

**ADDRESS: 1010 S 10TH ST**

Name of Resource: First Italian Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Trustees of the Presbytery of Philadelphia

Nominator: Bella Vista Neighbors Association

Staff Contact: Kim Chantry, kim.chantry@phila.gov

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1010 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the former First Italian Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia satisfies Criteria for Designation A, E, and J. Under Criterion A, the nomination argues that the church has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation, as a physical example of the social outreach efforts of the Presbytery in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the influx of Italian immigrants arriving in America. Under Criterion E, the nomination argues that the church was designed in 1908 by Charles W. Bolton & Son, a prolific family enterprise in Philadelphia in the early twentieth century that specialized in ecclesiastical design and whose work significantly influenced the historical and architectural development of the City, Commonwealth, and Nation. Under Criterion J, the nomination contends that the property exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, and historical heritage of the community, as a purpose-built church to serve the Italian immigrant population that had settled in the Little Italy neighborhood of South Philadelphia.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1010 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A, E, and J.



**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: 1010 S. 10th Street

Postal code: 19147

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: First Italian Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia

Current/Common Name: Christ Presbyterian 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: Place of worship

**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 1908 to 1973

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1908-09

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Charles W. Bolton & Son

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Harrison W. Rea, builder

Original owner: Trustees of the Presbytery of Philadelphia

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 Bella Vista Neighbors Association Date 09 January 2021

Name with Title Ralph Marano, Member Email ralph.marano1@gmail.com

Street Address 627 Kenilworth St. Telephone 215-923-3375

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19147

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: January 21, 2021

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: May 19, 2021

Date of Notice Issuance: June 21, 2021

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: TRUSTEES OF PRESBYTERY OF PHILADELPHIA

Address: 915 E GOWEN AVE

City: PHILADELPHIA State: PA Postal Code: 19150

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

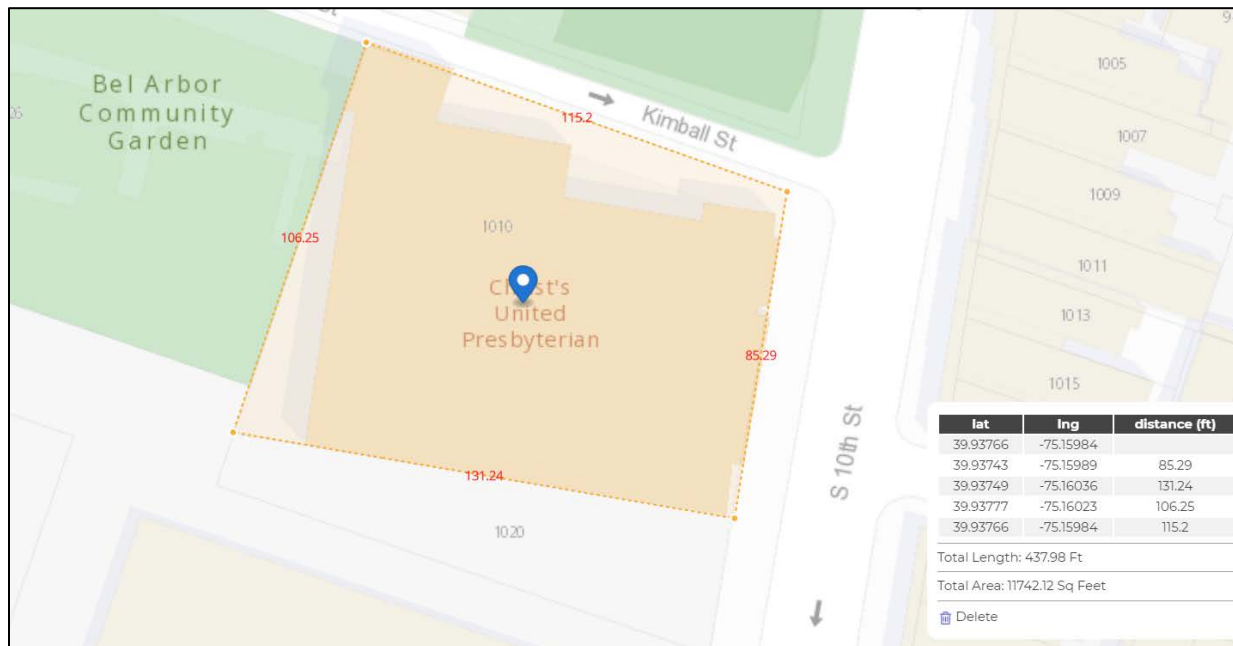
Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

