

REDISCOVER CHICAGO'S RANDOLPH STREET RIALTO

THE LAST SURVIVING POST-FIRE BUILDING
IN CHICAGO'S THEATER DISTRICT

DELAWARE BUILDING/BRYANT BLOCK

- Wheelock & Thomas, Julius Huber
- 1872-1874, 1889 Addition
- 36 W. Randolph Street
- Chicago Loop



PRESERVATION CHICAGO
THE CHICAGO 7 MOST ENDANGERED • 2025



Preservation Chicago Unveils the 2025 Chicago 7 Most Endangered



J.J. Walser House



CMD Clock Tower



Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor



Clarence Darrow Bridge



Delaware Building



Olivet Baptist Church



St. Martin's Church

Photos: Serhii Chucky / Esto and Eric Allix Rogers

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Preservation Chicago's 2025 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.



CMD Clock Tower. Photo Credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

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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.

Delaware Building

36 W. Randolph Street, Chicago



The Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, with 1889 addition by Julius Huber, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

OVERVIEW

After the devastating Great Chicago Fire of 1871, the city's Central Business District quickly sought to rebuild. The Delaware Building at 36 W. Randolph Street (also 151-155 N. Dearborn Street) is one of the few remaining buildings from the Loop's period of early reconstruction and a significant example of Italianate-style architecture. It is further believed to be one of the oldest surviving commercial buildings of its kind within the Loop.

The building was listed on the National Register in 1974 and designated a Chicago Landmark in 1983. That same year, noted preservation architect Wilbert R.

The Delaware Building / Bryant Block

Address: 36 W. Randolph Street / 151-155 N. Dearborn Street

Architect: Wheelock & Thomas, Julius Huber

Date: 1872-1874, 1889 addition

Style: Italianate

Neighborhood: Chicago Loop / Downtown



*Historic view of The Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, with 1889 addition by Julius Huber, 36 W. Randolph Street, c. 1905 prior to the removal of several of the easternmost window bays. View of the northeast corner of Randolph Street and Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois.
Photo Credit: Chicago History Museum, Barnes-Crosby Company, ICHi-019262*

Hasbrouck (1931-2018) of Hasbrouck Hunderman Architects, oversaw a restoration of the building, focusing especially on a recreation of cast iron of the lower floors and historic ground floor entrances. Despite its recognized significance and prime location, plans to reuse the building have long been stalled by long-term leaseholder, the McDonald's Corporation, which once operated a McDonald's restaurant on the lower two floors of the Delaware Building. The McDonald's location closed amid the pandemic with no apparent plans to reopen, but the parent company reportedly refuses to relinquish its lease. A planned residential conversion of the upper floors of the building and replacement tenant for the ground floor commercial space, which would require updated zoning compliance and additional means of egress, is effectively stymied while the lease remains in place.

HISTORY

Buildings constructed in the years immediately following the Great Fire of 1871, closely resembled those lost to the disaster in both use and form. Most were commercial in function, three to six stories in height, and constructed with party walls to form continuous streetscapes with architecturally refined facades, most commonly in the Italianate and Renaissance Revival styles. The Delaware Building was among these early post-Fire buildings and today stands as one of the few last surviving examples of Chicago's "Great Rebuilding" in the Loop.

Construction of the Delaware Building began in 1872, with an addition to the east added two years later. It was

Chicago 7: The Delaware Building



Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, with 1889 addition by Julius Huber, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo Credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto



Lower floors of the Dearborn Street façade. The Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, with 1889 addition by Julius Huber, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

originally opened in 1874 as the Bryant Block, named after its initial owner James W. Bryant, who invested \$165,000 on Dearborn Street during Chicago's "Great Rebuilding" effort. The structure was designed by the early Chicago architectural firm of Wheelock & Thomas and constructed by George A. Fuller Company.

Architects Otis L. Wheelock (1816-1893) and Cyrus Pole "C.P." Thomas (1833-1911), Thomas being the son of noted Canadian architect William Thomas (1799-1860), were among the luminaries of Chicago's early architectural practice. C. P. Thomas, raised and educated in Toronto, was active in both Canadian and American architectural firms during the late 19th century. Between 1870 and 1897, he practiced in Chicago, contributing to nearly 200 projects across commercial, industrial, residential, and institutional sectors, either alone or in partnerships. From 1872 to 1875, Thomas was in partnership with Otis L. Wheelock, an architect originally from New York. During this period, they participated in and designed over 30 projects along major streets such as State Street, Wabash Avenue, Dearborn Street, Randolph Street, Monroe Street, and Washington Street. These projects included the Delaware Building (1872-1874), Merchants Building (1873), the Wheeler & Wilson Building (1873), the Haskell-Barker-Atwater Buildings (1875 and 1877), the Reed Block, also known as the Hibbard, Spencer, Bartlett Company Building (1872), and the McVickers Theater (1872). In addition to his partnership with Thomas, Wheelock went on to work with other noted Chicago-based practitioners, namely, W.W. Boyington (1818-1898), W.W. Clay (1849-1926), and his own adopted son, Harry Bergen Wheelock (1861-1934). Nevertheless, the Delaware Building remains one of the most notable and celebrated works of both Wheelock and Thomas.

Born in Templeton, Massachusetts, the general contractor George A. Fuller (1851-1900) was among the earliest architects educated at MIT. As a highly talented designer, his proposal for a new clubhouse for the Union League Club of New York, won over prominent architects Richard Morris Hunt, Charles McKim, and William Rutherford Mead. Fuller later moved to Chicago, where he established the George A. Fuller Company in 1882. Often credited as one of the "inventors" of the assembly of the modern skyscraper, Fuller encouraged the use of steel in



Randolph Street looking east from Hooley's Theatre, circa 1892, with the Delaware Building in the distance noted with a red arrow. All other buildings in the photograph have been lost to demolition, including the Borden Block and Schiller/Garrick Building by Adler & Sullivan, the Ashland Block by Burnham & Root, the Masonic Temple by Burnham & Root, and the Sherman House Hotel. Photo credit: Chicago and Its Makers, Paul Gilbert and Charles Lee Bryson, 1929, pg. 146 / Preservation Chicago Library Collection



Randolph Street looking west from Dearborn, circa 1910, with the Delaware Building in the foreground. All the buildings in the photograph have been lost to demolition with the exception of the Delaware Building, noted with red arrows. Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, with 1889 addition by Julius Huber, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Chicago and Its Makers, Paul Gilbert and Charles Lee Bryson, 1929, pg. 385 / Preservation Chicago Library Collection



Bryant Block, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street, circa 1874. Image credit: The Land Owner, An Illustrated Newspaper, Chicago, June 1874, Vol. VI, No. 6, Cover / Chicago Public Library Special Collections, R917.731 W726

removed) were located along both Dearborn Street, Randolph Street, with the most prominent at the corner intersection of Randolph and Dearborn Streets. These entries led to the tall upper floor storefronts and offices above, with others more modest in character leading to the lower level, located just above grade. The large one-and-a-half-story arched main entrance (later removed) on the Randolph Street side of the building also led to the many office suites on the upper floors. The two lower floors housed businesses and retail ventures, while the upper floors served as offices. The Bryant Block's earliest tenants included real estate and insurance companies, including Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company, S.H. Kerfoot & Company Real Estate. Levi Wing & Company, Boyd & Wisner and other firms. In the 1880s, as social norms around sexuality were narrowly defined,

construction of buildings designed by architectural firms. He also created the new concept of a general contractor, who would handle all of the various trades working in tandem on a building's construction. In this capacity, Fuller's company could oversee almost every aspect of a project's development and execution, with the exception of its design, which was left to his many prominent clients. Fuller's firm contributed to several iconic buildings, including the Rookery Building (1888, Burnham and Root), the Rand McNally Building (1890, Burnham & Root), the Pontiac Building (1891, Holabird & Roche), the Monadnock Building (1891, Burnham & Root; 1893, Holabird & Roche) in Chicago, as well as the New York Times Building (1889, George B. Post) and the Fuller Building, also known as the "Flatiron Building" (Daniel Burnham and Frederick Dinkelberg, 1902) in New York City, among others.

The Bryant Block was originally five stories with street-level and below-grade storefronts. Three separate principal entries with large stairways (later



The Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street, c. 1984. Photo credit: "Delaware Building, Chicago, IL," bruo01_02_kF, C. William Brubaker Digital Image collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago

the Bryant Block also gained a reputation as a brothel on its upper floors, along with the so-called “queer bordellos,” before being revisioned and expanded as the Delaware Building in the 1880s. Despite these perceived early controversies, the building would go on to accommodate a wide variety of tenants over its 150-year history.

Chicago 7: The Delaware Building



Bryan Block, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street, circa 1875. Image credit: Illustrations of Greater Chicago, J.M. Wing & Co., Ashland Block; New York: A.J. Bicknell & Co., 27 Warren St, 1875 / Chicago Public Library Special Collections, R917.731 W726, page 11

In 1889, the building was remodeled by architect Julius Huber (1852-1939), a prominent Chicago architect active in the late 19th early 20th centuries. Huber's practice encompassed churches, breweries, including Brand's Hall (c.1877) at Clark and Erie Streets, as well as residences, apartments, stores, and office buildings. At the same time, it was renamed the Real Estate Board Building in deference to its new tenants, the Chicago Real Estate Board. While the 1889 remodeling included a number of modifications, they remained sympathetic to the building's original design. Exterior alterations included the addition of the top two stories of the building, which were clad in decorative sheet metal, and the addition of a wrought-iron balustrade and a corner projection at the roofline (no longer extant). The two lower levels were also remodeled at this time with large commercial windows, in addition to a beautiful interior light court and an ornamented open stairwell which was incorporated into the building. The removal of several bays from the eastern end of the Randolph Street facade occurred in 1924, with the construction of the new Masonic Temple/Civic Tower and the Oriental Theatre, now Nedelander Theater complex. These easternmost bays had been added to the building in 1874, on a ground lease which was later sold and that land became part of the Masonic Temple/Civic Tower.

The masonry facade; alternating square- and round-arch lintels featuring inset keystones and Corinthian capitals; and alternating Doric and Ionic pilasters rising to the upper floors are among the building's character defining features, which are said to be cast-stone. A modest but handsomely bracketed cornice is also highly visible from the street and extends the full width of the building's facades along Randolph and Dearborn Streets.

The two lower levels, originally featuring cast-iron façades, were periodically remodeled after 1889, with the most significant alternation occurring in the 1940s, when the façades were resurfaced with cement plaster, yet they remained largely composed of iron and glass. Today, they reflect the 1983 restoration directed by Hasbrouck, during which the cast-iron outer curvatures and decorative columns attached to structural steel were reconstructed based on archival photographs. The zinc-coated sheet-steel cladding on the two additional stories added in 1882

was also partially reconstructed due to severe deterioration. The interior was completely revised and reconfigured, with new HVAC systems installed as part of the restoration. Notably, the Delaware Building was the first structure renovated under the North Loop Redevelopment Guidelines released in 1981. The restoration cost \$2,193,000, equivalent to approximately \$7 million in today's dollars.

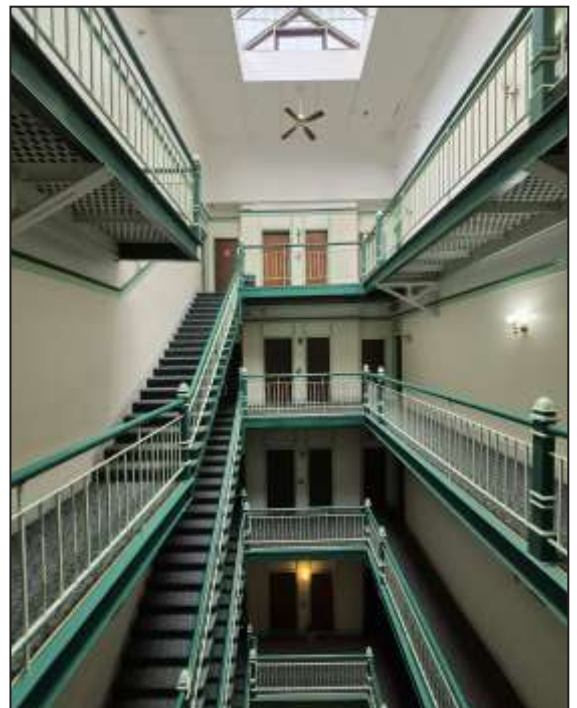
Despite these and other alterations, the building remains a fine example of Italianate architecture and early post-Fire reconstruction. The upper stories of the building retain a high level of integrity, with the bracketed and articulated cornice still in place. The significance of the building has been recognized through designation as both a Chicago Landmark and its listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Unfortunately, this remarkable building remains underutilized. McDonald's, which continues to hold a lease on the two lower floors of the building, has slowed the building owners' efforts to reuse and/or repurpose the property.



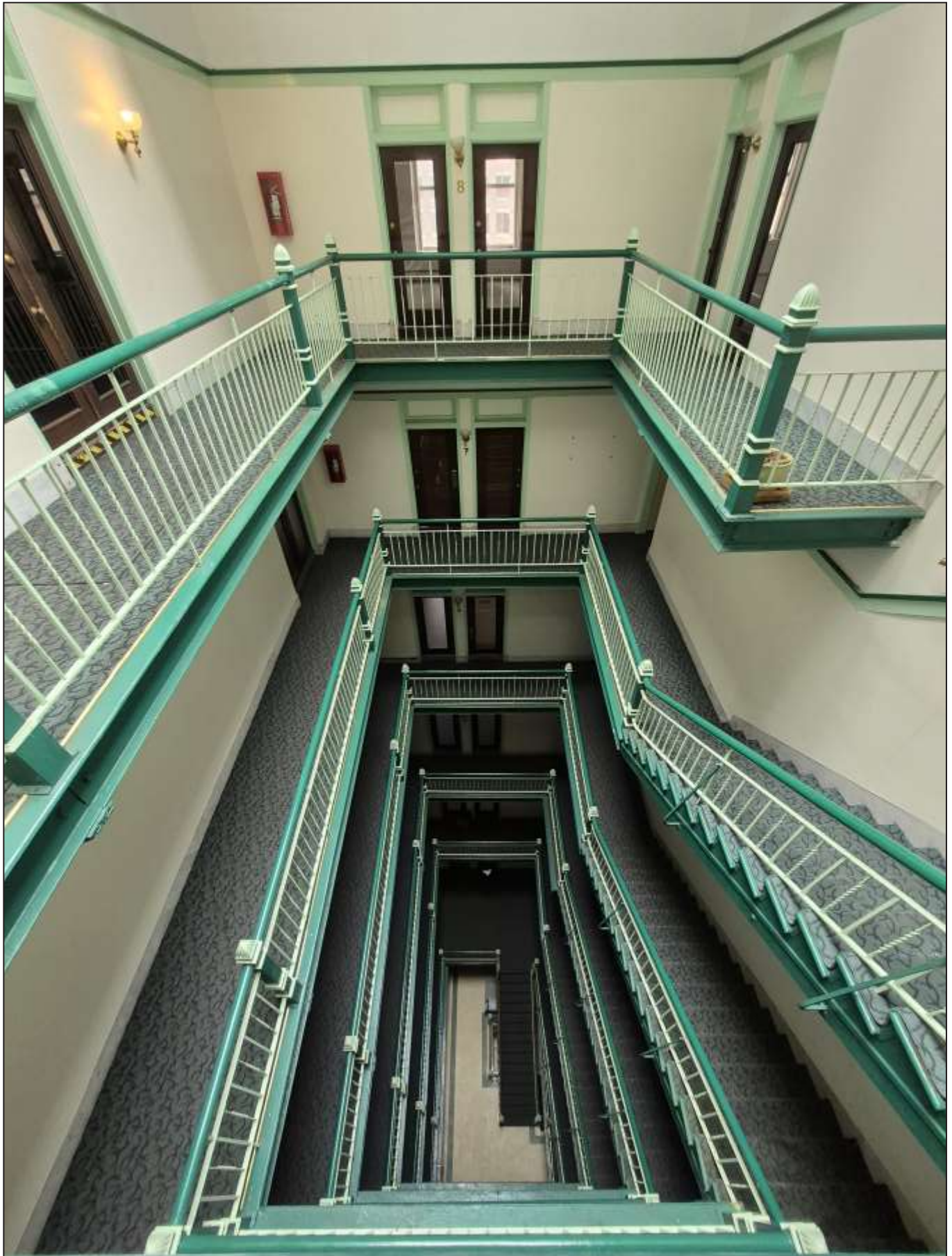
Detail of second floor atrium and stairs, The Delaware Building, Atrium 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, with 1889 addition by Julius Huber, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Ward Miller

THREAT

McDonald's Corporation holds a long-term, 99-year lease on the lower two floors of the Delaware Building. The fast food restaurant operated in the building for decades before closing down during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the building's owners have considered plans to revitalize the structure by converting the upper floor offices into new residences, or even offering it for sale, McDonald's lease includes space needed to add a second means of egress. Its large, currently vacant footprint on the majority of the first-and-second-floor space likewise poses challenges to future reinvestment. Although the restaurant has been closed, leaving the building vacant for nearly four years without plans to reopen, the parent company has yet to agree to releasing the space. The Delaware Building has also had a list of building code violations pending for many years, which need to be addressed.



Delaware Building Central Atrium, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo Credit: Ward Miller / Preservation Chicago



Delaware Building Central Atrium and Stairwell, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo Credit: Ward Miller



"Outfitted in Victoriana, a new MacDonald's Corp. restaurant is planned for the first two floors of the soon-to-be restored Delaware Building (above) of Randolph and Dearborn. As first commercial tenant in the 111-year-old building, the bi-level MacDonald's will cover 6,7000 square feet and is expected to open in December. The building, designed by Otis Wheelock, is being restored through private investment; principal architects are Bernheim, Kahn & Lozano, Chicago."

The Delaware Building at the northwest corner of Randolph and Dearborn Streets. This was formerly the Real Estate Board Building. The Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, with 1889 addition by Julius Huber, 36 W. Randolph Street, Rendering credit: Chicago Sun-Times, April 23, 1982 / Preservation Chicago Photo Collection

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Delaware Building already benefits from some of the highest and most protective recognition available for a historic property. Its status as a National Register-listed property makes any future rehabilitation potentially eligible for state and federal historic tax credits. Its further status as a designated Chicago Landmark protects it against demolition and insensitive alterations.

