

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



Chicago Motor Club Building

68 E. Wacker Place

**Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission
on Chicago Landmarks, March 1, 2012**



CITY OF CHICAGO
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Department of Housing and Economic Development
Andrew J. Mooney, Commissioner

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 which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

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.

CHICAGO MOTOR CLUB BUILDING

68 E. WACKER PLACE

BUILT: 1928

ARCHITECTS: HOLABIRD & ROOT

The Chicago Motor Club Building is an exceptional example of an Art Deco-style skyscraper that also exemplifies the importance of the automobile to the history of early 20th-century Chicago. Built in 1928, the building was the long-time headquarters of the Chicago Motor Club, a nationally-prominent motor club founded in 1906 to promote automobile ownership and to advocate on behalf of motorists, good roads and traffic safety. An early affiliate of the American Automobile Association (AAA), the club played a major role locally in lobbying for the implementation of improvements proposed in Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett's 1909 *Plan of Chicago* to better accommodate automobile traffic in the City's central business district.

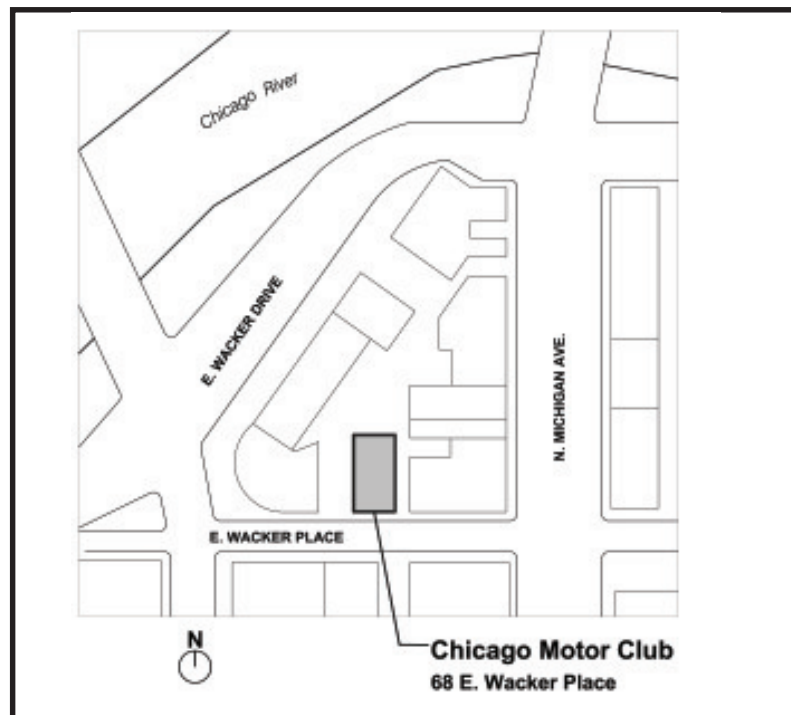
Situated on the north side of E. Wacker Place just west of N. Michigan Avenue, the Chicago Motor Club Building is a fifteen-story steel-frame building clad with gray limestone on its primary façade. The base is visually dominated by a highly-decorative and dramatic cast-iron surround that frames the building's monumental entrance, with its three doorways and a set of triple-height windows above. Designed in the Art Deco architectural style by the preeminent Chicago firm of Holabird & Root, the building is elaborately detailed with a plethora of Art Deco-style ornament, including stylized flowers and plants, flowing fountains of water, zigzags, swirls and sunbursts. Due to its relatively small size, the Chicago Motor Club Building did not require the upper-story setbacks typical of taller 1920s skyscrapers under Chicago's pioneering 1923 zoning ordinance; consequently, the building rises into the sky with a great sense of verticality.

The building's visually-dramatic, triple-height lobby is one of the finest Art Deco interior spaces in Chicago. The rectangular lobby features small mezzanines at both the north and south ends and



Top right: The Chicago Motor Club Building is a fifteen-story Art Deco-style skyscraper clad on its front facade with gray limestone and granite. It was built in 1928 as the headquarters of the Chicago Motor Club. **Top left:** The club's name and insignia are carved into the building's base.

Bottom: The building is located on the north side of E. Wacker Place, between N. Michigan Avenue and E. Wacker Drive.



is finely and lavishly detailed with Art Deco-style ornament throughout. Alcoves along the east wall were originally designed to showcase scores of auto touring pamphlets and lighted by tall windows ornamented with foliate ornament, geometric figures, and Art Deco-style chandeliers. Situated along the opposite wall above a bank of elevators is a large-scale cartographic mural of the United States by important Chicago artist John Warner Norton depicting 1920s-era transcontinental automobile routes. All of these finely-wrought details convey a sense of luxury, modernity, and sophistication of this exciting era in the evolution of the automobile age.

MOTORING IN CHICAGO

As a national transportation hub and a merchandising center, Chicago played an important early role in the promotion of the automobile and the construction of safe and efficient roads in the United States. Chicago's fascination with the automobile began in the 1890s and grew exponentially in the decades that followed. The automobile first made its appearance on Chicago streets in 1892. The following year, several models were showcased at the World's Columbian Exposition. On Thanksgiving Day in 1895, the *Chicago Herald* staged "America's First Automobile Race," a well-publicized test race through the city's streets. The winning entry ran the 52-mile round-trip route from Chicago's Jackson Park to Evanston in just under eight hours—at an average speed of 6.7 miles per hour.

Six years later the first Chicago Automobile Show was held, yet only one out of every 10,000 Chicagoans had the financial means to own an automobile in 1900. In Chicago, as elsewhere, early automobiles were expensive and unreliable; consequently, in the early years they were novelties enjoyed only by the rich. Most of these early cars though were sold through bicycle dealerships or by carriage makers, such as the Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company. In just two decades however, the number of cars in the city would increase by almost 500 times.

Beginning in 1905 and continuing through the 1930s, automobile dealers and purveyors of other auto-related products and services established businesses on South Michigan Avenue, predominately between 14th and 24th streets on Chicago's Near South Side. Today, more than fifty of these early commercial buildings form Motor Row, a designated Chicago Landmark District, considered to be the largest, intact early "automobile row" in the United States. Auto rows developed in numerous cities shortly after 1900 as car companies sought to create districts where the sale and repair of cars could become an easy urban shopping experience. At its peak, as many as 116 different makes of automobiles were being sold on Chicago's Motor Row.

The early automobiles that streamed out of the showrooms on Motor Row were often forced to contend with deeply rutted streets and fierce competition with streetcars, horse-drawn carriages and commercial traffic for a share of the road. Consequently, motorists, city planners and business owners sought solutions to address the growing number of traffic-related issues. Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett's 1909 *Plan of Chicago* proposed several improvements to accommodate the growing number of automobiles which were increasingly becoming a necessity of modern urban life.

Right: A motorist (seen at the bottom right of the photo) dodges streetcars, pedestrians and horse-drawn wagons as he attempts to navigate through traffic at the intersection of State and Madison streets in 1906.

In the early-twentieth century, most roadways in the city were poorly surfaced. Bottom: A view of automobiles moving through the deep ruts of Michigan Avenue in 1924. (The London Guaranty Building, with a belvedere at the top, and the Wrigley Building are seen in the background.)



The *Plan of Chicago*, which embodied the early 20th-century attitude that better streets and roads were a benefit to the whole community, was published just as new mass-produced cars like the Ford Model T (introduced in 1908) put auto ownership itself within the grasp of the middle class. At the urging of automobile proponents including transportation engineers, automobile dealers, motor clubs and downtown business owners, the Chicago Plan Commission gave high priority to elements of the Burnham Plan that would relieve central city congestion, such as the widening of North Michigan Avenue (completed 1920), establishing a public garage in Grant Park (1921), and the construction of the double-decked Wacker Drive (1926).

Additionally, efforts were made to assure that traffic control in Chicago would encourage the increased use of automobiles in the central business district. Streetcars were rerouted, parking was restricted, off-street parking facilities increased dramatically, penalties for violations were reduced so that they might more routinely be imposed, and Chicago began the development of coordinated traffic control signals in 1925. The result of these improvements was a dramatic increase in the number of vehicles passing through the central business district, with an equally dramatic drop in congestion. By 1926, it was possible for a motorist to travel through the city and around the central business district on broad well-surfaced roadways.

Massive street-widening and bypass construction projects were undertaken in the late-1920s to further alleviate the city's traffic congestion and to allow for the "betterment of commercial facilities, methods of transportation for persons, and for goods, to remove obstacles which prevent or obstruct circulation and to increase convenience." In arguing for the widening of LaSalle Street from 58 feet to 108 feet, the Plan Commissioners stated that "overall the improvement plan was meant to increase property values, add to city's annual revenues, improve economic conditions, facilitate commerce and industry, foster City growth, and help Chicago maintain its commercial standing."

