

Early Boulder Colorado photos - Sunbursts

Curated by David Bruner
March 11, 2025

Sunburst is an executive estate on 8.7 acres 0.3 miles up Lefthand Canyon (which, yes, goes all the way up to Jamestown). It came with an old white horse, Jeb (who ruled over it) and Bo, a big black lab, and Alfie, a smaller cocker spaniel. Also, it had a barn and a Model A flatbed truck.

There was a wonderful view of the valley with spectacular sunrises seen from shortly up the hill above the house. Yes, I was a frequent attendee!

I think we moved to Sunburst in June, 1973.

Philip Burley was the one who found it thru a friend. It was one of the many fantastic things he and Vivian brought to the providence. He was sooo far ahead of his time! He was clairvoyant and clairaudient as a child! Dunno how he put up with us...

The regional workshop was held there on August 3-4, 1973.

The center had been a rental house, 1121 Eleventh St, Boulder 80302, which sustained a fire a couple years before. They had painted the brick exterior dark green to hide that fact. And they paneled the first floor with absolutely the cheapest plastic imitation wood-patterned paneling and carpeted it with 1st gen astroturf! Sisters had the nicer upstairs while the brothers got the old unfinished rock and mortar cellar.

Maryellen McCabe, one of the "singing Irish sisters" who were invaded our movement back then, pioneered Boulder with the help of a couple new members. Paul Valin stated that Edgar (Sandy) Boshart rented 1121 on November 20, 1972, perhaps just after it was rebuilt.

I met the Unified Family on March 15, 1973 at Philip's OWC [One World Crusade] International Night at the A-frame First Christian Church. Folk costumes, yodeling, dancing, singing, celebration in this unmatched space!

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I joined on Easter, April 15.

The second Sunburst (which we named) was at 777 Broadway, Boulder, across the street from the CU campus. It started out as a 2 story apartment block until a famous Boulder architect, Hobart D Wagener, was hired in 1964 to design a grand new home for the Alpha Phi sorority to front it. As a Sigma Chi, we knew them as one of the better, un-snobbish sorority houses. I actually won the Sigma Chi Derby back in '67. We pledges were assigned to a sorority for a pledge costume contest. The Alpha Phis dressed me as Lady Godiva and put me on a white horse! No contest!

Maybe the large house became too much for the Alpha Phis and they put it on the market. Philip asked Mary (O'Brien) Cordill, another of the "female Irish mob," to find a center in Boulder (that is one of the hardest missions!). However, Mary was promptly led to 777 and we purchased it in July, 1974 for \$500,000 with a \$300,000 functional deficiency (it not being sold as a Greek house). The mortgage payment was over \$5k a month, pretty steep for our fledgling fundraisers and New World Home Cleaning!

Thank you, David

Mark Gerwing

First Christian Church, Boulder, Colorado

November 12, 2011 · architecture, historic preservation, Mid-century modern, places, architect Boulder



First Christian 01

As almost anyone can attest to, one of the very first buildings that most people see on arriving in Boulder is the First Christian Church on CO 36/28th Street, in southeast Boulder.

Built in 1960 and designed by Nixon and Jones, it is an excellent introduction to Boulder's great collection of late Modernist architecture.

The main sanctuary is the west-projecting prow that mimics the angled flatirons on the horizon and is clad in long strips of blue glass with a decorative, multi-colored geometric motif. The dropping site grade accentuates the projecting prow and the long, white horizontal balcony acts like a visual cantilevered beam simultaneously anchoring the building to the ground and allowing for it to soar upward.



