

*The*  
**Prairie  
School**  
*Review*

Volume X, Number 2

Second Quarter, 1973



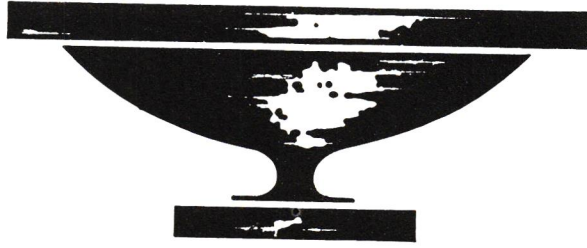


*ABOVE: The entrance to the Trinity Lutheran Chapel combines vertical and horizontal elements skillfully; however, the church as a whole retains a massive and traditional quality.*

*COVER: The exquisite leaded glass in these doors in E. E. Roberts' own home are still as lovely today as when they were installed in 1912.*

*The photographs in this issue are by the author unless otherwise indicated.*

THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW is published four times a year by The Prairie School Press, 12509 South 89th Avenue, Palos Park, Illinois 60464. W.R. Hasbrouck, FAIA, Editor and Publisher, Marilyn Whittlesey Hasbrouck, Assistant Editor. Manuscripts concerning the Prairie School of Architecture and related arts are solicited. Reasonable care will be used in handling manuscripts and such material will be returned if return postage is enclosed. Single copy price \$2.50, subscription \$10.00 per year in U.S. and Canada, \$12.00 elsewhere. Issues are mailed flat in envelopes. Address all change of address notices, subscription or back issue inquiries to the Editor at the above address. © Copyright 1973 by W.R. Hasbrouck.



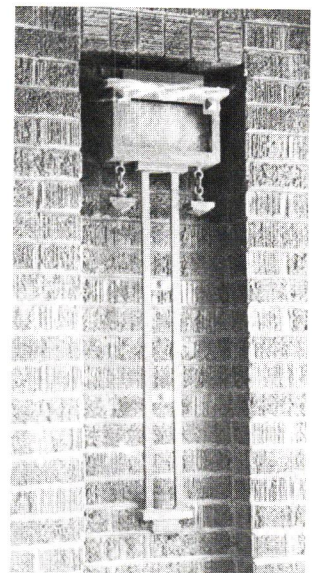
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*Lamp at the entrance to the Elks Club.*



## From the EDITORS

*Richard Nickel was the first to know of The Prairie School Review. We were standing in the vast empty hulk of the old University of Illinois Navy Pier building where remnants of the Garrick theatre were stored — pieces which eventually left Chicago and went to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. He had promised me the front door of Louis Sullivan's Babson house and we were there to get it. Eventually I built our house around it. With a slow smile he said that perhaps I should have that copy of Froebel's book on Kindergarten blocks he had found. He was concerned that my two sons should be exposed to something similar. Then we rambled on about the Chicago Heritage Committee Newsletter which we were trying to edit sporadically and which usually appeared only to lament the destruction of another important building.*

*I said the old White Pine Series was an example of what should be happening again with its measured drawings, photographs and history — we had even thought of doing something of our own along the same lines. But my wife interrupted and said something more like a "Harper's or Atlantic of architecture." Dick just smiled again at our naivete. His experience on the Chicago scene with the Garrick and all the rest didn't leave much room to encourage us — however, why not try . . .*

*But when we got it off the ground, he was subscriber number six. He would drop little notes to us on the back of sailing photographs suggesting a house or an address to be looked at sometime later. Always he would lend photographs with no possibility of payment. He even paid for his subscription faithfully each year when we conveniently left his addressograph plate in the billing list. Later he was more than repaid, he said, when we found and gave him a first edition of Hugh Morrison's Louis Sullivan, Prophet of Modern Architecture. He had been searching for one for years and told us of how many copies he determinedly had not filched from libraries.*

*About a year ago we were among the group who buried him. He was killed photographing the demolition of the Chicago Stock Exchange Building. The shell of Louis Sullivan's masterpiece, weakened by the wrecker's hammer, collapsed under him and he died along with the building. When he was found several weeks later, Richard was taken to Chicago's Graceland Cemetery where he lies within site of the marker of the man he revered but never met, Louis Henry Sullivan. I had the sad privilege of delivering a brief eulogy.*

*We are thinking about doing a memorial issue devoted to Dick and his photographs. Maybe. Maybe the whole ten years of The Prairie School Review is a memorial to him.*



*The influence of the European Art Nouveau movement on Roberts is easily recognizable in this wall panel designed by him for the C. W. Helder house in 1906.*

## *E. E. Roberts:*

### *Popularizing the Prairie School*

by Frances Steiner

In the suburb of Oak Park, just west of Chicago, Illinois, a tremendous architectural transformation was in progress between 1890 and 1915. As the home of Frank Lloyd Wright for twenty years, Oak Park became the geographical nucleus of the "Prairie School." The architecture of Oak Park before Wright began to practice there was commonplace and without special distinction. Except for the relatively small number of clients willing to experiment with the less conventional by engaging Wright or other innovators, popular taste remained conservative. Styles current elsewhere reappeared along the elm-lined streets of the village. However, before 1900 popular taste was changing, and Wright's geometric masses and rectilinear ornament were mirrored in the work, not only of his immediate followers, but in that of every architect and contractor working in Oak Park in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

The work of Eben Ezra Roberts clearly reflects the impact of the Prairie style upon local architecture. Roberts began his practice in a conventional manner, but was not destined to move smoothly in conservative channels once challenged by the new architectural tendencies in Oak Park. Born in Boston in 1866, the son of a woodcarver, Roberts received his education in the public schools of Boston and later in Meredith, New Hampshire; after completing public education, he studied architecture at Tilton Seminary.

*Frances Steiner received her Masters' Degree in 1970 from the University of Chicago. Her Masters' Thesis, written under the direction of Professor Paul Sprague, at the University of Chicago, was the basis for this article. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree at Northwestern University and teaching in the Northwestern Evening Division.*