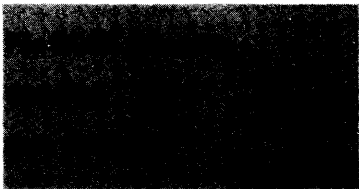


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**



**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 Coley Building

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 56 St. Francis Street N/A not for publication

city, town Mobile N/A vicinity of congressional district 01

state Alabama code 01 county Mobile code 097

**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 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<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 T. C. Weller, Jr.

street & number P. O. Drawer 350

city, town Mobile N/A vicinity of state Alabama

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mobile County Courthouse, Probate Division

street & number 101 Government Street

city, town Mobile state Alabama

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Nineteenth Century Mobile Architecture: An  
title Inventory of Existing Buildings p. 46 has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1974  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Mobile City Planning Commission

city, town Mobile state Alabama

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

The Coley Building is a two story brick commercial building that occupies a fairly isolated position on St. Francis Street near Water Street. The building is a rectangular block with a rear wing. The Coley Building has a rather steeply pitched mansard roof with the ridge running parallel to the street. At the ends of the mansard are gable-ended parapet walls which would indicate the original roofline had been gabled.

At the cornice level, there is a cast iron decoration which consists of raised molded rectangular panels set between small brackets. The brackets support a molded cornice. At each end of the cornice is a large acanthus bracket surmounted by a rosette placed in a semi-circular headed medallion.

At the second story level, simple windows with 2/2 light wood sash are present. Each window is defined by a straight headed lintel and slightly projecting sill. Both lintels and sills are of marble.

The first story has a colonnade of fluted engaged Corinthian columns that define the six bays of the facade. Inset in each bay is a double leaf door with transom above. Each leaf of the door has a molded panel in the lower section with paired round-headed lights in the upper section. The cast iron colonnade supports a heavily molded and decorated architrave. Between the brackets there is a well defined dentil frieze. At either end of the colonnade defining the outer walls of the building, there is a brick Corinthian pilaster that supports an acanthus leaf and rosette in a medallion.

Originally constructed c. 1836 in the Federal Style, the Coley Building retains the boxy massing that is a hallmark of the style. Also indicative of this style are the gabled end parapet walls and the simple window treatment of the second story. The 1873 Krebs bird's-eye-view map of the city shows the Coley Building as part of a row of Federal commercial buildings with gable roof parallel to the street. About 1870, as evidenced by large increases in tax assessment for this property and an 1891 bird's-eye-view map, the building was altered in the Beaux-Arts tradition. It would have been at that time that cast iron decoration was added to the facade, that the mansard roof was added and that the first floor was modified to include six pairs of double leaf entrance doors. Hooded dormers were also part of this modernization, and are shown in an extant c. 1900 photograph. According to oral history, the dormers were removed c. 1930 and the rear wing was added at this time.

### Interior:

Interior architectural details present at the outset of the 1982 restoration/rehabilitation project of this building have been retained. Several fluted cast iron columns on the first floor, a large vault with cast iron decorative molding on its exterior, the stairway to the second floor, in addition to pocket parlor doors, folding parlor doors and two fireplaces with simple mantels have been retained.

# 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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1836; c. 1870; 1930 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

**ARCHITECTURE:**

The Coley Building is architecturally significant to the City of Mobile. It is an unusual blend of architectural styles--the result of modifying an older building to fit the changing taste of the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The Beaux-Arts style had been popularized in the United States at mid-century by Richard Morris Hunt and it was the Beaux-Arts vocabulary that was chosen to update the Federally inspired Coley Building. This stylistic mix has resulted in a unique commercial building in which the elements blend interestingly but still retain their clearly distinguishable origins.

The most elaborate cast iron facade building that exists in the city is located at 2 S. Water Street--a signed Badger front. The only other example that utilizes a cast iron front is the Coley Building, although it does not have the complexity of the Water Street Building.

The Coley Building also has the distinction of being the only remaining commercial building in the city with a mansard roof.

**INTEGRITY:**

The evolutionary quality of the Coley Building is easily discernible. Gable ends between raised parapet fire walls indicates the original configuration of the roof line. The simple windows on the second floor are also identifiable as part of the Federal style building. Beaux-Arts additions of the mansard roof, cast iron columns and cornices and modification of the lower story to include six sets of double leaf entrance doors, contribute to give the building it unque flavor. Design conflicts in the building serve as a basis of this uniqueness.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Coley Building formed part of a commercial row that extended the entire length of the block. Today the building is fairly isolated, since a large portion of the block was demolished in the 1960s as part of the Water Street Urban Renewal Project.

The building appears to have continuously served the commercial life of the Port City since the time of its construction in c. 1836. A variety of exchange brokers, bankers, and real estate firms have occupied this site over the years. During the 1940s and 1950s an upstairs office was maintained by the Mobile Bar Pilots Association--a certain link to Mobile's waterfront.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Probate Division, Mobile County Courthouse: Deeds. City of Mobile Tax Records. City Directories. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Bird's-eye view maps of 1873 and 1891. U.S.A. PhotoArchives at Brookley. Oral history.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Mobile

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	6	4	0	0	3	8	0	3	3	9	5	9	2	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 82' 2" W of NW corner St. Francis and Water Streets, running W on N side of St. Francis 43' 4", then N 31' 11", then E 43' 3", then S 32' 1" to the place of beginning. 43' x 32'

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne S. Bantens - Architectural Historian Ellen Mertins

organization Mobile Historic Development Commission date May 5, 1982

street & number P. O. Box 1827 telephone (205) 438-7281

city or town Mobile 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 *Shirley Phelps*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 9-2-82

### For HCRS use only

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

*Bonnie Andrews*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 10/22/82

Attest: *Patrick Andrews*  
Chief of Registration

date 10/18/82