

Our New Home on Highland

We have moved!

Our new offices at 2827 Highland Avenue are emerging at the historic Altamont Apartments, now the Greenbrier at Altamont retirement community operated by Noland Health Services, Inc. The Highland Avenue neighborhood is super friendly and street life abundant. We look forward to welcoming you when our renovations are complete.

Thanks to the creative efforts of our President Wayne Hester and the generosity of Pat and Ehney Camp and The Camp Foundation, and following removal of multiple floors, the original quarry tile floor has reappeared, and with new lighting and paint, the original drugstore space is looking good. This construction began April 1 and finished early June. Our new exhibit panels and shelving for our research collections accumulated over the past 35 years have just arrived. Work is still to be done to get the quarry tile floor restored, HVAC system up to par, and the office up and running. In uncharacteristic fashion, we have been so busy moving and renovating that we have not photo-documented the move and construction.

Extraction from the Sloss Quarters site prior to the opening of the World Games (in our former front yard) was a challenge that required about 20+ moves during May and June. This was accomplished by Regina and Blue Ammon, Gerry Waters, Carol Ogle, Pat Camp's grandson, and their vehicles. Carol Slaughter and Gerry Waters helped pack books. There were also two official moving days with Two Men & A Truck. It took three men to move our heavy furnishings and file cabinets. As we emptied Duncan House and its 2,400 square foot attic, we moved not only to 2827 Highland but to Lakeview Storage. We still have a few more moves from Lakeview to 2827. Marion Walker formally transferred keys to the Duncan House that has been our home for the last 37 years to the City attorney. Our mailing address remains P.O. Box 321474, Birmingham, AL 35232.

The Society and The Altamont

The Society's move to 2827 Highland Avenue prompted us to revisit our files and expand our knowledge and understanding of our new office location. In this newsletter we share a bit of the history of The Altamont and the retail space at 2827 Highland Avenue we now call home.

In 1976, Grande Dame Lib Brown led a bus tour the Society organized for the Alabama Historical Commission's Annual Meeting in Birmingham along "the Grande Avenue," which she pronounced with elongated "a"s. In preparation for a picnic lunch for participants,



"Mrs. Brown, standing, Mrs. White, and [Richard] Bowron visit Rhodes Park. The house in the background, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Scott Phillips, is one that will be toured before a picnic in the park." Original caption to Elma Bell's "City's restored areas to be on view this weekend," *The Birmingham News*, June 14, 1976.

The Altamont
LARGEST AND MOST EXCLUSIVE APARTMENT BUILDING
IN THE SOUTH

Located in Birmingham's best residential section—being on Highland Avenue at Iroquois Street—commanding a wonderful view of the mountain and overlooking the city.

The Altamont offers the latest and most complete solution of the housing problem of today. Seven stories, fire-proof, sound-proof and vermin-proof; containing 121 suites, ranging from 2 to 6-room housekeeping apartments and a number of 1 and 2-room bachelor apartments.

Residents have the privilege of numerous conveniences that cannot be found in the usual apartment building. A complete hotel organization will be maintained with twenty-four-hour-a-day service. House telephone connections are supplied to every apartment. The central switchboard will be attended by three shifts of operators.

The dining room is on the lobby floor and is a beautiful, perfectly appointed and handsomely furnished room. The best service and carefully prepared food is assured, by reason of the fact that Mrs. Little L. Sloss will be in charge.

THE HIGHEST PERSONNEL OF TENANCY IS ASSURED
POSSESSION CAN BE HAD APRIL FIRST
FOR RESERVATIONS, OR DETAILED INFORMATION, SEE OR CALL

Smith - Throckmorton - Schultz Realty Co.
EXCLUSIVE AGENTS
2119 First Avenue Phone Main 2157

Advertisement for The Altamont, *The Birmingham News*, February 15, 1924.

with the help of the City's Public Works Department, Margot Marx excavated long neglected historic features in Rhodes Park. The city's once prestigious Highland Avenue had suffered significantly since the late 1950s as longtime residents died and others moved away. But the Highland Avenue Preservation Society members hung on to their heritage of fine historic housing. In 1975, the City completed plantings of street trees in the median. A few years later in 1980, Alice Bowsher led a Society survey of 2,000 properties on Birmingham's Southside. The first of many nominations to the National Register that followed this study was for the Rhodes Park Historic District, listed in 1982. For several years thereafter, the Society hosted an annual bike ride along the Highland Avenue streetcar route and hosted a party on the porch at the Enslin House, *pictured to the left*. Several years later to help encourage investment in the large apartments as they were converted to retirement community and condominium uses, the Society accepted façade easements on The Altamont, Avalon, Claridge, Highland Plaza, Hanover Court, and Harli Court apartments. So here we are, back again...and delighted to be part of this special place and to have, once again, the opportunity to contribute to the continued vitality of Highland Avenue and the Rhodes Park neighborhood.