## 5. Boundary Description



Located at the northwest corner of the intersection of S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Kimball Street, the subject property extends south approximately 85 feet along the west side of S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street to a point; thence extends westward along property lines approximately 131 feet to a point; thence extends northward along the rear property line approximately 106 feet; thence extends eastward along the south side of Kimball Street approximately 115 feet to the point of beginning. Being 1010 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The vacant land at 1020 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, under the same ownership, is not included as part of the proposed designation.

## 6. Architectural Description

Located at the corner of S.10th Street and Kimball Street in the Bella Vista neighborhood of Philadelphia, the former First Italian Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia stands out among the surrounding dense rowhouses and neighboring park.





Figure 1. View of church building from S. 10th Street. February 2021.



Figure 2. Undated illustration of the subject building, prior to alterations. Source: Michael DiPilla, *South Philadelphia's Little Italy and 9th Street Italian Market*. (United States: Arcadia Publishing Incorporated, 2016), 124.



The red brick church building fronts S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street and rises two stories in height. The building was designed in 1908 in the Italian Renaissance Revival style (Figure 3). The two-story nave is gabled and is surrounded by a low-pitched roof section of the building to the south and west. The red brick exterior is dominated by a large round arch stained-glass window on both the front (east) and side (north) facades. All stained-glass windows on the church are secured behind a plexiglass material (Figure 4). The main entrance on S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street features a marble surround with pediment, located up a flight of steps at the base of the church tower (Figure 5). The tower has been capped at the height of two stories, having had its bell tower removed at some time after it is shown in a photograph from 1954 (Figure 10).



Figure 3. East (front) elevation of 1010 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street. February 2021.





Figure 4. One of two dominant stained glass windows, this one along the Kimball Street side elevation, showing the stained glass protected behind plexiglass. February 2021.





Figure 5. Main entrance with truncated tower above. February 2021.



The Kimball Street side of the church, which faces north, replicates the appearance of the gabled nave on the front façade, and then connects to the rear section of the complex that features a mix of original and infilled window openings (Figure 6). A non-historic one-story garage addition was added in 1936.



Figure 6. North (side) elevation along Kimball Street, taken from Carpenter Street. February 2021.

The south side of the building faces onto the small lot at 1020 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, which is under the same ownership as the subject property, and is used for outdoor gardening and seating. The south side elevation features windows of various sizes and conditions, with some retaining their stained glass (Figure 7).



Figure 7. South (side) elevation of the subject building. February 2021.



The rear of the building faces west onto a community garden. The two-story red brick façade features three multi-pane round arch windows (Figure 8).



Figure 8. West (rear) elevation facing community garden. February 2021.





Figure 9. 1954 photograph of S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street facades of subject building. The section at the left was a parsonage addition, constructed in 1914, and has since been demolished. Source: PhillyHistory.org.



Figure 10. 1954 photograph of the subject building, showing the bell tower which has been removed. Source: PhillyHistory.org.



## 7. Statement of Significance

The property at 1010 S. 10th Street is historically significant and merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Pursuant to Section 14-1004(1) of the Philadelphia Code, the property satisfies Criteria for Designation A, E, and J. The property has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation, as a physical example of the social outreach efforts of the Presbytery in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the influx of Italian immigrants arriving in America, satisfying Criterion A. The property exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, and historical heritage of the community, as a purpose-built church to serve the Italian immigrant population that had settled in the Little Italy neighborhood of South Philadelphia, satisfying Criterion J. Lastly, the church was designed in 1908 by Charles W. Bolton & Son, a prolific family enterprise in Philadelphia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that specialized in ecclesiastical design and whose work significantly influenced the historical and architectural development of the City, Commonwealth, and Nation, satisfying Criterion E.

