

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received JUN 5 1985
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Studebaker Building

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 600 Fourth Street South N/A not for publication

city, town St. Petersburg N/A vicinity of

state Florida code 12 county Pinellas code 103

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name John Warren

street & number 714 Roser Park Drive South

city, town St. Petersburg N/A vicinity of state Florida

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pinellas County Courthouse

street & number 315 Court Street

city, town Clearwater state Florida

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title St. Petersburg Citywide Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records City of St. Petersburg Planning Department

city, town St. Petersburg state Florida

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Studebaker Building is a 20,000 sq. ft. two story, brick commercial warehouse in a streamlined Tudor Revival style. It is a good example of typical engineering and construction techniques of the 1920s, but has quality materials and details for a warehouse. The building is in excellent structural condition, suffering only from cosmetic problems. Even the 1925 Otis freight elevator is in working condition. Alterations to the building are easily reversible, with little damage to important features. Areas affected are; the first floor windows, some interior partitions, and the addition of fire escapes and awnings.

The Studebaker Building is a rectangular brick two story commercial warehouse with a flat roof, measuring 110'x90'. The foundation is poured in place reinforced concrete, with a continuous footing. The principal facade is the west, of 110', of two triple width bays, alternating with three single bays. Six recessed panel brick piers define the bays and give strong vertical thrust to the facade. The two central piers, joined by a segmental arch at the cornice line, end in a stepped parapet, creating a one bay central entrance pavillion. The dark red brick is laid in stretcher bond with 1/4" white cement mortar joints. The first floor consists almost entirely of plate glass windows set on a concrete water table, and surmounted by moveable 5 light transoms in wooden sash. The central bay contains a pair of one light french doors topped by a Tudor arch below six recessed panels, forming the door architrave. The southern end bay contains two 4 panel wooden doors that give access to the freight elevator.

The first and second floors are visually separated on the facade by a 5' deep horizontal band of concrete stucco, articulated with recessed and molded panels. The window bays of the second floor are filled with 12 light per sash steel awning type windows. There are three sashes per single bay, six sashes per triple bay, and two sashes in the central bay. The window sills are a plain concrete string course. The space above the second floor windows forms a 7' deep entablature for the building, and visually balances and ties together the brick piers. The entablature area is composed of notched recessed white stucco panels framed by stretcher bond red brick. These panels sharply define the rythms of the facade's bays. On the end and central bays, the stucco panels support cast stone Studebaker logos. The cornice is also white concrete, with two narrow moulding bands at the top. The brick piers interrupt and rise above the cornice and are capped with white concrete three part stepped parapets.

The north elevation (90') facing Sixth Avenue South, is the other visible side of the building. It is nearly identical in design with the main (west) facade, except in the arrangement of the bays. The scheme is; pier, single bay, pier, triple bay, pier, triple bay, pier, single bay, pier. The window treatment, ornament, and materials are the same (see above).

The east and south facades are of red brick laid in a common or American bond. The east facade is 110' long, and has a row of six windows on each floor. The windows are the same steel casement awning type as the main facades. The south facade of 90' is plain, with two windows on each floor at the east end of the facade. These elevations have no ornament, the window sills are plain cast concrete, and there is a simple red terra cotta roof cornice coping.

(See Continuation Sheet)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1925 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Studebaker Building is significant architecturally as an unusual example of the application of Tudor Revival characteristics to a commercial structure, and as one of the rare examples of the style to be found in the St. Petersburg area. It is historically significant for its association with the broad pattern of 1920s boom period development in Florida as it affected St. Petersburg and with the role of automobile transportation in that development, and as a symbol of the importance of the Studebaker automobile within that industry in the 1920s.

