

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

JUN 6 1978

DATE ENTERED

DEC 1978

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**NAME**

HISTORIC

Southern Bell Telephone Company Building

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

51 Ivy Street, N. E.

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5th - Wyche Fowler

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

CODE

13

COUNTY

Fulton

CODE

121 ✓

**CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY**

\_\_\_ DISTRICT

 BUILDING(S)

\_\_\_ STRUCTURE

\_\_\_ SITE

\_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

\_\_\_ PUBLIC

 PRIVATE

\_\_\_ BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

\_\_\_ IN PROCESS

\_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS** OCCUPIED

\_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED

\_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE** YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_\_ AGRICULTURE

 COMMERCIAL

\_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL

\_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_\_ GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL

\_\_\_ MILITARY

\_\_\_ MUSEUM

\_\_\_ PARK

\_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_\_ RELIGIOUS

\_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC

\_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION

\_\_\_ OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company

STREET &amp; NUMBER

51 Ivy Street, N. E.

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Fulton County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

260 Pryor Street, S. W.

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Atlanta Urban Design Commission Survey of Historic Sites, Structures, &amp; Districts

DATE

1972

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Atlanta Urban Design Commission, City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE  
Georgia

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Southern Bell Telephone Company Building, erected in the modernistic style in 1929, has the appearance of having been chopped from a single block of material. While both vertical and horizontal additions have been added over the years, the present building is only about half as tall as the structure originally planned by the architects, Marye, Alger and Vinour. The original sketches of the structure depict a tall building, of some twenty-five stories, with many setbacks stepping back from a wide lower section to a central tower at the top. The building as it stands today is fourteen stories high.

"As in any design which has, in effect, been cut off at the middle, the Southern Bell Building appears truncated and incomplete." A massive solid in form, the Bell Building has little or no facade articulation with the exception of that provided by the window openings themselves and a sparingly used, incised or low relief ornamentation around the windows and main entrance; today this decoration can still be seen at the base and around the windows of the fourteenth floor. This ornamentation, often geometric in character, is best seen in the Southern Bell Building around the main entrance arch on Ivy Street. Here, a two-story high corbelled arch entrance cuts through the flat plane of the front of the building to reveal, recessed into the building's base, a pair of bronze double doors. Around the entrance are numerous low relief ornaments ranging from stylistic representations of animals and people to simple geometric patterns. All of the decoration has been executed in such a manner as to emphasize verticality, a quality normally stressed in this style of building.

The exterior of the Southern Bell Building is sheathed in limestone and almost has the appearance of concrete from a distance. The roof of the building is now occupied almost completely by telephonic communications equipment.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
___1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1929

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Marye, Alger and Vinour

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Southern Bell Telephone Company Building in Atlanta is significant as the only good example in Atlanta of the modernistic style. Designed in 1927-1928 by Marye, Alger and Vinour, this building was "one of Atlanta's first 'really modernistic structures' according to Elinor Hillyer, writing in the Atlanta Journal Magazine on February 16, 1930. She also called it 'a pioneer of the strictly modern manner' and a striking contrast to the 'manifold oriental splendors of the Shrine Mosque and Fox Theatre' which had just been finished" by the same architectural firm.

The present building, although added on to over the years, both horizontally and vertically, is only about half as tall as the building originally planned by Oliver Vinour, who designed the exterior, and P. Thornton Marye. The architect's original rendering "depicted a tall building with many setbacks stepping back from a wide lower section to a central tower at the top. The original building (1929) was six stories high; following additions in 1947, 1948, and 1963, the building reached fourteen stories, the present height. The architect's original sketches show a structure twenty-five stories in height." The massing of the structure successively "stepping back" at succeeding higher levels, was meant to produce a pyramidal effect.

True to most business and communications facilities of the time, the original concept of the Southern Bell Building was to provide working space for the employees engaged in a variety of tasks as well as room for some telephone equipment. Originally, ten floors of heavy equipment and fifteen floors of office space were planned for the building. The structure today is occupied primarily by electronic equipment, not people as intended. The roof is also occupied by transmitting devices. The result is that, due to the increased loads imposed on the structure and foundations by the "change of occupancy", it is extremely doubtful that the architect's original plan for a soaring tower will ever be realized. The footings of the building will simply not support any additional weight.

While the present building has been enlarged several times, with each addition attempting to follow the architect's original scheme and thus slowly but surely working towards the completion of the initial building concept, the proposed structure according to J. A. Finch, a local architect, "would probably have never been any more satisfactory than the present building." However, Harold Bush-Brown, Director of the School of Architecture at Georgia Tech at the time the Bell Building

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Lyon, Elizabeth A., Business Buildings in Atlanta, 1865-1930: A Study in Urban Growth and Form, Ph.D. Dissertation, (Emory University, 1971).  
Garrett, Franklin M., Atlanta and Environs, Vol. II, (New York: 1954).  
Finch, J. H., "Classification and Description of Historic Atlanta Business Buildings," Seminar Paper (Georgia State University, 1972).

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Northwest Atlanta

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1 1 6 7 4 2 1 1 7 0 3 7 3 7 9 4 0  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B           
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the northeast corner of Ivy Street and Auburn Avenue and running north along the east side of Ivy Street 195 feet to the southwest corner of the adjacent

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

H. Lee Dunagan, Consultant, Atlanta Urban Design Commission; Elizabeth A. Lyon

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Section March 19, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

270 Washington Street, S. W.

(404) 656-2840

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Atlanta

Georgia 30334

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE X

LOCAL   

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Elizabeth A. Lyon*

TITLE

Elizabeth A. Lyon

DATE

5/25/78

Acting State Historic Preservation Officer

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12/1/78

ATTEST:

Bill Leberich, Sr.

DATE

Dec 1 1978

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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was erected, called the structure "an architecture expressive of our own civilization..." and went on to say that the building was typical of the modernistic school.

Later additions, especially the new equipment tower on the top, constitute intrusions to the original design. In spite of these features, this building is the only fully typical, extant Atlanta example of the modernistic style. Both the finely incised ornament and the pyramidal form are unique to the city and as such contribute to needed visual rarity downtown.

The only good extant example in Atlanta of the modernistic style, and the only extant example of the "pyramidal" approach to building form in the city, the Southern Bell Telephone Company Building has long been and will continue to be a landmark in Atlanta.

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**CONTINUATION SHEET** Bibliographical  
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Consultation with Dr. Elizabeth A. Lyon, Chairman, Atlanta Urban Design Commission  
Advisory Committee on Historic Sites, Structures and Districts.

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Verbal Boundary Description: (Continued)

property; thence east along the south line of said property 251.64 feet, more or less, to a point; thence south from that point 196.43 feet to Auburn Avenue; thence west along the north side of Auburn Avenue 251.42 feet.

This land was deeded to the current owners October 25, 1928, and recorded in Fulton County, Georgia, Deed Book 1182, pp. 163-165, November 5, 1928.