Jefferson County Historical Association

The Jefferson Journal

No. 2 Reflections on Jefferson County History April-June, 2025

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Thursday, April 24, 2025

Member Meeting at Mountain Brook City Hall 6:30 pm

Mr. Burgin Matthews, founding director of the Southern Music Research Center, will discuss the contributions of Jefferson County musicians to American life during the Second World War.

OUR MISSION:

To Preserve and Remember

Contact JCHA

To submit articles or mailing questions/changes for the JCHA newsletter, Contact the editor:

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Anna Judge
An Alabama Icon

By Maddie Benton

Maddie Benton is a junior at Samford University studying English, creative writing, and history to learn to learn how to tell unexplored stories from the past to present day audiences.

It's hard to narrow down just one thing that makes Anna Judge worthy of the title of Alabama icon. She was the first female graduate of Samford University, or Howard College as it was known back in 1896. Judge received a civil degree, C.E., which was awarded to accomplished students since no graduate courses existed.

While Judge and fellow female student Eugenia Anna Lacher Weatherly attended Samford, The Alabama Baptist State Convention Annual issued the glowing report that "thus far nothing has occurred to indicate that a mistake was made in admitting young ladies to the college halls."

In 1898, however, Samford returned to its policy of male-only graduates due to "lack of proper facilities for women." The next female graduate of Samford would not walk the stage until 1913. Judge's status as the first female graduate of Samford University would have been enough to cement her in history, but she continued to break new ground for the rest of her life.

Anna Judge Schoellkopf, ca. 1896, Samford University Special Collections

After a brief marriage to a fellow Samford graduate Joseph Johnston (1896-1900), Judge divorced and remarried Walter Hotron Schoellkopf (1908). She was thrust into the social spotlight soon thereafter. The New York Tribune, though, noted in its rather hilariously titled 1915 article about

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Message from the President

Martin Clapp

Greetings all. I hope this edition of the Jefferson Journal finds you doing well. I have to say we've started out the year with quite a bang. If you were unable to attend the January meeting, it might be just as well. We were very nearly at 'standing room only', with a whopping 82 members in attendance! Col. Ed Rowe gave us some excellent insight into military and national security from World War II up until today. Ask anyone who went, it was fantastic.

As mentioned in last quarter's Journal, we are busy shoring up our membership info and means of communication. Thank you to all who have returned our calls and emails as we've attempted to ensure we have current and correct contact information for all of you. And speaking of…one of the most important things we can have on file is your email address, if you have one. If you have NOT been getting emails from us regarding upcoming meetings, dues reminders, etc. then please shoot us a line at info@jeffcohistory.com and let us know your name and correct email address. If you provide your mailing address and/or telephone number that can help make sure we pull up the correct contact in our database. Thank you!

Finally, a plug for our April meeting. Continuing our focus on World War II, we are excited to have Mr. Burgin Matthews, founding director of the Southern Music Research Center, as our speaker. Mr. Matthews will discuss the contributions of Jefferson County musicians to American life during the Second World War. Topics include the central role of the city's jazz players in shaping the musical culture of the Armed Services; "Tuxedo Junction" as a WWII export and anthem; a Birmingham rock-and-roll pioneer's experience in a German P.O.W. camp; the local wartime roots of a holiday standard; and the war's larger impact on the musical styles – and professional careers – of local artists from a range of genres. Do join us!

Except for October, all 2025 meetings will be held at our usual location in Mountain Brook City Hall from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm on the dates below. Mark your calendars!

APRIL | Thursday the 24th
JULY | Thursday the 31st
OCTOBER | Thursday the 23rd (tentative)
See you on the 24th! Be there or be square.

Warm regards,
Martin Clapp
President

A 1971 Birmingham News advertisement listing all the cities where Bargain Town then had stores.

"The Marquesa de Pontejos" by Goya

(Judge continued from page 1)

her: "Home, Husband, Happiness, Health, Wealth and Beauty are Not Quite Enough for One Woman, Who Would Also Be Wise." Anna Judge wasn't satisfied with being married to a millionaire but instead began looking for a job with a newspaper. As the article wittily suggests, "to be young and pretty and wealthy is little balm to one bitten by ambition. Mrs. Schoellkopf has always had the ambition to be a writer."

And so, Judge decided to write a novel, one about the war raging in Europe. She wanted her story to have power and believability, so she boarded a ship — the R.M.S. Lusitania, the very same ship that would sink in just a few months, drawing the United States into the war — and headed to Europe to write.

She was not trained as a nurse, but she volunteered and "got her material by day and used it the same night," composing it in a mere three months. It was published only four months later. When describing her motivation for writing, she mentioned that she hoped she could "waken a generous impulse" in people who could not fully understand the devastation of the war or had ceased to be involved once the initial shock passed. Judge also noted that she "tried to show the woman's side of the war." She nobly sought to stir people to action and tell of the unsung heroes of World War I. To do so, she composed the well-known, but often uncredited book *A Nurse's Story* under the pen name Adele Bleaneau. Judge lived her dream of becoming a writer, and the New York Tribune reported that her story achieved its intended effects, motivating more readers than she could have expected to aid in the war effort.

After the publication of her book, Judge did not slow down. I had the privilege of speaking with her granddaughter, Ms. Anna Lacher, who described Judge as "independent," since she travelled so frequently by herself. In 1917, for example, she travelled to Japan and met with writers who mentioned her in their journals. She was working on a project to translate Japanese literature into English, but her contact died suddenly.

