

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC First Church of Christ Scientist

AND/OR COMMON

Christian Science Church

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

2619 Dwight Way

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Berkeley

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

8th

STATE

California

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE

94704

COUNTY

Alameda

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
___DISTRICT	___PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	___AGRICULTURE	___MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	___UNOCCUPIED	___COMMERCIAL	___PARK
___STRUCTURE	___BOTH	___WORK IN PROGRESS	___EDUCATIONAL	___PRIVATE RESIDENCE
___SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	___ENTERTAINMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
___OBJECT	___IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	___GOVERNMENT	___SCIENTIFIC
	___BEING CONSIDERED	___YES: UNRESTRICTED	___INDUSTRIAL	___TRANSPORTATION
		___NO	___MILITARY	___OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Executive Board of Directors, First Church of Christ Scientist

STREET & NUMBER

2619 Dwight Way

CITY, TOWN

Berkley

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

California 94704

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Recorder, Alameda County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

1225 Fallon Street

CITY, TOWN

Oakland

STATE

California 94612

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

See Continuation Sheet

DATE

\_\_\_FEDERAL \_\_\_STATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Ester McCoy wrote the building description:

"In 1910, when Maybeck was almost 50, five women of the congregation of the First Church of Christ, Scientist came one day to talk to him. They wanted, he recalled 'a church that would look like a church' and built of materials 'that are what they claim to be, not imitations.' Maybeck, whose religious feeling embraced everything, asked about their religion. The sincerity with which they spoke reminded him of the faith of the men who had built the early Romanesque churches in the south of France.

"Maybeck began to wonder how he could 'put himself in the boots of a fellow in the twelfth century,' as he described it. He was certain of one thing: the man of the Middle Ages could use 'the most modern materials he could lay his hands on,' and would combine them in such a way as to express the spirit of his faith.

"After Maybeck had found what he wanted to say, he looked among the common materials--the natural ones and the fabricated ones. From industry he took asbestos panels and factory sash; cement and local redwood completed his list for the structure. He cast concrete in hexagonal columns for the loggia to the left of the portico; against these he played rough redwood columns. To the right was a row of free-standing square fluted columns also of cast concrete; on top of each was a single complex trellis structure, which brought wistaria vines into the architectural composition. The Romanesque capitals were in the spirit of those in Ste. Madeleine's at Vezelay. Many castings were made before Maybeck was satisfied. 'He had great knowledge of what he wanted,' according to Anthony Tovani, who made the castings. The capitals were one of the loveliest passages in Maybeck's work--the figures of carollers in high relief set a joyous theme which ruled the spirit of the entire church.

"Asbestos panels formed a surfacing material for exterior walls; they were fastened to the frame in a rhythm of diamond-shaped pieces of red asbestos. Maybeck re-divided the vertical divisions of the factory sash to give them the character of a Japanese screen, and inserted handmade glass of warm flesh tones.

"Without towers or spires, he led the eye up, from the gently pitched roof covering the portico, from one hovering roof to a higher one, and finally to a modest cupola. It was a broad and friendly exterior, whose only thin verticals were cast concrete tracery of the two great windows, and the delicate lines of the factory sash.

"The directness with which Maybeck spanned the Greek cross plan was unexpected for one who loved height. Hinged trusses cut diagonally across the nave; the springings were four decorated concrete columns. The vertical members between the upper and lower chord were pierced with Gothic tracery outlined in gold.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1910

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Bernard Ralph Maybeck (1862-1957)

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Winthrop Sargeant has called Bernard Maybeck's Christian Science Church in Berkeley one of the most extraordinary and charming ecclesiastical structures in America-- a curious combination of colonnades, trellises, and dark rafted interiors that seem to float airily on the surrounding shrubbery. He designed this masterpiece at age 47 at the request of the Christian Scientists who wanted a building which was inspired by the past, but constructed of materials of the day. He chose concrete, factory sash, asbestos panels and redwood and based the form and detailing on Gothic, Japanese, Byzantine, and Romanesque architecture.

