

Domestic Science and Manual Training School
440 Second Avenue North
Designated August 1998, HPC #98-06



Built in 1901, the Domestic Science and Manual Training School is the oldest surviving school building in St. Petersburg and one of the oldest buildings in the downtown area. The school was made possible by Edwin H. Tomlinson, the City's most prominent benefactor. The building is also an important example of Masonry Vernacular architecture and one of the first brick buildings to be constructed in St. Petersburg.

The Manual Training School played an important role at that time, providing valuable vocational training for children. It also served as a community center for the residents of St. Petersburg and operated as an educational center specializing in vocational training from 1901 through 1925, after which these activities were moved to the Junior High School located on Mirror Lake. The Manual Training School was one of the earliest buildings constructed in St. Petersburg for educational purposes and the first vocational training school for children in Florida.

With the addition of the Manual Arts Training Annex, St. Petersburg had probably the finest facilities for vocational training of any town its size in the United States. The Manual Training School was constructed behind St. Petersburg's first primary school, a two-story wooden structure built in 1893 but demolished in 1938 for construction of City Hall. After the Manual Training School was relocated to the school on Mirror Lake in 1925 (now the Tomlinson Vocational School), the building became the offices of the Chamber of Commerce from 1925 to 1930. After that year the Veterans of Foreign Wars occupied the building until 1947, followed by the State Welfare Board (1947-56), Child Guidance Clinic (1956-60), Welfare Offices (1960-1975), Office on Aging and Public Works (1975-79) and the Neighbor Center (1979-1981). The City has utilized the building since 1981, commonly known as the "City Hall Annex."

The Domestic Science & Manual Training School was made possible by philanthropist Edwin H. Tomlinson, one of the city's greatest benefactors, who provided \$10,000 for the project in 1900. Construction began in the spring of 1901, with the official dedication taking place on Dec. 29 of that year. At the same time work was nearing completion on the Manual Training School Annex located at Fourth Street and First Avenue South, also funded by Tomlinson.

The two-story Masonry Vernacular building is rectangular in plan, measuring 36 ft. by 70 ft. The building is a structure of brick exterior walls 12" thick, with wood framed floor, ceiling and roof systems. The building measures approximately 40 feet from the first floor to the roof peak.

The Vernacular style is often influenced by many different styles of architecture, rather than following the tenets of any one specific school or method of design. For the Vernacular style, practicality is often the key element governing the design, with the function of the building, along with the use of local materials, climate and traditions determining its final appearance and character. St. Petersburg was still in its infancy when the Manual Training School was built, and the school exhibits subtle elements of various styles common for that period.