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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Ala. Historical Commission

Ala. Historical Commission
NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Dr. Pepper Syrup Plant
other names/site number Dr. Pepper Building

2. Location

street & number 2829 Second Avenue South N/A not for publication
city, town Birmingham N/A vicinity
state Alabama code AL county Jefferson code 073 zip code 35233

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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] 7-25-90
Signature of certifying official Date
Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State or Federal agency and bureau

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.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain:)

Amy Federman

9/6/90

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION

Manufacturing facility

Processing site

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

terra cotta

roof asphalt

other glass

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Dr Pepper Syrup Plant is a 3-story rectangular industrial building with full basement, in dimensions 60 feet wide and 128 feet long. Facing Second Avenue South but with its longer side along 29th Street South, it is located in an area to the southeast of Birmingham's downtown that was in the 1920's zoned for light industrial uses, adjacent to the railroad and just off one of the primary east-west motor routes (U.S. Highway 11). It is of concrete post-and-beam construction with terra cotta block infill and poured-in-place concrete floors, interior support for which is cylindrical bell columns, also of concrete. Its 12-inch-thick curtain wall is red brick with decorative bands and facings of white-painted block on the street elevations; these facings appear particularly on the spandrel between the first and second floors in the front that bears the company name flanked by the emblem clock dials. Windows are multi-pane metal frame in various sizes, with wire-reinforced glass and operable center sections. The majority of the building's wall surface on three sides is in fact taken up by the windows, and the long horizontal brick spandrels are broken at regular intervals by the white facings, providing the primary decoration. Also decorative is the brickwork in the streetside spandrels, with courses of headers every fourth row and soldier rows along the window heads. It has a plain parapet and concrete coping. Entrance to the building is at the west end of the facade; coming in the street-level double metal frame doors, one goes up a half-level to the first floor or down a half-level to the basement. The west side is the service side, with fewer windows and a long loading dock raised about four feet to the first-floor level. Extending to the west at the rear is a one-story section of the same brick and windows, identified as the boiler room. Contiguous with a slightly lower roofline is a one-vehicle garage. A large square storage tower or silo, midway against the west wall and clad in corrugated metal, is a 1959 addition rising several feet higher than the parapet. Shed-roof metal canopies for both the loading docks-- the other one is at the rear-- were later additions, probably in 1959 when the tower was built.

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The elevator housing in the southwest corner of the main building rises 11 feet higher than the third floor, its brick walls continuous with those of the building.

Inside, walls are painted concrete block or brick, floors are polished concrete and ceilings are concrete. The most distinctive interior feature is the bell-topped round columns supporting the floors. Floor openings and railings for the workmen's manlift still remain, though gone is the canvas conveyor belt that ran continuously from the basement to the third floor. Ceilings are 14 feet high. A section at the front of the building is partitioned from the working areas for offices and stair landings. There is a rear stair beside the elevator shaft. Although most of the syrup-making equipment has been removed, some of it remains, notably a large scale built into the first floor.

This is a good example of an industrial building in transition stylistically from the decorative '20s to the more rectilinear '30s. The patterned brickwork alternates with more modern smooth-faced white panels; inside, the Wrightian bell columns add a feeling of lightness and lift to the solidity they also represent. Other than some bricked-up windows on the west side to accommodate the additions, the building retains all of its original materials and appearance.

During its operating years the building was surmounted by a large V-shaped Dr Pepper sign; now removed but stored inside, it awaits commemorative hanging when the building is rehabilitated. Vacant since 1982, the building is in excellent condition, obviously well cared-for by its former long-time owner.

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)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Industry

1931-41

1931

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

Architect: David Oliver Whilldin

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

Eligible under Criterion A, the Dr Pepper Syrup Plant represents a major development in the history of a famous and still successful American company, the Dr Pepper Company of Dallas, Texas. It also represents an excellent and intact example, in continuous use until early in this decade, of an industrial facility located here to take advantage of Birmingham's particular geographic and economic attributes, and this at a critical time in the City's history when the business community was desperately trying to diversify and mitigate the drastic effects of the Depression on its economic life.

For the Dr Pepper Company, location of this plant in Birmingham gave them a southeastern headquarters and distribution center that, according to the company's historian, "had a stimulating effect on Dr Pepper sales and expansion in the eastern section of the country." It was the site of the only other syrup-manufacturing plant outside the company's home plant in Dallas.

