



Name of Property: Second Presbyterian Church of Chicago
City, State: Chicago, Illinois
Period of Significance: 1900 – 1917
NHL Criteria: 4
NHL Theme: III. Expressing Cultural Values
 1. Architecture, landscape architecture and urban design
 2. Visual and performing arts

Previous Recognition: 1974 National Register of Historic Places
 2012 Historic American Buildings Survey

National Historic Context: XVI. Architecture
 E. Gothic Revival
 3. Late Gothic Revival
 R. Craftsman

NHL Significance:

- Built in Chicago, a city that served as an early and important center for the dissemination of Arts and Crafts visual and philosophical precepts, the Second Presbyterian Church represents this emerging progressive movement at the turn of the twentieth century. It is one of the earliest, most complete and intact, non-residential expressions of the Arts and Crafts movement in this country.
- Second Presbyterian Church fully expresses the movement’s principles in its high artistic values, honesty of materials, craftsmanship, natural themes, and especially in the unity of its design. Through the use of proportion, materials, details and craftsmanship, architect Howard Van Doren Shaw designed an exceptional Arts and Crafts interior with stirring effect, yet on a very human scale in which the craft of the artists is prominent.
- Second Presbyterian Church is one of the masterworks of Howard Van Doren Shaw, who in 1926 was only the fourth living American architect to be awarded the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), “in recognition of a significant body of work of lasting influence on the theory and practice of architecture.”
- Shaw influenced other modernist movements in the United States such as the Chicago School and the Prairie School. Shaw’s biographer states that “Shaw’s work represents an



aspect of the Chicago School seldom explored – how European influences and eclecticism transformed the Midwestern prairie and the Arts and Crafts movement in America.”

- The completed church reflects the close collaboration of a group of highly innovative local artisans, who, under Shaw’s direction, produced an interior that presents some of the best examples of Arts and Crafts mural painting, sculpture, stained glass and crafting in metals, fabrics, wood and plaster. Many of the artisans went on to teach and to create and collaborate with Frank Lloyd Wright and other Prairie School architects.

Integrity:

- The church retains an exceptional level of integrity, as virtually all of the distinguishing characteristics from the 1900-1917 period of significance remain intact, conveying its outstanding qualities as a 1900 Arts and Crafts interior. The location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling and association all remain.
- All of the significant artistic features remain, although phrases of biblical text on the side walls just below the clerestory have been painted over. Recently, conservation work has begun to reveal them.
- The workmanship and skill of the artisans who created the details is still in great evidence, as these items have had little or no refinishing or repainting and no replacement. Beginning in 2008, portions of the murals have been cleaned, revealing their original beauty, and recently the two globe fixtures in the chancel were carefully restored to great effect. Currently, a finish analysis is being performed in various locations in the church and Parish House.
- The exterior of the sanctuary has remained unchanged since 1917, except for the 1959 removal of the storm-damaged steeple. In 2001, the roof received historically-appropriate slate shingles. In 1944, a fire across the alley blew out the original windows in the fellowship hall, which were subsequently replaced. In 2009, the bell clapper was restored and in 2010 the carved-oak front doors were refinished.

Owner of Property: Private owner, church congregation.

Size of Property: Less than one acre.

Origins of Nomination: The nomination was initiated by the Friends of Second Church, an organization formed to support the preservation and recognition of the church, with the approval of the congregation. The nomination was prepared by MacRostie Historic Advisors.

Cost of Nomination to the Public: None known.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Designation as an NHL will bring recognition to a significant and rare Arts and Crafts ecclesiastical design, an underrepresented type in the NHL Program.
- Designation will also bring recognition to Chicago as an important influence on the Arts and Crafts movement in America.



Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Professor Hoyos moved, Dr. Allan seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 10/31/12):

Reverend Dr. David M. Neff, Interim Pastor, Second Presbyterian Church, Chicago, Illinois
(owner)

Robert C. Reynolds, Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of Chicago, Presbyterian Church (USA),
Chicago, Illinois

The Honorable Danny K. Davis, US Representative, 7th District, Illinois

Pat Dowell, Alderman, 3rd Ward, City Council, City of Chicago, Illinois

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin, US Senator, Illinois

Andrew J. Mooney, Commissioner, Department of Housing and Economic Development, City of
Chicago

Rolf Achilles, Chair, Glessner House Board, Curator, Smith Museum of Stained Glass Windows,
Professor, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois

Linda P. Miller, President, Friends of Historic Second Church, Chicago, Illinois

Monica Obniski, Assistant Curator of American Decorative Arts, Art Institute of Chicago,
Illinois

William Tyre, Executive Director and Curator, Glessner House Museum, Chicago, Illinois

Advisory Board Recommendation: