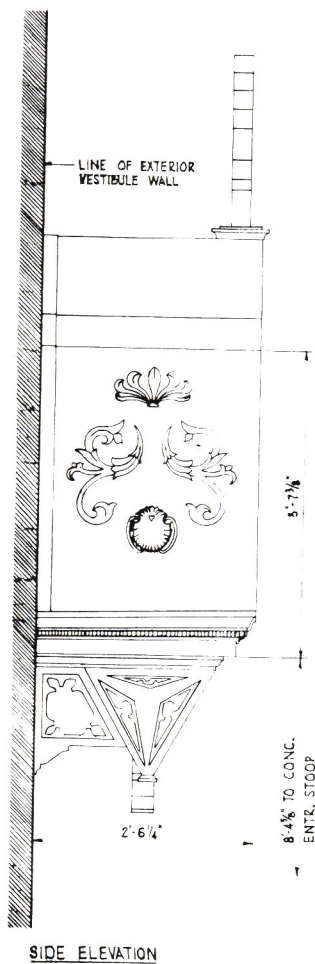


The
**PRAIRIE
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Review

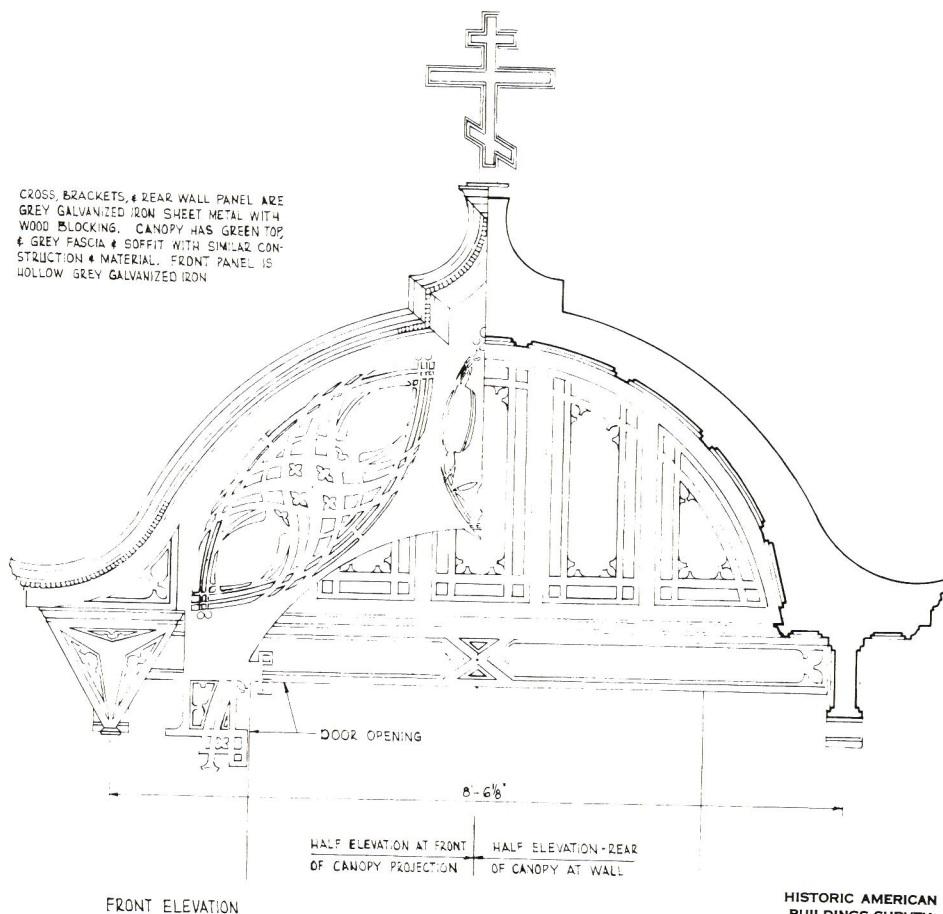
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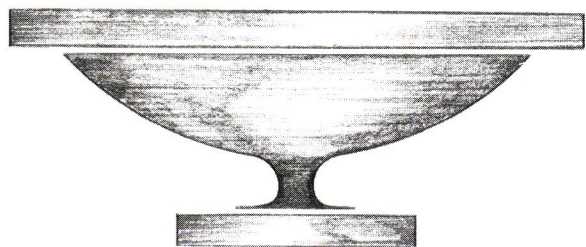
HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY

ABOVE: The portal of Holy Trinity.

COVER: The tower of Holy Trinity is one of the most exciting designs ever produced by Sullivan. It combines a picturesqueness with a rich plasticity. It seems to be the result of the complimentary influences of Viollet-le-Duc and William Le Baron Jenney.

Unless otherwise stated photographs were taken by the author.

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The PRAIRIE SCHOOL *Review*

Volume IX, Number 4

Fourth Quarter, 1972

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*Detail of the portal canopy. It is made of sheet metal which
has begun to corrode. It is in danger of being lost.*



From the EDITORS

This is a rather special issue of The Prairie School Review. It contains only one article, no book reviews, no other material. The Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Chicago designed by Louis H. Sullivan deserves an issue of its own. It was one of the first of Sullivan's "independent" commissions after leaving Dankmar Adler. It was also the last 19th Century commission Sullivan received. It marked the end of an era. Before Holy Trinity, Sullivan's work was almost all large, commercial, big business and monumental. After the church, Sullivan's commissions remained monumental but were almost all smaller, residential in scale if not function, business oriented to be sure, but only because he became "typed" as a designer of banks.

Thus Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Cathedral marks a turning point in the master's career. It was an elegant turning point, having withstood the test of time. Nearly three-quarters of a century later, the building is still serving a small but loyal congregation. Considering the tyranny of weather and cost of maintenance, it is remarkable that the Cathedral remains in such good condition.

This is not to say it does not need repair. It does. The building is still basically sound but work is needed to return it to the glory of years past. All this will take money. Money not readily available. Some copies of this issue will be sold to raise funds but much more must be found. We wonder where. Certainly none will come from the Russian government as happened when the building was built! The Tsar is gone.

It is strange that as we write, our desk holds a copy of The Architectural Record, on the cover of which are shown two 18th century Russian churches under restoration. The accompanying article states in part "... since 1945 Leningrad has spent as much as one-half of what it spends per year for housing, in restoring churches and monasteries to their former beauty. . .". One might quarrel with this kind of priority, but it seems strange that the entire United States budget for preservation of Historic Architecture is less than that of any one of several major East or West European cities.

The Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Cathedral has been measured and recorded by the HABS. It is on the National Register. Still, if it were to be abandoned or the congregation chose to destroy it, could it be saved? The same questions can be posed in regard to Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple which faces similar problems. The present administration has done more than any other for historic preservation — it is still wholly inadequate. Where do we go from here?



A Celt Among Slavs: Louis Sullivan's Holy Trinity Cathedral

by Theodore Turak*

HABS

Theodore Turak is an associate professor of art history at The American University, Washington, D.C. He earned his Doctorate at The University of Michigan specializing in architectural history. Professor Turak has contributed to The Prairie School Review previously with his article on "Jenney's Lesser Works, Prelude to the Prairie Style". He is currently completing further work on the career of William Le Baron Jenney.

*I would like to thank the people who aided me in the research on Holy Trinity Cathedral. The germ of this paper was conceived many years ago in a monograph about Russian architecture in the city of Cleveland for Dr. Edmund Chapman of Western Reserve University. I am most grateful to His Eminence the Most Reverend Archbishop John of Chicago and Minneapolis, the Reverend Hieromonk Hilary, the former pastor of Holy Trinity, Mr. Nick A. Konon and Mr. Stephen C. Smarsh. The last three were most helpful to me in opening the archives of the cathedral. The Very Rev. Sergius Kuharsky of St. Theodosius, Cleveland graciously sent me information on his church. Mr. Halstead of Jensen and Halstead kindly permitted me access to the records of his firm. Miss Helen Zolas of the Library of Congress and Mr. John C. Poppeliers of the Historic American Buildings Survey offered invaluable assistance. Finally I must mention my son Jonathan who printed many of the photographs used in the article.

Despite their numbers and the suddenness of their appearance, the absorption of eastern European immigrants into the fabric of American life has been relatively rapid. Within two generations the children of unskilled and largely illiterate peasants have entered the trades, business and the professions, forsaking many of the traditions of their fathers.

Few of the visual arts of the countries of origin have survived the process of cultural shock. Virtually the only tangible remains of this period are a number of churches still to be found in several of the industrial centers of the nation. Only a small number of these are of artistic significance. Most were designed by indifferent contractors for congre-



Overview of the Russian section of the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893. Report of the Russian Commissioners.

gations not thoroughly enlightened as to their own past.

The few fine examples of church architecture are therefore proportionately more precious. Louis Sullivan's Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Chicago is perhaps the most important of the group because it is not only a superb example of its genre, but it is the sole religious structure designed by Sullivan to survive as he had intended.¹ Changing social patterns threaten the existence of the building as its parishioners no longer live in the immediate neighborhood. The revenues constantly diminish and the ageing cathedral is becoming increasingly expensive to maintain. It is hoped, therefore, that this article will inspire those who love architecture to help save one of the dwindling examples of a genius' work.

Holy Trinity is one of Sullivan's most interesting buildings. Throughout his life he confronted the most pressing conditions of modern architecture, but here he came face to face with the oldest

architectural tradition of Christendom. He was required to solve the interlocking problems of a complex ritual, economy and his own demanding originality.

The Russian Orthodox population of Chicago had been growing through the last two decades of the nineteenth century. It was the great World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 that led to the building of the cathedral. Russia had not intended to have a pavilion because the previous year she had suffered a disastrous drought and famine. Her displays were thus small and housed in the main exhibition hall rather than a separate building as was done by most of the other large countries. Russia's participation in the Fair was an act of recognition and thanks for shipments of wheat sent by the United States to alleviate the crisis.²

The design of the pavilion and its impact on the Russian community were indicative of the aesthetic problem faced by Sullivan. To put it in its most charitable light it was monstrous, symbolic, perhaps, of a regime which had barely a decade and a half of existence left to it.

The Russian display area was enclosed by a border of exhibition cases pierced by "monumental" entrances. In its long history, Russian architecture was never so poorly represented. The large

1 Sullivan's two other religious structures were the Anshe Ma'ariv Synagogue of Chicago (1891) and St. Paul's Methodist Church of Cedar Rapids (1914). Neither reflect Sullivan's complete intentions. Hugh Morrison, *Louis Sullivan, Prophet of Modern Architecture*, N.Y., 1962, pp. 124-5 and 213-16.

