

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



PLYMOUTH BUILDING **(LATER LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY)** **417 S. DEARBORN STREET**

Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, August 4, 2016



CITY OF CHICAGO
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

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.

CONTENTS

Map of Site	5
Building Construction and Description	4
Early Building History	9
<i>Simeon B. Eisendrath (1868-1935)</i>	9
The Sullivanesque Architectural Style	13
The LaSalle Extension University and Distance Learning	16
<i>W. Scott Armstrong (1890-1965)</i>	24
The Collegiate Gothic Style	24
Educational Institutions and Adaptive Reuse in the Loop	27
Criteria for Designation	28
Significant Historical and Architectural Features	32
Bibliography	33
Illustration Credits	35
Acknowledgments	36

PLYMOUTH BUILDING

(LATER LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY)
417 S. DEARBORN ST.

BUILT: 1899
1945 (TERRA-COTTA EXTERIOR REMODELING)

ARCHITECTS: SIMEON B. EISENDRATH (1899)
W. SCOTT ARMSTRONG (1945)

The Plymouth Building, an eleven-story, steel-framed, masonry loft building located at 417 South Dearborn Street, is significant for its association with the LaSalle Extension University (LSEU), one of the largest and most successful distance learning institutions in the country that operated for over ninety years in the Chicago area. The Plymouth Building served as the university's international headquarters for 33 years, from 1945 to 1978. First established in 1908 by educators Jesse Grant Chapline (1870-1937) and William Bethke (1885-1966), the university was credited with developing a broad and aggressively-marketed curriculum that served as a model for adult education distance learning institutions across the country during the twentieth century. The university offered educational opportunities to hundreds of thousands of students throughout the world with limited access to more traditional avenues to higher education because of their race, gender, class, or their physical location. After World War II, the university served thousands of veterans who were continuing their educations through the G. I. Bill, and many LSEU graduates rose to positions of prominence in their respective fields. Notable graduates included Gertrude Rush, the first black woman admitted to the American Bar Association in Iowa who later helped found the National Bar Association to broaden opportunities for black lawyers; Harold J. Arthur (1904-1971), former Governor of

Vermont; noted psychiatrist Hugo Munsterberg (1863-1916); four-star Army general Bruce C. Clarke (1901-1988), and Arthur Fletcher (1924-2005), affirmative action pioneer, presidential advisor, and former head of the United Negro College Fund.

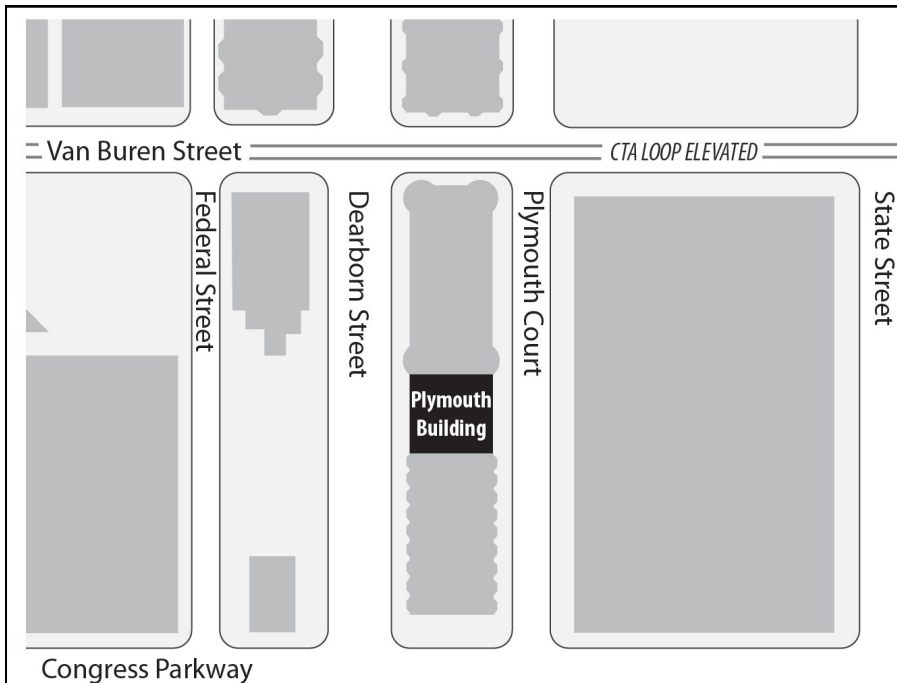
Architecturally, the Plymouth Building is an unusual mix of early steel-frame construction and an early example of cast-metal Sullivanesque ornament with later terra-cotta Collegiate Gothic ornament added in 1945, when the building became LSEU's headquarters. The building was the last skyscraper constructed within the prestigious group of printing houses and office buildings that lines South Dearborn Street between Jackson Boulevard and the Congress Parkway. Designed by Chicago-born architect Simeon B. Eisendrath (1868-1935) and completed in 1899, the building is a petite example of the revolutionary type of steel-skeleton skyscraper construction that was pioneered in Chicago during the last half of the nineteenth century and is included within the boundaries of the South Dearborn Street-Printing House Row North National Register Historic District. The Sullivanesque ornament on the Plymouth Court elevation is among the first examples of this style of ornamentation first developed and popularized by Louis Sullivan.

The later addition in 1945 of terra-cotta Gothic cladding at the building's base and crown, designed by engineer W. Scott Armstrong (1890-1965), exemplifies its educational use as the headquarters of the LSEU from 1945 to 1978 and reflects the continued appeal of the Collegiate Gothic style in educational buildings in mid-twentieth century Chicago. By remodeling their new headquarters building in the Collegiate Gothic style, the university sought to convey a sense of academic legitimacy and stability that was not often associated with correspondence schools. Although the building did not serve as a traditional "resident" university, the leaders of LSEU recognized that a Collegiate Gothic-style building made a powerful visual statement that connected their institution to the hallowed universities of England and to America's most prestigious centers of learning. The remodeled Plymouth Building fulfilled the university's long-standing vision for a prominent collegiate headquarters. The renovation was also heralded as an exemplary example of how outdated but structurally sound commercial buildings in the Loop could be repurposed for new uses.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

The Plymouth Building is an eleven-story, steel frame structure with a masonry exterior and a flat roof. The building abuts the Old Colony Building to the north and the Manhattan building to the south, and features two primary façades—the west elevation, facing South Dearborn Street, and the east elevation facing Plymouth Court.

The South Dearborn Street elevation is three bays wide and is divided into three separate parts—a two-story Collegiate Gothic-style terra-cotta base, a seven-story mid-section of ochre-colored pressed brick with paired window openings, and a two-story pressed brick top with applied Collegiate Gothic-style terra-cotta detailing and smaller window openings in groups of three. The Collegiate Gothic-style detailing on the two-story base and top, which feature a repeating tracery motif that includes pointed and cinquefoil arches, rosettes, thin ribbed columns, heavy brackets with floral motifs, and pinnacles, are rendered in architectural terra-cotta manufactured by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company and date from the 1945



The Plymouth Building is located in the South Dearborn Street Printing House Row National Register district on South Dearborn Street. The Dearborn Street elevation was remodeled in 1945 in the Collegiate Gothic style.

Top left: Dearborn Street elevation.

Top right: Plymouth Court elevation.

renovation executed by LaSalle Extension University (LSEU). The mid-section of the building remains as it was in 1899, with Chicago-style, wood sash windows at the first and second floors and one-over-one double-hung wood windows above. From the second through the ninth floors, the windows are decorated with terra-cotta banding in a Sullivanesque foliate pattern along the lintels and an intricate egg-and-dart motif below the capped sills.

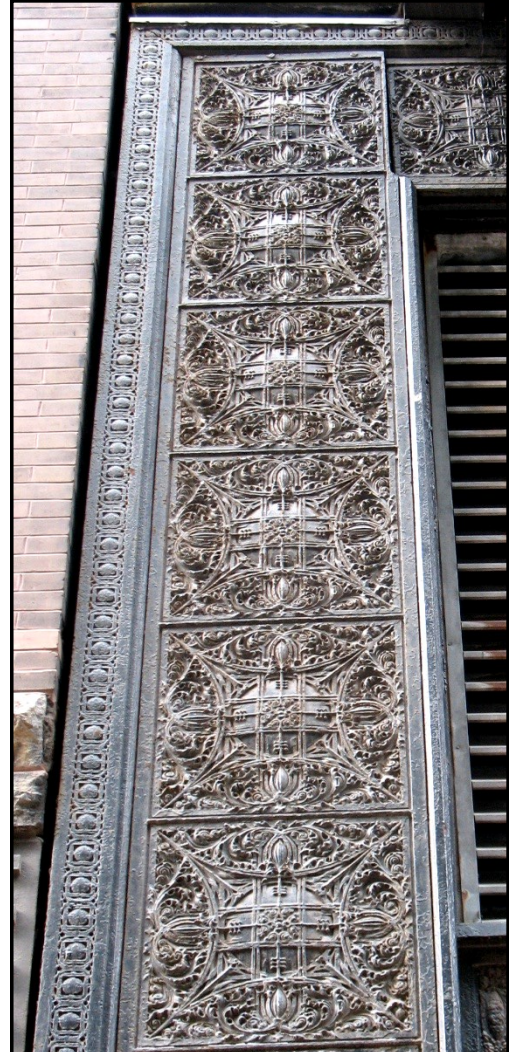
The Plymouth Court elevation is three bays wide and is also divided into three discernable parts—a two-story Sullivanesque cast-iron storefront base, a seven-story mid-section of ochre-colored pressed brick, and a one-story top topped with a one-story later addition constructed of exposed structural clay tile. The cast-iron panels, produced by the Winslow Brothers Iron Works, contain intricately wrought “rosettes”—stylized botanical forms contained in a geometric frame—that were a hallmark of Sullivan’s unique style. At the ground floor, the cast-iron frame holds three storefronts and a separate building entrance at the north end. These storefronts have been altered within the original openings and are currently boarded up. At the second floor, the cast-iron detailing frames three Chicago-style windows with original wood sash, and a projecting cast-iron cornice separates the building’s storefront base from the upper floors. The fenestration pattern above the second floor matches the Dearborn Street elevation, with paired one-over-one double-hung wood windows from the third through the ninth floors, and groups of three double-hung wood windows at the tenth floor. Above the tenth floor windows, the original brick has been replaced with newer brick, marking the location of the original projecting metal-clad cornice, apparent in historic photographs but no longer extant.

