



Friends of Historic Second Church

THE HERALD

Volume VII, Number 2

Fall 2013



THE CEILING OF SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH *by Nate Lielasus*

High above the pews the ceiling of Second Presbyterian Church crowns Howard Van Doren Shaw's outstanding Arts and Crafts interior. The cast plaster beams, ribs and purlins, painted to look like ancient oak, and a checkerboard of strapwork ceiling panels exhibit the high level of craftsmanship found throughout the church. The whole helps tie together the sanctuary's decorative scheme.

But the ceiling does not allow for easy examination. The bottom of the plaster ridge beam is 60 feet above the sanctuary floor. Time has faded once bright colors and years of accumulated grime obscure fine details. While the ceiling is a significant part of the church interior, its remoteness often leaves it overlooked in such a richly decorated environment.

The ceiling of Second Presbyterian is a study of the late medieval English craftsmanship Shaw and other Arts and Crafts designers admired and a masterful architectural response to the timber framed parish churches that inspired Shaw while he was designing the new interior for Second Presbyterian.

Shaw's English travels, the parish churches of Somerset, and Cleeve Abbey

In the year 1900, while Shaw was in the thick of planning the

reconstruction of the church, he and wife Frances left Chicago to spend the summer in England. The Shaws' travels began around the Welsh Marches and West Midlands. Frances recorded their first stop in her diary as the Raven Inn in Shrewsbury in the county of Shropshire. From there, they travelled down the Wye Valley to Tintern Abbey and the mouth of the Severn River. They journeyed up the Severn to Gloucestershire and the Cotswold countryside and then along the South bank of the Bristol Channel in Somerset with stops in the cities of Bristol and Bath. The Shaws' final recorded stop was in Devon.

Throughout England late medieval parish churches have open hall roofs supported by stone nave arcades. In an open hall, the roof is supported by massive timber trusses, which are visible from below and become major decorative elements on the interior.

Gothic builders in Somerset developed a vernacular truss design used across England and concentrated around its place of origin. The "Somerset Roof," also known as a "Wagon Roof," has braced arch trusses, which span across the nave and divide the ceiling into bays. The braced arch trusses look like a capital "A" with two major members



*Cleeve Abbey, England
Photo: Flickr user: Darklily*

connected by a horizontal collar tie.

The parish churches Shaw encountered on his trip became valuable sources from which he borrowed. The medieval refectory roof at Cleeve Abbey is considered one of the best examples in the Somerset style and shares an unusual feature with Second Presbyterian – false hammerbeams in the style of the East Anglia "Angel Roofs" below the braced arch trusses. The craftsmen of East Anglia constructed their timber roofs using hammerbeams instead of braced arch trusses.

Hammerbeams are supports projecting from the wall in order to reduce the required span across the nave. At churches in East Anglia, such as St. Mary's in Bury St. Edmunds and St.

Mary's in Buckden, Cambridgeshire, the ends of the hammerbeams are decorated with carved figures making up a "Choir of Angels" complete with musical instruments and open Bibles. Shaw and his wife travelled near Cleeve Abbey, staying at the Lutrell Arms. While much more common in East Anglia, other Somerset churches have angels as well either as false hammerbeams or serving as corbels that support the ends of the braced arch trusses. At Second Presbyterian the false hammerbeam "Choir of Angels" has been repurposed to serve as chandelier brackets.

Ceiling bosses

The proliferation of decorative ceiling bosses is another prominent feature of English parish church ceilings that can be found at Second Presbyterian. Bosses are grotesques that normally occur at the intersection of roof members or above significant areas of the sanctuary, such as a shrine. Originally bosses were used to simplify construction. It is easier to connect two or more members using a simple block rather than creating a complex miter joint.

Early bosses were carved to look like cabbage leaves or ivy curling around the ribs. It was not until the late medieval period that strange animals from the Gothic bestiary, human faces and mythological creatures began to appear on church ceilings. Though they occur in churches, bosses are usually non-religious in theme. Some were born from the imagination of the craftsmen while others are

creatures from mythology. Many are figures of rude people; the number of human faces with protruding tongues is astounding. Shaw filled the ceiling of Second Presbyterian with bosses. There are 352 in total and 19 unique designs. The bosses are organized into three distinct groups of unique figures by location.

The largest group is in the open ceiling where the purlins and ribs intersect. This group numbers 132 bosses of 13 different figures; turtle, squirrel, bat, frog, marten, crawfish, beetle, sea turtle, gold fish, holly, a plant with heart shaped fruit, a face wearing a medieval peasant's or monk's hood resting his chin in hand and a demonic face with wings sprouting from its horned head, possibly Baphomet, Manticore or a harpy.

