Dr. Sam Webb to Speak on U.S. Senator Lister Hill

“Welfare Legislation During the New Deal”

Dr. Sam Webb, who now serves as professor emeritus in UAB’s Dept. of History, retired in 2010.

Dr. Webb has authored a number of publications, most prominently in The Journal of Southern History and his book Two-Party Politics in the One-Party South: Alabama’s Hill Country 1874-1920. He co-edited the book Alabama Governors: A Political History of the State and is internationally known for his scholarly work in the fields of American political history, the New South and American legal history.

Webb earned his PhD from the University of Arkansas and joined UAB in 1988 as an instructor. He became associate professor of history with tenure in 1997 and has served on a number of committees, including the UAB Archive Committee, Teaching Award Committee and Tenure and Promotion Committee for Associate Professors.

His presentation on the late Sen. Lister Hill will include the senator’s noteworthy efforts to improve the American health care system including his namesake legislation, the Hill-Burton Act.

Meeting Notice

Thursday, April 12
Emmet O’Neal Library
Crestline Heights
Reception: 6:30 PM
Meeting: 7:00 PM
President’s Message

I hope all of you are happily saying goodbye to winter and looking forward to the fine program that Vice President/Program Chairman Tom Carruthers has lined up for our April meeting. Sam Webb’s talk on Lister Hill and the role he played in the adoption of minimum wage legislation should provide a most thought-provoking evening. I hope all of you are planning to attend.

The Birmingham History Center opened to the public its Enduring Business Exhibit on March 14. This exhibit is honoring companies in Jefferson County that are at least 75 years old; it is interactive and open for additions. Please plan to attend and if you are not a member of the BHC, please consider joining. The Center is one of our projects and it needs our support.

On a board note, member Tom West along with Scott Mauldin has been filming made-for-TV spots for Mt. Brook Television (MBTV) on our historical markers in and around Mt. Brook. Two are done with more to come. Please give Tom a big thank you.

Once again, there is a dues notice in this edition. Only about 30% of the membership has paid for 2012 and the board would really appreciate getting in the rest in a timely fashion. The board deeply appreciates your dues support as they support our many historical projects as well as our outstanding programs each quarter. We don’t want to lose members for non-payment. Dues become delinquent on June 1. If you are unsure of your status, please call Harry Bradford at 871-7739.

I will not be at the April meeting as I will be in the South Pacific in the Solomon Islands looking for myzomelas, flowerpiercers, sea-eagles and tropical birds to name a few. You will be in the able hands of Tom Carruthers. Happy spring! See you in July.

ALICE WILLIAMS
JCHA President

Jefferson County Historical Association

The Jefferson County Historical Association is dedicated to preserving and publicizing local history through regular meetings, publications and events. Founded in 1975 to promote historical preservation efforts, the society has grown to more than 400 members.

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In 1910 Highland Avenue was Birmingham’s grandest residential boulevard, with almost 100 significant residences, homes to the city’s business, civic and social leaders. As early as the 1920s commercial encroachment led to the street’s decline, and spot zoning in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in mansions giving way to poorly designed apartment complexes and low end retail. Today, less than a dozen of Highland’s signature homes remain.

Board Member Cathy Adams is currently completing ten years of research into the lost architectural legacy of this landmark street and seeking any relevant photos, family information and anecdotes relating to Highland Avenue’s heyday in the two decades before and after the turn of the 20th century. If you have materials or stories pertinent to this book project please contact Cathy at 918-0877 or by email at cathycadams@aol.com.
Dr. Lawrence Reynolds
The Reynolds Medical History Collection: Part 1
By Bill Weaver, PhD

Alabamians are indebted to Dr. Lawrence Reynolds for his many gifts to the state, none more important nor more valuable than his extensive medical history collection given to the Medical School of his alma mater, the University of Alabama. This is a story of an Alabamian who remembered his home state even when he was so strongly encouraged to reward other areas.

Born in Skipperville (near Ozark in Dale County), he became interested in medicine through reading medical texts to his physician father who had become blind. After graduating from Ozark High School in 1907, he entered the University of Alabama, receiving his degree there in 1911. Upon completion of his undergraduate degree, he entered medical school at Johns Hopkins University, then, as now, one of the most prestigious institutions in the nation.

