



Based on its architectural significance and contribution to the early development of the city, Tampa's City Hall was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, and the building was designated as a local historic landmark by Tampa City Council in 1994. It stands today as it did in 1915, as a source of inspiration that links Tampa's vibrant past to the bright prospects of its future. Old City Hall is currently home to City Council, Council Chambers, City Clerk's Office, Legal Department, Audit Department and some Human Resources Offices. It also houses the Mascotte Room and the Sister Cities Room.

Text supplied by Dennis Fernandez, Architectural Review & Historic Preservation, City of Tampa

For more information, contact

City of Tampa Archives and Records

Columbus Municipal Office Building
3402 W. Columbus Drive
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Phone: (813) 274-8030
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Hours of Operation:
Weekdays 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.



Mayor Bob Buckhorn

Old City Hall Information



Old City Hall is a municipal building located at the corner of Florida Avenue and Kennedy Boulevard at 315 East Kennedy Boulevard in Tampa, Florida.



Tampa's first City Hall was constructed in 1890, at the southeast corner of Florida Avenue and Lafayette Street. This \$10,000 building housed the city council chambers, offices for the mayor, council members, city clerk, and other officials. The building also was home to the Tampa Police Department and the Fire Department headquarters.

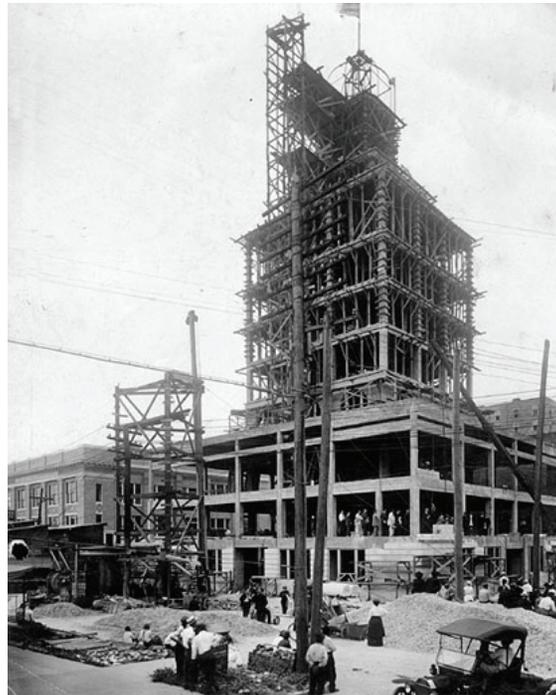
In 1912, Mayor D.B. McKay proposed a bond issue to generate monies for public improvements, including \$235,000 for a new City Hall. Twenty-six firms submitted design proposals. Bayard C. Bonfoey and M. Leo Elliott, prominent local architects, won the competition. They also designed other notable buildings in Tampa, including the Centro Asturiano and the Tampa YMCA. The City Hall building was designed as a symbol of hope for Tampa's changing image from frontier town to a substantial customs port and a leader in clear Havana cigar manufacturing. The new City Hall was lauded as the "Spirit of Tampa" in local papers as a monument to Tampa's growth.

M. Leo Elliott (1886-1967) was born in Woodstock, New York. He attended Cooper's Institute in New York City and trained at the New York City firm of Welch, Smith & Provost. In 1907, he moved to Tampa and formed a partnership with B.C. Bonfoey. Bonfoey (1872-1953) was born in Connecticut and served in

the U.S. Army in the Spanish American War. Bonfoey and Elliott's partnership was dissolved in 1917. Elliott went on to design Tampa's Italian Club, Cuban Club, Masonic Temple, and several other buildings in downtown Tampa and surrounding areas.

Bonfoey and Elliott designed a ten-story City Hall and a three-story police department directly to the south connected by a second-story skywalk with 35,000 square feet of office space. At the time, City Hall was the tallest building south of Jacksonville. With its symmetrical design, classical motifs, and elaborate terra cotta detailing, the architects' design for City Hall incorporated Beaux Arts architectural references into its traditional tripartite construction.

City Council, however, did not find the funds for the clockworks. Hortense Oppenheimer, the daughter of prominent Tampa physician



City Hall under construction in 1915.



M. Leo Elliott, Old City Hall architect, date unknown.

Louis Sims Oppenheimer, led the campaign that raised \$1,200 to help pay for the clock. W.H. Beckwith Jewelry Company donated the remainder necessary to provide the 2,840 pound, four-faced clock. Prior to the completion of City Hall, the clock was nicknamed "Hortense the Beautiful" in honor of its benefactor, and it retains this name today.

Ground was broken on July 18, 1914, by Mrs. Maria Moore Post, widow of the fifth Mayor of Tampa, Madison Post. City Hall was constructed by McGucken and Hyer, Contractors, in a timely manner in only 14 months. It was completed on August 30, 1915. In a special ceremony led by Mayor D.B. McKay on the following Saturday evening, the entire building was illuminated from base to dome, including the Roman-numeraled face of Hortense the Beautiful. Professor Walter E. Cobb, leader of Heidt's Municipal Band, composed a special "City Hall March" to commemorate the occasion. The Tampa Tribune described the new building as "Tampa's City Hall Layer Cake."