NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

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NATIONAL REGISTER

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Venetian Causeway
other names/site number: Venetian Causeway

2. Location

street & number: N. E. 15th Street and Dade Boulevard — [N/A] not for publication
city, town: Miami-Miami Beach — [X] vicinity
state: Florida code FL county: Dade code FL zip code: 33128

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
[ ] private	[ ] building(s)	0	0 buildings
[XX] public-local	[ ] district	0	0 sites
[ ] public-State	[ ] site	1	0 structures
[ ] public-Federal	[X] structure	0	0 objects
	[ ] object	1	0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official: State Historic Preservation Officer — Date: 6/5/89
Florida Department of State-Bureau of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

[X] entered in the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register.
[ ] other, (explain:) _____

Entered in the National Register — 7/13/89

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related(vehicular)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related(vehicular)

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

OTHER:bascule bridge

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete, steel
walls concrete
steel
roof N/A
other steel bascule spans

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

XX See continuation sheet

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)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	1926-1939	1926

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Architect/Builder: Stanley, Harvey-Engineer
Raymond Concrete Pile Co. of New York

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

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

[X] 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:
- [X] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: Bureau of Historic Preservation

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property two acres (approximately 2.5 miles in length)

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	17	580300	2852420
B	17	585710	2852680
C			
D			

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Township 53 South, Range 42 East, Sections 32 and 33-Located between Lat. 25 47'20"N. Long. 80 11'10"W. and Lat. 25 47'27"N. Long. 80 08'45"W. Boundary encompasses only the twelve spans and roadbed of the Venetian Causeway as indicated by the black line between blackened circles, inclusive, of the attached map named "Venetian Causeway-Miami/Miami Beach."

[ ] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary follows the legal boundary for the site and encompasses all those sections of the Venetian Causeway associated with its historic period, inclusive. The boundary contains the twelve bridge spans and the roadbed connecting these spans in a contiguous configuration.

[ ] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Vicki L. Welcher - Historic Sites Specialist
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date May 15, 1989
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SUMMARY

The Venetian Causeway, traversing Biscayne Bay in Dade County, Florida, links the cities of Miami Beach and Miami through a series of manmade islands known as the Venetian Islands. Constructed in 1926, the two and one half mile causeway consists of twelve bridges containing two bascule spans connected by a two lane road. Outstanding structural features include the geometrically designed guardrails and octagonal concrete entrance towers. Venetian Causeway, the final stage in the Venetian Island residential development, cuts across six islands of which the four central islands were created from material dredged from the bay bottom for a residential development shortly before the construction of the causeway.

PRESENT AND ORIGINAL SETTING

The Venetian Causeway, completed in 1926, is located just north of downtown Miami at N. E. 15th Street and extends eastward across the bay to Dade Boulevard in Miami Beach. The Causeway, approximately two and one half miles in length, is composed of twelve bridges including two drawbridges and the roadway. The main entrance to the causeway is located at the western terminus and is graced by simple geometric columns. The Causeway cuts across six islands of which the four central islands were created from material dredged from the bay bottom for a residential development shortly before the construction of the causeway. Development of the islands has been continuous from the historic period through the 1980s. Concentrations of historic structures vary from one area to the next with some islands containing heavy concentrations of historic resources. The houses on the islands along the causeway range from 1920s Mediterranean Revival style structures to contemporary ranch style houses. At both ends of the causeway, on Biscayne Island and Belle Isle respectively, there has been recent highrise residential development. The addition of the new toll both at the eastern terminus, and modern construction on the islands are the only changes in the setting of the Causeway since the historic period.

ORIGINAL APPEARANCE

The following description of the Venetian Causeway was included in the Spears/Harris Papers Manuscript, c.1927:

The causeway consisted of a combination of viaducts and fill. There were eighteen viaduct units, running a total of 4,200 linear feet, which were arranged to take account of tidal flow. The longest, on the Miami side, ran 1,340 linear feet. The project featured two modern bascule-type draw bridges, one at each side of the bay, which allowed for 12-foot clearances when closed. Fills ran an additional 4, 005 linear feet, fills and viaducts totalling 8,205 linear feet. Fill for both the causeway and islands came to 3,000,000 cubic yards.

The roadway was eighty feet wide, curb-to-curb, with four foot sidewalks on both sides. The road surface on the fill was laid over two feet of boulders which, in turn, lay over a mat built from planks from the old wooden bridge. 278 white way street lights illuminated the roadway.

84,000 linear feet of concrete piling were featured in the project. 25,000 barrels of cement and 30,000 pounds of steel were required for the piers and abutments. The abutments were of the arch-girder type.

PRESENT APPEARANCE

The Venetian Causeway across Biscayne Bay links the mainland Miami to Miami Beach. The causeway is a series of twelve bridges connecting six islands, spaning a distance of two and one half miles. The islands, from west to east, are named Biscayne Island, San Marco, San Marino, Di Lido, Rivo Alto and Belle Island. The causeway connects to N. E. 15th Street, Miami, at the west axis and Dade Boulevard, Miami Beach at the east axis. The twelve spans are a series of viaducts built of reinforced concrete. The roadbeds are carried on shallow arched girders resting on square concrete piers anchored to the bay bottom. The planks of the original wooden bridge, completed by John Collins in 1913, are embedded under the road surface on the landfill portions of the causeway. The guardrails, one of the most striking features of the bridge, are constructed of reinforced concrete in a pierced, ornamental geometric design that have square units with radiating diagonals forming an "x" pattern. This simple design forms a bold pattern while allowing a view of the bay from all bridges. Other than the two masonry light fixtures at the Miami entrance to the causeway, no original street light fixtures remain.

The distribution of the bridges of the Venetian Causeway, from west to east, is as follows:

Bridge 1 is the longest bridge at approximately .4 miles and connects the Miami shoreline with Biscayne Island. The western terminus contains a pair of tapering octagonal concrete entrance towers topped by lights resembling minature lighthouses. Inscribed in bas relief on the towers are the words "Short Way" on the north tower, and "Venetian Way" on the south tower. At the center of the viaduct is a steel bascule drawbridge. The bridge has a low rise and provides a clearance above the mean high water of 10 to 12 feet. At the southeast end of the viaduct is a small hip roofed, wood frame maintenance shed in a rectangular plan. Of modest utilitarian construction, it appears to be contemporary with the bridge. At the eastern terminus is a modern toll booth stretching the full width of the road. Bridge 2 connects Biscayne Island to San Marco Island. Of the same design and materials, it is a considerably shorter span than Bridge 1 at less than .1 mile.

Bridges 3 and 4 span the bay between San Marco Island and San Marino Island. Rather than using a longer bridge, the span is achieved by two short bridges which rest on a central landing, a small narrow piece of landfill landscaped with sea grape and palm trees. The same system of two short bridges resting on a central isle is repeated between San Marino Island and Di Lido Island by Bridges 5 and 6, and again between Di Lido Island and Rivo Alto Island by Bridges 7 and 8.

The span between Rivo Alto Island and Belle Isle is longer than the previous spans but retains the small scale and character of the venetian-styled bridges. Bridge 9 is relatively similar in construction to Bridges 2-8 and rests on a similar small landing. Bridge 10 springs from the same landing and is slightly longer. It contains the second bascule type steel drawbridge at its center. The span meets a small isle containing the western terminus of Bridge 11, a duplicate of Bridge 9, giving continuity to the configuration. Bridge 12, identical to the other short spans, connects Belle Isle with the Miami Beach mainland.

SUMMARY

The Venetian Causeway, the oldest causeway in Metropolitan Dade County, is significant at the local level under Criterion A under community planning and development as a bridge designed and constructed as an essential element of the planned community of Venetian Islands. The Venetian Causeway was the final phase of the development of the island communities and was the vital link to the surrounding Miami-Miami Beach areas. The causeway, a series of twelve spans, links the mainland of Miami to the island of Miami Beach. The Venetian Causeway was completed in 1926, shortly after the four central islands were created out of bay bottom by the Bay Biscayne Improvement Company.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

In 1913, with the death of the influential Henry Flagler, the Miami-Miami Beach area began an era of enormous growth. Prior to 1913, the growth of the area had been directed and controled by Flagler. Although a man of great vision, Flagler never envisioned Miami as more than a resort community to support his railroad and luxruious Royal Palm Hotel, which initially was the major reason for incoroporation. Fortunately, other monied interests had their eyes on Miami.

By 1914, L. T. Highleyman had become the first to make use of the dredge for real estate development when he filled in a mangrove swamp to create "Point View" off Brickell Avenue. Before long, Frederick H. Rand, Jr. had pumped up land in what he called "Miramar" and was building substantial houses on the bayfront near modern day N. E. 14th Street. Other Miami real estate magnates were quick to realize the advantages of using dredged bay bottom to create exclusive residential and commercial developments. In 1921, two of these individuals, Hugh Anderson and Josiah F. Chaille, formed the Bay Biscayne Improvement Company and created the Venetian Islands in the middle of Biscayne Bay. A third member of the corporation, F.C.B. Le Gro, had already dredged a small island in the bay in 1916 and named it Belle Isle.

During the 1920s, the Miami area, as well as all of Florida, experienced unprecedented growth in what has come to be known as the Florida Land Boom Period. Fortunes were made overnight as the price of real estate skyrocketed in, literally, a matter of

minutes and hours. Within a few years, the wood framed workers houses of the Flagler Railroad Era were replaced by concrete and steel commercial structures, and elaborate and ornate residences and small estates. Architects borrowed from the mediterranean countries in the use of the Spanish Colonial style of architecture. And, as expected, land was most valuable along the Miami River and Biscayne Bay. To make the most of these prime real estate areas, developers continued to employ the technique of dredging Biscayne Bay to produce marketable real estate. Used with restraint during the previous decade, the 1920s saw the face of the bay change as entire communities and developments were created in previously aquatic surroundings.

Historical Significance
Criterion A

The Bay Biscayne Improvement Company constructed the Venetian Islands and the Venetian Causeway during the years 1921 and 1926. The company's officers were: Josiah F. Chaille, President; F.C.B. Le Gro, Vice-President; and, Hugh M. Anderson, Secretary/Treasurer. Chaille and Anderson had previously been associated, in 1917, in the development of the Wynwood Park subdivision. Le Gro was responsible for opening the Highland Park subdivision in 1910. In addition, in 1916, Le Gro had been affiliated with John S. Collins in the development of Belle Isle, the eastwardmost island on the Venetian Causeway. Marshall Price and Colonel Frank B. Shutts, Directors of the Bay Biscayne Improvement Company, were both well-known attorneys. Shutts was also the publisher of The Miami Herald.

Through the Bay Biscayne Improvement Company, these five prominent Miamians planned to create a residential development out of bay bottom. They envisioned the creation of a chain of islands across Biscayne Bay. The chosen location for their island-building venture was alongside the 1913 Collins Bridge. The company's principals chose the name "Venetian Islands" for their planned island community. They hoped the project would be associated with the City of Venice, Italy - a community of "villas" of Italian inspired architecture within a landscape of water and small islands.

The company resolved to approach their development project in phases. Four islands were planned, to be constructed one at a time, beginning west of the existing island of Belle Isle. Preparations for the purchase of the desired property were

undertaken. John S. Collins, Miami Beach pioneer and owner of the Collins Bridge, was approached regarding the sale of the bridge. The Collins Bridge, a wooden structure completed in 1913, was an essential part of the development plans of the Bay Biscayne Improvement Company. The Collins Bridge, thought to be the longest wooden bridge in the world, was considered an engineering accomplishment for its time. Upon completion of the islands, the Bay Biscayne Improvement Company knew it would be necessary to replace the deteriorating Collins Bridge. However, access to the islands during the initial stage of development would be achieved via the old bridge.

Plans proceeded smoothly. The Bay Biscayne Improvement Company obtained all the necessary permits and the purchase of the Collins Bridge. Island building immediately began. The Venetian Islands, bearing the Italian names were platted as follows: Rivo Alton in February, 1922; Di Lido in January, 1923; and, San Marino and San Marco in June, 1923. Whitney C. Bliss, the engineer of record, was responsible for preparing the layout of the islands.

