

Special Issue Honoring
Frank Park Samford,
1893-1973.



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Title Page Photographs (Clockwise
from top left): Frank Park Samford,
President, Liberty National Life Insurance
Company; Samford riding motor bike
to work during World War II, in effort to
illustrate gas savings available to Liberty
National agents through use of this
conveyance; (clockwise from top left)
Connor, Frank, Yetta and James
Samford; Samford with grandchildren
(left to right) Frank Samford, III, Kathy
and Ginger Upchurch, Laura Samford,
and John Samford.

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Foreword

This issue of The JOURNAL of the Birmingham Historical Society is as representative of the publication as any of the 16 published in the preceding 24 years. With each issue, but particularly so with this one, the effort which produced it has been a co-operative one. Without the generous assistance of Torchmark Corporation, no publication would have been possible. Not only did Torchmark provide full funding of the issue but supplied technical expertise as well. Particular thanks must go to the following persons associated with Torchmark: Frank Samford, John Samford, Mike Klyce, Carter Anthony, and Camilla Harper, to cite only those most directly involved in the planning and publishing of this issue.

Gratitude must also be expressed to Pat Camp, Vice President of the Birmingham Historical Society, whose work in behalf of The JOURNAL extends far beyond the present publication but whose help with this issue has been unusually substantial. The sensitive work of Carol McWhorter, Assistant Vice President at R. Meadows & Fowler, Inc., who is responsible for the design of this issue, has been invaluable as well, as has that of John Henley, III and his staff at Birmingham Publishing Company.

Thanks must, of course, be expressed to those who have prepared the articles contained herein: Dr. Leslie Wright, the Chancellor of

Samford University; Gail Andrews Trechsel, Assistant Director of the Birmingham Museum of Art, and Robert Casey, Director of Research and Education at the Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark; Carolyn Stern, formerly Executive Secretary of the Birmingham Historical Society; and Steve Trimmier, Birmingham attorney, and Ellen Erdreich, art historian and doctoral student in art history at Johns Hopkins University.

Preparing and publishing an issue of The JOURNAL of the Birmingham Historical Society is, as the above suggests, a co-operative venture, but it is also largely a venture dependent upon volunteers. Of the more than 20 persons who participated in the preparation and publication of this issue, only three received any remuneration from their work. As with so many local history projects, so with this one, co-operation and volunteerism are the key ingredients.

There is a third characteristic of this issue which points up an additional ingredient crucial to local history activity. The substantial financial support for this publication provided by Torchmark Corporation is one evidence of a growing willingness on the part of the business community, both local and national, to involve itself, in a very tangible manner, in projects to preserve and publicize the history that is around us. In an era of reduced governmental involvement,

the success, even the existence of such projects as this publication is often dependent upon support from businesses and the professions.

Finally, note must be taken of one other element crucial to the life of this publication and to that of other ventures in the field of local history. Historical societies like the Birmingham Historical Society are often the sources of a majority of activity in the fields of historic preservation, documentation, and publication, but this activity would not, could not exist without the support of the persons who choose to be regular members and annually pay for that status. Without the more than 1,000 individual, family, and student/teacher members of the Birmingham Historical Society, there would be no organization and no JOURNAL; thus, in conclusion, a word of thanks to the Society's regular members.

Marvin Yeomans Whiting
Editor
The JOURNAL of the
Birmingham Historical Society

Contents

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Forward | 2 |
| Frank Park Samford: A Singular Vision | 4 |
| Influence on the Growth and Development of Auburn University and Samford University by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Park Samford, Sr. | 18 |
| The Enslen House | 22 |
| Buildings Reborn: II Poster Competition | 27 |
| Burst of Gas and Sparks: The Work of Roderick MacKenzie | 36 |



Frank Park Samford, President and Chief Executive Officer, Liberty National Life Insurance Company. Photograph courtesy of Torchmark Corporation.

Frank Park Samford: A Singular Vision

by Marvin Y. Whiting

PREFACE

To those who knew him well, Frank Samford was a consummate businessman, who bent the full force of his energies to secure and enhance the success of the company he served and loved. (1) But also to those who knew him well, there was another Frank Samford: a man who could—or perhaps, on occasion, had to—let go of business, a man who loved to fish and don “old grubby clothes,” and, for lunch, eat sardines out of a can; in short, a man who needed to find refuge, and found it in a country “hide-away.” (2) And there were other Frank Samford’s, as well: philanthropist, churchman, civic leader, parent and grandparent. (3)

Such characterizations as these are indeed accurate, but underlying each one of them was a dimension of the man which not only informed but also gave unity to all the varied other facets of his life. For Frank Samford, real life was not just the business of Liberty National, not just his church and the colleges and universities he served and supported, and not just his family; real life was also the life of his mind. Time and again, as if to reaffirm himself, and to understand better the changing world in which he functioned—as if to touch base with security—he stated and restated a set of ideals which informed every aspect of his activity, whether in business, in civic, religious, or educational affairs, or among his family; and these were, in essence, his verities. (4)

Hence, in order that the emphasis may fall in proper measure, this article focuses upon Frank Samford’s

ideals, and the external biography is restricted, providing only the necessary details. This focus is not, however, designed simply to permit an essential of Frank Samford to be seen and known but also to suggest the representational character of his beliefs, which were so similar to those of a generation or more of Southerners who had their roots fixed in that age of recovery and readjustment which followed the American Civil War, the consequent years of Reconstruction, and the aftermath of both.

EXTERNALS

On October 3, 1921, a group of ten delegates gathered in Huntsville, Alabama for the sixth Quadrennial Conclave of the Heralds of Liberty, a fraternal benefit society incorporated nearly 20 years earlier, on February 10, 1901, by a special act of the General Assembly of Alabama. In addition to these delegates and six previously-appointed members of standing committees, those present included the Society’s Supreme Medical Director, Dr. Samuel R. Crothers; Robert P. Davison, Alabama’s Deputy Commissioner of Insurance; and that state’s Commissioner of Insurance, A.W. Briscoe. The purpose of the Conclave was to describe the condition of the society and to take steps to rescue it from the effects of years of official mismanagement. (5)

In behalf of the Insurance Department of the State of Alabama, which had assumed operating control of the society late in July 1921, Commissioner Briscoe carefully detailed for those present the reasons which

had prompted the assumption of control, the subsequent resignation of the Heralds’ supreme officers, and the convening of the Conclave. (6)

First: The supreme officers . . . have invested the funds of the Heralds of Liberty in the securities of . . . other corporations which they own, manage and control, and which securities are not standard, some of them doubtless having no value whatever.

Second: The supreme officers have indirectly conducted the business of the Heralds of Liberty . . . for personal gain by means of overwriting or commission contracts with the International Loan and Trust Company, . . . a corporation composed, as to its management, of the same officers for the most part which control the Heralds of Liberty; . . . [such action] was equivalent to the officers of the Heralds of Liberty paying themselves out of the funds of Heralds of Liberty.

Third: The supreme officers of the Heralds of Liberty not only paid to themselves as officers of the International Loan and Trust Company all of the commissions accruing under the provisions of a contract in the sum of ninety odd thousand dollars, reporting



The Samford Brothers. Clockwise from the top: Frank, Yetta, James, and Connor. Photograph courtesy of Torchmark Corporation.

such overpayment to the Departments of Insurance under the head of balances uncollected in the hands of organizers, notwithstanding the fact that they allowed, at the same time, outstanding and unpaid claims to policyholders to reach the enormous sum of \$201,200.

Fourth: The supreme officers being directed by the Department of In-

surance of the State of Alabama to sever all relations with the International Loan and Trust Company and to cease making these payments seized upon the order and by erroneous application and construction thereof ceased paying dividends to the stockholders of the International Loan and Trust Company on the stock thereof, but did not cease collecting the commissions from the

Heralds of Liberty, and did not stop at the amount actually accruing, but overpaid and did not sever or attempt to sever connection with the International Loan and Trust Company.

Fifth: The supreme officers, when making reinsurance or merger agreements which produced a profit, would by means of commission agreements between themselves or with those under their immediate control obtain for themselves the benefit of such profits in addition to the salaries which they were being paid as supreme officers.

Sixth: The supreme officers, being vested with complete power and authority to fix their own salaries, fixed such salaries at exorbitant figures, and in order that such participating might be personally benefited, attached high salaries to offices which carried with them no service or responsibility commensurate with the salaries which they were drawing.

Seventh: The supreme officers, when directed by the Department of Insurance of the State of Alabama to effect a material

saving by the reduction of salaries, not only refused, neglected or declined to make such reductions, but from that very date began an increase of salaries being practically doubled since attention was directed thereto.

Eighth: The supreme officers [improperly] paid to themselves . . . [insurance] claims and at a time when numerous . . . [other] claims, long previously due to other members of the order, were outstanding and unpaid.

Ninth: The supreme officers, after executing an agreement with the officers of the International Loan and Trust Company, . . . abrogating and annulling the commission contract with the said International Loan and Trust Company, continued to make payments of commissions under said contract.

Tenth: The supreme officers of the Heralds of Liberty . . . held a meeting of the Supreme Council at the office of the Heralds of Liberty on the 29th day of March, subsequent to the cancellation of the International Loan and Trust Company contract and for the purpose of avoiding the return to the Heralds

of Liberty of sums of money which they had overpaid on the International Loan and Trust Company contract, and passed a resolution . . . designed to convey the impression that the [Alabama] Commissioner of Insurance had agreed to allow such sum as a consideration for the cancellation of such contract, when in truth and in fact no such agreement or proposal had been discussed or thought of directly or indirectly.

Eleventh: The supreme officers, . . . after executing an agreement with the [Alabama] Commissioner of Insurance on the 21st day of June, with the express understanding therein contained that such agreement would be ratified at a subsequent meeting of the Supreme Council which could be held only in the office in the City of Philadelphia, did afterwards, such meeting of the Supreme Council being

Frank Park Samford, Supreme Recorder, The Heralds of Liberty, early 1920s. Photograph courtesy of Torchmark Corporation.





Frank Park Samford and his World War II motor bike, a gas-saving conveyance he recommended for use by Liberty National Life Insurance Company agents during the period of rationing. Photograph courtest of Torchmark Corporation.

called, wilfully decline and refuse to ratify such agreement.

Twelfth: The supreme officers made a practice of using the funds of the order for their own personal benefit, it being the custom or practice with some of

them to write their checks for a given sum of money, have the same cashed out of the funds of the Heralds of Liberty, instructing the bookkeeper to hold the check until such time as they directed before presenting the check at the bank.

Thirteenth: The Supreme Recorder, . . . in a way of which the other members of the Supreme Council could scarcely have been ignorant, opened up a personal account with himself, and drew personally on the funds of the Heralds of Liberty at will until the amount of funds of the Heralds of Liberty thus converted to his own use reached the sum of something like \$26,000 . . . (7)

Commissioner Briscoe's report was a clear recitation of abuses of trust and thus a specification of the Heralds' plight. The need for prompt action was evident. The society required rehabilitation. The delegates responded accordingly. The Charter and Laws, and the Rules and Regulations of the society were amended. Robert Davison was elected Supreme Commander, and, with that action, Frank Samford's involvement in the management of the Heralds and in that of its eventual successor, The Liberty National Life Insurance Company, was assured. (8)

Both Davison and Samford had been born in Troy, Alabama, and had grown up together; in fact, they were first cousins, and, at one juncture, following his graduation from the University of Alabama, Davison had lived with the Samford family. Further, in the fall of 1919, Davison had, at the suggestion of Samford's father, succeeded Samford as Alabama's Deputy Insurance Commissioner. In the aftermath of the October Con-

clave, Davison extended his first cousin an invitation to join him in rehabilitating the Heralds, as the society's Supreme Recorder. The invitation was accepted, and with the acceptance came not only the opportunity for a lifetime of work in the insurance business but also a context in which to define and express a set of ideals which perhaps, more than any business successes, any civic and religious service, any philanthropic impulses, define the man who was Frank Samford. (9)

ESSENTIALS

In November 1921, when Frank Samford arrived in Philadelphia—the home office of the Heralds was located there—and assumed his duties as one of the supreme officers of the society, he brought with him a wife who was convinced that work in rehabilitating the Heralds was preferable to and certainly more profitable than life on a farm in Lee County, Alabama; but he also brought more: a personal background replete with those experiences so typical of Southerners of his generation. Born

in 1893, Samford was the heir to an era in which the South had defied the federal union, gone to war, been defeated, and, in the aftermath of that defeat, endured the repressions of Reconstruction. Not surprising, therefore, that when he arrived in Philadelphia, he came equipped with some sense of what it was like to rebuild—to rehabilitate—on nothing, or, as his son phrased it, “to build institutions of scope and solidity and things that . . . [wouldn't] fail.” He was unafraid of work—in fact, he courted it; for he was convinced that only



Frank Park Samford with his grandchildren. From left to right: Frank, III, Kathy Upchurch, Ginger Upchurch, Laura Samford, and John Samford. Photograph courtesy of Torchmark Corporation.

through concerted effort would there be such institutions and thus, not defeat, but victory, success, progress, growth. (10)

Unlike so many of his contemporaries—those who shared his religious background as a Southern Evangelical: first, a Methodist, and then, after marriage, a Baptist—Samford never defined the growth which to him meant success in terms of sudden, individual change: the conversion experience. For him, progress toward success, so often slow and sometimes painful, came through the determined effort of individuals who were willing to be effective parts of some corporate whole. Whether that whole was a family, a business, or a larger social unit, if it functioned properly, it would not only be a setting in which individual potential could be realized and support and reward provided, but also something larger than the sum of its parts, an entity transcending the individualized efforts of those who composed it. (11)

In 1938, in an address to the Torch Club, a select group of Liberty National agents distinguished for their sales performance, Samford first gave public voice to this set of convictions about growth, both personal and corporate.

What are our ambitions for Liberty National Life Insurance Company? What are we striving for? What is the ultimate aim? In trying to find the answers to these questions, I have come very definitely to the conclusion that so far as I am concerned, my ambition is not to make this

the largest company in the world; it is not to make it grow faster than any other company in the world, but rather to have the Company grow in a sound, substantial manner as the result of the growth of those of us who compose the Company.

I am extremely ambitious for you to grow. I am ambitious for you to be the best life insurance man in your community, selling a larger volume of good insurance than any other man in your community, making more money than any other life insurance man, or any other man in the community, regardless, of his line of business. I am ambitious for you to grow in the esteem of your fellow man and in your own esteem. I am ambitious for you to be more important to the welfare of your community, a more valuable citizen, a better provider for your family. I am ambitious for you to grow to the uttermost limits of your abilities and I here and now pledge this Company to help you and every other agent connected with this Company, . . . provided you have the proper outlook on life, and the will to succeed. Yes, I want the Company to grow, but I want it to grow not upon the failures, not upon the wrecks of

men who have passed through the organization, but because of the growth of the individuals who compose the organization. In announcing this policy of the Company, and I do announce it as a Company policy, it means that the first job before all of us is to make our present organization, down to the last man in the Field, successful. (12)

If, as Samford suggested, progress—and thus success—were to be a matter of growth, with the growth of individuals a principal determinant of the health of whatever corporate unit they were a part, then the family, the business, or other social structure must not only encourage personal growth but also act to avoid or remove individuals who refused to grow in a manner conducive to the progress of the whole.

