

First Church of Christ, Scientist

Vermont at Eighteenth Streets - Classical Revival - 1910 - Architect unknown

On June 30, 1889, a little band known as the Quincy Society of Christian Scientists organized in the home of Mrs. Mary B. Hinckley at 622 Broadway. There were eighteen members. On September 28, 1891 this group met by appointment for the purpose of organizing a church. On January 4, 1896 the church became known by its present name.

In November, 1891, quarters were secured in the Sons of Veterans Hall, on Maine Street and the group continued to meet there until 1895 when a move was made to the Newcomb Building on the corner of Fourth and Maine Streets. In November, 1899 they moved to the Conservatory Music Hall on the corner of Hampshire and Eighth Streets. In October, 1904 the church obtained permission to use the Jewish Temple on north Ninth Street.

Due to the difficulties connected with renting places in which to worship, and desiring their own church home, a committee was appointed at the semi-annual meeting of the church in October, 1905 to look for a suitable location for building. The committee learned of the present site on the southwest corner of Vermont and Eighteenth Streets. A building fund had been established in 1897 with a \$5 contribution from one member and by 1906 the fund had grown to the amount that the church felt able to proceed with plans for a building. The first plan submitted was in July, 1907 for a building to seat 250 people. However, it soon became evident that the growth in membership would prove such a building too small so in December, 1909 plans were drawn for an edifice to seat twice that number. The cost of the building with furnishings, the organ excepted, to cost \$20,000. The cornerstone was laid on December 8, 1910 and the first service was held in the new building on September 3, 1911. On Sunday, September 2, 1917 the debt was paid and the building was dedicated.

With the architect and builder unknown one must determine the architectural influence used from research. It would appear that the building reflects much of the design of the school of Thomas Jefferson. After his presidency, Jefferson occupied a strategic position with reference to the main lines of development of American building. Jefferson's adherence to ancient Rome as the ultimate architectural authority place him in the vanguard of the American Neoclassical Movement. He was also inspired by his attitude toward Andre Palladio (1508-80) who was recognized as the most influential architect of the whole Italian Renaissance.

There are similarities of the architectural design of this church to those of Jefferson's home at Monticello and to the Jefferson designed buildings at the University of Virginia. As one approaches the steps to the church the arched opening flanked by two square-headed openings are symbolic of the influence of the Palladian motif. Jefferson liked columns and used them unsparingly and one will note the presence of several columns in the church...two at the entrance and others inside the auditorium. Columns were first developed by the Greeks as structural supporting members. The Etruscans and Romans took the Greek columns, modified them and added two of their own...the Tuscan type and the Composite type respectively. The Tuscan, which is a simplified version of the Greek Doric is the type used in the church. The Tuscan column surface is smooth with simple moldings which form a finish at the top and at the pedestal or base of the column.

Above the outside doorway entering the church note the semi-circular round-headed stained-glass window segmented by mullions. This same style is also used in Jefferson's home and at the University of Virginia. Inside, the ceiling over the center section has a domed effect, much used in Roman inspired architecture, running the length of the hall with flat type ceilings flanking on either side. The white painted surfaces maintain the refined simplicity of the architecture.

The stained-glass used in the large windows at both sides on the auditorium and throughout the entrance area is in tones of gold and bronze etched in black which has an alabaster effect. The organ, located to the right of the reading desk is a two-manual and pedal instrument.

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