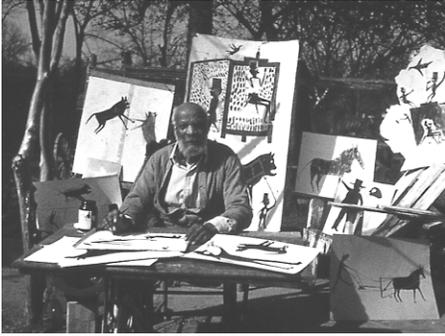


ALABAMAARTS

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In this Issue

Alabama Arts in the Millenium: Past, Present and Future, Volume 2

2 The Past as Challenge to the Future
Al Head

3 The Arts in Alabama: A Millennial Timeline
compiled by Joey Brackner and ASCA staff
Digging through 1000 years of the arts in Alabama

11 Working Women—Making Art in Alabama
by Billie F. Goodloe
*Twelve of Alabama's women artists are celebrated in a new show:
"Voices Rising: Alabama's Women at the Millennium"*

14 "America Creates for the Millennium" in Talladega
by Jan Jenner
*Talladega is selected as a Millennium Community by the White House to
"Honor the Past-Imagine the Future"*

20 The New Urbanism: Can Alabama Grow Smart?
by Philip Morris
How will we answer the challenge of urban growth in the new millennium?

25 T.S. Stribling, Alabama's First Winner
of the Pulitzer Prize in Letters
by William Smith
*Florence's native son made his reputation by dealing with the injustices of life in the South,
but he also alienated many in his home town.*

27 Exhibition Schedule:
Alabama Artist's Gallery

On the cover: Huntsville artist Mary Ann Pope's work is featured in the exhibit "Voices Rising: Alabama Women at the Millennium," now in Washington, D.C. The exhibit will travel to Birmingham, Huntsville, Montgomery, Mobile, Dothan, Gasden, and Auburn in 2001 and 2002. Down in the Dismals, 1995, 84" x 50", oil on canvas, diptych.

The Past as Challenge to the Future

by Al Head

In the last issue of Alabama Arts, we attempted to highlight some of the most significant achievements in the arts in our state's history. We used the results of a survey as the basis for the achievements and people to be featured, with the understanding that important omissions would certainly be brought to our attention. We have heard from a number of you and are still receiving input. Your responses are appreciated and quite interesting.

Neil Brantly, an artist from Montgomery, and Phillip Preston, the director of programming with the Opelika Art Association, both pointed out that Roger Brown, who was a prominent artist from east Alabama, should certainly have been mentioned in our "most significant" list. I agree. Neal also mentioned the importance of Kelly Fitzpatrick, a popular artist from the 1920's through the 1940's and a driving force behind the formation of Montgomery Museum of Art and the Alabama Art League. Part of Neal's letter is as follows:

Kelly Fitzpatrick should be on your list. He was a first-rate artist who captured Alabama life during the period he lived in. His works are strong, colorful and vibrant. The truth of his art, in recording Alabama life, was so clear that the public embraced him and his work. President and Mrs. Roosevelt selected one of his paintings to hang in the White House.

Neal shares his thoughts about Roger Brown with these

observations, which are well-stated and accurate.

The individual artists selected all seem to have a very strong Alabama identity. The thing I find troubling about this is that there are very good Alabama artists who do not have a strong Alabama, or even Southern identity. A good example of this is artist Roger Brown, a hugely successful international artist. He is known as a Chicago School artist, but is a native of Alabama.

We will continue to collect other suggestions or perspectives and will attempt to add to our list all during this year.

Speaking of adding to a list, you will find a timeline in this issue of Alabama Arts that begins with the year 1000, and continues forward to the present; it is a tabulation of some of the important art milestones throughout these ten centuries. The line covers Paleo-Indian culture, to the first Mardi Gras in Mobile, to the publication of significant literary works. The line is comprehensive, yet, admittedly, it is not complete. Again we would welcome your suggestions and additions.

As part of this exercise to compile lists of people, events, achievements and dates in history, we are again reminded of Alabama's rich cultural heritage. In the visual, performing and literary fields, our state can claim artists who have accomplished great things.

While a reflection on the past creates a sense of pride, it is the future that holds our challenge and opportunity for continued greatness. We must build on our past, by stimulating creative people to move to new arenas of work and achievement. We must ask ourselves, "In one hundred years, how will we be remembered? What will our list from 2000 forward look like?"

In Alabama we have come a long way, but still have much ground to cover in our desire to improve the quality of life for all our population. Our look at the past tells us that our achievements in the arts come from great diversity of background and expression. From the Afro blues singer to the Anglo classical dancer, our accomplishments come in different shapes, sounds, words and colors. It is to be hoped that we are learning to celebrate our diversity and to appreciate the rich texture that our differences bring to the past and future.

As you travel through the timeline presented in this issue, and read the features that highlight current activities in the arts in Alabama, allow yourself to be reminded of the immense contribution made by the arts to our great state. Artists and the arts do more to reflect the true personality of our state than does any other single element in our environment. The health of our artistic resources says a great deal about the health of our state and the character of our people.

Al Head is the Executive Director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

A TIMELINE OF ALABAMA'S ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

In our celebration of this millennial year, the staff of the Alabama State Council on the Arts decided that a long look back over the past one thousand years, with the purpose of tracing our state's artistic and cultural development, would prove instructive to the staff and, we hope, to you, our reader. As we worked on developing a timeline of significant events, it evolved that the exercise was not only a learning experience, it was a joyful and rewarding undertaking. As the list grew longer, we found that our feeling of pride in our state's accomplishments increased exponentially. We were delighted, and amazed, to learn just how much Alabamians have contributed to the arts in all categories—visual, literary and performing. We offer the following milestones, which we in no way claim to be a comprehensive listing, for your examination and comment. We believe you will share our pride in the cultural history of Alabama.

Circa 1000 A.D.: Large permanent towns are established along Alabama's rivers. The inhabitants of such towns as those at Moundville construct enormous earthworks around a central plaza and share a distinctive assemblage of artistic motifs, including crosses, sun circles, hands, and serpents.

1539-1543: Hernando de Soto's expedition to North America greatly impacts indigenous people in Alabama and sets in motion a process of cultural interaction between Indians and Old World Cultures. Four separate narrative accounts by survivors of this adventure are subsequently written, offering the only eyewitness accounts of the zenith of pre-Columbian Indian civilization in the South.

1702: Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville establishes Mobile as a French settlement.

1703: The first Mardi Gras is celebrated in Mobile.

1791: Naturalist William Bartram publishes *Travels Through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida: The Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or Creek*. This collection of drawings and journal entries from a 1771-1775 expedition gives the world an early detailed description of the southeastern United States.

1819: Alabama becomes the 22nd state admitted into the Union.

1830: Joseph Thoit Moore, a portrait artist, moves to Montgomery from Ohio and quickly becomes the City's most prolific painter. Moore painted more than 400 portraits before his death, from yellow fever, in 1854.

1830: The Forks of Cypress plantation house in Florence is built for James Jackson.

1831: The process of removal of Southeastern Alabama Indian groups begins. By 1838, most Alabama Indians have been forced to move to Oklahoma.

1831: The University of Alabama is established in Tuscaloosa, offering a focal point for cultural activities. The University environment gives birth to the "Tuscaloosa Bards," including, among others, W.R. Smith, A.B. Meek, Henry W. Hubbard and Jeremiah Clemens.

1832: A gold rush in eastern Alabama brings a rush of settlers into the new state.

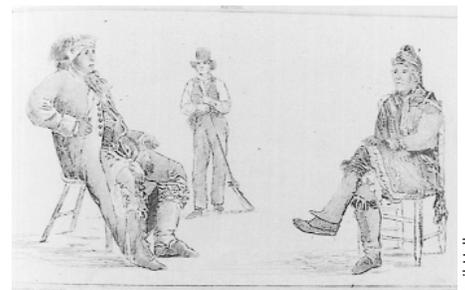
1833: A meteorite storm lights up the skies over Alabama, and inspires the subsequent song and legend.

1837: Early iron foundries in Mobile begin to make decorative ironwork for which the city will become known.



Mardi Gras in Mobile

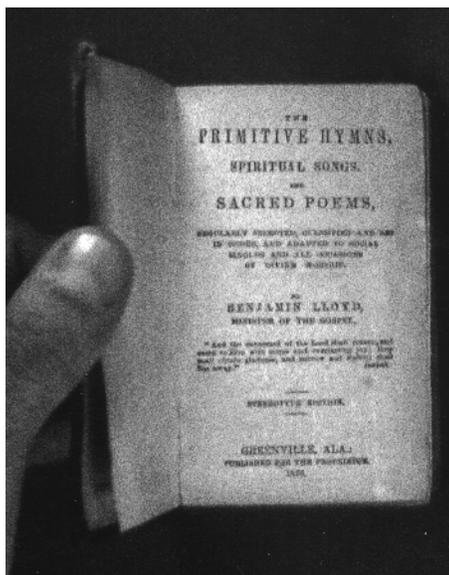
Alabama State Council on the Arts



1820s drawing of two Creek Indians

Basil Hall

1838-1861



Benjamin Lloyd's hymnbook

Alabama State Council on the Arts



The spiral staircases in the State Capitol were designed and built by Horace King.

Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel



Alabama River at Selma, attributed to William Frye, c. 1853/55.

Selma-Dallas County Library

1838: Phillip Henry Gosse, an English schoolteacher, begins an eight-month visit to Dallas County, Alabama. He later publishes *Letters from Alabama*, an account of his stay with descriptions of flora, fauna and social customs of the time.

1839: Members of the Herd family from Scotland are the first to mine marble and to fashion tombstones from the Sylacauga deposit. Other stone cutting shops soon take advantage of this resource.

1841: Professor Frederick A.P. Barnard of the University of Alabama is the first to publish in a scholarly journal the formula for daguerreotype chemicals that made reliable portrait photography successful on a wide scale.

1842: Construction begins on Gaineswood, considered by many to be Alabama's finest neo-classical residence. The owner and architect General Nathan Bryan Whitfield blends his ideas with contemporary architectural notions of the time to create this masterpiece.

1843: Benjamin Lloyd, a Primitive Baptist preacher in Wetumpka, revises his hymnbook, *Primitive Hymns*. This edition of his unadorned collection of 18th- and 19th-century hymns will remain a standard source for early-style hymn singing to this day.

1845: Johnson Jones Hooper publishes *The Adventures of Simon Suggs*. Born in Wilmington, North Carolina, Hooper was an attorney who came to Chambers County at age 20. He will become famous for his humorous sketches of the new Alabama featuring the frontier rascal Simon Suggs.

1846: Horace King, an African-American architect and master bridge builder, is granted his freedom. The designs/creations of Horace King include the lattice-truss-designed bridges that unified the Chattahoochee Valley into a single economic unit, and the spiral staircases of the Alabama state capitol, which are still in use.

1850: German immigrant William Frye of Huntsville paints a famous view of Demopolis. This, and his later landscapes, present a unique, unparalleled set of images of life when cotton was king, in the 1850s, from Huntsville, Selma and Demopolis.

