



Friends of Historic Second Church

THE HERALD



Volume VI, Number 1 Spring 2012

The Spotted Rock of Second Presbyterian

by Nate Lielas

One of the unique characteristics of Second Presbyterian Church is the sticky tar deposits that speckle the exterior walls. The limestone exudes bitumen from cells in the rock giving the exterior a mottled look. These deposits have been part of the church's stone face since it was first constructed in 1874. Recent research suggests the source of this "bituminous limestone" was a reef of limestone on the West side of Chicago where a group of quarries were harvested for some of the earliest stone taken from the ground beneath Chicago.

This "bituminous limestone" from the West side quarries also yielded stone for Second Presbyterian's earlier Renwick-designed church in the Chicago Loop at the northeast corner of Washington and Wabash. The black-marked facade of the downtown church was one of its most dominant features, inspiring names for it like the "Spotted Church" and the "Church of the Holy Zebra."

When the foundations of the downtown church were laid in 1849, there was very little stone used in Chicago buildings. Most structures in the city at that time were built from wood or brick. The "Spotted Church" may have been the first stone church in Chicago and succeeded the first stone building by only a year. The "Spotted Church" marked a change in church construction in Chicago. After it was completed, all new major churches in the city were built from stone. However, none of these other churches in Chicago were constructed from the spotted stone.

In 1853, shortly after Second Presbyterian completed their church, the Illinois Stone and

Lime Co. developed the great quarries in Lemont and began to supply "Athen's Marble" to Chicago in quantity. "Athen's Marble," which is actually a buff-colored limestone, had been discovered during the construction of the I&M Canal in the 1840s. This limestone became the stone construction material of choice until it was replaced in the 1890s by Bedford limestone from Indiana.

In the late 1840s, as plans for building Sec-



Artesian Quarry from Brick and Clay Record, Dec. 1905.

ond Presbyterian were being prepared, a strange oily rock was discovered on the open prairie northwest of the Courthouse. The congregation originally planned to erect a brick Italianate church designed by local architect John Van Osdel, but the newly discovered stone offered an alternative. The congregation voted to use this new stone in constructing their church and with the change in building material another option for an architect was explored.

T.B. Carter, a member of the building committee, brought plans for the new church back East while on personal business and was introduced to James Renwick. Renwick made a sketch and proposal for the church and the congregation voted to commission him to design the new structure. Renwick proposed a Gothic Revival style church – one of the first in Chicago. Many believed the discolorations in the newly discovered stone imparted an ancient appearance that complimented the Gothic design.

In 1868, Reverend Robert Patterson, who laid the cornerstone for both the downtown and the current church, recalled "the limestone



Second Presbyterian Church, before 1871.

used in its building was quarried on the prairie, three and a half miles from the centre of the city, from a quarry, now vacated, near the famous artesian well." Located at the northwest corner of Chicago and Western Avenues, the well was drilled by The Chicago Oil Company, boring for oil in the bituminous limestone in the area. The well often shows up on old maps such as S. Augustus Mitchell's "Map of Chicago" from around 1876 and Rufus Blanchard's Map of "Chicago and Environs" from 1888. Artesian Street, which runs north-south a half block west of Western Avenue, was named after the well.

Even before the artesian well appeared on early Chicago maps, a stone quarry was indicated in the area. Rees' map from 1849, the year the foundation of the church was laid, shows a rock pile labeled "stone quarry" at Chicago and Western. The earliest of the West side quarries were clustered around this intersection. Reuben Taylor developed one of the first of the West side quarries on the northeast corner of the intersection around the time plans for Second Presbyterian were being prepared. A ridge of the bituminous limestone near the surface creates a modest rise in the land. This ridge was known as "the Hill" and was, for a time, the highest point within the then city limits. Even today, from a point just north of Chicago and Western, the land slopes down in all directions, most noticeably to the south down Western Avenue and towards Grand, where the later quarries in the area were developed.

Today, none of the West side quarries remain. The earliest developed quarries closed first. Looking back in 1936, George Rice recalled the abandoned Taylor Quarry with "its rim and walls overgrown with vines and its water alive with sunfish and perch." Chopin Elementary School, a block off of Chicago and Western Streets, occupies former quarry land that became an ice pond before being filled and developed. The quarries further South at Grand Avenue lasted longer. The Rice Quarry, on the south side of Grand at Campbell, was sold to the city in 1911 for use as a garbage dump. The Artesian Quarry north, across Grand, was the last operating in the area. A Sanborn map from 1923 shows the quarry hemmed in by

residential development and earlier quarry sites covered by housing. The Artesian Quarry closed and was filled with garbage by 1928. After the dump was abandoned, the site was turned into Smith Park.

