

St. Petersburg, Florida's

# SIGNS of HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE





# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| The Evolution of Signage in St. Petersburg.....          | 5  |
| Methodology .....  | 14 |
| Extant Signs of Historic Significance.....               | 16 |
| A&A Tire and Repairs: 2727 38 <sup>th</sup> Ave. N. .... | 16 |
| Ace Hardware: 2739 Dr. MLK, Jr. St. N. ....              | 16 |
| Banyan Tree Motel: 610 Fourth St. N. ....                | 17 |
| Biff Burger: 3939 49 <sup>th</sup> St. N. ....           | 17 |
| Car Store: 3445 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N. ....             | 18 |
| Coney Island Grill: 250 Dr. M.L. King, Jr. Blvd. ....    | 18 |
| Derby Lane: 4 <sup>th</sup> St. N. ....                  | 19 |
| Driftwood Motel: 1600 34 <sup>th</sup> St. S.....        | 19 |
| El Cap Restaurant: 3500 Fourth St. N.....                | 20 |
| Elks Lodge: 2675 66 <sup>th</sup> St. N.....             | 20 |
| Fray's Donut House: 649 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N.....      | 21 |
| Kentucky Motel: 4246 Fourth St. N. ....                  | 21 |
| Landmark Motel: 1930 Fourth St. N. ....                  | 22 |
| Lundy's Liquors: 3084 18 <sup>th</sup> Ave. S.....       | 22 |
| Masonic Temple: 114 Fourth St. S.....                    | 23 |
| McCrory's: 433 Central Ave. ....                         | 23 |
| Palm Aire Motel: 3250 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N.....        | 24 |
| Pennsylvania Hotel: 300 4 <sup>th</sup> St. N. ....      | 24 |
| Publix/Family Dollar: 1720 16 <sup>th</sup> St. N. ....  | 25 |
| Rayco: 3121 Central Ave.....                             | 25 |
| Sandman Motel: 570 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N.....           | 26 |
| Star Deli Foods: 2451 Fifth Ave. N. ....                 | 26 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Sundaze Motel: 1590 34 <sup>th</sup> St. S.....                                 | 27 |
| Sunken Gardens: 1825 Fourth St. N.....  | 27 |
| Sunshine Laundry: 621 16 <sup>th</sup> St. N. ....                              | 28 |
| Venice Motel: 3301 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N.....                                  | 28 |
| West Central Shopping Center: 6601 Central Ave.....                             | 29 |
| World Liquors: 1601 Central Ave. ....   | 29 |
| Yard of Ale: 256 First Ave. N.....  | 30 |
| YMCA: 116 Fifth St. S. ....   | 30 |
| 8 Inn: 1201 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N. ....  | 31 |
| Altered and Removed Signs with Potential for Restoration or Reconstruction..... | 32 |
| Alcove Retirement Center: 2831 Fourth St. N. ....                               | 32 |
| Azalea Court Motel: 8210 Fourth St. N. ....                                     | 32 |
| Bay Breeze Motel: 3900 34 <sup>th</sup> St. S. ....                             | 33 |
| Budget Inn: 800 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N.....                                     | 33 |
| Cactus Motel: 1600 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N.....                                  | 34 |
| Candlelight Inn: 3405 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N. ....                              | 34 |
| Cedar Motel: 3250 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N.....                                   | 35 |
| Central Plaza: 3270 Central Ave.....  | 35 |
| China City Restaurant: 1221 Fourth St. N. ....                                  | 36 |
| The Colony: 301 Fourth Ave. N.....  | 36 |
| Hotel Detroit: 201 Central Ave. ....  | 37 |
| El Grande Motel: 4336 Fourth St. N.....   | 37 |
| El Patio Motor Court: 6733 Fourth St. N.....                                    | 38 |
| Essex House Hotel: 1914 Fourth Ave. N. ....                                     | 38 |
| Holiday Motel: 415 24 <sup>th</sup> Ave. N.....                                 | 39 |
| Horn Motel Apartments: 674 22 <sup>nd</sup> Ave. S. ....                        | 40 |
| Inn on the Hill: 275 34 <sup>th</sup> St. S.....                                | 41 |



|  |    |
|--|----|
| Kenwood Village Inn: 701 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N.....   | 41 |
| La Cita Executive Center: 8424 Fourth St. N.....       | 42 |
| La Mar Motel: 8840 Fourth St. N.....                   | 42 |
| Magnuson Hotel: 6800 Sunshine Skyway Ln. ....          | 43 |
| Mari Jean Hotel: 2349 Central Ave.....                 | 43 |
| Mosley Motel: 401 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N.....          | 44 |
| New Plaza Motel: 400 34 <sup>th</sup> St. N.....       | 44 |
| Orange Motel: 8435 Fourth St. N.....                   | 45 |
| Palms Motel: 6730 Fourth St. N.....                    | 45 |
| Park Place Apartments: 2026 Fourth St. S. ....         | 46 |
| Ponce de Leon Hotel: 95 Central Avenue .....           | 46 |
| Rusty Anchor Motel: 2301 Fourth St. N.....             | 47 |
| Siesta Inn: 7141 Fourth St. N.....                     | 47 |
| State Theatre: 687 Central Ave.....                    | 48 |
| Sunset Villa: 7200 Fourth St. N. ....                  | 48 |
| Suntan Motel: 2031 Fourth St. N. ....                  | 49 |
| Twin Palms Motel: 3600 Haines Rd. ....                 | 49 |
| Virginian Apartments: 441 47 <sup>th</sup> Ave. N..... | 50 |
| Wilson’s Sports Lounge: 3030 Fourth St. N. ....        | 50 |
| Karen Wornicki Insurance: 8120 Fourth St. N.....       | 51 |
| Resources.....   | 52 |
| Appendix: Gallery of Removed Signs .....               | 54 |

# The Evolution of Signage in St. Petersburg

The evolution of signage has closely followed that of both commercial architecture and of transportation; changes to buildings' form and the speed at which we pass them have necessitated differing types of graphics to advertise the structures' uses. Advertising styles and preferences have evolved significantly over time, and, just as social, architectural, and technological movements have influenced the buildings we now consider landmarks, historic signage can represent the business and material culture of its era. Historic signs, when appropriately preserved, restored, or reused, can invoke memories of a community's evolution and strengthen a sense of place, even when owners, uses, or even entire buildings have changed. In addition to addressing the preservation needs of historic architecture, the National Park Service encourages the identification and preservation of historically significant signs as part of a comprehensive historic preservation program.

Many of the earliest commercial buildings in America were essentially domestic in form but adapted for commercial uses.<sup>1</sup> An early-nineteenth century store, inn, or tavern might only have been distinguishable from a residence, therefore, by signage, as in Figure 1. Late-nineteenth century businesses often used numerous small signs in concert to identify themselves to potential customers both at street level and further away.<sup>2</sup> As St. Petersburg was beginning to develop during the 1880s, some of the young city's earliest commercial buildings were constructed with wood frames and gabled roofs. However, by the time of St. Petersburg's first major development boom, which occurred during the early twentieth century, the "Main Street commercial" building had become more popular for new structures. The photograph in Figure 2, taken circa 1925, shows a mixture of gable- and flat-roofed buildings along St. Petersburg's historic commercial corridor of



Figure 1: Early commercial building in St. Petersburg, circa 1890.

*Photograph courtesy of the St. Petersburg Museum of History*

<sup>1</sup> Martin Treu, *Signs, Streets, and Storefronts*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012). 27

<sup>2</sup> Auer, Michael J., "Preservation Brief 25: The Preservation of Historic Signs," National Park Service, October 1991. 4.

Central Avenue. Both projecting and fascia signs can be seen along the buildings. The visible signs appear to be primarily simple rectangular boards with utilitarian lettering.

Purpose-built commercial buildings featuring flat roofs hidden by parapet walls became prevalent in American downtowns by the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Speculative building practices, combined with a nearly ubiquitous grid system creating lots 25 feet wide by 100 feet deep in American towns, made the incredibly functional and versatile “Main Street commercial” form the most efficient and economical choice for development in towns across the US. Flat-roofed commercial buildings could be constructed at varying heights and abut similar structures to form a unified streetscape without appearing disproportionate. Their flat roofs gently sloped toward the rear elevation, draining water away from the sidewalk and neighboring buildings. Parapets highlighted by varying degrees of ornamentation could easily hide the utilitarian nature of flat roofs.<sup>3</sup>

To maximize natural light entering storefronts that were often bordered on two sides by other buildings, and therefore, lacked windows at their side elevations, large display windows were topped by transom lights. Transom windows generally opened to provide much-needed ventilation in the days before air conditioning. The blank spaces between and above windows were used by competing business owners for the application of jumbles of mismatched signs; messages were often painted directly on glass surfaces as well (Figure 3). As commercial buildings became more ornate, the amount of space available for surface-mounted signage decreased.<sup>4</sup> Images from the early twentieth century of St. Petersburg, and most American cities, show storefronts with signs competing for the attention of two businesses, each struggling to maximize the space made available to them for passersby.



