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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 1,2,3,5,7 Page 1

Downtown Birmingham Retail and Theatre Historic District
(Boundary Increase)
Jefferson County, Alabama

Section I.

Downtown Birmingham Retail and Theatre Historic District (Boundary Increase)

Section II.

1914, 1917, 1919, 1930 4th Avenue North, Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama, 35203

Section III.

State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. (I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William H. Brown
Signature of certifying official

5/22/98

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 for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

Edson H. Beall

6/26/98

State or Federal agency and bureau

National Park Service

Entered in the
National Register

Section V.

Classification

The district is being increased by four (4) resources: 4 contributing/0 noncontributing buildings.
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 56.

Section VII.

Architectural Classification

Other: multiple-story commercial block

Other: enframed window wall

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Section 7 Page 2

Downtown Birmingham Retail and Theatre Historic District
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Boundary Expansion Narrative Description:

The Downtown Birmingham Retail and Theatre Historic District is being expanded to incorporate all historic resources surrounding the existing boundaries that had been excluded from the original 1989 nomination. This includes four commercial buildings in the 1900 block of 4th Avenue North. This expansion is attached to the most northern corner of the existing district boundaries along 4th Avenue North at 19th and 20th Streets. Twentieth Street is downtown Birmingham's main landscaped thoroughfare (known as "Birmingham Green") and part of the eastern boundary of the existing district. There is a surface parking area which separates the Clark Building from the Forbes Building. All buildings are constructed of brick with wood windows. There is decorative brickwork throughout with limestone details. All foundations are brick and roofs asphalt.

The buildings in the expansion area were constructed between 1890 and c. 1915 including three multiple-story commercial block buildings (Inventory #s 98, 99, 101) and one enframed window wall building (Inventory # 100). The multiple-story commercial block building was common in downtown commercial areas during the first decades of the twentieth century: 1917 and 1919 4th Avenue North (Inventory #s 98 and 99) are adjacent buildings located on the south side of the street and both are three-story, dark red brick buildings. The building at 1917 4th Avenue North was built in 1890 and has Romanesque styling. This Romanesque detailing is rare in Birmingham; only a handful of buildings with such styling are extant in the city. Across the street, on the north side of 4th Avenue North, is the Clark Building (Inventory # 101), which is a brick two-story multiple-story commercial block building and is the largest building in the district expansion. It was constructed with multiple bays and occupies the prominent downtown corner of 20th Street North and 4th Avenue in the heart of the financial district. In addition to multiple-story commercial block buildings, the district expansion area contains one window wall enframed building. This type became popular around the turn of the century and reflected an effort to give greater order to the facade composition of small and moderate-sized commercial buildings. Popular through the 1940s, the type is visually unified by enframing the large center section with a wide and often continuous border, which is treated as a single compositional unit. West of the Clark Building, the Broyles Furniture Store/Forbes Piano Company (Inventory #100) is a good example of this type construction. It is a five-story brick building with a colorful interplay of brown and honey brick highlighted with geometric designs.

Archaeological Component: Although no archaeological testing has been conducted in this area, the potential for subsurface remains may be good. Buried portions could reveal significant information that may be useful in interpreting the district.

Boundary Expansion Inventory:

98. Commercial Building - 1917 4th Avenue North. (c. 1915), multiple story commercial block. Three-story, red brick building with a brick cornice and brick dentil course and a row of vent holes beneath. There are four rectangular windows along the second and third floors which have been boarded up, and there are continuous stone sills beneath the window openings. The storefront is flanked by metal columns with simple decorative capitals, and there is a pressed tin cornice with scrolled brackets on each corner. Above the storefront is a divided transom with prismatic glass and metal framing. The storefront was modernized in the 1940s with decorative ceramic tile in the entranceway, and ceramic and glass along the storefronts. There is an asphalt roof and brick foundation. There are also arched wood windows along each floor on the west side facade. (C)

99. Commercial Building - 1919 4th Avenue North. (1890), multiple story commercial block. Three-story dark red brick building with Romanesque styling. There are rounded bartizans with rounded stone bases near the corners of the upper front facade. There are three operable windows with round-arched openings with stone sills along the third floor, and there is also a smaller arched window with a simple arched head. These third floor windows are flanked and divided by a series of four brick pilasters with decorative flutes, carved limestone capitals and cut stone bases. Along the second floor are two double bay windows with 1:1:1 rectangular wood windows, and there is also an identical single bay window. All windows have limestone sills and lentils. There are decorative terra cotta insets between the second and third floor windows. There is a simple metal

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cornice above the storefront. The storefront was modernized c. 1960s with fiberglass panels and glass over the transom, which remains underneath. There are arched brick windows along each floor on the western facade of the building. There is a brick foundation and asphalt roof. (C)

This building was originally built as a grocery store and later served as a bakery, market, and a restaurant with a hotel upstairs.