For Birmingham, the syrup plant was the result of successful recruiting efforts by the young Birmingham Industrial Board, forerunner of the present Metropolitan Development Board, to attract industrial and commercial interests to the City and broaden the economic base. Birmingham's economic development and substratum of wealth had from its beginnings been based primarily on three activities: mining, milling, and real estate transactions. The 1920s were a period of high activity, optimism, and expansion, and those years saw accelerated building of both residential and commercial areas. By the late 1920s, however, all three of the major economic activities had slowed, to the extent that by the time the Depression was

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ellis, Harry E.: Dr. Pepper: King of Beverages. Dallas: Dr. Pepper Company, 1979.
Mr. Ellis has written a very complete and beautifully illustrated history of the company.

Clipping files, Tutwiler Collection, Birmingham Public Library
Photograph archives, Department of Archives and Documents, Birmingham Public Library

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:

Dr. Pepper Co., Dallas, Texas
Sloss Development Group, Birmingham, Ala.

10. Geographical Data

Acres of property approximately 1 acre

UTM References

A

1	6
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5	1	8	4	1	0
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3	7	0	8	3	9	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 1-5, Block 146, Birmingham Survey, as recorded in the Office of the Tax Assessor, Jefferson County Courthouse

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated property are contained in the legal description. These were the original lots purchased for Dr. Pepper Co. in 1931, as negotiated through Jemison Realty Co. by the Business Property Development Co.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Linda Nelson /Historian: Melanie Betz/AHC Reviewer
organization FuturePast date rev. April 1, 1990
street & number 4700 Seventh Court South telephone (205) 592-6610
city or town Birmingham state Alabama zip code 35222

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well under way Birmingham was one of the most-- perhaps the most-- hard-hit city in the nation. The efforts of the Birmingham Industrial Board to recruit businesses and diversify the economy were therefore critical to Birmingham's survival in the 1930s. Scores of new company facilities were induced to locate here during that time. Of these, the Dr Pepper plant was one of the most publicized because of its importance not only to Birmingham but to the company, in that it was one of two such Dr Pepper facilities in the country and would be making "syrup for the South," according to the Birmingham News of May 17, 1931.

Classic economic considerations dictated the choice of Birmingham as the plant site: geographic location, transportation, and shipping costs. Locally, the chosen site, in an area of light industrial and warehousing uses, was additionally appropriate because it was practically adjacent to the Dr Pepper bottling plant that had started operations in May of the previous year (1930). Whereas the factors that had determined the site changed after World War II as transportation modes drew industries away from the center of the City, the syrup plant was to continue its operations until 1982. By both its architecture and location, the building is an excellent example from Birmingham's industrial life before the Second World War.

Although not being nominated under Criterion C for architectural significance, locally the building is important as a design of architect D.O. Whilldin, who was responsible for many distinguished buildings in Birmingham and throughout Alabama.

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY:

The formula for Dr Pepper was developed by pharmacist Charles Alderton in 1885 at W.C. Morrison's Old Corner Drugstore in Waco, Texas. Naming the new drink after the father of a girl he once courted, Mr. Morrison started bottling the syrup for distribution to other fountain companies. The patent was official on December 1, 1885. In 1898, rights to the syrup name, manufacture and sale were sold to Southwestern Soda Fountain Company in Dallas. In 1902 the corporate name became the Dr Pepper Company. After some years of financial and organizational turmoil and a temporary move back to Waco, the company was reorganized under the laws of Colorado and moved back to Dallas, its permanent home. In 1926 the bottling of Dr Pepper was dissociated from the syrup manufacturing business, which was carried out exclusively in Dallas until 1931.

Dr Pepper remained a relatively small-scale business centered in Texas until Mr. J.W. Link became President of the company in 1927. Under his leadership about 20 new bottling companies were opened in key Southern cities during 1929-30, including Birmingham and Montgomery in Alabama. In supplying all these bottlers with syrup, the company incurred increasingly higher freight costs from Dallas, so they began looking for a second site at which to produce the syrup. After a thorough investigation of the potential advantages of the major southeastern cities, it was announced in February 1931 that Birmingham had been chosen as the second syrup manufacturing site for Dr Pepper. The primary reason for the choice of Birmingham was the savings realized by shipping sugar upriver from Mobile or New Orleans; central location, excellent transportation facilities and competitive freight rates also made Birmingham a good choice. Location of the syrup plant made Birmingham the southeastern headquarters for the company, serving the area east of the Mississippi River and south of the Ohio and Potomac Rivers.

Dr Pepper was one of several companies that in 1931 were induced to locate in Birmingham through the work of the Birmingham Industrial Board, a group of businessmen who sought to alleviate the city's great distress in the early years of the Depression by increasing the industrial base and encouraging new business. Most of the publicity surrounding the location of the plant in the city made note of the facilitation of the Birmingham Industrial Board in bringing Dr Pepper to Birmingham.

