

230

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1801 Fifth Avenue North city or town Birmingham vicinity: N/A
state: Alabama code AL county Jefferson code 073 zip code 35203

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official

March 4, 2003
Date

Alabama Historical Commission
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

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. 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]
Signature of Keeper

April 18, 2003
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	objects
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE Sub: Financial institution
GOVERNMENT Financial institution

Present Functions:

VACANT/ WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

20TH CENTURY REVIVAL:

Classical Revival

MODERN MOVEMENT:

Art Deco

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Granite
 roof METAL: Copper
 walls STONE: Granite
 other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

See attached Continuation Sheets.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

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Description of Physical Appearance:
General

The present Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta in downtown Birmingham (recently vacated for new suburban quarters) is comprised of the original building completed in late 1926 and the later addition completed in late 1958. Whereas the original building and its addition are architecturally very different, in terms of bank operations and mechanical systems they formed a functional whole, necessitated at that time in the Bank's development by vastly expanded post-War responsibilities. In visual terms, the contrast between the two structures is enhanced by the 15-foot setback of the 1958 building along the 5th Avenue North facade.

The 1926 bank building is located on the southeast corner of 5th Avenue North and 18th Street in downtown Birmingham. It is in an area of old and new public buildings such as the 1921 U.S. Post Office, now a U.S. courthouse; the 1985 Hugo Black U.S. Courthouse; and the new U.S. Attorneys Office (completed 2002). This area is also the section of the downtown where sit most of the current homes of the major Birmingham banks, actually closer now to the Federal Reserve than they were when it was built.

1926 Building
Exterior

The old Birmingham Federal Reserve Bank is a four-storey-with-basement commercial bank building in a form generally combining two types described by Richard Longstreth¹ as "vault" and "temple-front"; both forms obviously are intended to promote a feeling of solidity and impregnability, not to mention the sanctity of money, and therefore to inspire the public trust. Stylistically, it is a good and early example of Classical Modernism or "stripped Classicism" (see discussion of architectural significance below). This 1920s version of the style has also whimsically been called Greco-Deco, *i.e.*, early 20th-century neoclassicism influenced by Art Deco. The architects themselves called it Greek.

The building is of poured-in-place concrete construction, 50 X 112 feet in dimension, with its long side lying along 18th Street. Its fourth floor is recessed from the perimeter 4 feet all around and is capped by the original hipped green copper roof; the ledge is walkable and gives access to the corner flagpole. The core of the building is literally the vault, which occupies the basement and first-floor central portion, encased in 2' 3" concrete walls. The classically styled street elevations and rear are clad in unpolished white Stone Mountain, Georgia, granite, resembling limestone but harder. Historically the east side (now obscured by the 1958 addition) was clad in buff brick, without windows but with a light well indented in the wall toward the rear. The granite now covering the first 15 feet or so of this east wall, to the point where the set-back addition begins, is somewhat more polished than the original and was added in 1958.

The 5th Avenue north facade contains a dominant central entry and two flanking windows, while the west elevation contains eight window bays. These rectangular primary windows are nearly 18 feet high and serve both ground and second floors within deep two-

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

storey openings with an incised line defining the frames; the openings are inconspicuously interrupted by, but still contain, paneled cast iron floor-plate spandrels separating the upper and lower windows. The exception to this is the north front three that illuminated the atrium exchange floor and so had no floor plate: subsequent modernization of the exchange floor and insertion of flooring (see below) have been masked by granite panels in their openings, recessed to leave the frames intact. All windows are the original tripartite multipane metal with operable hopper sections. Third-floor windows are of like design, not quite square and visually serving as overlights to the larger primary windows, but separated from them by a masonry spandrel. The relative heights of the actual windows from first to third storeys is three pane rows on the ground, four on the second storey, and two on the third. The pattern of windows is present on all elevations but the east, which is now knit to the later building but was without original windows in any case. All street-face window openings were originally covered with geometric metal grillwork screens that were both secure and decorative, removed in the 1958 alterations. Even without the darker screens, the window-wall relationship is of fine proportions and gives the visual impression of columns and voids rather than rows of windows in a wall.

The wall of the recessed fourth floor is a line of panels defined by vertical copper batten seams; the panels are obscure where they front the open ceiling and interior access to the roof, while toward the rear they contain sheet windows, not original, overlooking the peripheral walkway but not visible from the street. This treatment of the fourth floor exterior dates from 1949, when the original copper panels were replaced by the Fed's Atlanta architect (Toombs & Creighton at this point), probably because of water problems. The parapet at each corner is marked by a stylized acanthus finial or *acroterion*. There is no cornice or other projecting decoration; the geometric austerity of the walls and windows, in combination with the balancing roof, therefore renders the Bank's classicism as "stripped" and inherent in its proportions, materials and stylized details.

The central two-storey entry into the building dominates the façade, although altered in 1959 from its original Classically derived style.² The entry frame is now filled with a three-level grid of steel framing and glass panels, the bottom middle one of which contains standard commercial double entry doors. An architrave block of granite was inserted to reduce the height of the frame to the size of the grid panel; it also masks the inserted ceiling over the old exchange floor (see below). On the building face above the entry, in line with the third-floor windows around the corner, is a frieze of *bas relief* rosettes separated by triglyphs beneath a small projecting stone cornice, both frieze and cornice with small *guttae*. Flanking this frieze panel and in place of third-floor windows are *bas relief* medallions or disks with a design incorporating a rounded tower pavilion transected by panels of geometric grillwork, suggesting a fenced keep and based on Greek coin designs.³ Surmounting this decorative spandrel band and running along below the parapet are the attached bronze letters of the bank's name, "Birmingham Branch" largest and "Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta" smaller below it.

The rear of the building contains the same window type as the facade and west side, although parts of some of the openings have been occluded by other uses and the original rear doors have been replaced by a window. Most notably, a guard station or observation window

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

=====

was appended on the rear west corner in 1959 overseeing the entry and departure of armored cars entering a ramp going down across the rear of the old building and into the basement of the addition. The ramp and the first-floor rear windows are obscured from public view by a brick tunnel surround projecting from the rear building wall.

**1926 Building
Interior**

The original three-storey exchange floor, 40 X 50 and 42 feet high —what in a commercial bank would be the banking floor – was altered in early 1959 but retains its original footprint and its function as a lobby and reception area; even in light of the pressure for operational space the room escaped conversion to more utilitarian purposes. The floor is a pale marble and slopes down to street level at the front, having been laid about six inches above the old travertine floor. The front lobby wall is paneled in this same marble, while other walls are paneled in oak. The ceiling is a plaster panel that is actually suspended in the space to close off the second-floor level that extends to the front from the original mezzanine. An open, unadorned portal to the elevator corridor in the new building is in the east wall toward the rear. On the rear wall, a half-light 1959 door leads to the small room and secure window used until quite recently for purchase of government securities.⁴ Off a small room to the west side beside the entry reveal (originally part of the ladies' rest room off the cashier's office, with a bath portion now torn out) is an old concrete winding stair to an enclosed room on the second level; the entry to the stair retains its original narrow paneled door and hardware.

The first-floor interior (other than the lobby) is characterized by plaster walls, floors of 9 X 9 vinyl asbestos tile with carpet overlaid in the office areas, and laid-in acoustical tile ceilings to the 12' level. The original vault is on this floor, surrounded by workrooms and security gates; the vault was highly prized when it was installed, reported as "the latest type of bank vault. The circular door is more than two feet thick and is a mass of steel and combinations."⁵ The remainder of the first floor behind the lobby and vault area is taken up with operations compartments and connecting corridors with varying degrees of security, gates and locks. This pattern of secure anterooms and vault is repeated in the basement; the vault itself is accessible only by stairs down from the first-floor compartment. The remainder of the basement contains utilitarian storage space and, originally, the boiler room.

Floors two, three and four contain standard office spaces with carpeted floors, plaster walls and a ceiling grid of acoustical tile over the concrete frame ceiling.⁶ The fourth floor was also used for storage and also accommodated the top of the elevator housing. There is interior access to the roof trusses from the fourth floor at the front. Originally a light well, generally 14 X 18 feet in dimension, rose from the mezzanine to the fourth floor, recessed in the east wall toward the rear and lined with windows serving the work rooms on that side of the building, which otherwise had no windows. This stair and the old elevator shaft were removed in the 1959 remodeling and the space knit into the later addition.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 4

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

=====

1958 Addition
Exterior

The addition is a five-storey commercial building with two sub-basements, of concrete-reinforced steel-frame construction, in dimension 90 X 114 feet, attached to the east wall of the earlier building and set back about 15 feet from it. It is clad in a grayish buff brick veneer laid in stacked courses to create an illusion of pale vertical stripes, possibly as an effort to relieve the boxiness of the whole. There is a projecting stair tower, in dimension approximately 16 X 21 feet, on its east side toward the alley rear. It has a flat built-up commercial roof and a flat parapet. There is no public entry to this addition; interior access is through a secure doorway system on the rear.

The five levels of the building's front and rear elevations are identical, consisting of thirteen bays, twelve of which contain windows, the bay closest to the joining ell being blind. The window bays are separated by thin vertical piers, more like ribs, that are created across the broader spandrels by continuous recessed header courses down the window-corner lines. In attenuated contrast to the ribs, each spandrel contains a single string course of light mortar, either materially white or painted; this appears to be another gesture at definition in what is essentially a flat and undifferentiated wall surface. The metal-framed sheet windows appear to be square but are actually slightly higher than wide, with no reveals; they march across the ground level just as they do above, with no entry on the facade. On the east wall there are six closely set window bays between the stair tower and a front (north) width of brick wall; here on the third level the windows are smaller, more nearly square, than elsewhere. The front and rear elevations are in fact just grids of windows and masonry, the dominant horizontal spandrels competing with the thinner recessed ribs for balance, and winning. (Based on the architects' rendering, this horizontality was not their intent, but they had designed the building with another floor or two.) Something akin to dentil blocks marks the joining of the ribs with the flat parapet on front and rear; the east side is more purely functional and does not delineate bays.

