

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name First Congregational Church of Albany

other names/site number The Ray Palmer Memorial

2. Location

street & number 405 Quail Street [] not for publication

city or town Albany [] vicinity

state New York code NY county Albany code 001 zip code 12208

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Rudolph Purpura DBHPO

4/2/14

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
- [] determined eligible for the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
- [] determined not eligible for the National Register

[] removed from the National Register

[] other (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

[Signature]
Edson W. Beall *5.27.14*

First Congregational Church of Albany

Albany County, New York

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility, church school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility, church school

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/

Colonial Revival

MODERN MOVEMENT (addition)

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation cast stone

walls brick

roof asphalt shingle

other cast stone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

First Congregational Church of Albany

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location
- C** a birthplace or grave
- D** a cemetery
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by historic American Building Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Social History

Period of Significance:

1917- 1961

Significant Dates:

1917, 1919, 1960-61

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Fuller & Robinson (architects)

William Sayles & Son (contractors)

Charles A. Schade (addition architect)

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property _____

Albany County, New York

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 0.95 Acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 599498 4723124
Zone Easting Northing

3 18
Zone Easting Northing

2 18

4 18

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer Walkowski, Historic Preservation Specialist

organization New York State Office of Historic Preservation date March 2014

street & number Peebles Island Resource Center, PO Box 189 telephone (518) 237-8643 x3214

city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name First Congregational Church & Society of Albany

street & number 405 Quail Street telephone _____

city or town Albany state NY zip code 12208

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20503

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First Congregational Church of Albany

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The First Congregational Church of Albany is located at 405 Quail Street, on an irregularly shaped parcel between Woodlawn Avenue and Maple Avenue in Albany's Woodlawn neighborhood, approximately one-and-a-half miles from downtown, in Albany County. The church is located on the west side of Quail Street, one block north of New Scotland Avenue, a major east-west thoroughfare in the neighborhood. The site consists of a two-story church building, constructed in 1917, with an attached two-story with basement Sunday School addition at its northern end that was built in 1960-61. To the southwest of the building is a surface parking lot, owned by the church. The First Congregational Church is surrounded by a largely single and multiple-family residential neighborhood composed of two- and three-story freestanding houses; to the southwest, along New Scotland Avenue, is a small-scale commercial area.

The First Congregational Church is an example of a Wren-Gibbs type church, rendered in a Colonial Revival style. The church is a two-story steel-framed building with a cast-stone foundation and beveled water table, running bond brick walls, noted as "dark tapestry brick" in contemporary newspaper articles, and an asphalt shingle roof. The church building has a rectangular, almost square, massing and is a front-gable form with shallow transepts that appear almost as cross-gables and maintain the boxy massing rather than establish a true cruciform plan. The most prominent exterior feature of the building is its broad pedimented tetrastyle entry portico and the centrally placed steeple with a short, bell-shaped spire. The church building features a beltcourse of cast stone that wraps the entire building above the first story and a wide frieze band with dentils at the eaves that is integrated into the front pediment as an entablature. The side-gable two-story addition is complementary with the materials of the original church, being of a similar red brick, but stylistically it is of a Modern design with simplified, minimal detailing.

The façade of the church faces southeast onto Quail Street and is set close to the sidewalk. This front-gabled symmetrical building features a nearly full-width front entry portico that rises two-stories in height with four massive fluted Ionic columns with four Ionic pilasters set behind. A series of six stone risers lead to three entries, each with a pair of paneled doors with a transom and set in a cast-stone surround with consoles and a modest cornice that contains delicate, Adam style tracery. Above each entry is a cast-stone panel, the center panel inscribed "Ray Palmer Memorial." Above the cast-stone beltcourse are three casement windows, aligned to the doors and panels. The pediment features an entablature that reads "First Congregational Church" and has a large bullseye window flanked by triangular moldings set in the tympanum. Above the pediment, the gabled end of the building is visible. Set at the peak is a square brick tower, which is surmounted by a turned balustrade. From the tower rises a white-painted wood belfry that is square with chamfered corners, and features a paired multi-paned window with a round headed transom. The belfry features relatively ornate moldings and panels and is surmounted by four classical urns at its chamfered corners. From the belfry rises an octagonal lantern with louvers and a short, octagonal bell-shaped spire with a finial.

Side elevations of the church building are more modestly rendered. While the northeast elevation is largely concealed by the addition, the southwest elevation is visible from the street. This elevation features the a centrally located, slightly projecting cross gable with returns and the wide frieze molding is broken to accommodate three large round-headed windows. The central unit contains a stained-glass window, while the outermost windows are multi-paned units. Each has a cast-stone keystone motif, and at the peak of the gable is a round bullseye window with tabs. A small modern vestibule, which appears to date to the 1960-61 education

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wing addition, has been added to this elevation to provide basement access to the building once the large wing was added to the northeast side of the building; it does not interfere with the legibility of the original architecture.

The Sunday School addition is a rectangular, side-gabled wing connected to the northeast elevation of the church building. Its primary southeast façade reveals a full-height, glass entry that connects the older church building with the classrooms. Adjacent to the glass entry area are bands of windows at the basement, first and second stories. The northeast elevation of the addition along Woodlawn Avenue features a modest cross pattern set into the brickwork of the gable end. The northwest elevation of the addition features similar bands of windows to the east side of the building.

The interior plan of the church is relatively simple and reflects a Wren-inspired “auditory” type of function. A full-width narthex is entered into from the three main entry doors. This space contains a broad set of stairs that lead to an upper platform with three doors into the main auditorium. Doors at the north and south end of the upper platform conceal stairs to the choir balcony above. These five entries in the vestibule all feature paired paneled doors set in simple classical surrounds with a transom and entablature. The auditorium is rendered in a simple, relatively restrained Colonial Revival style and consists of a large open seating area filled with wood pews divided by two aisles. At the front of the space, at the west end, is a platform with a table used for services. A Gothic Revival baptismal font is located to one side of the platform; this font was originally used at the congregation’s original downtown church. Flanking the chancel, the organ pipes are visible.¹ This lower platform is set in front of a knee wall, which has an upper platform set in a shallow chancel. This upper platform contains a centrally placed pulpit in front of a paneled knee wall with seating behind. While the interior of the auditorium does not feature freestanding columns, the suggestion of side aisles and a tripartite division of space is implied by the division of the ceiling by the large structural beams and created by the shallow transepts. The central area of the ceiling is raised and is framed by the heavy modillioned entablature with triglyphs. This entablature likely covers the building’s steel skeleton, which affords the space its open, uninterrupted volume, and is supported by fluted composite pilasters with egg-and-dart cushion capitals. The chancel space is similarly detailed with fluted pilasters and the heavy entablature, and features a broad semi-elliptical arched molding. This rear wall of the chancel also features the round stained-glass window depicting the Christ in Gethsemane, designed by Chapman Glass Studio and added in 1957 as a memorial to Alfred A. Yonkers. At either side of the auditorium, along the northeast and southwest elevations, are visible the three large windows, with stained-glass panels in the central windows. These large stained glass windows are the “Good Shepherd Window,” dedicated in 1935 on the 85th anniversary of the church in honor of Mrs. Henry J. McClure, and the “Resurrection Window” that dedicated 1925 on the 75th anniversary of the church in honor of Henry J. McClure. Those windows at the north, where the addition is located, are still intact and uninterrupted; artificial lighting behind them gives the illusion that these face the outside. At the opposite end of the auditorium, at the eastern end above the entrances, is located a balcony. As the choir was seated behind the pulpit at the front of the auditorium, it appears that the original use for the balcony was as a multi-use space, later serving as Sunday School space prior to the construction of the addition. Like the chancel, this balcony has

¹ In order to adhere to the strict symmetry of the building’s interior, the pipes to the left of the pulpit are non-functional and purely decorative. They were installed to visually balance the functional pipes to the right of the pulpit.

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the same pilasters and entablature. Currently the balcony is used for records and archival storage. Overall, this auditorium space is highly intact from its 1917 origins.

The basement of the church building houses a large meeting room, cafeteria and social room. While most of the finishes in the room are modern, this room also features a small stage with modest proscenium and a series of simple metal columns supporting beams in the ceiling.

The interior of the education wing consists of a T-shaped, double-loaded corridor. The corridor adjacent to what was once the exterior of the church reveals that the original exterior building details, such as the windows, are still generally intact. The addition was constructed with minimal removal or alterations of the older church building. This corridor features a modern stair and circulation space. The double loaded corridor running perpendicular features several classrooms, a meeting room, a sitting room as well as a smaller worship chapel. These rooms are all finished with modern materials such as vinyl tile, concrete block walls, and acoustic ceiling .

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The First Congregational Church of Albany is significant under criterion C as a distinctive, largely intact local example of a Wren-Gibbs type church rendered in the Colonial Revival style. The church also features an attached education wing constructed of materials that complement the church even though it was designed in the Modern style. Both sections were designed by prominent local architects. Although built with a steel frame structural system representative of its early twentieth century date, the First Congregational Church features many hallmarks of the Wren-Gibbs type church, including the prominent pedimented front entry portico, centrally located tower on a front-gabled building, and a large open auditorium-type worship space. The church building was designed by the notable local firm of Fuller and Robinson in 1917, and initial schemes for the building envisioned a wing on the north elevation that could contain meeting spaces and house Sunday School classes. Planning for the wing was stalled until 1957, and a two-story with basement addition was constructed in 1960-61 to the designs of architect Charles A. Schade.

The First Congregational Church was originally organized in 1850 in downtown Albany. Shortly after its establishment, the church played host to a key meeting, the 1852 "Albany Convention" of the national Congregational church. This congress is considered pivotal to the establishment of the current national Congregational church. Despite its prominence, like most downtown Albany churches, the First Congregational Church faced dwindling membership by the late nineteenth century, as Albany's growing western suburbs began to attract residents away from the downtown area. Like many churches in the city around the turn of the century, the First Congregational Church took the proactive step of relocating in order to be among the growing residential areas of the city. As one of the few Protestant churches in this area of Albany, the First Congregational Church began to attract growing membership not long after its move. Constructing a new church building on Quail Street, in the growing Woodlawn neighborhood, the First Congregational Church was a center for many social activities, ranging from supporting religious missions to hosting a bowling league, meeting Criterion A for its role in Albany's social history.

Early History of the First Congregational Church of Albany

Congregationalism dates to sixteenth-century England, where Protestant reformers created independent local churches, free from liturgical ceremony and control by the Church of England (also known as the Anglican church in the United States). These reformers, known as Puritans, left England and arrived in the New England colonies in the mid-1600s, bringing with them their ideal of a locally governed church with simple forms of worship, governed by the congregation itself. While Congregationalism was widely associated with New England, as the population became to move westward after the Revolutionary War and War of 1812, the religion began to spread into areas of New York State, including Albany.²

The First Congregational Church of Albany, the first Congregational parish in the city, was established after a group of thirteen men purchased the former First Presbyterian Church, located at the corner of South Pearl and Beaver Streets in Albany, on December 15, 1849, for \$20,000. Originally constructed in 1795 by Elisha Putnam, the church building was a stately example of a Wren-Gibbs type church building, with a prominent

² "Who Are the Congregationalists?" Congregational Library and Archives, 2013, accessed December 16, 2013, <http://www.congregationallibrary.org/about/congregational-christian>.