When constructed in 1899, the Dearborn Street and Plymouth Court facades featured much of the same architectural detailing. Pre-1945 photographs show that the Dearborn Street storefronts featured the same cast-iron detailing that remains on the Plymouth Court façade, with the addition of a projecting entrance bay with double doors at the north end of the Dearborn façade. Both facades featured an articulated top floor, with a small projecting cornice below the tenth floor windows and a large projecting cornice with dentil molding above.

Although no permit has been located to verify the exact date, the one-story, structural clay tile roof-top addition was constructed well before LSEU moved into the building in 1945. The addition is visible in undated photographs of the Dearborn Street elevation that appear to date from the 1910s or 1920s prior to the later 1945 changes to the building.

The exterior alterations executed by the LSEU in 1945 were limited to the first two floors and the top two floors of the Plymouth Building’s Dearborn Street façade. The ground floor was reconfigured—storefronts with separate recessed entrances at the center and southernmost bays were removed, the main Dearborn Street entrance to the building was moved from the northernmost bay to the center bay, and new Chicago-style windows were inserted to flank the new entrance. The Sullivanesque cast-iron decoration was removed and replaced with the current Collegiate Gothic-style surround. The projecting cornice above the tenth floor of the building was removed and the current Collegiate Gothic-style brick-and-terra-cotta top was constructed to mask the crudely constructed eleventh-floor addition.

On the Plymouth Court elevation, the only significant alteration has been the removal of the original projecting cornice at the tenth floor.



Except for a later top-floor addition and missing pressed-metal cornice, the Plymouth Court elevation retains the original 1899 design for the building. The cast-iron panels that decorate the first and second floors reveal the influence of the building's architect, Simeon B. Eisen-drath's former employer, Louis Sullivan, with their non-historic, foliate low-relief ornament designed in the Sullivanesque style. The panels were cast by the Winslow Brothers Iron Works, an influential Chicago firm that crafted decorative cast iron for several Chicago landmarks, including the Rookery, the Auditorium Building, the Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Building, the Marquette Building, and the Monadnock Building.





The Dearborn Street elevation of the Plymouth Building, remodeled in 1945 for the LaSalle Extension University, combines original brick-and-terra-cotta detailing by Eisendrath with later Collegiate Gothic-style architectural terra cotta manufactured by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, which was founded in Chicago in 1878 and became one of the leading terra-cotta manufacturers in the country. The company supplied architectural terra cotta for important Chicago buildings including the Civic Opera House and the Chicago Theater.

EARLY BUILDING HISTORY

The plot of land where the Plymouth Building now stands was once occupied by a five-story, masonry, commercial loft building that was designed by the architectural firm of Adler and Sullivan for Benjamin and Simon Shoenemann. The building, known as the Shoenemann Block, was one of many small-scale commercial buildings constructed along South Dearborn Street after the Fire of 1871.

The construction of the Dearborn Street railroad station in 1885 began a wave of redevelopment in the area south of Jackson Boulevard and north of Polk Street, as publishing and printing firms constructed printing houses close to the station. The area's long, narrow blocks also necessitated tall, narrow buildings, which provided the maximum natural light needed for engraving and typesetting. Closer to Jackson Boulevard, commercial office buildings mixed more freely with printing houses, but all shared a common architecture that was based on the new system of "skyscraper" construction being developed and refined by Chicago architects such as William LeBaron Jenney, William Holabird, Martin Roche, John Wellborn Root, and Daniel H. Burnham. Between 1889 and 1896, the modest commercial buildings surrounding the Shoenemann block along Dearborn Street were replaced with steel-framed high-rise buildings. The sixteen-story Manhattan Building, designed by William LeBaron Jenney, and the seventeen-story Old Colony Building, designed by Holabird & Roche, rose to great acclaim located on either side of the Shoenemann block. Just north of Van Buren Street, Daniel Burnham's Fisher Building (1895-1896) and the massive Monadnock Block (1889-1891, 1893)—completed in two phases that were designed separately by Burnham & Root and Holabird & Roche—joined the impressive group of new buildings.

Although the Shoenemann block, with its miniscule footprint of 50 x 68 feet, survived the wrecking ball during this period of growth, on March 22, 1898, the building caught fire and burned spectacularly to the ground. The Old Colony and Manhattan Buildings sustained only minimal damage, which led the *Chicago Daily Tribune* to call the fire the best test so far "of the value of the fire walls of the modern steel-frame skyscrapers." The Shoenemann's owner, W.D. Stern, immediately began plans to rebuild in modern steel-frame fireproof construction. Stern commissioned architect Simeon B. Eisendrath to design the new structure.

SIMEON B. EISENDRATH (1868-1935)

Simeon Benjamin Eisendrath (1868-1935) was born in Chicago to German Jewish immigrants. The family was part of the close-knit group of German Jews that made up Chicago's oldest and most influential Jewish communities. After high school, Simeon Eisendrath received a scholarship to attend the newly established Chicago Manual Training School, located at the corner of Twelfth Street and Michigan Avenue. The school was founded in 1883 by the Chicago Commercial Club, a group of Chicago merchants who hoped to reverse the decline of the manual trade apprentice system in America. At the time of its inception, the school was the only independent educational institution of its kind in the world. Eisendrath undertook two years of study at the school, which included such classes as carpentry, wood carving, wood turning, pattern making, proper care and use of tools, molding, casting, forging, welding, tempering, soldering, brazing, chipping, filing, fitting, turning, drilling, planning and study of machinery. Before graduating, each student was required to design and construct a machine from drawings and patterns he had made himself.

After finishing at the Chicago Manual Training School, Eisendrath left Chicago to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He studied architecture for two years before returning to Chicago in the late 1880s, where he joined the architecture firm of Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan. In 1890, Eisendrath established his own architectural practice in Chicago.

Eisendrath's major commissions reflect his close association with the leaders of Chicago's Jewish community. He was commissioned by Michael Reese Hospital to design several buildings for the original campus—the Michael Reese Training Hospital for Nurses (1891), the Michael Reese Hospital Annex for women and children (1896) and a morgue and laboratory building (1896).

While working on Michael Reese, Eisendrath was commissioned by the board of directors for the Home for Aged Jews to build a new facility at the intersection of Sixty-Second Street and Drexel Boulevard in Hyde Park. The Drexel Home, a four-story brick and stone Romanesque structure, was completed in 1893. Five years later, Eisendrath designed the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans—a three story brick and stone structure that included a natatorium—directly opposite the Drexel Home. In addition to these institutional commissions, Eisendrath completed designs for several large apartment complexes, including a six-story French Renaissance building at 35th Street and Ellis Avenue. None of these buildings survive.

Eisendrath also served briefly, but memorably, as the Commissioner of Buildings in Chicago. He entered the office in January of 1894 with grand plans of reform—the *Daily Inter Ocean* reported that on Eisendrath's first day in office, he announced plans to replace “incompetent” inspectors, rework the examination for inspectors, and amend the building ordinance. By the end of the year, Eisendrath had resigned the office in protest of the “ward heeler politics” that hindered his decisions.

Although Eisendrath is credited in several sources (including the *AIA Guide to Chicago* and the Chicago Historic Resources Survey) with designing the monumental Gansbergen Apartments at 2236-2256 North Lincoln Park West, articles discovered in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* show that the building was actually designed by the firm of Perkins & Hamilton. The building was completed in 1911 (See article entitled “New North Side Apartment Building to Have Novel Features, *Chicago Daily Tribune* dated 29 January 1911, page 20).

Eisendrath left Chicago for Pittsburgh soon after the Plymouth Building was completed, and he eventually settled in New York City in 1903. One of his first commissions in the city was the Knickerbocker Jewelry Company (1903-1904), a four-story retail building that was designated a New York City Landmark in 1990. That same year, Eisendrath also partnered with architect and engineer Oscar Lowinson on the design for the Criterion Club Building at 683 Fifth Avenue.

