

**The Swain Apartments
1511 22nd Street South
HPC #97-03 - Designated June 1997**



The Swain Apartments are significant because they were used to house African-American major league baseball players in St. Petersburg during spring training when these players were denied housing with their white teammates. The fight to integrate accommodations for spring training in St. Petersburg began with Dr. Robert Swain and Dr. Ralph Wimbish, both members of the local chapter of the NAACP. Both were prominent members of the African-American community who played important roles in the struggle to end segregation and also owned properties which were rented to African American baseball players for the New York Yankees and the St. Louis Cardinals. Because of their efforts to expose the injustices prevalent in spring training in St. Petersburg, Florida's other spring training sites were compelled to address their stand on the housing question and find solutions for their players. As a result of their efforts, they were able to entice the St. Louis Cardinals to integrate their housing. (The Yankees had already relocated their spring facilities to Fort Lauderdale.)

The Swain Apartment building, a two-story rectangular shaped structure which remains in residential use, was built in 1956 in the Masonry Vernacular style, with concrete block covered with stucco. Structures of this style tend to be simple, largely unornamented, and constructed out of readily available materials. The windows and doors are symmetrically spaced on a facade to form a regular rhythm of solids and voids called "bays." Where there is more than one floor, openings are aligned from floor to floor for structural purposes. Decoration is simple and limited usually to string courses, window and door lintels, window sills and cornices. The building also exhibits some Contemporary Style features, such as wide eave overhangs and brick window ledge treatments.