We must find out whether or not the man or woman who is not making good has character, whether or not he or she has a proper concept of the life insurance business, whether or not he or she is working by the week, or is working to make a career, whether or not there is in him or her the material upon which we can build the kind of life insurance representative upon which the Company is willing to rest its reputation and growth in the future. If we are convinced that there are . . .

those in our organization who are not making good representatives, who do not have this background, who cannot be made to see the picture of service the life insurance agent renders the public, who are not willing to consider life insurance selling as a calling worthy of their best, then those agents should be eliminated as rapidly as possible and we should try to bring into the organization those who have the qualities for which we are searching. All of us know that we cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.... (13)

Although Samford never publicly defined himself as anything other than a civic-minded, conservative businessman and never sought to label his ideals as other than those of a religious man, his concept of progress as growth and of the conditions requisite to such growth bore a marked affinity to the ideas of an earlier generation of Progressive thinkers, particularly those who had been influenced by the work of the English biologist, Charles Darwin. For both, progress was not the result of sudden change. Whether for individuals or for corporate structures, change was evolutionary, with its direction finally determined by the natural attributes of those who participated in the change. Such concepts as these do indeed link Samford to that school of English and American thinkers known as the Social Darwinists; but Samford's "Darwinism"—his Progressivism—

appears not to have sprung from a reading of Darwin, or Herbert Spencer, or other Social Darwinists. Rather, its source seems to have been that experience which for Samford began in 1921 and continued until his death in 1973: his practical experience as a businessman. (14)

EXTERNALS

From 1921 until 1973, the year in which he died, Samford's experience was predominantly that of a businessman. From the beginning of his association with the Heralds of Liberty, there was evidence that practical business experience would be a major factor in shaping not only his actions but his ideals as well. The job in Philadelphia, as the Heralds' Supreme Recorder, was a job he needed, and to keep that job, to be able to buy his wife the new pair of stockings she so clearly wanted—a thing he could not do as a farmer—he had to keep the Heralds alive. In fact, as his son has noted, it was the experience of business that not only taught him how to survive and succeed but also prompted his involvement in civic and community affairs, to assure further the success of the business in which he was involved. (15)

The years of experience in business were demanding ones. In association with Robert Davison, there first came the task of reclaiming and rehabilitating the virtually insolvent Heralds of Liberty. By July 1, 1929, that organization had been reorganized once and finally converted from a fraternal benefit society into a stock life insurance company; its home office transferred from Philadelphia to Birmingham; its name changed to the Liberty National Life Insurance Company; its policy

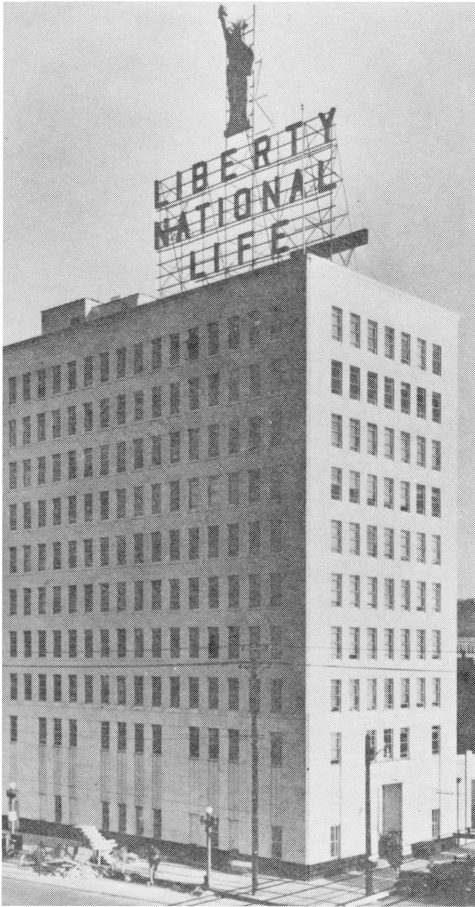
offerings enlarged to include ordinary life, 20-payment life, and 20-year endowment; a legal reserve division established; an industrial department added; a permanent home office building acquired; a "combination" contract developed, permitting an agent to sell both ordinary and industrial policies; an agents' \$100,000 Club created, and, last but not least, the worst years of the Great Depression endured. (16)

In February of 1934, after several years of failing health, Robert Davison formally relinquished his position as President and Chief Executive Officer of Liberty National. Within three months, he was dead. His duties, already the *de facto* responsibility of his Samford cousin, were officially transferred, and Frank Samford became the chief executive of the company he had worked to reclaim and reshape. (17)

These years, from late 1921 through early 1934, were crucial to the final survival and subsequent growth of what had, in 1921, been a virtually defunct fraternal benefit society. But they were also years crucial to Samford's development. His initial commitment, to his job and to the task of reclaiming the Heralds so that the job he held would remain secure, had rapidly been altered. A new commitment had emerged: to build an institution of scope and solidity, something that would not fail, something that would not only succeed financially but also offer benefit to those associated with it and, through them, to the larger society. It was this larger commitment that became Samford's "prime interest," his "prime motivation." (18)

In the years after 1934, that interest, that motivation contributed

substantially to the building of the largest insurance company in Alabama. From them, however, came more: an opportunity to learn about people, to work with them, to make judgments about them, and, perhaps of greatest significance, to tie "bonds with them."(19)



Headquarters of Liberty National Life Insurance Company, 1931, Twentieth Street, South, and Third Avenue, Birmingham, Alabama. Photograph courtesy of Torchmark Corporation.

ESSENTIALS

The conviction about the difficulty of making "a silk purse out of a sow's ear" suggests one side of Samford's view of people. To some was given the raw material from which personal success derived; to others it was not. In this conviction he was at one with the Social Darwinists, as he also was regarding the evolutionary character of growth. And with them, he shared another conviction, that growth should not be impeded by outside interference. This latter conviction Samford reflected time and again in remarks about governmental intervention in the economy and in the field of education.

On November 18, 1954, in an address made at West Point, Georgia, he offered these thoughts about economic health and governmental action.

I am thoroughly convinced that the most important thing in the development of a country, in the welfare and well-being of the people of a country is government. [Our forefathers] . . . set up here in America a government based on the theory that the government powers should be strictly limited, that each state should be a sovereign state, where government would be close to the people and that we should be linked loosely into a national government but with that national government having very little control over the individual citizens.

The theory was that the people should be sovereign, that they should support the government, and the government should not be called upon to support the people. This theory was, I think, based upon what Dr. Butler, former President of Columbia University, described as a true democracy. Dr. Butler pointed out that a true democracy was a democracy that guaranteed equality of opportunity while a false democracy was one that attempted to guarantee economic equality. He pointed out that the false democracy proposes "to each according to his need" while true democracy stands for the principle "to each according to his ability." The establishment of our government based upon the principles of true democracy was a revolutionary idea but in spite of our ups and downs, in spite of panics and depressions, the people of this country clung to it until recently. Probably the first change came early in this century with the passage of the Income Tax Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. This amendment was finally ratified by the necessary number of states in 1913 and by giving Congress power to tax the fruits of the labor of the individuals, the people

of America surrendered their greatest protection against an all-powerful government. While taxes must be passed by the elected representatives of the people in Congress, there is now nothing to protect the minority from persecution by the majority. Whether or not we gave up a protection that was vital to a continuation of our democracy, I do not know, but certainly, all of us appreciate the dangers of taxing to the point where incentive is killed, either through income taxes or inheritance taxes, or both.

When the world revolution [the Great Depression] broke out some twenty-five years ago, we did not escape in this country. Fortunately, we were better off than most countries. We had a great middle class of educated, self-respecting, industrious and intelligent men and women and it was not necessary to go as far as in Brazil and Argentina and some other countries. We did, however, do a great deal of deficit financing which resulted in a measure of inflation and we embarked upon a course of having the government support the people rather than the people support the government. Many, many laws were passed and many

agencies were established which I will not attempt to enumerate here, but you will recall that in each instance it was said that this was emergency legislation, that we faced first one emergency and then another that required the government to protect the tenant from the landlord, to protect the worker from the stockholder or management, to provide jobs for those who could not

find jobs in industry.

As I have already said, these were considered as emergency measures, but they constituted, nevertheless, a revolution, and eight years ago, the revolution was completed when Congress passed and the President signed the Employment Act of 1946. This act charges government with the responsibility of promoting larger employment, production and



Architect's rendering of Liberty National Life Insurance Company's Home Office Building, showing second major addition, 1965. Photograph courtesy of Torchmark Corporation.

purchasing power. It is no longer looked upon as an emergency measure, but as a definite and permanent responsibility of government to bring about full employment. This idea is diametrically opposed to the idea upon which this government was founded, and it means that no matter what party is in power, the Government has no choice but to do everything in its power to carry out the provisions of this Act. Certainly, whenever there is less than full employment the party in power must take positive and aggressive action to provide employment either indirectly through private industry, and this can be done to some extent by providing cheap money and credits, or directly by new work programs that will provide jobs for the unemployed.

Whether we like it or not, whether we agree with it or not, is beside the point. We must face the future with the knowledge that the philosophy of our government has now been changed, and I do not believe anyone will seriously argue that any political party would ever have the temerity to change back to the old philosophy that attempted to guarantee

equality of opportunity but made no effort to have government guarantee economic equality or economic security.(20)

Samford's convictions about the dangers of federal government intervention in the economy were paralleled by those regarding the role of the national government in education. His "Founder's Day Address" at Howard College, delivered March 26, 1965, contains a clear statement of these latter convictions.

I would not have anyone feel that I am opposed to tax-supported institutions of higher learning. I am a graduate of Auburn and also a member of its Board of Trustees, and I know the fine work that is being done by that great institution. No one, I am sure, would suggest that we could properly educate our people without the support of tax dollars. Our people are among the best educated people of the world and this has been made possible only because we were willing to tax ourselves and establish not only grammar schools and high schools but great institutions of higher learning where boys and girls may be taught, where scientists, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and other technical and professional men and women may be educated, but there is a

danger if the state attempts to exercise strict control over the manner and methods of teaching as well as over the curriculum.

In America, as you know, our schools and colleges were developed by the individual states. I am one of those who has always been opposed to federal aid to education, feeling that it was much safer for schools and colleges to be controlled by individual states rather than by an over-all dictator of education in Washington. I have been very much disturbed by pending legislation authorizing federal aid to education. If the federal government either directly or indirectly assumes the right to dictate how our state institutions shall be operated, I would fear for the future.

That this fear is justified is indicated by a statement in the report of a Commission on Higher Education appointed by President Harry S. Truman. In the section on finance and higher education this report states, and I quote: "Public responsibility for support of education implies special responsibility for the policies which are supported. It follows therefore that the acceptance of public funds

by any institution public or private should carry with it the acceptance of the right of the people as a whole to exercise review and control of the educational policies and procedures of that institution." This is the danger which I fear and not only do I oppose Baptists and other denominational colleges accepting public funds, I also oppose our state institutions accepting federal funds as it would transfer control of those institutions from the state to the national government.

Tax-supported institutions are necessary and must be continued, but the non-tax supported institutions of higher learning, such as our Baptist institutions, are very necessary and important.

This conviction was expressed by Dr. Milton Eisenhower, in his presidential address to the annual meeting of the Land Grant College Association in Washington in November of 1953, when he stated: "It is the private institutions that set traditions, the standard of academic freedom in America and because our private institutions do set and maintain these standards we of the public institutions also enjoy the benefit of such free-

dom. If private institutions were ever to disappear the politicians would take over the universities, and there would then be neither educational freedom nor any other kind."

These threats make the role of the private denominational college even more important. The challenge is great if we are to develop citizens for the future who think for themselves, who believe in God and who will have the freedom necessary for the development of Christian leadership.(21)

If the aphorism about the "silk purse" and the "sow's ear," in combination with convictions about the dangers implicit in federal government manipulation of the economy and in its intervention in the field of education, suggest one side of Samford's view of people and link his thought to that of the Social Darwinists, there was a poem he loved which suggests another side of that view and which separates him from the Social Darwinists. In his 1959 Torch Club report, as in a number of his other writings, he quoted it approvingly.

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)

Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,

And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,

An Angel writing in a book of gold:

Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the Presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?"
The Vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord
Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?"
said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the Angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerily still, and said, "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow-men."

The Angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed;

And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!(22)

Memorized by Samford as a fourth grade boy, this bit of Leigh Hunt verse spoke to him personally and permitted him, through a repeated use of it, to give voice to the one ideal which informed all the others he sought to realize.(23) If progress toward success meant change by growth, that growth, whether personal or corporate, had to have a direction other than just survival; there had to be more than just a "survival of the fittest." Certainly, there was in Samford's mind a conviction that the "fit" were those who would survive, and he often quoted, with approval, a

personal "creed" written by Dean Alfange, a New York attorney.

I do not choose to be a common man. It is my right to be uncommon—if I can. I seek opportunity—not security. I do not wish to be a kept citizen, humbled and dulled by having the state look after me. I want to take the calculated risk; to dream and to build, to fail and to succeed. I refuse to barter incentive for a dole. I prefer the challenges of life to the guaranteed existence; the thrill of fulfillment to the stale calm of utopia. I will not trade freedom for beneficence nor my dignity for a handout. I will never cower before any master nor bend to any threat. It is my heritage to stand erect, proud and unafraid; to think and act for myself, enjoy the benefit of my creations and to face the world boldly and say, this I have done.(24)

But, for Samford, even the "fittest," even those who could "stand erect . . . and say [to the world], this I have done," required a direction to their efforts at survival and success which would move them away from unbridled self-interest. And that direction was what he found so succinctly described in Hunt's poem: "Write me as one that loves his fellow-men."(25)

In his family and his business, but in the larger society as well, Samford was convinced of the need—the persistent need—for a moderating influence, a code of behavior that would keep humankind from being "red in tooth and claw," one that

would prompt in persons intelligent, productive, self-giving behavior. His personal background, in family and church, provided that code, and its heart was the Christian ethic so central to Hunt's poem, "Love thy neighbor." It was this ethic which so substantially shaped his 1938 address to the Torch Club, with its expressions of concern for the creation in Liberty National of an environment in which individuals would feel wanted, supported, understood and thus be productive for themselves and others, and it was this ethic which served as the touchstone from whence came Liberty National's philosophy. "Our greatest asset," Samford wrote, "is not reflected in our financial statements . . . Our greatest asset is the men and women who make up the company. . . . If we lost all our physical assets

and kept our organization, we would build another company; nothing could stop us. This company has progressed through the growth of the individual."(26)

CONCLUSION

To those who knew him well, Frank Samford "was not a subtle person." Rather, the man they knew was "candid, open, forthright," with "a strong sense of right and wrong," and no fear about making judgments in regard to either. "Strong and positive," yes; but in him they found no guile at all. And so it was, that Samford approached the matter of living: candidly, openly, forthrightly, but armed with a set of ideals by which he sought to shape not only himself but the people and the institutions he touched, as well.(27)

In a society progressively characterized by the very reverse of the ideals he cherished, a society in which change was often sudden and retrogressive, in which the effort to survive and succeed was increasingly regulated by government action, in which competition too frequently was transformed into violent opposition and human need was given low priority—in this kind of society, Samford's was a voice "crying in the wilderness." His vision—that composite of his ideals which was so singular for its durability—was not to be realized in this larger national context. But within the sphere he managed, within Liberty National, the vision became a reality and remains so.(28)



Frank Park Samford, Chairman, Board of Directors, Liberty National Life Insurance Company. Photograph courtesy of Torchmark Corporation.

