

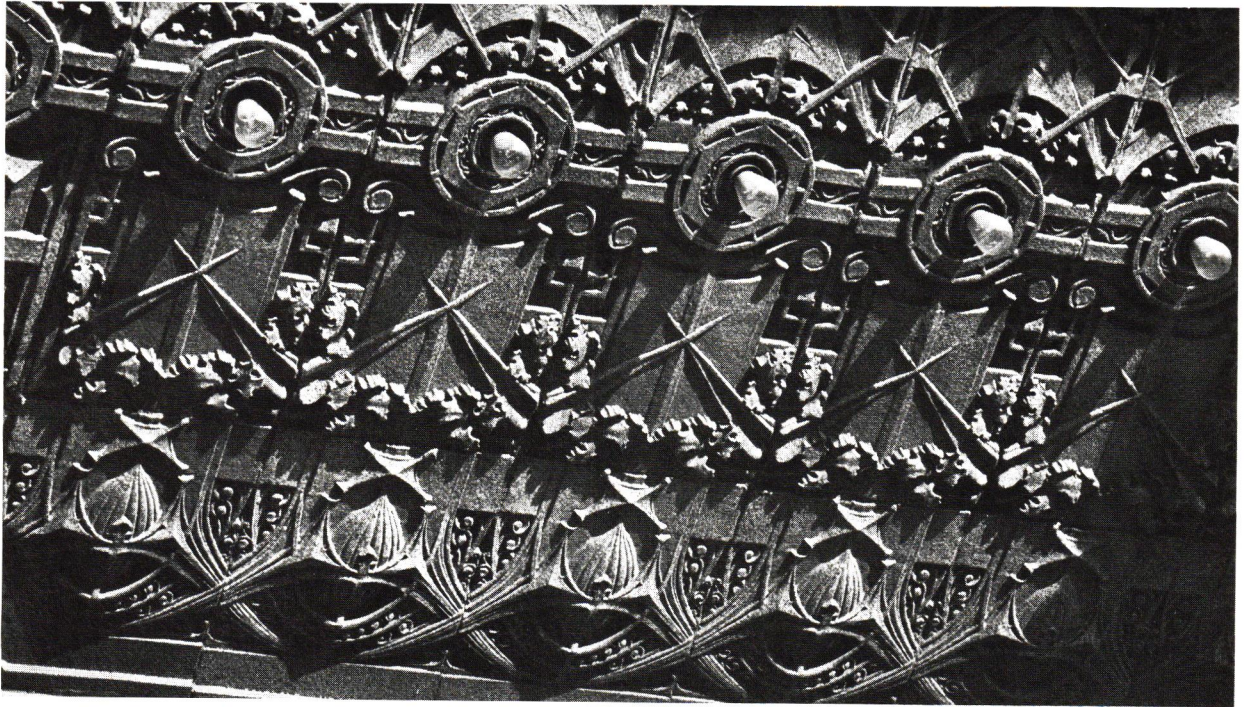
*The*  
**PRAIRIE  
SCHOOL**  
*Review*

Volume VI, Number 3

Third Quarter, 1969

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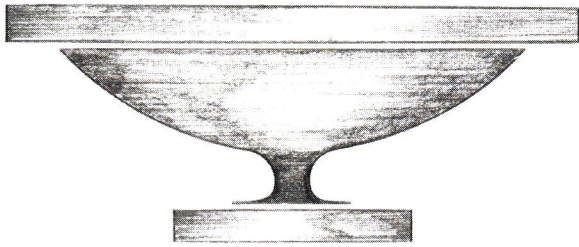




*ABOVE: A detail from the facade of the Krause Music Store. This ornament, executed in terra cotta is typical of the ornament produced by Louis Sullivan in the waning years of his career. Photo by Richard Nickel.*

*COVER: The great terra cotta medallion of the Krause Music Store marks the last executed structure designed by Louis Sullivan. Photo by Richard Nickel.*

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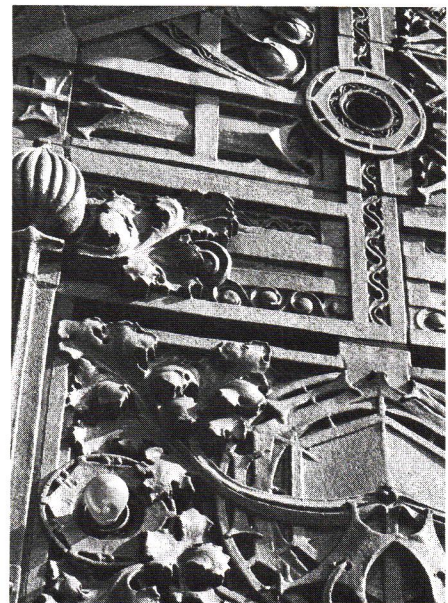
# *The* PRAIRIE SCHOOL *Review*

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## *From the EDITORS*

*Over the years we have written several times of our concern with the implementation of Chicago's Landmarks Law. That law is about to be tested. As we go to press the Chicago Landmarks Commission has proposed that Adler & Sullivan's Stock Exchange Building, erected in 1894, be declared a landmark building. That it deserves such status has been more than adequately testified to by several witnesses with impeccable credentials. However, the most interesting result of the proposal was a suggested plan presented by the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects which promises economic viability to the preservation of not only the Stock Exchange Building but for other such structures located on underdeveloped, expensive inner city real estate.*

*The AIA says it is not interested in stringing together a lot of museums, but that there are a number of important older structures worth conserving as part of Chicago's heritage and tradition.*

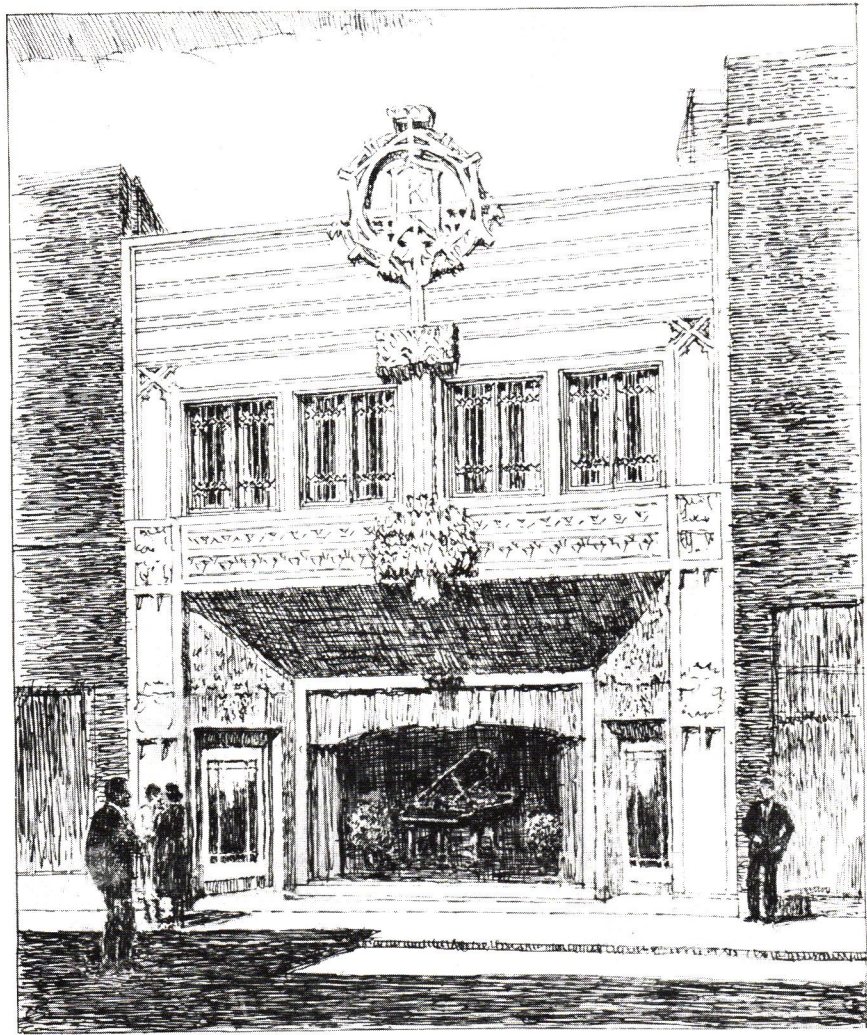
*The architects suggest that their idea might save the 13 story Stock Exchange Building and might serve as a pattern for saving the few other downtown buildings that the Commission hopes to preserve. The plan is to save landmarks by making it economically advantageous for owners to do so.*

*The AIA plan as an alternate or, perhaps, supplement to acquisition by public condemnation, tax abatement, or long-term lease — solutions already proposed and for the most part, rejected, — would make it possible for the owner of a landmark building to transfer the zoning volume or development potential permitted on the landmark site to another adjacent or nearby site, while at the same time retaining the landmark building as a taxable, income producing property.*

*In effect, the architects' suggestion would permit the owner to realize the potential value of a larger building on his site by selling or transferring the development rights to another nearby location. Zoning for the landmark site would be reduced to zero and since no other building could ever be built, it would be in the economic interest of the owner to maintain it well.*

*The plan is designed to preserve Loop landmarks without removing them from the tax rolls or causing loss to its owners. We believe the idea has great merit and urge the City of Chicago to make every effort to adopt this creative suggestion.*





by B. C. Greengard

## *Sullivan/Presto/The Krause Music Store*

By Bernard C. Greengard

*Bernhard C. Greengard, now retired, studied architecture at the Art Institute of Chicago then affiliated with Armour Institute of Technology, the predecessor of the Illinois Institute of Technology. After graduation he was employed in the office of Schmidt, Garden & Martin and later did renderings for that office as well as working for various other Chicago firms.*

On Lincoln Avenue in a shopping area on Chicago's north side a small building arrests attention with its ornate exterior of light green terra cotta. It is known to architectural historians as the Krause Music Store. Its facade was designed by Louis Sullivan. Constructed in 1922, two years before his death, it represents Sullivan's last executed work.

Hugh Morrison, in his now standard work on Louis Sullivan,<sup>1</sup> devotes only a paragraph to a

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Morrison, *Louis Sullivan, Prophet of Modern Architecture*, The Museum of Modern Art and W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1935.

description of the little building. He felt that the Krause Music Store was not one of Sullivan's best efforts, but he wrote:

. . . we have only to compare it with the conventional facades of the adjacent stores which have since been built up around it, to realize as forcefully as ever that even in his least significant works Sullivan was still a master.<sup>2</sup>

The circumstances surrounding his connection with this little building represent a little known chapter in the last years of Sullivan's life.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.



In the year of 1919 Louis Sullivan had desk space in the office of a colleague, George C. Nimmons.<sup>3</sup> The great commissions of former years had ceased to materialize and he had been forced to give up his spacious offices in the Auditorium tower. For a number of years he had been partly occupied with a series of small bank buildings located in rural communities. He was working on the sketches of the seventh and last of this series, the Merchants and Farmers Union Bank at Columbus, Wisconsin.<sup>4</sup> Ready for working drawings, he required the temporary services of a draftsman, and he asked George Nimmons to loan him one of his men.

Recently discharged from military service, William C. Presto,<sup>5</sup> one of Nimmons' former draftsmen, appeared at the office in search of a job. He was recommended to Sullivan by Nimmons and was so engaged. Together they went to an office he had rented in a converted residence on Prairie Avenue just south of H. H. Richardson's famed Glessner House, and within walking distance of the old Warner Hotel where Sullivan lived.

