

Masonic Temple architects were Holabird  
and  
Root of Chicago

IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

139). It is one of the most open and vigorously articulated of the Holabird and Roche designs by virtue of the round moldings on the piers, which elongate and narrow their appearance and enliven the whole elevation. The essential form of the original work of these prolific architects persists in three commissions that came near the end of the Chicago movement. The Great Lakes Building, on the southwest corner of Wacker Drive and Lake Street (1912), and the Crane Building (1912-13), 836 South Michigan Avenue, reveal the familiar cellular pattern of the articulated wall. The Century Building, on the other hand, stands in marked contrast to the usual designs of Holabird and Roche. Erected between 1914 and 1915 at the southwest corner of State and Adams streets, the sixteen-story Century is distinguished by street elevations that present an extremely attenuated vertical pattern, produced by continuous, closely ranked mullions sheathed in terra cotta.

William Holabird died in 1923 at the age of 69, but the partnership was continued by his son John until the death of Martin Roche in 1927. In the following year John A. Holabird and John Wellborn Root, Jr., established the highly successful firm of Holabird and Root, inheritors of the commissions for or authors in their own right of some of Chicago's best-known skyscrapers, most notably the original Daily News, the Palmolive, and the Board of Trade buildings. The older partnership was extraordinarily productive: in its forty-five-year history the firm designed seventy-two major buildings within the central commercial area of Chicago. Holabird and Roche were fortunate in the preservation of their buildings: many of their good designs after the Tacoma stand today, but the unplanned construction of expressways and new office buildings constantly threatens them, as it has swept away those that have fallen.

That other architects sought the formula that brought Holabird and Roche prosperity is revealed in a number of good commercial buildings. Some of these architects were less-well-known men whose designs were mostly of transitory interest; others were famous and well-established figures who contributed valuable work to the Chicago movement. The original Hunter Building, designed by Christian A. Eckstrom, is the best of these isolated achievements (Fig. 140). Now the office building of the Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, it was constructed in 1908 at the southeast corner of Madison Street and Market (now Wacker Drive). The base of the twelve-story block was greatly improved in 1947 to 1948 when the old ground-floor stores were removed and the windows widened out to the full area of the bays, as they are at the second floor. This change provided a handsome open base for the glass and brick cellular wall above it, but unfortunately the improvement was short-lived. The extension of Wacker Drive south of Madison Street three years later made it necessary to raise the street grade six feet to provide ade-

177 Condit, Carl St., The Chicago School of Architecture, A History of Commercial and Public Building in the Chicago Area, 1875-1925, Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1964

It was this added dimension which distinguished the atmosphere of the city from that of the East, and subtly but positively affected the opinions and the work of its building designers. It must thus not be considered accidental that the great trilogy of American architects — Richardson, Sullivan, and Wright — is permanently identified with Chicago. Elsewhere they may have worked, but nowhere, during that golden era of three decades, did they find a more hospitable environment. They were not by any means the only fine architects in Chicago at that time — merely the greatest. With them at various times were associated Adler, Burnham, Root, and Holabird, and others — all of them loosely affiliated in the Chicago School. Whatever differences there may have been among them, there were many points in common. And these points were best exemplified in the three leaders.

Henry Hobson Richardson entered L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris in 1860; and when, five years later, he disembarked in Boston, he carried with him a magnificent instrument — one that was to make him the first great architect since the days of Mills and Latrobe: the clarity and precision of French academic thought at its best. The esthetic character of his work and its impact on contemporary American building have been amply treated, notably in Professor Hitchcock's book,<sup>10</sup> so that it requires little attention here except to venture an opinion that too much has perhaps been made of this aspect of his work. For Richardson's largest significance lies not so much in the architectural vernacular he perfected as in his role of restoring the social function of the architect to something of its former prestige.

