

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT**  
**PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)  
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 2036-40 Cecil B Moore Avenue

Postal code: 19121

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Columbia Avenue Presbyterian Church; McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church

Current/Common Name: Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Building

Structure

Site

Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition:  excellent  good  fair  poor  ruins

Occupancy:  occupied  vacant  under construction  unknown

Current use: Unknown

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1870 to 1893

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1870; 1876; 1891-93

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Henry A. Sims (1870); J. William Shaw (1891-93)

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Tiffany Studios (stained glass windows in 1893 building)

Original owner: Columbia Avenue Presbyterian Church

Other significant persons: \_\_\_\_\_

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Please attach a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization The Keeping Society (edited/supplemented by PHC staff) Date October 15, 2018

Name with Title Amy Lambert, RA Email maryamelialambert@gmail.com

Street Address 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320 Telephone 267-584-6544

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19107

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 10/15/2018

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 1/8/2019

Date of Notice Issuance: 1/9/2019

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Trustees of the Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church

Address: 2036-40 Cecil B Moore Ave

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19121

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 2/13/2019

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 3/8/2019

Date of Final Action: 3/8/2019

Designated  Rejected

## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION



Figure 1: Parcel boundary for 2036-40 Cecil B. Moore Avenue. Source: Office of Property Assessment website.

The boundary of 2036-40 Cecil B. Moore Avenue encompasses a rectangular lot located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Cecil B. Moore Avenue and N. 21st Street. The parcel contains in front or breadth on Cecil B. Moore Avenue roughly one hundred feet, nine inches (100'), and of that width extends southwardly between lines parallel and along N. 21st Street one hundred and thirty-eight feet, nine inches (140') to Nicholas Street, which as the same frontage as Cecil B. Moore Avenue. The property is known as Parcel No. 013N09-0143, Office of Property Assessment Account No. 772093000.

## 6. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The former McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church is located at the southeast corner of Cecil B. Moore Avenue and N. 21st Street, within a neighborhood of primarily two- and three-story Italianate rowhouses from the late nineteenth century, most now gone. The church complex, which extends the full depth of the block to Nicholas Street, is freestanding. It was built during two campaigns and both portions are physically connected. The 1870 structure was built as the chapel for the McDowell Presbyterian Sunday-school Association on Nicholas Street, a mission of the Spring Garden Presbyterian Church and called out on city atlases as the Columbia Avenue Presbyterian Church. It is a gable-roofed, cruciform-plan, random-coursed brownstone building with gothic arches and articulated voussoirs. Its symmetrical interior plan with a center-aisle longer than its transept reflects the Gothic Revival architecture exhibited at the exterior. The chapel was expanded to the east in 1876. The 1893 portion of the church was built on the northern part of the site, abutting N. 21<sup>st</sup> Street and what is now Cecil B. Moore Avenue. It was designed in the Romanesque Revival style with Richardsonian details and is constructed of a quarry-faced, irregular-coursed, gray granite with limestone trim. This later building has a gabled, cruciform-plan, slate roof like the 1870 chapel, yet the interior reflects an auditorium plan whose panopticon interior design heightened the theatrical turn evangelical and Reformed Protestant churches took during this period.<sup>1</sup> It is described in William P. White's *The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia* as such: "the building is of granite, with Indiana limestone trimmings. The architecture is after the Romanesque. The main entrances are through the corner tower and a porch on Columbia Avenue. A stone arcade connects the church and chapel on 21st Street. The seats are semi-circular and the aisles are tiled. The rafters are supported by four stone columns with carved capitals. The 1893 building contains the main sanctuary, a parlor, and Sunday school space. A prominent, square-plan tower defines the northwest corner of the property, providing a dynamic relationship to the street and establishing the church in the neighborhood.

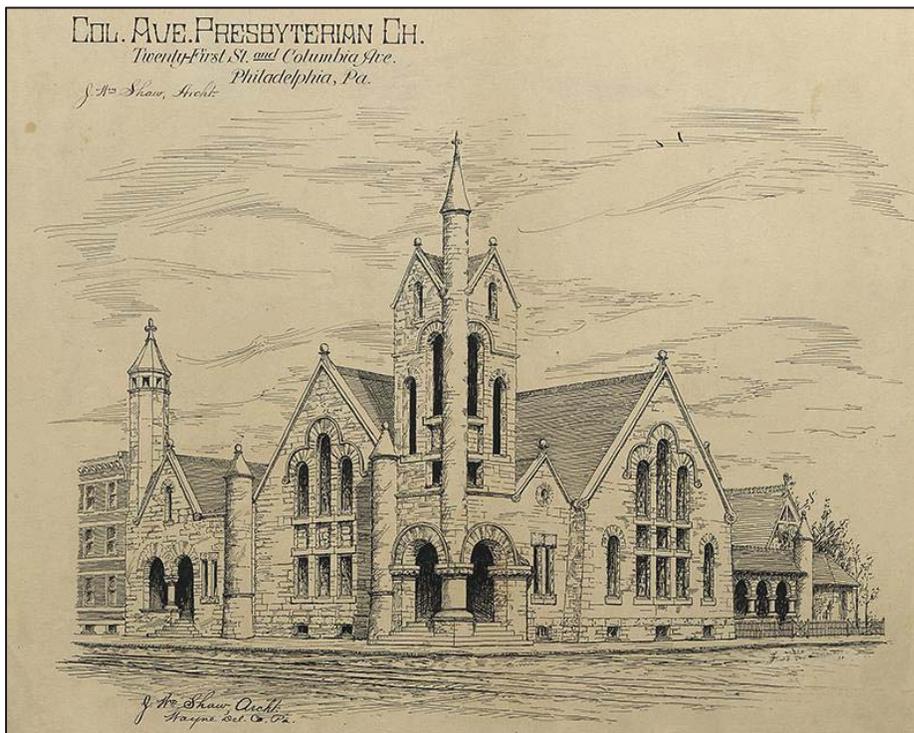


Figure 2: Rendering of the Columbia Avenue Presbyterian Church by J. William Shaw, Architect. The drawing depicts the Richardsonian Romanesque church in its neighborhood context, at the intersection of Columbia Avenue and N. 21<sup>st</sup> Street, adjacent to the 1870 chapel by H.A. Sims. From the Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library, Delaware

<sup>1</sup> Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002).



Figure 3: The former McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church, from the intersection of 21<sup>st</sup> St and Cecil B. Moore Avenue. Source: Cyclomedia, May 2018.



Figure 4: Photograph of the McDowell Memorial Church shortly after its construction in 1893. From William P. White & William H. Scott, *The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia*, 1895.

### **North Elevation (Cecil B. Moore Avenue)**

The north elevation of the church is marked by three bays: a corner, entry tower at the northwest end; the slightly set-back end gable of the main sanctuary; and a shorter gabled wall in the same plane as the tower in which there is a double-arched opening to the classroom wing. All volumes are clad in gray granite with coursed rubble foundation walls. The square-plan entry tower at the corner is the tallest and most prominent element of the entire church complex, defining the building's relationship to the intersection of two main thoroughfares, and cordoned by a low, open metal fence. The tower's granite corner column acts as a spring-point to the two entry arches at the north and west elevations, each of which has infilled walls and a painted, hollow metal single door. The granite corner column also provides a base for a round turret that rises to be the tallest element of the church; the turret is integrated into the tower walls and capped with a conical, ashlar-coursed, limestone peaked roof and crocketed finial. As it extends above the roofline, the tower's corners are chamfered and each face is punctuated with two round arched openings with limestone voussoirs and sills; the openings closest to the tower's corner turret are taller than its partner in the same elevation. The tower walls are all capped with gabled parapets in each of which is a small, round arched opening with limestone voussoir, all currently infilled; each gable has a limestone cap and ball finial.