1. Interview, Marvin Y. Whiting with Frank Samford, Jr., September 18, 1984.
2. Interview, Marvin Y. Whiting with John Samford, September 14, 1984.
Interview, Frank Samford, Jr.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Frank Park Samford, Papers, Birmingham Public Library, Department of Archives and Manuscripts; see particularly the collection of Samford speeches, dating from the 1930s through the mid-1960s.

See also [Frank Park Samford], *The First Seventy-one Years of Liberty National Life Insurance Company* (n.p., n.d.), pp. 118-26.
5. [Samford], *First Seventy-one Years*, pp. 17-18.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-19.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-21.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-28. Frank Park Samford was born in Troy, Alabama, November 1, 1893. He was the second son of William H. and Kate Park Samford. He attended the State Normal College at Troy until his father moved to Montgomery in 1909. Following a year at Edgar's School for Boys and a year of illness, he entered Auburn Polytechnic Institute from which he graduated in 1914. His first job was as secretary to the Superintendent of Banks. His father, who was at the time General Counsel for the Manhattan Life Insurance Company in New York, secured him a position with that company, and he moved to New York City, remaining there for about a year. When the General Assembly of Alabama created a separate Insurance Department in the fall of 1915, his father got an appointment for him as Deputy Commissioner of Insurance. In that capacity he served until the fall of 1919 when he resigned, at his father's request, in order to permit the appointment of Robert Davison. Samford then went to Opelika, joining his younger brother, Yetta, in an effort to start a general insurance agency in that city. Yetta was representing the New York Life Insurance Company, and Frank secured a contract with the Equitable Life Assurance Society. In addition, because of the contacts he had had in the Insurance Department, he received an offer from the Lumbermen's Mutual Casualty Company to be state manager in Alabama. This offer was accepted, and he remained with Lumbermen's Mutual for approximately a year and a half. Soon after he joined the Lumbermen's Mutual he was married to Hattie Mae Noland of Carrollton, Alabama. His job with Lumbermen's Mutual was a traveling one and, wanting to get off the road, he resigned and was relieved in February, 1921. He then joined his youngest brother, James, on a farm in Lee County and was there when he was advised of his election as Supreme Recorder of the Heralds of Liberty.
10. Interview, Frank Samford, Jr. See also Frank Samford, Jr., "Commencement Address to Samford University," May 26, 1984, in Samford, Papers, Birmingham Public Library.
11. Interview, Frank Samford, Jr.
12. Frank P. Samford, "The President's Annual Report to the Torch Club," *The Torch*, September, 1938.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Interview, Frank Samford, Jr.; see also Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Movement, 1900-1915* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), passim.; and Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), passim.
15. Interview, Frank Samford, Jr.
16. Samford, *First Seventy-one Years*, pp. 25-100.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3.
18. Interview, Frank Samford, Jr.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Frank P. Samford, "Address at West Point, Georgia," November 18, 1954, in Samford, Papers, Birmingham Public Library.
21. Frank P. Samford, "Founder's Day Address, Howard College," March 26, 1965, in Samford, Papers, Birmingham Public Library.
22. Leigh Hunt, "Abou Ben Adhem," in Frank P. Samford, "The President's Annual Report to the Torch Club," 1959, in Samford, Papers, Birmingham Public Library.
23. Frank P. Samford, "This I Believe: An Address to the Rotary District Conference," January 11, 1952, in Samford, Papers, Birmingham Public Library.
24. Dean Aflange, "My Creed," in Samford, "This I Believe."
25. Samford, "This I Believe."
26. Frank P. Samford, "Liberty National's Philosophy," in Samford, Papers, Birmingham Public Library.
27. Interview, Frank Samford, Jr.; see also Interview, John Samford.
28. Interview, John Samford; "I think there is still in Liberty National a very strong feeling—I know it's my feeling and I hope it is others' feelings—that although our goals and our methods of doing business may change from year to year, we can and will stick to . . . those basic principles that he [Frank Samford] put in place, because they are timeless."

Influence on the Growth and Development of Auburn and Samford University by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Park Samford, Sr.

by Leslie S. Wright

It would be impossible to find a trustee and wife who performed a greater service or had a more profound and beneficial influence on higher education at Auburn University and Samford University than Mr. and Mrs. Frank Park Samford, Sr.

A native of Troy, Alabama, and a 1914 graduate of Auburn University with a B.S. degree, Frank Samford, Sr., served his Alma Mater in many important capacities. He was President of the Auburn Alumni Association from 1943 to 1945, following in the footsteps of his father, who had headed the Association in the 1920's.

In 1946 Mr. Samford was named to the Auburn Board of Trustees by Governor Chauncey Sparks and reappointed in 1951 by Governor Gordon Persons.(1)

He served continuously on the Auburn Board by gubernatorial appointment until his resignation for health reasons in August of 1973. During these twenty-seven years as an Auburn Trustee, Mr. Samford held the position of Vice Chairman of the Board and Chairman of the Board's Executive Committee for much of the time. The Governor of Alabama was Chairman of the Board by virtue of his office.

In 1958 Mr. Samford played a key role as Vice Chairman of the Auburn University Engineering Emergency Fund. In 1960 he accepted new responsibilities as a Director of the Auburn University Foundation and Chairman

of the Development Council. The Samford incisiveness and persuasiveness were important assets in the progress of the Development Fund.(2)

Neil Davis, an Auburn Alumnus and a long-time publisher of the *Auburn Bulletin*, a weekly newspaper, has stated:

It was Mr. Samford's character and his stature in the business world that enabled him to be the leader of the Auburn Board of Trustees. Although by law the Governor was the official chairman of the Board of Trustees, his presence at Board meetings was infrequent due to pressing matters of State Government and, more importantly, because he had every confidence in Frank Samford, Sr.(3)

Davis stated further that Samford made many other important contributions to Auburn over the years as a Trustee, Vice Chairman of the Board, and Chairman of the Trustee Executive Committee.

When Auburn was censored by the American Association of University Professors, during the administration of President Draughon, the Board appointed a two-man committee consisting of the head of the English Department and Mr. Samford. They wrote the policy statement that resulted in the removal of the AAUP censorship.

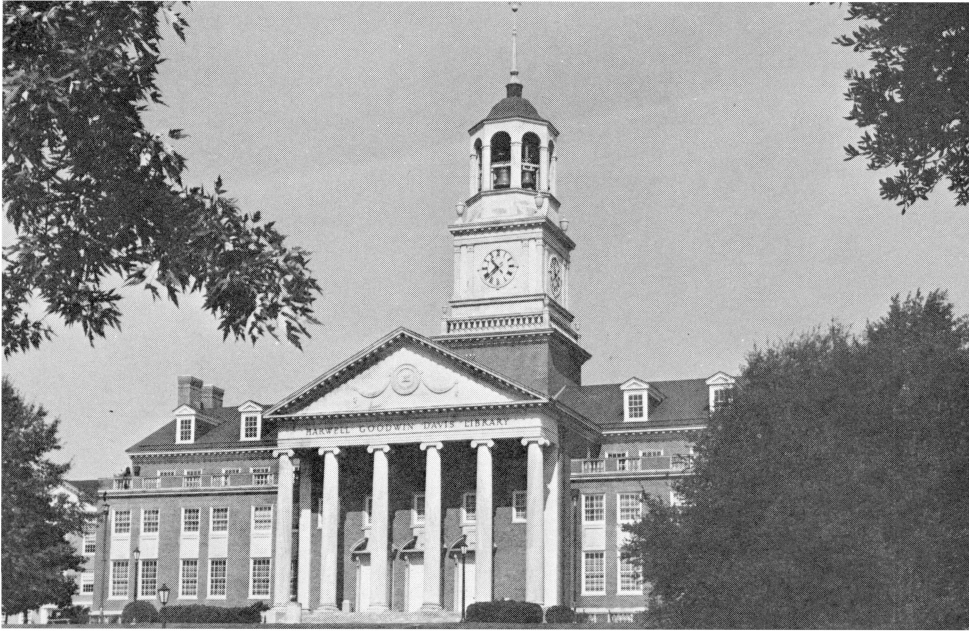
When Auburn's President Ralph Draughon announced his retirement from that position, the Governor appointed Mr. Samford as Chairman of a five-man screening committee to seek President Draughon's successor. The Governor knew that Mr. Samford would not yield to pressure brought by various groups but would insist on a person of outstanding character and with demonstrated educational leadership. The Committee recommended and the Board approved the selection of Dr. Harry Philpott to succeed Dr. Draughon.(4)

Davis summed up his assessment of Samford's leadership of the Auburn Board of Trustees in these words:

Frank Samford was a man of broad vision and was not narrow-minded on any subject. This unusual ability enabled him to work with all elements in the Auburn University constituency, including trustees, administrators, students, alumni, public officials and other friends of the School.(5)

In 1963, Auburn recognized Samford's many contributions to his Alma Mater. The University conferred upon him the honorary Doctor of Laws degree.(6)

In the exercise of his responsibilities as a trustee at Auburn, Samford was ably assisted and wisely counselled by Mrs. Samford. She was at his side in Auburn for trustee dinners, alumni functions and other similar gather-



Harwell G. Davis Library, Samford University, center-piece structure of the campus on Lakeshore Drive. Frank Park Samford, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Howard College, spearheaded drive to raise funds for the creation of the new campus, which, by 1965, would bare the Samford name. Photograph courtesy of Samford University.

ings. When activities such as the annual Auburn-Alabama football games were held in Birmingham, Mrs. Samford always entertained trustees and their wives as well as other University officials and their wives in her home. She was a lovely and charming hostess and deeply interested in all of her husband's activities as an Auburn trustee.(7)

An excellent insight into Samford's Auburn Trusteeship, coupled with his lifelong interest in agriculture and the farmers of Alabama, can be gathered from portions of a letter written after Samford's death in 1973 by R.G. Arnold, a staff member of the Auburn Extension Service:

Frank has always, since graduation, made regular visits to his alma mater, both officially and unofficially, but never with hat in hand seeking special favors or personal handouts. Always, he was on the giving and bestowing end of the association. He was a philanthropist of the first water, both religiously and educationally.

Frank had an inborn yen for

helping people and his constant prayer was not for riches, but for wisdom, that he might more perfectly glorify his Creator. And since like King Solomon, he prayed for wisdom rather than riches, God blessed him with both. . .

Frank's insurance company, along with the State Chamber of Commerce, helped sponsor our Auburn University Extension Community Development Program (now Rural Resource Development). Liberty National contributed many thousands of dollars to this program, the effectiveness of which is to be seen in practically every rural community in Alabama. . . (8)

Upon his resignation from the Auburn Board of Trustees in August, 1973, Samford was succeeded as Trustee by his son, Frank Park Samford, Jr. In announcing the Samford resignation, Governor George C. Wallace stated that Samford had submitted his resignation "due to health reasons," but he continued, "I feel certain that Frank, Jr. will

continue to provide the outstanding leadership that his family has contributed in the past to Auburn University." Governor Wallace further stated that "Mr. Samford, Sr. has rendered service of the highest calibre to Auburn University during the years that he has served as a member of the Board of Trustees. He was the senior member of that Board and his service to Auburn and other educational institutions in Alabama will be long remembered by the people of this state. I regretted to receive his resignation and I extend to him and his family my thoughts and prayers for his recovery."(9)

Dr. Harry Philpott, President of Auburn University at the time of Mr. Samford's resignation, said:

Mr. Samford, Sr. has given a great amount of time and resources to Auburn through the years for which we will be forever grateful.

For twenty-seven years he contributed as much as any person to the progress and development of this Institution.

As Chairman of the Selection Committee in 1965, he brought me to Auburn as President and has been a valuable counsellor and advisor since that time.(10)

On August 30, 1973, the day following Samford's resignation from the Auburn Board, the Alabama Legislature, both Houses concurring, approved House Joint Resolution 187 recognizing the outstanding contributions made by Samford to Auburn University, Samford University and the State of Alabama, and declared that November 1, 1973, be designated Frank Park Samford day and that November 1 of each year in the future be similarly designated "to honor the work of this worthy son, to recognize his contributions and his achievements, and to serve as an inspiration for those who now serve and who yet may serve this State in similar ways in high places and noble achievement." (11) Alabama Governor George Wallace signed the Legislature's resolution on August 30, and it was read to Samford the following day.

Although Samford's total length of service as a Trustee at Samford University spanned a greater number of years than his service as

a Trustee at Auburn University, he had the unique distinction of serving simultaneously for a period of twenty-seven years as the leader of the Board of Trustees at Auburn, a state university, and as Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Samford, a privately-owned and operated Baptist university.

Frank Samford's service on the Howard College Board of Trustees was preceded by that of his wife. Mrs. Samford was first elected to a three-year term on the Howard College Board of Trustees in November 1934.(12) In the 1936 report of Howard College to the State Baptist Convention, the Trustees expressed "special appreciation for the work being done under the direction of Mrs. Samford in securing donations through the Women's Missionary Union organizations in the Baptist churches throughout Alabama to buy books currently needed for the Howard College Library through the David Gordon Lyon Memorial book shower for a special section of the College Library."(13)

Mrs. Samford, the former Hattie Mae Noland, of Carrollton, Alabama, shared her husband's deep interest in education. A former school teacher, she was educated at the University of Alabama and Peabody College. She was one of the organizers of Brooke Hill School (now the Altamont School).(14)

Mr. Samford was first elected to the Howard College Board of Trustees in November, 1937. Mrs. Samford was re-elected to a second three-year term on the Howard Board at the same meeting of the Alabama State Convention.(15) She served for two years on the Board with Mr. Samford. She resigned from the Board in 1939 when her husband was elected its chairman, (16) but her deep interest in the school continued through his thirty-four year tenure in that position. After her husband's death in 1973, Mrs. Samford was re-elected to the Board of Trustees (17) and served until her death on October 26, 1976.(18)

As a Trustee of Howard College, Mr. Samford served on the School's Endowment Commission from 1937 through 1939. On July 1, 1939, Major Harwell G. Davis accepted the invitation of the Board of Trustees to serve as President of Howard College. (19) He stated that he accepted the Presidency on the condition that Mr. Samford

serve as Chairman of the Board as long as he, Major Davis, served as President.(20) Mr. Samford did so.

Having served on the College Endowment Commission for two years, Samford was thoroughly familiar with the financial problems which confronted the College as a result of operating indebtedness incurred during the years of the Great Depression. Under Samford's leadership, acting in concert with Davis and other Board Members, plans were made to liquidate the indebtedness as rapidly as possible. Speaking in behalf of the Board of Trustees, Samford presented Howard's financial problems to successive meetings of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. His business-like approach and recommendations for combining and liquidating the College's indebtedness were given strong approval by the Convention in annual and special sessions from 1939 through 1944.

