

# Birmingham History Center

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## IN MEMORY OF

THEIR LIVES WERE TAKEN BY UNKNOWN PARTIES  
ON SEPTEMBER 15, 1963 WHEN THE SIXTEENTH  
STREET BAPTIST CHURCH WAS BOMBED.

"MAY MEN LEARN TO REPLACE BITTERNESS  
AND VIOLENCE WITH LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING"

Birmingham History Center

THOMAS E. JERNIGAN SR. MEMORIAL

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## Letter from the Director/Jerry Desmond



An ancient Chinese proverb states "May you live in interesting times." It cannot be denied that the year 1963 was certainly interesting. The American civil rights movement reached a turning point that year with the city of Birmingham at its center. September of 1963, of course, was the most pivotal month of that dramatic year in Birmingham history with the tragic bombing at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church.

To commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing, "A More Convenient Season," a three-movement, 75-minute work for orchestra, chorus, soloists, film and electronic sound, will premiere Sept. 21 at the Alys Stephens Center, composed by Yotam Haber. It will employ vintage films contributed by Birmingham residents many of which were collected by the History Center. In fact, to familiarize himself with Birmingham history as background research, Mr. Haber visited the History Center earlier this year. Mr. Haber is a Guggenheim fellow and Rome Prize-winning composer who was born in the Netherlands and grew up in Israel, Nigeria and Milwaukee. The title and much of the text originates from Dr. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," the seminal civil rights document written six months before the bombing.

DEZ

## Featured New Artifact

This poster of the Birmingham Turf Club from 1987 was donated by George Wheelock. The horse racking track opened to the public on March 3, 1987 and held the first Alabama Derby on April 11 of that year. Through 13,000 fans came for the opening event, only 4,500 showed up the following night, and the track never drew the large crowds and large wagers its backers expected, losing up to \$100,000 a day in the weeks following. By the end of its inaugural 175-day season the track had lost \$50 million and the operators filed for bankruptcy reorganization in November 1988. The track went to greyhound racing in 1992.





## On Exhibit – Army Air Corps Uniform

This World War II Army Air Corps uniform belonged to Lieutenant William M. Cook, originally of Camden, Alabama (and the father of our Board President, Garland Smith). Cook enlisted in the Army Air Forces on December 4, 1940. He served for some time as an enlisted man but eventually entered flight school and received his pilot wings and commission on June 22, 1943.

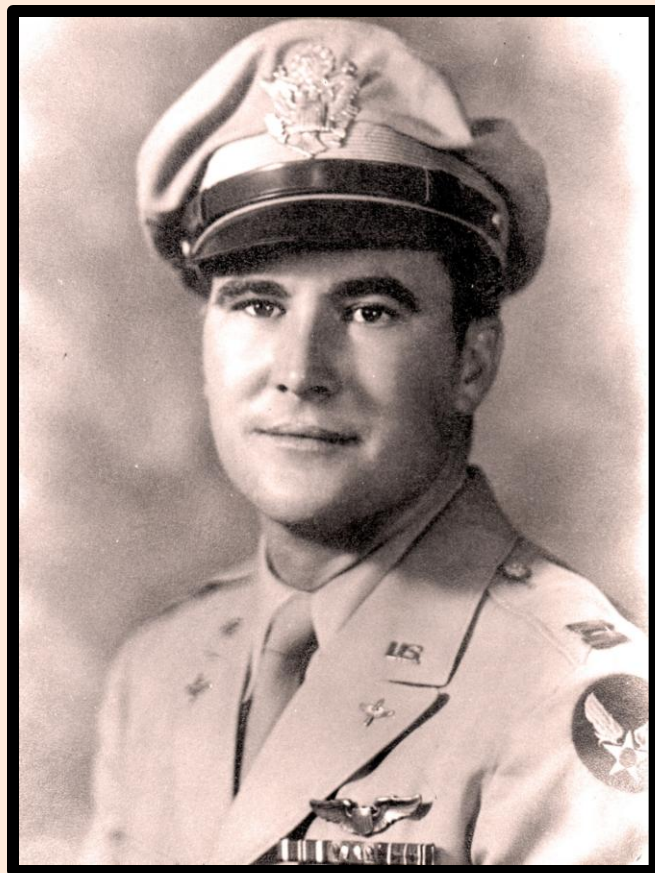
He was assigned to the Ninth Air Force A-20 bomber station in England. Quoted in a *Montgomery Advertiser* article, Cook noted that he was “glad to be in England and am proud to be in on the ‘Big Push.’” He eventually flew over 60 bombing missions in France and Germany.



**World War II Army Air Corps Uniform  
belonging to Lt. William M. Cook**

He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for actions which took place on April 30, 1944. While serving as a pilot in a Douglas A-2- “Havoc” bomber on a mission to destroy V-1 missile installations in occupied France, Lt. Cook noted that his left engine had lost partial power. He skillfully managed to stay in formation and dropped his bombs over the target. His engine then lost full power, forcing him to leave formation and return to base alone. He accomplished a successful single engine landing without damage to his plane or crew.

## On Exhibit – Army Air Corps Uniform



Lt. William M. Cook, Pilot – Army Air Corps

Following a bombing run over Merken, Germany, Lt. Cook and his all-Southern crew in his A-20 bomber - nicknamed the Camden Rebel - attacked German anti-aircraft guns near Aachen, Germany using its 50 caliber guns in a strafing run. With Lt. Cook diving the plane towards the “ack-ack” installation, Staff Sergeant Millard Gillespie of the Rebel’s crew fired 400 rounds, destroying the German guns. However, the plane was hit. Flames burst through the fuselage, which the crew eventually extinguished before the plane landed safely behind American lines.