Maybeck was one of the twentieth century's outstanding architects--sometimes treated lightly or scorned by critics, other times lauded by those who studied his work carefully. Many feel he is the American Antonio Gaudi--there is still no major publication on his long career.

Robert Winter has tried to evaluate his contribution:

"Bernard Maybeck can be more readily labelled an Arts and Crafts architect than most of his Northern California colleagues. His own life was characterized by unpretentiousness and simplicity, marked by a deep respect for nature and an overriding desire to return to what he considered the fundamentals of human existence. He regarded art as integral with life; work that does not so correspond could not be art. He felt that design was to be guided by the mood and character of those activities which it was to shelter; the design process was approached as a craft, not as an aloof fine art and certainly not as a business. While he was not adverse to the machine for many tasks, ornament and color were strictly a product of the hands, often his own.

"Maybeck's family emigrated from Germany to New York where Bernard was born. His father was a woodcarver, so successful in that profession that he was able to give his son an excellent secondary education which Bernard was not too successful in mastering, an apprenticeship in woodcarving where Bernard's brilliant eccentricity made him a little out of place, and then a term of study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris where Bernard was equally eccentric but which was an enormous influence in

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,0	56,5	5,8,0	4,1	9,1	0,1,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			

B						
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Block 1874, Lot number 12. Frontage on Dwight Way, 150 feet and depth on Bowditch Street 175 feet.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

July 1977

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.,

TELEPHONE

523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington,

STATE

D. C.

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL \_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_

LOCAL \_\_\_\_

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: Junior League of Oakland Historic Sites Survey

DATE: 1971, Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Bancroft Library, University of California

CITY,TOWN: Berkeley STATE: California 94720

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: Berkeley City Landmark

DATE: 1975, Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Berkeley Landmarks Preservation Commission

CITY,TOWN: Berkeley STATE: California 94704

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Byzantine-inspired ornament on the capitals was picked out in gold, blue and red; designs were stencilled on rough-sawn redwood brackets in colors so subdued that color and texture were fused. There were endless lovely small details--the floral designs inscribed in the two cast concrete readers' stands; the hanging steel light bowls--pierced with a pattern of quatrefoils--above the pews; the cross-form lights of 4 by 4-inch redwood in the Fireplace Room; the multiplication of members in the open truss of the Fireplace Room, originally the Sunday School.

"Maybeck moved with confidence from Renaissance plan to flamboyant Gothic tracery, from Romanesque columns to Japanese timber work, to Byzantine decoration. No one has ever carried the burden of the past more weightlessly."<sup>1</sup>

Robert Bernhardt continues:

"In 1910, this masterpiece of eclecticism went up. Essentially, it is a church of redwood resting on a concrete base. The four basic styles, each skillfully enunciated, are amalgamated into a harmonious whole.

"Gothic appears in the window tracery, in the gold-painted panels of the four great trusses which span the interior, in the ubiquitous quatrefoil panels to the rear of the readers' stands; in the delicate gold tracery in front of the organ loft. Romanesque is found in the rounded truss column capitals of the sanctuary and in the exterior fluted columns, capped with figures of medieval carollers. Byzantine makes its appearance in the downspout at the front portico, in the richly painted designs on the wood-panelled interior walls, and on the elaborately bracketed truss columns. (The paintings were all executed by a man named Schenckenberger, after Maybeck's designs. To this day, they have never been repainted, and still shine with their original coats of orange, red and blue.)

The Japanese influence is concentrated on the exterior, in the portico roof, in the detached wooden beams resting on columns adjoining the west end of the portico, in the wooden trellises at the far west facade, and in the row of concrete columns to the right of the portico. Climbing wisteria vines surrounding the trellises add a note of delicacy. Five heavy wooden brackets under the west rooflines also show their Oriental origins.

