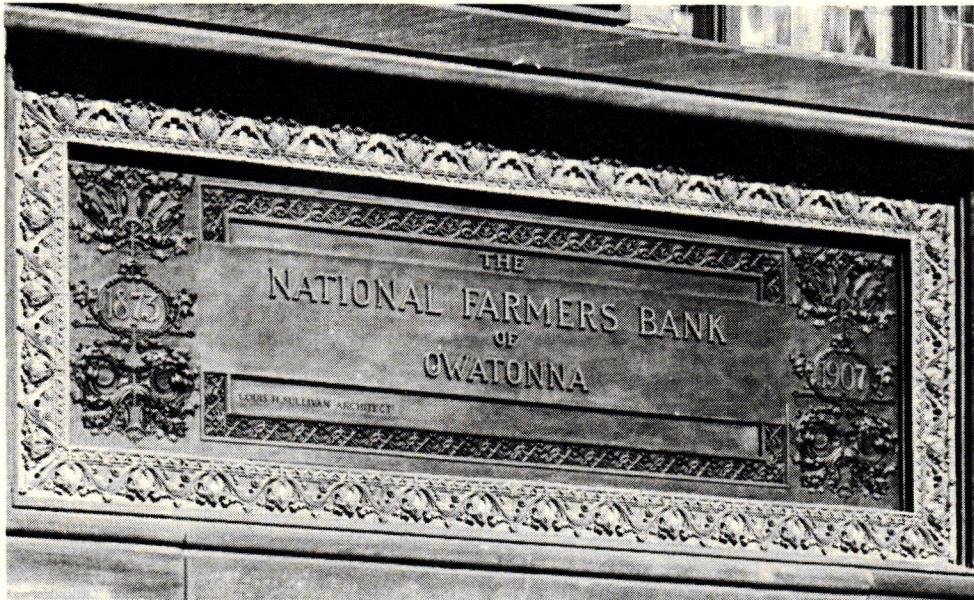


The
**PRAIRIE
SCHOOL**
Review

Volume IV, Number 2

Second Quarter, 1967

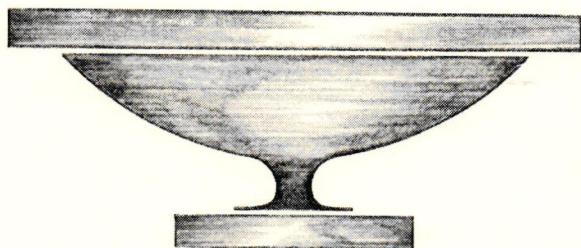
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ABOVE: This was the original sign over the entrance to the National Farmers' Bank of Owatonna. Sullivan, like nearly all architectural innovators of his time felt it necessary to design, or at least to supervise closely, the design of all accessories of his buildings. Thus we have the beginnings of the "total design" concept of today. His signs were always tasteful and restrained and sometimes, as here, incorporated his name as architect.

COVER: This view is of the south side of the National Farmers' Bank of Owatonna, as it originally appeared. Today it remains essentially the same, with exception of the addition of several signs.

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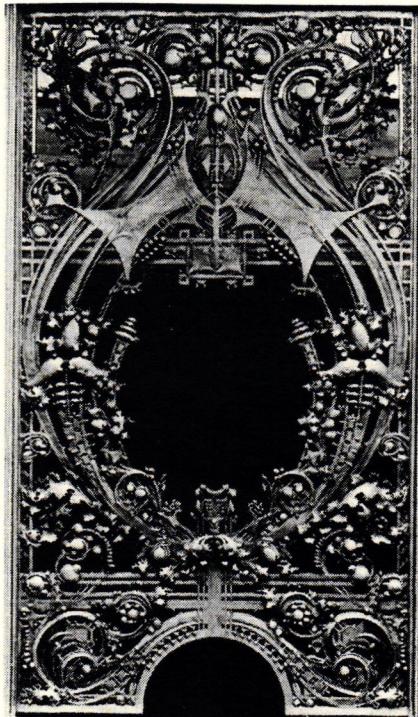
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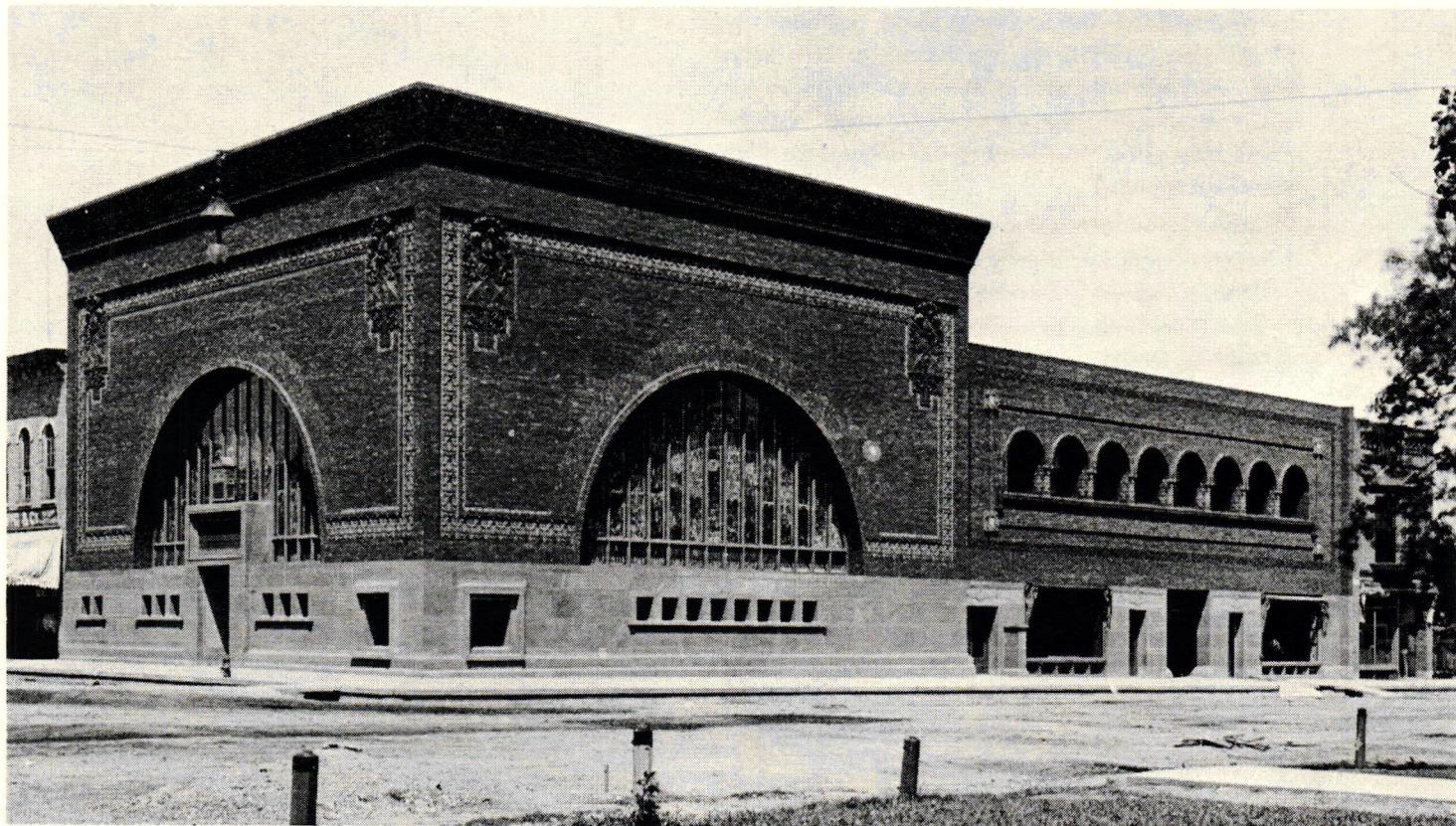


