

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only  
received JUN 1 1983  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Woodward Building

and/or common Woodward Building

**2. Location**

street & number 1927 1st Avenue North (SW corner 1st Ave. & 20th Street North) N/A not for publication

city, town Birmingham N/A vicinity of

state Alabama code 01 county Jefferson code 073

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<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 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 Woodward Properties (ATTENTION: Mr. Ron Travis)

street & number 23 Inverness Center Parkway

city, town Birmingham N/A 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 Jefferson County Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date Survey, 1972 & 1976, Birmingham Regional  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Planning Commission; Downtown Birmingham Architectural and Historical Resources Survey, 1977-79, Birmingham Historical Society

city, town Birmingham state Alabama

# 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Woodward Building is a steel-frame Chicago style skyscraper faced in brown brick and distinguished by its proportions, vertical emphasis, and straightforward expression of structure. Its 10 stories are divided by terra cotta moldings into a 2-story base with bold ground-floor openings (altered in the 1930s), a 7-story mid-section, and a 1-story top crowned by a classical cornice. The vertical piers, broken only by the moldings that delineate the top and base of the building, accentuate the 10-story height, which was unprecedented in Birmingham at the time of construction. The recess of windows and spandrels behind the piers further strengthens the verticality and creates opportunities for light and shadow to enliven the facade. The windows are grouped in bands of threes, with continuous lintel and sill moldings, creating a horizontal counterpoint to the vertical piers that expresses the nature and capabilities of the skeletal system. The projecting copper cornice that caps the building is typical of Chicago style skyscrapers.

In the early 1930s the two-story base of the building was refaced with black polished granite and green glazed terra cotta. The refacing, which incorporated a modest chevron motif, adds a restrained Art Deco touch typical of its period. A reduction in the height of the ground-floor openings compromises the original form of the building.

The interior of the building, which has been substantially remodeled over time, particularly in the 1930s, 1950s, and 1970s, was never architecturally distinguished. The only interior space of interest was the small ground-floor lobby, which today retains nothing original except a narrow open ornamental iron staircase that serves the entire building. The original offices, of which four remain, were typical of the early 1900s: plain cubicles with corridor glazing and transoms to maximize light and ventilation. Marble flooring in the elevator lobbies of the upper floors is partially intact and much of the plain marble wainscoting remains, although it has been modified by periodic remodelings, including replacement of hall glazing by metal studs and sheetrock in the 1970s to comply with life-safety code requirements.

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

**Specific dates** 1902 **Builder/Architect** Architects: Stone Brothers, New Orleans & William C. Weston, Birmingham  
**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)** Engineers: Purdy & Henderson, Chicago  
 Contractor: John Griffiths & Sons, Chicago

## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Woodward Building is architecturally significant as the first steel-frame building in Alabama and an excellent local example of the Chicago style skyscraper. It exemplifies the style's clear expression of structure and function, achieving prominence in its massing and proportions rather than with the use of elaborate surface ornament or historical references. Its characteristic form consists of a bold two-story base with maximum ground-floor openings designed for commercial display and access; a plain mid-section with large window openings, reflecting the grid nature of the steel skeleton and the repetitious offices inside; and a more decorative top expressed primarily in a projecting classical cornice. The Woodward Building is linked directly to the early development of steel-frame architecture in Chicago through its engineers, Purdy and Henderson, and contractor John Griffiths and Son, both from Chicago, and architect William C. Weston. Purdy and Henderson was active in steel-frame construction in Chicago in the 1890s. Moreover, it may have been a successor firm to Wade and Purdy, the structural engineers for the very first completely steel-frame building (the second Rand McNally Building) which they designed with architects Burnham and Root in 1889-90. William C. Weston, a New Zealander who became Birmingham's leading architect in the early 20th century, trained in the Chicago office of Daniel H. Burnham, and may even have been in that office when the second Rand McNally Building was under way, just a decade before the Woodward Building. There is some uncertainty about Weston's specific contribution to the design of the Woodward Building. Original plans list Stone Brothers, New Orleans, as architects and Weston as associate architect, although a May 1902 newspaper article, written while the building was under construction, credits only Weston as architect.

## COMMERCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Woodward Building clearly represents a major development period in Birmingham's commercial and industrial history. The demand for such a large office building in a city barely 30 years old, as well as the means to finance the project, were tied directly to the city's second industrial and real estate boom, touched off at the turn of the century by the ability of local plants to manufacture steel in commercial quantities from Birmingham-area raw materials. The building was financed by William Henry Woodward, a member of an important Birmingham pig-iron family, and it housed the main offices of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company (TCI, acquired by U. S. Steel in 1907), the Birmingham district's leading industrial company, which had pioneered the production of local steel in late 1899. The Sloss-Sheffield Steel & Iron Company, another important local company, also had its offices in the building. As the first steel-frame structure in the city, the 10-story Woodward Building initiated a drastic change in the vertical scale of Victorian Birmingham and signaled the emergence of Birmingham as an urban center.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 100' x 100'

Quadrangle name Birmingham North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	6	5	1	8	0	3	0	3	7	0	8	1	0	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

Block 108-A, North 100' of lots 1,2,3, and 4

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 Alice M. Bowsler, Architectural Historian

organization Kidd, Plosser & Sprague Architects, Inc. date March 15, 1983

street & number P. O. Box 11653 telephone (205) 251-0125

city or town Birmingham 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

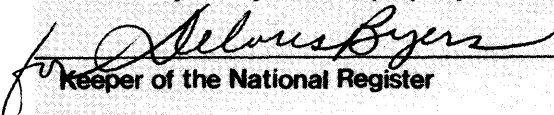
title \_\_\_\_\_ date 5/26/83 cd

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

date 6/30/83

  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

FOR HCRS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Architectural Documents, Woodward Building, Birmingham, Alabama. Stone Brothers Architects, New Orleans, W. C. Weston, Associate Architect, Birmingham, c. 1901

Examples from the Recent Work of Stone Brothers Architects, New Orleans, LA (St. Louis: Mitchell & Company, 1903)

Birmingham News Industrial Art Edition, May 26, 1902, page 81

Birmingham Regional Planning Commission, Historic Site Survey, Jefferson County, Alabama, 1972.

Carl W. Condit, American Building (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

Carl W. Condit, The Chicago School of Architecture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

Carolyn Green Satterfield, Historic Sites of Jefferson County, Alabama (Birmingham: Jefferson County Historical Commission, 1976).

Marjorie L. White, The Birmingham District: An Industrial History and Guide (Birmingham: Birmingham Historical Society, 1981).

Marjorie L. White, Downtown Birmingham (Birmingham: Birmingham Historical Society, 1977).

Henry F. Withey, AIA, and Elsie Rathburn Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956).