

RISING ABOVE THE BOULEVARD

SCHULZE BAKING COMPANY BUILDING

- Chicago Commercial Style
- 40 E. Garfield Boulevard
- John Ahlschlager & Son
- Washington Park
- 1914



PRESERVATION CHICAGO
THE CHICAGO 7 MOST ENDANGERED • 2024



Preservation Chicago Unveils the 2024 Chicago 7 Most Endangered



All of Mankind Mural /
Stranger's Home Church



Ogden-Keeler Industrial
Buildings



Swift-Morris Mansion



Schulze Baking Co. Building



Sheffield-Belden Group



Century & Consumers Buildings



Chicago Vocational
School (CVS)

Photos: Eric Allix Rogers, Serhii Chucky / Esto, Debbie Mercer, Max Chavez, Cristen Brown, & Ward Miller

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Preservation Chicago's 2024 Chicago 7 Most Endangered

Since 2003, the 'Chicago 7 Most Endangered' has sounded the alarm on imminently threatened historic buildings and community assets in Chicago to mobilize the stakeholder support necessary to save them from demolition.



Schulze Baking Company Ornament. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

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Leveraging the power of historic preservation to create healthy communities. Vision: Preservation Chicago is committed to strengthening the vibrancy of Chicago's economy and quality of life by championing our historic built environment.



Mission: Preservation Chicago protects and revitalizes Chicago's irreplaceable architecture, neighborhoods and urban green spaces. We influence stakeholders toward creative reuse and preservation through advocacy, outreach, education, and partnership.

Century & Consumers Buildings

202 & 220 S. State Street, Chicago



The Century and Consumers Buildings, Benson & Rixon Store with Dirksen Courthouse to the rear. Photo credit: Ward Miller / Preservation Chicago

Overview

The Century and Consumers Buildings, two of State Street's early terra cotta-clad skyscrapers, continue to face an urgent demolition threat. Located in the Loop in the heart of downtown Chicago, the proposed demolition of these two buildings would severely impact the visual character of State Street, one of the city's most iconic thoroughfares and would significantly undermine Chicago's rich architectural legacy. It is for this reason that Preservation Chicago has included these buildings as part of our annual 2024 Chicago 7 Most Endangered for the fifth time, including 2011, 2013, 2022, 2023, and 2024.

The Century Building

Address: **202 S. State Street**

Architects: **Holabird and Roche**

Date: **1915**

The Consumers Building

Address: **220 S. State Street**

Architects: **Jenney, Mundie & Jensen**

Date: **1913**

Neighborhood: **Loop**

Style: **Early Chicago School Skyscrapers**



The Century and Consumers Buildings, 202 and 220 S. State Street with Dirksen Courthouse to the rear. Photo credit: Serhii Chrukly / Etso

Comprised of two structures, they represent the last of the tall buildings of the Chicago School of Architecture built in downtown Chicago. These steel-frame early skyscraper buildings are part of a special group of structures which placed Chicago on the world stage of architectural and engineering achievements. Their potential loss and proposed demolition, would adversely impact the visual character of State Street, the Loop Retail National Register District, and would be considered by some to be an act of cultural, architectural and urban vandalism to destroy in the 21st century.

Preservation Chicago has long been concerned about the deferred maintenance, vacancy and deteriorating condition of the Century and Consumers Buildings, fronting State Street, Adams Street and Quincy Court, in the heart of the Chicago Loop and Central Business District. These buildings, owned for nearly 20 years by the General Services Administration (GSA), the real estate arm of the federal government, continue to languish, despite being spotlighted on our Chicago 7 Most Endangered several times over the past decade.

Preservation Chicago learned that in 2022, a \$52 million expenditure had been earmarked in the Federal Infrastructure Appropriations Bill, in Congress, specifically for the demolition of the Century and Consumers Buildings. It appears that the decades-long advocacy efforts to save these significant buildings is once again reaching a critical stage. In 2022, Preservation Chicago had two meetings with the GSA, federal officials and parties interested in a reuse vision for the structures. During those meetings, alternative plans were discussed. However, in late 2022, it was announced that Federal Section 106 Hearings would take place to determine a plan of action. Throughout the process, Preservation Chicago has been there to encourage new fresh ideas and a vision for these remarkable structures of the Chicago School of Architecture.

These two remarkable buildings, the 16-story Century Building by Holabird & Roche (1915) and the 22-story Consumers Building by Jenney, Mundie & Jensen (1913), were once principally occupied by small businesses,

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



Century and Consumers Buildings, 202 S. State Street & 220 S. State Street. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

attorney offices and showrooms. These types of multi-use structures along State Street and Wabash Avenue, with small stores located on their upper floors were also referred to as “shops buildings.”

Due to the close proximity of the courthouse and courtrooms, the federal government and the General Services Administration (GSA), exercised its power of eminent domain in 2005-2007, to take control of these State Street buildings based on increased security concerns following the events of September 11, 2001. Since that acquisition by the GSA, the buildings have been stable but slowly deteriorating due to deferred maintenance and prolonged vacancy.

Multiple adaptive reuse plans for the Century and Consumers Buildings have been proposed and later blocked due to the proximity to the Chicago Federal Center. The Dirksen Federal Courthouse, part of the larger Federal Center complex, fronting Dearborn Street on the west, is located across a pedestrian courtyard and alley from these historic buildings. The Quincy Court entry to the Dirksen Building was originally envisioned as a principal pedestrian entrance to the courthouse structure from State Street by architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Originally both the Century and Consumers Buildings, along with parcels to the south extending to Jackson Boulevard along State Street, were all proposed to be occupied by federal government offices as part of an expansion of their Loop campus. That proposal, published in media sources was said to have included the reuse of the Century and Consumers Buildings with a new structure bridging the two historic towers which would replace the two smaller buildings located at 208 and 214 S. State Street.

The architectural firm of Marshall & Fox designed the three-story structure located at 208-212 S. State Street, as a small retail building, with large expanses of glass on all three levels of its State Street façade, which over time had been concealed by numerous remodelings. The firm of Marshall & Fox designed an amazing portfolio of luxury and first-class buildings, including residential structures and hotels, most notably, The Drake, Blackstone and

Edgewater Beach Hotels. An assortment of buildings by Marshall & Fox are also recognized as designated Chicago Landmarks.

The four-story building located at 214 S. State is one of the oldest structures on this block. Known as The Consumers Building Annex, the structure has undergone numerous remodelings and transformations over time. It was remodeled in the 1920s by Jenney Mundie & Jensen, the same architects as the Consumers Building, for an expansion of that building into the neighboring structure to the north. The 214 S. State Street Building was originally designed by architect, C.M. Palmer in 1883, for Gunther's Confectionary store, and later remodeled for Martin Jewelers with an Art Deco/Art Moderne storefront by Isadore E. Alexander, c.1949. In later years, this was also known as Roberto's Men's Store, with its beautiful streamlined and curvilinear black-and silver-colored storefront. Also included in those Federal Center expansion plans were the Art Moderne Benson & Rixon Store Building by Alfred Alschuler in 1937 at 230 S. State and the modernist Bond's Clothing Store by Friedman, Alschuler & Sincere, with Morris Lapidus, in 1949 at 240 S. State. The Bond Store structure was also known as 10 W. Jackson Boulevard. A small two-story building included on this block is the heavily-remodeled and truncated E.L. Brand Building by Adler & Sullivan from 1883 at 12-18 W. Jackson Boulevard. Only portions of the exterior walls of the Adler and Sullivan commission remain.



Consumers Building, 1913, Jenney, Mundie & Jensen, 220 S. State Street. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

These seven properties on the block-long parcel fronting State Street, one of Chicago's most famous and notable thoroughfares, were acquired by the GSA to be used exclusively for federal government offices. They were long-considered to be part of a larger revisioning and vast expansion of the Federal Center complex. At one time, the GSA proposed a new large office building, which was to be sheathed in glass to bridge and connect the Century and Consumers Buildings. This proposal would have further increased the larger and more desired floor plates and square footages for federal offices. That proposal was welcomed by many in the architectural community, as it engaged and bridged the two historic skyscrapers in a sensitive manner, reinvested in the restoration, and repurposed these two seminal buildings. The plans also engaged The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for

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Exterior view of the Century and Consumers Buildings at 202 and 220 South State Street, Chicago, Illinois, c.1975. Photo credit: Hedrich-Blessing Collection, Chicago History Museum, HB-39113

Restoration, which is a series of established guidelines, principles and best practices for the reuse of historic buildings and part of a federal program.

In the past decade, it was determined that the expansion of the offices into all of these buildings was unnecessary with federal funding largely diminished for this larger and broader vision. Only the Benson & Rixon Building, with its broad horizontal banding and curvilinear corner, along with the former Bond's Store, were to be converted into governmental offices. The remaining buildings along State Street, between Adams and Quincy Court, were planned to be reused at some point in the future. Discussions held at the Federal Center in about 2009-2010, which included Preservation Chicago and preservation partner organizations, also considered demolition of one or both of the tall Chicago School buildings as a possibility. The conversation around demolition of these

early skyscrapers was considered unbelievable and incomprehensible at the time by members of the architecture and preservation community, and this response was shared with GSA officials.

Security concerns and a reduction in required office space in the Loop appeared to have halted the GSA's initial plans for renovation and reuse. Then in 2017 after an extensive advocacy effort by Preservation Chicago, the City of Chicago issued a Request For Proposals for the adaptive reuse of the Century and Consumers Buildings. Preservation Chicago was delighted by the City of Chicago's selection of CA Ventures in partnership with Cedar Street Companies. Their \$141 million renovation proposal planned for a preservation-sensitive adaptive reuse of the two terra cotta office towers as residential apartments. Despite a strong developer team submitting a solid adaptive reuse for a residential plan, it was halted by a federal judge citing security concerns due to the proximity of the proposed residential rooftop deck and rear windows facing the courthouse.

Widely considered to be an impossible challenge to solve, Preservation Chicago redoubled its efforts to identify an adaptive reuse that could accommodate the rigorous courthouse security requirements. Eventually, we arrived at a highly unusual solution, a collaborative national archive center to be known as the Chicago Collaborative Archive Center (CCAC).

At first, the notion of repurposing two tall, slender Chicago School skyscrapers into an archive center seemed unique and perhaps even improbable. In fact, this creative solution has many strengths and is very achievable. Recognizing the growing urgency to repurpose these buildings, Preservation Chicago has been working diligently over the past two years to build a strong coalition of critical stakeholders. There is now strong interest, support and enthusiasm for this adaptive reuse project. This coalition of partners has already engaged architects and engineers long before news broke of the \$52 million demolition congressional earmark in February 2022.

Since that time, a Public Scoping Meeting has been held, along with numerous Federal Section 106 Hearings have occurred. At all of the meetings, there has been no public support for demolition, but only preservation and reuse of the historic structures. In addition there have been intense public interest in the buildings, representing the most public support that Preservation Chicago has witnessed in our 23 years of advocacy. The buildings were featured in a story by “The B1M” of London, capturing 1.2 million views, and their very first story on Chicago. In addition, a Change.org petition has garnered over 23,330 petition signatures encouraging preservation and a reuse plan from not only Chicago residents, but individuals across the nation and world.

The potential loss of these skyscrapers will also adversely impact the consideration of Chicago’s UNESCO World Heritage Nomination of its “Chicago’s Early Skyscrapers.” Submitted in 2017 by a group of organizations and individuals from the architecture and preservation community, including Preservation Chicago, this is an elongated ten-year process. Many of us are very excited about this potential honor and recognition for our city. This nomination has the potential to bring tens-of-thousands of architectural and heritage tourists to our city each year, with the opportunity to add more “Early Chicago Skyscrapers” to this esteemed list over time.

Lastly, the Department of Planning and Development Historic Preservation Division at the City of Chicago has determined that the Century and Consumers Buildings individually fit the stringent criterion for Chicago



Rendering of Proposed Chicago Collaborative Archive Center at the Century and Consumers Buildings. Rendering Credit: JLK Architects / Chicago Collaborative Archive Center

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The Consumers Building, 1913, Jenney, Mundie & Jensen, 220 S. State Street, c. 1960. Photo credit: Chicago Architectural Photographing Company, State Street, 200-298 S. Folder 1177, Sheet 4, CPC_04_D_1177_004, Chicago - Photographic Images of Change, University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections Department

Landmark Designation. We at Preservation Chicago, along with our preservation partners, strongly supported the Chicago Landmark Designation of the Century and Consumers Buildings throughout 2023, offering our staff's testimony at every opportunity. The incredible efforts of public advocacy, raising awareness, and educational campaigning to acknowledge the importance of these two seminal structures, resulted with the Commission on Chicago Landmarks adopting a Final Landmark Recommendation on December 7, 2023.

We are hopeful that the Century and Consumers Buildings will be individually considered for a Chicago Landmark Designation by the City's Council's "Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards," followed by support from the full Chicago City Council in the near future. However, the GSA still has the jurisdiction to supersede the City of Chicago's Landmarks Ordinance, and potentially destroy these two incredible skyscrapers, despite the potential Landmark Designation.

History: Century Building

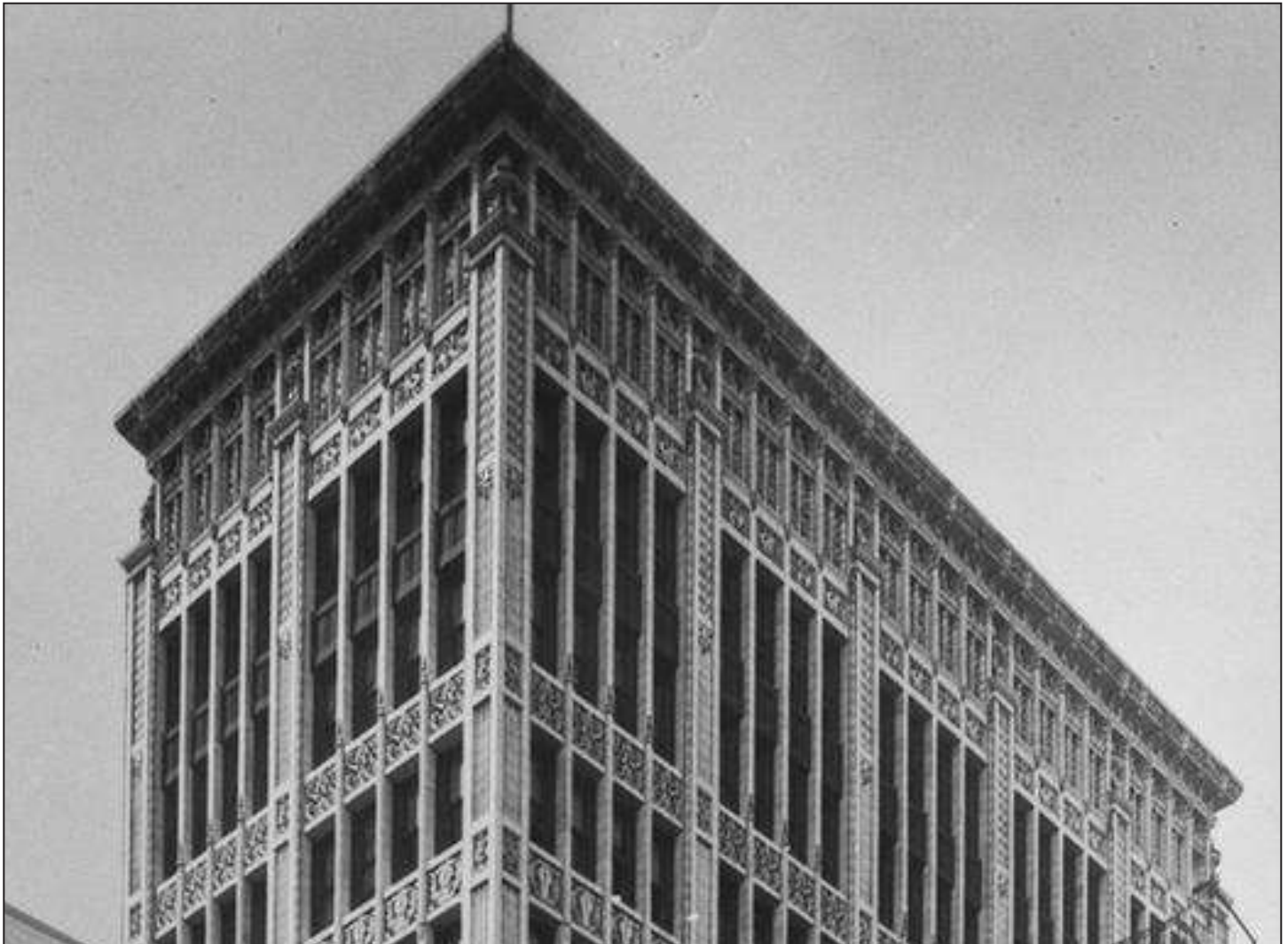
The Century and Consumers Buildings were once among the tall and elegant skyscraper buildings of a thriving and vibrant State Street Retail District. The 16-story Century Building at 202 S. State Street was built in 1915 and designed by Holabird and Roche. The firm was later renamed Holabird & Root to acknowledge the talent of John Root, Jr. (1887-1963), said to be specifically linked to his design of the Century Building.