Neighborhood and Site Characteristics

The neighborhood of the Studebaker Building lies on the southern edge of the Original Plat of St. Petersburg (1889), and was a part of the land holdings of "General" John C. Williams¹, whose 1890 home at 444 Fifth Avenue South, located one block to the northwest, is listed in the National Register.² This area saw some development prior to 1912, mainly inexpensive housing. Major development started with St. Petersburg's first growth "boom" of 1912-1917 and continued through the 1921-26 boom period. Almost all the buildings in this area are residential; single family houses, boarding houses, and small seasonal hotels, dating from the period 1912 to 1926.³ The lower middle class nature of the housing can be attributed to the proximity to Bayboro Harbour, the commercial port of the city, which was developed in this area. In 1924 Fourth Street became the major traffic artery of the city; with the completion of Gandy Bridge.⁴ Fourth Street was extended north to connect with the bridge and Tampa, and south to Pinellas Point. Here a ferry carried traffic to the town of Palmetto and the Tamiami Trail. Commercial development occurred along the whole length of Fourth Street after 1924.⁵ In 1953 with the completion of U.S. Highway 19 (34th Street) and the Sunshine Skyway Bridge, through traffic abandoned Fourth Street. Commercial property lost its desirability and value.

The Studebaker Building stands on the southeast corner of Fourth Street South and Sixth Avenue. The building is 90'x110' and nearly covers the 100'x120' lot. The adjacent sidewalks are 15' wide, extending from the building to the curb, and are multi-colored hexagon blocks. Several of the blocks are stamped "Farmer & Co. 1925," indicating this to be the original sidewalk.

History

The phenomenon known as the Florida Land Boom of 1921-1926 is intimately tied to the history of the automobile. Walter Fuller, one of the leading St. Petersburg developers of the 1920s, states "The boom was a disease born of Florida's sunshine and sand, but based, believe it or not, on Henry Ford's \$5 a day wage and the millions of cheap automobiles that flooded our highways."⁶ Automobiles brought throngs of tourists to Florida, and city expansions were designed for the automobile.

By 1926 the city limits of St. Petersburg covered 52 square miles.⁷ Suburban sprawl was a product of the 1920s. Public transit by electric streetcars, was not expanded after World War I.⁸ Population growth combined with a prosperous economy created a sellers' market for automobiles.⁹

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name St. Petersburg

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	7	3	3	8	5	5	0	3	0	7	1	9	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

North 120' of lots 6 & 7, block 94, revised plat of St. Petersburg. 120' frontage on Fourth Street South, 100' frontage on Sixth Avenue South.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Howard Hansen, Charles Canerday/Diana Primelles, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Florida Division of Archives

date April 15, 1985

street & number The Capitol

telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee

state Florida

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title George W. Percy, State Historic Preservation Officer

date 5/20/85

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 7-5-85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The interior of the Studebaker Building is that of a plain functional warehouse devoid of ornament and finish, except in the former showroom area. The showroom was located along the west and north sides of the first floor, forming an L shape room. The original partition is still in situ, although modifications have occurred. The floor is 5" square orange terra cotta tile, laid on a diagonal, with $\frac{1}{2}$ " grey concrete mortar joints. The floor has a border of 5" square beige and orange tile laid in chequerboard pattern, two deep. The walls and ceiling are finished plaster.

The area behind the showroom was originally a parts storeroom. It has exposed steel I beam posts, a concrete slab floor, unfinished walls and exposed ceiling rafters. In this area at the southwest corner of the building is the original automobile elevator, which is still operable.

The second floor of the Studebaker Building was the automobile service garage. The floor surface is 2" strip pine laid over a fireproof asbestos paper that rest on the sub-flooring. The walls are exposed brick, the 12 steel I beam posts are exposed, as is the steel roof truss system.

There are two crude wooden staircases that link the floors, both are much altered, and may not be original. The central stairwell is original to the building.

Alterations to the interior are minimal. The major alterations occur in the first floor showroom windows, and include the addition of a wooden hanging awning on the west and north side of the building. A fire escape has been added to the north facade.

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The Studebaker Building was built in 1925, and occupied by December of that year.¹⁰ Frank C. Lyon of St. Petersburg was the principal investor in the financing of the project. He spent \$115,000 on the construction of the building and retained ownership, giving a long term lease to the Peninsular Motor Co. of Tampa. This company had the Studebaker franchise for southwest Florida.