From the EDITORS

We are beginning our planned expansion of THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW with this issue. The editorial content this quarter is larger than ever before and, we believe, as significant as any work we have previously published. We are particularly pleased with the book review section in this issue where we have printed the longest and best critical analysis ever to appear in THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW. Similar reviews of this calibre will be a matter of standard editorial policy in the future. Furthermore, our reviewers and readers can be assured that their reviews will continue to appear exactly as written whether or not we agree with what they might say. On the other hand, we may offer authors or other reviewers the opportunity for a rebuttal in the same or a subsequent issue of THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW.

We also expect to begin the publication of contemporary work done in the "Prairie Spirit". By this we mean recent architecture demonstrating the original thought and creative talent that seems to be native to the American Midwest. Not that we plan to confine ourselves to regional architecture by any means. THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW will publish the best work we can find regardless of where or by whom it is done. This will include architectural criticism as well as architecture.

What we plan for the future is to be in addition to what we have done in the past, for we do not expect to give up any of our, or our readers', interest in the history of the development of modern architecture. Rather we intend to demonstrate that architecture is a total concept involving history, criticism, literature, the arts, planning and design.



The National Farmer's Bank, Owatonna, Minnesota

By Paul E. Sprague

Professor Sprague is presently teaching Architectural History in the Department of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame. He has recently completed his doctoral work at Princeton University. The subject of his thesis was "Louis Sullivan's Architectural Ornament". Professor Sprague has been the author of several articles concerning Louis Sullivan, his work, and his contemporaries.

In 1906 Louis Sullivan published an essay in the *Craftsman* which he called, "What is Architecture: A Study of the American People of Today."¹ Its import was that the American architect, by using historic architectural forms, was creating an environment which denied rather than expressed the collective spirits of his time and place. Sullivan believed that, in America, the primary spiritual force demanding expression was the democratic ideal — "a philosophy founded on man — the integrity, responsibility and accountability of the Individual". He argued that the American architect,

by virtue of his own untrammeled freedom and individuality, should search out, interpret and give appropriate form to this amorphous democratic spirit. The process by which the architect was to conceive of appropriate non-historic architectural forms was necessarily subjective. No formula was possible, but Sullivan clearly believed that each architect, acting with "responsible" freedom, could evolve by way of personal intuition and imagination an appropriate expression of the democratic ideal.

5

That Carl Bennett, the vice president of a bank serving the small agricultural community of Owatonna in southern Minnesota, should have been capable of grasping Sullivan's message seems quite extraordinary in itself. Surely most hard-headed businessmen of the time would have bogged down

¹ *Craftsman*, X (May, 1906), 145-49; (June, 1906), 352-58; (July, 1906), 507-13. The essay was originally published in the *American Contractor*, XXVII (Jan. 6, 1906), 48-54. Reprinted in *Kindergarten Chats* (revised 1918) and *Other Writings*, Isabella Athey, ed. "The Documents of Modern Art," New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc., 1947, pp. 227-41.

in Sullivan's rhetoric without even beginning to perceive the essence of his argument. And for a bank executive to have passed over — and apparently without offense — Sullivan's tirades against pecuniary ethics and commercial morality also seems astounding:

Look at your business. What has it become but a war of extermination among cannibals? Does it express Democracy? . . . In (contemporary academic) buildings the Dollar is vulgarly exalted — and the Dollar you place above Man. You adore it twenty-four hours each day: — It is your God! . . . By what right does any man say: I am! I own! I am therefore a law unto myself! How quickly among you has *I lead!* become — *I possess! I betray!* How glibly have you acquiesced. With what awful folly have you assumed greed to be the basis of Democracy!²

Yet the banker, Carl Bennett, was indeed an extraordinary man. Not only did he comprehend the meaning of Sullivan's "What is Architecture" when he chanced to read it in 1906, but he also convinced his board of directors to name Sullivan as architect of their projected new building for the National Farmers' Bank at Owatonna, Minnesota.

Bennett had several reasons for engaging Sullivan. First, he believed that a well-designed building expressive of its purpose would be of value both for its own sake and for the additional business it would attract as well. Second, he thought academic architecture highly impractical. In his enthusiasm for the building after its completion, Carl Bennett went so far as to write about it in the pages of the *Craftsman*. His reasons for engaging Sullivan are well stated in that article and it is appropriate, therefore, that we let him tell his own story:

With increasing business came the natural need for a large and more convenient banking room, and the officers of the bank not only felt the necessity of adequate and practical housing for its business, but also desired to furnish its patrons with every convenience that was necessary and incident to its environment. But this was not all. They believed that an adequate expression of the character of their business in the form of a simple, dignified and beautiful building was due to themselves and due to their patrons . . . Further than that, they believed that a beautiful business house

² "What is Architecture: A Study of the American People of Today". My quotation is taken from a typewritten copy in the Morrison Papers.



Sullivan was fond of weaving monograms into his architectural ornament. He seems to have felt that this was a more sophisticated type of sign and one that could be made more aesthetically pleasing than the ordinary kind. The "B" presumably stands for "Bennett", the family which originally commissioned and owned the bank building. Fuermann Photo.

would be its own reward and that it would pay from the financial point of view in increased business.

The layout of the floor space was in mind for many years, but the architectural expression of the business of banking was probably a thing more felt than understood. Anyhow, the desire for such expression persisted, and a pretty thorough study was made of existing bank buildings. The classic style of architecture so much used for bank buildings was at first considered, but was finally rejected as being not necessarily expressive of a bank, and also because it is defective when it comes to any practical use.