By 1910, Eisendrath had partnered with architect Bernard Horwitz. Between 1910 and 1925, the firm of Eisendrath & Horwitz completed several major synagogue buildings, including the Temple Beth Elohim at 277 Garfield Place in Park Slope (1910), the Temple Beth Emeth at 83 Marlborough Road in Prospect Park (1913), Temple B'nai Israel at Fourth Avenue and 54th Street in Sunset Park (1917), and the Free Synagogue School at 28-36 West 68th Street on the Upper West Side of Manhattan (1923). All of these buildings are contributing structures within



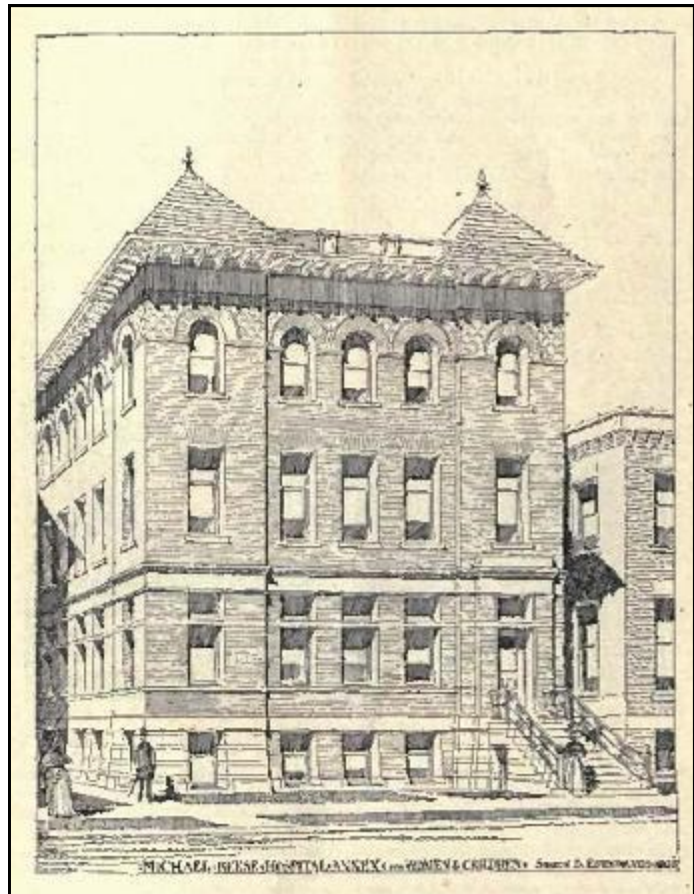
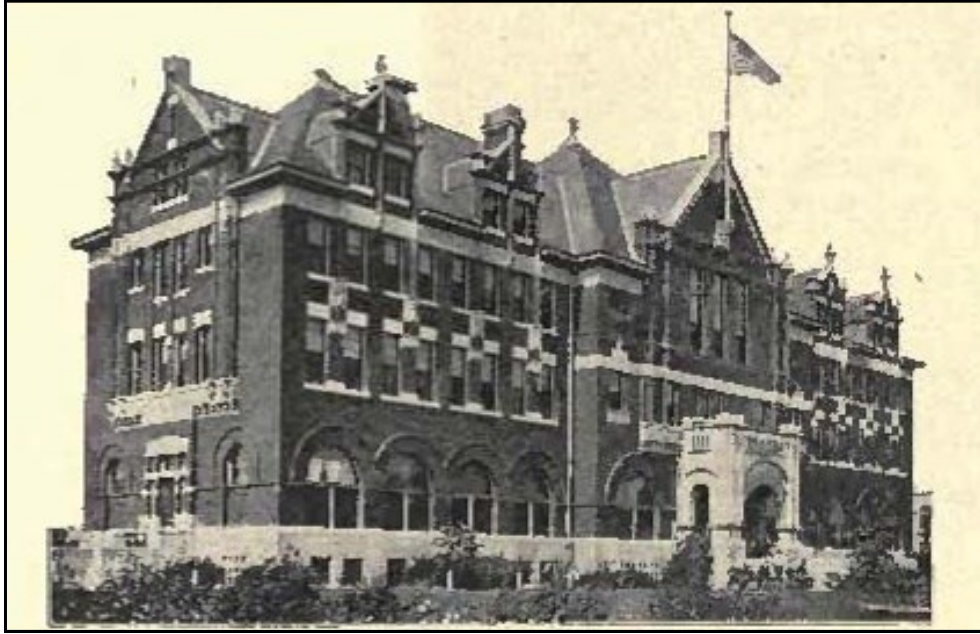
When originally built in 1899, the Plymouth Building's two elevations were very similar in design and architectural detail. Both elevations featured cast-iron paneled storefronts at the base and pressed-metal cornices at the top.

Top left: View south along Dearborn Street, with Plymouth Building at center with awnings, ca. 1900.

Bottom left: Plymouth Court elevation after construction of top-floor addition, ca. 1920.

Bottom right: Dearborn Street elevation after construction of top-floor addition, ca. 1920.





Simeon B. Eisendrath (1868-1935) worked for the architectural firm of Adler and Sullivan before establishing his own practice in the late 1890s. His most prominent commissions—including the Home for Aged Jews (top) and several buildings on the Michael Reese Hospital campus (right)—reflected his close association with leaders of Chicago’s Jewish Community.

local landmark districts. The firm also designed the Brooklyn Hebrew Home for the Aged and the Temple Shaari Zidek in Brooklyn.

In addition to synagogues, Eisendrath & Horwitz designed several movie theaters in Manhattan, including the Ideal Theater at 693 Eight Avenue (1915), the Tivoli Theater at 839 Eighth Avenue (1920-21), the Village Theater at 115-119 Eight Avenue (1916), the Arena Theater at 623 Eighth Avenue (1915-16), and the Pershing Theater at 1324 Amsterdam Avenue (circa 1922).

Eisendrath died at his home in Brooklyn on November 27, 1935, at the age of 68. He left a widow, the former Arlita Leszynsky, but no children. His obituary, printed in the *New York Times* on November 28, 1935, was entitled “Architect Helped Design Several Synagogues in New York.”

The Plymouth Building was Eisendrath’s first and only large, downtown commercial commission in Chicago. Initially, the architect proposed a fourteen-story steel-framed office building with a richly detailed Renaissance facade at an estimated cost of \$110,000. However, by the time the project broke ground in the fall of 1898, these plans had been scaled back and the building was re-designed as a ten-story printing house loft. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that “instead of [being designed] for offices it will be adapted for occupancy by printing establishments and lofts. The first and second stories will be finished for stores, while the upper floors will be constructed that they can be made into offices when the demand warrants the change. The building will be fireproof and will cost \$75,000.”

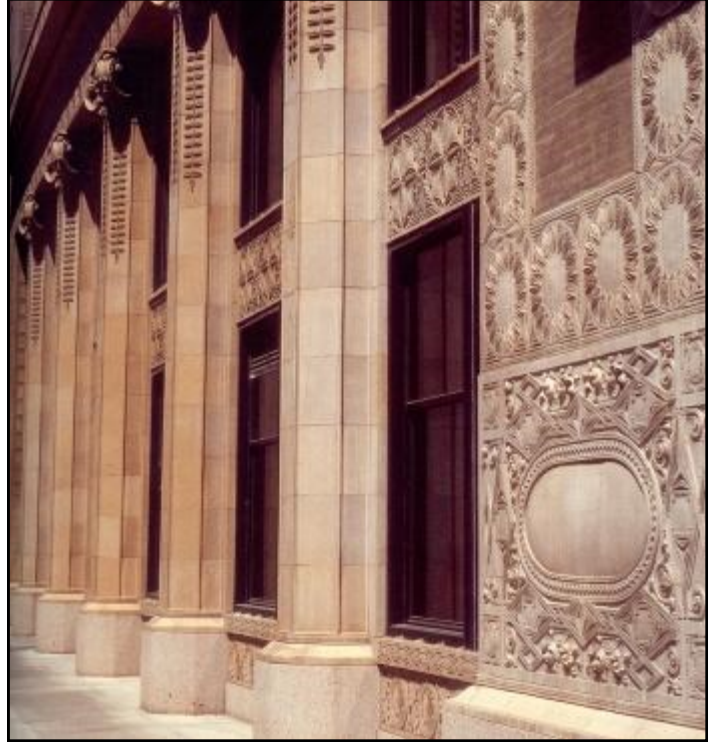
Construction was completed on the Plymouth Building by May of 1899. Although his original vision was not realized, Eisendrath’s completed design was in keeping with the other commercial buildings that had risen along Dearborn Street during the last decades of the nineteenth century, and reflected the influence of his former employers, Adler and Sullivan. The two-story Sullivanesque cast-iron storefronts on both the Plymouth Court and Dearborn Street facades were executed by the Chicago-based Winslow Brothers Iron Works, which manufactured ironwork for many of Sullivan’s interior and exterior designs, including the Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Building. Substantial cornices projected from above the second floor and from the top of the building on both facades, and both facades featured three-part Chicago windows at the second floor. The main body of the building, finished on both facades in vitrified pressed brick, was divided into three bays and regularly fenestrated with paired, double-hung wood windows.