Amid a deeply challenging context for downtown commercial spaces, it is vital that the lower-floor commercial space be released and made available for renewed investment and adaptive reuse.

The upper floors could likewise accommodate a small hotel, multi-family residential units, or continued office space, all of which are in alignment with recent Department of Planning and Development initiatives. Reactivating this highly visible and active corner of the Loop could help the slow but steady economic recovery out of the COVID-19 pandemic, while addressing evolving needs in Chicago's commercial business district.

Constructed in response to one of the greatest urban disasters of the nineteenth century, the Delaware Building, alongside its neighbors, was intended as a beacon for future commercial investment and a demonstration of the city's resilience amid ruin.

In 2025, the Delaware Building can again signal a response to devastating change, and again demonstrate the value and adaptability of Chicago's historic downtown spaces.



The Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

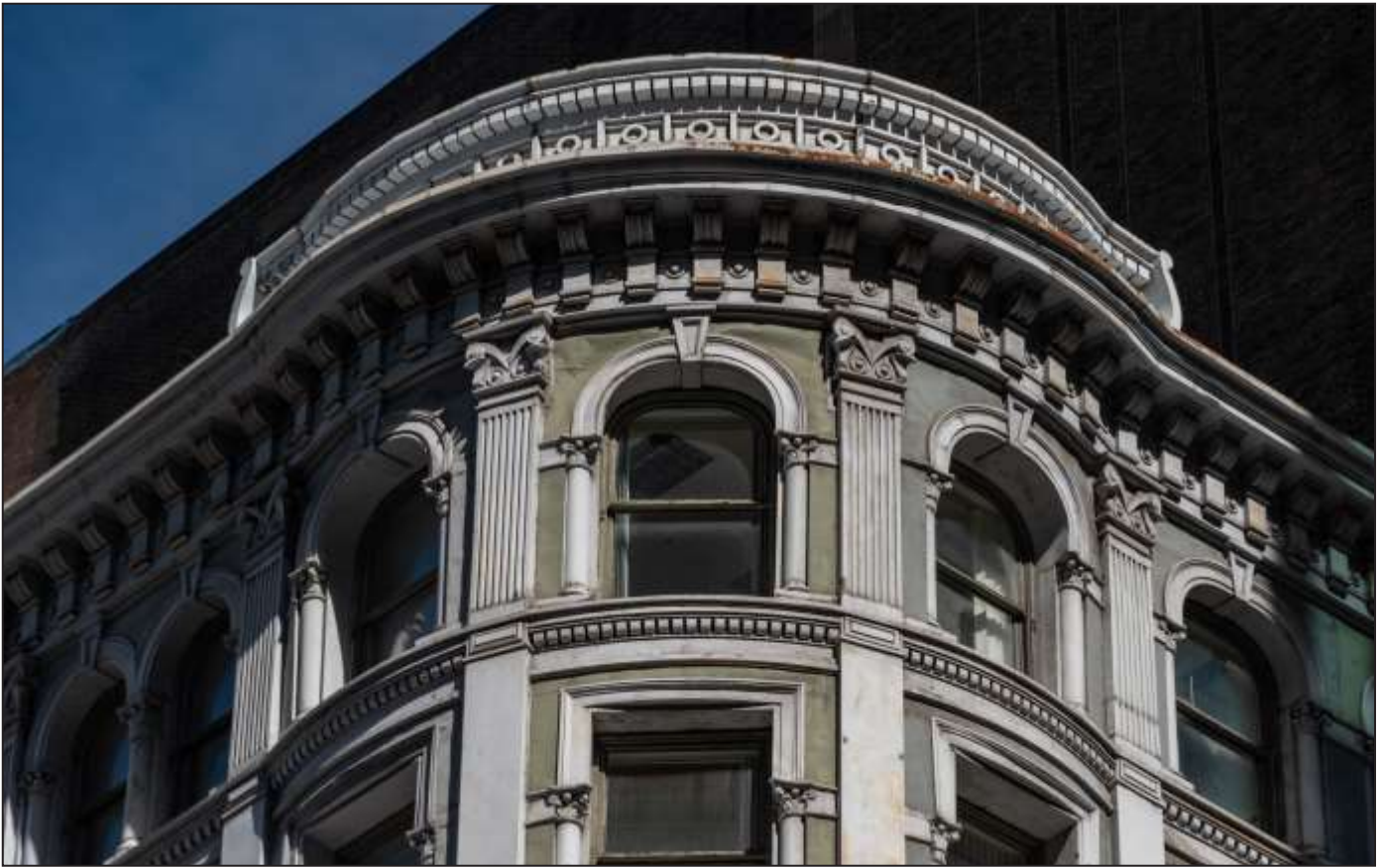


Deteriorated storefronts, Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Ward Miller



The Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, with 1889 addition by Julius Huber, 36 W. Randolph Street. Taken August 17, 1978. Photo credit: Preservation Chicago Photo Collection

Chicago 7: The Delaware Building



View of upper stories and cornice, Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers



The Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Chicago and Its Makers, Paul Gilbert and Charles Lee Bryson, 1929, pg. 576. / Preservation Chicago Library Collection



The Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, with 1889 addition by Julius Huber, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Lily Ma, Numi Studio



Photograph of Randolph Street looking west from State Street circa 1970. Visible signs include the Woods Theater, Oriental Theater, United Artists Theater, Magikist, Holloway House, Greyhound Bus Station, Old Heidelberg, and Sherman House Hotel. Photo credit: John Chuckman Collection



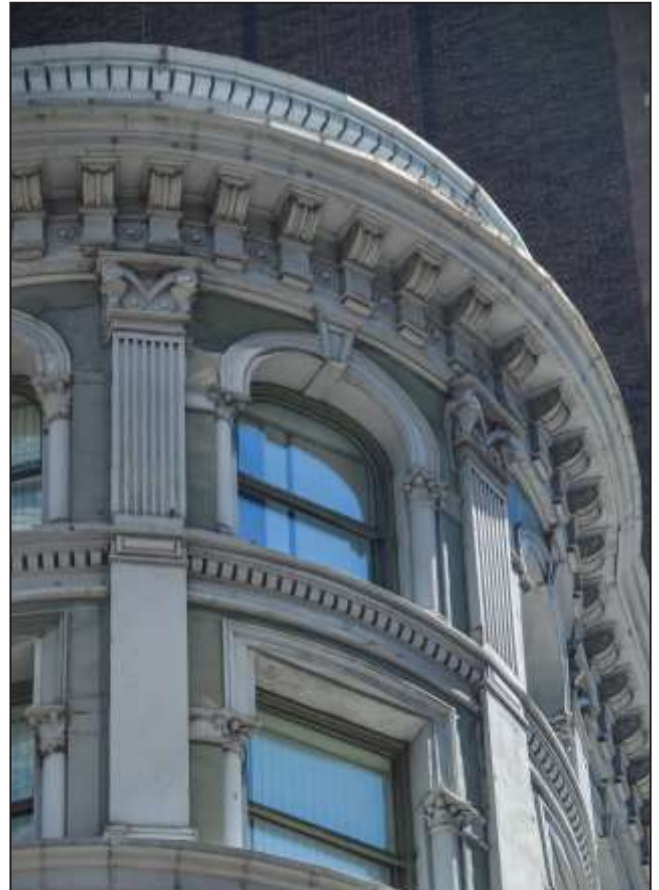
Oriental Theater and Garrick Theater Postcards with the Delaware Building visible. Photo credit: Preservation Chicago Postcard Collection



Looking east on Randolph Street, circa 1900, with the Delaware Building in the distance, noted with a red arrow. All other buildings in the photograph have been lost to demolition, including the Schiller/Garrick Building by Adler & Sullivan, the Borden Block by Adler & Sullivan and the Masonic Temple by Burnham & Root. Photo credit: Library of Congress Prints and Photograph, Historic American Buildings Survey, C.1900 - Schiller Building, 64 West Randolph Street, Chicago, Cook County, IL, HABS ILL,16-CHIG,60--7, il0034.photos.061311p



Corner storefront, Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers



Views of Delaware Building details and ornament, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers



View of the Daley Center from The Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Ward Miller



Deterioration at ground floor entry, Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, 36 W. Randolph Street. Photo credit: Ward Miller



*Evening view of the Delaware Building, 1872-1874, Wheelock & Thomas, with 1889 addition by Julius Huber, 36 W. Randolph Street.
Photo credit: Lily Ma, Numi Studio*

Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge

1766 Columbia Drive, Jackson Park, Chicago



Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive in Jackson Park, Chicago. Photo Credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

OVERVIEW

The Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge, originally known as the East Bridge and later, the Columbia Basin Bridge, has provided passage over Jackson Park's lagoon for nearly 150 years. Designed by the famed Chicago architectural firm Burnham and Root (1873-1891) and constructed in 1880, the South Park Commissioners described the bridge as the "most important work" within the park. The bridge is one of the few surviving architectural elements of the original Jackson Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), and is likewise a rare remaining feature that predates the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Since Jackson Park's opening, millions of visitors have traversed the bridge, traveling east-west across

Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge/ Columbia Basin Bridge / East Bridge

Address: Within Jackson Park , formally 6401 S. Stony Island Avenue

Architect: Daniel H. Burnham & John W. Root,
Burnham & Root

Date: 1880

Style: Naturalistic / Romanesque

Neighborhood: Hyde Park / Woodlawn



View of the west end of the bridge and the west abutment, looking north, 1893. Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive in Jackson Park, Chicago. Photo credit: Photo credit: Tim Samuelson personal collection

the park, and enjoyed picturesque views across Columbia Basin towards the Griffin Museum of Science and Industry. One of the many people who enjoyed the bridge was Clarence Darrow (1857-1938), famed Hyde Park resident, attorney, and activist, to whom the bridge was rededicated by Mayor Richard J. Daley in 1957.

Unfortunately, the Darrow Bridge has been closed to pedestrians since 2013, when the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) erected a permanent fence to block access. The banks of the bridge are overgrown with saplings and weeds, the pavement is cracked, and the Burnham and Root-designed railing is increasingly oxidized. The historic structure is badly in need of repair, despite the continuous and admirable efforts by local advocates who have been calling for restoration for over twenty years. Preservation Chicago calls for the City of Chicago and CDOT to complete all necessary repairs and historic rehabilitation of the Darrow Bridge, restoring access to this significant piece of Chicago's history and its legacy city parks.

HISTORY: The Design of Jackson Park and the Columbian Exposition

Jackson Park has long served as a vital green space on Chicago's South Side and as a planned natural area along Lake Michigan. Extending between Hyde Park, Woodlawn and South Shore Communities, the park speaks to the legacy of early beautification campaigns and open space formation in Chicago.

In 1837, when Chicago officially became a "city", the city government adopted the motto "Urbs in Horto," a Latin phrase meaning "City in a Garden." This slogan, which proved to be prophetic, helped to establish and protect the first Lakefront park, and later the same theories were applied by Frederick Law Olmsted and his designs for Jackson Park, beginning in 1871 and continuing following the World's Fair of 1893. These design principals from



The Merchant Tailors' Building with the Columbia Bridge and Palace of Fine Arts in the distance, circa 1892. Photo credit: The Dream City: a Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition with an introduction by Prof. Halsey C. Ives, 1893. pg 310 / Preservation Chicago Library Collection

the city's founding in 1837, were established more than 60 years before Sir Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928), an English urban planner, introduced his "Garden City movement" model in 1898. His writings and theories reflected a civic ideal that would later find concrete expression through the development of extensive park systems, lakefront preservation, and the City Beautiful movement in Chicago and in cities across the world.

By the early 1850s, a grassroots park reform movement had emerged, led by citizens who called for the creation of what would become the nation's first comprehensive system of parks and boulevards planned for a major city in the United States. These efforts gained momentum in the late 1860s, prompting the Illinois State Legislature to establish three separate park commissions, the South, West, and Lincoln Park Commissions. The goal of these three commissions was to form a "unified park and boulevard system that would encircle Chicago," an idea first proposed by real-estate speculator John S. Wright (1815-1874) two decades earlier, and one that the city still boasts today. Each commission was responsible for improving one section of this envisioned system.

The South Parks Commission, founded by a group of civic leaders including Paul Cornell (1822-1904), the "Father of Hyde Park", was established by the State legislature in 1869. The Commission was given the task of developing the parks and boulevards to the "South of the City." In 1871, their first act was to hire the leading landscape architects of the time, Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) and Calvert Vaux (1828-1895), who had already gained national prominence for designing New York City's Central Park in 1858, to design what was then called South Park. Unfortunately, shortly after Olmsted and Vaux began their work, the Great Chicago Fire occurred in October of that



"The Bridge northeast of Woman's Building, construction stage, October 16, 1891." This view, looking northwest, shows the original configuration of the bridge trusses and superstructure, as well as the limestone abutments and retaining wall along the water. Note the piers with finials at the base and top of the east and west retaining walls. Photo credit: C. D. Arnold, Chicago Public Library, Special Collections, C. D. Arnold Photographic Collection, Box 19, Volume XI, Plate 58

year, and delayed the implementation of their plan. When work resumed, the South Park System took shape with Eastern and Western divisions, now Jackson and Washington Parks, linked by the Midway Plaisance. Jackson Park alone made up 593 of the system's 1,055 acres. In 1875, the Eastern Division of the South Park System was renamed Lake Park, and in 1881 it was officially named Jackson Park, in honor of Andrew Jackson, the seventh U.S. President, a decision that sparked some public controversy. Vaux eventually withdrew from the project, but Olmsted returned in the early 1890s to revise and expand the plan, particularly in preparation for the upcoming fair.

HISTORY: Frederick Law Olmsted

Olmsted pioneered the field of landscape architecture in the United States. In addition to Central Park, he designed many prominent urban parks throughout the second half of the 19th century. Born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1822, Olmsted established his firm in Brookline, Massachusetts in 1883. The firm remained active under the leadership of his two sons into the mid-20th century. Besides his landscape work, Olmsted was a social reformer and environmentalist - working on the conservation efforts of both Yosemite and Niagara Falls - an abolitionist, and administrator. Olmsted is among the nation's, if not the world's, foremost designers to leave a lasting impact on the American social consciousness and urban form.

Chicago 7: Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge/Columbia Bridge



"View from Illinois Building, Looking Southeast, September 18, 1892." The Columbia Bridge is visible at the center bottom of this photograph with the Fisheries Building, United States Government Building, and the Manufactures & Liberal Arts Building visible beyond. The trusses extend above the bridge deck, separating the pedestrian walks at either side from the carriage drive at the center of the bridge. Photo source: Chicago Public Library, C. D. Arnold Photographic Collection, Special Collections & Preservation Division, 001_063

Olmsted's design work was guided by the natural features already present on a site. He focused on creating specific feelings and effects in the landscape and employed pastoral and picturesque styles to produce naturalistic and serene scenery, intended to enhance rather than remake a space. By respecting the "genius of a place," he sought to use the shaping of terrain to bring out the innate quality of a given landscape.

When Olmsted surveyed the site for Jackson Park, he found marshy conditions, bogs, and vegetated ridges. He cited Lake Michigan as an important natural feature that made up for the flatness of the chosen site. Communicated in a set of drawings delivered to the South Park Commission in 1871, Olmsted and Vaux planned a series of waterways in the form of lagoons to connect Jackson Park to Lake Michigan. Delays caused by the Great Chicago Fire prevented construction and improvements of the park's land from beginning until 1875. Construction on the park resumed with the excavation of the Twin Lakes and the establishment of an early masonry and iron bridge across them. That original bridge, however, no longer exists today. Further improvements of the park continued. The South Park Commission shifted its focus to the northern section east of the Twin Lakes in 1879, at which time a second and larger artificial lake, initially known as the North Pond and still existing today as Columbia Basin, was created.

HISTORY: Burnham & Root

In April of 1880, the famed Chicago architectural firm of Daniel H. Burnham (1846-1912) and John W. Root (1850-1891), was awarded the commission for a bridge that would span the southern end of North Pond, connecting the East and West Lagoons. Originally named the Columbia Drive Bridge, Burnham & Root designed the structure with masonry and iron. The bridge was planned so that a carriage drive could continue over the lake. In the South Park Commission's 1879-1880 Annual Report, they referred to the undertaking as "the most important work in the East Park" aside from the general landscape improvements initiated the previous year. As cultural historian, Tim Samuelson said, it "offers one of the only places in the entire park where visitors can experience a location truly authentic to Olmsted's original conception of the park." The bridge was officially opened in 1881 for the "driving season," when upper-class Chicagoans traditionally toured the park in horse-drawn carriages. That same year the park was renamed to Jackson Park, and boaters, picnickers, and carriages flocked to the still-unfinished park.



"Souvenir map of the World's Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance, Chicago, Ill, U.S.A., 1893." Hermann Heinze. Location of Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge is shown with yellow arrow. Photo credit: A. Zeese & Co., Engravers, Chicago, 1892. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. #2010587004

Daniel Hudson Burnham was born in Henderson, New York in 1846 and moved to Chicago in 1855 at the age of nine. After graduating from Central High School in Chicago, he was sent by his parents to a college preparatory school in New England. However, he failed entrance exams for both Harvard and Yale. So 21-year-old Burnham returned to Chicago in the fall of 1867, eventually becoming an apprentice at the firm of architect William Le Baron Jenney (1832-1907), after several unsuccessful attempts to establish himself in business, politics, and even the mining industry. He met his creative, long-term partner, John Wellborn Root, in 1872 while working at the firm Carter, Drake and Wight.

Chicago 7: Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge/Columbia Bridge



View "Aerial view of Museum of Science and Industry and Surrounding Landscape Looking South," circa 1931. The Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge in Jackson Park is visible near the top of this photograph, as part of the drive encircling the museum and its grounds. Photo credit: Chicago Park District, Chicago Public Library, Special Collections, Chicago Park District Archives: Photographs: Jackson Park (0019) Features, Box 46, Folder 25, Photograph 4

The encounter with Root would mark a turning point in Burnham's professional trajectory. Before the two would go on to form their influential partnership in Chicago, Root had already begun to distinguish himself through his intellect, education and early professional experiences.