During his earlier years, at the height of his success, Sullivan was a hard task-master, arrogant and not inclined to fraternize with draftsmen. Years of adversity must have mellowed him. A frustrated and lonely man, it is understandable that he welcomed the company of the young and lighthearted Presto. They lunched together at a cafeteria around the corner on 18th Street. Occasionally they dined at the Cliff Dwellers Club atop Orchestra Hall Building, a club which included in its membership many men prominent in Chicago's cultural life. From time to time Sullivan was a dinner guest at Presto's home, where Mrs. Presto, as hostess, regaled him with his favorite dish, chicken fricassee. After dinner, a lover of music, he listened to recordings of operatic airs, made by stars of the Metropolitan's "Golden Age", many of whom had appeared at the Auditorium in the great theater he and Dankmar Adler had created. Thus were

prompted the memorable conversations still vivid in the mind of William Presto.

When work on the Wisconsin bank building was completed, Sullivan sought other commissions without success,<sup>6</sup> and he was forced to ask Presto to find other employment. Sullivan then turned to work on his book, *The Autobiography of An Idea* and on a series of drawings which would illustrate *A System of Architectural Ornament According with a Philosophy of Man's Powers*.<sup>7</sup> He enjoyed doing his writing at the Cliff Dwellers Club.<sup>8</sup> He worked on his drawings in a room at the offices of the American Terra Cotta Company on Prairie Avenue, made available to him by C. D. Gates, then president of the company.

Meanwhile, William Presto, having become a licensed architect, opened his own office where he was kept busy designing low-rise flat buildings, much in demand after World War I. One of his clients was William Krause who owned a small lot on Chicago's Lincoln Avenue where he planned to build a store with living quarters above.

William P. Krause had been an employee of the Peoples Gas Company, and for a period of years had added to his income by "moonlighting". At first he had sold sewing machines after office hours, but when some of his customers inquired about phonographs he decided to expand. He visited the nearby offices of the Acelian Company on Michigan Avenue, manufacturers of musical instruments, including phonographs. There he became acquainted with Ray M. York,<sup>9</sup> a salesman, in charge of the phonograph and records department in a downtown department store. With the help of this gentleman Krause was authorized to offer Acelian phonographs for sale. Later he added pianos to his line and thus he came into the music business. He was thrifty and in 1922 was ready to establish himself in a building of his own. Krause planned to combine his place of business and his residence.

The exterior of this building was not to be like that of the "run-of-the-mill" store and flat. Presto decided to do something better, and he recalled

3 Ed. Note: George C. Nimmons (1865-1947) was trained in the office of Daniel Burnham. He began private practice in 1894. Later he was joined by a partner, William K. Fellows. Together they designed one of the few Chicago commercial buildings in the "Prairie" style. It was the Reid, Murdock & Company building located on the north side of the Chicago River at Clark Street. Today it is owned by the City of Chicago and its tower houses the offices of the Chicago Commission on Architectural and Historical Landmarks.

4 Ed. Note: The design sketches for the Merchants and Farmers Union Bank have been published in the small format edition of *A System of Architectural Ornament* edited by Ada Louise Huxtable and issued by Eakins Press in 1967.

5 William C. Presto is now retired and is living in Florida. He was most helpful to the author and to the editors of *The Prairie School Review* in preparing this article.

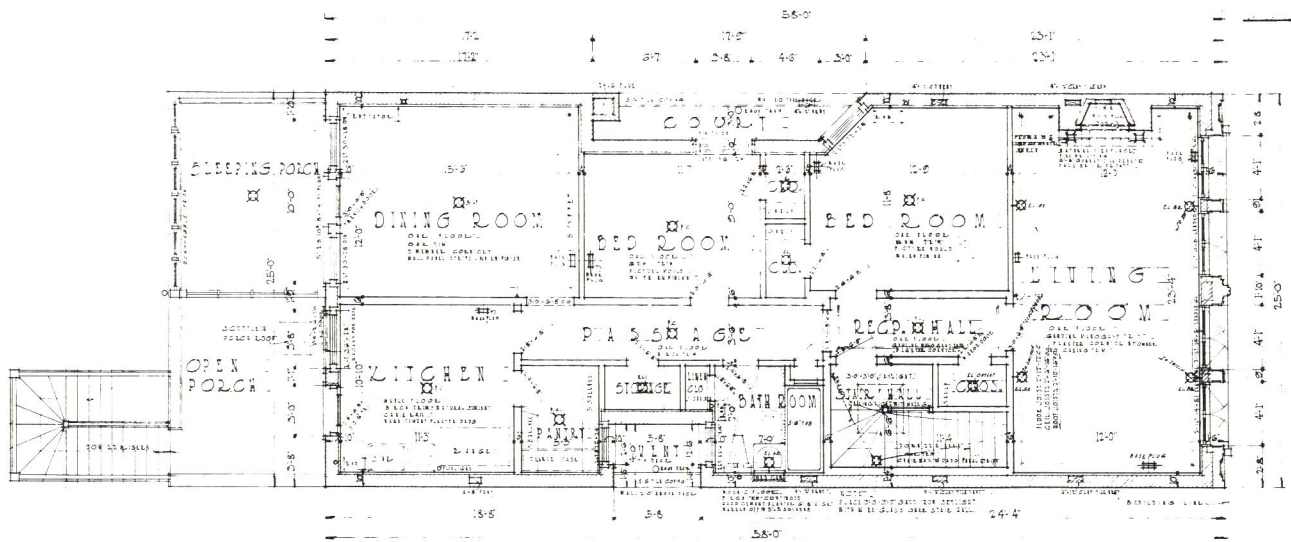
6 According to Presto, in a letter to the author, Sullivan was also working at that time on another project, a bank at Manistique, Michigan, which was never built.

7 Ed. Note: These drawings can now be seen in the Burnham Gallery of the Art Institute of Chicago.

8 Ed. Note: The desk used by Sullivan is now carefully preserved in the "Louis Sullivan" room of The Cliff Dwellers Club. This small room serves as the Club library and includes numerous memorabilia of Sullivan.

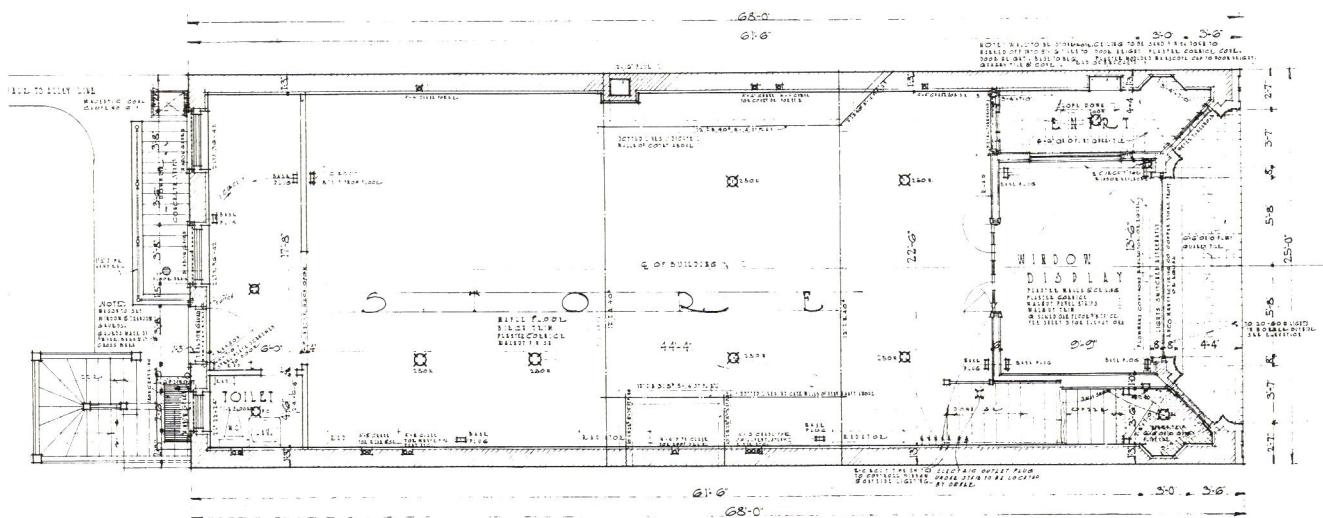
9 Mr. York contacted the author following the appearance of the author's illustrated letter to the editor of *The Chicago Tribune* on May 11, 1969. His comments were most helpful in the preparation of this article.





## SECOND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



## PLAN OF STORE

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

On this page we have reproduced some of the working drawings prepared in William C. Presto's office for the Krause Music Store. Drawing Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.





*The Krause Music Store still stands with its contemporaries at 4611 N. Lincoln Avenue. It has been changed only slightly. Its neighbors also are still in nearly original condition. Photo by Richard Nickel.*

with pleasure the bank building he had worked on with Sullivan. Perhaps, he thought, his old employer would be willing to associate with him. Presto submitted the simple floor plans to Sullivan, who obligingly sketched an idea for the elevation. He took the little job seriously, studied the design in detail, developing it in his own hand into a working drawing at a scale of one half inch to the foot. He did not do this work at Presto's office. As mentioned before, he had the use of a room at the offices of the American Terra Cotta Company, where he was still at work on the drawings for *A System of Architectural Ornament According With a Philosophy of Man's Powers*. It is not surprising that he chose terra cotta for the material of the facade, exploiting its adaptability for the modeling of ornament. He came to Presto's office nearly every day to consult with

Clarence Oak who was the draftsman<sup>10</sup> who prepared the working drawings of the floor plans and sections.

Sullivan, then in his sixty-sixth year, had long since shaved off the well trimmed beard and mustache he sported during his heyday before the turn of the century. His features now looked thin and sallow, but he still had the desire, as in the years of his *Kindergarten Chats*, to instruct younger men of the profession on his theories of design, and he did so for the benefit of young Oak, illustrating his discussions with sketches.

Hopelessly insolvent, Sullivan made no secret of it, and was not above asking for a modest fifty cents, perhaps for carfare, perhaps for a bit of lunch. Like many another visionary, ahead of his time, financial rewards did not come to him. Justly he had been called the prophet of modern architecture, but recognition came too late to have brought him anything more tangible than the admiration of his fellow professionals and, much later, the posthumous award of the Gold Medal of The American Institute of Architects.<sup>11</sup>

The material for the facade of the Krause building, furnished by the American Terra Cotta Company, was contracted for \$3,770.00. Sullivan together with Presto, made several trips to the plant located at Crystal Lake, about 50 miles from Chicago, to supervise the modeling of the ornamental features of the facade. The company had on its staff Kristian Schneider, a modeler of great skill. He had often collaborated with Sullivan, and better than anyone else in his field he understood and interpreted the architect's intentions. During these visits the company's president, C. D. Gates, Sullivan's fellow member of the Cliff Dwellers Club and a friend and admirer, made it a point to be present and to entertain his visitors.

