

TESTIMONY OF AVERY FAULKNER, FAIA
D.C. HISTORIC REVIEW BOARD
SUBJECT: THIRD CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST
16th AND I STREETS, N.W.

I was retained as an Architectural Consultant by the Third Church of Christ, Scientist in June of 1990. My credentials for serving in this capacity include the following:

1. I am a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.
2. I have headed two architectural firms in Washington D.C.
3. I am a former President of the Washington Chapter of the AIA.
4. I was the Chairman of the AIA's Historic Resources Committee.
5. I am a Presidential appointee to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
6. My maternal grandparents were both Christian Scientists.

I would like to separate my testimony and presentation into two parts. First, I will discuss why the site does not meet the applicable criteria for designation and secondly, I will outline the impact of such a designation on the Third Church specifically, and on the future of this important site for the continued church use.

First, let me address the criteria. Neither the Third Church of Christ Scientist nor the Monitor Office Building meet any of the written or theoretical criteria for designation as a District of Columbia landmark. As a third generation Washingtonian who has

been intimately involved with the architecture and architectural context of this city, as well as the historic significance of the city, I believe that this site should not be designated. Let me explain why:

1. I.M. Pei was not the architect for this building. It was designed by one of his partners, Araldo A. Cossutta.
2. Mr. Cossutta's original design concept was foiled in several ways:
 - a. The church entrance was placed on the north elevation to be served by a diagonal walk which, in the end, could not be built. This diagonal walk from 16th and X Streets toward 17th and I Streets could not be built because the parking lots west of the property could not be purchased. The loss of the diagonal walk "meant the loss of the central element of the plan," according to Cossutta.
 - b. The grass area between the church and the office building was a design error by the architect's own admission. It restricts access to the Church entrance.
 - c. The Monitor Building was built as a stage set to block the view of the "The World Center" building to the north. Proper attention was not given to its internal planning and it now proves to be too narrow to function

well for its intended purposes as office space for the Christian Science Monitor, or as a commercial office building. Its width does not allow for a central corridor with adequate office space on both sides. Its thermal insulation is deficient and its toilet rooms are too small. Its only visual linkage to the church is the exposed architectural concrete which is common to the exterior of both structures.

3. Neither the church nor the adjacent office building has been in existence long enough to judge their value as works of architecture or to assess the public's reaction to them over a sufficiently long period of time. The central purpose of the preservation of buildings for their architectural significance should be to save outstanding structures for future generations as examples of excellence in design and planning. These two buildings are flawed by circumstances beyond the owner's and designer's control and should not be given the distinguished label of "Landmark."
4. It is my belief that this site as designed and as constructed not only fails to carry out the architect's plan but is in conflict with the context of the area and the historical significance of 16th Street approaching Lafayette Square and the White House. Washington is defined by the grid and diagonal streets of the L'Enfant Plan. The streets, avenues, vistas and focal points of that plan are defined by buildings which are constructed on the building

line, thus providing a consistent framework to define these elements. Sixteenth Street, under the Historic Preservation element of the Comprehensive Plan, is a special street. On such a street holding the building line is especially important. Furthermore, Washington is a city of clearly-defined public, semi-public, and private zones that are established by streets, sidewalks and lot lines. Open areas of green are provided throughout the city in the form of squares and circles, and numerous public reservations. Open plazas such as found at this site are incompatible with Washington's traditionally expressed and defined built environment.

Washington is an easy city to live in, with its low skyline, large open spaces, and rich variety of buildings. In my view, the existing development is not consistent with that city. This important corner should be clearly defined and anchored. One can contrast this building with the Ritz Carlton to the east or the Hay Adams to the south or even the Time Life Building immediately on the south side of I Street. All of these buildings are oriented towards the street at the building line, and toward people and openness.

5. Add other points against designation.

When I began my work for the Third Church, the Third Church was in the process, along with the First Church in Boston, of reviewing the two structures on the site with respect to current

operating needs and functions for their respective owners. The First Church as owner of the Monitor Building was concerned about the nature of the structure and its viability as an income-producing property and for serving the publishing and educational needs of the Church. The Third Church, which occupies the octagonal, concrete structure on the south of the site, asked for an assessment of that structure from the point of view of providing a church facility that was open and inviting to its congregation and the public and was suitable for its needs. The Third Church also defined its need to physically separate its interest and title to its church from the overall site ownership of the First Church.

As part of the research connected with this assessment, several points became evident. First, the church facility is structurally and mechanically dependent on the office building for utilities service. Heating and cooling are supplied from equipment located in the office building penthouse. If the office building were to be significantly modified and enlarged, to meet current market conditions, the Third Church would need to construct and provide its own HVAC system, cooling towers, etc. in a new roof structure. If the Monitor Office Building were to be reconfigured, significant alteration or partial demolition of the Third Church would be required, both above and below grade, to provide the necessary structural support. This, in turn, would require the existing ramp to the below-ground parking garage to be relocated somewhere on the Third Church's site.

For the information of the Board (MPCB), attached is a list of deficiencies in the existing Third Church facility that must be remedied in order for the Church to continue as a viable congregation on the site. (Attach list) These deficiencies, together with the desire of the Church to have an entirely new entrance facing 16th Street in order to express its religious conviction of openness to the community, would require major alteration to the existing church structure, its exterior walls and perhaps total demolition and replacement.

My review of the Monitor Building indicates that without a wider building accommodating greater depth of office space, and probably a double-loaded corridor, the existing building must be either substantially altered or demolished to become economically viable.

The combination of the desires of the two interest (First Church and Third Church) in my opinion, necessarily involves a dramatic alteration of the site including both the Monitor Building and the church structure. In order to carry out the desires of the Churches, the alternatives of major alteration, partial demolition and even total demolition and replacement must be retained. It is very clear that if the First and Third Churches wish to remain on this important corner in this downtown area of the city, that the unimpaired right to remove entirely, or in significant part, both buildings are a necessity. This is true both from a structural architectural standpoint, a religious standpoint, and an economic standpoint. I would be pleased to

speak in more detail on this aspect of the case if you would like.

In view of the religious, structural, and economic needs of the Churches, it is my belief that a designation of the site or any major portion thereof would have extremely serious implications for both the First Church in Boston and the Third Church. The Third Church's congregation is unalterably opposed to the designation and the First Church's governing body feels it is absolutely essential to have a viable building on the site. In view of the statute and regulations that would govern the required modifications and rebuilding of the site if designation were to occur, the following specific prohibitions would result:

1. The First Church would not be able to maintain a viable economic presence on the site without the ability to add to the structure in major ways or even to accomplish a total replacement.
2. The Third Church should not be able to remove the facades of its building to provide a new front entrance to meet the needs of its congregation and the needs of the general public for easy access.
3. The Third Church might not have the flexibility to provide a structure that would have state of the art, self-supporting HVAC systems.

4. The Third Church's desire to have separate title and ownership of its building cannot be accomplished without major modification or demolition.
5. Other significant exterior changes which are needed to make the church more welcoming to the public should be prevented since such changes would necessarily involve the removal of one or more facades.
6. Without the ability to change the structure, the Third Church would not have a viable facility for its congregation and yet would not be able to market the property because of its very limited use to any other buyer.
7. The value of the site for any purpose, whether it be for the First and Third Churches or for any other use, would be dramatically diminished because it would be effectively frozen in terms of any major replacement or alteration that, in my view, is required.