Frank C. Lyon was a native of Burlington, Vermont, where he owned a successful department store. He chose an early retirement, in his 40's, and came with his wife and children to St. Petersburg in 1922. He was a choir director of the Congregational Church, and did not become involved in local land speculation until 1925 at the height of the boom. His home was at 680 Eighth Street South in Roser Park. Although he lost most of his savings, Lyon and his family lived comfortably through the Great Depression.¹¹

The Peninsular Motor Company of Tampa was incorporated in 1921 by Saul Jacobs, President, and Sam Bloomberg, Secretary/Treasurer. The rapid expansion of the company is typical of the Boom Era economy of Florida. In 1922 a franchise was opened in St. Petersburg at 691 Central Avenue, with four employees. When the Studebaker Building opened in December 1925, the company was the fourth largest Studebaker dealer in the world. The franchise covered 14 counties in southwest Florida, with showrooms in Tampa, Lakeland, Bradenton, Sarasota and St. Petersburg. Peninsular Motor Co. in 1925 provided employment for 300 people, with 56 working in St. Petersburg's showroom.¹² In 1926 the Peninsular Motor Co. went bankrupt, as a result of the collapse of the boom, and the Studebaker Building was closed.¹³ Frank Lyon lost his tenant, and by 1929 defaulted his mortgage on the building. The Marble Savings Bank of Vermont, Lyon's mortgagee, took over the Studebaker Building and named him as local agent for the property.¹⁴

The experience of the Peninsular Motor Company and its Studebaker Building reflects the fortunes of the Studebaker Company and its automobiles during the 1920s.

The Studebaker was an efficient medium priced automobile, built by a company with a fifty-year reputation for building sturdy wagons and carriages. The company was originally founded in 1852, as H & C Studebaker of South Bend, Wagon Makers. Studebaker's first automobiles were electric models produced in 1902. In 1911 the firm was reincorporated as Studebaker Company, and in the same year its electric models were discontinued and gasoline powered models were introduced. The Studebaker Company made substantial profits selling military vehicles to the allies during World War I. With these war profits, the company in 1919 introduced group insurance, retirement pensions, paid vacations, and stock purchase rights for its employees. In 1919 the company sold 39,000 units and 51,000 units in 1920. In 1922 sales reached \$133 million, and 1924 dividends amounted to 59% of profits. Studebaker did not retool its car models after 1926, usually a sign of economic instability, although on paper the company made profits until the stock market crash of 1929.¹⁵

But while the Studebaker Company recovered, and survived until its final demise in 1967, the Peninsular Motor Company did not. The Studebaker Building stood vacant from 1927 until 1930. At this time the Marble Savings Bank remodeled the interior, and leased space on the ground floor to an A&P Grocery Store. The rear of the ground floor and the second floor were rented to Smith's Garage.¹⁶ Through the 1930s the building served

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its original function as an automobile garage and storage facility. Atlas Automobile Storage and Garage (1941-1946) was the last tenant of this type.¹⁷

In 1947 the Studebaker Building was purchased by Lander Haige,¹⁸ who owned several downtown cafeterias. Repairs were made to the building and new tenants moved in.¹⁹ The Modern Launderette occupied the corner storefront, and the rest was rented as a warehouse to Pinellas Cigar Co. The Modern Launderette operated until 1960, while Pinellas Cigar moved to a new warehouse in 1955. These were the last businesses that stayed in the Studebaker Building for more than a year or two. During most of the 1960s and 70s the building stood vacant.²⁰ This can be attributed to the decline of Fourth Street as a traffic artery, with the opening of 34th Street (U.S. 19) in 1953. Lander Haige sold the Studebaker Building to John Warren in 1984.²¹ The new owner plans to restore the building to its original exterior appearance, and retain significant interior features.

Architecture

The Studebaker Building was the largest and most expensive automobile showroom - garage built in St. Petersburg before World War II.²² The economic boom of the 1920s saw a frenzied growth in all areas of commercial construction, including automotive related structures. A review of the St. Petersburg newspapers and city directories from 1920 til 1926 shows a phenominal growth of the automotive business. The role of the family automobile in expanding Florida trouism after World War I cannot be overstated. St. Petersburg, especially, was the destination of middle class winter tourists who came by car. The ambitious road building programs of Governor Martin and the completion of the Gandy Bridge in 1924 encouraged the influx of "tin can tourists" to the city. In 1925 the Peninsular Motor Co. was the fourth largest Studebaker dealer in volume in the country,²³ demonstrating the strength of the local market.