1958 Addition
Interior

The first-floor interior has terrazzo on the elevator corridor floor and vinyl asbestos tile elsewhere, with some composition vinyl tile overlay. The ceilings are the original acoustical tile grids. The walls of the elevator corridor connecting with the old lobby are covered with black marble set in vertical panels. Other walls are plastered or later drywall additions. The administrative suite in this building is on the first floor, with oak paneling and wainscot, wallpapered drywall (in places over the original plaster), and ceilings lowered to 8 feet, all of this built in after its original construction. The new vault, like the old, is encased in over two feet of concrete wall, situated somewhat off-center in the building on sub-basement, first- and second-floor levels. The elevator bank replaced the functions of the original elevator and grand stair in the original building, which were destroyed, as noted above. A concrete service stair was built in a projecting pavilion off the east wall.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 5

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

=====

The remainder of the interior, including that encircling the vault, is occupied with operational activities such as coin and money handling and check clearing, as well as general office space. Unlike the original building, the new addition had facilities for burning deteriorated paper bills or securities, located on the fifth floor. Interior finishes are generally floors of vinyl asbestos tile with some composition tile overlays; laid-in acoustic tile ceilings; and plaster walls and subsequent dry-wall insertions. The second floor housed the money-handling section and the third floor the check-processing area, with a raised fibreboard floor to accommodate cable flexibility to serve all the electrical equipment. In this as in some other of the operations areas, there is a rubber layer overlying the tile floors to alleviate some of the stress of standing for the employees. The kitchen, executive dining suite and employees' cafeteria are located on the fourth floor, the executives' area sharing the traditional décor of the office suite on the first floor, e.g., molded chair rail, floral draperies. Above the second floor/mezzanine levels, the third and fourth floors of the two buildings are, respectively, two and four feet different in floor level and are connected by a ramp on the third level and a set of steps on the fourth. The 1958 fifth floor does not connect with the old building at all.

Archeological Component

There has been no formal archeological survey done of this property, and whereas there may be some potential for subsurface remains from previous periods of building, the entire block is now paved or built on.

Notes for Part 7

¹ Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. Washington: Preservation Press, 1987, pp. 100-113.

² For a more thorough description of the building's historic features and appearance, see History of the Building, below in Part 8.

³ Shirley Kanter Osband, *Health, Wealth and Power: Emerging Art Deco Architecture and the Celebration of Modernity*. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 1998, p. 88.

⁴ For a discussion of the evolution of the exchange floor's functions, see History of the Building.

⁵ "Birmingham branch of federal bank last word in financial institutions," *Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 30, 1927.

⁶ Architect Chris Engel reports that the suspended ceiling in between the lobby and second-floor levels does not constitute a floor, so upstairs the space is floored but not used.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

N/A

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance: 1926-1952

Significant Dates 1926-27

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Warren, Knight & Davis, architects
Krebs, A.J., builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
See attached Continuation Sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the Books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS) N/A
 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
 Name of repository:
Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Robert Black, architect, successor to Warren, Knight & Davis, architects (drawings)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

Statement of Significance:

The Birmingham Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta is being nominated to the National Register based on Criterion A because it represents a significant development in the commercial life of the City and the region, *i.e.*, the establishment and expansion of the Federal Reserve system in the Sixth district; and on Criterion C, based on the building's embodiment of 20th-century classicism combined with Art Deco style, a modern synthesis that maintained Classicism's expressive ideal of safe money and good government. The style has been called Greco-Deco, and such a term is hard to improve upon. The 1958 addition is typical of those built by the Fed throughout the region around this time and does not possess architectural significance, nor does it have a sufficiently distinctive history to justify a less-than-50-years argument for significance. In the Bank's post-World War II period of expansion all new construction was in the commercial modernist style, and security and functional utility were its primary aims. In Birmingham the addition makes no gesture of accommodation to the older building in terms of style, although its 15-foot set-back does provide a setting where the variant portions of the whole appear comfortable in the streetscape. Fortunately in Birmingham, expansion of the banking plant did not require replacement of the old bank as it did in other Atlanta District cities; the original building was retained and continued to be used by the Bank until the very recent past (see History of the Building, following).

Criterion A: COMMERCE

The Birmingham Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta is a physical representative in Birmingham of a commercial development that is extremely significant in American life, the founding of the Federal Reserve System.⁷ From the perspective of a time when every movement of the Federal Reserve Bank is watched obsessively by the financial community to see what may be in store for the economy, it is difficult to imagine a time when the Fed was not yet seen as either a good idea or an effective organization. That it was not was in fact the case, however, and a contemporary review of the Fed's first eight years provides some insight into this state of affairs:

Perennial in the whole discussion of banking has from the start been the controversy whether a central bank was desirable for the United States. It was opposition to the central bank idea which . . . was responsible for the present structure of the Federal Reserve System. . . . The Federal Reserve System had an exceptionally hard task to perform in introducing its original type of organization. One of the difficulties, if not the greatest, which had to be encountered was found in the fact that so much of the country's banking strength centered around New York and in a lesser degree around a few other large financial centers. . . . Due . . . to the peculiar character of our banking system prior to 1914 there were many factors which tended to shift country bank funds to New York. . . . [This] brought

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 7

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

about a more or less artificial condition of affairs in which a considerable quantity of country bank funds for whose transfer there was no natural warrant was steadily shifted from the country to the city. This in itself was not a good thing.⁸

Before the federal bank was created in 1913, financial panics could wipe out local and state banks overnight, and it would take time to rebuild public confidence and start the upward swing again. J.P. Morgan by himself averted total collapse in 1893 and a major panic in 1907 simply by having the influence to command the resources to cover the demands on the banks. Such financial power in the hands of one or a few men was a subject of much public distrust but, as Gamble notes in his history of the Atlanta Fed, even though turning to Morgan was "politically unpopular . . . when the country had to have a central banker, there was nowhere else to turn."⁹ The 1907 situation "underlined the dangers of an inelastic currency and an illiquid banking system; the money supply could not expand or contract in response to economic conditions, and too often banking assets flowed to New York in good times and returned slowly and uncertainly to local banks and depositors in bad times."¹⁰

Because Birmingham was so dependent on a single industry—the mining of ore and the making of steel—and consequently was so at the mercy of economic conditions, the boom and bust cycles of the American economy were the more devastating to both businesses and individuals. From a regional perspective, the one-crop dependence on cotton created the same susceptibility to price fluctuations and economic downturns. Why, then, was the South, with so much to gain by stabilization of credit and liquidity of funds, so particularly suspicious of a federal bank? Some reasons for this are suggested by Gamble:

The membership problem was particularly daunting in the Sixth District, where there were fewer national banks than in other Districts, where state banks were smaller and disinclined to be regulated, and where anything federal was suspect. There was another problem. Checks cleared through the Fed were, from the very beginning, to be paid at face (par) value. Many small banks, particularly in the South and Midwest, were accustomed to withholding a small "exchange" fee, typically one-eighth of a percent of the check's value. They felt they were entitled to this fee, and they felt it strongly.

In the South it became a highly emotional issue that would not die. Because only banks that would pay at par could clear checks through the Federal Reserve, the Atlanta Fed found itself at odds with the contentious nonpar banks of its District. This problem endured until 1979, long after it had been laid to rest in other parts of the country.¹¹

The Atlanta Fed's determination to uphold cotton prices after the War ultimately enhanced its credibility in the South, even though this regional position was in conflict with some other priorities of the national Federal Reserve Board.¹²

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 8

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

=====

The Federal Reserve Act was passed by the Congress and signed by a delighted President Wilson a few days before Christmas of 1913. A cabinet official at the time, David Houston of the Department of Agriculture, harrumphed to his diary that it was nearly a miracle that a Democrat-dominated Congress had passed it, but he supposed that neither the Democrats nor the Republicans understood it very well and neither party had a very good record of currency comprehension anyway.¹³ Moreover, Gamble notes that "(m)ost of the commercial banks that eventually would become members of the Federal Reserve System remained overtly hostile to the legislation throughout 1913."¹⁴

What the Act had accomplished was authority to create a system of twelve privately controlled regional banks that could hold reserves and issue currency, with a publicly appointed Federal Reserve Board "to provide uniform guidelines for the regional banks."¹⁵ Once the legislation was a *fait accompli*, public opposition to the Federal Reserve took second place to competition for its locations. When it was announced that twelve cities would be chosen as regional sites for a bank, "bankers who had denounced it began to campaign for a Federal Reserve Bank in their city,"¹⁶ proving again the wisdom of the old limerick:

There was a man dining at Krewe
Who found quite a large mouse in his stew.
Said the waiter, "Don't shout
And wave it about,
Or the rest will be wanting one too."

Everybody did want that federal mouse, and among those lobbying for Birmingham was W.P.G. Harding, young president of the city's, and the state's, largest and most influential bank, the First National. Sharing a train from Montgomery to Opelika with President Wilson's confidant and advisor Colonel Edward House, the serious Harding pointed out the economic and functional advantages of Birmingham as a potential Federal Reserve city. Evidently making an impression on Colonel House, "(t)he Alabama banker heard nothing more until newspaper reports told him he had been nominated for the Federal Reserve Board." He would "serve as governor of the . . . Board from 1916 to 1922 and play an important role in the affairs of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta."¹⁷

Cities in the southern or sixth district that were considered possible sites for a branch bank included, first, New Orleans, then Atlanta, Savannah, Charleston, Birmingham and Jacksonville. It was generally thought that New Orleans, the South's "acknowledged financial center," would be the logical site for the southern branch bank, but in the end it was Atlanta that won the honor, not least because of its central location and accessibility. Among its first Directors was one Birminghamian, William H. Kettig, and one other Alabamian who was to become the dominant personality on the Board: Maximilian Bethune Wellborn of Anniston. It was Max Wellborn's devotion to the cause of supporting the regional economy, and his courage in the face of agricultural crises and falling commodity prices, that finally brought the Bank through a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 9

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

=====

period of initial public skepticism and established it as a guiding force in regional and national economic life. It was Mr. Kettig who represented Birmingham's case when local bankers were petitioning the Directors in 1918 for designation of Birmingham as a branch city¹⁸, an honor that was awarded the following October (see History of the Building, below).

