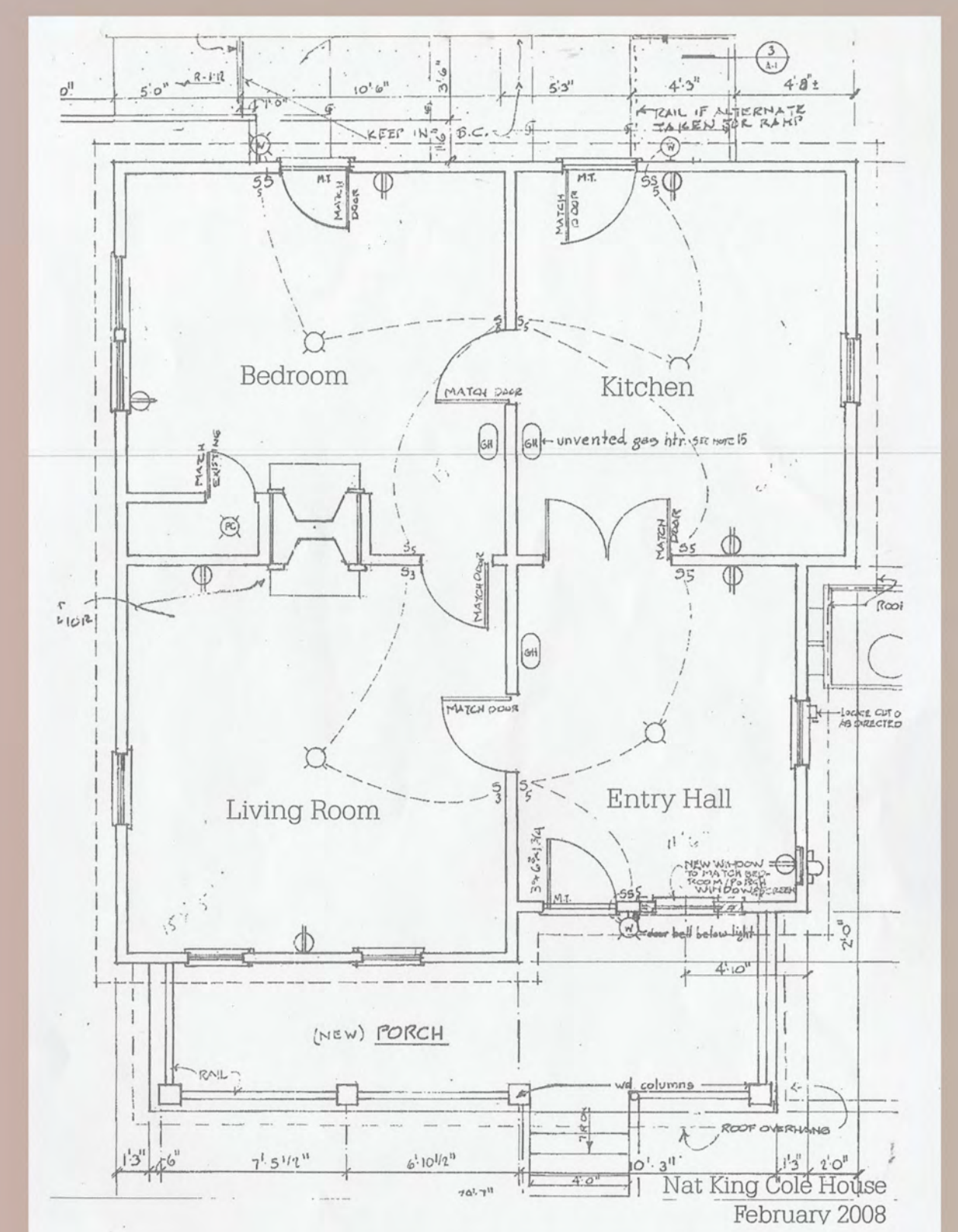


In 2000, Alabama State University moved the house on a flatbed truck from 1524 St. John Street, several blocks away, to 1333 South Hall Street. This location placed the Nat King Cole house in the University's cultural district, next to the one-time First Baptist Church parsonage home, occupied during the 1950s by civil rights icon, ASU graduate and pastor, Rev. Ralph Abernathy. The front porch and other features added to the house over time were not moved to the new location. John Chambliss of Brown and Chambliss Architect worked on the house renovation plan. In 2007, State Representative Alvin Holmes spearheaded an initiative to refurbish the structure at a cost of \$200,000. In 2009, ASU Chief Operating Officer John Knight announced the University's intent to make the house a major tourist attraction.

