

An Architectural Guide to  
**Downtown Ensley**



**David B. Schneider**

Schneider Historic Preservation, LLC  
For The

**City of Birmingham**

in collaboration with

**Main Street Birmingham, Inc.**

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*David B. Schneider*

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Cover Photo Courtesy Birmingham Public Library Archives, Catalog #1556.27.76

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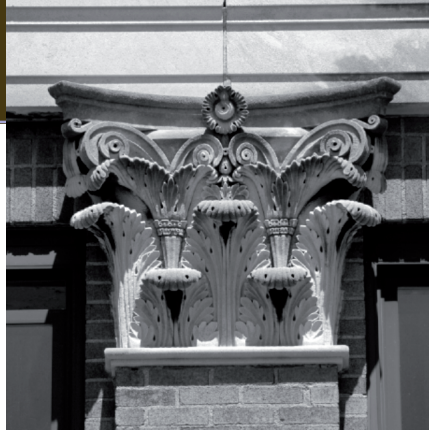
## Downtown Ensley



*Downtown Ensley, circa 1954*

Courtesy Birmingham Public Library Archives, Catalog #1556.34.35

# Introduction



*“Out where the steel begins – Ensley, hustling, bustling community with a big job...Where people work with roaring furnaces and piping hot metals...Where they live and trade...Where they look at towering smoke stacks with pride and watch the endless loads of Ensley-made steel pull out for other plants where the steel is turned into finished product...Ensley of furnace fame ...filled with civic pride...and wonderful people!”*

Joe Winters, “Neighborhood Airview,” [The Birmingham News](#), October 22, 1950

The Downtown Ensley Historic District is historically significant as the commercial core of the Birmingham suburb of Ensley. The town was founded in 1887 to service the workers of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company’s Ensley Works, then the largest of TCI’s early facilities in the Birmingham District. The community developed as a substantial self-governing town that was incorporated in 1899 and merged with Birmingham in 1909. The neighborhood’s surviving historic resources illustrate much of its late-nineteenth through mid-twentieth century development and are architecturally important as a representative collection of period building styles dating from circa 1885 through 1960.






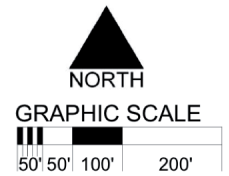
# Downtown Ensley Historic District

Numbers Correspond to Resource Inventory Included as the Appendix

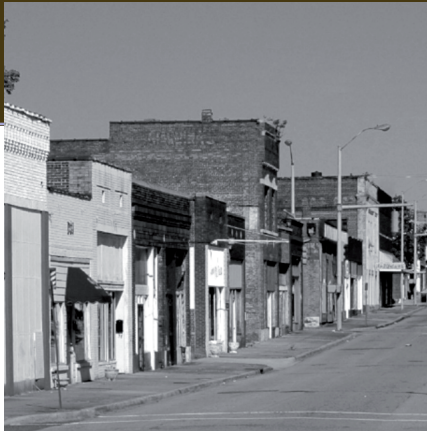


## KEY

-  Contributing
-  Noncontributing
-  District Boundary



# Setting



Downtown Ensley has a regular street grid with a series of lettered avenues, Avenues A through I, running parallel to the railroad and a series of streets, 17th through 21st, running perpendicular to the avenues. Street names typically include the suffix “Ensley” to differentiate them from numbered streets in downtown Birmingham and other urban neighborhoods. Nineteenth Street was historically the commercial spine of the downtown area until an overpass was constructed over the rail lines at 20th Street in 1954. Since that time, 20th Street has become a major six-lane arterial connecting Interstate 59 to the Sherman Heights neighborhood and other destinations west of the railroad. Until recent years, the extensive facilities of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company’s Ensley steel works extended along the west side of the railroad tracks. All that remains of the plant now are a series of smokestacks that still dominate the Ensley skyline and some scattered buildings.

The district is primarily commercial, with 123 (92%) of its contributing resources and twenty-seven (95%) of its noncontributing resources in that use. Remaining historic uses include one industrial building that was later converted into shop space, one theatre, four churches, a clubhouse, and two residences. Other non-historic uses include one government office building and one clubhouse.

With the exception of the residences, buildings typically cover much of their sites, especially in the densely developed commercial core where party walls are common. Other than vacant lots, the district has no public open space. Trees are widely scattered throughout the district and there is minimal landscaping. Interiors of most of the commercial blocks have parking areas that are typically paved with asphalt or gravel. The two residences are sited close to the street on small rectangular open lots with casual plantings.





*Top: The smokestacks of the former TCI Ensley Works still dominate the skyline adjacent to downtown Ensley; the 20th Street viaduct shifted the major thoroughfare through downtown from 19th Street to 20th Street.*



*Left: Streetscape along Avenue F.*

*Bottom: Streetscapes along 19th Street.*



# Building Types & Styles



The surviving buildings in the Downtown Ensley Historic District reflect its historical development as a large suburban community from circa 1890 to circa 1960. The earliest resource in the district is the elaborate Victorian commercial building at 420 17th Street (Resource #2), thought to have been built circa 1890 as a saloon catering to workers at the Ensley Mill. Historic commercial buildings are primarily concentrated within the town's traditional commercial core along 19th and 20th Streets and Avenue E, with additional resources along 17th, 18th, and 21st Streets and Avenues B through I.

Downtown Ensley retains four historically significant religious buildings. Architecturally, the largest and most elaborate are the Gothic Revival style First Methodist Episcopal Church South (circa 1920, Resource #132, now Soul's Harvest Deliverance Center) and the Ensley Baptist Church (1924, Resource #112, now Abyssinia Missionary Baptist Church). The other two church buildings include the Ensley First Presbyterian Church at 616 21st Street (circa 1920, Resource #60, now A.C.T.S. Ministries, Inc.) and the Ensley Christian Church at 2101 Avenue F (1914, Resource #129, now God's House).

Only two dwellings are located in the district: a one story folk Victorian style house at 1800 Avenue D (circa 1895, Resource #66, and later converted into a restaurant) and 2310 Avenue E, a two-story pyramidal form late Victorian style dwelling built circa 1900 (Resource #114).

Commercial buildings in Downtown Ensley were typically built between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most are relatively modest one, two, or three story buildings that are consistent with general stylistic trends that can be defined as Late Folk Victorian, Early Twentieth Century Commercial, and Post-War Modern. Folk Victorian style commercial buildings in Ensley are typically





*Victorian commercial styles often featured elaborate ornamentation such as the use of decorative brickwork. Most examples in Ensley are more modest in detail.*



*Early 20th Century commercial buildings often feature patterned brickwork with little or no relief, decorative inserts, and the use of prism glass in transoms.*

relatively plain architecturally with the exception of their decorative corbelled parapets, the frequent use of arched upper level windows, and the occasional use of other embellishments such as decorative brick banding, pilasters, etc. The buildings at 513 17th Street (circa 1905, Resource #5), the Birmingham Railway, Light, & Power Co. Building (circa 1915, Resource #94), and 2020 Avenue E (circa 1915, Resource #94) (Resource #27) are good examples of typical Folk Victorian style commercial buildings.