Looking to the future, as he was accustomed to do, Samford realized the need for the college to develop stronger ties with the Baptist people of Alabama. To this end, in August, 1939, he and Davis, along with Trustees Crawford T. Johnson, Sr., a leading Birmingham businessman, and Dr. John Buchanan, Pastor of Birmingham's Southside Baptist Church, secured the services of Dr. A. Hamilton Reid, Pastor of South Avondale Baptist Church of Birmingham, to travel over Alabama enlisting the interest of Alabama Baptists in Howard College. Contributions increased, enrollment grew, and the Convention began to increase its budget support for the College.(21) At the 1940 meeting of the State Baptist Convention, Samford reported that Dr. Reid had been named Vice President of Promotion for the College.(22) Dr. S.J. Ezell was employed in 1942 to assist Dr. Reid in Howard's Centennial Campaign.(23) These efforts proved so successful that in reporting to the Annual Meeting of the Convention in 1945, President Davis stated, "The debt-paying campaign led by Dr. Reid and Dr. Ezell has liquidated all of the old indebtedness."(24)

As early as 1942, Davis, Samford, and the other members of the Board began dreaming, thinking, and planning toward moving the College to a new location with ample room for growth and development.

From 1942 to 1948 the College acquired more than four hundred acres of land in Shades Valley.(25)

The State Convention in 1945 approved the moving of the College to a new site and the sale of the East Lake Campus and buildings.(26) The period from 1945 through 1951 was a time of intense fund-raising activities on the part of the college Trustees and Administration. In 1947, the firm of Olmstead Brothers of Brookline, Massachusetts, was employed to design and engineer the new campus in Shades Valley, including the required number of buildings and their locations. The estimated initial cost of preparing the campus and erecting the minimum number of academic buildings necessary for the College to move to the new campus was five million dollars.(27)

At the 1950 Annual Session of the Alabama Baptist State convention, Samford brought a most encouraging report on the growth of the faculty and the academic progress of the College. Also, he reported on the progress of efforts toward raising sufficient funds to build a new college on the new campus. He stated that if current fund-raising efforts should be completely successful, the College would have slightly more than two million dollars in hand. Samford further stated that the estimated cost of building and equipping the necessary teaching buildings would be approximately five million dollars and that an additional two and one-half million dollars would be needed before construction could begin. He challenged the Convention to meet the need and stated, "Whether or not we build a new campus rests with the Baptists of Alabama. The Trustees cannot do it. The administration cannot do it. It can be done only if the 400,000 Baptists in Alabama say it shall be done."(28)

At the 1951 State Convention, the Convention's Executive Secretary, A. Hamilton Reid, who had previously served as Vice President for Promotion at Howard College, accepted the challenge given by Samford and proposed a State Convention Advance Program for the five years between 1952 and 1956. The proposal was adopted by the Convention and provided five hundred thousand dollars annually in capital funds for Howard College, thus opening the way

for the College to begin building on the new campus. (29) Following this action by the Convention and with a steady flow of building funds assured by the State Convention, the Trustees appointed a Building Committee composed of Samford as Chairman, Trustees Paul Redmond and John H. Buchanan, and President Davis. The Committee was instructed to proceed.(30)

In the fall of 1957, with eight buildings complete, the College opened the academic year on the new campus.(31) and Davis announced his retirement as President, effective August 31, 1958.

From 1957 through 1983 construction, according to the master plan for the new campus, continued until the plan had been completed, with the exception of two residence halls which were to be constructed when needed. During these years, until Mr. Samford's death on September 1, 1973, one fund-raising campaign followed another. All were successful, with each led by Samford. When he died, the campus consisted of thirty-one buildings; the academic program included eight schools and colleges, and enrollment was in excess of three thousand students.

Over the span of thirty-four years, during which Mr. Samford served as Board Chairman, the University experienced an era of tremendous growth and progress in all areas. Under his dynamic leadership the institution achieved University status. He was the school's greatest individual benefactor. In recognition of Samford's significant contributions to Christian higher education, and on recommendation of the Board of Trustees, the Convention voted in 1965 to name the school Samford University.(32)

A careful reading of the State Convention *Annals* from 1939 until Samford's death in 1973 reveals that when a matter of urgent need faced the College, the Trustees and the Administration turned to him to make the presentation to the Convention. Because of his Christian convictions, his character, influence, leadership ability, and tremendous success in building one of the foremost insurance companies in the nation, Samford was highly respected by Alabama Baptists. They trusted him and had every confidence in him. In all of his many and varied responsibilities and endeavors, Samford always

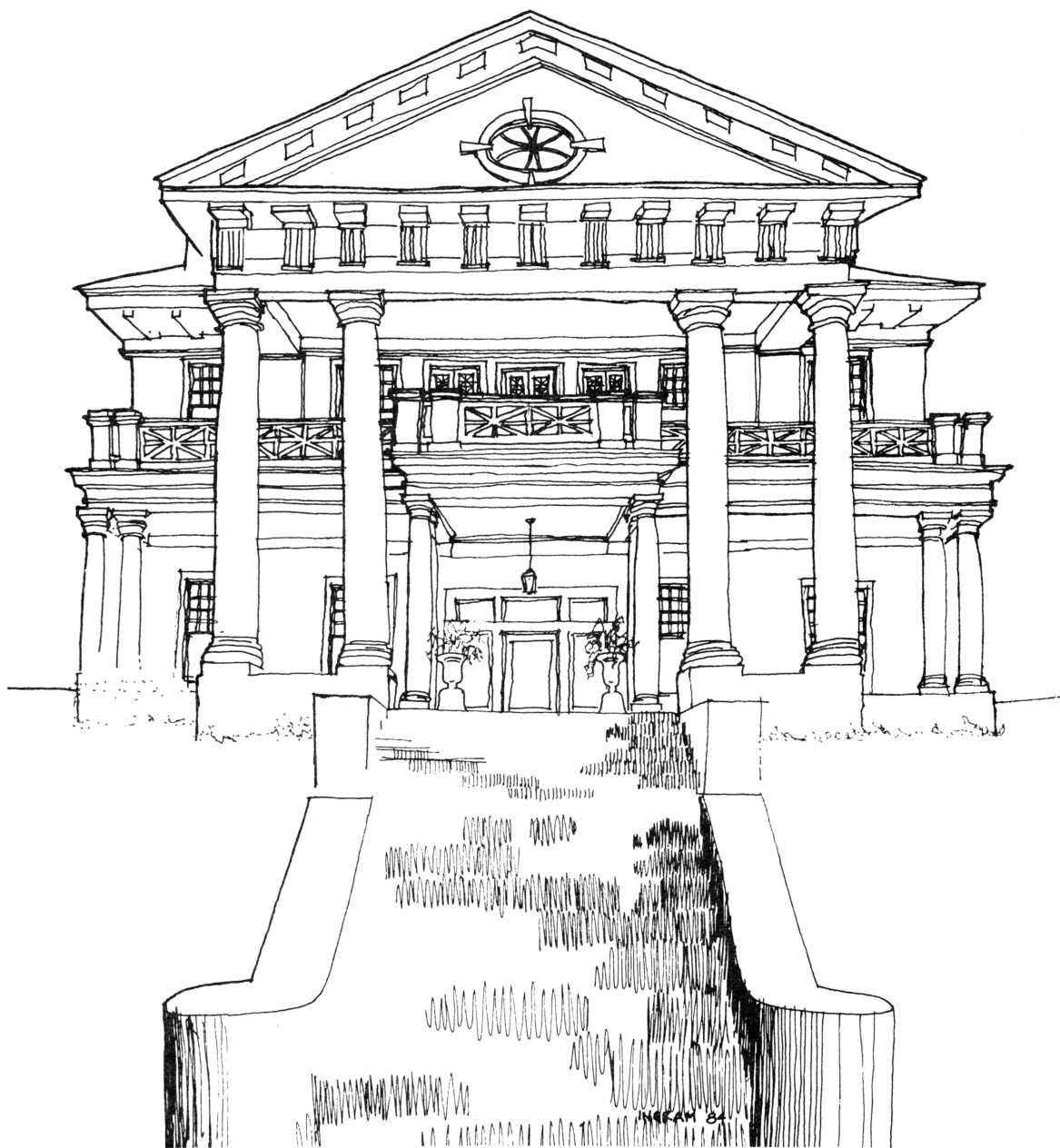
looked to his wife for assistance, counsel and support. She was his helpmate and contributed tremendously to his success in his business as well as in his trusteeships at Auburn and Samford Universities and the many other strategic positions of service to which he gave himself to freely. She infused him with her abundant energy and was greatly beloved by all who were privileged to be associated with her.

Very active in the Samford University Auxiliary, Mrs. Samford also served as chairman of the University Decorating Committee, which is concerned with the character of the campus buildings, and she was named an honorary member of the Samford Women's Service Guild, a student organization. For her long and dedicated service to Samford, she was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree in 1964.(33)

A beautiful testimony to the very close relationship enjoyed by this remarkable couple is revealed in the following inscription written by Samford in his wife's copy of his history of Liberty National Life Insurance Company entitled *The First 71 Years of Liberty National Life Insurance Company*:

To my companion for almost fifty-three years, my beloved wife, Hattie Mae. She was by my side for the entire period I have been with the company—she encouraged me when I became discouraged, she had confidence in me and the future when I was on the verge of losing confidence in myself and she helped immeasurably in the building of the company. Due to her sweetness and affability towards everyone connected with the company she had a great influence upon the entire organization. Without her help, her encouragement, her friendliness and her love, I could not have succeeded.(34)

1. *Auburn Alumnews* (January, 1961), p. 3.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Telephone Interview, Leslie S. Wright with Mr. Neil Davis, September 17, 1984.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Birmingham News* (August 29, 1973), p. 18.
7. Telephone Interview, Leslie S. Wright with Mrs. Ralph Draughon, October 7, 1984.
8. R.G. Arnold, "Letter to the Editor," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, September 11, 1973.
9. *Birmingham News* (August 29, 1973), p. 18.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *The Torch*, 4:5 (September, 1973), p. 2.
12. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1934, (Montgomery: Alabama Baptist State Convention, 1934), p. 6.
13. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1936, p. 82.
14. *The Torch/Liberty National Life* (October, 1976), p. 4.
15. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1937, p. 8.
16. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1939, p. 80.
17. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1973, p. 9.
18. *The Torch/Liberty National Life* (October, 1976), p. 4.
19. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1939, p. 80.
20. *Howard College Founders Day*, 1965 (Birmingham: Howard College, 1965), p. 18.
21. *Howard College Founders Day*, 1965, p. 21.
22. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1940, p. 85.
23. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1942, p. 131.
24. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1945, p. 40.
25. *Brick by Brick*, 1:1 (August, 1955).
26. A. Hamilton Reid, *Baptists in Alabama* (Montgomery: Paragon Press, 1967), p. 387.
27. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1947, pp. 40-41.
28. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1950, p. 85.
29. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1951, pp. 38-39.
30. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1953, p. 119.
31. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1957, p. 86.
32. *Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention*, 1965, pp. 24-25.
33. *The Torch/Liberty National Life* (October, 1976), p. 4.
34. *Ibid.*



The Enslen House

by Steve Trimmier
Photograph captions by Ellen Erdreich

The Enslen House, a two-story, brick structure faced with four-inch thick marble, is one of the few surviving large homes built along Highland Avenue during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The home is one of the finest Classical Revival residences in the city, and is notable for both the high quality of its craftsmanship and the lavish use of fine materials. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

The Enslen House, pen and ink sketch, by Bill Ingram, 1984. Eugene Flynn Enslen built his elegant Classical Revival residence at 2737 Highland Avenue in 1910. In 1885, with his father, German immigrant Christian F. Enslen, and his brother Charles, Eugene had organized the Jefferson County Savings Bank. In 1912 he constructed what was to be for many years the tallest building in Birmingham to house his bank. The 25-story office building, later known as the Comer Building, still serves Birmingham as the City Federal Building. He is said to have ordered extra marble for his impressive Highland Avenue home, which children on Birmingham's Southside have long called "The Marble Palace."

On May 12, 1984, participants in the Birmingham Historical Society's Annual Highland Avenue Bike Ride toured the Enslen House, savored the recent renovations and enjoyed punch on its gracious, columned porch.

Acquired for the use of the law firm of Trimmier & Pate, P.C. in 1981, the house has been restored to its original condition with no structural changes or partitions, other than converting two baths into four half baths.

Rather than modify the structure for commercial purposes, the firm has modified their working arrangements to be compatible with the house. The four main rooms upstairs are the location of the lawyers' offices with support personnel and equipment in private areas. Great care has been taken to have all public areas appear as home-like as possible with the long range plan to furnish these rooms with no visible phones or electronic equipment.

Structural restoration has been extensive. First consideration in all work was the original craftsmanship exhibited in construction. Expert carpenters were engaged for the project.

Due to improper drainage, the wooden portions of the balcony and portico had to be substantially rebuilt. Most supports and trim were highly deteriorated. Nine columns were replaced and the beaded ceiling rebuilt. New treated joists and beams replaced rotted wood. Portions of the balustrade were hand cut and bevelled to original specifications, again with treated wood. Drainage problems were identified

and rectified to prevent future damage.

The foundation had also been damaged by drainage problems. New concrete was poured, steel I-beams replaced supports that had rusted out, and an air vent was created to prevent condensation from forming which would destroy this new foundation. Freezing and thawing seepage between the brick and marble required the removal of the marble belting surrounding the house to improve the brickwork. The four-inch thick marble was then replaced.

Interior work has been carefully restored with painstaking attention to detail. What could not be purchased to duplicate original materials has been manufactured by the contractor.

Wall-to-wall carpeting was removed to reveal large sections of plywood which had been used to replace rotted flooring. Because this particular heart oak flooring is no longer commercially available, the contractor ordered a mill run to his specifications, enabling the floors to be returned to their original condition.

Four of the five fireplaces in the house had been sealed. These have been reopened and three antique mantles were installed where original mantels had been removed. All walls were steamed to expose the plaster, an interior designer researched appropriate period decor, and an artist was commissioned

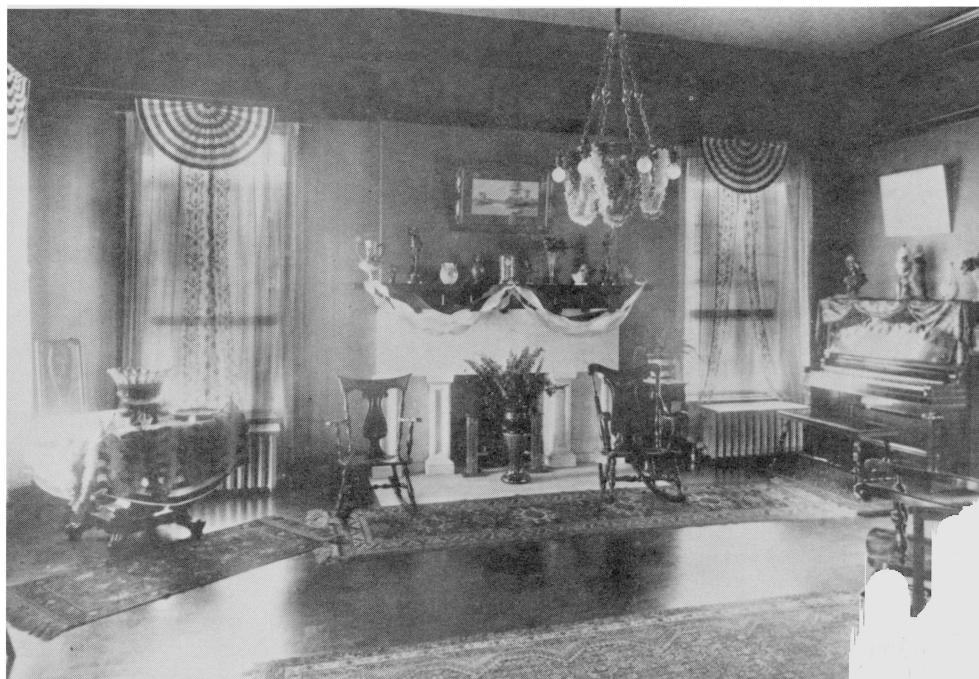


View of Enslen House just after construction, with early landscaping just completed. Photograph courtesy Steve Trimmier and Bob Carney.

