

# LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



## **THE CENTURY BUILDING** **202 SOUTH STATE STREET**

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**Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, December 7, 2023**



**CITY OF CHICAGO**  
**Brandon Johnson, Mayor**

**Department of Planning and Development**  
**Ciere Boatright, Acting Commissioner**

Cover photo by Patrick Pyszka.

# CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Evolution of State Street and its Commercial Architecture	3
Holabird & Roche on State Street	7
Development, Design, and Construction	9
Architectural Description	12
Architectural Style	20
Architects	25
Tenants and Ownership	29
Criteria For Designation	33
Significant Historical and Architectural Features	36
Selected Bibliography	38

# **THE CENTURY BUILDING**

**202 SOUTH STATE STREET**

**BUILT: 1915-1916**

**ARCHITECTS: HOLABIRD & ROCHE;**

**WILLIAM SEVIC, 1951-1952 REMODELING**

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1915 TO 1952**

## **Introduction**

The Century Building at 202 South State Street was built as a commercial investment property by the Buck & Rayner drug manufacturing and retailing firm between 1915 and 1916. The company already had two corner drugstores on State Street, one at Madison and another at Randolph, so the corner, ground-floor space at 202 South State gave them their third, at Adams. “Buck & Rayner” was prominently displayed above the storefront along with their marketing message “Cut Price Druggists,” and they sold patent medicines, prescriptions, toiletries, and sundries out of that location through the late 1920s. A Buck & Rayner Cafeteria built in the basement and accessed through a stair at the rear of their store served both as an amenity to tenants in the building and a driver of foot traffic to their business.

The sixteen-story, creamy-white-glazed-terra-cotta-clad Century Building skyscraper was designed by Holabird & Roche, one of Chicago’s most prestigious and successful architectural firms. William Holabird and Martin Roche were leaders in the Chicago School of architecture whose experiments with new technologies and materials helped to make buildings taller, floor spaces more open, and exterior walls lighter. The Century Building’s steel frame, large plate-glass windows, and terra-cotta cladding are character-defining features of the Chicago School of architecture, but its design also signaled a change in direction where verticality would take precedence over the open grid.

The Century building is an example of a “tall shops” building. This variation of the speculative office building was designed to appeal primarily to retail and wholesale businesses as tenants. Elegant display cases on the ground floor were a prominent feature which would allow the tenants of the upper floors to advertise their wares. Care was taken to create luxurious and handsome edifices, entries, and lobbies that would encourage potential customers to enter and circulate through the building. Free from the vagaries of outside weather, noise, and bustle, this early version of an indoor mall allowed shoppers to move from one floor to the next as they perused goods and services.





**Left:** Looking northwest at the Century Building. **Above:** The Century Building is at the southwest corner of State and Adams Streets. **Below:** Upper floors at the east elevation. (Photos by Patrick Pyszka)



## **The Evolution of State Street and its Commercial Architecture**

By the time Chicago was incorporated as a town in 1833, a grid system had been established to allow for the orderly transfer and development of real estate. New construction respected the streets established by the grid and pre-grid buildings were required to be moved to align with the new system. Downtown developed building by building along these streets and, by the 1850s, wholesale activities were concentrated along South Water Street (now West/East Wacker Drive) while retail was concentrated a block south along West Lake Street.

A dramatic shift began in 1867 when Potter Palmer purchased three-quarters of a mile of State Street at a tenth of the value land was selling for at Clark and Lake Streets. The former dry goods merchant successfully petitioned the city to widen State Street. He cleared wooden shacks to build a luxury hotel at State and Quincy Streets. Palmer also built a store to coax retailers Levi Z. Leiter and Marshall Field to relocate from Lake Street. It took only two years for State Street to become the city's primary retail corridor. The Great Fire of 1871, which left downtown in ashes, only accelerated the momentum as dry-goods and small retail firms from Lake Street chose to rebuild on State.

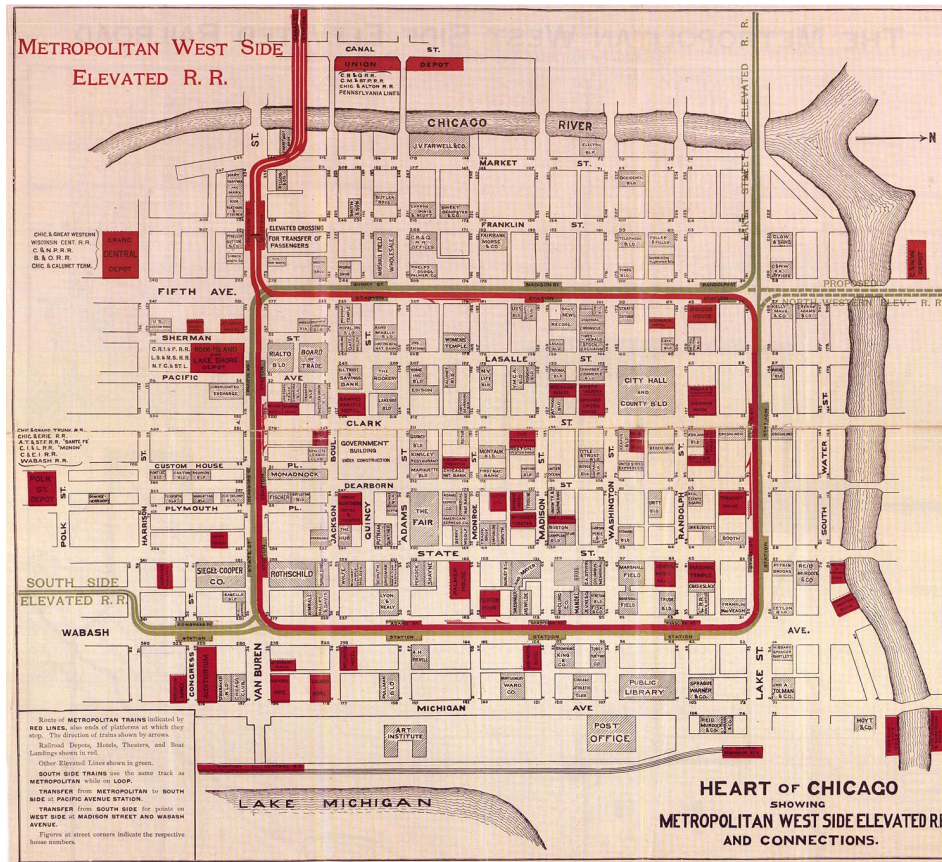
Most commercial structures erected on State Street in the decades after the fire were four to six stories high and built up to the sidewalk. Together, however, they could be an incongruous mix of roof lines, floor levels, and different decorative motifs, typically Italianate, Renaissance Revival, or Second Empire. State Street itself was a tangle of shoppers, office workers, and store clerks on foot darting between horse-drawn streetcars, later cable cars, carriages, and wagons transporting all manner of goods. Traveling businessmen, tourists, and new arrivals were added to the mix by the half dozen train depots dotting the downtown's periphery.

The number of new arrivals grew ever upward as Chicago's population rapidly expanded. The city had grown from 4,000 to 109,000 citizens between its first city charter in 1837 and 1860. Two decades later, the population had nearly quintupled to 503,000. By 1890, that figure doubled to over one million and it would double again to 2.2 million by 1910.

Though the city's population grew, and annexation expanded the city's boundary outward, the transportation options that developed kept people connected to the center of the city. Commuter trains brought residents from the edges of the city and the suburbs to downtown as early as the 1850s. Chicago's first horsecar line was built on State Street in 1859. Intracity horsecar lines connecting to State Street soon proliferated but were replaced by cable cars in 1882 and these would in turn be replaced entirely by electric trolleys by 1906. In 1897, elevated rail tracks completed around the heart of the city's center allowed rapid transit lines extending into Chicago's neighborhoods to converge in this central location known as the "Loop" (a name which is supposed to have come from the cable car lines which encircled the central business district).

Centralization of rapid transit guaranteed the business and retail dominance of the city's historic center. The accessibility of the city center made it a desirable place to work and shop, while its centrality provided a convenient location to do business. Demand for space there exerted pressure on real estate values which, in turn, encouraged taller buildings. By the 1890s, new





**Above: Metropolitan West Side Elevated R.R. map, 1898.** This map shows the “Loop” of elevated tracks encircling Chicago’s central business district used by the Lake Street Elevated R.R., the South Side Elevated R.R., and the Metropolitan West Side Elevated R.R.  
 (Credit: www.Chicago-L.org)

**Below: Northwest corner of Quincy and State, looking north along the west side of the street, 1903.** The Century Building will take the place of the two four-story buildings at the north end of the block. (Photo by Charles R. Clark; Credit: Chicago History Museum IChi-071871)



office and commercial structures on State Street were typically twelve or more stories, some with multiple basement levels.

Commercial interests of all kinds had to adjust to the rising value of land on State Street. Corporations with large ranks of managerial employees found it cost-effective to construct their own tall structures where they occupied most or all of the floors, but preferred locations were less retail-centric streets like Dearborn Street, La Salle Street, or Michigan Avenue. Warehouse functions of large retailers were moved from State Street to less expensive real estate west of the Loop. Groups of wholesalers shifted eastward to the less-prestigious Wabash Avenue while specialty retailers needing large but affordable showroom space like furniture or musical instrument manufacturers shifted southward away from the long-dominant north end of State Street.

Department stores not only remained but thrived on State Street. Beginning even before the 1890s but accelerating after the turn of the century up until World War I, each of the seven major Loop department stores built annexes or commissioned purpose-built stores. Typically eight to fifteen stories high and occupying full- or half-blocks, these structures considerably increased square footage available to display and market greatly expanded offerings.

Large numbers of middle- and small-sized enterprises desired the advantages of being located on State Street but did not have the resources for their own buildings. Many located in small-scale, low-rise, mid-block buildings including older, post-Fire structures that had escaped being consolidated into larger plots for new construction. As these were demolished, lower-rent spaces disappeared, and investors sensed an opportunity. To meet this demand for affordable business spaces, they began building skyscrapers designed as speculative commercial buildings. The Century Building at 202 South State Street was one of these structures.

