

Our Historic Building

Always New Thought

Originally built in 1909, our center is located at the corner of Division and North J Street. It was designated historic by the Tacoma Landmarks Commission in 2008.

Our History

- Park Universalist Church 1893-1925
- At our present site 1904-1925
- Church of the Healing Christ 1926-1979
- Center for Spiritual Living (Church of Religious Science) 1980-Present

Three different but related progressive denominations have shared land at 206 North J Street in Tacoma, and the historic church is remembered for the unusual ministers who have served there and the active congregations who have participated in community affairs. The church building is over one hundred years old. The beauty of the park and the lots donated by Charles Wright inspired the building of the Park Universalist Church in Tacoma at the site of the Subway Sandwich on North I and Division Avenue. The financial crash of 1893 affected the newly formed church which struggled until 1903 when Abbie Danforth arrived and put the group back together. By 1904 they had a church board and issued a letter of call to Rev. William D. Buchanan from Mount Pleasant, Iowa. An energetic leader, Buchanan was born in Ireland in 1871 and immigrated with his father to Iowa in 1883. He worked his way through Lombard College where he edited the college newspaper with poet Carl Sandburg, who remained a close personal friend throughout his life. Buchanan believed in the church playing a larger part in the affairs of the world. Buchanan was responsible for planning the modified Tudor design of the church constructed one block away at North J and Division Avenue begun in 1904 and completed in 1909. In 1912 Henry Victor Morgan took the pulpit. He changed the church allegiance from Universalist to Divine Science and the name of the church to Church of the Healing Christ. It was in keeping with his direction toward an international healing ministry that applied universal principles to daily living. Rev. Morgan had two children Murray Morgan and Victor Henry Morgan. Victor Morgan became a Navy chaplain. Murray Morgan distinguished himself as a great Northwest historian and recalled the time when the whole family got involved in saving Mount Tahoma from being named Mount Rainier. Rev. Morgan and his wife wrote poems, a national committee was formed that included Theodore Roosevelt and Will Rogers that supported keeping the mountain's native name of Tahoma. But Rainier won out. Murray Morgan wrote, "It was a sad day in Tacoma when it lost its mountain." After Rev. Morgan's passing in 1952, the church struggled to find a minister of his caliber who would live permanently in Tacoma. In 1982 the church became the Tacoma Church of Religious Science under the leadership of Rev. Beck Chew. Three ministers have served since: Rev. Jack Lamey, 1988-1992, Rev. Carole Price 1992-1996, Rev. Frances Lorenz 1997-2022, and Rev. Drew Ebersole 2023 - present. In 1998 the church was renamed Center for Spiritual Living-Tacoma. It continues to attract community leaders, artists and people interested in

improving their own lives and life in the community. In 2003 the United Centers for Spiritual Living launched a vision of the Global Heart, a world free of homelessness, hunger and limitation. The Center for Spiritual Living seeks to be a point of light in Tacoma.

The Building

This church building is essentially unchanged since its completion in 1909. This building is a rare example of craftsman-style church architecture in the state and the only extant example in Tacoma. The building sits north to south facing North J Street along the west boundary of a triangular-shaped parcel at the intersection of Division Avenue and North J Street. Approximately 30 ft by 60 ft, the one-story wood building is set into the hillside and sits atop a concrete foundation with full basement. A 1909 newspaper article described that the exterior would have a low, rambling roof and projecting eaves of the bungalow type. Lower walls would be finished in 10 x 1 boards, placed rough side out and stained. Above the sill are shingles. The brown-stained exterior earned the church its nickname "little brown church". A later article described it as one of the prettiest smaller churches (07/04/09). The north elevation (front) features a front-facing gable, a moderately pitched roof, and wide projecting eaves, decorated with simple verge boards and five eave brackets. A small tympanum with half timber and stucco infill and is set off from the lower wall by seven corbels. The walls are sheathed in small, wood shingles halfway down with 10 x 1 clapboards below to the concrete foundation. Concrete steps with bent-pipe railings access a small, centered porch. Inset about two feet, a double door with pebbled glass (probably not original) lights provides the main entrance. On either side of the porch are small windows with two opaque panes of leaded slag glass: a marbled border around an amber center. A flat roof projects over the porch. It is supported below by two large brackets and above by two decorative iron rods attached to the wall. The concrete foundation has two windows, and a basement stairwell is at the west corner. The roof of the east elevation has a wide eave and exposed rafter ends. Two false gables interrupt the roof edge, allowing for two larger windows in the five double-window bays. Each false gable is similar to the entrance: three eave brackets, simple verge boards and a half-timbered tympanum and five corbels below. The windows have opaque panes of leaded slag glass in the same pattern as those at the entrance. A retaining wall creates a daylight basement with the six double windows in the concrete foundation. A door and five concrete steps occupy this elevation's south end. The west elevation duplicates the east except it has no retaining wall or basement windows except at the basement stairwell. The south elevation is a simple gable with projecting eaves and decorative brackets. However, there are no windows and the shingles go from the gable pitch to the band with 10' x 1 clapboards following to a narrow band of exposed foundation.

