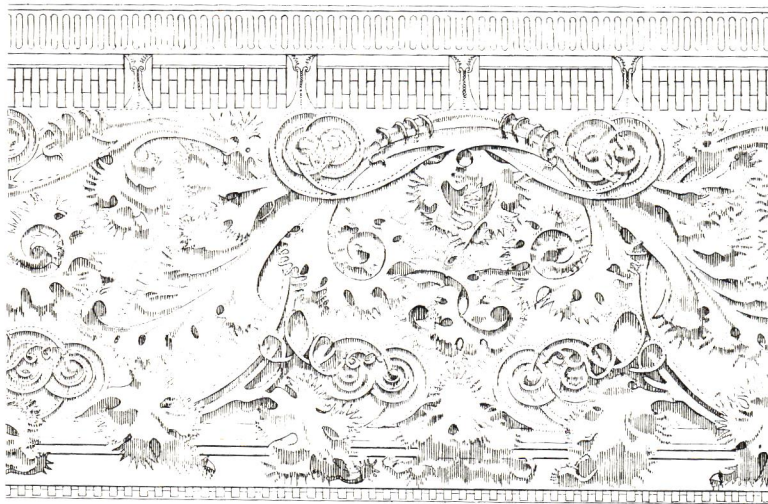


The
**PRAIRIE
SCHOOL**
Review

Volume IV, Number 3

Third Quarter, 1967

\$1.50 a copy



FRIEZE

ABOVE: This drawing shows the plaster frieze still in place in the Auditorium Hotel Dining room. The room is now used as a reading room for Roosevelt University. Similar ornament can be found throughout the building. The drawing was prepared for HABS by David T. Van Zanten and Robert C. Giebner in 1963.

COVER: On opening night Chicago's Auditorium glittered like a jewel before a packed house. First night patrons paid up to \$250 each to be a part of this scene. Photo by Richard Nickel.

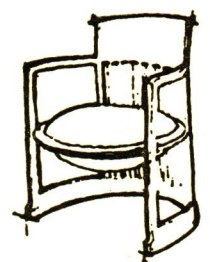
STENCIL INSERTS: The four golden stencils included in this issue are reproduced full size from the Auditorium. Courtesy of the Auditorium Theater Council.

THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW is published four times a year

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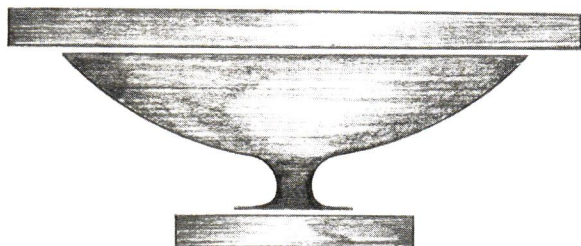
W. G. Purcell
George Grant Elmslie
Frank Lloyd Wright
Louis Henri Sullivan
Marion Mahony
Walter Burley Griffin
William Steele
Barry Byrne
Herman von Holst



Sculpture
Painting
Furniture
Individual Houses
Fabrics
Book Reviews







The PRAIRIE SCHOOL *Review*

Volume IV, Number 3

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From the EDITORS

Amid some confusion, Chicago's Auditorium Theater opened once more on October 31, 1967. The main entrance opens on Congress Expressway, thus causing problems for those who wished to disembark with great fanfare from their limousines. The narrow sidewalk which was cut into the building when the Expressway was built leaves but a slim passageway for those arriving on foot. Television cameras added to the confusion with their bright lights and bearded operators. Still the Auditorium is open.

The outer lobby is not really what it could be, and inside the floor slopes sharply due to the settlement which Dankmar Adler tried to design for but which came anyway. Some places the floor has sunk 18 inches or more. The stained glass windows, originals too, are all in place over the lobby doors and, despite what the Frank Lloyd Wright admirers say, they are obviously by Sullivan. The main lobby is too small for so many people and the check rooms are practically non-existent. Still, the Auditorium is open.

Up the stairs, the landings are graced with Sullivan's huge golden stencils. The stair railings have his superb cast iron ornaments or the simple curved wrought iron pieces echoing the stencils. The rug on the upper lobby floors is of Sullivan's design, albeit woven in three colors instead of four. The boxes on the sides of the theater have been cleaned and painted but lack their gold floor to ceiling stencils on ivory background. Still, the Auditorium is open.

Much remains to be done. But because Mrs. John V. Spachner and Architect Harry Weese decided to use the available funds to do only what had to be done, and did it well, the Auditorium is open and we can enjoy it. The stencils will be installed as money comes available, and even before that, the backstage machinery will be put into good condition so that it can be used as intended by Adler and Sullivan. This will aid in obtaining a full program for the Auditorium which in turn will help to raise additional funds to complete the restoration.

It is unfortunate that the remainder of the Auditorium Hotel Building has not fared so well. Roosevelt University has managed, with some extraordinary exceptions, to practically destroy the character of the interior of the building. The Wabash Avenue side of the Building with its storefront windows is particularly unsympathetic to the original as well as serving no useful purpose. Other changes are almost as disconcerting. The exceptions, of course, are Ganz Hall located over the Theater and the Sullivan Room located near the student lounge. Unfortunately, the building will probably continue to be chipped away by well meaning University administrators in search of classroom space.

The benefits derived by Roosevelt's student body from the privilege of being educated in a work of art are intangible but real. We suggest that the University consider carefully any future remodeling in the name of progress.

Chicago's Auditorium Theater

by Wilbert R. Hasbrouck, AIA *

For the first time in almost thirty years, the Congress Street entrance of the Auditorium Theater opened its doors on the night of October 31, 1967. Photo by Richard Nickel.



Chicago's Auditorium Building, or more specifically, the Auditorium Theater, was reopened on October 31, 1967. It was the second grand opening, the first having been held 78 years earlier on December 9, 1889. The second opening had been anticipated for several years, much longer in fact than the three years it took to build the entire Auditorium Building complex in the first place.

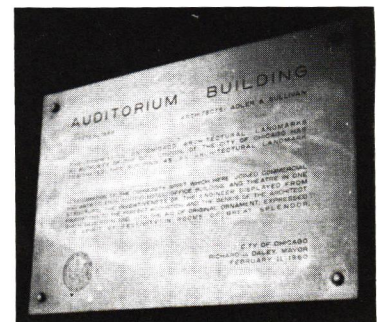
The reputation of the architects of this world famous building and the subsequent publicity accorded it from the time it was built until the present day has made it one of the most well documented buildings of the Chicago School. Thus it is not necessary to recount a history of the building on these pages; rather we are presenting the story of its restoration. This successful restoration in the face of economics which caused the loss

* The author acknowledges the assistance of a number of persons in the preparation of this article. Special thanks are extended to Harry Weese, Benjamin Weese and to Karl Hartnack of the office of Harry Weese and Associates. Grateful appreciation is also extended to Mrs. John V. Spachner and the Auditorium Theater Council for their assistance and encouragement. We are indebted to Richard Nickel for his superb photography.



The Auditorium Building stands at the northwest corner of Congress Street and Michigan Avenue. Originally designed as a hotel, business block and theater combination, it is today owned and occupied by Roosevelt University. The University does not use the recently restored theater but permits it to be operated by the not-for-profit Auditorium Theater Council. HABS photo by Cervin Robinson.

This plaque identifies the Auditorium Hotel as an official Chicago Landmark building. PSP photo.



of the Garrick Theater and is threatening several other landmark buildings in Chicago is indeed heartening.

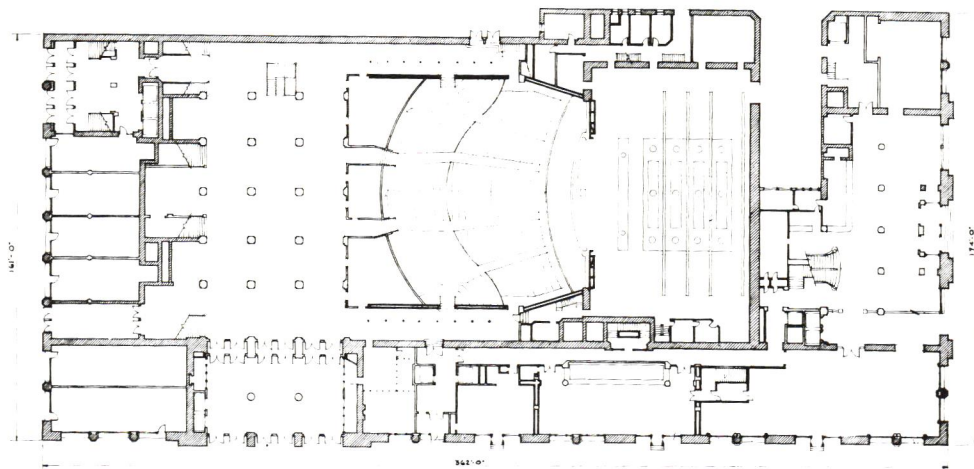
The Auditorium Building, which was designed to be a hotel, a business block and a theater, was first conceived by Ferdinand Peck in 1885. Mr. Peck had become impatient with delays in Chicago's obtaining a suitable opera house and public hall. He was instrumental in forming the Chicago Auditorium Association in 1886, the organization which actually built and owned the building after completion in 1889.

Adler and Sullivan were chosen as architects for the project. Adler had already established himself as an experienced theater architect and Sullivan was known to be a brilliant designer. His subsequent pre-eminence in this area was to be primarily a

result of his work on the Auditorium Building. The selection of this firm for such an important commission was therefore undoubtedly based on Adler's reputation rather than on that of Sullivan.

The complex planning of the building is clearly evident from the plans of the building. It had three functions, that of hotel on the east and south, a business block on the west and in the tower. Both supported the third component, financially and structurally, the theater in the center of the building.

The building was reasonably successful from the beginning with the commercial enterprises offsetting the cost of the theater. More important, the theater was a resounding artistic achievement, probably exceeding even the architect's expectations. Frank Lloyd Wright, who worked on the

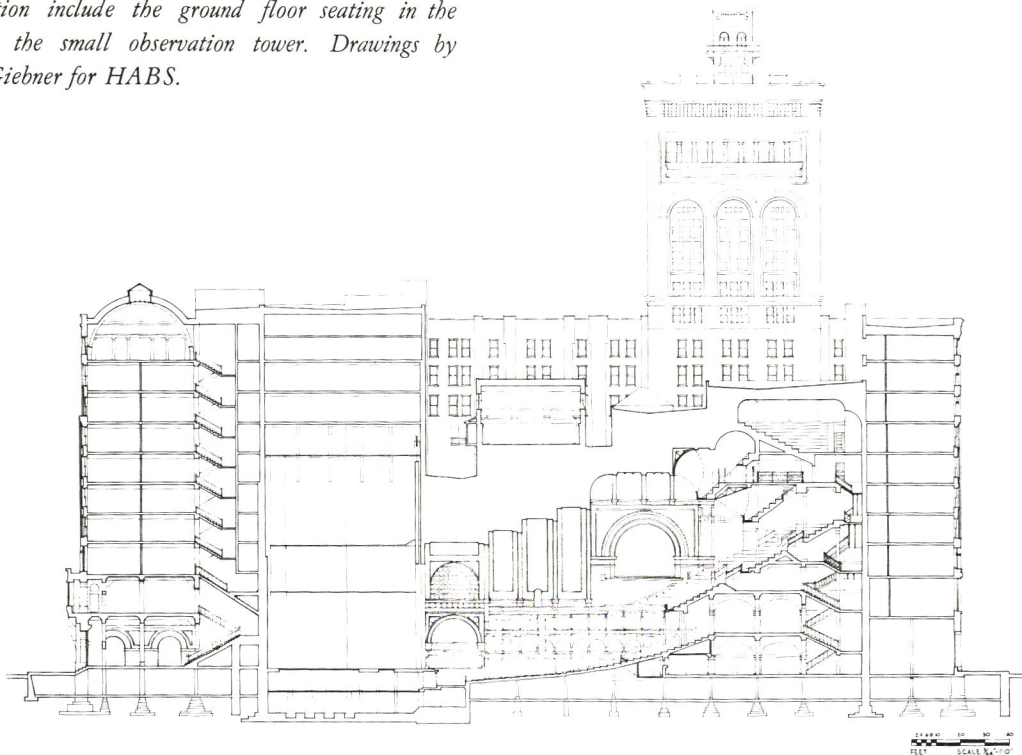


MAIN FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



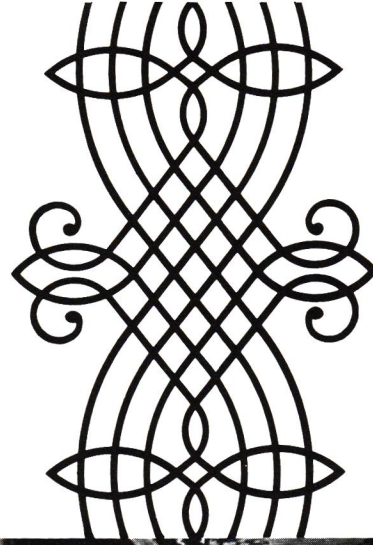
The restored main floor plan is based on early drawings and photographs. Principle alterations include an open arcade, 20 feet deep, along the entire south side, remodeled shops on the west side, and temporary partitions added in the east lobby. The longitudinal section is based primarily on a drawing published in *The Inland Architect*, July 1888, and on a drawing by J. N. Goorskey of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, Architects, 1961. Restored elements in this section include the ground floor seating in the theater and the small observation tower. Drawings by Robert C. Giebner for HABS.



SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

drawings for the building as his first assignment with the firm of Adler and Sullivan, has stated that it is "the greatest room for music and opera in the world, bar none." The building has now been designated as an official Chicago Architectural Landmark and as a national cultural monument by the United States National Park Service.

The initial success of the Auditorium was not long lived however, and in the years just before the great depression, various attempts were made



The theater was virtually abandoned for over twenty years during which no maintenance was done. Superficially it was in deplorable condition before the current restoration. Photo from the Auditorium Theater Council.

to demolish the building and build another structure on the site. Samuel Insull finally moved the Civic Opera to the new Civic Opera Building and the depression arrived nearly sealing the fate of the Auditorium. For several years practically the only factor to save the building was the enormous cost involved in demolishing it. During the Second World War the theater was used as a Serviceman's USO bowling alley with adjacent rooms serving other functions for entertaining soldiers on pass.¹

In 1947, the newly formed Roosevelt University bought the building for use as its physical plant. The hotel and business block portion of the building was used as classrooms but the theater was not adaptable for use by the University and cost of renovating it was out of the question. Therefore, the administration of the University took the position that while they could not restore the theater, they could give another organization the right to restore and operate it as a tax free public entity.

¹ By strange coincidence, the only other great space in Chicago designed by Adler and Sullivan, the trading room of the Chicago Stock Exchange, has been remodeled into a serviceman's USO Center.

In February of 1964 Architect Harry Weese, Auditorium Theater Council Co-Chairman Harold W. Norman and Chairman Mrs. John V. Spachner received a building permit from the City of Chicago and the restoration was under way.

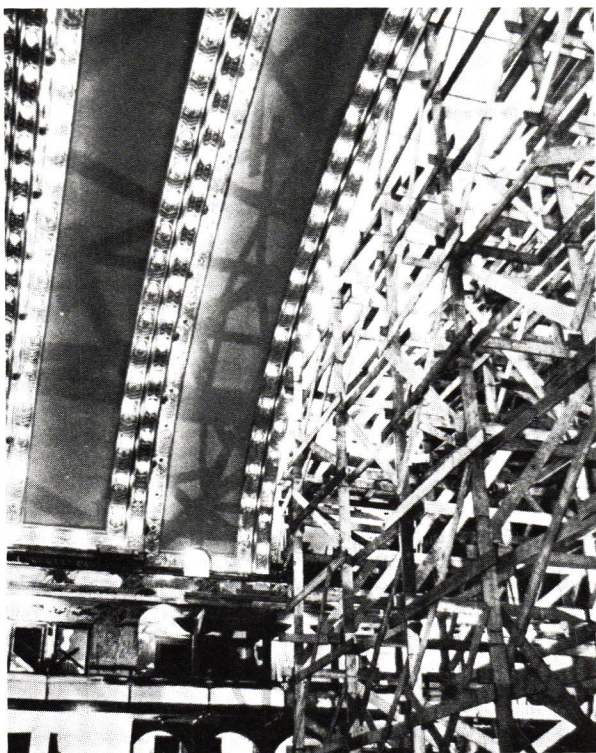


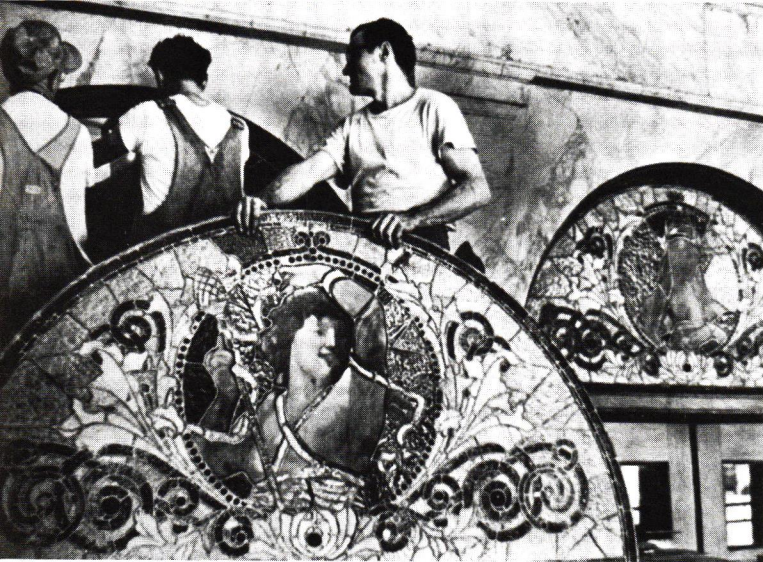
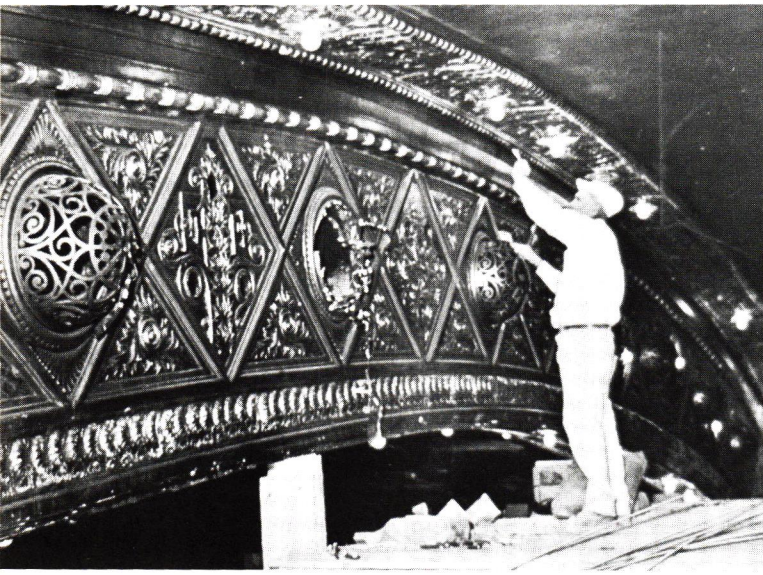
RIGHT: The paintings on either side of the theater were cleaned and restored by Ledo Lippe of the Florentine Gallery. Photo by Richard Nickel.

Dick Shory and his orchestra did not wait until the Auditorium was restored to make use of its legendary acoustical qualities. They held this recording session in 1964 before any work was evident.



BOTTOM: In 1965 the entire space of the Auditorium was filled with heavy timber scaffolding. Workmen were then able to reach the great arches to repair damage, restore the plaster ornaments, renew electrical fixtures and paint the great curved surfaces.





The trustees of Roosevelt University thus resolved to form the Auditorium Theater Council. The Council has "the right to restore, operate and manage the Auditorium Theater as a civic enterprise, to raise the money for the restoration, hold it separately from all other funds and use it solely for that purpose."²

The only logical candidate for chairman of the newly formed Council was Mrs. John V. Spachner who had recently completed raising the funds needed to restore the Rudolph Ganz Hall, a tiny ornamental gem also decorated by Sullivan, located over the theater proper and used by the Chicago Musical College as a recital hall. Attorney Harold W. Norman was chosen as Co-chairman and eventually the Council listed 77 prominent Chicagoans as members. From the beginning however, the Auditorium Theater Council was Mrs. Spachner. It was she who raised the funds, saw to it that the work was done, and she who deservedly received a standing five minute ovation from a grateful first night audience when the theater reopened on October 31, 1967.

After the Council was formed, Architects Crombie Taylor and Associates and Skidmore, Owings and Merrill made preliminary studies of what needed to be done. Taylor was a long time student of the work of Adler and Sullivan and acted primarily as consultant on aesthetic matters. Skidmore, Owings and Merrill did cost estimates and attempted to evaluate the condition of the structure. These first studies seemed to indicate that the building was in grave danger of collapse. It was estimated that it would cost more than four million dollars to restore the theater. Fortunately these preliminary indications were later found to be false.

After Skidmore, Owings and Merrill had completed their report it was obvious that something

² "Restoring the Auditorium," *Talmanac*, p. 21, November, 1964.

Master plasterer George Off supervised the restoration of Sullivan's intricate ornamental plasterwork throughout the theater. The domes seen here are part of the air distribution system.

Six stained glass windows were found in storage which were replaced over the lobby doors on the Congress Street side. Other stained glass which had been damaged or was missing was replaced with superb restorations done in a plastic material.

The original seats were carefully washed and painted, after which they were reupholstered in fabric duplicating the original. Those seats which were missing were rebuilt from the original designs.



Mr. Off spent over two years patiently duplicating the Auditorium's ornament. The missing or damaged pieces were recast from molds made of latex using those original ornaments remaining as models. Literally hundreds of separate molds were made. The new pieces were then painted gold to match the original gold leaf which was saved wherever possible.

Below is one of Mr. Off's plaster ornaments just as it came from the mold. After application of gold paint, it is extremely difficult to separate the original from the new ornament. PSP photo.



other than a complete rebuilding of the theater had to be considered. Their work completed, the big firm returned to contemporary architecture. Professor Taylor continued his research of the building, eventually devoting himself to an in-depth study of the stenciled ornament with which Sullivan had decorated nearly every flat surface.³ But he soon left Chicago to become Associate Dean for Architecture at the University of Southern California.

The Auditorium Theater Council was now faced with the possibility that costs might exceed any possible fund raising effort. In the summer of 1963 good fortune came to Mrs. Spachner and the Council in the person of Harry M. Weese. This prominent Chicago architect has been called the modern link to the "Chicago School" architects who were practicing at the time the Auditorium was built. He knew and admired the work of Adler and Sullivan and could not accept as fact the statements that this magnificent building was built in such a manner that it was in danger of collapse. He became chairman of the Council's Building Committee and offered his services as a gift to Chicago. Weese set about reevaluating the problems of restoration and assigned several members of his firm to aid him in the task. Prominent consultants were brought in and in early 1964 he was able to advise that the building was actually in reasonably good condition and that much of what had to be done was of a "cosmetic" nature.

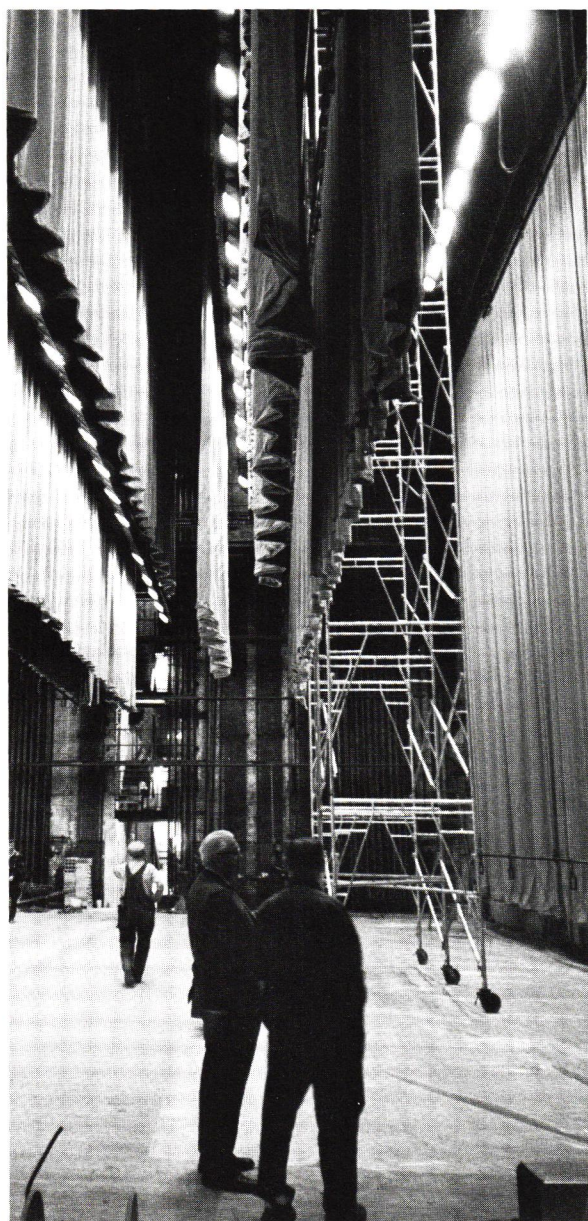
It was found that only a very few of the structural elements in the building needed reinforcement. Most of the plaster ornament was still in place although cleaning was required. Those parts of the ornament which were damaged or otherwise missing were replaced by making molds of the pieces still in place and recasting replacements on the site. Gold paint was used instead of gold leaf and under the carbon filament lamps in the theater

³ This work led Professor Taylor to assemble an Exhibition of these and other Sullivan stencils. See pages 18 and 19 of this issue of *The Prairie School Review*.





A few days before opening night. The work in the theater is nearly done. Photos by Richard Nickel.



Only a few of Sullivan's stencil's have been retained, although it is planned to eventually replace them. This one on the stair landing was never painted over. Photo by Richard Nickel.

TOP, LEFT: The carpet of the Auditorium was replaced with only days remaining before reopening. It is a near facsimile of the original, woven in three colors. Photo by Richard Nickel.

LEFT: Backstage repairs also were necessary before reopening. Much remains to be done here before the Auditorium is really restored as it should be. Photo by Richard Nickel.

it is not possible to separate the new plaster from the old. This same philosophy was followed throughout the building. When an original piece could be cleaned and left in place it was; when minor repairs would restore to original condition, this was done. Only in cases of absolute necessity were new components used. One casualty of the restoration was the loss of nearly all of the stencils in the theater. Funds were not available to restore them or to replace them. However, Professor Taylor had already made tracing of most of the designs and has since recut many of these fascinating ornaments. As funds become available they will be replaced on the theater walls.