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central steeple added in 1808 and attributed to Phillip Hooker.³ After some repairs and updates were made to the building, the first services were held in the building on April 7, 1850, with the Rev. Leonard Bacon, D.D. from New Haven, Connecticut, serving as preacher. Other preachers also held services for the Congregationalists in the early months of the church. On June 6, 1850, a religious society was formed, and on July 10th of the same year a church with 81 members was organized. On December 10, 1850, the Rev. Ray Palmer, D.D. of Bath, Maine, was installed as pastor, and the First Congregational Church of Albany was officially established.⁴

Under the leadership of the Rev. Palmer, the First Congregational Church played a prominent role in the national growth and organization of Congregationalism in the early nineteenth century. Between October 5 and 8, 1852, the First Congregational Church hosted the "Albany Convention," the third general convention of the Congregational Churches of America. The first convention held since colonial times, this convention was attended by 436 pastors from seventeen states and Canada. Attendees, who included Lyman and Henry Ward Beecher, two nationally known Congregational clergymen, debated the issue of slavery and also "the plan of union" between the Presbyterian and Congregational churches. It was at this meeting that the union between the two denominations was severed, to the mutual agreement of both, and Congregationalism was clearly established as its own religious practice. The "Albany Convention" was significant for giving the Congregational Churches a national consciousness.⁵

Not long after the Rev. Ray Palmer stepped down as pastor of the church, in April 1866, the First Congregational Church constructed a new purpose-built church. Located at the corner of Eagle and Beaver Streets, the second home of the First Congregational Church of Albany was dedicated on October 14, 1869. This second church building was designed in the Romanesque Revival style, with polychrome brick and stone, and a tall spire set on a square tower. The building cost more than \$130,000 to construct.⁶

In this church, located in the heart of downtown Albany, the First Congregational Church held its worship services and played host to a variety of charitable and social organizations for nearly half a century. In the decades between the church's founding in 1850 and 1886, the First Congregational Church had more than 800 members, and in 1886 its membership was 396. The church held a morning and evening Sunday service, as well as conducted a Sunday School program. The First Congregational Church also sustained the Bethany Mission School, located at 67 South Pearl Street in Albany.⁷

A New Home for the First Congregational Church

³ Douglas G. Bucher, W. Richard. Wheeler, and Mary Raddant. Tomlan, *A Neat Plain Modern Stile: Philip Hooker and His Contemporaries, 1796-1836* (Clinton, NY: Trustees of Hamilton College, 1993), 296.

⁴ Of note, Rev. Ray Palmer was well known for writing the hymn "My Faith Looks Up to Thee," which was set to music by Dr. Lowell Mason in 1832. George Rogers Howell and Jonathan Tenney, *History of the County of Albany, N.Y. from 1609-1886 with Portraits, Biographies and Illustrations* (New York: W.W. Munsell, 1886), 758.

⁵ *The First Congregational Church Services in Dedication of the New Building the Ray Palmer Memorial April 20-27, 1919* (Albany, NY: First Congregational Church, 1919), n.p. Also, Grace A. Moore, "Excerpts from "Historical Sketch" by Grace A. Moore in Centennial of the First Congregational Church, Ray Palmer Memorial, 1850-1950," First Congregational Church of Albany, accessed December 16, 2013, <http://albanyfirstcongregational.org/our-history/historical-sketch-by-grace-a-moore-1950/>.

⁶ Howell and Tenney, 758. Also, *The First Congregational Church Services in Dedication...*, n.p.

⁷ Howell and Tenney, 758.

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By the turn of the twentieth century, the urban landscape of Albany was beginning to shift. As was typical in many American cities during this era, improvements in public transportation, including street cars, were allowing for the residential population to move away from the crowded, densely built urban downtown, creating new "suburban" development around the city fringe. This phenomenon left urban downtowns increasingly devoid of residents, as properties transitioned into commercial, civic and other functions. For many downtown churches, the decreasing residential population meant the loss of members of their congregations, which also meant the decline of the critical financial support that helped keep the massive church buildings operational. As new suburban areas developed around American cities, many churches which had downtown locations were forced to either close their doors or chose to relocate closer to these new population centers in order to maintain membership and support.

This phenomenon was felt at the First Congregational Church around the turn of the twentieth century. Writing of the circumstances that led to the relocation of the congregation, the Rev. Charles S. Hager, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Albany, noted that "whatever may have been the condition when the [1869 second] church was first built, it had ceased to be a good residence section." The neighborhood around the Eagle Street church had transitioned into a primarily commercial neighborhood, and the Rev. Hager noted that many of the residents who did live in the area were predominantly non-Protestant. While the church continued to be one of the most prominent in downtown Albany, with the loss of residential population, the Rev. Hager noted that there was a surplus of Protestant churches to serve the dwindling community.⁸

Faced with the loss of financial support as its parishioners moved out of downtown Albany, the costs for maintaining the massive Romanesque Revival church, built to house more than 1,000 worshippers, on Beaver Street began to mount. By the turn of the twentieth century, the building was becoming increasingly costly to maintain and reached a condition that required critical and extensive repairs. In order to help pay for some of the maintenance of the building, a portion of the church lot was sold in early 1912 to the J.B. Lyon Company, which was contemplating constructing a business block. During negotiations on the parcel, the company indicated its interest in purchasing the entire property owned by the church.⁹

It was at this point that the discussion of the future of the First Congregational Church in Albany began to intensify. On May 2, 1912, a special meeting was held to consider the sale of the church property. At the meeting, a resolution was passed by a large majority, approving the sale of the lot and building. The congregation would keep the organ, pulpit, pews, bell, gas fixtures, and furnishings. Despite the congregation's approval, the transaction with the Lyon company was never realized. However, with the decision already made to sell the property, the congregation put the church on the market, committing to the relocation project. Despite the commitment to relocation, this could not occur without the revenue from the sale of the property. The sale of the church property was difficult and languished for several years. At the annual meeting on January 11,

⁸ Rev. Charles S. Hager, "History of the Removal of the First Congregational Church of Albany NY From the Corner of Eagle and Beaver Streets to Its New Location on the Corner of Woodlawn Avenue and Quail Street," 12 November 1917, TS, First Congregational Church of Albany, Albany, NY.

⁹ Hager, n.p.

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1915, the Board of Trustees reaffirmed its commitment to sell the downtown church property to facilitate relocation.¹⁰

Eventually, in late 1916, progress on the sale of the church was finally made. William V.R. Irving, commissioner of public safety for the city of Albany, had been tasked by the city to recommend sites for a new municipal building. Irving made the recommendation to purchase the property of the First Congregational Church on Beaver Street. At its annual meeting on January 15, 1917, the congregation authorized the sale of the property for \$35,000, excluding building fixtures such as the pews and the bell.¹¹ The price is an interesting reflection of the decline in desirability and the depreciation in property values in the neighborhood: the original cost of the building and land was roughly \$130,000 in 1869; by 1917, they were worth only \$35,000.

With the sale of the old church property finally underway, the church actively sought a location to build its new home. A committee of the Board of Trustees reported at the same January 1917 meeting on its recommendations for a suitable new site. In a resolution put forward, the committee recommended the purchase of several building lots on the corner of Woodlawn Avenue and Quail Street. These parcels, including their full assessments, could be purchased for approximately \$9,500. While the resolution was passed, after some investigation, the Board of Trustees modified the lots in question. It had been found to be possible, and preferable, to secure frontage along Quail Street between Maple and Woodlawn Avenues, with a reduced frontage on Woodlawn Avenue. The cost was noted as being roughly the same. The alteration was approved on February 5, 1917, authorizing the board to purchase the lots.¹²

Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Woodlawn neighborhood in Albany was emerging as a growing suburban and largely residential area. Through much of the nineteenth century, the area around New Scotland Avenue was largely undeveloped, as it was not served by a street car line. Around the turn of the century, the only notable buildings in the area around Quail Street consisted of an ice house and various sheds and service structures. In 1911, after a trolley car line was again rejected for the area, the Woodlawn Improvement Association established a bus route along New Scotland Avenue. The opening of the line became the impetus for development in the area during the 1910s and '20s. With improved access to downtown Albany, the Woodlawn neighborhood saw the growth of commercial enterprises, primarily along the north side of New Scotland Road, as well as the construction of new single and multiple-family houses.¹³

The First Congregational Church had first begun investigating the neighborhood in 1912, when the sale of the old church seemed imminent. During this time, a small non-sectarian Sunday School was being conducted in the chapel of the Allen Women's Christian Temperance Union Chapel on Seneca Street.¹⁴ In need of

¹⁰ Hager, n.p.

¹¹ Hager, n.p.

¹² Hager, n.p.

¹³ Matthew Bender et al., *Albany Architecture: A Guide to the City*, ed. Diana S. Waite (Albany, NY: Mount Ida Press, Published in Association with the Preservation League of New York State, 1993), 214.

¹⁴ As indicated on the 1908-09 Sanborn map, originally Ontario Street continued in a straight path to meet New Scotland Road. A short road forked from that route and was called Seneca Street. The Allen WCTU building was located on this fork. Eventually, the original straight route of Ontario Street was abandoned, and absorbed what was Seneca Street. The Allen WCTU would have been

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assistance, Harry E. Cowles was enlisted to serve as superintendent of the school. Cowles, a trustee of the First Congregational Church, facilitated the connection between the church and the neighborhood.¹⁵ In October 1914, it was decided that the regular evening service at the First Congregational Church would be omitted so that the pastor, organist and precentor could hold evening service in the Allen Chapel on Seneca Street. The first service at the Allen Chapel was conducted on October 18, 1914, beginning the transition away from the downtown church and into the Woodlawn area. On January 13, 1915, the “Allen Congregational” organization was formed, affiliated with the First Congregational Church, to give order and support for the growing local constituency. Initially, despite its growing interest in the area, the neighborhood seemed an unlikely candidate for the relocated church. In the 1910s, the area was still comparatively isolated and had no trolley or street car line to serve it. As the sale of the old church languished, interest in the Woodlawn area by many in the congregation faded, although the local group active with the Allen mission remained engaged with that community. However, by the fall of 1916, the neighborhood had continued to grow steadily, with many new single-family houses being constructed, despite the lack of streetcar service.¹⁶

With the church’s interests split between the waning downtown church and the growing Woodlawn area members, there was a growing call internally for action to be taken. Some felt the First Congregational Church should continue to focus on its downtown congregation and leave those associated with the Allen Congregational to form their own group to serve that community. Others considered the possibility of the downtown First Congregational Church serving as a “mother church” for a new branch in the neighborhood. Relocating the church was a serious gamble, as there was no guarantee that the congregation would draw members from the still relatively undeveloped neighborhood, and move could prove to alienate members who could not travel to the new location. The directors of the New York Congregational Conference, acting as support but without real authority, had paid a visit to the Albany area to consider the matter. Offering their services in council on the matter, the state conference directors required the undertaking of a canvass and survey of the proposed new neighborhood. Undertaken in October of 1916, the canvass and survey poled the local community to gage the interest in being served by the First Congregational Church. While the survey was underway, the sale of the old church property had also become tangible, making the option of the downtown location serving as a “mother church” unlikely. Instead, the full removal of the church from downtown became preferred. The canvass and survey did reveal information about the Woodlawn neighborhood as a new home for the First Congregational Church. Outlining the reasons why the church chose the area, as guided by the results of the survey, the Rev. Hager noted:

1. *Several families of influence in the church, seeking homes in a desirable residential section, had lately located near by.*
2. *The canvass had revealed a real interest in the proposition on the part of a growing possibly constituency – a considerable number of whom had Congregational affiliations in the past, and many of whom had children of Sunday School age.*

located roughly one block west the present location of the First Congregational Church; it appears that the Albany WCTU building has been demolished and replaced with residential buildings.