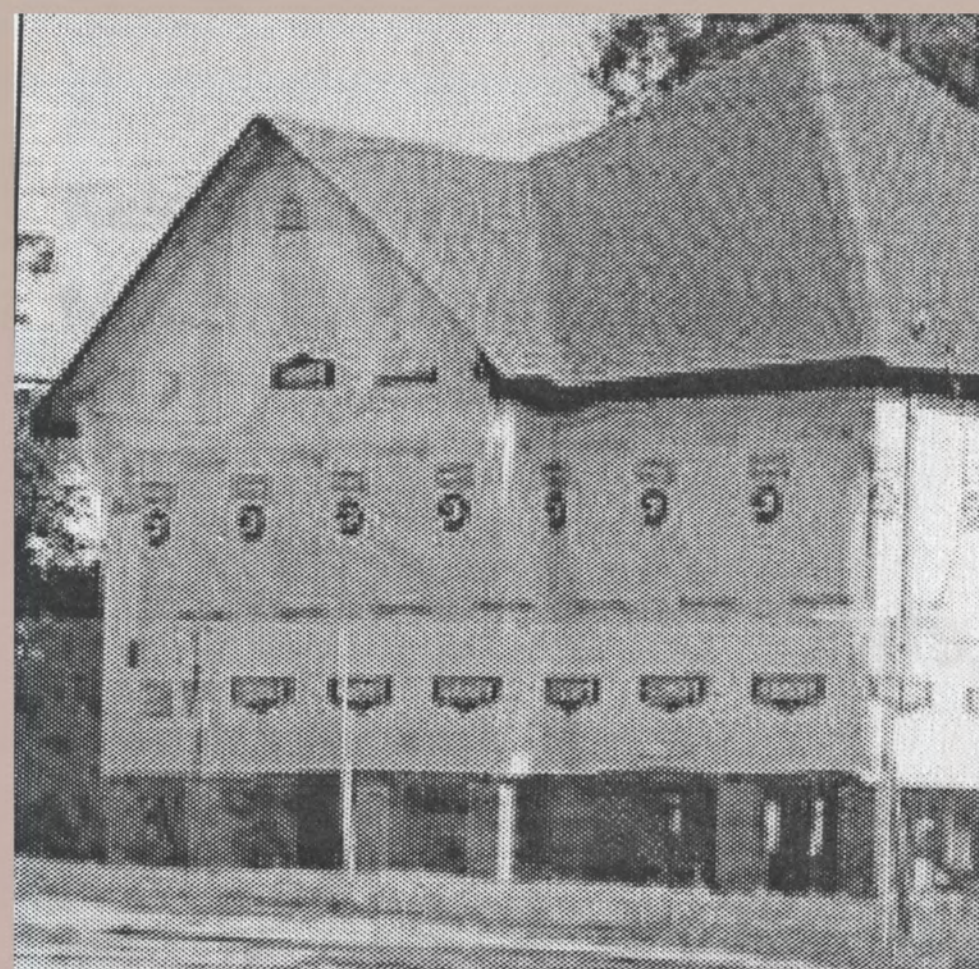
Built circa 1900, the 1,200 square foot-four room Nat King Cole home is a one-story frame high-hipped roof house with a shallow projecting rectangular front bay and a front gable, Southside projecting bay, brick interior chimney, rear shed, and diamond shaped asphalt shingled roof. The house has a brick pier foundation with a concrete block infill, an attached shed porch on replaced steel supports, concrete block porch foundation, with a concrete slab floor. Several four over four-sash windows are set among a large single pane window by front door shrub. The mailbox and rosebush in front yard makes the house typical for Black lower middle class families in Montgomery during the turn of the twentieth century.



Floor Plan
West Elevation
Nat King Cole House



Nat King Cole House, 2008
Asbestos siding removed before the house was relocated.



Wrapped House
To protect the house the University wrapped it in a protective covering and placed a fenced around it.



Historic Houses, 2011



House on St John
Nat King Cole House
St. John Street Bel-Aire neighborhood

Built circa 1900, the 1,200 square foot-four room Nat King Cole home is a one-story frame high-hipped roof house with a shallow projecting rectangular front bay and a front gable, southside projecting bay, brick interior chimney, rear shed, diamond shaped asphalt shingled roof, brick pier foundation with concrete block infill, attached shed porch on replaced steel supports, concrete block porch foundation, with concrete slab floor, four over four sash windows for the most part, large single pane window by front door shrub, mailbox and rosebush in front yard.

The Bel-Aire Community

(Birth Place of Nat King Cole)



Pre Bel-Aire



Montgomery Street Car, circa 1888

One of the City's Oldest Black Neighborhoods

As one of the city's oldest neighborhoods, Bel-Aire was a planned Black community from its inception in the 1880s. With the introduction of the street railway system in 1886, Montgomery saw the establishment of Highland Park, the city's first suburb accessible by streetcar. Land purchased by the Highland Park Investment Company to capitalize on the new transportation system was made available to prospective Black homebuyers. The Bel-Aire community took shape with Hall Street as the neighborhood's central thoroughfare. In 2012, the portion Hall Street where the Nat King Cole house is now located was renamed Harris Way, in honor of Dr. William H. Harris, thirteenth president of Alabama State University.



