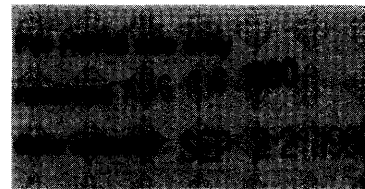


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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



## 1. Name

historic Nabers, Morrow & Sinnige Building

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number 109 20th Street North — not for publication

city, town Birmingham — vicinity of congressional district 6

state Alabama code 01 county Jefferson code 071

## 3. Classification

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

## 4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. Ann H. Matheson

street & number 3628 Country Club Road

city, town Birmingham — vicinity of state Alabama

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson County Courthouse

street & number 716 21st Street North

city, town Birmingham state Alabama

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1977-present ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Birmingham Historical Society

city, town Birmingham state Alabama

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## 7. Description

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Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved      date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	(slightly on ground floor)	

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Nabers, Morrow & Sinnige Building is a five-story brick commercial structure with Renaissance Revival motifs and an overhanging, heavily ornamented cornice. The most distinctive feature of the facade is the bold vertical grouping of windows, defined by heavy molding that rises to round-headed arches with decorated console at the keystone flanked by garland brackets. The paired windows within each arch are separated by slender Italianate pilasters and divided between floors by relieved spandrels. Above the arches is a frieze of medallions and a molded string course. Raised horizontal courses of brickwork at once give the facade unity and a lively surface. The attic story has relieved panels between the windows.

An elaborate cornice with dentils, egg-and-dart molding, modillions, and lion heads caps the building. The facade ornament and cornice wrap around each side of the building for the width of one bay. Like most late 19th-century buildings, the ground floor is opened up as much as the rectangular cast iron columns will allow, to maximize light and the display of merchandise, and ornamentation is concentrated above the ground floor level. The cast iron supports have molded capitals and molding that defines the shaft. The ground floor has been remodeled somewhat; the doors are modern and the transoms have been filled in with solid panels.

In a 1973 renovation, the original glazing was replaced with fixed-pane gray-tinted glass that is compatible with the building. To the right of the building are exterior stairs that lead to the second floor and upper offices.

## 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)	Urban development

**Specific dates** 1898      **Builder/Architect** Charles R. & Harry B. Wheelock

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Nabers, Morrow & Sinnige Building (1898)--one of the few virtually intact late 19th-century buildings remaining in Birmingham--is significant for the overall quality of its architectural design and for its strong association with two of Birmingham's leading families, both pioneer settlers of Jefferson County long before the city was founded in 1871. In addition, the building provides clear evidence of the remarkable growth sparked by the steel-making boom that occurred at the turn of the century.

The unified composition of the facade and the delicacy and skill with which the ornamentation is handled, giving the masonry building an unexpected sense of lightness, make this building notable. It testifies not only to the talents but to the sophistication of architects Charles R. and Harry B. Wheelock, who had played a central role in shaping the appearance of the young city since 1883, just a dozen years after it was laid out in a cornfield. They were clearly familiar with both Renaissance Revival motifs (the classical moldings, overhanging cornice, and attic story) and with the Chicago style that emerged in the 1880s and 90s. The use of tall round-headed arches that run through several stories, emphasizing verticality, and of an attic story that provides visual breathing space between the facade ornamentation and an elaborate cornice, are characteristic of larger, heavier buildings by Adler and Sullivan and Burnham and Root.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Nabers, Morrow & Sinnige Building was built by two prominent local doctors whose families were among the early settlers of Jefferson County and have contributed significantly to the physical, economic, and cultural growth of the city throughout its history. The 1898 city directory, which first lists the building, describes Francis Drayton Nabers and George Morrow as "Birmingham's leading druggists" with the "best appointed prescription department in Alabama." Nabers grew up on a farm in Jefferson County and was about 26 when the city of Birmingham was laid out on farmland his brother William had sold to the Elyton Land Company. He graduated in medicine from Tulane University but made his real contribution to the city as a druggist and businessman. In addition to founding a prosperous drug business that eventually merged to become Doster-Northington, the largest in the state, he served the city in its early years as an alderman, longtime president of the Birmingham Building and Loan Association, director and president of the East Lake Land Company, and a director of the First National Bank.