Private auto ownership rose steadily in Chicago, to one automobile for every eight inhabitants by 1930, but lagged behind state and national averages (around one for every five people). Illinois roads helped funnel suburban automobiles into Chicago and made it possible for the city's suburbs to expand from their railroad oriented cores, increasing suburban dependence on the automobile. At the height of the automobile age in metropolitan Chicago, like other major urban centers throughout the nation, the construction of a local system of superhighways would accelerate the suburban dispersal of residential districts, businesses and services.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHICAGO MOTOR CLUB

At the turn of the 20th century, almost immediately after the first automobiles appeared on America's roads, motorists began organizing motor clubs. In 1906 the Chicago Motor Club was founded by a group of motoring enthusiasts who shared an interest in leisure and sporting aspects of motoring such as auto touring and auto racing. Unlike many of the approximately fifty other auto clubs across the United States, however, the Chicago Motor Club was perceived of as more than a social group organized for the purpose of promoting the sport.

At the turn of the 20th century, the high cost of automobiles made them novelties enjoyed only by the wealthy. Top right: A 1905 photo of Mrs. Louisa Crosby driving an early automobile on South Michigan Avenue in what is now the Motor Row District.



By the 1920s, autos were increasingly becoming a necessity of modern urban life and efforts were made to accommodate them. Middle right: Traffic control signals like this one on State Street in front of the Carson Pirie Scott & Co. Building were introduced in 1925.



Massive construction projects proposed in Bunham and Bennett's 1909 *Plan of Chicago* were undertaken in the late-1920s to help alleviate traffic congestion. Bottom right: A ceremony celebrating the opening of Wacker Drive in 1926. Bottom left: A *Chicago Daily Tribune* headline from December 2, 1922 announces the opening of auto lanes on Michigan Avenue.

**NEW BOUL MICH
AUTO LANES OPEN
TOMORROW NIGHT**

South Bottle Neck Cut
Out by Widening.



From its inception, members of the Chicago Motor Club sought to distinguish their club from its rivals (especially the Chicago Automobile Club) by advocating for motorists and “taking up the legal angle and seeking protection from tire shooters and the like.” In just a decade, the Chicago Motor Club gained national prominence by promoting automobile ownership and advocating on behalf of motorists for good roads, traffic safety, and fair legislation. Locally, this civic organization played a major role in lobbying for the implementation of improvements proposed in Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett’s 1909 *Plan of Chicago* to more safely accommodate automobile traffic in the City’s central business district.

During the club’s first year of operations, its founding members, Joseph F. Gunther, George G. Greenburg, William H. Arthur, John W. Hayden, and Charles P. Root, undertook a diverse and ambitious agenda. Their efforts ranged from urging Mayor Edward F. Dunne and members of the Chicago City Council to enforce the ordinance that required all vehicles on the road to carry lights to promoting a spate of motoring events. The Club established its headquarters in the New Southern Hotel at Michigan Avenue and 13th Street (demolished), just north of the burgeoning automobile row between 14th and 24th streets.

One of the most popular of the early motoring events sponsored by the Chicago Motor Club was the “Hill Test” which began in 1906 in Algonquin, Illinois. Billed as the “first of the sort on this side of the Atlantic,” the Hill Test attracted more than fifty amateur and professional drivers seeking to navigate their roadsters up a steep hillside in record time. The novelty of the competition (and that of the automobile itself) attracted the attention of hundreds of spectators and the media. In the spirit of fairness, members of the Chicago Motor Club developed a handicapping formula and established a classification system for the competition that grouped the autos into the following categories: cars listing at \$1,000 and under; cars from \$1,000 to \$1,750; cars between \$1,750 and \$2,500; and cars \$2,500 and over. Andrew McNally II, grandson of the famous map publisher, captured the winning time of the first Hill Test in his Pierce Arrow automobile. Other early contests sponsored by the Club such as the “1,000 mile reliability run” and the “one gallon economy test” were presented to educate the public “as to the possibilities of the automobile” and to demonstrate that “motor cars are for use all the year around.”

During the 1910s with the rapidly growing popularity of the automobile, the membership of the Chicago Motor Club quickly surpassed 1,000 members. As the Chicago Motor Club garnered the attention of motoring enthusiasts by promoting motoring events of national note and disseminating information on travel routes and road conditions, it also functioned as a public relations machine and a goodwill ambassador for motorists. After several highly publicized hit-and-run incidents in the City, the Chicago Motor Club offered a reward for information leading to the arrest of the culprit in an effort to convince the public that “sane automobilists do not sanction reckless driving.”

The Fight for Good Roads

At the turn of the century, existing roads had been designed for the horse and buggy—not the auto. Recognizing that without good roads the intrinsic value of the automobile would be symbolic, little more than a leisure-time pursuit or a status symbol of upper class culture, the



Top left: The original headquarters of the Chicago Motor Club was located in the New Southern Hotel at Michigan and 13th avenues (demolished). Top right: A club member participating in the 1908 "Hill Test" in Algonquin, Illinois. Middle right: Club member Frank Nutt prepares to proceed to the starting gate at a 1907 auto reliability test. Bottom: Motorist Charles Soules rounds the turn of the race track at a 1911 Chicago Motor Club race.



Chicago Motor Club spearheaded lobbying efforts at the state and local level. By 1912, the necessity of good roads in the form of permanent highways became imperative not just for the steadily increasing number of motorists, but also for commercial business owners who began to ship products over the roadways in motor trucks.

In 1914 under the leadership of its president, Charles M. Hayes, the Chicago Motor Club became a chapter of the American Automobile Association (known as AAA or Triple-A). During this time, the Club maintained a unique identity separate and apart from the national organization as it expanded its focus on legislative matters. In an effort to secure cooperation at the city and county level for building improved highways and to establish a system of “trunk lines” leading into and out of Chicago, the Chicago Motor Club united auto dealers, motor clubs, athletic clubs, the Chicago Chamber of Commerce, and the Chicago Automobile Trade Association into an organization called the Associated Roads Organization of Chicago and Cook County. Milwaukee and Archer avenues were the first roads to be improved as a result of the campaign launched by the new Association.

The club achieved another early important step in raising awareness of road conditions when Illinois Gov. Edward F. Dunne endorsed the Association’s plan to name April 15, 1914, “Good Roads Day” throughout the state. Later the same year the Illinois State Highway Commission announced its plans to establish two principal auto routes originating in Chicago. Under the proposal one route (known as the “River to River Road”) would extend west to the Mississippi River in Clinton, Iowa, and the other would stretch north to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Funding for the construction of these roads was secured in 1916, when President Woodrow Wilson signed the Federal Aid Highway Act requiring the federal government to appropriate funds for building and improving roads. Completed in the 1920s, the two routes, respectively, formed portions of the national auto trails known as the Lincoln Highway (now US Route 30) and the Yellowstone Trail (now US Route 14).

As the Chicago Motor Club expanded its scope of operations and increased its membership, it quickly outgrew several clubhouses. From 1917 to 1919, the Club relocated three times, first occupying offices in the Lexington Hotel at 2135 S. Michigan Avenue (demolished), then establishing its clubhouse in the Barlow N. Higginbotham residence at 29th and Michigan Avenue (demolished), and finally setting up operations in the John Cudahy House located at 3254 S. Michigan Avenue (demolished). While the club initially sought to locate in the central business district, it found that occupying quarters at the south end of Motor Row was conducive to maintaining close contact with automobile dealers and trade associations. In 1920, as its membership swelled to 5,000, the Chicago Motor Club commissioned architect Alfred S. Alschuler to design a 3-story annex to its clubhouse to house a café and other amenities. During the 1920s, the Chicago Motor Club increasingly formalized its operations to focus on four major initiatives: ongoing efforts to secure the passage of legislation to fund improvements to and the construction of good roads; emergency assistance to stranded motorists; the implementation of traffic safety measures; and perhaps, its most well-known service, encouraging auto-related tourism.

**GOV. DUNNE STARTS
'GOOD ROADS' WORK;
CROWDS GREET HIM**

Uses Shovel at Mooseheart and
Sees Men and Women Labor
on Highway.



Two of the primary goals of the Chicago Motor Club were to advocate for motorists and to lobby for "good roads." In 1914 the club enlisted the support of Illinois Gov. Edward F. Dunne in the "Fight for Good Roads." Top right: Gov. Dunne (holding papers) is seen at the kick-off the Good Roads campaign to promote the construction of new highways in Illinois.

Top left: Headline from *Chicago Daily Tribune* reports on the April 15, 1914, event.

Right: A 1921 advertisement outlines the club's advocacy efforts. Bottom: Gov. Len Small and Mayor William Hale Thompson ride to the opening of the Grant Park garage in an automobile bearing a "Chicago Motor Club" pennant in 1921.

**We Maintain in Behalf of
Motorists a Legislative Bureau**

which has been instrumental in defeating many adverse bills and aiding the passage of some most favorable ones. Every session at Springfield is attended by our well qualified representative.

It is his duty to closely watch the proceedings of the legislature and carefully analyze all bills affecting the interests of motorists. Every car owner as well as our 35,000 members get the benefit. Why not give your moral and financial support to this work by joining our ranks?