In the 87 years of its existence, the Federal Reserve System has, through its powers to regulate monetary policy and credit, had a stabilizing influence over every aspect of American economic life. The old building of the Birmingham branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta is a local monument to the period when the Bank was new and gaining a foothold in the public's understanding and acceptance of a federal presence in economic life. The building reflects in its style and location a philosophy about money and commerce that has dominated American life in the 20th century. Although the styles and locational relationships of business entities continue to change and expand in modern times, this building on this site represents a significant development in the American economic system and the connection of major urban areas to their regional economies.

Criterion C: ARCHITECTURE

Birmingham's branch of the Federal Reserve, more than any other surviving buildings in the Atlanta division of the Bank, represents the architectural expression of two 20th-century building periods and also two major developmental periods for the Bank itself. The now abandoned property consists of the original 1926 building and the 1958 addition, the former a fine local example of early 20th-century classicism and the latter a typical example of utilitarian modern or American commercial modern. Birmingham's original 1926 building is the only one of the Atlanta Division's original buildings to have survived expansion and modernization, even including Atlanta's itself.¹⁹

The almost universal use in the United States of classical styles for banks and public buildings has been widely discussed in architectural literature; it is generally ascribed to the adoption of classicism meant to reflect the methods and ideals of law, democracy, and the near-sanctity of the people's treasury. This equation of stored wealth with a religious style, *i.e.*, bank buildings that look like temples, is seen everywhere in America from Washington down to the tiniest hamlet. In his compendium of Main Street styles, Richard Longstreth²⁰ shows examples of two categories of form that he names "Temple Front" and "Vault," both of which are applicable to the Birmingham Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. Particularly with the Temple Front form do his remarks relate to the Fed:

The type again became popular through the impetus of the academic movement at the turn of the 20th century. Over the next three decades, it was used almost exclusively for banks. Ancient Roman architecture served as the major source of inspiration, although great freedom was exercised in adapting

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 10

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

it. . . . By the 1920s, the character of these designs is often quite simple, even abstract. . . . Throughout the early 20th century the *distyle in antis* form enjoyed frequent use . . . (M)any banks from this period are situated on corner sites and have one or more side elevations that are subordinate yet closely related to the façade composition.²¹

The major characteristic of the vault form is its triumphal-arch entry into the main block of the building, implying "massiveness and enclosure" ²² and the safety of the interior. All such entries are not triumphal in the Roman sense, with a round arch; the architects of the Birmingham Fed termed their building Greek in inspiration and indeed the recessed entry was linear and post-and-lintel, its triumphalism suggested by the massiveness of the Doric *in antis* columns flanking the entry. In its present form it is still linear, although its glass grid renders the entry more in line with the building plane, and a good deal less triumphal, than previously.

Art historian Shirley Osband has suggested that Post-World War I Republicanism with its concomitant grandeur and optimism influenced the re-adoption of classicism as the primary style of choice for banks: "The commercial building as a cathedral and the Greek temple as the first mint came together in the image of the Neo-Greco-Deco bank building of that time."²³ A more contemporary account in *The Architectural Record* of May, 1928 somewhat complacently muses:

Columns, it would appear, have long been thought a necessary architectural part of a bank, something sacrosanct, almost. But now it appears that columns are not necessary at all, and that a bank can look dignified and impressive entirely by virtue of fine proportions and an essentially modern sophistication in detail—or absence of it.²⁴

This opinion was in relation to the magazine's feature of the National City Bank of New York (Walker & Gillette, architects), which had been completed the previous year. Built somewhat later than the Birmingham Fed, this building is remarkably similar (see accompanying photograph) to the Federal Reserve Bank, with its smooth limestone exterior walls, its two-storey rectangular windows separated from their upper-storey counterparts by a masonry spandrel, its stylized Art Deco carving over the deep and lofty entry panel on the narrow façade. It is in its decorative details more Deco than the Fed and lacks the plainly classical details of the latter (e.g., the original Doric columns), but in form and general design it is very like the Birmingham building, and is certainly meant to suggest the same qualities of dignity and strength.

Another contemporary comparison on the classical side is with the Charlotte National Bank (Alfred C. Bossom, architect), featured in the March, 1924 *Architectural Record*²⁵ (see accompanying photograph). Like the Fed and the National City Bank, it is situated on a corner with its entry in the narrower facade; here, however, like the Birmingham Fed, the Greek-styled entry is behind a *distyle in antis* portico with fluted Doric columns flanking the doorway.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 11

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

=====

The long street elevation here is also more plainly classical, with its Doric colonnade between the end blocks, projecting cornice and more classically carved and unwindowed attic level. As different in detail as these two contemporary buildings are from one another, a little imagination could impose a hipped copper roof on them and they would both bear a good resemblance to the Birmingham Branch of the Atlanta Fed.

A third good— and perhaps best in some ways— comparison to the Birmingham branch is the home of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, reviewed in *The Architectural Record* of October, 1926 (Mauran, Russell & Crowell, architects). This five-storey building actually looks like a masonry stacked block, having a projecting cornice at the fifth-floor level and at the top²⁶; what makes it strongly Modern Classical is the linear severity of its exterior elevations. The reviewer has provided us with a good contemporary rationale for the application of this architectural style to so important an institution as the Federal Reserve Bank:

The Federal Reserve Bank, St. Louis . . . is an inspiring work which achieves monumental grandeur without the use of columns. Its exterior design is the outcome of a bold, direct expression of plan requirements in terms of noble building material dependent on carefully proportioned openings set in deep reveals which perforate the vault-like walls carried from the sidewalk to roof in sheer beauty of tapering form . . . Thus . . . the predominating appearance of the building is that of a veritable strong box worthy to house the surplus gold of a great banking system. Architecturally it is of even greater significance, making as it does, a pronounced and remarkable change from the customary columnar treatment of its predecessors.

. . . [W]here ornamentation is used it is purposely kept in low relief for fear of marring the prevailing keynote of simplicity so successfully arrived at in the general treatment and it is this same striving towards simplicity in architectural design which is bringing forth the few genuine works of today.²⁷

Something else done by this particular reviewer is to relate the exterior appearance of the building to its interior functions; this is a primary tenet of modernism and further reveals the reviewer's enthusiasm for the modern and relative scorn for columns and all they imply.²⁸ It is interesting in this case because the institutional requirements of the Federal Reserve, such as security, a modicum of secrecy, efficiency of work environments, and ease of exchange, are all incorporated into the plans of the Birmingham branch bank as well but without any apparent relaxation of classical symmetry on the exterior. In fact, the Birmingham branch is in appearance both more classical and more modern than the St. Louis bank.

Warren, Knight & Davis were to design three buildings in Birmingham that Osband discusses in the context of Art Deco: the Alabama Power Building, completed in 1926; the Federal Reserve Bank completed in 1926, and the Protective Life Insurance Company Building, completed in 1927. Of the three, the Federal Reserve is the most typically classical: the Power

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 12

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

Building is more truly Art Deco, while the Protective Life Building shows more Commercial Gothic influence. It is the planar austerity of the bank building that distinguishes it and creates the Greek-like temple atmosphere. A more Renaissance splendor was reserved for the interior, and much of the attention to detail and beautiful use of decoration was the work of William Warren, a superb draftsman and by his own description the detail man of the firm.

The vitality of a premiere architectural firm such as Birmingham's Warren, Knight & Davis suggests that its members would be in tune with such developments in architectural practice as the adaptation of the classical style that was prevalent in these first decades of the 20th century. Architectural historians John Schnorrenberg and Shirley Kanter Osband note that Eugene Knight, the firm's principal designer, had spent a year in the offices of York & Sawyer, a New York firm that pioneered "the preferred modernized classical style of the twenties."²⁹ The firm later had itself a relationship to the Federal Reserve, "having achieved a break from strict Classicism with their 1924 Federal Reserve Bank, New York. . . . Robert Stern writes: 'Once York and Sawyer had opened the way to stylistic variety in bank design, architects gradually began to encourage their banking clients to pursue not only other traditional styles but also the Modern Classicism inspired by the 1925 Paris Exposition of Decorative Arts.'"³⁰

The combination of modernism, in the form of Art Deco, and Classicism was associated not just with banks in general but with federal architecture as well, and to a great degree this style can be said to have set the tone for official Washington. York and Sawyer were architects for several federal buildings there, including the Department of Commerce building (not built until 1932 with a modified design, but commissioned in 1913 while Knight was with the firm as an apprentice). Louis Ayres, one of the partners, acted as advisor to the Secretary of the Treasury in planning the design of the Federal Triangle. Osband notes that the "original Commerce Building design of 1913 set the tone for the Triangle, influencing the height and the tile roofing as distinguishing characteristics."³¹

In the 1930s this eclectic style so favored by the federal government came to be called stripped or starved classicism, employing as it did "large expanses of blank walls and rows of shallow unframed window openings. Ornament was simplified into angular accents that receded into the masonry, and all other sculptural featuring, the use of columns included, was held down to a minimum."³² This is the description of Spiro Kostof, who goes on to say that such stylistic features in their extreme led to the monumental excesses of ceremonial fascist architecture such as that of Albert Speer. The implied violence of such terms as "stripped" and "starved" does seem very removed from the sometimes austere dignity of these bank buildings of the 1920s. It seems the case that, even though the Federal Reserve was nominally a federal agency, its early buildings missed the institutional massiveness that could characterize some of the government's departmental and official buildings, and it reflected more the private commercial market in the style of its banking houses. That this was so is particularly obvious in the Federal Reserve's choice of style for its additions and new buildings in the 1950s and early 1960s³³, of which Birmingham's is typical: a charmless box of utilitarian modernism.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 13

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

We have, therefore, in the Birmingham branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta a fine example of the contemporary standard in bank style, including that used by other Federal Reserve branches. In Birmingham it stands alone as an example of this major transitional style, and it contrasts interestingly with the slightly earlier (1921) U.S. Post Office directly across the street; the latter is a good example of what Kostof called the "other" federal style of the period, the full-dress classicism of the Supreme Court and Jefferson Memorial³⁴—lots of columns.

