

**The John Williams House**  
**511 Second Street South**  
**(on the University of South Florida- Bayboro Campus)**  
**HPC #86-02, Designated May 1986**



Built in 1891, the Williams House is the home of General John C. Williams, one of the co-founders of St. Petersburg, and is one of the earliest surviving buildings in St. Petersburg. The Williams House is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

John Constantine Williams, born in Detroit, Michigan in 1817, first visited the Pinellas Peninsula in 1875. Shortly thereafter he purchased 1600 acres from the State of Florida and W.F. Spurlin. Williams' energies were devoted to bringing a railroad into the area an effort which led him into negotiations with the Orange Belt Railroad, headed by Russian exile, Peter A. Demens who was searching for a terminus on the Gulf of Mexico. Williams completed construction of the house in 1891, but resided there for only a few months before dying in April 1892. In 1906, the Manhattan Hotel Company purchased the house and converted it to a lodging use of the same name. The building was in hotel use for nearly ninety years at its 444 5th Avenue South address before it was purchased by the University of South Florida and moved to the Bayboro campus.

The house was originally a two-story frame house built in the Queen Anne style with an emphasis on irregularity of plan and massing. The principal entry into the parlor is within the veranda and set at a diagonal. All windows are double-hung sash with colored glass borders in the upper half. The roof is pitched and once an octagonal tower graced the structure but it has since been truncated. The house retains all of the jigsaw trim typical of the period, paling posts defining the veranda, hood mould over the corner door at the second level, and bargeboards resting on brackets in the principal gables.

Filled with fifteen rooms, the Williams House boasted the finest in furnishings. High-priced hardwood crafted by skilled carpenters winds up and down in tongue-in-groove wainscoting, a carved mahogany grand staircase and doorways with monogrammed transoms tailored with a "W." The upper walls wear stenciled designs of palm leaves interrupted midway by a seal surrounding a pink flamingo. Mirrors mounted above mahogany mantles reflect waxed floors adorned with oriental rugs, an abundance of antiques, and arches leading from parlor to parlor.