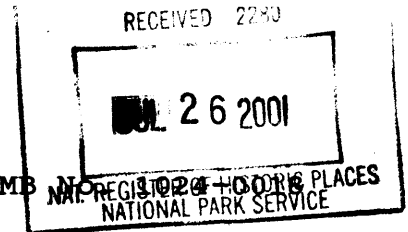


NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



*Sub
Rev
Requested
by
Date*

949

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name: First Church of Christ, Scientist

other names/site number: Center for Design Arts

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number: 1200 North Robinson Avenue

Not for publication: N/A

city or town: Oklahoma City

vicinity: N/A

state: Oklahoma

code:OK

county: Oklahoma code:109

zip code:73103

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Bob Bachleer
Signature of certifying official

July 23, 2001
Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register Entered in the National Register 9.9.01
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 Keeper

Date of Action

=====

5. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: religious facility/church

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: WORK IN PROGRESS Sub: _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:

Classical Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE--limestone

Roof UNKNOWN

walls STONE--limestone

other _____

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

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 is 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 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 the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1922

=====

8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

=====

Significant Dates: 1922

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder UNKNOWN

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

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

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

- Previous documentation on file (NPS) N/A
- 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 Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository:

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property Less than 1 (one)

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	634340	3927670	3	—	—
2	N/A See continuation sheet.					
				4	—	—

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: Dianna Everett, Ph.D., Public Historian

organization: for Oklahoma Foundation for Architecture date: 1 April 2002 /

street & number: 2510 Countrywood Lane

telephone: (405) 348-4272

city or town: Edmond state: OK zip code: 73003-6433

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form
First Church of Christ, Scientist
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

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Property Owner

=====

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

name: Oklahoma City Foundation for Architecture

street & number: 3000 Gen. Pershing Blvd.

telephone: (405)948-7174

city or town: Oklahoma City

state: OK zip code: 73107

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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SUMMARY:

The First Church of Christ, Scientist, at 1200 North Robinson Avenue, Oklahoma City, is sited in a commercial and social area of the city on a street known as "church street" because of its comparable buildings of religious nature. The Christian Science building was constructed in a plan typical of its denomination, of substantial brick and limestone-veneered walls, with a cross-shaped plan that placed a domed central auditorium (the center of worship) at the center of the plan. Exterior decoration, in a simple, classical style, includes fluted columns, broad cornice mouldings, ornamental objects on the roofline, and window hoods and brackets. The three-story structure has stained-glass windows, though thirteen are missing (and will be replicated) because of a 1995 terrorist attack on Oklahoma City. A centrally placed, stained glass skylight is still a decorative hallmark. The interior has been altered; however, the exterior retains all aspects of integrity necessary for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, Architectural Significance.

DESCRIPTION:

The First Church of Christ, Scientist, at 1200 North Robinson Avenue, Oklahoma City, is sited in a commercial/social area of the city. The setting is one of large churches and business buildings, with a few vacant lots where other buildings, primarily commercial, once stood. The First Church of Christ, Scientist, is a three-story, detached building with a parking lot to the immediate north, streets on the west and south, and an alley on the east. The main elevation parallels Robinson Avenue.

The church building's footprint is essentially square, with a small, chimney-like air shaft that projects out at the northeast corner. The plan resembles an open Greek cross, with a large circle in the middle, and the spaces between the cross's arms enclosed. This was a typical plan for a Christian Science church, a plan that was repeated in medium-sized and large cities around the United States in the 1900-1930s era of church building and urban design.(1)

The church's roofline is essentially flat, with very shallow pediments on all four sides. Rising in the center of the roof is a "third story"--a massive, octagonal skylight dome over the auditorium that takes up the entire central section of the building. Otherwise, the roof is flat, covered with asphalt roofing. The inclined

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portion of the dome, a hip-style roof, is covered with new composition shingles of the type that resemble wood shakes.

