

ENSLEY

Historic Building Survey
And National Register Nomination - 2009



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Downtown Ensley Historic Sites Survey

Ensley (Birmingham), Alabama

Survey Report, 2009

Version 5 January 2009

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Survey Report

5 January 2009

General Information

<i>Surveyor</i>	David B. Schneider, Schneider Historic Preservation, LLC 411 East 6th Street Anniston Alabama 36201
	Field Survey, Architectural Evaluation: David B. Schneider
<i>Dates</i>	July 1, 2008 - September 30, 2008
<i>Geographic Area</i>	Downtown Ensley, Birmingham, Alabama 103 acres
<i>Sites Surveyed</i>	185
<i>Prepared For</i>	City of Birmingham, Planning Division, Department of Planning, Engineering & Permits and Main Street Birmingham, Inc.

Previous Documentation

<i>National Register of Historic Places</i>	Bank of Ensley (survey #31) 425 19th St. (Ensley), Birmingham, AL.
<i>HABS/HAER</i>	No Listings
Alabama Register	No Listings



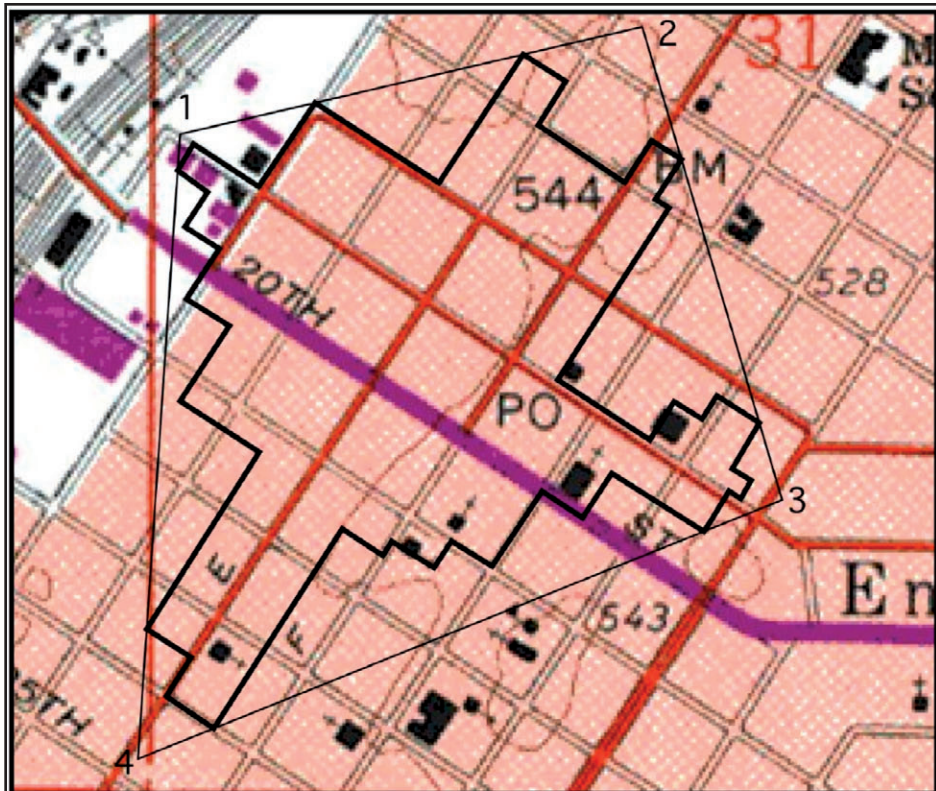
Bank of Ensley (Survey #31)

Location

County	Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama
U.S.G.S. Map Reference	Adamsville Quadrangle

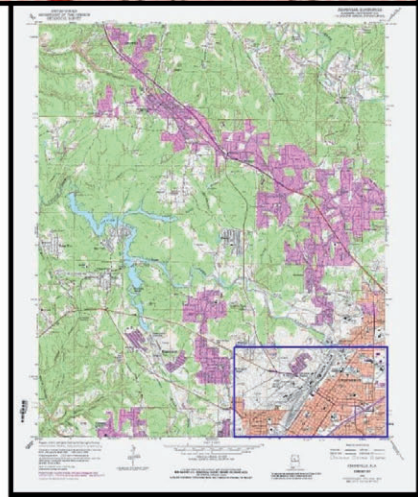
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Figure #1
 Location Maps
 Birmingham East Quadrangle