1851: Albert James Pickett wrote *History of Alabama*.

1853: Joseph Glover Baldwin publishes *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi: A Series of Sketches*, which becomes one of the most popular examples of Old Southwest humor.

1854: The State of Alabama passes the Public School Act.

1854: Adrian E. Thompson, an Alabama-born artist, paints the oft-reproduced view of the bridge over the Alabama River at Wetumpka (one of Horace King's bridges).

1855: Alexander Beaufort Meek publishes *Red Eagle*, a lyrical epic poem about Creek chief William Weatherford.

1857: Octavia Celeste Valentine Walton LeVert publishes a two-volume book, *Souvenirs of Travel*, based on letters written to her mother, Sarah Minge Walker, while Octavia traveled in Europe. As a result of this widely read book, Madame LeVert becomes one of the best known women in the world, and her salon in Mobile becomes famous all over the nation.

1857-1859: Episcopal Church of the Nativity in Huntsville is constructed. This is one of the state's most impressive examples of "Ecclesiological Gothic" style.

1861: A.C. McIntyre, a Montgomery photographer, photographs the inauguration of Jefferson Davis. He and other pioneer Alabama photographers, such as Montgomery's J.H. Lakin and S.P. and H.P. Tresslar, document life in Central Alabama during the 19th and early 20th century.

1861: William Russell Smith, widely known as the father of Alabama literature writes *The History and Debates of the Convention of the People of Alabama* (Secession

1861-1906

Convention), one of the most valuable historical documents ever produced in the state.

1865: A year after the Emancipation Proclamation, enslaved African-Americans in Alabama are actually freed; it is the end of the Civil War. This changes educational, political and religious institutions throughout the South.

1866: *St. Elmo*, by Augusta Evans Wilson is published. This author, from Mobile, becomes, arguably, the most successful popular woman writer between the Civil War and beginning of the 20th century.

1867: *Tiger-Lilies* is published by Sidney Lanier (1842-1881) Based upon his experiences in the Civil War, Lanier's book was written when he lived in Montgomery and worked as a clerk at the Exchange Hotel.

1870: The Belcher, Henry and McPherson families are in full pottery production on Sand Mountain near Duck Springs. Their inventive use of regional glazes and inscribed decorations will make their pottery desirable among art collectors in the late 20th century.

1871: The crossing of two railroad lines in north central Alabama ensures that Birmingham develops into a major industrial city.

1872: Auburn University, first chartered in 1856, becomes the state's land-grant college. Through the years, the institution will become known for its outstanding College of Architecture, Design and Construction.

1873: A.C. Oxford, Birmingham's first resident photographer, photographs the Magic City, from its beginnings in the early 1870s to the mid-1880s, thereby creating a significant body of work and one that was unusual for the state in his day.

1884: Booker T. Washington organizes Tuskegee Institute's first Tuskegee Quartet.

1891: Zora Neale Hurston is born in Notasulga. She will become an outstanding writer, and will be known as "the queen of the Harlem Renaissance," counting among her contemporaries Langston Hughes, with whom she collaborated on a play, *Mule Bone*.

1898: Howard Weeden's *Shadows on the Wall*, a collection of portraits, is published and brings this Huntsville artist, a woman, national attention.

1899: The photography of Mary Morgan Keipp of Selma is first exhibited. Subsequently, she was the only Alabamian and Southerner to participate in seven landmark exhibitions (with Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen and other luminaries) that created art photography in America and England at the turn of the century

1901: The Alabama Department of Archives and History is established as the nation's first such state agency. Over the years, the Archives will become the repository of Alabama art as well as official state records.

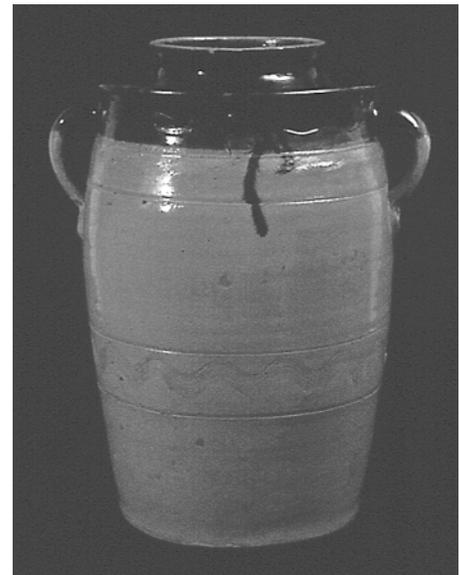
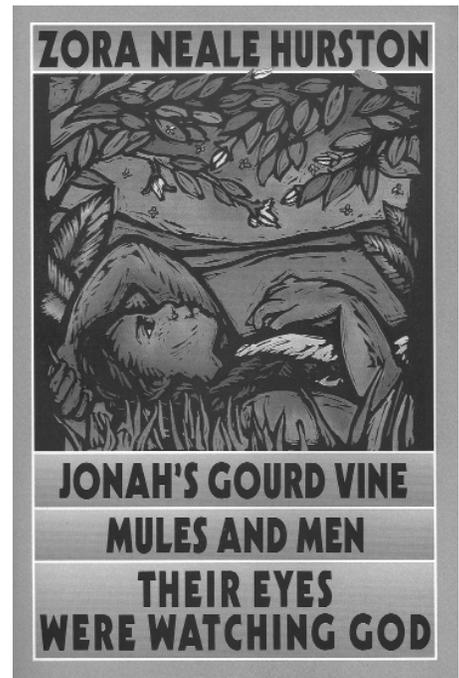
1901: *Up From Slavery* is published. Its author, Booker T. Washington, is president of Tuskegee Institute and the leading spokesperson for improving relationships between African-Americans and white people.

1903: Guiseppe Moretti, an Italian immigrant sculptor, begins work on Vulcan, a large cast iron figure. This and a smaller marble, "Head of Christ," will win acclaim at the 1904 St. Louis exposition.

1904: Helen Keller graduates cum laude from Radcliffe. While a student, she had written what would later be published as *The Story of My Life*. She becomes the world's best known advocate for the disabled.

1905: Birmingham Music Club is founded.

1906: Architect Frank Lockwood designs additions to the State Capitol. This talented Montgomerian later creates many beautiful Tudor-inspired structures during the 1920s.



Sand Mountain pottery



Jam session at the Athens Fiddlers Convention

1907-1929



Popular Music Archives—Middle Tennessee State University

Cow Cow Davenport



ASCA/Joey Brackner

Ave Maria Grotto



Alabama Music Hall of Fame

Delmore Brothers

1907: The Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education opens in the utopian community of Fairhope. This progressive school presents a new approach to education, prominently featuring visual arts and dance.

1912: Florence native W. C. Handy publishes the “Memphis Blues.” This, along with his later works, such as the “St. Louis Blues” and “Beale St. Blues” establishes a vernacular music genre within popular American culture. For this, he becomes known as the “Father of the Blues”.

1917: Walter and Bessie Bellingrath begin building a large garden at their country home on the Fowl River in Mobile County. In 1932, Bellingrath Gardens opened to the public and is today considered one of the nation’s most famous gardens.

1918: Brother Joseph Zoetl, a Benedictine monk from Bavaria, constructs a miniature church of concrete at St. Bernard’s Abbey in Cullman. Over the next 40 years, this partially disabled clergyman will build Ave Maria Grotto, an impressive example of the Benedictine grotto tradition.

1918: Well-known jazz musician and Mobile native, James Reese Europe, brings jazz to France as the leader of a military band during World War I. The popularity of this “Jazz King” starts a century-long French infatuation with this American art form.

1919: The Boll Weevil statue is dedicated in Enterprise, celebrating the economic prosperity brought about by agricultural diversification.

1919: Nat “King” Cole is born in Montgomery.

1922: Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald publishes her first story in *The New York Tribune*. Though she will labor in her husband’s shadow, this creative dancer, artist and writer will not only be an inspiration for her husband’s work in the early 20s and 30s, but for generations of young writers who come after her, particularly female artists.

1924: The first Athens fiddlers’ convention is held. Eventually this event will be organized in 1967 as the Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention and will be considered one of the nation’s most important.

1924: Hudson Strode joins the faculty of the English Department at the University of Alabama. The teaching and inspiration of several generations of literary talent by this Demopolis native will continue until the 1960s. Strode is widely known for his biographical series on Jefferson Davis.

1925: African-American gospel singers, Charles Bridges and Ed Sherrill, meet in Bessemer and form the Birmingham Jubilee Singers, the first quartet to take the infectious Birmingham style of a *cappella* gospel singing outside of the state.

1926: Roderick MacKenzie begins painting a mural on the interior rotunda of the State Capitol. The result of this four-year project is a panorama depicting the state’s history. MacKenzie’s career began in the late 19th century in his native Mobile as a portrait painter. He later worked in India and lived long enough to take part in WPA arts projects.

1927: The Alabama Theatre in Birmingham opens as the state’s largest and grandest movie palace. For 10 cents, moviegoers can see the latest attractions and sing along to the music of the “Mighty Wurlitzer” while luxuriating in air-conditioned Renaissance splendor.

1927: Birmingham’s Charles “Cow Cow” Davenport records “Jim Crow Blues.”

1928: Grover Hall, Sr. wins the Pulitzer Prize for Journalism for his writing and editing in *The Montgomery Advertiser*. Hall was a decisive player in the destroying of the power held by the Ku Klux Klan across the state. A play based on his courageous stand, *Grover*, written by Randy Hall of Anniston, would be mounted by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival’s Southern Writer’s Project in the mid-1990s.

1929: The Stripling Brothers of Pickens County record sixteen tunes at the Brunswick studio in Chicago. Charlie Stripling (1896-1966) is considered one of the

1929-1939

greatest American fiddlers of all time, and records the classic “Wolves a-Howling” during this session. He becomes Alabama’s most recorded fiddler, with “Coal Mine Blues” becoming one of his most popular tunes.

1931: Samuel Minturn Peck of Tuscaloosa is named Alabama’s first poet laureate by Governor Bibb Graves.

1931: William Dawson organizes the School of Music at Tuskegee Institute. This choir director and composer gained fame by putting aspects of African-American folk music into orchestral arrangements.

1932: The Birmingham Symphony gives its first concert.

1932: Alton and Rabon Delmore of Elkmont, a.k.a. the Delmore Brothers, join the Grand Ole Opry. As one of the first of the close harmony duet groups of the 1930s, they have some of the music industry’s first cross-over hits.

1933: P.H. Polk becomes the head of the Photography Division at Tuskegee Institute. For the next twenty years, he continues to photograph rural Alabama and its inhabitants, as well as making portraits of some of the great leaders of the Twentieth Century.

1933: T.S. Stribling’s *The Store* wins the Pulitzer Prize. The book is the second of a trilogy: *The Forge* (1931), *The Store* (1932), and *The Unfinished Cathedral* (1934). Stribling grew up and was schooled in North Alabama, with degrees from Florence State and the University of Alabama.

1933: Kelly Fitzpatrick establishes the Dixie Art Colony near Wetumpka for the purpose of providing instruction to promising young artists.