The Century Building's emphasis on vertical expression demonstrates the transition from the early Chicago School buildings of the late 19th century to its later works in the first decades of the 20th century. The precedence of verticality is achieved with strong vertical bands and understated recessed spandrels. The ornamentation on the façade, thought to be selected by John Root, Jr., is said to be a rare example of "Neo-Manueline," a Portuguese revival-style that influenced architecture in Chicago and other parts of the Midwest. Shields, knights in armor, botanical and other decorative motifs are featured in the complex ornament that extends around the buildings windows and doors and along the uppermost floors of the building. This unique ornamentation contributes to the diverse architectural environment in the Chicago Loop.



The Century Building, 1915, Holabird and Roche, 202 S. State Street. Photo Credit: Chicago Architectural Photographing Company, State Street, 200-298 S. Folder 1177, Sheet 21, CPC_04_D_1177_021, Chicago - Photographic Images of Change, University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections Department

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



Detail of upper façade and cornice of Century Building, The Century Building, 1915, Holabird and Roche, 202 S. State Street. Photo Credit: Chicago Architectural Photographing Company, State Street, 200-298 S. Folder 1177, Sheet 21, CPC_04_D_1177_021, Chicago - Photographic Images of Change, University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections Department

The Century Building is listed as a contributing structure to the “Loop Retail Historic District” on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, according to a March 2006 Cultural Sources Survey, a GSA study has determined that the building may be eligible for an individual National Register listing. The Century Building has also received an orange-rating in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey published in 1996. An orange-rated building “possesses some architectural feature or historical association that made them potentially significant in the context of the surrounding community.” Therefore, the building would be a strong candidate for Chicago Landmark designation.

The history of the Century Building began when Buck & Rayner, a pioneering Chicago drug store firm later absorbed by Liggett Drug stores, commissioned the noted Chicago architectural firm Holabird & Roche to design a modern commercial skyscraper building in 1913.

Completed in 1915, “The Twentieth Century Building,” as it was originally called, is an excellent example of a tall shops building. Its upper floors were occupied by a wide variety of tenants through the years including tailors, furriers, beauty shops, clothes shops, lawyers, brokers, and dentists, contributing to the vibrancy of the Loop’s commercial district. The Twentieth Century Building’s name was changed to the Century Building in 1917, after the newly named Century Trust and Savings Bank signed a 20-year lease. In 1949, the Home Federal Savings and Loan Association purchased the Century Building and modernized the storefronts and lobby space. In approximately 1958, Home Federal Savings & Loan Bank acquired the Republic Building (1905-1961), a building of great architectural merit by architects Holabird & Roche. Located directly across the street, on the southeast



Detail of modified upper façade and cornice of Century Building, 1915, Holabird & Roche, 202 S. State Street. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

corner of State and Adams Street, Home Federal demolished the Republic Building and replaced it with a nondescript building, which opened in 1962 to function as the bank's new headquarters. In 1984, Rev. Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign offices were located in the Century Building. His campaign created a path for Barack Obama's ascent to the White House in 2008.

The loss of the Republic Building by Holabird & Roche and the demolition of the Schiller/Garrick Building (1890-1961), by architects Adler & Sullivan in 1961, spurred a movement in Chicago and across the nation, to recognize and preserve these buildings as great works of art and architecture, and not obsolete buildings to be carelessly and senselessly lost to demolition. Combined with the demolition of Pennsylvania Station in New York City in 1963-1966, the preservation movement in America became part of a new consciousness, with new ordinances introduced to encourage protections and designations of commercial buildings and structures, as well as both public and semi-public buildings as landmarks.

History: Consumers Building

The 22-story Consumers Building at 220 S. State Street, also later known by its address of "One Quincy Court," was designed in 1913 by Jenney, Mundie & Jensen. William Bryce Mundie (1863-1939) was the principal designer of the building. Mundie's former business partner William LeBaron Jenney (1832-1907), was known as "The Father of Skyscraper," employing structural metal framing in his designs for multi-story buildings, and thereby creating what is recognized as the world's first skyscraper. His design for the Home Insurance Building (1884-1931) employed a metal frame, and is recognized as the world's first skyscraper.

Along with its neighbor the Century Building, the iconic Consumers Building represents the last period of the large-scale Chicago School commissions, (also known as the Chicago Commercial Style). Typical of this commercial

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Detail of upper façade and cornice of Consumers Building, The Consumers Building, 1913, Jenney, Mundie & Jensen, 220 S. State Street, c. 1960. Photo credit: Chicago Architectural Photographing Company, State Street, 200-298 S. Folder 1177, Sheet 4, CPC_o4_D_1177_004, Chicago - Photographic Images of Change, University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections Department

style, the 22-story building is constructed with a steel frame and clad in white architectural terra cotta made locally in Chicago, with a vertically-oriented, streamlined design highlighted by decorative ornament. The steel structure is supported with 38 caissons that took 200 men two months to drive into the ground. One week after the building permit was granted, a new Chicago building code limited the height of buildings to 200 feet. The Consumers Building is 291 feet tall.

Windows on all four sides of the building allow significant natural sunlight to illuminate interior spaces. This was an important feature in the early years of electricity and ventilation. An interior lightwell, which was typical of many large commercial buildings of the era, was eliminated from the design because of the extensive window coverage on the building's exterior. Floors 2, 3 and 4 feature the three-part Chicago windows, which feature a central fixed panel and two operable double hung windows on each side. The remaining floors contain more typical paired double-hung windows, extending to the top of the building. The primary facades on both State Street and Quincy Court are recognized for their vertical expression and their tripartite design, which consist of a defined base, shaft or middle section and cornice.

The Consumers Building is separated into these defined sections by simple horizontal bands of terra cotta, topped with an ornamental fascia and cornice, at the 1st, 4th, 17th, and 20th stories. The terra cotta spandrels are detailed with simple geometric shapes. In contrast, many of the public and semi-public interior spaces of the Consumers Building are highly ornamented and elaborate.

Upon entering the Consumers Building, one encounters a lobby sheathed in Italian marble-clad walls and ceilings, all authentic to the original architect's vision and design. Bronze fixtures, finishes, and surfaces, including elaborate bronze elevator doors, are original features within the lobby. Several alterations have been made to the ground-floor facade of the building. The bronze canopy over the State Street entrance was removed along with the storefronts. The early storefronts were replaced with modern ones over time and by various retailers, and a revolving door was



Detail of modified cornice of Consumers Building, 1913, Jenney, Mundie & Jensen, 220 S. State Street, c.2023. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

added to the State Street side. The original roofline that included a frieze band, fascia and cornice, located at the very top of the building, was also modified. However, these altered components of the building (storefronts, fascia & cornice) could all be easily restored, if so desired as part of an extensive restoration project in the future.

Plans for the Consumers Building began when Jacob L. Kesner, part of Kesner Realty Trust, initially purchased two buildings on the site along with a ground-lease under the structures. Both buildings were then demolished in order for the skyscraper to be constructed. The State Street and Quincy Court corner site was ideal for retail and store frontage, as there was good light, and ventilation. Kenser went on to purchase the adjacent building at 214 S. State Street to ensure that no other skyscraper would be built there and to forever protect his tall building's light and ventilation.

The Consumers Building secured three important tenants, the first was A. Weis & Co. for the Winter Garden, a formal restaurant located in the building's basement, whose lavishly ornamented interior signified it to be a desirable destination. The second was the Hilton Company, a men's clothing store from New York City, which was placed in the corner store location at street level. A month later, the name of the building was changed to the Consumers Building, which noted the occupancy of the Consumers Company on the 20th and 21st floors. At this time, a 60-foot electric circular "Consumers" sign was installed on the roof of the building. At an unknown date this sign was later removed. Throughout the years, the building's tenants have included film companies, clothing dealers, architects, lawyers and the Remington Typewriter Company.

History: Other Parts of the Block

Between the Century and Consumers Buildings are a pair of smaller retail buildings. Quincy Court is located midblock and was originally the formal entry to the Dirksen Federal Courthouse. Part of the larger Federal Center complex with its principal façade stretching along Dearborn Street, the Dirksen Building is located to the West of the Century and Consumers Buildings. Architect Mies van der Rohe originally envisioned Quincy Court as the principal pedestrian entrance to the courthouse from State Street. Quincy Court was also a gathering space for

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View of Quincy Street and State Street toward a crowd in front of the old Chicago Federal Building, Chicago, Illinois, August 16, 1958. Benson & Rixon Store building is visible. Photo credit: Hanns Gutenstein, photographer, Chicago History Museum, ICHI-177049 (left)

Frank Derrick Total Experience performs at South State Street and West Quincy Street, Chicago, Illinois, June 22, 1973. Photo credit: Chicago Sun-Times collection, Chicago History Museum, ST-90003454-0023 (right)

public events and concerts. At the time of its construction, State Street was Chicago's most prominent throughfare, lined with department stores and throngs of shoppers and visitors. The intersection of State and Madison Streets, known for more than a century as "the world's busiest corner," is just a few blocks to the north.

A beautiful plaza and courtyard was designed by Mies van der Rohe and was envisioned as a monumental gateway to the courthouse with its soaring flagpole and colossal stone dedicating the courthouse building to Congressman Everett M. Dirksen. This principal entryway, was flanked by the historic 22-story Consumers Building and the six-story curvilinear Art Moderne style, Benson & Rixon Store of 1937, by seminal Chicago architect Alfred Alschuler. That grand gateway is now a closed-off delivery entrance, parking lot, and security checkpoint. It is both programmed and used very much like a typical Chicago alley and delivery dock. This is hardly what Mies envisioned for his Federal Center project. The conversion of a formal pedestrian walkway, plaza, and entrance, to a loading dock and alley, does not in our opinion fairly respect or the honor the building's namesake, Congressman Everett McKinley Dirksen or the building's world-famous architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

When both the Century and Consumers Buildings, along with parcels along State Street extending south to Jackson Boulevard, were all acquired by the GSA, they were proposed to be occupied by Federal government offices as part of an expansion of their Loop campus. That proposal, published in media sources was said to have included the



Frank Derrick Total Experience performs at South State Street and West Quincy Street, Chicago, Illinois, June 22, 1973.

Photo credit: Chicago Sun-Times collection, Chicago History Museum, ST-90003454-0044

Century and Consumers Buildings, along with two smaller buildings located at 208 to 212 and 214 S. State Street. However, 208 to 212 and 214 S. State Street were not initially considered for preservation, as part of the GSA's plans, immediately after acquisition of the properties.

At one time, the GSA proposed a new large office building, sheathed in glass, intended "to bridge and connect" the Century and Consumers Buildings. This proposal would have formed one large building with an expanded floor plate area. That proposal was welcomed by many in the architectural community as it repurposed these two seminal buildings, invested in the restoration, and engaged and connected the two historic skyscrapers in a sensitive manner. The plans also engaged *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Restoration*, which is a series of established guidelines, principles and best practices for the reuse of historic buildings and part of a federal program.

The architectural firm of Marshall & Fox designed one of the smaller structures recognized as the three-story building, located at 208-212 S. State Street. It was a small retail building, with large expanses of glass on all three levels of its State Street façade, which over time had been concealed by signage and extensive remodeling. This building was determined to be structurally unstable and underwent an emergency demolition at an exorbitant cost of \$3.2 million dollars in April of 2023. This demolition was a response to long-deferred maintenance and neglect while the building was under the ownership of the GSA.

The architectural firm Marshall & Fox, led by Benjamin H. Marshall (1874-1944) and Charles E. Fox (1870-1926), designed an amazing portfolio of luxury and first-class office buildings, residential structures, and legendary hotels. Most notable of their hotel projects were The Drake, Blackstone and Edgewater Beach Hotels. A number of theaters, office buildings, and residential commissions by Marshall & Fox are designated Chicago Landmarks or contributing buildings in Chicago Landmark Districts.

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Gunther's Confectionery, 214 S. State Street. c 1900. (Pre-1909 address: 212 State St.) Image credit: Preservation Chicago Postcard Collection

The four-story 214 S. State Street Building, was originally designed by architect, C.M. Palmer in 1883, as a six-story structure for Gunther's Confectionery, Ice Cream Parlor and Café. Charles Gunther (1837-1920) was a German-American politician, confectioner, and collector of American Civil War and Lincoln associated objects, many which remain as part of the collections of the Chicago History Museum. Gunther was also known as The Candy Man and the P.T. Barnum of Chicago, as he was one of the largest candymakers of his time, and brought Libby Prison from Richmond, Virginia to Chicago in 1889. Eventually he turned his Civil War Museum within Libby Prison, into The Coliseum convention center. Located at 16th and Wabash, the Chicago Coliseum was open from 1895 to 1971, and was demolished in 1983.

The storefront was later remodeled for Martin Jewelers with an Art Deco/Art Moderne design and interior by architect Isadore E. Alexander, c.1949. In later years, this was also known as a variety of jewelry stores and other retail businesses. In recent decades, Roberto's Men's Store was located in this building.

The 214 S. State Building is among the oldest structures on this block. It was later known as "The Consumers Building Annex," which allowed for the elimination of a courtyard and the protection of both natural light and stunning views to the north for the businesses and offices in the adjoining 22-story Consumers Building. This structure had undergone numerous remodelings and transformations over time, including the elimination of its topmost floors. The work at 214 S. State Street Building was subsequently remodeled and altered by architects Jenney Mundie & Jensen in 1913, for an expansion into the adjacent Consumers Building to the north. The streamlined, high-style Art Deco/Art Moderne storefront with its black Vitrolite, colored terrazzo, silver banding, curvilinear glass windows, and wood paneled interior, is highly intact and a rare survivor celebrating State Street's



Roberto's storefront / originally Gunther's Confectionary, 214 S. State. Remodeled in 1949 by Isadore E. Alexander in a streamlined, high-style Art Moderne style. A highly intact and rare survivor celebrating State Street's rich history. Photo Credit: Google Maps

rich history. Preservation Chicago hopes that particular care and sensitivity will be taken to protect and restore this significant storefront.

Included in the 2012 Federal Center expansion plans was 230 S. State, the six-story 1937 Art Moderne Benson & Rixon Store Building by Alfred Alschuler, and the adjacent 240 S. State, the six-story 1949 modernist Bond Clothing Store by architects, Friedman, Alschuler & Sincere.

Threat

General Services Administration (GSA) meetings held at the Federal Center during 2009-2010 included conversations regarding the possibility of demolition of one or both of the tall Chicago School buildings. These conversations were witnessed by Preservation Chicago and our other partner organizations which attended the meetings. The conversation regarding demolition of these early skyscrapers was considered outrageous by members of the architecture and preservation community, and this response was shared with GSA officials.

The potential and irreparable damage that demolition of these historic skyscraper buildings will have on South State Street cannot be overstated. The Century and Consumers Buildings provide an important anchor for the existing street walls along both State Street, Adams Street, and the Chicago Federal Center, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe felt it important to frame his Federal Center with these historic structures. If demolished as planned by the GSA, not only will Chicago lose two important early Chicago School skyscrapers by two of its most important architecture firms, it will also create a huge void in the Loop's Commercial District, an open site which will negatively impact one of downtown Chicago's most vibrant thoroughfares. Chicago does not need another vacant, windswept plaza, nor does it need the embarrassment of losing more of its early historic skyscrapers. Every effort should be made to repurpose these buildings, so they contribute to the vibrancy of State Street and the tax rolls.