These “professional office” and “tall shops” buildings began to increase in number and typically were located at corners. With smaller footprints than department stores, these structures usually reached fifteen to twenty-five stories. Maximum advantage was taken of valuable State Street frontage. Ground floors had large storefronts. Lower floors above included large expanses of glass for display or signage, and often stairs provided easy access to the public. Stairs also typically led to basement spaces utilized for commercial purposes, and their entrances were marked by signage at the exterior. Only businesses with a broad customer base such as clothiers, drugstores, and restaurants could afford the top dollar charged for these spaces. Upper floors provided more affordable space. To be flexible enough to meet the needs of a wide variety of tenants, floor plans were open, allowing them to be subdivided and configured as needed.

Where professional office and tall shops buildings differed was in their intended mix of tenants for the upper floors. Professional office buildings were intended for professionals like doctors and dentists, manufacturers’ representatives, small businesses, and personal-service providers like tailors and beauticians. Tall shops buildings were created to house stores on the upper floors, typically specialty retailers such as hat and glove dealers, dressmakers, notions shops, jewelers, and silversmiths. Other floors were envisioned as spaces for wholesalers.



**Left: The Century Building ca. 1920.**

(Photo by Chicago Architectural Photographing Co.; Credit: Chicago—Photographic Images of Change, University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections Department)



**Right: The Century Building ca. 1925.**

(Photo by Kaufman & Fabry Co. Credit: Chicago—Photographic Images of Change, University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections Department)

The customers of specialty retailers and wholesalers were not the average shopper strolling along State Street, so expensive ground-floor spaces were not viable options for such businesses. People desiring these products and services would seek out such vendors and the buildings were designed to maximize the chances they would do so. High-design display cases featured prominently at the sidewalk. Entrances were meant to impress and invite. Glass cases in the lobby advertised merchants on the floors above. As shoppers moved through corridors, glass cabinets lining the walls or glass corridor walls of the spaces themselves allowed wares to be displayed as an enticement to enter the shops.

The Century Building was one of the handful of tall shops buildings on State Street. These buildings were part of the evolution of State Street, an experiment in building typology and design intended to capitalize on high demand for relatively affordable space on Chicago's busiest commercial corridor. Changes seen over the course of the building's life, such as the remodeling of the lower floors, reflect the continued transformation of Chicago as reflected in its most famous retail thoroughfare.

## **Holabird & Roche on State Street**

Holabird & Roche is one of the firms most responsible for shaping the look of State Street after the turn of the twentieth century. At the storied intersection of State and Madison (for a time referenced as "the busiest intersection in the world"), for example, Holabird & Roche designed the buildings at three of its four corners. Architectural historian Robert Brueggemann notes in his 1997 book on the firm, "To this day a surprising amount of street frontage designed by the firm between 1900 and the First World War survives, and it is in large part these buildings that give State Street its distinctive appearance so different from other streets in the Loop."

Holabird & Roche's retail architecture on State Street before World War I was composed primarily of two types: sprawling, palazzo-type department stores with acres of display space and "tall shops" buildings like the Century Building where upper-floor corridors were envisioned to function like interior sidewalks within an arcade of stores. Both types of retail buildings were designed to meet their clients' requirements for a commercial structure by combining affordable, highly flexible spaces with elegant, decorative exteriors. White-glazed terra cotta, which could be molded into practically any design, became one of the preferred materials for such exteriors.

Tall shops buildings were essentially the retail equivalent of the professional office building. Developers could take a small piece of expensive State Street frontage and multiply it many times by stacking floors of retail one on top of another. According to Robert Brueggemann, *The Economist* took note in 1903:

It is the desire of the owner to have as tenants in the upper floors the business houses which wish to be on State Street and yet do not wish to pay State Street store rents. Inasmuch as the tenants will wish, however, in many cases, to retail goods from the premises which they occupy, special provision will be made for this to those who desire it by lining the corridors



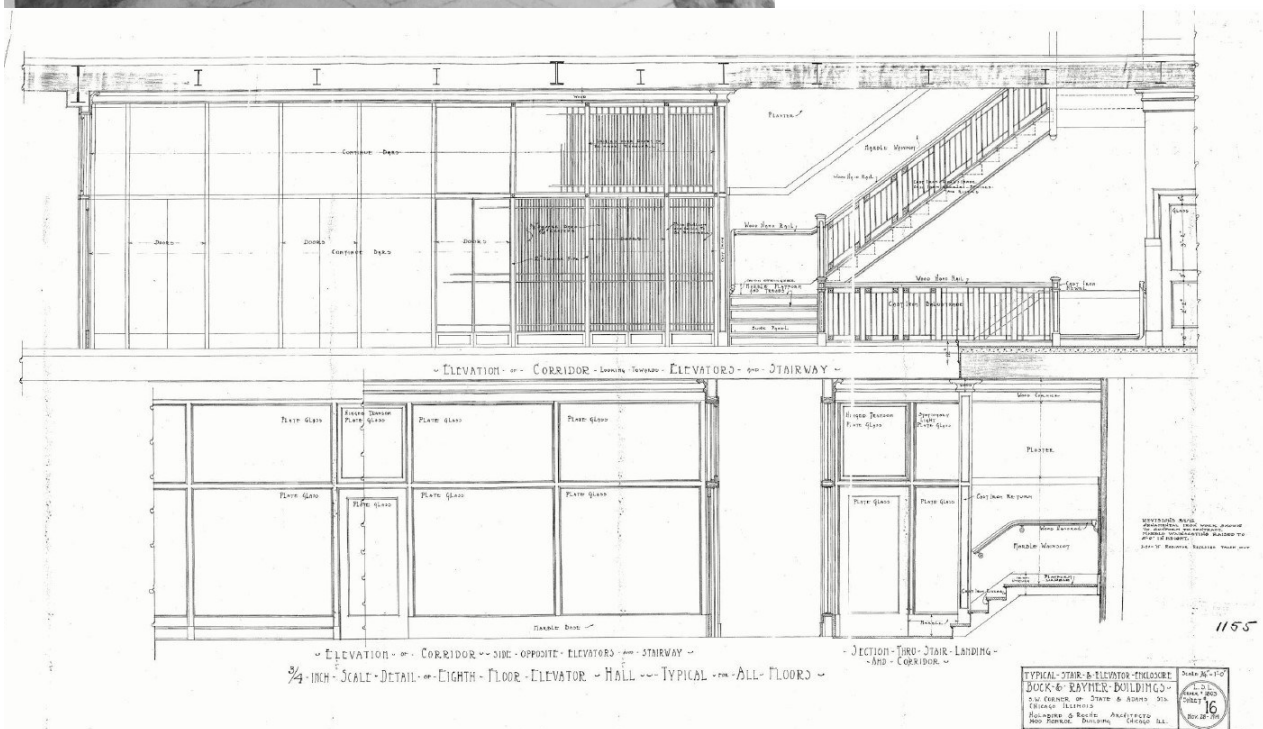


**Left: Display cases are opposite the elevators in this rendering of the elevator lobby from a circa 1915 Buck & Rayner promotional pamphlet.**

(From *Holabird & Roche, Holabird & Root: An Illustrated Catalog of Works, Volume II, 1911-1927*; Credit: Garland Publishing, Inc.)

**Below: Holabird & Roche drawing of a typical hall elevation for the Century Building. The top half of the drawing shows elevators and stairs while the bottom half of the drawing shows the opposite side of the corridor and specifies "plate glass" for all wall panels.**

(From General Service Administration's "Building Preservation Plan"; Credit: Chicago History Museum)



with show windows similar to those in the street below and so providing an opportunity for similar display of goods with the idea of so forming lighted and attractive arcades where shoppers will go as along the street below.

The large scale of these skyscrapers made it feasible for the developer to provide shared amenities useful to those working in the building such as lounges or gyms. Restaurants were also a featured facility, providing a convenient meal service option to employees while doubling as a draw for potential customers.

Holabird & Roche's first experiment in the design of a tall shops building was at the southeast corner of Adams and State Streets (across the street from where the Century Building would be built). Now demolished, their white-glazed-terra-cotta-clad Republic Building of 1905 had a relatively unadorned façade and focused the use of high-end materials and designs in its interior public spaces. A deeply recessed entrance lined with glass cases provided a small-scale arcade which was continued in the entry corridor with display windows announcing the tenants upstairs. Tenant spaces in the building's lower floors were configured to have as many glass, corridor-facing walls as possible which served as storefronts. The higher floors were targeted for wholesalers and manufacturing representatives.

In 1912, wholesalers and manufacturing reps were also the primary tenant intended to occupy the glass-lined corridors of showrooms at the North American Building, located at the northwest corner of Monroe and State Streets. Its white-glazed-terra-cotta exterior was considerably more ornate than that of its predecessor, the Republic Building. Holabird & Roche would be called upon to give this same high-end treatment to the exterior of its next tall shops building, the Century Building.

## **Development, Design, and Construction**

### ***Development***

In a series of articles between 1911-12, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that the Chicago-based drugstore company Buck & Rayner had bought the rights from current lessors to acquire a 103-year lease for "one of the most valuable corners in the State street (sic) retail district" at the southwest corner of Adams and State Streets. Owned by Charles H. Starkweather, the corner parcel and a second L-shaped parcel wrapping around it provided them with 42 feet on State Street and 101 feet along Adams at an average annual rent of \$21,004. Terms of the lease required that a new building be constructed on the site by 1915. Buck & Rayner planned to open a drugstore in the corner commercial space and basement, and newspapers began referring to the structure as the Buck & Rayner Building. This would be the company's third drugstore on State Street, with one two blocks north at Madison Street and another two blocks north of that at Randolph Street.

Two nineteenth-century, four-story, masonry, commercial buildings occupied the lots. The Berghoff Restaurant had occupied the corner building since 1898. Mr. Berghoff leased the



building to the west at 15-23 West Adams Street and moved his restaurant there. Demolition of the existing structures began in 1915 for what the *Chicago Tribune* reported as an “unusually attractive structure of the highest type of fireproof construction, fifteen stories high, and to cost about \$700,000.” A newspaper contest to name the new building led to its christening as the Twentieth Century Building, but the name would be shortened in a few years to the Century Building.

