

THE SANCTUARY DOWNTOWN/FOURTH CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST: RENAISSANCE REVIVAL “GATEWAY TO THE HIGHLANDS”

Why do you think this building might be nicknamed the “Gateway to the Highlands?”

The 1921 Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Italian Renaissance Revival style, with Classical Revival influences, as executed by two master Denver architects, Burnham F. Hoyt and Merrill H. Hoyt of the firm Hoyt and Hoyt. The church is a well-preserved example of an early 20th century urban neighborhood church. It is located in the Highlands neighborhood.

Structure

The Italian Renaissance Revival style emulated the Renaissance palazzi of northern Italy and was most popular in America from about 1890 to 1930. Buildings of this style are usually rectangular or square in plan. Houses are usually ornate and two- or three-stories high. Public buildings are usually imposing and three- or four-stories high.

The church displays many of the character-defining elements of the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The arcading of the north and south elevations is the most prominent characteristic. Other defining characteristics include the ceramic-tiled hipped roof with widely overhanging eaves and decorative brackets below; the exclusion of the frieze; the symmetrical elevations with tall, narrow, arched windows; the entry entablature supported by classical pilasters; and the ancones used in the lower window surrounds (Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form).

Architect

In 1920, Burnham F. Hoyt (1887-1960), with the help of his brother Merrill H. Hoyt (1881-1933), designed the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist. Burnham and Merrill Hoyt were Denver natives who grew up in the Highlands neighborhood and went to North High School. Merrill began his career as a draftsman for the firm of William E. Fisher in 1899. In 1915, he started his own practice. His younger brother, Burnham, joined the firm in 1919 after studying at the Beaux Arts Institute in New York City and further training with renowned architects of the day. Their architectural firm prospered in the post World War I era. In addition to the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, they collaborated on several other buildings in Denver, including the Denver Press Club, Lake Junior High School and the Park Hill Branch Library (all designated as Denver Landmark properties), as well as St. Martin's Chapel at St. John's Cathedral and an addition to the Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form).

Merrill's work was cut short when he died of a heart attack at the age of 52 in 1933. Burnham's work encompassed the turn-of-the-century revival style movement that persisted into the 1930s, as this building demonstrates with the Italian Renaissance Revival style. His work also comprised the clearest examples in the Rocky Mountain region of the great transition from the use of historic styles to the

mainstream modern movement as seen in the Denver Public Library and Red Rocks Amphitheater, both listed on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form).

Neighborhood

The Highlands is not just one district, but many, and was originally a city in its own right. It was incorporated in 1875. By 1890, Highlands included more than 35 separate subdivisions. The city had high aspirations of its own, touting clean air high above the smoke and industry of Denver, clean artesian water and, most important, clean morals. Although liquor was not forbidden in Highlands, liquor licenses were so expensive that none were issued until well after Prohibition. When Denver was still a dirty, dusty rambunctious frontier town, devoid of trees and other vegetation, early Highlands settlers were engaged in more civilized pursuits: planting trees and gardens. While Denver was called the Queen City, Highlands was known as the Garden City of the Plains (Potter-Highlands Neighborhood History).

Christian Science

Christian Science is a religion that was founded in New England in the last quarter of the 19th century by Mary Baker Eddy. Mrs. Eddy argued in her book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (1875) that sickness is an illusion that can be corrected by prayer. The book became Christian Science's central text, along with the Bible.

Mrs. Eddy described Christian Science as a return to "primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing." There are key differences between Christian Science theology and that of other branches of Christianity. In particular, adherents believe that reality is purely spiritual and the material world is an illusion. They believe that disease is a mental error rather than physical disorder, and that the sick should be treated not by medicine, but by a form of prayer that seeks to correct the beliefs responsible for the illusion of ill health (First Church of Christ, Scientist Fact Sheet). Revival styles are very typical of the early buildings of the Church of Christ, Scientist. The simplicity and elegance of the styles are a visual reflection of the harmony of spirit presented in the teachings of the faith (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form).

Zen Center of Denver

The Zen Center of Denver purchased this building in 1998 for \$460,000 to provide space, growth, particularly in community outreach and residential Zen training. The main room was divided into two sections in order to create a space for meditation. To do this, half of the original chairs were taken out and sold. The remaining chairs are still original to the building.

Uses Today: The Sanctuary

The Sanctuary Denver purchased the building for 1.8 million in August, 2015. In over 90 years, The Sanctuary is only the third owner of the building. The Sanctuary is a non-denominational, Christian church with Presbyterian roots. They offer public services on Sunday mornings with a variety of community events and educational classes. More info at: www.thesanctuarydenver.org.

References

Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form.
Denver Public Library. Potter-Highlands Neighborhood History. Retrieved from <https://history.denverlibrary.org/potter-highlands-neighborhood-history>.
First Church of Christ, Scientist Fact Sheet.
The Sanctuary Fact Sheet.