2 Halligan's *Illustrated World's Fair*, V, Chicago, 1893, p. 654.



The church in Streator, Illinois with its portal from the Russian section of the World's Fair. Report of the Russian Commissioners.

structures were not so much Russo-Byzantine as high Victorian being composed of an incredibly complex pile of irrelevant motifs. It was nevertheless much admired and formed a basis for the Tsar's munificence. The Imperial Commissioners noted:

The most notable of these donations, the splendid entrance-hall with painted glass adorning the entrance to the Russian manufactures section, was placed at the disposal of the Bishop of Aleutia and Alaska, the Right Reverend Nicholas, for the use of the Orthodox Church in America. The entrance-hall was dismantled . . . and sent to Streator, Illinois . . . Bishop Nicholas has already had a beautiful Orthodox Church made of it for the use of a significantly large Orthodox population in the locality.³

The congregation of Chicago may have been inspired by the Streator church to build a comparable structure. The impetus seems to have come

³ *Otchet Generalnavao Kommissara Russkavo Oigla Vsemirnoi Kolomboi Bissovki v Chicago* (Report of the General Commission of the Russian Section of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago), St. Petersburg, 1895, pp. 138-139.

from Bishop Nicholas himself who was quite distraught at the conditions under which he was forced to perform the liturgy.⁴

Funding for Orthodox churches was a problem because in Russia they had been built with substantial state subsidies. The tradition was partially continued in the building of Holy Trinity. In an *Ukase* (Imperial Decree) of Nicholas II, Count Sergei Witte, the Tsar's Minister of Finance, approved the release of funds. The treasury would:

. . . turn over 2,000 dollars, which are in trust to the Aleutian Diocese, for the purpose of purchasing a building in Chicago for a church and parish accommodations . . .⁵

Ultimately the Imperial Government gave 4,000 dollars with a per annum 600 gold rubles as collateral for the building loan. The sum was not excessive and the insufficiency of resources doubtlessly contributed to the final form of the cathedral.⁶

At the time of construction the parish was headed by one Father John Kochurov who was pastor between 1895 and 1907. A contemporary photograph of him reveals a man with intensely intelligent eyes. Aside from the fact that he was born in Russia, virtually nothing is known about his life. He must have been an individual of firm will in shepherding his flock into directions that he had chosen. Originally the parishioners sought to build on Halsted street, Jefferson or 14th and Union, but Father Kochurov determined the present site at 1121 North Leavitt street. Father Kochurov also, without doubt, had final choice of the architect.⁷

At least one architect was considered before Sullivan came on the scene. His name was John Clifford and two letters from his hand may be found in the archives of Holy Trinity Cathedral. In a letter dated November 16th 1896 Mr. Clifford indicated that thinking related to the new edifice was already well along. He wrote that he was "... busily engaged in drawing plans of the new Russian church for the newspapers" with the hope that the resulting publicity would aid in soliciting money. He had worked "... diligently every day including Sundays

⁴ *Ubilinii Sbornik* (Jubilee Collection), N.Y., 1944, p. 144.

⁵ *Ukase* of HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY Autocrat of all the Russias, from the Most Holy Synod, to the Most Eminent Nicholas, Bishop of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska, November 6/18, 1898. This document is in Russian with an English translation in the archives of Holy Trinity Cathedral.

⁶ *Seventy-fifth Anniversary, Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral*, Rev. Hieromonk Hilary and Nick A. Konon editors, Chicago, 1967, p. 12.

⁷ *Sixtieth Anniversary Jubilee Album, Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church*, 1952, p. 40.

for two months" on drawings.⁸ The approach was apparently successful because several prominent Chicago citizens came forward to offer support.

Another letter from Clifford to Father Kochurov three years later intimated that all problems were still not solved. The letter is interesting for several reasons. Curiously, it contains a vicious attack on the Roman Catholic hierarchy of Chicago, possibly with the idea of currying favor with the Orthodox community.⁹ More important were his comments on the iconography and style of the building. They form a comparison to the design evolved by Sullivan. Mr. Clifford wrote:

I respectfully submit a few remarks for the benefit of yourself and his Eminence Rt. Rev. Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Cal. in reference to some of the principal features of my design . . . First let me call your attention to the resemblance which the ground plan bears to a vessel (the Ark of the Covenant), the tower in front represents the bow of a ship while the gradual expansion of the auditorium represents the widening of the vessel towards the stern or rear part. The next important feature is the Greek Cross represented by the wings or sides of the auditorium that the light which illuminates the Greek Cross comes from above through the open dome in the centre of the roof. This is an important feature as the sides of the dome in line with the plastering are the points of contact where all the six groin arches meet. It is difficult to represent this on paper but I have endeavored to do so in the Transverse section showing the arches and groin arches above them. The effect produced by these architectural features in the ceiling of the church cannot be surpassed in any other building in the world, for your church is the only edifice designed in this style. With these architectural features artistically executed according to my plans no one will ever imagine that your church will cost less than fifty thousand dollars. Being the only edifice in the United States designed in the Russian national style of

architecture the effect produced both inside and outside will be very imposing . . . Each of the six arches in the auditorium of the church will be 12 feet six inside and 15 feet high to the apex of the arch. Then the groin arches are concentric with these arches but they come 14 inches higher and will taper on a curve to a point towards the dome. When the plans are thoroughly examined by the Bishop we will need them again as soon as possible so as to get contractors to figure on them in order that the church and residence may be finished by the middle of May.¹⁰

Mr. Clifford's plan was more grandiose than the one finally built. Centrally planned and covered with masonry vaults and a dome it would have been close in appearance to the great monuments of Novogorod and Moscow.¹¹ This tradition would have been the most obvious one for Sullivan to follow. Generally, it was selected for the major Russian churches in the United States. St. Theodosius in Cleveland, Ohio represents one of the best examples of this Russian monumental architecture and can thus serve as an excellent contrast to Holy Trinity. The church was the result of the combined efforts of Father Basil S. Lisenkovsky and the Cleveland architect Frederick C. Baird. It was modeled after the Church of Our Savior Jesus Christ in Moscow.¹² The consecration took place in 1912.¹³

10 Letter: John Clifford to Rev. John Kochuroff (sic), February 7, 1899. Archives of Holy Trinity.

11 Tamara Talbot Rice, *A Concise History of Russian Art*, N.Y., 1963, pp. 49-78 and 113-162.

12 I presume that this is the small fourteenth century Church of Our Savior in-the-Forest built in the Kremlin. Louis Reau, *L'art russe des origines a Pierre le grand*, Paris, 1921, p. 232.

13 *St. Theodosius Russian Orthodox Church*, Cleveland, no date, p. 22.



Father John Kochurov, builder of Holy Trinity. A close relationship developed between young priest and the older architect. Courtesy Holy Trinity.

8 Letter: Mr. John Clifford to His Eminence Bishop Nicholas, Greco Russian Church, San Francisco, California, November 16, 1896. I have been unable to find further information on this Architect. The letter is in the archives of Holy Trinity.

9 The schism between the two great branches of Christianity, the Latin Roman Catholic and the Greek (Byzantine) occurred in 1054. The separation, however, had been developing from at least the sixth century. R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, Baltimore, 1970, pp. 67-8. It was of course the Greek Church that evangelized the Russians in the tenth century. George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, New Haven, 1944, p. 33.



St. Theodosius, Cleveland, 1912. The exterior reveals the Greek Cross type of plan desired by the first architect of Holy Trinity. Courtesy of St. Theodosius.

It was built as a giant square with an inscribed Greek cross and capped by a magnificent dome and cupola supported on arches. Smaller cupolas symbolizing the Evangelists and the Apostles surround it. Within, the stern face of the Pantocrator looks down from the dome.

Mr. Clifford's target date of May 1899 for the completion of Holy Trinity was never met. Indeed, he inexplicably drops from the scene, and sometime within the next year Louis Sullivan was appointed his successor. A letter from the Cathedral archives addressed to Bishop Tikhon¹⁴ dated October 11th 1900 indicated that he had already begun work. Louis Sullivan wrote:

Reverend Sir:

I am instructed by the Rev. Mr. Kochroff (sic) and Baron Shleppinbach to forward to you for inspection and approval or emendation the sketch of plans of the proposed Russian church

¹⁴ Bishop Tikhon (1865-1925) would later be one of the important figures in the Russian Revolution. He was elected Patriarch of Russia in 1917. In 1919 he denounced the Bolsheviks and was imprisoned. Ultimately he was canonized. Vernadsky, p. 407.



The interior of St. Theodosius with its use of masonry vaults contrasts to Sullivan's more economical solution. Courtesy St. Theodosius.

in this city for which I have been employed as architect.

I have sent these plans under separate cover.

You will kindly note that there are two different plans in one of which the rectory is beside the church and in the other toward the rear.

I much prefer the second arrangement and cordially recommend its adoption by you as it gives the pastor an opportunity for a nice garden in front and connects the rectory with the church in front and connects the rectory with the church by a covered way. It also gives a better view of the church on both sides. For the Easter ceremony or procession about the church, I have provided a way by leaving a passage between the rectory and the lot line.

The cost by either plan will be approximately sixteen thousand dollars — \$16,000.00, but to build for this sum will require economical methods and the avoidance of expensive materials.

Kindly return the drawings at your earliest convenience. Trusting that the sketches will be

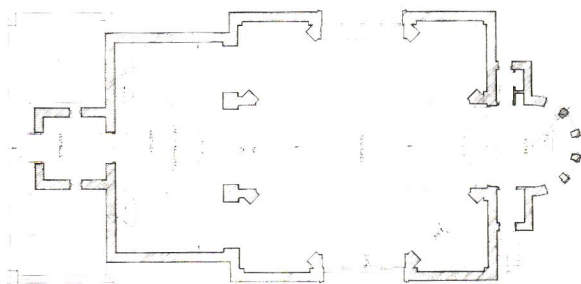
satisfactory to you, I am Reverend Sir,

Respectfully Yours,

Louis H. Sullivan

The question arises as to why Louis Sullivan was selected as the architect. Nothing in his past work particularly prepared him for such a task. One suspects that his name may have been suggested by those outside the Russian community who had come to the support of Holy Trinity. Most probably he was presented by the McCormick family. Stanley McCormick had commissioned Sullivan to ornament the Gage building in 1899.¹⁶ His younger brother Harold became one of the financial backers of Holy Trinity.¹⁷

Sullivan's partnership with Adler had been dissolved in 1895 and his practice had since begun to diminish.¹⁸ Any new commission would have been welcome. Most probably, however, it was his low bid and, of course, his design which differed in so many ways from that of an Mr. Clifford's. It was also quite likely that something of an electric rapport was established between the young priest and the deeply intellectual architect.



Ground plan of Holy Trinity Cathedral. Courtesy Historic American Buildings Survey.

As seen in the photographs the cathedral is a rather small building, differing little at first glance from a modest Protestant church. The structure is rectangular, oriented along an east-west axis, having the dimensions of forty-seven by ninety-eight feet.¹⁹ One enters through a square narthex in the west tower. Following this is a kind of inner narthex covered by a lateral tunnel vault which supports the balcony. The nave is square with an inscribed

octagon supporting the dome. To the east is the raised bema upon which rests the great iconostasis or altar screen imported from Russia and donated by Charles R. Crane and Harold McCormick in 1912.²⁰ Immediately behind is the altar set within an apse flanked by two small rooms. At the rear of the apse is the Bishop's chair. The bearing walls are brick covered with stucco, but the roof, dome and belfry are wood. The dome itself is carried on eight round arches and four squinches.²¹

The interior is lavishly decorated. The primary elements are paintings of the Orthodox saints and scenes from the life of Christ. Virtually all of the non-figural decoration was done in Sullivan's favorite medium of stencil. It is strikingly un-Sullivan-esque, however, having none of the complicated interlacing that one sees in the Auditorium building.

The motifs covering the intredos of the arches could be either Byzantine or Muslim in origin. They appear to me to resemble the Turkish decorations in Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. The decorations in the spandrels immediately above and the walls of the octagon are Gothic. The diapered pattern of the spandrels might have been taken from a French fourteenth century illuminated manuscript. Portraits of the Virgin and Saints are held within Gothic quatrefoils.

Almost universally in Greek and Russian churches the image of the Christ-Pantocrator stares down from the dome. Here, instead, the heavenly firmament, studded with stars, was painted with clouds clustered about the base of the dome. These unfortunately have been painted out in the last few years. Windows in the side-walls and in the clerestory are pointed, with strong, heavy moldings. The source was not so much Gothic as Gothic Revival.

The exterior reflects the interior perfectly with its succession of tower and solid geometric shapes. The plan chosen by Sullivan was among the oldest and purest within the Byzantine tradition. Unlike both the Catholic and Protestant churches of the west which perfected the longitudinal basilica, the Eastern church evolved several central type plans in the period after the iconoclastic controversy.²² The plan chosen by Sullivan has been designated the "octagon-domed" type by Richard Krautheimer. It is a

20 Like the McCormicks, Charles R. Crane was a manufacturer (International Harvester for the former, the Crane Co., makers of pipe, fittings etc. for the latter). Their concern for the church may have stemmed from the fact that they probably had numerous Slavic employees.

21 Homolka and Rudd, pp. 8-9.

22 Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Baltimore, 1965, pp. 241-7.

15 Letter: Louis H. Sullivan to Rt. Rev. Bishop Tikhon, #1715 Powell Street San Francisco, Cal., October 11, 1900.

16 Morrison, p. 194.

17 *The Book of Chicagoans*, Chicago, 1905, p. 375.

18 Morrison, p. 178 and *Seventy-fifth Anniversary, Holy Trinity Cathedral*, p. 9.

19 Larry J. Homolka and J. William Rudd, *Historic American Buildings Survey*, HABS No. ILL-1071, Washington D.C., 1965, p. 8.



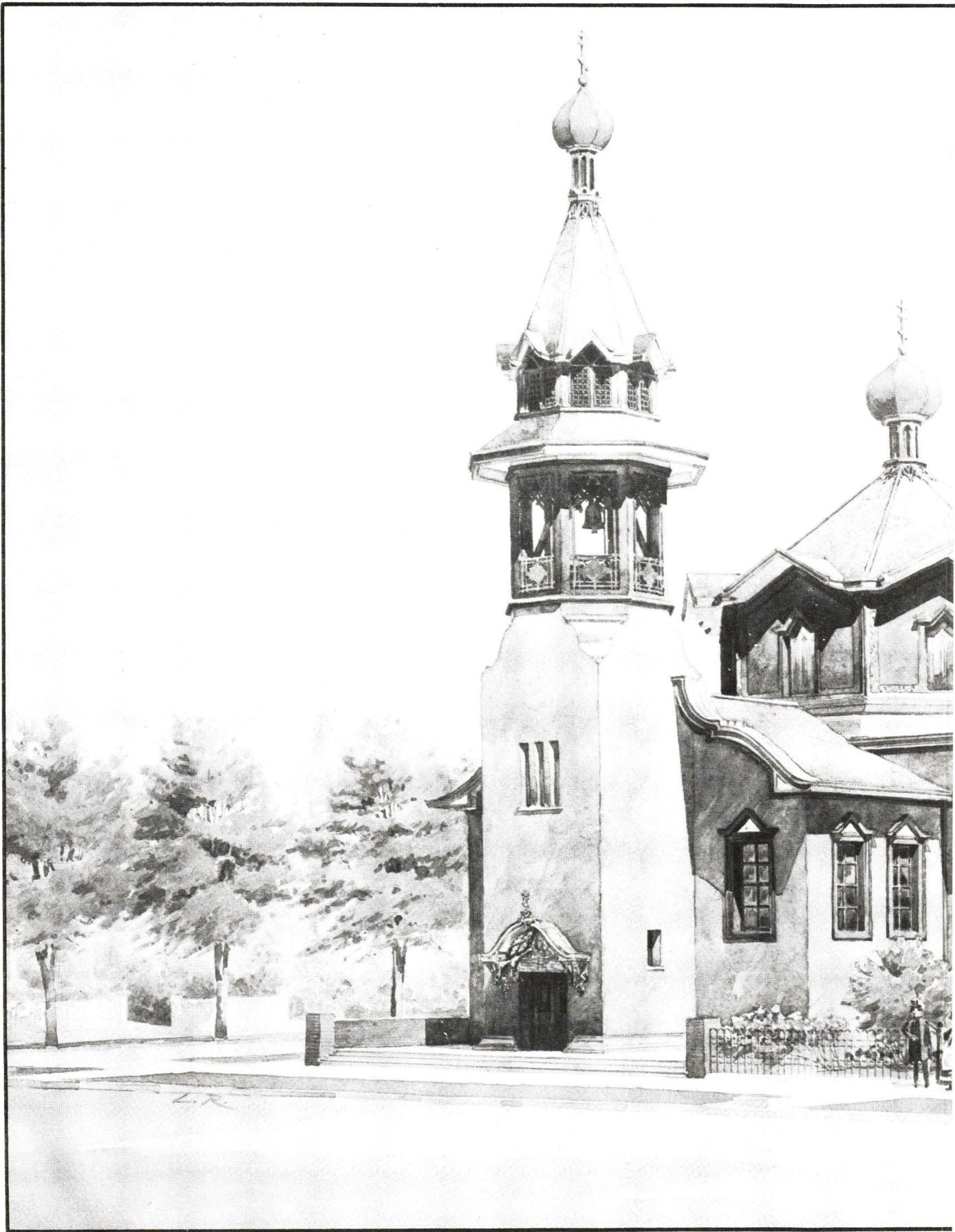
simple square mounted by an octagon and dome and is the least complicated of the centralized churches.

The building shapes of the two great branches of Christianity derive from differing interpretations of the rite. In the Western church the ceremony takes place before the worshippers as in a proscenium theater. The altar and ritual are completely visible but are functionally separate.

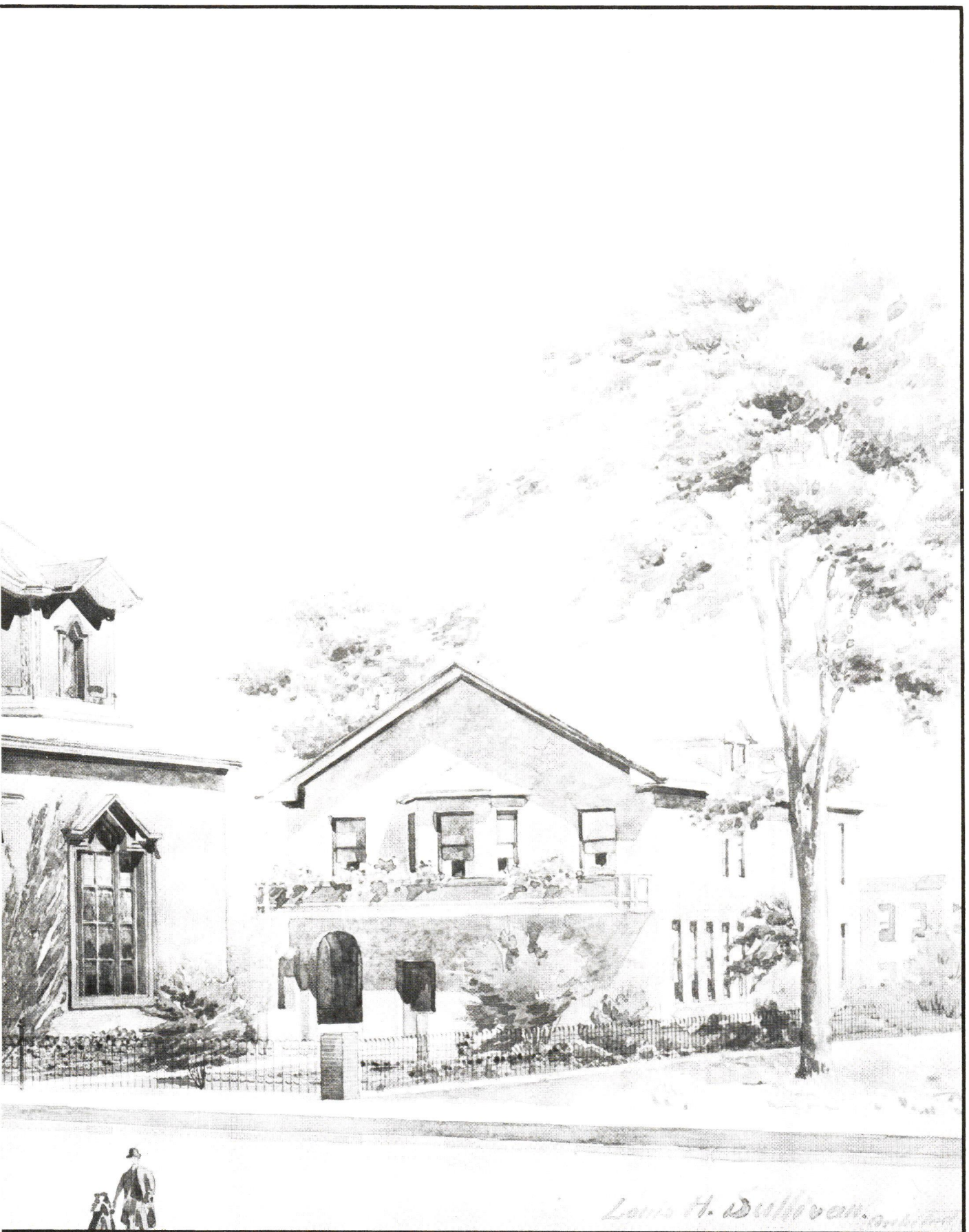
The opposite is true of the Greek rite. The element of mystery is heightened because the altar and portions of the liturgy are hidden behind the iconostasis. Only periodically can the altar be

The interior of Holy Trinity Cathedral. Courtesy Historic American Buildings Survey.

glimpsed through the Royal Doors. Though the most sacred area is hidden from the eyes of the laity, much of the ritual nevertheless penetrates into the body of the church. The area under the dome is thus, with the apse, a major ceremonial focal point. The worshippers stand around the vessel rather than in it as in the Latin church. They are confined to the large narthex and the periphery of the domed area. The net effect is that of a theater-in-the-round. As if to emphasize the centrality, a podium is found under the dome slightly to the west of its apex. Here, the Bishop stands after his entrance.



