

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS IN SEPTEMBER 2024



**KINGDOM BAPTIST CHURCH
(FORMERLY THE FIFTEENTH CHURCH OF CHRIST,
SCIENTIST)
301 N. CENTRAL AVENUE**



**CITY OF CHICAGO
Brandon Johnson, Mayor**

**Department of Planning and Development
Ciere Boatright, Commissioner**

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

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KINGDOM BAPTIST CHURCH

(FORMERLY THE FIFTEENTH CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST)

301 N. CENTRAL AVENUE

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1926 (Basement); 1932 (Exterior and First Floor Lobby); 1934-1943 (Interiors)

ARCHITECT: Nelson Max Dunning

BUILDER: Rosenthal & Cornell Co. (1926); Guy & McClintock (1932)

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Neoclassical; Art Deco

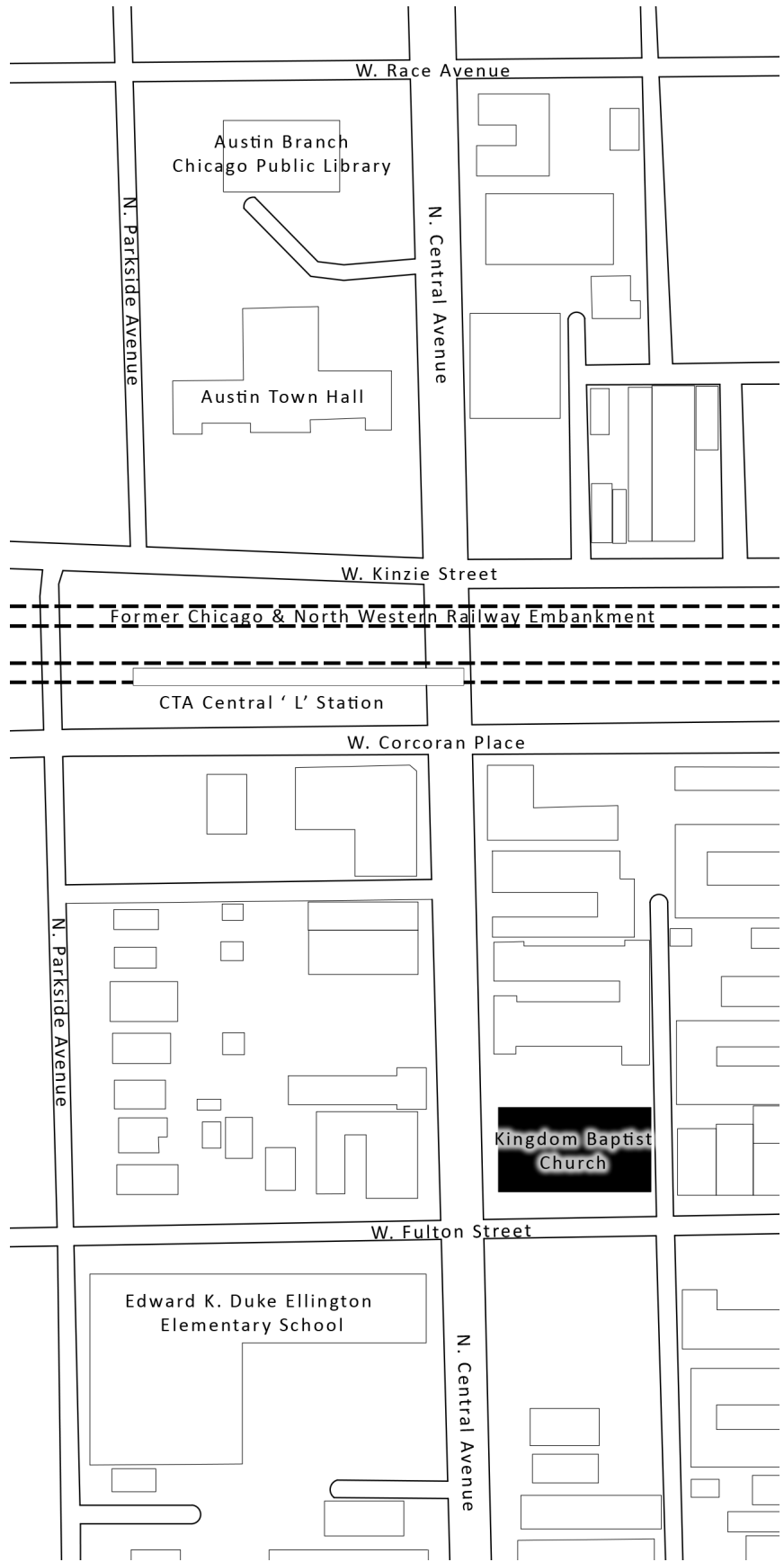
PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1926-1943

Kingdom Baptist Church was designed and constructed in three phases between 1925 and 1943 by the congregation of The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist. The congregation sought to dedicate the building debt-free and thus constructed sections piecemeal as funding allowed. The first phase included the basement, where the congregation held worship and Sunday school services beginning in 1926. In 1932, the exterior superstructure and first floor lobby were completed as part of phase two. Finally, the remaining interior spaces were completed in 1943 as phase three, and dedication services were held in April of that year.

Because of the building's long construction period, it displays two popular architectural styles between the 1920s and 1940s: Neoclassical and Art Deco. The exterior features an imposing red brick façade accentuated with carved classical and stylized limestone details. Renowned local architect Nelson Max Dunning (1873-1945) designed the house of worship to reflect the building and religious traditions of the congregation. Dunning's design emphasizes the evolving philosophy of architecture in The Church of Christ, Scientist.