<p>Other Departments for Benefit of Members</p> <p>Mechanical First Aid and Towing</p> <p>Touring</p> <p>Legal</p> <p>Home District</p> <p>Road Marking</p> <p>Insurance</p> <p>Accident Prevention</p> <p>Motor News</p>	<p>Initiation Free—Dues, \$10, Plus \$5 Service Fee (Total, \$15 Per Year), Dating from Time of Application.</p> <p>And \$1 extra the first year for rental of emblem during life of the membership—\$10 dues and \$1 for emblem rental from those living outside of Cook County.</p> <p>Write us today for information regarding the many dollar saving benefits of membership.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chicago Motor Club CHAS. M. HAYES, President 3254 Michigan Boulevard Chicago, Ill. Phone Victory 5000</p>
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Announcing A New Service to Motorists

The Greatest Mechanical First Aid and Towing Service Ever Rendered Motorists Anywhere in the World



In northern Illinois and northern Indiana, the Chicago Motor Club is the sole representative of the American Automobile Association, the national organization of motorists clubs. The A. A. A. is recognized everywhere as the representative of American car owners, not only by the various governmental units in the United States, but in Europe as well. The A. A. A. maintains its headquarters in Washington. Some cities branch clubs with combined membership in excess of a million motorists are affiliated with the national organization.

AUTOMOBILES are being built better every day. The car of today has more speed, more comfort, and more safety built into it than the car of five years ago, but manufacturers are unable to relieve motorists of that long-line of woes, the breakdowns. Clogged gas lines, stuck starters, run down batteries, water soaked ignition systems, frozen radiators, broken axles and wheels, weary motorists, cause them loss of time and money.

Many motorists, more than six-hundred thousand of them in northern Illinois and northern Indiana, however, are free from this worry. If they have a breakdown, they know that members of the Chicago Motor Club are entitled to free mechanical first aid and towing service.

This service originated in the United States with the Chicago Motor Club. Since the day in July, 1920, when the Chicago Motor Club announced this service, the club has been steadily improving and expanding it until today, the mechanical first aid and towing service of the club is without a peer in the world.

The recent purchase of a fleet of heavy duty trucks by the club, to supplement the service rendered by the speedy white roadsters has placed at the disposal of members, a service that is quicker and more effective than anything we have seen in the country.

These new heavy duty trucks which are on the streets today, are used exclusively for towing cars so badly disabled that our mechanics are unable to make roadside repairs.

If you are somewhere in Cook County and have a breakdown requiring repair service, you may call the club, and one of these great white trucks will tow you to your garage, the repair shop of your dealer, or to any repair man whom you may select, within a radius of five miles of the scene of the breakdown.

The fleet of white roadsters will continue to function as usual. Our mechanics will render first aid and make roadside repairs, thus saving members the cost of a tow as well as of a repair bill. The new service is simply an additional service.

The equipment of the Chicago Motor Club is the most elaborate and efficient equipment in the country, and has been purchased on the theory that nothing less than the best equipment was suitable to render a service worthy of the traditions of the club. Our

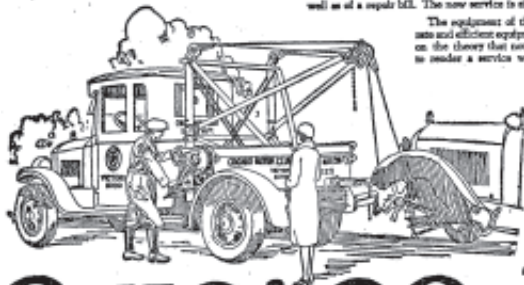
mechanics, too, have a most important part in carrying out these traditions, epitomized by the slogan "The member is my boss." These men are for the most part veterans in club service. They are expert trouble shooters, men who know their trade thoroughly, and who are so courteous and considerate of members in trouble that thousands of our members have taken the time to write us telling of the expert kindly service they receive when they call for mechanical service.

Mechanical service is but one of the numerous money-saving services of club membership. The other departments, such as the touring, home district, insurance, accident prevention, and legislative departments, are on a par with the mechanical first aid departments. All these departments make mounting rates considerable and save money for members.

You will save money by joining the Chicago Motor Club, and more than that you will help to promote the cause of motoring. Your dues help to further our good roads work, our accident prevention work and our legislative work. The organization of school boys' patrols, and the distribution of safety passes to schools by the club is curbing down accidents among children. This work is carried out by means of the dues paid by members. The club is the motorist's defense against every accident pending upon him. The American Automobile Association has named the club the territory of northern Illinois and northern Indiana, and in this territory the Chicago Motor Club is the sole representative of the national organization of motorists clubs. All the services of the club are rendered to members in this territory.

When you join the club, you are joining an organization that has been serving motorists since 1900. Children of the men who joined the Chicago Motor Club about a quarter of a century ago are today members of the organization their fathers helped to build.

It will cost you nothing to investigate the organization, and to find out for yourself just how the services of the club will provide you with protection that will be a great comfort and a decided saving of money the time are made, only about four cents a day. Possess yourself now, before trouble comes. We shall be glad to give you complete information and you do not place yourself under the slightest obligation. Send coupon today.



More than
65,000
Satisfied Members
enjoy this protection and many
other money-saving services

Mail this Coupon Today!

CHICAGO MOTOR CLUB, 3254 Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60618
 Customers: Please let me have further information concerning your mechanical first aid and other money-saving services of the Chicago Motor Club. Its obligation is on me.

Name: _____
 Street Address: _____
 Phone: _____
 No. Address: _____
 City: _____

CHICAGO MOTOR CLUB

3254 Michigan Avenue

Charles M. Hayes, President

Phone: Victory 5000

Chicago Motor Club advertisement from 1929.

Emergency Assistance

Auto breakdowns have always been a source of frustration to car owners. During the 1920s, the Chicago Motor Club introduced its “mechanical aid” department to provide emergency service for members including assistance with minor mechanical troubles and towing service. A 1923 advertisement for the service boasted that, for the modest fee of \$15.00 annually, Chicago Motor Club members could take comfort in knowing that if their automobile breaks down on the side of the road, in just 15 to 30 minutes, one of the Club’s “khaki clad mechanics mounted on fleet white motorcycles are on the job in all kinds of weather ready to rush to the aid of member at any hour of the day or night.”

Traffic Safety Measures

The rapidly increasing number of cars on the road in the early 1900s brought about a similar increase in motor vehicle crashes, and prevention of traffic mishaps became an early concern of the Chicago Motor Club. Pedestrian safety was also a primary concern, and in 1917 the Club advocated that pedestrians abide by signals of traffic officers and cross streets only in designated places. In keeping with its concern for pedestrians, the School Safety Patrol Program—which protects children from traffic dangers—was established in 1920 by the Chicago Motor Club and was soon expanded nationwide. This program was awarded the Presidential Citation for Private Sector Initiatives in 1985 and continues today.

Automobile Touring and Tourism

In an effort to promote auto touring and tourism, the Chicago Motor Club identified scenic automobile routes around Chicago and throughout the country and published the routes in newspapers and on maps. As part of this campaign, the club installed signs on posts along various scenic routes so that motorists could identify the towns through which they were passing. The club’s press division touted motor touring as a carefree leisure time activity, a healthy way for urban dwellers to “get out into the open, and commune with nature.” Motor touring was also promoted as a patriotic pursuit as the Chicago Motor Club beckoned drivers “to see America first.”

Statistics recorded by the motor touring bureau for requests for route information demonstrated the amazing rate at which motoring touring surged in popularity—in 1919 requests numbered 1,816; in 1920 the number rose to 9,199; and by 1921 the number of requests increased to a staggering 51,211. To reach even more motorists, the Chicago Motor Club opened branch offices at the Edgewater Beach Hotel and in the Austin neighborhood. A *Chicago Daily Tribune* article from 1921 reported that the work of the Chicago Motor Club “may be summed up somewhat as follows: roads surveyed and logged, 37,000 miles; new state highways marked, 128 miles; state highway markings repainted, 350 miles; route direction signs and arrows erected, 2,500; special road direction signs, giving mileage to towns, 45; caution signs erected, including school, railroad, turns, curves, dangerous crossings, 1,500.” The same article noted, “this is the work that the Chicago Motor Club donates to motorists in general, to guide them on their way, to surround the public with every safe guard possible.”

In 1928, the Chicago Motor Club announced a “\$1,000,000 building program” that included plans to acquire a site at South Water Street near Michigan Boulevard and to construct a



An increase in the number of motor vehicle crashes in the early-1920s prompted the club to promote traffic safety measures. Top left: Despite the presence of a traffic light (foreground) an auto and fire engine collide on Jackson St. in 1927.

Toot It Often!

When rounding dangerous curves, suggests the accident prevention department of the Chicago Motor club, do not give one long toot on the horn, as the sound may merge with a similar blast from an approaching car. It is better to sound short toots and listen between for the sound of an approaching car.

Left: A 1927 public service ad by the Chicago Motor Club reminds motorists to use their horn. Bottom: Members of the Chicago Motor Club (left) recognize a group of "Safety Patrol" members for their efforts in protecting pedestrians from traffic dangers.



Since its founding, the promotion of automobile touring and tourism was an important initiative of the Chicago Motor Club. Below: Club members prepare to depart on a regional tour sponsored by the club in 1906. Right: A 1923 advertisement for the Chicago Motor Club's touring division. Bottom: In addition to surveying and mapping touring routes, the club also installed roadside signs in many towns to inform motorists of the locations through which they were passing.