Because architects who were consulted preferred to follow precedent or to take their inspiration 'from the books,' it was determined to make a search for an architect who would not only take into consideration the practical needs of the business but who would heed the desire of the bank officers for an adequate expression in the form of the building of the use to which it would be put.³

In its issue of October 27, 1906, the Chicago *Economist* carried a notice stating that, "Louis H. Sullivan is working on plans for a three story bank, store and office building, 68 x 150 feet, to be built for the National Farmers' Bank at Owatonna, Minn. It will cost \$80,000."⁴ Sullivan, Elmslie and whoever remained from the previously large office staff labored on the necessary drawings from October 1906, through August 1907.⁵ Photographs of various ornamental details were published between June 1907, and April 1908.⁶ The major photographic essays illustrating the finished bank were published in October and November of 1908. Judging by the dates when these ornamental and architectural photographs were published, the bank was finished between April and October and, most likely, about July or August of 1908.⁷

Although it would seem obvious enough to say that George Elmslie, Sullivan's chief draftsman after 1893, had played a subsidiary role in the design

³ Carl K. Bennett, "A Bank Built for Farmers: Louis Sullivan Designs a Building Which Marks a New Epoch in American Architecture," *Craftsman*, XV (November, 1908), pp. 176, 183.

⁴ *Economist* (Chicago), XXXVI (Oct. 27, 1906), 662.

⁵ Plans and working drawings, on microfilm, Ricker Library, University of Illinois.

⁶ See Bibliography.

⁷ See Bibliography.

and detailing of this building, David Gebhard believes the reverse was true:

The National Farmers' Bank . . . has long been considered one of Sullivan's major contributions to American architecture. It has been known for a number of years that Elmslie's work on this building was by no means insignificant. In fact the building was basically designed by Elmslie with only two elements of the design being by Sullivan: one of these was the ornamental pattern on the underside of the interior soffits of the great arches; the second was the basic box-like conception of the building. Except for these, Sullivan did no other design or drafting work on the building.⁸

Gebhard is certainly correct in asserting that Elmslie's role in the design of the bank was much greater than normal for a chief draftsman. For example, all of the six surviving drawings for ornamental details are clearly and without question in Elmslie's hand.⁹ Also, all of the terra cotta and plaster decorative details are in Elmslie's own style as a comparison with any of his independent ornaments after 1909 will quickly show.¹⁰ The only decorative design in the building that can be absolutely attributed to Sullivan is the stencil on the interior walls below each of the four large arches. That this stencil was personally designed by Sullivan is confirmed by William Purcell, Elmslie's partner between 1909 and 1921, who wrote that the only ornament designed by Sullivan himself "was the stencil on the underside of the interior soffit of the great arch."¹¹

But for Gebhard to have limited Sullivan's contribution to a single stencil and to the "basic box-like conception of the building" was going much too far. The truth of the matter was clearly stated

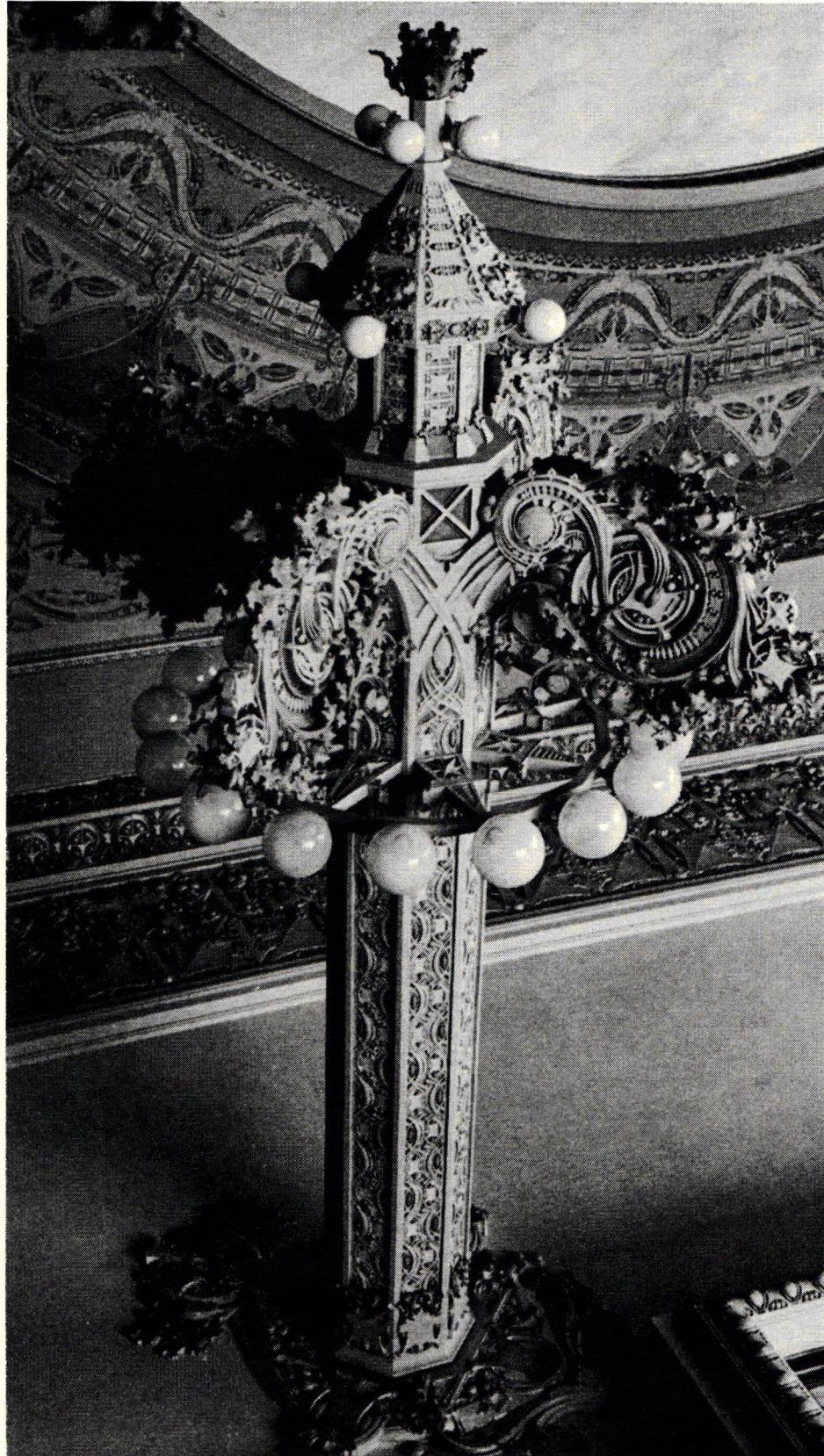
⁸ "Louis Sullivan and George Grant Elmslie," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XIX (May, 1960), 66.