(A) Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.

(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.

(J) Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, and historical heritage of the community.

### Site and Building History

During the late 19th century, Philadelphia saw a large influx of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. In response to this, the Philadelphia Presbytery initiated outreach efforts to the Italians who settled in the neighborhood that became known as “Little Italy,” and is now known as Bella Vista. This proselytizing aimed to wean Italian immigrants away from Catholicism in the belief that this would better facilitate their assimilation into the “melting pot” of American culture.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jeanne Outlaw-Cannavo, “Protestant Roots in the Delaware Valley’s Italian-American Community,” *The Delaware Valley Italian-American Herald*, August 2019, p. 5.

Around 1900 a tent was erected on the southwest corner of 10th and Kimball streets to form a Presbyterian center in "Little Italy." Services were held on Sundays for two years and then a temporary structure built of corrugated iron and wood was erected on the lot.<sup>2</sup> However, this temporary structure was quickly viewed as something that was holding the church back, rather than advancing its mission. A 1904 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article (Figure 11) provides the pastor's plea for "a new building that shall look like a church" in order to "impress the people."<sup>3</sup> Later that year, the first donation of \$50 was received towards the permanent building fund.<sup>4</sup>



Figure 11. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 22, 1904, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 11, 1902, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 22, 1904, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 3, 1904, p. 5.



The current building was constructed in 1908-09 at a cost of approximately \$38,000 or \$80,000 (depending on the source) and named the First Italian Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. It was dedicated in early October 1909, and had a seating capacity of 1,200 and classrooms to accommodate 500 children (Figure 12 and Figure 13).<sup>5</sup>

morning and evening services.  
The dedication of the First Italian Presbyterian Church will take place tomorrow. The dedicatory sermon will be preached by Rev. Arnaldo Stasio, the pastor, and the words of dedication and prayer will be by Rev. W. P. Fulton. The dedicatory services will continue during the entire week. The Day of Rejoicing will be observed by the Sunday school in the afternoon, and a popular meeting will be held in the evening, presided over by Robert N. Willson, when addresses will be made by John H. Converse, Rev. William Henry Roberts and Rev. Paul Miraglis. On Monday the Presbytery of Philadelphia will meet in the new church, when the building will be formally transferred to the Presbytery. Tuesday night will be Sunday school night, Wednesday night is set apart as Italian night, and on Thursday evening there will be a musical and social.

Figure 12. Announcement of the church dedication. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 2, 1909, p. 6.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 18, 1909, p. 7.



Figure 13. Announcement of the presentation of the church to the Presbytery in October 1909. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 5, 1909, p. 11.

The Rev. Arnaldo Stasio was installed as its first pastor. In addition to the worship area, the building contains a gymnasium and meeting rooms once used for kindergarten, primary school, and industrial education. The original building contained a bell tower which was removed sometime after 1954. The beautifully maintained interior includes a large, magnificent organ donated to the church by John Wanamaker, according to a church elder. See Appendix A for interior photographs. Note that the building's interior is not proposed for historic designation.

#### Satisfaction of Criteria (A) and (J)

(A) Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.

(J) Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, and historical heritage of the community.



Throughout the history of Philadelphia, the neighborhood now known as Bella Vista has seen significant demographic and socioeconomic changes. In the mid-19th century, the neighborhood was ripe with racial discord, poverty, and violence. Today, Bella Vista is a popular neighborhood due to its familial and friendly atmosphere. One of the many factors that have contributed to this is the ubiquitous, vibrant culture and history of the neighborhood. For evidence of this, one need to look no further than the buildings, particularly the churches, in the area.

Christ Presbyterian Church has been a constant support to the community throughout the various cultural shifts seen in Bella Vista over the years. Built over one hundred years ago as the First Italian Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, it continues to house worship services for a smaller but vibrant congregation and to provide important social services to the residents of Bella Vista.

