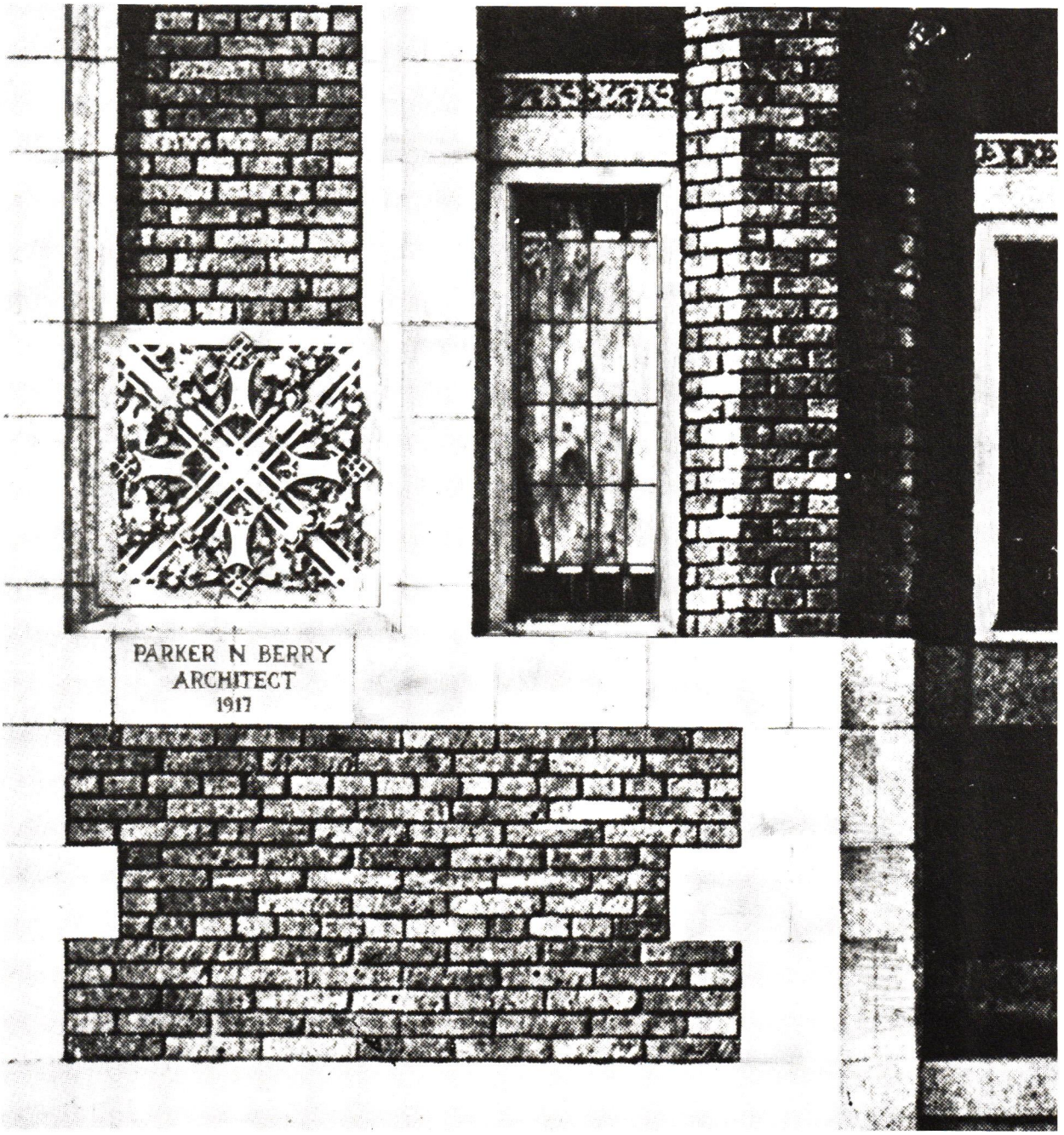

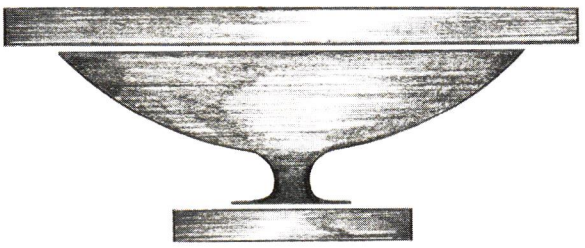

The PRAIRIE SCHOOL Review

Volume IV, Number 1 First Quarter, 1967

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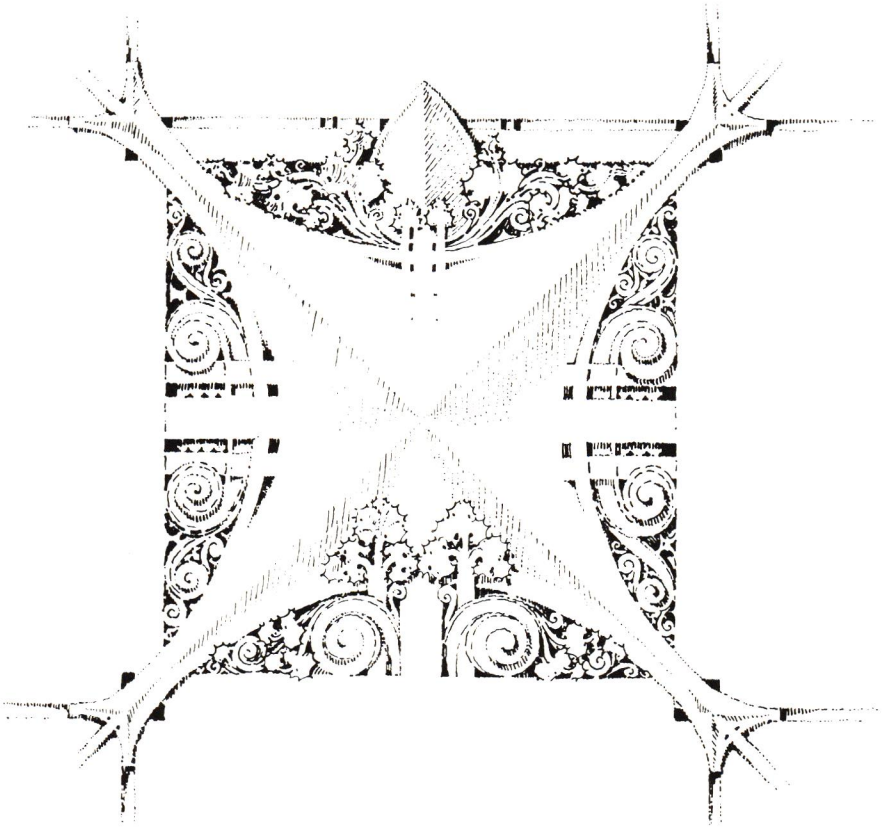
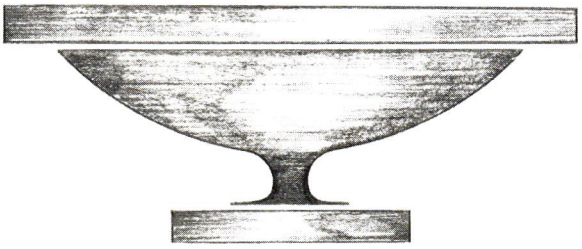


ABOVE: This is an enlargement of a detail from the border of a presentation drawing prepared by Parker Berry in 1917. The forms are markedly similar to those of Louis Sullivan, but the rendering technique is definitely Berry's. Another detail from the same drawing is shown on the Contents page.

COVER: The Interstate National Bank of Hegewisch was Parker Berry's most outstanding private commission. He was pleased enough with the structure to have his name inscribed on the facade beneath a panel of his Sullivanesque terra cotta. ***The Western Architect*** *photo.*

THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW is published four times a year by The Prairie School Press, Inc., 117 Fir Street, Park Forest, Illinois 60466. W. R. Hasbrouck, AIA, Editor and Publisher, Marilyn Whittlesey Hasbrouck, Assistant Editor. Manuscripts concerning the Prairie School of Architecture and related arts are solicited. Reasonable care will be used in handling manuscripts and such material will be returned if return postage is enclosed. Single copy price $1.50, subscription $5.00 per year in U.S. and Canada, $6.00 elsewhere. Issues are mailed flat in envelopes. Address all change of address notices, subscription or back issue inquiries to the Editor at the above address.



The Prairie School Review

Volume IV, Number 1 First Quarter, 1967

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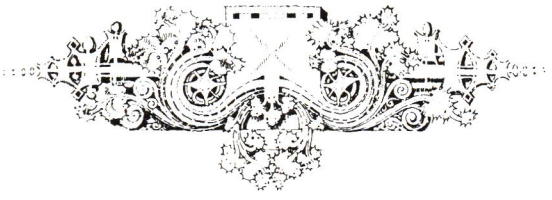


From the EDITORS

There has been spirited response to our editorial in last quarter's issue of **The Prairie School Review** *where we made the rather broad statement ". . . none of the institutions of higher learning in the midwest, or elsewhere for that matter, offer any courses devoted solely to the study of the modern movement in architecture." We are printing excerpts from some of the letters we have received along with a few additional comments of our own.*

From Smith College came the following: "It was with surprise and alarm that I read . . . the . . . editorial statement. . . . In view of this desperate state of affairs, I thought you might be interested in the following entries from the program of the Department of Art published in the . . . Smith College Bulletin . . . **The Arts in America.** *American art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries . . .* **Architecture of the Nineteenth Century.** *The background of modern architecture . . .* **Modern Architecture and its Immediate Background.** *Architecture of the last hundred years with particular emphasis on the work of H. H. Richardson, Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and the European architects of the International Style.*

"The second item was given this year by me, while the . . . (last) . . . is given by Henry-Russell Hitchcock, an apparently little-known but lifelong teacher and student in this field. I have even heard it said that similar courses are offered in nearby institutions." The letter is signed "Yours with temerity, Bernard M. Boyle."