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Plans for the building were announced in May of 1931, drawn by prominent local architect David Oliver Whilldin. Mr. Whilldin's recent buildings in Birmingham included the Florentine (1927) and the Thomas Jefferson Hotel (1929), both distinguished by elaborate terra-cotta decoration and classical detailing typical of the flamboyant '20s. The industrial simplicity of the syrup plant was a change for him but one that reflected his customary pleasing proportions and attention to detail. Part of the detail is the inclusion on the name panel and side facings of the Dr Pepper clock dial, the copyrighted emblem showing only the three numerals in the company's advertising slogan, "Drink a bite to eat at 10, 2, and 4."

The building was finished in September, 1931 and opened that month with 19 employees. Conveniently for the local bottler, it was located at the opposite end of the 2800 block from the bottling plant. Operations consumed a railcar-full of sugar daily and produced 10,000 gallons of syrup a day.

The following from Mr. Harry Ellis' history of the Dr Pepper Company explains how the syrup is made:

Manufacturing Standards and Procedures. The syrup factories are models of modernity and sanitation. They use distilled water, heated in steam-jacketed, glass-lined kettles; steam jacketed to aid in dissolving the pure cane sugar. The simple syrup thus made is then cooled and the proper amount of flavors and formula ingredients are added. The compound, thoroughly mixed, becomes Dr Pepper bottling syrup.

The finished syrup is drawn off through stainless steel conduits into sterile, paraffin-lined 50-gallon barrels. A sample of each batch is tested and checked, date recorded and filed. Barrels are weighed, sealed and shipped to bottlers for further processing into finished Dr Pepper and distribution to the retail trade.

The Dr Pepper Company discontinued operations at the syrup plant in 1982, and the building was sold to the Sloss Development Group in 1988. The present owners plan to take advantage of the large window expanses to create offices and other spaces for design firms, as well as their own headquarters.

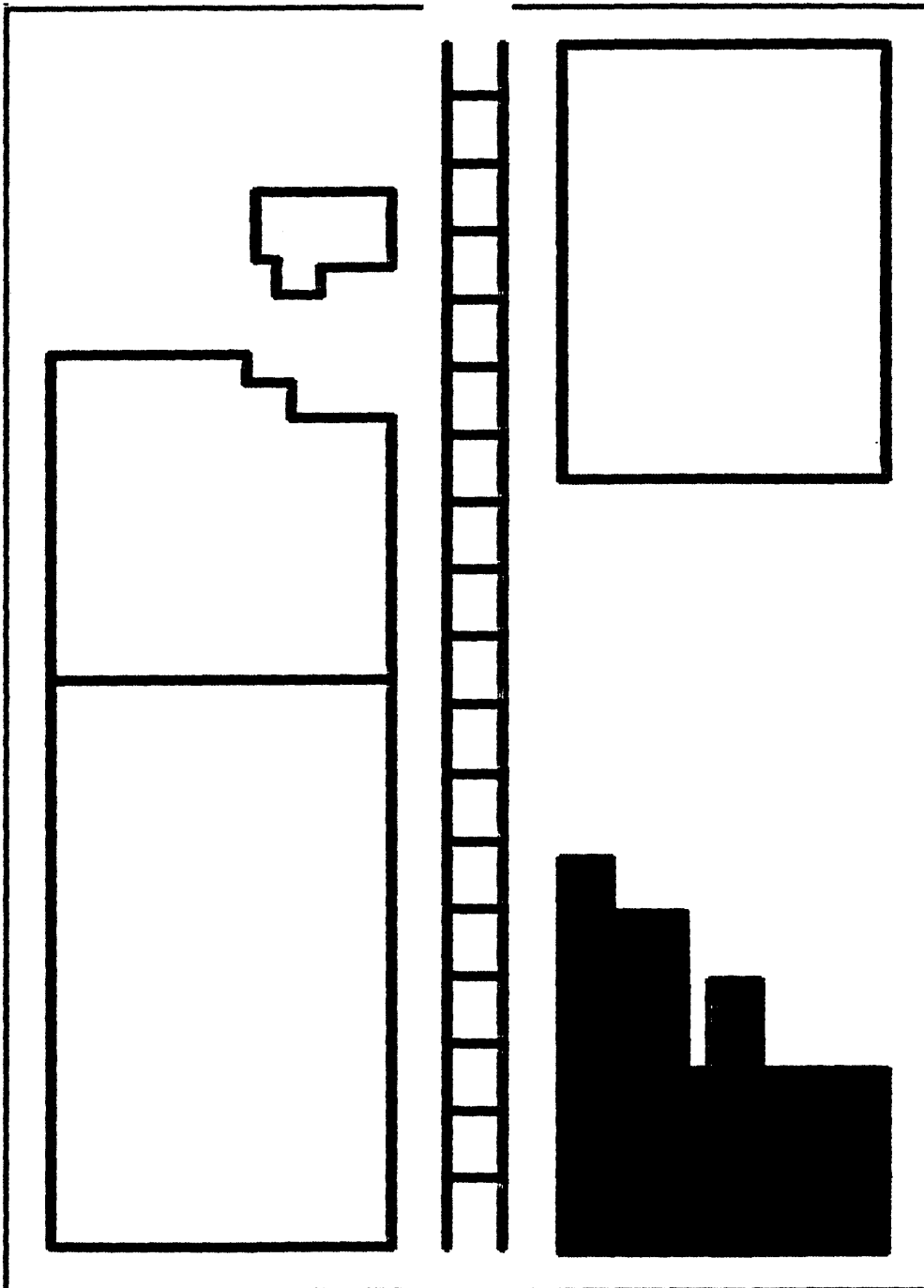
DR PEPPER SYRUP PLANT
2829 Second Avenue South
Birmingham, Alabama 35233

