



Birmingham Civil Rights Trail

The Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham was an era of intense struggle, ruthless segregation, and senseless tragedy. But the decades of brutality were not in vain. Stark images of peaceful protestors confronted with police dogs and fire hoses, and the faces of four girls killed in a church bombing shocked the nation. Segregation had become an undeniable evil, and America was forced to confront racial inequality head-on. Learn more by touring the sites where Birmingham became the city that changed the world.

Downtown

4TH AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Three blocks of 4th Ave., N. from 15th to 18th Sts., N., Birmingham 35203

The 4th Avenue Historic District includes 17 contributing buildings on 4.2 acres in downtown Birmingham. Prominent remaining sites include the Colored Masonic Temple (Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge) and Alabama Penny Savings Bank (Pythian Temple). Featuring Art Deco and Victorian architecture, the area was once the center of commerce in black Birmingham.

16TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

1530 6th Ave., S., Birmingham 35203
Tues-Sat: 10am-3pm (Book on website)
www.16thstreetbaptist.org

Often a starting point for demonstrations, the centrally located 16th Street Baptist was also the site of a tragedy that reverberated throughout the nation. On September 15, 1963, a bomb planted under the steps of the church took the lives of four young girls as they prepared for a program in the basement of the church.

A.G. GASTON MOTEL

1510 5th Ave., N., Birmingham 35203

Thurs-Sat: 10am-4pm

birminghamcivilrights.com/a-g-gaston-motel/

The motel, namesake of businessman A.G. Gaston, often provided a place of rest for prominent civil rights leaders and hosted their meetings in its interior courtyard. Restored and reopened in 2022, it now operates as a museum, offering visitors a deeper look into the life and legacy of Dr. Gaston and the motel's pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement. While there, guests are encouraged to stop by Alicia's Coffee, located on-site, to enjoy a locally loved cup of coffee and pastries.

BIRMINGHAM CIVIL RIGHTS INSTITUTE

520 16th St., N., Birmingham 35203

Tues-Sat: 10am-4pm

www.bcri.org

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) is a museum and educational center that documents the Civil Rights Movement across the region. Proposed by then-mayor David Vann in 1978, his successor, Richard Arrington, Jr., Birmingham's first black mayor, carried on the work to secure funding and make the proposal a reality. The BCRI opened in November 1992.

BIRMINGHAM CIVIL RIGHTS NATIONAL MONUMENT

1510 5th Ave., N., Birmingham 35203

Tues: 10am-5pm; Thurs-Sat: 10am-4pm

www.nps.gov/bicr

On January 12, 2017, President Barack Obama proclaimed four city blocks as the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument. The monument includes seven key sites: A.G. Gaston Motel, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, 4th Avenue Historic District, Kelly Ingram Park, and three churches: 16th Street Baptist, St. Paul Methodist, and Bethel Baptist, the only site outside of the designated area.

COLORED MASONIC TEMPLE (MOST WORSHIPFUL PRINCE HALL GRAND LODGE)

1630 4th Ave., N., Birmingham 35203

Built in 1922, this seven-story beauty served as an office building for Black professionals by day. But at night, it became an entertainment venue, hosting jazz legends Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Louis Armstrong, and others. It also served as state headquarters for the Masons and the Order of the Eastern Star. Restoration efforts are ongoing.

KELLY INGRAM PARK

500 17th St., N., Birmingham 35203
Daily: 8am-8pm

In May 1963, Kelly Ingram Park was the staging ground for protests at which marchers faced police dogs and high-pressure fire hoses. The ensuing outrage spurred national support for civil rights legislation. Today, sculptures throughout the park memorialize the heroes of the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth.

ST. PAUL METHODIST CHURCH

1500 6th Ave., N., Birmingham 35203
www.stpaulbham.org

Founded by newly freed slaves in 1869, St. Paul Methodist is one of the oldest African American churches in Birmingham. In 1956, the church hosted some of the first meetings in the campaign to integrate city buses. It later held training sessions in nonviolent civil disobedience for participants in the Children's Crusade marches.

Collegeville

BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH AND PARSONAGE

3233 29th Ave., N., Birmingham 35207

Mon, Wed, Fri: 10am-3pm; Tues & Thurs: By appt.

www.thehistoricbethel.org

Under the leadership of Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, Bethel Baptist became the official launching pad of the modern Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham. At the height of the movement, three bombings took place at Bethel, the first at the parsonage on Christmas Day, 1956. Shuttlesworth and his family were miraculously unharmed.

Smithfield

DYNAMITE HILL

10 11th Ct., N., Birmingham 35204

More than 50 racially motivated bombings of homes in the Smithfield community between 1947 and 1967 earned the area the name "Dynamite Hill." The attacks, often focused on the homes of civil rights figures like attorney Arthur Shores, were aimed at enforcing segregation and intimidating Blacks seeking to move into integrated neighborhoods.

OUR LADY QUEEN OF THE UNIVERSE CATHOLIC CHURCH

961 Center St., Birmingham 35204

Dedicated to serving the needs of its parishioners and the surrounding community, Our Lady Queen of the Universe became a target for racial violence during Mass on March 21, 1965, when a bomb containing 50 sticks of dynamite was discovered in the church's driveway. The device was disarmed while the priest continued the liturgy.

South Titusville

BIRMINGHAM JAIL

425 6th Ave., S., Birmingham 35205

A historic marker stands near the building where Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote his famous Letter from Birmingham Jail. The wing of the jailhouse where King was held was demolished in 1986, but the bars of his cell were preserved and are now on display at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.