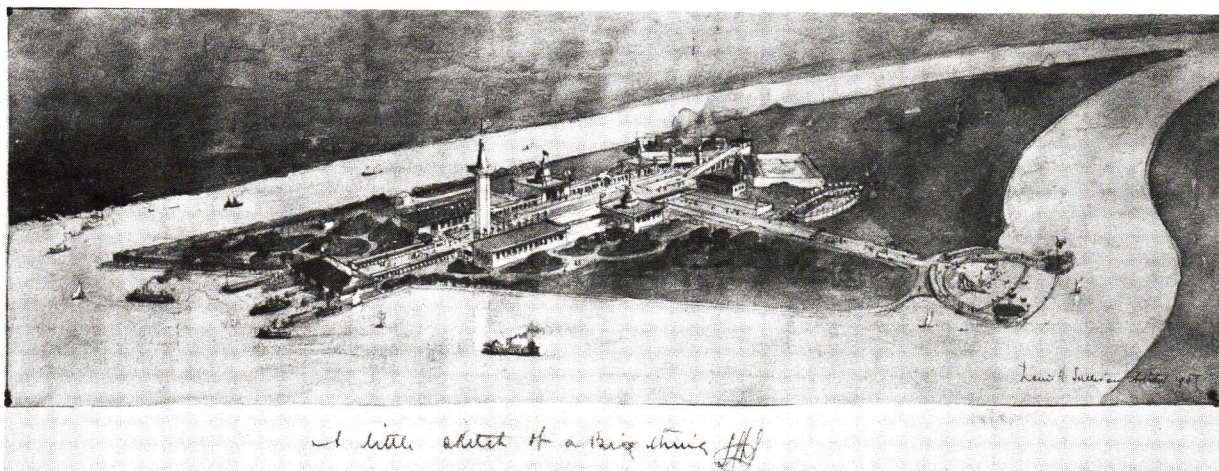


The
Prairie School
Review

Volume XII, Number 3

Third Quarter, 1975

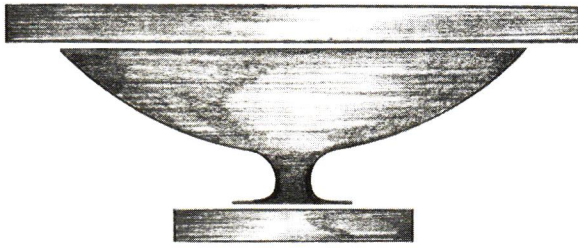
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ABOVE: Louis Sullivan designed his Island City project in 1907-08. He inscribed the drawing "A little sketch of a Big thing LHS". It appears to have been derived in part from Wright's Wolf Lake Amusement Park project of 1895. Wright's Midway Gardens design seems to have been influenced by this work of Sullivan. Drawing from PSP Archive.

COVER: The James Charnley house of 1891, still standing on Astor Street in Chicago, is the building which is almost always credited jointly to Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. PSP Archive photo.

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, and Marilyn Whittlesey Hasbrouck, Editors and Publishers, Virginia Kurshan, 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 mailed flat in envelopes. Address all change of address notices, subscription or back issue inquiries to the Editors at the above address. © Copyright 1975 by W. R. Hasbrouck.



The **Prairie School** *Review*

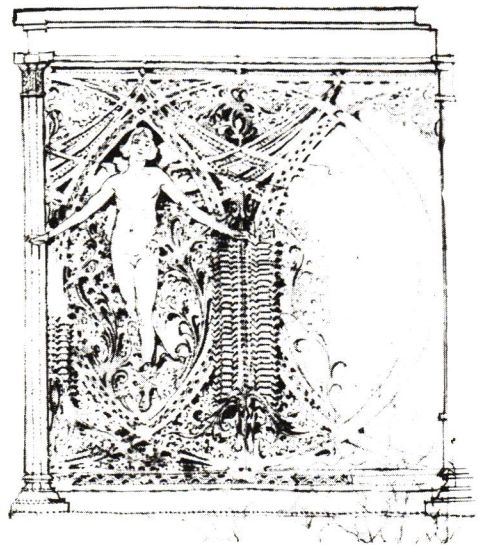
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This drawing of a female figure was executed in plaster by Richard Bock for the Heller house in Chicago. Wright drew heavily from Sullivan in the design of this frieze. The drawing was first published in The Architectural Review in 1900.



From the EDITORS

Something must be done to preserve in its entirety America's first modern house. Threatened with irreversible interior alterations is Chicago's world famous Charnley house, built in 1891 from designs by America's first modern architects—Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Although situated on a prestigious residential street now increasingly defaced by high-rise apartment construction, the Charnley house has survived virtually intact. But it is now proposed to incorporate this magnificent dwelling into a group of town houses planned for a site immediately behind it. The interior of the Charnley house would be vertically divided into thirds; its central stair hall would be converted into an entrance for the new structures. Openings would be cut through its walls to annex its remaining rooms to two of the new residences.

The Charnley house is an official Chicago Landmark standing in a newly-designated Historic District. Yet the Commission on Chicago Historic and Architectural Landmarks has unofficially approved this proposed interior conversion as an appropriate scheme for adaptive preservation. We strongly disagree.

Both its exterior and interior enshrine visible reminders of two great artists at work, and illustrate their aesthetic prowess at the very moment they were leading the world in throwing off the trammels of eclecticism and asserting their individuality in a truly American and determinedly modern architecture. The significance of the Charnley house can hardly be overstressed. Its cubic mass, bounded by flat surfaces and sharp linear edges, was a revelation in its day. No house before it anywhere in the world conveyed so clearly an entirely new, original and modern style.

The commission for the Charnley house came to the architectural firm of Adler and Sullivan in the spring of 1891 from Sullivan's friend, lumber magnate James Charnley. At that time Frank Lloyd Wright, although only twenty-three, was Sullivan's chief assistant. Wright personally made the working drawings, but it is quite obvious that Sullivan guided his hand, as evidenced in the formal symmetry of the design, the sharp-edged geometry of the massing, and the vitality of the floral-geometric ornamentation. Wright seems to have been particularly responsible for the framed entrance and the vertical spaciousness of the central stair—which rises without interruption to a rooftop skylight—as well as the exquisite detailing of the oak used for panelling, stair, stair-screens, mantles and cabinetwork.

The interior layout, intact except for the addition many years ago of a two-story porch to the south, is spread over three floors and basement. On the first floor the stair hall is flanked by the living and dining rooms, plus a modern kitchen and porch. The second floor, in addition to the stair hall, has three bedrooms, two baths, and an enclosed porch. Another bedroom and bath plus a small apartment make up the third floor. The basement contains the original kitchen and pantry, plus laundry, storage and furnace rooms.

To preserve this house in its entirety is a moral and social obligation, not as a monument to the past, but for the edification and instruction of future generations of Americans.

This editorial was adapted from a statement prepared by architect John Vinci and architectural historian Paul Sprague. We thank them for their comments. Ed.



AUSGEFÜHRTE BAUTEN UND ENTWÜRFE VON FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT.

Ja Meiner Lieber Meister Louis H. Sullivan
Frank Lloyd Wright

Photo by Tom Yanul

The Reunion of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright

by Kenneth W. Severens

Kenneth W. Severens is an associate professor in the Department of Fine Arts at the College of Charleston. He is presently writing a book on the Sullivan bank buildings from the viewpoint of patronage. He has also written an article on Sullivan's preliminary drawings for the Grinnell bank for the AIA Journal.

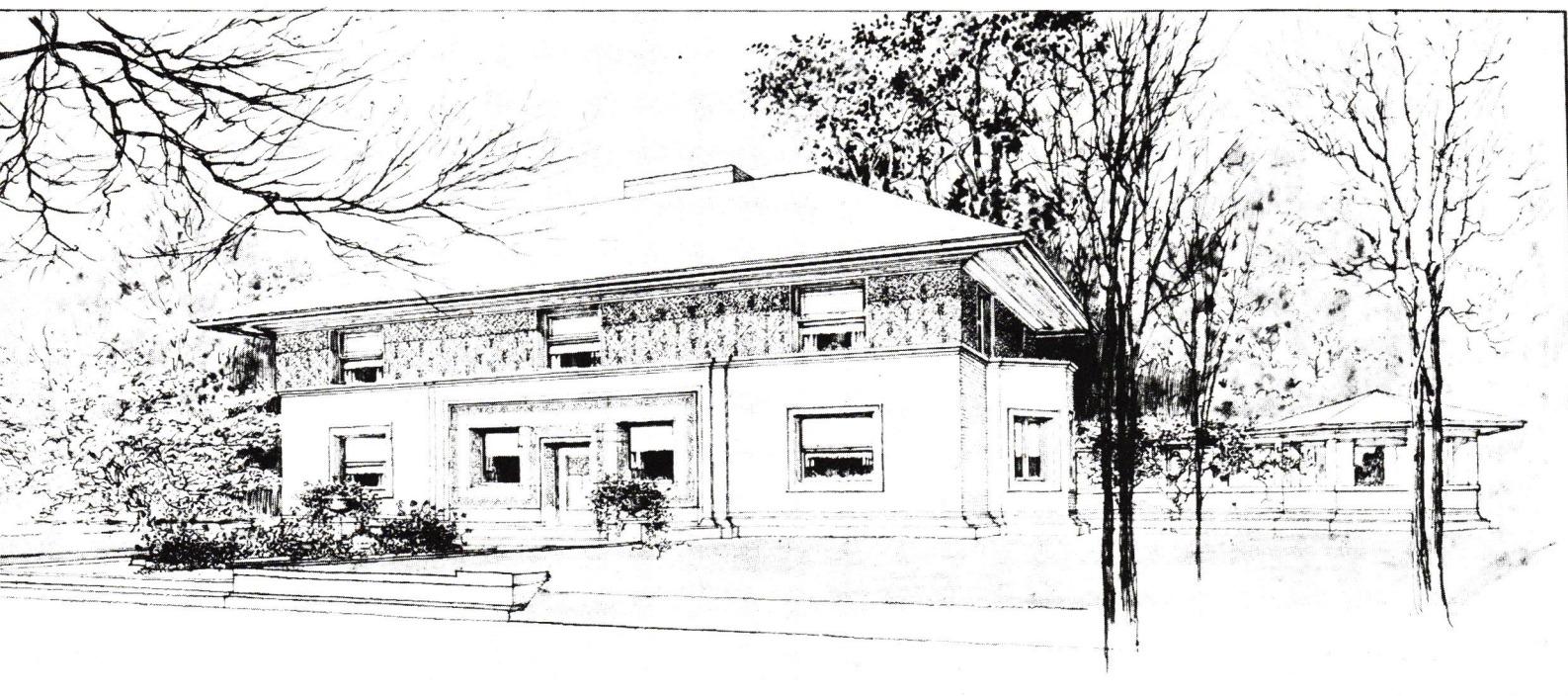
The heated argument which erupted between Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright in the Chicago Auditorium Tower in the spring of 1893 revolved around a relatively simple matter, the contract of 1889 which permitted Wright to draw advances on his salary from Adler & Sullivan. One of the less important clauses (at least to Wright) was that he had agreed to do no architectural work on his own.¹ When the contract had nearly run its five-year course, Wright requested the deed to his Oak Park house which had been largely financed by the advances. Sullivan unexpectedly revealed that he was aware of the "bootlegged" houses which the

young draftsman had been doing after hours and that they were violations of the contract. Wright would acknowledge his indiscretion later,² but the moment of confrontation was not a time to yield, and he angrily walked out of the office without the deed. The results of the quarrel are well-known. Wright emerged as an independent architect and celebrated the fact that very year by designing the Winslow house in River Forest, which after an unbelievably productive career of sixty-five years still stands as a consummate masterpiece. Sullivan, on the other hand, had experienced the first of a long series of disappointments which would plague

5

¹ Grant Carpenter Manson, *Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910 — The First Golden Age*, Rheinhold, New York, 1958, pp. 33-34.

² Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*, Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, New York, 1943, pp. 110-111.



him the rest of his life.

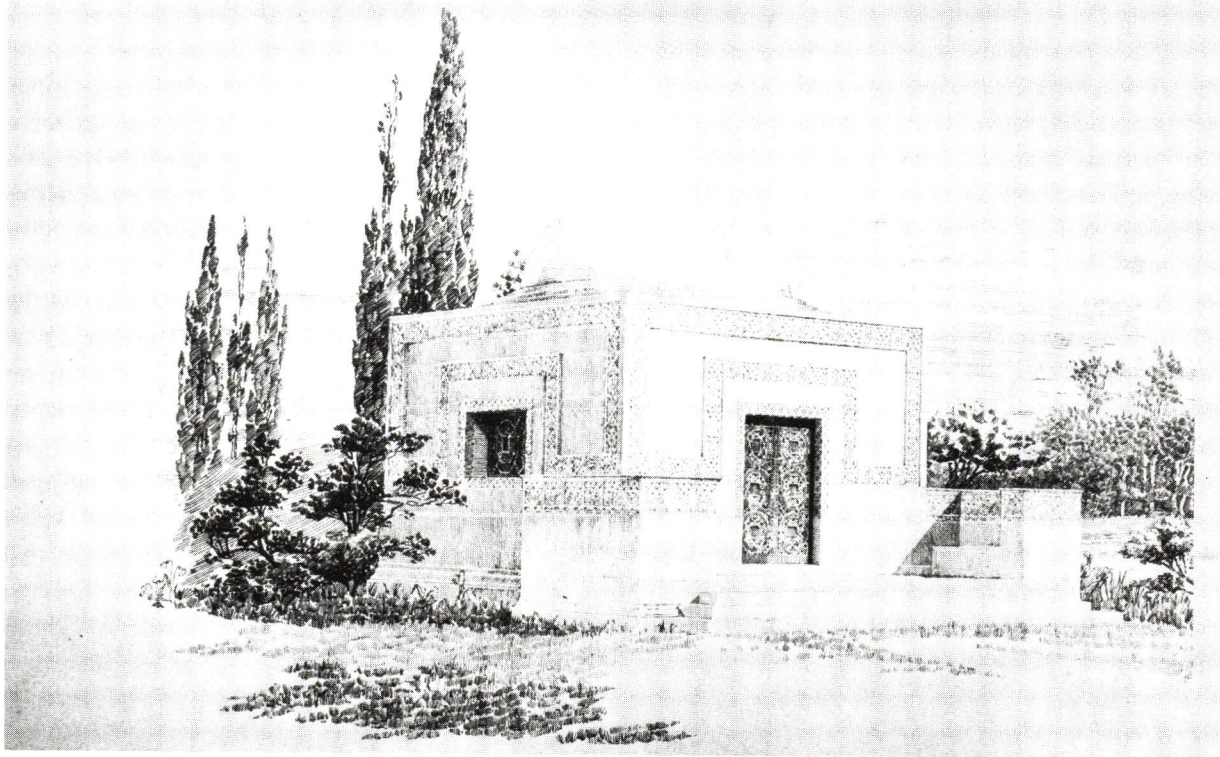
Unfortunately, the quarrel has been described only from Wright's viewpoint, and recent articles have shown that caution is necessary in the use of Wright's later writings about the early events in his career.³ Sullivan's *The Autobiography of an Idea* ends with the Columbian Exposition of 1893, the year of the disagreement, and he left Wright completely out of the book. Therefore, much is speculative about the separation and the reunion, and both participants have either misconstrued or withheld much of the evidence. Nevertheless, hitherto unexplained statements and even firmer architectural relationships suggest that Sullivan and Wright were so psychologically intertwined that an eventual reunion was inevitable.

As hard as each architect tried to ignore the other after 1893 (and they did try), the estrangement was bound to fail since they continued to work in the same city and their attitudes toward architecture were interdependent. The progress toward reunion proceeded slowly but steadily from the moment of

the break. In the 1890s it can be seen mainly in their buildings, but after the turn of the century the evidence gradually extends to their associations and writings. When personal reunion did occur some twenty years after the quarrel, both architects eagerly confirmed it in their architecture. The years 1909-1915 were difficult for Wright as well as Sullivan, and the renewal of friendship provided a source of regeneration for both. Finally, the sadness of Sullivan's last years was partially ameliorated by the occasional visits of Wright, and in the course of those meetings the latter assumed responsibilities as Sullivan's biographer which would not be fulfilled until after World War II.

Sullivan and Wright remained apart for the rest of the 1890s, and neither mentioned the other in any writing published in that decade. However, their architecture reveals a continuing bond. Wright, in particular, did not rush to rid his work of Sullivanian motifs. The Winslow house in totality is unthinkable as a Sullivan design; nevertheless it reflects the influence of Wright's years with Sullivan. The buff limestone frame which surrounds the doorway and the flanking windows comes directly from the Wainwright Tomb in St. Louis of 1892 and also relates to the entrance of the Charnley house in Chicago of 1891. The roof overhang and the ornamental frieze below, which acts as a built-in shadow, derive from the Victoria Hotel in Chicago Heights of 1892-1893. To a contemporary observer the details would have been Sullivanian, but the buildings from which the references come are those in which Wright's hand has now been generally recog-

3 Thomas S. Hines, Jr., "Frank Lloyd Wright — The Madison Years, Records and Recollections," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XXVI (December, 1967), pp. 227-233; and Eileen Michels, "The Early Drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright reconsidered," *ibid.*, XXX (December, 1971), pp. 294-303. Both H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School — Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries*, University of Toronto, 1972; and Robert C. Twombly, *Frank Lloyd Wright — An Interpretive Biography*, Harper & Row, New York, 1973, have observed Wright's tendency later in life to alter his attitude toward earlier events.



Frank Lloyd Wright's design for the Winslow house (1893-94), shown at left, was his first independent commission after leaving Adler and Sullivan. The Wainwright Memorial (1892), above, certainly influenced Wright's design as did the Charnley house illustrated on the cover. Photos from the PSP Archives.

nized.⁴ The Winslow house is more than a statement of independence since Wright seemed to be claiming for himself the specific aspects which he had contributed to the Adler & Sullivan buildings.

The continuation of foliate ornament in Wright's work yields a different explanation. Paul Sprague has concluded that the ornament of the Francis Apartments and Francisco Terrace, both Chicago buildings of 1895, was the work of George Elmslie who assisted Wright on a part-time basis during this period.⁵ As late as the Husser house of 1899 in Chicago, Wright employed an ornamental richness which has been described as "unexpectedly Sullivanian" and a "last flare-up of Sullivanism,"⁶ Not until the prairie houses did Wright relinquish foliate ornament, and this in itself relates his work to that of Sullivan.

4 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials — The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright (1887-1941)*, Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, New York, 1942, pp. 7-14; and Manson, *Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910*, pp. 21-34.

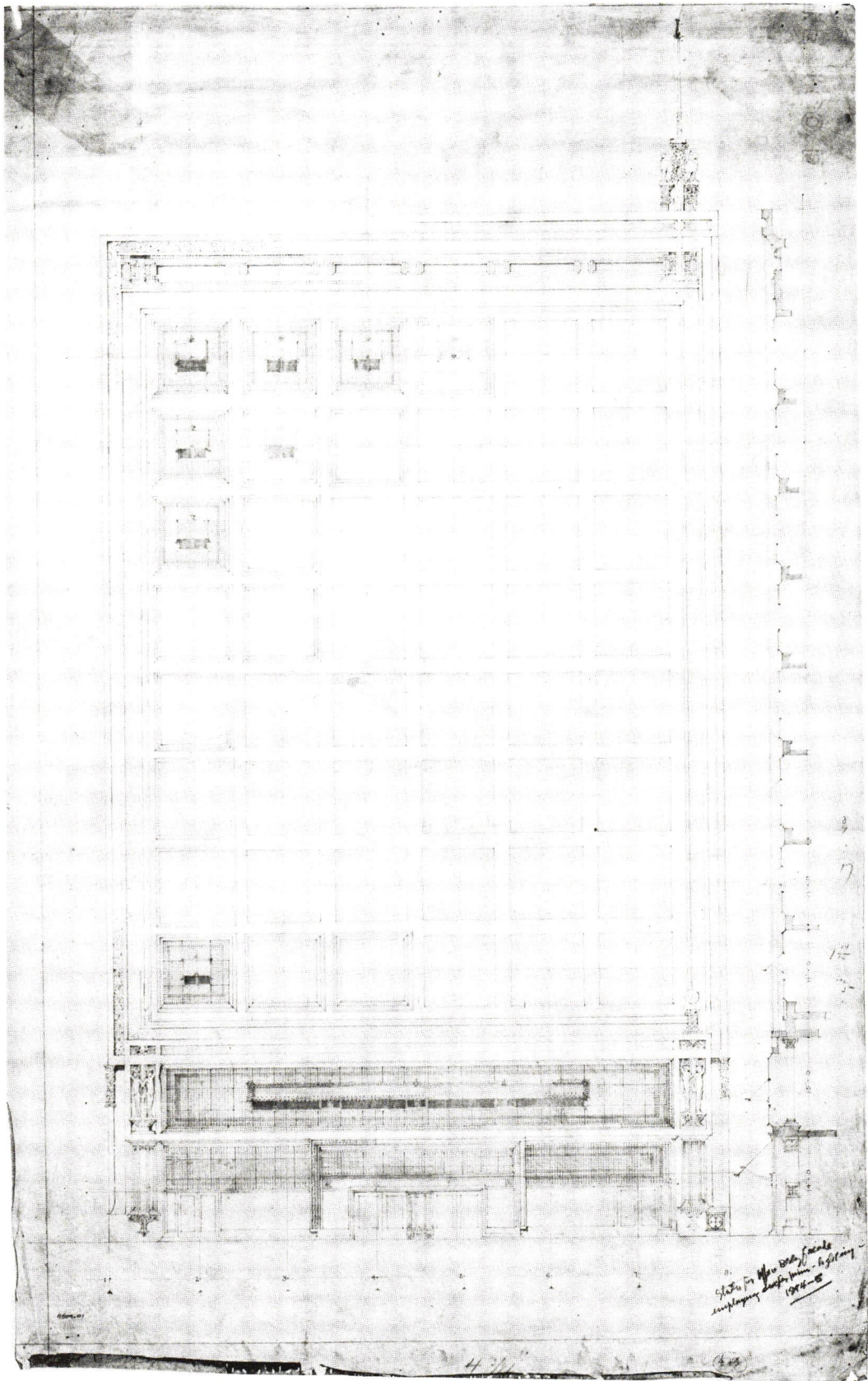
5 Paul Sprague, "The Architectural Ornament of Louis Sullivan and his Chief Draftsmen," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Princeton University, 1968, pp. 98-99, has convincingly shown that George Elmslie, Sullivan's chief assistant after Wright left in 1893, designed ornament for Wright in his spare time.

6 Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials*, pl. 45; and Manson, *Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910*, p. 76.

