

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (1)

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common

First Church of Christ Scientist

(2) Historic (if applicable)

same

II. Location

(1) Street Address

315 Wisconsin Ave.

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)

4th

III. Classification

(1) Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.)

Building

(2) Zoning District

R 6

(3) Present Use

Church

IV. Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Name(s)

The Congregation, First Church of Christ Scientist

(2) Street Address

315 Wisconsin Ave.

(3) Telephone Number

251-2771 (clerk's: 238-5066)

V. Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Parcel Number

0709-144-1308-7

(2) Legal Description Original Plat.

SE 66 Ft of Lot 10 & All of Lot 2
Block 92

VI. Condition of Property

(1) Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins)

Excellent

(2) Altered or Unaltered?

Unaltered

(3) Moved or Original Site?

Original Site

(4) Wall Construction

Foundation wall: reinforced concrete; upper walls: brick

(5) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the present and original physical construction and appearance (limit 500 words).

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

VI. (5) Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

The building of First Church of Christ Scientist stands today the same as it was in 1929 when designed and erected. The grandeur of its scale and the materials used are such that today's building costs prohibit now the construction of a building like it. The Wisconsin State Journal described the building's appearance when it was completed in 1929 (Friday, October 25, 1929):

"(the church on Wisconsin avenue (was) built with dignified simplicity and grace along the lines of Georgian architecture. . .

"Built to accommodate 850 people, the imposing edifice is equipped with opera-like seats in walnut brown to blend with the speaker's pulpit. There is a large Sunday School room on the lower floor and a reading room on the second floor.

"Large stone pillars quarried in one place, the only kind in the city, grace the entrance lending an attractive colonial atmosphere.

"Red brick and limestone constitute the exterior construction, while the interior walls are decorated in a cream color finish. The floor is of terrazzo."

Aside from interior repainting, the building has not been altered. It has strong Georgian and classical motifs throughout. Among its most important details are:

The Exterior

- * a large graceful, classical dome over the entrance
- * four Doric style columns
- * early Regency doorways with fluted pilasters
- * red brick walls done in Flemish bond (typical of Georgian architecture)
- * arched colonial windows

Foyer

- * terrazzo flooring (white and black squares)
- * rounded archways at the stairways
- * art deco lamps with a classical motif

Nave

- * segmented arch vaulted ceiling
- * nine bays on each side demarcated by simple rectangular pilasters; each bay has a round arched window
- * art deco ceiling lights
- * walnut theater seats
- * a rear balcony supported by two octagonal columns

Chancel Area

- * raised platform
- * fluted pilasters on rear wall flanked by two large columns with composite capitals (Corinthian and Ionic)
- * an organ loft supported by six large modillions and decorated with four columns featuring floral-leafed capitals

Second Floor Reading Room

- * a large classical domed ceiling
- * exquisite Georgian fireplace
- * semicircular front wall with French windows
- * art deco wall lamps
- * large folding doors leading to small chambers on two sides of the room

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner First Church of Christ Scientist	(2) Original Use Church
(3) Architect or Builder Frank Morris Riley	(4) Architectural Style Georgian
(5) Date of Construction Completed in October, 1929	(6) Indigenous Materials Used none

(7) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the significance of the nominated property and its conformance to the designation criteria of the Landmarks Commission Ordinance (33.01), limit of 500 words.

VIII. List of Bibliographical References Used

1. Dedication Service Historical Sketch , (October 23, 1949)
2. Christian Science in Madison, Wisconsin , a report submitted to the Mother Church (1932)
3. "Have You Seen This Madison," Wisconsin State Journal, December 30, 1973
4. "New Christian Science Church Open Sunday," Wisconsin State Journal, October 25, 1929, p.6
5. "Frank M. Riley," Wisconsin State Journal, May 23, 1949
6. "The Cultural Climate of Christian Science in 1890-1910," an interview with Charles Hosmer, Progress at Principia (Summer, 1979), pp. 1-3
7. Stephen Gottschalk, The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life(Berkeley, Ca.), 1973
8. Miscellaneous records, First Church of Christ Scientist, Madison

