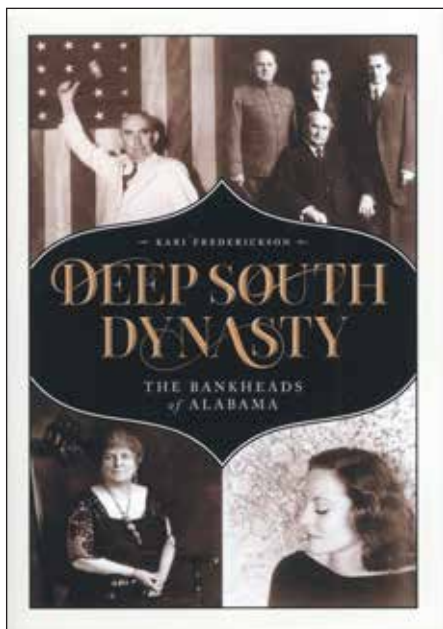


BIRMINGHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Newsletter

February 2023

## Talks, Autograph Party, and Cake Walk



PLEASE JOIN US ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27 AT 7 P.M. IN THE AUDITORIUM of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens for the 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Birmingham Historical Society. President Wayne Hester will preside. He will report on our campaign to double the endowment to provide for the future of the Society and will lead our salute to Pat Camp—who after 45 years of sustaining projects and programs has requested to step down as a Trustee and permit another to serve! (The Nominating Committee has recommended a well-earned sabbatical.)

Our speaker, Dr. Kari Frederickson, will share her insights into the legendary Bankhead family. As Professor of Southern History at the University of Alabama, Frederickson, who teaches Southern history since 1865, U.S. political history, and African American history, was the perfect person to dig in and unearth this fascinating story.

Jasper banker and University of Alabama Trustee John Oliver (who married Barbara Bankhead, granddaughter of John Hollis Bankhead Jr.) commissioned Frederickson to write about the Bankhead family. And after more than a decade of exhaustive and exhausting research, she did, producing the 416-page *Deep South Dynasty: The Bankheads of Alabama* in 2022.

Following Dr. Frederickson's talk, Carolanne Roberts will announce the winners of the Cake Walk into the Past Competition and extoll the best cakes, per the palates of our secret judges. The 2023 categories include Best Overall Cake, Most Vintage Recipe, Most Unusual Cake, and Best Memory Statement.

You will then have time to get your copy of *Deep South Dynasty*, visit with our speaker, sample the cakes, and pay your 2023 Society dues. Copies of *Deep South Dynasty* will be available for sale for \$40 cash, check or credit card.



**Dr. Kari Frederickson**  
Professor of History at the University of Alabama  
And our speaker

### CALLING ALL CAKES for A Cake Walk into the Past: Favorite Childhood Cakes (and Why)

**THE RULES:** Bake your Favorite Childhood Cake and bring the form (on back) and your cake for judging to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens Auditorium by 4 p.m. on February 27.

**JUDGING CATEGORIES:** Best Overall Cake, Most Vintage Recipe, Most Unusual Cake, Best Memory Statement

### In Praise of Pat (Patricia Hough Camp)

In 1978, The Junior League of Birmingham chose Mrs. Ehney A. Camp III to serve as chairman of Birmingham Historical Society's first project: the Downtown Discovery Tours. Having thought up this project, I assumed that I would chair it. I am forever grateful to the someone at the League who tapped Pat Camp for leadership. She proceeded to sell the non-existent tours to nearly every school system in the Birmingham area. (Headmaster Martin Hames signed up the entire Altamont School.) And thus, 35 years of school children with their little green books hit the downtown streets, gazing up with admiring eyes and seeing beauty in the then dirty and



Pat Camp, helping move the Society to Sloss in 1985 and celebrating our move to 2827 Highland Avenue in 2022.

deteriorated historic buildings. Bonding with *Birmingham News* Editor Elma Bell, Pat and Elma orchestrated feature story after story about preservation pioneers as local owners found new uses for our historic buildings. To spur interest in the saving of Sloss Furnaces, Pat cultivated Kathryn Windham and supported Windham's telling of the Sloss ghost story, encouraging the City and its citizens to embrace this industrial icon. When in 1993, the Society decided to copy the National Trust for Historic Preservation and establish a Heritage Society, the intent of which was to raise funds by providing access to private residences, Pat was there to spearhead and chair the annual gatherings ... for the next 30 years. Wherever Society projects have taken place, Pat was there, providing counsel and leadership and pitching in and making them happen as the Society's educational party service has unfurled over the past 45 years. MLW

# Birmingham and Alabama's Bankhead Legacy

Bankhead Lake, Bankhead Forest, Bankhead Highway, Bankhead Tunnel, Bankhead House and Heritage Center.