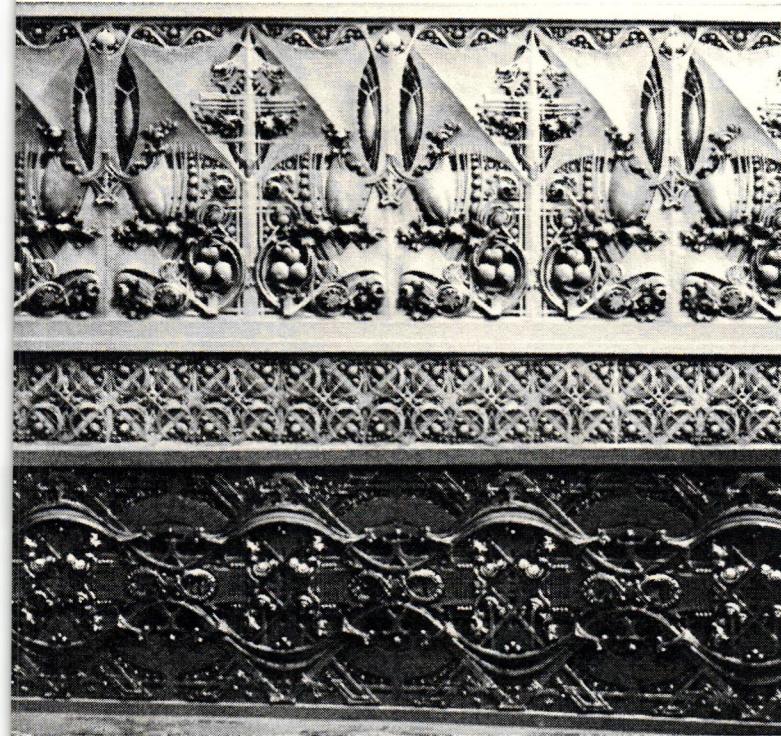
⁹ Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University. I would like to thank Adolf Placzek, Avery Librarian, for his generous assistance during my many visits to the Avery Library. I wish to thank him also for his kind permission to publish the ornamental drawings which accompany this article.

¹⁰ For Elmslie's ornament and ornamental drawings see, "The Statics and Dynamics of Architecture: The Work of Purcell, Feick & Elmslie, Architects," *Western Architect*, XIX (January, 1913), 1-10; reprinted by the Prairie School Press, 1966.

¹¹ David Gebhard, "William Gray Purcell and George Grant Elmslie and the Early Progressive Movement in American Architecture from 1900 to 1920," 2 vols., unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1957, 1, 85.

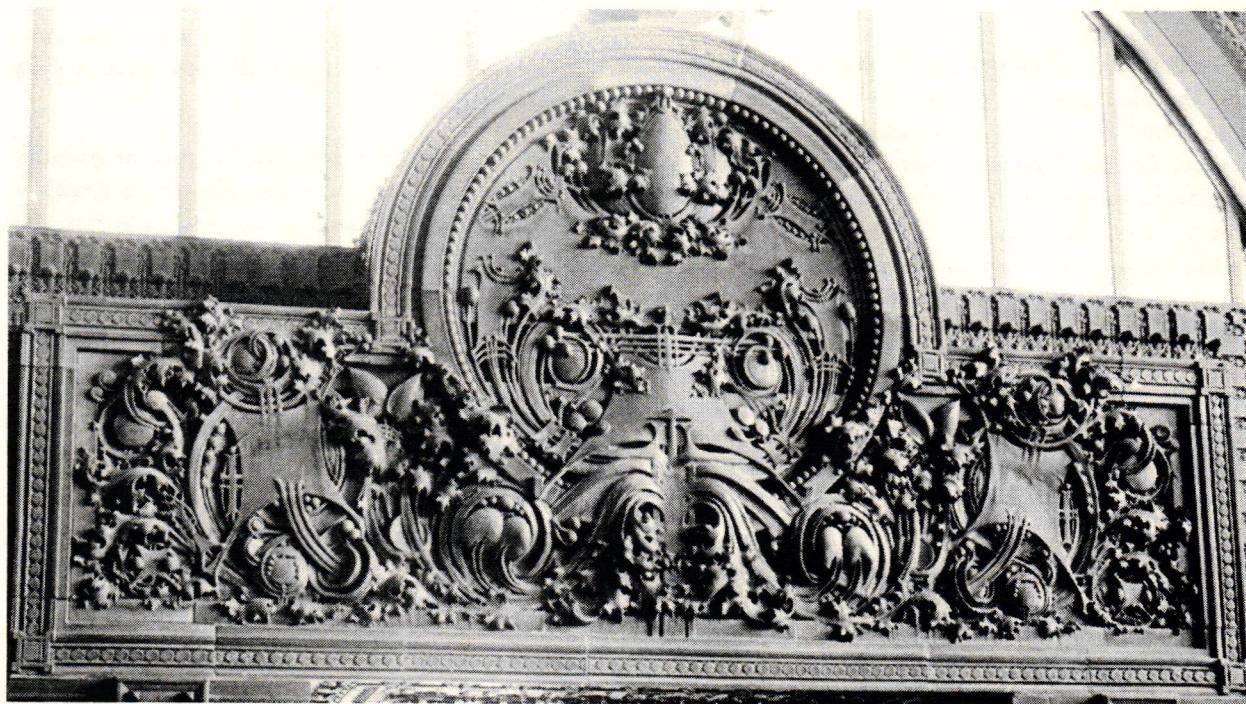
One of the four great chandeliers or "electroliers" as they were called at the time. Electroliers of a similar shape may be traced back in Sullivan's work as far as the Auditorium Banquet Hall of 1890. The decoration of this electrolier quality also conforms to Elmslie's practice of the years after 1909 when he opened his own office. Sullivan never went quite this far. Photo by Furerman.