The Early Twentieth Century Commercial style developed in America between circa 1900 and 1930 largely in response to the often highly ornamented styles that had been popular during the Victorian era. Features common to the style include patterned masonry wall surfaces, shaped parapets frequently with projecting cornices, the use of cast or terra cotta as accent materials, and generally flat wall surfaces. The majority of the commercial buildings in Downtown Ensley fall under this architectural style. Representative examples 515 19th Street (circa 1925, Resource #29), 713-715 19th Street (circa 1925, Resource #45), the Echols & Angwin Funeral Home (1924, Resource #116, now Perryman Serenity Funeral Chapel), 1715 Avenue F (circa 1927, Resource #117), and the Waters Building (circa 1927, Resource #146).



*Post-war Modern style buildings are typically more streamlined in style, with minimal ornamentation, expanses of glass, and often overhanging flat roofs.*





*Left: Neoclassical style buildings feature symmetrical facades with the use of classical columns or pilasters.*

*Top: The Gothic Revival style can be identified by the use of pointed arches, buttresses, and other Gothic style details.*

The Post-War Modern style became popular after World War II. These buildings are typically quite austere in their use of ornamentation, typically relying on broad expanses of glass or plain wall surfaces and often signage to define their architectural character. Examples in Ensley include 501 19th Street (circa 1955, Resource #5), the First National Bank (1960, Resource #77), the Liberty National Bank Building (circa 1955, Resource #87), Berthon's Dry Cleaners (circa 1925, altered circa 1960, Resource #109), and the Alabama Power Co. Building (1959, Resource #131).

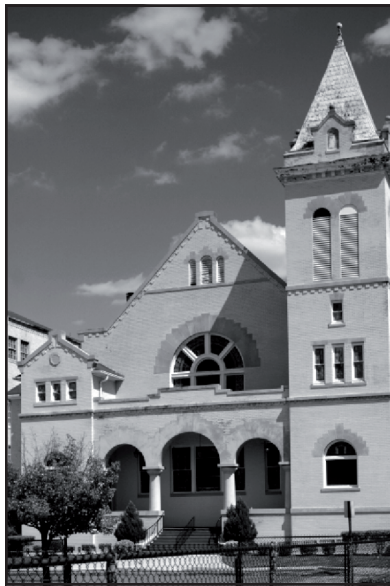
There are also a number of buildings in Ensley that fall within within the major American commercial architectural styles. Classical Revival style buildings can be identified by their use of architectural details common to earlier periods of architecture, including pedimented gables and classical order columns. The Ensley Christian Church, 2011 Avenue F (1914, Resource #129) is a good example. Closely related in stylistic detailing are Neoclassical style buildings. The Neoclassical style was popular between circa 1900 and the 1940s and was inspired by the Beaux-Arts style exhibited at the Columbian Exposition of 1893. Typical stylistic details include the use of classical symmetry, full-height columns or colonnades, and ornamentation including dentil cornices and parapets resembling balustrades. Ensley examples include the Kress Building (circa 1925, Resource #18), F.W. Woolworth Building (circa 1925, Resource #23), the Bank of Ensley (1919, Resource #24), and the Birmingham-Ensley Land Co. Building (1927-1928, Resource #48),

Gothic Revival architecture also is reflective of the older Gothic style and was commonly used in church and school architecture from the late nineteenth through the mid twentieth centuries. Common features include asymmetrical facades, pointed-arched windows, Gothic arches and/or the use of buttresses, and steeply pitched roofs. The Ensley Baptist Church (1925, Resource # 112) is a good example. Roman architectural patterns were also imitated in the Romanesque Revival Style. This style is typified by the use of asymmetrical facades with varying textures and materials (typically stone and brick), round arches over windows and entrances, massive masonry walls, and frequently corner

towers with hipped or conical roofs. The First Methodist Episcopal Church (1920, Resource #132) is a good example of this style

The Field/Knapp/Ellis Building (circa 1910, Resource # 31), the Ensley Theatre (1927, Resource # 86), and the commercial building at 2015 Avenue E (circa 1927, Resource # 93) are examples of the Mediterranean Revival style. Architecturally, these buildings are based on Spanish, Latin American, or California Mission prototypes. Common details include the use of stucco, clay tile roofs, shaped parapets, and other Mediterranean details.

The Ramsay-McCormack Building (1929-1930, Resource #82), Ensley's most prominent landmark and its only skyscraper, is an example of the Art Deco style. Art Deco derives its name from the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs and Industriels Modernes, held in Paris 1925, which exhibited designs that sought to reflect the modern machine age. In architecture, this is reflected in streamlined designs with stylized architectural motifs.



*Top-Left: Note the use of rounded arches and the use of brick and stone in this Romanesque Revival style church. Top Right: The Mediterranean Revival style uses architectural motifs based in Spanish or Southwestern architecture. Bottom: The Art Deco style is more streamlined and stylized in its use of detail.*

# The Buildings



The following pages contain photographs and descriptions of many of the more notable buildings within downtown Ensley. A complete listing of all buildings included within the Downtown Ensley historic district is included in the Appendix. The names used are typically the historic name or simply an indication that an unnamed resource was historically used as a commercial building, a house, etc.



## Saloon/Commercial Building

420 17th Street • Resource #2 • circa 1890

Local tradition holds that this building was constructed circa 1890 as a saloon. The 1902 Sanborn map indicates that the first floor was in use by a store by that time. Although it has lost its original windows, the elaborate brickwork of this late Victorian style building is particularly notable.



Photo at Left: Jefferson County Board of Equalization photo courtesy of the Archives Department, Birmingham Public Library

## Christopher Columbus Hall Building

509 17th Street • Resource #4 • 1925

According to a cast sign panel at the parapet, this building was built in 1925 as the Christopher Columbus Hall. Christopher Columbus Halls were established by Italian American communities as social organizations in many cities. Ensley had a significant population of Italian-Americans, many of whom worked at the T.C.I. mill and others who were merchants, shopkeepers, and tradesmen.

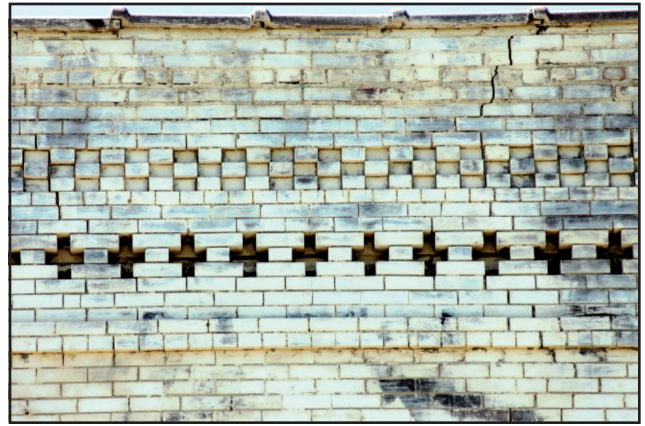




## Commercial Building

**513-517 17th Street • Resource #5 • circa 1905**

Construction and design details of this Folk Victorian style building indicate that it was constructed circa 1905. A one-story store building is shown at this location on the 1902 Sanborn Map and this building is shown on the 1911 edition as a two-unit commercial building with a warehouse to the west and a store to the east. The 1928 edition shows the building as a wholesale grocery operation and the 1951 map shows it as “one store” with a club on the 2nd floor.

