Early modern architecture : Chicago, 1870-1910

Date
1940

Publisher
The Museum of Modern Art

Exhibition URL
www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2050?high_contrast=true

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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

EARLY MODERN ARCHITECTURE CHICAGO 1870-1910

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CHICAGO 1870 - 1910

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Catalog of an exhibition held at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, from January 18 to February 23, 1933

Second edition, revised, March 1940

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BIOGRAPHIES

JENNEY

Major William LeBaron Jenney. Born Fairhaven, Mass., 1832. Died Chicago, 1907. Studied at Lawrence Scientific School. Graduated from Ecole Centrale des Arts et Manufactures in Paris, 1856, as engineer and architect. Engineer on Sherman's and Grant's staffs in the Civil War. Settled as architect in Chicago. Built Grace Episcopal Church, Union League Club, etc. but chiefly known for his commercial buildings. Generally considered the first to use steel skeleton construction. A technician rather than a designer.

Bibliography: "William LeBaron Jenney". Architectural Record, Vol. 22, August 1907, pp 155-57. New York

Photographs: #4,5,14

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Bibliography: Henry Hobson Richardson & His Works, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer. Boston, 1888
The Architecture of H.H.Richardson and his Times. Henry-Russel Hitchcock, Jr. New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1936

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Louis Henry Sullivan. Born Boston, 1856. Died Chicago, 1924.

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Autobiography of an Idea. Louis Henry Sullivan. New York, Press of the American Institute of Architects, 1924.

"A Critique of the Works of Adler & Sullivan." Great American Architects Series. No. 2. Architectural Record. Dec. 1895.

Photographs: #16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.

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Dankmar Adler, Born in Langsfeld, Sachsen-Weimar, in 1844. Died in Chicago, 1900.

Came to America in 1854. Studied in Detroit with Julius Melchers, John Schaefer and Willard Smith, and in Chicago, 1857-62. First partnership with Kinney, 1869-71, with Burling, 1871-78.

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Daniel Hudson Burnham. Born Henderson, N. Y., 1846. Died Evanston, Ill., 1912.

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John Wellborn Root, born Lumpkin, Ga., 1850. Died Chicago, 1891. Graduated New York University, 1869. Worked in Renwick's office in New York, then went to Chicago after the fire of 1871, where in 1872 he met Burnham in Wright's office,

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Bibliography: Architectural Record, Vol 31, April 1912, pp 313-387. New York.

Photographs: #6, 24.

Bibliography: Architectural Record, Vol 31,
April 1912, pp 313-327. New York.

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CHRONOLOGY OF THE TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SKYSCRAPER

The tall commercial building, early labelled the skyscraper, was the most conspicuous achievement of American architecture in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the creation of the skyscraper several complimentary lines of technical development joined. First, in the fifties, iron skeleton construction was often used to replace masonry bearing walls, sometimes in the interior of the building, sometimes as an ornamental cast iron facade. Then, with the introduction of the elevator, buildings higher than six stories became convenient and acceptable. At the same time, methods of fireproofing the metal skeleton were invented in New York, and effective pier foundations developed in Chicago. Finally, in Chicago, by the late eighties, the protective masonry shell came to be carried by the metal framework in which Bessemer steel replaced cast and wrought iron. The skyscraper, imminent for more than a generation, thus became an actuality.

Bibliography: "Buffington and the Skyscraper". E. M. Upjohn. The Art Bulletin, Vol. XVII, No. 1, March 1935, pp 48-70.

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1851	Crystal Palace, Hyde Park, London, by Paxton Destroyed by fire, 1936 First structure entirely of iron and glass.
1851-65	Dome of Capitol, Washington, D.C., by Thomas U. Walter Built of cast iron.
1853	New York Crystal Palace (in imitation of Paxton's) Now demolished First passenger elevator in America.
1854	Harper's Building, Franklin Square, New York Now demolished Introduction of wrought iron girders.
1855	Invention in England of Bessemer's converter for producing superior wrought iron known as "Steel".
1859	Fifth Avenue Hotel, New York Now demolished Passenger elevator first used in a permanent building.
1862	Siemens' invention in Germany of the Open Hearth Process for steel.
1868	Equitable Life Assurance Society Building, Broadway, New York. Now demolished First office building with elevator.

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1880 Price of land in Chicago Loop district reaches $130,000. per quarter acre, thus encouraging higher buildings. Compare 1890.

1881 Buffington's dreams of metal "cloud-scrapers" based on Viollet-le-Duc's ideas.

1881 Montauk Building, Chicago, by Burnham & Root

Introduction of separate spread foundations for separate piers.