When Planning Your Tours

If a Chicago Motor Club member, our Touring Bureau will supply you, free of charge, complete routing—logs and map showing detours, dangerous crossings, etc.—all the latest information from our numerous correspondents. Your membership card will secure you a welcome at every A. A. A. Motor Club in America. Your emblem will be respected at our official garages, where you are sure of fair and just treatment. These are only a few of the many benefits offered by the

Chicago Motor Club

The Motorists' Pioneer Service Organization

Mechanical First Aid, which rushes one of our fleet white motorcycles, with an expert mechanic, to the assistance of members, any hour of the day or night, to any point in Cook County; towing service in all cases of necessity.

Free first aid or towing service for C. M. C. members also at our branches in over 300 Illinois and Indiana towns.

Legal Department, consisting of a corps of able attorneys who devote their entire time to handling cases of members.

Insurance Dept., supplies to members greater protection on their cars at a saving of 20 per cent from the usual rates. It supplies a policy that covers accessories, without extra charge, and is free of technicalities—get our terms before you insure.

Also **Home District Dept.**, **Road Marking and Accident Prevention**, **Legislative Depts.**, **Motor News**, etc.

We foster good roads, work for better lighting of streets and alleys, mark the highways and dangerous crossings, attack unfavorable legislative bills, fight grafters and vicious speed traps, preach obedience to traffic laws, "safety first" and endlessly strive for conservation of human life.

Fill out and send in the coupon and let us tell you more about our work and what we can do for you.

INITIATION FREE—DUES \$15 PER YEAR

—to members living outside of Cook County, \$10 per year, and \$1 extra the first year for rental of emblem.



Chicago Motor Club

2255 Michigan Boulevard,
Chicago, Ill. Phone Victory 5000

If you are interested in the service you render, please send us your descriptive booklet and full particulars regarding the benefits and savings that a membership in your organization would secure for you.

Name.....

Business Address.....

T-3

Chicago Motor Club to Label Towns in Motor Routes.

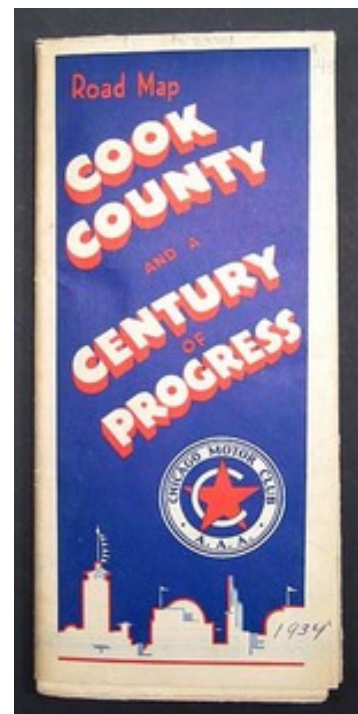
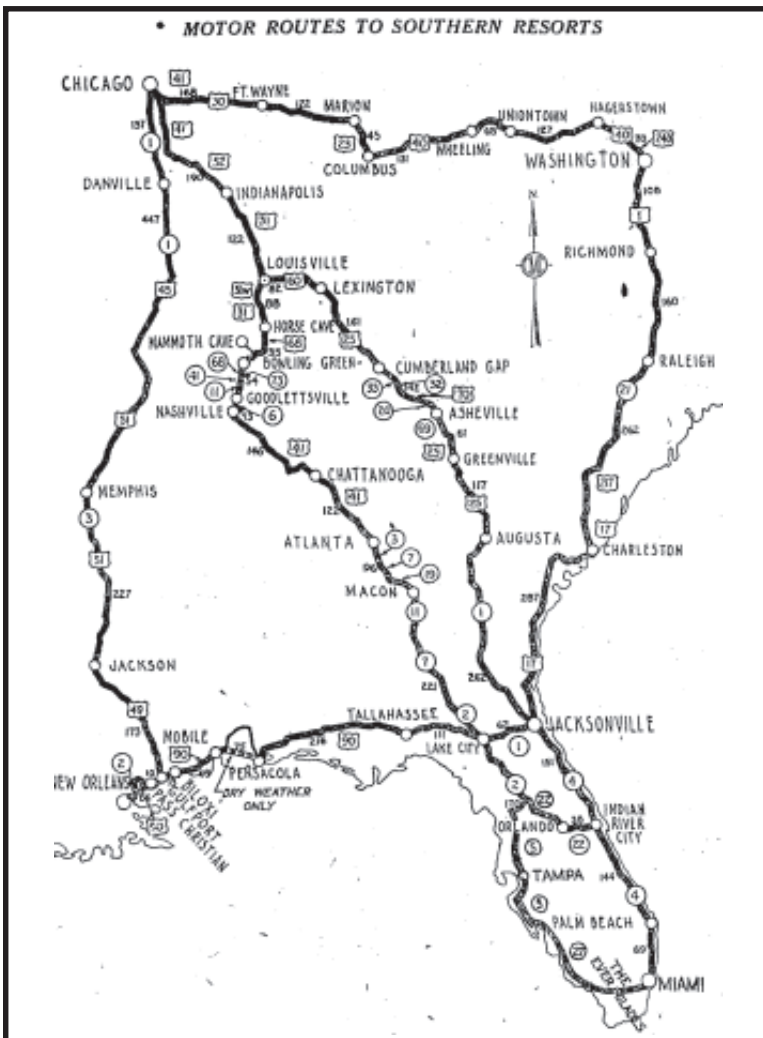
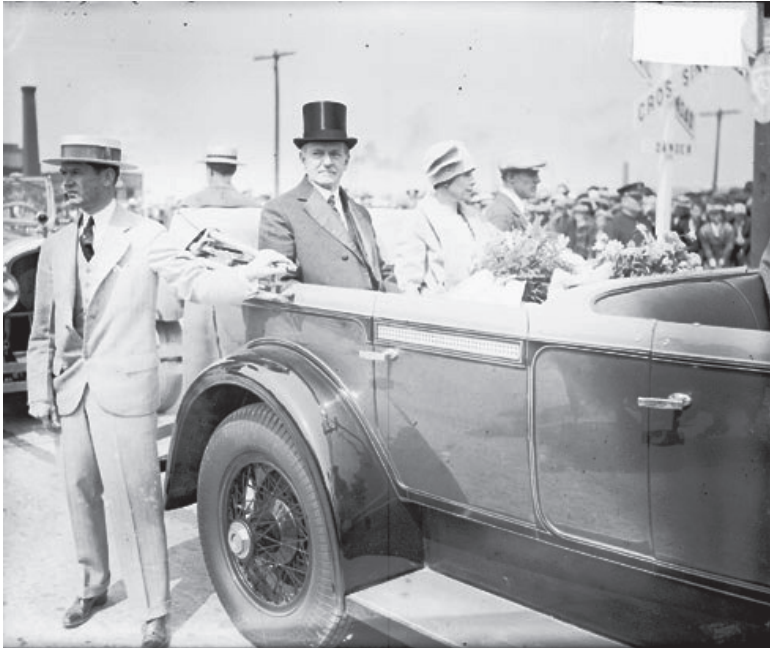
A little later for the touring season of 1923 perhaps, yet in plenty of time for 1924, the Chicago Motor Club is at present engaged, through its signboard committee, in labeling all of the towns on the motor routes which are suggested with guide signs, so that motorists coming along these roads will be able to identify the towns through which they pass. So far as America is concerned, this is a record not only of the Chicago Motor Club, but of touring motorists in order to get correct directions in passing through these towns, this information. A number of the clubs have also arranged to have their own signs placed in the towns where they are passing and along the routes. The signboard, when he was driving to St. Paul, he did not know where he was going, nor how to get to St. Paul, when he thought it would be a good idea to get a sign placed in the town through which he was passing. The signboard, and it is also for the purpose of the signboard committee to take up the work.

For some time Chicago Motor Club has been in correspondence with officials of the various towns along the motor routes and in each case every instance it was provided directions. The signboard committee of the Chicago Motor Club has also been in correspondence with the signboard committee of the towns through which they are passing and they are now in the process of placing signs in the towns through which they are passing. There are now signs placed in each town and these are intended to be placed in



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the signboard committee to take up the work. The signboard committee of the Chicago Motor Club has also been in correspondence with the signboard committee of the towns through which they are passing and they are now in the process of placing signs in the towns through which they are passing. There are now signs placed in each town and these are intended to be placed in



Top: President Calvin Coolidge and Mrs. Coolidge are seen in the backseat of a convertible promoting a 1927 Chicago Motor Club touring event in Hammond, Indiana. Above and left: Various tour maps and guides produced by the Chicago Motor Club.

skyscraper to serve as its headquarters. According to Club President Charles Hayes, the building would be built to the designs of Holabird & Root in a manner befitting of its prominent location off Michigan Boulevard. Mr. Hayes added that with the increased membership of the Club nearing the 70,000 mark, “every foot of the floor area will be used by the motor club.” The announcement detailed the Club’s plan for the building’s first floor to be used by the touring bureau, noting “motorists from every part of the world visit this bureau during the course of the year.” Additionally, the Club planned to dedicate one floor each to its law department, mechanical first aid department, and the claims department.

