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# Hoover Historical Log

*The Official Newsletter of the Hoover Historical Society, Hoover, Alabama*

## Scholarship info now on Website

Each year, the Hoover Historical Society awards a scholarship to a worthy senior at each of Hoover's two public high schools, Spain Park and Hoover High. The scholarship honors the founder of the HHS, Vadie Honea. This year, as we acknowledge the Bicentennial of our state, the 'prompts' used to guide the essayists reflect specific state history topics.

Students are asked to write a 1,000-word essay on either the most significant event in Alabama's 200-year history or research one or more of Alabama's five state capitals. The Scholarship Committee of Dr. Charles Hickman, Pamela Thompson, and Deborah Burnett will note excellent research, writing skills, and personal interest in history. Citation of sources is required.

If you know a senior who would like to compete, please direct them to our Website or their school counselors. Deadline for a finished application is March 22<sup>nd</sup>.



## Historian and landscape architect to discuss Ross Bridge culvert

Landscape architect Birgit Kibelka and historian Marjorie White will join us for the January 15, 1:15 p.m. meeting at the Hoover Public Library. They will present an illustrated talk on the Ross Bridge Culvert. They know it well—having recently completed documentation (a footnoted history, large format photographs, and measured drawings) of the massive Civil War-era structure for the National Park Service's Historic American Engineering Record. Their talk will tell us who James Ross was and why and how the Shades Mountain sandstone structure was built and how it came to be the centerpiece of today's Ross Bridge community.

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## Save the Date!

### General Meeting

January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Ross Bridge Culvert  
with Marjorie White  
and Birgit Kibelka at  
the Hoover Public  
Library at 1:15 PM

### Board Meeting

March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Meet at the  
Valleydale  
Archive/office at  
10 AM

### General Meeting

March 19, 2019

Anne Beddow:  
Pioneer Nurse  
Anesthetist, Anne  
Gibbons, 1:30 at  
HPL

## Culvert dates to Civil War era

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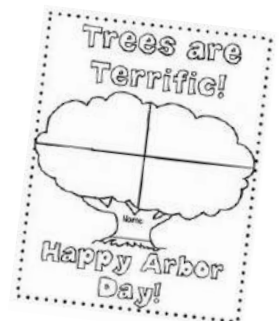


This photo was taken during the survey of the culvert in 2017, and is the official photo at the National Park Service.

Kibelka and White have worked together on other historic documentation projects for the National Park Service including the planning for Mountain Brook, 1926-1929. For the past three years they have been studying, mapping, and putting together *Shades Creek: Flowing Through Time*, a 216-page book with more than 250 maps and photographs to be released by Birmingham Historical Society February 25. Ross Creek is a tributary of Shades Creek. Researching the landmark culvert turned into a six-month exploration of the physical structure and hard to find historical documentation.

## Plant a tree for Arbor Day!

The Hoover Beautification Board works with Hoover Landscape Architecture & Urban Forestry staff and Hoover City Schools staff to organize annual Arbor Day celebrations at public schools and at Aldridge Gardens. Since 1998, these celebrations have helped Hoover retain its status as a 'Tree City' in the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program. The school and community celebrations work to educate children, youth, and adults about forest trees and urban trees, and about the importance of cities maintaining healthy urban forests.



### The Arbor Day Essay Contest

Hoover's Arbor Day essay contest is conducted at the 4th Grade level with all elementary schools in the Hoover City School System invited to participate. School faculties along with a panel of Beautification Board members read and judge each essay to determine an overall contest winner and winners from each school. Contest winners are honored at the community Arbor Day celebration and receive an assortment of prizes for their work including cash, tree identification books, an Aldridge Gardens membership, plants, etc. Local sponsors and the Beautification Board provide prizes. Each winner is invited to read his or her essay at the community celebration.

### Arbor Day Ceremonies at Hoover Schools

Each of Hoover's 17 schools is encouraged to organize their own Arbor Day celebration on campus. These celebrations always include a ceremonial tree planting led by Hoover Landscape Architecture & Urban Forestry staff. Utilizing larger caliper trees, the plantings have proven effective at enhancing campus landscapes and at teaching students the do(s) and don't(s) of tree planting and care. The Beautification Board provides one tree to each participating school. Board members attend and assist with each school celebration. The Hoover Beautification Board also produces a comprehensive 'Arbor Day Report' detailing Hoover's annual Arbor Day celebration activities.

Tree plantings are scheduled between February 20 and March 13. Aldridge Gardens will host Arbor Day on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. For more information, see the Website:

[www.hooveral.org/163/Arbor-Day-Tree-City-USA](http://www.hooveral.org/163/Arbor-Day-Tree-City-USA).