¹⁵ Cowles also later served as head of the Building Committee for the church, so his interest and involvement in bringing First Congregational Church to the Woodlawn neighborhood was strong.

¹⁶ Hager, n.p.

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3. *There were no church privileges within convenient distance.*
4. *With a successfully operated bus-line already established, transportation privileges were improving, and were bound to improve still more as the neighborhood grew.*
5. *Any other location would bring the church into too close proximity and competition with other churches.*
6. *Finally – and in the minds of the Board of Trustees, decisively – not only was a church really needed in this locality, but also, after careful survey of the city, no other available and satisfactory location was to be found.*¹⁷

The First Congregational Church decided to move forward, taking the proactive move of relocating into the western suburbs. The property along Quail Street was purchased shortly after the authorization was signed, in the spring of 1917. Moving quickly to establish its new home in the neighborhood, the congregation engaged the services of a notable local architecture firm, Fuller & Robinson. The original plan for the new First Congregational Church of Albany was to consist of two units, the church building and an attached parish house. However, the plan for two buildings was tabled due to the high building material costs dictated when the United States entered World War I on April 16, 1917. The Rev. Hager noted,

*The church has been obligated to make a choice between erecting such a small and – it is believed – inadequate structure as could be wholly completed without incurring an overburdening debt; or of adopting another plan – the plan of building in part, on the unit basis, as much as could be wisely financed, of such a structure as would, when completed meet the growing needs of the future in an adequate, modern way. The latter policy was followed...Parish house and a possible parsonage must await the time of future financial ability.*¹⁸

Deciding to focus their resources on building the church and planning for a phased approach for the parish house, progress appears to have occurred slowly. After holding its final service in the church on Eagle Street on July 8, 1917, the church was likely eager to have their new building finalized and ready for use; however, war-time prices and material shortages appear to have delayed construction. The cornerstone of the building was laid amidst great ceremony, which included the rather coincidental hymn “How Firm a Foundation,” on November 25, 1917. Under the oversight of Fuller & Robinson, William Sayles & Son served as the contractor.¹⁹ A contemporary article noted,

*The architectural design is Colonial, a type associated with Congregational history from the beginning and familiar to all New Englanders. The main characteristics of the type are the simple rectangular outline, the pillared portico in front, with the bell-tower rising from it in the center.*²⁰

¹⁷ Transcribed from Hager, n.p.

¹⁸ Quoted from Hager, n.p.

¹⁹ Interestingly, Fuller & Robinson were already working nearby the new First Congregational Church during this era. They designed School 17 at 395 New Scotland Road, which was constructed in 1917. While the congregation’s reason for the selection of Fuller & Robinson is not specified, and was likely based on their general reputation, there may be a connection since the firm was already working in the area. Matthew Bender et al., 214.

²⁰ “Cornerstone of First Congregational Church to Be Laid Sunday,” *Albany Evening Journal*, November 23, 1917.

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The author describes the key features of what has become known as the Wren-Gibbs church type. The building was noted as being designed with a large auditorium, as well as a spacious basement that would serve as the Sunday School, kitchen, and house a bowling alley for recreational use. After holding services temporarily in the Eastern Star hall, the congregation held its first service of worship in the "lower auditorium" in the basement on November 24, 1918. In a week long ceremony, the church was dedicated to the Rev. Ray Palmer as the "Ray Palmer Memorial" on April 20-27, 1919.²¹

The circumstances that connected Fuller and Robinson to the Congregational Church are unknown. It does not appear that the church held a design competition, and it is unknown how many architectural firms were contacted for proposals. While it is highly likely that the church sought out the leading architects to design their new building, there is other information that hints at a potential deeper connection between the architects and the congregation. In a letter dated March 7, 1917, the church accepted the proposal for plans, specifications and construction management from Fuller and Robinson. Interestingly, the firm charged a 5 percent commission for the project, and Mr. Fuller donated one-third of that amount as a "personal gift" to the congregation. While Albert Fuller does not appear to have been a member of the congregation at this time, his wife, the former Sarah Shaw, may have had relatives who were members of the church. Contemporary church records note several Shaws that were members of the congregation.²²

Many of the items that filled the church were gifts and donations from the congregation. The organ, installed by the Austin Organ Company of Hartford, Connecticut, was given as a memorial to Dr. James McNaughton and his wife, Caroline, by their daughter. A memorial gift providing for the pulpit and other platform accessories was given on behalf of the Hon. Isaac Edwards and his wife. In honor of the Rev. Ray Palmer, his granddaughter provided a gift of the communion table and chairs. Other memorials and donations included the pulpit sofa, the pulpit bible, and the gowns for the minister and the choir. The baptismal font was brought from the old church and reinstalled in the new building.²³ The bell which had been salvaged from the old downtown church, attributed to the Meneely Bell Foundry of Troy, NY, was also reinstalled in the new building.²⁴

Social History

The relocation of the First Congregational Church to the Woodlawn neighborhood proved to be well planned, and the church played a key role in serving the local community. As one of the only Protestant churches said to

²¹ "Cornerstone of First Congregational Church to Be Laid Sunday," *Albany Evening Journal*, November 23, 1917. *The First Congregational Church Services in Dedication of the New Building the Ray Palmer Memorial April 20-27, 1919* (Albany, NY: First Congregational Church, 1919), n.p.

²² "Proposal Acceptance," Edmund S. Baldwin to Fuller and Robinson, March 7, 1917, First Congregational Church, Albany, New York. Also, records of the First Congregational Church.

²³ The font was originally dedicated on November 18, 1906 in memory of Jonathan Tenney. *The First Congregational Church Services in Dedication of the New Building the Ray Palmer Memorial April 20-27, 1919* (Albany, NY: First Congregational Church, 1919), n.p.

²⁴ Information suggested by contemporary records in the First Congregational Church archives.

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be located in the area, First Congregational Church saw growth in its membership and played a prominent role as a hub for religious, social and recreational groups.

Almost immediately after its dedication in 1919, the First Congregational Church saw growth in its congregation. On January 1, 1919, before the new building was dedicated, the church reported 255 members. One year later, on January 1, 1920, the church reported 304 members. The 1920s and '30s was the peak era for membership at the First Congregational Church, although it appears that the active membership also spiked in the 1950s around the time of the merger of First Congregational Church and First Christian Church.²⁵

Once settled into the Woodlawn neighborhood, the First Congregational Church made a variety of charitable contributions and supported many different causes through this period. The church supported an Inter Church Emergency Fund, the Home Missionary Society, and the American Missionary Association, to name a few. The church also supported organizations with health-related concerns, including the Anti-Saloon League (a temperance organization) and a Tuberculosis Fund. First Congregational Church also supported missionary activities, including providing funds for John X. Miller who was serving as a missionary in India in 1919.²⁶

Beyond its financial missions, the First Congregational Church served as host to a wide variety of clubs, organizations and functions throughout its history on Quail Street. Youth groups formed an important part of the church's activities, and the church housed the Pilgrim Fellowship, an organization of Junior and High School aged children, and the Scrooby Club, "an organization for older young people." While the First Congregational Church had established a Sunday School at its previous downtown Albany locations, that tradition was perpetuated in the church school. The church school met Sunday mornings and was divided into different departments based on ages, hosting beginner, primary, junior and senior level classes. In addition to religious classes, the church also hosted Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts troops. The church also supported a variety of organizations for women and for families. Women's groups included the Women's Association, the Ray Palmer Guild, and the Mother's Club for women with children who attended the beginner's department of the church school. A Couples' Club, for young married couples of the church, was hosted monthly. Typical of many churches, First Congregational Church had an active choir program, with a senior and junior choir. For recreation, the church participated in a bowling league with other churches. Known as the "Sunday School Athletic League of Albany, NY," First Congregational Church competed with other church-sponsored teams from First Methodist, Park United Presbyterian, Protestant Evangelical, Calvary Methodist Episcopal, Hope Baptist and several other churches in the Albany area, all reflecting a wide range of Protestant denominations. First Congregational Church became a center for religious, social, recreational and other forms of enrichment for the Woodlawn neighborhood right from its opening.²⁷

The Education Wing

²⁵ According to records at the First Congregational Church.

²⁶ From files provided by the First Congregational Church, dated 1919.

²⁷ First Congregational Church of Albany, *Retrospective*, 1946, n.p. Also, from files provided by the First Congregational Church, dated 1920-21.

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The original concept put forth by architects Fuller & Robinson in 1917 described a church building with an attached parish house. However, due to the high cost of materials during the war, plans for the wing were shelved, as the congregation decided that its priority was for the construction of the new church building. By the post-World War II era, successes with membership and with its financial standing allowed the First Congregational Church to finally realize its original vision for the property. Plans to realize the wing began to emerge in 1957. It appears likely that, with the merger of the congregations of First Congregational Church and the Second Congregational Christian Church (originally known as the First Christian Church) in 1956, the combined membership put increased pressures for additional space in the church building.²⁸

In celebration of its 110th anniversary, ground was broken for a new education wing for the First Congregational Church on April 10, 1960. Where the Fuller & Robinson scheme for the wing had been in more of a Colonial Revival style similar to the church, with a broad hipped roof and columns or pilasters on its main façade to mimic the church's entry portico, the proposal created by architect Charles A. Schade was a Modern design. While the red brick color and simple massing were intended to harmonize with the existing building, elements such as the glazed two-story open entry vestibule and the bands of windows were a decidedly modern touch. Schade was a well-known Albany architect during the mid-twentieth century, and designed several local churches. Schade's scheme for the education wing addition called for the creation of 11 new Sunday School classrooms, a nursery, as well as a women's lounge and a choir room. In addition to the wing, Schade also undertook some renovations to the church itself. While it appears that he did not alter the auditorium, Schade designed a new heating and lighting system in the church. He also remodeled the basement recreation rooms and updated the kitchen.²⁹

The Wren-Gibbs Church Type³⁰

While the new building for the First Congregational Church has many classically derived elements, the building is a good example of a typology of church architecture that has come to be known as the Wren-Gibbs church type. This church type, which takes its name from English architects Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723) and James Gibbs (1683-1774), is a broad category of religious architecture which is based on several shared forms and characteristics.

While the individual buildings can vary greatly, from grand high-style building to a more modest vernacular design, there are several key elements that are associated with the Wren-Gibbs type church. Generally, these buildings are more square than rectilinear in plan, and they are frequently almost as wide as they are long. Many buildings have clear glass windows to maximize natural light in the interior, although stained glass is also

²⁸ "Congregational 101," First Congregational Church of Albany, accessed December 19, 2013, <http://albanyfirstcongregational.org/about-us/congregational-101/>.

²⁹ "Ceremony Slated for School," *The Knickerbocker News* (Albany, NY), April 9, 1960. Also, "Albany Church to Dedicate New Building," *The Knickerbocker News* (Albany, NY), April 22, 1961.

³⁰ This section is drawn from "American Religion Buildings: The Wren-Gibbs Church," *New York Landmarks Conservancy Common Bond*, December 1994, <http://www.sacredplaces.org/PSP-InfoClearingHouse/articles/American%20Religion%20Buildings.htm>. Also, Calder Loth, "The Gibbs Church: A Paradigm for America," *Classicist Blog*, Institute of Classical Architecture and Art, November 3, 2011, accessed December 12, 2013, <http://blog.classicist.org/?p=3821>.

