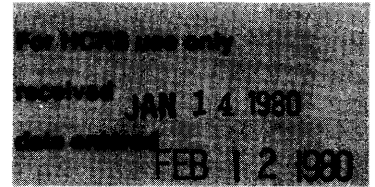


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic First Congregational Church (Old)

and/or common Willcox Building

2. Location

street & number 492 E. 13th Avenue not for publication

city, town Eugene vicinity of congressional district 4th

state Oregon code 41 county Lane code 039

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<u> </u> district	<u> </u> public	<u>XX</u> occupied	<u> </u> agriculture <u> </u> museum
<u>XX</u> building(s)	<u>XX</u> private	<u> </u> unoccupied	<u>XX</u> commercial <u> </u> park
<u> </u> structure	<u> </u> both	<u> </u> work in progress	<u> </u> educational <u> </u> private residence
<u> </u> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<u> </u> entertainment <u> </u> religious
<u> </u> object	<u> </u> in process	<u> </u> yes: restricted	<u> </u> government <u> </u> scientific
	<u> </u> being considered	<u>XX</u> yes: unrestricted	<u> </u> industrial <u> </u> transportation
		<u> </u> no	<u> </u> military <u> </u> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Willcox Building Joint Venture

street & number 492 E. 13th Avenue

city, town Eugene vicinity of state Oregon 97401

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lane County Courthouse

street & number 125 E. 8th Avenue

city, town Eugene vicinity of state Oregon 97401

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Eugene Historic Landmark has this property been determined eligible? yes XX no

date October 29, 1979 federal XX state county XX local

depository for survey records Department of Housing and Community Conservation, City Hall

city, town Eugene vicinity of state Oregon 97401

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The First Congregational Church building an eclectic blend of primarily Mediterranean derivation, located on the S.W. corner of the intersection of 13th Avenue E. and Ferry Streets today presents an almost unchanged appearance to the street. Additions to the rear match the existing building. The building is set back 15 to 16 feet from the street property lines on the north and the east. The maximum N-S dimension of the original building is 108 feet, the E-W dimension is 81 feet. The lot size N-S dimension is 160 feet, the E-W dimension is 200.4 feet. The property is bordered by an alley on the south side. The portion of the property to the west of the building is at present mostly parking for the mortuary which recently occupied the building. An existing house occupies the northwest corner of this property to the west of the church building.

The overall shape of the plan as originally built was rectangular, in the form of a modified "H" shape. The sanctuary formed the west leg of the "H"; the two-story classroom the east leg of the "H". The two legs are connected by an east-west two-story chapel and a ground-level pastor's study, thus completing the "H" shape. The shallow north exterior space formed by the "H" is covered by a porch serving as the entry to the chapel and classroom, and as an exterior passage from the sanctuary to the chapel entry. The exterior space formed to the south by the "H" is a courtyard.

The sanctuary and chapel buildings are double stud, wood-frame construction with cement "gunite" blown-on as the exterior finish. The classroom wing is of single stud wood-frame construction and is also covered with gunite. In the mid-fifties all the buildings were sold to a mortuary, who added 1600 square feet of embalming facilities and garage space to the rear. The most recent tenant has added a 27' x 75' one-story addition south of the sanctuary. All of these additions were constructed and finished to be compatible with the original buildings. The external characteristics of the building are marked by an honest, forthright simplicity of detailing and use of materials. A maximum effect was achieved by the use of common, available, inexpensive materials. A simple, elegant building resulted whose appeal remains fresh and appropriate today.

The largest part of this complex, the sanctuary, has a 4 in 12 gable roof with a shallow eave. The roof and wall juncture is ornamented with a unique, band-sawed cavetto cornice molding in wood. An ornamented cross protruded from the gable ridge but has been recently stolen. The large, flat wall surface of the front elevation is an appropriate background for the entrance. The well-proportioned entry is comprised of double, decoratively-paneled, wooden doors flanked by small windows on each side. The entry is protected by a low-pitch, pent roof supported by large wooden brackets which rest on either side of the entry windows. A large, thirty light, segmentally-arched window is positioned in the upper wall space above the entry. The ornamented jamb detail is repeated in the free-standing wooden posts which decorate this large window. Smaller versions of these posts are centered in the lower porch windows.