The spotted stone never became popular for constructing buildings, though it was used extensively in macadamized road paving. Crushed stone from the Rice Quarry was used to pave the Boulevards from Douglas Park to Humboldt Park. The stone was also used in foundations, making lime, and iron ore smelting. However, when the congregation moved south and built their current home they chose to turn again to the old quarries that supplied



"Spotted" entrance to Fry residence.

stone to the Spotted Church.

There are other nineteenth-century buildings around Chicago built from the stone, including churches and mansions. After the Chicago Fire of 1871, the limestone from the Spotted Church was salvaged and later used to construct the Henry Ives Cobb designed Lake Forest Presbyterian Church. Pilgrim Congregational Church in Oak Park uses the stone in its rubble

masonry walls. This stone may have been salvaged from the original Pilgrim Congregational Church, which was constructed with stone from the West Side Rice Quarry. At 52-56 East Bellevue Place in Chicago's Gold Coast, there are two mansions side by side. The house at 52 East Bellevue which uses the bituminous rock as trim was built for Charles Fay in 1888 and designed by the firm of Cobb and Frost. The house to the east, completely faced in the stone, was designed by Joseph Lyman Silsbee and built around the same time as the Fay residence. A few blocks away at 16 W. Maple Street there is another house faced in the stone, this time in smooth dressed block. In Chicago's Little Italy neighborhood, there is a Queen-Anne house with turreted front at 1508 West Polk Street that has a familiar tar-pocked façade.

However, the best-known and most celebrated use of Chicago's native spotted stone can be found at Second Presbyterian Church at E. Cullerton Street and S. Michigan Ave.

Nate Lielas, AIA, is researching the bituminous limestone used to construct Second Presbyterian. He is an architect at Northworks Architects and Planners. Nate and his partner, John Cramer, have been docents with Friends of Historic Second Church since 2011.

Friends of Historic Second Church is in the early stages of compiling a list of buildings (both extant and no longer standing) that used bituminous limestone in their construction. If you know of a building, or have other information regarding the spotted stone, please contact Nate Lielas at nlielas@gmail.com.

This month CBS Chicago selected Second Presbyterian Church for their "Best of the South Loop" list!

Also on the list is the Glessner House Museum, the Wheeler Mansion, and the National Veterans Art Museum.

Check out the article at <http://chicago.cbslocal.com/top-lists/best-of-the-south-loop/>



120 enthusiastic Evanston elementary school students came with music teacher John Tanis to hear the church organ and learn about the church art and architecture.

Bell Tower Window Pane Restored

A stencilled glass pane original to Renwick's 1874 design located in the bell tower was restored this winter.

Friends once again enlisted the services of Bill Klopsch Stained Glass to remove, restore and reinstall the lower sash in the east facing window. Klopsch restored the south facing window in 2008.

This project required Klopsch to disassemble the window pane, clean the existing glass, and replace the missing pieces with appropriate glass. Using

the silkscreens Klopsch created for the previous repair, vitreous paint was then screened onto the glass pieces and kiln-fired to make the paint permanent.

This was a small project concerned with only one pane, but as one of the only aspects of Renwick's gothic interior to survive the fire, it is extremely rare and valuable.

The window is easily accessible from the balcony. Tell your docent you'd like to glimpse the restored stencilled window on your next tour.



Photo by Martin Cheung.

Annual Appeal Launched

This Winter Friends launched its first Annual Appeal Campaign. A letter was sent out seeking donations for the repair and preservation of such treasures as the Tiffany and Burne-Jones windows, the Frederic Clay Bartlett murals and the

exquisite hand carved Italian baptismal font. Appeal recipients were also encouraged to consider less artistic but necessary projects like plaster repair and handicap access.

The response from both members and

non-members has been incredibly generous. Friends has raised \$6,210 to date. If you haven't already supported the Annual Appeal campaign, please consider making a donation today. With your help, we can make 2012 our most productive year yet.

Finishes Analysis Uncovers Original Design

The finishes analysis project that has been underway since fall is coming to a close. This has been a very visible project, with exposed areas or, "exposure windows" popping up throughout the sanctuary and narthex. During a finishes analysis, exposure windows are created on surfaces considered likely to have significant decorative finishes underneath. A sizeable strip of gold colored paint atop the sanctuary wall below the clerestory windows in the northwest corner reveals letters from the scriptures that originally lined the walls. Exposures taken from the sponge stenciling currently arching the walls and ceiling of the east balcony have revealed a far more decorative floral motif beneath. There are also prominent exposure windows in the north and south narthex rooms. The south room uncovered



Exposure windows on the east balcony reveal earlier design.

an especially clear image of the original grape and gold leaf stenciling.

Adhering to historic preservation standards, the windows will remain exposed, adding a rich visual and informative element to the sanctuary and narthex. All of the findings, including paint samples

taken in other areas of the church, will be included in a final report prepared by finishes expert Tony Kartsonas, and added to the Preservation Plan to complete a Historic Structure Report of the entire church complex that will serve as a guide for all future preservation projects.

