

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist

other names/site number Hebrew Tabernacle Congregation of Washington Heights

2. Location

street & number 551 Fort Washington Avenue [] not for publication

city or town Manhattan [] vicinity

state New York code NY county New York code 06 zip code 10033

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide locally. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ruth J. Purpoint DBAHO

9/11/11

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist

New York, New York

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/ religious facility

RELIGION/ religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/ Art Deco

foundation Stone

walls Brick & Indiana Limestone

roof Flat/ Membrane

other Aluminum Grilles

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist

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Narrative Description

Overview

The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, now the Hebrew Tabernacle Congregation of Washington Heights, is located at 551 Fort Washington Avenue, at the northwest corner of West 185th Street, in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, New York City. The boundaries of the property are described as Borough of Manhattan Tax Block 2179, Lot 229. The building was constructed in 1932, to designs by the firm of Cherry & Matz. On both West 185th Street and Fort Washington Avenue, the building is flanked by a six-story apartment house, typical of the streetscape of this neighborhood. Across Fort Washington Avenue there are several more such apartment houses. On West 185th Street, the building faces Bennett Park, a green oasis that is one city block wide by two city blocks long. West 185th Street slopes up towards the west, while Fort Washington Avenue slopes down towards the north.

The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist is a three-story building with a double-height stadium-plan sanctuary sitting above a basement. Its massing is defined by a series of setbacks typical of the Art Deco style. Its facades are clad in large gray bricks, and adorned with Indiana limestone trim and aluminum grilles.

Exterior

West 185th Street

The entrance façade faces West 185th Street. Its central portion is two stories tall, rising to a setback; that portion is flanked on the east and west by a one-story section and, beyond that section on the west, by a matching one-story entranceway to a service alley. The main entrance is through three deeply recessed, large bronze double doors approached by a partial flight of steps (because of the slope of the street; only the easternmost entrance has a set of narrow railings), set within three bays defined by limestone piers; above the entrance doors, all ornament is also in limestone. The wall areas to either side of the central limestone-clad bays are faced in brick, with limestone trim, as are the one-story wings.

Each of the double-doors of each entrance is adorned with three ornamental squares, connected to each other by a slightly projecting vertical element which gives the illusion of passing beneath them. Each square is itself a set of three squares of decreasing size, one on top of the next, whose effect suggests a flattened pyramid; at the center of the smallest square is a geometric design. Each entrance is topped by a typically Art Deco metal grille combining abstract geometric patterns with stylized curves and spirals. Above the grilles, the limestone wall is adorned with a typically Deco stylized floral pattern, including leaves, flowers and clusters of grapes. The area directly above the grille over the central entrance has had a plaque attached reading "HEBREW TABERNACLE OF WASHINGTON HEIGHTS." It appears to obscure a pattern of triangular forms still visible over the entrances to the left and right. Above this section is an ornamental limestone screen, behind which are three windows which light the rear of the sanctuary (which, in a stadium plan, rises above the first-story foyer and vestibule). Above the screen, the limestone becomes plain, with a simple inset blind arch. Beginning at the level of the limestone screen, the slender piers separating the three entrances, which at the first story level are plain, become ribbed, and rise slightly above the setback where they curve inwards over the roof.

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The wall areas to either side of the central entrance are faced in brick and take the appearance of plain, massive towers. Their only ornament is a geometrically shaped panel screen in the lower portion of each one; each wall is capped at the setback with a limestone row of five square panels each inscribed with a stylized flower. The wall area to the east includes a simple service entrance, topped by a lintel in the form of small projecting chevrons ("v"-shapes).

The one-story wings to the east and west are set back slightly behind the main two-story block; in the center of each is a window set in a limestone enframingent; the limestone below the window is geometrically ribbed; above, the limestone repeats the simple arch pattern from the upper portion of the central block. The simple brick wing at the far west has an arch with a gate which leads to a service alley; the gate is adorned with simple stylized floral patterns.

Above the second-story, the third story wall (behind which is the upper section of the sanctuary) is faced in brick, and chamfered at either corner. In the center, corresponding to the triple entranceway below, are three bays with simple blind arches set between flat brick piers. The chamfered corners are visible above the one-story wings to either side of the main entrance block. Also visible above the one-story wings are two sections of brick wall, one parallel to the front façade and one perpendicular to it, each with a window topped by simple limestone trim repeating the motif of a simple arch, and each with a set of square panels inscribed with a stylized flower, similar to those on the main façade.

Fort Washington Avenue

Like the West 185th Street elevation, this elevation has a central two-story section flanked by a lower section to either side, and a set-back third story above it. The central section reflects the design of the central section on the main elevation: a central limestone enframingent, with similar slender piers rising to slightly above the setback; instead of entrances, however, this enframingent includes two sets of windows, one at the first story and one at the second. The windows at the first story are protected by elaborate, Art Deco style aluminum grilles, adorned with spirals, stylized floral patterns, and, at the center top of the grille, a stylized classical urn adorned with additional stylized floral patterns. The upper windows are plain. The wall section between the lower and upper sets of windows is limestone articulated with vertical ribbing. The wall sections above the windows are adorned with the same simple blind arch seen elsewhere on the façade. The wall sections to either side of the central section are similar to the plain brick sections on the West 185th Street façade, rising to a similar set of square panels inscribed with a stylized flower. Each has a window at the ground floor, protected by a slightly narrower but equally elaborate version of the Art Deco grille on the central windows. The setback third story is identical to the setback third story of the West 185th Street façade.

To the north of this central wing is a shorter wing with three levels of three windows each, set in bays defined by simple brick piers. Above each topmost window is a limestone panel with a simple blind arch; between the topmost and the middle window is a limestone panel with a simple ribbed motif. That same motif is used above the south and north windows at the bottom, but at the center, between those two windows, is a service entrance, and above that is a rectangular limestone panel with elaborate stylized floral ornamentation. To the south of the central wing is a similar short wing, but this one has only two stories; it has similar limestone ornament above

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and below the topmost windows. At the lower level the limestone extends into a simple protective screen over the lower windows.

Western elevation

The western elevation is visible from the narrow service alley, entered through a gated entrance on West 185th Street, west of the building, or from a service doorway from the basement. It is a simple, undeveloped, brick-faced façade, except for its topmost level, where three windows are topped with simple blind round arches separated by simple brick piers, similar to blind arches elsewhere on the building. There are simple gated windows at the ground level.

Northern elevation

The northern elevation, partially visible from the yard of the adjoining apartment house, is entirely undeveloped, with plain windows.

Roof

The building's exterior walls rise slightly above the roof level, hiding the projecting octagonal dome above the sanctuary.

Interior

The interior spaces include a shallow one-story entrance vestibule directly behind the three main entrance doors; a larger one-story foyer beyond that, with ancillary offices and lounges to either side; and, beyond the foyer, a double-height sanctuary. The sanctuary is arranged in a stadium plan, in which the slope of the sanctuary's rear seating rises above the foyer and entrance vestibule. Beyond the far north end of the sanctuary are two stories of ancillary rooms. Beneath the sanctuary is a large basement, which includes what is now a social hall, a lower-level foyer, a large classroom, and ancillary rooms and lounges.

Entrance vestibule-

The main entrance doors on West 185th Street lead into a shallow three-part entrance vestibule. The entrance doors are mirrored by three sets of double doors, with geometrically-shaped windows, leading into the foyer. Above each door is a simple ornamental panel. Each of the three sections of the vestibule has an ornamental ceiling panel with modernistically molded rectangular areas, with a light fixture at the center. The narrow transoms above the entrance doors are set in frames with typically modernistic chevrons.

Foyer-

Three double-doors lead from the vestibule into a similarly shaped but much wider the foyer. Above the entrance doors the ceiling steps up to a plain plaster surface; the floor is set in geometric patterns. At either end, three steps lead up to entrances to offices and other ancillary spaces: on the west side, to the principal's office (on the south) and a ladies' lounge (on the north); on the east side, to two administrative offices. The walls are hung with bronze memorial plaques. On the wall opposite the vestibule, doorways lead into the sanctuary.

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Sanctuary-

The sanctuary is a single large centrally-planned space, capped by a large, shallow sky lit dome. It is arranged on a stadium plan; rather than a balcony, it has a raised rear seating area which rises above and extends over the foyer and entrance vestibule. The space is entered from the foyer by staircases on either side of the rear seating area.

Each corner of the space, formed by recessed portions of the exterior walls, gives the appearance of supporting the shallow central dome. The western, southern, and eastern walls each center on a set of three large windows set in an ornamental enframing of ribbed piers and inscribed panels. The windows at the rear, southern, wall are plain glass, which allow the pattern of the exterior limestone screen to be seen through them. The windows on the west and east have been replaced with stained glass panes on Jewish religious themes with Hebrew inscriptions. The walls at each corner have single windows with similar new glass. All the walls are covered in a fabric wall paper installed in the 1970s as a soundproofing device.

The domed skylight at the center of the roof is entirely original except for its central pane of glass, in which a Star of David replaced a picture of a dove. Its circumference is defined by ornamental bands, including such typically modernistic motifs as chevrons, incised curves and stylized floral patterns.

The front wall of the sanctuary has been somewhat altered in keeping with the ritual needs of the Hebrew Tabernacle. The organ has been removed, and an ark (ritual repository for the Torah scrolls) added in the center of the raised platform. The ornamental bronze light fixture hanging from the ceiling above the ark (the "ner tamid" or "eternal light") was brought from the congregation's earlier home. Original ornamental detail does survive here, however, notably portions of a geometrically patterned screen above the ark, and the wooden frontispiece of the raised platform adorned with stylized floral patterns, curves, and geometric patterns.

To the left (west) and right (east) of the raised platform, tall geometrically shaped doorways, which lead to the ancillary spaces behind the sanctuary, display similar ornament, in particular a wooden panel with an "exit" sign, adorned in typical stylized spiral floral patterns. The ribbed wall above each of these doorways rises to a patterned screen.

Original Art Deco detailing remains intact in much of the rest of the sanctuary, notably in the wooden pews. These extend in rows from the front towards the back, rising in the rear of the stadium to the rear wall; there are also ranks of pews set parallel to each of the side walls. The ends of the pews, facing the aisles, are adorned with typically modernistic geometric patterns. The pews at the rear of the stadium are set behind ornamental aluminum railings with stylized floral patterns.

Ancillary rooms behind the sanctuary-

The exit doors to either side of the raised platform in the front lead to staircases and a corridor off which are various small offices and restrooms. Stored in one of the small offices are the two original Art Deco style

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wooden readers' stations, used in the Christian Science service. The staircases on either side lead up to an organ loft and other ancillary spaces, and down to the basement and boiler room.

Basement-

Classroom: One large space in the basement, at the north end, has been turned into a large classroom, with built-in bookcases; other rooms to the east and west have been converged to use as smaller classrooms. There is also a kitchen and utility and rest rooms.

Social hall: Directly below the sanctuary is a large double-height space with a dropped ceiling (the original ceiling, similar to that in the vestibule – see below – is said to survive above it) now used as a social hall. This room was once used as a Sunday school by the Fourth Church, and also as overflow space where loudspeakers could pipe in the service upstairs to crowds of 400 to 500.¹ The room is lit by tall, wide windows looking out on Fort Washington Avenue (these are the windows screened by modernistic aluminum grillwork described above). At the south end of the room is a small stage recessed into the wall.

Other spaces: Other spaces in the basement include

- A foyer, below the foyer at the upper level and connected to it by staircases, and with a similar geometrically patterned floor and similar stepped ceiling.
- A hallway with a coatroom
- Ancillary rooms and lounges

At the north end of the basement level, several steps lead down to a boiler room.

Summary

In general, the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. It has been continuously maintained as a house of worship since its construction in 1932. Alterations primarily affect minor spaces such as offices and classrooms. The main façades, main sanctuary, vestibule and foyer all survive largely intact.

¹ See Significance section, footnote 48.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave
- D a cemetery
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F a commemorative property
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance:

1931 - 1932

Significant Dates:

1931, 1932

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Cherry & Matz

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by historic American Building Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other repository: _____

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Significance

The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, today known as the Hebrew Tabernacle Congregation of Washington Heights, at 551 Fort Washington Avenue in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan, is architecturally significant under Criterion C as a rare example of an Art Deco style Christian Science church, and, for that matter, as an unusual Art Deco example of any religious denomination in New York City. It reflects the classical design of the congregation's first home, translated into a modernist idiom. Built in 1931-32, to designs by church specialist architects Cherry & Matz, it was conceived as a new home for the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, an established congregation incorporated in 1896, whose earlier home several blocks to the south had been condemned to make way for the George Washington Bridge. The period of significance has been set at the years of the building's original construction.

