

**American Academy of Religion  
Annual Meeting – Atlanta 2015**

**Houses of Worship Tour**

Jeanne Halgren Kilde, University of Minnesota  
David Bains, Samford University

**Monday, November 20, 2015 - 1:00 PM-5:00 PM**

This bus tour will explore landmark houses of worship amid the changing religious ecology of Atlanta's Ponce de Leon Avenue. Many of these buildings have served multiple purposes as Atlanta's population has changed and moved. A major east-west avenue, "Ponce" passes through several distinct neighborhoods. Beginning in Midtown, through Virginia-Highland and Poncey-Highland, and into Druid Hills, where it is lined with parks first planned by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead.

We will begin by traveling north and west to the campus of Emory University to see its Canon Memorial Chapel at Candler School of Theology, a landmark modernist building by Paul Rudolph. Then we follow Ponce de Leon Avenue back to Midtown. The western part off the avenue in the neighborhood of Druid Hills is a linear park designed in part by Frederick Law Olmstead, Sr. The different sections of part present distinct landscape styles. Our first stop on Ponce is the neo-classical mansion built for Coca-Cola owner and Emory benefactor Asa Candler's. It now serves as St. John Chrysostom Melkite Catholic Church. We will then walk next door to the second "mansion church," St. John's Lutheran Church. We will then visit the Atlanta Hare Krishna Temple, which is also in a repurposed residence, albeit a more modest one. Our last stop is Druid Hills Baptist Church, a grand neo-classical auditorium church. On the way back to town, we will pass two landmarks of the Moorish revival, Fox Theatre and modernist Moorish Yaarab Shrine.

**Schedule**

- 1:00 Leave Atlanta Marriott Marquis
- 1:25 Arrive Cannon Chapel, Candler School of Theology
- 1:55 Depart Cannon Chapel
- 2:05 Arrive St. John Chrysostom Melkite Catholic Church, 1428 Ponce De Leon Ave. NE
- 2:35 Depart and walk to St. John Lutheran
- 2:45 Arrive at St. John Lutheran Church, 1410 Ponce De Leon Ave. NE
- 3:15 Depart St. John Lutheran
- 3:20 Arrive ISKCON Atlanta Hare Krishna Temple, 1287 S. Ponce De Leon Ave. NE
- 3:50 Depart ISKCON
- 4:00 Arrive Druid Hills Baptist Church, 1085 Ponce De Leon Ave. NE
- 4:30 Depart Druid Hills Baptist
- Drive by Yaarab Shrine, 400 Ponce De Leon Ave. NE
- Drive by Fox Theater, 600 Peachtree St. NE
- 5:00 Arrive Marriott Marquis

**Cannon Chapel**  
**515 Kilgo Circle**  
**Atlanta, GA 30322**  
**404-727-6226**  
[http://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/cannon\\_chapel/index.html](http://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/cannon_chapel/index.html)

Erected by the Candler School of Theology on the Emory University campus, the Cannon Chapel is a landmark modernist building, designed by noted architect Paul Rudolph. Groundbreaking for the building occurred on August 39, 1979, and was attended by then-President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, and First Lady, Rosalynn Carter. The chapel was completed two years later and consecrated on September 30, 1981. It was named in honor of William Ragsdale Cannon (1916-1997), dean of the school (1953-68) and bishop of the United Methodist Church (appointed 1968). Cannon had a notable international career, serving as president of the World Methodist Conference, serving as a Protestant observer of the Vatican II Council in 1965, and in the same capacity during the Extraordinary Synod of 1985. Among his personal friends were Pope John Paul II and President Jimmy Carter, and he delivered the invocation at Carter's inauguration. A church historian and theologian, Cannon wrote 13 books, including works on medieval Christian history and on John Wesley.



**History.** The Candler School of Theology was founded in 1914 by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS), after the organization severed its ties with its previous flagship institution, Vanderbilt University. The MECS Education Committee, charged with finding a location for the new institution, was headed by Warren Candler, whose brother Asa, founder of the Coca-Cola Company, offered financial support for moving the school to Atlanta. Initially housed in the Wesley Memorial Church, the school of theology was moved to the new Druid Hills campus in 1915. In 1929, the MECS severed ties with the Candler School over issues related to modernism.

