



Office of the City Clerk City of Chicago

City Hall
121 North LaSalle Street
Room 107
Chicago, IL 60602
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Legislation Referred to Committees at the Chicago City Council Meeting 4/10/2013

Section 2a - City Clerk Introductions

File #	Title	Sponsor(s)	Committee Referral
Historical Landmark Designation(s)			
1	O2013-2425	Historical landmark designation for Portage Park Theatre Building at 4042-4060 N Milwaukee Ave and 4905-4915 W Cuyler Ave	Mendoza, Susana A. (Clerk) Zoning
2	O2013-2471	Historical landmark designation for Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building at 4700 S Ashland Ave	Mendoza, Susana A. (Clerk) Zoning
Municipal Code Amendment(s)			
3	O2013-2470	Amendment of Chapter 9-112-600 of Municipal Code to increase taxicab fare rates (by George Kasp)	Mendoza, Susana A. (Clerk) Transportation



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O2013-2425

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City Council Document Tracking Sheet

Meeting Date:	4/10/2013
Sponsor(s):	Mendoza, Susana A. (Clerk)
Type:	Ordinance
Title:	Historical landmark designation for Portage Park Theatre Building at 4042-4060 N Milwaukee Ave and 4905-4915 W Cuyler Ave
Committee(s) Assignment:	Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards



DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF CHICAGO

April 2, 2013

The Honorable Susana Mendoza
City Clerk
City of Chicago
Room 107, City Hall
121 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60602

**RE: Recommendation for Landmark Designation of the Portage Park Theatre Building
at 4042-60 N. Milwaukee Av.; 4905-15 W. Cuyler Av.**

Dear Clerk Mendoza:

We are filing with your office for introduction at the April 10, 2013, City Council meeting as a transmittal to the Mayor and City Council of Chicago the recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks that the Portage Park Theatre Building be designated a Chicago Landmark District.

The material being submitted to you for this proposal includes the:

1. Recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks; and
2. Proposed Ordinance.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Esser Gorski, AIA
Assistant Commissioner
Historic Preservation Division
Bureau of Planning and Zoning

encls.

cc: Alderman John Arena, 45th Ward (*via email without enclosure*)

RECEIVED
CITY COUNCIL DIVISION
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ORDINANCE

Portage Park Theatre Building 4042-60 N. Milwaukee Av. and 4905-15 W. Cuyler Av.

WHEREAS, pursuant to the procedures set forth in the Municipal Code of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), Sections 2-120-630 through -690, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") has determined that the Portage Park Theatre Building (the "Building"), located at 4042-60 N. Milwaukee Avenue and 4905-15 W. Cuyler Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, as more precisely described in **Exhibit A** attached hereto and incorporated herein, satisfies three (3) criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Sections 2-120-620 (1), (4) and (7) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the Building is a significant "transitional" movie theater in Chicago dating from 1919-20, exemplifying this important stage of movie theater design immediately after World War I. It remains one of the best of such remaining theaters in Chicago, many of which have been demolished or remodeled for other purposes; and

WHEREAS, the Building is one of the last-remaining theaters associated with Ascher Brothers, one of Chicago's largest and most important theater operators in the 1910s and 1920s. Run by Nathan, Max and Harry Ascher, Ascher Brothers operated many theaters scattered throughout the city; and

WHEREAS, the Building has served for decades as an important neighborhood commercial and entertainment venue for the Six Corners commercial area on Chicago's Northwest Side, showing first-run "moving pictures" in its early years, later as a venue for second-run movies and, most recently, historic films presented by groups such as the Silent Film Society of Chicago and Northwest Chicago Film Society; and

WHEREAS, the Building is a rare-surviving and significant example of a "transitional" movie theater, designed in 1920 by architect Lindley P. Rowe, working in association with the architectural / engineering firm of Fridstein & Co., and built exclusively for motion picture use; and

WHEREAS, the Building contains a theater, street-level stores, and apartments and exemplifies "theater-block," an historic multi-use building type in Chicago that have served as anchors in neighborhood shopping districts; and

WHEREAS, the Building is elaborately decorated with unusual and outstanding ornament in cream-colored terra cotta, exemplifying fine craftsmanship. Its distinctive details include a grandly-scaled arch with sunburst, as well as harps, and other Classical Revival-style motifs; and

WHEREAS, the Building has a finely-detailed French Neoclassical auditorium with a variety of swags, garlands, pilasters, moldings, medallions and other Classical-style details; and

WHEREAS, the Building also has a set of lobbies that were redesigned in 1939 in the Art Moderne style, and they exemplify the style with their overall sleek, spare design and recessed cove lighting in walls and ceilings; and

WHEREAS, the Building is an established and familiar visual feature on North Milwaukee Avenue in the Six Corners commercial area on the Northwest Side due to the Building's dramatic terra cotta ornament, including its large-scale, rooftop arch, and its location at a bend in North Milwaukee Avenue, one of the city's distinctive diagonal avenues and the main commercial street linking Chicago's historic Northwest Side neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, consistent with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, the Building has a significant historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value, the integrity of which is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value; and

WHEREAS, on March 7, 2013, the Commission adopted a resolution recommending to the City Council of the City of Chicago (the "City Council") that the Building be designated a Chicago Landmark; now, therefore,

Be It Ordained by the City Council of the City of Chicago:

SECTION 1. The above recitals are hereby adopted as the findings of the City Council.

SECTION 2. The Building is hereby designated a Chicago Landmark in accordance with Section 2-120-700 of the Municipal Code.

SECTION 3. For purposes of Section 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code governing permit review, the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building; and
- the theatre auditorium (the "Theatre Auditorium") as depicted and identified on **Exhibit B** (attached hereto and incorporated herein), including:
 - its overall spatial volume; and
 - historic decorative floor, wall and ceiling finishes and ornamentation;

but excluding the seats from the Theatre Auditorium which are not historic.

- the theatre's lobbies (the "Theatre Lobbies") which consist of an outer lobby, inner lobby, and connecting "rotunda," as depicted and identified on **Exhibit C** (attached hereto and incorporated herein), including:
 - their overall spatial volume; and
 - historic decorative wall and ceiling finishes and ornamentation

SECTION 4. Finds that, for the purposes of Sec. 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code, the following "Additional Guidelines - Theatre Lobbies" shall apply:

The Commission's review of work proposed within the Theatre Lobbies should ensure that the historic character of the Building is preserved long-term, while allowing reasonable change and flexibility to meet new needs.

The Commission may approve the creation of openings on the north and south walls of the outer lobby to provide connections to the adjoining storefront spaces. Such openings should be limited to one per wall and be located at existing recesses (which were used as display areas) in the walls. Such openings should maintain the existing width and head height of the recess as well as the curved corners of the recess.

SECTION 5. The Commission is hereby directed to create a suitable plaque appropriately identifying the Building as a Chicago Landmark.

SECTION 6. If any provision of this ordinance shall be held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the invalidity or unenforceability of such provision shall not affect any of the other provisions of this ordinance.

SECTION 7. All ordinances, resolutions, motions or orders in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

SECTION 8. This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage and approval.

**CITY OF CHICAGO
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

March 7, 2013

**RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF CHICAGO THAT
CHICAGO LANDMARK DESIGNATION BE ADOPTED FOR THE**

**PORTAGE PARK THEATRE BUILDING
4042-60 N. Milwaukee Av.; 4905-15 W. Cuyler Av.**

Docket No. 2013-03

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago:

Pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code of the City of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") has determined that the Portage Park Theatre Building (the "Building"), located at 4042-60 N. Milwaukee Av. and 4905-15 W. Cuyler Av., is worthy of Chicago Landmark designation. On the basis of careful consideration of the history and architecture of the Building, the Commission has found that it satisfies the following three (3) criteria set forth in Section 2-120-620 of the Municipal Code:

1. *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.*
4. *Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*
7. *Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.*

I. BACKGROUND

The formal landmark designation process for the Building began on April 5, 2012, when the Commission received a "preliminary summary of information" at the Commission's regular meeting of April 5th from the Department of Housing and Economic Development ("HED") summarizing the historical and architectural background of the Building. At said meeting, the Commission voted to approve a "preliminary landmark recommendation" for the Building, based on its finding that it appeared to meet three of the seven criteria for designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 of the Municipal Code, as well as the integrity criterion set forth in Section 2-120-630(ii) of the Municipal Code.

The Commission's Landmark Designation Report for the Building, initially adopted by the Commission on April 5, 2012, and revised as of this date, which contains specific information about the Building's architectural and historical significance, is incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit A** (the "Designation Report").

At its regular meeting of June 7, 2012, the Commission received a report from Andrew J. Mooney, Commissioner of the HED, stating that the proposed landmark designation of the Building supports the City's overall planning goals and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans. This report is incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit B** (the "HED Report").

On June 12, 2012, the Commission officially requested consent to the proposed landmark designation from the owner of the Building. On January 24, 2013, the Commission received a consent form, dated January 24, 2013, and signed by Erineo Carranza, the owner of the Building, consenting to the proposed landmark designation of the Building.

II. FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 2-120-650 of the Municipal Code, the Commission, upon receipt of the Building owner's consent, shall notify the owner of its determination with respect to the proposed Chicago Landmark designation within 45 days after receipt of the owner's consent; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code, the Commission has reviewed the entire record of proceedings on the proposed Chicago Landmark designation, including the Designation Report, the HED Report, and all of the information on the proposed landmark designation of the Building; and

WHEREAS, the Building meets at least three criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4) and (7) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the Building is a significant "transitional" movie theater in Chicago dating from 1919-20, exemplifying this important stage of movie theater design immediately after World War I. It remains one of the best of such remaining theaters in Chicago, many of which have been demolished or remodeled for other purposes; and

WHEREAS, the Building is one of the last-remaining theaters associated with Ascher Brothers, one of Chicago's largest and most important theater operators in the 1910s and 1920s. Run by Nathan, Max and Harry Ascher, Ascher Brothers operated many theaters scattered throughout the city; and

WHEREAS, the Building has served for decades as an important neighborhood commercial and entertainment venue for the Six Corners commercial area on Chicago's Northwest Side, showing first-run "moving pictures" in its early years, later as a venue for second-run movies and, most recently, historic films presented by groups such as the Silent Film Society of Chicago and Northwest Chicago Film Society; and

WHEREAS, the Building is a rare-surviving and significant example of a "transitional" movie theater, designed in 1920 by architect Lindley P. Rowe, working in association with the architectural / engineering firm of Fridstein & Co., and built exclusively for motion picture use; and

WHEREAS, the Building contains a theater, street-level stores, and apartments and exemplifies "theater-block," an historic multi-use building type in Chicago that have served as anchors in neighborhood shopping districts; and

WHEREAS, the Building is elaborately decorated with unusual and outstanding ornament in cream-colored terra cotta, exemplifying fine craftsmanship. Its distinctive details,

including a grandly-scaled arch with sunburst, as well as harps, and other Classical Revival-style motifs; and

WHEREAS, the Building has a finely-detailed French Neoclassical auditorium with a variety of swags, garlands, pilasters, moldings, medallions and other Classical-style details; and

WHEREAS, the Building also has a set of lobbies that were redesigned in 1939 in the Art Moderne style, and they exemplify the style with their overall sleek, spare design and recessed cove lighting in walls and ceilings; and

WHEREAS, the Building is an established and familiar visual feature on North Milwaukee Avenue in the Six Corners commercial area on the Northwest Side due to the Building's dramatic terra cotta ornament, including its large-scale, rooftop arch, and its location at a bend in North Milwaukee Avenue, one of the city's distinctive diagonal avenues and the main commercial street linking Chicago's historic Northwest Side neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, consistent with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, the Building has a significant historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value, the integrity of which is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value; now, therefore,

THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS HEREBY:

1. Incorporates the preamble and Sections I and II into its finding; and
2. Adopts the Designation Report, as revised, and dated as of this 7th day of March 2013; and
3. Finds, based on the Designation Report, HED Report and the entire record before the Commission, that the Building meets the three (3) criteria for landmark designation set forth in Sections 2-120-620 (1), (4), and (7) of the Municipal Code; and
4. Finds that the Building satisfies the "integrity" requirement set forth in Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code; and
5. Finds that the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are identified as follows:

(A) The significant historical and architectural features of the Building are:

- all exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building; and
- the theatre auditorium (the "Theatre Auditorium") as depicted and identified on **Exhibit C** (attached hereto and incorporated herein), including:
 - its overall spatial volume; and
 - historic decorative wall and ceiling finishes and ornamentation;

but excluding the seats from the Theatre Auditorium which are not historic.

- the theatre's lobbies (the "Theatre Lobbies") which consist of an outer lobby, inner lobby, and connecting "rotunda," as depicted and identified on **Exhibit D** (attached hereto and incorporated herein), including:
 - their overall spatial volume; and

- historic decorative wall and ceiling finishes and ornamentation.

(B) Additional Guidelines - Theatre Lobbies

The Commission's review of work proposed within the Theatre Lobbies should ensure that the historic character of the Building is preserved long-term, while allowing reasonable change and flexibility to meet new needs.

The Commission may approve the creation of openings on the north and south walls of the outer lobby to provide connections to the adjoining storefront spaces. Such openings should be limited to one per wall and be located at existing recesses (which were used as display areas) in the walls. Such openings should maintain the existing width and head height of the recess as well as the curved corners of the recess.

This recommendation was adopted unanimously (5-0).



Rafael M. Leon, Chairman
Commission on Chicago Landmarks

Dated: March 7, 2013

Exhibit C

Portage Park Theatre
Significant Historical and
Architectural Features -
Theatre Auditorium

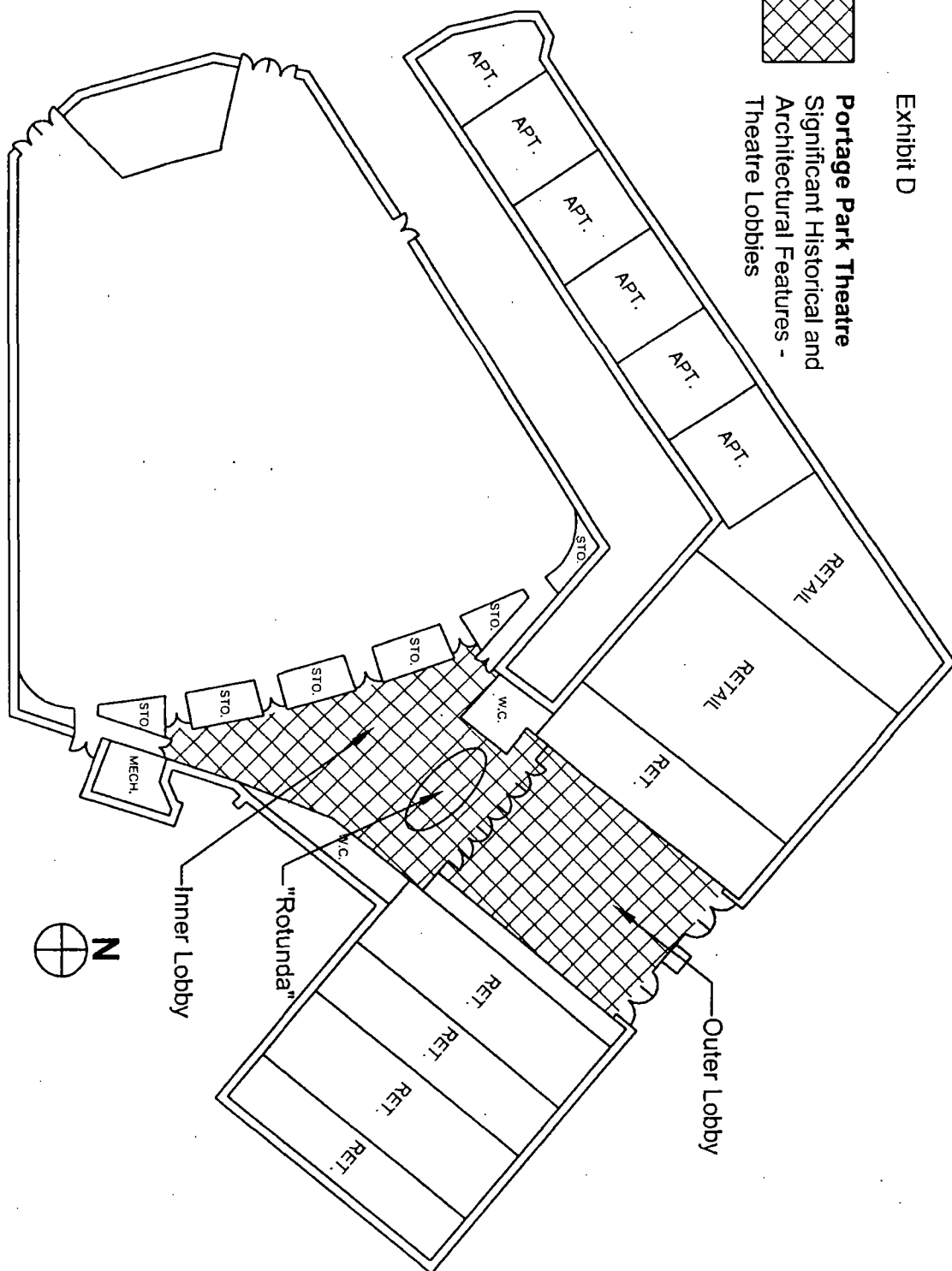
The floor plan illustrates the layout of the Portage Park Theatre. The central feature is the Theatre Auditorium, depicted with a cross-hatched pattern. To the right of the auditorium is a long, narrow wing containing six rooms labeled 'APT.' (Apt.) and two larger rooms labeled 'RETAIL'. Below the auditorium is a series of rooms labeled 'STO.' (Storage), 'W.C.' (Water Closet), and 'MECH.' (Mechanical). To the left of the auditorium is a large, irregularly shaped area labeled 'W.C.' (Water Closet). The plan also shows a series of rooms labeled 'RET.' (Retail) and 'W.C.' (Water Closet) along the bottom edge. A north arrow is located in the bottom right corner.

-The seating in the Theater Auditorium is not historic and is excluded from the Significant Historical and Architectural Features.



Exhibit D


Portage Park Theatre
Significant Historical and
Architectural Features -
Theatre Lobbies



LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



PORTAGE PARK THEATRE

4042-60 N. Milwaukee Av.; 4905-15 W. Cuyler Av.

Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on
Chicago Landmarks, March 7, 2013



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.

PORTAGE PARK THEATRE BUILDING

4042-60 N. Milwaukee Ave.; 4905-15 W. Cuyler Ave.

Built: 1919-20

**Architects: Lindley P. Rowe, in association with
Fridstein & Co.**

The Portage Park Theatre Building is an excellent "transitional" movie theater in Chicago, exemplifying the period at the end of World War I during which movie theater design was evolving from relatively modest buildings to large-scale movie "palaces." Designed by Chicago architect Lindley P. Rowe, working in association with the architectural / engineering firm of Fridstein & Co., the building was completed in 1920 and was part of a theater chain operated in the 1920s by the Ascher Brothers, one of the largest movie theater operators in Chicago during the decade.

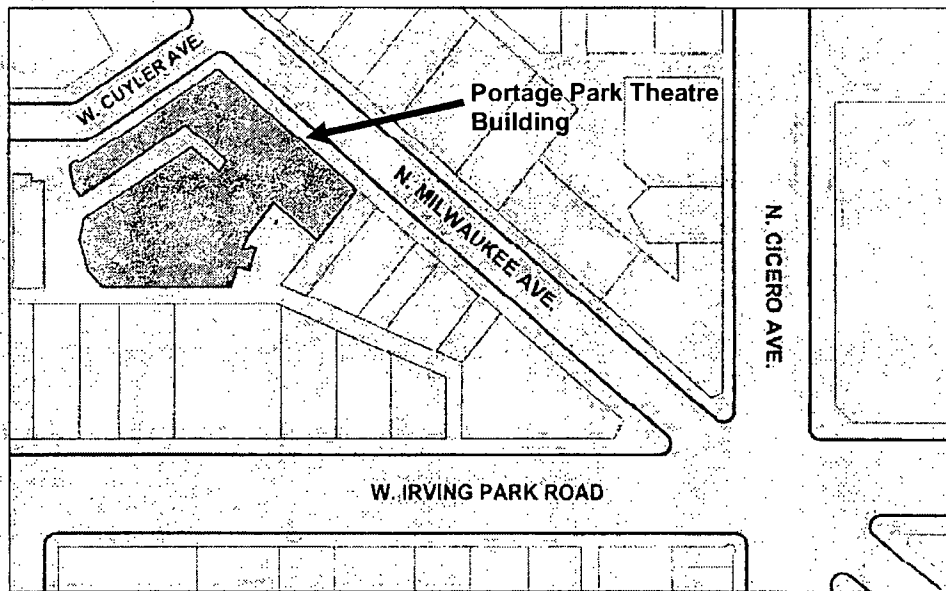
The three-story building contains a theater, stores and apartments and is an excellent example of a "theater-block," a building type combining a movie theater with commercial and residential uses. Mixed-use theaters such as the Portage were not only entertainment venues, but commercial and residential anchors for Chicago neighborhood shopping districts such as the "Six Corners" commercial area of the Portage Park neighborhood.

Completed in 1920 and partially renovated in 1939-40, the Portage Park Theatre Building includes an unusual combination of Classical and Art Moderne stylistic influences. The elaborately decorated auditorium interior is inspired by Neoclassical architecture of 18th-century France. Classical motifs also appear in the boldly-profiled, cream-colored terra cotta decoration of the façade, most notably in the building's emphatic arched crown. Twenty years after construction, the building's lobbies were remodeled in 1939-40 in a sleek, spare Art Moderne mode.

The building has served for many decades as an important commercial and cultural institution in the Portage Park neighborhood. It remains a strong visual landmark on North Milwaukee Avenue as part of the "Six Corners" commercial area, centered on the intersection of W. Irving Park Rd. and Milwaukee and Cicero avenues, which historically was an important shopping district for the Northwest Side.

EARLY CHICAGO MOVIE THEATERS

The first movie houses in Chicago, built in the first decade of the twentieth century, were family-owned storefront operations known as nickelodeons after the common price of admission. They were sparsely decorated, smoky places, often no more than storefronts with a hanging sheet or a white-washed wall to act as a screen. Chairs were moveable and placed in rows, and at the rear of the room sat the projector with the operator, who might also act as the ticket vendor. This type of theater eventually gained a bad reputation for attracting only the working class



The Portage Park Theatre Building is located on Milwaukee Avenue northwest of the "Six Corners" intersection formed by Milwaukee Avenue, Cicero Avenue, and Irving Park Road in the Portage Park neighborhood. Annexed to Chicago in 1889, the neighborhood first saw significant retail development with the arrival of the Milwaukee and Irving Park street railway lines. By the late 1910s, when construction on the Portage Park Theatre Building began, Six Corners was becoming one of Chicago's busiest neighborhood commercial districts.



In the evolution of theater design in America, the Portage Park Theatre Building stands between the era of the early "first-generation" movie theaters and the grand movie palaces of the 1920s. In addition to the theatre, the building contains street-level storefronts and apartments on the second and third floors.



The Portage Park Theatre Building also contains a wing of apartments facing W. Cuyler Ave.



A circa 1920 photograph of the Portage Theatre compared with the current photo on the facing page shows that the building retains the majority of its architectural features.

and was not considered the type of establishment suitable for women and children. In spite of unsophisticated surroundings and presentations, these early movie theaters attracted ever increasing audiences, spurred by the rise of the motion picture industry and the creation of full-length movies such as *The Great Train Robbery*, filmed in 1903. (Before the movie industry moved to California, Chicago was the center of both the emerging motion picture studio and distribution industries, beginning in 1907-08.)

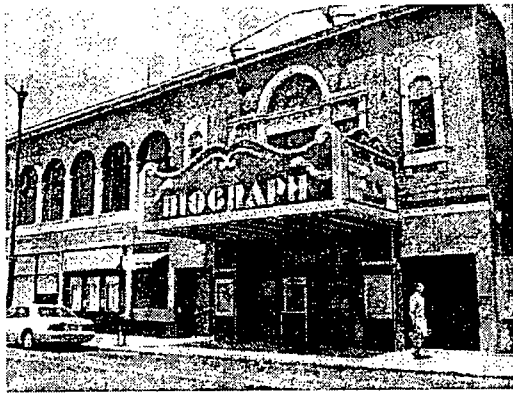
Beginning in 1908, municipal code reforms were passed and nickelodeons moved from storefronts to larger and often more sumptuous buildings (often defunct vaudeville theaters). Since the reforms required operators to obtain movie-house licensing, it gave the more affluent clientele a sense of safety and, as a result, raised the level of respectability of the movie house. By the early 1910s, "purpose-built" movie theaters, buildings designed expressly for the showing of motion pictures, began to be built in Chicago. Although larger than nickelodeons, these theaters remained relatively small in scale, fitting easily into neighborhood commercial strips in Chicago's many neighborhoods. The vast majority of these first-generation movie theaters have been demolished or remodeled for other purposes. The Biograph Theater (1914), designated a Chicago Landmark in 2001, and the Village Theatre (1916), designated a Chicago Landmark in 2009 are among the best of those that remain.

In the years immediately after the end of World War I, movie theaters were built in Chicago that were larger and more visually elaborate than these first-generation theaters, but more visually modest than later "movie palaces" such as the Uptown and Chicago Theaters. The Central Park Theater at 3531-39 W. Roosevelt Rd., built in 1917 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005, is widely considered to be one of the earliest of these "transitional" movie theaters in Chicago. Such theaters were larger in scale than first-generation theaters, often three-stories in height and combining a theater with stores, offices and residences. The design of these theaters was more elaborate with more extensive ornamentation, usually terra cotta, used to define theater entrances and to provide a sense of visual celebration. Lobbies and auditoriums within transitional movie theaters often are elaborate in detail while remaining more modest spatially than later movie palaces.

