

**Flori-de-Leon Apartments
130 Fourth Avenue North
HPC #94-08 - Designated December 1994**



Built circa 1925 the Flori-de-Leon, perhaps the first attempt with cooperative apartment living on the west coast of Florida, was built in the Mediterranean Revival style, characteristic of the state's boom-time architecture during the 1920's. The Mediterranean Revival style is characterized by asymmetrical facades, multi-level roofs, flat or gabled roofs, curvilinear parapets, arches above doors and principal windows, terra-cotta tile roof coverings, decorative tile inlays and iron work, exterior stairs, elaborate chimney tops with small tiled roofs, towers or bell towers, and arched colonnades.

The Flori-de-Leon retains much of its original architectural characteristics such as double-hung wood windows with flat and arched tops, metal casement windows, barrel tile roof, checker-board tile inlays, curvilinear lines, an arched colonnade, decorative swirled columns, ironwork and dome and gable corner pieces. The "H" shaped plan of the historic building was typical of many residence apartment/hotel plans of the day, allowing all units to capture cross ventilating breezes, and take full advantage of windows in each room and their corresponding views.

The W.J.V. Corporation set out to construct eighty-five apartment homes, building each floor as buyers came forward paying cash. After the original developers abandoned the project with only half of the apartments sold in 1927, the determination of the remaining owners and James E. Woodhouse brought the project to completion. Warren Webster, first Board Chairman, bought the land from the original owner, eventually selling it to the Flori-de-Leon Cooperative. Becoming 100 percent owner occupied in 1944, the Flori-de-Leon is believed to be the first venture of its kind as a cooperative apartment on the west coast of Florida. It continues to function as a cooperative today.

Before all the apartments were sold, units were rented to cover the cost of the mortgage. In the 1930's during baseball's spring training season, Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth rented the northeast and northwest penthouse apartments. Former residents of the Flori-de-Leon describe Ruth as being rambunctious and noisy and Gehrig as quiet and reserved. Possibly due to his desire for privacy, Gehrig had the northeast apartment elevator extended directly to his penthouse apartment on the top floor; originally the elevator stopped at the sixth floor.