



**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls concrete block

stucco

roof clay barrel tile-cuban

other stucco

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Coral Gables Elementary School is a complex of five two-story, Mediterranean Revival style buildings constructed in three consecutive phases begun in 1923 and completed in 1926. The buildings are concrete block structures with smooth stucco finishes. They are arranged to enclose two courtyard areas and are connected by a series of shed-roofed loggias. (See site plan.)

Richard Kiehnel, the architect, designed the Coral Gables Elementary School so that additions to the original structure would be indistinguishable. By planning his building around two central court areas, Kiehnel was able to relate the additions by carrying the loggias along the longitudinal axis of the complex. Kiehnel designed the school in the Mediterranean Revival style in keeping with developer George Merrick's dominant theme for the City. The style is particularly well suited to the climate of South Florida and takes maximum advantage of outdoor spaces through numerous openings onto the two large courtyard areas.

The anticipated growth of Coral Gables is the primary reason the School is so well designed. The success of Merrick's Coral Gables is a result of the outstanding planning that was involved. Merrick had Kiehnel design the three phases anticipating the growth that was quickly a reality. Because of the rapid growth in student population and the immediate additions to the original building, the Coral Gables Elementary School is considered to be one complex with a three year construction period.

The buildings contain such elements of the Mediterranean Revival style as stucco finishing, clay tile roofing, decorative ornamentation around doorways and windows, loggias and such classically derived elements as round arches and columns often with composite capitols.

**MINORCA AVENUE FACADE (SOUTH ELEVATION)**

The original building, which forms the south side of the complex, was completed in 1924, and contains a series of classrooms arranged in a narrow rectangular plan with the main entrance placed at the west end.

The two story entrance bay terminates in a hip roofed tower. The door hood surmounting the rectangular aperture leading into an arcade is extremely

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ornate, featuring columns and capitol consoles supporting a projecting rectangular panel filled with relief and the words "Grammar School." The second story of the tower features paired-arched openings with a freestanding column providing the definition between the arches.

The classroom portion of the building is two-story. The first story features an arcade of round arches that carry the second story veranda. The veranda is covered by a barrel-tiled shed roof. A balustrade composed of circular interconnected elements extends between the piers supporting the roof. The arcade terminates in a two story block which contains another entrance portal. The cornice features linear rectangular bands surrounding the perimeter.

PONCE DE LEON FACADE BOULEVARD (WEST ELEVATION)

That portion of the complex which faces onto Ponce de Leon contains a 900 seat auditorium. A two story porch extends out from the center of the building. The three round arches of the porch carry the gable-roofed second story featuring five Moorish-inspired arches springing from freestanding columns. The corners of the building on the Ponce elevation are distinguished by gable-roofed pavilions containing a series of windows divided into a diamond pattern.

NAVARRE AVENUE FACADE (NORTH ELEVATION)

The building extends the entire length of the block, and individual parts are articulated by a series of four projecting towers occurring at regular intervals. The western-most tower features a door hood with an elaborate relief incorporating a series of geometric patterns as well as marine motifs such as seahorses and dolphins. The second story of the tower is pierced by two round-arched openings. The second tower of the facade repeats the general arrangement but terminates in crenells. The third tower mirrors the others but includes a compound arch on the first story. The last tower, closest to Ponce de Leon Boulevard, terminates in a flat roof and is embellished by gothic-inspired molding around the perimeter of the tower.

The sections of the building between the towers are essentially unarticulated on the first story. The second story possesses paired slender pilasters separating the windows and includes rectangular panels containing a relief of an open book and scrollwork. Regular fenestration is four over four double hung wood sash.

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CAFETERIA BUILDING (INTERIOR COURT)

The one story cafeteria building is essentially unarticulated, and is rectangular in plan. The building contains louvered wooden windows and possesses a hip roof. The building is visible only from the Minorca Avenue facade and is recessed some distance from the roadway.

GALIANO FACADE (EAST ELEVATION)

As this portion of the complex is the rear elevation, it is relatively unarticulated. The walls possess none of the relief ornamentation found on the other facades. Fenestration consists of three over three, double hung windows.

This section terminates in a polygonal one story bay. Above it is a two stage tower pierced by three round arched windows which are surrounded by a low relief of stylized floral motions.