CSL Tacoma is ready for your event.[/caption]

The church's interior also reflects the craftsman style. A small vestibule contains the stairwell to the basement and a narrow stair to the organ loft (now an office). Inside the sanctuary, the walls are paneled to about five feet with burlap and stained fir battens with plaster above. The ceiling is canted with painted battens. Pews have been removed and replaced with chairs. In the northeast rear corner is small room about 8' x 8' with sliding doors. The sanctuary's front is dominated by a ~ 18 ft -wide proscenium arch with flanking doorways. A semi-circular, two-step dais projects from the archway. Beneath the arch is a waist-high, concave wooden rail that sets off the small choir loft. An array of four small stained-glass windows decorates the rear wall of the choir loft. A door to the

left of the arch goes to a robing room with steps and doorway into the choir loft, and the door on the right leads to a small office space. The sunlight basement has two bathrooms, a small kitchen, furnace room, and social hall, a part of which along the western wall has been divided into three classrooms of recent origin.

Over its 100-year history, this church has had several related denominational affiliations. For ease and consistency of reference, this account will use its earliest name, Park Universalist Church, except when focusing on denominational history. The Park Universalist Church is a rare example, and only one extant in Tacoma, of craftsman-style church architecture, and was designed by two of the city's early advocates of that style, Woodrooffe & Constable. Completed in 1909, it is among Tacoma's oldest church buildings. Over the decades, this church has been home to one of Tacoma's liberal, non-doctrinal congregations, and as such it embodies the religious and social freedom that the American West represented to many of Tacoma's early settlers. In addition, it was the longtime church home of Rev. Dr. Henry V. Morgan, the long-time dean of Tacoma's clergy, as well as his son, Murray Morgan, one of Tacoma's major historian and preservationist. Located in Tacoma, Washington, and within the National Register's North Slope Historic District (Site ID: J206), the Park Universalist Church sits less than one block east of the eastern boundary of Tacoma's Landmark North Slope Historic District. This church building is the oldest of the five remaining churches and synagogues within the North Slope Historic District. Within the larger Wright Park neighborhood, it is the second oldest.

The Congregation's Early History

Rev. Q. H. Shinn first organized Tacoma's Universalist congregation in 1892. Though Episcopalian, Charles B. Wright, head of Northern Pacific Railroad and Tacoma's leading citizen, donated the land at the corner of North I St. and Division Avenue for a church and \$450 to its construction. The church was finally built in 1894 under Rev. E. J. Felt, newly arrived from Ohio. Rev. Felt continued as pastor until 1897, after which the congregation had no permanent pastor and declined substantially. In 1903, Rev. Abbie Ellsworth Danforth assumed the pastorate of the church. Unlike other denominations at this time, gender was not a bar to the Universalist pulpit, and Rev. Danforth was Tacoma's first female minister. A dynamic organizer, she revitalized several Universalist congregations during this period. She quickly reorganized the church and had it issue a call to a young minister, Rev. William D. Buchanan of Mount Pleasant, Iowa. Rev. Buchanan, born in Ireland in 1871, had immigrated in 1883 with his family to Iowa. He attended Lombard College and joined the ministry in 1901. At Lombard, he edited the college newspaper with Carl Sandburg, who would become one of America's great 20th Century poets. Sandburg and he were life-long friends, and Sandburg visited Buchanan in Tacoma on several occasions.