His work in the East had already achieved the high praise of imitation when he came to Chicago in 1885 to build the famous wholesale store for Marshall Field (Fig. 154). It created an immediate sensation. But the thing about the Field Building which Louis Sullivan was quick to appreciate was not so much the majestic scale of arched bays and rusticated stonework as the simplicity and clarity of its organization. Here he saw a "direct, large, and simple" mind at work — the first architectural mind in half a century which showed control of the medium in which it worked. W. Johnson's

#### FALSE SPRING IN CHICAGO

Out in the Middle West a somewhat special set of circumstances was to lead to different results. Chicago, already the metropolis of the inland empire, had been all but destroyed in the Great Fire of October 8, 1871. In the decades which followed it was the scene of unprecedented expansion. This construction alone would have furnished the material basis for a large and prosperous group of architects and engineers. But the rise of the famous "Chicago School" of architects — and its unchallenged ascendancy in the nation throughout the next several decades — cannot be wholly explained in terms of large and numerous commissions. These men developed in the electric environment of a vigorous and progressive capital, intellectual center of the Midwest. In the older cities of the eastern seaboard, the Wall Street capitalists had already consolidated their power and settled down for a long period of intensifying conservatism. Chicago, on the other hand, was the pivot of industrial and agrarian forces which resisted, for the time at least, the long arm of eastern monopoly. It faced huge new problems and had no choice but to try new solutions. Internally, it was witnessing a rapid polarization of social forces marked on the one hand by the rise of the grain, packing-house, railroad, and manufacturing industries, and, on the other, by the great trade-union movements. It was thus the home both of robber barons and Haymarket martyrs, of the Pullman massacre and the eight-hour day. And beyond the city proper lay the great democratic hinterland, with its agrarian Populism.

*Sitch, James Marston, American Building,  
1. The Historical Forces that Shaped It, 1947  
Doughstons Mufflin Company, Boston, 1947*

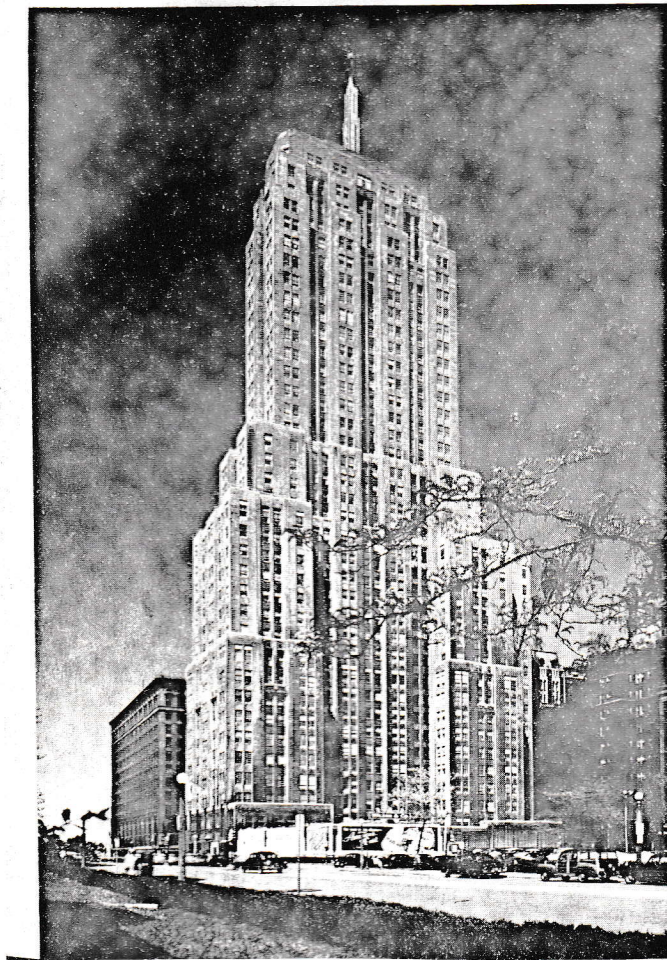
70. **Palmolive Building.** 1929-30.