Four years younger than Burnham, Root was born in Lumpkin, Georgia in 1850. He was raised in Atlanta, where he was first educated at home. During the American Civil War, Root was sent to Liverpool, England, where he attended school in Claremont. His time in Britain exposed him to European architectural traditions and the Gothic Revival architecture, influences that would later surface in his work. After returning to the United States, Root enrolled at New York University, where he studied engineering and graduated in 1869. He worked for several architects in New York City, including James Renwick Jr. (1818-1895), the architect of St. Patrick's Cathedral, and Peter Bonnett Wight (1838-1925), who designed the National Academy of Design (demolished) in New York City. In 1871, following Wight, Root moved to Chicago in the wake of the Great Fire, and became head draftsman for Carter, Drake & Wight, where he eventually met Burnham.

In 1873, Burnham and Root began what would become an 18-year partnership with the founding of their architectural firm, Burnham & Root, which quickly rose to prominence during the Chicago post-fire reconstruction period. Among their most notable works were the Rookery Building (1888), which featured a hybrid metal-and-masonry frame and a light-filled central atrium; the Monadnock Building (1891), one of the tallest load-bearing masonry structures ever built; and the Masonic Temple (1892), which, at 21 stories, was briefly the tallest building in the world. Beyond their renowned urban skyscrapers, Burnham & Root also contributed to landscape and



"Mrs. and Mr. Stuart Chase standing on the Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge where the famed Lawyer had his ashes strewn and every year groups gather to commemorate the event...This bridge will go and the tress from over the world with it..." Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive. Chicago. Photo credit: Bud Daley, Chicago Daily News, September 1, 1965 / Preservation Chicago Photo Collection

infrastructure projects at an early stage of their practice. Some of the newfound firm's earliest work was for the South Park Commission in the 1870s and 1880s, including the bridge over the Columbia Basin. They were later named the lead architects of the World's Columbian Exposition and went on to design those famed residential and commercial buildings, making them one of the most important and well-known architectural firms of the 19th century.

Unfortunately, the partnership between Burnham & Root came to a premature end when Root contracted pneumonia and died in 1892 at his home, located at 1310 N . Astor Street in Chicago, while he working on the plans for several pavilions at the World's Columbian Exposition.

HISTORY: 1893 World's Columbian Exposition

Although the city's original plan to completely encircle Chicago with continuous green parkland was never completely realized at its northmost terminus, it nonetheless resulted in one of the most forward-thinking park and boulevard systems in the United States. This network of parks and boulevards, along with the growth and annexation of Hyde Park, Lake View and Jefferson Townships, bringing Chicago's population to over one million, contributed to Chicago successfully surpassing New York, St. Louis and Washington, D.C. for the privilege of hosting the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. This was a monumental event commemorating the 400th

Chicago 7: Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge/Columbia Bridge



"View of the southern part of the Art Building (later the Field Columbian Museum and now know as the Griffin Museum of Science and Industry) as enlarged from the bridge of World's Fair, South of it," October 24, 1895. This view of the bridge, looking north, shows the modifications to the superstructure and railings implemented in 1895. Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive in Jackson Park, Chicago. Photo credit: Taken by J. C. Olmsted on October 24, 1895, Olmsted Archives, Olmsted Photograph Album Collection, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, National Park Service Photo Album 01902-01-ph26, Courtesy United States Department of the Interior

anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas, which due to delays, was celebrated one year later than the official anniversary date.

Through this event, Chicago aimed to prove that it was the "City of the Century." Following the precedent of the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition (1876), which featured many separate buildings set in a large garden-like layout, the World's Columbian Exposition was planned to spread over 686 acres along the city's south lakefront area. After 1889, most of the city's resources and attention were focused on preparing for the fair. Long-term plans for Jackson Park's permanent development were postponed until a new plan was approved in 1895. Jackson Park was selected as the site in 1890 and its incomplete status was the very reason that Olmsted recommended it for the Exposition.

Architects, engineers, and planners worked together to turn the swampy area into the "White City." Olmsted, Henry Sargent Codman (1863-1893) of Olmsted's firm, Daniel Burnham of Burnham and Root (later D.H. Burnham & Company), and Charles B. Atwood (1849-1895) of Burnham's firm, embarked on planning the layout for the Exposition. Rather than design a traditional park landscape, they conceived of a spectacular seascape. Olmsted approached landscape not simply as scenery, but as a system. He used Lake Michigan, along with a series of man-made pools and canals, to form a setting with islands and raised terraces where the buildings would stand. Moreover, he introduced over a million plants to build a diverse and resilient environment. Despite objections from Louis Sullivan and other architects of the "First Chicago School" of architecture, Burnham chose to strongly



Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

encourage the design of buildings primarily in the Beaux-Arts style, featuring contributions by a number of prominent architects, mostly from the East. Exceptions included Burnham's firm, Henry Ives Cobb (1859-1931) and that of Dankmar Adler (1844-1900) and Louis Sullivan (1856-1924) of the Adler & Sullivan firm, who designed the Transportation Building. These eastern architects included Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895), Charles McKim (1847-1909), William Mead (1846-1928) and Stanford White (1853-1906) of McKim, Mead & White, and George B. Post (1837-1913), among others. Among these eastern architects, a particularly notable figure was Sophia Hayden (1868-1953), the first woman to graduate from MIT's four-year architecture program. She designed the Woman's Building for the Exposition at just 21 years old.

The Columbia Basin was the northernmost part of the Exposition's lagoon system, and it fronted the monumental Atwood-designed Fine Arts Building, now the Griffin Museum of Science and Industry. While much of Jackson Park was completely redesigned during the fair, the basin's form remained and became part of the interconnected series of lagoons. The Columbia Drive Bridge also remained one of the only unchanged and extant pieces of the original design for the park, with Burnham & Root adding ornamental railings to improve both its safety and aesthetic appeal. The bridge's placement was part of Olmsted's vision to create picturesque views of the Fine Arts Building. Standing on the bridge, a fair-goer would experience a naturalistic vista, where the grand neoclassical building was framed by grassy slopes, clusters of trees and the basin itself. During the fair, tens of millions of visitors crossed the Columbia Drive Bridge, and traveled in boats beneath it.

Chicago 7: Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge/Columbia Bridge



Overview of Jackson Park looking southward, with the Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge in the foreground, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

Held from May 1 to October 10, 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition was an enormous success. Referred to as “the fair that changed America,” it showcased modern innovations to over 27 million visitors, including the Ferris Wheel, Cracker Jacks, early elevators, the zipper, and the earliest voice recording technologies. The fair also acting as a catalyst for Chicago's intellectual and cultural development, contributing to the founding of conferences, including the Parliament of the World's Religions, professional associations, and civic organizations. Moreover, it cemented the dominance of classical and Beaux-Arts architectural styles, which Louis Sullivan criticized as a harmful influence. In his words, “The damage wrought by the World's Fair will last for half a century from its date, if not longer.”

HISTORY: After the Exposition

After the six-month Exposition concluded in late October of 1893, the South Park Commissioners soon began efforts to turn the site back into parkland. Jackson Park was again redesigned by Olmsted's firm with aims to retain the picturesque qualities of the World's Fair and serve as a space for passive recreation. The redesign of the park was completed between 1895 and 1906. The Exposition had been conceived as a temporary attraction, so most of its buildings were constructed using a plaster-like material known as “staff,” which was designed to resemble stone. These structures were later either destroyed in the fires of 1894 or demolished. Only a few structures were preserved, most notably the Palace of Fine Arts, which had fireproof masonry vaults. It was repurposed by Burnham to house the Field Columbian Museum, which displayed anthropological and cultural artifacts that had



Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

been exhibited at the fair. After a period of vacancy, following a move of the Field Museum to a site near Grant Park, the building fell into disrepair and was largely reconstructed by philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears Roebuck & Company. In 1933, the museum was renamed and transformed into the Rosenwald Museum and later named The Museum of Science and Industry.

Another structure that was retained from the Exposition, although less prominent, is the Columbia Drive Bridge. After the fair, the bridge was modified under the supervision of Charles B. Atwood. The deck was widened, and the original Burnham & Root-designed iron railings were replaced by simplified ones, in keeping with the Exposition's style. These railings were reused from another Exposition bridge that had been demolished after the fair. The bridge, in its post-fair state, has remained a constant in the park amidst the city's many changes. In 1957, the city renamed the structure the Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge to honor Chicago's famed lawyer Clarence Seward Darrow (1857-1938).

Both Jackson Park and the Darrow Bridge have been recognized with numerous historic designations. The park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and became part of the Chicago Park Boulevard Historic District in 2018. The bridge itself is documented in the 1990 "Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District" form. It likewise falls within the parcel boundary of the 1995 Museum of Science and Industry Chicago Landmark designation, as a contributing structure.

Chicago 7: Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge/Columbia Bridge



Current conditions Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

HISTORY: Physical Description

The Darrow Bridge measures 56 feet in length and 56 feet 6 inches in width, including one 40-foot-wide roadway and sidewalks measuring 8 feet 3 inches. It currently stands on the main axis of the Museum of Science and Industry and reflects the symmetry present in the museum's exterior façade. The Columbia Basin lagoon and its naturalistic banks act as a frame, and the bridge elevates the viewer to provide the viewshed that Olmsted intended. The experience of looking out over the bridge, both to the north and the south, allows visitors in the 21st century to authentically experience Olmsted's original South Park concept. The location and framing of the Darrow Bridge continue the long tradition of pastoral American landscape design.

The Darrow Bridge additionally acts as an important connector between what is now a parking lot on the eastern bank of the lagoon to the Garden of the Phoenix and Wooded Island, both accessed from the western side of the park. With the bridge blocked and closed to the public, not only is the impressive view of the lagoon and the Museum of Science and Industry lost, but the park cannot be fully experienced or easily traversed. Currently, visitors have limited options for accessing one of the park's main features, the Wooded Island, and must walk around the museum, along the east bank, or enter from 63rd Street. The loss of this bridge connection has reduced convenient access to the northern section of the park, which for Olmsted and Burnham served as the focal point of Jackson Park.

The bridge is an architectural gem in its own right. With its limestone abutments and rough-hewn stone retaining walls, the bridge displays a formal but organic and naturalistic quality. As Tim Samuelson, the Chicago cultural



Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive in Jackson Park, Chicago. Photo Credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

historian, commented to the *Hyde Park Herald*, “the dramatic curving swoop of the stone bridge embankment was a remarkable early effort in melding Daniel Burnham’s creative understated modernism with the Frederick Law Olmsted concepts of human discovery and wonder amidst a natural environment.” This simplified form with its minimal ornament reflects Burnham and Root’s later architectural designs for Chicago’s skyscrapers.

Dating back to the earliest phase of Jackson Park’s development and predating the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, the bridge’s current structure includes components from different time periods. The stone abutment walls were constructed in 1880, when Burnham & Root designed the original pony-truss bridge to accompany Olmsted & Vaux’s 1871 landscape design for South Park. The iron hand railings were added after the Exposition, and the deck was introduced as early as 1895, following the revisions proposed in Olmsted’s Revised General Plan for Jackson Park. Despite several alterations of the bridge, key historical elements remain. The limestone superstructure and embankments/abutments, along with 1895 railing, and walkway all are original to Burnham and Olmsted’s vision. The abutments are also original, featuring elegant curved wingwalls. The 1895 deck represents an early example of a deck plate girder structure, composed of four shallow girders and floor beams supporting a concrete slab. This structural system, which resembles the jack-arch type, was common during the fair but has largely disappeared. Additionally, as part of Jackson Park, the bridge falls within the park’s overall period of significance of 1875-1953. Despite deferred maintenance, the bridge was evaluated by the National Bridge Inventory and received a rating of five out of ten for historical significance, with a designation of “good historic integrity.”



Fred Lundin, attorney Clarence Darrow, and attorney Charles Erbstein sitting and talking at a table in a Chicago courtroom in 1923. Photo credit: Chicago Daily News collection, Chicago History Museum, DN-0075819

HISTORY: Clarence Darrow

Although many Jackson Park recreationalists have admired and traversed the Darrow Bridge, arguably none have done so more than its namesake, Clarence Darrow. Darrow became one of the 20th century's most famed lawyers through his many high-profile defense cases. He represented Eugene Debs and other union leaders during the 1894 Pullman Strike, defended Leopold and Loeb, saving them from the death penalty, and is most known for his role as a defense attorney arguing for science education and freedom of speech in the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial.

Darrow was born on April 18, 1857 in Farmdale, Ohio, and was raised in a household shaped by skepticism, abolitionism, and radical moral thought. His father, Ammirus Darrow, an outspoken freethinker and former seminary student, deeply influenced Clarence Darrow's ethical worldview. Drawn to its intellectual rigor and persuasive force, Darrow began to study law during his time as a young school teacher. After being admitted to the bar in Ohio in 1879 at age 22, he moved to Chicago in 1887, where he formed crucial political and legal alliances that shaped his career. Influenced by governor John Peter Altgeld's progressive ideals, Darrow became known for defending labor leaders, political radicals, and socially marginalized individuals. His legal work was driven less by commercial success than by a deep commitment to justice and civil liberties. In 1897 Darrow and his wife, Ruby Hammerstrom, moved to an apartment at 1537 E. 60th Street (demolished), where they had a view of the bridge crossing Columbia Basin. Darrow was said to contemplate his cases and the mysteries of life on the bridge, as well as practice his "famous oratory on the fish in the lagoon." He was an esteemed resident of Hyde Park and stayed



Alderman Leon Despres, Nina Helstein and other civic leaders, legislators, and historians at the annual memorial for Clarence Darrow on 34th anniversary of his death at the Clarence Darrow Bridge over the Lagoon in Jackson Park, Chicago, Illinois on March 13, 1972. Photo credit: Gene Pesek for Chicago Sun-Times / Chicago Sun-Times collection, Chicago History Museum, ST-40001175-0007



View of the Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge in Jackson Park, Chicago, Illinois. View of sidewalk, curb, and railing, circa 1937. Photo credit: Chicago Park District, Works Progress Administration photograph 2483, Chicago Public Library, Special Collections, Chicago Park District Archives, Photographs: Jackson Park (0019) Features, Box 47, Folder 8, Photograph 4

involved in neighborhood institutions and events until his death on March 13, 1938. According to his wishes, Darrow's ashes were scattered in the Jackson Park lagoon.

The bridge became both an endpoint of his life and a lasting monument to his values. In 1957, following Ruby's death, her ashes were also scattered at the same site. That same year, Mayor Richard J. Daley dedicated the bridge to Darrow, and beginning in 1961, those who remember Darrow would gather on the bridge every March 13th and toss a wreath off of its side and into the lagoon.

THREAT

Unfortunately, since 2013, those attempting to celebrate Darrow's life and memory have been unable to actually set foot on the bridge. The park commissions were merged into the Chicago Park District in 1934, which later proposed modifications to the bridge and its retaining walls after receiving federal funding. In 1962, the bridge was turned over to the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), who still owns and manages it today. At that time, the City planned to build a major expressway through Jackson Park, which would have required the demolition of the bridge. Thankfully, this urban renewal plan never materialized due to strong opposition and massive protests. In

the same year, plans were also drawn up for a dam and drainage improvements at the Columbia Basin, showing that a soil boring was taken at the bridge. Early letters requesting that CDOT make necessary repairs to the bridge were published as early as 1968 in the *Hyde Park Herald*.

By 2009 the bridge was deemed unsafe for vehicles and a permanent metal fence was built to keep out pedestrians in 2013. In 2017, CDOT presented a plan for the bridge to provide pedestrian and emergency vehicle access to the Obama Presidential Center, cited just southeast of the bridge along Jackson Park's eastern S. Stony Island Avenue border. In 2021, CDOT engineers further proposed a timeline for the bridge's repair with the completion of the project slated for the end of 2024. Unfortunately, neither plan has come to fruition.

With the construction of the Obama Presidential Center taking place just to its south, the bridge project has been postponed, though \$2 million in state funding remains earmarked for its repair.



Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive in Jackson Park, Chicago. Photo Credit: Eric Allix Rogers

In 2024, the Clarence Darrow Bridge Preservation (CDBP) Coalition was formed in response to the designation of federal funds for the demolition and replacement of the bridge, as well as suggestions that the historic limestone abutments may be replaced with concrete. Because of its location and age, any repair or demolition project is subject to both National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 reviews. Formal Section 106 review was initiated in late 2024, but the process has seemingly stalled. Current disruptions and uncertainties around federal offices and regulatory oversight may further delay NEPA and NHPA reviews.



Current conditions Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

RECOMMENDATIONS

As necessary maintenance continues to be deferred, the bridge is increasingly vulnerable to further disrepair. If conditions worsen, demolition and removal are possible outcomes. In the event that elements of the bridge must be replaced to ensure structural stability and safety, the CDBP Coalition has advocated for the retention of the limestone blocks, retaining wall, iron railings, and other surviving historic elements. Preservation Chicago echoes those recommendations and is confident that the historic integrity and character of the bridge can be maintained.

With ambitious developments underway at both the Obama Presidential Center and the Griffin Museum of Science and Industry, a rehabilitated Darrow Bridge can reconnect not just the two sides of Jackson Park, as originally intended, but further provide a literal and symbolic bridge between these two Chicago institutions. CDOT, community advocates, park visitors, and neighboring partner institutions all stand to benefit from a rehabilitated and reestablished Clarence Darrow Bridge.



Fallen stones at Clarence Darrow Memorial Bridge / Columbia Bridge, 1880, Burnham & Root, 1766 Columbia Drive. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers



Entry tickets to the World's Columbian Exposition admitting Ms. Jane Rooney, Mrs. Mary Rooney-Flanigan, and Mr. Thomas Flanigan of Elwood, Indiana. Photo credit: Ward Miller Family Collection

J.J. Walser House

42 N. Central Avenue, Chicago



J.J. Walser House with former owner Anne Teague, a 2025 Chicago 7 Most Endangered. Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser House, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue. Photo Credit: Eric Allix Rogers

OVERVIEW

The Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser House, located at 42 N. Central Avenue in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago, is a significant structure within both the west Chicago neighborhood and city at large. Today, the J.J. Walser House has accrued additional significance as one of only five extant Prairie School structures designed by Frank Lloyd Wright within the city of Chicago. It is also the only single-family house designed by the renowned architect on the city's West Side.