1933: The establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority brings a new awareness of the outside world through the electrification of rural Alabama. The resulting radio audience is presented with a new venue for the rich regional musical heritage of the Tennessee Valley, the Shoals and Sand Mountain.

1934: Judge Jackson, an African-American shape-note singer from Ozark, compiles and publishes *The Colored Sacred Harp*. This hymnbook affords black Sacred Harp composers an outlet for their works and becomes a much-loved emblem of a regional song tradition.

1934: *Stars Fell on Alabama*, by New Yorker Carl Carmer, is published. This romanticized account of his years in Alabama was a non-fiction best seller.

1935: Author Clarence Cason, professor at the University of Alabama, sees publication of his novel, *Ninety Degrees in the Shade*.

1935: Blues pianist Frank “Springback” James records “Poor Coal Loader.”

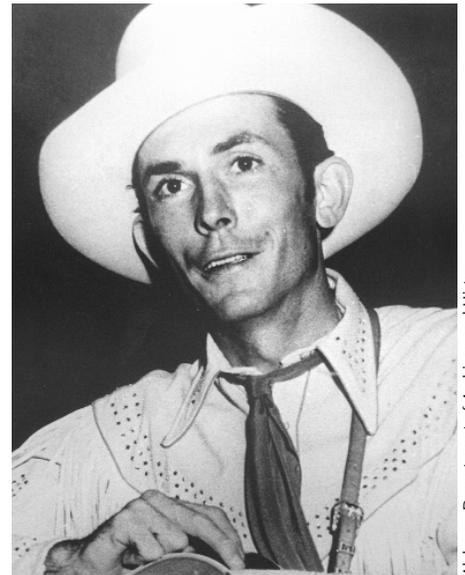
1936: The original *Sacred Harp* (Denson Revision), is published in Haleyville in 1936 (begun by patriarchs Seaborn M. and Thomas Jackson Denson and completed after their deaths by T.J.’s son Paine Denson). From the mid-19th century to the present, the Denson family popularize Sacred Harp music in North Alabama.

1936: Writer James Agee and photographer Walker Evans come to Alabama and live with sharecroppers in Hale County. Evans had been to Alabama previously, while working for the FSA. Their resulting collaboration, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, becomes an American classic.

1938: Hank Williams makes his public debut singing “WPA Blues” at the Empire Theatre in Montgomery.

1939: A “Usonian” residence for the Rosenbaum family, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, is completed in Florence.

1939: Tallulah Bankhead triumphs on Broadway in Lillian Hellman’s *The Little Foxes*. Known as a sultry Hollywood film actress from such screen classics as *Lifeboat*,



Hank Williams

Alabama Department of Archives and History



Tallulah Bankhead

Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel



Erskine Hawkins

Alabama Music Hall of Fame

1939-1960



Horace Perry

Bill Traylor



Center for Public Television

William Bradford Huie



Courtesy: Charles Louvin

Charlie Louvin

she has a four-week run in a non-speaking part on stage and appeared in two films before she was 17. Her autobiography, *Tallulah*, is published in 1952.

1939: Birmingham jazz musician Erskine Hawkins records his composition “Tuxedo Junction”, which becomes a worldwide hit during World War II.

1940: The works of the impoverished street artist Bill Traylor are shown at the New South Gallery in Montgomery.

1940: In Livingston, Ruby Pickens Tartt hosts a famous folksong recording trip by John and Alan Lomax of the Library of Congress. The resulting recordings contain some of the most famous American folk songs ever collected, and they introduce the impressive talents of Dock Reed and Vera Hall to the world.

1941: Julian Rayford of Mobile has his classic novel, *Cottonmouth*, published

1942: William Bradford Huie’s first novel, *Mud on the Stars*, is published. The Hartselle native is a novelist and journalist and publishes six novels between 1942 and 1945. He publishes two short story collaborations and nine books of non-fiction. His other works include *The Execution of Private Slovik*, *The Revolt of Mamie Stover*, and *The Americanization of Emily*.

1946: Children’s Theatre of Birmingham is founded.

1946: Carolyn Voshell begins teaching at Huntingdon College. This violinist will teach until 1982 and be one of the organizers of Montgomery Symphony.

1950: Town and Gown Theater, Birmingham’s longest-running professional theatre, is organized by James Hatcher.

1951: The Birmingham Museum of Art is founded.

1951: Dexter Johnson establishes the first Shoals-area recording studio in Sheffield. Through the remainder of the 1950s, recording studios pop up all over the area. These include Shoals Recording Services, Tune Publishing Company, Judd Records, Spar Records and FAME Recording Studio. Songs such as Arthur Alexander’s “You Better Move On” will become national hits.

1952: Well-known Birmingham musician Sonny Blount changes his name to Sun Ra and begins his unique cosmic interpretation of jazz.

1952: Florence’s Sam Phillips founds Sun Records in Memphis, where he will later discover Elvis Presley, B. B. King, and Jerry Lee Lewis, among others.

1953: Montgomery born mezzo-soprano Nell Rankin opens as Carmen at Covent Gardens, after joining the Metropolitan Opera in 1951. The Alabama legislature honors her by joint resolution in 1957 as Alabama’s “cultural ambassador.”

1954: William March’s *The Bad Seed* is published. This Mobile native wrote six novel collections between 1933 and 1954 and three short stories. Although he is best known for *The Bad Seed*, his novels, *Company K* and *The Looking Glass*, are superior.

1955: The Montgomery Bus Boycott takes place.

1955: The Huntsville Symphony is founded.

1956: Country music artists Charlie and Ira Loudermilk’s (the Louvin Brothers) song, “I Don’t Believe You’ve Met My Baby,” hits number one, despite the emerging popularity of Rock and Roll. Their close harmony tenor music continues an Alabama tradition begun by the Delmore brothers.

1957: Auburn novelist Madison Jones publishes *The Innocent*, the first of ten novels he will write over a 40-year period.

1958: The Montgomery Civic Ballet is founded.

1959: Fame Recording Studio is established in Muscle Shoals; Tuscaloosa’s Dinah Washington records “What a Difference a Day Makes.”

1960: *To Kill a Mockingbird* is published. Nelle Harper Lee, born in Monroeville,

1960-1972

is awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1961 for her work, and the book is subsequently made into an Academy Award-winning film.

1961: William Gibson's drama, *The Miracle Worker*, based upon the life of Helen Keller, is presented in the Shoals. Later, this outdoor performance will be presented during the annual Helen Keller festival in Tuscomb.

1961: William Christenberry makes his first photo of the Palmist Building in Havana, Alabama. This begins decades of work by the artist documenting aspects of the Alabama landscape.

1964: Emmylou Harris debuts at Horsepens 40, a new bluegrass and old-time music venue in St. Clair County, founded by folk music enthusiast Warren Musgrove. The site becomes synonymous with the resurgence of local interest in indigenous music during the 1970s.

1965: Shirley Ann Grau, who grew up in Montgomery, wins a Pulitzer for her book, *Keepers of the House*.

1965: Jesse Hill Ford, born in Troy, sees publication of *The Liberation of Lord Byron Jones* by Little Brown.

1965: Leighton native Percy Sledge's "When A Man Loves A Woman" is recorded at Quinvy studios in Muscle Shoals. This soul classic becomes an international hit and wins the artist a gold record.

1966: The Alabama State Council on the Arts is established as the official state arts agency of Alabama.

1966: A television presentation of the Truman Capote short story, "A Christmas Memory," wins a Peabody award. The story is based upon Capote's early years in Monroeville. His best known book is *In Cold Blood*. His novels, *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and *The Grass Harp*, are set in Alabama.

1966: The Alabama School of Fine Arts opens in Birmingham.

1966: *Fancy's Knell* by Babs Deal wins an Edgar Award for best first novel. She will later write *Three O'Clock in the Morning* and *Acres of Afternoon*.

1966: Prattville's Wilson Pickett records "Mustang Sally" in Muscle Shoals.

1967: Birmingham Creative Dance Group is incorporated under the leadership of Laura Knox. This group later becomes Southern Danceworks, the only professional modern dance group in Alabama.

1967: Borden Deal publishes *The Least One*.

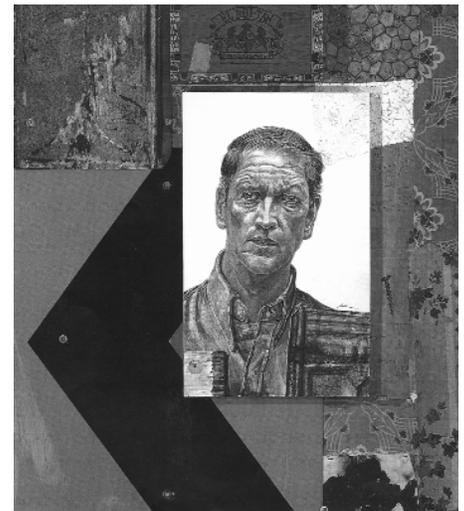
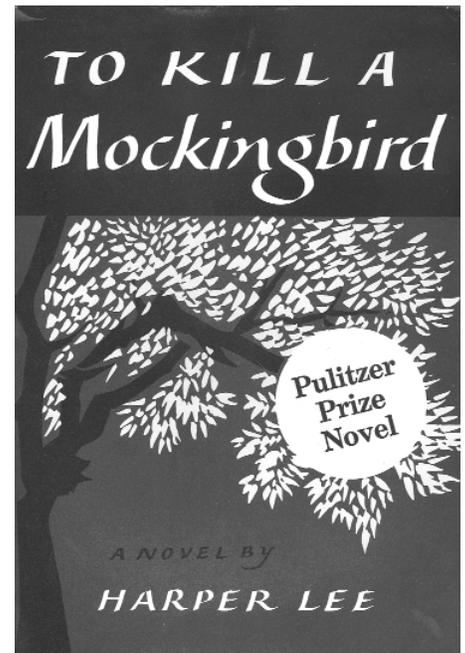
1969: Three cousins in Fort Payne form a band called "Young Country," later known as "Alabama." They become one of the greatest country acts of all times.

1969: Journalist Kathryn Tucker Windham begins publishing her Jeffrey series of Alabama ghost story books with *Thirteen Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey*, in collaboration with Margaret G. Figh (of Huntingdon College/Montgomery). The popularity of these books will lead Windham to become one of Alabama's most sought-after story-tellers around the country.

1970: The Rolling Stones record "Wild Horses" and "Brown Sugar" at the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, established in Sheffield in 1968.

1971: The first Kentuck Festival is held in Northport. The event quickly becomes an important regional venue for visual artists and an annual showcase for nationally-known self-taught artists, including Jimmie Lee Sudduth, Lonnie Holley, Bernice Sims, the Tolliver family, and Charlie and Annie Lucas.

1972: Huntsville artist David Parrish has his first one-man show in New York City, marking his recognition as a leading painter in the photorealistic style. His technically demanding work captures the reflective surfaces of such pop culture images as racing cars and porcelain figures.



Portrait of William Christenberry by Nall.



Katherine Tucker Windham

1974-1994



Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel

Alabama



ASF/Scarsbrook

Greta Lambert in the Alabama Shakespeare Festival production of *Fair and Tender Ladies*.