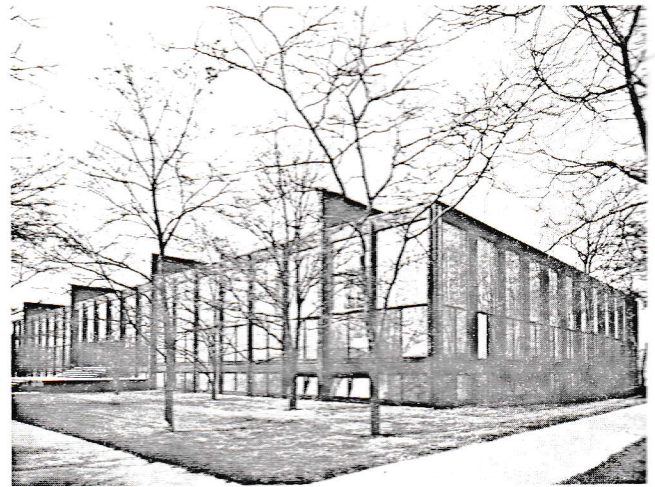
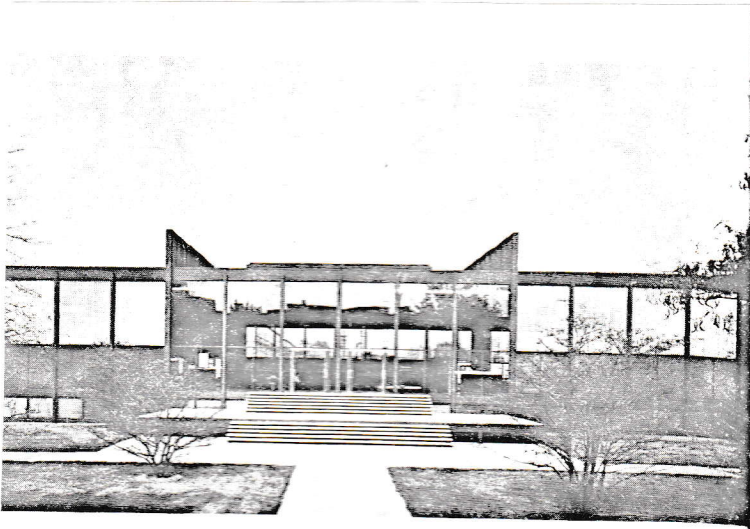
Architects: Holabird and Root. ← *IV  
Decatur Masonic  
Temple  
architects.*

919 North Michigan (100 E). Map 2.

One of the first skyscrapers in Chicago to adopt the simplified vertical style, it contrasts with the Tribune (No. 67) and others treated in historical styles. It achieves a lively silhouette of rising masses by its use of setbacks. A familiar sight to Chicagoans is its Lindbergh Beacon, which serves as a guide to airplanes.

*Siegel, Arthur, Editor, Chicago's Famous Buildings, U. of Chicago Press, 1965*

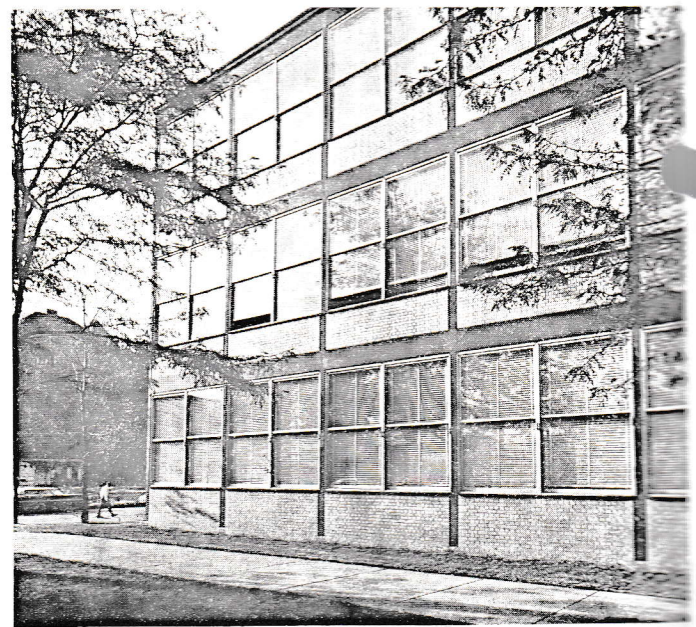




73. **Illinois Institute of Technology** L II-B  
**Campus. 1942-58.**  
*Architects: Mies van der Rohe; Friedman, Alschuler*  
*and Sincere; Holabird and Root; Pace Associates.*  
 South State, 31st to 35th. Map 4.