The Chicago Motor Club building opened with much fanfare on January 27, 1929. In a full-page advertisement in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the Club described its new headquarters as “the most beautiful, complete and efficient plant in the world devoted to the service of motorists.” All motorists were invited to tour the building during its opening week and to see first-hand the “modernistic design; beautiful lobby floor; great light fixtures; the interesting map of the United States, thirty by twenty feet, painted by the famous mural artist John Norton.” In glowing critiques, the press called the building “a temple of transport.” Throughout 1929, the Chicago Motor Club featured images of the “state-of-the-art facility” in advertisements and publications to underscore the modernity of its operations and to celebrate the sophistication of its services.

The Chicago Motor Club established its affiliation with national motoring club, the American Automobile Association (AAA), in 1914 and functioned as an independent motor club into the 1980s. The club, now known as the AAA-Chicago Motor Club, continues to serve motorists as a local branch of this important national organization. AAA was established in Chicago in 1902 through a union of nine motor clubs. Today the AAA is a not-for-profit organization comprised of a federation of 51 independently operated motor clubs throughout North America with a total membership of more than 51 million.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

The Chicago Motor Club purchased property on E. Wacker Pl. (then called E. South Water St.) in early 1928. The location was chosen due to its downtown location near Michigan Boulevard (now N. Michigan Ave.). Demolition of the existing brick commercial building on the site commenced around May 1st while architectural drawings for the new building were being completed by the Chicago firm of Holabird & Root. A building permit was subsequently issued on July 30th. The cost of the building was listed in Holabird & Root ledger books as more than \$948,700. The club had a tight timeline for the construction of the building, which was met by the building’s architects and contractor, the Henry Erickson Co., and the building opened to the club’s membership in less than six months time on January 27, 1929.

The Chicago Motor Club Building is a fifteen-story steel-frame building clad with gray limestone on its street (south) façade and tan face brick on the three secondary elevations. The building faces E. Wacker Pl., which is double-decked in the same manner as nearby E. Wacker Dr. and N. Michigan Ave. As with buildings facing these other streets, the Chicago Motor Club

**OPEN FOR THE SERVICE OF
CAR OWNERS**

The new Chicago Motor Club building at 66 E. South Water street is in the heart of the new downtown Chicago: a stone's throw from Michigan avenue, near the Link bridge, Wacker drive, the Randolph street station of the I. C., Wrigley building, Tribune Tower, 333, and many of Chicago's most beautiful buildings. It is in the block south of the Michigan avenue Link bridge, and a half block west of Michigan avenue.



All motorists are invited to our opening week, January 28, 29, 30, 31, and February 1 and 2. Open from 9 A. M. to 6 P. M. Refreshments on the ninth floor.

**THE NEW HOME OF THE
CHICAGO MOTOR CLUB
66 E. SOUTH WATER STREET**

RIGHT IN THE CENTER OF THINGS

It has been said that the new Chicago Motor Club Building at 66 East South Water Street is the most beautiful, complete and efficient plant in the world devoted to the service of motorists. We think, with all due deference to the thousand other clubs affiliated with the American Automobile Association, that this is not an exaggeration.

But, come yourself, and see this building that the town is talking about. It is done in modernistic style; see the beautiful lobby floor, housing the touring bureau of the club; see the great light fixtures; the interesting map of the United States, thirty by twenty feet, painted by the famous mural artist John Norton.

Holabird & Root, creators of beautiful buildings, have done nothing better than the new home of the club.



A lobby different from anything you have ever seen—done in an original and modern style. As you enter, reminders of richness and splendor are with each step.

A 1929 advertisement announces the grand opening of the Chicago Motor Club Building.



The Chicago Motor Club Building is an exceptional example of an Art Deco-style skyscraper. The building faces E. Wacker Place, which is double-decked in the same manner as E. Wacker Drive and N. Michigan Avenue.



Top: The building's verticality is emphasized by a wide, visually-dominant central bay above the main entrance that bows gently outward and rises to the building's parapet. Bottom: A highly-decorative and dramatic cast-iron surround frames the building's monumental entrance.

Building's main entrance opens onto the upper deck of Wacker Pl. while the building's loading dock opens from one of the building's two basement floors onto the street's lower level. N. Garland Court, a mid-block, lower-level secondary street functioning at this location as an alley, runs along the east side of the building at ground level, passing under Wacker Pl. and providing access to a rear building entrance.

The Chicago Motor Club Building is designed in the Art Deco architectural style, popular in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Due to its relatively small size for a late 1920s skyscraper, the 15-story Chicago Motor Club Building was not required to have upper-level setbacks as mandated under Chicago's pioneering 1923 zoning ordinance for taller buildings; and as a consequence, the building rises into the sky with a great sense of verticality. (Under the 1923 zoning ordinance, buildings taller than 264 feet were required to have setback towers above the main volume of the building. The limited footprints of these additional stories resulted in slender towers rising from larger bases.)

The base of the building's main façade has a gray-granite water table and relatively few openings. It is visually dominated by a highly-decorative and dramatic cast-iron surround that frames the building's main triple-height entrance, with three doorways and a set of tall windows above. The surround is painted black with silver highlights and has great visual verticality, with stylized finials rising above the body of the surround. The surround is elaborately detailed with a plethora of Art Deco-style ornament, including stylized flowers and plants, flowing fountains of water, zigzags, swirls and sunbursts.

The Chicago Motor Club's name, the building's date of construction in Roman numerals, and the club's logo—a "C" encircling a star—are carved into a stone block to the left of the building entrance. At both corners of the main façade are large blocks of stone that are carved with dramatic Art Deco-style swirls and abstracted flowers.

The building's verticality is further emphasized by a wide, visually-dominant central bay above the main entrance that bows gently outward and rises to the building's roof parapet. This central bay is three windows wide and has dark-colored terra-cotta spandrels. A single column of recessed windows flanks each side of this central bay. Limestone spandrels between these windows are carved with Art Deco-style panels with stylized birds, abstracted flowers and geometric figures. The building's rooftop parapet is ornamented with limestone panels with finely-detailed sunbursts and abstracted foliate patterns.

Inside the building's main entrance, a small, low-ceilinged vestibule gives way to a visually-dramatic, triple-height building lobby that is one of the finest Art Deco-style interior spaces in Chicago. The lobby is roughly rectangular in plan and encompassing almost the entire first floor, with small mezzanines at both the north and south ends. The alcoves along the east wall originally were designed to showcase scores of maps and auto touring pamphlets are lighted by the tall windows; a bank of elevators on the west wall is flanked by similar alcoves, although without windows. Alcoves are lighted by original Art Deco-style chandeliers with frosted-glass discs of different sizes layered with light bulbs.



The Chicago Motor Club Building's fine exterior features a plethora of Art Deco-style ornament, including stylized flowers and plants, birds, flowing fountains, zigzags and swirls. Other ornament includes a Chicago Motor Club insignia and the dramatic metal surround at the building's main entrance.





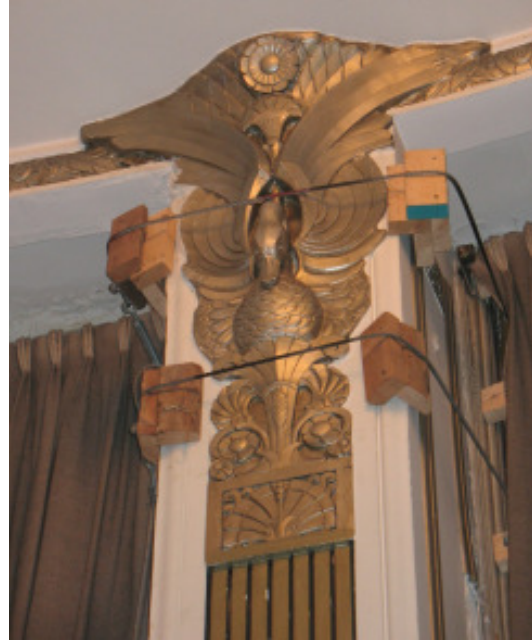
The Chicago Motor Club Building lobby is one of the finest Art Deco interior spaces in Chicago. It is visually dramatic and lavishly ornamented. Top right: A view of the lobby looking north in 1930. Bottom: Contemporary view of the lobby looking north. Top left: View of the north mezzanine, which is ornamented with a cast-metal panel bearing the insignia of the Chicago Motor Club and railings featuring a variety of Art Deco-style motifs.





Top: A view of the lobby looking south toward the Wacker Place entrance. Bottom left: A view of an alcove along the west wall from 1930. Bottom right: A current view of the same alcove.





Elaborate details enliven the lobby. Top left: Cast-metal panel featuring the Chicago Motor Club insignia. Top right: Stylized eagles on columns framing mezzanine windows. Right: Bronze framed signs identify alcoves from which scores of maps were once distributed. Bottom right: A finely detailed cast-metal panel below the mezzanine rail. Bottom left: Foliate ornament frames the elevator openings.





Top: Detail in the lobby vestibule. Bottom: Sleek spiral staircase leads to the south mezzanine, which originally served as the visitor's lounge.

The lobby is finely and lavishly detailed with abundant Art Deco-style ornament. The mezzanines have cast-metal panels and railings ornamented with a variety of motifs, including the Chicago Motor Club insignia, sunbursts, abstracted foliate ornament, and geometric patterns. Windows lighting these mezzanines are further ornamented with stylized eagles, foliate ornament, and geometric figures; alcoves have similar foliate and geometric ornament running in vertical bands. The elevator openings are detailed with silver-metal surrounds with geometric ornament. A corner circular staircase leading to the south mezzanine, which originally was a lounge for Motor Club members, is detailed with a silver-metal railing.