From another letter, whose author asked not to be named, the criticism is in not quite so light a vein: ". . . Even when you qualify your personal definition of the modern movement, the statement is radically incorrect. There is not a serious department of art history in the country in which architectural history is taught at all, in which a course in modern architecture is not a part of the curriculum. . . ."

We are not in disagreement with these writers; the letterheads merely serve to underscore our point. Both are from the Department of Art of their respective institutions, and neither has a School of Architecture on its campus. We concede that our editorial statement may not have been clear. We tend to think of ourselves as addressing primarily architectural schools and practicing architects. Our subscription list leads us to believe

that the larger segment of our audience is in these areas. We are certainly not criticising the teaching of architectural history as it is evidently being done by these and many other art departments. They are to be commended for what they are doing, and we appreciate their interest and concern for what we are doing.

But statements near the end of the second letter serve to illuminate the controversy further. The writer continues: ". . . The only explanation I can conceive for your remarks lies in the fact that there is no Architectural school in which the history of architecture is taught (adequately) . . . but I have never been persuaded that architecture schools provide the best home for serious study of the history of their subject. Like art history in art schools, it becomes a service which is pursued only for the practical ends (technical procedures, stylistic devices) and never deeply enough to stimulate actual exploration and discovery. . . . This business is a complicated one: it is true indeed that too many architects themselves know nothing of the background of their profession." With these remarks the writer has made our point much better than we did in our editorial. Too many schools of architecture look upon historians only as persons recording that which is finished. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The architectural historian is, more often than not, the holder of the highest academic degree in his department. In order to gain that distinction, it was necessary for him to subject himself to the discipline required to obtain that level of education through independent research and analysis of the best in the building arts, past as well as present. It is his responsibility to convey to his students the importance of architecture to our native culture and the why of that importance. When the young man in architecture knows what a heritage he has in his chosen profession, he will then realize that any work he does, the forms and designs that he conceives, must have meaning and reason in order to be genuine lasting architecture.

The crux of the current misunderstanding is apparently our "personal definition of the modern movement". A quote from another letter gives this course description: "'architecture from the eighteenth century to the present, with emphasis on those developments in design, theory, materials and techniques which have contributed most to the formation of contemporary architecture or are most relevant to the contemporary situation.'" We feel that the work of Wright, Sullivan, Griffin, Byrne, their midwest contemporaries and their European counterparts, has too often been considered ***irrelevant*** *to the contemporary situation, interesting only as an aspect of history. The modern movement as it developed in and around Chicago and the midwest at the turn of the century did not*

die with the first shot of World War I. Certainly in discipline, if not in form, it contributed a major part of the base from which the modern architecture of today is derived. The lack of this discipline is too often seen in the carnival atmosphere inspired by some of the so-called modern architecture we find being built by the "dollar" architects whose lack of a sense of history or culture is so apparent.

We suggested in our previous editorial that perhaps the Chicago School of Architecture Foundation would be an appropriate place to begin a real study of modern architectural history. Our last excerpt is from a letter by Professor Marcus Whiffen at Arizona State University who writes " . . . Rather than set up courses which could be attended by only a limited number of students, might not The Chicago School of Architecture Foundation organize a series of traveling exhibitions of the work of Chicago School architects to be sent around to the Schools? This would be a real service to architectural education. The first of such a series of exhibitions might best suitably, and very usefully, be of the work of Barry Byrne. . . ."

With the appointment of L. Morgan Yost, FAIA, as Executive Director of the Chicago School of Architecture Foundation, this becomes a very real and immediate possibility. Mr. Yost's knowledge of the history of modern architecture is widely recognized, and, combined with his many years experience as a practicing architect, provides him with the qualifications required for preparing material for use in training and inspiring students of architecture in an area we think has been neglected. He has already initiated plans for a program similar to what Professor Whiffen suggests. These exhibitions, like all programs of the Chicago School of Architecture Foundation, will be made available to the interested layman and general public as well as the academic community. Perhaps such exhibitions might serve to encourage the various architectural schools to examine their curriculae and to devote a little more time to keeping alive what we call the "Prairie Spirit" which began in Chicago so many years ago and is still contributing so much to today's architecture.

The Brief Career of a Sullivan Apprentice: Parker N. Berry

by Donald L. Hoffmann

Donald Hoffmann is Art Editor of the Kansas City Star and a member of the Society of Architectural Historians. He has written extensively about the development of modern American Architecture. Mr. Hoffmann is currently doing research concerning the life and work of Chicago architect John Wellborn Root.

PARKER N. BERRY (1888-1918)

Parker Noble Berry, who was the chief designer for Louis H. Sullivan during more than eight of the master's declining years, possessed one of the finest talents of the Prairie School architects. His career, unfortunately, was as brief as it was promising; and today his work is virtually unknown.

He was born September 2, 1888, in Hastings, Nebraska, the first of six children of Mr. and Mrs. John Wesley Berry.[1] His paternal grandfather had been a building contractor in Coatesville, Pennsylvania. John Wesley Berry also was a contractor, building from plans he prepared himself, though he was not an architect. In late 1891, the Berry family moved to Princeton, Illinois, a small town where they had lived before their brief years in Hastings. John Wesley Berry operated a planing mill in addition to his contracting business.

Parker Berry attended the Princeton public schools. He was an alert student; his younger brother, Roger Berry, who lives in the family home and who, like his father, has a planing mill, recalls that he had an astonishing capacity for memorizing poetry and passages of literature.

A small house in Princeton, designed by Berry while he was a student at Princeton Township high school, was his first executed commission. He was graduated in 1906, the class president and valedictorian. Berry worked for his father in the construction of a new high school building completed not long after his graduation. He continued working for his father until the fall of 1907, when he was enrolled in the architectural school of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Berry stayed in school only two years, leaving in late 1909. "He became convinced," Berry's wife said recently, "that he was not gaining instruction in the American type of designing, which was his objective."

1 For many of the facts in this article I am deeply indebted to Mrs. Grace Berry Mueller of Chicago, wife of the architect, and to Roger Berry, his brother.

The Henry C. Adams building in Algona, Iowa was designed by Louis Sullivan and built in 1913. Although it was intended to be a bank, the owner never obtained a bank charter and the building was used as a Land and Loan Office. Parker Berry prepared the working drawings for this structure and, when his own first bank building was designed in 1915, he was strongly influenced by this design. Photo by Richard Nickle.

Berry moved to Chicago, living on the North Side with his friend L. R. Lund, who was a close friend of Kristian Schneider of the American Terra Cotta Company, modeler for many years of Sullivan's ornament. Berry was introduced to Schneider, who examined some of his drawings, was impressed, and introduced him to Sullivan. In late 1909, shortly before George Grant Elmslie left the office to join William Gray Purcell in Minneapolis, Berry was hired as a draftsman. At the departure of Elmslie, Berry — only 21 years old — became Sullivan's chief draftsman and, in fact, designer.

The latitude in design enjoyed by Elmslie after Frank Lloyd Wright left Sullivan in 1893, and that Berry exercised during his years with Sullivan between 1909 and 1917, remains a fascinating, and probably moot, historical problem. Roger Berry vividly remembers a visit, about 1912, to Sullivan's office at 1600 Auditorium Tower. His youthful impression was that Sullivan clearly maintained authority over his dwindling staff and their designing. The few draftsmen worked with dedication and great speed, Roger Berry recalls, and in an atmosphere of reverence: conversations were almost whispered. Sullivan himself was polite but somewhat formal. He stalked about the tables to check and advise on the work in progress. "All you could hear was the slap of the T-square and triangle," Roger Berry recalls. "Mr. Sullivan was a little, short man, and slightly stooped; but his eyes were bright, and when he looked at you, you knew it."

From this same period, however, is a letter written by Parker Berry to his father, dated May 15, 1912.[2] He mentions his plaguing ill health and the high cost of his doctor's bills, then adds these significant comments:

> Am very busy now. Getting along with my work pretty well, — have had four "raises" in the last year. I do all the original work in the office now and look after some of the specialists.

Berry and Homer Sailor, a fellow draftsman in Sullivan's office, sat for the Illinois State Board examinations in 1912. "Papers were marked on a basis of 200," Berry's wife relates. "The chairman of the examining board later called Parker to his office, where he explained that the entire board had searched his work carefully but were unable to locate any flaw in his paper — it was therefore decided to award a score of 200 to Parker, the first ever given an applicant for an architect's license."

2 Letter in possession of Roger Berry.

Berry worked evenings and weekends at his home on his own commissions, apparently at first with Sullivan's permission. Of the work attributed to Sullivan during his fading years, it would appear that Berry had a strong part in the little building of 1913 in Algona, Iowa, intended to be the "Iowa State Bank". Berry's wife recently recalled it to be Berry's design rather than Sullivan's, and it was listed as one of Berry's buildings in his obituary in the Princeton newspaper.[3] In 1954, the contractor for this one-story building was unable to remember the architect, whom he said he had seen in Algona only once. The client, Henry C. Adams, a few years later requested complete plans for adding a second story. Those plans were dated January 6, 1917, and were signed by Parker N. Berry. The addition never was made. As late as 1920, Adams was thinking of other changes, and Sullivan made at least three sketches for terra cotta ornaments. The sketches were not utilized. Adams moved from Algona without having received a bank charter. He had used the building merely as a loan office. It was bought in 1921 by the Druggists' Mutual Insurance Company of Iowa, which completed an addition to it in 1951.[4]

About 1915, Berry designed a bank on his own. This was the old First State Bank of Manlius, Illinois, a village 13 miles northwest of Princeton, in north central Illinois. The building contractor was John Wesley Berry. The bank failed in the Great Depression, but the structure still stands. It is a two-story building in red brick and ornamental terra cotta, with a frontage of less than 30 feet. An ornamented cornice slightly more than halfway up the front rather awkwardly expresses the separation of the ground-floor banking room and the small office suites above. A stringcourse above the four office windows is embellished with five large terra cotta plaques much in the Sullivan-Elmslie style, and small glazed terra cotta insets further animate the facade. Two narrow panels of leaded stained-glass, mottled green and white, abut short brick terminals capped with urns, affecting screens in front of the entrances. The recession of the base creates spatial interest on the building's front.