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



Site of the Century and Consumers Buildings in 1903, approximately a decade prior to their construction. Buildings on the west side of State Street, north of Quincy Street, decorated for the Fort Dearborn Centennial and the early beginnings of the City of Chicago on September 27, 1903. Photo credit: Charles R. Clark, photographer, Chicago History Museum, ICHi-071871

Moreover, there are also concerns regarding the impact that demolition of the Century building would have on the neighboring 1870s buildings that comprise the historic Berghoff Restaurant, Chicago's oldest extant restaurant, at 17 W. Adams Street. A recent structural survey has stated that the Berghoff Restaurant could potentially lose the significant structural stability that they currently receive from the frame of the Century Building.

The \$52-million-dollar taxpayer earmark to demolish the Century and Consumers Buildings are a real threat and this has the potential to adversely impact the entire Chicago Loop and Central Business District. In an era where Downtown's across the nation and world are recovering from a three-year Covid pandemic and the ensuing remote working lifestyles, there is a need to reinvest in our urban built environment to attract people back to the American city center. A demolition of such proportions is a regressive and an act of poor planning for the future of a vibrant city like Chicago. Hopefully we will avoid the wholesale land clearances of the 1950s and 1960s as a solution to the issues presented by the GSA.

Recommendations

The City of Chicago's Department of Planning and Development-Historic Preservation Division, has made two separate staff presentations at two public hearings of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in 2022. The informative presentations were made to consider whether the Century and Consumers Buildings meet the strict criterion and standards for Chicago Landmark Designation. At both hearings, City of Chicago DPD Staff determined that the Century and Consumers Buildings do indeed qualify for designation. Out of respect for the owners, the GSA, and the federal judge appearing before the Commission, a decision to consider a Preliminary Landmark Recommendation was postponed for a future meeting date and to indicate to the GSA that the city might favorably support a Chicago Landmark Designation of the Century and Consumers Buildings in the future.



Night view of State Street decorated for the holidays, Chicago, Illinois in 1960. The Century and Consumers Buildings are visible along with following stores: Benson & Rixon, Howard Clothes, Parker Furs, McLennon's Pen, Martin Jewelers, Leo Ross, Home Federal Savings, and The Fair Store. Photo credit: Chicago Sun-Times collection, Chicago History Museum, ST-17668060

We at Preservation Chicago are of the opinion that the time has arrived for the Century and Consumers Buildings to become Designated Chicago Landmarks. We are urging the City of Chicago to proceed with the two individual Chicago Landmark Designations and to both honor and encourage preservation of these highly visible and esteemed Chicago School of Architecture buildings.

The designation should not be delayed any further. Arriving at a critical moment, it would signal to GSA that the City of Chicago has determined that the Century and Consumers Buildings are critically important to the city's

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



Display cases are opposite the elevators in this rendering of the lobby of the Century Building circa 1915, from the Buck & Rayner promotional pamphlet. Image credit: Holabird & Roche, Holabird & Root: An illustrated Catalog of Works, Volume II, 1911 - 1927, Garland Publishing, Inc.

built environment, Chicago's unique architectural legacy, the international architectural community, and worthy of preservation and reuse.

Preservation Chicago hopes that the Consumers Building's elevations on State Street and Quincy Court, along with the Century Building façade at State and Adams, will be restored to include the building's original rooflines, frieze band, fascia, cornice and terra cotta, along with the storefronts and grand marble-lined lobby and arcade. The buildings have been allowed to fall into disrepair, and so this restoration is an essential step forward for reuse.

Every effort should be made in partnership with the GSA and federal government to preserve and reuse the Century and Consumers Buildings. There are already a couple viable options. Since the buildings are owned by the federal government, they could be rehabilitated for government use, or reused for a creative purpose like a collaborative and shared archives institution.

Preservation Chicago is actively working with a consortium of stakeholders which has formed the

Collaborative Chicago Archives Center. To date, we have a group of religious archive collections which have joined together to explore the Century and Consumers Buildings as a national collaborative archives center, which could prove beneficial to many religious orders and secular organizations across the nation. Such an idea could also provide a center for religious studies and research, centrally located and under one roof, in an area of Chicago noted for its concentration of universities and students.

With this collaborative archive project, many of the rear elevation windows on the Consumers Building, closest to the Federal Courthouse, could be blocked for the archive stacks which are sensitive to sunlight exposure. Other windows at the west end of the Quincy Court elevation, could potentially be blocked from the interior side, which would not impact the building's southern elevation. The easternmost windows on Quincy, as well as those fronting



Marble-clad Consumers Building elevator lobby and grand staircase with bronze fixtures. c. 2017. Credit: John O'Dwyer / JSO Valuation Group

State Street, could remain open but inoperable with security glass. Each archive could potentially be located on individual floors of the building, in secure areas, with portions of each floor facing State Street to be used as a research center for the archive. Of course, security would be of great importance and entry to the building would be by appointment only and via a security desk in the lobby of each building. This is an exciting opportunity and concept and could additionally even house municipal, county, state and federal archives. Dominican University, based in River Forest, Illinois has proposed the idea of a new presence in the Loop for their library and archive departments. What a tremendous asset that could be to add another institution of higher learning to Chicago's downtown.

We at Preservation Chicago, along with other architecture, preservation, non-profit, civic organizations and community partners have all been part of ongoing discussions with the GSA and federal employees, at Section 106 meetings. These hearings, which offer public participation through Consulting Parties or established organizations, are required by law for buildings included on the National Register of Historic Places. As all four buildings, located at 202, 208-212 and 220 S. State Street are part of the Loop Retail National Register District, they are all to be considered as part of the federal Section 106 hearing process.

We also want to point to the urban planning mistakes and mishaps of the past in the Downtown central area of Chicago. Block 37, bounded by State Street, Randolph, Washington and Dearborn Streets, sat vacant for 16 years, from 1989 to 2005. As a vacant parcel after demolition, Block 37 had extensive negative consequences for both the Loop and State Street. The vacant parcel and underutilized green space at State Street and Van Buren, another site of demolition, has had a negative impact on State Street and has been discussed for redevelopment. The same is also true for the former Chicago Mercantile Exchange Building site at Washington and Franklin, which remains a fenced gravel-filled vacant lot. We would argue the same could occur for the State Street-Adams and Quincy Court site of the Century and Consumers Buildings.

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Consumers Buildings, 220 S. State Street. Photo credit: Preservation Chicago Postcard Collection

In addition, demolition could represent a troubling new precedent for buildings determined to be too close to Federal Buildings in the future. This could undermine many of our Chicago Landmark Buildings and newly proposed reuse projects for buildings in the Loop, most notably the “LaSalle Street Reimagined”/“LaSalle Corridor Reuse Proposals” project, which will convert several historic structures near the Federal Center from office buildings to residential developments, with a variety of rooftop amenities. One of these proposed adaptive reuse projects overlooks the Federal Center Plaza. Given the precedent of the Century and Consumers buildings, what will be considered “too close” to the Federal Center in the future? What impact may this have for historic buildings in proximity to federal buildings across the country? For instance, the Citadel Building, across from the Dirksen Courthouse is approximately the same distance from the Century and Consumers Buildings, and yet the GSA is not currently considering that building a threat at this time. We’re concerned about the potential precedent this could create.

The Kluczynski Federal Building and the Chicago Loop Post Office, as well as the Metcalf Buildings are all part of the Chicago Federal Center Complex and similarly near to other privately-owned structures. Yet these adjacent buildings are not considered a threat. The Federal Center complex is currently protected by granite balusters along the perimeter of the property. Why then can’t the existing balusters around the Dirksen Courthouse Building also be sufficient to protect that asset? It appears there are alternatives that could be pursued which would allow for the buildings of the 200 Block of South State Street to be reused.

Another solution could include the installation of ballistic glass on the interior side of the Miesian glass curtain-wall of the Dirksen Courthouse where offices and chambers might require additional security. This same solution is being considered to replace sections of metal fencing around the east perimeter of the Dirksen Building, why not on the interior side of vulnerable offices as a similar solution?

Some members of the preservation community maintain that the GSA has never really intended to reuse the Century and Consumers Buildings. Numerous proposals, from “a trade of services” for the site and buildings, to residential reuse have been determined to be inappropriate by the GSA and federal officials, after large investments have been made in plans and financing. If the GSA continues to reject viable private proposals for the buildings, we support a Chicago Landmark designation to prevent demolition and to generate additional potential funding sources for restoration and repurposing.

In an era of ever shrinking public funding, now is not the time to use \$52 million of public taxpayer dollars to destroy historic buildings for vacant lots or small corner parks on a historic and dense commercial street. If properly repurposed for government use, or as a Chicago Collaborative Archives Center, these two buildings could serve the people of Chicago and the nation for another 100 years or more.



Century and Consumers Buildings, 202 S. State Street & 220 S. State Street. Photo credit: Preservation Chicago Postcard Collection

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Consumers Building at Quincy Court, 1913, Mundie and Jensen. Photo Credit: J.W. Taylor, Photographer. Historic Architecture and Landscape Image Collection, Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, Art Institute of Chicago, Digital file#16458



The Century Building, 202 S. State Street. Photo credit: Chicago Architectural Photographing Company, State Street, 200-298 S. Folder 1177, Sheet 13, CPC_04_D_1177_013, Chicago - Photographic Images of Change, University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections Department

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



View of Quincy Street west from State St. towards old Federal Building, c.1914. Photo credit: Charles R. Clark, photographer, Chicago History Museum, ICHI-072020 (top left) | Exterior night time view of the Benson & Rixon Company Building. Photo credit: Hedrich-Blessing Collection, Chicago History Museum, HB-04358-H (top right) | Gunther's Confectionary Store, Ice Cream Parlor and Café, 214 S. State Street. Image credit: Preservation Chicago Postcard Collection (bottom)



Exterior view of the Benson & Rixon Company Building at State Street and Quincy Street, Chicago, Illinois. The Benson & Rixon Store, 1937, Alfred S. Alschuler, 230 S. State Street. Photo credit: Hedrich-Blessing Collection, Chicago History Museum, HB-04358-H



Winter Garden Restaurant "The Joy Spot of Chicago's Loop" located in the basement of the Consumers Building, 220 S. State Street and Buck & Rayner Cafeteria in the Century Building, 202 S. State Street. Image credit: Preservation Chicago Postcard Collection



Martin Jewelers, 214 S. State St., October 1966. Photo credit: Declan Haun, photographer for LIFE Magazine. Chicago History Museum, ICHI-092622. (Top) Views of State Street looking north towards Consumers Building. (Bottom) Image credit: Preservation Chicago Postcard Collection

The Sheffield-Belden Group

Northwest corner of Sheffield and Belden Avenues, Chicago



Sheffield-Belden Townhouses, 3308, 2310, 2314 & 2316 N. Sheffield Ave., John Morrell and others, 1890-1893. Ward Miller / Preservation Chicago

OVERVIEW

For over 130 years, four freestanding brick and stone Romanesque Revival townhouses built between 1890-1893, have fronted the 2300 block of N. Sheffield Avenue in the Lincoln Park Community Area. In 1926, the townhouses were joined by a well-scaled 40 apartment courtyard building at south the corner of Sheffield and Belden. The freestanding townhouses were later converted to apartments while some in recent years have been transformed into DePaul University offices. For decades the courtyard building has provided reasonably-priced

The Sheffield-Belden Group

Courtyard Building

Address: **1000-12 W. Belden & 2300-02 N. Sheffield**

Architect: **Maher & McGraw**

Date: **1926**

Style: **Renaissance Revival**

Four Freestanding Townhouses

Address: **2308, 2310, 2314 and 2316 N. Sheffield**

Architect: **John Morrell and others**

Date: **1890-1893**

Style: **Romanesque Revival**

Neighborhood: **Lincoln Park**



Sheffield-Belden Group, northwest corner of Sheffield and Belden Avenues. Freestanding townhouses, 2314 and 2316 N. Sheffield, John Morrell and others, 1890-1893. Photo Credit: Serhii Chruk / Esto

housing for DePaul students and the local community. Together, these five historic structures comprise a half-block along Sheffield and Belden Avenues.

All five of the buildings are “contributing” structures in the Sheffield National Register Historic District while two of the historic houses, 2310 and 2316 N. Sheffield, are orange-rated in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey (CHRS), deeming them important to the City of Chicago and the community in which they are located. In the past year, DePaul University has proposed that the five buildings be demolished and replaced with a new multi-story athletic center. This development would completely change the character of the block and adversely impact the few remaining historic structures nearby.

Preservation Chicago supports the growth DePaul University as an important Chicago institution of higher education and recognizes the university as a tremendous asset. However, we are also of the opinion that the demolition and loss of these five buildings will adversely impact the streetwall, historic character, and human scale of both this block and the Sheffield National Register District, which has experienced a tremendous onslaught of demolitions and new construction in recent years, including by DePaul University.

HISTORY

Established in 1898 as St. Vincent’s College by the Vincentian Fathers, a Catholic Order of priests, DePaul University received its charter as a university and assumed its current-day name in 1907. DePaul and the community area of Lincoln Park have grown together from the late nineteenth century to present day. The university now has two primary campuses, its oldest being the Lincoln Park campus, along with their Loop campus

Chicago 7: Sheffield-Belden Group

established in 1914 in the Powers Building at 37 S. Wabash. DePaul's Loop Campus, composed of five colleges located in multiple buildings, has experienced tremendous growth and expansion over the past two decades and is housed largely in historic former department stores and commercial office buildings. DePaul University is said to be the largest Roman Catholic university in the nation and the largest private nonprofit university in the Midwest.

Even before the 1898 establishment of DePaul University, residential neighborhoods were quickly developing nearby. The four Romanesque Revival townhouses at 2308-2316 N. Belden are typical of the period and include ornate detailing, beautiful carved stone and decorative arched openings. Built over the course of three years from 1890 to 1893, these four townhouses are fine examples of Romanesque and Chicago Greystone architecture, exhibiting the rough-hewn stone, rounded arches, and rusticated stone bases associated with these styles. While the architects of 2308 and 2316 N. Sheffield are unknown, 2314 N. Sheffield can be definitively attributed to architect John Morrell. 2310 N. Sheffield is likely a Morrell design as well owing to its near-identical appearance and its construction in 1890, the same year as 2314 N. Sheffield.



Sheffield-Belden Group, northwest corner of Sheffield and Belden Avenues. Freestanding townhouses, 2314 and 2316 N. Sheffield, John Morrell and others, 1890-1893. Photo Credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto

In 1926, over thirty years after the construction of the townhouses, the courtyard building at the corner of Sheffield and Belden was completed. Designed by architecture firm Maher & McGraw, it is a prototypical Chicago courtyard building displaying characteristics of Renaissance and Colonial Revivalism. These five buildings comprise half of a



Sheffield-Belden Group, northwest corner of Sheffield and Belden Avenues. Courtyard building, 1000-1012 W. Belden and 2300-2302 N. Sheffield Avenue, Maher & McGraw, 1926. Photo Credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

fully intact historic streetwall completed by Sanctuary Hall (1883-1889) at Sheffield and Fullerton, formerly the primary building of DePaul's Lincoln Park campus, and a courtyard building at 2318 N. Sheffield. Each of these buildings are "contributing" structures in the Sheffield National Register Historic District created in 1976. Two of the historic houses (2310 and 2316 N. Sheffield) are orange-rated in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey (CHRS), deeming them important to the City of Chicago and the community in which they are located.

THREAT

In the past year, DePaul University has proposed that these five structures, ranging in age from 98 to 134 years old, be demolished and replaced with a new athletic center building. The building would be of the same general scale and size as other nearby DePaul athletic facilities constructed over the past two decades, which offer a sense of what could potentially be built at this corner. The current athletic buildings form a two-block stretch on the east side of Sheffield between Webster and Fullerton Avenues and are of a completely different scale and style than the historic structures that visually define Lincoln Park's more characterful and architecturally significant buildings. This process of acquisition and demolition by DePaul University is a concerning pattern that continues to accelerate. This process was demonstrated by the complete loss of the eastern side of the 2300 block of North Sheffield Avenue to new developments over the past two decades.

