

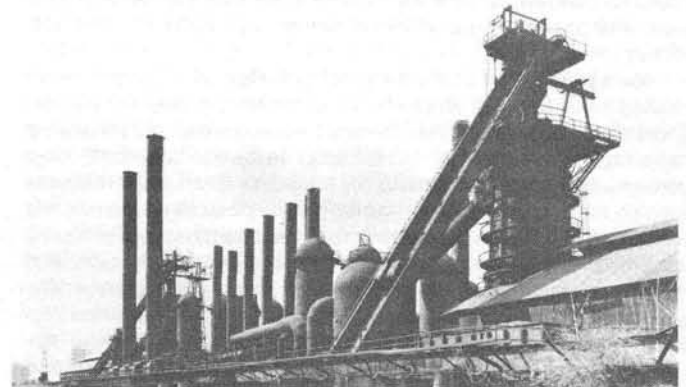
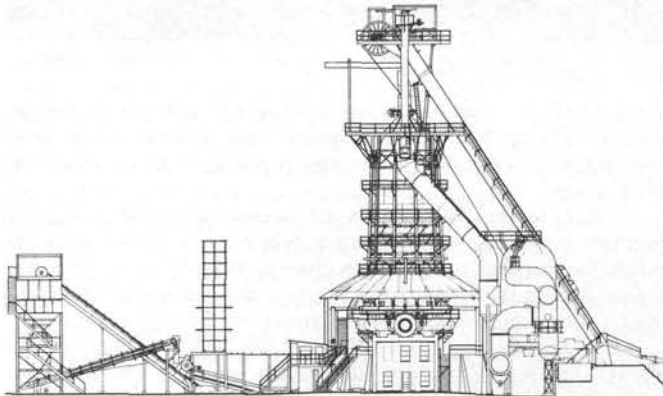
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PRESERVATION OF SLOSS FURNACE, BIRMINGHAM



SLOSS BY HAER. (L) No. 1 Furnace, 1902: S.W. face. *Drawing by James T. Hunt.* (R) High Furnace: blast-air heating stoves; and No. 2 Furnace—looking west. *Jack E. Boucher photograph.*

PRESERVATION OF SLOSS FURNACE, BIRMINGHAM

The preservation of one of Birmingham's historic industrial landmarks, the Sloss [blast] Furnace [NR, HAER], is now assured [SIAN Nov. 72:1]. This was accomplished last spring by the citizens of Birmingham in approving a \$3-million bond issue for this purpose, which was supported by Mayor David Vann and the City Council. Citizen support was generated by the Sloss Furnace Assn. [SFA] and the Citizens Advisory Board of the Citizens Participation Plan. The bond issue was preceded by two events that rallied public interest around the furnace.

The first was that in early 1976 Eric N. DeLony [SIA] of HAER proposed to the Mayor and Council that a detailed recording project be conducted of the furnace. It was pointed out that Sloss was one of the few fully-intact early-20thC blast furnaces remaining in the U.S. The M&C agreed to fund the survey, carried out by a team of six architects and historians during the summer of 1976.

Inspired by this, the M&C created a special Citizen's Study Comm. to determine whether, and how, the property should be developed. Based on the Comm's. report and the results of the HAER project, the M&C proposed the inclusion of \$3 million for this project among 13 bond-issue proposals.

Mayor Vann and the Council now are proceeding to develop the property as a museum of industrial history, for which purpose it was donated to the city by Jim Walter Corp. whose U.S. Pipe & Foundry Divn. was the furnace's last operator.

Following passage of the bond issue, the Jim Walter Fndn. made a gift of \$100,000 to the City to further the project, simultaneously appealing to the area's industries and to other foundations to contribute also.

Mayor Vann's leadership continues to move the project forward. He has been instrumental in obtaining a \$370,832 Special Projects Grant under Title VI of the Comprehensive Employment Training Act, which is being used to clean up the 18-acre site, clean and paint the structures, and fence the property.

While this has been going on, the SFA has assisted by working with the City and the L&NRR to assure adequate access and to improve 32nd St., the site's main entrance.

SFA also has been studying which of the complex's elements should be preserved and how. Some ideas put forward by SFA and others include:

- displays on the pig-iron and steel-making processes, and on facilities past and present in the Birmingham area;
- tours to related iron, steel, and mining facilities in the district;
- geological exhibits on local mineral deposits and the various processes used to extract them;
- a full-scale foundry, bee-hive coke ovens, and even the possibility of an open-hearth furnace on the site.

Other proposals under consideration are:

- the use of part of the land for a RR museum, an aviation museum, a fire-fighting museum, and an Indian museum;
- an on-site motel;
- a full-scale or mini "theme park."

This March, the facility in its present state is to be used as a filming location for the movie *Ravagers*.

The Mayor, his staff, and the City Council are now actively exploring the course to be followed in developing one of the most significant historical industrial facilities in the Southeast. *R.S.C.*

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