

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

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

For NPS use only

received JUN 28 1984

date entered AUG 1 1984

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

**1. Name**

historic Central High School

and/or common St. Petersburg High School

**2. Location**

street & number 2501 Fifth Avenue North

N/A— not for publication

city, town St. Petersburg

N/A vicinity of

state Florida

code 012

county Pinellas

code 103

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction

street & number Box 4688

city, town Clearwater

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**

St. Petersburg Architectural and  
title Historic Survey

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1978-81

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records St. Petersburg Planning Department

city, town St. Petersburg

state Florida

# 7. Description

<u>    </u> excellent	<u>    </u> deteriorated	<u>    </u> unaltered	<u>  X  </u> original site
<u>  X  </u> good	<u>    </u> ruins	<u>  X  </u> altered	<u>    </u> moved     date _____
<u>    </u> fair	<u>    </u> unexposed		

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Central High School is a Mediterranean Revival building located on four blocks between Fifth Avenue North, Ninth Avenue North, 25th Street and 26th Street in St. Petersburg. Designed by William Ittner in 1926, it is built of brick, hollow tile and poured concrete with a stucco exterior finish. It is in a good state of repair with no major alterations. The building is rectangular in plan with two interior courtyards flanking the central auditorium. The exterior is highlighted by the arcade along the first floor of the main facade, the red clay barrel tile roof, the entrance pavilions and surrounds, casement windows, corner towers and stair towers. Significant interior areas include the auditorium and library.

Central High School occupies about four square blocks between Fifth Avenue North, Ninth Avenue North and 25th Street to 26th Street. Fifth Avenue North is a major traffic artery. This section was platted and paved in 1912, but the buildings on Fifth Avenue are predominately post World War II, one story masonry commercial buildings with a few remaining pre-1930 frame bungalow and vernacular houses. The surrounding neighborhood on 25th and 26th Streets North is part of Chevy Chase subdivision platted in 1926. This totally residential area is composed of modest one story frame residences of the 1920s and masonry one story frame houses of the early 1950s. The houses have no architectural merit but are well maintained with mature trees and plantings. Ninth Avenue North is a minor traffic artery mainly residential in character.

The first building erected on the site by the Board of Public Instruction was West Central Elementary School in 1925. The school is located on 25th Street North at the intersection of Seventh Avenue North and is immediately north of the nomination boundary (see Fig. 1). West Central Elementary is a stucco over masonry two story building with a red clay barrel tile roof. It is Mediterranean Revival in style with restrained cast terra cotta ornament. About 150 feet square, the school contains 21 classrooms built around a central arcaded patio. The principal (East) facade has a central two story entrance pavillion flanked by a one story arcade that extends to two projecting gable end wings.

The north end of the block contains athletic facilities, a 1953 masonry locker room and Stewart Field flanked by two reviewing stands.

Central High School (now St. Petersburg High) was designed by William B. Ittner in 1926 and faces south onto Fifth Avenue North with a 60 foot setback from the curb. It is basically a square mass in plan (310 feet north and south facade, 281 feet east and west facade) with two interior courtyards symmetrically flanking the auditorium.

The school is built over a continuous poured-in-place concrete footer; a crawl space below the concrete slab floor allows room for the heating system. The walls are stucco over brick, hollow tile, and poured-in-place concrete. Interior partitions are balloon frame 2"x4" stud construction, finished with lath and plaster, as are the ceilings. The second and third floors are also concrete slab. The roof beams and rafters are 4"x6" pine, forming a gable roof with a 3/5 slope. The roof is covered with red clay barrel tiles with copper flashings and gutters. The auditorium roof is flat, of built-up tar paper and gravel construction. The southern facade is two story, the east and west facade is two story with attic, and the north facade three story. The auditorium is two and one half stories.

The main (south) facade has strong horizontal lines which are broken by a central two story entrance pavillion and two projecting gable end wings at the corners of the facade. These three projecting vertical elements are linked by a first floor open arcade of sixteen bays. Sixteen pivoted wood casement windows (4/4/4 per case) are on the second floor centered over each arch.