United States Map (1928)

Above the elevators is a large-scale mural, entitled *United States Map* (1928), by important Chicago artist John Warner Norton. In its celebration of the American road trip, Norton's *United States Map* exemplifies the function of the Chicago Motor Club's travel bureau and is an integral feature of the building's elegant Art Deco lobby. The nineteen by twenty-nine-foot mural occupies the west wall of the triple-height space. Land masses are depicted as flat planes of pale gray and tan surrounded by bodies of water rendered with cubist patterns in pale green and blue. Cities are marked as deep-orange rectangles connected by a network of light-gray lines representing the major national highways of the time. Other geographic features are reduced to simple geometric shapes, such as the chevrons representing mountain ranges and the squares which depict national parks.

The work was painted on three sections of canvas in Norton's studio at Tree Studios (601-623 N. State Street, a designated Chicago Landmark) and adhered to the plaster wall surface with white lead. Consistent with his love of travel, Norton had an appreciation for cartography, and the Chicago Motor Club mural is one of three map-based murals he completed. The other examples are a map depicting the exploration of North America by Jesuit missionaries (1930) at the Cudahy Library at Loyola University in Chicago and a series of global map murals (1932) at Hurley Hall at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

CHICAGO SKYSCRAPER DESIGN AND THE ART DECO STYLE

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Chicago grew to become America's second largest city. As a national center of industry, commerce, and finance, the city developed a city center—the "Loop"—densely built up with skyscrapers, an innovative building type developed largely by Chicago architects in response to economic forces, building technology advances, and both natural and manmade constraints to development that were present in the city. The restraints in downtown development created by geographic factors (Lake Michigan and the Chicago River), combined with manmade barriers (the railroad yards south of the Loop and the warehouse district along the river) and high land prices, encouraged Chicago real estate developers to build up rather than out. The development of new building technologies such as skeleton-frame construction, reliable elevators and electricity made skyscrapers possible in the late 19th century.

In the 1920s, however, Chicago's downtown began to expand outward from its traditional boundaries. New development along the Chicago River itself was encouraged by the 1909



John Warner Norton's *United States Map* (top) enlivens the elegant Art Deco lobby of the Chicago Motor Club Building. The legend (bottom left) identifies the nineteen national highways that existed in 1928. In addition to decoration, the mural would have been useful to members visiting the club's touring bureau, located in the lobby, as shown in the circa 1929 photo (bottom right).

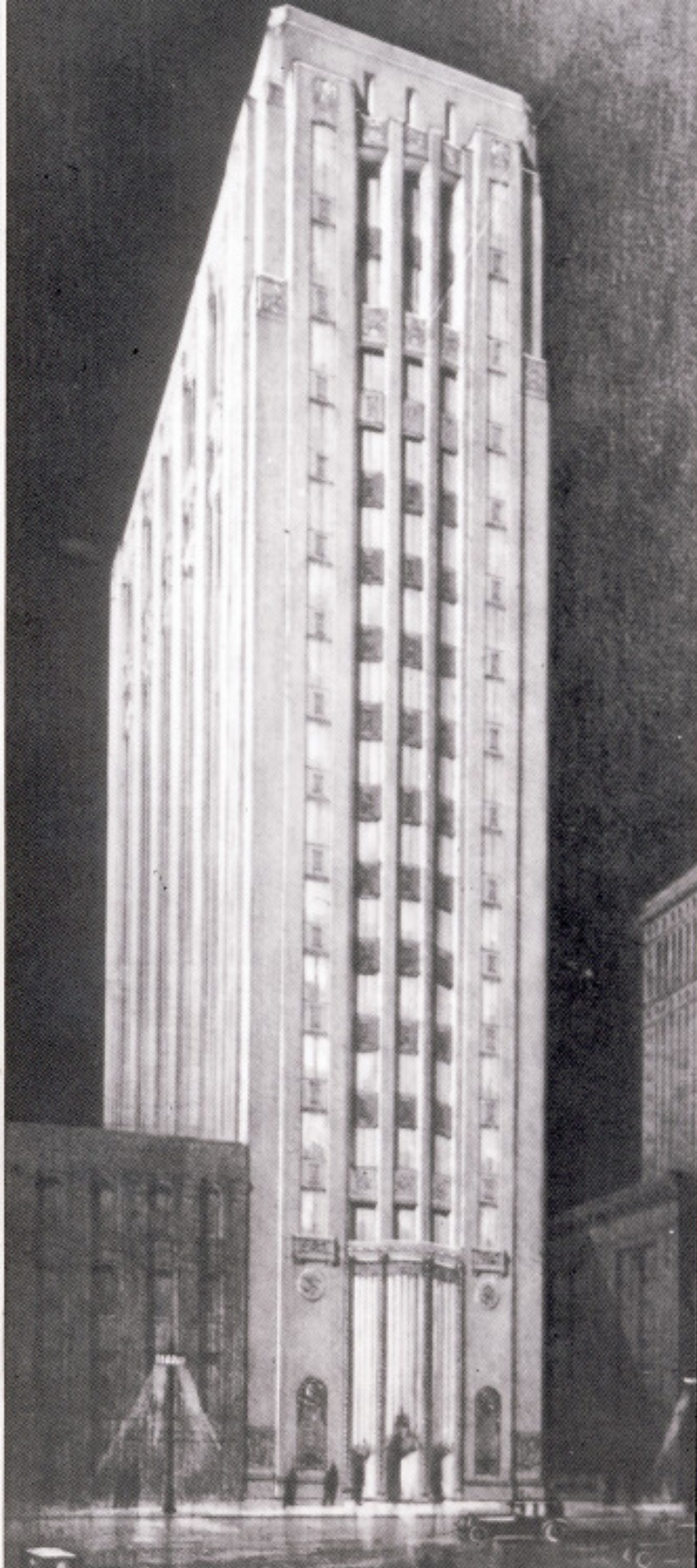
Plan of Chicago, which called for the redevelopment of the city's riverfront warehouse district with a grand boulevard lined with office buildings. Wacker Drive, as the innovative double-decked street was called, opened in 1926 on the former site of the city's wholesale produce district. In response, builders constructed new skyscrapers along and near Wacker Drive in the late 1920s. The Chicago Motor Club Building, although not fronting on Wacker Drive itself, benefited from the new focus on the Loop's northern edge for office development in the late 1920s, the heyday of the Art Deco architectural style.

The Chicago Motor Club Building is an exceptional Art Deco-style skyscraper, characterized by the combination of linear, hard-edged forms with strong vertical emphasis and visually-striking ornament combining abstracted foliate details with geometric patterns. The Art Deco architectural style, which developed in the 1920s and continued into the Depression years of the 1930s, was a widely popular form of architectural and decorative design. It offered a visual grammar free of historical precedent and one that reflected a newness that was in keeping with the changing, "modern" social trends of the post-World War I era. According to architectural historian Alan Gowans, the aesthetic taste for easy-flowing, streamlined designs reflected a broader social penchant for contemporary approaches rather than traditional ways of doing things.

Tall buildings built in Chicago from the 1880s through the early 1920s typically were detailed with historic ornamentation, but by the late 1920s architects such as Holabird & Root were abandoning such detailing for more "modernistic" decorative treatments. This was due, in part, to the influence of such designs as Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen's submission to the *Chicago Tribune's* 1922 competition for a new office building. Although Hood and Howells won the competition, Saarinen's modernist design proved ultimately more influential. The design established unrelieved verticality as the ideal for tall buildings, and was acclaimed as being "style-less," i.e., having no reference to historical styles. Saarinen's entry was awarded second prize in the *Tribune* competition and was widely publicized. Contemporary architects praised the design as being completely "modern"; its influence helped free Chicago architects from dependence upon historic styles such as Classical Revival and Gothic Revival.

Another impetus for American architects to abandon these historical styles was the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* which was held in Paris in 1925. Influenced by this exposition, American architects developed a style of design that has come to be called "Art Deco." Art Deco design was geometric, abstract, and "modernistic"; it employed smooth materials that could be given a sleek, machine-finished appearance. The exposition left American architects with an enthusiasm for "modernity," which they believed could be achieved through a simplified aesthetic.

By the late 1920s these influences had combined to create a distinctive type of architecture: wall planes are extremely flat, clad with smooth materials (such as marble and limestone); and piers frequently rise unbroken to rooflines, and windows and spandrels are recessed, creating a pronounced verticality. Ornament is non-historical and comprised of designs usually based on abstracted foliate and geometric patterns; common motifs include chevrons, zigzags, fluting, sunbursts, abstracted water and fountains, and delicate fluting.



Chicago Motor Club Building, perspective exterior rendering, from 1927-28.



Skyscrapers built in the 1920s, including the Chicago Motor Club Building, were greatly influenced by the second-place entry to the Chicago Tribune Tower Competition submitted by Eliel Saarinen (top left), which was noteworthy for its sleek non-historic design. By the late 1920s the Art Deco style emerged as a distinctive type of architecture. The style was initially developed in New York City, and an early New York example of the style is the Barclay-Vesey Building (1926) (top center). Chicago examples of Art-Deco skyscrapers include 333 North Michigan Avenue (top right) and the Carbide & Carbon Building (right), both designated Chicago Landmarks.