### ***Design***

As previously noted, the Century Building is a “tall shops” building intended to be leased primarily to retailers and merchants. To provide the showcases for merchandise that upper-floor tenants needed to attract customers, architects looked for every opportunity to include display space on the ground floor. Holabird & Roche’s drawings, including those in a promotional pamphlet created by the Buck & Rayner Company, feature tall, elaborate, bronze-framed display cases. At the sidewalk, they were set into the base of the building’s columns, and they lined the recessed entry and the walls of the vestibule and lobby.

Holabird & Roche designed highly ornamental entries to the main building and corner store meant to entice potential customers inside. The leasing brochure highlighted the marble surfaces and bronze fixtures of the elevator lobby meant to suggest the quality of the tenants on the upper floors. In a nod to the exotic, it noted that the building was a “modern translation of the Spanish,” referencing the design motif of the building’s decorative elements.

Plans included a barber shop on the eighth floor and a cafeteria space in the basement. Upper floors provided a great deal of flexibility with open plans so the space could be subdivided as needed. An elevation of a typical tenant space opposite elevators showed floor-to-ceiling, plate-glass corridor walls for tenant spaces so that corridors would look like a line of storefront windows.

### ***Construction***

A permit was issued to the Buck & Rayner Co. on February 9, 1915, for a “15-story store and office building” measuring 42 feet x 100 feet x 200 feet. Construction costs were reported as \$500,000. The builder was listed as Henry Ericsson Co. The completed structure had fifteen full stories with a partial sixteenth floor and the ledgers of architects Holabird & Roche record the total project costs as \$593,624.

The sixteen-story, steel-frame building with two basements was built on rock caissons and was clad in architectural terra cotta. The project engineer was Henry J. Burt, whom Holabird & Roche had hired as their construction engineer during a major expansion and reorganization in 1892. Although Buck & Rayner ads include the State and Adams locations in their ads by December 1915, permit documents show the city’s final report was issued July 1916, suggesting the remainder of the building was fully ready for occupancy that year.

**Lower left:** The Century Building ca. 1940. Storefronts at the base have been altered from the original and may reflect the changes authorized by the 1934 building permit for “changes to storefront.”

(Photo by William Loewe; Credit: *Chicago Tribune*, September 1940)

**Lower right:** The Century Building ca. 1948. The canopy over the main entrance is gone and storefronts have been changed, this time with deeply recessed entrances flanked by round-cornered display cabinets atop structural glass. These changes may reflect the 1944 building permit issued for “storefront repairs.” A clock with signage now projects over the sidewalk, likely from the 1946 permit issued for “erection of signpost for clock.”

(Photo by Chicago Architectural Photographing Company; Credit: Chicago—Photographic Images of Change, University of Illinois at Chicago. Library, Special Collections Department)



## **Architectural Description**

### **The Century Building**

#### *Site*

The Century Building is located at the southwest corner of State and Adams Streets in Chicago's central business district. The building has no setbacks, though, at the ground floor, the State Street entry and storefront are recessed in an irregular shape and the building overhangs a single freestanding column at its northeast corner.

#### *Overall Form and Exterior Appearance*

The Century Building has a simple, rectangular, box form. Its roof is flat but slopes down at the north and east sides to create a partial sixteenth floor not visible behind the parapet. A substantial, tall, patterned-terra-cotta-clad chimney rises from the southwest corner and is topped by a terra-cotta cornice, giving the appearance of a small-scale, flat-roofed campanile.

The structure's street-facing elevations are clad with creamy-white-glazed terra cotta. Secondary south and west elevations are clad in common brick and have no window openings. Wide, flat, fluted piers divide the facade into two bays at the east elevation and five bays at the north elevation. The fluted pattern of the piers changes to twisted rope at the fifteenth floor. Early photographs show that the piers began at the sidewalk and were truncated above the fifteenth floor with dentiled pedestals. Atop each pedestal is a large urn, the base of which is formed from curved supports in the shape of stylized dolphins while grotesques encircle the necks of the urns. (Later remodeling at the first and second floors involved removal of all terra-cotta cladding, discussed below). At the corners of each pier, rounded terra cotta units had a detailed diagonal weave pattern. With the exception of one unit visible above each third-floor windowsill, all of these units were removed, and metal panning was applied, sometime after 1990.

Each bay frames four double-hung, wood windows separated by thin, continuous mullions. The westernmost bay of the north elevation accommodates the fire escape so has only three windows and one exit door to the fire escape. Floor levels are marked by recessed terra cotta spandrels which feature fluting between three corkscrew verticals. Originally dark green, the spandrels are covered in layers of grime which obscure the original glazed surface and they appear a greyish-green.

Original architectural drawings showed additional decorative treatment of the narrow mullions—columns at the second floor, torches on pedestals at the third, and sharply molded columns at the thirteenth, fourteenth, and sixteenth floors. Sometime after 1990, the decorative terra-cotta column pieces at the thirteenth and fourteenth floors were removed, and flat metal panning was applied on top of all the mullions from above the torch shapes at the third floor up through the fifteenth floor.

The main entrance to the building remains on State Street somewhat south of its original location. The northeast retail space is accessed via a revolving door at the building's northeast corner. A door at the west end of the Adams elevation is used as an emergency exit.

Loss of the original cornice and remodeling of the first and second floors has altered the original tripartite design of the façade. Originally the base consisted of the first three floors, each of which was topped by a decorative spandrel band. Tall storefronts filled bays on the ground floor and Chicago windows (windows with large, fixed, central pane flanked by narrower, double-hung windows) spanned the bays of the two floors above. Third-floor windows retain their original window opening configuration and, above each bay, original, terra-cotta spandrel panels feature stylized foliate designs with a central heraldic shield emblazoned with a lion in profile and topped by a knight's helmet, both of which are in high relief.

The central portion of the building consists of floors four through fifteen and is wrapped by spandrel bands at the thirteenth, fourteenth, and sixteenth floors. Thirteenth-floor panels feature festooned shields with a torch encircled by a snake. One floor above, the design changes to stylized leaves and flowers framing a central grotesque. At the sixteenth floor, griffins posture amidst swirling shapes.

The “capital” portion of the façade is still distinguishable at the sixteenth floor because it appears set back by virtue of the fluted piers' truncation at that level. Corinthian pilasters aligned with the lower floors' mullions project slightly from the north and east elevations. In place of windows, grille-patterned terra cotta is recessed between colonettes, and a pedestal-and-torch form is set against the base of each panel. Originally the building was crowned with a projecting cornice, but the cornice and its frieze were removed sometime after 1950, and the parapet is capped by plain metal coping.

### ***Plan***

Plans by Holabird & Roche showed the building's recessed State Street entry led to a long, narrow corridor. This opened onto a slightly wider lobby with a bank of four elevators along the south wall and a marble staircase to the west which accessed all floors. The stack pipe, ventilation ductwork, etc. were west of the stairs in the southwest corner of the building.

The ground floor also originally contained three “shops,” the largest occupying most of the northern half of the floor. Access to the basement and a partial mezzanine above the western half of this space was provided via stairs at its southwest corner. On upper floors, windows lined the north and east elevations, and the space could be divided into as many as six units, with each guaranteed to have windows. Four columns were evenly spaced from east to west along the center of each floor.

### ***Interior***

At the basement level, sections of the original Buck & Rayner Cafeteria's black and white mosaic tile flooring remain but other portions have been covered over or replaced. Walls and ceilings are unfinished. Ventilation ductwork and piping are exposed.

At the ground floor, stairs west of the elevator banks retain their marble walls/wainscoting, landings, and steps. Original decorative bronze railings, balustrades, and newels from the first