It was at Johns Hopkins that Reynolds came in contact with and was inspired by several of the luminaries in medicine who were on the faculty there. As were all students during their medical education, Reynolds was exposed to all fields of medicine, but he became enamored with a field that was just getting started: radiology. Before completing his radiology residency at Hopkins and shortly before the U.S. entered World War I, he volunteered for the armed forces. In this role, he helped to install the earliest x-ray equipment in the American Hospital in Paris, and, as is common for physicians in the military during wartime, he obtained an extraordinary amount of x-ray experience.

Following his military service, Reynolds returned to Hopkins, completed his radiology residency, and accepted a position on the Hopkins faculty. However, he was soon lured to Peter Bent Brigham Hospital and to join the radiology faculty at Harvard Medical School. It was there that he became a friend of Dr. Harvey Cushing, famous physician and medical history enthusiast.

In 1922, Reynolds left Boston and joined a Detroit radiology group headed by a physician with whom he had worked during his military time in Europe. Not long thereafter, he became a leader in the radiological society and also associate editor of its journal. His practice in Detroit, which lasted from 1922 until his death in 1961, combined with having no family to support, permitted him to have the financial resources for purchasing rare medical books and other medically-related items.

By the mid-1950’s, he had amassed one of the world’s finest private collections of rare and important books on the history of the medical sciences. His collection was coveted by several institutions including, but not limited to Yale University, Wayne State University, and the University of Michigan. Fortunately for Alabama, his strong allegiance to his home state, its university and its medical school prevailed. The story about where he chose to have his collection reside, along with a brief listing of some of the collection’s most valuable contents, will appear in the next issue of this newsletter.

Editor’s Note: This article was extracted from Bill Weaver and Mary Claire Britt, “Dr. Lawrence Reynolds and His Medical History Collection”, The Alabama Journal of Medical Sciences, Vol. 21, No. 3 (July 1984), pp. 311-317.
As a child during the years following World War II, every time our family drove past an especially ugly white concrete building on a hill on the north side of Lakeshore Drive in Homewood, I was told “that’s where the German prisoners were kept.”

Beginning in the summer of 1943, more than 15,000 German soldiers, mostly captured from Erwin Rommel’s Afrika Korps, were sent to Alabama to the POW camps at Aliceville, Opelika, Camp Rucker and Fort McClellan and dozens of “side camps” including the one in Homewood.

Jim Bennett, author of our Historic Birmingham and Jefferson County history interviewed your writer and also Harrison (Hack) Lloyd who also remembered the Homewood camp. Hack, too young for the war, along with his mother and sister would bake cookies to take to the German prisoners. Lloyd related that these acts of kindness quickly ended when his older brother, a B-24 bomber pilot, was killed after being shot down over Germany.

Bennett’s research showed that the building was formerly known as “County Prison Camp No. 5”, the most modern of nine such facilities in Jefferson County before it was shut down right before World War II in 1940. The German POWs, Hack Lloyd related, worked as orderlies, cooks and janitors at the TB Sanatorium that remains today as Lakeshore Hospital.

After the war, W. H. Merritt bought the prison camp property and converted the main building into a residence and the surrounding land became the Lakeshore Stables and Riding Academy. Later, the buildings were demolished and an office building now rests on the site.
Recent History Center Acquisitions

Sometimes historical events happen recently. On February 2, 2012, the City of Birmingham held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Birmingham Barons’ new ballpark on the Southside. A ticket to the ceremony was donated by Keith DePew.

Each month the Birmingham History Center receives ten to fifteen artifact donations. We try to accept items that have a Birmingham or Jefferson County connection. In addition we adhere to the following code of ethics:

• collections in its custody support our mission and public trust responsibilities.
• collections in our custody are lawfully held, protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for, and preserved.
• collections in our custody are accounted for and documented.
• access to the collections and related information is permitted and regulated.
• acquisition, disposal, and loan activities are conducted in a manner that respects the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources and discourages illicit trade in such materials.
• acquisition, disposal, and loan activities conform to its mission and public trust responsibilities.
• collections-related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.
• competing claims of ownership that may be asserted in connection with objects in its custody should be handled openly, seriously, responsibly and with respect for the dignity of all parties involved.