The exterior, in sum, is a quiet and tasteful exercise in the Prairie School idiom, though it is somewhat lacking in compositional finesse. The most significant element, and one which Berry was to develop with more success in a year or two,

3 *The Bureau County Republican,* Vol. 71, No. 51, December 19, 1918, p. 1.

4 Letter dated March 9, 1954, from Eugene Murtagh, president of the insurance company, to Mrs. Grace Berry Mueller.

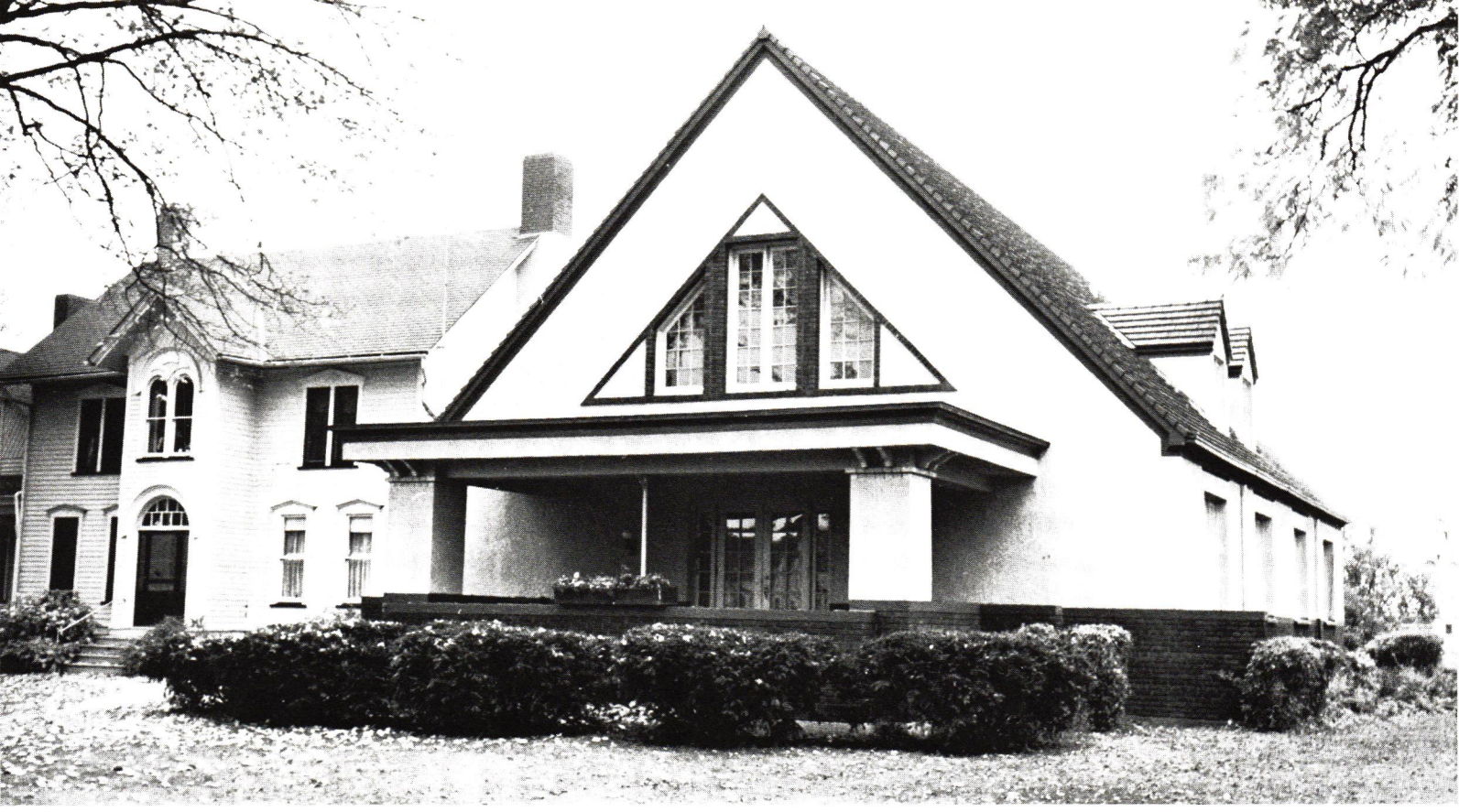
One of Berry's earliest private commissions was the First State Bank of Manlius, Illinois. The building still stands although it is no longer used as a bank. The Sullivan influence, particularly that of the Adams building in Algona, Iowa can be plainly seen. Photo by Donald Hoffmann.

was the recessed base. Of the interior of the building, one can no longer judge, for it has been stripped and used for storage space for many years.

If Berry's bank in Manlius was not a major achievement, it at least indicated his aspirations; and in the small Illinois village it brought the surprise of beauty. The front has aged well, and its softly autumnal colors — the colors that Wright loved so dearly — are still in sympathy with the prairie vistas unfolding only a few blocks away. In the fall, when the wind rustles curled leaves about the recessed base, the organic concept of ornament that Sullivan shared with his followers announces itself most eloquently.

In 1917 Berry was commissioned to plan new facilities for the Adeline Prouty Old Ladies home on Park Avenue in Princeton, Illinois. His plan envisioned construction in several stages, eventually comprising matching dormitory wings connected by a low-lying section with larger day-rooms. Unfortunately, only the first stage was executed — the west wing. Unfortunately, too, the project abruptly

Even acknowledging the apparent Sullivan influence, the detailing of the facade of Berry's first bank building was excellent. No amount of deterioration can completely erase the mark of this talented but almost forgotten young architect.



The west wing of the Adeline Prouty Old Ladies Home in Princeton, Illinois was built almost as called for by Parker Berry's preliminary plans. The street facade was not changed although the building was built one bay shorter than originally proposed. The presentation drawing called for five windows in the side elevation rather than the four shown here. The building has been well maintained and is still standing today. Photo by Donald Hoffmann.

ended Berry's relationship with Sullivan, much in the same way that Wright's "bootlegged" houses of the early 1890's brought on his dismissal.

"This was the job that Sullivan resented Parker doing," Roger Berry recalled not long ago while examining his brother's presentation drawing for the Old Ladies home. Parker Berry opened his own architectural office in Chicago in May, 1917.

Berry's nine-room wing for the Old Ladies home has bedrooms on two levels. The salient characteristics of the exterior — the strong and simple gable and the countering slab of the heavy porch roof — were surely intended to express a feeling of domestic shelter for the occupants. The dado is of brick, the walls above are stucco, and the roof is tiled. A pronounced feeling for incisive line, as in the triangulated window grouping above the porch, is combined with rather blocky massing similar in spirit to much of Walter Burley Griffin's architecture. The original home, a wood-framed Victorian structure, regrettably still stands adjacent to Berry's wing: its presence diminishes the force of his design and hinders an understanding of his overall scheme.

At this time Berry was engaged also in remodeling of the Farmers National Bank on North Main Street in Princeton, now demolished, and in remodeling the old Princeton Dry Goods store, also on North Main, which has been severely altered and is now occupied by the Larson Furniture Company.

In Chicago, Berry had become a friend of Lawrence Cox, the president of the Interstate National Bank in Hegewisch, a Polish-American community now within the city limits of Chicago at the extreme southeast corner. Berry was commissioned to plan a new bank building. It was constructed in 1917-18 on a site at 13310 Baltimore Avenue. That bank, too, collapsed in the Depression; later, the building was demolished, and a few bits of ornament were stuck in the facade of the grocery standing there today.

Due, no doubt, to the perceptiveness of Robert Graik McLean, who had been a friend of John Wellborn Root and a friend of Sullivan and his followers, the Interstate National Bank was soon published in the journal McLean then edited, the exemplary *Western Architect.*[5] From the three published photographs, one can conclude that this was Berry's masterpiece, representing a remarkably sudden improvement over his Manlius bank, and, indeed, taking a place very high among the buildings of the Prairie School.

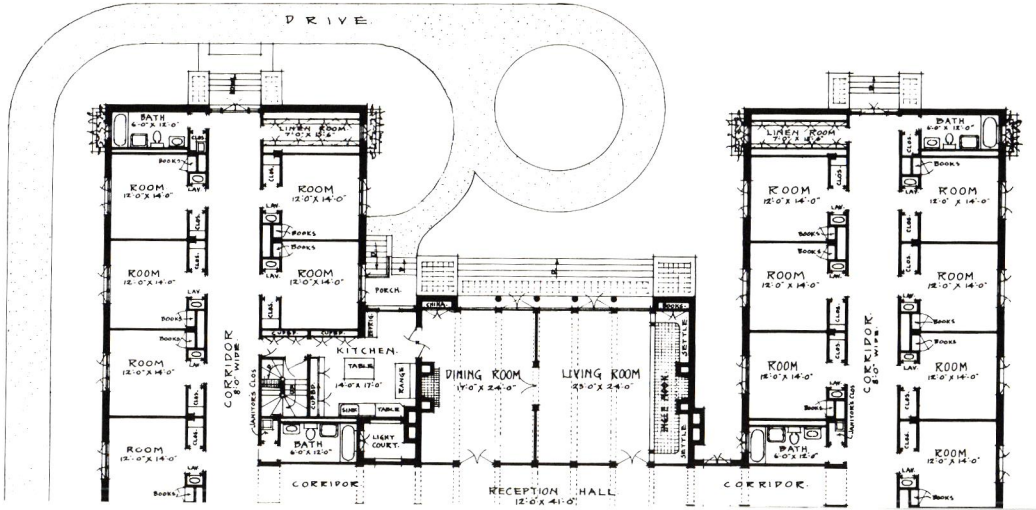
The little bank was unencumbered by rental office space above and thus consisted of a single banking space, with natural illumination through