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title Kenneth D. Nordin a member of First Church of Christ Scientist	
(2) Organization Represented (if any) none	
(3) Address 2919 Oxford Rd Madison 53705	(4) Telephone Number 231-1417
(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared January 15, 1980	

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

VII.(7) Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

The First Church of Christ Scientist building is of historical importance for two reasons:

- (1) it has served as the first permanent church of the Christian Science religion in Madison
- (2) it's architect, Frank Morris Riley, ranks among Madison's major architects in the first half of the 20th century

History of the Building

The church structure at 315 Wisconsin Ave. has been a focal point for the Christian Science movement in Wisconsin for most of the 20th century. Christian Science was introduced in the city in the mid 1880's about five years after Mary Baker Eddy, the movement's leader, organized the first congregation in Boston (April, 1879). Many of the early adherents to the religion in Madison became active followers after they experienced physical healings of one sort or another.

During the formative year Madison's pioneering Christian Scientists met informally in private homes. They officially organized themselves in April, 1895 and shortly thereafter moved into their first public meeting place -- the Jewish synogogue then located on West Washington Street. The congregation grew apace and in 1908 moved into a larger facility, the Women's Building. First Church of Christ Scientist was to meet there until the mid 1920's.

In 1912 the congregation purchased the lot and building at 315 Wisconsin Ave., once the home of Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice J. H. Carpenter. The congregation used the former Carpenter residence as its reading room (a place where Christian Science literature can be studied borrowed, or purchased). Meanwhile, the church members struggled to raise funds for a new church facility. In 1919, for an unknown reason, the congregation sold the Wisconsin Avenue property to the Methodist Hospital Association for \$14,000. A year later the church members repurchased the property for the same price.

In 1918 some of the members of First Church of Christ Scientist broke away to form Second Church of Christ Scientist. The new group purchased a residence at 263 Langdon Street and converted it into a church facility. In the mid 1920's the two congregations began to reconsider the need for two churches and in 1927 merged as First Church of Christ Scientist. The united congregation sold the Second Church building and used the funds to promote the program for a new church facility.

The First Church congregation staged a corner stone laying ceremony on January 1, 1929 and moved into its new facility the following October. Twenty years later, on October 23, 1949, the congregation celebrated in a dedicatory service the final payment of its indebtedness for the building. It had taken the congregation of First Church of Christ Scientist sixty-five years to form, build the church, and pay off the debts. The building has become a landmark on the landscape of Madison's capital area and an identification point of Christian Science.

The Building's Style and its Architect

Frank Morris Riley, the congregation's choice for architect, was a logical selection. The church members wanted someone who could build them a grand, classical temple. Riley, who had studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and in Europe before settling in Madison, specialized in colonial and classical style architecture. By the end of his career he had designed many grand homes, including the present mansion of Wisconsin's governor, fraternity houses, and commercial buildings such as the Madison Gas and Electric Building. First Church of Christ Scientist was to be the only Madison area church he designed.

The Georgian style building Riley designed for the First Church congregation was consistent with a general trend of architecture for urban Christian Science churches built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Across the country Christian Science facilities were being erected that looked like Roman temples on the outside and featured quiet, dignified interiors. The architecture reflected the sense of progress and bigness and optimism for the future that Christian Scientists of the day felt. This attitude came in part from the fast growth the churches were experiencing then as well as from values of the American society as a whole.

City planners, architects, church leaders, and politicians were gloring in the early part of the 20th century in their country's advances -- its economic growth, its technological progress, its cultural achievements. Community leaders wanted their public buildings to be grand in style to reflect the greatness they felt. The classical style, articulated at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 as the ideal expression of architecture for the new American city, was widely used for banks, government offices, and other public buildings. The Christian Science movement had a display at the Chicago fair and its members believed strongly in the progressive themes stated there.

The classical style, consequently became the architectural expression of early 20th century Christian Science thought. The building for First Church of Christ Scientist in Madison became part of that tradition. Architecturally, it serves today as a local monument of a once important national trend.

Its grand style and exquisite detail also are testimony to the craftsmanship of Frank Morris Riley.