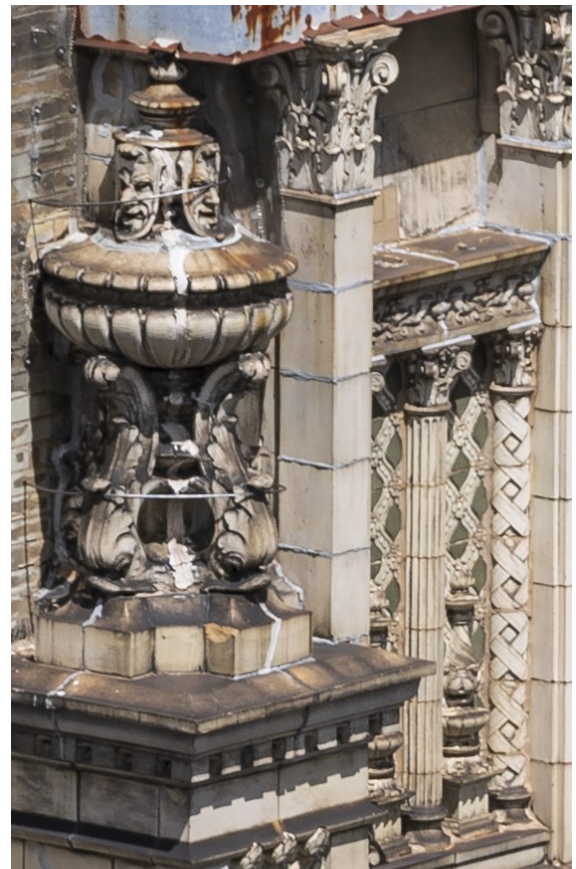


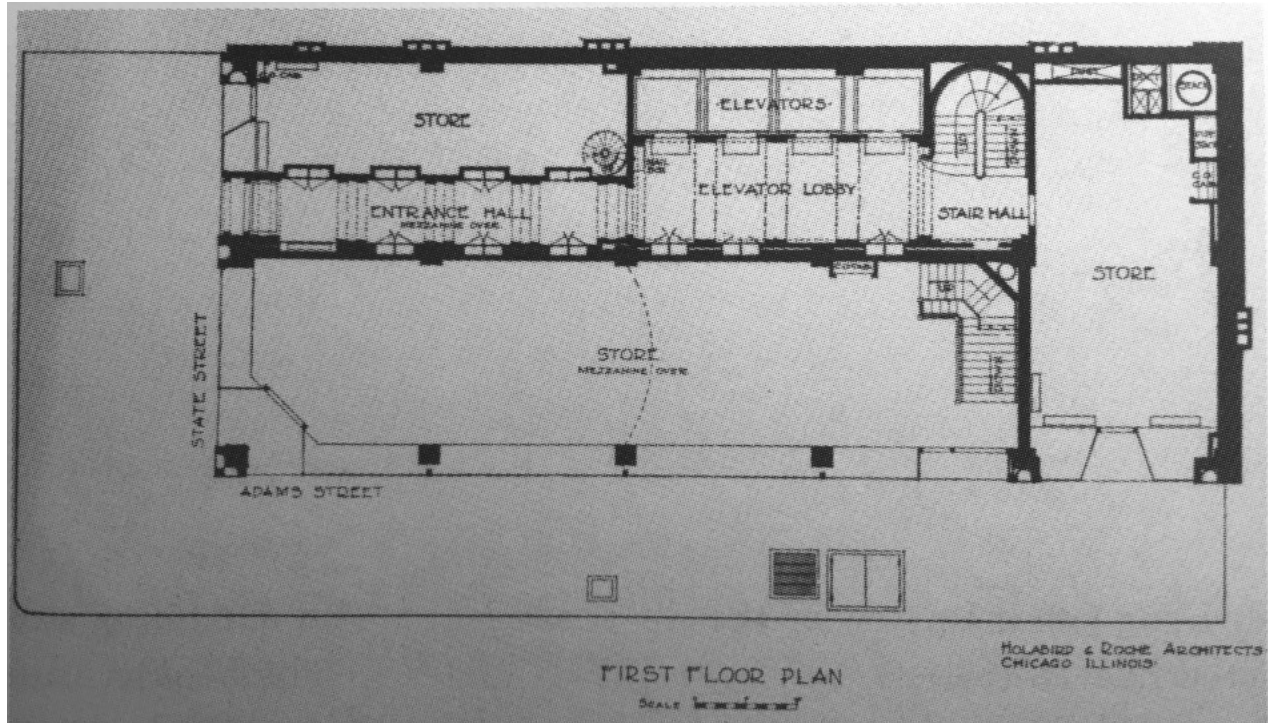


**Left: The east elevation of the Century Building. (Photo by Patrick Pyszka)**

**Lower left: Detail at the third and fourth floors of the east elevation.**

**Lower right: Detail at the sixteenth floor of the east elevation. (Photo by Patrick Pyszka)**



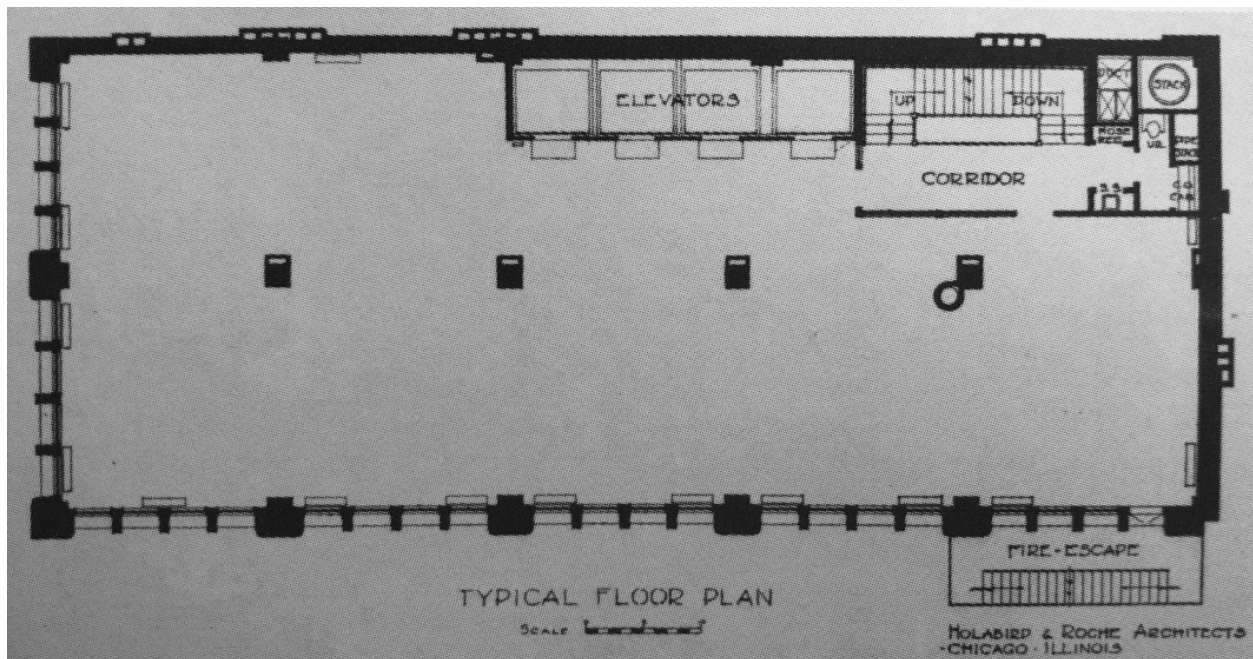


Holabird & Roche floor plans for the Century Building which were included in a circa 1915 Buck & Rayner promotional pamphlet.

**Above:** First floor plan includes display cases recessed into exterior piers and along the entrance hall and elevator lobby.

**Below:** Typical floor plan shows open space ready to be subdivided per tenant requirements.

(From *Holabird & Roche, Holabird & Root: An Illustrated Catalog of Works, Volume II, 1911-1927*; Credit: Garland Publishing, Inc.)





basement to the mezzanine level change to simplified cast iron on the floors above. Many of these cast-iron elements have begun to rust or are otherwise damaged.

From the second floor up, almost all partition walls and light fixtures have been removed and spaces remain unfinished. Some fragmentary original trim remains, but much of it is damaged. Original, wood, double-hung windows remain as do mahogany closet doors in the southwest corner of every floor.

## **Alterations, 1951-1952**

### ***Overall Form and Exterior Appearance***

Permits were issued for storefront changes in 1934 and 1944. A circa 1948 photo shows that all original storefronts and terra-cotta cladding had been removed. They were replaced by deeply recessed storefronts flanked by round-edged display windows atop dark structural glass.

In January of 1951, only a few years after Home Federal Savings purchased the building in 1949, a permit was issued for a new front stairway and entrance. A June 1951 permit reflected revised plans for “front and interior alterations.” Existing storefronts and signage were removed and replaced with a continuous storefront trimmed in stainless steel, which remains today. A horizontal, stainless-steel band is set at the transom level, and regularly placed, narrow, floor-to-ceiling mullions secure large, flat, plate-glass windows along the sidewalk at Adams. This storefront stops about fourteen feet from the building’s northeast corner where a single, rounded, free-standing column is enclosed in narrow, vertical, stainless-steel panels. An S-shaped State Street storefront of curved glass panels, concave at the corner, but arching out to align with the front plane of the building at the elevation’s midpoint intersects with the recessed, angled building entry at the south end. A revolving door in the concave section of the storefront provides access to the commercial space beyond.

The angled wall of the building entrance and the façade of the second floor were clad in smooth granite panels. Stainless pin letters spelling “Home Federal Building 202” were installed above the door. At the second floor’s north and east elevations, window openings were reconfigured to centered bands of fixed windows divided by stainless-steel mullions aligned with the storefront mullions below. Large pin letters spelling “Home Federal Savings” at State Street and “Home Federal Savings and Loan Association of Chicago” at Adams were set into the granite below these windows, and a new cubical clock topped by a silver eagle (the logo of the new owners) cantilevered over the sidewalk. Narrow, ten-story, vertical sign boards were installed atop both elevations of the terra cotta pier at the building’s northeast corner. Letters spelling “Home Federal Savings” were installed on both faces.

Since Home Federal Savings sold the building, several different tenants have occupied the ground-floor space, but the first floor looks much the same as it did in 1952. At the second floor, the corner clock is gone. Windows and the granite cladding below them were removed and the area covered over with large metal gridded panels, while remaining granite panels appear to have been pinned for additional stability. A semi-permanent metal awning has been

**Right:** The curving storefront at northeast corner.



**Far right:** The east and north elevations with continuous storefront at the ground floor.



**Below:** The lower floors at the east elevation.

(Photo by Patrick Pyszka)





installed above the ground floor, and the second floor was boxed in with wood panels. Above this, the vertical sign panels were removed from the corner pier.

### ***Plan***

The layout of the ground floor remains essentially unchanged from the 1952 remodeling. The northeast corner retail space was expanded south and west to encompass the majority of the building's floor plate. The building's main entry corridor was shifted southward to the building's south wall and enclosed on the north by the retail space's curving, plate-glass, southern wall. A curving stair just inside and to the south of the retail space's corner revolving door was added and led down to the basement. The mezzanine was expanded to the east above the building's entry corridor and an additional passenger elevator was added at the building's west wall which accessed a limited number of floors. The marble staircase west of the elevator bank is the only original lobby feature remaining.

### ***Interior***

Home Federal Savings included a rendering of their new banking space in the announcements for their June 30, 1952, grand opening. Ads showed an open plan framed with the sweeping curve of a mezzanine defined by metal-framed, clear-glass panels; a curving stair to the basement with a metal-and-glass-panel balustrade; and a large, rounded, free-standing column disappearing up into one of the round-edged, suspended ceiling sections.

Several elements from the 1952 remodeling have been altered. Only partial frames remain on the floor from what would have been the curving glass panels of the space's southern wall. Above this, the mezzanine space has been enclosed by a series of wood panels alternating with vertical lighting elements, many of them damaged. At the western side of the commercial space, only railings along the northern edge of the partial mezzanine remain as those on the western edge are missing altogether.

The floor is covered by a mix of tile dating from the space's last active use as a restaurant, but all fixtures including the lunch counter, booths, and kitchen equipment have been removed. Columns have been wholly or partially stripped of cladding. Walls throughout the first floor have been removed or damaged, including the marble cladding of the entry corridor, but the terrazzo flooring there remains. Directory signage, a mailbox, and the hour marks of a built-in clock are still in place on the east wall of the elevator bank but have sustained damage.