The unification of Italy in 1848 led to income inequality and economic hardship, especially for the population of southern Italy. As a result, thousands of Italians came to America seeking a better life. Philadelphia was a popular destination, and the proximity of the Washington Avenue Immigration Station directed many of the Italians to the neighborhood we now know as Bella Vista. Behind only New York City, Philadelphia became home to the 2nd largest “Little Italy” in America.

The Italians found themselves in a completely new environment, one with a different language and new customs. They naturally came together to experience the familiarity of their traditions, foods, religion, language, and heritage. Since over 95% of Italians are Roman Catholic, the local catholic church became a primary source of support and affiliation.

In Philadelphia, discrimination against Italians and Catholics was common during this period. Although the violence and catholic riots that occurred during the 1840's was no longer prevalent, membership in protestant church denominations was often considered more aligned with the American way of life. Presbyterian proselytizing aimed to wean Italian immigrants away from Catholicism, as many believed this would facilitate assimilation into the more mainstream “melting pot” of American culture.

The First Italian Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia was the outgrowth of a small mission started in 1897 by Rev. Felix Santilli.<sup>6</sup> Its first services were held outdoors under tents at 10<sup>th</sup> and Kimball Streets. A 1903 newspaper article states, “The Committee on Italian Work reported that the first Italian Presbyterian Church had been established in Little Italy with a membership of forty Italians.”<sup>7</sup> By 1908, when the subject building was dedicated, the church had a membership of about 500, with about 400 in the Sunday school. A newspaper article announcing the laying of the corner stone states, “The occasion will be one of special interest to all active in the work among the foreign-speaking residents of the city. It is estimated that there are one hundred thousand Italians in this city, and this church will be located in the center of the colony. Up to the present the work as conducted by the Presbyterian Church in the Italian quarter has met with remarkable success.”<sup>8</sup>

This work included numerous social service programs and the Sunday school program, all geared toward the Italian immigrant community. A 1910 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article notes that The Christian Association of the University of Pennsylvania “has inaugurated a crusade for the education of foreigners in the poorer districts of this city. Classes have been established at center points in English, politics and American history... A class in English is held for Italians in the annex of the Presbyterian Church at Tenth and Kimball streets, on Mondays and Thursdays from 8 to 9 o’clock P.M.”<sup>9</sup> Other program offerings in these early years included stenography and dressmaking.<sup>10</sup> A 1913 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article explains that the church was the location of the second chapter of the Little Mothers’ League, an initiative of the era to fight infant mortality that taught young girls how to care for infants, in recognition that it was often these young girls who were left to care for their younger siblings. See Figure 14 for a more thorough account of this effort at the First Italian Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia.

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<sup>6</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 5, 1909, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 3, 1903, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 21, 1908, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 26, 1910, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> *The Philadelphia Record*, October 19, 1918.



# LITTLE MOTHERS' THIRD LEAGUE IS WELL UNDER WAY

Other District Branches  
to Be Started During  
Winter

Small Girls Prove Apt Pupils  
in Science of Caring for  
Babies

With the organization of the third Little Mothers' League, under the auspices of the Child Federation of this city, the project is now well under way and other district leagues will be started from time to time during the coming winter.

The third league was started on Friday at the Baptist Settlement House, Passyunk avenue and Federal street, under the direction of Dr. Mary Sallom, who has organized the two other leagues in this city. The first one started was at 412 North Twenty-third street, and the second at the Italian Mission, Tenth and Kimball streets.

While the Child Federation is back of these leagues and the idea one suggested by that body, unquestionably much of the success of the plan is due to the untiring efforts of Dr. Sallom. An idea of just what Dr. Sallom and her associates in the Federation hope to accomplish in their efforts to abate the shadow of infant mortality, which hangs over every big city, is best gained from Dr. Sallom, who, in discussing the work, said:

"In recent years many theories and plans have been advanced to reduce the unnecessarily high mortality, but all have met with partial success. One of the plans most energetically worked was that of teaching the mother. In actual practice this plan proved to have many drawbacks. In many cases the instructors were looked upon by the busy mothers as intruders, and in not a few cases were told to 'mind their own business.' In other cases where the mothers listened, they were found to be so prejudiced in their own ways that here again the instructors failed to convince them of the harmfulness of their own antiquated methods.

