A decade-long Pig Iron Boom began on November 30, 1890, when Alice Furnace became the first major producer in the Birmingham district. This was followed in Birmingham and nearby at Thomas, Woodward, Gate City, Trussville, Vanderbilt, Bessemer, North Birmingham and other locations, with the opening of foundries and mines. With few local markets, 90 percent of pig iron produced was exported across the country and abroad.

Railroad Park, a public/private partnership, opened on a railroad corridor site once used as a freight depot for Burlington-Northern.

By 1890, production of pig iron in The Birmingham District reached 816,911 tons annually: 8.9 percent of the U.S. total. This corresponds to 20.6 percent of America's national pig iron production. The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) became a degree-granting university with Dr. Joseph Volker its first president.

After barely surviving a national financial panic and a cholera epidemic, early industrialists and financiers, with crucial support from Louisville-based L&N Railroad, began to make improvements that could pay off. Discovery of high-grade coal in quantity supported the shift from charcoal to coke as fuel for furnaces in 1876.

The City of Birmingham and the larger region grew accordingly. Only with armament needs from World War II did local industry recover and thrive as the “Arsenal of the South”. After the war, pent-up demand for consumer goods kept the boom going through 1950.

It was not to last. The boom economy was based on high wartime prices and heavy government orders for armaments. After the war, pent-up demand for consumer goods kept the boom going through early 1950s, but prices fell and orders declined. Birmingham entered a long period of economic decline, and more moderate growth was the best that could be achieved. Energy-related industries provided some stability and a new phase of industrial development started in 1960s.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) became a degree-granting university with Dr. Joseph Volker its first president.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) became a degree-granting university with Dr. Joseph Volker its first president.

By 1890, county population reached 88,000 with a great majority of jobs in mine and mills. A local network of railroads, including the Railroad & Mechanical Reservation (near today’s I-65) went into blast furnace operation, and the decade of booming pig iron production got underway. By 1890, production of pig iron in The Birmingham District reached 816,911 tons annually: 8.9 percent of the U.S. total.

The monumental Beaux Arts style Terminal Station spanning Fifth Ave. N. opened for six of the seven railroads serving the city. (The L&N retained its passenger station at 20th and Morris Ave.).

The new downtown overpassed the 10-story The Woodward Building, rose high above its late-Victorian neighbors at First Ave. N. and 20th Street. Ten years later all four corners of the intersection had skyscrapers.

The federal Clean Air Act of 1963, followed by expanded versions in 1967 and 1970, meant clearer skies over Birmingham but also the obsolescence of much local industrial plant. Imported iron ore replaced local sources.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) became a degree-granting university with Dr. Joseph Volker its first president.

Medicaid, Medicare, and other social insurance programs of the New Deal provided some relief for the elderly and the disabled.

The BJCC opened, in phases, a new coliseum, exhibition hall, concert hall and theatre around a central plaza two blocks north of Linn Park.

New underpasses opened at 20th, 18th and 14th streets, elevating trains through the heart of downtown and freeing local road movements. Birmingham Municipal Airport opened.

A post-war U.S. boom led by pent-up demand for houses, cars and other consumer goods sustained war-era prosperity. Automobile ownership grew rapidly.

The federal Clean Air Act of 1963, followed by expanded versions in 1967 and 1970, meant clearer skies over Birmingham but also the obsolescence of much local industrial plant. Imported iron ore replaced local sources.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) became a degree-granting university with Dr. Joseph Volker its first president.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) became a degree-granting university with Dr. Joseph Volker its first president.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) became a degree-granting university with Dr. Joseph Volker its first president.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) became a degree-granting university with Dr. Joseph Volker its first president.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) became a degree-granting university with Dr. Joseph Volker its first president.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) became a degree-granting university with Dr. Joseph Volker its first president.