Christian Science Church Architecture

Christian Science began as an "association of students" created in 1876 under the leadership of Mary Baker Eddy (always referred to by Christian Scientists simply as "Mrs. Eddy"). Mrs. Eddy suffered from a serious injury in 1866; "after reading an account of Jesus' healing, her health improved." In 1875, she published *Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures*, which the church today describes as:

...Mary Baker Eddy's primary work and the definitive textbook on the system of healing that she discovered in 1866 and named Christian Science. Since the first publication of Science and Health in 1875, its readers have testified that reading and studying this book has not only given them a spiritual sense of the Bible and a clearer recognition of their permanent relationship to God, but has resulted in physical and spiritual healing. Letters from readers that testify to healing from simply reading the book can be found in the last chapter of Science and Health. Available in multiple editions and formats, as well as in 17 languages and English Braille, the book is dedicated to thinkers and "honest seekers for Truth" (Science and Health, p. xii:23).²

In 1879, Mrs. Eddy established the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, today known as the "Mother Church"; there are branch churches in 80 countries.

As a new religious denomination, Christian Science didn't have any specific architectural tradition, other than the general tradition of Christian architecture in Europe and North America. A recent history of Christian Science church architecture by Paul Ivey³ traces the development of architectural styles during the church's major building boom, from 1890 to 1930, a period that saw the construction of some 2000 Christian Science churches. Some of the earliest examples were built in neo-Gothic and neo-Romanesque styles. By 1900, however, neo-Classical had become the preferred choice.

Most influential among architects of classically-designed Christian Science churches was Solon Beman, who had designed several neo-Classical structures in Chicago at the 1893 World's Columbian

² Christian Science web site, "Publications: Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures by Mary Baker Eddy," <http://christianscience.com/publications/science-and-health/>.

³ Paul Eli Ivey, *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science architecture in the United States, 1894-1930* (University of Illinois Press, 1999).

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Exposition, and who brought the style (and himself, as he became a Christian Scientist) to the movement. Beman's First Church of Christ, Scientist in Chicago, 1897 – by far the denomination's largest at the time – became a model for such churches nationwide. His design

... was for a classical church, modeled on the Merchant Tailors building he had produced for the World's Columbian Exposition.⁴

Its interior had

... a semicircular arrangement of tiered theater seating, derived from Louis Sullivan's Auditorium, and a large foyer ... In his proposal, Beman wrote that he had chosen the Erechtheion of the Athenian acropolis as a prototype. He claimed that his studies of the basic principles of Christian Science led him to a model that would express "elements of dignity, strength, refinement, and beauty by crystallizing these high sentiments that your teaching inculcates into the architectural harmony," rather than to more traditional ecclesiastic forms.⁵

Beman went on to design several more churches in Chicago, and others around the country, always in the neo-Classical style. In 1906, he designed a major addition to the Mother Church in Boston.

The typical neo-Classical Christian Science churches included particular characteristics in their interiors:

Christian Science interiors engaged the audience differently than did Protestant churches of the time. In classical [Christian Science] churches, the large domes, often fitted with beautiful stained glass, dominated the experience of the worship space. Centralized entry tunnels leading from the large foyers positioned worshipers directly under these dramatic domes as they entered the auditoriums. The spaces were always calm and comfortable. The readers' platform, often framed by a decorative screen hiding organ pipes, was often adorned with cut flowers or potted plants rather than with Christian symbols.

Though Christian Science has never had an official architectural style – and though all design decisions were made independently by each branch of the church – the classical became a standard for the movement.

Why did the classical style become so identified with Christian Science, for Scientists and for the public alike? First, the popularity of Christian Science in Chicago and the influence of the World's Columbian Exposition on concepts of progressive architecture and religion.... Second... the classical style harmonized well with law and the authority of government, a concept conveyed by the

⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

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progressive designs of proponents of city beautification movements such as City Beautiful. The classical style reiterated an important relationship that the Christian Science branch church wanted to maintain with law and concepts of civic responsibility, areas in which the movement was criticized. Third, the classical style was often discussed using the metaphysical language of Christian Science and could also be justified through its theological ramifications.⁶

Another reason reflected religious associations:

...this architectural style predated the rise of ecclesiasticism and therefore could be said to represent primitive Christianity. According to the Christian Scientists, not since Jesus' time and the time of the early Christian church had healings been accomplished in the manner of Jesus. The Scientists theorized that the teachings of their church, as the new/old church of a new/old dispensation, actually predated ecclesiastical histories. The Christian Science classical style was clearly historical, but its historicity could be mitigated by the incorporation of up-to-date technological innovations and standards that ensured comfort, peace, and shelter from disorder and pain. Though the underlying technologies were modern, Christian Scientists knew that the classical style predated the rise of the Gothic style and so they believed it represented a return to the unfettered and pure time of primitive Christianity. The classical style itself could be configured as "new/old."⁷

In New York City, the First and Second churches commissioned neo-Classical homes for themselves, the Second Church at Central Park West and West 68th Street (Frederick R. Comstock, 1899-1901), and the First Church at Central Park West and West 96th Street (Carrere & Hastings, 1899-1903). The Third Church didn't build its home at Park Avenue and East 63rd Street until 1924 when, following contemporary tastes, it adopted the neo-Georgian version of classicism. But the Fourth Church built its first permanent home in 1918, in Washington Heights, as a neo-Classical building, and in fact hired Beman himself to design it – it was Beman's only Christian Science church in New York, and the last such church he designed before his death.

Washington Heights⁸

Washington Heights occupies the section of Manhattan Island between the Harlem River and the Hudson River stretching from Dyckman Street on the north to West 155th Street on the south. It takes its name from Fort Washington, erected during the American Revolutionary War in the area that is now Bennett Park, at Fort Washington Avenue between West 181st and 186th streets. By the 19th century the neighborhood had become known for its country estates with generous river views, and remained a largely rural environment until the beginning of the 20th century. The development of the Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) subway line in 1904, connecting 157th Street with the lower parts of the city, sparked denser real-estate development.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁸ This account is based on "Washington Heights," by Robert W. Snyder, in *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, edited by Kenneth T. Jackson (New York Historical Society and Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 1242-1243.

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A number of cultural and educational institutions moved into the new neighborhood early in the 20th century, including Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center (near Broadway at West 166th Street), the museum complex at Audubon Terrace (Broadway at West 155th Street), Yeshiva University (West 185th Street and Amsterdam Avenue), and the Polo Grounds stadium (West 155th to West 157th Streets at the Harlem River). Apartment buildings were erected in large numbers during the first half of the century. As the neighborhood's population increased, the need for a new Christian Science church was felt, and the Fourth Church, originally housed in rented quarters on West 82nd Street, on Manhattan's Upper West Side, built a new home in the neighborhood.

The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist:

The Fourth Church in Manhattan, incorporated in 1896 as the West Side Church of Christ, Scientist, was founded by two of Mrs. Eddy's students: Mrs. Elizabeth P. Skinner, and Mrs. Caroline W. Frame (d.1925). As described in an "Historical Sketch" of the church, of 1933:

Under the direction of our Leader, Mary Baker Eddy, two of her students, Mrs. Elizabeth P. Skinner, C.S.D. and Mrs. Caroline W. Frame, C.S.D., united to hold Christian Science services which eventuated in the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, New York City.⁹

Both Mrs. Skinner and Mrs. Frame had studied with Mrs. Eddy in 1888 at the Massachusetts Metaphysical College,¹⁰ and both had been among the first members of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston.¹¹ By 1897, both were living in New York City. In that year, Mrs. Skinner's card was listed in the *Christian Science Journal* as living at 314 West 76th Street, New York:

Normal Course Graduate of the Mass. Metaphysical College, practices and teaches the practice of Christian Science Mind-healing. Science and Health, by Rev. Mary B.G. Eddy, and all her publications for sale.¹²

"Mrs. Caroline W. Frame, C.S.B.," was listed in the same issue as living at 312 West 76th Street, next door.

⁹ Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist. *Historical Sketch of Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, New York City*, 1933. Two-page typescript now held by The Mary Baker Eddy Library in Boston, Massachusetts.

¹⁰ Ernest Sutherland Bates and John V. Dittmore, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Truth and the Tradition* (1932), Appendix.

¹¹ Mary Baker Eddy, *Church Manual of The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts*, Revised Edition (Boston: Christian Science Publishing Society, 1897). "On the twenty-third day of September, 1892, at the request of our beloved Teacher, Rev. Mary Baker Eddy, twelve of her students and church members met and re-organized, under her jurisdiction, the Christian Science Church and named it The First Church of Christ, Scientist. At this meeting twenty other of Mrs. Eddy's students and members of her Church were elected members of this Church; those with others that have since been elected are to be known as 'First Members.'" Mrs. Skinner was one of the twenty students.

¹² *Christian Science Journal*, Vol. XI, No. 1, April 1893, p. xx. "Christian Scientists' Cards: No cards are hereafter inserted in these columns except upon reference deemed satisfactory to the Publication Committee. Cards for publication are accepted from such persons as are Christian Scientists, using as their ONLY text-books the BIBLE and SCIENCE AND HEALTH, and who use and distribute only the works of Rev. Mary B.G. Eddy and the publications of the C.S. Publishing Society."

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Mrs. Frame, according to the *New York Times*,

...is the granddaughter of Samuel Willets, who left her the income of a trust fund that yields about \$20,000 a year.... Henry Frame, Mrs. Frame's husband, who died in October, 1902, made a fortune in the insurance business and left his widow nearly \$1,000,000.¹³

The "Historical Sketch" continues:

The first steps were taken in a modest way, the services being held in the home of one of these students. The attendance increasing, it was decided to incorporate as a Church under the State laws, a Charter being granted in 1896, under the name of West Side Church of Christ, Scientist.

The West Side Church (which changed its name formally in 1901 to the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist) was formed just as Christian Science was beginning to develop an architectural presence in Manhattan. The First Church, chartered in 1887,¹⁴ had rented space in a series of buildings until 1896, when it moved into the former home of All Souls Protestant Episcopal Church, on West 48th Street, which it had bought the year before, making it the first church building owned by a Christian Science congregation. By 1898, the West Side Church was renting space called the "Christian Science Chapel," at 251 West 82nd Street, between Broadway and West End Avenue.¹⁵ By the following year, Mrs. Frame was serving as the First Reader of the church, while the second reader was a young student of Mrs. Eddy's, Carol Norton.¹⁶

Norton had formerly been Second Reader at New York's First Church. An 1895 publication describes him as follows:

Carol Norton... was born in Maine and comes of the line of authors and poets that gave us Longfellow and had its rise in the old Puritan stock. His mother, who was a Wadsworth, was first cousin to the poet... Although only about twenty-five years of age, [Norton] has been working along the lines of religious reform for more than the past decade. When but fourteen years of age, he was deeply interested in reform work, and his maiden speech was made at the age of sixteen before the Y.M.C.A. in the interest of the White Cross work, when he took the ground that the law of purity is equally binding upon man and woman.

Although active in business he devoted much time to reform and non-sectarian work until the age of twenty, when, receiving personal proof of the claims of Christian Science in his power to heal, he

¹³ "Weaverson's Wife Sues Widow of 72," *New York Times*, July 10, 1914, p.5.

¹⁴ *New York Tribune*, September 27, 1896, p. A2.

¹⁵ *New York Tribune*, November 21, 1898, p. 12; *Christian Science Journal*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, April, 1898, p.xxviii: "Mrs. Caroline W. Frame, C.S.B., 11 A.M. to 1 P.M., Monday and Friday at Christian Science Chapel, 82nd St., bet. Boulevard and West End Ave." See also "Historical Sketch," *op. cit.*

¹⁶ *Christian Science Sentinel*, February 9, 1899, p. 13.

