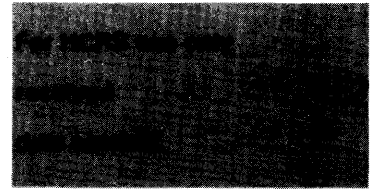


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 of Oregon City (preferred)
and/or common Atkinson Memorial Congregational Church

2. Location

street & number 6th and John Adams Streets, n/a not for publication
city, town Oregon City n/a vicinity of congressional district Fifth
state Oregon code 41 county Clackamas code 005

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	n/a in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
	n/a being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name First Congregational Society of Oregon City
street & number 6th and John Adams Streets
city, town Oregon City n/a vicinity of state Oregon 97045

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Clackamas County Courthouse - Clerks Office
street & number 8th and Main Streets
city, town Oregon City state Oregon 97045

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Inventory of Historic Properties has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1982 federal state county local
depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office
city, town Salem state Oregon 97310

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date n/a

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The First Congregational Church of Oregon City, or Atkinson Memorial Church as it is known today, is a church building located on the upper level atop the bluffs of Oregon City, in the district known as the McLoughlin Neighborhood. The building, which measures 84 x 92 feet in plan, was completed in 1925. It was designed in the 20th Century Gothic Style by its architect, Willard F. Tobey. W. D. Andrews Construction Company of Portland was the builder. The church contains 15 stained glass windows designed and installed by the Povey Brothers Studio of Portland. Originally, the building included two towers: one octagonal, 66 feet tall; the other square, 58 feet tall. The smaller tower was removed in 1958. Most of the building was constructed of poured concrete, except for the towers, which were built of wood and galvanized iron. The building has been in continuous use as a church since its dedication on February 1, 1925.

Background and Setting

Since its inception in 1849, the First Congregational Society of Oregon City has been housed in three successive churches. The first of these, a simple rectangular Classic Revival structure, was constructed in 1850 (Bachelder 1969: 15-17). Outgrowing this, the Society completed a new edifice in 1890, which incorporated the first structure. Plans for this new church were drawn by its then incumbent minister, the Rev. Oramel W. Lucas. His vernacular design for a Carpenter Gothic church included a 102-foot tower and spire topped by a "gilded arrow surmounting a gilded ball or sphere", symbolizing the Church Society's emphasis on "freedom of thought in the search for truth and knowledge" (Bachelder 1969: 34-35). The cornerstone, laid on August 12, 1889, bore the inscription "In Memoriam, G. H. Atkinson, D.D.", commemorating George Henry Atkinson, the Society's guiding spirit over four decades (Bachelder 1969: 30-31).

A fire on February 4, 1923, destroyed these original structures, located at Main and Moss Streets on Oregon City's water grade level along the Willamette River. The third church building, thus born of necessity, was begun in the summer of 1924 and dedicated February 1, 1925, at the present location atop Oregon City's bluffs (Bachelder 1969: 48-58).

The 20th Century Gothic church occupied by the Congregationalists is a distinctive landmark on Oregon City's upper level. Its Perpendicular style, octagonal tower rising 66 feet above the main, north entrance, is visible over much of the surrounding mixed residential-commercial district. Atkinson Memorial Church is part of a cluster of public and quasi-public buildings that include the Carnegie Library directly to the north; a newly-built senior center to the west; and, on the block at cater-corners to the northwest, a fire station and Clackamas County Historical Society Museum. The McLoughlin House National Historic Site (including the adjacent Barclay House) is located to the northwest, approximately four blocks distant. Surrounding residential sections (collectively termed the McLoughlin Neighborhood) are dotted with a number of Queen Anne, Stick Style, and Italianate houses surviving from the last quarter of the 19th Century.

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Site and Plan

Occupying a 105 x 124-foot, quarter-block site at the southeast corner of 6th and John Adams Streets, the building has a rectangular ground plan measuring 84 x 92 feet (Tobey n.d.-B). While appearing somewhat irregular, with bays and projections and a variety of vertical elements projecting above the roofline, the church's plan is, in fact, a symmetrical composition. The main axis extends along a diagonal, northwest-southeast line bisecting the building into nearly equal and complementary parts. The seating arrangements radiate outward in sweeping curves along this central axis from the pulpit platform in the southeast corner. The axis is terminated by the bowed exterior wall of the semicircular Sunday School room at the northwest corner. The street entrances and ancillary rooms are placed in a generally symmetrical pattern in southwest and northeast corners.

Construction and Style

Structurally, Tobey's design for the Oregon City church called for poured concrete walls with a sand finish coat. Its hipped and gabled roofs were supported by wood trusses, and its two entrance towers -- the major one 66 feet tall and octagonal, the other square and rising 58 feet -- were built of wood and galvanized iron. The interior structural system used post-and-beam construction with some wood-frame bearing walls. Steel piers and reinforced concrete beams were used in combination with wooden structural members (Tobey n.d.-B). The building today is essentially as it was originally designed and constructed, except that in 1958 the smaller tower over the west entrance was removed because it was thought to be the cause of leaks in the roof (Annual Report 1959).