(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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" 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 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 type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** +1926 **Builder/Architect** Architect-William B. Ittner, St. Louis, MO  
Builder

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Central High School is a tangible example of the civic achievement of St. Petersburg during the prosperous "Boom Era" of the 1920s. It is architecturally the most significant educational building in the city,<sup>1</sup> and an excellent example of the Mediterranean Revival Style. The architect, William B. Ittner, was a nationally recognized architect who specialized in the design of educational facilities.<sup>2</sup> The plan and design of the school was so skillful that it has been little altered over the years and still satisfies the needs of a modern high school. Between 1926 and 1953<sup>3</sup> this was the only high school for the city and therefore holds great local sentiment as the "Alma Mater" for many generations of residents. The auditorium which seats 2,000<sup>4</sup> was the setting of many cultural events, concerts and professional performances before the municipal auditorium was constructed in 1965.<sup>5</sup>

St. Petersburg High School was founded in 1898<sup>6</sup> largely due to the efforts of Professor Joseph Guisinger. He and a faculty of five began a three year high school program. The school's first building was the Graded School Building built in 1898 with funds given by Edwin Tomlinson.<sup>7</sup> In 1901 one person was in the first graduating class.<sup>8</sup> In 1907 a fourth year of curriculum was added.<sup>9</sup> One of the traditions of St. Petersburg High School began in 1908 with the adoption of green and white as the school's colors.<sup>10</sup> A bond issue was passed in 1909 giving \$30,000 to construct new schools.<sup>11</sup> The new High School was completed in 1911 at the corner of Fifth Street and Second Avenue North. In 1912 St. Petersburg High School became accredited by the South Central Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools.<sup>12</sup> Between 1913 and 1918 the city school enrollment increased by 46%; the existing building was overcrowded. A \$175,000 bond issue passed in 1917 which allowed the construction of a new school on Mirror Lake in 1918.<sup>13</sup> The public was promised that the new facilities would last a generation.

George M. Lynch, the City Superintendent of Schools from 1919 until 1929, is credited by many as the father of the new (1926) Central High School.<sup>14</sup> He reorganized the schools on the 6-3-3 standard and favored locating new schools on large plots of land. St. Petersburg launched on a vast school building spree in 1923 which lasted until 1928. During these five years twenty new schools were erected. This was in response to the phenomenal growth of the city during the "boom" era.<sup>15</sup>

William B. Ittner designed the 1918 high school on Mirror Lake. The Cal F. Thomas Co., contractors, entered the low bid of \$136,282 in March 1918. The contractor then went broke trying to build it. The cost overruns were tremendous and a second bond issue of \$75,000 was required to complete it in 1919.<sup>16</sup> In spite of this experience Ittner was chosen to design the new Central High School in 1925. He was also to design several other schools in the county including the Sunshine School on St. Petersburg Beach.<sup>17</sup>

On March 3 of 1925 a bond issue of \$1,160,000 was passed to finance the new high school and other projects. Land was purchased on April 27 and July 23, 1925; it comprised about 17 acres.<sup>18</sup> Construction started immediately on West Central Elementary School by F.J. Mason Co., contractors, at the cost of \$70,500.<sup>19</sup> The architect was William B. Ittner<sup>20</sup> and he designed it in the Mediterranean Revival Style. This building is not part of the nomination although it stands immediately north of the boundary for Central High School.

(See Continuation Sheet)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 7.13 acres

Quadrangle name St. Petersburg

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	7	3	3	5	6	2	10	3	10	7	13	5	2	10
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** 609 feet along Fifth Avenue North; 550 feet along 25th and 26th Streets North from Fifth Avenue North; then 609 feet East to West from a point 550 feet North of Fifth Avenue North. This boundary includes all significant features of the property specifically associated with Central High School.