The buildings were originally roofed with clay barrel tile. Portions of the buildings were reroofed in 1982 using an "S" shaped, terra cotta colored tile. That material was selected after extensive negotiations were conducted between the School Board and the City of Coral Gables' Historic Preservation Board. Those negotiations resulted in this highly desirable compromise. There have been no significant alterations. The buildings are remarkably intact.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture \_\_\_\_\_

Community planning and development \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1923-1926 \_\_\_\_\_

1923-1927 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1924, 1926 \_\_\_\_\_

1923 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Richard Kienhel, FAIA

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Coral Gables Elementary School is significant in architecture as an outstanding example of the Mediterranean Revival style and in its association with the architectural firm of Kienhel and Elliott, under the direction of Richard Kienhel. Kienhel, a noted architect, designed numerous structures in South Florida during the 1920s Boom Period, several of which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is significant historically for its association with the community planning and development of Coral Gables by George Merrick.

The Coral Gables Elementary School employs the Mediterranean Revival style of architecture for its compatibility with the semi-tropical environment of South Florida. Because this style enabled the structure to take advantage of the cross breezes, it became the most prevalent of the style for schools during this period. One of the distinguishing features of the Mediterranean Revival style, the arcaded loggias, developed into the covered walkway in schools. This became a distinguishing feature of all styles of schools in Florida until recent times. With the advent of efficient, commercial air conditioning, school designs abandoned the arcaded open walkways for the economical interior hallway design. This style, reminiscent of penitentiary construction, further reduces the effects of the hot Florida sun.

The first half of the second decade saw the beginning of the Florida Land Boom. Florida, and in particular South Florida, was advertised nationally as the "Tropical Paradise". Planned communities flourished and counties saw their populations explode. Utopian communities borrowed from exotic locales to create thematic cities such as Opa-locka. Other cities, such as Coral Gables, expanded quickly because of detailed city plans by such men as George Merrick.

Dade County, in particular, experienced phenomenal growth during this 1920s boom period. Miami suburbs, such as Miami Shores Village developed by Hugh Anderson's Shoreland Company in 1924, the Glenn Curtiss and James Bright developments of Opa-Locka and Miami Springs, began in 1921 and 1922 respectively, and Carl Fisher's burgeoning Miami Beach community, all enticed buyers with their promise of something unique.  See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property approximately 2 acres

UTM References

A 

1	1	7
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5	7	4	4	4	0
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2	8	4	8	4	4	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Coral Gables Elementary School boundary encompasses all of Coral Gables Section L, Block 16. It is bounded on the north by Navarre Avenue, on the east by Galiano Street, on the south by Minorca Avenue, and on the west by Ponce de Leon Boulevard.

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Boundary Justification

The boundary as stated encompasses the historic site only, and conforms to its historic as well as present legal boundaries.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Ellen Uguccioni/Vicki Welcher - Historic Sites Specialist  
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date May 10, 1988  
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George Merrick, son of Reverend Solomon, a Congregationalist Minister, came to Florida in 1898 to an area today known as Coconut Grove. He and his father were successful farmers and shippers of fruits and vegetables grown on the Coral Gables Plantation, the family homestead. They shipped the first carload of citrus fruit out of Dade County at the completion of the East Coast Railway, and eventually became the largest shipper of grapefruit in the Southeast. These endeavors led to financial security, and in 1906, the Merricks built the family home, "Coral Gables".

In 1921, George Merrick began his development of the then 3,000 acre tract he also called "Coral Gables." Merrick brought together the talents of architects, landscape architects, engineers, city planners and fine artists to create the model city he envisioned. The city plan was developed by Denman Fink, the landscape artist was Frank Button of Chicago, and the principal architect was Phineas Paist. Other local architects and designers involved in the project were H. George Fink, Paul Chalfin and Walter De Garmo. Other major architectural firms such as Kiehnel & Elliot and Schultze & Weaver contributed to the planned community. Between 1920 and 1923, Merrick invested over fifty million dollars in construction of permanent improvements. Over three million dollars was spent to advertise Merrick's "Riviera of the Tropics."

George Merrick's planned community of Coral Gables was phenomenally successful and eclipsed other developments of its kind. This success was due in large part to the careful analysis of the needs of new residents which were addressed in the master plan. Merrick devoted the greatest portion of Coral Gables to residential uses, but included a commercial district and the finest residential, religious, educational, recreational, and commercial facilities as well. His plan allocated large tracts of land for a golf course and other recreational facilities.

Merrick's commitment to the educational needs of his new community is demonstrated in the construction of the Coral Gables Elementary School. Constructed between 1923 and 1926 and designed in a Mediterranean Revival style of architecture, this was the first public school to be constructed in Coral Gables. The school is an important community focal point and a key element in Merrick's planned community. Merrick personally financed the building of the original school with the understanding that the Dade County School Board would repay him \$10,000 for the land within five years and \$25,000 for the school building within one year after it was completed. The

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School Board also agreed to erect an addition in the summer of 1924 at the cost of \$35,000 and a second addition by the fall of 1925. Merrick agreed to provide all landscaping.