Sonia Sanchez

1974: The Alabama Dance Council is created in Birmingham by Laura Knox, Lou Wall, Phoebe Barr, Jeanette Crew, Theda Cowan and others.

1974: Roger Brown, internationally recognized artist and central figure of the Chicago Imagist School, completes the hinged construction/painting, *Autobiography in the Shape of Alabama*. The piece becomes part of the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and relates his rural family history in Alabama.

1974: Joe David Brown's *Addie Pray: A Novel* is published. This Birmingham novelist and journalist has three of his novels made into films. His first novel, *Stars in My Crown*, is filmed with Joel McRae. *Kings Go Forth* is filmed with Frank Sinatra and *Addie Pray* is filmed under the title *Paper Moon* starring Ryan and Tatum O'Neal.

1981: Alabama native, African-American Willie Ruff, Yale University professor of music, music historian, author and jazz musician is the first jazz player to take his ensemble to the Republic of China during the cultural thaw of the late 1970's.

1981: The State of Alabama Ballet is founded.

1982: W.C. Handy Music Festival begins in Florence.

1983: Sacred Harp singer Dewey Williams of Ozark is awarded a National Heritage Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts.

1983: *Women, Race, and Class* by Angela Davis is published.

1984: Mark Childress's first book, *A World Made of Fire*, is published by Alfred A. Knopf. Childress will continue to write novels and children's books, and one of his titles, *Crazy in Alabama*, is made into a movie in 1999.

1985: The Alabama Shakespeare Festival opens its new facility in the Blount Cultural Park in Montgomery. ASF began in 1972 as a summer theater project in the Anniston High School. After its relocation and subsequent maturation in Montgomery, the festival is a key Alabama cultural institution and fifth largest Shakespeare festival in the world.

1985: Sonja Sanchez's *Homegirls and Handgrenades* wins an American Book Award for Poetry. This Birmingham native teaches throughout the U.S. and is currently Temple University poet-in-residence and professor of English.

1985: Tuskegee's Lionel Richie wins the Grammy Award for Album of the Year and also the American Music Award for Best Pop Male Vocalist.

1987: Mary Ward Brown of Marion, Alabama, receives the Pen/Hemingway Award for Best First Fiction for her first short story collection, *Tongues of Flames*.

1988: The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, founded in 1930, opens a new facility in the Blount Cultural Park.

1990: Alabama Music Hall of Fame opens in Tuscumbia

1991: The Wiregrass Museum of Art in Dothan opens a main gallery retrofitted from a 1913 power plant listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings. Planned phases of construction triple the space and add an auditorium.

1992: Birmingham's Fannie Flagg's novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* (1987) is adapted for the film *Fried Green Tomatoes*.

1992: The Alabama Writers' Forum is founded.

1992: Jerry Brown, a ninth generation potter and narrative quilter Nora Ezell are honored at the National Heritage Fellowship Program by the National Endowment for the Arts.

1994: *Forrest Gump*, a film based upon the 1986 Winston Groom novel wins four Academy awards including Best Picture and Best Actor.

1994: E.O. Wilson's autobiography, *The Naturalist*, is published. Wilson, a Birmingham native and graduate of the University of Alabama is a world-renowned professor of Biology at Harvard where he wins two Pulitzer Prizes for general nonfiction.

1995-2000

1995: Albert Murray's first novel, *South to a Very Old Place*, is reprinted in the prestigious Modern Library Series. Murray, of Nokomis, Alabama, publishes a trilogy of novels and nonfiction work on aesthetics, literature, race relations and music and becomes the first recipient of the Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer, in 1998.

1995: The Birmingham Museum's "Made In Alabama" exhibition and catalog is the first attempt at a comprehensive look at the state's art history.

1995: Dennis Covington's *Salvation on Sand Mountain*, a book that profiles a community of snake-handlers, is a finalist for a National Book Award.

1996: Cornelius Wright and John Henry Mealing of Birmingham are awarded National Heritage Fellowships by the NEA for their presentation of the work songs of the "gandydancer" to a younger audience.

1996: International ballet star Wes Chapman returns home to become Artistic Director of the Alabama Ballet.

1996: Phase I of the Urban Mural Project, one of the largest public sculptures in the Southeast, is dedicated in Birmingham. Covering the east wall of Boutwell Auditorium, the mural features around 9,000 (eventually to include 20,000) bricks individually created and produced by young participants in Space One Eleven's innovative City Center Art Program.

1996: The Alys Robison Stephens Performing Arts Center opens in Birmingham with a concert by the National Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Leonard Slatkin.

1997: Han Nolan wins a National Book Award in Young People's Literature for *Dancing on the Edge*.

1998: Rick Bragg, a Pulitzer-Prize winning feature writer for the *New York Times*, wins critical acclaim for his autobiographical book, *All Over But the Shoutin'*. Much of the story recounts the dignity of working class people in Bragg's native northeast Alabama.

1998: The Huntsville Museum of Art moves from a small space in the Civic Center and opens a new \$7.7 million building.

1998: The Alabama State Board of Education approves the first comprehensive curriculum document for K-12 arts education program in Alabama's public schools. The document includes content standards for dance, music, theatre, and visual arts for grades K-12.

1999: The inaugural Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival in Birmingham screens over forty films, including six World Premieres and twelve Southeast Premieres.

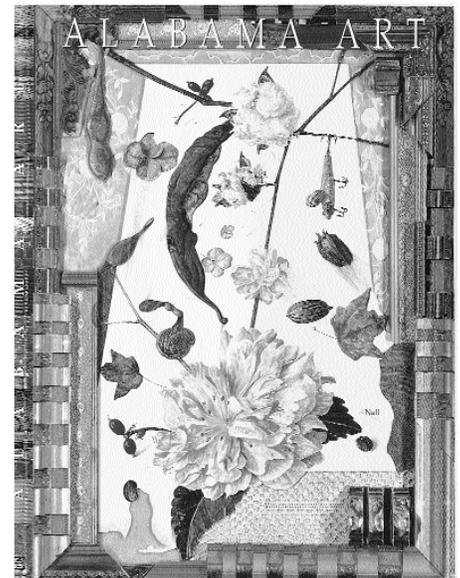
2000: Helen Norris of Montgomery publishes her short story collection, *A Day in the Life of a Born-Again Loser*, her eighth work of fiction and receives the Harper Lee Award for 2000.

2000: Samuel Mockbee wins a McArthur "Genius" Award for his work with Auburn University's Rural Studio that he co-founded in 1993. This pioneering program joins the teaching of architecture with a commitment to public service by designing and constructing economical yet beautiful structures for residents in Alabama's Black Belt.

2000: The Alabama Dance Council produces an unprecedented showcase of eleven Alabama dance companies at the Bama Theatre in Tuscaloosa as part of the annual Dance Summit.

2000: Mobile Museum of Art, first opened in 1964, breaks ground for a 95,000 square foot building anticipated to open in 2002.

2000: Spotlight on Alabama artists, "Alabama Art 2000," opens in France coordinated by Nall, an internationally known artist and native of Troy.



Alabama Art is also featured in this hard-bound book by Nall.



Cornelius Wright and John Henry Mealing.



Fannie Flagg



Working Women— *Making Art in Alabama*

by Billie F. Goodloe

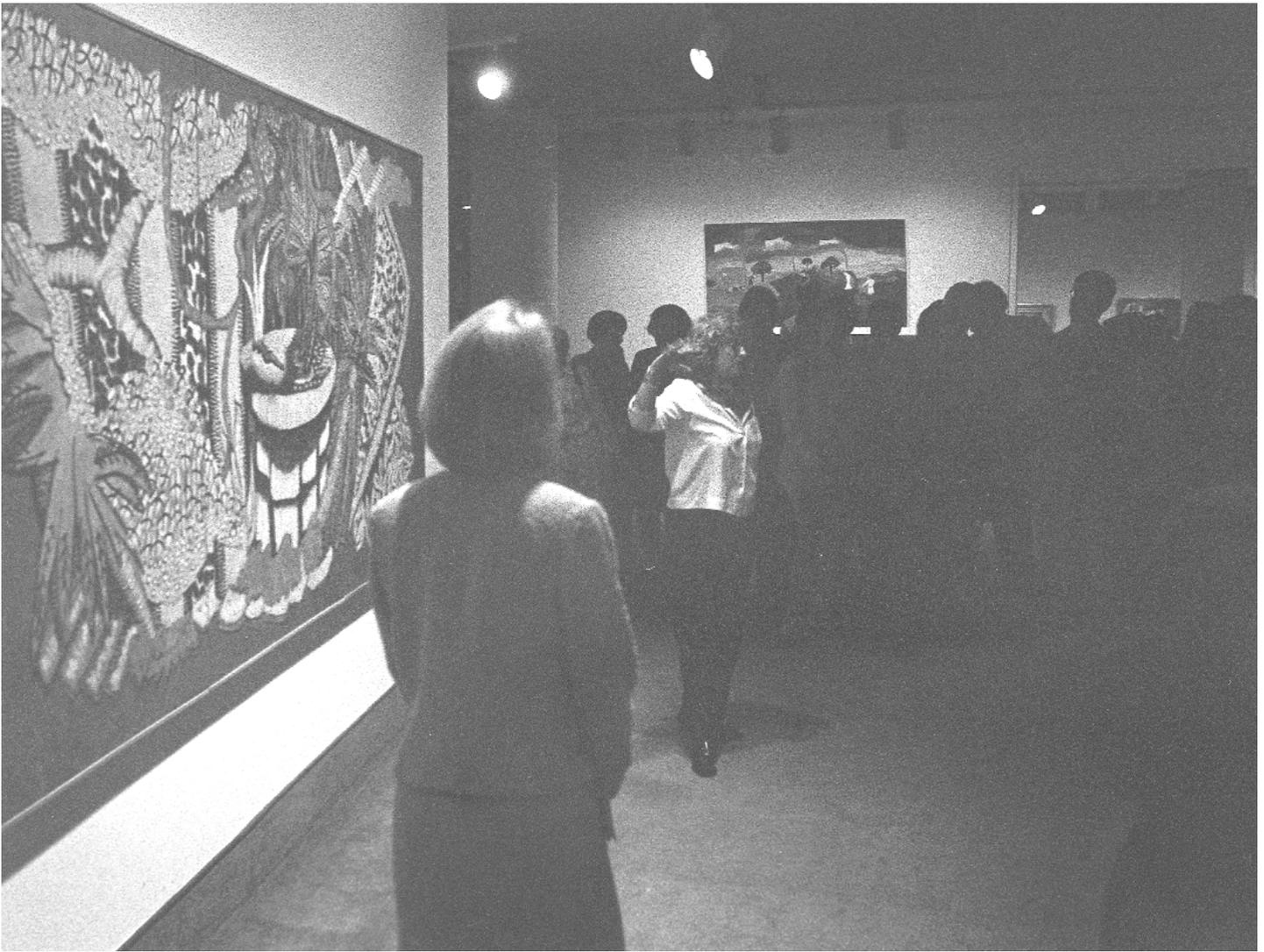
Alabama women artists are speaking out in Washington, D.C., where an exhibition of their works at the National Museum of Women in the Arts has raised voices of praise from museum professionals, artists, collector, and the public. Compliments abound for the twelve women whose works were selected for exhibition; for Birmingham artist Catherine Cabaniss, who conceived the show and assembled the Alabama Committee of the NMWA to make it happen; for the women of that committee who raised money for the project; for Ruth Stevens Appelhof, Ph.D., former curator at the Birmingham Museum of Art and current director of Guild Hall in East Hampton, New York, who was selected to be curator of the exhibit; and for the staff assisting Appelhof.