In 1897 Wright's Heller house in Chicago and Sullivan's Bayard Building in New York featured female figures under the roof cornices. Sullivan's winged figures are more truly caryatids, while Wright's are less architectonic — wingless women joining hands. The latter have been conclusively related to an illustration in Viollet-le-Duc's *Discourses on Architecture*,⁷ a book which both Sullivan and Wright knew. Furthermore, winged female figures appeared on the Transportation Building of the Columbian Exposition, one of the last Adler & Sullivan buildings on which Wright worked. The Heller house figures were placed on a background of circularly interlaced foliage reminiscent of the attic frieze of Sullivan's Wainwright Building in St. Louis of 1890-1891. The Wainwright Building also provided the source for Wright's 1897 project for the Abraham Lincoln Center which John Lloyd Wright asserted his father had done originally in 1888 outside Adler & Sullivan office hours,⁸ a statement which implies that the essential concept underlying the Wainwright Building came from Wright. Although the date and the conclusion are implausible, the situation does reinforce the idea that Wright wanted to claim as his own the work he had done for Adler & Sullivan.

7 Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., "The Fine Arts and Frank Lloyd Wright," *Four Great Makers of Modern Architecture*, (Columbia University School of Architecture Symposium, 1961), Da Capo, New York, 1970, p. 31; and Donald P. Hallmark, "Richard W. Bock, Sculptor. Part II: The Mature Collaborations," *Prairie School Review*, VIII (1971), 2, p. 9.

8 John Lloyd Wright, *My Father Who is on Earth*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1946, p. 20.





Louis Sullivan designed the first section of the Schlesinger & Meyer building, shown above, in 1899. It was a response to Wright's unbuilt design of 1894-95 for the Luxfer Prism Company building illustrated at left. Both incorporated the Luxfer prism, but the basic design in each case subordinated the prism to the rectangular grid of the structural frame. In these two designs, the skyscraper reached maturity. Luxfer Prism drawing photograph by George Barrows through the courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art. Photo above by Fuerman.

Wright admitted in *An Autobiography* that his early buildings were "characterized to a certain extent by the Sullivanian idiom, at least in detail," and apparently he did not resent the implications for he went on to write that he "couldn't invent the terms of [his] own overnight."⁹ A similar acknowledgment

⁹ Wright, *An Autobiography*, p. 130.

emerges with the description of Daniel Burnham's offer in 1894 to finance Wright's education at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Wright refused the opportunity to study in Paris and he explained his reason: he had "been too close to Mr. Sullivan. He has helped spoil the Beaux Arts for me, or spoiled me for the Beaux Arts."¹⁰ Wright also included an indirect communication of the late 1890s. "A remark of the Master's had come back to me by way of my client Winslow: 'Sullivan says, Frank, it looks as though you were going to work out your own individuality.' So he was interested in me still, was he?"¹¹ Undatable, brief, and enigmatic, the incident along with the architectural evidence indicates that both Sullivan and Wright were conscious of each other's development and that the bitterness of 1893 was waning.

Wright's compassion for both Sullivan and Adler is best illustrated by his attempt at reuniting the partners. Dankmar Adler had left the firm in 1895, but his venture in the elevator business lasted less than a year. Architect friends concluded that a renewed partnership would be advantageous for both Adler and Sullivan, and Wright worked toward that end, but to no avail because of the stubbornness of both parties. He discussed reconciliation with Adler and although he did not communicate with Sullivan,¹² Wright was obviously concerned for Sullivan's welfare.

The Luxfer Prism Company Building which Wright designed in 1894-1895 projected the skyscraper into the twentieth century by filling the grid of the structural frame with glass in proportions which no Chicago architect had then attained. The overall rectangular border was as richly ornamented as Sullivan's Guaranty Building in Buffalo of the same date, but the sheathing over the square grid was without ornament, emphasizing the geometry of the skeleton and the planarity of the surface. Sullivan did not immediately react. His Bayard Building was even more sumptuously ornamented than the Guaranty Building, and its colonnettes, behind which no structural verticals exist, reveal his personal treatment of a facade as an equilibrated rhythm of upward and downward forces. In the Gage Building of 1898-1899 (for which Sullivan designed only the facade), the rectangular frame is expressed more directly, but its colonnettes, which resemble Gothic compound piers, are attached to the top of the facade by exuberant flourishes. Not until the Schlesinger & Mayer Building of 1899-1904, did Sullivan respond to the Luxfer project,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 264-265.

and during that time Sullivan and Wright also began to make spoken and written moves in each other's direction, still rather formal and covert, but significant enough to lead to Sullivan's *Kindergarten Chats*.

Two events in June, 1900 — the first comprehensive publication of Wright's work and the convention of the Architectural League of America — provide the background for the *Kindergarten Chats*. Robert C. Spencer wrote "The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright"¹³ and was a member, along with Wright, of the Steinway Hall group of young progressive architects who acknowledged Sullivan as their spiritual leader. Spencer's article resulted from personal knowledge and collaboration with Wright since many of the themes recur in Wright's subsequent writings. Consequently, Spencer's treatment of Wright's education and his relation to Sullivan may be interpreted as an official statement sanctioned by Wright.

If I were making a plea for the kindergarten idea in education, I could adduce no better living example of its value as a factor in the development of artistic faculties than by referring to the subject of these pages. He is one of very few in our profession who have enjoyed that training. As a child in Boston he was given by his mother the benefit of the Froebel system of training the eyes to see, the brain to think and the hands to do. To this fortunate early training as a beginning she ascribes his instinctive grasp of niceties of line, form and color. And no more fortunate circumstance could have befallen him than his schooling with Mr. Sullivan, himself an independent and close student of nature.

The word "kindergarten" stands out prophetically, and as if to indicate that Wright was still too proud to proclaim publicly his indebtedness to Sullivan, Spencer does it for him, but undoubtedly with his approval.

No one more than he realizes and is grateful for the significance in this work of the early influence of Sullivan. Working together as master and trusted pupil for seven years, during a period of great undertakings, there must have been between two such ardent natures an interchange of thought and influence not wholly one-sided.

The germ of the *Kindergarten Chats* continued to grow at the convention of the Architectural League of America which met in Chicago on June 7-9, 1900. Sherman Paul and H. Allen Brooks have studied the underlying events which led to fifty-two essays published serially in the *Interstate Architect and*

Builder from February 16, 1901, to February 8, 1902.¹⁴ Both Sullivan and Wright addressed the convention on Friday morning, June 8; Sullivan was acknowledged by applause and speeches as the inspirational source for the Steinway Hall group. According to the *American Architect and Building News*, Sullivan "was evidently the master, and, as one of the later speakers expressed it, they the disciples,"¹⁵ and the *Inland Architect and News Record* identified that speaker as Wright himself.¹⁶ The presence of Sullivan and Wright at the same session dispels conclusively the literal accuracy of Wright's statement that after the quarrel the two architects did not see each other for twenty years.

While discussing in his address the education of an architect, Wright advised that "the kindergarten circle of sympathetic discernment should be drawn about him when he is born, and he should be brought into contact with nature by prophet and seer until abiding sympathy with her is his."¹⁷ Kindergarten, nature, and an intimate master-pupil bond were sensitively combined. What a revelation this must have been to Sullivan! In the introductory remark Wright had called Sullivan the master and he the disciple, and now Sullivan heard the very ideas which he knew he would proclaim the next night in the main address, "The Young Man in Architecture."¹⁸

When Sullivan revised the *Kindergarten Chats* in 1918, his foreword stated, "It was originally written for young architects,"¹⁹ and foremost in his mind must have been the Steinway Hall group. But the essays were more specifically addressed to the former pupil who publicly had named Sullivan the master. Perhaps the informal dialogue of the *Kindergarten Chats* (the only time Sullivan used that format) was meant as a discreet invitation to Wright to renew their personal relationship.

Sullivan announced the preparation of the essays in a letter dated December 13, 1900, to Lyndon Smith,²⁰ the New York architect who had assisted

14 Sherman Paul, *Louis Sullivan — An Architect in American Thought*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1962, pp. 55-57; and Brooks, *The Prairie School*, pp. 38-40.

15 LXVIII (June 16, 1900), p. 87.

16 XXXV (June, 1900), p. 43.

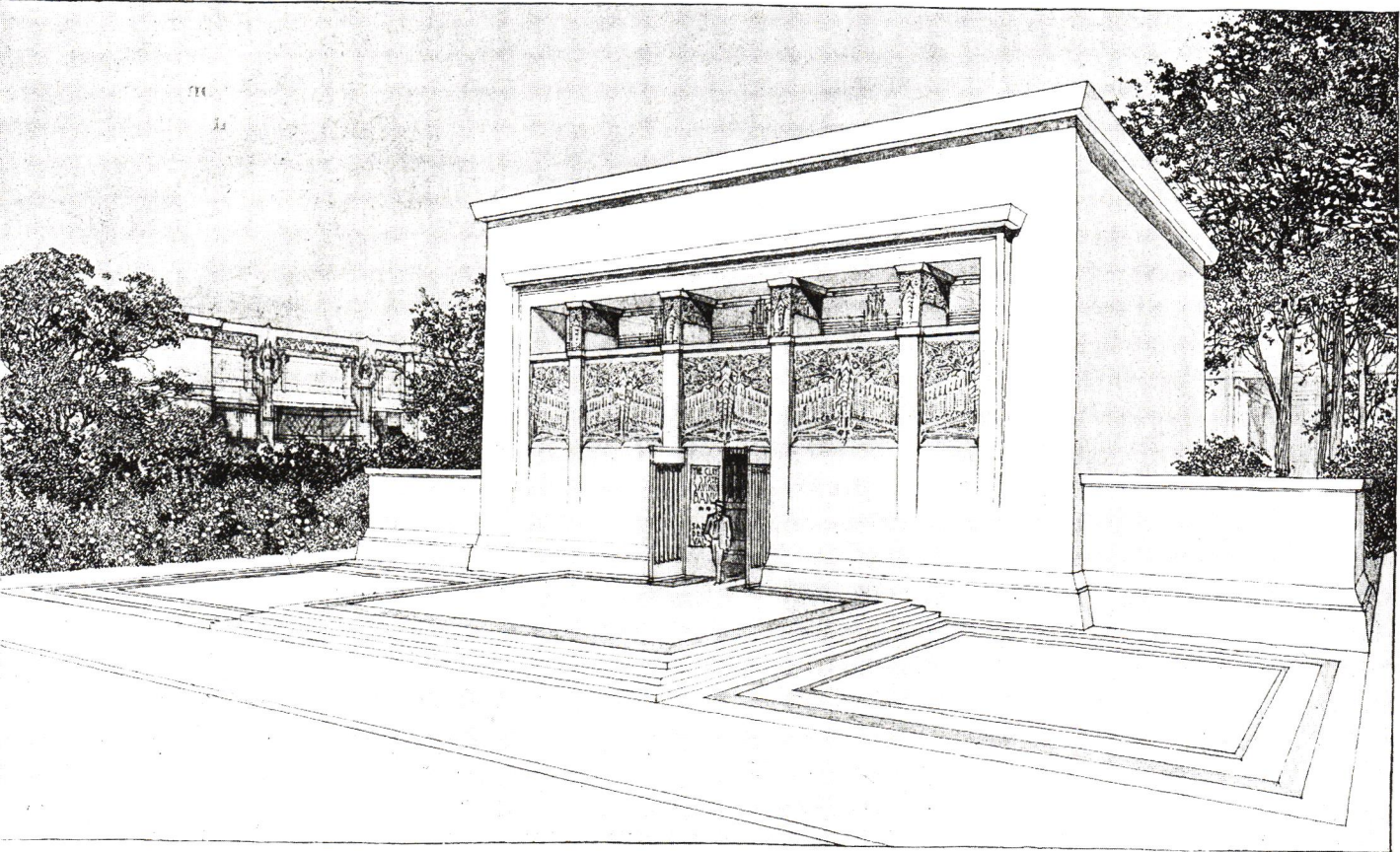
17 Wright's address, "The Architect," was published in the *Brickbuilder*, IX (June, 1900), pp. 124-128; and the section which refers to the kindergarten can also be found in Frederick Gutheim, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture*, Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, New York, 1941, p. 16.