In the corner retail space, curving terrazzo stairs down to the basement with metal-and-glass railings remain. The stair's side walls are wood. Reports suggest the elevator doors at the basement, first, mezzanine, and second floors are either brushed steel or nickel-plated. Each has three stacked panels with eagle medallions, the Home Federal Savings Bank logo. At least one of these doors are damaged where a medallion has been cut out.



**Above:** Home Federal's advertisement for the official opening of their "new State Street building" at 202 South State Street features a rendering of their modern International Style banking lobby. (From June 29, 1952, *Chicago Tribune*)

**Below:** The June 30, 1952, grand opening of Home Federal's new banking headquarters. (Photo from *Realty & Building*, 1952; Credit: [forgottenchicago.com](http://forgottenchicago.com))



## **Architectural Style**

### ***The Century Building***

The Century Building is a “tall shops” building built in the Commercial style with Late Gothic ornament. The Commercial style embodies the fundamental components of what became known as the Chicago School of architecture. Underlying this school were the advancements in construction methods and materials which allowed buildings to grow taller, exterior walls to open up to allow in more light, and usable interior space to be maximized with fewer columns. At sixteen stories, the Century Building was considered relatively tall for its time. Its steel frame allowed large openings for windows. The frame also provided the building’s structural support such that terra cotta could be hung from the columns and horizontal beams to create a grid across the primary facades.

The National Register nomination which included the Century Building as a contributing structure in Chicago’s Loop Retail Historic District notes that the Commercial Style emphasized such clear expression of the steel-frame structure without the horizontal proportions and exclusive use of large tripartite windows included under the umbrella of the Chicago School of architecture. In the Commercial style, ornamentation usually was limited to storefronts, building entrances, spandrels, and cornices, and two of the most common decorative motifs employed were Classical and Gothic. On the Century Building, decoration at these locations is in a Late Gothic motif.

Around the same time that Holabird & Roche was designing the Century Building, they also were working on a commission for the Roanoke Building (1915, extant, 11 South La Salle Street, designated Chicago Landmark) which used Portuguese-Gothic-style ornament. A General Services Administration report suggests this is also employed at the Century Building. Buck & Rayner’s promotional pamphlet for the Century Building described the structure as a “modern translation of the Spanish.” The Century’s architects would have been aware of the revival of interest in Spanish architecture and its colonial variations reflected in designs for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in California. The unusual urns, torches, and grotesques incorporated into the terra cotta of the Century Building could also be seen on buildings at the international exposition, and the shields and heraldic imagery, floral designs, festoons, and fantastic creatures could also easily have been plucked from Spanish Late Gothic sources. Specific sources aside, the decorative treatment has a level of regularity and, although some elements are elaborate beyond the extent seen in the firm’s more conservative structures, it can still be seen as restrained, serving the purpose of the structure rather than overwhelming it.

More striking about the design of the Century Building is the emphasis on verticality created by the repeating, continuous, narrow mullions within each bay. Challenged by the narrowness of the lot upon which the skyscraper was to stand, Holabird & Roche had to be thoughtful in their façade design. The large window expanses of the first three floors in the original design provided a more horizontal rhythm which served to visually ground the building. Above this, the tall central portion, only two bays wide at the east elevation, called for something different.

Commercial buildings in the Chicago School generally limited cladding to the horizontals and verticals of the building's skeletal frame, but here, beginning on the third floor, the architects transformed what at the second floor had been the discrete, terra-cotta-clad mullions of the Chicago windows into thin, continuous mullions, setting them in front of the spandrel panels and running them all the way up through the fifteenth floor. Above the third floor, another continuous, thin mullion was added at the center of each bay. This treatment was extended across the north elevation. Both visually and philosophically with regard to design, it was a linear extension from the Chicago School's Chicago window to include non-structural elements alongside the wider piers reflective of the steel frame underneath.

The cream-white panning on the continuous vertical mullions, akin to the original terra-cotta cladding, is set off by darker and slightly recessed spandrel panels. This conscious emphasis of the slender verticals celebrates the height and lean nature of the structure. Although the Century Building employs the steel frame, large plate-glass windows, and white-glazed terra cotta that architectural historian Robert Bruegmann characterized as Holabird & Roche's "formula for the State Street commercial building" since 1900, it also signals a change in direction for their future work where verticality takes precedence over clear expression of the underlying structure. By 1922, this transformation developed into a preferred approach as evidenced by the firm's entry into the Tribune Tower Competition. The building can therefore be seen as part of a transition from the expressed steel-frame focus of Holabird & Roche's Chicago School commercial structures toward the sleek linear geometry and emphasis on verticality central to skyscrapers of the Art Deco Movement.

### ***Alterations, 1951-1952***

The 1951-1952 remodeling of the Century Building's first two floors by architect William Sevic for Home Federal Savings added another dimension to the significance of the structure. Like other financial institutions of the era, appearing modern and efficient was seen as a way to attract customers. The sleek, smooth lines of the International Style were used to communicate this message.

The International Style took shape in the 1920s and 30s in Europe and the United States, but it did not come into wider use until the middle decades of the twentieth century. Broadly speaking, common architectural characteristics in this style included smooth and uniform wall surfaces without applied ornamentation; large expanses of windows, often employed to create curtain-like walls of glass; and projecting or cantilevered balconies, upper floors, or other elements creating a visually weightless quality. Compositions avoided symmetry and were a balance of unlike parts. Steel and glass were favored materials.

With the recovery of the economy after World War II, modernization of commercial spaces accelerated, and components of the International Style were translated to storefront design. This new generation of storefronts was called "open front" storefronts due to its focus on the display window providing a better view to interiors. Ideally, then, storefront modernization would be coupled with an interior renovation so that the interior of the commercial space became the display.



**Left: Looking northwest at the Century Building ca. 1960.**  
(Photo by Kaufmann & Fabry Co.; Credit: Photographic Images of Change, U of I at Chicago. Library. Special Collections Department)



**Below: Looking southwest at the Century Building ca. 1964.**  
(Credit: Chuckman Collection)

International Style storefronts were a striking departure from earlier design trends and could create dramatic retail frontages. Tall, polished plate-glass windows were employed as both window and architectural form, replacing flat, impenetrable walls with transparent, more dynamic forms, typically asymmetric, often curving or set at angles. Manufacturers provided the products to make these new kinds of glass walls possible and the Century Building showcased this. In 1954, the Republic Steel Corporation chose architect William Sevic's Home Federal Savings storefront and glass-intensive interior remodeling to advertise their Enduro line of stainless steel product, noting "Designers of this bank have achieved a feeling of ample space in an area in which no space is wasted. They've done it by using large glass areas, with ENDURO Stainless Steel supplying necessary structural strength and safety."

To the pedestrian simply walking by the building, the recessed, curving, glass storefront of the Century Building was (and still is) its most striking feature. This "open front" places large sheets of plate glass in a nonsymmetrical arrangement. Large glass windows continue around the Adams elevation, making the entire banking space within highly visible. With solid visual barriers removed, more people could see into the space. Seeing the interior, where customers were being served, removed a psychological barrier and conveyed to people outside that it was a space set up for them. This unspoken message made it more likely they would enter the space and become a customer. (Almost 13,000 people did just that during Home Federal's first month in their new location according to a *Chicago Tribune* article.)

The main building entry at the south end of the east elevation was not flush with the front plane of the building, but angled back to provide a gentle transition area for anyone entering or leaving the building. Angular planes emphasized the three-dimensionality of storefronts and were thought to help sweep people inside. Opening up storefronts exposed columns that were once hidden, both inside and out. The single, rounded column at the northwest corner of the building, clad in stainless steel thus became a new visual architectural element, as did interior columns newly clad with a smooth finish.

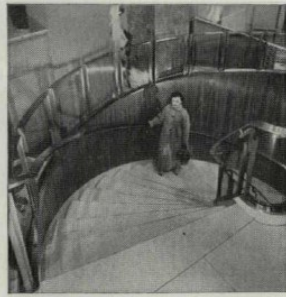
With portions of the storefront recessed, lights in the new exterior ceilings as well as the interior ceilings were recessed to maintain smooth surfaces. At the second floor, select window openings were bricked in and other portions of the wall were opened up so continuous strips of windows could be inserted into the wall plane for a more uniform façade than the original with separate windows. Vertical surfaces were clad with polished, grey granite for a sleek look.

At the time of the renovation, the tall, largely open interior space was shaped with rounded edges and stripped-down surfaces that continued the sweeping sense of movement begun with the rippled shape of the storefront. Rounded edges continued at the top of the space where non-rectilinear, suspended ceiling sections suggested weightlessness. The curving stair to the left of the entrance gracefully swung into the basement. The rounded southern glass wall allowed views all the way back to the polished-marble-clad entry corridor with smooth terrazzo floors. Having created a modern, up-to-date banking space attractive to mid-century tastes, Home Federal Savings featured the Century Building with its new curving storefront and International Style spaces in its ongoing advertising. Since that time, many of the interior elements have been lost to later remodeling, but the dramatic "open front" storefront remains intact.





Bank entrance is open, spacious, inviting, in ENDURO and glass.



ENDURO frames with glass screens give circular stairway "open" effect.



Even bank vault entrance appears spacious, thanks to ENDURO with glass. Home Federal Savings and Loan Assoc. of Chicago. William Sevic, Architect.



ENDURO and glass separate lobby and banking floor, act as balcony rail and draft screen.

# ENDURO combines with glass to create "Spacious" interior

● Designers of this bank have achieved a feeling of ample space in an area in which no space is wasted. They've done it by using large glass areas, with ENDURO Stainless Steel supplying necessary structural strength and safety.


ENDURO and glass belong together. ENDURO's strength-to-weight ratio is extremely high. It is tough, durable. You can use thinner, lighter sections and still design rugged, weathertight construction. No need to "beef up" the section to allow for eventual weakening. ENDURO Stainless Steel stubbornly resists rust and corrosion . . . fights fatigue . . . maintains its great strength through the years.

