

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

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

For NPS use only  
received OCT 3 1 1984  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Sears, Roebuck and Company Department Store

and/or common Sears Building

**2. Location**

street & number 1300 Biscayne Boulevard N/A not for publication

city, town Miami N/A vicinity of

state Florida code 12 county Dade code 025

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input 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
	<u>N/A</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

**4. Owner of Property**

name Sears Roebuck and Company

street & number 675 Ponce De Leon Avenue, N.E.

city, town Atlanta 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**

1. Dade County Historic Survey  
 title 2. City of Miami Conservation Program has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
 1. 1978  
 date 2. 1983  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records 1. Metro-Dade Community & Economic Development  
 2. City of Miami Planning Department

city, town Miami state Florida

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved      date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Sears, Roebuck and Co. Department Store is a four-story Art Deco style commercial building located at the entrance to uptown Miami. Rectangular in plan, the building features a seven-story tower placed on a 45 degree angle on its southeast corner. The building is of reinforced concrete construction with a smooth stucco surface and is decorated with a variety of low relief ornamentation. Although several additions have been made to the building, none compromise its basic integrity. Several smaller buildings and a surface parking lot are also located on the property, which covers an entire city block.

Located on the northwest corner of Biscayne Boulevard and N.E. 13th Street, the Sears, Roebuck and Co. Department Store is a detached building which fronts directly on the sidewalk. Topped with a flat roof, the building originally featured four bays across the east (front) facade and six bays across the south facade. The verticality of the building is emphasized by engaged, fluted piers which divide each bay and by the octagonal tower. The tower, the building's most prominent feature, is decorated with intricate, low-relief ornamentation executed in a variety of stylized designs as was typical of the Art Deco style. A panel of birds and flowers adorns the lower portion of the tower, while ziggurats, floriated patterns, and a zig-zag decorative band outline the parapet. Atop the tower are two large Sears signs that replace the original vertical sign running the length of the tower.

The main entrance to the building is located in the second bay on the east facade and features a pair of modern, aluminum and glass doors, topped with a transom. The entrance is flanked by heavy, fluted piers and is topped with a panel containing the store's name. Store windows on the first story are fixed, with four large glass panels. The original transoms over the windows are now covered, and metal awnings have replaced the original striped, canvas awnings. Windows on the other three stories are grouped in threes and are double hung metal sash with one over one lights.

In addition to the ornamentation on the tower, the main building is embellished with a band of chevron designs along the parapet and zig-zag motifs between the first and second story windows. A floriated band is located above the second story windows over the main entrance. The vertical fluting which separates each bay is further emphasized on the first story by slightly projecting fluted piers topped by stylized ziggurats.

Large additions have been made to the building at two different times in its history. In the early 1930s, a two story structure directly north of the Sears store was annexed. This building, also constructed in 1929, originally housed a Burdines Department Store. That store, however, was forced to close shortly after opening because of the Depression. Although not part of the original Sears building, the annex maintains a continuity of design due to its similar scale, setback, and use of materials. The building features a stepped facade in the central bay, highlighting the main entrance. The recessed doorway is flanked by native keystone and is topped with a large panel of glass block. Keystone also defines the foundation of the building. Large store windows with metal awnings are located on either side of the main entrance.

A one-story service station was added to the south facade of the Sears building in 1934. This addition was enclosed, and a second and third story were added in 1958. This addition, located on the western three bays of the south facade, respects the main building in scale, materials, and detailing. The southern end of the addition features an octagonal corner, echoing the octagonal tower. Low relief ornamentation decorates the first story, while the second and third stories are plain. Awning windows, grouped in banks of four, pierce the upper two stories. Also located on the southwest corner of the site are a two-story automobile service station with two attached service bays and an open garage. The remainder of the site is a surface parking lot.

The Sears building is presently vacant and the interior is not accessible.

# 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 checked="" 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** 1929 **Builder/Architect** Harrison Construction Co. (Miami, FL)  
Nimmons, Carr & Wright (Chicago, IL)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Sears, Roebuck and Co. Department Store is significant in the history of architecture commerce, and community planning in Miami. Built in 1929, the Sears Building is one of the finest examples of Art Deco style architecture in Miami and embodies the distinctive features of that style as applied to a large, commercial structure. The building, moreover, is the earliest known example of the Art Deco style in Dade County, predating the Art Deco buildings on Miami Beach by almost six years.<sup>1</sup> The opening of the Sears store on Biscayne Boulevard marked the culmination of efforts to establish a new shopping area for Greater Miami. The building, therefore, reflects the city's changing attitude toward commercial development in the late 1920's, brought about by the growing use of the automobile which led to the decentralization of shopping areas.