In 1915, as Emory University, also endowed by the Candlers, and the Candler School of Theology were both moving to the Druid Hills area, architect Henry Hornbostel was commissioned to design the conjoined campus as well as the mansion of the Candler family, Callanwolde, now a fine arts center. Among the buildings Hornbostel designed for the Candler School was Durham Chapel, completed in 1916, which served as the primary worship space for both the theological students and Emory University.

In 1975, the Candler School purchased some 250,000 books and other items from Hartford Seminary in Hartford, CT, resulting in the need for additional library space. Paul Rudolph was hired to convert the chapel into a library. In addition to Rudolph's growing reputation as a gifted, modernist architect, the fact that Rudolph's father, Keener, had been a member of Candler's first graduating class in 1915, also made Rudolph a favorable choice for the project. Upon completion of the conversion, the building was renamed the Pitts Theological Library. It is now called the Old Theology Building and can be seen adjacent to the Cannon Chapel on Kilgo Circle. Upon completion of the chapel conversion, Rudolph was commissioned to design its replacement, the Cannon Chapel.

**Architecture.** Cannon Chapel is a textured poured concrete building in the Brutalist style, a term associated with Le Corbusier's description of the primary building material as "béton brut" or "raw concrete." The use of poured concrete gained favor among post-World War II modernists as an honest material that revealed its form and function. In the United States, it was used primarily for government and institutional buildings, appearing on several university campuses from the 1950s through the mid-1970s. Paul Rudolph had used poured concrete in the Yale University Art and Architecture Building of 1958. Cannon Chapel, with its prominent arches, deeply textured walls, and red tile roof, is a somewhat "softer" use of the style, but Le Corbusier's influence can be seen in the elevation and slender exterior columns or "pilotis" that lift the building above the ground.

Despite its very different style, the chapel was intended to speak, architecturally, to the other buildings near it on campus. Its exterior arches echo those of the windows in Hornbostel's earlier Durham Chapel. The fourth arch, narrower and higher than the rest, serves as a tower and

presents the only architectural iconography in the building, a void in the shape of a cross.

The interior of the chapel features a square sanctuary topped by a barrel vaulted ceiling that follows the exterior roofline. Supported by wood beams and lined with plank (oak or pine? sources differ) slats, it is reminiscent, perhaps, of Rudolph's years in the shipbuilding industry. Clerestory windows just under the ceiling level flood the space with light during the day and make the ceiling seem to float. Artist Frank Stella, who had designed a mural at Drake University's cafeteria during this period, was invited with Ellsworth Kelly to design stained glass windows for the chapel, but upon visiting the newly built space Stella claimed the space was perfect as Rudolph had designed it and that stained glass would diminish his vision.

Galleries supported by concrete columns line the main sanctuary on three sides, rising on progressively higher levels around the room, referencing the pinwheel effect that Frank Lloyd Wright popularized to enhance privacy in domestic plans in the early twentieth century. The mechanical systems are exposed, a common practice in the brutalist effort to demonstrate architectural honesty. The space seats well over 400 people. The concrete floor, designed with dance performance in mind, is overlaid with wood parquet. The Holtkamp Organ was custom designed for the space. A smaller chapel adjacent to the main sanctuary shares a wall of windows with it, allowing light to flow from each room into the other.

**Multifaith Usage.** The Cannon Chapel was designed as a multi-purpose building, intended in the 1980s, to provide space for Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and University services as well as weddings, funerals, memorials, student activities, performances, meetings, and other activities. In the main sanctuary, all furnishings were designed to be moveable, from the seating to the pulpit, communion table, and the original copper cross and menorah. Only the pew seating in the galleries was fixed. Currently, along with Christian and Jewish services and meetings, the building serves Buddhist and Hindu meetings as well as Muslim Jummah Prayer. A halal meal is also served in the Chapel on Fridays. The building continues to serve as a popular location for a variety of religious services, events, and meetings.

