

***HISTORIC PRESERVATION STUDY REPORT**

SIXTH CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST

(Written Winter, 1983)

I. NAME

Historic: First Church of Christ, Scientist, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Common: Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

II. LOCATION

1036 North Van Buren Street

Tax Key Number: 392-1597-000

Legal Property Description: Plat of lot No. 1 in NW $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 28-7-22 Block 92 lot 15 and lot 16 of block 92 in plat of NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 28 adjoining.

III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

IV. OWNER

Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, Milwaukee
1036 North Van Buren Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

V. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Sixth Church Christ, Scientist is located on Milwaukee's lower east side in a mixed-use neighborhood. Originally the area was part of Yankee Hill, a nineteenth century neighborhood of elegant mansions and row houses. When the church was constructed in 1902, the neighborhood still retained its predominantly single family residential character, but it is now primarily a mixture of commercial establishments and apartment buildings.

The church is composed of a rectangular block that is one story high with a balcony level. It measures 112 feet long by 53 feet wide and occupies almost all of its site. The steeply pitched, end gable roof is covered with brown asphalt shingles. The roof is pierced on both sides with three large, gabled dormers. The walls are faced with soft red brick laid in garden wall cross bond and trimmed with red sandstone. The sidewalls are symmetrically articulated with square brick piers between the windows that terminate at the overhanging eaves. The windows are either fixed or casement sash with leaded quarrels of amber glass.

The gabled façade is steeply pitched with sandstone coping and brick corbelling. Although the façade is symmetrically proportioned, its fenestration is asymmetrically arranged and includes a variety of windows of differing sizes and shapes. To the south of the entry are two

segmentally arched, single casements set within deep reveals and to the north of the entry is a single lancet-arched window and a double, segmentally arched casement.

The entry is raised from the street level and is reached by a U-shaped stair consisting of two double flights of brick with modern cast concrete treads and risers and wrought-iron railings. This current stair plan was installed in 1967 to replace the original stairway, which was removed to accommodate the widening of North Van Buren Street. Except for this alteration, the exterior appearance of the church has not been changed. The entrance is located in a projecting gable vestibule with double oak doors and massive wrought iron hinges. It is set in a compound, round arch with brick ribbing and a brick drip mold.

At the center of the façade above the entry is a large Gothic arch with a brick drip mold framing a deep recess within which is set four lancet arched windows. Above these windows are three inlaid marble cruciform insignia.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE

Date Built: 1902

Architect: Elmer Grey

Milwaukee Landmark, 1978

National Register of Historic Places, 1980

The Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist is primarily of historical significance for its role in establishing the Christian Science Church in Wisconsin and as the first Christian Science Association established in the United States outside of Massachusetts. After the founding of the first Christian Scientist Association in Lynn, Massachusetts and the Mother Church in Boston, the Milwaukee Association was the next Christian Scientist Association to be organized in the United States. The present edifice was the first permanent structure built for the Milwaukee Association and continues in use as the home of the descendent of the original pioneer congregation.

Architecturally, Sixth Church is an interesting example of church architecture illustrating a highly personal interpretation of the English Gothic style by its architect, Elmer Grey. It is one of the few important examples of Grey's work executed in Milwaukee before he moved to Southern California where he had a distinguished career.

VII. HISTORY

Milwaukee's contributions to establishing the Christian Science Church as a national denomination are recorded in the archives of the Mother Church in Boston. The records state that Milwaukee was the first city after the original organizations were founded in Lynn and Boston, Massachusetts to establish a Christian Scientist Association.

The origins of the Christian Science Church can be traced to 1866 when its founder, Mary Baker Eddy, experienced a miraculous physical healing. She had slipped on the ice near her home in Lynn, Massachusetts and had seriously injured her back. Subsequently, her injury healed without medical treatment. She attributed this cure to her belief in spiritual metaphysics. Metaphysics is a science, which theorizes that within the mind there are powers that can heal physical infirmities without the aid of medicine or surgery. Mrs. Eddy was first introduced to metaphysics by Phineas Quimby who was an early practitioner and theoretician

of the science. She had been physically ill most of her adult life and having heard of Quimby's work, she went to visit him in 1862 at his residence in Portland, Maine. Quimby's theory of mental healing was derived from a personal revelation he had received from Biblical scriptures. He believed that every man, like Christ, could heal himself and other. After she had been healed by Quimby, Mrs. Eddy remained in Portland to learn the divine truths of spiritual metaphysics and become herself, a practitioner. Mrs. Eddy subsequently returned to her home in Lynn. About a month after Phineas Quimby's death in January of 1866, Mrs. Eddy had her accident on the ice and was cured. This event, combined with her previous contact with Quimby, compelled her to develop a religious doctrine, which she called "primitive Christianity" based on spiritual metaphysics as divinely revealed to her through the scriptures. Although Mrs. Eddy did not immediately use the term "Christian Science", major historians of the church credit these events as the beginning of the Christian Science movement.

News of her healing powers spread quickly resulting in a following eager to learn the science of metaphysics. In response to this, Mrs. Eddy established, in her home, the first school of instruction for metaphysical healers in 1870. In 1879, the school was chartered by the State of Massachusetts as the first such institution of its kind anywhere. The culmination of this early period was the publication in 1875 of Mrs. Eddy's doctrine of spiritual metaphysics called, *Health and Science*. In the following year, she established the first Christian Scientist Association in Lynn. Although the original concept of her doctrine did not include an organized church and hierarchy, she was prompted by her growing number of followers and practitioners to establish the Mother Church in Boston in 1879.

In 1883 Dr. Silas J. Sawyer, a Milwaukee dentist, and his wife, Jenny, were trained under Mrs. Eddy as metaphysical healers and instructors of the religion. The Sawyers returned to Milwaukee in 1884 and started the Wisconsin Metaphysical Institute under a charter granted by the State. Sessions were held in Dr. Sawyer's office parlor on East Wisconsin Avenue. In October of 1884 the Sawyers established the Christian Scientists Association of Wisconsin. It was the only association of its kind in the United States other than the original ones in Lynn and Boston. The Association, which met in rented halls, was reorganized as the Church of Christ, Scientist in 1889. Subsequently, the name was changed to Students Christian Scientists Association, No. 11.

In 1901-1902 the present church edifice was constructed as the first permanent home of the congregation. Sealed in the cornerstone were the complete records of the pioneer work of the Milwaukee church. It was designed by architect, Elmer Grey, a native of Milwaukee who had received his apprentice training with the eminent local firm of Ferry and Clas. Sixth Church was one of Grey's last major works built in Milwaukee before poor health forced him to move to California. In California he formed a partnership with Myron Hunt and together they designed many notable buildings including such major architectural landmarks as the Pasadena Community Playhouse and the Beverly Hills Hotel.

Grey's English Gothic inspired design for Sixth Church was a significant departure from the Classical Revival style, which, even then was becoming the symbolic architecture of the Christian Science Church. Although his design did not establish a trend, the five other Christian Science Churches, later built in Milwaukee, are all designed in variations of the Classical Revival style. Grey was recognized for his individualistic thinking on religious architectural expression. Shortly after he moved to California, his design for Sixth Church was featured in the prestigious, *Inland Architect and News Record*; and a lengthy article on his views, entitled, "Christian Science Church Edifices and What They Stand for," was published in the *Fine Arts Journal*. He subsequently designed other Christian Science churches in California.

Within two years after the construction of their church, the original congregation merged with the Second Church Christ, Scientist, Milwaukee and was chartered by the Mother Church as First church Christ, Scientist, Milwaukee. By 1907 the congregation had outgrown this Van Buren Street building and it was put up for sale. A minority of church members, many who were the original pioneers of the Wisconsin Christian Science movement, objected to the sale. The minority group split from the First Church congregation and purchased the building. In that same year they were incorporated as the Christian Science Society of Milwaukee. In 1937 the congregation petitioned the Mother Church for its present name, Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist.

VIII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Sixth Church Christ, Scientist, Milwaukee be designated as a historic structure in accordance with the provisions of Section 2-335 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

VIII. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

The following preservation guidelines represent the principle concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding this historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. These guidelines shall be applicable only to Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Roof

1. Retain the original roof shape and dormers. Additional dormers, skylights and solar panels may be added if they are not visible from the public right of way. Avoid making changes to the roof shape and dormers that would alter the building height, roofline, pitch or gable orientation.
2. Avoid using new roofing materials that are inappropriate to the style and period of the building.

B. Openings

Retain the location and style of window and door openings and the number and configuration of panes on the north, south and west elevations. Replacement or repair of deteriorated materials shall resemble the original in color, texture and dimensions so that the appearance of the building is not altered. Avoid making additional openings or changes in the principal elevations by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Avoid the filling-in or covering of openings with inappropriate materials, such as glass block, which are historically out of character with the building. Avoid using modern style window units such as horizontal sliding sash in place of casement sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

C. Additions

The north, south and west elevations are integral to preserving the structure's architectural integrity. Additions are not recommended. However, any approved additions must be confined to the rear (east) elevation and be designed in such a way so as not to visually intrude on the other elevations. The design of the addition should be compatible with the original structure in massing, scale, proportions, materials and color.

D. Exterior finishes

1. Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural stone and unpainted brick. This is likely to be historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
2. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or not used when the building was constructed.
3. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick or stone surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone or marble.
4. Repair or replace deteriorated materials with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer.

E. Porches and Trim

1. Retain existing porches, steps and trim that are visible on the principal elevations except that restoration to the documented original condition is allowed. Avoid the indiscriminate removal of trim such as copings and window and door moldings that are essential to the maintenance of the structure's historic character and appearance.
2. Replace or repair deteriorated materials with new materials that duplicate the appearance of the appearance of the original material as closely as possible. Avoid using replacement materials that do not accurately reproduce the appearance of the original material.