Chicago 7: Sheffield-Belden Group



Sheffield-Belden Group, northwest corner of Sheffield and Belden Avenues. Courtyard building, 1000-1012 W. Belden and 2300-2302 N. Sheffield Avenue, Maher & McGraw, 1926. Photo Credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

Demolition of these five historic buildings would cause tremendous and irreparable damage to Sheffield Avenue and the local community. Concerned groups who oppose this plan include neighborhood community organizations and even current DePaul students who are unhappy with this proposed development and its anticipated impact. The proposed demolition of these buildings has since generated multiple media stories, leading to it becoming a high-profile preservation concern for Chicago's North Side.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservation Chicago strongly supports and understands the need for DePaul University to expand its programs and footprint on an as-needed basis. If such a facility is desired, there are many alternative options for expansion. Preservation Chicago believes this athletic center should be relocated to the nearby, underdeveloped surface parking lot a block away at Sheffield and Fullerton. This would be an ideal site for the proposed athletic building as it would not harm the architectural fabric of the community and would sit much closer to the CTA Red Line station for ease of access to games by students and visitors. Likewise, an expansion of the university's facilities could be accomplished by constructing additional floors on top of the two existing athletic center buildings located just across the street from the proposed site, and possibly extending the floors over the adjacent parking garage structure.



Sheffield-Belden Group, northwest corner of Sheffield and Belden Avenues. Courtyard building, 1000-1012 W. Belden and 2300-2302 N. Sheffield Avenue, Maher & McGraw, 1926. Photo Credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

It is our understanding that the Sheffield/Fullerton surface parcel was first proposed in 2018 as the site for a much larger athletic center and fieldhouse building with support from DePaul's leadership. There have also been suggestions that the land may be under future consideration for a hotel and convention center, but those plans have not yet been unveiled. The university has officially stated that they would like to use the Sheffield/Fullerton site for an academic building, but that may be years in the future. A deferral of formal use of the site for more than a decade could easily be considered "landbanking." DePaul could also explore the possibility of an athletic facility in the South Loop, given their already established presence in that neighborhood. In any case, DePaul University has multiple options for an alternative site for their athletic center which should all be given greater consideration.

Given DePaul's history of demolitions in the past, we remain concerned about other historic Lincoln Park properties near the campus that could one day be impacted by future university proposals. These include Cortelyou Commons (1929) designed by architect Dwight Wallace, St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church and Rectory (1897) by architect James Egan, the former DePaul Academy, now Byrne Hall (1907), Sanctuary Hall (1883-1889), and several rowhouses at the southeast corner of Belden and Sheffield (1891) by Harold M. Hansen. All of these historic buildings are worthy of Chicago Landmark designation and should be bestowed with that honor to prevent demolition in the future. Preservation Chicago is confident that DePaul, the Lincoln Park community, and organizations like ours can all collectively craft a sensible vision for growth, while also respecting the university's and surrounding neighborhood's historic assets.

Chicago 7: Sheffield-Belden Group



2310 and 2314 N. Sheffield Avenue Details, John Morrell, 1890-1893. Photo Credit: Max Chavez / Preservation Chicago (top & bottom)



2314 N. Sheffield Avenue Detail. Photo Credit: Max Chavez / Preservation Chicago (top)

Sheffield-Belden Group, northwest corner of Sheffield and Belden Avenues. Freestanding townhouses, 2314 and 2316 N. Sheffield, John Morrell and others, 1890-1893. Photo Credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto (bottom)

Ogden Keeler Industrial Buildings

Western Felt Works and Turner Manufacturing Company



Ogden-Keeler Industrial Buildings, Turner Manufacturing Company Building, 4147-4151 W. Ogden, Alfred S. Alschuler, 1918 – 1921. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

OVERVIEW

The Ogden Keeler Industrial Buildings are a collection of three historic manufacturing structures situated along West Ogden and South Keeler Avenues on the border of the Little Village and Lawndale Community Areas. The group of buildings were the former headquarters of Western Felt Works and the Turner Manufacturing Company, both successful Chicago companies that provided essential goods to the nation throughout the twentieth century.

The buildings display characteristics emblematic of Chicago industrial design from the 1910s and 1920s, and have retained a significant level of architectural integrity. Most

Ogden-Keeler Industrial Buildings

Western Felt Works

Address: **4115 W. Ogden Avenue**

Architect: **R.C. Fletcher**

Date: **1916**

Style: **Prairie School**

Turner Manufacturing Company

Address: **4147-4151 W. Ogden; 2309-2325 S. Keeler**

Architect: **Alfred S. Alschuler**

Date: **1918 - 1921**

Style: **Prairie School and Classical Revival**

Neighborhood: **North Lawndale**



Ogden-Keeler Industrial Buildings, Western Felt Works, 1916, R.C. Fletcher, 4115 W. Ogden Avenue. Photo credit: Ward Milller

notably, the Turner Manufacturing Company buildings were designed by acclaimed Chicago architect Alfred S. Alschuler. Despite the architectural legacy that the Ogden Keeler Buildings preserve, these three structures are today threatened with demolition. Current owners seek to create a blocks-long logistics warehouse that will permanently alter the streetwall of this portion of Ogden Avenue, part of the original famed Route 66. Preservation Chicago urges the landmarking of these buildings and recommends their incorporation into the proposed development.

HISTORY: Western Felt Works

Western Felt Works was founded in 1899 by New York-born Henry Faurot. Beginning his career as an employee of Armour & Company, a leading firm in Chicago meatpacking, Faurot eventually came to direct Armour's Curled Hair and Felt Works. Faurot oversaw the construction process of a new factory building for Armour's Curled Hair and Felt, completed in 1898, but an 1899 fire resulting in multiple deaths caused Faurot to step away from the company. Shortly after this catastrophic blaze, Faurot established a new business venture of his own: Western Felt Works at 787-797 Canal Street.

The company quickly found success, and within just a few years was producing an immense range of products. With felt as their core material, Western Felt Works manufactured a variety of items, from horse saddles, automobile washers, phonograph turntables, to robe linings. Due to Western Felt Works' ability to efficiently provide hundreds of products to many other businesses, the company grew tremendously and eventually needed to expand. In 1916, Western Felt Works relocated to a new factory building at 4115 W. Ogden Avenue by architect R.C. Fletcher, who designed other industrial buildings around Chicago.

Chicago 7: Ogden Keeler Industrial Buildings



Ogden-Keeler Industrial Buildings, Western Felt Works, 1916, R.C. Fletcher, 4115 W. Ogden Avenue, a 2024 Chicago 7 Most Endangered.

Photo credit: Ward Miller / Preservation Chicago

By 1928, Western Felt Works had become a nationwide operation with business offices in New York City, Detroit, Cleveland, San Francisco, and St. Louis. This was followed by their greatest era of financial success and name brand recognition amid World War II, owing to the company's newly established production of wartime goods. As the war strained the supply of much-needed materials like rubber, leather, and plastics, manufacturers discovered that wool felt could be used as a suitable substitute for many of these sorely needed items. Felt footwear protected soldiers' feet in frigid temperatures while felt-lined aviator helmets protected pilots from the elements. Felt was also found to make an excellent cushion for gun turret mounts and as insulation to help soften mechanical vibrations in airplanes and tanks. During the war felt was used for airplane life rafts, ammunition cases, and gas mask filters for both troops and horses. Through these varied uses, felt becoming an essential wartime material with Western Felt Works becoming one of its central manufacturers.

In response to the wartime rubber shortage, Western Felt works created Acadia Synthetic Products, a subsidiary that produced a rubber substitute which quickly became one of the company's most lucrative products. Among the most notable products manufactured by this new division was Saran, the production of which was licensed to Western Felt Works by the Dow Chemical Company. The flexible and durable material—most famous today for lending its name to Saran Wrap—was also employed in the production of fuel and oil lines much like those found in airplanes. With the company's continued growth, the Western Felt Works building complex was gradually expanded over the years following the second World War. By the 1950s, Western Felt Works occupied a large industrial site, consisting of multiple buildings with the original Fletcher-designed warehouse at its center.

The company's influence only continued to grow into the 1950s and beyond, weathering a change in leadership and a series of labor protests, which were eventually settled by the National Labor Relations Board in favor of Western Felt Works employees. At this point, Western Felt Works was an industry leader in felt, which remained in high



"We Make the Felt" Western Felt Works magazine advertisement from 1925. Image credit: Manufacturers News; a weekly journal devoted to the industrial and general business interests of the middle west, v.28 no.24, 1925

demand in the postwar years, its uses ranging from clothing to car manufacturing. By the 1970s, Western Felt Works suffered from declining sales, and in 1978, the company was sold to Lydall, Inc., leading to its subsequent closure.

HISTORY: Turner Manufacturing Company

The Turner Manufacturing Company was founded by August Turner, born August Tarkovsky, who arrived in Chicago from present-day Ukraine in 1885 at the age of 22. According to the 1933 book *Chicago And Its Jews: A Cultural History*, when Turner immigrated "the only wealth he brought with him consisted of a profound knowledge of Hebrew literature, a fine mind and a forceful character." He found early work gilding picture frames before going into business for himself, incorporating Tarkovsky & Co. in 1891. A year later, the company had become Globe Molding Works, and led to the 1896 founding of the Great Northern Molding Works.

In 1902, the Great Northern Molding Works opened a six-story warehouse at 1444 South Sangamon. Along their growing financial success, the company faced early labor challenges. A picture frame workers strike hit the warehouse over a union agreements dispute in 1904: Great Northern Molding Works had instituted a 10-hour day while employees argued they had been promised a 9-hour day by their union. The strike lasted for nearly a half-year before the company agreed to the union's terms. By 1907, Turner had incorporated the Turner Manufacturing Company which remained at their Sangamon location for at least another decade or more. While Turner's business became wildly lucrative in the early years of the 20th century, Turner continued his contribution and commitment to Chicago's Jewish community. Turner helped to maintain the library of the Hebrew Literary Society and advised the Jewish Home for the Aged as a board member.

Chicago 7: Ogden Keeler Industrial Buildings

By the time Turner passed in 1924, the Turner Manufacturing Company was one of the most prominent manufacturers of picture frames and other decorative pieces in the United States. Before his passing, Turner oversaw the opening of a new complex located along West Ogden Avenue. The large warehouse at 4147-4151 W. Ogden Avenue, the complex's first structure, was designed by prominent Chicago architect Alfred S. Alschuler and built on land acquired from the nearby Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad between 1917 and 1918. After it was constructed, the warehouse was touted as the "largest factory in the world devoted to the manufacturing of Portrait Frames, Mirror and Pictures Frames of all kinds."

Alschuler is one of Chicago's most important architects. Born in Chicago and educated at the Armour Institute of Technology (today, the Illinois Institute of Technology), he was trained in the offices of Dankmar Adler before opening his own practice in 1907. Although the architect best known for grand designs like the London Guarantee Building (1922) and KAM Isaiah Israel (1924), Alschuler earned a name for himself with his earlier designs for commercial and industrial buildings. Alschuler fully embraced reinforced concrete construction in many of his building designs. These buildings' external expressions often reflected the powerful concrete structure found within, best exemplified by his Florsheim Shoe Company Building (1926) at 3963 W. Belmont, now a Designated Chicago Landmark, as well as the Chicago Printed String Company Building (1928) at 2300 Logan Boulevard. However, the Ogden-Keeler buildings have a heavy-timber mill construction design.



Ogden-Keeler Industrial Buildings, Turner Manufacturing Company Building, 4147-4151 W. Ogden, Alfred S. Alschuler, 1918 – 1921. Photo credit: Max Chavez / Preservation Chicago

The completion of Turner Manufacturing's new home on Ogden came at an unfortunate time for the company. In 1918, wartime materials shortages impacted the company's output, leading to the buildings near immediate lease to Sears, Roebuck & Company to be used warehouses. An announcement in *Manufacturers' News* that same year noted that with the leasing of their Alschuler building, the Turner Manufacturing Company decided to build a second structure on the west side of the block for their own use. This is most certainly a reference to the warehouse structure soon to be built for the Turner Manufacturing Company at 2309-2325 S. Keeler in 1921, also by Alschuler. It was said that Turner and Alschuler were personal friends.

While the Turner Manufacturing Company Buildings are mill construction—rather than reinforced concrete—they are still representative of one of Alschuler's central architectural contributions: his ability to create muscular yet



Ogden-Keeler Industrial Buildings, Turner Manufacturing Company Building, 4147-4151 W. Ogden, Alfred S. Alschuler, 1918 – 1921, a 2024 Chicago 7 Most Endangered. Photo credit: Max Chavez / Preservation Chicago

elegant exteriors that beautify the industrial zones they are sited in. Both Alschuler structures share a similar visual appearance, with the Keeler structure serving as a larger-scale version of its Ogden counterpart. A fusion of Prairie School and Classical Revival, the buildings feature limestone ornaments and subtle brickwork, fitting neatly alongside some of Alschuler's finest industrial designs.

Once settled in their new home, Turner Manufacturing came to be associated with extremely popular, mass-produced frames, mirrors, wall plates, shadow boxes, and other wall decorations. By the 1950s, under the leadership of Turner's grandson, Francis DeKoven (President of the company from 1933 to 1959 and Board Chairman until 1963), the Turner Manufacturing Company became famous for high-end reproductions of famous artworks. A 1952 Chicago Tribune article lists "El Greco, Rembrandt, da Vinci, Hans Holbein, Brueghel, Gauguin, and Matisse" as just a few of the artists that Turner Manufacturing Company was making available to households nationwide. Alongside their reproductions, the company found the production of original pieces profitable as well, including their popular "Flamingo" series. The company was acquired and eventually dissolved by the late 1970s.

Thanks to their popularity in midcentury America, Turner pieces can still be found today, and their cultural value continues to grow. Today, Turner frames and artworks are popular and sought-after collector's items, sometimes fetching thousands of dollars for a single piece. These extant Alschuler buildings, more than just symbols of Chicago's industrial might, also exist as testaments to the cultural and artistic legacy of the Turner Manufacturing Company.



Ogden-Keeler Industrial Buildings, Turner Manufacturing Company Building, 4147-4151 W. Ogden, Alfred S. Alschuler, 1918 – 1921. Photo credit: Ward Miller / Preservation Chicago

THREATS

The Ogden Keeler Industrial Buildings, along with multiple other neighboring structures, are currently threatened with demolition as part of a substantial warehouse redevelopment project that would extend along Ogden Avenue from Keeler Avenue to Pulaski Road. The proposal, led by IDI Logistics, envisions a 246,200 square foot structure on a nearly 15-acre site that would necessitate the demolition of long-standing buildings that have housed dozens of small, local businesses for decades.

Recent community engagement meetings led by IDI Logistics have indicated that reuse of these structures—or even preservation of the facades and other significant architectural elements—is not being considered at this time. The environmental impacts of demolition alongside the construction of the logistics warehouse itself and ensuing truck traffic, are of environmental concern and must be carefully considered.

West Ogden Avenue was part of the iconic Route 66 journey in and out of Chicago. One of the joys of this legendary roadway has always been the variety of sites and architecture that dot its landscape. From motels to diners, industry to nature, Route 66 has been a celebration of America's finest places since its founding in 1926. The Ogden Keeler Industrial Buildings and their innovative manufacturing histories are part of that legacy; losing them to a severe, windowless development would only serve to lessen the architectural identity of Route 66 and harm the surrounding North Lawndale, South Lawndale, and Little Village communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The construction of this proposed logistics center would be harmful to both the residents and architectural and manufacturing histories of the surrounding community. Preservation Chicago recommends that this logistics center not move forward in its current proposed location, instead opting for a more industrially dense area, one that would not impose such detrimental impacts on adjacent Chicagoans. Demolition of industrial structures in the area—the notoriously dangerous Crawford Power Plant demolition in particular—have raised concerns about the impacts of legacy industry on West Side communities of color. This proposal continues that damaging pattern of perpetuating environmental injustice.

However, if this proposal does move forward, incorporation of these historic structures into the new warehouse is imperative to the history and visual appeal of the neighborhood. We call on IDI Logistics to explore sensible, creative approaches, whether through retrofitting these buildings as satellite facilities or preserving the historic facades and signature exterior elements, to establish the campus' connection to this area's storied industrial past.



Ogden-Keeler Industrial Buildings, Turner Manufacturing Company Building, 4147-4151 W. Ogden, Alfred S. Alschuler, 1918 – 1921. Photo credit: Ward Miller / Preservation Chicago

Whatever the outcome, we believe that further transparency and environmental accountability will be necessary throughout the process of this proposal's review. Per IDI Logistics, a tenant has not been secured for this warehouse, meaning that this proposal is by all indications speculative. When the fate of community health and safety hangs in the balance, it is hard to justify large-scale projects that have no certain occupant. On the other hand, if a tenant has indeed been secured, this raises further concerns about why this crucial information would be concealed. The proposal as it stands poses far too many risks for Little Village and North Lawndale and we ask that it be more carefully considered so as to mitigate the most deleterious effects on the health, architecture, and history of this corridor.