**Figure 5: North elevation along Cecil B. Moore Avenue. Source: BHHS Fox & Roach-CC Rittenhouse Hotel. Listing Agent Nadeen Hodge, 2018.**



Figure 6: North elevation along Cecil B. Moore Avenue. Source: Cyclomedia, May 2018.

East from the tower is the north wall of the sanctuary space, expressed at the exterior as the large end-gable of the sanctuary. It is clad in gray granite and punctuated by a tiered, triple-arched window opening with Tiffany Studios glazing, and limestone voussoirs ending in foliate trim at the outer springers. These windows are bisected by two belt courses of limestone before ending in a limestone sill. This end-gable wall is flanked on either side by small turrets with peaked, conical limestone roofs; the gable and turrets are all capped with limestone ball finials. The round form of each turret extends to ground level and is set out from the wall. Further east is the 1.5-story end gable of the classroom wing. The peak of this bay is shorter than that of the sanctuary end gable next to it, and within it is a narrow round arched window with limestone voussoir. In the wall there is a triangular-plan porch recessed behind two arched openings both of which have limestone voussoirs supported in the middle by a slim column with a carved foliate capital. The entry steps are located at the western arch. The gabled roofline has a limestone cap ending on either side with foliate trim and at its peak, a ball finial. The entire elevation is capped at the east end by an octagonal tower the front facet of which is aligned with the wall; the top of the tower is punctuated with openings at each of the octagonal planes and capped by a limestone roof with ball finial.

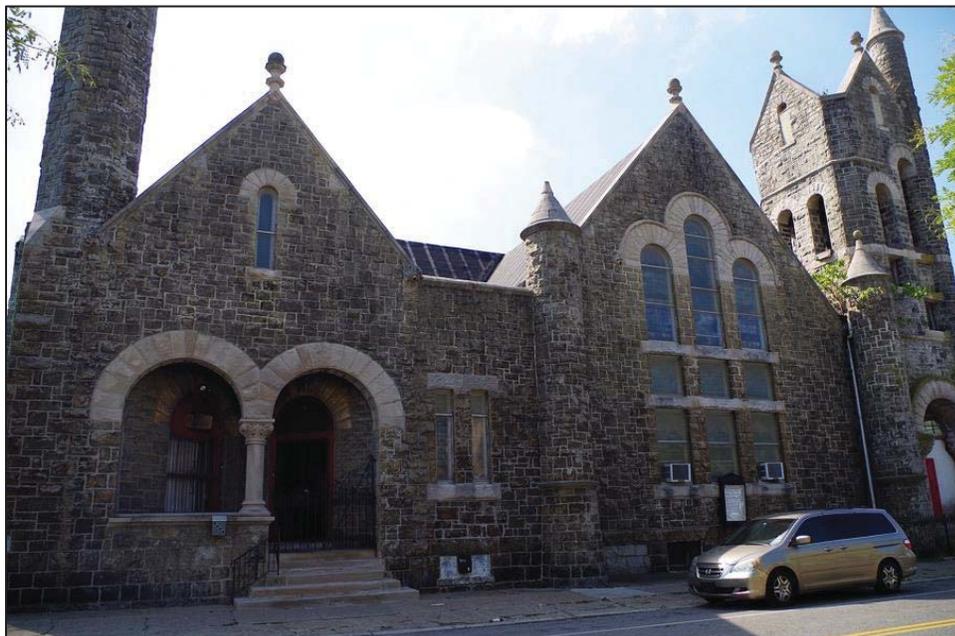


Figure 7: North elevation along Cecil B. Moore Avenue. Photo by author.

### **West Elevation (N. 21<sup>st</sup> Street)**

The west elevation of the church begins, as with the north elevation, from the spring-point of the entry tower at the northwest corner of the property. As at the north elevation, the west arched opening terminates in a granite pilaster with a carved, foliate capital. As at the north elevation, the arched tower entryway has been infilled with partition walls and a red painted, hollow metal single door. At its walls' upper levels, the tower has double arched openings; again, the opening closer to the tower's corner turret is taller than the other. South from the tower is a one-story end gabled bay that has two centered, small windows with horizontal lintels and a gabled peak within which is a small opening; this bay is slightly set back from the plane of the corner tower and the next volume to the south, the end gable of the main sanctuary space. This wall is nearly identical to the north end gable of the sanctuary with granite cladding punctuated by a central, tiered, triple, round-arched windows with Tiffany Studios glazing and limestone voussoirs with foliate trim at the outer springers. The windows are bisected by two belt courses of limestone before ending in limestone sills above a rubble-course foundation. However, this wall's fenestration has the addition of two shorter, round-arched windows flanking the triple-windows, all of which share the same sill height. As with all other gables at the 1891-93 building, the peak of this end-gable elevation has a limestone cap ending in foliate trim, and a limestone ball finial.



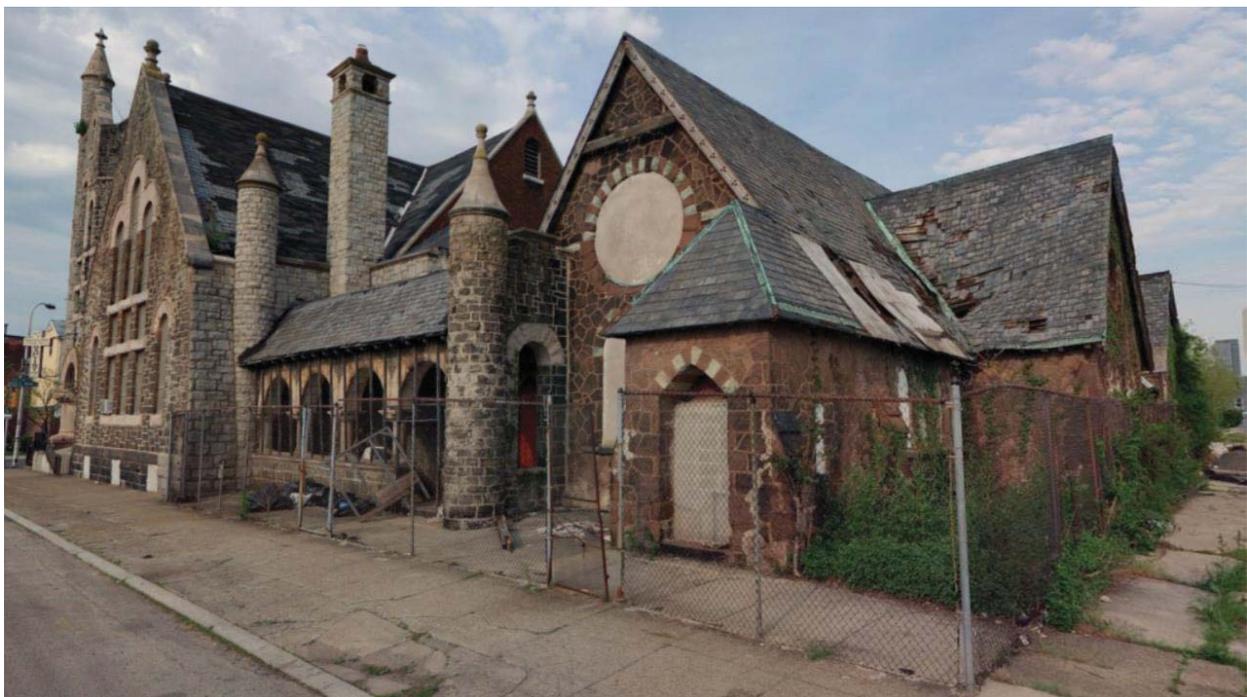
**Figure 8: Northern portion of the west elevation along N. 21<sup>st</sup> Street. Source: Cyclomedia, May 2018.**

Further south and recessed a few feet from the plane of the main sanctuary volume is a one-story arcade, clad like the rest of the 1893 church in gray granite with limestone details. This arcade of four ogive-arched openings has a shed roof of slate shingles flanked on either side by small turrets each capped by conical, ashlar-coursed limestone roofs and ball finials; the northernmost turret is taller and partially embedded in the main sanctuary volume. The arcade juts out from the main sanctuary space and ends after the fourth arch by turning into the 1870 brownstone chapel; the chapel's elevation is punctuated by a round-arched opening with a limestone voussoir and a sill at the same height of the side arch sills, all a couple of feet above grade level.