In 1918, her husband entered U.S. diplomatic service, and they lived in Paris, Madrid, Bucharest, Buena Aries, and Vienna. During her travels, she wrote a biography of Don Jose San Martin, a revolutionary hero in South America. Ms. Lacher also told me that Judge was stationed in Spain during the Spanish Civil War and helped Andrew Mellon, the secretary of treasury, purchase and acquire a famous Goya painting. Today, the painting hangs in the National Gallery of Art in D.C. Ms. Lacher was quick to point out that it is difficult to grasp what an accomplishment it was to organize this in the midst of war and before modern communication.

In 1930, Judge began work on her exquisite house, built by President Herbert Hoover in 1921. Judge executed major renovations on the house, spending an estimated one million dollars (equivalent today to over twenty million). The house was later purchased by the Burmese government to use as an embassy and still stands today as a lasting monument to the life and legacy of Anna Judge.

In the eyes of the newspaper, Judge was an eccentric

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millionaire. In the eyes of her granddaughter, Judge was "a very driven person…really interested in all kinds of things." Perhaps in her own eyes, Judge was simply a person who sought to make a difference, who sought to bring a different, personal lens to the story of WWI. In a 1915 letter she noted, "the whole thing makes one pause and consider how few things in life really do count after all. Already, I have come to believe I shall never look on life quite the same again. The courage, determination, the bravery, the self-sacrifice, of the people here put one to shame. I wish we all might see it. It could not fail to make better and more unselfish human beings of us."

To the members of Jefferson County and Birmingham at large, Judge is nothing less than an example of a ground-breaking history maker who we can proudly call our own. She charted new territory as a student, an author, a world-traveler, and a diplomat. Though she has not often been mentioned in traditional history, Anna Judge Schoellkopf undeniably left a mark on many of its pages. It is up to the citizens of Jefferson County and Birmingham to restore Judge and figures like her to their proper place in our historical consciousness.

Photograph of Ms. Anna Schoellkopf Lacher with an oil painting of her grandmother.

Ad from Birmingham News, September 1946

Helen Bess Ore Mine in Crestline.

Helen Bess: Ore Mining in Crestline

By Todd Russell

Todd Russell is a lifelong Birmingham resident, Crestline Neighborhood Association President, nationally ranked croquet player with the Mountain Brook Croquet Club, a passionate local history buff, and Ruffner Mountain enthusiast.

Just north of Crestline Village, in a deep ravine behind the Mountain Brook Post Office, sits the remains of the Helen Bess ore mine. The Helen Bess mine has been mistakenly believed by many to be the source of iron ore for Wallace McElwain's Cahaba Ironworks better known as the Irondale Furnace or "Cannonball Factory." This mistake was likely first promulgated by legendary historian Ethel Armes in her book The Story of Iron and Coal, published in 1910. Local (and also legendary) historian Robert Yuill proved beyond any doubt that this was not the case, as discussed in a previous Nextdoor post, "Yankees in Crestline and Crestwood."

In his book Iron Mining on the NE Portion of Red Mtn, Birmingham, Alabama, Yuill writes:

"William Buffington and others first acquired this property in 1867 from the US government. Hillsdale Land Company, having acquired the property in 1889, then granted the Birmingham Mineral Railroad a right of way into the Helen Bess mine, in April 1891. The spur was about 1700 feet long with a tipple at the end standing over two tracks. Hillsdale Land Company conveyed the property to the Birmingham Ore Company in April 1902, who later conveyed the property to Birmingham Ore Mining Company."

We know McElwain's land was east of the former Trinity Hospital site, so it would not make sense for him to lease other land.

Initially at Helen Bess Mine, the ore was strip mined along the edges of the ravine and primarily in a gully below

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(Ore Mine continued from page 5)

Altamont Road where the ore seam was an impressive seventeen feet thick. Next, drift mines were worked into the sides of the ravine. By 1907, two slope mines sat on either side of the ravine, the longer being 500 feet long with seven branches both left and right.

Also from Yuill's book:

"Buildings located on site were: a compressor house, boiler house, large shop, two bath houses, two engine houses, one large modern commissary building, old commissary building converted into a five-room house, 5 three-room houses and 35 two-room houses."

