



Friends of Historic Second Church

THE HERALD

Volume IX, Number 2

Summer 2015



PULPIT FURNITURE BY JOHN A. COLBY & SONS *by William Tyre*

The set of furniture on the pulpit platform has been in place since the reconstruction of the church in 1901. Records indicate that the pieces were acquired for \$366.00 from John A. Colby & Sons, a leading manufacturer and retailer of furniture in Chicago. In this article, we will examine the history of the Colby company, the pieces acquired by the church, and how they fit into Shaw's master plan for the sanctuary.

JOHN A. COLBY

The Colby furniture company had its origins in a furniture and auction house founded in 1869 by John A. Colby and Jacob C. Wirts. A decade later, Colby bought out his partner and began producing high end furniture. He built a large factory on Elizabeth Street and by 1901 employed 100 men, with the factory providing nearly three-quarters of the furniture in his Wabash Avenue store. The company produced custom furniture following sketches created by architects and interior decorators, or the company's own designers. By this time, Colby had also expanded into providing custom interior woodwork, curtains, and draperies, and provided the large embroidered and appliquéd curtain for the stage of the Auditorium Theatre when it



*Pastor's chair.
All photos by author*

opened in 1889.

Colby's two sons, Henry and Edward, joined the business in the early 1880s and the name was changed to John A. Colby & Sons in 1884. The company became a training ground for a number of individuals who went on to become prominent furniture designers and manufacturers. Among these were George Clingman, who headed Colby's special order department for a decade before

becoming head designer at the Tobey Furniture Company, and designer Alexander Hompe who eventually left the firm to become president of the Royal Furniture Company in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In the mid-1890s, Colby became one of the first Chicago-based manufacturers to specialize in colonial reproduction furniture, advertised as "exact reproductions of the best existing types of rare Colonial masterpieces."



Pulpit table.

The huge Wabash Avenue store was destroyed in a catastrophic fire in 1908, but it was rebuilt shortly before Colby died the next year at the age of 76. His



"Savonarola" chair.

son Henry died in 1910, and the business was sold. By the 1920s, the production end of the business came to an end, but Colby's remained a prominent Chicago furniture retailer until the last store in Lincolnwood closed in 1991.

FURNITURE AT SECOND

The furniture purchased during the rebuilding of Second Presbyterian included the pastor's chair and table, two side chairs, and two chairs for the narthex. These latter chairs are classic examples of Windsor sack-back arm chairs and were probably stock pieces manufactured by Colby as part of its line of Colonial reproduction furniture.

It is quite possible that the two side chairs on the pulpit were stock pieces as well, as the Colby company produced many examples of historic-based furniture. The chairs, with their wavy X silhouette, are based on an early form of a chair known variously as an X-frame, Dante, scissors, or Savonarola chair. The form upon which they are based became popular in Medieval and Renaissance Italy



Above: Pastor's chair date detail.

Bottom: Pastor's chair ornamental detail

and was designed as a portable folding chair like its original inspiration, the ancient Roman curule. The two chairs at Second are not meant to be folding chairs, but are made from heavy oak with elaborate carved bearded faces forming finials at either side of the back.

The two most significant pieces of furniture in the sanctuary are the pastor's chair and table, which were no doubt designed by Shaw and executed by the craftsmen at the Colby factory. Made of quarter-sawn oak, both pieces sit upon squat bun feet and feature carvings of the pomegranate and grape motifs found throughout the sanctuary. The table is designed with two lower shelves to hold books and papers, and features straight lines with the carving confined to the area just below the top. The chair features a series of four distinct carved panels on each side, with a

continuous stem sprouting pomegranates in one panel and grapes in the next. An interesting feature is the inclusion of the date on the front of the chair, consisting of "A. D." and "1901" flanking a central carved foliate panel. This is a device found on other pieces of furniture designed by Shaw. The overall shape of the pastor's chair is simple but graceful with gently curving armrests extending up to carved finials at the top of the high back.

Although often overlooked by visitors to the sanctuary, the pulpit furniture tells an important story of a prominent Chicago furniture manufacturer working closely with an architect to select and produce handsome designs that blend harmoniously into the overall scheme of the sanctuary. We are fortunate that the pieces have remained in their exact positions for more than 110 years, continuing to combine functionality with artistic design.