### 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/Larry S. Paarlberg, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Division of Archives

date May 29, 1984

street & number The Capitol

telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee

state Florida

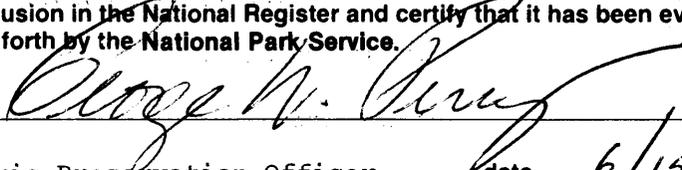
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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

6/15/84

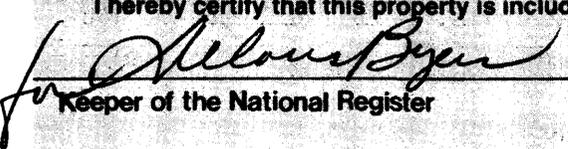
For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date

8/1/84

for   
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The projecting entrance pavilion on the first floor is pierced by three cast terra cotta arches, flanked by four polychrome terra cotta engaged columns on plinths with composite capitals. Four portrait lunettes fill the pendentives below a composite entablature, the architrave of which is filled with a bas-relief of lamps of wisdom and rosettes. Above the entablature a parapet of terra cotta is embossed with "St. Petersburg High School" in polychrome. The parapet ends in two plinths that support polychrome baluster shape finials. The parapet supports six engaged columns of a hybrid salomonic order. They carry five arches whose archivolts of cast terra cotta have a heavy cyma recta molding. Behind this arcade is a loggia with five large french doors with transoms. Above in the pediment is a quatrefoil grille of cast terra cotta. The pavilion is topped by a stepped and curved pediment. This complex silhouette is delineated by a terra cotta corona that supports three acroteria in the form of balusters with finials. Hanging from the central acroterion is a polychrome terra cotta laurel wreath.

While many interior spaces and details are worthy of note, the most significant two spaces in the building are the auditorium, which also serves as a gymnasium, and the library. The stage surrounds, ceiling beams and modillions, the lighting fixtures, and the seating all reflect the original design of the building. In the library, wooden book shelves and door surrounds, ceiling beams and decorative plaster modillions and cornices all contribute to the significance of this space.

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The plans of the Central High School were dated June 1925 and sealed by William Ittner. The consulting architect was M. Leo Elliott of Tampa, Florida.<sup>21</sup> The contractor was F.J. Mason Co. of St. Petersburg who entered the lowest bid of \$850,000.<sup>22</sup> The building was opened and dedicated December 14, 1926.<sup>23</sup>

The appearance and many special features of the school are best described in the following extract from the 1926 school yearbook.

"The Central High School, which will occupy about one and one-half block in the south central section of the twenty acre campus, will face south on Fifth Avenue North. It will be constructed on the lines of modified Spanish architecture, will be two stories high, and will contain, besides an auditorium which will seat 2,000 persons, fifty-seven class rooms. The auditorium stage, in addition to its use in presenting plays which may require even the largest casts and grandest stage fixtures, will be employed as an indoor gymnasium, divided by a steel curtain into two separate sections, each accommodating 80 physical training students.

There will be two study halls, adjoining a large central library, and a smaller auditorium, seating 150 persons, to be used for special student conferences and small meetings, such as those of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, Junior Woman's Club and Civic League. Other features of the new building will include five special student rooms for extra school activities, such as the two publications, girls' and boys' reception rooms, two large reception rooms for teachers, eleven vocational training rooms to care for Domestic Science, Manual Training, and commercial courses, four science laboratories and two lecture rooms, music and art rooms, a dental clinic, two offices for nurses and medical attendants, and a reception room for the medical clinic.

Adjoining the main building and of a design in harmony with the Spanish style, will be a large cafeteria with tables for seven hundred and a possible seating capacity of one thousand. This cafeteria will be connected with High School by means of two covered archways. Here also will be showers and special club rooms for boys, containing billiard and pool tables, as well as other helpful indoor games. Girls too will have similar club rooms at their disposal.