Enslen House, bedecked for an early 20th century celebration. The principal rooms of the home are divided by a foyer and a stair hall. The elaborate woodwork of this entrance—fluted columns and pilasters, triglyphs and unadorned metopes, heavy dentils with guttae, coffers, spiral balusters—both repeats the classical architectural vocabulary employed on the exterior and announces similar elements found in the “public” rooms to either side. Photograph courtesy Steve Trimmier and Bob Carney.



The large living room, the parlor and the dining room were created for just the sort of entertainment recorded in the photographs on this and the opposite page, taken during the early years of the Enslen residence. The fresh flowers, the fern before the fireplace, and especially the patriotic decorations suggest a summer festivity, perhaps a Fourth of July Gala. Red and blue streamers are wrapped around columns and flower pots; continuous bands of eagles on draped flags and of stars and stripes are stretched between the crown moulding and that which runs above the windows and doors. Garlands of flowers and swags of streamers decorate the chandeliers and mantels, striped paper fans top each window. The punch bowls stand ready, chairs are pushed back against the walls to make room for the expected crowd. Photograph courtesy Steve Trimmier and Bob Carney.



Dining Room, Enslen House, early 20th century. Although the furnishings are eclectic, the massive table in the mahogany panelled dining room is bound by streamers to the multiple lanterns of a Craftsman style metal chandelier. As well, the repetitive pattern of the mur above the plate rail of the "warm," dark wood paneling shows the influence of the English Arts and Crafts style and the American Craftsman Movement in one of the most neo-Classical of Birmingham Revival style homes. Photograph courtesy Steve Trimmier and Bob Carney.

to paint a mural above the mahogany paneling in the dining room.

Three stained glass panels from the logia had been removed by the previous owners, but the firm was able to regain these windows for the house. Additionally, there are plans to replace the leaded glass which had been removed from the side hall, front windows and the front door.

The firm appreciates this structure as a nationally recognized historic building and has every intention to preserve it as such. In so doing, the firm feels the outward appearance must remain that of a home. Because of this, no sign or business designation has been placed in the yard. A landscape architect was consulted to assure the grounds surrounding the imposing classical residence would enhance its position as a significant and handsome part of Highland Avenue.



Reconstruction of exterior columns. Photograph courtesy Steve Trimmier and Bob Carney.

Steve Trimmier, a graduate of the University of Alabama Law School, is a Birmingham attorney with offices in his recently restored Marble Palace.

Art historian Ellen Erdreich, who provided commentary for the captions, is presently working on her doctorate at Johns Hopkins University in Washington while her husband, Ben, serves in Congress.

II Poster Competition

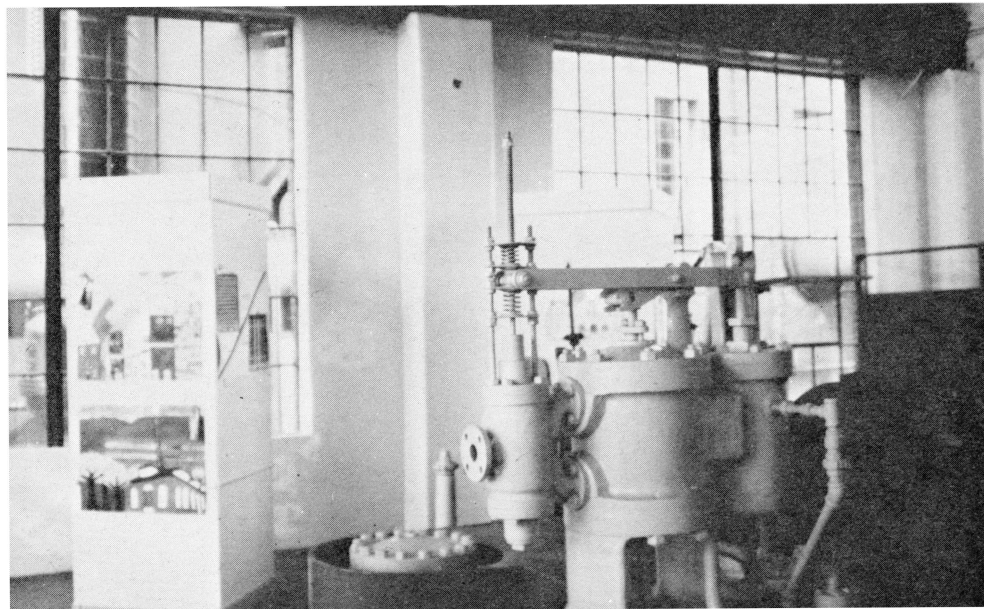
by Carolyn Stern

Buildings
Reborn
New Uses
Old Places

Bringing new life to old places is a preservationist's dream. One of those dreams became reality this past spring as the Power House at Sloss Furnaces became a full-fledged exhibit gallery.

Most appropriately, the first exhibit was the Birmingham Historical Society's "Buildings Reborn II." This collection of posters created by Jefferson County students from public and private schools, kindergarten through 12th grade, showed buildings which have been renovated and ways historic buildings could be rehabilitated or adapted to serve today's office worker or city dweller.

Amid levers, dials and switches which once controlled the power supply for the vast iron-making furnaces were posters that depicted downtown Birmingham as an entertaining and exciting place to be—City Hall was revamped as a Science Museum, Birmingham Realty Com-



View of machinery and exhibit infrastructure at Sloss Furnace Power House Gallery for Buildings Reborn II Exhibit, May 1984.

pany received a rooftop restaurant and the Watts Building's 11th floor became a church, complete with pipe organ.

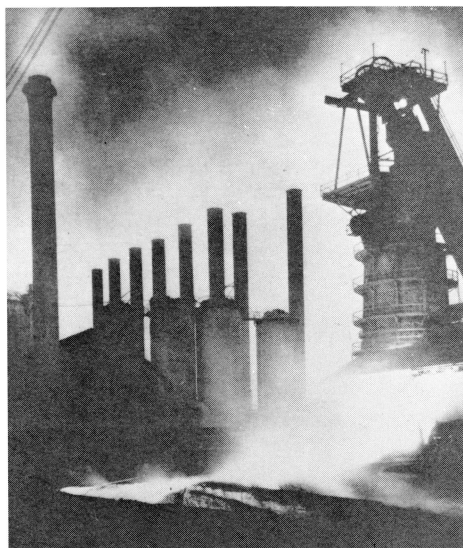
The posters were the result of the Society's spring poster competition, an effort to get students to look around them and put down on paper what they have seen already refurbished in the city and to use their imaginations to create new uses for historic buildings.

Curriculum specialist Claire Datnow, artist Mary Ann Sampson and architectural historian Alice Bowsher served as judges for the competition. These judges chose works that best represented the competition's theme for special recognition. John Tent, a fourth-grader at Epic School, gained notice for his idea to rebuild the Terminal Station and make it an observatory. Goodloe White, Advent Day School sixth-grader, brought the Rosedale

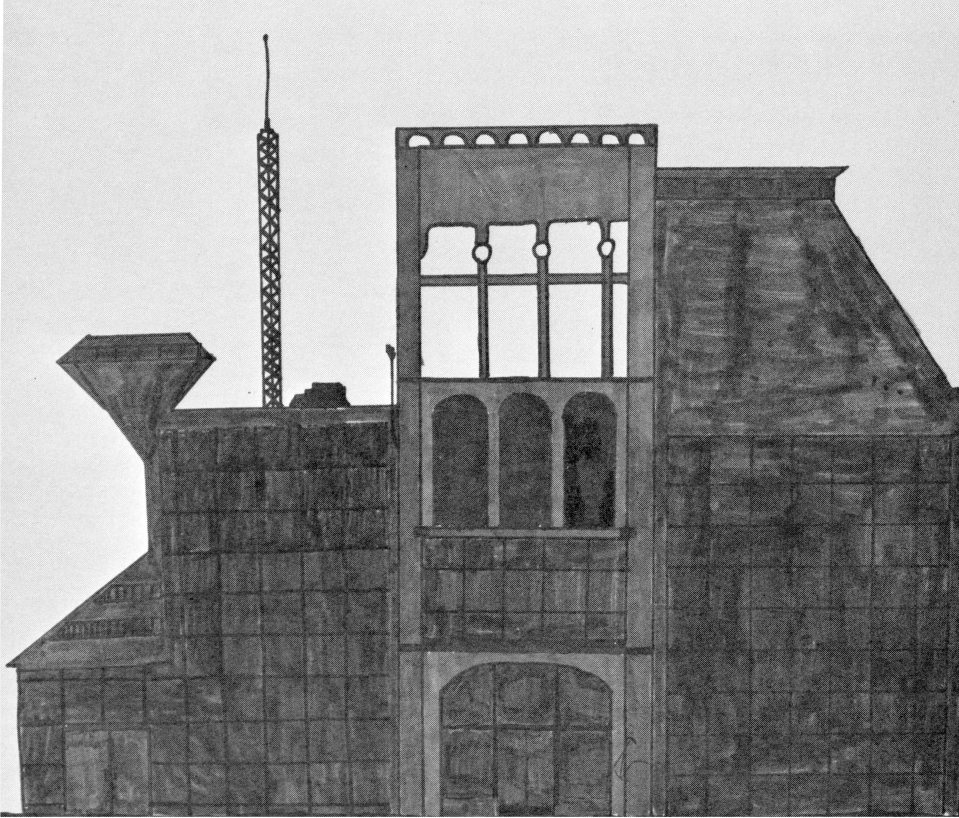
Pumphouse to new life as a restaurant, "The Seafood House."

The Steiner, John Hand, South Central Bell and Alabama Power Buildings underwent transformations at the hands of Eddie Jory (fifth grade, Arthur School), Shane Burge and Jeffrey Sharpe (fifth grade, Avondale School), and John Gregg (fourth grade, Epic School).

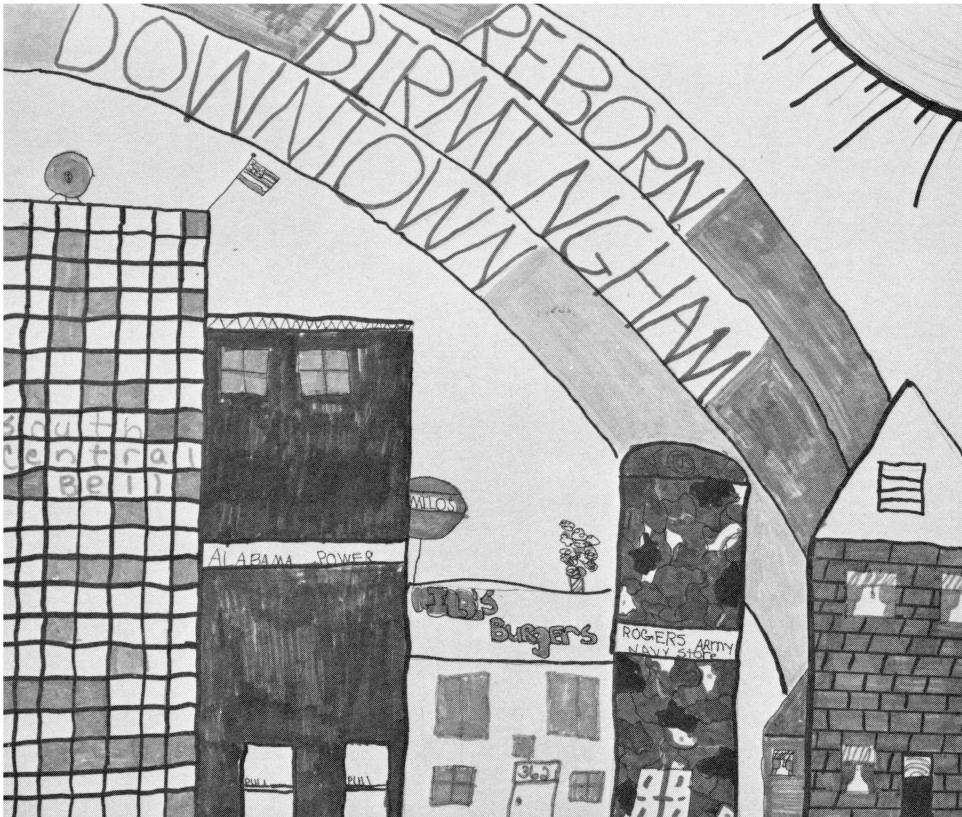
Seventeen other posters were chosen to be exhibited at the Power House Gallery. The massive piers and columns which architect Katherine Shannon designed for the Society's fall '83 exhibit at the Birmingham Museum of Art were moved to Sloss and brightly painted white with "industrial yellow" trim to form the infrastructure on which the exhibit was mounted. Willard Whitson designed the exhibit and Scout Carr created the Buildings Reborn logo.



Sloss Furnaces, a "Building Reborn," serves new uses as community and entertainment center and art gallery. Photograph courtesy Birmingham Public Library.



