

Baha'i house draws millions

A unique experience while in Chicago is a trip to the world-famous Baha'i House of Worship on the shore of Lake Michigan. Over three million people have visited this unusual building since it was dedicated in 1953.

Driving north along Sheridan Road the lovely, lace-like dome of the Baha'i House of Worship rises suddenly above the trees like an exotic mirage. The reality of the building is confirmed on rounding the corner when the rest of this beautifully different nine-sided building becomes visible.

Walking through the nine gardens surrounding the House of Worship, the first thing to strike the eye is the interwoven lace exterior covering the majority of the building.

The House of Worship is ringed by 18 steps leading up to the nine entrances. At each corner these are joined with a pylon upon which the symbols of different religions - star of David, Christian cross, star and crescent of Islam, the nine-petaled Baha'i rosette and others - are interwoven into the design.

The second story pylons, although set back and separated from the first floor, are a crown over each entrance, joining the two sections in visual unity. Between the pylons, beautifully arched windows and in Baha'i rosettes.

The dome, which is the crowning grace of the whole House of Worship, has a jeweled band of airy windows surrounding the base with nine verticle ribs joining the whole building together as they interlock at the top like hands in prayer.

As the viewer ascends the outside steps, the intricacy of the design breaks down into a basic simplicity.

Above the nine entrances quotations from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, the Prophet-Founder of the Baha'i Faith, are inscribed. They are addressed to the needs of modern man. The quotation over the main entrance reads: "My love is My stronghold; he that entereth therein is safe and secure." Over another door, the quote is: "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

Inside the auditorium, daylight filters through the lacy interior, bathing it in a warm glow. Peace permeates the whole atmosphere from the top of the 191-foot dome down into each of the nine bays.

The House of Worship was built by the Baha'is as a gift to the world. It took 32 years to build, costing \$3 million which was toally financed through voluntary member contributions. Its beauty is uniquely expressive of the unifying proposes to which it is dedicated: recognition of the oneness of God, the oneness of His Prophets and the oneness of mankind.

Baha'is believe that Baha'u'llah is God's Messenger for this age and that He brought the blueprint for the establishment of world unity and for universal and lasting peace for all mankind. Some of the Baha'i principles are independent investigation of truth; elimination of all prejudice whether racial, national or religious; equality of women and men; universal compulsory education for all; need for a universal auxiliary language; and establishment of a world federation.

The history of the House of Worship, which is one of the most photographed buildings in the world, is unique. The land on which it is built originally belonged to Archange Chevalier, a Pottawattomie Indian woman and wife of Antoine Ouillette, the first white settler in the Chicago area.

This interracial marriage over 150 years ago was only a glimmering and precursor of the unity of all mankind to which the House of Worship is dedicated.

In 1912 'Abdu'l-Baha, the son of Baha'u'llah, during His visit to America, laid the corner stone of the House of Worship - assisted by people from many national and racial groups.

The design for the building was not selected until 1920 when the architectural plans of Louis Bourgeois, a French-Canadian, were accepted.

Former president of the America Architectur League, H. Van Magonigle, called it "the first new idea in architecture since the 13 Century."

The dome was the first portion to be finished after the superstructure was built and the House of Worship was sheathed in an intricately designed facing of concrete and crushed quartz ornamentation from top to bottom.

In the future there will be Baha'i Houses of Worship in every city, each surrounded with a hospital, university, hospice, orphanage and other dependencies which will be open to people of all nationalities, races

and creeds. Today there are five Houses of Worship Wilmette, Ill. Kampala, Uganda; Sydney, Australia; Frankfurt, Germany and a newly completed one in Panama City, Panama.

Every Sunday at 3 p. m. there are public devotions which consist of readings from the Baha'i writings as well as from other religious writings in the 1,200-seat auditorium.

BONUS PRIZE NAMES:

1. Kevin M. Hill
3628 So. Wentworth
2. Alfred Kelso
6207 King Dr.