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gave up business to give six years of close study and demonstration to that system of philosophy and religion and is now Second reader in First Church of Christ-Scientist.... Mr. Norton is untiring in his work for the promotion of the cause....¹⁷

Both Caroline Frame and Carol Norton had specific ideas about the physical needs of church buildings:

Mrs. Caroline W. Frame, C. S. B., of New York City, and Mrs. Emilie B. Hulin, C. S. B., of Brooklyn, were called to Boston to assist our progress [in building the Mother Church]. They devoted themselves to selecting furniture and fittings for "Mothers Room"; and, although all questions must be deferred to the Directors for decision, yet their taste and experience in house-furnishing was of great value. They also looked after the windows, to urge the work forward, to see that subjects were properly brought out, and that all was made harmonious.¹⁸

Norton wrote an article about Christian Science in the *New York Sun*, later enlarged and printed in 1899 by the Christian Science Publishing Society in Boston as *The Christian Science Movement*. In it, in discussing the growth of the religion, Norton wrote of the significance of Beman's First Church in Chicago:

The dedication of the massive and beautiful Christian Science Temple in the city of Chicago, on Sunday, November 14, 1897, renewedly called the attention of all sober thinkers and readers of the signs of the times to the serious contemplation of the religious movement which this great edifice represents. The event is one of universal significance to the Christian Scientists...¹⁹

Christian Science is of practical value to the architect, inasmuch as it intensifies what is known as the artistic temperament, enables him to rapidly, surely and correctly attain the ability to reproduce the great classical orders of the past, and acquire the religion, as well as the science and originality of art and architecture.²⁰

Clearly Norton was impressed by Beman's work, and might well have laid the groundwork for the eventual choice of the Chicago-based architect to design the new home for the Fourth Church in Washington Heights.

The Fourth Church rented its space on 82nd Street until 1907, when the building was sold. According to the "Historical Sketch":

¹⁷ "General Gossip of Authors and Writers," *Current Literature: A Magazine of Record and Review* (New York: The Current Literature Publishing Co., 1895), Vol. XVIII, July-December, 1895, p. 474.

¹⁸ Joseph Armstrong, *The Mother Church: A History of the Building of the Original Edifice of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1897), p. 38.

¹⁹ Carol Norton, *The Christian Science Movement* (Boston: Christian Science Publishing Society, 1899), p.17

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

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Owing to the cancellation of our lease, and at the invitation of a group of Christian Scientists living on Washington Heights, including over thirty families, it was decided to accept the invitation and establish the Church in that locality. A hall was secured at St. Nicholas Avenue and 181st Street, West, with a seating capacity of 400. The Reading Room was located in the same building. Steady growth in the attendance soon made it necessary to have larger accommodations, and on June 3rd, 1913, the title was taken to a parcel of ground on Fort Washington Avenue and West 178th Street... Very large congregations, especially on Wednesday evenings, attended our services in this church and it was the center of light and healing to the people in this vicinity.

In the interim, both the First Church and the Second Church had built their new, neo-Classical buildings. The Fourth Church engaged Beman, who designed the structure that same year:

The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, is to have a two story edifice at the north-east corner of 178th street and Fort Washington avenue. The estimated cost is \$75,000. The plans have been drawn by S. S. Beman.²¹

Construction, however, was delayed, contracts being let only in 1917.²² Completed in 1918 – four years after Beman's death – the church was illustrated in several architectural journals.²³

Beman conceived the church as a handsome neo-Classical structure, not quite square in shape, with an entrance through a porch with four Ionic columns supporting an architrave, on which rested an attic story and a crowning pediment. This central portion, corresponding to the vaulted interior, rose to a higher level than either side. The main space of the interior was a huge barrel-vaulted space, lit with skylights, with a short aisle to either side. The Fourth Church was very much in the spirit of Beman's Chicago churches and Mother Church extension.

Beman's design was typical of the Christian Science church in its plan, entrance porch, and Ionic order. Ivey describes the usual building:

Typically, the urban Christian Science branch church was a central-plan building with a pedimented porch. This presented an authoritative public face, even though the Ionic column favored in many of the designs could be said to soften or even feminize the style, an interpretation held by Freemasons in the late nineteenth century. The porch was frequently made of fine materials such as marble or terracotta.²⁴

²¹ *New York Tribune*, November 30, 1913, p. C1.

²² *Real Estate Record and Guide*, Vol. 99, March 3, 1917, no. 2555, p. 315.

²³ "Fourth Church of Christ Scientist, Fort Washington Ave., New York," *American Architect*, Sept. 4, 1918, Vol. 114, Pt. 1, no. 2228; and "Fourth Church, New York," *Architecture and Building*, July 1918, Vol. 50, pl. 121-122.

²⁴ Ivey, *op. cit.*, 3.

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The Fourth Church's interior also conformed to the typical Christian Science neo-Classical church interior, with its domed interior space, lack of sculpted or painted ornament, three entrance doors, and auxiliary spaces:

The [typical Christian Science church] building was often crowned by a low dome centered over an auditorium. There were usually three to five doors giving access to the interior. The typical interior was also classical in detailing and consisted of a large foyer created to foster sociability among church members, with at least three main entrances to the auditorium; a Sunday school underneath the auditorium; and offices for church business. The heaviness and authority of the exterior contrasted with the lightness and comfort in the domed auditorium. In fact, light dominated the uncluttered worship space. As a Protestant denomination, Christian Science continued much of the iconoclasm associated with the Puritans' rejection of symbols and other decoration in churches. Christian Science interiors were less elaborate and less ornamented than the interiors of the buildings of many Protestant denominations.²⁵

The Fourth Church's form as an amphitheater continued the type:

Christian Science emphasized the importance of the Word over the traditional rituals of both Catholicism and Protestantism. In Christian Science, God was immanent and the worship serves were direct lessons in Christian Science theology. Therefore, Christian Scientists chose the amphitheater form similar to that of the pulpit-centered auditorium popular with some Methodist congregations, among others. This configuration emphasized a unity and intimacy of worship rather than hierarchy, a "gathering around" of believers who listened to a lesson-sermon read from a dual pulpit.

The result was a very particular physical atmosphere:

Christian Science interiors engaged the audience differently than did Protestant churches of the time. In classical churches, the large domes, often fitted with beautiful stained glass, dominated the experience of the worship space. Centralized entry tunnels leading from the large foyers positioned worshippers directly under these dramatic domes as they entered the auditoriums. The spaces were always calm and comfortable. The readers' platform, often framed by a decorative screen hiding organ pipes, was often adorned with cut flowers or potted plants rather than with Christian symbols.

Solon Beman's Fourth Church stood for barely two decades. Just eleven years after completing the building, events forced the congregation to search for new quarters, when the Port of New York Authority²⁶ condemned their property to make way for approaches to the newly planned George Washington Bridge. In

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Now the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

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1929, the congregation purchased property further north on Fort Washington Avenue, at the southwest corner of West 185th Street.²⁷

The new building eventually opened in 1932, holding its first service on May 22nd of that year. The new building included many of the typical elements of a Christian Science church – a central-plan amphitheater form, a large foyer, a sky lit dome. But rather than replicating the classicism of the original Fourth Church, designed by the Chicago-based innovator of the style for Christian Science churches; it was built, in the words of the *New York Times*, to a “modernistic design,”²⁸ by the local firm of Cherry & Matz.

Cherry & Matz, specialists in church architecture

William John Cherry (d.1942)²⁹ and Herbert E. Matz (d.1965)³⁰ separately and together specialized in church architecture. Little biographical information about either architect appears to be available, other than that Cherry lived in White Plains and Matz in Kew Gardens, and that the firm kept an office in midtown Manhattan. In May and June 1921, Cherry wrote a series of articles on the design of suburban homes for the *New York Tribune*.³¹ Cherry & Matz produced a monograph, published c. 1930, on their church designs, all of which are in traditional styles, primarily Gothic or Romanesque.³² The following list includes all those buildings, plus additional ones listed in other sources (those illustrated in the firm’s monograph are asterisked; footnotes identify other sources).

New York City Projects-

Brooklyn

- *Church of the Advent (1928, Avenue P and East 12th Street)³³
- *Church of the Epiphany (date and location undetermined)
- *Church of the Good Shepherd and parish house (1928, 4th Avenue and 75th Street)³⁴
- *Third Church of Christ, Scientist (1929, Albemarle Road and E.21st Street)³⁵
- St. Paul’s Lutheran Church (1941, Avenue J and E.40th Street)³⁶

²⁷ “Purchases Uptown Site,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1929, p. 28.

²⁸ “Christian Scientists Open \$275,000 Building; New Fourth Church Is of Modernistic Design,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1932, p. 13.

²⁹ “Cherry, William John,” in “Brief Biographies of American Architects Who Died Between 1897 and 1947, transcribed from the *American Art Annual* by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Director, Maine Historic Preservation Commission,” on the web site of the Society of Architectural Historians (<http://www.sah.org/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=BiographiesArchitects&category=Resources>).

³⁰ “Herbert E. Matz” [obituary], *New York Times*, August 6, 1965, p.27.

³¹ “\$8,500 Will Give Small Family Charming Bungalow,” *New-York Tribune*, May 15, 1921, p. A11. See also May 8, 1921, p. A11; May 22, 1921, p. A11; May 29, 1921, p. A10; June 5, 1921, p. A10; June 12, 1921, p. A12.

³² *Ecclesiastical Work of Cherry & Matz* (n.d.). Almost entirely a book of photographs. The title page reads: “The following illustrations are a few of the recent churches executed by the firm of Cherry & Matz, Registered Architects. Member, American Institute of Architects, New York, Architectural League of New York.” At the bottom of that page is printed “Presented to” with room for the name of a potential client.

³³ *Brooklyn Eagle*, February 7, 1928, p.11.

³⁴ *Brooklyn Eagle*, February 7, 1928, p.11, and February 12, 1928, p. D1.

³⁵ *Brooklyn Eagle*, November 2, 1929, p. 8.

³⁶ *Brooklyn Eagle*, June 21, 1941, p. 8.

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Queens

- *Holy Trinity Church, Hollis (1920s, 159-19 98th Street)
- *St. Barnabas Lutheran Church, Howard Beach (1929, 159-19 98th Street)³⁷
- *St. John's Lutheran Church, Richmond Hill (c.1923, 86-20 114th Street)
- New Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Glendale (1926, Cooper and Fosdick avenues)³⁸
- First Church of Christ Scientist, Queens Village (1929, 217th Street between 93rd and 94th roads)³⁹
- Emanuel Evangelical Reformed Church of Woodhaven (1939, Woodhaven Boulevard and 91st Avenue)⁴⁰
- Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Maspeth (1940, 60th Avenue and 60th Street)⁴¹

White Plains

- *First Presbyterian Church (date undetermined, 39 North Broadway)
- *St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, parish house and rectory (1926, 82 Prospect St)⁴²
- *St. Matthew's Lutheran Church (1925, 3 Carhart Avenue)⁴³

Elsewhere

- *Allentown, Pennsylvania: Grace Lutheran Church (1934, 729 Saint John St)⁴⁴
- *Bridgeport, Connecticut: First Lutheran Church (date undetermined, 470 Laurel Avenue)
- Lutheran Church of the Epiphany, Hempstead (1932, Long Island)⁴⁵
- St. John's Lutheran Church, Merrick (1937, Merrick Avenue at Margaret Boulevard, Long Island)⁴⁶
- First English Lutheran Church, Schenectady (1930, Summit Avenue)⁴⁷
- St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Huntington (1936, Broadway at S. Park Avenue)⁴⁸

On his own, Matz also designed the new Evangelical Lutheran Church, 335 East 19th Street in 1948, in Manhattan.⁴⁹

³⁷ *Brooklyn Eagle*, June 14, 1929, p. 19.

³⁸ *Brooklyn Eagle*, July 4, 1926, p. 2D, and November 22, 1926, p. 6.

³⁹ *Brooklyn Eagle*, December 11, 1931, p. 19.

⁴⁰ *Brooklyn Eagle*, August 26, 1939, p. 10.

⁴¹ *Brooklyn Eagle*, July 14, 1940, p. 6A.

⁴² *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 10, 1926 p. 2D, and May 20, 1926, p. 6A.

⁴³ St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, web site: <http://www.st-matthews-lutheran.org/history.html>

⁴⁴ St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, web site:

<http://www.stjohnsallentown.org/AboutStJohns/OurHistory/tabid/105/Default.aspx>

⁴⁵ *Brooklyn Eagle*, June 5, 1932, p. D2.

⁴⁶ *Brooklyn Eagle*, January 24, 1937 p. A.13.

