

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 92000852

Date Listed: 7/15/92

Downtown Bessemer Historic District
Property Name

Jefferson
County

ALABAMA
State

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



Signature of the Keeper

7/15/92

Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section No. 3

This nomination is amended to show the count as 70 contributing buildings, 71 non-contributing buildings, and 6 non-contributing sites (for a total of 77 non-contributing resources).

This change was confirmed by phone with the Alabama SHPO (7/15/92).

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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Signature of the Keeper

10/19/92
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section No. 3

This nomination is amended to show the count as 70 contributing buildings, 71 non-contributing buildings, and 6 non-contributing sites (for a total of 77 non-contributing resources).

Section No. 10

The verbal boundary description is amended to conform with the site map, which shows that the city park is not included in the boundaries of the district.

These changes were confirmed by phone with the Alabama SHPO (7/15/92 and 10/15/92).

DISTRIBUTION:

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 92000852

Date Listed: 7/15/92

Downtown Bessemer Historic District
Property Name

Jefferson
County

AL
State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

[Handwritten Signature]

Signature of the Keeper

3/27/97
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Resource Count/Significance:

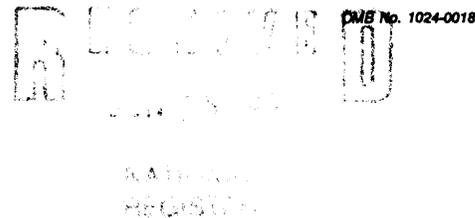
The property at 315 N. Nineteenth Street (Patton Block) is considered a contributing resource within the Downtown Bessemer Historic District.

[The two-story brick Patton Block is a modest example of late nineteenth-century commercial design and contributes to the significance of the district as a cohesive inner-city commercial neighborhood associated with the dramatic upbuilding of the community of Bessemer during the turn-of-the-century period. First occupied by local businessman J. B. Patton, the property at 315 N. Nineteenth Street retains integrity of location, scale, setting, materials, and association. The recent removal of a modern (c.1970) replacement facade revealed original architectural features.]

This information was confirmed with the Alabama SHPO.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)



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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16).

1. Name of Property

historic name Downtown Bessemer Historic District other names/site number same

2. Location

street & number See verbal boundary description city, town Bessemer state Alabama code AL county Jefferson code 073 zip code 35020

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: NA Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official Date State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:)

for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE

GOVERNMENT/CITY HALL: County Courthouse

TRANSPORTATION/RAIL-RELATED

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE

GOVERNMENT/CITY HALL: County Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th Early 20th-Century Commercial

20th Century Classical Revival

Modern Movement

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

ALUMINUM

roof METAL

other WOOD

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The physical development of Bessemer was originally centered around the rolling mill, the Little Belle furnaces, and the railroad. The fire district established in the first year went southeast-northwest from Carolina to Fourth Avenues, and southwest-northeast from 16th to 21st Streets. By 1895 the commercial center of town was at Second Avenue and 21st Street, continuing to 22nd Street and across the tracks to Carolina Avenue.¹ The first town well was dug at the intersection of Carolina and 22nd. Several large and imposing commercial, office and residential blocks were constructed in this area in the very first years, funded largely by the real estate investment companies that had formed to take advantage of the Bessemer boom. Of these blocks several remain, though hardly in their original condition. The effect of these buildings when they were new must have been not unlike the scene in Washington when it was a-building: grandeur amidst mudholes. Perhaps the most pretentious of these blocks (but also practical, since it was partially a tenement for mill workers) was the Charleston Block built by the Carolina Real Estate Co. on the corner of Second Avenue and 19th Street North, a location which at the time (1887-88) was almost out of the center of the town. In any case, the primary commercial intersection eventually became that one at 19th and Second, having already been the site of the first lot sold that April 12th, on which was built the Office Building (1890, later the Bank of Commerce), and of the Berney Bank Block, which is another surviving though much altered building. The fourth corner held the Grand Hotel, one of Bessemer's proudest possessions until its demolition in 1987 to make way for a County facility. Filling in between the large blocks were smaller structures, at first of frame, then of brick, and all reflecting, in either plain or fancy ways, the stylistic attributes of that great age of American commercial architecture.

Bessemer has seen much vitality and success in its history, but its aspirations to be the premier manufacturing and financial city in Alabama were never realized. From an architectural standpoint, however, the confections of an optimistic investment community, which paid for the skills of the many building craftsmen who flooded into Bessemer when it was booming, and which had at its disposal every material and process then known, remain a rich heritage of this late Victorian boom town. There is an unusual lot of fine commercial architecture in downtown Bessemer. A portion of it, unfortunately, has been obscured or permanently stripped of its distinction during a period when this style of building was not understood or appreciated by a generation influenced, no matter how subtly, by modernism-- primarily by the doctrinaire modernist scorn for ornament. Adding to Bessemer's particular situation was a 1963 tornado that did most of its damage in the middle of the commercial district. The city's response to the destruction was to encourage property owners and merchants to pick themselves up by modernizing their buildings. City Hall offered loans for screening of facades, modernizing of storefronts, removal of cornices, and any other project that would show Bessemer's determination to be successful as a modern city, and to look like one.

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1887-1941

Significant Dates

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

NA

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Statement of Significance:

Downtown Bessemer is being proposed as a historic district on the basis of two criteria: A., association with significant events in the history of Jefferson County and Alabama, and C., architectural distinction.

CRITERION A: Association with significant events in the County's and State's history.

Bessemer is an excellent example of an industrial city of the New South, invented practically overnight by businessmen who had the means and the energy to realize their dreams of vast wealth for themselves and for their state and region. Bessemer is also a relict (now fortunately diversifying and standing on its own) of a system of incentives and deals, offered by a business-controlled government, that produced immediate gain for the owners and managers but over time enshrined a political culture that pauperized the public sector to promote a virtual recolonization of the Southern states by North-based industry. Exploitation of its assets notwithstanding, Bessemer is significant as a mining, milling and manufacturing center, at one time second in Alabama only to Birmingham for the abundance of her resources and the production of her industrial facilities.

CRITERION C: Architecture

Architecturally, Bessemer remains the best example of a Victorian boom town in the Birmingham district.² Despite losses, refacings and other changes, the downtown commercial district contains a good collection of late 19th century and early-to-mid-20th century commercial buildings, primarily in brick, ranging from the earliest Berney Bank Block with its Richardsonian Romanesque attributes (1887) through the simpler storefronts and more restrained Classical decorative elements of 1910-30 buildings (e.g., Alabama Power Building, 1926), to the functional small commercial structures of the 1920s and into the '30s. Domestic architecture is represented primarily by houses ranging from simple to elaborate versions of the Queen Anne style, dating from the earliest period of residential building. One frequently encountered sub-category of commercial structure is the automotive service building; most of these have been altered, even where they are still in use as automotive buildings, but several retain their original open corner bays and garage doors. Finally, there are a few examples of Modernism, primarily the 1938-41 City Hall.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Notes from text:

1. Jane Ross, "History of Bessemer," series in Bessemer Advertiser, April 1927.
2. Marjorie White, The Birmingham District: An Industrial History and Guide. Birmingham: Birmingham Historical Society, 1981, p. 109.
3. "A Circular of Information About Bessemer City." New York: South Publishing Co., 1889.
4. Quoted in "Bessemer, city of vision, iron," Birmingham News/Age-Herald, Oct. 24, 1928.
5. Jane Ross, op. cit.
6. Ibid.
7. Birmingham News, Oct. 4, 1950.

Periodical resources from the collections of the Dept. of Archives & History, Birmingham Public Library, and the Tutwiler Collection, BPL. Other major resources were the newspaper archives of the State Archives in Montgomery and the Hoole Special Collections of the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, and the Jefferson County Board of Equalization files housed in the Archives, BPL.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property _____

UTM References

A
Zone Easting Northing

C

B
Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The district encompasses 10 complete blocks and parts of 10 others in the downtown Bessemer area, bounded on the southeast by Carolina Avenue, on the northwest by Fifth Avenue with one extension at 19th St. to Sixth Ave.; on the southwest by 17th St. with an extension between 2nd & 3rd Avenues to include the city park, and on the northeast by 20th Street with an extension along 2nd Avenue to 21st St.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

These boundaries are drawn to include the primary historic business district and some other significant structures from the earliest district near the railroad; some of the early residential area, now commercial primarily, is also included. This district also conforms well to the original fire district established in 1887.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Linda Nelson/Historic Preservationist; Melanie Betz/AHC Reviewer

organization FuturePast date December 12, 1990

street & number 4700 Seventh Court South telephone 205/592-6610

city or town Birmingham state Alabama zip code 35222

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There developed a predominantly Black commercial district along First Avenue between 18th and 20th Streets, turning the corner of 19th and extending up part of the block. Even after the end of segregation in the 1960s, this area of the downtown has continued to be home to Black-owned businesses and centers of entertainment.

The present nomination seeks to recognize what is now the primary commercial center of Bessemer. Much of the early built environment near the railroad has unfortunately been destroyed; over time the commercial center expanded to the north and west of the original surveyed blocks, eventually intruding upon areas that until relatively recently had been almost exclusively residential. This transition explains the presence in the inventory of some residential buildings (although most now in commercial use) interspersed among the commercial structures, and also explains the presence of newer commercial and office structures in the midst of otherwise historic streetscapes. Although there are a number of historic facades that are behind screens and therefore on the non-contributing list at this time, it is anticipated that many of the screens will be removed in the course of downtown revitalization. In any case, the many structures that retain much or most of their original style and materials even now constitute a significant collection of late 19th- and early-to-mid-20th-century buildings.

As preliminarily drawn, the proposed district extends from Carolina Avenue on the southeast to Fifth Avenue on the northwest, with a finger reaching up to include Diana Hall (c.1926) on Sixth Avenue; and from 17th to 20th Streets North southwest to northeast, with Second Avenue extended almost to 21st Street. Boundaries attempt to exclude blocks or portions of blocks that have lost the majority of their historic material; this includes stretches of the streets closest to the railroad, especially First and Alabama Avenues; the 1900 block of Fourth Avenue and the northwest side of the 1900 block of Fifth Avenue, and most of Second Avenue up to 19th Street. Although historically significant, the plant of the R.L. Zeigler Company (now occupied by Masonry Arts) was not built until c.1948, with a later addition c.1980, and so it was drawn out of the proposed district.