The 1959 removal of some of the bank's more classical decorative elements such as the *in antis* columns, the bronze doors and the window grills has detracted from but not destroyed the quality of the building. Essential aspects of its modern classicism remain intact: the planar walls, the contrasting rectilinear window openings that substitute for the colonnade, the angular adaptation of classical carving motifs such as the coin discs, the stylized *acroteria* on the corners. Attached along the east flank of the old building and dominating it in height, the modern addition it is at least set back about 15 feet and so appears not so much a continuation of the old building as it does a neighbor in a varied streetscape. Since it was operationally necessary to expand the bank's plant in a time of don't-look-back modernism, we can be grateful that the prized location noted above and the quality of the original building were sufficient justification to keep it and to have the addition defer to it, if only slightly, by its set-back position.

Justification of the Period of Significance:

The period of significance has been defined as 1926-1952, relating primarily to the original building's functional life. The bank was constructed in 1926 and finished and occupied in early 1927, representing on its completion one of the best examples of the type not only among Birmingham buildings but also among its Federal Reserve peers in the Atlanta Bank's Sixth District. Until after the Second World War it functioned—albeit with increasing pressure on operational space—as one of the busiest Federal Reserve branches in the region. The Atlanta Fed after the War began in earnest to seek expansion room and to make additions to its branch banks; Birmingham's expansion period began in 1952 with purchase of the lot to its east. This latter year, therefore, was chosen to end the period because it represents the beginning of the building's plans for a modernized plant and condition.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 14

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

=====

History of the Building:

The Federal Reserve System of federally regulated banks for bankers was created several years after the Panic of 1907; the panic, though fairly short-lived, had finally convinced Congress that failures in commercial credit were wreaking economic disaster on large portions of the nation and had to be controlled. Before the establishment of the Federal Reserve System in 1913, cycles of boom and bust caused small banks to fail and the money supply to coagulate in large cities, notably New York.³⁵ The only entity with sufficient financial resources to underwrite the demands on the banks was the House of Morgan—a generally unpopular situation and especially so in the South, which was naturally antipathetic to the power of northern capital (see discussion of commercial significance, above). Its antipathy to Morgan, however, did not make the South much more enthusiastic about a federal bank; this being the case, the entire Atlanta division of the Federal Reserve Bank had a somewhat rocky start in terms of membership and activities. It began to be busier during and just after the First World War³⁶, the increase in activity and respect due largely to War financing and the concomitant expanded market in government securities and associated credit activities.³⁷

New Orleans, bypassed in the first distribution of bank cities in 1914, had finally gotten its branch bank in 1915. Birmingham and Jacksonville were the next district branches opened in 1918, followed by Nashville in 1919. Prior to their occupying their own building, the Birmingham Fed had leased space in, first, the Jefferson County Bank Building (now the City Federal Building) and later in the old *Age-Herald* Building on Fifth Avenue North. Need for expanded operational space, combined with a growing public acceptance of the federal bank after it successfully supported the cotton crop in 1920 and 1921 (defying Washington's anxiety about over-extension of reserves³⁸), made permanent facilities in cities apart from Atlanta seem a necessity. Birmingham's building was actually the last completed; the architects were finishing plans for the Birmingham Branch of the Bank in the summer of 1925.³⁹ Its site was on property purchased from the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church—locally exemplifying Mumford's glum observation that in modern times temples of commerce were superceding temples of faith in the urban landscape. The architects were Warren, Knight & Davis of Birmingham; the general contractor was A.J. Krebs.

Warren, Knight & Davis were chosen as designers without any process of competition: the firm was commissioned by the local Federal Reserve Board, several of whom traveled around the country with the architects to see other banks and consider the appropriate design for the Birmingham building.⁴⁰ The choice of the stripped Classicism that eventually became the style of the building was completely sympathetic with the *zeitgeist* and with the inclination of the architects (see discussion of architectural significance above). Osband notes⁴¹ that Eugene Knight, whose design the building almost certainly was,⁴² had spent time in the offices of York & Sawyer in 1913; this firm had been influential in popularizing the "reductive classicism of some of the more advanced traditional architects of the second half of the 1920s".⁴³

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 15

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

=====

Construction was finished and the building occupied by the bank on January 23, 1927. The transfer from the *Age-Herald* building was accomplished in a day without any loss of business hours, a feat of which the bank was very proud.⁴⁴ At its opening the building was inspected by George R. James, a member of the Federal Reserve Board in Washington, who pronounced it outstanding and that it "ranked on equal terms with the very best of other Federal Reserve Branch Banks in the United States."⁴⁵ It was also highly praised by members of the Board of Directors of the American Institute of Architects, who happened to be in Birmingham at this time.⁴⁶ Its elaborate exchange floor was particularly attended to in the press reports.

Functions of the Federal Reserve Bank in the years between the world wars were generally those of maintaining reserves and clearing checks and currency for member banks, issuance of currency when necessary, and particularly the making of discounted loans to member banks. When the Birmingham branch was built in 1926, therefore, its original operations were well accommodated in the space, with room besides for a Directors' Room and a recreation room for the employees.⁴⁷ A visual and spatial luxury as well were the 42 feet of ceiling space occupying the two levels over the exchange floor.

The original three-storey exchange floor, 40 X 50 and 42 feet high—what in a commercial bank would be the banking floor—was heavily altered in early 1959, the original atrium space sacrificed to functional needs and the décor to modernism. The architects' drawings and narrative description⁴⁸ and a few photographs show us that it was extraordinary. John Schnorrenberg describes the architect's drawing:

The half section of the interior of the banking room, also now destroyed, shows an orthodox Ionic order through the entablature and the astonishment of the ceiling cavity, receding step-wise in eight planes . . . The rise of each recession is adorned by a meander motif interrupted by rosettes set in squares. The soffits of each recession and of the ceiling itself are covered with rosettes. The whole ceiling is bottom lit from a trough at its base. The remote stepped height seems somehow Mayan, and that is what links the structure to Art Deco.⁴⁹

Supporting the interior entablature were two massive columns, Ionic in style, which along with the counters, floor and wainscot were faced in light Travertine marble. The Director and Cashier had office spaces to either side of the entry, separated from the main area by marble counter walls and raised a step.⁵⁰ Anterooms and baths were originally on either side of the entry off the Director's and Cashier's offices, and the still intact winder stair (see Description of Physical Appearance) gave access to small mezzanine-level rooms connected across the front wall by a walkway and balcony rail, so the exchange floor could be observed from this level. The mezzanine occupied all but the front 40 feet of the footprint and 12 feet of the exchange

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 16

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

floor height and was fronted by bronze grillwork balustrades; it housed check-clearing operations and the telegraph that connected all the Federal Reserve branches. The third floor (which the architects called the second floor) had the same footprint as the mezzanine and originally contained the Board of Directors' Room and a large recreation hall for the employees. There were some relatively minor changes to the building before the major 1959 renovation; these include the 1949 alteration of the fourth-floor exterior, by which copper battens and panels were installed around the perimeter; the 1951 redesigning of some banking floor work spaces (the architects' plans noting that the new counters were to be composed of Formica over plywood) and air-conditioning in 1952. This work was designed by Toombs & Creighton (subsequently Toombs & Company), the Bank's Atlanta architects.

The booming economy and vastly expanded activities of the Bank after the Second World War made additional operational space a necessity. Gamble's history of the Atlanta Fed reports that "(t)he war effort ruled out new buildings during those years, but additional space was leased in New Orleans in 1942 . . . By 1944 the Bank began to search for sites and to develop plans for expansion after the War ended. . . . (P)lanning or carrying out some kind of construction occupied Bank leaders from the day World War II ended until February 1966."⁵¹ Desperation for space dictated the order in which cities were accommodated, and Birmingham was not the most desperate: "Birmingham was overcrowded as well, but it enjoyed a particularly prized location close to the city's major banks and connected to the post office by a tunnel. When property adjoining the Bank finally became available in Spring 1952, the Bank snapped it up and approved plans for a six-story addition in 1953, then scaled back the plans to five stories when the Washington Board balked at the cost. Construction began in 1955 and was completed in October 1958."⁵²

According to Warren, Knight & Davis⁵³, the original building had been planned to accommodate the addition of floors if necessary in the future. This option, however, was never used, even though it seems to have been the case that the bank experienced a space shortage early on. Newspaper articles at the time of the 1952 announcement of the purchase of the neighboring parking lot, as well as in 1953 when the new building was announced, quoted branch manager John Liles to the effect that the bank had been "renting outside space to carry on the functions of the bank . . ."⁵⁴ The quotations are inconsistent, however, as to how long that had been the case, one stating "since 1930" and the other "for more than ten years."⁵⁵ When the architects' rendering of the new building appeared in the News of May 8, 1955 (all seven floors of it), the accompanying article again noted the manager's justification for more space: "To illustrate the inadequacy of the present building, [manager] Mr. Frazer said a whole floor of a furniture company—6000 square feet of space—is used for storage of current supplies." Whatever the absolute accuracy of outside rental, it was plain that by the 1950s the Birmingham branch of the bank was experiencing the same operational pressures as were all the bank branches and was in need of greatly expanded space.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 17

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

=====

The evolution of the operational areas over the years contributed mightily to the pressing need for space, and the withdrawal of traffic from the original uses of the exchange floor made the splendors of that space truly superfluous to the Bank. The gradual decrease in physical storage of cash and securities at the Fed and therefore in courier traffic and window transactions, plus the automation of check exchange between member banks, contributed to the decline in use of the exchange floor and the adjacent vaults. In a very helpful summary of Bank activity prepared for this nomination, Atlanta Federal Reserve Historian Bobbie McCrackin explains that "(t)he bottom line is that clearly lobby and adjacent room traffic was declining by the 1960s due to changes in the importance of certain functions like safekeeping of securities and discount window lending and because of technological innovations."⁵⁶ She also interestingly notes that a primary function of the Fed as perceived and championed by Max Wellborn, the Atlanta Fed's first Chairman—the support of agriculture—had sustained seasonal borrowing activity in agricultural regions such as Alabama until it too began to decline into the early 1960s.

