



Talbot Chapel

History

The current chapel, known as the Talbot Memorial Chapel, sits on the site for the first chapel at Lowell Cemetery that was built in 1848. It was octagonal, made of wood and had a veranda. The current chapel was erected in 1885 by Harriet Rogers Talbot, wife of Charles P. Talbot. He was born in Ireland in 1807 and died in Lowell in 1884. (She died in 1893). They lived at 94 Chestnut St. (near the current Lowell General Hospital/Saints Campus on Hospital Drive from East Merrimack Street). With his brother Thomas, Charles founded and owned the Talbot Mills in North Billerica and the Talbot Dyewood & Chemical Company in Lowell. The chapel was designed by Lowell-born architect Frederick Stickney who also designed the Lowell Cemetery's Shedd Receiving Tomb and the Pollard Memorial Library.

Art and Architecture

Frederick Stickney designed the Talbot Chapel in the Romanesque Revival style. He was a great admirer of the Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson who championed Romanesque Revival and designed many notable structures including Boston's Trinity Church. Rough-faced stone and wide-rounded arches are key features of the Romanesque design, including the use of the round arch for door and window openings and its distinctive rounded moldings. The style is less picturesque than the Gothic Revival style seen at the Theodore Edson Parker Mausoleum. It is more reasoned and maybe more serene. It has a strong sense of gravity and permanence. A large rounded arch leads to a recessed entrance. An outline of a triangle above the archway indicates that the chapel used to have a porte-cochere attached to the chapel. This was a covered structure with a steeply pitched wooden roof that provided cover for carriages and later cars to arrive and drop off their passengers for a service.

The Romanesque Revival style for churches was generally preferred by Congregationalists, Methodists, and Baptists, while the Gothic Revival was particularly favored by Episcopalian and Catholic parishes.

The chapel has a central nave and an apse (the rounded end of the chapel). Stickney designed a beautiful timber ceiling using a complex geometric system. This design is the major artistic statement. Windows in the walls and apse were placed to achieve maximum natural lighting. The brightness of the interior is associated with purity and is accomplished with white walls and the elimination of representations of any kind (statues, paintings, stained glass).

A portrait of Harriet Rogers Talbot hangs in the front of the chapel. The painting is by David Dalhoff Neal (1837-1915) who was born in Lowell at the corner of Branch and Middlesex streets. He left Lowell when he was 15 to study painting in New Orleans and San Francisco. In the late 1860s, Neal toured Italy following four years at the Royal Academy in Munich. The Whistler House Museum of Art owns a portrait of Neal, and the Pollard Memorial Library displays his beautiful painting of Venice's Rialto Bridge.

The Talbot Chapel inspired the design of the pavilion at the Lowell Cemetery's O.M. Whipple Columbarium. Slate was chosen as the material for the pavilion's roof because that was the material used for the Chapel's main roof and the apse. Additional buildings designed by Stickney are the Cemetery's original administrative office at the Lawrence St. entrance and the Shedd Receiving Tomb. The Lowell-born architect is buried in the Cemetery on Tennyson Avenue, near the Theodore Edson Parker Mausoleum.

The Talbot Chapel comfortably seats up to 80 people for memorial services.