About Our New Home: The Altamont

At the completion in February 1924, The Altamont was said to be “the largest and most exclusive Apartment Building in the South.” Located in “Birmingham’s best residential section,” its 121 apartments boasted 24/7 hotel service and wonderful views of Red Mountain and the city. Mrs. Lillie L. Sloss oversaw food served in the elegant 1st floor dining room.

When plans for the seven-story-tall apartment hotel were announced in October 1922, project architect Jacob Salie stated that the Statler hotels in New York City, Buffalo, and Cleveland informed its concept and design. The mixed-use Birmingham apartment would include both residential and commercial components. Of the six- to eight-room apartments one half were slated for permanent

residents and one half furnished as hotel rooms. Both residents and hotel guests might enjoy hotel services within the privacy of a home-like setting. Dining and music rooms were planned on the first floor and eight retail shops along the 133-foot Highland Avenue frontage. The full-service restaurant accepted reservations from the public.

“The service and conveniences in this new apartment hotel will be very similar to that of the high-class Statler hotels up North with café, roof garden, and exclusive shops opening into the lobby, and highest class service throughout. In fact, this hotel will mark a new era in that type of apartment hotels in the whole South.”

—Jacob Salie, “Apartment Hotel Costing \$1,300,000, to be Built Here,”
The Birmingham News, October 20, 1922.

Ellsworth Milton (E. M.) Statler (1863-1928) operated the Hotel Pennsylvania that opened in 1919 in New York City. Beginning in 1901 in Buffalo, Statler brought innovative marketing, design, and labor strategies to the hotel industry. These considerations lowered costs and prices and put luxury within reach of the middle class, especially traveling businessmen and tourists. Statler’s relatively affordable hotel experience evolved into the first hotel chain to have a private bathroom, shower, and running water in every hotel room. This new feature was made possible by an innovative stacked



The Altamont. Photograph by the Birmingham View Company, Collection of Randy Merritt.



Lobby, The Altamont. Photograph 1931, Collection of Randy Merritt.



Hotel Pennsylvania, New York City. Opening dinner menu, 1919. According to historian Daniel Levinson Wilk, this Manhattan hotel managed by E. M. Statler changed the American hospitality industry.



Jacob E. Salie

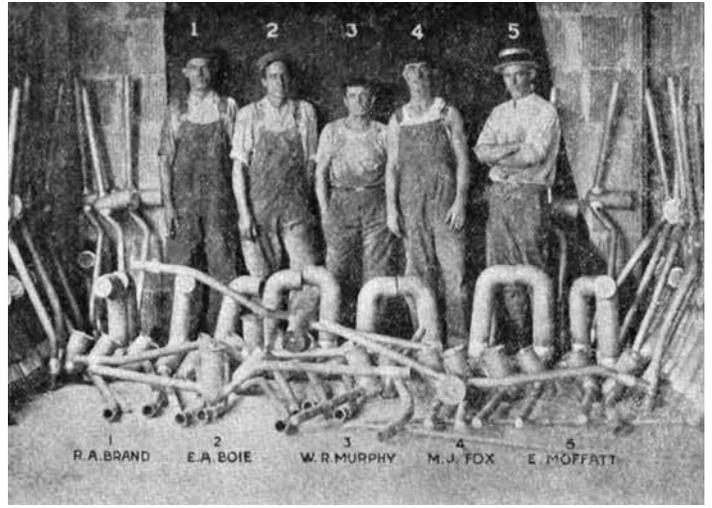
Jacob E. Salie was born in 1884 in Grand Rapids, Michigan and educated here and in Binghamton, New York. He studied architecture at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, graduating in 1906. Three years later, he married a hometown gal, Nina Bouck, and moved to Birmingham. For the next five years, he worked for the architect S. Scott Joy, eventually becoming a junior partner. During this time, Joy’s practice included primarily residential properties, both houses and apartments, and is best known for designs in the style of Frank Lloyd Wright. After working with Philip Mewhinney from 1914 to 1918, Salie opened his own firm. In addition to his work on the Altamont, the Hollywood resident (living at 11 Bonita Drive with his wife and daughter in 1929), drew the late 1920s plans for the Hollywood Country Club of which he was a member. In 1925, his fellow architects elected him president of the newly formed Birmingham Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. In the 1930s, Salie worked for the Federal Housing Administration.