Steiner Building—Change name to Jewel Building, Eddie J. Jory

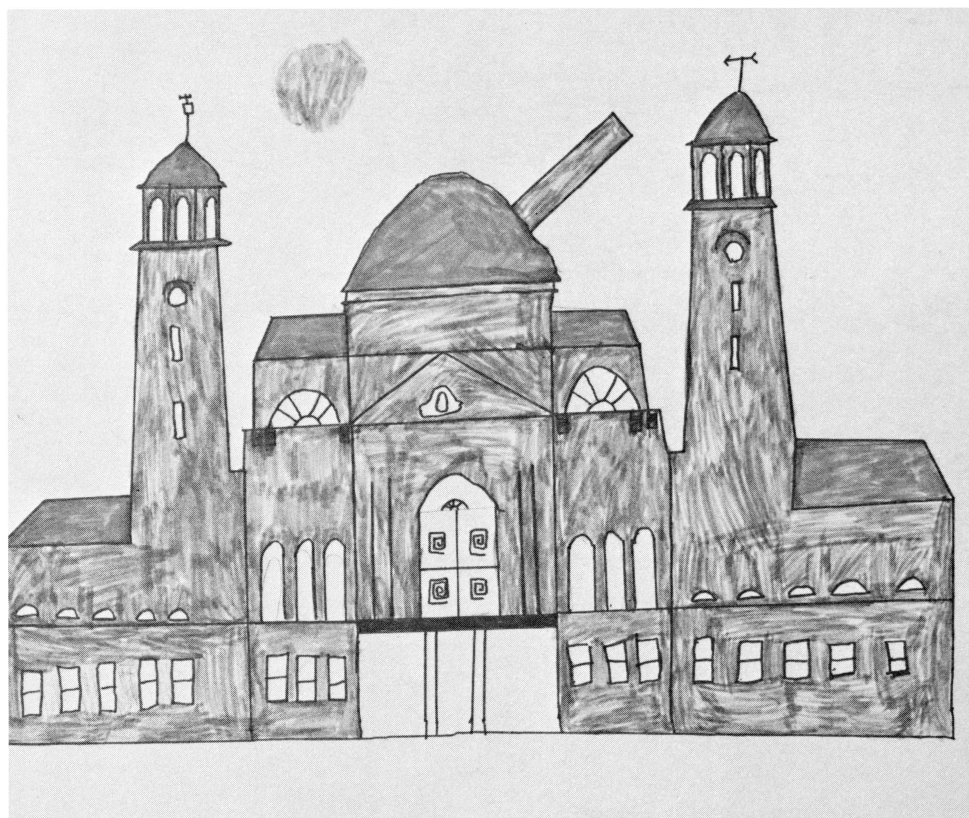


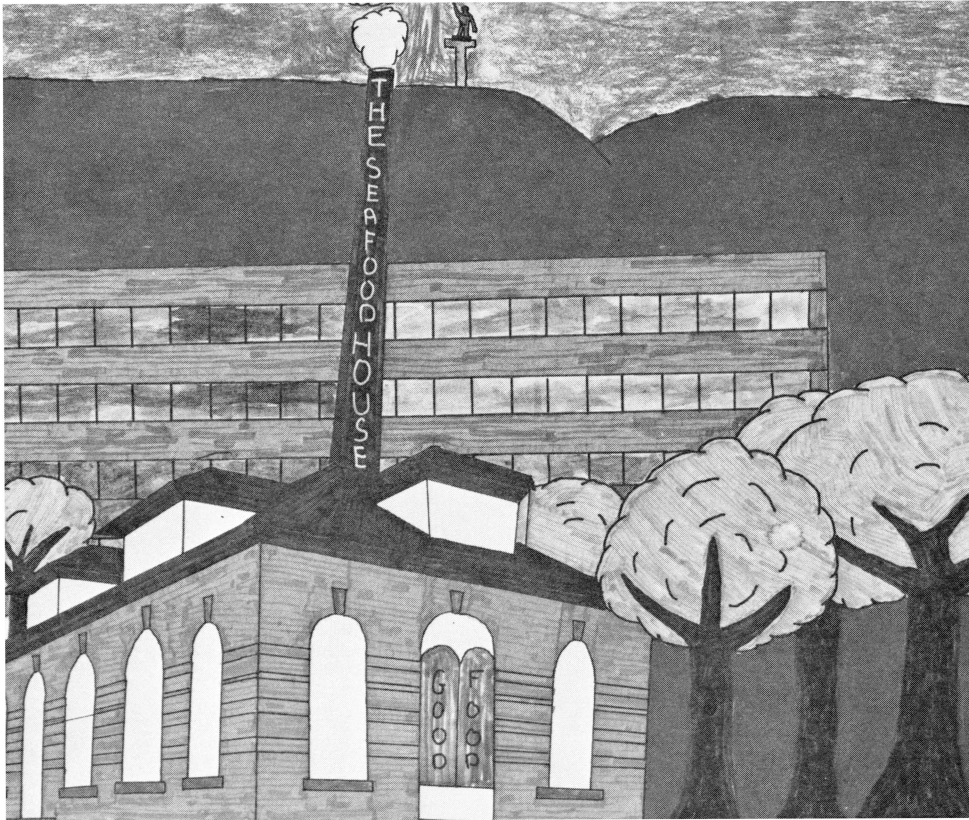
Downtown Birmingham Reborn, Shane Burge and Jeffrey Sharpe

Inside of the John Hand Bank Building,
John Gregg

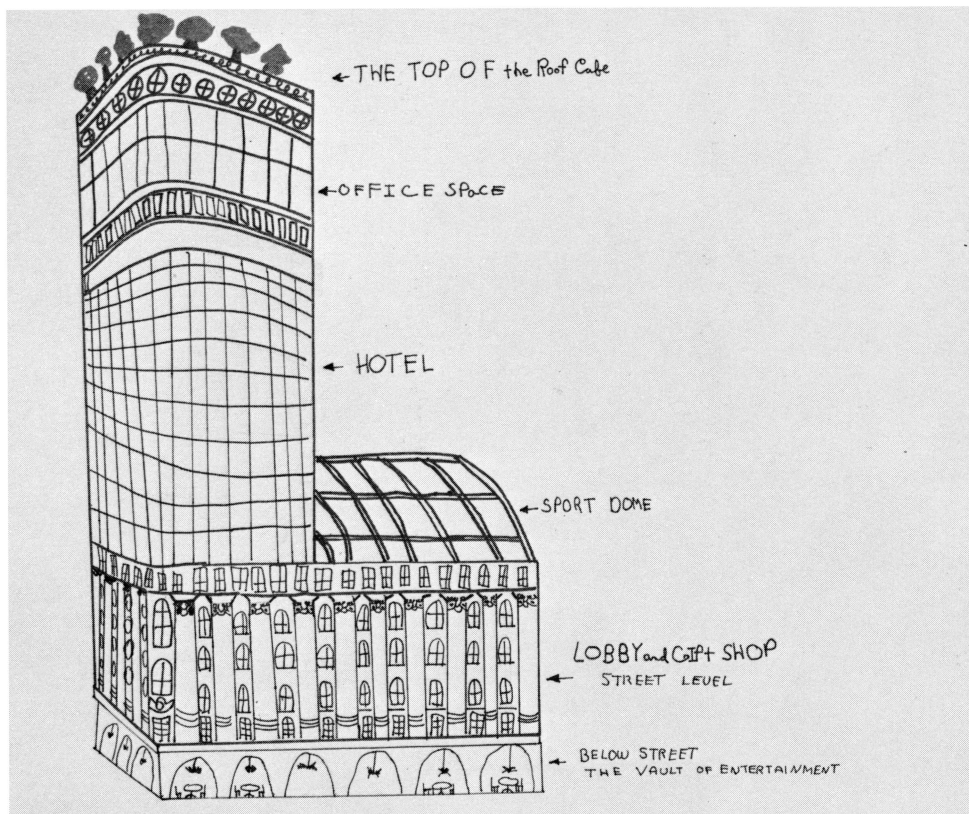


The Terminal Station as an Observatory,
John Tent

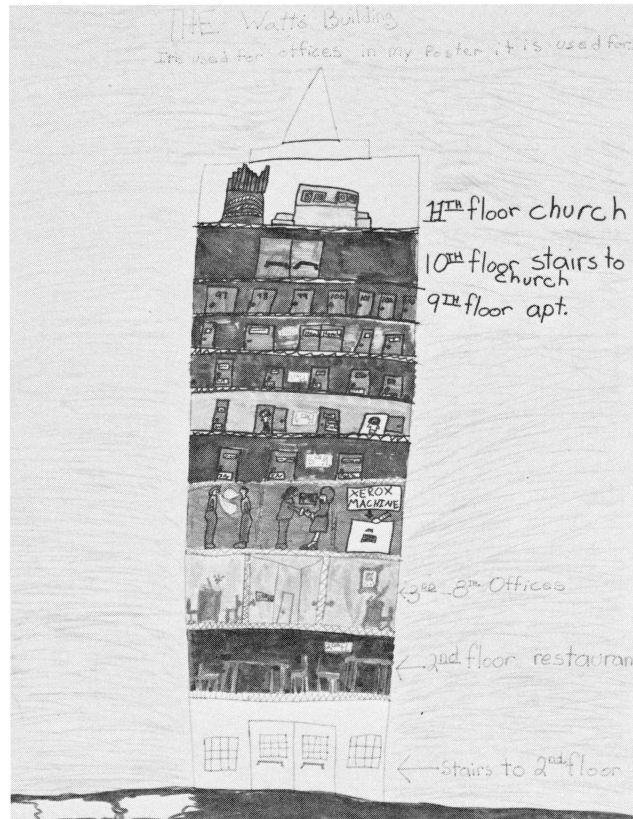




Rosedale Reborn—The Pumphouse changed into a Restaurant, Goodloe White

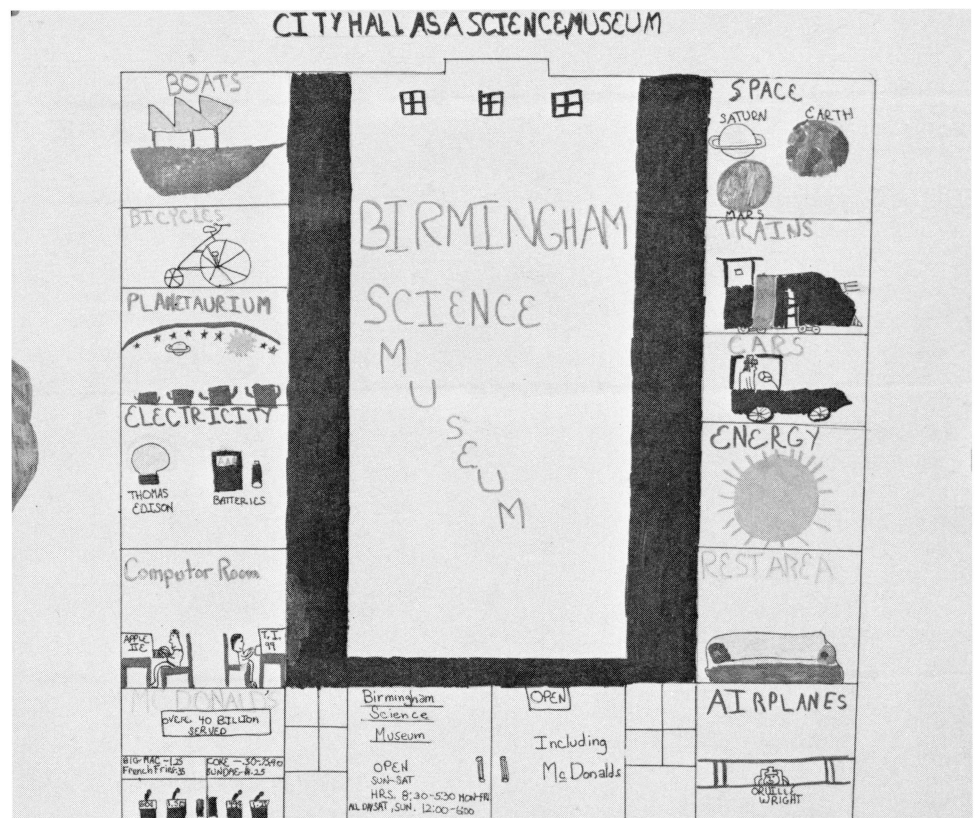


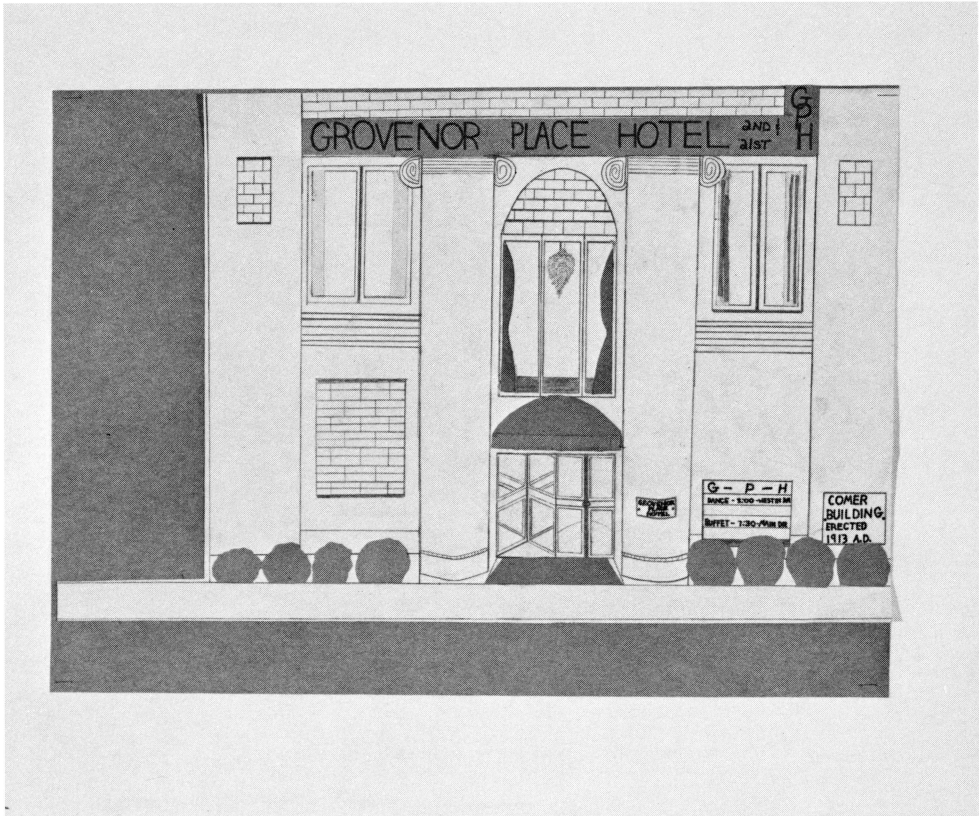
The John Hand Building as a Hotel and Office Space, Scott Marshall



