

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAY 30 1978
DATE ENTERED	AUG 24 1978

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

First Universalist Church of Cedar Rapids

AND/OR COMMON

People's Church

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

600 3rd Avenue SE

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Cedar Rapids

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

Iowa

___ VICINITY OF

CODE

COUNTY
Linn

CODE

113

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
 - UNOCCUPIED
 - WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
 - YES: UNRESTRICTED
 - NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

People's Unitarian Church

STREET & NUMBER

600 3rd Avenue SE

CITY, TOWN

Cedar Rapids

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Linn County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Cedar Rapids

STATE

Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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

People's Church was built in 1875. It measures 40' across the front and is 60' deep, with a steeply-pitched gable roof and corner tower. The six-bay side elevations and three-bay front feature wall and corner buttresses, with the latter found also on the tower. Windows of the raised sanctuary are stained glass, lancet in form, while those of the ground story or basement are segmentally-arched, as the main entrance. The lancet is also employed in the louvred openings of the tower bellchamber.

From its construction until 1925, the church could be termed vernacular Gothic in style, with a stepped parapet gable end, corbelled cornice frieze, and window arches with stone keystones and imposts which stood out against the red brick of the walls. In 1925, however, deterioration of the brick caused the building to be stuccoed, with a concomitant loss of detail, as cornice friezes and window heads were obscured. At that time also, the main and tower roofs were tiled, presumably to complement the stucco in a vaguely Mission-style way, and the buttresses of the front elevation were shortened to cornice level. The Mission theme was not carried further, however, and in fact was somewhat confused by the removal of the stepped, curved parapet gable and its replacement with some half-timberwork, repeated in the small porch over the main entrance.*

The sanctuary walls are covered with rough plasterwork, against which the dark wood of the pews and beams stands in interesting contrast.

At the northwest end of the church (the building is oriented NW/SE) is a small vestibule which was part of the original construction. From it extends a modern glass and stucco education wing which, like many such church additions, is architecturally incompatible with the main building but, in this case, is at least relatively unobtrusive.

*Regional artist Grant Wood was a member of the congregation at this time, and served on the Renovation Committee. According to the present pastor, Judith Urquhart, Wood may have been responsible for the main entrance porch.

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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" 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 b. 1875; 1908-1916

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The People's Church is principally significant for its association with Dr. Joseph Fort Newton (1876-1950), who served here from 1908 to 1916, when he was called to the pulpit of London's City Temple, the preeminent Non-Conformist church in England at that time. When he came to Cedar Rapids, from Dixon, Illinois, the church here was 39 years old, having been founded with an original congregation of 23 people in 1869. Under Newton, the Cedar Rapids church began to move away from its traditional denominational ties with Universalist congregations elsewhere in Iowa, toward a creedless, non-sectarian viewpoint that emphasized "unity of the spirit" over "uniformity of theology".¹ This trend culminated in 1920 with the total reorganization of the church as "the People's Church", in which identification with the local community took precedence over denominational association.²

During his stay in Cedar Rapids, Newton began the series of sermon-articles which were to bring him national and international notice. They were originally printed weekly in the Cedar Rapids Gazette, and subsequently appeared nationally in the Christian Century. According to that publication, a subscriber at London's City Temple read, and was greatly impressed by, Newton's ideas; the result was a call to Newton to serve in London, "which astonished the church world" due to Newton's heretofore obscure career and his American nationality.³ Newton was at London from 1916 to 1919, then returned to the U.S.. He served briefly in New York, and later, as a Protestant Episcopal minister, in Philadelphia.

The call to City Temple, and the national syndication of his sermons and column "Everyday Religion" brought Newton honor in 1924. In that year, the Christian Century conducted a poll of American churchmen to determine the 25 most "outstanding preachers of the American pulpit". Out of 21,843 ministers responding (and 1146 possible candidates) only 302 were Universalist or Unitarian, but Joseph Fort Newton was among the top 25 at poll's end.⁴ Newton's fame was short-lived, however, and for many years his contributions to religious thought were ignored by American church historians. Only in recent years has interest in his work revived.

Although Newton was best-known for his work after leaving Cedar Rapids, he contributed much to the religious and intellectual life of this Iowa community. As noted above, he was instrumental in the church's move toward total non-sectarianism. Newton's Tuesday-evening lectures on literary and historical topics were popular in Cedar Rapids, and, apparently, in Iowa City, where a number of them were delivered at the University. Newton was also editor of The Builder, a Masonic magazine, during 1915-16.

See continuation sheet

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(Obituary) New York Times, 26 January 1950, p. 27.
 Schwartz, J.C. (ed.) Religious Leaders of America, Vol. II. New York: 277 Broadway, 1941-42, p. 842.
 Tucker, Elva Louise. The History of the Universalist Church in Iowa: 1843-1943. MA Thesis, University of Iowa, Iowa City, 1944.

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

QUADRANGLE NAME Cedar Rapids South, Iowa

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,5 6,1,0 8,3,0 4,6 4,8 2,0,0

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 60' x 100', bounded on west by 6th Street, on south by 3rd Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

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

MHBowers, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

26 East Market Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Iowa City

STATE

Iowa 52240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Adrian H. Anderson

TITLE

Director, Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

5/12/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Wm. H. ...

DATE

8/24/78

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Charles ...

DATE

P. 23. 78

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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First Universalist Church, Cedar Rapids, Linn County, Iowa

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Footnotes:

- 1 Tucker, p. 352.
- 2 Tucker, p. 354.
- 3 The Christian Century 67:167.
- 4 Ibid., 41:1673.

Bibliography, cont.:

Snyder, Charles E. "Unitarianism in Iowa," Palimpsest 30 (Nov. 1949), pp. 345-376.
The Christian Century, Vol. 41 (25 December 1924), p. 1673; Vol. 67 (8 February 1950), p. 167.
James, Gertrude. History of the People's Church, 1858-1959 (privately printed).