The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist was the primary occupant until approximately 1972, when the congregation chose to vacate the building. Following the original congregation's departure, the newly chartered Kingdom Baptist Church began acquiring the building in the summer of 1972. The congregation formally marched in on June 24, 1973, and remains the primary occupant of the historic house of worship. This continued use as a place of worship has maintained the building as a center of religion and community within the Austin Community Area for nearly a century. Kingdom Baptist Church has served as the enduring steward of the building. They have preserved the original architectural and character-defining features of Dunning's design, which illustrates the evolution in national trends in architecture during the 1920s and 1930s and the shifting philosophies of architecture within The Church of Christ, Scientist. The period of significance for the building is from 1926 to 1943, encompassing the beginning of phase one in 1926 of its construction and ending in 1943 with the formal dedication of the building.

A sincere and special thank you goes to the following members of the congregation for sharing their history, stories, and memories of Kingdom Baptist Church: Dean Morgan, Adlena Pughsley, Eula Bundley, Bernice Byrdlong, Janie Horton, Nancy Green, Pearly Rice, Debussy Rice, Deacon Albert Byrd, Stephanie Horton, David Horton, Adam Dowell, Adriane Smith, Jessie Noblin-Crawley, Eugene Stanton, Dr. Addie Stanton, Pastor Crystal Wilson, Geraldine Goss, Darlene Shorter, and Christina Rice.



Kingdom Baptist Church, shaded in the map to the left, is located at the northeast corner of N. Central Avenue and W. Fulton Street in the Austin Community Area of Chicago.



BUILDING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

The present building was constructed by The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist. The congregation was founded on April 27, 1914, to relieve overcrowding in the Third Church of Christ, Scientist, at Washington and Leavitt Streets (now Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church), organized only two months earlier on March 1, 1914. The congregation was affiliated with The Church of Christ, Scientist, a denomination founded in 1879 in Boston, Massachusetts, by Mary Baker Eddy.

When The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist was founded, it consisted of approximately 500 members. Before the completion of the building at 301 N. Central Avenue, the congregation met in the Masonic Hall at the southeast corner of Central Avenue and Fulton Street (demolished). The congregation also maintained a reading room in the community at The Chicago Public Library's Austin Branch Library, formerly at 5642 W. Lake Street.

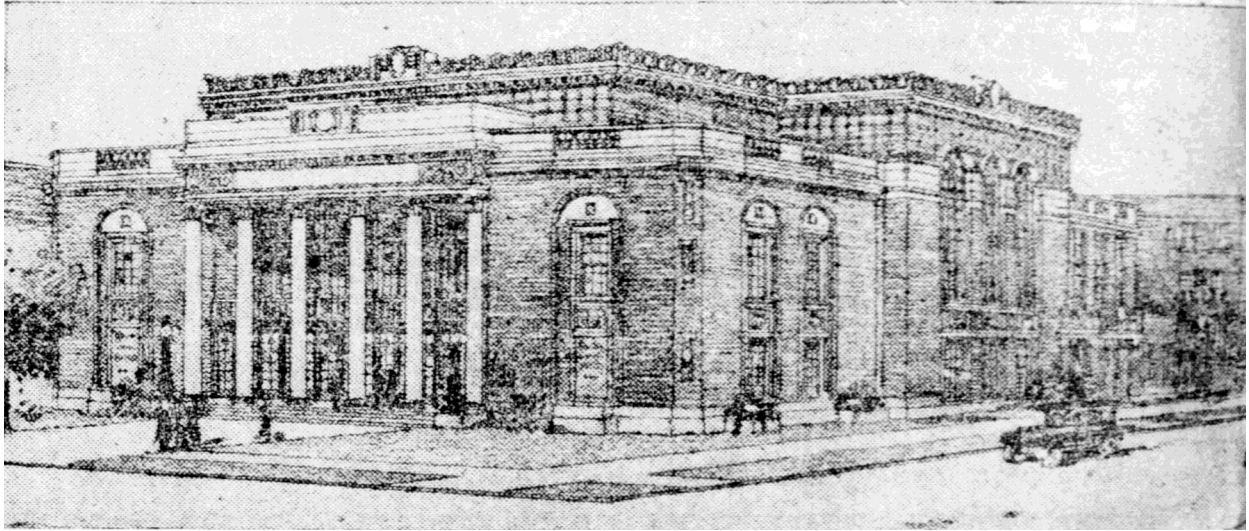
In March 1915, the site at the northeast corner of Central Avenue and Fulton Street (formerly Frink Street) was purchased to construct the building; however, it would be over ten years before phase one of the building was completed. The congregation believed in constructing the building as funding was available and thus completed the structure in three phases over eighteen years. The first phase was completed in 1926 and consisted of constructing the basement, which would house the auditorium and Sunday school space. In January 1932, the cornerstone of the building was laid, which marked the beginning of phase two. This phase encompassed the exterior superstructure of the building, as well as the first floor lobby. Phase three was implemented between 1934 and 1943 and included the completion of the interior spaces. On April 11, 1943, the congregation held three ceremonies to officially dedicate the building debt-free.

