

BIRMINGHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Newsletter

November 2002



*From the Collection of Rucker Agee • An Exhibit at the Birmingham Public Library*

MAPS EXPRESS THE RELATION TO ONE ANOTHER of points and features on the earth's surface. From 1540 to today, methods of determining the placement of these points and features have varied widely from astronomic and mathematic calculations to satellite and computer-aided digital images.

Reasons for developing maps have also changed. Early maps charted discoveries in the new world and delineated European colonies and, later, new American states, counties and townships. Points of interest vary from rivers, ports, and native American villages to routes of trade and travel for ocean going vessels, steamboats, railroads, roads, interstates, and airports.

Languages found on early maps include Latin, old Spanish, old French, old Dutch, old German and English. Native American villages are first named in Spanish. The word *new*, for example, is variously spelled *neuwe*, *neuve*, *nouvelle*, and *nouveau*.

This exhibit of more than 50 maps is drawn from the Birmingham Public Library's Rucker Agee Collection of maps of the Southeast. The late Rucker Agee, an investment banker and broker with Sterne, Agee, & Leach, and an avid historian and collector, donated 600 maps to the library in 1965. He curated several exhibits at the library and oversaw the proper conservation of the treasures in the Linn-Henley Library. Mr. Agee also gave an endowment for future acquisitions to keep the collection up-to-date. Today, the Agee Collection includes 3,675 maps, 700 atlases and 2,533 related volumes.

Visit the Agee maps at the library or on line at <http://alabamamaps.ua.edu>. Agee's comments about his maps, which are written in italics, contribute to the captions for the exhibit and gallery guide. Instructions to younger visitors on what to look for in the maps are printed in this format in many captions.

*Cosponsored by the Birmingham Historical Society, Birmingham Public Library, and Sterne, Agee & Leach, Inc.*

## *Rucker Agee* THE MAN BEHIND THE MAPS

THE LATE RUCKER AGEE (1897-1985) ENJOYED history and collecting, especially maps and books. For 66 years, Mr. Agee was a principal in the investment banking firm now known as Sterne, Agee & Leach, Inc., where he specialized in state and municipal finance. He provided leadership to many civic and charitable organizations, including the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, the Metropolitan Development Board, the Community Chest, and the Boy Scouts. He also contributed significantly to historical endeavors, particularly the Alabama Historical Association, established in 1947, for which he developed a statewide program of highway signage to identify historic sites. An avid reader and scholar, Mr. Agee's interest in maps began as a child. His mother gave him a globe to better study his geography lessons. According to his daughters, Mrs. John (Louise) Wrinkle and Mrs. Arthur (Kitty) Durkee, his collecting instinct was innate. He began with collecting seashells and stamps, and then moved on to maps, always believing it was important to have a focus in a collection. From the 1930s to the 1960s, Agee's interest was the Southeastern United States and Alabama. He amassed more than 600 maps and atlases, as well as a fine library of southern history. Due to the close friendship between Agee and the Birmingham Public Library's director at the time, Fant H. Thornley, Mr. Agee donated his outstanding



collection to the library in 1965. Over the years, the Birmingham Public Library presented several exhibitions of the Agee maps. A substantial number of images have been added to the holdings which are now housed in the Linn-Henley Research Library. Thanks to Mr. Agee's willingness to share his knowledge and collection with others, we have the opportunity to understand more fully the rich history of our city, state, and region.

# YOU ARE HERE: ★



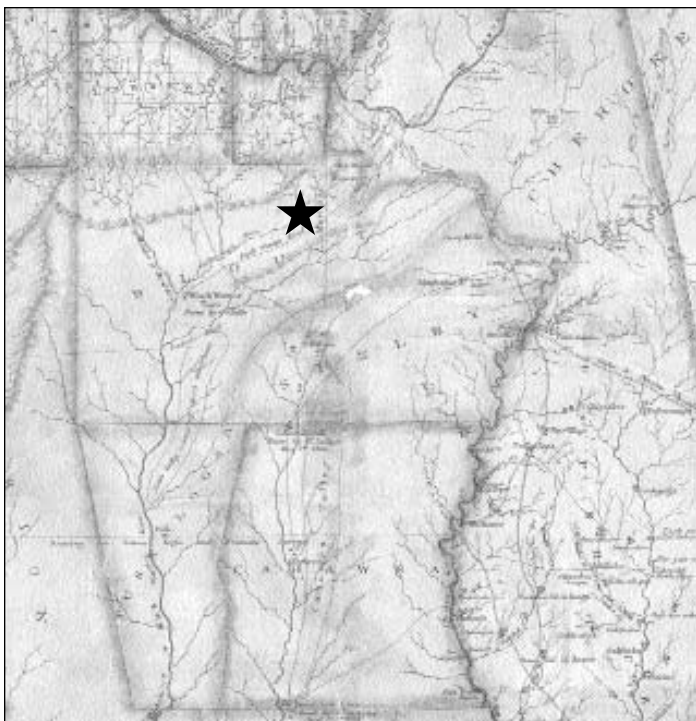
1540 In Spanish Florida. *Die Neuwe Inslen* (German for *The New Islands which the King of Spain Found in the Great Ocean*). Sebastian Munster