The Watts Building, Tiffany Smith

City Hall as a Science Museum, Eric Ray



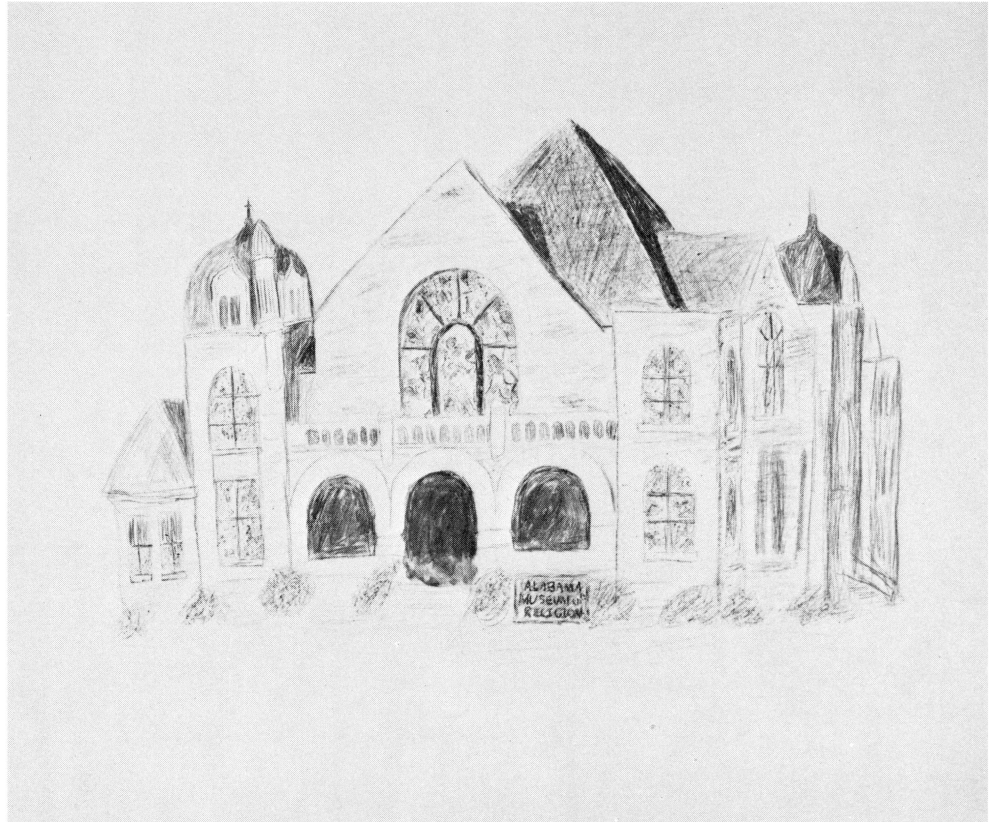


The Grovenor Place Hotel, Christopher Brooks

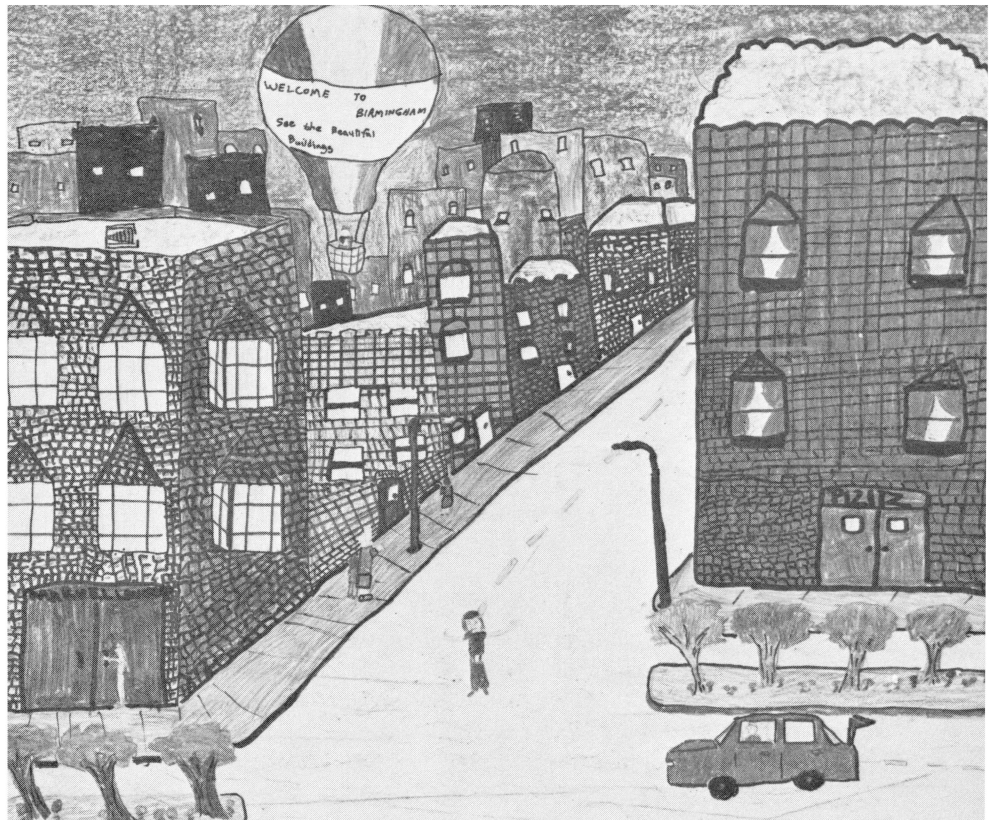


Birmingham Realty Company, Kim Craddock

First Baptist Church: A New Use for a Building Worth Saving, Jennifer Hartsell



Beautiful Buildings, Gina Harris





Downtown, Matt Latta and Samuel Holmes

Special Recognition

Downtown Birmingham Reborn
Shane Burge and Jeffrey Sharpe
Grade 5, Avondale School

Inside of the John Hand Bank
Building
John Gregg
Grade 4, Epic School

Steiner Building, Change name of
Jewel Building
Eddie J. Jory
Grade 5, Arthur School

The Terminal Station as an
Observatory
John Tent
Grade 4, Epic School

Rosedale Reborn—The Pumphouse
Changed into a Restaurant
Goodloe White
Grade 6, Advent Day School

Exhibitors

The Grovenor Place Hotel
Christopher Brooks
Grade 8, Altamont School

Buildings Reborn
Jermaine Brown and Clarence Knight
Grade 5, Avondale School

Birmingham is Beautiful to Me
Kim Cox
Grade 5, W.J. Christian School

Birmingham Realty Company
Kim Craddock
Grade 11, Altamont School

A New Life
Michelle Graham
Grade 5, Tarrant Middle School

Inside of the John Hand Building
John Gregg
Grade 4, Epic School

Beautiful Buildings
Gina Harris
Grade 5, W.J. Christian School

First Baptist Church: A New Use
for a Building Worth Saving
Jennifer Hartsell
Grade 8, Tarrant Middle School

The Royal Arms
Neal Jackson
Grade 11, Altamont School

Buildings Reborn
Jon Kelly and George Cougill
Grade 5, W.J. Christian School

Downtown
Matt Latta and Samuel Holmes
Grade 5, Avondale School

The John Hand Building as a
Hotel and Office Space
Scott Marshall
Grade 4, Epic School

Buildings of Tomorrow
Ronnie Pate
Grade 8, Tarrant Middle School

Welcome to Birmingham Green
Amy Proctor
Grade 5, W.J. Christian School

City Hall as a Science Museum
Eric Ray
Grade 4, Epic School

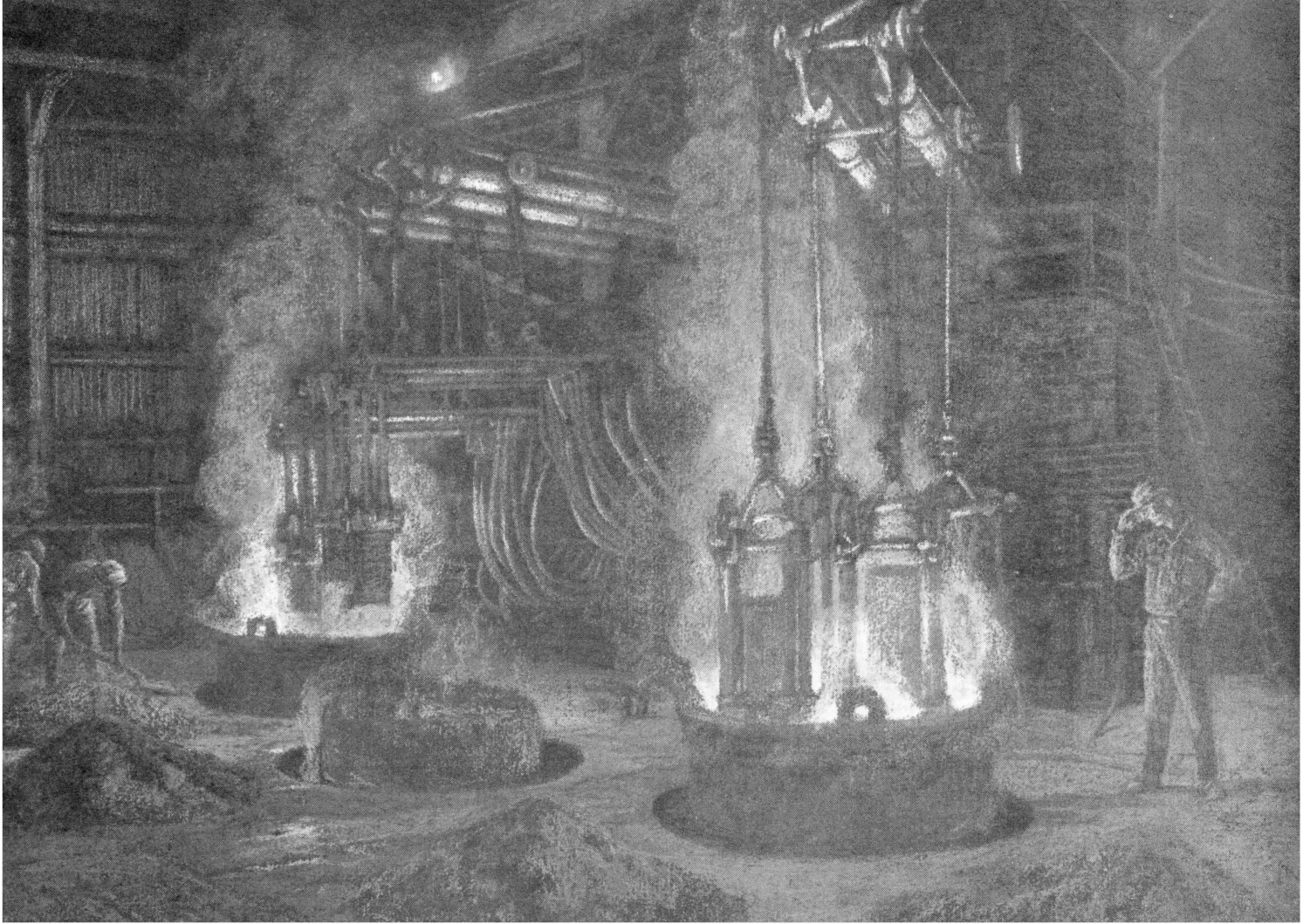
The Watts Building
Tiffany Smith
Grade 4, Epic School

Sloss
Stephen Thorne
Grade 11, Altamont School

Welcome to Downtown's
Buildings Reborn
Kelley Watts
Grade 5, W.J. Christian School

Carolyn Stern, formerly a reporter
for the Birmingham Post-Herald, is
a contributing writer for Art Line maga-

zine and a graduate student at the
University of Alabama in Birmingham
in the field of Urban Affairs.



This small electric furnace produces the various alloying agents that are added to steel to give it the different characteristics desired by each customer. Lent by Sloss Furnace Association, gift of Herbert Ryding.

Burst of Gas and Sparks: The Work of Roderick MacKenzie

by Gail Andrews Trechsel

Photograph captions by Robert Casey

Roderick MacKenzie was born in London, April 30, 1865 and moved to Mobile, Alabama with his parents in 1872. MacKenzie's parents, John and Isabella, were Scottish,

his father a painter of heraldry and carriages. MacKenzie was educated at the Barton Academy in Mobile, and in 1884, went to Boston to study at the School of the

Museum of Fine Arts. He remained in Boston for two years, then returned to Mobile where he opened a studio, painted portraits and conducted classes.

In 1889, MacKenzie left for Paris to continue his studies at the Academie Julian and L'Ecole des Beaux Arts. In Paris, he met Charlotte Elizabeth Barnes of Boston, whom he married in 1891.

While in Paris, MacKenzie received a commission from art dealers in India to paint tigers and other big game of that country. From 1893 to 1913 MacKenzie painted extensively in India and Afghanistan, including a painting commemorating the accession of Edward VII. The painting, which is eleven by eighteen feet and contains over 1,000 figures, hangs in the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta.

In 1906 he left India for Paris, and later moved to London where he established a studio. In 1910 an exhibition of his paintings made in India was held at the McLean Gallery in London where it attracted widespread attention and favorable reviews. In 1913 the MacKenzies returned to Mobile.

After World War I the South began to experience urban and industrial growth. As stated by Patrick Stewart, "For many, the South became a 'new frontier' of economic promise. . . . Old patterns were being broken as the area established more contact with other regions. The rigid system of social stratification was being challenged by industrial prosperity and expansion."(1)

In Birmingham the steel industry was developing rapidly, with simultaneous growth in the building of schools, hospitals, recreational facilities and welfare centers. By the 1920s the Birmingham steel mills were pioneering the development of a carefully planned industrial community in the South.

Attracted by this change and growth, MacKenzie came to Birmingham around 1921. He approached the Tennessee Coal, Iron

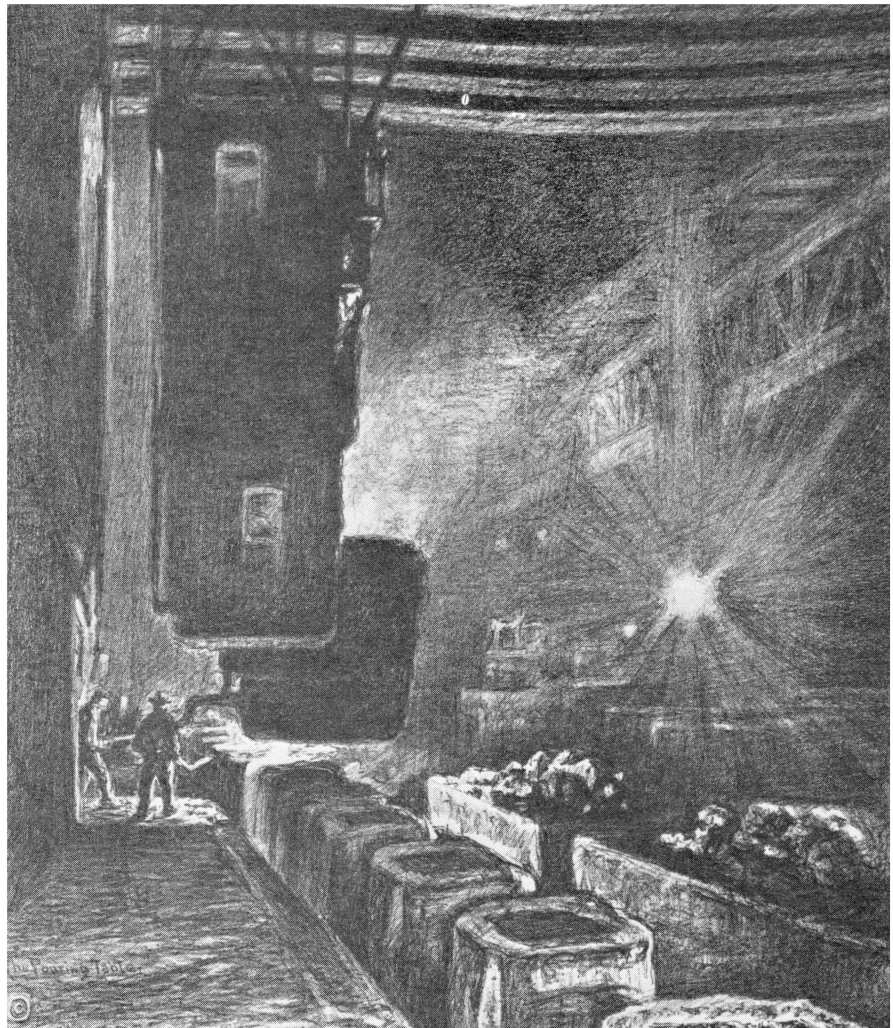
and Railroad Company and requested a permit to visit the Ensley steel plant. TCI's president, George Gordon Crawford, who was impressed by MacKenzie's work, granted him permission to work in the steel plants indefinitely.

Working swiftly at night, drawing by the acetylene light of a miner's lamp clamped on his head, MacKenzie depicted the primary phases of the steelmaking operation. Since it was often necessary to work only at intervals, he sometimes worked on as many as three paintings simultaneously, devoting to each a

few minutes at a time. Thus, some pieces took as long as two months to complete, while others were finished in a single night.

MacKenzie's choice of pastel was practical, the dirt and dust of the steel plant making oil and water-color impossible to use. Light conditions did not permit photographs with the detail the pastels captured. The pastels were so accurate, TCI chemists were able to tell the exact stage of each process depicted.

