

**The JOURNAL
of the
Birmingham
Historical
Society**

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First National Bank of Birmingham.
Photograph courtesy of John C. Henley, III.



The JOURNAL Birmingham

This JOURNAL of the Birmingham Historical Society is published with the financial support of The Linn-Henley Charitable Trust. One of the honorees of this trust, established in 1961 by Walter E. Henley,* is Birmingham's first financier, first industrialist, and a grandfather of Mr. Henley, Charles Linn.

Charles Linn was born June 13, 1814 in the Kingdom of Sweden (now the southwest coast of Finland) a son of the manager of the iron works at Bilnas Burk. This company was operating in the late medieval times and is still in existence.

After the destruction by fire of the city of Turku where Linn was in college, he embarked upon a career at sea. During his lifetime he crossed the Atlantic Ocean 53 times and thrice circumnavigated the globe—all by sail.

By 1833 he had arrived in the United States, and finally settled, in 1838, as a wholesale mercantile merchant in Montgomery, Alabama.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, having sold his Montgomery business, he returned to the sea as a

Captain in the Confederate States Navy. This time his job was to run the Federal blockade with cotton to Liverpool.

Captain Linn was finally captured when he ran one of his two vessels, *The Kate Dale*, into neutral Havana harbor. Federal gunboats in hot pursuit nonetheless boarded his ship taking Linn and his son Charles to Washington where he was promptly pardoned by the Secretary of the Navy.

After heading the South's largest wholesale grocery house in New Orleans, Linn moved back to Montgomery in retirement. He was urged by a group of businessmen at a special dinner to build a bank in the new City of Birmingham. Captain Linn surprisingly agreed. With fifty thousand dollars in gold he organized The National Bank of Birmingham. The Bank occupied a magnificent three-story early Victorian structure which Linn constructed on the northeast corner of First Avenue, North, and Twentieth Street.

This briefly was called "Linn's Folly," because, as North Alabama's tallest building and first *national*

Birmingham Car and Foundry Company. Linn Iron Works.
Photograph courtesy of John C. Henley, III.



of the Historical Society

bank, it was considered far beyond the needs of the new town. Here on the night of December 31, 1873, Linn staged the famous Calico Ball, commemorating the opening of the Bank and the passing of the cholera epidemic which had nearly ended the life of the new "City." In 1882, with Linn's purchase of the City National Bank, the present name, First National Bank of Birmingham was adopted.

Subsequently, expanding his support of Birmingham's development, Linn organized Birmingham's first industries, The Linn Iron Works† and the Birmingham Car and Foundry Company. He brought from Cincinnati and Cleveland, Ohio the City's first iron craftsmen (many of them European). These craftsmen manufactured machinery "as heavy as any constructed South of the Ohio River."

Perhaps, however, Linn's devotion to Birmingham is best illustrated, not by reference to his banking or industrial enterprises but by a repetition of the far-sighted prophecy he made before his death in 1882:

I shall have my tomb built upon a high promontory‡ above the town of Birmingham, in which you men profess to have so little faith, so that I may walk out on Judgment Day and view the greatest industrial city of the entire South.

To Charles Linn, one of Birmingham's most significant pioneers, this issue of The JOURNAL of the Birmingham Historical Society is respectfully dedicated.

*Walter Ervin Henley (1877-1961) B.S. Eng., Auburn '98; developed the Cahaba Coal Field at Piper, Ala., 1900-1925; Director, Birmingham Trust, 1905-1950; President, 1925-1937; Chairman, 1937-1950.

†The first lathe machine, was brought to Linn Iron Works from the Confederate Arsenal at Selma. It is now on the campus of Auburn University.

‡Oak Hill, the City's first cemetery.

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FOREWORD

This issue of The JOURNAL of the Birmingham Historical Society is, like a backward Spring, considerably late in appearing. The Editorial Advisory Board and the Editors offer an apology and a promise that the regular publication schedule will be resumed during this calendar year.

Although no central theme unites the articles which appear in this issue, each article examines a topic in Birmingham history which has previously received little or no attention from researchers. Marjorie White's study of Glen Iris Park and the home of Robert and Eugenia Jemison gives access, for the first time, to a wealth of information on one of the city's principal turn-of-the-century real estate developments and to the roles which Thomas Ustick Walter, III, a noted Birmingham architect, and Samuel Brown Parsons, Jr., a nationally known landscape designer, played in that development. Special thanks should be expressed to a number of persons who assisted in the preparation of the article: Bitsy Williams, Camille Agricola, Faye Clark, Ann Burkhardt, Margaret Jemison, Martee Woodward Webb, Eugenia Akin, Weezie Smith, Wesley Anderton, Elbert Jemison, Jr., and Ann Woodward.

"Images of the Past: Selections from the Work of O. V. Hunt" is an autobiography in visual form of one of Birmingham's principal photographic artists. First, as chief photographer for the *Ledger* and then as an independent professional, Hunt chronicled the city's physical features and its people with a sensitivity paralleling that of such nationally known photographers as Walker Evans or Arthur Rothstein. A majority of the photographs used in this visual study of Hunt and his work were selected by Robert G.

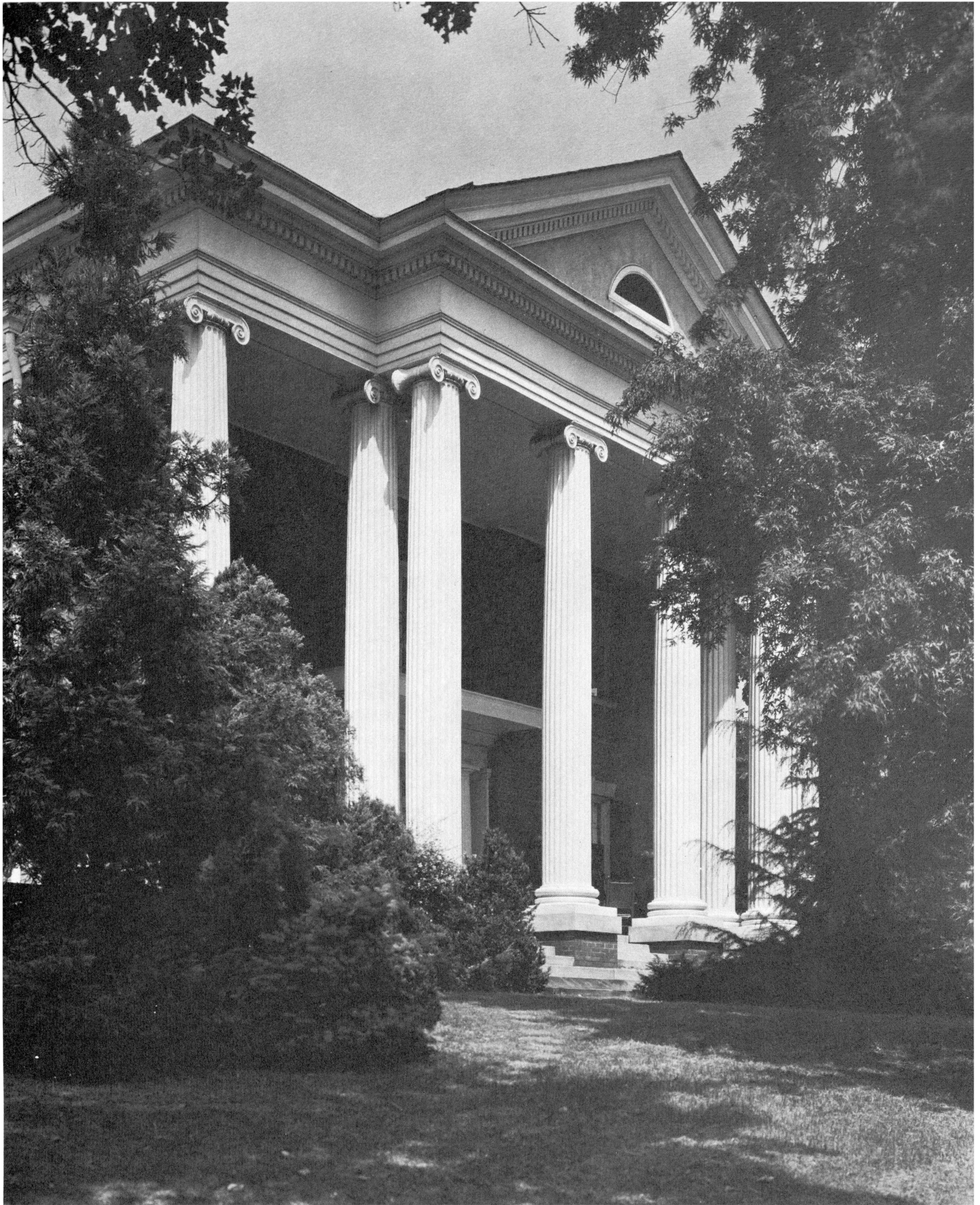
Corley from a collection of photographic prints given to the Department of Archives and Manuscripts of the Birmingham Public Library by Frederic L. Smith, whose father, J. Martin Smith, possessed a keen interest in Birmingham photographers and was an active member of the Birmingham Photography Club.

The final article in this issue is a study, by Lyn Johns, of another major real estate development on Birmingham's Southside, the area known as South Highlands. As a prologue to Willis J. Milner's "History of Highland Avenue," which is published following the Johns' article, "Early Highland and the Magic City: 1884 - 1893" provides a step-by-step account not only of the construction of the avenue and the street railroad which occupied its center but also of Lakeview Park and the Town of Highland. Perhaps, of greatest interest is this latter aspect of the account, in which Johns details the founding, incorporation, and demise of the municipality which grew out of the Elyton Land Company's development of what Milner once termed the "South Side Hill Tops." To Walter Schoel, Jr., the Editors of The JOURNAL express sincerest thanks for his generous efforts in preparing the map showing the corporate limits of the Town of Highland.

The Editorial Advisory Board and the Trustees of the Birmingham Historical Society wish to express gratitude for the generous support given The JOURNAL by The Linn-Henley Charitable Trust. Without that support, this issue would not have been published, at all.

April, 1980

The Editorial Advisory Board
The JOURNAL of the Birmingham
Historical Society



The home of Robert and Eugenia Jemison, constructed in 1901 - 1902 at Number 16, Glen Iris Park, and designed by architect Thomas Ustick Walter, III. This home has been designated the 1980 Decorator Showcase House by the Junior Women and the Women's Committee of the Alabama Symphony. Photograph from Hill Ferguson, *Historical Collections of Birmingham, Jefferson County and Alabama*, Vol. 86. Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

GLEN IRIS PARK AND THE RESIDENCE OF ROBERT JEMISON, SR

MARJORIE LONGENECKER WHITE

INTRODUCTION

On a knoll just north of Red Mountain, about 2,000 feet east of Green Springs Park, is a house which bears the likeness of a Greek temple. Viewed from the sleek new addition to The Club on the crest of Red Mountain, the serene classical lines of this residence contrast sharply with the rest of the Jones Valley panorama: the busy traffic on the elevated expressways and the massive structures of the Medical Center and downtown Birmingham. The approach to the house, through the street system on the floor of Jones Valley, is not an easy one, suggesting that the builder sought a site remote from transportation arteries. The house's immediate setting is a park surrounded by large lots with the structure in question resting on two of the largest and most elevated of these. This Greek temple-like residence is the Jemison house, the last home of Robert Jemison, Sr., a principal in the development of real estate and transportation in the Birmingham area. The park and the lots which surround it are Glen Iris Park, one of the most gracious residential developments in Birmingham's history.

Today, Glen Iris and its stately residences are located on the fringe of the University of Alabama in Birmingham, in a changing inner-city neighborhood. Pressures for construction of apartments have been strong since the 1960's when the older residential areas of Southside began to be redeveloped with apartment structures wedged on to small lots originally designated for single-family dwellings. In September, 1971, Texas developers, proposing to build 990 apartment units for students and employees of the university, sought and won rezoning of the park to an R-6 multiple-dwelling classification.¹ Fortunately, at the time of the original planning of Glen Iris, Robert Jemison, Sr., the principal developer of the area, had the foresight to subject the entire park to restrictive covenants which protected the original plan for the park despite the zoning change. Only unanimous approval of all the property owners of Glen Iris will permit the covenants to be changed.² Efforts in June of 1978 to restore the park to R-3 single-family status were, however, unsuccessful.³

¹*The Birmingham News*, September 22, 1971 and November 3, 1971.

²Deed, Amanda Harding, February 5, 1903, in Blair Rich, "Preliminary Study, Glen Iris Park, Birmingham Historical Society.

³*The Birmingham News*, June 21, 1978.

There are, nonetheless, many signs of renewed health in Glen Iris Park. Of the original houses, thirteen remain and are well maintained; and most of these are marked with appropriate historical designations. Former residents and young families have moved in and, at least for the present, the spectres of bulldozers and apartments seem to have vanished. In this small green oasis in the heart of a rapidly changing section of the city, the Junior Women and the Women's Committee of the Alabama Symphony have chosen the Jemison house as their 1980 Decorator Showcase House. The attention of the "beau monde" will be focused on the home and the park, once a leading real estate location in the city, from April 26 to May 18, 1980.

THE CONTEXT FOR GLEN IRIS

As early as 1898, Robert Jemison, Sr. began planning construction of a family home removed from downtown Birmingham.⁴ His development of Glen Iris Park as the setting for that home was preceded by that of only one other Southside neighborhood: South Highlands, the first suburban development in the city, begun in 1884 when the Elyton Land Company built a "grand boulevard" with streetcar line leading east from Twentieth Street, South, to Lakeview Park, along the northern slope of Red Mountain.⁵ Away from furnace soot and smoke, Highland Avenue long remained an exclusive real estate location in Birmingham.

Prior to the development of South Highlands, Birmingham's fine residential district — its first such district — spread northward from Fourth Avenue, North, and centered on Twenty-first Street. In this district, in 1884, Robert Jemison, Sr. had built an impressive Queen Anne-styled mansion shortly after arriving in Birmingham; and it was in this residence that he lived until moving to Glen Iris in 1902.⁶

Glen Iris also preceded the development of Forest Park, begun in 1906 by Robert Jemison, Jr. Ironically, Forest Park cemented a trend of development eastward

⁴Frances Nimmo Greene, "Biography of Robert Jemison," in Hill Ferguson, *Historical Collections of Birmingham*, Jefferson County and Alabama, Vol. 86, pp. 114-15. Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

⁵See Lyn Johns, "Early Highland and the Magic City," published in this issue of *The JOURNAL* of the Birmingham Historical Society, pp. 32.

⁶Greene, pp. 57-58 and 65.

along Red Mountain, away from Glen Iris, and toward Redmont and eventually Mountain Brook, both distinctive residential sections developed by The Jemison Companies during the 1920's.⁷

The development of Glen Iris occurred simultaneously with the emergence of downtown Birmingham as the industrial center of the North Central Alabama mineral district. The city's first skyscrapers, the Woodward and Title Guaranty Buildings, were already under construction. A new City Hall and facilities for the Southern Club were nearing completion. The city, along with its iron, steel, and coal industries, was prospering; and population and business were expanding.⁸

⁷Forest Park Realty Company, Miscellaneous Companies' Binder, and Redmont Land Company and Mountain Brook Development Company, Office Files, in Robert Jemison, Jr., Papers. Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

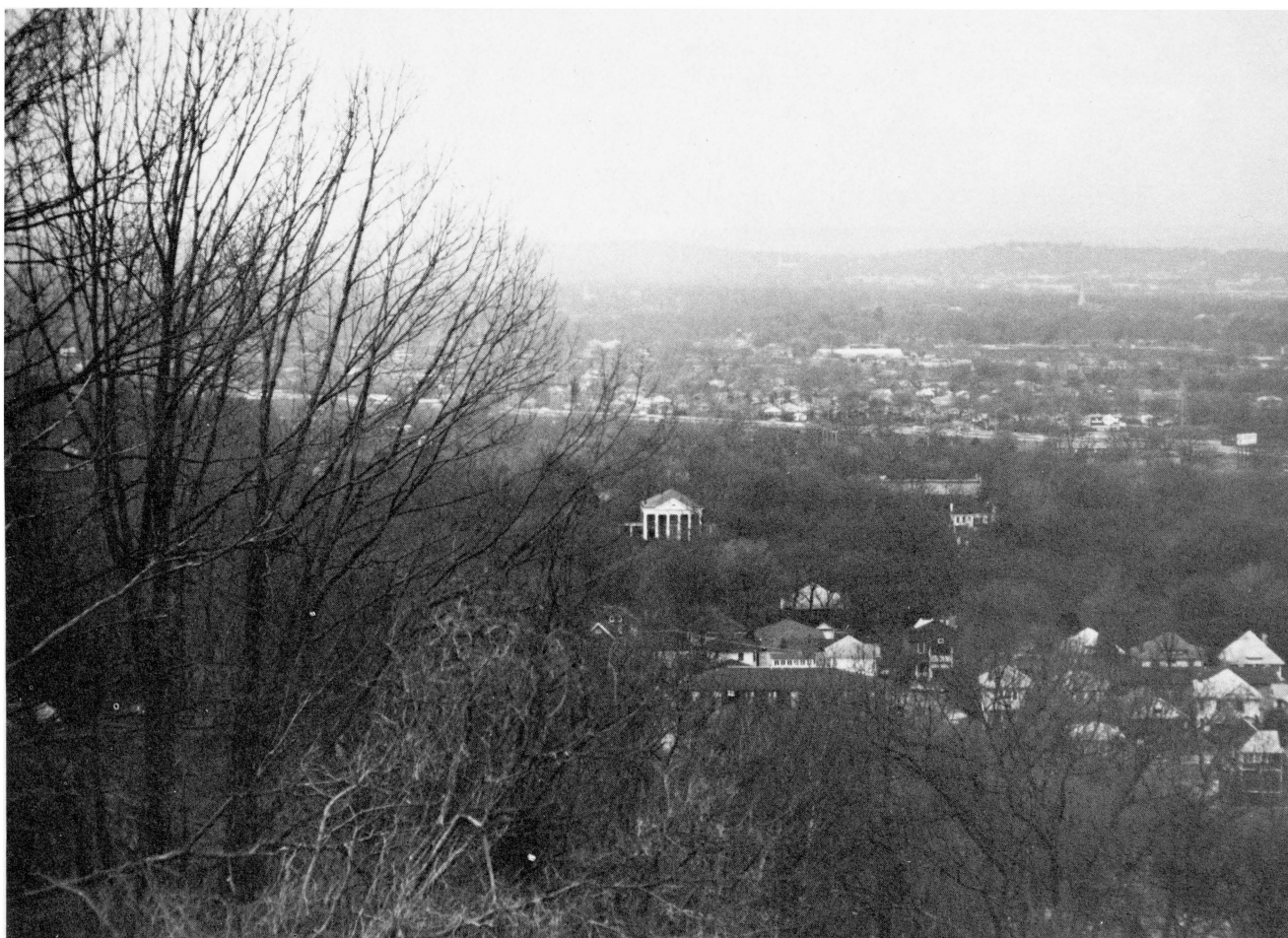
⁸Marjorie L. White, Richard W. Sprague, and G. Gray Plosser, eds., *Downtown Birmingham: Architectural and Historical Walking Tour Guide* (Birmingham: Birmingham Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 34, 70, 108, and 122.

Home construction boomed in the years just after the turn of the century. To the north of the city, Birmingham Realty Company was beginning construction of Norwood. Southside, west of Twentieth Street, South, was developing into a middle-class residential district. In the area surrounding Glen Iris, there were, however, only a few houses, with most of the land still a heavily forested wilderness.⁹ In 1902, E. N. Cullom, a Montgomery-born bank president who was active in local real estate, built 16 stately houses along Eleventh Avenue, South.¹⁰ By 1903, T. M. Bradley had planned a fashionable section then named Highland Park but now designated Idlewilde Circle.¹¹ Colonel William H. Graves, proprietor of the Graves Shales Brick Company, makers of the sturdy "Graves Block" used extensively in construction of the period, acquired extensive acreage and about 1905 constructed his gracious home

⁹Margaret Jemison, Personal Interview, February 11, 1980.

¹⁰Francis Mulcahy, "A Regal Demesne with Handsome Homes Gleniris Will Be," in *Birmingham Ledger*, February 26, 1902.

¹¹*Ibid.*



The Glen Iris Park Home of Robert and Eugenia Jemison rises above the wooded floor of Jones Valley in this photograph, taken in the spring of 1980 from a vantage point near the new addition to The Club, on the crest of Red Mountain. Photograph courtesy of Marjorie Longenecker White.

which remains today at 1214 Eleventh Street, South.¹² Although Robert Jemison, Sr. extended streetcar transportation via Fifteenth Street, South, to within two blocks of Glen Iris in 1902, the area remained largely remote and inaccessible.¹³ A large truck farm owned by the Lusco family spread out around the site of Gable Square, at Eleventh Avenue, South, and Tenth Street. When developers wanted to erect stores at this location in the 1920's, residents of the neighborhood were incensed. Later, however, all found it a marvelous convenience not to have to journey down town or to Five Points, South, for groceries and daily necessities.¹⁴

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GLEN IRIS

The development of Glen Iris Park began in 1898, when Robert Jemison, Sr. purchased 40 acres of South-side land for residential development. He proceeded to commission an architect and landscape planner to design homes and homesites for his family and friends.¹⁵ By February of 1902, the residential park had been laid out and construction of his residence and servants' house was almost complete.¹⁶ Residences for his eldest son, Robert, Jr., attorney James McAdory Gillespy, and Major Franklin M. Frazier were also nearing completion.¹⁷ By 1910, thirteen residences for an assortment of attorneys, doctors, and bankers, all either friends or relatives of the Jemison family, graced the handsome park. Five additional residences were later constructed.¹⁸

Among those who made significant contributions to the early development of Glen Iris was, of course, its principal backer, Robert Jemison, Sr. Of perhaps equal significance, however, were the contributions of Birmingham architect Thomas Ustick Walter, III, and nationally known landscape designer Samuel Brown Parsons, Jr.

Robert Jemison, Sr. (1853-1926) son of a well educated Tuscaloosa planter, graduated with the first law class at the University of Alabama in 1874. Before coming to Birmingham 10 years later, Jemison engaged in the hardware business in Tuscaloosa. From 1886 until 1906, he was active in the development of real



Robert Jemison, Sr. (1853-1926), developer of Glen Iris Park, principal Birmingham-area real estate executive, and pioneer in the consolidation of local street railways and light and power utilities. Photograph courtesy of the Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

estate and mass transit in the rapidly-growing Birmingham industrial district. As President of the East Lake Land Company and the Birmingham Railway and Electric Company, he provided the vision and leadership to found a workingman's suburb and to consolidate nine competing streetcar railways, three electric light companies, and one gas company into the Birmingham Railway, Light & Power Company.¹⁹ This public utility company operated one of the South's finest transportation systems. By 1900, it managed 100 miles of streetcar track extending from Bessemer and Ensley to East Lake and from South Highlands to North Birmingham and five pleasure parks serving 10,000,000 persons annually.²⁰ In 1906, when American Cities Railway and Light Company, owned by the Isadore Newman firm of New Orleans, gained control of

¹²Margaret Jemison, Interview; R. L. Polk & Company, *Birmingham Directory, 1905* (Birmingham: R. L. Polk & Company, [1905]).

¹³Alvin W. Hudson and Harold E. Cox, *Street Railways of Birmingham* (Forty Fort, Pennsylvania: Cox Publishers, 1976), p. 40.

¹⁴Margaret Jemison, Interview.

¹⁵Greene, pp. 115-16.

¹⁶Mulcahy.

¹⁷The Maloney Directory Company, *Maloney's Birmingham 1900 City Directory* (Atlanta: The Maloney Directory Company, [1900]). Directories were also checked for the years 1901-1910.

¹⁸R. L. Polk & Company, *Birmingham City Directory for the Year Commencing February 1st 1910* (Birmingham: R. L. Polk & Company, 1910). Directories were also checked for the years 1911-1930.

¹⁹George Cruikshank, *Birmingham and Its Environs: A Narrative Account of Their Historical Progress, Their People and Their Principal Interests* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1920), II, 12-13.

²⁰*Street Railway Journal*, May, 1900, reprinted in Hudson and Cox, pp. 41-44.

the company,²¹ Jemison resigned as President and retired to a life of directorships of civic, banking, and religious institutions, and world travel. At his death in 1926, a Birmingham newspaper editorial decried the loss of "not a chip off the old block but the old block himself."²²

Architect Thomas Ustick Walter, III (1864-1931) practiced in Birmingham from 1887 until 1905, in association with several individuals, including Samuel Ullman, T. E. Thompson, Daniel A. Reamer, and William C. Chaffee.²³ At the time of construction of the Glen Iris residence for Robert Jemison, Sr., Walter was a principal of the firm of Walter, Reamer and Chaffee, Architects, with offices in the Chalifoux Building, the present site of the Stallings Building, on the southwest corner of First Avenue, North, and Nineteenth Street.²⁴ Walter designed many of the finer residences of Southside as well as a number of public buildings in the city including the first St. Vincent's Hospital in 1900. His practice extended throughout the South. After 1907, as his eyesight failed, Walter became associated with The Jemison Company in real estate sales. He died in Virginia in 1931.²⁵ Walter was the third in a family line of distinguished architects. His grandfather, Thomas Ustick Walter, one of the nation's leading practitioners of the classical architectural style, designed the monumental wings and dome for the U. S. Capitol in the period between 1850 and 1863.²⁶

Samuel Brown Parsons, Jr. (1844-1923) a nationally known landscape architect, was born in Bedford, Massachusetts. His father introduced the first seedless orange into the United States in 1859 and maintained extensive orange plantations in Florida. Parsons was educated at Haverford College and the Yale Scientific School and studied landscape gardening under Calvert Vaux in New York City prior to his service as Superintendent of Parks for New York City from 1885 to 1900. At the time Parsons designed Glen Iris Park, he was under commission to devise plans for the beautification of the nation's capitol. His planning resulted in the park-like mall which today links the Capitol with the Washington Monument, providing magnificent green space and a central allée for the nation's museums. Parsons also designed private estate grounds for the wealthy of New York and Rhode Island, plans

for college and university campuses, including Princeton University and the University of Pennsylvania, and authored four books on landscape architecture and many magazine articles of landscape design for "men of moderate means." In association with Robert Jemison, Jr., he created the initial landscape plans for Forest Park. He was a member of the American Institute of Landscape Architects, founded in 1899.²⁷

In October, 1898, Robert Jemison, Sr., with two good friends, Rufus N. Rhodes, Editor of the *Birmingham News*, and Stephen E. Thompson, a prominent local real estate broker, formed the City Land Company.²⁸ The capital stock of \$5,100.00 was divided into 51 shares at a par value of \$100.00 each. Jemison, acting in behalf of the company, selected 40 acres of land to the southwest of Birmingham which, on October 5, 1898, were purchased from the Walker Land Company.²⁹ Portions of the land had been deeded by presidential land grant in 1853 to Frenchman John Malone Dupuy, a large pre-Civil War landholder in that portion of Jones Valley which would become Birmingham's Southside. Before and during the Civil War, William A. Walker, Jr., then a planter in Elyton, acquired the present site of Glen Iris Park and other lands,³⁰ becoming the largest landholder in Jefferson County by 1870.³¹ Later, a prominent local attorney, Walker became a business associate and friend of Robert Jemison, Sr. To Mr. Jemison's great regret, Walker never moved from his gracious home at 1730 Eighth Avenue, North, in Birmingham's first major residential area. His daughter Virginia Earle did, however, marry Robert Jemison, Jr., and they built the home at Number 10 Glen Iris Park, adjoining that of the elder Jemisons. Walker's son, William Mudd Walker, husband of Molly Cullom, also built a house in the Glen Iris area, with stables behind. This house and the stables are still standing today at 1240 Tenth Place, South.³²

Jemison named the park "Glen Iris" in honor of the final resting place of a family heroine, Mary Jemison. Taken captive during the French and Indian War, she lived among the Shawnee and Seneca Indians, who held her in profound respect and in 1797 deeded to her a tract of 18,000 acres in upper New York state. There she lived in seclusion until two years before her death. After her death in 1833, she was buried at "Glen Iris,"

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 40.

²²Editorial, *Birmingham Age-Herald*, October 10, 1926.

²³Charles W. Anson & Company, Publishers, 1887. *Birmingham Directory* (Birmingham: Caldwell Printing Works, 1887). Directories were also checked for the years 1888-1905.

²⁴Correspondence: Robert Jemison, Sr. Residence, Receipts, 1902, in Robert Jemison, Sr., Papers. Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

²⁵Obituary, from unidentified Birmingham newspaper, 1931. Clipping Files, Art and Architecture, Art and Music Department, Birmingham Public Library.

²⁶*The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, IX, 333.

²⁷*Ibid.*, XXVI, 308.

²⁸Greene, pp. 115-16.

²⁹Abstract for Number 5, Glen Iris Park, in possession of Eugenia Akin, Birmingham, Alabama; Eugenia Akin, Personal Interview, February 24, 1980. Greene, pp. 115-16.

³⁰Abstract for Number 5, Glen Iris Park.

³¹Map of Landowners of Jefferson County, 1870, prepared by The Jemison Company, in Robert Jemison, Jr., Papers.

³²Margaret Jemison, Interview; R. L. Polk & Company, *Birmingham Directory*, 1907 (Birmingham: R. L. Polk & Company, 1907).



The Tuscaloosa, Alabama home of Robert and Eugenia Jemison, constructed in 1877 and occupied by the Jemison family until 1884. Photograph from Hill Ferguson, *Historical Collections of Birmingham, Jefferson County and Alabama*, Vol. 86. Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

the home of Dr. William Pryor Letchworth, at Letchworth Park, New York.³³

Landscape architect Parsons suggested the formal symmetrical plan for the park.³⁴ Parsons' plan shows a central driveway contoured to the sloping terrain and extending about an open lawn-center with a symmetrical division of lots. Parsons may also have sited the Jemison house and provided plans for the estate grounds, drives, and gardens. On July 10, 1900, Robert Jemison, Sr. filed his plan for park development with the Jefferson County Judge of Probate.³⁵ The plan

also shows 10 acres of the 40 which had been purchased from Walker Land Company — the 10 acres fronting St. Charles Avenue, now Eleventh Place, South — subdivided into much smaller lots than those in the park. These smaller lots were sold to Bertram Jacobs, one of three brothers who owned Ben M. Jacobs & Company, a Birmingham furniture and accessories store, for \$6,000.00. Jemison retained for the park approximately 30 acres. Herman Schoel, a German-born engineer practicing in Birmingham since the early 1880's, supervised the actual layout of the park, the grading of the driveway and alleys, and the installation of sewers.³⁶ Many of the original groupings of trees were preserved and blue grass planted. By February, 1902, \$16,000.00 had been expended for park im-

³³*The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, XV, 325; Greene, p. 124.

³⁴Greene, p. 124.

³⁵Map Book #4, Probate Court, Jefferson County, Alabama, p. 102.

³⁶Greene, p. 116.

provements, and others were planned to follow. For example, a fountain and a fish pond were projected as integral parts of the park grounds.³⁷

Rules for the Association of Residents provided the standards for development within the park.³⁸ These rules, included as a covenant in all deeds, stipulated that houses within the park must cost at least \$3,000.00, that they must be set back 100 feet from the sidewalk, and that only one house might be built on each lot. Alleys, the driveway, and the park grounds were designated private property for use of residents only. The rules also provided that on the first Monday of each October, the owners of park property should select a committee of three to manage and superintend maintenance of the park for the following year; additionally, a \$25.00 annual assessment for maintenance was to be paid by each property owner. Thus, concluded the *Birmingham Ledger* in 1902, the park residences could be given to "architectural display," but that "display" would be of a "very elegant character."³⁹

Early purchasers of property in the park included Robert and Eugenia Jemison, Robert Jemison, Jr., attorney James McAdory Gillespy, and Major Franklin W. Frazier, formerly with the Mary Lee Coal Company. Architect Thomas Walter designed each of their residences.⁴⁰ Other early owners of property, Rufus N. Rhodes, S. E. Thompson, and William A. Walker, chose not to build in the park. In 1903, S. E. Thompson sold his \$1,250.00 lot to Dr. George Morrow for \$4,500.00.⁴¹ The Morrow residence at Number 1 Glen Iris Park was demolished in 1976. Thompson later built at 2848 Highland Avenue, where his home is still standing today.⁴²

In 1904, W. P. G. Harding, then President of the First National Bank of Birmingham, later Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank, and always a close friend and associate of Robert Jemison, Sr., built his elegant residence at Number 20, the center lot in the park complex. In 1930, when the James Penney's occupied the

house, they built Number 21 on the adjoining lot for their daughter Mrs. Holden Naff.⁴³

In 1905, Robert Montgomery Goodall, owner of Goodall-Brown Dry Goods Company, which he founded in 1900, built at Number 17. Mrs. Goodall's sister, Mrs. Lizzie Yancey, widow of attorney William C. Yancey, built at Number 15 in 1908. The adjacent houses at Number 15 and Number 17 still have a common driveway.⁴⁴

In 1906, physician J. T. Harwell built a residence at Number 5, which was purchased by R. Dupont Thompson in 1920. Thompson's daughter Eugenia Akin and her family reside at Number 5 today.⁴⁵ Dr. E. Miller Robinson built his residence at Number 6 in 1907. One of the early practitioners at St. Vincent's hospital, Robinson also ran the Robinson Infirmary, still standing at Fifteenth Street, South, and Eleventh Avenue.⁴⁶

In 1927, Julian E. Dow, secretary-treasurer of American Casting Company, built Number 11 as a wedding present for his daughter.⁴⁷ In the same year, Nat Barker constructed Number 8.⁴⁸ These homes completed the residential construction which remains today in the park.

THE JEMISON HOUSE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Landscape plans for Glen Iris have not been located. From old photographs and descriptions in newspaper accounts, it appears that much of the original oaken growth, holly, and other native trees were retained in the original plan and that the lawn-center was planted blue grass. Further, Parson's 1900 book, *Landscape Gardening*, provides a basis for reconstructing the essential elements of the Glen Iris landscape plan.⁴⁹ Parsons abhorred roads and driveways. He stipulated that locations for these "necessary evils" will be devised to minimize their ugliness.⁵⁰ Thus, the park driveway is arranged along natural contours. The driveway to the Jemison house, which sweeps well to the side of the house, up to the side entrance and summer kitchen, thereby leaves the lawn encircling the

³⁷Mulcahy. In the Robert Jemison, Sr., Papers, note is made of only \$500.00 expended for park improvements in the year ending 1902. In July, 1904, property owners agreed to put in a sewer, macadamize the driveway, thin out the park, and sow the same in grass and otherwise beautify the grounds and also change some grades. By October, 1904, \$500.00 had been spent for park improvements. It is possible the majority of park improvements were accomplished and expenses incurred during 1900 and 1901 for which no record exists; however, the alleged sum seems high. The fountain and fish pond were never built, despite the fact that Parsons highly recommended both.

³⁸Deed, Amanda Harding.

³⁹Mulcahy.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Greene, p. 116.

⁴²R. L. Polk & Company, *Polk's Birmingham City Directory, 1926* (Birmingham: R. L. Polk & Company, 1926).

⁴³Wesley Anderton, Personal Interviews, February 24 and 26, 1980; Wesley Anderton, Oral History, in Glen Iris Files, Jefferson County Historical Commission, Birmingham, Alabama.

⁴⁴R. L. Polk & Company, *Birmingham Directory, 1905*; Wesley Anderton, Personal Interviews; Wesley Anderton, Oral History.

⁴⁵Abstract for Number 5, Glen Iris Park.

⁴⁶Birmingham City Directories were checked for the years 1900-1914.

⁴⁷Wesley Anderton, Interviews; R. L. Polk & Company, *Polk's Birmingham City Directory, 1928* (Birmingham: R. L. Polk & Company, 1928).

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Samuel Parsons, Jr., *Landscape Gardening* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900). Robert Jemison, Sr.'s copy of this book is now in the library of Mrs. Lindsay C. Smith, Birmingham, Alabama.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. xiv.

house largely undisturbed. Living rooms look out on the main lawn, with a commanding view of the park grounds beyond. Parsons considered the lawn the most essential ingredient of a landscape and as much a part of the house domain as the verandah.⁵¹ He recommended that it be planted with Kentucky blue grass, a “vigorous” and “fairly good looking” grass and immaculately trimmed to a soft, velvety appearance. Parsons also advocated planting trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants to the side of the lawns, grouped in beds with curving boundaries and placed in the specially prepared crests of swells.⁵² Parsons’ principle regard-

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. xviii.

ing such plantings, which he considered “novel” in the practice of landscape design, seems to have been applied to the open lawn-center of Glen Iris Park, as well. There, trees were grouped only along sloping ground just below the Jemison house. To the east side of the house a magnificent planting curves along the swell leading along the brick walkway to the original vegetable and cutting gardens. In later years, William Kessler, Birmingham landscape architect associated with Robert Jemison, Jr. in the development of Mountain Brook Estates, assisted the elder Mrs. Jemison with the residence gardens which were her pride and joy.⁵³

⁵³Margaret Jemison, Interview.



The home of Robert and Eugenia Jemison, constructed in 1886, on the southeast corner of Twenty-first Street and Sixth Avenue, North, and occupied by the Jemison family until the completion of their Glen Iris Park home in 1902. Photograph courtesy of the Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

Thomas Walter's design for the twenty room residence imposed a severe Greek temple plan on the domestic scene at Glen Iris. The Neoclassical Revival style of the house represents a marked reaction to the extravagant excesses of Victorian taste prevalent across America in the 1880's and 1890's and a return to the classical elegance of the earlier Greek Revival style which dominated the American architectural scene from 1820 to 1850.⁵⁴ Since most Southern antebellum mansions were built in this earlier era, the custom has been to describe any mansion with white columns as "Southern Colonial."

The illusion which the Jemison house gives of a Greek temple is created by the large two-story portico, supported by eight immense Ionic columns, which dominates the entrance and the view of the house from the park and which is so prominent from vantage points on Red Mountain. A similar portico frames the west entrance. Both shelter roomy verandahs and breezy porches, quite popular in the early twentieth century for summer living and entertaining.

The firm of Waters, Sherwin & Crowinshield, Decorators, 30 West 33rd Street, New York planned the original interior.⁵⁵ The library, parlor, hallways, breakfast and dining rooms were panelled and wainscotted in quartered oak and the walls painted in either "ivory white enamel" or "chaste white enamel."⁵⁶ In the hallway a massive fireplace and mantle of Doric design continued the classic treatment of the exterior. Later, Mrs. Jemison, assisted by another New York firm, covered these walls with rose silk damask and blue and green painted canvas. Dark, heavy velour drapes, massive furniture, and other trappings of the late Victorian era were installed in the first floor reception rooms.⁵⁷

The downstairs rooms included, in addition to the public rooms, an open summer porch with big swing, winter and summer kitchens, and a safe with screened sides to store perishable foods. The "loggia," a curious landing with stained glass windows, was positioned on the staircase, midway between the first and second floors.⁵⁸ Upstairs, the house boasted six big "sleeping rooms," each provided with a bath and dressing rooms, and a billiard hall.⁵⁹ As the house was built before the advent of central heat, all rooms were constructed with fireplaces and fixtures wired for both gas and electricity. A. J. Krebs Company, "Contractors, Dealers in Lumber and Building Material with a Yard, Office

and Mill at 5th and 35th Street," had a \$17,000.00 contract for the residence and a \$1,500.00 contract for the stable. Carpenters were paid 34 cents an hour; laborers 10 cents per hour.⁶⁰ Total construction cost was reported to be \$27,000.00.⁶¹

Although the men planned and built the physical features and setting for the Jemison residence, it was Eugenia Sorsby Jemison, born on September 4, 1859 at "The Circle" near Tuscaloosa,⁶² who created the Jemison home. She and Robert Jemison were married at an early morning hour in September, 1876, so they could catch the train for Philadelphia and the nation's Centennial Celebration.⁶³ By all reports they were a devoted couple. Seven children were born of the marriage: Robert, Jr., John, Elbert, Sorsby, Annie, Bessie, and Richard Wilbur, who died in infancy. Several of the children came to live at Glen Iris. Robert, Jr. built his first home at Number 10, on a lot adjoining that of his parents. Even after he moved to Forest Park in 1907, the family referred to the house next door as "Bob's" and to the elder Jemison's home as the "Big House."⁶⁴ To daughter Bessie, who married Dr. Lewis Coleman Morris in 1907, her father gave the lot at Number 2 "for one dollar with love and affection."⁶⁵ Son John Jemison built his home, now demolished, on Sixteenth Avenue, South, just across from Glen Iris Park. When his bride, Margaret Pockman, arrived from San Francisco in 1906, efforts to transport her trunks via freight elevators to the second floor of the "Big House" failed, and the elevators were used thereafter as closets.⁶⁶

Margaret Pockman Jemison became a dear friend and companion of her mother-in-law, Eugenia, traveling with her in the United States and abroad. Today, at age 94, she possesses a marvelous intellect, photographic memory, and *joie de vivre* that seems to incarnate the spirit of the "Big House" she came to love.

Margaret Jemison fondly recalls a host of festive occasions at the "Big House." In 1906, just after her marriage, the elder Jemisons entertained with a garden party in honor of their newest daughter-in-law. One year later came the wedding of Bessie, Margaret's sister-in-law, to Dr. Lewis Morris. To this latter "affair," Margaret was not invited, as she was then carrying her first child, and custom precluded the public appearance of pregnant women. Choosing not to be totally excluded, Margaret watched the festivities from behind the furniture in the loggia.⁶⁷

⁵⁴Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to Styles* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, Inc., 1969), pp. 167-69.

⁵⁵Mulcahy.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷Margaret Jemison, Martee Woodward Webb, Mrs. Alan Woodward, and Mrs. Lindsay Smith, Personal Interviews, February 20, 1980.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Mulcahy.

⁶⁰Correspondence: Robert Jemison, Sr. Residence, Receipts, January 31, 1903, in Robert Jemison, Sr., Papers.

⁶¹Mulcahy.

⁶²Margaret Jemison, Interview.

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵Wesley Anderton, Interviews.

⁶⁶Margaret Jemison, Interview.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

Another splendid occasion in the "Big House" was the reception given daughter Annie upon her marriage to Alan Harvey (Rick) Woodward in 1904. The couple later made their home on Red Mountain in a magnificent 1925 residence, now the home of Dr. and Mrs. S. Richardson Hill.⁶⁸

On Thanksgiving, Robert Jemison, Sr. always entertained the male residents of Glen Iris with a festive array of food. Oysters and mincemeat pie were specialties. At Christmas, the entire family, in later years very large in number, came to a seated dinner. Eggnog made with fresh cream — and cream only — was a highlight of this annual celebration.⁶⁹

A sizeable domestic staff helped to keep the house and grounds. Favorite family servants included John Turner, the gardener; Leslie, the butler; and Albert, the coachman. Despite their links with streetcar transportation, the Jemisons were slow to relinquish their horses and carriages. There were always lots of horses

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

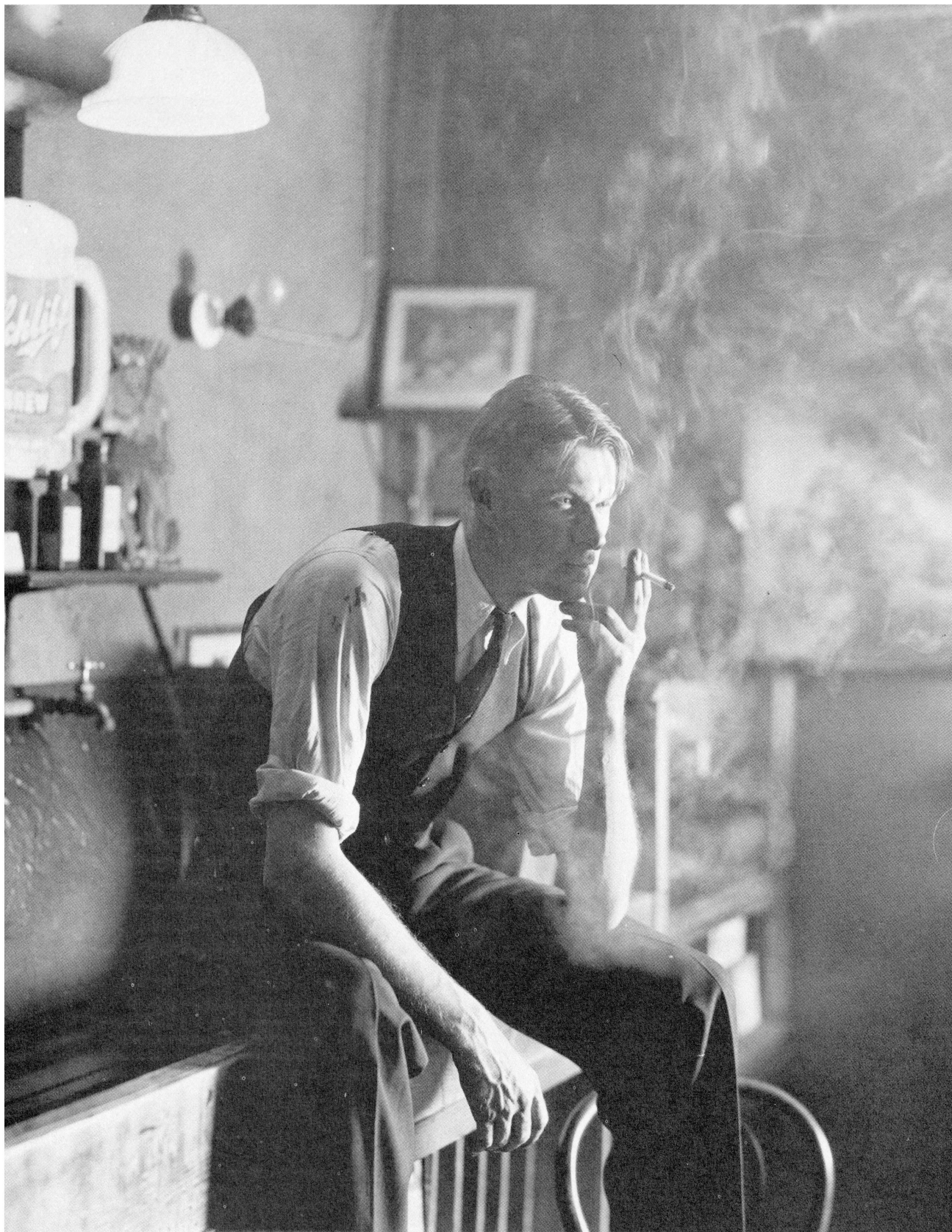
⁶⁹*Ibid.*; Greene, pp. 118-19 and 122-23.

in the barn and a cow to provide fresh dairy products. William Page, the cook, was certainly the most colorful of the Jemison servants. "Mr. Page" — as he was known to the family — regaled the children and grandchildren with tales of his military service during the Civil War. He enlisted as a Confederate bodyguard but was captured by Union forces and subsequently became a drummer in the Union army. Later, he was granted a Union pension which put him in great demand with the ladies.⁷⁰ Many of the servants lived in the classically-styled servants' house, at the rear of the Jemison residence, the former structure being completed September 28, 1901, before completion of the "Big House."⁷¹

After the death of her husband in 1926, Eugenia Jemison presided over the Glen Iris house. When she died in 1950, Mr. and Mrs. Ryall Morgan purchased the property, living there until 1979, when the residence was sold to Dr. Gaylon McCollough.