Building the New Church

In 1904, the church retained the services of the new firm of Woodrooffe & Constable to design their new church. Here the record becomes murky. A newspaper article in March 8, 1908, reports that the North I property sold for \$7,300 and the North J property was purchased for \$6000. A few days later (03/15/1908), a newspaper article describes the proposed new church as a model of modern architecture seating 400 with classrooms and kitchen for a cost of \$10,000. Seven months later in October (10/25/08), the newspaper reports that the church trustees have decided to build a 200-seat chapel to be used as a parish house when the new church is completed. In February 1909, the

trustees award the firm of C. H. Hallen the contract for building the structure we see today for a cost of \$5,500. It is unclear what caused the trustees to scale back their building plans. The North J property may have been more costly than planned, or perhaps a major contributor failed to come forward. Rev. Buchanan is reported as saying that a larger church would be built further from the center of the city where new residential subdivisions were growing up along the trolley lines. It is interesting to note that Rev. Buchanan's wife had recently received a substantial inheritance, and also in 1909 he hired Woodroffe & Constable to design him a large craftsman home at 3319 North Adams Street. Nonetheless, the finished church was simply a scaled-down version of the original design minus the steeple. It's positioned on the west side of the lot with nearly the same length but about half of the width of the original design. It would be relatively easy to expand the foundation eastward. Details such as the two false dormers along the roof and the front gable decoration are the same as in the original design. As built it was described as one of the prettiest smaller churches (07/04/09) as well as one of the most unique and yet artistic church structures in Tacoma (08/29/09). The dedication in August was coincided with the Conference of Northwest Universalists held in Tacoma that year in celebration of the congregation's new building. Rev. A. C. Grier of Spokane delivered the dedicatory sermon, consecrating the church to the principle of love, while Mayor John Linck (who lived at 817 North J) delivered the evening speech. Rev. Buchanan continued as pastor of the church until 1911 when he left Tacoma. He would later (1921) become a poultry and rural-life extension specialist with Washington State University in Pullman, WA. When Buchanan left, the congregation invited Rev. Henry V. Morgan to become their minister. Thus began a pastorate that would last 40 years until Rev. Morgan's death in 1952.

Rev. Henry Morgan and Later Developments

Rev. Henry Morgan (1865-1952) was born in Napanee, Ontario, and moved to New York in 1890 to study the ministry. He was ordained in the Universalist Church and held pastorates in Detroit, Napa, Alameda and Pacific Grove. In 1901, at the end of missionary work in Hawaii, his health failed. He attributed his surprisingly recovery to his faith, and this event would figure prominently in his healing ministry. He visited Tacoma on a lecture tour in 1912, and the Park Universalist congregation offered him the pastorate. Morgan, assisted by his first wife Adda, was a dynamic speaker and prolific author. In 1914, he established The Master Christian Publishing Company that published his monthly magazine, The Master Christian, as well as many of his books and poetry collections, such as The Cosmic Conception of Walt Whitman and Creative Healing. His poetry and hymns were so well known that he was called poet laureate of the New Thought Alliance. Some of his books were translated in to seven languages. By the 1920s, the Universalist denomination had dwindled nationally. While never large, its primarily rural congregations were hard hit as small towns evaporated with urban migration. Mainstream denominations, especially the Methodists, adopted a less judgmental, more Social Gospel theology amenable to many Universalists. Also, other movements, such as Ethical Culture, Theosophy and New Thought vied for interest. The New Thought movement continued the transcendentalism of Emerson and others along with a focus on spiritual healing developed from Phineas Quimby in 1859. The New Thought Alliance was a loose affiliation several denominations, such as Divine Science, Religious Science, and Unity Church, as well as like-minded individuals from other denominations. Accepting a non-traditional Christianity, they generally held that illness was the result of erroneous belief and that a mind open to God's wisdom could overcome any illness. For example, long-time Spokane Universalist minister, Rev.

Albert C. Grier, who preached at the dedication of Tacoma's new church, was, like Rev. Morgan, a prominent leader in the New Thought movement in the West. In 1913, he left the Universalist Church and founded his own denomination, The Church of Truth. He would go on to found 22 churches in the West. In 1924, Rev. Henry Morgan followed Rev. Grier's example. He resigned from Universalist church and successfully petitioned the denomination to sell him the church building. In 1926, Morgan and his congregation associated themselves with the Divine Science denomination and changed the name of the church to the Church of the Healing Christ. His ministry was very popular, so much so that he held evening services in a downtown theater. Through his books and magazine, he maintained an international ministry, often traveling abroad for lectures. Morgan would lead his church until his death in 1952. Rev. Morgan's son, Murray, grew up in this church where he met his future wife Rosa and married in 1939. Murray put himself through college working at the 11th Street Bridge, now named after him, and became a leading Northwest historian and author. His brother Victor would follow his father into the ministry and become a naval chaplain. After Rev. Morgan's death, the church struggled for the next five years to find a new minister. In 1957, Rev. Berneice Nichol merged her Tacoma Truth Center with the church and remained for the next 10 years stabilizing and growing the church. Following her retirement, the church again suffered a string of short-term ministers. By 1982, the church had lost its stability and could not maintain the building, which was deeded to the affiliated Seattle Church of Religious Science and became the Tacoma Church of Religious Science. In 1998, the denomination Church of Religious Science changed its name to Center for Spiritual Living and hence today the church continues a vibrant ministry under Rev. Francis Lorenz as The Center for Spiritual Living – Tacoma.