The house was listed as a City of Chicago Landmark first in 1981, with the designation report later revised in 1983. In 2013 the property was

Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser House

Address: **42 N. Central Avenue**

Architect: **Frank Lloyd Wright**

Date: **1903**

Style: **Prairie School**

Neighborhood: **Austin**



Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser House, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue. Photo courtesy of the Gilman Lane Photograph Collection at Oak Park Public Library Special Collections, Art Institute of Chicago Archives, Architecture Photograph Collection, 67368

listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its significant design by Frank Lloyd Wright, which is exemplary of the design philosophies of the Prairie School. The J.J. Walser House is one of Wright's experiments with employing the tenets of Prairie School design to more affordable residences. The overall massing, horizontal trim, low hipped roofs with wide overhanging eaves, material palette, horizontal bands of windows, and an open floor plan are just some of the design elements that typify the Prairie School.

HISTORY

Born in 1878 in Chicago, Joseph Jacob Walser (1878-1921) was a graduate of engineering class of 1900 of University of Michigan. After graduation, he worked for his father, Jacob Joseph Walser Jr. (1848-1913), in the Goss Printing Company before becoming a real estate developer. In 1901, he married Grace Lenora Moore (1877-1970) in Ann Arbor, Michigan. In early 1903, Mr. and Mrs Walser bought the land at 42 N. Central Avenue (formerly 417 S. Central Avenue) for their new home. It is not known how Walser came to commission Frank Lloyd Wright for the design of his home. Proximity to Wright's Home and Studio in Oak Park, Illinois, is one possible explanation. The scope of the commission included "not only a modern style house but also custom-designed interior built-in furniture and specially designed leaded art glass windows." For a cost of \$4,000, the two-story single-family house was finished by the end of 1903.



Side elevation with original art glass windows, Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser House, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue.

Photo credit: The House Beautiful Magazine, Volume 18, Issue 4, September 1905, pg. 25 / Preservation Chicago Collection

Just two years after its construction, the house was featured in the September 1905 issue of *House Beautiful* magazine. At the time, it was often cited as a model design for similarly modest, architect-designed residences.

The Walsers lived in the house for only seven years before it was sold in 1910. Between 1910 and 1970, the property changed hands eleven times. During this period, successive occupants altered and remodeled the house, enclosing the front wing porches, constructing a rear addition, remodeling the kitchen and bathrooms, removing some original windows and doors, and combining two rear bedrooms into one. Since 1970, when the Teague family purchased the house, only minor changes were made in nearly 50 years. After Anne Teague's death in 2019, however, the house began to deteriorate and eventually went into foreclosure through a reverse mortgage.

Though not often cited as one of Wright's grander works, the Walser House nonetheless incorporates essential details of the Prairie Style and is a testament to the style's broad applicability, its emphasis on simple forms, horizontality, and "organic" naturalism. Wright's (and his contemporaries') development of the Prairie Style through single-family residences remains among the most recognized, and arguably the most iconic, impressions of the form. The Walser House is no exception.

Through the "conversation" between interior and exterior, the J.J. Walser House exemplifies the defining principles of Prairie School architecture, with careful composition and attention to detail. Strong horizontal lines dominate the design, reinforced by the low-hipped roofs with wide overhanging eaves that also help with passive climate control. Inside, the open floor plan allows rooms to flow smoothly into one another. Noticeably, Chicago-style windows with ribbon casements flood the interior with maximum natural light. Wide porches, integrated planters, and plentiful windows further blur the boundaries between the house and its surroundings. The two-toned exterior palette of



Front and side elevation, Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser House, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue. Circa 1977. Photo credit: Chicago Sun-Times collection, Chicago History Museum, ST-14001686-0004

light stucco and dark wood trim, complements the natural materials inside. The Prairie School's focus on integrated, handcrafted elements is evident in the built-in furniture, including benches, bookcases, mantels, and sideboards.

THREAT

The J.J. Walser House is no stranger to the need for preservation support. Around the middle of the twentieth century, the original art glass windows were removed and sold for their considerable value, a rear addition was built, and the front porches were enclosed. Anne (d.2019) and Hurley Teague (d.1997) purchased the house in 1970, stabilized it, and continued to steward this invaluable historic asset for nearly fifty years.

After the passing of Anne Teague in 2019, the future of the house further became uncertain amid the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The house has been unoccupied and unmaintained for the past six years, and the harsh regional climate has taken an especially significant toll on the fragile historic materials throughout its exterior and interior. Despite admirable temporary enclosure efforts and the clearance of overgrown vegetation by advocacy partners, including the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, Landmarks Illinois, and Austin Coming Together, the entirety of the house requires immediate evaluation and repair.

The condition of the house is just one hurdle. The property is also undergoing foreclosure, which is complicating and slowing efforts to find a new owner and steward for the house. No repair efforts can be undertaken without the property owner's consent, and with the ownership of the property in legal limbo, the house continues to suffer from deferred maintenance.



Original art glass window from the J.J. Walser House, Chicago, designed for Frank Lloyd Wright. Image photo: Toomey & Company Auction House



*Views of principal façade on Central Avenue, Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser House, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue.
Photo courtesy of the Gilman Lane Photograph Collection, Oak Park Public Library Special Collections*

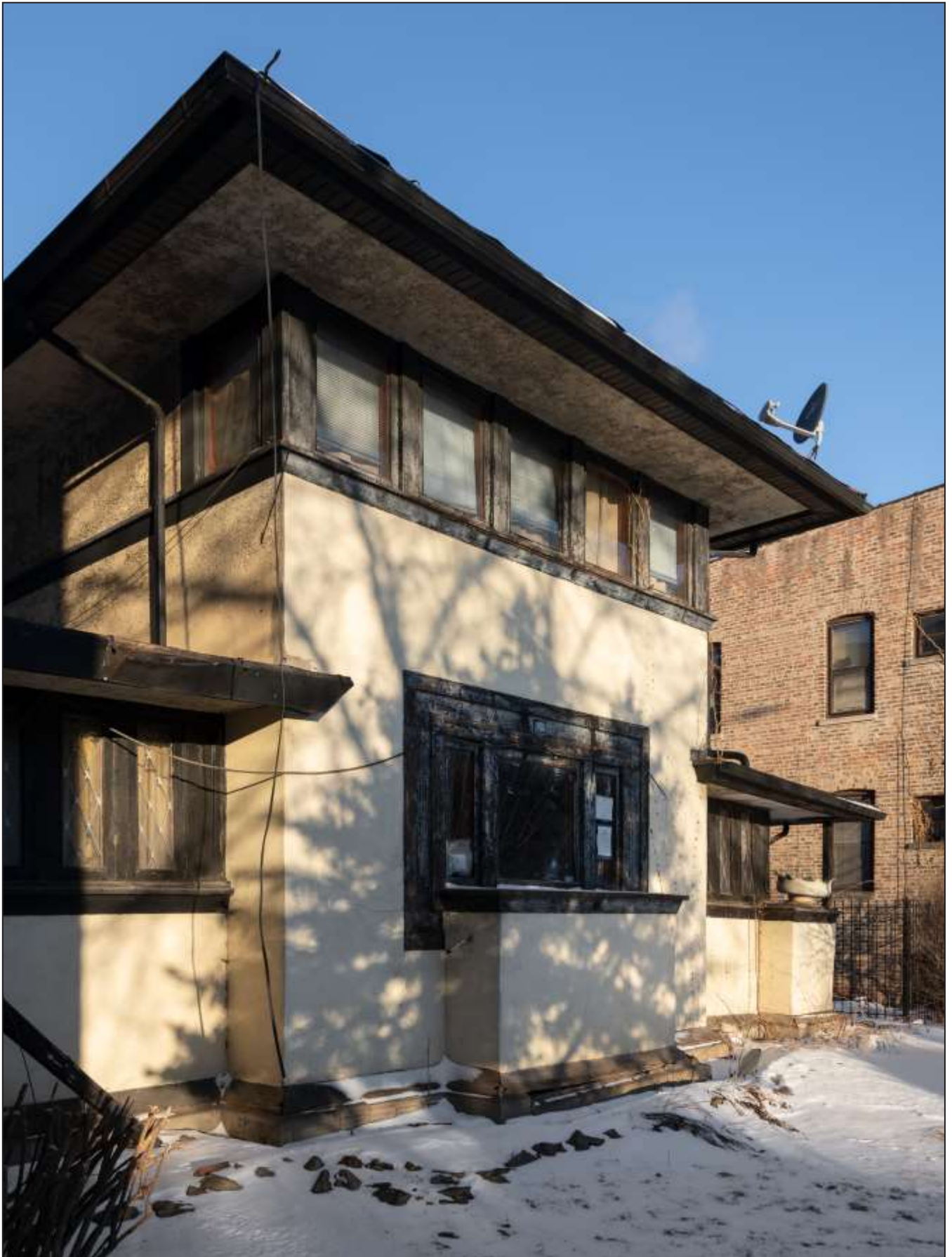
While the house is protected from intentional demolition as a City of Chicago Landmark, the severity of the existing conditions and continued rapid deterioration pose a serious threat to the future of this significant Austin home.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservation Chicago, along with our partners in advocacy at the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, Landmarks Illinois, and Austin Coming Together, is working to closely monitor the conditions of the house and to encourage a good preservation outcome for the Walser House. Preservation partners are urging the mortgage company and the City of Chicago to take all possible steps to expedite the foreclosure process, in order to transfer the building and title to a new preservation-oriented owner.

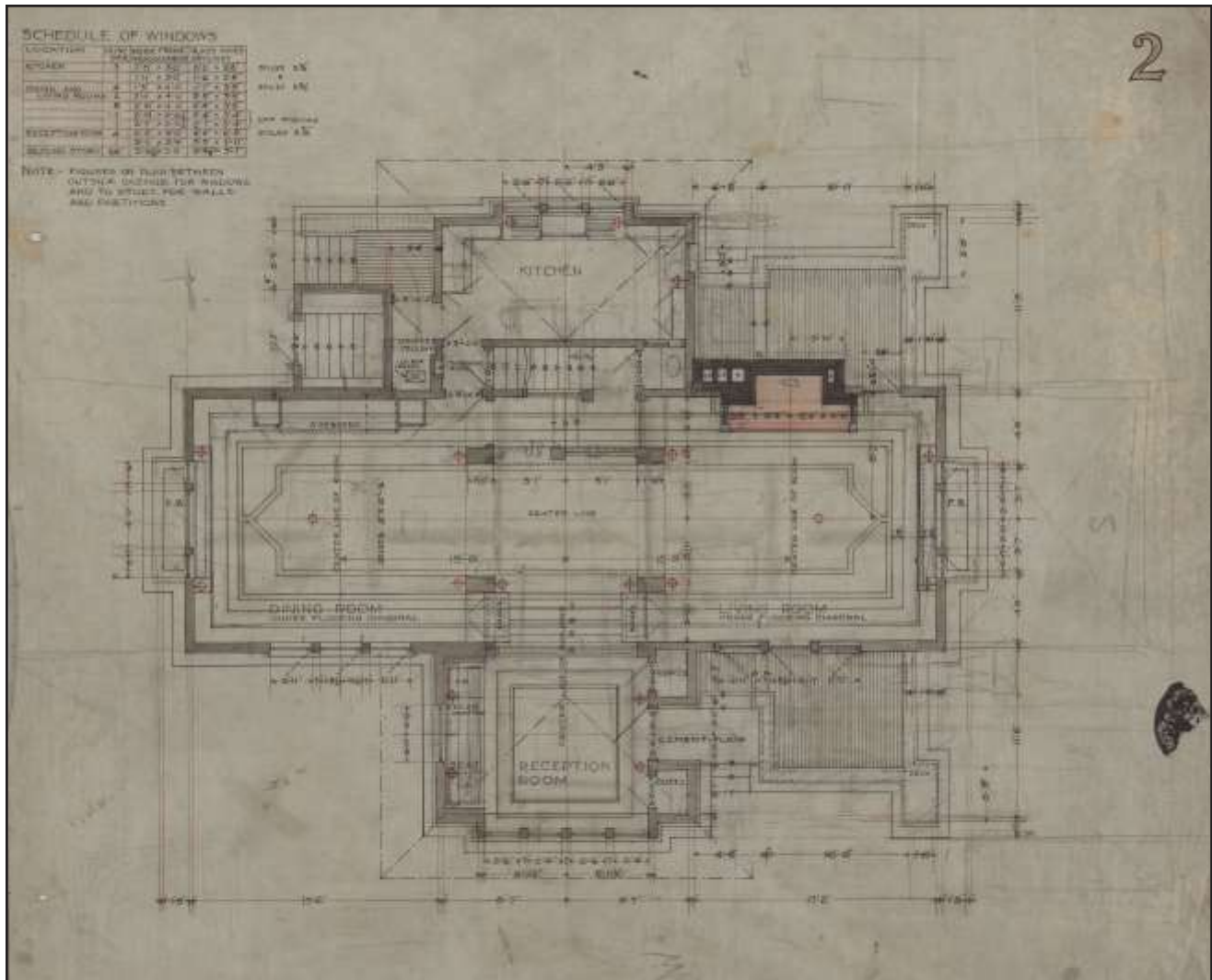
During this period of uncertainty, the Walser House needs to be carefully monitored in Building Court to ensure that all stakeholders are fully aware of the significance of this home and to prevent emergency actions that could result in demolition.

We have advocated for the property be placed under the ownership of a new, long-term steward that will stabilize, repair, and restore the structure for continued residential use or other appropriate adaptive reuse. As a Designated Chicago Landmark, the Walser House would be eligible for City of Chicago Adopt-a-Landmark funding to help underwrite the cost of a comprehensive restoration. Additionally, as a NRHP-listed property, the house is a certified historic structure. A qualified rehabilitation project undertaken by future owners could possibly apply for federal and/or state historic tax credits.



Front elevation, Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser House, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue. Photo credit: Serhii Chruky / Esto

Chicago 7: J.J. Walser House



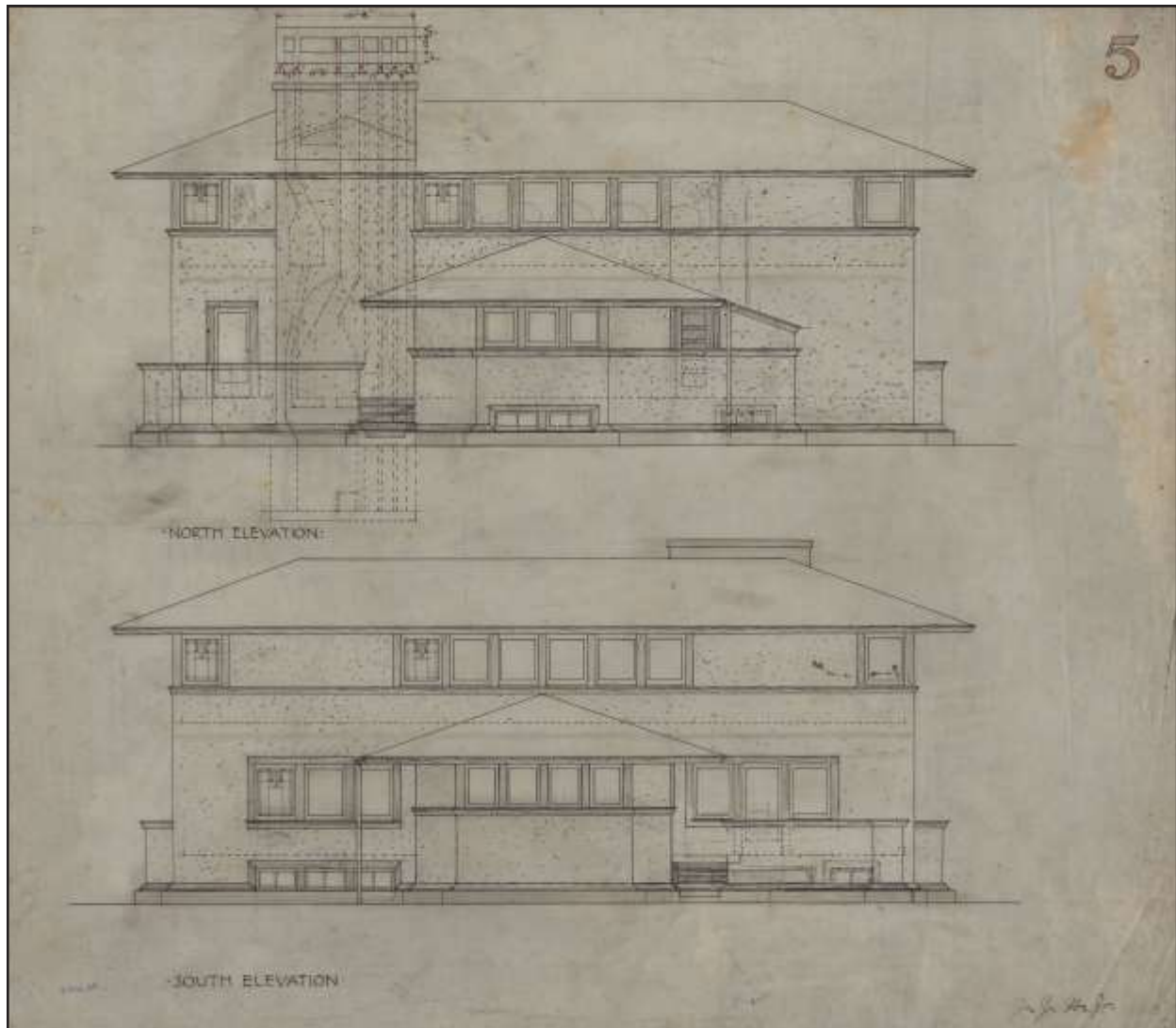
J. J. Walser, Jr. House (Chicago, Illinois), Architectural Working Drawing #2 First Floor Plan, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1903. Image credit: The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives / The Museum of Modern Art, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York, Project 0306.003



Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser Residence, Chicago, Illinois, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue. Photo credit: John Vinci, John Vinci Papers, Ryerson and Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago. Digital File#200704_251120-006 and 005



Front Entry, Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser House, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue. Photo credit: Serhii Chrukky / Esto



J. J. Walser, Jr. House (Chicago, Illinois), Working Drawing #5 Elevations / North / South, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1903. Image credit: The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives / The Museum of Modern Art, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York, Project 0306.006



Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser Residence, Chicago, Illinois, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue. Photo credit: John Vinci, John Vinci Papers, Ryerson and Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago. Digital File#200704_251120-009 and 003



View of reception room and entry, Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser Residence, Chicago, Illinois, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue. Photo credit: John Vinci, John Vinci Papers, Ryerson and Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago. Digital File#200704_251120-007



J. J. Walser, Jr. House (Chicago, Illinois), Working Drawing #4 Elevations East & West, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1903. Image credit: The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives / The Museum of Modern Art Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York, Project 0306.005



Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser Residence, Chicago, Illinois, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue. Photo credit: John Vinci, John Vinci Papers, Ryerson and Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago. Digital File#200704_251120-001 and 008

Chicago 7: J.J. Walser House



Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser House, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue. Photo credit: Cristen Brown



Joseph Jacob (J.J.) Walser Residence, Chicago, Illinois, 1903, Frank Lloyd Wright, 42 N. Central Avenue. Photo credit: John Vinci, John Vinci Papers, Ryerson and Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago. Digital File#200704_251120-002

Olivet Baptist Church

3101 S. King Drive, Chicago



Olivet Baptist Church / First Baptist Church of Chicago, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive. Photo credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto

OVERVIEW

Olivet Baptist Church is the oldest African American Baptist church structure, and the second oldest African American congregation in the city of Chicago. In 1918, Olivet Baptist Church purchased the Gothic Revival church building at 3101 S. King Drive, which was originally constructed for First Baptist Church of Chicago in 1875, by the early Chicago architecture firm Wilcox and Miller.

