

**The William L. Rawls House
734 Grove Street North
HPC #96-02, Designated October 1996**



Built in 1898 the William L. Rawls house is the singular remaining example of a "I"-house in St. Petersburg. The house was one of the earliest structures built in the area around Round Lake, a neighborhood platted by H.H. Kinyon and O.E. Wood. The property was purchased by R.E. Rawls on July 14, 1898. It was later sold by R.E. Rawls to William L. Rawls on May 16, 1906, who lived in the house with his wife until his death in the mid-1920s. The surrounding neighborhood consisted of wood frame single family houses, most built between 1898 and 1917. During the 1920s boom the density of the area increased dramatically; existing houses were enlarged and/or converted to boarding houses and new apartment buildings were constructed. The surrounding Round Lake neighborhood was built-out by the end of the 1920s boom, and has changed very little since that time.

The two-story balloon frame building is a Frame Vernacular I-House clad with drop siding and raised 18" above grade on brick foundation piers. Windows are wood frame double hung sash (DHS) 2/2 light with plain sills and surrounds. The house features a one story front porch supported on the front (east) facade by four wood Tuscan columns (the simplest of all classical orders, distinguished by unfluted columns and unadorned capitals and bases). This porch and the clean proportions of the structure provide distinction to the exterior of this simple frame building. The house does feature a one story rear addition with gable and shed roof. The roofs of the Rawls house are gables covered by composition shingles of a relatively steep pitch.

The I-House is an important American house type that has its origins in 16th century England and was imported by the colonists for their use in the 17th century. Although it has changed slightly through the years, the basic components of plan and massing have remained the same. Defined by Fred Kniffen in "Folk Housing: Key to Cultural Diffusion", the I-House is "a two story, gable roofed house, one room deep, and at least two rooms wide, and often with one story rear additions."

Folk housing types, such as the I-House, can be described as the backbone of working class architecture throughout the country from its inception in the 17th century through the 1800s. In the time following the Civil War, however, they lost favor to more complex designs. During the turn of the century, the houses that were preferred were the late Victorians pictured in magazines and journals -- homes like the Williams House (1891) and the Straub House (1902). The cost of these more elaborate homes did keep them out of reach of some of the population, so folk style houses could still be found but were primarily relegated to rural areas. However, St. Petersburg did not experience exceptional growth until the 1910s and 1920s, when the bungalow had already established itself as the housing of choice for the working class. For this reason it is not surprising St. Petersburg may have only had a handful of these folk style I-Houses, of which the Rawls House is the lone known survivor.