

MAR 22 1988

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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date entered

JUN 2 1988

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections**1. Name**

historic Woodlawn City Hall

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number 5525 First Avenue North N/A not for publication

city, town Birmingham vicinity of Congressional District 6

state Alabama code 01 county Jefferson code 073

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name William L. Kelpke and Charlotte Kelpke

street & number 848 South 78th Street

city, town Birmingham vicinity of state Alabama 35206

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson County Courthouse

street & number 716 North 21st Street

city, town Birmingham state Alabama 35203

6. Representation in Existing SurveysJefferson County Survey of Historic Sites & Structures
title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes nodate 1970 - present federal state county localdepository for survey records Birmingham Public Library Archives
Alabama Historical Commission, Montgomerycity, town Birmingham state Alabama
Montgomery

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Woodlawn City Hall is a rectangular two-story building of buff brick, in dimension 110' on the main street frontage and 60' deep. It is very symmetrical, with a central entrance distinguished by elaborate terra cotta classical detailing in a very slightly projecting central pavilion. On its front and sides it is surmounted by a decorative metal cornice with terra cotta brackets and a dentiled molding at its base. Above the cornice is a parapet roofline, broken in the center by an attic room with three small windows on the front. There is a small egg-and-dart wooden molding around the building just above the second-story window transoms. Originally the building was crowned at the central attic portion by an octagonal vented cupola with a dome and finial; this was removed after suffering storm damage.

This building is, essentially, a spacious and plain structure made remarkable by the scale and elaborateness of its classical cornice and entrances. The main First Avenue entrance is the more elaborate of the two (the other is at the center of the east facade, along 55th Place); it consists of a double door (now aluminum) surmounted by a semi-circular fanlight, flanked by double Corinthian engaged columns supporting a simple entablature and a full gable pediment enclosing scroll brackets and molding around a cartouche on which is engraved the date 1908. The words "City Hall" appear in relief at the center of the frieze.

The side entrance consists of double wooden doors, apparently original, with a plain square transom light above; surmounting this is a simple entablature supported by three large scroll brackets, and on top of this is a plain cartouche flanked by scrollwork and relief carving of leaves. Both these entrances are made the more outstanding because they are formed in brown terra cotta, making them darker than the surrounding masonry, rather than lighter.

The west and rear elevations are of plain brick masonry punctuated with long narrow windows. All windows are double-hung one-over-one sash, with transoms on the street facades. Only at the rear have the original windows (which have arched headings) been replaced with aluminum frames. One window departs from the single-light pattern and that is the one directly above the central pediment; it is flanked by two narrow sidelights with transoms. There are stone sills all around.

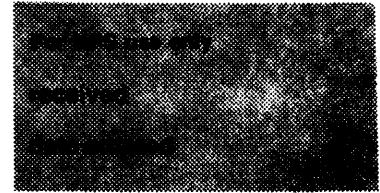
The ground floor exterior of this building has undergone alterations from its earliest days. A 1908 photograph shows the front with ordinary double-hung windows on the east side of the entrance with large doors on the west side to accommodate the fire wagons. After 1910 the storefronts were added, which appear to be in substantially their original form in the present building, with recessed entries and raised wooden display platforms. A 1972 photograph shows where the Morgan Brothers store had modernized their half of the ground floor by facing it in what appears to be Cararra glass, probably dating from the 1930s. This addition covered the transom and detracted from the integrity of the building's appearance; it was removed during the commercial revitalization of the early 1980s. At that time some of the windows on the east facade were bricked in.

Inside, the building has remained remarkably unchanged. All walls are plaster; original ceilings are beadboard, and some on the first floor have been overlaid with acoustical tile. Ceiling height is 15'3" on both floors, with 7'4" doors and 2½'

(see Continuation Sheet 1)

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Continuation sheet 1

Item number 7

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transoms. All floors are pine, some on the ground floor covered with asphalt tile or concrete. There are some massive timber supporting elements in the walls that stand from floor to roof trusses; these have been uncovered in the process of wainscot restoration. The second floor is supported by cast iron columns or by plaster-wrapped steel posts; both sides of the ground floor are open spaces except for these supporting elements. At the back of the central hallway is a broad pine staircase with square newell posts and one surviving turned baluster. There is beadboard wainscoting in the stairwell and upstairs hall and rooms.