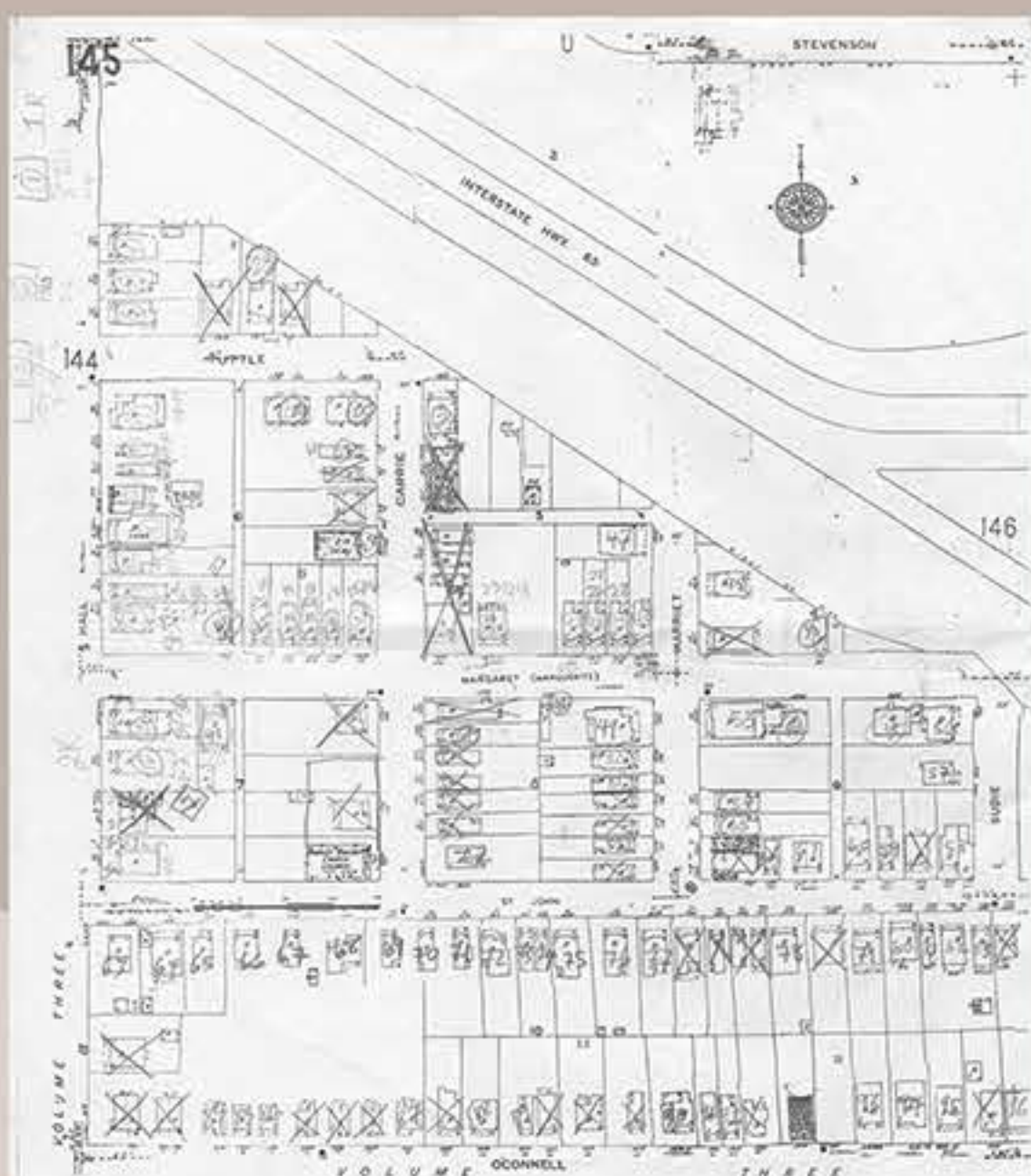
Hale Infirmary circa 1910



Tullibody Hall circa 1910

Black Homeowners Build a Vibrant Black Community

Black people organized their resources to build homes in the burgeoning community of Bel-Aire. The first residents of Bel-Aire were laborers and domestic workers. Over time, more Black skilled and unskilled workers began building homes in the district. Houses in the area represent Victorian, Craftsman, and Tudor Revival architecture. Other homes in the neighborhood were vernacular types of shotgun, side gable, cross gable, and hip roof cottages. The district also featured a number of Gothic and Mission Revival churches. These included Hall Street Baptist Church, Yougene Zion Baptist Church, as well as St. Paul A.M.E. church (which Rosa Parks would later attend). In 1890, Hale's Infirmary, named after prominent Black businessman James Hale, opened on Lake Street. Bel-Aire was also situated near Alabama Colored People's University (now Alabama State University), which moved to Montgomery from Marion, Alabama in 1887.