Jacob Salie, architect (1884-1958). Photograph by Jerome Bouck Stephens, FindAGrave.

plumbing system that is still in use. Statler service became synonymous with the saying: "the guest is always right."

Highland Avenue residents were not impressed with the plans for The Altamont; they flooded City Hall protesting the intrusion of retail establishments and hotel guests in their neighborhood. Seeking to modify the plans, they threatened to bring a legal injunction against the developer.

Promoter and builder of The Altamont was the Altamont Investment Company of which H. M. Malony was president. This firm also owned the Highland View Apartments. By September 1923, Malony had sold his interest to A. V. Gude & Company of Atlanta and attorney Val Nesbitt of Birmingham. G. L. Miller & Co. of New York and Atlanta financed the reported \$1,300,000 venture that was among \$11,000,000 the firm raised for apartment projects across the South during 1922. According to a 1938 Federal Housing Administration report, Miller financed the Altamont, the Claridge, and the Highland Plaza apartments, all under construction in the mid 1920s, through the sale of bonds.



"Members of Local 91 Installing Work on Altamont Apartments," *Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters Journal*, Vol. XXXVIII. No. 12, December 1923.

The Loyd-Leonard Drug Co.

Ground Floor---The Altamont

Phones Main, 3362-3363

Formal Opening, Wednesday, August 13th

Souvenirs and Refreshments Free to All From 8 P. M. to 10 P. M.

Under the management of two thoroughly experienced pharmacists and druggists, this store makes its bid for your patronage on a basis of quality and satisfaction in service. You are invited to attend our formal opening, which will take place next Wednesday evening.

DURING our formal opening we will present cigars and refreshments to the men and candy and toilet novelties to ladies. We are agents for Whitman's candies.

OUR prescription department will be stocked with drugs of purity, and every prescription will be filled with the utmost care and with all accuracy.



The Beautiful Interior of Loyd-Leonard Drug Co.



Soda Fountain and Interior of Loyd-Leonard Drug Co.

WE FEEL DISTINCTLY complimented in having been selected to design and manufacture the fixtures for Loyd-Leonard Drug Company. This is a wonderful store in a wonderful location.

We congratulate the management and wish for them a great success.

We are manufacturers of store, bank, office and jewelry fixtures. Originators and designers of Clearview Bank Fixtures

The Georgia Show Case Co.

F. E. Litchfield, Vice-President and General Manager
MONTGOMERY, ALA.
Doster-Northington, Local Distributors For Our Drug Store Fixtures

LOYD-LEONARD DRUG COMPANY
2108 First Avenue
Birmingham, Alabama
August 8, 1924

Georgia Show Case Company,
Montgomery, Alabama.

It gives us pleasure to express to you our appreciation of the splendid work and service in the construction of our new drug store fixt.

The perfect blending and beautiful design has attracted the attention and raised appreciation of our patrons from the very first to the last.

We are glad to remain your permanent and service and wish for you continued business.

Sincerely,
LOYD-LEONARD DRUG CO.
E. A. BOIE
Secretary

A Perfectly Appointed Soda Fountain

Is an asset to a druggist and a source of pleasure to the public. We supplied the Loyd-Leonard Drug Company with their fixtures and soda fountain.

The fountain is of Seneca gray marble, trimmed with black and gold, manufactured by Robt. M. Green & Sons, Philadelphia, for whom we are local representatives.

The Loyd-Leonard Will Maintain a High Type of Fountain Service

We wish this new company full measure of success and we are confident that they will achieve it, for their long experience in retail drug activities fits them to serve the public admirably.

Doster-Northington Drug Co.

Wholesale Druggists

2108 First Avenue

Phones: Main 5500-1928



Advertisement for Birmingham Hollow Tile Co., *The Birmingham News*, September 17, 1922.