18 For the address, see Louis H. Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats and Other Writings*, Wittenborn, New York, 1947, pp. 214-223.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

20 The letter (now in the Avery Library of Columbia University) is published in *ibid.*, p. 243.

13 *Architectural Review* (Boston), VII (June, 1900), pp. 61-72.



Wright's Village Bank of 1901 was designed for cast concrete although it was described as brick in *The Brickbuilder*. This change and its publication six months after the village bank competition ended suggests that Wright was responding to Sullivan's denunciation of classical banks in the *Kindergarten Chats*.

him with the Bayard Building. Subsequent letters to Smith reiterated Sullivan's program and stressed that he was writing for the architectural layman rather than the professional. But again, a more specific reader was suggested by Sullivan in a letter of uncertain date to Claude Bragdon. "A young man who has 'finished his education' at the architectural schools comes to me for a post-graduate course."²¹ The title *Kindergarten Chats* refers to Spencer's statement in the *Architectural Review*, Wright's address to the Architectural League of America, and the earliest training which Wright had received in architecture, the kindergarten principles of Friedrich Froebel. The spontaneity of the dialogue recalls the long evening discussions which Wright and Sullivan had experienced from 1887-1893. The overbearing tone of the master recaptures Sullivan's paternalistic attitude toward the young Wright, and the overconfidence and arrogance of the pupil, particularly in the early *Chats*, correspond to Wright's estimation. The letter was quoted in the introduction of the 1934 Scarab edition of the *Kindergarten Chats* and reprinted in Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats and Other Writings*, p. 245.

tion in *An Autobiography* of his own personality. Finally, the building which the master holds up as the prime model of excellence, Richardson's Marshall Field Wholesale Warehouse of 1885-1887, was finished in the year when Wright began his apprenticeship with Sullivan.

The interdependence of Sullivan and Wright emerges with a literary and architectural exchange concerning bank design. In 1900-1901 the *Brickbuilder* sponsored a competition for a village bank, and of the six designs which received awards and criticism in February, 1901 (the month the *Kindergarten Chats* began to be published), all had porticos with classical columns.²² Two months later Sullivan's Chat, "A Roman Temple," was a tirade against classical banks.²³ The *Brickbuilder* published another village bank in August, six months after the competition was over, and Wright was the architect.²⁴ His project embodied Sullivan's progressive ideals, and the program as well as the design mark the beginning of the prairie banks which would constitute the majority of Sullivan's late commissions.

22 X (February, 1901), pp. 33-36.

23 *Interstate Architect and Builder*, III (April 13, 1901), p. 6; and Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats and Other Writings*, p. 37.

24 X (August, 1901), pp. 160-161; reprinted in *Architectural Essays from the Chicago School*, Prairie School Press, Park Forest, 1967, pp. 18-19.

During the period of the *Kindergarten Chats*, the communication between Sullivan and Wright remained impersonal and indirect; pride and discretion still kept them apart. Furthermore, Sullivan tended to express his ideas metaphorically and a simple, direct statement in regard to Wright would have been out of character. Less enigmatic are Wright's early writings, but his temperament precluded a conciliatory gesture to Sullivan. Thus, the renewal of friendship was still more than a decade in the future. The two architects must have seen each other occasionally at the Chicago Architectural Club, and in the exhibition of 1902, which the Steinway Hall group dominated, the work of Wright and Sullivan was the most amply displayed, which could not have gone unnoticed. Regardless of their personal feelings, Sullivan and Wright were the leaders of the progressive architecture which had emerged in the Midwest, and as one author expressed it in 1904, "it derives its momentum and inspiration chiefly from the work of Mr. Louis Sullivan, and from a very able architect, who issued from Mr. Sullivan's office, Mr. Frank Wright."²⁵

Wright's full acknowledgment of Sullivan did not occur until 1908 when he wrote "for seven years it was my good fortune to be the understudy of a great teacher and a great architect, to my mind the greatest of his time — Mr. Louis H. Sullivan."²⁶ Wright went on to say that Adler & Sullivan were primarily interested in commercial buildings. "So, largely, it remained for me to carry into the field of domestic architecture the battle they had begun in commercial building." Not only did Wright single out Sullivan as his teacher, but he also traced Chicago architecture as a continuum from skyscrapers to prairie houses. This position Thomas Tallmadge confirmed in his article, "The 'Chicago School,'"²⁷ which treated Sullivan as the inspirational leader and Wright as a prominent member of the Steinway Hall Group.

The National Farmers Bank of Owatonna, Minnesota (1906-1908), which Sullivan designed before Wright's acknowledgment of indebtedness, strikingly contrasts with the Peoples Savings Bank of Cedar Rapids, Iowa (1909-1911). The banks are so different in concept, form, and ornamentation that they, without any other information, suggest a major reorientation in Sullivan's work.

25 Arthur C. David, "The Architecture of Ideas," *Architectural Record*, XV (April, 1904), pp. 363-364.

26 Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture," *Architectural Record*, XXIII (March, 1908), p. 156.

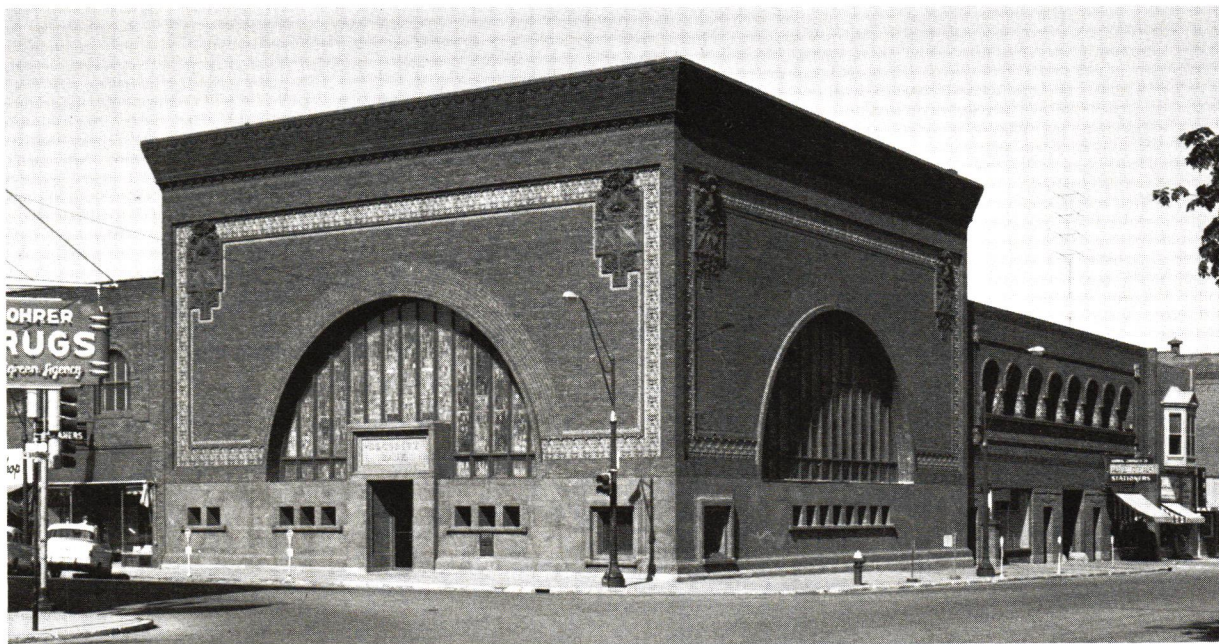
27 *Architectural Review* (Boston), XV (April, 1908), pp. 69-74, 78; reprinted in *Architectural Essays from the Chicago School*, pp. 3-8.

The Bennett family, who owned the Owatonna bank, conceived it as a monument for the community.²⁸ The building stands on a prominent corner of the business district, defines one side of the town green, and complements the city hall and county courthouse on the other side. Carl K. Bennett, the vice president, has described the family intentions: "They believed that an adequate expression of the character of their business in the form of a simple, dignified and beautiful building was due to themselves and due to their patrons."²⁹ In the concluding paragraph, he stressed the monumental aspect. "The owners of this building feel that they have a true and lasting work of art — a structure which, though 'built for business,' will increase in value as the years go by and which will be as adequate for use and as fresh and inspiring in its beauty one hundred years from now as it is today."

Sullivan understood the dual purpose of his clients by designing a building which functions on two different levels. The red sandstone base relates to the pedestrian on the street and corresponds in height to the banking areas inside. The change in material to brick for the upper exterior and the increased ornamentation convey monumentality. The spandrel cartouches which grow organically out of the brick wall and the light green terra cotta border with ripening fruit symbolize the agrarian wealth which supported the bank. Above the tellers' cages, offices, and vaults on the interior, murals depict dairy farming, the main occupation of the county, while the B monograms in the spandrels of the great arches, the heraldic designs in the opalescent glass, and the overall sumptuous decoration express the idea of the family monument. Even the placement of the vaults on the central axis represents conscious planning to elevate the business transaction to a quasi-religious experience. The tellers' space in front of the vaults projected (before remodeling) as an apse into the public lobby, and

28 Paul Sprague, "The National Farmers' Bank, Owatonna, Minnesota," *Prairie School Review*, IV (1967), 2, pp. 11-13; and David Gebhard, Letter to the Editor, *ibid.*, IV (1967), 3, pp. 33-36. Considerable controversy has emerged concerning Elmslie's contribution to the Owatonna bank; the extreme position is that he was co-architect with Sullivan. For the interrelationship of Sullivan and Wright, the initial conception is most important, and there is evidence that Sullivan did the preliminary studies for most of the banks.

29 Carl K. Bennett, "A Bank Built for Farmers — Louis Sullivan Designs a Building Which Marks a New Epoch in American Architecture," *Craftsman*, XV (November, 1908), pp. 176-185. Robert R. Warn, "Part I: Bennett & Sullivan, Client & Creator," *Prairie School Review*, X (1973), 3, pp. 5-8, has published a Sullivan letter which describes the interior as a "color symphony," supporting the conclusion that the bank was conceived as a work of art.



The National Farmers Bank of Owatonna, Minnesota (1906-1908), was Sullivan's first bank. Although George Elmslie suggested the large arches and designed most of the ornament, the initial concept was Sullivan's. Sprague photo.

the luxuriously ornate iron wickets resembled ecclesiastical furnishings by screening the individual positions.