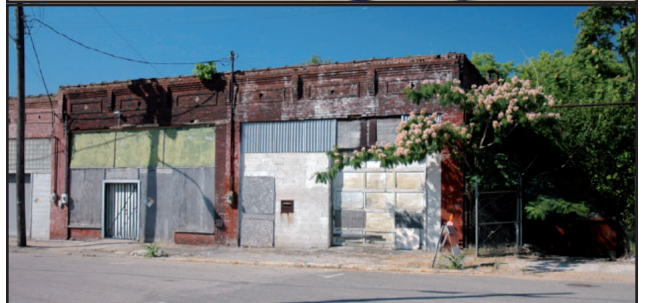


## Commercial Buildings

**109-111 & 113-115 19th Street (Ensley)**

**Resources #8-9 • circa 1910**

These two Folk Victorian Commercial style commercial rows are architecturally similar, indicating that they were built at approximately the same time. Construction and design details indicate that they were constructed circa 1910. Both buildings are shown on the 1911 Sanborn map. The city directory records Henry Goad (a baker), Jacob Marino (a shoe maker), and Inman Brothers meats operating from these buildings.





## Commercial Building

**305 19th Street • Resource #11 • circa 1925**

Construction and design details indicate that this Early 20th Century Commercial Style building was constructed circa 1905. A one-story store building is shown at this location on the 1911 Sanborn Map and this building is shown on the 1928 edition. According to the 1925 city directory, the building then housed two businesses: the Ensley Furniture and Painting Company and Sol Sugarman's dry goods store.



## Commercial Building

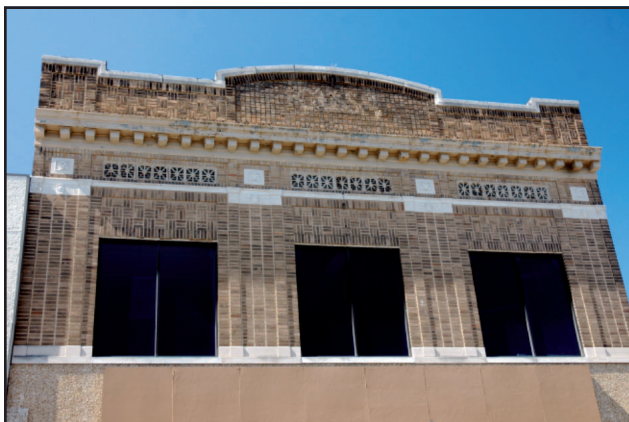
**309 19th Street • Resource #13 • circa 1920**

Construction and design details indicate that this Early 20th Century Commercial Style building was constructed circa 1920. By 1925, Samuel Kallman was operating a grocery store in one of the building's two first floor retail spaces. The Ensley Clothing Company was located in the other retail space and W.E. Mosteller, a printer, was operating out of the second floor.

## Kress Building

**405 19th Street • Resource #18 • circa 1925**

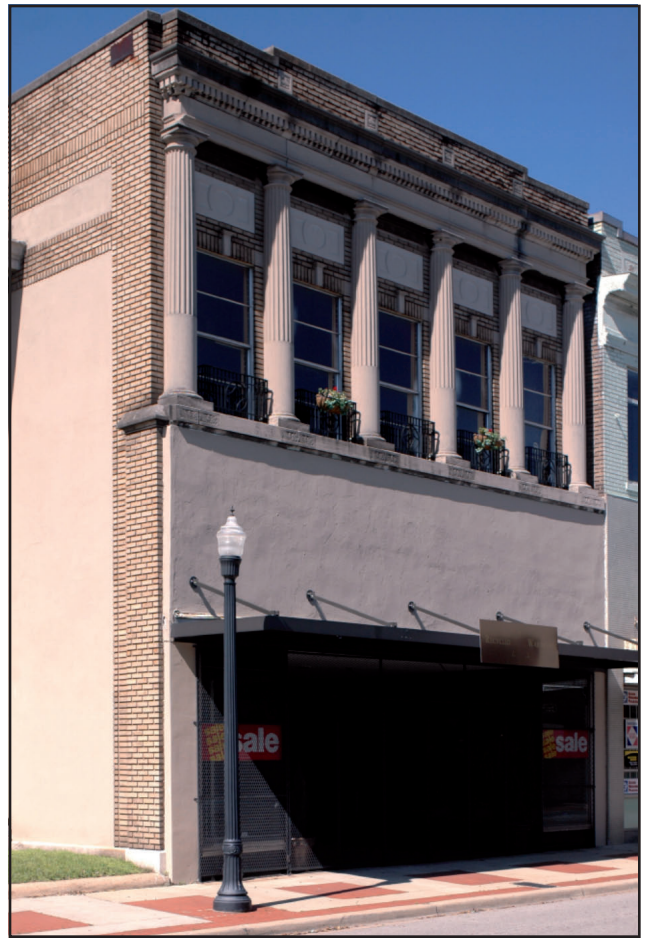
This Neoclassical Revival style building was constructed circa 1925 as a Kress store.





**F. W. Woolworth Building**  
417 19th Street • Resource #23 • circa 1925

This Neoclassical Revival style building was constructed circa 1925 for use by the F.W. Woolworth Company.



**Bank of Ensley Building**  
425 19th Street • Resource #24 • 1919

This elaborate Neoclassical Revival style building was constructed in 1919 for the Bank of Ensley. The bank was founded in 1899 by Erskine Ramsay and George B. McCormack.





## Commercial Row

514-26 19th Street • Resource #28 • circa 1927

Construction and design details indicate that this Early-20th Century Commercial style commercial row was constructed circa 1925. The 1925 city directory suggests that this building was not yet constructed but it is shown on the 1928 Sanborn map.



## Commercial Row

515-23 19th Street • Resource #29 • circa 1925

Construction and design details indicate that this Early 20th Century Commercial Style row was constructed circa 1925. Tenants in 1925 included the McCain Hardware Co., Wilson-Clark Shoe Co., Clark Brothers meats, Samuel Trana fruits, Singer Sewing Machine, Western Union, J.R. Boggs electrician, Hill Grocery, and Philip Lewis clothing.





## Fields/Knapp/Ellis Building

600-02 19th Street • Resource #31 • circa 1910

Built circa 1910, the 1925 city directory lists the building as the Fields Building with the first floor being divided to house the Steel City Drug Company and the Belle Theatre. By 1927 the building was renamed the Knapp Building and, by the 1950s, the Ellis Building. Originally built as a 2-story building, the third floor was added later. According to the Birmingham Post-Herald (12/14/1927): “The increasing demand for office space in Ensley is being further met by the addition of a third story to the Knapp Building...” The third story added a decidedly Mediterranean Revival style to the building, with its pent tile roof and drop corbelled cornice. The present storefront replaced the original storefront by at least February 1958.