**Figure 9: The southern portion of the west elevation, including the one-story arcade and the west elevation of the 1870 chapel. Source: Cyclomedia, May 2018.**

The connection of the 1893 arcade and the 1870 chapel is at the northwest corner of the chapel whose end gabled altar wall is recessed from the plane of the arcade. The end gable contains a large, round window with voussoirs in alternating colors, a nod to Moorish detailing; this window has been completely infilled but may have originally contained a rose window not unlike the one at the south transept wall. The peaked gable is trimmed in weathered bargeboard with triple-dot surface ornamentation and rudimentary wood stick ornamentation in the gable peak. The final element in the west elevation of the chapel is a small, one-story, hip-roofed pod that juts out from the main sanctuary space of the chapel and is aligned with the face of the arcade. Centered in this elevation is a doorway with an ogive arch opening with voussoir in alternating colors.



**Figure 10: The southwest corner of the property at N. 21<sup>st</sup> and Nicholas Streets. The 1870 brownstone chapel building is to the south. Source: Cyclomedia, May 2018.**

### **South Elevation (Nicholas Street)**

The south elevation is the long side of the chapel portion of the complex interrupted by two end gables each expressing the transept (west) and the narthex (east). The chapel wall contains four ogive-arch windows with alternating color voussoirs at the west side of the transept and on the east side of the transept is another ogive-arch opening; all openings have been infilled. The transept end gable contains two pairs of double, ogive-arch openings (infilled) above which is an oculus with alternating-color voussoirs and the remnants of a wood window frame containing a center circular opening surrounded by five circular openings of the same size; there is no glazing in these openings, which are thus exposing the interior to the elements. The narthex end gable has the same projection in plan as the transept, but with a lower roofline. It has two ogive-arch openings from sill level to mid-height of the gable; as with all other openings in the exterior walls of the chapel, there are alternating color voussoirs at these two arches. Between these arched openings is a narrow vertical opening in the brownstone cladding that terminates above the height of the arches in a trefoil shape; all openings are completely infilled. Nestled to the west of the narthex end gable is a small, hip-roofed, shingled pod. The entire roof is covered in slate shingles, yet in various areas near the perimeter walls there is failure, patching, and some openings. The peaks of the roof have copper coping caps. Beyond the 1870 chapel, the roof of the 1891-93 church can be seen; it is currently covered in asphalt shingles with enough failure in parts to expose the slate shingles underneath. The gable end of the sanctuary altar wall is exposed and clad in brick veneer, representing its secondary elevation status, with a louvered, round opening in the gable peak. A granite chimney rises from the west side of this south gable, and on the east side there is a brick chimney.



**Figure 11: South elevation of the church complex showing the 1870 brownstone chapel and its 1876 addition to the east with pitched slate roof and the end gables of the narthex and transept. These portions of the property were used as a Sunday School, lecture room, and classrooms after the construction of the larger church in 1893. Photo by author.**



Figure 12: South elevation along Nicholas Street. Source: Cyclomedia, May 2018.

### **East Elevation**

The east elevation of the church complex is comprised of a party wall that has been completely exposed since the removal of adjacent properties over the years. At the north end of the remaining party wall is a large mural that has as an architectural motif a triple arch with central support columns that plays upon the double arched opening around the corner at the north elevation entrance to the Parlor wing of the building. Beyond these arches is a picturesque, painted landscape depicting water, mountains, trees and a blue sky beyond a stone arcade. The entire length of the east elevation party wall is covered with metal coping caps. Behind the mural wall, the roof of the north elevation's gabled porch entry shows exposed roofing felt. The end gable of the main sanctuary space is set back but shows a brick façade with several arched window openings mirroring those opposite that are expressed on the main gable of the west elevation. Despite the brick veneer that expresses its status as a secondary elevation, this gable end also has a limestone cap and finial, undoubtedly due to the height of the building and its role as neighborhood landmark. On the south slope of this same gabled roof is a brick chimney, capped but with openings just below the cap. Also visible, as at the south elevation is another chimney parged with a cementitious stucco that rises from the north side of the 1870 chapel. In the foreground of the east elevation are two lower, smaller hipped roofs covered in newer standing seam metal.



Figure 13: East elevation, from Cecil B. Moore Avenue. Photo by author.



Figure 14: East elevation as viewed from Nicholas Street. Source: Cyclomedia, May 2018.

**Interior\***

\*The interior of this property is not included in the nomination, but photographs from the 2018 real estate listing are provided for informational purposes. They also show several Tiffany windows that are obscured by exterior Plexiglas, but which are considered part of the exterior envelope of the property.



Figure 15: Looking south within the sanctuary. The stained glass arch over the organ behind the pulpit is the work of Tiffany Studios. Source: BHHS Fox & Roach-CC Rittenhouse Hotel. Listing Agent: Nadeen Hodge. 2018.