A water color of Holy Trinity Cathedral signed by Louis H. Sullivan. Courtesy Holy Trinity.





The dome acts as a huge baldacchino. It creates for the worshipper an intimacy which at first seems contradictory to the pomp and mystery of the Orthodox rite. He and his fellows seem to partake in it because it comes to them into their midst. Sullivan knew this. Of the variations on the central plan, the octagon-domed church is the most compact. The walls, hence the congregation, are pulled closer to the void of the core. He aimed at precisely the effect he achieved — a sense of an intimate community humbly drawn together by the structure before the exaltedness of Diety.

As was made evident by the letter quoted above, Sullivan was well acquainted with the ritual and processions of his patrons. A letter to Prince Nicholas Eugatilcheff made clear how profoundly he felt about the commission.²³ Sullivan wrote to the Imperial Vice-Consul as follows:

Permit me in acknowledging the receipt of your cheque — \$312.50 in full of my charge for professional services, to my sincere regret that our pleasant relations — you a member of the Building Committee, I as architect, for the St.

The finely articulated octagon. Note that the stucco is smoother than on the main body of the church. See footnote twenty-five.

Trinity Church, — has come to a close — I am quite sincere in this expression of feeling; and in it I indulge Baron Schlippenbach and Rev. Kochnoff (sic), whose courtesy has amply impressed me.

In this connection I would like to call your attention to a little matter, in the hope it may influence other well-wishers of your church: —

My usual charge for work of this character and cost, (and it is the standard design of the American Institute of Architects) is 10% (ten per centum) upon cost. However, my relations with Baron M. Schippenbach (sic), yourself, and Mr. Charles R. Crane, have been so cordial, and our mutual desire to see a beautiful Russian Church erected in this city, so great and enthusiastic, that I consented to do the work for 5% commission — which means — practically — cost to me — and in money terms, a donation of \$1250.70 to the church.

I have no reason whatever to regret this act of mine, and hope, only, that it may influence other well wishers to contribute liberally, so that in the

²³ Letter: Louis H. Sullivan to Prince Nicholas W. Eugatilcheff, Imperial Vice-Consul, Chicago, August 21, 1903. Homolka and Rudd, p. 6.



A window with heavy pointed moldings seems to reflect Sullivan's early Gothic Revival training.

course of the ensuing year or two we may see our beautiful little church *decorated in color outside and inside* in the rich and beautiful way we all have had in mind — This accomplished your structure will be one of the most unique and poetic buildings in the country.

Let us hasten the day!

With sincere regards to yourself and to all your co-workers.

Truly yours

Louis H. Sullivan

This letter is the key to understanding Holy Trinity. It indicates the warmth that the architect felt toward his patrons, the help of the non-Russians and the coloristic conception of the whole. The last element is evident only on the interior today. A contemporary article in the *Chicago Record Herald* referred to a drawing by Louis Sullivan at the Chicago Architectural Club in 1901 and described the exterior:

A colored drawing that is calculated to arouse criticism is one by Louis H. Sullivan for an Orthodox Russian Church. It is thoroughly Russian in character, and the exterior is painted



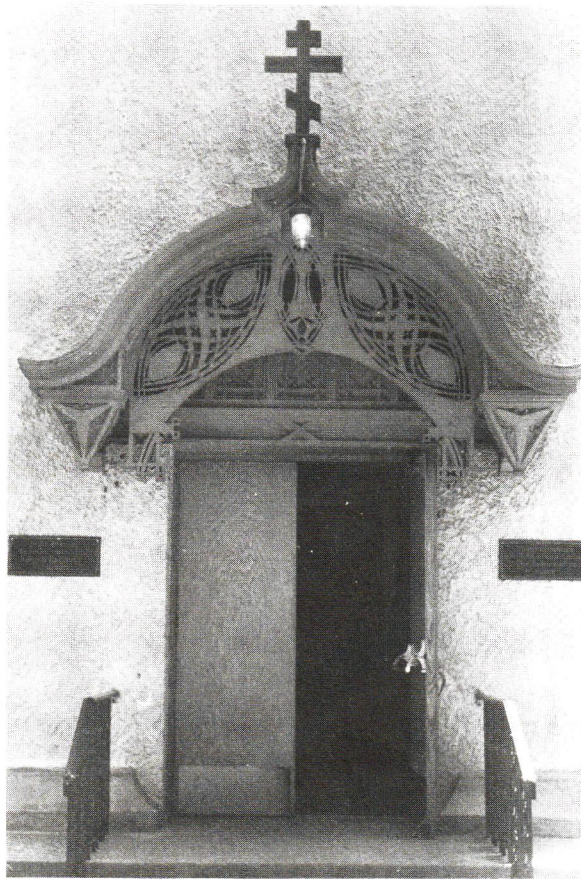
South window of the nave.

in polychromatic colors, its domes embellished with gold. The color which runs from ultramarine to red, is to be applied to plaster. It is to be hoped that this structure will soon blossom forth like a flower amid somber surroundings, and do for a city street what Mr. Sullivan's superb Transportation Building did for the Columbian Exposition.²⁴

A drawing, signed by Sullivan hangs in the rectory of Holy Trinity and is reproduced here. Its coloring is quite restrained so that either the tints have faded or it is a completely different picture. There is no evidence that the church was ever painted with the colors described in the article. It has been stuccoed several times, always, evidently, in white.²⁵ In any case the drawing indicates that the

²⁴ *Chicago Record Herald*, March 31, 1901. Homolka and Rudd, p. 2.

²⁵ The original stucco finish was smooth white. This texture is still to be found on the exterior of the octagon drum. The lower portions of the structure are a rougher, grayer stucco probably applied in 1950. The polychromy may have been carried out "to some extent." In 1965 traces of yellow paint were found in the recesses of the ornament over the front door. Homolka and Rudd, pp. 2 and 8. Also, *Sixtieth Anniversary Jubilee Album*, p. 3.



Entrance canopy of Holy Trinity.

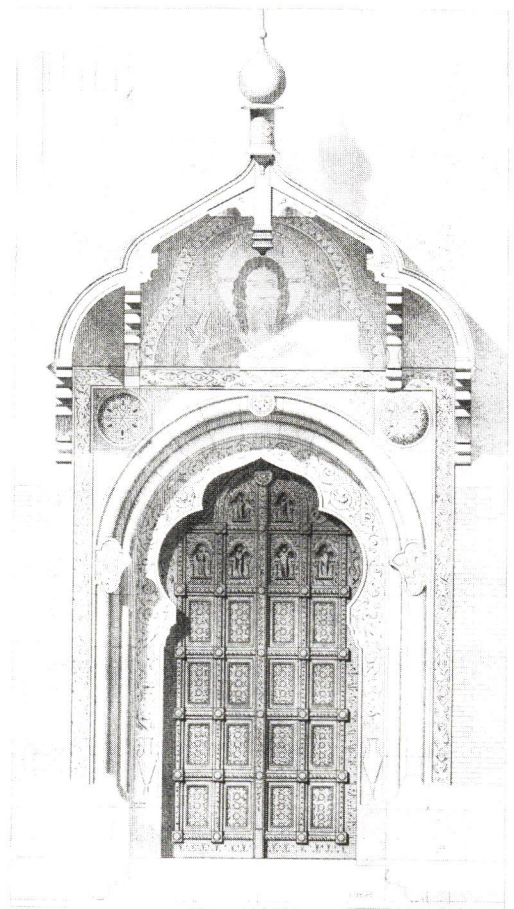
project was finished substantially as planned, for a cost, incidentally, of \$27,104.²⁶

Holy Trinity, even without its intended exterior coloring is therefore "Russian" fulfilling its function with great feeling. Its resemblance to no other specific Russian church, however, makes one wonder from what sources he drew his inspiration. Having had no previous contact with Russian culture, he must have researched his subject thoroughly. In all probability he consulted Viollet-le-Duc's *L'art russe, ses origines, ses éléments constitutifs, son apogée, son avenir*. The writings of the French architectural critic were popular with the more progressive American architects and were a particular favorite with Sullivan's teacher William Le Baron Jenney.²⁷

There are certain affinities between some elements of Viollet-le-Duc's book and Sullivan's design for the Cathedral. The gable over the doorway of Holy Trinity is similar to one pictured in *L'art russe*. There is at least a tenuous resemblance between the debased acanthus of an iconostasis (from St. John the Evangelist near Rostov) reproduced in

²⁶ Homolka and Rudd, p. 5.

²⁷ Theodore Turak, "Jenney's Lesser Works: Prelude to the Prairie Style?," *The Prairie School Review*, VII, 1970, p. 20.



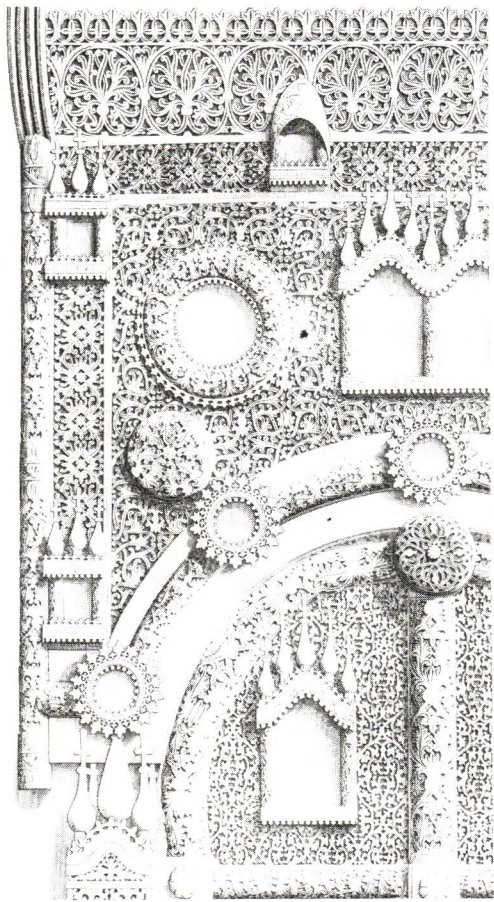
This example of a Russian church portal is more exotic than Sullivan's, but the canopy and general decorative effect are similar. Viollet-le-Duc, *L'art russe*. . . .

the book and the stencil work employed by Sullivan. Perhaps it was the richly colored plates used to illustrate Viollet-le-Duc's examples that caused Sullivan to wish to clothe his church in barbaric splendor.

Viollet-le-Duc noted that stone was not the principal building material in Russia. Often it was brick, the proper medium of a clay rich country. Brick walls were then usually covered by layers of plaster which in turn were painted or colored "by the insertion of enameled faience." The dominant colors were red, white, and green, the latter being reserved to the metal roofs. Viollet-le-Duc felt this system of vivid colors developed naturally from the materials. The brick was protected by the plaster and the plaster by the paint.²⁸

Beyond the correspondence of isolated details, however, there was an attitude shared by both men that suggested a parallel approach to the same problem. Viollet-le-Duc, as his younger contemporary Sullivan, was concerned with the revitalization

²⁸ Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *L'art russe, ses origines, ses éléments constitutifs, son apogée, son avenir*, Paris, 1877, p. 119.



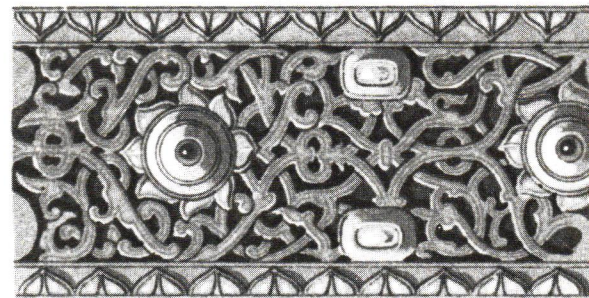
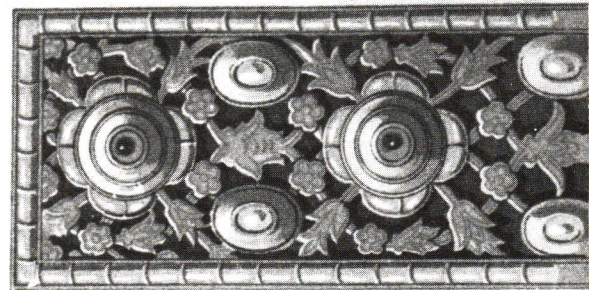
*Iconostasis from St. John on the Ichna River near Rostov.
Viollet-le-Duc, L'art russe. . . .*



Interior of Holy Trinity showing icons and stencils.



*Russian ornament from
Viollet-le-Duc's L'art russe. . . .*





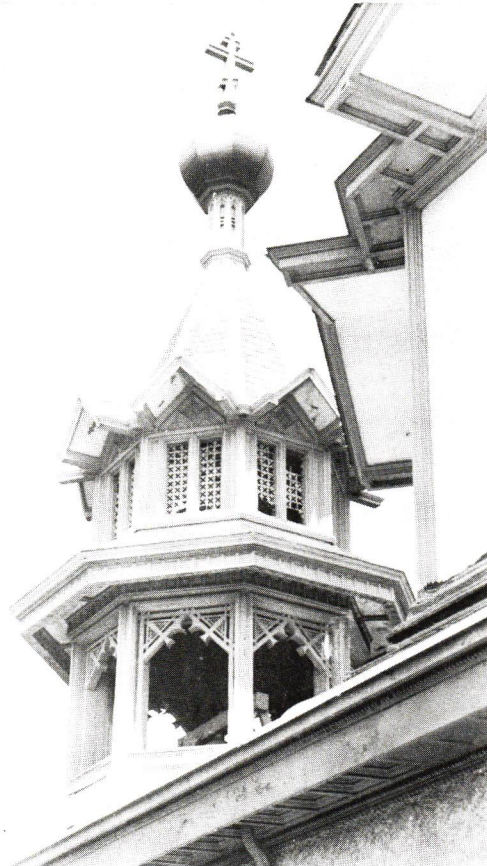
View of the octagon from the front yard of the rectory.

of nineteenth century architecture. He sought to bring it into tune with the modern era through the use of new materials and adaptation to new conditions.

Viollet-le-Duc tried to discover the underlying rationality of all great architecture. In the west this could be deduced from the principles (not the superficialities of style) of Gothic building. Such might be the case with a new Russian architecture. Russia, according to his thesis, had had a strong and original architecture until the eighteenth century when she was seduced by the classically derived styles of western Europe. Of these, he felt the worst was the "... l'ornementation lourde, prétentieuse et contournée de l'école de Bernin."²⁹

This "décadence occidentale" perpetuated the most cardinal of architectural sins in hiding both structure and function by an incrustation of heavy and useless ornament. The Russian architect should, like his counterpart in the west, take into consideration the latest materials such as iron, but he must above all be aware of the traditions of his own culture. These traditions should not be repeated mindlessly but grow out of the social and material conditions of his homeland forming his architectural vocabulary. Russian architecture at its best was an art of superbly proportioned masses and elegant silhouettes enhanced by delicate, tapestry-like decoration. Viollet-le-Duc wrote:

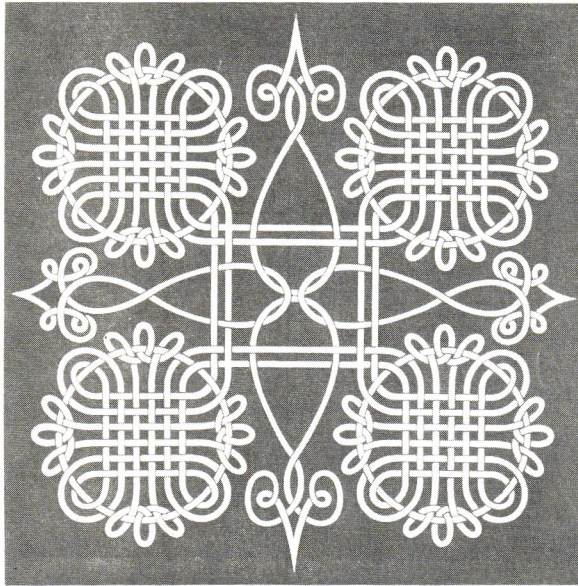
29 *Ibid.*, p. 181.



"... l'élégance, non sans hardiesse..."

The rear of Holy Trinity exhibits Sullivan's consummate massing of forms.



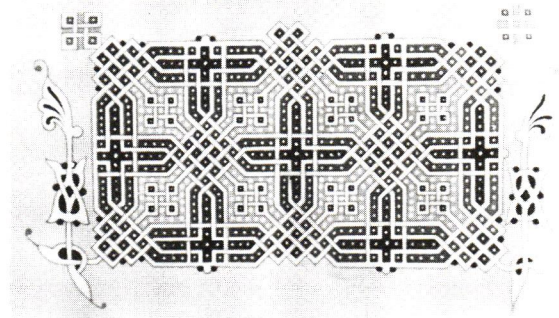


*This interlace from the Auditorium Building is close enough to the Russian manuscript published by Viollet-le-Duc to assure that Sullivan knew *L'art russe*. . . . Courtesy *Prairie School Review*.*

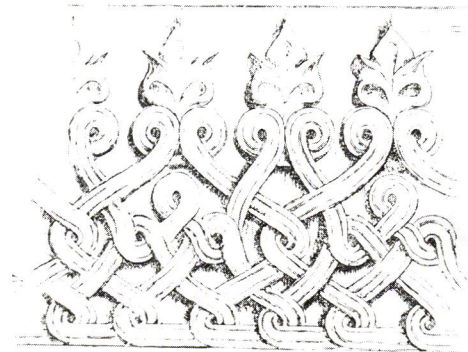
In reviving Slavic art it therefore will be necessary to appreciate exactly the qualities that govern it, these are: elegance, not without boldness; the attentive study of the effect of the masses; a discreet ornamentation that is never powerful enough to destroy the principal lines and leaves repose for the eye, ornamentation which must, chiefly in the parts above ground level, be composed in colors; because this architecture . . . requires the help of painting in order to produce its maximum effect since it is most often covered with coatings of plaster.³⁰

A walk around Holy Trinity will reveal that these paragraphs could have served as the specifications for the edifice. The spacial units are beautifully massed, the spire is tall and elegant, the silhouette of the roof-line approaches the picturesque and Sullivan's refined ornament is restricted to the portal, the tower, the windows and under the eaves. Although the decorative motifs are those of Sullivan's own unique idiom, they convey a feeling close to the engraved, tapestry-like ornament suggested by Viollet-le-Duc. Indeed, some of the Russian ornament used to illustrate his book was not too far removed from the Celtic interlaces employed by Sullivan above the door. Had Sullivan's intentions regarding the color of the exterior been carried out, Viollet-le-Duc's vision would have been very nearly realized.

Sullivan knew the people for whom he was working. As stated above he might have chosen as
30 *Ibid.*, p. 181.

