

**The St. Petersburg Lawn Bowling Club  
536 4th Avenue N  
HPC #93-01 - Designated April 1993**



The St. Petersburg Lawn Bowling Club is the oldest formally organized lawn bowling organization in Florida and the tenth oldest club in the United States. Sited to the northeast and adjacent to the Mirror Lake Shuffleboard Court, it is also the only location officially recognized by the American Lawn Bowls Association for the testing of bowls. The club has habitually sponsored a variety of functions for its members. These include lectures and A.L.B.A.-recognized bowling tournaments. The first National Open Lawn Bowling Winter Tournament was hosted by the St. Petersburg Lawn Bowling Club in 1926. This tournament is still held at the club on alternate years. The tournament for the championship of the Southeast Division of the A.L.B.A. is also held at the club each year. The membership of the club grew steadily until it reached a peak of 483 in 1952-53. The St. Petersburg Lawn Bowling Club is still actively in use today, catering to seasonal winter residents and some permanent year-round residents. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

The Club was constructed by the City in 1917 at the behest of Al Mercer, a regular visitor to the city from Toronto, Canada who suggested the use of Marl-surfaced roque courts in St. Petersburg as bowling rinks. The grasses used for lawn bowling did not thrive in Florida, and the Marl of the roque court - a game similar to croquet - seemed to offer a suitable alternative surface.

The St. Petersburg Lawn Bowling Club's facilities included not only the rinks and buildings, but also a 2,500 book library. Originally, there were only two bowling rinks at Mirror Lake. In 1912, the number was increased to nine rinks and six more were added in 1926 when the women bowlers formed a separate organization and eventually the number of rinks was increased to twenty-five. Many of these were eliminated with the construction of the Sunshine Center in the late 1970s. The clubhouse was enlarged in 1928 and a new clubhouse was built in 1933.