

Fannye Ponder House
1835 Ninth Avenue South
HPC #91-03 - Designated in October 1991



Built in 1940, the Fannye A. Ponder Council House commemorates the location where Ms. Ponder established a local affiliate of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), the purpose of which was to effect the integration of African Americans into the political, educational, economic, social and cultural life of St. Petersburg. The building not only provided a meeting place for their group, but served to fill an unmet need in the African-American community. It was the place where community fund-raising activities could be held and a place for African Americans to meet for recreation, business, and civic purposes in a segregated society. The Council House has also been known as the Southside Community Center and has been used as a meeting place by several sororities, the Elks, Concerned Citizens, the Gulf Coast Lung Association, the Gibbs High School Chorus, both political parties and the NAACP.

Fannye Ayer Ponder came to St. Petersburg in 1925 with her husband Dr. James Ponder who was appointed as city physician for the African-American community the following year. Ms. Ponder served as the vice-president of the National Council of Negro Women, founded by Mary McCleod Bethune, a close friend and confidant of Ponder. A graduate of Florida A&M, Ponder taught locally for twenty years, organized the St. Petersburg Metropolitan Council of Negro Women, organized the City Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, worked as a Republican committee woman, helped build the Melrose Clubhouse, and sold thousands of U.S. Savings Bonds during World War II, including a total of \$85,000 in one single night in Miami. Her accomplishments in over 40 years of service to her community and nation led to the declaration in June 1972 of Fannye Ayer Ponder Day by Mayor Herman Goldner for the City of St. Petersburg.

The Council House was originally a one-story L-shaped frame bungalow with wood siding. In 1952, the southwest portion of the structure was demolished and a masonry addition was constructed. Both sections of the structure were stuccoed. There are two entrances located on the south or main facade. The west elevation has four aluminum frame windows and the north and east facades contain four windows and a back door and six windows respectively. The building has been substantially altered but its significance remains through the historical association with Fannye Ponder.