

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **NOV 21 1988**

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Old U. S. Post Office and Courthouse

and or common AmeriFirst Federal

2. Location

street & number 100-118 N. E. 1st Avenue/59-65 N. E. 1st Street not for publication

city, town Miami vicinity of

state Florida 33132 code FL county Dade code FL 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Owners

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dade County Courthouse

street & number 75 W. Flagler Street

city, town Miami state Florida 33130

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title FMSF-Miami Multiple Resource

Historic Preservation Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June, 1985 federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Historic Preservation

city, town Tallahassee state Florida 32399-0250

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

See Continuation Sheet

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1938	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1912-1914 **Builder/Architect** Oscar Wenderoth, Kiehnel and Elliott

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

See Continuation Sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see Bibliography for Cover Nomination

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Miami

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 17 581091810 285108810
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

Miami, Lots 18, 19 and 20 of Block 105 of the plat of MIAMI NORTH (PB B-41).
Boundary follows historic and legal boundary.
Please see cover nomination-boundary justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sarah Eaton /Vicki L. Welcher, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date October, 1988

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida 32399-0250

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 


title State Historic Preservation Officer date October 17, 1988

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

entered in the
National Register

date 1/4/89


Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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DESCRIPTION:

Condition: Good

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is a three-story masonry structure executed in an adaptation of the Neo-Classical Revival style of architecture. Construction of the building began in 1912 following the plans provided by Oscar Wenderoth, Supervising Architect for the U.S. Department of the Treasury.¹ The building was completed in July 1914, with a structural system comprised of reinforced concrete beams and hollow tile floor slabs.²

The exterior of the Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is clad in Bedford limestone quarried from Indiana. The rectangular plan building sits at the northwest corner of the intersection of N.E. 1st Street and N.E. 1st Avenue. The east elevation, parallel to N.E. 1st Avenue, is characterized by a facade nine bays in length and three stories in height. There are Ionic pilasters, two stories in height, separating each bay. The end bays are solid and contain no openings between the flanking pilasters. The middle seven bays are embellished with elements characteristic of the Neo-Classical style.

The first story is characterized by seven arched openings capped by rectangular openings above. As originally constructed, the east elevation was approached by a series of masonry steps extending the length of the elevation. The seven openings extended to the floor and led to an open loggia. After the 1937 renovation, the loggia was enclosed, and only the steps beneath the arch closest to the corner were retained. A massive masonry molding once served as a belt course delineating a "pedestal line" for the pilasters; this molding serves as window sills for windows that have been installed within the arched openings. The second story of the east elevation contains double doors set within rectangular openings. These openings are embellished by shallow projecting balconies surrounded by wrought iron. A wide entablature wraps around the building between the second and third stories. The entablature rests atop the Ionic capitals of the pilasters below. The middle seven bays of the third story contain paired windows, divided by an engaged Tuscan column, set within each bay. Flat pilasters serve to divide the bays along the third floor.

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The south elevation, parallel to N.E. 1st Street, is characterized by a facade six bays long and three stories in height. The end bays are solid, just like those found on the east elevation. The middle four bays of the south elevation contain the same physical features as the middle seven bays within the east elevation. The only difference between the two elevations lies in the fact that the south elevation only contained steps toward the corner, and was not approached through an open loggia.

The building is capped by a truncated hip roof covered with Spanish tile. The building is surrounded by wide eaves supported by highly ornate wooden brackets. These brackets were originally polychromed and still retain traces of the original paint colors and decorative patterns. In 1948, two-story wings were added to the building along the east and south elevations. This addition was executed following the plans provided by the architectural firm of Kiehnel and Elliott, one of the most prominent design teams in South Florida.³ The additions follow the same wall treatment of the original building, except they are two stories in height and the rooflines are characterized by a low masonry parapet wall.

The interior of the first floor originally contained the post office facilities, while other federal offices and courtrooms were found in the upper floors. After the 1937 conversion of the building into a bank, only the first floor, which serves as the main teller area, retained any distinctive decorative features such as the masonry string courses and vaulted ceilings.

The openings characterizing the original fenestration pattern have all been retained; however, many of the original wooden casement windows have been replaced by solid panes of glass. Except for the enclosure of the loggia in 1937, the building has remained virtually unaltered on the exterior. Subsequent changes to the building's architectural fabric have been sensitive to the original design integrity.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Specific Dates: 1912-1914, original construction
1937, renovation
1948, addition

Architects: Oscar Wenderoth, 1912-1914
Kiehnel and Elliott, 1937

Builder: F. G. Tarbell Company

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of the Neo-Classical Revival style in Miami. The building was the first major federal structure to have been constructed in Miami, and was also said to have been the most modern government building in the South at the time of its construction.⁴ After the federal government moved out of the building into larger quarters, the building became home to First Federal Savings and Loan Association (now AmeriFirst Federal), the first federally chartered savings and loan association in the country.

The visual composition of the Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is noteworthy for its restrained, classically-inspired composition. The building's elevations are embellished with such features as monumental pilasters, arched openings, and an articulated entablature. The building's design is also important in that it demonstrates the adaptation of the style to South Florida's climate, particularly in the use of wide overhanging eaves and a Spanish tile roof.

Prior to the construction of the Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, the Miami post office was located in a small building on South Miami Avenue at S. W. 1st Street. Still a second class facility, the post office did not achieve first class status until 1911. Miami's growth and development during the city's formative years quickly overtaxed the existing facilities of the post office, and the U.S. Government acknowledged the need to construct a modern facility.

When the new building opened in 1914, the post office occupied the first floor and the courts, the second floor. Other government agencies, including customs, the weather bureau, and

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the immigration inspector, were housed on the third floor. The building met the needs of the federal government until the frenzied development of Miami's Boom years necessitated the erection of a new structure in 1931.