1884-85 Home Insurance Building, Chicago, by Jenney
Demolished, 1931

Usually considered the first skyscraper. Weight carried largely by framework of cast and wrought iron concealed inside the masonry. Bessemer steel beams first used here above the sixth floor.

1886 Rookery Building, Chicago, by Burnham & Root

Same construction as Home Insurance Building. New type of foundation of railroad steel in concrete.

1887-88 Tacoma Building, Chicago, by Holabird & Roche
Demolished, 1929

Often considered the first skyscraper. All the structural potentialities of metal frame construction are implicit, but the iron skeleton is called upon to carry less than half the weight of the building.

1888-89 Pulitzer Building, New York, by George B. Post

At the time of its erection, the highest building in the world (349 feet). Masonry walls; interior piers of cast iron.

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First use of metal skeleton of true skyscraper type in New York.

1889 Rand-McNally Building, Chicago, by Burnham & Root

Rolled steel beams and columns of standard bridge shapes riveted together as still used today.

1889-90 Second Leiter Building, Chicago, by Jenney

First building in which all the walls are supported by the internal metal skeleton.

1890 Monadnock Block, Chicago, by Burnham & Root

Last tall building with solid masonry bearing walls. Sixteen stories.

1890 Price of land in Chicago Loop district $900,000 per quarter acre. Compare 1880

High buildings encouraged by high land values force land values ever higher.

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CHRONOLOGY OF THE AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE SKYSCRAPER

Original design in the skyscraper did not keep pace with new developments in construction. The facades of the early experimental buildings in the late seventies and eighties (#4 especially), although often more honest in the expression of skeleton construction than many more modern buildings, were appallingly crude. Yet it was their frank emphasis on wide-windowed horizontality that fore-shadowed such developed skyscraper design as in the Schlesinger-Mayer Building (#22) and Gage Building (#23).

But the building which initiated a new spirit in commercial design was Richardson's masonry Marshall Field Wholesale Store (#7). Deriving at first his inspiration from the Romanesque, Richardson in his later work reached a highly original and pure expression of masonry construction adapted either to residence or commercial design. The Marshall Field Wholesale Store provided for the young Chicago architects an aesthetic discipline of regularity and simplicity from which Sullivan rapidly created a new personal style.

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The free non-traditional architecture of the Chicago

School retained its vigor until about 1910 when the stylistic revivalism which had made its first striking appearance in Chicago with the World's Fair of 1893, vitiated its force.

1874-75 Cheney Building (now Brown-Thompson Co.), Hartford, Conn., by Richardson.

A personal interpretation of Romanesque design applied to commercial architecture.

1879 Leiter Building I, Chicago, by Jenney.

Non-stylistic expression of mixed masonry and cast iron construction.

1882 Ames Building, Kingston and Bedford Sts., Boston, by Richardson. Replaced in 1892.

Further simplification of the Richardsonian Romanesque.

1885-86 Marshall Field Wholesale Store, Chicago, by Richardson. Demolished 1930.

The masterpiece of early commercial architecture in masonry.

1886 The Rookery, Chicago, by Burnham & Root.

Unintelligent application of Richardsonian Romanesque. Uninfluenced by Marshall Field Wholesale Store.

1886 Pray Building, Boston, by Richardson.

Furthest development of Richardson's commercial style. Shallow reveals and light spandrels at story levels.

1887-88 Tacoma Building, Chicago, by Holabird & Roche. Demolished, 1929.

General scheme uninfluenced by masonry design, though detail is slightly Richardsonian.

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1887-89 Auditorium Building, Chicago, by Adler & Sullivan.

Strongly under the influence of Richardson's masonry Marshall Field Wholesale Store. In the tower appear the beginnings of Sullivan's more personal expression. Compare Walker Warehouse (#18).

1889-90 Leiter Building II, Chicago, by Jenney.

A direct development from Jenney's first Leiter Building (#4) in its clear expression of structure. Influenced in detail and general sense of form by the Marshall Field Wholesale Store.

1890-91 Monadnock Block, Chicago, by Burnham & Root.

Rigidly simplified masonry design with Richardsonian sense of form.

1891-92 Wainwright Building, St.Louis, by Adler & Sullivan.

Sullivan's vertical type of skyscraper design here fully developed for the first time. Compare Schiller Building (#20).

1893 Meyer Building, Chicago, by Adler & Sullivan.

Sullivan's more logical horizontal type of skyscraper design preserving wide fenestration of Jenney's Leiter Building I (#4).

1899 Schlesinger-Mayer Building (now Carson Pirie Scott & Co.), Chicago, by Sullivan.

Further development of wide-windowed design, with narrow supports and spandrels veneered with terra cotta.