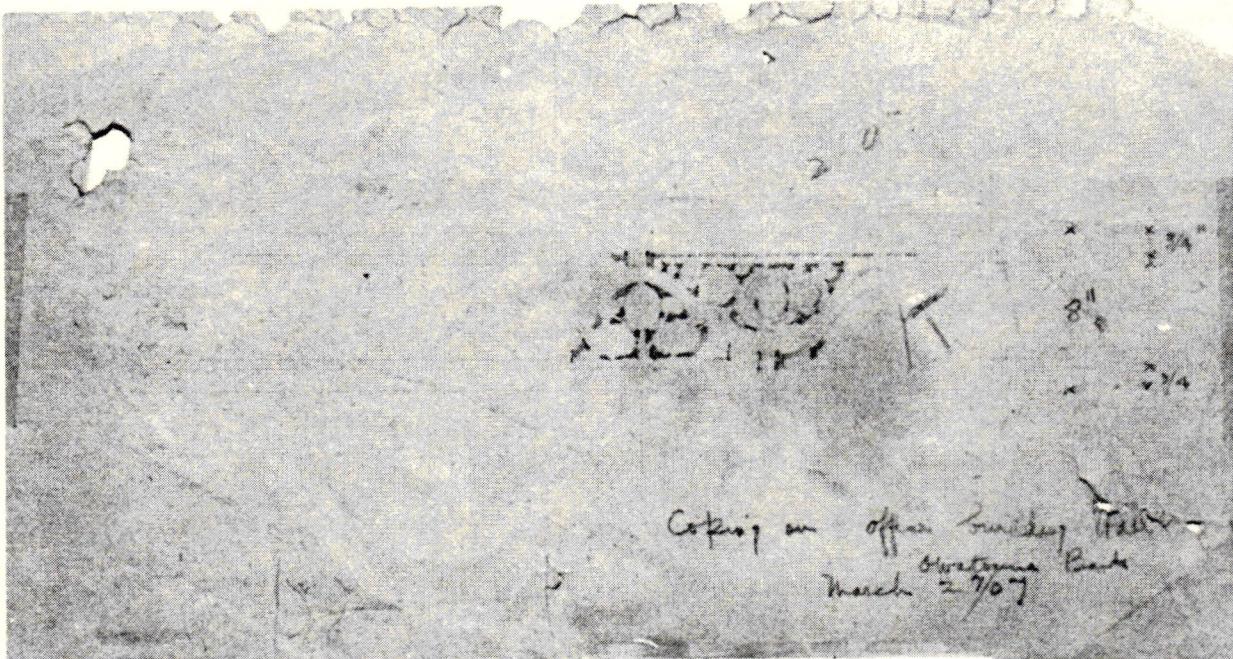




These three moldings are executed in plaster. The darker one which covers the soffits of the great arches is surfaced with gold leaf. A drawing for the one with large rectangles whose sides are concave still exists. It, and the narrow molding next to it, frames the ceiling of the bank. All three of these appear to be the work of Elmslie; however, it is most likely that Sullivan provided sketchy suggestions for these moldings and that Elmslie developed them in his own style. Photo by Fuermann.

This large complex decoration is greenish terra cotta over the inner side of the entrance to the bank. Although the design is primarily the work of Elmslie, it demonstrates that the origins of Sullivan's ornament lay in the botanical interests of nineteenth century designers. Although there are sweeping curves in these plant motifs, this and other ornaments in the bank cannot be called Art Nouveau for two significant reasons. Where Art Nouveau architectural ornament was generally structural, this ornament is non-structural. Where Art Nouveau ornament was generally assymmetrical, this ornament is always symmetrical. Both Art Nouveau and Sullivanesque ornament represent contemporaneous solutions to the problem of evolving a new, non-historical architectural decoration. Their similarities result from both having come from similar sources. Photo by Fuermann.





by Elmslie himself as early as 1931 where, in a letter to Lewis Mumford, he wrote:

When (Sullivan) . . . returned from Owatonna he had some sketches of requirements and a study for the design. His design embodied three arches on each of the two fronts. I suggested a great thirty-six foot arch, instead of the three. The building was so built. I made every drawing for the building, every detail, every ornament without exception¹² as well as establishing its characteristic motif, the big arch.¹³

Obviously Elmslie did not mean to take credit for the planning of the bank, for the conception of the great forty foot high unobstructed interior space, for the lighting through skylight and side windows, for the structural and mechanical systems, for the choice of materials, for the scheme of coloration or for the location of ornaments and ornamented areas. Apparently Elmslie supplied the idea for the single arch on each facade, designed all of

This drawing for a "coping on officebuilding hall", dated March 27, 1907, seems to be entirely the work of George Elmslie. The inscription is in his handwriting. Photo courtesy of the Avery Library.

the ornament and made all of the working drawings. The fact that the ornamental details are so much more satisfactorily integrated into the fabric of the building than was the case in Elmslie's independent work after 1909 implies that Sullivan also played some preliminary though obviously minor part in the design of each ornament. Thus, even though Elmslie's part was considerable, we cannot agree with Gebhard that "the building was basically designed by Elmslie".

Nevertheless, George Elmslie must be given his due, especially regarding the ornamental details of the bank. They are among the finest, if in fact they are not the finest, that Elmslie ever designed. Indeed, they are even superior to Sullivan's own ornaments after the turn of the century. Such elegant and imaginative ornamental details as the tellers' wickets, clock frame, ceiling ornament and entrance decoration mark Elmslie as one of the outstanding decorative designers of all time. In fact, it is something of a paradox that Sullivan is best known not for his own ornaments but rather for those by Elmslie on the National Farmers' Bank and on the Schlesinger & Mayer Building (Carson, Pirie, Scott). Clearly the time has come for a reappraisal of Sullivanesque ornamentation whereby Sullivan will become known for his own fine work

12 Although this seems to conflict with my attribution of the stencil to Sullivan, I believe that in his letter to Mumford, Elmslie had in mind only the "plastic" ornament and not this two-dimensional stenciled decoration. This assumption also serves to explain Purcell's otherwise incorrect statement, quoted by Gebhard, Dissertation, *op. cit.*, 1, 85, that Sullivan designed the stencil.

