



WORKING AND HAVING FUN IN EARLY BIRMINGHAM

This set of activities recreates Birmingham's urban life in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, and introduces the city's cultural landmarks. Birmingham in the 1920s and 1930s had an active nightlife that included several popular theatres. The most famous jazz club was Tuxedo Junction, located in Ensley in the Nixon Building at the intersection of the Wylam and Pratt City streetcar lines. Tuxedo Junction was very popular with African-American iron and steel workers. On their way home from work, patrons would use the streetcar intersection as an opportunity to stop off and listen to jazz.

Activity 1

Find online images of famous Birmingham entertainment venues such as the Lyric Theatre, the Alabama Theatre, Carver Theatre, Famous Theatre, Ensley Theatre, and Tuxedo Junction. Strive for images from the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. Print the images and position the images on the streetcar map. Students can also print and place images of famous works of architecture. Images may be found in the Birmingham Public Library's Digital Collections.

What You'll Need...

- Streetcar map (see previous activity)
- Scissors
- Construction paper
- Old photographs of commercial architecture, available online

Activity 2

The Digital Collections contain many images of Birmingham's old movie theatres. Identify some of the movies in the marquis and use them to pinpoint the time the photograph was taken.

Activity 3

Set this scene for students: It's the 1930s and you've got a movie to catch. Afterward, you want to stop off at Tuxedo Junction to hear jazz and eat dinner. Use your streetcar schedule and knowledge of movies to plan an evening. (Students can get a feel for the time by listening to an online recording of Tuxedo Junction, available through the Birmingham Post-Herald website listed on the following page.)

Online Resources

The Carver Theatre is home to the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame. This link provides a brief overview of the theatre's history.

<http://www.jazzhall.com/carver/carver.htm>

Birmingham Library's Digital Collections provides access to photographs and articles about Birmingham's architectural landmarks. Go to www.bplonline.org. Click on "Digital Collections" and search topics like "African-American Business" and "Birmingham Architecture." By entering the desired year and "Chamber of Commerce" into the search field, students can access old editions of Birmingham Magazine. This periodical is a rich source of information on Birmingham's ever-evolving skyline.