

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 for individual properties and districts. **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE** Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION

RECEIVED 413

SEP 30 1994

1277

1. Name of Property

historic name MAHER BUILDING

other names/site number Site File 8IR439

2. Location

street & number 1423 20th Street Not for publication

city or town Vero Beach N/A vicinity

state Florida code FL county Indian River code 061 zip code 32960

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Suzanne P. Walker / Deputy SHPO 9/26/94
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
 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:)

Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 10.28.94
Entered in the National Register

MAHER BUILDING
Name of Property

INDIAN RIVER CO., FL.
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/ Department Store

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/ Specialty Store

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vernacular

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls stucco

roof tar and gravel

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1920-1944

Significant Dates

1920

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Name of repository:

MAHER BUILDING
Name of Property

INDIAN RIVER CO., FL.
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>559160</u>	<u>3057100</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ruth Stanbridge/ Sherry Piland, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date September 1994

street & number R. A. Gray Bldg., 500 S. Bronough telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Fl. zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

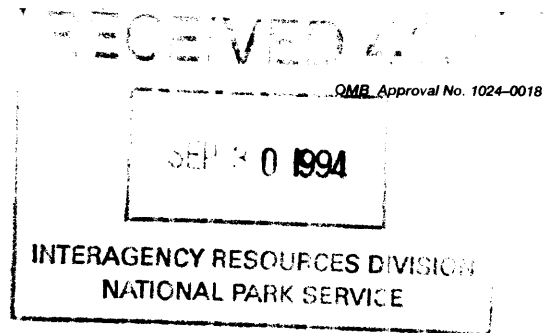
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet



MAHER BUILDING, VERO BEACH,
INDIAN RIVER CO., FL.

Section number 7 Page 1

SUMMARY

The Maher Building is located in downtown Vero Beach, Florida, at 1423 20th Street. The majority of the building is two stories in height; only a small section near the northeast corner of the building is a single story. The masonry structure, built in 1920, has stucco exterior walls and rests on a concrete foundation. It is approximately 50 feet in width and 130 feet in length. The flat roof is covered with tar and gravel.

SETTING

The Maher Building is located in the original 1913 plat of the Town of Vero. It faces north onto the four lanes of State Road 60 (20th Street). This road was originally a narrow, dirt city street called Osceola Boulevard, but by the late 1920s had become the eastern end of the Atlantic to Gulf Highway (then known as State Road 30). In the 1920s the highway was lined with commercial buildings and was the hub of downtown Vero Beach. Historic photographs show this block lined with commercial buildings similar to the Maher Building (photo 1). Today only the Maher Building remains.

Commercial buildings constructed in the 1950s are to the north of the Maher Building. Surfaced parking lots are to the east and west. Another commercial building is across the alley to the south.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The main facade of the Maher Building faces north (photo 2). The first floor is recessed behind a six-bay arcaded walkway that extends to the curb line and shelters the sidewalk (photo 3). The arcade has a beaded board ceiling. What was originally a second floor screened porch (now enclosed), is supported by the arcade columns.

The first floor is divided into two storefronts, each with an entrance near the center of the facade. A third entrance, leading to the second floor, is located at the west end of this facade. The wall surface of the first floor is veneered with a

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**MAHER BUILDING, VERO BEACH,
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marble-like facing. The remainder of the building is covered with stucco.

The parapet of the main facade rises slightly at each end and in the center has a Mission-style curved projection. On the wall surface below the parapet and above the second story windows is a signage panel with the painted inscription, "Maher Building." The second floor of this facade is fenestrated with eighteen 3/1 double hung sash windows, arranged in groups of three.

The one-story portion of the east elevation has no openings (photo 4). The two-story portion, on the east facade, has an entrance door located approximately mid-way down its length. This leads to the second floor residential spaces. A small landscaped area is adjacent to this entrance. The second floor is fenestrated with 6/6 aluminum windows (photo 5). Near the center of the east facade is a small screened balcony.

The first floor of the rear (south) elevation contains entrance doors (photo 6). A screened porch, supported by triangular knee braces, projects from the second floor.

The west elevation has no first floor openings (photo 7). The second floor has windows identical to those on the east elevation. Two recessed areas on the second floor formerly contained skylights that provided additional illumination for the first floor commercial area. The skylight areas are now roofed over.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The first floor is divided into two commercial areas. Originally a center partition had several large openings, so the first floor functioned as a single space. Those openings have been filled in.

The second floor is divided into living spaces, accessed by a stairway at the northwest corner of the building (photo 8), a stairway at the rear of the building (photo 9), and a stairway from the center portion of the east elevation (photo 9). A hallway extends down the center of the second floor, with rooms opening off each side of the hallway (photo 10). A skylight

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provides additional light to the hallway. The hallway jogs to the east near the rear third of the second floor.

The second floor originally was divided into living space for the Mahers, several small one bedroom apartments, and a few sleeping rooms. The apartments had their own baths; the sleeping rooms shared a bath. The porch that extends across the main facade was originally divided into two sections: one for the private use of the Maher family and one for the tenants (photo 11). The porch has vertical wood paneled walls and a beamed ceiling. French doors lead to the porch from the hallway.