To donate artifacts related to the history of the Birmingham region, please call 205-202-4146 or bring items to the History Center at 1731 First Avenue North, Birmingham, AL.

Bobblehead Doll
This bobble-head doll was given out to fans at the Rickwood Field Classic on June 22, 2006. It honors Rick Woodward, the longtime owner of the Birmingham Barons. Rickwood Field is the oldest surviving professional baseball park in the United States. It was built in 1910. This doll was donated by James Lowry.

Photograph
This photo of the 1944 Phillips High School county baseball champions was donated by Dr. Bayard Tynes (pictured far right second row). Coach Jim Walker’s team had some excellent ballplayers, including Alan Worthington (second row, third from right) who pitched in the major leagues for the Minnesota Twins and other teams. Jimmy Bragan (second row, left) played in the Dodgers’ farm system and became President of the Southern League.
World War II on the Home Front:
How the Sweet 16 Rolls-Royce Went to War

By Tom Badham

Just about every American young girl would like a car for her sixteenth birthday. Little June got a birthday present that went a bit beyond the basic sixteen-year-old’s wish. Her father, a very well connected St. Louis lawyer, gifted her with a new 1937 Rolls-Royce, complete with chauffeur! The automobile title was in her name! I guess her father could afford to be crazy like a fox.

Not only was the chauffeur-chaperone always on board, but the new four-door convertible “Touring Car” Rolls would stand out just a tad wherever she went in Missouri when she was home from the Stuart Hall private girls’ school in Virginia. Everyone knew whose car that was and that Louis D. Culley was her daddy. Maybe the eyes of Texas weren’t upon her, but Missouri’s sure were.

June, though, was an intelligent girl who showed creative initiative by entering into a little private agreement with the chauffeur which involved an occasional pint bottle traded for his discretion. He’d of course keep an eye on her, but Daddy didn’t get a second by second report if any boy made so bold as to kiss her or something. A girl has to have a little social privacy. She could live with that. Life was good. Then Mr. Hitler got involved.

In the spring of 1939 Great Britain and France knew they soon would be at war with Germany. Prior to the fighting, which began in September of 1939, two British Army officers appeared at June’s parents’ front door. Would June please sell her Rolls to them for “King and country?” The British Army needed armored cars, lots of them, for fighting in the African desert. That Rolls chassis was so strong and massive it would do quite nicely for remodeling into an armored car.

How did they find June? Rolls-Royce kept very good records of their few customers. When a person who could afford a custom built Rolls needed a part, information or advice, Rolls “artificers” had all the information at their fingertips in case they needed to travel to the automobiles. Katmandu, Kansas or Kensington were all the same to the company. They knew where their autos were and who owned them whether they were maharajas or Missouri school girls. The Rolls-Royce Motor Company had a factory assembly and repair facility in New York. If an American customer just bought the engine, chassis and running gear from the factory, they suggested New York’s Brewster Carriage Company to build a custom body to Rolls standards.

A car that went to war, June Culley’s 1937 Rolls-Royce.
The handsome dashing officers with British accents, which make American girls’ knees tremble, pled their case with June. Her dad was out of town and shortly thereafter the chauffeur was out of a job. She sold the car to them for $500. She does remember that her father wasn’t too happy about that. But as she told me, “I took that money, got on a train to New York City, found a boy (one C. Horton Emory by name) and married him. By the time the U.S. got in the war we were happily married and living on Dexter Avenue in Crestline where I still live to this day.”

So, maybe it wasn’t such a bad trade after all.

Thanks to a $10,000 grant from Hatton Smith and Royal Cup Coffee the history of the area, featuring former JCHA President Tom West, can be seen on Charter public access channel 10, MBTV.