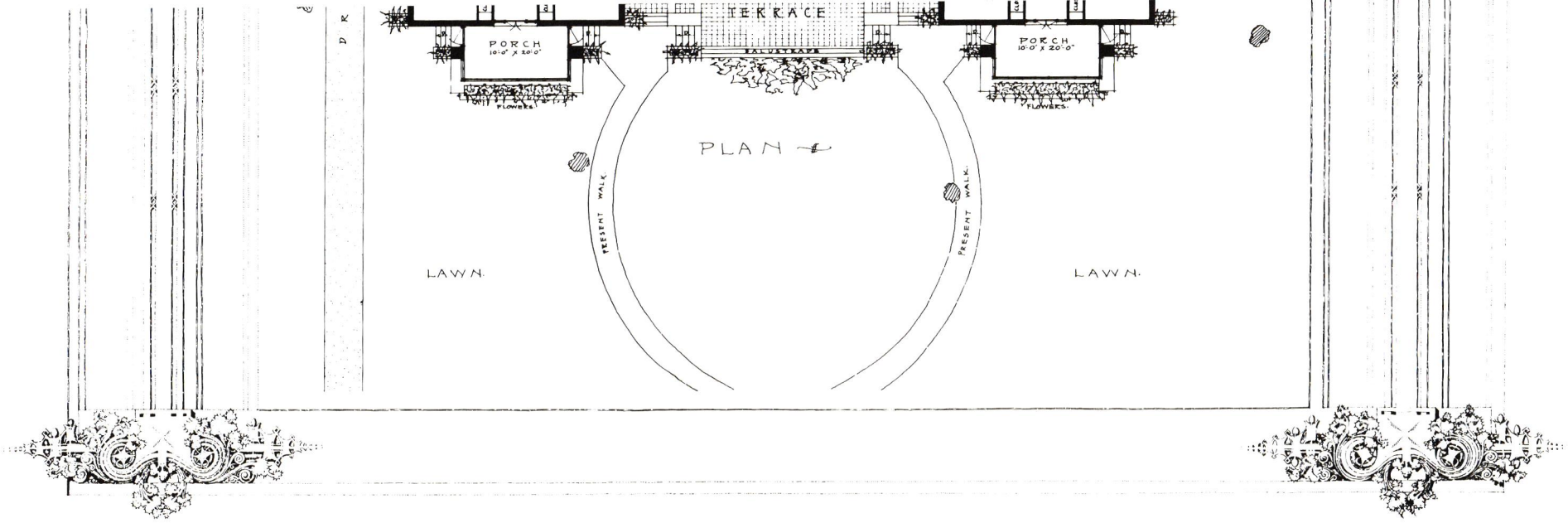
5 *The Western Architect,* Vol. XXVII, No. 11, November, 1918.

ELEVATION ON PARK AVE.
NEW BUILDING FOR
THE ADELINE PROUTY OLD LADIES HOME
PRINCETON, ILL.

PARKER N. BERRY, ARCHITECT
1600 AUDITORIUM TOWER CHICAGO.

SCALE: 0 5 10 15 30 45 FT.
NINETEEN HUNDRED SEVENTEEN.





It is our good fortune to include this reproduction of Parker N. Berry's presentation rendering of the Adeline Prouty Old Ladies Home for Princeton, Illinois. The original drawing, which measures 20" by 24", is owned by Roger W. Berry, brother of the architect. In a letter to the editors, Mr. Berry commented on this drawing as follows:

As far as I know this presentation drawing is the only original work of Parker intact today . . .

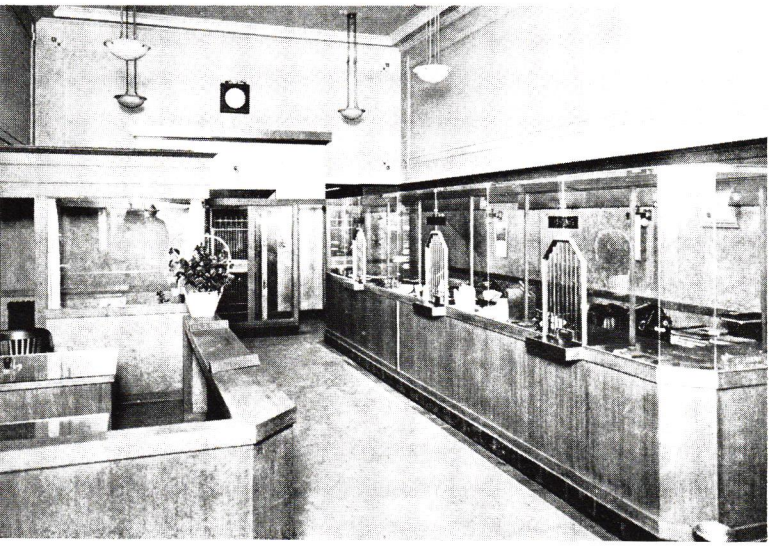
This drawing hung in the main foyer of the Old Ladies Home from 1918 to 1960 when it was presented to me by the trustees. The home was unable to finance the complete additions as planned, so only the right dormitory was built with porch left open and the existing center house modestly modernized. The building that was built is as new-looking and sturdy today as it was when first built.

It was this Old Ladies Home job that caused Sullivan and (my brother) to sever professional relations. Sullivan objected to Parker taking outside work. That Parker had to solicit outside jobs to meet financial needs was no valid argument to Sullivan.

As a visiting little boy, I watched Parker do some of his ornamental margin work. He pointed out to me that the entire design, including the "straight" lines, is constructed of tiny dots which he did with a special pen dipped into India ink which had been diluted with distilled water. You can substantiate this by examining a print with a magnifying glass. The unit or corner of a design, he said, must never be preconceived or penciled ahead, but must develop itself from a nucleus of only a few dots. Is this Sullivan speaking?

. . .

We thank Mr. Berry for his cooperation and for permitting us to reproduce this drawing by his brother. ***The Editors.***



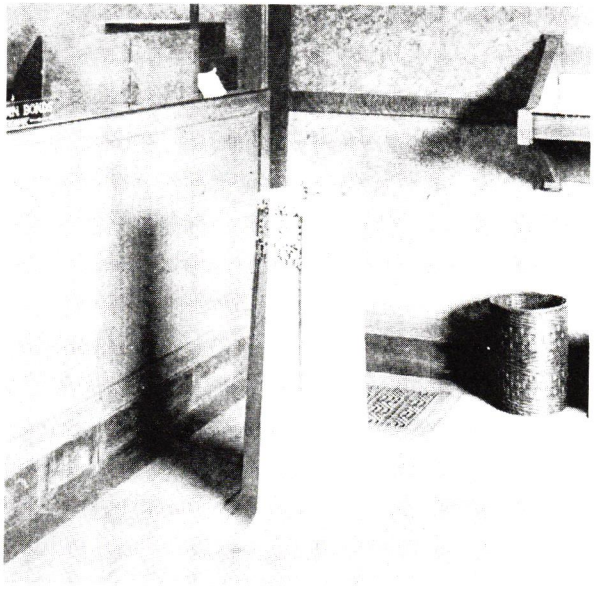
The interior of the Interstate National Bank was plain by contemporary standards but appears to have been clean and functional. The use of plate glass to separate the tellers from the public was a direct influence from Louis Sullivan. Photo from ***The Western Architect.***

a skylight and windows on the east front. The floor was above grade, suggesting a podium, and the entrance steps were delineated with a masterly touch worthy of Mies van der Rohe. The exquisite linearity was carried through the detailing of the entire front, and through the interior. Any trace of the awkwardness of the Manlius bank front disappeared in the Interstate National Bank. The proportions of the recessed entranceway were perfectly attuned to the cubic massing of the front as a whole; in place of the Manlius bank's stubby terminals supporting flower urns, the Interstate Bank was enlivened by sturdy octagonal piers with ornamented capitals containing lightbulbs; and the terra cotta enrichment was employed with restraint and complete success.

The interior was almost Spartan by comparison, but its clean finishing must have been welcome relief to the prevailing pomposity of the Neo-Roman banks of that era. There was a touch of typical Prairie School ornament in the drinking fountain, and Berry's wife remembers, "Parker was particularly proud of a drinking fountain of terra cotta which he considered artistic as well as utilitarian." Though the dome lights suspended from the ceiling were of no great interest, the small lights along the walls were: they were composed of spheres paired below a rectangular mount. That the Interstate National Bank has not survived into our day is one of the tragedies in the history of the Prairie School.

In his last year, Berry was busy on plans for the two-story Julia Rackley Perry Memorial Hospital in Princeton. Mrs. Perry, who had lived in nearby Malden, Illinois, had left more than $50,000 to the town of Princeton. Originally, the hospital was planned as a structure fifty feet wide and ninety feet deep, with provision for later expansion.[6] A civic campaign for additional money was impeded by a concurrent campaign for a World War I memorial. Plans for the hospital apparently underwent substantial revisions. Today the hospital has been remodeled and expanded to a point where no evidence of Berry's hand survives.