Why are so many landmarks named Bankhead?

Kari Frederickson answers this question in her recently released biography: *Deep South Dynasty: The Bankheads of Alabama*. Frederickson traces the careers of five members of this northwest Alabama family. Her sweeping account documents the complex story of the family's role in state and national politics.

John Bankhead Sr. excels as he harnesses the federal government and channels federal funds for post offices and public buildings, locks and dams, and rural roads and highways. These initiatives helped develop the region's agricultural and industrial capacity and lift it out of the wreckage caused by the Civil War. His sons follow him to Washington as Bankhead family members serve in the U.S. Congress from 1887 to 1946. Granddaughter Tallulah stars on the London and New York stages, in Hollywood, and on the radio. While father John and his children (William, John, and Marie) held old school and traditional Southern values, granddaughter Tallulah becomes their flaming opposite: a champion of racial tolerance and equality. Behind the scenes, her grandmother Tallulah James Brockman Bankhead, John Sr.'s wife of 53 years, served as her tombstone reads: "The Inspiration of his career" ... and this legendary family.

## John Hollis Bankhead Sr. (1842-1920)

Confederate veteran and farmer, Bankhead served in political office from 1865 until his death in 1920. During his 33 years



**John Hollis Bankhead** with his granddaughters: Tallulah, left, and Eugenia, right, 1917. Library of Congress.

*There is a solidarity about him that warrants confidence in his judgments.*

— New York Congressman Amos Cummings

in the U.S. Congress, he headed important committees on inland waterways and harbors, post offices and public buildings, and good roads. He was a "super appropriator" well before the term was coined.



"Sunset," John Hollis and Tallulah James Brockman Bankhead House (c.1900). 1400 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Jasper. Jet Lowe, Historic American Buildings Survey, 1993.

In 1900, the Bankheads moved from their home in today's Sulligent to Jasper. Living both here and in Washington D.C., they raised granddaughters Eugenia and Tallulah whose mother had died giving birth to Tallulah.



**Warrior River Locks and Dams** (1888-1915). Map courtesy *Deep South Dynasty*.

Channelization of the Warrior River and the creation of the system of locks and dams, then the longest in the world, provided a



**U.S. Post Office, today's Robert S. Vance Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse** (1921). 1800 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, Birmingham

navigable waterway from Walker County and Birmingham to the Gulf of Mexico, at Mobile. These improvements accessed new markets for agricultural and industrial products and facilitated production of hydroelectric power and recreation.



**W. B. Bankhead**, 1937. *Time Magazine*.

## William Brockman Bankhead (1874-1940)

Lawyer and U. S. Congressman from 1917-1940, Bankhead served during Republican and Democratic administrations, becoming Speaker of the House during the Franklin Roosevelt administration, and serving from 1936 until his death in 1940. A most effective parliamentarian, he marshalled the votes to pass the latter's agenda and brought home to his constituents significant appropriations, including Bankhead Farms, a Farm Security Administration planned community near Jasper. Birmingham became headquarters for many federal Depression era programs.

Today William Brockman Bankhead's home is open to the public as an educational center. Staff collect and showcase Bankhead and Walker County political and military memorabilia and host many community events on the surrounding grounds. The collection on actress Tallulah Bankhead is extensive.



**Bankhead House and Heritage Center** (1924, Bem Price, architect). 800 West Seventh Street, Jasper.



**Clear Creek, Bankhead National Forest.**

Established in 1918 as Alabama National Forest, Congress renamed the wilderness area for William B. Bankhead in 1942, after his death.

**John Hollis Bankhead Jr.**  
(1871-1946)

Eldest son John, a lawyer, managed family businesses and later served as a U.S. Senator from 1931 to 1946, consecutively with his brother for nine of those years.