There is much still to be done before the restoration of the Auditorium Theater is completed. We have no doubt that it will be done. Mrs. Spachner and the Auditorium Theater Council continue to raise funds and to arrange for use of the



ABOVE: Most persons arrive early but still the curtain is delayed almost half an hour as they move slowly so as to see for themselves this most magnificent of theaters. Photo by Richard Nickel.

theater. Because of the uncertainty of the opening date, a full schedule for 1967-68 could not be arranged. Furthermore the requirements of Roosevelt University are such that the Auditorium Theater Council must have funds on hand before engaging future performances.

Adler and Sullivan's Chicago masterpiece will once more be a credit to its city. We quote from the pages of the opening night program:

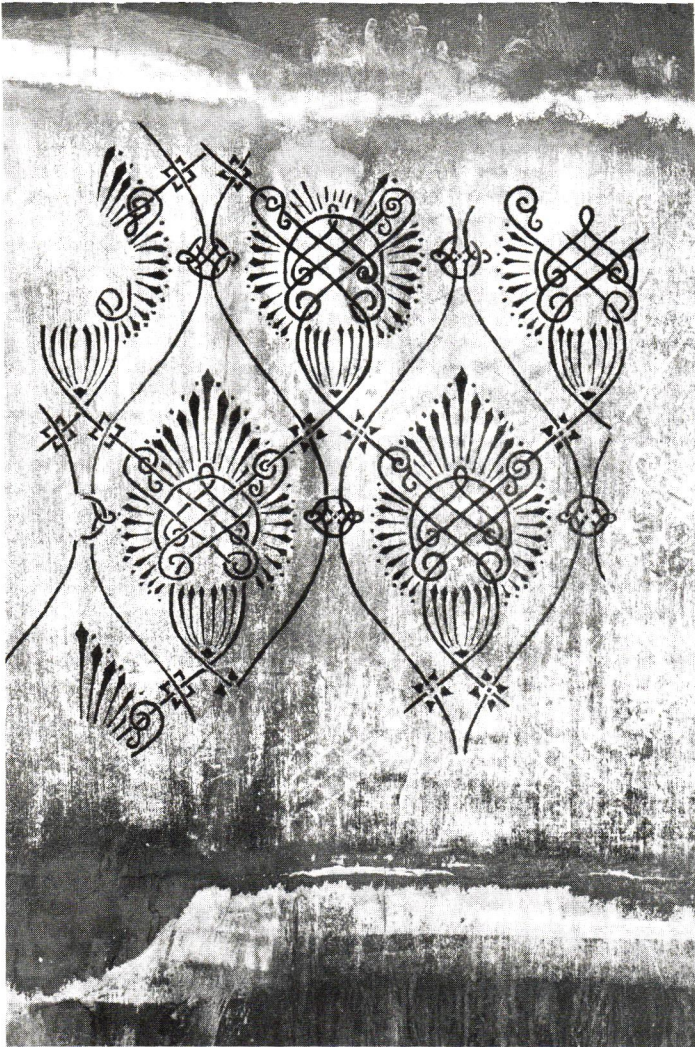
"The restoration of the Auditorium marks a renaissance in Chicago cultural life. Operated on a not-for-profit basis, the Auditorium Theater will bring Chicago the masters of the stage. It will also house local efforts in drama, music, dance, festivals and educational and civic programs.

"The Auditorium Theater has returned once again to the use for which it was intended: a center for the performing arts." ⁴

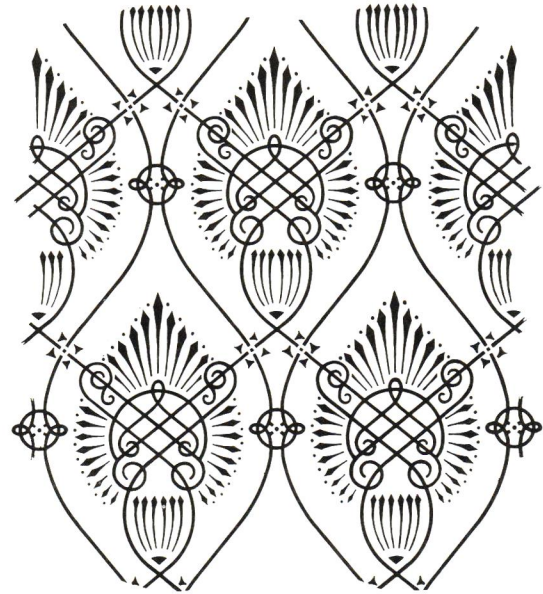
⁴ Program for *Auditorium Theatre Grand Reopening October 31, 1967*, p. 18.

"A Mid Summer's Night Dream."



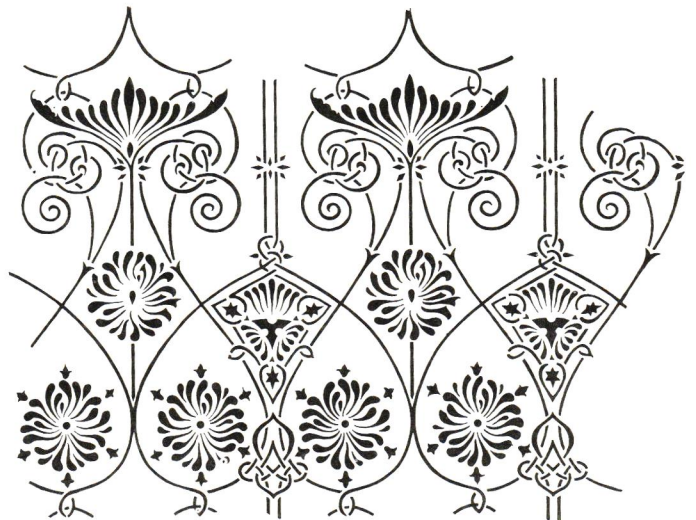


The upper boxes of the theater also had these floor to ceiling stencils of gold and ivory on the rear wall. This stencil and the one above were uncovered by Crombie Taylor in 1961. Professor Taylor also supervised the re-drawing of these stencils as shown in the two small drawings. Photos all by Richard Nickel.



A System of Stencil Ornament

These two illustrations show the stencil originally placed on the rear wall of the lower boxes. The stencil was done in gold on an ivory background from floor to ceiling.





ABOVE: John Vinci and Charles Simmons uncover a stencil from the Student lounge in the Auditorium.

RIGHT: These stencils on the lobby landings were never painted over. Each is about three feet in height. Photos by Richard Nickel.



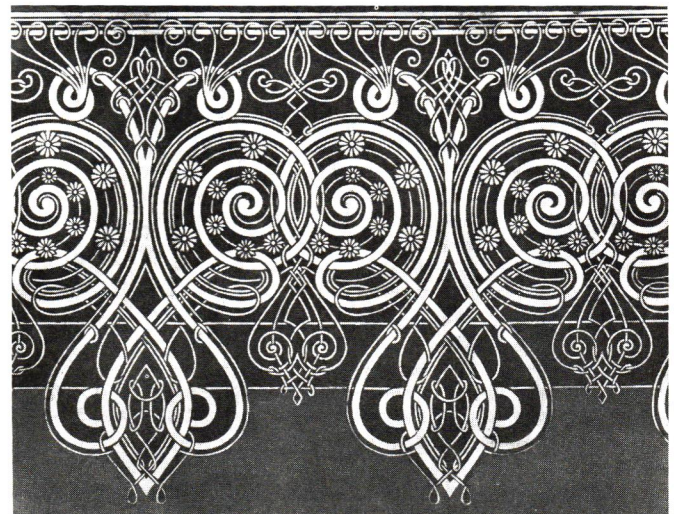
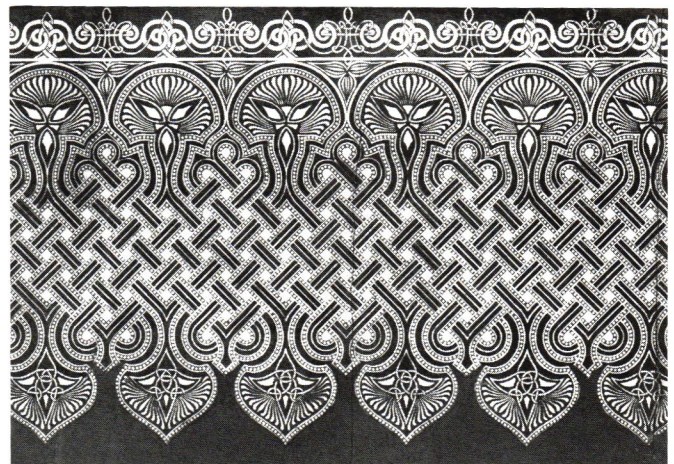
ABOVE AND RIGHT: After being uncovered the stencils, such as this one from an arch soffit on the second level foyer, were carefully inked in and photographed. Photos by Richard Nickel.

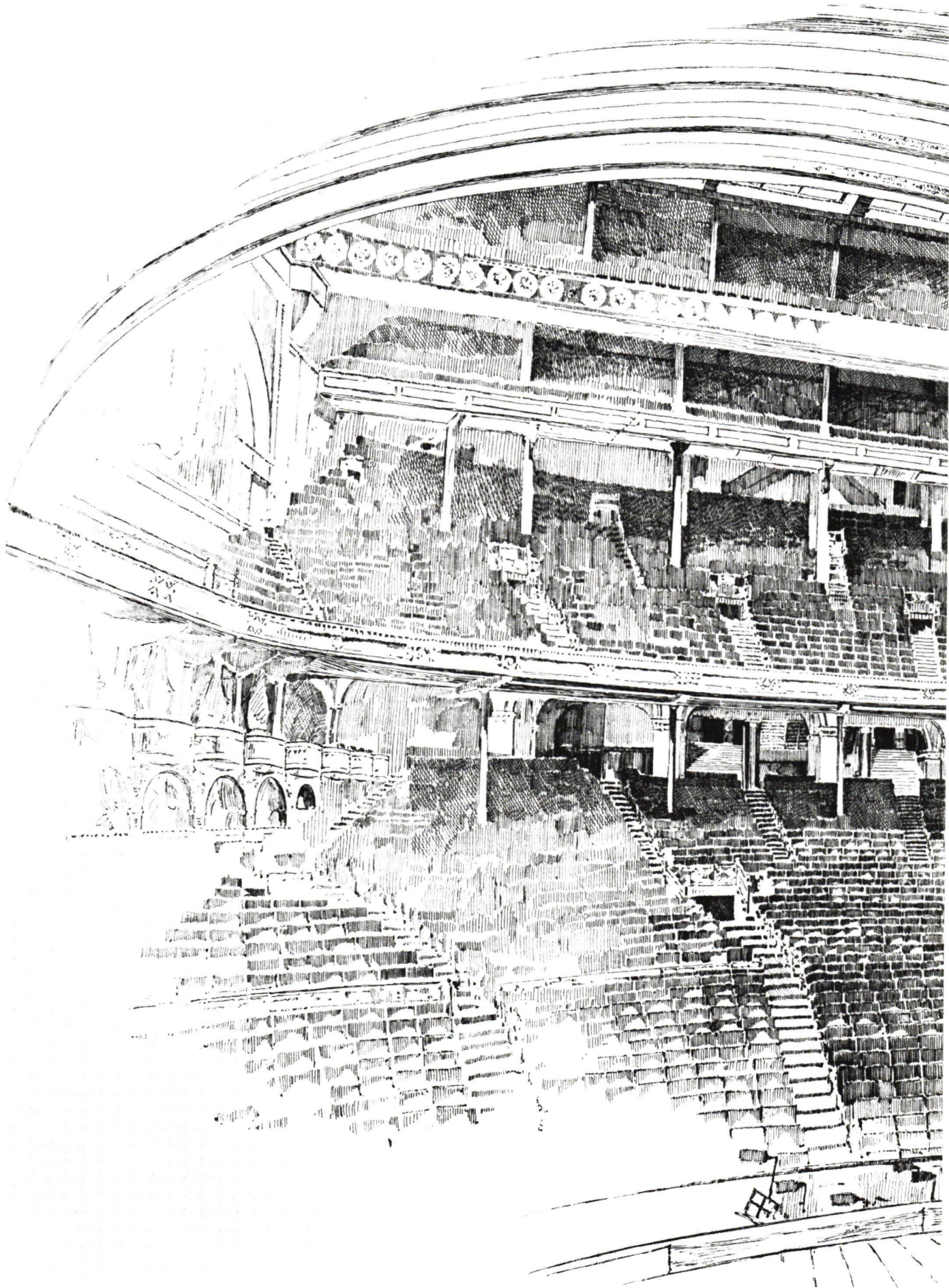
The stencils illustrated on these pages and elsewhere in this issue are all from the Auditorium Theater Building. They were gathered under the direction of Professor Crombie Taylor during the time he served as Architect for the Auditorium Theater Council. The process of retrieving most of the stencils involved a careful investigation of original plaster sections and reconstruction of the patterns and colors. The reconstructed designs were done under Professor Taylor's supervision after he had left Chicago to become Associate Dean of Architecture at the University of Southern California.

