

MORE ABOUT ACADEMY CHAPEL

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HENRY --

HOPE ALL WENT WELL WITH TRIP TO MINNEAPOLIS

I had a phone call from Otto Stark last evening. We talked for quite a while.. Otto worked with Stan on the chapel and succeeded him when Stan left SOM for Naes & Murphy c. 1956-57. HE used the word "ABSOLUTELY" in asserting that the chapel was Stan's design.

He said that Stan started with the idea of wings, but the wings morphed into hands in the attitude of prayer. Typical of Stan always looking for the symbol. Netsch was intent on building a cathedral on a nearby mountain top and he went on an extended tour of cathedrals in Europe. Meanwhile, the Air Force colonels in charge nixed the idea of a mountain top location. They said that weekend visits of parents to cadets required a more convenient location near the Administration Building.

Neither Gertrude nor Otto could remember why Stan and Netsch disagreed and Stan left. But Stan and Otto were close and Otto continued to keep Stan informed. Otto had a problem with the rabbi who required a separate entrance, for Jews, but that was happily resolved later when it was decided that the chapel needed to be taller so as not to be dwarfed by the Administration Building. Increasing the height allowed for a separate level for Jews which made the rabbi happy.

Stan had already pulled Otto away from SOM to work on O'Hare before Netsch returned. But Otto said that with the Mountain site eliminated Netsch warmed to Stan's solution and put crew to work on it.

In reading accounts of the building, it was raised still taller with the addition of a third level which went to the Protestants, the largest group. Catholics got the second level. Total building height, 178 ft. All of these changes and refinements came after Stan and Otto were gone.

I don't know who the others were who helped Netsch finish up. I can see why the building is now an icon and tourist attraction and why Netsch gets full credit as its designer.

I think it is proper for the Graceland tour docents to continue to give Netsch credit when discussing his grave, but also to mention Stan's initial role in giving the chapel its form based on hands clasped in prayer when discussing his memorial stone.