## New Step Taken

"In organizing the Little Mothers' League, an entirely new and different step was taken, to effectively control the problem of infant mortality. The idea is to teach the little girls the care of the baby, for it is most often upon them that the whole care of the little ones rests. Indeed, it is not an unknown fact that many girls as young as 6 and 8 years have as many as two and three younger brothers and sisters to take care of.

"We have found that these little girls were very apt pupils, and were eager to learn. They not only displayed marked interest and enthusiasm in the classes, but put the knowledge which they gained into actual practice, and often would remonstrate with their mothers about the care of the baby. In this way we not only reach those upon whom the proper care of the baby devolves, but also the mother, who was found in the past so hard to reach.

"We must also remember that these little girls are the mothers of tomorrow. Therefore the benefits derived are not only apparent immediately, but the good work will be intensified during the next decade.

"It is among the foreign and poorer class of people that the problem of infant mortality is the greatest. On June 25 the first league was organized at 412 North Twenty-third street, and on July 9 the second league was organized at the First Italian Presbyterian Mission Church, Tenth and Kimball streets. At each place the organization was effected by the election of a president, vice president and secretary.

## President Given Badge

Upon election the president received a gold badge, while the vice president and secretary each received a silver badge. After attending four lectures and displaying real interest in the cause, the members received silver badges. To further stimulate their enthusiasm, two prizes were offered, one to the girl who will bring the healthiest baby at the end of the first six months, due to her individual care, and the second prize to the girl who will be instrumental in arousing the greatest interest and enthusiasm among her immediate circle.

"It must be admitted, however, that the greatest interest was shown by these little girls. This interest was especially marked at Tenth and Kimball streets, which is an Italian centre. Often these little girls would bring their little charges and, holding them up would say, 'Look, doctor, I have done just what you told me to do. Do you not think that the baby looks clean and healthy? I haven't too many clothes on the baby, have I? My mother wanted to give my little baby brother a pretzel and some beer, but I told her what you said would happen,

Figure 14. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 12, 1913, p. 13.

The draw of summer services for the Italian American community became a means of advancing membership, according to the specific Presbyterian Summer Evangelical Committee. While maintaining its primary mission as a Presbyterian worship site, the church continually adapted its social outreach services to the dynamic needs of the community. During the 1930s it sponsored several Boy Scout Troops, and hosted jamborees and gatherings for similar troops throughout the region.

**SUMMER MEETINGS  
AID PRESBYTERIANS**

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Work Among Italians Said  
to Show Big Results in  
Philadelphia

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Four Large Churches and  
Half Dozen Missions Form-  
ed With Big Membership

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The growth of Italian Presbyterian churches in this city as a result of summer services is remarkable, according to the Presbyterian Summer Evangelical Committee, under whose auspices the services are conducted.

There are now four large Italian churches and a half dozen missions which are the direct result of the summer services. These churches and missions have nearly 2000 attendants.

At the First Italian Presbyterian Church, Tenth and Kimball streets, Rev. Angele M. Centanni preached last night.

Rev. Nicholas Mucci preached last evening to more than 300 Italians at the Second Italian Church, Sixty-fourth and Westminster avenue.

Figure 15. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 19, 1920, p. 3.



In the years following World War II, church membership began to decline, with younger second-generation families moving to the suburbs. This led to a merger in 1973 of First Italian Presbyterian Church and South United Presbyterian Church, which had been located at 17<sup>th</sup> and Snyder Avenue. These two congregations decided the future of their ministry could best be served by the merger of their personnel and resources into the subject building, to be known as Christ's Presbyterian Church, which remains its current designation.<sup>11</sup> It has adapted to the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic by offering virtual services and still provides essential social services, including a food pantry to serve homeless women and meeting rooms for support groups.

#### Satisfaction of Criterion (E)

(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.