During the late 1920's, Sears, Roebuck and Company was opening a new store every two working days. South Florida's first Sears store, selling only tires and auto accessories, opened in 1928 in an older, four story building at 835 West Flagler Street. The immediate success of this store and a careful survey of the community by company experts prompted Sears to build a larger retail department store on Biscayne Boulevard in the following year.<sup>2</sup> Groundbreaking for the new store took place on May 15, 1929, and the official opening was held on November 14, 1929.<sup>3</sup> Constructed at a cost of \$750,000, the Biscayne store was the thirty-third store in Sears' southern territory and the third store in Florida.<sup>4</sup>

Heralded as a great event for Miami, the opening of the store captured the City's attention. During the opening ceremonies, Mayor C.H. Reeder characterized the new store as "the finest store in the south."<sup>5</sup> The Miami Daily News published a special, eight-page supplement on Sears, and the opening received widespread publicity elsewhere. As a result, more than 6,000 people visited the store during its first two hours of operation.<sup>6</sup>

Designed by the prominent Chicago architectural firm of Nimmons, Carr and Wright, the Sears building is typical of the many stores that the firm designed for Sears and reflects the firm's philosophy in the design of these buildings. The choice of "modern" design to express the form and proportion of the entire composition and its parts is evident in the Biscayne Boulevard store. George Nimmons expressed his firm's design philosophy in a 1928 article which appeared in The American Architect:

The architectural treatment of the exterior design of these [retail store] buildings represents an effort to design in conformity with the modern movement. No historic style of architecture was followed, but the expression of the plan and arrangement of the parts of the building, together with the features of its construction were made the basis of the design. In nearly every case the vertical lines of construction were marked by strong piers or projections, and no cornices whatever were used. Forms and proportions of the whole composition and its parts were depended upon principally for the effects or design in each case. Features of importance were emphasized in a simple way by enrichments of stone carving in low relief.<sup>7</sup>

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 4.5 acres

Quadrangle name Miami

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	7	5	8	1	2	0	0	2	8	5	2	2	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

Tract "A" of the plat of Boulevard Tract. This area includes all significant properties.

### 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 Sarah Eaton/Michael F. Zimny, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Florida Division of Archives date September 25, 1984

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *George W. Percy*

title George W. Percy, State Historic Preservation Officer date 9/27/84

For NPS use only

Determined Eligible

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

DOE / OWNER OBJECTION

Patrick Andrews Entered in the National Register Edson H. Beall date 12/4/84

Keeper of the National Register 8/8/97 date

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
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date entered

Continuation sheet One

Item number 8

Page 1

The Biscayne store embodies many design features of Art Deco style architecture, the style most closely associated with Sears stores built during the 1920's. Foremost among these is the central tower, a trademark of Sears. The pronounced verticality of the tower is emphasized by the building's engaged fluted piers, a feature typical of the Art Deco style. Also noteworthy is the variety of low relief ornamentation, highlighting such building features as the tower, entrance, and roof line. Although the store on Biscayne Boulevard is one of hundreds of Sears buildings constructed throughout the country during the early twentieth century, it is the only such building in South Florida.

The development of Biscayne Boulevard into a major commercial thoroughfare was a business venture unparalleled in Miami's history. The Boulevard was envisioned by the Biscayne Boulevard Company as a complete shopping center, carefully designed for beauty and comfort, while at the same time located outside of the downtown district. Characterized as the "new Fifth Avenue of the South,"<sup>8</sup> the Boulevard became the forerunner of the modern shopping center, as developers began to recognize the increasing importance of the automobile.

The Sears store, located at the foot of Biscayne Boulevard where a traffic circle marked one of the busiest intersections in Miami, served to anchor the Biscayne Boulevard development. In deciding to locate its new retail store here, Sears officials stated that although the Boulevard was far removed from downtown Miami, customers would use their cars to get to the store.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the abundance of parking spaces was of prime importance in the selection of a location. In basing its decision on such a factor, Sears foreshadowed the course of development in Miami for the next several decades.