The style in which Tobey chose to clothe the Oregon City church was inspired by traditional forms, mostly late English medieval, that seem to have been intended to overcome the difficulties of relating the "churchness" of a building with a ground plan so untraditional -- to say nothing of its concrete construction. This was a problem in an earlier Tobey church design of 1909 in southeast Portland (Sunnyside Congregational Church) wherein the use of square-topped windows, ponderous square towers, rock-faced stone facades, and castellated parapets combined to impart the look of a medieval castle rather than that of a church. Whatever "churchness" Sunnyside Congregational Church expresses derives mostly from the tentative use of pointed-arched openings. In Atkinson Memorial Church in Oregon City, Tobey seems to have sought a remedy for this problem by expanding the use of pointed-arch windows, proportioning the streetward-facing windows to emphasize their verticality, and lightening the appearance of the towers by choosing an octagonal form for the larger one and giving the upper sections of each open arches with delicate, vertical iron traceries in the Perpendicular style. He also abandoned the battlements for simpler parapets decorated with blind arcading between posts with pointed terminations that are strong vertical elements.

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It is difficult to say if Tobey was inspired by a specific medieval structure, but the 15th century Yorkist collegiate church at Fotheringhay, Northamptonshire, has an octagonal tower greatly resembling the Atkinson main tower (Platt 1978:149). Juxtaposition of tower and portal is a medievalism common to all Tobey-designed or influenced churches, although the Oregon City church is the only one with primary and secondary entrances under the main tower. The placement of polygonal, vertical elements, on both sides of the main doorway, is reminiscent of 16th century Tudor period gateways (cf. Fletcher 1950: 410A; 411B). Four small round-arch windows, however, placed above or near the entrances introduce a minor Romanesque theme that is picked up in the decoration of the parapet curving around the bowed northwest corner of the building and the tower.

Interior

The church's interior space is dominated by the radially-shaped auditorium which measures 50 feet across at its center, 26 feet from floor to ceiling, and which seats approximately 260 persons on the main floor. Overall, the structure has the capacity to hold audiences of nearly 1,000 persons, if the so-called Dome Room (Sunday School Room) and galleries are pressed into use (Bachelder 1969: 57-58). The original main floor plan included a study, parlor, library, two rectangular rooms and the semicircular Dome Room for Sunday School use, foyers and stairwells at each entrance, a choir loft and dressing room, and space to house a pipe organ. The ground (or basement) floor plan provided for a large, 70 x 35-foot dining and social hall running along the main axis of the building, adjoined by a kitchen, two rest-rooms, janitorial and furnace rooms, and three rooms designated on the original plan as "Ladies," "Girls," and "Boys" rooms, respectively (Tobey n.d.-B). While the current use of these interior spaces has changed in several cases from those originally planned, few structural alterations have been necessary. The only significant changes have been the replacement of folding partitions in the main floor Sunday School rooms originally designated "Beginners" and "Primary", and the addition on ground floor of a curtain wall creating a hallway between the so-called "Girls" and "Boys" rooms. Steps providing access to this hallway from the outside were replaced by a ramp in 1960 (Bachelder 1969: 58).

The interior decorative program of the church carries the Gothic theme throughout. The two main transverse ribs spanning the auditorium are plastered in gracefully sweeping curves terminating in brackets which, in overall effect, resemble the pendant posts of late medieval English timbered roofs (cf. Fletcher 1950: 449 E and G). A foliated, or cusped arch motif decorates much of the extant original furnishings, all of which are constructed of oak. Furniture with this motif includes the pulpit, a pulpit bench, the pews, a communion table, and two accompanying chairs. Street-entrance doors and many of the interior doors also bear this design. On the

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premises is a pulpit chair thought to date from one of the pastorates of G. H. Atkinson, the earliest of which began in 1849 and the last of which ended in 1883. It was saved from the 1923 fire (Bachelder 1969: 49). Five other ornately carved chairs of uncertain age are understood to have come into the church's possession at the time of its merger with the Atkinson Memorial Church of Portland in 1936 (Bellingham, personal communication).

