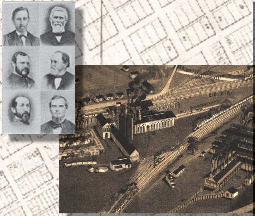


EARLY HISTORY

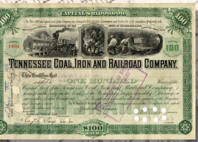
The City of Birmingham was incorporated in 1871 , its grid of streets laid out parallel to two new railroads converging in this stretch of the farmland valley. Major deposits of iron ore, coal and limestone, the key ingredients for iron-making, all lay within a few miles. Montgomery-based founders envisioned a new industrial city emerging on the 4,150-acre property acquired by Elyton Land Company, and they named it after the famous British manufacturing center.

After barely surviving a national financial panic and a cholera epidemic, early industrialists and financiers, with crucial support from Louisville-based L&N Railroad, began to make their visions real. Discovery of high-grade coal in quantity supported the shift from charcoal to coke as fuel for furnaces in 1876.

In 1880, when Henry DeBardeleben's Alice Furnace at the west end of the Railroad & Mechanical Reservation (near today's I-65) went into blast a decade of booming pig iron production got underway, spawning furnaces and foundries along the tracks through the center of the city. By 1890, production of pig iron in The Birmingham District reached 816,911 tons annually: 8.9 percent of the U.S. total.

The City of Birmingham and the larger region grew accordingly. By 1890 county population reached 88,000 with a great majority of jobs in mine and mills. A local network of railroads, extending more than 150 miles, moved materials from mines to mills and workers to jobs, while major trunk lines carried the district's coal and pig iron to distant markets.

By 1900, the boomtown had grown to be a major player in iron production. That year, Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railroad Co. (TCI), a consolidation of many companies, became the largest pig iron producer in the U.S. with 1.2 million tons.



CAPITAL $2,000,000.

100 SHARES

19654

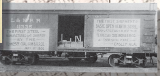
100

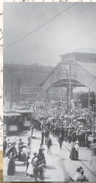
TENNESSEE COAL, IRON AND RAILROAD COMPANY.

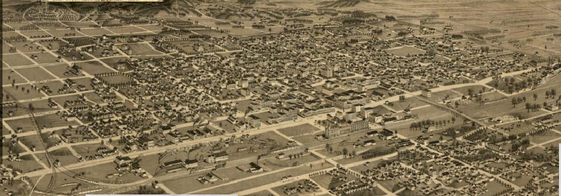
This Certifies that Jacob T. Hoffman.

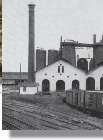
entitled to ONE HUNDRED Shares of the Capital Stock of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company, transferable only on the books of the Company, in person or by Attorney, on surrender of this Certificate.

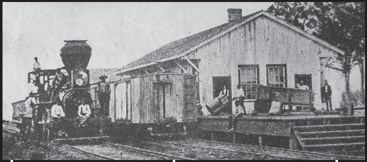
SHARES $100 EACH

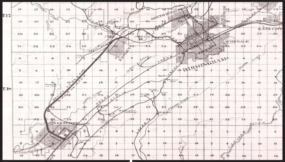












1870-1871

Alabama & Chattanooga Railroad completed the first line into Jones Valley from the northeast. The next year South & North Alabama Railroad (later L&N) reached the site of Birmingham from the south. First terminal was called the Relay House.

1871

On December 18, Elyton Land Company incorporated City of Birmingham, named after English iron center, on part of its 4,150-acre property. Railroad engineer John T. Milner laid out the city grid aligned with the railroads. Other names considered were after founders: Milnerville, Morriston, Powellton and Muddtown.

1873

National financial panic and local cholera epidemic threatened the newborn Birmingham, depleting population.

1876

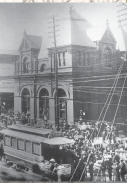
In the Oxmoor Experiment, local interests succeeded in making the first pig iron from coked coal rather than charcoal from trees.

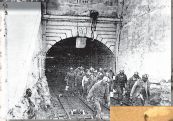
1884

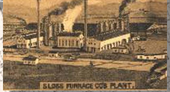
L&N extended the Redding spur west to an iron ore mine on Red Mountain, the first increment of what soon developed into a 150-mile-long loop, the Birmingham Mineral Railroad.