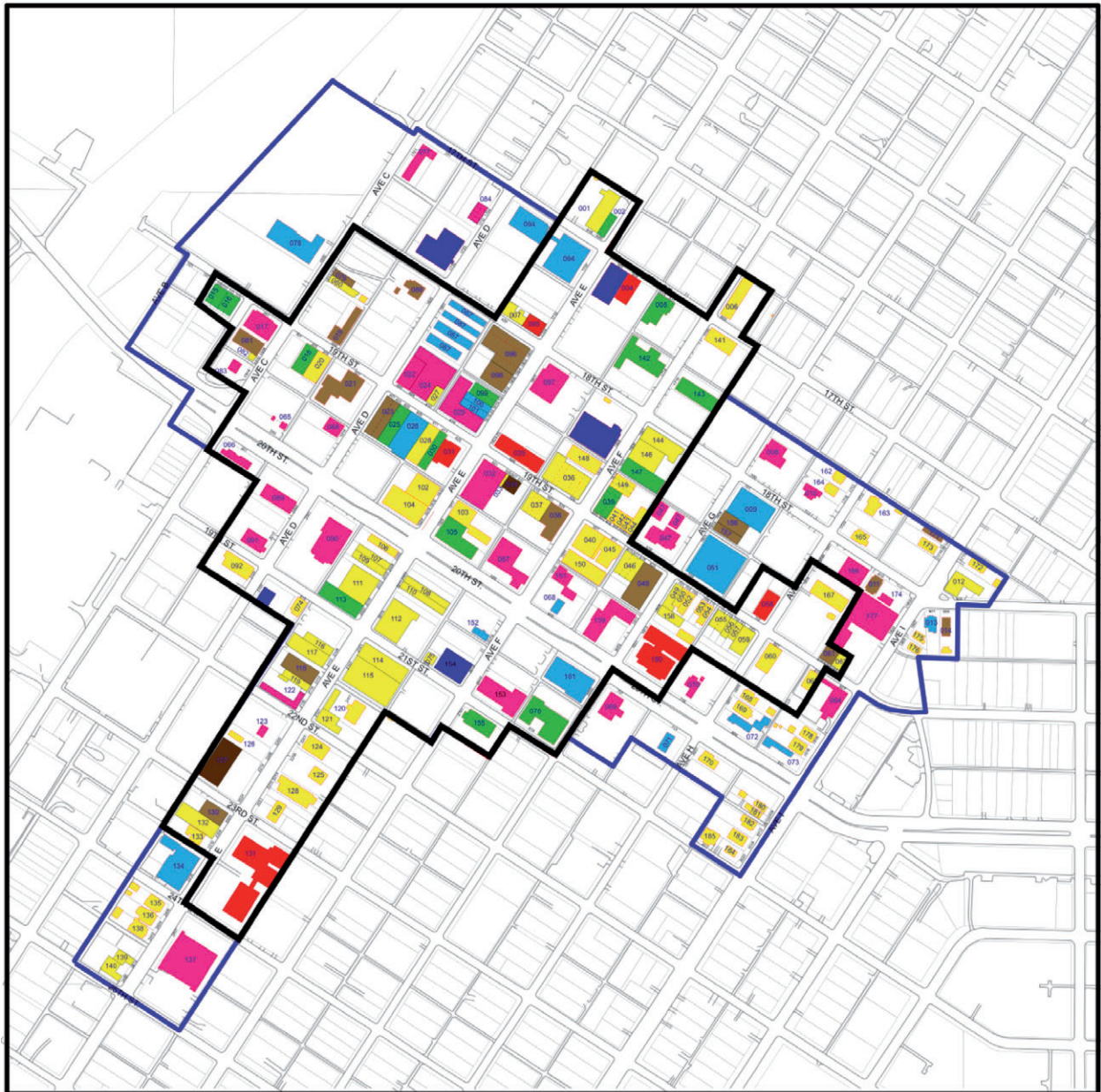


U.S.G.S. Topographic Map
 Adamsville Quadrangle

PT	Zone	Easting	Northing
01	16	509286	3708169
02	16	509824	3708300
03	16	509987	3707743
04	16	509237	3707439



Survey Map



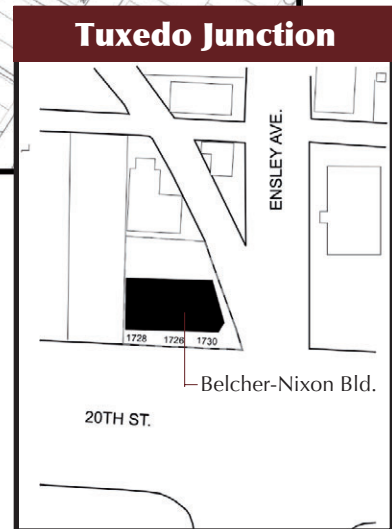
RECONNAISSANCE LEVEL SURVEY EVALUA'

- Contributing
- Contributing, Notable
- Contributing, National Register Listed or Eligible
- Contributing, Altered
- Noncontributing by Alteration
- Noncontributing Constructed 1947-1959
- Noncontributing Constructed after 1959
- Intrusive
- Gone

Historic District Map



- KEY**
- Contributing
 - Noncontributing
 - District Boundary



Historical Background

Ensley, Alabama

Significance

The Downtown Ensley Historic District is historically significant under Criterion A 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, 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 significant under Criteria C as a representative collection of period building styles. The period of significance for the district extends from circa 1885, the date of construction of its earliest surviving history resource, through 1960, the construction date of its last notable commercial building.

Historical Narrative

"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!"

Enoch Ensley, a wealthy Tennessee planter and merchant, began acquiring land in the Opossum Valley near Birmingham in the early 1880s with the intent of developing a vast steel production facility to exploit the site's location adjacent to the Pratt coal seam. It was on this site, described in contemporary accounts as "rough, sterile, full of scrubby pine and blackjack" that the town of Ensley and its extensive iron and steel operations would be developed. The Ensley Land Company was established in 1886 with Enoch Ensley as president and the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company owning a majority of the company's \$10 million in stock. Four thousand acres of land were acquired on which to develop the company's industrial facilities and a town. Founded in 1852 as the Sewanee Mining Company of Tennessee, T.C.I.'s original operations were limited to the mining of coal. The company began producing coke in 1873 in response to an increased demand from the expanding regional iron industry. Renamed the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company in 1881, the company was reorganized to add the production of pig iron to its operations. The company acquired the Pratt Coal and Iron Company and its extensive facilities in the Birmingham area in 1886.