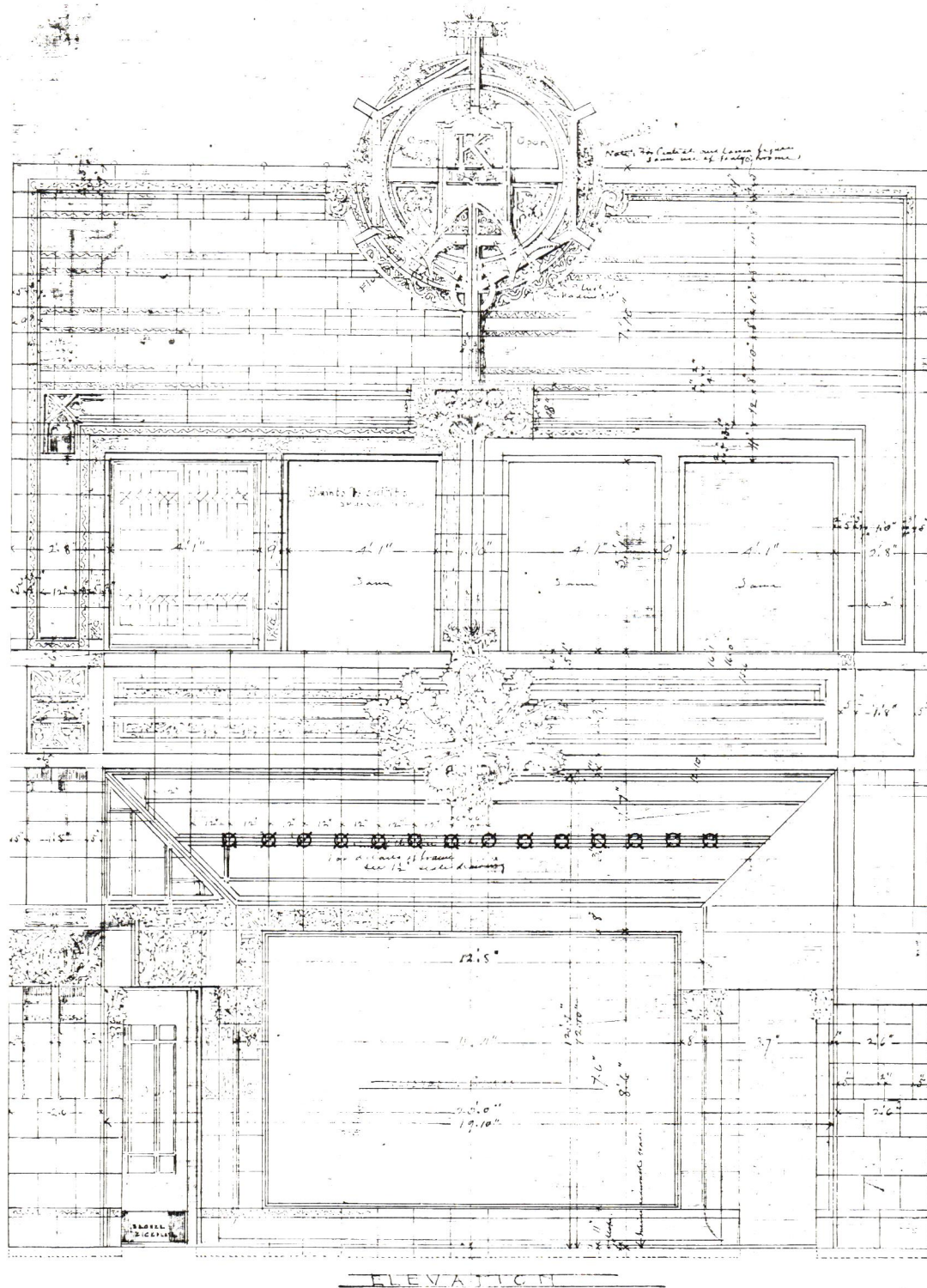
William Krause was pleased and happy with the plans for his building, and he proudly displayed blue prints to his friends. The building completed,

10 Mr. Oak was also in touch with the author after seeing *The Chicago Tribune* letter noted above. At the time this article was in preparation he was still employed as an architectural draftsman in the office of Alfred Shaw and Associates. Regrettably, he passed away suddenly in the fall of 1969.

11 Louis H. Sullivan was awarded the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects in 1944.

*At right is the drawing Louis Sullivan prepared for the facade of the Krause Music Store. The original was done in india ink on linen and was initialed by Sullivan on 1/25/21. The date in the title block however was February 27, 1921. Drawing Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.*









he took possession stocking the shop with pianos, phonographs and records, and yes, sewing machines. The shop became known as the Krause Music Store and prospered.

It was the year of 1922, the beginning of a period of great business activity and speculation. Calvin Coolidge, followed by Herbert Hoover, was in the White House, a period some enthusiasts liked to call "the new era". It was the well known "boom and bust" sequence which brought ruin and tragedy to many. William Krause may have suffered financial reverses but for whatever the reason, scarcely ten years after he moved into his new building, he was found dead in his flat above the store, a suicide.

The widow disposed of the property and under new ownership the shop ceased to be a music store. Louis Sullivan's design of the facade, in the course of time was subjected to various alterations. An incongruous projecting sign has been installed and the display window has been cut down to a small

*Above is a photograph of the Krause Music Store as it appears today. It has been reasonably well maintained although the leaded glass windows on the second floor have been changed and the display window remodeled. It was designated a Chicago Landmark Building in 1961. Photo by Richard Nickel.*

mullioned window. The flanking entrance doors have been altered and the second floor leaded casements were replaced many years ago by sliding sash. Emblazoned in a shield in an ornament at the top, still remaining to recall the original owner, is the initial "K".

In recent years the little building has been designated by The Chicago Commission on Architectural Landmarks, appointed by the mayor, as an official Chicago architectural landmark. Today it is used as an undertaking establishment and is reasonably well maintained, but in any list of cherished buildings it continues to be known as "The Krause Music Store".



# *The Chicago School and the Tyranny of Usage*

by Titus M. Karlowicz

*The author is now located in Macomb, Illinois where he teaches art history at Western Illinois University. Professor Karlowicz did his doctoral dissertation on "The Architecture of the World's Columbian Exposition" at Northwestern University. Recently, he completed an article on the role of D. H. Burnham in the selection of architects for the World's Columbian Exposition which will be published in 1970.*

What follows is an essay based on some reactions to an event which took place at Northwestern University last April through the initiative and under the direction of Art Department Chairman, James Breckenridge. The event was a symposium entitled "The Chicago School of Architecture", and was occasioned by the presence on campus of Professor Winston Weisman who was completing a stay at Northwestern as Concora Visiting Lecturer. Professor Weisman, one of the leaders in a debate over the origins of the skyscraper in Chicago, made a presentation to which Professor Carl Condit responded with his opposing view. Moderator for the day's activities was Sir John Summerson, who was also visiting Northwestern from his post at the Soane Museum in London. The encounter between Professors Weisman and Condit was augmented by a session in which the principle speakers were joined by Professors Henry-Russell Hitchcock, H. Allen Brooks, and commentators from the floor.

This essay is not a review or a critique of the symposium. Hopefully, its proceedings will be published. What follows is surely a mere particle of the thought which must have been generated on the matter of the Chicago School. Thanks for the stimulus of my remarks here is due to the principle participants and the commentators in the audience. To Sir John Summerson goes a special note of thanks for insights which grew from his closing remarks: these turned on what he called "the tyranny of usage". As an aftermath of the symposium, there is no indication that the tyranny might soon falter. In the echo of that day's words, for that matter, there seemed to be heard sounds bearing strange but not entirely unfamiliar notes peculiar to another tyranny. What follows might be instrumental in undermining the tyrannies in order that future symposia might be their undoing.

Sir John's utterance made reference to the term Chicago School and the insistence with which usage directs attention to the development of the tall building in Chicago during the last two decades of

the nineteenth century rather than to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and his followers early in the twentieth, the original context of the term. This restatement was fittingly coupled to the notion of a tyranny of usage, and pointed up the semantic basis of the problem. That other tyranny which grew from the echo created by that usage may share in some of the semantic nature, but only so far as problems of semantics relate to the past. The past is the realm of the other tyranny; it is the essence as meaning is the essence of the tyranny of usage. In effect, what both share is the bothersome element of change. While we seem to be able to read the changes which took place in the usage and meaning of the term Chicago School, we do not seem to be able to read the implications of the changes. Similarly, we seem not to be able to take into account the possibility that our reading may be somewhat myopic. Rather than coining a name for that other tyranny, I would prefer to try to see it for what it is. Allowing for a possibility that the historical proximity of the matters pertaining to a Chicago School may be an interfering factor which may cause us to be near-sighted about the problem, I invite the reader's indulgence and ask leave to vary the focus upon events which may bear a relationship to the architectural history which occurred in the Midwest during those decades before and after the turn of the century.

Looking back through the developments of the nineteenth century and into the later decades of the eighteenth, changes were taking place which were to have a decisive effect upon architecture. The key development was that of the use of metal for structural purposes. Despite the widespread acknowledgment of its significance, the entry of metal as a primary structural material does not seem to have made the impact upon much of our thinking it most obviously deserves. Here, we find ourselves confronted with the question. What is the import of all the debate and discussion about the steel skeleton? Furthermore, where does the essence of this



structural form reside: in the steel, or the skeleton? In truth, it is not in just one or the other. The steel skeleton, or its counterpart — if not descendant — the ferro-concrete one, must be considered a compound of factors greater than the simple sum of those brought together by its material and its form. Obvious as that may seem, an equally obvious corollary would follow: that the steel skeleton is the embodiment of structural principles which do not reside in any previous systems of construction. The basic text-books, directly or indirectly, make it overly easy to establish indiscriminate modes of thought. Notions are carried along that on the one hand the steel skeleton is in its structural system but a multiplication of the ancient post and lintel. On the other, the temptation to speak of a skeleton in a gothic cathedral is only rarely accompanied by a corrective reminder that the basis of the skeletal character of the medieval building is the masonry arch. It is too easy to forget that the principles embodied in different systems govern the means and the degree to which forces of thrust are controlled, distributed and absorbed. Moreover, the relationship between the structural principles and the accompanying resultant form which arises from it is neglected.

Similar modes of thought come into play when modern buildings are mistakenly brought together and left to be understood as being an embodiment of the same principles. Most notable is the ease with which the rig providing the framework for the vitreous envelope of the Crystal Palace is brought together with the steel skeleton of a building such as the Reliance. Despite explicit allusions to the inherent differences, it is unfortunate that such relationships are vaguely or superficially established. Similarly unfortunate is the pedestrian enforcement of the work of such people as Badger and Bogardus upon the subject of the steel skeleton when in truth they were little closer to the principles of this modern structural system than was Paxton. At most, the relationship of the work of these men to the steel skeleton remains indirect: going back to them does not take us to its origins. Thus in dealing with the steel skeleton as has been customary, vagueness of understanding shows itself in the results. In the absence of a firm and unmistakable point of origin, recourse is taken to the now time-worn faith in the evolutionary process. Weak threads rather than strong links are tied across a vast abyss, not in terms of principles inherent in the object of study, but in terms of principles residing in the method of study. Seen thus, the guise of that other tyranny begins to emerge into a collective image of ourselves as students and scholars.

For all that the nineteenth century bestowed upon us, the modes of thought we inherited are badly in need of revision. History or knowledge of our background does not stand to be annihilated by such an assertion. The quest for origins need not be entirely abandoned, but it need not be an obstacle to a resolution or understanding of other and perhaps more immediate problems. As our funds of knowledge grow, we cannot allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the misleading devices of elision over facts or indiscriminate confusion of principles which give the facts their inherent character.

These last remarks should not be taken to indicate that history as we have come to know it is of no value. A look into a second point in time beyond the nineteenth century may serve to show the way, as history often does. Allowing for differences in the particular structural systems, types and principles, the history of architecture in ancient Rome has a valuable lesson to offer. It can give direction to our thinking, and what will remain for someone to break is that shackle, that tyranny, which the nineteenth century had bred into our study of the past.

By a peculiar coincidence, Hunt, McKim, Post and Van Brunt sought to find their model for the World's Columbian Exposition in the antiquity of Rome. The result of their search was but a single aspect of what there was to be found. Since they were after something called "style", other factors were set aside. These other factors had values which may or may not have provided insights for the architect late in the nineteenth century. What is important here is their value to the student of late nineteenth century architecture today. To the purpose of this essay, the arch and the Roman house can serve as important counterparts of the dilemma centering on the Chicago School.