Photo at right circa 1937  
 Courtesy Birmingham Public Library Archives

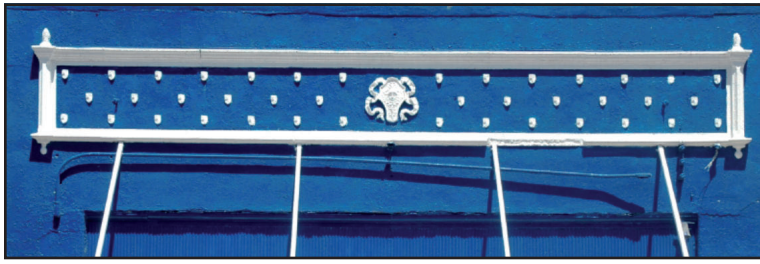


## Commercial Building Grouping

604, 606, and 608 19th Street • Resources #33-35 • circa 1925

This row of three modest early 20th Century Commercial style buildings are notable for the decorative stucco ornamentation found at the upper levels of the flanking buildings. Constructed circa 1925, 604 housed the Birmingham Water Works that year, 606 was a real estate office, and 608 was the Ellis Jewelry Co.





*Notice how this stucco ornamentation enlivens what would have otherwise been rather simple and plain facades. Details like these are becoming increasingly rare in Alabama.*

## **Birmingham Railway Light & Power Co. Building**

**611 19th Street • Resource #37 • circa 1915**

This building was constructed circa 1915 for the Birmingham Railway, Light, & Power Company. A dwelling is shown at this location on the 1902 Sanborn map. By 1911, the BRP&L had built a facility on this site with an office building along 19th street with a dynamo and battery room on its second floor and a freight depot to the rear. The footprint of the office is generally consistent in size with the two central bays of the present building, although it is not depicted in its current form until the 1928 edition. The 1928 map indicates that the offices were expanded and that the dynamo room was relocated to the rear. The rear section of the building has since been removed. The BRP&L operated Birmingham's street car lines and furnished both electricity and gas. Organized in 1898 with Robert Jemison, Jr. as its president, the BRP&L operated until 1921 when it was sold to the Birmingham Electric Company.



## **Commercial Row**

**615-19 19th Street • Resource #38 • circa 1927**

Construction and design details indicate that this Early 20th Century Commercial Style commercial row was constructed circa 1927. The building is not listed in the 1925 city directory but is shown on the 1928 Sanborn map. The 1930 city directory lists the following tenants: Tom Jones Dry Cleaning Co., Rogers Inc. grocers, and the Nu-Way clothes cleaners.





### **Ideal Drug Company Building** 701 19th Street • Resource #40 • circa 1927

Construction and design details indicate that this Early 20th Century Commercial Style building was constructed circa 1927. The building is not listed in the 1925 city directory but does appear on the 1928 Sanborn Map as a drug store. The 1930 city directory lists the occupant as the Ideal Drug Company.

### **Peerless Laundry Building** 703 19th Street • Resource #41 • circa 1927

Construction and design details indicate that this Early 20th Century Commercial Style building was constructed circa 1927. The building is not listed in the 1925 city directory but does appear on the 1928 Sanborn Map as a store. The building is listed in the 1930 city directory as being occupied by the Peerless Laundry Corp, an African-American business. While most of Ensley's African-American businesses were historically concentrated along Avenues C and D, others were scattered throughout the downtown.



### **Commercial Building** 705 19th Street • Resource #42 • circa 1920

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1920. The building is listed in the 1925 city directory with John Giardina, a confectioner, at the first floor, and W. T. Cammack occupying the second floor.





## Commercial Building

709 19th Street • Resources #43 • circa 1927

Construction and design details indicate that this Early 20th Century Commercial Style building was constructed circa 1927. The building is not listed in the 1925 city directory but does appear on the 1928 Sanborn Map. The 1930 city directory lists the building as vacant.



## Commercial Building

711 19th Street • Resources #44 • circa 1927

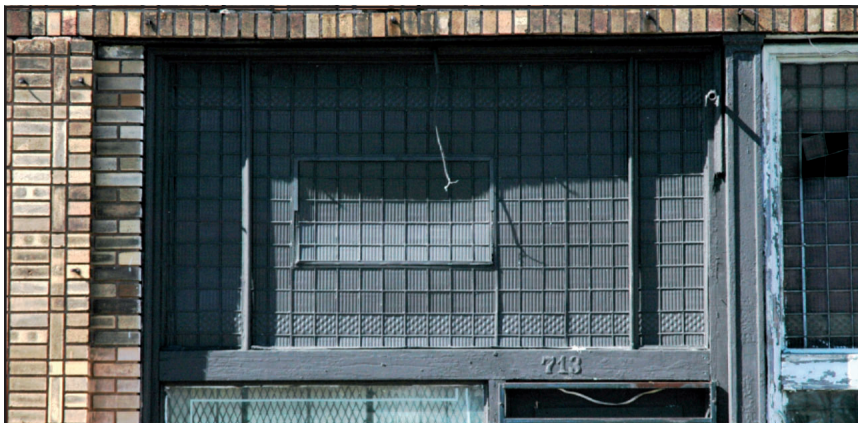
Construction and design details indicate that this Early 20th Century Commercial Style building was constructed circa 1927. The listing in the 1925 city directory appears to be a residence but the building does appear on the 1928 Sanborn Map. The 1930 city directory lists the building as the Broadhead-Klinner Furniture Company.



## Commercial Building

713-15 19th Street • Resource #45 • circa 1925

Construction and design details indicate that this Early 20th Century Commercial Style building was constructed circa 1925. The 1925 city directory lists 715 19th Street as the L.L. Brothers Furniture Store. By 1930, 713 is listed as the Ernest Sly bicycle shop and 715 is listed as being vacant.



*715 retains its historic prism glass transom. This type of glass was commonly used in the storefront transoms of commercial buildings of this period, but this is one of the few remaining examples in Ensley.*



## **Birmingham-Ensley Land Company Building**

**722 19th Street • Resource #48 • circa 1927-1928**

This elaborate Neoclassical Revival style building was built in 1927 and completed in early 1928 to house the offices of the Birmingham-Ensley Land Co.



## **Commercial Buildings**

**700 and 800 Blocks 19th Street  
Resources #46, 47, 49, 50, & 51  
circa 1900-1925**

A series of modest early-20th century commercial buildings line the 700 and 800 blocks of 19th Street.







**Ensley First Presbyterian Church Building**  
**616 21st Street • Resource #60 • circa 1920 • now A.C.T.S. Ministries, Inc.**

Construction and design details indicate that this Romanesque Revival style building was constructed circa 1920 and expanded circa 1965 and circa 2000. The building is shown on the 1928 Sanborn map as the Ensley Presbyterian Church. The site was vacant when the 1911 edition was compiled.