ENDURO maintains its handsome appearance, too. It is solid stainless steel, with no applied surface to chip, peel, or flake away. That distinctive lustre is a perma-

nent quality. Its smooth surface is easy to clean and to keep clean.

Use ENDURO to spark client enthusiasm. It responds beautifully to your creative ideas, producing striking architectural effects. Competent ENDURO fabricators are ready to work with you. Republic metallurgists will be glad to help develop projects you have on paper or in the idea stage. Sweet's File has more facts, or write:

**REPUBLIC STEEL CORPORATION**  
*Alloy Steel Division • Massillon, Ohio*  
**GENERAL OFFICES • CLEVELAND 1, OHIO**  
 Export Department: Chrysler Building, New York 17, N. Y.



## REPUBLIC

# ENDURO STAINLESS STEEL

See Sweet's for data on Republic Pipe, Sheets and Roofing . . . Electrunit E.M.T. . . Republic Rigid Steel Conduit . . . Berger Lockers, Bins, Shelving and Cabinets . . . Truscon Steel Windows, Doors, Joists and other Building Products.

Manufacturers fabricated new products for "open front" storefronts. Here, an ad for Enduro Stainless Steel features its use in the storefront and interior of the corner commercial space of the Century Building remodeled by architect William Sevic. (From *Architectural Forum*, October 1954)

Retail locations, perhaps more than any other type of real estate, are likely to undergo updating or modernization as business owners use facades as a marketing tool to convey messages about their business and attract customers. The significant costs of property on State Street increase the odds that owners and lessees able to locate there are likely to have the financial resources needed to undertake such work.

When considered from the perspective of the larger story of State Street's architecture, certain storefront alterations may be considered significant. The wholesale change of storefronts, indeed even entire facades, has been a continuous phenomenon from the street's earliest days. Such changes can reflect developments in style, design, economics, and technology that took place across the United States which impacted the trajectory of commerce transacted on State Street.

Storefront and second-floor changes at the Century Building have completely changed the appearance of the base of the building. The remodeling was comprehensive in concept and execution, committing fully to modernization with the vocabulary and materials of the International Style. The materials used were of substantial quality as evidenced by their survival despite re-use by multiple subsequent tenants.

The changes were made between 1951 and 1952, years when the economy was re-bounding after World War II. It was a time of optimism when the new and novel were seen as harbingers of an ever-greater future in the eyes of a people coming out of years spent rationing and re-using what they already owned. The strikingly new Home Federal Savings banking location embodied this turning away from the past and embracing the future.

Therefore, the remodeled first and second floors of the Century Building are significant in their own right and worthy of preservation. All the more so due to the increasingly rare survival of such mid-century designs. Of the six structures identified with the International Style included in the National Register Loop Retail Historic District, added to the Register in 1998, one has been demolished, four buildings' storefronts have been entirely remodeled, and only the Century Building's storefront remains intact.

## **Architects**

### ***Holabird & Roche, Architects of the Century Building***

The senior member of the Holabird & Roche firm was William Holabird. Born in 1854, he studied engineering at West Point, but left before graduating and married Maria Ford Augur in 1875. He immediately moved to Chicago and began working as a draftsman for William Le Baron Jenney. Martin Roche was born in 1853 in Cleveland and arrived in Chicago as a child. He attended public schools and enrolled at the Art Institute but left at age fourteen to become an apprentice cabinetmaker. By 1871, he had begun working for Jenney, where he would meet and become friends with Holabird.

In 1880, Holabird and colleague Ossian Simonds left the employ of Jenney to start their own firm. The following year they would tap Jenney's head draftsman, Martin Roche, to join their venture to add his design sensibility to what architect Edward Renwick, subsequently hired in



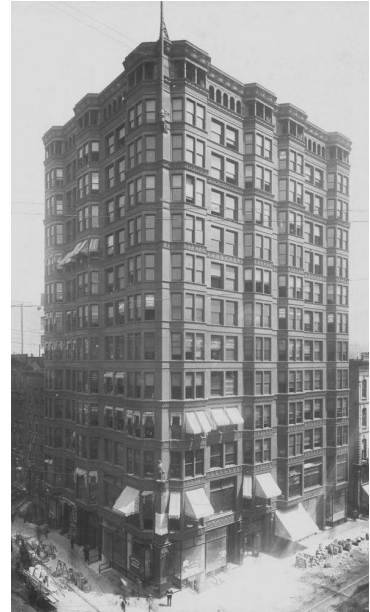
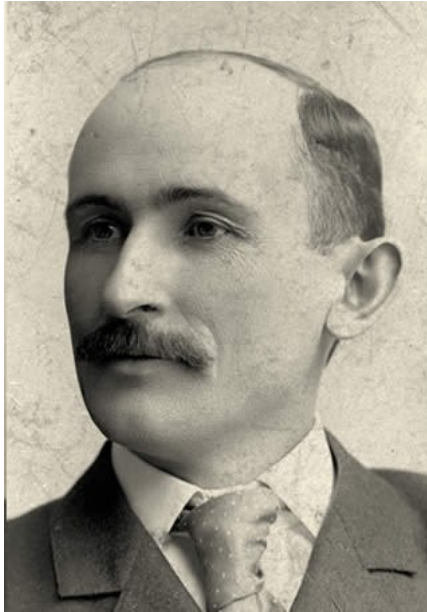
1882, characterized as the firm's being "long on engineering and short on architecture." Simonds withdrew from the firm in 1883 and the name was changed to Holabird & Roche. Commissions were moderate at first, mostly renovations of existing commercial buildings, but the growing city's demand for new construction in the 1880s provided considerable opportunities for the young practice.

Their firm was taking shape as experiments with existing building technologies were being undertaken in the rapid evolution of commercial buildings. In Chicago, Jenney's Home Insurance Building, completed in 1885, is typically credited as the first example of a structure designed with an iron and steel frame. (Per Robert Brueggemann, its masonry walls still carried some of the load as Jenney's novel engineering step for the Home Insurance Building was moving the outermost interior column to the exterior masonry pier into which it was embedded.) When given a chance to design a twelve-story office building at the northeast corner of La Salle and Madison Streets, Holabird & Roche would take the bold step of using only metal (iron and steel) framing in the street wall of their Tacoma Building (1889, demolished). This was so unusual that, when cladding began to be installed simultaneously at the second, sixth, and tenth floors, it drew crowds in a way that Jenney's hidden technological advance had not.

The firm would become instrumental in perfecting the aesthetic expression of the skeletal-steel-frame office building. Their designs displayed the central characteristics of what has come to be called the Chicago School of architecture. The supporting frame, sheathed in brick and/or terra cotta, is expressed on the facade of the building. Rows of spandrels intersect with piers to create a "cellular" elevation. Windows occupy the largest portion of the facades and often include Chicago windows (consisting of a stationary center pane flanked by double-hung windows).

By the early 1890s, Holabird & Roche was one of the handful of Chicago firms to rank nationally and they employed dozens of draftsmen. As the firm grew, operations were more complex, roles became more specialized, and they took on new staff overseeing specialty areas like construction and electrical work. At the turn of the twentieth century, a healthy economy led to increasing commissions. As one of the firms whose work played a large role in shaping State Street, they became known for their steel-frame, white-glazed-terra-cotta buildings such as the twelve-story Republic Building (1905, demolished 1961, 209 South State Street) and the nineteen-story North American Building (1912, extant, 2 West Monroe Street). Their work branched out to include institutional and civic work as well as resorts and club buildings. Around 1910, they began to solicit business outside of Chicago and developed a big presence in the small towns and cities of the Midwest.

Holabird & Roche grew to be one of the most successful and prolific architectural firms in Chicago. With an established national reputation, the firm's commissions averaged \$6 million per year between 1908 and 1911, reaching a peak of \$13 million in 1910. By the time the Century Building was completed in 1916, the firm was responsible for five to ten percent of the construction in the city and employed over one hundred draftsmen. Between 1912 and 1917, Holabird & Roche surpassed the New York firm of McKim, Mead & White in size and



***Clockwise from above left:***

**William Holabird.** (Credit: Chicago History Museum, ICHI-39473)

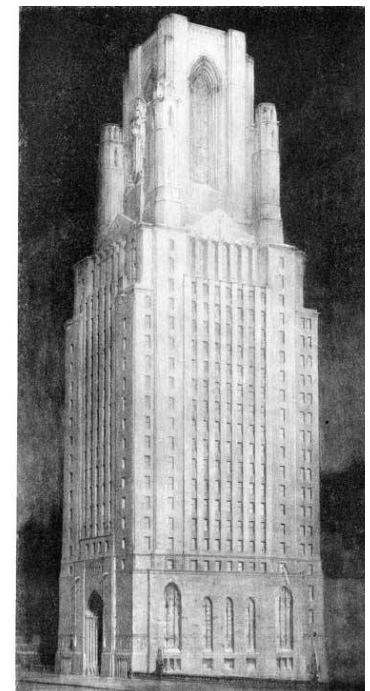
**Martin Roche.** (Credit: Chicago History Museum, ICHI-33655)

**Tacoma Building by Holabird & Roche, 1888-1889, northeast corner of La Salle and Madison Streets, demolished 1929.** (Photo by J.W. Taylor; Credit: Ryerson & Burnham Libraries)

**Holabird & Roche's entry into 1922 Tribune Tower Competition. It won third prize.** (Credit: Ryerson & Burnham Libraries)

**North American Building by Holabird & Roche, 1911-1912, 36 South State Street, extant.** (Postcard)

**Republic Building by Holabird & Roche 1904-1905, addition 1909, 201 South State, demolished 1961.** (Photo by Chicago Architectural Photographing Co.; Credit: Ryerson & Burnham Libraries)



commissions, but was still behind the Chicago firm of Burnham & Company. By the 1920s, Holabird & Roche had surpassed even them.

In 1914, William Holabird's twenty-seven-year-old son, John, came to work for the firm. Like his father, he had studied engineering at West Point. After graduating, he attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He was soon joined at the architecture firm by École des Beaux-Arts classmate John Root, son of architect John Wellborn Root, the partner of Daniel Burnham. John Root, Jr. and John Holabird left the firm in 1917 to serve in the military during World War I and both re-entered the firm upon their return in 1919.

