

St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Club
559 Mirror Lake Drive
HPC #94-01 - Designated February 1994



The Shuffleboard Club is significant for its association with the development of the tourist and leisure industries in St. Petersburg during the 1920s. The St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Club was the first organized club of its kind. It had thousands of members and served the recreational needs of St. Petersburg's wintering tourists. Several tournaments were held on the grounds, including the first state tournament in 1928. In addition, the members organized a Festival of States Tournament and participated in the Festival of States Parade. The club is located in the Mirror Lake area which at the turn of the century was known as Reservoir Lake and served as the source of the town's drinking water. In 1910, much of the area around the lake was dedicated to "the public forever for the purposes of parks and roadways (City Ordinance #242, 1910)." Around the lake remain some of the most important relics of architecture in the city including the Lawn Bowling Club, Coliseum, City Hall, Mirror Lake High School, and the Carnegie Mirror Lake Library.

The Shuffleboard Club is an assemblage of sixty-five masonry courts, four masonry buildings, a steel and concrete grandstand, freestanding frame and metal porches and hexagon block patios and walkways. The original shuffleboard courts were built on this parkland property in 1923 with Clubhouse construction beginning four years later in 1927. The structure, designed by Harry Cunningham of Goodhue and Associates originally was a small rectangular building with a steeply pitched roof. A second building was built in 1929 and has similar architectural details of the original building. Over the years the building complex was enlarged to include the bridge club/dance hall in 1937 and the grandstands in 1939 as well as major additions to the 1927 and 1929 buildings.

The game of shuffleboard, originally known as "shovel board," can trace its origins from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. The modern day game of shuffleboard became popular as a deck game on shipboard. The first modern shuffleboard courts constructed on land were built in Daytona, Florida in 1913. In 1922, W.N. Britton of Rochester, New York, who had played in Daytona, recommended city officials build courts to attract and entertain tourist. He originally offered to finance and build a court in William's Park which was the sports center for St. Petersburg because lawn bowling, cards, horseshoes and dominos were played there. However, the heirs of J.C. Williams, believing that no one should be excluded from enjoying the park, obtained a court injunction restraining the City from allowing any club to have exclusive rights over the park.

Plans for shuffleboard courts were revisited when, P.T. Ives of Meriden, Connecticut came to St. Petersburg in winter 1923. He urged the City of St. Petersburg to build two courts in Mirror Lake Park which it did in mid-1923 making it, along with Daytona, the only other city in the United States to play shuffleboard on land.