Located in the historic Douglas-Bronzeville and Lake Meadows Community, Olivet has a long history of influential Black leadership stretching back to the 19th century. Many of the

Olivet Baptist Church / First Baptist Church of Chicago

Address: **3101 S. King Drive / 405 E. 31st Street**

Architect: **Wilcox and Miller**

Date: **1876**

Style: **Gothic Revival**

Neighborhood: **Douglas-Bronzeville-Lake Meadows Community**



Detail of King Drive upper façade, Olivet Baptist Church / First Baptist Church of Chicago, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive.

Photo credit: Debbie Mercer

congregation's pastors have been leading figures at various political levels, including during the National Baptist Convention and the 20th century Civil Rights Movement. During the Chicago Race Riots of 1919, the church fought to maintain peace under the leadership of Pastor Lacey Kirk Williams (1871-1940), who also served on a 12-person commission investigating the riots. In the 1920s, as the Great Migration brought an influx of African Americans from the South to the urban North, the church became a community center for the growing population with the promise of jobs and housing. However, following the death in 1990 of Joseph H. Jackson (1900-1990) who served as pastor for nearly fifty years, the church struggled to maintain its former stature in Chicago's African American community. In recent decades, the number of parishioners has declined significantly, and portions of the church are effectively sealed off due to deferred maintenance.

Despite its storied history and architectural pedigree, the property is not formally recognized as a historic landmark by either the City of Chicago or National Park Service. A sensitive yet pragmatic rehabilitation would bring the church back to its full operation and allow this Chicago institution to remain standing well into the decades to come.



31st Street and King Drive elevations, Olivet Baptist Church / First Baptist Church of Chicago, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive.

Photo credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto

HISTORY

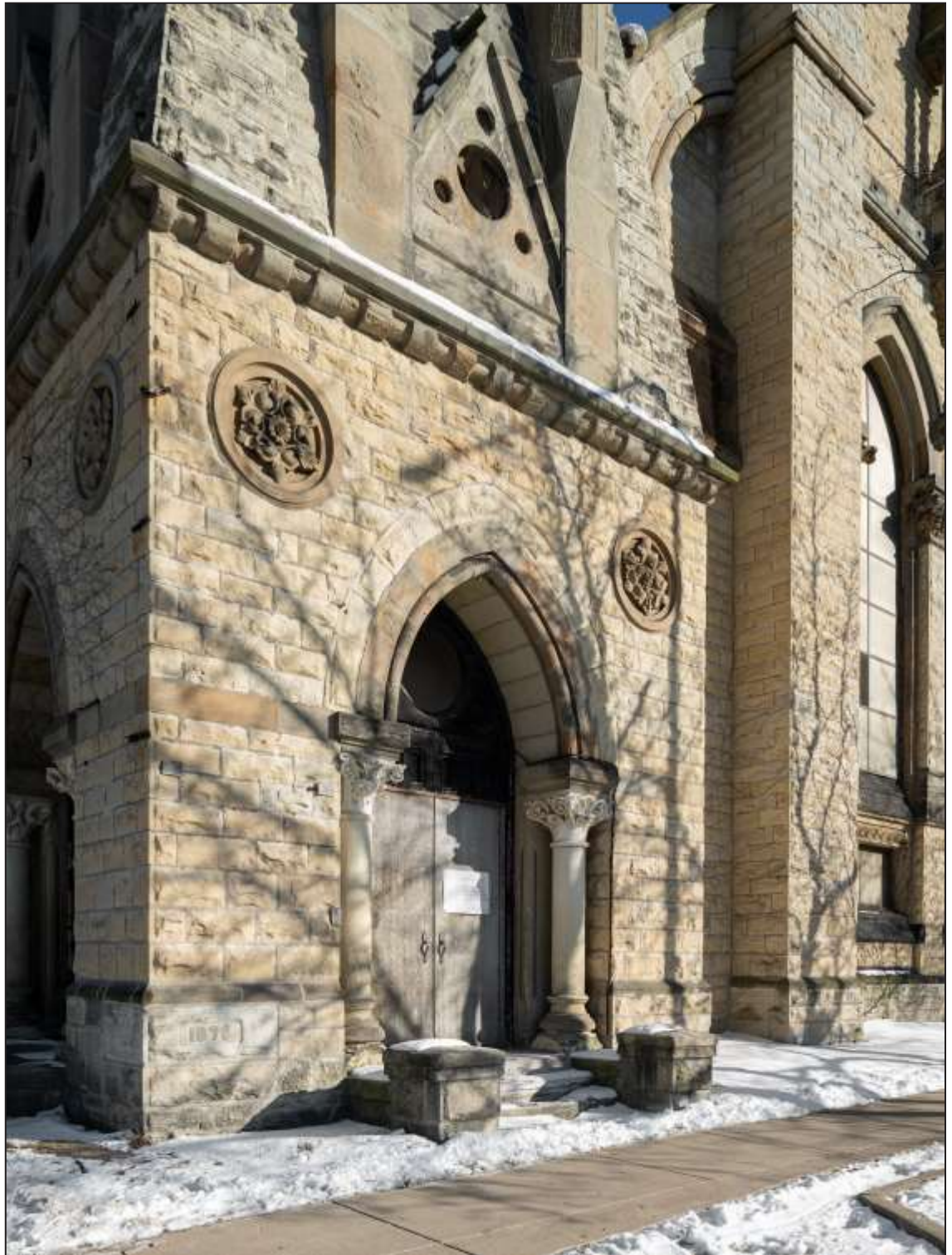
Black churches began to emerge in Chicago in the late 1840s. Quinn Chapel was the first, organized in 1847 on Wells Street, followed by Olivet Baptist Church, which traces its origins to 1850, when it was first organized as Xenia Baptist Church by John Larmon and Samuel McCoy in the heart of Chicago. Following incorporation in 1853, the Xenia Baptist Church became known as Zoar Baptist Church (Xenia was a variant of the word Zoar), and called its first minister, the Rev. H. H. Hawkins of Chatham, Canada to lead its flock of 56 members. In 1857, Zoar erected a church on the corner of Harrison and Griswold Streets (demolished), today the location of the LaSalle Street “L” station. In the years before the turn of the 20th century, growing numbers of Black migrants from the South joined the congregation. Managing what had once been a modest congregation, but now was rapidly expanding, became increasingly difficult. In 1858, roughly sixty members seceded from Zoar Church and formed the Mount Zion Church in a wood-frame storefront on Clark Street in today’s Loop. The two congregations later reunited in 1862 under the name Olivet Baptist Church, with a total of 132 members. John Jones (1816-

1879), one of Olivet's founders, operated a safe house in his home that became a key point on the Underground Railroad. John and Mary Jones home site is a Chicago Landmark located near the southwest corner of W. 9th Street and S. Plymouth Court. The church served as a station helping enslaved people, also referred to as "Freedom Seekers," in their escape from the South. The reunited congregation continued to worship at the Zoar Church building until 1865.

As Olivet saw its congregation increase, following an early wave of northward African American migration after Emancipation and the Civil War, the church relied on the city's other Black congregations for aid in finding a new building. The congregation met at a temporary location until 1868, when a bigger church was completed in the South Loop under Reverend Richard De Baptiste (1831-1901), a famous figure in the National Baptist community.

After this first building was destroyed, either in the Chicago Fire of 1871, or an ensuing 1874 fire, the congregation rebuilt the church at a different downtown location on Fourth Street (renamed Madison Street), between Polk and Taylor Streets. The new structure, designed by architect Benjamin J. Bartlett (1834-18--), followed a novel model that combined a commercial business block with the church facilities.

By 1903, 600 people were listed as members of Olivet Baptist Church. While African Americans comprised just two



Detail of corner entry on King Drive, Olivet Baptist Church / First Baptist Church of Chicago, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive.. Photo credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto

Chicago 7: Olivet Baptist Church

percent of Chicago's population by 1910, there were nearly two dozen African American Churches in the city. Many of these Baptist churches serving the African American community established during this period were offshoots of Olivet, the city's oldest, and at the time, largest African American Baptist church.

By 1917, there were over 2,600 people in attendance at Olivet's Sunday services with hundreds still being turned away, many of whom were recent migrants from the South. To accommodate its increasing membership, Olivet purchased its church building from the First Baptist Church of Chicago in 1918, which had a 3,000-person capacity. The official turnover between the congregations was celebrated on the second Sunday in September, 1918, marked by a parade from the old building to the new, with attendees singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers." In addition to a dramatic increase in capacity, the new building also signaled a shift away from the increasingly commercial downtown and toward the less dense neighborhoods to the south.

The building at 3101 S. King Drive, which still houses Olivet Baptist Church today, was originally constructed in 1875 for the First Baptist Church of Chicago, which had been organized by Rev. Allen B. Freeman at Wacker Drive, then South Water Street, and Franklin Street on October 19, 1833, by some of the earliest settlers of the city, when Chicago was little more than a cluster of blockhouses. Over the following four decades, the congregation moved several times as the city grew. Their first major church building, located on Wabash Avenue, was a grand structure valued at \$200,000. However, this building was destroyed during Chicago's second great fire on July 14, 1874. After the fire, the congregation temporarily met at Wabash Avenue Methodist Church. By November 1874, they had begun construction of a new



Partial view of 31st Street elevation with new replacement steeple, Olivet Baptist Church / First Baptist Church of Chicago, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers



Detail of First Baptist name carved in stone, Olivet Baptist Church / First Baptist Church of Chicago, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive. Photo credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto

church at the corner of 31st Street and King Drive (then South Park Way), completing it in 1875.

Willcox and Miller's plan was selected from among nine submissions, making them the architects of the new church building. Although their partnership lasted only from 1874 to 1877, the Willcox and Miller ranked among the busiest architectural firms of the period, taking on numerous commissions both within the city and beyond, and the new First Baptist Church is one of their surviving works.

William H. Willcox (1832-1929), an English-born architect and surveyor who practiced in several U.S. cities, including New York, Chicago, Nebraska, Minneapolis-Saint Paul and Seattle. He served as a topographical engineer during the Civil War and later partnered with Charles C. Miller in Chicago. Willcox also designed public buildings, including the Nebraska State Capitol (1879-1882, now demolished), and published a book on church design in 1884, *Hints to Those Who Propose to Build; also a Description of Improved Plan and Construction of Churches*. He died in Yountville, California, in 1929 at the age of 96.

Willcox's partner, Charles Crosby Miller (1831-1902), was also an architect active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, primarily in Ohio and Illinois. He was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1831, and moved to Norwalk, Ohio, in 1838. Miller learned the basics of architecture from his father, a carpenter by trade. In the early 1850s, he served as a draftsman in the Cleveland office of architect John J. Husband (1820-1895). Miller later went to work as an architect in Toledo and Chicago and was the co-author of an architectural pattern book titled *Architecture Designs of Street Fronts, Suburban Houses and Cottages*, regarded by architects and is still frequently used as a reference. One of his best known works is the Stick Style William Cunningham Gray House (1883) in Oak Park, later transformed by Frank Lloyd Wright into the Prairie School masterpiece known as the Edward R. Hills House or the Hills-DeCaro House. Miller died in Winnetka, Illinois in 1902, after a long and productive career.

Olivet's massive stone church building measures 110 feet wide and 165 feet deep. A beautiful sanctuary occupies most of the western half of the complex, while an adjoining Sunday school building, also constructed in 1876, is



Historic photograph of the church with its original steeple. Olivet Baptist Church / First Baptist Church of Chicago, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive, circa 1913. Photo credit: The Newberry Library - Modern Manuscripts and Archives, Percy H. Sloan photographs, Buildings, Chicago: Churches, Baptist, File — Box: 1, Folder: 12

Chicago 7: Olivet Baptist Church



*Olivet Baptist Church / First Baptist Church of Chicago, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive. Photo credit:
Children boarding bus in front of Olivet Baptist Church, circa 1920, Chicago History Museum, ICHi-037978*

seamlessly attached to the eastern portion of the main historic structure. The eastern half contains a fellowship hall on the first floor and the Sunday school and church offices on the second floor. Olivet Baptist Church was said to be the largest in the United States at the time of completion, seating about 1,500 people. Like many nineteenth-century religious buildings, the Olivet Baptist Church building reflects the Gothic Revival tradition. Its exterior is clad in rusticated Joliet limestone from quarries southwest of Chicago, giving the facade a rustic, textured appearance. The tall pointed Gothic arches, rondells, sills, trim and many details of the facades are highlighted in smooth sandstone, differentiating various features and components of the church. The church's most striking feature is its highly articulated square corner tower. At one time, the tower was crowned by a prominent faceted steeple (later demolished) that rose approximately 160 feet above the street, almost doubling the height of the corner tower structure. A smaller tower at the southwest angle finishes in a wedge-shaped roof, with a window and chimney fronting south. The carved limestone capstones along S. King Drive are very bold and finely cut, contributing to the building's picturesque composition. The church's large arched windows, situated between foliated capitals inspired by the French Gothic style, contain simple trefoil tracery. The church features strong massing and prominent square engaged columns, marking the end of its large nave beneath a gabled roof. Throughout all its primary facades, the church exhibits a high degree of integrity of design, fine articulation of all components and materials on its elevations, and stands prominently on 31st and King Drive.

This building became the center of the First Baptist congregation's religious and social life for more than four decades. The church provided worship services, community gatherings, and educational programs, serving a predominantly white congregation at the time. It was a period with both growth and change. Around 1918, the Douglas neighborhood, what is now known as the Bronzeville area of Chicago's South Side, was undergoing rapid demographic changes. White residents were moving out while Black residents were moving in. Church leaders

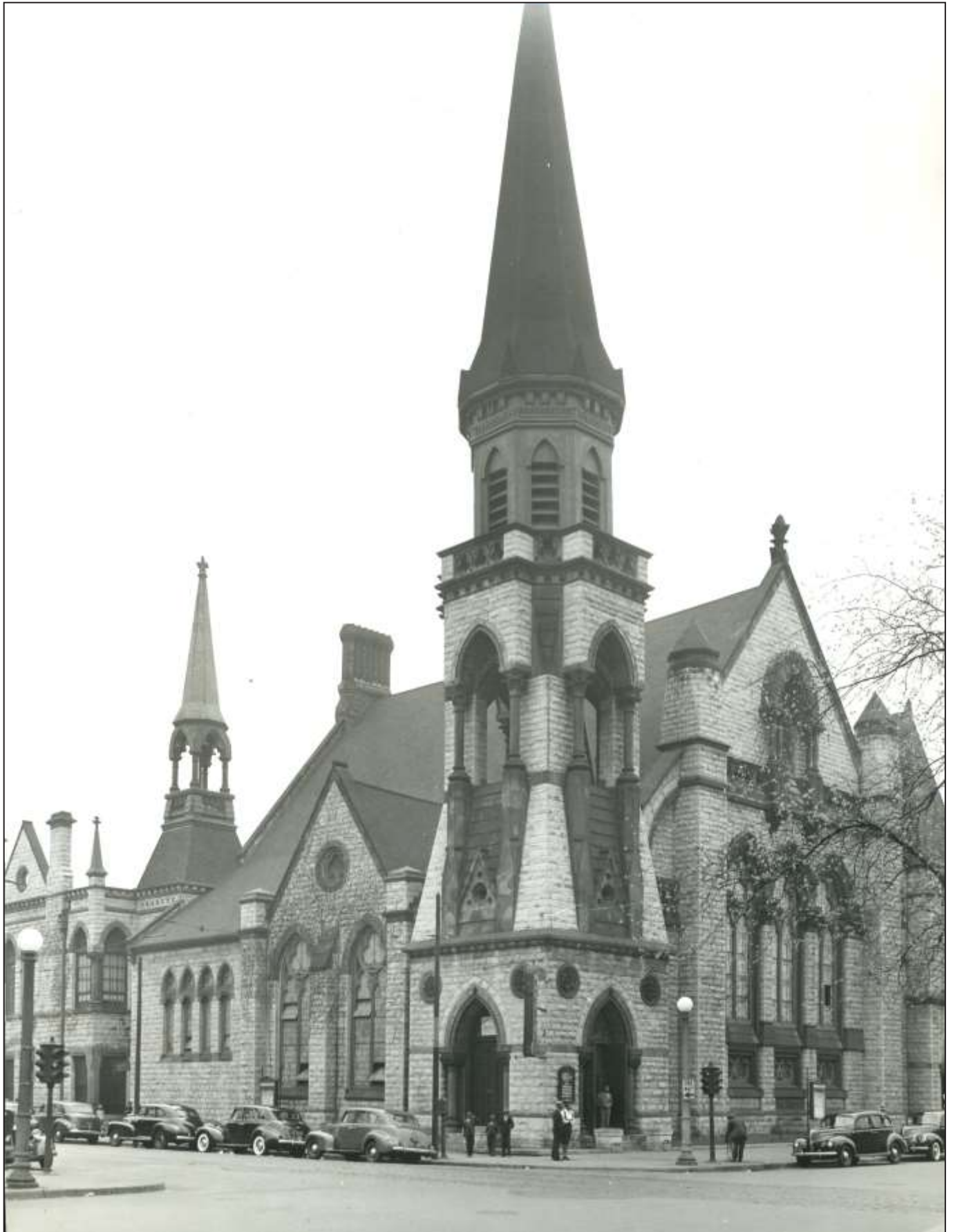


Olivet Baptist Church / First Baptist Church of Chicago, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive.