⁷⁰Margaret Jemison, Interview.

⁷¹Correspondence: Robert Jemison, Sr. Residence, Receipts, September 28, 1901, in Robert Jemison, Sr., Papers.



O. V. Hunt relaxes in the darkroom of the *Birmingham Ledger*, where he served as chief photographer. This photo was made by his assistant about 1910 when Hunt was 29.

IMAGES OF THE PAST:

Selections from the Work of O. V. Hunt

COMPILED, WITH COMMENTARY, BY ROBERT G. CORLEY

Oscar V. Hunt possessed that rare combination of talent and perseverance which make for a success in a career. Fortunately, for those who are interested in the historical development of Birmingham and in the way the city's people lived, Hunt chose to be a professional photographer. From 1898, when he was still a teenager, until 1953, when he retired, Hunt devoted himself totally to the pursuit of those elusive images which could somehow capture the essence of life in Birmingham. And to a remarkable degree, he was successful.

Hunt first began to gain fame as a local photographer when he climbed aboard a fragile two-passenger airplane in April of 1912 at the State Fairgrounds. He had been assigned by his editor at the *Birmingham Ledger* to obtain an aerial view of the city centered at First Avenue and Twentieth Street North. Not only did Hunt make this photo, but he and his pilot broke the world record for altitude for an airplane with two passengers. Hunt's photograph was the first view of a Southern city from an airplane, and according to the city editor of the *Ledger*, the first for any American city.

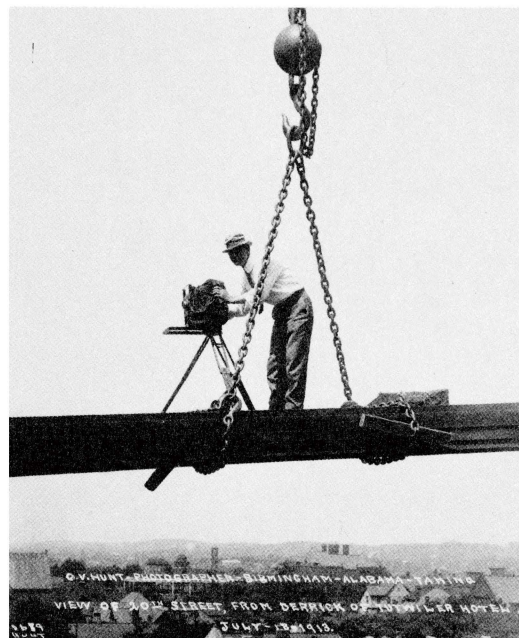
This experience would not be unique for Hunt, either during his tenure as chief photographer at the *Ledger* or later in his professional career. One who views his work through the years is struck by the sensation that

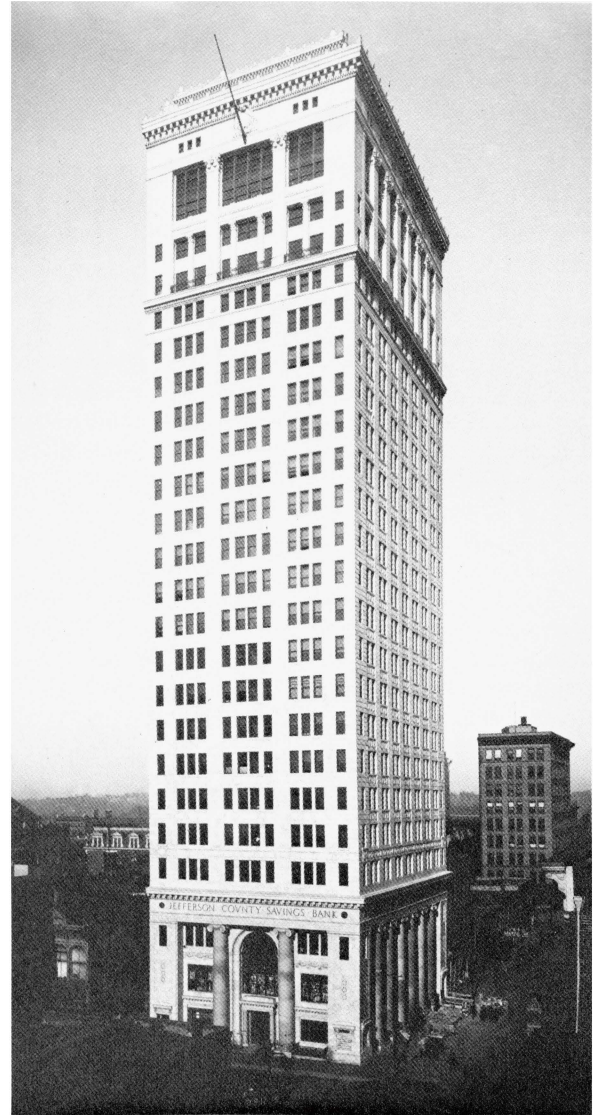
Hunt seemed to be everywhere. The variety and scope of these images is very nearly overwhelming. When buildings were being constructed, when buildings were being torn down; when men were at work, when men were leaving work; when men and women were at play; when people were simply going about their daily lives; when famous people came to Birmingham—on all these occasions and many more, O. V. Hunt was there with his camera. And because he was there, we are able now to experience what he saw.

What follows are selections from the work of O. V. Hunt. Over 400 of his photographic prints are now housed in the Department of Archives and Manuscripts at the Birmingham Public Library, and it is from that collection that the photographs on the following pages have been chosen. They were selected with the objective of providing a representative sampling of views which have not been widely seen and which also show clearly the depth and breadth of Hunt's creativity.

Oscar V. Hunt died on December 30, 1962, at the age of 81. Very few details are known now about his life, but his photographs remain and they can tell us as clearly as ever where Hunt was and what he was doing. In a real sense, then, Hunt's photographs were his life, and now for us, they are his autobiography. But even more importantly, they are windows to our past.

Hunt always seemed willing to go wherever he had to in order to get the best view of his subject. Here he climbed aboard a beam during the construction of the Tutwiler Hotel in 1913 to shoot an aerial view of 20th Street.





Both the historical and architectural value of Hunt's photographs may be seen in these views of two of Birmingham's skyscrapers shortly after their completion and before pollution had dulled their pristine exteriors. On the left is the American Trust and Savings Bank Building in 1912; it is now the John A. Hand Building. On the right is the Jefferson County Savings Bank Building in 1914; it was later the Comer Building and is now the City Federal Building.



Echoing the Pantheon at Rome, the classic lines of the Temple Emanu-El on Highland Avenue and 21st Street are captured in this early Hunt photo. The Temple was originally located on 17th Street and 5th Avenue North before moving to its present location in 1914, about the same time this picture was made.



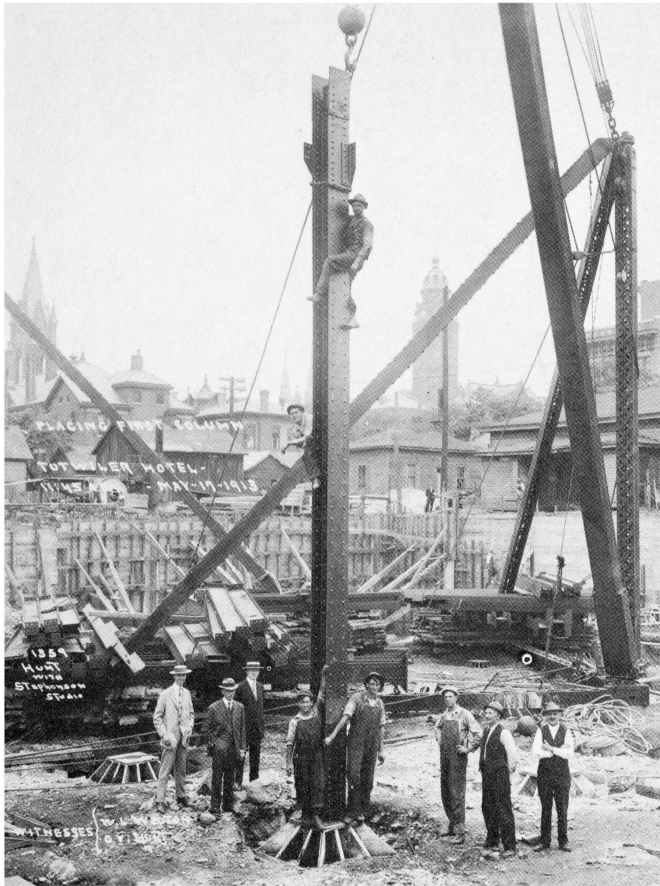
Two contrasting views of area mercantile districts in the early decades of this century may be seen here. The Buck Mercantile Store (top) stands in near isolation at the corner of Crawford and Gary Avenues in Fairfield on January 22, 1914. In the early 1930's, Hunt pictures the much more active corner of 18th Street and 1st Avenue North in Birmingham (bottom). The tower in the center of the photo belonged to the old Post Office.





Two views of the same theater taken about seven years apart show some remarkable changes. On the top about 1940 is the Pantage Theatre, which is advertising "Atomic Scandals" on stage and "Big Time Vaudeville" on its marquee and banner; notice on the left the sign designating the "Colored Bacony". The photo on the bottom shows the Birmingham Theatre about 1947; the references to vaudeville have disappeared and the marquee now advertises the "Largest and Finest Colored Theatre in the Entire South".





With these two photographs, Hunt provides the opportunity to see a building from beginning to completion. Above, Hunt records the placing of the first column for the construction of the Tutwiler Hotel at 11:45 A.M. on May 17, 1913.

Below, the completed Tutwiler rises majestically from the corner of 20th Street and 5th Avenue North in 1925, the undisputed queen of Birmingham hotels for the next half-century.





Hunt also opens the doors of the Tutwiler and gives us a view of the richly adorned interior, a view which is, of course, lost forever except through the medium of photos like these. Above is the lobby and below is the dining room as they both appeared soon after the Tutwiler opened in 1914.

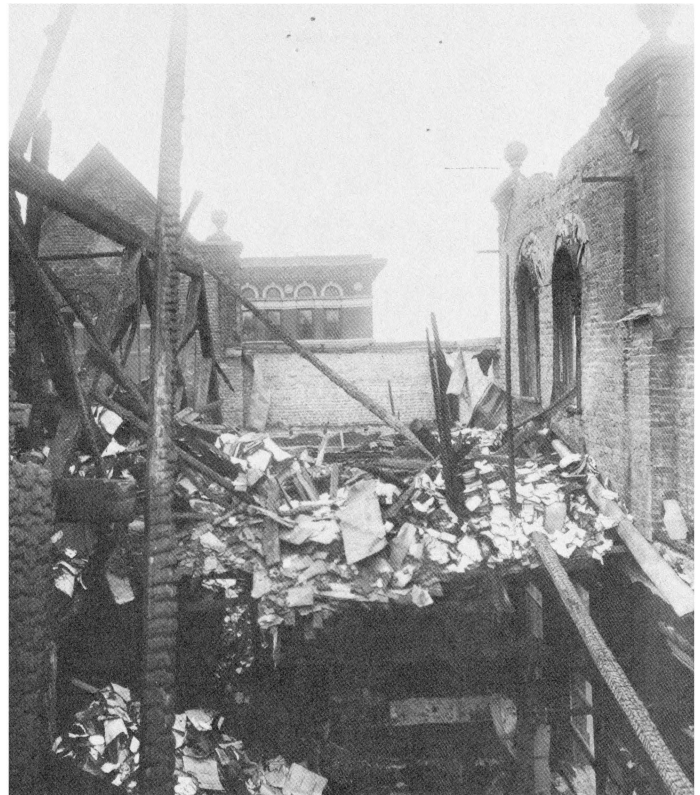




A classic of the Victorian period, the old Watts Building prepares to make way for the new in October, 1927. The signs on the building announce the new locations of the old tenants, and from the appearance of the drays and lumber on the street, demolition is about to commence.



The complete destruction of the old City Hall is clearly evident in these photographs taken the day after the fire on April 23, 1925. These views show the area where the Birmingham Public Library was housed before the fire; the collapse of the upper floors may be seen in the top view and the charred remains of a few books are visible on the small portion of the floor which still stands. There is little doubt that these photos were made at great risk to Hunt's personal safety.



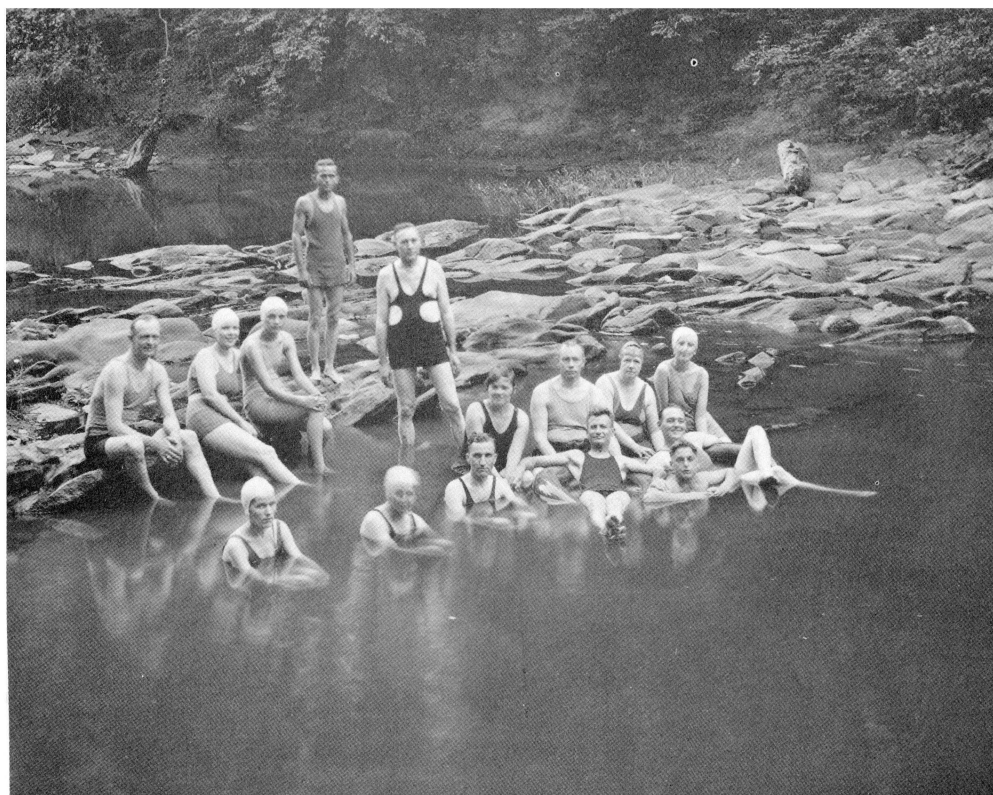


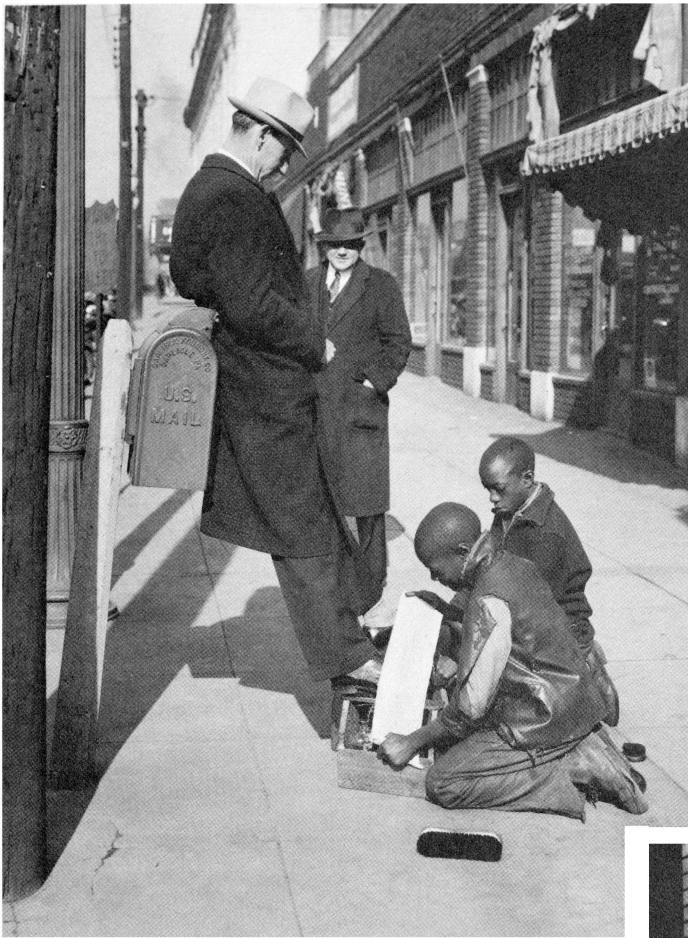
Of course, Hunt did much more than take pictures of the buildings in this area; he also documented the ways in which people lived their lives. Above, workers toil at local coke ovens around the turn of the century, and below, the exodus homeward begins for this shift of steelworkers at the Fairfield Works in 1914.



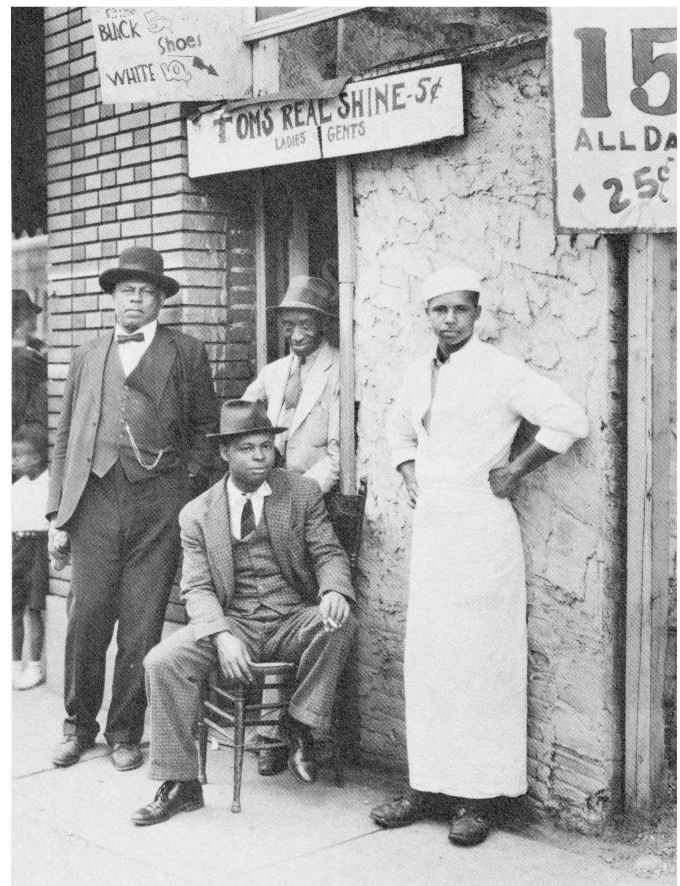


Leisure activities also did not escape the gaze of Hunt's camera. In these two photos, two groups enjoy different forms of recreation. Although the barbequers are somewhat formally attired for outdoor grilling, they nonetheless seem more relaxed about having their picture made.





Some of Hunt's best photographs were made on the streets of Birmingham, capturing the daily lives of the city's people, both black and white. Here two young boys earn their money on the street, while a somewhat older practitioner of the same trade poses with some of his friends or customers in front of his business establishment.





The street outside the entrance to Birmingham City Hall was Hunt's subject on this day approximately one year before the building was destroyed by fire in 1925. Close scrutiny of the scene reveals an old hitching post standing next to the man in the light suit, and the two piles of matter in the street testify to the recent presence of a horse which was likely tied up to the post while his owner took care of some business at City Hall.



Looking like the cast of an "Our Gang" comedy, this group of boys poses proudly in front of their modest Boys Club.



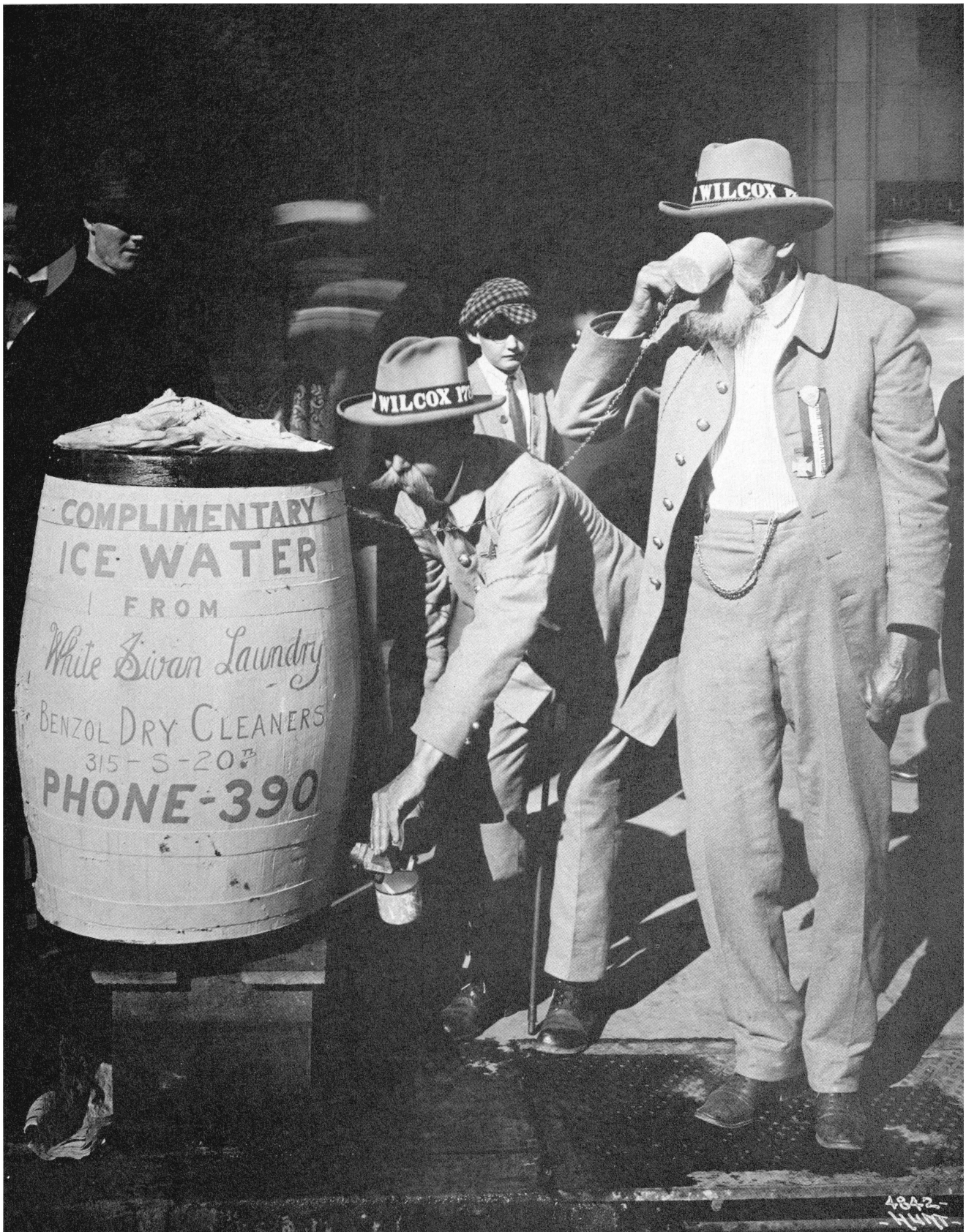
The First World War then raging on the European continent was the apparent inspiration of this float which was constructed as an advertisement for J. Blach & Son at the State Fair. While the United States had not yet entered the war when this photo was taken in 1915, the theme of the float suggests that the war would be an opportunity to bring prosperity to the South's economy.



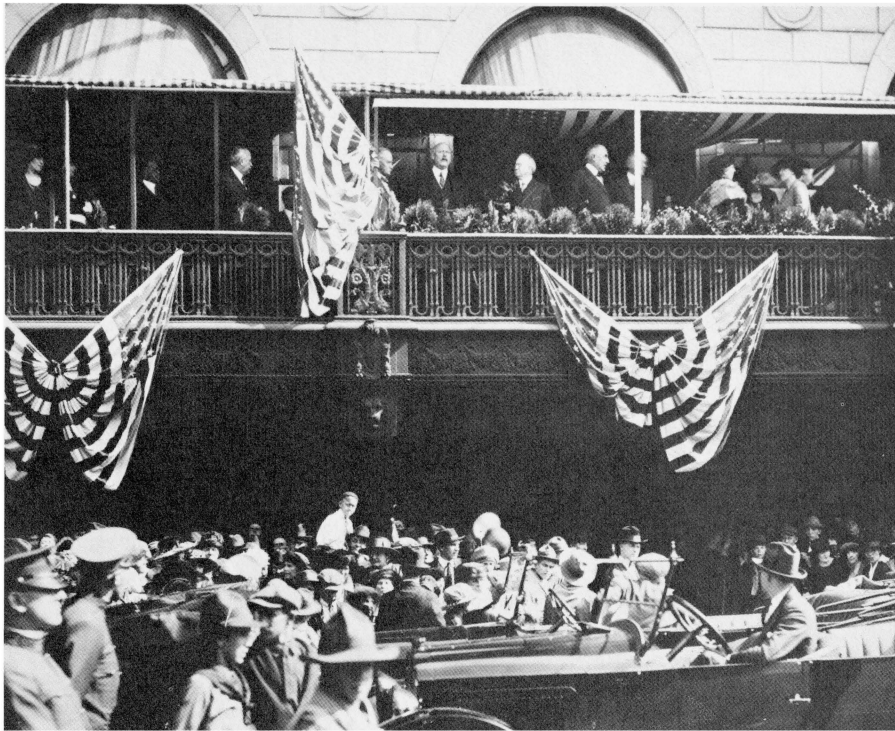
In his journeys around the city, Hunt occasionally happened upon incidents which were ripe for the talented photographer. One such incident is shown above. This early model automobile was apparently attempting to execute a turn at this Southside intersection when its front axle broke and the wheel fell off, creating some excitement for both the driver and the passersby.



The scene is 5th Avenue and 21st Street North in 1912, and the street is being plowed up in preparation for the tracks of the Tidewater Carline. On the corner to the right of the workers is the First Christian Church and next to it is the Age-Herald Building; the Redmont Hotel now stands on this corner.



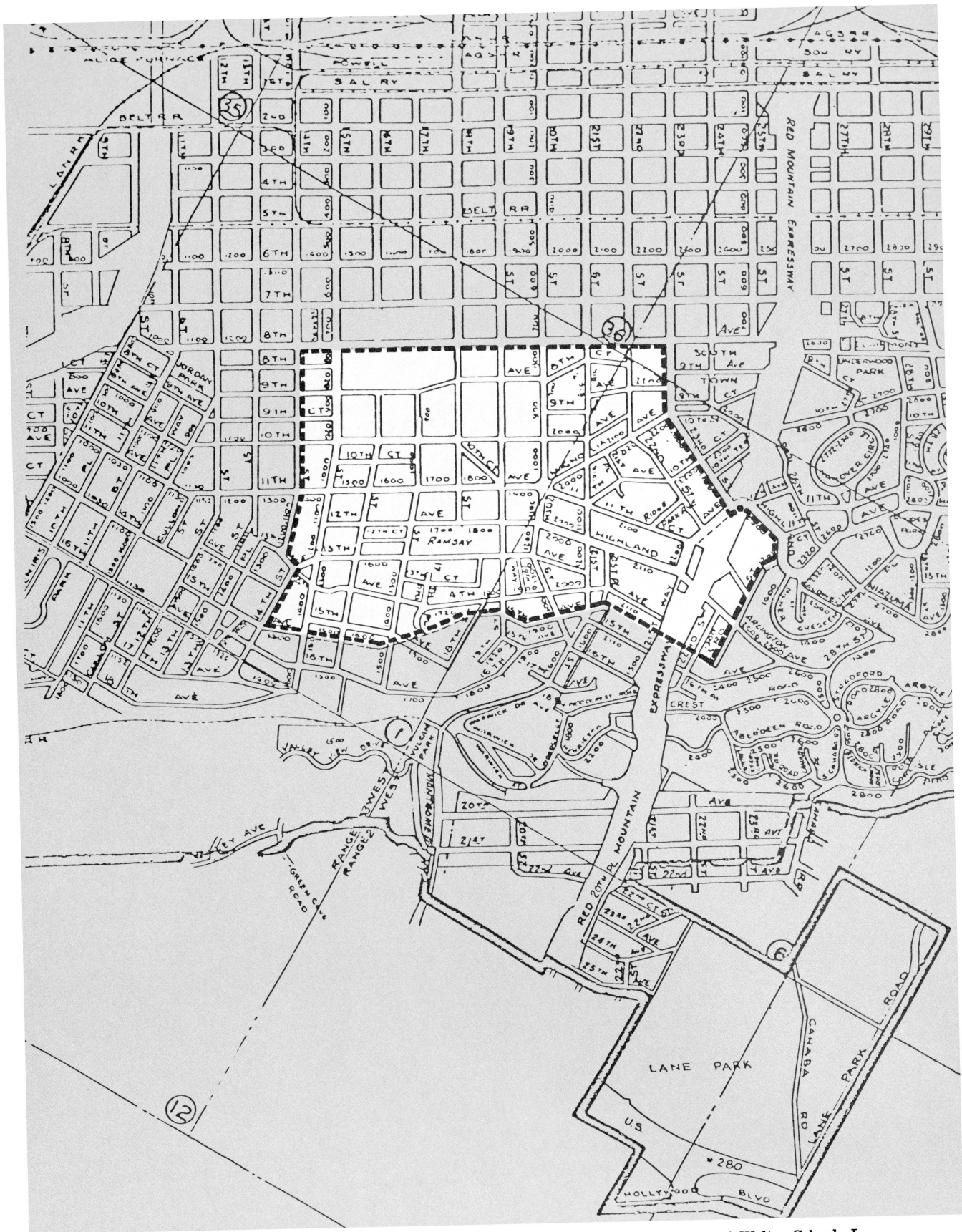
Celebrants at the Confederate reunion in 1916 enjoy a cup of cool water compliments of the White Swan Laundry. Such celebrations were a highlight of the social year for thousands of the city's citizens and Hunt was there to record them for posterity.