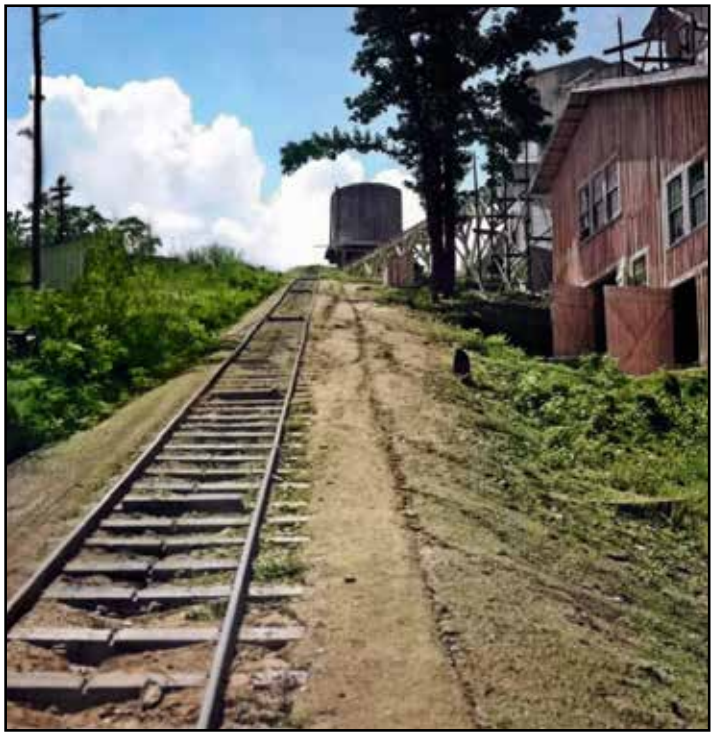
Around 1913, the Iron Ore Products Company built an iron ore concentration plant on site which processed crushed ore so that the silica impurities were separated and removed. The fine ore was then heated so that it fused together and became usable by the local furnaces. The silica was then used for products such as bricks and sand molds. The building reportedly burned to the ground after short periods of operation with little success. The photo of the plant, however, seems far more recent. Perhaps it was rebuilt.

The underground workings of the mine lay beneath Blenheim Drive and extend under Morningside Drive, while the stripped portion sits between the Timberline apartments and Altamont Road. This is all private land, and any mine exploration is inherently dangerous and highly discouraged. However, some drifts are visible behind some of the houses on Blenheim Place. What appears to be the tipple foundation can be seen in a natural area between some houses. The foundations of the concentration plant are visible along Timberline Drive.

While the Helen Bess mine played a key role in Crestline's mining history, it was not the only site of iron extraction in the area. Just a short distance away, the Dago Ore Mine once echoed with the sounds of mining operations. Situated in South Crestwood, this mine has a storied history of its own, tied to the industrial expansion of the region.

Dago Mine: Ore Extraction in South Crestwood

Birmingham, Alabama is well known for its suitability for iron making due to reserves of limestone, coal, and iron ore. The Dago Ore Mine, nestled in the rugged terrain of South Crestwood, is a testament to the determination and hard work of the miners who once extracted iron ore from its depths.



Helen Bess Ore Mine in Crestline.

The mine was first developed in 1889, when a rail spur was built into the ravine that flanks the east side of Southcrest Road and Sumar Road, and the west side of Southhall Road. Mining operations began in February 1890, and for many years, the center of the ravine was heavily excavated, allowing the extension of the railroad spur to reach the bottom of the incline and tipple.

Today, a massive dam sits across the bottom of the ravine, apparently built to prevent any catastrophic failure

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Helen Bess Ore Mine in Crestline.

(Ore Mine continued from page 6)

of the water tower at the Mountain Ridge development. But despite the passing of time and the changes that have occurred in the landscape, the legacy of the Dago Ore Mine lives on.

Historian Robert Yuill, in his book Iron Ore Mining on the Northeast Portion of Red Mountain, Birmingham, Alabama, describes the layout of the mine in great detail. He notes that on the west side of the ravine, eight drifts were driven into the strike of the ore. A shallow incline grade provided access to the drifts, but what makes the Dago Ore Mine unique is that the pitch of the ore seam and the incline grade are not parallel.

At the bottom of the incline, the first few drifts are on the same level as the incline, but as the incline ascends, the elevation of the drifts becomes higher than the elevation of the incline. To avoid the expense of building an incline that followed the ore seam, which required heavy fill work and/or extensive trestle work, chutes were built at the end of each tram track. Ore-filled trams could be dumped into the chute, filling a car on the incline below.

On the east side of Dago hollow, several areas appear to be stripped, a reminder of the relentless mining activity that once took place there.

The Dago Ore Mine was once owned by the Pioneer Mining and Manufacturing Company, an organization created by members of the famous Thomas family of Pennsylvania iron-masters: David, Samuel, and Edwin.

The initial properties of the company were acquired by Baylis Grace and Giles Edwards, who were employed as purchasing agents and prospectors. Edwards moved to the Tannehill Furnace site as land agent for the Pioneer Company, which had bought 2,615 acres in 1868 for its huge iron ore reserves.

The acquisition of additional mineral lands at the hands of various other parties went on gradually for two decades before the first furnace of the Pioneer Company was built on the old Williamson Hawkins plantation. The ore from Dago was likely used at the Thomas furnace, which was part of the complex currently owned by the Wade sand and gravel quarry, across I-20 from Birmingham Southern College.

The Pioneer Company was eventually acquired by Republic Iron and Steel, which operated the Dago Ore Mine for many years before ultimately closing it for good in 1900. The closing of the mine marked the end of an era for the area, as the relentless mining activity that had once taken place there came to a halt.

But despite the passing of time and the changes that have occurred in the landscape, the legacy of the Dago Ore Mine lives on. It is a reminder of the sacrifices that were made and the risks that were taken in the pursuit of the valuable iron ore that was so essential to the development of the area. It is also a testament to the determination and hard work of the miners who once extracted iron ore from its depths, as well as the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the Thomas family and the Pioneer Mining and Manufacturing Company.

Oldest home in Shades valley.