Source: From Birmingham Planimetric Map

Not to scale

Second Avenue South

28th Street South



29th Street South

Third Avenue South

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Section number photo-
graphs Page 1 Dr. Pepper Syrup Plant

The information is the same in items 1 - 5 for all photographs listed.

- 1) Dr. Pepper Syrup Plant, 2829 2nd Avenue South
- 2) Birmingham, Alabama, Jefferson County
- 3) Linda Nelson
- 4) 1989
- 5) Negatives at Operation New Birmingham, Birmingham

Photographs:

- 1) Front (North) Facade, Looking South
- 2) Side (East) and Rear (South) Facades, Looking Northwest
- 3) Front (North) and Side (West) Facades, Looking Southeast
- 4) Rear (South) Facade, Looking Northwest
- 5) 29th Street elevation, detail showing clock emblem
- 6) Interior, General View
- 7) Interior, General View
- 8) Interior, Floor Scale for Weighing Barrels
- 9) Interior, Window
- 10) Interior, Equipment

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10/9/91

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Dr. Pepper Syrup Plant Jefferson County, ALABAMA

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVAL

*Allow Syrup 10/9/91
for keep*

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Dr. Pepper Syrup Plant

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Birmingham's population in 1930 was 259,678. It had increased steadily since the beginning of the 20th century, showing in some ten-year census periods a growth as high as 250%. The city was reported to be "the largest in the state of Alabama, the fifth largest in the South, the thirty-fourth of the country, and the biggest of its age in America." The larger metropolitan area, including the city of Bessemer, was 345,000. This was reported to be the third largest in the South, after New Orleans and Louisville, and 28th largest in the United States, according to the U.S. Census of 1930.

The mining and milling operations related to the making of steel dominated the local economy. Industrial employment in Birmingham numbered 34,396 and the value of 1929's production of mines, mills and factories came to \$264,132,118. The Chamber of Commerce reported that investments in Birmingham had reached a peak in 1929 and that new "companies are establishing themselves in Birmingham at the rate of almost one a day." (Information from the introduction to the 1931 City Directory).

While the tone of the Chamber of Commerce publications continued to be optimistic, the incipient depression of 1929 was, in fact, beginning to be felt. The Birmingham Industrial Board (BIB) was created to solicit and assist the location and development of new businesses in Birmingham. As orders for steel fell off, the necessity of diversified industry became increasingly obvious. Birmingham's natural advantages were great; the BIB augmented these with assistance in expansions, site location, labor issues, and tax abatements - a typical pattern of Southern business practice even to the present day. By September 1931, the Birmingham Realty Company (a beneficiary of the Board's services) congratulated them that 37 new industries had been attracted to Birmingham "during the past 30 months, employing 1,700 people and adding "Upward of \$1,700,000 to the city's payroll." By February 1932, there had been 51 new industries added, employing 3,000 people and representing an annual payroll of \$3,000,000. (Information from C of C Weekly News Bulletin, February 15, 1932).

Among the 37 companies attracted by September 1931 was the Dr. Pepper Company. Their syrup plant and equipment represented an investment in the local economy of \$120,000.00 and the Company pledged to procure its materials (such as the 100 barrels a day) locally to the greatest extent possible. Employment at its opening was 19 people, with about ten traveling salesmen who covered the entire Southeast.

Whereas the syrup-making operations of Dr. Pepper continued at this location in Birmingham until 1982, the significance of the building as described under Criterion A is cut off in 1941 because the beginning of the War economy alleviated many of the conditions that made the location of the plant important to Birmingham. This did not, of course, alter the plant's importance to the company, whose southeastern operations continued to expand and prosper with syrup supplied from Birmingham.