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Downtown Bessemer Historic District
Contributing Properties

1. Romano Block; Carolina Grocery/Ronald's Motorcycle Sales (1889; c.1895), 2001-03 Carolina Avenue
A fine two-storey brick commercial block, double storefront with central entry; seven bays with segmental-arch windows above, double in the center over the arched entry. Modernization has removed much of the trimwork and the original windows, which have metal replacements; storefront altered, transom obscured. Still fairly intact upstairs and at sides. Present speculation is that the original 1889 brick block on this corner was enlarged in the '90s by early Bessemer pioneer Sam Romano, a prominent grocery wholesaler who eventually compiled considerable property along the Avenue. (5-17)

5. Peoples Garage/B & W Auto Repair (c.1920), 2013 Carolina Avenue.
Double-bay, one-storey garage of rock-face concrete block, originally with spherical finials at the parapet, now very altered; bays now filled in with plywood. Has also housed Seegar Welding Co. and the Wall Machine Shop. The address is significant, being for many years the site of The Bessemer Weekly's print shop, which was in a frame structure that apparently burned around 1898 or '99. (5-13)

6. George Grocery Building/Silver Moon Cafe (c.1900), 2015 Carolina Avenue.
One-storey brick commercial building with gabled parapet, decorative band below the gable, largely intact; metal awning. The address was well known in the earliest days of Bessemer as the site of the Marvel City Saloon, E.A. Little, proprietor. (5-12)

10. Robinson Block; Southern Queen Hotel/Finocchio Grocery Co. (1888), 2101-03 Carolina Avenue.
Five-bay, two-storey brick commercial building with segmental-arched windows and door openings, the middle bay a central stair; parapet roofline; upper windows boarded up. Metal canopy over sidewalk. Most original brickwork intact; original transoms, some with leaded and stained glass panels. This is one of Bessemer's earliest brick blocks, built by R. & A. Robinson and operated as a saloon and dry goods store by them. H. Magill, a partner, operated a grocery and feed store there in the '90s, subsequently taken over by Sapp & Hagler in 1899. After Sapp & Hagler moved to Second Avenue, the building was again used as a saloon and rooming house in the early years of the century. (5-07,5-08)

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11. Southern Railroad Passenger Station/Bessemer Hall of History (1916), 1905 Alabama Avenue.
Prairie-influenced railroad passenger station, high central block with wings, hip roof, central gable. Built of pressed brown brick, clay tile roof, deep bracketed eaves. Listed on National Register of Historic Places, . Originally built by the Alabama Great Southern Railroad, which became the Southern. (5-21)
12. Trolley Line Freight Depot/Vacant Depot/Warehouse (c.1905), 1906 Alabama Avenue.
Three-bay gable-front depot building of red brick, pilasters framing front with stone caps that form flared eaves. Round vent in gable, deep side eaves with brackets. It has also served as a warehouse for a soft drink company and for Colley's Wholesale Liquors. (5-25)
13. Bell-Rogers Produce Co./Surplus Store (c.1915), 1818 First Avenue.
One-storey brick commercial building built as a general purpose warehouse with a concrete floor; now painted yellow. Decorative triglyph brick band below parapet. Remodeled 1949 when it became a State liquor store. It has also housed a produce company. Storefront altered, metal entrance, but masonry mostly intact. (5-31)
17. Huddleston Drug Store/Tommie's House of Beauty (1890), 1828-30 First Avenue.
Two-storey brick corner block, three bays on First Avenue facade, recessed corner entrance; upstairs has original masonry, straight-head windows with limestone heads, now filled in with metal screens. Decorative brick cornice; transom partially obscured; flat metal canopy attached to one storefront section, apparently of early vintage. 1828 is a one-storey section to the southwest along First Avenue, now painted over and its details obscured, but plainly part of the corner building, added sometime before 1925. (5-34,5-37)
18. J.C. Lewis Furniture Co./Lumzy Funeral Service (c.1905), 1901-03 First Avenue.
Two-storey brick corner commercial building, six windows on each face; building now painted white, storefront altered. Metal awning on street level; windows painted over. Original decorative masonry, including cornice, and segmental-arched window openings intact. Among this double block's earliest occupants were a fruit and confectionery store and a pool hall. (5-27,10-18)

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19. Trolley Waiting Room; AB&A Station/Lumzy Funeral Service annex (c.1905), 1907 First Avenue.
One-storey brick railroad passenger building with chamfered corner entrance; double doors with fanlight; segmental-arch windows; corbeled decoration under the parapet. Now painted white as its neighbor on the corner. (5-36,10-18)
20. U. Friedman; National Clothing Co./Gatewood's Bar & Grill; Public Finance (c.1910), 1908-10 First Avenue.
One-storey commercial building of vari-toned brown brick; double storefront under double crested parapet with decorative corbeling in a band below. Storefront altered c.1969: one transom screened, plate glass storefront installed. Building vacant at time of survey (1989-90). (6-13)
21. New Deal Tavern/State Clothing Company (c.1910), 1912 First Avenue.
Two-storey, two-bay commercial building faced with highly decorative brick to resemble a woven pattern. Upstairs paired windows under segmental arches; pilasters with inset panels frame the building. Storefront altered 1960: aluminum and glass, transom covered. (6-14,6-17)
23. Mayo Tailoring Building (c.1915), 1924 First, Avenue.
One-storey commercial building of varitoned brown brick with crested parapet, inset panel, and framing pilasters. Although only 25' wide, it had a double storefront, with an intact transom, now demolished preparatory to rehabilitation. Built by the mercantile partnership of Erlick & Lefkovitz; from the 1920s to 1963 the home of Frank Mayo, tailor, it has also housed a shooting gallery and clothing stores; at present (1991) it is being rehabilitated for commercial use. (6-15)
26. Birmingham Electric Co. Building/Alabama Power Co. Building (1926), 1809 Second Avenue.
One-storey red brick commercial building with three bays, one of which has been faced to close the window. Limestone trim on pilasters, parapet, storefront cornice, lozenge insets. Storefront altered, transoms obscured, entrance moved from center bay to right bay (facing). (4-15)
28. Office Building, Bank of Commerce/Albano's Discount Store (1890), 1900 Second Avenue.
On the site of the first lot sold in Bessemer in 1887, but interestingly not the first lot built upon. Two-storey brick; segmental-arch windows, grouped between prominent piers; round-head windows above the original front and side

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entrances. Decorative corbeling below the parapet line; simple brick cornice; capped piers at the parapet. Storefront now radically altered, first about 1951 by F.W. Woolworth, who closed up the 19th Street windows and closed the transom line. On the most prominent commercial corner in Bessemer, the building was originally a four-compartment office building whose main entrance was on 19th Street (original addresses were 201-05 19th). The ground floor became offices for the Bank of Commerce in the 1890s, and in later years it was long the home of Pegram-Patton Drug Store and then Lane's Drugs. It has also housed 5 & 10-cent stores, e.g. Woolworth's, McLellan's. Built by William Berney, whose real estate company owned three of the four corners at this intersection of 19th Street and Second Avenue; most likely the architect was G.M. Torgerson, who designed other Berney structures in Bessemer and was architect for the Land Company. (4-21,10-17)

29. Berney Bank Block (1887), 1901 Second Avenue.
One of the earliest of the commercial blocks built in Bessemer, and early home of the Bessemer Land & Improvement Co. offices. Two-storey corner block of red brick, terra cotta and cut stone; rounded corner entrance, originally with medieval-style (conical) turret above cornice line; rare Second Empire roofline. Upstairs windows alternate round and flat heads; very elaborate decorative brickwork below cornice line. Storefronts inserted; remodeled 1950s; by 1964 the turret was gone. Although completely altered on ground level, the fine masonry and original window openings remain upstairs. Beginning life as the Berney Brothers Bank, it became the Bank of Bessemer in '89 and the First National Bank in '90; by '99 the bank was in liquidation and the building was sold at auction that same year. For some years part of the Rosenbaum Brothers mercantile business, it has in recent years housed discount retail stores, including Jack's Bargain Center and, currently, the Three Dollar Bill. Built by William and Chollett Berney; architect G.M. Torgerson, contractor Patrick J. Gillen. (4-19,4-20)
34. Randle Building; Elmore's 5 & 10/KS Wigs (1899), 1908 Second Avenue.
Two-storey red brick commercial building, one of a row of four built by local contractor W.F. Nolan, this one for furniture dealer A.A. Randle but not long occupied by him. Crested parapet and decorative corbeled friezeband below, limestone trim above upstairs windows. Storefront altered 1951; upstairs windows filled in but intact. (6-32)
35. Simmons & Buck Bldg; A.A. Randle/Baron's Men's Store (1899), 1910 Second Avenue.
Two-storey brick three-bay commercial building, built by W.F. Nolan for grocery wholesalers Simmons & Buck. Bays

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defined by projecting piers with simple caps at the parapet; storefront altered 1963. Sold by the builders almost upon completion, it was occupied by early furniture merchant A.A. Randle, and in the early 20th century became the home of H.W. Sweet's furniture store. (6-31)