**Figure 2: Central Avenue's 600 block circa 1925**

*Photograph courtesy of the St. Petersburg Museum of History*



**Figure 3: Stores on Ninth Street North in 1924**

*Photograph courtesy of the Burgert Brothers Photoaraphic Collection*

---

<sup>3</sup> Treu, 28.

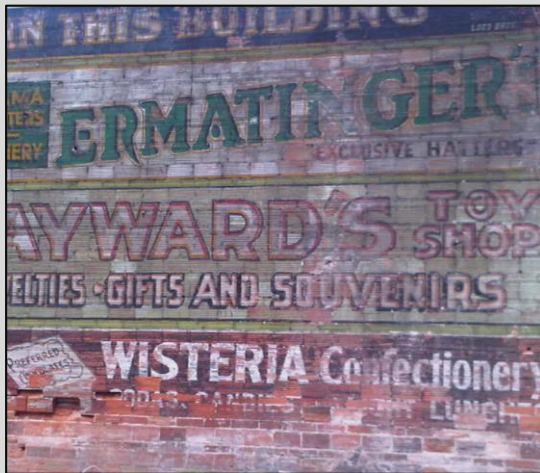
<sup>4</sup> Treu, 50.

## Guidelines for Hand Painted Signs of Historic Significance

Though rare, a few historically significant signs representing the pre-illumination era remain in St. Petersburg. Hand painted signs often continued to be used in conjunction with illuminated signs later in the twentieth century. By nature, they are easy to cover up or replace, making their long-term survival fairly uncommon. Hand painted signs sometimes remain as “ghost signs” on historic buildings, referencing former occupants. Character-defining elements of these signs may include:

- Hand painting, lettering, or stenciling,
- Very bold graphics designed to stand out against masonry or wood surfaces, or
- Simple shapes reflective of the signs’ handmade nature.

These signs can be found painted directly onto buildings or applied to wooden or enamel signboards. When a sign’s significance is derived from its hand lettering and hand painted decoration, attempts should be made to preserve the original graphics, even if a business’s name has changed. This can actually benefit a business by reinforcing the community’s identification with a building’s historic use. Though historic signs should be kept in good condition and repaired when necessary, “over-restoration” should be avoided, as this can diminish evidence of a sign’s age and significance. The handmade nature of these signs and the patina that they develop over time adds to the story they tell and can allow them to remain in place without being mistaken for contemporary advertisements.



The rise and standardization of the commercial storefront as a building type allowed the fascia sign to become a nearly ubiquitous element of commercial corridors. The continuous panel just above window height and generally paralleling the internal structural beam created a logical place for signage, as shown in Figure 5. The style of lettering common to these signs accordingly grew bolder and wider to maximize impact within the broad, slim space provided. In Figure 4, a simple commercial building in St. Petersburg is shown housing boldly-painted advertising. Canvas awnings, frames for which became increasingly light and simple to operate throughout the nineteenth century, often provided additional space for businesses to use graphics to advertise.<sup>5</sup> Hanging or projecting signs, whether painted onto wood or porcelain enamel, also remained popular.<sup>6</sup>

Early experiments with electrically-illuminated signs comprised of light bulbs began in the 1890s. The medium was initially limited to large-scale “spectacular” signs; the first was a 50 foot by 80 foot sign reading “Manhattan Beach – Swept by Ocean Breezes” that was installed on Broadway at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street in 1892. The sign’s text was created by nearly 1,500 individual light bulbs.<sup>7</sup> By the early twentieth century, illuminated signs began appearing at smaller scales in downtowns across America (Figure 6). In addition to allowing customers to see signs at night, the use of light bulbs incorporated movement into signs. By flashing or by blinking in sequence, signs could demand attention and direct the viewer’s gaze in a new way. This dynamic element had a significant impact on the way that signs were designed.<sup>8</sup>

Beginning in the 1920s, the modern lines popularized by the Art Deco and Art Moderne styles influenced the design of new commercial buildings, alterations to existing storefronts, and the style of graphics used in signage and advertisements. Large, flat panels of structural glass and porcelain enamel were popularized by these styles, creating



Figure 5: Fifth Street at Central Avenue, circa 1950



Figure 4: Painted signage, circa 1924

*Photograph courtesy of the St. Petersburg Museum of History*

<sup>5</sup> Treu, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Auer, 3.

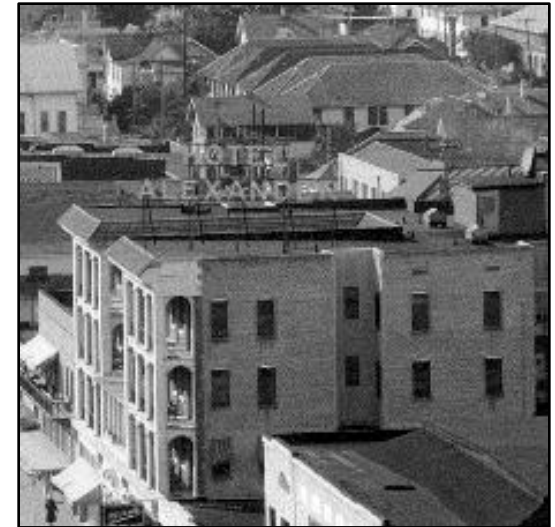
<sup>7</sup> Signs of the Times Magazine, “A Brief History of the Sign Industry,” September 1976, American Sign Museum, <http://www.americansignmuseum.org/a-brief-history-of-the-sign-industry/>.

<sup>8</sup> Auer, 4.



smooth surfaces to which bold letters could be applied.<sup>9</sup> Instead of necessitating bold block lettering that could be visible against a masonry backdrop or when painted across a display window, these new surfaces led to increased creativity in the design of sign graphics. As shown in Figure 7, new signs were often added to join older styles, creating a layered look in which painted, projecting, fascia, and awning signs coexisted. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, it became popular for architects to incorporate graphics directly into the design of storefronts, thus merging the buildings and the signs they supported.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, the new technologies of neon tubing and fluorescent lighting were improving, resulting in more affordable and accessible products. Improved technology in the area of artificial lighting impacted business owners' ability to advertise with signage in two ways. Illuminated signs could be viewed from larger distances after nightfall and could garner more attention from potential customers. The need for eye-catching signs was only heightened by the increasing popularity of the automobile. Further, as artificial lighting became an affordable option, transom lights became unnecessary and, in many cases, were covered by sleek new surfaces for signage. By the mid-twentieth century, business owners, therefore, not only had more options for the creation of their signs, but larger surfaces on which to apply them.



**Figure 6: Rooftop sign on Central Avenue, circa 1930**  
*Photograph courtesy of the University of South Florida's Digital Collections Library*



**Figure 7: Central Avenue's 400 block in 1953**  
*Photograph Courtesy of the Florida Memory Project*

---

<sup>9</sup> Mike Jackson, "Storefronts on Main Street: An Architectural History," Illinois Preservation Series No. 19, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Division of Preservation Services, 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> Auer, 5.

## Guidelines for Neon Signs of Historic Significance

Many of St. Petersburg's iconic historic signs include significant neon elements. This significance is generally derived from:

- The use of neon lettering to create a distinctive “logo” for the business,
- Multiple colors of illuminated neon tubing,
- Combined lettering and graphics to create memorable and eye-catching displays, or
- Enamel signboards enhanced and highlighted by neon tubing.

These signs can be found applied to buildings as fascia signs or projecting signs, or as freestanding post signs. Care should be taken to preserve the most character-defining features of the signs as they are reused, preserved, and updated. If it is necessary to alter the lettering on a neon sign, for example, the font, size, and coloring of the original language should be replicated as closely as possible.



The increasingly affordable medium of neon signage would again change the way that business owners sought customers' attention as the twentieth century progressed. Neon signs are made by shaping glass tubes filled with neon or argon through which an electric current is passed, allowing them to glow. True neon illuminates to give off a red, orange, or amber glow, whereas colors in the blue family can be achieved with illuminated argon. Beginning in the 1930s, glass tubes tinted with fluorescent powder became available in even more colors.

Nonetheless, the term "neon" is used nearly ubiquitously for glowing exposed glass tubes shaped into letters, symbols, and other graphics.<sup>11</sup> The first neon sign in the United States was installed at a Packard Motor Car dealership in Los Angeles in 1923, and the medium's popularity peaked in the late 1940s. Neon lights were usually combined with painted enamel backgrounds, resulting in signs that could convey messages day or night (Figure 8). Since neon signs were attention-grabbing and could be incredibly unique, they became especially popular among roadside restaurants and motels who vied for passing tourist business. In St. Petersburg, Fourth Street and 34<sup>th</sup> Street, which were the major corridors into the city before the construction of I-275, remain home to dozens of these midcentury neon signs. Neon signs again came into vogue in the 1970s after several decades of declining popularity.<sup>12</sup>

The use of plastic and acrylic materials allowed signs to take nearly any color or shape imaginable beginning in the 1950s. Its affordability, durability, and ability to be lit from behind and mass produced made it an incredibly popular material. Plastic signs of the 1950s and 1960s were often inspired by the nation's fascination with outer space, taking the shape of wings, fins, and satellite shapes. The parallel growth of franchises and chain stores led to the standardization of corporate signage.<sup>13</sup> Mass-produced signs often became icons of the chains they represented and now evoke distinct memories of their era. The "Biff-Burger" sign (Figure 9) once marked hundreds of locations along the East Coast; the only location that remains operational under the same name is located in St.