THE SULLIVANESQUE ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Eisendrath’s use of Sullivanesque ornament for the Plymouth Building appears to be one of the earliest, if not the earliest, uses of such ornament by an architect other than Sullivan. This reflects the emergence of the Sullivanesque style as an architectural style independent of Sullivan’s use. During the next three decades, other Chicago architects and designers would use the Sullivanesque style in their own work, fulfilling the hopes of Sullivan and other progressive architects of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century for the emergence of a modern, non-historic architectural style based on innovations by individual architects.



The Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Building (top left), designed by Louis Sullivan and built in stages between 1898 and 1904, was constructed around the same time as the Plymouth Building and featured an elaborate cast- iron storefront that was manufactured by the Winslow Brother Iron Works, the same firm that completed the cast-iron panels for the Plymouth Building. During his career, Sullivan designed his unique stylistic ornament in a variety of materials, including cast iron and stone, but it was most commonly rendered in architectural glazed terra cotta. Bottom right: The Plymouth Building's Sullivan-esque-style storefronts are an early example of the use by architects other than Sullivan of this once-personal architectural style. Bottom left: Terra-cotta ornament at the top of the Union Trust Building in Chicago (demolished), designed by Adler and Sullivan and completed in 1893. Top right: Terra-cotta ornament from the M. A. Meyer Wholesale Store Building (1892-1893), designed by Adler and Sullivan in Chicago. The building was demolished in 1968.



Architect Simeon B. Eisendrath's use of Sullivan-esque ornament for the Plymouth Building, built in 1899, was one of the earliest uses of such ornament by an architect other than Sullivan. Over the next three decades, other architects throughout the Midwest would use the Sullivan-esque style in their own work. Top left: Detail of ornament on the Shall Candy Company Building (1917) in Clinton, Iowa, architect unknown. Top right: Chamber of Commerce Building in Minneapolis (1900-1902), Kees and Colburn, architects. Bottom : The William Nesbit Apartment Building (1914) at 1134 Farwell Avenue in Chicago, designed by architect Louis C. Bouchard.

The cast-iron storefronts that Eisendrath designed for the Plymouth Building closely resemble those on Sullivan's Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Building. The two buildings were under construction at the same time, and the Winslow Brother Iron Works cast the decorative iron pieces for both buildings. An extensive inventory of Sullivanesque buildings compiled by architectural historian Ronald Schmitt shows only two other nineteenth-century Sullivanesque buildings in the downtown Chicago area that were not designed by Louis Sullivan or by Adler and Sullivan—the Montgomery Ward Building at 6 North Michigan Avenue, designed by Richard E. Schmidt and completed in 1899, and the now-demolished Western Methodist Publishing Company building at 12-14 West Washington, designed by Harry B. Wheelock and also completed in 1899. These buildings were among the first in a long line of noteworthy Chicago structures that adopted the Sullivanesque style.

The Plymouth Building served as home to a variety of printing concerns, commercial artists, advertising agencies, printing-related manufacturing concerns and other small businesses including the Presto Publishing Company, Office Appliances Periodicals, and the Tint Kraft Company (which produced transfers). The McPherson Eames Manufacturing Company occupied the entire eleventh floor of the building in 1929, and the Landstrom Monotype Machine Company, an internationally recognized firm that produced typesetting machines for printing, occupied most of the second-floor office space.

The building continued as commercial loft space through 1944, when it was purchased and renovated by the La Salle Extension University (LSEU) for use as its international headquarters.

THE LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY AND DISTANCE LEARNING

During the post-World War II period, the Plymouth Building would become known primarily as the headquarters of the LaSalle Extension University (LSEU), a nationally-recognized correspondence school that operated for over ninety years in the Chicago area. Founders Jesse Grant Chapline (1870-1937) and William Bethke (1885-1966) developed a broad, business-focused curriculum coupled with an aggressive marketing strategy that would serve as a model for distance learning institutions across the country during the twentieth century. LSEU offered coursework that was designed to appeal to a wide range of potential students, covering everything from vocational training to law school.

Distance-education institutions such as LSEU were a product of the uniquely American principal of equality in educational opportunity. Well established by the Civil War, this democratic approach was based on the principal, as described by Loyola University of Chicago educational historian Gerald L. Gutek, of "extending education to everyone, no matter how humble his birth, no matter where he may live, and no matter what his reasonable aspirations may be." The first adult distance education programs in the United States, established during the last half of the nineteenth century, were founded with these ideals in mind. In 1873, Massachusetts resident Anna Eliot Ticknor founded the Society to Encourage Studies at Home, which sought to foster the growth of home-study groups by providing reading guides and conducting regular correspondence via the mail with its members. Ticknor's program was especially popular with women, many of whom were denied access to more traditional forms of

education. Although this initial organization was short-lived, by 1883 a new organization called the Correspondence University was established in Ithaca, New York. Formed by a group of instructors from various colleges and universities—including Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Wisconsin—the organization sought to “supplement the work of other educational institutions by instructing persons who for any cause were unable to attend them.” *Harper’s Weekly* described the new school as “a new and interesting scheme in higher education” where “persons in every part of the country who wish to follow at home a general or a special course of reading are advised by letter as to the books to take up and the methods to pursue.” Like Ticknor, the founders of the Correspondence University sought to encourage education among a wide range of potential students, but they did not consider their endeavors to be a money-making enterprise. Consequently, the Correspondence University, too, was short-lived.

The democratization of higher education began in earnest during the early 1900s, as rapid industrialization created a demand for workers with a range of specialized skills that were not taught in the public school system. Colleges and universities transitioned from a prescribed classical curriculum to a system that included more professional, specialized, and technical courses to meet the needs of a modern technological society. Correspondence courses were a natural outgrowth of these trends. Although a number of established universities and colleges—including the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Chicago—also began to establish correspondence courses in the late-1800s, the development of private, for-profit correspondence schools such as the LaSalle Extension University followed a separate path that was forged in large part by the International Correspondence School (ICS) of Scranton, Pennsylvania.

ICS was founded by Civil War-veteran Thomas J. Foster, who published a mining journal known as the *Colliery Engineer and Metal Miner* in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania. Troubled by the large number of accidents at the area coal mines, Foster launched a campaign through his paper to lobby for greater education among mine owners, superintendents, and workers. His efforts resulted in the passage of the Pennsylvania Mine Safety Act of 1885, which required miners and inspectors to pass examinations in mine safety. However, many of the miners (most of whom spoke little English and had only rudimentary educations) lacked the technical skills to successfully pass the new tests. In an effort to assist them, Foster began inviting miners to submit questions to the paper, which he published with answers in a “correspondence column.” The response to the column was so overwhelming that Foster began to prepare correspondence courses in coal mining. By 1885, he had established a school of mining, which later became ICS.

The school’s first class enrolled 500 miners. By 1910, the school had a cumulative enrollment of over one million students and offered a variety of engineering and technical training courses.

With the ICS as a model, the early decades of the twentieth century saw a vast increase in the number of private correspondence schools offering study in an array of topics ranging from nursing to accounting to taxidermy. By the late 1930s, the National Home Study Council had accredited fifty-two correspondence schools across the country, including ICS. One of the largest and most successful of these schools was Chicago-based LSEU, which claimed to be the world’s largest business training institution. LSEU distinguished itself from the more technical training programs offered by ICS and from other narrowly focused local correspondence

schools such as the National Salesman's Training Association and the Page Davis School of Advertising (both in Chicago) by offering a broad and inclusive curriculum of business training courses for adult continuing education. LSEU was incorporated in 1908 by Jesse Grant Chapline. Chapline was born and educated in St. Louis, Missouri, before moving to Chicago to pursue a career in publishing. He served as vice president of Making of America Company, publishers, and as president of Associated Publishing Company before turning his attention to what was known at the time as "home study" education. Chapline brought William Bethke on as vice chairman and educational director, and the two men first set up a small office in the Old Colony Building at South Dearborn Street and Van Buren Street in the Loop. They soon moved to a grand Gothic Revival-style residence at 2715 South Michigan Avenue (no longer extant) that was purportedly designed by Henry Ives Cobb. From the beginning, Chapline understood the importance of providing potential students with an image of a physical location that conveyed solidity and tradition. One of the university's early advertisements, in the 1910 edition of *Who's Who in America*, showed a monumental building with clusters of pinnacled turrets and tall, massive chimneys; although it may or may not have been the actual building that first housed the university, the effect was convincing. The advertisement announced the LSEU as the "largest exclusive University Institution in America" with a mission to "bring university education to the home; to open the door of opportunity to those not having the time or means for resident university attendance."