100. Broyles Furniture Store/Forbes Piano Company - 1914 4th Avenue North (1913), enframed window wall commercial building. Five-story brick building with a colorful interplay of brown and honey brick highlighted with geometric designs. The roofline is flanked with rounded projecting pilasters with rounded stone caps, and there is a simple metal cornice above the fifth floor windows and a metal coping along the roofline. Although some of the original wood windows have been removed, a few remain: there are two sets of triple 1:1 windows in the center of the building along the 2nd and 3rd floors, and there is an operable transom above. Similar openings remain along the 4th and 5th floors. Above these windows/window openings were smaller windows probably 1:1 all of which have been replaced with aluminum. All windows are decorated with brick dentil work beneath a stone sill. There are also wood 1:1 windows along the side and rear facades. There is a brick foundation and an asphalt roof. (C)

This building was designed by prominent local architect, Harry B. Wheelock, and built by William Grubb and David Roberts as a furniture store for W. B. Bröyles. The Forbes Piano Company, tenants of the building since 1932, originally sold furniture before specializing in pianos and musical instruments.

101. Clark Building - 1930 4th Avenue North (1908), multiple story commercial block. Two stories plus a basement, the Clark Building makes its architectural statement through its multiple-story commercial block form, its pronounced horizontal size and massing, and its prominence as a corner building, rather than with specific stylistic qualities. As a corner building, Clark contains two facades: one facing 20th Street North, known as the "Birmingham Green" because of its median center, and 4th Avenue North. It is a nearly square (140' x 129') building around a central light court. The original iron-spotted buff brick has been painted gray and now appears dark and dull, though the masonry appears to be in good condition. The alley elevation has also been painted but otherwise is largely unaltered. The building's two street facades had up until recently been obscured by a series of refacings and alterations. Now uncovered, they reveal the proportions of the storefronts and transom line, the painted brick upper storey, and the rhythmic row of its upper floor straight-head windows. Only in the light court, which retains unpainted red brick, were the window openings made with segmental-arch heads. The storefront area of these facades are currently open as the result of the removal of the nonhistoric display windows and bulkheads. However all ten of the original cast iron posts (used both for support and decoration) separate each bay and remain intact. Many of the original transoms, with their large number of purple-hued prism glass blocks, are extant as well. The transoms have been removed and stored for safe-keeping, away from the threat of possible damage during the restoration until such time when they are to be reinserted. Approximately midway through both front facades are original stairwells with access from the exterior to the upper floor. Both stairwells are wood with beaded-board wainscoting. The upper facade contains groups of three window openings with flat stone lintels and sills in each bay. One-over-one wood windows were used historically and will be a component of the current restoration. Rectangular vent openings are located above each window opening. The extant metal grills that went into these vent openings have been removed, but will be replaced during the restoration. The original simple stone coping atop the brick parapet remains; however, the metal cornice below was removed in the 1962 refacing. Good documentation of this cornice exists, so the developers plan to incorporate it back onto the building during its restoration. The developer plans to utilize the Federal Investment Tax Credits during this detailed restoration. (C)

Real estate entrepreneur General Louis Clark began excavations on this corner in 1905, anticipating the location of a multi-story department store owned by the prominent automobile-related Drennen family. The Drennens, however, chose another site and left General Clark with a hole in the ground. Incensed, it is said, Clark never drove another General Motor's car. Three years later, however, he hired prominent local architect, Harry B. Wheelock, to design the Clark Building. Wheelock designed

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Section 7, 8, 10, & photos Page 4 Downtown Birmingham Retail and Theatre Historic District
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this building to be constructed of heart pine timbers purchased second hand from a fertilizer factory.

During its heyday, the Clark Building was a significant commercial structure (containing speciality stores, service, and retail-oriented businesses) on an important corner of Birmingham's old business and hotel district. Its immediate surrounding area contained two hotels (one of which was the Southern Club), other smaller commercial buildings, and many of the favorite downtown restaurants. The Clark Building had a good variety of businesses during its history, including several restaurants, a photography business, the Schwobilt clothing store, financial loaning institutions, and an optometrist. Clark was across the street from the original Tutwiler Hotel (demolished in 1967 for a modern bank) and housed Tutwiler Drugs, for many years, the only all-night apothecary in the City. But perhaps its most locally significant shop was one of Birmingham's oldest bookstores, Smith & Hardwick. Vacant and threatened for over a decade, the Clark Building is now the focus of a detailed restoration project (sponsored in- part by the city of Birmingham) to reestablish the Clark Building, both architecturally and economically.

Section VIII.

Reason for Boundary Increase: The boundaries are being expanded as a result of a new survey that identified all remaining buildings eligible as contributing properties surrounding the existing Downtown Birmingham Retail and Theatre Historic District. Most of these buildings have plans for restoration using the Investment Tax Credits.

Section X.

Acreage: approximately 1.5

UTM: 16-517830-3708430

Verbal Boundary Description: See area boundary outlined on accompanying planimetric map at 1"=200'.

Boundary Justification: This boundary increase includes all remaining buildings eligible as contributing properties in the Downtown Birmingham Retail and Theatre Historic District. It is contiguous to and continuous with the existing district boundaries.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Name of Photographer: Pam King
Date of Photographs: December 1997
Negative Location: Alabama Historical Commission

1. Commercial Building (Inventory #98), 1917 4th Avenue North, Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama
View facing southwest
2. Commercial Building (Inventory #99), 1919 4th Avenue North, Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama
View facing southwest
3. Broyles Furniture Store/Forbes Piano Company (Inventory #100), 1914 4th Avenue North, Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama
View facing northwest
4. Clark Building (Inventory #101), 1930 4th Avenue North, Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama
View facing northwest