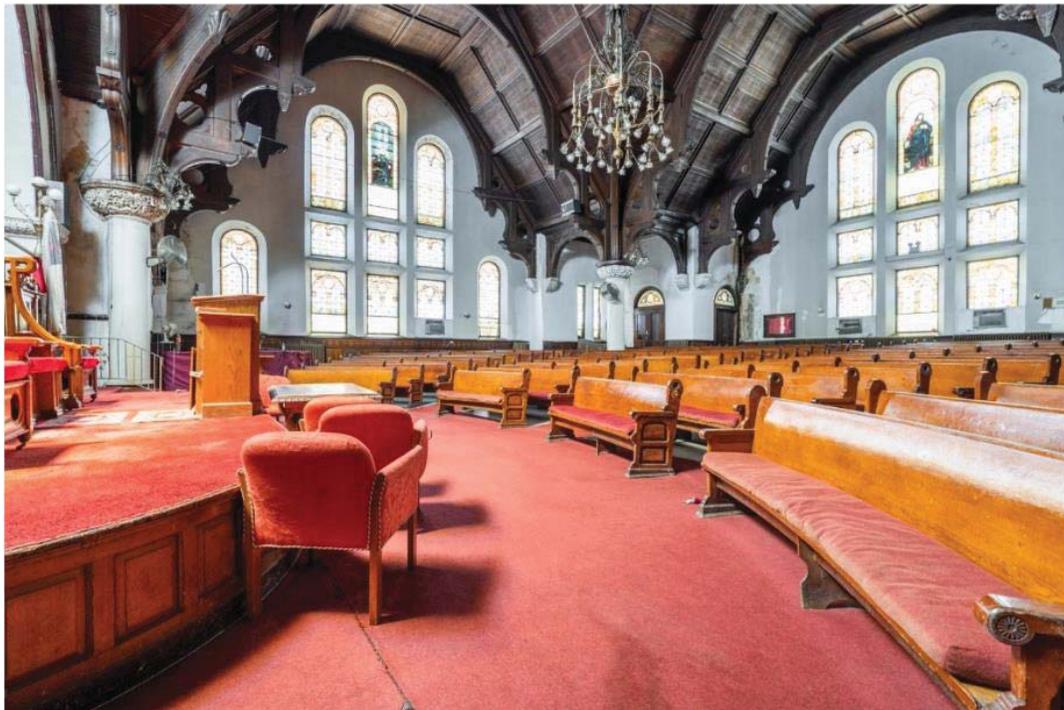


Figure 16: Looking northwest within the sanctuary. Windows in the north (right) and west (left) elevations are by Tiffany Studios. Source: BHHS Fox & Roach-CC Rittenhouse Hotel. Listing Agent: Nadeen Hodge. 2018.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church at 2036-40 Cecil B. Moore Avenue is a significant resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The property, which is located at the southeast corner of Cecil B. Moore Avenue and N. 21<sup>st</sup> Street in North Philadelphia and features building campaigns from the 1870s and 1893, satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D and E.

(c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;

(d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;

(e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.

The 1893 church, which embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Richardsonian Romanesque style, is representative of the national trend towards theatrical, auditorium-plan churches in the late nineteenth century, satisfying Criteria C and D. The 1870s chapel is significant under Criterion E as the work of significant local architect Henry Augustus Sims. The 1893 sanctuary is also significant under Criterion E for its stained glass windows, many of which were designed by the preeminent Tiffany Studios.

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The rapid industrialization of Philadelphia after the Act of Consolidation and the Civil War led to a population boom by foreign and native immigrants. William Penn's "greene countrie towne" with its pastoral landscapes and large country homes were rapidly replaced by an extension of the gridiron street plan and subdivided lots beyond Center City. Area churches seized upon the city's growth by building missionary outposts in newly developing neighborhoods such as North Philadelphia. In 1868, the Sunday School Association of the Spring Garden Presbyterian Church, located on 11<sup>th</sup> Street north of Spring Garden Street, established a mission Sunday School in an existing house on Nicholas Street near Ridge Avenue and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street.<sup>2</sup> They named it the McDowell Sabbath School of Philadelphia in honor of their first pastor Rev. John McDowell, who had died five years earlier.

In 1870, the Spring Garden Presbyterian Church commissioned local architect Henry Augustus Sims to design a brownstone chapel at N. 21<sup>st</sup> Street and Columbia Avenue (now Cecil B Moore Avenue) in the rapidly expanding North Philadelphia neighborhood. Originally known as the Columbia Avenue Presbyterian Church, the chapel was expanded just six years later (see Figure 17). In 1882, the Columbia Avenue Presbyterian Church absorbed the dwindling congregation of the Fairmount Presbyterian Church, located at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Callowhill Streets. This merger was followed by a second, with the diminishing Spring Garden congregation merging with the Columbia Avenue church in 1891. Renamed the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church, the expanded congregation quickly began planning the construction of a new church building. The new church building, designed by Wayne, PA-based architect J. William Shaw, was largely completed by the fall of 1893, and cost \$55,000 to construct (see Figure 18 and Appendix A for additional maps).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Based on historic maps, it appears this house was demolished by the church between 1875 and 1888. Source: Baist's Property Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Penna, complete in one volume, 1888.

<sup>3</sup> Wm. P. White and William H. Scott, *The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Allen, Lane & Scott, 1895), p. 83.

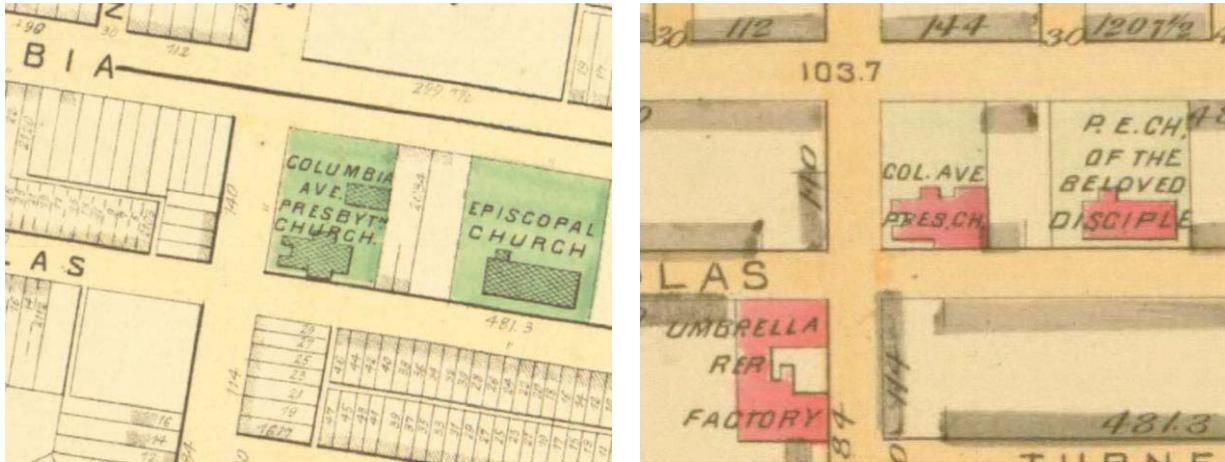


Figure 17: Left, detail of the 1875 *City Atlas of Philadelphia, Vol. 6, Ward 29* by George M. Hopkins. The mission Sunday School was initially housed in an existing building, shown here in the center of the parcel, along with the 1870 chapel designed by Henry A. Sims. The church was initially named for Columbia Avenue, the site's frontage to the north. Right, detail of the 1888 *Baist's Property Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, showing the 1876 addition to the church, and the removal of the original building that housed the Sunday School. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.



Figure 18: Left, detail of the 1910 *G.W. Bromley Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* showing the expansion of the church by J. William Shaw and the name change to McDowell Memorial. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

By the time of the Great Depression, the demographics of the neighborhood around the church had changed from primarily white to predominantly African-American, and most of the members of the white McDowell Presbyterian congregation had left the area. In 1936, the church applied for dissolution, and a new entity—the McDowell Memorial Community Presbyterian Church Sunday School Mission—was formed, with the intent to serve the area's African-American residents.<sup>4</sup> After a period of growth, the congregation fell to the pressure of “a different socio-economic group that did not respond to Presbyterian worship or organization.”<sup>5</sup> In 1954, the Trustees of the Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church, under the leadership of Rev. Quinton D. Davis, acquired the building.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Emily T. Cooperman, Ph.D. “McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church.” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. March 27, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Hammonds, *Historical Directory*, pp. 74

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B for additional information on the Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church and founder Rev. Quinton D. Davis.

**Criterion E: Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.**

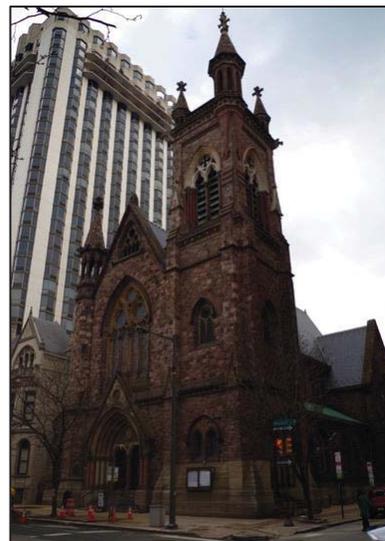
The church complex at the southeast corner of Cecil B. Moore Avenue and N. 21<sup>st</sup> Street was constructed in two phases by two local architects for one Philadelphia-based Presbyterian congregation. The 1870 gable-roofed brownstone chapel was designed by Henry Augustus Sims and constructed at the southern end of the property by the McDowell Sunday School Association, a missionary outpost of the Spring Garden Presbyterian Church. In 1893, construction was completed on the granite sanctuary volume, designed by architect J. William Shaw. The congregational assembly by this time was known as the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church. While little is known about J. William Shaw, Henry A. Sims is a local architect whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, and cultural development of Philadelphia and elsewhere.