When dignitaries came to Birmingham, Hunt always made it a point to be on hand. Above, President Warren G. Harding greets the crowds at the Tutwiler Hotel on October 24, 1921. Harding was in the city to help it celebrate its Semi-Centennial.



The two somber gentlemen standing at the entrance to the Terminal Station are (left) Senator John H. Bankhead of Alabama and Senator James K. Vardaman of Mississippi. They had just arrived with the funeral train of Senator Joseph F. Johnston of Alabama on August 11, 1913, and as was so often the case, O. V. Hunt was there to record the scene.



Map showing the corporate boundaries of the Town of Highland, Alabama, 1887. Map courtesy of Walter Schoel, Jr.

EARLY HIGHLAND AND THE MAGIC CITY, 1884-1893

Including Willis J. Milner's "History of Highland Avenue"

LYN JOHNS

Introduction

Many of the bits and pieces of the history of the Highland area were lost in the Birmingham City Hall fire of 1925, but from those records which still exist comes a fascinating chapter in local history, that of the development and demise of the Town of Highland, Alabama. Before the town came into existence in the mid-1880's, the area was a wilderness with a largely unknown past, remembered only for its "flocks and flocks of wild turkey and deer."¹ There is, however, a rumor which reports the existence of old maps purportedly showing army encampments and Indian villages on the face of Red Mountain, almost to Morningside Drive; and for archaeologists, there is a late midden, from two to ten feet deep in the middle of Rhodes Park, full of cinders, old bottles, crocks, and broken chamber pots.

The name "Highland," with its sundry modifiers, became the toponym for much of residential Birmingham. Thus, although "South Highlands" was most often used in reference to Five Points, South, and vicinity, it was also later applied to Glen Iris, Highland Park (Idlewild), the Lakeview Park area, and other parts of Red Mountain. The name "North Highland," although never used to denote an incorporated area, appears on the G. William Baist map of the City of Birmingham (1902)² as the designation for that area approximately between Twelfth and Seventeenth Avenues, North, and Twenty-second and Twenty-seventh Streets.³

An "East Highland" and a "North Highland" addition to Pratt City also existed, as did an "Ensley Highlands" development northeast of the old Fairgrounds;⁴ and, in the Bessemer/Hueytown area, residents also picked up the appellation and had not only a "North Highlands" but a Highland Avenue, as well.⁵

This multiple use of the name "Highland" inevitably produced some confusion as to which "Highland" was which. Eventually, however, the designation became almost exclusively associated with the area encompassed by the Town of Highland and the adjacent residential sections.

Highland Avenue and Lakeview Park

Although Highland Avenue was initially located, according to Major Willis J. Milner's account, on April 1, 1884, and graded shortly thereafter,⁶ the first mention of the avenue in the Elyton Land Company's proceedings is the following Minute Book entry for January 29, 1885: "On motion it was Resolved that the action of the Directors in improving Highland Avenue and Lakeview Park is hereby ratified and approved."⁷

Unlike the numbered streets and avenues in most of original Birmingham which were laid out geometrically according to the traditional grid pattern, Highland Avenue was designed to follow the base of Red Mountain, south of the city, and to wander at will according to the contours of the land or the owners' wishes. Its goal was to open up 1,500 acres of Elyton Land Company property for development. This acreage was described, in the rapturous language of a late nineteenth century publicity release, as "mountainous woodland of rare natural beauty, where narrow serpentine valleys and rocky acclivities mark the landscape, situated about a mile to the southeast of the city." "In the midst of this wilderness of nature," the description continued, "the springs flowing out from the mountain

⁶Willis J. Milner, "History of Highland Avenue," typescript, p. 3. Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library. This typescript is published in its entirety following this article.

⁷Elyton Land Company, Minute Book, 1871-1892, p. 242. Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library. See also page 237 of the same source. There, although no explicit reference is made to the avenue, appears the first reference in the minutes of the Elyton Land Company to the area which would later become the Highlands: "On motion it was Resolved that the President be authorized and instructed to proceed to make the necessary surveys preparatory to improving the property of the company on the South Side Hill Tops."

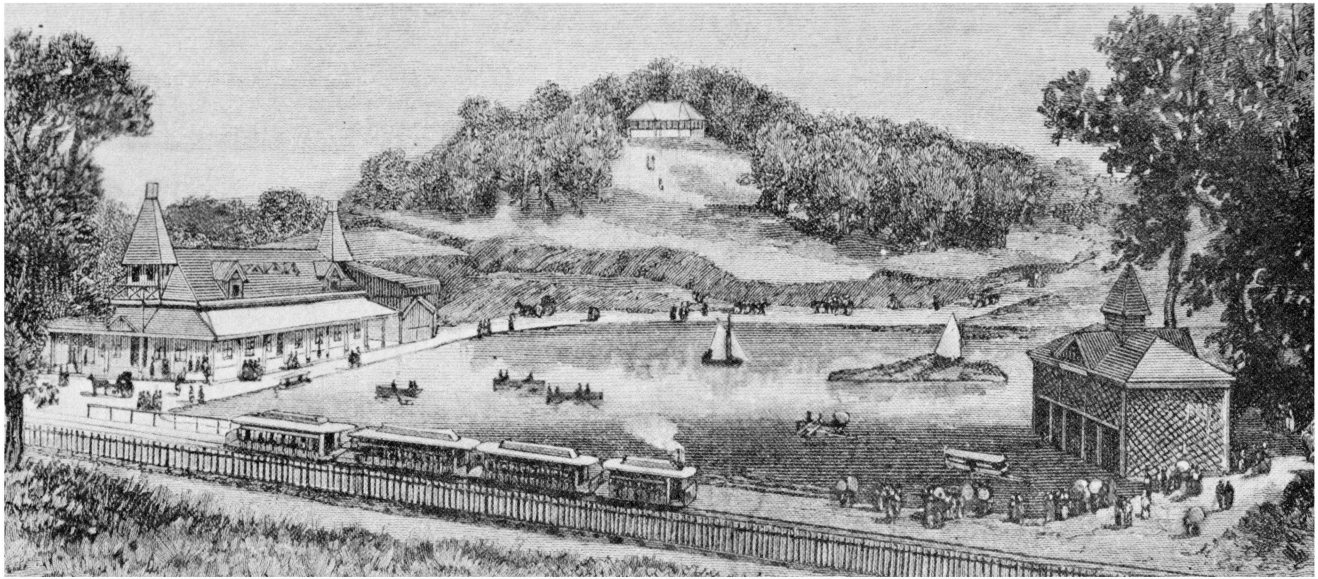
¹*Birmingham News*, October 10, 1910, p. 2.

²G. William Baist, *Baist's Property Atlas of Birmingham and Suburbs, Alabama* (Philadelphia: G. Wm. Baist, 1902), Plan 16.

³John Witherspoon DuBose, *Jefferson County and Birmingham, Alabama: Historical and Biographical, 1887* (Birmingham: Teeple and Smith, Publishers; Caldwell Printing Works, 1887), p. 272. Baist, Plan 16.

⁴Baist, Plans 21, 22, 23, and 24.

⁵Statement, Office of City Engineer, Bessemer, Alabama, April 14, 1980.



An engraving showing Lakeview Park, ca. 1887. In the foreground is a Highland Avenue and Belt Railroad dummy, with attached passenger cars. To the left is the pavillion, and to the right stands the boathouse. Engraving courtesy of the Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

sides have been trained to form, in the crescent-like valley, a lake of limpid waters, whose borders follow the curves of the base of the elevated hillsides around them.”⁸

Not only was nature’s landscape used as an attraction to potential residential builders but also Lakeview Park, which was designed by the Elyton Land Company to attract residents as well as vacationers to the Highlands area. By the time John Witherspoon DuBose wrote his *Jefferson County and Birmingham, Alabama: Historical and Biographical*, 1887, the Park had its man-made lake, dance hall, restaurant, bathrooms, a large veranda, numerous boats, as well as cottages on the nearby mountaintops, all built by the Elyton Land Company. It was later to boast a hotel and clubhouse which catered to such cultural events as the operas given on the pavilion, among which were *Martha*, *The Bohemian Girl*, *Martana*, *The Mikado*, and *Haymaker*.⁹

As for the two miles of the avenue, paving and public transportation were only a dream in 1884. In his reminiscence, which he wrote in 1911, Willis Milner noted that the editors of the *Daily Age*, one of the principal Birmingham newspapers, made the “dirt road” the object of their ridicule. The road, however, was well-travelled and served its builders’ purpose: houses were built alongside it, and the way was opened to both Lakeview Park and the northern slope of Red Mountain.¹⁰

⁸DuBose, p. 157.

⁹Martha Carolyn Mitchell Bigelow, “Birmingham: Biography of a City of the New South,” Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1946, pp. 187 and 170-171.

¹⁰Milner, pp. 3-4.



Dr. H. M. Caldwell, President of the Elyton Land Company, shown here in an engraving done by E. G. Williams and Brother, New York, N.Y. and included in John Witherspoon DuBose, *Jefferson County and Birmingham, Alabama: Historical and Biographical*, 1887 (Birmingham: Teeple and Smith, Publishers; Caldwell Printing Works, 1887).

Highland Avenue Railroad

The construction of Highland Avenue was but one of two means by which the Elyton Land Company's officers made their Highlands development accessible to new residents, to prospective home site purchasers, to patrons of the Lakeview Park facilities, and to the idly curious sightseer, as well. The other was the construction of the Highland Avenue Railroad. Responsibility for the development of both means of access was given to Willis Milner, who, among other jobs, held that of Chief Engineer of the Elyton Land Company.¹¹

On January 29, 1885, in ratifying the prior actions of the company's Directors "for the improvement of Highland Avenue and Lakeview Park," the stockholders of the Elyton Land Company also authorized the construction of Willis Milner's streetcar line, the Highland Avenue Railroad.¹² A year before this authorization was given, Milner had suggested to company President H. M. Caldwell that the development of the Highlands area include "a street car line from the City to and through the [1,500 acre tract of] property" on the

northern slope of Red Mountain. Caldwell had readily accepted the suggestion and, proceeding on his own authority, had instructed his Chief Engineer to work out not only plans for the street railroad but also for the avenue and Lakeview Park.¹³

Completion of the Highland Avenue line took slightly less than two years. Much of this time, however, was not consumed in actual construction but, rather, in obtaining from the Legislature of the State of Alabama an amendment to the Elyton Land Company charter permitting the corporation to build and operate a streetcar line. Having obtained the requisite legislative permission, construction of the line was begun early in 1885 and finally completed on the first of October in the same year.¹⁴

The Highland Avenue Railroad, under Milner's supervision, quickly became not only a reality but a major attraction. Rides on the brightly painted cars were a popular pastime among the young blades of the area. "It must have been quite a sight in those days," according to a newspaper article published around the turn of the nineteenth century, "to see that old mule

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

¹²Elyton Land Company, Minute Book, p. 10; Milner, pp. 1-2.

¹³Milner, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴Milner, pp. 3-4.



A scene on Highland Avenue during construction of the roadway and the street railroad in 1885. Photograph courtesy of the Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

care jogging along, with a bunch of Sunday holiday people, bound for Lakeview," aboard.¹⁵

The line's fame also soon spread to other cities. A letter to Dr. H. M. Caldwell from Cyrus Garnsey, Jr., Auditor and Cashier in Birmingham for the Kansas City, Memphis & Birmingham Railroad Company, dated April 8, 1887, noted that "when Mr. Nettleton and Mr. Ford were here[,] say two weeks ago, they took a ride out to Lakeview and the Highland, and seemed especially enthusiastic over the . . . [streetcar] line itself." The letter also contained a request for information regarding the construction, equipment, and operating costs of the Highland Avenue Railroad, the intention of the Kansas City company apparently being to construct a street railroad in the Missouri city, using the Highland line as a model.¹⁶ In response, Dr. Caldwell provided the information requested:

Cost per mile	\$3,500.00
Length of road	7 miles
Cost of masons	\$4,000.00 each
Cost of cars	\$1,500.00 each
Annual earnings	\$24,000.00, approximately
Cost of grading	Depends on topography. ¹⁷

¹⁵Hill Ferguson, "Birmingham and Alabama Personalities, 'Mi,'" XXI, 45. Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

¹⁶Letter, Cyrus Garnsey, Jr. to H. M. Caldwell, Birmingham, Alabama, April 8, 1887, in Birmingham Water Works Company, Correspondence: 1884-1887, folder 18. Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

¹⁷Letter, [H. M. Caldwell] to Cyrus Garnsey, Jr., [Birmingham, Alabama], [May, 1887], in Birmingham Waters Company, Correspondence: 1884-1887, folder 18.

Before the construction of the Highland Avenue Railroad, the Birmingham Street Railway had a virtual monopoly of street railway privileges. In 1885, its line was three miles long and extended from Thirteenth Street and First Avenue, North, to Nineteenth Street, then north on Nineteenth to Second Avenue, North, and thence, eventually, to Avondale.¹⁸

Prior to October 1, 1885—the date of the final completion of the line—the Highland Avenue Railroad began at Twenty-second Street and First Avenue, South. It ran, from that point, south on Twenty-second to Fifth Avenue, South, and then branched. The "Short Route" followed Fifth Avenue to the east, proceeding by way of Twenty-ninth Street, Seventh Avenue, South, Thirtieth Street, and Clairmont Avenue to Lakeview Park. The "Long Route" followed Fifth Avenue to the west, turning south on Fifteenth Street, and then by way of Tenth Avenue, South, Tenth Court, Eleventh Avenue, South, and Twentieth Street to Highland Avenue and Lakeview Park.¹⁹ On October 1, 1885, a bridge on Twenty-second Street, spanning the railroad reservation, was opened, and Milner's line

¹⁸DuBose, p. 296. This monopoly was later rescinded by act of the Alabama Supreme Court, after the Birmingham and Pratt Mines Railroad was given some rights-of-way as the result of a petition. The court found that the Elyton Land Company had given the streets to the City of Birmingham in "perpetual trust for the benefits of the public," and that the city had no right to grant such a monopoly. The Birmingham Street Railway was incorporated in 1879 by B. F. Roden and W. H. Morris, and, in 1887, merged with the Pratt Mines Railroad under J. A. Van Hoose to form the Birmingham and Pratt Mines Railroad.