By the mid-1910s, the school had established courses in accounting, business, finance, law, sales and traffic/transportation management. The university also produced and published its own course materials, ranging from pamphlets and catalogs to large multi-volume text books, including a fourteen-volume law course, entitled *American Law and Procedure: A Systematic, Non-Technical Treatment of American Law and Procedure (1910)*, which was edited by James Parker Hall, Dean of the University of Chicago Law School, and the twelve-volume business course, entitled *Business Administration: Text Prepared by 400 of the Foremost Educators, Business and Professional Men in America (1909)*. In addition to course materials, the university also produced a periodical for its students called *Personal Efficiency: the How and Why Magazine* that dealt with topics ranging from banking practices to calisthenics. The university advertised extensively not only in Chicago papers but in nationally-distributed periodicals including *Popular Mechanics*, *National Geographic*, and *Atlantic Monthly*. LSEU also targeted college graduates by advertising in the *Harvard Alumni* magazine, the *University of Chicago Magazine*, and the *Alumni Register* of the University of Pennsylvania.

On May 7, 1916, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* announced that LSEU was nearing completion of "a substantial two-story office and administrative building at the northwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Forty-First Street." W. P. Whitney was listed as the building's architect. The university moved into the building in August of 1916. By 1920, the university had again outgrown its existing space, and plans were made for a new administration building. Initially, LSEU prepared to construct a monumental six-story Collegiate Gothic-style building, complete with a corner clock tower. A rendering of the proposed new building was prominently displayed in the 1922 Official Reference Book of the Press Club of Chicago (of which Jesse G. Chapline was a prominent member), along with a full page article on the school, declaring:

La Salle Extension University is the largest higher business training institution in the world—with assets of over \$7,000,000, with more than 350,000 enrolled members, with an educational, administrative, and service staff of more than 1500 people.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
 (NON-RESIDENT INSTRUCTION)
 University Extension Studies by Correspondence—a practical method of

American Law and Procedure. The text books—edited by James P. Hall, Dean of Law School, University of Chicago, and James DeWitt Andrews, author of “Andrews’ American Law”, etc.—are the product of professional teachers.

Courses also in

**BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
 INTERSTATE COMMERCE
 BUSINESS ENGLISH
 DOMESTIC SCIENCE
 ORATORY AND EXPRESSION
 LITERATURE
 CIVIL SERVICE**

All courses are conducted by experienced teachers.

Note.—The research and reference system and bulletin service are important features of the courses.

The **Consulting Privilege** is of special value to business men, teachers and students.

LaSalle Extension University, 2715 Michigan Avenue, Chicago




LaSalle Extension University began in 1908 as a correspondence business school, offering “non-resident instruction” in such courses as business administration and “oratory and expression.” From its inception, the school founders recognized the importance of a physical location that conveyed a sense of tradition and educational legitimacy.

Early advertisements show a substantial turreted building, which may or may not have accurately represented the school’s first location in a converted residence on Chicago’s south side (top left). The school constructed its own facilities at Forty-First Street and Michigan Avenue during the 1910s (right). Although a monumental Gothic Revival-style administration building (top right) was planned in the 1920s, it was never built.





LaSalle Extension University (LSEU) founders Jesse Grant Chapline (top left) and William Bethke (bottom left) developed a broad and aggressively-marketed curriculum that served as a model for adult education distance-learning institutions across the country during the twentieth century. The school offered educational opportunities to hundreds of thousands of students throughout the world with otherwise limited access to more traditional avenues to higher education because of their race, gender, class, or their physical location.

Right: LSEU advertised in a wide variety of periodicals, including many college alumni magazines, targeting educated men who were seeking additional business training. This LSEU advertisement from the 1920s was posted in the University of Chicago alumni magazine.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO MAGAZINE 317

NOTE:—This advertisement carries two questions that big employers repeatedly ask, viz: (1) *What makes LaSalle men so practical?* (2) *Why don't more men train with LaSalle for the high-pay positions in business?*

The LaSalle Problem Method

—and how it successfully condenses a lifetime of experience into a few months of study

It comes as a jolt to many college men to discover that the knowledge they have acquired during their four years' course is not recognized in the business world as an "open sesame" to a high-salaried position.

They see about them thousands of young men who have never been to college already commanding substantial salaries. They naturally feel that they possess a tremendous advantage over these men, yet in trying to make it they find this advantage discounted at every turn.

Here, then, is a problem every college man who enters business must squarely face:—How can I acquire in the shortest possible time the greatest amount of practical experience?

With more than 325,000 men—thousands of them college graduates—rapidly winning their way to bigger and better things as a result of home study training under the LaSalle Problem Method, a way is suggested that deserves the keen attention of every college man in business.

The value of this method lies in the fact that it imparts not theoretical knowledge—impractical, unobtainable—but real, practical, usable experience.

Suppose you decided to acquire, as a foundation for your business career, a thorough knowledge of—accountancy, say.

Now stretch your imagination a trifle. Suppose that thru the offices of an influential friend, arrangements were made for you to step in and immediately occupy the position you intended training to fill—right in the organization of a big corporation—with a complete department under your orders. Say that by your side were placed, as your instructors and guides, several high grade accountants—men of national reputation—their sole duty being to train and equip you.

With these men instructing you in proper principles—then, you yourself exercising your own judgment in handling transactions and solving problems as they arose in your daily work—do you get the idea? You would be acquiring experience right along with the best work in the profession.

Sitting in the chair of authority—dealing with actual business—learning by solving what you learned—with experts correcting your errors, commending good work, guiding you aright through all the complications, routine and emergency situations of the entire accounting field and making you make good every step of the way—could not in a class room, but right in a business office where you would be actually doing the work you were training for—

—wouldn't you, at the end of a year or so in this training be much further ahead than men who had spent years seeking the same knowledge in the old, hard, "find-out-for yourself" way?

You can answer these questions—your good sense tells you that the situation described would make you a practical man—sure, certain and confident—able and capable of holding down any situation the accounting field offered.

And that is why the LaSalle Problem Method makes practical men. Simply because the procedure outlined above is followed—exactly.

True, you do your work at home. True, the experts who help you are located here in Chicago.

Nevertheless, under the LaSalle Problem Method you are actually occupying the position you are training to fill, whether it be in the accountancy field, or traffic, or business management, or law, or correspondence—irrespective of what you are studying; you are acquiring principles and applying them in actual business under the watchful eyes and helpful guidance of men big in your chosen field.

And when you have completed your LaSalle work, you can truthfully say that you are not only a thoroughly trained man, but an experienced man—you know the best work practices and you have used them all—your are familiar tools in your hands.

A LaSalle man can walk in anywhere with confidence. He does not feel the uncertainty and fear that arise when one faces the new and unknown. Under the Problem Method he has exploited his chosen field on his own feet—the questions, the problems, the difficulties—he has met, faced, and mastered them all. His experience makes him know that also he may be amassing a new position at higher pay, the duties of that position are an old, familiar story.

Experience is cash capital in business.

There are only two ways to get it.

One is the old, slow, uncertain way. The man who chooses to learn a branch of business by picking it up bit by bit as he goes along, finds the years slip by faster than he thought and sometimes his progress not so sure as he had anticipated. For all the "bits of knowledge" he sought may not have come his way.

The other road is short, sure and certain. It lies thru the Problem Method, distinctive with LaSalle Extension University. This way condenses into months the experience which it takes most men a lifetime to gain.

J. Chapline
President LaSalle Extension University
of Chicago, Illinois

LaSalle Extension University

The Largest Business Training Institution in the World

If you are in earnest when you say to yourself that you must do something to permanently increase your earning capacity—then—check the coupon below. It is a step you will never regret. And it is a step that is one hundred times as hard to make tomorrow as it is to take today.

—INQUIRY COUPON—

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, Dept. R-325 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Please send me catalog and full information regarding the course and service I have marked with an X below. Also a copy of your booklet, "Ten Years Experience in One," all without obligation to me.

<input type="checkbox"/> Business Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Law—Degree of LL. B.	<input type="checkbox"/> Banking and Finance	<input type="checkbox"/> Export Bookkeeping
<input type="checkbox"/> Typewriting	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Personnel and Employment Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Business English
<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Accountancy	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Modern Foremanship	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Spanish
<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency	<input type="checkbox"/> Production Methods	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective Speaking
<input type="checkbox"/> Railway, Accounting and Business Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Modern Business Correspondence and Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> C. P. A. Coaching	

Name _____ Present Position _____ Address _____

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LaSalle's field is vocational training; that is, training men practically for such work as certified public accounting, executive accounting, traffic management, salesmanship, business correspondence, and executive positions.

LaSalle training is primarily for adults. The average age of students is nearly thirty years and ranges from eighteen to seventy-two. Among these are rich and poor, college graduates and those who have obtained most of their education in the school of hard knocks, presidents of large corporations and ambitious men in the ranks.

Ultimately, the administration and distribution building that was eventually constructed at Forty-First Street and Michigan Avenue in 1923 was a more modest three-story brick building with a Gothic Revival-inspired entrance surround. With the new space, the LSEU continued to expand its operations. In 1926, Jesse G. Chapline and William Bethke founded the National Home Study Council, with the mission of promoting "sound educational standards and ethical business practices within the home study field." Of course, LSEU was one of the first schools to receive accreditation from the organization.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Chapline, Bethke, and vice president Lewis Grime Elliott (1872-1946) also initiated several other programs that extended the reach and influence of the LSEU. One of the most innovative was the formation of a separate "LaSalle Corporation Service" that partnered with major companies such as General Electric, Packard Auto, Chrysler, and Esso Standard Oil to produce sales training manuals. Titles produced by the LaSalle Corporation Service included "Esso Moto Tank Salesmanship," "Packard Salesmanship," "General Electric Kitchen Appliance Salesmanship," and "Specialized Automobile Salesmanship – Chrysler Sales Corporation and Dodge Brothers." In 1935, the LSEU partnered with the Stenotype Company to establish the National Stenotype Institute, with offices on the fourth floor of 9 West Washington Street. The institute, Chapline explained to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, was meant to serve "as a pacemaker, a national laboratory" for the methods of teaching stenotype. The Institute taught teachers from 400 schools ranging from commercial colleges to Ivy League universities that were "enfranchised" by the Stenotype Company to teach stenotype.

