

True Tales: John T. Milner and the Making of Birmingham and Ross Bridge's Journey from the Old South to Today

"[Birmingham District-An Industrial History and Guide] may be the most useful book ever written about the history of Birmingham and Jefferson County."

• Clarke Stallworth, Associate Editor, *The Birmingham News*, 1982 •

The Birmingham Historical Society will feature speakers on Ross Bridge (from Old South to present) and a look at founding father John Milner and the Making of Birmingham at its annual meeting February 24 at 7 p.m. in the Strange Auditorium at Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

"The annual meeting will also explore a strategy plan for '2020 and Beyond,'" says Marjorie White, the Society's director. "It is also our tradition to release or re-release volumes published by the Birmingham Historical Society. Additionally, this year our annual



Birgit Kibelka and Marjorie White to speak at the Annual Meeting on February 24, 7 p.m.

Heritage Cake Contest expands to include pies—following the judging, all attending members are invited to sample the creations."

The 2020 meeting presents a re-release of **The Birmingham District-An Industrial History and Guide**. This 324-page volume with 377 illustrations is the indispensable guide to the rise of area industry and communities—in it you will find the cultures of iron ore mines, coal mines, and limestone quarries and of geological discoveries and enterprises that resulted.

First published in 1981, the re-release of this carefully crafted history of Birmingham industry is yet compelling and important to the understanding of our community's growth.

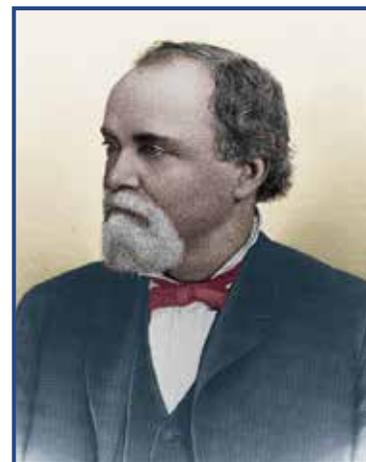
Members of the Society receive this year's book as part of their membership benefits; for all other, the cost is \$24.95.

Membership also includes the opportunity to enter the Family Favorites Cake and Pie Contest (entrants may join the Society onsite to participate). "We invite submissions of both cakes and now pies for the first time this year, all a manner of celebrating recipes passed down through families," says White. "We uncover fascinating stories which harken back to when our ancestors used 'oleo' and tested doneness with broom bristles."

She adds, "Anyone attending the meeting may join the Society by paying 2020 dues, which includes invitations to events, newsletters and copies of all newly published books."

"[The Birmingham District-An Industrial History and Guide] invites the reader to join in the history of this place...the book gives precise locations of historical places and objects in the county."

• Clarke Stallworth, Associate Editor, *The Birmingham News*, 1982 •

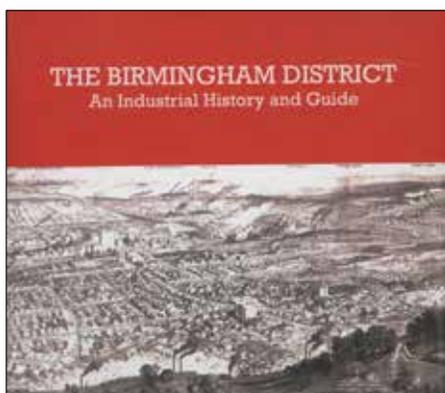


"John T. Milner. Founder of Birmingham" in Ethel Armes, *The Story of Coal & Iron in Alabama*, 1910.

The Birmingham District – The 2020 Members Book

“From Mother Earth to Finished Product, All in a Mile or Two.” These words, once the slogan of the Birmingham Stove and Range Company, summarize the industrial and economic history of our region’s first 100 years.

Founded in 1871, Birmingham has always been an industrial city. Blast furnaces, foundries, locomotive shops, and pipe and cotton gin manufactories once filled Jones Valley where Birmingham lies. Red Mountain, honeycombed with iron ore mines, rose to the south of the city. To the north and south lay coal mines and limestone



quarries. A network of railroads tied the mines, quarries, and industries together and linked Birmingham with the rest of the nation. The city grew rapidly, leading local boosters, with typical Gilded Age enthusiasm, to dub Birmingham the “Magic City.”

“The Birmingham District” is a geographic area defined initially by geological discoveries and subsequently by the location of industries that exploited the minerals located by the geologists. *The Birmingham District: An Industrial History and Guide* tells the stories of companies and communities, as these enterprises—as opposed to commercial, tourist, or service enterprises—defined early Birmingham growth. Together with 377 photographs, maps, and charts, other chapters detail the geology, geography, and native American and pioneer settlement that preceded the rise of the industrial enterprise in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

First published in 1981, as an update to Ethel Armes’ classic *The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama*, the volume itself has

also become a classic. Not all the buildings, roadbeds, mines, mills, houses, commissaries, streets, and churches described in the 324-page work will be extant. The 2020 re-glued and rebound volume still encourages those with an interest in the origin of our present region to understand and perhaps explore the remaining physical evidence of our rapid rise as the South’s largest industrial center.



Marjorie White introducing the Society’s industrial history and guide, January 22, 1982. *The Birmingham News*.

Stories from 2019 Family Favorites Cake Contest

Mocha Torte by Sumter Coleman

My dear daughter Anne always bakes this torte for me on my birthday. It is from an old recipe and has lots of fabulous ingredients like Grand Marnier.