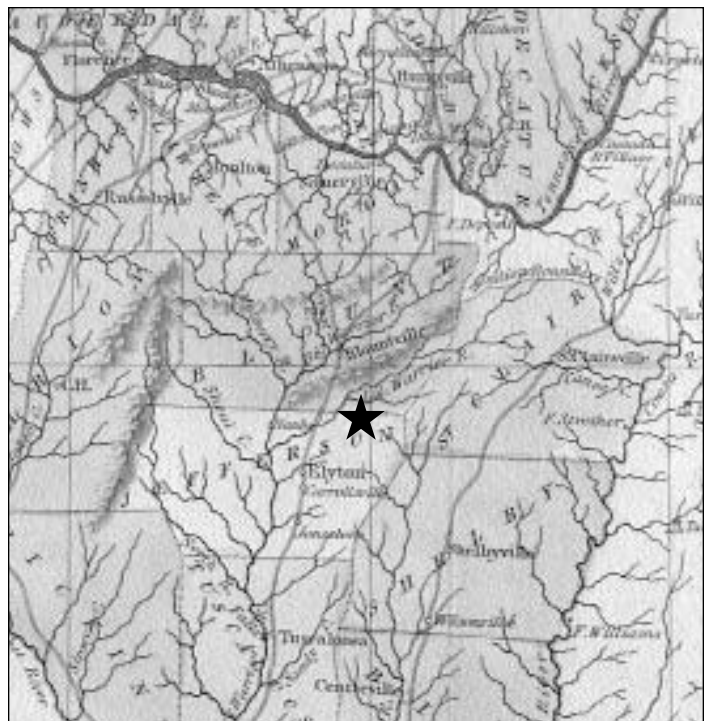
1657 In French Florida. *America, with those knowne parts in that unknowne worlde*. Nicole Sanson d'Abbeville



1720 In French Louisiana. *A New Map of the North Parts of America Claimed by France*. Herman Moll



1818 In the State of Alabama. *Map of Alabama Constructed from the Surveys in the General Land Office, and other Documents*. John Melish



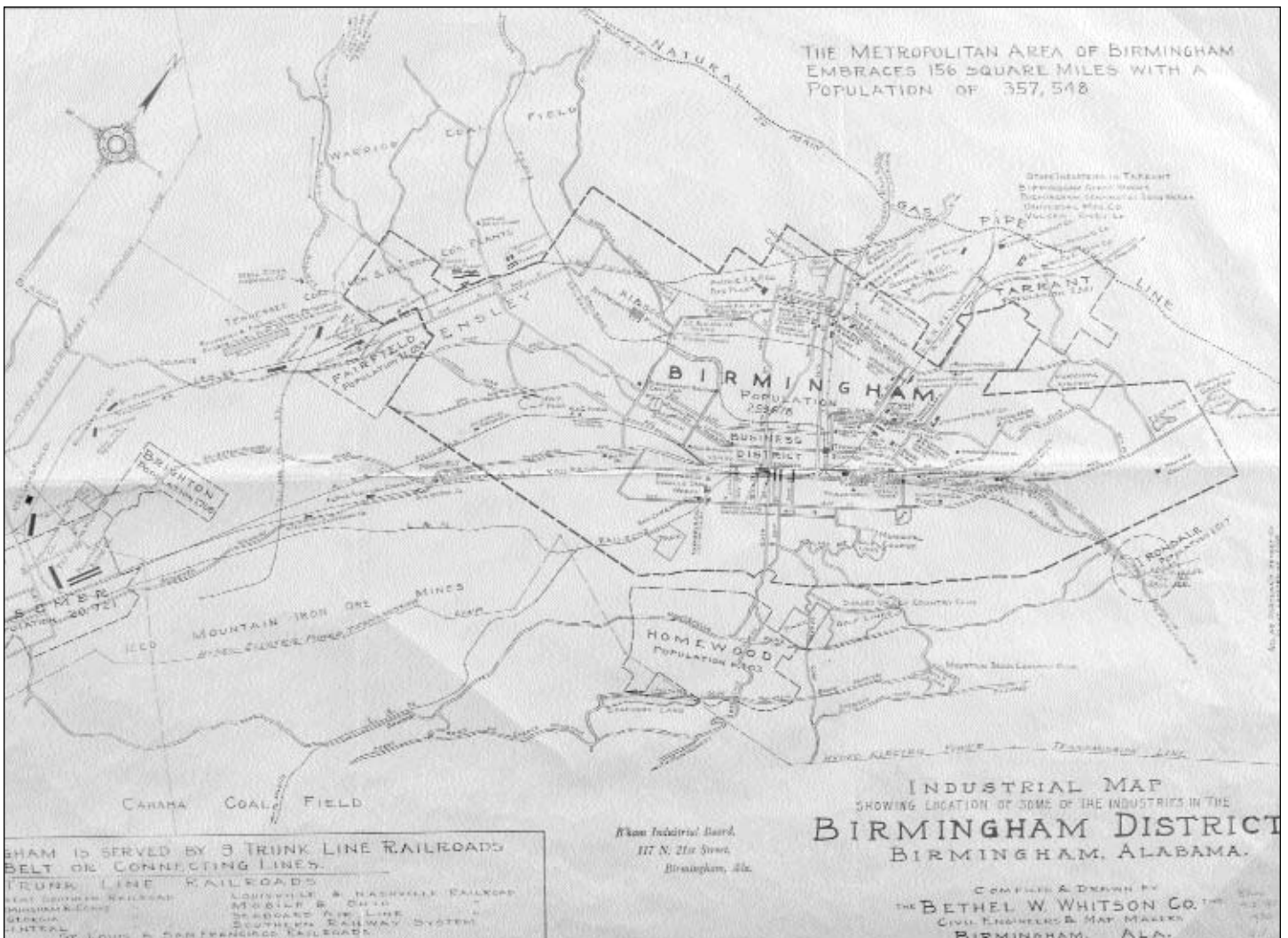
1822 In Antebellum Alabama. *Geographical, Statistical and Historical Map of Alabama*. Fielding Lucas