(Top photo) nine of the artists gathered at the National Museum of Women in the Arts for the opening of *Voices Rising: Alabama Women at the Millennium*. Left to right: Frances de La Rosa, Dale Kennington, Lucy Jaffe, Janice Kluge, Mary Ann Pope, Annie Lucas, Sonja Reiger, Curator Ruth Appelhof, Laura Prange, and Susan Downing.

Voices Rising: Alabama Women at the Millennium opened on June fourth at NMWA, a museum dedicated solely to the achievements of women in the visual, performing and literary arts. It runs through September seventeenth. Carol Ballard, current chair of the Alabama Committee, reported that over four hundred people gathered for the reception. "The crowded atmosphere added to the energy of the day," she said. "The opening was a wonderful and elegant affair. Having nine of the artists present added significantly to the excitement surrounding the event."

Nancy Rohrbach, NMWA's board president, found the opening and the exhibit to be among the best of those already held as a part of the museum's state exhibition program.

The NMWA's exhibit of Alabama women's art was unabashedly assembled to guarantee women the right to speak out and be heard. In the introduction to the exhibi-



Frances de La Rosa gives a gallery talk in Washington, D.C., in front of *Yard, Pitt's Folly* (oil on canvas, 60" X 144" triptych, 1994). Ruth Appelhof is seen from the back.

tion catalogue, Appelhof writes, "... the goal has been to go beyond traditional art historical practices, to put these works of art in a larger, more meaningful context. I have looked to the South and to the state of Alabama, to the women's movement and to the personal lives of women artists today in order to build a new paradigm for art investigation... ."

Appelhof chose twelve from among 146 artists who responded to the call for entries by sending resumés and slides of their work. She visited studios and selected the pieces that would best articulate the purposes of the exhibition. The variety of media and wide range of styles included are impressive. The freedom of personal voice is also cause for celebration.

Behind each painting, photograph, and installation in *Voices Rising* stands a woman committed to hard work. Most are mid-career artists who have had one or more solo exhibitions. All have participated in group shows and

have received recognition in the press. Individually, their levels of production have been impressive. Collectively, their work earns high marks for women making art in Alabama.

Who are these women?

FULL-TIME PROFESSIONAL

At home in Dothan, Dale Kennington works every day in her fully-equipped, well-managed studio. Working over fifty hours a week, she is pushed to meet the demands of sales, gallery shows and museum exhibitions. Equipped with her "rapid-fire sketchbook," a camera loaded with high-speed film, Kennington gathers images of people and setting that impress her with mood, light, pattern, and color. She takes thousands of photographs and organizes them in files. It is often from disparate images that she chooses the characters and settings for her paintings, most of which include one or more figures that participate in some sort of narrative. When asked

about her experience as a woman artist in the state, Kennington was quick to respond, "The art community in Alabama is very supportive and protective of its artists." she has found making art in Alabama to be expansive rather than restrictive. She feels free to paint subjects that are of interest to her, whether or not those subjects are representative of the South.



Dale Kennington, *The Debutantes*, oil on canvas, 60" X 84", 1996.

INTERPRETERS OF LANDSCAPES

As painters of landscape, Susan Downing and Mary Ann Pope find the cities and environs in which they live replete with imagery. Downing limits her subject matter to the Mobile area. Pope finds inspiration around Huntsville and in other locales in this country and abroad.

Downing works in a studio, sans phone, some distance from her home. She was prompted to seek out a quiet, spacious place in which to set up her easel when she began planning a series of large canvases for a solo exhibition scheduled for March 2000 at the Wiregrass Museum in Dothan. Downing spends five or six days a week working out her carefully conceived, thoughtfully executed paintings. She believes that each work should

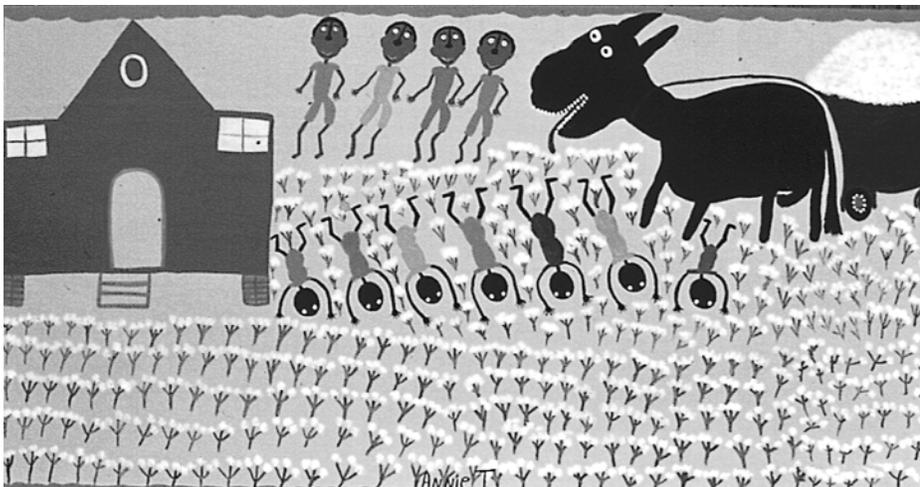
be wholly a product of the hand of the artist. Downing extends her imagery, and sometimes a bit of text, over the hand-sewn borders of canvas that surround the central elements of the piece. She treats the frames as integral to the composition. Because Downing is as capable of rendering the figure as the landscape, she enjoys success as a portrait painter.

Pope's studio is in addition to the house in which she balances life as artist, wife, mother, and grandmother. Painting since 1991, Pope has developed a method of working that leads from one painting to another. She goes on location and takes photographs which are used like sketches or in conjunction with sketches. Choosing one area or view of a landscape, and working on one painting at a time, Pope thinks about how the image might evolve in a series. Her ability to work in oil,

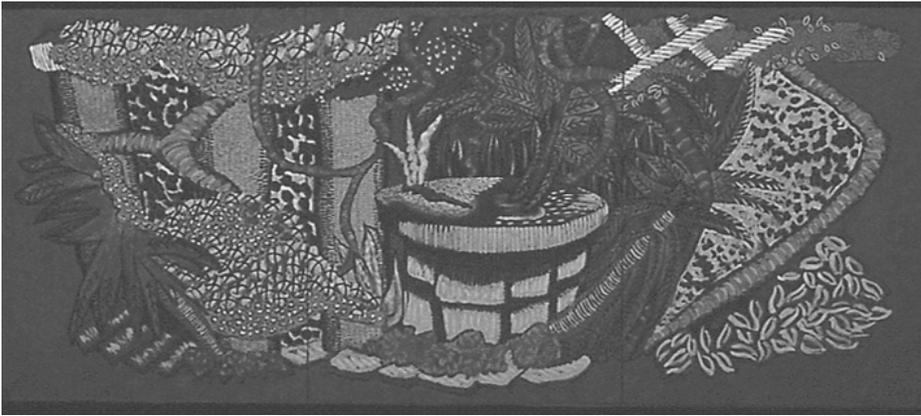
watercolor, or acrylic gives Pope the option of exploring possibilities within these different mediums. She may spend several weeks or a couple of months on a painting, depending on its scale. She is pleased to sell her work, but does not let marketing considerations influence her approach.

ABSTRACTIONIST

It has been said that the paintings by Lucy Jaffe are the most abstract in the exhibition. She describes her images as "psychological portraits involving natural and manmade objects, incorporating



Annie Tolliver, *The Tolliver Family Picking Cotton, Horse Wagon and Cotton Barn*, acrylic on plywood board, 48" X 96", 1998.



Frances de La Rosa, *Yard: Pitt's Folly*, oil on canvas, 60" X 144" triptych, 1994.

my concerns with the conflicts of existence in an environment shaped by man." Working from the studio in the basement of her home, Jaffe moves in and out of the studio throughout the day, thinking about her paintings as she performs routine household tasks. She feels that there is a strong relationship between where one lives and one works, because changes in landscape and nature prompt internal change. Jaffe has noticed that her paintings have become progressively more symbolic since she moved to Alabama three years ago. She is now working on a series about the instructions that we encounter daily on objects such as tubes of toothpaste—those signs of a restricted world that set limits for us, warn us.

SELF-TAUGHT AND BUSY

Signs of a different sort are important in the life of painter and quilt-maker Annie Lucas. She interprets her visions as spiritual signposts for life and uses signs in the Bible as subject matter for her work. Skilled at stitching quilts, Lucas moves easily to stitching on her acrylic paintings, outlining and filling painted forms with sewing thread, a procedure that she describes as painstakingly slow. Because her life as art-maker must harmonize with that of grandmother, Lucas finds that her best working time, which also a quiet time, is from midnight until around three in the morning. She has worked in her home for years. She looks forward to sharing a new studio with her artist husband who recently renovated his grandmother's house in Prattville as a working gallery. Lucas enjoys a steady market for her work. "They come to us," she says, a smile in her voice.

A few miles from Prattville, another artist shares Lucas' delight in having galleries and patrons seek out her paintings. Annie Tolliver from Montgomery draws upon memories of her childhood and other life experiences as she works every day of the week, sometimes well into the

night, to provide the work needed for exhibitions and sales. Tolliver is the daughter of artist Mose T., for whom she was painting as she developed her own style. She now manages a busy schedule of family life, painting, packing panels

for shipment, and greeting patrons who wish to buy or commission paintings. "My door is always open," Tolliver maintains.

TEACHERS/ARTISTS

Four of the artists whose works appear in *Voices Rising* balance a teaching career with that of art-making. Janice Kluge and Sonja Rieger are on the faculty at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Laura Prange teaches at Auburn University, and Frances de La Rosa recently left for a position at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia.

Sculptors Kluge and Prange have installation pieces in the exhibit. Janice Kluge's entry is influenced by the symbols that are found in household altars, artwork, and nighttime grave-side rituals of the "Day of the Dead," a Mexican ceremony. After suffering the loss of three of her immediate family members between 1991 and 1996, Kluge went to Mexico to be in a death-accepting culture on her sister's birthday and the anniversary of her death. In her work, she honors departed family members.

Laura Prange uses text in her work. A series of hand-printed sheets of text attached to the wall with the artists' hand-wrought nails questions the human relationship to technology and the way technology mediates our everyday experience of space and time. Appelhof tells us that Prange's bias is toward a mind/body text rather than a science/technological one.

Sonja Rieger has been described as "artist/professor, mother/wife, adventurer/other." She is known for her artistic integrity. Always interested in the cutting edge of her medium, Rieger worked in the early Eighties with the large-format Polaroid camera just after its invention. She is now creating Iris prints from Cibachrome images.