This style of architecture was initially developed in New York City by such architects as Ely Jacques Kahn, Raymond Hood, and William Van Alen. Early New York examples of the style are the Barclay-Vesey Building (1926) and the Insurance Center Building (1930). Later, more mature examples include the New York Daily News Building (1930), the McGraw-Hill Building (1930), and the Chrysler Building (1930). The style flourished until the early 1930s, when the Depression put an end to the building boom experienced in American cities since the mid-1920s.

Before the Depression, the style spread to other cities, including Chicago. Here, two leading practitioners of the style were the firms of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White (a successor firm to D.H. Burnham & Company) and Holabird & Root; Chicago examples include the Civic Opera House (1929) and the Field Building (1932, 1934) by the former firm; and the 333 North Michigan Building (1928), the Palmolive Building (1927-29), the Chicago Board of Trade Building (1930) and the Chicago Daily News Building (1930) by the latter. The Chicago Motor Club Building is one of Holabird & Root's most significant buildings in the style in terms of its overall appearance, handsome proportion, imaginative ornamentation, and surviving significant interior space.

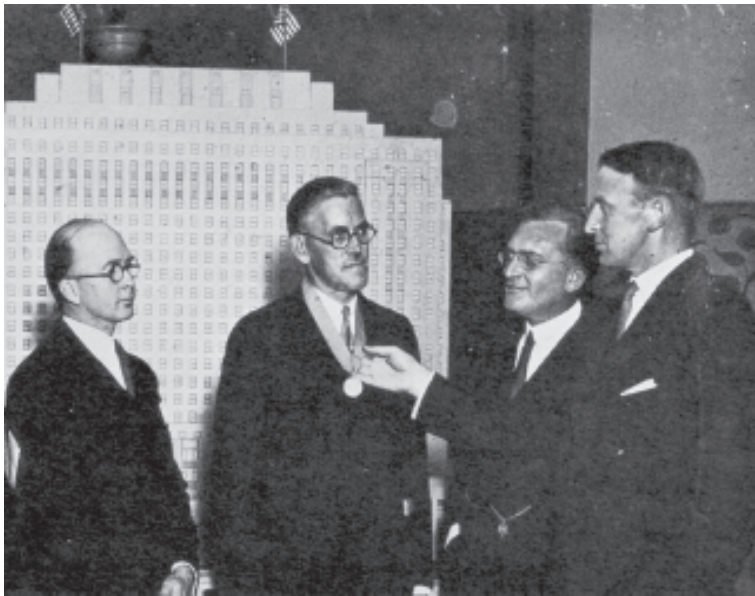
ARCHITECTS HOLABIRD & ROOT

The Chicago Motor Club Building was designed by **Holabird & Root**, one of the preeminent firms in the history of Chicago architecture. The firm is the successor firm of Holabird & Roche, whose 19th-century commercial designs influenced architectural designs around the world. With the deaths of founders William Holabird and Martin Roche in 1923 and 1927, respectively, control of the firm passed to **John A. Holabird (1886-1945)**, William's son, and **John W. Root, Jr. (1887-1963)**. Root's father, with Daniel Burnham, had founded the important Chicago architecture firm of Burnham & Root.

The younger Holabird and Root had met during the 1910s while studying at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. From their study, the two received not only the benefits of the classical Beaux-Arts training, but exposure to the most contemporary art trends. They worked briefly at Holabird & Roche before World War I, and returned to the firm after serving in the war.

During the mid-1920s—even before the firm was reorganized in 1928 as Holabird & Root—the firm's work began to take on a very contemporary character, largely in response to Chicago's adoption of a new zoning ordinance in 1923. The firm was key to the development of new setback-styled skyscrapers in Chicago and elsewhere in the Midwest. Chicago architectural historian Robert Bruegmann and others have cited these years as some of the most brilliant periods in the firm's history, when so many of its great masterpieces were constructed. Buildings such as 333 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago Board of Trade Building, Palmolive Building (all designated Chicago Landmarks), the Chicago Daily News Building, and Chicago Motor Club Building all reflect the modernistic character of their work and are widely renowned for the quality of their design and planning.

The architectural firm of Holabird & Root, the successor to the pioneering 20th-century firm of Holabird & Roche, was one of Chicago's most significant early-20th century offices. Below: The firm was headed by John A. Holabird (second from left in the picture) and John W. Root, Jr. (far left in the picture). Holabird & Root designed some of the City's most noteworthy 1920s skyscrapers, including (right) the Palmolive Building, (bottom right) the Chicago Board of Trade Building, and (bottom left) the Chicago Daily News Building.



Holabird & Root's work earned it a national reputation. In 1930, the firm received the gold medal of the Architectural League of New York "for the great distinction and high architectural quality which they have achieved in the solution of the American office building." Writing in *Architecture* magazine, Chicago architect Earl Reed, Jr. praised the firm's work:

A dozen or more [buildings] by the young-old firm of Holabird & Root stand out in my mind, large and small, complete and unfinished, each as the glorification in architecture of the American commercial spirit at its best. In these buildings the forms of yesterday and today are indiscriminately used with a mastery of proportion and good taste which delights the passer-by. Nothing so truly significant has happened here since the pre-Columbian Exposition days which witnessed the coming to our streets of the epoch-making work of that mighty band which surrounded Louis Sullivan.

The late architectural historian Carl Condit, who authoritatively chronicled the development and significance of Chicago's commercial high-rise buildings, stated that Holabird & Root's work during this period was "the decisive step in breaking with the past and reintroducing to Chicago the modern skyscraper that [Louis] Sullivan had developed years before."

ARTIST JOHN WARNER NORTON

Befitting the building's function as a club for automobile enthusiasts, the lobby is enlivened by a large-scale cartographic mural of the United States depicting the primary automobile routes across the country in 1928. Declared by the Chicago Motor Club "as useful as it is decorative," the mural was created by John Warner Norton (1876-1934), an important American painter whose body of work includes numerous murals in schools, clubs, banks, government and commercial buildings in Chicago and throughout the country from 1909 to 1933.

Norton was born into a prosperous family in Lockport, Illinois. After finishing private schools in upstate New York and Chicago in 1895, he began studying law at Harvard where he revealed an artistic strain as an illustrator for the college magazine. A sudden decline in his family's fortunes forced him to return home after two years, and in 1897 he enrolled at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Despite the school's then-adherence to Beaux Arts academic traditions in art education, Norton developed an interest in Japanese art and was also part of a group of students known as the "Beetles" who supported then-controversial experiments in art such as Seurat's pointilism. Before completing his studies there in 1901, Norton volunteered with the U. S. Cavalry during the Spanish-American War and traveled to California and Arizona, inspiring a lifelong interest in the American West and Native American culture.

Though he is best known as a muralist, during the first decade of his career Norton focused on easel painting, commercial graphic arts and book illustration. Norton's first mural was not completed until 1909 when he finished the *Navaho* for the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago. With its Japanese-influenced composition and non-traditional subject, the work departed from

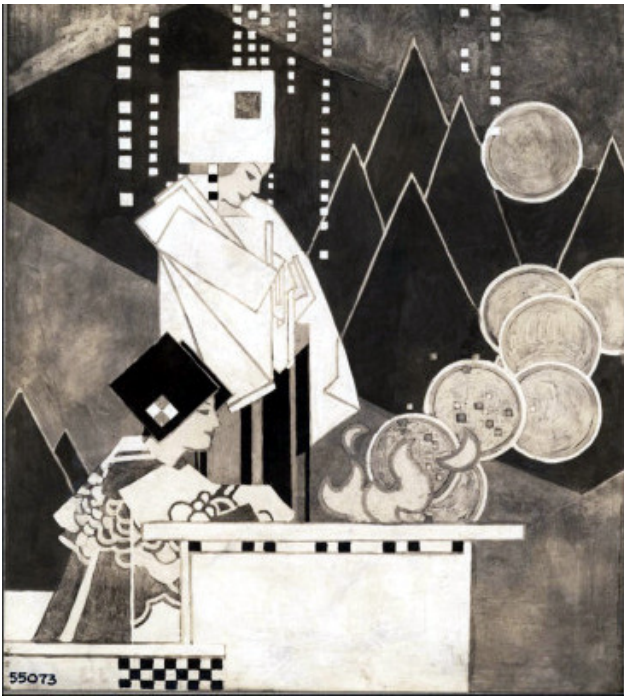
the Italian Renaissance-based traditions of mural painting at the time and established Norton's position as a talented and progressive muralist in Chicago.

Norton's entry into the field of mural painting was certainly influenced by the rising popularity of this specialized art form in the first decades of the twentieth century, when new schools, government buildings, and libraries were decorated with murals depicting historical and allegorical themes. This mural movement was championed by Progressive-Era reformers who saw the potential of mural painting to educate the large number of foreign immigrants in cities like Chicago. Norton's colleague, artist Charles Wood Stevens, observed that "hundreds of children must grope their way into American traditions, for the old world traditions of their fathers and mothers do not long hold out against the hard attrition of American cities." In 1907 Stevens established a mural painting program at the Art Institute and supervised his students in creating murals in Chicago public schools and park buildings. Norton joined Stevens as an instructor in the mural program, and from 1910 to 1929 Norton served as the head of the mural department at the school.