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**Knights of Pythias Hall Bld.**  
**1813 Avenue C • Resource #62 • circa 1900**

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1900 and that it was remodeled circa 1960. The building is shown on the 1902 Sanborn map as a store with “gambling” at the 2nd floor and with a 1-story rear extension marked “dancing pavilion.” The 1911 map indicates that the rear extension had been altered by that time and was in use as beer storage. The 1925 city directory lists the building as the “colored” Knights of Pythias Hall. By 1928, the building is shown as a store with a lodge on the upper level and appears to indicate that the building had been extended to the rear. The building was in use as a restaurant in 1951. This, along with the adjacent building at 1809 Avenue C (photo at lower right) and the former dwelling and later a restaurant at 1800 Avenue D mark the tangible reminders of the once vibrant African American business district that lined Avenues C and D in the early to mid 20th century.



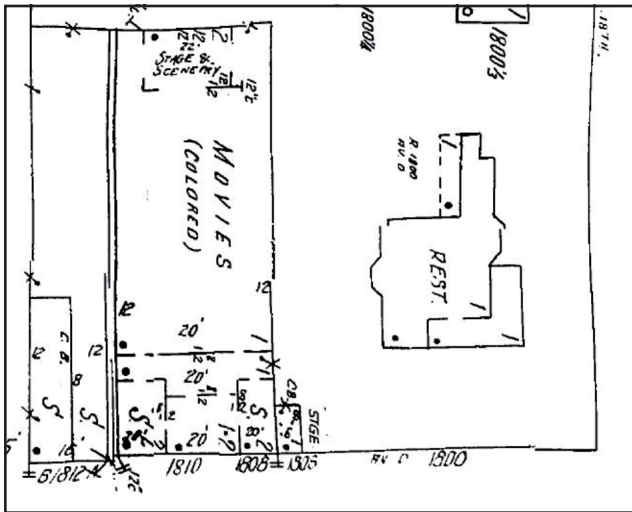




## House (Jimbo's)

1800 Avenue D • Resource #66 • circa 1895

Construction and design details indicate that this house was constructed circa 1895. Sanborn maps and city directories indicate that it was a residence until the 1940s when it was converted for use as a restaurant by Robert Brown, an African American. The house was used after that as a restaurant and night spot, eventually becoming known as Jimbo's. Despite its altered condition, the house is a rare surviving residential building within the downtown area and a vestige of the once thriving African-American commercial and entertainment district that existed along Avenue D in the early to mid 20th century. The adjacent parcel to the west was the site of the Palace Theatre, a black vaudeville and movie theatre.



Left: Detail of the 1951 update of the 1928 Sanborn map

## Commercial Building

2100 Avenue D • Resource #72 • circa 1925

Construction and design details indicate that this Early 20th Century Commercial Style building was constructed circa 1925. The building is shown on the 1928 Sanborn map as a vacant garage and as auto storage on the 1951 edition.



## Bank of Alabama Building

1724 Avenue E • Resource #75 • circa 1925

This Neoclassical Revival style building was constructed circa 1925 as the Bank of Alabama's Ensley branch. The building was vacant in 1938 and was in use by the Iron and Steel Workers Credit Union by the mid 1940s.



## First National Bank Building

1801 Avenue E • Resource #77 • 1960  
Now Regions Bank

This building was built in 1960 as the Ensley Branch of the First National Bank. Construction began in April 1960 and was scheduled to take 6 months. Thomas C. Brasfield served as the general contractor and the building was designed by noted Birmingham architects Warren, Knight, and Davis.

## Commercial Building

1810 Avenue E • Resource #79 • circa 1925

Construction and design details indicate that this Early-20th Century Commercial style building was constructed circa 1925. An earlier one-story commercial building is shown on the 1911 Sanborn map and this building is shown on the 1928 and 1951 editions. The 1925 city directory lists the A.M. Heller dry goods store at 1814 and T. G. Mackey & Sons men's furnishings at 1816 Avenue E. These are the addresses of the property indicated on the 1928 Sanborn map.





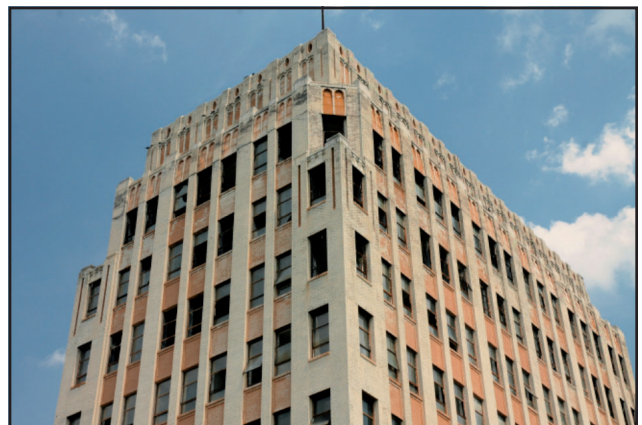
## Ramsay-McCormack Building

1825 Avenue E • Resource #82 • 1929-1930

The September 1926 edition of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce's newsletter announced that: "Erskine Ramsay and Carr McCormack will erect a six story office building of reinforced steel and concrete, to cost \$200,000, at Avenue E and Nineteenth Street, Ensley. This will be Ensley's first Skyscraper." The location was then the epicenter of Ensley's commercial core and was sited directly across the intersection from the imposing Bank of Ensley building, constructed by Ramsay and McCormack in 1911. Construction of the building was delayed and by the time it was started in 1928, its plans had been expanded to include ten floors.

Designed by Birmingham architect Brooke B. Burnham, the \$500,000 building was completed and ready for occupancy in January 1930. The building housed a variety of businesses over the years and served as the headquarters of the United Security Life Insurance Company for many years. A prominent symbol of the community's declining fortunes, the Ramsay-McCormack Building has remained vacant since 1986. The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and plans were announced for its rehabilitation in 2008.

Erskine Ramsay (1864-1953) was among the most prominent of Birmingham's industrial, commercial, civic, and philanthropic leaders in the late nineteenth to the mid twentieth centuries. Ramsay's business interests were varied and he, often in conjunction with partner McCormack, was involved in real estate, coal, engineering, industry, and inventing. A millionaire by the age of forty, Ramsay gave extensively to charities throughout his lifetime and was active in many civic organizations. The front-page notice of Ramsay's death in The Birmingham News stated that: "A fabulous American of the nation's most colorful years of industrial growth, Mr. Ramsay made his fortune in Birmingham in the days of his youth and spent his senior years giving it away for good causes."



## Webb Crawford Building

1917 Avenue E • Resource #84 • circa 1910

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1910. The site is shown as being vacant on the 1902 Sanborn map. This building is shown on the 1910 edition with a “Moving Picture” theatre at its southern retail space, a “Steam Laundry” at its second space, a store in its third space, and a photo shop with a picture framing shop to the rear in its northern space.



## Ensley Motor Co. Building

1918 Avenue E • Resource #85 • circa 1925

Construction and design details indicate that this Early 20th Century Commercial Style building was constructed circa 1925. The ruins of an earlier building and three small shops are shown on the 1911 Sanborn map. The 1925 city directory indicates that the site was in use by the Ensley Motor Company and this building is shown on the 1928 edition as “Ford Sales and Service.”