1849 In the North Alabama Mineral Region. Geological Map of Alabama. Michael Tuomey, the state's first geologist



1874 At the crossing of the railroads that created Birmingham. Map of Land Granted to the South & North Alabama Rail Road. South & North Rail Road.



1930 In the flowering of Birmingham Industry. Industrial Map Showing Location of Some of the Industries in the Birmingham District, Alabama. Bethel Whitson.

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## *Time Line*

**1492**

Christopher Columbus discovered the new world, claiming it for the **Spanish** crown.

**1512**

The **Spanish** claimed the future site of Birmingham, following Ponce de Leon's discovery of Florida.

**1539-1543**

Hernando deSoto and his army of 600 men invaded and explored the interior lands. He descended from the Tennessee Valley down the Coosa and Alabama Rivers and up the Tombigbee into Mississippi.

**1629**

The **English** king, with no idea of the magnitude of his land, granted Carolina to Sir Robert Heath. The vast land extended westward across the present state of Alabama westward to the South Sea, but was not settled.

**1682**

The **French** claimed the Southeast area as part of Louisiana. Louisiana included the Gulf Coast area and all lands drained by its rivers. The Monsigneur D'Iberville and the Chevalier De La Salle explored this area in the 1680s and 1690s. The French confirmed their claim by setting up colonies and trading with the natives.

**1700**

Scientific cartography (aided by instruments and field research) developed, with pre-eminence among French map makers.

**1763**

The **British** claimed the lands west of their Atlantic colonies "to the South Sea." The Treaty of Peace (Paris) of 1763 ended the French and Indian Wars and secured the site of Birmingham for the British. One year later, English King George III chartered East and West Floridas as the 14th and 15th American colonies.

**1770s-1819**

**Spain** seized West Florida during the American Revolution and held it for 30 years.

**Mississippi Territory / Alabama Territory**

**1819**

United States gains title to the site of Birmingham

**1819**

Alabama established as a state, with seven large counties including Jefferson County named for our third president.

**1832**

The Creek Nation ceded all lands in Alabama and Georgia and reluctantly agreed to move west of the Mississippi River.

**1861**

The Confederate States of America formed at Montgomery.

**1871**

The city of Birmingham is founded and envisioned to be the great workshop center of the mineral region.

**2002**

Greater Birmingham remains the South's largest industrial workplace and a center of medical services and research, engineering, insurance, and banking.

## *Description of the Collection*

upon its first exhibition at the  
Birmingham Public Library in 1955  
by Rucker Agee

During more than 450 years, more governmental jurisdictions have been asserted over the Southeast region than over any other part of the Americas . . . Meanwhile, the great civilized native tribes—the Creeks, the Cherokees, the Chickasaws, and the Choctaws—occupied the land.

During the Colonial period, Spain, France, and Great Britain, seeking alliances of war and trade with the aborigines, continually had agents and ambassadors in the land. The Spanish and French regarded the natives as subjects of their kings. Only the British pursued the policy of seeking land cessions from the natives.

After the United States acquired a conditional title from Georgia, the land now called Alabama was governed by the Mississippi Territory, the Alabama Territory, State of Alabama, and the Confederate States of America.

This collection includes not only maps of the colonial and territorial periods but also maps showing the creation of our state, our county, and our city and man-made developments to the native landscape.

Today's map makers use satellite reconnaissance to delineate geographic features, accurately. The early maps in this exhibit were made without instruments and surveys in an era when little was known (of the land that became Birmingham). Travelers and explorers provided the bits and pieces of information to the map makers who rarely traveled to the site. Hence, errors abound. The early maps show the understanding of the era.

## *Society Calendar*

**Maps 1540 to Today**

The Exhibit: November 1-December 31  
Birmingham Public Library Gallery

**Exhibit Opening & Reception**

November 3, 3-5 p.m.

Library Gallery

**Gallery Talks at the exhibit**

Thursdays at Noon

**Brown Bag Lunch & Gallery Tour**

with Amanda Adams Schedler

Linn-Henley Auditorium, 3rd Floor

November 13, Noon

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