Figure 8: The projecting sign for Bishop Hotel combined "neon" style tube letters and an enamel structure to create a projecting sign that could be read day or night.

<sup>11</sup> "Neon History," The Neon Library, [http://neonlibrary.com/neon\\_history\\_3.html](http://neonlibrary.com/neon_history_3.html).

<sup>12</sup> Auer, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Auer, 5.



Petersburg and retains its recognizable sign. Likewise, many smaller and local businesses creatively used neon tube lettering and plastic signs, often in concert, to make iconic and eye-catching signs that remain landmarks into the twenty-first century.

It should be noted that in the case of midcentury plastic or acrylic signs, unique shapes and proportions of the frames have sometimes been retained even as the signs themselves have been changed over time. When coupled with historic documentation, these frames can provide the opportunity for the restoration of a sign to its intended aesthetic. The use of neon tubing has seen a resurgence, but plastic signage remains the most popular material for businesses today. The following inventory is intended to provide an initial assessment of historic signs in St. Petersburg that remain in use, whether they have retained integrity, or should be seen as potential restoration projects.



Figure 9: Biff Burger, circa 1970

*Image courtesy of Biff-Burger.com*

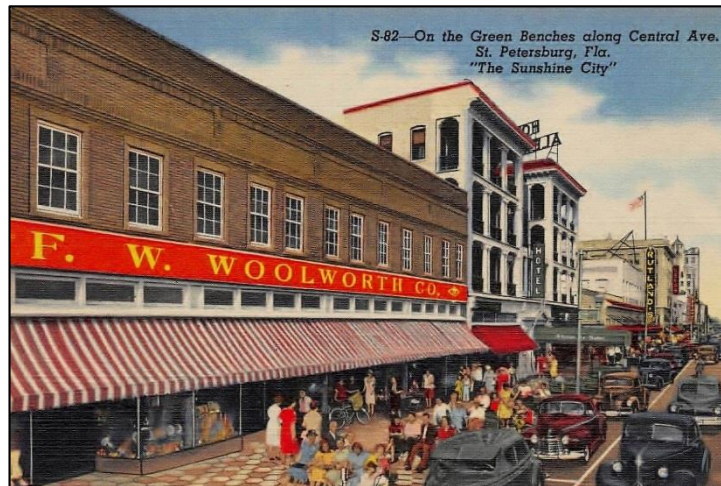


Figure 10: View of Central Avenue



Figure 11: View of Central Avenue

## Guidelines for Plastic and Acrylic Signs of Historic Significance

Plastic signs began appearing in St. Petersburg in the years following the Second World War and remain popular today, but many that were installed over 40 years ago have gained historic significance. This significance is generally derived from:

- The use of abstract geometric shapes, especially those dating to the 1950s and 1960s referencing the popularity of the “Atomic Age” such as arrows, orbits, and chevron,
- Colors, logos, and designs closely associated with businesses and marketing schemes of the mid-twentieth century, or
- Cutout lettering, shapes, and graphics representing the aesthetic of their period.

Some of St. Petersburg’s most iconic midcentury signs provide an opportunity to respect their association with regional or national chains which have since adopted different sign styles, or have vanished entirely, while still being updated. Signs such as the 1960s-era striped “Norgeball” sign that originally advertised the Norgetown Laundromat at 2465 Fifth Avenue North (in photo at right) provide a connection an earlier era of consumer culture. Whenever possible, care should be taken to document the origins of such signs. A number of national groups, such as Roadside Architecture ([www.roadarch.com](http://www.roadarch.com)) and the Society for Commercial Archeology ([www.sca-roadside.org](http://www.sca-roadside.org)) are dedicated to the identification and documentation of these signs as artifacts.

These signs can be found applied to buildings as fascia signs or projecting signs, or as freestanding post signs. Care should be taken to preserve most character-defining features of the signs. Replacement of certain portions of a historically significant plastic sign’s lettering may be appropriate when a business changes; ideally the font, scale, and coloring should be replicated.



# Methodology

On October 18, 2012, St. Petersburg City Code was amended by the addition of Section 16.40.120.3.6, which establishes a procedure through which certain historic signs may be recognized and preserved. The Signs of Historic Significance regulations are intended:

- To provide for the preservation of St. Petersburg's unique character, history, and identity, as reflected in its iconic signs,
- To preserve the sense of place was created by signs dating to earlier eras,
- To prevent inappropriate reuse of nonconforming and/or illegal signs while ensuring that the signs are safe and well maintained,
- To prevent the unintentional loss of individual signs with historic or unique characteristics and, where possible, to provide a means for their retention and restoration, and
- To allow owners the flexibility to preserve historic and vintage signs.

Under the regulations pertaining to Signs of Historic Significance, the owners of signs placed on an Inventory of Signs of Historic Significance by the Community Planning and Preservation Commission (CPPC) may be allowed flexibility with regard to the signs' nonconforming size and placement in order to encourage the long-term preservation and reuse of these recognizable elements of the city's past. Signs of Historic Significance may be nominated to the Inventory by their owners or city staff. A proposed Sign of Historic Significance shall comply with the following criteria. This classification does not preclude

owners from removing these signs. The regulations of this section apply only to signs included in the City's inventory of Signs of Historic Significance as set forth below.

## *Technical criteria:*

- The sign shall have been installed at least 40 years prior to the date of application;
- The sign is an example of the technology, craftsmanship, or design of its era;
- The sign uses historic materials or means of illumination such as exposed integral incandescent lighting or exposed neon lighting;
- The sign may include, but is not limited to, a detached sign, a projecting sign, a roof sign, a painted building sign, or a sign integral to the building's design (fascia sign), or any other type of sign that was permitted on the property;
- The sign is structurally safe or can be made safe without substantially altering its historic appearance; and
- The sign retains the majority of its character-defining features (materials, technologies, structure, colors, shapes, symbols, text, and/or art) that have historical significance, are integral to the overall sign design, or convey historical or regional context. If character-defining features have been altered or removed, the majority of these features must be able to be restored to their historic function and appearance.

*Cultural/historical/design criteria:*

- The sign exemplifies the cultural, economic, and historic heritage of the city;
  - The sign exhibits extraordinary aesthetic quality, creativity or innovation;
- or*
- The sign is unique, was originally associated with a local business or local or regional chain; there is academic research, including but not limited to sign industry journals, articles or books to support its significance, or it is a surviving example of a once-common sign type that is no longer common.

A preliminary survey was conducted of the signs located within St. Petersburg's historic commercial corridors. This is by no means a complete inventory of the eligible signs within the city's boundaries. Rather than serving as a comprehensive index of signage that might be considered for protection under Signs of Historic Significance section of City Code, the following inventory is intended to serve as a basis from which to build.

This inventory is divided into sections based on integrity: Extant Signs of Historic Significance, Altered and Removed Signs with Potential for Restoration or Reconstruction, and an Appendix of Removed Signs, which may serve as stylistic inspiration for reproductions in the future.



Figure 12: Historic YMCA sign at 116 Fifth St. S.



Figure 13: Florida Arcade circa 1930

*Photograph courtesy of the St. Petersburg Museum of History*



# Extant Signs of Historic Significance

The first section of this initial inventory includes some of the city's most iconic and well-known signs which retain the majority of their character-defining features. This list shall serve as exemplars of cases in which the regulations discussed above may prove relevant and beneficial.

## **A&A TIRE AND REPAIRS: 2727 38<sup>TH</sup> AVE. N.**

Formerly Capri Auto Interior

Installed 1965



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure

## **ACE HARDWARE: 2739 DR. MLK, JR. ST. N.**

Formerly Kwik Check Grocery Store

Installed 1963 by Bussard Neon



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure

## BANYAN TREE MOTEL: 610 FOURTH ST. N.



Historic Image



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure



Illuminated Sign

## BIFF BURGER: 3939 49<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Installed circa 1965

One of only two locations remaining in operation of former Clearwater-based chain which once consisted of hundreds of restaurants along the Eastern Seaboard.

This is the only location to retain its name.



