

NR Listed 1-4-89

DA 355

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

MULT LIST - 82A5123

For NPS use only

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

## 1. Name

historic Dade County Courthouse

and or common Dade County Courthouse

## 2. Location

street & number 73 W. Flagler Street

not for publication

city, town Miami

vicinity of

state Florida 33130 code FL

county Dade

code FL 025

## 3. Classification

### Category

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

### Ownership

- public
- private
- both

### Public Acquisition

- in process
- being considered

### Status

- occupied
- unoccupied
- work in progress

### Accessible

- yes: restricted
- yes: unrestricted
- no

### Present Use

- agriculture
- commercial
- educational
- entertainment
- government
- industrial
- military
- museum
- park
- private residence
- religious
- scientific
- transportation
- other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Metropolitan Dade County

street & number 111 N. W. 1st Street

city, town Miami

vicinity of

state Florida 33128

## 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

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## 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

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Dade County Courthouse

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The Dade County Courthouse building is a 28-story structure of steel frame construction executed in the Neo-Classical style of architecture. The building, which features a broad base and a central tower, was completed in 1928 following the designs of A. Ten Eyck Brown, architect, and August Geiger, associate architect.<sup>1</sup> The base of the building is faced with Stone Mountain granite while the other floors are sheathed in terra cotta, tinted to match the granite slabs.<sup>2</sup>

Surrounding the building at a height of five feet above the sidewalk level is a broad slate-paved terrace. The terrace and main floor, which is six feet above the terrace level, are reached by two flights of granite steps on the north and south sides. The raised level of the first floor provides space for a garage, a major consideration of the architect in undertaking the design of the building.<sup>3</sup> The overall height of the structure is highlighted through a series of setbacks. The primary base rises three stories and encompasses 168 square feet in area. The primary base is surmounted by a secondary base, also rising three stories and encompassing an area of 138 square feet. From the seventh to the twentieth floors, the tower walls are set back from the base and form a square shaft. At the twentieth floor, the square shaft changes to an octagonal shape and further decreases in area at the twenty-fourth floor. A three-story pyramid caps the tower.<sup>4</sup>

Six colossal, fluted, Doric columns, flanked by two colossal pilasters, highlight the north and south elevations of the base. Similar colossal engaged columns mark the east and west elevations. Above the columns is a full entablature with triglyphs and metopes. Six engaged columns with Egyptian-styled capitals adorn the secondary base, which is surmounted by a classical balustrade. Decorative plaques with classical motifs embellish the ninth and nineteenth floors. The twenty-third floor is encircled by a classical entablature, with a pediment and tympanum at the twenty-fourth floor.

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A majority of the building's original steel casement windows remain, although windows on several floors have been replaced. The twelfth floor now contains bronze finished, aluminum fixed windows with bronze-colored glass. Aluminum awning windows on the fourteenth floor were recently replaced with new windows that closely replicate the originals in muntin configuration. Except for the alteration of some windows and doors, the exterior of the Dade County Courthouse remains virtually unaltered.

The main floor of the building was originally quite open and was equipped with folding metal grilles instead of the present-day security doors. The building was air conditioned in the 1940s, thereby necessitating the installation of revolving aluminum and glass doors.

The interior spaces originally provided full facilities for two government entities (city and county), including the necessary courtrooms, record storage, judicial chambers, libraries, and jails for both systems. Offices that had frequent dealings with the public were located on the first three floors, while other officials, courts, and jails were situated on the upper stories. The jails, with their administrative offices, occupied the floors from the fourteenth to twenty-fifth, inclusive, and were reached from the basement by two special elevators.<sup>5</sup> A battery of eight high-speed elevators, some with specifically programmed access routes, originally served the needs of vertical circulation and privacy.

The lobby floor still retains the original marble floors, bronze sidelights, and mailbox. In some of the judicial chambers and offices, one can still see the original woodwork, with intricate carvings, still intact.

## 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/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1938	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		
				community develop		ment

Specific dates 1925-1928

Builder/Architect A. Ten Eyck Brown; August Geiger

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Specific Dates: 1925-1928

Architects: A. Ten Eyck Brown, Architect  
August Geiger, Associate Architect

The Dade County Courthouse is significant in the history of government, community development, and architecture in Miami. Built between 1925 and 1928, the courthouse building has continuously served as Dade County's seat of government. The Courthouse was also designed to serve as the Miami City Hall, and facilities included the necessary courtrooms, record storage, judicial chambers, law library, administrative offices, and jails for both government entities. The Dade County Courthouse is also significant as an outstanding example of Neo-Classical style architecture.

When the county seat of Dade County was moved from Juno to Miami in 1899, judicial affairs were conducted from a wood frame building on the Miami River just east of the old Miami Avenue bridge. A new courthouse was built on the site of the present courthouse in 1904. That building was designed to meet the needs of Dade County for 50 years.

A new courthouse was planned in 1925 after the old one became inadequate. Several locations were considered, but the county later decided to utilize the site occupied by the old courthouse. The earlier building was to be torn down from within the rising steel structure of the newer edifice.