The second group occupies the spaces where purlins meet the transverse arches at the ceiling. There are 110 of these bosses in four designs: scroll, seahorse, crab and pomegranate. The last group, studding the underside of the transverse arches, are alternating pairs of grape bunches and crowns, motifs found elsewhere in the church.

Many of the animal figures are familiar - turtles, squirrels, bats, frogs, martens and crawfish. These are creatures that live in Illinois and which Shaw may have seen around his Lake Forest home, Ragdale.

Others are fantastic such as the demonic face and possibly the sea turtle, which may represent *Aspidochelone*, a creature whose shell resembled an island and by swimming off into the horizon led mariners to their death.

A good number of the bosses

are creatures from the ocean – the seahorse, crab, sea turtle and possibly the fish. The crawfish could be a lobster. The ocean is far from Chicago but woven into the culture of Somerset where the long coastline ensures it is always nearby.

Lake Shore Country Club

Shaw sometimes reused symbols in his work – a basket of fruit being the best-known example. The same is true of the ceiling boss figures at Second Presbyterian – four of which can be found at the Lake Shore Country Club in Glencoe, Illinois. The club, completed in 1911, has a pair of brick Tudor-style entrance towers flanking the front façade. At the top of the north tower are limestone versions of Second Presbyterian's frog and fish, with the bat and marten on the south tower.

The next time you are at Second Presbyterian, grab binoculars and look up. A host of creatures is watching from above.



*Second Presbyterian ceiling boss
Photo by Martin Cheung*

ONLY CHURCH IN CHICAGO TO RECEIVE NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK RECOGNITION

There was great joy and fanfare at Second Presbyterian Church on Thursday evening June 20, 2013 when Friends, church members, South Loop neighbors, preservationists and politicians gathered to celebrate the church's designation as a National Historic Landmark. Officials, including Congressman Danny Davis' District Manager Cherita Logan, Alderman Pat Dowell's Chief of Staff Maurice Bright, Alderman Robert Fioretti, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle's Housing Director Anna Ashcraft and State Senator Mattie Hunter's District Administrator Janis McReynolds congratulated the church on receiving this distinguished designation. Remarks were offered by Rev. Dr. David M. Neff, Interim Pastor and Linda P. Miller, President and Ann Belletire, Secretary of Friends of Historic Second Church. Mr. Roosevelt Ferguson, President of the church's Board of Trustees and 50 year church member offered recollections of the years of struggle to keep the doors of the church open. A bronze designation plaque was presented by Lynda Lancaster of the National Park Service. Look for the plaque to be installed adjacent to the main doors of the church. A highlight of the celebration was the music, both the inspiring selections of church organist Michael Shawgo and the trumpet fanfare of the Royal Trumpet Works, Inc. under the direction of Phil Feo. A reception with a sparkling wine toast followed the ceremony. The 130 guests lifted their glasses in celebration of Second Presbyterian Church's past, present and increasingly bright future.



Back row, from left: Tracy Cargo, trustee; Nicki Pecori, representing Alderman Robert Fioretti; Janis McReynolds, representing State Senator Mattie Hunter; Jane Tiffen, trustee and board member; Roosevelt Ferguson, trustee; Reverend David Neff, Pastor; Ann Belletire, Secretary; Marcel Bright, representing Alderman Pat Dowell.
Front row, from left: Linda Miller, President; Ruth Sharpe, board member; Susan Baldwin Burian, board member; James Barnes, board member.

Photo: Martin Cheung

Mission Statement

The mission of Friends of Historic Second Church is to preserve and restore the 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.

***Friends of Historic
Second Church
gratefully
acknowledges the
following
memberships,
donations, and
contributions from
April 1, 2013 –
July 31, 2013.***

***Tiffany Window
Investigation***

Richard H. Driehaus
Foundation

Annual Appeal

Shirley Dubois
Alister MacDonald

***Sanctuary Paint &
Plaster Project***

Anonymous
*In honor of David &
Ruth Sharpe*

\$250-\$499

Richard & Mary Gray
Howard & Jane Tiffen
Christian Vinyard

\$100-\$249

Susan Aldridge
James Barnes
Michael & Ann
Belletire
Mary Bucaro
John A. Bross
Connie Casey
Thomas E. & Barbara
Donnelley
Ned & Barbara
Edwards
Jan & Jerry Erickson
Edwin L. Ferguson
Roosevelt & Pauline
Ferguson
Karen Lee Fontaine
Donna Gabanski
Charles & Jean
Glasgow
Charles Wishart
Hayford

Diane Hoekstra
Robert Irving
Sue B. Ish
Darleen & Jim
Jackson
Robert L. & Sheila
Joynt
William & Judith
Locke
Dr. & Mrs. William
Lussie
Linda Miller
Priscilla Mims
Lynn & Bill Redfield
Shelley & Elizabeth
House-Reither
Hilda Robinson
Anita Rogers
Gary Schuetz
Alice Tell

