

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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

1. Name

historic Opa-locka Bank

and/or common First Baptist Church

2. Location

street & number 940 Caliph Street N/A not for publication

city, town Opa-locka N/A vicinity of congressional district 13

state Florida code 12 county Dade code 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name First Baptist Church of Opa-locka

street & number 940 Caliph Street

city, town Opa-locka N/A vicinity of state Florida

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dade County Courthouse

street & number 73 West Flagler Street

city, town Miami state Florida

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Dade County Historic Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1973, February 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records 90 S. W. 8th Street

city, town Miami state Florida

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

The First Baptist Church, formerly the Opa-locka Bank, is a two-story masonry structure designed in the Egyptian Revival style. Never used as a bank, the building served as a sanctuary for the First Baptist Church of Opa-locka from the mid-1930's until its conversion to a recreation hall by the Church in 1969. Adjoining the building are a later sanctuary and school also belonging to the First Baptist Church. The complex of the buildings are located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Caliph and Bahman Streets in a residential area of Opa-locka.

The original bank building, designed to resemble an Egyptian treasure vault, is constructed of poured concrete and concrete block. Much in the manner of the Egyptian Revival style, the building is distinguished by heavy battered walls and shallow projecting wings on its south and west facades. Save for a pair of narrow windows recessed approximately twelve inches and a shallow door enframingent on the south facade, the two principal facades of the building are otherwise architecturally undistinguished.

Following acquisition of the building by the First Baptist Church, a pointed Gothic style window was inserted in the west facade of the building facing Bahman Avenue. No other major alterations were made to the structure of the building. The Church interior is relatively austere having plaster wall surfaces. Much of the interior trim and finish detailing the former sanctuary was removed in the conversion of the building to a recreation hall.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1926 **Builder/Architect** Bernhardt Emil Muller

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The First Baptist Church, formerly the Opa-locka Bank, is significant as one of the major elements in the planned community of Opa-locka and as an example of Egyptian Revival architecture. Built to serve as a bank for the community of Opa-locka in 1926, the building never functioned in this capacity but instead was purchased by Dr. E. H. Ressler shortly following its completion to serve as a sanctuary for the First Bpatist Church of Opa-locka. The building has remained in the ownership of the Church to the present and provides a distinctive expression of the development and promotion of South Florida.

The city of Opa-locka was developed at the height of the Florida real estate "boom" of the 1920's by pioneer aviator and inventor Glenn H. Curtiss. Curtiss envisioned Opa-locka more than just another residential development. It was to be a total community.¹ Areas were to be allotted for industry and business in addition to residential sections. Additionally, to aid in its promotion, the city was to possess architectural distinction. To this end, Curtiss employed the talents of New York architect Bernhardt E. Muller. Muller has studied architecture at L'ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris between 1903 and 1905 before establishing his own practice in New York City. Working together, Muller and Curtiss elected to develop the future city around a Moorish theme based supposedly on tales taken from The Arabian Nights.

Of the eighty-six dwellings designed by Muller in Opa-locka, the church must be considered one of his more unique works. The inspiration for the design of the building was supposedly based on the "Tale of Layn al Asnam" taken from The Arabian Nights.² Muller resolved the dilemma of whether to express security of fantasy in the design of the building by producing a structure resembling an Egyptian vault or mastaba. The building was designed to have columns with lotus capitals modeled after the Temple at Karnak but the columns were never installed. The building was completed in 1926.

The collapse of the Florida land boom and resulting real estate bust shortly thereafter did not permit the building to open as a bank. At about this time, Dr. E. H. Ressler arrived in Opa-locka to establish a church. Ressler organized the Opa-locka Temple which at first met in a wood frame building now known as the old Opa-locka Hotel. The congregation acquired the unopened bank building from Curtiss in the early 1930's in exchange for a tract of of property on Peri Street. The bank's unused vault was removed and a sanctuary was installed. The building continued in this function until 1969 when the present day auditorium was completed. The building remains in the ownership of the First Baptist Church.

¹"Opa-locka, Florida". (Brochure), published by Glenn H. Curtiss Properties, Inc.

²Journal of the American Institue of Architects, April 1928, p. 157.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Approximately 1/4 acre

Quadrangle name USGS Opa-locka

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	7	5	1	4	9	1	0	2	1	8	6	1	5	1	1	1	0
Zone				Easting				Northing									

B

Zone				Easting				Northing									

C

Zone				Easting				Northing									

D

Zone				Easting				Northing									

E

Zone				Easting				Northing									

F

Zone				Easting				Northing									

G

Zone				Easting				Northing									

H

Zone				Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 1-2 and 3 and tracks A and B as per PB 34-76, Blk 50

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Herbert I. Linden/Michael Zimny, Historic Sites Specialist

organization FDAHRM

date 4-11-83

street & number The Capitol

telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee

state Florida

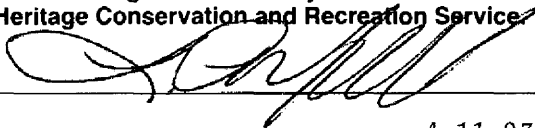
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 4-11-83

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 5/19/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet 1

Item number 9

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BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Fitzgerald-Bush, Frank. A Dream of Araby.

Opa-locka: South Florida Archaeological Museum, 1976.

Journal of the American Institute of Architects, April 1928, pp. 157-58.

"Opa-locka, Florida." Brochure published by Glenn H. Curtiss Properties, Inc.
ca. 1926.

Opa-locka Times (Opa-locka), January 8, 1927.