Initially listed as a commission for architect Charles L. Hillman in the June 1908 *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, the project soon changed hands to architects Charles W. Bolton & Son and builder Harrison W. Rea.<sup>12</sup>

According to Sandra L. Tatman's biography from the *Philadelphia Architects and Buildings* database, Charles W. Bolton & Son (fl. 1906-1942) was a prolific family enterprise in Philadelphia in the early twentieth century, that specialized in ecclesiastical design, much like the Durangs and Dagits. Unlike the Catholic church commissions of those latter firms, Charles W. Bolton & Son designed Protestant churches, especially Presbyterian, Methodist Episcopal, Lutheran, and Baptist. The firm was a succession of Charles W. Bolton's practice started in Philadelphia in 1884.

Charles Webber Bolton (1855-1942) was considered one of the leading ecclesiastic architects in Philadelphia in the early twentieth century. Beginning in 1884, his designs for Presbyterian churches were included in the *Church's Board of Church Erection Annual Reports*. A competitor of Isaac Pursell, Bolton is considered to be more prolific and adaptable than Pursell owing to his

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<sup>11</sup> "Chapter 1: A History of Christ's Presbyterian Church."

<sup>12</sup> *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, v. 23, n. 25, 6/17/1908, p. 387; *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, v. 23, n. 33, 8/12/1908, p. 517; *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, v. 23, n. 38, 9/16/1908, p. 599.

commissions for various denominations. In 1906, Bolton's son Charles Lewis Bolton was made a partner and the firm changed its name to Charles W. Bolton & Son. Charles Sr. continued to work at the firm until his death, and is credited in his obituary with designing more than 500 churches throughout the country.

Charles Lewis Bolton (1884-1981) inherited one of the most prolific architectural firms associated with church design in Philadelphia. Following graduation from the University of Pennsylvania's architecture program and supplementary courses at PAFA in 1906-1908, he entered his father's firm. Interestingly, this is happening while the subject church building is being designed. The firm's commissions were not limited to Philadelphia, but rather spanned the country. Most churches designed by Charles W. Bolton & Son are considered to be a revised form of the Gothic. Charles L. Bolton became the sole owner of the firm upon his father's passing in 1942, the same year that he became a member of the AIA. He was also a member of the T-Square Club and an honorary member of the Pennsylvania Society of Architects.<sup>13</sup>

Local extant examples of Charles W. Bolton & Son's church designs include the Richardson Memorial Presbyterian Church at 60<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Streets, designed in 1911 (Figure 16); Emmanuel Presbyterian Church at 42<sup>nd</sup> and Girard Avenue, designed in 1912 (Figure 17); and Union Baptist Church at 1910 Fitzwater Street, designed in 1915-16 and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 2016 (Figure 18).

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<sup>13</sup> Sandra L. Tatman, *Philadelphia Architects and Buildings*, "Charles W. Bolton & Son," [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/18688](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/18688); "Bolton, Charles Webber," [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/24058](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/24058); "Bolton, Charles Lewis," [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/18681](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/18681).





Figure 16. Richardson Memorial Presbyterian Church, now Sanctuary Church of Open Door, 5923 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, 1911. Source: Google.