Many of these theaters from the beginning of the 1920s have been demolished or their auditoriums have been converted to other commercial, non-assembly uses, such as stores. The Portage Park Theatre Building, which retains the great majority of its exterior ornamentation as well as a largely intact theater auditorium, is unusual in the context of such Chicago movie theaters.

Film historian Ben Hall has described Chicago in the 1920s as "the jumpiest movie city in the world and had more plush elegant theatres than anywhere else." The demand for motion pictures encouraged the construction of larger-scale theaters holding between 2,000 and 4,000 movie-goers. Built by major theater operators such as Balaban and Katz, Lubliner and Trinz, and the Marks Brothers, these movie "palaces"—including the Chicago, Uptown, New Regal, and Congress theaters (designated as Chicago Landmarks in 1983, 1991, 1992 and 2002, respectively)—were major centers of entertainment both in the Loop and outlying neighborhoods.

Meant to create an environment of fantastic illusion for movie patrons, the typical movie palace took its design cues from historic revival styles such as the Renaissance and Baroque. Facades



[a.]



[b.]

As a historic building type, movie theater design evolved in stages in Chicago. Early “first-generation” theaters, largely built before World War I, were relatively small, fitting into the surrounding streetscapes. Two Chicago examples are the Biograph Theater [a.] and Village Theater [b.], both designated Chicago Landmarks.

A second, or “transitional” phase occurred after World War I and were larger in scale and with more visually-impressive detailing and interiors than earlier theaters. Along with the Portage Park Theatre Building, an early example of a “transitional” theater is the Central Park Theater [c.], listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Movie theater design reached its peak with the so-called “palaces” of the 1920s, exemplified by the Chicago Theater [d.] and Uptown Theater [e.], both Chicago Landmarks.



[c.]



[d.]



[e.]

were richly detailed with terra cotta while lighted marquee and neon signs blazed at night. Upon entering, a patron experienced a grand lobby, often with sweeping staircases, and a lavish auditorium. With interiors detailed with elaborate stone and plaster work, decorative light fixtures, and plush seats, these theaters became in effect extensions of the films being shown, with their often exotic storylines and locales.

By the end of the 1920s, Chicago had more than thirty of these movie palace theaters. The economic dominance of these later movie theaters caused many of the "first-generation" and "transitional" movie theaters to be converted to non-movie use. In turn, beginning in the 1950s and accelerating in later years, a decline in movie-going, coupled with suburban development and changing motion picture exhibition practice, led to the construction of smaller movie theaters clustered in "multiplexes" and the destruction or drastic remodeling of most of these grandly-scaled movie theaters.

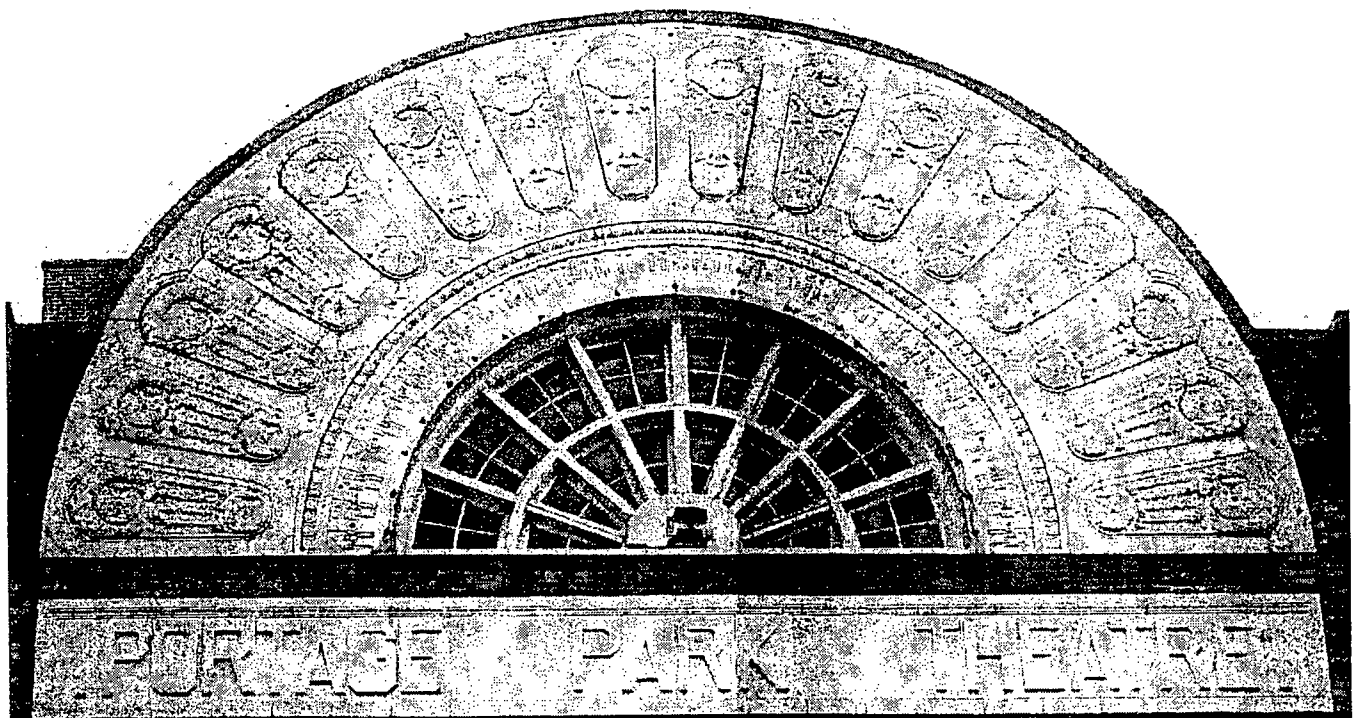
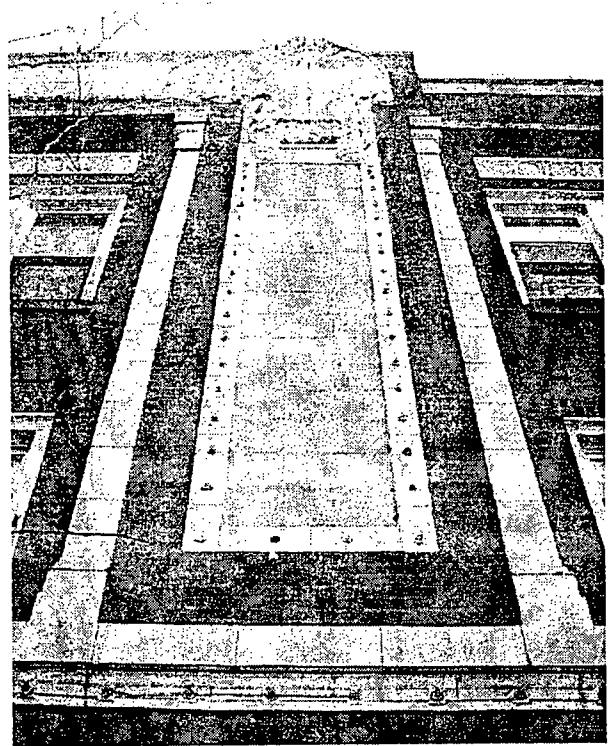
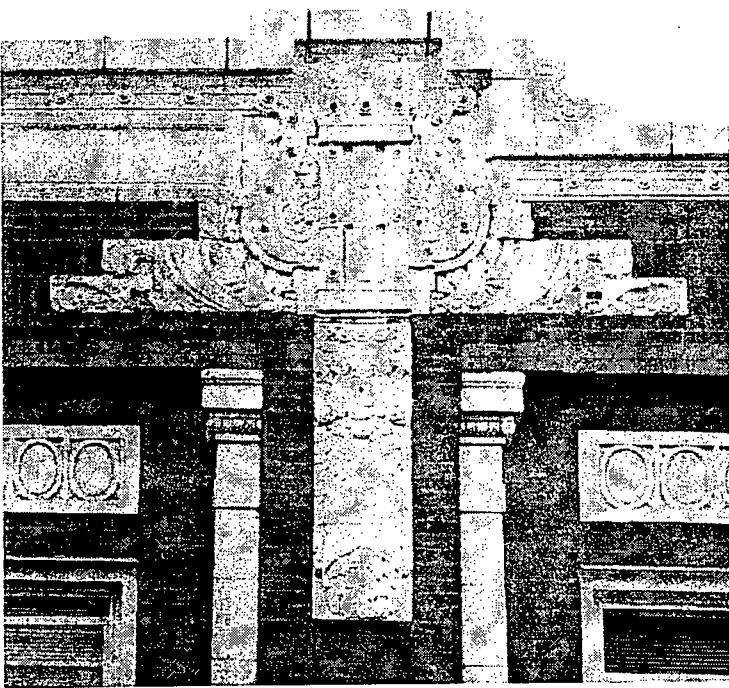
BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

The Portage Park Theatre Building is located on North Milwaukee Avenue in the Portage Park neighborhood, approximately nine miles northwest of the Loop. Based on available documentation, the building was conceived and constructed by J. M. Browarsky and his nephew Edward Browarsky. The Browarskys were real estate speculators who developed both residential and commercial properties in Chicago, as well as several theaters in addition to the Portage Park, including the Atlantic, Metropolitan, and West End.

In July 1919 the *Chicago Tribune* announced that Edward Browarsky was planning the construction of a new movie theater in the developing Portage Park commercial district centered on the intersection of Irving Park Road, Cicero Avenue, and Milwaukee Avenue. The newspaper reported that the architectural firm of Fridstein & Co. had designed for Browarsky a multi-purpose building that, in addition to the theater, would include eight street-level storefronts, thirty-four "high grade" apartments and a fraternal lodge hall. Construction costs were estimated at \$400,000. Two months later, in September 1919, the City of Chicago issued a building permit to Edward Browarsky for a three-story "theater, stores, and flats" to be built at 4042-60 N. Milwaukee Ave. The architect listed on the building permit was "L.P. Rowe," or Lindley P. Rowe. The permit listed the estimated cost of the building to be \$350,000. Building permit records indicate that construction of the building was completed in January 1921, although other sources indicate that the building and theater were open and occupied before the end of 1920.

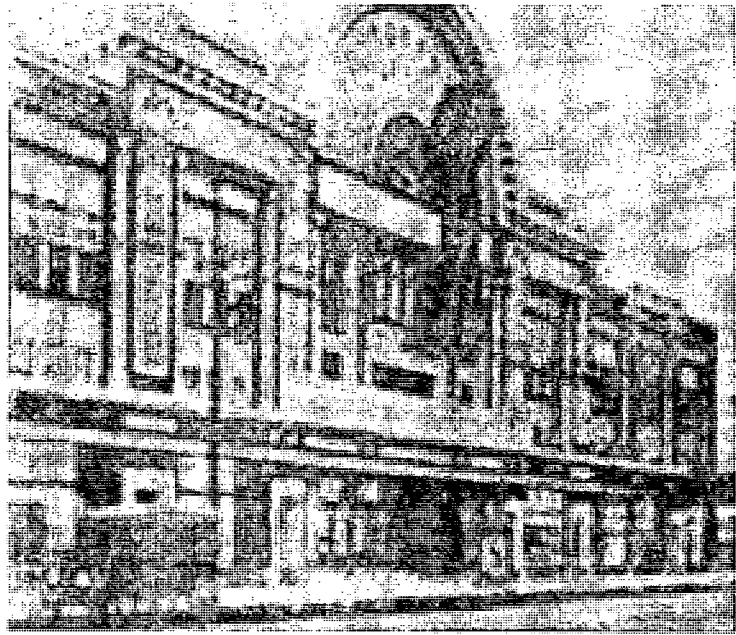
The building occupies a parcel of land on the southwest corner of Milwaukee and Cuyler Avenues with the primary street façade facing northeast on Milwaukee Avenue, and a secondary street facade facing Cuyler Avenue. The building has an irregular plan that reflects its multiple functions. The stores and apartments are housed in rectangular street-facing wings that form an L-shape. Nestled within these wings is the wedge-shaped theater that extends west to the alley between Cuyler Avenue to the north and Irving Park Road to the south.

The building is a three-story masonry load-bearing structure with a flat roof over the commercial/residential portion. The fireproof structure of the theater auditorium includes a steel truss



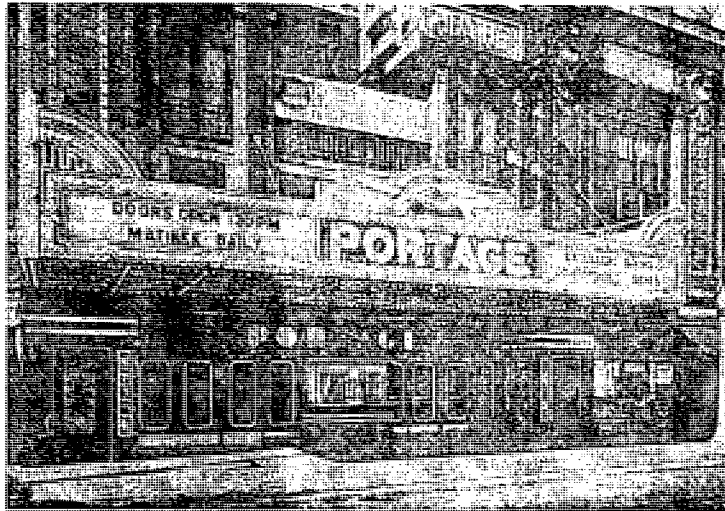
Cream-colored terra cotta decorates the façade of the Portage Theater with motifs derived from classical architecture. An image of a lyre (top left) rendered in terra cotta is repeated along the building's cornice and brick piers (top right) are accented along their length green tiles. Much of the terra cotta is fitted with sockets for incandescent lighting. The prominent arch and fanlight (bottom) at the top of the building makes the building a prominent visual feature of the "Six Corners" neighborhood commercial district.

Movie theater signage and marquees evolved in the twentieth century and these changes can be traced in historic photos of the Portage Theatre. The 1920 photos [a.] shows that the building had a balcony that was flush with the wall plane and lacked a projecting marquee. A vertical sign projected from the center of the façade.

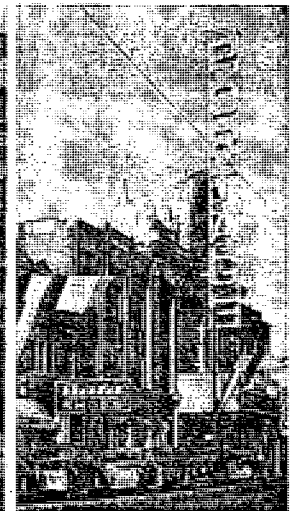


[a.]

During the 1939 renovations of the building a projecting marquee [b.] was added with illuminated panels announcing current movies. At the same time the entrance doors were replaced and black glass "vitrolite" tiles were installed at the surrounding wall surfaces. In addition, the original vertical sign was replaced with a much larger version [c.] with the word "Portage" in neon. The increased use of the automobile in this period is regarded as a factor in the expansion of marquees and signs to make the theater more visible to fast moving cars. Advances in lighting technologies such as neon and chase sequences certainly contributed to the expansion of marquees and signage.



[b.]



[c.]



[d.]

The current marquee [d.] was originally installed on the Tivoli Theater and was modified and installed at the Portage Park in 1962, replacing one that was installed in 1939.

roof and concrete floor. The street-facing facades are dark-red face brick with a combed finish accented with extensive cream-colored terra-cotta ornament. Numerous sockets for incandescent bulbs that are incorporated into the terra cotta. Chicago common brick is used for the rear elevation of the building facing the alley.

The Milwaukee Avenue façade has a symmetrical composition which is dominated by the theater occupying the central bay of the building which is marked by a projecting marquee. A group of windows is located above the marquee and trimmed with terra-cotta under cast-iron balustrades. Above the windows is a terra cotta tablet with "Portage Park Theatre" in block letters. This tablet is topped with a prominent terra-cotta arch which is visible on Milwaukee Avenue from several blocks away.

At street-level, the box office and entrance doors to the theater are recessed beneath the projecting marquee. A 1939 renovation of the theater included reconfiguration of the original 1919 entrance and box office. The overall design of this Art Moderne-style renovation remains, however the vitrolite wall panels added in 1939 have been replaced with red and black glazed tile at some point in the recent past. Similarly, the current marquee was originally installed on the Tivoli Theater and was modified and installed at the Portage Park in 1962, replacing one that was installed in 1939.

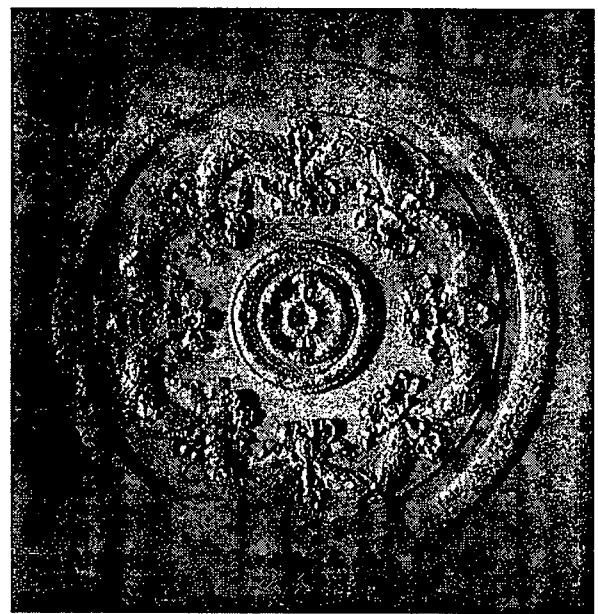
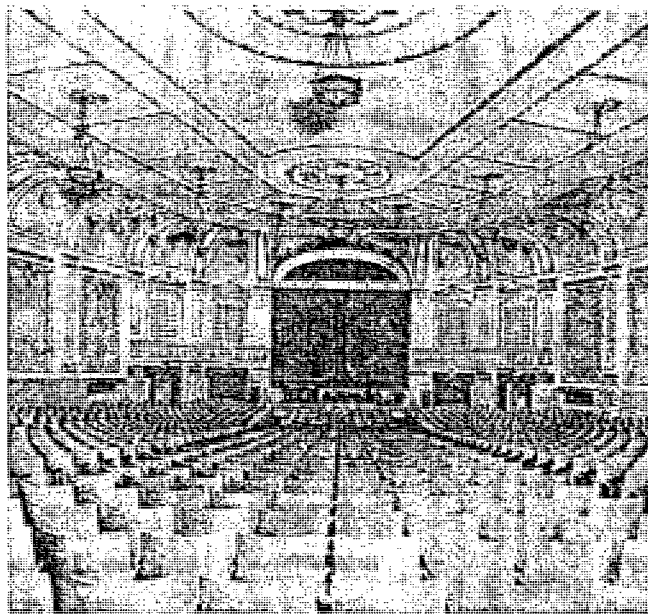
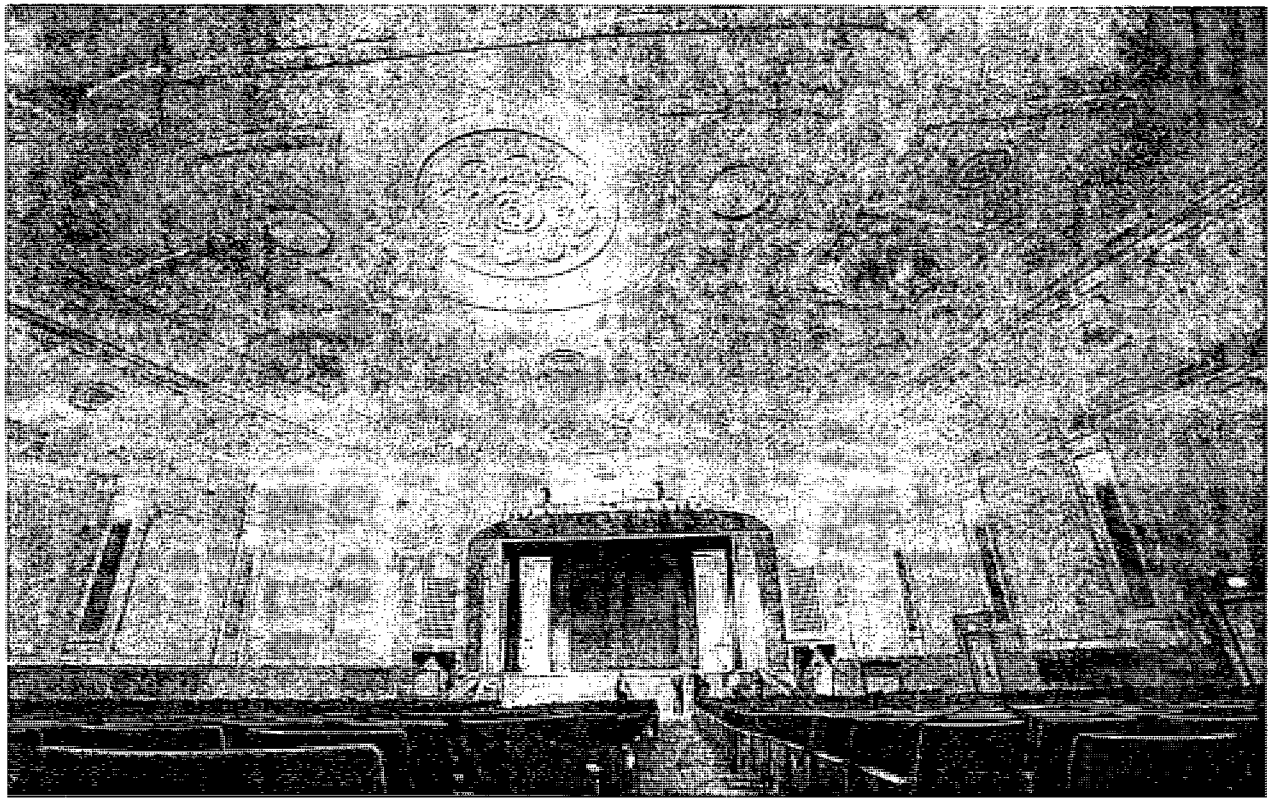
The wings flanking the central bay of the theater contain eight street-level storefronts with apartments on the second and third floors which are reached by four separate entrances. Though less decorated than the central bay housing the theater, these wings incorporate terra-cotta decoration rendered with Classical motifs such as lyres and egg and dart molding. The secondary elevation on Cuyler Avenue houses apartments on all three floors. The east half of this elevation is treated as a finished return which uses the same dark red face brick and cream-colored glazed terra cotta trim as the Milwaukee elevation. The rest of the Cuyler Avenue façade utilizes similar red brick, but in a greatly simplified design.

Theatre Interior

The interior of the Portage Park Theatre Building includes a progression of outer and inner lobbies, with a connecting rotunda, that were all Art Moderne-style renovation of 1939. These spaces lead to the theater auditorium, which retains its original 1920 appearance.

The Art Moderne style was popular in America in the late 1930s and 1940s and it is characterized by smooth surfaces, curved corners, and, in the case of interiors, minimal wall and ceiling moldings and the use of indirect lighting in recessed wall and ceiling coves. The 1939 renovation of the lobbies reflects the desire on the part of movie theater operators to update their properties in order for them to feel fashionable to theatergoers. It was not uncommon for theater entrances and lobbies to be occasionally renovated with new ticket booths, doors, wall and floor renovations, and new furnishings. Such entrance and lobby changes were often more noticeable to patrons than changes in theater auditoriums, where light levels were typically kept dim.

The outer lobby features an arched ceiling indirectly lit by fixtures concealed in a streamlined cornice. Glass doors leading to the rotunda were repurposed from the Balaban & Katz-owned Marbro Theatre, which stood at Madison and Karlov on Chicago's West Side until it was de-



The walls and ceiling of the auditorium of the Portage Theatre (above) are richly decorated with ornamental plaster inspired by French Neoclassical architecture. The historic photograph (lower left) shows the auditorium with its original chandeliers and seating. A detail of a ceiling medallion is at lower right.

molished in 1964. It was common practice among theater operators to repurpose fixtures and elements from one theater to another as properties were renovated and/or demolished.

The inner lobby continues the streamline aesthetic found in the exterior lobby. The space is irregular in plan, widening from the interior doors and showing how the auditorium is oriented at an angle from the commercial/residential portion of the building. Decorative elements include an oval coved ceiling, streamlined plaster moldings and interior doors with porthole windows.

In contrast to the renovated Art Moderne-style lobbies, the capacious auditorium retains its 1920 decoration which draws on eighteenth-century French Neoclassical architectural motifs rendered in plaster. The volume of the space is striking, owing to its unusual plan that is rounded at the corners and flares gently from front to back. The floor is raked upward from the stage that projects from the proscenium. The seating in the auditorium is not original and appears to date from the mid-twentieth century. Historic photos show ornate pendant chandeliers (no longer in place) hanging from the center of the medallions.