"The building is lighted naturally by the large areas of glass on three sides of the church; artificially, by the many hanging sanctuary lamps of steel pierced with trefoils, and by the hammered brass capped and truncated redwood lights in the reading room. Heating is by forced air, with the ducts being cleverly hidden in the truss columns of the sanctuary.

1. McCoy, Ester, Five California Architects, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1960. p. 24.

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"The First Church of Christ Scientist of Berkeley was completed at the high water mark of Maybeck's career. It attracts visitors from all over the world, simply because there is nothing like it anywhere. The church is a monument of immense beauty and strength, literally a piece of timeless carved sculpture constructed with imagination and loving care that nowadays is almost unheard of in a world of sterile, box-like structures.

"Sargent best sums up the work of this genius: '...Maybeck has never been able to accept the idea that utility is the main function of architecture. He talks gravely and unsmirkingly about things like God and beauty. He loves to color his buildings in all the hues of the rainbow. He is not afraid of gold-leafed domes, wood carving and Gothic ornament. He has a profound reverence for the great architecture of the past, and an equally profound reverence for the startling conceptions of his great contemporary Frank Lloyd Wright...He thinks of a building as an intimate or magnificent scene against which human beings play real life parts, and he believes simply that the world would be better, and its people happier, if its architectural scenery were more beautiful.'"<sup>1</sup>

- 
1. Bernhardt, Robert, The Buildings of Berkeley, The Holmes Book Company, Oakland, California, 1972. p. 68.

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his life. The super-sophistication of l'Ecole and the training in the sensitivity to materials gained from his woodworking were to be the polarities between which Maybeck was pulled back and forth throughout his long life of creativity.

"The Ecole des Beaux Arts background is obvious in Maybeck's frequent allegiance to Romantic Neo-classicism. The Palace of Fine Arts, done for the San Francisco Exposition in 1915 is in the Beaux Arts tradition of complete mastery of history. But it also exhibits an imagination which transcends simple Neo-classicism. We note it, because it is in a sense the absolute opposite of the Craftsman commonsense point of view. The First Church of Christ Scientist (1910) in Berkeley is another famous example of his Romanticism within historic styles. The lessons of Vezelay become decadent in the cast concrete of the exterior columns. And the tracery of the south window outdoes St. Severin in Paris in Gothic flamboyance.

"Nevertheless, it is impossible to categorize this amazing genius. Maybeck, while never simple, could summon not just effects but solid craftsmanship. The ceiling of the Christian Science Church is a case in point--a celebration in wood of the cruciform truss, which Maybeck of course elaborated with decorative patterns from French Gothic. The result is Craftsman woodsiness of a very individualistic variety. Other rooms in the church are more clearly Craftsman, with rafters, paneling and even light fixtures fashioned of wood. The same Craftsman effects appear again at his Outdoor Art Clubhouse (1905) at Mill Valley, and Town and Gown Clubhouse (1889), the Faculty Club (1902) at Berkeley and in many other buildings, some very un-woodsny on the exterior.

"He comes closest to the American Arts and Crafts movement--indeed becomes a part of it--in the shingled Swiss chalet houses and bungalows he built, mainly for the Berkeley intelligentsia, in the hills above the University. Maybeck even had a fan club, The Hillside Club, founded by Charles Keeler, his first client, especially to promote Maybeck architecture in Berkeley and its environs. Southern California Craftsman architects were never so fortunate.

"It is fascinating to compare Maybeck with his counterparts to the south. Many of his buildings would fit beautifully into the Arroyo Seco, where Swiss chalets were plentiful. Yet to enter a Maybeck house is a very different experience from that which you have in crossing the threshold of most Southern California Craftsman houses. The point is Maybeck's conception of space. Where the Arroyo Craftsman stressed intimacy and even sometimes the flowing space which Frank Lloyd Wright