1880-1890

A decade-long Pig Iron Boom began on November 30, 1890, w
become the first of many large-scale, competitive producers of
followed in Birmingham and nearby at Thomas, Woodward, Gat
Vanderbilt, Bessemer, North Birmingham and Ensley, most of t
By 1890 more than 21,000 worked in local furnaces, rolling m
mines. With few local markets, 90 percent of pig iron produced
the country and abroad.







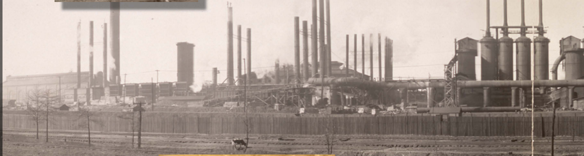
1900-1929

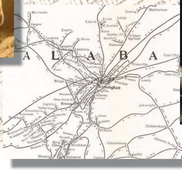
In the early decades of the 20th century, Birmingham and its surrounding region continued as an iron and coal powerhouse, but growth took new directions. The colossal statue of Vulcan created for the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904 was meant to showcase not just pig iron but local products made from it, in keeping with the master craftsman of Roman mythology.

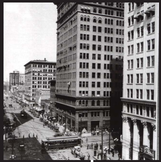
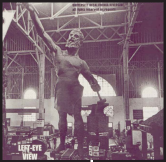
Within a few decades, Birmingham became the center of cast iron pipe production in the U.S., driven by demand as cities everywhere installed water, sewer and gas lines. Major producers included U.S. Cast Iron Pipe and Foundry Co., National Cast Iron Pipe Co., and American Cast Iron Pipe Co. (ACIPCO). James R. McWane left ACIPCO in 1921 to start his own company. Other foundries, many family-run, focused on a wide range of products: cotton gins, sugar mill machinery,stoves, radiators, steam engines, railway equipment, tanks, and much more.

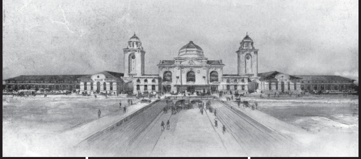
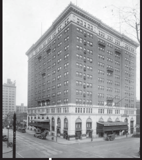
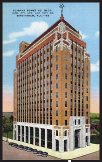
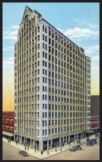
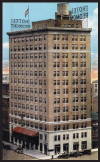
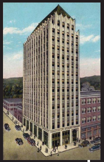
Steel, which had surpassed cast iron in construction and other fields, was difficult to make from local ores so production came late and did not match earlier success with iron. Even so, by 1925, TCI's Ensley and Fairfield plants reached 1.7 million tons annually. Ownership now concentrated in national companies. By 1907, when the newly organized U.S. Steel acquired TCI, 6 northern-based companies controlled most of Birmingham coal, iron and steel output and 35 percent of Jefferson County land.

Meanwhile, Birmingham was transformed from late Victorian to modern metropolis with nine steel-frame skyscrapers erected between 1902 and 1913. An extensive street railway system connected neighborhoods and far-flung industrial centers. Jefferson County grew from 140,000 in 1900 to 431,000 in 1930. Eleven common carriers and three railway yards and shops made the city a railway hub. There were 93 passenger trains arriving and departing the two passenger stations.





hen Alice Furnace
pig iron. Other plants
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1902

The city's first steel-frame skyscraper, 10-story The Woodward Building, rose high above its late-Victorian neighbors at First Ave. N. and 20th Street.
Ten years later all four corners of the intersection had skyscrapers.

1904

Guiseppi Moretti's statue of Vulcan, cast of local iron by Birmingham foundry workers, dazzled visitors at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exhibition (St. Louis World's Fair).

1907

The monumental Beaux Arts style Terminal Station spanning Fifth Ave. N. opened for six of the seven railroads serving the city. (The L&N retained its passenger station at 20th and Morris Ave.).

1913

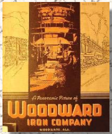
The original Tutwiler Hotel opened at 20th and Fifth Ave. N., anchoring a hotel row extending east to Terminal Station.

1920

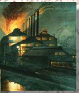
Population of metropolitan Birmingham reached 310,000, among the largest in the south. While basic iron and steel production continued to dominate, a diversified economy produced over 1,600 different kinds of articles and commodities.

1820-1930

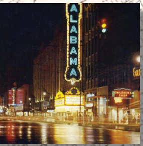
Even as new suburbs grew, downtown Birmingham expanded with significant additions: U.S. Post Office (1920); Pizitz Department Store (1923), Federal Reserve Bank (1924), Alabama Power Co. (1925), Redmont Hotel (1925) Watts Building (1927), Alabama Theater (1927), Birmingham Public Library (1927),Protective Life Building (1928), Jefferson County Courthouse (1929-32).