## Liberty National Life Insurance Co. Building

2002 Avenue E • Resource #106 • circa 1955

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1955. An earlier two-story commercial building is shown at this site on the 1950 Sanborn map. By the mid 1950s, the present building was occupied by the Liberty National Life Insurance Company. The building has a distinctive stone façade with a classical entrance surround.





## Ensley Theatre Building

1925 Avenue E • Resource #86 • circa 1927

This building was built as the Ensley Theatre in 1927 and was designed by architect Lawrence S. Whitten. “Escapism was built into the Ensley’s exotic architecture, its ornate stenciled pilasters, stippled walls, its three large chandeliers and three lobbies floored with decorative mosaic tile. The Ensley was built for silent movies, and was outfitted with a large Robert Morton pipe organ” [*Artful Excursions Through Birmingham’s African-American Communities*]. The theatre was extensively remodeled in 1941. Board of Equalization records indicate that the 1941 update included redecorating and the replacement of the deteriorated marquee. It also noted that the owner spent \$5,000 and the theatre (tenant) \$6,000 including \$4,300 for seats and that the tenant’s five-year lease would be \$5,700. The theatre historically housed a drug store. Dewberry’s Drug Co. is listed at the site in 1930 and Goldstein’s Pharmacy operated there from the latter 1930s into the 1960s. Historic photos indicate that the entrance to the theatre was via a recessed vestibule where the present storefront windows are located and that the second floor tower was originally open. The building was subsequently converted into a single retail space.



Photo at Bottom: Jefferson County Board of Equalization photo courtesy of the Archives Department, Birmingham Public Library

## Commercial Building

2008 Avenue E • Resource #88 • circa 1905

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1905. The site is shown as being vacant on the 1902 Sanborn map. This building is shown on the 1911 map as a garage and on the 1928 map as an auto repair shop.



## Arctic Ice Co. Building

**2009 & 2011 Avenue E • Resources #89 & #91 • circa 1910, circa 1925**

The building at 2011 Avenue E is shown for the first time on the 1911 Sanborn map as a store. By 1928, the adjacent building at 2009 was constructed and both buildings were in use by the Arctic Ice Company. The map indicates that the company manufactured ice and ice cream. The front portion of the building was the ice cream factory. The 1951 map shows the building in the same use under the name Puro Ice Cream Co.



## Collum Motor Co. Building

**2012-2018 Avenue E • Resource #92 • circa 1925**

Construction and design details indicate that this Early-20th Century Commercial style building was constructed circa 1925. This site is shown as being vacant on the 1911 Sanborn Map. The 1925 city directory lists the site as being occupied by the Collum Motor Company with the Alabama National Guard Armory at the second floor. This building is shown on the 1928 map as a Hudson-Essex auto dealership with a dance hall at the second floor. The building was still used for auto sales and service in 1950 with a "Hall" upstairs.





## Commercial Building

2015 Avenue E • Resource #93 • circa 1927

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1927. Although altered, some vestiges of what appears to have been a Mediterranean style façade remain visible. The present building is located on the site of Ensley's City Hall and Opera House. The 1902 Sanborn map indicates that the earlier building was a two-story L-shaped building with a market on the first floor and an opera house on the second floor of the main portion along Avenue E. City offices and a jail were located in a wing along 21st Street. By 1911, the market had been replaced by a fire department with seven men, two horses, and one auto. The present building is shown on the 1928 map with a drug store in the southernmost of its four retail units, two stores, and an auto sales and service shop to the north. By 1950, the drug store had become a restaurant and the auto sales and service had expanded into the remainder of the building.

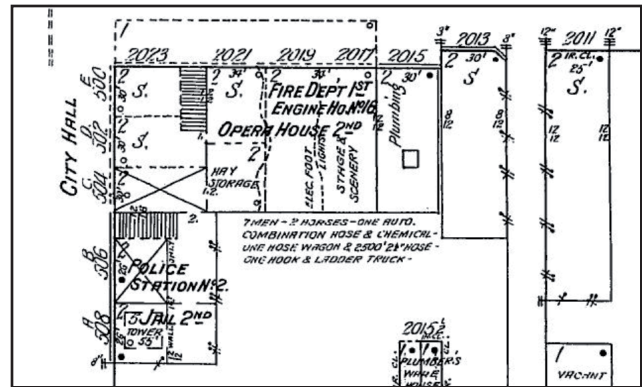


Photo at Right: Jefferson County Board of Equalization photo courtesy of the Archives Department, Birmingham Public Library



## Quonset Hut

2117 Avenue E • Resource #101 • circa 1945

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1945 but it was not located on this site until after 1950 according to the Sanborn map of that year. These prefabricated buildings were mass-produced during World War II and many were sold as surplus after the war ended. This is the only existing example documented in downtown Ensley.



## Commercial Building

**2020 Avenue E • Resource #94 • circa 1915**

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1915. Two dwellings are shown at the rear of this site on the 1911 Sanborn Map. The present building is shown on the 1928 edition as an automobile repair shop and on the 1950 edition as a used auto sales and service shop.



## Berthon's Dry Cleaners

**2213 Avenue E • Resource #109 • circa 1925**

Berthon's Cleaners was established by A.H. Berthon in 1925. Berthon, a French immigrant, began pressing clothes as an ancillary business to his barber shop and the sideline eventually became profitable enough for him to begin his dry cleaning business. This site in Ensley was the first of the company's five facilities. This building has been expanded and remodeled several times.

## Masonic Hall Building

**2300 Avenue E • Resource #111 • circa 1925**

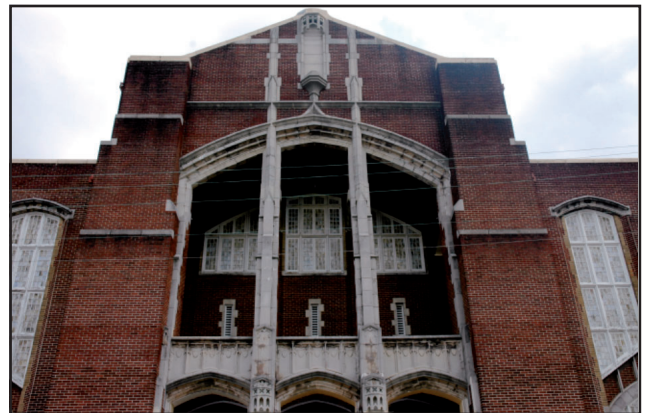
Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1925. The site is shown as being vacant on the 1911 Sanborn map and the present building is indicated on the 1928 edition as a "Masonic Hall." The building is shown on the 1951 Sanborn map as being used by the Drennan Motor Car Company as an auto repair facility with the Masonic Hall still indicated at the 2nd level.



## Ensley Baptist Church

2301 Avenue E • Resource #112 • 1924 • Now Abyssinia Missionary Baptist Church

According to its datestone, the elaborate Gothic Revival style Ensley Baptist Church was erected between 1924 and 1929. The building is now in use by the Abyssinia Missionary Baptist Church.



## House, 2310 Avenue E

Resource #114 • circa 1900

Construction and design details indicate that this Queen Anne style house was constructed circa 1900. This area is not depicted on the 1902 Sanborn map but the present house is shown on the 1911, 1928, and 1950 editions. This is the only relatively unaltered historic dwelling remaining in the downtown area.





