

# First Church of Christ Scientist got its own place in 1911

By Ruth Hultz

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**T**he First Church of Christ Scientist at 1644 Vermont has a long and colorful history.

It started in 1889 when two students of Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Christian Science church, helped organize the Quincy Society of Christian Scientists.

They changed the name to First Church of Christ Scientist in 1896. For years the small group met in homes, the Sons of Veterans Hall, the Newcomb building and the Jewish Temple on Ninth Street.

By the early 1900s, though, the group decided it was time to build a church building. So it hired Chicago architect Solon Beman — who had built Christian Science churches around the country — to design their new building at 18th and Vermont. Church history says that George Behrensmeyer was the associate architect.

In 1911, the group moved into

the Classical Revival building. The church was built for \$24,000 on land bought from Charles and Anna Bull. Church documents show the carpentry work cost \$7,34, stone work cost \$2,712 and the cost of the pews was \$985 — all sizable amounts for the time.

Classic Revival was a popular style for Christian Science churches in the early 1900s and the Quincy congregation chose that style for its church.

The colonnade, or row of columns in the auditorium, creates the feeling of Greek and Roman temples and engenders calmness and comfort for the worship services.

A break in the simplicity comes from the three gold-lettered quotes behind the platform and desk where the readers conduct the service.

“God is Love” takes the highest place in the dome-shaped area, flanked by a Bible scripture from Matthew 11:28 and a quote from

**The portico on the First Church of Christ Scientist building includes Doric and square columns, pilasters and a pediment surrounded by a fan light.**



**The large board room is made cozy because of the original warm-colored birch trim and antiques.**

Mary Baker Eddy's "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures."

"This shows just how grand simplicity can be," said Robert Christie, historic restoration consultant. "They did things exactly right the first time. The pews are the original birch. It was used only in the best homes. It's as hard a wood as you can find. It is indestructible."

Christie said the organ grill is the quintessential style for organ grills and its design was derived from a shell.

The diamond paned windows of butterscotch-colored slag glass, or opaque pressed glass, Christie said, "gives a nice, warm feeling inside when the light comes through; it is a restful light."

Music is an important part of

the congregation's worship and members still enjoy the Hall Organ Co. electro-pneumatic organ. Members say the acoustics in the theater style auditorium are excellent.

The board room behind the auditorium has two tambour walls — wooden walls that roll into the ceiling. The walls were originally used to divide the large room into separate Sunday school areas.

In 1959, the congregation converted the basement into a large, brightly lit Sunday school room.

The close-knit congregation is grateful for an endowment that has allowed it to conscientiously preserve the church. Recently, the congregation installed a wheel chair ramp, added a new roof and rebuilt the front brick steps.