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not uncommon. Frequently, Wren-Gibbs type churches are detailed with Classical ornamentation derived from ancient Greek and Roman forms. Perhaps the most characteristic element of a Wren-Gibbs type church is a prominent front tower with a spire or cupolas centered on its main façade.

The Wren-Gibbs church type is common throughout the United States, and one reason for its development was in response to new religious and liturgical needs. After the fire of 1666 that devastated many of London's historic parish churches, Sir Christopher Wren was enlisted to oversee the reconstruction of the city. As many of the older churches that had been lost had been designed originally for Roman Catholic services, Wren had the opportunity to see to the construction of new buildings that better served the Protestant, and more specifically Anglican, religious services. In contrast to medieval English religious practice that focused on ceremony and mystery, the seventeenth-century Anglican liturgy was more participatory and focused on preaching or reading passages from a prayer book. Churches needed an interior that could house a number of parishioners and allow them to easily see and hear the minister. Because parishioners often read from their own prayer books as a part of the service, large windows with clear glass allowed for good natural illumination. As a means to augment the auditory quality, Wren utilized many curved plaster ceilings to amplify the minister's voice, and parishioners were seated in pews not far from the pulpit. Wren called his buildings "auditoriums," because of the emphasis on sound quality and making the human voice audible to a large congregation.

Architecturally, Wren's churches shared many common elements. He frequently employed classical ornamentation for his buildings, drawing on its associations with order, rationality, and clarity in contrast to the medieval churches which were often dark, mysterious Gothic structures. Other common features, however, were dictated by need and were out of Wren's control. Because of the vast expense of rebuilding nearly 90 parish churches as well as other buildings lost in the fire, Parliament, which funded the construction, urged Wren's designs to be economically designed and quickly constructed. As many of the sites for the new church buildings were set on irregular city parcels, a standardized design was impossible to develop, putting a focus on key elements and characteristics while allowing for a great range of variety and designs. One feature was retained by Wren for his new churches, that being the traditional English steeple. Long a symbol marking the presence of a religious building and visible from great distances, Wren transformed the Gothic spire to suit the Classical vocabulary. Typically, the steeple was centered on the building's front-gable primary façade.

Perhaps the most quintessential church designed by Sir Christopher Wren is St. James Church Piccadilly (1680-84). The church embodied many of Wren's typical elements, including the broad, open interior illuminated by two rows of arched, clear glass windows, galleries supported on square columns surrounding an interior volume on three sides, and a vaulted plaster ceiling. On the exterior, the building featured a prominent tower centered on its front elevation, with a tall spire. Widely published and circulated, plans and elevations of St. James Church Piccadilly were published and distributed in the largely Protestant American colonies, making it a convenient and fashionable model for colonial-era buildings looking to establish religious architecture.

While Sir Christopher Wren created the auditory church, it was the work of James Gibbs that refined it and brought it to a wider audience. Drawing on many of the same elements of Wren's buildings, Gibbs's St. Martin-in-the-Fields (1726) in Trafalgar Square in London is considered a landmark of eighteenth-century church architecture, bringing a new sense of monumentality and ornamentation. The building shares common elements

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from the Wren models, including a broad open interior with galleries, abundant natural light, and a prominent centrally located tower and spire on the front façade. St. Martin-in-the-Fields introduced several other elements that became common features, including the large pedimented front entry-portico and the Palladian window. Like Wren's work, Gibbs's St. Martin-in-the-Fields was also widely disseminated, as Gibbs published his illustrated *A Book of Architecture* (1728) that contained detailed drawings of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

For early America, looking to establish new and predominantly Protestant churches, this emerging Wren-Gibbs church type became widely utilized beginning in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The form became popular for several reasons, including the superior auditory qualities of the design, and it was available for builders and architects through its dissemination in many books and texts. For many American Protestant groups, who sought a clear religious and philosophical division from Roman Catholicism, the Wren-Gibbs type church provided an architectural manifestation of the new religious practices. The type was particularly common among Congregational churches in New England.³¹ While monumental, elaborate versions could be found in some American cities, the type could be simplified to a vernacular variation in more rural areas where fine quality materials and skilled craftspeople were rare. Buildings could be constructed quickly and economically, providing worship space in the rapidly growing American landscape. Delphi Falls United Church of Delphi Falls, NY (also known as the Delphi Baptist Church, 1815-18, NR listed), and the Reformed Church in Shawagunk, NY (1752-55, NR listed) all reflect variations of the Wren-Gibbs type.

The Wren-Gibbs church form dominated American ecclesiastical architecture until around the mid-1800s, when the Gothic and Romanesque Revival styles began to become fashionable. However, the Wren-Gibbs type never really faded from use and had a resurgence in popularity in the 1890s when Classical architecture in general became stylish. However, elements from the Gothic style did become mixed into the Wren-Gibbs type. Perhaps the most notable feature was the use of stained glass windows, which could be incorporated into buildings that now relied on interior electrical lighting. During the early twentieth century the Wren-Gibbs type became incorporated into the Colonial Revival style, and while ornamentation was typically simplified, buildings from the era retained many key character defining features such as open auditorium spaces, front entry portico, and a centrally located tower or spire.

The Wren-Gibbs church type continues to be popular for many Protestant denominations in the United States. While many buildings of the last century reflect changing needs and developments, such as electrical lighting and sound amplification, the church type continues exemplify religious architecture. While ornamentation is typically more modest than seventeenth and eighteenth century examples, many basic elements have been retained, such as open auditoriums focused on a speaker, Classical ornamentation and articulation, a prominent front entry portico, and a prominent tower or spire.

The First Congregational Church of Albany is a good representative example of this Wren-Gibbs type church building as designed in the early twentieth century. The church utilizes many of the hallmarks of the type, including its large, open auditorium with a choir balcony at the rear, prominent pedimented entry portico, the

³¹ Edward F. Bergman, *The Spiritual Traveler: New York City : The Guide to Sacred Spaces and Peaceful Places* (Mahwah, NJ: Hidden Spring, 2001), 54.

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use of classically derived ornamentation, and its centrally located tower. The First Congregational Church features many stained glass windows, indicative of the lingering Gothic Revival influence of twentieth century Wren-Gibbs examples. Perhaps one of the more uncommon elements of the Wren-Gibbs type church present at First Congregational Church are the indications of crossings, here rendered on the exterior as gables more than full transepts. Also relatively uncommon is the flat ceiling of the interior, rather than an arched or vaulted interior, which was likely influenced by the building's modern steel skeleton. Although these slight variations, rendered in a Colonial Revival style, still fit in the context of the widely variable Wren-Gibbs church typology.

Architects

Fuller & Robinson (architects)

The firm of Fuller & Robinson, designers of the church building on Quail Street, was one of Albany's most prominent architectural firms around the turn of the twentieth century. The firm comprised partners Albert W. Fuller and William P. Robinson, and was active in the Albany area between 1910 and 1923.

While little information about William P. Robinson is available, Albert W. Fuller had a prominent 50-year architectural career in Albany and was known as the "dean of Albany architects" upon his death. Born in Clinton, NY in 1854, Fuller relocated with his family to Albany as a child. Here, he trained as a draftsman in the office of Ogden and Wright between 1873 and 1879 before working briefly in St. Louis. In 1883, Fuller returned to Albany and established the firm of Fuller and Wheeler with William Arthur Wheeler. Between 1900 and 1904, he partnered with William B. Pitcher, a former draftsman in his office. Fuller and his associated firms were known for their proficient designs that reflected the current architectural trends and styles. In the 1880s, Fuller's large-scale public projects utilized a Richardson Romanesque vocabulary. Simultaneously, residential designs were of the Queen Anne, Shingle Style and Colonial Revival styles. When tastes changed in the 1890s to reflect an interest in more formal, symmetrical classical designs, Fuller's work explored Renaissance Revival forms. Later, Fuller & Robinson continued working in the popular modes of the time, frequently drawing on the Colonial Revival style as they did for their design of First Congregational Church in Albany. While Fuller worked most frequently in the Albany area, he executed projects around the country, including completing the Charlotte Williams Memorial Hospital in Richmond, Virginia (1903, NR listed). Between 1881 and 1918, Fuller's firms had eleven of their works featured in national architectural journals, and Fuller himself published *Artistic Homes in City and County*, a collection of residential designs that he revised and re-issued five times between 1882 and 1891. Many works in the Albany area are attributed to Fuller and his associated firms. As Fuller & Robinson, notable projects include School No. 19 at 395 New Scotland Avenue (1917), the enlargement and remodeling of the Park Branch of the National Commercial Bank at 200 Washington Avenue (ca. 1920-22), the Renaissance Revival style Harmanus Bleecker Library at Washington Avenue and Dove Street (1923-24) and the University Club at the same intersection (1924-25). Albert W. Fuller passed away in 1934.³²

Charles A. Schade (Education wing architect)

³² T. Robins Brown, "Albert W. Fuller," in *Architects in Albany*, ed. Diana S. Waite (Albany, NY: Mount Ida Press, 2009), 34-36.

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For the design of the new Education wing, the First Congregational Church turned to local Albany architect Charles A. Schade. Charles Argow Schade was born in Albany in June 2, 1910 to Catherine and William C. Schade, also an architect in Albany. In 1933 he received certificates in Construction and Design from Pratt Institute in New York City. In 1936, Schade graduated with a Bachelor's of Fine Arts degree in Architecture from Yale University. After his studies, Schade entered the employ of the notable New York City architectural firm of Fellheimer & Wagner as a draftsman, working for them between 1937 and 38. He subsequently worked for his father's architectural firm before working as an architect for the Federal Housing Administration in 1941. Between 1942 and 1946, Schade served as Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Navy during World War II. After the war, he worked again at his father's office for several years, before Schade organized his own practice in 1950.

Schade appears to have worked primarily in the Albany area, and his works include the Sinclair-Valentine Ink Plant in Albany (1955), the Hilltop Motel in the Town of Colonie (1959), the modern style McKownville Methodist Church on Western Avenue in Albany County (1960), the National Commercial Bank and Trust Company building (1960), and the Pine Grove Methodist Church and School on Central Avenue in Albany (1961). In 1961, Schade remodeled the old Capitol Restaurant at Green and Norton Streets in Albany into the fashionable Hugh Denniston's Tavern, named in honor of the first stone house in Albany of the same name. Schade also designed the Grace Methodist Church Complex in Ravena, NY (1964), the New York State Cultural Exhibit Center in Albany (1966), and the Picotte Office Building in Albany (1966).

Schade's addition to the First Congregational Church in Albany appears consistent with many of his other architectural works. Schade's other churches, for example, reveal a modern take on traditional church forms, with simplified front-gable buildings of brick. Details are minimal and streamlined, typical of architecture of the 1960s. Schade's addition fits the scale and materials of the existing church building, and the subtle cross motif at the gable end is a modern take on traditional Christian iconography. His use of bands of windows and the glass entry space, however, is a modern design element.

In addition to his architectural work, Charles A. Schade also served as director of the City Planning Commission for Greater Albany in 1960-61, during the time he was designing and building the addition to the First Congregational Church. Also in 1961, he served as president of the Eastern New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA).³³

Summary

For more than 150 years, the First Congregational Church has been a prominent feature in the city of Albany, both as an architectural landmark and as a gathering place for the community. The current church building,

³³ John F. Gane and George S. Koyl, *American Architects Directory*, Third ed. (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1970), 803, <http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/1970%20American%20Architects%20Directory.aspx>.