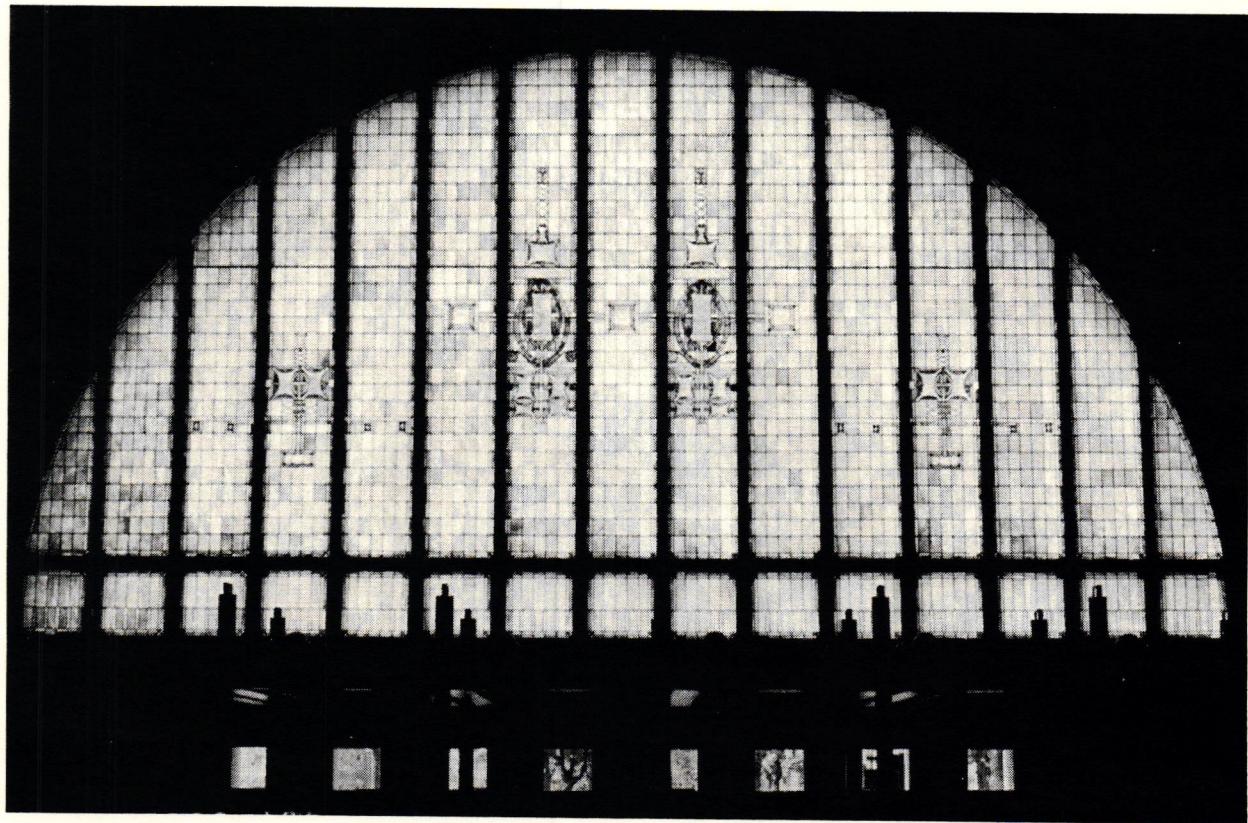
13 Letter from George Elmslie to Lewis Mumford, May 29, 1931, partly recorded in the Morrison Papers. Elmslie repeated the essentials of this statement in a letter to Frank L. Wright dated June 12, 1936, published in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XX (October, 1961), 140.

of the eighteen-eighties and nineties and Elmslie for his impressive ornamental achievements after 1900.

The owners of the bank wanted a monumental self-contained banking room on the corner of their land and a business building, containing a store, offices, a printing plant and a warehouse on the remainder. Sullivan did not disappoint them. He designed an elegant brick, stone and terra cotta edifice some forty feet high and sixty-eight feet square for the corner site. Within this shell he provided a single grand unobstructed space floating over a central public area. He subdivided the perimeter by means of nine foot high partition walls

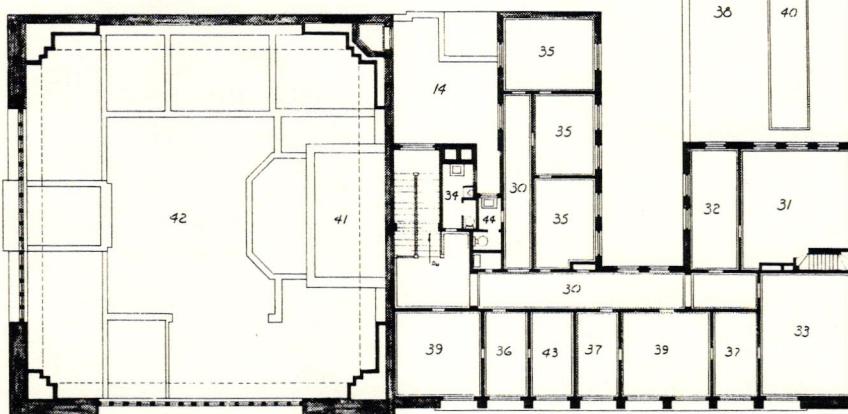
This is a view looking west in the bank toward the entrance as seen from the officer's platform. This is the best view we have showing the relationship of the public and subsidiary spaces to the grand magnificently decorated thirty foot high space that floats overhead and unifies the interior. Fuermann Photo.

Below is the great stained glass window which faces south. Sullivan did not make the mistake of contemporary architects who would have put in clear plate glass and then spent considerable effort trying to reduce the glare and heat losses. This window is actually double-glazed with plate glass in steel mullions on the exterior, stained glass on the interior to soften and distribute the light, and a partial vacuum between to provide insulation. Photo by Richard Nickel.



-SECOND-FLOOR-PLAN-

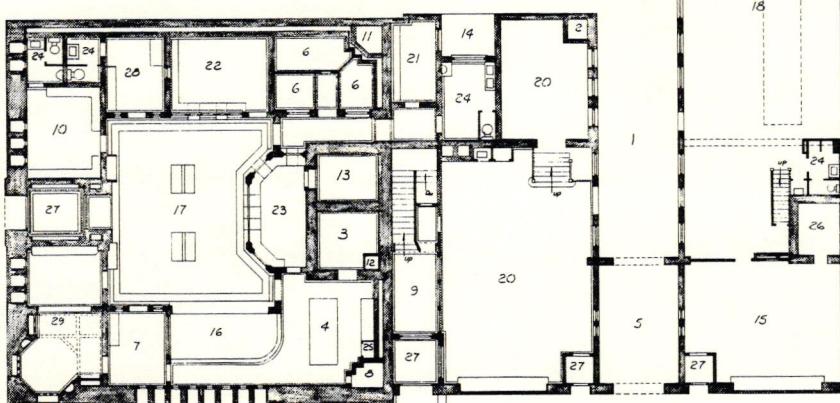
- 30 CORRIDOR
- 31 COMPOSING-RM.
- 32 EDITORIAL-RM.
- 33 LIBRARY
- 34 MENS-TOILET
- 35 OFFICE
- 36 OPERATING-RM.
- 37 PRIVATE-OFFICE
- 38 ROOF
- 39 RECEPTION-RM.
- 40 SKYLIGHT
- 41 TOP-OF-VAULT
- 42 UPPER-PART-BANKING-RM.
- 43 WORK-RM.
- 44 WOMENS-TOILET



-FIRST-FLOOR-PLAN-

SCALE 0 5 10 20 30 40 50 FEET

- 1 ALLEY
- 2 ASH-HOIST
- 3 BOOK-VAULT
- 4 " KEEPER'S
- 5 COVERED-WAY
- 6 CUPON-RM.
- 7 CONSULTATION-RM
- 8 CLOSET
- 9 ENTRANCE-HALL
- 10 FARMERS-EXCHANGE
- 11 FRESH-AIR
- 12 LIFT
- 13 MONEY-VAULT
- 14 OPEN-COURT
- 15 OFFICE-PRINTING-SHOP
- 16 OFFICERS-PLATFORM
- 17 PUBLIC-SPACE
- 18 PRINTING-RM.
- 19 STORAGE-WAREHOUSE
- 20 SHOP
- 21 STORE-RM.
- 22 SAVINGS
- 23 TELLERS
- 24 TOILET
- 25 TELEPHONE
- 26 VAULT
- 27 VESTIBULE
- 28 WOMENS-RM.
- 29 PRES.RM.



into a series of specialized spaces in accord with the wishes of his client. Only in the northeast corner, where Sullivan placed a workroom and an employee's toilet, did he find it necessary to go beyond the confines of the sixty-eight foot square.