A major renovation, completed in 2013, included the replacement of the parquet floors, upgraded the audio-visual capabilities, provided greater disability access, and created ablution stations for Muslim worshipers.

### For further reading:

Brown, Shelley V. "No Ordinary Chapel: Emory Consecrates a New Center for Spiritual Growth." *Emory Magazine* October 1981. Pp. 15-19.

M.L.J. "Cannon Chapel: Twenty Years of Shared Sacred Space." *Emory Magazine* 77: 3 (Autumn 2001).

Sacred Space International. City Guide to Sacred Spaces: Atlanta, GA. [https://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/art/atl\\_cityguide.pdf](https://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/art/atl_cityguide.pdf)

### St. John Chrysostom Melkite Catholic Church

1428 Ponce de Leon, NE  
Atlanta, GA 30307  
404-373-9522  
<http://stjohnmelkite.org/>



**History:** This mansion was built in 1916 for Asa Candler, the Coca Cola magnate who had purchased the rights to the soft drink in 1891. Here the Candlers hosted such notables as the evangelist Billy Sunday and President William Howard Taft. Candler lived here with his wife until 1926 when due to ill health he spent the next three years in Wesley Memorial Hospital (the future Emory University Hospital). After his death his wife moved. The house was closed for years, rented, and then became a boarding house for fifteen tenants. It was purchased by the American Legion in 1946 with the intention of making it their state

headquarters and war memorial. In 1955 the Legion sold it to Atlanta's Melkite community.

Melkites are Eastern-rite Catholics who follow the Byzantine liturgy, like Eastern Orthodox Christians, but are in communion with the Roman Catholic Church. The head of the Melkite church is the Patriarch of Antioch, and Melkites immigrated to the United States from Syria and other Arab countries.

The Atlanta Melkite community did not have their own church in Atlanta prior to World War II. Fundraising began after that point. It was after Fr. William Haddad came to be the pastor of the community in 1954 that the church was purchased. Under his leadership the mansion was dedicated by the Roman Catholic archbishop of Atlanta, Francis Hyland in 1957 to John Chrysostom (d. 407), the "golden-mouthed" patriarch of Antioch and later of Constantinople.

**Architecture:** The initial remodeling of the mansion to serve as a church was modest costing only \$12,000. Under Fr. Haddad's leadership in 1975, Joseph Lorenz, the Candler's original artist who had designed the leaded glass ceiling was contracted to help further decorate the church. Improvements have continued over the years. Fr. Haddad retired as pastor in 1988. The current pastor, the Rt. Rev. Archimandrite John Azar has served the church since 2000.

The Candler's twenty by thirty foot dining room now houses the altar of the church from which the congregation participates in a mirror of the heavenly banquet in the divine liturgy. The main body of the church or nave was once a thirty-five by sixty-five foot sunken atrium court. The mansions' other elaborate rooms are now used for various purposes, the music room is a chapel dedicated to the



Mother of God and houses the baptistery. The library serves as the Heritage Room and gift shop.

#### For Further Reading:

Terry Kearns, "Church Mansions of Druid Hills," Architectural Tourist  
<http://architecturetourist.blogspot.com/2010/05/chruh-mansions-of-druid-hills.html>

**St. John's Lutheran Church**  
**1410 Ponce De Leon Ave NE**  
**Atlanta, GA 30307**  
**(404) 378-4243**  
<http://www.stjohnsatlanta.org>  
/



**History:** St. John's Lutheran was organized in July 1869 as *Die Deutsche Luterische Gemeinde* (the German Lutheran Congregation) and is the oldest Lutheran church in Atlanta. The name St. John's Lutheran was adopted in 1871. The current property is the church's fourth. Previous buildings included a Gothic revival church at Forysth and Garnett purchased from a Methodist Protestant congregation and used 1885 to 1924, and a neo-classical building at the corner of Euclid Avenue and Druid Circle, NE, purchased from a Presbyterian in 1924. In 1959, the congregation purchased the Stonehenge Mansion and after remodeling, moved their worship services into in 1961. In 1969 the current sanctuary was dedicated.

