

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

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



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

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



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

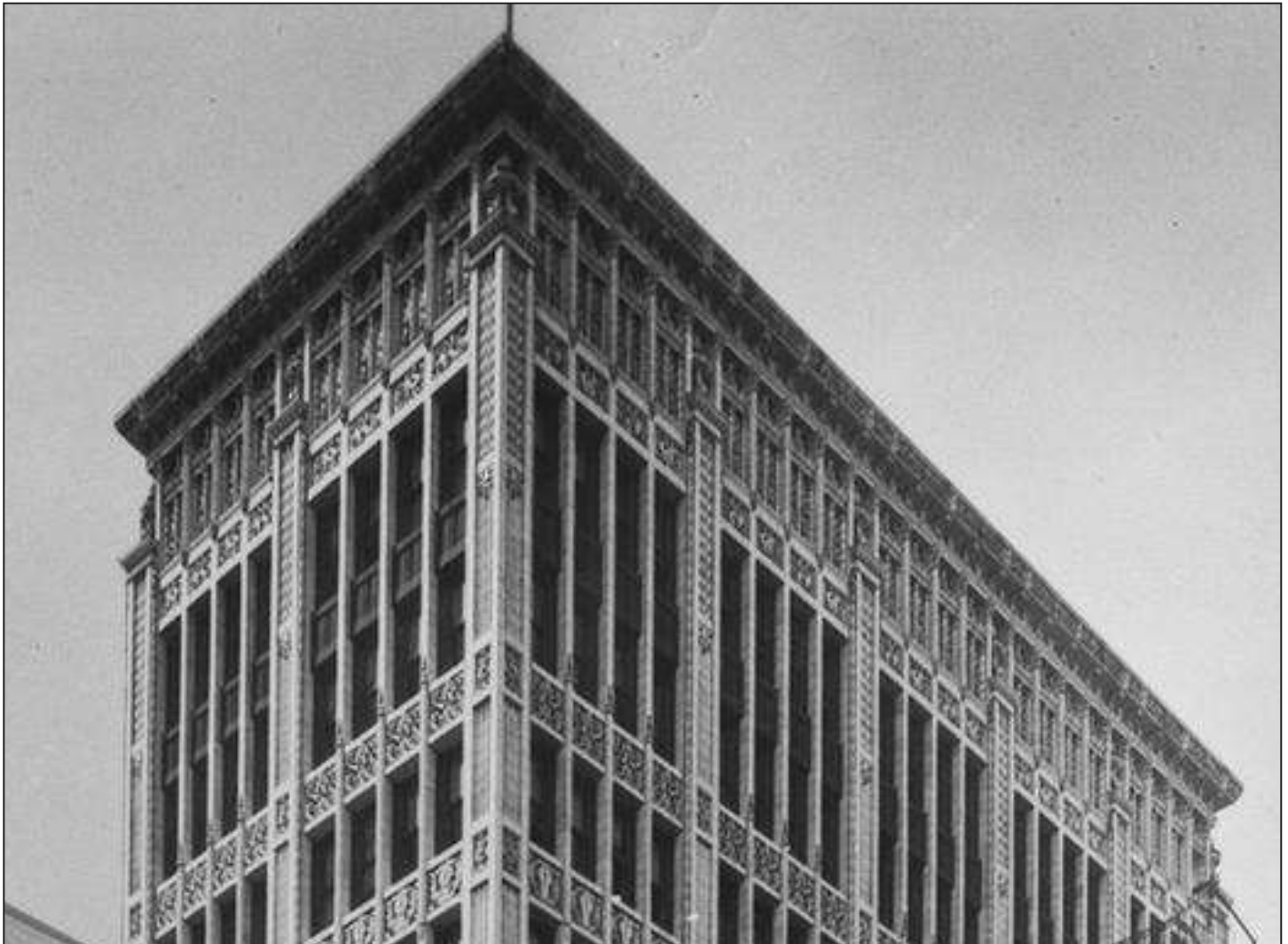
The Century and Consumers Buildings were once among the tall and elegant skyscraper buildings of a thriving and vibrant State Street Retail District. The 16-story Century Building at 202 S. State Street was built in 1915 and designed by Holabird and Roche. The firm was later renamed Holabird & Root to 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

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



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

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



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.

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



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.

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



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

Chicago 7: The Century and Consumers Buildings



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**