*Henry Augustus Sims*

Born in Philadelphia in 1832, Henry Augustus Sims trained as a civil engineer. By 1851 and with the emergence of railroads coinciding with the end of his studies, Sims found employment with one of the emerging companies in Canada, the Bytown and Prescott Railway. By 1856, he began practicing architecture, opening up his own practice in Ottawa in 1858 and eventually becoming a Canadian citizen. After returning to Philadelphia in 1866, he occupied an office at 6<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Streets according to the 1868 Philadelphia City Directory where, by 1872, he was joined by his younger brother James P. Sims. They practiced together until Henry's early death in 1875.

The Sims brothers are accredited with the 1872 Second Presbyterian Church (now the First Presbyterian Church) at Walnut and S. 21<sup>st</sup> Streets in Philadelphia; St. John's Chapel (now Church of the Advent) in Cape May, New Jersey; and the Washington County Courthouse in Hagerstown, Maryland. One of the most beautiful of the brothers' designs was the 1873-74 Girard Avenue Bridge over the Schuylkill River, a commission more often associated with its engineers since it was a five-span iron Pratt truss bridge, an elegant construction and one that made the bridge immediately popular for promenades. This design for the Girard Avenue Bridge was the second bridge at this crossing and built in anticipation of the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Fairmount Park.

According to the Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects: 1700-1930, "many of Sims's building in both Ottawa and the Philadelphia area show a fine interest in the Gothic Revival, most appropriate for the churches which he and his brother designed, such as St. John's Episcopal Church in Prescott, [Ontario,] Canada, as well as the many country and city residences which the brothers produced."<sup>7</sup> Though prominent in Philadelphia architecture for only a brief period, Henry A. Sims was indeed a passionate practitioner of the Gothic Revival, although he never visited Europe. Historian Michael J. Lewis wrote of Sims that "architectural design was for [him] a kind of controlled improvisation, guided by intuition and principle."<sup>8</sup> Lewis describes Sims as possessing a piety about architectural and structural truths whose library was a pedantic monument to such beliefs. Yet, in spite of his library offering him a



**Figure 19: Photo of First Presbyterian Church (originally Second Presbyterian) on Walnut at 21st Street, constructed in 1872, by Henry A. and James P. Sims. The corner bell tower was designed by Furness, Evans & Co. in 1900. Photo by author.**

<sup>7</sup> Sandra Tatman and Roger W. Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects 1700-1930*, (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), 724.

<sup>8</sup> Michael J. Lewis, "The Architectural Library of Henry A. Sims", in *American Architects and Their Books, 1840-1915*, ed. Kenneth Hafertepe and James F. O'Gorman, (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 186.

plethora of stylistic details and constructions, Sims, according to Lewis, was unable to integrate the theoretical and practical lobes of his mind, scrambling for his architectural sensibilities to be revealed as completely as his thorough structural knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps in acquiescence to this gap, Sims did put considerable energy into his associational memberships. The Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects owes its organization to Sims, among others; he was active with its educational committee and served as its secretary of foreign correspondence. In 1870, Sims became a stockholder of The Athenaeum of Philadelphia. In 1872, Sims was the first architect to join the Sketch Club and was instrumental in moving the club to 10 North Merrick Street, adjacent to the AIA's local offices.<sup>10</sup> He died at age 42 in 1875.

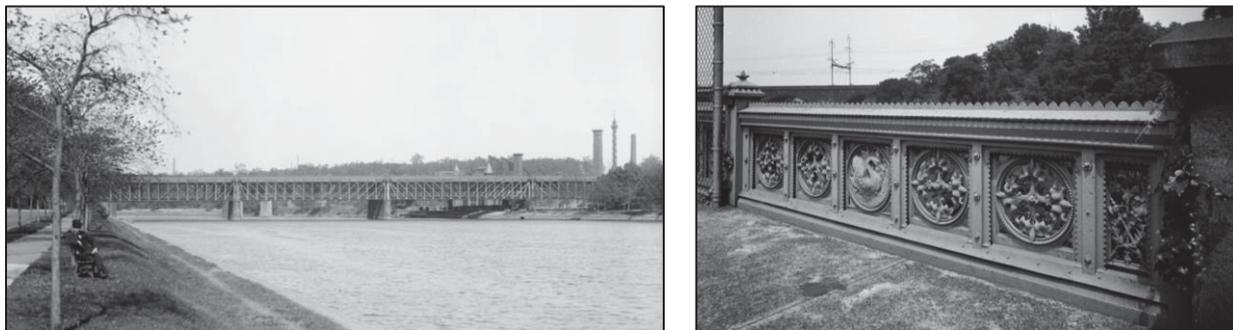


Figure 20: The Girard Avenue Bridge, designed by Henry A. and James P. Sims. Left, the bridge from a distance, in 1900; Right, detail of the balustrade, in 1933. Source: Library of Congress, HABS PA-1657.

### J. William Shaw

Less is known about architect J. William Shaw (1882-1914), who was tapped to design the new sanctuary building adjacent to Sims' chapel for the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church. Ultimately known for his residential and small civic buildings in and around Wayne and Radnor Township, PA, as well as for a smattering of large residences in the Overbrook and Germantown neighborhoods of Philadelphia, it is fair to say that the church commission in North Philadelphia for the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church was his masterpiece. Shaw's other buildings in Philadelphia included two residences for Horace Finch Smith, an 1890 French Romanesque Revival on West Upsal Street in Germantown and a 1893 Colonial Revival at 5855 Drexel Road in Overbrook Farms.<sup>11</sup> Shaw also designed the Trinity Presbyterian Church Sunday School (now the Cambodian Baptist Church) on East Cambria Street. According to the *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects: 1700-1930*, Shaw "maintained an office in Philadelphia from 1889 to 1892 at 233 South 4th Street and from 1895 to 1899 at 14 South Broad Street. Subsequently he was employed by the Pennsylvania Railroad at the Broad Street Station."<sup>12</sup> Although appearing in Philadelphia City Directories sporadically from 1883 to 1914 as an architect or draftsman, Shaw primarily worked and



Figure 21: Rendering dated October 1890 of a house in Wayne, Delaware County, PA designed by J. William Shaw. From the Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library, Delaware.

