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The Baha'i House Of Worship Modern Saga Of Religious World

IN CHURCH CONSTRUCTION, one of the marvels of the century is the ornate and imposing Baha'i House of Worship in Wilmette, Ill.

Of particular significance this week is the announcement by church officials that work has been practically completed on interior ornamentation of the great structure which rests upon nine steel-reinforced concrete caissons, sunk 124 feet to bed-rock.

Height of the building from main floor to pinnacle of the dome is 165 feet. Diameter of the massive dome is 98 feet and made entirely of glass. The House of Worship, rising in a majestic sweep from its Wilmette site, was designed by the architect, Louis J. Bourgeois, in accordance with the Baha'i teaching which sets the pattern of a nine-sided structure for temples of this faith.

The nine ornamental doors, all of similar construction, have long been the wonder of visitors who have journeyed there from every country in the world. The original architects' model is on exhibit at the House of Worship, and more than 500,000 visitors have been taken on tour of the big edifice.

Contract for the job of interior decoration was let to the George A. Fuller Co., and the work included installation of lighting, heating, ventilation, accoustical equipment, etc. The cost: approximately \$900,00.

A unique feature of the interior ornamentation is that it conforms with the exterior, and employs a construction process known as architectural concrete—which means the casting of sections from molds made from hand carved models.

Dedicated to the principle of world religion, the Baha'i House of Worship will be formally opened for public worship in 1953.

The 1953 landscaping job will mark completion of the gigantic project—a modern saga of the religious world, which dates back nearly 45 years. Here's what happened: back in 1907, a Baha'i committee, charged with the responsibility of selecting a site for construction, chose the present one on Sheridan Road and Linden Avenue, in Wilmette.

The land was acquired by 1914 and foundations were sunk in 1920. By 1931, the super-structure was completed. Exterior construction work was finished in 1943. Work on interior ornamentation, started in 1949, has just been completed. So the final step—landscaping—will be a reality by 1953.

Total cost of the entire building operation—from purchase of ground to the formal public opening—will be about \$2,500,000—with all expenses paid for by followers of the Baha'i Faith. Largest amount has come from the United States and Canada, but members in the Orient, Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Islands of the Pacific and Latin America have supported generously the sacred undertaking.

At the Baha'i Temple, non-members are not allowed to pay one cent toward support of the church program. No collections are taken and there is no public solicitation of funds. There is no morning worship on Sunday, but all members and non-members are welcome to the afternoon lecture at 3:30 p. m. The Temple is open daily, from 10:30 a. m. to 5 p. m., for meditation and prayer, to all who wish to enter its sacred portals.

Baha'i is a One-Faith church, based on the spiritual principles of love, unity, integrity and knowledge of God. All are welcome, regardless of race, creed or color, but only Baha'i members can pay for the material propagation of the Faith. Here are the Nine Baha'i tenets and texts, carved over the entrance portals and on the interior walls of the Temple:

The earth is but one country; and mankind its citizens.

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away there from if thou desirest Me.

My love is My stronghold; he that entereth therein is safe and secure.

Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner.

Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent.

I have made death a messenger of joy to thee; wherefore dost thou grieve?

Make mention of Me on My earth that in My heaven I may remember thee.

O rich ones on earth! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust.

The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His glory.