⁴⁷ *Schenectady Gazette*, June 4, 1930, p. 7.

⁴⁸ *Long Islander*, Huntington NY, June 19, 1936, p. 6.

⁴⁹ "New 19th St. Church for Lutheran Group," *New York Times*, July 20, 1948, p. 35.

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Not only are the churches in the monograph all traditional styles, mostly Gothic, so are the firm's churches of the 1930s and early 1940s – those contemporary with or later than the Fourth Church.

The overwhelming majority of the firm's clients appear to have been Lutheran churches. Nevertheless, they did occasionally do work for other denominations; and in the years just before the Washington Heights commission the firm designed two Christian Science churches: the Third Church of Christ, Scientist, in Flatbush in 1929, and the First Church in Queens Village in 1931. Their design for the Third Church in Brooklyn followed the 1920s trend of neo-Georgian versions of the classical, including a main entrance marked by four double-height Ionic columns supporting an entablature and pediment, not unlike the Third Church in Manhattan. No doubt the firm could have designed a new home for the Fourth Church in the spirit of Solon Beman's original. For unknown reasons, however, the congregation's leaders decided that, instead, they would opt for a modernistic design. None of the buildings Cherry & Matz designed in the late 1920s and 1930s suggests anything of the modernistic style today called Art Deco – only the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, in Washington Heights.

Art Deco

The term "Art Deco"⁵⁰ – derived from the title of the 1925 Paris "Exhibition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes" (International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts) – is today used loosely to describe a number of architectural and decorative styles current in Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere from the mid-1920s until as late, in some instances, as the mid-1940s.

In New York City architecture, the style developed first in some two dozen skyscrapers, built between 1923 and 1932, and then filtered out and down to building types of all kinds across the city – apartment buildings, hotels, diners, movie theaters, bus and airline terminals. Chief characteristics of the style include vertical rows of windows; a sculptural approach to design, making inventive use of the setback requirements of the 1916 zoning resolution; and the application of "modernistic" ornament, generally based either on abstract geometrical patterns or on stylized floral motifs.

Art Deco as an ecclesiastical style is rare in New York City, perhaps because of a strong predilection for historical styles, especially Gothic, for church design, combined with the economic effects of the Depression. According to one contemporary writer, discussing church design in 1932:

Precedent is a strongly determining factor in church design and it is hard to break away from its influence. Change has come about in every other way. We would not consider for a moment leaving out the central heating plant in the most correctly reproduced Gothic structure because such an appliance

⁵⁰ For a general survey and history of Art Deco as a world-wide phenomenon in art, architecture and design in general, see Charlotte Benton, Tim Benton and Ghislaine Wood, *Art Deco 1910-1939* (London: V&A Publications, 2003), the catalog accompanying the exhibition of the same name, organized by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. For a specific focus on New York City Art Deco architecture, see Cervin Robinson and Rosemarie Haag Bletter, *Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

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*was unknown in the middle ages. Yet we mostly adhere to ancient types in design which do not fit the modern structure.*⁵¹

A review of two major American architectural magazines in 1930, '31 and '32 (*Architecture and Building* and *American Architect*) found very few churches designed in anything other than traditional styles. The 1931 run of *Architecture and Building* included such major Art Deco structures as the Empire State Building, the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, the Brooklyn Telephone headquarters, the Goelet Building, the Earl Carroll theater, Bloomingdale's, 21 West Street, the Continental Building at Broadway and West 41st Street, 500 5th Ave; 20 Exchange Place, the Squibb Building, the American Stock Exchange, and the Hotel Edison. Alongside these modernist landmarks, by contrast, the magazine ran photos of Brooklyn's Central Methodist Church (neo-Gothic), the Hackensack First Presbyterian Church (neo-Georgian), the Church of the Holy Child in Philadelphia (neo-Romanesque), and St. Aedan's Church in Jersey City (neo-Romanesque). Only two churches illustrated that year showed the influence of modernistic design: The First Swedish Baptist Church, 250 East 61st Street (architect Martin G. Hedmark), and the Salvation Army building on West 14th Street (architect Ralph Walker). Historian Robert A.M. Stern's survey of religious buildings in New York City c. 1930⁵² also notes that most stayed close to traditional styles.

One of the few Art Deco religious structures erected in 1931-32, contemporaneously with the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, was the Church of the Precious Blood in Astoria, Queens (architect Henry J. McGill). The unusual design attracted much notice in the architectural journals. The writer cited above called it out as an excellent example:

The building is of the best type of present day construction with equipment and appointments carefully selected and installed to give the maximum service from the best of appliances that in variety enter into the modern building. The further step was taken. The design is modern too.

A survey of religious buildings undertaken by the New York Landmarks Conservancy found only a few other examples, including St. Vincent Ferrer Roman Catholic Church and Parish School (3702 Glenwood Road; 1933-34, architect McKenna & Irving); St. Theresa of Avila Queens (109-26 130th Street; 1937, architect undetermined); Jon Hus Moravian Church (originally Prospect Park Jewish Center; 153 Ocean Avenue, Brooklyn; 1952, architect undetermined); Blessed Sacrament church complex in Jackson Heights (93-01 35th Avenue; 1929-1949, architect Henry J. McGill); and St. Andrew Avellino (157-05 Northern Boulevard; 1940, architect Henry J. McGill.)

Cherry & Matz's design for the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist

The members of the Fourth Church proudly described their new building as

⁵¹ "Modernism in the Edifice of the Church," *Architecture and Building*, Vol. 64, February 1932, pp. 18 ff.

⁵² Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, Thomas Mellins, *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars* (Rizzoli, 1987), pp. 147 ff.

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...a very modernistic building, beautifully lighted and well equipped.... The seating capacity of the auditorium is about 800. Other churches having been established within our radius, fewer seats were required for regular use. The Sunday School is equipped for amplifying and broadcasting and seats about 400.... Standing on one of the highest points of Manhattan Island, opposite a small park which marks the site of Fort Washington, the church edifice built of pearl grey Waldorf brick and limestone, is of unique beauty and interest.⁵³

The term "Waldorf brick" refers to a newly created brick, gray in color, specifically developed for the needs of the then brand-new Waldorf-Astoria Hotel – itself representing a shift in hotel architecture to a modernistic style.

The press accounts all seem to have agreed that the modernistic design was worthy of note. The *New York Times* wrote that the church's "modernistic design"

...features massive wall surfaces with bold ornamentation in stone and metal. The exterior is executed in a special oversize gray-faced brick and is trimmed with Indiana limestone.

Ornate aluminum grilles, windows and doors open into the central auditorium, which has a seating capacity of 780. Through the elimination of pillars and the use of acoustic plaster, it has been possible to bring every seat in the hall within sight and sound of the readers' platform. A central dome gives indirect light.

An amplifying system links the auditorium with the Sunday school on the floor below, where 400 to 500 additional persons can hear the lesson-sermons if the main hall is filled. The edifice is of fireproof construction throughout, the stairs being of marble finished steel.⁵⁴

(Curiously, in a 1936 article the *Times* described the design as merely a "semi-modernistic design."⁵⁵)

The building was also noticed by the *Brooklyn Eagle*:

Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, Manhattan, has just finished its new edifice, facing the park at 185th St. and Fort Washington Ave.... About two years ago Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, received notice from the Port of New York Authority that the site of its church building would be needed for the approach to the new George Washington Memorial Bridge. This, of course, made it necessary for Fourth Church to seek a new location. As property sales in this section had been rapid, few desirable lots remained. The plot on the north side of the little nameless park happened to be one of these. It is 100 by 100 feet, the building covering 90 percent of the lot, with a 10-foot court along the westerly side that adjoins the rear yards of the apartment buildings, thus giving ample light and air on all sides.

⁵³ Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, "Historical Sketch..." *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ "Christian Scientists Open \$275,000 Building," *New York Times*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ "Church Dedicated, \$385,000 Debt Paid," *op. cit.*

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The architects, Cherry & Matz of New York City, have successfully developed an original and distinctive style of modernistic church architecture, featuring massive wall surfaces with bold but pleasing ornamentation in stone and metal.

The lower story has its main entrance on Fort Washington Ave., remote from the main entrance of the Church, which gives the best arrangement of circulation.⁵⁶

And the *New York Evening Post* wrote:

The new building of Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, at Fort Washington Avenue and 185th Street, will be opened for worship for the first time Sunday with services at 11 A.M., 4 and 8 P.M. The exterior of the new church is executed in a special light gray face brick with Indiana limestone trimming and ornate aluminum grills [sic]. The architects, Cherry & Matz, used an original style of modernistic church architecture with bold ornamentation in stone and metal.⁵⁷

According to the account in the *Times*, the church was

...believed to be the first such church of its denomination in America.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, several Christian Science churches that could be characterized today as "Art Deco" in design do in fact slightly pre-date the Fourth Church:

- The Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist in Seattle (Gerald C. Field, 1929)⁵⁹
- The Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist in Portland, Oregon (Morris H. Whitehouse, 1931)⁶⁰
- The Second Church of Christ, Scientist in Minneapolis (Thomas R. Kimball, 1930)⁶¹

Though not the first such building, however, the Fourth Church remains one of the very few ever built. Neither of the two main works on Christian Science architecture mentions Art Deco churches. The first such book to appear, by Charles Draper Faulkner, published in 1946, states that while "there is no such thing" as a Christian Science architectural style, nevertheless the four most popular styles were Gothic, Classic, Georgian and Colonial. His categorizes churches by style, of which he lists quite a few: "California," "Classic" (including "Greek Classic" and "Roman Classic") "Colonial," "English," "Georgian," "Gothic," "Italian Renaissance,"

⁵⁶ "Christian Science Group Has Handsome New Church," *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 22, 1932, p. D2.

⁵⁷ "Church Opens Sunday - Three Services Arranged for New Scientist Edifice," *New York Evening Post*, May 19, 1932, p. 3.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, *op cit*.

⁵⁹ *Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, Historic and Cultural Resources Report*, prepared by The Johnson Partnership, Seattle Washington, May 2009.

⁶⁰ American Institute of Architects, *A Guide to Portland Architecture* (American Institute of Architects, 1968), p. 10.

⁶¹ Minneapolis Heritage Commission web site (<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/hpc/landmarks/index.asp>), citing the building's National Register nomination of 1983.

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“Modernized Classic,” “Modernized Gothic,” and “Romanesque.” But there is no entry for “Modernistic,” and he illustrates no example.⁶² The more recent, and effectively definitive, survey of Christian Science church architecture by Paul Ivey makes no mention of Art Deco or Moderne designs; Ivey’s discussion of pre-World War II “modern” churches ranges from an Arts and Crafts design of 1903 in Manchester, England; to Bernard Maybeck’s First Church in Berkeley, California, of 1910; to the First Church of 1925 by Hendrik Berlage in the Hague; to O.R. Salvisberg’s First Church of 1936 in Basel; and to Hans Hofmann’s First Church of 1938 in Zurich.

Though decisively Art Deco in style, Cherry & Matz’s design for the Fourth Church bears some similarity to its neo-Classical predecessor, and continues many of the elements that Ivey identified as typical of a Christian Science church. In particular, its exterior massing repeats the generally square shape; the central portion is twice as tall as the portions at either side, similar to the massing of the original; and the triple entrance, framed by four modernistic piers, repeats the triple entrance of the original framed by four Ionic columns. Each interior includes a large foyer to encourage sociability among the congregants, and each sanctuary is a centrally-planned space, lit by a skylight dome; the original building’s sanctuary focused on a barrel-vaulted ceiling supported on columns, with short side-aisles, while the new version focuses instead on a circular dome and eliminates the use of interior columns.

Though it remains undetermined if the architects or the congregation specifically so intended, the new design suggests a modernistic interpretation of Solon Beman’s original.

Later history: the Hebrew Tabernacle

In 1973, its congregation apparently too small to maintain the church, the Fourth Church sold the building to the Hebrew Tabernacle, a congregation with strong German-Jewish roots, relocating from further south in Washington Heights.

New York’s Jewish community largely descends from a huge group of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe fleeing poverty, religious discrimination, expulsion and massacres – a wave beginning in the 1880s and reaching its peak in the early decades of the 20th century. From about 1880 up until World War I, some two million Jews – roughly one third of all the Jews in Europe – arrived in the United States.⁶³ The vast majority first settled in New York City, many in the crowded tenements of Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Major Jewish immigration stopped only with the passage in 1924 of new immigration laws.