Interstate Highway

Neighborhood Decline

In the years before the turn of the twentieth century, Black people responded to widespread White racism by establishing or relocating business into Black neighborhoods such as Bel-Aire. By 1920, Forrest Ellis and Henry Landcaster ran Cook Shops on South Hall Street in the Bel-Aire community. B. A. Ball and H. B. Butcher were two of four grocers also on South Hall Street. Over time business became more diversified. Bel-Aire's Black commercial activities peaked in the 1930s and declined in the 1960s. The general decline of the community can be linked to several different developments. Black business owners had different options with the growth of two federal military bases in Montgomery. Black residents in the post civil rights era began to take advantage of residential opportunities opening in previously all-White neighborhoods. Interstate highway construction displaced significant sections of the community while urban renewal projects negatively impacted the neighborhood.

Nat King Cole

HOUSE
COLE

Nat King Cole

(March 17, 1919 – February 15, 1965)

Legendary Pianist, Composer, Vocalist, Movie Actor



Beulah Baptist Church

Cole's Montgomery Years (1919-1923)

During the second decade of the twentieth century, Edward Coles, a working class preacher at Beulah Baptist Church and his wife Perlina Adams Coles, purchased a house on St. John Street in the Montgomery, Alabama community of Bel-Aire. Perlina gave birth to Nathaniel Adams Coles on March 17, 1919. In 1923, when Nathaniel was about four years old, the Coles family, including Nat and his two siblings, Eddie M. and Edward B., moved to Chicago, Illinois. There the family would grow to include additional siblings

Cole's Formative Period as a Musician (1923-1937)

Cole's inclination for music began early as he learned to play piano and organ from his mother, who played the piano and directed the choir at her husband's church. Cole himself began playing the piano and organ at his father's Chicago church when he was about five years old. The young virtuoso began formal training as a pianist and achieved notoriety as a musician in city. A young Cole played in the high school band when he was only nine years old. During this period, against his father's wishes Nat became interested in jazz music. In Chicago, Cole was exposed to well-known jazz musicians, including Louis Armstrong.

Cole began playing with one of the many small jazz bands in Chicago. At the age of fifteen he formed his own band called the "Rogues of Rhythm." Afterwards Cole dropped out of high school to pursue a career as a full time jazz musician. In the "Windy City" the piano player became known as a teenage jazz prodigy. In 1937, when Cole was only sixteen-years-old, he left Chicago and toured as a piano player with Eubie Blake's play Shuffle Along. At this point, the eighteen-year-old dropped the "s" from his last name and became known as Nat Cole.



Eubie Blake

Cole's Major Period as a Musical Entertainer (1937-1965)

By the late 1930s, Cole's career as a jazz musician centered in Los Angeles, California where he became known as Nat "King" Cole. In 1938, the up-and-coming entertainer formed the King Cole Trio. This band emerged as an overnight sensation, and in 1943 the group's fame earned them a music contract with Capitol Records. The King Cole Trio produced a series of record hits, including his first mainstream vocal hit "Straighten Up and Fly Right."

In addition to jazz music, in the 1940s, Cole began to attract considerable attention for his ballads, some of which became national best sellers. They included "(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons," "The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas to You)," "Nature Boy," and "Sweet Lorraine." By the 1950s, Cole achieved renown as a singer with his number one hit "Mona Lisa," and "Unforgettable," a song his daughter Natalie Cole would rerelease as a duet twenty-five years after her father's death.

The 1950s and the 1960s, witnessed Cole's further transformation from jazz to mainstream music. The now accomplished musician recorded with leading orchestrators, including American arranger and composer Nelson Riddle. Cole's hits during this period included his rendition of the country tune "Rambling Rose," and "Those Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days of Summer." Nat King Cole's last highly popular releases, "I Don't Want to Hurt Anymore" and "I Don't Want to See Tomorrow" came in 1964, the year before his death.



Nat King Cole Trio



The Nat King Cole Show, 1956 - 1957



Film Star

Cole's Career as a Television Star (1950s-1960s)

Nat King Cole became the first African-American to host a nationwide television variety show in 1956. The show featured both black and white guests and lasted from 1956-1957. Although ratings for the show demonstrated wide popularity, corporate sponsors were afraid that running ads on the show would hurt their sales to American Whites.

Cole's Career as a Film Star (1950s-1960s)

Nat King Cole played leading roles as an actor in several movies in the 1950s and 1960s. The most popular of these roles was his 1958 portrayal of W.C. Handy in the film *St. Louis Blues*.