36. S.S. Kress Co./United Textiles (c.1915), 1912-14 Second Avenue.
Two-storey buff brick commercial building with crested parapet, grouped two-over-two straight-head windows, upper masonry intact; cornice removed; storefront altered. This appears to be a joining and enlargement of two 1899 buildings that were originally one storey, refaced to create the impressive facade typical of S.S. Kress buildings. One of the original buildings was the home of Buck Brothers & Shelfer, prominent Bessemer grocers; the Bucks had bought the interests of W.S. Winters, the original owner and builder of the 1899 building at 1914 Second. (6-30)
37. Rosenbaum Block; I. Rosen/New Image Clothing; Grafix South (1889), 1913 Second Avenue.
Remaining half of I. Rosen's 1923 remodeling: two-storey brick commercial with recessed storefront, tile entry, plate-glass upper window band under a large but simple bracketed cornice. Pressed metal storefront cornice; all trim painted white. The original building dates from 1889 and was built by the Rosenbaum Brothers, very successful general merchants who at one time occupied nearly the entire corner of 19th and Second Avenue. (4-27 to 4-29)
42. Lewis Block; Sapp & Hagler, grocers/Dress for Less Shop (1899), 1925 Second Avenue.
Two-storey brick commercial building of painted brick, very simple except for a heavy metal cornice. Four bays defined by projecting piers with caps under the cornice, straight-head windows, now painted over. Recessed storefront; transom obscured by signboard. An early address of the Bessemer Loan Co. and prominent grocers Sapp & Hagler, the building has also housed, among others, the Bessemer Furniture Co., Dixie Shops, and Boackle's. (4-31)
54. Bessemer Cornice Works/Long-Lewis Hardware (1900), 2020-28 Second Avenue.
This part of the Long-Lewis block includes the original Bessemer Cornice Works building, and the additions have been faced to resemble it. The second-storey round-head windows form an arcade across the facade; the ground level retains an early rock-face block facing, but modernization over time has largely obscured original materials and detail. Flat

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canopy over sidewalk. 71-B is the slightly later corner section that was originally the cement and lime warehouse. By this time the business had become Long-Lewis Hardware Co. (6-25 to 6-27)

55. Citizens Bank; Jeff Clay Building/Bank Pawn Shop (1899), 2023 Second Avenue.

One-storey commercial building of brick and rock-face concrete block; built originally as a bank by businessman Jeff Clay, it eventually became the Bank Pawn Shop and has remained so to the present. It has a prominent finialed rectangular pediment over the parapet line and capped framing piers; otherwise a very simple building. Metal canopy over sidewalk added c. 1957; storefront and interior largely original. East wall now plastered. (6-23)

56. Bank Furniture Store/W.E. McWilliams, loan office (c.1899), 2025-27 Second Avenue.

One-storey brick commercial building, double storefront, one side vacant and one side now occupied by the Bank Pawn Shop. Dentiled cornice; original cabinet storefronts; interior appears intact. (6-24)

57. Hollingsworth House/Cason's Flowers (c.1902), 1701 Third Avenue.

Two-storey, 12-room frame house now clad in vinyl siding. Neoclassical details in the porch trim and segmental-pedimented entry; gabled on one end, hipped on the other to accommodate a rear extension. Full facade one-storey front porch with brick piers and balustrade above. Originally a private residence, it was converted to apartments in the late '30s. The Casons bought it in about 1971. The original detached servants' quarters and garage, now considerably altered, has been joined to the main house. (2-25)

58. Hollingsworth Rental House/The Straw Hat (c.1902), 1705 Third Avenue.

Two-storey frame house, two bays with one-storey facade-wide front porch supported on clustered square columns resting on brick piers; gable breaking the porch eaves over central entry; hip roof, prominent gabled dormer with small paired windows. Recently purchased and being rehabilitated. (2-24)

59. Charleston House/Western Star offices (1899), 1709 Third Avenue.

Two-storey frame, pedimented gable-front house with wrap-around porch; sawnwork ornament; chimney at rear roofbeam. Restored by the present owner as offices of the Western Star newspaper. (2-23)

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64. Bessemer City Hall (1938-41), 1800 Third Avenue.
Three-storey municipal building of buff brick in a modified Art Deco style; prominent square corner clock tower; banded windows between projecting piers; limestone facing at entrance bay on Third Avenue. Building also houses the City Auditorium; it was originally designed with a commercial space on the Third Avenue side (see #65) to provide additional revenue; space now occupied by an attorney. Constructed in phases between 1938 and 1941; Charles H. McCauley, architect, as a project of the Works Progress Administration. The clock on the tower was the original one on the old City Hall, 1890, G.M. Torgerson, architect, Patrick J. Gillen, contractor. (3-04,7-20)
65. Neal Electric Co./City Hall Annex; T.H. Jackson, atty (c.1938), 1810 Third Avenue.
Two-storey section of City Hall, of buff brick banded by recessed coursework; single large multi-pane window upstairs. This section was originally included in the City Hall design to provide the extra income to the city of commercial rents. (7-17)
66. Jefferson County Courthouse, Bessemer (1919), 1801 (NE corner) Third Avenue.
Three-storey building of buff brick, the ground floor delineated by a limestone course. Built in the enframed block design popular in the early decades of the 20th century, especially for government buildings, the Courthouse's end bays project slightly with recessed panels and inset Ionic columns; five bays in central section that are defined by slightly projecting piers. Simple band cornice. (2-20)
67. Donahoo Realty; Ling & Bains, attys/Fitzpatrick Bail Bond; Bains & Terry (c.1915), 1811-13 Third Avenue.
Two-storey commercial brick; dentiled and bracketed cornice, stone-capped piers at the parapet; one-over-one upstairs windows, paired in the center; double storefront, one side radically altered by pebbledash panel, the other side in fairly original condition, including the transom. In the early days of the Courthouse the upper floor of this building contained beds for jurors. (2-19)
68. Western Union Office/Terry Realty Company; J. McDougal (c.1915), 1815-17 Third Avenue.
One-storey commercial building, double storefront, one half altered with aluminum and glass in 1953 but masonry to parapet remaining; the other side (Terry Realty Co.'s half) recently (summer 1990) unscreened to reveal original masonry which includes stone-capped piers at the parapet and inset panels below with varitoned decoration. The rehabilitation of the storefront has recovered the sense of a double-storefront building. (2-18, 7-21)

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71. Goodwyn & Ross Bldg./1820 Building (1919), 1820-22 Third Avenue.
Two-storey commercial building of buff brick, double storefront, altered but with much original material intact. Modern storefronts retain some original material in the surround; transom line is defined by square-paned framework over translucent material. Upper masonry mostly intact: stepped parapet, projecting piers defining halves of building; four windows per side. Built as two storefronts with a one-storey garage behind, all founded on concrete. Built by attorneys Gardner Goodwyn and George Ross for their offices, this building also at one time housed the Bessemer bureau of the Birmingham Age-Herald. Remodeled 1980s. (7-19)
74. Realty Building (1915), 1824 Third Avenue.
Four-storey commercial building of red brick, U-shaped with full basement. Ground floor altered over the years; glass block inserted c. 1940s; other individual tenants have modernized their storefronts. Upper floors intact: paired one-over-one windows. End blocks defined by projecting pilasters; originally end blocks were crowned with crested parapets, now removed. Original cornice also removed. At the time of this survey the building is undergoing rehabilitation. Since 1915 the Realty Building has been the home of the Bright Star Restaurant, whose owners recently bought the building. Site of the 1890 Rebie Hall Building, which was destroyed by fire. (10-14,10-15)
81. E.L. Huey Furniture Co. Annex (1905), 1919 Third Avenue.
Two-storey commercial building of brick with stucco facing; four straight-head windows upstairs, below a highly decorative cornice-band framed by colonettes with caps above the parapet line. The storefront appears to be original, partially obscured at the transom level by the large signboard of E.L. Huey Furniture Co., which joins it to the larger building to the south. This structure, although differing slightly on its exterior from its neighbor, is actually part of the neighboring building, and is connected on the interior for its length. (2-12)
82. Sokol Brothers (1920s)/Commercial Building (c.1905), 1920 Third Avenue.
One-storey commercial brick building with highly decorative brickwork at the parapet line. Three bays above delineated by capped piers; modern storefront inserted in an apparently original recessed entry. Transom obscured; masonry painted yellow. (7-28)
83. McAdory Building/E.L. Huey Furniture Co. (c.1905), 1921-23 Third Avenue.
One of the most original commercial structures in Bessemer: two-storey commercial building in three sections, with a

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large pedimented gable breaking the parapet over the central section, in which is inscribed "McAdory". Crested limestone window heads; two-over-two windows alternating singly and in pairs. Recessed entries; storefronts original. The store sign-band occupies the entire transom area. The building is in need of repair: part of the cornice is torn away, and the masonry is deteriorating. Early in its life also known as Beavers Hall, the meeting place of the fraternal organization of the Beavers. (2-11)

84. Martin Furniture Co./Best Carpets of Dalton (c.1905), 1922-24 Third Avenue.
Two-storey six-bay brick commercial building; apparently original central recessed entry; upper segmental-arched windows now closed with metal screens. Fine decorative brickwork across the parapet line, including three rows of dentils, the largest beneath the parapet; lower row of dentiling above the transom line, which is now behind a metal screen. Interior remarkably original; now used as a carpet warehouse and sales outlet. (7-29)
87. Bennett & Carnes, auto glass & tin/Williams Upholstery & Auto Repair (c.1930), 1927 Third Avenue
One-storey commercial brick, now painted white; shallow corbeled band below the parapet; decorated framing piers. This building has been an automobile shop all its life; the garage doors are intact; transom obscured by sign panel. The interior is in remarkably original condition, including the stamped tin ceiling. (2-09)
88. Bessemer Grocery Co./Bessemer Professional Building (c.1907), 1928-30 Third Avenue.
Two-storey commercial building, concrete foundation; of brown brick with recessed storefronts, one with a corner entrance. Another entry and stair to second storey in middle of Third Avenue side. Decorative brick segmental-arch window heads on second storey; original simple cornice and chimneys missing. Second floor was a boarding house listed in 1921 as "A.J. Jenkins, furnished rooms." Transom obscured, one storefront altered, but otherwise the exterior and interior are in very original condition. At the time of this survey the building has been purchased for rehabilitation as offices. Associated for many years with the Bessemer Grocery Co. and the Cowen family. (1-27)
90. Pam Am Auto Service/Stop & Shop Bakery (c.1935), 1731 Fourth Avenue.
Gable-roofed structure originally built as a garage with angled porte cochere; porte cochere and garage altered 1959

