

Ninth Street Christian Church, 819 D St NE

Beth Purcell 4/12/2014

The Ninth Street Christian Church was built in 1897-1898 by the Disciples of Christ for their prosperous and fast-growing congregation, replacing a smaller church building constructed on that site only six years earlier. Five architects competed for the commission. Like many Protestant congregations, the Disciples of Christ built a Gothic church¹

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Gothic architecture exemplified the architecture most suited to Christian worship. Influential architects such as Ralph Adams Cram led the way.² W. N. Pugin, one of the most influential authorities on Gothic architecture, promoted it on moral and aesthetic principles, and believed that stained glass windows were essential to the worship experience in a Gothic church.

The church likely ordered its stained glass windows from a catalog. Catalogs were a common marketing tool for companies selling stained glass windows. In the late nineteenth century, stained glass was a competitive business, and firms competed on the basis of design and price. Companies in New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Richmond, Reading, and Philadelphia (with 17 firms by 1890) produced stained glass. Many firms marketed through catalogs, offering residential and ecclesiastical stained glass.³ In fact, the National Art Glass Manufacturers Association, in Chicago published its The International Glass Catalogue (issued between 1909 and 1915) to curtail price cutting among its members.⁴ For these reasons "catalog glass" can refer to a superior and competitive work.

¹ "Real Estate Market," Washington Post, 9 May 1897, 14; "A New Church Edifice," Washington Post, 24 Jul. 1897, 10; "New House of Worship." Washington Post, 19 Sept. 1897, 2.

² Mark Gelertner, A History of American Architecture. Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England., 1999, 143-148.

³ Erin R. Stevic. "A Decoration Which Shall Lose Nothing by Age or Time: The Domestic Stained Glass of R. S. Groves and Steil Art Stained Glass Company," Diss. University of Delaware, 2004, 30, 37. Jonathan Matthew Nguyen-Weaver, "American Renaissance Stained Glass of the 800 and 900 Blocks of West Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia." Diss. Virginia Commonwealth University, 2002.

⁴ Rene R. Frueh and Florence Frueh. Chicago Stained Glass. Chicago: Loyola Univ. Press, 1983, 27-28.