The federal government vacated the building in 1931 when a larger structure opened at 300 N. E. 1st Avenue. Between 1931 and 1937, the old post office was occupied by the federal arts project, as well as by other governmental units.

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was purchased in 1937 by First Federal Savings and Loan Association as its permanent home. Organized by Dr. William H. Walker in 1933, this financial association was the first federal savings and loan association in the country to have been granted a charter by the U.S. government.

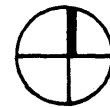
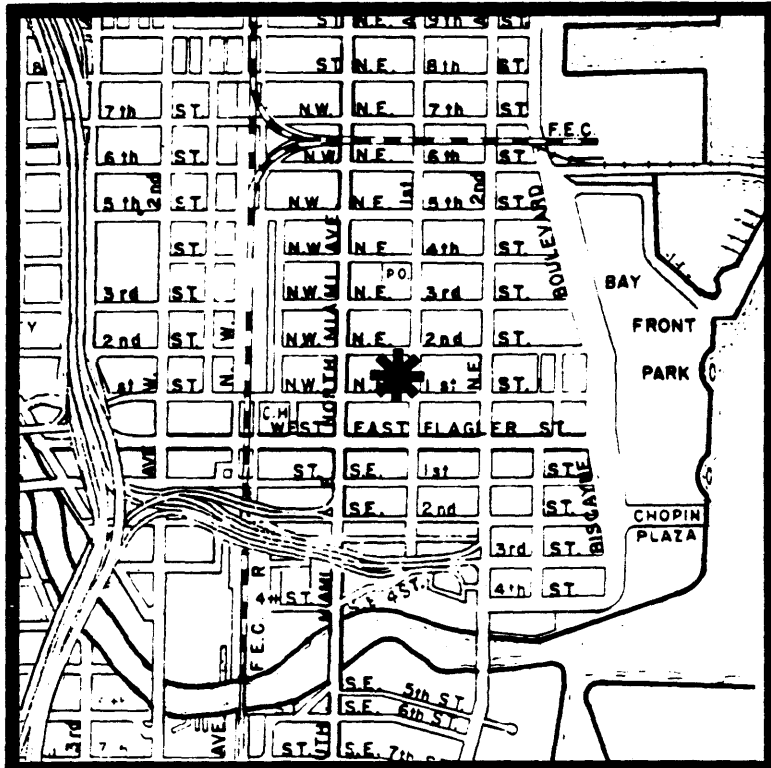
By 1937, First Federal had become Miami's largest savings and loan institution. Although criticized for his optimism in visualizing such growth that his association would utilize all the space of the large post office building, Walker soon proved his critics wrong. By 1947, the association had assets of \$17 million and required a large addition to the old building. AmeriFirst moved to its new 32 story building in 1973 but continues to utilize the old post office as a downtown branch office.

NOTES

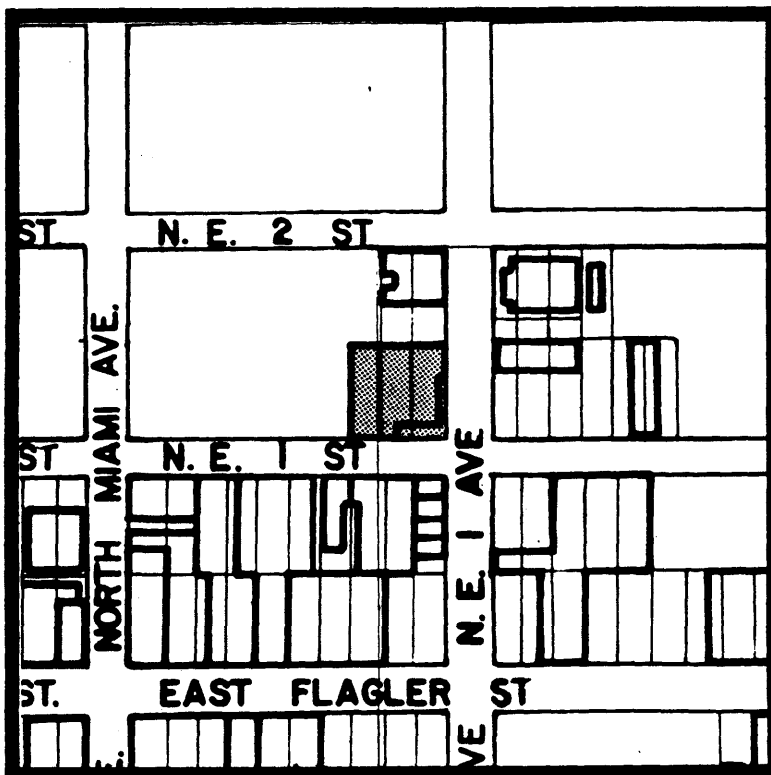
1. State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Archives, History and Records Management, "Florida Master Site File: Historic Site Data Sheet" for 100 and 124 N. E. 1st Avenue, "Statement of Significance."
2. "Government Building To Be Open Today," Miami Herald, 18 July 1914.
3. City of Miami, Building and Zoning Department, Building Permit applied for 25 May 1937; City of Miami Building and Zoning Department, Building Plans on Microfilm, Roll 17, Plan M-56; and "Kiehnel and Elliott, Architects," Florida Architecture and Allied Arts, 1938, p. 20.
4. Sarah E. Eaton, "Old U.S. Office and Courthouse Designation Report," (prepared for the City of Miami Heritage Conservation Board, 8 June 1984.)

OLD U.S. POST OFFICE and COURTHOUSE

100 N.E. 1 AVENUE



location



site plan