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constructed between 1917 and 1918 and dedicated in 1919, is an excellent example of the Wren-Gibbs church type, which had strong connections with the growth of American Protestantism, including Congregationalism. The later education wing addition, built 1960-61, realized the original vision for the church to accommodate meeting spaces and Sunday School classrooms in the facility. Today, the First Congregational Church has approximately 100 members, and continues to play a strong role in the local community, hosting annual events such as a Harvest Festival, Christmas pageant and 50-Year Member Silver Tea gatherings, in addition to regular services, Sunday School classes, choir rehearsals and other events. Much as it did in the 1850s, and in the 1910s when it embraced the Woodlawn neighborhood, First Congregational Church continues to be a notable place for many Albany residents.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 2

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

Albany County, New York

County and State

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

Albany County, New York

County and State

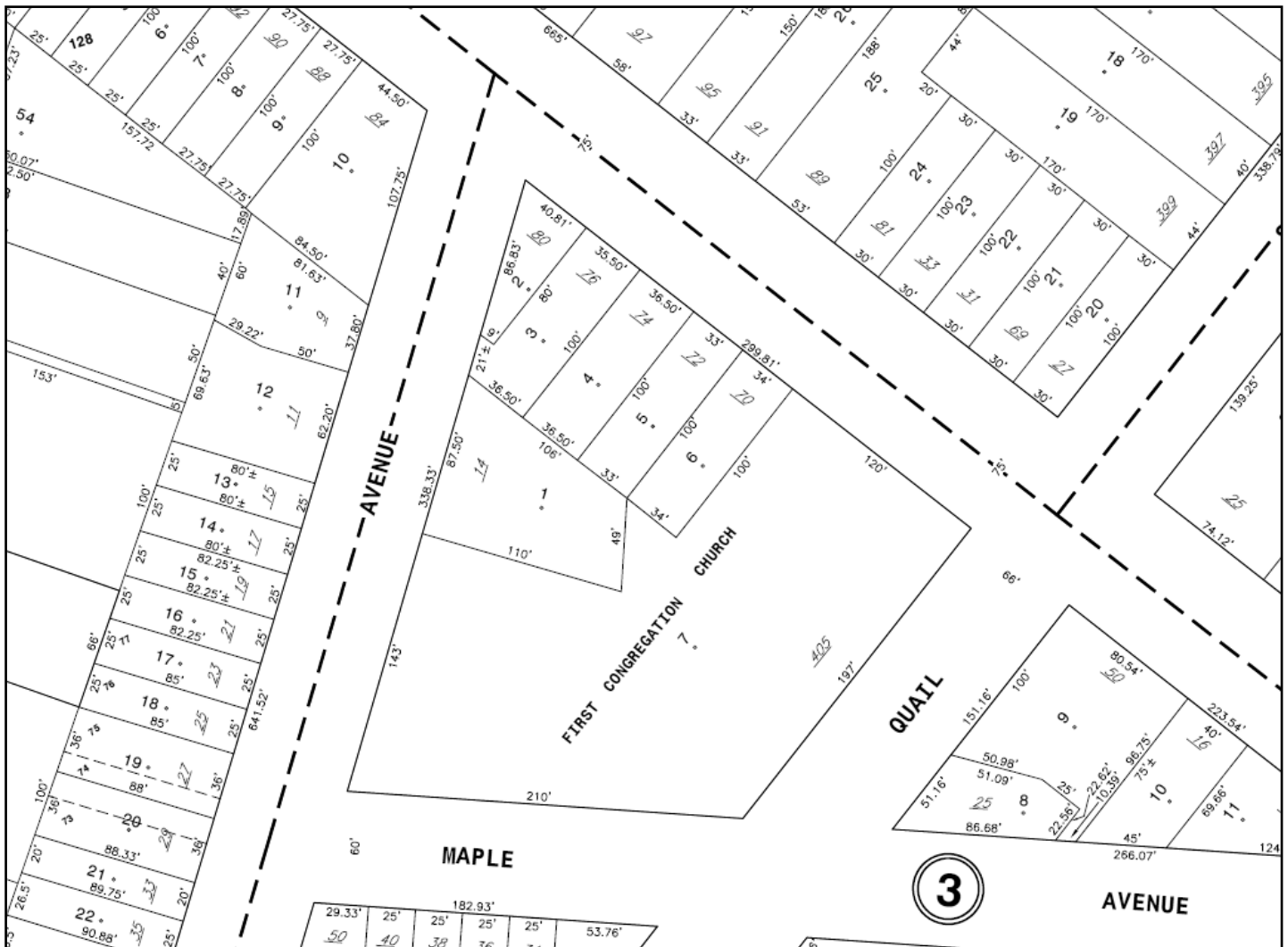
Section 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is an irregularly shaped parcel located at the on the west side of Quail Street between Woodlawn and Maple Avenues in the Woodlawn neighborhood of the city of Albany, Albany County, New York. Refer to the attached maps with scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries have been drawn to reflect all land currently owned by the First Congregational Church of Albany. These boundaries encompass land historically associated with the church since its construction at this site in 1917.



United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

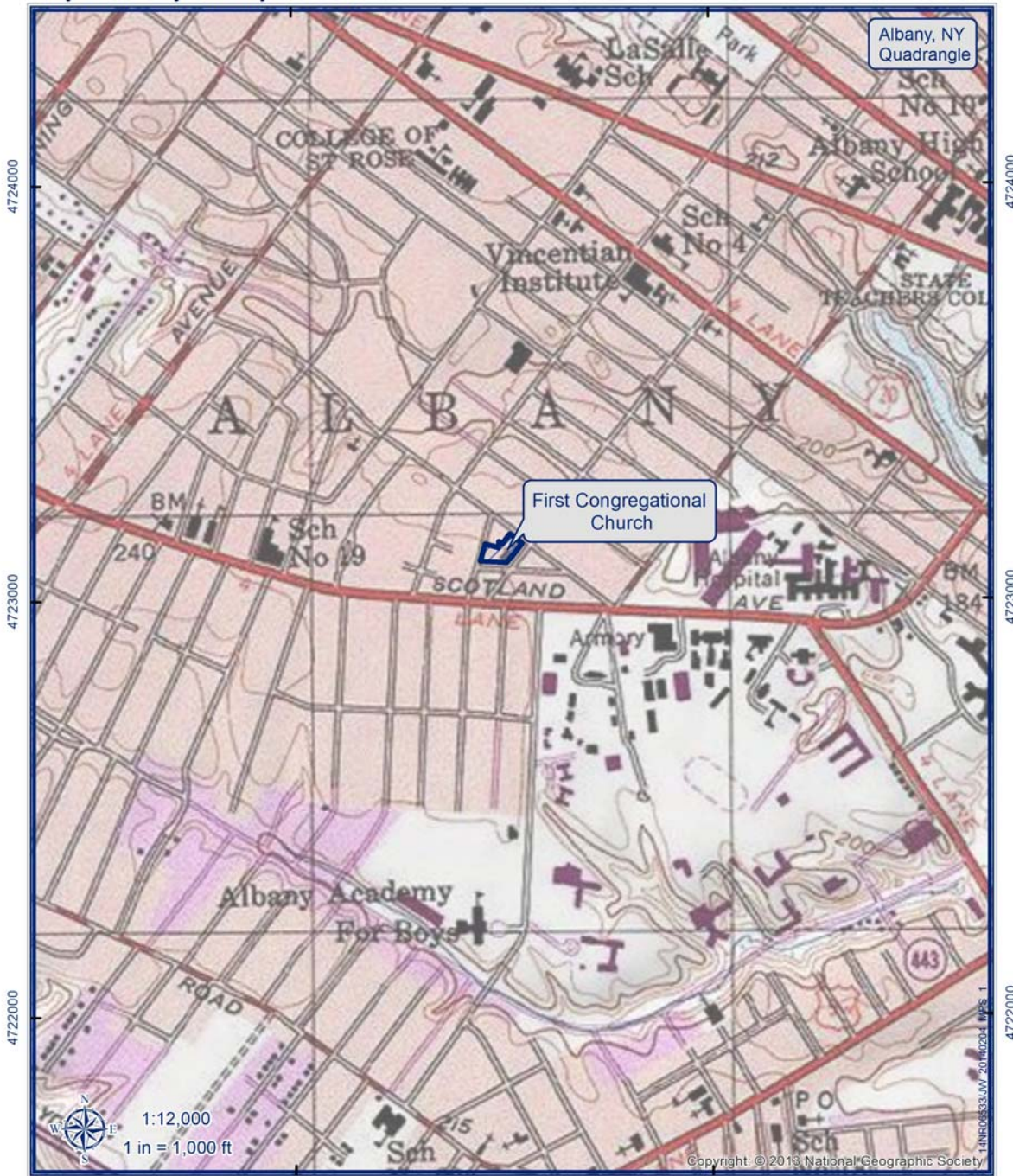
Albany County, New York

County and State

Section 10 Page 2

First Congregational Church of Albany
City of Albany, Albany Co., NY

4405 Quail Street
Albany, NY 12208



1:12,000
1 in = 1,000 ft

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



First Congregational Church

Tax Parcel Data:
Albany Co. RPS
albany.org/Government



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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

Albany County, New York

County and State

Section 10 Page 3

First Congregational Church of Albany
City of Albany, Albany Co., NY

4405 Quail Street
Albany, NY 12208



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



First Congregational Church

Tax Parcel Data:
Albany Co. RPS
albany.ny.gov/Government



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

Albany County, New York

County and State

Section 11 Page 1

Additional Information

Name of Property: First Congregational Church of Albany
City or Vicinity: Albany
County: Albany
State: NY
Name of Photographer: Jennifer Walkowski
Date of Photographs: November 2013
Location of Original Digital Files: Peebles Island Resource Center, PO Box 189, Waterford, NY 12188

NY_Albany County_First Congregational Church of Albany_0001
Primary east façade, showing church and Education wing

NY_Albany County_First Congregational Church of Albany_0002
Primary east façade, looking north

NY_Albany County_First Congregational Church of Albany_0003
South elevation, looking east

NY_Albany County_First Congregational Church of Albany_0004
Education wing, looking south

NY_Albany County_First Congregational Church of Albany_0005
"Ray Palmer Memorial" plaque, detail of east façade

NY_Albany County_First Congregational Church of Albany_0006
Interior, narthex, looking north

NY_Albany County_First Congregational Church of Albany_0007
Interior, auditorium worship space, looking west from balcony toward pulpit

NY_Albany County_First Congregational Church of Albany_0008
Interior, auditorium worship space, looking east toward balcony

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

Albany County, New York

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Section 11 Page 2

Builders and Contractors involved with the construction of First Congregational Church (1917-18)³⁴