By the 1940s, the LSEU had established itself as one of the country's largest and most successful correspondence schools, educating hundreds of thousands of students during its years in operation. From its inception, LSEU offered educational opportunities to many who were largely excluded from following traditional avenues to higher education. Although it does not appear that the school marketed specifically to African-American students, its correspondence courses were inherently color blind at a time when much of the country's educational system was still segregated, and many African Americans received degrees from LSEU.

Some of the LSEU's most successful graduates went on to break racial barriers in their fields. In 1918, Gertrude Elzora Durden Rush (1880-1962), an LSEU law student, became the first black woman admitted to the Iowa bar; in 1925, she helped found the National Bar Association to broaden opportunities for black lawyers. Arthur D. Shores (1904-1996), a native of Birmingham, Alabama who received a law degree from LSEU in 1935, was one of the first blacks to practice law in Alabama. During the 1950s and 1960s, Shores became a prominent figure within the civil rights movement, and in 1969 he became the first black candidate to be elected to the Birmingham City Council.

Arthur Fletcher (1924-2005), Republican presidential advisor and affirmative action pioneer, is perhaps the most well-known of LSEU's African-American graduates. Born in Phoenix, Arizona on December 22, 1924, Fletcher graduated from Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas in 1950 and went on to receive a law degree from LSEU. In 1954, he became the first black player for the Baltimore Colts football team. In 1972, he became executive director of the United Negro College Fund, and coined the fund's signature phrase—"A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste." Fletcher served as Secretary of Labor to the Nixon administration, was an advisor to four Republican presidents, and headed the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in the 1990s.

LSEU was one of the largest of the private correspondence schools operating in the nation during the first half of the twentieth century. The school was certainly the largest and best-publicized correspondence school in Chicago. The 1923 Polk's Chicago City Directory profiled the LSEU in the education section of its special insert, entitled *Chicago, the Great Central Market*, citing the school as one of the city's most well-known business schools. No other correspondence school was profiled in the publication. Between 1910 and 1921, the university's annual enrollment climbed from around 6,000 to more than 58,000. The school employed over 1,600 people and claimed a total enrollment of over half a million, including 5,000 overseas students. In contrast, the Alexander Hamilton Institute, a New York-based correspondence business school with a Chicago office in the Transportation Building at 608 South Dearborn Street, claimed a total enrollment of just 155,000 in 1921. The American School of Correspondence, although perhaps as well known as LSEU, served high school students exclusively, while LSEU courses were designed primarily for adult continuing education. Many of the correspondence schools listed in the Chicago city directories during the 1910s and 1920s focused only on one discipline, such as nursing or stenography. One correspondence school at 127 North Wells specialized in "Gospel and Scientific Eugenics." Other Chicago correspondence schools, including the Chicago Home Study Schools at 82 West Washington Street and the Chicago Correspondence Schools at 2914 South Wilcox, appear to have been more modest institutions, with limited coursework options that were advertised primarily in local papers. Although additional research is needed to establish a more complete context of correspondence schools in Chicago, no other locally-based correspondence school appears to have been as well-known, both throughout the city and across the country, as LSEU.

LSEU maintained administrative and distribution facilities at its Forty-First Street and South Michigan Avenue location until 1945. In that year, the school moved its headquarters to the Plymouth Building at 417 South Dearborn Street. The building, originally designed as a commercial loft building for printing and publishing concerns, was well-suited for the university's core services, which mainly involved the development and distribution of printed materials, the processing and grading of student coursework, and the handling of large volumes of mail. The move represented a major milestone for the university, as it moved from the relative obscurity of its operations on the south side to the Loop. It also corresponded with the beginning of a great transformation in higher education, which began in 1944, when Congress enacted the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, more commonly known as the "G.I. Bill."

The G. I. Bill was originally intended to ease returning war veterans' transition to civilian life and to prevent a glut of unemployed veterans seeking jobs in an economy that couldn't support them. By providing government-subsidized tuition, educational materials and fees, and living



In 1945, LaSalle Extension University, one of the largest and most successful correspondence schools in the country, purchased the Plymouth Building for use as their new headquarters. To give the building a more collegiate feel, the new owners hired architect W. Scott Armstrong to design a Collegiate Gothic terra-cotta treatment for the Dearborn Street façade of the building.

Top left and right: Plymouth Building with Collegiate Gothic Dearborn Street façade, ca. 1945.

Bottom: Entry detail, ca. 1945.

expenses for veterans who were attending approved educational institutions, the G. I. Bill made it possible for millions of men and women to receive a higher education. Conversely, the legislation made the post-war period a time of unprecedented growth for legitimate correspondence schools such as LSEU. The university's new downtown headquarters reflected the post-war surge in higher education. Between 1944 and 1951, almost eight million veterans received educational benefits through the G. I. Bill, and many of them chose to take courses by correspondence.

The university paid \$100,000 for the Plymouth Building and announced plans for a remodeling program, to be financed by the sale of the school's Michigan Avenue buildings. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that LSEU intended to "consolidate all of its correspondence facilities in the Plymouth Building and in additional rented space in the Mergenthaler Building, 431 Plymouth Court."

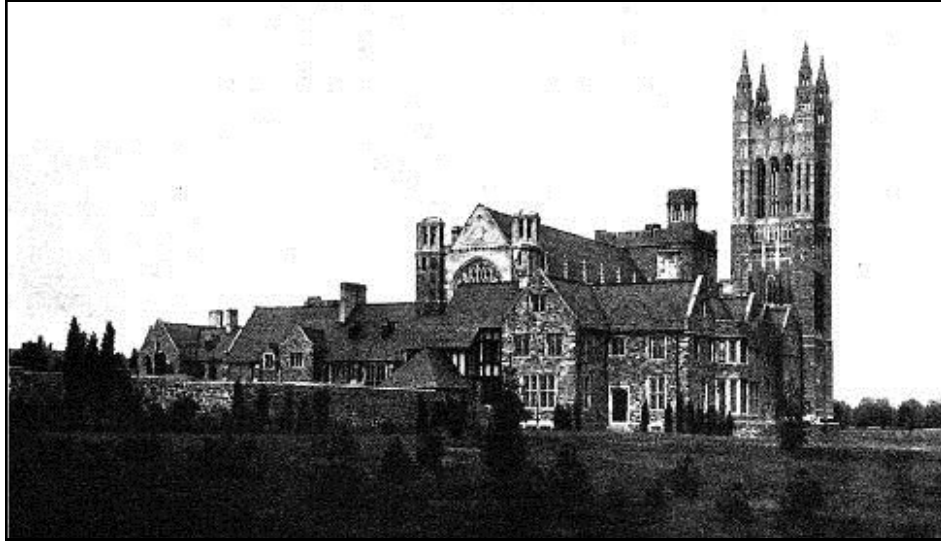
W. SCOTT ARMSTRONG (1890-1965)

LSEU commissioned Chicago engineer and architect W. Scott Armstrong (1890-1965) to draw up plans for the renovations. Armstrong was born in Kansas and initially trained as an engineer at the Kansas State Agricultural College in Manhattan, Kansas, which would later become Kansas State University. During the mid-1920s, he partnered with architect Kenneth T. White to form the Chicago architectural firm of Armstrong & White. Commissions from the firm during the 1920s included the Dayton Hotel in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and the New Aurora Hotel Annex in Aurora, Illinois. By the late 1920s, Armstrong had formed his own firm, W. Scott Armstrong & Co., and had completed several apartment projects in Chicago, including a six-story furnished apartment hotel at 5722 North Winthrop Avenue in the Uptown neighborhood.

THE COLLEGIATE GOTHIC STYLE

The Collegiate Gothic treatment that Armstrong employed for the Plymouth Building's Dearborn Street elevation was a deliberate choice by LSEU that reflected a long tradition of Collegiate Gothic architecture as the standard architectural style for American educational buildings of all types, from prestigious institutions of learning such as Yale University to small-scale grade school buildings in small towns. The style's historic associations with British universities, especially those at Oxford and Cambridge, were important to a rapidly-growing American nation with aspirations towards culture and high educational standards.

