

**The Bruce Blackburn House
1422 22nd Avenue South
HPC #99-03 - Designated October 1999**



The 1925 Blackburn House is significant for its association with local businessman Bruce B. Blackburn who served as Mayor of St. Petersburg for two years until 1949 when he was defeated for reelection. During his tenure, Mayor Blackburn was recognized as the dissenting vote in the City Council's decision to phase out the City's trolley system. This decision was made after numerous complaints from citizens about the delay trolleys caused for automobile traffic. By January 1948, most of the trolleys or streetcars were taken out of service and scrapped. The Gulfport and Jungle lines remained open until May 7, 1949, when Car 100 made St. Petersburg's final trolley run. With Mayor Blackburn, ex-Mayor Al Lang (who had presided over purchase of the line in 1919), and several other "old-timers" on board, the car coasted to the end of the line in Gulfport with its windows draped in black crepe. A sign on the front of the car read "Not Dead Just Retired." In addition to serving as mayor, Mr. Blackburn was past president of the Lakeview Community Club, a member of Clearwater Lodge 127 F&AM, a past commander of the L. M. Tate Post No. 39, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and a board member of the Pinellas County Dairymen's Association.

In 1925, Bruce B. Blackburn constructed a two-story garage apartment building on the property out of red brick. This garage apartment would become the basis for the development of the house that exists today. The westerly part of the present house, which forms the leg of the "L-shape" plan, is actually the garage apartment. The downstairs was converted from garage/carport space to living area. The stairs leading to the second floor now serve as a rear entrance for the home, however, they were originally the stairs which led to Mr. Blackburn's second floor apartment.

In 1944, Mr. Blackburn added the easterly two-story red brick addition. The front of the house facing Lakeview Avenue (including the original house and the addition) was redesigned to reflect the Neoclassical Revival architectural style. Although it would appear this redesign was planned with the design of the original garage apartment, "ghosts" of altered doorways, windows, and additions in the brickwork reveal significant changes were needed to accomplish this architectural style. The original building is easily identified by the intermittent use of English bond in the brickwork; for some reason, this brick pattern was abandoned in the 1944 addition. Overall, this particular architectural style was chosen by the Blackburns because of their love of southern plantations. They owned and operated the 200-acre Blackburn Plantation in Barnesville, Georgia where the Blackburns raised cotton, sweet potatoes, oats, and cattle. The Blackburns transformed their home on 22nd Avenue South to become their St. Petersburg version of a plantation. Hence, it was named "Dixieland."

The home constructed by Mr. Blackburn is representative of the type of Neoclassical Revival design constructed during the latter part of the period in which this architectural style was in vogue. While the facade facing 22nd Avenue South demonstrates the basic qualities of symmetry and the full facade porch, the columns and windows lack detail. The front door, while ornately framed, seems out of proportion given the height of the residence. The columns are very simple and lack detailing in the bases and caps. The lack of these noted details would seem appropriate for a home that was designed during the transition to the American Modern home of the 1950s.