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when it became the Stop & Shop. Stucco over frame; transoms now filled in but much original material remaining. (8-16,8-17)

93. Zeigler Meat Co./Amison's Transmission & Automotive (c.1920), 1909 Fifth Avenue.
One-storey commercial building of Bessemer Gray brick, faced in pressed buff brick; asymmetrical storefront, one large and one smaller section; garage doors added c. 1963. Capped piers define bays; flat parapet. Storefront modernized, transom covered. This little building is the first home of Zeigler Meats, from whence Mr. Zeigler wheeled his sausage wagon through the streets. (11-11)
94. Benson-Ruffin House/Cottage (c.1895), 1915 Fifth Avenue.
One-storey pyramidal-roof cottage with projecting front gable; novelty board; attached shed-roof front porch; central chimney. (11-12)
95. Williams House/Cottage (c.1895), 1919 Fifth Avenue.
One-storey frame pyramidal-roof cottage with projecting front gable; attached shed-roof front porch; novelty board; central chimney. A twin to 1915, with slightly different decorative details. (11-13)
97. Wunderlich-Warlick Garage/Lipscomb & Lipscomb, attorneys (c.1922), 210 No. Eighteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building of buff brick, originally with double garage bays, still defined by capped piers; lozenge insets below parapet. Facade now altered; pebbledash inserted in openings; transoms and original masonry intact. Originally built by Judge Gardner Goodwyn with the foundation to build a second floor for his law offices, never built. (7-16)
98. Williams Building (c.1910), 300 No. Eighteenth Street.
Two-storey red brick commercial block; stone-capped parapet with lozenge insets below; simple limestone cornices over storefronts and above upper windows. Storefronts altered to fake Colonial decor under hipped shingle hoods or canopies; windows changed from one-over-one to nine-over-nine. Original metal downspouts. Seaboard Air Line Railroad and State Farm Insurance Co. have both occupied offices in this building at different times, and the Home Bakery was located here at one time. (3-03)

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99. Brobston Commercial Block (c.1927), 304-12 No. Eighteenth Street.

One-storey commercial row of brick faced in limestone; flush storefronts, some of which appear to be in original condition; transoms intact. Mr. E.L. Brobston purchased the building in 1960; he has suggested that the original builder and occupant of the building may have been U.S. Steel, according to his recollection. He also said that the building was built later than others on the block, its vacant lots being a maneuvering space for the fire engines that came and went from City Hall across the street. (7-36)

100. Alabama Title & Trust Building/Norton Realty Company (1924), 314 No. Eighteenth Street.

One-storey brick office building with gable-front pediment; decorative Classical pediment set into the facade below. Slightly recessed entrance with inset tapered limestone columns and limestone surround. Windows along alley closed by Mr. Norton, who bought the building c. 1970. (7-37)

102. Carnegie Library/Chamber of Commerce Building (1907), 321 No. Eighteenth Street.

Central block with side wings; one-storey red brick with limestone trim; raised foundation; central steps to recessed loggia entrance. Tripartite arcade with substantial limestone heads and keystones; short round columns with rusticated stone capitals. Crested central pediment with stone panel with legend "1907, Public Library." Sash windows with round heads that have been filled in due to lowered interior ceilings. The building has been altered inside but remains in very original condition on the exterior. One of Bessemer's most historic buildings, built with assistance of a Carnegie grant through the efforts of some of Bessemer's prominent ladies; land donated by Bessemer Land & Improvement Co. Designed by W.E. Benns; built by Fred Jay; design reportedly based on the Kennedy Library in Spartanburg, S.C. (8-04)

104. WoCoPep Station/Old Reliable First Avenue Taxi (c.1928), 2 No. Nineteenth Street.

One-storey service station, steeply pitched cross gables with stucco and false timbering in the Tudor style popular for these structures in the 1920s; built by J.G. Johnston for the Wofford Oil Company. Walls stucco over brick; end chimney with exposed face. The projecting gable covers the porte cochere and pumping stand, with much original material extant, though in poor condition. A warehouse to its rear and a barbecue restaurant to the northeast are now respectively partially destroyed by fire and deserted and overgrown. (2-24, 12-15)

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105. Sam Raine Bakery; The Square Deal/Disco Beauty Supply (c.1900), 101-03 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building faced in buff brick, painted white on the First Avenue side; appears to be a later refacing of an older structure. Double storefront; bays defined by capped brick piers. Decorative corbeled brick band under the parapet. Storefronts altered. (6-11)
106. Chris Demos restaurant/W.S. Shivers Clothing Co. (c.1900), 105 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building of buff brick; blind panel below the parapet; flat metal canopy suspended over sidewalk; transom filled in under storefront cornice. One of a row of four storefronts built in the early years of this century, very similar in style and detail; probably refaced in the buff brick at a later date. (6-10)
107. Feirman's/W.S. Shivers Clothing Co. (c.1900), 107 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building of buff brick, in details very like its neighbor 105, sharing a pier, but slightly different in execution of details. Blind panel under the parapet; flat metal canopy; modernized storefront; transom painted but still original. (6-09)
108. Armory Building; Dummy Office/Masonic Hall; Regal Clothing (1889), 108-10 No. Nineteenth Street.
One of the oldest buildings in Bessemer, originally home of the Bessemer Rifles and downstairs the ticket office for the Bessemer Dummy line. The building has also housed a Masonic Lodge and two commercial tenants downstairs, including the Alabama Gas Company appliance store. Storefronts now radically altered. Upstairs the central section contains three heavily-arched round-head windows, flanked by pairs of straight-head windows. Pediment and other decorative elements once above the parapet are now gone. The building has been painted; dentiled storefront cornice intact. (6-02)
123. Hill Grocery Company/True Value Hardware (c.1910), 316 No. Nineteenth Street.
Two-storey commercial building faced in pressed buff brick, storefront altered with metal transom cover; glass block in upper windows; original upper masonry, crested parapet and stone insets survive. (10-11)
125. Bessemer Land & Improvement Co./First Alabama Bank (1889), 330 No. Nineteenth Street
Two-storey commercial building in the Neoclassical Bank Vault style, completely faced in limestone. Radically remodeled in 1924 from its

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original Victorian appearance as the offices of the Bessemer Land & Improvement Co., it became the Bessemer Trust and Savings Bank, retaining the original three facade bays. Expanded by Exchange Security Bank in 1976, it was augmented by two additional bays, making a total of five, defined by attached Doric columns that support a friezeband below a simple cornice. The entrance is in what had been the central bay, second from the corner, under a round arch. The original building was designed by Land Company architect G.M. Torgerson; builders were J.A. Powell and A.C. Babcock. General contractor for the 1924 remodeling was Charles W. Hall.

126. U.S. Post Office/Bessemer Public Library (1908), 400 No. Nineteenth Street.

A public building in the Renaissance Revival style, a central block with wings, strictly symmetrical; constructed of coursed limestone, with paired banded Ionic columns fronting the slightly projecting central block and defining three round-arched openings, the central one the entrance. Pedimented gable window heads; slightly crested parapet over the entrance. The building was purchased by the City in 1965 to serve as the Public Library; in 1967 the Library moved in. (9-37)

127. Taylor Drug Company Building/Commercial Building (c.1903), 414-16 No. Nineteenth Street.

Two-storey commercial building of red brick, double storefront, one of which remains in fairly original condition. Transoms metal-screened but still defined; flat metal canopies over sidewalk. Upstairs two straight-head metal-sash windows per bay, replacements; limestone sills; flat unadorned parapet. One-over-one windows on the alley wall appear to be the original ones. Once the location of W.D. Taylor & Co., drug manufacturers and successful producers of patent medicines. The building was apparently originally only one storey until some time after the mid-twenties. Present occupants are Collier Optical Co. and Frankie's Glamorama. (10-03)

129. Gillett Wall Paper Co./Commercial Building (c.1910), 417 No. Nineteenth Street.

One-storey brick commercial building, storefront completely modernized with metal canopy, transom obscured; upstairs original masonry intact; band of honeycomb brickwork below very plain flat parapet. Building framed by slightly projecting brick piers. (10-01)

130. Dennis Auto Co.; Ansley's Garage/Hury's Auto Parts (c.1920), 418-24 No. Nineteenth Street.

One-storey commercial building of Bessemer gray brick, originally an auto service building with a garage, an office

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bay, and an open corner drive-in bay for tire repair, now diminished to a recessed corner entrance with cast iron column supports. The garage bays mid-block have been converted to commercial storefronts with covered transoms but some original material in the window surrounds. At the time of this survey (1990) the Fifth Avenue side of the building was being worked on. (10-20,10-21)

132. Joseph Plaia, shoemaker/Country Classic Productions (c.1915), 421 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building of buff brick, flat parapet, blind panel below; modernized storefront. (9-35)
133. John Ferrendella, confectioner; Edwards Poultry/Schilleci Building (1916), 429-31 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building of buff brick, double storefront, both sides altered; bays defined by piers capped at the parapet; original cornice removed. Upper masonry is intact, though painted; blind panels, lozenges inset in piers. The parapet on the corner half, once continuous with that of the other half, has been cut down to the level of the side wall. Some elements of the corner storefront still intact, and the interior of this side retains its stamped tin ceiling. Built by the Schilleci Brothers for Mr. Ferrendella. (9-32,9-33)
135. J.C. Curry Block/Commercial Row (c.1918), 505-15 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial row with slightly lower parapet line than its anchor block on the corner (#198). All bays defined by piers capped at the parapet; upper masonry generally intact, with friezeband of varitoned blind triglyph-like panels; flat stone-capped parapet. Storefronts have undergone changes over time, part of the row converted from Sadler's Garage c. 1942, now Anderson's Cleaners, itself an old Bessemer business. Other uses have been small businesses such as a barber shop, photography studio, jewelry company, and news stand. Transoms obscured; one storefront obscured by metal canopy. (9-30,9-31)
137. Diana Hall (c.1926), 521-31 No. Nineteenth Street.
Two-storey corner commercial and civic building and attached one-storey garage section, all of Bessemer Gray brick.
(a) Main building faced in patterned varitoned brick with stucco; clay tile roof. Straight-head and segmental-arched windows alternate; decorative panels in the spandrels.
(b) The one-storey garage has a crested parapet over the garage doors; patterned brickwork below parapet; transoms painted. Original downspouts. Built by the Schilleci brothers as a meeting place for social and fraternal organiza-