The demands of teaching leave Frances de La Rosa only a few hours each week for her personal work, so she



Melissa Springer, *Tattooed Boy*, silver gelatin print, 40" X 32", 1997.

spends many hours painting during weekends. De La Rosa is working out-of-state now, but her ties to Alabama are strong. "I am who I am because of where I grew up. I have to be committed to it," she said. Several years ago, she turned to personal icons such as Pitt's Folly, her family home in Uniontown, as subject matter for her art work. She does not adhere to a production schedule, because her work is intuitive. Ideas for colors or images come spontaneously. She may work on several canvases at once, building layers of color with small brush strokes that lend texture to the surface of the painting. De La Rosa looks at her completed paintings and discovers time and thought captured between layers of paint.

PHOTOGRAPHERS WITH DIFFERENT STYLES

Photographers Pinky/MM Bass and Melissa Springer like to talk about the mystical and spiritual dimensions of life and art. They share feminist concerns as well. Their thoughts and ideas are expressed in different kinds of photographs, however. Bass uses alternative cameras

such as pin-hole and Polaroid and experimental darkroom chemistry. Springer works with more traditional camera equipment and developing techniques.

The life and work of Pinky/MM Bass come together in a secluded, tree-shaded dwelling in Fairhope, the darkroom a floor above an impressive collection of musical instruments in the living room. The images produced in the darkroom are those taken when Bass travels outside Alabama. Once back in her studio, Bass works with her photographs in creative ways. She is intrigued by what she does not or cannot know, and by surprises, so she takes delight in anomalies that may appear as an image comes to life in a developing tray. Because of her working methods, Bass does not feel that the art she makes in Alabama is too different from that which she had made elsewhere. "I don't pay attention to what people expect of Alabama artists, but I do believe that my southern roots influence and inform my work," Bass said. "I rebel sometimes, affirm sometimes."

When Melissa Springer studied photography with Sonja Reiger at UAB twelve years ago, she found her calling. Today, she owns Studio 50, a successful business venture in Birmingham. She also works as a free-lance photojournalist and teaches workshops at the International Center for Photography in New York City. Springer likes having her work based in Birmingham for practical reasons, such as affordable studio space. Also, she finds rich subject matter in the state and region. There are women's stories she wants to tell. Springer wants some of those stories to come from Southern women whom she feels have not yet spoken.

VOICES RISING

Alabamians will have an opportunity to view an expanded version of *Voices Rising: Alabama Women at the Millennium* in seven statewide venues from January 2001 through October 2002. According to Appelhof, a broadening of the cultural vocabulary in Alabama has made it possible for the millennium voices of these twelve working women to ring from their studios. Applause for chorus.

Billie Goodloe is a long-time student of painting and the history of art. She lives and works in Mobile and Memphis.

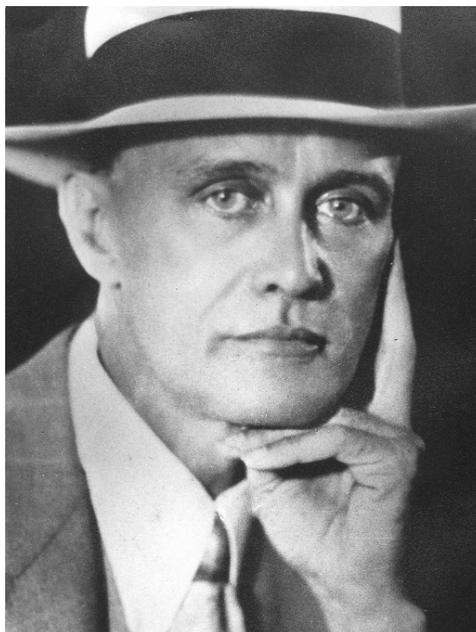
T.S. Stribling: *Southern Literary Maverick*

by William E. Smith, Jr.

The name T. S. Stribling once rivaled Hemingway and Faulkner in literary reputation and risked the ire of North Alabamians. The Pulitzer Prize-winning author was born in 1881 in Clifton, Tennessee, but he spent many summers with his maternal grandparents on their farm in Gravelly Springs, Alabama. From these visits he would later draw settings and characters for his novels.

By the age of twelve, Stribling had written his first story, which he sold for five dollars. A ghost story entitled "The House of Haunted Shadows," it was published in a Florence grocery store pamphlet. He graduated from the University of Alabama Law School in 1905, but it wasn't long before he had launched his writing career as a short story writer for such magazines as *American Boy*. In 1917, he converted one of his short stories into a novel, and, by 1921, had published his second novel, *Birthright*. The protagonist of *Birthright* is an educated mulatto male who tries to survive in a small Southern town filled with racial prejudice. In 1924, the famous black director Oscar Micheaux adapted *Birthright* into a silent film featuring an all-minority cast.

Over the next few years Stribling published a string of novels, including *East Is East* (1922), *Fombombo* (1923), and *Red Sand* (1924). His sixth novel, *Teeftallow*, was a bestseller and critical success, although southern critics were hostile to the manner in which Stribling dealt with some of the South's social issues. In 1930, Stribling married Louella Kloss, also a native of Clifton, and finished the first book of his epic trilogy about the South: *The Forge*, *The Store*, and *The Unfinished Cathedral*. The trilogy traces the fortunes of the fictional Vaiden family of Lauderdale County from the antebellum period through the building of Wilson Dam on the Tennessee



T.S. Stribling

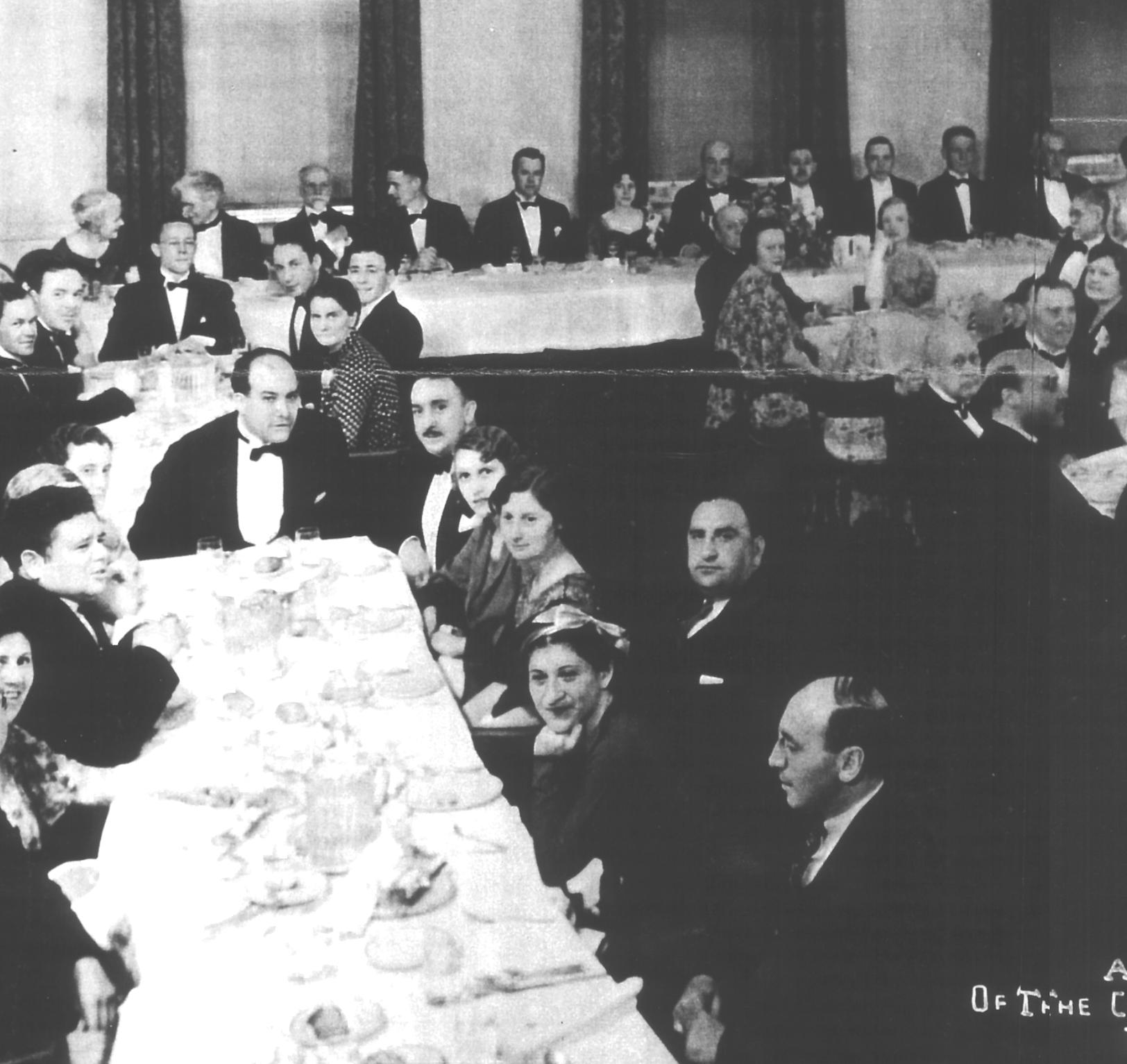
River in the 1920s.

Time magazine called *The Store*, "easily the most important U. S. novel of the year." The New Yorker compared Stribling to Mark Twain "in his abilities to convey the very life and movement of a small Southern town." In 1933, Columbia University awarded Stribling the Pulitzer Prize in Letters for *The Store*. It was chosen over *Mutiny on the Bounty* and Ellen Glasgow's *The Sheltered Life*, because "of its sustained interest, and because of the convincing and comprehensive picture it presents of life in an inland Southern community during the middle eighties of the last century."

Stribling's trilogy offered a stark and realistic portrayal of life and race relations in the South and directly attacked economic, social, and political injustices. It sold in excess of 240,000 copies during the Great Depression, but the books caused consternation. In June 1934, Stribling was prompted to write an "Apology to Florence." His trilogy, he wrote, was a

"survey; more or less, of the foibles and amusing social kinks of the whole South from Civil War times to the present. I have focused everything I found on Florence because that was the scene of my prolonged story. I am in the position of a very sad literary dog which drags every bone to his kennel, and I know this has made it quite uncomfortable for the perfectly nice and charming people who live in the house."

Over the next few years, Stribling taught and lectured and wrote primarily "whodunit" fiction. Published by *Ellery Queen*, *Famous Detective*, and *Smashing Detective Stories*, many featured a principal character named Dr. Henry Poggioli. Stribling published only two more novels, but among his



Mr. and Mrs. T.S. Stribling (in oval) at the 1934 annual dinner and dance for the 1933 Pulitzer Prize winners at the Men's Faculty Club, Columbia University.

papers are the completed manuscripts of three novels and a philosophical treatise entitled *The Philosophy of Yes and No*.

After a self-imposed exile from Florence of over three decades, the Striblings returned to Florence in 1965. Stribling died later that year and was buried in Clifton Cemetery. His tombstone reads "Through This Dust These Hills Once Spoke." Stribling's autobiography, *Laughing Stock*, was published in 1982, and the University of Alabama Press

reissued the trilogy in 1985. In his book, *T.S. Stribling: Pioneer Realist in Modern Southern Literature*, Edward J. Piacentino recognizes Stribling as a pioneer in the Southern Literary Renaissance: "Stribling helped to transmit significant social themes and a diverse range of character types drawn from real-life southern experience and presented them from an iconoclastic perspective. In this capacity, he broke new ground, and defying long-standing conventional conceptions about the



South, he brought to the forefront new and startling images and introduced a critical method for treating them, thus paving the way for modern southern literature.”

