

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received JUN 12 1985
date entered

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

1. Name

historic The Heaviest Corner on Earth

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Intersection of 1st Avenue North and 20th Street North not for publication NA

city, town Birmingham vicinity of Congressional District 6

state Alabama code 01 county Jefferson code 073

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name See attached list of property owners

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

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 National Register of Historic Places Three of 4 properties
has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date No. 1 - 6/30/83 No. 4 - 9/29/83
No. 2 - 3/19/82 federal state county local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington state D.C.

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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 district consists of four early steel-framed skyscrapers located on the four corners of the early major intersection of the city. The two earlier buildings--The Woodward and the Brown-Marx--are commercial-style structures, which sit diagonally across the intersection from each other on the Southwest and Northeast corners, respectively. The two later buildings--The First National Bank Building--John A. Hand and the Empire Building--are elegant towers, extravagantly decorated with marble and glazed terra cotta in Neo-classical motifs.

Three of the four buildings were individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places -- The Woodward, 6-30-83; The John A. Hand, 9-29-83; and the Empire, 3-19-82. Each is extensively described in the original nomination.

1. The Woodward Building (1927 1st Avenue North, SW corner 1st Ave. and 20th St. N.): 1902, with 1930 alterations; Chicago Commercial style; 10-story, tan brick with terra cotta molding dividing it into a 2-story base, 7-story mid-section, and 1-story top crowned with a classical cornice.
2. The Empire Building (1928 1st Avenue North, NW corner 1st Ave. and 20th St. N.): 1909, Neo-classical revival, 16-story, sheathed with white and polychromed terra cotta and richly decorated with Renaissance Revival Classical ornaments.
3. Brown-Marx Building (2000 1st Avenue North, NE corner 1st Avenue and 20th St. N.): 1906, 1908, 1930; Chicago Commercial style; 16-story, tan brick, first three floors were originally faced with two-story brown stone pilasters and rusticated stone arches around 3rd floor windows, refaced in 1930's and 1960's; cornice of stylized copper leaves removed in 1970's, building retains its basic massing (base shaft, and cap) its steel frame skeleton, brick vertical piers, and ribbon bands of windows. Interior alterations include: reduction of two-story lobby to one by lowering ceiling, removal of some marble wall sheathing and selected transoms. Still remaining are: Marble lobby floor, most transom windows, winding iron stairwell with railing, marble elevator walls, original doors and casings, mail shutters and fire doors. Also a 22-stall marble bathroom.
4. John A. Hand Building--First National Bank (17 20th Street North, SE corner 1st Avenue N. and 20th Street N.): 1912, 1940 addition; Neo-classical revival, 21 stories, white glazed terra cotta sheathing on main elevations, rich marble and terra cotta detailing, 1940 two-story wing and 1955 five-story western addition.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1903-1913 **Builder/Architect** Wm. L. Welton, Wm. C. Weston, Carpenter & Blair, Uffinger and Mowbray, Stone Brothers, Purdy and Henderson, John Griffiths and Sons

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Architecture: Criterion C

"The Heaviest Corner on Earth" is a rare and perhaps unique concentration of four steel-frame skyscrapers constructed between 1902 and 1913. Individually distinguished for their design and associations, the buildings -- which sit on the four corners of the city's first major intersection -- as a group are of regional, or possibly national, significance. Three of the four have been individually listed on the Register -- The Woodward, First National Bank--John A. Hand and the Empire Building.

The buildings were designed by two important local architects of the period (in association with out-of-state firms on three of the four buildings), William C. Weston and William L. Welton.

The two earlier buildings, the Woodward (1902-03, Stone Brothers, New Orleans, & William C. Weston, Birmingham; Purdy & Henderson, Chicago, engineers; John Griffiths & Sons, Chicago, contractor) and the Brown-Marx (1906-1908, William C. Weston) are good examples of the Commercial style: a substantial base, an extensive and plain mid-section reflecting the skeletal structure and repetitious nature of offices on the interior, and crowned by a large projecting cornice (now removed from the Brown-Marx Building).

The two later skyscrapers, the John A. Hand--First National Bank Building (1912, William Leslie Welton, Uffinger and Mowbray, Assoc.) and the Empire Building (1913, William Leslie Welton, with William Warren, Carpenter and Blair, New York Associates) are elegant towers, extravagantly decorated with marble and glazed terra cotta in skilled interpretations of classical motifs.

Industry: Criterion A

As a collection the buildings are unsurpassed in their documentation of Birmingham's major development phase when the capacity of local furnaces to manufacture steel in quantities from local raw materials led to the growth that dramatically changed the vertical scale of the existing Victorian city and made Birmingham the largest city in the state. Each of the buildings is associated with major industrial and commercial enterprises that shaped the city.

9. Major Bibliographical References

White, Marjorie L. Downtown Birmingham: Birmingham Historical Society, 1980.
 Satterfield, Carolyn G. Jefferson County Site Survey: Jefferson County Historical Commission, 1977.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Birmingham North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6
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5	1	8	0	2	0
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3	7	0	8	1	4	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 12,13,14 Block 100, lots 12,13,14,15,16 Block 107D, lots 1,2,3,4,5 Block 108A, and lots 18 & 19 Block 99, all B'ham survey. See red line on plat map.

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

state NA code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ellen Mertins, National Register Coordinator; Pam King, Historic Preservationist; Alice Bowsher, Architectural Historian

organization Alabama Historical Commission date April 19, 1984

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205 261-3184

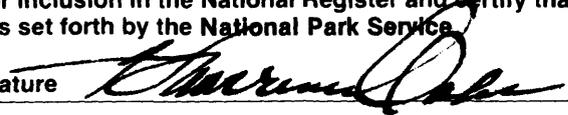
city or town Montgomery state Alabama

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

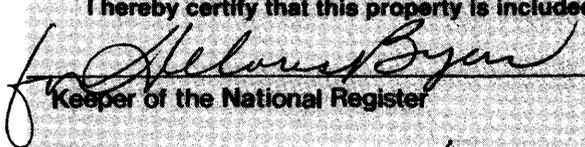
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date May 22, 1985

For NPS use only

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

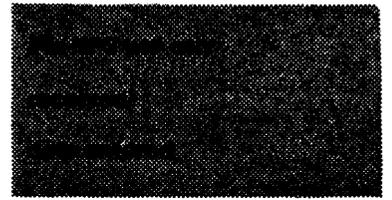
 **Keper of the National Register** Entered in the **National Register** date 7-11-85

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 2

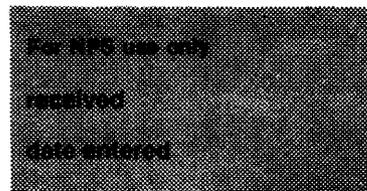
Page 1

Inclusive street numbers - Heaviest Corner on Earth:

1. 1927 1st Avenue North
2. 1928 1st Avenue North
3. 2000 1st Avenue North
4. 17 20th Street North

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

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Continuation sheet

Item number 4

Page 1

Heaviest Corner on Earth Property Owners:

1. Woodward Building -- Woodward Properties
c/o James R. McLane, John J. McMahon, Jr.
McWane, Inc.
P. O. Box 43327
Birmingham, AL 35243

2. Empire Building -- Colonial Bank of Alabama
1928 1st Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203

3. Brown-Marx Building -- Bruce and Sam Gittlin
Gittlin Companies, Inc.
c/o Overwrap Equipment
1275 Bloomfield Avenue
Fairfield, NJ 07006

4. John Hand Building -- 20th Street Partners Limited
c/o Greg Church
2100 John Hand Building
Birmingham, AL 35203