

The Pennsylvania Hotel
300 4th Street North
HPC #01-01 - Designated February 2001



The 1925 Pennsylvania Hotel is significant for its association with the development of the tourism industry in St. Petersburg during the 1920s. Built during the city's golden era of hotels, the hotel with its 92 rooms and baths reflects the changing character of the city's lodging industry from small boarding homes such as those built in the 1910s to the larger sized hotels built during the Florida Land Boom Era. It was also one of the ten large hotels built in southern Pinellas County during the boom, seven of which were constructed in downtown St. Petersburg.

The Pennsylvania Hotel is also significant for its architectural association with the Chicago Style, a rare building style in St. Petersburg which blended art deco and classical influences. The Chicago Style emerged in the late nineteenth century and is embodied in the work of such notable architects as Daniel Burnham, Louis Sullivan, and the early designs of Frank Lloyd Wright. The Chicago Style represents the marriage of the latest in technological innovation (the use of structural steel and elevators) with the design principles of classicism. In addition, like other Chicago Style designs, the structural system of the Pennsylvania Hotel is expressed on the exterior grid iron pattern with vertical piers between the windows to emphasize height.

The exterior of the Pennsylvania Hotel remains much the same today as when it was built with three exceptions. The proportions of the principal facades show the base, shaft and capital proportions of classical design while the verticality of the detailing anticipates the art deco design trends that were soon to come into fashion. The primary wing is oriented in a north-south axis along Fourth Street North. The hotel was constructed utilizing a steel and brick structural system. It has a flat roof with a low parapet wall. The exterior walls of the principal facades are finished in a tan-gray brick, while the north facade and the west facade of the south wing are finished in stucco.

The Pennsylvania Hotel was built by Harry C. Case for \$325,000 in 1925. Case was a Philadelphian hired to run the streetcars of St. Petersburg. To construct the building Case hired Franklin Mason, a New Yorker who in addition to his residential construction business, constructed the St. Petersburg Yacht Club in 1922 soon followed in the spring of the next year by the Mason (now Princess Martha) Hotel.

Harry Case lost the hotel in 1937 to Senator N.U. Bond, also a Pennsylvanian. N. U. (Ninian Ulysses) Bond was a teacher who later earned a law degree from the University of Michigan. After graduating, Bond entered the lumber business. During winter visits to St. Petersburg, Bond acquired valuable pieces of property including the Pennsylvania Hotel, the Sears-Roebuck Store Building and the Wilson-Chase department store building. Bond and his wife Martha Medlock of Kentucky would finally move to St. Petersburg on a permanent basis in 1940. At one point the Bonds owned and operated numerous hotels in St. Petersburg including the Pennsylvania Hotel, Ponce de Leon Hotel, the Bond Hotel, Colonial Hotel and The Old Bond Hotel now St. Anthony's Friary.