There is one third-floor room, a 10'-high space at the front center lit by the attic windows; this provides access to the heavy timber-trussed ceiling and to the roof.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1908-1937 **Builder/Architect** R.E. Posey, architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Historic Background:

The town of Woodlawn grew from an original settlement of the Wood family, who came to the newly-created Jefferson County in 1824 from South Carolina. In 1835 Edmund Wood, grandson of the original settler, purchased 400 acres on the Georgia dirt road east of what became 54th Street. The Alabama Great Southern Railroad was constructed in 1870 and a "grab post" erected for mail, and the little settlement was named Wood Station. The first school was built in 1878 and the second in 1884. Churches sprang up in the '80s, and the Georgia Pacific Railroad provided transportation to the growing city of Birmingham to the west. In 1886 the town was renamed Woodlawn, and in 1891 it was incorporated as a municipality. Government, schools, and public infrastructure were created and operated independently for 18 years; then in 1910 the general annexation of Birmingham's outlying communities absorbed Woodlawn into the City. At that time Woodlawn's population was about 3,750 people.

Statement of Significance:

CRITERION A - POLITICS/GOVERNMENT:

The Woodlawn City Hall served an independent Woodlawn for only two years. The town had taken its municipal status and responsibilities very seriously and was proud of its accomplishments by the time it was taken into Birmingham in 1910. When the City Hall was built in 1908 under the administration of W.E. Perryman, part of the reason for its imposing substance was said to be that Mayor's wish that "the funds of Woodlawn should be memorialized in concrete." Succeeding a timber structure on the site, it incorporated most of the town's public functions within its walls-- city offices, the court and jail, the fire department, an auditorium for meetings and performances, and the first branch of the Greater Birmingham Library, which began with 890 books. Relieved of its city hall status after the annexation, the upstairs became used entirely by the Library (they did not build separate quarters until 1950), while the street level was converted on one side to retail spaces, the longest-term occupant of which was the Morgan Brothers Department Store. The fire station remained until 1928, and subsequently that half of the first floor was converted to commercial use. The City of Birmingham did not sell the Woodlawn City Hall to private interests until 1940.

The old City Hall remains an imposing building in this municipality that was once independent of Birmingham but was annexed into the City a mere two years after its great civic headquarters were completed. It stands on its own small block on Woodlawn's main thoroughfare, dominating but not overpowering the mercantile and civic buildings around it. Even though it had to be adapted after annexation to

9. Major Bibliographical References

Documents from the Tutwiler Collection, Birmingham Public Library, especially "Early Events in the Life of Woodlawn" by Rosa Wood Burris, 1927.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than an acre

Quadrangle name Birmingham North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	5	2	2	9	2	0	3	7	1	0	8	8	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 1 and 2, Block 4, J.T. Hood's addition to Woodlawn
117' X 101.4'

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Linda Nelson, Historic Preservationist

organization Operation New Birmingham

date July 31, 1987

street & number 2027 First Avenue North

telephone (205) 254-2105

city or town Birmingham

state Alabama 35203

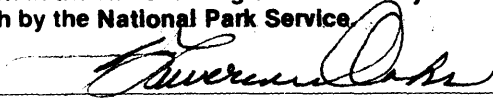
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

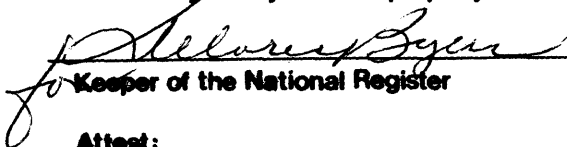


title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 5/22/88

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register



Keeper of the National Register

date 6-30-88

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet 2

Item number 8

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some commercial uses, it was large enough to accommodate remaining municipal functions, and it has continued until the recent past to be a meeting place for civic organizations and local theatricals. The City Hall building has been the symbol of Woodlawn even though not its governing center. It represents to this day a focal point for Woodlawn as a distinct commercial and residential neighborhood. The present restoration is being undertaken with great respect for this building's architecture, history, and position in Woodlawn's community life.

CRITERION C - ARCHITECTURE:

Architecturally the Woodlawn City Hall is distinctive for its almost symbolic American businesslike plainness decorated with details of classical elaboration. It has survived several external "modernizations" over the years, the last of which in 1981 was intended to return its street frontage at least partially to its original uncluttered appearance. The crucial thing in the building's evolution is that, despite sometimes radical alterations to the storefronts and despite the loss of the cupola, the classical features of the entries and cornice have remained undisturbed. They declare the importance of the structure and its builders' belief in Woodlawn's future and in the substance and symbols of government.

WOODLAWN CITY HALL
5525 First Avenue North
Birmingham, Alabama 35212

Source: Jefferson County Tax Map
23-21-4