Mountain Brook Television, which formerly featured mostly sports shows, has grown more inclusive. The history segment is being coordinated by Susan Doidge from the Mt. Brook Chamber of Commerce and produced by Scott Mauldin of Vulcan Media. The first history segment featured the Old Mill and the Robert Jemison marker on Mountain Brook Parkway. The second was about the oldest house in Shades Valley and the Irondale Furnace marker on Montevallo Road.

Both markers were erected by the Jefferson County Historical Association. MBTV’s format features business and community information about Mountain Brook. While there are no published air times, the history segments are a part of what is titled “MBTV News” and can be viewed on Channel 10, if you are a Mt. Brook cable subscriber, Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7:30 a.m. and Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 12:30 pm and again at 5:30 p.m., or on Channel 99 on ATT Uverse. Future history segments are being planned.

Tune Tom in.

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Smile, We are on TV

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Shades Valley Sun, 1955
This photo was found in the barn of the Prickett house in Ashville, Alabama. Clarence Watkins, who wrote a book on Birmingham baseball, said the photo was taken in 1908, because there was one player pictured here that was only on the Barons that one year. The hill in the background is the famous slag pile. Thanks to Kerry Gossett.

When the Barons Played at the Slag Pile

The Barons history can be traced back to 1885, when the Barons (originally known as the Coal Barons) played in the successive Southern Leagues during the early years of baseball.

In 1887, the Birmingham Barons were playing at the Slag Pile (West End Park), located on 6th Street between 1st Avenue North and the Alabama Great Southern Railroad tracks. The old Slag Pile grandstand would only grant one 60-day lease at a time. Also during these days, the Barons played in East Lake. A.H. (Rick) Woodward, the late Birmingham millionaire industrialist, decided to buy the team in 1910 from J. William McQueen, who had been the Barons’ owner since 1901.

After reaching the final terms in February 1910, Woodward’s first objective was to construct a ballpark. In a short time, he produced plans for the first concrete-and-steel ballpark in the minor leagues. Woodward consulted Philadelphia’s manager Connie Mack about building the 12.7-acre park. From parks such as Philly’s Shibe Park and Pittsburgh’s Forbes Field, Rickwood Field took shape. The name of the park originated from Woodward’s first name and part of his last name.

Construction of Rickwood was complete prior to the first game played there on August 18, 1910. The Barons won the opener 3–2 over Montgomery, after a 2-run rally in the 9th inning. A crowd in excess of 10,000 came for the contest.
When Did The Last Trolley Run?

By Jim Bennett

At one time Birmingham was the largest operator of surface steam dummy lines in the United States.

While other big cities were served in the mid-1880s by horse railways, metropolitan areas were trending toward new cable lines. Unfortunately, horse railways were unsuited for the distances involved in the Birmingham area other than to serve the central city. Cable railways were not well suited for Birmingham either because of their high construction costs which required a traffic density beyond the capability of Birmingham and its suburbs.

The lack of congestion, however, allowed Birmingham to experiment with a form of transportation which had been largely unsuccessful in other places, the steam dummy. While not a new idea, their use was discouraged because the cars scared horses on congested city streets. Because of its wide-open spaces, Birmingham was ideally
suited for steam service, its use here providing rapid transportation without the cost of building a cable or main-line railroad.

Birmingham’s closest competition for steam dummies was Los Angeles which had a similar population dispersion. While horse trams remained in the city proper, the dummy steam lines headed out to the suburbs bringing workers to town on a daily basis.

The first horse car began operation in Birmingham January 24, 1884 while steam dummies began service May 25, 1885. A host of small companies went into business competing for the city’s business. As time passed and the city grew, many were consolidated into larger companies. Oddly, there was little consistency in car purchases and Birmingham had every imaginable coach type possible made by a myriad of coach companies.

Unfortunately not one of these cars, some unique to Birmingham, was saved for museums. Steam service gave way to electric service beginning in 1891 which gave way to trackless coaches with overhead wires in 1953. By 1958, the city’s transportation services turned to buses and the era of the street car was over.

The last trackless vehicles ran on the 25-Ensley line on November 29, 1958. Many of them were sold to Mexico City and Vancouver. (For more information see Street Railways of Birmingham by Alvin W. Hudson and Harold E. Cox privately published in 1976.)