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- tions, the upper floor was also served as a ballroom and nightclub. The building also housed the Diana Bicycle Shop in the '30s and '40s. The upstairs was a popular hall for civic and school dances, and from about 1943 to 1947 it was known as Teen Town, a center of young people's activities. Insurance, OK Barber Shop, Bessemer Vault Co., and C & R Ceramics. (9-29,11-25)
138. Commercial Row (c.1928), 101-11 No. Twentieth Street.
One-storey commercial row of brick, originally with a two-storey corner office block that was altered to one storey c. 1942. Plain parapet with clay tile coping; storefronts in varying degrees of alteration, but several appear to be in essentially original condition. The Roaring Twenties Lounge now occupies the corner space once housing Smith & Gaston Funeral Service (1940s). (1-35,6-19)
139. Bessemer Livery & Transfer Co./Economy Clothing & Furniture Co. (c.1890), 112-14 No. Twentieth Street.
One-storey commercial building of brick with pressed brick face, occupying alley corner behind Union Drug Building and connecting in the rear with the old Lincoln Theatre on First Avenue. Double storefront with original configuration of doorways, but with modern plate glass and aluminum storefronts inserted and transoms screened. Early flat cornice with block dentils and scroll brackets on pier caps still extant. An early brick stable of the Bessemer Livery & Transfer Co., it was most likely refaced when it became a commercial storefront about 1906. (1-36)
144. Marvel City Brokerage Co./J.V. Davis Warehouse #2 (c.1915), 312 No. Twentieth Street.
One-storey commercial building of brick, now painted white but in substantially original condition; double bays delineated by stone-capped piers, one bay a garage entrance and the other an office front with a single central entry and a window on either side. Transom intact over the office side; flat metal canopy over garage entrance, transom on that side screened. (1-26)
145. Gwin Block; Alliance Mercantile/Western Wire Rope Co. (1891), 401-11 No. Twentieth Street.
One-storey brick warehouse block, built by Chambers McAdory, Sam Ware and M.M. Gwin; bays defined by decoratively capped piers; shallow corbeling in cornice line, blind panels below. Sidewalk canopy early if not original; original entries intact. For many years this and its neighboring buildings were the home of the Bradley Brothers Grain Co. (1-22,1-23)

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146. Gibson Sheet Metal Co. (c.1905), 413-15 No. 20th Street.
One-storey brick industrial/warehouse building, originally a two-storey structure with produce warehouse below and rooms above, it lost its second floor after a c. 1910 fire. Central vehicular entrance, round-arched office entrance next to it, large window; simple flat parapet; flat metal canopy over sidewalk. Facade masonry has been sand-blasted. (11-17)
147. J.R. Waldrop & Co.; Bessemer Grain/Warehouse (c.1905), 421-23 No. Twentieth Street.
One-storey brick warehouse building in two sections built in about 1905 and 1910; decorative corbeling at cornice line; large round-arched vehicular entrance; straight-head and segmental-arch windows, irregularly spaced. Constructed in two sections that step down slightly with the street, the halves are similar but not identical in fenestration and motor entry shape; the interiors have street-level vehicle passages and wagon-level concrete floors. City Directory records indicate two firms in the building in the 1920s: Huey-Hosey Grain & Grocery at 1419 and J.W. Waldrop, grocery wholesaler, at 421. In the 1940s a property of Bradley Brothers Grain Company. (11-18,11-21)
148. Wood Chevrolet; Elliott Grocery Co./H & S Repair Service (c.1922), 418 No. Twentieth Street.
One-storey corner brick commercial building with garage bay at alley end; masonry intact, including brick piers, but novelty board paneling has been inserted in the storefronts; double entry doors appear original, as does garage door. Flat parapet. The first home of Wood Chevrolet, it was for some years the home of the Elliott Grocery Co. (11-15,11-16)

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2. Harris Grill/Commercial Building (c.1944), 2005 Carolina Avenue.
One-storey commercial building of concrete construction, originally with transom; refaced c. 1959, now painted. (5-16)
3. Star Confections, billiard parlor/Phil and Ann's Game Room (c.1945), 2007 Carolina Avenue.
One-storey commercial building of concrete construction; refaced c. 1964, transom obscured. (5-15)
4. Blue Note Cafe; Star Theatre/Green Upholstery; Masonic Lodge (1947), 2009 Carolina Avenue.
Actually 2009-11 Carolina, built as a one-storey cafe and two-storey theatre, constructed of concrete with stucco facades. Part of the Romano holdings until 1953, when the property was sold to Lodge 112. Now refaced with masonite. (5-14)
7. Long's Cleaners (1948), 2017 Carolina Avenue.
Concrete block commercial building; originally lot was part of Romano holdings along this block. (5-11)
8. Burgin-Little Block/Cross Cathedral (1891), 2023 Carolina Avenue.
One-storey building of now invisible original material; brick veneer on face and aluminum siding on sides; single-step parapet in center. The small concrete block building contiguous to it on its southwest side is part of the property and dates from c. 1955. (5-10)
9. Hurd's Pharmacy; Carolina Avenue Market/Guyton Printing Company (c.1895), 2029-31 Carolina Avenue.
Combination of a more recent brick building on the corner, next to an older building that has been refaced with the same brick; all distinguishing features of the older building facade have been obscured. The c. 1895 building was and remained the only brick structure at that end of the block. (5-09)
14. City Taxicab Co./Commercial building (c.1915), 1822 First Avenue.
One-storey brick commercial building; storefront altered 1971, now boarded up with no identification. Upper brickwork intact, with panel below the parapet and lozenge insets. In the '20s housed the City Taxicab Co. (5-32)

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15. BPOE Lodge Hall/Nu-Way Loan Company (1887), 1824 First Avenue.
Two-storey brick commercial building, four bays upstairs, with original or early recessed storefront and side stair entrance. Facade now obscured by metal screen, but has a fine Coca Cola wall painting on side. This is almost certainly one of the earliest buildings in Bessemer and the only brick block along First Avenue for several years after 1887. A blacksmith's shop during the '90s, in the early '20s the building housed the Brotherhood Undertaking Co. (5-33)
16. Vacant lot, 1826 First Avenue.
Once the site of Colley's Grocery & Market.
22. Site of Dixie Theatre, 1918 1st/Vacant lots, 1914 First Avenue.
About 100 feet of parking lot, once the site of three buildings including the Dixie Theatre, razed 1959. The other buildings were demolished more recently, the western most as recently as 1989.
24. Lincoln Theatre/Lincoln Theatre (1948), 1926 First Avenue.
The one-storey brick commercial building on this site was demolished in 1947 and the steel-frame, brick-clad theatre completed in 1948. It is faced with green and white glazed brick. It served as a movie house for the black community, but never with much financial success. It is now divided into smaller commercial spaces; the original auditorium is now connected to a shop on 20th Street around the corner, and there are small spaces on either side of the box office. (6-16)
25. Sam Dunn Saloon/Union Drug Company Building (c.1910), 1930 First Avenue.
Two-storey brick commercial block, the 25' facade completely covered by a metal screen. The long side wall is in largely original condition, with segmental-arch windows along the upper storey; old wall painting indicates a saloon occupant in the past. The interior of this building is remarkable, hardly changed from its 1930s beginnings as a drugstore. (6-18,6-21)
27. Charleston Block; Steiner Block/McDonald Building (1887), 1813-31 Second Avenue.
A great Victorian block now almost completely obscured by a metal screen at the second storey, and all storefronts modernized; also with addresses on the Nineteenth Street side. This building was originally three storeys (four at its central section along Second), built of brick with

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- stone foundations, faced with pressed brick, marble and iron, with a pressed metal cornice. Fulton's Drug Store occupied the corner store for many years. The top floors were removed by the 1950s, and the second floor was in such bad condition that it was not rented. The metal screen was attached after severe storm damage in 1963. The only visible hint of the building's former grandeur is the arched entrances with granite pilasters framing. The building was constructed by the Carolina Real Estate Co., early investors in Bessemer; commercial on the ground level, it was a tenement apartment house for East European workers who were brought to Bessemer to work in the rolling mill. Originally numbering from 1809 Second, the first Bessemer Post Office was located at that address before the construction of the building at 400 No. Nineteenth Street in 1907-08. Sutcliffe, Armstrong and Willett, architects; McCrossin Brothers & Thomas, contractors. (4-16 to 4-18)
30. Isaac Rosen, dry goods/The Custom Place, 1903 Second Avenue.
25' storefront completely screened to the parapet with brick veneer. Recessed storefront with single brick support pier. This was originally a two-storey building or section of a building. (4-22)
31. McLellan's Building/McLellan's Building (1942), 1904-06 Second Avenue.
Two-storey commercial building of concrete construction and buff brick veneer; four upstairs windows in an enframed window wall; plate glass storefront. This is a complete rebuilding on the foundations of the Schwartz Double Block, c. 1890, in one of the oldest commercial rows in the City. McLellan's tore the building down "almost to the foundations" (Bd. of Eq.) and built the present building in 1942. (6-33)
32. Miller & Malone, dry goods/Rhoda's Very Best Cosmetics (c.1888), 1905 Second Avenue.
Completely modern refacing of a 25' two-storey commercial storefront, once the location of Forst Mercantile Co. (1905-07) and later housing Dixie Clothing Co. The storefront was marbled over in the 1950s, and the metal screen covering the upper storey is relatively recent. Judging from the Board of Equalization photographs of the building before it was screened and from present configuration of staircases to the second storey, this front and its neighbor at 1903 are some remainders of the Adler Block of 1888, built by industrialist Morris Adler; G.C. Harris, architect. Unfortunately, none of the building's original material or structure is visible. (4-23)