Fenestration pattern is one of the building's principal visual hallmarks. On the west, the three-bay principal elevation faces Robinson Avenue. The east and west bays (containing the stairwells) are smaller and two stories in height, each with a small, side-opening, stained glass window on each floor. The central bay, which features a pedimented parapet, columned porch, and recessed entrance, is elevated about a half story higher and projects slightly outward from the wall. Four *in antis* Ionic columns support the porch, and three single-light glass doors access the church foyer. Flanking the doors are small, 2x1, side-opening stained-glass windows, and above the doors are five small, two-part, central-opening, stained glass windows that illuminate the balcony above the foyer. Under the pediment is a large, flat, slightly recessed panel that originally bore the chiseled inscription, "First Church of Christ, Scientist." The inscription has been covered with plaster. In this elevation the windows are all stained glass.

The north and south elevations are identical. Each has three bays; the east and west bays (stairwells and anterooms) have two small, single-light, center-opening windows in the upper story and a stained glass window and a single-light door on the ground floor. Originally, the small bays in the southwest corner had stained glass windows, but these were lost in 1995 (see Alterations, below). Between the smaller bays is a pedimented central bay, elevated about a half story above the others. On the ground floor are five small, double-hung, four-light, opaque glass windows (lighting the Sunday School room). Above these, the auditorium is lighted by five tall, three-part windows with new, brown-tinted glass (see Alterations, below).

The east elevation, or rear of the building, has no entrances. It is marked primarily by small, opaque glass windows on each floor. As with the other three elevations, this has the two-story bays (stairwells and anterooms) flanking a taller, pedimented bay. On the north end is a very tall ventilation shaft that rises about ten feet above the roofline. Each of the side bays has windows on each story, two in each story on the south, one in the lower story on the north and two in the upper story on the north. In the second story the central bay has two sets of single-light, side-opening opaque glass windows, placed wide apart. On the ground floor are five small, double-hung, opaque glass windows, each with four lights (illuminating the Sunday School room). Four low concrete walls mark window wells for the basement. Basement windows are boarded up. All of the small windows

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have wood casings, and the ten large windows on north and south are metal units. The dome has a huge skylight that cannot be seen from the street.

Materials used in exterior construction are brick and limestone. The load-bearing masonry walls are of red brick (not visible on the outside, but presently visible in various spots on the interior.) The walls are covered in four-inch limestone veneer with a smooth finish. Sills, window hoods, decorative elements, and columns are also limestone. Porch and stoop floors are concrete. Doors are all original, single-light wooden units, clad in copper.

Classical decorative elements, while simple, do add visual interest. There is an elaborate cornice moulding around the elevated center section and also below the parapet of the smaller bays. Bracketed hoods and sill brackets set off the windows on the first floor west, south, and north and appear also on the ten auditorium windows north and south. Anthemion ornaments project up from the parapet over the main entrance, a design that is repeated around the top of the skylight. The columns are fluted and have Ionic capitals. Pilasters at either side of the porch are decorated with egg-and-dart and acanthus leaf designs on the capitals. A water table runs around the girth of the building, at the level of the top of the main entry porch. These decorative elements are all of limestone.

The stained glass windows are simple in design, with leaded lights that form small squares, divided into eight sections. The colors are shades of pink, lavender, and beige, with a gold border that runs around the outside. From the outside, the windows appear to be a brownish color when the interior is unlighted (see Alterations, below).

On the west lawn, a large sign on the southwest corner of the property identifies the building as the "Centre for Design Arts." The sign is counted as a noncontributing object. A chain-link fence (not counted) encloses a grassy area on the east side, at the alley.

The church's interior is not elaborate but is typical of Christian Science churches of the 1900-1930s era. Again, the plan is in the form of a Greek cross with the corners filled in. The "arms" of the cross basically encompass the public meeting areas on the ground floor and first floor: the west-side foyer and balcony are one "arm"; the auditorium, with north-south long axis, forms the center and

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two more arms; and the stage, on the east side of the auditorium, forms the fourth.