Very little is known about the congregational history of The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist. There are no written publications, and the congregation is infrequently mentioned in newspaper articles after December 1971. The congregation vacated the building on Central Avenue in early 1972. Based on available newspaper articles and the Christian Science Sentinel, the congregation hosted events in 1974 and 1975 from the Austin Baptist United Church of Christ at 5460 W. Ohio Street (now the Rhema Word Church). While little may be known of the congregation, their house of worship retains a commanding presence on Central Avenue, predominantly composed of low-rise multi-unit dwellings and commercial blocks.

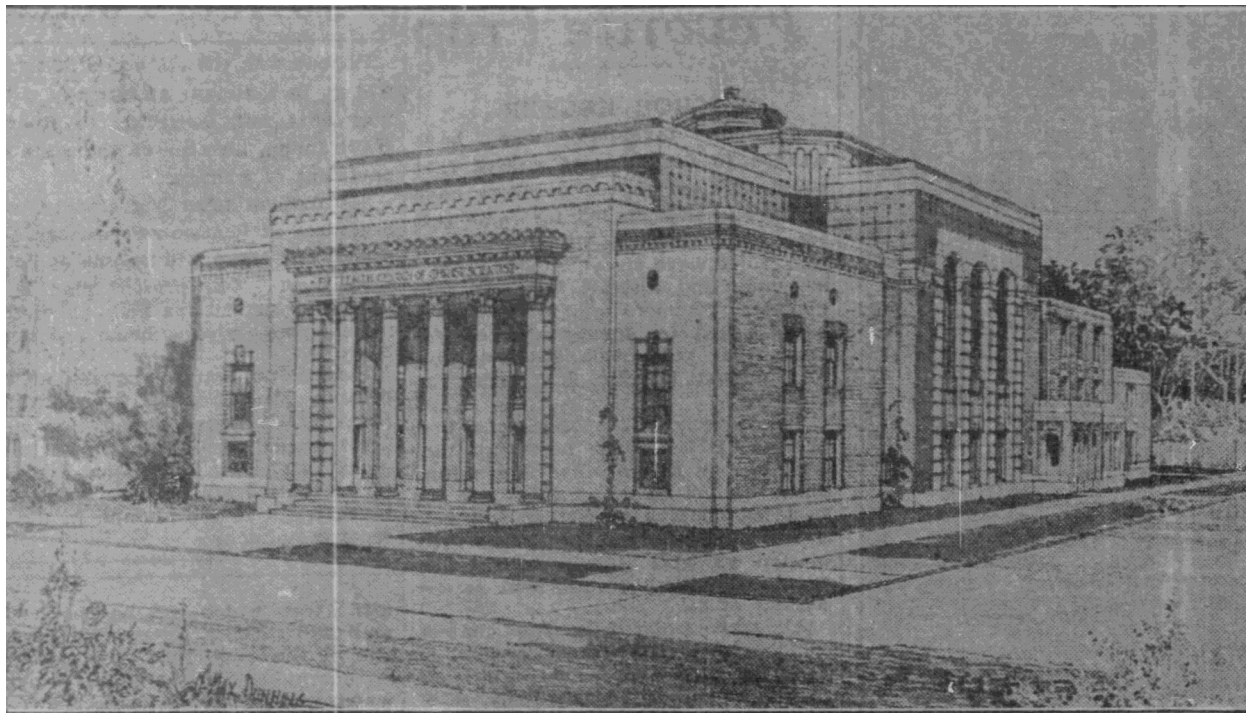
Designed by Nelson Max Dunning, The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist was constructed in three phases over approximately two decades, resulting in a unique architectural design combination of the Neoclassical and Art Deco styles popular between the 1920s and 1940s.

The use of these styles also reflects The Church of Christ, Scientist's evolving philosophies related to architecture as the visible proclamation of the denomination within cities. Historically, the denomination utilized classical architecture, which, according to its first architect and architectural theorist, Solon S. Beman, from 1897 to 1914, classical architecture's emphasis on order and proportion reflected the denomination's belief in progressivism compared to the styles derived from Gothic architecture that many other Christian denominations favored at the time.

At the exterior of The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Science, Dunning united the two philosophies through Neoclassical detailing, stylized and applied to the forms of the modern Art Deco style. Between the initial design for the building, completed in 1925, and the completion of the exterior in 1932, the overtly Neoclassical design was refined to incorporate favored architectural details and influences of the Art Deco style. Originally, the building was to feature extensive classical ornamentation, monumental arched window openings at each façade, and have a flat roof obscured by classical balustrades and entablatures surmounted with acroterions. Over the



Pictured above is a 1925 rendering of The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist published in the *Chicago Tribune*. The rendering of the exterior exhibits key features of the building that were constructed such as the prominent portico at the west façade and monumental arched windows at the south façade. It also illustrates elements that were not constructed including the arched windows at the façades of the flanking wings and the classical balustrade at the roof line



Pictured below is a 1931 rendering of The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist published in the *Chicago Tribune* as the congregation announced the initiation of construction for phase 2. This rendering depicts the final design of the exterior and the changes influenced by the Art Deco style, including the elimination of applied classical detailing and the stylization of the architectural ornament that was to be constructed. The rendering also illustrates the design changes to the roof line to incorporate the stepped form and vertical setbacks, prominent in the Art Deco style.

course of design and construction, the architectural ornamentation was substantially scaled-down and abstracted, and the arched window openings were replaced with the existing, rectilinear openings embellished with stylized bas-relief carvings of classical motifs, both popular aesthetics of the Art Deco style. The classical roofline was also refined to the existing series of vertical setbacks and stepped roofs, a prominent architectural feature of Art Deco. The interior is also reflective of this integration, as the basement, first-floor lobby, and flanking staircases to the second-floor auditorium are derivative of classicism, while the interior of the auditorium is overall restrained and streamlined, representative of the Art Deco style.