## Commercial Building

1700 Avenue F • Resource #115 • circa 1935

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1935. This building is not shown on the 1928 Sanborn map but is shown on the 1950 edition with two stores in front and two dwelling units in the rear. The 1947 city directory lists the Capitol Real Estate and Insurance Company and the Magic City Printing Company at this address.



## Echols & Angwin Funeral Home

1714 Avenue F • Resource #116 • 1924 • Now Perryman Serenity Funeral Chapel

John Angwin and Dennis Echols established their "undertaking shop" at this corner in 1898. Echols died in the early 1920s and Angwin erected this building in 1924. This Early-20th Century Commercial style building is shown on the 1928 Sanborn map.

## Commercial Building

1715 Avenue F • Resource #117 • circa 1927

The site is shown as having been vacant on the 1911 Sanborn map and no listing is indicated in the 1925 city directory. The present building is shown on the 1928 edition as a store. The 1950 map indicates the interior mezzanine level and shows that the first floor was in use as a store and that the upper levels were used for furniture refinishing. Goodwill Industries purchased the building in 1941.





**A&P Super Market Building**  
**1801 Avenue F • Resource #118 • circa 1927**

Construction and design details indicate that this Early-20th Century Commercial style building was constructed circa 1927. The present building without its rear extension is shown on the 1928 edition as a store and the 1930 city directory lists it as the Drayton Truck's grocery store. The building became an A&P grocery store by the mid 1930s. The building was expanded to the rear by the early 1950s.

**Waters Building**

**1809 Avenue F • Resource #120 • 1927**

According to a cast sign atop its parapet, this Early-20th Century Commercial style building was constructed in 1927 as the Waters Building. The building is listed as being vacant in the 1930 city directory. By the 1930s, Truck's Food Store had relocated to the building. It later served as a clock repair shop.



**Hood-McPherson Furniture Company/Braswell's 1811 Shoppe**

**1811 Avenue F • Resource #121 • circa 1927**

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1925. The site is shown as having been vacant on the 1911 Sanborn map and with the present building in 1928. The 1930 city directory lists the Hood-McPherson Furniture Company at this address and this building is depicted on the 1950 Sanborn as a furniture store with an interior mezzanine level. A May 9, 1960 article in The Birmingham News announced that Braswell's had moved into this building. A painted sign at the parapet indicates that this was once known as "Braswells' 1811 Shoppe."



**Pastime Billiard Parlor Building**  
**1814 Avenue F • Resource #122 • circa 1930**

Construction and design details indicate that this Early-20th Century Commercial style building was constructed circa 1927. This building is not listed in the 1925 city directory but is shown on the 1928 Sanborn map. The 1930 city directory lists the Pastime Billiard Parlor, Pastime Barber Shop, and Carl F. Tucker, a confectioner, as tenants in this building.



**Commercial Building**

**1815 Avenue F • Resource #123 • circa 1927**

Construction and design details indicate that this Early-20th Century Commercial style building was constructed circa 1927. This building is not listed in the 1925 city directory but is shown on the 1928 Sanborn map with two retail spaces in its western bays and one office space in its eastern bay. The 1930 city directory lists The Birmingham News and Age Herald in the office space with the two retail spaces vacant.

**Ensley Fairfield Laundry Co. Building**

**1911 Avenue F • Resource #124 • circa 1925**

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1925. A dwelling is shown at this site on the 1911 Sanborn map. The present building is shown on the 1928 map as the Ensley Fairfield Laundry Co. and on the 1950 edition as the Troy Laundry Co.



**Commercial Building**

**1915 Avenue F • Resource #125 • circa 1950**

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1950. A dwelling is shown at this site on the 1928 Sanborn map. The present building is shown on the 1950 map with 2 internal retail spaces.

## Ensley Christian Church

2101 Avenue F • Resource #129 • 1914 • now God's House

According to its datestone, this Classical Revival style building was built as the Ensley Christian Church in 1914. A smaller church labeled the "1st Christian Church" is located at this site on the 1911 Sanborn map. The building is shown as the Ensley Christian Church on both the 1928 and 1950 Sanborn maps. A May 28, 1954 article in the Birmingham Post-Herald shows the building in its original form without the present projecting entrance bay. As originally constructed, the building had a slightly projecting entrance bay with a double-leaf door at its first level with a rectangular window similar to those in the flanking bays above. A small steeple is also shown at the front of the roof ridge.



## Commercial Building

1909 Avenue G • Resource #130 • circa 1955

Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1955. Two small dwellings are shown at this location on the 1950 Sanborn map.

## Alabama Power Co. Building

1912 Avenue G • Resource #131 • 1959

According to a Birmingham News article entitled "New Ensley office building to open," this building was built to house the Ensley district offices of the Alabama Power Company. Two dwellings are shown at this location on the 1950 Sanborn map.





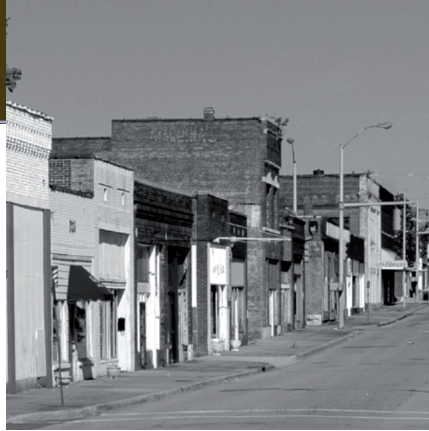
## **First Methodist Episcopal Church South**

**1913 Avenue G • Resource #132 • circa 1920 • now Soul's Harvest Deliverance Center**

Construction and design details indicate that this elaborate Romanesque Revival style building was constructed circa 1920. A smaller earlier church is shown at this location on the 1911 Sanborn map. This building is shown on the 1928 and 1950 editions as the First Methodist Episcopal Church South.



# Appendix



## RESOURCE LIST

### DOWNTOWN ENSLEY HISTORIC DISTRICT

Ref #	Address	Historic/Descriptive Name	Year Built	National Register Status
1	17th St. Ensley, 418	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
2	17th St. Ensley, 420	Saloon/Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1890	contributing
3	17th St. Ensley, 501	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 2000	noncontributing
4	17th St. Ensley, 509	Columbus, Christopher, Hall	1925	contributing
5	17th St. Ensley, 513	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1905	contributing
6	17th St. Ensley, 600	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
7	18th St. Ensley, 426	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
8	19th St. Ensley, 109	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1910	contributing
9	19th St. Ensley, 113	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1910	contributing
10	19th St. Ensley, 201	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1945	noncontributing
11	19th St. Ensley, 305	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
12	19th St. Ensley, 306	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1955	contributing
13	19th St. Ensley, 309	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1920	contributing
14	19th St. Ensley, 321	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1920	contributing
15	19th St. Ensley, 400	Cotton's	ca. 1922	noncontributing
16	19th St. Ensley, 401	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	noncontributing