Stained Glass Windows

Stained glass windows by the Povey Brothers Studio of Portland are the major element of the interior decorative program of the church. These windows, numbering 15 in all, are dominated by two tripartite groupings (15 X 16 feet) in the east and south walls of the auditorium. The two rooms under the gables at the building's northeast and southwest corners each have equally tall but single pointed-arched windows (15 X 6 feet), both of which bear the signature of the Povey Brother's Studio. The semi-circular Dome Room is lighted by seven pointed-arched windows, the largest of which (15 X 5 feet) is on the building's main axis, aligned with the pulpit at the opposite end. The other six (13 X 4 feet) are evenly spaced around the bowed wall, three on either side of the central window. Four additional windows light the entrance vestibules. They are unlike the other windows in that they are smaller and have round arch heads instead of pointed. Of the two smallest (3 1/2 X 1 1/2 feet) one is above the main north entrance and the other above the west street entrance. A third rounded window (8 X 2 1/2 feet) is above the secondary north entrance, and the fourth and largest, measuring 13 X 2 1/2 feet, is adjacent to the west street entrance. The latter two windows light stair wells leading to the galleries. An itemized list of the stained glass windows follows.

STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

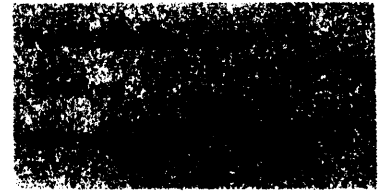
Atkinson Memorial Church

	<u>Name or Motif</u>	<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Shape</u>	<u>Location</u>
* A-1	The Good Shepherd	15' X 16'	tripartite, pointed	Auditorium, east wall
A-2	Jesus in Garden of Gethsemane	15' X 16'	tripartite, pointed	Auditorium, south wall
B-1	Jesus Blessing Little Children	15' X 6'	pointed	Northeast Parlor (now Dye Room)
B-2	Jesus in Home of Mary and Martha	15' X 6'	pointed	Southwest Primary School Room (now Library)
C-1	Come Unto Me	15' X 5'	pointed	Center of Sunday School Room (Dome Room)
C-2	Jesus, the Light of the World	13' X 4'	pointed	Extreme right in Sunday School Room (now Dome Room)

(continued on next page)

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	<u>Name or Motif</u>	<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Shape</u>	<u>Location</u>
C-3	He is Risen	13' X 4'	pointed	Second from right in Sunday School Room (now Dome Room)
C-4	Jesus and the Rich Young Man	13' X 4'	pointed	Third from right in Sunday School Room (now Dome Room)
* C-5	Sistine Madonna	13' X 4'	pointed	Extreme left in Sunday School Room (now Dome Room)
C-6	The Announcement of the Shepherds	13' X 4'	pointed	Second from left in Sunday School Room (now Dome Room)
* C-7	The Boy Jesus and the Doctors	13' X 4'	pointed	Third from left in Sunday School Room (now Dome Room)
D-1	The Christ Child	8' X 2.6'	round-arched	Stairwell at North Entrance
* D-2	St. Cecilia	13' X 2.6'	round-arched	Stairwell at West Entrance
* D-3	Rose	3.5' X 1.5'	round-arched	Above Main North Entrance
D-4	Lily	3.5' X 1.5'	round-arched	Above West Entrance

(*) asterisk indicates photograph of window accompanying nomination form.

Pipe Organ and Heating Systems

In 1928, three years after Atkinson Memorial Church was constructed, a Kimball Organ of 500 pipes was installed in space provided behind the choir loft (Bachelder 1969: 61). An open work panel of four pointed arches surmounted by a cross in the central spandrel, conceals the pipes and decorates the wall behind the choir loft and pulpit platform.

The building's heating system originally consisted of two wood-burning furnaces, a wood-burning brick fireplace in the ground-floor Social Hall, and three gas-fueled brick and tile fireplaces, located in the Parlor and Study (main floor), and the Ladies Room (ground floor). The central heating system was converted to burn fuel oil in 1937 (Bachelder 1969: 70), but the four fireplaces remain unchanged. A gas stove in the kitchen appears to be essentially contemporary with the original structure.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1925 **Builder/Architect** Willard F. Tobey, architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) W. D. Andrews Construction Co., builder

The First Congregational Church of Oregon City is a prominent landmark at the southeast corner of 6th and John Adams Streets, opposite Oregon City's Carnegie Library and surrounding park. Completed in 1925, its plans were drawn by Portland architect Willard F. Tobey, who designed or influenced as many as eight ecclesiastical buildings in Oregon and southwest Washington between 1909 and 1925. Tobey's churches are generally distinguished by a radial auditorium plan in which the principal space is oriented on a diagonal axis and has a semi-circular exterior wall. Stylistically, Tobey's churches represent a transition from the late Gothic Revival to 20th Century Gothic architecture. The First Congregational Church in Oregon City was the latest, chronologically, of the group, and it is a fully-developed expression of its type. With its pointed arch openings and its ornament derived from late medieval architecture applied to a poured concrete structure, the church embodies the distinctive characteristics of the 20th Century Gothic Style. With its 15 windows of stained glass designed and fabricated by the Povey Brothers Studio of Portland -- the outstanding manufactory of its kind in the state -- it also possesses high artistic values. The building's historical significance is that it houses the congregation descended from that which, in earlier days, was served by the Reverend George Henry Atkinson (1819-1889), a noteworthy figure in the history of religion and education in Oregon. Atkinson co-founded Tualatin Academy in Forest Grove, which became Pacific University, and induced the Territorial Legislature to establish a public school system. After lengthy pastorates in Oregon City and Portland, he traveled widely in the interior as Superintendent of Missions of Congregational Churches in Oregon and Washington. Oregon City's Congregational Church of 1925 was re-dedicated as a memorial to G. H. Atkinson in 1937, and it contains one piece of furniture -- a pulpit chair -- associated with him. Essentially unaltered, the building now commonly known as Atkinson Memorial Church possesses integrity of location, setting, materials, design, workmanship, feeling, and association with the Congregational Church, a denomination of importance in early Oregon history and education. The church is still used by successors of the historic First Congregational Society of Oregon City, although it is presently shared by a Unitarian-Universalist congregation. The building is primarily significant as the fullest expression of an architectural type in which the architect, Willard F. Tobey, specialized and for its outstanding array of pictorial stained glass.