With his own father in failing health, and Martin Roche disinclined to take full charge, John Holabird assumed leadership in the office during the busy years of the 1920s. During this time, he proved his skill and ability in executing the numerous and varied commissions received by the firm. William Holabird died in 1923, but the partnership with Martin Roche was continued by his son John until Roche's death in 1927. In 1928, John reorganized the firm and took on John Root as a partner, launching Holabird & Root.

The 1920s have been cited as one of the most brilliant periods in the firm's history, especially with regard to the development of setback-styled skyscrapers in Chicago and elsewhere in the Midwest. The building code that prompted this style of skyscraper was not in place in the 1910s, but the vertical emphasis of the Century Building can be seen as a precursor of vertical-centric designs to come such as the firm's 1922 entry into the Chicago Tribune Competition (unbuilt), the La Salle-Wacker Building (1926, extant, 221 North La Salle Street), 333 North Michigan Avenue (1928, extant, designated Chicago Landmark), and the Chicago Board of Trade (1928, extant, 141 West Jackson Boulevard, designated Chicago Landmark).

As the years passed, the firm continued to build on the reputation of its predecessor and established itself as one of the premier architectural firms in the city. Holabird & Root would have a 45-year partnership and designed some of Chicago's best-known skyscrapers, many of them in Chicago's central business district.

### ***William Sevic, Architect of the 1951-1952 Alterations***

William Sevic (1898-1983) designed the 1951-1952 remodeling of the lower-level floors of the Century Building for Home Federal Savings. Sevic, the son of Czech immigrants, was a successful architect based out of Home Federal's former Pilsen neighborhood and would have been a natural choice for an institution like Home Federal which was closely connected to Chicago's Czech community. In Pilsen, he had begun to do work for corporate clients as early as 1924 with his design of the Truck Fleet Complex at 1647 South Blue Island Avenue in 1924 for the Furhman & Forster meat-packing company.

Sevic had earned his architecture degree from the Armour Institute of Technology in 1920. R. Harold Zook taught at the Armour Institute through 1918 and Sevic became a protégé of the distinctive architect, paying homage to his former mentor by incorporating two of Zook's signature spider webs in wrought-iron into his design for the 1931 Oh Henry Ballroom in Willow Springs, later known as the Willowbrook Ballroom. The Oh Henry Park was a popular

recreation destination which became known for its dancer-friendly, woven-construction, “sprung-floor” ballroom which remained a national attraction decades after the park closed until it was destroyed by fire in 2016.

Not long after the Oh Henry project, Sevic’s path crossed with Holabird & Root, as reported in a June 30, 1935, *Chicago Tribune* article, when the firm worked “in association with William Sevic” to remodel a five-story structure and build a five-story annex as the new home for Saks Fifth Avenue at 669 North Michigan Avenue (extant). By 1951, he was partially remodeling Holabird & Roche’s Century Building. The May 3, 1952, *Chicago Tribune* article noting the official renaming of 202 South State Street as the Home Federal Building shows signage at the base of the building being unveiled by the company’s president, personnel director, and “William Sevic, vice president and architect.” Sevic’s work with banks did not end with Home Federal. On January 5, 1958, the *Chicago Tribune* printed his design for a new, one-story, glass-walled International Style bank he designed for Hemlock Savings & Loan at 5140 South Ashland Avenue (extant). Throughout his 50-plus-year career, William Sevic’s architecture practice remained based in his home neighborhood of Pilsen.

## **Tenants and Ownership**

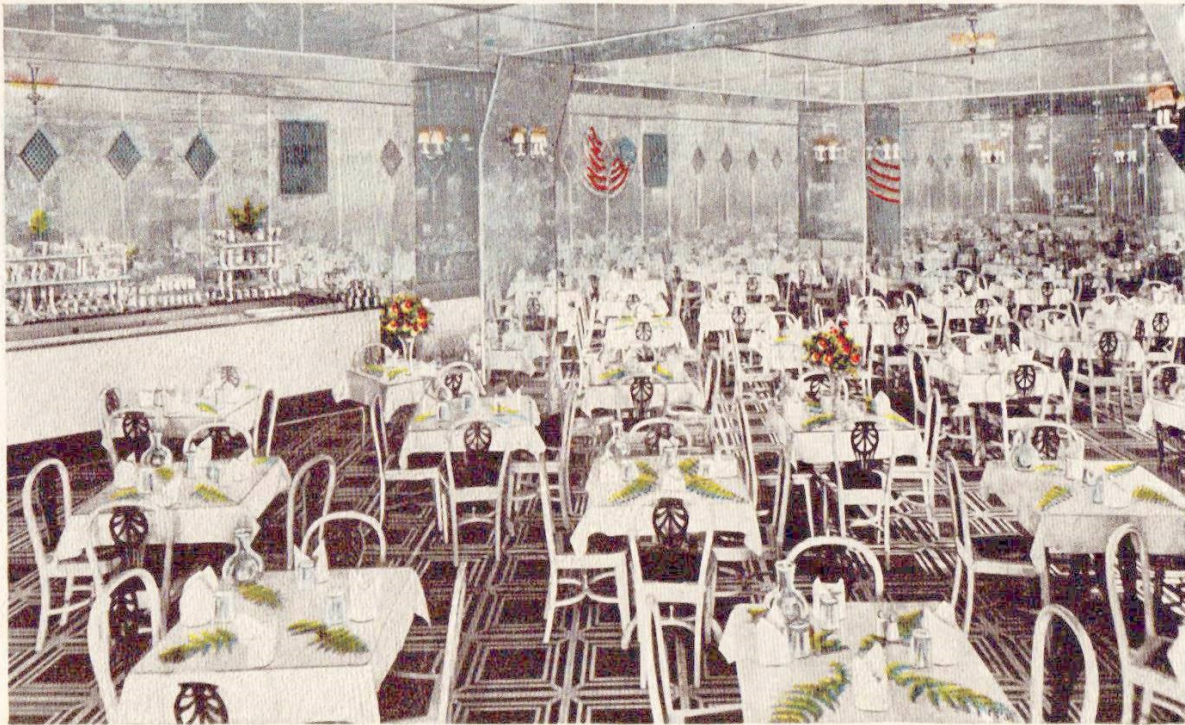
The Buck & Rayner Drugstore was the first occupant of the corner retail space. Postcards produced by the Curt Teich Company in 1917 for the Buck & Rayner Cafeteria tout the “\$100,000 ventilating plant—68 degrees cool in summer.” In 1928, the Adams and State drug store location was one of the outlets purchased by the Liggett drugstore chain which would remain there through the 1940s. Other ground-floor retail tenants included jewelers and men’s clothiers.

A March 13, 1917, *Chicago Tribune* article reported that Century Trust and Savings signed a twenty-year lease to relocate their business to the second floor of the renamed Century Building, but the institution left in 1923 after being purchased by the Chicago Trust Company. Parker Pen Corporation had taken the floor over as a retail space by 1930.

Between 1949 and 1950, Home Federal Savings purchased the building and the leasehold for the property. The savings & loan company was begun in 1886 by and in Chicago’s Bohemian community of Pilsen to help people purchase homes. A 1952 article in the *Chicago Tribune* announced their new headquarters at 202 South State, what the company would refer to as the Home Federal Savings Building: “The association’s new home has been modernized and beautified. Large amounts of plate glass, stainless steel trim, and other decorative trim give it the appearance of a handsome store. The association will occupy two floors below street level and five above.” The move would be rewarded with growth of their assets from 40 to 150 million dollars within six years. Home Federal moved its banking facilities out in 1962, and, by the following year, the corner space had been remodeled and opened as Romas Restaurant. In the 1970s, the Court Restaurant would take over the space.



5100.000 VENTILATING PLANT—68 DEGREES COOL IN SUMMER.



BUCK & RAYNER CAFETERIA, STATE AND ADAMS, CHICAGO, ILL.

**HELLO!**  
**MRS. MILLS**

Say, talk about good things to eat. Frank and I strack it rich last night. We went to Buck & Rayner's 20th Century Cafe at State and Adams, that new place with mirrors on walls and ceilings. You know they are specializing on oysters, clams, shrimps, and lobster. I brought a menu home so I could tell you what we had.

Well, Frank had soft clams, steamed, all large, white, and luscious, 20th Century style, with pure juice broth and butter sauc for 40c. He could of had 'em fried, with Rasher of Virginia Bacon. He says he is going to try them that way next time. I had their combination seafood waffle dinner for 75c. My choice of shrimp, crabmeat, oyster or clam cocktail and sliced tomatoes with French dressing. Then a cup of real chicken gumbo soup. My choice of crabmeat, Baltimore style—mushrooms and green peppers—curry of fried shrimps en Bordure. Lake Superior Jumbo Whitefish planked on Baltimore Grill—candied sweet potatoes—Spongy South Carolina waffle with real Vermont maple syrup—choice of home-made pudding, delicious Parfait and cake or cheese. Large cup of coffee with real cream. We are going back tonight for their Southern Chicken Waffle Dinners for 75c.

Well, Grace, that sounds fine. I will get Jim on the phone and arrange to meet you there tonight.

All right, we will meet you at 6:30 by the fourteen mirror lined telephone booths. Don't forget the place, Buck & Rayner's 20th Century Cafe, State and Adams.

**ALL RIGHT, GOOD-BY.**



Above: Buck & Rayner Cafeteria postcard, 1917. (Credit: Curt Teich Company)

Left: Ad for Buck & Rayner's 20th Century Café in the October 23, 1916, Chicago Tribune.

In line with the “tall shops” design of the Century building, upper floors had a variety of retail, wholesale, and service-provider tenants like tailors, jewelers, and brokers in its early years, but gradually shifted to majority office and professional tenants including doctors, dentists, and optometrists. The federal government acquired the building via a taking circa 2005 and it has remained vacant since that time.





