

**The First Baptist Church
120 Fourth Street North
HPC #94-06, Designated December 1994**



The 1924 First Baptist Church is an excellent example of the Neoclassical style of architecture which is rare in St. Petersburg. The Church is also significant for its association with architect George Feltham, who designed the building as well as many others in St. Petersburg between 1913 and 1926. Among the many other buildings he designed are the Green-Richman Arcade, Ponce de Leon Hotel, and the Sunset Hotel.

The First Baptist Church of St. Petersburg was organized in early 1891 with Reverend F. King as its first pastor. The services were held in different locations such as local school buildings near Central and 9th Street, and Cooper's Hall at 340 Central Avenue. The church purchased its first site at 226 Fourth Avenue North in 1893, and in 1896 the church body was moved to a wooden structure at the southeast corner of Central Avenue and Sixth Street. The members of the church lived in close proximity to the church and a permanent site was pursued. In 1911, the present location, 120 Fourth Street North, was purchased. The next year the wooden building was moved from the Central Avenue site to this location. In 1922, the small wooden church was relocated to the rear of the site to provide space for construction of a new masonry church, constructed in the NeoClassical style with a temple front facing Williams Park.

The Neo-Classical style was a dominant style for buildings throughout the country during the first half of the 20th century. This revival of interest in classical models dated from the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893. According to the City's Florida Site File inventory, only twenty-eight structures in St. Petersburg – less than one-half of one percent of all of its documented historic buildings – are Neoclassical Revival in style. Twenty-two of these structures are residential properties, while the remainder include such historically significant properties as the Dennis-McCarthy Hotel, the Alexander Hotel and the Princess Martha Hotel. The Church is unique among these significant structures due to its Greek Temple Form (full-height entry portico with columns supporting a pediment) which may be the sole example on a historic building in St. Petersburg, and because it is the only Greek Temple Form structure designated a local historic landmark. The temple form has been the prototype for Classical Revival structures beginning with the Greek Revival of the early 19th century and continuing into the first half of the 20th century.

The front facade of the three-story building facing 4th Street North contains an imposing temple front raised one level above the street, featuring six, 30-ft. high gray stone Corinthian columns, which rest upon 4-ft. high stone pedestals. The front and side facade features buffed-up (polished) beige face brick with yellow stained glass windows and the rear facade features common red brick, with frosted glass wood double hung windows. A set of entry stairs stretching the entire width of the portico in antis ascends to a 40-ft. by 10-ft. entry area covered with a ceramic tile floor. The gabled roof over the porch featured a pediment with a slate roof. A round, yellow stained-glass window, 2-ft. in diameter, is located in the center of the brick tympanum just below the gabled roof. Above the windows on the third level, a continuous painted metal cornice wraps around the entire building and is aligned with the portico's entablature. A parapet wall with a gray stone coping (a protective cap) crowns the front and two sides of the face brick building facade.