



Friends of Historic Second Church

THE HERALD

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THE POMEGRANATE AS DESIGN AND SYMBOL *by Linda P. Miller*

As you enter the sanctuary of Second Presbyterian, one of the first things to catch your eye is the plaster pomegranate banding on the ceiling beneath the balcony. Pomegranates are also found crafted in oak at the end of the pews and on the pulpit and platform, carved in stone around the Burne-Jones windows, molded into the plaster panels across the face of the balcony, cast into the design of the two pulpit candelabras, and painted into several of the Bartlett murals. Why did Shaw select and repeat this motif? The answer to that question lies in the rich history of the pomegranate in many of the world's religions, in art through the ages, and in literature.

The pomegranate tree bears a deep red, acid-sweet fruit with many seeds. The name comes from the Latin: *pomum* (apple) and *granatus* (seeded). One of the first cultivated fruits, the pomegranate was likely first grown in Persia, perhaps as early as 3,000 B.C.E. Some scholars even suggest that it was a pomegranate, not an apple, that tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. As a symbol it has been linked to health, fertility, abundance, prosperity, and resurrection.

In Greek mythology, Persephone succumbed to the temptation of



Carved wood pomegranate detail from the pulpit.

Photo credit: Martin Cheung

the sweet seeds of the pomegranate and was thus fated to spend six months of each year in the underworld. Egyptian kings were buried with pomegranates in the belief that to do so would heighten chances of a second life. The Old Testament contains many references to the pomegranate. The hems of the High Priests' robes were embroidered with pomegranates to symbolize righteousness and fruitfulness as commanded in the book of Exodus (28:33-34). In Deuteronomy (8:8), Moses tells the people that "the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land ... of vines and fig trees and pomegranates... in which you will not lack anything." Even today the pomegranate plays an important role in the celebration of Rosh Hashanah, one of a number of harvest symbols associated with the fall holiday. Within the Christian tradition the pomegranate represents resurrection and life everlasting.

In Islam, the Qur'an speaks of pomegranates growing in the

gardens of paradise. Buddhists view pomegranates as one of the three blessed fruits along with peaches and citrus. In Chinese tradition pomegranates are presented as gifts at weddings as an offering to bring good fortune and the birth of many sons.

Just as pomegranates are powerful religious symbols, references to the many-seeded fruit are also evident in world literature. In the 8th century B.C.E. Homer referred to pomegranates in his *Garden of Alcinoüs*. Pliny, the Elder (23-79 A.D.) wrote a treatise on how to preserve pomegranates. Shakespeare wrote of nightingales singing in pomegranate trees in *Romeo and Juliet* and of picking kernels out of pomegranates in *All's Well That Ends Well*.

With its rich red color and full round shape, the pomegranate appealed to artists across time and culture. Islamic art uses the pomegranate motif frequently in ceramics and tile work. In the

1590 *Baburnama*, the history of the Mughal emperor Babur, one panel depicts pomegranates in his garden. In Botticelli's *Madonna of the Pomegranate* (c.1487), the Christ child holds the shining, ruby-red fruit as a symbol of His coming resurrection. In Agnolo Bronzino's *Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo and her Son Giovanni* (1545-1546), Eleonora is wearing a magnificent, embroidered gown with gold netting and a pomegranate design as a symbol of fertility and chastity. Cezanne featured the pomegranate in his painting, *Ginger Pot with Pomegranate and Pear* (1893).

In 1900, when Howard Van Doren Shaw began work on the redesign of the sanctuary at Second Presbyterian, he turned for inspiration to the Arts and Crafts movement. The Chicago Arts and Crafts Society had formed at Hull House in 1897. Shaw was a member.



Madonna of the Pomegranate by Botticelli, c. 1487

In Owen Jones's *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856), an influential publication illustrating many examples of design from this emerging reform movement, pomegranates appeared in



"Fruit" or "Pomegranate" wallpaper designed by William Morris.

numerous drawings. A.W.N. Pugin, as early as 1850, created a pomegranate wallpaper design. William Morris used the pomegranate in 1866 in his second wallpaper design, *Fruit or Pomegranate*. Three decades after his death, his firm used it again in one of their last wallpaper designs, *Bird and Pomegranate*, in 1926. The pomegranate was also used by Morris and Company in textile, embroidery, and tapestry design. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting *Persephone* (1874) depicts Morris's wife, Jane Burden, as the mythical Persephone holding the pomegranate that sealed her fate.

All of these works of art are likely to have been familiar to Shaw. In 1897 he used the same pomegranate banding as seen at the church in the master bedroom of Ragdale, his summer home in Lake Forest. The aesthetic principles of the Arts and Crafts movement—valuing medieval design, finding beauty in nature, respecting the work of the

craftsman, and creating a harmony in the design—can be found at Second Presbyterian. From its religious symbolism, to its frequent appearance in literature and art and its valued place in the world of Arts and Crafts, the pomegranate made an apt, meaningful, and natural design motif for incorporation into the 1901 redesign of the Second Presbyterian sanctuary. By using the pomegranate, Shaw created a subtle yet strong allusion to the religious symbolism of resurrection and life ever-lasting. He was able to draw on the Arts and Crafts desire to look to nature and the past for inspiration, and by using the pomegranate in locations throughout the sanctuary he was able to create the harmony of the whole that was so valued in Arts and Crafts design.

