

HAER  
ALA  
37-BIRM  
49-

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
WATER RESOURCES DIVISION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20012-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

O'NEAL STEEL INC.

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HAER No. AL-71

Location: 744 41st Street North, East Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama.

Dates of Construction: est. 1923; East Birmingham plant est. 1942

Project Information: This report is based upon written documentation donated by the Birmingham Historical Society, reformatted to HABS/HAER guidelines.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

O'Neal had originally established the company as a steel fabricating firm in West End in 1922. In 1937, O'Neal opened one of the South's first steel service centers. In 1942, with war-time contracts to build a dry dock for the U.S. Navy, Birmingham industrialist Kirkman O'Neal acquired a 16-acre site between the Southern and Central of Georgia railroads in East Birmingham. O'Neal completed construction of his new plant in three months. The company was later awarded additional contracts to build several different types of bombs. Working 1,300 men around the clock, Southern Steel Works became one of the nation's largest producers of general-purpose bombs, used extensively in the Pacific area and at the D-Day invasion. In 1949, the company assumed the name of its founder and president. During the 1950s and 1960s, O'Neal Steel expanded its operations into the warehousing of steel products. With service centers throughout the South, O'Neal Steel is a major source of pre-processed steel, aluminum and bronze. It is still family owned and operated by two generations of O'Neals. O'Neal most recently, with British investors, developed the Tuscaloosa Steel Plant at Holt in Tuscaloosa County.

**Sources Consulted**

White, Marjorie, The Birmingham District, p. 167

Interview with Emmet O'Neal, 11/28/91