Contractor	Address	Service Provided
James Ackroyd	966 Broadway, Albany	Waterproofing and flashing under front stairs
A.H. Lawton		Cinders, Fertilizer
Albany Builders Supply Co	NYC Ave and Manning Blvd	Cement
Albany Concrete Stone Co / W.F. Hinman	Tweedle Building	Sand
Albany Hardware & Iron Co.	39, 41, 43 State Street	Nails, Brads, Knobs, Pulls, etc
Albany Trucking & Storage Co	21 Hudson Ave	Cartage on Columns and Pilasters
Alfred Hunter & Son	152 1/2 Clinton Ave	Brick
Austin & Company	13 North Pearl	Insurance
Bamer & McDowell	38 Central Ave	Nails, Felt, etc
Blakeslee Lumber Co	979 & 981 Broadway	Lumber (for sash, etc)
DeLaus W. Herrick & Son	167, 169, 171 Hudson Avenue	Coal
E.M. Murray Plastering Co	58 Jay Street	Lathing and Plastering
F.F. Crannell Lumber Co	Cor. North Ferry and Water Sts	Lumber
F.W. Newman & Son		Electrical
F.W. Ridgeway Co.		Plumbing
G.H. Crandall Co.	363 Saratoga Street, Cohoes	Sash Doors, trim, etc
Geo. Spalt & Sons	904 Broadway	Carving
George Rymiller		Dirt blocking and horses
George Whitbeck	122 Morris Street	Labor
Gibson - Snow Co. Inc. Wholesale Druggists	645-657 Broadway	Muriatic Acid
Graceland Farm		Chopping Elms on Quail Street
H. Shapiro, teaming	47-49-51 Rensselaer Street	Fertilizer
H.C. Parsons, civil engineer & surveyor	Room 212, 467 Broadway	Locating Foundation Walls
Hartmann-Sanders Company	Chicago	Columns - Roman Ionic Caps, Pilasters
Hobbs, E.R.	199 Orange Street	Marble and Tile
Hoy & Co	39-41 Columbia Street	Lead
J. Herbert	Cedar Hill, NY	Fertilizer
J. Hunter Hag & Ctg. Co		Heating
J. Kurtz, Jr. & Wend		Lumber
J.J. Grinner, teaming	273 New Scotland	Fertilizer
J.T.D. Blackburn	129 Water Street	Stone

³⁴ Provided by the First Congregational Church. Most are from the Albany, NY area.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

Albany County, New York

County and State

Section 11 Page 3

J.T. Murray		Placing Bell
James T. Young		Basement Window Frames
John H. Jackson Tile Co	108 Third Avenue	Brick headers, etc
John H. Moran	Hudson Avenue and Eagle Street	Tinning Doors
John Robinson Co	116 Water Street	Lumber, flooring
Joseph Schaap		cutting trees
L. Thompson & Co		Shiplap
M.F. Dollard	118 Van Woert Street	Fertilizer
Madden Lumber Co	Troy	lumber
Murray plastering co		lead flashing
N.C. Clausen A. Iron Co	Tivoli Street (near North Pearl)	Lally columns & Steel & iron
Onondaga Litholite Co	102-112 N. Beech St, Syracuse	Corner Stone
Peter McCabe	28 William street	Portland cement
R.K. Palmer		painting
Robinson Company		furring
Standard Oil Company		Fertilizer
Wm. Sayles & Son	264 Hudson Ave	General Contracting; Carpentry Masonry

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 4

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

Albany County, New York

County and State

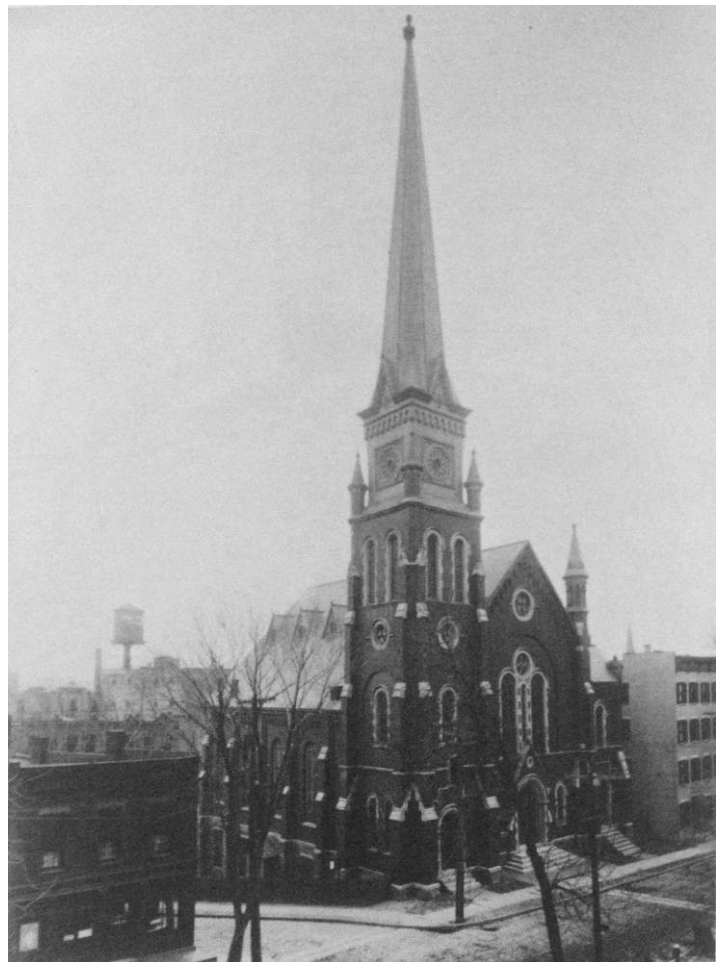


**First building, First Congregational Church
(demolished)**

Located at South Pearl and Beaver Streets

Built 1795, tower 1808

Used by the congregation between 1850 - 1869



**Second building, First Congregational Church
(demolished)**

Located at Eagle and Beaver Streets

Built 1869

Used by the congregation between 1869 - 1917

United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation Sheet

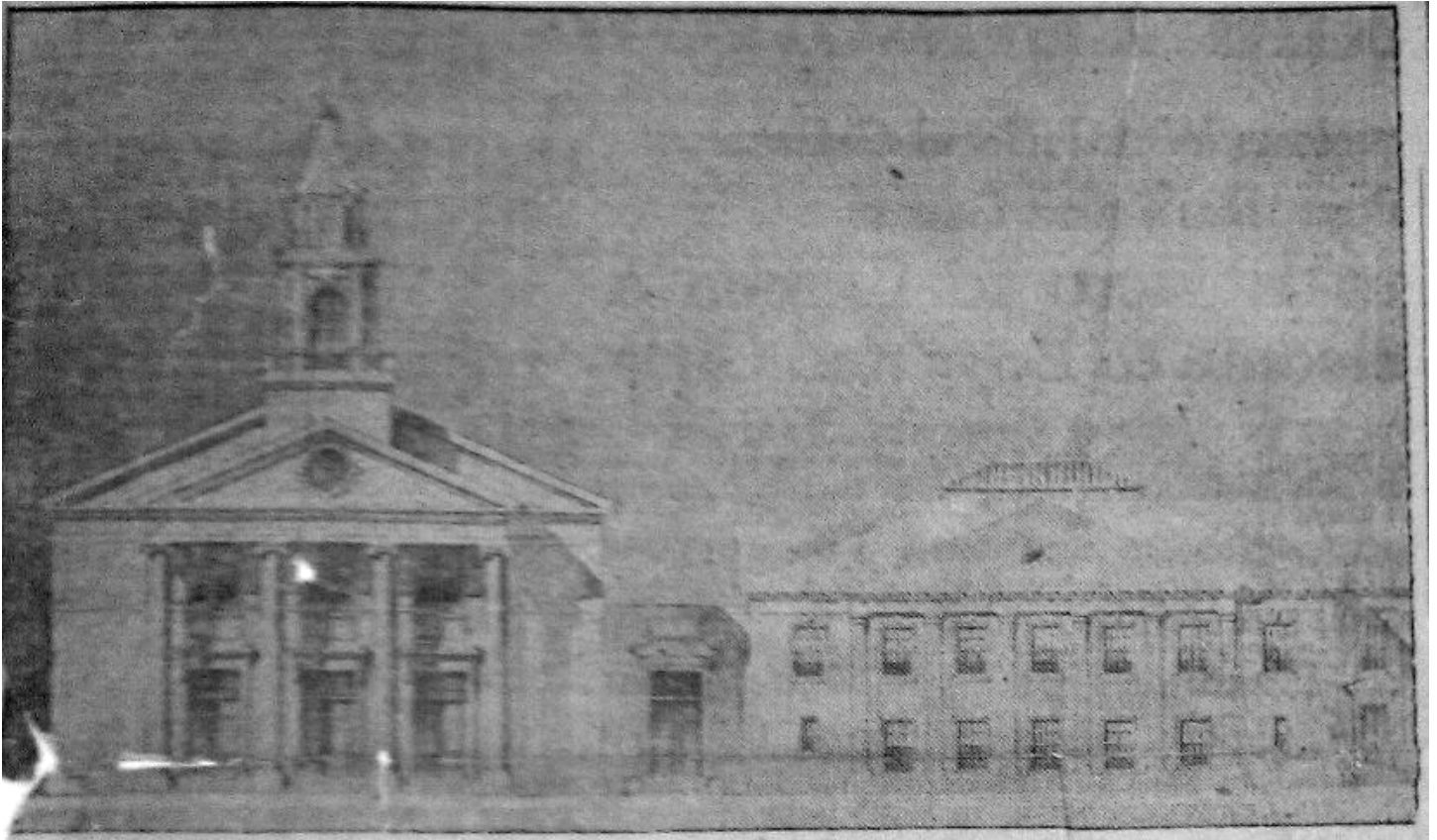
Section 11 Page 5

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

Albany County, New York

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“The First Congregational Church as it will appear when completed.

The building on the right is the additional unit which will be erected later.” (1917)

Original drawing published in the local newspaper, showing the original scheme for the new church building. Note that the original concept included an adjoining parish hall, linked to the church by a hyphen.

Source: The Albany Evening Journal, November 23, 1917. From the collection of First Congregational Church.

United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation Sheet

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

Albany County, New York

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First Congregational Church under construction (ca. 1918)

View showing the exterior of the building nearing completion, and the elaborate scaffolding needed to build the pedimented portico.

Source: First Congregational Church archives

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Section 11 Page 7

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

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First Congregational Church, "The Ray Palmer Memorial" (1919)

Source: *The First Congregational Church Services in Dedication of the New Building the Ray Palmer Memorial April 20-27, 1919*
(Albany, NY: First Congregational Church, 1919), frontispiece.

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First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

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First Congregational Church, north elevation (ca. 1958)

This image shows the north elevation just prior to the construction of the Education Wing, and was part of a promotional booklet issued by the church to spur support for the construction project.

Source: *Program of Progress* (Albany, NY: First Congregational Church, March 1958).

United States Department of the Interior
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First Congregational Church of Albany
Name of Property
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“Three Church School classes meeting in one room.” (1958)

This view shows the balcony being utilized as classroom spaces, and was featured in a promotional booklet issued by the Church to solicit support for the Education Wing addition.