MacKenzie's pastels were first exhibited in 1922 in a show organized by the Alabama Art



At the pouring table, steel from the ladles is poured into molds to form ingots, the raw steel shapes that will in turn be heated and rolled to produce plates, I-beams, pipe, and wire. Lent by Institute for Labor Education and Research, University of Alabama in Birmingham.

League at the Little Gallery Annex (2008 Third Avenue North, Birmingham). The review of the exhibition stated that MacKenzie caught the “spirit of the furnaces.”

Riotous color, hot living flames, vibrant parching atmosphere, these combined to show the beauty in strength, the majesty of work, the wonderful in daily tasks and the picturesque in gigantic masses of structural sub-

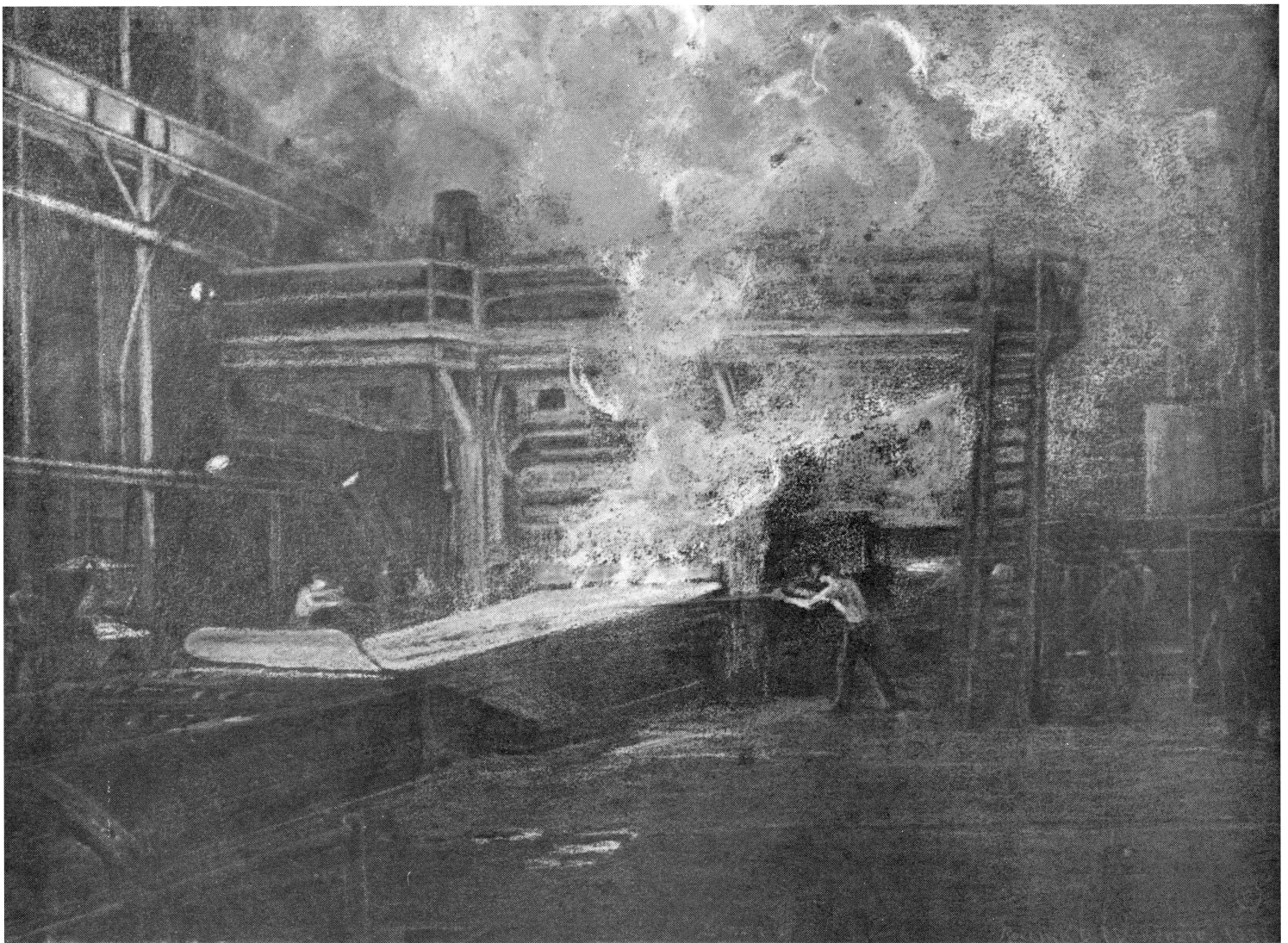
stances in the process of being made useful for man—these are his pictures.(2)

Lily May Caldwell, Music and Art Editor for the *BIRMINGHAM NEWS* quoted another review of this exhibit which stated:

Roderick MacKenzie has introduced a fourth new element dimension into painting—heat. His pastels of the Ensley

steel plants, which are being exhibited by the Alabama Art League, fairly radiate the intense heat of the flowing ingots, the fiery flowing metal and the opened flaming furnaces. Splintering sparks of near molten metal have been placed upon canvas with uncanny realism by the artist. (3)

Following that exhibition, MacKenzie was invited to show his



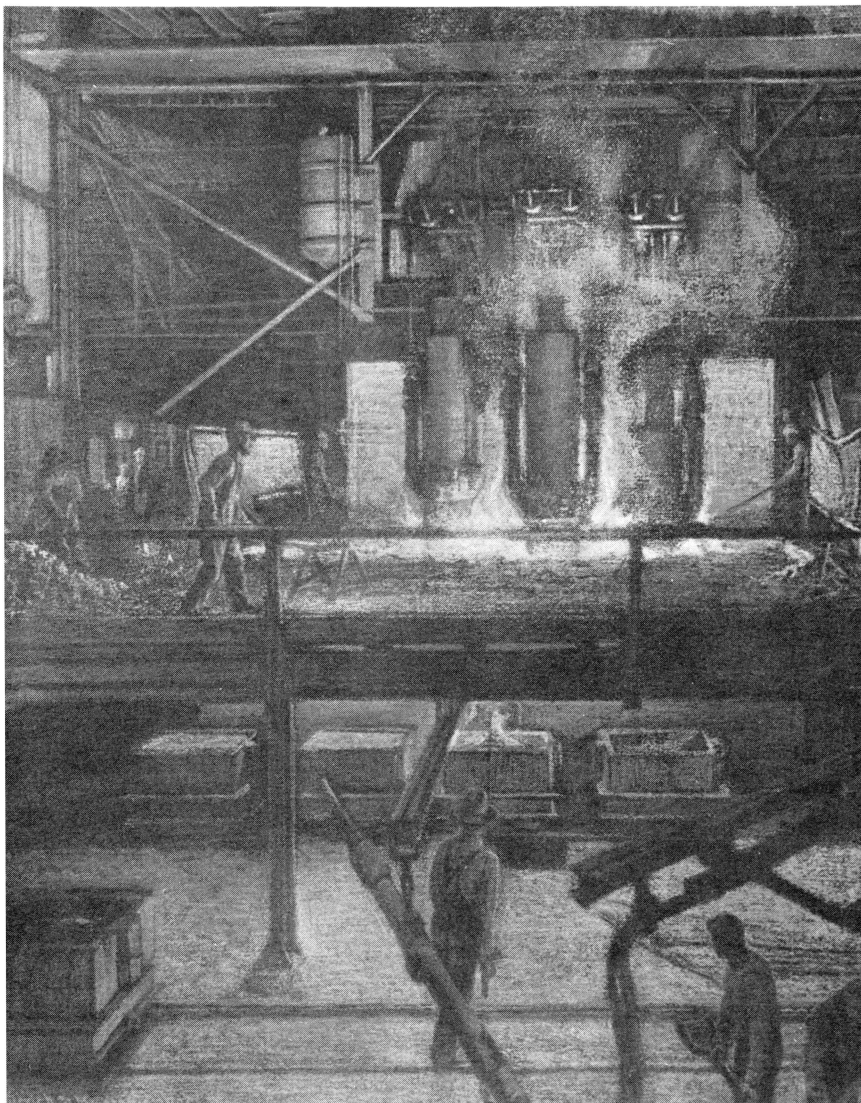
Here a red hot slab of steel is repeatedly squeezed between giant rollers, emerging as a flat steel plate. Such plates are used to build ships, tank cars, and bridges. Lent by United Steel Corporation, purchased in honor of George Gordon Crawford, President of Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company, 1907-30.

work at the spring meeting of the American Iron and Steel Institute in New York in 1923. In 1924, the pastels were exhibited in the Anderson Galleries in New York and subsequently at the Brooklyn Museum, the Grand Central Galleries and the Alabama section of the Southern States Exposition in the Grand Palace Building in 1925.

Iron Age magazine published some of the drawings in 1924 and five of the 55 pastels were reproduced in color in *Fortune* magazine, January 1931. MacKenzie made lithographs from the pastels, some of which are included in this exhibition.

Between 1926 and 1929 MacKenzie painted eight murals for the rotunda of the Alabama state capitol in Montgomery. The murals, which depict scenes from the state's history, were described by a contemporary as follows:

His mural paintings are noteworthy contributions in illustration or portrayal of some of the chief events in the state's history. They are boldly designed and faithfully executed, and, of special worth are the panels depicting scenes in which historical personages had part, for the artist has given close study to the subject and endeavored in each instance to preserve in portraiture the features and forms of these participants. In a general way it may be said that the murals present an epic of Alabama's settlement and progress, and of her present position in commerce, industry and social life. Monumental in size and inspiration, they speak impressively



In this large electric furnace, huge electrodes consume massive amounts of current to produce the temperatures necessary to melt and refine steel. In collection of Birmingham Museum of Art, gift of Mrs. R.D. Southall, Robert MacKenzie Southall, John Southall, Roderick Southall, 1957.

for Alabama and its civilization, and give harmonious finish and added beauty to the walls of one of the handsomest and most purely artistic structures in the state. (4)

Roderick MacKenzie died at the age of 76 in Mobile. His work captured more than industry; it spoke to the changing South and attempted to reconcile the con-

flict between the materialistic values of the new age of urbanization and the traditional spiritual values of the nineteenth century. The dark steel mills, shot with the brilliant light of molten metal could appear romantic and exciting, while the moral issues of expansion and industry were illuminated almost as clearly. In a *BIRMINGHAM NEWS* interview, May 4, 1941, MacKenzie stated that "art is just beginning to be taken seriously in

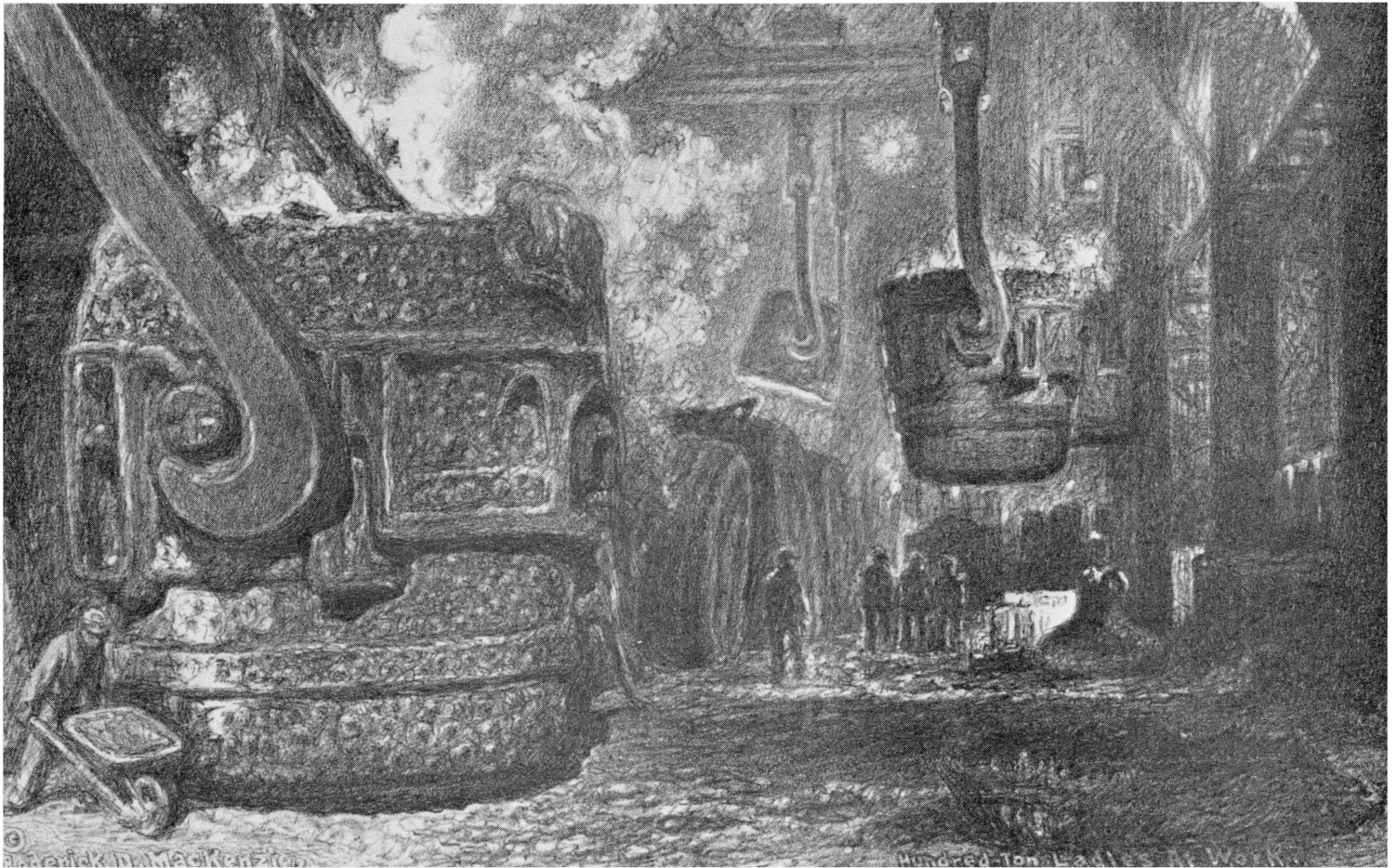
the South and it will be many years yet before it will be given a real home here, but it will come in due time when commercial edifice has been well established and the minds of the people released from the material struggle of acquiring wealth After-all, one dollar is very much like another, and in itself is only a means of an end."

"Burst of Gas and Sparks:

The Works of Roderick MacKenzie" was the first exhibition to open in the Bath House Gallery in the Sloss Visitor's Center. The Gallery, formerly a shower room for furnace workers, is one of the more creative adaptations of the historic iron making complex at Sloss. The MacKenzie exhibition, which examines the work of Birmingham's most famous painter of industry,

is an exciting and altogether appropriate exhibition for the Bath House Gallery.

The installation of "Burst of Gas and Sparks: The Works of Roderick MacKenzie" was another step in the development of Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark as a unique and exciting museum and community center in downtown Birmingham.



These massive, brick-lined ladles transfer molten steel from the furnaces to the pouring table. Lent by United States Steel Corporation, purchased in honor of George Gordon Crawford, President of Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company, 1907-30.

1. Patrick Stewart, "Towards a New South," *Painting in the South, 1564-1980*, (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 1983).

3. *Birmingham News*, February 22, 1948.

4. Artist File, Tutwiler Collection of Southern History, Birmingham Public Library.

2. *Birmingham News*, November 19, 1922.

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