Although the Sears store opened just as the country was entering the Depression, it survived and even flourished. The Burdines Department Store next door, however, did not, and Sears soon expanded into that two story building. The Sears building has remained relatively unaltered during its 55-year history, and those changes and additions that have been made do not compromise the integrity of the building.

The Sears Building has been vacant since June 1983 when company officials closed the oldest South Florida store. Although the future of the building remained in jeopardy for an extended period of time following its closing, the building is now likely to be sold to a developer who hopes to utilize the 25 percent Investment Tax Credit to rehabilitate the structure.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Metropolitan Dade County, From Wilderness to Metropolis, 1982, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> "Fiftieth Year Celebrated," The Gold Coaster, March 1978, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> "Sears, Roebuck Store Opened by Miami Mayor," Miami Daily News, November 14, 1929.

<sup>4</sup> "1929-Biscayne Opens," The Gold Coaster, March 1978, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> "Sears, Roebuck Store Opened by Miami Mayor," Miami Daily News, November 14, 1929.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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National Park Service

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Continuation sheet Two

Item number 8

Page 2

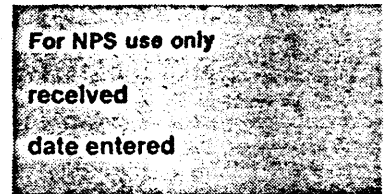
<sup>7</sup>George C. Nimmons, "The New Renaissance in Architecture," The American Architect, 1928, pp. 144, 148.

<sup>8</sup>"Boulevard Is Merger of Two Developments," The Miami Herald, July 28, 1929.

<sup>9</sup>"Store Mobbed At Opening," The Gold Coaster, March 1978, p. 6.

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National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet Three

Item number 9

Page 1

"Boulevard is Merger of Two Developments." The Miami Herald, July 28, 1929.

Dade County, Florida. Community and Economic Development. Historic Preservation Division.  
Dade County Historic Survey, Site Inventory file for 1300 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami,  
Florida.

"Eight Modern Department Stores." The Architectural Forum. Vol.-58, No. 5, May 1933,  
pp. 357-372.

Epstein, Steven. "Sears." (Unpublished Research Report). Copy on file in City of Miami  
Planning Department, Miami, Florida, 1979.

The Gold Coaster. (Newspaper Published for and by the Employees of the South Florida Sears  
Group). Vol. 10, No. 1, March 1978, pp. 2-7.

Metropolitan Dade County. From Wilderness to Metropolis. Miami: Franklin Press, Inc., 1982.

Nimmons, George C. "The New Renaissance in Architecture." The American Architect. Vol. 134,  
No. 2550, August 5, 1928, pp. 141-149.

"Sears, Roebuck and Co. Retail Stores." Architectural Record. Vol. 69, June 1931, pp. 490-491.

Sears, Roebuck and Co. Section. Miami Daily News, November 13, 1929.

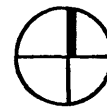
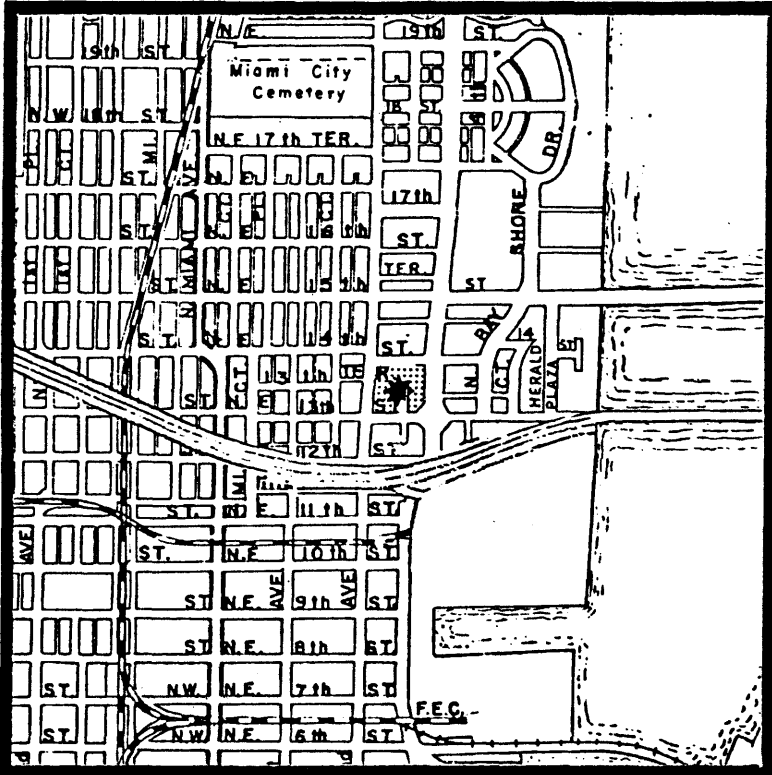
"Sears, Roebuck Store Opened by Miami Mayor." Miami Daily News, November 14, 1929.