The front façade of the building faces west onto Central Avenue. Here, the building is defined by a monumental portico, a character-defining feature of the Neoclassical style. A short series of low steps slightly raises the portico above grade. Six giant order limestone Corinthian columns enclose the portico and support an intricately carved limestone entablature. The architrave is relatively unadorned, except for lamb's tongue moulding. The frieze is composed of smooth limestone that appears to have originally held the name of The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist, but it has been removed. The projecting cornice is heavily ornamented with modillions, classical moulding, scrollwork, and acroterions. At the exterior corners of the main brick façade, which frames the portico opening behind the columns, the edges are accentuated by limestone quoins. The portico is crowned by a smooth limestone cornice that features an applied band of cast stone shaped to create a blind arcade across the façade.

The portico marks the entrance to the building, composed of five pairs of bronze doors trimmed with limestone. The original doors are relatively simple and minimally adorned with rosettes at the bronze top rail of the door frame. On the second floor, above each door, is a pair of wood casement windows with a Juliette balcony rendered in bronze. Above each window is an inset decorative marble panel composed of several variations of marble in a square pattern. The portico walls terminate at a limestone crown moulding, which features a simple corbeled design and acanthus leaf moulding.

The footprint of the building is rectangular in plan and composed of three interconnected but distinctly articulated sections: a higher, central auditorium portion with related accompanying wings on the east and west. The auditorium is square with inverted chamfered corners in plan and a towering three stories in height. It is crowned with a low-pitched hipped roof surmounted by an octagonal raised skylight. The auditorium is flanked by the school/office wing to the east and the lobby/circulation wing to the west. Each wing is three stories in height with a flat roof. At each façade of the flanking wings, the height steps down to one-and-a-half stories to create a complex roofline of vertical setbacks, quintessential to the Art Deco style. Crowning each building section are smooth limestone, beveled coping units accentuating the series of setbacks. Deviations to the main footprint include the two-story portico at the center of the front (west) façade and a one-story covered entrance vestibule at the east end of the south façade.

The building sits on a concrete foundation wrapped in a smooth Indiana limestone base. The façades are predominantly monolithic and clad in red and brown brick, laid in a common bond that terminates at an inset limestone stringcourse at the cornice line. At the upper portions of the auditorium and east wing, the brick is laid in a decorative bond to create a grid pattern across the façade. At the parapets of the flanking wings, the wall is accentuated by a brick sawtooth course and a band of limestone embellished with Art Deco reeding.

Throughout the exterior, windows are set within standard rectangular openings, placed to correspond to the interior spaces. Most windows are crowned with limestone headers embellished with stylized carvings and terminate at smooth limestone sills. The building retains many of its original wood windows, which are either double-hung with divided lights or multi-



The front (Central Avenue) façade is defined by a striking Neoclassical portico framed by six colossal Corinthian columns which support an intricately carved entablature. Above the portico the façade displays stylized limestone architectural detailing along the cornice line and parapet wall inspired by the Art Deco style.



On the interior of the portico, the building expresses refined and simplified Neoclassical details including limestone quoins and bronze Juliette balconies as pictured to the left and coffered panels and lamb's tongue and compounded mouldings rendered in carved limestone.



The south (Fulton Street) façade is characterized by a monumental three-story tall limestone arcade which corresponds to the auditorium on the interior as depicted above. The arcade is framed by compounded mouldings and flanked by limestone capitals adorned with stylized classical and geometric motifs as pictured below.



light casement windows. The original windows are glazed with opalescent glass. Replacement windows are located at the east end of the south façade.

The restrained architectural detailing at the remainder of the front façade further highlights the portico. At either end of the façade is a marble plaque inscribed with scripture and encased in a simple bronze frame. To the left of the eastern marble plaque is an inset granite plaque inscribed with the names of the charter members and mortgage guarantors of Kingdom Baptist Church.

The south façade facing Fulton Street is dominated by a three-story tall limestone arcade. This arcade frames double-height round-arched windows that light the interior of the auditorium at the second story. The windows are steel sash with opalescent glazing. Each arch of the arcade is surmounted by an elongated keystone. Adjacent to this arcade, at the sidewalk level, is a projecting vestibule with arched entrances. Above this, the façade steps back and features punched window openings that light the interior spaces within the building.

The relatively simple north façade of the building faces a parking lot. Architectural interest is provided by three double-height arched windows that light the auditorium. Similarly, the east façade at the rear of the building faces an alley, and there is limited architectural detailing. Applied ornamentation is only located at the first floor window openings at the southeast corner.

On the interior, the building is organized around the central auditorium. One enters the building through the main first floor lobby off the west façade. The lobby spans the full width of the portico and is flanked on either end by a terrazzo staircase ascending to the second floor auditorium foyer. The first floor lobby is finished with grey terrazzo floors, painted plaster walls, and a compounded classical moulding frames the ceiling plane. The room retains its original metal and glass ceiling-mounted light fixtures and palm wall sconces. All original light fixtures in the building were designed by Victor S. Pearlman & Company.