As it was developed by the Romans, the arch had its importance for spanning great distances, of course. It was in addition to this practical problem that the kindred vault and the dome became a hallmark of much of Roman architecture structurally, stylistically and symbolically. By virtue of the arch, one of the more notable revolutions in the history of architecture took place. The statics of post and lintel structure gave way to the dynamic distribution of thrusts inherent in the structural principles of the arch. The achievements associated with the arch are clearly and consistently identified as Roman, though its origins are not. By some remarkable turn of fate, once it became apparent that the Romans were not the originators of the arch, archeologists and historians were able to appreciate that origin was quite



separate in its significance from achievement and development. The arch is no less Roman today than when it was thought to have had its origins with the Romans.

This lesson can be applied to the similar matter of the origin and development of the steel skeleton. If, on the one hand, its origins are not completely accounted for, the search could continue. In the course of the search, let us remember that in the contributions of antiquity, there would be no confusion between an arch using corbels and one using voussoirs. If, on the other hand, it was once claimed erroneously that the steel skeleton originated in Chicago, any proof to the contrary should not make it any less Chicagoan with regard to initial development, notable achievement, or genuine architectural expression. The adoption of the arch in antiquity, or the steel skeleton in the nineteenth century, cannot be taken as anything more than the availability of a given system of construction to a set of economic and cultural circumstances as well as technological ones. In the case of Chicago, we know that the money and the minds were not native any more than the principle of the steel skeleton. These did converge upon Chicago, however, in the heat of need. In view of the foregoing remarks, it is not the tyranny of usage which comes into play where the association of the steel skeleton with Chicago is concerned.

When we turn to the matter of a Chicago School, however, the tyranny of usage becomes a much more strongly governing factor. Let us depart from the steel skeleton for the time being with the reminder that the term was originally used with reference to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and his followers after 1900. Because the term Chicago School later became identified with the tall building of the 1880's and 1890's, there has arisen a desire to separate the two. Consequently, the question arises, are they separable? And if so, to what degree? An example found in ancient Rome may provide some tentative insights: this time with attention given to the Roman house. Clearly, the arch did not dramatically effect the character of the Roman residential structural type called the *domus*. It is one of the several distinct Roman structural types. Like the arch it arose in response to a given set of demands and circumstances particular to the culture of the Romans. The problems of use, setting, environment, etc., were different from those of public monumental buildings. The plan did not embody the form which would necessarily have called for the structural principle of the arch. Though the Roman *domus* and the Roman bath differ considerably as structural types, they nonetheless shared the dy-

namic cultural milieu which arose among the Romans.

The dynamic milieu which grew in the Midwest gave rise to a similar pair of new structural types, but this insight can serve only as an introduction to other considerations. As an introduction, however, it can serve to establish a tendency to think in terms of relationship of one to another. It offers a possibility that the leap from a building like the Reliance — or preferably the Tacoma — to one like Wright's Willits or Robie house is not as great as it may at first seem. Among the tall office buildings, the Tacoma struck a new note for architecture by virtue of more than the metal skeleton alone. New structural principles, as applied to the Tacoma, gave rise to a new concept of architecture. In the design of this building, great masses suggesting structural units, as in the Auditorium or the Rookery, became non-existent. Holabird and Roche might have done as Mies van der Rohe was to do later in giving expression to the same structural principle in the tall building and the low and residential building so that the concept of architecture arose synonymous to the structural principle. That they did not take the Miesian path is more than passingly curious. Part of the answer to that lies in the insistent distinctness with which the new commercial architecture was attributed: apart from the entire realm of architecture. In addition to that, residential architecture in the Midwest was undergoing a development of its own during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Added to this was the bequest of Richardson which came from his residential work, but which his successors in the Midwest incorporated into a new concept of architecture.

Richardson's work in Chicago, as seen in the Marshall Field Wholesale Store and the Glessner house, would have placed a limitation on the extent of importance his contribution made to the development of the new concept of architecture. Knowledge of his Stoughton and Watts Sherman houses added the necessary complement. The bold, massive and basically geometric quality of style in his rough-faced stone buildings in Chicago provided only a partial suggestion of the remarkable force of beauty which the inherent properties of materials might generate. Followers such as Beman or Cobb, however elegant their Richardsonian work, seized upon that partial communication of the essence of Richardson's endowment. Had Root gone the way of Cobb, the unqualified success of the Monadnock would have been impossible. Root was more fully informed of the message of Richardson's work. Sullivan, after the Auditorium, found the way to the Wainwright Building by a similar extension of what



## TACOMA BUILDING

Martin Roche.  
Edward A. Runkel



*In the Tacoma Building great masses suggesting structural units, as in the Wainwright, were absent. The design allowed an expression of new structural principles consonant with the new materials: an embodiment of a new concept of architecture.*

Richardson had to offer as far as the meaningful part materials play in the new concept of architecture is concerned.

That same importance of materials was somewhat later in coming to its new and full expression in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. The new concept and its chief exponent are inseparable, but where is the germ which gave the essence of form to Wright's

work? The story of materials as derived from Richardson provides only another partial insight, for Richardson's break with the architecture of the past was more suggestive than actual. Root and Sullivan, in the examples of the Monadnock and the Wainwright, made something of a break with the past, but at the same time found themselves depending upon it. They could not relinquish weighty appearing masses suggesting structural solidity and integrity: Root by virtue of the materials and Sullivan by virtue of his bondage to traditions he would have denied. Seen in the light of these observations, the architects of the Tacoma building broke with the past, and we must dare credit them with pointing to



the future significantly more than we have. It was in that building that the expression of the new structural principles embodied in the metal skeleton coincided unmistakably with the new concept of architecture.

Dare we attempt to break the imperious hold the past exerts upon us without destroying the valuable work done to stimulate our minds and enlarge our knowledge? We can try, and by doing so the tyranny of usage associated with the term Chicago School is sure to become but a former stumbling block of no present consequence. Terms embodying the significance of a movement or period in history are notoriously imprecise, and extended attempts to correct that shortcoming hold little promise of becoming more than scholarly quibbles. We are obligated to convey to the future that which will be instrumental to a more complete understanding of the past. A detailed definition for a term such as Chicago School — or Prairie School — will inevitably and ironically remain cursory. Agreed upon at an assembly of scholars, it will, at its best, survive as an awkward contrivance, for such a term can be no more than a working tool. Its impreciseness offers a flexibility and an adaptability in accord with the workings of semantical change. Simple arithmetical relationships, in complex situations have long since been supplanted by multi-dimensional ones. This should be the case with the study of modern architecture. Those significant architects working in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the early ones of the twentieth, whether they knew it or not, were on the brink of a new era. Newtonian physics was about to yield to that of Einstein, and the science of psychology was beginning to come of age. As one frontier was closed, others were about to open. And what appeared previously to be resolvable through simple relationships proved itself a mirage; the mystery of life, experience and knowledge had reawakened men to a new awareness. The men we would call great must have had some realization of these things which have become a certainty for us, and we cannot allow ourselves to think and interpret in terms not corresponding with the implications of this new era. Like Root and Sullivan, we depend on the past, but too many of us cannot make the break they did; we seem to be unwilling to risk adventure for fear of offending ritualistic rules of thought.

Much of the valuable work which makes a substantial body of knowledge about the buildings and the work of the men who gave them substance is in danger of being relegated to the class of scholarly quibble. This is particularly true of the extensive studies of the personalities' contributions, and to a

certain extent of the recapitulations of technological developments. The individual personalities can certainly be championed, or perhaps impugned, but without forgetting that they were a part, however great, of given important moments which absorbed them. Technological innovations, though attributable to individuals, are different from their greater inherent principles to which no individual has an exclusive right. The manifestation of principles may occur abroad or in the immediate environment, but the occurrence is untrammelled by the demands of accessory vocabularies of modes of historical thinking which give expression to the principles. To preserve the value of what has been done in the study of the men and the buildings, modes of thought need to be modernized to bring together into a current relationship the method of study with its subject.

Bearing in mind that which has been done, it remains possible, without impugning the claims of greatness for each, to bring together three buildings: the Monadnock, the Wainwright and the Tacoma. Lacking the exhaustive accounts of the latter, some advantage may be gained. Matters of precedence can continue to be important, but not here. The stage in the development of the tall building each occupies can also continue to be important, but not here. The search for the prototype of the Tacoma — the direct one — remains an important occupation, but here it is minor. So too, for present purposes, the importance of the fact that all three were not existing neighbors within walking distance of one another could be subordinated. The sacrifices would be temporary, and made in the interest of bringing the three together to establish a new kind of relationship among the three, and perhaps a new or added importance for each in the historical context.

The Monadnock, taken first for its primordial qualities of boldness and candor, must in some respects be considered atypical of Root, yet remarkably akin to Richardson. The physical qualities of the stone along with its inherent aesthetic qualities arise in a form which is endowed with the same power found in the Marshall Field Wholesale Store. The load-bearing wall is given its dramatic emphasis by the deep reveals of the fenestration in the corner bays and between the projected ones as finely as in any work by Richardson. Enhanced by these details, the overall tapering form of the building becomes more than a simple reflection of the walls' varied thickness. Essentially the vocabulary is that of masonry, but within the limits of the new concept of architecture. Here is but one aspect of the break



with past, and though an incomplete one, the building seems to be dedicated to it.

Despite the claims made for the Wainwright building, the old and the new are mingled. The rich combination of the terra cotta panels and brick incorporated into the design is a further remove from Richardson, so that no obvious traces of the older master's influence are apparent. The design is, as the claims for it contend, adapted to the steel skeleton, but the break with the past is hesitatingly expressed. At the corners, the treatment suggests massive piers. The first two stories, their accessibility to the street notwithstanding, allude to the heavy base of an older architecture not conversant with the principles of the steel skeleton. Meanwhile, the cornice reinforces the compositional integration of the parts into a single massive unit. A break has been made with the past, and to be sure, with more emphatic clarity than in the Monadnock; it is nonetheless hesitant.

The above observations can justifiably be made in view of the advanced exterior characteristics of the Tacoma building. The break there appeared to have been more complete, although internally the presence of transverse masonry walls provided a lingering link to the past. The expression of this link to the past was denied on the exterior, and the design dedicated itself to the metal structure which supported it. Here, the new concept of architecture came into play, but unmistakably affected by the new structural principles inherent in the structural materials. Any semblance of weighty structural masses alluding to an older architecture was absent from the exterior design. Throughout the height of the building vertical structural members were undifferentiated, except at the street level and the topmost story. At the street level, they were most daringly denied in the bays nearest the corner to allow for the consecutive extension of the expansive plates of glass around either side of the corner entrance to the store. At the top, as at the bottom, the closure of the design by weighty mass-like forms was absent, and made to appear lighter rather than heavier to proclaim the adventuresome concept of architecture which was undertaken in its structure and design. Perhaps this was too daring, or in need of aesthetic refinement, but the boldness and candor of the masonry Monadnock had found a new mode of expression consistent with the materials of glass and metal.

There is no need to carry on with a eulogy to the Tacoma, but the need to acknowledge its critical importance does exist. There is an unmistakable and direct relationship between the Tacoma and the Reliance building. There is also no need to try to

project the importance of the Tacoma to a degree beyond that of the Reliance, Monadnock or Wainwright as an important monument of a transition into a new concept of architecture. Somewhat like the Monadnock, the Tacoma was an atypical product of its architects. But those forces which generated the impetus to its creation were not unlike those at work in the design of the Monadnock. The combination of economic and cultural factors working together in the environment of Chicago's architectural boom determined the combined practical and aesthetic characteristics of each as much as did the materials and structural systems. The date of its commission in 1886 corresponds to the formative period of the Monadnock: this fact magnifies its importance especially in its correspondence to the completion of the Marshall Field Wholesale Store and the commission of the Auditorium. The Tacoma and Monadnock, together with the Wainwright, if it may serve here as the maturation of Sullivan in commercial architecture, magnifies the unlikeliness of the architects as bedfellows. The architectural boom, not only accompanied, but perhaps generated a creative boom of which these buildings as a trilogy are exemplary.

That trilogy of works can serve as a meaningful corrective to the myopic translation by which the triumvirate of greatness in Richardson, Sullivan and Wright becomes an exclusive lineage. In that time after 1886, when Frank Lloyd Wright entered into the midst of the creative boom in Chicago, the Monadnock and Tacoma, along with the Auditorium were under way, and the Wainwright was probably formulated soon after. In consideration of a lineage between Richardson and Wright, the formative and parental role of Sullivan must be shared with others. Holabird, Roche and Root, without forgetting the still enigmatic Silsbee, must loom larger in the genesis of Frank Lloyd Wright as an architect. Before sitting at the master's knee, he had witnessed the emergence of a new concept of architecture.

To arrive at the practical and aesthetic solutions which appeared in his work after 1900, Wright needed to make a break: a break which we must dare admit eluded Sullivan. The compact mass of the block which expresses itself in the design of the Wainwright building persists in the banks of Owatonna, Grinnell, Sidney and Columbus. Taking into account the importance of *Froebel's Gifts* and the Japanese Ho-o-den at the World's Columbian Exposition as keys to the break Wright made, he must have needed a manifest example of a complete, executed, native building in which the break with the past was complete and unrestrained. His per-



sonality, strongly influenced by a disdain of eclecticism, would have caused him to see the Tacoma's contribution to the Reliance building. The obverse of that personality would have provided him with resourcefulness and accessibility to such insights as may have occurred to him regarding the significance of the break made in the Tacoma and reasserted in the Reliance.

Wright's personality, coupled to his gravitation to residential architecture, found the integrity of the discipline he acquired after arriving in Chicago being put to a severe test. Ordinary logic would suggest that if it was the Tacoma which provided the necessary ingredient for making the break, some visual physical attribute of the Tacoma would have carried over into the work of Wright. The distinct status of the tall commercial building as an architecture apart, however, would have asserted for Wright the distinct differences in the requirements of a residential structure. The break he had to make had to be determined in terms of the residence, as the one made downtown was determined in terms of the tall commercial office building.

For Wright, the challenge was found not so much in the occasional importation of someone like Hunt as in the neighbors of the Glessner house: the Prairie Avenue palaces of the Chicago tycoons. Coupled to this was the added challenge of making the break with Sullivan: not the contractual one, but the ideational one. In view of a certain temporary dependence upon Sullivan, the personality dictated that the break had to be one also that Sullivan was unable to make. Considering that a break had been made in Sullivan's area of commercial architecture, that discipline Wright acquired in the execution of exercises in compact masses such as the Charnley, Winslow, and Heller houses, would have made him alert to the significance of the bold departure which was made in the design of the Tacoma building. Another aspect of his discipline included the awareness for a new concept of architecture, and would have provided the insight which led to the realization of the need to break with the concept of the closed formal mass which he later called "the box". The break appeared in the Hickox house and the "House in a Prairie Town" presented in the *Ladies Home Journal*, but with the Willits house it was certain, confident and continuing toward the Robie house. The integrated and integrating multiplicity of roof lines which accentuate the asymmetrical extensions of the spaces they cover proclaims the break, while the spaces, disengaged from the confines of the rectangle without loss of unity, accomplish it. Together these became the expression of the new concept of architecture manifest in the

Tacoma. To gain the freedom for the new concept he had to free himself of the confines of restrictive rectangular city lots as well as the restrictive ties to the rectangular plan. Though the departure from the rectangle was not in itself a singular achievement, the disciplined orderliness and integrated arrangement of all the parts was significant, unique and promising. In the Tacoma, similarly, there was little that was singularly its own, but the mere denial that the design must conform to concepts of a former architecture constituted the germinal ingredient for the new architecture of which the House in a Prairie Town itself was a part.

Perhaps the importance of the Tacoma, as it is presented here, should be denied for lack of a testimonial in the documentary evidence. Where architecture is concerned, and especially in the study of its history, the building is necessarily the primary source of fact and insight which informs the intellect. With regard to the Tacoma, a case is presented here in behalf of its important contribution to a new concept of architecture not completely awakened in its own time. We must dare to risk the chance of becoming heretical, and allow the Tacoma to join with the Monadnock as being among the monumentally significant contributions to the awakening of the new concept. Whatever heresy there may be in elevating them to an importance of modestly greater significance than the Wainwright vanishes upon the assertion that this is in no way slighting Sullivan's importance or that of his building. Wright's work on the Wainwright, and his association with Sullivan, becomes remarkably more significant. The younger architect was born not to emulate the master; moreover, he would not deny him. Wright did leave Sullivan, as he made the break the master could not, but he did carry on the spirit of an architecture preached, if not practiced by the master. The key to the new concept was to be found elsewhere in another monument, but the stimulus to seek it was in the spirit. Both led the way to a realization of the concept of "organic architecture".

The succinct interpretation of the term "organic architecture" was offered by Wright in the Preface to *Genius and the Mobocracy*.

When I speak of architecture as organic I mean the great art of structure coming back to its early integrity . . .

Organic building is natural building: construction proceeding harmoniously from the nature of a planned or organized inside outward to a consistent outside. The space to be lived in is now the human reality of any building and in terms of spaces we will find the new forms we



seek. Or lose them. The old order called "classic" is therefore reversed and where so many of our basic building materials are wholly new, we must search again for the natural way to build buildings appropriate to the unprecedented life now to be lived in them. Our modern advantages should no longer be disadvantageous, as they are.

As part of an introduction to a panegyric, by Wright's own admission laced with bias, it comes from mid-twentieth century elation of triumph. But it echoes the earlier essays *On Architecture*, and the Wasmuth monograph where, in particular, he said, ". . . the nature of materials, the nature of the tools and process at command, and the nature of the thing they are called upon to do" to urge what he thought was fundamental to an architecture so interpreted. In an earlier commentary (*On Architecture I*), he had said,

In the hope that some day America may live her own life in her own buildings in her own way, that is, that we may make the best of what we have for what it honestly is or may become, I have endeavored in this work to establish a harmonious relationship between ground plan and elevation of these buildings, considering one as a solution and the other an expression of the conditions of a problem of which the whole is a project. I have tried to establish an organic integrity to begin with, forming the basis for the subsequent working out of a significant grammatical expression and making the whole, as nearly as I could consistent.

Without oversimplifying these few quotes into the synthesis of a credo, the essentials of the new concept can be brought together. They are integral to the Tacoma and the Monadnock, not the Wainwright. The Monadnock is of an older structure, closed in form, but organically conceived. The Tacoma is of a new structure, open in its form, and organically conceived. The Wainwright is hesitant. It is of a new structure, but its form relates to the old; it is inconsistent. It is of the nineteenth century and tied to the past.

18

The leap from Chicago's commercial architecture of the mid-eighties into the twentieth century on to the "international style" need not be made here. By whatever gift of intuition or stretch of the imagination, the two have been made one. However that may be, the Tacoma deserves its greater share of attention in that regard. But the task here is to make credible that stretch of the imagination which would make the residential work of Frank Lloyd Wright after 1900 consonant with a conception operative in the outstanding example of Chicago's pioneering

tall buildings. Those presented here are outstanding to the purpose of this essay. The Home Insurance building, the Fair, the Second Leiter, the Rookery, the Schlesinger-Mayer, and others do not diminish in importance to another context. In this one, they share with the Wainwright as important foundations for the bridge to the past with their inconsistency as a common denominator. The consonance between the Tacoma and the Willits house thus becomes more remarkable, though it is not dramatized by comparison of plan, or some motif arising from the elevation in its entirety or in some detail. Both buildings make the break with the past by exhibiting in its completeness a new form based on a new concept which relates itself to the materials and the job they are to do structurally, and — consistent with that consideration — aesthetically.

With all the debate over the Chicago School, too little attention is given to the fundamental aspects of the new concept of architecture which arose in Chicago materially. The origins of the tall building supported by a structural frame of metal might be found at large. Technological development and refinement is of equally debatable importance. In any case, it will confine itself to the tall commercial building. The association of a new architecture with the skyscraper is considerably significant, however, because it was there that a new structural type was given expression in terms of a concept which governed a relationship of *interior to exterior in every way*. The result was a new form at variance with those of the past. Rather than relying on the discovery of some graphic motif found in a plan or elevation, we should seek beyond into the principles and concepts. The work of Frank Lloyd Wright in the decade after 1900, by his own admission, was a conservative beginning. New concepts were at work, despite the absence of new structural materials, and new forms were in the making. To think or believe in other ways which would isolate that work from the work of Wright's seniors in downtown Chicago such as Holabird, Roche, Root and others than Sullivan is to yield to that other tyranny. The mode of thought in such a case is inconsistent with the one which prevailed in the making of a new architecture. The mode of thought is eclectic, while that of the key figures, namely Richardson, Root, Sullivan, Wright, and including Holabird and Roche among others, was not, though at times their work may have appeared otherwise. The eclectic mode of thought was the tyranny they sought to escape. An obligation rests with us to do the same without poetic flights of fancy, but also without retreat from the awareness of the new world which in their time was complicated by a revised notion of time-space relationships.





*The break with the concept of the closed formal mass of "the box" was expressed with unmistakable confidence in the Willits house, shown here. The Hickox house and the "House in a Prairie Town" anticipated this expression which later showed itself in the mature form of the Robie House.*

Despite the difficulties which usage puts upon us, the contributions of Chicago's tall commercial buildings are not separable from those of Wright's "Prairie Houses". The differences between the classes of works is no greater than the differences which exist among the developing skyscrapers. To separate one from the other can yield up a fictitious and eclectic version of history to the lasting benefit of no one. The fictitiousness can make the assumption that it is all a part of the historical by-gones, apart from the present or the future, seem valid. The eclectic version of the past can aid and abet the notion that the phenomenon indicated by the term Chicago School — or Prairie School — is dead and gone. Toward the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Wright said, in *In the Cause of Architecture I*, "... the new school of the Middle West is beginning to be talked about and perhaps some day it is to be". His faith in the study of nature suggests the interminable but changing process, and would cause us to doubt that the whole thing would have the mortality of a group of men instrumental in bringing it to notice. We cannot assume that the *new school of the Middle West* has been and is gone, no more than we can ascertain a "school" to have ascended and declined within a single generation. We are not dealing with the remote past of antiquity. The historical proximity requires a tolerance for effects and after effects to have their full play. Other historical events, such as the American Civil War, have taught the historian that its effects are not

extinguished in so short a period of time as a century. Yet there is a willingness to agree that the effects of the more significant events in the history of architecture never really had a chance to show an afterglow beyond their initial flash of creation.