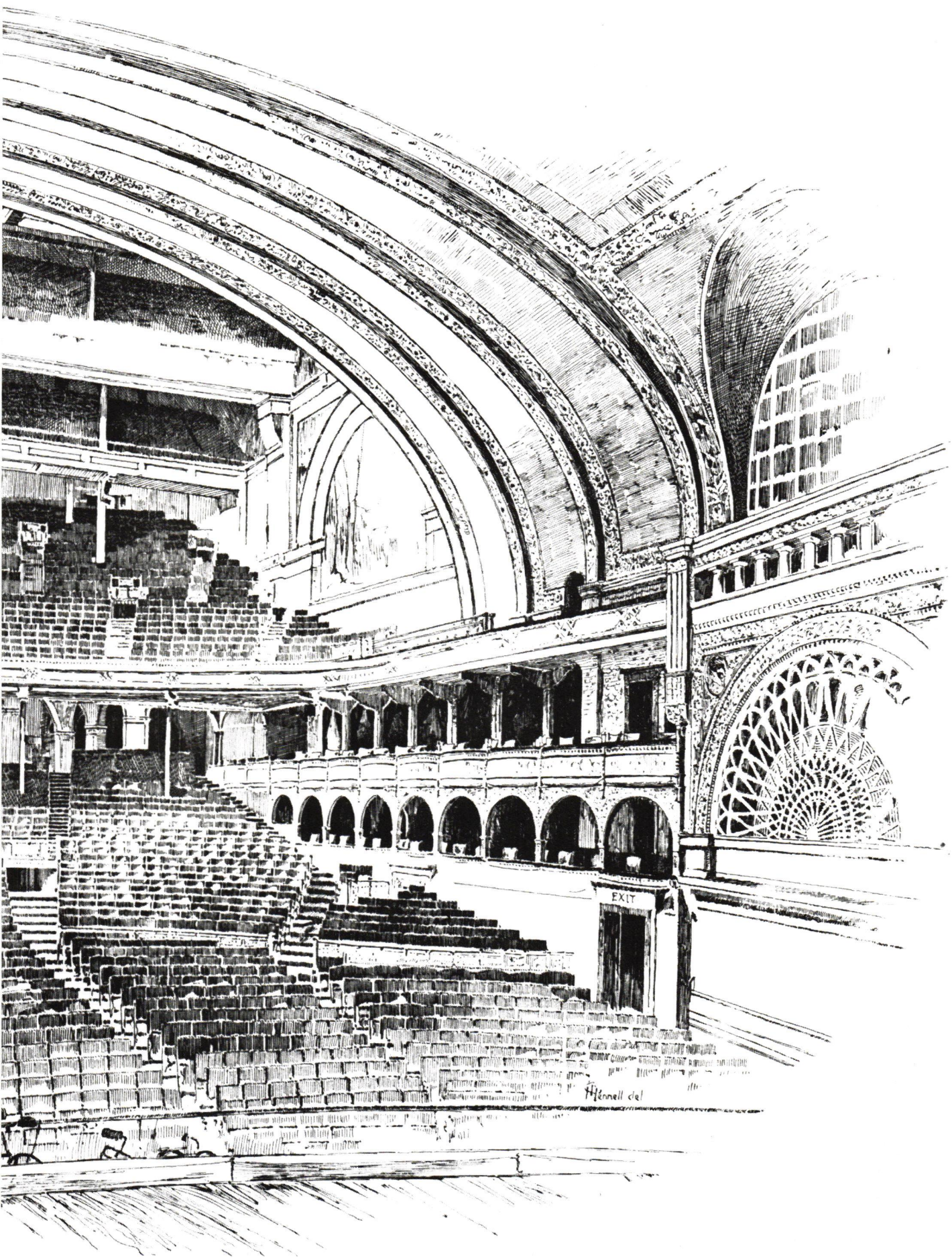
These stencils along with others taken from various buildings designed by Louis Sullivan form the Exhibition "Systems of Stencil Ornament" which Professor Taylor has prepared under the auspices of The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and The Architectural Guild of the University of Southern California. Included in the Exhibition are 23 full-sized color stencil designs taken from the Auditorium Theater, the Garrick Theater, the Chicago Stock Exchange and the Home Building Association Bank of Newark, Ohio.

The Exhibition traces the evolution of Sullivan's stencil work for a period of 27 years (1887-1914), beginning with the gold line and single color used in the Auditorium, and ending with the multi-color work in his bank in Newark, Ohio.

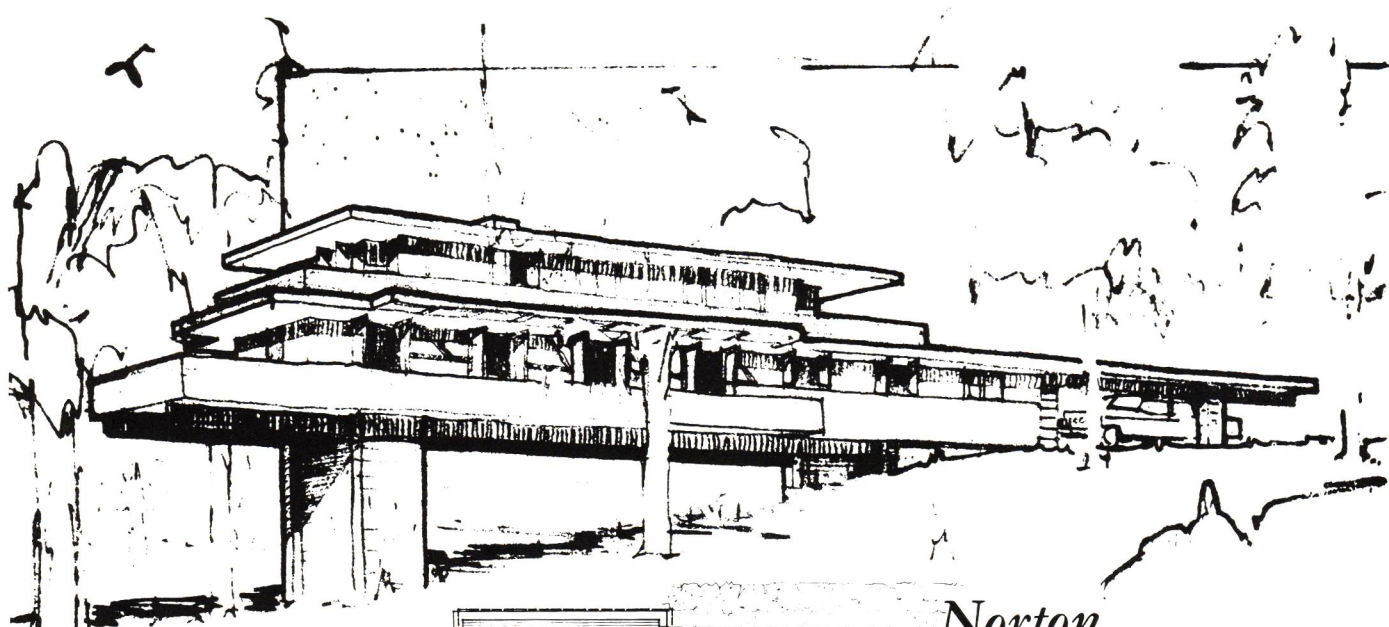
The Exhibition will travel throughout the United States for the next two years.



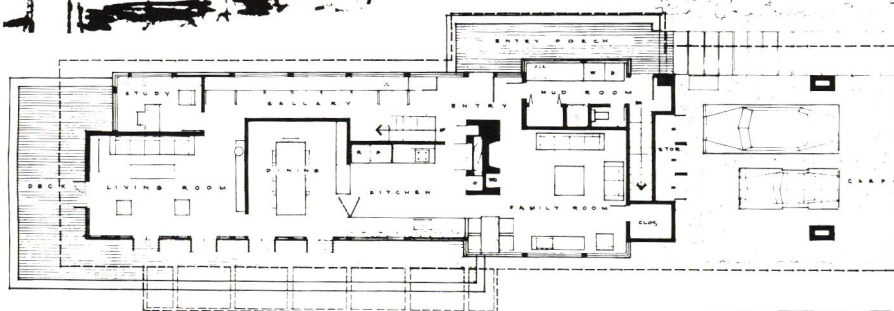




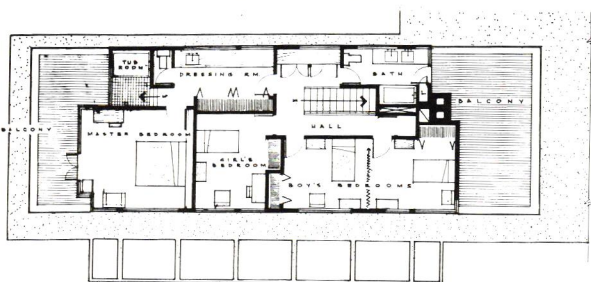
For the first time we are presenting contemporary architecture in The Prairie School Review. Since our announcement to do so in last quarter's issue, our readers have reacted strongly both for and against such a policy. We will include current work in this and future issues in addition to, not instead of, our usual articles concerning the history of the modern movement. The work shown here was chosen for the same reasons we choose everything published in The Prairie School Review. We think it is significant, worthwhile and lasting architecture.



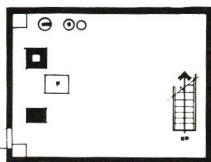
*Norton
and Hall
Architects*



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



BASEMENT



RIGHT: The southwest elevation of the house seen from the hillside.

All photographs in this article are by Orlando R. Cabanban.



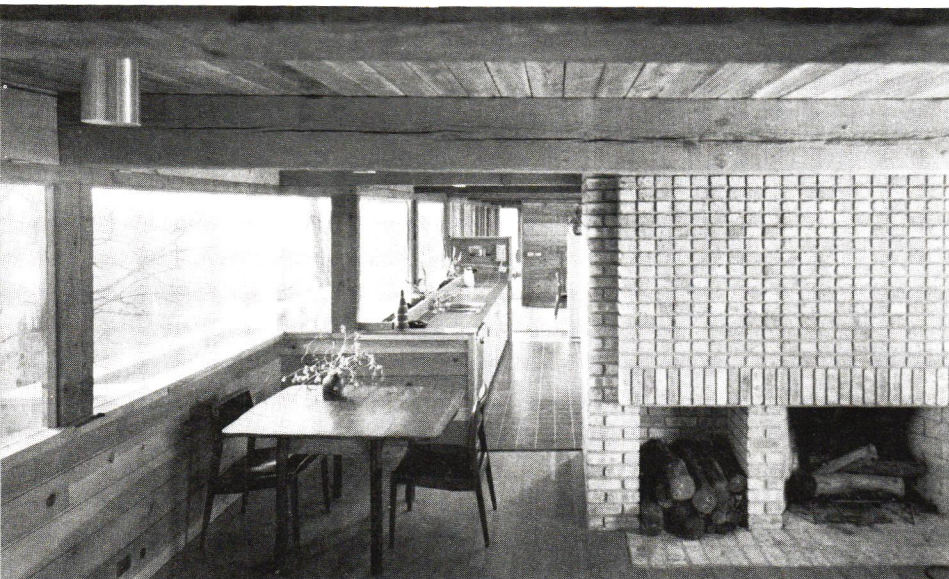
From the family room one can see past the common brick fireplace through the kitchen, dining room and into a corner of the living room at the far end of the house.



The first house illustrated here was built near Joliet, Illinois on a ridge in a suburban development of custom houses.

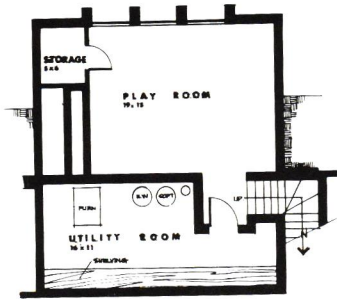
The structure is a post, beam and deck system using rough sawn douglas fir. Exterior walls were done in rough sawn cedar while the interior walls are very inexpensive resawn sheathing grade pine milled to pattern. Total price of the house exclusive of land and fees was \$45,000.

The site was part of a wooded ridge, high at the street side, marshy at the low side. There is a magnificent view from the ridge which was blocked by trees extending to the base of the ridge. While most other houses in the area faced the street, ignoring the view, this house obtained it by thrusting through the edge of the tree line at mid-tree height. From the master bedroom one can literally see for miles, which is extremely unusual in an otherwise flat Midwestern area.

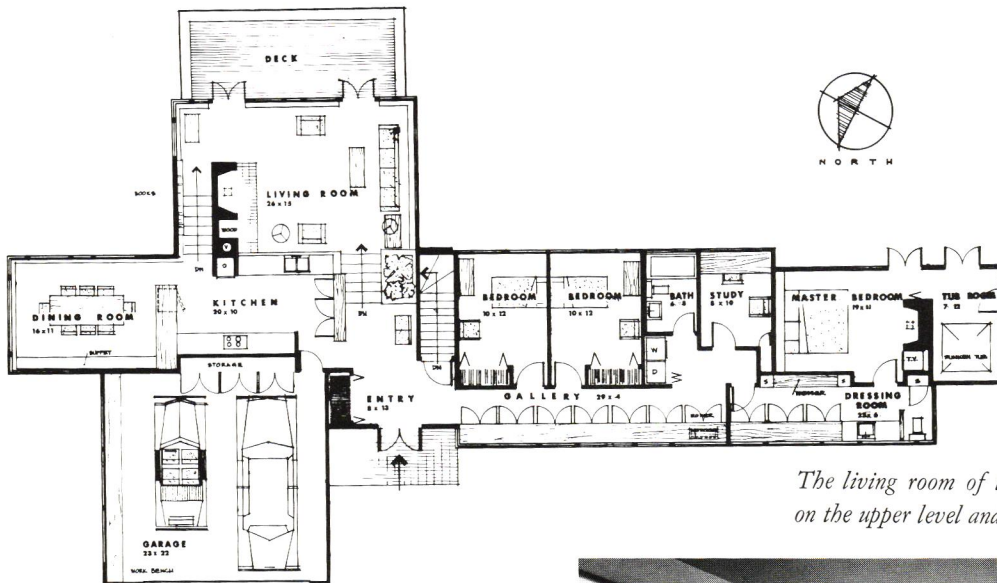


This upper level balcony on the south side of the first floor plan permits an unobstructed panoramic view many miles over the adjacent forest of trees.