The Ensley Land Company had the town surveyed and platted in 1887. Designed by Newport, Rhode Island engineer Edward Waring, Jr., the town was laid out on a grid that paralleled the proposed plant facilities and featured a complete sewage system with separate piping for storm water and sewage. Birmingham's street railway was soon extended to the community. Construction began the following year on four blast furnaces, the last of which was lighted on April 4, 1889. Enoch Ensley died unexpectedly in 1891 and in 1892 T.C.I. combined its Ensley holdings with the Debarleben Coal and Iron Company, the Cahaba Coal Mining Company, and the Excelsior Coal Company "to form the largest single industrial enterprise in the Birmingham District." By that time, the company's total holdings reached 400,000 acres of land, seventeen blast furnaces, and coal lands that produced 13,000 tons of coal per day. An open-hearth steel plant was added to the Ensley site in 1899 and the company continued to expand, becoming "the Birmingham Dis-

trict's strongest industrial corporation" by 1907. Despite T.C.I.'s success, an economic downturn in the autumn of 1907 resulted in circumstances that led to its acquisition by the United States Steel Corporation on November 5 for \$35.3 million. T.C.I. became a subsidiary company of U.S. Steel yet retained the T.C.I. name. At the time of its formation in 1901, U.S. Steel was "the largest industrial corporation in the world."

In 1893 during a particularly difficult economic downturn, the Ensley Land Company went into receivership and was sold at a sheriff's sale. The company was reorganized in 1898 with local businessman and T.C.I. executive Erskine Ramsay as one of its principals. With economic conditions improving, additional industrial development occurred in Ensley: an open-hearth furnace was built at the Ensley Works; the Semet-Solway Company opened a new coke byproducts facility; the Birmingham Cement Company opened a facility to use blast furnace slag to make concrete; the Alabama Steel and Wire Company built a plant; and the Ensley Brick Company was established. Additional blast furnaces were added to the Ensley Works in 1900 and 1904 and the facilities began producing rails in 1904. In 1907, T.C.I. management announced plans for a \$25-30 million modernization and expansion program "with the intention of doubling capacity and 'radically' cutting costs." After its acquisition by U.S. Steel in 1907, additional improvements were made and annual steel capacity at the plant reached 840,000 tons by 1912. U.S. Steel expanded its operations to the southwest in 1909 and created new facilities and another town at Corey, later renamed Fairfield. By World War II, the company's total employment reached 28,000.

The town of Ensley grew slowly in the 1890s but expanded rapidly in the early 1900s. T.C.I. built two hundred workers cottages in 1898 and the Ensley Land Company added two hundred more in 1900. The City of Ensley was incorporated on February 12, 1899 and its population reached 10,000 by 1901. Fourteen thousand workers were employed at the Ensley Works by 1907. According to Marjorie Longenecker White in her book *The Birmingham District*, by 1908 "more than 30 miles of streets and sidewalks had been paved; water, light, and storm and sanitary sewer systems extended; and a city hall, schools, and a public library built, giving Ensley more public improvements than any other municipality in the area other than Birmingham itself." Ensley merged with the City of Birmingham in 1909. Industrial expansion continued and Ensley's population more than doubled by 1910 and topped 41,000 by 1934.

White continues: "Ensley prided itself as a community 'with a backbone of steel' and a regional business and shopping center serving Ensley, Highlands, Bush Hills, Fairview, Oak Hill, Central Park, Pratt City, Wylam, Fairfield and outlying communities. Aggressive promotion and development activities fostered a strong sense of separate identity which endures today." The community's commercial district initially developed along Avenue E between 17th and 20th Streets. The 1902 Sanborn map shows a relatively dense concentration of primarily one and two story commercial buildings lining both sides of Avenue E and along the southwest side of 19th Street and both sides of 17th Street between Avenues D and E. By 1911, business had extended somewhat to the southwest along Avenue E and to the southeast along 17th and 19th Streets. TCI operated a dispensary and a commissary at the north end of 19th Street. The 1928 map indicates that considerable commercial development occurred since the earlier edition, with much of it occurring along 19th Street by then the commercial district's principal corridor. The city's fortunes were well represented by a large collection of buildings of substantial architectural character and quality.

The 1925 city directory indicates the following general mix of businesses in downtown Ensley: a bakery, two banks, four confectioners, at least eight barbers, seven clothes shops, eleven dry goods stores, two flower shops, two fruit dealers, two funeral homes (one white and one black), eleven furniture stores, nine grocers, two general merchandise stores, seven hardware stores, five jewelers, three laundries or dry cleaners, two loan and pawn shops, a meat market, four mens' stores, nine pharmacies, two photographers, a printer, twelve real estate companies, restaurants, several shoe

repair and making shops, at least six tailors, two wholesale produce companies, an F.W. Woolworth Store, a Kress Store, a Singer Sewing store, a Western Union, at least fifteen doctors, several dentists, several lawyers, and restaurants.

Downtown Ensley was also a center for entertainment with several movie theatres. The largest and most elaborate of these, the Ensley Theatre was designed by Birmingham architect Lawrence S. Whitten and opened in 1927. "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." The building remains at 1925 Avenue E (Resource #86) although it was remodeled for use as retail space in recent decades. Other theatres that are no longer extant included the Franklin Theatre, located in the block adjacent to the Ramsey-McCormack Building and the Belle. The Palace Theatre, located along Avenue D, served the local African-American community.

The city continued to prosper during the 1950s due to its "backbone of steel and commerce." The completion of the Ensley Overpass in 1954 was hailed as a major stimulus for increased development within the community by opening Ensley to other areas to the west. Also in that year, the first phase of construction of the interstate system through Jefferson County was underway in Ensley. An article in the Birmingham Post-Herald that same year stated that: "This 'city within a city' is right now in the midst of growing and changing – new buildings are going up every day, homes are being built and more and more modern stores are moving into the community." A 1960 article in the Birmingham News entitled "Ensley Steel Works of TCI still rate one of South's great plants" noted that "In both world wars and during the Korean conflict, steel from Ensley helped to convince the nation's enemies that they could not hope to match America's industrial might."

By the late 1960s, signs of economic decline had already begun within Ensley's retail sector. A 1968 study by the Birmingham Planning Department found that industrial smoke, dust, and noise was a deterrent to Ensley's growth. Ironically, just a decade later, the loss of the industries that were producing the noise, smoke, and dirt would be the catalyst for the community's decline. By the 1970s, competition from area shopping centers and malls began to erode Ensley's retail base.

Ensley's fortunes began to decline sharply after 1974, when U.S. Steel significantly expanded the Fairfield Works with the construction of two innovative Q-BOP furnaces and added another furnace in 1978. The older more inefficient facilities at Ensley were gradually shut down, with the last of the mill's open-hearth furnaces ceasing operation in late 1978. With the closure of the rail mill and U.S. Steel's steel service center, Ensley's era as a major industrial center was over and much of its employment base was lost. Many of the buildings along 19th Street were vacant by the mid 1980s and the shooting that year of the manager of the Ensley Grill during a robbery was the catalyst for still more closures.

A prominent symbol of the community's declining fortunes, the Ramsay-McCormack Building became vacant in 1986. A 1996 article in the Birmingham News noted that: "Not much remains of downtown Ensley these days but ghosts and a handful of hold-on businesses. Even the grand 10-story Ramsay-McCormack Building, a landmark image of Ensley's past, now stands sadly empty, its windows one by one becoming broken."

Ethnic History

Ensley's industries attracted workers from many countries and different ethnic backgrounds. Afri-

can-American's made up the largest of these but there was also a significant Italian-American population, as well as a small Jewish and Greek communities. According to Lynne B. Feldman in *A Sense of Place: Birmingham's Black Middle-class Community, 1890-1930*: "By the early 1900s Birmingham had the nation's largest concentration of black industrial workers. In 1910, black workers held 75 percent of the jobs in Birmingham's iron and steel industry and even held leadership positions in the city's growing labor union." A small African-American business section developed primarily along Avenue D between 17th and 20th Streets. Businesses in the area included restaurants, small shops, and services businesses such as barber shops and tailors. African-American professionals located in the area included the Stallworth & Johnson funeral home, dentists John D. Rawls and Joseph N. King, and physicians James K. Robertson and Frank S. Simpson. Entertainment venues included the Palace Theatre, a movie and vaudeville theatre on the north side of Avenue D, and several nightclubs. The only surviving buildings representing this district include the house at 1800 D (resource #66) that was converted for use as a restaurant and nightclub by at least World War II and the two buildings at 1809 to 1813 Avenue C (resources #61-62), the latter of which served as a Knights of Pythias Hall.

Italians represented Birmingham's largest immigrant group, with a population of 2,160 by 1920 being more than forty per cent larger than the city's English population, and double that of the area's German or Russian populations. Ensley's Italian population in 1910 stood at about eight hundred, most of whom were settled in a twenty-block area in the residential area along Avenue F just to the east of the downtown and known as "Little Italy." In addition to working in the TCI mill, a number of Italians operated businesses within the commercial district. According to *The Italians: From Bisacquino to Birmingham*: "Italians did not have the anti-Negro prejudice that probably kept native whites from establishing businesses in black neighborhoods. Moreover, blacks willingly traded with Italians, whereas some native whites would not." Jacob Cantavespre, the son of an Italian immigrant bricklayer, operated a coal business out of a building in the predominantly black commercial district at nearby Tuxedo Junction. Other Italian businesses in downtown included: Joseph Pizzitola's shoe repair shop on Ave D; Vincent Scalco's fruit store at 1720 Avenue E; Jake Marino's shoe repair shop; Samuel Spano, a shoe shiner; Joe Rizzo's shoe repair shop at 306 19th; and Maeza's Grocery at 517-521 17th Street. Ensley's Italian community built a fraternal lodge, the Christopher Columbus Hall (Resource #3) in 1925. (A new Catholic Italian Chapel was completed in 1939 with the Rev. A. Pucciarelli serving as its priest and a Good Will Center for Italians was located at 608 16th Street. Ensley's Italian community began to migrate away after World War II.

Greek-American businesses included Bourboulas Brothers Restaurant at 1813 Avenue E; Nick Pafos, a confectioner, at 101 19th Street; Gus Zanthos, a confectioner, at 302 19th Street; Peter Harduvel, operator of a pool room; and Alex Costs, who operated a billiard parlor at 403 19th Street. Berthon's Cleaners was established in Ensley by French immigrant A.H. Berthon in 1925. Another French-American Paul Fontille, operated a furniture store. Jewish owned businesses in downtown included Myron Greenburg's dry goods store, C. Sarasohn & Son's Dry Goods store, Golstein & Cohen's department store, Silver & Sons 5&10, and Applebaum's Department Store. Cotton & Gingold dry goods store is the only business still operating and is now know simply as Cotton's. One Chinese business, Sam Loo's laundry, was operating in downtown in 1925.

Architecture

The surviving buildings in the Downtown Ensley Historic District reflect its historical development as a large suburban community from circa 1885 to circa 1960. The earliest resource in the district is the elaborate Romanesque Revival commercial building at 420 17th Street, 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. Notable among these are the Columbus, Christopher, Hall (resource #4, 1925), 509 17th St. Ensley, a rectangular two-story brick two-part Early-20th Century Commercial style fraternal lodge building; the Bank of Ensley (resource #24, 1919), an elaborate Neoclassical Revival bank building; the Ramsey-McCormack Building (resource #82, 1929-1930), 1825 Avenue E., a ten-story Arte Deco style building and the district's only skyscraper; the Birmingham-Ensley Land Co. Building (resource #48, 1927-1928), 722 19th St. Ensley, a two-story Neoclassical Revival style building; and the Bank of Alabama (resource #75, circa 1925), 1724 Avenue E, a one-story Early-20th Century Commercial style building. Other notable commercial buildings within the district include: 513 17th Street (resource #005, circa 1905); 109-115 19th Street (resource #s 8-9, circa 1910); 305 19th Street (resource #11, circa 1925); 405 19th Street (resource #18, circa 1925); 417 19th Street (resource #23, circa 1925); the Knapp Building, 600-602 19th Street (resource #31, circa 1910); 1810-1812 Avenue E (resource #79, circa 1930); the Ensley Theatre, 1925 Avenue E (resource #86, 1927); 2020 Avenue E (resource #94, circa 1915); the Echols & Angwin Funeral Home, 1714 Avenue F (resource #116, 1924); 1715 Avenue F (survey #143, circa 1925); and the commercial building at 1811 Avenue F (resource #117, circa 1925).

Downtown Ensley retains a four historically significant religious buildings. Architecturally, the largest and most elaborate are the Tudor Revival style First Methodist Episcopal Church South (resource #132, circa 1920) and the Ensley Baptist Church (resource #112, 1924). The other two church buildings include the Ensley First Presbyterian Church at 616 21st Street (resource #60, circa 1920) and the Ensley Christian Church at 2101 Avenue F (resource #129, 1914).

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

Architectural Description

General Description

Ensley is a suburb located at the western end of the City of Birmingham within the Opossum Valley. Originally a separate incorporated city, Ensley became part of Birmingham in 1909 and is now generally bordered by the suburban neighborhoods of Fairfield to the southwest, West End and Smithfield to the east, Pratt City to the northeast, and Sherman Heights to the west. Village Creek meanders across the north end of Ensley in a generally east to west direction and Interstate 59 bisects the community from the southwest to the east-northeast. The tracks of the Southern Railroad form the western boundary of the main portion of the community and run in a diagonal direction from southwest to northeast. Downtown Ensley is centrally located along the railroad line and is immediately surrounded by residential neighborhoods to the northeast, east, southeast, and southwest. The topography of the district is flat.

The downtown section 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. 19th 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.

Buildings in the core commercial area are typically constructed of brick, one to three stories in height, and are representative of late-nineteenth and early twentieth century styles. One 10-story skyscraper, the Ramsay-McCormack Building, is located at the southeast corner of Avenue E and 19th Street. Prominent landmarks within the core area include the Bank of Ensley (Resource #24, 1919), the Ramsay-McCormack Building (Resource #82, 1929-1930), the Christopher Columbus Hall (Resource #4, circa 1925), the Birmingham-Ensley Land Company (Resource #48, 1927-1928), the Echols-Angwin Funeral Home (Resource #116, 1924), the Bank of Alabama

(later Olive Branch Lodge, Resource #95, circa 1925), a former saloon at 420 17th Street (site #2, circa 1890), and the Fields/Knapp/Ellis Building (Resource #31, circa 1910). Stylistically, the vast majority of the district's commercial resources are examples of the Early 20th Century Commercial style. At least five buildings can be classified as being in the Neoclassical Revival (resources #18, #23, #24, #48, and #75) style and three exhibit features of the Mediterranean Revival style (Resources #31, #86, and #122). Late Victorian styles are represented by Resources #2, #5, and #94.

The district includes four churches: the Ensley Baptist Church (Resource #112, 1924), a large and elaborate Gothic Revival style building; the First Methodist Episcopal Church South, a large and elaborate Richardsonian Romanesque style building with an attached educational building (Resource #132, circa 1920); the Romanesque Revival style Ensley First Presbyterian Church (Resource #60, circa 1920); and the Clasical Revival style Ensley Christian Church (Resource #129, 1914). Only two dwelling are located in the district. The one story folk Victorian style house at 1800 Avenue D was constructed circa 1895 and was later converted into a restaurant. 2310 Avenue E is a two-story pyramidal form late Victorian style dwelling built circa 1900. The Ensley Theatre (Resource #86, 1927) was built as a motion picture theatre and was later converted into a drug store.

The district includes 109 contributing buildings and 25 noncontributing buildings.

Potential Individually National Register Eligible Resources

Additional historical research and evaluation is recommended for the following resources that may be potentially National Register eligible:

- 1) ***Columbus, Christopher, Hall*** (survey #4), 509 17th St. Ensley. Rectangular 2-story brick two-part Early-20th Century Commercial style fraternal lodge building with a monopitch roof concealed by a stepped parapet at its façade and at its side elevations; faces northeast; 5-bay façade with central arched window opening at 2nd level (now infilled with stucco) flanked on either side by large rectangular window openings and paired window openings infilled with plywood; large rectangular storefront opening at east side of 1st level infilled with concrete block, storefront system at west side flanked by pilasters and a single pedestrian entrance to the west, storefront has a central double entrance flanked by frame infill and with a continuous glazed multi-light transom, west entrance and transom infilled with wood; southeast elevation has 5 rectangular window openings at its 2nd level that are all infilled with concrete block and three small windows at the 1st level; northwest wall abuts adjacent building; alterations have included the infilling of windows and storefronts (ca. 1975). According to a cast sign panel at the parapet, this building was built in 1925 as the Christopher Columbus Hall; a metal clad 1-story "transfer" building is shown at this location on the 1911 Sanborn Map; this building is shown on the 1928 edition with a store at the 1st floor and a Hall at the 2nd; the map shows the building as a club: Chrsitopher Columbus Halls were typically established as social organizations by the Italian-American community