Source: *Program of Progress* (Albany, NY: First Congregational Church, March 1958).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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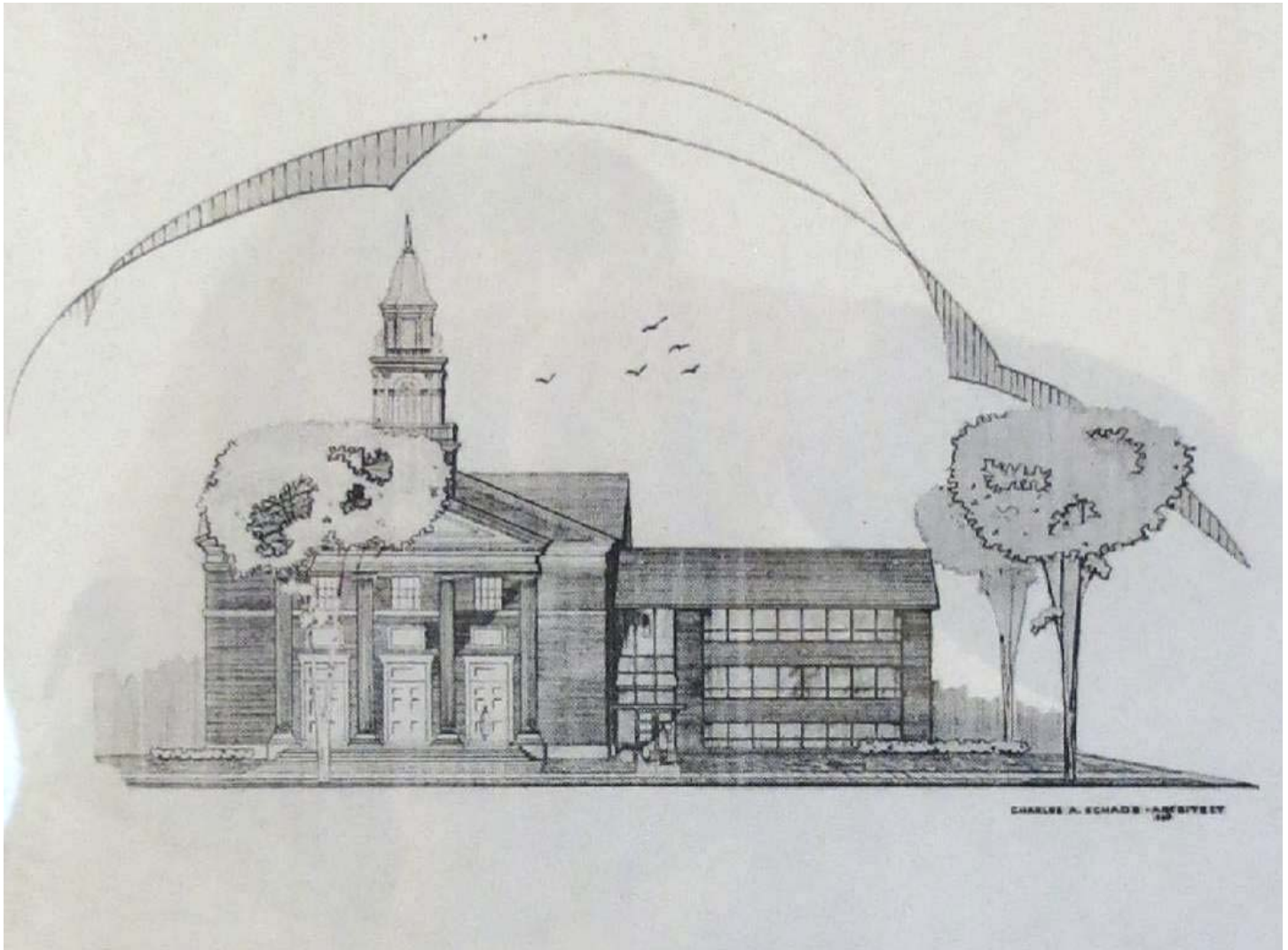
Section 11 Page 10

First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

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County and State



Drawing, First Congregational Church with Christian Education Building wing (ca. 1961)

Drawing by architect Charles A. Schade showing the front elevation of the 1917 church building with the new 1960-61 wing. Compare this view with the original concept proposed in 1917.

Source: First Congregational Church archives

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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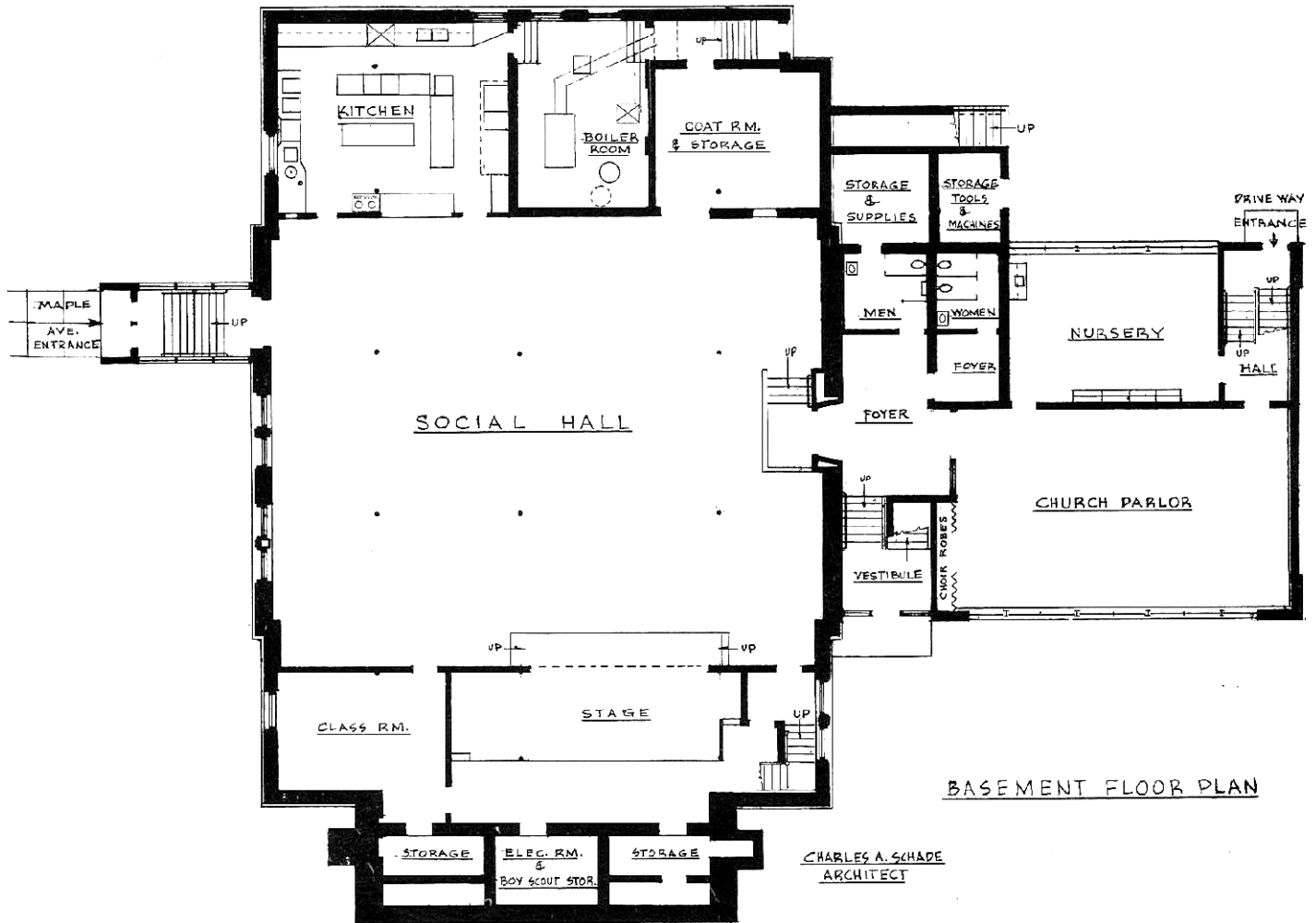
First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

Albany County, New York

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Section 11 Page 11



Basement Floor Plan, Charles A. Schade, architect (1961)

This floor plan shows the current layout and configuration of the church, with the education wing addition.

Source: *Dedication Day: Christian Education Building* (Albany, NY: First Congregational Church, April 23, 1961).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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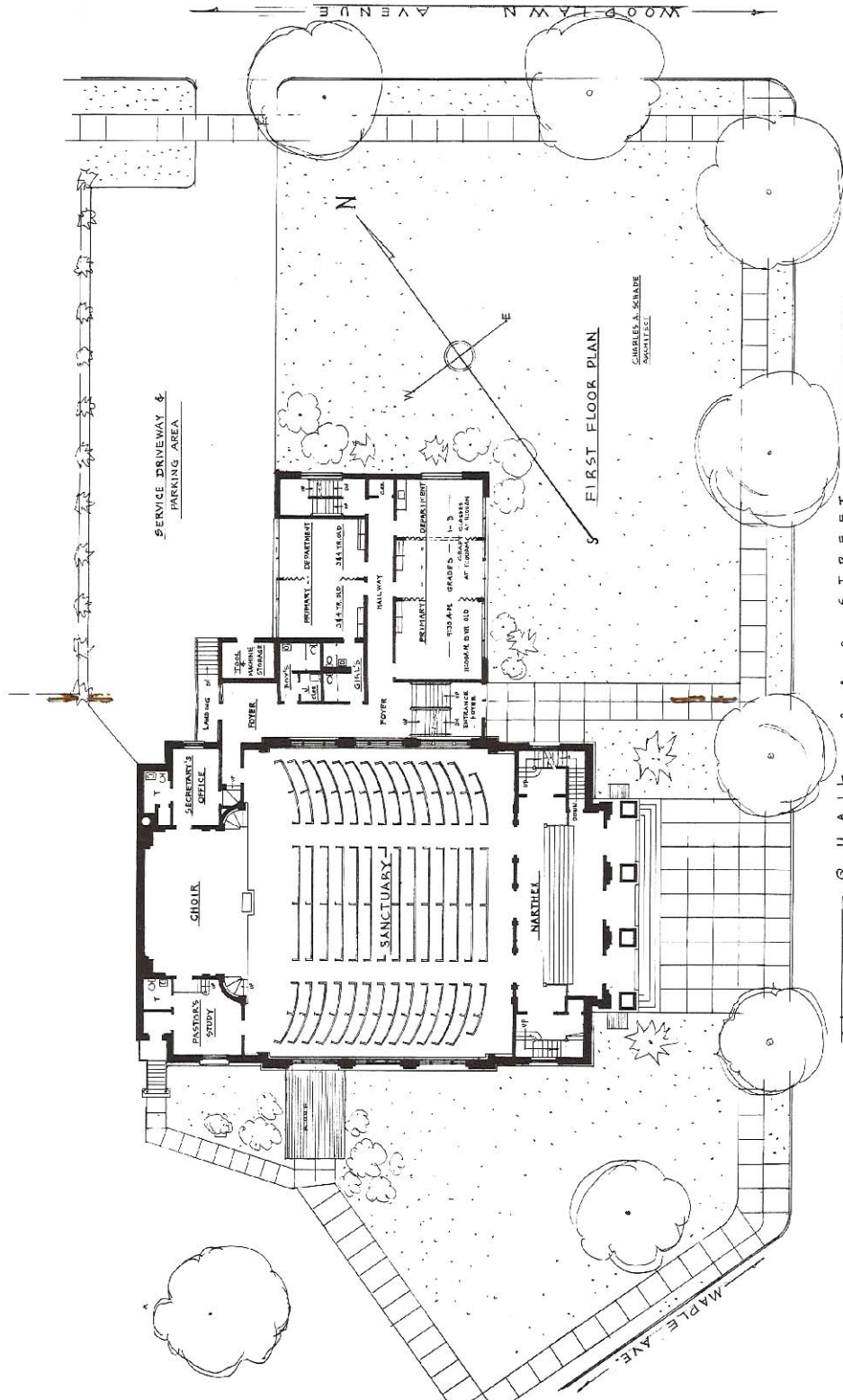
First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

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First Floor Plan and Site Plan, Charles A. Schade, architect (1961)

This floor plan shows the current layout and configuration of the church, with the education wing addition. It also depicts the landscaping proposed by Schade for around the building.