This second house was designed for partner Richard Norton as his own home. Located on the extreme south side of the Chicago Metropolitan area, it is not within any city's limits. The large lot is cut in two by a small stream running in a deep ravine which provides a dramatic view and allows the house to turn its back on the street. The house is frankly derivative of Frank Lloyd Wright's "Usonian" period. There is a private master bedroom suite with a sunken tub and dressing room. The balcony kitchen allows socializing of persons in the kitchen with those in the living



B A S E M E N T



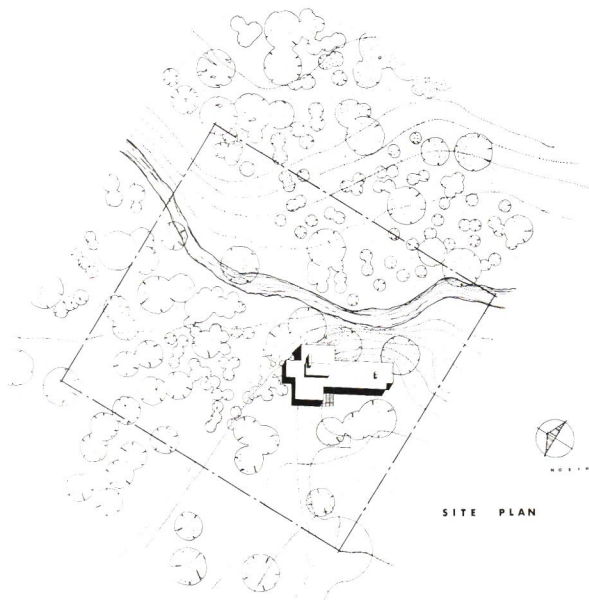
F I R S T F L O O R P L A N

The living room of the Norton House showing the kitchen on the upper level and the clerestory lighting above.





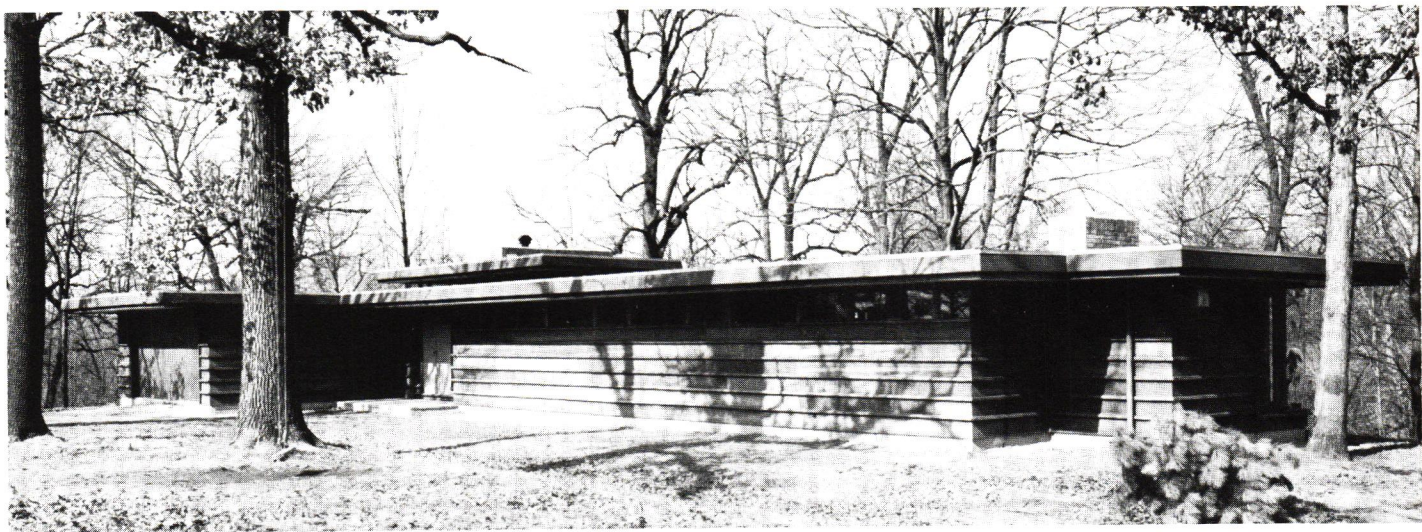
This view of the Norton house is from the ravine to the northwest. The house is superbly sited.



room while not revealing the kitchen clutter or isolating the housekeeper. The dining room and living room create different moods, the former by being surrounded by small scale trees at their mid-height, the latter by having some foreground between a view of large trees seen at a more usual height.

Redwood is used throughout the house on all exposed surfaces for continuity and warmth. The exterior finish is a transparent stain, creosote base, and the interior is done in rubbed linseed oil. The floors are exposed integrally colored green concrete throughout and the color scheme is completed with ceilings of sand plaster in buff.

The Norton house as seen from the southwest.



The Term Chicago School: Hallmark of a Growing Tradition



THE MONADNOCK, BURNHAM & ROOT, ARCHITECTS.

by Titus M. Karlowicz

The author is Assistant Professor in the Department of Art at Wisconsin State University, Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Mr. Karlowicz did his doctoral dissertation on "The Architecture of the World's Columbian Exposition" at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He is presently working on a monograph concerning Charles Bowler Atwood.

The prominent art historian, George Kubler, made the point that "certain words, when they are abused by too common use, suffer in their meaning as if with cancer or inflation. Style is one of these."¹ And we can add easily that school is another which offers as wide a range of nuances in meaning as Kubler ascribed to the word style. To the observer of the history of American architecture, the term Chicago School suffers in its meaningfulness in an equal measure, for by common use it is deprived of any specificity. Ideally, it would appear to be a distinct advantage if a succinct and unequivocally specific definition could be ascribed to it, but the term seems to resist such finalization.

The history of the term Chicago School was presented in an elucidative article by H. Allen Brooks two years ago.² That account clearly indicates a shift from the original meaning of the term as it was used by Thomas Tallmadge in 1908 to one which Brooks devised on the basis of the authoritative and influential book *Space, Time and Architecture* by Sigfried Giedion. With the passage of time the term no longer refers to what Tallmadge had in mind, for Chicago School, as Brooks said, "meant to Tallmadge the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and his contemporaries as manifest primarily in residential architecture after

¹ George Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, New Haven, 1962.

² H. Allen Brooks, "'Chicago School': Metamorphosis of a Term," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XXV, 1966, pages 115-118.

the turn of the century.”³ Today, however, the most wide-spread application of the term is with reference to the tall commercial buildings of Chicago. In order to alleviate some of the vagueness Brooks suggested a definition which is an outgrowth of Giedion’s powerful influence:

The term Chicago School might therefore best be defined as that particularly vigorous, regional phase in the development of the Commercial Style in utilitarian, multi-story buildings as was manifest in Chicago, and in the region of its immediate influence, by the generation of architects whose work represented a stylistic entity in the years between the late 1880’s and the early twentieth century. Its most distinctive characteristic was an exterior expression in masonry, of the skeletal frame although an unashamed repetition of identical fenestration for stories of similar plan, and (often) an unusual emphasis upon verticality, were also typical.⁴

The purpose of this essay is not to deny the validity of the above definition, but to present an opposite point of view which would suggest that a meaning of greater breadth may possibly be as valid though less restrictive. The line of thought can be developed directly from Frank Lloyd Wright’s comments on his “New School of the Middle West,” when he said, “some of the young men and women who have given themselves up to me so faithfully these past years will some day contribute rounded individualities of their own, and forms of their own devising to the new school.”⁵ Two qualities attributable to the members of the “talked-about” school can be derived from the comment. First, there must be a unifying spirit of personality (in this case it was Wright), and, second, the eventual individuality of those who had gathered around the key personality. The implied outcome of a transfer indicates infinite development subject to the varied qualities and potentials of the new individualities expressed in the “forms of their own devising.” The assumptions drawn from Wright’s comments are attributable to Tallmadge’s usage of the term Chicago

3 *Ibid.*, p. 115. (Ed. Note; “The Chicago School” by Thomas E. Tallmadge originally appeared in *The Architectural Review*, April, 1908. It has been reprinted in facsimile in *Architectural Essays from the Chicago School* by The Prairie School Press, 1967.)

4 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

5 Frank Lloyd Wright, “In the Cause of Architecture,” *Architectural Record*, XXIII, 1908, pages 156 and 164, as quoted by Brooks.

School in its original context to convey a new promise, immediate and eventual, for architecture. Regrettably, the definition suggested by Brooks does not embody comparable qualities. It is restrictive in time, independent of developing individualities, and limits itself to a type of structure.⁶

A search into the closing decades of the nineteenth century, as might be expected, will show little or no evidence of a self-conscious proclamation of the existence of a “school” of architecture in the Middle West. Louis Sullivan and John Wellborn Root, two of the more formidable thinkers to come forth from the sphere of architectural activity in Chicago during that period, showed no indications of an awareness of a cohesive spirit gathering the more youthful architects around itself as Frank Lloyd Wright and Thomas Tallmadge saw readily when the twentieth century had gotten under way. Observers surveying the scene from outside the center, such as Montgomery Schuyler, were drawn to a point of fascination with the achievements of a number of Chicago architects, and others, such as Henry Van Brunt, began to be optimistic about the emergence of an American architecture. The development of the tall commercial building captured the imagination of many and focused their attention upon Chicago. The “skyscraper” struck a note of harmony for the age with the developments which had grown out of the industrial revolution and given architecture a new lease on life. But the skyscrapers alone were no more an absolute indicator of the existence of a School of Architecture, or perhaps a School of Architectural Thought, than the trusts were a School of Finance.

The architect and writer Henry Van Brunt, in his article “Architecture in the West,” ended by focusing on Chicago and the work of Burnham and Root, Adler and Sullivan, Jenney, Holabird and Roche, and a few other firms notable for their achievements in the design of tall commercial buildings. He saw those architects as

ministers of an architectural reform so potent and fruitful, so well fitted to the natural conditions of the strenuous liberty of the West, that one may already predicate from it the speedy overthrow of the temporary, experimental, transitional vernacular art

6 Kubler indicates that types are considered independently of schools or styles. *Op. cit.*, page 3.

of the country, and the establishment of a school which may be recognized in history as the proper exponent of this marvelous civilization.⁷

The promise of a "school" and of an accompanying American architecture showed itself clearly. At the time, however, Van Brunt observed that

the work to be done is so great and the field so vast that, if these were the only effective missionaries of art in the West, we might well despair of national art there within a century. Fortunately, they are closely followed by a crowd of trained workers If they can be held together long enough by the influences of powerful examples, the result is assured.⁸

The stage was being set in 1889 for the fulfillment of the hoped-for appearance of a school which readily became a reality to Tallmadge and imminently to Wright before 1910.

Observing the scene from within as if his ideas were in unison with those of Van Brunt, John Wellborn Root remarked that "the architectural profession in Chicago stands in ability and integrity well abreast of that in any other city, and any other profession."⁹ He, too, was attentive to the accomplishments of the architects whose virtues were expressed in the skyscraper, but he tried to extend the importance of Chicago by calling attention to works well away from the commercial center of Chicago. Residences by Treat and Foltz, Whitehouse, Clay, Pond and Cady, along with S.S. Beman's work in the town of Pullman, and J.L. Silsbee's suburban houses should not have been overlooked, according to Root, as evidence that his colleagues did "confer honor upon the profession and kept it well abreast of that in any other city."¹⁰

The dramatic and monumental development and concentration of skyscrapers in Chicago became undeniably important as well as prominent,

though Root did not hold to the opinion that the significant contributions of his profession were all in the arena of commercial activity in the business center of Chicago.¹¹ To some, however, the city and its skyscrapers were, in 1893, the main attraction for the visitor to the World's Columbian Exposition.¹² The journalist joined in the avid preoccupation with the skyscraper, and as a result a phrase was coined which was intended to convey what Brooks had proposed for the term Chicago School. The journalist was Joseph Medill, editor and proprietor of the *Chicago Tribune*, and his term was Chicago Style.¹³

The immediate context of both terms refers to a type of building independent of any reference to greater implications which are inherent in the terms because of the key words "school" and "style." Just as the suggestiveness of Wright's use of the word "school" might set the standard, so, too, those who occupied a knowledgeable position ought to be the ones to turn to for insight on the word "style." Root's well-known essay on style sets the pace for us in discerning one meaning of the word which conveys something "of the head and heart" while another "of the

11 See also John Wellborn Root, "The City House in the West," *Scribner's*, VIII, 1890, page 416 ff.

12 Julian Ralph, "Chicago the Main Exhibit," *Harper's Magazine*, LXXXIV, 1892, pages 425-436.

13 Joseph Medill participated in a campaign to get the government of the United States to replace the dilapidating post office building of Chicago in time for the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. By the end of 1890 he had begun to speak for a body of authoritative opinion in favor of a building in the "modern business style, something like the Rookery . . . without elaborate exterior decoration and with plenty of light and air . . ." (*Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1890, p. 9.) This was followed by quoting architects. Jenney agreed that a new building was needed; "a steel, fireproof, terra cotta affair known all over the world as the Chicago construction." (*Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 27, 1890, p. 1.) A few days later Medill quoted John Wellborn Root. "First of all, it must be all that the present structure is not. It should be tall, light, airy, easily cleaned, with no high relief ornaments to catch the dirt. In short, on the Modern Chicago Plan." (*Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 30, 1890, p. 8.) As the campaign continued into 1891, Medill, in an editorial, invoked the opinion of the government's supervising architect who was quoted as having said, "that if he owned the building he would tear it down and erect a new office building in the modern style. . . ." To this Medill added, "or he might have said in the Chicago Style, for Chicago is now setting the fashion for the country in office buildings." (*Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 16, 1891, p. 4.) It is notable that Jenney and Root were cautious in speaking of construction or plan in conjunction with the type of building they thought would be appropriate, while James H. Windrim, the government architect, and Medill did make the mistake of relating the type of building with style.