A smaller subset of the Jewish immigrant community, however, came earlier, from German speaking countries. Beginning as early as the 1840s, they settled around Grand, Stanton, Ludlow and Pitt Streets on the Lower East Side, then gradually moved north with the rest of the German-speaking immigrant population. By the 1900s, the community – more assimilated and economically prosperous than the newer arrivals – had moved up to new middle-class precincts in Harlem. In the 1930s and 1940s, the community was bolstered by a new

⁶² Charles Draper Faulkner, *Christian Science Church Edifices* (Chicago: Charles Draper Faulkner, 1946).

⁶³ Moses Rischin, *The Promised Land: New York’s Jews, 1870-1914* (New York, 1970), p.20, cited in Andrew Dolkart, *National Register Nomination: Lower East Side Historic District* (New York: 1999).

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wave of German-speaking immigrants fleeing Nazi persecution. The Hebrew Tabernacle's history involves both waves of immigrants.

The Hebrew Tabernacle⁶⁴

The Hebrew Tabernacle was created in Harlem in 1905. Central Harlem at that time housed many ethnic groups, including upwardly mobile Jewish immigrants and their families who had left the congested housing of the Lower East Side. By 1910, after the Lower East Side, Harlem had become the country's next largest community of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. Harlem's Jewish community however also included a relatively well-to-do population of German Jews, some with roots in the city's colonial era.

Like many synagogues, the Hebrew Tabernacle began as an effort to provide education for Jewish children. The German Jewish community felt threatened by the process of assimilation, and worried about the potential loss of the younger generation. Dr. Edward Lissman and Adolph Schwarzbaum, the Tabernacle's founders, circulated a letter in 1905 soliciting support for the creation of a Jewish school. As the letter described the situation: "Within the environs of East and West Harlem, thousands of Hebrew children are left to wander aimlessly about the streets without any instruction in Jewish ethics."⁶⁵ Lissman and Schwarzbaum stressed the need for "a house of worship and of instruction...to enable [the community's] young to receive a practical conception of our sacred Torah....Kindly come to our aid as a member, because in a short time Christian Missionaries will commence to take up a similar work among Jewish children...."⁶⁶

Lissman and Schwarzbaum opened a Sunday school later that year. It quickly grew to accommodate 150 children, with 20 volunteer teachers. On May 8, 1906, The Hebrew Tabernacle Association incorporated. It soon offered religious services as well as educational classes.

The Tabernacle's services began, in the words of the congregation's official history, as

...a mixture of conservative and reform traditions. Wearing head coverings and tallis [prayer shawls] during services followed the conservative custom. The mixed choir and especially the use of an organ, on the other hand, had been among the most fought over issues in the nineteenth century debate regarding synagogue reforms in Germany. After its incorporation the Hebrew Tabernacle continued the conservative-reform type of worship; parts of the ritual were rendered in English as well as in Hebrew. As time went on, the temple increasingly leaned towards the reform side of its spiritual make-up without, however, relinquishing certain conservative overtones. The conservatism seems to have stemmed as much from a religious preference as it reflected the background and status of the synagogue's leading

⁶⁴ This section is based almost entirely on a history commissioned by the congregation: Evelyn Ehrlich, *A History of The Hebrew Tabernacle Congregation of Washington Heights: A German-Jewish Community in New York City, With An Introduction by Rabbi Robert L. Lehman, D. Min., D.D.*, (New York: Hebrew Tabernacle of Washington Heights, 1985). Available on the congregation's web site: http://hebrewtabernacle.org/History_of_Hebrew_Tabernacle.pdf

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8, citing a circular letter by the Hebrew Tabernacle Association dated October 13, 1905, p. 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 12, citing the same circular letter.

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members, almost all of whom were financially well-established and belonged to the middle and upper middle classes.⁶⁷

The Tabernacle's first home at 218-220 West 130th Street, altered from existing buildings, was completed in 1909, and dedicated in 1910. By 1919, however, the ethnic composition of the neighborhood had changed, as Harlem evolved into the city's major African-American community. The congregation sold its building to the Colored People's Church, and moved north to Washington Heights, building a new synagogue at 605-607 West 161st Street between Broadway and Fort Washington Avenue; the first services in the new home were held in 1923, though construction wasn't completed until 1927. The dedication included as guests a number of prominent New Yorkers, including Rabbi Stephen Wise, and Columbia University president Nicholas Butler. The new building had a seating capacity of approximately 1,200.

During the 1930s, the congregation

...became officially affiliated with Reform Judaism. The case of the Tabernacle would suggest that the denominational lines were not as sharply drawn as some historiographical works present it. Here, for instance, we have one synagogue which identified with Reform, yet at the same time retained a certain measure of independence with regard to the mode of its services. A daily orthodox Minyan met in the Tabernacle's vestry for more than two decades during the 1950's and 60's.⁶⁸

The new building's neighborhood had some 31,000 Jewish residents in 1923, but that number rose dramatically during the 1930s and 1940s, thanks to the influx of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution in Germany and German-speaking countries. Estimates of the number of German-Jewish immigrants to the United States between 1933 and 1945 range from 100,000 to 150,000. New York became home to 70,000 such refugees, of whom perhaps 20,000 settled in Washington Heights.

The new immigrants created their own institutions and synagogues, but many also joined the Hebrew Tabernacle, founded originally by German Jews.

Among the approximately thirty congregations founded in New York City by immigrants, the Hebrew Tabernacle assumed a unique position. It gradually turned into an immigrant congregation as more and more refugees filled its ranks. At the same time it was an American temple, which had been founded by German Jews, yet which had over the years acquired a mixed membership of both East European and German Jews. The refugees flocked to this temple. Even those who came from a traditional background, who at first had attended services at an orthodox shul [synagogue] in the neighborhood and felt dissatisfied with the lack of decorum there, were attracted to the Hebrew Tabernacle, even in spite of organ music and collection baskets.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

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Moreover,

...the Tabernacle called an imposing building its home. It was not the typical immigrant establishment in one room or in the basement of another temple. Its structure was reminiscent of many a liberal temple in German cities. Furthermore, in autumn 1937 Richard Cohn, who had been trained in Germany and who was an émigré himself, became the cantor of the Tabernacle. ...Since the Tabernacle had German roots, the employment of a German trained cantor was only natural. The melodies which he introduced and rendered in his beautiful voice became one of the main features which made the temple so popular among German Jews... Despite all the elements which could make a German Jew feel at home at the Hebrew Tabernacle, it was still an American institution. The rabbi was not German-born; sermons were held in English and its affairs were managed by a Board of Trustees. For some immigrants eager to adjust to their surroundings, this fusion of German and American characteristics constituted the temple's main attraction.⁷⁰

The synagogue provided social opportunities for its members. These included guest speakers, including the American ambassador to Germany, as well as

...musical evenings. Members of the Parents' Association and the Men's Club performed the operetta "Der Vogelhandler" and chamber music was presented by Mr. Alfred Grau, Mr. Otto Seyfert and Mrs. Felice Gould.⁷¹

In 1973, the Tabernacle moved one more time, leaving behind its building on West 161st Street and purchasing the former home of the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist. As recalled by Justin Winter, a vice-president of the congregation involved with the transaction:

Rabbi Lehman mentioned that he had heard a rumor that the Christian Science Church might want to sell its building on Fort Washington Avenue and 185 Street [sic]. I made contact with two people of the church who were extremely friendly and helpful and one Sunday morning when I went to the building, and saw that the service was attended by only about twenty people, I realized that the rumor of sale was true... At a congregational meeting, when I presented the need for the move and the possibility of obtaining a building in a much better location, the congregation backed us up and consented to the purchase.⁷²

The building required alterations:

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷² Justin Winter, "The Buying of a New Building," *Journal of the Hebrew Tabernacle: Focus on a Decade*, 1984 (n.p.).

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A lot of work was to be done in the new building to make it ready for our purposes, not only upstairs as a synagogue but also downstairs in the vestry. It took the cooperation of many members of our congregation to finally create our new sanctuary.⁷³

Ernest Hartog, first Chairman of the House Committee and later President of the congregation, described the changes:

Soon we had an opportunity to view the new quarters. What a shock! It seemed that there were endless little cubbyholes for solitary meditation. A beautiful sanctuary: a multi-tiered dais with platform levels signifying the rank of the clergy, with the pipe organ's keyboard console as its centerpiece. An impressive skylight dome with the word LOVE at its apex. A social hall with a microscopic stage and arched ceiling, perfect for a modern echo chamber. The entire structure situated on the two main floors, with an endless number of in-between floors surrounding the central core. Changes were definitely in order.

We called on a good personal friend and first-class architect, Norbert Turkel, and asked for advice and guidance. With efficiency and expertise, on paper at least, the walls came tumbling down, the various levels vanished and our most important building blocks grew out of the myriad of heretofore useless chambers.

A single-level Bimah [reader's platform] was created, with the sacred arch carved out of existing walls. The organ console was moved to a newly created organ-choir chamber. Access, by the way of a movable stairway, to the center of the Bimah and to the Chupah [traditional covering for a wedding] was made possible for the occasional wedding ceremony. The eternal light [a regular feature of synagogues, recalling a similar light from the Temple in Jerusalem] found its way above the arch's Decalogue [inscription with the Ten Commandments] overhang, suspended approximately fifty feet from the ceiling. A Magen David [Star or Shield of David] filled the dome's center and lighting was added in various forms. Carpeting, drapes and sound-absorbing wall covering made the new sanctuary an attractive and dignified place of worship.

Downstairs, an enlarged stage, a dropped ceiling, scientifically arranged lighting and a sound distribution system converted the vestry into a most versatile social hall.... The rest of the building gave birth to more mundane entities: the spacious and efficiently equipped kitchen; the office; the clergy rooms; the classroom; the affiliate rooms; the custodian's living quarters and other useful nooks and crannies.

...Now, a decade later, we have a superb House of Prayer that, more than ever, fulfills all of our needs. It allows us to pursue our religious and social activities with purpose and dignity.⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ernest Hartog, "Temple Conversion from Christian Science to Hebrew Tabernacle," *Focus on a Decade*, op. cit. (n.p.)

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Dedication of the Tabernacle's new home took place on May 26, 1974. Guest speakers included rabbis from other congregations, and public office holders and officials, but, reflecting the congregation's origins, also "Dr. Otto Nathan, personal friend of Albert Einstein and Trustee and Executor of his estate," as well as "Bauco T. Van Der Wal, International Director of the Anne Frank Center, Amsterdam."

In the following decade the Tabernacle absorbed the memberships of two other Washington Heights synagogues, Temple Beth Am and Temple of the Covenant. Despite that influx of new members, the membership gradually aged as younger members moved to the suburbs.