THREE GENEROUS GIFTS RECEIVED

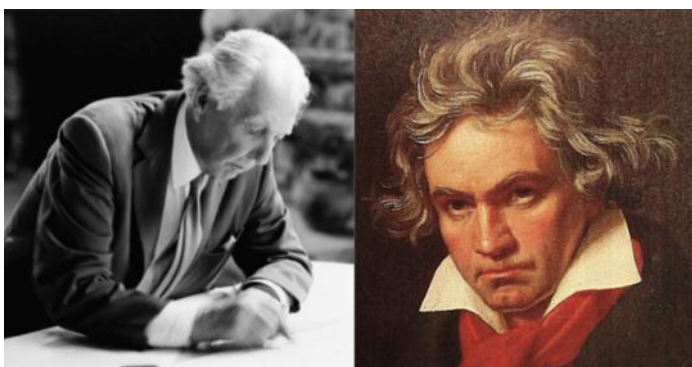
It is with gratitude that Friends acknowledges three recent, generous gifts to underwrite the cost of an inspection and report on the exterior condition of the building. A heartfelt thank you to The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation and the Alphawood Foundation which have each granted Friends \$35,000 for this work and to the National Trust for Historic Preservation for a gift of \$5,000. The inspection and report are being conducted by Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc., an internationally recognized firm of architects, structural engineers, and material scientists specializing in the investigation, testing, and design of repairs for buildings. Their comprehensive report will detail the condition of the exterior and contain a prioritized list of repair recommendations. It will be the basis for the upcoming work to the church exterior. It will also ensure that this historically and culturally relevant Chicago landmark can be safeguarded for present and future generations to enjoy and appreciate.

TOUR HOWARD VAN DOREN SHAW'S MARKTOWN WITH FRIENDS

At 10:00am on September 19th Nate Lielasus and Bill Tyre will lead a tour of Howard Van Doren Shaw's Marktown, a unique English Arts and Crafts village surrounded by the refineries and mills of Northwest Indiana. It was built in 1917 for Clayton Mark as a planned worker community similar to Pullman to house workers of the Indiana Harbor Works of the Mark Manufacturing Company. The community originally included a Market Square, hotel, garage, manager's houses and several models of worker housing. Recent demolition by the BP Whiting Refinery threatens the integrity, character, and survival of the community. Pre-paid tickets are \$25 and the tour is open to the public. To purchase a ticket, please contact Friends at historic2ndchurch@yahoo.com or (800) 657-0687.

2015 LECTURE SERIES CONCLUDES IN OCTOBER

Please join Friends for the final lecture in our 2015 series on October 22, when musicologist David Patterson will present his lecture, "Frank Lloyd Wright, 'Organicism,' and the Long Shadow of Beethoven." During his career, Frank Lloyd Wright spoke of Beethoven as one of his influences, even referring to the composer as "a great architect." David Patterson is currently writing a book on the place of music in the thought and work of Frank Lloyd Wright and has spoken on the topic at several Wright sites. In 2013, Mr. Patterson produced a recording of music composed by Wright's father, entitled *The Music of William C. Wright: Solo Piano and Vocal Works, 1847-1893*. Copies of the CD will be available for purchase. The lecture will be held at 7:00pm preceded by a reception with light refreshments at 6:00pm. \$10 suggested donation.



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



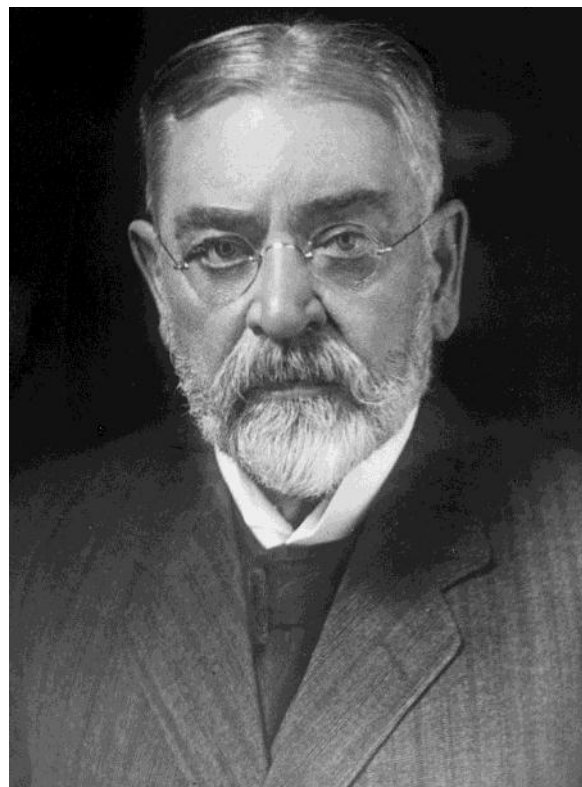
Like us on
Facebook

WHAT ROLE DID CHICAGO PLAY IN THE LIVES OF ABRAHAM AND ROBERT TODD LINCOLN?

Please join Friends on June 18th when we host the third annual "Celebration of Chicago History" with a presentation on "The Lincolns in Chicago." Mark B. Pohlad, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at DePaul University will reveal how important Chicago was to Abraham Lincoln's rise in politics and Robert Todd Lincoln's influence in Chicago after his father's death. Robert Todd Lincoln was a trustee at Second Presbyterian Church from 1879-1889.