¹⁹Alvin W. Hudson and Harold E. Cox, *Street Railways of Birmingham* (Forty Fort, Pennsylvania: Harold E. Cox, 1976), p. 16. See also Milner, p. 2.



This photograph, from the Bob Baker Collection in the Department of Archives and Manuscripts of the Birmingham Public Library, shows the first dummy to be used on the Highland Avenue and Belt Roadroad. The date of its first run from downtown Birmingham to Lakeview Park was May 25, 1886.

crossed it to connect to the Birmingham Street Railway system at a terminal near O'Brien's Opera House, on the corner of Nineteenth Street and First Avenue, North.²⁰

Initially, service on the Highland Avenue Railroad was by mule-drawn cars. Sometime during the early summer of 1886—June 26, to be exact—steam service was initiated. This change not only required the acquisition of new equipment but, as Major Milner later noted, the replacement of the lighter rails which were installed for mule-drawn service with heavier rails that would support the weight of both the steam dummy engines and the passenger cars which they pulled.²¹

Two years after the completion of the street railroad, the Elyton Land Company began construction of a belt railroad on which to move heavy freight within and around the city. Its main line was to be 12 miles long, with numerous radii which would make its total length greater. As Willis Milner recalled, the decision of the company to construct this line not only had to do with rendering access to warehouses and other commercial and industrial facilities but also with problems raised by the rapid growth of the Birmingham area during the real estate boom of 1887. "While the growth of the city was rapid and promising, the prices of real estate were increasing entirely out of proportion to the other conditions. In this situation it was easy to see that the time was not far distant when terminal facilities for any other railroads desiring to enter the city would be impossible at reasonable cost. In order, therefore, to obviate this difficulty, I conceived the idea of construction of a belt line which would be able to supply this great need and invite other railroads to come."²²

On May 5, 1887, the Highland Avenue Railroad and the Belt Railroad were combined. The Minute Book of the Elyton Land Company records the decision of the Directors to transfer control of "all rolling stock, rails, material and other personal property connected therewith" and all of the 70 acres of Lakeview Park to the Highland Avenue and Belt Railroad Company.²³ Operation of both railroads remained in the hands of the H. A. & B. R. until 1899, when the company was forced into receivership. Subsequently, its assets were purchased by E. E. Whitaker, who sold the Highland Avenue Railroad to Birmingham Traction Company and organized the freight service under the name, the Birmingham Belt Railroad. In 1902, the belt line was purchased by the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad, which continues its operation. The Highland Avenue Railroad remained with Birmingham Traction Company until November 5, 1900, when it and several other street railway companies were merged to form Birmingham Railway, Light & Power Company.²⁴

²⁰Milner, p. 4, and Hudson and Cox, p. 15.

²¹Milner, p. 4. See also Hudson and Cox, p. 15.

²²Milner, p. 5.

²³Elyton Land Company, Minute Book, pp. 260-61.

²⁴Hudson and Cox, pp. 16 and 39-40.

The Town of Highland

On May 14, 1887, certain property owners—twenty-two in all—petitioned for incorporation of a town to be called "Highland." Ten days later, on May 24, with three inspectors in attendance, a public election was held on the corner of Twentieth Street and Eleventh Avenue, South. Only 29 votes were cast; twenty-three of these were for incorporation; six were against. The result of the election was the birth of a new town, which, by June 18, had its first mayor, W. C. Ward.²⁵

By 1892, the town's second mayor, J. Q. Cohen, was quoted as saying that Highland was the most complete municipality in the South for its age. Population was equal to an eighth of Birmingham's; the town's land area was a seventh of Birmingham's; it had taxable property in the amount of \$900,000.00, a bond issue of \$75,000.00 which was paying annual interest of \$4,500.00—a debt only a fifteenth that of Birmingham's—and an almost complete sanitary sewage system. But, despite this expression of civic pride which was not restricted to the town's chief executive officer, there was a growing sentiment among the citizens of Highland favorable to merger with their municipal neighbor to the north.²⁶

²⁵Corporation Record, B, 179-84. Office of Judge of Probate, Jefferson County, Alabama.

²⁶*Birmingham Age-Herald*, October 20, 1892, p. 1.



Jack Quintus Cohen, Birmingham attorney and the second Mayor of the Town of Highland, who was in office in 1893, when the annexation of Highland by the City of Birmingham was approved by the Legislature of the State of Alabama. Photograph courtesy of the Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

In the summer of 1892, the people of Highland held a giant rally in the spirit of patriotism and loyalty to their mother city. One tangible result of the gathering was a public expression on the part of the town's citizens of their desire to be a part of Birmingham, to make a contribution to it, and to have a voting role in its future. The benefit to Birmingham seemed apparent, for, as Mayor Cohen stated, the town would require of the City of Birmingham little other than a policeman or two and the payment of its electric light bill.²⁷

The soundness of the City of Birmingham was also noted. The A. O. Lane administration was praised as one which economized and which invested its funds wisely. Many expenditures had been reduced; however, the city's debt was still great, and it remained committed to growth. Yet, merger sentiment seemed to predominate both in the Town of Highland and in the City of Birmingham.²⁸

On October 19, 1892, Birmingham Mayor A. O. Lane called a meeting of the Board of Alderman's Judiciary Committee to consider the question of merger. Not only were there representatives of the Town of Highland in attendance but also persons from other Birmingham suburbs: Avondale, Woodlawn, North Highland, Elyton, and Smithfield. In turn, each speaker expressed a common desire: merger with the City of Birmingham.²⁹

Two major objections to annexation were raised but each was answered quickly. First, there was the fear of losing existing industry or discouraging the establishment of new industrial facilities, if, by inclusion of areas in which such were or could be located, they would become subject to city taxation. As it would be illegal to exempt any industrial property from the city's tax levy, it was argued that omission of the areas in which these properties were located from annexation would be to the advantage of the city and the rolling mills and furnaces, which were the particular properties that had occasioned the objection. To keep faith with and promote these industries, it was proposed that an amendment be included in any legislation drafted, specifically excluding rolling mill and furnace properties from annexation. Second, it was feared by some that a saloon might spring up in the midst of one of the suburbs. Alderman D. J. Fox felt that anyone who paid for a license should have the privilege of establishing a saloon wherever he chose. The other alderman felt the objection was valid, however, and another amendment to the proposed annexation bill was introduced, which would prevent the sale of liquor in the suburbs which were to be brought with-

in the Birmingham city limits,, unless their citizenry voted otherwise.³⁰

With these concessions, the few who "kicked" were ridiculed. In a Sunday column entitled "About the Town," which was carried in the *Age-Herald*, the writer observed that "the only kicker who was in town yesterday was a man with both legs cut off, and he got pants to fit him at the Surprise Store fire sale." The Lane administration and the suburbs to be annexed were as one for the act to be accomplished.³¹

The Beginning of Greater Birmingham

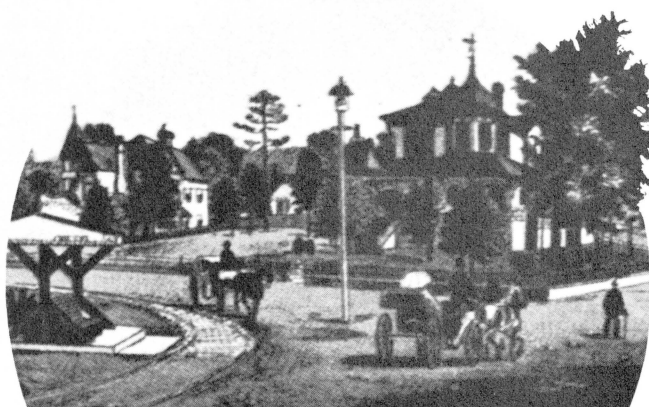
On January 21, 1893, the Alabama General Assembly convened in Montgomery, and brought up the "Greater Birmingham" bill as a special order. The measure introduced was to annex the Town of Highland, the unincorporated areas of North Highlands, the rolling mills and furnaces, and other corporation property to the east and west of the existing city limits. Amendments were introduced to eliminate all territories but Highland. In the House, Representatives Ferguson and McQueen of Jefferson County were for the amendment which would permit annexation of Highland only. At this point in the deliberations, the *Age-Herald* reported that "the House has shown a very frank disposition to give the Empire County whatever she asks for."³²

A substitute bill was presented and accepted which provided for taking in the Town of Highland as Bir-

³⁰*Birmingham Age-Herald*, November 28, 1892, p. 1.

³¹*Birmingham Age-Herald*, December 4, 1892, p. 1.

³²*Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 25, 1893, p. 1.

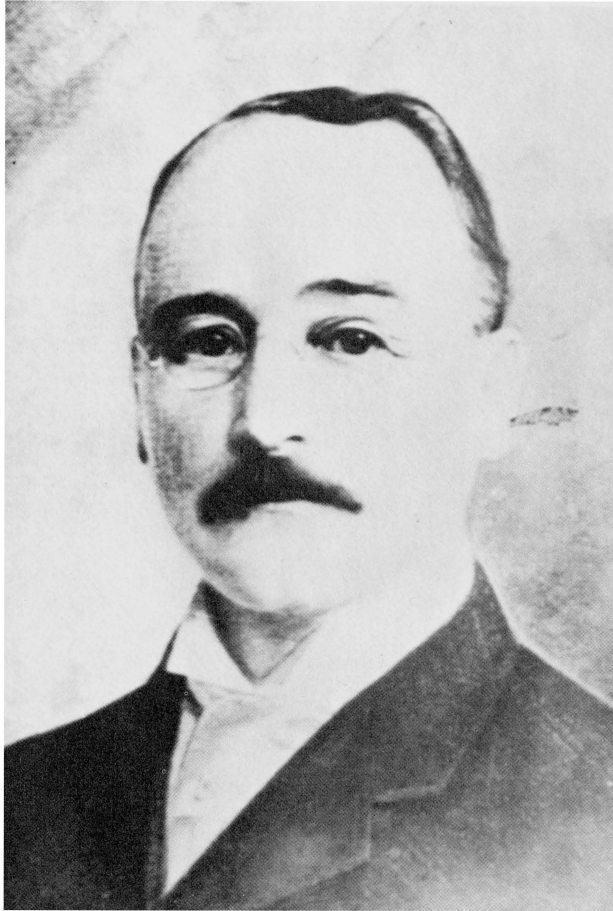


A scene in the Town of Highland, ca. 1887, showing, on the left, an unidentified station on the Highland Avenue Railroad—probably one on Highland Avenue itself—and, in the background and on the right, two residences typical of many built along the thoroughfare. An engraving from R. T. Boyett, *Souvenir of Birmingham, Alabama, Photo-gravures* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: The Alvertype Company, 1902).

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Birmingham Age-Herald*, November 18, 1892, p. 3.

²⁹*Birmingham Age-Herald*, October 20, 1892, p. 1.



David J. Fox, Mayor of the City of Birmingham at the time of the annexation of the Town of Highland and a principal proponent of the "Greater Birmingham" movement. Photograph courtesy of Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library.

mingham's Sixth Ward, assuming its debt, and repealing the charter of "that beautiful city upon an hill which we did once and many times term the urban Arcadia. That is all and that is enough."³³

But that was not all. Controversy was just beginning. Representative Frank O'Brien of Jefferson County had been opposed to the new measure but agreed to a compromise when the bill was amended to divide the new territory into two wards (Wards Six and Seven) with two aldermen to be elected from each, an arrangement which would give the city four aldermen from the Highland area.³⁴

Back in Birmingham, Mayor David J. Fox, who had been elected Birmingham's chief executive on December 6, 1892, was calling together a delegation to go to Montgomery in an effort to deliver a death blow to limited annexation. The delegation consisted of Representative Frank P. O'Brien, Aldermen John M. McCartin and Charlie E. Thomas, Tax Collectors Robert

³³*Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 24, 1893, p. 4.

³⁴*The Sunday News*, January 22, 1893, p. 1.

Warnock of the city and R. G. Hewitt of the county, Messrs. N. L. Miller, Eugene F. Enslen, J. P. Mudd, Dave Brown, John Bradley, R. Loxla Thornton, Harry Hawkins, A. O. Lane, W. J. Cameron, Mack Sloss, and W. J. Duncan.³⁵

While preparations for the trip were being made, an announcement appeared in the *Age-Herald* on January 25, 1893:

House bill on the city extension has been referred to, at my request, my committee, who will consider it Wednesday, January 25 at 7:30 o'clock at my room at the Exchange Hotel. JOHN T. MILNER³⁶

That night, Senator Milner appointed a committee of warring factions. The committee closeted itself until midnight, but no agreement seemed forthcoming. Some time between midnight Thursday and Friday morning, however, there was a reconciliation.³⁷

Headlines, Friday, January 27, in the *Age-Herald* read "ANNEXATION. The Tide Turned With the Rising Sun."³⁸

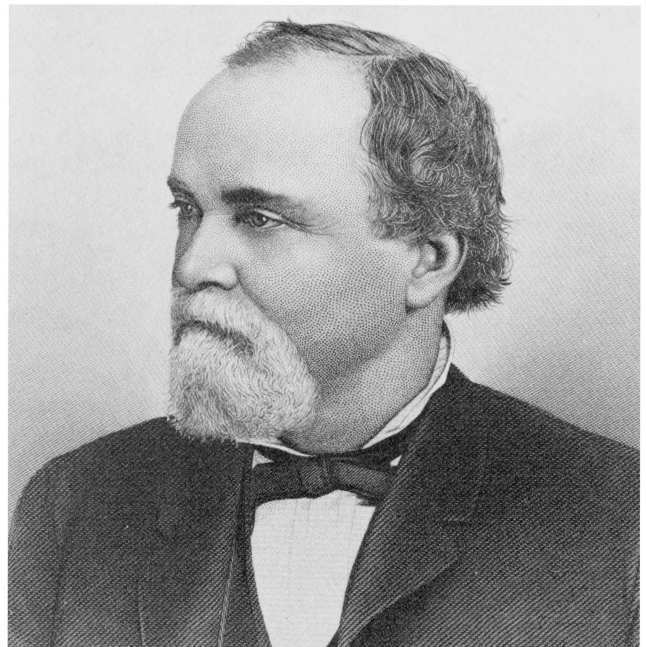
The agreement notifying Senator Milner and the Jefferson County representatives and requesting that

³⁵*Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 24, 1893, p. 4.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 26, 1893, p. 1, and January 27, 1893, p. 4.

³⁸*Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 27, 1893, p. 4.



State Senator John Turner Milner, shown here in an engraving done by E. G. Williams and Brother, New York, N.Y. and included in John Witherspoon DuBose, *Jefferson County and Birmingham, Alabama: Historical and Biographical*, 1887 (Birmingham: Teeple and Smith, Publishers; Caldwell Printing Works, 1887).