If the exchange floor and mezzanine were not to be used as they once were, a logistical problem then presented itself: architectural historian John Schnorrenberg points out that there was also the added difficulty of awkward access to the mezzanine from the office areas toward the rear.⁵⁷ With all these factors prevailing, the decision to remodel the exchange floor was therefore one of practicality and efficiency. Architects for the addition were the Fed's Atlanta firm, by then Toombs, Amisano & Wells, with local association of Shaw & Renneker. Bids were requested for both construction of the new addition and remodeling of the original building. Daniel Construction Company of Birmingham got the job. At that time it was announced with some pride that the old building would be redone completely.⁵⁸ Construction of the new building was finished in October, 1958 and it was occupied by the bank in early December of that year. Work on the old one began subsequent to the move and was finished in time for dedication of the entire new facility on May 8, 1959. In its present form the lobby space did retain its original footprint and its function as a lobby and reception area; it was not converted to utilitarian space. The second floor was converted for the in-house clinic and the third floor for ordinary office space, including an extension of the floor through the former atrium space at the front.

The opening dedication ceremony was held in the modernized lobby of the old building, since there were no rooms in the new addition that lent themselves to ceremonial purposes. In his speech on that occasion, First National Bank Chairman General John C. Persons, who had been present at the dedication of the original building in 1927, ruefully commented that he "missed the gold leaf," which, "like all the rest of the gold," had been taken away.⁵⁹

Inadequacy of operational space overtook the bank again in the middle 1990s. The branch "bought property in Liberty Park [a new suburb to the southeast of the city] to replace its cramped building that went up in 1927. 'The other building just did not meet our operational

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 18

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

=====

needs any longer,' said Andre Anderson, the branch manager."⁶⁰ The bank had completed its move to the new facility by the fall of 2000. The entire city block on which the old facility sits, having over time been cleared of everything else other than the bank and its parking lot, was sold to the All Right Parking interests; they shortly thereafter sold the property to the Sloss Real Estate Group, a Birmingham company specializing in rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings. Sloss, in partnership with Barry Real Estate of Atlanta, plans to restore the 1926 building, maintaining what's left of its original material and restoring what it can, and to incorporate the entire structure into a new mixed-use development on the remainder of the block. Architect for the restoration will be Christopher Engel of Workshop7 in Birmingham.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 19

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

=====

Notes for Part 8

⁷ The following general discussion of the Federal Reserve and the Atlanta Fed is based primarily on Richard H. Gamble, *A History of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, 1914-1989*. Atlanta: Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, 1989, *passim*.

⁸ H. Parker Willis, "The Federal Reserve System—A retrospect of eight years," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 4, December, 1922, p. 572.

⁹ Gamble, p. 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹² An interesting discussion of this early period is found in Gamble, pp. 33-38.

¹³ Gamble, p. 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11. Mr. Harding did not, however, attempt to influence the location of a branch in his native city, nor the decision to build permanent quarters in Birmingham. As Governor of the Federal Reserve Board from 1916 to 1922, he declined to exercise his authority on Birmingham's behalf and deferred these Sixth District decisions to the Atlanta Fed's Directors. This is confirmed through his correspondence with Robert Jemison Jr. regarding the choice of location for the Birmingham Branch (Jemison Papers, Birmingham Public Library Archives).

¹⁸ "Birmingham may get branch bank," *Birmingham News*, March 10, 1918.

¹⁹ Bobbie McCrackin, personal communication; also Gamble, *passim*, for the details.

²⁰ Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*, Washington: Preservation Press, 1987, pp. 100-115.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

²³ Shirley Kanter Osband, *Health, Wealth and Power: Emerging Art Deco Architecture and the Celebration of Modernity*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 1998, p. 81.

²⁴ Matlack Price, "National City Bank of New York: Walker & Gillette, Architects," *The Architectural Record*, Vol 63, no. 5, May 1928, pp. 406-07.

²⁵ Portfolio of current architecture, *The Architectural Record*, Vol. 55, no. 3, March 1924, p. 265.

²⁶ A.N. Rebori, "The Federal Reserve Bank, St. Louis, Mo.," *The Architectural Record*, Vol. 60, no. 4., October 1926, pp.290-300. The photographs differ from the architects' rendering, also published in the article, which shows two lower cornices at the fourth- and sixth-floor levels, with a lesser one at the top. The sixth floor most likely was deleted by order of the Federal Reserve Board in Washington, which was watching costs as they did in Birmingham.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 299-300.

²⁹ Osband, p. 81

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83. Robert Stern's remarks are quoted from his book *New York*, cited in Osband.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³² Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 716.

³³ See photographs in Gamble, p. 102 Birmingham, pp. 104-5 Atlanta, and p. 109 New Orleans.

³⁴ Kostof, p. 716.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 20

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

³⁵ Gamble, pp. 5-6; Willis, p. 568.

³⁶ Gamble, pp. 24-25.

³⁷ Willis, p. 572.

³⁸ See note 12.

³⁹ Schnorrenberg, John M., *Remembered Past, Discovered Future: The Alabama Architecture of Warren Knight & Davis, 1906-1961*. Birmingham (Ala.) Museum of Art, 1999, pp. 71-72.

⁴⁰ "Architects successfully execute unusual design," undated typescript in the collection of WK & D, noted in Osband, p. 85.

⁴¹ Osband, pp. 81-83.

⁴² Schnorrenberg, p. 72.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ "Birmingham branch of federal bank last word in financial institutions," *Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 30, 1927.

⁴⁵ "Architects successfully execute . . .," p. 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Discussions of other branch banks suggest that in-house recreation for the employees was an important feature, because getting in and out of the very secure bank was not a simple matter, and the work was repetitive and tiring. See A.N. Rebori, "The Federal Reserve Bank, St. Louis, Mo.," *The Architectural Record*, Vol. 60, no. 4, October, 1926, p. 289.

⁴⁸ "Architects successfully execute . . ."

⁴⁹ Schnorrenberg, p. 72.

⁵⁰ H.J. Urquhart Jr., personal communication, May 30, 2001. Mr. Urquhart's father was head cashier, so he often had occasion to be in the bank as a little boy.

⁵¹ Gamble, p. 89, p. 101.

⁵² Gamble, p. 103. Founding Board member W.P.G. Harding, a Birminghamian, had objected to the high cost of the original Federal Reserve building in Atlanta, particularly the elaborateness of the lobby, and plans were subsequently scaled back (Gamble, p. 28); we do not know if he similarly objected to the splendor of the Birmingham branch's exchange floor. In fact Birmingham's building was more expensive than any of the other branches built ahead of it, with the exception of New Orleans. The tunnel referred to by Gamble was built in the fall of 1927 at the time of a remodeling of the U.S. Post Office across Fifth Avenue North, thereby making possible secure and convenient delivery to and from the Post Office.

⁵³ "Architects successfully execute . . ."

⁵⁴ "Federal Reserve buys lot to expand facilities here," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, July 10, 1952.

⁵⁵ "Reserve bank expansion to add services," *Birmingham News*, June 18, 1953.

⁵⁶ Bobbie McCrackin, e-mail to Linda Nelson of January 18, 2002. This excellent summary of the functional factors affecting the exchange floor is attached hereto as an addendum.

⁵⁷ John Schnorrenberg, personal communication, May 28, 2001.

⁵⁸ "Federal Reserve Bank to be remodeled here," *Birmingham News*, January 2, 1958.

⁵⁹ "New Federal Reserve Bank is dedicated," *Birmingham News*, May 9, 1959.

⁶⁰ "Fed secretly moves truckloads of cash to new Liberty Park site," *Birmingham News*, October 12, 2000.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 21

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

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McCrackin, Bobbie, E-mail communication of January 18, 2002 related to the uses over time of the exchange floor and adjacent rooms, in terms of the activities of the Federal Reserve Bank from the earliest years up to the 1960s.

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Warren, Knight & Davis: "Architects successfully execute unusual design: Warren, Knight & Davis achieve outstanding success in new Federal Reserve Bank Building." Unattributed typescript, probably intended for the Federal Reserve, in the collection of Mrs. William T. Warren Jr. and copy from Shirley Osband.

Warren, Knight & Davis, drawings for the Birmingham Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, in the collection of Robert M. Black, architect and successor to the firm. This collection also contains some miscellaneous drawings by Toombs *et al.* for the pre-1958 alterations.

Willis, H. Parker, "The Federal Reserve System—A retrospect of eight years," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 4, December 1922, pp. 553-584.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: less than 1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	517600	3708570	3		
2				4		

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Linda Nelson (with AHC reviewer Christy Anderson) date July 3, 2001

organization FuturePast street & number 4700 Seventh Court South

city or town Birmingham state Alabama zip code 35222 telephone (205) 592-6610

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Sloss Family Investments LLC

street & number 4000 Ridge Park, 1130 22nd Street South telephone (205) 802-2100

city or town Birmingham State AL zip code 35205

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 22

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

Boundary Description

The buildings of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham branch, sit on lots 5 through 10 of Block 61 in downtown Birmingham. See accompanying Jefferson County tax map 22-36-2-27-4.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated property are specifically the six lots indicated, which are those historically associated with the buildings themselves; they include some areas for vehicle access and parking. The Federal Reserve had purchased the entire block over time, clearing it of all but parking. The Bank sold the property to All Right Parking in 2000; All Right Parking subsequently sold the block to Sloss Real Estate Group for redevelopment.

The buildings' relationship to the entire built block, prior to the demolition of everything else on it, is shown on the accompanying copy of the 1962 Sanborn map. The present footprint on the empty block is indicated on the more recent Birmingham planimetric map.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Page 23
Photographs

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Jefferson County, Alabama

Description of Photographs

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch, 1926 building and 1958 addition, from NW corner of intersection of Fifth Avenue North and 18th Street.