Left: Beautiful artwork from the RRES yearbooks; right, Dr. Dil Uswatte, Principal; center, Arnold Singer in the *Hoover Sun*, photo by Jon Anderson.

## A message from our president...

Dear Friends:

In early 2017, Carolyn Kolar and I accepted several boxes of PTO scrapbooks from Rocky Ridge Elementary School. We met Karen King, the school librarian, who was anticipating her retirement and concerned about the fate of the beautiful, uniquely handcrafted Rocky Ridge Elementary school yearbooks.

This past Thanksgiving evening, a hit-and-run driver struck Mrs. King's family in a pedestrian crosswalk in Denver. Mrs. King did not survive. When I learned of her death, like all the children and staff at RRES, I was shocked. On behalf of the HHS, and in honoring Karen's preservation wish, I asked Principal Dr. Dilhani Uswatte, to locate the remaining grey archival boxes.

We plan to access the collection as "The Karen King Memorial Collection." Dr. Uswatte calls our effort "a lovely and heartwarming idea."

Later this month, our Society hosts an historian and landscape architect at our third General Meeting of the 2018-2019 club year. We hope you will join us for this program on the history of the Ross Bridge Culvert! With spring comes at least two more educational visits to our Folklore Center by Hoover City Schools, our Spring Trip, and Spring Tea. A new slate of officers are nominated this month and the search for two worthy seniors in our scholarship program takes off. And, two more public educational offerings are extended in March and May. Happy New Year!

*Arnold Singer*

## In memoriam...

*Eddie discovered a "chance seedling" in 1969 and propagated and patented the now world -famous Snowflake Hydrangea. He established Aldridge Gardens in Hoover as a public garden in perpetuity in memory of his family. The Snowflake Hydrangea is the official flower of the City of Hoover.*



Eddie and Kay Aldridge spoke with the HHS in 2015 about their gift to the City of Hoover.

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## Jim Langley's Hoover tour is popular with locals and newcomers!

Although Hoover, Alabama was incorporated fairly recently—in 1967—the city has a great deal of history within its borders. It is hard to imagine that the woods, hills, hollows and streams were once the ceremonial and hunting grounds of the Native Americans, including the Woodland, the Mississippian Moundbuilders, and the Muskogee (Creek) clans. Their existence becomes real when you walk the boulder fields and streams of Moss Rock Preserve or stand looking over the cliff in Bluff Park—listening to the legend of Lovers Leap. That all changed when General Andrew Jackson defeated the Red Sticks in 1814, and settlers began streaming into the Alabama Territory.

With few roads and no railroads, the area experienced a quiet and slow-paced existence with a scattering of small farms, but little or no industry or large plantations. The exception was the “good air” of the Summit, now Bluff Park, where settlers in the Valley around Elyton and Jones Valley escaped to get away from the many cholera epidemics experienced in the 1800s.

On our history tour, we explore Bluff Park. One can walk down the path to Sunset Rock and visualize why people would come here for the awesome vistas. We imagine the medicinal natural springs, and cabins built by Octavia Spencer for tourists, and the resort it became under Gardner Hale and family. We envision the 500-acre peach farm as we pass the Overseer's House. We see the house that William and Evan Hale referred to as their *Shangri-La* and across the road, we experience an 1840s Homestead.

We follow the old wagon trail over Shades Mountain, the last mountain of the Appalachian chain. On the road, we are reminded of the old wooden store that served as a stagecoach stop. We see the old Summit School and Baptist Church and the adjoining Cemetery, built at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Later we pass the ‘new’ school, built in 1923, which has evolved into Bluff Park Elementary. We see the spectacular view where the Bluff Park Hotel and Resort was built in 1909 and many old homes built in this timeframe along Shades Crest. Nearby, we ride through the Children's Fresh Air Farm built by Independent Presbyterian Church in 1924 that still serves inner-city kids.

The Civil War brought change—especially in the valleys. It was during this time that James Taylor Ross allowed the Confederate Army to build a railroad bridge on his land to allow transport of iron ore for munitions from the

Oxmoor furnaces through Brock's Gap, to the other side of Shades Mountain and on to the Selma Arsenal. Brock's Gap, a 75-foot-deep cut in the mountain through limestone bedrock and Ross Culvert are still there, as part of Hoover's history.

After the war, with completion of the railroad system, the iron ore and coal industries boomed. Much of Hoover is located above a large coal bed called the Cahaba coalfields. These fields sprouted a new town called Acton, which became a source of work for area settlers. Harbert Corporation developed Acton and the 42 square acres of coalfield into what we call Riverchase. Early settlers such as the Tyler and Patton families worked on farms and in the mines. They also established schools and churches.

Modern Hoover began in the 1940s when insurance executive William Hoover built a two-room log cabin as a family getaway on an old logging road called Tyler Road. In 1947, he built a colonial style brick home, later purchased by the Randle family. A highlight of the tour is touring the home, hosted by Ed and Barbara Randle.