Historic Image



Sign Face



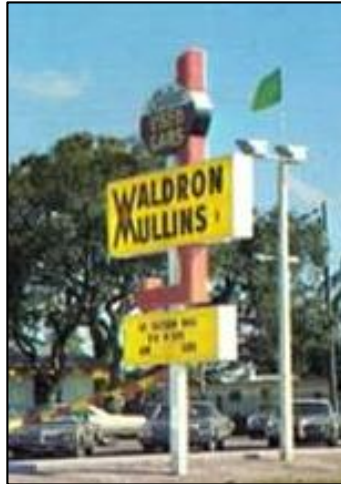
Sign Face & Structure



## CAR STORE: 3445 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Formerly Waldron  
Mullins Pontiac

Installed 1970



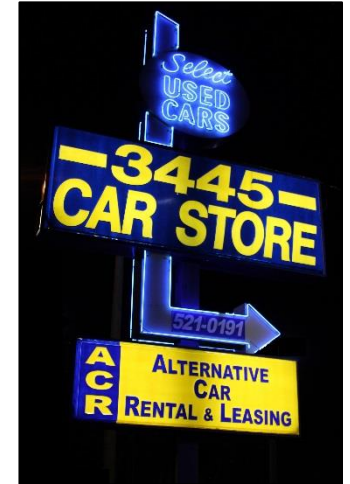
Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure



Sign Face



Illuminated Sign

## CONEY ISLAND GRILL: 250 DR. M.L. KING, JR. BLVD.



Historic Image



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure

## DERBY LANE: 4<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

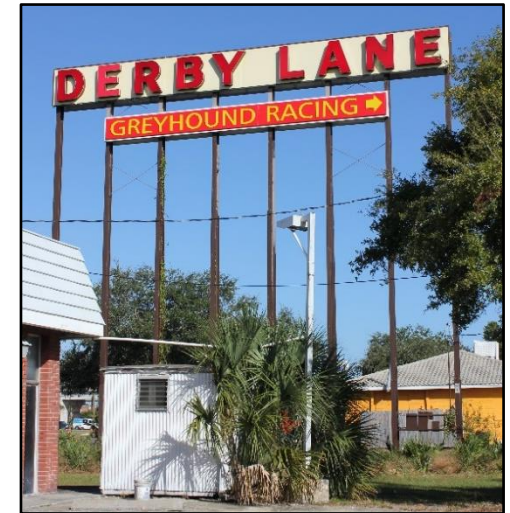
Located on E. side of 4<sup>th</sup>  
Between 99<sup>th</sup> & 100<sup>th</sup> Aves N.



Sign Face



Illuminated Sign

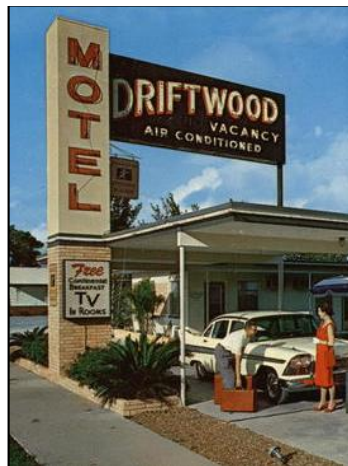


Sign Face & Structure

## DRIFTWOOD MOTEL: 1600 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. S.

Formerly Tangerine  
Motel

Installed 1956



Historic Image



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure



## EL CAP RESTAURANT: 3500 FOURTH ST. N.

Formerly  
Bruni's Tavern

Original sign  
installed 1949

Sign has been  
refurbished  
several times,  
most recently  
in 2016.



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure



Illuminated Sign

## ELKS LODGE: 2675 66<sup>TH</sup> ST. N

Lower portion installed  
1969



Sign Face, 2012



Sign Face, 2016



Sign Face & Structure

## FRAY'S DONUT HOUSE: 649 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Installed 1965.

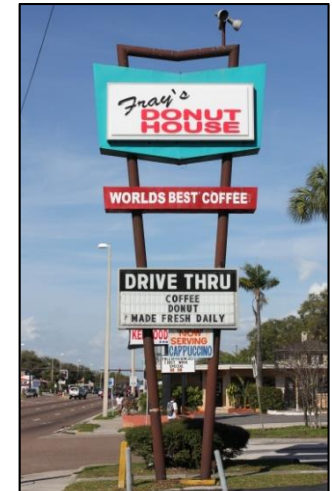
Formerly Mister Donut, a once-national chain founded in 1956.



Sign Face



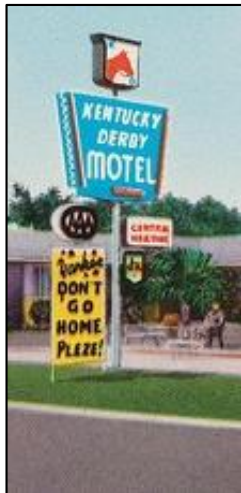
Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure

## KENTUCKY MOTEL: 4246 FOURTH ST. N.

Formerly Kentucky Derby Motel



Historic Image



Sign Face, 2012



Sign Face & Structure



Illuminated Sign



## LANDMARK MOTEL: 1930 FOURTH ST. N.

Installed  
1958



Historic Image



Sign Face



Illuminated Sign



Sign Face & Structure

## LUNDY'S LIQUORS: 3084 18<sup>TH</sup> AVE. S.

Formerly Rainbow Bar/World Liquors

Installed 1949 and 1966

Altered circa 1987



Sign Face

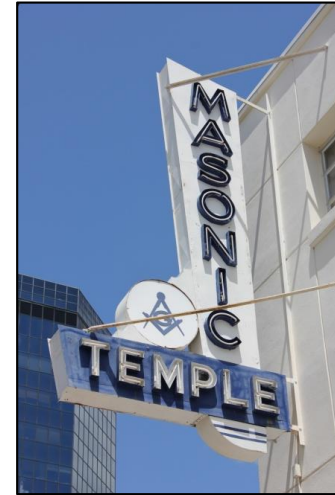


Illuminated Sign

## MASONIC TEMPLE: 114 FOURTH ST. S.

St. Petersburg Lodge No. 139 F&AM

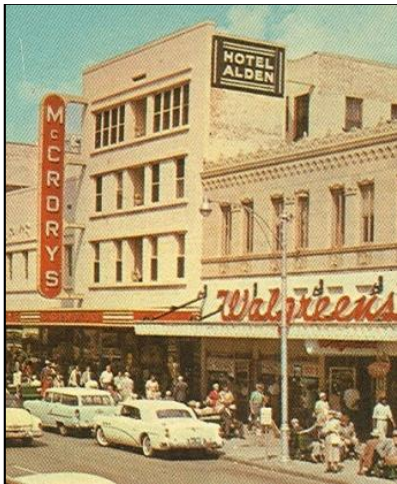
Installed 1958



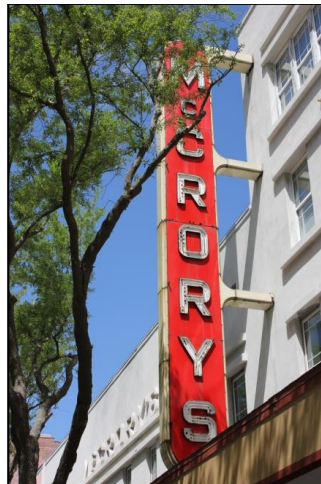
Sign Face

## MCCRORY'S: 433 CENTRAL AVE.

Projecting sign  
installed 1929



Historic Image



Sign Face



Sign Face



## PALM AIRE MOTEL: 3250 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Installed  
1954



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structures



Sign Face & Structure

## PENNSYLVANIA HOTEL: 300 4<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

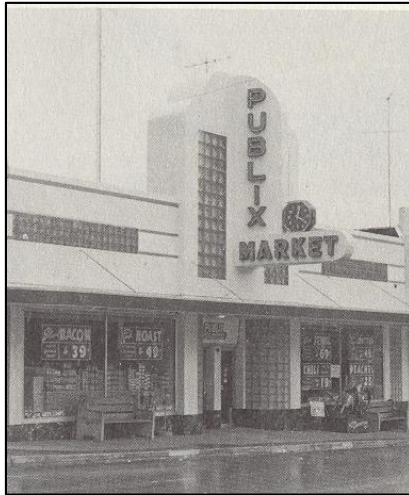


Sign Face & Structure

## PUBLIX/FAMILY DOLLAR: 1720 16<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Formerly Publix Supermarket.

Installed by Ace Sign Company in 1950.



Historic Image



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure

## RAYCO: 3121 CENTRAL AVE.

Installed 1953



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure



Sign Face & Structure



## SANDMAN MOTEL: 570 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Installed  
1957



Historic Image



Sign Face



Illuminated Sign

## STAR DELI FOODS: 2451 FIFTH AVE. N.

Building constructed circa 1954; formerly Mitchell's Quality Meats

Sign is repurposed Norgetown Laundry "Norgeball" sign dating to the early 1960s and relocated from 2465 Fifth Ave. N. (date of relocation unknown).

This "Norgeball" is one of few remaining, but the Chicago-based Norge Village Cleaners was once a national chain. Though most of the rotating spherical signs, which were designed by Rohm & Hess, featured polka dots, the striped variation was seen throughout Florida.