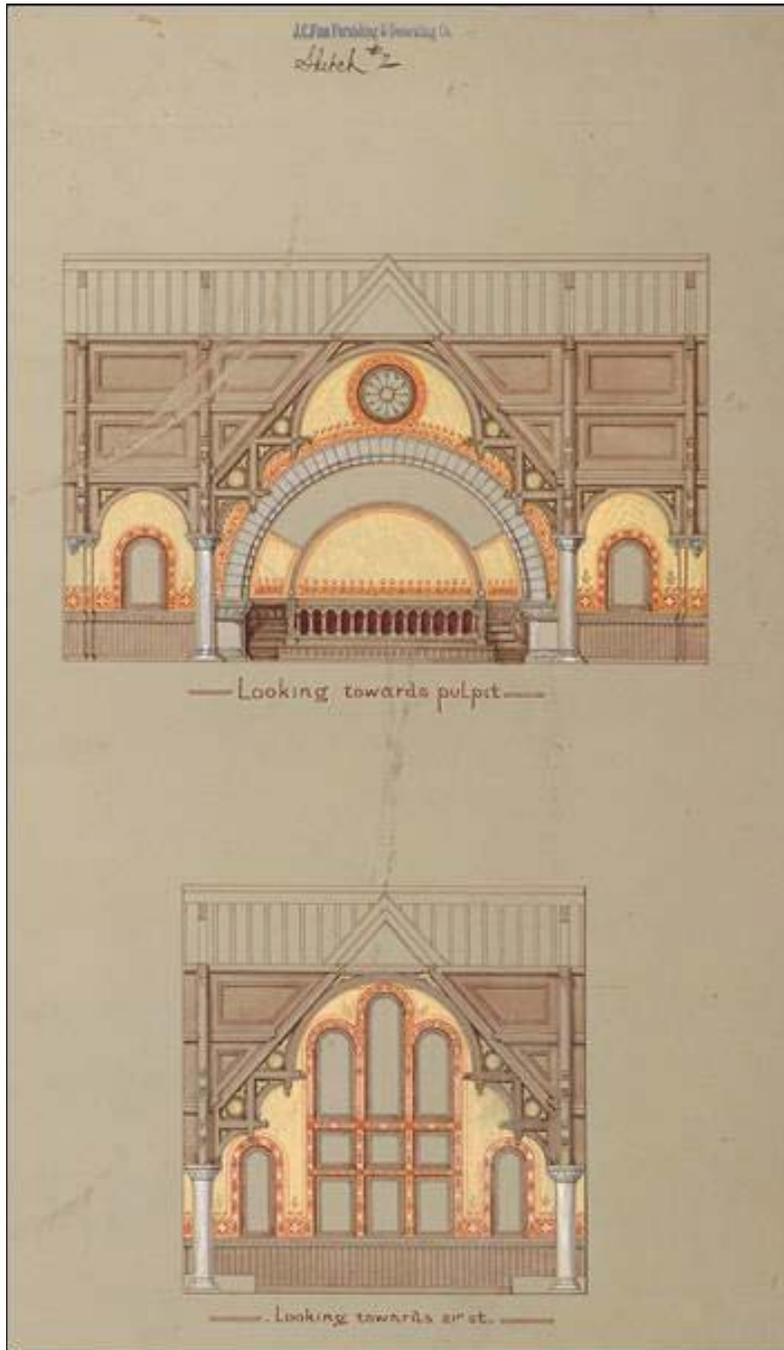
<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>10</sup> "Henry Augustus Sims," Philadelphia Sketch Club, accessed December 16, 2015, [www.sketchclub.org/art-collection/archives/](http://www.sketchclub.org/art-collection/archives/).

<sup>11</sup> Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Overbrook Farms Historic District, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2004, 66.

<sup>12</sup> Tatman and Moss, 713.

lived in Wayne, Pennsylvania where he designed several buildings including the Strait Residence, the Engine House, and the Union Hall.<sup>13</sup>

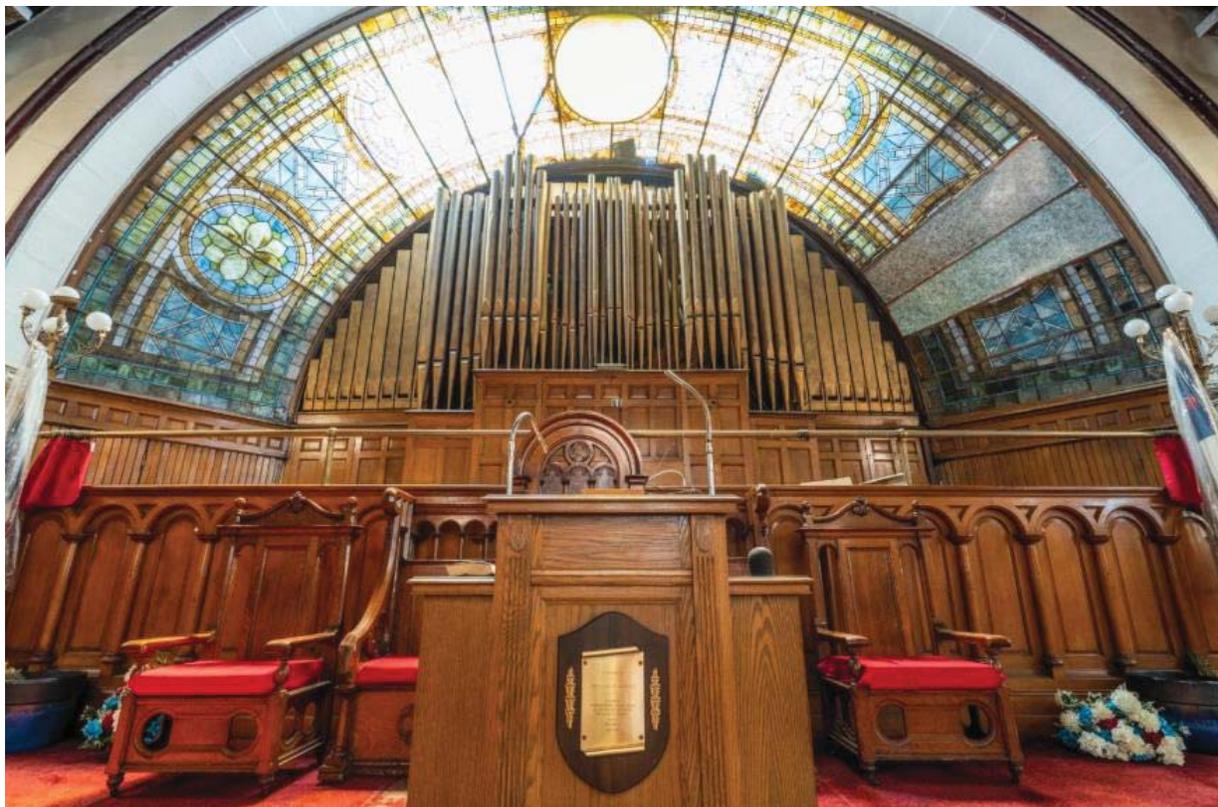


**Figure 22: Color renderings of two interior elevations at the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church by J. William Shaw. The stamp at the top of the page reads “J.C. Finn Furnishing & Decorating Co.” Tiffany Studios provided the windows, not detailed here. The interior of the church today has white walls as opposed to the multicolored and stenciled walls shown in this rendering. Source: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library, Delaware.**

<sup>13</sup> The Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera at the Winterthur Library in Delaware has among its holdings several of J. William Shaw's drawings and blueprints; they were purchased from George S. MacManus, an antiquarian bookdealer in Philadelphia. There are 146 items in all, including many beautiful perspective renderings. Many of the holdings relate to the Horace F. Smith House in Germantown or to the many commissions that Shaw had in the Philadelphia area including stations and associated buildings for the Pennsylvania Railroad. Source: J. William Shaw (1860, Collection 279), The Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, 11/30/2015. Finding Aid at the Winterthur Library, Wilmington, Delaware.