Tall, narrow, simply framed windows punctuate the west and east elevations, although two are truncated on the east elevation in order to accommodate the roof of the chapel. These windows provide the primary illumination in the sanctuary. Below are 3 smaller windows axially-aligned with the larger ones and provide further interior light. Towards the south, there are also several, irregularly placed smaller windows. A modern porte-cochere was added to this elevation by the mortuary as was the door under the fifth tall window. The rear elevation is almost sculptural in its simplicity. Covered by a low pitched hip roof, the apse is attached to the unadorned rear wall. Simple casement windows abutt the eave. An equally unadorned chimney is partially attached to the left side of the apse and rises through the cornice. The previously mentioned one-story addition extends to the south.

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The portico, attached to the lower east elevation of the sanctuary, north elevation of the chapel, and west elevation of the classroom building is practically hidden by mature vegetation. Entry to the chapel and classroom is through this portico. The low-pitched roof of the chapel covers a two-story interior space. The front elevation of the old classroom building is similarly organized to that of the sanctuary front. The large undecorated wall is broken in the center by a twelve-light casement window on the first floor, and by a much larger opening above it on the second floor. French doors with twenty lights are bordered by narrow fixed-pane panels on either side. The doors open onto a iron-railed balcony supported by brackets. The twelve light windows of the lower east elevation are matched on the upper floor. A side door is protected by a pent roof supported by large brackets.

The prevailing dark brown trim on all the woodwork is juxtaposed against the creamy-white gunite. The natural slump pattern developed in the process of finishing the exterior walls provides a uniquely-textured surface. The "soft" appearance is particularly evident at corners and around window frames, lending a rustic character to the building.

Interior Description

The interior throughout the building is a combination of plaster walls set off by dark painted trim, decorative mouldings, woodwork and screens. The exception is the light natural wood staining of the pews and the balcony and choir railings in the sanctuary. The sanctuary details and finish are of particular interest and high quality. The wall finish of the sanctuary is a very rough "mission jazz" finish plaster which plays against the relatively refined dark mouldings and trim of the windows and the stained open truss ceiling. Interior windows carry out the theme of ornamentation of the ornamented high window over the main entry (See photographs) The detached posts are turned vertical spindles that ease the hard lines of the window frames. The ornamented dark stained exposed trusses are supported on large curved wood wall brackets. The king post of these simple truss forms protrudes through the two bottom chords to form a turned ornament thrust into the space below. The wood ceiling is supported on wood purlins running the length of the building. The bottom surfaces of the purlins and the truss members are stencilled with delicate low key colors, adding a special subtlety to the combination of forms and stain color of the ceiling space. The rough texture of the plaster wall, playing against the decorated, stained wood of the ceiling and trusses, produces a quiet liveliness of a very special quality.

All of this general harmonious interior theme is supported with simply, yet elegantly designed Douglas fir pews, altar furniture, and chori railings. A small Greek cross carved relief is the common decorative theme of these elements. Of particular quality and visual significance is the focally oriented organ screen located on the wall to the rear of the altar. The device for creating the richness of this feature is quite simple, yet it is of particular subtlety and beauty. The screen is made up of small vertically placed, flat boards with decorative scroll saw patterns cut from their edges, thus forming an ornamental silhouette pattern between the vertical boards. A similar technique of less complexity is used to decorate the stair rails. The use of such devices of common technique and simplicity is a good example of the various methods used throughout the building to achieve a kind of unity in the combination of spaces, materials, construction and detailing.

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Another important feature of the sanctuary are the hanging, hand-made light fixtures (see photo). These are constructed of commonly available electrical equipment shaded by copper screens, punched with small holes in delicate patterns. These fixtures are further decorated with hand-wrought ornamental iron supports; they hang on long rods springing from the truss brackets where these meet the truss. Of special interest is the "dancing stairway" leading to the balcony from the sanctuary main entry space. The angle turn in the steps is achieved with no landing. The steps at the change-of-stair direction are a comfortable width across their entire length as these turn the corner. Also, the stair wall skirting curves upward and the two pieces of stair handrail curve upward and downward respectively. The curves indicate the complicated geometry required to produce the dancing stair turn using minimum space to accommodate a maximum rise from one floor to another.