1886: The world’s first electric trolley system was introduced in Montgomery, Alabama.

Some of the old trolley tracks from the Edgewood line can still be seen where Manhattan Street dead ends into Parkridge Drive behind Homewood Park (Bennett).
The Hawes Horror Conclusion, Part Two

By Tom Badham

(continued from last issue)

Concurrently with the coroner’s inquests, Richard Hawes’ defense attorneys led by E. T. Taliaferro and Frank W. Barnett went before Judge Samuel E. Greene with a motion for a change of venue due to the defendant’s belief that he could not get a fair trial in Jefferson County because the jail riot and all the subsequent publicity had prejudiced the local public. Solicitor James E. Hawkins argued that Hawes would get as fair a trial in Jefferson County as elsewhere due to the widespread publicity all across the state. Judge Greene denied the motion.

Lurid newspaper reports of the murders had not only spread throughout Alabama and Georgia, but had been telegraphed around the world. Harper’s Magazine, then the most widely read magazine in the U.S., carried the story complete with drawn illustrations purporting to show the rioters being shot by the Birmingham lawmen.

On January 28, 1889, at 10 AM, Judge Greene called to order the preliminary session of the criminal court in which Hawes was to be tried. The judge had an extraordinary heavy court docket with 211 criminal court cases of which 20 were indictments for murder, 16 assaults with intent to murder and 42 indictments for manslaughter, robbery, forgery and other serious crimes. He then postponed the Hawes trial until late April of 1889.

At 9 AM Monday morning, April 22, 1889, the Richard R. Hawes murder trial reopened in the Jefferson County Criminal Court presided over by Judge Greene. Along with Fannie Bryant, law officers suspected John and Jules Wylie, two Atlanta railroad engineers, of being Hawes’ accomplices. They were arrested in Atlanta and returned to Birmingham. They were escorted into the courtroom under heavy guard.

Grand Jury indictments of Hawes for the murders

Lakeview Lake, now on the Highland Park Golf Course, was the site of one of the most heinous murders in Birmingham history. Here the body of Mrs. Hawes was found. The so-called “Hawes Horrors” earned the Magic City unwanted national press.
of his wife and two daughters were presented to Judge Greene. The prosecution team for the state was lead by Solicitor James E. Hawkins and Judge George Bushnell Denison. Thus began the long and complicated trial of Richard Hawes. It was as much of a spectacle in its day as the celebrity televised trials of today. Colonel Taliaferro, as he was referred to in the press, again made a motion for the venue to be moved and was again denied by Judge Greene. All during the trial Taliaferro would bring up every technicality he could find to either have the trial moved or charges dismissed. Judge Greene steadfastly denied all his motions.

The courtroom was packed by spectators for each session with an amazing number of women competing for the best seats. As well as the Birmingham newspapers, Atlanta papers and others from across the country assigned reporters to watch Hawes during every session of the trial. His every action and demeanor was noted. In the courtroom before each session he seemed cool and detached, chatting with anyone and everyone around him. During the trial he would take notes on the various testimonies, occasionally whispering something to his lawyers and looking almost bored during the proceedings. He at no time admitted any guilt for the crimes.

Since no one admitted witnessing the murders, the crucial evidence and testimony for the prosecution revolved around the actions and movements of Richard Hawes during that first weekend of December 1888. When and where he rode Birmingham’s steam trolley system, both the Highland Avenue and East Lake lines, were key points that had to be established by the prosecution. His location and who he was with had to be pinpointed during those two days the murders were thought to have occurred.

Other key points were exactly when and where were Mrs. Emma Hawes and her two daughters last seen? Also examined during the trial were his accomplices. Fannie Bryant’s role was closely examined. While the Wylie brothers were also thought to be involved, especially John Wylie, perhaps in moving Mrs. Hawes’ and Irene’s bodies to Lakeview Park Lake, testimony and evidence was confused and lacking. While he and his brother were released at that time due to lack of evidence, charges were not dropped.