Tacoma, Liberal Religious Thought, and the American West

The Park Universalist Church and its later history represent an important aspect of Tacoma's cultural development. While the westward migration was largely fueled by cheap land and economic opportunity, non-conformity, especially in religion, was also a powerful spur. The newness, openness and individualism of the American West were congenial to free thinkers like the Universalists and others. By the 1890s when Tacoma's congregation was founded, the Universalist Church was old compared to the many denominations to emerge in 19th century America. Founded as a separate denomination in 1778, the Universalists rejected the hard Calvinism of primarily Presbyterians and Baptists and emphasized God's forgiveness and universal salvation. Strongly egalitarian, Universalists, along with Quakers and Unitarians, were the first American churches to oppose slavery. By the late 19th century, Universalists, along with Unitarians, were among the first American denominations to embrace transcendentalism, the new biblical criticism and an ethical Christianity now identified as the Social Gospel. The Park Universalist Church provided a spiritual home to likeminded Tacomans. Earlier, in 1884, Tacoma's first Unitarian Church, the oldest of America's dissenting congregations, was organized. In 1893, embracing a broader religious experience than Christianity, the Tacoma Unitarian Church becomes the Free Church of Universal Region with many noted Tacomans among its members, such as Virginia Mason, George Plummer, C. A. Darmer and R. T. Reid. Crowds were so large they held services at the Rialto Theater. In 1909, it becomes the Ethical Society of Tacoma. In 1890, the Narada Lodge of the Theosophical Society was organized in Tacoma. It was the fifteenth lodge in the nation, and the first, and for many years the largest, west of St. Louis. Theosophists studied spiritualism and were particularly interested in the Eastern religions, especially Hinduism. The Tacoma lodge remained a

strong organization until the 1920s when a number of its members moved to India. South Puget Sound was also home to several utopian communities that mixed liberal religious thinking with socialist and anarchist political and social thought. In 1898, socialists founded the community of Burley north of Gig Harbor, which lasted until 1913. In 1894, the short-lived Glennis Cooperative was founded outside of Tacoma on the Eatonville Road. Three years later, its remaining members founded Home Colony, a utopian workers community, near Tacoma on the Kitsap Peninsula. By 1901 it had about a 100 residents, who espoused individualism, utopian social ideals and progressive religious thought. While stories of anarchism, free love and nude bathing enraged conservatives, the Home Colony was similar to many such communities across the country, especially in the West. The Universalists, Unitarians, Theosophists, utopian communards and other such progressive groups are an important part of Tacoma's and Washington state's history that is often overlooked. They are examples of the freedom and open-mindedness that the American West represented then and continues to represent. No doubt that open-mindedness allowed the Park Universalist congregation to choose for their new church building the new craftsman style, a style closely identified with progressive, reform movements in America.