Nat King Cole HOUSE

Nat King Cole and the Modern Civil Rights Movement



Nat King Cole Home, Hancock Park, Los Angeles, California

Nat King Cole believed he could fight racial discrimination as an entertainer who interacted with persons of all races on the basis of equality. Therefore, he maintained a distance from the civil rights movement. Yet he consistently faced racism. Hecklers called him "Nigger" and taunted him during performances; his house was vandalized and his life was threatened. At the same time few advertisers were willing to purchase commercials on his variety show. Cole, whose music also appealed to White audiences, initially took a behind-the-scenes stance against racial discrimination. He donated monies to the Montgomery Bus Boycott and sued northern hotels that hired but would not serve him. After 1956, when White sponsors refused to buy advertisement on his television show, and Black audiences began to complain that the popular entertainer was not sufficiently committed to the struggle for first class citizenship, Cole paid \$500 for an NAACP life membership, and thereafter emerged as a bold supporter of the civil rights movement.

The New York Times.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 1956

Heed Their Rising Voices

"The growing movement of peaceful mass demonstrations by Negroes is something new in the South, something understandable... Let Congress heed their rising voices, for they will be heard."

—New York Times editorial Saturday, March 19, 1956

As the whole world knows by now, thousands of Southern Negro students are engaged in widespread non-violent demonstrations to protest against the right to live in human dignity as guaranteed by the U. S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. In their efforts to uphold these guarantees, they are being met by an unprecedented array of terror by those who would deny and negate that document which the whole world looks upon as setting the pattern for modern freedom...

In Birmingham, South Carolina, when 60 students peacefully sought to hear daughters and other at lunch counters in the business district, they were harshly ejected, unprovoked, naked to the skin in freezing weather with fire hoses, arrested as masses and hurled into an open barbed-wire mesh to stand for hours in the bitter cold.

In Montgomery, Alabama, after students sang "My Country, 'Tis Thee" on the State Capitol steps, their leaders were expelled from school, and trade-booths of police arrested with chains and handcuffs in the streets. When the students were arrested and taken to the Alabama State College Campus. When the entire student body protested to state authorities by refusing to re-register, their dining hall was padlocked in an attempt to starve them into submission.

In Tallahassee, Florida, students were arrested, taken to the State Capitol grounds, and a host of other cities in the South, young American teenagers, in face of the entire weight of official state apparatus and police power, have boldly stepped forth as protagonists of democracy. Their courage and sense of purpose have inspired millions and given a new dignity to the cause of freedom.

Small wonder that the Southern victory of the Constitution over this new, unprovoked breed of freedom fighter... even as they fear the swelling righteous movement, small wonder that they are determined to destroy the one man who, more than any other, symbolizes the new spirit now sweeping the South—the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., world-famous leader of the Montgomery Bus Protest. For it is his doctrine of non-violence which has inspired and guided the students in their widening array of sit-ins, and it is this same Dr. King who has been called to preside at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference—the organization which is spearheading the new Negro civil rights movement. Under Dr. King's direction the Leadership Conference conducts the Atlanta Workshop and Seminars in the philosophy and technique of non-violent resistance.

Again and again the Southern victors have answered Dr. King's peaceful protest with intimidation and violence. They have bombed his home, killing his wife and child. They have assaulted his person. They have arrested him seven times—on "spurious" "intention" and "suspicion" charges. And now they have charged him with "perjury"—a felony under which they could imprison him for ten years. Obviously, their real purpose is to remove him physically as the leader to whom the students and millions of others look for guidance and support, and thereby to intimidate all leaders who may rise in the South. Their strategy is to behind this offensive movement, and then to demoralize Negro Americans and weaken their will to struggle. The failure of Martin Luther King, Jr., would be the defeat of the entire Negro movement, therefore, it is an integral part of the total struggle for freedom in the South.

Discriminated Americans cannot help but applaud the creative daring of the students and the quiet heroism of Dr. King. But this is one of those moments in the history of freedom when men and women of good will must do more than applaud the rising tide of others. The American people must stand in the balance before a watershed world, the American whose heritage of liberty from Southern tyrants and the Constitution are at stake, in our America as well as in the South.

We must heed their rising voices—yes—but we must add our own.

We must extend ourselves above and beyond moral support and render the material help so urgently needed by those who are taking the risks, facing jail and even death in a glorious recommitment of our Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

We urge you to join hands with our fellow Americans in the South by supporting, with your dollars, this Combined Appeal for all three needs—the defense of Martin Luther King—the support of the embattled students—and the struggle for the rights of...

Nat King Cole Integrates All-White Neighborhood

In August of 1948, Cole purchased a house in the previously all-White Los Angeles neighborhood of Hancock Park. Members of the Hancock Park property-owners association told Cole they did not want any undesirable moving in. Cole retorted, "Neither do I. And if I see anybody undesirable coming in here, I'll be the first to complain." The Ku Klux Klan unsuccessfully attempted to scare Cole out of the neighborhood by burning a cross of the lawn of his of his home in 1948.