Friends Evening Lecture Series Announced for 2012

Friends has assembled a diverse and interesting group of lectures for our members and the general public for 2012. This year the three speakers and their topics include cartographer Dennis McClendon on the History of the South Loop (March 29), Northwestern professor David Van Zanten on the work of Louis Julien Millet (September 20), and lecturer Alice Ireland on Women and the Arts and Crafts Movement (October 25).

For the first lecture of the series, Mr. McClendon will recount the history of Chicago's South Loop. Using dozens of old pictures and many maps, geographer and historian McClendon will weave together a colorful tale about one of Chicago's most vibrant neighborhoods, which was replete with hotels

and prostitutes, printers and railroad stations, millionaires and gangsters. Come to learn more about the area in which Second Presbyterian is located!

The reception begins at 6pm, with the lecture following at 7pm. Suggested donation is \$5.

Second Presbyterian Tour Schedule

Public tours of Second Presbyterian Church are at the following times:

Every Saturday from 1 p.m. - 3 p.m., except holidays, Cost \$5

Every Sunday after church at approximately 12:05 p.m. Free

Every Wednesday from 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. Free



The former Dearborn St. Station in Chicago's South Loop circa 1890.

Mission Statement

The mission of Friends of Historic Second Church is to preserve and restore the internationally recognized art and architecture of Chicago's landmark Second Presbyterian Church, educate a worldwide audience about its historical and cultural significance, and share those resources with the community.

With the successful completion of Friends' first Annual Appeal in Fall 2011, Friends is embarking on an annual membership drive in Spring 2012. Instead of membership renewals throughout the year, all memberships, whether new or renewal, will be solicited in the spring. The former six membership circles will be reduced to just two: the Tiffany Circle and the Arts and Crafts Circle (see membership form bottom of page). As a special benefit, Friends will offer one or more unique members-only tours each year at the \$100 Arts and Crafts level, providing members a chance to see hidden art treasures at the church and hear their stories. All members receive three editions of the newsletter *The Herald* each year and also receive a 25% discount on Friends' merchandise. Memberships provide important support for the preservation work of Friends of Historic Second Church. One goal of the simplified plan is to broaden the membership base allowing greater numbers of art lovers, preservationists, and historians to enjoy this beautiful historic church at a modest membership fee.



Friends of Historic Second Church

Annual Membership Levels and Benefits

All members receive the newsletter *The Herald* and are recognized as donors in the newsletter.

Tiffany Circle: \$40 Individual; \$55 Family; \$25 Student/Senior (62 yrs.+)

Benefits include: Free tours during regular tour hours, 25% discount on Friends' merchandise.

Arts & Crafts Circle: \$100 and above

Benefits include: Free tours during regular tour hours, 25% discount on Friends' merchandise, and invitations to special members-only tours and programs.

I/we wish to become a member of Friends of Historic Second Church or renew a current membership.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ for membership at the following level: _____

____ **Tiffany Circle:** \$40 Individual; \$55 Family; \$25 Student/Senior (62 yrs.+)

____ **Art & Crafts Circle:** \$100 and above

____ Yes ____ No You may acknowledge my contribution in Friends' publications.

____ Yes ____ No I prefer to receive my newsletter by e-mail.

____ Yes ____ No I am interested in volunteering for Friends' activities.

If you wish to discuss sponsoring a restoration project, contact Friends of Historic Second Church at 1-800-657-0687.

Please return completed form with check made payable to: Friends of Historic Second Church, 1936 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60616. Or renew online at www.2ndpresbyterianfriends.org.

Memberships and gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Friends of Historic Second Church is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.



Friends of Historic Second Church

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Friends of Historic Second Church is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. All Donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Friends of Historic Second Church gratefully acknowledges the following memberships, donations, and in kind contributions from October 1, 2011 through January 31, 2012.

In Kind:

David Arbogast
Mary Brush

Shaw Circle: (\$500 - \$999)

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Terry Tatum
Linda Thomas
Adina Van Buren

Docent Training 2012

Friends of Historic Second Church invites participation in its 2012 Docent Training Program. The training for 2012 includes four 1-½ hour sessions beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday evenings May 2, May 9, May 16 and May 30.

Topics discussed will include the Arts and Crafts Movement, the church's American and English stained glass windows, the Pre-Raphaelite murals, Gothic Revival architecture, architects James Renwick and Howard Van Doren Shaw, artists Frederic Clay Bartlett and Louis Comfort Tiffany, and preservation philosophy and techniques.

Please visit www.2ndpresbyterianfriends.org and click "Become a Docent" under Get Involved, and download the application form. Completed applications can be emailed to preservationmanager@2ndpresbyterianfriends.org. Call (800) 657-0687 for additional information. Training will take place at the church.