Under the direction of expert engineers, there will be layed out two baseball diamonds, a gridiron, a running track circling the field, and a smaller track on which exercises may be executed with no interference from other quarters of the grounds.

The laying of the first stone of the new plant marks the realization of a four years' effort on the part of Captain Lynch, superintendent of St. Petersburg's public schools, to give the city's youth the utmost in the way of thoroughly modern and entirely complete educational facilities."

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William Butts Ittner was born in St. Louis, September 4, 1864, the first of several of her decendants to be born on his grandmother's natal day. He received his early education in the public schools of the city and was graduated in 1883 from the Manual Training School of Washington University, a member of its first class. Later he entered Cornell University and was graduated as a special student in architecture with the Class of 1887. Travel and study abroad supplemented his education and enriched his professional preparation.

He began his career in 1888 by entering the office of the architectural firm of Eames & Young of St. Louis. Here he remained a year and then established an office of his own, which he maintained until 1897, when he became Commissioner of School Buildings for St. Louis. He served in that capacity until March, 1910, when he was selected Architect of the Board of Education, which position he filled until 1916. He designed all the public school buildings of the City of St. Louis during his time, including the McKinley, Soldan, Yeatman, Sumner and Cleveland High Schools and the Harris Teachers' College. His school architecture, owing to its plan efficiency and beauty of design, brought him national and international recognition, and he had to his credit some 500 schools in 115 communities and 29 states. At the National Capital he was architect for the Central High School, costing a million and a quarter dollars. He was consulting architect for a fifteen million dollar school building program at Buffalo, New York; for a three and one-half million dollar school building program at Niagara Falls, New York, and large building programs at Birmingham, Ala., Knoxville, Tenn. and St. Petersburg and Jacksonville, Florida.

He was architect for many notable buildings in St. Louis for other than school use, such as the Scottish Rite Cathedral; the St. Louis Unit of the Shriners' Hospital for Crippled Children; Neighborhood Association, St. Louis' first settlement house; two buildings for the Central Institute for the Deaf; and the Continental Life Insurance Building, a twenty-three story office building on Olive at Grand. He was a member and vice-president of the St. Louis Plaza Commission, which expended \$16,000,000 of the \$87,000,000 bond issue voted in 1923 for city buildings and improvements.

His work brought him several awards. The American Institute of Architects elected him to Fellowship and a medal was presented him for marked and worthy achievement in the design and construction of school buildings by the St. Louis Chapter of the Institute.

He served as a member of the Board of Directors of the American Institute of Architects and in other official capacities. He was President of the St. Louis Architectural Club in 1897-90 and President of the Architectural League of America in 1903-04. And he was also a life member of the National Educational Association.

During World War I he was retained as school expert by the United States Housing Bureau of the Department of Labor to make the surveys of munition centers of the country to determine their school needs.

William was married June 5, 1888 to Charlotte Crane Allan of St. Louis, the daughter of George and Nellie Allan, natives of Aberdeen, Scotland, who had come to seek their fortune in America when newly married. She died on October 18, 1922, after a long illness. William Ittner died January 26, 1936 in St. Louis, MO.

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Since the completion of the building in 1926, thousands of students have been enrolled at St. Petersburg High School. Among the more prominent graduates are: Henry Baynard, former Senator, State of Florida; John Burroughs, one-time Mayor of St. Petersburg; Floyd Christian, former Superintendent of Public Instruction, Pinellas County; William J. Dean, M.D., past President, Florida Medical Association; Tom C. Harris, former editor of St. Petersburg Times; Ian Morrison, 1963 high school All-American Basketball Team; Jack Puryear, Superintendent of Parks & Recreation, St. Petersburg, Florida; Martha Rudy Wallace, past Chairperson, Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction.<sup>26</sup>