**Left:** A “Run Jesse Run” sign is barely visible in the third-floor window of the Century Building, the downtown campaign headquarters for Jesse Jackson’s 1984 bid for the presidency. (Photo by George Thompson; Credit: *Chicago Tribune*, May 27, 1984)

**Lower left:** The Century Building, 1982. (Photo by C. William C. Brubaker; Credit: C. William Brubaker Collection, University of Illinois at Chicago)

**Lower right:** The Century Building ca. 1975. (Credit: Chicago History Museum)



## **CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION**

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for landmark designation,” as well as possesses sufficient historic integrity to convey its significance. The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Century Building at 202 South State Street be designated as a Chicago Landmark:

### ***Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City’s History***

*Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The Century Building is an outstanding example of a distinct retail building type known as a “tall shops” building. “Tall shops” buildings were the retail equivalent of the speculative office building, using high-rise structures to create interior shopping “streets.” Free from the vagaries of outside weather, noise, and bustle, this early vertical version of an indoor mall allowed shoppers to move from one floor to the next as they perused goods and services.
- “Tall shops” buildings like the Century Building were designed to attract the large numbers of small- and mid-sized merchants and service providers who desired the advantages of being located on State Street but for whom street-level space did not make economic sense. Handsome edifices with lavish entries and lobbies were designed to attract and encourage potential customers to enter and circulate through the building. Elegant display cases on the ground floor allowed upper-floor tenants to advertise their wares. On the upper floors, glass corridor walls of the tenant spaces functioned like shop windows. Tenants enjoyed the advantages of single ownership in terms of scale of operation and building management while amenities such as restaurants doubled as a draw for potential customers.
- The Century Building is prominently sited at the southwest corner of State and Adams Streets. Despite occupying only about half of the State Street frontage in the Loop, speculative high-rise “tall shops” and professional office buildings, typically occupying corners, along with major department store buildings, occupying half- or full-block lots, visually dominated the streetscape and created a distinctive streetwall with canyon-like views.
- The Century Building manifests in built form the increasing demand for retail space on State Street and the consequent skyrocketing prices for it in the decades before the First World War. Developers exploited advances in building technologies and materials to construct taller buildings by creating skyscrapers on the highly desirable but often narrow parcels they were able to assemble. These purpose-built retail “tall shops” structures contributed to the increasing density of State Street over the course of its evolution as Chicago’s primary retail corridor.



#### ***Criterion 4: Important Architecture***

*Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*

- The Century Building is a Commercial-style building in the tradition of the Chicago School of architecture. Experiments with building materials and technologies allowed buildings to grow taller, exterior walls to open up to allow in more light, and usable interior space to be maximized with fewer columns. The Century Building utilized these key elements of the Chicago School of architecture.
- The Century Building is located on State Street in Chicago's Loop, home to more buildings from the Chicago School of architecture than anywhere else. The Century Building represents the final years of this movement, generally considered to end with the onset of the First World War, where emphasis on expression of the steel-frame construction gave way to the emphasis on verticality and sleek, linear geometry seen in much of the following decades' skyscrapers.
- The Century Building was one of dozens of Loop structures built in the two decades leading up to the First World War featuring white-glazed-terra-cotta cladding. Taken together, they represented the most extensive use of white-glazed terra cotta in the city.
- Although the Century Building employs the steel frame, large window openings, and white-glazed terra cotta that characterized Holabird & Roche's State Street commercial buildings since 1900, it also signaled a change. The repeating, narrow, continuous mullions within each bay, the overall height of the structure relative to its width, and the darkening and recessing of spandrel panels so they visually recede relative to the verticals give the façades a striking emphasis on verticality which were central to the firm's skyscraper designs in the following decade.
- The Century Building displays a high level of detailing and craftsmanship in the Late Gothic terra-cotta ornamentation at the building's exterior.
- The 1951-1952 remodeling of the Century Building's exterior at the first and second floors by architect William Sevic for Home Federal Savings reflects the optimism and prosperity of post-war America when new was equated with better. Like other financial institutions of the era, appearing modern and efficient was seen as a way to attract customers. The unadorned, smooth lines of the International Style were used to communicate this message.
- The wholesale change of storefronts, indeed even entire facades, has been a continuous phenomenon from State Street's earliest days. With the recovery of the economy after the Second World War, modernization of commercial spaces accelerated on State Street. The Century Building's altered exterior at the first and second floors is especially noteworthy as a rare surviving example of a mid-twentieth-century commercial storefront remodeling on State Street.

- The storefront of the Century Building is an excellent example of the translation of the International Style to storefront design. New, “open front” storefronts prioritized views inside such that the interior commercial space became the display. Tall, plate-glass windows were employed as both window and architectural form. The Century Building’s dramatic, floor-to-ceiling, curving-plate-glass storefront trimmed in stainless steel is an example par excellence of these ideas.

### ***Criterion 5: Important Architect***

*Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The Century Building was designed by Chicago architects William Holabird and Martin Roche, both of whom are recognized as innovative and prolific practitioners of the Chicago School of architecture.
- The architectural firm of Holabird & Roche was one of the most successful and prolific architectural firms in Chicago between 1883-1927. By the time the Century Building was completed in 1916, the firm was responsible for five to ten percent of the construction in the city. Over a dozen of their buildings are designated as individual Chicago Landmarks including the Old Colony, Marquette, Chicago, and City Hall-County Buildings, the Three Arts Club, and the Palmer House Hotel.
- Holabird & Roche was one of the firms whose work played a large role in shaping State Street. The Century Building was one in a series of their steel-frame, white-glazed-terra-cotta buildings for which they became known, including the twelve-story Republic Building (1905, demolished 1961, 209 South State Street), the nineteen-story North American Building (1912, extant, 2 West Monroe Street), the Rothschild Department Store (1912; extant; 333 South State Street), and the Waterman Building (1919, extant; 127 South State Street).

### ***Integrity Criteria***

*The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value.*

The Century Building exhibits a high degree of architectural integrity. No major additions or alterations have been made to the building since the 1951-1952 remodeling of the exterior at the first and second floors, leaving most historic features, finishes, overall form, footprint, and location of entrances and windows intact. The 1951-1952 exterior remodeling of the first two floors is considered significant as a rare surviving example of a mid-twentieth-century commercial storefront remodeling on State Street.

The ground-floor exterior from 1951-1952 is remarkably intact and very minor changes such as addition of lettering to the transom bar are easily reversed. Windows and some portion of the granite cladding at the north and east elevations of the second floor have been removed, but the

1951-1952 reconfigured window openings remain. There is photographic documentation of the remodeling and original cladding at the first floor remains to inform future restoration work, so these losses can be considered reversible. The projecting steel canopy installed above first floor to protect pedestrians in 2009 is temporary and easily removed.

Permit research shows that Holabird & Roche continued limited work on the Century Building after its completion, but the majority appears to have been interior work except for the construction of a penthouse addition in 1928 which would be considered part of the era of significance. Absence of the original cornice is not unusual for buildings of this age, and this does not significantly impair the building's ability to convey its historic character. The exterior retains the majority of its architectural terra cotta cladding and decoration and imparts a strong sense of its original visual character. The building's historic integrity is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such values.

## **SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES**

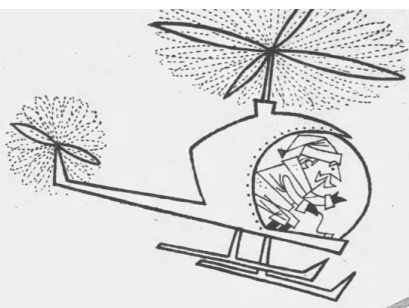
Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark. Based upon its evaluation of the Century Building at 202 South State Street, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as follows:

- All exterior elevations of the building, including rooflines and the first- and second-floor exteriors remodeled in 1951-1952.

In light of the Century Building's adjacency to the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse and the security vulnerabilities asserted by the federal government, and in order to recognize and provide the flexibility which may be needed to accommodate the fifteen (15) reuse criteria provided by the General Services Administration (the "GSA") for the Century Building which were developed in collaboration with the United States District Court, Northern District of Illinois, and federal law enforcement agencies, and published in the November 1, 2022, Federal Register, the following additional guidelines shall also apply to the Commission's review of permits pursuant to Section 2-120-740:

- The Commission shall have flexibility to allow modifications to the Century Building to accommodate the GSA's reuse criteria in order that viable reuse of the building can be achieved.

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE COOPER FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE



# HOME FEDERAL SAVINGS

# MOVES

ACROSS STATE STREET

## New Home Opens Tomorrow December 17th!

IN THE MIDDLE of Saturday night, while the city slept, men and machines silently crossed State Street at Adams from one corner to another, moving the \$285 Million Savings Institution.

You'll see the new Home Federal building, sixteen stories of dark gray glass, gleaming aluminum and steel, on the Southeast corner of State and Adams. True, most of the equipment is brand new, but such things as permanent records (maintained since HOME began in 1886) had to make the crossing of State Street.

Inside, you'll discover four customer service floors joined by escalators, three times the former savings lobby space, and elevators uniting all 16 stories. Our IBM electronic Data Processing Center occupies the fourth floor and can be viewed in operation by the public.

We're scarcely settled this week, but watch for HOME's grand "Grand Opening" with presents and prizes, coming for you in January!



Now Home is ready to give you—  
More income  
More often  
More conveniently

Open daily 8:45 to 5 including Saturdays  
Monday nights till 8 p.m.

# HOME FEDERAL SAVINGS

Still—STATE AT ADAMS—but now on the Southeast corner  
CHICAGO 4 WAbash 2-9600

Home Federal bought the Holabird & Roche-designed "tall shops" Republic Building across State Street from the Century Building and tore it down in 1961 to build the first new skyscraper on State Street since before 1930. Pictured here in their ad, the new International Style building was built on the 1905 caissons of the Republic Building. (From *Chicago Tribune*, December 16, 1962)



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**The Century Building with ground-floor tenant Romas Restaurant is at right in this photo of a November 26, 1967, State Street parade.**

(Photo by *Chicago Sun-Times*; Credit: Chicago History Museum, ST-20003728-0056, Chicago Sun-Times collection)



# **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

## **CITY OF CHICAGO**

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*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual building, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Historic Preservation Division of the Chicago Department of Planning and Development.*

*This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.*

## COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

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