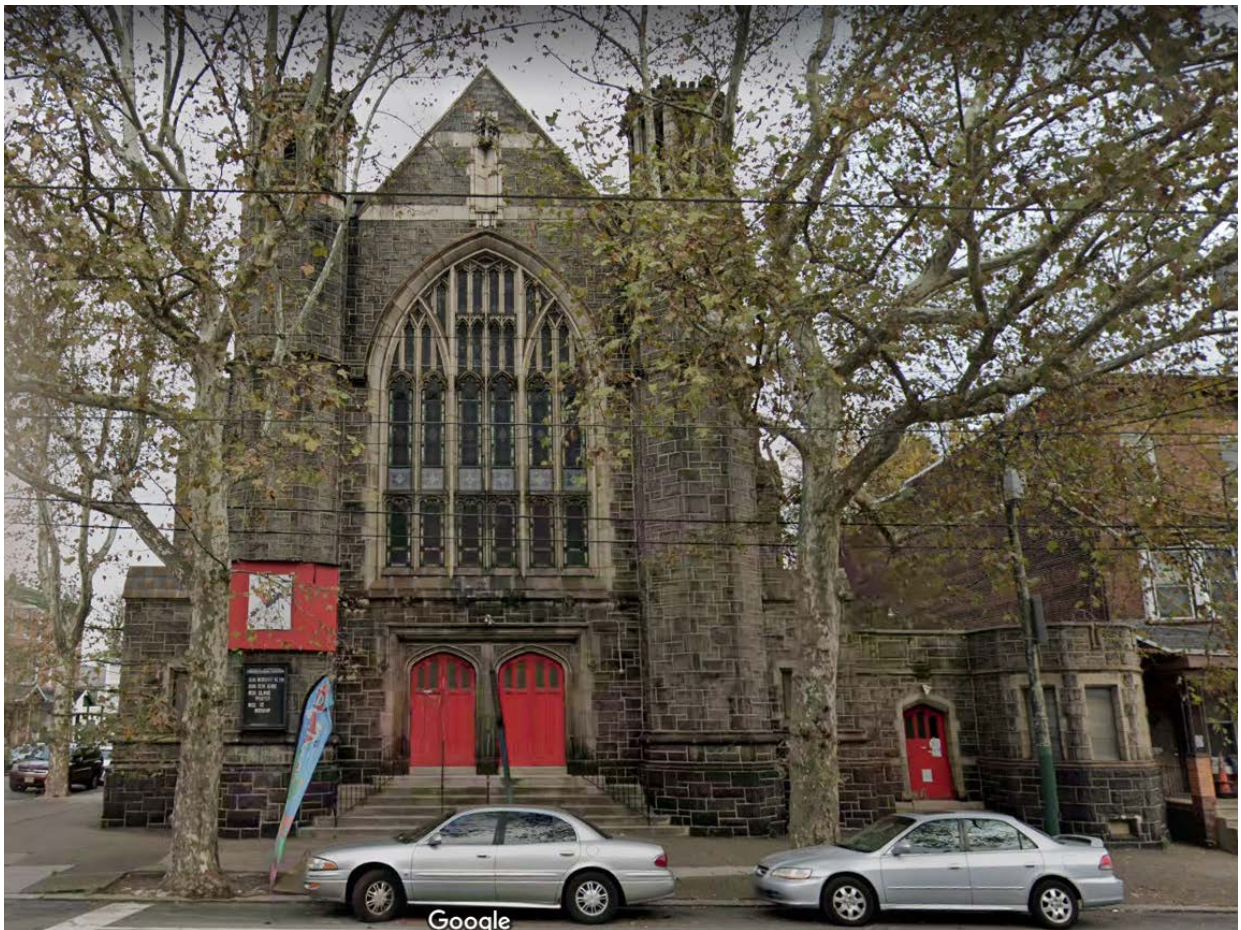


Figure 17. Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, now First African Presbyterian Church, 4159 W Girard Avenue, Philadelphia, 1912. Source: Google.





Figure 18. Union Baptist Church, 1910 Fitzwater Street, Philadelphia, 1915-16. Source: Google.

Examples of the work of Charles W. Bolton & Son can also be found throughout the country. The Second Presbyterian Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was a 1905 commission, right around the time that Charles L. Bolton was joining the firm (Figure 19). According to a history of the Central Park Methodist Episcopal Church in Buffalo, New York (Figure 20), during construction the Bolton family relocated to Buffalo and became members of the church, and went on to design a number of local churches in the area.<sup>14</sup> A commission in Detroit that utilized red brick was the Trinity Reformed Church, constructed in 1919 (Figure 21). The Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York, New York (Figure 22) was constructed in 1922 for one of the oldest African American churches in New York City.

<sup>14</sup> James Napora, *Houses of Worship: A Guide to the Religious Architecture of Buffalo, New York*. Reprinted with permission as a public service by the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier, now the Preservation Buffalo Niagara, accessed via <https://buffaloah.com/how/sec.html>.



