United States Department of the Interior  
National Park 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  
First Presbyterian Church  
DA 1124  

and or common  
First Presbyterian Church  

2. Location  

street & number  
609 Brickell Avenue  

not for publication  

city, town  
Miami  

vicinity of  

state  
Florida 33131  

code  FL  

county  Dade  

code FL 025  

3. Classification  

Category  

Ownership  

Status  

Present Use  

X district  

public  

occupied  

agriculture  

museum  

X building(s)  

private  

unoccupied  

commercial  

park  

structure  

both  

work in progress  

educational  

private residence  

site  

Public Acquisition  

Accessible  

entertainment  

religious  

object  

In process  

yes: restricted  

government  

scientific  

being considered  

yes: unrestricted  

industrial  

transportation  

no  

military  

other:  


4. Owner of Property  

name  
The First Presbyterian Church  

street & number  
609 Brickell Avenue  

city, town  
Miami  

vicinity of  

state Florida 33131  

5. Location of Legal Description  

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.  
Dade County Courthouse  

street & number  
75 W. Flagler Street  

city, town  
Miami  

state Florida 3130  

6. Representation in Existing Surveys  

title  
PMSF-Miami Multiple Resource Historic Preservation Survey  

has this property been determined eligible?  __ yes ___ no  

date  
June, 1985  

federal  X  

state  

county  x  

local  

depository for survey records  
Bureau of Historic Preservation  

city, town  
Tallahassee  

state Florida 32399-0250
7. Description

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<td>x original site</td>
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<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>ruins</td>
<td>altered</td>
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<tr>
<td>fair</td>
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET
8. Significance

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<tr>
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<th>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</th>
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<td>commerce</td>
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Specific dates 1949  Builder/Architect Lester Geisler

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET
9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see Bibliography for Cover Nomination

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: less than 1 acre.

Quadrangle name: Miami

Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

UTM References

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</table>

Verbal boundary description and justification:

Miami, Lot 2 and riparian rights of Block 103 of plat of MARY BRICKELL'S ADDITION (PB B-113) follows historic/legal boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Sarah Eaton/Vicki L. Welcher, Historic Sites Specialist

Organization: Bureau of Historic Preservation

Date: October 19, 1988

Street & Number: 500 South Bronough Street

Telephone: (904) 487-2333

City or Town: Tallahassee

State: Florida

Code: 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 69-665), 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: [Signature]

Date: October 17, 1988

For NPS use only:

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

Date: [Date]

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: [Signature]

Chief of Registration
DESCRIPTION:

Condition: Excellent

The First Presbyterian Church is a large four-story masonry edifice executed in the Mediterranean Revival style of architecture with elements of the Romanesque mode. The church building was designed to house 1,200 worshippers and was completed in 1949. The First Presbyterian Church is a cruciform-plan building supported by a masonry structural system. The exterior walls are clad with a combination of stucco and native keystone, and its roof is covered with flat tiles. The exterior of First Presbyterian Church is characterized by a triple arched entrance sitting within a gable end. To the left of the entrance is the Flagler Memorial Chapel whose interior consists of portions of the original First Presbyterian Church building constructed in 1900. The exterior of this chapel lies to the north of the central entrance, and its walls are embellished with multiple bays inset with recessed arched windows divided by flat pilasters. The exterior of this portion of the principal elevation is a replication of a portion of the older church building. To the south of the central entrance is a two-story wing containing uniformly spaced windows on the first and second floors. The central entrance is comprised of three sets of double wooden doors leading to a vestibule. Over the triple arches are three casement-type windows and over them is a circular window flanked by two "slot" windows. The exterior of the principal elevation is embellished by masonry bands at the division of each story. A masonry brac-ted cornice runs the length of the gable end and serves to support a shallow eave. The sanctuary of the church rises to a height of four stories and is capped by a gable roof running in an east-west direction. The side elevations follow the same architectural styling as the facade with broad planes of stuccoed surface embellished by bands and moldings of cast stone. Tall arched windows are found on the side elevations. The altar is situated within a semicircular apse end, and behind it is a two-story portion that contains numerous meeting rooms.
The interior decoration of the church is rather simple except for that found within the Flagler Memorial Chapel. The woodwork and decorative ornament comprising the chapel's interior were brought to their new site from the old church building which stood at the corner of East Flagler Street and S. E. 3rd Avenue. The chapel's interior is characterized by old oak pews, ornately carved wooden window surround that delineate the arched stained glass windows, and a carved balcony to the rear of the chapel.

The interior of the main sanctuary is rather austere in that its walls are all smooth plaster and its ceiling is covered with original acoustical tiles. The most outstanding features of the main sanctuary are the stained glass windows which stand out against the rather plain surrounding surfaces. The interior and exterior of the church have not been altered since the building was completed.

A two story school building addition is located directly behind the church and is connected to the main structure.
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:
Specific Date: 1949
Architect: Lester Geisler

The First Presbyterian Church is architecturally significant because it represents an exceptionally fine example of late Mediterranean Revival styling in Miami and for its association with Henry Flagler and the oldest and most influential religious group in Miami. Although less than 50 years old, the church building is exceptionally significant for this important historical associations with the religious group.

The exterior of the First Presbyterian Church embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Mediterranean Revival architectural style, a popular design expression throughout the 1920s and 1930s in South Florida. Its appearance as late as 1949 constitutes a rarity in the use of such a style at mid-century. The visual composition of the church is architecturally noteworthy for its stylistic features and use of local materials.

The First Presbyterian Church houses Miami's oldest white congregation, having been organized in April 1896. The new congregation first worshipped in a tent at what is now the corner of North Miami Avenue and S. E. 2nd Street. Henry M. Flagler, the man responsible for providing a railroad link to Miami, donated the lots for the erection of a permanent church building in 1900. Flagler, himself a Presbyterian, also provided all the money for the construction of the church and manse. That church located at the corner of East Flagler Street and S. E. 1st Avenue, served the congregation until the 1940s. The First Presbyterian Church was made nationally known by William Jennings Bryan, who was a member of the church and taught a Sunday School class there. The new and present church building was completed in 1949. No other structure is associated with this important early congregation.

The current church building was constructed in the 1940s when the congregation could no longer afford the upkeep at the original location. The earlier church contained a small chapel that was constructed by funds donated by Henry Flagler for that specific purpose. When the church was to be relocated, the congregation voted to take the chapel with them.
In the construction of the new church was included the actual interior materials from the Flagler Chapel. Because it was impossible to retain the exterior materials, the builders did the next best thing. They used the actual plans for the original chapel to reconstruct the second chapel. This can be noted by the different architectural detailing in the two sides of the main facade. The left (north) side is the reconstruction. (See Photo)

The First Presbyterian Church is situated on a large parcel of land that is located between Brickell Avenue and Biscayne Bay. As such, the land where the church stands is suggested to be worth upwards of $25 million. The congregation has dwindled in size to about 130 parishioners, a drop from the 1,400 parishioners who belonged to the church just 15 years ago.

NOTES
2. State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Archives, History and Records Management, "Florida Master Site File: Historic Site Data Sheet" for 609 Brickell Avenue, "Statement of Significance."
4. See note 3 above.
5. See note 1 above.
7. See note 6 above.
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
609 BRICKELL AVENUE

location

site plan