Source: *Dedication Day: Christian Education Building* (Albany, NY: First Congregational Church, April 23, 1961).

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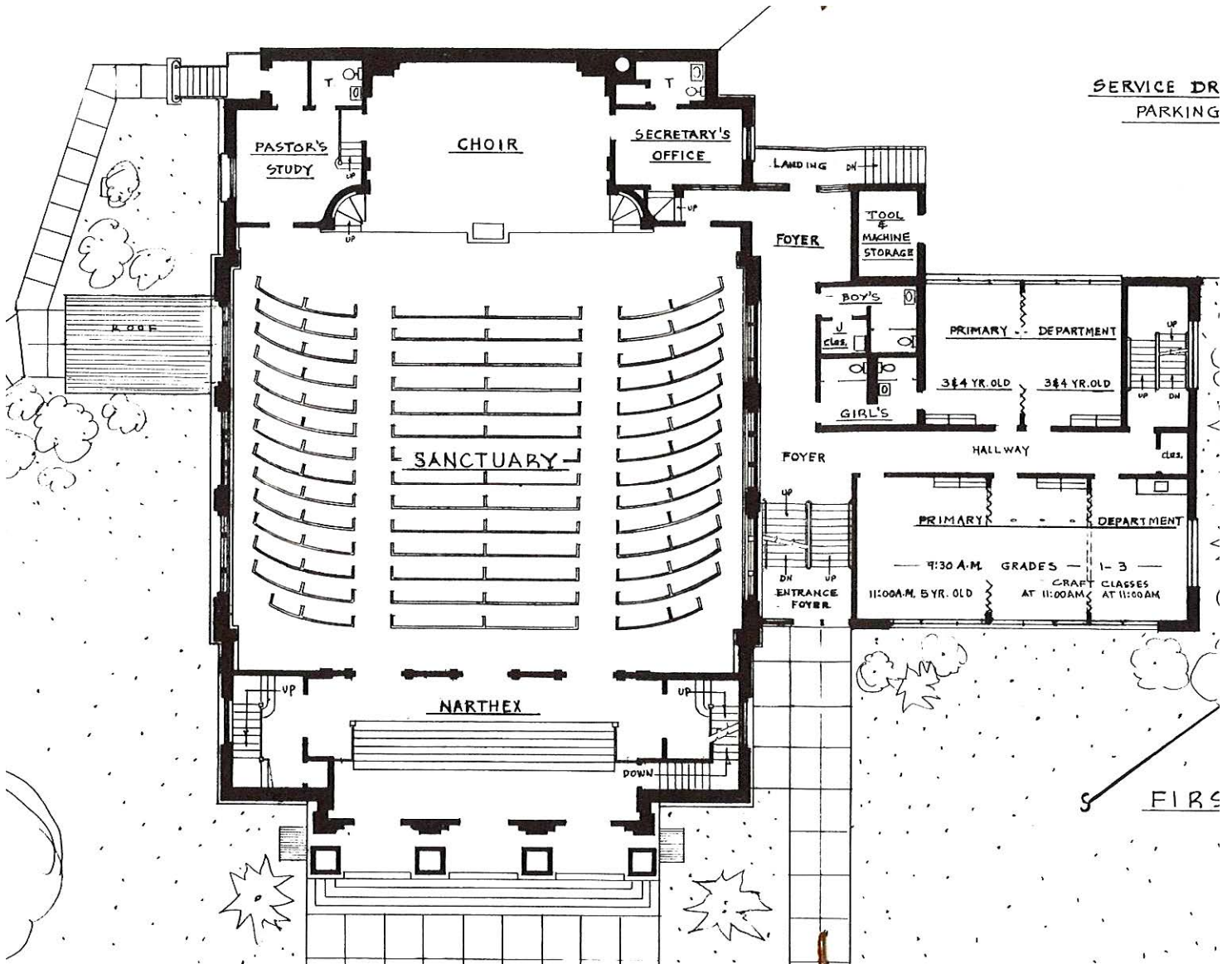
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First Congregational Church of Albany

Name of Property

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Detail, First Floor Plan (1961)

Detail of previous, showing layout of first floor.

United States Department of the Interior
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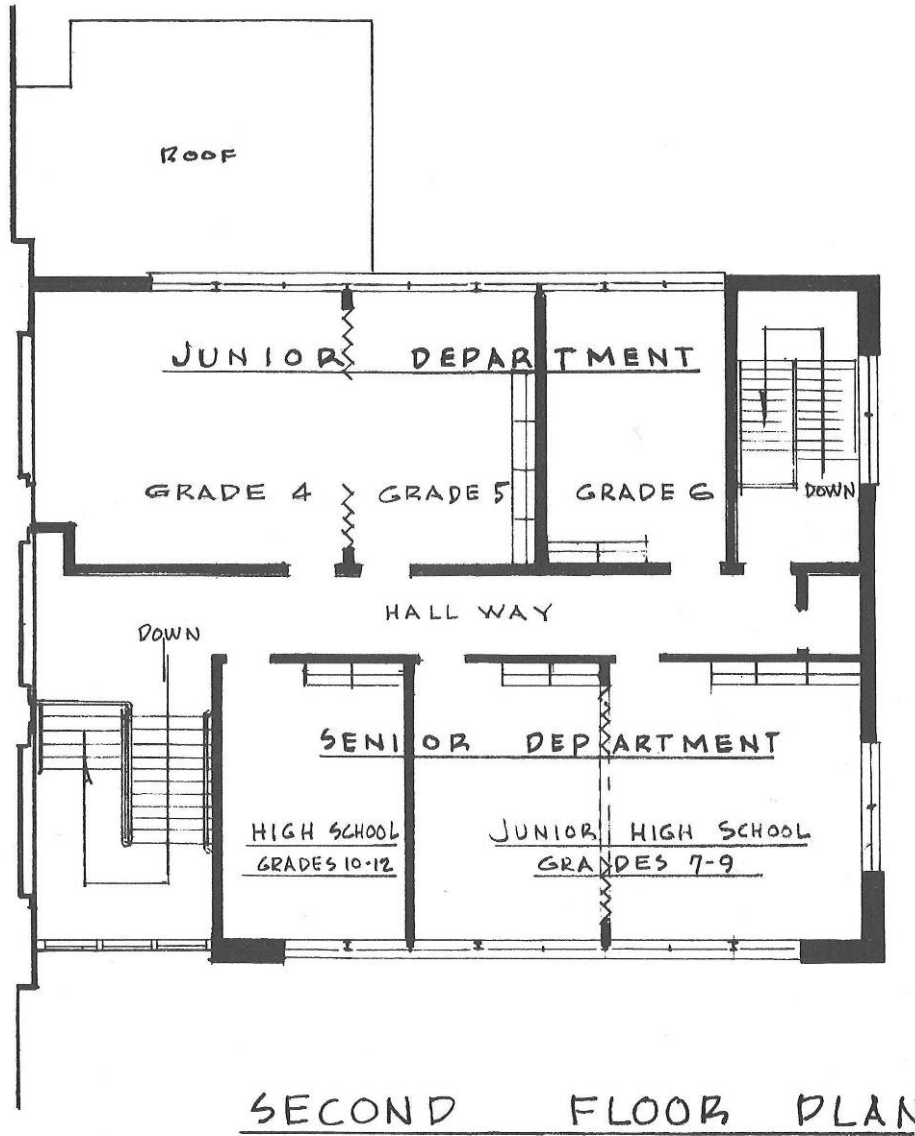
First Congregational Church of Albany

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Section 11 Page 14



CHARLES A. SCHADE
ARCHITECT

Second Floor Plan of Education Wing, Charles A. Schade, architect (1961)

Plan of the Education Wing.

Source: *Dedication Day: Christian Education Building* (Albany, NY: First Congregational Church, April 23, 1961).





FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH





CLOTHING
SHOES
DROP BOX

Clothing
Shoes
Drop Box



A rectangular stone plaque is mounted on a red brick wall. The plaque has a double-line border and contains the text "RAY PALMER MEMORIAL" in a serif font, arranged in two lines. The wall is composed of red bricks with light-colored mortar. Above and below the brickwork are horizontal bands of light-colored stone or concrete.

RAY PALMER
MEMORIAL







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: First Congregational Church of Albany

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Albany

DATE RECEIVED: 4/10/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/07/14
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/22/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/27/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000259

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 5.27.14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

COMMITTEES
Aging
Cities
Mental Health and
Developmental Disabilities
Real Property Taxation
Tourism, Parks, Arts &
Sports Development

JOHN T. McDONALD III
Assemblymember 108th District

February 13, 2014



Ms. Ruth Pierpont
Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation
Peebles Island
PO Box 189
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Re: First Congregational Church of Albany
405 Quail Street, Albany, NY 12208
Albany County

Dear Ms. Pierpont:

I am writing in regard to the property known as the First Congregational Church of Albany which is being considered by the State Review Board at its meeting on March 13, 2014, for nomination to the National and State Registers of Historic Places. I am writing to express my support of the aforementioned application and would request that this support be shared with those that will be considering the nomination.

As a former Mayor and now as a Member of the New York State Assembly, I can tell you first hand the importance of preserving our historic structures. The Assembly district which I represent includes many prime properties that are either located in historic districts or are eligible for historic nomination and it is just as important that the property owners of such buildings have access to the various incentive programs provided that a nomination is secured. I have witnessed the hard work and success of a number of projects involving historic structures and each project needs full support from state and federal partnerships that now exist.

I strongly encourage the State Review Board to accept this nomination to the National and State Registers of Historic Places and I kindly ask that I be advised on how I can support these efforts further.

Sincerely,

John T. McDonald III
Member of Assembly

cc: Mayor Kathy M. Sheehan, Albany

City Hall
Eagle Street
Albany, NY 12207
March 11, 2014

Ms. Ruth Pierpont
Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
PO Box 189
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Dear Ms. Pierpont:

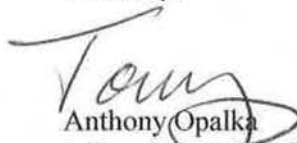
As Albany City Historian, I am writing regarding the nomination of the First Congregational Church at 405 Quail Street to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

This church, the congregation of which dates to 1850, is a distinctive, largely intact local example of a Wren-Gibbs type church rendered in the Colonial Revival style. It also features an attached education wing constructed of materials that complement the church even though it was designed in the Modern style. The church building is a design of prominent Albany architectural firm of Fuller and Robinson in 1917 and although a wing was part of the original design, it was not constructed until 1960-61 to the designs of architect Charles A. Schade .

The First Congregational Church was originally organized in 1850 in downtown Albany, but like many congregations of the early twentieth century, saw many of its members move to Albany's growing western suburbs. The church relocated to this new and growing residential area of the city and became a center for many social activities.

I am pleased to support the nomination of this property to the Registers.

Sincerely,


Anthony Opalka
Albany City Historian



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Division for Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189
518-237-8643



Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

Rose Harvey
Commissioner

5 April 2014

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to enclose the following two National Register nominations, both on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Tomhannock Methodist Episcopal Church, Rensselaer County
First Congregational Church of Albany, Albany County

Please feel free to call me at 518.237.8643 x 3261 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office