

St. Petersburg Central High School
2501 5th Avenue
HPC #86-09 - Designated August 1986



Built in 1926, St. Petersburg Central High School is a Mediterranean Revival building and is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. The building was designed by William Ittner who was a prolific designer of school buildings and plied his trade throughout the United States. Ittner is also responsible for executing the design of the St. Petersburg Mirror Lake High School in 1918 and the St. Petersburg Junior High School (now the Tomlinson Educational Center).

Central High was the fourth high school in the St. Petersburg high school system; three of these buildings remain as local or national historic properties. The school system's first building was the Domestic Science and Manual Training School built in 1898 with funds given by Edwin Tomlinson. A bond issue was passed in 1909 giving \$30,000 to construct new schools. The new high school was completed in 1911 at the corner of 5th Street and 2nd Avenue North. (It was demolished in 1947 to construct the Pinellas County Administration Building, which was demolished in 2001.) Between 1913 and 1918 the city school enrollment increased by 46 percent forcing the city to pass a \$175,000 bond issue in 1917 allowing the construction of St. Petersburg Mirror Lake High School. St. Petersburg launched a vast school building spree in 1923 which lasted until 1928. During these five years twenty new schools were erected. This was in response to the phenomenal growth of the city during the "boom" era. During this period Central High School was constructed.

Central High is built of brick, hollow tile and poured concrete with a stucco exterior finish. The building is rectangular in plan with two interior courtyards flanking the central auditorium. The exterior is highlighted by the arcade along the first floor of the main facade, the red clay barrel tile roof, the entrance pavilion and surrounds, casement windows, corner towers and stair towers. Significant interior areas include the auditorium and library.

The school is built over a continuous poured-in-place concrete footer; a crawl space below the concrete slab floor allows room for the heating system. The walls are stucco over brick, hollow tile, and poured-in-place concrete. The roof is covered with red clay barrel tiles with copper flashings and gutters. The auditorium roof is flat, of built-up tar paper and gravel construction. The southern facade is two stories in height, the east and west facade is two story with attic, and the north facade three story. The auditorium is two and one-half stories. The main (south) facade has strong horizontal lines which are broken by a central two story entrance pavilion and two projecting gable and wings at the corners of the facade. These three projecting vertical elements are linked by a first floor open arcade of sixteen bays. Sixteen wood casement windows (4/4/4 per case) are on the second floor centered over each arch.