

2991

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

For NPS use only

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

received **NOV 21 1988**
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Meyer-Kiser Building

and or common Dade Commonwealth Building

2. Location

street & number 139 N. E. 1st Street

___ not for publication

city, town Miami

___ vicinity of

state Florida 33132 code FL county Dade

code FL 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	___ unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Julius Marcus

street & number 144 N. E. 2nd Avenue

city, town Miami

___ vicinity of

state Florida 33132

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dade County Courthouse

street & number 75 W. Flagler Street

city, town Miami

state Florida 33130

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title FMSF-Miami Multiple Resource
Historic Preservation Survey

has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

date June, 1985

___ federal state ___ county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Historic Preservation

city, town Tallahassee

state Florida 32399-0250

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

See Continuation Sheet

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input 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"/> 1900–1938	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) comm. development
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

Specific dates 1925, 1926 **Builder/Architect** Martin L. Hampton

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

See Continuation Sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see Bibliography for Cover Nomination

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Miami

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 17 581090 2850850
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

Miami, The easterly half of Lot 15 and the westerly half of Lot 16 of Block 104 of the plat of MIAMI NORTH (PB B-41). Boundary follows historic and legal boundary.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sarah Eaton /Vicki L. Welcher, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation

date October, 1988

street & number 500 South Bronough Street

telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee

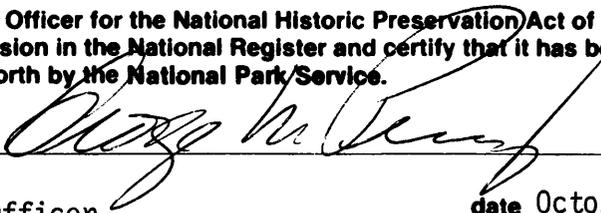
state Florida 32399-0250

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 

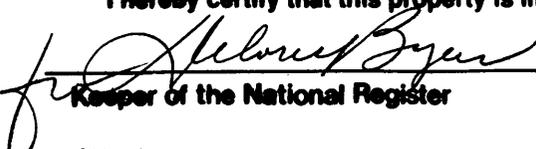
title State Historic Preservation Officer

date October 17, 1988

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the date 1/4/89
~~National Register~~


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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Section number 7 Page 1 The Meyer-Kiser Building

As originally constructed, the Meyer-Kiser Building was a 17-story structure executed in the Commercial style of architecture and embellished with features derived from the Neo-Classical architectural mode. Construction of the building began in 1925.¹

The building's structure is comprised of a steel frame sitting atop a concrete foundation.² The 17-story structure was ready for occupancy during December 1925, at a cost of \$1.2 million.³ When a hurricane hit Miami on 18 September 1926, the Meyer-Kiser Building was severely damaged.⁴ The upper 10 stories were removed in 1926, and today's building is only seven stories in height. The exterior of the present building carries forth the same design articulation of the principal elevation; however, the building shaft has been reduced in size.

The principal elevation fronts to the south and is only three bays wide. The side elevations contain 15 bays across their lengths, with each bay containing paired windows. The lower three floors of the principal elevation are characterized by four tall Composite columns dividing the elevation into three bays. The entrance to the building is comprised of an arch rising to a full two stories in height, capped by a cartouche with masonry molding. Flanking the entrance are two storefront windows containing fixed panes of glass. Atop the storefronts are triple windows set within the end bays. Over the entrance is a paired window, surrounded by an articulated masonry enframingent. The four columns support an entablature located between the third and fourth floors. The entablature is plain except for stylized anthemion motifs found at its ends. There are four large eagle sculptures atop the entablature on the same vertical axis as the columns.

The building shaft is mostly brick and rises to a height of four stories. Paired windows are set within each bay, and very little decoration is found on the exterior wall. All the windows appear to be replacements, and many are awning-type windows set within metal frames. The windows on the lower three floors are casement-type, also set within metal frames.

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The building's roofline is characterized by an open loggia which spans the three bays of the principal elevation and extends back two bays along the sides. The loggia is delineated by a pierced parapet wall, which once contained a decorative molded balustrade within its openings, and finals atop each bay division. Atop the parapet is a band with a classically-inspired molding which wraps itself around the loggia.

The building has undergone several modifications throughout its years of use so that no significant interior spaces remain. The offices were laid about a central corridor that extended from the elevator lobby in front of the building to the rear wall. Although its exterior has been slightly modified, the visual composition of the Meyer-Kiser Building does not significantly differ from the way it was rebuilt following the hurricane of 1926.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Specific Dates: 1925, 1926

Architect: Martin L. Hampton (?)

The Meyer-Kiser Building is architecturally significant because it represents a fine example of the Commercial style in downtown Miami. The building is noteworthy for its use of stylistic features, classically-inspired details, and cohesiveness within the neighborhood.⁵ The building is historically significant for its associations with Miami's Boom years and with the impact of the hurricane of 1926 on the city's development.