The foyer, on the west side, is decorated with solid wood wainscot paneling throughout. The floor is covered with dark gray, light gray, and white ceramic tile, in a pattern of squares in which the squares are joined at the corners by intertwined swastikas. A border, set out from the walls, is in the Greek key pattern. At the left and right of the foyer, in the "bays" previously described, are substantial wood staircases leading up to the auditorium and on up to the balcony. Each bay also has an exterior door and accesses a hallway that has a bathroom on the exterior wall and leads to the Sunday School room on the ground floor. In the center of the foyer, a stairway leads up into the auditorium. On either side of the stairway is a cloakroom, with windows that open into the foyer. Similar, but smaller, stairways are placed in the northeast and southeast "bays." The foyer is the only interior space that retains any integrity.

The Sunday School room, on the ground floor, is an open area with three rows of steel columns that support the auditorium floor. At the northeast and southeast corners are the "bays" in which there are stairways leading up to the auditorium level. A low platform set at one side of the Sunday School room was presumably used as a stage. There do not appear to have been interior walls in this room. The framework is still present for a suspended ceiling, which, along with all electrical fixtures, was removed at an unknown date. Under the east end of the Sunday School room is a small basement where mechanical systems were located. It is accessed through a door in the stairwell area in the southeast corner.

The auditorium, on the first floor, was once the principal feature of the interior. Sadly, a previous owner almost completely gutted it at some time between 1988 and 1998. All that remains to indicate its semicircular seating pattern, facing east, are curving rows of bolt-holes in the concrete floor. The balcony, once suspended from the west wall, was removed, and all that remain are two large steel beams, supporting members for the floor joists. The balcony was accessed from the north and south via the stairwells in the corner bays. The stage is intact, with its board flooring, screened side walls that formerly concealed the pipes of a large Kimball pipe organ (now removed), and panelled back wall, with two panelled doors accessing a hallway along the building's rear wall. The walls of the auditorium form three large arches that bear the weight of the massive dome. In the center of a series of concentric rings that narrow the space down, is the skylight. The skylight is divided into eight sections that radiate

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from center. The design is simple. Also radiating from center is a triangular floral design, and three rings of white opaque glass surround it; an outer ring of glass is set with a gold-colored cresting wave in a blue background. All reflect the tranquillity needed for the meditative style of worship chosen by this denomination. Immediately surrounding the glassed skylight is a ring that is subdivided into sixteen sections, all plastered, and a third ring, further out, is not subdivided at all--it is a walkway around the inside of the dome. One may ascend into this ring via sets of ladders leading up from a small room at the side of the stage. No images are available to indicate decoration that might have been applied inside the auditorium, but according to church philosophy, at least, decoration should have been minimal and understated. At one time, painted designs decorated the plaster on the underside of the arches, and some of these have been exposed by peeling paint and by some investigative work by the present owners.

In the rear, or east side, of the first floor are the stairwells and also small bathrooms and rooms for contemplation, as well as a room where, presumably, the organ was placed. These lie along a hallway behind the stage, and two doors in the hallway access the stage from the rear. In the front of the building on this level, in the west "bays," are the stairwells and also small rooms used for office space and a nursery. An elevator, was installed in the southwest corner room in the 1970s or 1980s, is still present.

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ALTERATIONS:

Alterations to the exterior of First Church of Christ, Scientist, of Oklahoma City have been minimal. First, in 1988, when the church congregation sold the building, they defaced and made illegible all signage indicating that the building had been a church. In order to do this, they plastered over the inscription "First Church of Christ, Scientist" and the cornerstone, both on the main facade, with a thin layer of concrete. (2) This could be carefully removed. Second, in 1995 ten large and three small stained glass windows were destroyed by the concussion resulting from the bombing of the Alfred E. Murrah Building. The glass was too fragmented to be reinstalled in the windows, but one intact original panel was saved and will be replicated and reinstalled in the ten auditorium window openings. The large windows were replaced with steel-framed, three part units with brown-tinted glazing. (3) In the small windows, the frames remain, but the glazing is brown-tinted glass as well. This repair, interestingly, is not particularly obvious, as during daylight hours, all of the stained glass windows have the same brown-tinted cast as the replacement windows.