7 Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture in the West," *Atlantic*, LXIV, 1889, page 777.

8 *Ibid.*, page 784.

9 John Wellborn Root, "The Architects of Chicago," originally published anonymously in *America*, V, 1890, pages 304-306, and reproduced posthumously in the *Inland Architect and News Record*, XVI, 1891, page 91.

10 *Ibid.*

epidermis.”¹⁴ There can be little doubt that he viewed the former with an intellectual’s passionate delight, while the latter could have been no worthier than an abomination. This kind of a discernment provides an especially suitable prelude to the thinking of Louis Sullivan. When he dealt with the problem of style, Sullivan often seemed fulminatory, but in one instance of a private account on the matter he laid aside his passions to give his views clearly. This appeared in a letter to D.H. Burnham with regard to the design of the Transportation Building for the World’s Columbian Exposition.

. . . In designing the Transportation Building, its architects sought to illustrate the elementary processes of architectural composition. They wished to do this independently of the notion of style as the word is usually understood; and yet to seek for style as they understand it, namely, as a quality due to a certain way of expressing the development of an idea. We have sought to demonstrate in our work that the word style really implies first a harmonious system of thinking, second, an equally harmonious manner of expressing the thought.

A system of thinking and the manner of expressing, naturally require life long study and cannot be special to any one structure. A thought to be expressed, should, on the contrary be special for each building and peculiar to that building . . .¹⁵

Sullivan’s attitude toward style constituted a departure from any reference to types of buildings as they might be characterized by the materials and methods of construction. It was set emphatically in the realm of thought, and the materials and technical knowledge of their use constituted the system of construction which, if it was not subordinated, shared an important place with the system of thinking only so far as the former became an instrument of expressing the latter. His letter to Burnham contained no comments on the materials of the Transportation Building, but it did contain a detailed explanation of what he had in mind for its design. The letter went on as follows:

14 Harriet Monroe, *John Wellborn Root, A Study of his Life and Work*, Boston, 1896, pages 74-94. (Also facsimile edition, Prairie School Press, Park Forest, Illinois, 1966.) The same essay is reproduced in Lewis Mumford’s *Roots of Contemporary American Architecture*, New York, 1959, pages 276-288.

15 The letter is in the collection of Sullivaniana in the Burnham Library, Chicago. It is unsigned, on Adler and Sullivan’s stationery with hand written corrections, and dated November 11, 1893.

The thought we sought to express in the Transportation Building was this: *An architectural exhibit.*

This thought subdivided itself as follows:

1. A natural, not a historical, exhibit.
2. To be expressed by elementary masses carrying elaborate decoration.
3. All architectural masses and subdivisions to be bounded by straight lines or semi-circles, or both in combination, to illustrate the possibilities of very simple elements when in effective combination.
4. The decorations to be of a very elaborate nature and chiefly in color.
5. The combination of 3 and 4 to show how easily and quietly large simple masses carry elaborately and minutely worked out ornamentation.
6. The chief object of 4 being to show that the farther the process of systematic subdivision be carried the quieter and more dignified becomes the structure as a whole.
7. The use of colored decorations to show the possibility of sequence, combination, and repetition when a great many colors are used: — hence the true nature of polychrome.
8. The use of a symbolical human figure in color to show its great value in architectural decoration.
9. A long series of minor considerations, entering too minutely into detail to be here enumerated . . .

The intimate interdependence between a harmonious system of thinking and an equally harmonious manner of expressing the thought shows itself in the latter remarks. Somehow, the similar intimacy of interdependence between a harmonious manner of expressing a thought and the materials used along with methods of construction employed remained significantly absent. It is not because these were not important in the design of a building for Sullivan as we know too well. The absence is explainable by the apparent desire to dissociate matters of technical consideration from style.¹⁶ Root, in his efforts, tried to explain his attitude with an analogy in which architecture became “the politeness of building.” Betraying his Victorian heritage, he sought to explain that a good building, i.e. one in which style became a virtue, would possess the qualities of ‘Repose, Refinement, Self-Containment, Sympathy, Discretion, Knowledge, Urbanity,

16 The Transportation Building was a timber structure sheathed with stucco-like material which was called “staff.”

Modesty.”¹⁷ Architecture, to follow the analogy, consisted of more than the anatomical constituents. The architect, to be qualified to call himself by that name, had to possess the ability to develop the form of a building wherein its structure was so arranged as to give expression to metaphysical qualities embodied in its conception.

The discussion on style is not easily terminated, but enough has been said here to provide a basis for explaining why it would be difficult to accept Brooks’ definition of Chicago School. The words “style” and “school” are mutually significant in many contexts. Brooks, like Medill, seems to suggest that “type” enters into the mutual significance. The importance of “type” is undeniable and must be respected so long as the mutual significance is not mistaken for synonymy. In making this point it is necessary to take caution against suggesting that a hierarchy exists. Rather than taking their place in order of importance each of the three words begins to serve as an indicator of a singular quality which manifests itself in a work of art. If style can be taken to be a quality due to a certain way of expressing the development of an idea, as Sullivan suggested, and if school is to imply a generating or perpetuating and unifying spirit, as we had gathered from Wright, then type, understood as an expression of a structural or technological system, must be allowed its important place to form the triad of mutually significant factors in a work of architecture.

The term Chicago School can begin to emerge into an expression of special significance, or it can be allowed to degenerate into nothing more than a mere parochialism. The long debate over the originality of Chicago’s contribution and the exclusiveness of its place in American architecture gives cause for the kind of re-examination suggested by this essay, and Brooks’ definition arouses the reaction expressed here. Chicago played an important part only inasmuch as it was the gathering place for men and ideas. The time when the men and ideas began to come together was also important, for it was then that a new technology gave rise to new forms. But the key to creative power seems to have come from new principles which were generated by the encounter with the new technology. All three — the new principles, the new technology, and the new forms — were as mutually interdependent as style, school and type were seen to be mutually significant. In this respect Chicago became a spawning ground of an American architecture so hopefully anticipated

by Henry Van Brunt. In order to provide the term Chicago School with meaningfulness there is no reason for using it when we may mean Chicago Type or some equivalent such as Jenney’s “Chicago Construction.” When the term Chicago School is used it should embody all the factors contributing to the generative force which keeps concepts of modern American architecture in the realm of vital development rather than drawing upon single factors which may or may not have succumbed to the quieting authority of history.

The tall building, no longer purely commercial, stands out today as it did in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a particularly exciting aspect of architecture, and developments in Chicago stand out as prominently in the nineteenth century as they did three quarters of a century ago. The skyscraper remains the chief attraction, but for consideration with regard to a Chicago School it only relates itself as a type. The quality of style has been transitory, but more than in terms of fashion. Changes in production methods, costs of materials, construction methods, cost of labor and margins of profit have been accompanied by the introduction of materials and technological developments new to architecture. These changes have demanded stylistic changes which have kept pace with the spirit established by the demands placed upon the architects of the late nineteenth century tall commercial buildings.

Utilitarian principles which govern the systems of construction and set the related characteristics of style can begin to reveal qualities which might be summarized under the term Chicago School. In this way the term can become unbound by limitations of so brief a period of time as a decade or two. The individual personalities, though obscured by the complex organization of contemporary architectural firms, remain as carriers of a contributing force which has not yet dissipated itself. Though they become obscured their works in execution remain individualized without vying with one another, and the idea of a school manifests itself all the more clearly in contemporary Chicago. The complex but agreeable relationship of federal, municipal and private buildings which are being brought together in Chicago’s loop in our time by different architectural firms testify to this assertion. The type has become integrated into an expanded form or totality where the single rising structure no longer boasts only of a unique technological prowess, but where this prowess now turns itself into a genuine “politeness of building” which marks the maturation of a tradition.

17 Monroe, *op. cit.*

Book Reviews

R. M. SCHINDLER - Architect, by David Gebhard, introduction by Esther McCoy. University of California, Santa Barbara, 1967. 114 pp., illus., list of buildings, \$3.50.

Good architectural exhibitions are as rare as auk eggs, and good exhibition catalogs are even harder to come by. For that reason, in spite of several faults, it is a pleasure to read David Gebhard's catalog for the Schindler show which he organized at Santa Barbara this past spring. (For those who missed the exhibit first time around, it will have another outing at the Los Angeles County Museum in the fall.) Gebhard's selection of Rudolf Schindler for this major exhibition was a propitious one since Schindler is perhaps the most neglected of the modern masters, one who was not only often a step or two ahead of his contemporaries, it is now clear, in terms of architectural innovation, but one whose work has a good deal more to say today than does the "classic" International Style work which roughly parallels Schindler's period of greatest inventiveness. The reasons for the architect's relative obscurity are not hard to formulate, however: as Gebhard suggests, the historical neglect turns on three factors, Schindler's self-effacing inability to serve as his own publicity agent, a facility possessed by every major architect of the century with the possible exception of Mies; the fact that Schindler was not an active educator, either at an architectural school or through the media of books; and because the very nature of his work has made it easier for scholars to ignore him than to try to fit him into their nicely structured historical schemas.

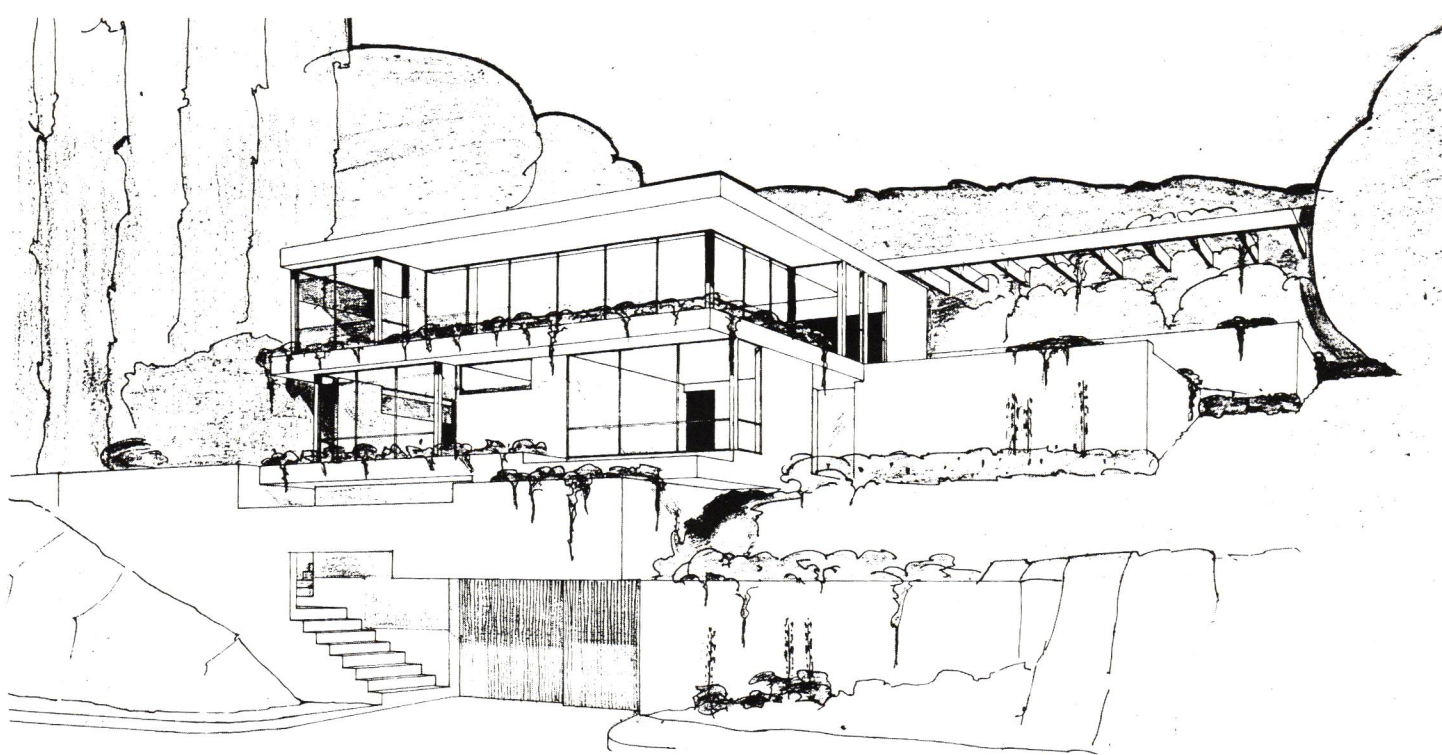
Perhaps the most interesting part of Gebhard's text is the account of the complex set of influences that lay behind Schindler's ultimate emergence as a mature creative artist. Because the bulk of his work was built in Southern California, and indeed was a powerful factor in the too-brief flowering of significant modern architecture there in the late 30's and 40's, one is inclined to forget that his formative years had relatively little to do with the Los Angeles milieu. A Viennese by birth, he studied both engineering and fine arts there in the turbulent years just preceding World War I. His engineering prowess was reflected in the markedly constructivist quality of his mature work, but it was perhaps the circle of friends he acquired through his fine arts studies which had the longer range impact on his career. Gebhard discusses his relationship not only to the great Viennese architects of

the time - Wagner, Loos, Olbrich and Hoffman - but also to the painters Klimt, Kokoschka and Schiele. In other words, he was closely identified with both the Secessionists and the new wave of expressionists and rationalists. At the same time, he gained familiarity with the American scene through Loos' first hand knowledge and through publications, notably Wright's Wasmuth editions.