George M. Morrow grew up in Elyton, the little antebellum town whose importance Birmingham challenged after the Civil War and eventually absorbed. Like Nabers, he attended medical school shortly after the war, graduating from Miami Medical College in Cincinnati in 1868. Sometime in the 1870s or early 1880s, he and Nabers & Morrow Wholesale Drug Company. While he remained active in the drug business for some 40 to 50 years, finally serving as a vice president of Doster-Northington, he

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Downtown Birmingham: Architectural & Historical Walking Tour Guide, 1977; Historic Sites of Jefferson County, Ala., 1972 & 1976; Birmingham city directories; Souvenir of Birmingham, 1903; Dictionary of Alabama Biography, vol. 4, 1921; Memorial Record of Alabama, vol., 2, 1893; Birmingham and its Environs, vol. 2, 1920.

## 10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property 40 x 100

Quadrangle name Birmingham North

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:2400

UMT References

A 116 518040 37081810  
Zone Easting Northing

B                    
Zone Easting Northing

C                  

D                  

E                  

F                  

G                  

H                  

Verbal boundary description and justification

NW 1/4 36 tsp. 17 South Range 3 West--tax assessment block 13 parcel 16

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

state code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ellen Mertins/Alice Bowsher: Birmingham Historical Society 1425 22nd St. South

organization Alabama Historical Commission

date August 5, 1980

street & number 725 Monroe Street

telephone 832-6621

city or town Montgomery

state Alabama

## 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Phil B. Howard, Jr.

title SHPO

date Aug. 8, 1980

For HCRS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

date 9/22/80

Attest:

Carol Dubie

date 9/19/80

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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RECEIVED AUG 18 1980  
DATE ENTERED SEP 22 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

was also involved in public service and business: he served as sheriff of Jefferson County during the great railroad and miners' strike of 1894, as a city alderman, as a director of the First National Bank, and was also associated with the Stouts Mountain Coal and Coke Company, one of many established to develop the area's mineral resources.

Little is known of Harry H. Sinnige, the third person for whom the building was originally named.

At the time the Nabers, Morrow & Sinnige Building was constructed, it was perhaps the tallest office building in the city (only the Morris and Caldwell Hotels --now demolished--are known to have also had five stories), impressive evidence of the young city's growing population and urban identity. Paradoxically, it also provides an important frame of reference for understanding the impact of the city's first steel-making boom that followed just two years later: a stone's throw away at the corner of 1st Avenue and 20th Street North is the Woodward Building, Birmingham's first steel-frame skyscraper, 10 stories tall and five bays wide along each street, built in 1902-1903, only four years after the "tall" Nabers, Morrow & Sinnige Building. The Woodward Building was shortly followed by three other skyscrapers: the Brown-Marx Building (1906, 1908, 16 stories), the Empire Building (1909, 16 stories), and the American Trust and Savings Building (1912, 20 stories). This concentration of skyscrapers at a single intersection became known as the "Heaviest Corner on Earth." Standing next to the Brown-Marx Building, the Nabers, Morrow and Sinnige Building leaves no doubt of the investment and population explosion--and the dramatic change in the city's scale--that came with the steel boom and steel-frame construction.

From 1918 till 1979, the building was occupied by Thompson's Cafeteria, long itself a landmark institution in Birmingham. The building was rehabilitated on the exterior in 1973. A second, more thorough rehabilitation is currently planned, which would make suitable for occupancy as professional offices the upper floors, long empty.

The interior of the building is not architecturally significant. There may, however, be notable cast iron columns, moldings, and wainscoting under more modern materials on the ground floor.