Parker Berry was particularly proud of this terra cotta drinking fountain which he designed for installation in the Interstate National Bank of Hegewisch. Photo from ***The Western Architect.***

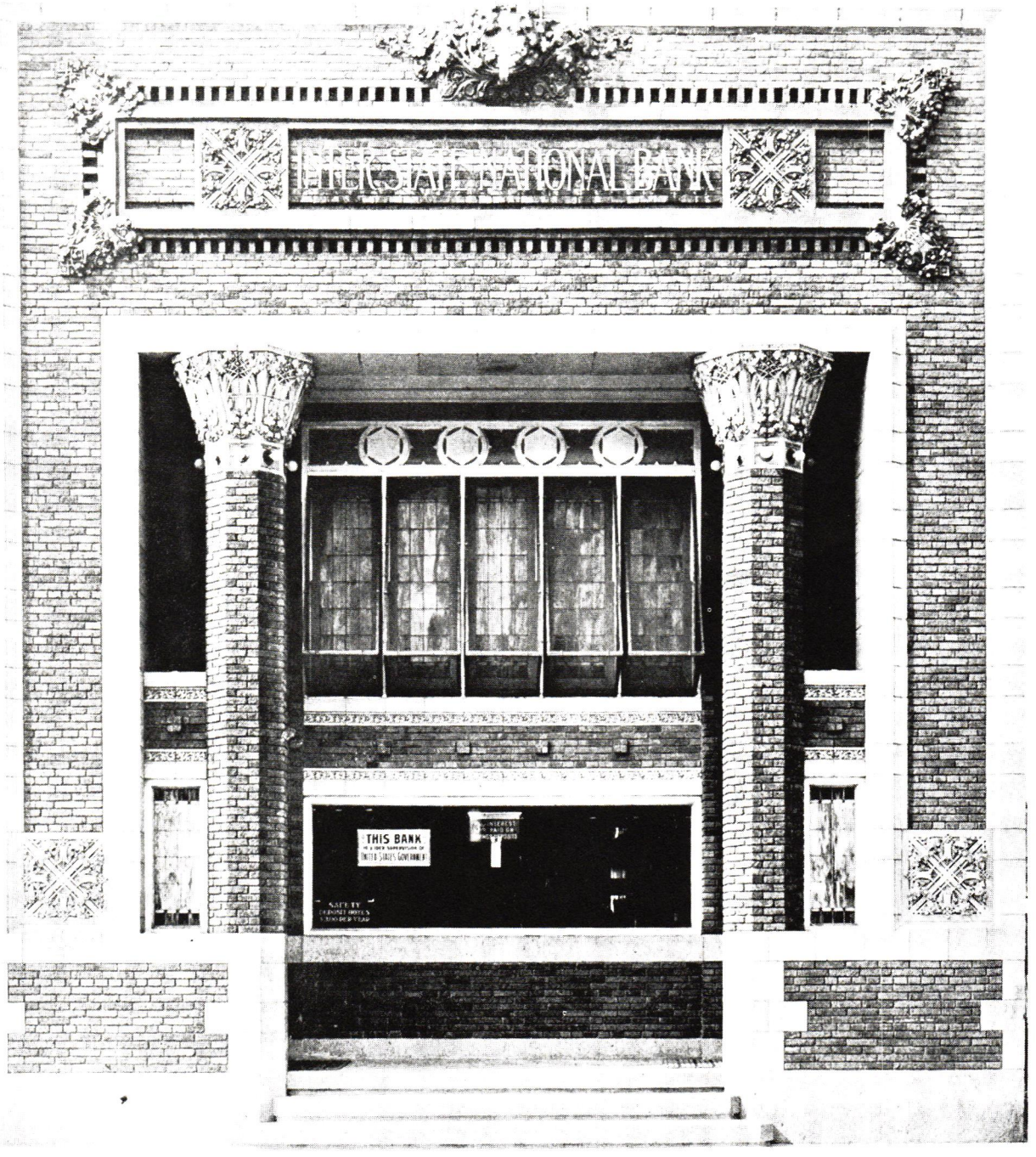


Berry's last working hours were spent on a project for remodeling a Chicago hotel — of which no plans have been preserved — and a project for a new building for the Lake County Trust & Savings Bank in Hammond, Indiana. A new building was constructed in 1924-25, but obviously not from Berry's plans.[7]

Parker Berry for many years had suffered precarious health. In early December of 1918, he left Chicago to attend a funeral in Princeton. There he contracted influenza, then so virulent in many parts of the nation, becoming noticeably ill December 8. The influenza led to pneumonia. He died December 16. Parker Berry was only 30 years old.

6 *The Bureau County Republican,* Vol. 71, No. 11, March 21, 1918, p. 1.

7 Letters of January 17 and March 18, 1966, from Warren A. Reeder of Hammond, Indiana, to the author.



The Interstate National Bank was located in the Hegewish community on Chicago's Southwest side. It was demolished many years ago; the only thing remaining from its proud facade are several bits of the Sullivanesque ornament which were built into the front of the building which replaced it. Photo from **The Western Architect.**

Ethics of Ornament

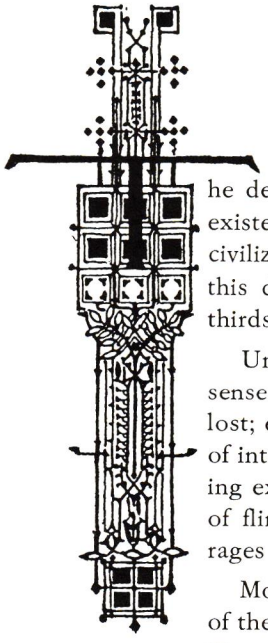
A few months ago subscriber Robert C. Twombly, now at the University of Wisconsin, wrote that he had discovered a portion of a lecture delivered by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1909 which was not included in any bibliography of Wright's work. He very kindly referred us to the January 16, 1909 issue of "Oak Leaves", the weekly newspaper of Oak Park, Illinois, where we found the following published under the heading "On Ornamentation" - *The Editors.*

"Ethics of Ornament" was discussed by Frank Lloyd Wright before the Nineteenth Century club Monday afternoon. He pointed out that the work of ornamenting the person and habitations of the people take up two-thirds of the economic resources of the country, and condemned practically all of this vast effort.

Ornamentation is a problem before every woman every day, and for this reason the lecturer received close attention. He not only indicted existing ornament and the culture it suggests, but gave the cure. Many an old idol and deified curleycue was knocked over and room made for Mr. Wright's ideas of ornament, which have made him one of the most famous architects in the world.

The meeting was in charge of the home and education department of the club.

Mr. Wright spoke in part as follows:



he desire for works of ornament is coexistent with the earliest attempts of civilization of every people, and today this desire is consuming at least two-thirds of our economic resources.*

Understanding is essential to a real sense of loveliness, but this we have lost; exaggeration serves us now instead of interpretation; imitation and prettifying externals combine in a masquerade of flimsy finery and affection that outrages sensibility.

Modern ornamentation is a burlesque of the beautiful, as pitiful as it is costly. We never will be civilized to any extent until we know what ornament means and use it sparingly and significantly. Possession without understanding and appreciation means either waste or corruption. With us almost all these things which ought to be proofs of spiritual culture go by default and are, so far as our real life is concerned, an ill-fitting garment. The environment reflects unerringly the society.

If the environment is stupid and ugly, or borrowed and false, one may assume that the substratum of its society is the same. The measure of man's culture is the measure of his appreciation. We are ourselves what we appreciate and no more.

The matter of ornament is primarily a spiritual matter, a proof of culture, an expression of the quality of the soul in us, easily read and enjoyed by the enlightened when it is a real expression of ourselves. The greater the riches, it seems, the less poetry and less healthful significance.

Many homes are the product of lust for possession, and in no sense an expression of a sympathetic love for the beautiful. This is as true of the New York millionaire as of his more clumsy Chicago imitator.

He who meddles with the aesthetic owes a duty to others as well as to himself. This is true not only where the result is to stand conspicuous before the public eye but also in regard to the personal belongings of the individual. Back of all our manners, customs, dogmas and morals there is something preserved for its aesthetic worth, and that is the soul of the thing.

We are living today encrusted with dead things, forms from which the soul is gone, and we are devoted to them, trying to get joy out of them, trying to believe them still potent.

It behooves us, as partially civilized beings, to find out what ornament means, and the first wholesome effects of this attitude of inquiry is to make us do away with most of it; to make us feel safer and more comfortable with plain things.

Simple things are not necessarily plain, but

* The ornamental capital letter at the beginning of this paragraph was drawn by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1896 for use in *The House Beautiful,* a handcrafted book published by Wright and William H. Winslow.

plain things are all that most of us are really entitled to, in any spiritual reckoning, at present.

True ornament is not a matter of prettifying externals. It is organic with the structure, it adorns, whether a person, a building or a park. At its best it is an emphasis of structure, a realization in graceful terms of the nature of that which is ornamented. Above all, it should possess fitness, proportion, harmony; the result of all of which is repose. So it is that structure should be decorated.

Decoration should never be purposely constructed. True beauty results from that repose which the mind feels when the eye, the intellect, the affections, are satisfied from the absence of any want—in other words, when we take joy in the thing.

Now to make application, I would impress upon you one law, concerning which all great artists are agreed, and that has been universally observed in the best periods of the world's art, and equally violated when art declined; it is fundamental, therefore invoilable.

Flowers or other natural objects should not be used as ornaments, but conventional representations founded upon them, sufficiently suggestive to convey the intended image to the mind without destroying the unity of the object decorated. With birds and flowers on hats, fruit pieces on the walls, imitation or realism in any form, ornamentation in art goes to the ground.

This conventional representation must always be worked out in harmony with the nature of the materials used, to develop, if possible, some beauty peculiar to this material. Hence one must know materials and apprehend their nature before one can judge an ornament.

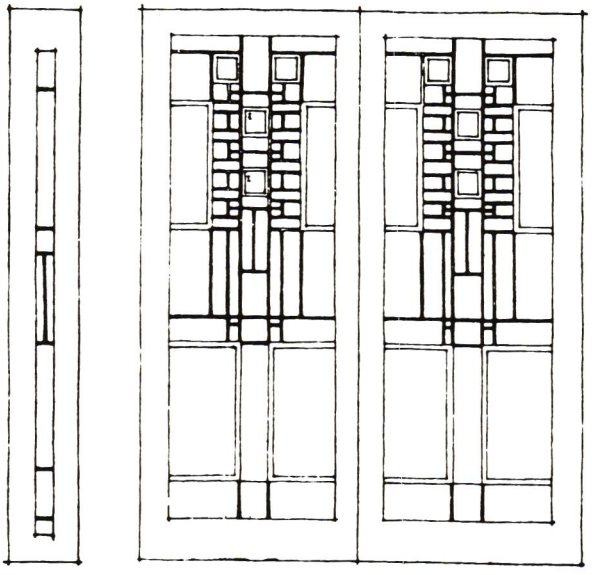
Fitness to use and form adapted to function is part of the rule.