Schulze Baking Company Building

40 E. Garfield Boulevard, Chicago



Upper façade Wabash Avenue, Schulze Baking Company Building, 1914, John Ahlschlager & Sons, 40 E. Garfield Boulevard.

Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

OVERVIEW

The Schulze Baking Company Plant has served as a Washington Park visual landmark for over a century, from its prominent location at the corner of East Garfield Boulevard and South Wabash Avenue. Designed by prominent architecture firm John Ahlschlager & Son, the five-story bakery is clad in cream and blue terra cotta and glazed brick, which lends the building a hygienic and modern appearance. The 1914 construction of the Schulze Plant and the implementation of cutting edge and highly efficient technology bolstered the company's production to 150,000 loaves of bread a day. This flagship baking plant made Schulze Baking Company a part of Chicago's rich food production history and synonymous with quality bread.

Schulze Baking Company Building

Address: **40 E. Garfield Boulevard**

Architect: **John Ahlschlager & Son**

Date: **1915**

Style: **Sullivan-esque**

Neighborhood: **Washington Park**



Schulze Baking Company Building, 1914, John Ahlschlager & Sons, 40 E. Garfield Boulevard. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

The Schulze Baking Company Plant has been closed since 2004. Although plans for the adaptive reuse of the structure as a data center were announced in 2015, the building has remained unoccupied for almost a decade and is now for sale. The exterior and interior of the building has slowly decayed due to vacancy. Full restoration and adaptive reuse of this historic structure would provide a bright future for the Schulze Baking Company Plant.

HISTORY

The Schulze Baking Company was established by Paul Schulze Sr. in 1896. Schulze immigrated from Germany in 1883, and spent his first decade in the United States working in retail and commercial positions between South Dakota and Minnesota. By the 1890s, as a new Chicago resident, Schulze innovated a new process of breadmaking that addressed many of the health and inconsistency issues that challenged the breadmaking industry.

The process of breadmaking in the City of Chicago was often inconsistent and even dangerous occasionally. As detailed in a 1915 Chicago Tribune ad: “Mrs. Jones bought one kind of a loaf in her neighborhood, while Mrs. Smith, a few blocks away, got an entirely different product [...] Truly, in those days, bread was an ‘unusable staple.’ The big majority of housewives baked their own bread [...]” It is reported that after he interviewed housewives about the shortcomings of bakery bread in the city, Schulze decided to establish a new bread product that would be

Chicago 7: Schulze Baking Company Building



Schulze Baking Company Building, 1914, John Ahlschlager & Sons, 40 E. Garfield Boulevard. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

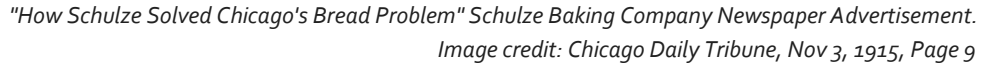
on Sullivan-esque motifs, the gleaming ornament lends crisp, rich detail to the industrial building, especially in the entablature around its Garfield Boulevard entrance and its highly-elaborate corner cornices. The company's name is emblazoned in blue terra cotta lettering on each side of the building's cornice, establishing the brand's presence in the Washington Park community and making the structure an iconic visual landmark of South Side Chicago. In the years following the building's completion, its terra cotta designs were such a triumph that Midland Terra Cotta Company featured them prominently in numerous advertisements.

The building's cream, glazed exterior was designed to visually convey the modernized and hygienic facilities contained within. Newspaper advertisements emphasized that the quality bread exclusive to Schulze was the result of the plant's scientific baking—"terrific heat perfectly regulated." A 1911 speech by Schulze to the National

of a reliable quality. Schulze Baking Company rapidly became a local favorite thanks to their consistent production standards and ingredient selection. The company's Butter-Nut Bread was particularly representative of the high-quality loaves that Schulze sought to produce.

Following the company's growing success, the construction of the Schulze Baking Company Plant was announced in February 1913. The new five-story warehouse housed enough machinery to produce 150,000 loaves of bread a day, enabling the increase of Schulze's production. Designed by John Ahlschlager & Son, the building was erected using a reinforced concrete frame and clad with glazed white brick. The building's façade is trimmed with blue and cream terra cotta ornament created by the Midland Terra Cotta Company, one of the biggest terra cotta manufacturers during the early part of the twentieth century.

The terra cotta on the Schulze Plant is some of the most ornate for a factory building in the city of Chicago. Drawing



Chicago 7: Schulze Baking Company Building



Wabash Avenue elevation, Schulze Baking Company Building, 1914, John Ahlschlager & Son, 40 E. Garfield Boulevard. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer

technological advancements. The Schulze Company Baking Plant's forward-thinking approach to breadmaking was identified by an automatic system of weighing flour and water, and the use of gas-heated ovens, which eliminated sooty exhaust. A three-story garage at 21-25 E. 54th Street, architecturally a scaled down version of the main baking plant, was erected and put into operation at the same time.

The Schulze Baking Company was reconfigured over the years. By 1939, the company had become the Schulze & Burch Biscuit Company and soon after was contracted by the U.S. Army for wartime manufacturing. Schulze & Burch later debuted the Flavor Kist product line in 1949 and spent the following decades creating beloved new snack products including Toast'em Pop Ups and Flavor Kist saltines. Schulze & Burch Biscuit Company also pioneered the first mass-produced granola bar in the 1970s.

Today, the Schulze Baking Company Plant is one of the most notable and recognizable buildings in the Washington Park community. It was recognized for its architectural and cultural significance in 1982 with listing on the National Register of Historic Places but has not yet received Chicago Landmark status. After nine decades of operation, the plant was closed in 2004 and has remained vacant ever since.



*"From this palace all white, comes the Bread that's all right - Schulze's Butter-Nut Bread Postcard. Schulze Baking Company Advertisement.
Image credit: Preservation Chicago Postcard Collection*

THREAT

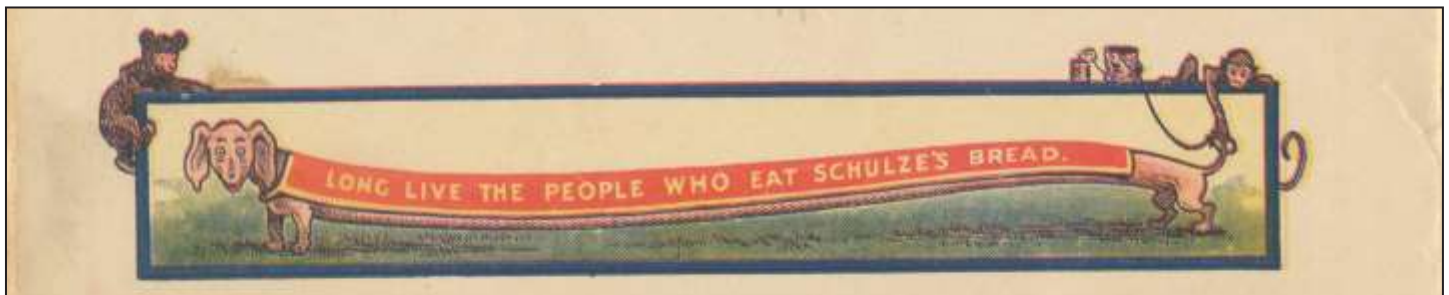
In 2015, property owners 1547 Critical Systems Realty announced that they would be converting the Schulze Baking Company Plant into a data center. The company announced a planned investment of \$130 million, promising “a much needed capacity the Chicago market requires as well as jobs to the area.” The data center was proposed to reuse the entirety of the plant building while using the later additions along Wabash as a training complex for data center workers. At the time of the proposal’s announcement, restoration of the terra cotta facade was estimated to take between two and five years before the data center could be fully operable.

Three years later in 2018, the property was reportedly acquired by real estate investors CIM Group for \$7.5 million and the estimated cost for a data center conversion were raised to \$150 million. Six years after the acquisition, the building remains vacant and largely untouched. In January 2024, the Schulze Baking Company Plant was once again listed for sale.

Protective scaffolding has been erected around the perimeter of the structure since its closure, and the installation of tarping around the building has raised new concerns about the condition of the terra cotta exterior. In the time since the data center proposal’s announcement, a large garage and storage structure featuring similar glazed brick and terra cotta was demolished nearby, alluding to a potential redevelopment plan.

A preservation-friendly owner is not guaranteed. Without Chicago Landmark designation, the Schulze Baking Company Plant could be heavily altered or even demolished without recourse by a new owner. The structure is orange-rated in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey, offering it only the protection of a 90-day demolition delay review. After a decade of disuse, any further vacancy will only worsen the building’s condition and its terra cotta exterior.

Chicago 7: Schulze Baking Company Building



Sammy Schulze of Schulzeville Children's Book, Paul Schulze, 1911. Image credit: Preservation Chicago Collection gift of Debbie Mercer

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservation Chicago is fully supportive of the proposal to convert the Schulze Baking Company Plant into a data center, or any other viable reuse that may yet emerge. Marketing materials for the current listing encourage the use of the site as a data center, advertising its proximity to a ComEd station and other data centers. Given its large, open floor plates and sturdy warehouse construction, a data center or similar programming is a sensible use for this structure. Other uses, such as housing, retail, or commercial space for small businesses, would all suit the Schulze Baking Company Plant's design, honor this important building, and demonstrate an investment in Washington Park.

However, it is imperative that the building receive Chicago Landmark protection for its ornate terra cotta and glazed brick exterior. Schulze Baking Company and its focus on hygienic food production, Ahlschlager's

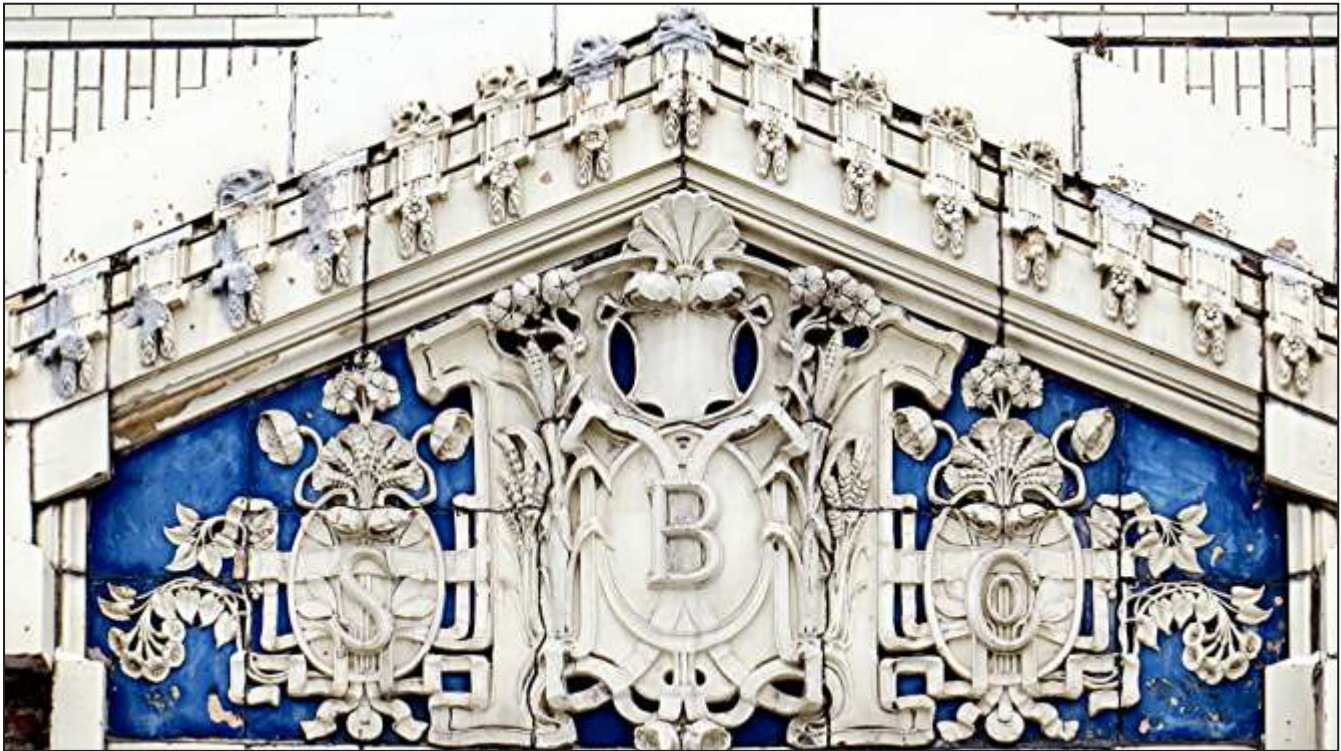


"The Bakery where bread is made of the highest standard of quality and production - Schulze Baking Company" Schulze Baking Company Advertisement c. 1919. Image credit: University of Illinois Library Digital Collections Open Content Alliance

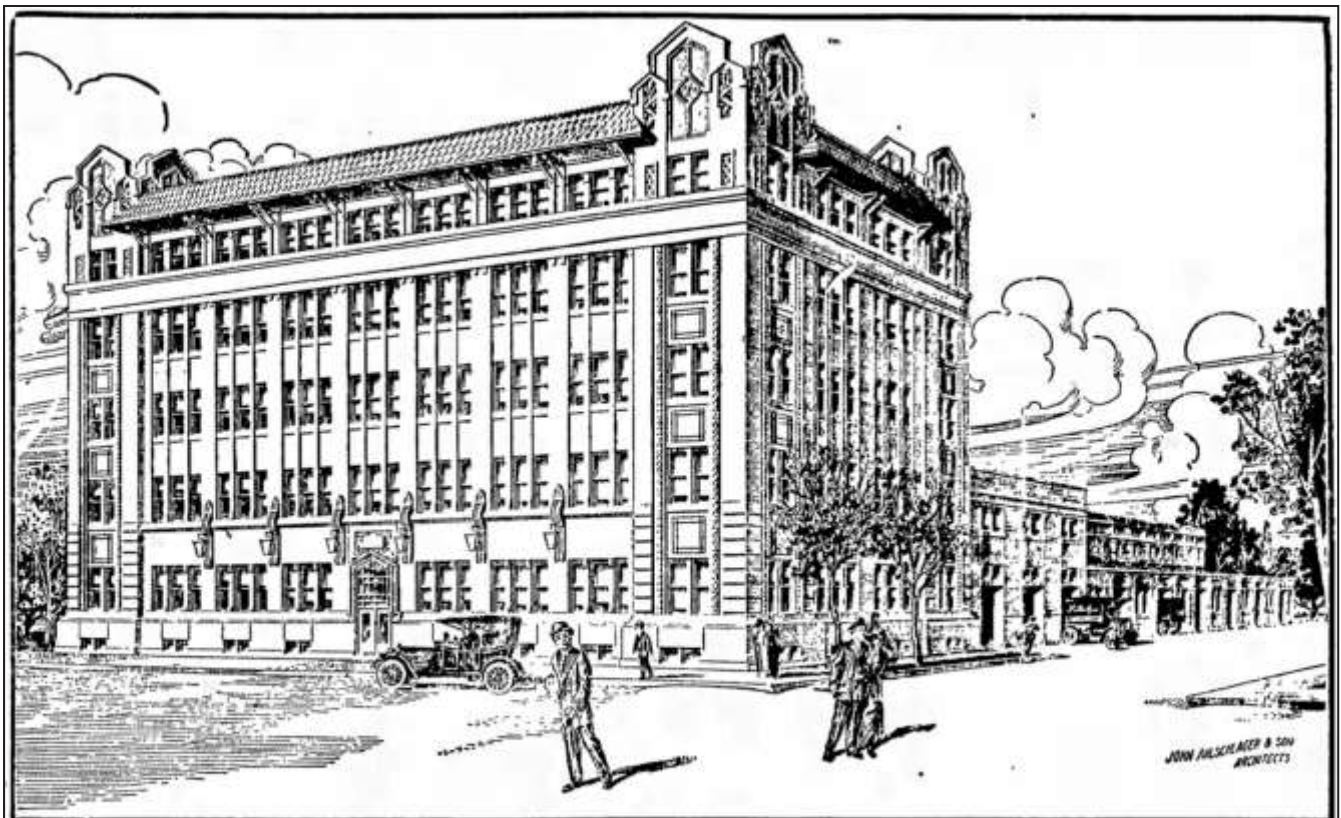
architectural talents, and Midland Terra Cotta Company's craftsmanship are all important narratives intertwined with the plant's powerful visual appearance. To lose building's exterior features would mean losing the ability to convey much of the site's significance.

