

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 First Presbyterian Church DA 1124

Returned by NR 1988/89.

and or common First Presbyterian Church

2028/21/91

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not for publication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
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> 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 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

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## 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 checked="" 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"/> 1900-1949	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

**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

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Miami

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	1	7	5	8	1	2	1	0	1	0	2	1	8	5	1	0	1	0	1	0
Zone			Easting						Northing											

B 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

C 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

D 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

E 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

F 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

G 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

H 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

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

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 X 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 [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

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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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 1949.1 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 bracketed 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.

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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.

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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.<sup>2</sup>

The First Presbyterian Church houses Miami's oldest white congregation, having been organized in April 1896.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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. 3rd Avenue, served the congregation until the 1940s.<sup>5</sup> 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.

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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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

### NOTES

1. Howard Kleinberg, "Early Church Met in a Tent," Miami News, 29 January 1983, p. 4-C.
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."
3. "160 Churches Include All Denominations," Miami Herald, 28 July 1929, p. 22.
4. See note 3 above.
5. See note 1 above.
6. Adon Taft, "One of City's Oldest Churches May Sell Brickell Site," Miami Herald, 30 May 1983.
7. See note 6 above.

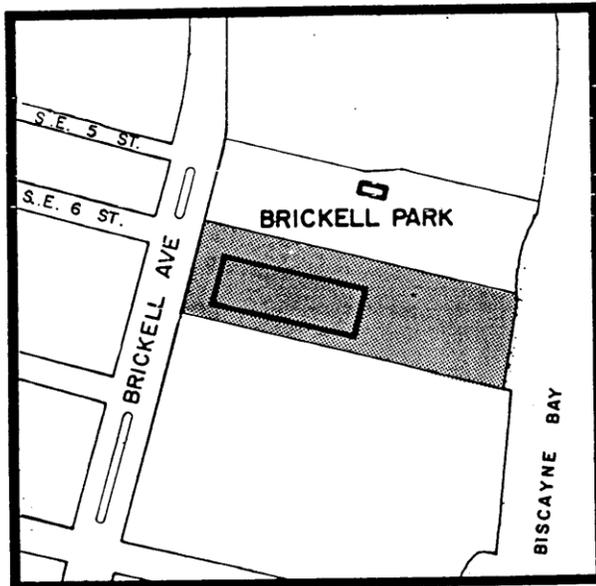
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# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

609 BRICKELL AVENUE



location



site plan



