

**Ernest H. Lewis House
1604 22nd Avenue South
HPC #98-07 - Designated January 1999**



The circa 1926 Lewis House was constructed by Ernest H. Lewis who arrived in St. Petersburg with his wife Nell around 1914. Lewis started a construction business and was elected to serve a two-year term on the St. Petersburg City Commission in 1920. Lewis' construction business continued to flourish and he became one of the most prominent builders in the City during the boom era. In 1925, Lewis began construction of this home for his family, which was built at a cost of \$30,000. With the collapse of the land boom in the late 1920s, it is likely Lewis' construction business suffered considerably. Lewis apparently closed his business and accepted the position of Director of Public Works for the City of St. Petersburg on July 1, 1928. He resigned from this post in April, 1930.

The two-story masonry building is built in the Colonial Revival style popular in North America from the late 1880s through the first three decades of the 1900s, becoming the dominant style in many regions of the country. In southern and central Florida, Colonial Revival is less common and was seldom utilized as a design style during the boom era when Mediterranean, Moorish, Spanish Colonial and Mission styles were most prevalent.

The Lewis house is a vernacular adaptation of the Colonial Revival style, possessing an elaborate entrance portico and a matching porte cochere along the west facade. The north facade, which serves as the main entrance, is symmetrical in design. Semi-circular concrete stairs lead to the entrance portico which is supported by eight Tuscan columns. The central portion of the main facade is slightly recessed and includes a glass-paneled front door of twelve lights with surrounding sidelights. A porch with a decorative classical balustrade extends the width of the main facade. The second floor balcony, located just above the entrance, features decorative spindle railing.

One of the most unique and prominent features of this house is the decorative brickwork, which exemplifies the skill of the contractor and craftsmen involved in this project. The house utilizes a buff colored brick with deeply raked mortar joints whose depth is further accentuated with a dark reddish-brown mortar. The brick exterior between the floors includes a decorative horizontal band with circular insets. The lintels, window sills and cornice also contribute to the decorative brick pattern with the use of vertical brick laid at right angles to the horizontal brick pattern along the facade.

The west facade features a porte cochere, or carriage porch, which was historically designed as a doorway large enough to allow for the passage of a carriage from the street to the parking area. This echoes the design of the entrance portico and is supported by four Tuscan columns.