Landmark status would be a benefit the new owners in their efforts to renovate the building and encourage restoration of existing and missing terra cotta including the corner cornices and roof cresting. Once Landmark status is secured, permit fees are waived and the site is made eligible for substantial Adopt-a-Landmark funds, both of which would contribute to a more cost-efficient restoration and reuse of the Schulze Baking Company Plant. These financial benefits, along with potential tax credits provided by the building's National Register status, are all at the disposal of the site's new owner should they pursue Chicago Landmark designation.

Chicago 7: Schulze Baking Company Building



Schulze Baking Company Building Ornament Detail, 40 E. Garfield Boulevard. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer



The Schulze Baking company will start work soon on an immense bakery building to be erected at Garfield Blvd. and Wabash Ave., at a total cost of \$250,000. The building will be equipped with all modern baking facilities, and will have a capacity of 150,000 loaves of bread a day. Particular attention will be given to secure the most sanitary working conditions in the building. The structure will be five stories in height and will front 170 feet on Wabash Ave. The exterior of the building will be of an attractive appearance. It will be faced with white enamel tiling. A large garage and stable will be erected at 54th St. and Wabash Ave. on a lot 135 by 165 feet in extent. It is expected the structure will be completed by November. The plans for the building were prepared by John Ahlschlager & Son.

Schulze Baking Company Building Drawing. Image credit: Suburbanite Economist Chicago, February 14, 1913, page 3



Garfield Blvd. elevation, Schulze Baking Company Bld., 1914, John Ahlschlager & Sons, 40 E. Garfield Boulevard. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers



Schulze Baking Company Building, 1914, John Ahlschlager & Son, 40 E. Garfield Boulevard. Historic photo credit: The Western Architect

Chicago 7: Schulze Baking Company Building



West façade, Schulze Baking Company Building, 1914, John Ahlschlager & Sons, 40 E. Garfield Boulevard. Photo credit: Ward Miller



Interior view, Schulze Baking Company Building Interior, 1914, John Ahlschlager & Sons, 40 E. Garfield Boulevard. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer



North façade, Schulze Baking Company Building, 1914, John Ahlschlager & Sons, 40 E. Garfield Boulevard. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers



Schulze Baking Company Building Garage, 1914, John Ahlschlager & Sons, 21 E. 54th Street . Photo credit: Debbie Mercer

Chicago Vocational School (CVS)

2100 E. 87th Street, Chicago



Chicago Vocational School (CVS), 1941, John Christensen, 2100 E. 87th Street. Photo Credit: Lee Bey

OVERVIEW

Chicago Vocational School (today, Chicago Vocational Career Academy, or more commonly CVS, a Chicago public high school) is among the most notable examples of Art Deco/Art Moderne architecture in the city of Chicago. Outside of downtown skyscrapers, CVS is the largest building in this style in the city. Constructed between 1938 and 1941, Chicago Vocational High School was a result of generational demographic shifts and changes in urban educational philosophy. With federal financial support, it was intended as a South Side counterpart to the North Side's Albert G. Lane Technical College Preparatory High School completed in 1934.

Chicago Vocational School is a surviving early Public Works Administration-funded project in Chicago and was significant as a site of wartime training during

Chicago Vocational School (CVS) / Chicago Vocational Career Academy)

Address: 2100 E. 87th Street

Architect: John C. Christensen

Date: 1938-1941

Style: Art Deco/Art Moderne

Neighborhood: Avalon Park



Chicago Vocational School (CVS), 1941, John Christensen, 2100 E. 87th Street. Photo Credit: Lee Bey

WWII. The school was once affectionately known as “The Pride of the South Side,” and a longtime institution in the Avalon Park neighborhood. Today its sheer size continues to impress, as the school’s four principal structures sit on a 22-acre parcel.

CVS is an active Chicago Public High School, with a renewed emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education and college preparedness. Enrollment, however, has dwindled. The school was originally designed to accommodate from 4,000 to 6,000 students, however as of 2023, the school had only approximately 800 enrollees. In 2022, CVS alumni operating under the banner of “Chicago Vocational H.S. Restoration Project” mounted a successful campaign to list the property on the National Register of Historic Places. That same group has made further appeals to designate Chicago Vocational School as a Chicago Landmark in the hopes that such a formal distinction could assist efforts to bolster both the school’s evolving curriculum and the physical campus itself.

HISTORY

At the turn of the twentieth century, Chicago’s public education supervisors increasingly recognized the promise of “technical” education. Like other progressive causes of the era, their aims were largely centered on the growing population of European immigrants arriving in the city after the 1920s. Many of these individuals originated from rural and agricultural regions of Europe, with little professional training or access to a classroom education. It was believed that vocational education would not only provide a pathway to steady employment and self-sufficiency for recent immigrants, but would also further the United States’ position as an industrial powerhouse in response to competition from Western Europe.

Chicago Vocational School is by no means Chicago’s first vocational school. Richard Crane Technical High School (1903), Lake High School (1905), and the original and subsequent Albert G. Lane Technical High School (1908 and

Chicago 7: Chicago Vocational School (CVS)



Chicago Vocational School (CVS), 1941, John Christensen, 2100 E. 87th Street. Photo Credit: Lee Bey

1934) were among the earliest schools established in Chicago with the express purpose of providing technical education in the industrial arts and sciences. Others soon followed and by the 1920s, vocational education was a central feature of the Chicago Public School system.

Vocational education proved such a success that by the waning years of the Great Depression, demand for these programs was so great that additional schools on the South and West Sides of Chicago were built. Chicago Vocational School was funded in part by a series of grants from the Public Works Administration, the New Deal agency responsible for thousands of public works projects nationwide. Chicago Vocational School was surely the most ambitious of this later wave of public vocational schools. It remains the second largest public school in Chicago, behind Lane Tech on the North Side.

Construction on Chicago Vocational School began in 1938. Although the facility as it exists today was not fully completed until 1941, the year 1938 is carved in stone atop the school's primary entrance. The school's design consists of five interconnected buildings: the Main Administration Building sited along E. 87th Street; a Gymnasium and Auditorium which respectively flank the main building to the east and west; the Chappel Avenue Wing, sited north-south along Chappel Avenue and forming the western edge of the campus; the Anthony Avenue Wing, running northwest-southeast along Anthony Avenue, forming the eastern edge of campus; and a Dining Hall and Central Plant placed to the north of the Main Administration Building. A freestanding Vehicle Maintenance Garage and Aviation Hangar, both constructed in 1941, complete the campus.

The Main Administration Building, along with its Gym and Auditorium, is arguably the school's most striking and familiar view. Faced primarily in limestone and tan Pompeian brick, all principal elevations of the building feature vertical elements typical of Art Deco and New Deal-era federal architecture. A series of full-height fluted columns at the Gym and Auditorium's primary entrances, and near-full-height fluted pilasters, both framing and



Chicago Vocational School (CVS), 1941, John Christensen, 2100 E. 87th Street. Photo Credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

interrupting the three-story window bays that run throughout the principal facade form an Art Deco exterior.

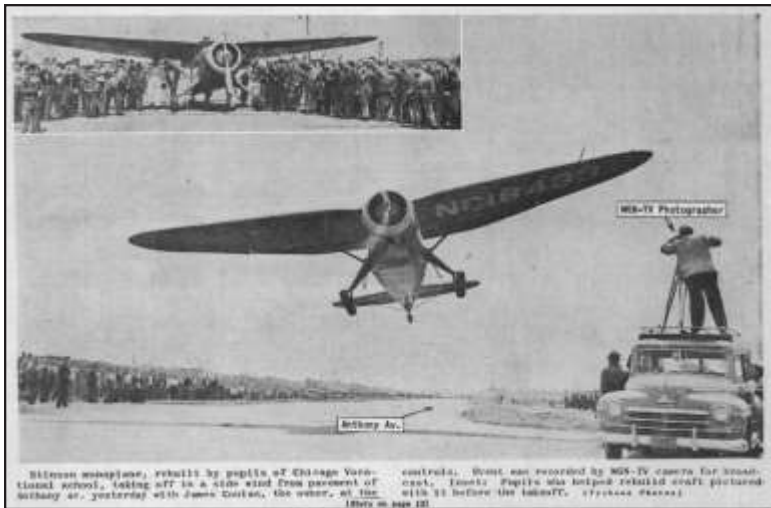
Rounded forms and beveled corners bring the structure more firmly into the Art Moderne. Along the 87th Street elevations are a series of notable bas-relief tablets, some serving as caps to the façade's pilasters, others inset within the entablature, each depicting various trades and industries which were to be the focus of education at CVS. These bas-relief insets are likewise typical aesthetic flourishes of the Public Works Administration and Works Progress Administration, often intended to lionize and celebrate the people and practices of everyday American life.

This design aesthetic is continued on the Auditorium's interior, via a series of unique carved wood panel murals depicting both iconic Chicago landmarks, such as the Chicago Board of Trade building, and industrial scenes similar to the bas-relief on the school's exterior. These particular murals were made possible by the Works Progress Administration Federal Arts Project, as were countless other such murals throughout Chicago. Most WPA murals, however, were completed in traditional oil and fresco paint. CVS's carved wood panels are undeniably rare. The artist is unfortunately unknown.

The two-story Chappel Avenue and Anthony Avenue Wings are more utilitarian in their design, but nonetheless help communicate the grandeur and imposing scale of the facility. A still extant, freestanding aircraft hangar, while slightly modified over the years, likewise speaks to Chicago Vocational School's varied history.

But for all the pomp and circumstance surrounding CVS's construction and eventual opening, it would be nearly six years before the curriculum commenced as intended. Owing to the United States' entry into World War II, CVS was

Chicago 7: Chicago Vocational School (CVS)



Airplane hanger and Anthony Ave. airplane launch in 1948. Image credit: (clockwise from bottom left) 1969 CVS Yearbook "Technician", pg. 16; Chicago Daily Tribune, April 17, 1948, pg.40; 19650 CVS Yearbook "Technician", pg. 49, Historic photos, Michael Mims

handed over to the US Navy almost as soon as it was completed. From 1941 to 1945, the Navy wholly operated the campus, the only such arrangement at a Chicago school. The bulk of wartime training at CVS was devoted to aviation mechanics and repair, memorialized by the remaining aircraft hanger. The school was even temporarily renamed the Naval Training School for Mechanics, and had a symbiotic relationship of sorts with Navy Pier, Chicago's most regularly celebrated wartime training facility. Vehicles repaired and assembled at CVS would often be sent north to be used for practical training at Navy Pier.

Following the war, normal school activities began in earnest in 1946. Aviation mechanics remained a central component of CVS's curriculum and contributed to one of the school's most iconic moments. In April of 1948, students successfully reconstructed a 1930s era Stinson Reliant monoplane owned by local pilot James Coulas at CVS. At Coulas's request (and with permission from the city), Anthony Avenue was made a makeshift runway and Coulas took flight on his way to nearby Midway Airport. The moment was captured by the press and media.



Chicago Vocational School (CVS) Historic Exterior Photograph and Art Deco bas-relief sculpture. Photo credits: Michael Mims

Other primary areas of instruction included cabinet making, auto repair, sheet metal working, architectural drafting, printing, welding, and electrical work. These remained primary subjects at the school for the next thirty years. The postwar period also saw the introduction of male/female co-education and an increasingly diverse student body. Many programs were nonetheless still gender-coded. The majority of CVS female students pursued training in fields such as cosmology, millinery, dressmaking, secretarial work, cooking, and interior design. By 1964, the student body was approximately one-third female, and one-third African American, among the highest such numbers for any vocational school in Chicago. This was owed in no small part to the changing population of South Side Chicago. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Chicago hosted an influx of African American Southern families amid later waves of the Great Migration, people and families often in pursuit of both employment opportunities and freedom from the discriminatory practices of the Jim Crow South.

Vocational education was initially framed as a “progressive” success story, seen as providing a pathway to economic success. During the decades after WWII, this narrative was flipped on its head, with vocational education seen as furthering inequality in the city. Moreover, many neighboring African American families resented the Navy’s occupation of CVS just as it was opening, sought an equitable and high-quality education for their children. That demand in part led to the 1942 creation of Dunbar Trade School (now Dunbar Vocational Career Academy High School), further north in Bronzeville.

The promise of vocational education dramatically changed even more impactfully amid later decades of white flight, capital disinvestment, and a rapidly deindustrializing economy. Many of the economic opportunities that minority groups in America had recently gained access to through technical education and federal protections such

Chicago 7: Chicago Vocational School (CVS)



*Chicago Vocational School (CVS) Anthony Avenue Wing (Top). Photo Credit: Max Chavez / Preservation Chicago
Chicago Vocational School (CVS) Airplane Hanger (Bottom). Photo Credit: Max Chavez / Preservation Chicago*



*Chicago Vocational School (CVS) Anthony Avenue Wing Photo Credit: Max Chavez / Preservation Chicago
Chicago Vocational School (CVS) Aerial Photograph Anthony Avenue Wing (parallel to Chicago Skyway). Photo Credit: Serhii Chrukly / Esto*

Chicago 7: Chicago Vocational School (CVS)



Chicago Vocational School (CVS), 1941, John Christensen, 2100 E. 87th Street. Photo Credit: Kaufmann & Fabry Co., Chicago Vocational School (CVS) Historic Exterior Photograph, East 87th Street and South Anthony Avenue, Circa 1950, Folder 201, Sheet 11, Photographic Images of Change, University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections Department

as the 1964 Civil Rights Act were now vanishing due to rapid technological advances which reduced the numbers of industrial jobs and by corporate relocations to the Southern US and Global South.

Despite a tangible need for skilled trade workers in the twenty-first century, CVS and its fellow technical schools have struggled to adapt to the realities of a post-industrial economy. By the late twentieth century, the very same liberal arts secondary education that was perceived as elitist and irrelevant to an emergent industrial workforce at the beginning of the century, was essentially a requirement of entry into the modern economy. Today, CVS still emphasizes technical training, but with a renewed focus on STEM education and more traditional college preparatory courses. Despite these updates to the curriculum, recent alumni mourn what they perceive as the decline of a once great Chicago Public School. Their passion and appreciation for their alma mater encouraged them to pursue both National Register listing and formal recognition as a Chicago Landmark, optimistic that the school can once again be a beacon of opportunity and lifelong preparedness.

THREAT

As noted, enrollment is a fraction of what it once was and the school is currently serving approximately a tenth of its intended capacity. Not surprisingly low-enrollment has resulted in deferred building maintenance throughout the school's multiple sections. The Anthony Avenue Wing was briefly targeted for demolition as a cost-saving measure, however, a lack of necessary funding for the demolition prevented that outcome. The Chicago Public School system as a whole is perennially challenged by emerging resource needs, teacher shortages, and budget shortfalls. At CVS, these issues are compounded by the ongoing and delicate maintenance needs of a massive 1930s era structure.



Chicago Vocational School (CVS), 1941, John Christensen, 2100 E. 87th Street. Photo Credit: Kaufmann & Fabry Co., Chicago Vocational School (CVS) Historic Exterior Photograph, East 87th Street and South Anthony Avenue, Circa 1950, Folder 201, Sheet 5, Photographic Images of Change, University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections Department

The school remains open and there are no apparent plans to close and/or downsize the facility. However, CVS clearly needs an infusion of funds to address both deferred maintenance and, as alumni contend, modernization of the curriculum for a twenty-first century workforce.

