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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JUL 28 1987

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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). 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 West End Masonic Temple
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 1346 Tuscaloosa Avenue N/A not for publication
city, town Birmingham N/A vicinity
state Alabama code 01 county Jefferson code 073 zip code 35211

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA
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] 7-22-87
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): _____
[Signature] Entered in the National Register 8/27/87

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Social - Meeting Hall

Commerce/Trade - Specialty Stores

- professional

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade - Speciality Stores

Social - Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof

other columns, entablature -
stone - sandstone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION

The West End Masonic Temple is a large rectangular, three-story brick building with classical Revival features that include matching set of recessed columns and a frieze of Masonic symbols. The ground floor has been altered with mid-twentieth-century storefronts. The remainder of the building is intact and retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and associations.

* * * * *

The West End Masonic Temple is located in the West End of Birmingham, a suburban area of Birmingham that experienced a boom in the 1920s. The Masonic Temple is situated on Tuscaloosa Avenue, the major thruway of the West End commercial center. The structure faces south on the northeast corner of Tuscaloosa Avenue and 14th Street, S.W. The Masonic Temple is the largest and most ornate structure in the neighborhood.

The West End Masonic Temple is a large (100 x 58') rectangular three-story building of yellow brick, faced on the ground level with stone and terra cotta. Its most outstanding characteristics are its adaptations of classical details: matching sets of recessed Doric columns at either end of the main Tuscaloosa Avenue elevation, resting on a stone course atop the first story and rising two stories to the entablature that surrounds the building on three sides; the entablature itself, consisting of a frieze containing repeating Masonic symbols suggesting triglyphs, topped by a small cornice and shallow attic; and the diagonal-patterned grillwork used both over inset brick panels and over the large end windows of the third-story Masons' hall. The central portion of the main elevation on the third story is windowless and contains the words "West End Masonic Temple" in cutout metal letters. Extending from the main facade is a vertical sign containing Masonic symbols. The second story, containing offices around its perimeter, is pierced with conventional double-hung sash windows in their original frames.

The ground floor of the building is devoted to retail uses and also contains a small elevator lobby and the stairs to the second floor. There is a one-level extension to the east, adding one more storefront to the Tuscaloosa Avenue elevation. The first floor has been extensively altered with modern metal framed plate and glass block windows. Other first-floor alterations include a metal awning and sheet metal panels covering the original wall surface, multipaned transoms, and double-arched building entrances (see historic photograph).

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Continuation Sheet**

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The interior of the Masonic Temple has been little altered. The ground floor retail space has undergone the typical retail modifications of dropped ceilings and plate glass and metal storefronts. The floor is cement with original tile in the elevator lobby. The walls and ceilings are of plaster.

The south and west sides of the second story are taken up with a row of small offices, and the remainder of the floor by a large dining room with a raised stage at the east end, behind which is the kitchen. A long corridor separates the offices from the dining area. The ceiling and walls are plaster, and the floors are hardwood overlaid with linoleum.

Stairs to the third-story Masons' Hall are at the rear of the building, rising into the reception area at the west end of the building; beyond this room is a small Eastern Star committee room. Other anterooms to the Lodge Room include a preparation room and smaller spaces for storage. The Lodge Room occupies the majority of this floor; it is lit naturally only by the large grill-covered window at the east end. This window rises from just above a small dais to almost ceiling height, and in its deep frame are set two large Tuscan columns. Facing this on the west end of the room is a mall mezzanine; behind the mezzanine in a corridor are the Lodge locker rooms. The north and south sides of the Lodge Room contain four rows of theatre seats on risers, and the open black and white tile floor space in the middle contains the room's other outstanding feature (besides the columns): a large white star circumscribed by a black circle.

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)

Architecture
Social History

Period of Significance

1926 - 1937

Significant Dates

1926

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

Whilldin, David Oliver

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

INTEGRITY

The West End Masonic Temple has retained its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and associations. The first-floor elevation was altered in the mid-twentieth-century by replacing the original storefronts and entrances with modern metal framed plate and glass blocks. The original wall surface and multipaned transoms were covered with sheet metal panels. In direct contrast to the modernized first floor, the second- and third-story facade is completely original. The interior has maintained its original woodwork including doors, baseboards, stairs, architraves, and third-floor paneled ceiling. The only interior alterations are the modern drop ceilings on the first floor and tiled floor coverings.

* * * * * * * *

CRITERION C - ARCHITECTURE

The West End Masonic Temple is architecturally significant as one of Birmingham's finest examples of the neoclassical style adapted for both commercial and civic use in a single building. The first floor has always been reserved for commercial usage, whereas the second and third floors house the Masons' dining hall and auditorium. The neoclassical elements are most evident in the symmetrical facade, paired fluted Doric columns, a stone belt course, and a stone entablature decorated with Masonic symbols.

The Masonic Temple was designed by David Oliver Whilldin, a prominent Birmingham architect (b.1881). Whilldin is associated with period revival styles richly ornamented in terra cotta. While serving as the architect for the Birmingham Board of Education, Whilldin designed the Phillips High School in the English Jacobethan style (1923, 1925). Whilldin is best known for the Florentine Building (1927) which is an Italian Romanesque structure embellished in terra cotta.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Architectural drawings, Birmingham Public Library Archives
Newspaper file, Tutwiler Collection, Birmingham Public Library
Title Records for West End Masonic Temple

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:

Operation New Birmingham

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than 1 acre

UTM References

A

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

C

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B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 13, 14, west half of 15, block 9 of West End Land & Improvement Co's Surveys, an area 185 x 125 feet in size (see attached map).

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Boundary has been drawn to reflect the Masonic Temple and original lot.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Linda Nelson / Historic Preservationist, Steven M. Kay / Editor-Reviewer, AHC

organization Operation New Birmingham date May 1987

street & number 2027 1st Avenue North telephone 205 254-2105

city or town Birmingham state Alabama zip code 35203

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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CRITERION A - SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN

The West End Masonic Temple is locally significant for its association with the growth of free masonry in the early 20th century. Formed in 1912 with 16 charter members, the lodge increased to 350 members by the time the Temple was constructed in 1926. The Temple grew and served the community for 59 years. The new structure coincided with a statewide period of growth and prosperity for the fraternal organization which also saw the construction of two other temples in Birmingham in the early 1920s.

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The West End Masonic Lodge No. 753, for whom the Temple was built in 1926, had been organized in 1912 with 16 charter members; the Lodge had grown and prospered with West End, and when the Temple was built there were 350 members. While its membership was comprised of a number of prominent West End business and professional men, its best-known member was probably Birmingham Commissioner and Mayor Jimmy Morgan (1953-1959). West End itself had originally been an independent settlement but had been annexed into Birmingham in 1910; this resulted in a growth spurt, and by the mid-1920s boosterish publicity reported the belief that this community of homes, small businesses and public institutions would come to be the "very heart" of greater Birmingham. Such optimism was reflected in the building of the Masonic Temple on a major intersection of the commercial district; it was then and remains today the largest building in this section, and even in its current street-level disrepair it dominates the blocks around it.

Birmingham did not come to center around West End, and the depression took its toll of the Masons as of everybody else. By 1942 the Lodge was in bankruptcy but was kept in possession of its property; finally the building's mortgage was paid off in 1954. The retail space continues to be occupied, but the second-floor offices, used primarily as doctors' and dentists' offices, have been abandoned. The Lodge ceased to use the building in 1985; and it was sold to its present owner, a Lodge member, in the same year.



N

WEST END BAPTIST CHURCH

WEST END BRITISH CHURCH

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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WEST END MANORIC LODGE

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