One other other exterior alteration was occasioned by the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Building as well. Along the cornice of the dome, limestone finials were destroyed by the blast, and these have not yet been replaced.

Inside, there have been significant changes to the fixtures and decorative elements. The auditorium seats and lighting fixtures were removed, as well as the flooring in the auditorium and the flooring and ceiling in the Sunday School area. The balcony was removed at an unknown date, as were the organ and organ pipes. Most bathroom fixtures and all electrical fixtures elsewhere were removed.

Despite these changes, which do not substantially impact the building's exterior integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, the First Church of Christ, Scientist, is still well able to transmit the information that it has always carried about the Christian Science philosophy of worship and of architecture. As the transmitter of this information to the religious and lay community of Oklahoma City, the building is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, Architectural Significance.

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ENDNOTES

1. Paul Eli Ivey, *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 3-7.
2. Mrs. Paul Ellgen, church member, interview with D. Everett, March 2001, by telephone.
3. Todd Scott, Oklahoma City Foundation for Architecture, conversation with D. Everett, March 2001, by telephone.

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SUMMARY:

The 1922 First Church of Christ, Scientist, at 1200 N. Robinson Avenue, historically existed and continues to exist within a context of religious architecture drawn for Robinson Avenue, a "street of churches" that developed from the late 1890s through the early 1920s. Most of the churches on Robinson Avenue were designed in a revival style, either Gothic or Classical, that typified religious architecture of the period. Most on Robinson were and are designed in the Late Gothic Revival style. Four were Classical Revival, including the First Church of Christ, Scientist. That building's design and interior plan reflect the thinking of church leaders about the ideals that Christian Science churches should reflect: simple Greek style, reflecting basic Christian belief; power and authority, reflecting reform and healing of the urban social and architectural environment; and grace and harmony, reflecting the church's role in the healing and spiritual salvation of individual urbanites. The presentation was meant to be uplifting, and literally hundreds of Christian Science houses of worship built around the United States in the 1900-1930 era are very similar to the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Oklahoma City. That church, however, is the city's only example of Christian Science-influenced Classical Revival architecture. The First Church of Christ, Scientist, at 1200 N. Robinson Avenue, Oklahoma City, is architecturally significant as the city's only example of typical, early twentieth-century Christian Science architecture, and it is one of four original Classical Revival examples on the street, of which only two are extant. The other, the First Christian Church (NR 84003383), is an example of Beaux Arts Classical Revival. The Christian Science building is restrained, dignified, and "pure" Classical Revival, in typical Christian Science fashion, looking much like a temple, a bank, or a library. The building's integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association are excellent, and on that basis it is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, Architectural Significance.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT:

The First Church of Christ, Scientist, at 1200 N. Robinson Avenue, in Oklahoma City, was constructed in 1919-1922 during one of the city's periods of "building boom." Established immediately after the historic Land Run of 1889, Oklahoma City rapidly grew, with a population growing from nearly 26,000 in 1900 to nearly 56,000 by 1907. After 1907 statehood the city emerged as the hub of

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business and social activity in Oklahoma Territory, which had been created in 1890 and comprised the western half of the present state. The pre-World War I years brought an even greater development, due to rail connections that brought in industry, business, and more people.