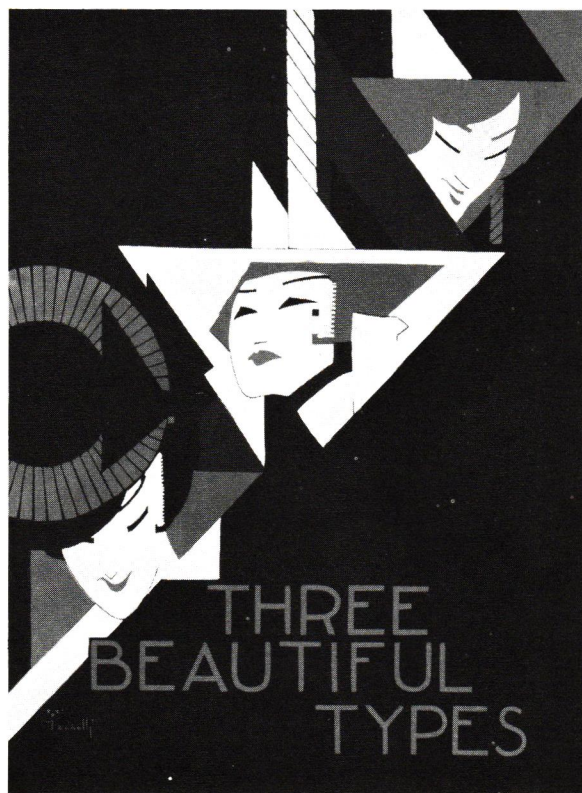
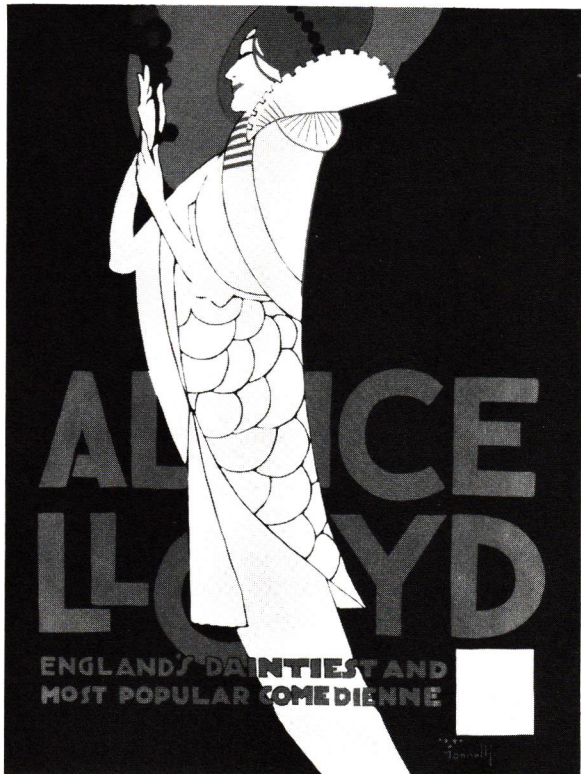
Such considerations as must be made in view of the foregoing remarks only reinforces the burdensome inadequacy of a notion tied to a term such as Chicago School or Prairie School. We do not understand the importance of Wright if we do not acknowledge his disdain for eclecticism by divesting ourselves of it. He would not lead, as he would not follow, in the manner of an eclectic. That is, he was not himself a schoolman in the usual sense which the tyranny of usage assumes. His debt to Sullivan was for the mode of thought contrary to that of the eclectic. The term school then, can have consonance in association with Wright only as it relates to modes of thought consonant with his views. Discipline in conception demands priority over discipline in execution in his teaching. Without ultimate recourse to the concept of architecture which he espoused and which first found its expression in Chicago's skyscrapers, the notion of a school becomes useless and meaningless. History written to the exclusion of these considerations will be distorted, and of little value to the historian or the architect. As change is the essence of the tyrannies by which we are plagued in the subject of this discussion, so too, is it the essence of the modes of thought by which the tyrannies are to be sustained or undone. The one ruling over usage may survive, but when the other is undone, the tyranny of usage will indeed be but a former stumbling block of no present consequence. By accepting that our problem is a conceptual one rather than a semantic one, we stand a good chance of undoing that other tyranny and at the same time suppressing the tyranny of usage into insignificance.



## Book Reviews



*The Orpheum Theater Posters, by Alphonso Iannelli. A silk screen edition of the originals produced for the Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles during the years 1910-1913. Chicago School of Architecture Foundation, Glessner House, Chicago, 1969. 6 Posters, 30" x 40", \$5.00 ea., 6/\$25.00.*

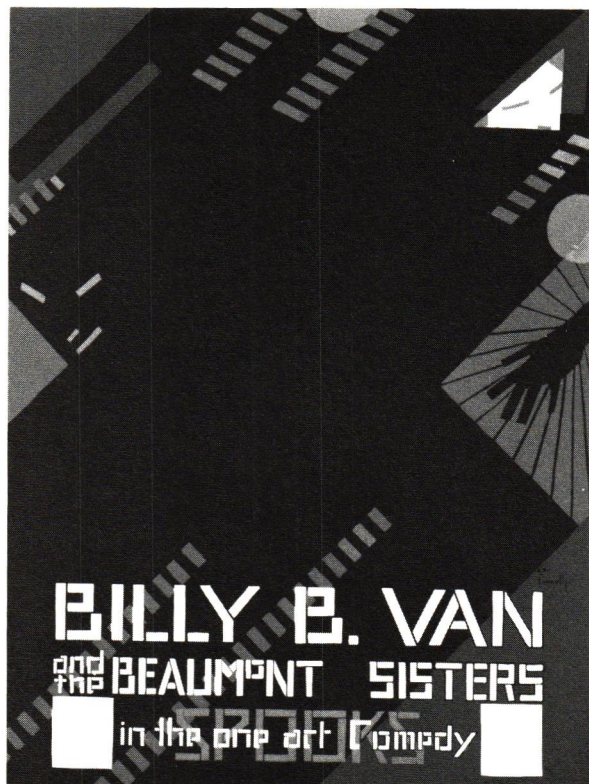


The Orpheum Theater poster series was produced during one of the most innovative periods of Alfonso Iannelli's career. Iannelli understood and hoarded the significance of these posters, though perhaps his later career might have taken another direction had he "given away" that work to the public long ago. Many people over a period of years urged that the posters be published but Iannelli's concern was that he would become known as "the poster man" — that recognition of his other work would suffer in the brilliance of the posters. Iannelli really saw himself as a universal artist — painter, sculptor, designer — an artist in the sense of being able to harmonize with his subject, his media and with other artists on a cooperative project. This attitude was consistent with the ideals of organic design and the posters are representative of this.

The posters had perhaps attained an unwarranted degree of significance in Iannelli's mind due to the events which occurred as a result of their "discovery" by John Lloyd Wright — events of great moment for a young and relatively unknown artist.

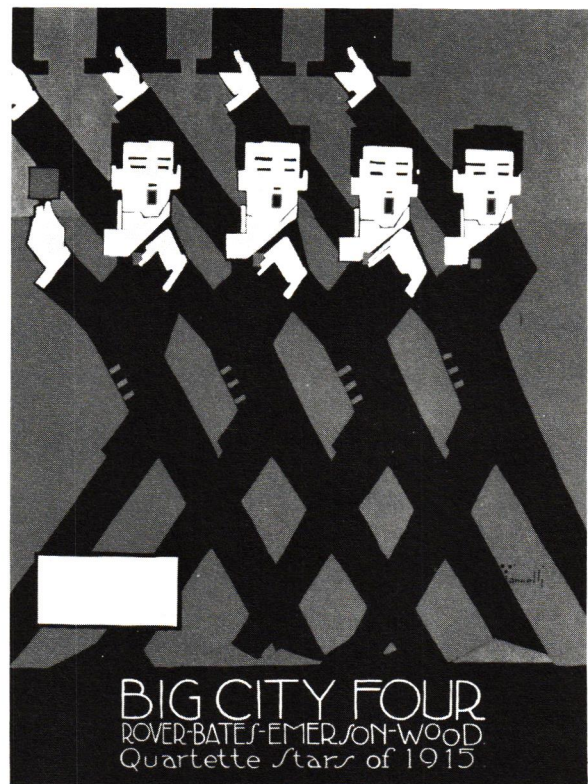
Iannelli, whether he knew it or not, was remarkably in tune with the esthetic ideas being expressed and developed by the architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Though it is often difficult to separate reminiscence from fact, Iannelli has said that his aim in going to California had been to retreat from the European influence and to search for a more characteristically American means of expression, a search parallel to





the Sullivan-cum-Wright ideas of the development of an American architecture. It was the posters which attracted the attention of John Wright, a frequent patron of the Orpheum. "... it was my habit to go to the vaudeville show at the Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles, once each week. In metal frames on Foyer walls were a series of fascinating posters . . . A bold colorful geometric background pattern ran through the series relating each to the other. The impression produced was that of one continuous mural." (letter from J.L. Wright to the reviewer, Sept., 1965) Wright was in California working for Harrison Albright, architect for the Pan-Pacific exposition, but would soon be called back to Chicago to assist his father who was on earth with the Midway Gardens commission and to extoll the virtues of the artist Iannelli. The result was that Iannelli was invited to join in the process of creating the Midway Gardens. Here Iannelli was able to develop in three-dimensional form some of the ideas with which he had been working in the posters.

Certainly these posters and the sophisticated graphic concepts which they represent were not created in some kind of visual vacuum. Iannelli himself acknowledged his debt to the work of Gustav Klimt, and his early association with Gutzon Borglum in New York must have provided plenty of exposure to the stimulus of European sources. But regardless of the influences and

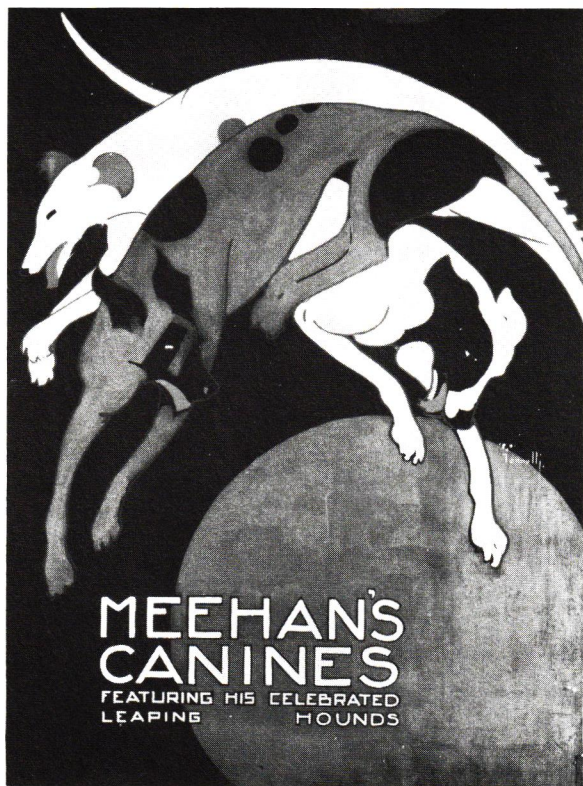


sources, it is obvious that the remarkable graphic design represented by the posters puts Iannelli at this time in the avant-garde.

The posters were produced as single copies in tempera for each program change at the Orpheum during the years 1910-1913 until Iannelli went to Chicago for the Midway Gardens work. They were often done in graphic series although the subject matter might be unrelated. The series could then be displayed over a period of several weeks.

Iannelli used a palette of brilliant colors including bright gold and silver, often with a black background. The compositions are developed geometrically around strong organizational lines which are emphasized by the boundaries of large geometricized shapes, the edges of stylized subject matter, lines of smaller repetitive forms, and the requisite lettering. The subject is often distorted, elaborated and stylized to enhance its own mood. Colors were selected with consideration for the same purpose, as were the shape, size, scale and frequency of the decorative geometric shapes. The composition seems to have been conceived wholly as two-dimensional pattern with no attempt and no apparent desire to create the illusion of 3-dimensional space or figure. The results are often scintillating visual experiences, strongly evocative of the character of the thing being advertised, often lyrical, musical, sometimes delicate like wind chimes, sometimes brassy like a fanfare.





The posters were designed primarily as areas of color and line without modeling or shading, thereby lending themselves well to the silk-screen process. There has been no attempt in this edition to reproduce the tempera quality of the originals and the reproductions are the better for being honestly silk-screens, a process which appropriately lends a more immediate quality than other forms of reproduction.

There are over 100 of the original posters on long-term loan to the Chicago School of Architecture Foundation from Iannelli's estate. The CSAF has permission to reproduce twelve of the designs, six of which are presently offered. Not all of these six are representative of the finest work available, but perhaps in combination with the next six they will comprise a representative sampling.