A Minute with a Marker

The Oldest House in Shades Valley

by Rick Lewis

Tucked away on a quiet residential street in Mountain Brook stands a relic of Shades Valley's early industrial era: the Cummings-Eastis-Beaumont House, originally built as the Irondale Furnace commissary. Dating back to 1863, this unassuming structure holds the distinction of being the oldest surviving house in Shades Valley. Its enduring presence offers a tangible link to the region's iron-making heritage and the determined individuals who shaped it.

During the Civil War, Alabama's iron industry became vital to the Confederate war effort, with numerous small furnaces springing up across the state. Among them was the Irondale Furnace, constructed in 1863 by Wallace S. McElwain, a New Jersey native who brought his iron-making expertise to Alabama. The furnace produced iron used for Confederate munitions, making it a strategic target. In July 1865, Union forces under the command of Major General James H. Wilson destroyed the facility, along with other industrial sites in the area.

Though the furnace itself was reduced to ruins, its nearby commissary building—where provisions and supplies were stored and distributed—was spared. Following the war, the sturdy structure was repurposed into a private residence. The home has changed hands over the decades, acquiring the names of its subsequent owners: Cummings, Eastis, and Beaumont.

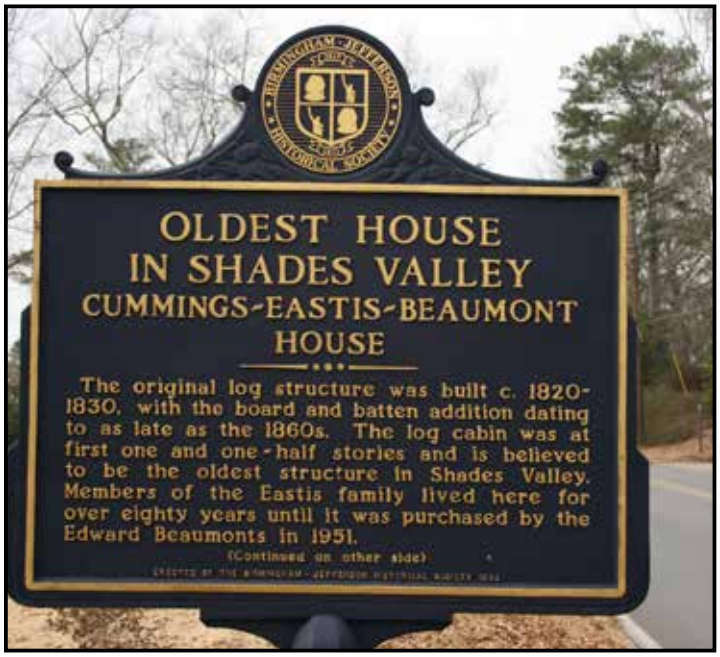
The house, though modest in appearance, stands as a testament to 19th-century craftsmanship. Built with locally sourced materials, including rough-hewn stone and hand-cut timbers, it retains much of its original construction. The functional design reflects its utilitarian origins as a commissary, while later renovations introduced residential features.

Today, the house is privately owned, but its historical significance is recognized by a historical marker placed on the site.

While the Irondale Furnace itself now lies in picturesque ruins, with its stone stack and foundations nestled within the Irondale Furnace Trail Park, the commissary-turned-residence continues to serve as a silent witness to the

valley's transformation. From its wartime origins to its current role as a cherished home, it embodies the resilience and adaptability of the region's architectural and cultural legacy.

For history enthusiasts, the Cummings-Eastis-Beaumont House offers a compelling glimpse into Shades Valley's industrial past. The historical marker serves as a poignant reminder of the valley's iron-producing days and the enduring structures that continue to tell its story.



Historic plaque (front) for the Oldest House in Shades Valley.

Historic plaque (back) for the Oldest House in Shades Valley.

Join the fun Friday with 'L'il Abner'

L'il Abner and Daisy Mae—one of the longest-lived romances in American cartooning—will appear daily in The Birmingham News comics pages.

Long a staple of the Sunday News color comics, "L'il Abner" is one of the all-time top U.S. comic strips. Cartoonist Al Capp created "L'il Abner," who dwells in mythical Dogpatch, U.S.A., a never-never land peopled by the likes of the Scraggs, Earthquake McGoon, Moonbeam McSwine, and Mammy and Pappy Yokum.

Join the fun Friday when "L'il Abner" and his family and friends put in their appearance in the daily comic pages of

The Birmingham News

Birmingham's Unknown Naval Hero

By Tom Badham

This article originally appeared in the Spring 2016 edition of the Jefferson Journal.

Few people knew that the Hardy Tynes steel fabricating company vice-president quietly living on Stone River Circle in Mountain Brook had won the Navy Cross in the dark, early days of World War II for sinking the Japanese heavy cruiser Kako.

Lt. Commander John Moore was the kind of hero of which movies were made.

What made the sinking of the Kako so extraordinary was that he and his crew accomplished it in a dangerous, battle damaged, obsolete World War I era submarine—the S-44. The sub was so old and small that the boats (subs were considered boats, not ships back then) in its class when built in 1923 weren't even given names.

On the night of August 9, 1942, during the first battle of Savo Island, five Japanese heavy cruisers, two light cruisers and one destroyer sank three USN cruisers and one Australian cruiser. Another USN navy cruiser was damaged as well as two more destroyers. The Japanese ships received only moderate damage. Two of the Japanese cruisers, Kako and Furutaka were not even damaged! It was one of the worst defeats suffered by the US Navy in the war.