The second floor living spaces have hardwood floors, plastered walls, arched openings between rooms, original doors and original lighting fixtures (photo 12).

ALTERATIONS

The screened second story porch was infilled with windows in the late 1940s. Most other changes to the building took place in the late 1950s. Those changes include the addition of marble-like facing to the main facade around the store fronts; replacement of the original second floor windows of the east and west elevations with double hung aluminum windows; and the replacement of three exterior doors. The skylights on the west facade were also removed. The building retains its original shape, scale, materials, and design features and is well maintained.

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**MAHER BUILDING, VERO BEACH,
INDIAN RIVER CO., FL.**

Section number 8 Page 1

SUMMARY

The Maher Building, 1423-31 20th Street, Vero Beach, is significant under criterion A for its role in the commercial development of the city. Small family commercial enterprises such as this helped stabilize new communities as Florida slowly grew in the early years of the twentieth century. Three generations of the Maher family have conducted business in this structure for over seventy years.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Several small communities developed along the Indian River in the period following the Civil War. In the late 1880s a small village centered around the homestead of Henry Gifford. His wife, Sarah, named the settlement "Vero," Latin for "to speak the truth." Gifford established the first store in the area and operated a citrus grove. In 1891, he was appointed postmaster of the Vero community, which was then in Brevard County. Inadequate transportation hindered the growth of the area and it was not until Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) reached Vero in 1893 that real growth became possible. The railroad provided the means for quicker shipment of crops to markets and enabled tourists to travel to the area. In 1903, the FEC Railway built a small station and freight depot in Vero. The station played an important role in the city and county's steady growth.

The population doubled between 1905 and 1910, to 200 residents. In 1911 a representative for a land investment group, the Indian River Farms Company, toured the low, swampy land west of the railroad line. The Company decided to purchase thousands of acres, with the intention of draining the land and marketing it for settlement and citrus production. The older settlement of Vero, east of the railroad line, continued primarily as a residential area. In 1913, the Indian River Farms Company laid out a town plan west of the railroad line, consisting of a seven-block area. This new area developed into a commercial district and the school and post office eventually moved to the new area. Between 1914 and 1917 other subdivisions were established for residential construction.

The Indian River Farms Company encouraged sales and development of the company's property by donating building lots

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MAHER BUILDING, VERO BEACH,
INDIAN RIVER CO., FL.

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for churches, assisting in the acquisition of land for a Woman's Club, and helping to create a downtown park, Pocahontas Park. An important year in Vero's history was 1919. That year the town was incorporated. The first mayor, A.W. Young, was an official of the Indian River Farms Company. In 1919 a disastrous fire destroyed much of the fledgling business district. That year the community also initiated plans for a bridge to connect Vero with the adjacent barrier island, Orchid Island. On Labor Day, 1920, the Vero Bridge was opened and within five years the beach area was annexed to the town. In 1925 the town was renamed Vero Beach. The annexation of the beach property tremendously increased the tax base and assured the funds for building a power plant and other municipal facilities.

The Florida Land Boom of the 1920s boosted the economy of the growing town. Road construction projects brought land speculators, tourists, and new residents to the area in increasing numbers. Between 1915-1928, Indian River County expended more than \$500,000 to improve its road system. A cross-state highway, leading west from the Vero Bridge and through the town of Vero Beach, was promoted by the city and was readily approved by the State of Florida. Construction began in the early 1920s and was completed in 1928. First called State Road 30 (now known as State Road 60), this east-west highway proved an important link to the interior of the state.

The growth of this area of Florida is reflected in the formation of new counties. The settlement of Vero was originally in Brevard County. In 1905 St. Lucie County was created out of Brevard County and Vero found itself in the new county. In 1925, another new county was created by portioning off part of Northern St. Lucie County and Vero became the county seat of newly formed Indian River County. The population of Vero Beach had reached 1,500 by 1923.

The Land Boom began to collapse in 1926; however, the diversified economy of Vero Beach (agriculture, citrus, fishing, and tourism) moderated the effects of the bust. Although construction slowed dramatically, the population reached 2,500 by 1929. As banks failed and the nation moved into the Great Depression, the full brunt of the collapse was felt. The Farmer's Bank in Vero Beach failed in 1933. Other businesses failed and many business owners simply closed their doors and left the community.

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However, continued tourism along the coast enabled Indian River County to continue to grow and the intervention of federal relief programs helped sustain the community. The population of Vero Beach increased from 2268 in 1930 to 3060 by 1940. The build-up of military facilities in the early 1940s boosted the population and financial base of Vero Beach and positioned the community for further growth.