Sign Face



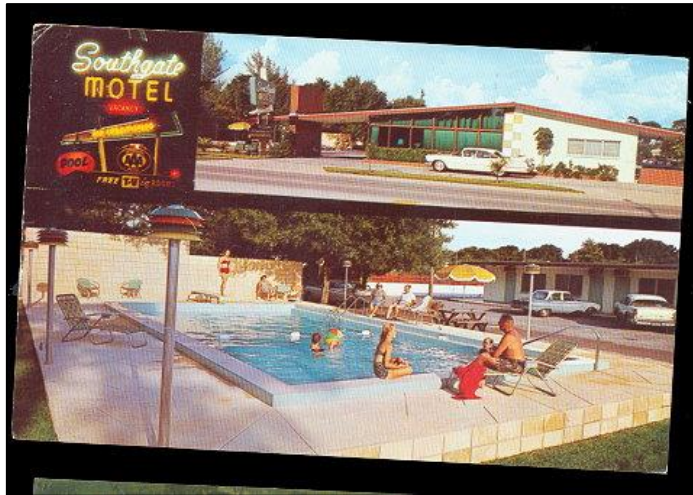
Sign Face & Structure

## SUNDAZE MOTEL: 1590 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. S.

Formerly  
Southgate Motel

Installed 1957

Altered 1981



Historic Image



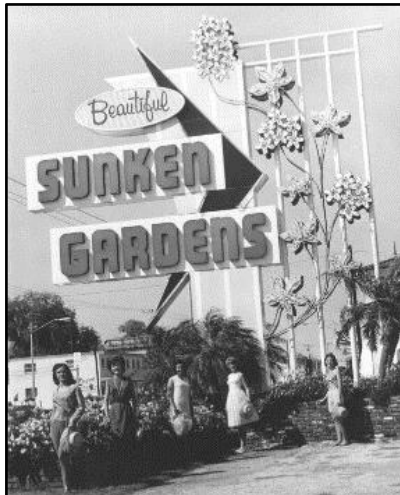
Sign Face & Structure, 2012



Sign Face & Structure

## SUNKEN GARDENS: 1825 FOURTH ST. N.

Installed  
1960



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure



Illuminated Sign



## SUNSHINE LAUNDRY: 621 16<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Installed 1969



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure

## VENICE MOTEL: 3301 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Installed 1958



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure

## WEST CENTRAL SHOPPING CENTER: 6601 CENTRAL AVE.

Installed 1959



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure



Illuminated Sign

## WORLD LIQUORS: 1601 CENTRAL AVE.

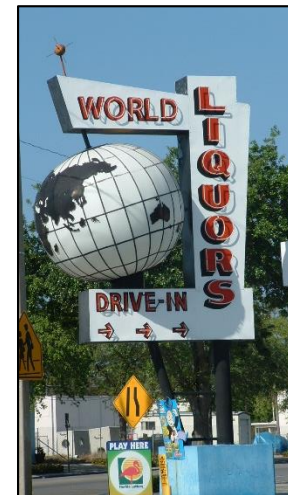
Installed 1961

Incorporated globe from "World Furniture" store, formerly on 100 block of Central Avenue.

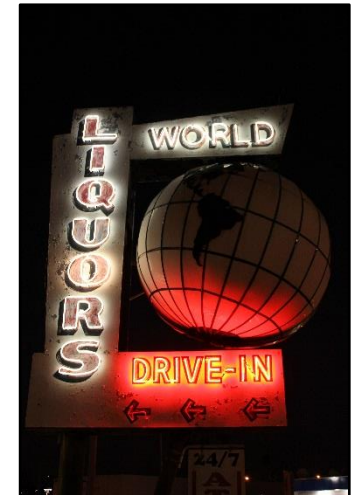
Globe rotated until mid-1970s.



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure



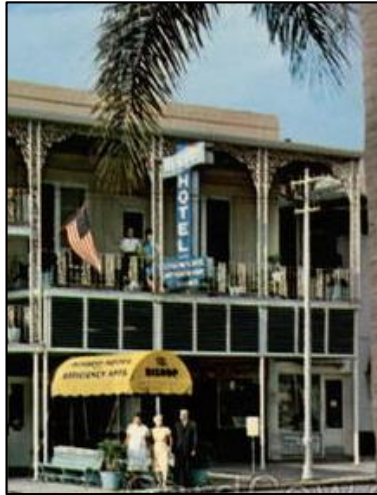
Additional Sign Face



## YARD OF ALE: 256 FIRST AVE. N.

Formerly Bishop  
Hotel/Bishop Tavern

Installed 1949



Historic Image



Historic Image



Sign Face, 2012



Sign Face

## YMCA: 116 FIFTH ST. S.



Historic Image



Sign Face

## 8 INN: 1201 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Formerly  
Chateau  
Motel/Capri  
Motel

Installed 1958



Historic Image



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure



# Altered and Removed Signs with Potential for Restoration or Reconstruction

## ALCOVE RETIREMENT CENTER: 2831 FOURTH ST. N.

Formerly  
Flamingo/Silver  
Star Motel

Installed 1956



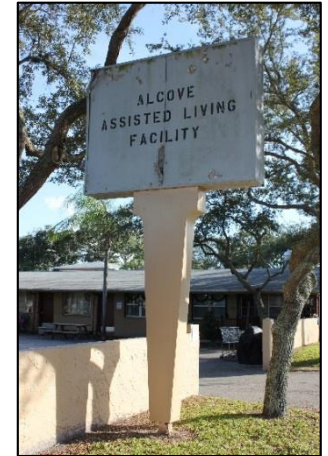
Historic Image



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure



Sign Face & Structure

## AZALEA COURT MOTEL: 8210 FOURTH ST. N.



Historic Image



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure

## BAY BREEZE MOTEL: 3900 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. S.

Sign frame and some tube lettering remain



Historic Image



Sign Face



Sign Face & Structure

## BUDGET INN: 800 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Formerly Safari Motel/Diplomat Motel

Installed circa 1955 and 1963

Building still operates as motel.

Roof sign has been removed; pole sign altered but extant.



Historic Image



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure

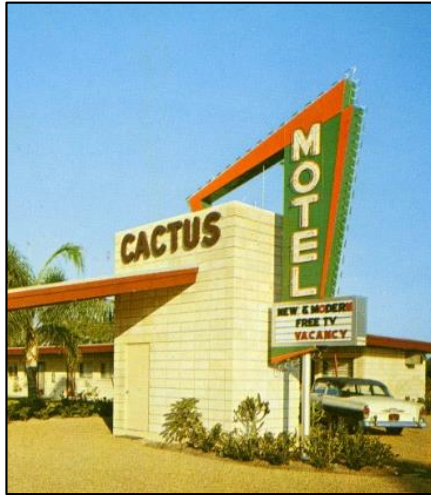


## CACTUS MOTEL: 1600 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Installed 1956

Building remains in operation  
under same name

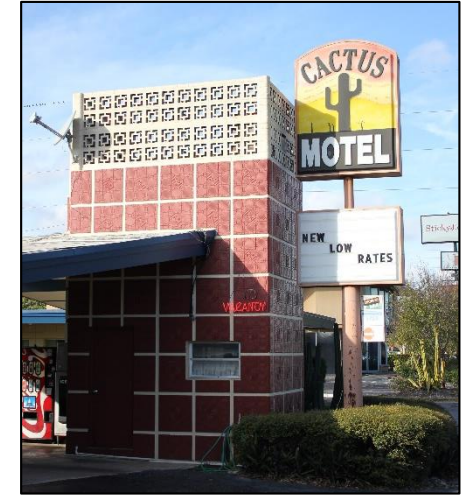
Sign replaced but structure  
remains



Historic Image



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure

## CANDLELIGHT INN: 3405 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Formerly Cadillac Motel

Installed 1958

Building remains operational as motel and restaurant

Sign has been replaced but historic frame is in use



Historic Image



Sign Frame & Structure

## CEDAR MOTEL: 3250 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Formerly 3300 34<sup>th</sup> St. N.

Installed 1957

Business remains operational under same name.

Sign has been altered but retains historic frame



Historic Image



Sign Frame & Structure



Illuminated Sign

## CENTRAL PLAZA: 3270 CENTRAL AVE.

Formerly 3250 Central Ave.

Buildings and some signboards remain, but signs have been replaced.



Historic Image



## CHINA CITY RESTAURANT: 1221 FOURTH ST. N.

Formerly Chick's Drive-In

Installed 1952

Altered circa 1960

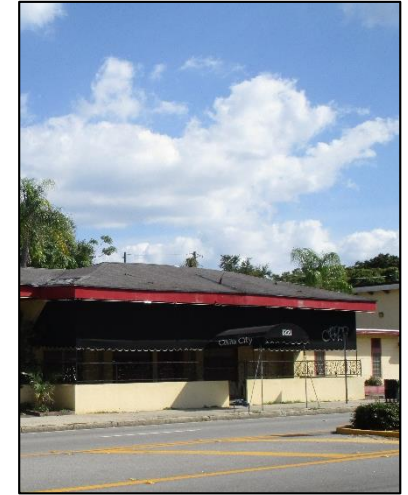
Removed 2016



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure, circa 2005



Former Location of Sign

## THE COLONY: 301 FOURTH AVE. N.

Installed 1950

Sign has been removed,  
but building remains with  
historic awning  
framework.



