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 Meyer-Kiser Building
and or common Dade Commonwealth Building

2. Location

street & number 139 N. E. 1st Street   vicinity of not for publication

city, town Miami state Florida code FL county Dade
code FL 026

3. Classification

Category Ownership Status Present Use

— district public occupied X commercial
— building(s) X private unoccupied
— site both work in progress
— object Public Acquisition

Accessible

X yes: restricted

yes: unrestricted

no

4. Owner of Property

name Julius Marcus

street & number 144 N. E. 2nd Avenue
city, town Miami vicinity of state Florida

city, town Miami state Florida

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dade County Courthouse

street & number 75 W. Flagler Street
city, town Miami state Florida

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Title PMSE-Miami Multiple Resource Historic Preservation Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes __ no

date June, 1985

defederal X state X county X local

Depository for survey records Bureau of Historic Preservation
city, town Tallahassee state Florida

city, town Miami state Florida

city, town Miami state Florida

city, town Miami state Florida

city, town Miami state Florida
7. Description

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<td>ruins</td>
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

See Continuation Sheet
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 enframement. 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.
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.
## 8. Significance

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

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

See Continuation Sheet
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 building 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
the lower floors, the American National Bank moved into the building in 1936. At that time, the name of the building was changed to the American Bank Building. This name was retained until 1944 when the Bade-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 Bade Commonwealth Building.

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. 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.
3. See note 2 above.
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.
8. See note 7 above.
9. See note 7 above.
10. See note 7 above.
9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see Bibliography for Cover Nomination

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name: Miami

UTM References:

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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

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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  [x] state

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

Date:

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Date

Chief of Registration