Programs were developed which opened the temple to the community at large, and at the same time brought cultural events to the doorsteps of the people who could no longer travel, or did not feel at ease to use the public transportation system to attend concerts and similar activities downtown. The temple sponsored tours to study the historic sites of the Jewish people in Israel, Spain and other Jewish sites in Europe, as well as in the United States. There were art exhibits and biennial concerts featuring Pinchas Zukerman, David Bar-Ilan, and Jerome Hines. In addition, film festivals took place, and the temple invited noteworthy speakers, most recently Elie Wiesel. In commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Kristallnacht the congregation funded the publication of Reflections on the Holocaust, containing memoirs by congregants.⁷⁵

Today

Today the Hebrew Tabernacle of Washington Heights continues to function as a Reform Synagogue, offering religious services and cultural and social programs to its members. Its building stands as a rare Art Deco religious structure in New York City, as well as a testament to changing religious and ethnic identity of its Manhattan neighborhood. The original congregation occupied the building from 1932 to 1973 – 41 years – while the successor congregation has occupied it from 1973 to date – 38 years. That such different congregations as the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist and the Hebrew Tabernacle could thrive not just in the same neighborhood, but in the same building, reflects the strength of New York's religious communities and the versatility of its religious architecture.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Under 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 589542 4523053
Zone Easting Northing

3 18
Zone Easting Northing

2 18

4 18

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tony Robbins

organization _____ date 4/14/2011

street & number 50 West 67th Street telephone _____

city or town New York state NY zip code 10023

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
- A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name Hebrew Tabernacle Congregation of Washington Heights

street & number 551 Fort Washington Avenue telephone _____

city or town New York state NY zip code 10033

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20503

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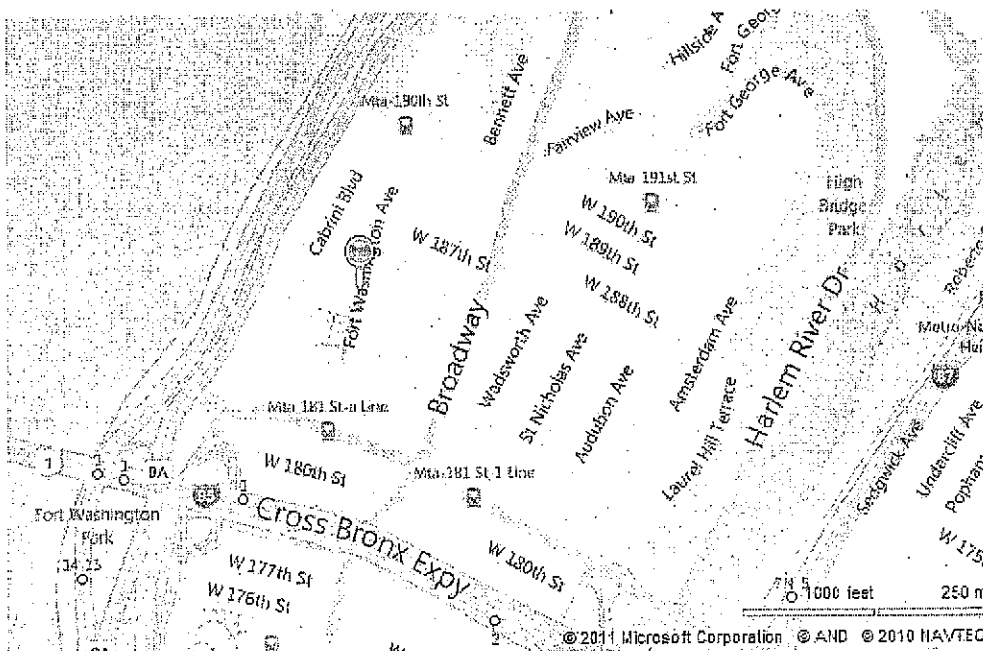
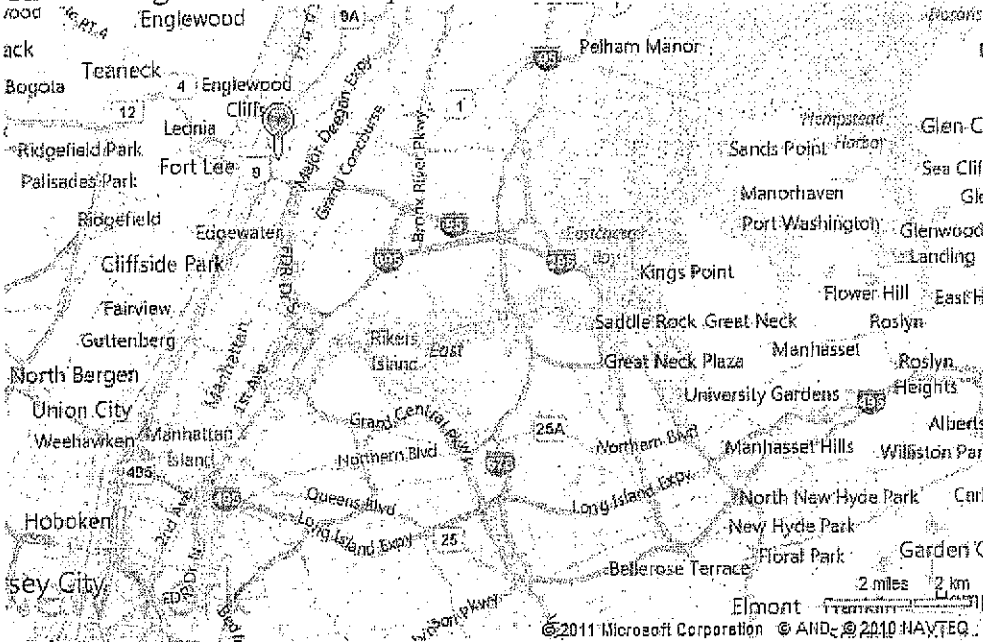
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description

The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist is located on a roughly square parcel at the corner of Fort Washington Avenue and West 185th Street in the Washington Heights neighborhood in Manhattan. The boundaries of the property are described as Borough of Manhattan Tax Block 2179, Lot 229.

Boundary Justification

The building is located on the parcel associated with its 1931-1932 period of significance.

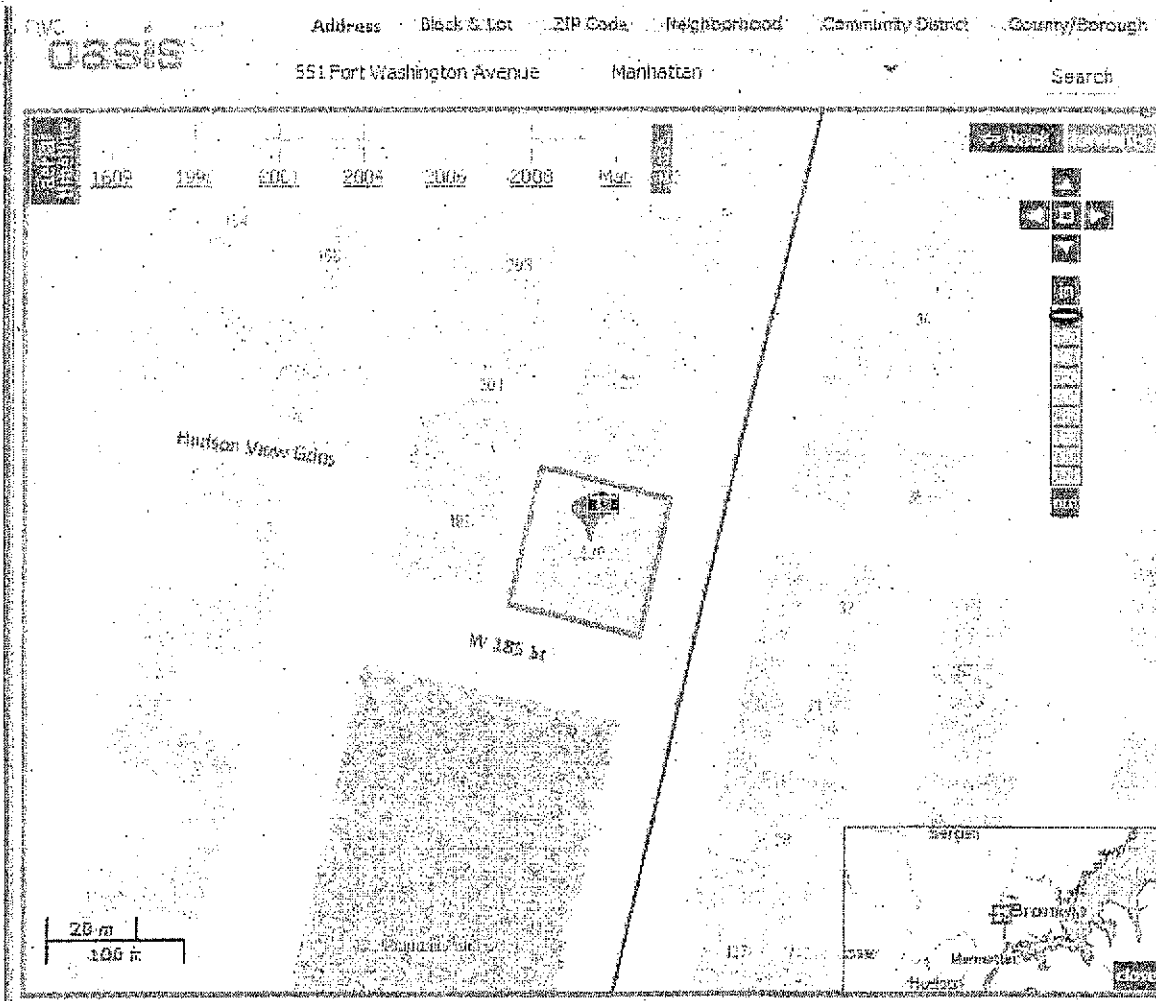


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Additional Information

*Full photos will accompany finalized nomination form

FOURTH CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST
PHOTO LIST

Anthony W. Robins (AWR), Ann Friedman (AF), photos taken March 3rd, 2011
Sarah Sher (SS), photos taken June 17th, 2010

1. Fourth Church/Hebrew Tabernacle, 551 West 185th Street, looking northwest (SS)
2. West 185th Street elevation, looking north (AWR)
3. West 185th Street elevation, entrance detail (AF)
4. West 185th Street elevation, double doors (AF)
5. West 185th Street elevation, limestone screen above entrance (AF)
6. Fort Washington Avenue elevation, looking north from West 185th Street (AF)
7. West elevation, looking south along service alley (AF)
8. North (rear) elevation, looking south from adjoining rear yard (AWR)
9. Entrance vestibule from West 185th Street (AF)
10. Entrance vestibule, ceiling (AF)
11. Foyer, looking at entrance doors from vestibule (AF)
12. Main sanctuary, looking towards front (SS)
13. Main sanctuary, looking towards rear (SS)
14. Main sanctuary, looking towards eastern windows (along Fort Washington Avenue) (AWR)
15. Main sanctuary, pew railing detail (AF)
16. Main sanctuary, exit detail, west of the raised readers platform (AF)
17. Main sanctuary, ornamental detail (AF)
18. Basement foyer (AF)
19. Basement social hall (AF)
20. Basement classroom (SS)



The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist
 New York, NY New York County
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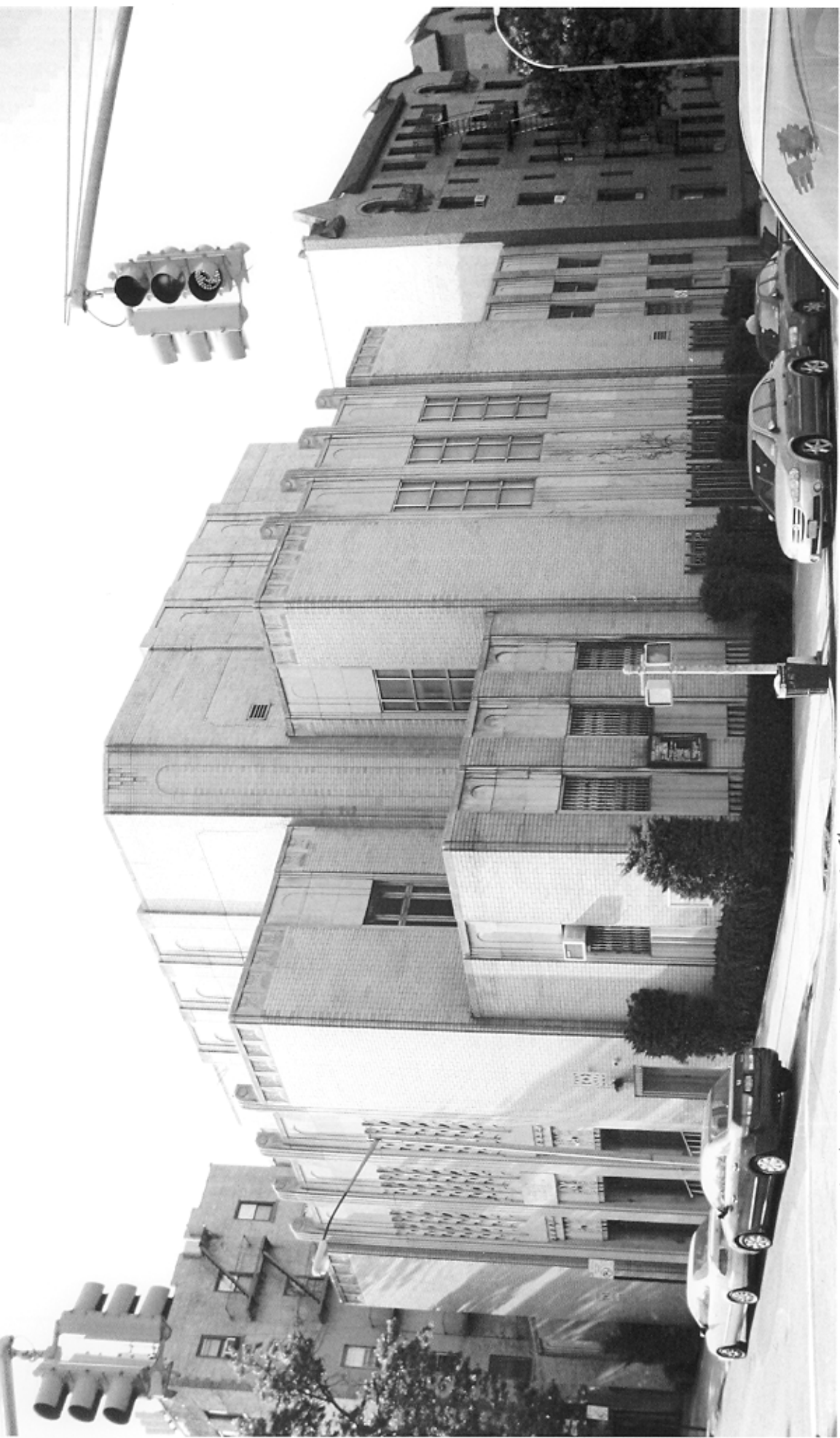


