

MORRIS AVENUE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT  
Birmingham Industrial District  
Birmingham  
Jefferson County  
Alabama

HABS No. AL-966

HABS  
ALA  
37-BIRM,  
18-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

APPENDIX  
FOLIOS

ADDENDUM TO  
MORRIS AVENUE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT  
Birmingham Industrial District  
2000-2400 blocks of Morris Avenue &  
2100-2500 blocks of First Avenue N.  
Birmingham  
Jefferson County  
Alabama

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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ADDENDUM TO  
MORRIS AVENUE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT

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- Location: 2000-2400 blocks of Morris Avenue and 2100-2500 blocks of First Avenue North, just north of the Railroad Reservation, city center Birmingham, Jefferson County. First Avenue North is the east-west major artery in the Birmingham city center.
- Ownership: Multiple private
- Date of Construction: 1886-1920s
- Project Information: This report is based upon written documentation donated by the Birmingham Historical Society, reformatted to HABS/HAER guidelines.
- Significance: This concentration of warehouses in Birmingham's oldest and most important warehouse and jobbing district testifies to the importance of railroads to the commerce of the early city. The district documents the development of warehousing over a 50 year span showcasing warehouse design and technology from small scale, load bearing wall buildings through the larger scale, steel and concrete reinforced structures with vast expanses of industrial windows.

#### DESCRIPTION

First listed in 1973 and expanded in 1986, the Morris Avenue & First Avenue North National Register Historical District includes Birmingham's earliest warehouse district with 33 remaining commercial/warehouse structures erected adjacent to the major rail lines and freight depots of the city's central railroad reservation. Warehouses dating from 1886 to the 1920s reflect the transitions in building practices from wood frame to steel and concrete structural support systems and incorporate new technologies in structural and window design for industrial buildings. The district also includes several significant office buildings associated with public utility and development firms.

Outstanding structures in the district include the Slaton, McGlathery & Burwell Building (1886, 2125 Morris Avenue) with its wide, arched carriage delivery entrances still intact; the Collins Building (1902, 2100 Morris Avenue) an early food brokerage; and

the W. S. Brown Building (1904,1915, 2301-2307 Morris Avenue), a local mercantile company warehouse (now loft condominiums). The office buildings for the Birmingham Realty Company (1905, 2118 First Avenue North), a Beaux Arts structure with original interiors intact, still houses corporate offices of the company that founded the city. The eight-story Birmingham Railway Light & Power Company Building (1915, 1926-1927), a replacement for a turn of the century structure that burned, were the offices of the company that developed, under the leadership of Robert Jemison, Sr., the second largest streetcar network in America.  
1880s-1920s

#### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Morris Avenue developed in the 1880s as the city's first warehouse and wholesale district. Named for Josiah Morris, the Elyton Land Company's largest stockholder and most astute financial advisor, the district, was well served by rail transport, first burgeoned with small family enterprises including groceries, sawmills and stockyards, and later with the substantial warehouses of today's district. By 1900, warehousing activity spilled over into the 2300 to 2500 Blocks of First Avenue North, still a warehouse district to this day.

The Morris Avenue portion of today's National Register District was designated the city's first National Register District in 1973. At this time, asphalt covering the original Belgian block street was removed and gas lighting and sidewalk improvements installed as part of unsuccessful efforts to create an entertainment district.

#### CONDITION

During the 1980s, this area witnessed substantial renovation with conversion of many warehouses to use as artists' studios, loft apartments and offices for legal and design professionals.

#### **Sources Consulted**

National Register Nominations 1973, revised and expanded 1986  
Birmingham Historical Society, Downtown Birmingham Files