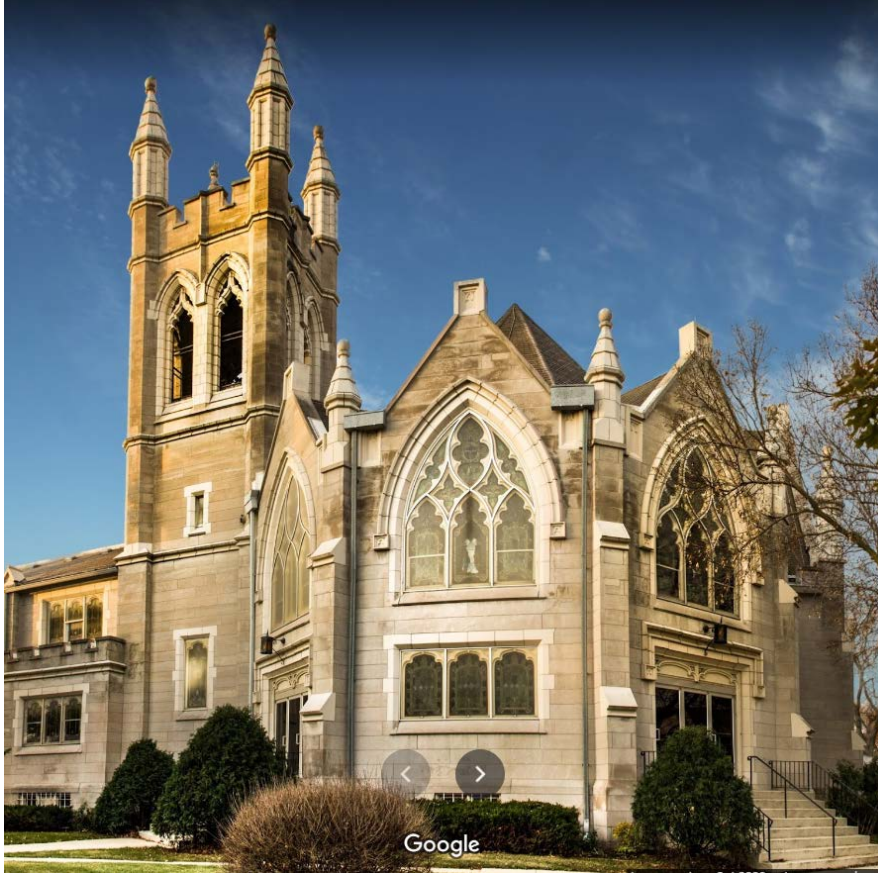


Figure 19. Second Presbyterian Church, now Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1285 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1905. Source: Google.



Figure 20. Central Park ME Church, 216 Beard Avenue, Buffalo NY, 1918-21. Source: Google.





Figure 21. Trinity Reformed Church, W. 7 Mile Road and Charleston Street, Detroit MI, 1919. Source: Google.



Figure 22. Abyssinian Baptist Church, 132 Odell Clark Place, New York NY, 1922. Source: iloveny.com

### Conclusion

Today, despite the pandemic, the building at 1010 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street continues to act as a harbor of service. In addition to its social services outreach, it is home to a theatre company that hopes to resume live performances when safe to do so. It is for these reasons that we, the Bella Vista Neighbors Association and Preservation Committee, wish to preserve this location. A building that has stood in our city for over a century in service to some of its most vulnerable people is worthy of recognition and preservation. The property has significant character, interest, and historic value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of the City and exemplifies the cultural, economic, social and historical heritage of the community. It is the work of Charles W. Bolton & Son, whose work has significantly influenced the historical and architectural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.



## 8. Major Works Cited

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Appendix A: Interior Photographs from 2020, provided by the Bella Vista Neighbors Association



Large stained-glass window facing Kimball Street.



Large windows on the south side of the church.



Images of the wooden roof trusses.





The church's organ is of particular historic interest. It was donated by John Wanamaker, according to a church elder.