Governor Jones support the bill was signed by B. F. Roden, Charles A. Senn, J. P. Mudd, R. H. Pearson, Ross C. Smith, David J. Fox, C. E. Thomas, J. M. McCartin and Rufus N. Rhodes. The agreement allowed Birmingham to take in the larger territory and to float a large bond issue, with the stipulation that the territory to be annexed not be allowed to come in until the bond issue had passed.³⁹

Thursday's editorials in the *Age-Herald* had panned the annexation, saying that Highland's bonds were not worth par and that, even if they were, Birmingham's treasury would receive no benefit from them, that all the benefit would accrue to the bondholders. By Monday, the same paper claimed that it was the original proponent of annexation, pleading for both the Highlands to come in.⁴⁰

On February 8, 1893, the beginning of Greater Birmingham became a reality, with the passage by the State Legislature of an act to extend the boundaries of the city.⁴¹ Birmingham was now three miles long and two miles wide. It extended south to the limits of development; west to Smithfield and Elyton; east, just east of the Sloss furnaces, taking in both the Sloss and Alice furnaces and the Birmingham Rolling Mill; and north to Fifteenth Avenue. There was one section included in the original bill which was now omitted, and that was some vacant property to the north of the city, on Village Creek.⁴²

With the passage of this annexation statute, the city's population leaped to 45,000, and its treasury grew overnight by several million. The move to annex was definitely under way, in earnest. Jokes appeared in the newspaper about a new town being formed, to be called "Annexmenot."⁴³

Highland was, in fact, the first pebble of many which, with Avondale, Woodlawn, East Lake, Elyton, Ensley, North Birmingham, Pratt City, Wylam, and others, would build up Birmingham to the great census of 1910, when the headcount would total 132,685. It was said then that the public had failed "to appreciate fully the moment of the hour, and the tremendous possibilities for the immediate future which . . . [Greater Birmingham] had created. To grasp the occasion as it present[ed] itself and labor unceasingly to render Birmingham the brightest civic star in the galaxy of Southern cities . . . [was] now the duty of every patriotic citizen."⁴⁴

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰*Ibid.* *Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 30, 1893, p. 4.

⁴¹*Birmingham Age-Herald*, February 9, 1893, p. 1. The text of the annexation act appears in the *Birmingham Age-Herald*, February 12, 1893, p. 3. See also *Acts of Alabama, 1892-93*, pp. 323-26.

⁴²*Ibid.*

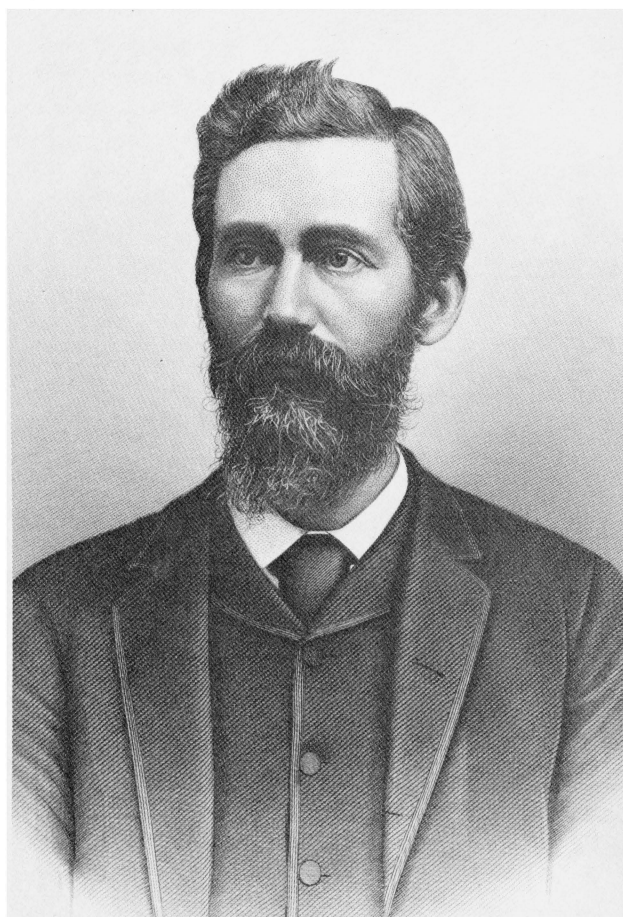
⁴³*Birmingham Age-Herald*, February 13, 1893, p. 4.

⁴⁴*Birmingham News*, October 12, 1910, p. 1. These words were spoken by J. B. Babb, Secretary of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce.

History of Highland Avenue W. J. Milner

Willis J. Milner's "History of Highland Avenue" was written in 1911, slightly more than 10 years after he resigned his positions as Secretary-Treasurer of the Elyton Land Company, as that company's Chief Engineer, and as General Superintendent of the Birmingham Water Work Company. His position as General Manager of the Highland Avenue and Belt Railroad Company had ended earlier, when the assets of that corporation were purchased by E. E. Whitaker.

Few men in the history of the City of Birmingham have had a more substantial role in its development than did Milner. The reminiscence which follows reflects but a portion of that role. It is published with the permission of the Department of Archives and Manuscripts of the Birmingham Public Library and without substantive changes in spelling or grammar.



Willis J. Milner, Secretary-Treasurer and Chief Engineer of the Elyton Land Company, General Manager of the Highland Avenue and Belt Railroad Company, and the chief designer of Highland Avenue, the street and belt railroads, and Lakeview Park, shown here in an engraving done by E. G. Williams and Brother, New York, N.Y. and included in John Witherspoon DuBose, *Jefferson County and Birmingham, Alabama: Historical and Biographical, 1887* (Birmingham: Teeple and Smith, Publishers; Caldwell Printing Works, 1887).

The beauty and attractiveness which Highland Avenue has assumed in recent years prompts me to believe that many of those whose handsome homes adorn its frontage will be interested in its early history.

At the beginning of the year 1884, Birmingham had emerged from the long period of depression and struggle following the panic of 1873, and was well on its start towards its later period of growth and prosperity. The Elyton Land Company—the founders of the City, of which Dr. Henry M. Caldwell was President, and the writer was General Manager and chief engineer—had just passed through a very successful year. The Company had also a short while before it made a joyous bonfire of its first issue of bonds, which had been redeemed before maturity. It may be interesting to note here, parenthetically, that these bonds had been issued chiefly to meet obligations incurred during the hard times in the construction of a system of water works, at a cost of nearly \$75,000.00, and that these works, a few years before this, came near being acquired by the late William H. Woodward in satisfaction of a note of \$15,000.00 given for borrowed money and secured by a mortgage on the water works. This disaster was averted by three of the stockholders' (Josiah Morris, James W. Sloss and H. M. Caldwell) paying the note and taking bonds of the company in payment therefor.

Up to this time, January 1884, only a small proportion of the Company's large holdings of real estate had been sold, and these sales had been confined mostly to the then corporate limits, that is, the area bounded between 13th. and 27th. streets and 9th. Avenue and Avenue "I". The large tract now known as the South Highlands, lying southward and eastward of the limits named, was an almost unbroken primeval forest [concerning which] the endeavors of the Agents of the Company had been directed for many years towards preventing [the] depredations by wood-choppers.

I suggested to the President of the Company that the time had now come when this tract should be developed. I was accordingly instructed by him to prepare a plan to make this development to the best advantage, and to include in the plan a street car line from the City to and through the property to be developed, and a park somewhere on the line. The entire project was placed in my hands to be worked out as my judgement dictated.

Almost the only power for street cars then in use was animal power; electricity for such purposes was unknown. The only semblance of a street car line in the county at that time was one extending from about 13th. Street along First Avenue to Nineteenth Street, thence on Nineteenth Street to Second Avenue, and thence on Second Avenue to about Twenty-Sixth Street, built by the late J. C. Kyle, with the assistance of Mr. Roden, Mr. Pearson and a few other enter-

prising citizens. This line was afterwards extended to Avondale and later became the nucleus of the present system of rapid transit.

The plan which I finally evolved, for carrying out the object of the directors mentioned above, comprised a street car line extending along First Avenue from 19th. Street to 22nd Street, thence along 22nd Street to Avenue "E", passing the railroads by a bridge on 22nd Street. Along Avenue "E", which had been selected because of its easy grades, a line was to extend west to 15th. Street and another East to 27th. Street; the former line was to be extended along 15th. Street, 10th Avenue South, Cotton Avenue and 11th Avenue South to 20th. Street near Five Points. These streets, with the exception of Cotton Avenue, having already been dedicated, were adopted without change. The other line mentioned, for similar reasons was extended along 27th Street to Avenue "G", and along Avenue "G" to 29th. Street, from which point the old system of projected streets was abandoned. These two points, that is 29th. Street and Avenue "C", and 20th. Street and 12th. Avenue South, were left to be connected by a thoroughfare, to be located entirely anew, to which all other streets were to be made tributary.

I had previously prepared an accurate topographical map of the entire property, drawn to large scale, on which I projected this thoroughfare, which Dr. Caldwell christened "Highland Avenue". With this map before me, showing not only the property to be developed but its topography as well, it was an easy matter for me to locate the line of the street with a considerable degree of accuracy. My plan was then laid out on the ground—as it now is—by my cousin Jno. A. Milner, whom I engaged for that purpose, and whom I regarded one of the best railroad locating engineers in the State.

In designing this Avenue, two objects were kept in view: first, to construct an attractive boulevard, of ample width, with light grades adapted to horse cars and other similarly drawn vehicles, and second, to locate it so as to give the greatest practicable frontage of lots upon it. The width of the street was made one hundred feet and the maximum grade fixed at three per cent.

The tract now known as "Lakeview Park" was selected for the park, to be made a feature of the scheme, and a baseball park also was later constructed near Lakeview—the first, I think ever constructed in the county.

The location of the Avenue was completed about April first and contracts were let for grading a 25-foot wide driveway in the center along the route named, from 15th Street and Avenue "E" to 29th Street and Avenue "G", via Highland Avenue. The grading was completed during the summer; and a short while later Lakeview Park, including the lake, was completed.

Two springs within the park were piped into the upper end of the lake and another spring, located near the intersection of Highland Avenue and Avalon Street, was also introduced into the lake. The grounds within the park were laid off by an old landscape engineer by the name of Caldwell (not related to the Doctor.)

The Elyton Land Company under its charter had no authority to build or operate a street car line and it had now proceeded about as far as its authority in that direction extended. The work, therefore, was suspended to await the meeting of the Legislature, that of 1884-5, to obtain this authority.

In the meantime the public was invited to use the driveway, which they did freely. Much sport was made by the *Daily Age*, then edited by Lawrence Watkins, over the Elyton Land Company's "dirt road", and many gibes and flings were made by the paper at the Company. One of these I recall, which after the order of Bellamy, represents a citizen of that period returning to Birmingham after an absence of many years, to visit his old home. He enquired of a friend of former years, "what ever became of the Elyton Land Company?". His friend replies "Elyton Land Company? Elyton Land Company? Yes, I believe I do remember something about it. It is dead and forgotten long ago and everybody that was connected with it have long since gone and are forgotten." There is, alas, much truth in this imaginary conversation.

Authority to build the street car line was obtained at the following session of the Legislature and early in the year of 1885 work thereon was begun. Pending the construction of the bridge both lines started temporarily on 22nd Street and Avenue "A", one terminating at Five Points and the other at Lakeview. The Street care line at the time was being operated by horse-power.

The bridge over the railroads was completed and thrown open October 1st. 1885. It was designed and constructed under the direction of Thos. A. E. Evans, an older brother of F. V. Evans. He was a very estimable man and an engineer of ability. The car line operated by horse-power proved to be very unsatisfactory both to the public and the Company. It was therefore determined to change it to steam. Accordingly the light sixteen-pound rails were replaced with forty-pound rails and the gap between Lakeview and Five Points was completed in 1886. On June 26th. of that year we bade farewell to the mules and began operating the line with steam dummies. Four trains were put on, one leaving the terminus at 1st Avenue and 19th. Street every fifteen minutes, two going by the "Short Route", that is, via 27th Street, and two by the "Long Route", that is, via 15th Street, to the other terminus, which was Lakeview Park, thus making the round trip in just one hour, going out one way and returning the other. It was the first dummy line of any extent ever operated in the South and it proved a great

success, and for a long time very attractive to the public. At times the overflowing trains were unequal to the demands and other and heavier dummies and additional cars had to be purchased.

This old bridge has now stood for twenty-six years although the timbers have been renewed from time to time as became necessary. The traffic over the dummy line became so great as to make it necessary in a short time to replace the iron rails with new steel rails.

When the town of Highlands was incorporated, a portion of Highland Avenue was included in the corporate limits and was graded and curbed by the corporation. Afterwards the limits of the City of Birmingham was extended over the town of Highlands and also to include the remainder of Highland Avenue, which was then graded and curbed by the City.

I have omitted to mention that after the completion of the Highland Avenue Railroad, the Elyton Land Company built the Belt Railroad, which now belongs to the Frisco Company, and the two were then transferred to a separate company incorporated as the Highland Avenue and Belt Railroad Company, the stock of which was distributed as a dividend to the stockholders of the parent company. The two corporations were continued, however, for several years under the same management.

While it may not be altogether pertinent to the subject of this paper, it will not I hope be amiss to give some information in regard to the Belt Railroad. Its construction was begun in the early part of 1887 in the midst of the great boom, during which the Company's income was enormous. Sometimes several dividends per month were declared and paid. While the growth of the city was rapid and promising, the prices of real estate were increasing entirely out of proportion to the other conditions. In this situation it was easy to see that the time was not far distant when terminal facilities for any other railroads desiring to enter the city would be impossible at reasonable cost. In order, therefore, to obviate this difficulty, I conceived the idea of constructing a belt line which would be able to supply this great need and invite other railroads to come.

I laid the plan before the President of the Company, who, after some delay, and persuasion on my part, finally acceded to the plan and instructed me to proceed. I lost no time in putting engineers in the field locating the lines. Fortunately the Company still owned practically all the lands that would probably be required for the railroad, which fact made me the more impatient to get to work, lest some insurmountable obstacle should intervene by delay.

The right-of-way for tracks constituting the belt within and contiguous to the City limits were first obtained and occupied with tracks, after which these lines were extended to the limits of the property of the Company in four directions, easterly towards Avon-

dale, northeasterly in the direction of Guntersville, westerly towards Thomas and Pratt City and southward to reach the summit of Red Mountain and its ore deposits.

The charter obtained at the next session of the Legislature gave to the Company the right to extend its lines anywhere within the County or the adjoining Counties, to cross or parallel any other railroad line, and to reach tide water at such point as might be in future determined upon.

During the period of depression following the collapse of the boom of the Eighties, culminating in the panic of 1893, the income of the railroad was insufficient to meet expenses, repairs and renewals, and as the parent company had committed financial suicide and was therefore unable to render assistance to its offspring, the Company met disaster, went into the hands of a receiver, died and was buried. After the obsequies, it was resurrected, the passenger department as an electric line, which eventually gravitated into the present corporation, while the freight department was

acquired and is now owned, as has been stated, by the Frisco Company, affording to that Company invaluable terminals. The public is doubtless benefitted by the former. I wish I could feel that the latter also is for the public good. The belt road, it was hoped, would continue in the hands of strong local interests and would afford equal terminal facilities for all other railroads entering Birmingham, as well as shipping facilities to the mines and manufacturing industries of the district, and would eventually, as its charter provides, be extended to tide water, thus fulfilling the expectations and intentions of its designer.

Another offspring of the old parent Company, or ganized in a similar manner to the railroad Company just a short while previously, the Birmingham Water Works Co., was more successful, fortunately for the people of Birmingham, and has been able to take care of itself and fulfill its obligations to the public, although in the formative period of those pioneer days its profits were much less than some people now think them to be.

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