Wednesday, October 22, 2014 – Ed Bridges

“The Birth of Alabama: It Was a Complicated Delivery”

After the American Revolution, Georgia, Spain, and the United States all claimed at least parts of what would become the future State of Alabama. Yet this land was occupied by Indians whose claims reached back to time out of memory. The resolution of these competing claims was a story of political conflict, personal intrigues, international diplomacy, war, and perhaps America’s greatest fraud. The result was the creation in 1819 of America’s twenty-second state.

As the director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, Dr. Bridges guided the study and preservation of Alabama history for thirty years. During his last years as director, he masterminded the “Becoming Alabama” statewide partnership to promote a better understanding of Alabama history and the significance of these three periods in the shaping of our state and nation. Bridges graduated from Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, and received his M.A. and Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago. He retired as director of the ADAH and is presently writing a book on the history of Alabama.

Wednesday, October 29, 2014 – Paul Harris

“Alabama’s Monuments Man: Captain Robert K. Posey and the Quest for the Mystic Lamb”

Robert Kelley Posey—born in Morris, Alabama in 1904—attended Alabama Polytechnic Institute on an ROTC scholarship earning a B.S. in Architecture in 1927. Posey’s career was interrupted by World War II with an assignment as an engineering officer, but with the establishment of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives (MFAA) of the U.S. Army in 1943, Posey was assigned to General Patton’s Third Army in the fall of 1943. As a Monuments Man, Posey was responsible for not only protecting war damaged building and monuments in occupied France, but he was also given the responsibility of tracking down art looted by the Nazis. His biggest discovery was the Ghent Altarpiece also known as “The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb” which was painted by the brothers Hubert and Jan Van Eyck in 1432. The art work is arguably the most coveted painting in the world and in 1942, it was stolen by Adolf Hitler and stored in an Austrian Salt Mine.

Thanks to the hard work of Robert Posey, the “Mystic Lamb” was saved and for his efforts, Posey was awarded Belgium’s highest honor, “The Order of Leopold.” After the war, Posey had a successful and long career with an architectural firm in Birmingham. Posey died in 1977 and is buried in Elmwood Cemetery in Birmingham.

Paul Harris—Associate Director of the University Honors College at Auburn University—will tell the amazing story of how Posey made his biggest discovery during the war. Harris has a B.S. degree in Liberal Arts from Excelsior College; a Master of Public Administration from Georgia Southern University; and a Ph.D. in Public Administration and Public Policy from Auburn University.

Wednesday, November 5, 2014 – Dolores Hydock

“Soldiers in Greasepaint: Entertaining with the USO”

From Utah Beach to the Philippines, from wrestlers and tap dancers to the biggest names in show business, from 15,000 servicemen in an amphitheater in southern France to 20 GIs in Jeeps in a lonely stateside outpost—the story of the entertainers of USO Camp Shows is a diverse, hilarious story from a remarkable time in U.S. history.

Dolores Hydock, a familiar and much loved face at the Comer Library, will take the series out on a high note. Hydock, originally from Pennsylvania, is an actress and story performer whose work has been featured in a variety of concerts, festivals, and special events throughout the United States. She is a touring artist for the Alabama State Council on the Arts, a speaker with the Alabama Humanities Foundation, and a member of the Southern Order of Storytellers. Dolores lives in Birmingham, Alabama and in her spare time, teaches Cajun and zydeco dancing. She is a great favorite with the brown bag lecture audience and her entertaining and thought-provoking stories will leave them wanting more of the same!
Wednesday, October 8, 2014 – Nimrod Frazer

“Send the Alabamians: World War I Fighters in the Rainbow Division”

Nimrod T. Frazer will tell the story of the 167th Infantry, a regiment of the Alabama National Guard units whose heroic service in World War I helped break the bloody stalemate on the battlefields of eastern France and turn the tide of war. Part of the famous Rainbow Division, the Alabama regiment served under young Colonel, soon to be Brigadier General, Douglas MacArthur. The Germans planned a major offensive designed to end the conflict definitively; however, they neglected to consider adequately the arrival of American troops, who changed the outcome of the war. Although the Alabamians fought in different locations throughout the war, one particular battle, the Battle of Croix Rouge Farm, stands out in their history.

Frazer recounts this crucial battle and the stories of the heroic Alabamians who fought in it.

Nimrod T. Frazer was born in Montgomery in a family with a strong military tradition. His great-grandfather spent two years in a Union prison during the Civil War, and his father earned a Purple Heart in France in 1918. Following in their footsteps, Frazer was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in the Korean War and his unit received a Presidential Citation. He received an MBA from Harvard University before engaging in a successful business career which was recognized by his admission to the Alabama Business Hall of Fame in 2009. A scholar of history and a published author, Frazer focuses on military matters. His latest book, “Send the Alabamians: World War I Fighters in the Rainbow Division,” was published by the University of Alabama Press in May of 2014.

Wednesday, October 15, 2014 – Norman McMillan and Jim Day

“Coal Mining in Alabama: The Industry and its Impact on the Lives of Those Who Toiled”

Two experts on the topic of coal mining—Norman McMillan and James Sanders Day—will give a joint presentation focused on the coal fields of the Cahaba region and the life of coal miners during the turbulent years of the Great Depression.

Using material from Sue Pickett’s book, The Path Was Steep, McMillan will relate the story of a coal miner’s daughter who became a coal miner’s wife who lived a life of hardship and poverty and witnessed the sometimes violent struggles between labor unions and coal mine bosses. Pickett’s story is peopled with memorable characters, including her irrepressible husband and an almost Biblical cast of other family members along with a roaring, fire-belching automobile nicknamed Thunderbolt. Hers is a triumphant voice, full of life and fully expressive of her humanity.

Day, the author of Diamonds in the Rough: A History of Alabama’s Cahaba Coal Field, will reconstruct the lives and times of the miners and the influence of mining on the region, later overshadowed by the rise of Birmingham. At the heart of Day’s story are the diverse people—operator or miner, management or labor, union or nonunion, white or black, immigrant or native—who lived and worked in the district leaving a legacy for posterity.

Norman McMillan is a retired professor at the University of Montevallo and James Sanders Day—retired from the Army after 16 years of active duty—is a professor of history at the University of Montevallo.

For more information about the full series—Lest We Forget—call 256 249-8961, email spears@ssylacauga.net, or visit our website at www.bloomerlibrary.net and while you are there, friend us on Facebook! Groups will be accepted by reservation only!