The city's main north-south artery, Broadway Avenue, the main east-west artery, Main Street, and adjacent blocks were quickly filled with residences and business buildings large and small. The earliest buildings were wood-frame or stone and one or two stories. From about 1900 onward, more substantial brick buildings were constructed. By 1909 major office buildings were under construction, and some fit into the new "skyscraper" type. Among them were the Colcord Building, the Baum Building, and several banks. Of these early phases of construction, few examples survive. The building boom experienced a resurgence in the immediate post-statehood years and continued in spurts for another fifteen years, pausing only from 1917-1919 for the war and continuing unabated after its end, until the advent of the Great Depression of the 1930s. During this period of three decades, the basic footprint of downtown Oklahoma City was established, and several sections of the city were devoted to related activity.(1)

One pattern placed the industrial and support-services buildings east of the Santa Fe railroad tracks, in what is now known as "Bricktown." A second industrial section developed as the Stockyards, south of the Canadian River. A third pattern placed the financial/commercial district around Broadway and Main and adjacent blocks. A fourth section, which emerged after the popularization of the automobile, resulted in the growth of north Broadway as "Automobile Row," as it was called by the Daily Oklahoman in 1917, or "Automobile Alley," as it is known today. In a fifth development, a significant number of religious edifices were placed along north Robinson Avenue, from 4th Street to 12th Street.

By the time of 1907 statehood, Robinson Avenue and its cross streets had developed with residential and social buildings. By 1912 or so it had become known locally and informally as "church street" because of the number of religious groups that were erecting edifices along its margins. The first real church buildings in Oklahoma City were erected in 1889 as St. Joseph's (Catholic) Cathedral, at 4th and Harvey (one block west of Robinson; replaced in 1902 by the present building, across the street), and the First Methodist Church, at 4th and Robinson. Following were small buildings built by other major denominations.

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Church building had proceeded very slowly, however; by 1892, reportedly, there were only seven church buildings in town. Even by 1900, according to the Daily Oklahoman of 6 February 1910, few churches had erected "a real building", and "most rented 'halls.'" In the ensuing decades, however, the major denominations began to build, as church membership grew. By 1910 the city boasted 56 congregations, with a combined total of 35,000 members.(2)

In particular, the years 1909-1912 constituted a "boom period" in church construction, with a number of congregations moving from other locations to new quarters on Robinson Avenue. St. Luke's Methodist Episcopal Church, at 8th and Robinson, was completed in 1909-1910. In 1910 the First Presbyterian congregation purchased property at 9th and Robinson and completed its church in 1912. The year 1912 also marked the completion of the First Christian Church at 10th and Robinson, the First Baptist Church at 11th and Robinson, and the First Lutheran Church at 12th and Robinson. In addition, the 1904 St. Paul's Episcopal Church at 6th and Robinson received a large addition and became St. Paul's Cathedral. This spate of construction created the "church street" of which Oklahoma Cityans boasted. The 22 April 1912 edition of the *Daily Oklahoman* noted that Oklahoma City's "Church Growth [was the] Marvel of the Age," with three churches erecting edifices in 1911-12 "at an aggregate cost of about half a million dollars. They are models of architectural beauty. By 1922 other religious edifices graced "church street" and cross streets as well. These included a Seventh Day Adventist building one-half block west of Robinson on 7th Street, B'Nai Israel Synagogue, on Broadway Circle just east of Robinson at 10th Street, and the First Church of Christ, Scientist, at 1200 Robinson.(3)

In the years between 1900 and the mid-1920s the architectural style of Oklahoma City's churches generally followed the national trend of the period. Much large-church building resulted from the growth of a prosperous middle class, who (consciously or unconsciously) built church edifices that would reflect to God's approval of their religious lives and commercial successes. Large churches of splendid architecture also testified to the growth, prosperity, and respectability of the city. The Classical Revival, Romanesque, and Gothic Revival styles were popular, each taking inspiration from "architectural roots" of the faith, that is, from building styles in a period in the history of Christianity--the first, from the faith's early years during the Roman Empire (and harkening back to the Greek style), and the second, from the period of high style Medieval cathedrals in

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Europe, and the third, to the Medieval period and to Protestant Reformation. In 1910 and 1912 photographs of Oklahoma City's various churches testify to the faithful's devotion to trend. (4) First Methodist Episcopal (1904) is styled in Romanesque, with Gothic elements. St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral is Gothic Revival, of the type that many old-line Episcopalians associate with "High Church" (Church of England) liturgy. Likewise, First Lutheran (1912) is modestly Gothic Revival, with arched windows and towers. First Baptist (1912) is Gothic, as well, with arched, stained-glass windows and a tall bell tower. The original First Presbyterian, at 6th and Broadway, was a fanciful Gothic building with spires and Tudor arches; its 1910 successor, at 9th and Robinson, was an imposing Classical Revival model, with pedimented, columned entrances and a tall central dome-like feature. St. Luke's Methodist Episcopal Church (1912) was an imposing Classical Revival building with large pedimented, full-height portico and high dome. First Christian (1912) is Classical Revival, of the fancy Beaux Arts variety, with pedimented elevations, a columned, full-height portico at the main entrance, and elaborate decorative elements at the windows and at the pediments. By comparison, and by virtue of Christian Science's architectural philosophy, the 1922 First Church of Christ, Scientist, at 1200 Robinson, is a little different from its companions on "church street."

Christian Science churches across the United States are identifiable by their architectural style and general plan. The denomination called "Christian Science" developed as a religious reform movement within the rising urban middle class in the eastern United States just before the twentieth century. Its first practitioner and founder was Mary Baker Eddy, originally of New Hampshire. Her new and somewhat unusual interpretation of Christianity's tenets and methods of worship involved getting back to a fundamental, Bible-based faith that eschewed materialism. Mary Baker Eddy held definite views on the type of architecture that she felt was appropriate for Christian Science church buildings. She said in 1904 that "our proper reason for church edifices is, that in them Christians may worship God,--not that Christians may worship church edifices." (5) She also thought that the Christian faith, as practiced in modern times, often wasted "spiritual energy" on social, recreational, and charitable activities. Christianity should be "basic," and so should its place of worship, she thought. (6) In this, she contradicted the conventional, Protestant, middle-class wisdom on the functions of a Protestant church congregation, which was, in the 1890-1920 period, changing to incorporate new emphases besides worship: fellowship, education, charity, and evangelism. Church architecture of the 1890s-1920s was changing to reflect these new functions, as well, with new churches

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having "wings" for various activities.(7) Eddy opposed this change in basic practice and its corresponding change in church architecture, at least in theory. In theory as well, just as her method of worship was basic, modest, and unassuming, she also professed to prefer understated church buildings, and she urged her adherents to follow that precept as they formed branch churches across the nation.(8) Interestingly, her religious philosophy and the architectural philosophy of Christian Science in general point up the tension between the individualistic, populist strain in American fundamentalist Christianity and the materialism embedded in twentieth-century middle-class life.

Many, if not most, Christian Science churches followed a "formula" for functional design. This pattern was not established by the 1893-94 "Mother Church" in Boston. Its style was Romanesque; it had a square tower at the side, looking something like the First Lutheran Church in Oklahoma City. A 1906 "addition" dwarfed the original building by attaching an enormous Classical Revival building, with circular, pedimented, full-height portico and huge dome, somewhat resembling the 1912 First Christian Church of Oklahoma City. The second of these two styles, Classical Revival, eventually predominated and became the hallmark of Christian Science architecture, repeated in smaller, less complicated versions all across the United States. The smaller versions predominate, and the Oklahoma City church is of that that type.(9)

In the words of Oklahoma City-born Christian Science practitioner Paul E. Ivey, who is an historian of Christian Science architecture, the small, Classical Revival church built in an urban area in the early twentieth century "tells the story" of urban, middle-class Christian Science, of the urban reform movement, and of the City Beautiful movement. He notes that the Christian Scientists, as new interpreters of Protestant religious philosophy, placed their churches "to clearly position Christian Science in relation to large, historical mainstream religions."(10) This meant that the first church of their kind in any community would be downtown, close to the magnificent churches built by the other denominations. In terms of social reform, the object of the church's downtown location was to provide a place of refuge, of healing, for individuals, and for society as well, in other words, to accomplish reform on an individual level, through Christian worship. In Ivey's view, the Christian Scientists were the only denomination to use "[one] representative architectural style."(11) In the first