Shortly after its formal dedication on 6 September 1928, the Dade County Courthouse was featured in several national publications that showcased the latest developments in urban architecture and planning. The author of one article boasted that the courthouse was "the tallest structure south of Baltimore, and [was] believed to be the tallest municipal building in the United States."<sup>7</sup> The tower rose to a height of 336 feet above the street.<sup>8</sup> It was brilliantly lighted each night by electricity and visible for "100 miles by sea and 50 by land."<sup>9</sup>

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Construction of the building spanned the Boom and Bust years of 1925 to 1928. The completion of the building, at a cost of more than \$4,000,000, marked a milestone in the development of Dade County and reflected the faith and optimism of the community in its future.<sup>10</sup>

The Dade County Courthouse is also significant for its associations with the architectural development of South Florida. The building constitutes an outstanding example of the Neo-Classical style of architecture as applied to a high-rise building. The choice of the Neo-Classical style was in keeping with the contemporary ideas that the workings of the judicial systems of government were a solemn business to be housed in the dignified manner of the ancients.<sup>11</sup> The choice of a skyscraper met the desire for a modern building as well as the city and county's needs for expansion.

Designed by the prominent Atlanta architect, A. Ten Eyck Brown, who distinguished himself in the design of numerous courthouses throughout the South, the Dade County Courthouse featured many innovative solutions to meet the needs of local government. An underground garage, for instance, provided parking spaces at a time when parking was beginning to be recognized as a problem.

The building's history, size, classical decorative ornament, and distinctive ziggurat roofline have contributed to the local perception of the Dade County Courthouse as a major landmark.

The Courthouse was occupied by both Dade County and the City of Miami until 1954, when the city vacated its space. The jail, originally located on the upper tower floors, was closed in 1961. County offices have recently moved to the new County Administration Building, and the courthouse is now occupied exclusively by the judiciary for the first time in its history.

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### NOTES

1. City of Miami, Building and Zoning Department, Building Plans on Microfilm, Roll 16, Plan M-34; and "Pass Courthouse Plans," Miami Herald, 5 April 1925.

2. W. L. Robinson, "A Four-Million Dollar 28-Story 'Tower of Justice,'" The American City, November 1928, p. 159.

3. See note 2 above.

4. A. Ten Eyck Brown, "Designing and Planning of Court Houses," Architectural Forum, June 1927, p. 520.

5. See note 2 above.

6. Sarah E. Eaton, "Dade County Courthouse Designation Report" (prepared for the City of Miami Heritage Conservation Board, 7 June 1985).

7. See note 2 above.

8. See note 6 above.

9. The Miamian, July 1927, p. 3.

10. See note 6 above.

11. See note 6 above.



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see Bibliography for Cover Nomination

## 10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Miami

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 17 580690 2850760  
Zone Easting Northing

B           
Zone Easting Northing

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Miami, All of Block 115-A, less the westerly 50 feet for street, and the area known as Avenue E lying east of Block 115 a, and Lots 8 and 0 of Block 115-N, of the plat of MIAMI NORTH (PB B-41) - follows historic and legal boundaries

### 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 *Sarah Eaton*

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

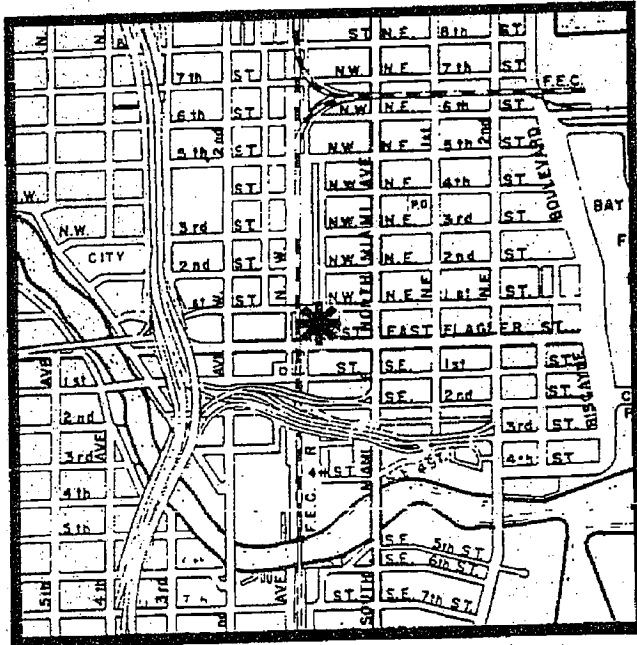
date

Attest:

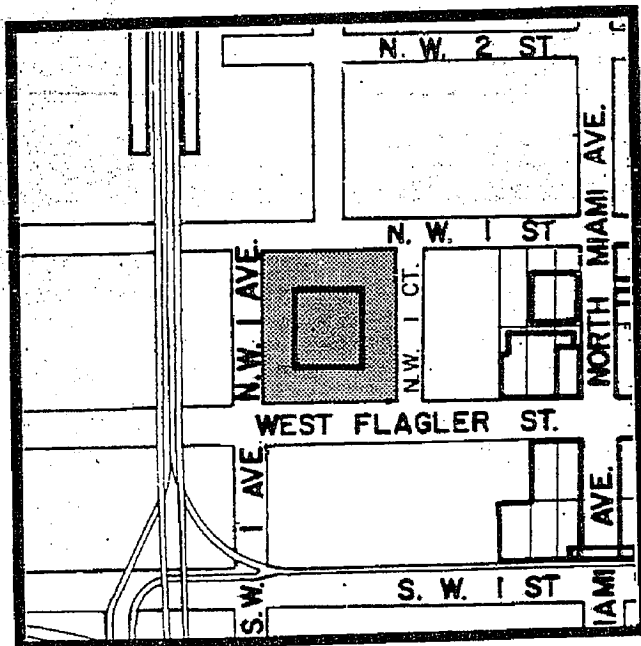
Chief of Registration

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# DADE COUNTY COURTHOUSE and MIAMI CITY HALL 73 WEST FLAGLER STREET



location



site plan



DADE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
North & West Facade  
September 1989