Architecture and Art

The origin and evolution in Oregon of the church plan exemplified by the First Congregational Church of Oregon City are closely associated with the architect, Willard F. Tobey. Tobey's career in ecclesiastical architecture began while he was a partner in

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one (105' x 124')

Quadrangle name Oregon City, Oregon

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	0	5	3	1	0	5	0	5	0	2	2	2	5	0
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

The First Congregational Church occupies Lots 7 and 8 of Block 103, Plat of Oregon City, Clackamas County, Oregon. It is also described as Tax Lot 11300, in SE 1/4, NE 1/4, Sec. 31, T. 2S., R. 2E., W.M.

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

state n/a code county n/a code

state n/a code county n/a code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Herbert K. Beals

organization n/a date December 8, 1981

street & number 7005 Valley View Drive telephone (503) 656-0450

city or town Gladstone state Oregon 97027

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

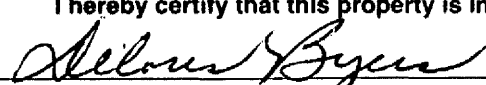
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

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 Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date June 30, 1982

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	Entered in the
	National Register
Keeper of the National Register	date <u>8/28/82</u>
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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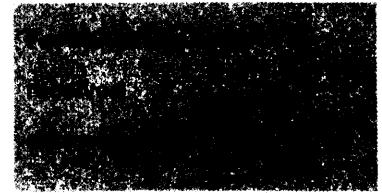
the Portland firm of Bennes, Hendricks and Tobey between 1907 and 1909 (Portland City Directory 1907-08 and 1909). At that time, he was a member of the Sunnyside Congregational Church in southeast Portland, which in 1909 constructed a church building with a rectangular ground plan with diagonal interior axis similar to that of the Oregon City church (Foster 1975: 33-35; Tobey n.d.-A). Sunnyside Congregational Church (later called Staub Memorial Church, and now known as Community Bible Church), located at 32nd Avenue and Taylor Street, was designed by Tobey in collaboration with the church's minister, the Rev. John J. Staub. According to a contemporary newspaper account, "plans for the new church were drawn with a view to the erection of a thoroughly modern church in every way, with no waste space, largely according to the suggestions of Rev. Mr. Staub" (The Oregonian 1909). The popularity of this "thoroughly modern" and functional design spread, as evidenced by the fact that seven other Willamette Valley and Portland area churches were built employing this basic ground plan. Churches based on the Tobey/Staub plan are itemized in the following list (Foster 1975: 35).

CHURCHES BASED ON THE TOBEY/STAUB PLAN

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Year Built</u>
Sunnyside Congregational Church (subsequently, Staub Memorial Church; now Community Bible Church)	Southeast Portland	1909
First Presbyterian Church	Corvallis	1909
First Presbyterian Church	Albany	1911
First Presbyterian Church (now Emanuel Baptist Church)	Vancouver, Washington	1912
First Evangelical and Reformed Church (now Grace Bible Church)	Southwest Portland	1912
First Presbyterian Church	Lebanon	1913
First Congregational Church	Forest Grove	1919
First Congregational Church (Atkinson Memorial Church)	Oregon City	1925