Photo 1 of 20: NY - New York County - Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist

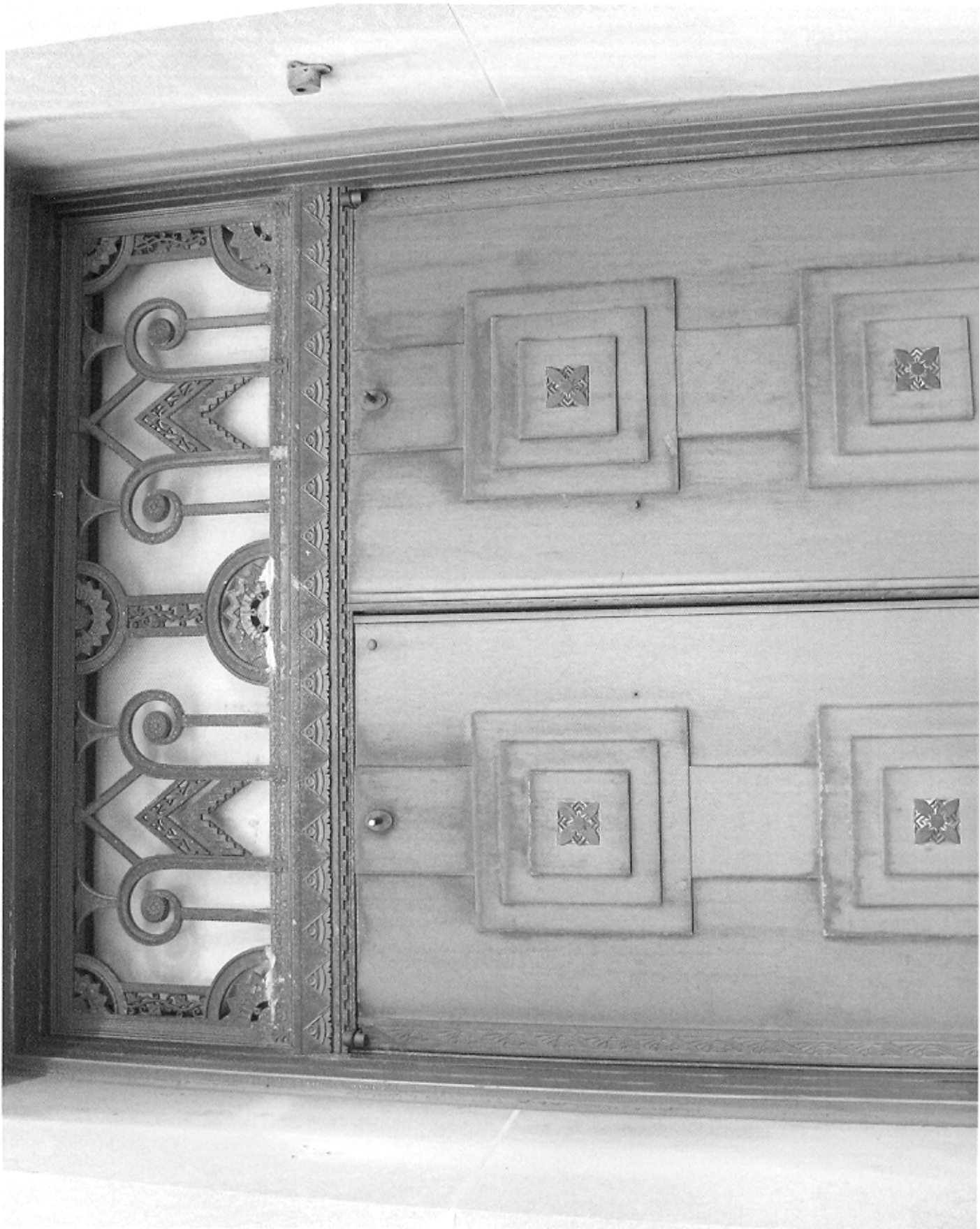


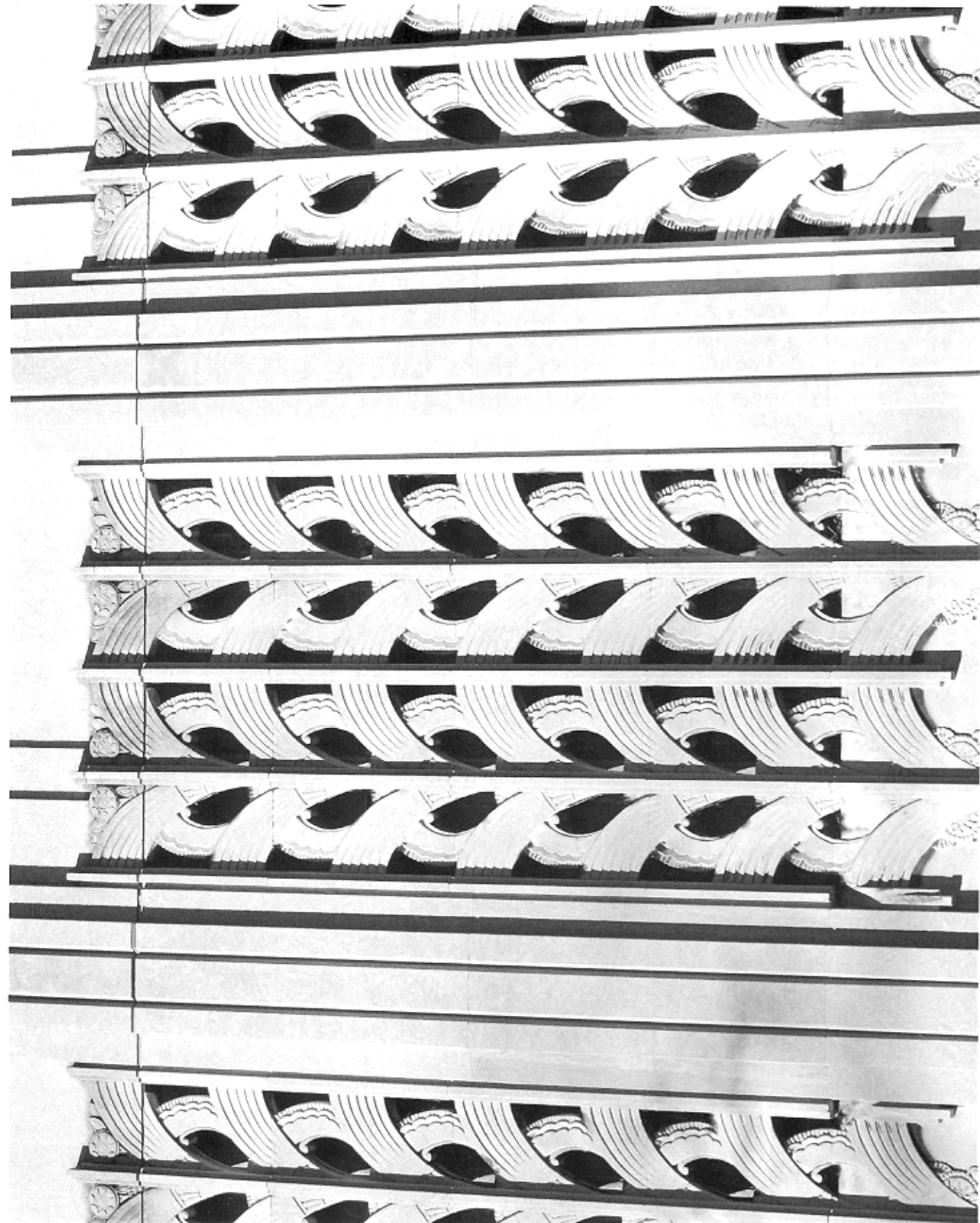
Photo 2 of 20 : NY - New York County - Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist

A black and white photograph of the entrance to the Hebrew Tabernacle of Washington Heights. The building features three prominent, tall, narrow doorways, each framed by a decorative Art Deco-style column. The columns are adorned with intricate, repeating geometric patterns. Above the central doorway, a sign reads "HEBREW TABERNACLE OF WASHINGTON HEIGHTS". The entrance is flanked by brick walls, and a parking sign is visible on the right side of the image.

HEBREW
TABERNACLE
OF
WASHINGTON
HEIGHTS











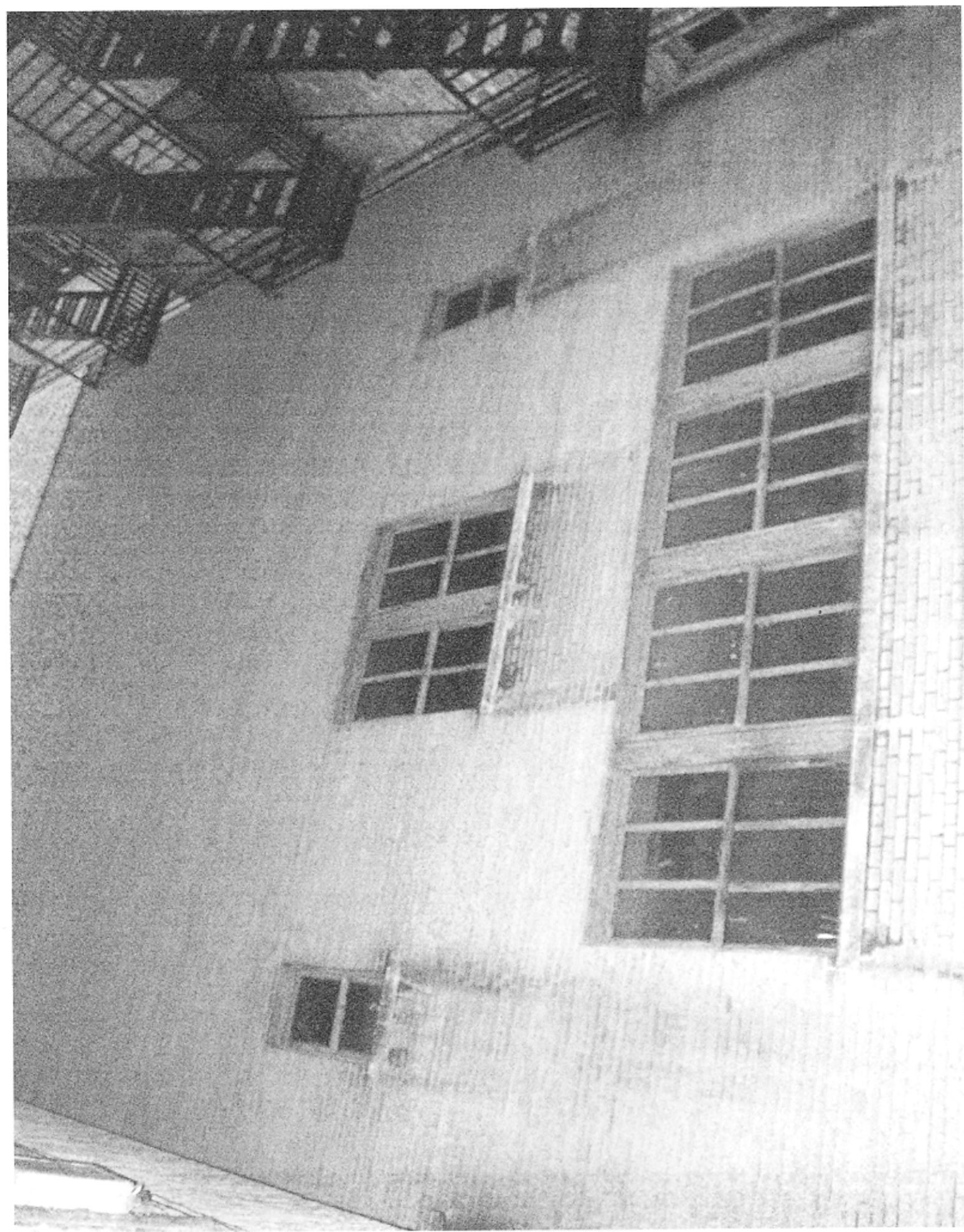


Photo 8 of 20: NY - New York County - Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist



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Tot Shabbat

Friday, March 11th
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
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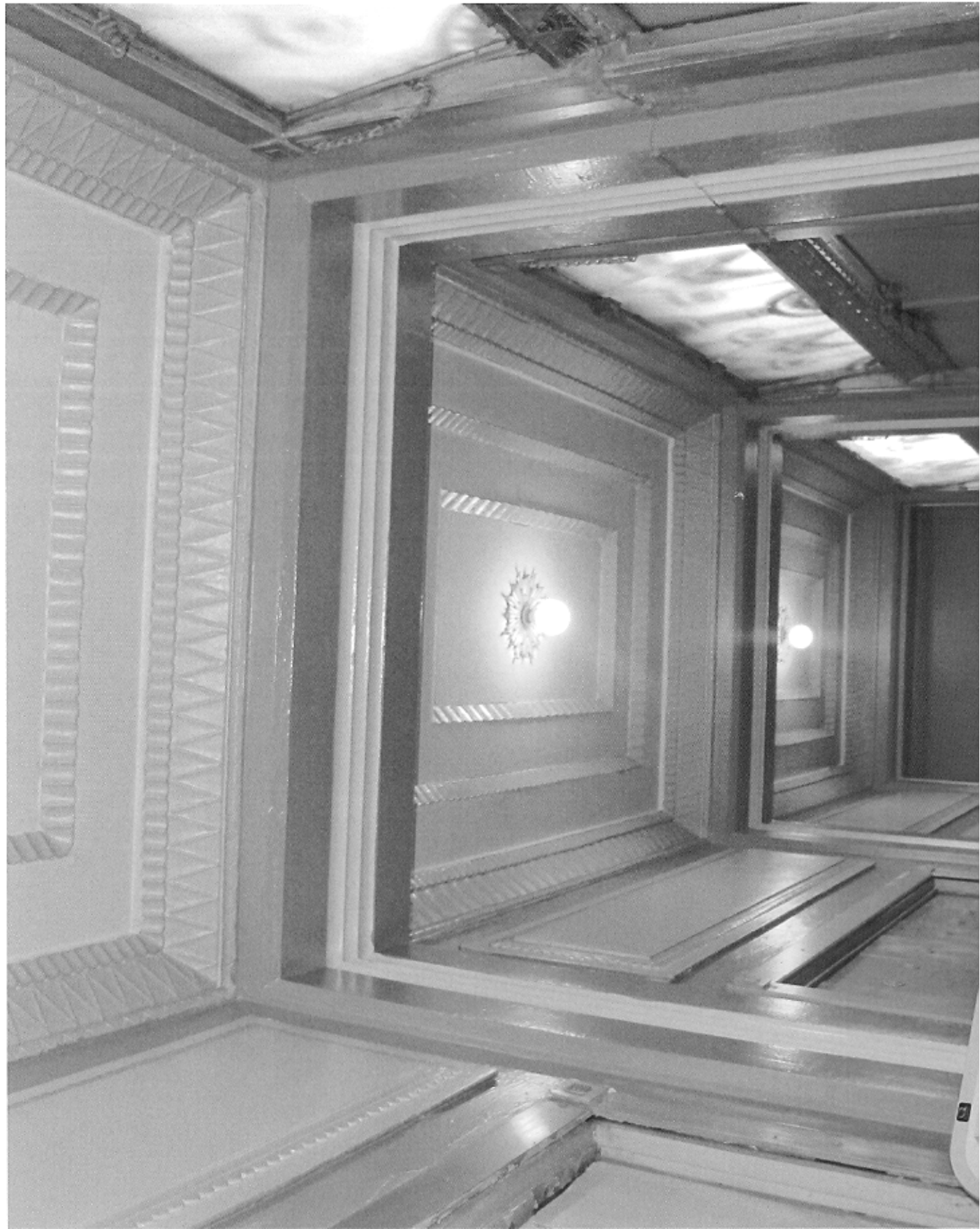
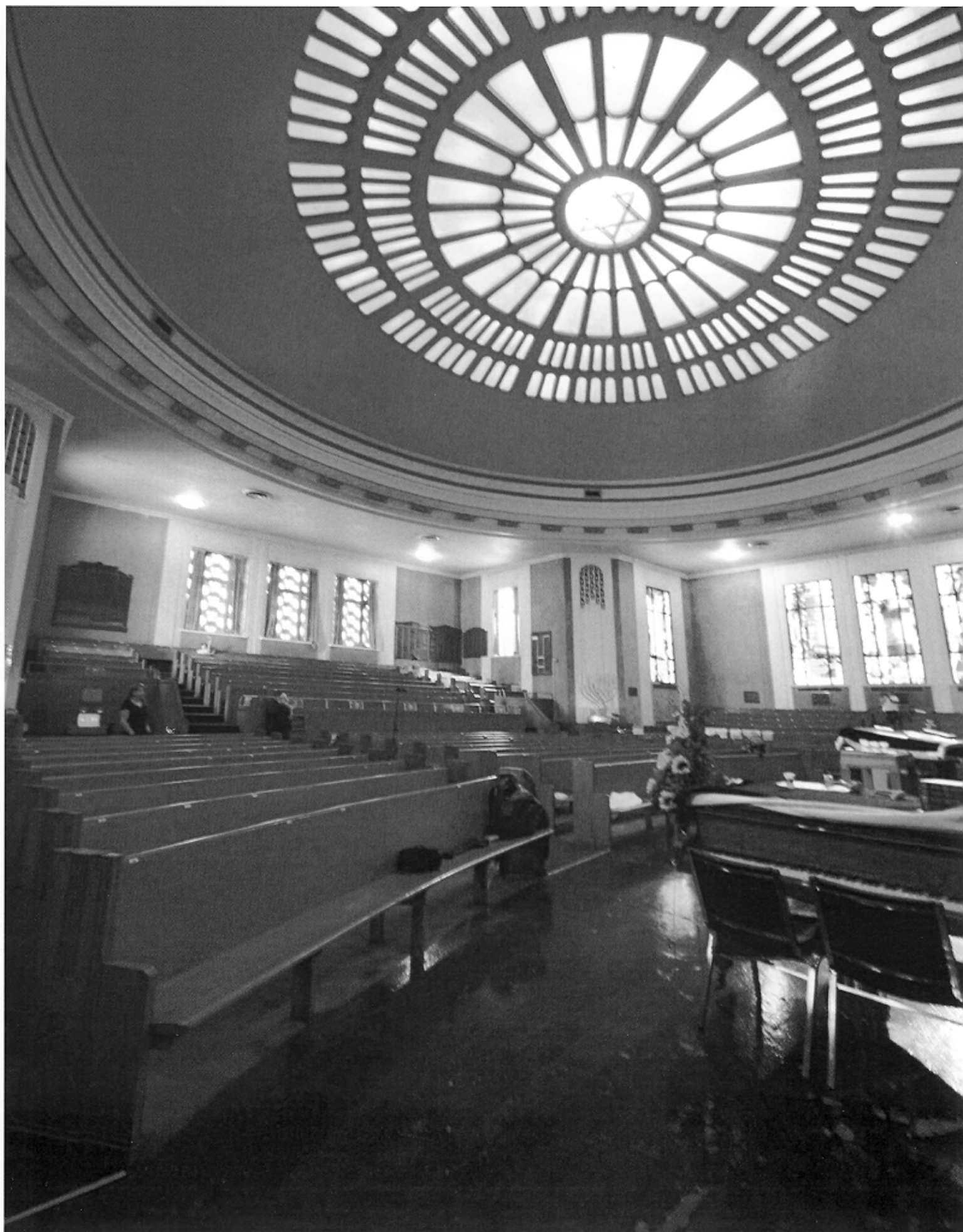
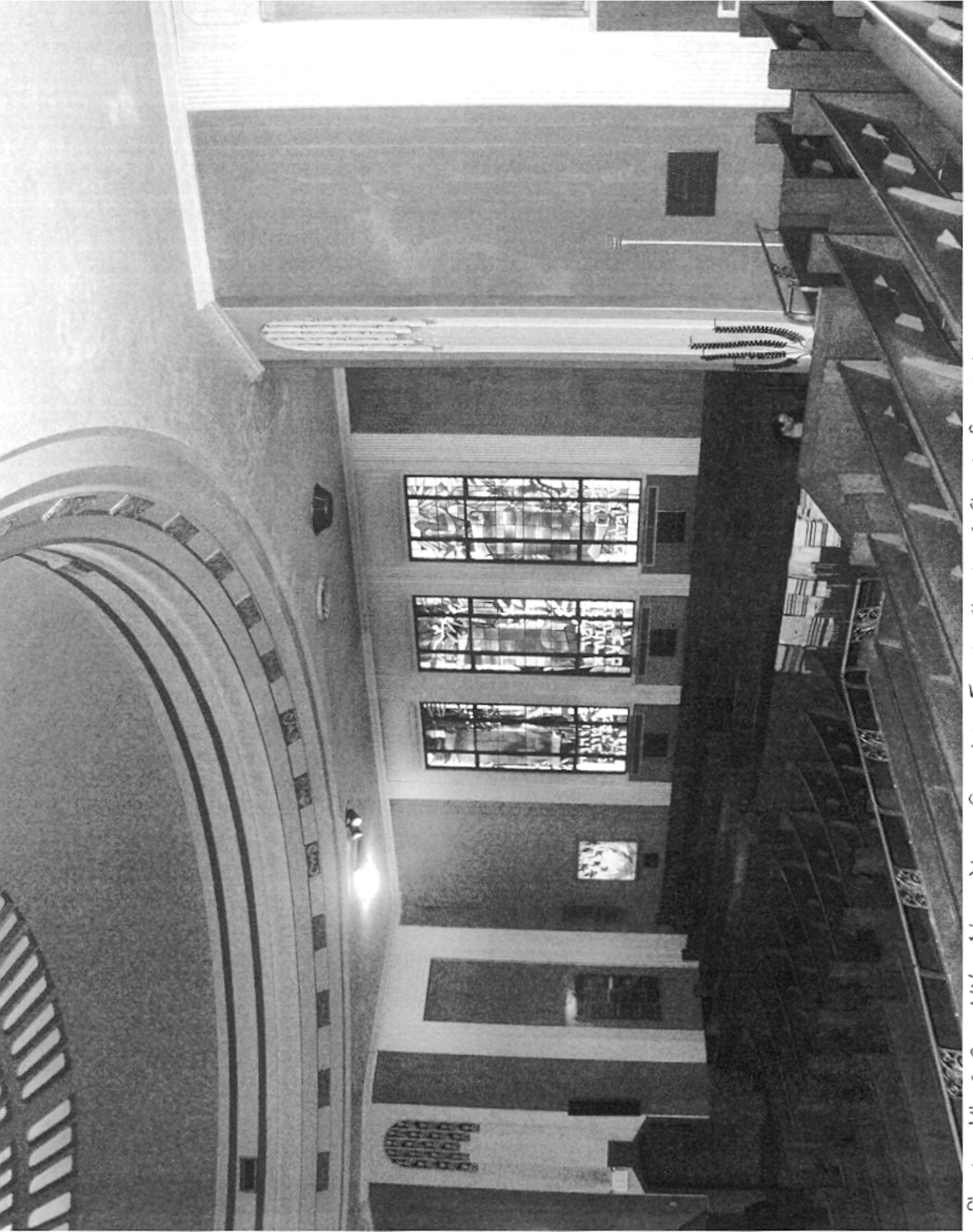






Photo 12 of 20: NY - New York County - Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist













ARMIN AND ESTELLE GOLD