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33. Sokol's; I. Rosen/Salvation Army Bldg; James Jewelry (c.1888), 1907-11 Second Avenue.
Two-storey brick commercial building, now completely covered with a metal screen; altered storefronts. Sokol's moved into it in 1941, and remodeled it after a fire. Half of the neighboring building was annexed in 1946, and the entire store screened across the facade in 1959-60. (4-24)
38. Pizitz/Davis-Burch Building (1956), 1915-21 Second Avenue.
Two-storey commercial building, modern storefront, completely screened in masonite. Behind the screen is the old Pizitz store, faced in enameled steel; this was a 1956 construction on the site of several dry goods establishments including the Pizitz-Smolian Cooperative Stores. (4-26)
39. United Textiles (1990), 1916 Second Avenue North.
One-storey red brick commercial building of postmodern influence, central entrance between two show windows.
40. Site of Erlick's, Loveman's/Vacant lot, 1918-24 Second Avenue.
This is the site of Erlick & Levkovitz' clothing store, later Erlick & Sons Department Store, which closed in 1954 to be remodeled as Loveman's Bessemer store. The building burned down in January, 1977.
41. Bessemer Loan Co; Sears, Roebuck/The Cubby Hole (c.1898), 1923 Second Avenue.
Two-storey commercial building completely refaced in 1949, obscuring all historic details. Upstairs windows have been opened up, but the face is still covered with stucco or drivit. (4-30)
43. Ensley Clothing Co./Bessemer Video (c.1900), 1927 Second Avenue.
Two-storey commercial building now completely obscured by a screen at the second storey. The storefront was remodeled in Cararra glass with new recessed entrance and show windows in 1948. Behind the screen are three one-over-one straight-head windows with large transom lights. There was originally a pressed metal cornice. This is most likely an enlargement to two storeys of a one-storey side to W.H. Lewis' block at 1925; Lewis' original plans were probably changed by new owner Ben West when he bought the building late in 1899. (2-32)

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44. Palace Saloon; W.H. Lewis & Bros./Picard's (1899), 1929-31 Second Avenue.

One-storey brick commercial building, originally a double storefront, since 1967 completely screened in metal, front and sides. Originally home of Nordman's Palace Saloon and at one time a Piggly Wiggly store, it has been the home of Picard's store for over 30 years. The property includes a building at the rear that is now attached to Picard's, although facing 20th Street. (1-33,2-33)

45. Site of TCI Commissary/Bessemer Furniture Galleries (c.1979), 1930 Second Avenue.

One-storey metal-sheathed furniture warehouse-type storebuilding. The original building on the site was the TCI Commissary, later the J.C. Lewis Furniture Co. till 1937, and then Union Supply Co.; destroyed by fire in January, 1977. (1-31)

46. Simmons Sporting Goods, 2001 Second Avenue.

One-storey modern screened structure built into the corner, connecting with older buildings to its rear. Central entrance, no windows; false pent-eave. This was the site of W.A. Simmons Clothing Co. in the early '20s. (1-32)

47. Kartus Furniture Co./Heilig-Meyers Furniture Co.(c.1900), 2005 Second Avenue.

Two-storey brick commercial building, now part of Heilig-Meyers Furniture Co. and screened to the top with metal. (4-33)

48. Long-Lewis Ford Dealership/Bargain Town (c.1920), 2006-12 Second Avenue.

Two-storey commercial building of brick, once part of the Long-Lewis automobile dealership and oriented to Second Avenue, with the original address 2006-12 Second. In about 1953 it was remodeled; now completely refaced on the 20th Street end as a storefront, and oriented to 20th Street with a parking lot across its front. (6-28,6-29)

49. Jefferson Furniture Co./Heilig-Meyers Furniture Co. (c.1930), 2007-11 Second Avenue.

One-storey commercial building of buff brick, three bays, 75' in width, cement foundation. Although the facade is now completely behind the Heilig-Meyers screen, the interior is nevertheless in largely original condition with a mezzanine and its original ceiling and support columns. (4-35)

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50. City Furniture; Bessemer Gas & Appl/Heilig-Meyers Furniture Co. (c.1915), 2013 Second Avenue.
One-storey brick commercial building, new brick face 1955; now completely screened in metal as part of the Heilig-Meyers group of stores. Central entry, windows closed, flat metal canopy over sidewalk. (4-36)
51. Bessemer Cornice Works Repository/Assurance Agency Building (c.1902), 2014-18 Second Avenue.
Two-storey commercial building of brick, built several years after the Bessemer Cornice Works Building and used as a repository. The building has been faced to match the original building at 2020-22, with round-head windows upstairs and rock-face block on the lower face. Original front altered with fake Colonial shutters and siding; masonry intact above. (6-27)
52. Site of Collins Block/Rex Clothing Company (1891), 2015 Second Avenue.
A one-storey commercial building now modernized and completely screened in metal. The original structure on the site was (is?) the 1891 Collins Block, which had a second storey with access by a side stair. It is possible that the second storey and stairwell were removed and the masonry obscured by other materials. The original arched side entrance to the upstairs, now torn away, is covered by the face screen and makes the storefront appear asymmetrical. (4-36)
53. Parking lot, 2017-21 Second Avenue.
A Long-Lewis agricultural implements warehouse building (c.1900) was on the site. The lot also served as Long-Lewis parking after the building was demolished.
60. Larry Russell Building (c.1985), 1711-15 Third Avenue.
Modern one-storey office commercial building, brick with paneled band around the parapet; plate glass windows. Built on the site of two houses, one of which was a twin to 1709. Unlike other properties on this block, it has no set-back. (2-22)
61. First Presbyterian, Church Fellowship Hall (1953), 1723 Third Avenue.
Two-storey side-gable brick fellowship hall, built on the site of the old manse. The end gable is on the Avenue, with an oriel window. Turner, Smith & Batson, architects; E.C. Coston, contractor. The church playground is adjacent to this property toward the southwest.

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62. First Presbyterian Church, Educational Bldg (1959), 1723 Third Avenue.
Two-storey brick educational building attached to the main sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church but constructed first. Turner, Smith & Batson, architects; E.C. Coston, contractor. (7-15)
63. First Presbyterian Church (1962), 1731 Third Avenue.
Red brick church building in the Southern Colonial style, gable-front, projecting entrance portico with supporting columns; square tower, lantern, and spire. Shaw & Renneker, architects; E.C. Coston, contractor. The original building on this site was constructed in 1909, a Victorian Gothic auditorium church designed by G.M. Torgerson. It was demolished in 1958 to make room for the new buildings. (2-21)
69. Drennen Buick Co.; McDonald Furn Co/The Phone Center (c.1917), 1816 Third Avenue.
Two-storey commercial building with modern storefront and masonite paneling on upper floor. This is actually three buildings on four lots: two 25' buildings flanking a 50' building, the latter estimated to have been built c. 1917, the other two c. 1910. The central building also housed J.W. McDonald Furniture Co.; Pearson Realty Co. occupied 1818 in the '60s. (7-18)
70. Water Works Office; Paden Realty Co/Bessemer Finance Co. (c.1905), 1819 Third Avenue.
One-storey commercial building now completely faced in permastone with aluminum and glass storefront dating from 1954. An interior fire in 1959 was the occasion for an interior remodeling. This was an early building of concrete construction with brick curtain walls. (2-17)
72. Lipscomb & Brobston, attys/Robert Graham, attorney (c.1920), 1821 a & b Third Avenue.
One-storey commercial building of brick, storefront altered 1957: aluminum and glass with metal-screened transom. Straight parapet with inset panel below. Having originally a single entrance with a flat suspended canopy, the building was divided into two sides in 1949; parts of one of the entrances are still extant. (2-17)
73. Southern Bell Telephone Exchange/Foots Shoe Repair (1905), 1823 Third Avenue.
One-storey commercial building now completely faced in metal screen over what had been a nicely detailed facade with pilasters and dentiled cornice; refaced 1957. This little

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building was built by the Bessemer Land & Improvement Co. for use by Southern Bell as the telephone exchange office. Divided into three spaces, 1964; the doorway to the side now incorporated into the present building was originally the entrance to a tiny shop between the two larger buildings. (2-16)

75. Paden-Stephens Realty Co./B'ham Area Legal Services (c.1920), 1825-27 Third Avenue.
One-storey brick commercial building, double storefront, both stores now completely refaced-- one with fake Mansard shingling and one with metal screen-- with all original material obscured. Original 1960 refacings were identical; 1827 was done again at a later date. (2-16)
76. F.B.Buck, wsl; Morton Hardware Co./Spencer Furniture Co. (c.1900), 1909 Third Avenue.
Originally 1909-11 Second Avenue, a one-storey brick commercial building now with modern storefront and completely screened in metal; flat metal canopy suspended over sidewalk; projecting sign in need of repair. Originally a double storefront, altered 1957-63; latest alteration also put in a single central entry. (2-14)
77. Hood-Whittle Furniture Co./Ward-McClure Furniture Co. (1954), 1910-12 Third Avenue.
One-storey commercial building, aluminum-and-glass storefront, brick and concrete facade. Built on the site of a former building destroyed in the 1930s, of which only two walls were left. Half the site (1910) was originally occupied by the 1888 Marble Front Building, a major early Bessemer commercial structure. (7-25)
78. Roberson-Dunlavy Furniture Co./Budget Furniture (c.1905), 1913-15 Third Avenue.
Actually two one-storey commercial buildings, now faced in metal above a modern storefront. The later building, c.1905, is 1915 with a highly decorative corbeled brick cornice-band under the parapet; 1913, c. 1900, is simpler with an inset panel below the parapet. Both buildings originally had flat canopies suspended over the sidewalk below the transom; these were removed by 1963. Dunlavy's has been in this location since 1915. These buildings were at one time part of the Huey holdings along Third Avenue. (2-13)