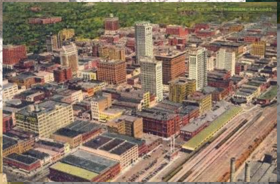
Welcome to
TCI



BIRMINGHAM
UNIQUE IN NATURAL RESOURCES



DUCTILE U.S.PIPE



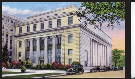
1930-1970

With its concentration on basic industry, Birmingham and the region were among the worst hit during the Great Depression. Mills and mines operated off-and-on, far below capacity. Unemployment brought New Deal programs focused on public infrastructure improvements including the construction of Vulcan Park.

Only with armament needs from World War II did local industry recover and thrive as the "Arsenal of the South". After the war, pent-up demand for consumer goods kept the boom going through the 1950's. By the 1960's, however, competition from newer plants across the U.S. and abroad, passage of federal air-quality standards, greater automation and other factors led to a decline in industrial jobs. A once-vigorous rail passenger service shriveled under competition from cars and airlines.

Even as Birmingham became a focus of the national civic rights struggle, the city and region began a sea change from heavy industry to diversified business base. Growing from a medical school and extension center, the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) was established in 1969. Banking, engineering, insurance, medicine, construction and other fields grew to prominence.

Birmingham also began to nurture arts and culture with creation of the Birmingham Museum of Art as well as a new zoo, botanical gardens, symphony, ballet and other civic facilities. And a beautiful natural setting was becoming more healthful and enjoyable as the air cleared.



NEON LIGHTS ADV CO
NEON ELECTRIC SIGNS

BMC
COST $600,000
7-WAR LOAN

1930-39

The Great Depression hit Birmingham especially hard. Furnaces, mines and plants operated only spasmodically, with production between 40 and 60 percent of capacity.

1931

New underpasses opened at 20th, 18th and 14th streets, elevating trains through the heart of downtown and freeing local road movements. Birmingham Municipal Airport opened.

1939

Vulcan was moved from the Alabama State Fairgrounds, restored and placed atop a 125-foot high sandstone-clad tower in the new Vulcan Park on Red Mountain, part of the WPA depression-era jobs-creation program.

1940-45

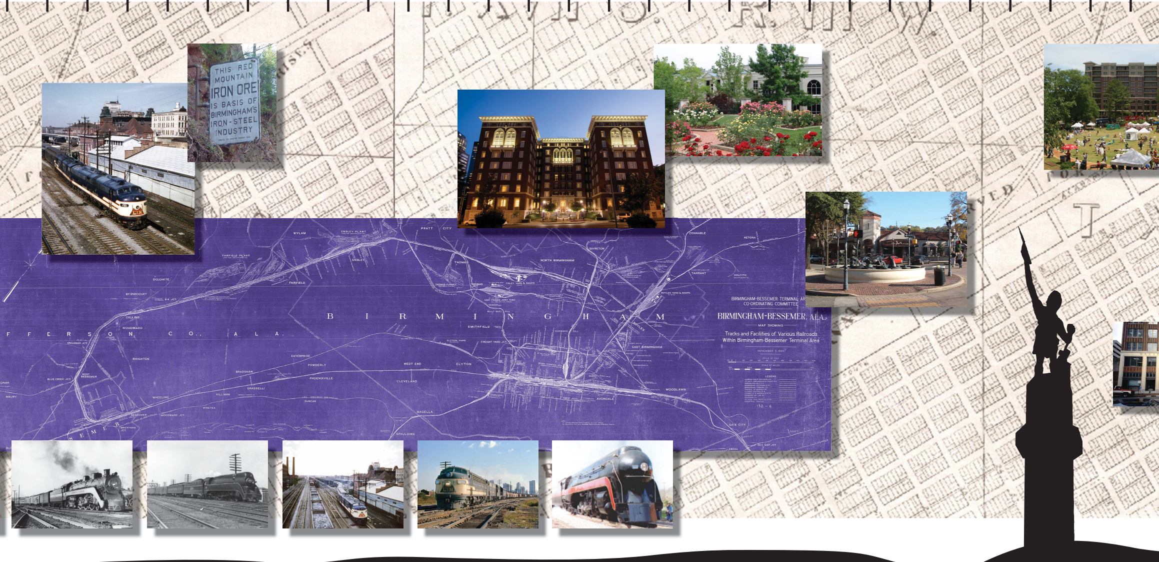
During World War II, demand for iron, steel, coal and other products revived the Birmingham District's economy. Described as the "Arsenal of the South", most industries operated three shifts per day and women joined the work force in large numbers.