**Architecture:** The mansion was designed by Edward Bennett Dougherty (1876-1943), an Atlanta native who studied at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, and designed many structures in Atlanta, Nashville, and other parts of the south. Erected in 1914, the mansion was built for Samuel Hoyt Venable, a bachelor, and the family of his sister Elizabeth Venable Mason. Venable and his brother William owned the Southern Granite Company and thus chose Stone Mountain granite for their home, the church used the same stone for the new sanctuary designed by architects Barker and Cunningham.

The mansion contains many elaborate rooms typical of the period, including a mahogany paneled library, a room with a mural featuring woodland scenes from Stone Mountain, and a great hall designed to give the feel of an old English Baronial Manor.

The sanctuary is octagonal with a central altar. This central plan design reflects the ideals of the twentieth century liturgical movement, which emphasized the church as the people of God gathered around the table. Though it seats 300, no seat is more than five rows back. A four-sided cross made of faceted glass hangs above the altar. The octagonal shape has been given several interpretations, including the “eight day of creation,” i.e. the new creation through baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ.

**Recent History:** The congregation is known for its inclusive ministry and played a significant role in the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s changing policies on same-sex relationships. In 2006, the church’s then pastor, Bradley Schmeling, was charged by Bishop Ronald Warren of the Southeastern Synod for being in a committed same sex relationship with Rev. Darin Easler. Disciplinary and appeals committees ruled against Pastor Schelling for violating ELCA policy concerning the ordained ministry, and he was removed from the ELCA roster. Subsequently the ELCA changed its policy concerning gay, lesbian, and transgendered persons with a series of actions beginning with a 2007 resolution calling on bishops to exercise restraint in discipline. Accordingly Pastor Schmeling was probably the last partnered gay pastor to face trial in the ELCA.



### Atlanta Hare Krishna Temple -- New Panihati Dhama

1287 S. Ponce de Leon Avenue, NE

Atlanta, GA 30306

404-377-8680

[http://www.atlantaharekrishnas.com/component?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid,1/](http://www.atlantaharekrishnas.com/component?option=com_frontpage&Itemid,1/)



**History.** Vaishnavism, devotion to the Hindu god Vishnu, was established in the U.S. by Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who journeyed from India to New York in 1965 on a mission to bring the practice to the country. He established the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in New York in 1966, and over the next decade, 108 ISKCON temples were organized in the US and around the world, including one in Atlanta.

The original Atlanta temple, founded by Swami Prabhupada, was in Midtown at 23 Thirteenth Street. In 1973 two saints, Lords Gaura (a.k.a. Gauranga or Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu) and Nitai (or Sri Nityananda) were installed in the temple. Popular within Hare Krishna communities, Sri Gauranga, meaning “the one with the golden body,” was an incarnation of Krishna who came in 1486 to serve as his own devotee. Nityananda, whose name means “he who embodies eternal bliss,” was Chaitanya’s friend and an incarnation of Krishna’s boyhood companion, Balarama. The two saints are often linked together as Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai.

The Atlanta Hare Krishnas relocated their temple in 1974, renting a rundown fraternity house in the then-declining Little Five Points neighborhood on Ponce de Leon Avenue. Since the 1960s this neighborhood, a popular commercial area since the 1890s when five major trolley lines converged there, had experienced “white flight” exacerbated by fears that a major highway was to bisect the area. The ISKCON group eventually bought the house in the late 1970s along with houses on both sides.

In 1975 Srila Prabhupada returned for a visit, bringing stories of Lord Nityananda in Panihati Dhama, a small village in India. Balavanta Prabhu,

temple president, decided to travel to Panihati Dhama with some Atlanta temple members. There they celebrated the Panihati Festival. The next year, they celebrated the first Panihati Festival in the Atlanta temple, in which by that time Lord Jagannatha, Lord Balarama and Subhadra Devi had been installed. The temple then took Panihati Dhama as its name.

Panihati Dhama's membership is multicultural. Devotees trace their heritage to South Asia, Africa, Western Europe, and South America.