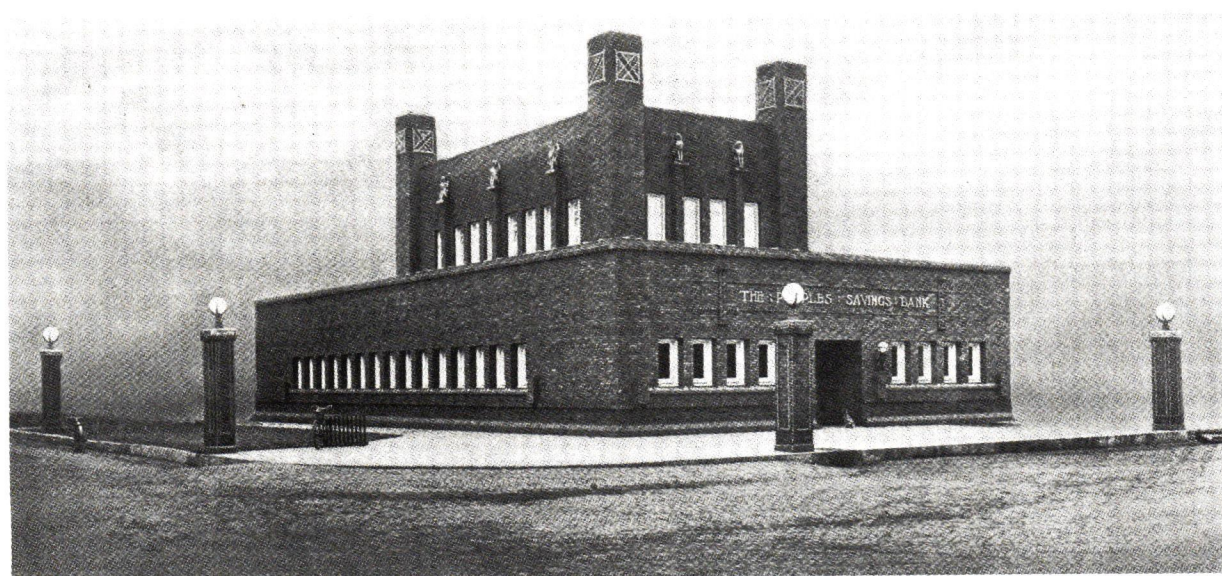
The meaning of the Owatonna bank lies in the interplay between the form and the symbol of a vault as a protective enclosure for valuables and an

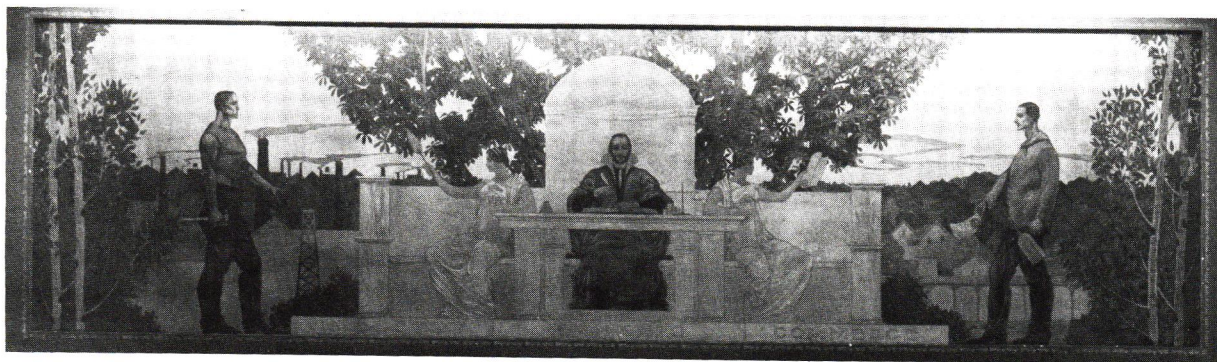
Sullivan's second bank — the Peoples Savings Bank of Cedar Rapids, Iowa (1909-1911) — provoked mixed comments when it opened and it has remained an unusual building in Sullivan's work. Photo from the Architectural Record.

immortalizing mausoleum. Wright's reactions to the building, as recorded on two later occasions, reveal an irreconcilable contradiction. In his review of Hugh Morrison's *Louis Sullivan — Prophet of Modern Architecture*, Wright identified the bank as one of the two late Sullivan buildings of distinction.³⁰ The arrogance of Wright's review so troubled George Elmslie that he reminded Wright in a letter of 1936 that Wright had changed his mind concerning the bank. "Once in the nearly twenty years when you were not on speaking terms with [Sullivan] you classed it as a high wall with a hole in it."³¹ Wright

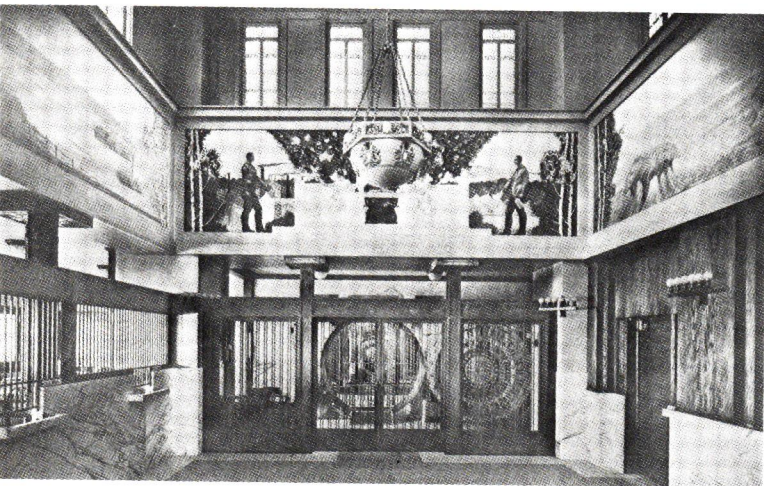
³⁰ *Saturday Review of Literature*, XIII, 7 (December 14, 1935), p. 6; reprinted in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XX (October, 1961), pp. 141-142.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.



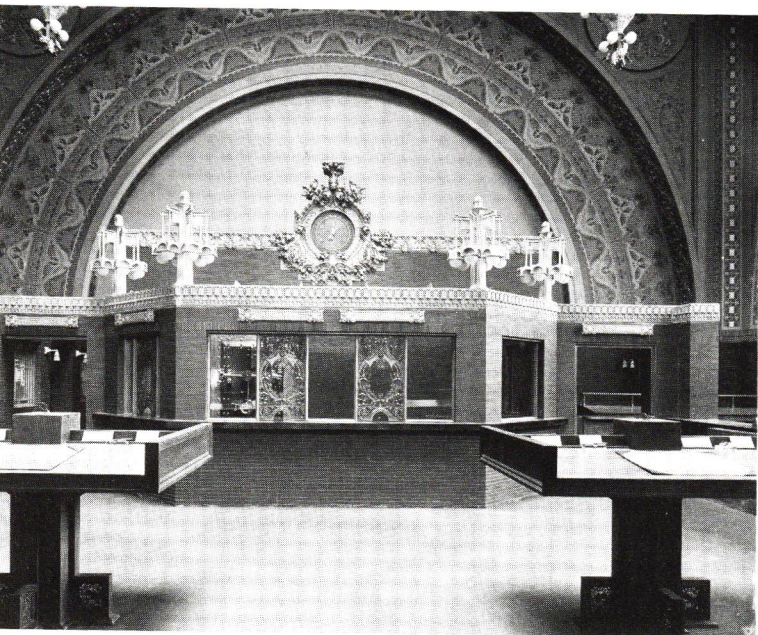


A mural painting by Allen E. Philbrick over the Cedar Rapids vault depicts an enthroned Banker with Industry and Commerce signifying the city's diversified economy in contrast to the agrarian orientation at Owatonna. Photo by Kenneth Severens.



The Cedar Rapids banking room. Sullivan's plan emphasized the vault on axis. It differed from the Owatonna bank as the vault mechanism is clearly visible. Photo from the Architectural Record.

The axis of the Owatonna banking room led directly from the entrance to tellers' positions in front of the vault. Photo from the Architectural Record.



had reversed his attitude, and Elmslie interpreted the change in terms of his estrangement, and subsequent reunion, of Sullivan and Wright.

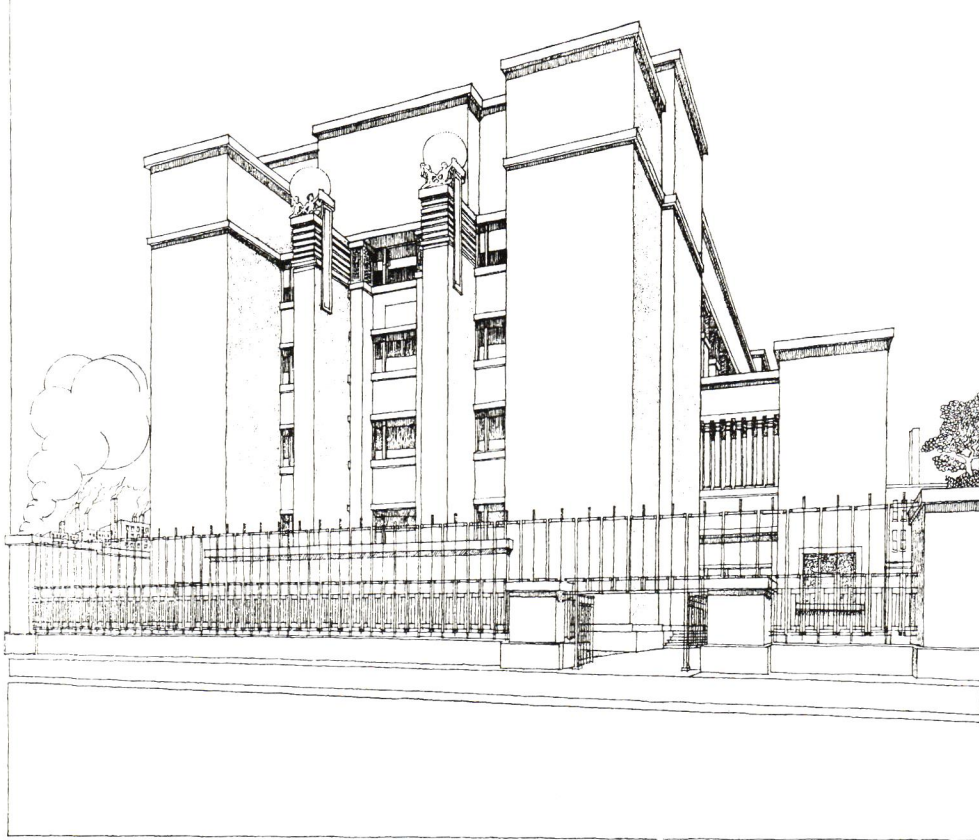
The clients at Cedar Rapids were less ambitious artistically than the Bennetts of Owatonna. A letter written by the vice president, F. H. Shaver, on September 29, 1910, proudly but perfunctorily stated that Sullivan's plans were of great merit, that the bank when finished would have advertising value, and that Sullivan was no more expensive than other architects.³² At no time in the planning or construction was the bank described as a monument or a work of art.

Montgomery Schuyler realized in 1912 that it was very different from the bank at Owatonna. "Every one of [Sullivan's] buildings is the solution of a particular problem, and the result is a highly specialized organism, which is as suitable for its own purpose as it is inapplicable to any other."³³ While the Owatonna bank possessed a richness in overall organization and surface detailing, the Cedar Rapids bank was simple, austere, and sparsely ornamented. Specifically criticized were the omission of a crowning coping for the exterior and the absence of capitals on the interior columns. But the Schuyler comment which is most significant is: "this, one feels, is the habitation of a highly organized and highly specialized machine, in which not only provision is made for every function, but expression given to every provision."