Richard Kiehnel, FAIA, of the firm of Kiehnel and Elliot, designed the school which received two major additions within three years, testament to the extraordinary growth of Coral Gables during Florida's boom years. The Kiehnel and Elliott firm designed all phases of Coral Gables Elementary, as well as many other noteworthy structures in Coral Gables and Dade County. During his years in Florida, Richard Kiehnel made a special effort to introduce and develop Mediterranean Revival style architecture in the state. It is largely through his influence that this became a style characteristic of South Florida..

The firm of Kiehnel and Elliott was formed in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1906, with Richard Kiehnel as the designer. Their first commission from Florida was received in the early spring of 1917. At first, Kiehnel operated from a small branch office but, by 1922, a permanent office was opened. During the period of Florida's rapid growth, branch offices were maintained in Miami Beach and St. Petersburg. In 1926, certain changes in the partnership agreement were made and, in 1930, Mr. Kiehnel personally took over the Florida interests of the firm. Among Kiehnel and Elliott's more notable designs are the Coral Gables Congregational Church, built in 1924 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 10, 1978, and the Bindley Estate, now Carrollton School for Girls listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 30, 1974 as El Jardin. They designed many residences in Coral Gables, Miami and Miami Beach and are also known for their design of the Scottish Rite Temple in Miami.

Coral Gables Elementary School is one of the most esthetically appealing structures directly attributed to Merrick and his original plan for the city. In an early Coral Gables advertisement that highlighted the new school Merrick wrote, "Coral Gables Grammar School building, now almost completed, marks another advance in the well rounded development program of Coral Gables...Better homes, larger breathing spaces in lawns and parks, better air and water, and a far better influence through beautiful things which inspire high ideals in the minds of children."

The school opened in October, 1923. Mary Feaster Jackson, a teacher, and Mrs. George Merrick, who had no children, signed up the first 39 students prior to the building of the school. The first principal was J. A. Osteen who also served as temporary P.T.A. President until a P.T.A. was established.



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Within two weeks, the original 39 pupils were joined by 111 other. The second phase of construction was completed during the summer of 1924 and, by the end of the 1925 school term, had 450 students. The final construction phase was completed in September, 1926, at an approximate cost of \$40,000. The enrollment in 1926-27 was over 1,000 students. The five buildings of the school replaced a number of temporary portable classrooms which had accommodated the overflow of students.

The school originally housed grades one through eight. In 1942, the grades were changed to one through six. In 1971, the Coral Gables Elementary was paired with George Washington Carver Elementary and became a kindergarten, and grades three through six. Through the efforts of Coral Gables Elementary parents, the schools continued to thrive despite the court-ordered pairing. Today, Coral Gables Elementary is considered a model tri-ethnic school in Dade County, its student make-up mirroring the ethnic make-up of the county.

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Continuation Sheet

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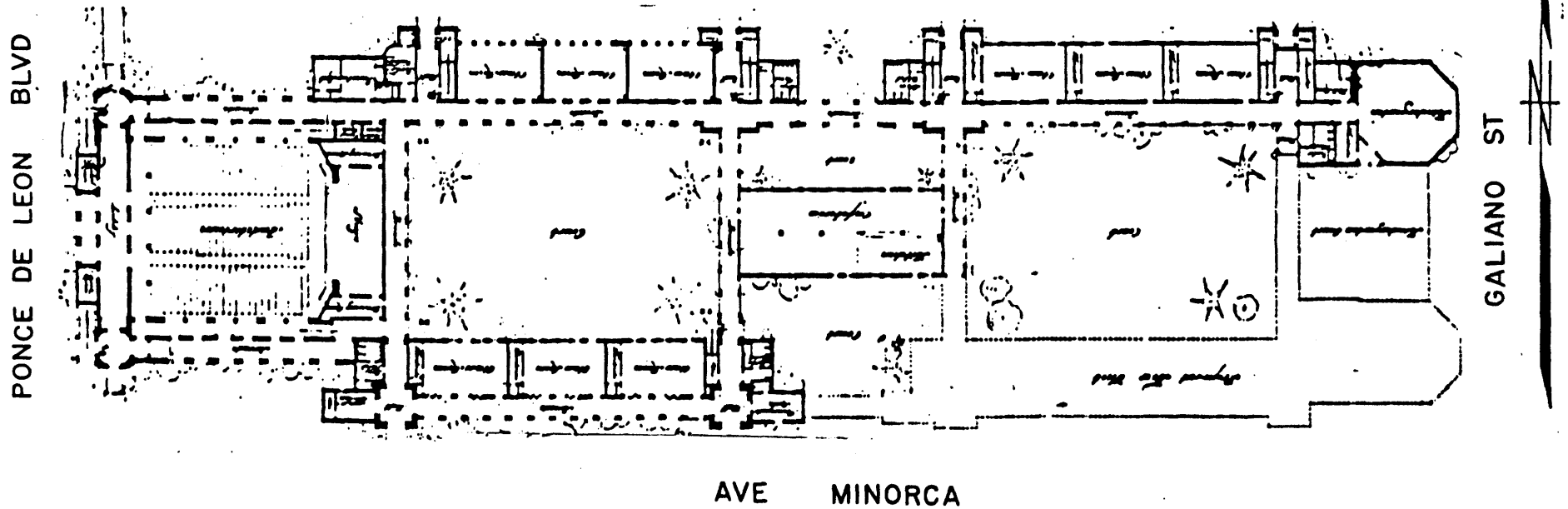
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KIEHNEL & ELLIOTT, ARCHITECTS