**Architecture.** New Panihati Dhama's purchase of the fraternity house in 1974 was not an uncommon strategy for small religious groups seeking worship space during this period. About the same time, a Hindu group in Minneapolis, for instance, purchased a former Methodist church, in which they established their deities. The practice of repurposing old houses, churches and other buildings for religious purposes has, in recent years, become even more prevalent. In Atlanta, the house provided space for the deities and worship on the first floor while the upper floor was living space of the monks. The two houses on either side of the temple, purchased a few years later, provided living space for devotees and office space.

The temple serves as the home of the installed deities, who are tended by resident priests who dress, bathe, and feed them several times a day. It also houses the priests and several communards, the number of which peaked in the early 1980s and, as in all ISKCON communities, declined sharply as financial problems forced most devotees to abandon communitarianism. The temple continues to welcome individual visits and hosts many collective gatherings.

**Vaishnavism.** Connected textually to passages in the *Bhagavad Gita* (including the *Mahabharata*), the *Srimad Bhagavatam* (one of the 18 *Puranas*), and the 16<sup>th</sup> century *Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita*, Vaishnavism is devotion to Vishnu, Supreme Lord and Preserver of the Hindu trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva), with a focus on his avatars Krishna and Rama. Vaishnavism is a *bhakti*, or devotional, practice, dating at least to the 12<sup>th</sup> century when a devotional renaissance occurred in India. Devotees practice *bhakti yoga*, a spiritual practice focused on love and devotion toward God, a path toward liberation (*moksha*) through oneness with God understood as the "Supreme all-attractive person, or Krishna." Training in Vaishnvaism is

with a guru. During initiation, one is given a mantra, which repeats the names of Krishna and Rama. According to ISKCON "Vaishnavas teach that by chanting God's names the soul can reawaken his original spiritual knowledge, live peacefully in this life and return to the spiritual realm, or Vaikuntha, the place of no anxiety, at the time of death" (website).

**For further reading:**

"Panhati Festival History in Atlanta." ISKCON Atlanta Hare Krishna Temple. [http://www.atlantaharekrishnas.com/index2.php?option=com\\_content&do\\_pdf=1&id=32](http://www.atlantaharekrishnas.com/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=32)

"What is Vaishnavism?" ISKCON. <http://www.iskcon.org/what-is-vaishnavism/>

"Center Profile: International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), 2003." The Pluralism Project at Harvard University. <http://www.pluralism.org/profiles/view/68147>

## **The Church at Ponce & Highland / Druid Hills Baptist Church**

**1085 Ponce De Leon Ave NE**

**Atlanta, GA 30306**

**404-874-5721**

<http://www.churchatponceandhighland.org/>

**History:** Druid Hills Baptist Church was founded in 1914. The congregation acquired the land for the present site in 1918 and opened its present building in 1928. Throughout its history it has been an innovative congregation. Among Baptists in the south it claims the first vacation Bible school, the first church day camp, and the first co-ed adult Sunday school class. As part of its mission to a changing neighborhood, it recently began using the name the Church at Ponce & Highland.



In the mid-twentieth century, like many congregations, the church expanded its campus to include a large complex of educational buildings that served a membership that peaked at 3,637 in 1947. Since that time, membership gradually declined as the neighborhood transitioned and church members moved to the suburbs. Now the number of weekly worshipers numbers around 100. Unlike many churches, however, Druid Hills remained in its location and became one of the few Baptist churches in downtown Atlanta.

In January 2015, the church sold three acres including its mid-century education buildings to a developer who is building apartments or condominiums. This has provided funds for the maintenance of the landmark 1928 building.

The Rev. Mimi Walker, has served as pastor of the church since 2010. When she was co-pastor of the church with her husband, Graham Walker, a

professor at McAfee School of Theology, the church was removed from the roll of the Georgia Baptist Convention.

The building was designed by architect Edward Bennett Dougherty (1876-1943), who also designed the Stonehenge Mansion (St. John's Lutheran Church) and is a remarkable example of the Beaux-Arts Style.

At a time when Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians were often embracing the neo-medieval Gothic or Romanesque styles, Baptist denominational officials such as P.E. Burroughs of the Southern Baptist Convention's Sunday School Board preferred neo-classical structures.