Construction should be decorated. Decoration never should be purposely constructed, which would finally dispose of almost every ornamental thing one possesses.

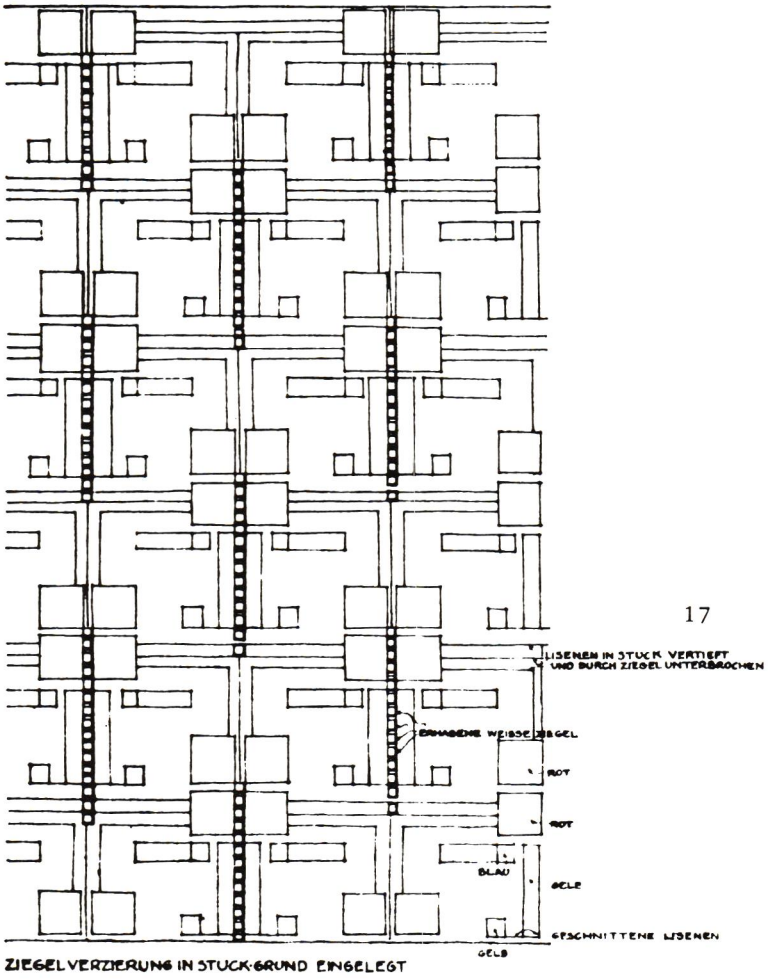
The principles discoverable in the works of the past belong to us. To take the results is taking the end for the means.

. . .

The column continues with a brief resume of the remaining activities of the Nineteenth Century Club on that Monday, January 11, 1909. It was noted that "the next general meeting will be held January 25, speaker, Mrs. Anna Lloyd Wright; subject, "Monna Vanna." Anna Lloyd Wright was, of course, Mr. Wright's mother. - *The Editors.*



Twelve years after Wright drew the ornamental capital letter on the previous page, he prepared these designs for the Coonley house in 1908. This building was under construction at the time he delivered his lecture. Drawings from Ausgefuhrte Bauten and Entwurfe.



The Edward J. McCready House Spencer & Powers, Architects

by J. William Rudd *

Of the many houses identified with the Prairie School movement (and similarly misconstrued as being the work of Frank Lloyd Wright), the Edward W. McCready [1] house by Spencer and Powers is perhaps most often erroneously so identified. Located at the southwest corner of Euclid Avenue and Erie Street in Oak Park, the house is adjacent and just to the north of Wright's 1897 house for George Furbeck — a house which does not contain the stylistic vocabulary of Wright's Oak Park maturity.

The house was probably designed by Robert W. Spencer [2] of the firm, and contains many of the stylistic characteristics identified with the Prairie School — the broad overhanging hip roof, the horizontally emphasized Roman brick, and the carefully ordered assymmetry of the front. The most forceful element of the Euclid Avenue front is this carefully ordered assymmetry of the projecting element containing the entrance vestibule, coat closets and stairwell.

The house remained, after its completion in June of 1908, in the McCready family until 1932, at which time the title was turned over to the Northern Title and Trust Company. The present owner, F. J. Mahon, purchased the property from Orville Shostrom in 1963. [3]

1 Edward W. McCready, born in 1860 in Crisfield, Maryland, was manager and treasurer of the R. W. McCready Cork Company, 344 W. Illinois Street in Chicago. The firm had been established in 1866. See: Albert Nelson Marquis. (ed.) *The Book of Chicagoans.* (Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Company 1911), p. 439.

2 Robert Closson Spencer, Jr. was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April 13, 1864, and after schooling in Milwaukee attended the University of Wisconsin from which he graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering. The eighth recipient of the Rotch traveling scholarship in architecture from 1891-93, he returned to work for Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, (Chicago office) and was responsible for the mosaic designs in that firm's Chicago Public Library. He became a partner in the firm of Spencer and Powers in November, 1905. See: *The Book of Chicagoans,* 1907. For biographical data on Horace S. Powers see: *The Western Architect,* XX 1914, p. 33.

3 The property description and chain of title are listed in Book 110-B in the Cook County Recorder of Deeds Office, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, p. 15-18.

* J. William Rudd is now teaching in the Department of Architecture at Syracuse University.

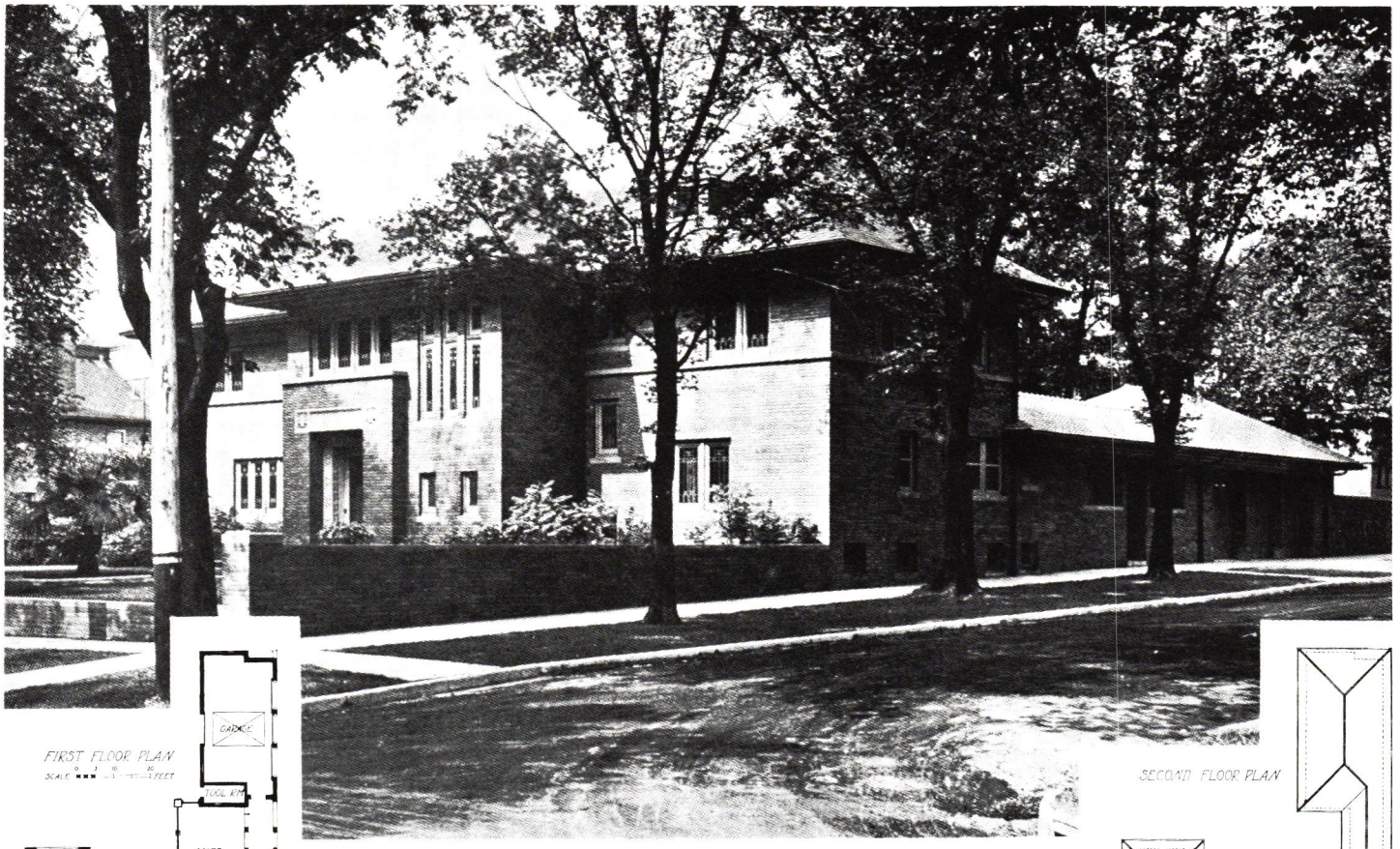
A detail of the entrance to the E. W. McCready house in Oak Park, Illinois. Two views of the McCready house are illustrated on the facing page along with plans for the first and second floors. Plans and photographs from **The Brickbuilder.**

The interior spaces of the house are each self-contained without "borrowing" spatial elements from adjacent areas and express a degree of composed formality which is not suggested by the design of the exterior. This is particularly apparent on the east wall of the large central entrance hall. Here the symmetrical handling of openings and trim is a decided contrast to the studied informality of the entrance projection on the exterior.