**John Hollis Bankhead Jr.** Alabama Department of Archives and History.

*"Together, father and sons played key roles in crafting and maintaining a conservative political culture, legal code, and economic system that facilitated economic opportunities for cotton farmers, coal barons, and emerging industries in Alabama and across the South while perpetuating White supremacy."*

—Kari Frederickson

**Marie Bankhead Owen (1869-1958)**

An accomplished author and advocate for the study of history, education, and civics, Owen adeptly lobbied the Roosevelt



**Marie Bankhead Owen**, c.1918. Alabama Department of Archives and History.



**Alabama State Archives Building**, opened 1940. Alabama Department of Archives and History.

administration for the appropriation that funded the building that, to this day, houses the Alabama Department of Archives and History. The Alabama archive, the first state archive in the United States, had been established in 1901 by her scholarly husband Thomas McAdory Owen. Following his death in 1920 and for the next 35 years, Marie Bankhead served as director of the Archives. Owen's collection policies supported her political views, including support for "the Lost Cause" and opposition to women's suffrage.

**Tallulah Brockman Bankhead**  
(1902-1968)



**Tallulah Brockman Bankhead**, c. 1940. Poster for the touring show of *Little Foxes*. Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Beautiful, outrageous, witty, the actress' career spanned five decades. Tallulah Bankhead starred on the London stage in the roaring 20s, in Hollywood films of the 1930s, on the New York stage with her award-winning portrayal of Regina Giddings in Lillian Hellman's *Little Foxes*, in Alfred Hitchcock's 1944 film *Lifeboat*, and in a popular radio show of the 1950s.

*"A star more than an actress, a personality more than a star, a celebrity before the phenomenon of celebrity had been identified.... She has not gone gently into oblivion."*

— Robert Gottlieb, *The New Yorker*, 2005.

**Tallulah James Brockman Bankhead**  
(1844-1922)



**Tallulah James Brockman Bankhead.** Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Born in Greenville, South Carolina, Tallulah Brockman became the wife of John Hollis Bankhead Sr. and mother of their five children: John Hollis Bankhead Jr., William Brockman Bankhead, Marie Bankhead Owen, Henry Bankhead, and Louise Bankhead Lund and grandmother of Tallulah Brockman Bankhead. Her grandfather, planter and politician Thomas Patterson Brockman (1797-1859), was a man of great prominence in Greenville who served in the state legislature for many years. Her parents honeymooned at Tallulah Falls, Georgia, vowing then to name a daughter for this spectacular 1,000-foot "leaping water," as the Choctaw described the falls.

*Without detracting from the luster of the late Senator Bankhead, we know that in the rearing of children, the mother has the principal role in shaping their lives and activities. Bankhead sons received much inspiration and instruction from their mother. This mother by breeding and character and intelligence was able to instill in her children much of their aims and results in life. I have heard it stated a number of times that, Mrs. Bankhead (Tallulah Brockman) was largely responsible in the success of her husband's prominence in Washington's social and political life.*