That night, the Japanese admirals, flushed with victory, ordered four of the heavy cruisers back to their forward stronghold at Rabaul unescorted. The 200-foot long S-44, lurking near Kavieng, crossed their paths early on the morning of August 10 off Simbari Island. Barely able to make 10 knots submerged, its 44 men crewmen frantically positioned their boat for their only chance at hitting one of the fast moving Japanese cruisers before they sped out of range.

The Kako was two football fields long with six eight-inch (bore diameter) guns. She was almost as large as a battleship, had a crew of 616 and could steam at a top speed of 34 knots. She was the last ship in line. But the S-44 was in the right place and only 700 yards away. At 7:06 AM, the S-44 fired all her torpedo tubes—she only had four bow tubes and no stern tubes. At 7:08 all four of the obsolete, slow Mark 10 torpedoes struck the Kako in a textbook perfect spread from the No. 1 turret then aft to the forward magazines and the first two boiler rooms. Within five minutes Kako rolled over on her starboard side, exploded as sea water reached her boilers and sank bow first.

If then Lt. Commander Moore had been in our newer Fleet class submarine, he may not have had such success. The larger and faster Mark 15 and 16 torpedoes had a horrible tendency not to explode when hitting enemy ships. Until the exploder mechanisms were replaced later in the war, most of our "modern" torpedoes were duds. The situation was so bad Hollywood even made a John Wayne movie about it.

John Moore and his crew sank the first Imperial Japanese capital warship of WWII by a USN submarine. A spectacular achievement for an obsolete old relic that had been pressed into emergency wartime service. For sinking the Kako, Moore was awarded the Navy Cross and

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Lt. Commander John Moore

Japanese Heavy Cruiser Kako under fire (Terry Manton).

(Hero continued from page 10)
promoted to Commander. The ship's crew was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

During those first three war patrols in the Southwest Pacific under Moore, the S-44 was credited with three confirmed sinkings totaling 17,070 total tons. Vice-Admiral Charles A. Lockwood, Commander Submarines Southwest Pacific, created a roll of honor for his submariners. When a skipper would have an outstanding patrol, Admiral Lockwood would present him in a ceremony a set of 10 karat solid gold dolphins for which the Admiral had paid for out of his own pocket. On the back of the large dolphin would be the name of the commander and his sub. Moore was well-known in submarine circles as being the most successful S-boat commander of WWII.

Moore would lead three more war patrols from September 9, 1942 to July 17, 1943 in the USS Sailfish (SS-192). This was difficult duty too. The Sailfish had been first commissioned as the USS Squalus in 1939. During a test dive off Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the boat flooded and sank in 243 feet of water. With great difficulty 33 of the crew were saved, but 23 men drowned. Even though the boat was salvaged, refitted and re-named, sailors thought it was "unlucky" with the crews having low morale and performance. Under Moore, the boat successfully sank two Japanese ships. He then was given orders ashore as engineering and maintenance officer for the Southwest Pacific Submarine Fleet. He was promoted to captain on March 3, 1945 and retired as a rear admiral in 1958. He passed away on June 10, 1985.

Sources: US Naval Records via the Steve Brannan private collection; Wikipedia.

Japanese Heavy Cruiser Kako.

The Story of Cherokee Bend in Mountain Brook, Alabama

By Edward W. Stevenson, M.D.

Abridged reprint from the 2019 April-June edition of the Jefferson Journal.

Cherokee Bend is an upscale residential area of Mountain Brook, Jefferson County, Alabama. It does not have inclusive political limits per se, as would be outlined on maps of Mountain Brook as "Cherokee Bend." However, it extends east to the political city line of Irondale, and north to the political city line in the middle of Shades Creek between Mountain Brook and Birmingham. The geographical area, however, in addition to those mentioned, originally in 1963, bordered Old Leeds Road on the south and west. Prior to 1963, the Cherokee Bend area and the Mountain Brook Club were in Jefferson County, not in Mountain Brook. After the original development, as residential areas expanded to the south across Old Leeds Road, new county areas were annexed and became a subdivision known as Cherokee Bend South.

The area holds exceptional historical interest for the present and future homeowners of Cherokee Bend, as well as for history buffs. Although Red Mountain and the associated valleys had active Indian populations in the pre-colonial days, there is no direct evidence that the Cherokee tribe itself occupied Shades Valley, therefore the Cherokee Bend name is not directly related to the tribe. Historical interest in the raw land first comes to attention with the establishment of Cahaba Iron Works (Irondale Furnace) by Wallace S. McElwain during the Civil War, when he moved from Mississippi in 1864 and bought 2146 acres, which included two detached sites on the Cahaba River. It extended from present day Spring Valley, Westbury, and Cherokee Roads on the south, to Red Mountain on the north; and from as far west as Montrose Circle to near the eastern end of Brookwood Road.

The area that was named "Cherokee Bend" in 1963 was composed of perhaps 200 acres, which was only one percent of the total McElwain acreage of 1864. Cherokee Bend can be thought of as the immediate area of the Irondale Furnace only. The furnace was destroyed by Gen. Wilson's famous raid in 1865. It was rebuilt in 1866 by McElwain, and operated until 1873. Charcoal was the fuel for the furnace before coke was generally used in America. The reason for closing the furnace in 1873 was the complete deforestation of his land for fuel, which included the present Cherokee Bend as well as much more. Therefore, all of the trees in Cherokee bend after 1873 and prior to 1963 were a maximum of 90 years old; and, in 2019, the larger and oldest ones are now 146 years old.