To this mixed bag of influences were added first hand contact with the Chicago School when Schindler arrived in 1914 to work for the lack-luster firm of Ottenheimer, Stern and Reichert whose chief virtue appears to have been the relative freedom they offered Schindler in design matters. In 1915 he took an extended trip through the American Southwest where he saw the work of Irving Gill which seemed to confirm the teachings of Loos, and the indigenous adobe architecture of New Mexico with its simple plasticity which made a profound impression. Back in Chicago, he ultimately (1917) went to work for Wright, then deeply engrossed in the Imperial Hotel. His association with Wright - often seemingly approaching the status of partner - continued through the Hollyhock House which Schindler supervised in Wright's absence, and terminated with the working drawings for the Millard house in 1923.

I dwell on these origins at some length because it is here that Gebhard is at his best: step by step, he leads the reader through this complex maze using Schindler's buildings to demonstrate how each new wave of influence was reflected in the architect's work, and how, in Southern California, he quickly came into a style of his own that combined at once a clean, sometimes austere sense of the wall as plane with an expressionistic feeling for structure while retaining Wright's emotive use of space and sculptural mass. The result of this architectural synthesis was a series of undoubted masterpieces, such as the Lovell house at Newport Beach (1925), which Gebhard rightly singles out as Schindler's *magnum opus*.

On the later work, from the late 20's on, Gebhard's approach often tends to be somewhat more superficial. Step by step analysis gives way to broader morphological groupings, and the result is occasionally what amounts to lists of buildings which, if they are not illustrated in the plates, remain little more than teasing ciphers. With an architect like Wright, whose work is fairly widely known and published, this approach can be pulled off, but with a more obscure man like Schindler, it can be distracting. There is no reason to assume that Gebhard does not know whereof he speaks;



A project for a house done for W. J. Delahoyde, Los Angeles, 1935.

it is simply the lack of materials to follow the arguments, a lack dictated in part by the scope of the catalog. Hopefully Gebhard will eventually expand this publication to the full-scale monograph that the subject so clearly warrants.

There are other problems, however, that again may be partly attributed to the demands of the format. Certainly, for example, the relationship between Schindler and Wright should be more deeply explored, especially the former's contributions, if any, to the engineering of the Imperial. Also, Gebhard enigmatically lists several buildings - e.g. some of the Barnsdall commissions and the C.P. Lowes house - as "for Frank Lloyd Wright." It seems doubtful that Wright would have allowed something to go out under his signature without having retained control over the design. Nor does Gebhard discuss the contributions of Lloyd Wright to the Barnsdall projects, suggesting that Schindler carried the bulk of the burden; yet Lloyd Wright's contributions appear to be greater than has usually been credited. The loose partnership of Schindler and Neutra is not fully spelled out either, and especially the personal tensions that resulted from Neutra's securing the commission for the second Lovell house in 1927. Finally, Gebhard hardly touches on Schindler's social thought in relation to his work and the often very close personal contact that existed between him and his clients, perhaps best illustrated in the relationship with Samuel Freeman. The client was Wright's, but it was Schindler who designed the furnishings for the house and who, over a period of some 25 years, kept tinkering with the roof and the great mitered

windows to make the design "work". For a more humanizing approach, the reader should consult Esther McCoy's *Five California Architects* (Reinhold, 1960, pp. 149-193.) as well as her interesting introduction to the present work.

One final note: the photographs, although a little fuzzy because printed on too soft paper, are certainly generous and offer a broad overview of Schindler's career. It is a great pity, however, that they are not keyed by number to the text. It is time consuming and annoying to have to look through 60-odd pages of photos and drawings to find a building under discussion. To spend the time looking only to discover the building is not even illustrated is downright maddening. On the whole, however, Gebhard's *R. M. Schindler* is very good and certainly is the best work to date on this important, too-little known modern master.

Reviewed by Bruce F. Radde

ST. CROIX TRAIL COUNTRY, Recollections of Wisconsin, by William Gray Purcell. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1967. 123 pp., illus., \$6.50.

In this posthumously published book Mr. Purcell recalls the summers he spent with his grandparents from 1887 to 1901 in the St. Croix Country south of Bayfield, Wisconsin. In his later years Purcell was convinced that these experiences influenced his architecture to a great extent.

The book is a nostalgic history of the region and its return to wilderness after the Civil War. Some portions of the area remain today almost as they were when the events in the book took place. It is certainly one of the last really primitive areas in the United States.

Letters to the Editors

Sirs:

I would appreciate it very much if you might be able to assist me in locating material related to the life and work of the architect, F. W. Fitzpatrick. I must caution you that already I have had very little success in the Chicago and Evanston areas. Fitzpatrick worked in Chicago for a period of about thirty years (1900-1931) and lived in Evanston until his death in 1931. Also, Fitzpatrick cannot be included in the "Chicago School" group although he did have great respect for these men.

Fitzpatrick can be considered an architectural "progressive" in respect to better construction methods, fire-proofing, and city planning. However, my main problem is that Fitzpatrick was a consulting architect, so that most of his work is attributed to the men he worked for.

The Architectural Forum in its obituary of Fitzpatrick claimed that he was the architect of the Newberry Library, the Chicago Public Library, and the Chicago Federal Building and Post Office. I do have documentary evidence of his connection with this last building.

I would be most grateful for any information your readers might have concerning this interesting but elusive architect, or names of persons having contact with Fitzpatrick before he died.

James A. Scott
Department of History
University of Minnesota, Duluth

Sirs:

It is hard to single out any one issue of *The Prairie School Review* for praise, but I do want to pay especial compliments on the new issue (Vol. IV, No. 2) featuring Sullivan's bank at Owatonna. It is excellent. I am especially appreciative of the wealth of excellent illustrations. I have had some correspondence with Paul E. Sprague, but he has contributed far more to me than I to him. I have also been in touch with Harwell H. Harris (now in Raleigh, N.C.) who aided, as you may remember, in the restoration of the bank. I also liked Thomas Hines' rather candid review of Olgivanna Lloyd Wright's new book.

These are belated but I think well-merited compliments on the very good job you are doing on the *Review*.

Hugh Morrison
Dartmouth College

Sirs:

Bacon or somebody wrote Shakespeare's plays, and Louis Sullivan, it seems, was Elmslie.

In the article on the National Farmer's Bank, Owatonna, Michigan, by Paul E. Sprague in Volume IV, Number 2 of *The Prairie School Review*, little is attributed to Sullivan. Amongst the ornamental features, only the color stencil framing the arches is generously attributed exclusively to Sullivan.

The execution of the work of a creative architect depends on teamwork. Elmslie had great ability and was no doubt a valuable member of Sullivan's team, but in the last analysis the character of the ornamental features of the bank, as detailed by Elmslie, derived from Sullivan. If credit is to be given where credit is due, mention should also be made of another member of Sullivan's team, Christian Schneider, the modeler who understood Sullivan's system of ornament, who translated into three dimensions with fantastic skill details drawn on flat paper which Elmslie, or Sullivan himself, produced.

It is inconceivable, had Sullivan never existed, that the styles of such designers as Elmslie, Purcell or Garden, could ever have come into being. Frank Lloyd Wright justly referred to Sullivan as the Master.

B. C. Greengard
Chicago

Sirs:

Louis Sullivan's The National Farmer's Bank at Owatonna, Minnesota, has rightly been considered one of the really significant buildings of the first decade of this century. *The Prairie School Review* is to be commended for devoting a whole issue to this building. One would assume that since this building has been so often discussed there could be only two legitimate reasons for again turning our attention to it: either that new purely factual information concerning the building had been discovered, or that a new and significant appraisal of the design is needed. Regrettably Paul Sprague's article accomplishes neither purpose. The 1935 discussion of the building by Hugh Morrison is still by far the most meaningful general analysis of the building which we possess. The only new factual information that has come to light is the now firmly documented extent of George Grant Elmslie's responsibility for the ornament of the building. When the Frank Lloyd Wright drawings were acquired by the Avery Library of Columbia

University the fact that six of the drawings were unquestionably from Elmslie's hand was readily apparent to all of those who have been concerned with Sullivan and his place in the American architectural scene.¹

When the author departs from the world of the factual to the world of conjecture his arguments become even thinner. It is unfortunate that we do not possess any of the first sketches for the building, nor do we possess Sullivan's diary (which was destroyed by Elmslie in the late 1920's), for these sources would certainly have provided us with an understanding of how Sullivan and Elmslie worked together. But the likelihood of any of these sketches coming to light is highly improbable and therefore it would seem unlikely that we will ever possess the uncontested factual information needed to thoroughly explain the authorship of this bank and its various details.

Though we do lack the full range of documentary evidence, it is still perfectly possible to assign the authorship of one or another aspect of this building to Sullivan or to Elmslie through an analysis of their earlier and later designs. It is in this area that the author most disappoints us. As with any building the design of the Owatonna Bank reveals very specific roots closely tied to the immediate past. The building which was most likely the spring-board for all of Sullivan's and Purcell's and Elmslie's later Prairie banks was the 1888 design for the Security Bank of Minneapolis produced by Harvey Ellis who at that time was working for the Minnesota architect, Le Roy S. Buffington.²

The concept of a small bank as a simple volumetric box; the way that the interior space was thought of as an inter-connected horizontal and vertical space; and the way the exterior ornament was placed in purposeful contrast with the plain undecorated wall surfaces are all contained in the Ellis project. Even Frank Lloyd Wright's project

for a "Village Bank in Cast Concrete" of 1901 would appear to have been inspired by this source. That both Elmslie and Sullivan admired the project of Ellis is aptly attested to in that this was one of the few drawings which Elmslie kept around the Sullivan office. Purcell has related that when he was in the Sullivan office in 1903 the sketch for the Ellis building was pinned up beside Elmslie's drafting table.³

Thus, by the time that Sullivan secured the commission for the Owatonna Bank he could lean back on both the Ellis and on Wright's 1901 variation for the basic form of the building - a box-like object in space; and an interior composed of secondary lower spaces which are emitted from the large vertical open space of the main banking room. The general form of the bank at Owatonna could then have been developed either by Sullivan or Elmslie - but since Elmslie credits the basic idea to Sullivan there would seem to be no reason to doubt this attribution.

As to the details of the building, the pre-1907 works of the two men make it reasonably easy to discuss who was most likely responsible. The eight-arcaded window unit of the store-office wing is closely related to the many Sullivan buildings of the 1890's, and must have been from his hand. The lower groups of small square windows connected by a projecting horizontal sill which occurs in the lower part of the walls of the main banking building are more likely to have been Elmslie. He used similar devices in his design for the Babson house (Riverside, 1907), in the Bradley house (Madison, 1908-1909) and in several of his projected buildings of the pre-1908 period.⁴ The rigid rectangular geometry expressed by these groups of windows, and by the two large corner windows is an approach which Elmslie was to use again and again in his work with Purcell (1909-1922), and in his independent work of the 1920's and early 1930's.⁵ The craftsman atmosphere of the interior of the bank at Owatonna is also more in

1 Since these six drawings for the ornament of the bank at Owatonna are extremely important for the author's argument he should have offered some objective evidence as to why he believes that the drawings are by Elmslie rather than by Sullivan. The author's case on this point would have been better substantiated if he had brought out that several historians including the writer of this letter had examined the drawings in question and that their conclusion that they were by Elmslie was duly recorded at the Avery Library.