At the time of its construction, the Meyer-Kiser Building was thought to be one of the sturdiest and most imposing structures in downtown Miami at a height of 17 stories. The building was said to be "another imposing monument to Miami's progress and permanency."⁶ It was one of the first steel frame buildings to contain an elevator. The Meyer-Kiser Building was developed by Jerry Galatis and Locke Highleyman and was named for its premier tenant, the Meyer-Kiser Bank. Based in Indianapolis, the Meyer-Kiser Bank opened a branch in Miami at the urging of Frank Shutts, editor of The Miami Herald. The bank financed Galatis and Highleyman's new \$1,500,000 building and agreed to be its major tenant.

When the hurricane of 1926 hit Miami, the Meyer-Kiser Building sustained major damage, and the building was considered for demolition. The Meyer-Kiser Building, however, was one of the few structures in downtown Miami to carry "wind insurance."⁷ The owners received a payment in the amount of \$675,000 from the insurance company, at that time the largest damage payment in the history of Florida,⁸ and they were able to repair and rebuild the structure without its upper 10 stories. Although the building was determined to be structurally sound, the owner did not believe that existing economic conditions warranted full repair.

The Meyer-Kiser Bank occupied the lower floors of the building and stayed in business after the storm. The bank closed after the "Crash" of 1929, however, and after a series of tenants on

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the lower floors, the American National Bank moved into the building in 1936.⁹ At that time, the name of the building was changed to the American Bank Building. This name was retained until 1944 when the Dade-Commonwealth Title and Abstract Company decided to move into the lower floors. Consequently, the building's name was changed once more, this time to the Dade Commonwealth Building.¹⁰

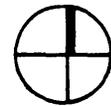
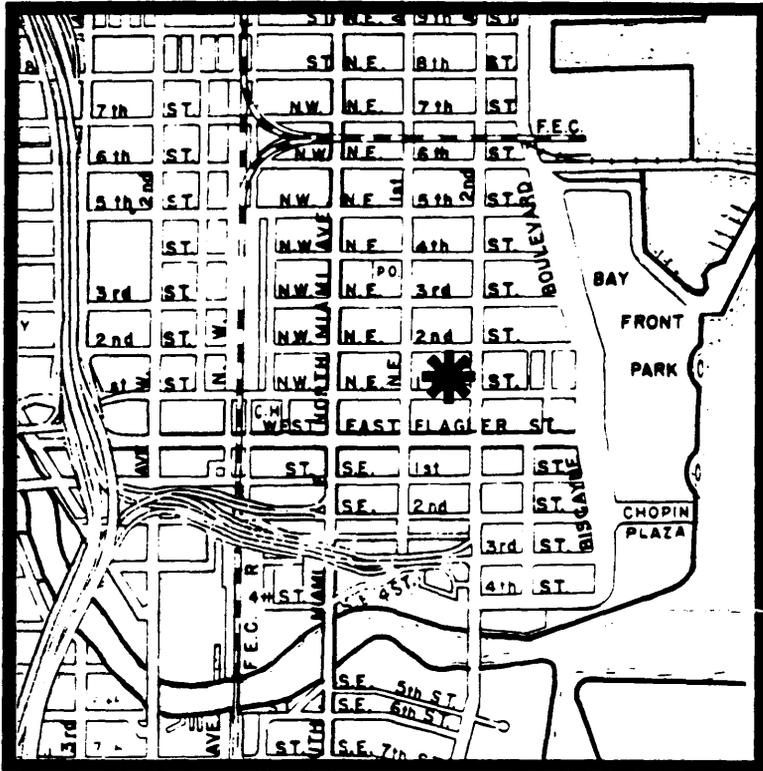
The architect for the original building appears to have been Martin L. Hampton, who designed a number of important high-rise buildings, including the Congress Building and the Old Miami Beach City Hall. A newspaper article announcing the opening of the building noted that Martin Hampton originated the architectural motif; however, this reference may have been only to the bank itself.¹¹ It is not clear who was the architect for the remodeling.