Beyond the lobby is the double height auditorium. An impressive cove ceiling characterizes the space. At the center of the ceiling is an octagonal coffered panel from which an Art Deco glass chandelier descends. Decorative ceiling ribs extend from the panel and extend along the cove ceiling to terminate at the four main chamfered corners of the space. A classical crown moulding wraps the perimeter of the space where the cove ceiling and walls meet. The north and south façades are defined by the monumental arched window discussed at the exterior. At the west end of the auditorium is a shallow balcony. The east end of the space encompasses a raised platform defined by six colossal, fluted Doric columns.

At the northeast and southeast end of the main lobby, two short staircases descend to the basement. A pair of wood doors at the base of each stair separates the main lobby and basement. The original doors contain eight upper lights, each filled with opalescent stained glass. The basement is a modest space, historically serving as the temporary place of worship and Sunday school for The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist. The floors are concrete, and the walls are painted plaster. A grid of large original cylindrical columns divides the space. The original platform is located at the east end of the space and retains its original wood railings. Other architectural detailing includes wide, compounded painted wood architraves at the window and door openings.

The two main spaces on the second floor are the auditorium foyer and auditorium. The foyer is defined by a barrel vault ceiling framed by a plaster crown moulding with an acanthus leaf motif. The walls are painted plaster and accentuated by the original metal and glass palm wall sconces. There are three entrances evenly spaced along the east wall of the foyer. Each entrance comprises a pair of leather doors with an upper oval light and decorative nail head design. At the north and south ends of the foyer is a restroom located in the interstitial space above the



Located at the east end of the south (Fulton Street) façade is a one-story projecting vestibule defined by an arcaded entrance as pictured above. This vestibule houses the original entrance into the basement during phase one of the construction, which only included the completion of the basement level. Pictured below is the modest north façade of the building which features three double-height arched windows that light the auditorium.





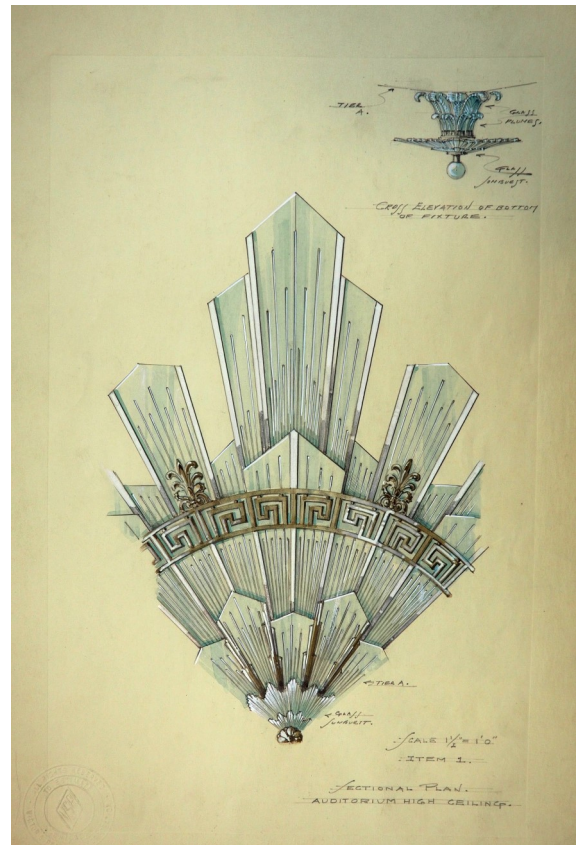
At the portico, the limestone entablature is adorned with intricately carved classical mouldings, modillions, and acroterions, depicted in the photograph on the top left. On the interior of the portico, five original bronze doors provide access into the main lobby. The doors are relatively simple and minimally adorned with rosettes at the bronze top rail of the door frame. Above the door opening is a limestone spandrel carved with a stylized roundel, as shown in the top right and center left. The exterior is also ornamented with modest, inset marble details, as pictured in the bottom left photo.



Pictured above is a detail view of the limestone ornamentation at the parapet, carved limestone cladding at the hipped roof over the auditorium, and brick pattern work at the upper portions of the façade which break the monolithic and imposing brick exterior of the historic house of worship.



The interior of the building is organized around the central auditorium, pictured top left. An impressive cove ceiling characterizes the space. At the center of the ceiling is an octagonal coffered panel from which an Art Deco glass chandelier descends (top right) and is enframed by decorative ceiling ribs which extend along the cove ceiling to terminate at the four main chamfered corners of the space. To access the auditorium, one enters through the main first floor lobby (center left). The lobby is flanked by terrazzo staircases ascending to the second floor auditorium foyer.



The interior spaces retain their original light fixtures, designed by the prominent firm, Victor S. Pearlman & Company. The congregation has also preserved the original renderings of each light fixture, prepared by the company, and pictured in the center right and bottom left photographs. These renderings depict the auditorium chandelier and ceiling-mounted light fixture in the main lobby.

staircase, which connects the first and second floor lobbies.

The east wing of the building is composed of the mechanical spaces on the first floor and the former offices, board rooms, and nurses' rooms on the second floor. These spaces are located along the east side of the corridor. They are humble in design and feature simple, painted wood baseboards, chair rails, picture mouldings, and crown mouldings. Some spaces retain the original floor-to-ceiling wood built-ins and the fireplace, which features a marble hearth, classical wood surround, and mantel. At either end of the east wing is a secondary original stair that provides access between all floors. The staircases are classical in design with terrazzo treads and landings, cast iron newel posts and balusters adorned with scrolling foliage, and wooden handrails.