The **Douglas A-20 Havoc**, also known as the **Douglas DB-7**, **Douglas Boston** and **Douglas Havoc**, was a United States attack, light bomber, intruder and night fighter aircraft of World War II.





Need an activity for your church group or social club? The Birmingham History Center is open Monday – Friday from 9:00-4:30 and Saturday from 10:00-4:00. We will open early or stay late to accommodate tour groups. Bring your out-of-town relatives or friends. It is a great place to learn about our city's history. Call 205-202-4146 to make a reservation today.

For Facebook users - Check out our great Facebook page and click to like us. We now have over 400 likes but want to reach 1,000. Go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Birmingham-History-Center/107657042610740>.



### *Need a Public Speaker for Your Meeting or Event?*

Our Executive Director, Jerry Desmond, is available to give talks about the History Center or other topics in local or American History. Donations are accepted but not required, last minute requests are considered. Call 205-202-4146 or e-mail at [jdesmond@bham.rr.com](mailto:jdesmond@bham.rr.com).



**Wire Desmond**





Marx Brothers, Inc., is not to be confused with the Marx Brothers comedy team (although they did star in a movie in 1931 called "Coconuts"). Marx Brothers, Inc., located on Second Avenue South in Birmingham, produces sweetened and dried coconut. Established in 1919, the company was incorporated in 1958. Its products are distributed to customers in the grocery, foodservice, and bakery supply markets in packages ranging from seven ounces to 50 pounds.

With a taste profile ranging from sweet to savory, the company's most popular product is flake coconut, the preferred cut for the grocery and foodservice markets. Marx Brothers has 25 employees.

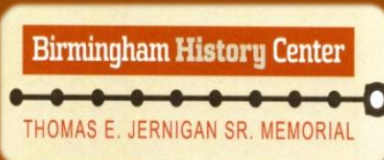


**Company Products: Flake Coconut, Fancy Shred Coconut, Short Shred Coconut, Medium Shred Coconut, Macaroon Coconut, Toasted Coconut**

3100 Second Avenue South, Birmingham, Alabama 35233.

## **This Edition's Featured Enduring Business**

*Honoring area companies that have been in business for at least 75 years.*





## "1963: The Year Everything Changed" Exhibit at the UAB Sterne Library



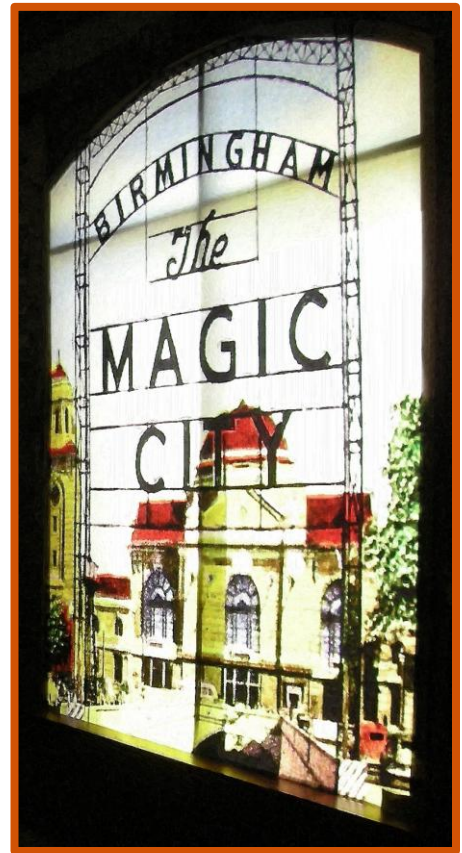
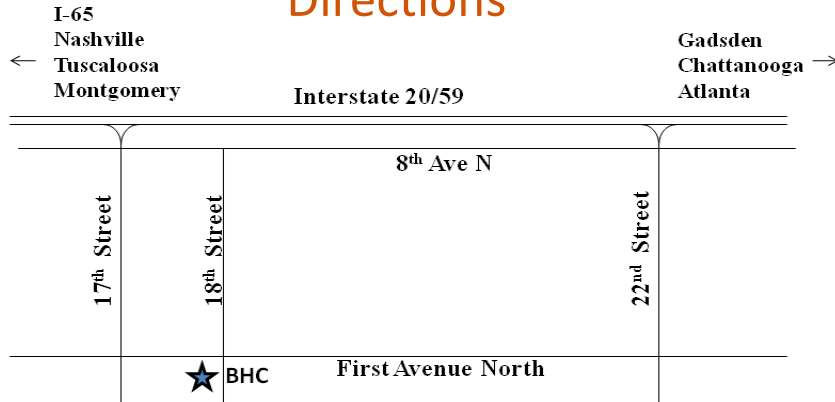
The BHC exhibit "1963: The Year Everything Changed" has been on the road over the past two months. So far, the exhibit has been viewed by @ 10,400 people at five different venues. Following trips to the Alabama Theatre, Alabama Power and the American Association of State and Local History annual meeting, it will return to the History Center on September 23<sup>rd</sup>.



# Birmingham History Center

Recently opened in the Spring of 2010, the BHC features exhibitions of historical events of Birmingham and Jefferson County from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Admission charged: \$4 adults, \$3 seniors and veterans, \$2 students, children under 6 free. Visa, Discover, Master Card accepted; tickets available also by phone. Group rates available, free parking. Open 9:00 am - 4:30 pm, Monday – Friday, Saturday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. Located at the corner of 18<sup>th</sup> Street and First Avenue North in Birmingham at the historic Young and Vann Building.

## Directions



## Birmingham History Center

1731 First Avenue North  
Birmingham, AL 35203

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