It would be illuminating in evaluating this work if all the posters would be made available in smaller format, perhaps a book or folio for easy comparison. In all, this edition of six of Iannelli's posters provides a rare opportunity for devotees of the Prairie School to acquire a unique example of the organic ideal as represented in graphic work.

Reviewed by Joseph Griggs, AIA  
Art Institute of Chicago

*The posters illustrated and described in Mr. Griggs' review are all available from The Chicago School of Architecture Foundation, 1800 South Prairie Avenue, Chicago, Illinois*

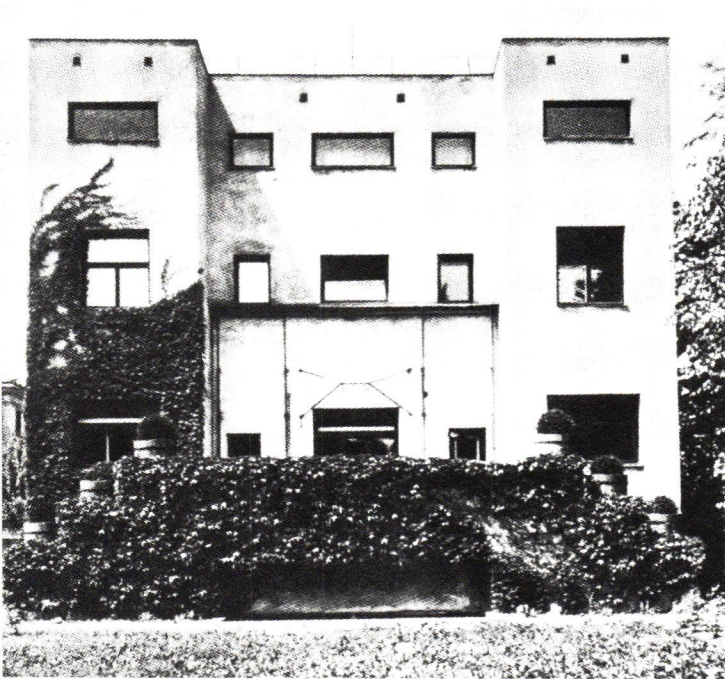
*American Architecture and Urbanism, by Vincent Scully. Praeger, New York, 1969. 275 pp., illus., \$18.50.*

Professor Scully's text, amply augmented by 525 illustrations of varying sizes, takes form as something between a series of slide lectures and an extended critical essay. His verbal pyrotechnics and his occasionally too sweeping generalizations seem at times more appropriate to the lecture platform, where audiences seldom have time to reflect, than to the printed page, where readers have time to analyze. If one may be permitted to belabor the pyrotechnical metaphor, it must be said that Professor Scully's fuses can fizzle out, as when he perceives a resemblance in effect and intention between Plains Indian saddle trappings and the exaggerated tail fins of an automobile. One concedes that both are American, but does Professor Scully mean to imply that his "daimon" of the western hemisphere has somehow miraculously coalesced aboriginal culture with what passes for culture in certain factories at Detroit? Perhaps not, but the comparison he makes seems pointless. As for sweeping generalizations, consider the following: "... all the architecture of this hemisphere can be shown to exhibit common hemispherical traits." That, to be sure, may mean more than Professor Scully's observation that "obvious cultural differences do not obscure those similarities," a somewhat Delphic remark. Instead of the much overworked *Zeitgeist*, that ill-defined bogey of past art criticism, we find the equally amorphous daimon of the western hemisphere (a rather large area for a *genus loci*) haunting Professor Scully.

A justly popular teacher and rightly respected scholar may at times find it difficult to resist a grandstand play. Professor Scully is not immune to temptation, but his muse sometimes betrays him. What is one to think of "vaults like dolphins leaping into the air" (in Girard College)? Such images may dazzle undergraduates, but to what audience is this book addressed? The unrestrained tone of such overstrained imagery tends to put one off. If, however, one is unfortunately put off by the earlier passages of this book, one should read on, for there is good nourishing meat to be found imbedded in the soufflé.

Professor Scully's opening pages contain a brief sampling of good things to be expected with the appearance of his next work, a study of the Pueblo architecture of the Southwest. Returning his attention eastward, he then presents us with a capsule discussion of English Colonial buildings and a passing glance at early town planning. Although the book is not intended to be a comprehensive history





Steiner House in Vienna by Adolf Loos

of American architecture, one is disappointed to find no mention of non-English Colonial forms. Professor Scully finds planarity, linearity, simplification, and tautness to be the distinctive characteristics of American architecture. He makes his point, as far as English Colonial and American Federal buildings are concerned, but one wonders why he found it essential to compare Stratford in Virginia with so baroque an English example as Blenheim. Vanbrugh's Blenheim was scarcely typically English, but all argument is selective, and Professor Scully carefully avoids examples which do not hammer home his point. He does not stress planarity, etc. in connection with Frank Furness or Richardson but returns to his premise in discussing Mies.

Professor Scully's sensitive perceptions and sound critical insights — as distinct from his flights of fancy — are abundantly evident in his remarks on Jefferson and Furness. He gives fearless Frank Furness very high marks indeed, calling him "the first great architect in America after Jefferson". The influence of Viollet-le-Duc upon Furness is clearly brought out, and the superficial resemblances between the Philadelphia master and Butterfield and Burges are put in proper perspective. It is gratifying to find Furness at last coming into his own. Understandably, less is said on Richardson, about whom so much has already been written. One wishes, perhaps, that his Chestnut Hill Station of the Boston and Albany Railroad were not described as an "insatiable monster, swallowing up vehicles,"



Gill's Wilson Acton Hotel at La Jolla

but tastes vary. Richardson's reputation can withstand having his rugged and cyclopean Ames Gate Lodge called "not hard, but soft," its boulders likened to plums in a pudding.

As one might expect from Professor Scully, the "stick style" and the "shingle style", to employ the useful terms he invented, are given full justice in brief but penetrating analyses. That ground, already long since tilled by Professor Scully with exemplary scholarship and brilliant insight, produces no new crop in this book, but a pleasant surprise follows in the discussion of Beaux-Arts architecture. Professor Scully, without descending to the nostalgic partisanship of Henry Hope Reed, records his *mea culpa* and confesses that he (among many other critics of his generation) hitherto failed to perceive the positive merits of American Beaux-Arts architecture and planning. He makes a handsome *amende honorable* and gives the Beaux-Arts its overdue due. The Chicago skyscrapers and Sullivan receive their expected meed of praise: it is pleasant to find New York's Beaux-Arts towers getting more than perfunctory mention.

Needless to say, Wright's careers are summarized with skill and his sources noted. The brief passage on the lamented Larkin Building is particularly rewarding reading. In going over his discussion of California architects, however, one is moved to ask Professor Scully why the resemblance of Gill's Wilson Acton Hotel at La Jolla to the Steiner House in Vienna by Adolf Loos does not indicate that the daimon of the western hemisphere had extended his



influence to Austria. One also wonders why the resemblance Professor Scully perceives (others fail to see it) between Maybeck's work and Gaudí's did not suggest to him that he qualify his earlier generalizations just a bit.

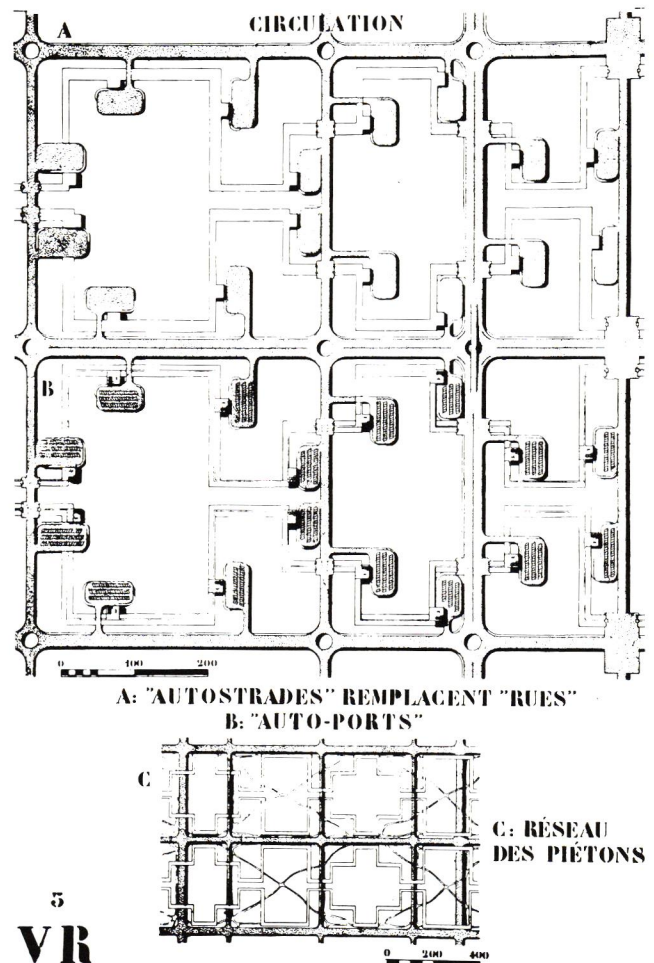
The virtue of patience is finally rewarded in full when one gets beyond page 160. In the last hundred or so pages Professor Scully really hits his stride. Up to that point, little of scholarly significance appears. Much of the text has been a combination of warmed-over historical outline and irritating clichés occasionally mitigated by flashes of the authentic Scully brilliance. After that point, things begin to fall into place. It at last becomes evident that Professor Scully intends to write something more than a thin history of American architecture illuminated by some critical insights but obscured by much fancy rhetoric. Architecture and urbanism, the stated subjects of the book, are finally related to each other.

After grading contemporary architects (Mies, Philip Johnson, and Gropius pass with high marks, but Eero Saarinen, Stone, and Yamasaki flunk his course), Professor Scully awards a *summa cum laude* to Louis Kahn. Paul Rudolph passes, but Kevin Roche, John Dinkerloo and Associates are expelled for "paramilitary dandyism". This reviewer, however, fails to see the "ominous" aspect the Ford Foundation Building presents for Professor Scully. Toward the end of his essay the author introduces Venturi and Rauch as the firm with, in his opinion, the right answer — "accommodation" to the realities of American life and to the real needs of the American people. Professor Scully rightly blasts the baneful effects of over-addiction to "form". He also justly condemns the mechanistic rationale of Le Corbusier's inhuman "Ville Radieuse" concept — a series of filing cabinets for people who have been reduced to the scale and behavior of ants. Official urban development plans which sweep the poor away like chaff and slash superhighways like swords through city cores are castigated as "cataclysmic," as indeed they are. After citing the unhappy experience of his own New Haven, Professor Scully concludes with the warning that "the brutal forcing

of present reality into old models is . . . the way in which most states . . . have encompassed their own collapse".

If some of *American Architecture and Urbanism* is disappointing, may it not be because we expect so much from its distinguished author? In spite of defects, this is an important book. It is also handsomely produced. It is difficult to fault the illustrations, although one might wish that Harvard's Memorial Hall had been represented by an early view showing the tower roof and that Furness' Provident Life and Trust Company had been similarly illustrated. If it is difficult to quibble about all but two or three of the 525 illustrations, one should grade them A-plus. This reviewer detected only one typographical error — Henry Chandlee Forman is cited as Henry Chandler Forman in the bibliography — again, an excellent score. It should also be noted that the index really works, which is not always the case even in otherwise carefully produced books.

Denys Peter Myers  
Principal Architectural Historian  
Historic American Buildings Survey



350. Ville Radieuse. 1922-35. Le Corbusier. *Circulation*.



# Letters to the Editors

Sirs:

Your issue on William Drummond is very interesting. I remember him well, in my father's Oak Park Studio, as a serious, sober young man and a diligent worker.