On Friday afternoon, 3 May 1889, The Hawes trial ended with jury coming back with a verdict around 3:30 PM. Court Clerk W. N. Burgin read in a clear voice, “We the jury, find the defendant guilty of murder in the first degree, as charged in the indictment, and say he shall suffer death.” Col. E. T. Taliaferro gave an interview in the Saturday, May 4, 1889, Birmingham Age-Herald that he would, “of course appeal the Hawes case.” Hawes was formally sentenced on May 23rd.

Judge Greene stated that Hawes had been tried and convicted fairly and impartially but that his attorneys already had made a motion to appeal his case before the Alabama Supreme Court. “Should this case be reversed and remanded, you will have to be tried again on this charge in this or some other county. Meantime, it is better for you to make such preparation as you think you ought to make for the infliction of the death penalty. It is the sentence of the jury that you suffer death, and of this court that on Friday, the 12th day of July next, you be hanged by the neck until you are dead.”

(To be continued in the next issue)
Remembering Bechtel-McCone
World War II in Birmingham

By Thomas M. West, Jr.

If there are any ghosts from World War II lurking around Birmingham, they must be at the vast industrial complex remaining until this day at Birmingham’s airport. At its zenith, 14,000 men and women worked there. Today this fabled place is all but vacant.

During World War II, American aircraft plants turned out airplanes of cookie cutter configuration and to change each one to a specific need, they were flown to places like Birmingham where they were modified to the particular use needed.

Ground was broken January 15, 1943 and J. Perry Yates was general manager. The official name was the “Birmingham Modification Center” or “Bechtel-McCon-Parsons” but locals just called it “Bechtel-McCone.”

What Bechtel-McCone did was modify B-24 Liberators, B-29 Super Fortresses, P-38 Lightnings and A-20 Havocs. A little known effort was the 600 people with “only moderate levels of skill” who restored battle-fatigued jeeps.

The first modified airplane was a huge 4-engine B-24 heavy bomber, christened “Vulcan of Birmingham”, on March 18, 1943.

Bing Crosby came to Birmingham and visited the
Bechtel-McCone plant on June 1, 1943. On hand that day were company owners Ralph M. Parsons and John A. McCone as well as Lewis F. Jeffers, who was chairman of the Jefferson County War Bond Drive and also Bechtel-McCone’s manager of public relations.

On August 1, 1944, the world’s most modern “super fortress” first arrived to be modified. By the war’s end, Birmingham had proudly modified 49% of all Boeing B-29s in production. The two B-29s that dropped “Little Man” and “Fat Boy” (atomic bombs) on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the “Enola Gay” and “Bock’s Car” were not modified here.

Bechtel McCone’s house organ was entitled “Wings of Birmingham” and many copies are still on hand at the Southern History Department of the Birmingham Public Library. In the September 1, 1944 issue is a story about one of Bechtel-McCone’s top engineers, a man by the name of E. M. Rase. Besides his engineering skills, Rase was the father of Betty Jane Rose, Miss Alabama for 1944 who became the second wife (after Ava Gardner) of Mickey Rooney.

As mentioned in an earlier story, Mickey and Betty Jane’s two children, Timmy and Mickey, Jr., were both born right here in Birmingham where their wedding had also taken place. Betty Jane worked in the summer of 1943 in Bechtel-McCone’s Blueprint Control Department.

Among the 14,000 employees, 40% were women, often referred to as “Rosie the Riveters”. Rumor has it that little people (midgets) were hired for their special ability to crawl into tight spaces. One condition of working at Bechtel was that the man became draft exempt. Almost everyone probably knew someone working there. There were two on my short street.

Eyewitnesses that I have interviewed told of a Birmingham sky constantly filled with the war planes being flown in, often by female ferry pilots, being test flown after modification and then flown off to war. What a unique sight the skies of our city must have been!

After the war, Lewis Jeffers took over the plant as Hayes Aircraft. After a change in ownership it became known as Pemco Aeroplex and finally Alabama Aircraft Industries, currently in Chapter 11 reorganization.
**2012 JCHA Membership / Renewal Form**

Please remember to renew your membership if you have not done so. You may use this form also as an initial application for membership. A membership directory will be distributed at a future meeting to dues-paying members.

First Name: _____________________________________________________________________________________________

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