Photo credit: Members of Olivet Baptist Church; Chicago, Illinois; circa 1925, Woodards Studio, Chicago History Museum, ICHI-026767

realized that the congregation was changing in a community that had become almost entirely Black, and they decided to sell the building and relocate southward. They sold the property to Olivet Baptist Church for \$80,000. Olivet had outgrown its facilities due to the migration, and the transaction was described as one of the greatest examples of a “Baptist Missionary endeavor” in the city. Until the end of World War I, First Baptist held worship services at Memorial Christian Church, a Disciples of Christ congregation pastored by Herbert L. Willett (1864-1944). However, the church leadership remained concerned about the permanence of the neighborhood community and felt that they needed to move farther south. In 1919, they purchased a new building at 935 East 50th Street and Drexel Boulevard in the particularly affluent Kenwood neighborhood. This building, built in 1911 by Plymouth Congregational Society and said to be one of the finest examples of pure English Gothic architecture in the city, remains the home of First Baptist Church today.

Over the following decades, Olivet Baptist Church’s congregation continued to grow. By 1921, the church already had more than 10,000 members, and its membership rose to 20,000 members by 1941. As the membership continued to expand, Olivet acquired additional land east and north of its main building between 1957 and 1960 as part of the Land Clearance Commission’s Redevelopment Project No. 1. This land was intended for parking and educational facilities, and a portion of the parcel once contained a parsonage to house the pastor and their families. The current two-and-a-half story educational building or the annex, one of Dr. Joseph H. Jackson’s notable accomplishments during his tenure as pastor, was constructed in 1961 and completed in 1962. It was designed in a mid-century modern style by McKissack & McKissack, one of the nation’s oldest African American-owned architectural and contracting firms, established in 1905 in Nashville, Tennessee. The new school structure



Historic photo of church with its original steeple, Olivet Baptist Church / First Baptist Church of Chicago, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive. Photo credit: Landmark of Religious Progress in Chicago, Chicago Daily News, May 23, 1942 / Preservation Chicago Photo Collection

Chicago 7: Olivet Baptist Church



Olivet Baptist Church in the news. Photo credit: Olivet Baptist Church, Landmark of Religious Progress in Chicago, Chicago Daily News, pg.2, May 23, 1942, Chicago History Museum, ICHi-183652

senior choir for 48 years. Kay was the father of community activist Hattie Kay Williams (1922-1990), who was known for her humanitarian and educational outreach efforts. She also worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the Chicago Freedom Movement campaign.

Beyond its architectural merits, Olivet played a direct role in stimulating migration with the advertisement of opportunity, jobs and housing in Chicago, primarily through the influential Chicago Defender newspaper. During the Great Migration, from 1910 to 1970, millions of African Americans relocated from the rural South to industrial cities in the Northeast and Midwest. Within this period alone, 500,000 Black migrants arrived in Chicago. Olivet served as a community center for many new migrants, offering forty different social, cultural, and economic

cost \$500,000 and was one of the few religious buildings in the area erected without loans, relying primarily on gifts and sacrifices from Olivet members and their friends. The building was designed to expand community services, featuring 30 Sunday school classrooms and a recreation hall. Part of the space served as a day nursery for children, while another section was dedicated to senior citizens, offering programs such as industrial crafts. The youth of the community also had special quarters for socials, discussions, and study groups. In 1962, the building served as the Executive Headquarters for the Annual National Baptist Convention USA, hosting approximately 25,000 delegates from all 50 states, as well as representatives from the Bahamas and Jamaica, and missionaries from Liberia and Nigeria. Originally constructed as the J.H. Jackson Educational Building and dedicated in 1962, the building was rededicated in the 1970s in honor of Marion Kay (1896-1971). Kay was a prominent Chicago singer who toured the United States and Canada. He also served as Olivet Baptist Church's treasurer and sang in the



Olivet Baptist Church School, 1962, McKissack & McKissack, 3125 S. King Drive. Photo credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto

organizations. By 1920, the Church had grown to approximately 10,000 congregants, making it the world's largest African American congregation as well as the world's largest Protestant church at the time. The Church touted a 2,500-seat auditorium and a lecture room on the first floor. On the second and third floors, a club and rooms for Sunday school and church offices located in the easternmost portion of the historic church complex and fronting 31st Street.

In addition to providing direct social services, the Church became increasingly involved in labor relations and city politics. The Church has only had four pastors since 1916: Lacey Kirk Williams (1871-1940), who served from 1916 to 1940; Joseph H. Jackson (1900-1990), from 1941 to 1990; Dr. Michael A. Noble, from 1992-2011; and the current pastor, Rev. John L. Smith, who has served the community at Olivet since 2012.

Lacey Kirk Williams was a Baptist minister who came to Chicago from Texas in 1916 to lead Olivet Baptist Church. After the 1919 Chicago race riot, Illinois Governor Frank Lowden (1861-1943) appointed him to the Chicago Inter-Racial Commission to study the city's race issues. As a nationally renowned Republican, Williams remained active in politics until his death in a 1940 plane crash while traveling to the G.O.P. convention. This was consistent with his lifelong commitment to Abraham Lincoln's emancipation platform and the Republican-led Reconstruction in the South. In 1941, Joseph H. Jackson took over as pastor of Olivet Baptist Church, a position he held for nearly fifty years until his death in 1990. Like his predecessor Williams, Jackson adhered to Booker T. Washington's (1856-1915) accommodationist approach to achieving civil rights, focusing on economic uplift rather than social and legal action. In 1953, he was elected president of the National Baptist Convention (NBC). During the 1960s, amid the height of the Civil Rights Movement, Jackson frequently clashed with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), criticizing his approach, while nonviolent, was overly confrontational.

Chicago 7: Olivet Baptist Church



Interior sanctuary photos of Olivet Baptist Church, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive. Photo credit: Rolf Achilles

Because of his controversial remarks, King and other dissenting ministers broke away from the NBC to form the Progressive National Baptist Convention, USA. Jackson, however, held onto the presidency of the NBC until 1982, when he was succeeded by T. J. Jemison (1918-2013), one of the founding members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

THREAT

Since the 1990 death of pastor Joseph H. Jackson, leader of the church for almost fifty years, the congregation has significantly dwindled in numbers. As with countless churches across Chicago and the nation, an aging congregation, demographic shifts, and the considerable demands of maintaining a large, historic structure have all proved challenging. Since then, Olivet has struggled to recover its stature in Chicago's African American community. The Church retains ownership and continues to hold services in a smaller section of the historic structure, though the building itself shows signs of increasing deterioration. The church building's masonry is stained with organic material and the roof and many of the windows throughout appear in need of repairs. Additionally, earlier remedial work, such as the northwest church spire replacement, while undertaken with good intentions, does not align with the church's historic character.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Formally pursuing City of Chicago Landmark status is a natural first step for Olivet Baptist Church, and a path Preservation Chicago recently recommended at a public meeting of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks.



Interior sanctuary details and window photos, Olivet Baptist Church, 1876, Wilcox and Miller, 3101 S. King Drive. Photo credit: Rolf Achilles

Repairs and weatherproofing the exterior envelope of the church and addressing a series of open code violations likewise remain top priorities. With significant public subsidy and/or private assistance, the church would hopefully be positioned to fully reopen its grand sanctuary. City of Chicago Adopt-a-Landmark funding is unfortunately on pause at the time of this writing, but national programs such as the National Fund for Sacred Places and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Preserving Black Churches are both excellent candidates for private support. Serious consideration should likewise be given to investment opportunities for both the adjacent, modernist school wing, which is currently vacant, and the large, underutilized surface parking lot. Whether via lease, partnership, or outright sale, monetization of both spaces could support larger rehabilitation efforts for the grand church structure.

Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building

2000 W. Pershing Road, Chicago



Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building, 1917, Samuel Scott Joy, 2000 W. Pershing Road. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

OVERVIEW

The Central Manufacturing District (CMD) Clock Tower Building, located at 2000 W. Pershing Road, is a prominent structure at the center of the CMD Pershing Road Development. The tall, slender, 11-story red-brick masonry and terracotta-clad structure, the tallest in the CMD development, is symmetrical on all elevations, with large windows punctuating the masonry of the tower and four elaborate clocks crowning its upper most floors. Designed by architect Samuel Scott Joy, who was also responsible for many of the other massive buildings in the CMD, the building functioned as a water tower while concealing a large water tank which provided a

Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building

Address: **2000 W. Pershing Road**

Architects: **Samuel Scott Joy**

Date: **1917**

Neighborhood: **McKinley Park**

Style: **Late Gothic Revival/Industrial Gothic**



Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building, 1917, Samuel Scott Joy, 2000 W. Pershing Road. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

centralized fire suppression system for the entire CMD complex. The water tank with its water suppression system, cleverly hidden within this large timepiece, continues to serve as a striking visual feature and landmark for both the CMD and the McKinley Park Community.

Preservation Chicago has previously listed the historic CMD as part of our Chicago 7 Most Endangered List, noting the deteriorating conditions and vacancy of several of these massive and beautifully crafted structures. The CMD Pershing Road Development was included on our 2014 and 2020 lists, and the CMD Original East District was included on our 2021 list. Both the historic CMD Original East District and the CMD Pershing Road Development are historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The Clock Tower Building is a contributing resource to the CMD Pershing Road Development. Due to its proximity and visual relationship with McKinley Park across West Pershing Road, is also a contributing resource to another National Register-listed historic district, the Chicago Park Boulevard System Historic District. Over the past decade, Preservation Chicago has suggested the clock tower and CMD complex be considered for Chicago Landmark Designation.

HISTORY: The Central Manufacturing District

Created in 1905 by Frederick Henry Prince, a New England financier known for his investments in stockyards, the 265-acre Central Manufacturing District was the first planned industrial district in the United States. Earlier, Prince had acquired a small switching railroad that connected the Chicago Union Stock Yards with major trunk

Chicago 7: Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building



Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building, 1917, Samuel Scott Joy, 2000 W. Pershing Road. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

lines, aiming to attract more shipping clients to his railway. At the time, many industrial businesses were being displaced from Chicago's downtown by increasingly dense commercial development. Recognizing the potential of the underutilized land on the city's Southwest Side, which was ideal for its large, inexpensive tracts of land, access to railroads, and proximity to a sizable working-class population, Prince saw a tremendous opportunity to gather these relocating businesses along the Chicago Junction Railway's tracks. He envisioned the CMD as a hub to streamline and expand industrial operations.

Before Prince's initiative and the establishment of the Chicago Junction Railway, the land was largely undeveloped, dotted with old cabbage patches and abandoned lumberyards, and only a handful of industrial operations. The first phase of Prince's plan produced the 185-acre "Original East District," located in what is now Bridgeport and extending roughly from 35th Street to Pershing Road and from Morgan Street to Ashland Avenue.

The CMD was originally conceived in response to both the economic and geographic pressures within Chicago's Central Business District and the opportunity to capitalize on the city's extensive network of national rail lines. By 1915, the first decade of the CMD was drawing to a close. During this period, the East District had grown to house around a hundred companies and had been transformed with new streets, landscaping, and buildings, all efficiently served by Chicago Junction Railway spurs. Building on the district's early success and responding to growing demand, Prince expanded the development westward along Pershing Road.

The Pershing Road Development began in 1917 with the construction of several industrial buildings. Among them, the striking 11-story Clock Tower Building, also known as the Water Tower, anchored the district as its central landmark. Over the following decades, it was surrounded by a series of tall, reinforced-concrete warehouses clad in red brick, stone, and terra cotta, gradually added as the development expanded through 1965.

The CMD represented an ambitious experiment in large-scale land development, capitalizing on new technologies in construction and power production. It became a national model for post-World War II industrial parks, featuring purpose-built manufacturing facilities organized around essential transportation infrastructure. Most buildings there range from one story, one-bay plans to multi-story, multi-bay industrial lofts. By 1931, the district spanned 900 acres and attracted hundreds of prominent tenants including Wrigley, Ford, Westinghouse, Rexall, Pullman, and hundreds of other manufacturing and industrial businesses. In the 1960s the CMD even expanded into the Union Stock Yards, transforming the historic meatpacking site for new industrial purposes.



'Niagara' on South Side: Water pours from ninth floor of the Central Manufacturing tower at Pershing and Damen. The "Niagara" resulted from a break in a fill pipe leading to the automatic sprinkler system. It took more than an hour to turn off the water valve because of extreme pressure. Eight floors were flooded." Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building, 1917, Samuel Scott Joy, 2000 W. Pershing Road. Photo credit: Don Casper, Chicago Sun-Times, January 26, 1963 / Preservation Chicago Photo Collection

Chicago 7: Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building



Pershing Road elevation of Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building, 1917, Samuel Scott Joy, 2000 W. Pershing Road. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

HISTORY: The Clock Tower

Fire protection was a serious concern throughout the city but especially within this manufacturing district. Most, if not all, of the buildings were sprinklered, and the layout of the district provided safe distances between adjoining structures. The CMD also planned and built private water lines throughout the district, with special equipment to facilitate city fire engines' access to water in the event of a fire. An official from the Board of Fire Underwriters stated that the buildings comprising the CMD were "the best group of manufacturing buildings constructed from the fire insurance standpoint in the City of Chicago."

Many factory buildings in the CMD often had their own integrated water towers, which typically contained a passenger elevator and a sprinkler tank to serve the building's own fire protection needs. These towers were functional yet designed to harmonize with the overall architectural style of the district. Expanding on this concept, the Clock Tower Building was constructed as an independent water supply for the district's fire protection network. Built in 1917 by Butler Street Foundry & Iron Company, a company that specialized in structural and architectural steel and iron work. While it performed this essential

utility function, architect Samuel Scott Joy designed it as an elegant landmark rather than a purely utilitarian structure. Measuring 50 feet wide and 38 feet deep, the tower features four clock faces, one on each facade, which are emblazoned with the "Central Manufacturing District" seal, the structure is an example of a "disguised" or "concealed" utility structure within an architectural language that is more "artistically designed."



Deferred maintenance and scaffolding visible at main entry to Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building, 1917, Samuel Scott Joy, 2000 W. Pershing Road. Photo credit: Cristen Brown

On December 1, 1926, *Water Works Engineering* magazine reported that “the architects have found a means for concealing the naked ugliness of the too prominent water tanks” and cited the CMD Pershing Road Development Clock Tower Building as a prime example:

“A stately tower of very good proportions not only serves as an office building but also contains two Horton elliptical bottom tanks mounted one above the other - the combined capacity is 250,000 gallons. The bottom of the lower tank is 118 feet above the ground and the bottom of the higher tank is twenty-four feet above this. The tower is supported on an eight post steel tower which extends down to just above the eighth floor.”

The fire-protective function of the tower was effectively wrapped in office spaces and concealed behind architectural expression. Betsy H. Bradley, author of *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* described the structure as “an empathetic synthesis of centralized power and fire protection.” The lower-level offices housed the industrial district’s architecture department and construction staff. For Bradley, the electrically illuminated clock faces “served as an ever visible reminder of the need for fire safety.”

The industrial buildings throughout the CMD Pershing Road Development share a unity of scale, volume, design and various detailed features, but the Clock Tower Building stands out as the tallest and most visible beacon of industrial development and heritage in the neighborhood.

Chicago 7: Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building



Bird's eye view of the Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building and McKinley Park, 1917, Samuel Scott Joy, 2000 W. Pershing Road. Photo credit: LoopNet

THREATS

Like many of the buildings throughout the CMD Pershing Road Development, the Clock Tower Building remains underutilized and vacant, and has stood in this state for decades. The building is in a significant state of deterioration and only the minimum necessary stabilization and safety measures are being undertaken. Increasing areas of containment netting have been installed throughout all four of the building's facades, and protective scaffolding surrounding the base of the building has been in place for over a decade to protect passers-by from the potential of deteriorated and loose masonry and terra cotta elements.

Without proper mothballing and stabilization measures put in place until a new preservation-sensitive owner comes along, the building is likely to continue deteriorating, ultimately increasing the threat of demolition by neglect. Other buildings throughout the larger CMD development in the Original East District have likewise been lost to the promise of new development. These include the Continental Can Company Building at 3815 S. Ashland Avenue (1920-2024), the Larkin Soap Company Building at 3617 S. Ashland Avenue (1912-2020), and the Wrigley Company Gun Manufacturing Buildings Complex at 3535 S. Ashland Avenue (1911-2007), which were previously listed on our Most Endangered list in 2020, 2021, and 2023.

Since the CMD Pershing Road Development was listed on our Chicago 7 Most Endangered List in 2020, the Clock Tower Building and three warehouses, including all adjoining land, were unsuccessfully listed for sale for \$12 million by property owner and manager Imperial Realty Company. According to the company's website, the "Clock Tower Industrial Center," which includes the Clock Tower Building, is still under their ownership and management as of early 2025. The real estate listing presented the property as a "multi-family redevelopment opportunity."