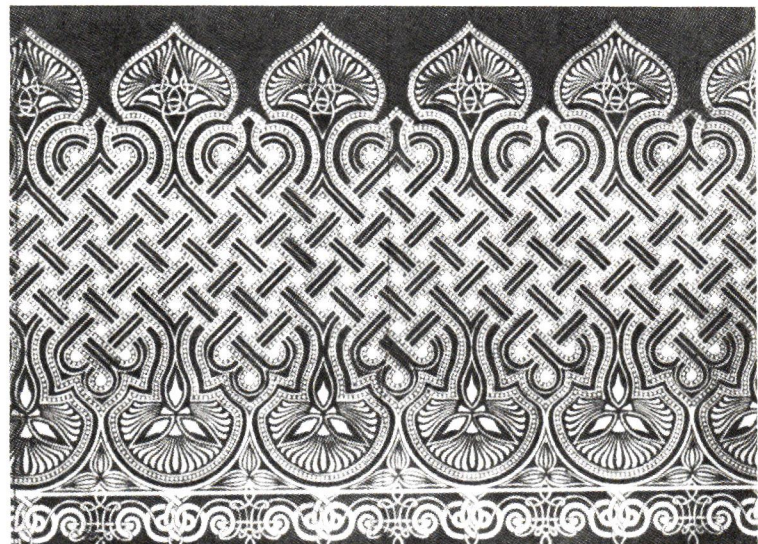


*A Russian manuscript with interlaced forms reproduced by Viollet-le-Duc in his *L'art russe*. . . .*



*A decorative interlace from Viollet-le-Duc's *L'art russe*. . . .*

*Another stencil from the Auditorium Building apparently inspired by Viollet-le-Duc's *L'art russe*. . . . Courtesy *Prairie School Review*.*





St. John's on the Ichna River Rostov (eighteenth century) is an example of a provincial Russian church. Sullivan adapted the same sequence of forms to Holy Trinity. Réau, L'art russe

his model the monumental edifices of Novogorod or Moscow as was done in Cleveland. These were not the type of structures familiar to the parishioners of Holy Trinity. Generally, they did not originate in the metropolitan centers of Russia. Rather, they were country people, often not even Great Russians, coming from such regions as Byelorussia, the Ukraine, and the Carpathian mountains.³¹

The churches that these people would have known were humble structures usually constructed of wood. They might be hardly more than peasants' huts or complicated with numerous cupolas piled over the nave. The more monumental took the form known as the "tent church." The name derived from the shape of the broadly based octagonal steeple-like structure over the main area. It usually had the configuration of an inverted cone, but frequently, particularly in the Ukraine, there might be a stacking of two or more octagons upon the

square of the nave, culminating in a small cupola.³²

Bell towers, in the Western sense, were not common to the monumental tradition adapted in Cleveland. The prominent tower of Holy Trinity therefore seems unusual, but an investigation of the provincial church shows that it is common to this type. The Russian campanile was composed of a square base, two octagons and a *flèche* topped by a small cupola. It was placed slightly to the west of the church and connected to it by a passage.³³

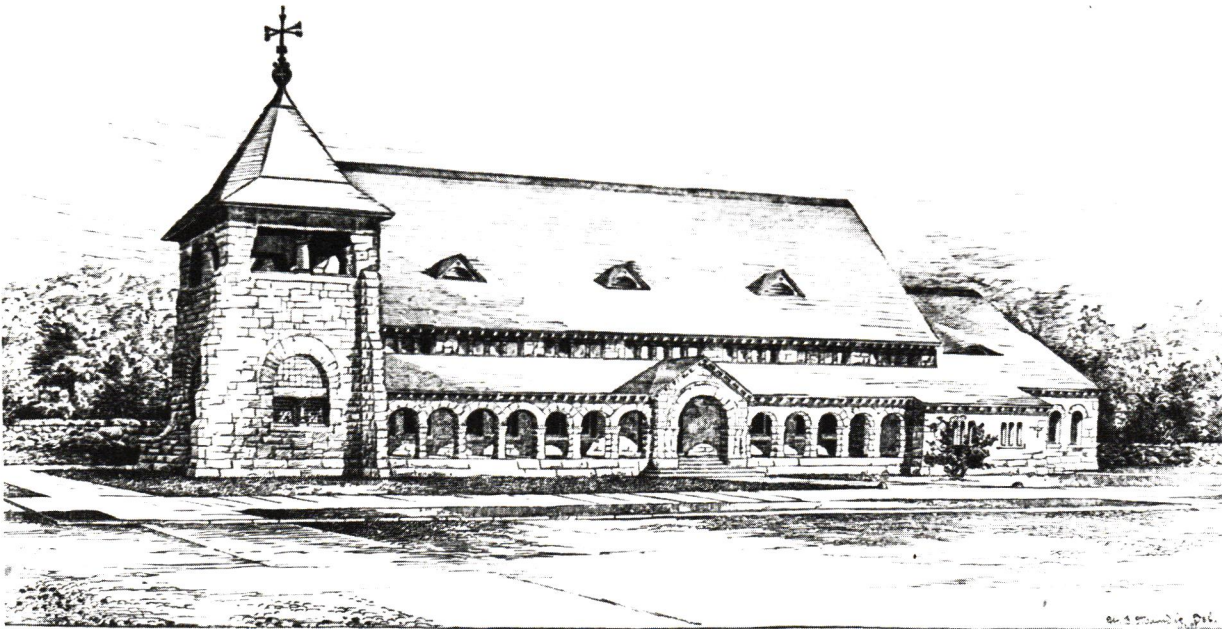
This combination can be seen in the seventeenth century church of Saint John the Evangelist on the Ichna River near Rostov. Rostov, in the south of Russia on the eastern edge of the Ukraine would have been an area from which many of the parishioners of Holy Trinity came. The American architect simplified the grouping of this type into a unified whole.

The use of the tower was the only important element that survived from Mr. Clifford's Greek Cross plan. This suggests the role that may have been played by Father Kochurov. It was certainly he who would have been best informed regarding the various forms of Russian church architecture and their interpretation in the new world.

31 Brig. General Philip B. Fleming, *The Peoples of Cleveland*, Cleveland, 1942, pp. 223-248.

32 Réau, pp. 260-1.

33 Rice, p. 88.



Design for a Church by William Le Baron Jenney, 1887, Building Budget.

Sullivan's total background must be taken into consideration in analyzing this work. Various studies have shown that many of his greatest buildings were the result of a metamorphosis of earlier impressions. His relationship to H.H. Richardson was one that he openly acknowledged. The appropriation of Muslim motifs for the Transportation Building has been discussed.³⁴ The Jayne Building in Philadelphia was certainly the forerunner of his Guaranty Building constructed in Buffalo.³⁵

It has been noted that numerous Gothic and Gothic Revival elements may be found both within and without the structure and that there is a general picturesqueness in the composition. The Russo-Byzantine forms were thus conceived by a mind trained in Romantic, nineteenth century ways of seeing.

This training was from two possible sources. Sullivan's first strong initiation into the Gothic Revival was in the studio of the Philadelphia Architect Frank Furness.³⁶ Furness, however, created buildings possessing a Baroque plasticity. Sullivan's ornament conformed elegantly to the surface of his buildings. His interpretations of Gothic must therefore be sought elsewhere.

It was with his first mentor in Chicago, William Le Baron Jenney, that he learned the tendencies

34 Dimitri Tselos, "The Chicago Fair and the Myth of the 'Lost Cause,'" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XXVI, 1967, p. 264.

35 Ada Louise Huxtable, "Progressive Architecture in America, Jayne Building, 1849-50," *Progressive Architecture*, XXXVII, 1956, p. 134.

36 Morrison, p. 35.

manifested in Holy Trinity. Jenney's influence on Sullivan has been largely ignored because of Sullivan's somewhat condescending attitude toward his teacher.³⁷ Whether consciously or not there can be little doubt that he had an impact on his student.

It was Jenney who developed the metal frame as an expressive force in architecture. Sullivan began his career by using it in much the same way. After an interlude of experimentation with the neo-Romanesque, he returned to it, developing it from the point where Jenney left off.³⁸

Donald Hoffmann noted the similarities between Jenney's Manhattan Building and Sullivan's Schiller Theater.³⁹ Both architects used cantilever construction in the wings of their buildings in conjunction with a stepped back central shaft. Jenney's solution was straight forward and functional. Sullivan, working with the same structural components created what Sir Bannister Fletcher called the "Parthenon" of the tall building.⁴⁰

Similarly, Louis Sullivan's St. Paul's Methodist Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa may be based upon a church published by Jenney in the *Building Budget* of 1887.⁴¹ Each man, understanding the importance of the sermon in the Protestant service chose an unusual interpretation of the basilican plan. The

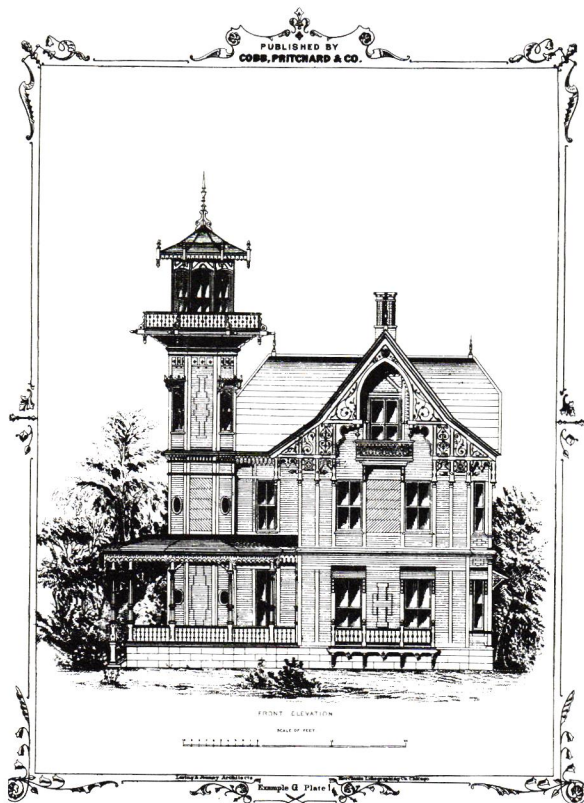
37 Louis H. Sullivan, *Autobiography of an Idea*, N.Y., 1956, pp. 203-4.

38 Albert Bush-Brown, *Louis Sullivan*, N.Y., 1960, p. 17.

39 Donald Hoffmann, "The Setback Skyscraper City of 1891: An Unknown Essay by Louis H. Sullivan," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XXIX, 1970, p. 181.

40 Sir Banister Fletcher, "American Architecture Through English Spectacles," *Engineering News*, III, 1894, p. 318.

41 *Building Budget*, "Design for a Church, Jenney and Otis Architects," VI, 1887, p. 36.



A house published by William Le Baron Jenney in 1869. Jenney was working in this picturesque style when Sullivan entered his office. Courtesy *Prairie School Review*.

focal points of the interiors were placed ninety degrees to the middle of the long axes providing the congregations with clearer views of their ministers. Sullivan created a much more personal structure than Jenney's version of the neo-Romanesque, but the impetus seems nevertheless to have come from the older man.

When Sullivan entered Jenney's firm in 1873, the latter had been working in a version of the Gothic Revival. Many of his works, particularly those done in Riverside, had a decidedly picturesque aspect. It was likely that Sullivan encountered the origins of his decorative ideas in Jenney's office. Mr. Halstead of the firm of Jensen and Halstead (Jenney's firm which still continues to practice in Chicago) showed me a book, *Recueil de sculptures gothiques*, bearing the stamp of Jenney's ownership.⁴² It contained designs that have a striking similarity to those later developed by Sullivan.