17	19th St. Ensley, 404	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	noncontributing
18	19th St. Ensley, 405	Kress Building	ca. 1925	contributing
19	19th St. Ensley, 406	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	noncontributing
20	19th St. Ensley, 410	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
21	19th St. Ensley, 411	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
22	19th St. Ensley, 414	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1970	noncontributing
23	19th St. Ensley, 417	F.W. Woolworth Building	ca. 1925	contributing
24	19th St. Ensley, 425	Bank of Ensley	1919	contributing
25	19th St. Ensley, 501	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1955	contributing
26	19th St. Ensley, 505	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
27	19th St. Ensley, 507	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	noncontributing
82	Avenue E, 1825	Ramsay-McCormack Bld.	1929/30	contributing
28	19th St. Ensley, 514	Commercial Row, Not Named	ca. 1927	contributing
29	19th St. Ensley, 515	Commercial Row, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
30	19th St. Ensley, 525	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
31	19th St. Ensley, 600	Field-Knapp-Ellis Building	1910	contributing
32	19th St. Ensley, 601	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
33	19th St. Ensley, 604	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
34	19th St. Ensley, 606	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
35	19th St. Ensley, 608	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
36	19th St. Ensley, 610	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
37	19th St. Ensley, 611	Birmingham Railway, Light, & Power Co.	ca. 1915	contributing
38	19th St. Ensley, 615	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1927	contributing
39	19th St. Ensley, 623	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
40	19th St. Ensley, 701	Ideal Drug Co. Bld.	ca. 1927	contributing
41	19th St. Ensley, 703	Peerless Laundry Building	ca. 1927	contributing
42	19th St. Ensley, 705	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1920	contributing
43	19th St. Ensley, 709	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1927	contributing
44	19th St. Ensley, 711	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1927	contributing
45	19th St. Ensley, 713	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
46	19th St. Ensley, 719	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
47	19th St. Ensley, 721	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
48	19th St. Ensley, 722	Birmingham-Ensley Land Co. Building	1927-28	contributing
49	19th St. Ensley, 723	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1900	contributing
50	19th St. Ensley, 801	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
51	19th St. Ensley, 814	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	noncontributing
52	19th St. Ensley, 818	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
53	19th St. Ensley, 819	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
54	20th St. Ensley, 300	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1955	contributing

55	20th St. Ensley, 301	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1955	contributing
56	20th St. Ensley, 526	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1955	contributing
57	20th St. Ensley, 600	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1975	noncontributing
58	21st St. Ensley, 415	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
59	21st St. Ensley, 512	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1960	contributing
60	21st St. Ensley, 616	Ensley First Presbyterian Church	ca. 1920	contributing
61	Avenue C, 1809	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1910	contributing
62	Avenue C, 1813	Knights of Pythias Hall	ca. 1900	contributing
63	Avenue C, 1908	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1940	contributing
64	Avenue C, 1910	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1955	contributing
65	Avenue C, 1914	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1950	contributing
66	Avenue D, 1800	House, Not Named	ca. 1895	contributing
67	Avenue D, 1801	Storage Warehouses	ca. 2005	noncontributing
68	Avenue D, 1914	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1950	contributing
69	Avenue D, 2000	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1955	contributing
70	Avenue D, 2001	Colonial Stores Grocery	ca. 1954	contributing
71	Avenue D, 2012	AMVETS Post 127	ca. 1965	noncontributing
72	Avenue D, 2100	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
73	Avenue D, 2107	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1980	noncontributing
74	Avenue E, 1700	Western Health Center	ca. 1980	noncontributing
75	Avenue E, 1724	Bank of Alabama	ca. 1925	contributing
76	Avenue E, 1800	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
77	Avenue E, 1801	First National Bank	1960	contributing
78	Avenue E, 1806	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1910	contributing
79	Avenue E, 1810	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
80	Avenue E, 1820	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	noncontributing
81	Avenue E, 1818	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	noncontributing
83	Avenue E, 1912	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1910	contributing
84	Avenue E, 1917	Webb Crawford Bld.	ca. 1910	contributing
85	Avenue E, 1918	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
86	Avenue E, 1925	Ensley Theatre	ca. 1927	contributing
87	Avenue E, 2002	Liberty National Bank Building	ca. 1955	contributing
88	Avenue E, 2008	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1905	contributing
89	Avenue E, 2009	Arctic Ice Co.	ca. 1925	contributing
90	Avenue E, 2010	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
91	Avenue E, 2011	Arctic Ice Co.	ca. 1910	contributing
92	Avenue E, 2012	Collum Motor Co.	ca. 1925	contributing
93	Avenue E, 2015	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1927	contributing
94	Avenue E, 2020	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1915	contributing



95 Avenue E, 101	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1910	contributing
96 Avenue E, 2107	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
97 Avenue E, 2108	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1950	contributing
98 Avenue E, 2110	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
99 Avenue E, 2112	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
100 Avenue E, 2116	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
101 Avenue E, 2117	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1945	contributing
102 Avenue E, 2121	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1925	contributing
103 Avenue E, 2130	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1995	noncontributing
104 Avenue E, 2200	Drennen Motor Car Co. Used Car Office	ca. 1955	contributing
105 Avenue E, 2201	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1955	contributing
106 Avenue E, 2205	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1980	noncontributing
107 Avenue E, 2208	Drennen Motor Car Co. Service Garage	ca. 1955	contributing
108 Avenue E, 2212	Drennen Motor Car Co.	ca. 1935	noncontributing
109 Avenue E, 2213	Berthon's Dry Cleaners	ca. 1925	contributing
110 Avenue E, 2221	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1950	noncontributing
111 Avenue E, 2300	Masonic Hall	ca. 1925	contributing
112 Avenue E, 2301	Ensley Baptist Church	1924	contributing
113 Avenue E, 2306	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1930	contributing
114 Avenue E, 2310	House, Not Named	ca. 1900	contributing
115 Avenue F, 1700	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1935	contributing
116 Avenue F, 1714	Echols & Angwin Funeral Home	1924	contributing
117 Avenue F, 1715	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1927	contributing
118 Avenue F, 1801	A&P Super Market	ca. 1927	contributing
119 Avenue F, 1808	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1985	noncontributing
120 Avenue F, 1809	Waters Building	ca. 1927	contributing
121 Avenue F, 1811	Hood-McPherson Furniture Co	ca. 1927	contributing
122 Avenue F, 1814	Pastime Billiard Parlor	ca. 1930	contributing
123 Avenue F, 1815	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1927	contributing
124 Avenue F, 1911	Ensley Fairfield Laundry Co.	ca. 1925	contributing
125 Avenue F, 1915	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1950	contributing
126 Avenue F, 2010	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1965	noncontributing
127 Avenue F, 2017	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1970	noncontributing
128 Avenue F, 2018	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1985	noncontributing
129 Avenue F, 2101	Ensley Christian Church	1914	contributing
130 Avenue G, 1909	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1955	contributing
131 Avenue G, 1912	Alabama Power Co.	1959	contributing
132 Avenue G, 1913	First Methodist Episcopal Church South	ca. 1920	contributing
133 Avenue G, 2003	Commercial Building, Not Named	ca. 1970	noncontributing



# **SCHNEIDER**

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