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made famous in his work, Maybeck saw interiors as spatial explosions. He achieved this by playing with scale and axial changes--and also just plain surprises. It is illuminating to go from Maybeck's dramatic spatial arrangements--low ceilinged passages wandering toward baronial halls--into houses by Greene and Greene who only once in actual building showed an interest in vertical space (Pratt House, Ojai). The Greenes' rooms are boxes--beautiful boxes, immaculately conceived boxes. Maybeck spaces sometimes seem to go below the human scale but then stretch far beyond it. Maybeck's love for the grand as well as the simple, his roots in cabinet making and his Beaux Arts training, his almost simultaneous planning of Keeler's rustic Berkeley cottage and the formation of a visionary scheme for an enormous classical city to serve as the new campus of the University of California, mark the diversity and breadth of his genius."<sup>1</sup>

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1. California Design, 1910. Article by Robert Winter; California Design Publications, 1974. p. 132.

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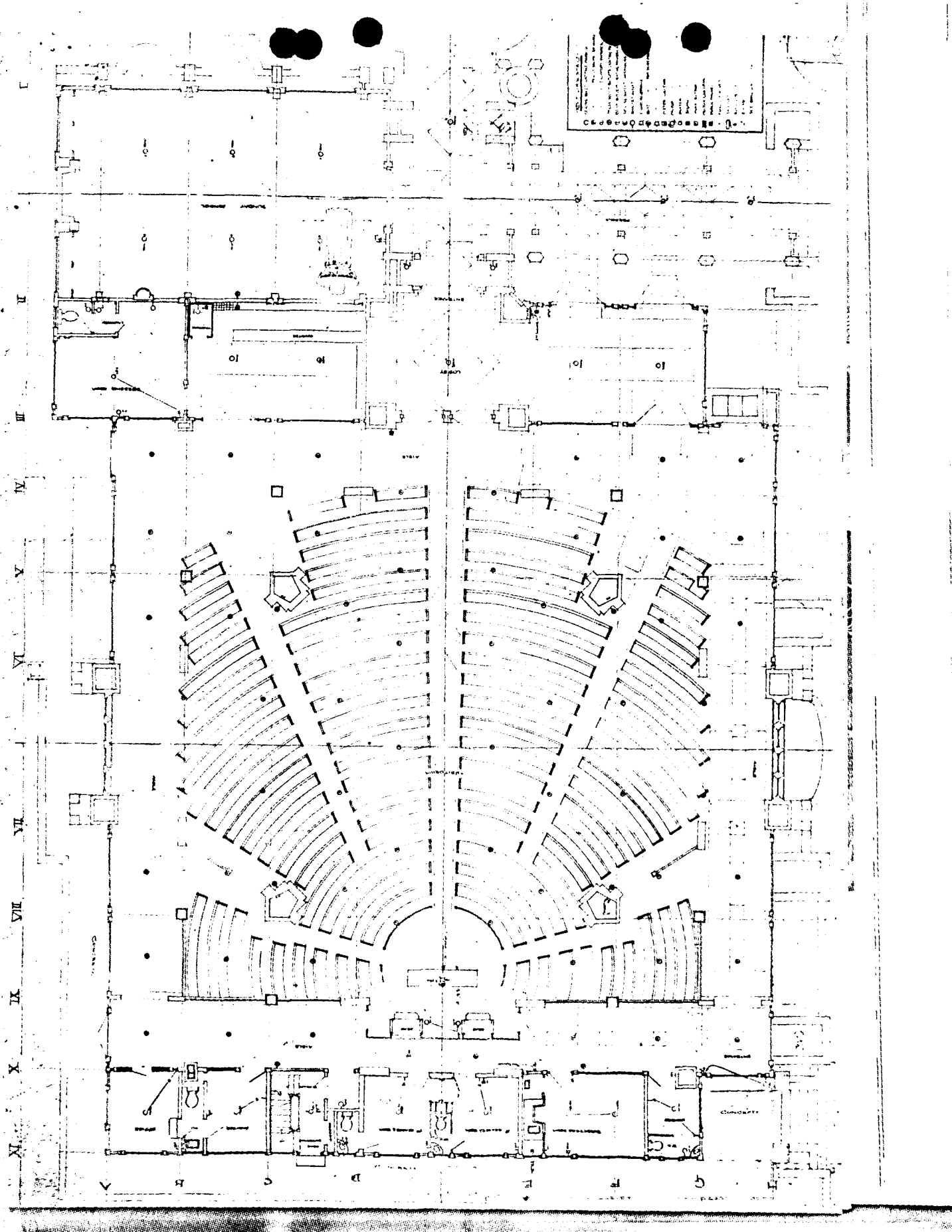
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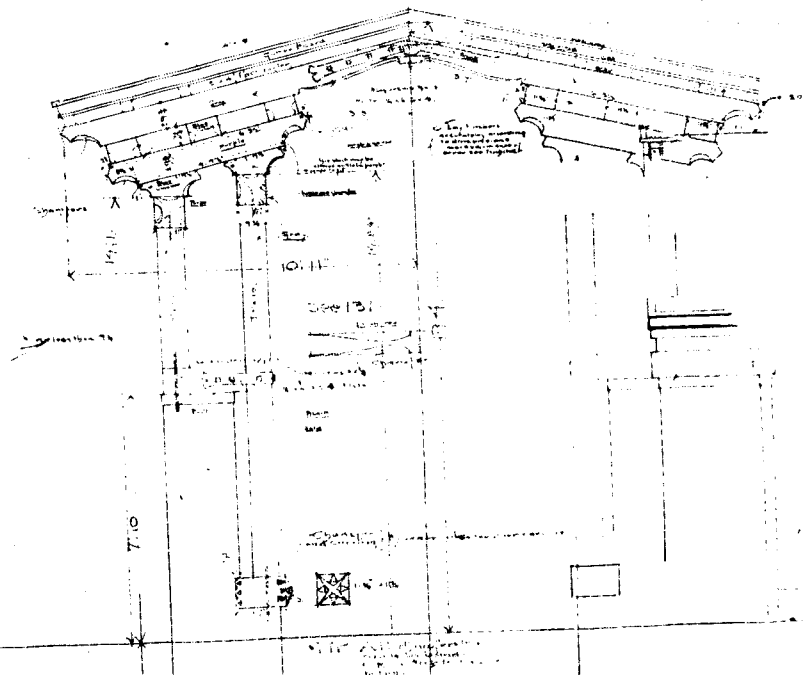
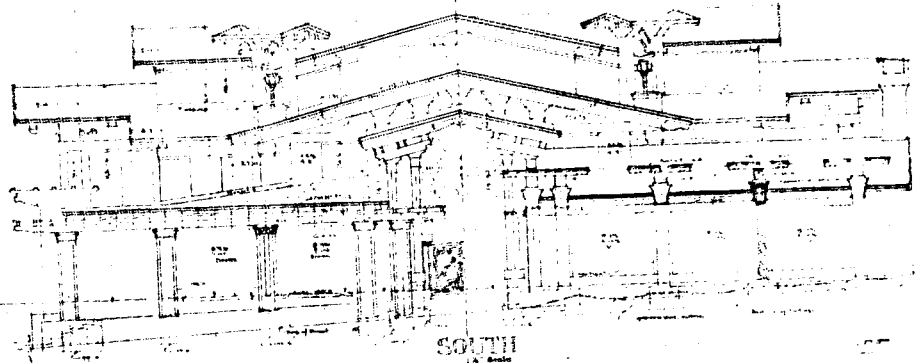
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PORTICO ENTRANCE  
 3/4" Scale

View of portico entrance. The structure is in the spirit of a Japanese style, detached from the rest of the building to admit light at the entrance. In contrast to the height of the main entrance, this entrance was low; the exterior structure was a preparatory great hinged truss of the

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PHOTOGRAPHS AND THEIR DESCRIPTIONS

SITE: First Church of Christ Scientist

LOCATION: Berkeley, California

PHOTO CREDIT: Charles Snell, NPS

DESCRIPTION: 1. Exterior facade  
2. Flank  
3. Overall view