In relating the qualities of the picturesque to Holy Trinity one might refer again to earlier works of Jenney. A house published by Jenney in 1869 possessed a tower as richly varied as Sullivan's steeple.⁴³ The scroll work under the eaves can be

42 Adams, *Recueil de sculptures gothiques*, Paris, 1866.

43 Turak, p. 9.

seen as an ancestor of Sullivan's interlaces. As with virtually all of his work, he transformed the original impulse through the unique problems posed by the building.

Holy Trinity is, I believe, an important monument in the evolution of modern architecture. While not influential in itself, it marked a point when traditional forms became something new. Throughout a large part of the nineteenth century a number of progressive architectural critics saw in eclecticism a potential for creativity that often escapes us today. César Daly, the editor of the influential *Revue générale de l'architecture*, was among those who felt that experimentation with historical styles might produce the sought after modern idiom.⁴⁴ The *Revue générale* was certainly well known in Chicago. Its attitudes were ingrained in the important architects of the city. Jenney had believed that the Gothic was leading Americans toward a new style until interrupted by the Queen Anne.⁴⁵ Harriet Monroe described how John Wellborn Root would thumb through pictures of Medieval architecture before resolving a design problem.⁴⁶

In like manner Sullivan achieved his sublime synthesis from many sources. Holy Trinity was one of the fulcrum upon which the architectural anarchy of the nineteenth century was tipped into a coherent modern style. The cubic shapes, the pronounced overhangs and the disciplined silhouette bear a strong resemblance to the forms being developed at that moment by Sullivan's most illustrious pupil, Frank Lloyd Wright.

44 *Revue générale de l'architecture*, XIV, 1856, Col. 10. Also, Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture*, London, 1965, p. 120.

45 Turak, p. 17.

46 Harriet Monroe, *John Wellborn Root, Architect*, Chicago, 1896, p. 112.

Preview

The tenth year of *The Prairie School Review* will begin with an article by frequent contributor Paul E. Sprague, Professor of Modern Architectural History at the University of Chicago. One of Professor Sprague's classes has surveyed a little known cluster of houses by Walter Burley Griffin on Chicago's south side. The resulting information has been documented and an important period in the development of Griffin's early career now becomes clear.

Marvin Cone

Article by John Zug

Photos by George Henry



Self Portrait

THE rich legacy of Artist Marvin Cone will have special meaning for generations yet unborn — especially for artists but also for all who seek through the arts an enrichment of the spirit.

Here is a philosopher of the arts and their place in the education of man. Here is the skilled craftsman and teacher of the charcoal and the brush and the color; Iowa has produced none to excel him. Here is a good friend who, because of his special talents, can still be known well from the words and paintings he left behind.

"Well, I'll tell you, it's hard to remember when I wasn't drawing and fussing around with paint," he said on a radio show. "Most kids enjoy drawing. I don't seem to remember much earlier than kindergarten."

Cone and Grant Wood, both destined to hang in all the major U. S. museums, were chums from boyhood. At Washington High School in Cedar Rapids, they painted scenery for the plays. At age 15 and 16 they unpacked paintings for the Cedar Rapids Art Association and helped hang them.

"I'm sure these were the first really good paintings we had ever seen," Cone said years later. "We both made up our minds then to become artists."

A pleasant memory through the years was that Wood introduced Cone to the girl who was to become Mrs. Winnifred Cone. It was 1920, and they were all on board a ship coming home from Europe. Marvin and Grant Wood had spent the summer painting in Paris and held an exhibition of their work in the lounge of the S. S. Grampian.

People were whiling away the time with a game, and it fell the role of a Canadian passenger to approach Wood and ask, "Are you the mysterious Mr. Raffles?" Wood was not, but he met several Canadians, including Winnifred.

Cone had been in France in World War I. He designed the insignia for the famed 34th Regiment, and was interpreter for General Hubert Allen. After the Armistice Marvin stayed in Europe and attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts at Montpellier, France.

Cone had graduated from Coe College, Cedar Rapids, in 1914 and spent three years at the Art Institute of Chicago. Back home from France, he began a life-long career of teaching at Coe.

Sometimes, Cone made it all seem so easy. He once said: "My earliest work, as I remember it, was more or less an imitation of nature. That was what most American artists were doing at that time.

"Later, in the Art Institute, I tried painting in different styles, influenced by the paintings in that museum.

"In France, I became an impressionist like nearly all young Americans in Paris.

"When I began teaching at Coe I became interested in still life, then came clouds, circus and carnival pictures, old barns — and the last few years I've been monkeying around with material that people speak of as 'haunted houses'. They are all done from imagination and they seem to offer me more opportunity for design than previous material has."

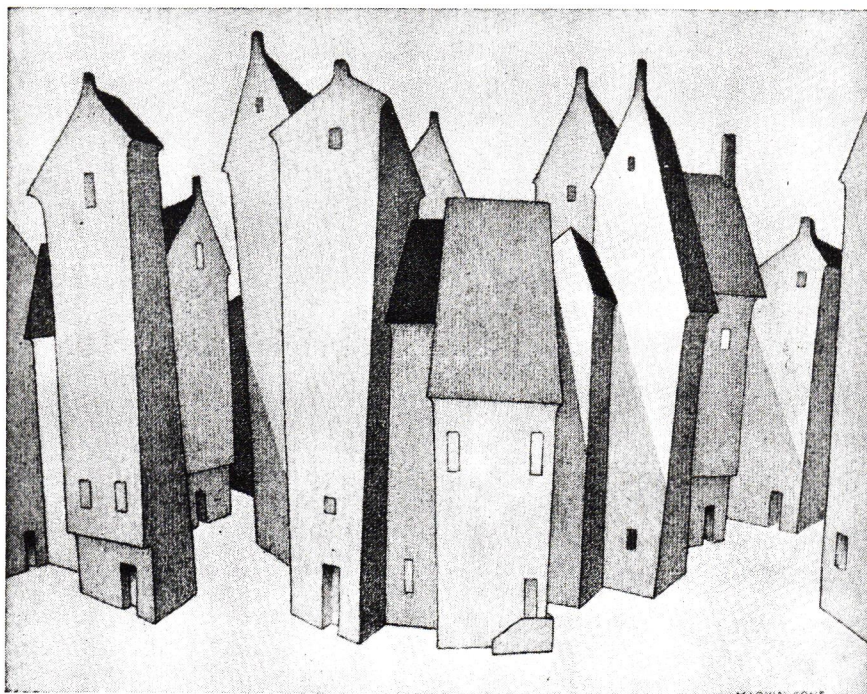
Another Cone insight: "I enjoy the sort of eerie feeling you get when you mosey around in an old vacant house. You imagine the people who have lived there and the events that have happened. I think the first one I did was in an old abandoned house at Stone City, while we were spending a month or so there with the Paul Engles." Cone taught life drawing at the Stone City Art Colony in 1932.

Cone painted ghosts. "I don't think a ghost is a trivial matter," he once said. "People all over the world know about ghosts. A ghost is international. No, I have never seen a ghost, but I like ghosts."

Grant Wood once wrote that Cone's painting shows "a rich vein of what we call, for want of a more serviceable word, the poetic, that lends to the best of it a special depth and inner vibrance."

Others saw still other qualities. Artist Dick Pinney wrote:

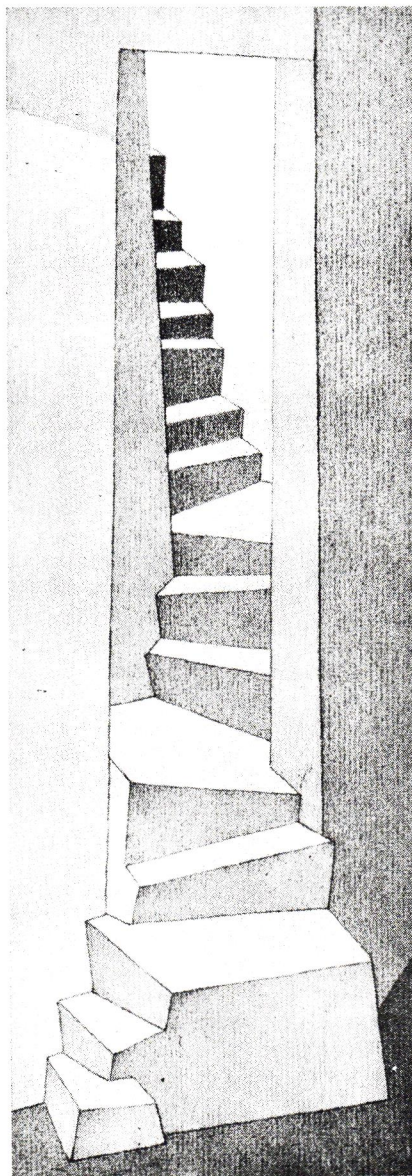
"As transparent as the ghost himself is the wry sense of humor of the painter. You don't have to know Marvin Cone to see the obliqueness of his wit in the 'doorman's' splayed feet, his smooth, cantaloupe head laid in a