My Grandmother’s Sour Cream Pound Cake

by Elizabeth Hester

Sour Cream Pound Cake by Eunice Gray

The cake is a family tradition. When my now 21-year old granddaughter was not tall enough to see the counter, she would run in the door to my house, straight to the kitchen and stand on her toes to see if “the cake” was on the counter. The cake has been at every family gathering for at least 40 years. It has traveled by car, van, truck, bus, and airplane to multiple states. The US Mail carried it to my granddaughter at summer camp.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Cake by Grace White

I made this cake for my Dad’s birthday. My Dad loves peanut butter. The recipe comes from Betty Crocker with additions by me. The cake has a sea salt chocolate filling and a peanut butter frosting outside.

Mama Cle’s Applesauce Cake

by Carolanne Griffith Roberts

Mama Cle (my grandmother Cleora Marie Griffith) typed out this recipe with two fingers for a 3-ring book that she made especially for me. Typing, for her, was a new technology and it must’ve taken forever. Often, she’d write in comments (like my favorite “Cook til done,” with no indication of timing!) She also used Wesson oil. And oleo.

Applesauce Cake, according to the book, was a recipe given to her by Alice Matson, whom I remember well—she lived in the apartment next door and the two ladies swapped recipes as

enthusiastically as they did gossip. Once Applesauce Cake marched into Mama Cle's house, we identified it with HER. She made it for special occasions and for non-occasions. It seemed like a close cousin to fruitcake (the cherries for sure); none of us liked fruitcake but we did like this.

We Griffith sisters arrived at Mama Cle's house, pecked her on the cheek and raced back to the kitchen where an Applesauce Cake was always waiting. To us it was the ultimate symbol of love.

Rum Cake by Carolyn Sloss Ratliff

My maternal grandmother Mary Betty Lowery used to make this cake for our family when she came to visit us from Jacksonville, Alabama. Mary Betty used to say, "The best way to win hearts is through stomachs!" She was head of the Home Economics Department of Jacksonville State University and her cakes, biscuits, and barbeque were absolutely delicious! Her granddaughters often shared this cake with their suitors, often winning their hearts.



Barbie Cake by Riva Cullinan

As a little girl, my grandmother made me Barbie Cakes for my birthday. As a five-year old, this cake was very exciting and delicious. The knowledge that she made it for me always made it taste better, and you got a new toy!

LEFT: Riva Cullinan's Barbie Cake, 2019.

Mimi's Magic Yellow Sheet Cake with Chocolate Butter Cream Icing by Virginia and Robert White

Our grandmother made this cake with and for us. It always accompanied us to the beach. Mimi died but we remember her with this delicious cake. It is not unique. It is a classic 1-2-3-4 cake, baked with love for us.

Chocolate Mint Angel Cake by Marjorie White

This fun, simple to make, and yummy cake was a favorite for birthday parties and special family occasions. The recipe came from a tiny 1964 cookbook, *Make It Now-Bake It Later*, that was given to me from Flora Fenner at a kitchen-themed wedding shower organized by my mother's friends.

Date Squares or Mini Cup Cakes by Kaydee Erdreich Breman

Aunt Dottie's Jam Cake by Marjorie Lee White

Aunt Dottie is Louisa May Alcott's Aunt Dottie. We started making this cake for Thanksgiving and then made it into little cupcakes for parties as the recipe is large and very rich. The cake includes lots of yummy ingredients—like crushed pineapple, blackberry jam, buttermilk, walnuts and spices—and burnt sugar icing.

Fudge Cake by Elberta Reid

I've been making it for 50 years.

Blarney Stones for St. Patrick's Day by Michelle Kinsler Blackwood

I remember my mother, Bertha Kinsler, making Blarney Stones for us around St. Patrick's Day. My family lived on a farm in south central Kansas and 20 miles from a town with 3,000 people. My mother did a fair amount of baking, partly because we lived so far from town and only drove into town to buy groceries once a week or longer. We raised our own chickens that produced the eggs we used. Our nearest neighbor, one mile away, had dairy cows, so we got milk from them and they got eggs from us.

My mother would bring out her electric mixer and sometimes let us kids help make a cake. Making Blarney Stones was messy (the cake balls are covered with powdered sugar and peanuts) and I don't remember her inviting us to help make these. I just remember coming home from school and they would be there—ready to eat! Which we did! I made Blarney Stones a couple of times when my children were very young, but as I said, they are pretty messy to make and my husband wasn't impressed, so I'm sorry to say I didn't continue making them. I made them for this event, because they are a memory from my childhood and I wish I could call my mother to say "I made Blarney Stones today!"

Beaten Biscuits by Henry Hughes

Making beaten biscuits with my grandmother Margaret Elizabeth Faulconer Minich ("Lady Margaret") was a highlight of my childhood that I continue today using her 1929 apparatus.



Seventh-generation beaten biscuit maker Henry Hughes with his grandmother's 1929 Beaten Biscuit machine, 2019.



THE SWEETEST CONTEST TRADITION CONTINUES so ...

Let Us Eat Cake ... and Pie Too
(if it's your family fave, we'll love it!)

What to Do:

BAKE A CAKE, MAKE A PIE—either one, or both if you can't decide!

FILL OUT THE ENTRY FORM (we savor your stories!)

DROP YOUR CREATION AT STRANGE AUDITORIUM, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, for judging by 4 p.m. on Feb. 24.



2020 CAKE VS. PIE CONTEST ENTRY FORM

Fill out your form in advance.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

MEMORIES OF THIS CAKE/PIE: _____

WHOSE RECIPE WAS IT? Details, please! (family stories):

WHAT MAKES YOUR CAKE/PIE UNIQUE? :

RECIPE must be typed and affixed to this form.

Are you willing to share your recipe: Y / N (circle one)

Signature _____ Date _____

Bring to Annual Meeting between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. February 24.

Winners will be announced during the BHS Annual Meeting at 7 p.m.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Read This Too!

Have Your Cake and