After McElween left, the present Cherokee Bend land, and perhaps much more, became the private property of George Gordon Crawford, who was President of T.C.I. from 1907 until 1930. He was a very active civic leader, and a friend of Robert Jemison, Jr. During those years after the deforestation, the natural botanical cycle from weeds to softwoods to hardwoods was progressing. The territory became a network of riding trails; and some people in the area had

horse stables with access to the trails. Robert Jemison, Jr. had been developing Mountain Brook in the late 1920's and early 1930's, and was very familiar with the ironworks. He proposed to George Gordon Crawford that he donate the ironworks site itself as a public park, which he did; and it is now Mountain Brook City's Irondale Furnace Park. The park is marked with an historic marker on Stone River Road, and the park actually bisects Cherokee Bend.

Either before or after Crawford's death in 1936, the land that was to become Cherokee Bend was bought by W.E. Belcher to use as a hardwood reserve for his Belcher Lumber Company. After Belcher's death in 1945, the property became embroiled in a lengthy legal process involving W.E. Belcher's children, the lumber company, and a bank. The legal result appears to be that the property remained with the Belcher Company, and one of W.E.

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(Cherokee Bend continued from page 12)

Belcher's sons, Brady Belcher, became president of the company.

It was Brady Belcher who progressively sold segments of the company land to the Cherokee Bend developers. Each segment was progressively annexed by mutual agreement with the Mountain Brook Planning Commission, the city of Mountain Brook and real estate developers. Belcher's sales were not limited to particular real estate companies, but individuals could buy lots and build their own houses. The Mountain Brook Planning Commission, originally set up by Mr. Jemison, regulated building codes and standards. Cherokee Bend was never annexed by the city as a total unit, but annexed piecemeal in segments as development progressed.

Development of residential property began in 1963, when several interested real estate companies formed a consortium, which is mentioned in available records as "The Cherokee Bend Corporation." The consortium provided a unified voice for the realtor members to be able to deal with governmental issues that were common to all. Perkins Realty, Davis and Majors Realty, Johnson Rast & Hayes, and Jerry and Allen Drennan were the principal members. It is well-accepted that the original idea of development of Cherokee Bend was that of John Hamilton "Ham" Perkins with Mel Davis; and these two were the "sparkplugs" at the beginning of development, and for many years thereafter. Jerry Drennen and Tom Rast were very active participants.

Ham Perkins, with agreement and approval of Robert Jemison, Jr. and the other developers, gave the development its name, "Cherokee Bend," referring to the location of the "bend" in Old Leeds Road at the end of Cherokee Road. Before this large planned residential development began in earnest, there was already a road into the area, Old Leeds Lane, which began at the eastern end of the Mountain Brook Club golf course. Two other streets were already present, Old Leeds Terrace and Hillock Drive, branching from Old Leeds Lane. Houston Blount had a home and horse barn; and John Davis, Mel's brother, had a barn. Cherokee Bend development itself began up the hill on Old Leeds Lane, above those streets, near the driveway to the Blount estate. Stones from the Davis barn were used to build an entrance column, with a bronze plaque inscribed "CHEROKEE BEND 1964."

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at that column, as pictured, but the stone column was later removed. Ham Perkins took the bronze plaque to his home and garden fence. Mountain Brook, with the partnership of The

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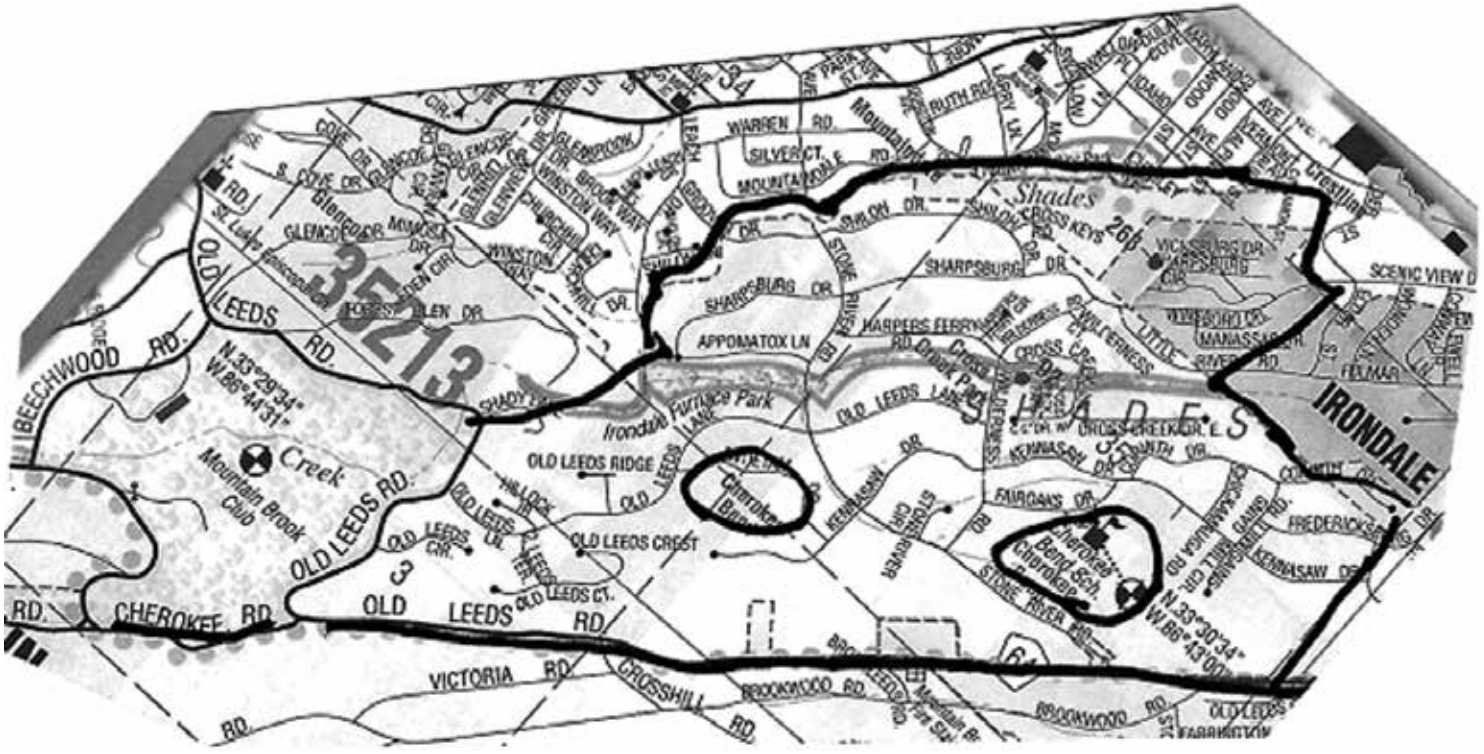