The chapel, joining the main sanctuary at right angles near the altar, is detailed in a similar manner to the sanctuary, using open trusses and stenciled surfaces. Originally functioning as a classroom, the room was opened to the sanctuary to accommodate the overflow at worship services. Through subsequent changes in usage the chapel remains unaltered. Like many similar church buildings, the classroom building was intended for multi-use. The first floor originally an office, parlor, study, kitchenette and kindergarten. The second floor housed only two rooms; a large kitchen in back and a single large room which served as dining room and Sunday School. Sliding partitions were used to divide the space. After the mortuary purchased the building, this space was permanently divided into smaller rooms, which are now being converted to offices.

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 type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1925 **Builder/Architect** Architect: W.R.B. Willcox; Builder: Earl M. Drew

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Old Congregational Church, built in 1925, is significant for its architectural excellence. It is the best of the remaining local structures designed by Walter R.B. Willcox a Northwest architect and educator of considerable renown, and considered to be his only ecclesiastic building in Oregon.

Now named the Willcox Building, the congregational church is a fine example of design trends emanating from England in the early part of this century and also shows a California mission influence. The building is widely admired for its elegance and simplicity, and its creative use of quality materials. It is frequently under study by students of the University of Oregon Department of Architecture and has a timeless charm that is highly appealing. It is estimated that over 2,000 weddings have taken place in the building during its 32-year church history. In 1956 the church was sold for use as a memorial chappel (McGaffey-Andreaso Funeral Home) and it remained in that use until April 1979 when it was sold again, to Associated Management, Inc. Its present use is for offices and for a wedding chapel. All the original interior appointments are still in use--the pulpit, altar, pews, pipe organ, etc Former parishioners and those married here visit the building frequently.

W.R.B. Willcox, a friend of Frank Lloyd Wright, was persuaded to leave his private practice and to become head of the University Department of Architecture in 1923. His tenure at the University ended with his death in 1947. The church, dedicated on March 8, 1925, was used by him as a teaching tool with his architecture students at the University. He became as widely known for his innovative teaching methods as for his strongly original designs.

A retrospective exhibit honoring W.R.B. Willcox will be held at the University this fall. It will feature drawings and exhibits of his entire career, including working drawings and diagrams of this particular building. Willcox was educated at MIT and the University of Pennsylvania during the early 1890s. He developed a thriving practice in Burlington, Vermont where a number of his successful buildings survive today. He moved to Seattle, Washington in 1908 where two of his structures are included in the National Register--the Queen Anne Hill Retaining Walls, and the Viaduct crossing Washington Park.

While in Seattle, Willcox became prominent as a fellow of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), eventually becoming their National Vice-President. He met Ellis Lawrence, the Dean of the University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts, during their mutual membership in this organization. Over a period of six or seven years, Lawrence convinced Willcox to accept the position of Head of the Architecture Department in Eugene. Willcox the architect became a tremendously inventive and innovative teacher, gaining national attention among architectural educators, many of whom visited the school during this period to witness his educational experiments. This building, now named for the man who had used it as a teaching devise for budding architects, represents an historic place that is important in its own right as architecture as well as symbolic record of an unusual man.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Charles Rusch, Concerning the Preservation of the Original First Congregational Church, Designed by W.R.B. Willcox in 1925. University of Oregon, 1979.

Papers of Philip Gilmore, Architect and Researcher on the career of W.R.B. Willcox.

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name Eugene East, Oregon

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	0	4	9	3	2	5	0	4	8	7	6	7	1	9
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C

Zone		Easting				Northing							

D

Zone		Easting				Northing							

E

Zone		Easting				Northing							

F

Zone		Easting				Northing							

G

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H

Zone		Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 5, 6, 7, Block 1, Shaw's Second Addition or Shaw's and Patterson's Addition to Eugene City, Lane County, as platted and recorded on page 364, Vol. G, Lane County, Oregon plat records, in Lane County.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet K. Walsh, Researcher

organization Willcox Building Joint Venture date August 28, 1979

street & number 492 E. 13th Avenue telephone 503/485-0575

city or town Eugene state Oregon 97401

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

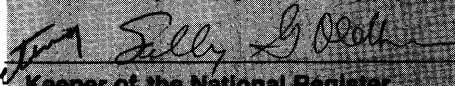
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

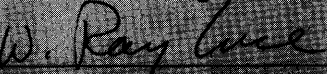
title SHPO Designee date December 19, 1979

For HCERS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

 date 2/12/80

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:  date 1-29-80

Chief of Registration