Under \$100

Ann Belletire
*In memory of
Jack Simmerling*
Anonymous
Kathy Belletire

William & Susan
Crawford
Kathleen Cummings
Joanne Davis
Rochelle Davis
Barbara Epler
Nina Fain
Barbara J. Floyd
Diane Gartung
Loretta Gratias-
Bremer
Laura Hall
John & Mickey
Hartmann
Tom & Meg
Hartmann
Wilbert R. Hasbrouck
Louise Howe
Robert Jacobsen
Virginia Kerr
Vana Kikos
Wendy Koenig
Walt & Sue Kovalick
Linda P. Lilly
*In honor of Ann
Belletire*
Kenneth F. Little

Alister MacDonald
Dr. Edward Mazur
Raisa Montero
Beverly Offen
Karen Oliver
Vicky L. Sauter
Thelma Schwartz
Stephen & Marilyn
Scott
Maryann G. Strain
Anne T. Sullivan
Sharon Sylvester
Mary Tamminga
Jack & Susan Tribbia
Adina Van Buren
Stephen & Mary Kay
Wysham

In Kind

Peter Copeland

YORK UNIVERSITY GRADUATE STUDENT CONDUCTS INVESTIGATIONS

This summer, Friends hosted a graduate student from the prestigious program in Stained Glass Conservation and Heritage Management at York University in the United Kingdom. Ms. Greer Ashman, a native Californian, conducted investigations into the construction and physical conditions of the Tiffany stained glass windows in the church. Ms. Ashman will use Second Presbyterian's windows as a case study for her master's thesis to be completed later this year.

On July 23, Ms. Ashman presented her findings in a special-invitation lecture attended by more than 50 members of the Arts & Crafts Circle and Friends docents. To receive invitations to these special events, join Friends of Historic Second Church at the Arts & Crafts level. See page 5 of the newsletter for our membership form.



Photo: Ann Fisher

ARTS AND CRAFTS FURNITURE ON VIEW

On June 13, Friends held its second lecture in the 2013 series with Peter Copeland, author of *The Tobey Furniture Company, Chicago, Illinois: A Brief History* as speaker. Mr. Copeland is an avid collector of Arts and Crafts furniture and is the proprietor of the Parchment Press, which publishes reprints of historic furniture catalogs.

Mr. Copeland lectured on the history of the Tobey Furniture Company from its founding in Chicago in 1857 to when the company closed its doors in 1954 as one of the longest operating furniture manufacturers and retailers in the city. The Edward Burne-Jones windows in the church narthex were purchased from the Tobey Furniture Company. The lecture was co-sponsored by the Historic Pullman Foundation. Guests were able to see examples of Tobey Furniture brought by Mr. Copeland as well as by the Historic Pullman Foundation, which brought pieces of furniture from the Hotel Florence in Pullman.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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.



Friends of Historic Second Church

1936 S. Michigan Ave.

Chicago, IL 60616

Phone: 1-800-657-0687

E-mail: historic2ndchurch@yahoo.com

Web: www.2ndpresbyterianfriends.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Linda Miller, *President*

A. Gerald Erickson, *Vice President*

Ann Belletire, *Secretary*

William Tyre, *Treasurer*

Susan Baldwin Burian

James T. Barnes

Rowena Balogun

Jeff Case

Kurt Hyzy

Ruth Sharpe

Michael Shawgo

Jane Tiffen

Rev. David Neff, *ex-officio*

Lisa Napoles, *Historic Preservation Manager*

Graphic Designer: Lisa Napoles

Contributors: Nate Lielas, Bill Tyre, Ann

Belletire, Lisa Napoles, and Linda Miller.

DOCENT TRAINING 2013

Friends of Historic Second Church invites participation in its 2013 Docent Training Program. The training includes five 1-½ hour sessions beginning at 6:30pm on Thursday evenings Sept. 5, 12, 19, and Oct. 3 & 10 at the church.

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 historic2ndchurch@yahoo.com.

Call (800) 657-0687 for additional information.

SEPTEMBER 26 LECTURE: BURNE-JONES WINDOWS AND SONG

The last lecture in the 2013 series will be held on Thursday September 26, 2013 and will be co-sponsored by the Greater Chicago Chapter of the Victorian Society in America. Prof. Elizabeth Helsinger will present her lecture, "If Any Earthly Music Dare: The Burne-Jones/Morris Windows in the Vestibule of Song." The lecture will be held at 7:00pm preceded by a reception with light refreshments at 6:00pm.

Second Presbyterian Public Tour Schedule:

Wednesdays
1:00-3:00pm, Free

Saturdays
1:00-3:00pm
Suggested donation \$5.00

Sundays
(after worship service)
12:15pm, Free

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