1944

Assisted by a grant from the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, the Medical College of the University of Alabama moved from Tuscaloosa to Birmingham's nascent medical center anchored by the WPA-era Jefferson Tower.

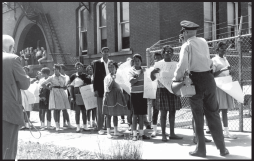
1950-60

A post-war U.S. boom led by pent-up goods sustained war-era prosperity. Au



OSCAR WELLS MEMORIAL

27 ENSLEY
STORE



demand for houses, cars and other consumer
utomobile ownership grew rapidly.

1951

Birmingham Museum of Art was founded in City Hall. Original wing of a new building opened in 1959.

1953

Final run of a Birmingham street car: April 18, 1953. Diesel buses replaced streetcars.

1960

Birmingham Botanical Gardens was established on 69 acres, like the new zoo on land previously a part of Lane Park.

1963-64

The U.S. Civil Rights Movement, which had a grassroots counterpart based in Birmingham black churches, climaxed with sit-ins, demonstrations, and church bombings that brought national media attention to Birmingham. President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964.

1963

The federal Clean Air Act of 1963, followed by expanded versions in 1967 and 1970, meant clearer skies over Birmingham but also the obsolescence of much local industrial plant. Imported iron ore replaced local sources.

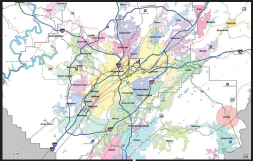
1970-PRESENT

Over recent decades, the Birmingham metropolitan area has continued to evolve as a mosaic of communities spread over a varied topography. The seven-county region now holds a population over 1 million. Ridges once mined for ore are being transformed into public open space, and formerly polluted streams invite recreation. Sloss Furnaces, like a number of other industrial sites, now operates as a museum and cultural venue.

Diversification away from heavy industry has continued, with 85 percent of local jobs now non-manufacturing. UAB, with 250-plus buildings on 86 blocks, is the largest employer in the region and state. Even so, Birmingham remains dominant in U.S cast iron pipe production, the Fairfield Works of USS produces steel and steel products, and steel fabrication continues to be a local specialty. Automotive manufacturing entered the scene with Mercedes-Benz (1995) to the west and Honda to the east (2001). Major railroads have consolidated to three: CSX, Norfolk Southern and BNSF. The main lines through downtown remain busy national links.

Much of the historic urban core has survived with buildings converted to new uses including residential. Cultural institutions and facilities restored or added over recent years enrich city life. Among them: Birmingham Museum of Art, the Alabama Theater, McWane Science Center, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, UAB's Alys Stephens Center, The Alabama Symphony, Vulcan Park & Museum, Alabama Ballet, Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame, and Barber Motorsports Park.

This Railroad Park, occupying a site long-used as a railroad freight yard, offers a look back at Birmingham's industrial roots, present pleasure as cultural park and a vision of its urban future.



RAILROAD PARK BIRMINGHAM

1969

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) became a degree-granting university with Dr. Joseph Volker its first president. A national decline in rail passenger service lead to the abandonment and demolition of Terminal Station (1907-69).

1970

Sloss Furnaces ceased operation. Surveyed by the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) in 1976, it became a City of Birmingham museum and designated a National Historic Landmark.

1971

First National Bank (later AmSouth, then Regions) occupied a new 30-story glass-clad headquarters at 20th Street and 5th Ave. N. Three other skyscrapers of similar height and size followed through the 1980's to give the city its current skyline. Last of the iron ore mines on Red Mountain closed.

1974-77

BJCC opened, in phases, a new coliseum, exhibition hall, concert hall and theatre around a central plaza two blocks north of Linn Park.

1979

Total employment in the Birmingham metro area hit 645,000, but the percent involved in primary metals declined to five percent. Even so, US Steel's Fairfield Works expanded capacity to 5 million tons annually with increasing automation. Population growth in suburban communities accelerated.

2000

Birmingham-Hoover metropolitan area population passed the one million mark, extending across seven counties.

2007

Red Mountain Park Commission acquired 1,100 acres with more than 20 former iron ore mine sites along the crest from US Steel for new 4.5 mile long park.

2010

Railroad Park, a public/private partnership, opened on a railroad corridor site once used as a freight depot for Burlington-Northern.