Two other articles on the bank appeared in

³² The letter has been published in a somewhat abridged form in "New Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis H. Sullivan Papers in the Burnham Library of Architecture," *Calendar of the Art Institute of Chicago*, LXV (January, 1971), pp. 11-12.

³³ Montgomery Schuyler, "The People's Saving Bank of Cedar Rapids, Iowa," *Architectural Record*, XXXI (January, 1912), pp. 45-56.



The Larkin building.

national trade journals during 1912.³⁴ Sullivan was given a byline for the first, and the second also was largely written by him since the description of the building is almost verbatim that of the first. Consequently, the following statement (from both articles with only two minor differences) is a succinct summary of the architect's program. "The prime governing considerations were utilitarian — that is, an effort was made to secure a banking layout specially adapted to this bank's class of business, and which should be, as nearly as possible, an automatically working machine."

The shift in form and meaning from Owatonna to Cedar Rapids paralleled the machine analogies of the contemporary Deutsche Werkbund while the reduction in ornament coincided with Adolph Loos' attack on ornament as crime, but explanations based on the European modern movement are not necessary. The changes resulted from the fact that Sullivan's original design of 1909 proved to be too expensive,³⁵ and that the altered plans of the next

34 Louis H. Sullivan, "Lighting the People's Savings Bank, Cedar Rapids, Iowa," *Illuminating Engineer*, VI (February, 1912), pp. 631-635; and "The Peoples Savings Bank, Cedar Rapids, Iowa," *Bankers Magazine*, LXXXIV (March, 1912), pp. 415-426.

35 A mimeographed account, Ervin F. Stepanek, "History of the Peoples Bank and Trust Company (Formerly the Peoples Savings Bank) Cedar Rapids, Iowa," p. 21, records that Sullivan's design of 1909 was rejected on December 1. Negotiations were reopened with Sullivan in 1910, and the altered plans were accepted by the bank's directors. Elmslie undoubtedly worked on the 1909 design and he seems to have been consulted in the spring of 1910, but from the bank's viewpoint Sullivan was the architect of record and the working drawings of July 14, 1910, came from his office.

year were revised in direct response to Wright's Larkin Building in Buffalo of 1904-1906.

One-story tellers' areas, consultation rooms, offices, and vaults, all planned according to functional efficiency, define the periphery of the bank. Before remodeling, the central public lobby was a raised space lighted directly by clerestory windows, and although the height was more than human scale it was not monumental. The exterior reflects the interior with horizontal emphasis on the peripheral parts and vertical articulation of the central mass. The corner piers enclose the chimney and the ventilating shafts. All these features were derived from the Larkin Building, as were the minor piers and the predominance of brick.

In 1908 Wright described the mechanistic character of the Larkin Building:

[It] is a simple, dignified utterance of a plan, utilitarian type with sheer brick walls and simple stone copings. . . . It was built to house the commercial engine of the Larkin Company in light, wholesome, well-ventilated quarters. . . . The building is a simple working out of certain utilitarian conditions, its exterior a simple cliff of brick whose only 'ornamental' feature is the exterior expression of the central aisle, fashioned by means of the sculptured piers at either end of the main block. The machinery of the various appurtenance systems, pipe shafts incidental thereto, the heating and ventilating air in-takes, and the stairways which serve also as fire escapes, are quartered in plan and placed outside the main building at the four outer corners, so that

the entire area might be free for working purposes.³⁶

The Cedar Rapids bank is similar in form to other Wright buildings: the exterior massing of the Yahara Boat Club project, the spatial organization of the Unity Temple parish hall, and the corner piers of the conservatory of the Martin house in Buffalo. But only the Larkin Building furnished both the concept and the form which explain the change from Sullivan's first to second bank. Even the Cedar Rapids murals on the four walls beneath the clerestory windows underwent a shift in iconography. The Owatonna murals featured only agrarian themes; at Cedar Rapids the agricultural scenes of cows grazing on a spring morning, farmers resting on a summer noon, and a fall plowman at dusk culminate over the vault where personifications of Industry and Commerce flank Banking. Similar figures of Labor and Commerce occurred in relief sculpture on the Larkin Building above the fountain at the main entrance.

The fall of 1909 was troublesome for both Wright and Sullivan. Wright's difficulties revolved around an event which soon became a public scandal: his flight to Europe in September with the wife of a former client. Sullivan's problems were far less spectacular but they were remarkably similar since they combined the curtailment of architectural activity and marital separation.³⁷ One cause was financial, and on November 29 he auctioned his library and art collection and received far less than he had expected. On December 4 he fired George Elmslie, his trusted assistant for twenty years, and two days later he separated from his wife to allow her to develop a career as a writer. Sullivan was suddenly alone and progressive architecture was floundering since Wright had already abandoned his promising practice. The Cedar Rapids commission

36 Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture," pp. 159, 166-167. In the article, "The New Larkin Administration Building," *The Larkin Idea*. (November, 1906), reprinted in the *Prairie School Review*, VII (1970), 1, pp. 15-19, Wright emphasized the mechanical services which he had integrated into the design. The concluding paragraph dealt with the aesthetic character and it is prophetic of the Cedar Rapids bank. "There may be some question whether it is beautiful or not; there always will be the usual two opinions about that, for it has 'character.' . . . But in-so-far as it is simple and true it will live, a blessing to its occupants." Interestingly, preliminary sketches for the Larkin Building, illustrated in Manson, *Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910*, pp. 147-148, reveal Sullivanian arches and ornament. Even the more retilinear final design of the interior and the exterior side elevation resembles the Wainwright Building.

37 Warn, "Bennett & Sullivan, Client & Creator," pp. 11-15. I am indebted to Robert Warn for pointing out the interrelatedness of Sullivan's and Wright's problems in the fall of 1909.

was directly related in that the design of 1909 was rejected by the directors on December 1. The personal parallels between Sullivan and Wright may have provided the psychological basis for the revision of the plans the next year along Wrightian lines. Physical reunion was impossible with Wright still in Europe, but Sullivan had made an extraordinary concession by acknowledging the significance of the Larkin Building. Wright himself would later recognize that the Cedar Rapids bank was "more or less 'arcing' back to my own work."³⁸

For the actual reunion Wright's statements suggest three dates — 1905, 1907, and 1913-1914 — but only the last is plausible. The first comes from *An Autobiography*: "nor for more than twelve years did I see Louis Sullivan again or communicate with him in any way." Later in the book the reunion is dated seven years after Dankmar Adler's death, or 1907, and finally "just before the destruction of Taliesin I" or 1914, the version which is repeated in *Genius and the Mobocracy*.³⁹ Wright explained that Sullivan had telephoned concerning his office in the Auditorium, and Wright asserted twice that this did not occur when Sullivan moved from the tower to smaller quarters in the body of the building, which happened in 1909. Instead, it was a later crisis when the building management threatened to evict Sullivan from even the less prestigious office. The telephone call was long distance suggesting a date no earlier than 1911, when Wright began to build Taliesin near Spring Green, Wisconsin. The visit which ensued in Sullivan's office led Wright to remark that Sullivan's desk was littered with "photographs of the small bank-building he had been doing."⁴⁰ That statement characterizes best 1914 when four banks were under construction.

Wright's disapproving tone concerning the small bank buildings may refer specifically to the Henry C. Adams Building of Algona, Iowa (1913-1914) and the Purdue State Bank of West Lafayette, Indiana (1914). As Sullivan's smallest and simplest commissions, they can easily be viewed as minor accomplishments. Furthermore, Wright seems to be saying that he did not consider the small bank buildings influenced by his work. The Algona and West Lafayette banks lend support to this conclusion because they relate most closely to Purcell, Feick & Elmslie's Exchange State Bank in Grand Meadow, Minnesota, of 1910. However, the Adams

38 Letter to Lewis Mumford, April 7, 1931. I would like to thank H. Allen Brooks for calling the letter to my attention and Lewis Mumford for permission to quote from it.

39 Wright, *An Autobiography*, pp. 111, 265, and 263; and Frank Lloyd Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy*, Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, New York, 1949, p. 67.

40 Wright, *An Autobiography*, p. 265.



Sullivan's Algona bank

Building entrance featured urns (a Wrightian hall-mark not used by Sullivan previously) which may have been another enigmatic gesture by Sullivan to communicate with Wright.

The Merchants National Bank of Grinnell, Iowa (also 1914), is significantly different because its sources lead to Wright. The simple rectangular brick massing relates to the Village Bank of 1901 and the

Wright's Mason City Bank

City National Bank in Mason City, Iowa, of 1909-1910, both of which Wright had described as "the town strong box."⁴¹ Sullivan's designation of his later banks as brick jewel boxes is first applicable to the Grinnell bank, and like Wright's banks it combines vault-like security, business efficiency, and material richness. Other Wrightian details include the unified panel of windows on the flank, the projecting cornice of the entry vestibule, and the

41 *Brickbuilder*, X (August, 1901), p. 160; and "City National Bank of Mason City, Iowa," *Western Architect*, XVII (December, 1911), p. 105.





The Merchants National Bank of Grinnell, Iowa (1913-1915) established the format for Sullivan's remaining banks with its simple brick surfaces highlighted by sumptuous terra cotta ornament.

urns in front of the vault. Even the celebrated over-entrance motif of superimposed circles, squares, and foliate ornament in its resemblance to a vault mechanism can be interpreted as Sullivan's symbol for the strong box.

Wright's essay of 1914, "In the Cause of Architecture, Second Paper,"⁴² dealt with the theme of discipleship around which the entire Sullivan-Wright relationship revolved. Wright bitterly castigated the architects who were blindly following his work, and he criticized the Prairie School as threatening "to explode soon in foolish exploitation of unripe performances or topple over in pretentious attempts to 'speak the language.'" His attitude toward Sullivan was not filled with the contempt that he expressed toward the younger architects as he acknowledged again that Sullivan had been his teacher and his inspiration. The reunion may explain why Wright excluded Sullivan from the full attack on imitators. The circumstances underlying the renewal of friendship cannot be definitively determined; one suggestion, which now seems apocryphal, is that it occurred after a lecture which Sullivan gave in Chicago.⁴³ A more concise piece of evidence of the reunion is the *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* which Wright gave to Sullivan. It is inscribed "To Mein Leiber Meister, Louis H. Sullivan, from his Frank Lloyd Wright." It

42 *Architectural Record*, XXXV (May, 1914), pp. 405-413.

43 Willard Connely, *Louis Sullivan — The Shaping of American Architecture*, Horizon, New York, 1960, p. 262.

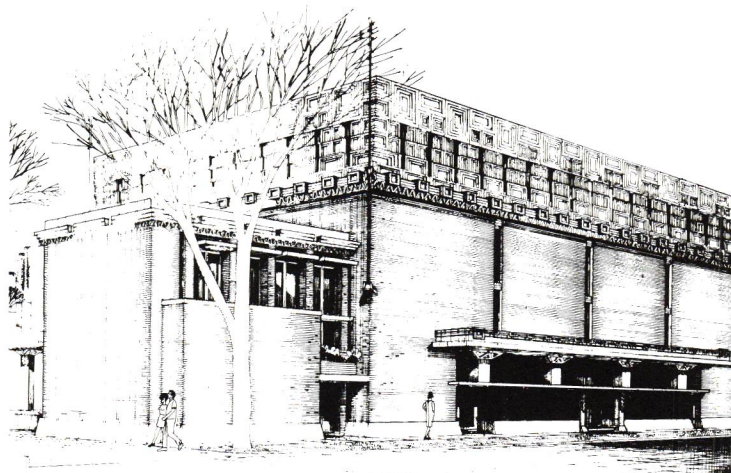
is not dated.⁴⁴ However, it is the first edition and totally undamaged. This indicates it was presented before the disastrous first fire at Taliesin which destroyed or water stained virtually all of the folios in Wright's possession. Thus, we can conclude that Wright presented the folios to Sullivan prior to August of 1914. The strange but very personal inscription would indicate that Wright felt a strong relationship to Sullivan.

