

Unitarian Church
1479 Hampshire
Harvey Chatten, 1914
Craftsman Style

The church at 16th and Hampshire is the fourth meeting house of the Unitarian congregation in the city. Founded in 1840 as the Second Congregational Church, it was the third congregation of Unitarians to be established in Illinois. The church has a history of distinguished leadership, beginning with Washington University founder W. G. Eliot and continuing through the pastorate of eminent Dante scholar Lyman Greenman, who was the first to preach in the new building.

The Unitarian Church building is distinguished by superb masonry design and craftsmanship. The ashlar blocks resemble rubble in individual shape, but closer inspection reveals very careful cutting and fitting in order to create an effect of broken courses rather than purely random arrangement. Particularly fine examples of the stone-cutters art can be seen in the fitting of the voussoirs into flat arches above the doors and windows.

Like most Craftsman churches, this one vaguely recalls the country parish churches of late medieval England. A squat, unsteeped lateral tower, prominent gables, and broadly glazed walls were all distinguishing marks of the last phase of Gothicism in rural England. But the detailing of the tower also harks back to Chatten's Queen Anne residential work. Its corner turrets, clerestory windows, and witch's hat roof can all be found in East End houses of twenty years earlier.

In plan, however, the church is strictly a twentieth century American invention. According to church records it grew out of trips to Unitarian churches in Kansas City and Champaign. The auditorium stretches the length of the building on the the west, while immediately in front of the tower vestibule is a parlor, complete with stone fireplace and leaded glass doors. The windows are also free of strictly religious associations. The street-facing chancel window, dedicated to the founders of the church and donated by their descendants, depicts a scene in Indian Mounds Park. Windows in the parlor recall events that shaped America: the Pilgrims signing a covenant aboard the Mayflower and the treaty between William Penn and the Delaware Indians in 1682.

The church still enjoys use of the organ installed in its third building in 1875. Now the oldest remaining organ in Quincy, it was built by the Steere Organ Company in Springfield, Massachusetts, and modified only to permit operation of the blower by an electric motor.