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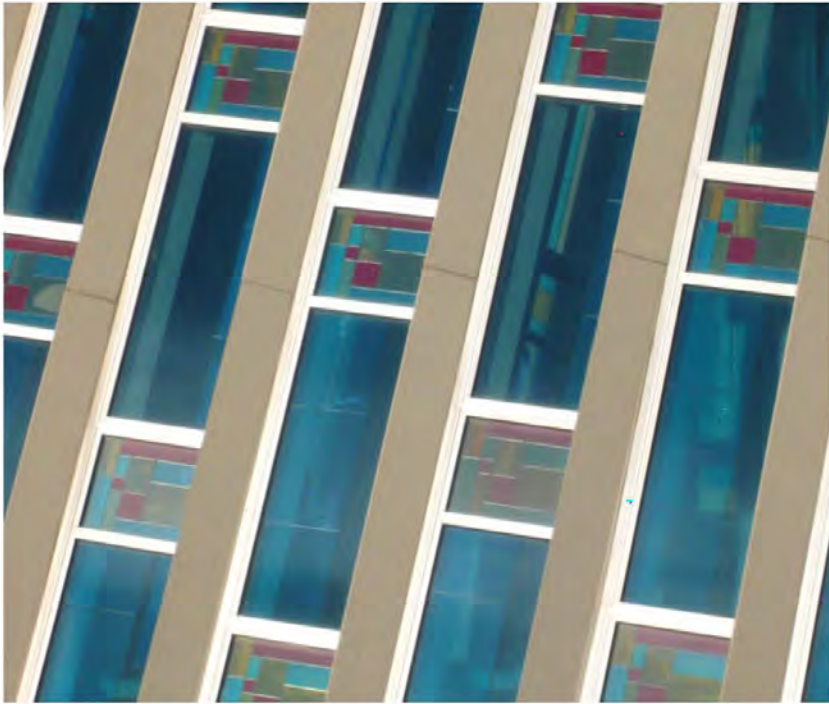
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First Christian 06

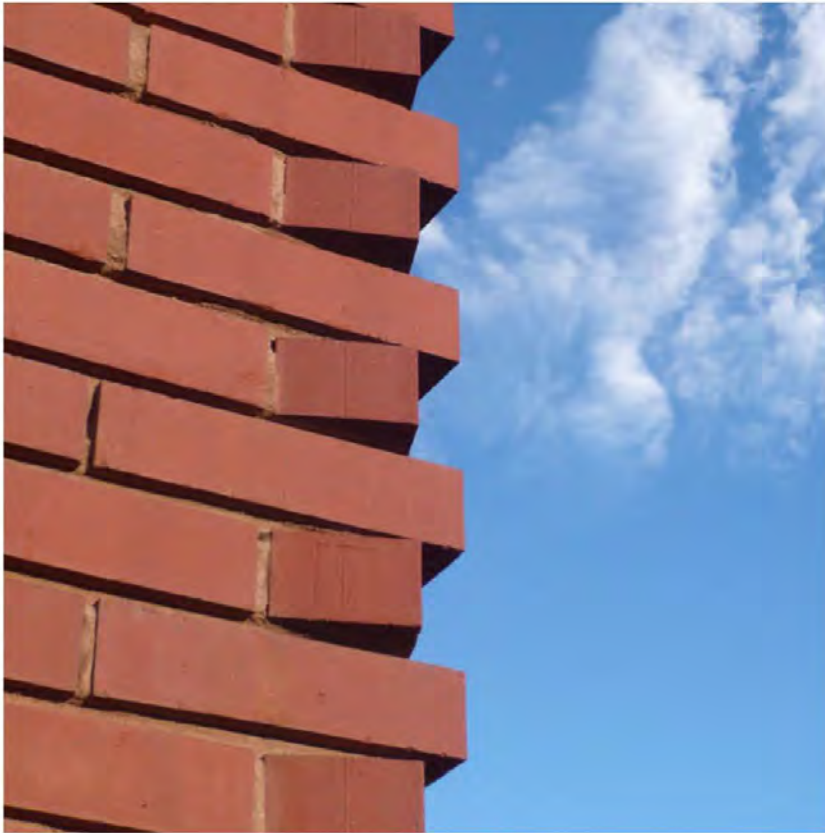
Alongside the form of the sanctuary space is a stark brick "campanile", lozenge-shaped, standing just to the east of the main entry. While I don't think this tower houses any bells, it does act as that typical vertical element of the traditional campanile, distinguishing the entry and providing a vertical counter to the horizontal impetus of the front of the building.



First Christian 03

The east side of the building is a series of low, single-story structures, an office and school. But the heart of the building clearly lies in the west sloping face.