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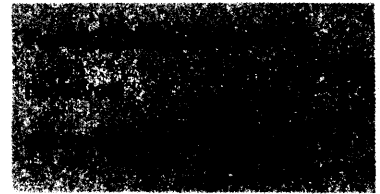
Tobey is known to have been the architect of the earliest as well as the later of these structures on the basis of extant plans signed by him (Tobey n.d.-A and B). While his participation in the design of the intermediate churches has not been documented, the general appearance of the churches in Albany, Forest Grove, and Grace Bible Church in southwest Portland strongly suggest that he was responsible for them as well (cf. Foster 1975: 34). The Forest Grove structure was demolished ca. 1976 (Bellingham personal communication). The Atkinson Memorial Church in Oregon City was the last in the series of ecclesiastical structures built on a plan developed and perfected by its architect primarily in conjunction with Congregational and Presbyterian church societies during the 16 years from 1909 to 1925. This wave of church-building activity coincided with prosperous times, before and after the First World War, which ended with the economic collapse of 1929 and the Great Depression. Little is known about Tobey's background and education except that he was a native of Woburn, Massachusetts and at various times was associated with the leading architectural firm in Portland, Whidden and Lewis (clerk and draftsman, 1901) and its successors: A. E. Doyle (1926) and Pietro Belluschi (1950). Tobey died about 1971 (Portland City Directories, 1926, 1950, 1971, 1972).

The overall feeling of the church Tobey designed for the Oregon City Congregationalists is one of departure from High Victorian Gothic architecture in an effort to express "churchness" in a newer, 20th century mode. The radial auditorium contained within what is essentially a rectangular plan eliminated the long nave of the traditional cruciform church and created a closeness between pulpit and congregation much like that of the 17th Century New England meeting houses in which Congregationalism was nourished (cf. The Old Ship Meetinghouse, Hingham, Mass.; Roth 1979: 17-18). The use of poured concrete as the principal construction material was another departure from 19th century ecclesiastical architecture, having been introduced by Frank Lloyd Wright twenty years earlier in Unity Temple (Roth 1979: 204-205). Its use in Atkinson Memorial Church -- unfaced by anything but a sand finish coat -- may have been greeted with mixed feelings in 1925. When the church was painted for the first time in 1959, satisfaction was expressed by some that the "dull gray color of the cement and stucco" had been replaced by a "soft white." (Bachelder 1969: 89). The building is now painted a light buff shade. Except for a persistently leaky roof, the building has proven over its 55 years to be highly serviceable not only for the ecclesiastical purpose for which it was originally designed, but for many community service functions as well.

The church's stained glass windows are an outstanding example of the pictorial art form utilized in ecclesiastical buildings in the United States in the early 20th century. Povey Brothers Studio, the firm that designed them, was founded in Portland in 1888 by brothers David and John, and their studio designed windows for at least seven other Oregon churches. The business was sold in 1930 (Polly Povey-Thompson personal communication). A 1974 study of stained glass windows in southwest Portland churches makes the following observation (Connors 1974: 59):

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"David [Povey] felt that everyone knew who made his windows, and it was neither habit nor tradition to use signatures. By 1923, it became obvious that there was so much confusion in authenticating his work of the past thirty years that his last major commission, the First Christian Church, is signed."

The windows of the First Congregational Church in Oregon City, however, also are signed and they bear the date 1924, indicating that the studio handled at least one other major commission after the First Christian Church in Portland.

Religion and Education

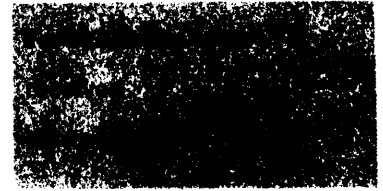
The Atkinson Memorial Church in Oregon City holds a distinguished place in Oregon's religious history, for its membership descends from what is probably the earliest congregationally-organized church in the state. The origin of the congregation of Atkinson Church reaches back to May 1844, when three Oregon City men joined together in a non-creedal church they called "The Presbyterian Church of the Willamette Falls." The three included: Peter Hatch, a pioneer advocate of education and former member of the Congregational Church of Woburn, Massachusetts; Osborne Russell, like Hatch, a native of Maine, and formerly a fur trapper and Baptist; and Robert Moore, founder of Linn City and a Presbyterian from Pennsylvania via Illinois. These early settlers -- each noteworthy in his own right -- obtained the part-time services of the Reverend Harvey Clarke, a Congregational missionary then living in Tuality Plains, to inaugurate public worship services (Bachelder 1969: 1-3).

Four years later, a man who was to make significant contributions to the growth and development of Oregon, the Reverend George Henry Atkinson, arrived in Oregon from Boston with his wife, Nancy Bates Atkinson, to carry on the mission work begun by Harvey Clarke. This man, who would be commemorated in the Gothic church of a later generation, had been born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, May 10, 1819. In 1843, he was graduated from Dartmouth College, and in 1846 completed theological training at Andover Theological Seminary. Immediately upon his graduation from the Seminary he offered himself to the foreign mission field and was assigned to the Zulu Mission, South Africa. This was not to be, however, for the ship sailed before his ordination, and he was asked instead by Dr. Milton Badger to undertake home missionary work in the Oregon Country (Pacific University Bulletin 1944: 1).