### *Tiffany Studios*

The Census of Stained Glass Windows in America, commissioned by Macdeonia Free Will Baptist Church in 1993, notes that several of the 1893 sanctuary windows are the work of the Tiffany Glass Company (renamed Tiffany Studios in 1902).<sup>14</sup> Tiffany Glass Company was established in 1885 by New York City-born Louis Comfort Tiffany, an interior designer, painter, and aesthete best known for his stained glass windows and lamps, who also embraced a number of other mediums, including metalwork, enamel, and jewelry. Inspired by the collection of Roman and Syrian glass he saw at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1865, Tiffany, an interior designer, turned his attention towards the creation of stained glass in 1878. Unable to find the types or quality of glass he sought for his interior design projects, Tiffany opened his own studio and glass foundry. While many of Tiffany's commissions were for wealthy and high-profile clients in New York, he was sought after by public and private clients on a national and international scale. Given the nature of his work, many of Tiffany's clients were religious institutions. In Philadelphia, in addition to the windows for McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church, two of Tiffany's high-profile religious commissions were the Church of the Holy Trinity (19<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Streets) and First Presbyterian Church (21<sup>st</sup> and Walnut Streets).



**Figure 23: Among other windows, the stained glass arch over the organ behind the pulpit, at the southern end of the sanctuary, is the work of Tiffany Studios. Source: BHHS Fox & Roach-CC Rittenhouse Hotel. Listing Agent: Nadeen Hodge. 2018.**

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<sup>14</sup> The Census of Stained Glass Windows in America notes that Windows L201, 100, R201, F201, \*L1, \*R1, \*R100, and \*L2 are the work of Tiffany Studios. Source: Philadelphia Architects and Buildings website, Athenaeum of Philadelphia.



Figure 24: Among other windows, the stained glass windows on the north elevation along Cecil B. Moore Avenue are the work of Tiffany Studios. Source: BHHS Fox & Roach-CC Rittenhouse Hotel. Listing Agent: Nadeen Hodge. 2018.

**Criteria C and D:**

***Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; and embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen***

Shaw's design for the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church embodied the latest trends in Protestant church design of the day, and embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Having achieved missionary success with the 1870 chapel by Sims, the presbytery was able to make a dramatic gesture with this new architectural expression. Colonial-era Protestant churches had been rectangular affairs, boxes with center aisles that put the focus on the lectern and had a formality and sparseness of décor. This classical arrangement gave way to a complex assortment of towers, bays, and niches untethered to earlier church symmetry. By the time of the sanctuary's design, Protestant churches throughout the country were experiencing an aesthetic revival, with a bent toward a theatricality in the architecture that reflected concurrent doctrinal movements within the major denominations. According to Jeanne Halgren Kilde, the vocabulary of churches in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century shifted from Greek and Roman to one that was more medieval, with an exterior solidity expressed in masonry and an interior that was often lavishly opulent.<sup>15</sup>

Designed in the Romanesque style with Richardsonian influences, the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church took full advantage of its location at the intersection of two, well-traveled streets (N. 21st Street and Columbia Avenue) to provide an impressive though welcoming entry-point for parishioners through two openings in a tall, corner tower. The turreted tower is the most prominent physical element of the

<sup>15</sup> Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth Century America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

building. Additionally, the church sanctuary is an auditorium plan, taking up the full volume under the cruciform-plan roof. The panopticon aspect of the sanctuary plan allowed for a heightened theatrical church experience, very much in line with the trend of evangelical and Reformed Protestant churches of the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. Distinctive characteristics of Richardsonian Romanesque embodied in the church include a “restricted exterior color palette, the prominent use of large-scale, round-arch openings with large, beaded-edge voussoirs, large-scale, quarry-faced stone ashlar, the division of window groups into vertical sections by the use of slightly projecting sills and lintels, the use of a principal, rectilinear-plan tower in combination with secondary round- and hexagonal-plan towers, and the use of massive, broadly proportioned columns with Romanesque Revival, foliate capitals.”<sup>16</sup>

The corner tower ensured that one entered the sanctuary at the corner of the room to survey a stage at the opposite corner of the room and curved seating that radiated out from that stage; the overall impression of movement through such a space was much more experiential than ever before. The ceiling of the main worship space at McDowell was expressed in wood as a groin vault with four symmetrical quadrants over the sanctuary seating, accentuating the diamond shape of the space. The trusses and hammer beams above frame two elevations with Tiffany windows, complemented by a Tiffany arch above the altar. If the church interior were a baseball field, the exterior windows would be at left and right field while the altar would be at home plate. Such an interior arrangement allowed not only for good sightlines and acoustics, but a stronger focus on the pastor and a better relationship between speaker and audience. This architectural arrangement spoke to the evangelical orientation of the leaders of the McDowell Memorial Church whose very presence in this neighborhood was to take advantage of the arrival of new residents lured by Philadelphia’s impressive job growth of the time.

## **Conclusion**

Constructed phases between 1870 and 1893, Columbia Avenue, and later McDowell Memorial, Presbyterian Church at 2036-40 Cecil B. Moore Avenue is a significant ecclesiastical work worthy of listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The 1870 brownstone chapel was designed by a significant local architect, and the 1893 church is of a form and style reflective of the era in which it was constructed and the theatrical turn American Protestant churches took in the late nineteenth century, and retains stained glass windows by a prominent firm. The solid Romanesque forms and theatrical expression of stone and colored glass along a major arterial street have been a neighborhood landmark for over one hundred years, and have provided a dramatic forum for worship and musical productions for both Presbyterian and Free Will Baptist congregations.

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<sup>16</sup> Cooperman, 13-14.