Historic Image



Remaining Sign Structure

## HOTEL DETROIT: 201 Central Ave.

Building remains.

Rooftop sign has been removed

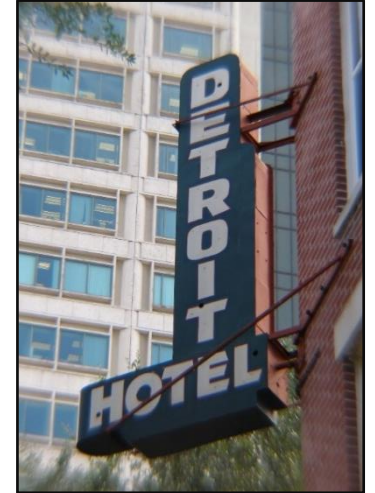
Projecting corner sign remains.



Historic Image



Historic Image



Remaining Sign Face & Structure

## EL GRANDE MOTEL: 4336 FOURTH ST. N.

Currently Shandy Style

Installed 1955

Building remains, but has been altered.

Stick-out sign replaced with monument.



Historic Image



## EL PATIO MOTOR COURT: 6733 FOURTH ST. N.

Installed 1960

Business remains operational.

Sign altered, but historic frame has been retained.



Historic Image

## ESSEX HOUSE HOTEL: 1914 FOURTH AVE. N.

Currently Outback Steakhouse

Building has been altered and is presently a restaurant.

Sign has been removed.



Historic Image

## GENERAL LEE HOTEL: 4554 CENTRAL AVENUE

Currently Faith Professional Plaza

Installed 1956

Reuse as office building

Sign has been removed



Historic Image

## HOLIDAY MOTEL: 415 24<sup>TH</sup> AVE. N.

Installed 1954

Motel remains operational under same name

Sign has been replaced



Historic Image



Current Sign Face & Structure



## HORN MOTEL APARTMENTS: 674 22<sup>ND</sup> AVE. S.

Currently Park Terrace Apartments

Installed 1959

Building now used as apartments

Sign has been removed.



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure

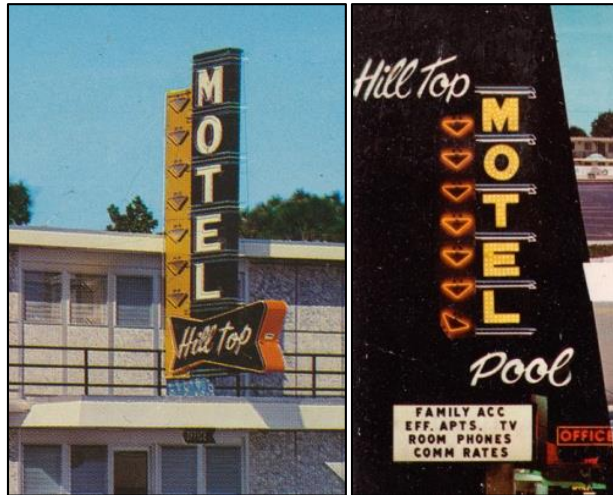
## INN ON THE HILL: 275 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. S.

Formerly Hill Top Motel

Installed 1957

Building remains operational as motel

Sign has been removed.



Historic Images



Sign Face & Structure

## KENWOOD VILLAGE INN: 701 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Formerly Siesta Motel

Installed 1956 and 1964



Historic Images



Sign Face & Structure

## LA CITA EXECUTIVE CENTER: 8424 FOURTH ST. N.

Formerly La Cita Motel

Installed 1949



Historic Image

## LA MAR MOTEL: 8840 FOURTH ST. N.

Installed 1948

Building extant

Sign and frame have been removed.

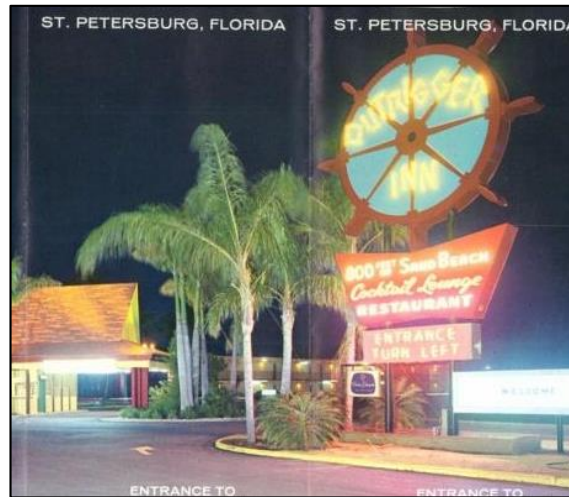


Historic Image



## MAGNUSON HOTEL: 6800 SUNSHINE SKYWAY LN.

Outrigger Inn/Skyway Motel  
Building remains; sign has been removed.



Historic Images

## MARI JEAN HOTEL: 2349 CENTRAL AVE.

Installed 1961



Historic Image

## MOSLEY MOTEL: 401 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Formerly Plaza Inn

Installed 1958



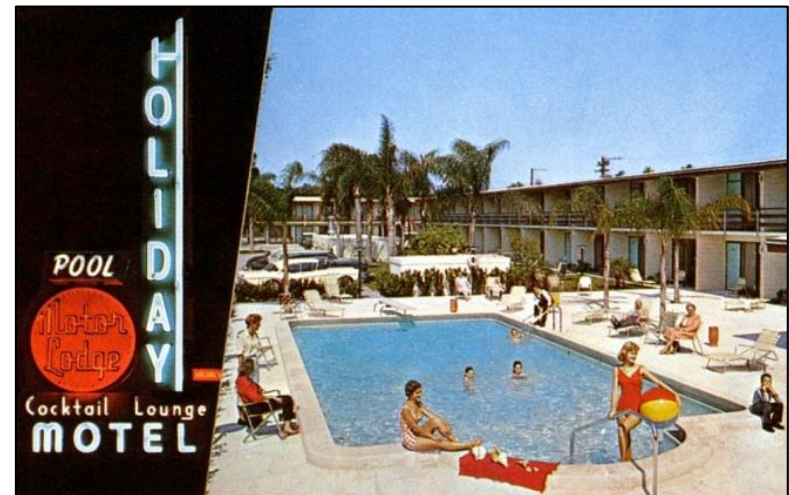
Historic Image

## NEW PLAZA MOTEL: 400 34<sup>TH</sup> ST. N.

Formerly Holiday Motor Court

Installed 1958

Building remains in use as motel with some commercial; sign has been removed.



Historic Image

## ORANGE MOTEL: 8435 FOURTH ST. N.

Installed 1955

Building remains; sign has been removed.



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure

## PALMS MOTEL: 6730 FOURTH ST. N.

Installed 1949



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure



## PARK PLACE APARTMENTS: 2026 FOURTH ST. S.

Formerly Park Place Apartment  
Motel

Installed 1955



Historic Image



Sign Frame & Structure

## PONCE DE LEON HOTEL: 95 CENTRAL AVENUE

Original sign installed c. 1950

Current sign is placed in same corner of awning and  
references the style of original



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure

## RUSTY ANCHOR MOTEL: 2301 FOURTH ST. N.

Formerly El Royal Tourist Court •

Installed 1939

Remains operational as a motel.  
Original sign has been replaced but  
historic frame has been retained.