The Venetian Islands, when completely developed, would contain over 450 residential lots. Two sales offices were opened to market the development. One office was located in the heart of downtown Miami, another at the Miami side of the Collins Bridge. Lots, still underwater, were sold from the plats. Sales contracts specified that a purchaser would receive a lot on the island that had been dredged, filled and bulkheaded by a sea wall of one to three feet thick. The contract also stipulated that the island would be equiped with roads, sidewalks, utilities and other amentities. Furthermore, the purchase agreement guaranteed that the Collins Bridge would be replaced. A toll would be charged for usage of the new access road. However, the toll would be waived for Venetian Islands residents.

The construction of the Venetian Islands and the sale of its lots progressed swiftly. In 1924, the Bay Biscayne Improvement Company began drawing plans for the replacement of their Collins Bridge. The engineer in charge of submitting plans for a new access road to the Venetian Islands was Harvey Stanley. Several designs for the roadway were presented. The one chosen was estimated to cost two million dollars. The new structure would be made of concrete. Work began on the construction of the Venetian Causeway in February, 1925. The contractor chosen to undertake the project was the Raymond Concrete Pile Company of New York. James M. Thompson served as superintendent.

The completion of the Venetian Causeway was scheduled to take place near the end of 1925. However, an embargo on the shipment of building supplies delayed this date. On February 28, 1926, a formal dedication ceremony took place at the entrance of the causeway. The developers of the Venetian Islands and the Venetian Causeway were praised for their significant accomplishments. The islands and causeway were considered engineering feats of both beauty and practicality.

Biscayne Island, the Westernmost island on the Venetian Causeway was not part of the original Venetian Islands development although it was partially dredged to sustain the bridges. Biscayne Island was platted in December, 1936. The island was developed by the Biscayne Island Corporation whose President was Lucy C.T. Magraw and whose Secretary was Albert R. Smith. The engineer in charge of the layout of the island was William B. Garris, a principal in the firm of Watson & Garris Civil Engineers, Inc.

The Venetian Causeway serves as an excellent focal point for the Venetian Islands and the land development phenomenon that created prime real estate from bay bottom in the Land Boom period of Miami-Miami Beach. Venetian Causeway also serves as an example of the most modern engineering techniques of the 1920s in Florida. The causeway was a very significant part of an unusual planned community. Its location was planned from the inception of the Bay Biscayne Improvement Company and the Venetian Causeway. Without the bridge, with its arched girders and "Italian" vista from the shallow height, the concept of a comprehensive community in the venetian style would not have had a cohesive element with which to promote the community and provide continuity.

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Peters, Thelma. Biscayne Country: 1870-1926. Miami: Banyan Books, 1976.

Smiley, Nixon. Memories of Old Miami. Reprints from The Miami Herald, Sunday Magazine. 1982.

Spears/Harris Papers, Unpublished Manuscript, Miami Shores, Florida, c.1930.

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NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs

1. Venetian Causeway
2. Miami, Florida
3. Rick K. Poley
4. May, 1988
5. Venetian Islands Improvement Association
6. Entrance to Venetian Causeway from Miami facing east
7. Photo 1 of 14

