

PROJECT PROFILE

First Presbyterian Church Plaster Ceiling ♦ Ithaca, NY

VERTICAL
access



Building description

Designed by Josiah Cleaveland Cady and completed in 1900, the First Presbyterian Church in Ithaca is a load-bearing masonry structure with sandstone cladding at the exterior.

Steel and built-up wood roof trusses in the attic of the church are expressed as plaster arches at the interior of the sanctuary that divide the ceiling into five bays. The ceiling is comprised of a barrel vault within the gabled roof of the church. The barrel vault is divided into five bays: a narrow bay above the narthex at the west end of the sanctuary, three bays above the nave of the church and a fifth bay above the choir at the east end of the church.

The plaster ceiling is comprised of square-shaped “coffered” panels, each roughly 26 inches by 26 inches with rosette ornaments. The panels and the ornament are all cast plaster. Each panel is screwed to a framework constructed of wood 1-inch by 3-inch members, which is visible in the attic. At each intersection between panels, where the corners meet, there are plaster fleurettes 5½ inches in diameter. These fleurettes are attached to the wood framework in the attic by means of four nails through each fleurette at thin edges of the panels. At the center of each panel is a larger rosette, 13½ inches in diameter. The plaster elements have a layer of burlap reinforcement, cast within each piece.

Scope of work

- Performed hands-on inspection of the plaster panels and rosettes, sounding with an acrylic mallet and testing by hand to determine the integrity of the ornament.
- Mapped and documented cracks and other conditions at the plaster ceiling of the sanctuary using annotated drawings and still photographs.

Owner:

First Presbyterian Church

In collaboration with

Bero Architecture

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