Historic Image



Historic Image

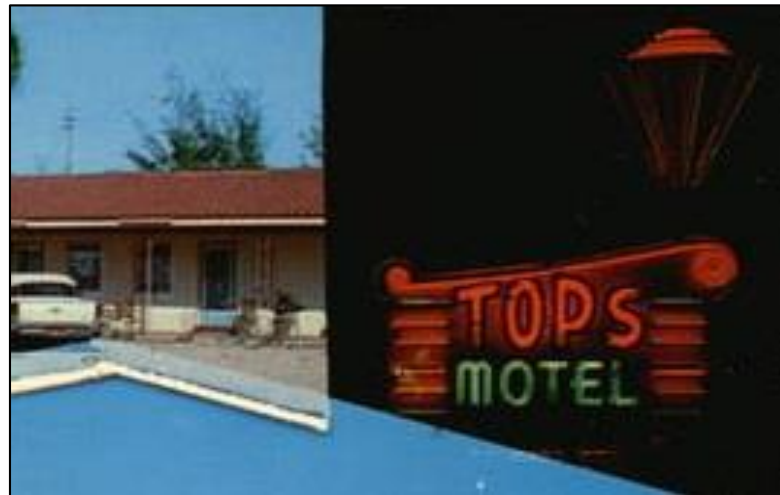


Sign Face & Structure

## SIESTA INN: 7141 FOURTH ST. N.

Formerly Tops Motel

Installed 1958



Historic Image



Current Sign Face & Structure

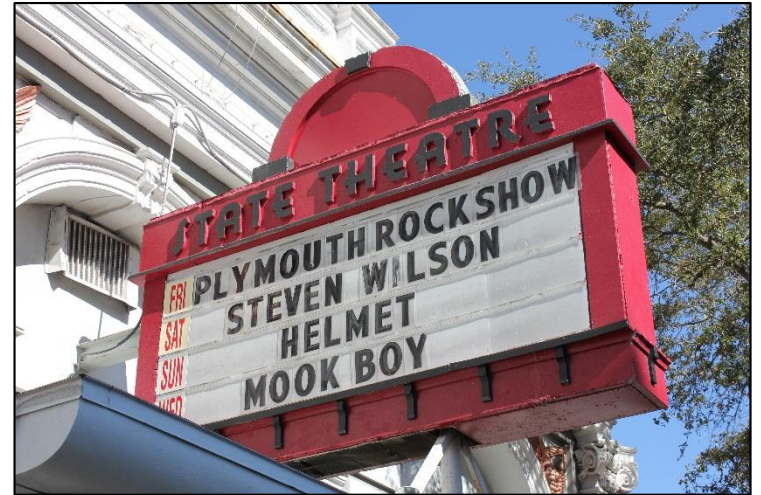


## STATE THEATRE: 687 CENTRAL AVE.

Marquee installed in 1969



Historic Image



Current Sign Face & Structure

## SUNSET VILLA: 7200 FOURTH ST. N.

Installed 1949



Historic Image



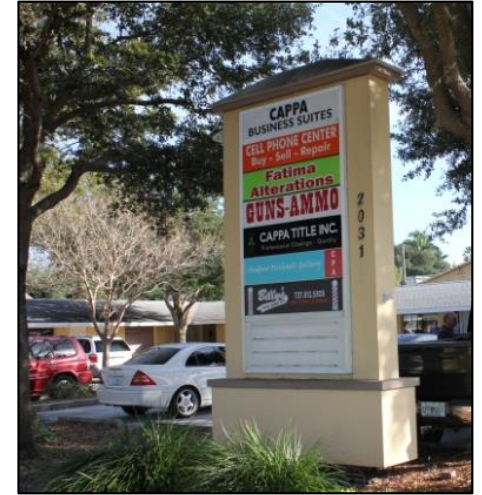
## SUNTAN MOTEL: 2031 FOURTH ST. N.



Historic Image



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure

## TWIN PALMS MOTEL: 3600 HAINES RD.

Installed 1956



Historic Image

## VIRGINIAN APARTMENTS: 441 47<sup>TH</sup> AVE. N.

Formerly Perrybrook Acres Apartments

Installed circa 1950



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure

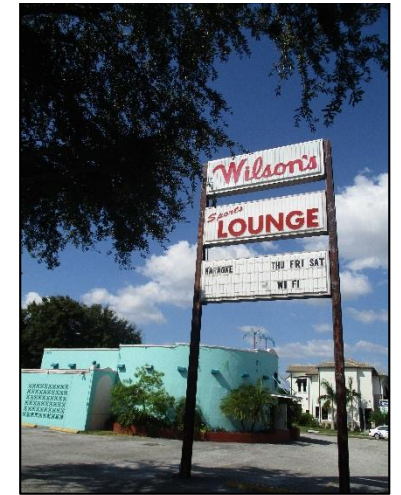
## WILSON'S SPORTS LOUNGE: 3030 FOURTH ST. N.

Formerly Round Table Restaurant

Installed 1950



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure



## KAREN WORNICKI INSURANCE: 8120 FOURTH ST. N.

Formerly Pelican Court

Installed 1949 and 1953



Historic Image



Sign Face & Structure



# Resources and Acknowledgments

3A Composites Graphic Display USA. "An Incomplete History of Signage: The Evolution of Sign Materials." <http://graphicdisplayusa.com/blog/an-incomplete-history-of-signage-the-evolution-of-sign-materials/>.

Auer, Michael J. "Preservation Brief 25: The Preservation of Historic Signs." National Park Service. October 1991. <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/25-signs.htm>.

The Biff Burger Blog. "The Original Biff-Burger Drive-In Website." <http://biff-burger.blogspot.com/>.

Card Cow Vintage Postcards. "Bishop Hotel." <https://www.cardcow.com/222369/bishop-hotel-efficiency-apartments-st-petersburg-florida/>.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Driftwood Motel." Undated Postcard. <https://www.cardcow.com/420764/driftwood-motel-st-petersburg-florida/>

City of St. Petersburg, Florida. *Historical Photograph and Postcard Archives*. On file, City of St. Petersburg.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Property Cards*. On file, City of St. Petersburg.

Delcampe – The Largest Marketplace for Collectors. "Exterior, Aunt Hattie's, St. Petersburg, Florida, 40s-60s." [https://www.delcampe.net/en\\_GB/collectables/postcards/united-states-st-petersburg/exterior-aunt-hattie-s-st-petersburg-florida-40-60s-167969386.html](https://www.delcampe.net/en_GB/collectables/postcards/united-states-st-petersburg/exterior-aunt-hattie-s-st-petersburg-florida-40-60s-167969386.html).

Florida Memory, "Ponce de Leon Hotel – Saint Petersburg, Florida." State Library & Archives of Florida, c. 1970. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/161728>

\_\_\_\_\_. "Young Women Pose for a Photograph at Saint Petersburg's Sunken Gardens," State Library & Archives of Florida, 1964. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/81280>.

Hotdogman. "Coney Island Grill – National Hot Dog Month, Day 7." *Hot Dog Stories*. <http://hotdogstories.com/coney-island-grill-national-hot-dog-month-day-7/>.

Jackson, Mike. "Storefronts on Main Street: an Architectural History." Illinois Preservation Series No. 19. Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Division of Preservation Services.

The Neon Library. "Neon History." [http://neonlibrary.com/neon\\_history\\_2.html](http://neonlibrary.com/neon_history_2.html).

Playle's, "St. Petersburg, FL, Southgate Motel 1963 Postcard." <http://www.playle.com/listing.php?i=MOONCATANTIQUES3470>.

\_\_\_\_\_. "St. Petersburg, FL, Wolfies Restaurant." <https://www.playle.com/listing.php?i=REDROCKVIEWS5322>.

Reiley, Laura. *St. Petersburg Times*. "The Best Hot Dogs in the Tampa Bay Area." <http://www.tampabay.com/features/food/restaurants/the-best-hot-dogs-in-the-tampa-bay-area/654598>.

San Jose State University. "Florida Motels," San Jose State University. <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/motelflorida.html>.

Signs of the Times Magazine. "A Brief History of the Sign Industry." September 1976. American Sign Museum. <http://www.americansignmuseum.org/a-brief-history-of-the-sign-industry/>.

Snow Smith, Katherine. "Apartments, retail coming to World Liquors corner on Central Avenue." *Tampa Bay Times*. November 13, 2014.  
<http://www.tampabay.com/news/business/realestate/new-apartments-retail-coming-to-world-liquors-corner-on-central-avenue/2206321>.

Susina, Mark. "Vintage Postcard – H D Cafeteria – St. Petersburg, Florida." Via Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mss2400/13377924173>.

Treu, Martin. *Signs, Streets, and Storefronts: A History of Architecture and Graphics along America's Commercial Corridors*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

University of South Florida. "YMCA 5<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South, with Cars," After 1926. University of South Florida Library Digital Collections.  
<http://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0007708/00001?search=ymca+=petersburg>.

Waymarking.com. "Ponce de Leon Hotel – St. Petersburg, FL, USA." Groundspeak, inc.  
[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM4KD2\\_Ponce\\_de\\_Leon\\_Hotel\\_St\\_Petersburg\\_FL\\_USA](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM4KD2_Ponce_de_Leon_Hotel_St_Petersburg_FL_USA)

What Was There. <http://www.whatwasthere.com/browse.aspx#!//27.778299,-82.679459/id/41226/info/details/zoom/14/>.

## Special Thanks

*Additional thanks are in order to a number of St. Petersburg residents, sign enthusiasts, and historians of "roadside America" who contributed their expertise, personal photographs, and memories to this project. Special thanks are due to Debra Jane Seltzer of RoadArch.com and Todd Bates of the Vintage Neon Project, both of whom contributed invaluable feedback and incredible knowledge of historic sign styles; Maryjean Bonfili of El Cap and Paul Misiewicz of World Liquors, who provided information about their own businesses' signs; and the members of "Remember in St. Pete when...", the Society for Commercial Archaeology, and St. Petersburg Preservation, Inc., who assisted staff in identifying and understanding the origin of many of the signs discussed in this report. As is the case with any project involving historic preservation and public memory, much of this research would have been impossible without the insight and experiences of the community.*

## Historic Preservation Staff

Laura Duvekot, Historic Preservationist  
 Urban Planning and Historic Preservation  
 Planning and Economic Development Dept.  
[Laura.Duvekot@stpete.org](mailto:Laura.Duvekot@stpete.org)  
 (727) 892-5451

Larry Frey, PhD, Historic Preservationist  
 Urban Planning and Historic Preservation  
 Planning and Economic Development Dept.  
[Larry.Frey@stpete.org](mailto:Larry.Frey@stpete.org)  
 (727) 892-5470

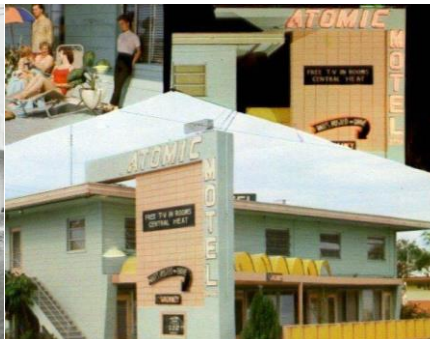
Derek S. Kilborn, Manager  
 Urban Planning and Historic Preservation  
 Planning and Economic Development Dept.  
[Derek.Kilborn@stpete.org](mailto:Derek.Kilborn@stpete.org)  
 (727) 893-7872

# Appendix: Gallery of Removed Signs

The following appendix includes historic images of signs that are no longer extant, but that could inspire future reproductions. These signs are representative of the graphic styles that dominated midcentury branding.