Nat King Cole Provides Financial Support To Underwrite The Carpool System During The Montgomery Bus Boycott

Nat King Cole Attacked by the Ku Klux Klan

On April 10, 1956, during a performance before 4,000 all-White fans at the old City Auditorium in Birmingham, Alabama, Cole was attacked by members of the North Alabama Ku Klux Klan. The leader of this Klan group, Asa "Forrest" Carter, would go on to become the principal speechwriter for Governor George Wallace in the 1960s. Cole's assailants, who were angry that he made several appearances with White female singer June Christy, and who were opposed to Rock & Roll music, assaulted Cole on stage and knocked him to the floor in a botched attempt to kidnap the popular crooner. Local police thwarted the scheme, quickly apprehended the attackers, and several accomplices outside of the venue. Cole returned to the stage where he received a ten-minute standing ovation but he did not finish the concert. After seeing a physician, Cole decided to perform a scheduled Blacks-only show later that same night.

SINGER TELLS WHY HE PLAYS SOUTH

NAT COLE ATTACKED IN ALABAMA;

On the stage of the Birmingham, Ala., Municipal Auditorium last week, three white men attacked singer Nat King Cole in an abortive attempt to carry out a bold plan by an anti-Negro mob of 150 to kidnap the crooner. Although the mob had planned it, in the showdown only six men and a car loaded with rifles, brass knuckles and black-jacks were on the scene as Cole sang to an all-white audience of 3,500 in the first mixed show ever to play Birmingham.

As the nation, North and South, spluttered its indignation over the barbaric attempt to harm an innocent man, a solemn question rose up to ride with the tide. The question: Why would a singer of Cole's stature perform for a segregated audience in the first place? For Nat Cole himself came the best answer. Said he: "Those people, segregated or not, are still record fans. They can't overpower the law of the South, and I can't come in on a one-night stand and overpower the law.

"The whites come to applaud a Negro performer like the colored do. When you've got the respect of white and colored, you can ease a lot of things. I can't settle the issue—if I was that good I should be President of the

KIDNAP PLOT IS UNCOVERED

United States—but I can help to ease the tension by gaining the respect of both races all over the country."

Although the singer's Birmingham contract had called for two segregated shows, one for an all-white audience with one for an all-Negro audience to follow, Cole pointed out that doing separate shows for white and colored audiences had not been the rule on his Southern tour, which had grossed \$110,000 the first week for the show, owned by Nat and his manager, Carlos Castel. "In San Antonio," said Cole, "there was no segregation at all. In Ft. Worth, the auditorium was split right down the middle, half for whites, half for Negroes. It was the same way in Houston, but there I saw a few Negroes spotted among the white section. In Winston-Salem, N. C., the audience was mixed, and there was no trouble at all."

The unstable seating pattern itself represents a slow change in the South, Cole said, and added: "The important thing is for Negroes and whites to communicate. Even if they sit on separate sides of the room, maybe at intermission a white fellow will ask a Negro for a match or something, and maybe one will ask the other how he likes the show. That way, you have started them to communicating, and that's the answer to the whole problem."

The Birmingham attack came as Cole, closing out the show, swung into the concluding lyrics of his third tune.

The Consummate Entertainer



Nat King Cole's Formative Period as a Musician (1923-1937)

Cole's inclination for music began early when he learned to play piano and organ from his mother. Perlina played the piano and directed the choir at Nathaniel father's church. Cole himself began playing the piano and organ at his father's Chicago church when he was about five years old. The young virtuoso gained formal training as a pianist and achieved notoriety as a musician in city. A young Cole played in the high school band when he was only nine years old, and then he became interested in jazz music. In Chicago Cole was exposed to well-known jazz musicians including, Louis Armstrong. An eighteen-year-old Nat dropped the "s" from his name, married Nadine Robinson, and moved to Los Angeles.

Nat King Cole Shines on the Silver Screen

Played leading roles as an actor in several movies in the 1950s and 1960s. The most popular of these roles was his 1958 portrayal of W.C. Handy in the film *St. Louis Blues*.



Nat King Cole and Eartha Kitt



Nat King Cole Becomes a Television Star

In October of 1956 Nat King Cole's show made its debut on NBC, making it the first network television program to be hosted by a Black performer. Although ratings for the show demonstrated wide popularity, corporate sponsors were afraid that running ads on the show would hurt their sales to American Whites. The show featured both black and white guests and aired from 1956 to 1957.

The Silky Voice of Nat King Cole

In the 1940s Cole began to attract considerable attention for his ballads, some of which became national best sellers. They included, "(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons," "The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas to you)," "Nature Boy," and "Sweet Lorraine." By the 1950s Cole achieved renown as a singer with his number one hit "Mona Lisa," and "Unforgettable," a song his daughter Natalie Cole would rerelease as a duet twenty-five years after her father's death.