RECOMMENDATIONS

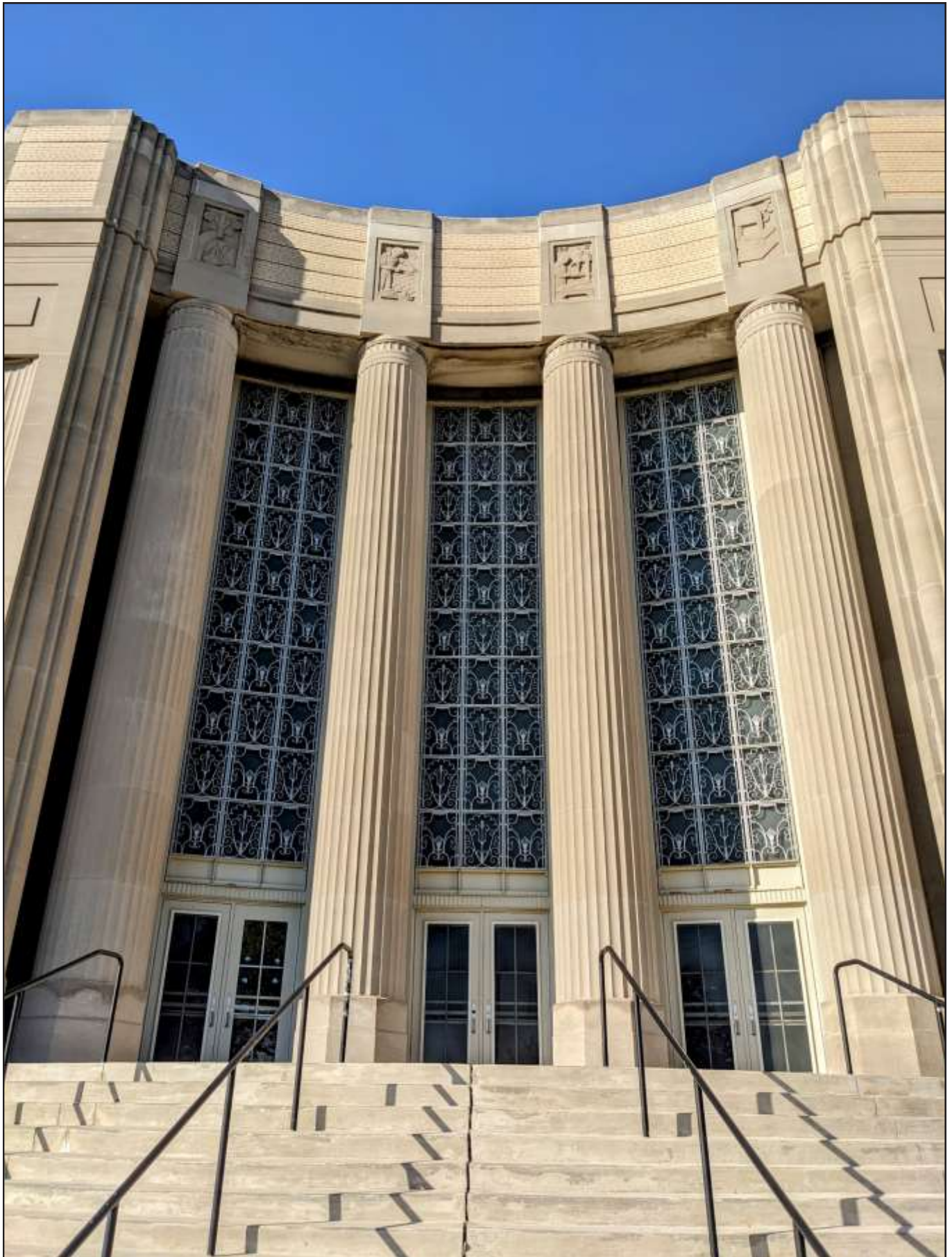
Chicago Landmarking is a start. It would potentially open the school to City of Chicago Adopt-a-Landmark funds and provide the school with a much-needed financial boost. The property is National Register listed, but as a municipally owned and operated public school, it is not a candidate for Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits more typically reserved for privately led, commercial projects. National Register listing makes the structure potentially eligible for grant support via the National Park Service and/or Illinois State Historic Preservation Office, though these funds are typically modest in scope and would only cover small, discrete projects. Regrettably, there is no modern-day equivalent of the Public Works Administration. Ultimately, the school needs a bold investment of public dollars, either local, state, or federal, to be made whole again.

In the sad—and avoidable—event that the school ever closes, it will at least be well situated for private reuse, and a number of creative approaches could be pursued to utilize its unique array of interior spaces. A recent example of creative reuse is Philadelphia’s Edward W. Bok Technical High School, another immense Public Works Administration-funded public vocational school closed amid much controversy in 2013. The building has since been successfully converted into a combination of events space, food and service providers, office suites, artist studios and retail, with an emphasis on local craftsman and makers. Projects like this offer just one possible template for CVS, should it be closed. Reactivating the trade school at CVS would prepare the next generation of Chicago’s skilled tradespersons and engineers.

Chicago 7: Chicago Vocational School (CVS)



CVS Historic Interior Lobby. Image credit: UIC Chicago Collections; Ethyl News Cover, June 1943. Image credit: Ethyl News Chicago Vocational School (CVS), 1941, John Christensen, 2100 E. 87th Street. Photo Credit: Max Chavez / Preservation Chicago



Chicago Vocational School (CVS), 1941, John Christensen, 2100 E. 87th Street. Photo Credit: Eric Allix Rogers

All of Mankind Mural

617 W. Evergreen Street, Chicago



All of Mankind Mural by William Walker (1972) at San Marcello Mission Church / Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church, 1901, John Neal Tilton, 617 W. Evergreen Avenue. Photo credit: Ryan Patrick Clarke

OVERVIEW

In 1971, a progressive priest commissioned Chicago artist William Walker to paint a series of murals at San Marcello Mission/Stranger's Home Missionary Church. Surrounded by the towers of the Cabrini-Green homes, Stranger's Home Missionary Church served as a center of religious life for African American families on the Near North Side. The murals, collectively titled *All of Mankind*, explored the beauty and struggle of Black America and envisioned a world united. The piece was widely regarded as one of Walker's masterpieces and became a symbol of Cabrini-Green.

All of Mankind Mural / San Marcello Mission Church / Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church

All of Mankind: The Unity of the Human Race

Artist: **William Walker**

Date: **1971-1974**

Style: **Black Arts Movement**

San Marcello Mission Church / Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church

Architect: **John Neal Tilton**

Year: **1901**

Style: **Gothic Revival**

Address: **617 W. Evergreen**

Neighborhood: **Near North Side**



All of Mankind Mural by William Walker (1972) at San Marcello Mission Church / Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church, 1901, John Neal Tilton, 617 W. Evergreen Avenue. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer

The church was built in 1901 by the Episcopal congregation of the St. John the Evangelist. In 1927, it became San Marcello Mission Church and served a community of Italian immigrants.

The Cabrini-Green homes were mostly demolished by 2011, but Stranger's Home Missionary Church remained standing. Unfortunately, Walker's murals were whitewashed by 2016 in an effort to prepare the building for sale. It is believed that these works are salvageable. A coalition of art conservators, community organizations and residents are pursuing funding and city support for the purchase and restoration of the church and its murals through a coalition called the Cabrini Art House Project. They believe that the site can become a center for a revised Cabrini community, and Walker's restored murals a neighborhood landmark.

HISTORY

In 1900, the Episcopal congregation of St. John the Evangelist announced the purchase of a plot of land at the corner of Rees and Vine Street for the construction of a "chapel, club quarters, and apartments for the pastors in charge." A year later in 1901, construction of the church began based on plans by architect John Neal Tilton .



Site of All of Mankind Mural by William Walker (1972) at St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church / San Marcello Mission Church / Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church, 1901, John Neal Tilton, 617 W. Evergreen Avenue. Historic photo credit: John Neal Tilton. Item #3407. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library

As early as 1917, St. John the Evangelist was noted as one of the many congregations serving the city's large Italian population, which had swelled over the decades following the church's construction. Growing from 16,000 in 1900 to nearly 74,000 by 1930, the largest concentration of this immigrant population was centered on the Near West Side, with a sizable Italian community settling in the area around the church. In 1927, St. John the Evangelist was sold to the Archdiocese of Chicago and became San Marcello Mission Church which continued to serve the neighborhood's expanding Italian American community.

However, the following decades saw the movement of Italians and other ethnic groups out of Chicago's urban core, including the San Marcello area. This geographic shift was partially driven by unsafe housing conditions in comparison to the more comfortable accommodations found in residential parts of the city and suburbs.

To combat poor housing, in 1941 the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) demolished homes in the vicinity of Chicago and Cambridge Avenues and extending north and eastward to clear the land for the Cabrini Homes. Named for Saint Frances Cabrini, this early development was home to a sizable mix of Italian and Black families.



All of Mankind Mural by William Walker (1972) at San Marcello Mission Church / Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church, 1901, John Neal Tilton, 617 W. Evergreen Avenue. Photo credit: Chicago Public Art Group

Over the next two decades more than twenty mid-rise and high-rise buildings were added as far north as Clybourn and as far west as Halsted, and the Cabrini homes grew into the Cabrini-Green public housing complex. By the 1960s the development primarily housed a multi-denominational community of Black families while the presence of the Italian community dwindled. With the 1962 completion of the William Green Homes, San Marcello Mission Church was absorbed by the large housing development and promptly closed.

In 1971, Father Dennis Kendrick, a priest at nearby St. Joseph's Church successfully lobbied the Archdiocese to reopen the church as a resource for the Cabrini-Green community. Kendrick, a known progressive figure in the area, commissioned local muralist William Walker to create a series of paintings on the church's façade and interior.

Today, Walker is considered one of Chicago's most consequential artists. He was a central figure in the development of the 1960s mural movement in Chicago, which artistically captured the beauty and struggle of the Black experience. Walker was one of the founders of the Organization for Black American Culture (OBAC) collective and was a guiding force alongside artist and activist Sylvia Abernathy, in the creation of the Wall of Respect in 1967, a pivotal moment in art history. Wall of Respect was mural celebrating icons of Black history and culture painted by OBAC on the side of a Bronzeville building at 43rd and Langley. Walker referred to the mural in a Chicago Daily News interview as "the ghetto's answer to the Picasso." Wall of Respect sparked a nationwide movement of similar large-scale cultural murals and cemented Chicago as a center of muralist art as well as the Black Arts Movement. Walker went on to found the Chicago Mural Group (today, Chicago Public Art Group) and at one point had murals in Nashville, Memphis, and Detroit.

Chicago 7: *All of Mankind: The Unity of the Human Race* Mural

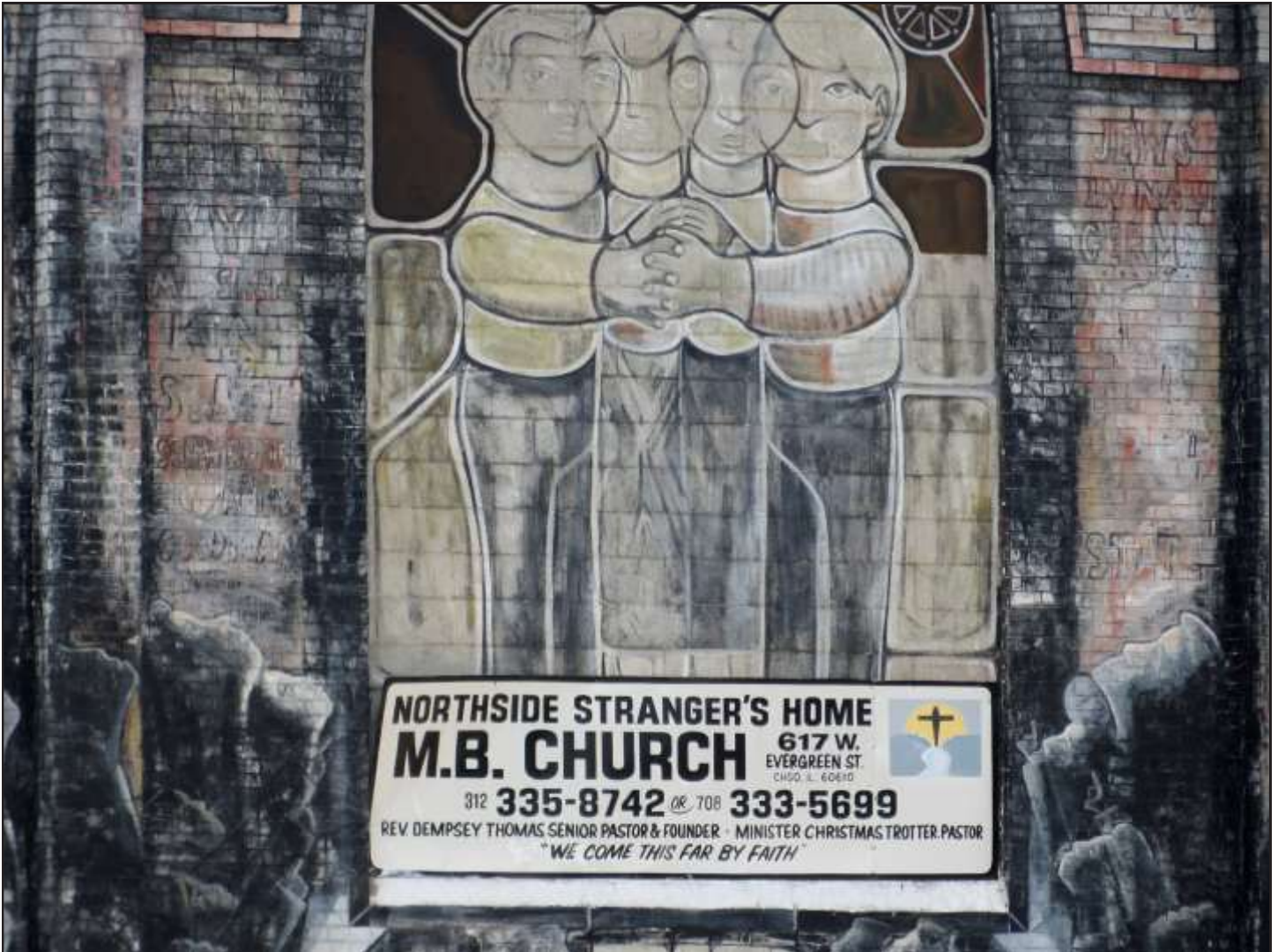


All of Mankind Mural by William Walker (1972) at San Marcello Mission Church / Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church, 1901, John Neal Tilton, 617 W. Evergreen Avenue. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer

Walker commenced work on the series of murals at San Marcello in 1971 titling it *All of Mankind: The Unity of the Human Race*. The most prominent section was painted on the north elevation of the church. It depicts four figures of varied races and genders with intertwined hands; above them, the words “Why were they all crucified” and the names of various martyrs including Jesus Christ, Anne Frank, Malcom X, “Dr. King,” and Emmett Till. The mural also invokes the names of the My Lai and Kent State Massacres, among other acts of mass violence.

On the church’s interior back wall, Walker painted a floor-to-ceiling mural depicting images of Black families, community, and industry, while on either side of the altar, Walker celebrated Black motherhood and fatherhood. The scale and beauty of these murals led to the church earning the nickname of “Chicago’s Sistine Chapel.”

Father Kendrick’s progressive politics resulted in his removal by the Archdiocese and the end of his protection over the church. The building was sold in January 1974 to a Black Baptist congregation and renamed Stranger’s Home Missionary Baptist Church. For decades after the church became Stranger’s Home, the structure and Walker’s striking murals served as a visual landmark in the Cabrini-Green Homes. Despite their artistic and cultural



All of Mankind Mural by William Walker (1972) at San Marcello Mission Church / Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church, 1901, John Neal Tilton, 617 W. Evergreen Avenue. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer

significance, the church whitewashed the interior murals in 2004. Seven years later Stranger's Home was left with a greatly reduced congregation after the demolition of the high-rises that surrounded the church was completed. The façade—the only remaining portion of Walker's mural—was whitewashed in 2016 to aid in the building's sale later that year. Prior to the exterior murals being white-washed and building sold, Walker had returned to restore them. The building has been vacant since the 2016 sale, although it has occasionally been used as a filming location, most recently for the 2021 movie *Candyman*.

Today, only a few William Walker murals remain in Chicago. Works like *History of the Packing House Worker* (1975) at 4859 S. Wabash and *Childhood Without Prejudice* (1977) at 56th Street and Stony Island have been restored, but many more have been lost to demolition or defacement. Although painted over, *All of Mankind* is now considered a significant mural by an important Chicago artist.

THREAT

The whitewashing of *All of Mankind* has obscured Walker's work, but it is believed the murals still exist underneath layers of paint. A coalition of local community organizations, art conservators, neighborhood residents, as well as the Chicago Public Arts Group has in recent years pursued fundraising opportunities to both purchase the church and restore Walker's murals. Limited access to the site has made it difficult to ascertain the murals'



Whitewashed All of Mankind Mural by William Walker (1972) at San Marcello Mission Church / Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church, 1901, John Neal Tilton, 617 W. Evergreen Avenue. Photo credit: Corcoran Urban Real Estate

condition but initial assessments indicate it may be possible to restore them. The coalition is not only interested in restoration of the murals, but also redevelopment of the property into a center that supports the local community and remaining Cabrini-Green residents.