Woodroffe & Constable and the Craftsman Style in Tacoma

Woodroffe & Constable were strong advocates of the new craftsman style. Both had recently come from Britain where their architectural training immersed them in British Arts & Crafts movement of the previous 20 years. They would have had an easy familiarity with the aesthetics of Ruskin, the designs of Morris and Ashbee, and the architecture of Prior, Voysey, Baillie Scott, and MacIntosh. They arrived in Tacoma just as the new craftsman style began to dominate American residential architecture. In Tacoma the craftsman style appears by 1902 with Ambrose Russell's Stevens house (801 N. Yakima) and in 1903 with Carl Darmer's mission style Scott house (402 N. Yakima) and George Bullard's Prairie-influenced Grosscup House (901 N. Yakima). Like most early instances of a style, these are large homes for major clients. However, the craftsman style was easily adapted into less costly versions that perfectly fit the quasi-rural, rustic vision of the new streetcar suburbs and their progressive residents. Quickly it becomes the dominant residential style. By 1907 Woodroffe writes a brief article, Tacoma Architecturally for a northwest culture magazine, The Coast, in which he describes middle-class Tacoma homes as somewhat on the order of the California bungalow, without imitating the same. He pens another article (02/05/11) entitled Most happiness in the bungalow that echoes the progressive reformist themes associated with the style. He lauds the cosy bungalow of perhaps \$1000 over the pretentious mansion of \$100,000 and proclaims its healthful attributes in a suburban setting as opposed to the crowded cities. He extols the use of stained native timbers both inside and out that not only throw the grain of the wood into high relief instead of hiding it as paint would, but also blend quietly with the surroundings. These egalitarian, naturist and aesthetic themes were commonly associated with the craftsman style. Arnott Woodroffe, a Scotsman and member of the Royal Institute of British Architects, comes first to Canada about 1898 but soon moves to the United States. Nothing is known of his earlier work until 1904 -05 when he arrives in Tacoma and becomes head draftsman for the firm of Russell & Babcock. Since Ambrose Russell was also Scottish with connections to British architecture, perhaps Woodroffe had a connection or at least an entre. By 1906, however, Woodroffe joins with the Tuttle Brothers to form a new architectural firm, Tuttle & Woodroffe. In 1906, a newspaper article notes that the firm of Russell & Babcock is designing a Swiss-influenced bungalow (1002 N.

L St.) for Amanda Forbes, a Lincoln High teacher. A later newspaper article lists the architect as Arnott Woodroofe of Tuttle & Woodroofe. This appears to be the first Tacoma building we can identify with Woodroofe. Little is known of the Tuttle Brothers, Rollin and Paul, who also arrived in Tacoma about 1904-05. Rollin was the architect, though nothing is known of his training, and Paul was the builder. Their ad in the 1906 Tacoma Directory shows a craftsman-style Four Square with the tag line: Specialists in original and artistic designing of the Modern American Home. However, their stay was short. By 1907 the Tacoma Directory no longer lists Rollin Tuttle, and by 1908 his brother Paul is not listed. It's not known where they relocated. The Tuttle Brothers were clearly familiar with the new craftsman style. Their houses at 622 North 4th and 1718 North Stadium Way are Swiss-influenced variations while 1702 North Prospect is the typical bungalow. A 1906 newspaper article notes that Rollin has just returned from an extensive trip through Southern California where he secured a number of new residence designs. Southern California would surely have included Pasadena where architects Green & Green, Frederick Roehrig, Robert Orr and others were perfecting the California bungalow. Indeed Rollin Tuttle's 1906 design of the McNeeley house (223 N. Yakima) with its stucco upper floors and Mission dormers demonstrates the California influence. The two firms, Tuttle Brothers and Tuttle & Woodroofe, are responsible for about 45 buildings in Tacoma, almost all residential homes. In the summer of 1907, Woodroofe buys out the Tuttle Brothers and by January 1908, architect Arnold S. Constable joins him in the new firm of Woodroofe & Constable. Constable had just recently arrived from Britain. He also studied architecture at the Royal Institute where he won the King's Prize and several other honors apparently graduating in 1905. He then worked for firms in London, Paris and Brussels. It's likely that Constable already knew Woodroofe or was recommended to Woodroofe by a British colleague. The new Park Universalist Church was one of the new firm's first commissions. The work of Tuttle & Woodroofe and Woodroofe & Constable clearly shows the Swiss influence on the emerging craftsman style: a somewhat more vertical massing with a dominant, front-facing gable and deep eaves coupled with large decorative brackets. The Swiss chalet has long influenced British and American architecture and is featured in Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) and Bicknell & Comstock's *Specimen Book of One Hundred Architectural Designs* (1880). Its influence on the Stick style is often hidden beneath that style's ornamental fretwork. In 1887, influential Spokane architect Kirtland Cutter built his own home as a Swiss chalet, which he reprised in his award winning and very influential Idaho House for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In 1902, Robert Reamer (later of Seattle) used the Swiss style in his influential Old Faithful Inn at Yellowstone Park. This lodge set the style for future national park and other lodges, including Frederick Heath's 1906 chalet-inspired Nereides Baths for Point Defiance Park. By 1905, Ambrose Russell's Davidson house (916 N. K) shows Swiss influences, and his 1906 Pickerell house (1318 South 4th) is almost a chalet reproduction. By 1908 and the design of the Park Universalist Church, the Swiss influence is a common element of the craftsman style. The firm of Woodroofe & Constable would last until 1912 and build over 60 buildings in Tacoma and Lakewood, almost all residences in the craftsman style. While information is lacking about Woodroofe, Constable moves to California in 1913 and continues designing homes.

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