

LIBRARY COPY

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
TO THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION BOARD  
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF  
U. S. POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE  
300 N. E. 1ST AVENUE  
AS A HERITAGE CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT

Prepared by

Sarah E. Estox  
Historic Preservation Planner Date

Accepted by

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman, Heritage Conservation Board Date

Designated by the Miami City Commission

Ordinance No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

CONTENTS

	Page
I. General Information	1
II. Significance	4
III. Architectural Information	6
IV. Planning Context	8
V. HC Zoning Elements	9

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

U. S. Post Office and Courthouse

Current Name:

U. S. Courthouse

Location:

300 N. E. 1st Avenue  
Miami, Florida 33132

Present Owner:

Regional Historic Preservation Officer  
General Services Administration  
Region 4  
Richard B. Russell Federal Building  
75 Spring Street, S. W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Present Use:

Governmental

Present Zoning District:

CBD-1/9

HC Zoning Overlay District:

HC-1

Tax Folio Number:

01-0108-050-1010

Boundary Description of HC Zoning District:

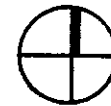
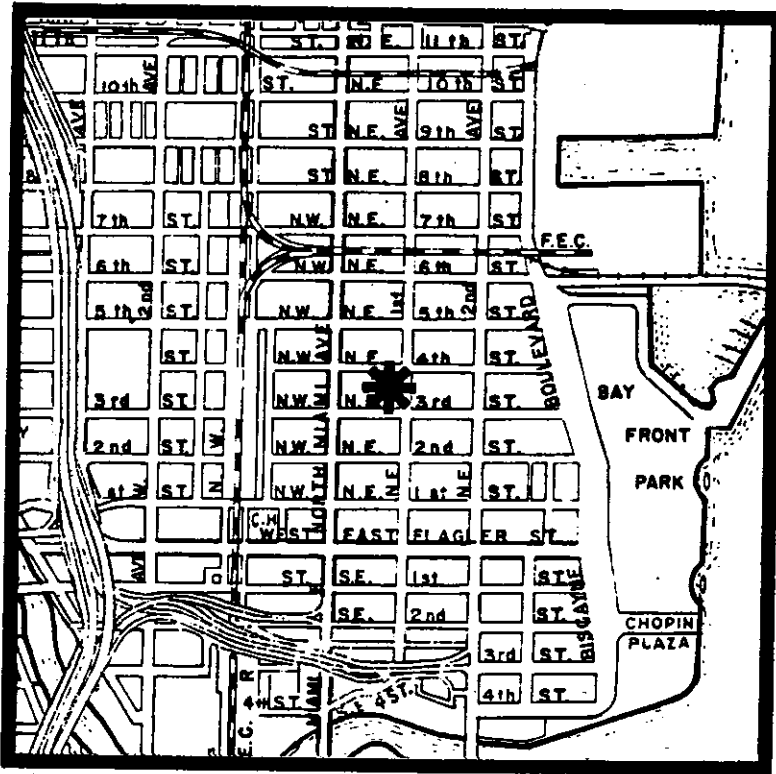
Lots 1 through 6 and Lots 15 through 20, inclusive, of Block 85 of the plat of MIAMI NORTH (B-41)

HC Zoning Classification:

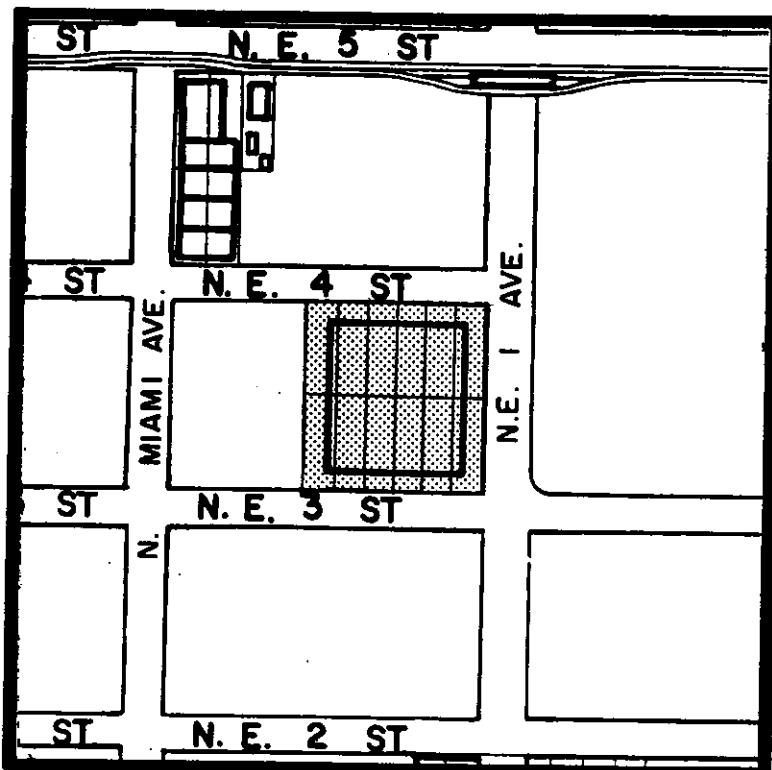
Historic Site

# U.S. POST OFFICE and COURTHOUSE

300 N.E. 1 AVENUE



location



site plan

## II. SIGNIFICANCE

### Specific Date:

1931

### Architects:

Paist and Steward

### Statement of Significance:

The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse is architecturally significant as an excellent example of the adaptation of the Neo-Classical style to the South Florida environment. The building also exemplifies the work of the architectural firm of Paist and Steward in Miami. The building also possesses historical associations with the federal government and its expansion into new quarters during the height of the Depression.