The Classical Revival Style

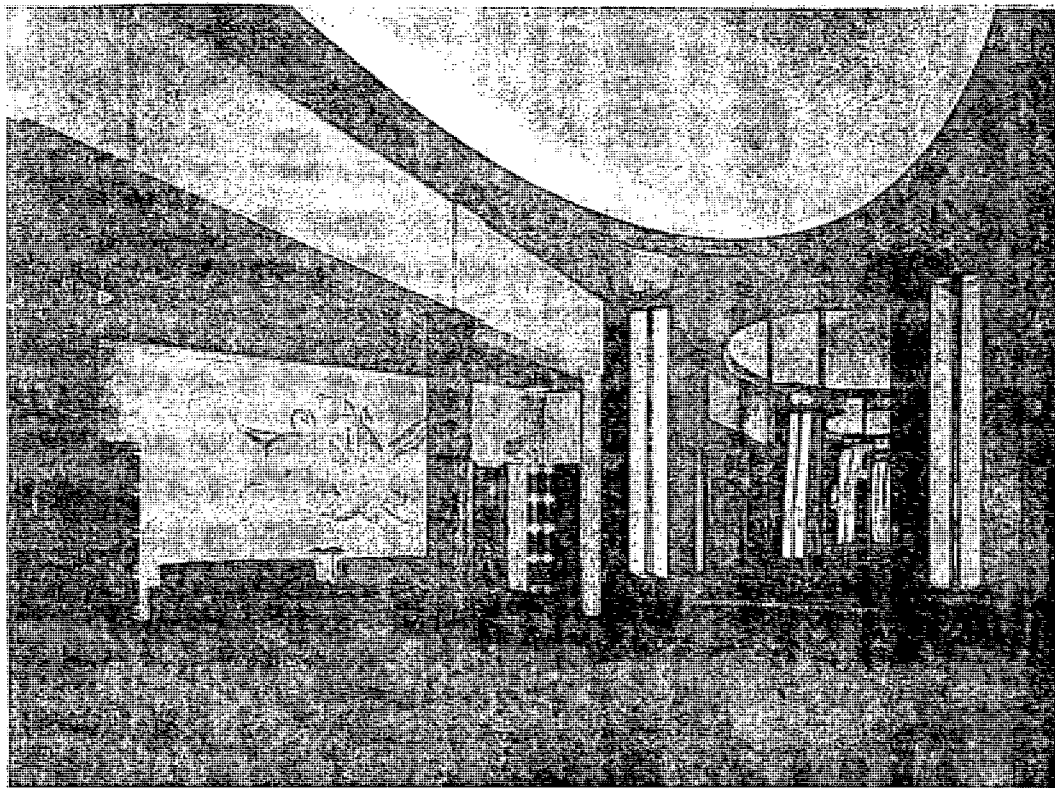
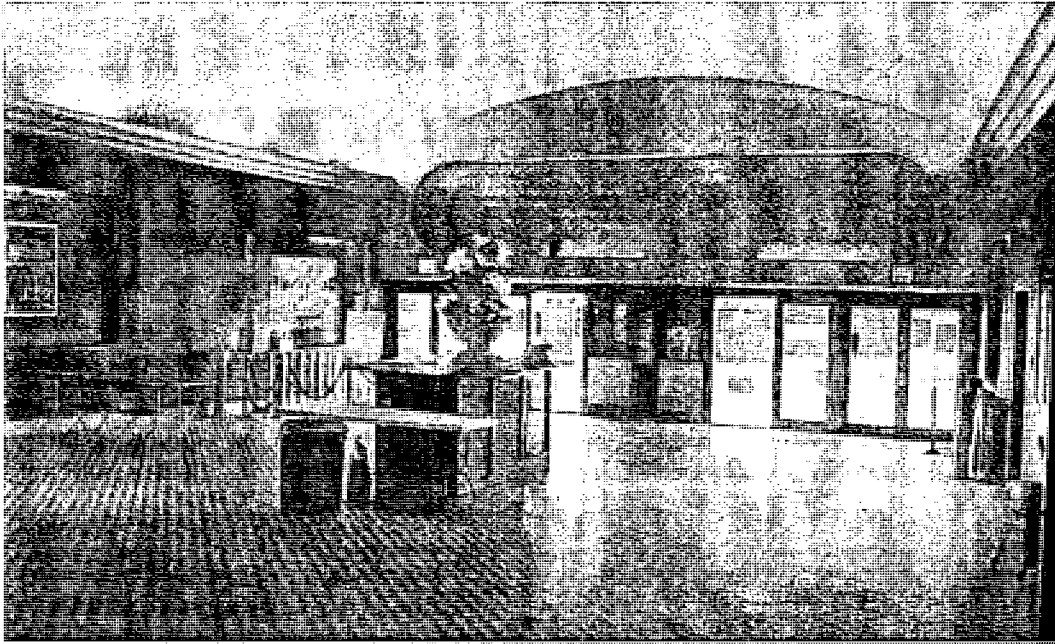
The elaborate Classical-style decorative program of the Portage Park Theater's auditorium, as well as the Classical motifs used in the terra-cotta decoration of the building's façade, are inspired by the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome and the subsequent revivals and reinterpretations of Classical traditions from the Renaissance up to the 20th century. Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 with its grandly-scaled "White City" of Classical Revival-style exposition buildings and monuments, played an influential role in reinvigorating the style both in Chicago and nationally from the 1890s through the 1920s.

The Portage Park Theatre Building, in both its exterior and interior auditorium exemplifies the Classical Revival architectural style. Inside, the theater's auditorium is a fine expression of French Neoclassical style, with its curved interior corners and coved ceiling and abundant low-relief surface decoration rendered in ornamental plaster. Other characteristic motifs of the style include the swags, running molding and the organization of the ornament within framed panels or medallions. The Classical Revival imprint is also evident in the building's exterior terra-cotta ornament which is boldly detailed with a plethora of Classical motifs.

Movie theater operators Ascher Brothers

Available information indicates that, although the Portage Park Theatre Building was built by J. M. and Edward Browarsky, it was leased and operated upon its completion by Ascher Brothers, one of Chicago's largest movie theater operators of the 1910s and 1920s. Sources differ as to the number of theaters that Ascher Brothers managed during the roughly 20 years of their existence, with counts ranging from 29 to more than 60.

Ascher Brothers was founded in 1909 and was headed by Nathan, Max and Harry Ascher. Starting with nickelodeons, the partnership steadily acquired movie theaters through the 1910s through both construction of new theaters as well as leasing theaters built by others. By 1919, the year that the construction of the Portage Park Theatre Building began, Ascher Brothers ran at least 15 theaters, including the Adelphi, Calo, Milford, Cosmopolitan, Metropolitan, and Crown. By 1921, this list had expanded to include the Portage Park Theatre Building. Ascher



The theater lobbies were renovated in the Art Moderne style in 1939-40 and exemplify this sleek, streamline, modernistic style. Top: The outer lobby has a shallow vaulted ceiling and cove lights in both walls and ceiling. (The Greek-key-ornamented tile floor is believed to be original to the building.) Bottom: A 1940 view of the "rotunda" connecting the outer and inner vestibules.

Brothers got out of the theater operating business in 1929, with their theaters taken over by other operators.

The Architect of the Portage Park Theatre Building

Some accounts of the Portage Park Theatre Building's history have indicated that the theater was designed by Chicago architect Henry L. Newhouse, or by Newhouse in association with Mark D. Kalischer. Ascher Brothers often used Newhouse for the theaters they built themselves, including the Highland and Metropolitan.

But Ascher Brothers managed a number of theaters designed by other architects, including, among others, the Colony (Lowenberg and Lowenberg), Calo (George H. Borst), and Terminal (J.E.O. Pridmore). Based on information contemporary with the construction of the Portage Park Theatre Building, including City of Chicago building permit records; the *Economist*, a Chicago-based real estate periodical; and a project ledger kept by the Midland Terra Cotta Company, which supplied terra cotta for the building, it appears that Chicago architect Lindley P. Rowe, working in association with the architectural / engineering firm of Fridstein & Co., designed the Portage Park Theatre Building.

The *Economist* (May 24, 1919) mentions that J.M. Browarsky was planning a three-story theater at Irving Park Road and Milwaukee Avenue to be designed by Fridstein & Co. The City of Chicago building permit # 53903 (issued September 17, 1919) has Browarsky's nephew Edward as the owner of a three-story "theater, stores, and flats" to be built at 4042-60 N. Milwaukee Ave. The permit lists "L.P. Rowe" as the architect. Three days later, the *Economist* (September 20, 1919) lists the building in its "Building Permits" section as the work of "L.P. Rowe, care of Fridstein & Co." The Midland Terra Cotta Company project ledger lists the "Portage Park Theatre," located on "Milwaukee Ave," as designed by Fridstein & Co. An advertisement printed in *The Rotarian* (April 1921) listed the architect of the theater as Fridstein & Co.

Architects Fridstein & Co. and Lindley P. Rowe

Fridstein & Co. is best known today for several Chicago apartment hotels and movie theaters. **Meyer Fridstein (1884-1964)**, the founder and president of Fridstein & Co., was born in 1884 in Marinette, Wisconsin, and studied structural engineering at the University of Wisconsin. Following graduation, he worked for a few years in Milwaukee before moving to Chicago, where he worked in the offices of both Richard Schmidt and the architecture firm of Marshall and Fox.

Although Fridstein trained as an engineer, he was the architect for a number of Chicago buildings, mainly apartment hotels and theaters. These include the Webster and Belden-Stratford hotels on North Lincoln Park West, built in 1920-21 and 1922 respectively. Fridstein & Co., also designed the Shoreland Hotel at 5454 S. South Shore Dr., built in 1926 and a designated Chicago Landmark. The firm was also known for its movie theaters, including the Congress Theater at 2117-39 N. Milwaukee Ave. (designated a Chicago Landmark in 2001), as well as the Logan, Tivoli, Tower and Harding theaters.

From 1920 until 1929 the Portage Park Theatre Building was operated by Ascher Brothers, one of Chicago's leading movie theater operators. Nathan Ascher (right), one of the partners of Ascher Brothers. Listings (far right) of silent movies playing at the theatre in 1920. Bottom: an advertisement touting Ascher Brothers' 10th anniversary in 1919.



ASCHER'S PORTAGE PARK THEATRE
Milwaukee Ave. at Irving Park Bld

Week of January 21st to 26th

One Day Only Sunday, January 21st
HERK BARKER
"She Couldn't Help It"

Two Days Only Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 22nd and 23rd
ATTRACTIONS EXTRAORDINARY
The Personality Comedienne
THE SCUTTLES
WILLIAM FARNUM
To be one of the greatest features of the year
"BURY MY BONES"

One Day Only Wednesday, Jan. 24th
A Modern Love - Special Production
"RED FOAM"
A Story as far as the movies go
Clara Chapman Comedienne
Thursday & Friday, January 25th & 26th
Bring the Children to See
"Freckle Faced" Wesley Barry
in
"DINNY"
Patience, Romance, Humor, Adventure
Saturday, January 26th
The Delightful Romance of a Modern Maid
of the Forces of Nature
VOLEA DANA
in
"CINDERELLA'S TWIN"
"DON'T FORGET" Ted Fawcett
Sunday, January 27th
Every body's Favorite
MABEL NORMAND
in
"WHAT HAPPENED TO ROSA"
COMEDY
STREET

ASCHER BROTHERS
Announce their Tenth Anniversary

Ten Years Ago
Ascher Theaters were little more than an idea. Motion pictures offered little more than the interest of a miracle of invention. Array of talent was bare. The term of "photographs" was crude. But the Ascher brothers foresaw in those elemental efforts the beginning of a new and great art.

To-Day
that early faith is expressed in the concrete form of twenty veritable palaces, nine-story centers unveiled in any other city in the world. In every community banner forth the ASCHER banner, the emblem of excellence, the assurance of delightful entertainment, the mark of the acme in silent America's progress.

ASCHER THEATRES
PICTURE AND MELODY
OF ASCHER THEATRE

Adelphi
Clark and Kane
Albany Park
Lorenson and Kane
Calo
Clark and Kane
Columbia
Broadway and Irving
Columbus
Clark and Kane
Competition
Clark and Kane
Crown
Clark and Kane
Fair
Clark and Kane
Commercial
Clark and Kane
Forest Park
Clark and Kane

Kew-Forest
Clark and Kane
Lane Court
Clark and Kane
Metropolitan
Clark and Kane
Palmer
Clark and Kane
Oakland Square
Clark and Kane
Princeton
Clark and Kane
Rosewood
Clark and Kane
Union
Clark and Kane
Windsor
Clark and Kane

W. W. GIFFITH
"Grand of the Nation"

Lindley P. Rowe (1885-1964) attended the Armour Institute on Chicago's South Side and began his architectural practice in 1910. Between 1922 and 1932, he was a partner, with his brother Charles B. Rowe and Frank G. Dillard, in the firm of Rowe, Dillard & Rowe. The office designed, among other buildings, a parish house for the Episcopal Church of the Mediator in Chicago's Morgan Park neighborhood and a clubhouse for the Forest View Club, a combination golf and riding club in the near northwestern suburbs. During the 1930s, Rowe worked as an architect for the United States Treasury's procurement office. A questionnaire completed by Rowe for the American Institute of Architects listed Meyer Fridstein, the principal of Fridstein and Co., as a structural engineer with whom he had previously done business. Rowe finished his career as an architect for DeLeuw Cather & Co., a Chicago architectural / engineering company.

ARCHITECTURAL TERRA COTTA IN CHICAGO

While many early 20th-century buildings in Chicago were clad or ornamented in limestone, others were clad or ornamented with terra cotta, including the Portage Park Theatre Building. Due to the intricacy of historic ornament, terra cotta was most often used on buildings designed in historic architectural styles such as Classical or Gothic Revival, where the plastic versatility of terra cotta allowed the easy imitation of many different architectural styles and building materials.

From the immediate post-Fire years of the 1870s through the early 1930s, Chicago was a leading American center for architectural terra-cotta design and manufacture. Terra-cotta factories took advantage of Chicago's vibrant and innovative architectural community, its strategic location at the center of the nation's great railroad transportation network, and its proximity to clay deposits in nearby Indiana. By the beginning of World War I, three nationally-important terra cotta companies—Northwestern, American, and Midland—were all headquartered in or near Chicago.

First-generation movie theaters such as the Biograph and Village theaters typically were built of brick with relatively simple terra cotta ornament in historic styles, most typically Classical Revival. Transitional theaters such as the Portage Park, while still relatively modest in scale, were more lavishly detailed with terra-cotta ornament. Later movie palaces of the 1920s were often entirely clad with terra cotta on their main entrance facades; examples include the Chicago and Uptown theaters. Terra cotta was especially suited to such buildings due to the visually-elaborate nature of their designs and ornament, embodying a degree of fantasy unlike most buildings experienced by Chicagoans.

The Midland Terra Cotta Company

The terra cotta used for the Portage Park Theatre Building was manufactured by the Midland Terra Cotta Company, one of the three major architectural terra-cotta manufacturers located in the Chicago area. Midland was founded in 1910 by William G. Krieg, a former City of Chicago architect, and Alfred Brunkhorst, son of one of the founders of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, the largest and best-known of Chicago's terra-cotta manufacturers. The company was located in the near west suburb of Cicero at W. 16th St. and 54th Ave. Midland's terra cot-

The Chicago architectural and engineering firm of Fridstein & Co., in association with architect Lindley P. Rowe, designed the Portage Park Theatre Building. Meyer Fridstein (bottom) was the head of Fridstein & Co. Buildings designed by the firm include:

[a.] Harding Theater (demolished)

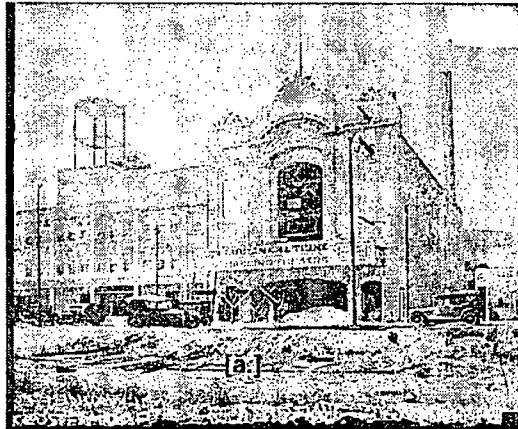
[b.] The Shoreland Hotel (a designated Chicago Landmark)

[c.] The Belden-Stratford Hotel (listed on the National Register of Historic Places)

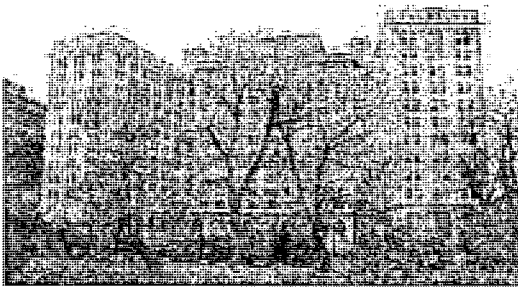
[d.] The Tower Theater (demolished)

[e.] The Congress Theater (a designated Chicago Landmark)

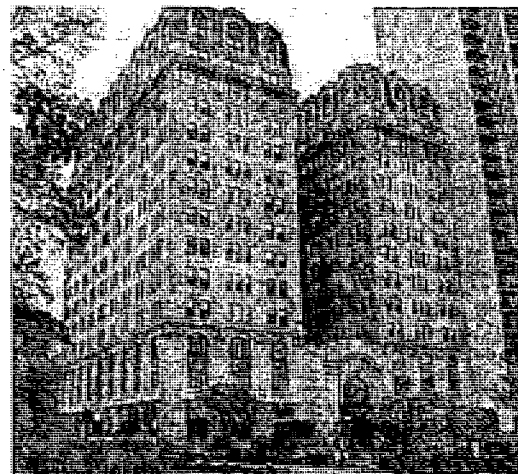
[f.] The Webster Hotel (listed on the National Register of Historic Places)



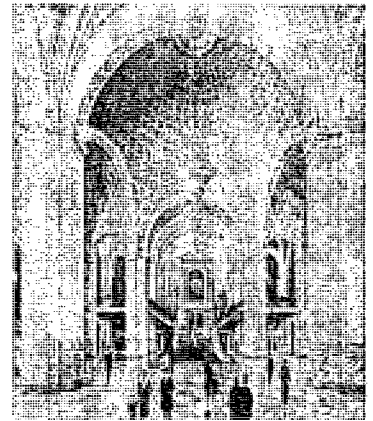
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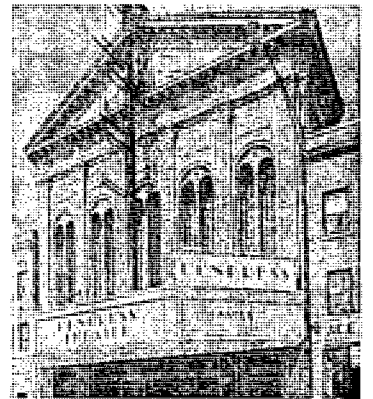
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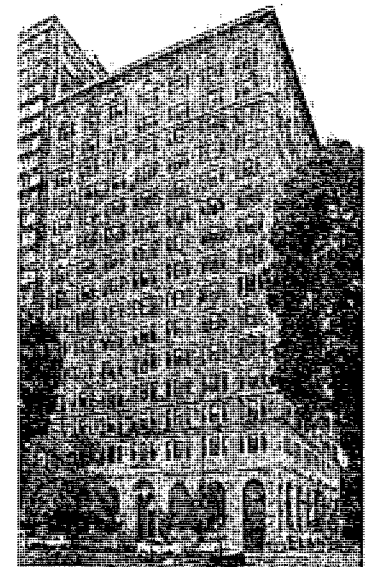
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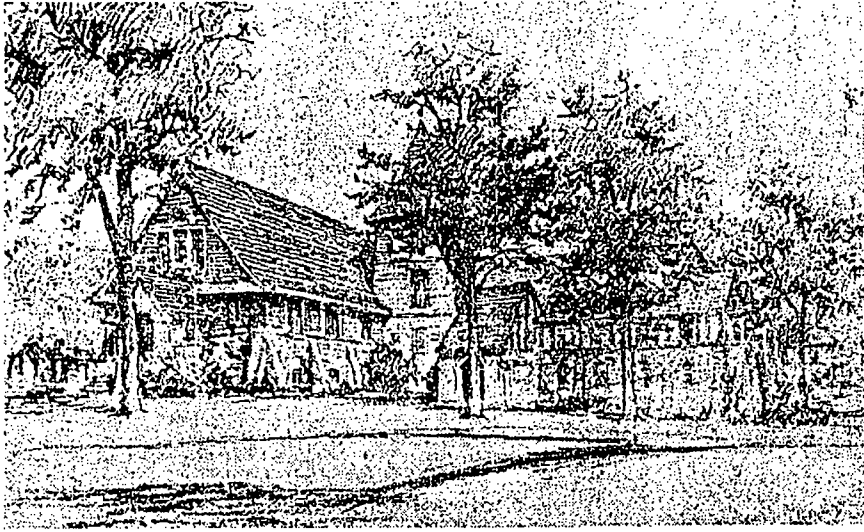
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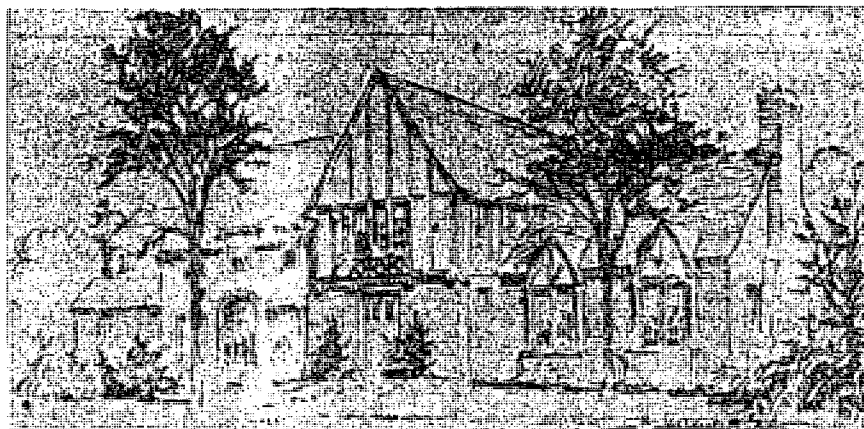
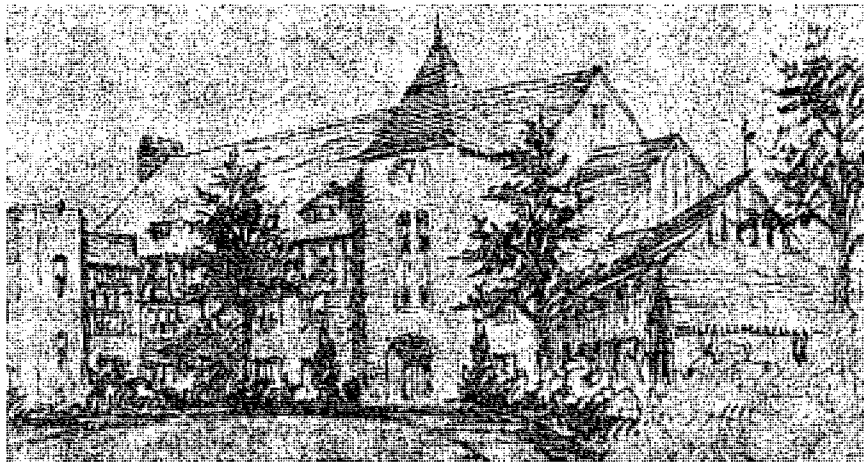
[e.]



[f.]



Lindley P. Rowe, who worked with Fridstein & Co. to design the Portage Park Theatre Building, designed a number of buildings in the 1920s while a partner in the firm of Rowe, Dillard & Rowe. Top: The parish house for the Church of the Mediator in Chicago's Morgan Park neighborhood. Middle: The Forest View Country Club northwest of Chicago. Bottom: A North Shore house in the Tudor Revival style



ta was used for Navy (originally Municipal) Pier, the Medinah Temple, and a number of movie theaters other than the Portage Park, including the Marbro and Granada.

The Midland Terra Cotta Company is also known today for its popularization of terra cotta designs based on the non-historic foliate architectural ornament of famed Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. The company kept a variety of stock "Sullivan-esque" ornament that could be mixed and matched by architects for small and mid-size buildings. Such buildings can be found throughout Chicago neighborhoods.

The use of architectural terra cotta peaked in the 1920s. Business for Midland Terra Cotta slowed in the decline of building construction during the Great Depression, and the company closed circa 1939.

THE "SIX CORNERS" SHOPPING DISTRICT AND THE PORTAGE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

Since its opening in 1920, the Portage Park Theatre Building has been a fixture of the "Six Corners" commercial district on Chicago's Northwest Side. Located on the eastern edge of the Portage Park community area, Six Corners was one of Chicago's leading neighborhood shopping districts throughout much of the 20th century, and the Portage Park Theatre Building was historically an important commercial and cultural anchor for the neighborhood.

The Portage Park community is named after the Native American "portages," or overland trails, noted by European pioneers to the area in the early 1800s. Natural ridges along Irving Park Rd., Cicero Ave. and Naragansett Ave. provided relatively easy overland connections between the North Branch of the Chicago River and the DesPlaines River.

Throughout most of the 19th century, the area remained a rural part of Jefferson Township, located between the railroad suburbs of Irving Park to the south and Norwood Park to the north. The Northwest Plank Road (now Milwaukee Avenue) was built in the 1840s and became the primary route to Chicago to the south and to Wheeling to the north. The road early on had a toll booth located approximately where the Portage Park Theatre Building is today.

An important early commercial institution for travelers and surrounding farmers was a small inn and tavern built in 1841 by E. B. Sutherland at what would become the corner of Milwaukee and Belle Plaine avenues, a block north of the future site of the Portage Park Theatre Building. (Later known as Dickinson Tavern, the building was a longtime community gathering place and a neighborhood "landmark" until it was demolished in 1929.)