In the 1920s and '30s, Stribling was America's foremost author. He sold more books than any author between the two world wars. The former Florence resident even outsold his leading contemporaries, William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway. Ostracized in much of the South, the work of this

former Florence resident has played an important role in both literature and social progress.

William E. Smith Jr. is a native of Florence, Alabama, where he practices law, and is the author of Leo's Tale: University of North Alabama Trivia, just out from Shoals Heritage Publishers. This article is adapted from his upcoming book about Shoals area residents entitled Legacy

“America Creates for the Millennium” in Talladega

by Jan Jenner

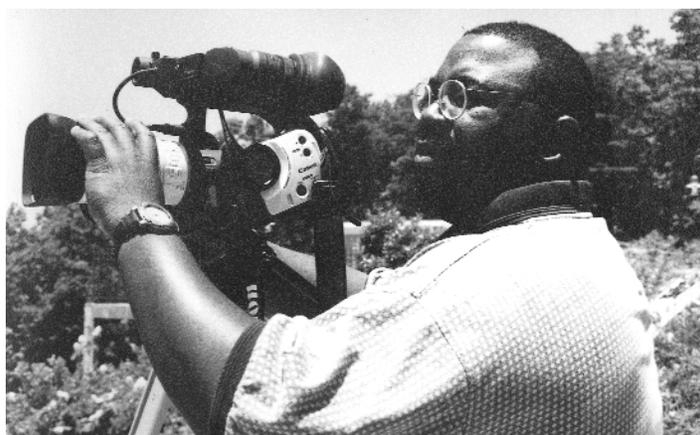
From May 1 through August 30, videographer Curtis Reaves was Talladega’s Resident Artist. Sponsored by the prestigious national program, *Artists & Communities: America Creates for the Millennium*, and headquartered at Heritage Hall in Talladega, Reaves was one of just 56 artists to have been selected to take part in this nationwide program, an outreach of the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation of Baltimore, Maryland.

Motorsports fans know Talladega as the home of the fastest track on the NASCAR circuit, the largest enclosed racetrack in the world. So, you may be wondering, how did Talladega, a town of only about 17,000 that drowns off I-20, midway between Birmingham and Atlanta, receive this impressive recognition? What has the community gained from this project? What has this artist discovered about the life of this particular small, Southern town? Has the focus of this program — community involvement in the arts — been realized? The answers to these questions and others may surprise you.

THE VIDEOGRAPHER AS HISTORIAN AND ARTIST

Let’s start with Curtis Reaves, the artist who is at the center of this story. It took Reaves about 16 hours to drive his tan and brown ‘83 Oldsmobile from his home in Duquesne, Pennsylvania to Talladega, with all the high-tech equipment necessary to make a sophisticated video

stuffed into the trunk and backseat. Because all this apparatus is so essential to his work, Reaves was loathe to leave his jam-packed car untended, for fear something would be stolen. So, the only stop he made on his long drive to Alabama was at a truck stop in Kentucky, where he fell briefly asleep, only to dream that someone was watching him. The dream jolted him awake, and although no one was there, Reaves quickly drove on.



Curtis Reaves shooting video footage at Mount Cheha, near Talladega.

Photo by Russell Everett

Once in Talladega, Reaves moved into the apartment provided by Heritage Hall to find that his new neighbors were hosting a party that lasted all night and well into the next day. “They had the music cranked up so loud, the walls of my place seemed to vibrate, but I was so tired, I finally fell asleep at 5:00 in the morning.” (Since then, Reaves, his rowdy

neighbors, and the landlord have come to a more amicable agreement.)

Unlike many of the other Millennial artists, who have had wide experience as community artists, this is Reaves’ first residency. And although the transition to life in a small Southern town has been bumpy at times, the experience seems to agree with him. “I plan on doing more residencies,” Reaves says. “As an outsider coming into a community I see things differently than people who live here. I like the challenge of using my craft in a different setting, and, after 20 years of practice making videos and doing still photography, I feel confident that I can go to a new place and put an artistic spin on almost any story.”

John and Sarah, Reaves' video about his search to trace the lives of his great-grandparents, who were slaves in Vance County, North Carolina, allowed him to visually interpret their story. Reaves has always been interested in history, and making John and Sarah set him on the road to making historical videos and developing installations to house them. The installation for John and Sarah is a re-creation of their 1879 home. "John and Sarah taught me about my own family and our place in history. Now the Talladega project is giving me an understanding of history on a broader scene. I've learned how this part of the country was founded and how the past has influenced where Talladega is today. And to me, this is interesting stuff.

"For instance, I've learned that this country was settled in spurts instead of in one continuous process. I've learned that the mindset of the Europeans and Easterners who got 'Alabama Fever' was to divide and conquer the country, subduing the Native Americans and the native plants and animals. It was the Europeans who brought both boundaries and slavery."

As of this writing (July, 2000), Reaves is still developing his project. The video will trace the history of Talladega beginning with the Muskogee and Redstick Creeks and the Natchez peoples who migrated to Talladega County before 1800. Highlights of the early Native American-Federal conflicts will include the 1806 development of the Federal Road, which led to "Alabama Fever;" the massacre at Fort Mims, in which about 500 whites and friendly Creeks died, and caused the Federal government to declare war on the Creek Nation; and the Battle of Talladega (1813), in which about 2,300 Federal troops, under the command of General Andrew Jackson, killed 500 Creeks. Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie fought in the Battle of Talladega and, to this day, as Alabama State Highway 21 passes through the town, it is called Battle Street.



Maija Taylor and Curtis Reaves making the video, *Trouble at Talladega College*.

Photo by Tommy Moorehead

Then Reaves' video will segue into the life of one of the earliest planters to settle in Talladega, Thomas McElderry. The video will use the McElderry family story to summarize events in Talladega during the Civil War, and it will then outline the founding of the town through three historic Talladega institutions: the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, Talladega College, and the

Presbyterian Home. All this history will be told in an economical 45 to 50 minutes of video.

THE VENUE

Curtis Reaves has been granted an extraordinary creative and personal challenge as Talladega's (and Alabama's) Millennial Artist, and the opportunity for him to grow personally is obvious. But what will the community gain from the experience of having a resident videographer telling the Talladega story? Quite a lot, as it turns out, and at this point this story of the Millennial Project shifts to focus on Heritage Hall, the host institution and co-recipient of this unique award.

Anyone in Alabama who is interested in the arts probably knows of Heritage Hall, Talladega's art museum in a magnificently restored old library building. Talladega didn't always have an art museum, though. In 1982, a group of concerned citizens began the process that eventually would rescue the derelict building that had been Alabama's first public library (the Jemison-Carnegie Public Library, founded in 1906), and transform it into a graceful, gem-like exhibit space. Since its rebirth as a fine art museum, Heritage Hall has gained a reputation for ambitious and innovative community arts programs and the current director, Tommy Moorehead, continues this tradition. It is surely because of his leadership, and his record of unusual exhibits and ambitious community outreach programs, that Heritage Hall was awarded this prestigious grant.

An accomplished watercolorist, Tommy Moorehead is known for the breadth of his creative vision.

Moorehead likes to do things in a big way, and this includes making big watercolors and dreaming up big community projects that involve artists and lots of participants, especially children. Moorehead works hard to infuse these projects with his own brand of Southern *joie de vivre*, and his vision makes his projects quite successful. For example, Heritage Hall's Arts Camp for Kids has grown from a fifty-participant, two-week-long program supported by funding from the Alabama State Council on the Arts to a two-hundred-participant, self-supporting, four-week-long arts education extravaganza.

In last year's schedule for Heritage Hall events, Moorehead included a series of community artist's residencies that brought six of Alabama's finest artists into school and community outreach projects in Talladega. During that same year, while working in conjunction with Hank Willett at the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture, Moorehead also helped organize a prestigious exhibit of traditional Alabama folk arts. Earlier this year, he was instrumental in co-producing (with Georgine Clarke of the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the Alabama Artists' Gallery) a kaleidoscopic exhibit that showcased work of twenty-two of Alabama's finest self-taught artists. These last two exhibits subsequently traveled on to other venues within the state. With his knowledge of the Talladega community and the wealth of his experience in designing community art projects, Tommy Moorehead and Heritage Hall were natural and reliable choices as hosts for a Millennial Artist. But, interestingly enough, Moorehead never expected that Heritage Hall and Talladega would win the award.



Curtis Reaves, Amy Gordon, Quinton Garrett and Joe Wood and Rye Fannin working on the video, *The Oak Hill Project*.

Photo by Tommy Moorehead

"We learned about the Millennial Cities program at the last minute, and we had to rush to get our application in on time.

Probably one reason that we were able to do it is that the initial form didn't require too much work. We made the deadline, but considering the competition from larger organizations in the state, we never expected to hear anything more about it. We were surprised, pleased, and not a little shocked when we learned that Talladega and Heritage Hall had been chosen," Moorehead says.

HOW THE MATCH WAS MADE

Once the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation selected Talladega as a Millennial City, it was Talladega's turn to select a panel of possible artists. To find five potential artists, this writer (who is a Heritage Hall volunteer, writing grant requests and performing other chores) traveled to Baltimore and spent two days reviewing the work of nearly 300 painters, sculptors, printmakers, singers, dancers, performance artists, photographers, and videographers. After the choices were narrowed down to 19 possibilities, hours were spent reviewing samples of their work. The goal was to arrive at five artists who could be invited to Talladega for interviews, artists who were a good match for the community and its available resources.



Amy Gordon and Lonnie Holley and a newly-made sculpture.

Photo by Jan Jenner

The selection process wasn't easy—I had numerous slides to review, many different videos to watch, and many tapes and compact discs to hear. This intensive review procedure was possible because of the advance work done by the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, which had located all the artists, collected samples of their work, and prepared the various pieces of

equipment so people like me could make a decision—theirs was a truly unbelievable task. I was one of numerous community representatives who struggled through the eight-foot-long row of binders containing the artists' resuméés and other written documentation. One other person was a museum director from Leesville, South Carolina, and by the end of the day, her eyes were as red and tired as mine. It was grueling work.

My main objective was to find artists who would be a good fit for Talladega. I finally chose videographer Frederick Marx, printmaker Tomie Arai, gospel singer Stefanie Minatee, photographer Olive Pierce, and videographer Curtis Reaves.

Back at Heritage Hall, a committee reviewed the five choices and selected Curtis Reaves as the artist that would best fit with the community. A few months later, Reaves visited Talladega to brainstorm about the project, working with Moorehead and me. Because one of the aims of the project was to involve the community in the artistic process, Moorehead planned to develop a four-week-long advanced art camp program for middle- and high-schoolers. After the planning session, it was clear that I had more grant requests to write!