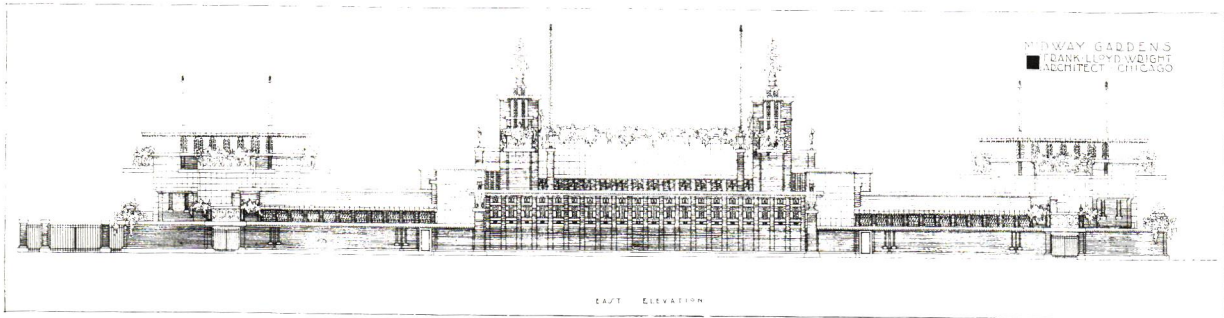
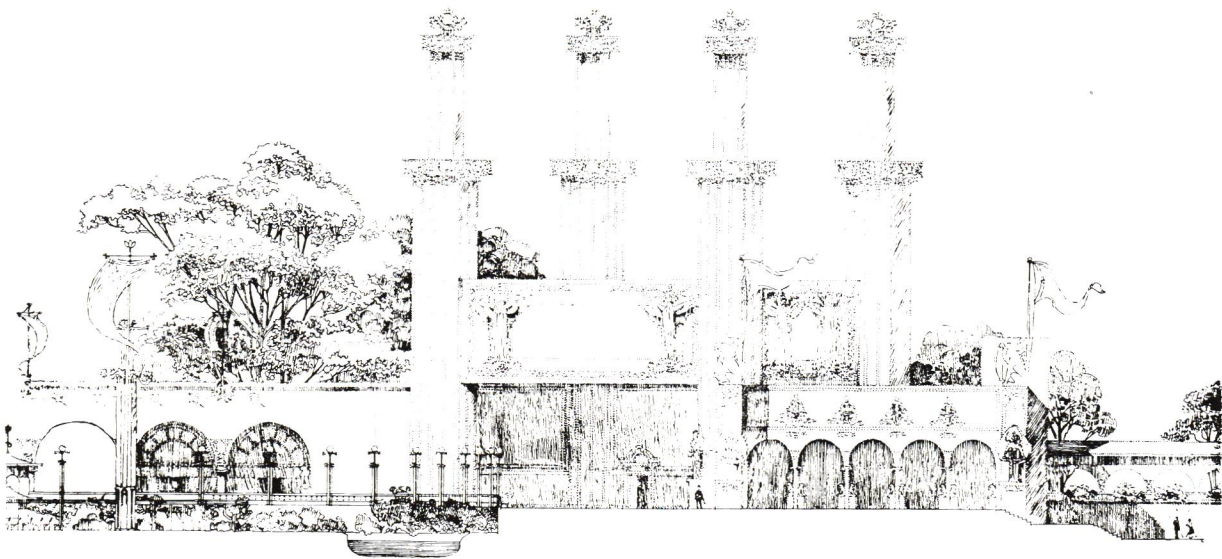
Despite Wright's disapproval of architectural borrowings, Midway Gardens in Chicago of 1913-1914 resembled the spatial organization and massing of Sullivan's Cedar Rapids bank. The Cottage Grove Avenue facade was an ornamented version of the bank with a raised central space articulated by corner piers and surrounded by lower spaces with serial windows. Inside, the dining room was a horizontal variant on the Larkin Building, but the Cedar Rapids banking room is also analogous. In its overall concept and design Midway Gardens related to Sullivan's Island City project of 1907-1908, which in turn was derived from Wright's Wolf Lake Amusement Park project of 1895.⁴⁵ The

44 The cover sheet of the *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* which bears the inscription is now owned by a prominent Chicago architectural firm. It was brought to the attention of the author by Wilbert R. Hasbrouck, publisher of *The Prairie School Review*. Among the Purcell and Elmslie papers at the Northwest Architectural Archives of the University of Minnesota, there are several references to the quarrel between Sullivan and Wright. Neither Purcell nor Elmslie is very precise but both indicate that the reunion occurred in 1914.

45 *Architectural Essays from the Chicago School*, pp. 21 ff; and Arthur Drexler, *The Drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright*, Bramhall, New York, 1962, pl. 3.

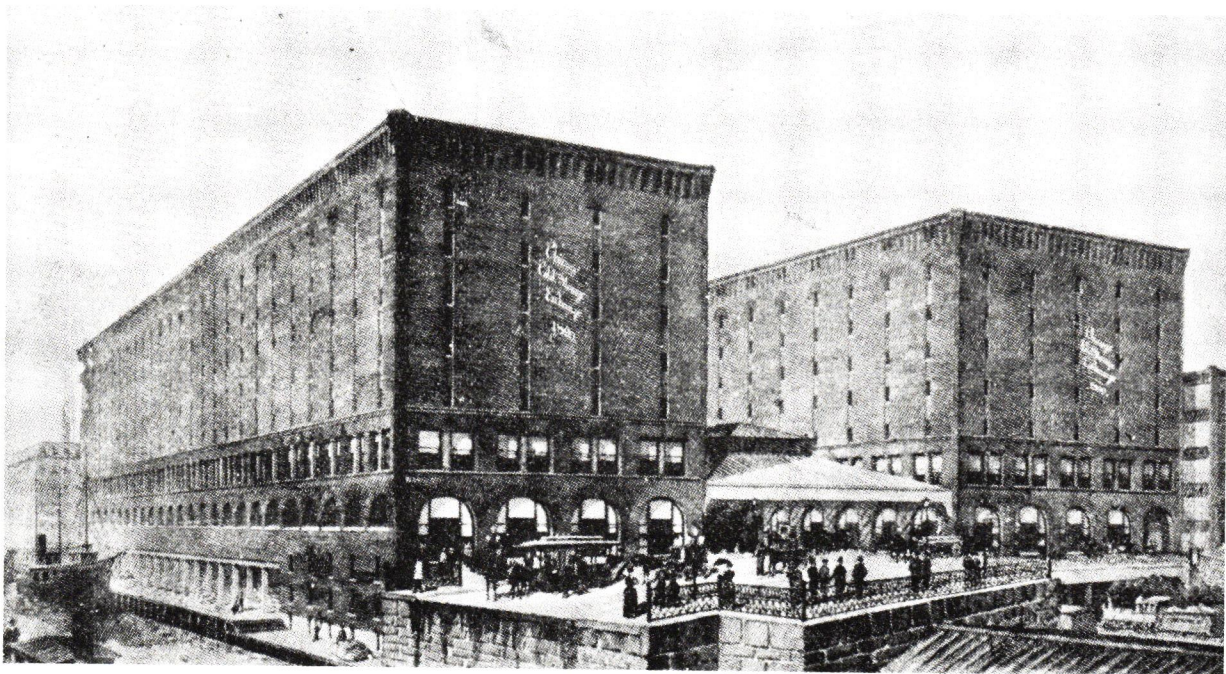
Frank Lloyd Wright designed the A. D. German Warehouse in Richland Center, Wisconsin in 1915. It seems to have its roots in Sullivan's Chicago Cold Storage Exchange Warehouse of 1891.

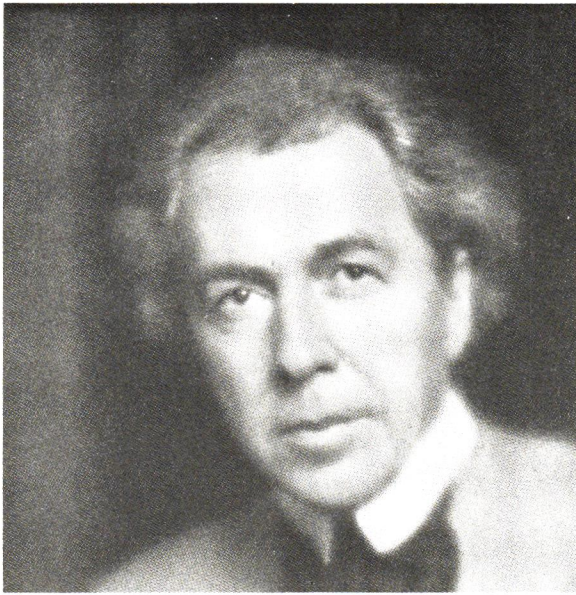




At the top is Sullivan's drawing for the unexecuted Island City project, done in 1907-08. In concept it is strongly related to Wright's design for the Midway Gardens of Chicago done in 1913-14. Drawings from the Inland Architect and Wendingen.

Louis Sullivan designed the Chicago Cold Storage Exchange Warehouse in 1891. It is almost certain that Wright worked on this project while in the office of Adler and Sullivan. It was demolished only 11 years after construction. Photo from the Inland Architect.





Frank Lloyd Wright in 1914

exchange of ideas concerning amusement parks indicates the longstanding cross-influence between the master and his foremost pupil.

One final comparison illustrating the architectural dialogue is Wright's A.D. German Warehouse in Richland Center, Wisconsin, of 1915 and its much earlier source, Sullivan's Chicago Cold Storage Exchange Warehouse of 1891, a building on which Wright may have worked during his years with Adler & Sullivan. Common features are the prismatic volumes contained by planar surfaces with vertical slit windows and corbeled cornices. Wright articulated the attic area of refrigerating equipment with Pre-Columbian textured concrete blocks, but otherwise the Sullivanian inspiration is clear, and remarkable because the Cold Storage Exchange Warehouse was demolished in 1902.

The reunion coincided with the succession of misfortunes which Sullivan and Wright experienced independently between 1909-1915. Sullivan's plight consisted of fewer and smaller commissions, involuntary moves to less imposing offices and cheaper hotels, growing uncertainty about his health and his finances, and virtual desertion by most of his younger colleagues. Wright's professional career during those years was not an unqualified success either, and his personal life was far from stable. The Wasmuth publication of his work in 1910 brought world-wide acclaim, but in *An Autobiography* he recounted the European sojourn very briefly and incompletely. After returning to Chicago in the fall of 1910, he retreated the next year to rural Wisconsin and his commissions dwindled in number. He would interpret the half-decade as a period of renewal, but even this promising recovery came

to an abrupt and tragic end on August 14, 1914, when Taliesin was destroyed by fire. Wright may have remembered the reunion with Sullivan as occurring "just before the destruction of Taliesin I," because his own misfortunes allowed him to empathize with Sullivan.

