

BIRMINGHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

May 2025

HARNESSING THE POWER OF PLACE

CELEBRATING THE NATION'S HERITAGE AND historic places, May in Birmingham and across the land is dedicated as Historic Preservation Month. Birmingham's special historic places include 44 historic districts, its National Historic Landmarks, National Monument, and future World Heritage sites. A host of programs organized by the City of Birmingham's Department of Planning, Engineering, and Permits offers opportunities to learn about our city's treasured historic resources. Walking tours, lectures, and talks will showcase our civil rights heritage, neighborhood preservation, architectural styles, and the nuts and bolts of rehabilitation, tax incentives, and historic easements. For more information about the tours and talks, contact Hannah Garmon, Historic Preservation Manager, (205) 254-2424, Hannah.Garmon@birminghamal.gov.

JOIN A WALKING TOUR

Collegeville: Ground Zero for Civil Rights

Saturday, May 10 at 10 a.m.

Rain Date: Saturday, May 17 at 10 a.m.

Meet at Historic Bethel Baptist Church, 3233 29th Ave N



Bethel Baptist Church, 2025.

the nation's strongest local civil rights organization. Restored to its 1958 appearance following a second bombing, today's National Historic Landmark church spearheads preservation of neighborhood properties, including new roofs, a beautifully restored bungalow, and a National Register nomination for the neighborhood.

Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument

Wednesday, May 21, Noon

Rain date: Friday, May 23, Noon

Meet at the Four Spirits Statue, NE Corner, Kelly Ingram Park, 16th St & 6th Ave N



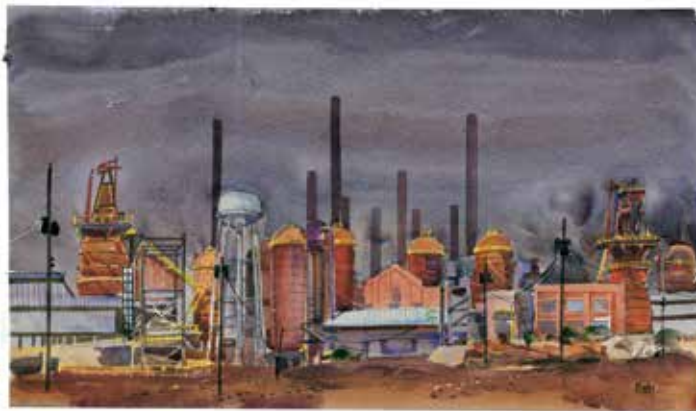
Four Spirits Statue, 2025.

Honoring the nonviolent protestors who successfully challenged discriminatory laws and practices in the 1950s and 1960s, the historic churches and businesses in and about Kelly Ingram Park were designated a nationally significant National Register of Historic Places district in 2006 and a National Monument in 2017. This tour heads to the 16th Street Baptist Church, the St. Paul United Methodist Church, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the A. G. Gaston Motel, and the 4th Avenue Business District.

Making Iron at Sloss Furnaces

Thursday, May 22, Noon

Meet at the entrance to the Visitor Center.



Sloss Furnaces, 2001. BOB MOODY.

Documented in 1976 by the Historic American Engineering Record of the National Park Service as a nationally significant site, this large-scale ironmaking plant that operated for nearly 100 years became a National Historic Landmark in 1981. Closed in 1971, the iconic site reopened as an open-air museum and host of events and festivals in 1984. The tour will highlight how the iron that built our nation into an industrial powerhouse in the early 1920s was made as well as the challenges of preserving a massive industrial plant.

COME TO A TALK

Birmingham's Historic Preservation Program

Thursday, May 1, Noon

Meet in the City Council Chamber, 3rd Floor, City Hall.

This presentation will provide an overview of the nuts and bolts of historic preservation, including nominations for the National Register of Historic Places and Local Historic District listings, the Design Review process for rehab of properties in Local Historic Districts, Historic Preservation Grants, Tax Incentive Guidance, and Adaptive Reuse Incentive Applications.