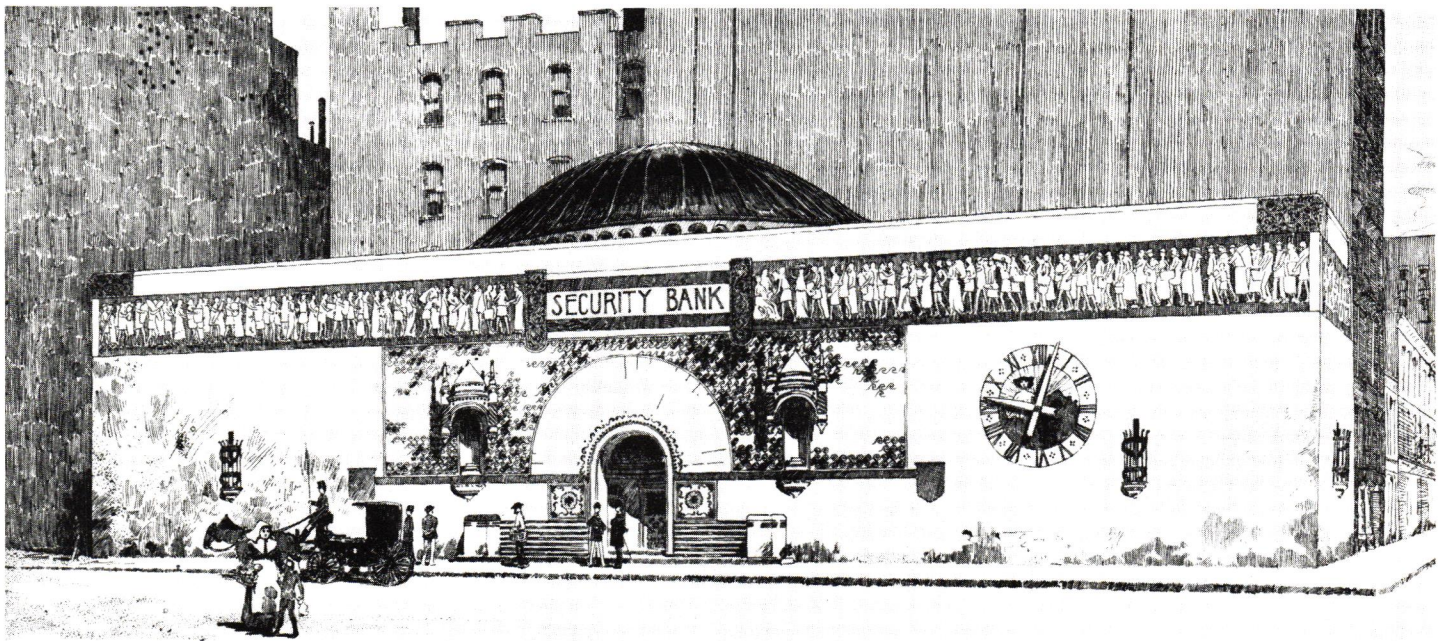
2 The design for the Security Bank was published in 1891. That Ellis was a well known figure among Chicago architects can be readily seen by reading Claude Bragdon's "Harvey Ellis: A Portrait Sketch," *Architectural Review*, XV, December, 1908, pp. 173-183; and Hugh M. G. Garden, "Harvey Ellis, Designer and Draftsman," *Architectural Review*, XV, December, 1908, pp. 184-186.

3 William Gray Purcell, "Unpublished Notes on Harvey Ellis," written in March, 1958; manuscript in the possession of this writer.

4 Two projected houses designed by Elmslie while he was in the Sullivan office were: Project for Mrs. N. F. McCormick, Lake Forest, Illinois, 1900; and Project for Ellis Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo., ca. 1898-1900.

5 The writer of this letter discussed the influence of the Craftsman movement on Elmslie in his paper, "Louis Sullivan and George Grant Elmslie," *Journal, The Society of Architectural Historians*, XIX, No. 2, May, 1960, pp. 64-65.

This design for the Security Bank of Minneapolis was prepared for Architect L. S. Buffington by designer Harvey Ellis.



L.S. BUFFINGTON ARCHITECT MINNEAPOLIS MINN. D. 1891

keeping with Elmslie's predilections rather than Sullivan's.

After one has set down and analyzed the possible authorship of the details of the building one finds it difficult to go along with the view that Elmslie's participation in the design was limited to the ornament and the two large semi-circular windows. Unless new evidence comes to the light Elmslie should receive as much credit for the design of this bank building as Sullivan.

Another negative aspect of Sprague's article relates to the client himself. There are individuals still living in Owatonna who could and already have revealed much about Carl Bennett and his bank building. If the author had looked more deeply into the client and his relationship with

Sullivan he might have avoided the errors of fact and interpretation which mar his article. Bennett did not really have to sell the idea of hiring Sullivan to design the bank, for the simple reason that he and his family held the controlling interest in the bank. He could - at least in theory - do whatever he wanted. Bennett did have a number of ideas about how the bank should be designed, but almost all of these were thrown out by Sullivan and Elmslie. To state as an historical fact that "the owner of the bank wanted a monumental self-contained banking room on the corner of this land . . ." (p. 11) is simply not true, for there is no objective evidence for such an assertion. On the contrary Elmslie mentioned that Bennett was initially thinking of a rather conventional bank building, with the ground floor elevated to banking

actions and an upper floor of offices.⁶ Although one should never minimize Bennett's "way-out" act of engaging a controversial architect such as Sullivan, still one must be extremely cautious about building up Bennett as an acute, highly talented businessman. The operation of his bank in the late teens and twenties was so poor that depression or not the bank would have collapsed by the 1930's.⁷ Bennett certainly does deserve a full historic study for he was both a perfect example of his period, and at the same time he was outside of it. His dealings with Sullivan (1907-1919) and with Purcell and Elmslie (1909-1922) indicate that for him architecture was a desired means of asserting his prominence in his own community. The bank at Owatonna was to have been only the first of a series of monuments which would constitute a memorial to himself and to his family.⁸

The ornament of the bank is undeniably one of the finest which Elmslie ever designed. But there are several later Purcell and Elmslie building projects which present as fine ornament equally well integrated into the building itself.⁹

David Gebhard

Sirs:

I read with very great interest the article of Professor Sprague concerning the National's Farmers' Bank at Owatonna, Minnesota. The documentation which demonstrates the principal role of George Elmslie in the designing of that building accounts for and may be explained by several important facts from Sullivan's biography.

First: It accounts for some of the essential differences between the Owatonna bank and the other Sullivan banks in which Sullivan took a more active role. The other banks seem to be more restrained, have less of the Art Nouveau. The Sydney,

6 Notes gathered by the writer of this letter from Elmslie, 1952.

7 Information gathered from William Gray Purcell, October 17, 1963; also letters between Bennett and Purcell, 1927-1931.

8 Between 1909 and 1920 Purcell and Elmslie produced a number of designs for Bennett. These ranged from a large landscape garden which was planned to become a public park, memorial markers for the Bennett family, a series of projects for a town house for Bennett, a project for a lake-side summer house, speculative houses, designs for check blanks, stationery, etc. for the bank, etc.

9 Among the most successful examples of Elmslie's use of ornament after 1909 would be the Merchants Bank, Winona, 1911-1912; the First National Bank project for Mankato, 1911; the St. Paul Methodist Church project, Cedar Rapids, 1910; and the Farmers and Merchants State Bank, Hector, 1916.

Ohio, bank is more typically Sullivan and in many ways is a far greater work.

Second: The reason for Elmslie's primary role in the Minnesota bank may be explained by the following hypothesis which I have formulated as a result of recent research. During the years 1905 - 1908 we have a crisis period in Sullivan's life. We have a period of marked absence from the architectural scene. We know of his drinking habits and it has been suggested he took drugs as well; it is my theory that during that period 1905 - 1908, Sullivan suffered a rather serious mental breakdown. This breakdown may account for the distinctive characteristics of Sullivan's work (both architectural and literary) during his last period 1908 - 1923.

Harold J. McWhinnie
Ohio State University

Preview

The final issue of Volume IV of THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW will be devoted to commemorating the Centennial of the birth of Frank Lloyd Wright. We are fortunate to have the lead article contributed by the dean of American architectural historians, Henry-Russell Hitchcock. We will also include a photo essay of the recent restoration of Wright's most famous Prairie house, the F. C. Robie house in Chicago. Finally, there will be a brief essay concerning the saving of two early Wright houses which were destined to be destroyed before an interested citizens group came to their rescue.

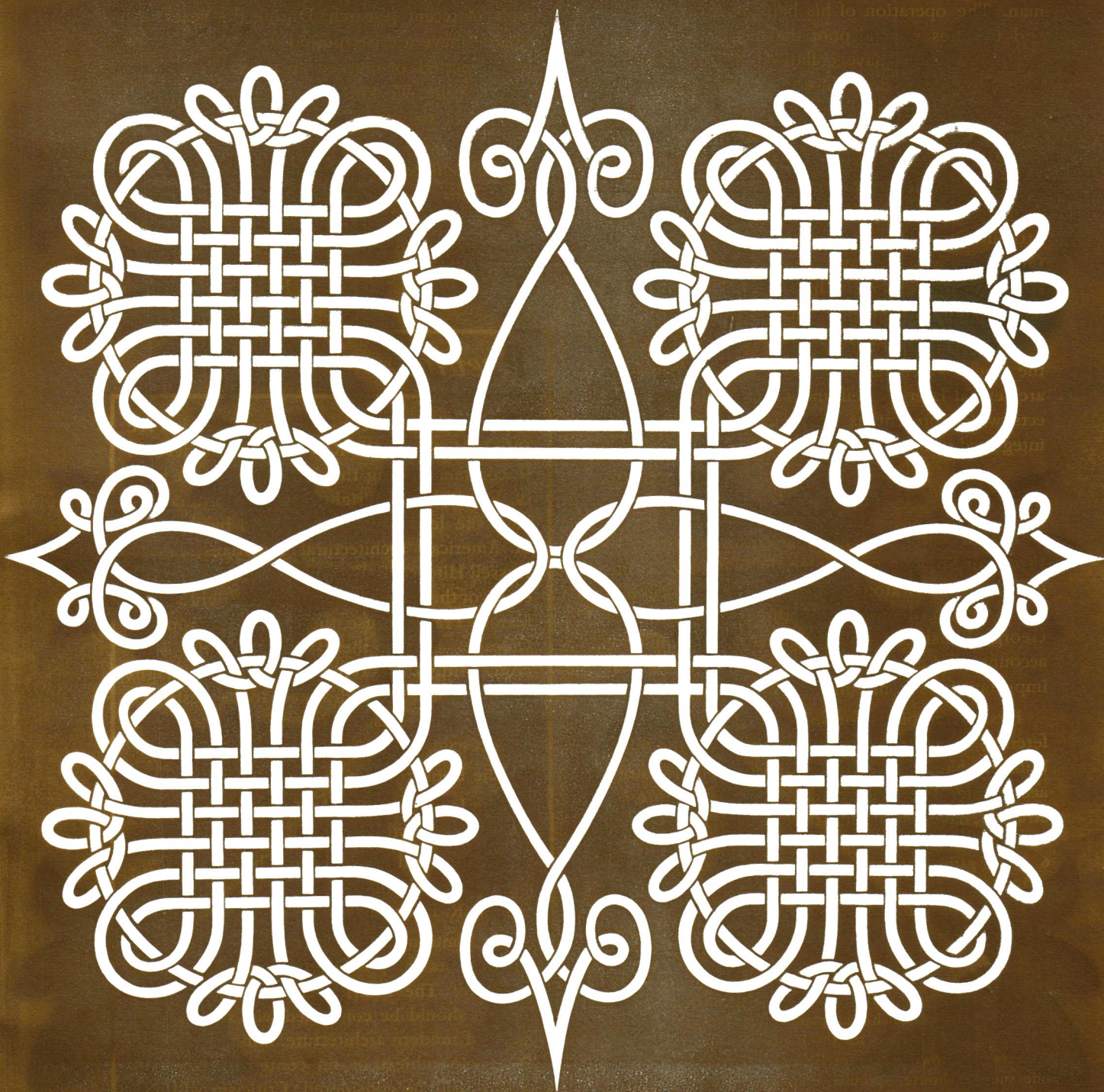
The book reviews in this issue will include:

The Japanese Print, An Interpretation
Frank Lloyd Wright

Architectural Essays From The
Chicago School

W. R. Hasbrouck, Editor

We continue to be interested in receiving manuscripts for possible publication in future issues of *The Prairie School Review*. Major articles should be concerned with the development of modern architecture. Minor articles on the same subject or on contemporary architecture will be considered. Criticism will also be considered, as will be book reviews. It is suggested that prospective authors submit outlines to the editors before completing their manuscripts to avoid possible duplication of efforts.





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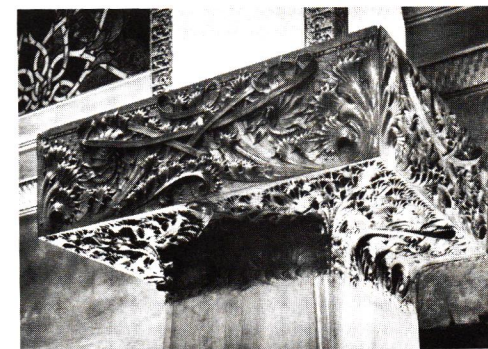
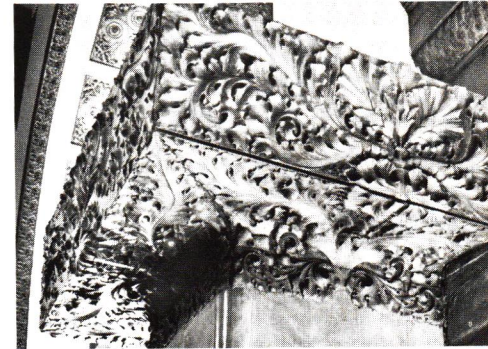
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These carved wood capitals designed by Sullivan are found in Ganz Hall located in the Auditorium Hotel building immediately over the theater. HABS photos by Cervin Robinson.

This selected bibliography was compiled with the assistance of Miss Susan Sinykin.