Dunning's design for The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist, limits the use of religious details and instead articulates his professional philosophy of functionalism expressed through design and the use of minimal ornamentation. The building highlights the evolution of architectural styles over the eighteen-year construction period. It illustrates the philosophy of architecture within The Church of Christ, Scientist while emphasizing the role of the built environment as a place of community that has sustained these spaces across denominations and generations.

The Architect: Nelson Max Dunning (1873-1945)

The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist was designed by the prolific and well-known architect Nelson Max Dunning. Born in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Dunning studied architecture at the University of Wisconsin before moving to Chicago to briefly apprentice in the office of Solon S. Beman, who was later the chief architect for The Church of Christ, Scientist from 1897 until his death in 1914. Dunning also apprenticed with Joseph C. Llewellyn from 1894-1899. In 1900, Dunning was awarded a scholarship to travel Europe from the Chicago Architectural Club. After his return to the United States and Chicago, he established his practice in 1903.

Even among his contemporary critics, Dunning became best known for his specialization in the design of large-scale industrial, commercial, and educational buildings. His design for each building was always based on a careful study of his client's requirements, evolving architectural technology, utility, and aesthetics – inspired by the Chicago School of Architecture's philosophy of functionalism. He was first introduced to this architectural philosophy through his involvement with the Chicago Architectural Club, where he became acquainted with the group of architects who proliferated the Chicago School of Architecture. Dunning helped to promote the Chicago School by organizing exhibits, classes, and meetings showcasing progressive architecture. This work contributed to its rise as one of the most influential forces in the field of architecture at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1910, he was joined in practice with his brother Hugh B. Dunning.

Dunning's best-known commercial and industrial works in Chicago include the American Book Co. Building (1912, 330 E. Cermak Road, a designated Chicago Landmark), the American Furniture Mart Block (1924-26, 680 N. Lake Shore Drive), the Standard National Bank (1930, 7917-7921 S. Ashland Avenue), and the Chicago Federation of Musicians (1933, 175 W. Washington Street). He is also credited with designing several single-family residences and religious buildings in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. Dunning's residences include the Craftsman-style residence at 4940 South Kimbark Avenue (1910, a contributing building in the Chicago Kenwood Landmark District), the Robert J. Thorne Home in Lake Forest (c. 1915), the

F.W. Penfield Home in Glencoe (1921), the Stiger residence in Oak Park (1910), Clyde and Elizabeth Shorey House in Oak Park (1922), the F.C. Traver Residence in Kenilworth (1921), and the Robert E. Ward Residence (1921). In addition to Kingdom Baptist Church (formerly The Fifteenth Church of Christ Scientist), Dunning designed buildings for the congregations of the Fourteenth Church of Christ Scientist (1921, 1713 W. Sunnyside Avenue), Immanuel Baptist Church (1923, 2320 S. Michigan Avenue, demolished), and Bethany Bible School (1919, 3435 W. Van Buren Street, demolished).

In 1933, he moved to Washington, D.C., to serve in President Franklin Roosevelt's administration where he supervised the design and construction of public buildings for the Public Works Administration. His firm in Chicago appears to have remained open through at least 1937 under the local leadership of architect Clarence A. Jensen with Paul Esser and Dunning's brother Hugh. He remained employed with the federal government until his death in April 1945.

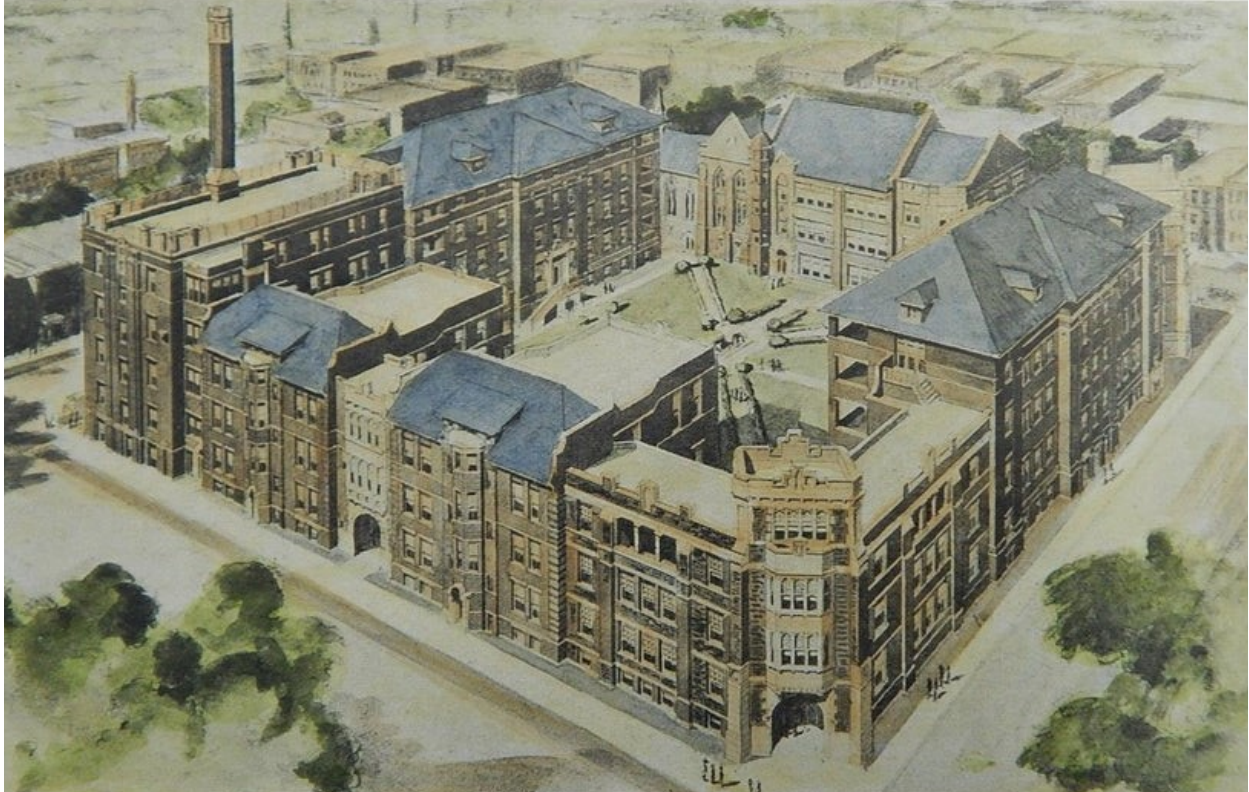
Outside of his architectural practice, Dunning was a founder of the Architectural League of America (ALA) in 1899 and served as its first president. As part of the ALA, he disseminated progressive and modern designs throughout the country. He was elected a member of the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1915 and nominated as a Fellow of the AIA in 1919.