Fortunately, our requests were generally met with acceptance. One in particular from the Alabama State Council on the Arts, for Moorehead's advanced art camp, has helped eleven students to learn about the history of the town while developing their skills in recording it. The students have written, acted in, and produced their own videos, while also learning to take good 35-mm photographs. At this writing, the students



Amy Gordon, Tommy Moorehead, Katy Blackwell and Lonnie Holley stabilizing a sculpture.

Photo by Jan Jenner

are in the process of planning, designing, and constructing a free-form multimedia installation that will reflect their concept of Talladega through their own photography, artwork, and

videography. Their efforts will work in tandem with Curtis Reaves' video, which is the centerpiece of the exhibit.

COLLABORATION, WITH LAGNIAPPE

Creating this installation was a true collaborative effort. Moorehead, Reaves, and this writer together advised the students on video production; Moorehead guided construction of the exhibit, aided by, during the second half of the art camp, Lonnie B. Holley, the nationally recognized self-taught artist from Harpersville, Alabama. Holley was a welcome addition to the effort. As this article is being written, the installation is still under construction, but it is clear even now that Holley's unique creative vision is having a tremendous impact on the way that the students are evaluating their town, its history, and their relationship to it. Furthermore, their view of creativity, art, and artist is being dramatically reshaped by the experience.

"It's neat how Lonnie Holley can look at something like a clothes hanger or a door knob and turn it into something completely different. He seems very dedicated to his work. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience," says Sarah Morgan, a fifteen-year-old sophomore from Talladega High School.

"I feel like I'm learning a lot. You get to take senseless stuff like wire and old wood and ripped paper and make it into something that means something to you. I think it has helped my creativeness a lot,"

Photo by Jan Jenner



Brianne Cross and Brittany Pressley deconstruct a tape player.

adds Brittany Pressley, a fourteen-year-old ninth-grader at Childersburg High School.

A MILLENNIUM PROJECT ENRICHES

In Talladega, the lives of artists, townspeople, and students are being enriched by their experience with the program *Artists & Communities: America Creates for the Millennium*. And, in particular, the perceptions of student and professional artists are being enlarged and transformed. Once the video and installation have been completed, the circle of influence will grow to include all who visit Heritage Hall during September 2000 when

Curtis Reaves' video and the Millennial City Exhibit will debut.

For more information, call Heritage Hall at 256-761-1364. Hours are as follows: Sunday, 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Tuesday through Friday, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.; closed Saturday and Monday. Also, check the following websites: <http://www.hmuse.org>, and <http://www.johnandsarah.org>.

Jan Jenner is a writer and biologist who volunteers at Heritage Hall.



COWBOY HUBBARD'S TALLADEGA AL. REAVES 00

Photo and hand-tinting by Curtis Reaves

FAST FACTS ABOUT TALLADEGA, ALABAMA

The Talladega County Courthouse was built in 1836 and survived the Civil War.

When Union troops neared Talladega, the Mayor rode out to meet them on the outskirts of the town and convinced them not to burn the Courthouse. Instead, they burned the railroad depot.

The Court-house did burn in the 1920s and was redesigned and enlarged. One of the unusual features of the Talladega County Courthouse are its banded columns.

A block from Courthouse Square, in the ditch between the Piggly Wiggly parking lot and Campbell's Barbecue, is an enormous gush of water that is the diverted Big Springs. This natural spring was the place where many Creek trails converged.

Before white settlers moved into the area, Talladega was home to Miskogee Creek and Natchez tribes.

On November 9, 1813, as part of the Federal effort to eradicate tribal peoples, General Andrew Jackson and his Tennessee Volunteer troops rescued about 17 whites and about 120 friendly Creeks who were besieged within the palisades of Fort Lashley (also known as Fort Leslie). About 1500 hostile Creeks were camped all around Big Springs and were laying siege to the Fort, threatening to destroy it by sunrise. Beginning about 4:00 a.m., Jackson and about 1,200 infantry and 800 cavalry tried to surround and massacre the Creeks in the Battle of Talladega that lasted only a short time (estimates range from 20 to 90 minutes). When it was over, about 500 Creek men, women, and children had been killed or were mortally wounded, and 17 whites were dead.

The rest of the Creeks fled and eventually gathered in the Horseshoe Bend area, where they were attacked once more by Federal troops. Those who weren't massacred at Horseshoe Bend were captured, and eventually, in 1836, they were force-marched over 1,000 miles, to what is now Oklahoma, in the shameful episode of American history now known as the Trail of Tears.

In 1834, 21 years after the battle, visitors to the battlefield found it still covered with unburied Indian bones.

Talladega used to be a busy stop on railroad lines. In the 1800s, six train tracks came through town. The railroad reached Talladega in 1859, and eventually there were four separate train depots and between 16 and 23 passenger trains per day.

The arrival of Talladega's first railroad cars was celebrated in fine Southern fashion: locals dug a big pit and had a huge barbecue. Special extra-wide cake pans were manufactured for this railroad whoop-de-do.

Today there are few remnants of this once-busy railroading industry. The train tracks have been torn up from Battle Street, but, if you have a good imagination, you may be able to envision locomotives chugging into town along this exceptionally straight, wide avenue.

In the mid-1800s, Courthouse Square was a bustling place, and hotels, boarding houses, and saloons accommodated transient railroad passengers. The White Elephant Saloon was in the ground floor of what is now Michael's Men's Store.

Chambers Opera House, located at the southwest corner of Battle and Court Street (now the Standard Furniture Company) brought vaudeville and traveling plays to the 1880s and 1890s.

Because Talladega is the county seat, many lawyers have always practiced in the town. Lawyers' and doctors' offices used to be in the upper floors of the buildings around the Square, while as many as six large groceries occupied ground-floor stores.

Although it seems incredible today, throughout the 1800s and until World War II, it was a common practice for townspeople to place an order and have food delivered every day. Some homes had deliveries twice a day. Robert Weaver, who has been in business on the Square for 54 years and has seen many changes, said that sometimes customers would call to order just a loaf of bread, and the grocer would send a boy on a bicycle to make the delivery. Of course, today in Talladega, home deliveries are a thing of the past—everyone goes to supermarkets in shopping malls.

Robert Weaver also recalled that, before World War II, cars used to park in the center of the streets around the Square, and there used to be two-way traffic around the Square.

The New Urbanism: Can Alabama Grow Smart?

By Philip Morris

Getting to Jacksonville State University, about 20 miles north of Anniston, for a recent governor's conference on something called "Smart Growth" was, if not half the fun, half the lesson—the what not to do part. First, there was billboard blight along Interstate 20 near the Oxford, Alabama frontage, where the once-lovely views of wooded mountains and ridges have been all but obscured. Then, after a turn north onto US 431 and Alabama 21, the well-maintained boulevard through the heart of Anniston was the only, all-too-brief, interruption in the endless visual clutter of retail strip development. If this is the future of Alabama, and it seems to be so across much of the state, the Smart Growth message, a key to the new urbanism, deserves rapid exploration.

The defining element of new urbanism is, without question, "quality of life." In the standard conflict between progress (the "new") and preservation (the

"old") that has driven so many short-term decisions in Alabama, the Smart Growth options become compelling. A smart community, by deciding in advance what it wishes to protect and enhance, and how it wants to grow, can have it both ways—thereby ensuring a most desirable quality of life.

"Although the United States leads the world in conservation of key natural features, we are still losing character through our development practices," said the conference's keynote speaker, Ed McMahon, who is a Birmingham native, co-founder of Scenic America, and currently the director of the American Greenways Program at the Conservation Fund in Washington, D.C. Illustrating with slides of shapeless, depressing messes found on either side of those highways that lead into many towns and cities, McMahon decried the effects of "placelessness". "If you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are," he pointed out to a concerned audience.

He quickly reassured everyone that there is a clear choice to be made to prevent "placelessness". And, he said, it is not "no-growth," as many would suggest, but "Smart Growth." What Smart Growth really means, as determined by different states and organizations such as the Urban Land Institute, can be captured in three key points, says McMahon:

Where do you put the growth? -In Smart Growth, you decide first what natural resources and features deserve protecting, then steer new development elsewhere;



Although the Horizon 280 Association has worked to manage growth and enhance public landscape along U.S. 280 through Birmingham's southern suburbs, the basic pattern of cul-de-sac developments, all of which must use the highway for even minor trips, overloads the highway.



Mountain Brook, a suburb of Birmingham, has strengthened its three separate villages with enhanced sidewalks and pedestrian amenities. Its 1926 plan, by landscape architect Warren Manning, still serves as a good model of suburban layout: it clusters commercial buildings, rather than stringing them out along strips.

How do you arrange it? -In Smart Growth, you employ land use planning, road layout and other local development tools to give a coherent shape to development;

What does the new growth look like?-In Smart Growth, you adopt sign and landscape ordinances, you plan around local historic districts and other special features of the town, and you take any other available means to assure that all new commercial establishments, even fast-food restaurants, are compatible with community character.

That Smart Growth already has found a place in Alabama became evident in a series of examples, drawn from several projects that have done a good job of balancing existing landscape and character with new development. Three were from Shelby County, which is the fastest-growing urban area in the state. Included was the new urbanist Mt. Laurel development, which incorporates a pedestrian-friendly town center, and Ronnie Morton's revival and expansion of an existing hamlet, (___name?___), as a new place to live and shop. The third example from Shelby County was a report on the close look given by Shelby County's "Committee of 19" to the

costs of unplanned, sprawling growth and its replacement with Smart Growth alternatives.

McMahon cited numerous towns and cities across the country that got better development by simply demanding it. In addition to helping in the battle against traffic congestion, now listed as the number one issue in most communities, Smart Growth can help protect the environment. "Runoff from pavement is now the greatest source of pollution in the United States," McMahon told the gathering. When development is planned to be more compact, a tenet of Smart Growth, total paved surface area is reduced.

Other presentations at the Jacksonville State conference brought forward similar good choices. Traffic engineer Walter Kulash from Orlando amazed the group by tracing the short-comings in the way we have been building streets and highways, then loading new development



One option in Smart Growth is the strengthening of city and town centers, with their existing infrastructure, as vital mixed-use neighborhoods that include residences. Such progress is happening in downtown Birmingham, where this ten-story tower, as well as three- and four-story buildings nearby, are among dozens that have been converted to loft living.

along these suburban thoroughfares. In fact, as Kulash demonstrated, the old-style street grid found in the earlier parts of towns offers more efficiency and choice. The simple option of being able to choose to walk or ride a bicycle, rather than drive, has given many neighborhoods a cost-effective way to reduce traffic. At the new, pedestrian-linked town of Celebration in Orlando, he pointed out, 40 percent of the usual automobile trips have simply disappeared.

With its natural amenities and its heritage of town- and city-building, Alabama has much to draw upon, as it considers what kind of place it wants to be in the next millennium. As the state competes with others for economic growth, and as various cities and counties within the state vie for opportunities, the long-term gain is going

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Mt. Laurel, a development underway in Shelby County that follows New Urbanist principles, takes inspiration from early suburban planning, such as that incorporated into Mountain Brook and other close-in neighborhoods. Such planning is exemplified by a walkable town center and the nearby small-lot residential areas.