Map with Cherokee Bend Outlined.

(Cherokee Bend continued from page 13)
Cherokee Bend Garden Club, has built a new pedestal for a duplicate plaque, and it has now been installed at the entrance to the area at the intersection of Old Leeds Road and Old Leeds Lane.

The naming of the streets for Civil War battles was done by interest in military history possessed by Annapolis graduate, Ham Perkins. The McElwain iron works certainly provided adequate association with the Civil War, especially since the loss of the Battle of Shiloh had been the incentive for McElwain's move from Mississippi. Two prominent streets were exceptions to that original naming scheme, namely Old Leeds Lane, which was already present, and Stone River Road.

Cherokee Bend Ribbon Cutting 1964; L to R: Front: John Davis, Ham Perkins, Robert Jemison Jr., Bracw Belcher, Jerry Drennon. Back: Vann Perkins, Charles Zukowski, Sam Burr Top: Felix Drennon, Mel Davis, Ted Holder. Photo Courtesy Mrs. Hamilton Perkins

On the area blueprints dated 1963, Stone River Road was named Monarch Avenue. The reason for that name was the original plan to build a bridge across Shades Creek where that street would have entered the pre-existing Birmingham city street named Monarch, in the Mountain Dale section. When the Birmingham City Council refused to allow footing of the bridge on the Birmingham side of Shades Creek, the bridge location was moved nearby to the end of Shiloh Drive, where Birmingham allowed footing to enter Groover Street. This opened a second traffic access to Cherokee Bend. Monarch Avenue was renamed Stone River Road, and it dead-ends on the north end at Shades Creek. For several years prior to that Shiloh Drive bridge, the homeowners, fire trucks, and ambulances had only one access to the whole development, and that was Old Leeds Lane. It is possible that Old Leeds Lane follows an old road used by the iron works for delivery of fuel to the top of the furness bloomer, and was later used as a bridal trail.

As years passed, additional connecting access roads included the upper, south, end of Stone River Road, joining Old Leeds Road; and Sharpsburg Drive, which joined Scenic View Drive in Irondale.

Robert Jemison, Jr. had been developing Mountain Brook since the late 1920's, and certainly had been aware of this 200 acre tract of land as a possible inclusion. The Mountain Brook Country Club had been part of his earliest plans, so he had been very much aware of the contiguous area. In 1929, portions of the area were known as Jefferson County Estates. After World War II and the Korean War, expansion of the original Mountain Brook was inevitable. Belle Meade area, Brookwood Road, and Brookwood Forest were being developed by Perkins Realty, Davis and Majors, Johnson Rast & Hayes, Berman Realty, Jerry and Allen Drennan and others. This expansion had been bypassing this large area which was owned by Belcher Lumber Company and was reserved by them as a source of hardwood lumber. Then, when you add Belcher's litigation to the equation, it remained a forest while other areas were being developed. When that litigation was settled, Belcher was able and willing to sell.

In dealing with the Mountain Brook city government, the infrastructure and school plans were of primary concern. The initial plans required assurance that there would be adequate property for schools. To assure that the school requirement would be met, Ham Perkins personally bought the property for Cherokee Bend School, and donated it to the city. The initial plans also called for a small Williamsburg style shopping center. When the time came to consider implementation of that plan, enough citizens opposed the idea of a commercial area to force abandonment of the shopping center plan. Cross Creek residential subdivision was substituted and developed by Jerry Drennen in the area reserved for the shopping center. The original plans also called for single-family dwellings only; but, as years passed, the Mountain Brook Planning Commission agreed to allow controlled construction of some condominiums and apartments.