Aside from the individual merit of some buildings, the campus is of great interest for the grouping of a number of structures by one of the masters of modern architecture. The buildings are related so as to suggest courts or quadrangles, but these are never completely closed, one such suggested space overlapping or opening into another, usually asymmetrically. This results in fascinating and varying visual relationships and is highly expressive of a modern ideal, the combination of freedom and order. Of particular interest among the buildings designed by Mies are the Alumni Memorial Building, 1946 (especially for the detailing, as at the corners); the Chapel, 1952; and Crown Hall, 1956. The main floor of the latter, which houses the Institute's department of architecture, is a notable expression of freedom of space.

*Siegel, Arthur, Editor, Chicago's*  
*Damascus Buildings, U. of Chicago*  
*Press, 1965.*



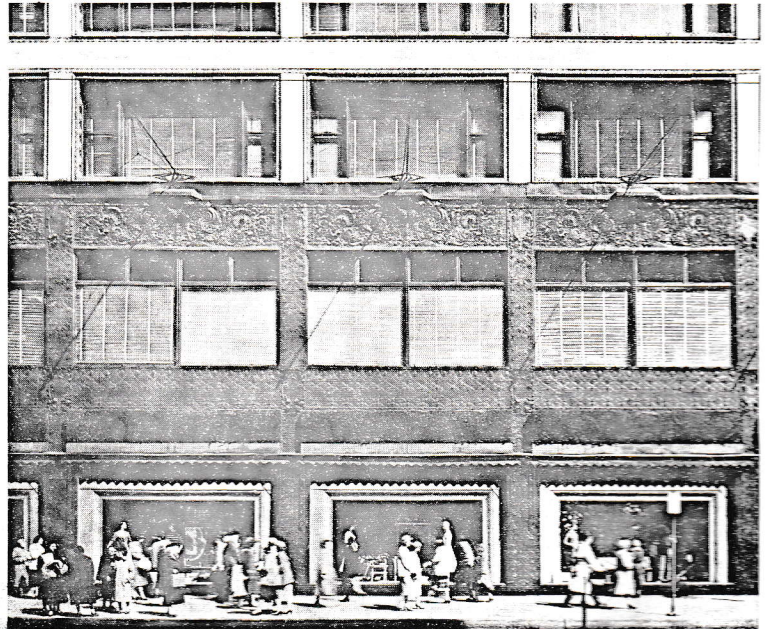
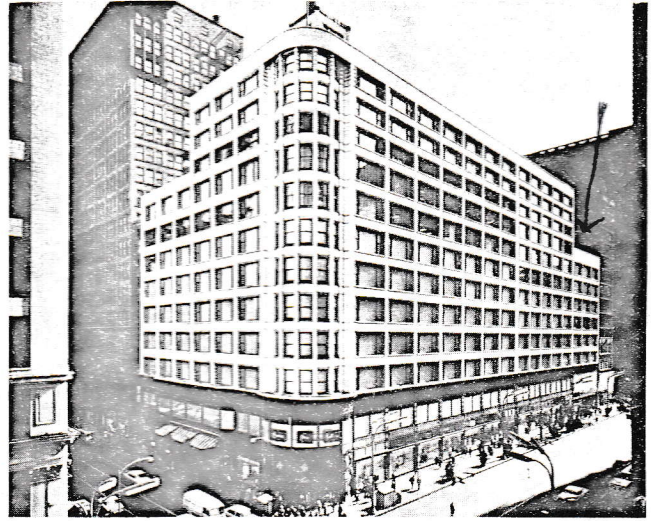
45. Carson Pirie Scott Store. 1899, 1903-4. L II-B  
 (Originally the Schlesinger and Mayer Store.)  
 Architect: Louis H. Sullivan.  
 State and Madison (SE corner). Map 3.

The easternmost section of three bays on Madison Street was built first, and the main section, extending around the corner and with seven bays on State Street, several years later. (The third section was done by D. H. Burnham and Company in 1906, and the southernmost by Holabird and Root in 1960-61.) The fine proportions of the window openings, the firm emphasis in the moldings around them, the accent given by the line of delicate ornament on the horizontal wall sections, the deep window reveals, all provide a powerful statement of iron and steel framing and contribute to a perfection of design rarely to be found. The rich ornament of the first and second floors has been criticized as too ornate for a commercial building. However, one should note that Sullivan held that the display windows were like pictures and deserved rich frames, and his prophetic power is seen in this, if one compares old photographs showing the stodgy displays of the time with the window-dressers' art of today. The citation by the Landmarks Commission reads: "In recognition of the fine expression of interior spaces in the serene horizontals of window and wall; the execution of an original scheme of ornament, and the excellent craftsmanship of its execution in cast-iron."