The lecture begins at 6:00 PM with a reception following. Prior to the lecture, tours of the National Historic Landmark church will be available from 5:30-6:00 PM. To reserve your place at the event, RSVP to historic2ndchurch@yahoo.com or call 800-657-0687.

Robert Todd Lincoln
Photo credit: Library of Congress



Friends of Historic Second Church

gratefully acknowledges the following memberships, donations, and contributions from February 16, 2015 - May 20, 2015.

\$25,000-\$49,999

Alphawood Foundation
The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation

\$5,000-\$9,999

Dr. Floyd & Shirley DuBois

\$500-\$999

Friedrich Burian
Marshall Field V
Northern Trust
Mark R. Veselack

\$100-\$499

Michael & Ann Belletire
Rev. Karen Blatt
Mary Bucaro

Tricia Cassidy &
Andrew Wycislak
in memory of
Mary Louise Schober
Jane Dewey
Jerry & Jan Erickson
Edwin Ferguson
Pauline Ferguson
Ann Fisher
Donna & Glenn Gabanski
Richard Heath &
Jennifer Welch
Dale & Diane Hoekstra
Elizabeth House Reither &
Shelley Reither
Robert Irving
Chris-Ellyn Johanson
Robert & Sheila Joynt
Dr. Sharon Kobak
William & Judy Lussie
Arthur Mead Martin
Linda & Jeff Miller
Priscilla Mims
Terri & Erik Prenzler
Anita J. Rogers
Gary Schuetz
Ruth Sharpe
Bonnie Bartlit Vickrey
Maria Wicks

Under \$100

Carole & Thomas Ahern
Diane J. Anderson
Susan Benjamin
Suzette Bulley
Larry & Carla Bush
Beatrice & Gary Coates
William & Susan Crawford
Paul Doros
Barbara L. Epler
Ruth Foley
Karen Fontaine &
Al Renslow
Diane Gartung
Kevin Hall
Louise D. Howe
Sue Ish
Nicole & Paul Janas
Diane & John Jacoby
Virginia Kerr
Vana Kikos
Michael Leo Kirk
Walter & Susan Kovalick
Winfred M. Leaf
Michael & Diane Levy
Nate Lielas-Morrow &
John Cramer
Kenneth Little
William Luginbuhl
Alister MacDonald

Richard A. Mach
Teresa Maher
Debra N. Mancoff
Dr. Edward & Myrna Mazur
Bonnie McGrath
Raisa Montero &
Pod Rodolfo Loo
Beverly Offen
Karen Oliver
William Redfield
Joel Schorn
Lori Schreiber
Thelma L. Schwartz
Marilyn & Stephen Scott
Tori Simms & Ray Hoffman
Norman Spielman
Joan Stinton
Lois Stratemeier
Sharon Sylvester
Terry Tatum
Adina Van Buren
Susan J. Van Der Meulen
Stephen &
Mary Kay Wysham

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

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

It's not too late to become a 2015 member of Friends of Historic Second Church. Your membership supports Friends' restoration work and our tour program. It also supports our educational efforts including lectures, walking tours, research and this newsletter. Your support is what enables us to bring this beautiful National Historic Landmark church to the world's attention. If you are one of the many supporters who have already joined, we thank you. If you haven't sent in your membership yet, 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: _____

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*

Nate Lielasus, *Vice President*

Ann Belletire, *Secretary*

William Tyre, *Treasurer*

Rowena Balogun

James T. Barnes

Mary Bucaro

Susan Baldwin Burian

Jeff Case

A. Gerald Erickson

Kurt Hyzy

Ruth Sharpe

Michael Shawgo

Jane Tiffen

Rev. David Neff, *ex-officio*

Lisa Napoles, *Historic Preservation Manager*

Graphic Designer: Lisa Napoles

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

DOCENT TRAINING

Friends of Historic Second Church invites participation in its 2015 Docent Training Program. The training includes five 1 ½ hour sessions beginning at 10:00am on Saturday mornings Sept. 26 and Oct. 3, 10, 24, and 31 at Second Presbyterian Church.

Topics discussed will include the Arts & 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 projects undertaken at the church. Please visit www.2ndpresbyterianfriends.org and click "Become a Docent" under "Get Involved" to download the application form. Completed applications can be mailed to historic2ndchurch@yahoo.com. Call (800) 657-0687 for additional information.

CONCERT FOR UKRAINE

On March 28, Second Presbyterian Church hosted a benefit concert organized by the Kyiv-Chicago Sister Cities Committee to provide humanitarian aid for those affected by the conflict in Ukraine. 400 guests attended the concert. Friends of Historic Second Church docents led tours of the sanctuary prior to the event.



Photo credit: Ukrainian Chicago Magazine