View of the Central Manufacturing District Clock Tower Building and other CMD warehouse buildings, 1917, Samuel Scott Joy, 2000 W. Pershing Road. Photo credit: LoopNet

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a contributing resource to a National Register-Listed Historic District, the CMD Clock Tower Building is a certified historic structure. A qualified rehabilitation or adaptive reuse project could utilize both State (IL) and Federal (F) Historic Tax Credits (HTCs) for project financing. Under the IL-HTC program, project sponsors can receive a state income tax credit equal to 25% of qualified expenses (capped at \$3 million). Under the F-HTC program, project sponsors can receive a federal income tax credit equal to 20% of qualified expenses (no cap). By stacking both HTC programs, owners can benefit from up to 45% of rehabilitation project costs returned in the form of tax credits.

As an orange-rated property in the *Chicago Historic Resources Survey*, the Clock Tower Building is also protected by the 90-Day Demolition Delay Ordinance adopted in 2003. However, Preservation Chicago recommends and continues to advocate for the designation of this significant building as either an individual City of Chicago Landmark or as part of a larger Landmark District. Formal landmarking would best safeguard the clock tower and adjacent district buildings from future demolition threats or insensitive alterations.

The CMD Clock Tower, and the entire CMD Pershing Road Development, is a defining element of the McKinley Park/New City community that meets multiple criteria for local landmark designation. Such a designation would incentivize preservation and investment in this important component of Chicago's industrial history and provide more community control over the building and the area's future rehabilitation and development. For years, the McKinley Park community has voiced its support for the preservation of the Clock Tower Building and the entire CMD Pershing Road Development, which are seen as neighborhood assets. A preservation-sensitive buyer committed to environmentally clean light industrial/assembly or mixed adaptive reuse can make that vision a reality.

Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor

Roughly 4200 to 4500 S. Western Boulevard, Chicago



Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4301 S. Western Boulevard, Illinois Fibre Specialty Co, 1920. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer

OVERVIEW

Eight historic industrial buildings line the eastern edge of South Western Boulevard between 43rd and 45th Street within Chicago's Back of the Yards/New City neighborhood. Together, these early 20th century factories and warehouses exemplify several architectural styles of the period, were designed by notable industrial architects, and form an intact industrial corridor. South Western Boulevard forms the western boundary of Chicago's Back of the Yards/New City neighborhood, a historically industrial and working-

Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor

Addresses: **Roughly 4200 to 4500 S. Western Boulevard**

- i. **4235 S. Western - MK Cabinet Supply**
- ii. **4301 S. Western - Illinois Fibre Specialty Co.**
- iii. **4311 S. Western - Whitney Ford**
- iv. **4335 S. Western - Kinsella Landscaping Building**
- v. **4401 S. Western - Wheatland Tube / Cold Parts**
- vi. **4425 S. Western - Wheatland Tube / American Plumbing**
- vii. **4435 S. Western - Wheatland Tube**
- viii. **4501 S. Western - O Cedar Corp.**

Architects: **Various**

Dates: **c.1910-1920**

Neighborhood: **Back of the Yards / New City**



Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4335 S. Western Blvd., Kinsella Landscaping Building, 1916, Argyle E. Robinson. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer

class area associated with the former Union Stock Yards. The eight industrial properties face the boulevard to the west with the former Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railroad running parallel to the east.

This industrial corridor is one of only a handful of such intact clusters along the Chicago Park Boulevard System Historic District, which was listed in the National Register in 2018. All eight of the industrial buildings included in this group listing are contributing resources to the historic district. Two of the buildings (4345-4349 S. Western Boulevard. and 4501-4513 S. Western Boulevard.) are identified as orange-rated in the *Chicago Historic Resources Survey* (CHRS). One building, (4405 S. Western Boulevard.) is also identified as individually eligible for listing in the National Register in the *Historic and Architectural Resources Geographic Information System* (HARGIS), maintained by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

Preservation Chicago is taking a proactive preservation advocacy position. The inclusion of these eight industrial buildings along South Western Boulevard on our Chicago 7 Most Endangered list serves to spur increased awareness, promote advocacy, and encourage greater appreciation for Chicago's industrial heritage citywide. By 1919, at which time most of the buildings on this list were built, half of the city's 400,000 wage-earning workers were employed in heavy industries. The factories and warehouses throughout Chicago, including these buildings along Western Boulevard, tell the city's rich history of labor, industrialization, and Midwestern manufacturing, a story that remains important not only to the region, but to the nation and its growth.

HISTORY

South Western Boulevard began as part of the original South Park System, established in 1869 by the South Park Commission. The boulevard extends 3.1 miles north from Garfield Boulevard in Gage Park to the Sanitary and Ship Canal, with a width of 200 feet. It was constructed just east of the existing South Western Avenue, which had been laid out as a plank road in the 1850s. A broad central median separated the two parallel roadways, forming a paired boulevard-and-avenue configuration that remains today. The eastern roadway became known as South Western Boulevard, while the western retained the name South Western Avenue. When first developed, the east side of the boulevard was lined with residential flats and modest commercial buildings. By the early 20th century, however, these were gradually replaced by heavier industrial development. The completion of the Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal in 1900, along with the convergence of several major railroads, made the area highly desirable for factories

Chicago 7: Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor



Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4235 S. Western Boulevard, MK Cabinet Supply, 1919. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

and warehouses in this area, as manufactured goods could be efficiently shipped to and from Western Boulevard by both water and rail.

The buildings are generally two-to-four-story red brick masonry buildings with large, evenly spaced rectangular window openings to allow sufficient natural light and ventilation. Some of the buildings are more utilitarian in their design with modest brickwork and stone elements, while others feature slightly more ornamental stone or terracotta elements. Several of the buildings also feature rooftop ventilators, a common feature of historic industrial buildings where the circulation of fresh air was paramount. Two of the buildings (4301 and 4425 S. Western Boulevard.) still retain original metal rooftop water towers, an increasingly rare feature in Chicago that is a vestige of fire suppression policy following the Great Fire of 1871. The building at 4335 S. Western Boulevard Also preserves its original clay tile roofing system, the standard fireproof roofing system of the early twentieth century.

Several buildings also retain historic signage that conveys the original or later occupants, such as the Bell & Thorn bronze signage (inset into the limestone pediment) surrounding the entrance to 4235 S. Western Boulevard; the limestone tablet above the entrance to 4311 S. Western Boulevard that reads “Whitney & Ford,” the terracotta “G” medallion at the parapet of the building at 4425 S. Western Boulevard (for the “Grinnell Company”), and the limestone tablet above the entrance to 4501 S. Western Boulevard that reads “O-Cedar Corp’n” (for the O-Cedar Corporation).

INVENTORY: 4235 S. Western Boulevard

Historic Name/Association: United Autographic Register Co. (c. 1919); Bell & Thorn Inc. (c. 1951)

Current Occupant/Use: MK Cabinet Supply

Construction Date: 1919

Style: Craftsman

Architect: Unknown

The United Autographic Register Company built the warehouse and office building at 4235 S. Western Boulevard in the 1910s. The company manufactured autographic registers and other machines that could produce commercial paperwork such as receipts, bills, orders and purchasing, and other reports more efficiently. Its subsidiaries included Autographic Register Company and Hamilton Autographic Register Company. The stockroom was housed on the first floor and offices were located on the second floor. By 1951, a Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows that the building was in use by Bell & Thorn Inc., a metal stamping and tool and die manufacturer. By this time, masonry additions had been built to the north along South Western Boulevard and to the east along W. 43rd Street to provide additional warehouse space and a larger area for manufacturing.



Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4301 S. Western Boulevard, Illinois Fibre Specialty Co, 1920. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

INVENTORY: 4301 S. Western Boulevard

Historic Name/Association: Cleveland Metal Products Co. in 1920; Solar MFG Co. in the 1940s, and Inland Steel Products Co. (c.1951)

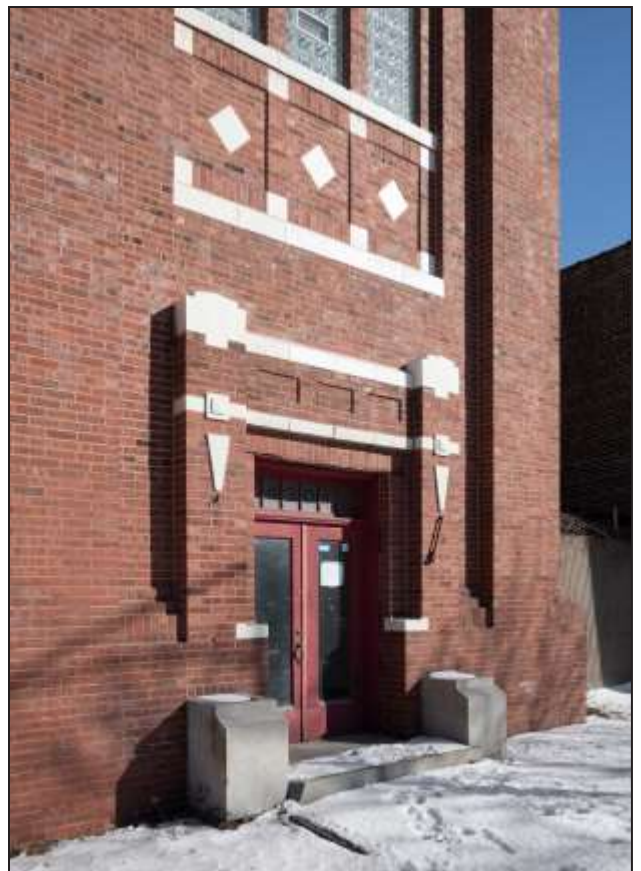
Current Occupant/Use: Illinois Fibre Specialty Co.

Construction Date: 1920

Style: Craftsman

Architect: Unknown

4301 S. Western Boulevard was built in 1920 by the Inland Steel Products Company. The company was founded in Chicago by Joseph Block and his son in 1893. After it built a new large open-hearth steel mill in Indiana Harbor, the company grew exponentially in the first two decades of the twentieth century. By the 1920s, the company made two percent of all the steel produced in the United States. This building was used as a warehouse to store sheet metal products manufactured at the company's plants. Railroad tracks historically led to a wooden platform at the southern facade of the building, allowing for the efficient shipment of steel products to and from the warehouse for storage, distribution, or sale.



Chicago 7: Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor



Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4311 S. Western Boulevard, Whitney & Ford, 1921. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

INVENTORY: 4311 S. Western Boulevard

Historic Name/Association: Whitney & Ford (c. 1921)

Current Occupant/Use: Several, including Chase Mechanical, Designs for Dignity, and Windy City Booths

Construction Date: 1921

Style: Craftsman

Architect: Unknown

According to the 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, the building at 4311 S. Western Boulevard was built by Whitney & Ford in 1921 as a warehouse for plumbing supplies. The company, organized by Hugh E. Whitney and Charles A. Ford, was a plumbing fixture manufacturer that produced enameled cast iron fixtures such as bathtubs, lavatories, kitchen sinks, laundry trays, drinking fountains, and similar items. The north half of the building was a train shed, and, like most of the buildings along the east side of Western Boulevard, siding tracks once directly entered the east side of the building to support the efficient shipment of fixtures to and from this address

INVENTORY: 4335 S. Western Boulevard

Historic Name/Association: Union Petroleum Co. (c. 1919); Sinclair Refining Co. (c. 1951)

Current Occupant/Use: Kinsella Landscaping Building

Construction Date: 1916

Style: Classical Revival

Architect: Argyle E. Robinson



Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4335 S. Western Boulevard, Kinsella Landscaping Building, 1916, Argyle E. Robinson. Photo credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto

The warehouse facility at 4335 S. Western Boulevard was built by the Union Petroleum Company in 1919, an export auxiliary of the Sinclair Consolidated Oil Company involved in the manufacturing and refining of oils. The first floor housed shipping rooms, tank storage spaces, and shops, while the second floor housed storerooms, offices, and employee areas. The land to the north of the building was historically used as a barrel storage yard. Railroad tracks once led to the yard to the north, as well as a steel-and-clay-tile, fireproof platform along the southern facade to facilitate shipment.

4335 S. Western Boulevard was designed by Chicago architect Argyle E. Robinson, as documented in the *Chicago Historic Resources Survey*. Robinson was born in 1872 and trained at the Armour Institute of Technology (now Illinois Institute of Technology) and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He went on to design residences in Hyde Park as well as apartment buildings, warehouses, and industrial buildings throughout the city. He was appointed City Architect from 1926 through 1929 during which time he designed four Chicago firehouses, all of which have since been designated as City of Chicago Landmarks.

Chicago 7: Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor



Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4401 S. Western Boulevard, Wheatland Tube / Cold Parts, 1914, Samuel Scott Joy. Photo credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto



Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4425 S. Western Boulevard, Grinnell Co., 1916, Argyle E. Robinson. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer

INVENTORY: 4401 S. Western Boulevard

Historic Name/Association: Waterous Acme Co. (c.1914) Wilson & Co. Warehouse (c. 1919); Coffee Corporation of America (c. 1951)

Current Occupant/Use: Wheatland Tube / Cold Parts

Construction Date: 1914

Style: Craftsman

Architect: Samuel Scott Joy

4401 S. Western Boulevard was constructed in 1914 as a four-and-one-half-story building with a nine-story corner tower. It was originally used by Wilson & Company, a Chicago-based meatpacking company, as a warehouse. By 1919, the company was also involved in the manufacturing, canning, and preserving of jellies, jams, and other fruit and vegetable products, which were stored at this warehouse. By 1951, this building was in use by the Coffee Corporation of America, which performed coffee roasting, packing, storage, and shipping from the facility.

INVENTORY: 4425 S. Western Boulevard

Historic Name/Association: Grinnell Co.

Current Occupant/Use: Wheatland Tube / American Plumbing

Construction Date: 1910s

Style: Tudor Revival

Architect: Unknown

This factory building at 4425 S. Western Boulevard was built by the Grinnell Corporation in the 1910s, a company associated with engineer Frederick Grinnell. The company provided pipe fitting and plumbing services. Grinnell also patented a design for a new fire protection sprinkler system in 1881, which eventually was installed in thousands of buildings around the country. This building housed the company's local pipe fitting and manufacturing in the 20th century.

Chicago 7: Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor

INVENTORY: 4435 S. Western Boulevard

Historic Name/Association: James A. Brady Foundry Co. (c. 1919); Wolff Range Boiler MFG. Co. (1920s); Service Station Equipment Co. (1930s); John Wood Manufacturing Co. Inc. (c. 1951)

Current Occupant/Use: Wheatland Tube

Construction Date: 1910s

Style: Classical Revival

Architect: Unknown

4435 S. Western Boulevard was built in the 1910s and operated by the James A. Brady Foundry Company, which also operated a plant in the nearby Central Manufacturing District. The company manufactured metal castings, and this building housed a foundry, core department, and cleaning department, as well as offices, warehouse and storage space. By 1951 the building was in use by John Wood Manufacturing Co. Inc., which continued to manufacture metal products on site. By this time, an addition was built along the north facade, and the building housed a boiler shop, galvanizing shop, tank storage, and shipping and loading spaces, with extended railroad sidings.



INVENTORY: 4501 S. Western Boulevard

Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4435 S. Western Boulevard, Wheatland Tube / James A. Brady Foundry Co., 1910s. Photo credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto

Historic Name/Association: O-Cedar Corporation (former Channell Chemical Co., c. 1920); Russell Electric Co. (Division of Raytheon Manufacturing Co., c. 1951)

Current Occupant/Use: 555 International (an interior design, fabrication, and management firm)

Construction Dates: 1920

Style: Chicago School, Classical Revival

Architect: Davidson & Weiss

O-Cedar Corporation was originally founded in Chicago as Channell Chemical Company by Charles A. Channell in 1906. The company originally manufactured wood polishes and waxes, and later expanded its products to include a greater variety of cleaning products, such as mops, brooms, and sponges. The building at 4501 S. Western Boulevard was constructed in 1920 for the O-Cedar Corporation. By 1951, the building was in use by Russell Electric Company (at that time a division of Raytheon Manufacturing Co.). The company was established in 1914 and manufactured heating and ventilation equipment. By the mid-twentieth century, however, the company was involved in manufacturing fractional-horsepower electric motors.



Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4501 S. Western Boulevard, 555 International / O-Cedar Corporation, 1920, Davidson & Weiss. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

The building was designed by architects Frank E. Davidson (1867-1931) and John W. Weiss (1868-1938) of Davidson & Weiss. The pair formed a brief partnership in 1916 and designed many industrial manufacturing and warehouse facilities throughout Chicago until dissolving their business in the mid-1920s. Davidson continued to practice architecture independently.

THREATS

While all of the industrial buildings along S. Western Boulevard are contributing resources to the National Register-listed Chicago Park Boulevard System Historic District, many buildings require repair or rehabilitation to address deferred maintenance and deteriorated conditions. Most of the buildings retain their original windows and doors; decorative masonry, stone, and terracotta elements; clay tile roofing; water towers; and more. While these important features remain, their conditions vary, and some buildings exhibit greater deterioration than others.

In addition to their condition, some of the industrial buildings along S. Western Boulevard are partially unoccupied or currently available for lease or sale. In 2025, demand for industrial space such as this clearly has evolved, though a number of these structures continue light industrial and warehousing functions. Despite their centrality to Chicago's industrial growth and economic development, many of these industrial properties are primed for alternative, non-industrial uses.



Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4501 S. Western Boulevard, 555 International / O-Cedar Corporation, 1920, Davidson & Weiss. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservation Chicago encourages existing owners of occupied industrial buildings along S. Western Boulevard to continue promoting the occupation and use of these warehouse and factory buildings for income-producing, industrial purposes. Wherever possible, Preservation Chicago implores existing owners of occupied buildings to make much-needed repairs and rehabilitation efforts in a manner that preserves the existing historic features.

Where the buildings are partially unoccupied, for sale, or for lease, Preservation Chicago supports future property transactions or leases that maintain the historic character and use of the properties, or that propose suitable adaptive reuse and rehabilitation.

While two of the buildings (4335-4349 S. Western Boulevard and 4501-4513 S. Western Boulevard) are identified as orange-rated in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey and therefore protected by the 90-Day Demolition Delay Ordinance adopted in 2003, the remainder of the buildings are not safeguarded by such legislation. Preservation Chicago recommends the designation of this significant and intact cluster of industrial buildings as a City of Chicago Landmark District, which would provide important protections against any future threats including alterations that destroy their distinct character.