Nat King Cole the Musician

The 1950s and the 1960s witnessed Cole's further transformation from jazz to mainstream music. The now accomplished musician recorded with leading orchestrators, including American arranger and composer Nelson Riddle. Cole recorded twenty-nine top forty pop hits during his career. In the last two decades of his life Cole recorded a rendition of the country tune "Rambling Rose," and "Those Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days of Summer." Nat King Cole's last highly popular releases, "I Don't want to Hurt Anymore" and "I Don't Want to See Tomorrow" came in 1964, the year before his death.

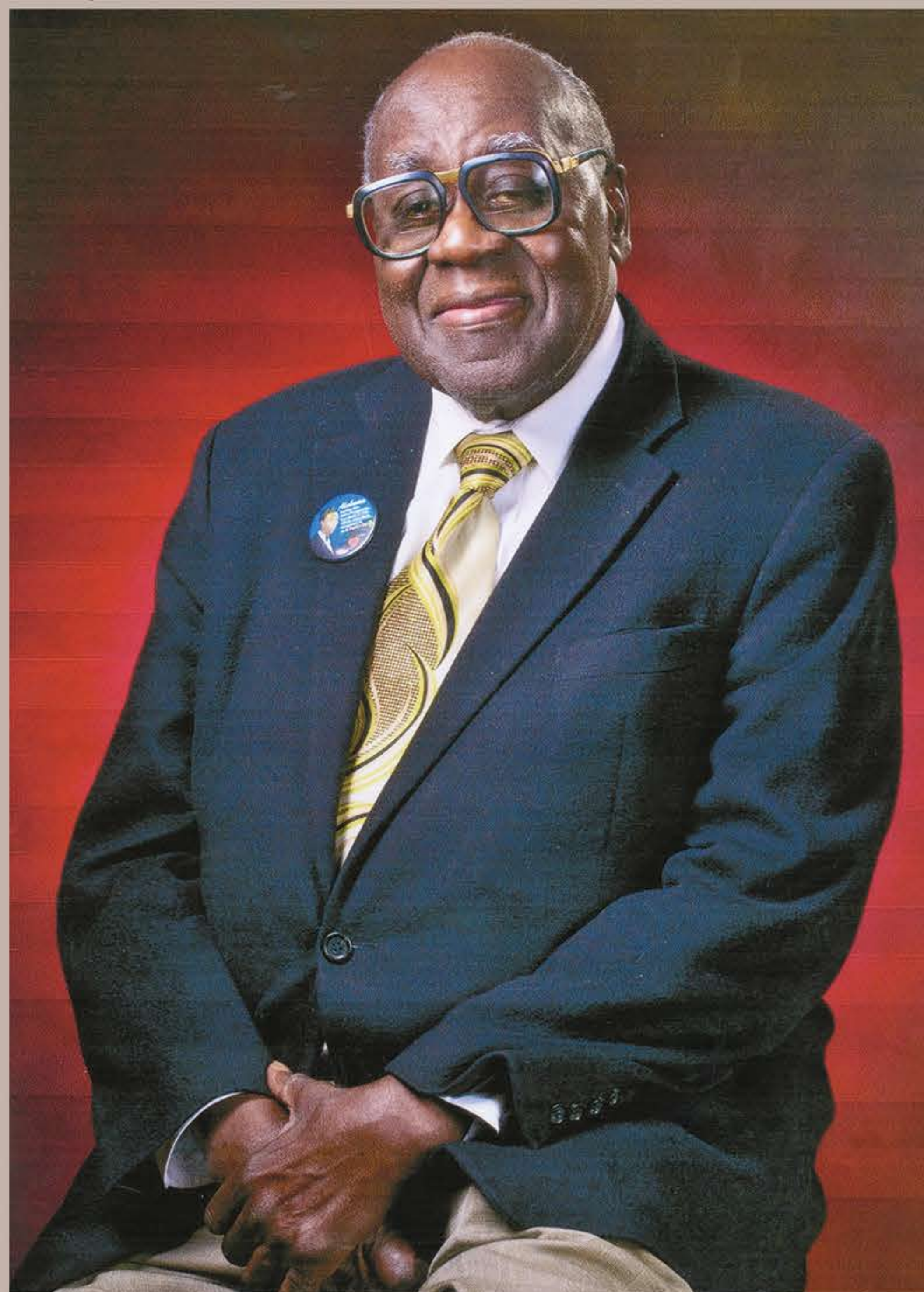


The Nat King Cole Society



Amos Harris, a native of Chicago, Illinois founded the Nat King Cole Society in 1994.

Amos Harris, a native of Chicago, Illinois, moved to Montgomery in 1983. As a life-long admirer of Nat King Cole, Harris wondered why more had not been done to preserve the famous entertainer's Montgomery birth home. In 1994, he founded the Nat King Cole Society and served as its first Chief Operating Officer. The society set out to focus attention on Cole's music, preserve the birth house, and establish a park and statue in Cole's honor. The society provides scholarships to outstanding high school seniors, as well as to Alabama State University students interested in pursuing a career in the fine arts. The scholarships are awarded at the Nat King Cole annual "Birthday Bash" held in honor of Cole's Montgomery birthday in March of 1919.