Columbus, Christopher, Hall (Survey #004)

- 2) **Ramsey-McCormack Bld.** (survey #35), 1825 Avenue E. Rectangular 10-story three-part Art Deco style office building with a flat roof concealed by decorative parapets, elevator/mechanical penthouse atop roof; faces NW to Ave. E but has 19th Street address; 5-bay façade with 3-bay storefront system, northern entrance bay at storefront set within an ogee-arched opening with decorative transom visible above plywood infill, splayed openings at remaining bays with recessed storefront windows visible above plywood infill; center 3-bays of floors 2-11 have triple windows at their center bay flanked by double windows, windows are separated by full-height pilasters that terminate into decorative cast capitals above the 9th floor, brick spandrel panels separate floors, decorative panels with paired cast stone Tudor arches are set above the 9th floor windows; single windows at outer bays with cutaway corners at the 9th floor; the 10th floor is 3-bays wide with similar windows surmounted by stylized paired brick arches; the parapet is pierced with oval openings at each bay; remaining elevs. are generally similar; stone veneer at 1st floor, painted brick veneer at upper levels; windows appear to be modern replacements (ca. 1960). The Ramsey-McCormack Building was constructed in 1929-1930 as an office building that historically housed a variety of business and professional offices.



*Ramsey-McCormack Bld.
(Survey #035)*

- 3) **Birmingham-Ensley Land Co. Building** (survey #58), 722 19th St. Ensley. Rectangular 2-story brick two-part commercial building with a collapsed monopitch roof concealed by flat parapets; slightly projecting brick pilasters with cast Corinthian capitals and stone bases divide the 6-bay façade and rise from a raised cast foundation to an elaborate cast cornice; entrances with pedimented surrounds and cast Corinthian pilasters are located at the outer bays of the 1st floor and flank 3 rectangular window openings at the center bays, all openings have been infilled with plywood and the western opening has been modified to serve as an entrance; double 1/1 replacement aluminum windows with simple cast sills are located in all bays of the upper level; the façade is exposed brick veneer; the southeast elevation is exposed along Avenue H, all but the rear of its 8 bays are similar in design to the façade; the northwest elevation is exposed to a parking area but historically abutted a 1-story building, a light well is recessed at the 6 rear bays of the upper level, the remainder of the elevation is exposed brick set in common bond; alterations include the replacement of upper story windows and the infill or 1st story windows (ca. 1975). This building was built in 1927 and completed in early 1928 to house the offices of the Birmingham-Ensley Land Co. (Birmingham Post-Herald 12/14/1927).



*Birmingham-Ensley Land Co. Building
(Survey #058)*

- 4) **Bank of Alabama** (survey #95), 1724 Avenue E. Rectangular 1-story brick veneer commercial building with a front-facing gable asphalt shingle roof concealed at its façade by a gable parapet; faces SE, 3x5 bay core; central bay of façade projects slightly under broken pedimented gable with a molded cornice with dentils, round-arched central

entrance opening with recessed double leaf doors with trabeated entrance surround surmounted by a cast eagle, entrance flanked by single narrow windows; outer bays with single multi-light windows with decorative brick surrounds; similar shorter windows at 2 front bays of SW elevation, 2 similar windows within round arched openings with cast keystones at next 2 bays, similar arched opening with entrance at rear bay; blank NE elevation formerly abutted a building that has been removed; exposed brick veneer façade with decorative cast foundation and belt courses, decorative pilasters and corbelled cornice at SW elevation. Construction and design details indicate that this building was constructed circa 1925. It is shown on the 1928 Sanborn map as a bank and on the 1951 edition as shops. The Birmingham District indicates that the building was originally the bank of Ensley and that it later served as the Olive Branch Lodge, a social organization for Ensley's white community (pp. 103 & 105).



Bank of Alabama (Survey #095)

- 5) **Ensley Baptist Church** (survey #131), 2301 Avenue E. Rectangular T-shaped 2-story flat-roofed core with long axis perpendicular to street with rear T wings, raised clerestory level centered along main axis forward of wings; faces SW; oversized brick buttresses at the façade support a central gable parapet at the clerestory, elaborate pointed stone archway spans buttresses above the 2nd level and is visually supported by 2 narrow cast stone pillars rising from a 1st level portico, archway frames a 2-story loggia, large stone staircase descends through the portico and projects into the street; entrances at 1st level within the loggia with arched multi-light stained glass windows above, similar full height windows within pointed arched openings flank the loggia and have stone lintels, small entrance pavilions below these windows with stone parapet caps and entrance surrounds; NE elevation is 10 bays deep with the front 5 bays representing the core and the rear 5 bays the rear L wing, slightly projecting front bay under a gable parapet, remaining bays are separated by brick buttresses, paired multi-light stained glass windows with stone arches at upper level with similar rectangular windows at lower level, molded stone band atop foundation level with similar windows below, 2x5 bay T wing at rear bays with a 1x1 bay stair lower within the L; SW elevation is similar with ancillary building extending from SW elevation of the rear wing; historic building was built in 2 phases: rear portion between 1924 and 1929 and front portion in 1929, alterations include construction of ancillary building (ca. 1965) and new industrial metal roof (ca. 2005). According to its datestone, the Ensley Baptist Church was erected between 1924 and 1929; only the rear portion of the building is shown on the 1928 Sanborn map; the front portion appears to have been added in 1929 and the large ancillary building circa 1965.