(continued on page 15)

(Cherokee Bend continued from page 14)

The social and economic timing turned out to be nearly perfect in the mid 1960's. There were many young professionals and business executives already living in Birmingham or the suburbs, some of whom were war veterans, and had completed their education. They had joined the professional and business community, had started young families that were now needing more space; and they were rising in their chosen businesses and professions. These were the initial homebuyers, lot purchasers, and homebuilders in the new Cherokee Bend. This provided a healthy mix of older Birmingham families and people moving from other cities and states. The early residents formed a community bond like a small town, with parties, sledding in the snow with the children, Christmas-day visits to each other's homes, and other activities which formed lasting friendships, associations and memories.

Other social and economic factors added to the profound changes during the 1960's. The Red Mountain Expressway, the rapid development of The University of Alabama at Birmingham, the building of Baptist Medical Center Montclair, and the civil rights disturbances all had positive impacts on "Over-The-Mountain" development. It was estimated that 400 houses were built in Cherokee Bend during the first ten years.

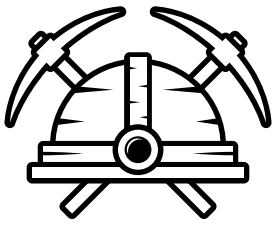
Cherokee Bend Elementary School was built in 1969 on the land donated by Mr. Ham Perkins. At the present time, it enrolls students from Kindergarten through grade 6. Students are assigned to the various Mountain Brook schools by the School Board depending upon need, desires of the parents, and availability. There is no political boundary related to school districts, except the boundaries of the City of Mountain Brook itself.

As the years have passed, areas outside of the original Cherokee Bend have developed, and, as mentioned previously, names such as Cherokee Bend South have been applied. Likewise, some homes have been built in Irondale, contiguous to the Mountain Brook city limits, and architectural changes are not apparent as one crosses the boundary line, but owners outside of Mountain Brook are not eligible to use Cherokee Bend Elementary School. Likewise, assignment of a child to Cherokee Bend School does not necessarily designate that their home is in Cherokee Bend.

The development of Cherokee Bend has occupied a unique period in the land that it occupies. The land was a dense virgin forest in "Shades of Death" Shades Valley before becoming an important Civil War site. Later it was an undeveloped recreational area for equestrian activity, and a hardwood reserve for a lumber company. Finally it is a prestigious residential area, familiar to those who call it home, or fondly recall happy childhoods when they grew up there.

The author was a resident of Cherokee Bend from 1965 until 2008, and wishes to thank the following other sources for this article:

- The Perkins family: Mrs. Ham"Marge" Perkins; son, Charles Perkins; Ham's sister, Carol Perkins Poynor; and many personal conversations by this author with the late Ham Perkins
- Interview with Betty Drennen, wife of the late Jerry Drennen
- Birmingham Public Library staff and Birmingham News files
- The Mountain Brook City Administration staff (Janet Forbes and Dana Hazen)
- "A History of Mountain Brook Alabama" by Marylin Davis Barefield
- The late Dr. Joseph Appleton by interview
- "Descendants of Wallace Scott McElwain" by Linda Coulter
- Wikipedia



A brief History of

The Jefferson County Historical Association

Started in 1942 as the Birmingham Historical Society, our organization evolved into the Birmingham-Jefferson Historical Society and later rebranded as the Jefferson County Historical Association (JCHA) in 2011. With an unwavering dedication to preserving, educating, and publicizing local history, the JCHA has remained steadfast in its mission. Through quarterly meetings, the Jefferson Journal newsletter, and active curation of historical markers and publications, the Association continues to attract local historians and enthusiasts alike. Committed to placing history within the public sphere, the JCHA invites participation from all who share a passion for preserving the rich heritage of Jefferson County.

Upcoming Meeting

We are excited to announce that Burgin Mathews, founding director of the Southern Music Research Center, will be the featured speaker at our meeting on Thursday, April 24th.

Mathews will present "Birmingham Musicians and the Second World War", an engaging exploration of Jefferson County's musical contributions during this pivotal period. His talk will highlight the central role of Birmingham's jazz musicians in shaping the musical culture of the Armed Services, as well as the broader influence of local artists on the wartime soundscape.

Among the fascinating stories Mathews will share are the wartime export of "Tuxedo Junction" as a musical anthem, the harrowing experience of a Birmingham rock-and-roll pioneer in a German POW camp, and the surprising local roots of a beloved holiday standard. He will also examine the war's lasting impact on musical styles and the careers of Birmingham-area artists.

In addition to directing the SMRC, Mathews is the author of ***Magic City: How the Birmingham Jazz Tradition Shaped the Sound of America*** and host of The Lost Child, a weekly downhome roots music radio show on Birmingham Mountain Radio and WBHM. His deep knowledge of the region's musical heritage promises to make this a memorable and insightful presentation.

Past Meeting

Our January quarterly meeting featured a captivating presentation by Retired US Army Colonel Ed Rowe, who shared his expertise on national security and Alabama's role during World War II and today.

Colonel Rowe's presentation, titled "A Peek at Meeting the Challenges of National Security: Alabama in World War II and Today", offered a unique and insightful comparison of wartime challenges to contemporary security threats. Drawing on his 50 years of defense-related government service, including roles with the Army, the Joint Staff, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Colonel Rowe provided a firsthand perspective on the evolving landscape of national defense and our state's unique role in safeguarding our nation.

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