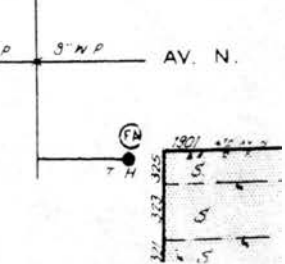
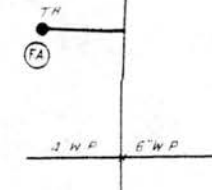
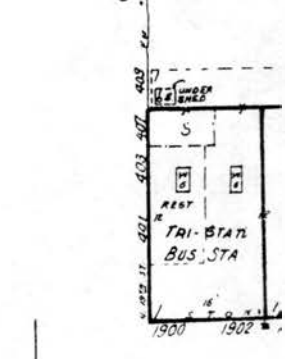
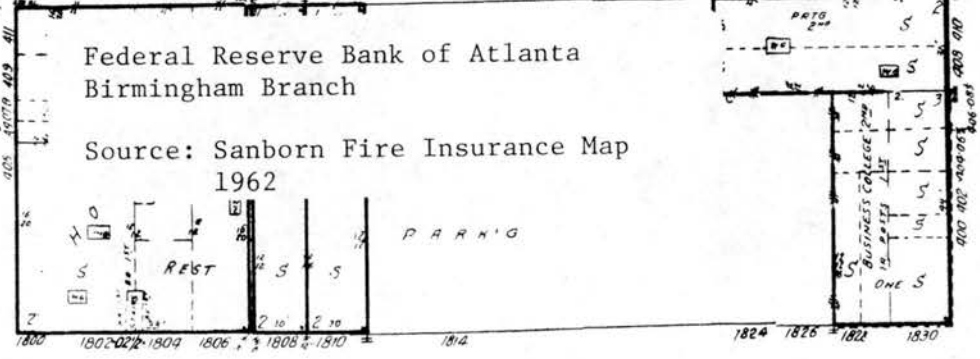
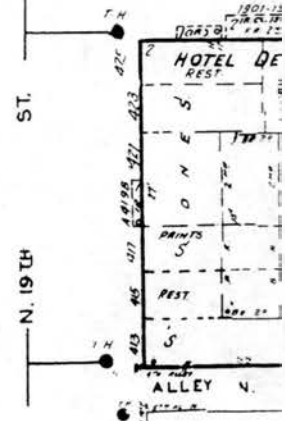
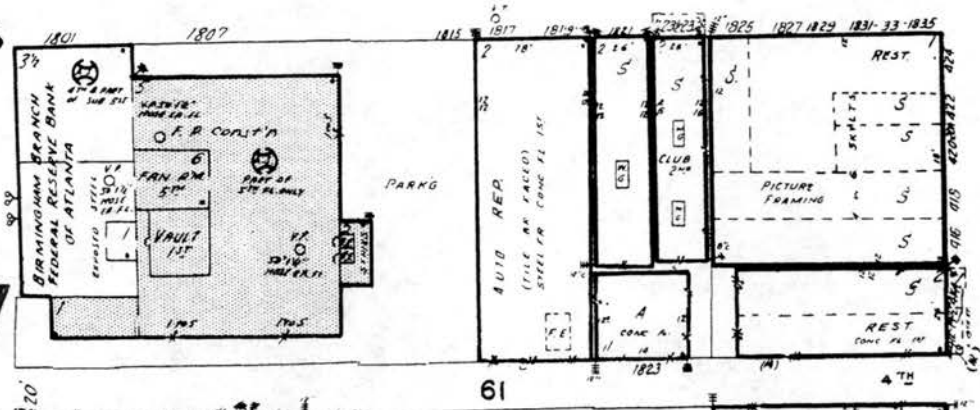
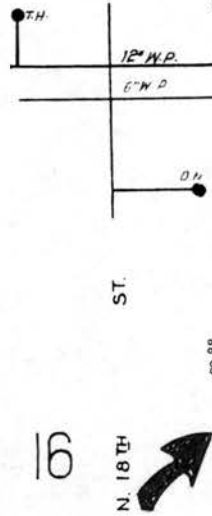
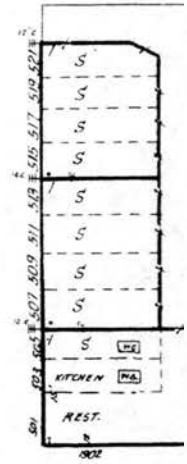
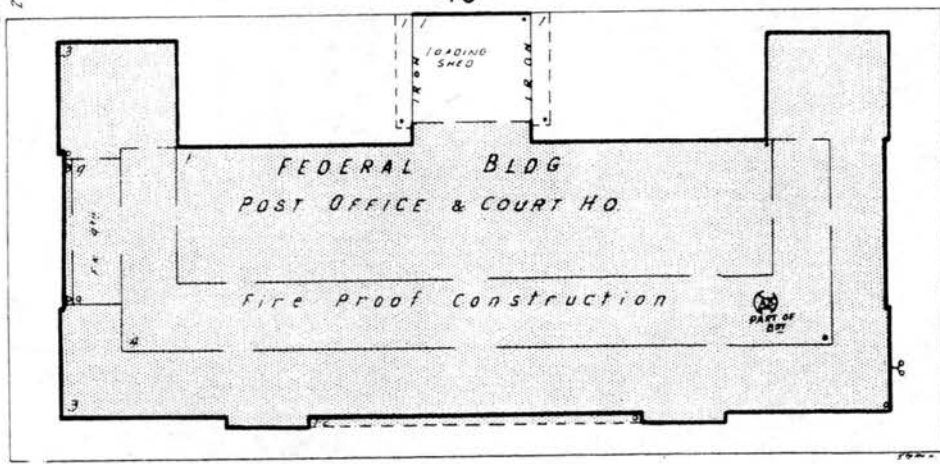
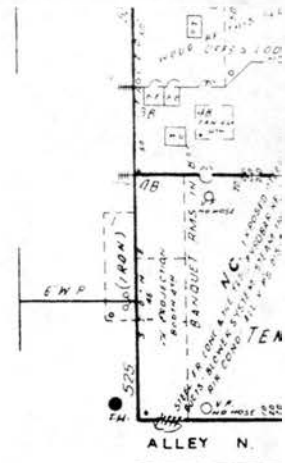
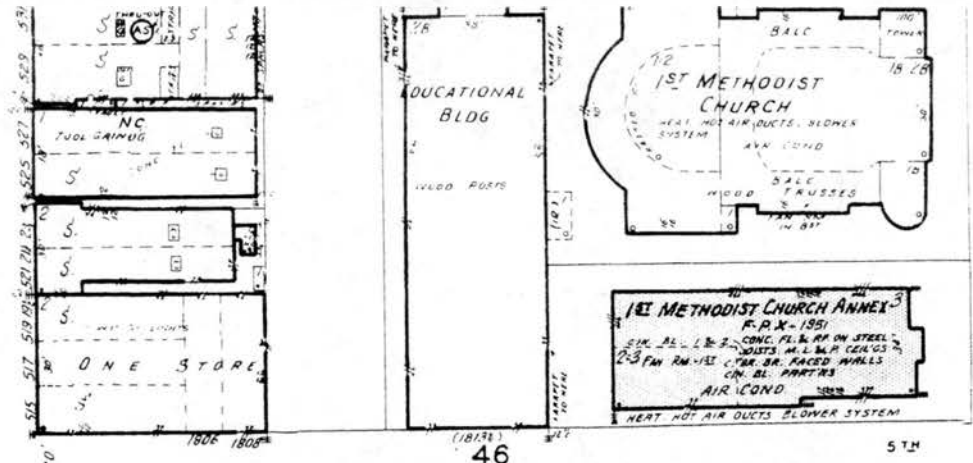
1926 Building:

2. 1926 building, from NW.
3. West elevation, from W.
4. West elevation, detail showing column-and-void effect of windows and piers, from NNW.
5. Entry bay detail, from NNW.
6. Detail of upper facade decoration and title sign, from NNW.
7. Detail of roof.
8. Lobby, looking toward passage into 1958 addition, from NW.
9. Lobby, detail looking east obliquely across entry.
10. First floor, doorway of vault, from ENE (18th Street windows at right of photograph).
11. Second floor, general space at location where old mezzanine began, by corner pier, from E.
12. Fourth floor under roof, general space, from NW.
13. Sidewalk view of two portions of the building, looking east along Fifth Avenue North.
14. Street view of two portions of building, looking SW across Fifth Avenue North (Hugo Black U.S. Courthouse in background).

1958 Addition:

15. Rear of addition, from S.
16. East elevation and portion of street front, from NE.
17. Detail of street-front connection of 1926 building and 1958 addition, from NNW.
18. Detail of street-front fenestration, from NNW.
19. First floor, entry into addition from rear alley, from SE.
20. Second floor, currency-handling area, from SE.
21. Third floor, check-processing area with raised floor, from NE.
22. Fourth floor, employee dining room, from NE.
23. Fourth floor, kitchen, from N.
24. Fifth floor, general space, from WSW (rear alley windows in right of photograph).

All photographs January, 2002.



Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1962

*See New
Photo.*



Tax Assessor's file, Birmingham Public Library Archives, c. 1938

Site of 1958 addition: Tax Assessor's file, Birmingham Public Library
Archives, c. 1938





Phillips Collection, Birmingham Public Library Archives, 1930s

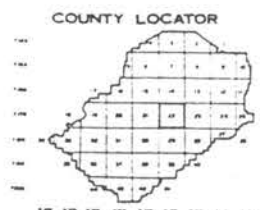


Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
 Birmingham Branch
 1801 Fifth Avenue North
 Birmingham, Alabama

390

OWNERSHIP MAP
 COUNTY OF
JEFFERSON
 PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION
 OF THE
 STATE OF ALABAMA
 DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
 AD VALOREM TAX DIVISION

PREPARED BY
COLE LAYER TRUMBLE CO.
 ATLANTA, GEORGIA
 TAX MAPS ENGINEERS
 SCALE 1" = 100'
 DATE OF MAP 1/21/74 DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY 12/1/73



TOWNSHIP LOCATOR
 (INDEX TO 1" = 400' & 1" = 300' MAPPINGS)

6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
18	17	16	15	14	13
19	20	21	22	23	24
30	29	28	27	26	25
3	32	33	34	35	36