Ensley Baptist Church (Survey #131)

- 6) **First Methodist Episcopal Church South** (survey #160), 1913-1921 Avenue G. Rectangular T-shaped 2-story flat-roofed core with long axis perpendicular to street with rear T wings, raised clerestory level centered along main axis forward of wings; faces SW; oversized brick buttresses at the façade support a central

gable parapet at the clerestory, elaborate pointed stone archway spans buttresses above the 2nd level and is visually supported by 2 narrow cast stone pillars rising from a 1st level portico, archway frames a 2-story loggia, large stone staircase descends through the portico and projects into the street; entrances at 1st level within the loggia with arched multi-light stained glass windows above, similar full height windows within pointed arched openings flank the loggia and have stone lintels, small entrance pavilions below these windows with stone parapet caps and entrance surrounds; NE elevation is 10 bays deep with the front 5 bays representing the core and the rear 5 bays the rear L wing, slightly projecting front bay under a gable parapet, remaining bays are separated by brick buttresses, paired multi-light stained glass windows with stone arches at upper level with similar rectangular windows at lower level, molded stone band atop foundation level with similar windows below, 2x5 bay T wing at rear bays with a 1x1 bay stair lower within the L; SW elevation is similar with ancillary building extending from SW elevation of the rear wing; historic building was built in 2 phases: rear portion between 1924 and 1929 and front portion in 1929, alterations include construction of ancillary building (ca. 1965) and new industrial metal roof (ca. 2005). According to its datestone, the Ensley Baptist Church was erected between 1924 and 1929; only the rear portion of the building is shown on the 1928 Sanborn map; the front portion appears to have been added in 1929 and the large ancillary building circa 1965. Construction and design details indicate that this 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 on the 1928 and 1950 editions as the First Methodist Episcopal Church South.



Ensley Baptist Church (Survey #160)

Potential Alabama Register Eligible Resources

None Identified.

Commercial Architecture

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. Much of this commercial area is being nominated to the National Register as the next phase of this project. The proposed Downtown Ensley Historic District includes 107 contributing buildings and twenty-seven noncontributing buildings generally dating from circa 1885 to circa 1959. Notable commercial buildings within the district include the buildings previously identified as being potentially individually eligible for the National Register as well as: the commercial building at 420 17th Street (survey #002, circa 1885); the commercial building at 513 17th Street (survey #005, circa 1905); the commercial buildings at 109-115 19th Street (survey #s 015-016, circa 1910); the commercial building at 305 19th Street (survey #018, circa 1925); the commercial building at 405 19th Street (survey #025, circa 1925); the commercial building at 417 19th Street (survey #030, circa 1925); the Knapp Building at 600-602 19th Street (survey #039, circa 1910); the commercial building at 1810-1812 Avenue E (survey #099, circa 1930); the Ensley Theatre at 1925 Avenue E (survey #105, 1927); the commercial building at 2020 Avenue E (survey #113, circa 1915); the Echols & Angwin Funeral Home at 1714 Avenue F (survey #142, 1924); the commercial building at 1715 Avenue F (survey #143, circa 1925); and the commercial building at 1811 Avenue F (survey #147, circa 1925).



420 17th Street (survey #002, circa 1885)



513 17th Street (survey #005, circa 1905)



109-115 19th Street (survey #s 015-016, circa 1910);



305 19th Street (survey #018, circa 1925)



405 19th Street (survey #025, circa 1925)



417 19th Street (survey #030, circa 1925)



1810-1812 Avenue E (survey #099, circa 1930)



Knapp Building at 600-602 19th St. (survey #039, circa 1910)



1811 Avenue F (survey #147, circa 1925)



Ensley Theatre at 1925 Avenue E survey #105, 1927)



2020 Avenue E (survey #113, circa 1915)



Echols & Angwin Funeral Home, 1714 Avenue F (survey #142, 1924)



1715 Avenue F (survey #143, circa 1925)

Ecclesiastical Architecture

Downtown Ensley retains a four historically significant religious buildings. Architecturally, the largest and most elaborate are the Tudor Revival style First Methodist Episcopal Church South (survey #160, circa 1920) and the Ensley Baptist Church (survey #131, 1924). Both of these buildings were identified as being potentially eligible for the National Register and are pictured on previous pages. The other two church buildings include the Ensley First Presbyterian Church at 616 21st Street (survey #76, circa 1920) and the Ensley Christian Church at 2101 Avenue F (survey #155, 1914).



Ensley First Presbyterian Church, 616 21st Street (survey #76, circa 1920)



Ensley Christian Church, 2101 Avenue F (survey #155, 1914).

Residential Architecture

Only two dwellings are located in the district: a one story folk Victorian style house at 1800 Avenue D (survey #86, circa 1895 and later converted into a restaurant) and 2310 Avenue E, a two-story pyramidal form late Victorian style dwelling built circa 1900 (survey #133).



1800 Avenue D (survey #86, circa 1895)



2310 Avenue E (survey #133, circa 1900)

Survey Gaps

None.

Resource Inventory

A complete resource inventory is included in the separate document entitled: *Downtown Ensley Historic Sites Survey 2009 - Resource Inventory*.

