

2018 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois

Second Church of Christ, Scientist

- **Location:** 2700 N Pine Grove Ave., Chicago, Cook County
- **Built:** 1899
- **Architect:** S. S. Beman
- **Current owner:** Congregation
- **Historic significance:** Designed by a prominent architect and is the oldest continually operating Christian Science church in the city.
- **Why it is endangered:** A shrinking congregation makes funding necessary repairs to the building difficult. Also, the church is for sale, making it vulnerable to demolition if a developer purchases the property to make way for a new development.



Credit: Landmarks Illinois

The Second Church of Christ, Scientist is currently for sale, and while it is part of a National Register-listed Lakeview Historic District, this designation is honorific with no protection. Additionally, the Classical-Revival style church does not have any local protections under the Chicago Landmark Ordinance due to an owner consent clause for places of worship. [Decline in membership](#), especially in the Christian Science denomination, has forced many congregations to make difficult decisions regarding their properties.

This building, which was designed by S.S. Beman in 1899, was the second Christian Science church built in the city of Chicago. For that reason, the Second Church of Christ, Scientist is the oldest continually operating Christian Science church in Chicago. The church was the second of six Chicago structures Beman designed for the denomination between 1897 and 1911, during which time the denomination was experiencing rapid national growth. By the time of his death in 1914, Beman had designed 20 Christian Science churches throughout the country, effectively setting the building style for the denomination in America.

Beman, best known for his design for the Pullman Company Town in Chicago, studied at the renowned New York office of Richard Upjohn, where he was part of many noteworthy commissions. In 1879, he arrived in Chicago at the request of George Pullman to begin work on

the nation's first company town. Beman took his first Christian Science church commission in 1897. Beman's [propensity toward classically inspired design](#) helped to develop an association between the style and Christian Science churches.

The introduction of tiered theater seating was an innovation in these early Christian Science churches, the likes of which had not been seen in previous religious architecture. Also of note was the attention given to acoustic design, as well as the ability to conform curvilinear interiors to the rectilinear exterior forms that were in fashion at the time.

Several other religious properties in the City of Chicago, such as the 1899 J.E.O. Pridmore-designed Ravenswood Club and the 1917 Max Dunning-designed Philadelphia Romanian Church of God (formerly the Fourteenth Church of Christ, Scientist), both of which reside in the East Ravenswood National Register District, fall victim to the owner consent provision and are unprotected. All of these buildings are located in sought-after development areas, making them vulnerable to demolition.

However, because all of the aforementioned resources contribute to National Register Historic Districts, the valuable 20% federal historic tax credit incentive would be available to potential developers who rehabilitate and reuse the buildings.

What you can do:

- Voice your support for Chicago Landmark designation and reuse of Second Church of Christ, Scientist by contacting 43rd Ward Alderman Michele Smith:
<http://ward43.org/contact/>

Additional Links:

- "Fate of historic Lincoln Park church building remains precarious," *Inside-Booster*, April 4-10, 2018 ([PDF](#))
- "Will this Lincoln Park church go residential?" *Crain's Chicago Business*, November 15, 2017:
<http://www.chicagobusiness.com/realestate/20171115/CREDo701/171119929/will-this-lincoln-park-church-go-residential>
- "Chicago's Historic Churches are Worth Saving, Part 1: Preservationists Prepare for a Crisis," *Curbed Chicago*, March 10, 2016:
<https://chicago.curbed.com/2016/3/10/11191158/chicago-historic-churches-preservation-battle>