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79. Vines Grocery/Ward-McClure Furniture Co. (c.1910), 1914 Third Avenue.
Two-storey commercial building, originally brick with three bays upstairs, built in almost the identical style of its earlier neighbor at 1916-18; now completely obscured by a screen. Storefront modernized and upper windows obscured 1963; screen added later. (7-26)
80. Batson Mercantile Co./H.G. Ray Furniture Co. (c.1900), 1916-18 Third Avenue.
Two-storey commercial building now obscured by a screen; originally a double structure with a central entry and stair to the upstairs. Connected inside by an arch. The Rays have occupied the building for 50 years. (7-27)
85. Dixie Gas & Supply Co./Commercial building (c.1950), 1925 Third Avenue.
One-storey commercial building, originally with a plain brick face, now covered in metal screen above an aluminum-and-glass storefront. The storefront had at some point had either Cararra glass or masonite panels applied to it, now falling off. (2-10)
86. Commercial building (c.1963), 1926 Third Avenue.
One-storey commercial building faced in buff brick, built on the site of an earlier, more decorated building that was destroyed. Once used (1970s) as a Good Will store.
89. Arthur Jacobs, funeral director/Armed Forces Recruiting; Primeway (c.1900), 1929-31 Third Avenue.
One-storey brick commercial building, double storefront now separately faced, 1929 in permastone (1952), 1931 with original masonry painted grey but a completely modernized storefront inserted and the transom screened (1952; 1967). (1-29)
91. Parking lot, 1805-17 Fourth Avenue.
Large parking lot between Chamber of Commerce and end of commercial row behind First Alabama Bank; once the site of the YMCA and Southern Bell Telephone buildings.
92. Commercial Row (c.1920), 1819-29 Fourth Avenue.
One-storey block commercial row completely faced with screens; modern canopy; tinted windows. (12-11)
96. Cheese Carburetor Repair Shop, 1925 Fifth Avenue.
Automobile service shop, painted block; decorated parapet. Combination office and garage front. (11-14)

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101. Bradley & Hendrick, real estate/ISI Information Services (c.1925), 316 No. Eighteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building of varitoned brown brick; capped piers at the parapet. Storefront completely altered 1964: transom filled in; modern storefront screened by vertical blinds. For many years occupied by Elaine's Cafe; the present owner's mother, Ada May Garner, had a real estate business here from 1964 until 1988. (8-03)
103. Pasquale Row/Commercial row (c.1905), 1-7 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey four-bay commercial row of brick, now completely obscured by metal screen but with some storefronts in partially original condition; flat metal sidewalk canopy of early vintage still suspended from the screen. An early location of bakeries and grocers; Oddo Pasquale, general merchandise, occupied 5-7 in the 1920s and '30s. (5-26,12-14)
109. Lizzie Barr, dry goods/People's Outfitting Clothes & Furn (1890), 109-11 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building faced with glazed brick; modernized storefront, though still recessed in the old style. Flat metal canopy; transom screen and projecting sign. Stone-capped parapet surmounted by three spheres delineating the halves of the building. Originally a double store, it became a single shop about 1910. (6-08)
110. Trolley Line Freight Station/Commercial Building; Niki's Restaurant (c.1902), 112-16 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial facade masking three storefronts in two buildings, now in varying degrees of alteration. Partially refaced in blond brick, the middle section (#114) still defined by pilasters and entablature above. Niki's restaurant occupies #116 and the adjacent space, which is part of the old Charleston Block. (6-03)
111. Colley's Billiards/Home Appliance Repair (c.1890), 113 No. Nineteenth Street.
Half of a very early double block, its 25' commercial facade now completely refaced and painted over white. (6-06)
112. I.J. Roll, men's furnishings/Brother to Brother Record Shop (c.1890), 115 No. Nineteenth Street.
The other half of the double block of 113-15 19th, at one time refaced c. 1957 with Cararra glass applied to storefront; in 1991 modernized with face brick. (6-05)

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113. Site of Bessemer Savings Bank/McLellan's (1956), 211 No. Nineteenth Street.
Two-storey commercial building of buff brick, very plain facade; upper windows metal-frame banded; modern storefront. Built on the site of the Victorian Romanesque Bessemer Savings Bank, later First National Bank, constructed 1890. (12-16)
114. W.D. Taylor Drug Co./Ullana's Jewels (c.1898), 213-15 No. Nineteenth Street.
Two-storey commercial building, modern storefront, metal screen to parapet line. Originally the home of Taylor's Drug Store, one of the earliest such firms in Bessemer. The highly decorative finials and pediments above the parapet have all been removed. The alley elevation retains its original materials. (7-04,7-05)
115. Nabors-Morrow Block/J. Bo's Sandwich Shop; CBC Thrift (1887), 214-16 No. Nineteenth Street.
Two-storey commercial building of brick, now partially refaced and partially painted. Number 214 has been completely screened (1963) with masonite panels but shares a common parapet with no. 216, which retains its upstairs masonry and Italianate window hoods. Both storefronts very altered. One of the original brick blocks in the city, it was the home of Nabors, Morrow & Hendon, druggists, and, since it was also constructed for Lodge or society purposes, it became the first home of Bessemer Lodge AF & AM No. 358 in 1888. Prominent Bessemer druggist W.L. Rush occupied the building after 1898 for many years. (7-23,10-16)
116. Lewis Hardware; Bains Book Store/Mr. Style Clothing (c.1898), 217-19 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building of brick, remodeled and refaced c. 1963 with small ceramic tiles in the storefront into which has been worked an Rx symbol; upper level now screened in metal with flat metal canopy suspended from the screen. Half of this building, along with 215 next door, was an early address of I.A. Lewis Hardware Co. (7-03,7-24)
117. Jenkins Block/Bessemer Apothecary (1887), 218-230 No. Nineteenth Street.
Two-storey brick corner commercial block, built by pioneer businessman and alderman John Jenkins and owned by his family until recently. Enlarged to connect with the Nabors Morrow block after an interior fire in 1889; long the home of groceries, the first of which was J.Y. Lucas. For many years the Bessemer Apothecary has occupied the corner store. Storefront modernized 1950s; completely screened in metal,

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probably about 1976. Other commercial occupants include Loyle Seymour Jewelers, an established Bessemer firm. It should be noted that the original cornice is intact above Seymour's and an adjacent hotdog stand. (7-22)

118. Sweatman-Trotter Building/Mr. Style Clothing (1898), 221-23 No. Nineteenth Street.
Two-storey brick corner commercial block, now with its facade screened to the parapet line and the Third Avenue side stuccoed, though with original window openings intact. Housing Lefkowitz' clothing store and the Grand (later the State) Theatre for many years, it was completely remodeled in 1964 for a chain jewelry store. The theatre itself was closed in 1960. (2-15,7-02)
119. Site of Jacob Green, dry goods/Standard Furniture Co.; Dixie Shoe (c.1955), 301-13 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial corner building faced in buff brick, rebuilt new after a fire in the 1950s. The furniture store is U-shaped and wraps around the Dixie Shoe Co. and Dress for Less, which have varying types of entries. This corner has been the long-time site of Dixie Shoe, and was for many years the home of Pope's Drug Store and the Manufacturers' Outlet Store. (7-30)
120. Ala. Optical Co.; Seymour Jewelers/Paden Realty Company (c.1900), 310 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building, facade remodeled 1951 with brick veneer and glass block in the transom. Actually half of one building, its other half being 312; the building was sold at auction in 1940 and from that time was divided and assessed as two properties. Original flamboyant pediment and capped piers have been destroyed. (10-13)
121. Savoy Steam Laundry; Neal Electric/Smith's Cleaners (c.1900), 312 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building of brick, now completely refaced in various materials, primarily masonite panels above the storefront and wood panels on the storefront. This is the other half of 310, with all original decorative features removed or obscured. (10-13)
122. Patton Block; Monarch Saloon/Bessemer Pawn Shop (c.1890), 315 No. Nineteenth Street.
Two-storey commercial building of brick, now partially refaced (c.1966) with metal screen but with some upper decorative material still showing. Originally the home of J.B. Patton, plumber and pipe fitter, with an elaborate gabled pediment and finials. (10-10)

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124. First Alabama Bank drive-in tellers, 318-20 No. Nineteenth Street.
50' of parking and drive-in teller lot adjacent to First Alabama Bank; once the site of the Robinson Block, a two-storey commercial building demolished c. 1964 for bank use. (12-12)
128. Dixie Cleaners & Dyers/Commercial Building (c.1905), 415 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey commercial building of brick, now completely faced to the parapet in metal, storefront altered. This is the earliest building on this half of the block. (10-02)
131. Home Bakery; Houppert's Bakery/Bessemer News Stand (c.1910), 419 No. Nineteenth Street.
Small one-storey commercial building of varitoned brick, probably a refacing. The entire storefront above the transom line is now obscured by a fake mansard canopy. (9-36)
134. J.C. Curry Block; City Grocery Co./Drummond Drug Co. (c.1918), 501 No. Nineteenth Street.
One-storey corner commercial block, the corner property with slightly larger proportions than the row up Nineteenth Street (#135); chamfered corner entry. Corner block now stuccoed and painted. Major changes to the corner block appear to have been in 1959, when a small set back structure was added on the Fifth Avenue side and the entire section stuccoed. The corner store became the Fifth Avenue Pharmacy c. 1925. (9-30,9-31)
136. Parking lot, 517 No. Nineteenth Street.
140. Simmons & Buck; F.B. Buck, grocer/Simmons Sporting Goods Annex (1900), 113-15 No. Twentieth Street.
Two-storey commercial brick block completely obscured above the transom line by metal screen. Originally an 80' x 50' commercial block with two double storefronts and regularly-spaced segmental-arched windows upstairs, the storefronts underwent alteration in 1949 and 1957 but the second storey remained intact. At the present time (1990) one 40' storefront has been completely bricked over between piers, leaving only solid doors; the other storefronts remain but in very modified condition. Originally the home of Simmons & Buck and, after the partnership was dissolved in 1907, F.B. Buck's grocery business, and for many years the only substantial structure on that end of Twentieth Street. Sanborn maps indicate that the building was built in stages, the western 40' about 1904. (1-34,6-22)