While many older schools throughout Pinellas County have been demolished to be replaced by newer, more modern structures, St. Petersburg High School has never been endangered, due in part to the existence of strong local support of the school.<sup>27</sup> Expansion needs (i.e. a new gymnasium and a science/business technology building) are being met by new construction separate from the original structure but in a compatible design. Over two million dollars has been allocated for renovation of the present building, including interior remodeling of several classrooms for an academically-talented program, repair of the tile roofs, and general maintenance of the structure. Expressions of concern regarding alterations to the school voiced by the Alumni Association, the PTSA, and local preservationists have received assurances<sup>28</sup> from the architects involved that the building's appearance will remain unchanged.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>"St. Petersburg's Architectural and Historic Resources," (St. Petersburg Planning Department, August 1981), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>"Biography of William B. Ittner," (St. Louis, Missouri: Ittner and Co., ca 1930) Much of the information concerning William Ittner in this nomination comes from this source.

<sup>3</sup>"The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools," (Clearwater, Florida: Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction, 1926), p. 53.

<sup>4</sup>"Year Book 1926," (St. Petersburg High School, 1926), p. 115.

<sup>5</sup>Walter Fuller, History of St. Petersburg, (n.p.: 1977), p. 335.

<sup>6</sup>"The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools", pp. 12-13.

<sup>7</sup>ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>8</sup>"History of St. Petersburg", p. 332.

<sup>9</sup>ibid., p. 332.

<sup>10</sup>ibid., p. 332.

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- <sup>11</sup>"The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools," pp. 12-13.
- <sup>12</sup>History of St. Petersburg, p. 332.
- <sup>13</sup>William Straub, History of Pinellas County, (St. Augustine, Florida: St. Augustine Record Co., 1929), p. 65.
- <sup>14</sup>Fuller, p. 332, and "1926 Year Book," p. 1.
- <sup>15</sup>Straub, p. 65.
- <sup>16</sup>"The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools," p. 47.
- <sup>17</sup>ibid., p. 54, and "Biography of William B. Ittner."
- <sup>18</sup>Board of Public Instruction Pinnelas Bouny., Property Records, facsimilie of document is Figure 1 in this nomination.
- <sup>19</sup>"The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools," p. 51.
- <sup>20</sup>"The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools," and "Biography of William B. Ittner." p. 54.
- <sup>21</sup>"The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools," p. 56.
- <sup>22</sup>Fuller, p. 56.
- <sup>23</sup>Straub, p. 66.
- <sup>24</sup>"Year Book of 1926," p. 115.
- <sup>25</sup>"Biography of William B. Ittner."
- <sup>26</sup>Interview, Robert Pfeiffer by Lynn Homan. St. Petersburg, Florida, 2 March 1984.
- <sup>27</sup>Interview, Dan McAuliffe by Lynn Homan, Clearwater, Florida 5 March 1984.
- <sup>28</sup>Interview, David Houston by Howard Hansen, St. Petersburg, Florida, 16 January 1984.

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"Biography of William B. Ittner." Ittner and Co., W.D., ca. 1930.

Fuller, Walter. History of St. Petersburg. n.p., 1977

"The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools." Clearwater, Florida: Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction, 1926.

Houston, Daniel, by Howard Hansen. Interview, St. Petersburg, Florida, 16 January 1984.

McAuliffe, Daniel, by Lynn Homan. Interview, Clearwater, Florida, 2 March 1984.

Pfeiffer, Robert, by Lynn Homan. Interview, St. Petersburg, Florida, 5 March 1984.

Property Records, Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction. Pinellas County Courthouse. June 2, 1964.

"St. Petersburg's Architectural and Historic Resources." An architectural and historical survey conducted by the St. Petersburg Planning Office. St. Petersburg: Planning Department, August 1981.

Straub, William. History of Pinellas County. St. Augustine, Florida: St. Augustine Record Co., 1929.

"Year Book of 1926." St. Petersburg High School, 1926.