The genuineness and permanence of the reunion are beyond question. Wright stated that he continued to visit Sullivan whenever he was in Chicago and that when he was in Tokyo or Los Angeles, he corresponded with him. More than ten years after Sullivan's death, Wright's review of Morrison's biography provoked an acrimonious letter from Elmslie to Wright containing the accusation that Wright had not done enough for Sullivan, or at least that others had been more reliable and constant companions.⁴⁶ Elmslie undoubtedly was one of Sullivan's friends and guardians, but Sullivan's late writings reveal no bitterness toward Wright.

The letters dated 1918-1923 which Sullivan wrote to Rudolph Schindler,⁴⁷ Wright's assistant who supervised the Los Angeles work while Wright was in Tokyo, concern the possibility of publishing the *Kindergarten Chats* in Europe. In almost every letter Sullivan inquired about Wright indicating that Wright was not a diligent correspondent, but Sullivan, although frustrated by the lack of news, never criticized Wright. Sullivan's last two articles written in 1923 and 1924 eloquently praised Wright's Imperial Hotel as "a high act of courage — an utterance of man's free spirit, a personal message to every soul that falters, and to every heart that hopes."⁴⁸ Sullivan's state of mind was rejuvenated by the building, and the words are remarkably close to those he has used earlier to describe Richardson's Marshall Field Wholesale Warehouse and his own Wainwright Building, both having special significance in the early friendship of Wright and Sullivan. Magnanimously and proudly, Sullivan continued: "this great work is the masterpiece of Frank Lloyd Wright, a great free spirit, whose fame as a master of ideas is an accomplished world-wide fact." Sullivan emphasized the successful resolution of the earthquake problem probably because it reminded him of the titanic struggle with nature which he and Adler had waged with the skyscraper. By designating Wright a "master of ideas," Sullivan ascribed to

46 *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XX (October, 1961), pp. 140-141.

47 Esther McCoy, "Letters from Louis H. Sullivan to R. M. Schindler," *ibid.*, XX (December, 1961), pp. 179-184.

48 Louis H. Sullivan, "Concerning the Imperial Hotel, Tokyo," *Architectural Record*, LIII (April, 1923), pp. 333-352; and "Reflections on the Tokyo Disaster," *ibid.*, LV (February, 1924), pp. 113-117.



The V. C. Morris Store

him a title which previously had been reserved for himself and referred to his recently completed book, *The Autobiography of an Idea*.⁴⁹

The events immediately before Sullivan's death on April 14, 1924, were as dramatically meaningful as any episode in the relationship. According to Wright, three days before his death Sullivan gave him the first bound copy of *The Autobiography of an Idea* and more than one hundred of his drawings. Sullivan asked, "Frank, you will be writing about these someday?"⁵⁰ Wright responded without equivocation, "Yes, lieber-meister, I will." Perhaps George Elmslie, Max Dunning, and George Nimmons had contributed more to offset Sullivan's expenses and certainly they were more frequent visitors, but Sullivan chose Wright to be his spiritual heir.

The psychological problems of fulfilling the promise became clear with Wright's obituary of Sullivan in July, 1924;⁵¹ Wright limited Sullivan's

49 *The Autobiography of an Idea* was published serially in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, X (June, 1922) — XI (September, 1923); and in book form in 1924.

50 Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy*, p. 101. Frank Lloyd Wright, "Louis Henry Sullivan — Beloved Master," *Western Architect*, XXXIII (June, 1924), p. 66, concludes: "Later when I have him more in perspective I intend to write about and illustrate his work. It is too soon, now. I hope to make clear in unmistakable concrete terms, what is now necessarily abstract. A privilege I feel as mine and one I know from him that he would be pleased that I should take, as I have assured him I sometime would do."

51 Frank Lloyd Wright, "Louis H. Sullivan — His Work," *Architectural Record*, LVI (July, 1924), pp. 28-32.

creative work to the Auditorium, the Getty Tomb, the Wainwright Building, and the Transportation Building, all dating in his years with Adler & Sullivan. Wright interpreted Sullivan's career as coming to a close when his own began, just as Sullivan himself had implied by ending *The Autobiography of an Idea* with the year 1893. In 1935 Wright's intemperate reviews of both Claude Bragdon's edition of the *Kindergarten Chats* and Morrison's book⁵² may result from his uneasy recollection that he had not fulfilled the vow which he had made to Sullivan. When he finally wrote *Genius and the Mobocracy* in 1948-1949, he admitted that "this book is 'in memorium,' because of a promise."⁵³

Wright's renewed interest in Sullivan also found expression in architecture. The V. C. Morris Store in San Francisco of 1948-1949, in addition to its Richardsonian overtones, combines an organically spiraling ramp within a brick cube recreating the jewel box effect of Sullivan's small bank buildings which Wright had seen upon the renewal of their friendship in 1914. Wright's full homage to Sullivan was architectural as well as literary, and the enigmatic statement in *Genius and the Mobocracy*, "but the pen is a tricky tool — fascinating but treacherous,"⁵⁴ suggests that the architecture may prove to be the more truthful testimony.

52 Frank Lloyd Wright, "Louis Sullivan's Words and Works," *Architectural Review*, LXXVII (March, 1935), pp. 116-117; and *Saturday Review of Literature*, XIII, 7 (December 14, 1935), p. 6.

53 Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy*, p. 95.

54 *Ibid.*

Book Review

SKYSCRAPER STYLE: ART DECO NEW YORK, by Cerwin Robinson and Rosemarie Haag Bletter. Oxford University Press, New York, 1975, 88 pp. plus 124 pp. of illus., 8 of which in color, hard, \$20.00

Hardly is the style Art Deco half a century old, and yet it has attracted a fiercely devoted body of enthusiasts. The good fortune of this where architecture is concerned is that the style is new enough for many of the best buildings to survive with their ground floor fenestration and intricate elevator lobbies largely intact.

This survey of the Art Deco commercial work in New York City consists of two essays and a portfolio of photographs. The first essay, "Buildings and Architects," by Cerwin Robinson focuses on the buildings themselves, tracing the sources for their particular sense of design and ornamentation to a final surge of Beaux-Arts training. He also provides short sketches of the major architects responsible for the New York Art Deco skyscrapers — Hugh Ferriss, Ely Jacques Kahn, William Van Alen, and of course Raymond Hood. The second essay is a broader international examination by Rosemarie Haag Bletter of the sources of Art Deco in Europe, drawing attention to Vienna, German Expressionism, the famous 1925 Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, and Ruskin's earlier advocacy of color in building materials. This is followed by a list of 115 major buildings in Manhattan (2 in Brooklyn) located in maps which form the end papers.

As well written and documented as these essays are, however, the best reason for examining this book is the splendid reproductions of Mr. Robinson's superb photographs. One of the major architectural photographer-historians of his time, Robinson has spared no pains in making the exposures and developing the prints so as to bring out fully the texture and sculptural plasticity of the buildings. One feels that there could be no better angle of the sun, no better time of the day in which to see the richness of these buildings revealed.

Both essays touch on the critical role of Chicago in the origin and development of this particular expression with Saarinen's second-prizewinning Tribune Tower design the stimulus for a generation of skyscrapers. Just as New York has Robinson, so Chicago needs another Richard Nickel to document those buildings of the 1920's and 30's which played such a critical role in the development of the Art Deco and Art Moderne skyscraper — buildings such

as 333 North Michigan, 1928, and the Board of Trade, 1929, both by Holabird and Root; the Carbide and Carbon Building, 1929, by the Burnham Brothers; and the LaSalle Bank Building, 1934, by Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, to cite only a few. And would not such a survey include a review of the Century of Progress Exposition?

Such architecture as is lovingly captured here by Robinson and Bletter is important since it documents a time when American architecture was still at the height of its aesthetic powers, when architects were concerned with creating a total sensual experience and with expressing the various parts of the building in accordance with use and in proportion to their distance from the viewer. They are the last expressions of a time when the cost of labor could permit such lavish care in the manipulation of exotic materials. And there are so many of them standing still unspoiled.

Reviewed by
Leland Roth
Northwestern University

Preview

The final issue of Volume XII of *The Prairie School Review* will have two primary articles. The first will be an essay by Gordon Orr discussing the relationship of several Madison, Wisconsin firms to Chicago architects. The second will be by Lenore Pressman who has done extensive research on Graceland Cemetery in Chicago. She will focus on the Graceland monuments which are related to architects.

To be reviewed:

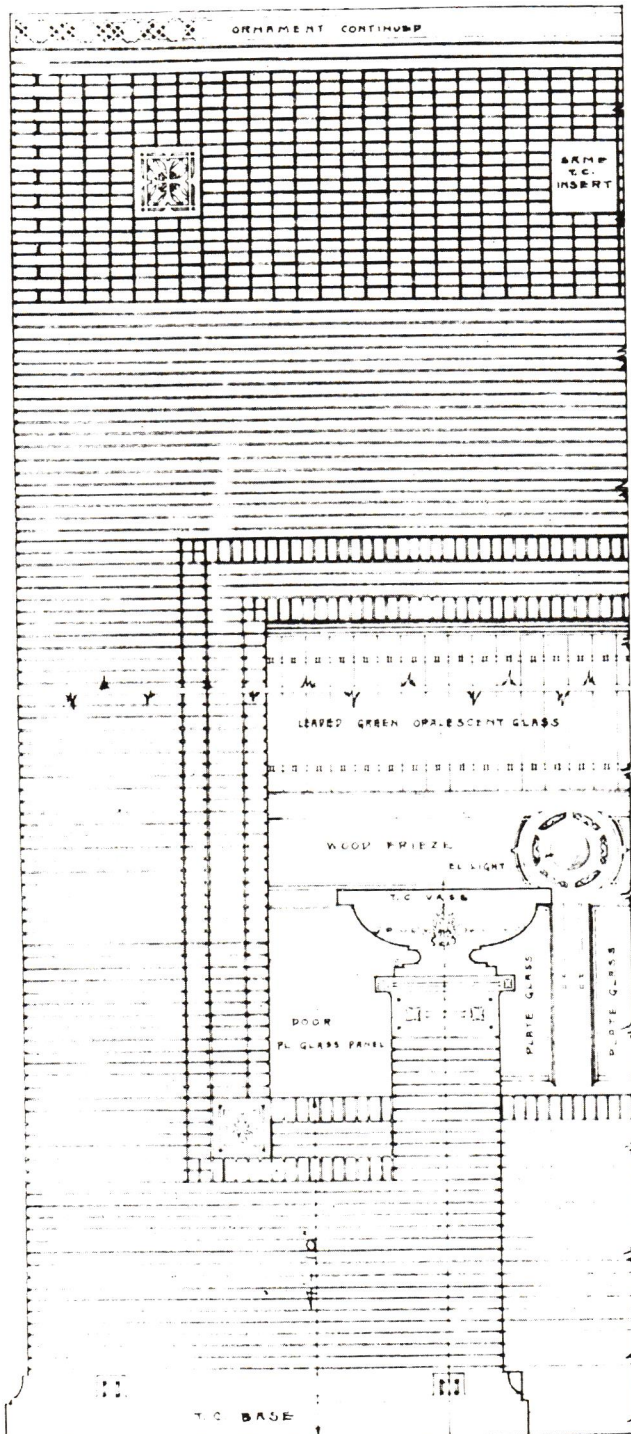
Charles F. A. Voysey, *Architect*,
David Gebhard

Modern Movements in Architecture
Charles Jencks

RIGHT:

Facade elevation of the Henry C. Adams Building of Algona, Iowa (1913-1914). The building reflects Sullivan's growing reputation as a bank architect since the client seems to have employed Sullivan as a means of supporting his application for a state bank charter. The charter was never granted and the building was used as a land and loan office. Drawing from the Architectural Record.

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