TOUR PROGRAM MARKS 75TH YEAR

The tour program at Second Presbyterian Church marks its 75th anniversary this year, making it what is believed to be the oldest continuously operating tour program of an historic building in the city of Chicago. The genesis for the tour program came from the Attendance Committee of the church which believed tours would increase church attendance. An article written for the church newsletter, *The Record*, in November 1940 stated in part:

"It was decided to train certain ushers and have them conduct tours of the building, after the morning service. There are many artistic points of beauty in the Nave that many of the regular attendants of the Church do not know of. Doctor Howard is preparing a lecture which the Ushers will use in conducting these tours."

It is interesting to note that the beauty of the sanctuary was recognized for its significance at such an early date. Over time the tour program expanded due to increased interest, and tours were offered at times beyond those given after Sunday services. Since 2006, Friends has overseen the tour program, with a core of more than 20 trained docents welcoming many thousands of visitors through the doors to explore our many "artistic points of beauty."

2015 LECTURE SERIES BEGINS IN MARCH

Friends kicks off its 2015 lecture series on March 26. Lecturer Jackie Kenyon will present *Sculptors Anna Hyatt Huntington, Laura Gardin Fraser, and Sylvia Shaw Judson: A Comparison of Careers and Study of Cultural Milieu in Historic Sculpture*. Sylvia Shaw Judson was the daughter of Howard Van Doren Shaw, the architect of Second Presbyterian Church. The lecture will be co-sponsored by Glessner House Museum. On May 28, Friends Board Vice-President Nate Lielasus, AIA, will present *The Spotted Stone: Quarried in Chicago*. The final lecture of the year will be held on October 22, when musicologist David Patterson will discuss the influence of composer Ludwig van Beethoven on the work of architect Frank Lloyd Wright. All lectures are \$10, are held at Second Presbyterian Church, and begin at 7:00pm, preceded by a reception with light refreshments at 6:00pm.



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You can now support Friends of Historic Second Church just by shopping on Amazon.com. Friends has joined AmazonSmile, a website which allows non-profit organizations to receive donations from a portion of sales made on the popular shopping website. To donate via AmazonSmile, visit: <http://smile.amazon.com/> and select Friends of Historic Second Church at the prompt. Friends will receive donations in the amount of 0.5% of purchases made through AmazonSmile.

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.

Second Presbyterian Public Tour Schedule:

Wednesdays
1:00-3:00pm

Saturdays
1:00-3:00pm

Sundays (after worship service)
12:15pm

JOIN US FOR A TOUR

While the frigid weather in Chicago continues, Friends encourages visitors to stop in and warm up in the beautiful sanctuary of Second Presbyterian Church. Our doors are open for tours on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 1:00pm to 3:00pm and on Sundays beginning at 12:15 after services. Tours are always free. For group tour information, contact Friends at: 800-657-0687 or by email at: historic2ndchurch@yahoo.com

We look forward to seeing you soon.



Photo credit: Catherine Acosta

Friends of Historic Second Church gratefully acknowledges the following memberships, donations, and contributions from November 15, 2014 - February 15, 2015.

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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

Friends of Historic Second Church invites all readers to join the campaign to restore Chicago's newest National Historic Landmark by becoming a member today. For our current members, we thank you for your past support and ask you to consider renewing your membership. Your support results in important restoration projects at the church. Plus you also support Friends' educational and cultural programs including the annual lecture series and regular tours which have now reached guests from forty countries worldwide. Be a part of the restoration history of this "crown jewel" of fine art and architecture. Simply complete and mail the form below or renew online at www.2ndpresbyterianfriends.org.

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: _____

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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.



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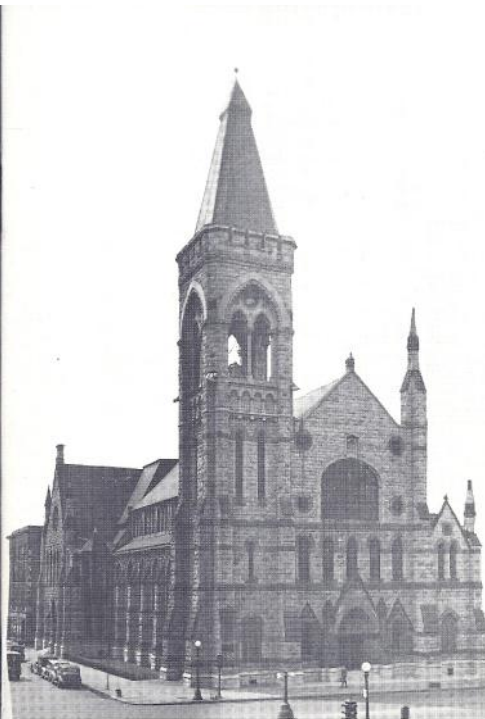
Contributors: Ann Belletire, Linda Miller, Lisa Napoles, and Bill Tyre.

ARCHIVAL DONATIONS

Friends recently received some archival materials to add to our collection of historic documents from the church. At left is the cover of a guide booklet published by the Second Presbyterian congregation in 1968. The booklet contains the historical background of the congregation and information about the church's art and architecture. Documents such as these are valuable reminders of the church's long history in welcoming visitors to see one of Chicago's earliest and most significant architectural treasures.

SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendar for Friends Celebration of Chicago History on June 18, 2015. Friends will host a lecture and reception at Second Presbyterian focusing on Chicago's history. Plans for the event are currently in progress and details will be announced later this spring. Join us again as we celebrate our local history.



THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
MICHIGAN AT 20th STREET
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