A NEW CHAPTER: KINGDOM BAPTIST CHURCH

The origins of Kingdom Baptist Church began on June 20, 1972, when a small group of faithful



One of Dunning's most notable works is the American Book Co. building located in Chicago's Near South Side. Constructed in 1912, as the Midwest offices, warehouse and distribution center of the American Book Company, the five-story building features finely-crafted, classically-influenced details in brick, limestone, and terra cotta. Source: Chris Rycroft on Flickr.



In addition to his industrial commissions, Dunning was well known for his religious, residential, and commercial designs, including those completed for Bethany Bible School (top row), Robert E. Ward Residence (center left), F.C. Traver Residence (bottom left), and Standard National Bank (bottom, right). Source: Bethany Bible School — *American Architect and the Architectural Review*, 1921; Robert E. Ward and F.C. Traver Residences— *The American Architect*, 1921; and the Standard National Bank—HB-00639, Chicago History Museum, Hedrich-Blessing Collection.

worshippers met for service in the home of Reverend and Mrs. James A. Horton on N. Pine Street in Austin.

The fledgling congregation was predominantly composed of members from Greater Union Baptist Church in Chicago’s Near West Side and a designated Chicago Landmark. In 1967 Reverend James A. Horton became pastor of Greater Union Baptist Church and served the congregation until 1972, when the Kingdom Baptist Church was organized. Reverend Horton left Greater Union Baptist Church following a divide in the congregation regarding the relocation of the church. As city-sponsored urban renewal and block-clearing programs began to decimate the built environment around Greater Union, Reverend Horton believed the congregation should move to a new house of worship in Austin. The congregation was split into two factions: those who wanted to stay in the existing Greater Union Baptist Church building and those who feared the loss of their house of worship and believed in the leadership and gospel of Reverend Horton. Approximately sixty members left Greater Union Baptist Church in 1972 to eventually organize Kingdom Baptist Church.

For the first year, the fledgling congregation utilized Reverend and Mrs. Horton’s home on Pine Street, near Washington Boulevard, as their house of worship. On July 16, 1972, with pledges



and offerings of over \$2,000, a deposit was made toward purchasing The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist at 301 N. Central Avenue. Additional down payments of \$10,000 each were made on October 26, 1972, and March 4, 1973. Several members of the church served as guarantors on the mortgage for the property, including Reverend and Mrs. James A. Horton, Deacon and Mrs. W.C. Rice, Mr. and Mrs. William Goggins, Mrs. Nancy Green, Mrs. Robert James, Deacon and Mrs. Albert Byrd, Reverend and Mrs. Tabe Miller, Mrs. Eula Bundley, Mrs. Olivia Jenkins, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Langworth.

Kingdom Baptist Church commemorated its charter members and mortgage guarantors during the 1989 mortgage burning ceremony with the installation of the above pictured granite plaque inscribed with their names. The congregation also installed a time capsule located behind the plaque.

The first service in their new home was held on June 22, 1973. At noon on June 24, 1973, the congregation marched into the building from the Pine Street residence, heading west on Washington Boulevard and then north along Central Avenue. Within the first few years, the congregation established several community and internal programs, including Kingdom Day Care Center, Kingdom Chase House Day Care Center, a Sunday school program, Afterschool Program Mission Meetings, Bible Class, Substance Abuse Ministry,

and Evangelistic Ministry.

By the congregation’s tenth anniversary, it had grown fivefold in membership, founded departments for missions, teaching, music, and service, and established the Benefit Fund. Known as insurance for members, the Benefit Fund was funded by ten percent of all offerings and covered unexpected and everyday expenses (e.g., funeral expenses and utility bills) for congregants who needed financial assistance. They also organized trips to visit the sick, Youth



Chartered in 1972, the congregation of Kingdom Baptist Church was composed of members from Greater Union Baptist Church who chose to leave the congregation due to mounting concerns regarding urban renewal pressures on the city's West Side. The fledging congregation met in the home of Reverend and Mrs. Horton until they were able to acquire the former The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist building on Central Avenue. The congregation held its marching in ceremony on June 24, 1973, as pictured above and below.