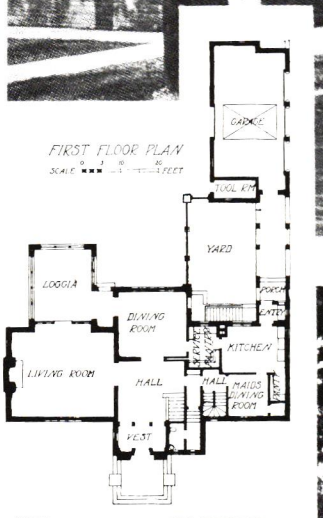
The decorative details of the house are based on the design of the decorative glass windows in the stairwell on the east front, and are repeated in numerous locations throughout the major rooms of the house. They are particularly apparent in the ceiling and beam details of the living room at the south end of the first floor. This room, which is carefully ordered about an axis of symmetry through the fireplace on the south wall and related opening to the entrance hall on the north wall, appears to have been the most studied space in the house. Not only does the strong axis suggest this, but the careful ordering of the windows on the east wall establishes a similar relationship with the opening to the west porch and, regularly spaced beams continue this visual order into the ceiling.

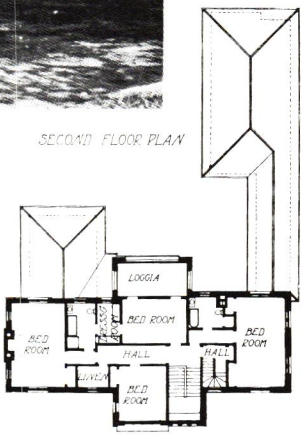
Only minor changes have been made to the house — mostly on the interior. The south wall of the living room has been modified by closing the windows flanking the fireplace (on the inside only). An elevator has been placed in the area of the north coat closet of the entrance hall (and in the bedroom above). And, the center bedroom at the rear of the second floor has been enlarged by enclosure of the porch and removal of the wall between.

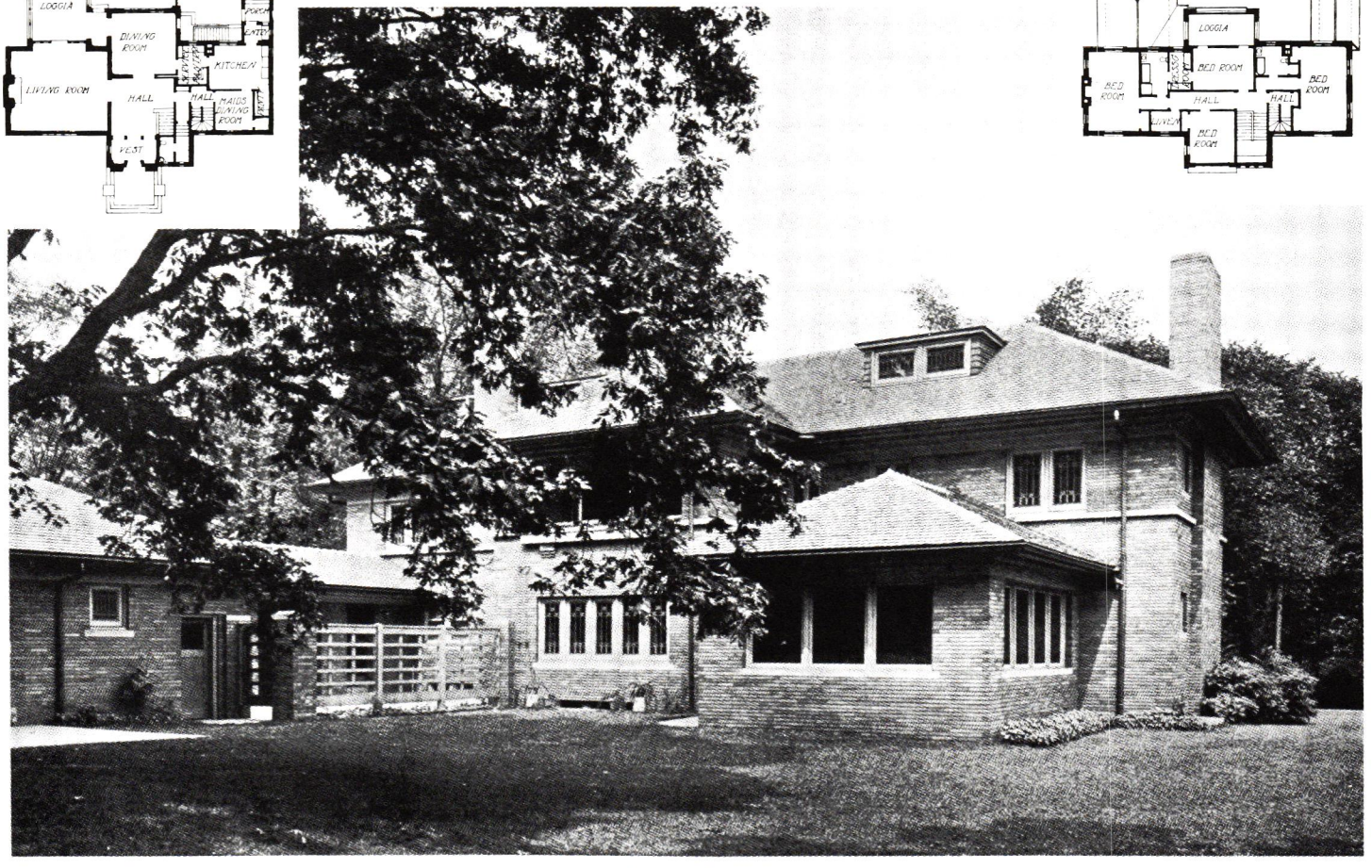
With its many overtures to the stylistic vocabulary of the Prairie School, the McCready house perhaps most closely (of Spencer's designs) parallels its progenitors, as well as, its contemporaries.



STREET FRONT

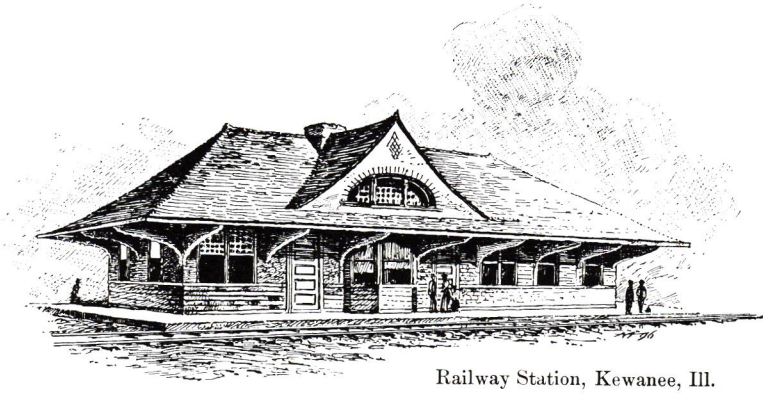






GARDEN FRONT

Book Reviews



Railway Station, Kewanee, Ill.

JOHN WELLBORN ROOT, ARCHITECT, A Study of His Life and Work, by Harriet Monroe. The Prairie School Press, Park Forest, Illinois, 1966. 291 pp., illus., $8.50.

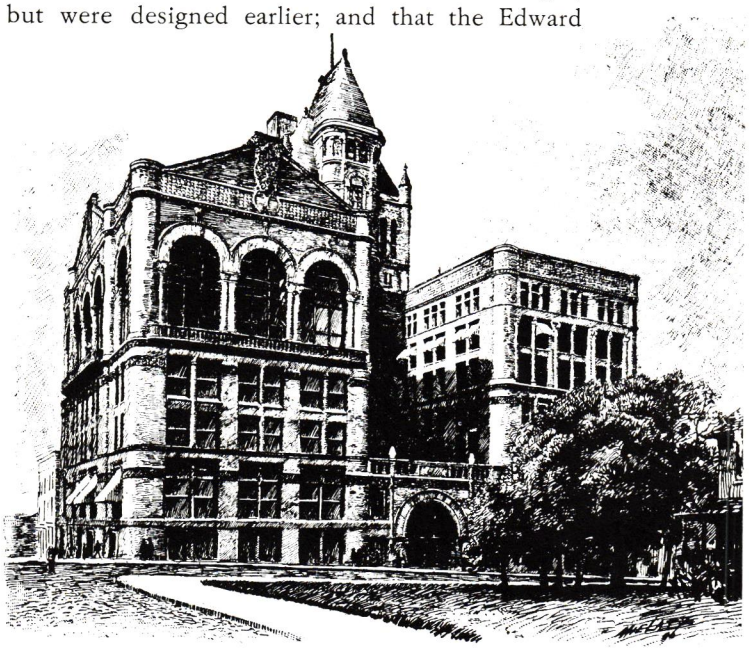
The appearance, in a facsimile edition, of Harriet Monroe's memoir of John Wellborn Root, which was originally published in 1896, is a welcome and significant event. The original book is extremely difficult to acquire. Surviving copies invariably are literally falling apart. And libraries, even in metropolitan areas, often do not possess the book.

Meanwhile, it has become increasingly clear that the skyscraper as a logical and expressive architectural-type was not ushered into the world solely by Louis Sullivan; and that Chicago, among other cities, witnessed some amazing solutions to the problem by other architects — notably John Root. When Frank Lloyd Wright admitted that Burnham and Root, during the 1880's, had the edge on Adler & Sullivan in getting downtown Chicago commissions, he was perfectly candid. And when one discovers, buried deep in the evidence of the Chicago School, that indeed Root designed the first ten-story block in Chicago, the first high blocks in the financial district, and the first twenty-story building; that he pioneered not only foundation techniques but various non-slab plans (such as the quadrangular plan, the U-plan, and the H-plan); and that between 1880 and his death in 1891 he was responsible for some thirty commercial buildings in downtown Chicago, then the truth begins to rise to the surface.