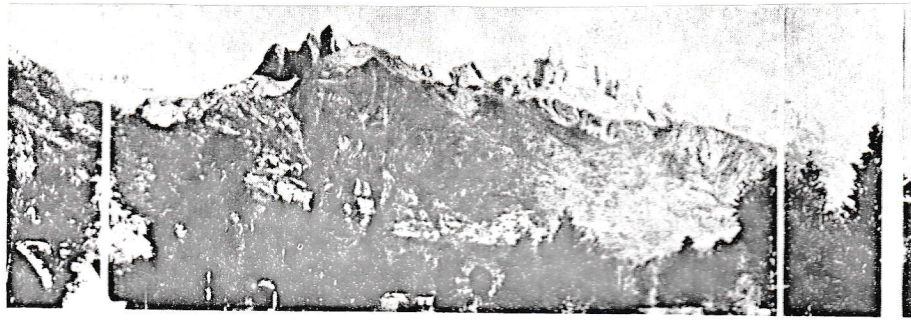
As in many of the older buildings, the original projection, or cornice, at the top has been replaced by a bald parapet. The large festoons of ornament which were originally set outside the piers between the first and second floors have also been removed. (One wonders whether they could ever have seemed very closely related to the wall, rather than "hung on" it.) They contained the initials "SM" for the owners. The architect's initials "LHS" can still be seen in some of the ornament, perhaps slipped in by George G. Elmslie, who, as Sullivan's chief designer, carried out much of the ornamental design.

Seigel, Arthur, Editor, *Chicago's Famous Buildings*, 2d of Chicago Press, 1965

*Holabird and Root*



*Carson Pirie Scott and Co  
 State Street  
 Chicago*



Resor house project for Jackson Hole, Wyo., 1938. Because the landscape is all-important in a glass house, architectural elements were underplayed to emphasize the view. (Courtesy, Mies van der Rohe)

Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Gropius, and others. In short, Mies was quite well known to the American *avant-garde* by the time the invitation came from the Resors to visit America.

Mies arrived here in the summer of 1937, and went out to Wyoming to study the site. (Though the Resor house was never built, Mies's studies for it are as clear a demonstration as he ever made of the importance of the landscape in glass architecture.) On one of his trips through Chicago he met the architect John Holabird, who was then looking for a man to head the School of Architecture at Chicago's Armour Institute (later to be known as the Illinois Institute of Technology.) Holabird thought that Mies was exactly the man for the job, and asked him what his terms were. "A completely free hand, and \$10,000 a year," Mies answered. Holabird telephoned President Heald, of Armour, then turned to Mies and said: "You can have a free hand, but they can't quite afford the salary." Mies accepted nonetheless and, in 1938, moved to Chicago for good to become the Director of Architecture at Heald's Institute. Twenty years later, when the age limits of the Illinois Institute of Technology (I.I.T.) finally forced Mies to retire, he had set up one of the most impressive—and unusual—Schools of Architecture in the world, and trained some of the best men now heading the staffs of American architectural offices. I.I.T., for its part, had given Mies the chance to design its entire campus (and build a large part of it), and to construct, also, some of the faculty and student housing along the perimeter of the campus. I.I.T. also had, by the time Mies retired, managed to raise his salary to the amount he had originally requested.

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Blake, Peter, The Master Builders,  
Alfred A. Knopf, N.Y., 1960, p. 214

Note: There are three who are  
written up:

1. Le Corbusier
2. Mies van der Rohe
3. Frank Lloyd Wright

The Decatur Masonic Temple designed by the famous Chicago architectural firm of Holabird and Root is a good example of Modernistic architecture. This style was popular with the middle class and constitutes an impressive segment of American architecture of the 1920's and 1930's. It was an overall simplification and retainment of classic designs in a functional form. The ornamentation of the Modern style is subdued stemming from the use of one color and material in its design. Even though the building does have a plain appearance, on close observation, one can see its extensive ornamentation. The details such as the fluting around the entrance and windows, the circular designs and frets are carved or molded into the facade instead of attached to it.

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