

Bay Gables
136 Fourth Avenue NE
HPC #93-07, Designated January 1994



The 1910 Bay Gables house is an architecturally significant example of upper middle class housing in St. Petersburg at the turn of the century. Originally designed in the Vernacular style as a single family residence, the house was altered in 1928 to include Queen Anne and Colonial Revival style detailing and accommodate a boarding house for seasonal tourists. This use strongly reflects the significance and importance of the tourist industry in St. Petersburg during the first half of the 21st Century. Bay Gables is also associated with a pioneer era merchant, and is a reminder of the role of the seasonal tourist in the development of St. Petersburg.

Built during the first land boom in St. Petersburg, Bay Gables was originally owned by John T. and Ella Smith in 1910. Smith was a local merchant as indicated in the City Directories; he owned a meat market located on Central Avenue until he died in 1918, leaving behind his widow Ella and their two daughters. In 1928 Ella Smith converted the home into a boarding house for winter tourists and named the home Bay Gables. Ella Smith and her daughters operated the house until 1948 when the property was sold.

The Roland Subdivision was platted March 18, 1905. The area surrounding this subdivision was platted at approximately the same time. The 1908 Sanborn Maps indicate approximately 20 percent of the area was developed with single family detached dwellings. The 1913 Sanborn maps indicate approximately 80 percent of the neighborhood developed with the same type structure. Later Sanborn Maps (1918) indicate a change in neighborhood character from single family residences to two and three-story rooming houses with the neighborhood nearly completely built out.

Bay Gables is a two and one half story wood frame residence which rests on a red brick pier foundation system that raises the home approximately 40 inches off the ground. Between the brick piers, infill panels of brick lattice and wooden lattice are used to screen the crawl space beneath the house. The house is sheathed in wooden drop clapboard siding, with wooden shingles used in the gable ends of the bay windows on the north facade. The roof appears to have been originally sheathed in wooden shingles; however, composite asphalt shingle are in existence today. The property card does not mention the date of change of material. The eave line of the home was originally open with exposed rafter tails. At a later date a decorative fascia board was added, which gives the structure a more finished look consistent with the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles. A wrap around porch was constructed along the north and east facades facing 4th Avenue and Roland Court, while a second-story sleeping porch was added to the east facade of the home in 1928. The ceilings of both porches are sheathed in 4-inch beaded board matching the soffits. The intersecting gable roof form is supported by Tuscan columns which rise from a paneled solid railing.