Maher Building

The Maher Building is located in the area platted by Indian River Farms as the Town of Vero Subdivision. Lot 9, Block 49 was purchased by Katie Maher in 1915 from O.F. and Frances Schepman for \$300. Two years later, after obtaining a loan from the new Farmer's Bank, William J. and Katie Maher built a dry goods store on the property. The second floor of their building was used as their residence. The business prospered and they were able to satisfy their \$2,000 mortgage in January of 1919. In the early morning hours of November 16th, 1919, a fire swept through this section of the Vero Beach downtown area, destroying most of the buildings on the block and leaving several families without housing. Newspaper reports stated the Maher Building was "burned to the ground." The loss of the building and its stock was estimated at \$40,000. Only about one-fourth of this was covered by insurance. All the damaged buildings were of frame construction, built before Vero established fire limits within which the buildings had to be constructed of brick or concrete. Four days after the fire, Mrs. Maher traveled to St. Louis to purchase a new stock of dry goods. The Mahers rented a near-by building and planned to open for business again as soon as possible. With another loan from the Farmer's Bank, the Mahers rebuilt their dry goods store. Other buildings on the block were also reconstructed between 1920 and 1925 and provided a grocery, drug store, and rooming house.

The Maher Dry Goods store was arranged so that the left side of the building contained men's clothing, and the right side accommodated women and children's wear and a large shoe department. The rear of the building housed the office, bathroom and storage areas.

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Twice a year Katie Maher traveled by train to Jacksonville and Savannah to purchase the majority of the store's inventory. Although the merchandise was selected to appeal to all economic levels of the community, the majority of the goods stocked were those that would appeal to the surrounding farm families. The Maher store served all the small outlying communities from Sebastian and Fellsmere on the north, to Oslo and Viking on the south.

The second floor was divided into several small apartments and sleeping rooms in addition to the living space occupied by the Mahers. Both permanent renters and winter visitors could be accommodated. Some of the rooms shared a common bath; others had private baths.

William Maher was not only a successful merchant, but was also active in civic affairs. He came to Florida from Illinois in 1915. When the town of Vero was incorporated in 1919, Maher was appointed to the City Council. When the first municipal elections were held in December of 1910, he was elected President of the City Council. Maher was also one of the twenty-five prominent Vero Beach citizens who traveled to Tallahassee to lobby the Florida Legislature for the creation of Indian River County in 1925.

The Maher family rode out the Great Depression and continued to operate their downtown business. William Maher died in 1941, but members of the family operated the business until 1957. The building is now owned by William Maher's granddaughter, Mary Ann. In 1946, she and her husband, Walter Skiscim, opened a photography shop in the east portion of the structure. The west side was leased as a children's clothing store. Those two businesses continue to occupy the building today.

The Maher Building is one of the few remaining commercial buildings in Vero Beach from the 1920s Florida Land Boom era. Its combined residential/commercial use is typical of the period.

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Section number 9 Page 1

Florida Municipal Review. February 1941, p. 24.

"Four Stores of Vero are Burned to the Ground." Vero Press, 22
November 1919, p. 1.

Lockwood, Charlotte. Florida's Historic Indian River Country.
Vero Beach: MediaTronics, 1975.

Miller, Ernest, comp. Vero Beach City Directory. Ashville,
N.C.: Miller Press, 1927-28.

Newman, Anna. Stories of Life Along the Beautiful Indian River.

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**MAHER BUILDING, VERO BEACH,
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Section number 10 Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Plat of Subdivision, Town of Vero, Block 49, lot 9.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Maher Building.

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**MAHER BUILDING, VERO BEACH
INDIAN RIVER CO., FL.**

Section number Photo Page 1

1. Maher Building, 1423 20th Street
2. Vero Beach, Indian River Co., Florida
3. Unknown
4. 1925-26
5. Walter Skiscim, 860 27th Avenue, Vero Beach, Fl.
6. Elevated view of main (north) facade; view looking southwest
7. Photo No. 1 of 12

1. Maher Building, 1423 20th Street
2. Vero Beach, Indian River Co., Florida
3. Walter Skiscim
4. February 1994
5. 860 27th Avenue, Vero Beach, Fl.
6. Main (north) facade; view looking south
7. Photo No. 2 of 12

Numbers 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs

6. Looking west, through arcade
7. Photo No. 3 of 12
6. Main (north) facade on right; east elevation on left. View looking southwest
7. Photo No. 4 of 12
6. Rear (south) elevation on left; east elevation on right. View looking northwest
7. Photo No. 5 of 12
6. Rear (south) elevation on left; east elevation on right. View looking northwest
7. Photo No. 6 of 12
6. West elevation on left; rear (south) elevation on right. View looking northeast
7. Photo No. 7 of 12
6. Interior detail showing stairway to second floor from main (north) facade and second floor lobby area; view looking north
7. Photo No. 8 of 12

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6. Interior detail, looking south along second floor hallway;
east stairway opening on left
7. Photo No. 9 of 12

6. Interior detail, looking south along second floor hallway
7. Photo No. 10 of 12

6. Interior detail of second floor apartment, view looking
northeast
7. Photo No. 11 of 12

6. Interior detail, second floor porch across main (north)
elevation; view looking northeast
7. Photo No. 12 of 12

MAHER BUILDING

Vero Beach, Indian River Co., Fl.

Photo Direction ○→

Boundary — — — —

Approx. Scale: 1.5" = 50'