On his arrival at Oregon City in 1848, Atkinson found a tiny congregation of seven members struggling to have services once a month, but nonetheless carrying on a Sunday School. He began his ministry by preaching in a house owned by Peter Hatch. Within a few weeks he was holding both morning and evening services in a room which friends of the church had fitted out with a pulpit and furniture, and for which they had paid a year's rent (Pacific University Bulletin 1944: 4-5).

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In 1849 the name "First Congregational Church" and the First Congregational Society were incorporated under laws of the first Oregon Territorial Legislative Assembly. The Society was among the church organizations that received property donated by John McLoughlin, proprietor of the Oregon City Plat, in 1850. The two lots donated were on Washington Street, but the Society sold them in order to purchase and develop another site at the corner of Moss and Main Streets. It was at the latter location that the Society erected its first church building, a simple Classic Revival structure, in 1850. Atkinson ended the first of his pastorates at the Oregon City church in 1866, after which he became increasingly involved in the founding of other Congregational churches in Oregon, including the First Congregational Church of Portland (Bachelder 1969: 15-17, 22-28).

Education also was a matter of keen interest to Atkinson, an interest that eventually came to be shared by his Oregon City church congregation as well. The commission he had received from the American Home Missionary Society included Bible and tract distribution, and the establishment of schools. He had been given a special charge by the secretary of the American College Society, Rev. Theron Baldwin, "to establish an Academy that should grow into a college." (Pacific University Bulletin 1944: 1). Accordingly, his first act in fulfilling this aspect of his responsibilities occurred in July 1848, when he met with the Rev. Harvey Clarke to plan an organization known as the Oregon Association of Churches and Ministers. The primary intent of this organization was to establish an academy with collegiate powers. Its founders met at the meeting^{place} of Oregon City Congregationalists in September 1848 to organize the Association, after which they voted on a board of trustees for what was to be known as the Tualatin Academy and eventually became Pacific University at Forest Grove (Pacific University Bulletin 1944: 5-6).

An even larger task awaited him in 1849 when he was drawn into the question of whether Oregon should have a public school system. At the request of Governor Joseph Lane, he drafted a public school law which the Territorial Legislature enacted. He later served as the first Superintendent of Schools in Clackamas County, during which time he helped establish 88 schools in rural areas and convinced Oregon City residents of the need for organizing their schools into grades. All the while, he was also meeting his preaching responsibilities (Pacific University Bulletin 1944: 6-7).

George Henry Atkinson, pioneer preacher, founder of churches, colleges, and public schools in the Northwest a century ago, made his imprint by the dedication to professional duty and broad citizenship that characterized his leadership. In the years since the founding of the First Congregational Society, 22 pastors have served the congregation. The economic hardships of the Great Depression resulted in a merger of the Atkinson Memorial Church of Portland with the First Congregational Church of Oregon City in 1936. In the following year, during the pastorate of E. P. Borden, the Oregon City church was re-named in honor of Atkinson, as was fitting since it was among the Congregationalists in Oregon City that his pioneering ministry began.

