

**St. Petersburg High School at Mirror Lake
701 Mirror Lake Drive
Designated April 1998, HPC #98-01**



The St. Petersburg High School at Mirror Lake was constructed by the Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction in 1918-19 and designed by St. Louis architect William Ittner, a nationally known for his school designs. For 46 years it served as a public school (1919-1926, St. Petersburg High School; 1926-31, St. Petersburg Girl's Junior High School; 1931-64, Mirror Lake Junior High School) and from 1967-85 served as the Mirror Lake Adult Education Center. It presently houses condominiums that were built in 1991. The building holds significance in St. Petersburg as an important educational and cultural institution, serving as a high school, junior high school, vocational school and adult education center. Its Mission Revival style was a precursor of the Mediterranean Revival style of architecture which would dominate the 1920s boom era of construction in St. Petersburg. Ittner also designed the former St. Petersburg Junior High School (Tomlinson Center) and the current St. Petersburg Central High School which opened in 1926 on 5th Avenue.

The St. Petersburg High School at Mirror Lake was a very imposing building for its time in the relatively small town. It is designed primarily in the Mission Revival style and exhibits subtle stylistic elements serving as the precursor to the Mediterranean Revival style which would dominate the 1920s boom era of construction. The Mission Revival style originated in California during the 1890s and spread eastward during the first two decades of the 20th century. Characteristic of the Mission style is simplicity of form with minimal surface decoration. The Mission style often features a balanced facade with decorative shaped roof parapets, arches, balconies, stucco surfaces and barrel-tiled roof segments cantilevered from the surface of the building.

The St. Petersburg High School at Mirror Lake is a four-story concrete structure that faces south toward Mirror Lake. The building is designed in a square plan with the front facade set back nine feet from the flat-roofed perpendicular side sections which have simple gable-end, shaped parapets. The structure is a load bearing building on a continuous foundation of concrete footing laid at grade. The building's exterior walls are clad with a stucco surface imbedded with a mixture of fine, multi-colored stones.

Plans for a new St. Petersburg High School were initiated in 1916 to accommodate the rapidly growing population of St. Petersburg, which had experienced a 46% increase in school enrollment. At this time students attended the school located at Fifth Street and Second Avenue North. A bond issue was passed in January 1917 to provide funding for the new school to be built on the northwest side of Mirror Lake. On August 24, 1917, Ittner submitted the plans to the school board. The plans were approved by the Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction. The site was purchased for \$25,250 and the Cal F. Thomas Construction Company was the low bidder at \$136,282. Work started in June, 1918. However, the firm went broke and additional funding through a second bond issue of \$75,000 was needed to complete the project.

Due to restrictions applied to construction and materials as a result of World War I, only government buildings were constructed during the 1917-18 period. The war caused sharp inflation of building material costs and labor shortages. The only other major building constructed during this period in St. Petersburg was the U.S. Open Air Post Office. Much of the impetus for new schools was led by Dr. George N. Sleight, City Superintendent of Schools, and his successor, Capt. George Lynch.

The school was completed on November 28, 1919. The St. Petersburg High School was officially dedicated on Feb. 10, 1920 in a patriotic ceremony attended by several leading city and county officials. The Principal of the school was Winston Little. The school quickly became a focal point of the community and its 1,200 person capacity auditorium was used for a variety of public gatherings and civic meetings.