

**St. Petersburg Federal Saving & Loan
556 Central Avenue
Designated 1993, HPC #93-08**



The St. Petersburg Federal Savings and Loan Association building is a one-story, flat-roof masonry structure with a facade which exhibits the Art Deco/Art Moderne style of architecture. This style was very popular in commercial buildings during the 1930s and early 1940s, although it is somewhat unusual in St. Petersburg. Other examples of the Art Deco/Art Moderne style in the downtown area include the Randolph Hotel, Avalon Hotel and the 1931 storefront renovation of the Womens Town Improvement Association building. The building was designed by Philip J. Kennard a leading architect in St. Petersburg during the 1930s and 40s.

Art Deco is a style that consciously strove for modernity and an artistic expression to complement the machine age. The name Art Deco originates from a 1925 exposition in Paris called the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes. Art Deco was adopted in America during the 1930s, especially in New York, Los Angeles and Miami Beach.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Art Deco style evolved into a more austere look, commonly termed Art Moderne or Depression Moderne. While the Art Deco style consists largely of low-relief geometrical designs, often in the form of parallel lines, zigzags, chevrons and stylized floral motifs, Art Moderne designs were generally simplified with a minimum of ornamentation. The facades of Art Deco/Art Moderne structures like the St. Petersburg Federal Savings and Loan building include features which are arranged in a series of staggered and layered patterns emphasizing the geometric form. Hard-edged, low relief designs are found around doors, windows, string courses and along roof edges. The front entrance door is bordered by dark green stone and stucco detailing arranged in a layered pattern. The geometric design is further reflected in the decorative crown. Recessed above the door is a rectangular shaped geometric design. Two metallic cylinder-shaped light fixtures on either side of the door appear to be the original fixtures.

The property was used by St. Petersburg Federal Savings and Loan until 1953, when they moved into a new building located at 33 Sixth Street South. McCleary & Co., a local stock broker, took over the building in 1954. From 1956 to 1971, the building was occupied by Bache & Co. In 1972, Rutland Bank acquired the building. It was vacated in 1974 and has over the years housed the Modern Media School and an antique shop. It is currently the home of the Bessolo Design Group which has done extensive renovation on the interior.