Druid Hills is a particularly grand and colorful example of this. Its auditorium style seating, with galleries on three sides of the church, gathers the congregational around the pulpit, choir, and baptistery. Renovations to the sanctuary were completed as recently as 2009.

## **Yaarab Shrine**

**400 East Ponce de Leon Avenue, NE**

**Atlanta, GA 30308**

**404-872-5818**

<http://yaarabshrine.net/>



**History.** The Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (A.A.O.N.M.S.), an offshoot of freemasonry dedicated to "fun, fellowship and the Masonic principles of brotherly love, relief and truth," was founded on September 26, 1872, in the New York City Masonic Hall. The Atlanta chapter, known as the YAARAB Shriners of Atlanta, was founded

in 1929. The organization erected the now-historical building known as the Fox Theatre (see below) as its headquarters. Due to several financial misadventures, that building was sold to the Fox moving pictures company. In 1965, the Yaarab Shrine completed the current building, designed by Atlanta architect, A. Thomas Bradbury, at 400 East Ponce de Leon Avenue.

**Moorish Revival Style.** These two Shriner buildings are among hundreds of Moorish style buildings erected across the US and Europe during a period of widespread aesthetic and commercial interest in the material culture, architecture, landscapes, and people of the Middle East – or the Orient – beginning in the early 1800s and continuing through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1990 Trump Taj Majal Casino in Atlantic City is a good example of the contemporary persistence of the style.

Termed “orientalism” by academics concerned with the cultural appropriation and uneven power relationships of this appropriation, this wave of interest and adaptation affected several areas of expression, from scholarship to literature to art to architecture. In the field of architecture, adoptions of features from across the Islamic world from Andalusia to Turkey to Persia to India were incorporated in many building types. Onion domes and horseshoe arches were the signature features of the style, but other elements, including minarets and ornament such as polychromy, horizontal banding, delicate window tracery, and arabesque patterning were borrowed eclectically, bits and pieces here and there – making the “Moorish Style” or Moorish Revival Style less of a “style” than a pastiche. The style was frequently often used in entertainment pavilions and theatres—and the freemasons embraced it. “Mosques” such as the Fox Theatre, imitated Muslim houses of worship and were constructed throughout the country. Many of these still exist, but their names having typically lost the term “mosque” as is the case with the Yaarab Shrine.

In the current Yaarab Shrine, a modernist version of the style, the onion dome remains the most prominent feature, echoing that of the group’s



previous building, the Fox Theater. The Gothic arches of the colonnade echo those created in several buildings by mid-century American architect Minoru Yamasaki. This colonnade also references the Islamic hypostyle mosque (a building supported by many columns), and the low, horizontal profile gives the building a distinctive modernist character.

**Sources.** Kilde, Jeanne Halgren. “Moorish Revival: Revisiting Orientalist Architecture.” Paper delivered at the symposium on Shared Cultural Spaces: Islam and the West in the Arts and Sciences, University of Minnesota. Minneapolis. February 23, 2011.

[http://yaarabshrine.net/shrine\\_history](http://yaarabshrine.net/shrine_history)  
<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/file/5376>

**Fox Theater**  
**660 Peachtree St. NE**  
**Atlanta, GA 38308**  
**404-881-2100**  
<https://foxtheatre.org/#K-8II>

This Moorish Revival building, the original Yaarab Temple, is now a popular theater and entertainment venue. The building was designed by the Atlanta firm of Marye, Alger and Vinour, and completed in 1929. Given the escalating costs of the building, however, and the crash of the stock market in October, the Shrine leased the building to William Fox, who was establishing his movie theater empire. With Fox’s help, the \$3-million building was opened on Christmas Day, 1929.

With its patterned onion dome, slender minarets, polychromatic exterior, tripartite massing, and recessed entrance, the building is an excellent example of the fascination of Americans with the architecture of the Middle Eastern “other.”

**Sources.** Moore, William D. *Masonic Temples: Freemasonry, Ritual Architecture, and Masculine Archetypes*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006.

<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/fox-theatre>