Very few structures remain in St. Petersburg that relate to the early years of this emerging automotive economy. Several badly altered service stations, and a much remodeled Nash-Overland dealership on Central Avenue are the only survivors along with the Studebaker Building.²⁴ Many car dealerships operated on vacant lots in the 1920s also contributing to the scarcity of such buildings.

The Studebaker Building, although simple in design and ornament, shows a sophisticated handling of its strong horizontal and vertical planes. The extensive use of glass and the reduction of architectural elements to rigid geometric forms all foreshadow the emergence of the "Moderne Style" of the next decade. Ornamental details, however few, reflect the historicism still prevalent in the 1920s. The historical allusion in this case is to the Tudor Revival Style, popular in this era, but rare in St. Petersburg. All other examples of these late gothic revival styles (Tudor, Gothic, Jacobean) are either religious or residential in this area.²⁵ The obvious aesthetic problem of placing a building of this style in a sub-tropical context explains their lack of popularity here.

An extensive search of building records, newspaper accounts and personal interviews has failed to produce any records of the Studebaker Building's Contractor or Architect. This is not unusual, building permit records before 1930 are incomplete at best in St. Petersburg. Most city records concerning early building, planning and zoning were

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discarded circa 1950 when archives were moved (personal communication from Doug Moore, Director of Licensing, Permits and Inspections, City of St. Petersburg). The families of original and subsequent owners have no records concerning the building. A search through obituaries of local architects and contractors active in the 1920s produced no information. However, the hand of a skilled, nameless architect is still apparent throughout the Studebaker Building.

FOOTNOTES

¹

Straub, William, History of Pinellas, St. Augustine, 1929.

²

City of St. Petersburg, Planning Division, St. Petersburg's Architectural and Historic Resources, St. Petersburg, 1981, p. 6.

³

Ibid., pp. 38-46.

⁴

Straub, p. 86.

⁵

Fuller, Walter P., St. Petersburg and Its People, pp. 165-168.

⁶

Fuller, Walter P., This Was Florida's Boom, St. Petersburg, p. 7.

⁷

Ibid., p. 63.

⁸

Ibid., p. 42.

⁹

Grismer, Karl H., The Story of St. Petersburg, 1948 ed., pp. 129-130.

¹⁰

St. Petersburg Times, December 6, 1925, section G, p. 1.

¹¹

Mrs. Richard Jenkins (daughter of Frank Lyon) interviewed by Howard Hansen, August 1984.

¹²

St. Petersburg Times, December 6, 1925.

¹³

Mrs. Richard Jenkins interview.

¹⁴

Ibid.

¹⁵

Longstreet, Stephen, A Century on Wheels, The Story of Studebaker.

¹⁶

City Directory of St. Petersburg 1926-1930: City of St. Petersburg, Building Card 600-610 Fourth Street South, 1925-.

¹⁷

City Directory of St. Petersburg 1941-1946.

¹⁸

Title Abstract of 600-610 Fourth Street South, Pinellas County, Florida, Registrar of Deeds, Deed Book O, fol. 372.

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¹⁹ Building Card 600-610 Fourth Street South.

²⁰ City Directory of St. Petersburg.

²¹ Title Abstract of 600-610 Fourth Street South.

²² St. Petersburg Times, December 6, 1925.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ St. Petersburg's Architectural and Historic Resources.

²⁵ Ibid.

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Historic Building Survey, City of St. Petersburg, Department of Planning, 1979.

Fuller, Walter P. This was Florida's Boom, St. Petersburg, 1954.

St. Petersburg and Its People, St. Petersburg, 1972.

Grismer, Karl H. The Story of St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg, 1948.

Mrs. R. Jenkins, interview with Howard Hansen, August, 1984.

Longstreet, Stephen. A Century On Wheels: The Story of Studebaker, New York, 1952.

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St. Petersburg's Architectural and Historic Resources, City of St. Petersburg, 1981.

St. Petersburg Times, December 6, 13, 1925.