The A&P Supermarket  
824 Fourth Street South



Atomic Motel  
6374 Central Avenue



Aunt Hattie's  
625 First Street South



Barracuda Brand Fishing Tackle  
2100 First Avenue South



Bay State/Sun Deck Motel  
4050 Fourth Street North



Belle Vernon Motel  
3039 Fourth Street North



Burdick's Restaurant  
800 Fourth Street South



Burger Chef  
5236 16<sup>th</sup> Avenut North





Cavalier Motel  
1325 Fourth Street North



Citizens National Bank  
3100 Central Avenue



Citizens National Bank  
3100 Central Avenue



Colburn Guest Home  
456 Beach Drive NE



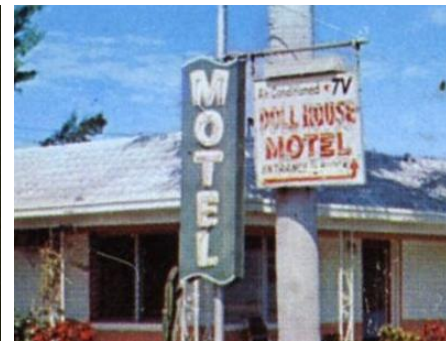
Colony Court Motel  
5304 Fourth Street North



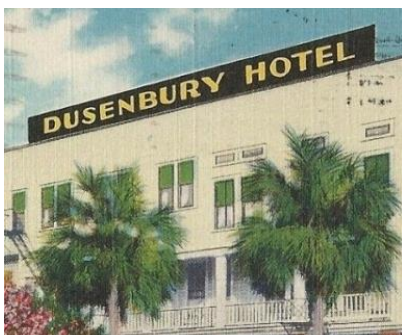
The Corral  
5800 Central Avenue



Doctors Motel  
6800 34<sup>th</sup> Street South



Doll House Motel  
1325 Fourth Street North



Dusenbury Hotel  
422-439 First Avenue North



El Rancho Motor Lodge  
1701 Fourth Street South

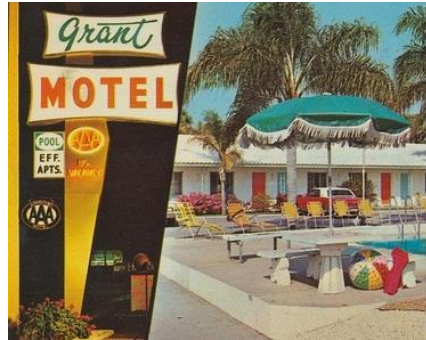


El Rio Motel  
3120 Fourth Street North





Florida Theater  
22 Fifth Street South



Grant Motel  
9046 Fourth Street North



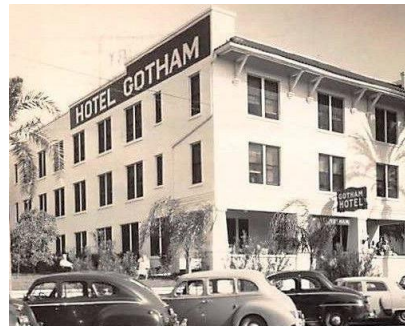
Harding's Motel  
3650 Fourth Street North



Holiday House Restaurant  
4301 Fourth Street North



HD Cafeteria  
4th Street North at 38th Avenue



Hotel Gotham  
455 Third Avenue South



Hotel Richelieu  
700 Third Street South



Hotel Toffenetti  
Second St. N. and First Ave N.



Il Mago Restaurant  
4125 Fourth Street North



La Conga Motel  
5400 Fourth Street North



La Hacienda Motel/La Hacienda Court - 3840 Fourth Street North







Larson's Motel  
3900 Fourth Street North



La Mar Motel  
8840 Fourth Street North



Lewis Palm Park Motel  
4100 Fourth Street North



Lighthouse Inn



Maas Brothers  
First Ave N. and Third St. N.



Mayflower Motel  
2315 Tyrone Boulevard North



Mr. Donut  
9<sup>th</sup> Street and 62<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North



Molly's House of Good Food  
Central Avenue at 58<sup>th</sup> Street



Monicello Motor Inn/Monticello Motel  
1700 Fourth Street North



Parke Motel

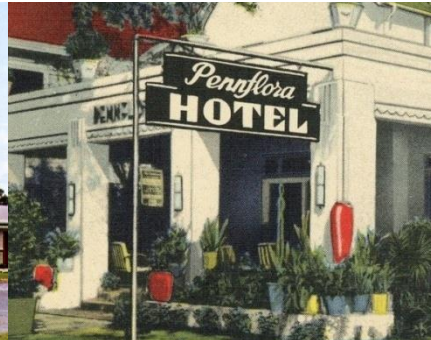


Park Terrace Motor Court





Penguin Motel  
4800 Fourth Street North



Pennflora Hotel  
443 Second Avenue North



Pennsylvania Hotel Dining Room  
320 Fourth Street North



Poincianna Court  
7001 Fourth Street North



Rainbow Lodge  
4241 Fourth Street North



Ranch Motel  
3701 Fourth Street North



Rancho Siesta Motel  
2525 Tyrone Boulevard



Rutland's  
500 Block, Central Avenue



Shamrock Motel  
4145 Fourth Street North



Southern Comfort Court  
4845 Fourth Street North



South Winds Motel & Restaurant  
6535 Fourth Street North





South Winds Motel & Restaurant  
6535 Fourth Street North



Southward Ho! Motor Court  
1850 Fifth Avenue North



Steak & Shake  
1020 34<sup>th</sup> Street North



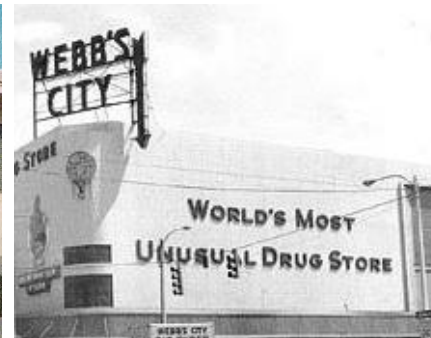
Sunshine Skyway Motel



Trade Winds Motor Court  
3637 Fourth Street North



Tudor Apartment Motel  
2014 M. L. King Street North



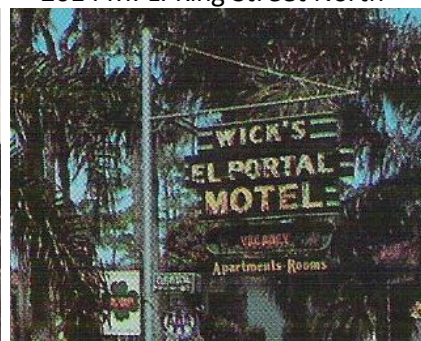
Webb's City  
Eighth St. and First Ave. S.



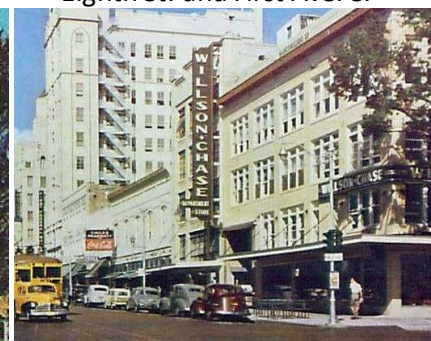
Webb's City Outpost  
Fourth St. N. and Gandy Blvd.



Wedgewood Inn  
Fourth St. at 18<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.



Wick's El Portal Motel  
4624 Fourth Street North



Wilson Chase  
300 Block Central Avenue



Wilson Apartments & Motel  
309 Fourth Street South



Windsor Motel  
1924 Dr. MLK , Jr. Street



Wolfie's Restaurant  
3200 Central Avenue





Urban Planning and Historic Preservation Division  
Planning and Economic Development Department  
City of St. Petersburg, "The Sunshine City"  
P.O. Box 2842, St. Petersburg, Florida 33731-2842

(727) 892-5451

[stpete.org/history](http://stpete.org/history)