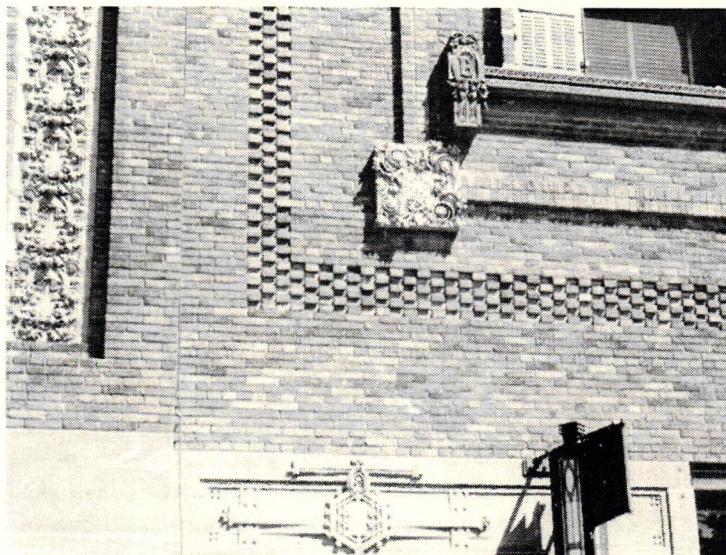
In the center of the square and approached by a vestibule was the public area above which hovered the grand, magnificently decorated thirty-foot high upper space. Straight ahead were the tellers' cages and behind them the vaults. To the right, arranged in an eminently rational manner, were the bank of offices. The president's office occupied the southwest corner of the building. Next to it was a consultation room which looked out into the public area through large plate glass windows. It communicated with the president's office on the one side and the officer's platform on the other. In the southeast corner there was space for the desks and cabinets of the bookkeepers. To the left, or northern side of the public area, were spaces devoted primarily to the service of the bank's patrons. In the northwest corner there was a farmers' exchange, essentially a lounge and meeting room for male clients, and next to it on the north was a similar room for the use of women and children. Each communicated with toilet facilities. Further along the north wall was a savings department and beyond it were coupon rooms for those patrons having safety deposit boxes.

Behind the bank, facing south, was the business building. Its association with the bank was suggested by its similar style and materials. It was, however, completely subordinated to the monumental corner structure by its lower height, smaller scale and unified facade. In fact, the facade was considerably more unified than the rather complex structure behind it. Although Sullivan wove the building together by a variety of horizontal and vertical elements, namely corridors, stairs and an elevator, he allowed the various functional entities of offices, shop, printing plant and warehouse to retain their separate identities.

A covered way communicating with an alley divided the ground floor into two quite distinct parts. At the western end of the building next to the bank an entrance, vestibule, and stairway gave access to offices on the second floor. Next came a shop with an interesting two level plan, its higher rear section being placed over the boiler room of the entire bank-business building complex. Separating the shop from the ground floor office of the printing firm was the covered way. It provided access to an alley at the rear through which the print shop and warehouse were serviced. The print shop

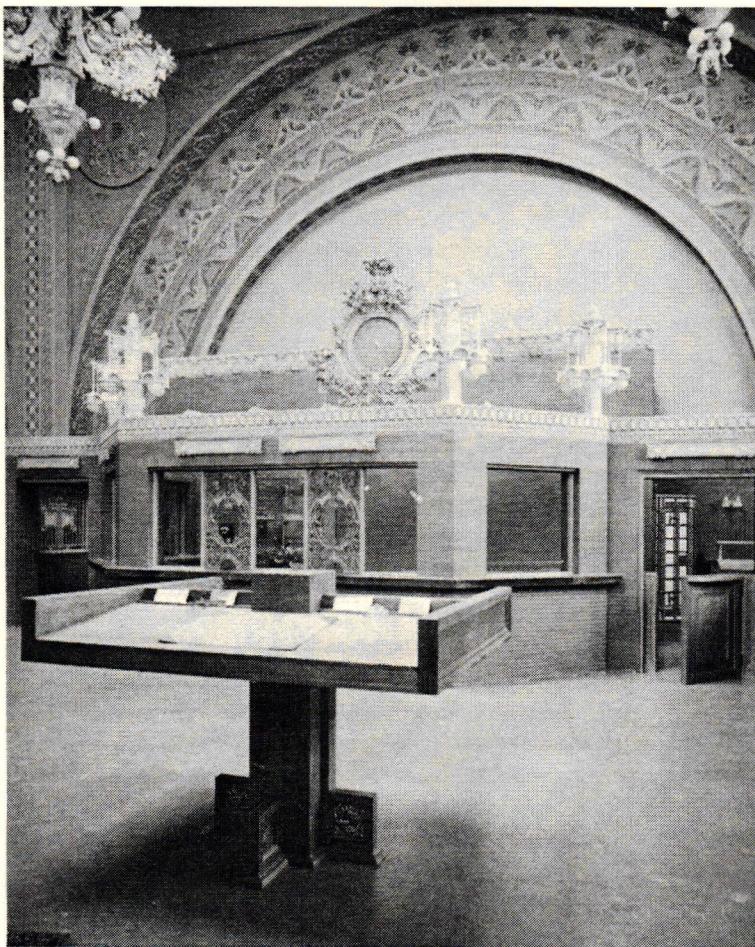
occupied a long rectangular skylit room facing on the alley. Besides having direct access to the front of the building through its ground floor office, the print shop communicated by means of an internal stairway with a group of offices belonging to the firm that were located on the second floor. Behind the print shop and also facing on the alley was a self-contained four-story warehouse with its own stairs and elevator. In the upper story of the business building there were some nine offices in addition to those occupied by the printing firm which communicated by way of two corridors with the stairway at the western end of the building.