Some of Norton's early murals reflect these Progressive-Era concerns to educate the large immigrant population about American history. In 1914 he completed a series of nine murals depicting New World explorers at the Fuller Park Fieldhouse (331 W. 45th Street), and two years later finished a series of mural portraits of noteworthy statesmen in American history at Hamilton Park Fieldhouse (513 W. 72nd Street). Both buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Throughout his career, Norton successfully cultivated relationships with prominent architects. The first was Frank Lloyd Wright for whom Norton prepared studies for unusual Japanese-styled murals for the Midway Gardens in 1914, though it is unknown if the murals were ever completed prior to the building being demolished. From 1917 to 1925 he received numerous commissions from the architectural firm of noted Prairie School architects Purcell and Elmslie, including an extensive mural and decoration program at the Woodbury County Courthouse (1918) in Sioux City, Iowa, and a series depicting the *The Months of the Year* for a kindergarten classroom at Peirce School (1924, 1423 W. Bryn Mawr, extant). In 1954, Purcell attributed Norton's success as a muralist to his "inner need . . . to serve the basic nature, spirit and form of the building, to work with and within the substance of architecture, not to embellish it."

From 1928 to 1932 Norton collaborated with the architectural firm of Holabird & Root, during which time his murals developed a more modern aesthetic showing the influences of various contemporary movements, including Cubism, Futurism, Art Deco and Social Realism. In addition to the Chicago Motor Club, important murals created by Norton for Holabird & Root-designed buildings: *Pagan Paradise* (1928) at the Tavern Club in Chicago, a mural depicting newspaper production (1929) in the Chicago Daily News Building (removed from the building in 1993), a figure of *Ceres* (1930) for the Chicago Board of Trade, and the *Old South and New South* (1932) in the Jefferson County Courthouse in Birmingham, Alabama. Before his premature death in 1934 at the age of fifty-eight, Norton produced five murals for the Hall of Science at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago in 1934 (these are currently in the collection of the Museum of Science and Industry).



The photo at top left shows John Warner Norton at work on his 1929 masterpiece mural for the concourse ceiling of the Daily News Building (top right, removed from the building in 1993). Other examples of his work include: designs for Frank Lloyd Wright's Midway Gardens (1912, middle left) with their strong Japanese compositions; *July* (1925, bottom left) in his *Months of the Year* series at Peirce Elementary School in Andersonville; and *Ceres* (1930, bottom right) in the atrium of the Chicago Board of Trade Building.

LATER YEARS OF THE CHICAGO MOTOR CLUB BUILDING

In 1985, the AAA-Chicago Motor Club ceased operations at the Chicago Motor Club Building and relocated to Aurora, Illinois. The building housed offices of many commercial tenants throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Several plans to redevelop and reuse the building were considered but never implemented, and the building has been vacant since 2004.

The Chicago Motor Club Building is rated “orange” in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 as a contributing building in the Michigan-Wacker Historic District.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object with the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for designation,” as well as possesses sufficient historic design integrity to convey its significance.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Chicago Motor Club Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Value as an Example of City, State or National Heritage

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 Chicago Motor Club Building was the long-time headquarters of the Chicago Motor Club, a nationally-prominent motor club founded in 1906 to promote automobile ownership and to advocate on behalf of motorists for good roads, traffic safety, and fair legislation; and exemplifies the importance of automobiles and motor clubs in the economic, social and cultural history of Chicago during the twentieth century.
- The Chicago Motor Club played a major role locally in lobbying for the implementation of several improvements proposed in Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett’s 1909 *Plan of Chicago* to more safely accommodate automobile traffic in the City.
- The Chicago Motor Club became affiliated with the American Automobile Association (AAA), an important national motoring organization, in 1914. Today the AAA, comprised of a federation of 51 independently-operated motor clubs including the AAA-Chicago Motor Club, boasts a membership of more than 51 million motorists.

Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture

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

- The Chicago Motor Club Building is an outstanding example of the Art Deco architectural style as used for a skyscraper, an architectural style and building type of great significance to the history of Chicago and to the United States.
- The Chicago Motor Club Building exhibits fine craftsmanship and detailing in materials, including gray limestone, granite, and cast-metal.
- The Chicago Motor Club Building's exceptionally fine exterior ornament includes a highly-decorative and dramatic cast-iron surround that frames the building's main entrance with a plethora of Art Deco-style ornament, including stylized flowers and plants, flowing fountains of water, zigzags and swirls; other exterior ornament includes a finely-carved Chicago Motor Club insignia, and low-relief swirls, sunbursts, geometric patterns and stylized birds found at the building's corners, in spandrels, and along the rooftop parapet.
- The building's interior retains significant spaces in its remarkably-preserved main entrance, with its small, low-ceilinged vestibule that gives way to a visually-dramatic, triple-height lobby comprising almost the entire first floor of the building; the lobby interior remains one of the finest Art Deco-style interior spaces in Chicago.
- The lobby of the Chicago Motor Club Building is finely and lavishly detailed with abundant Art Deco-style ornament including cast-metal panels and railings, windows ornamented with stylized eagles, foliate ornament, and geometric figures, alcoves featuring foliate and geometric ornament running in vertical bands, elevator openings detailed with silver-metal surrounds with geometric ornament, and a corner circular staircase leading to the south mezzanine.

Criterion 5: Work of Significant Architect or Designer

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, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- Renowned Chicago architects Holabird & Root designed the Chicago Motor Club Building; one of Chicago's most significant architectural firms of the twentieth century, Holabird & Root designed several of the City's iconic 1920s skyscrapers.
- Besides the Chicago Motor Club Building, Holabird & Root, the successor firm to Holabird & Roche (noteworthy for its important Chicago School buildings), designed such important works as the Chicago Board of Trade Building, the 333 N. Michigan Avenue Building, and the Palmolive Building, all designated Chicago Landmarks, as well as the Chicago Daily News Building.

- John Warner Norton, whose large-scale mural entitled *United States Map* enlivens the lobby of the Chicago Motor Club Building, is an important American painter and muralist whose body of work includes numerous murals in schools, clubs, banks, government and commercial buildings in Chicago and throughout the country dating from 1909 to 1933.

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, architecture or aesthetic value.

The Chicago Motor Club Building retains excellent physical integrity, on both its exterior and interior, displayed through its historic location, overall design, historic materials, details and ornamentation. The building retains its historic exterior forms, materials and detailing, including its granite and limestone main façade, low-relief limestone carved panels, and dramatic cast-iron surround that frames the building's main entrance. The building's first-floor interior, with its high-ceilinged building lobby, mezzanines, alcoves and circular staircase, retains its historic spatial volume and virtually all of its architectural finishes and details. A large mural of the United States with 1920s-era transcontinental automobile routes designed by Chicago artist John Warner Norton remains in place. Several original light fixtures remain in the lobby; several others, including two large-scale chandeliers, have been placed in storage.

Changes to the Chicago Motor Club Building's exterior are minor and include the replacement of windows and entry doors. Besides the removal and storage of some of the original light fixtures, changes to the building's lobby include the covering of the original terrazzo floor with black and white tile, the removal of murals in the lobby's west alcoves, and the removal of a counter from which touring advice and maps were dispensed by motor club staff members that was situated in front of the east alcoves. As a whole, these changes are minor and they do not detract from the building's overall ability to convey its exceptional historical and architectural value.

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. The Commission has identified the significant features for the Chicago Motor Club Building, and these are defined in the Commission’s “Recommendation to the City Council of Chicago that Chicago Landmark Designation be adopted for the Chicago Motor Club Building,” dated March 1, 2012.

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The Chicago Motor Club Building exhibits fine craftsmanship and detailing in materials, including gray limestone, granite and cast-metal.

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CITY OF CHICAGO

Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Department of Housing and Economic Development

Andrew J. Mooney, Commissioner

Patricia A. Scudiero, Managing Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Planning and Zoning

Eleanor Esser Gorski, AIA, Assistant Commissioner, Historic Preservation Division

Project Staff

Heidi Sperry, research, writing, and layout

Terry Tatum, photography, research and writing

Matt Crawford, research, writing and layout

Lisa Napoles, layout

Nikki Ricks, layout

Brian Goeken, editing

Illustrations

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From Barbara Crane for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks: p. 32 (bottom right).

From http://www.artic.edu/aic/education/mural_project/pages/M_peirce: p. 35 (bottom left).

From Lisa Napoles: p. 35 (bottom right).

COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

Rafael M. Leon, Chairman
John W. Baird, Secretary
Dr. Anita Blanchard
James Houlihan
Tony Hu
Andrew J. Mooney
Christopher R. Reed
Mary Ann Smith
Ernest C. Wong

The Commission is staffed by the:



Department of Housing and Economic Development,
Bureau of Planning and Zoning

Historic Preservation Division
33 N. LaSalle St., Suite 1600
Chicago, Illinois 60602
312.744.3200 (TEL) ~ 312.744.9140 (FAX)
<http://www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks>

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