"Cool in the summer's glare, warm against the winter's chill, homes of brick and tile will always be an enduring monument to the architect, and enduring advertisement to the builder, and a lasting joy to those who live in them." So stated a 1924 advertisement by Clay Products Manufacturers, Birmingham, Ala.

The Birmingham real estate scene was humming. In 1924, construction of the Redmont Hotel, the Municipal (today's Boutwell) Auditorium, the Colored Masonic Temple, the Jefferson County Savings & Loan Association Building (long the headquarters of prominent developer Jemison & Company who undertook the subdivision of Redmont Park at this time), and many other stores and offices as well as residences across the city were under construction. Unlike national trends, Birmingham's construction boom would continue through 1927.

The city is now experiencing an unprecedented building. We challenge any man in the city to name a period of the last 25 years that was marked with greater building activity in public, semi-public, and business structures than now actually going on in Birmingham. . . . And this takes no account of the fact that three of our largest apartment houses have just been completed or are nearing completion.

—"\$8,500,000 in realty trades during July, Construction wave reaches apartments." *Birmingham Age-Herald*. August 3, 1924.

The Altamont is a seven-story Classical Revival style building set into a sloping lot and faced with brick and limestone. Its wings are arranged in an H-shape with a central courtyard opening to Highland Avenue and to the rear where a parking deck was built at a later time. The front courtyard leads to the terrace and the columned entrance. Walls are lined with 400 tons of hollow tiles made by The Birmingham Hollow Tile Company. Massive steel columns support the interior spaces. The pipes were lead.

By the time the hotel opened in 1924, retail activity included the two extant ground-level spaces adjacent the entrance courtyard along Highland Avenue. At the corner of Highland and Iroquois (now 28th) Street, a florist shop opened and sold cut flowers, potted plants, bouquets, and other floral needs. D. L. Smith and Charles B. Webb managed the shop. By 1926, the Altamont Florist was lending space to the Junior League of Birmingham whose members opened a circulating library as a fundraising project for their charitable endeavors. Mrs. Hobart McWhorter served as chief librarian. The League soon added a gift shop chaired by Mrs. Richard Bowron. Homemade cakes and preserves were also prepared and sold.

In the larger retail space at 2827 Highland, the Loyd-Leonard Pharmacy opened on August 13, 1924. Souvenirs and refreshments were provided to guests attending the 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. opening: cigars for the men and Whitman's candies for the ladies. Pharmacists Charles A. Loyd and W. F. Leonard had been operating in the city for 13 years. On the east side of the store, black walnut showcases lined the walls and held drugs ready for dispensing. The west side featured a soda fountain and black walnut café tables and chairs. The Georgia Show Case Co. fabricated all fixtures for the store.

Many would be the residents, retail tenants, and owners of The Altamont. Times would be good and terrible. In 1931, the property sold to an Atlanta investor for \$300,000. In 1945, both the Altamont and the Claridge were sold to a North Carolina investor for \$675,000. Funds were poured into improvements and Molton, Allen & Williams took over management. Good times returned. The Altamont Grill, Hill Grocery, the Altamont Drug Co., a deli and a beauty shop filled retail spaces. But by 1961, occupancy was down and shops closed as hard times fell on Highland Avenue. Residents and businesses were moving to other areas of the city. Longtime residents formed the Highland Avenue Preservation Society and sought historic designations to help spur interest in their historic neighborhood. The Society prepared the Rhodes Park Historic District nomination in 1982 for one of the first Birmingham residential districts to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the nation's list of properties worthy of preservation.

In 1986, The Park Corporation converted the apartments into a retirement community and a fully licensed health care facility. The Society accepted a façade easement on the property at this time. Following management by several firms, Noland Health Services, Inc. purchased The Altamont in 2001 and renamed it the Greenbriar at the Altamont. Today Noland Health continues to operate apartments, assisted living, and nursing care facilities and has leased one of the former retail spaces along Highland Avenue to the Society.

Acknowledgments

Katie Tipton and Gerry Waters researched the Altamont and its architect Jacob Salie through online sources. Randy Merritt shared photographs of exterior and interior views of the apartment shortly following construction and a copy of Pam King's history. Julius Linn Jr. and Katie Tipton served as editors, Scott Fuller as newsletter designer.

Marjorie L. White

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The Altamont. Photograph by Birmingham View Company. Collection of Randy Merritt.



Our new Home at
 2827 Highland Avenue

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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