Entry details, Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4501 S. Western Boulevard, 555 International / O-Cedar Corporation, 1920, Davidson & Weiss. Photo credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto



Entry details, Western Boulevard Industrial Corridor, 4311 S. Western Boulevard, 4259 S. Western Boulevard, and 4425 S. Western Boulevard. Photo credit: Debbie Mercer

St. Martin de Tours Church

5848 S. Princeton Avenue, Chicago



South and West facades of the Former St. Martin de Tours Church along 59th Street, later renamed St. Martin de Porres Church and Chicago Embassy Church, 1895, Henry J. Schlacks, 5848 S. Princeton Avenue. Photo credit: Eric Allix Rogers

OVERVIEW

Historic churches are some of both the oldest and finest examples of architecture throughout Chicago's neighborhoods. They are part of the fabric of the city and beloved landmarks that provide a direct connection to a neighborhood's past. The prominent ecclesiastical building at the corner of Princeton Avenue and 59th Street in Englewood, originally St. Martin De Tours Church, is an outstanding example of the city's architectural legacy. St. Martin is reflective of a time when Chicago was famous for having churches on nearly every block, with one for nearly every ethnic group and immigrant community.

St. Martin De Tours was built in 1895 for Chicago's growing German Roman Catholic community. The plans

St. Martin de Tours Church / St. Martin de Porres / Evangelical Chicago Embassy Church

Address: **5848 S. Princeton Avenue**

Architect: **Henry J. Schlacks; Louis Becker**

Date: **1895**

Style: **Gothic Revival**

Neighborhood: **Englewood**



Upper façade and details of the Princeton Avenue elevations of St. Martin de Tours / St. Martin de Porres / Chicago Embassy Church, 1895, Henry J. Schlacks, 5848 S. Princeton Avenue. Photo Credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

for the building were drawn up by Louis Becker of Mainz, Germany, and executed by accomplished Chicago architect Henry J. Schlacks, widely regarded as one of the city's finest ecclesiastical architects. Trained at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and in the offices of Adler & Sullivan, Schlacks specialized in the design and decoration of churches and later founded the Architecture Department at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. Per an 1894 article published in *Inter Ocean Newspaper*, St. Martin's design was described as a "conscientious endeavor to put forth for the first time in Chicago, if not the country, an edifice of pure style in Gothic church architecture." Today, St. Martin's stands as a significant historical edifice or monument from the Gothic Revival movement in the United States and remains one of the finest examples of German Gothic architecture in the country.

St. Martin's further also stands as a testament to Englewood's demographic shift, and to the long tradition of church buildings being repurposed for a diverse set of congregations. The church was later renamed to St. Martin De Porres Catholic Church to honor the neighborhood's large African American population, before its eventual closure in 1989 due to dwindling attendance. The building reopened in 1998 as the Evangelical Chicago Embassy Church, serving an Evangelical Black congregation.

St. Martin's has been shuttered since 2017 and continues to suffer from years of deferred maintenance and considerable deterioration due to vacancy and neglect. St. Martin was previously listed as a Chicago 7 Most Endangered in 2022, but unfortunately conditions have remained largely unchanged. Preservation Chicago again urges the restoration of this magnificent and storied church, and its creative reuse could spark both spiritual and social renewal at this corner of Englewood.



View of church and rectory along Princeton Avenue, Former St. Martin de Tours Church, later renamed St. Martin de Porres Church and Chicago Embassy Church, 1895, Henry J. Schlacks, 5848 S. Princeton Avenue.

Photo Credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto

HISTORY

St. St. Martin was initially organized for the German Catholic Community in what was then the suburban town of Englewood in 1886. Shortly thereafter, a combination church and school, designed by German-born architect Adolphus Druiding, was erected on Princeton Avenue and completed by Christmas of that year. The German-speaking population of Chicago had grown tremendously after 1872, and St. Martin was the third German church built in the Englewood area (the two earlier churches have since been demolished). The church was built up from its humble beginnings through the enthusiasm of its first pastor, Rev. John Schaefer, and with the support of his parishioners. As the congregation grew, a new rectory was built in 1894 at 5842 S. Princeton Avenue to replace the original parish residence, which was converted into a convent. That same year, the cornerstone for a new, permanent church was laid, marking the transition from the modest initial structure to the grand

Gothic edifice completed in 1895. The construction cost approximately \$150,000. Just a year after St. Martin De Tours was erected, it was called “the pride of the German residents of that part of the city,” and its members continued raising funds to furnish the building with four new bells, statues, and a grand organ. The crown jewel of the church was an 1895 statue of St. Martin and the Beggar, carved by noted sculptor Sebastian Buscher (1849-1926) out of poplar and weighing 1,600 pounds. Prominently placed atop the building’s high gable, it was one of the first colossal wooden statues completed in the United States. The figure represents a 4th-century Roman soldier who famously cut his cloak in half to share with a beggar on a cold night.

Reverend Francis J. Schikowski, an immigrant from Germany, became the leader of the church in 1890 and served there until his death in 1941. Over the course of his tenure and with the continual growth of the German immigrant population, St. Martin expanded its campus and broadened its services to care for the poor and the needy. In addition to the Becker and Schlacks-designed main Gothic church, a 3-story school was constructed at 5830-38 S. Princeton, designed by Hermann J. Gaul, another noted ecclesiastical architect. There were 30 priests and several thousand attendees at the 1909 dedication of the new school and parish building. A two-year high school was later added and enrollment as well as the number of parishioners continued to increase.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the congregation continued to acquire property and make improvements to the campus. The church was redecorated in 1924, and in 1929 new altars were installed while the organ was rebuilt and enlarged. That same year, additional property north of the school was acquired, and a building at the corner of 59th and Shields Avenue was purchased for use as a convent dormitory. In 1935, the stained glass windows were re-leaded, and the slate on the church tower was replaced. The original statue of St. Martin and the Beggar atop the church's high gable was also replaced with a new lead-coated copper figure on horseback designed by Gaul, indicating the congregation's growing prosperity. This statue was even gilded in 1949 and restored again in 1960.



Historic view of church and rectory fronting Princeton Avenue. St. Martin de Tours / St. Martin de Porres / Chicago Embassy Church, 1895, Henry J. Schlacks, 5848 S. Princeton Avenue. Photo Credit: John Chuckman Postcard Collection

By the time of Reverend Schikowski's death in 1941, the congregation was no longer "thoroughly German," and English had replaced the German language in sermons, announcements, and parish publications. The postwar era saw Englewood an increasingly multiethnic community. German attendees were joined by Irish, Italian, Lithuanian, Mexican and African American families. At the same time, enrollment at St. Martin's Catholic School began to fall and non-Catholic students were newly admitted. In the 1950s, the number of African American congregants increased and attendance across both the church and school rose again to levels not seen since the

Chicago 7: St. Martin de Tours Church



59th Street façade of St. Martin de Tours / St. Martin de Porres / Chicago Embassy Church, 1895, Henry J. Schlacks, 5848 S. Princeton Avenue.

Photo Credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto

1920s. By 1961, St. Martin had become a predominantly black parish, with school enrollment 99% African American.

The 1961 construction of the Dan Ryan Expressway displaced many Englewood residents and St. Martin congregants. Although attendance dwindled and financial difficulties persisted, the church remained active in the community, offering a food pantry, senior lunch program, and scouting activities, among other services, until its closure by the archdiocese in 1989. In the decade before its closing, the parish was renamed for St. Martin de Porres, a Black Dominican from Lima, Peru, who comforted the sick and provided for the poor and was canonized in 1962. Even as the church experienced decline, the gilded statue of St. Martin, perched atop the high gable, continued to serve as a familiar landmark for pilots approaching Midway Airport and commuters traveling along the Dan Ryan Expressway.

After its closure, the building stood vacant for almost a decade. When Chicago Embassy Church, an Evangelical Black congregation, purchased the building in 1998, the building was “some sorry stuff.” The congregation’s original leader, Bishop Edward Peecher, and volunteers found the church with no electricity or heat, a floor needing reinforcement, pieces of the ceiling and insulation falling to the floor, and reportedly piles of garbage in place of pews. Chicago Embassy Church took out loans to make necessary repairs, drew 300 attendees from across the city, and eventually began a summer day camp and afterschool program.



View of lower façade and main entry fronting Princeton Avenue, St. Martin de Tours / St. Martin de Porres / Chicago Embassy Church, 1895, Henry J. Schlacks, 5848 S. Princeton Avenue. Photo Credit: Serhii Chucky / Esto

In 2006, the massive and iconic gilded statue of St. Martin de Tours was blown off the high gable in a windstorm. It was never repaired or replaced, but as Assistant Bishop Nance of Embassy Church was quoted, “the statue can tell the story of the Englewood community and where it was, and where it is. And our job is to declare where it is going.” Although Chicago Embassy Church stopped operating out of the church building at the corner of Princeton Ave and 59th St. in 2017, and the building has since remained vacant, Preservation Chicago believes that the church can again guide the future of Englewood. With the church restored to its former glory, and its moving and prominent statue replaced, St. Martin’s can again serve as a visual landmark of hope and community on the South Side.

In addition to its role in the history of Englewood’s German and African American community, St. Martin’s magnificent architecture contributes to Chicago’s rich architectural heritage and to the broader canon of Gothic Revival throughout the United States. In 1894, the church was lauded for its purity of gothic detail, including its large Gothic windows with intricate tracery, and crockets decorating a steep gable above its grand main entrances. The church features foliated ornamentation on its main façade, double interlacing tracery above its doorways, blind tracery at the base of its massive corner tower, and narrow arched windows throughout. The church’s integrity to the Gothic form may well derive from its original plans devised by the architect Louis Becker, who sent his drawings to Chicago from Mainz, Germany. The building was realized by Henry J. Schlacks and is considered one of his most impressive built works.



Historic interior sanctuary view, Saint Martin's Church, Chicago, Illinois, 1894, Louis A. Becker and Henry J. Schlacks, 5848 S. Princeton Avenue. Photo credit: Inland Architect, Vol. 29, No. 1, 1897, Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago. #1A2901_2229

The structure's most striking feature is its soaring 228-foot-tall steeple atop a massive tower, inset with projecting balconies, pinnacles, and even attached to a turret. The entire building has strong massing and a distinct presence from each angle. The façade is clad in Bedford limestone from Indiana, and its exterior detail is well preserved. Unfortunately, much of the stunning carved wooden interior detail has been lost, but the beautiful stained-glass windows that line the church's nave and which were designed and manufactured in Munich and Innsbruck studios are still partially extant. The 72-register, 3,000-pipe organ built by Johnson and Son, purchased with funds hard earned by St. Martin's original congregants, was once played at Chicago's Central Music Hall, the city's original Orchestra Hall, and was donated to St. Martin by Mrs. Marshall Field, Jr. The current interior of St. Martin is now quite spare and features mostly plaster and brick in poor condition.

THREAT

St. Martin, despite its deterioration, continues to dominate the built landscape of Englewood's two-story frame homes. It has acted as a backdrop for the lives of Englewood residents for over 121 years. Unfortunately, its current condition reflects years of deferred maintenance and neglect. Some of its windows have been damaged, the façade has been subject to graffiti, and sections of the roof are in disrepair. Preservation Chicago is worried that the interior is, or will become, exposed to the elements. Without intervention, this grand structure will continue to decline. Its lack of heat, exposure to inclement weather, and deferred maintenance all contribute to worsening conditions. Creative reuse and active occupancy are essential to rehabilitate and preserve the structure.

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Historic published view of Saint Martin's Church, Chicago, Illinois, 1894, Louis A. Becker and Henry J. Schlacks, 5848 S. Princeton Avenue. Photo credit: Inland Architect, Vol. 29, No. 1, 1897, Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago. Digital File#1A2901_2226

Chicago 7: St. Martin de Tours Church



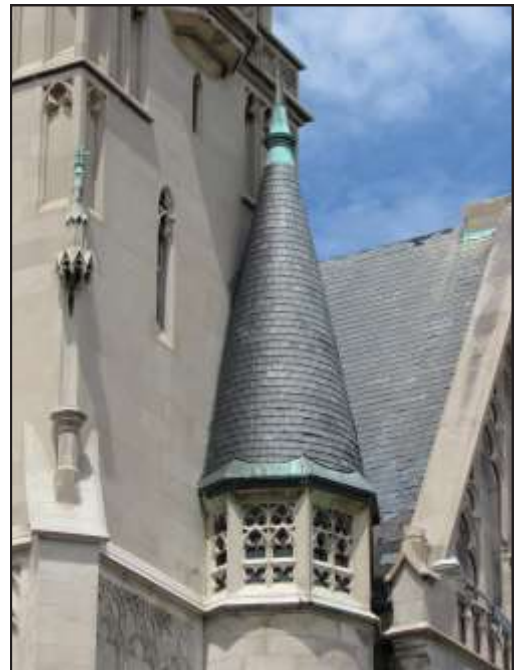
Tower detail, St. Martin de Tours / St. Martin de Porres, 1895, Henry J. Schlacks, 5848 S. Princeton Avenue. Photo Credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

RECOMMENDATIONS

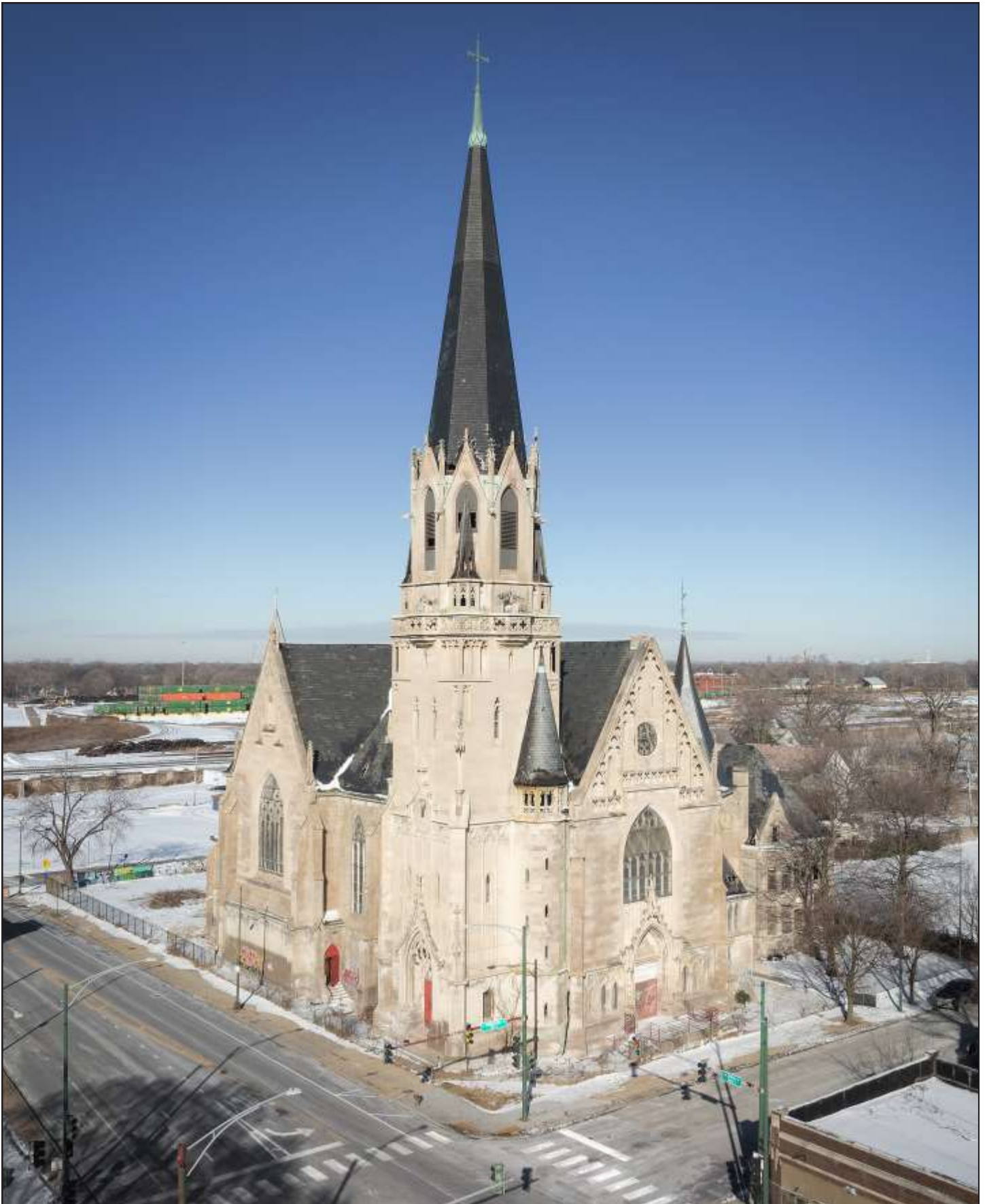
Despite its condition, St. Martin could surely house a new congregation and continue operating as a place of worship. Assuming lack of interest or demand for continued religious use, the building is nonetheless suited for adaptive reuse. Across Chicago and the United States, numerous former churches and synagogues have been successfully converted to residential, commercial, or even recreational uses.

The structure is orange-rated within the *Chicago Historic Resource Survey* (CHRS), triggering 90-Day Demolition Delay, and it also easily meets the standards for a Chicago Landmark.

Formal designation as a Chicago Landmark would make a restoration project eligible for City of Chicago Adopt-a-Landmark funding. These funds could help to underwrite the cost of a restoration and ensure that this visual and spiritual landmark of Englewood remains standing and is returned to a productive use.



Turret detail, St. Martin de Tours Photo Credit: Debbie Mercer



Corner view of St. Martin de Tours / St. Martin de Porres / Chicago Embassy Church, 1895, Henry J. Schlacks, 5848 S. Princeton Avenue. Photo
Credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

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Western Blvd. Industrial Buildings, 4425 S. Western Boulevard, Grinnell Co., 1916, Argyle E. Robinson. Photo credit: Serhii Chrucky / Esto

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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

Signatures on PC's
petition to save Century
and Consumers



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