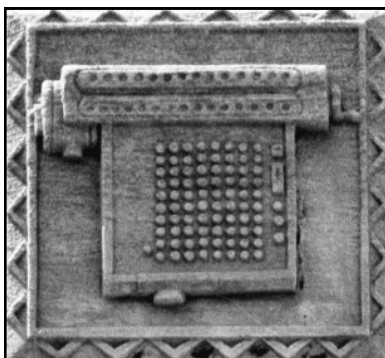
Although Gothic Revival-style buildings had been built in the United States since at least the early nineteenth century, the Collegiate Gothic sub-style was first introduced in America in 1890 by the Philadelphia architectural firm of Cope and Stewardson in their design for buildings on the Bryn Mawr women's college campus in Pennsylvania. Walter Cope (1860-1902) and John Stewardson (1858-1896) carried the Collegiate Gothic style to Princeton University in 1896, and in the early 1900s the firm designed an entire new Collegiate Gothic campus for Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Boston architect Ralph Adams Cram, who served as Princeton's supervising architect from 1907 to 1929, also enthusiastically embraced the Collegiate Gothic, calling it the only architectural style that was "absolutely expressive of the civilization we hold in common with England and the ideals of liberal education."



During the late nineteenth century, Collegiate Gothic architecture emerged as the standard architectural style for American educational buildings. Examples include: Princeton Graduate School and Cleveland Tower (1913, top), designed by Ralph Adams Cram, a leading proponent of the Collegiate Gothic style; Duke University Chapel (1930-1932, middle right), a later example of the Collegiate Gothic style, designed by Julian Abele, chief designer of the Philadelphia firm of Horace Trumbauer.



In Chicago, the most prominent examples of the Collegiate Gothic style are buildings constructed on the University of Chicago campus in Hyde Park by a number of architects including Henry Ives Cobb, Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, and Coolidge and Hodgdon. Bottom right: University of Chicago's Hutchinson Court (1903), designed by Shepley, Rutan, & Coolidge; bottom left, Ornament on the Social Science Research Building (1929, Coolidge and Hodgdon).



In Chicago, Henry Ives Cobb patterned his master plan for the University of Chicago campus in Hyde Park after the Universities of Oxford. The original campus, begun in 1891 and completed in 1930, consisted of thirty-one buildings arranged around six quadrangles. Although Cobb heavily favored the Romanesque style over the Collegiate Gothic style, the university's trustees "felt strongly that the ecclesiastical and educational associations of the Gothic" made it a more appropriate choice for the campus than the Romanesque style. Cobb acquiesced, and during his ten years as campus architect he produced eighteen structures in the Collegiate Gothic style. His successors, the Boston architectural firm of Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, and later Coolidge and Hodgdon, completed the remaining buildings, which included the Hutchinson Court complex and the Harper Memorial Library. During the 1910s, the university began requesting that the carved ornament on the buildings be indicative of their use—a tradition that continued through the early 1930s and resulted in an interesting array of ornament such as the carved calculators and calipers that adorn the Social Science Research Building. While the post-World War II period saw many campuses embracing a more modern architecture, Collegiate Gothic-style buildings continued to be built through the twentieth century, and are still being constructed today.

As one of a relatively small number of legitimate and accredited correspondence education institutions, the LSEU was constantly trying to differentiate its programs from the hundreds of fraudulent home study schools that were operating in the United States. Having a physical location where students could see the operations of the school for themselves was one way that university distinguished itself from the operators of the "diploma mills" who did not seek voluntary accreditation and evaded regulatory authorities by changing names and moving their base of operations. A 1930 promotional booklet published by the university and entitled, "My Trip Through LaSalle"—written on the premise of a recent graduate's first tour of the LSEU headquarters in Chicago—clearly showed how important LSEU's physical location was to the cultivation and promotion of the university's public image. The publication featured pages of photographs and photo collages that provided an exhaustive tour of the LSEU facilities and an introduction to its hundreds of employees. The graduate narrator exclaims, "Of course, I had a mental picture of the University—I suppose every LaSalle student has—and my image of it was rather exacting, for I knew of LaSalle's great place in the business world. But even I was happily surprised at the size and appearance of the two buildings on opposite corners of Michigan Boulevard and Forty-First Street. They were even more impressive than I had expected."

The university's leaders also understood that the architectural design of these buildings was just as important for helping visitors and potential students make the correct association between LaSalle and more traditional, established universities such as the nearby University of Chicago. From its beginnings at the residence at 2715 South Michigan, the leaders of LSEU saw the Collegiate Gothic style as the ultimate architectural expression of "legitimate" higher education. President Lewis G. Elliott, who had served as the school's vice president under Jesse G. Chapline, had been involved in the university's stalled plans for a distinctive and monumental Collegiate Gothic headquarters in the early 1920s. In the newly renovated Plymouth Building, the school's leaders had finally achieved their architectural vision. The new two-story terra-cotta base featured a repeating motif of Gothic tracery that included pointed arches and thin, attenuated ribbed columns topped with pinnacles. These decorative details were repeated in terra-cotta and brick at the top two floors of the Dearborn elevation, which were designed to hide the

eleventh floor addition that was added to the building sometime in the early twentieth century. Interestingly, these changes were limited to the Dearborn Street elevation, where the main entrance to the building was located.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND ADAPTIVE REUSE IN THE LOOP

Although LSEU's program for the Plymouth Building was not architecturally forward-thinking, the renovation was held up as a model for re-servicing existing office buildings in the Loop. In the immediate post-war period, materials were scarce, and large new construction projects were rare; coming out of the Great Depression of the preceding decade, many existing buildings had suffered a long period of deferred maintenance. The Inland Steel Building, the first new office building constructed in the Loop after World War II, was not completed until 1958, and many of the existing buildings in Chicago's central business district were seen as functionally obsolete for modern business practices. LSEU's investment in the Plymouth Building signaled a commitment to the Loop as the center of business and commerce at a time when focus was beginning to shift from urban downtowns. In a *Chicago Daily Tribune* article entitled, "Modernization Held Way to Slow Shift from Loop District," university president Elliot stated:

Reports by building experts and architects that the Dearborn Street building was as sound as the day it was completed and could be made as modern as any in the loop convinced us that it would be wise to buy it and rehabilitate it. . . . Within the loop and fringing it for blocks around are other worthy buildings grown old in service, run down and neglected, which at heart are as sound as they were in their prime. All they require is recognition of their virtues and good treatment to restore them to a place of usefulness in the community. Much of the march away from downtown Chicago could be halted by intelligent use of such fine old structures.

As an educational institution, LSEU's presence downtown anticipated the expansion of other established colleges and universities into the Loop during the second half of the twentieth century, many of which also utilized existing buildings. In 1955, DePaul University established a Loop campus, the center of which was the eighteen-story building at 25 East Jackson Boulevard, which had been originally constructed for the Kimball Piano Company. The university reconfigured the interiors and renamed the building the Lewis Center.

From 1974 through the 1990s, Columbia College (which, like LSEU, began as a "non-traditional" higher education institution) assembled a campus in the South Loop composed exclusively of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century buildings. Unlike many of these educational institutions, however, LSEU's operations were more consistent with the mail-order houses such as Speigel, Sears & Roebuck, and Montgomery Ward, which had made Chicago the central clearinghouse for goods that were distributed across the country. The Plymouth Building's interior loft space was perfectly suited for this new purpose, and it was the exterior of the building that had to be "adapted" to clearly express the operations within.

LSEU operated from the Plymouth Building from 1945 until 1978. During this period, the university experienced unprecedented growth buoyed by the large number of World War II veterans who were enrolling through the G. I. Bill. A 1949 article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* noted a nation-wide upward trend in correspondence enrollment, citing a National Home Study

Council report that showed more than “1,500,000 enrolled last year in the numerous study courses available by correspondence or direct teaching at schools accredited by the council.” In 1960, LSEU was offering courses to more than 26,000 students annually across the country. That same year, the university acquired two other Chicago-based home study organizations—the Utilities Engineering Institute and the Wayne School—further increasing its share of the correspondence school market. Just four years later, LaSalle’s annual enrollment had increased to 36,000, with over two-thirds of the school’s students electing to take accounting and law courses. The 1964 edition of *A Complete Guide to the Accredited Correspondence Schools* listed LSEU as the “only accredited school in the country that offers a correspondence course in law” which, although not sufficient for eligibility to the bar exam, provided an L.L. B. degree that “thousands of students have found useful in insurance, government, and business.” The university had also expanded its technical programs to include courses in Mechanical Drafting, Auto Body and Welding, Diesel and Motor Tune-Up, and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning.

LSEU maintained all of its correspondence facilities within the Plymouth Building until 1978, when it moved to Wilmette, Illinois, to the site of the National Register Publishing Company, a division of Macmillan, Co., which had purchased the university in the 1960s. The university continued to operate until the early 1980s, when several lawsuits forced the closure of the LSEU law school and the Federal Trade Commission ordered the school to scale back its advertising claims on its other courses. In 1982, the school failed to receive accreditation from the National Home Study Council (which had been renamed the Distance Education and Training Council), the very organization that Jesse G. Chapline and William Bethke had founded in 1926.

After LSEU left in 1978, the Plymouth Building once again became rental office space. In the 1980s, the interior of the building was renovated by Katz Brothers Development with architect R. R. Rasmussen & Associates of Skokie, Illinois. The building has been vacant since 2006. At that time, a new owner began work to convert the building into condominiums. Those plans failed, and the current owners purchased the building in 2008.