Portage Park was annexed to Chicago in 1889, along with the rest of Jefferson Township. Despite the annexation, the neighborhood was slow to develop. Street car lines were extended through the "Six Corners" intersection of Milwaukee, Cicero and Irving Park in the 1890s and early 1900s, with a line first on Milwaukee Avenue (1894), then Irving Park Road (1896), and lastly Cicero Avenue (1913).

But much of the area was low-lying, marshy and prone to flooding, and would remain so until the widespread installation of sewers in the years prior to World War I. Also, beginning in 1915, a new park at Irving Park, Central and Long was developed. Portage Park, as the park became known, became an important amenity for the larger neighborhood.

With these infrastructure improvements, residential development grew rapidly during the 1910s and 1920s. The *Local Community Fact Book*, which provides concise histories of Chicago's community areas, states that the Portage Park neighborhood reached residential "maturity" by 1924.

The Six Corners intersection of Milwaukee, Cicero and Irving Park, and the surrounding commercial district, largely developed in the 20th century, although commercial buildings were built along the streets during the late 19th century. Contemporary photographs show these buildings to be relatively scattered, low in scale and largely of wood-frame construction. An early major developer in Six Corners was the real-estate partnership of Koester and Zander, which in 1889 bought and began the development of 82 acres of land on the southwest corner of Irving Park Road and Cicero Avenue.

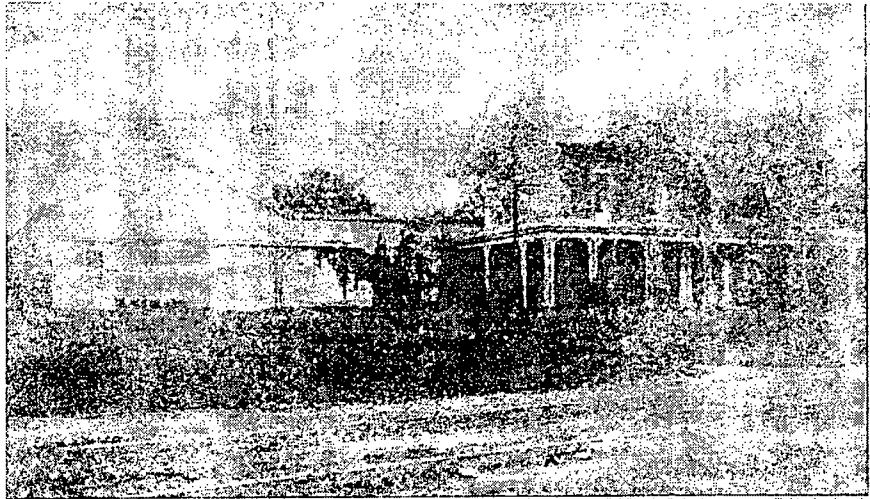
Much development came to Six Corners in the years following World War I. The Portage Park Theatre Building, built in 1919-20, was a harbinger of this development, which saw the construction of important commercial anchors for the shopping district such as the flatiron Klee Building on the northwest corner of Cicero and Milwaukee, and the Portage Park Bank Building at the southeast corner of Milwaukee and Irving Park. A *Chicago Tribune* article from 1938, looking back on the development of Six Corners, noted that the value of an unimproved corner lot at Milwaukee and Irving Park had risen from \$4,000 in 1910, to \$18,000 in 1920, then to an astounding \$199,000 in 1930.

Although the Great Depression of the 1930s depressed such land values, the Six Corners area remained a vital neighborhood shopping district. The construction in 1938 of the Sears Roebuck & Co. retail store on the northeast corner of Irving Park and Cicero only solidified the commercial importance of the intersection. This importance remained into the 1950s and 60s, declining only during the last years of the 20th century as businesses closed in the wake of the popularity of suburban shopping centers.

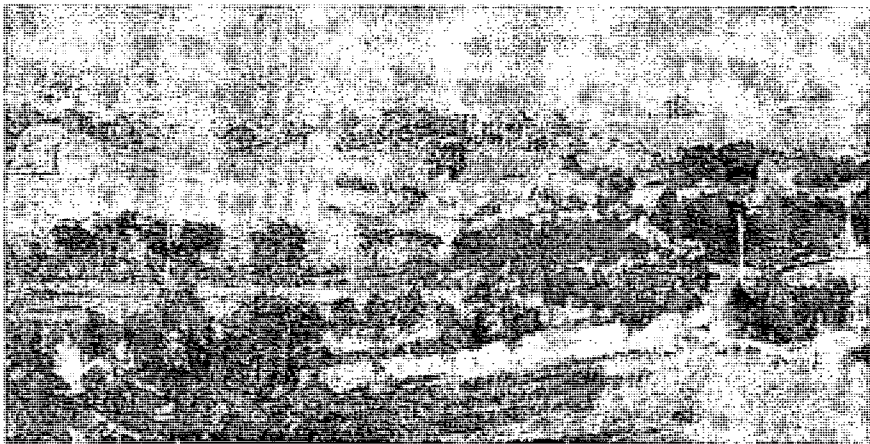
LATER HISTORY

In 1929, Ascher Brothers sold the Portage Park Theatre Building to Fox Chicago Theaters. In turn, the theatre was leased by Fox in 1932 to the G.C.S. theater organization, led by lawyer Mort D. Goldberg. (A year previously, the theater's name had been shortened to the Portage Theatre.) A year later, in 1933, Harry Krauspe of the State Realty Trust gained control of the theater from the Fox Chicago Theaters company, along with five other theaters, including the West Englewood, Frolic, Metropolitan, Oakland Square and Crown.

Built in 1841, the Dickinson Inn was one of the earliest buildings of Portage Park. It was located just north of the future site of the Portage Park Theatre Building. The building served as Jefferson Township Hall for a number of years in the mid-19th century and remained a community "landmark" until its demolition in 1929.



An aerial view of the then rural Six Corners area taken in 1909. The diagonal road is Milwaukee Avenue, which was built as the Northwest Plank Road in the 1840s.



The real estate firm of Koester & Zander made the first major real estate transaction in the Six Corners area, buying 82 acres of land at the southwest corner of Irving Park Rd. and Cicero Ave. in 1889, the year that Jefferson Township was annexed to Chicago.

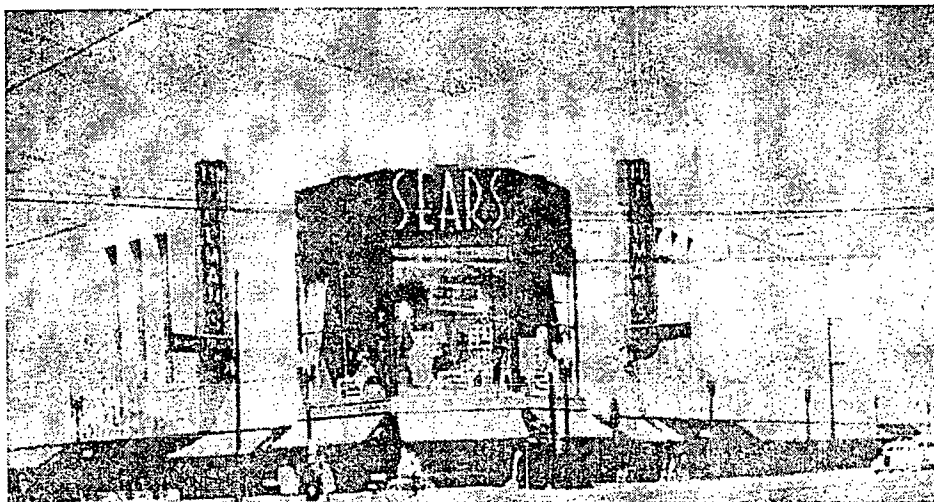




A view of Six Corners in 1934, looking north on Milwaukee Ave. from Irving Park Rd. The five-story Klee Building is to the right.



Another view of the intersection, also in 1934, looking south on Milwaukee from Irving Park Road. The Portage Park Bank Building (now Bank of America and with its exterior reclad) is on the left.



Sears Roebuck & Co., famous as a mail-order company, built an early retail building in 1938 on the northeast corner of Cicero Ave. and Irving Park Rd.

In 1939, the theater's lobby was remodeled in the sleek and spare Art Moderne style, and it was acquired by the Balaban & Katz theater chain. In 1962 the existing marquee was replaced with a restyled marquee from the demolished Tivoli Theater.

In 1975 the Portage Park Theatre Building was acquired by the Brotman and Sherman circuit; available information indicates that the theater at that time hosted live country music acts, including Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn. In 1980 the theater was acquired by M & R Amusements, which subdivided the theater into two theaters; this subdivision has since been reversed.

More recently, the theater, which closed in 2001, then reopened in 2006, has shown a variety of movies. It is currently the location of the Silent Film Society of Chicago and the Northwest Chicago Film Society, which show historic films.

The Portage Park Theatre Building is an orange-rated building in the *Chicago Historic Resources Survey*.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation of landmark designation to the City Council for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for designation," as well as the integrity criterion.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Portage Park Theatre 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, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The Portage Park Theatre Building is a significant "transitional" movie theater in Chicago dating from 1919-20, exemplifying this important stage of movie theater design immediately after World War I. It remains one of the best of such remaining theaters in Chicago, many of which have been demolished or remodeled for other purposes.
- The Portage Park Theatre Building is one of the last-remaining theaters associated with Ascher Brothers, one of Chicago's largest and most important theater operators in the 1910s and 1920s. Run by Nathan, Max and Harry Ascher, Ascher Brothers operated many theaters scattered throughout the city.
- The Portage Park Theatre Building has served for decades as an important neighborhood commercial and entertainment venue for the Six Corners commercial area on Chicago's Northwest Side, showing first-run "moving pictures" in its early years, later as a venue for

second-run movies and, most recently, historic films presented by groups such as the Silent Film Society of Chicago and Northwest Chicago Film Society, among other kinds of films.

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.

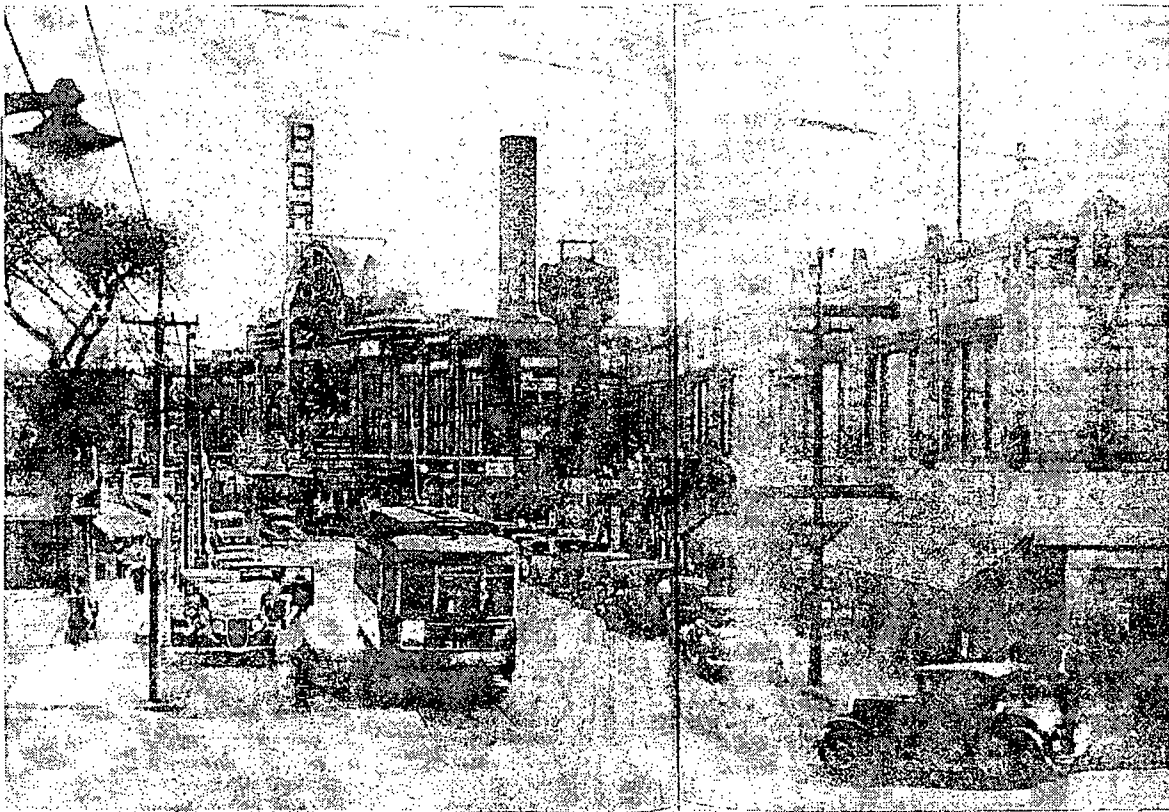
- The Portage Park Theatre Building is a rare-surviving and significant example of a “transitional” movie theater, designed in 1920 by architect Lindley P. Rowe, working in association with the architectural and engineering firm of Fridstein & Co., and built exclusively for motion picture use.
- The Portage Park Theatre Building contains a theater, street-level stores, and apartments and exemplifies “theater-block,” an historic multi-use building type in Chicago that have served as anchors in neighborhood shopping districts; and .
- The Portage Park Theatre Building is elaborately decorated with unusual and outstanding ornament in cream-colored terra cotta, exemplifying fine craftsmanship. Its distinctive details, including a grandly-scaled arch with sunburst, as well as harps, dragons and fasces, are designed in the Classical Revival architectural style.
- The theater has a finely-detailed French Neoclassical auditorium with a variety of swags, garlands, pilasters, moldings, medallions and other Classical-style details.
- The theater also has a set of lobbies that were redesigned in 1939 in the Art Moderne style, and they exemplify the style with their overall sleek, spare design and recessed cove lighting in walls and ceilings.

Criterion 7: Unique or Distinctive Visual Feature

Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.

- The Portage Park Theatre Building is an established and familiar visual feature on North Milwaukee Avenue in the Six Corners commercial area on the Northwest Side due to the building's dramatic terra cotta ornament, including its large-scale, rooftop arch, and its location at a bend in North Milwaukee Avenue, one of the city's distinctive diagonal avenues and the main commercial street linking Chicago's historic Northwest Side neighborhoods.

The Portage Park Theatre Building was built on North Milwaukee Avenue where the street bends at Cuyler. Top: A photo circa 1910 showing a vacant lot on the site of the future theater. The Dickinson Inn is in the background. Bottom: A view circa 1930-40 looking south on Milwaukee Ave. Next to the theater to the north is the two-story terra-cotta clad commercial building that replaced the Dickinson Inn. (This building has since been demolished.)



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 value.

The Portage Park Theatre Building remains in its original location. Its setting today is primarily a neighborhood commercial district as it was when the building was built. The building was designed as a multi-use building combining theater, storefronts and apartments and these three functions continue at the building and are clearly expressed in architect Lindley P. Rowe's design.

On the exterior, the majority of the building's historic exterior wall materials, brick and terra glazed terra cotta, remain in place. Historic photos indicate that the building once had a terra cotta cornice above the central arch which extended across one bay on either side of it. A low parapet was placed above this cornice and a pair of ornamental pylons flanked either side of the arch. These roofline decorative elements were removed at some point in the 1950s, probably due to deterioration which develops more quickly in roofline elements like these that are especially exposed to the effects of weather. These elements could be replaced in the future with terra cotta or a suitable substitute material, and the loss of this decoration does not significantly impair the building's integrity.

The commercial storefronts on Milwaukee Avenue are not historic, but the overall large storefront windows and recessed entrances reflect the design of the original storefronts. The windows for the apartments facing Cuyler all appear to be replacements, while the windows on the theater façade appear to be original.

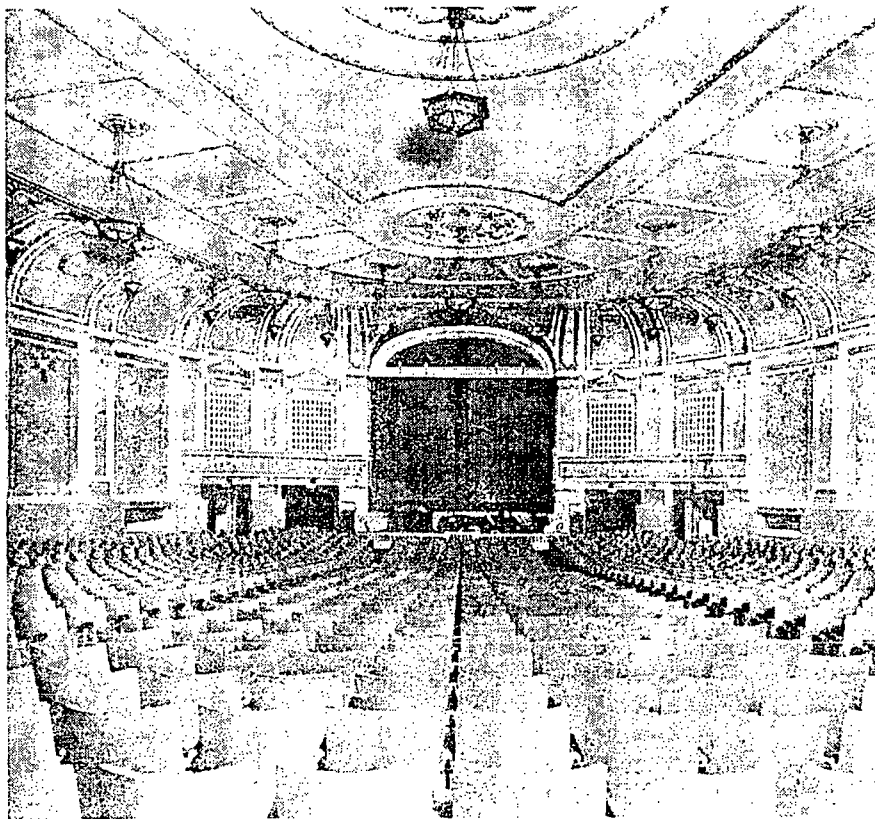
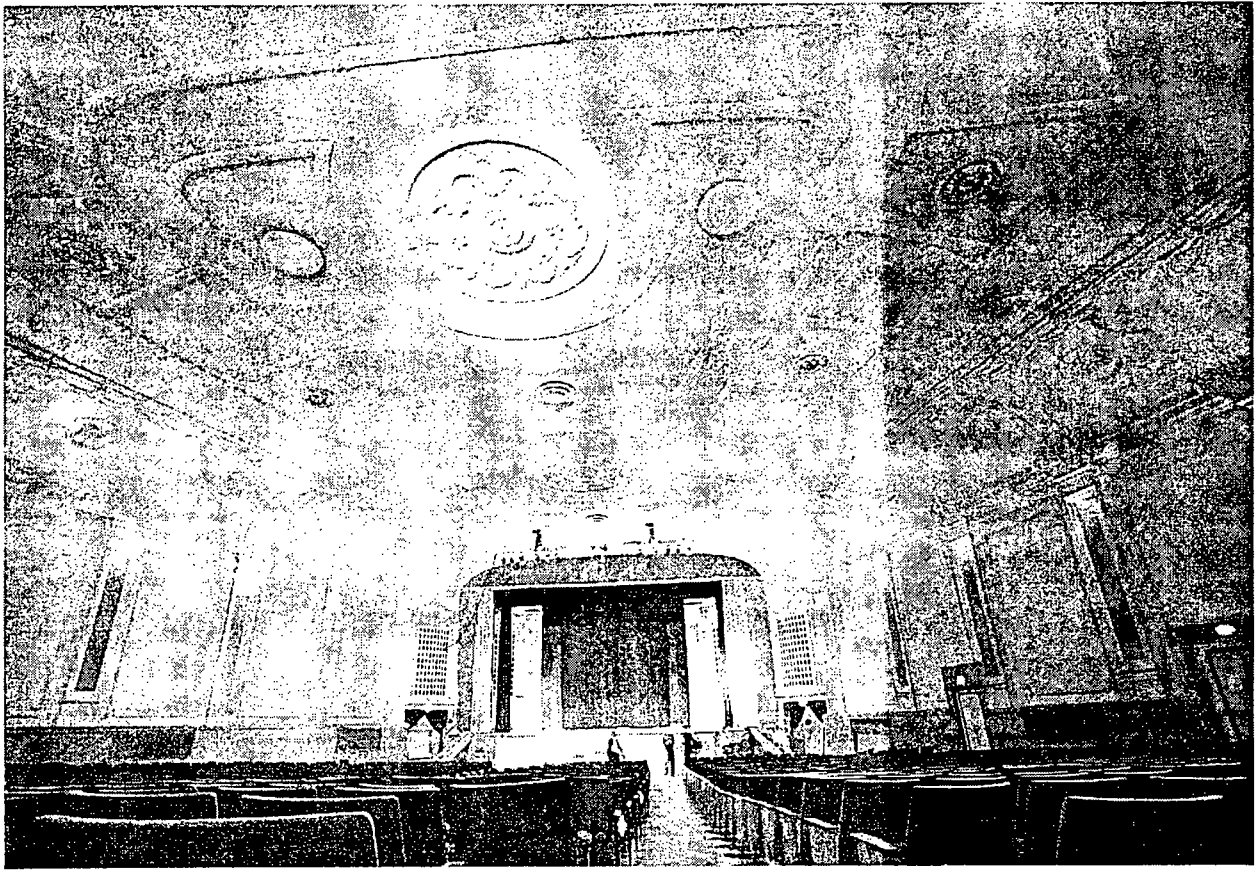
The 1939 renovation also changed the street-level box office and entrance to the theater with black and white vitrolite wall cladding and new doors. While the entrance doors and vitrolite panels have been replaced, the overall configuration and box office from the 1939 renovation remains intact. As noted above, the existing marquee was originally installed on the Tivoli Theater and was modified and installed at the Portage Park in 1962, replacing one that was installed in 1939. Photographs of the building prior to 1939 provide some evidence of the building's original marquee and signage.

On the interior, the most significant alterations to the building date to the 1939 renovation of the theater lobbies and connecting rotunda, which were remodeled in the then-fashionable Art Moderne architectural style. Though not original to the 1919-20 design of the building, these lobbies represent a significant early change to that possesses historic and architectural significance in its own right. Bump-outs in the rotunda to accommodate accessible washrooms are the most visible change to the lobbies since the 1939 renovation. Changes to the interior of the theater auditorium include the introduction of new seating, ventilation grills, the removal of original light fixtures, and changes to the original color scheme.

Taken as a whole, the alterations to the building are either significant in their own right due to their age and design, or minor and reversible, and they do not detract from the building's ability to express its historic, architectural and aesthetic value.



The circa 1920 photo (below), paired with a current photograph (top) illustrates that the Portage Park Theatre Building retains very good exterior physical integrity. The building's characteristic features such as the historic face brick, terra cotta decoration with incandescent bulbs, and the outsize fan-shaped ornament that crowns the theater all convey the historic aesthetic that set the building apart from the more common commercial buildings of the area.



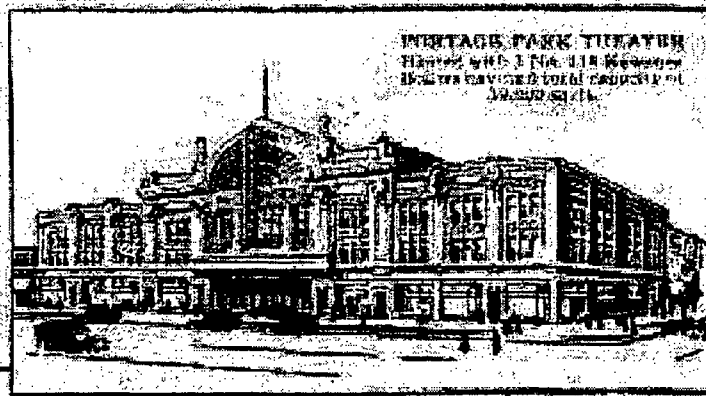
A current photo of the auditorium (above) compared with a circa-1920 photo (left) shows that it retains most of its original plaster decoration, coved ceiling, and overall volume. The original light fixtures and seating have been replaced.

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 building, and these are defined in the Commission’s “Recommendation to the City Council of Chicago that Chicago Landmark Designation be adopted for Portage Park Theatre Building,” dated March 7, 2013.

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A 1920 rendering of the Portage Park Theatre used in advertisement for the Kewanee Boiler Corporation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CITY OF CHICAGO

Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Department of Housing and Economic Development

Andrew J. Mooney, Commissioner

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

Eleanor Esser Gorski, Assistant Commissioner, Historic Preservation Division

Project Staff

Terry Tatum, Lisa Napoles, Matt Crawford, research, writing, photography and layout

Terry Tatum, editing

Eleanor Esser Gorski, editing

Illustrations

Historic Preservation Division, Department of Housing and Economic Development: cover, pp. 4, 6 (middle left and right), 8, 9, 11 (top and bottom right), 13 (top), 27 (top).

Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com/>): p. 6 (top left & right, bottom right).

Sollitt & Sons advertisement: p. 20 (bottom).

Marquee: The Journal of the Theatre Historical Society of America (vol. 22, #3, 1990): p. 11 (bottom left).

Hedrich-Blessing photograph archives, Chicago History Museum: p. 13 (bottom).

Mcites, *History of the Jews in Chicago*: p. 15 (top left).

Chicago Tribune Historical Archives, various dates: pp. 15 (bottom), and 18.

“Shoreland Hotel” landmark designation report files: pp. 17 (top left, middle right, bottom row).

“Congress Theater” landmark designation report files: p. 17 (middle left).

Chicago Daily News photograph archives, Chicago History Museum: p. 17 (top right).

Pogorzelski and Maloof, *Portage Park*: pp. 16 (top right), 21, 22, 25.

The Rotarian (April 1921): p. 29.

COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

Rafael M. Leon, Chairman
Andrew J. Mooney, Secretary
Anita Blanchard, M.D.
Victor Ignacio Dziekiewicz
James M. Houlihan
Tony Hu
Mary Ann Smith
Ernest C. Wong
John W. Baird, Commissioner Emeritus

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>

Printed April 2012; reprinted March 2013.



DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

June 7, 2012

Report to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks

on the

Portage Park Theatre Building
4042-60 N. Milwaukee Ave.; 4905-15 W. Cuyler Ave.

The Department of Housing and Economic Development finds that the proposed designation of the Portage Park Theatre Building as a Chicago Landmark supports the City's overall planning goals for the surrounding Portage Park community area and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.

Completed in 1920 and partially renovated in 1939-40, the three-story Portage Park Theatre Building is located at the southwest corner of Milwaukee and Cuyler Avenues. The building is an excellent example of a "theater-block," a historic building type combining entertainment, commercial and residential uses. As it continues to host these functions, the subject property contributes to both the architectural and commercial character of the surrounding "Six Corners" commercial / retail area.

The building is located in the Portage Park community area and is zoned B1-3, which is a neighborhood shopping district made up of a broad range of small-scale retail and service uses at street-level with dwelling units above the ground floor. A typical feature of this zoning district includes storefront-style shopping streets that are oriented to pedestrians, which is reflected in the design of the Portage Park Theatre Building's storefronts and theater lobby fronting on Milwaukee Avenue.

The "Six Corner" intersection of Irving Park Road and Milwaukee and Cicero Avenues is located 350 feet southeast of the building. This intersection and its associated arterial streets are formally identified in the Chicago Zoning Ordinance as a "Pedestrian Street" district, and the subject property is subject to the regulations of this zoning designation. The Pedestrian Street designation is intended to preserve and enhance the character of streets and intersections that are widely recognized as Chicago's best examples of pedestrian-oriented shopping districts. The regulations of the district promote transit, economic vitality and pedestrian safety and comfort. The Portage Park Theatre Building's diverse commercial storefronts abutting the sidewalk are a typical feature of the "Pedestrian Street" designation.

The Portage Park Theatre Building is included in the Portage Park Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District which was established in 1998 to strengthen existing small businesses and attract new commercial investment. The TIF also called for renovation and restoration of commercial storefronts to improve the character of the streetscape.

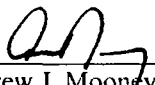
The subject property is well-served by public transportation. Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) bus routes run along Irving Park Road, Milwaukee and Cicero Avenues. The CTA Blue Line stop at Irving Park

Road is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile west of the building. The Metra Rail Mayfair Station of the Milwaukee District / North Line is located $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of the building.

With the exception of the People's Gas Irving Park Neighborhood Store at 4829 W. Irving Park Road, there are few Designated Landmarks in the vicinity of the Portage Park Theatre Building. Landmark designation will provide much-needed recognition to this historic Chicago neighborhood.

The Department supports the designation of the Portage Park Theatre Building as a Chicago Landmark. Preserving buildings such as this provides many long-term benefits to the City. Landmark designation encourages the preservation and rehabilitation through a range of incentives. Designation also supports economic development, employment and an enhanced property tax base. It serves as a model for sustainable development by retaining existing buildings and adapting them to modern conditions. Preservation of Chicago's architectural heritage attracts tourists and new residents as well as contributes to the quality of life for Chicago citizens.

In conclusion, landmark designation of the Portage Park Theatre Building supports the City's overall planning goals for Chicago's Portage Park community area and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.



Andrew J. Mooney
Commissioner

Exhibit A
Portage Park Theatre Building
4042-60 N. Milwaukee Av. and 4905-15 W. Cuyler Av.
Property Description

Legal Description:

LOT ONE (1), LOT TWO (2), LOT THREE (3), LOT FOUR (4), LOT FIVE (5), LOT SIX (6), LOT SEVEN (7), LOT FORTY SEVEN (47) (EXCEPT THE WEST SIXTEEN (16) FEET OF LOT FORTY SEVEN (47) RESERVED FOR PURPOSES OF A PUBLIC ALLEY) IN BLOCK ONE (1) IN THE DICKINSON, LOWELL HOMESTEAD SUBDIVISION OF PART OF LOTS 11 AND 12, IN SCHOOL TRUSTEE'S SUBDIVISION OF SECTION 16, TOWNSHIP 40 NORTH, RANGE 13, LYING EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN.

ALSO:

ALL THAT PART OF THE ALLEY RUNNING IN A NORTHWESTERLY DIRECTION SOUTHWESTERLY OF AND ADJOINING THE SOUTHWESTERLY LINE OF LOTS ONE (1) TO SEVEN (7) BOTH INCLUSIVE AND NORTHEASTERLY AND EAST OF THE NORTHEASTERLY AND EAST LINE OF LOT FORTY SEVEN (47) LYING NORTHWESTERLY OF THE SOUTH LINE OF SAID LOT FORTY SEVEN PRODUCED AND SOUTHEASTERLY OF THE NORTHWESTERLY LINE OF SAID LOT (1) PRODUCED SOUTHWESTERLY IN BLOCK ONE (1) IN THE DICKINSON, LOWELL HOMESTEAD SUBDIVISION OF PART OF LOTS 11 AND 12, IN SCHOOL TRUSTEE'S SUBDIVISION OF SECTION 16, TOWNSHIP 40 NORTH, RANGE 13, LYING EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, SAID PART OF SAID ALLEY BEING FURTHER DESCRIBED AS ALL THAT PART OF THE ALLEY RUNNING IN A NORTHWESTERLY DIRECTION LYING NORTHWESTERLY OF THE NORTH LINE OF THE EAST AND WEST PUBLIC ALLEY IN THE BLOCK BOUNDED BY CUYLER AVENUE, IRVING PARK BOULEVARD, MILWAUKEE AVENUE, AND NORTH LAPORTE AVENUE, AS SHOWN ON PLAT REGISTERED AS DOCUMENT NUMBER 98644.

P.I.N. Number

13-16-430-010-0000

Commonly known as:

4042-60 N. Milwaukee Av. and 4905-15 W. Cuyler Av.
Chicago, Illinois

Exhibit B

Portage Park Theatre
Significant Historical and
Architectural Features -
Theatre Auditorium

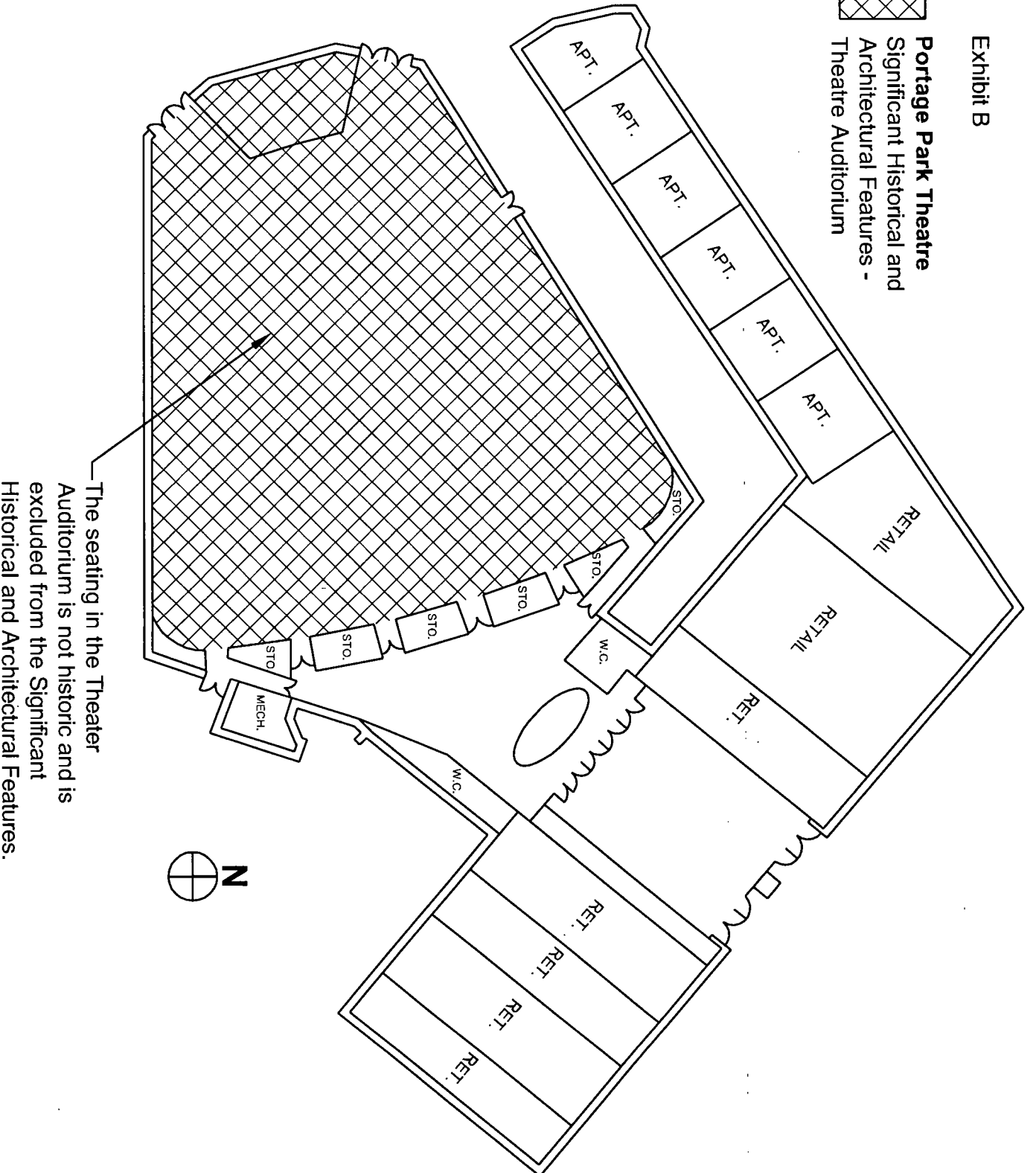
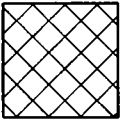
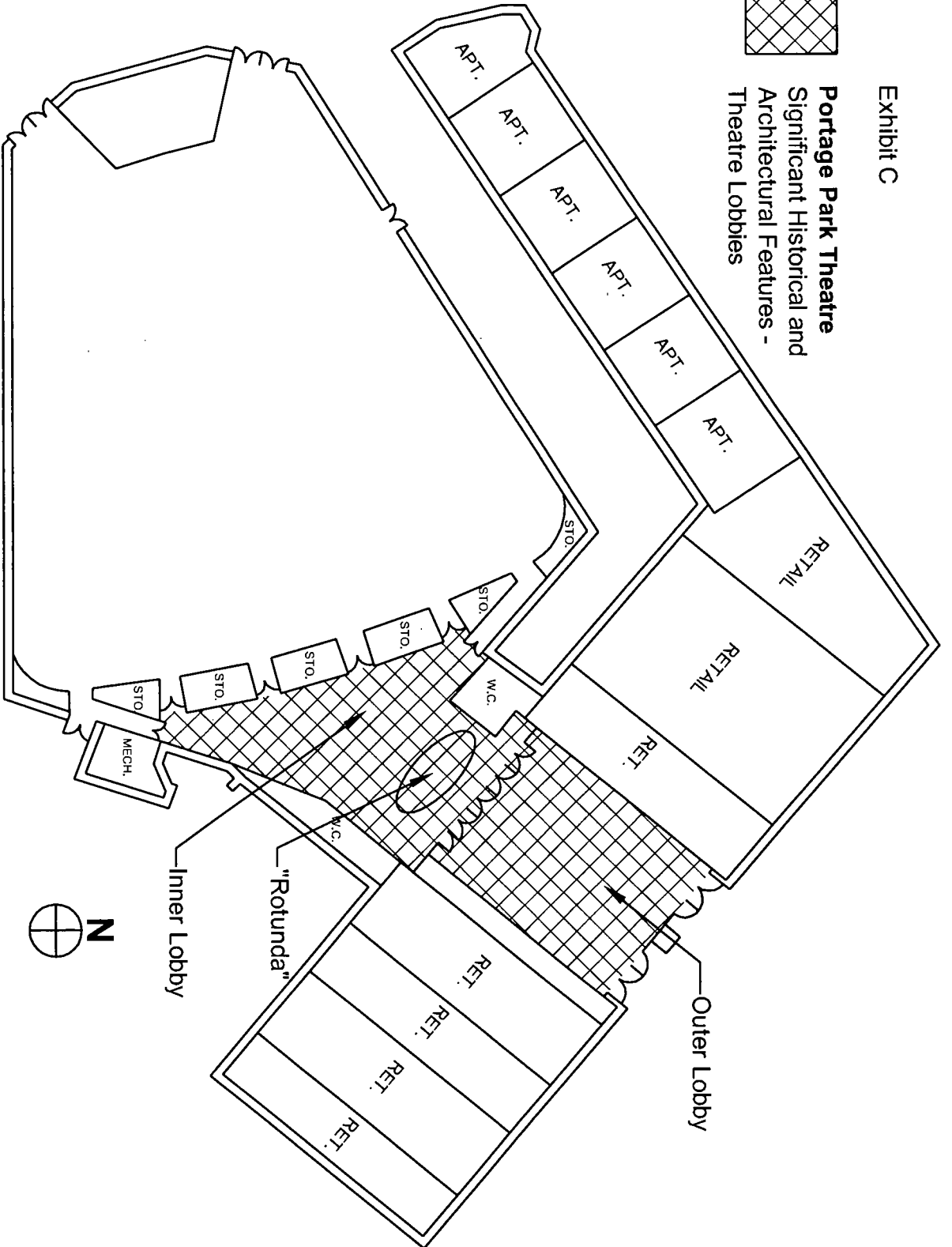
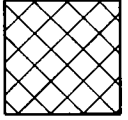


Exhibit C

Portage Park Theatre
Significant Historical and
Architectural Features -
Theatre Lobbies





Office of the City Clerk



O2013-2471

Office of the City Clerk

City Council Document Tracking Sheet

Meeting Date:	4/10/2013
Sponsor(s):	Mendoza, Susana A. (Clerk)
Type:	Ordinance
Title:	Historical landmark designation for Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building at 4700 S Ashland Ave
Committee(s) Assignment:	Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards



DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF CHICAGO

April 5, 2013

The Honorable Susana Mendoza
City Clerk
City of Chicago
Room 107, City Hall
121 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60602

**RE: Recommendation for Landmark Designation of the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros.
Department Store Building at 4700 S. Ashland Av.**

Dear Clerk Mendoza:

We are filing with your office for introduction at the April 10, 2013, City Council meeting as a transmittal to the Mayor and City Council of Chicago the recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks that the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building be designated a Chicago Landmark District.

The material being submitted to you for this proposal includes the:

1. Recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks; and
2. Proposed Ordinance.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Esser Gorski, AIA
Assistant Commissioner
Historic Preservation Division
Bureau of Planning and Zoning

encls.

cc: Alderman Willie Cochran, 20th Ward (*without enclosure*)

RECEIVED
CITY COUNCIL DIVISION
2013 APR -5 PM 3:17
OFFICE OF THE
CITY CLERK

ORDINANCE

Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building 4700 S. Ashland Av.

WHEREAS, pursuant to the procedures set forth in the Municipal Code of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), Sections 2-120-630 through -690, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") has determined that the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building (the "Building"), located at 4700 S. Ashland Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, as more precisely described in **Exhibit A** attached hereto and incorporated herein, satisfies four (4) criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Sections 2-120-620 (1), (3), (4) and (5) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the Building exemplifies the important role that neighborhood department stores played as economic engines in the development of Chicago's neighborhood commercial districts in general, and specifically the intersection of 47th St. and Ashland Av., one of the oldest such districts in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, the Building reflects important aspects of Chicago's social, economic and cultural history, particularly the shopping habits of working-class residents of neighborhoods such as Back of the Yards, where retailers grew profitable by meeting the needs of local residents for practical and affordable merchandise; and

WHEREAS, the Building was the first branch of the Goldblatt Brothers chain, which at its peak was the largest department store chain in Chicago and the third-largest in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the Building is significant for its association with brothers Maurice and Nathan Goldblatt who are credited with inventing discount-retailing methods that became standard practices for retailers across the nation in the twentieth century, including locating their stores in working-class neighborhoods, extending hours to allow for shopping before and after work, buying wholesale goods at the lowest price to undercut their competition, and eliminating clerks and counters to allow customers to select and handle products themselves; and

WHEREAS, the construction of the Building in 1915 and subsequent additions to it in 1929 and 1933 illustrate the economic prominence of department store companies, and more broadly the transformation of retailing in Chicago from small independent shop owners to large companies offering a wide range of goods at multiple branches as the city grew; and

WHEREAS, with its continuous vertical piers and recessed spandrel panels that express the underlying metal structural frame, as well as its three-part windows and restrained ornamentation, the design of the Building is an excellent example of the Chicago School, a style of commercial architecture developed in Chicago after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 that became internationally significant for its influence on the modern movement in architecture; and

WHEREAS, the Building exemplifies the application of Chicago School principals to the design of the department store building type, seen earlier in such iconic Chicago buildings as Louis Sullivan's for the Carson Pirie Scott & Company building, and the continued use of the Chicago School in retail commercial architecture well into the twentieth century; and

WHEREAS, the Building is decorated with fine Classical Revival-style details, such as the decorated pilaster bases and capitals and the modillion course at the cornice as well as other characteristic decorative motifs such as egg-and-dart molding, recessed panels and festoons; and

WHEREAS, the Building is clad with white-glazed terra cotta that displays a high degree of craftsmanship in its ornamental details and overall high-quality design and fabrication; and

WHEREAS, the Building was designed in phases by Alfred S. Alschuler, one of Chicago's prominent early-twentieth century architects whose body of work includes such noteworthy buildings as the London Guarantee and Exchange Building, K.A.M. Isaiah Israel

Temple, the first Goldblatt Brothers Department Store, and the Florsheim Shoe Company Building, all designated Chicago Landmarks; and

WHEREAS, Alschuler's career coincided with Chicago's expansion as a manufacturing center, and he became known as an innovative and prolific designer of industrial and commercial buildings that combined functionality and aesthetics, enhancing the character of Chicago's manufacturing districts; and

WHEREAS, consistent with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, the Building has a significant historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value, the integrity of which is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value; and

WHEREAS, on March 7, 2013, the Commission adopted a resolution recommending to the City Council of the City of Chicago (the "City Council") that the Building be designated a Chicago Landmark; now, therefore,

Be It Ordained by the City Council of the City of Chicago:

SECTION 1. The above recitals are hereby adopted as the findings of the City Council.

SECTION 2. The Building is hereby designated a Chicago Landmark in accordance with Section 2-120-700 of the Municipal Code.

SECTION 3. For purposes of Section 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code governing permit review, the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building.

SECTION 4. The Commission is hereby directed to create a suitable plaque appropriately identifying the Building as a Chicago Landmark.

SECTION 5. If any provision of this ordinance shall be held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the invalidity or unenforceability of such provision shall not affect any of the other provisions of this ordinance.

SECTION 6. All ordinances, resolutions, motions or orders in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

SECTION 7. This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage and approval.

Exhibit A
Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building
4700 S. Ashland Av.
Property Description

Legal Description:

LOTS 1 TO 5, BOTH INCLUSIVE, (EXCEPT THAT PART TAKEN FOR WIDENING S. ASHLAND AVE.); LOT 43 (EXCEPT THAT PART OF SAID LOT 43 DEDICATED FOR AN ALLEY BY DOCUMENT #5610414); LOTS 44 TO 47, BOTH INCLUSIVE, AND 16 FOOT STRIP FORMERLY ALLEY AND NOW VACATED LYING WEST OF AND ADJOINING SAID LOTS 1, 2, AND 3, ALL IN BLOCK 1 IN BERGER AND JACOB'S SUBDIVISION OF BLOCK 9 IN STONE AND WHITNEY'S SUBDIVISION OF THE WEST ½ OF THE SOUTHEAST ¼ OF SECTION 6 AND THE NORTH ½ AND THE WEST ½ OF THE SOUTHEAST ¼ OF SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 38 NORTH, RANGE 14 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ALSO ALL THAT PART OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH ALLEY BEING PART OF SAID LOT 43 AS DEDICATED AND RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF RECORDER OF DEEDS IN IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS ON APRIL 12, 1905, AS DOCUMENT #5610414 TOGETHER WITH THAT PART OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH ALLEY LYING WEST OF AND ADJOINING THE WEST LINE OF LOTS 4 AND 5 AND LYING EAST OF AND ADJOINING THE EAST LINE OF ORIGINAL LOT 43 AND LYING NORTH OF AND ADJOINING A LINE DRAWN FROM THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF LOT 5 TO THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF ORIGINAL LOT 43, ALL IN BLOCK 1 OF BERGER AND JACOB'S SUBDIVISION AFOREMENTIONED, IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

P.I.N. Number

20-07-207-001-0000
20-07-207-002-0000

Commonly known as:

4700 S. Ashland Av.
Chicago, Illinois

**CITY OF CHICAGO
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

March 7, 2013

**PRELIMINARY AND FINAL RECOMMENDATION TO
THE CITY COUNCIL OF CHICAGO THAT
CHICAGO LANDMARK DESIGNATION BE ADOPTED FOR THE**

**OPPENHEIMER-GOLDBLATT BROS.
DEPARTMENT STORE BUILDING
4700 S. Ashland Av.**

Docket No. 2013-02

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago:

Pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code of Chicago (hereinafter, the "Municipal Code"), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") has determined that the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building (the "Building"), located at 4700 S. Ashland Avenue, is worthy of Chicago Landmark designation. On the basis of careful consideration of the history and architecture of the Building, the Commission has found that it meets the following criteria set forth in Section 2-120-620 of the Municipal Code:

1. *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.*
3. *Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*
4. *Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail or craftsmanship.*
5. *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.*

I. BACKGROUND

The formal landmark designation process for the Building began on March 7, 2013, when the Commission received a "Landmark Designation Report" at the Commission's regular meeting of March 7th from the Department of Housing and Economic Development ("HED") summarizing the historical and architectural background of the Building. This Landmark Designation Report for the Building (adopted by the Commission on March 7th), which contains specific information about the Building's architectural and historical significance, is incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit A** (the "Designation Report").

At its regular meeting of March 7, 2013, the Commission also received a report from Andrew J. Mooney, Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Economic Development, stating that the proposed landmark designation of the Building supports the City's overall planning goals and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans. This report is incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit B** (the "HED Report").

On January 31, 2013, the Commission received a consent form, dated January 30, 2013, and signed by William Platt, representing Goldblatts SLF of Chicago GP, Inc., the owner of the Building, consenting to the proposed landmark designation of the Building.

II. FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 2-120-650 of the Municipal Code, the Commission, upon receipt of the Building owner's consent, shall notify the owner of its determination with respect to the proposed Chicago Landmark designation within 45 days after receipt of the owner's consent; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code, the Commission has reviewed the entire record of proceedings on the proposed Chicago Landmark designation, including the Designation Report, the HED Report, and all of the information on the proposed landmark designation of the Building; and

WHEREAS, the Building meets at least four criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (3), (4) and (5) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the Building exemplifies the important role that neighborhood department stores played as economic engines in the development of Chicago's neighborhood commercial districts in general, and specifically the intersection of 47th St. and Ashland Av., one of the oldest such districts in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, the Building reflects important aspects of Chicago's social, economic and cultural history, particularly the shopping habits of working-class residents of neighborhoods such as Back of the Yards, where retailers grew profitable by meeting the needs of local residents for practical and affordable merchandise; and

WHEREAS, the Building was the first branch of the Goldblatt Brothers chain, which at its peak was the largest department store chain in Chicago and the third-largest in the nation, and which is regarded as a pioneer of discount retailing methods that have become standard practices; and

WHEREAS, the construction of the Building in 1915 and subsequent additions to it in 1929 and 1933 illustrate the economic prominence of department store companies, and more broadly the transformation of retailing in Chicago from small independent shop owners to large companies offering a wide range of goods at multiple branches as the city grew; and

WHEREAS, the Building is significant for its association with brothers Maurice and Nathan Goldblatt who founded and led Goldblatt Bros., Inc., a Chicago-based company established in 1914 that grew into a regionally-prominent discount department store chain in the mid-twentieth century; and

WHEREAS, the Goldblatt brothers are credited with inventing discount-retailing methods that became standard practices for retailers across the nation in the twentieth century, including locating their stores in working-class neighborhoods, extending hours to allow for shopping before and after work, buying wholesale goods at the lowest price to undercut their competition, and eliminating clerks and counters to allow customers to select and handle products themselves; and

WHEREAS, with its continuous vertical piers and recessed spandrel panels that express the underlying metal structural frame, as well as its three-part windows and restrained ornamentation, the design of the Building is an excellent example of the Chicago School, a style of commercial architecture developed in Chicago after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 that became internationally significant for its influence on the modern movement in architecture; and

WHEREAS, the Building exemplifies the application of Chicago School principals to the design of the department store building type, seen earlier in such iconic Chicago Buildings as Louis Sullivan's for the Carson Pirie Scott & Company Building, and the continued use of the Chicago School in retail commercial architecture well into the twentieth century; and

WHEREAS, the Building is decorated with fine Classical Revival-style details, such as the decorated pilaster bases and capitals and the modillion course at the cornice as well as other characteristic decorative motifs such as egg-and-dart molding, recessed panels and festoons; and

WHEREAS, the Building is clad with white-glazed terra cotta that displays a high degree of craftsmanship in its ornamental details and overall high-quality design and fabrication; and

WHEREAS, the Building was designed in phases by Alfred S. Alschuler, one of Chicago's prominent early-twentieth century architects whose body of work includes such noteworthy buildings as the London Guarantee and Exchange Building, K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Temple, the first Goldblatt Brothers Department Store, and the Florsheim Shoe Company Building, all designated Chicago Landmarks; and

WHEREAS, Alschuler's career coincided with Chicago's expansion as a manufacturing center, and he became known as an innovative and prolific designer of industrial and commercial buildings that combined functionality and aesthetics, enhancing the character of Chicago's manufacturing districts; and

WHEREAS, consistent with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, the Building has a significant historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value, the integrity of which is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value; now, therefore,

THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS HEREBY:

1. Incorporates the preamble, Section I, and the recitals contained in Section II into its findings; and
2. Finds that the Building merits preliminary landmark recommendation in accordance with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code; and
3. Adopts the Designation Report of the Building, as revised and dated as of this 7th day of March 2013; and
4. Finds, based on the Designation Report, HED Report, and the entire record before the Commission, that the Building meets four out of seven of the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (3), (4) and (5) of the Municipal Code; and
5. Finds that the Building satisfies the historic integrity requirement set forth in Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code; and

6. Finds that, for the purposes of Section 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code, the significant historical and architectural features of the Building be identified as follows:
 - All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building.
7. Recommends that the Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

This recommendation was adopted unanimously (5-0).


Rafael M. Leon, Chairman
Commission on Chicago Landmarks

Dated: March 7, 2013

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



OPPENHEIMER-GOLDBLATT BROS. DEPARTMENT STORE BUILDING

4700 S. Ashland Av.

**Preliminary and Final Landmark Recommendation adopted
by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, March 7, 2013**



**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.

OPPENHEIMER-GOLDBLATT BROS.

DEPARTMENT STORE BUILDING

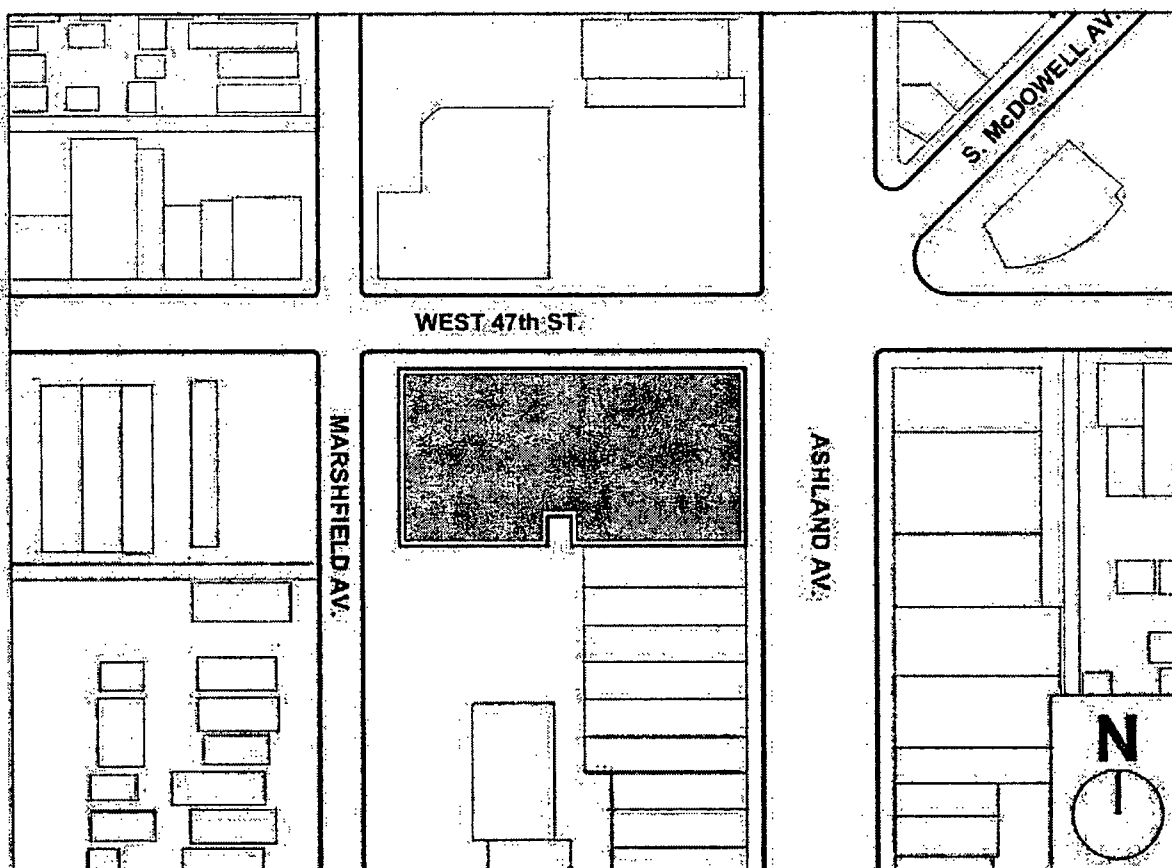
4700 S. Ashland Av.

Built: 1915 (Original Building)
 1929 (Addition to the West)
 1933 (Added Stories to 1915 Building)

Architect: Alfred S. Alschuler

Chicago's tremendous growth in population and size from the 1870s through the 1920s gave rise to its distinctive patchwork of neighborhoods sprawling outward from Chicago's central business district in the Loop. While the Loop remained the commercial heart of the city, many of Chicago's outlying neighborhoods grew large enough to support their own shopping districts with a range of stores, banks, professional services and theaters conveniently located for local residents. These "cities within the city" were often anchored by at least one large department store building, owned independently or by a chain, which offered a wide range of goods at prices that reflected their middle- and working class neighborhood surroundings.

Built in phases from 1915 to 1933, the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building at 4700 S. Ashland Av. is one of the best-surviving early examples of this significant building type. Each phase of the building was designed by Alfred S. Alschuler, one of Chicago's most prominent early-twentieth century architects whose body of work includes the London Guarantee Building, K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Temple, the first Goldblatt Bothers Department Store and the Florsheim Shoe Company building, all designated Chicago Landmarks. Alschuler's design for the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building is a late example of the Chicago School, a nationally-important style of commercial architecture. The building is also significant for its association with the Goldblatt Bros., a Chicago department store company that grew into a regional chain by pioneering discount-retailing methods.



Built in phases from 1915 to 1933, the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store is located at the intersection of W. 47th St. and Ashland Avenue in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on Chicago's Southwest Side.

BUILDING HISTORY AND CONSTRUCTION

The Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building is located five miles from the Loop on the Southwest Side at the corner of W. 47th St. and S. Ashland Av. in the Back of the Yards neighborhood within the larger New City community area. The name "Back of the Yards" refers to the neighborhood's location south and west, or "back," of the Union Stock Yards, a conglomeration of livestock trading and meatpacking facilities that once sprawled over 475 acres near Exchange and Halsted streets north of the store's location. The Stock Yards was one of Chicago's largest employers from its establishment in 1865 until well into the middle of the twentieth century, and most of its employees lived within walking distance in a group of densely-populated working-class neighborhoods that included, in addition to Back of the Yards, the neighborhoods of Bridgeport, McKinley Park and Canaryville, all collectively known as Packingtown.

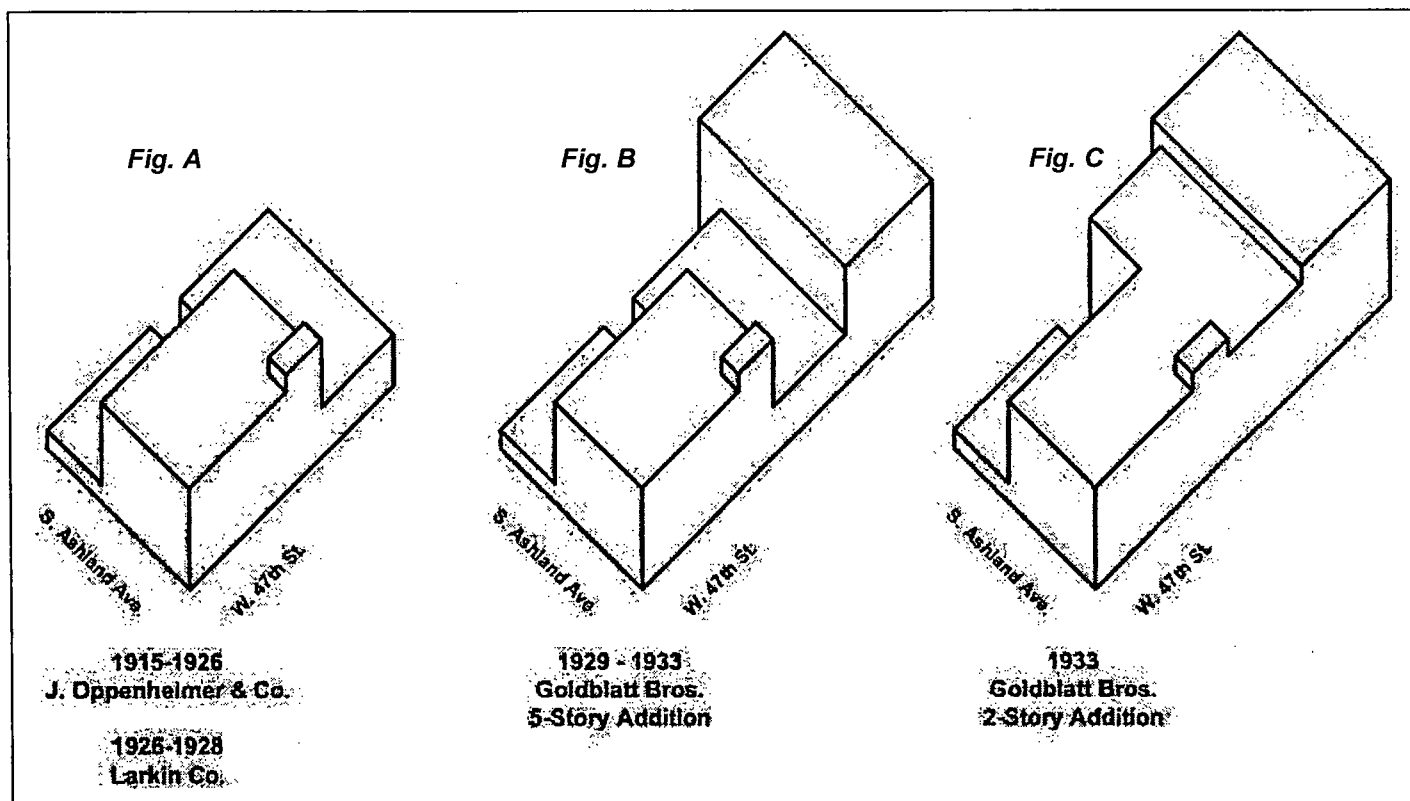
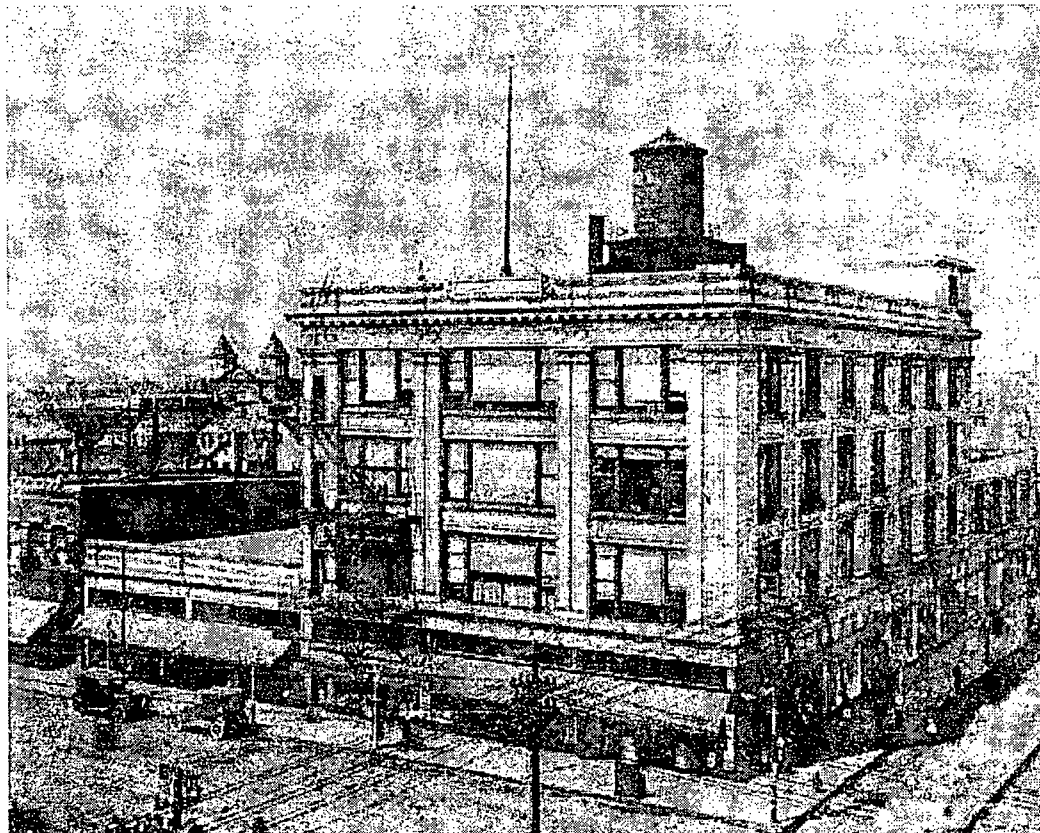
Back of the Yards was first populated by German and Irish immigrants, yet as these groups moved west in the 1870s, they were replaced by immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, primarily Poles as well as Lithuanians, Bohemians and Slovaks who found jobs in the Stock Yards. This working-class population lived in crowded conditions in modest frame houses built in the 1880s and 1890s.

In his muckraking 1906 novel *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair characterized Stock Yard workers as the "wage slaves of the Beef Trust." Despite the grinding poverty documented by Sinclair, retail merchants Julius Oppenheimer and Simeon Lederer reasoned that the neighborhood contained a large population with at least some income to spend on basic goods and necessities. In 1894 Oppenheimer and Lederer constructed a four-story brick store building at the southwest corner of W. 47th St. and Ashland Av. (the site of the current building) which housed the first Oppenheimer department store. The store remained in business for twenty years until it was destroyed by fire in 1914, whereupon Oppenheimer immediately began to rebuild in the spring of 1915.

Oppenheimer commissioned Alfred S. Alschuler, a 39-year-old Chicago architect establishing himself as a specialist in industrial and commercial buildings, to design a new department store for the site. Completed in November 1915 at a cost of \$80,000, the J. Oppenheimer & Co. department store forms the original part of the current structure and consists of the four-story block that includes three structural bays on Ashland Av. and six bays on 47th St. as well as the attached one-story wing extending an additional two bays south along Ashland and a wing (originally two stories) extending four bays west on 47th St. Alschuler's design employed a white-glazed terra-cotta façade, reinforced-concrete floors and a cast-iron structural frame (steel framing was used in later additions to the building).

In 1926 Oppenheimer sold the property to the Buffalo-based Larkin Company, which operated their department store in the building for only two years, until 1928, when it was purchased by the Goldblatt Brothers, a rising Chicago retailer. Established in 1914 by Maurice and Nathan Goldblatt, Goldblatt's had successfully adapted the department store model from a purveyor of luxury goods to a retailer offering discounted merchandise to working-class shoppers.

The circa 1915 photo (right) depicts the building in its original form as built for the J. Oppenheimer & Co. Department Store. The photo is from the archives of the American Terra Cotta Company which manufactured the building's cladding.



The isometric diagram (above) shows the evolution of the building, beginning with the original 1915 structure (fig. A). In 1929 the Goldblatt Bros. added the five-story block that extended the building west along 47th St. (fig. B), and in 1933 the Goldblatts added two stories atop the two-story portion of the 1915 building (fig. C) which visually unified the 47th St. facade.

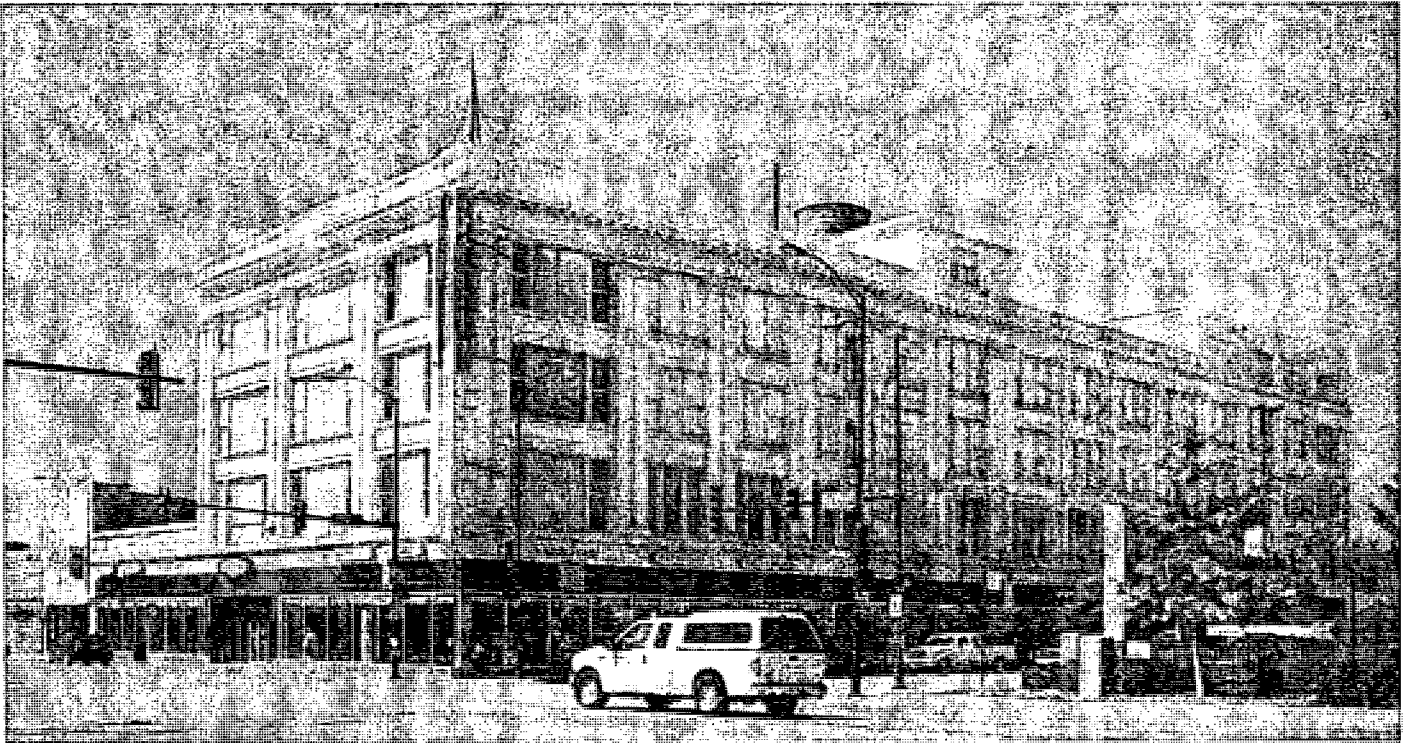
The Goldblatt brothers prospered and added onto the building in 1929 and again in 1933 bringing it to its current form. In both its structure and exterior design, the original 1915 building was well-suited for later additions, and in both cases the Goldblatts commissioned the original architect, Alfred Alschuler, to design them. The 1929 addition housed additional retail space and offices in a five-story block that expanded the building west along 47th St. to Marshfield Av. In 1933 the Goldblatts engaged Alschuler again to add two stories atop the two-story portion of the 1915 building. This final addition visually unified the 47th St. facade with a regular rhythm of fourteen structural bays and a continuous cornice above the fourth story.

Though it was built in three stages from 1915 to 1933, the overall coherency of Alschuler's original design and his additions allows the building to be described as a single work. Rectangular in plan with a flat roof, the building fills the 245' x 125' lot bounded by Ashland Av., W. 47th St., Marshfield Av., and the alley to the south. The primary mass of the building is a four-story block (1915, 1933) at the intersection of 47th St. and Ashland Av. Attached to this is a five-story block (1929) to the west and a one-story wing (1915) to the south.

The terra-cotta clad primary elevations facing the commercial thoroughfares of 47th St. (north) and Ashland Av. (east) have the most architectural interest. Typical of retail buildings of the period, these elevations are organized into two horizontal divisions: a street-level one-story base composed almost entirely of large storefront windows for the display of goods, and upper floors with a unified architectural treatment of large window openings defined by a grid of piers and spandrels.

The base of the building consists of a nearly-continuous band of storefront windows placed in front of the building's structural columns. While the current aluminum storefront frames are not historic, the overall size of the windows is consistent with historic photos of the building. The low granite bulkhead below and the transom windows above the storefronts are original. There are four recessed entrances to the building from the sidewalk, one at Ashland Av. and three along 47th St. The coved soffit and ornamental metal decoration at the westernmost entrance on 47th St. appears to be original. A horizontal band of terra cotta with a simple raised-panel design marks the transition from the storefront level and the upper floors. The band includes integral terra-cotta lettering identifying the "West 47th Street" and "S. Ashland Ave" facades, and the name "Goldblatt Bros." is applied with bronze lettering at three locations along the band.

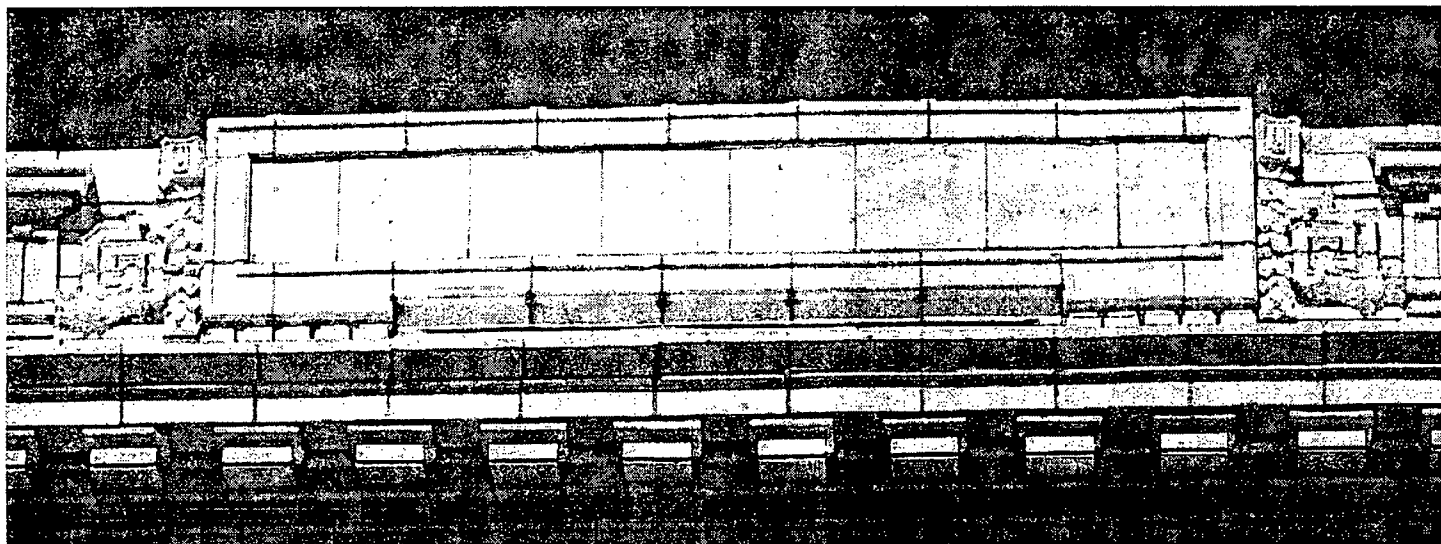
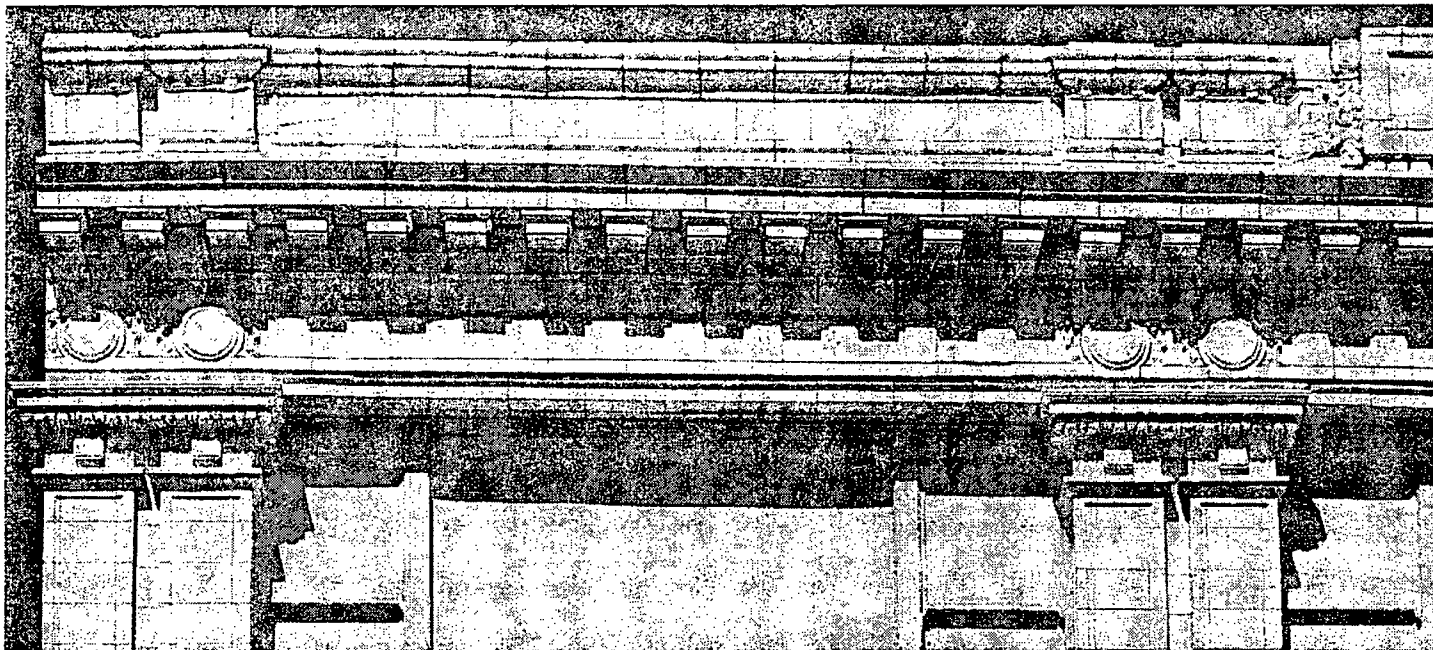
Above the street-level base, the upper portion of the building is composed of a rectangular arrangement of continuous vertical piers and recessed spandrels framing bay-spanning window openings. The piers organize the facades into a series of repeating structural bays, with fourteen on 47th St. and five on Ashland Av. The piers are rendered as paired pilasters with simplified Classical-style bases and capitals. The horizontal line of the floor levels is marked by recessed spandrels with simplified panel ornamentation. The grid-like arrangement of intersecting piers and spandrels expresses the underlying metal structural frame of the building and places the design within the Chicago School, a style of commercial architecture developed and refined in Chicago from 1875 through the 1920s. The building's fenestration is also characteristic of the style, with each opening combining a fixed casement flanked on each side by double-



The above photo shows the primary elevations of the building which are clad in white glazed terra cotta. The shorter Ashland Av. elevation (left side of photo) includes the four-story portion which is divided into three bays as well as the one-story wing. The longer W. 47th St. elevation (right side of photo) is arranged in a series of fourteen regularly-spaced bays. Though built in three stages, architect Alfred S. Alschuler's design for the original structure and two additions forms a unified and coherent whole.



Looking east down 47th Street (above) reveals the building's nearly continuous band of storefront windows at the sidewalk level. On the upper floors projecting piers and recessed spandrel panels intersect to create the grid-like rectangular aesthetic that is characteristic of Chicago School commercial architecture. The Marshfield Av. elevation (on the right) has a finished terra-cotta return for one bay, while the rest of this secondary facade is face brick.



While the overall design of the building follows the practical tenets of the Chicago School, Alschuler decorated the exterior with restrained Classical-style terra-cotta ornamental details, including pilaster capitals and a cornice (top photo) as well as the tablet at the parapet (middle photo) framed by swags and a Greek-key motif. Street names (left) are molded into the terra-cotta band above the storefront windows.

hung-sash windows, a grouping known as the "Chicago window" for its association with the Chicago School of architecture.

The upper stories are clad in white glazed terra cotta that displays a high degree of craftsmanship in its ornamentation. The terra cotta was manufactured by the American Terra Cotta Company, based in the town of Terra Cotta near Crystal Lake, Illinois. From 1881 to 1966 the company was one of the nation's largest producers of terra cotta.

The fourth story of the building is topped with a Classical entablature with a projecting cornice and raised parapet. Portions of the building rise above the parapet, including a one-story mechanical penthouse near the center of the north façade and the fifth story at the northwest corner of the building. A wood water tank painted with the Goldblatts name is located on a penthouse above the south elevation.

The west elevation facing Marshfield Av., a primarily residential street, includes a single terra-cotta clad bay turning the corner of the building, while the less-visible remainder of the facade is face brick trimmed with terra-cotta stringcourses and window sills. The south elevations of the building facing the alley are utilitarian common brick.

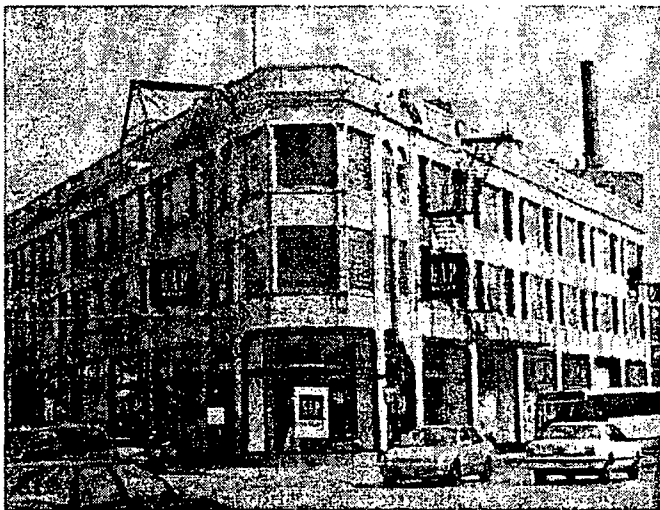
The Neighborhood Department Store in Chicago

The Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building is a fine example of a neighborhood department store, an important building type in the development of Chicago's outlying neighborhoods. As the city expanded outward from the Loop from the 1870s to the 1920s, neighborhood shopping districts emerged which provided working- and middle-class Chicagoans with a range of stores, banks, professional services, and theaters as a more convenient and affordable alternative to Chicago's Loop.

The intersection of 47th St. and Ashland Av. was one of these neighborhood commercial nodes, catering to the nearby working-class residents of Back of the Yards, many of whom lacked both the financial means and convenient public transportation to shop in Chicago's Loop. Goldblatt's, and its competitors such as Kruse's, Klein's, Diebold's, Woolworth's and Sears, Roebuck & Co., grew successful in these outlying commercial districts by offering a range of affordably-priced wares for Chicago's large working-class population.

Chicago's neighborhood department stores tend to occupy between three and nine building lots with a height of three to five stories and were often, along with banks, the most visually-prominent buildings in these neighborhood commercial areas. At street-level the buildings feature large storefront windows for the display of goods while the upper floors are typically clad in brick masonry or terra cotta. In lieu of architectural ornamentation or rich materials, neighborhood department store buildings relied on their larger massing and scale as well as corner locations to stand out in the commercial streetscape. Like the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building, many of these buildings were built in stages, with additions added as businesses grew.

In addition to the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building, other examples of this building type include the first Goldblatt Bros. Department Store at 1613-35 W. Chicago



In the late-19th and early-20th centuries, neighborhood department stores anchored Chicago's commercial districts outside the Loop. Examples of this building type include: the Moeller Bros. (1895, top left) and Wieboldt's (1898, top right) stores in the Milwaukee Av. Chicago Landmark District; as well as the Goldblatt's (1927, bottom left) store in the Milwaukee-Diversey-Kimball District. The Loren Miller & Company store (1915, bottom right) is located in the Uptown Square Historic District on the National Register.

Av., a designated Chicago Landmark designed by Alfred S. Alschuler and built in stages between 1921-22 and 1925-28. Other examples can be found in Chicago Landmark districts, including the Wieboldt's (1898), Mocler Brothers (1895) and Iverson's (ca 1900) stores in the Milwaukee Avenue District; as well as the Goldblatt's (1927) and Woolworth's (1922) stores in the Milwaukee-Diversey-Kimball District. Another representative example of the type is the Loren Miller & Company store (1915) at 4726 N. Broadway in the Uptown Square Historic District on the National Register.

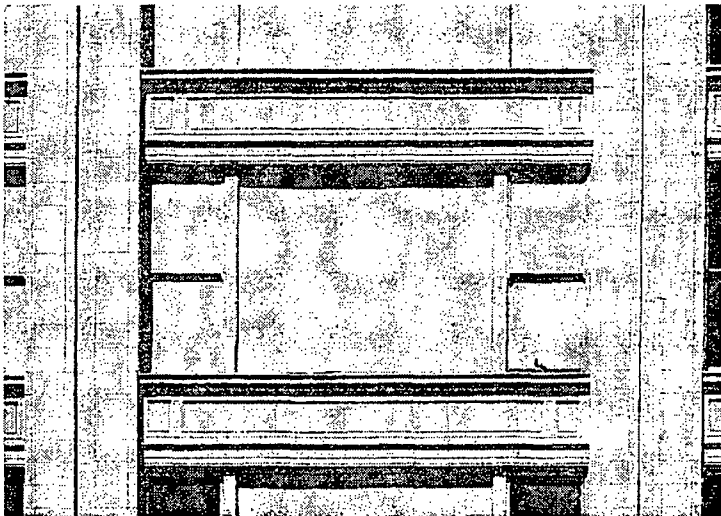
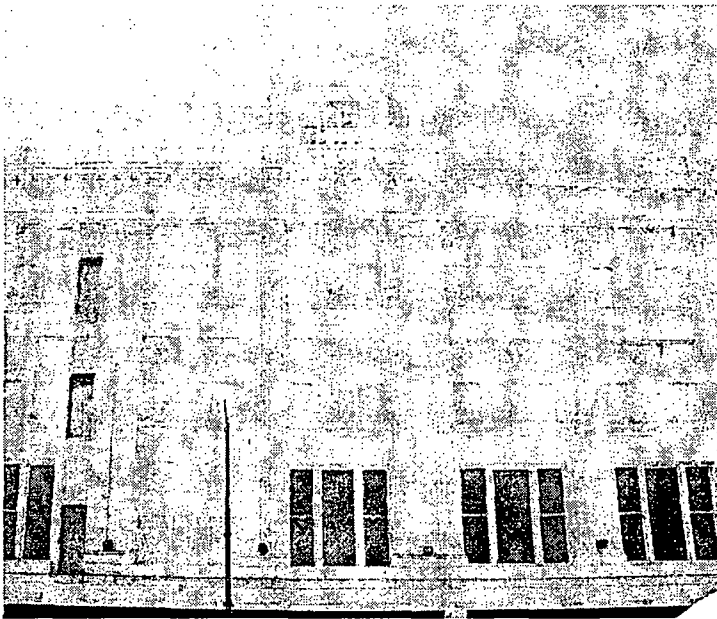
THE CHICAGO SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

With its projecting vertical piers, recessed spandrel panels, three-part window openings and restrained ornamentation, the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building exemplifies the Chicago School, a style of commercial architecture that blossomed as the city was rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1871. Chicago's booming economy in the late 1880s and '90s led to soaring real estate prices in Chicago's Loop. To take maximum advantage of expensive land, Chicago architects perfected the tall commercial office building by adopting and advancing new building technologies such as the elevator, plate glass, the floating and caisson foundation, and, most importantly, the metal (first iron, then steel) structural frame.

William Le Baron Jenney's seminal Home Insurance Building at LaSalle and Adams streets was the first building to employ an iron structural frame in 1884. By eliminating load-bearing masonry exterior walls, the metal skeleton allowed for more rentable floor space on the building's interior and much larger window openings for maximum lighting and ventilation. The metal frame also allowed for architects to build taller and more quickly, and it more readily accepted additional stories. In addition to supporting the building, Chicago school architects allowed the steel frame to guide the aesthetic of the façade by expressing the rectangular arrangement of vertical piers and horizontal beams, perhaps most boldly exemplified by Burnham and Root's Reliance Building (1895) which clearly reveals its skeletal metal structure beneath crisp terra-cotta sheathing.

Though the Chicago School developed in the design of the city's early office towers, Louis Sullivan's design for the Carson Pirie Scott & Company (1899, 1903-04) successfully adapted the construction technology and bold aesthetic of the style to the department store building type. The style offered two advantages for the large retailer: the metal frame allowed the ground floor to be opened up with vast storefront display windows, and the skeletal structure allowed for large open floor areas that could be flexibly accommodate the various "departments" of the store unobstructed by load-bearing partition walls.

The development of the Chicago School was eclipsed in 1893 when the World's Columbian Exposition swayed architectural tastes toward Beaux-Art classicism. However, the practical methods and aesthetic of the Chicago School continued to be applied for commercial and manufacturing buildings outside the Loop, including neighborhood department stores, well into the 1920s. The Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building exemplifies the persistence of the style.



The Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building is a late example of the Chicago School of commercial architecture. Characteristic of the style, the façade (top) is arranged as a grid of continuous vertical piers and recessed horizontal spandrel panels which visually express the building's underlying steel structural frame. Also characteristic of the style are the building's "Chicago windows" (middle) with a central fixed casement window flanked by double-hung-sash windows. While the Chicago School took root in the design of office buildings, it was also used for retail buildings, including prominent department stores on Chicago's State Street. The most important of these being Louis Sullivan's Carson Pirie Scott & Company Building (1899, 1903-04, bottom) at State and Madison.

In addition to its Chicago School architectural character, the building is decorated with pared-down Classical-style details in glazed terra-cotta. The piers are treated as paired pilasters with a torus-molded base, paneled shaft and paired capitals with egg-and-dart molding. The spandrels are similarly decorated with a recessed panel motif. The building is topped with a Classical entablature that includes a frieze decorated and floral ornament, a modillion course and projecting cornice terminating in a raised parapet with paneled decoration. At the Ashland Av. facade the parapet includes a tablet framed with festoons.

ARCHITECT ALFRED S. ALSCHULER

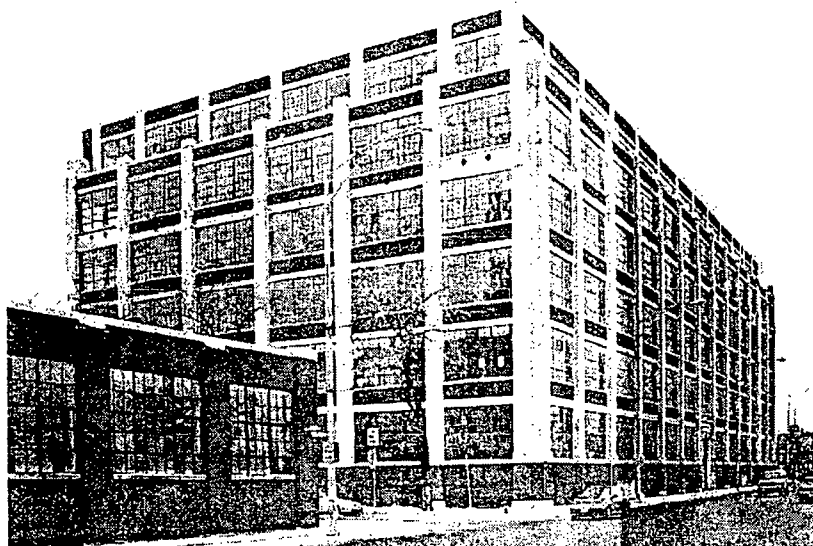
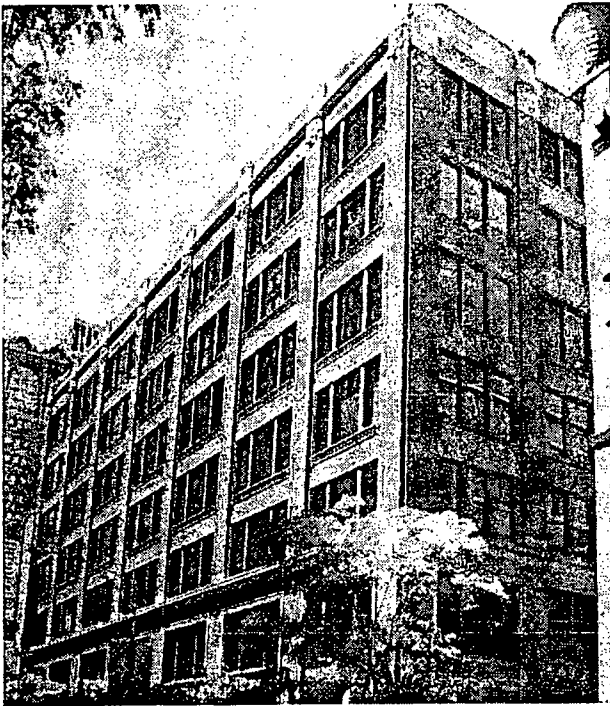
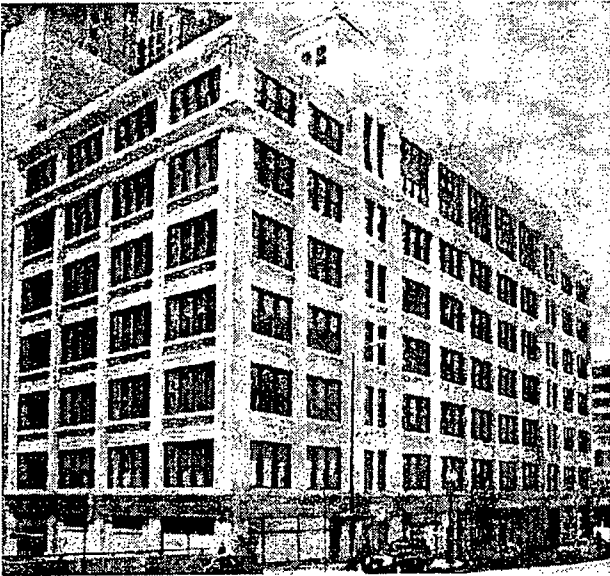
Alfred S. Alschuler (1876-1940), the architect of the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building, was one of Chicago's most prominent early-twentieth century architects. Born in Chicago to German immigrant parents, Alschuler received bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture from the Armour Institute of Technology (now the Illinois Institute of Technology), and also took classes at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1900 he began his professional career in the office of Dankmar Adler, and he subsequently worked with both Adler and Samuel Atwater Treat. In 1907 he established his own practice which grew to become one of the city's largest architectural firms during the 1910s and 1920s, a period when the city was developing a large manufacturing base. Although a specialist in the design of industrial and commercial buildings, Alschuler received a wide variety of commissions, including office towers, synagogues, libraries, automobile showrooms, and hotels.

Through the course of his career, Alschuler designed dozens of industrial and warehouse buildings throughout Chicago, many of which were located in the Central Manufacturing District near 35th St. and Ashland Av. A *Chicago Daily News* article from January 23, 1937, noted Alschuler's contributions to the city's industrial architecture:

Many of the improvements in industrial and commercial buildings in Chicago can be attributed to the genius of Alfred S. Alschuler, one of the city's prominent architects. During the course of thirty-five years or so he has introduced to Chicago such items of far-reaching importance as the extensive use of reinforced concrete in buildings, multicolored terra cotta, and standardized office-building units.

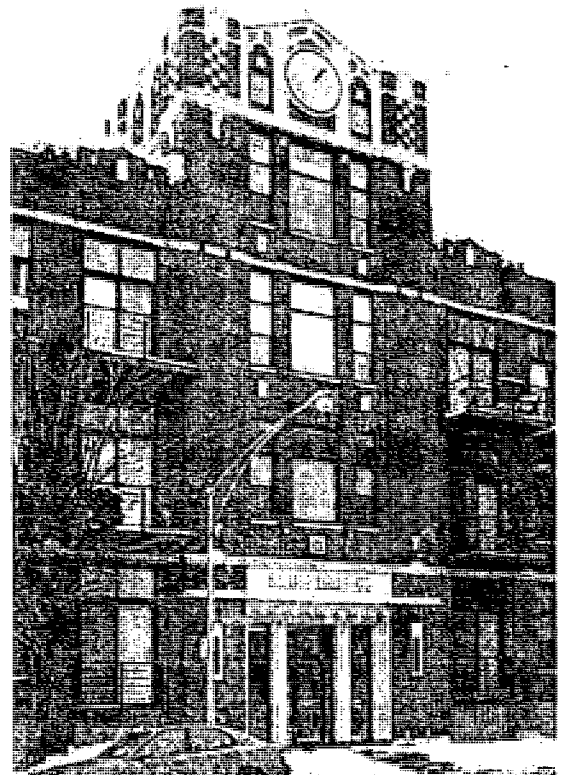
While the requirements of industrial and warehouse buildings placed function over aesthetics, Alschuler believed that even these utilitarian buildings had a civic obligation to visually enhance the city. A biographical sketch of Alschuler in the Art Institute of Chicago's 1982 publication *Chicago Architects Design: A Century of Architectural Drawings from the Art Institute of Chicago*, remarks:

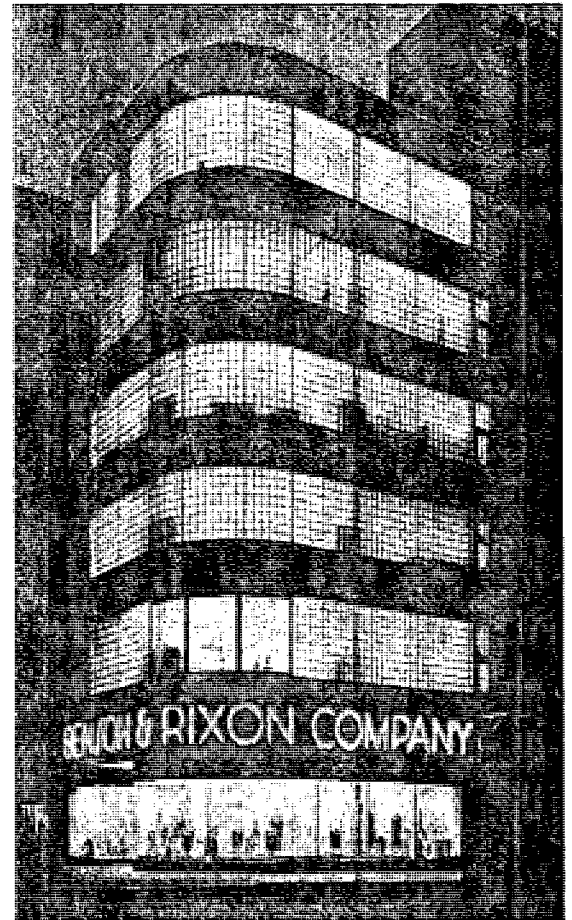
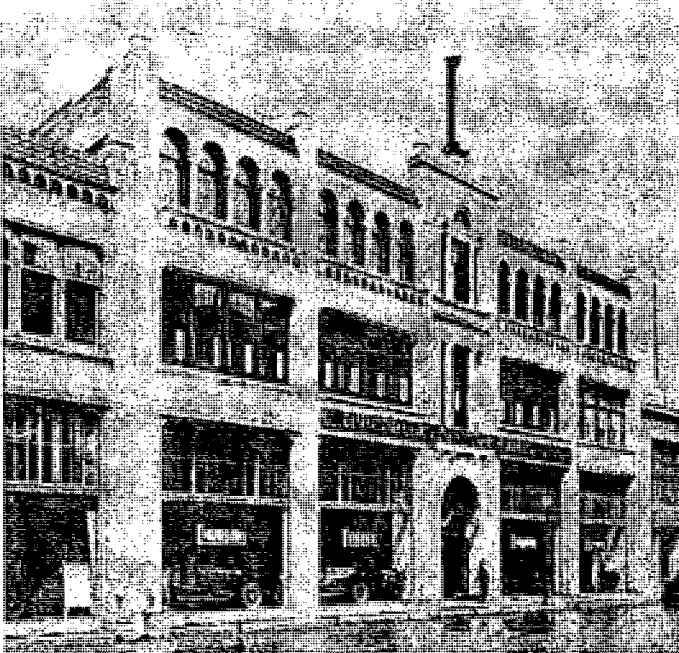
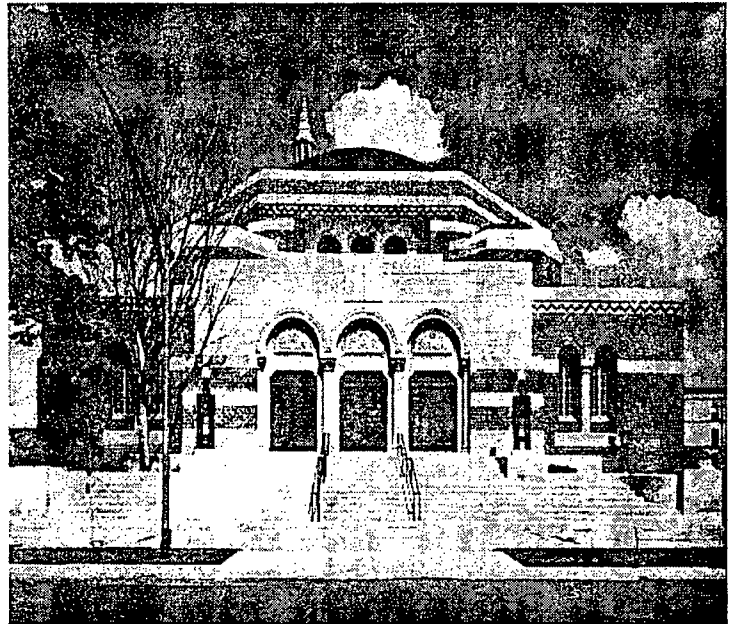
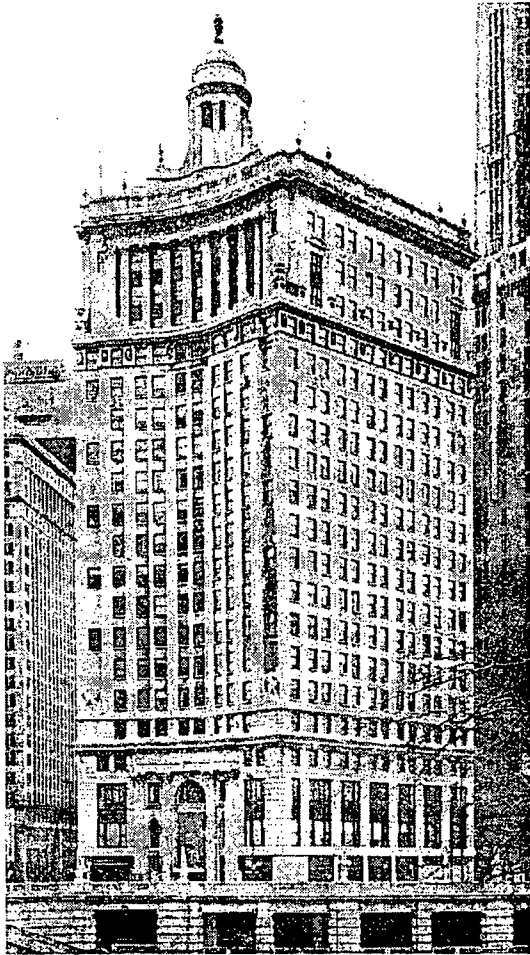
At a time when the city was developing an industrial fringe of unattractive functional buildings, Alschuler's harmonious and refined designs and restrained Classical detailing were changing the texture of the city.



Architect Alfred S. Alschuler (above, 1876-1940) was one of Chicago's most prominent early 20th-century architects. His industrial and warehouse buildings reflected his design philosophy that however utilitarian these types of buildings were, they should make an aesthetic contribution to the cityscape.

Noted examples include the John B. Thompson Commissary Building (top left) from 1912 at 340 N. Clark; the Pelouze Building (middle left) from 1916 at 218 E. Ohio; the Florsheim Shoe Company Building (bottom left), a designated Chicago Landmark from 1926 at 3963 W. Belmont Av.; and the Kling Brothers Company (bottom right) from 1920 at 2300 West Wabansia Avenue.





In addition to his many industrial and warehouse buildings, the versatile Alschuler designed a range of building types in a variety of styles, including the Beaux-Arts-style London Guarantee Building (1923, top left, a designated Chicago Landmark), the Byzantine Revival-style K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Temple (1926, top right, also a designated Chicago Landmark), the Spanish Baroque Revival-style Hudson Motor Car Co. Showroom (1922, lower left, in the Motor Row Chicago Landmark District) and the Art Moderne-style Benson & Rixon Department Store building (1937, lower right).

Though designed in a range of historical styles of architecture, Alschuler's body of work includes notable examples of architectural modernism. For example, his 1926 design for a manufacturing plant for the Florsheim Shoe Company (a designated Chicago Landmark) at 3963 W. Belmont Av. is a bold application of architectural modernism to an industrial building with its sleek, rectilinear forms formed by its exposed reinforced-concrete structure. Another example of his work in the modernist vein is the Benson & Rixon Department Store at 230 S State St., a 1937 Art Moderne-style design with smooth terra cotta cladding, pronounced bands of glass-block windows and curved corners.

The London Guarantee Building (1923) at 360 N. Michigan Av. (a designated Chicago landmark) was Alschuler's most important commission. Commanding an important setting at the Michigan Avenue Bridge just across the Chicago River from the Wrigley Building and the Tribune Tower, the 22-story Classical Revival-style building features a concave façade and is topped by a cupola replicating a Greco-Roman lantern. Its design earned Alschuler a gold medal from the North Michigan Avenue Improvement Association for the best new building of 1923 in the North Central District. Other extant office towers by Alschuler include a seven-story addition to the Blum Building at 624 S. Michigan Av., included in the Historic Michigan Boulevard Chicago Landmark District.

Alschuler was also known as the "Temple builder" due to the many synagogues he designed, including K.A.M Isaiah Israel Temple (1926) at 1100 E. Hyde Park Boulevard (a designated Chicago landmark). The walls of this Byzantine-style edifice feature polychromatic brick in various shapes laid up randomly to suggest old, sun-baked walls. Another important synagogue design by Alschuler is the Sinai Temple at 4622 S. Martin Luther King Drive (1909-12), now Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church.

In addition to the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building, Alschuler designed several stores and store additions for the Goldblatt Brothers chain, including their first department store (1921-22 and 1925-28) at 1613-35 W. Chicago Av. (a designated Chicago landmark), as well as the Goldblatt's store buildings at 3149 N. Lincoln Av. from 1929.

Civic buildings by Alschuler include Engine Company 5, Truck 2, 324 S. DesPlaines Av. (1928, a designated Chicago Landmark), the Legler Regional Library at 115 S. Pulaski Av. (1919), and the Henry W. Austin Public Library at 5615 W. Race St. (1928). Alschuler's 1930 Harrison Hotel at 63 E. Harrison St. is a high-style Art Deco edifice replete with stylized foliage, while automobile showrooms for the Hudson and Marmon automobile-manufacturing companies, located in the Motor Row Chicago Landmark District and both dating from 1922, feature exuberant terra-cotta ornamentation.

GOLDBLATT BROS., INC.

Little is known about Julius Oppenheimer, who built the original portion of the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Bros. Store. The building is significant, however, for its long association with the Goldblatt Brothers, a pioneering Chicago retailer who expanded the building



Brothers Nathan (bottom left) and Maurice Goldblatt (bottom right) established their first store on Chicago Av. in 1914 in a rented store. By 1922 they built their first store at 1613-35 W. Chicago Av., (above, a designated Chicago Landmark). It was also designed by Alfred S. Alschuler and expanded 1925-28. The brothers are credited with inventing discount-retailing methods that are now standard practices for retailers across the nation.

and operated it as a department store from 1928 to 1985. Rather than the high style and luxury of Chicago's State Street department stores, the Goldblatt brothers helped revolutionize American retailing by catering to working class and immigrant Chicagoans by offering low-priced merchandise in neighborhood department stores.

The company was established by brothers Maurice and Nathan Goldblatt, who were later joined in managing the company by their younger brothers Joel and Louis. The brothers were part of a family that immigrated to Chicago from Poland in 1904. In 1914 Maurice and Nathan opened the Goldblatt Bros. Drygoods Store in a rented building at 1615 W. Chicago Av. in a neighborhood on Chicago's near Northwest Side known as "Polish Downtown." The store sold a wide range of low-priced household goods to an immigrant population and the business grew rapidly. In 1922, the brothers commissioned Alfred Alschuler to design their first department store which they expanded in stages through 1928. The building survives at 1613-35 W. Chicago Av. and is a designated Chicago Landmark.

In the same year that they finished expansion of their first store, the Goldblatts purchased the former Oppenheimer department store at 47th St. and Ashland Av. in 1928 to serve as the first branch, initiating a period of expansion in the company that allowed it to proclaim itself in 1930 "America's Fastest Growing Department Chain." At its peak in the 1970s, the chain included forty-seven stores throughout Chicago and Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin. As with the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store, the company typically established branches by purchasing existing store buildings and expanding upon them.

The Goldblatt brothers innovated discount-retailing methods that are now standard in American merchandising. At the core of the company's approach was the idea that everyone was a consumer, even the working poor. In *Retailing* magazine, Nathan Goldblatt asserted that: "the people of Chicago want to buy goods [and] 95 percent of them have not the money to spend for everything they want, nor can they buy anything without considering its cost." To cater to this thrifty majority, Goldblatts located their stores in Chicago's outlying neighborhoods and established longer hours (7 a.m. - 9 p.m.) to allow for shopping before and after work. In addition to newspaper advertisements, Goldblatts published their own circulars which they delivered to neighborhood residents. The company also pursued aggressive wholesale buying practices to keep their prices low, often carrying merchandise with slight defects or from unknown brands.

In his 1994 memoir, Louis Goldblatt claimed that the company was the first retailer to allow the customer to see and handle merchandise by eliminating sales clerks and counters:

Goldblatts displayed its merchandise out in the open, stacked or dumped on tables. This enabled customers to see and handle it, encouraging impulse sales. We called this self-selection; it grew up to become the self-service at discount stores. Goldblatts was about the only store in the country that tied a pair of shoes together with its own laces and dumped them on a table, inviting the customer to find the right style and size, rather than selling them from a box which required a clerk and space-taking chairs.

A display ad (right) for a Goldblatt's sale in 1933 showed its six store buildings, including 4700 S. Ashland Av. Goods on offer included butter, spark plugs, roller skates and canaries in "full plumage" with a written guarantee that each bird had a "beautiful song."

Open until 9 P.M. Monday

All Chicago Stores Open Monday Night Until 9 P. M.

A Great Big Day Underwriting Areal!

Popular Cigarettes 94c

Libby's Red Alaska Salmon 14c

Fresh Eggs 14c

Wilson's "Clear Brook" Butter 18c

Famous Brands HAMS, L.B. 10c

Child's Combed Yarn Hose 7c

Marquette Panels 29c

\$1.00 In. Stump Bed Spreads 59c

21x27-Inch "Burton" Pillows 57c

Van Heusen COLLARS 19c

Pound Cake 12c

Armour's or Wilson's Bacon 6c

Men's Headlight Overalls 94c

"Storm Hero" Umbrellas 89c

All Padded Ironing Boards 69c

"Orchard" Merc. Crochet Thread 18c

Bicycle Playing Cards 29c

Granulated Sugar 10 lbs. 39c

Woolen 100% AB Silk Slips 79c

8x12 Ft. All Hair Rug Pads \$1.98

Famous "Dazzle" Shoe Polish 4c

Boys' Denim Overalls 23c

Rayon Taffeta Bed Spreads \$1.79

Regular 70c Boudoir Dolls 44c

Half Soles and Heels 49c

Nestle Bars 12c

25c Parle GARTENS 10c

Libby's, Pat or Cornaline Milk 4 cans 19c

White or Rye Bread 3c

5c Packages Chewing Gum 3 pkgs. 5c

"Hotpoint" Electric Iron \$1.79

Big Vank Shirts 35c

All Silk Pongees 12c

Chicken Bones 23c

15c Picture Corns 8c

Bissell's Carpet Sweepers \$2.58

Arrow Brand Laundry Soap 10 lbs. 13c

75c Champion Spark Plugs 39c

Willow Clothes Baskets 29c

Union Hardware Roller Skates 99c

Wisc. Potatoes 100 Lb. 88c

Libby's Recd-Dale Peaches 11c

Maxwell House or Webb's Coffee 3 Lb. 75c

Famous O. M. T. Crochet Thread 6c

Women's Reg. 40c Tee Ties 19c

Tomorrow is Goldblatt Day—

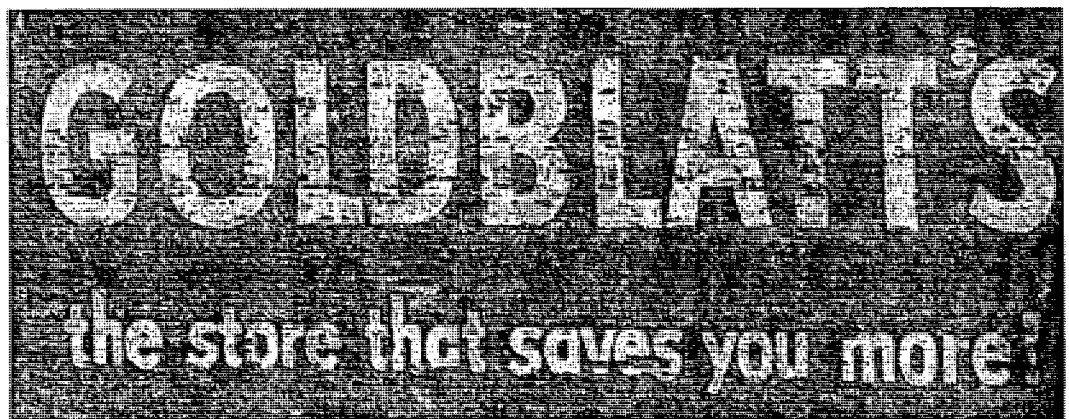
A tremendous crowd is expected with merchandise values. Goldblatt Day is a day of real big-time prices on our Monday of the highest quality. A day that brings you purchasing power in the stores of thousands of Chicagoans who share in its triumph. A day that is eagerly awaited by thousands of the city people who have learned that only Goldblatt Day will take the best on every item, every article in the line with such rapidity. And prices of what are presented today. These are the results of an all-out effort to bring you better bargains. Every department in every store is participating and co-operating to the fullest degree.

NEW LEXINGTON AND BROADWAY

6 GOLDBLATT

CHICAGO STORES: 4700 S. Ashland, 4700 S. Dearborn, 4700 S. Halsted, 4700 S. Madison, 4700 S. North, 4700 S. South.

A painted sign (right) on the south wall of the 47th and Ashland store.



Louis Goldblatt went on to offer a description of what the interior of the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store might have been like:

We had no carpeting on the floors, no expensive fixtures, or fancy treatments. Cartons and paper cluttered our stores. The selling floors were a hodgepodge of grocery tables, wearing apparel, and household needs, interspersed with hawker demonstrators of, perhaps, knife sharpeners or furniture polish. Goldblatts was a beehive of excitement and fun; it was not intended to be fancy or even comfortable.

The formula worked. During the Great Depression Goldblatt's sales nearly tripled and by 1933 the chain expanded to include five stores in Chicago, an additional two in Joliet and one in Hammond, Indiana. In 1936, Goldblatts bought the former 11-story Rothschild-Davis store at 333 S. State St., and opened their flagship store (now the DePaul University Center) on Chicago's State Street. Architectural historian Richard Longstreth noted that "no other company in the United States approached the scale of Goldblatts operations" during the Depression.

In 1944 Nathan Goldblatt died of cancer at age 49, prompting the surviving brothers to establish the Cancer Research Foundation in 1954. Maurice Goldblatt transferred his executive duties to his brothers to focus his attention as a major contributor and fundraiser for the construction in 1950 of the Nathan Goldblatt Memorial Hospital for cancer research at the University of Chicago. The Cancer Research Foundation continues to carry out its mission.

In the post-war period the Goldblatts chain continued to expand to become the largest department store chain in Chicago, and the third-largest in the nation. Following demographic shifts, the new stores were located in growing communities at the periphery of the city and in the suburbs where the stores anchored larger shopping centers. Increasing competition from national chains such as Sears, Montgomery Ward and K-Mart ultimately forced Goldblatts into bankruptcy in 1981. In 1985 the chain's remaining stores, including the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store, were purchased by the Ames Company who continued to operate them as discount department stores. Patrick Kane, a descendant of Nathan Goldblatt, bought the store at 4700 S. Ashland in 1999 and re-opened it as the Goldblatt Bros. Department Store. The store finally closed in 2003.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation of landmark designation to the City Council for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for designation," as well as the integrity criterion.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store 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 Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building exemplifies the important role that neighborhood department stores played as economic engines in the development of Chicago's neighborhood commercial districts in general, and specifically the intersection of 47th St. and Ashland Av., one of the oldest such districts in Chicago.
- The building reflects important aspects of Chicago's social, economic and cultural history, particularly the shopping habits of working-class residents of neighborhoods such as Back of the Yards, where retailers grew profitable by meeting the needs of local residents for practical and affordable merchandise.
- The Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building was the first branch of the Goldblatt Bros. chain, which at its peak was the largest department store chain in Chicago and the third-largest in the nation, and which is regarded as a pioneer of discount retailing methods that have become standard practices.
- The construction of the building in 1915 and subsequent additions to it in 1929 and 1933 illustrate the economic prominence of the Oppenheimer and Goldblatt department store companies, and more broadly the transformation of retailing in Chicago from small independent shop owners to large companies offering a wide range of goods at multiple branches as the city grew.

Criterion 3: Identification with a Person

Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building is significant for its association with brothers Maurice and Nathan Goldblatt who founded and led Goldblatt Bros., Inc., a Chicago-based company established in 1914 that grew into a regionally-prominent discount department store chain in the mid-twentieth century.
- The Goldblatt brothers are credited with inventing discount-retailing methods that became standard practices for retailers across the nation in the twentieth century, including locating their stores in working-class neighborhoods, extending hours to allow for shopping before and after work, buying wholesale goods at the lowest price to undercut their competition, and eliminating clerks and counters to allow customers to select and handle products themselves.

Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, unique-

ness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- With its continuous vertical piers and recessed spandrel panels that express the underlying metal structural frame, as well as its three-part windows and restrained ornamentation, the design of the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building is an excellent example of the Chicago School, a style of commercial architecture developed in Chicago after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 that became internationally significant for its influence on the modern movement in architecture.
- The building exemplifies the application of Chicago School principals to the design of the department store building type, seen earlier in such iconic Chicago Buildings as Louis Sullivan's for the Carson Pirie Scott & Company Building, and the continued use of the Chicago School in retail commercial architecture well into the twentieth century.
- The building is decorated with fine Classical Revival-style details, such as the decorated pilaster bases and capitals and the modillion course at the cornice as well as other characteristic decorative motifs such as egg-and-dart molding, recessed panels and festoons.
- The building is clad with white-glazed terra cotta that displays a high degree of craftsmanship in its ornamental details and overall high-quality design and fabrication.

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.

- The Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building was designed in phases by Alfred S. Alschuler, one of Chicago's prominent early-twentieth century architects whose body of work includes such noteworthy buildings as the London Guarantee and Exchange Building, K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Temple, the first Goldblatt Brothers Department Store, and the Florsheim Shoe Company Building, all designated Chicago Landmarks.
- Alschuler's career coincided with Chicago's expansion as a manufacturing center, and he became known as an innovative and prolific designer of industrial and commercial buildings that combined functionality and aesthetics, enhancing the character of Chicago's manufacturing districts.

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 value.

The Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building remains in its original location. Its setting today is primarily a neighborhood commercial district as it was when the building was built. Architect Alfred Alschuler's design of the original building and two additions is clearly legible as a Chicago School-style department store with Classical revival style details.

The building's historic materials, glazed terra cotta and brick masonry, remain in place. A small number of terra cotta units, mostly at the parapet level, exhibit cracking, a common and repairable condition of terra cotta buildings of this vintage. None of the cracked units appear to be displaced from the wall plane. A small number of terra cotta units have been removed from the façade and the voids have been infilled with white glazed brick. These missing units can be replaced based on patterns from identical units elsewhere on the façade.

The most significant alteration to the exterior is the replacement of the original street-level storefront windows and doors with a contemporary aluminum storefront system. The replacement storefronts retain the original window configuration and overall transparency. The steel transom windows above the storefront windows and the granite bulkhead beneath them are original. Above the street level, the building retains its original wood sash windows.

A projecting blade sign is located at the northeast corner of the building and a steel sign armature is mounted on the roof at this corner of the building. Archival images indicate that these were not original to the building but were in place as early as 1933. These accessory elements neither impair or enhance the building's integrity.

As a whole, the building's condition is repairable and its alterations are minor and reversible, and they do not detract from the building's ability to express its historic, architectural and aesthetic value.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its evaluation of the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Bros. Department Store Building, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as follows:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development: cover, pp. 4 (top), 8, 9, 11, 13 (top and middle left, bottom right), 14 (top left and top right), 20 (bottom left).

Northwest Architectural Archives, American Terra Cotta Co. photographs, University of Minnesota, <http://special.lib.umn.edu/manuscripts/digital/atcsearch.html>: p. 6 (top).

The Buildings of Alfred S. Alschuler, website by B. Alschuler, http://www.communitywalk.com/the_buildings_of_alfred_s_alschuler/map/5716: p. 15 (bottom right).

New York Public Library, Digital Gallery, Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy: p. 16 (bottom right).

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Meites, Hyman L. *History of the Jews of Chicago*: p. 16 (top right).

University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center, image identifier apf3-00305: p. 18 (bottom right).

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DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF CHICAGO

March 7, 2013

Report to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks

on the

Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Brothers Department Store Building

4700 S. Ashland Ave.

The Department of Housing and Economic Development finds that the proposed designation of the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Brothers Department Store Building as a Chicago Landmark supports the City's overall planning goals for the surrounding New City community area and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.

The Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Brothers Department Store Building at 4700 S. Ashland Avenue is located in the New City community area. The neighborhood is referred to alternately as "Back of the Yards" and "Packingtown" as it was settled by immigrants who found employment in the nearby Union Stock Yards and surrounding meatpacking plants beginning in the 1870s. The building was originally constructed in 1915 by Julius Oppenheimer for his department store which catered to the area's working class residents. From 1928 to 1981 the building was owned and expanded upon by the Goldblatt Brothers who are regarded as innovators in discount retailing. The building is to be rehabilitated and converted to housing for senior citizens, and the owner has consented to landmark designation pursuant to a redevelopment agreement with the City.

The building is located in a B3-3 zoning district which is intended to accommodate a very broad range of retail and service uses. The planned redevelopment of the building may retain commercial uses on the ground floor and no zoning change may be required. The nearby blocks of Ashland Avenue and West 47th Street are zoned for small scale commercial uses. Beyond these commercial streets the blocks are zoned for small scale residential uses.

The building is located within the 47th/Ashland Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district. The district was created in 2002 to foster improvements to older commercial properties along Ashland Avenue, to aid in the beautification of commercial corridors, and to provide assistance for housing on underutilized properties. Landmark designation and the planned rehabilitation of the building for seniors are consistent with these objectives.

The building is well served by public transportation with CTA bus service on West 47th Street (with a connection to the Red Line) and bus service on Ashland Avenue (with a connection to the Orange Line).

The surrounding Back of the Yards and Packingtown neighborhoods are significant in Chicago's economic and literary history (e.g. Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* [1906], Carl Sandburg's poem "Chicago" [1916]), however to date few historic resources have been officially recognized in the area. These are the Union Stock Yards Gate and the former Stock Yards National Bank Building, both located 1 mile northeast of the building, and both designated as Chicago Landmarks. Davis Square, ¼ mile north of the building, and Cornell Square, ½ mile to the south are listed on the National Register of Historic Places under the *Chicago Park District Multiple Property Submission*. In addition, in 2006 the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Brothers Department Store Building was itself placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The preservation and rehabilitation of this building will provide long-term benefits to the City in general and the residents of New City in particular. It serves as a model for sustainable development by retaining existing buildings and adapting them to new needs. In conclusion, landmark designation of the Oppenheimer-Goldblatt Brothers Department Store Building as a Chicago Landmark supports the City's overall planning goals for Chicago's New City community area and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AJM', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Andrew J. Mooney
Commissioner



Office of the City Clerk



O2013-2470

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City Council Document Tracking Sheet

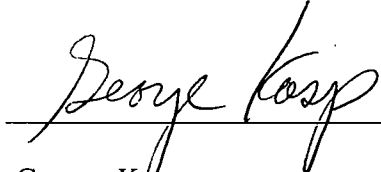
Meeting Date:	4/10/2013
Sponsor(s):	Mendoza, Susana A. (Clerk)
Type:	Ordinance
Title:	Amend ordinance of Chicago Taxicab Fare Increase (by George Kasp)
Committee(s) Assignment:	Committee on Transportation and Public Way

April 5, 2013

Susana Mendoza, City Clerk
121 North LaSalle Street
Room 107
Chicago, Illinois 60602

City Clerk Susana Mendoza:

Please introduce on my behalf, the enclosed citizen's ordinance regarding a taxicab fare increase to the City Council meeting on April 10, 2013 and please have this proposed ordinance referred to the Committee on Transportation and Public Way for their consideration.


George Kasp
(312) 203 - 3305

RECEIVED
CITY COUNCIL DIVISION
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CITY CLERK
G.A.

Citizen's Ordinance for Taxicab Rates of Fare Revision

Facts to support a taxicab fare increase

1. Inflation has eroded the value of the dollar by 17% since 2006.

2011	3.16 %
2009	-0.34 %
2007	2.85 %

*source: <http://inflationdata.com>

2. Major U.S. Cities Taxi Fare Prices

	CITY	Flag Pull	Per Mile Charge	Waiting Time
1.	New York, NY	\$2.50	\$2.50	\$30 per hour
2.	Boston, MA	\$2.60	\$2.80	\$28 per hour
3.	San Francisco, CA	\$3.50	\$2.75	\$33 per hour
4.	Las Vegas, NV	\$3.30	\$2.40	\$30 per hour
5.	Chicago current rates	\$3.25	\$2.80	\$26 per hour
	Chicago proposed	\$3.25	\$2.10	\$24 per hour

*source applicable municipal websites

In comparison to other cities cited, Chicago's proposed taxicab rate would still be below all major cities. The taxicab rate proposed is very reasonable and is long overdue. We respectfully request a hearing before the Committee on Transportation and Public Way for consideration and a favorable vote with a recommendation to the full City Council for passage.

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Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Chicago the following ordinance is to be amended:

9-112-600 Taxicab rates of fare - Revision

Portions omitted do not affect remainder of ordinance. Strikeouts reflect current ordinance. Underscored text is proposed ordinance.

(a) Commencing with the effective date of this Chapter, the rates of fare for taxicabs shall be as set forth in this section:

For the first ~~1/9~~ 1/7 mile or fraction thereof: \$ 3.25

Forty-five cents of this initial mileage rate for the first ten taxicab fares which a driver transports per day is hereby designated for payment of workers' compensation insurance.

For each additional ~~1/9~~ 1/7 mile or fraction thereof: ~~\$ 0.20~~ \$0.30

For each ~~36~~ 45 seconds of time elapsed: ~~\$ 0.20~~ \$0.30

For the first additional passenger over the age of 12 years and under the age of 65 years: \$ 1.00

For each additional passenger, after the first additional passenger, over the age of 12 and under the age of 65 years: \$ 0.50

Vomit clean-up fee: \$ 50.00

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