In the 1950s, as the Montgomery Highway expanded, Mr. Hoover began buying property in the area. He moved his insurance company there in 1958, and the Hoover community began. One of the first businesses was Green Valley Drugs—which stands today as the oldest continuous business in Hoover and retains an old-fashioned soda fountain and grill.

Our modern-day Hoover, the sixth largest city in the state, includes Mr. Hoover's insurance company building and the one-by-four block area where Hoover started with a population of 400 people in 1967. In that area, we see the Motor Mile with its many automobile dealerships. On the other side is the Hoover Mall, which thrived in the early 1970s with 21 stores, but was eclipsed by the Galleria Mall in 1986. The original city complex with jail, Fire Department and city offices is now an unremarkable building occupied by a cellular phone company.

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## An updated edition of Alabama's history celebrates the state's Bicentennial

*Alabama: The History of a Deep South State, Bicentennial Edition* is a comprehensive narrative account of the state from its earliest days to the present. This edition, updated to celebrate the state's bicentennial year, offers a detailed survey of the colorful, dramatic, and often controversial turns in Alabama's evolution. Organized chronologically and divided into three main sections—the first concluding in 1865, the second in 1920, and the third bringing the story to the present—makes clear and interprets the major events that occurred during Alabama's history within the larger context of the South and the nation.

Once the home of aboriginal inhabitants, Alabama was claimed and occupied by a number of European nations prior to becoming a permanent part of the United States in 1819. A cotton and slave state for more than half of the nineteenth century, Alabama seceded in 1861 to join the Confederate States of America, and occupied an uneasy and uncertain place in America's post-Civil War landscape. Alabama's role in the twentieth century has been equally tumultuous and dramatic.

General readers as well as scholars will welcome this up-to-date and scrupulously researched history of Alabama, which examines such traditional subjects as politics, military history, economics, race, and class. It contains essential accounts devoted to Native Americans, women, and the environment, as well as detailed coverage of health, education, organized labor, civil rights, and the many cultural developments, from literature to sport, that have enriched Alabama's history. The stories of individual leaders, from politicians to creative artists, are also highlighted. A key facet of this landmark historical narrative is the strong emphasis placed on the common everyday people of Alabama, those who have been rightly described as the "bone and sinew" of the state.

University of Alabama professor Albert B. Moore wrote the standard account of Alabama History, first published in 1927, but in 2013 the book had not been updated since 1934. This new story of Alabama resulted from a joint effort between the University of Alabama Press and four authors with Auburn connections—William Warren Rogers, Auburn undergraduate and longtime Professor of History at Florida State University; Robert David Ward, who was a classmate of Rogers and who spent his teaching career at Georgia Southern University; J. Wayne Flynt, who taught history for many years at Samford University and retired as Professor of History



**Leah Rawls Atkins, PhD, will present a paper at the Alabama Historical Association in April in Tuscaloosa. Dr. Atkins and Amazon.com contributed to this article.**

at Auburn University; and Leah Rawls Atkins, who taught at Samford and Auburn and received the first Ph.D. History degree granted by Auburn University. The value of this edition, published as an updated Bicentennial Edition, is its extensive endnote citations, a bibliography, which has been updated to books and articles published to press time, an index, appendices, and accounts of society and culture to its publication in 2018.



**Hoover Tour**  
*Continued from Page 4*

**A 2018 tour of Hoover included visiting the Aldridge Gardens, a 30-acre paradise of nature.**

The Hoover of today has splendid municipal buildings, most built in the 1980s, including the City Hall complex. Hoover has one of the best small-town libraries in the country, a great senior center, and a large public safety building which houses cybercrime units, state forensics, and the municipal court. The Hoover Met is home to some famous baseball players and the Southeastern Conference tournament. The Finley Center competes for conventions and large functions. The new complex of sports fields provides premier facilities for local activities. A tour of Hoover would not be complete without visiting the jewel of the city—Aldridge Gardens—a 30-acre paradise of nature specializing in world-famous hydrangeas, now owned by the city of Hoover.



## HOOVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY Membership Form

Make checks payable to *Hoover Historical Society*  
P.O. Box 360233 Hoover, AL 35236-0233  
Archive/Office 205-739-7316

### Types of Memberships

Individual	\$10
Couple	\$20
Sustaining	\$50
Patron	\$100
Corporate	\$150

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

BUSINESS: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cell): \_\_\_\_\_

Interests: Publicity \_\_\_\_\_ Archives \_\_\_\_\_ Speakers' Bureau \_\_\_\_\_ Research \_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_

Other Interests & Skills: \_\_\_\_\_

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[Recipient]