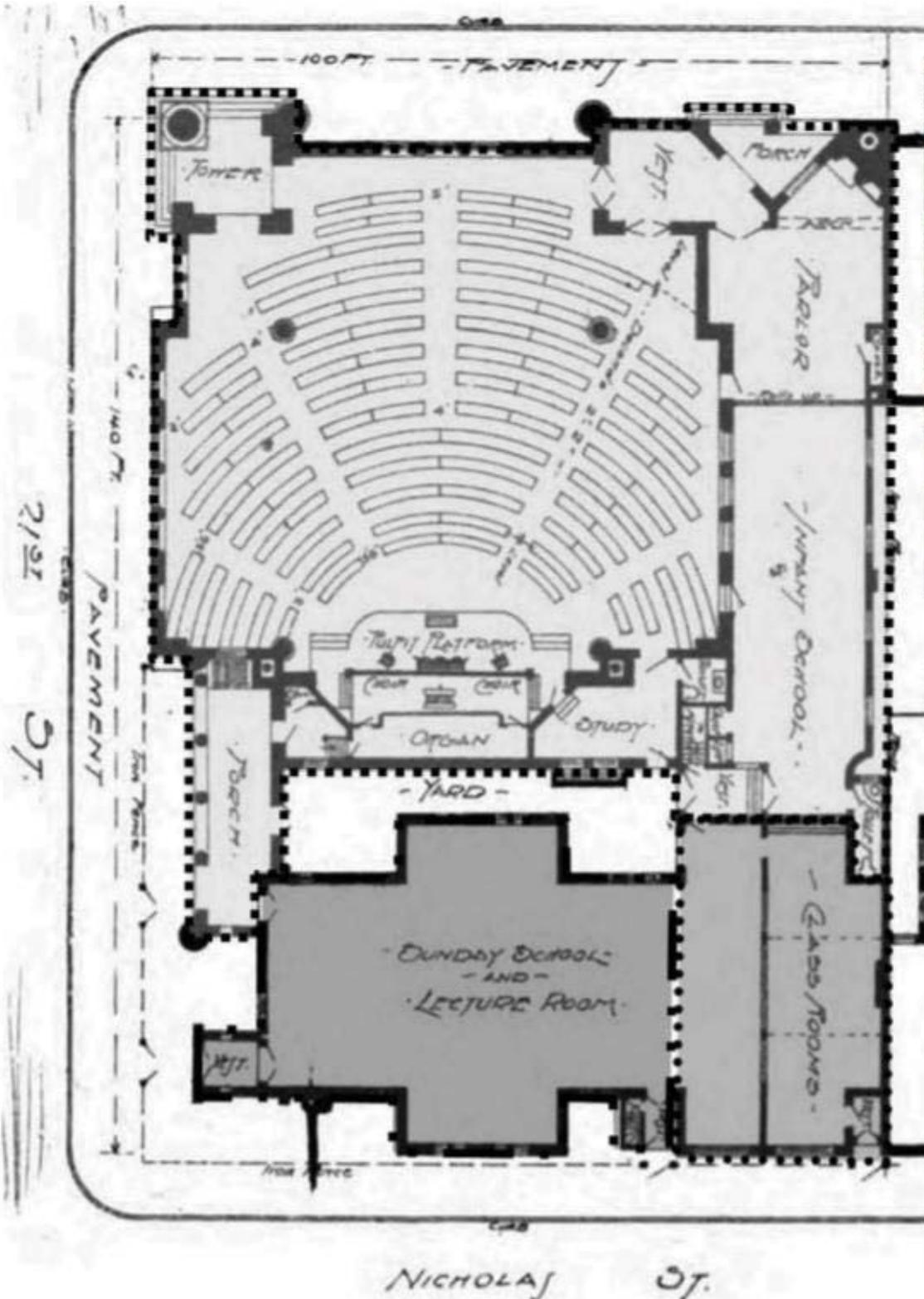


Figure 25: The plan of McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church, published in 1893, shows the different phases of construction and use of the buildings. The 1893 auditorium form sanctuary at the top of the drawing is shown in the lightest grey. The 1870 chapel is labeled “Sunday School and Lecture Room,” is shown in the darkest grey. The 1876 extension of the chapel, labeled “Class Rooms,” is shaded in medium grey. Source: (original) *Architecture and Building*, Vol. 18, no. 25 (June 24, 1893): 25; shaded drawing from the National Register nomination by Emily T. Cooperman, PhD., 2013.



Figure 26: View looking east down Columbia Avenue with the church to the south, on the right side of the photograph, taken July 27, 1950. Note the presence of trolley tracks indicating that both Columbia Avenue and N. 21st Street were used as transportation thoroughfares, with tracks in either direction along Columbia, linking the neighborhood east to Broad Street and west to Fairmount Park and the Schuylkill. This street now called Cecil B. Moore Avenue and links Fairmount Park to Frankford Avenue in Kensington. Digital image from the Department of Records, City of Philadelphia, [www.phillyhistory.org](http://www.phillyhistory.org), accessed September 17, 2015.

Appendix A: Additional Maps



Figure 27: 1862 Smedley Atlas of the City of Philadelphia illustrating the expansion of the city grid into North Philadelphia. Development is being established along Ridge Avenue to the west of the site, though the church isn't yet there.



Figure 28: 1875 City Atlas of Philadelphia, Vol. 6, Ward 29 by George M. Hopkins. The mission Sunday School was initially housed in an existing building, shown here in the center of the parcel, along with the 1870 chapel designed by Henry A. Sims. The church was initially named for Columbia Avenue, the site's frontage to the north. Most of the neighborhood's parcels along arterial streets have by this point been prepared for development to include low-industrial factories, stables, and markets amidst rowhouse development.



Figure 29: 1895 Atlas of the City of Philadelphia by George W. Bromley & Co. The church now takes up its entire parcel, reflecting the 1891-93 building campaign. The neighborhood is dense with rowhouse development supplemented by commercial buildings along Ridge Avenue. Factories and large markets are set on larger parcels adjacent to, but not facing, the main commercial corridors of Ridge and Columbia. Source; Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.



Figure 30: The controversial 1934 J.M. Brewer Appraisal Map shows the change in demographics for the neighborhood surrounding the church from its origins in a predominantly white area to a solidly African-American neighborhood, with different religious backgrounds. Source; Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

## Appendix B: The Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church

The Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church was founded on May 9, 1954, by Rev. Quinton D. Davis (1917-1980). Davis was born in Worth County, Georgia and thus shared a heritage with many of his black contemporaries who had arrived in northern cities to escape Southern terrorism during the Great Migration. Davis organized a church that was initially located in a house on N. 13<sup>th</sup> Street, followed by another residential location at N. 24<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson Streets in the Sharswood neighborhood. The congregation then moved into the former McDowell Memorial Church, celebrating its first Sunday services in June, 1961.<sup>17</sup> Macedonia mirrored the culture of the black middle class even as civil rights battles occurred around them. A 1967 article in the *Philadelphia Tribune* mentioned a 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration for Pastor Davis with a banquet and fashion show; guests included area church leaders and Macedonia officers and members.

Clippings in the *Philadelphia Tribune* from the 1960s onward paint a portrait of Macedonia as a church dedicated to a strong music ministry, especially through the Davis Chorus, and a congregation that was active in its community. Church leadership at the time seemed to nurture relationships with other Baptist churches, Free Will or otherwise. They certainly had many partners nearby. By the 1950s, as post-war white flight solidified the neighborhood demographics as largely African American, former Lutheran and Presbyterian church buildings were given new life by Baptist and Pentecostal congregations. In addition to the purpose-built Miller Memorial Baptist Church on N. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, the former Hebron Presbyterian Church at Thompson and 25<sup>th</sup> Streets became the United Missionary Baptist Church, the former St. Luke's German Reform Church on N. 26<sup>th</sup> Street became the Christian Hope Baptist Church, and Mt. Zion Pentecostal Church in the former 20<sup>th</sup> Street Methodist Episcopal Church at Jefferson and N. 20<sup>th</sup> Streets. Funerals for pastors of defunct Baptist churches in Philadelphia were regularly held at Macedonia, according to news briefs in the *Philadelphia Tribune*, confirming church connections.

The Macedonia Free Will Baptist Church has been led by Rev. Gary Dunlap, the church's third pastor. Rev. Dunlap and his ministry at Macedonia have made enough of an impact on the neighborhood that in 2007, artist Cavin Jones included him and the church building in Jones' mural *Facial Unity*. The mural is painted on the side of a rowhouse on Cecil B. Moore Avenue, across from the church at the corner of Lambert Street. The neighbors with whom Jones discussed the mural mentioned that the church should be depicted. Extending the legacy of the Davis Chorus, the church has hosted several gospel choirs and festivals through the years.



Figure 31: Left, news clipping about Macedonia founding pastor Quinton Davis celebrating his 14<sup>th</sup> year with the church in 1967. Rev. and Mrs. Davis were praised for their work with the church at a banquet lunch and fashion show, an elegant event that speaks to the middle-class profile of the congregation. Members of other Baptist churches were in attendance. Source: *Philadelphia Tribune*. Right, a 2007 mural by Cavin Jones called *Facial Unity* that was painted on the side of a rowhouse facing Cecil B. Moore Avenue at Lambert Street, across from the church. Jones mentioned that

the community around this mural site wanted to include a rendering of Macedonia Freewill Baptist Church. Jones added portraits of people who lived in the neighborhood “to reflect all the different types of people in this almost exclusively African American neighborhood: all ages and skin tones and groups.” Photo by author.

<sup>17</sup> “Pastor and Wife Feted On 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary”, *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 8, 1967.

<sup>18</sup> Robin Rice, “Deck the Walls”, *Philadelphia Citypaper*, October 4-11, 2001, accessed January 29, 2016, <http://mycitypaper.com/articles/100401/ae.art.mural.shtml>.

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