SUB-SHEET INDEX

28-4	29-3	29-4
30-1	30-2	30-3
30-4	30-5	30-6

LEGEND

STATE LINE	---	AREA (FROM DEED)	10.8 A
COUNTY LINE	---	AREA (CALCULATED)	10.8 A (1)
CORPORATION LINE	---	DIMENSION (FROM DEED)	10.8
DISTRICT LINE	---	DIMENSION (SCALED)	10.8 (1)
ROAD R/W	---	WATER	
TRAVELED ROAD	---	INTERSTATE HIGHWAY	5
RAILROAD R/W	---	U.S. HIGHWAY	50
PROPERTY LINE	---	STATE HIGHWAY	1
LAND HOOD	---	COUNTY HIGHWAY	2
INTERIOR TRACT LINE OR ORIGINAL TRACT LINE	---	ROADS OF STREETS BY NAME	
SUBDIVISION LOT NUMBER	29	MAJOR TRANSMISSION LINES (POWER, GAS, ETC.)	
PARCEL NUMBER	15	SECTION CORNERS	11 U
BLOCK LOTS (WHERE APPLICABLE)	---	STATE PLANE COORDINATES	11 U
OWNERSHIP MAP BLOCK (WHERE APPLICABLE)	---		
CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, CEMETERIES, AIRPORTS, GOVERNMENT LANDS, ETC.	---	BY NAME	

REVISIONS
 CHANGES OR ADDITIONS
 DATE BY

SECTIONS NW1/4 36
 TSP 17 SOUTH, RANGE 3 WEST
 01-22-36-2
 MAP NUMBER

2236-2



BIRMINGHAM BRANCH
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Alabama

1. FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA, BIRMINGHAM
BRANCH
2. JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALABAMA
3. PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA NELSON
4. ORIGINAL NEGATIVE ON FILE WITH PHOTOGRAPHER
57-11482 NDN 898
5. DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 2001
6. VIEW: NW CORNER OF BIRMINGHAM INTERSECTION OF
FIFTH AVENUE NORTH AND 18TH STREET
7. PHOTOGRAPH #1



BIRMINGHAM BRANCH
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA

ONE WAY

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

2

1. FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA, BIRMINGHAM
BRANCH
2. JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALABAMA
3. PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA NELSON
4. ORIGINAL NEGATIVE ON FILE WITH PHOTOGRAPHER
58-1-82 NDNN 898
5. DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 2001
6. VIEW: 1926 BUILDING, FROM NW
7. PHOTOGRAPH #2



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

3

1. FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA, BIRMINGHAM
BRANCH
2. JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALABAMA
3. PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA NELSON IN 898
4. ORIGINAL NEGATIVE ON FILE WITH PHOTOGRAPHER
5. DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 2001
6. VIEW: WEST ELEVATION, FROM WEST
7. PHOTOGRAPH #3



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

4

1. FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA, BIRMINGHAM BRANCH
2. JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALABAMA
3. PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA NELSON
4. ORIGINAL NEGATIVE ON FILE WITH PHOTOGRAPHER
5. DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 2001
6. VIEW: WEST ELEVATION, FROM NNW
7. PHOTOGRAPH #4

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA



1. FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA,
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH
2. JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALABAMA
3. PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA NELSON
4. ORIGINAL NEGATIVE ON FILE WITH PHOTOGRAPHER
5. PHOTOGRAPH DATE: 2001
6. VIEW: NNW
7. PHOTOGRAPH No. 5

Fed. Reserve Bank of
Birmingham, Ala.
Atlanta 5

INCHAM
L. RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

6

1. FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA, BIRMINGHAM
BRANCH
2. JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALABAMA
3. PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA NELSON
4. ORIGINAL NEGATIVE ON FILE WITH PHOTOGRAPHER
5. DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 2001
6. VIEW: NNW
7. PHOTOGRAPH No. 6



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

7

1. FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA, BIRMINGHAM
BRANCH
2. JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALABAMA
3. PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA NELSON
4. ORIGINAL NEGATIVE ON FILE WITH PHOTOGRAPHER
5. DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 2001
6. VIEW: DETAIL OF ROOF
7. PHOTOGRAPH No. 7



1. FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA,
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH
2. JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALABAMA
3. PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA NELSON
4. ORIGINAL NEGATIVE ON FILE WITH PHOTOGRAPHER
5. DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 2001
6. VIEW: NNW
7. PHOTOGRAPH No. 8

Fed. Reserve Bank of
Birmingham, Ala.
Atlanta 8



Fed. Reserve Bank of Atlanta 9
Birmingham, Ala.

1. FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA,
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH
2. JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALABAMA
3. PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA NELSON
4. Original & negative on file with
Photographer
5. Date of photograph: 2001
6. View: Lobby, detail looking east
obliquely across entry
7. Photograph No. 9



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

10

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographer: Lucinda & Nelson
4. Original & negative on file with photographer
5. Date of photographs: 2001
6. View: 1st floor, doorway of vault, from ENE
7. Photograph #10



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

11

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographer: Linda Wilson
4. Original negative on file with photographer
5. Date of photograph: 2001
6. View: Second floor, general space at location where old mezzanine began, by corner pier, from E.
7. Photograph No. 11



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

12

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographers: Linda & Nelson
4. Original negative on file with photographers
5. Date of photograph: 2001
6. View: Fourth floor, under roof, personal space, from NW
7. Photographs & No. 12



FOR LEASE

802-2100

BRASFIELD & GORRIE

SIDEWALK
CLOSED
PLEASE USE
OTHER SIDE

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

13

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham, Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographer: Linda & Nelson
4. Original negative on file with photographer
5. Date of photograph: 2001
6. View: Looking east along 5th Avenue. North
7. Photographs 470.13



BIRMINGHAM BRANCH
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ST. LOUIS

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ST. LOUIS
JOB SITE
1000 15th St. N.W.
Birmingham, AL 35203
Call 205-261-1234

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

14

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. Birmingham Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographs: Linda & Nelson
4. Original & negative on file with photographs
5. Date of photograph: 2001
6. View: Looking SW across 5th Avenue North
7. Photographs 4 to 14



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

15

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. Birmingham Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographer: Linda Nelson
4. Original negatives on file with photographer.
5. Date of photograph: 2001
6. View: Rear of 1958 addition from South
7. Photograph No. 15



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

16

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographer: Linda Y Nelson
4. Original negative on file with photographer
5. Date of photograph: 2001
6. View: East elevation and portion of street front, from NE
7. Photographer Y No. 16



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala

17

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographer: Linda Nelson
4. Original negative on file with photographer
5. Date of photograph: 2001
6. View: Detail of street-front connection of 1926 building and 1958 addition, from NNW
7. Photograph No. 17



1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta,
Birmingham Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographer: Linda Nelson
4. Original negative on file with photographer
5. Date of photograph: 2001
6. View: Detail of street-front fenestration,
from NNW
7. Photograph number: 18

Fed Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH
Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

19

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographer: Linda Wilson
4. Original negative on file with photographer
5. Date of photograph: 2001
6. View: First floor, entry into addition from rear alley, from SE
7. Photograph number: 19



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

20

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham
Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographers: Linda & Nelson
4. Original negative on file with photographer
5. Date of photograph: 2001
6. View: Second floor, from SE
7. Photograph 4 to 20



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

21

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham, Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographer: Linda & Nelson
4. Original negative located in photographer's files
5. DATE of photograph: 2001
6. View: Third floor, from NE
7. Photograph No. 21



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

22

1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham.
Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographer: Linda Nelson
52 11+02 NBNNH 090
4. Original negatives on file with photographer
5. Date of photographs: 2001
6. View: Fourth floor, from NE
7. Photographs 4 to 22



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

23

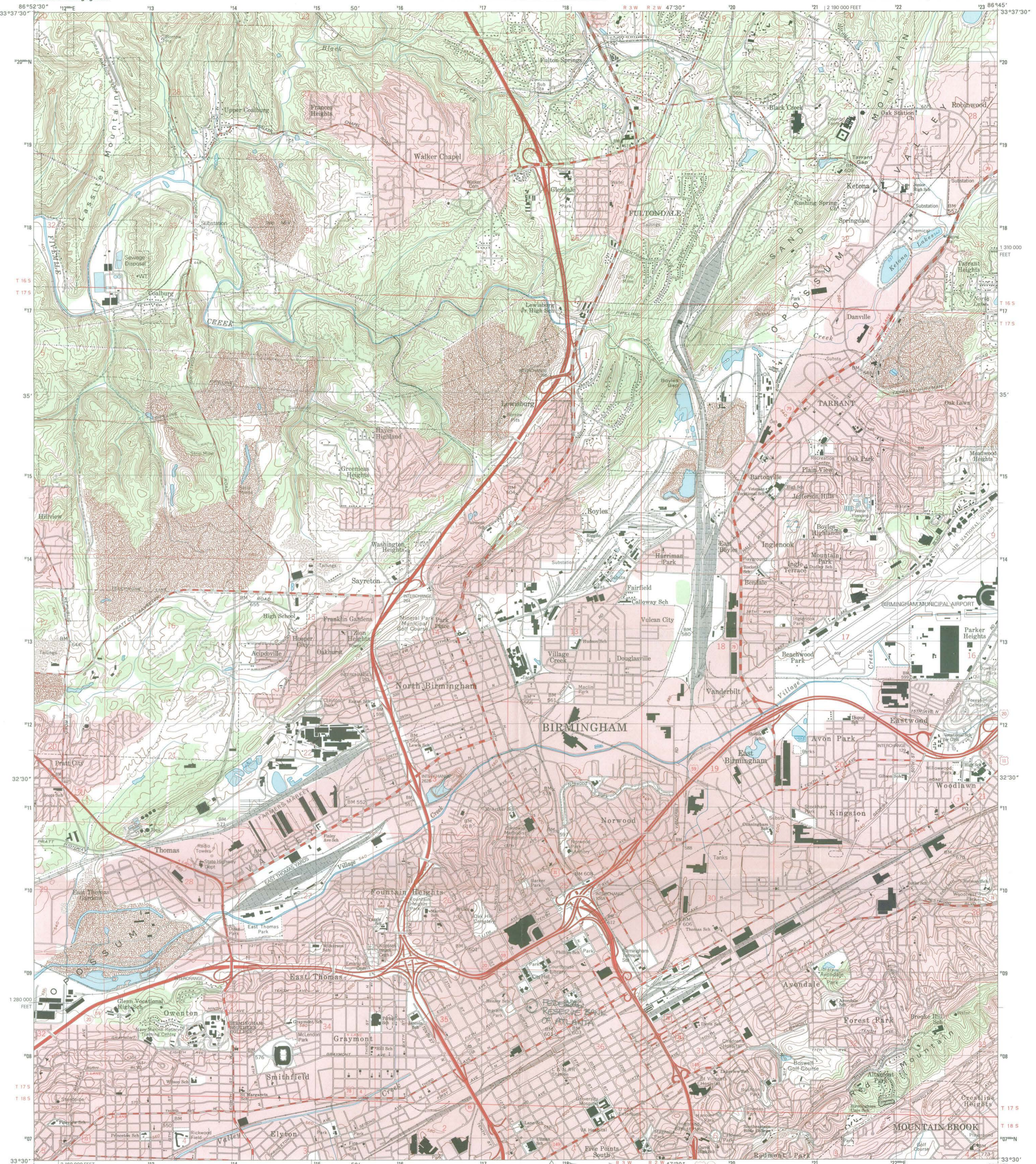
1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographers: Susida & Nelson
4. Original negative on file with photographs
5. Date of photographs: 2001
6. View: Fourth floor, from N.
7. Photographs & no.: 23



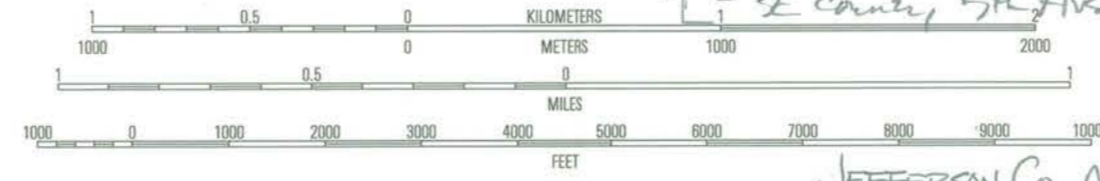
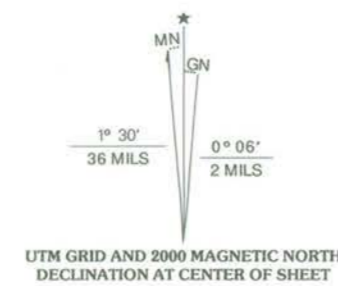
Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham, Ala.

24

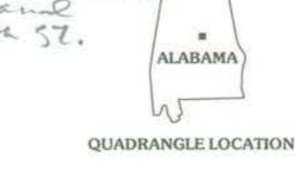
1. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. Birmingham Branch.
2. Jefferson County, Alabama
3. Photographers: Linda & Nelson
4. Original negative on file with photographs
5. Date of photographs: 2001
6. View: 5th floor, from WSW
7. Photograph No.: 24



Produced by the United States Geological Survey Topography compiled 1957. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1997 and other sources. Public Land Survey System and survey control current as of 1959. North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1 000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 16 10 000-foot ticks: Alabama Coordinate System of 1983 (west zone) North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software. There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map. Landmark buildings verified 1959.



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1983 TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U.S. Route
	State Route

ADJOINING 7.5' QUADRANGLE NAMES

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	

1 Brookside
2 Gardendale
3 Phenix
4 Adansville
5 Irondale
6 Bessemer
7 Birmingham South
8 Cahaba Heights

BIRMINGHAM NORTH, AL 1997 NIMA 3651 III SE-SERIES V844

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



National Register of Historic Places

Note to the record

Additional Documentation: 2014

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY NAME: Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta--Birmingham Branch

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ALABAMA, Jefferson

DATE RECEIVED: 9/21/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/07/13
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03000230

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 11.7.13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Additional Documentation Approved

RECOM./CRITERIA accept

REVIEWER Gordon Beall

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 11.7.13

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta Birmingham Branch
Name of Property Jefferson, AL
County and State N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)


Section number 3 Page 1

1. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local
Applicable National Register Criteria:
 X A B X C D

	Executive Director	September 13, 2013
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
<u>Alabama Historical Commission</u>		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	

Signature of commenting official:	Date

Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham Branch

Name of Property
Jefferson, AL

County and State
N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Update of the Period of Significance

The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch, was listed in the National Register in 2003. The nomination documented the period of significance for the resource as 1926 to 1952. This amendment expands that period until 1958, the year in which a major addition to the original 1926 building was completed.

The nomination appears to have anticipated the potential for a subsequent reevaluation of the period of significance once the 50-year milestone for the addition was reached. The description of the building begins:

The present Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta in downtown Birmingham (recently vacated for new suburban quarters) is comprised of the original building completed in late 1926 and the later addition completed in late 1958. Whereas the original building and its addition are architecturally very different, in terms of bank operations and mechanical systems they formed a functional whole, necessitated at that time in the Bank's development by vastly expanded post-War responsibilities. In visual terms, the contrast between the two structures is enhanced by the 15-foot setback of the 1958 building along the 5th Avenue North facade.

The nomination's justification of the period of significance continues:

Birmingham's expansion period began in 1952 with purchase of the lot to its east. This latter year, therefore, was chosen to end the period because it represents the beginning of the building's plans for a modernized plant and condition.

The addition was completed in September 1958. While the architectural significance of the addition is not established by the nomination, the functional and historical relationship of the addition is clearly recognized both by the historical narrative and in the selection of the ending date for the period of significance.

The nomination continues:

The 1958 addition is typical of those built by the Fed throughout the region around this time and does not possess architectural significance, nor does it have a sufficiently distinctive history to justify a less-than-50-years argument for significance.

The addition is now fifty-five years old and therefore it is no longer required to meet the more rigid test of significance for buildings less than fifty years old. It was clearly built to continue and to expand the historical function of the 1926 building and the original nomination established that plans to modernize the building were part of the building's significance. Accordingly, now that the fifty-year milestone has been reached, the addition represents the physical expression of that expansion and modernization planning.

1958 is justified as the end of the period of significance for the resource as it represents the completion date of the addition and pre-dates a subsequent separate remodeling of the 1926

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Birmingham Branch

Name of Property
Jefferson, AL

County and State
N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

building that commenced in 1959 and that compromised its architectural character by altering its historic storefront. The original architectural appearance of the 1926 building served as the basis for its architectural significance as documented in the nomination. According to the nomination, the 1926 building's architectural significance is "based on the building's embodiment of 20th-century classicism combined with Art Deco style, a modern synthesis that maintained Classicism's expressive ideal of safe money and good government." The alterations made to the 1926 building in 1959 and afterward were not documented by the nomination as being related to the architectural significance of the building. Rather, the "removal of some of the bank's more classical decorative elements such as the in antis columns, the bronze doors and the window grills, has detracted from but not destroyed the quality of the building" rendered the building "a good deal less triumphant, than previously."

Therefore, 1958 represents an appropriate cut-off for the period of significance, as no exterior changes were made to the 1958 addition after that date and it predates the incompatible alterations to the 1926 building.

National Register of Historic Places
Memo to File

Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta--Birmingham Branch

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ALABAMA, Jefferson

DATE RECEIVED: 3/06/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/02/03
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/18/03 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/20/03
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03000230

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Birmingham Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta is locally significant under Criterion A for its association with commerce and the development of the Federal Reserve banking system, and also under Criterion C for its Neoclassical and Art Deco-influenced design. Built in 1926, the building was a direct manifestation of increasing federal involvement in fiscal policy. Its designed incorporates classically inspired expressions of authority and avant-garde elements of Art Deco design. The large 1958 addition does not contribute to the significance of the building nor prevent the original bank building from conveying its significance under criteria A and C. The addition is set back from the street and is clearly differentiated from the original building, which retains integrity and reflects the history of banking and commercial development in early twentieth-century Birmingham.

RECOM./CRITERIA A, C

REVIEWER Daniel Vivian

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE (202) 354-2252

DATE 4/18/03

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/ see attached SLR Y/

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1900-1992

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September 11, 2002

SEP 17 2002

Dr. Lee Warner
State Historic Preservation Officer
Alabama Historical Commission
468 South Perry Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900

Ala. Historical Commission

**RE: National Register Nomination for The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta,
Birmingham Branch**

Dear Lee:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Birmingham Historical Commission, as its Chairman. At the September 10, 2002 meeting of the Birmingham Historical Commission we received a presentation and considered the nomination of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch. Our meeting was preceded by public notice published in The Birmingham News on September 6, 2002.

We examined this nomination in detail and, following discussion, a motion was made which was unanimously approved to recommend the registry of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch on the National Register of Historic Places. We are enthusiastic in our recommendation for the inclusion of this listing.

Yours very truly,



Samuel H. Frazier

SHF/anc

cc: The Honorable Bernard Kincaid, Mayor, City of Birmingham



**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

BERNARD KINCAID, MAYOR

RECEIVED

SEP 18 2002

Ala. Historical Commission

September 16, 2002

Dr. Lee Warner, Executive Director
Alabama Historical Commission
468 South Perry Street
Montgomery, Alabama 35130-0900

**Re: National Register Nomination for the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta,
Birmingham Branch**

Dear Dr. Warner:

As the Mayor of the City of Birmingham, it gives me great pleasure to support the nomination of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch, to the National Register of Historic Places. In my opinion, the nomination meets the criteria for listing in the National Register.

This building is an important part of both our local and national heritage. Therefore, I enthusiastically recommend that the Federal Reserve Bank be properly recognized and preserved for present and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bernard Kincaid".

Bernard Kincaid
Mayor



STATE OF ALABAMA
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
468 SOUTH PERRY STREET
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-0900



FRANK W. WHITE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TEL: 334-242-3184
FAX: 334-240-3477

September 13, 2013

Ms. Carol Shull
Keeper of the National Register
U. S. Department of the Interior, NPS
Cultural Resources
National Register, History & Education Programs
1201 "I" Street NW (2280)
Washington, D. C. 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find an amendment and its supporting documentation for the:

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch
Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama
Reference No.: #03000230

03000230

The original nomination was listed on April 18, 2003. Your consideration of the enclosed amendment is appreciated.

Truly Yours,

Frank W. White
Executive Director

FWW/sme/nw

Enclosures