

# Newsletter

January 2014

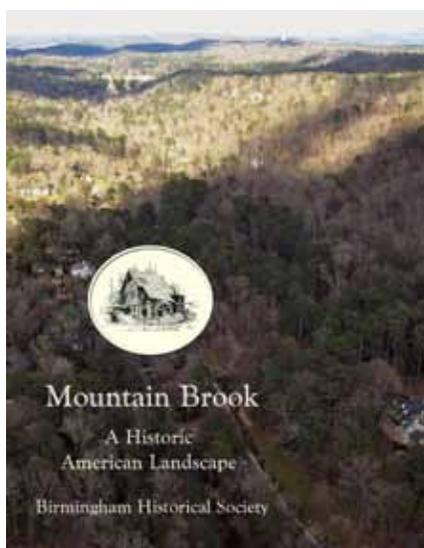
## Annual Meeting Offers Sneak Peek at Newest Book

Please join us Monday evening February 3 at 7 p.m. in the Birmingham Botanical Gardens Auditorium to celebrate the release of *Mountain Brook-A Historic American Landscape*. There will be talks, an exhibit of photographs and drawings, and the gorgeous new publication with everything you might know and lots you might never have imagined about the planning for today's suburban community of Mountain Brook, Alabama. Clearly, the planning effort of the late 1920s to be featured remains one of the best things that ever happened in Birmingham, and we look forward to sharing the story.

The February 3 meeting is the Annual Meeting of the Society at which the Members will elect Officers and Trustees for the coming year (*see the report of the Nominating Committee*). Members whose dues are paid for 2014 will receive their membership copy of *Mountain Brook-A Historic American Landscape*.

### **About the New Book**

This book details the process by which the Mountain Brook planners worked out their vision for today's historic landscape. In an era before computers, geographic information systems, and modern construction equipment, they painstakingly documented the terrain and its features, revising and adjusting their plans to suit the complicated topography and enhance the beauty of the place.



The volume is centered on documentation prepared by Birmingham Historical Society for the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS), a program of the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. It includes more than 200 historic and contemporary photographs and drawings.

### **About the Planning for Mountain Brook**

From 1926 to 1929, the Jemison & Co. real estate firm of Birmingham, Alabama, assembled a team of talented professionals to design a residential district in a rugged wilderness south of the city. The ambitious venture integrated homes, recreation, and community amenities into a park-like setting, retaining and intensifying the area's natural beauty. Led by celebrated landscape architect and planner Warren H. Manning of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Jemison's team sited individual homes along the ridges and knolls and designed the winding roads that led to them.

The 4,500-acre Mountain Brook development was the largest, and finest, undertaken in the region. By the 1950s, it would become one of the highest per capita income communities in America. The original system of roads, bridges, entrances, and open spaces remains intact to this day and helps shape the Mountain Brook experience.

## Gardening The Old-Fashioned Way

The heirloom gardens at the Society's Duncan House at Sloss Furnaces include examples of varieties of roses, perennials, herbs—both culinary and medicinal—and vegetables that were available and grown in the early 1900s when Sloss Furnaces was booming.

At this time, gardens filled with “pass-along” plants, cuttings and seeds shared among families and neighbors. There were few nurseries or seed catalogues or stores. Families didn't have money to purchase plants or seeds anyway, so “old-fashioned plants,” such as the ones you see at the Duncan House Garden, were what people grew.

Pesticides were not as yet a ubiquitous item; weeds were handled via “mechanical” means, i.e. hoeing, monitoring or “scouting,” hand pulling, and washing with soapy water. We follow this practice by refraining from use of insecticides, preferring to use the historic mechanical means. Without pesticides, beneficial insects are present in numbers and they help hold pest populations in check. The arrival of the kudzu bugs last fall severely tested our use of “mechanical means.” We eventually removed our glorious hyacinth beans. The small, black stink bugs then liked tansy!



*Kudzu Bugs Feasting on Tansy, October 2013. After repeated washings, the tansy was removed.*

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### **Officers**

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Ms. Marion Walker

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When nature did not supply sufficient rainfall during growing seasons, gardeners had few options to help their crops survive. They used mulches at the base of plants to help hold moisture in the ground, and collected rainwater in cisterns, which was usually applied by hand from a bucket or watering can. Our rainwater collecting system for our home garden demonstrates the use of rainwater gutters and collections devices to catch and reuse what nature provides. --Sallie Lee



The Society's Offices at Sloss. Illustration by Louise McPhillips.

## 2014 OFFICERS and TRUSTEES to Be Nominated

Carol Slaughter, chairman of the Society's Nominating Committee, reports that the following individuals are willing to serve as officers and trustees of the Society. Their names will be submitted to the Members for approval at the Annual Meeting on February 3. Please thank these individuals, and retiring Trustees Will French and Hanson Slaughter, for their service

### Officers

**President:** Wayne A. Hester, President

**Vice Presidents:** Allison A. Boone, Patricia H. Camp,

Julius E. Linn Jr., Richard W. Sprague, Katherine M. Tipton.

**Secretary:** Carol L. Slaughter

**Treasurer:** Edgar B. Marx Jr.

**Chairman of the Board:** Marjorie L. White

### Trustees

Cathy C. Adams

Craig Allen Jr.

Regina Ammon

Ron Bates

Lee M. Bowron

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Diane Burnett

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Carolanne Roberts

Brian R. Rushing

Barbara S. Shores

Paula Stanton

Ben Thompson

Karen Utz

Marion Walker

## SOCIETY CALENDAR

- Monday, Feb. 3, 7 p.m. The Society's **Annual Meeting with Book Signing, Photo Exhibit and Program.** Illustrated talk by landscape architect Birgit Kibelka and historian Marjorie White, "What Makes Mountain Brook Mountain Brook," celebrating the BHS 2014 annual publication: *Mountain Brook-A Historic American Landscape*. Auditorium, Birmingham Botanical Gardens.
- Feb. 24-28, beginning 9 a.m. **Rose Whacking, Grandmother's Garden**, Sloss. Bring your clippers and help.
- March 16, Noon-3 p.m. **Spring Equinox Plowing Party**, Grandmother's Garden. Bring newspaper for mulching the veggie garden following its plowing. Come dressed to get dirty. Children and adults welcome.
- Sunday, April 6, Noon, **Heritage Society Luncheon**, Mountain Brook Club (*Heritage Society Membership required*).
- Sunday, April 13, 2-4 p.m., **Book Signing and Exhibit Opening of Perfectly Planned: Mountain Brook Roads and Scenic Views**, Community Meeting Room, Emmet O'Neal Library.
- Saturday, April 26, 9-Noon, "**Home Pharmacies**" Workshop. Grandmother's Garden (*fee charged*).



Grandmother's Garden. Watercolor by Gail Cosby.

- Every Wednesday, beginning at 9 a.m., weather permitting, **Artists in the Garden.** Bring your supplies and come paint.
- Available upon request, **Grandmother's Garden Tours**, email Sallie Lee ... leesall@aces.edu

**To receive the 2014 annual publication, 2014 dues must be paid. Members' books** will be mailed in late April, if the volumes are not picked up at the events listed above.

Additional copies of *Mountain Brook-A Historic American Landscape* are available by mail for \$35 postpaid.