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Methodology

Literature & Records Review

Background historical research was completed between May through and September 2008. Appropriate archival sources were researched, interviews were conducted and the collections of the Alabama Historical Commission, the National Register of Historic Places and HABS/HAER were reviewed. The results of the research are summarized in the Historical Background section of this report and, where appropriate, information has been recorded on individual field survey forms.

Field Inventory

Fieldwork for this project was completed by David B. Schneider from July through September 2008. An intensive historic sites inventory was conducted within Downtown Ensley as it was defined by the Birmingham Planning Commission. The survey was conducted in order to meet the requirements of the Alabama Historical Commission and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for identification. All above-ground buildings, structures, and objects were recorded. For each site inventoried, a unique inventory number was assigned, a survey form was completed, a photograph was taken, and the site was indicated on an appropriate map based upon a U. S. G. S. 7.5 minute series topographic map. In addition to a black and white negative, digital photographs were taken of all surveyed sites and of each noncontributing resource within the indicated historic district.

Report

This report summarizes the project's methodology, geographic coverage and survey results. The report describes the historic resources and related landscape features identified and assesses the potential eligibility of any or all of the identified resources for the National Register of Historic Places. A "fair and reasonable" approach was taken to determine the eligibility of resources for the National Register and all resources were evaluated utilizing appropriate National Register Bulletins.

Acknowledgements

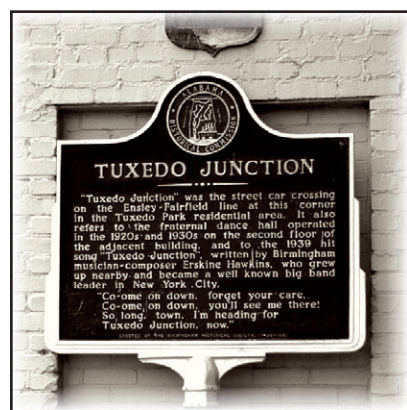
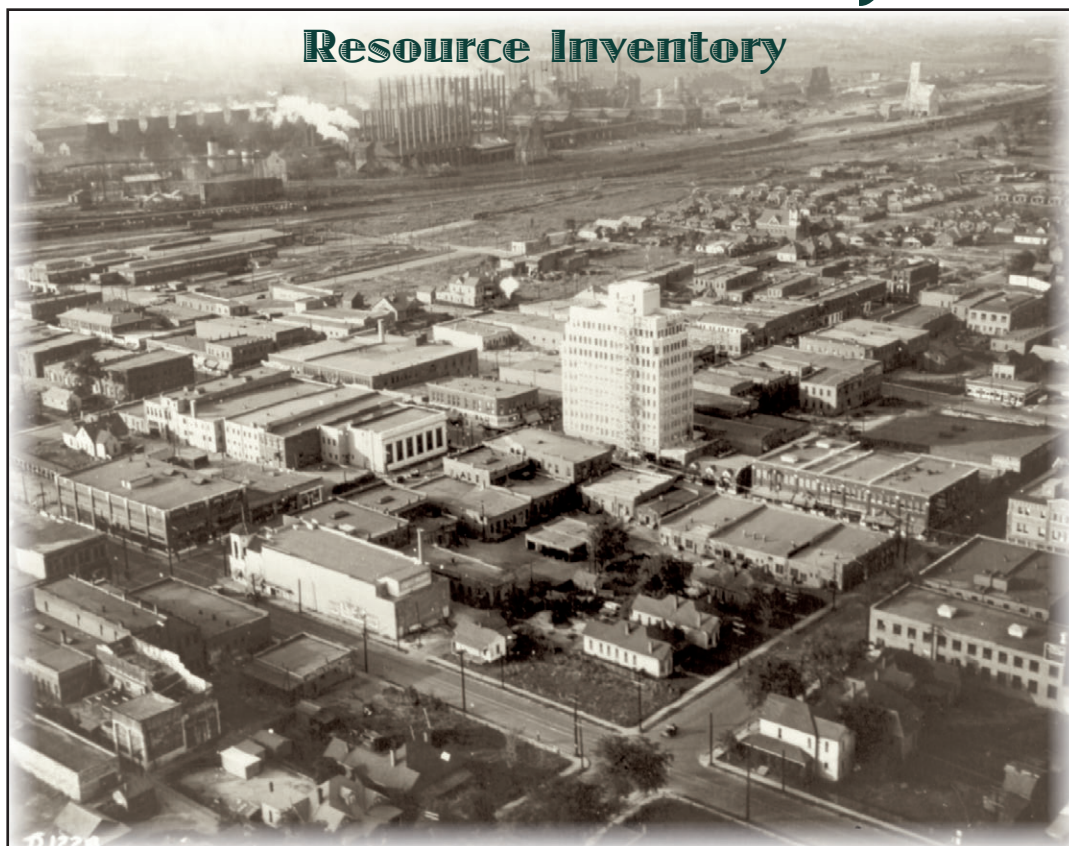
Special thanks are extended to Victor Blackledge and Karla Calvert of the City of Birmingham Department of Planning, Engineering and Permits, Mary Allison Haynie of Main Street Birmingham, Inc., and the staff of the Alabama Historical Commission including Mary Shell and Lee Anne Wofford .

In addition, thanks are extended to the Ensley Neighborhood Association, Tuxedo Park Neighborhood Association, the Ensley Merchants Association, Omie Crockett, Sr., Ples E. Lewis, and Antonio Spurlin.

David B. Schneider, September 30, 2008

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Downtown Ensley Historic Sites Survey 2009



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