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decades of the twentieth century this style evolved into a simple, uncomplicated version of Classical Revival. Ivey notes that the adherents of Christian Science saw their churches as "'lighthouses' guiding people away from materialism. The church edifice itself, then, became a significant component of reform, a place for individual inspiration, and a beacon of social and civic enlightenment." (12) He notes that this concept was "similar to the fundamental precepts" of the City Beautiful movement, which was established as an important architectural trend by Daniel Burnham and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. It aimed to create an urban environment full of "stylistically unified and beautiful" buildings that would have an uplifting effect on the citizens. Both City Beautiful proponents and Christian Scientists saw in the Classical Revival style a visual symbol of the power, order, and authority that they felt needed to be restored in the modern city. Ivey notes that "the classical style . . . symbolized the control of civic power by various governmental and social institutions. Christian Science churches in many cities were located so they would be part of larger ensembles of civic architecture." (13)

In general, Christian Science churches built in smaller cities in the first three decades of the twentieth century resemble public buildings, rather than "traditional" religious buildings. The visual characteristics of the exterior were pediments (at least one), a columned porch, a low dome over a large auditorium, and three to five exterior doors accessing the interior from the porch. Very few decorative elements were used. (14) The entire appearance of one of these traditional Christian Sciences churches was more akin to that of a bank, a government building, or a Carnegie library. Rather than brick, exteriors were of stone. They fairly exuded substantiality and respectability, which was extremely important to a denomination of middle-class, urban believers who found their beliefs and practices misunderstood and scorned by the surrounding community. Many, if not most, footprints were square, and the plan resembled an open Greek cross, with a large circle in the middle, and the spaces between the cross's arms filled in. Interiors consisted of a large foyer, for socializing, a large, centrally placed auditorium, a Sunday school area beneath the auditorium, or amphitheatre, and various offices and study rooms in the corners of the building. Interiors were undecorated, in order to foster concentration on worship. Because the style and plan became such an important symbol of their faith, "stock" plans were popular. Several architects happily drew up these stock plans and sold them

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to new branch churches.(15) Ivey has assessed the architectural significance of Christian Science churches in this way: "Christian Science churches were unique at the turn of the century and during the early twentieth century. A new challenging theology that promised physical healing, the standardization of new worship services, the locations of the buildings, and the use of the classical style all contributed to the building boom of a marginal group, one that created some of the most innovative Protestant architecture of the period."(16) Visibly different from other churches in a city, they are an exceptional contribution to a city's built environment. While using a monumental architectural style, the buildings were nevertheless relatively compact, because of the central plan. They could be placed on a large downtown lot, and there was no idea of expanding the church facility with "wings" as a congregation grew or added to its activities.

Within this social-architectural milieu, the First Church of Christ, Scientist, was constructed at 1200 N. Robinson Avenue in Oklahoma City in 1922. The process of creating the church had been lengthy. The population of Christian Science followers had grown in the city, from in the 1890s. The first meetings were held in 1895, and over the next decade various meeting places were rented: an office on Main; the District Court Room; a second-floor room in a building at 1st and Robinson; the Overholser Opera House, and so on through about 1906. In that year the congregation constructed a wood-frame building on property they purchased at 11th and Robinson, where the present church building stands. In early 1915 a new building fund was established, so that a large, "permanent" church could be built. By the time of World War I the congregation had raised \$23,000, which was invested in U.S. Liberty Bonds. At the end of the war the program resumed, and ground was broken in late October or early November 1919. The church's cost was \$110,000, and it was one of the most costly buildings built in the city in that year.(17) The cornerstone was laid on July 17, 1920,(18) and the building was occupied on or about December 3, 1922.(19)

