

**Municipal Utilities Building/City Hall**  
**175 5th Street North**  
**HPC #90-01, Designated October 1990**



The St. Petersburg Municipal Utilities Building or City Hall is significant as being one of the few buildings in the City constructed under a PWA (Public Works Administration) grant. Its construction was made possible through a New Deal program of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's and had a great impact on the morale of the community, struggling to free itself from the years of the Depression. The building retains most of its architectural integrity and also retains significant interior features (the main entrance corridor, the main stairway, and the ceiling in council chambers) which contribute to its significance. City Hall is also the work of nationally known architect A. Lowther Forrest, prominent local contractor R.E. Clarson, and City engineer Paul Jorgensen.

Although government regulation during the New Deal made it difficult to expend funds on city Hall construction projects, local leaders and PWA officials eventually found a way to fund the building with public utilities appropriations. The idea for the new city hall was begun by City Manager G.V. Leland after listening to one of Roosevelt's talk before Congress on April 14, 1938. He instructed engineering to prepare the design and after redrafting five different proposals the city sent the application to the Public Works Administration. The federal government approved the application granting the city a sum of \$175,000 outright and a self-liquidating loan of \$214,000 pledged for payment against annual revenues from the city gas works. Under the arrangement the city was required to name the building the "municipal utility building."

The St Petersburg Times noted in 1939, that the "new city hall was patterned along the same general lines as the well known Pan-American building in Washington, D.C., in the Latin American motif." The building style can be considered a late Mediterranean Revival style or Art Moderne with Mediterranean Revival influence. The revival features included on City Hall include a clay tile roof system, vertical towers with narrow windows, and wrought iron balconettes. Modifications to the Mediterranean Revival style were used to modernize the building, receiving influence from the Art Deco style which itself was a reflection of the modern "industrial" era. These buildings were characterized by sculptural use of rectilinear geometric forms and vertically emphasized by piers spaced at regular intervals often using abstract relief to embellish the wall surface.

The Municipal Utilities Building has significant interior features as well. Inside the main entrance there is a transverse hall, divided by arch treatment into three sections. The center section has an ornamental groined and ribbed arch ceiling. In addition, there are a total of eight ornamental bronze hanging lamps in the front entryway. Over the main staircase leading to the second floor is an elaborate domed ceiling, richly decorated and finished in old ivory. Walls on each side are finished in select Alabama marble.

On the stair landing remains a 7 ft. by 10 ft. mural one of two painted by the artist George Snow Hill. They were commissioned by Mayor Walfred Lindstrom and City Council in 1940 under a federal art project of the Works Progress Administration, but World War II terminated the project. Hill continued to work on the murals at his own expense and donated them to the city when he was finished.

Opening from the second floor hall directly at the head of the main stairway is the council chamber. The interior of council chambers has been altered over the years, but the ceiling which is in stained oak, with cross and longitudinal beams that have been beautifully hand-painted, remains unaltered and is a significant feature of the building.