Choir, Adult Choir, Gospel League, fashion shows, exercise classes, skating parties, and youth parties. Kingdom Baptist Church has also always been active in the community, contributing to a food pantry and hosting anniversary fundraisers or dinners to predominantly support the Bethany Brethren/Garfield Park Community Hospital 3420 W. Van Buren Street (demolished). The church also regularly hosted events for other organizations, such as the West Side Ministers Conference and the Chicago Baptist Institute.

As part of their seventeenth anniversary, the congregation hosted a mortgage burning in June 1989 to celebrate completing the payments for the building thirteen years early; an achievement attributed to the leadership of Reverend Horton. Reverend Horton served the congregation until his death in 1995. He was succeeded by Reverend Tabe Miller, who served for seven years until his retirement. He was followed by Reverend Christopher Murry until 2006 and Reverend Ray E. Williams, Sr. until 2016. Under Reverend Williams, the congregation established the Children's Church and hosted events for the Community Renewal Society, a faith-based, community organizing and public policy non-profit. Today, Kingdom Baptist Church is led by Pastor Marcus Clemons. The congregation continues the mission of canvassing and witnessing to the community through its Food Pantry Outreach Program and foreign mission work, providing financial aid to Haiti, Africa, and other local agencies in need.



Dunning's unique design for Kingdom Baptist Church illustrates national trends in architecture during the early twentieth century, as designers moved away from the classical revival styles and into the Modern era. The design also reflects the building and religious traditions of the congregation, and emphasizes the evolving philosophy of architecture in The Church of Christ, Scientist.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for designation” and it possesses sufficient historic design integrity to convey its significance. The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that Kingdom Baptist Church (formerly The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist) be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Value as an Example of City, State or National Heritage

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- Kingdom Baptist Church, formerly The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist, has served as a place of worship and remained a center for community in the Austin Community Area for nearly a century.
- When Kingdom Baptist Church relocated to the building, they opened it to greater Austin as a center of community, education, and culture by establishing several key programs. Here, the congregation’s mission, teaching, and youth departments organized the Kingdom Day Care Center, Kingdom Chase House Day Care Center, Afterschool Program, Substance Abuse Ministry and hosted fashion shows, exercise classes, skating parties, and youth parties.

Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The building highlights the evolution of architectural styles over the eighteen-year construction period. It is an architecturally significant and unique example of the hybrid use of two distinct and divergent styles: Neoclassical and Art Deco. At the exterior, Dunning united the two styles through Neoclassical detailing, which was stylized and applied to the forms of the modern Art Deco style. The interior is also reflective of this integration, as the basement, first floor lobby, and flanking staircases to the second floor auditorium are derivative of classicism, while the interior of the auditorium is overall restrained and streamlined, with a focus on the decorative arts, representative of the Art Deco style.
- The design for The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist, limits the use of religious details and instead articulates the architect’s, Nelson Max Dunning, professional philosophy of functionalism expressed through design, and using minimal ornamentation.
- The architecture of the building reflects The Church of Christ, Scientist evolving philosophies related to architecture as the visible proclamation of the church within cities. Historically, the denomination utilized classical architecture which reflected the denomination’s belief in progressivism. By the 1920s, Christian Science congregations generally eschewed any overt ecclesiastical symbolism and incorporated secular and restrained ornamentation, which is showcased in the overall design of the building.

Criterion 5: Work of Significant Architect or Designer

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- Nelson Max Dunning was one of Chicago's most renowned architects for over thirty years. He was well-known for his specialization in the design of large-scale industrial, commercial, and educational buildings. His design for each building was always based on carefully studying his client's requirements and evolving architectural technology, utility, and aesthetics.
- Dunning's works were inspired by the Chicago School of Architecture's philosophy of functionalism. He was one of the most significant promoters of the movement through his work organizing exhibits, classes, and meetings showcasing progressive architecture. His work contributed to the movement's rise as one of the most influential forces in the field of architecture at the beginning of the twentieth century.
- Outside of his private architectural practice, Dunning contributed to the national built landscape under President Franklin Roosevelt as an expert in public housing and supervisor of the design and construction of public buildings for the New Deal-era Public Works Administration.
- Dunning is recognized as a founder of the Architectural League of America in 1899 and served as its first president. He disseminated progressive and modern designs throughout the country as part of the ALA. He was elected a member of the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1915 and nominated as a Fellow of the AIA in 1919.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of the proposed Landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value.

Kingdom Baptist Church retains its historic location, setting, exterior design, materials, and workmanship. Few significant alterations have been made to the historic house of worship. Known alterations include the replacement of all roofs, rehabilitation of the basement auditorium, replacement of windows at the east end of the south façade and east façade, remodeling of the Ladies' Lounge, installation of a chair lift and ramp, addition of the wrought iron fence at the front (west) lot line, and the removal of the 1944 organ built by Frank C. Wichlac & Associates, though it should be noted that the sale of the organ was utilized to pay the heating bill for the church for several years.

Despite these changes over time, Kingdom Baptist Church retains a significant amount of the historic, architectural, and aesthetic features of the original design for The Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist, completed between 1926-1943. The aforementioned alterations, which occurred after the sale of the building in 1972, have been sensitive to the original design intent and have preserved the integrity and character-defining features of the building for over a century.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark

designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant historical and architectural features” of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its evaluation of Kingdom Baptist Church (formerly the Fifteenth Church of Christ, Scientist), the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as follows:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.

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- Archives of Kingdom Baptist Church

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