate, call Martha Bouyer at 379-2088.

Registering Civil Rights Resources

Listing on the National Register of Historic Places (the nation's list of properties worthy of preservation maintained by the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C.) is sought for:

Bethel Baptist Church

National Landmark historians prepared a nomination for Bethel Baptist Church as a National Historic Landmark (an *exceptionally nationally significant* site). The nomination recognizes that Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and his organization, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) created, from his base at Bethel, a new kind of non-violent, direct action organization, the one that seven years later won the war (for civil rights under federal law), during the April-May 1963 demonstrations in the Birmingham city center. On September 21, 2004, the Landmarks Committee of the National Park Service Advisory Board approved Bethel at a meeting in Washington, D.C. The Rev. Thomas Wilder, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, and Marjorie White spoke. Bethel awaits final listing by the Secretary of the Interior.

ACMHR Churches

Individual nominations for 21 churches passed Alabama's National Register Review Board at their October 28, 2004 meeting. National Register Coordinator Christy Anderson shepherded them through detailed review. These nominations now await final listing on the National Register: Bethel AME Church, Ensley; Canaan (Missionary) Baptist Church; Christian Valley Baptist Church; East End Baptist Church; First Baptist Church, East Thomas; First Baptist Church, Kingston-Lighthouse Ministries; First Ebenezer Baptist Church; Metropolitan Community Church; Mount Ararat Baptist Church, Ensley; Old New Pilgrim Baptist Church (led by the Reverends Nelson Smith and Charles Billups Jr.), as *nationally significant*; New Rising Star Baptist Church; Oak Street Baptist Church; Christ Temple AFM-Old Metropolitan CME Church, Ensley; Old Sardis Baptist Church, *with statewide significance*; Shady Grove Baptist Church; (Sixth Street) Peace Baptist

Church; St. Luke AME Church; St. Luke AME Zion Church; St. Peter Primitive Baptist Church; Twenty-Second Avenue Baptist Church; and West End Hills Missionary Baptist Church.

The Birmingham Civil Rights District

The state National Register Review Board will review this nomination, prepared by BHS with Dr. Carroll Van West, at their March 10, 2005 meeting. The district is a four-part collection of properties: *Northside* (with the churches and commercial buildings surrounding Kelly Ingram Park and along Fourth Avenue, the staging area for the marches); the *governmental center* at Linn Park (with city hall and the courthouse where demonstrators sought civil rights); the *retail district* (with Lovemans-now McWane Center, Kress-now law offices, Woolworth, and Pizitz where demonstrators sought access to facilities and jobs) and the network of major *march routes* that connect these sites.

Here "the climatic battle of the Civil Rights revolution" — Shuttlesworth vs. Connor — took place in April and May 1963. Properties and connecting streets are earmarked as *nationally significant* as these events hastened the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the act that provided equal access to public accommodations for all Americans.

Lists of demonstration sites and the marches and routes are included in the National Register nomination text. Victor Blackledge, Karla Calvert, the Rev. Calvin Woods, together with Odessa Woolfolk and work she spearheaded in the 1990s, provided invaluable assistance in mapping the march routes.

Sites in the proposed district include Kelley Ingram Park, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, St. Paul United Methodist Church, A. G. Gaston Motel and Office Building, Smith and Gaston Funeral Home, Metropolitan A.M. E. Zion Church, the Masonic Temple, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Poole Funeral Chapel and Dr. Hamilton's Office Sixth Avenue Zion Hill Baptist Church and Community Building.



One Sloss Quarters

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Address Correction and Forwarding Requested

Join us for

The Annual Meeting
February 21, 7:00 p.m.

East Lake Public Library Mural, 1937,
by Carrie Hill

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