The congregation continued to use the building until 1988 and then sold it to a neighboring business.(20) The church building was purchased by the Oklahoma City Foundation for Architecture in April 1999 and, now called the Center for Design Art, is scheduled for restoration and use as gallery and public meeting space. In 2000, the White House Millennium council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation designated the building one of sixteen official projects in Oklahoma properties on the "Save America's Treasures" list.(21)

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ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Within a church-related architectural context drawn for Robinson Avenue, the Christian Science building made a unique statement. By the mid 1920s Robinson Avenue was a street lined with stately government, commercial, and religious buildings. In 1929 the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, in a regionally distributed "Merchandise Shipping Guide," proudly boasted that "it is believed that no other American city street contains as many fine churches as Robinson Avenue." This simple statement attests to the importance of the church-related architectural context of Robinson Avenue, a context that compares favorably to the context of Automobile Alley Historic District along an adjacent street, Broadway.

Most of the Robinson Avenue churches were designed in Gothic Revival, and only three in Classical Revival style, reflecting the trend in religious architecture in the United States of the Gilded Age and early twentieth century. Several of these buildings are now gone, and those that have been razed include the First Presbyterian Church (Classical Revival), St. Luke's Methodist Church (Classical Revival), B'Nai Israel Synagogue, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Of the four that were styled in Classical Revival, the First Christian Church and the First Church of Christ, Scientist, remain. St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral is listed on the National Register (NR 77001096) as is the First Christian Church (NR 84003383). The First Church of Christ, Scientist, at 1200 N. Robinson Avenue, Oklahoma City, is architecturally significant as the city's only example of typical, early twentieth-century Christian Science architecture, and it is one of only two remaining Classical Revival examples on the street. The building's integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association are excellent, and on that basis it is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, Architectural Significance.

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ENDNOTES

1. *The Physical Legacy: Buildings of Oklahoma County, 1889 to 1931* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1980), 19-22, 24, 45-46.
2. *Daily Oklahoman*, 6 February 1910, 23 March 1986; *Great Buildings Ahead: A Guided Tour of Central Oklahoma's Architectural Landmarks* (Oklahoma City: American Institute of Architects, Central Oklahoma Chapter, 1989), 27, 28 31,34, 35.
3. *Daily Oklahoman*, 6 February 1910, 22 April 1912; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1906, 1922, 1922 Corrected to 1949; "Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce Merchandise Shipping Guide," 15 June 1929 (Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce Papers, Archives Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City), 61.
4. *Daily Oklahoman*, 6 February 1910, 22 April 1912.
5. Robert Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy, The Years of Authority* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1977), 224.
6. *Ibid.*, 226.
7. Sheldon Cheney, *The New World Architecture* (New York: AMS Press, 1967 [1930]), 341-43; Edward Norman, *The House of God: Church Architecture, Style, and History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990), 191, 280ff, 290ff; Paul Tillich, "Contemporary Protestant Architecture," in Albert Christ-Janer and Mary M. Foley, *Modern Church Architecture: A Guide to the Form and Spirit of 29th Century Religious Buildings* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962), 122-25.
8. Paul Eli Ivey, *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 3-7.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 3.
11. *Ibid.*

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ENDNOTES, cont'd

12. Ibid., 92.

13. Ibid., 94.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 118-131.

16. Ibid., 4.

17. "Historical Sketch, First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Dedicated Sunday, November 21, 1926 (Church Dedication Brochure, 1926, Files, Oklahoma City Foundation for Architecture), n.p.

18. *Daily Oklahoman*, 25 October 1919.

19. *Daily Oklahoman*, 3 December 1922.

20. *Daily Oklahoman*, 16 April 1988.

21. *Daily Oklahoman*, 21 November 1999.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The property encompasses Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Block 7, Dale Addition, City of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

These are the legally recorded boundaries of the property as found in Book 7563, page 281, Register of Deeds, Oklahoma County Clerk Office, Oklahoma City.