The current owner has not listed the property for sale, but has reportedly signaled that he is open to offers. The church structure constitutes the full extent of the property; any surrounding land is owned by the Chicago Housing Authority, making independent redevelopment of the property much more difficult. As CHA continues to sell off parcels of the former Cabrini-Green Homes, it is likely that the building will one day be targeted for demolition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Thanks to the efforts of this dedicated coalition, preservation and restoration of *All of Mankind* and San Marcello Mission Church / Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church is feasible — but a few pieces are still missing. Increased funding will be crucial to this effort. The coalition is seeking funding opportunities that will facilitate the site's acquisition and the murals' assessment and restoration. The site touches on many important themes—Black history, mural art, and public housing foremost among them—that could certainly attract funding from preservation-, art-, and history-focused organizations.

Collaboration with the City of Chicago will also be necessary during this process. The involvement of various agencies, including Chicago Housing Authority and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) will be required to ensure redevelopment is provided every resource needed to succeed, including potential incorporation with future developments on adjacent CHA-owned land. Guided by this devoted coalition and with the aid of the city, the restoration of this church and its murals could become a moment of rebirth and resilience for a community heavily affected by demolition, disinvestment, and the traumas of urban renewal.



Black Family, Community and Industry, Black Motherhood, and Black Fatherhood interior murals by William Walker (1972) prior to overpainting at San Marcello Mission Church / Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church, 1901, John Neal Tilton, 617 W. Evergreen Avenue. Photo credit: Jeff Heubner

Swift-Morris Mansion

4500 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago



Swift-Morris Mansion, 1892, Willett & Pashley, 4500 S. Michigan Avenue. Photo credit: Cristen Brown

OVERVIEW

The Swift-Morris Mansion at 4500 South Michigan Avenue stands as an echo of the South Side's Gilded Age "Millionaire's Row." A landmark of the Grand Boulevard community for over one hundred and thirty years, the house has gained further significance as the headquarters of local businesses and social service providers well into the twentieth century. The property was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, based on its architectural merits and association with prominent Chicago families. Mid-twentieth century signage at the corner of South Michigan Avenue and East 45th Street proudly advertises the house's distinction as the "Swift Mansion: A National and State Historical Landmark Site Built 1892".

Swift-Morris Mansion

Address: **4500 S. Michigan Avenue**

Architect: **James R. Willett & Alfred Pashley**
(attributed)

Date: **1892; c.1917 (coach house)**

Style: **Richardsonian Romanesque / Queen Anne**

Neighborhood: **Grand Boulevard**



December 3, 2023 fire at Swift-Morris Mansion, 1892, Willett & Pashley, 4500 S. Michigan Avenue. Photo credit: Chicago Fire Department Media

Indeed built in 1892, and attributed to local architecture firm Willett and Pashley, the house is associated primarily with its namesake and first resident, Helen Swift Morris and her extended family. After periodic use as a gathering space, funeral home, and insurance office, the property again became noteworthy for its role as the onetime home of the Cook County Bar Association and later, the Chicago Urban League, who occupied the house from 1964 to 1984 amid the height of the twentieth century civil rights movement. Since 1995, it has been owned and operated by Inner City Youth and Adult Foundation (ICYAF), a non-profit providing housing and transitional services to formerly incarcerated individuals.

Sadly, on December 3, 2023, the Swift-Morris Mansion was the site of an intense fire which badly damaged the upper floor, attic and roof. Local media reports at the time indicated suspicion of arson, although the Chicago Fire and Police Departments have not yet concluded their investigations. Fortunately, no individuals were harmed in the fire, and the property damage appears limited to the upper floors and roof. Much of the impressive oak paneling and carved ornament on the ground floor interior appears to remain intact.

HISTORY

Chicago's commercial and institutional elites began flocking to what was then the southern reaches of the city in the decades before the 1893 World Columbian Exposition. Beginning in 1874, the construction of tree lined thoroughfares became popular carriage routes for the city's wealthy who built grand architect-designed houses

Chicago 7: Swift-Morris Mansion



Swift-Morris Mansion, 1892, Willett & Pashley, 4500 S. Michigan Avenue. Image credit: Preservation Chicago Postcard Collection

along boulevards like Michigan and Drexel. The Swift-Morris Mansion is one of the most notable homes to survive later decades of demolitions and disinvestment.

Helen Swift's father, Gustavus F. Swift, oversaw the vast meatpacking empire of Swift & Company, one of Chicago's three primary meatpacking giants (alongside Morris & Company and Armour & Company). Swift is largely credited with revolutionizing the refrigerated rail car, enabling meat slaughtered and processed in Chicago to be efficiently distributed to urban centers on the East Coast and farther afield. Together, Swift and his competitors greatly contributed to Chicago's economic growth in the 19th century.

Gustavus Swift commissioned the house at 4500 S. Michigan Avenue as a wedding gift to his daughter, Helen, and new son-in-law, Edward Morris. Edward Morris hailed from the aforementioned Morris & Co. lineage, and their marriage represented an informal union of two of the city's most prominent business patrimonies. All three – Swift, Armour, and Morris – would later merge to create a monolithic enterprise. For most of its first four decades, the house was a luxurious residence, first for the extended Morris and Swift families; then the art collector John W. White; and later, longtime 19th Ward Alderman John Powers.

The house's design is attributed to Willett and Pashly by its 1978 National Register nomination form. The house displays elements of both the Richardsonian Romanesque and Queen Anne styles, with an exterior faced in rusticated gray stone, articulated dormer windows capped with conical hoods, and a covered stone front porch and large matching porte-cochère separated by a conical corner turret. The house displays a visual heaviness, and sculptural and irregular massing with minimal and simple ornamentation throughout. The house's architects, Willett and Pashly, are most often acclaimed for their work with the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, but also designed a handful of similarly grand homes throughout the city. According to staff of the Glessner House in a 2015 article on Swift-Morris Mansion, they suggests that the house's architects might have been influenced by Henry H. Richardson's much celebrated 1887 stone residence for the John J. Glessner family at 1800 S. Prairie Ave, as well as



Swift-Morris Mansion, 1892, Willett & Pashley, 4500 S. Michigan Avenue. Photo credit: Chicago Urban League headquarters (corner view), 4500 S. Michigan Avenue (at Grand Boulevard), Chicago Urban League Photos (University of Illinois at Chicago), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago Library, CULR_04_0190_2160_002

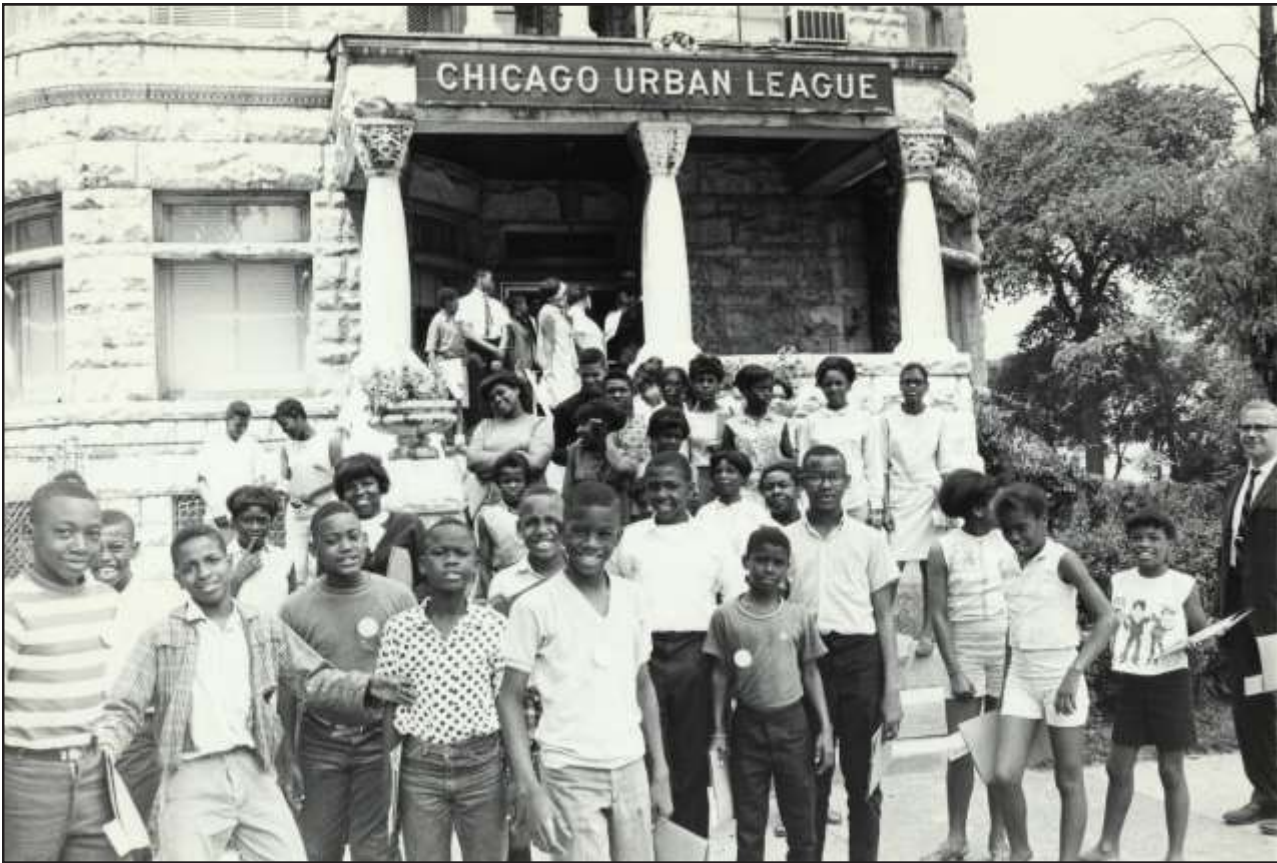
his since demolished 1885 Franklin MacVeagh House at Schiller and Lake Shore Drive.

At the close of the nineteenth century the house at 4500 S. Michigan Avenue was a appropriately bold yet austere design for the city's young and emerging elite, it is fitting that many passersby see it as a small "castle" given the building's legacy. As noted earlier, the Swift and Morris families represented two-thirds of Chicago's empiric meatpacking enterprise. Upon his death in 1913, Edward Morris left behind an estate estimated between \$20 and \$40 million. And even after the Swifts' time at the property, 4500 S. Michigan Avenue served as the primary residence of both a reclusive, yet wildly impressive art collector, John W. White, and an entrenched local politician, John Powers. The Swift-Morris Mansion is a site of power as much as it is an architectural treasure.

As the neighborhood around the Swift-Morris Mansion experienced rapid racial transition and evolved into a hub for Chicago's African American community, the building's role shifted from a single-family residence to serving commercial and family interests. The Cook County Bar Association established a lease at 4500 S. Michigan Avenue in 1927, and seem to have been the first non-owner tenant of the building. Formally established in 1914, the Cook County Bar Association was a group of young Black attorneys who sought to challenge discriminatory practices in their own judicial professions and Illinois' public sphere and schools. The organization continues to this day and operates out of offices in Avalon Park. Later tenants of 4500 S. Michigan included the McGavock Funeral Chapel, Selenia Garden, Bethel A.M.E. Church, and the offices of Unity Mutual Life insurance—all Black-led organizations.

Beginning in 1964, the property was wholly owned and operated by the Chicago Urban League. Like the Cook County Bar Association before them, the Urban League is a Black-led organization with origins dating to the early twentieth century. Since 1916, they have pursued a mission devoted to economic empowerment and equity of opportunity. The organization's tenure at 4500 S. Michigan coincides with their growing presence in Chicago's social service sector. Some of the Urban League's proudest organizational achievements took place in this building.

Chicago 7: Swift-Morris Mansion



Swift-Morris Mansion, 1892, Willett & Pashley, 4500 S. Michigan Avenue. Photo credit: Children at the Chicago Urban League headquarters (staircase view) and (sidewalk), 4500 S. Michigan Avenue (at Grand Boulevard), Chicago Urban League Photos (University of Illinois at Chicago), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago Library, CULR_04_0207_2330_004 and CULR_04_0190_2160_004



Swift-Morris Mansion, 1892, Willett & Pashley, 4500 S. Michigan Avenue. Photo credit: Cristen Brown

The Chicago Urban League is still connected to the Swift Mansion, now as their neighbor in a commissioned four-story modern office building at 4510 S. Michigan Avenue that they have occupied since 1984. After a brief period of apparent vacancy, the Swift-Morris Mansion was purchased in 1995 by Maurice and Christine Perkins. The Perkins family remains the owner of record and have overseen the efforts of the Inner City Youth and Adult Foundation (ICYAF), a non-profit providing housing and transitional services to formerly incarcerated individuals.

THREAT

Despite periodic vacancy and semi-frequent changes in ownership, the Swift-Morris Mansion has nonetheless found multiple viable uses and persevered for well over a century. Prior to the December 2023 fire, the property's appearance was largely and remarkably unchanged. Composite roof materials were added sometime in the mid-twentieth century, in lieu of original slate, but otherwise its heavy stone exterior appears much the way it did at the time of its 1892 completion.

Media coverage, photographs, and drone footage of the recent fire, however, reveal extensive damage to the roof and upper floors. In the efforts to tame the fire, many of the upper floor windows were broken and the building suffered water damage. Most urgently, the roof experienced significant damage and needs to be sealed against the elements.

Despite its significant history, the Swift-Morris Mansion is not a locally designated Chicago Landmark. Its orange-rating on the Chicago Historic Resource Survey would only require a 90-day demolition delay, in the event that the current or a future owner sought a demolition permit. Furthermore, at the time of the fire it was suggested that the City of Chicago's Department of Buildings was conducting a structural report "to determine if the damage [was] bad enough to order the home demolished."

Another challenge facing the building is its location in Grand Boulevard, a neighborhood of the city that has contended with decades of disinvestment and extensive property vacancy. Any rehabilitation options may be perceived as cost-prohibitive.



December 3, 2023 fire at Swift-Morris Mansion, 1892, Willett & Pashley, 4500 S. Michigan Avenue. Photo credit: Chicago Fire Department Media

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservation Chicago recommends the immediate stabilization of the Swift-Morris Mansion and the securing of its exterior envelope. These actions would minimize any further damage due to weather exposure successfully positioning the structure for eventual rehabilitation, if not full restoration. Despite the considerable resources required to bring the house back to its former glory, the building's stable, primarily stone structure can surely be reconfigured for residential, commercial, or mixed use.



Aftermath of the 2023 fire at the Swift-Morris Mansion, 1892, Willett & Pashley, 4500 S. Michigan Avenue. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer

The Swift-Morris Mansion is an undeniable landmark in a South Side community with few other surviving examples of its rich gilded age architecture. Its significance to Chicago's legacy of meatpacking and historic business magnates, alongside its multi-decade's role as a Black-led social service provider, make it a more than worthy recipient of the funding and sweat equity its restoration will require.



Swift-Morris Mansion, 1892, Willett & Pashley, 4500 S. Michigan Avenue. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer



Pre-fire interior lobby and stairs at Swift-Morris Mansion, 1892, Willett & Pashley, 4500 S. Michigan Avenue. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

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Colonnade detail. Chicago Vocational School (CVS), 1941, John Christensen, 2100 E. 87th Street. Photo Credit: Max Chavez

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Promontory Point
23-Year Effort Landmarked



Crittenton Anchorage
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Werner Bros. Storage
Chicago 7 2023
Adaptive Reuse



Mars Candy Factory
2-Year Effort Landmarked



St. Adalbert Church
8-Year Effort Landmarked



Century and Consumers
17-Year Effort Landmarked



Epworth Church
4-Year Effort Landmarked



St. Boniface Church
Chicago 7 2023
Adaptive Reuse



The Warehouse
Rapid Response Landmarked



Ramova Theater
Chicago 7 2012 Restored



Greater Union Baptist
5-Year Effort Landmarked



Washington Park Bank
Chicago 7 2016/2020
Facade Reuse



603

News articles on PC
advocacy efforts

90

Testimonies to support
landmark designations

14,283

Signatures on PC's
petition to save
the Warehouse

36

Days between
Chicago 7 Warehouse
announcement
and landmarking

278

Direct PC quotes
or direct mentions

16

New Chicago
designated landmarks

\$8.232

Million in Adopt-a-
Landmark funds

23,918

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petition to save Century
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