1900-10 The heyday of the Chicago School under the inspiration of Sullivan's work of the previous decade.

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LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS WITH COMMENTS

1. 33 SOUTH FRANKLIN STREET (corner of Monroe Street), Chicago. c. 1872.

   This building retains the dignity and good proportions of the Classical Revival. The simple masonry post and lintel construction is clearly expressed in the design. Cast iron posts are used only in certain bays on the ground floor.

2. 221-227 WEST RANDOLPH STREET, Chicago. 1880.

   Unusually large window area for masonry construction. Cast iron posts on the ground floor only. The elegance of extreme simplicity is still reminiscent of the Greek Revival.

3. WILLOUGHBY BUILDING, Jackson and Monroe Streets (northeast corner) Chicago. 1884.

   Structurally a great advance: the use of wrought and cast iron instead of masonry walls permits building higher without sacrificing light on the lower stories. The peculiar ornament is ambitious in its originality, but no more appropriate to the new material than traditional forms.

4. WILLIAM LE BARON JENNEY
   LEITER BUILDING I, 200 West Monroe Street, Chicago. 1879. Two stories added later.

   An important step toward the skyscraper: the use of cast iron posts between the masonry piers introduces more light. The design is crude, but the general horizontal

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HOME INSURANCE BUILDING, Chicago. 1884-85. Two stories added, 1890. Demolished, 1931.

The crucial step in the creation of the skyscraper. The metal skeleton supports all the weight of the building except the exterior masonry walls which are partially self supporting. Above the second floor in the masonry piers between the windows are iron columns which strengthen the piers. This added strength makes it possible to diminish the width of the piers and increase the width of the windows. Part of the weight of the exterior masonry is carried by the metal frame. In principle the building has ceased to be a crustacean (chief support by masonry shell) and is already implicitly a vertebrate (chief support by skeleton, including support of exterior walls). Jenney did not yet realize the revolutionary quality of the device he had employed above the second floor.

For the first time in America, Bessemer steel is introduced in place of wrought iron above the sixth floor. The importance of the building lies entirely in the construction, not in the design.

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MARSHALL FIELD WHOLESALE STORE, Chicago. 1885-86.
Demolished 1930.

The masterpiece of commercial architecture in masonry, and the strongest single influence on the design of Chicago commercial architecture of the next generation. Even when this influence was no longer direct, the aesthetic discipline of regular and simple design continued.

8. H. H. RICHARDSON
GLESSNER HOUSE, 1800 South Prairie Avenue, Chicago. 1885.

Here, as in the Marshall Field Wholesale Store, Richardson generalized and recreated the traditional elements of design which he had earlier borrowed directly from the Romanesque. The disposition of the plan with the main rooms opening toward the court rather than toward the street is unusual in America.

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Less original than the Glessner House, this house by Richardson is nevertheless superior to most work of the Richardsonians of the eighties. Compare Art Institute (#10).

10. BURNHAM & ROOT
ART INSTITUTE (Later THE CHICAGO CLUB), Chicago. 1886-87.

Root here attained some of the regularity and dignity of Richardson's work. The dormers, banded arches and profusion of ornament derive from Richardson's more archaeological work of the seventies rather than from the Marshall Field Wholesale Store (#7) and the Glessner House (#8).

11. BURNHAM & ROOT
FIRST INFANTRY ARMORY (Now 131st INFANTRY ARMORY), South Michigan Ave. at Sixteenth Street, Chicago. 1890. Rebuilt after fire, 1894.

The contrast of tiny windows and colossal portal, the avoidance of fussy detail, and the fortress-like scale of the whole illustrate the possibilities of the free traditional design which existed in Chicago before the World's Fair. The medievalism is hardly Richardsonian but rather that of the projects of the early nineteenth century in France.

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200 WEST ADAMS STREET, Chicago. c. 1892.

Although this building is Richardsonian in general design, the absence of arches, the unusual cornice and the curved brick corners give it original character.

14. WILLIAM LE BARON JENNEY
LEITER BUILDING II (Now SEARS ROEBUCK & CO.) southeast corner of State and Van Buren Streets, Chicago. 1889-90.

A direct development from Jenney's first Leiter Building (#4) in its clear expression of structure. The detail, however, and the general proportioning show the influence of the Marshall Field Wholesale Store (#7).

15. GEORGE B. POST
PULITZER BUILDING, Park Row, New York. 1889-90.

Although at its completion the tallest building in the world (349 feet), this New York tower is progressive neither in structure nor design. It has masonry bearing walls on the exterior, 12 feet thick at the base, and only the interior is supported on wrought iron columns. Yet the Home Insurance and Tacoma Buildings had been completed several years earlier.