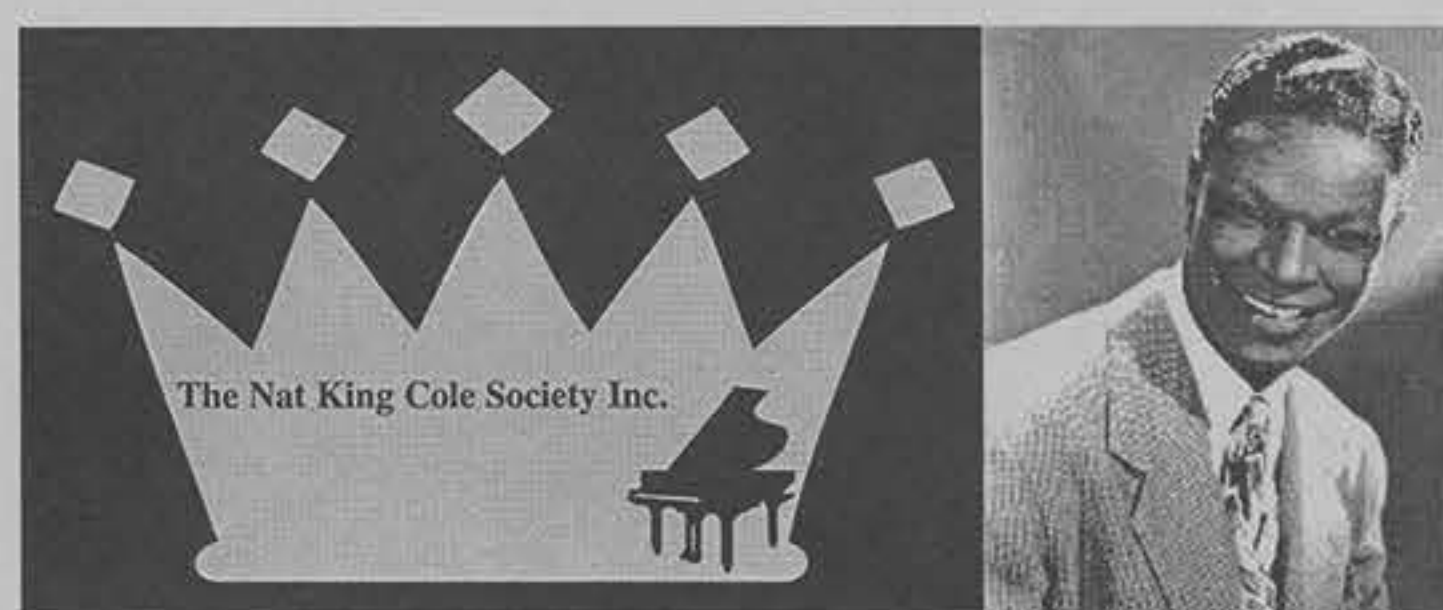


Amos Harris

 The Nat King Cole Society, Inc.

presents

The 10th Annual
**Nat King Cole Birthday Bash
& Scholarship Program**



Saturday, March 13, 2004
6:00 p.m. until 10:00 pm.



RSA Activity Center
201 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36104



Nat King Cole Birthday Bash



Nat King Cole Society Gives Scholarship Money to Alabama State University

Nat King Cole: A Legacy



The life and legacy of Nat King Cole has been recognized by people and institutions in Alabama, throughout the United States, as well as in several foreign countries. Cole rose to national prominence during a period of the near-exclusion of Black people from television and films, and from major contracts with leading White record companies. During his lifetime, Cole recorded twenty-nine top forty pop hits and appeared in twenty-nine films and was featured in eighteen television shows. Most importantly, he became the first African American to host a nationally televised variety show.

In recognition of Cole's stellar career in the world of entertainment, he was included in several induction organizations. In 1985, Cole was inducted into the Alabama Music Hall of Fame. The Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame inducted Cole in 1993, as did the Down Beat Jazz Hall of Fame in 1997. An additional honor came to Cole with his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2000 and to "Hit Parade" Hall of Fame in 2007.

Cole also won a number of awards, including a posthumous Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1990. In 1994, the United States Post Office honored Cole by issuing an official United States postage stamp featuring his likeness. In 2013, Cole experienced international recognition when he was inducted into the Latin Songwriters Hall of Fame for his contributions to Latin music. A statue of Nat King Cole has also been erected in the Hotel Nacional Vedado in Cuba.

In keeping with the vision of Amos Harris, the former president of the Nat King Cole Society, and Alabama State University made plans to erect a statue of Nat King Cole and place it in an amphitheater to be constructed behind the Nat King Cole home.



Vision for Historic Houses And Amphitheater



Nat King Cole Postage Stamp Issued In 1994