Items 1 through 5 are identical for all photographs

6. Bridge 1 facing south
7. Photo 2 of 14

6. Toll booth on Biscayne Island facing north
7. Photo 3 of 14

6. Bridge 2 facing north
7. Photo 4 of 14

6. Bridge 3 facing north
7. Photo 5 of 14

6. Bridge 4 facing north
7. Photo 6 of 14

6. Bridge 5 facing south
7. Photo 7 of 14

6. Bridge 5 facing north
7. Photo 8 of 14

6. Bridge 7 facing north
7. Photo 9 of 14

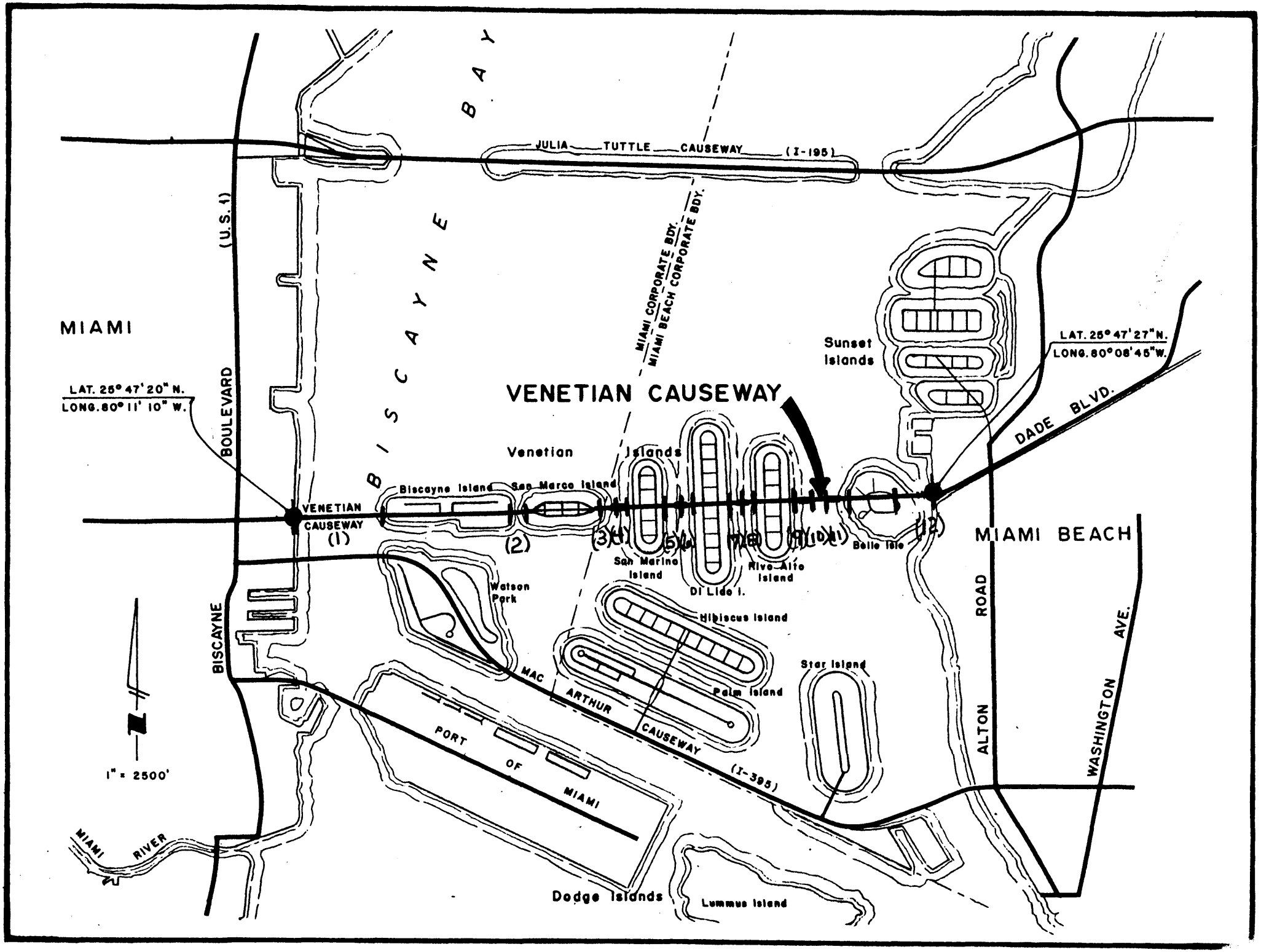
6. Bridge 10 facing north
7. Photo 10 of 14

6. Bridge 11 facing north
7. Photo 11 of 14

6. Bridge 12 facing north
7. Photo 12 of 14

6. Detail showing view of side railing formed in concrete
7. Photo 13 of 14

6. Detail showing roadway of Venetian Causeway
7. Photo 14 of 14



VENETIAN CAUSEWAY-MIAMI/MIAMI BEACH