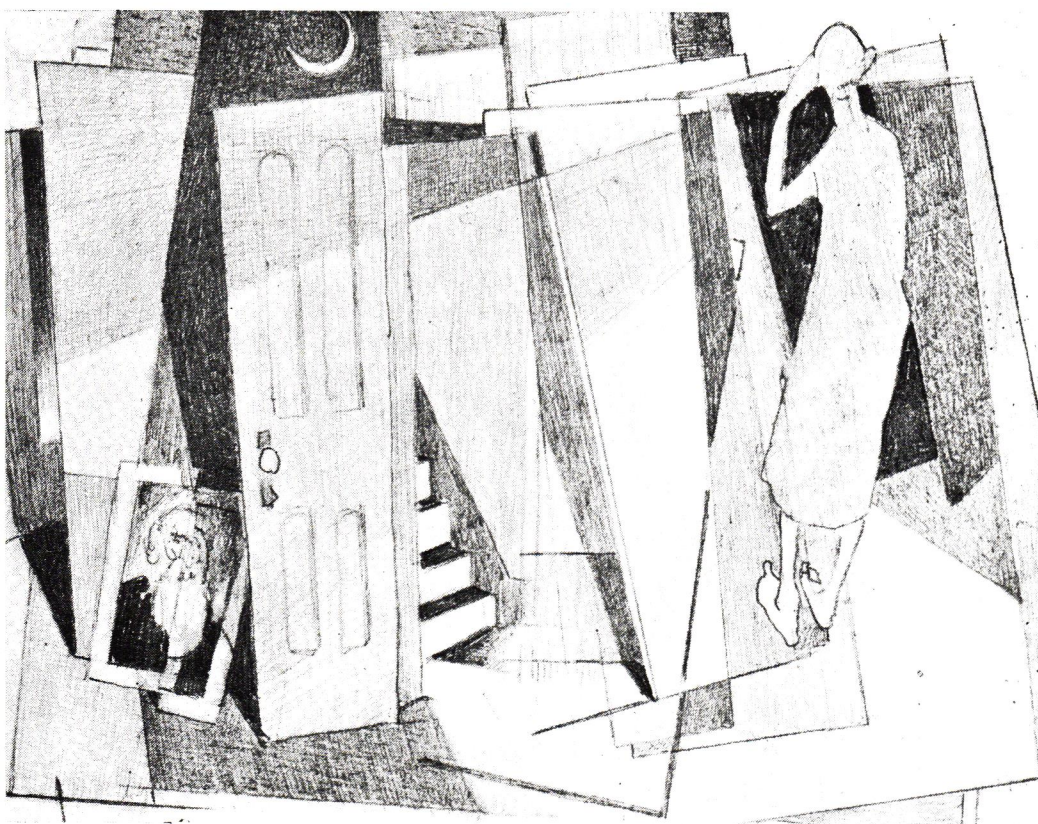


Designs

Uncle Ben

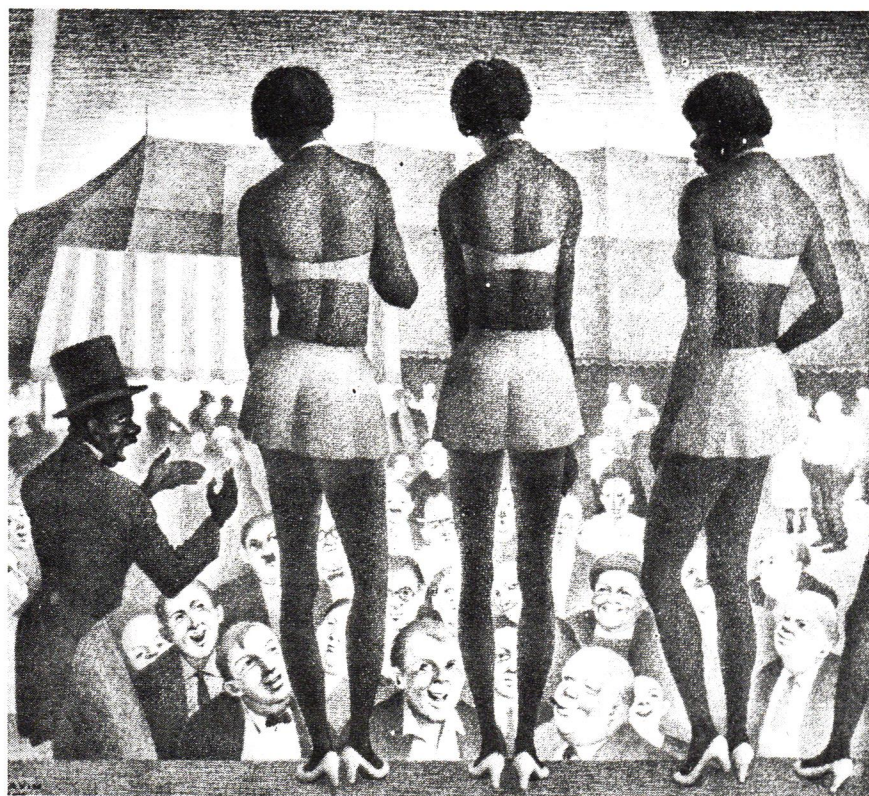
Rakish Steps





Housing Problem with Ghost and Uncle Ben

Carnival Graces



simple single dimension against the wall, the awkward angles this protoplasm takes as it rears back in a sort of ineffectual awfulness."

Paul Engle said about Cone:

"Marvin Cone dramatizes space. He begins not with object, but with emptiness, which he then fills with colors, lines and shapes, identifiable or not, which in turn set up tensions and attractions with each other. In relation to the forms around it, a blank area in one of his paintings may bristle with energy like a magnetic field of force.

"He stares at the world with his hands.

"(His work) . . . demonstrates the process of one artist discovering his own personal way of transfiguring the merely visual into the vision. He has the painter's second sight, the form seen once, and then again, after the imagination has redefined it.

"The whole man goes into the whole artist. Talent will take an individual only so far. After that, the suffusing of talent with character, in all of its meanings, alone can create a superb art. The human dimensions of the painter do give poise and power to the spacial dimensions of the painting."

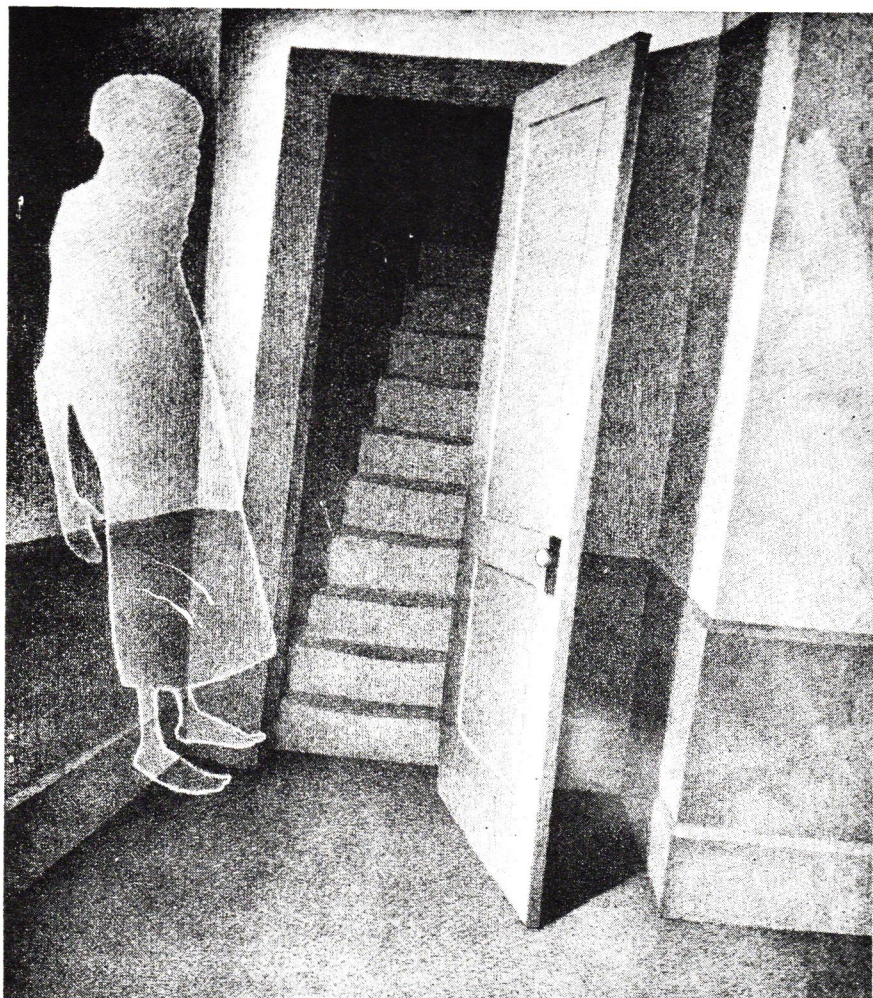
Cone's abstracts are noteworthy for their limited tonal range, a technique by which he made subdued colors come alive as they would not otherwise.

Many words have been written by many persons about Cone's paintings, but let's drop that approach for the moment to let Cone himself communicate in a printed medium, as he did in the *Coe Cosmos* of November 1, 1944:

"Just as a sick body after drastic surgery must have continuous nourishment to offset shock, combat infection, and renew strength, so the human mind or spirit, to offset the damaging effects of the disease of war, must have potent nourishments . . .

"More intelligence and insight are demanded for the expansion of spirit than for specialized training to equip a man to acquire the necessary utilities of life — a sandwich, a coat, a roof.

"These three, as goals of education, are not satisfying for long. For a century, the human spirit has lagged behind material progress for lack of food. Values have been distorted. In times of war and prospective peace, values which have contributed to war must be revalued.



Ghost

Marvin Cone's paintings have been exhibited in most of the major art exhibitions and galleries in the United States, and are in the following permanent collections of: Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines; Mulvane Art Museum, Topeka, Kansas; Norton Art Gallery, West Palm Beach, Florida; Davenport Art Gallery, Davenport; Cedar Rapids Art Center, Cedar Rapids; Waterloo Art Center, Waterloo; University of Iowa, Iowa City; and Coe College owns a collection of twenty-five Cone paintings.

"The fine arts, as part of a humanities program in a liberal arts college, function primarily in the field of the human spirit. As the spiritual heritage of the race they define man, bring him into focus.

"They disclose human beings at their best, uncover the potentialities of mind and spirit and the wide range of insight with which all men, in some measure, are endowed, and show to what heights of accomplishment these qualities may lead when permitted growth.

"The arts train toward sensitive perception, discrimination, and judgment, demonstrate the worth of reflection and discernment, mature and perfect personality. They widen our circle of 'things to cling to', they pull upward, making possible the enrichment which follows contact with enriched personalities, they reinforce our belief in the basic dignity and goodness of man.

"The arts are the best analysis man has of himself. As tangible records of the experiences of virile human beings, they suggest the determining measures of living. By uncovering countless viewpoints the arts encourage living in and enjoying a many-dimensional world.

"Education in the arts increases the values placed upon them. To perceive and enjoy one must have knowledge. The arts become alive and energizing as we catch life from them for they document abundant experience and suggest the meaning of life to man. As such they possess powerful recreative value.

"One familiar with the arts inevitably unravels some significance in the adventure of living. He acquires a philosophy that satisfies and maintains an optimistic outlook toward tomorrow, sure that the heights that have been attained in the past can not only be reached but perhaps surpassed.

"Let us not pretend to be mature as long as we are adolescent with respect to many of the qualities essential to maturity.

"The latter implies peak form, normalcy, fullness, richness and flavor.

"The arts signalize these qualities in human beings. They allow us to savor man. They deal ultimately in intangibles, but by these man lives."

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An example of Gothic interlace that Sullivan might have studied while in Jenney's atelier, *Recueil de sculptures gothiques*.



Another example of decoration from Jenney's studio. Its richness and complexity suggests the ornament of the Carson, Pirie, Scott Store. *Recueil de sculptures gothiques*.

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