



Photo courtesy of St. Augustine Historical Society, c. 1915



TIMELINE

- **1896-1898:** Constructed as part of the City's first water utility as the pumping station
- **1928:** Converted to a community center when West King Street water treatment plant was constructed in 1927
- **1928-2005:** The St. Augustine Art Association, Little Theatre, Camp Fire Girls and Garden Club occupied the building
- **2005:** Building closed due to structural concerns
- **2009:** Architectural status report completed and scaffolding installed to support the roof
- **2013-2014:** Designated a Local Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- **2015-2021:** City preservation efforts removed non-historic additions to restore original finishes and features
- **2022:** The St. Johns Cultural Council becomes tenant and breathes new life into the building
- **2023:** Florida Historical Marker erected

BUILDING SPACES

Auditorium space: A new floor of coquina concrete installed and, once sealed, will appear like terrazzo. Trusses above are new and roof decking was repaired to match what was historically present. The green color was specified in the original 1896 engineering specifications as "green seal zinc."

Windows are original to the 1928 renovation and have been restored. The surrounding walls that have residual paint would require extensive care to remove the remaining old finish and avoid damaging the brick so they are left in their current condition following a significant amount of cleaning and superficial paint removal.

Walls to your left facing San Marco Ave and behind you at the main entrance have been completely reconstructed due to masonry failure. This allowed the scaffolding to be removed from the auditorium space.

Stage/Platform: A height variation within the building always existed, likely to aid in gravity flow of water from boilers to pumping engines, but would later be literally used as a stage. Hex tiles were covered with flooring and rediscovered and restored throughout the stage and back rooms.

Engineer's Office: The bay shaped room, once the engineer's office, was later turned into bathrooms accessed from the outside like a comfort station in historic park settings. Modern facilities could not be accommodated in this space and the terrazzo floor has been refurbished and patched where modern fire suppression equipment was installed. The plaster walls and beadboard ceiling are original and have been repaired and restored.

Kitchen and Office: The two back rooms were once open but became divided after the 1928 change in use. Walls are the original

exposed brick with multiple layers of paint and stucco, and the plaster walls are original that were repaired. The hex flooring is original, as identified in the 1896 engineering specifications. A cut-out was made in the corner of both rooms to allow a structural system to be placed in support of the last remaining original truss in the attic space.

New Addition: The 1970s addition was demolished as it was structurally unsound, and a new facility was constructed to provide bathrooms and accessibility features as well as a new office space.

The **music platform** on the exterior of the building was once a fully enclosed semi-circular brick holding tank. In 1928 it was reduced to just a platform called the 'music platform' and, at some point, was demolished. This feature has been reconstructed and during construction the original brick foundations were discovered.

The **aerating basin** brought in water with a natural aquifer, later became a wading pool, and eventually was filled in. It may be possible to restore the fountain in a future project.

The property was named **Davenport Park** in 1928 to honor the father of Naomi Davenport's father, a part-time resident in St. Augustine who bequeathed funds in her will for that purpose. The building became known as the Davenport Park Clubhouse, Davenport Playhouse, and later the Garden Center. The knee-wall and columns at the entrance were transported to this property when the original ballfield at Francis Field was decommissioned.

The **St. Johns Cultural Council** now occupies the space and has added additional necessary build-outs with careful monitoring by city staff to ensure that the building remains preserved. The space is now used as a venue to facilitate concerts, theatrical performances, literary events, exhibitions, educational programming, community meetings, and more.