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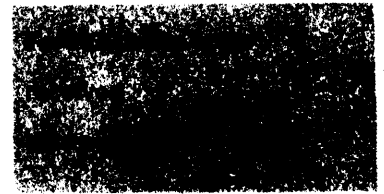
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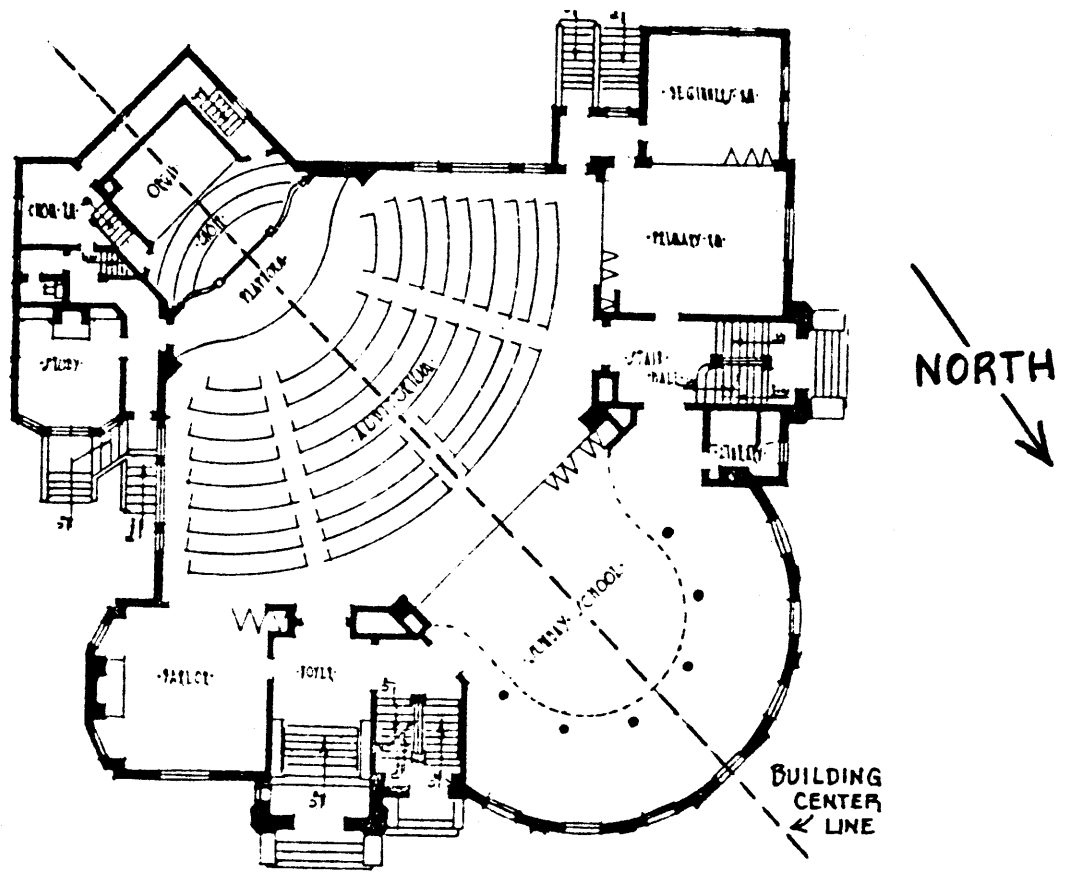
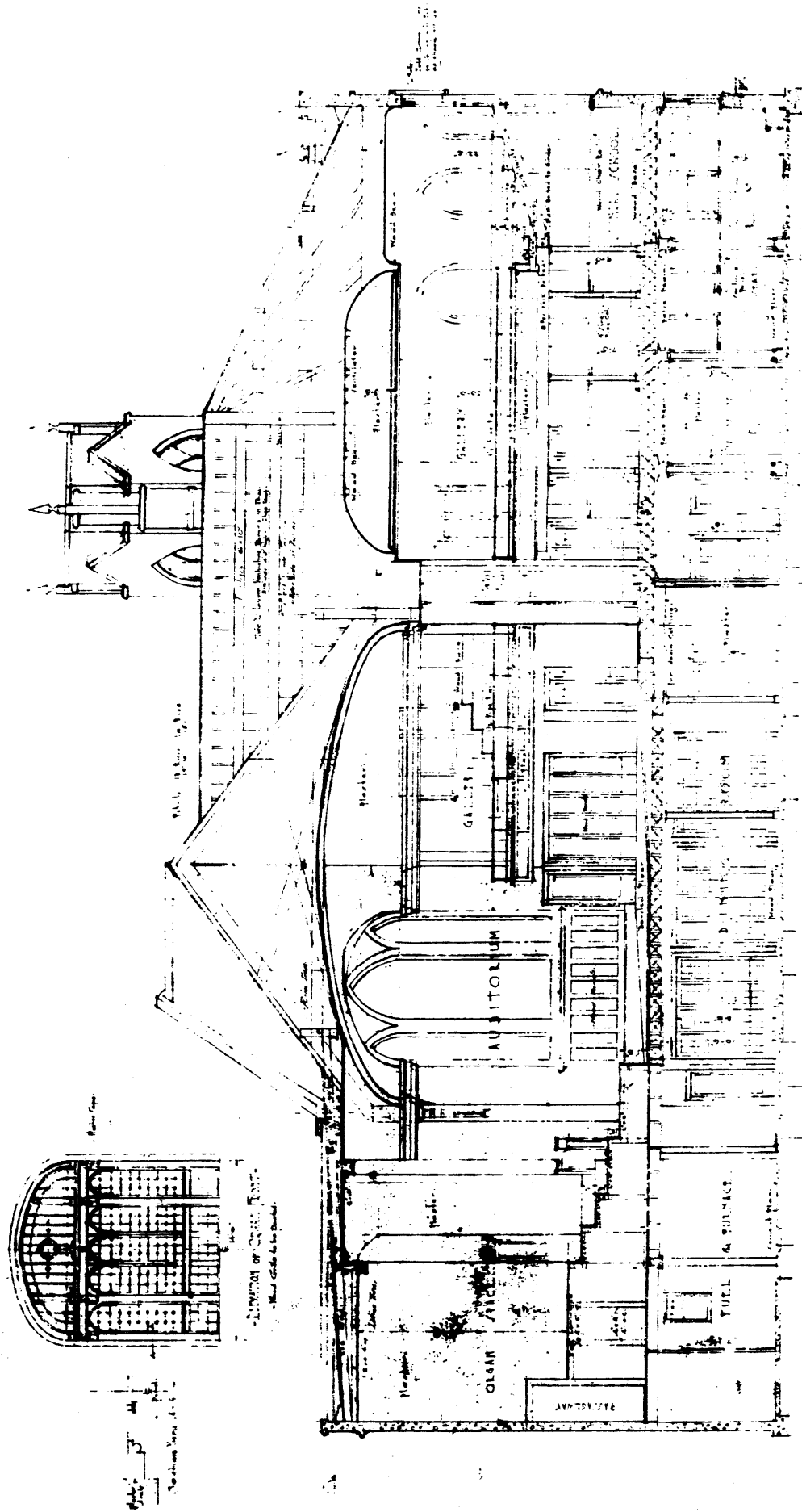