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141. Parking Lot, 200 No. Twentieth Street.
Parking lot occupying the full half-block street frontage along Twentieth Street, serving the Bargain Town store that is the remodeled southern most building attached to the Long-Lewis Hardware group. Originally an early row of stores occupied the site.
142. J.C. Curry & Company/J.V. Davis Warehouse #1 (c.1905), 214 No. Twentieth Street.
One-storey 40' commercial building of brick that has been faced or stuccoed; storefronts filled in with patterned block when the building became a warehouse c. 1965. The entire facade now painted; all original parapet pediments removed. (1-30)
143. Bessemer Office Machines (c.1915), 310 No. Twentieth Street.
Narrow one-storey structure of brick and galvanized iron on Third Alley corner of Twentieth Street, at one time owned and used as a warehouse by the Martin Furniture Co. on Third Avenue. The original structure on the site was a livery stable. Mid-'50s alterations inserted an aluminum and glass storefront and removed the gable roof; now with replacement windows and modern brick veneer. (12-05)

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Historical Development of Bessemer

Bessemer, Alabama, is a small city of about 32,000 people, situated thirteen miles to the west of Birmingham in the mineral-rich fields of the Jones Valley. A city born out of the industrial vision of a few ambitious and wealthy men, it is a prime example of an urban construct of the New South. From an 1889 circular about Bessemer comes this characteristic statement:

Alabama has been gifted far beyond even our boasted empire of Pennsylvania, and only the Southern sluggard has hitherto given the race to the North. Now there is a New South, with new teachings, new opportunities, new energies, and manifestly a new destiny, and the time is at hand when a large portion of the great iron and coal products of the country which enter competing centers will be supplied cheaper from Alabama than from any State in the North. (3)

Henry Fairchild DeBardleben was a successful Birmingham mining entrepreneur who in 1886, knowing the location of the coal deposits in the Cahaba and Warrior fields, as well as the proximity of iron and fluxing stone necessary for the making of steel, chose the site of the future city of Bessemer for the erection of a battery of blast furnaces known subsequently as Furnaces 1 and 2. Not irrelevant to his choice of site was the presence of the Woodward Iron Co.'s operation, from mine to furnace, not much more than a mile from his projected city's boundary. Inviting investors from around the South to join him, he formed a development company and, through the agency of Dr. Frank Prince of nearby Jonesboro, purchased some 4,000 acres of land surrounding the furnaces at prices of from \$10 to \$25 an acre-- land that would within a half-year be selling at up to \$18,000 an acre. DeBardleben's intent was to build his own industrial city, rivaling Birmingham in size and wealth, producing the finest and cheapest steel in the nation. A much-quoted remark of his was that "(n)o stockholder will be allowed to come in who can't make smoke!" (4) Thinking at first to call his city Brooklyn, his stockholders prevailed upon him to call it something more pertinent; he then had the inspiration to name it after Sir Henry Bessemer, British inventor of the Bessemer converter that revolutionized the steel-making process.

Attracting investors primarily from Charleston, London, New Orleans, Richmond and Natchez, he formed the Bessemer Land & Improvement Co. in the early months of 1887. The land was surveyed with the avenues running parallel to the Alabama Great Southern Railway line. On April 12, 1887 the first public auction of lots was held; this date has been generally agreed to be the date of the founding of Bessemer.

Resembling in development its rival Birmingham in the early years, Bessemer grew like a weed, and speculation in land was commonplace. The Land Company controlled the disposition of lots, and it suited DeBardleben's sense of grandeur to import from the Centennial Exposition in New Orleans some of

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the buildings that had been constructed for it and to have them resided in the midst of his muddy streets and half-begun commercial blocks. One of these, the Jamaica Building, became the first unit of the Rolling Mill. The other, the Montezuma Building, was rebuilt as the Montezuma Hotel, an extensive structure overlooking Carolina Avenue from an elevated lot, close enough to the railroad to be convenient for the many visitors and speculators coming and going.

Bessemer was granted a charter by the State legislature in 1888. It had been the intent of the city's founders that it should be the center of a county separate from Jefferson; this was, however, never accomplished, and Bessemer had to settle for being a branch of the Jefferson County government. A Bessemer Courthouse was constructed in 1919, with jurisdiction over the area of western Jefferson County now known as the Bessemer Cut-Off. The city itself passed its first bond issue in 1889 in order to build a city hall, which was finished in 1890; it was designed by G.M. Torgerson, an architect of the Centennial Exposition who had been imported to Bessemer to help continue the atmosphere of vigorous importance sponsored by the founders.

The second industry to augment Bessemer's nascent vigor was the Rolling Mill, organized in 1887 and put into operation by 1888. In 1891 the Howard-Harrison Iron Co. built shop and quarters in the city; it became the U.S. Pipe & Foundry Co. and has been one of Bessemer's prime industries to the present time. Another prominent Bessemer industry was begun in these early days: the presence of fire clay beds about 15 miles to the southwest meant that Bessemer would become a leading producer of building bricks, famous for the Bessemer Grays that would go into so many buildings in Jefferson County and the surrounding area. In fact, the natural resources of the region around Bessemer made it a natural point of origin for many mining, milling and manufacturing processes and products. The tireless efforts of the investors to advertise and promote their essentially private city resulted in the attraction of much out-of-state investment to Bessemer. As industry was established and as workers, factors and merchants increased the population, Bessemer took on the attributes of a true boom town. All of the hustle and bustle of a rail and manufacturing center, combined with the rawness and violence of a frontier town, were typical of Bessemer in its early days. Fortunes were made and lost; lots were bought and resold; buildings were thrown up only to be replaced by bigger, fancier ones in a few months. Dubbed the Marvel City, it would by the 1920s be the fourth largest city in Alabama.

The general financial depression of 1893 was to have its serious effect on the fortunes of Bessemer, but in 1894 an event of local significance occurred that had a more long-term effect. Henry DeBardeleben was a major stockholder in the Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railway Co., and it was his ultimate purpose, through stock market manipulations that would gain him control of the company, to secure a steel mill for Bessemer and thereby guarantee its permanent industrial supremacy over Birmingham. Outwitted by other interests within TCI, he lost control of the company instead, and in fact lost a good deal of his fortune. TCI subsequently took over many of the mine and mill operations in Bessemer, but the steel mill was ultimately established in

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Fairfield. From that point, Bessemer's potential as a serious economic rival to Birmingham was dramatically diminished.

The panic of '93 took its toll of Bessemer's vitality: the rolling mill, which had curtailed operations even as early as 1891 as the boom began to slow, closed down completely until 1899. In general the years between '93 and '99 were characterized by limping economic growth, even considering the advent around 1894-95 of companies such as Republic Steel. The return of prosperity and the city's later progress date from the turn of the 20th century. (5) After that, some of Bessemer's primary industries and businesses flourished, including the Bessemer Cornice Works, which became Long-Lewis Hardware & Supply Co., and Sullivan, Long & Hagerty Construction Co., "which put in the bulk of public improvements that Bessemer has experienced since the early nineties." (6). In 1927 the R.L. Zeigler Meat Packing Co. was established by a local butcher in the old Armour plant, and in 1929 the Pullman Standard Co. located in Bessemer, destined to be the city's greatest industry until it discontinued major operations in the 1980s.

Suffering acutely in the Depression of the 1930s, as did its sister and rival Birmingham, Bessemer was assisted back to health by the demands of World War II on her mines and factories. In 1950 the city boasted 76 industries with employment of 13,000 and a 22 million dollar payroll. (7) In the following decades, however, Bessemer was to fall victim to the changes that were affecting cities everywhere in the United States, including the growth of the suburbs, the decline of basic industry, loss of the place of the railroad in the transportation hierarchy, and the scattering of the downtown's functions to other areas both geographic and technological. Heavy layoffs in some major industries began in the late 1970s, and by the 1980s it was clear that some kind of municipal initiative in redevelopment would be necessary to sustain the economic viability of the downtown. In recent years the historic dependence of Bessemer on basic industry has been mitigated by diversification, and the city finds cause for optimism in the expanding composition of its business community and the partnership of city government in planning and facilitating economic development.

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Acreage of Property: Approx. 26 Acres

UTM References:

ZONE: EASTING: NORTHING:

- A) 16/ 504160 / 3695940
- B) 16/ 504530 / 3695890
- C) 16/ 504880 / 3695770
- D) 16/ 504610 / 3695420
- E) 16/ 504410 / 3695480
- F) 16/ 504180 / 3695460

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Downtown Bessemer Historic District
Bessemer, Alabama (Jefferson County)
Linda Nelson, Photographer, 1991
Alabama Historical Commission

- PHOTO #1: 300 block of 19th Street N, looking W toward Fourth Avenue
- PHOTO #2: 1800 block of Third Avenue, looking SW toward 18th Street
- PHOTO #3: 100 block of 19th Street, looking toward First Avenue
- PHOTO #4: 1900 block of Second Avenue, looking SW toward 19th Street N
- PHOTO #5: 2000 block of Second Avenue, looking N toward 21st Street N (Long/Lewis Block)
- PHOTO #6: Corner of 19th Street N and Second Avenue, looking NE
- PHOTO #7: 1700 block of Third Avenue, looking NE
- PHOTO #8: 1900 block of First Avenue, looking SW toward 19th Street N
- PHOTO #9: First Avenue, showing Gatewood's Bar and Grill and State Clothing Company Buildings
- PHOTO #10: 2000 block of Carolina Avenue, looking NE toward 21st Street N
- PHOTO #11: 400 block of 20th Street N, looking NW toward Fifth Avenue
- PHOTO #12: 101-111 20th Street N.
- PHOTO #13: 1800 block of Third Avenue, looking SW toward 18th Street
- PHOTO #14: 1800 block of Third Avenue, looking SW toward City Hall
- PHOTO #15: 400 block of 19th Street, looking toward Fourth Avenue
- PHOTO #16: Berney Bank Block, 1901 Second Avenue, looking E
- PHOTO #17: 2000 block of Second Avenue, looking NE toward 21st Street N
- PHOTO #18: Robinson Block, 2101-03 Carolina Avenue, looking W