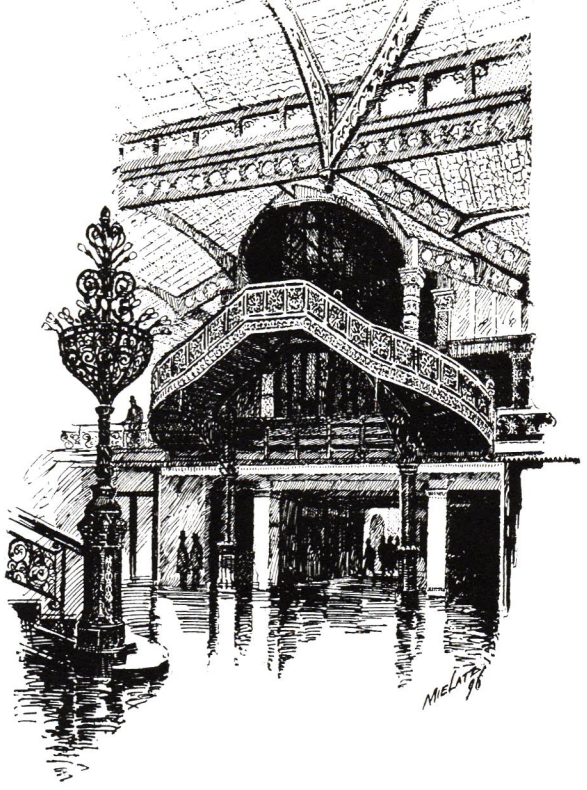
Harriet Monroe's book is not without its faults. Reyner Banham, in his new introduction, generously credits her with capturing the cultural milieu of Chicago, acknowledging the business aspects of Root's architecture, and with furnishing some of Root's own thoughts on architecture rather than attempting a rigorous examination of his buildings. One can forgive the sentimental tone of the book, since Root was her brother-in-law and, as she confessed in her autobiography, a man who so impressed her that she remained a spinster, fearing no other man could stand comparison. But she was hardly scrupulous, even as a casual historian. Thus she provides what purports to be an insider's story of the Monadnock design, a tale which documents surviving even today prove to have been almost wholly erroneous; she furnishes a building list without dates, with incomplete addresses, with repetitions and omissions; and one learns that she managed not to preserve some of Root's manuscript essays, which had been entrusted to her care.

Yet the value of the book remains substantial. Just as Root's words are sufficiently quoted to hint at his basically organic-functional architectural theory, the illustrations, largely etchings from photographs, hint at the currents and backwaters of his architecture.

One sees the grace and sweeping horizontals of the Shingle Style (the Kewanee station and the Montezuma hotel); the incipient Art Nouveau ornament (light standards of the Society for Savings, the Rookery court, and Great Northern hotel); the airiness of his residential design, despite its electicism (Sydney Kent and Reginald De Koven houses); the borrowings from Richardson (most explicit in the first study for St. Gabriel's church); his feeling, which far outdistanced Sullivan's, for large interior spaces (the Rookery court and west vestibule); the fact that his best skyscrapers (the Mills and the Monadnock, illustrated on the dust jacket) could not only stand with the Wainwright, but were designed earlier; and that the Edward



Kansas City Board of Trade



Covered Court, Rookery Office Building

Valentine house, with its Spartan walls and near-symmetry, clearly anticipated Wright's 1891 Charnley house, so often thought of as epochal.

The new facsimile edition has been superbly produced, with illustrations as clear as those in the original, and with stock and binding superior to the original. It belongs on every shelf devoted to the Chicago School, and in every library concerned with the best of progressive American architecture.

Reviewed by Donald Hoffmann

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT: A Study in Architectural Content, by Norris Kelly Smith. Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1966. 178 pp., illus., $5.95.

Of the making of books on Frank Lloyd Wright, there is no end. In some ways this latest volume is the most remarkable which has yet appeared. Bringing to his study an astounding intellectual and art-historical equipment, Professor Smith analyzes the work of Wright primarily as symbolic expression rather than in terms of architectural form. His approach is therefore at odds with that of such scholars as Manson and Hitchcock. He sees Wright as a conservative thinker, much concerned with the preservation of traditional values (the dignity and integrity of man) in a world increasingly mechanized and hostile to these concepts. This line of thought is not entirely new; it has been suggested by Vincent Scully in his book on Wright. What *is* new and truly impressive is the scope and subtlety of the argument by which Smith links Wright with nineteenth century romanticism as seen in the thought of Rousseau, Goethe, and Carlyle. In one of the most striking sections of the book he contends that the crisis of 1910 was the result of the failure of Wright's self-image as a romantic hero. This failure, says Smith, occurred precisely because Wright had become too successful. His architecture had achieved a level of acceptance which was not in keeping with his own concept of his mission in life. Surely this is a new and provocative insight. At the same time we must question the author's assertion that "By that time (1908) a Heurtley or a Willets house would have been considered acceptable in almost any American neighborhood." This reviewer still believes that a shift in American taste had much to do with Wright's famous flight to Europe with Mrs. Cheney. The causes of this event were at least as much external as internal.

The interpretation of the 1910 crisis is only one of the difficulties which confront the reader of this extraordinary book. In dealing with the Kaufmann house of 1936 Smith sees it as the final realization of the Hebrew-Biblical quality in Wright's thought. Relying heavily on the Thorlief Boman's *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek,* he argues that the building is to be understood as a succession of non-visual experiences. It is, he says, closer to musical than to visual sensation. Once again the argument is brilliant but convincing only in part. Didn't Wright's desire to find a suitable expression for reinforced concrete (a material in which he had long been interested but never used) have something to do with the house? Was it in no way related to the work then being done by Gropius, Oud, and LeCorbusier? Smith summarily dismisses the contention of those who perceive such a relation with the phrase, "I see little evidence of it in the forms themselves and none whatever in their expressive implications." This kind of intellectual arrogance runs all through the book. At the same time we must add that it is buttressed by a truly formidable philosophical, theological, and art-historical body of learning. The footnotes bristle with reference to such writers as Paul Tillich, Mircea Eliade, and Meyer Schapiro. In one sense we can only admire the ambition of a man who will analyze the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright in this way. In another sense we must deplore the author's failure to come to grips with empirical problems which do exist in a real world. Architecture, after all, cannot be analyzed altogether in terms of ideas. In short, we have here a book which will alternately infuriate and delight the students of Frank Lloyd Wright. The very least that can be said, however, is that Professor Smith has raised the criticism of this architect to a new plane.

Reviewed by Leonard K. Eaton

Letters to the Editors

Sirs:

. . .

I always seem to go out of my way to offend people unnecessarily so, here I go again! I don't understand why you feel it necessary to dress your *Prairie School Review* up in turn-of-the-century dress, simply because it is devoted to historical material. I am referring, of course, to your outdated covers and contents pages. It is a fundamental error, I think, to strive to present the architecture of a certain past period in the dubious trappings of that period. Suppose your magazine were devoted to Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Romanesque, Gothic or Renaissance architecture; would you deem it necessary to ornament your covers with the decorative symbols of those periods? As great as Wright was (and he was very great), I think most of his ornament was bad. So, what do you do on your covers? Well, you present bad imitations of bad ornamentation. Your magazine looks old-fashioned and there is no reason why it should look that way. You are doing a great job and I applaud this but you should sweep the cobwebs from your layout and make-up.

Yours sincerely,
Howard Dearstyne
Illinois Institute of Technology
Institute of Design

Preview

The next issue of THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW will be devoted to the National Farmers' Bank of Owatonna, Minnesota. This was Louis Sullivan's first bank building. Many authorities believe it was his best. The article will be written by Paul E. Sprague, Assistant Professor at the University of Notre Dame.

We expect to review the following books:

Frank Lloyd Wright: His Life, His Work, His Words
by Olgivanna Lloyd Wright

The Flowering of Art Nouveau
by Maurice Rheims

Many of the articles we have published in past issues have come about as a result of suggestions by our subscribers. We welcome comments by readers and are always pleased to receive manuscripts for review and possible inclusion in THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW.

Sirs:

Just a note to let you know that I think your Review is as beautiful in format as it is in content. Please manage to survive in your effort, for each issue is a work of art no less than a record of it.

Sincerely,
Kenneth M. Kipen

In Chicago

The position of Executive Director of The Chicago School of Architecture Foundation has been filled. On April 1, 1967, Mr. L. Morgan Yost, FAIA began his duties as the operating officer of the Foundation. One of his first and most important duties is to supervise the renovation of the J. J. Glessner house, owned by the Foundation, to permit its use as headquarters for the Foundation and its proposed program of architectural activities in Chicago. The renovation will be by stages, the first being the restoration of several rooms for use by the Executive Director, his staff and members of the Foundation's Board of Trustees, many of whom are taking an active part in getting the program under way at the Glessner House.

Mr. Yost has been a practicing architect in the Chicago area since 1933. In 1952 he was elevated to Fellowship in the American Institute of Architects in recognition of excellence in architectural design. He is a past president of the Chicago Chapter of the AIA and has served on numerous Committees of the AIA, both locally and on a national level. In 1942 he taught a class in industrial design at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and in 1949 was visiting professor of Architecture at the University of Illinois.

As Executive Director of The Chicago School of Architecture Foundation, Mr. Yost will be able to make use of his vast personal collection of books, slides, clippings and artifacts which he has collected throughout his life.

Mr. Yost will be aided by an administrative assistant, Miss Susan Sinykin. Miss Sinykin holds a degree in Art History from Pembroke and an MA in the same field from the University of Minnesota.

Other officers of the Chicago School of Architecture Foundation include, Benjamin Weese, AIA, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, W. R. Hasbrouck, AIA, President, James Shultz, Vice President, Paul Lurie, Secretary and Council, and Wayne Benjamin, Treasurer. Mrs. Marian Despres is serving as Chairman Pro-tem of the Program Committee.

An Illustrated Review

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, Vision and Legacy, by the Committee of Architectural Heritage. University of Illinois, Champaign, 1966. 32 pp., illus., $2.50 (Distributed by The Prairie School Press.)

Following a successful exhibition of Prairie School furniture and other items presented as a student project to help raise money for the restoration of the F. C. Robie House, the Committee of Architectural Heritage felt that there should be a more permanent record of such seldom seen pieces as the Dana and Robie House furniture. *Frank Lloyd Wright, Vision and Legacy* is the resultant photographic essay to which the Committee has added measured drawings, a few of which are illustrated here.