The Plymouth Building is identified as an “orange”-rated building in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey and is within the boundaries of the South Dearborn Street-Printing House Row Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a final 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 a significant degree of historic integrity to convey its significance.

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

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History

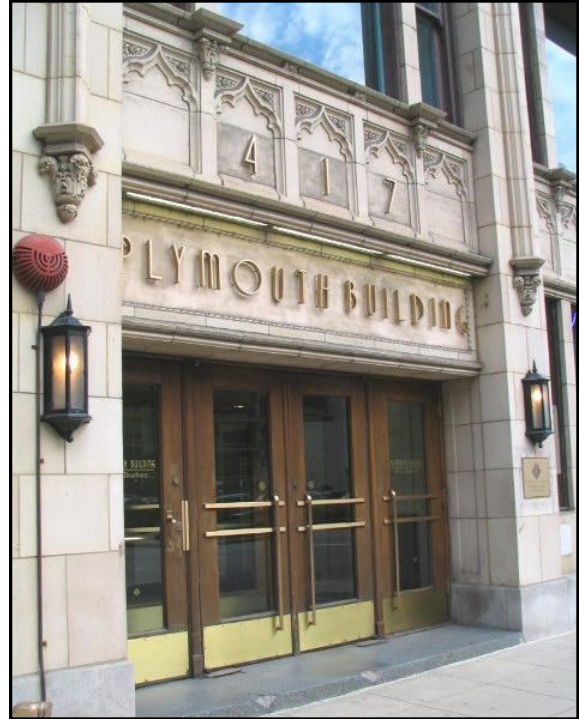
Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois or the United States.

- The Plymouth Building, through its historic associations with the LaSalle Extension University (LSEU), exemplifies the significance of distance learning organizations to the economic and educational history of Chicago and the nation. LSEU was a nationally-recognized distance learning institution that operated in Chicago for roughly ninety years. Founded in 1908 in Chicago by educators Jesse Grant Chapline and William Bethke, LSEU was one of the largest and most successful distance learning institutions in the country. It owned and occupied the Building from 1945 to 1978, a period of great growth and influence for the school.
- LSEU developed and published its own coursework materials for a variety of subjects, from vocational training to law, that were utilized not only by the university but by hundreds of other schools and universities across the country. LSEU's correspondence model extended opportunities to students who had limited access to more traditional avenues of higher education because of their race, gender, class, or their physical location.
- Some of LSEU's most successful graduates include Harold J. Arthur (1904-1971), former Governor of Vermont; noted psychiatrist Hugo Munsterberg (1863-1916); and four-star Army general Bruce C. Clarke (1901-1988). Many of the university's African American students went on to break racial barriers in their fields, including Gertrude Elzora Durden Rush (1880-1962), the first black woman admitted to the Iowa bar and co-founder of the National Bar Association, a organization that broadened opportunities for black lawyers; Arthur D. Shores (1904-1996), one of the first black attorneys to practice law in Alabama, who became a prominent figure within the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s and in 1969 became the first black candidate elected to the Birmingham City Council; and Arthur Fletcher (1924-2005), an affirmative action pioneer who was elected executive director of the United Negro College Fund in the 1970s, served as Secretary of Labor during the Nixon administration, was an advisor to four Republican presidents from the 1970s through the 1990s, and headed the U. S. Civil Rights Commission in the 1990s.

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 Plymouth Building is an unusual example of a tall office building whose architectural design and detailing reflects both its original purpose as a commercial loft building in Chicago's premiere printing district, housing a variety of commercial tenants, and its later reuse as an institutional building housing the LaSalle Extension University (LSEU), a large and historically-significant educational organization. The Building's mix of nineteenth-century steel-frame construction and cast-metal Sullivanesque ornament with later mid-twentieth-century terra-cotta Collegiate Gothic ornament expresses the building's atypical history and evolution, unusual and significant in the context of Chicago history.



Top left: Terra-cotta window lintel on Plymouth Building's Dearborn Street elevation, dating from 1899; Top right: Dearborn Street entrance dating from 1945 rehabilitation; Bottom right: Terra-cotta detail above the entrance on the Dearborn Street elevation; Bottom left; 1899 Sullivanesque-style cast-iron panel on Plymouth elevation; Middle left: Terra-cotta parapet, 1945, at the top of the Dearborn Street elevation.

- The Building is a small-scale example of the tall office building, a building type of significance to Chicago architectural and economic history. With its internal steel-frame skeleton and exterior masonry facades, the Building exemplifies the revolution in high-rise building design and construction that occurred in Chicago in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.
- The Building's terra-cotta window decoration and Plymouth-facing cast-iron storefronts are among the earliest, if not the earliest, examples of Sullivan-style ornament created by an architect other than Louis Sullivan himself. They epitomize the emergence of the Sullivan-style as an architectural style, independent of Sullivan's use, of importance in the history of Chicago architecture during a period when a number of the city's architects sought to develop new, non-historic architectural styles.
- The Building's Collegiate Gothic terra-cotta ornament, added in 1945, is an unusual mid-twentieth-century use of the architectural style and reflects the style's continued cultural associations in Chicago and the nation with universities, colleges, and other institutions of higher learning.
- The Building possesses fine detailing and craftsmanship in a variety of historic building materials, including brick, cast-iron, and terra-cotta. In particular, the Building's original Sullivan-style cast-iron storefronts were produced by the renowned Winslow Brothers Iron Works, which produced other important architectural ornamental treatments (both interior and exterior) for Chicago Landmarks such as the Auditorium Building (1886-1890), the Monadnock Building (1889-1891, south half 1891-1893), the Marquette Building (1895), the Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Building (1898-1899, 1902-1904), and the Gage Building at 18 South Michigan Avenue (1899-1900). The Building's later Collegiate Gothic-style terra-cotta was produced by Chicago's Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, one of the United States' major terra-cotta companies and the producers of terra-cotta cladding and ornament for such significant Chicago buildings as the Auditorium Building, the Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Building, the Marquette Building, the Chicago Theater, the Civic Opera House, and Wrigley Field.

Integrity Criterion

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.

Retaining its historic integrity of location and setting, the Plymouth Building is located on a building parcel extending through from Dearborn Street on the west to Plymouth Court on the east. It shares common walls with the Old Colony Building to the north and the Manhattan Building to the south. (Both the Old Colony and Manhattan are individually-designated Chicago Landmarks.)

The Plymouth Building’s overall design and materials reflect the building’s evolution of uses and its varied and significant history as first, a commercial loft building housing a variety of tenants, and later, as the headquarters for the LaSalle Extension University (LSEU), which was a distance-learning institution with a national enrollment. The building’s original 1899 design by Simeon Eisendrath combined handsome brick, terra cotta, and decorative metal in a manner that exemplified better-quality commercial loft buildings of the period. This 1899 design remains visible on the Dearborn elevation from the third through the ninth floors with original brick walls, double-hung windows and Sullivanesque-style terra-cotta window ornament. In addition, the building’s Plymouth elevation retains original cast-iron, Sullivanesque-style, two-story storefronts from 1899, as well as upper-floor brick and terra-cotta treatments similar to the Dearborn elevation.

With Dearborn Street considered a more prestigious street than Plymouth Court, the building’s 1945 renovation for the LSEU focused on the Dearborn elevation. Architectural terra-cotta designed in the Collegiate Gothic style was used to re clad the first two and top two floors of the building. (This cladding covers in part a top-floor addition to the building that was added at some point before 1930.) This terra-cotta cladding was ornamented with a variety of Gothic-style details, including tracery and finials. These changes reflect the building’s subsequent use as the headquarters of a historically-significant educational institution. They exemplify the cultural associations between the Collegiate Gothic style and institutions of higher learning that the LSEU sought for their new headquarters.

Non-significant exterior changes to the Plymouth Building include boarded-up Plymouth Court storefronts, some window replacement, and the roughly-finished Plymouth Court elevation of the building’s top-floor addition. Despite these changes, the Plymouth Building retains the vast majority of the exterior features that exemplify its unusual history and varied uses.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever a building 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 on its preliminary evaluation of the Plymouth Building, the Commission staff recommends that the significant historical and architectural features of the District be identified as:

- all exterior building elevations, including rooflines, of the Building.

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LaSalle Extension University logo, circa 1925.

Illustrations

Emily Ramsey, pages 5, 6, 7, 8, 14 (top left), 28, and 31.

Chicago History Museum, Street Files for Dearborn Street and Plymouth Court, pages 11 and 23 (all).

From Eliassof, *The Jews of Illinois*: page 12 (all).

From *My Trip Through LaSalle*: pages 19 (middle right) and 20 (bottom left).

From *Official Reference Book, Press Club of Chicago*: pages 19 (bottom left) and 20 (top left).

From *Who's Who in America*: page 19 (top)

From *University of Chicago Magazine*: page 20 (right).

From Schmitt, *Sullivan-esque*: pages 14 and 15 (all).

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From *Photographs and Sketches of Ornamental Iron and Bronze*: page 35.



The original Dearborn Street cast iron storefront manufactured by the Winslow Brothers Company of Chicago, as seen in the company's 1901 catalog. The extant Plymouth Court cast iron storefront matches the former Dearborn Street storefront.

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