NOTES

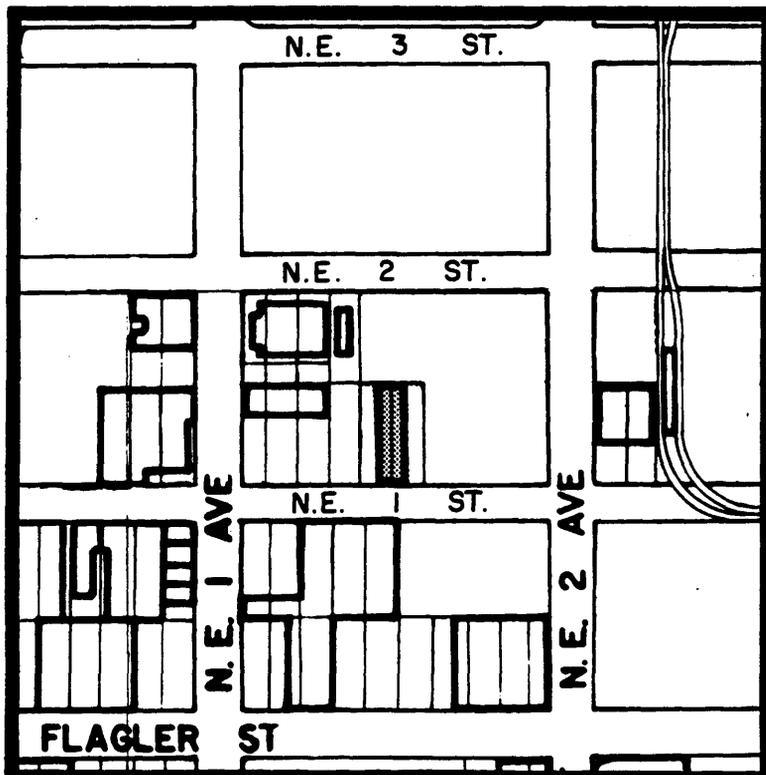
1. City of Miami, Building and Zoning Department, Building Permit applied for 1 May 1925.
2. "Twelve Skyscrapers Being Built Here," *The Miamian*, November 1925, p. 14.
3. See note 2 above.
4. Howard Kleinberg, "Monster '26 Storm Shatters the Town, Miami: The Way We Were (Miami, Florida: Miami Daily News, Inc., 1985), pp. 158-159.
5. State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Archives, History and Records Management, "Florida Master Site File: Historic Site Data Sheet" for 139 N. E. 1st Street, "Statement of Significance."
6. See note 2 above.
7. "17 Stories, and 10 of Them are Fiction," *Miami News*, 8 August 1965, p. 31.
8. See note 7 above.
9. See note 7 above.
10. See note 7 above.
11. "Meyer-Kiser Opens Doors of New Home," *The Miami Daily News*, 3 March 1926.

MEYER-KISER BUILDING

139 N.E. 1 STREET



location



site plan

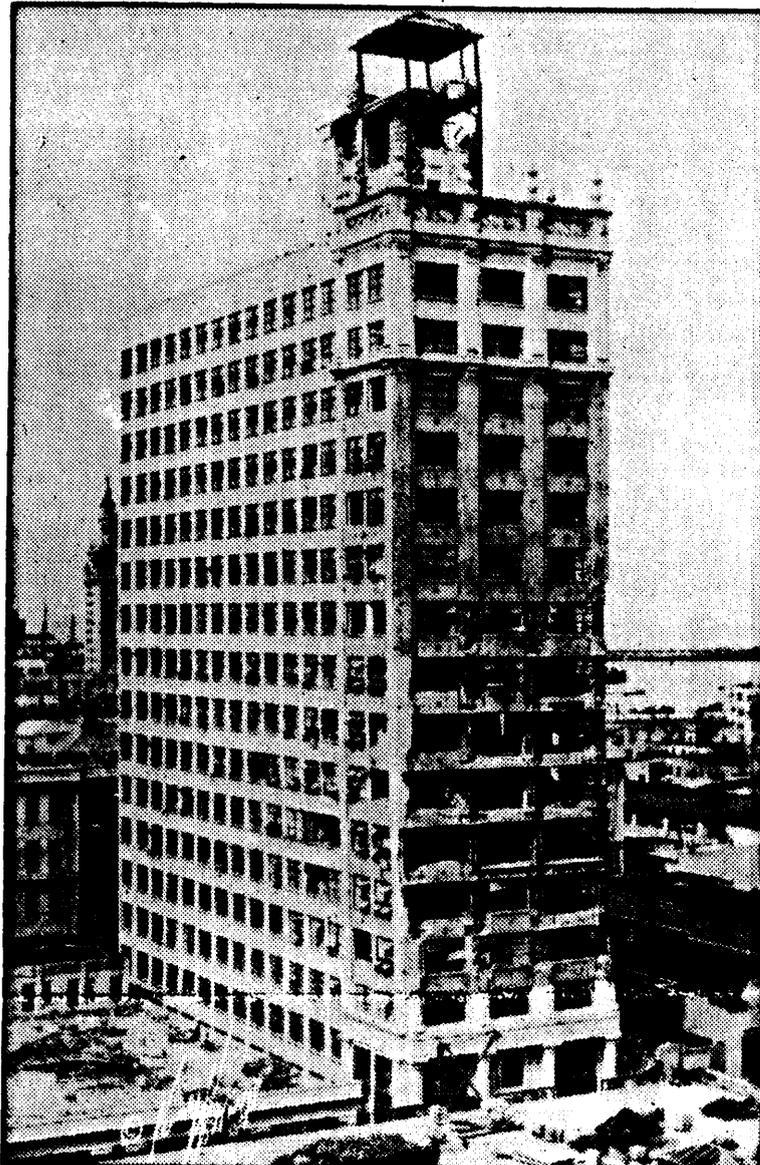


Photo by VERNE WILLIAMS Sr.



The Miami News - LENNY COHEN

Meyer-Kiser Building (left) as it appeared shortly after 1926 hurricane and as it appears today — as the Dade Commonwealth Building — with the top 10 stories lopped off.