"Store of Sears, Roebuck and Co., Miami, Florida." Architecture. Vol. 62, October 1930,  
pp. 227-228.

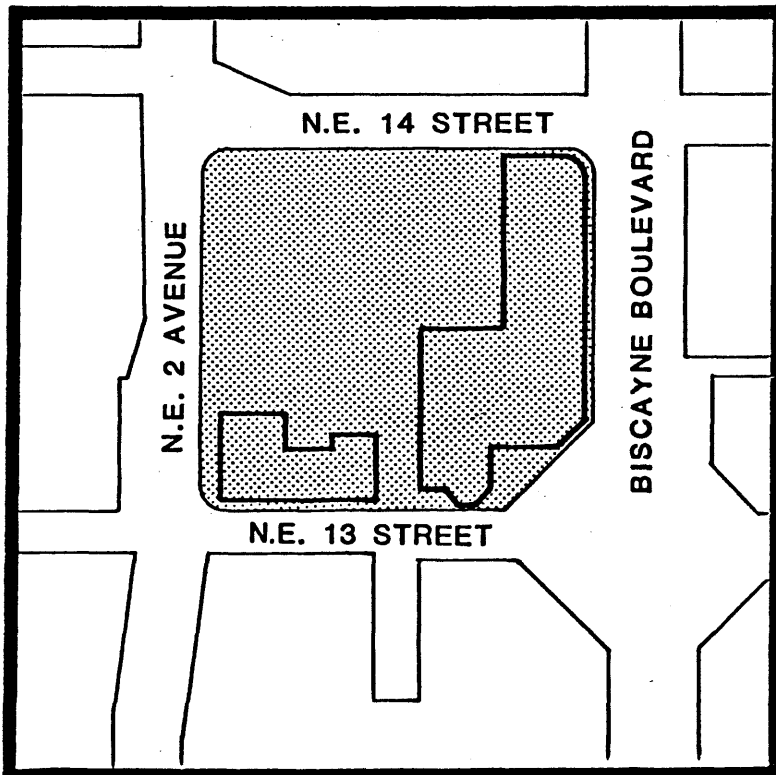
Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects.  
Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956.

# SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO.

1300 BISCAYNE BOULEVARD



location



site plan



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Sears, Roebuck and Company Department Store

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: FLORIDA, Dade

DATE RECEIVED: 7/10/97      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/22/97  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/07/97      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/24/97  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 84003903

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    8/8/97 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Owner Objection removed*  
**Entered in the  
National Register**

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

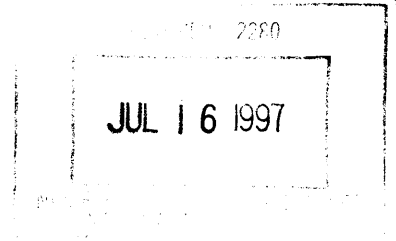
REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
**Sandra B. Mortham**  
Secretary of State  
DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES



July 10, 1997

Ms. Carol D. Shull, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Post Office Box 37127  
Washington, D. C. 20013-7127


Dear Ms. Shull:

This letter is to forward to you the enclosed notarized letter from Michael Spring of Metropolitan Dade County's Cultural Affairs Council, which states that Metro-Dade County is the present owner of the former Sears Building, located at 1300 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, Florida. The Sears Building was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the Keeper on December 4, 1984. As the current owner, Metro-Dade County requests removal of owner objection to listing. They ask that the property be listed as quickly as possible.

We, therefore, request an expedited review and a waiver of the 45 day review period.

We greatly appreciate your cooperation in this matter. If you have any questions, please contact Gary V. Goodwin, Historic Preservation Planner.

Sincerely,

  
George W. Percy  
for State Historic Preservation  
Officer

GWP:gvg  
Enclosure

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

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