Best Practice: Materials and Methods

Tuesday, May 6, Noon

Meet in the Sloss Furnaces Visitor Center.

Chloe Mercer, Federal Tax Credits and Alabama Ad Valorem Coordinator, Alabama Historical Commission

Alabama's longtime master at overseeing preservation projects will share insights on "how to do it right" and meet federal and state guidelines for tax incentive financing for renovations to historic commercial properties.

Spotlight on Neighborhood Preservation

Tuesday, May 13, Noon

Meet in the Sloss Furnaces Visitor Center.

Paula Stanton, Titusville Historical Marker Committee
Walladean Streeter, Bush Hills Neighborhood Association

Join community leaders as they share success stories of their work with many partners to mark historic places and create new uses for historic schools and neighborhood pride. Surveys are under way in both neighborhoods to recommend future National Register of Historic Preservation districts.

Birmingham’s “Modern” Architecture

Tuesday, May 20, Noon
Meet in the Sloss Furnaces Visitor Center.
Dr. Caroline Swope, Historic Preservation Specialist,
City of Decatur



UAB’s Boshell Diabetes Bldg (1973), 2025.

Long ridiculed by devotees of traditional architecture, “Mid-Century Modern” is now all the rage. Join architectural historian Carolyn Swope to explore Birmingham’s architecture of “modernity” and how the Neo-Formalism, Ranch, and Brutalism style movements shaped Birmingham’s identity in the 1950s and 1960s, a period of extensive home and office building in the city.

Selling Real Estate in Historic Districts

Tuesday, May 27, Noon
Meet at the Birmingham Association of Realtors
3501 Independence Dr., Homewood.

Come to find out how to know whether a residential or commercial property is “historic” and what this means for the seller and the buyer of a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places or in a Local Historic District.

Preservation Easements

Thursday, May 29, Noon
Meet in the Sloss Furnaces Visitor Center.
David Fleming, President and CEO, REV Birmingham

Fleming will present the pros and cons of historic easements as tools for long-term preservation of significant, privately owned properties. An historic easement is a voluntary agreement that permanently protects the historic property. The legal agreement regulates the uses of, or changes to, a property to which present and future owners must abide. Owners of historic properties can donate a charitable easement to a qualified organization in return for a significant federal tax benefit.

SOCIETY NEWS

The Great Chocolate Cake Contest at our annual meeting in February featured 14 delectable confections. Prize bakers’ family favorites included Anne Ledvina’s *Very Good Chocolate Cake*, Olivia Allison’s *Aunt Irene’s Devil’s Food Cake*, Lane Franklin’s *Flourless Chocolate Cake*, Susan Haskell’s *Chocolate Ice Box Cake*, Patricia Sprague’s *Jolly Roger’s Rum Cake*, and Marjorie Lee White’s *Barefoot Contessa’s Chocolate Cake*. No wonder that members are requesting the recipes.

The Heritage Society gathered at the crest-top residence built in 1925 for Virginia and Herbert Stockham, today the home of Doug Klick and Gregg McCormick. Party planners Virigina Markstein and Jay Draper produced a stellar event.

Birmingham Historical Society joins our neighborhood associates for the annual **Open Houses on Highland** set to return this fall on Sunday afternoon, October 19. We’ll host an architectural treasure hunt and an exhibit on residential styles at our offices.

Birmingham by the Book: A Guide to the Magic City, our 2025 Members’ publication, is in the works. Photographers—including Louise McPhillips, Quentin Linn, Nathan Watson, Steve Dunlap, and Art Meripol—are shooting sites and places across the region, and editors are seriously scrutinizing text and layouts. Target date for release is late fall of this year.

The semiquincentennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026, began with *Two Lights for Tomorrow*, commemorating Paul Revere’s Ride on April 18, 1775.

Marker Dedication, Titusville, 2021.



Restored Bungalow, Collegeville, 2025.



Celebrate Preservation this May
with talks and tours.

Birmingham Historical Society
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