The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse stands out within its local architectural context because of the classicism of its design and the quality of its detailing. The classical elements are well-detailed and vary from large Corinthian columns to small Ionic pilasters and carved spandrel panels. The use of local keystone as a building material reflects the adaptation of the Neo-Classical style to the South Florida conditions. The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse is the largest structure in Miami to be built of this material.

The funds for the U. S. Post Office and Courthouse were appropriated in 1926 as part of the Public Buildings Act. Between 1913 and 1926 Congress had authorized no funds for new federal buildings, despite the fact that the federal presence in localities had grown tremendously during those years. Because of this pent up need, funds for hundreds of federal buildings were approved by Congress in 1926 and again in 1928. This spurt of federal government building activity remains relatively undocumented. However, it is known that James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect between 1915 and 1933, encouraged the use of classical styles. Because Wetmore was a lawyer, he never actually controlled architectural design. This control was exerted by Louis A. Simon, who was Superintendent of the Architectural Section of the Supervising Architect's Office from 1905 to 1933, and Supervising Architect from 1933 to 1939. During the 1920s and especially the 1930s, Simon encouraged the use of a very restrained, undetailed version of Neo-Classical style architecture. The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse in Miami is unusual among federal buildings of the period because of its elaborate detailing.

The Miami building was designed by the firm of Paist and Steward. Phineas Paist came to Miami in 1924 and became the supervising architect for Coral Gables in 1925. He became associated with Harold Steward in the early 1930s, and together they designed many well-known buildings. The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse is perhaps their finest.

The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse replaced the Old U. S. Post Office and Courthouse built in 1912 at 100 N. E. 1st Avenue. Federal employees moved to the new building in 1933. In 1978, the post office was closed, and today the building is used solely as a federal courthouse.

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

3. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community.

The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse possesses historical associations with the federal government and its expansion into new quarters during the height of the Depression.

5. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.

The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse is an excellent example of the adaptation of the Neo-Classical style to the South Florida environment.

6. Is an outstanding work of a prominent designer or builder.

The building exemplifies the work of the architectural firm of Paist and Steward, an important Miami firm.

7. Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment.

The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse is particularly noteworthy for its use of keystone as a building material and for the classicism of its design and the quality of its detailing.

### III. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

#### Description of Building:

The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse is a three story rectangular building constructed of concrete and steel. Built in 1931, this Neo-Classical style structure is faced with keystone and is topped with a hipped roof covered with Mission tiles. The building faces east and occupies half of the block.

The first and second stories of the building are grouped together, and the bays are articulated by two story engaged Corinthian columns and pilasters and two story windows. The columns support an entablature that separates the second and third stories. The third story has smaller details articulating the bays. A water table separates the main building from the raised basement.

The center 13 bays contain arched windows on the second story. Spandrel panels below these windows represent scenes of Florida history. Windows throughout the building are casements. Entrances are located on each end bay and are approached by broad granite terraces. Each end bay is set back from the main lobby of the building.

The face of the building, as well as all columns and pilasters, are sheathed with keystone, while the column capitals and bases and door and window surrounds are Floridian Buff marble. The raised basement is faced with granite. Window and door frames and muntins are of cast aluminum stamped with a chevron pattern.

Directly off the main lobby is an open courtyard with a two-story gallery on the north, south, and west sides. The east side has three doors and two windows from the main lobby. The west side has three round arches supported by four Doric columns. The north and south ends have a Palladian motif constructed of stone and brick. At the center of the courtyard is a hexagonal concrete slab which covers the area that was a fountain. The columns of the gallery rest on a band of red granite. The gallery ceiling is a suspended plaster vault.

#### Description of Site:

The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse is located on the west side of N. E. 1st Avenue and occupies the entire block between N. E. 3rd and 4th Streets. A new federal courthouse is located immediately west of the historic building.





U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
300 N.E. 1 Avenue

#### IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

##### Present Trends and Conditions:

The U. S. Post Office and Courthouse is used almost entirely by the district court, since the post office moved out in 1976. Additional courtrooms are housed in the new courthouse.

The historic building was recently rehabilitated in conjunction with the construction of the new building. It is in excellent condition today, and its architectural features have been carefully preserved.

A new federal building is proposed for the east half of the block immediately north of the historic building. This building will house offices for federal attorneys.

##### Conservation Objectives:

The continued preservation of this important downtown landmark should be encouraged. The proposed new building should be carefully designed so as not to compromise the integrity of the historic building. Any proposed connector between the two structures should be carefully designed and studied.

These conservation objectives can best be achieved by maintaining the present zoning of the property. An HC-1 zoning overlay district will maintain the existing zoning, requiring only the review of physical changes to the property.

V. HC ZONING ELEMENTS

Boundaries:

The boundaries of the HC zoning district have been drawn to include only those lots on which the historic building is located.

Major Exterior Surfaces Subject to Review:

All four facades shall be considered major exterior surfaces subject to review.

Interior Surfaces Subject to Review:

The interior courtyard shall be subject to review. Any alterations to this space shall be guided by the U. S. Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation."

Major Landscape Features Subject to Review:

The major landscape features subject to review shall include any features which are subject to requirements for tree removal permits, as set forth in Chapter 17 of the City Code.