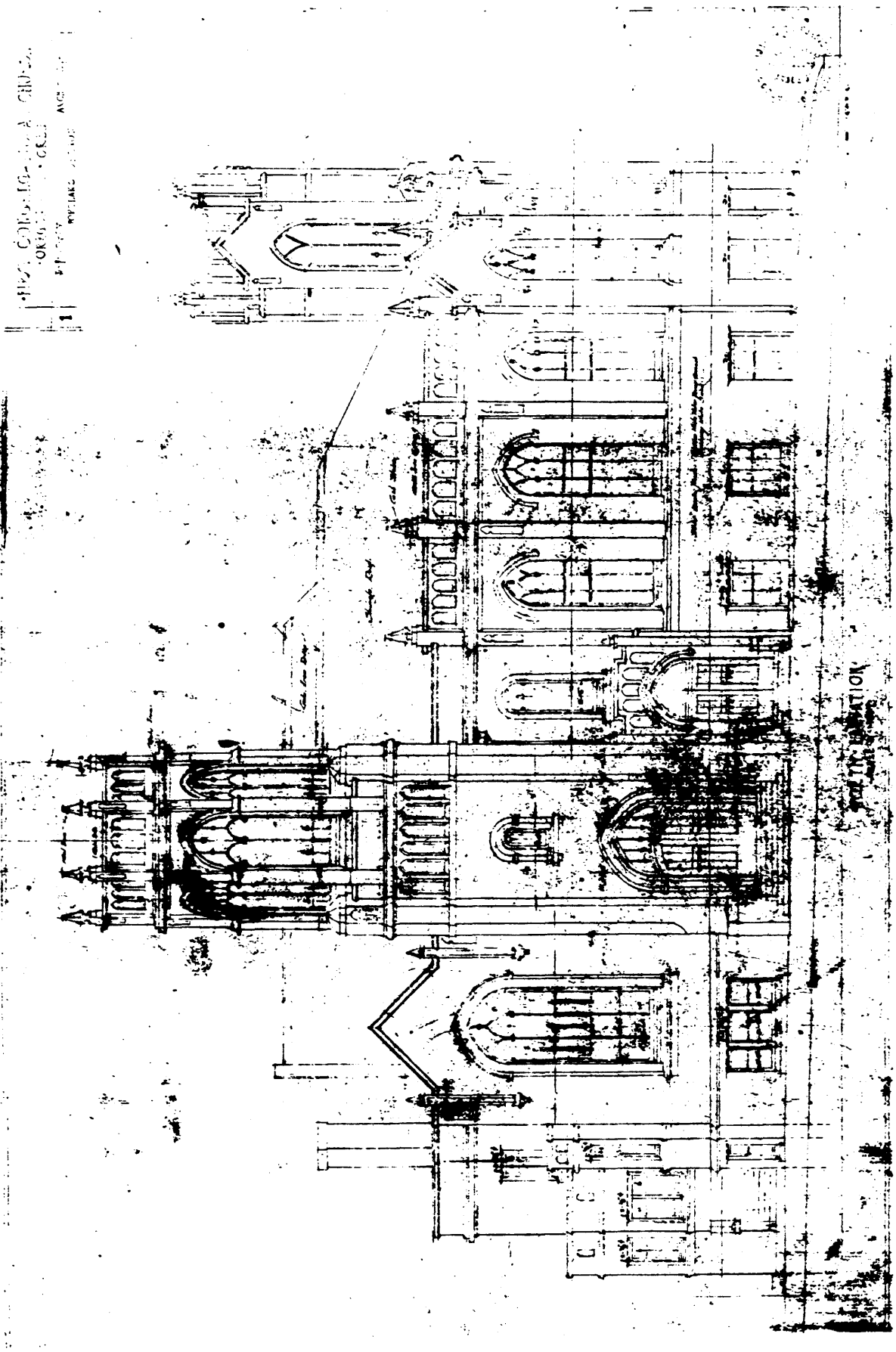


FIGURE 1 Main Floor Plan.



SECTION ON CENTERLINE OF BUILDING

FIGURE 2



ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH
COLUMBIA, IOWA
ARCHITECT
WYLLIAMS & BIRNBAUM

NORTH ELEVATION

NORTH ELEVATION

FIGURE 3