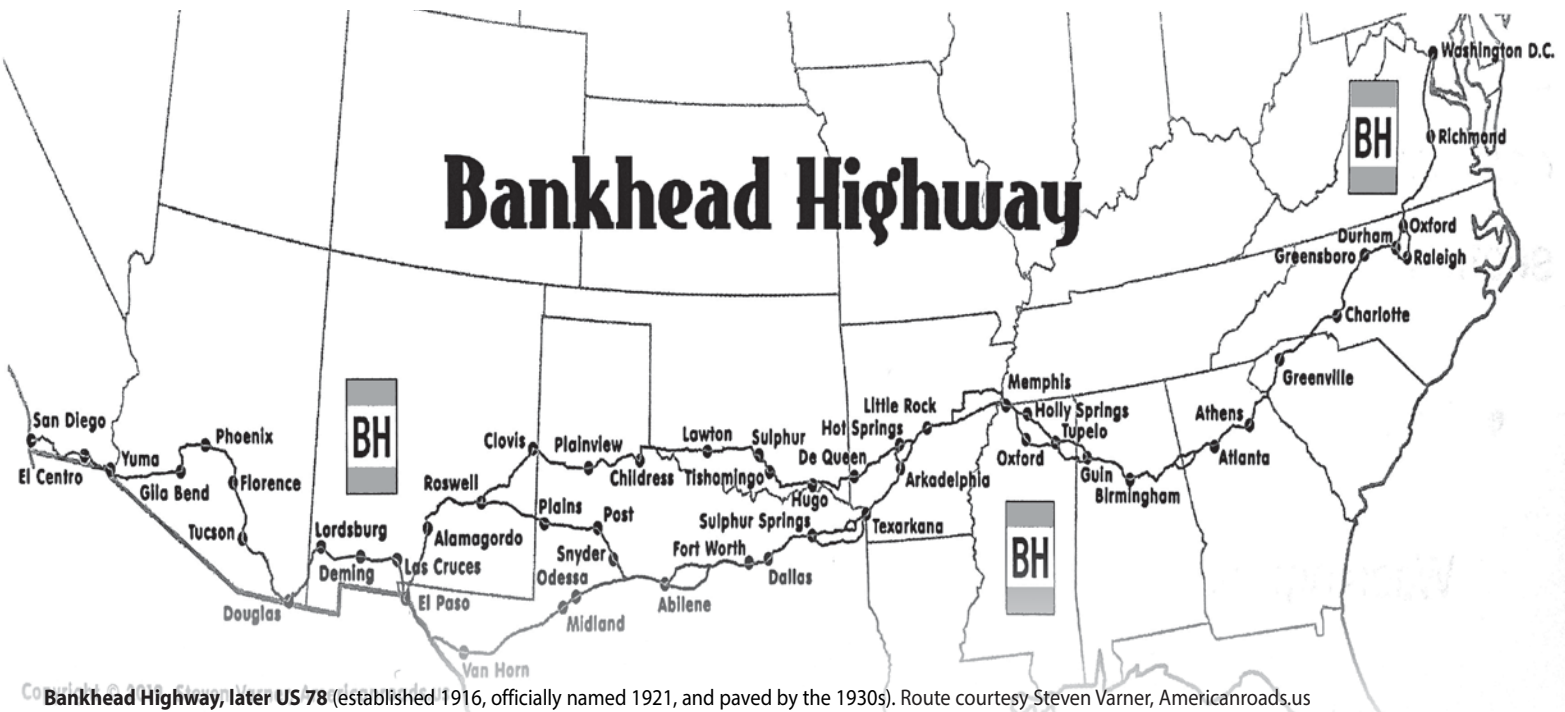
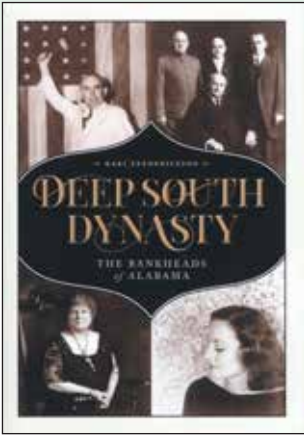
*I heard one Ex-Congressman say that in her time she knew every member of Congress by their first name and most of the diplomats and important officials.*

—Jesse Kilgore Brockman, Mrs. Bankhead's first cousin, providing background on the Brockman side of her family to Charles N. Feidelson of *The Birmingham News*, at the death of Senator John Hollis Bankhead Jr., June 21, 1946. Letter courtesy Brockman great grandson James H. White.

Birmingham Historical Society  
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 Birmingham, AL 35232

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Learn more, February 27 at 7 P.M.



Bankhead Highway, later US 78 (established 1916, officially named 1921, and paved by the 1930s). Route courtesy Steven Varner, Americanroads.us

Extending from Washington D.C. to San Diego, this second national highway traveled across the southern United States. The route was open to travel every day of the year, free from snow and steep mountain climbs. In 1921, Congress officially named the highway for the "father of good roads," John Hollis Bankhead Sr., who, per Frederickson, engineered the largest transfer of federal funds to the states in the nation's history: The Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, the first federal highway funding legislation in the United States.

BIRMINGHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
 Heritage Cake Contest 2023

*A Cake Walk into the Past:  
 My Favorite Childhood Cake (and Why)*

February 27, 2023

CAKE BACKGROUND FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CAKE: \_\_\_\_\_

MY MEMORIES OF THE CAKE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

WHOSE RECIPE WAS IT? \_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU STILL MAKE IT OFTEN? \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: 2-27-23

BRING THIS FORM WITH YOUR CAKE  
 to the Auditorium of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens  
 by 4 p.m. on Monday, February 27 for the judging.