His association with Frank Lloyd Wright was similar to F.L.W.'s association with Louis Sullivan, "the pencil in his hand" — except that Drummond continued his entire life to be "the pencil" so to speak — while F.L.W. later developed a style of his own, after he left Sullivan. Barry Byrne's association with F.L.W. was similar to Drummond's, except that he also developed a style of his own after he left F.L.W.

John Lloyd Wright  
Del Mar, California

Sirs:

I am very gratified to see Miss Ganschietz's articles coming out, conveying as they do so much of the feeling my father had for his work.

I have not researched all the scholarship involved, but I do note one error of dating the sketch of the River Forest Tennis Club to the period with Frank Lloyd Wright. It was done about 1928, to remodel the building to its present plan and adapt it to its site, which flows eastward across the axis of the building.

Alan M. Drummond, M.D.  
Falls Church, Virginia

Sirs:

Edward J. Vaughn's article in the most recent issue on "Sullivan and the University of Michigan" is marred by several errors in dates. It states that Sullivan was born in 1865; he was born in 1856. *Kindergarten Chats* are dated 1885-1906; they were first published in 1901-02. Sullivan's *Autobiography of an Idea* is dated 1920; actually, it first appeared serially in the *Journal of the A.I.A.* in 1922-23, and in book form in 1924. (*Ed. Note: The birthdate was a typo. The other dates were errors we should have caught.*)

But the major error is in referring to the architect as "Louis Henri Sullivan". Since this error is so widespread please let me explain the matter. Sullivan was never formally christened, but throughout his mature life he gave his full name as Louis Henry Sullivan. To be sure, during his childhood his mother and grandmother used to call him "Louis Henri" out of respect to his maternal grandfather Henri List. And he himself always gallicized the "Louis" in pronunciation.

But there can be no doubt that his full name — when he used it at all — was Louis Henry Sullivan. George Grant Elmslie, who worked for Sullivan longer than any other man (the twenty years from 1889 to 1909), and who was his most faithful

disciple until his own death in 1952, was positive about this.

Actually, Sullivan seldom used his middle name. He used to sign letters "Louis H. Sullivan" or "Louis Sullivan." And to all his colleagues he was known simply as "Louis Sullivan."

The start of the "Henri" myth can be pinned down definitely at the time of Sullivan's death in 1924. There wasn't enough money to bury him properly, so a group of his friends and fellow architects got together and raised money for a tombstone in Graceland Cemetery, Chicago. On it was inscribed "Louis Henri Sullivan." It is not known how this decision was reached. It is unlikely that they knew of his French-Swiss maternal ancestry. They certainly knew of his schooling at the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* in Paris. Be that as it may, the first published use of the middle name "Henri" was by the Chicago architect Thomas E. Tallmadge, in *The Story of American Architecture* published in 1927.

Since then the error has been repeated many times, even in encyclopedia articles. It is repeated in Willard Connely's biography *Louis Sullivan As He Lived*, published in 1960.

Errors are like rumors: once made they are hard to overtake. And when graven in granite on a tombstone this one seems destined for a durable life.

Hugh Morrison  
Dartmouth College

Sirs:

The current issue is interesting, as usual. But what really leads me into writing is your editorial on the need for professionally trained restorationists. You may not be aware that, here at Columbia, we have the first (and so far the only) functioning program of such training in this country. We've turned out about fifty young men and women in the past five years and now have twenty three graduate students in the program, including three doctoral candidates. The attached data may give you a clearer idea of how the program works and what, up to date, we've accomplished.

The need for a program on a national basis is, as you say, very great. As in the case of higher education everywhere, our program could do with increased financial support, especially for such extra curricula items as student scholarships and summer internships and travel, as well as for research and publication. It would seem that the architectural profession, above all others, ought to be more aggressively supporting such a program than it has, up to date.

James Marston Fitch  
Columbia University



## In Chicago

In accordance with its policy of furnishing architectural information to visitors, the Chicago Public Library has announced that their most recent item is a listing of the Chicago buildings of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Compiled by the staff of the Art Department, copies of this list are free and available in the Art Department of the Chicago Public Library.

## Ernest Olaf Brostrom

Ernest Olaf Brostrom, who was long concerned with the Prairie School movement, died August 28 in a hospital in Pittsburgh. He was 80 years old.

Mr. Brostrom was born in Sweden in 1888. He had no formal architectural education. In 1907 he moved from Sioux City, Iowa, to Kansas City, Missouri, to manage a branch office of the Eisen-traut-Colby-Pottenger Company, architects. In 1910 he traveled to Oak Park, Illinois, intending to join the studio of Frank Lloyd Wright. The studio had been closed.

In later years, Mr. Brostrom became a close friend of the late William Gray Purcell. He called on Louis Sullivan during the master's long days of decline. "He seemed so pleasant to talk to," Mr. Brostrom once recalled of those visits. "There was not any feeling of bitterness. He was then pretty frail. At that time the terra cotta company had taken him over and given him something to do, to keep him from starving."

Mr. Brostrom thought that three of his buildings represented his best work. All still stand. They are the Jensen-Salsbery Laboratories, 1918-1919, and the Newbern Apartment-Hotel, 1921-1925, both in Kansas City, Missouri, and the Rushton (now Holsum) Bakery, 1919-1920, in Kansas City, Kansas. He was pleased, in his last years, to note that those three structures — all in the Prairie School idiom — were still being used for their original purposes.

"Architecture did not start when bricks were piled together," Mr. Brostrom once asserted, "but when some dreamer layed them in a pattern and design with a motive in his thought.

"Sullivan-esque grew naturally, but few grasped that they were dealing with life and character during those days, even as now. We knew so little of the basic theme, and base from which it sprang." *Don Hoffmann, Kansas City Star.*

## Preview

The final issue of Volume VI of *The Prairie School Review* will be devoted to the work of Henry Trost and his work in the Southwest. The material is being prepared by Lloyd Englebrecht.

Several recently published books are scheduled for review including:

*The Architecture of The Well-tempered Environment*

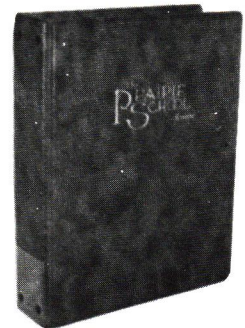
Reyner Banham

*American Architecture since 1780*

Marcus Whiffin

Our readers are invited to suggest or submit articles for possible publication in *The Prairie School Review*. Often the editors are able to assist in the preparation of articles or illustrations. Furthermore, we maintain files on all phases of the Prairie School and its practitioners. We appreciate receiving obscure bits of information and will return any material submitted if so desired after we make copies for future reference.

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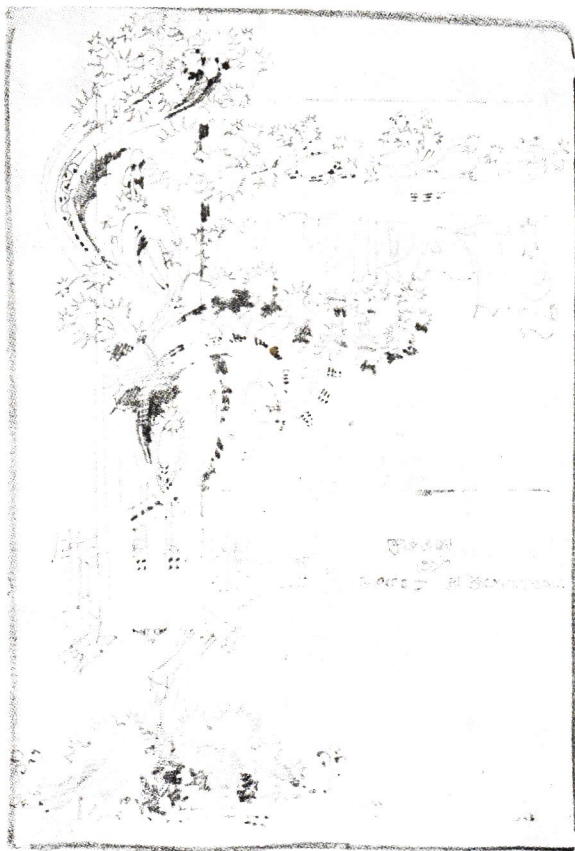


PLATE 1

## Elmslie Drawings

*DRAWINGS FOR ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENT BY GEORGE GRANT ELMSLIE, 1902-1936, Catalogue . . . exhibition . . . Santa Barbara, by David Gebhard. University of California, Santa Barbara, 1968. Catalogue folio, 12 plates, 11" x 15", \$6.50.*

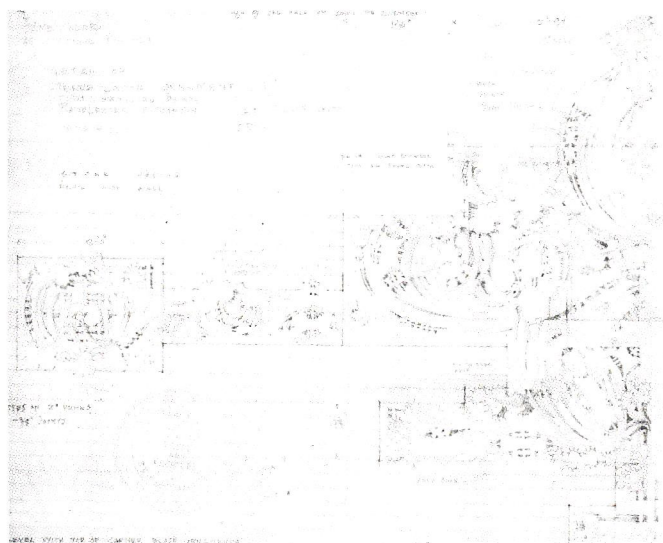


PLATE 4

Louis Sullivan is too often remembered by buffs for some of George Grant Elmslie's best architectural ornament. Much of the ornament so admired on Sullivan's National Farmers' Bank at Owatonna, Minnesota and most of the Carson, Pirie, Scott exterior ornament was in fact developed by Elmslie. Developed is the correct in this case because there is no doubt in this reviewer's mind that the basic concept, however sketchily indicated on preliminary drawings, was Sullivan's. Elmslie was, in the truest sense, the pencil in the master's hand.

Elmslie became proficient in developing Sullivan's ornament, but he was enough of an individual that his hand can be fairly well identified in Sullivan's architecture by anyone who has taken the time to carefully examine the work of both men. While there is not sufficient space to discuss the matter fully here, suffice it to say that, in general, Elmslie's work was somewhat more crisply or tightly executed than Sullivan's, whose ornament had a softer more sophisticated plastic quality.

The character of Elmslie's ornament became more evident after he began practice in his own right. The drawings in this folio are especially revealing. Elmslie was a superb draftsman but his very skill somehow works against him — some of the drawings are almost metallic in character, particularly those of the later years. On the other hand the drawings from the years of his partnership with William Grey Purcell are near masterpieces. Plate 4 reproduced here is of this quality.

All but one of the drawings in this thin folio are working drawings which Elmslie prepared for execution in terra cotta by his long time collaborator Kristian Schneider of the American Terra Cotta Company who modeled all of Elmslie's ornament and much of Sullivan's. Gebhard discusses the rapport between Elmslie and Schneider in his brief forward.

The single drawing which is not a working drawing is reproduced above. It is a drawing for a title page for Louis Sullivan's prose poem "Inspiration" written in 1886. Sullivan drew several similar drawings of the same subject, two of which are now at the Avery Library. The drawing above is so different from the others in the folio, and so like those at Avery that this reviewer cannot believe it is by Elmslie — it must be by Sullivan himself. Furthermore, why else would it be so boldly signed with the great ornamental initials L. S.?