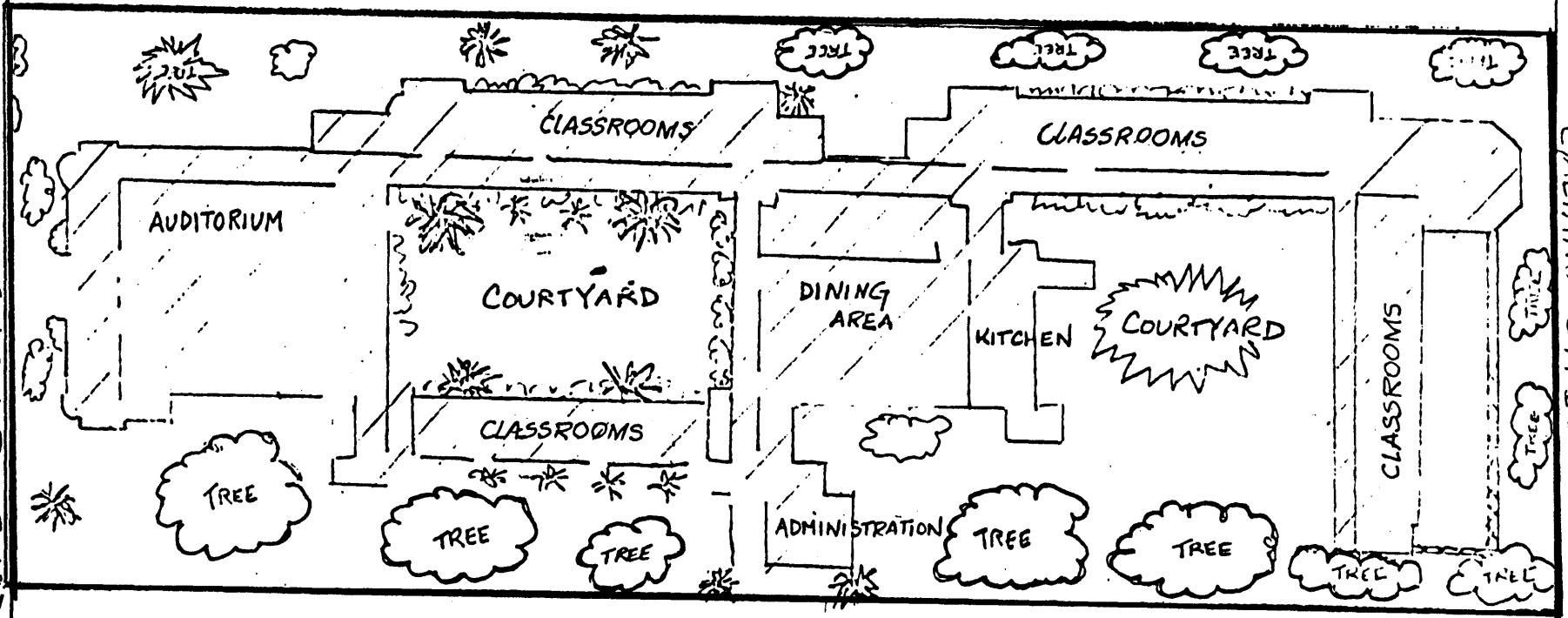


Coral Gables Elementary School  
105 Minorca Ave.  
Coral Gables, Florida  
(from the Architectural Forum, March 1928, p.379.)

NAVARRA AVE.



PONCE DE LEON BOULEVARD



GALIANO STREET

MINDOCA AVE