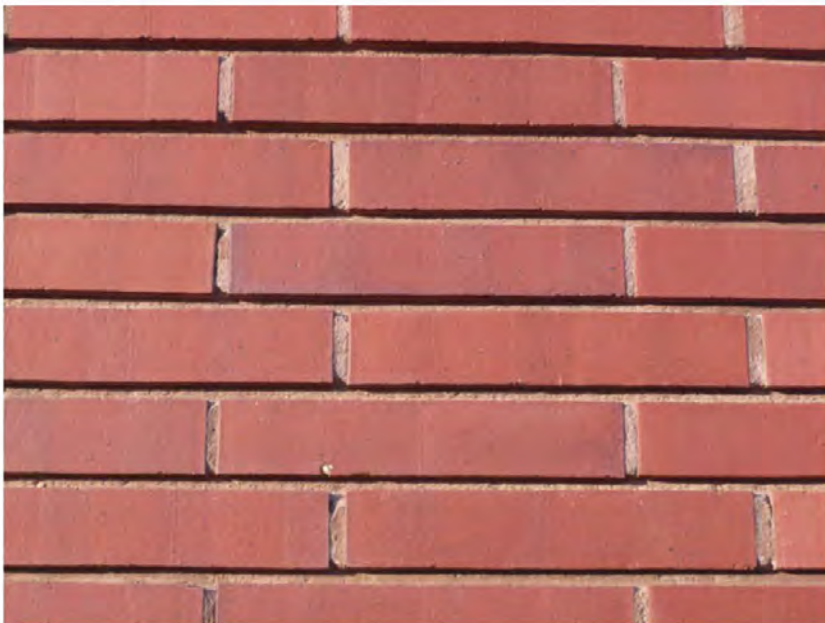




First Christian 02

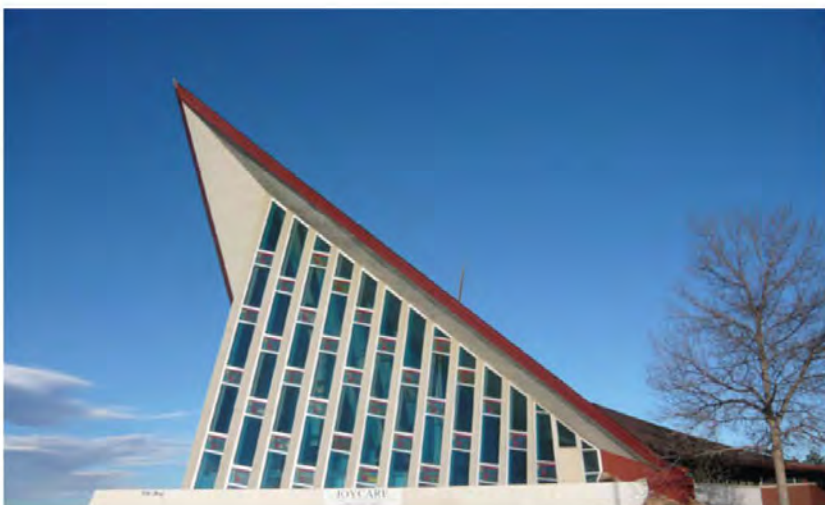


The sanctuary portion of the building has been empty for quite a few years and is suffering from some much needed delayed maintenance. The soffits are showing some damage and the brick, with its raked horizontal joints and flush vertical joints, so typical of Wright-inspired mid-century architecture, is in need of proper tuck-pointing.



First Christian 05

There are development plans afoot for much of the site, including some demolition, but retaining the sanctuary and campanile. As First Christian sits along the most-traveled entry into Boulder, thousands of folks travel past it everyday without much of a thought. Certainly the sites around this church have sprouted many buildings of ever-increasing size and articulation, diminishing the impact of the work. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to imagine Boulder without this iconic, welcoming edifice.





First Christian 04

Tagged: architecture, boulder, colorado, mid-century, preservation

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Rob anthems 12 years ago · 0 Likes

I am visiting here in the Denver area and love this mid century modern building.an icon of this magnitude needs to be saved! Too many MCM buildings around the country are going under and are lost forever.preservation is progress too!

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