The conventional scheme of academic Renaissance design (the dome of the Invalides has been placed on top of the Louvre) is characteristic of the Eastern architecture of

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AUDITORIUM BUILDING, Michigan Avenue at Van Buren Street, Chicago. 1887-89.

The treatment here of the masonry bearing walls shows strongly the direct influence of the Marshall Field Wholesale Store (#7). The lower portions have been influenced by the Marquis de Vogüé's publications on early Syrian architecture. Only in the tower appears the beginning of Sullivan's more personal style.

17. ADLER & SULLIVAN
BALLROOM, AUDITORIUM BUILDING, Michigan Avenue at Van Buren Street, Chicago. 1889.

A monumental interior which reveals Sullivan's power of original design in a field totally different from the office buildings which made his fame.

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ANSHE MAARIV SYNAGOGUE (Now PILGRIM BAPTIST CHURCH), southeast corner of Indiana Avenue and 33rd Street, Chicago. 1890-91.

An interior, simple in general design, but lavishly ornamented with the delicate geometric and foliate patterns so characteristic of Sullivan's later work. In this interior the ornament is a gracious element in the design; on his office buildings, on the other hand, it is often incidental and redundant.

20. ADLER & SULLIVAN
SCHILLER BUILDING, (Garrick Theatre) 64 West Randolph Street, Chicago. 1891-92.

An example of Sullivan's vertical skyscraper design. The scheme developed in the Wainwright Building of the previous year in St. Louis is applied to the shell of a metal skeleton building. The prominent cornice is a feature which appears in many of Sullivan's buildings.

Note: In the foreground is the Borden Block, 1880, designed by Sullivan when he was a junior partner in D. Adler & Company.

21. ADLER & SULLIVAN
MEYER BUILDING, southwest corner of Van Buren and Franklin Streets, Chicago. 1893. Cornice removed.

In this building the horizontal type of design provides more logical expression of the underlying structure than the vertical treatment of the Schiller Building (#20). The wide windows preserve the practical advantages of

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SCHLESINGER-MEYER BUILDING (Now CARSON PIRIE SCOTT & CO.)
State and Madison Streets, Chicago. First section 1899.
Second section 1903-04.

A further development of the horizontal window treatment. The sense of an exterior wall has disappeared. There remains only a grille of vertical columns and horizontal beams, sheathed in terra cotta for fireproofing. The ornamental incrustation on the lower stories is typical of Sullivan.

23. LOUIS SULLIVAN
GAGE BUILDING, 18 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago. 1899.

Note: Only the facade on the right (Gage Building) is by Sullivan. The two facades on the left as well as the structure of all three buildings are by HOLABIRD & ROCHE. The structure of all three buildings is clearly revealed in the facades. The difference between Sullivan's facade and the other two is that between the studied proportions of fine architecture and ordinary structural honesty.

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CABLE BUILDING, southeast corner of Jackson and Wabash Streets, Chicago. 1899.

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MALLERS WAREHOUSE, 225 South Market Street, Chicago. 1893. Cornice removed.

A further development from the Tacoma Building (# 6) toward the clear expression of new skeleton construction, but without the influence of Sullivan. All ornament is eliminated with the exception of incongruous detail on the doorway.

26. D. H. BURNHAM & COMPANY
RELIANCE BUILDING, southwest corner of State and Washington Streets, Chicago. 1894.

The last building of the type of the Tacoma Building (#6). The wide fenestration provides better lighting than the great majority of present day office buildings.

27. RICHARD E. SCHMIDT
NEPEENAUK BUILDING, 63 East Adams Street, Chicago. 1903.

A fine example of the work done by the younger men who, under Sullivan's influence, constituted the Chicago School.

28. ADLER & SULLIVAN
CHARNLEY HOUSE, 1365 Astor Street, Chicago. 1892.

This is the finest of the few houses built by Sullivan. A large part of the design is due to the young Frank Lloyd Wright, then in charge of all the domestic work done in Sullivan's office. Without the stimulus and discipline of the new skeleton construction Sullivan's style was characterized chiefly by simple dignity and a new grammar of ornament. His domestic building was distinguished, but not as significant as his skyscrapers.

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PATTEN HOUSE, 1426 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, Illinois. 1902.

A house by a member of the Chicago School which followed Sullivan's artistic leadership. The houses of this group, although they introduced few innovations, established a standard in non-traditional domestic architecture by their simplicity and dignity and by their careful use of materials and detail.

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SELZ, SCHWAB & CO., northwest corner of Kingsbury and Superior Streets, Chicago. 1907.

This factory has real architectural quality based only on the character of the ferro-concrete structure. At this early date a factory at once so simple and so well studied in its proportions was a rarity in America.

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