Although the planning of the bank and business building may seem rather obvious and elementary to mid-twentieth century eyes used to extremely complex horizontal and vertical planning, Sullivan's simple and direct solutions were not without virtue. To have organized within the limits of a simple rectangular volume bounded by four planar surfaces the desired banking spaces, logically arranged, and to have envisioned a grand monumental space giving unity and breadth to the whole interior as well, was no mean accomplishment. And to have answered the more complex but less pretentious requirements of the business building with equal verve was also a quite respectable achievement.



This photo shows the junction between the bank and office building. A drawing survives for the stone carving at the bottom and another survives for the decorations on the piers between the windows. Both drawings can be seen on pages 16 and 17 of this issue. Photo by Richard Nickel.

While it is not difficult to understand the bank and even grasp something of its aesthetic qualities from the study of plans and monochrome photographs, the building must be seen to be fully appreciated since so much of its total effect depends

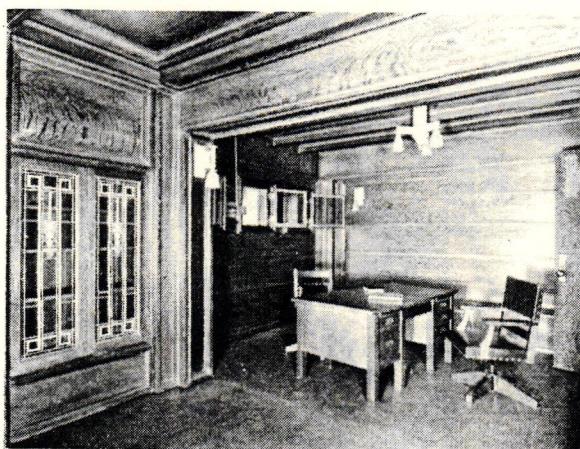
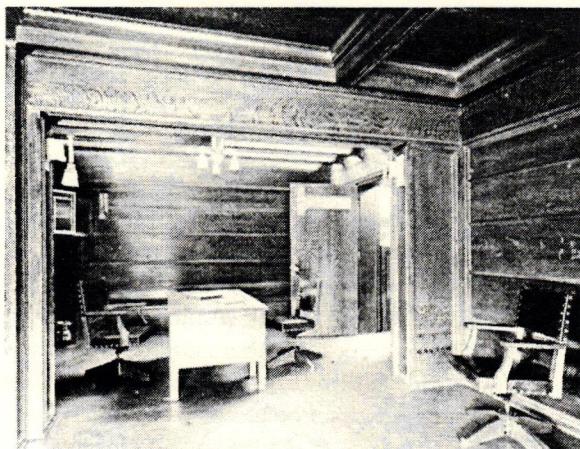


This early view of the bank looks east toward the vault. Even the check desk in the foreground was designed by the architect as can be verified by the ornamental base. Photo by Fuermann.

Below are two photographs of the President's office showing the furniture selected by the architect. All the furniture was by Craftsman and was done in natural Oak as was the interior cabinetwork. Note the small square window openings which were cut into the base of the building on the exterior. Photos by Fuermann.

upon color and texture. This bank alone belies Wright's claim that Sullivan did not understand the innate nature of building materials. There can be no question that every visible material used in the bank was carefully selected for the effect that its color and texture would contribute to the entire ensemble. True, Sullivan's choice of materials was not as earthy as Wright's, in that Sullivan normally chose the more elegant and more sophisticated, but this does not mean that he was insensitive to the elemental qualities of brick, stone and wood. While he preferred the more finished over the less finished, Sullivan never hesitated to use unadorned materials where they fitted his scheme. For example, some of the furniture in the bank was specially built in plain oak from designs perhaps by Sullivan but more probably by Elmslie. The remaining furniture, also of unadorned oak, was purchased from Gustav Stickley's Craftsman's Guild.¹⁴ Carl Bennett himself tells us that

the woodwork (was) . . . all of quarter-sawed white oak, laid in broad smooth surfaces and panels finished in Craftsman style, which gives the wood a soft brown tone in which there is a subtle undertone of green. The furniture is Craftsman throughout



¹⁴ See John C. Freeman, *The Forgotten Rebel: Gustav Stickley And His Craftsman Mission Furniture* Watkins Glen, N.Y.: Century House, 1966.

and is all of oak finished to match the woodwork . . . Along the walls (of the Farmers' Exchange) are comfortable built-in seats covered with Craftsman cushions . . . The President's Room is finished wholly in wood and is charming in its friendly simplicity of oak paneling. It is fitted with a Craftsman office desk and swivel-chairs upholstered in soft dull-red leather . . . (The Consultation Room) is furnished with a big Craftsman desk, comfortable office chairs, and a settee well filled with Craftsman cushions.¹⁵

The exterior of the building consists of a reddish brown sandstone ashlar base surmounted by walls of multi-colored rough-faced bricks. According to Thomas Tallmadge, it was Sullivan himself who introduced and popularized this type of brick, a type which came to be known as "tapestry brick."¹⁶ In fact, Sullivan once wrote an introduction to a catalogue of these bricks in which he discussed their aesthetic qualities:

When laid up promiscuously . . . the general tone suggests that of a very old oriental rug and the differing color values of the individual bricks . . . are taken up and harmonized in the prevailing general tone . . . It lends itself admirably to association with other materials susceptible to color selection or treatment, such as stone, terra cotta, wood, glass and the metals and admits in these, because of its broad supporting neutrality, a great variation in range of treatment.¹⁷

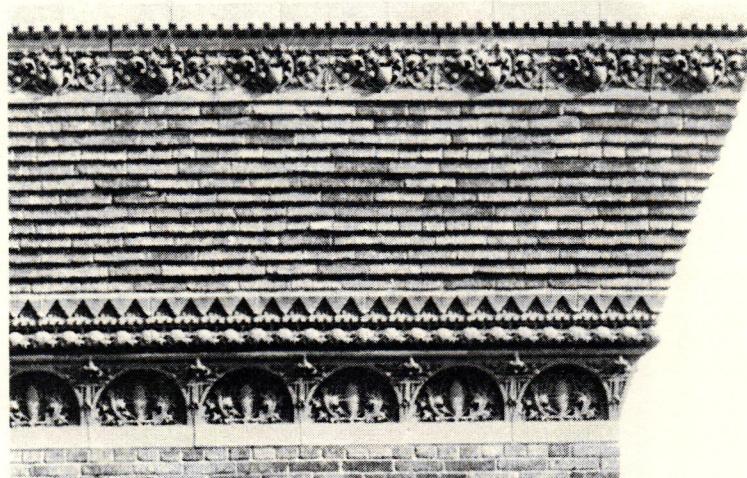
In the National Farmers' Bank Sullivan did, in fact, combine his tapestry bricks with all of these materials and their colors for Carl Bennett has already provided us with a vivid account of the color decoration as it appeared when the building was newly finished:

A wide band of polychromatic terra cotta (chiefly Teco green) and a narrow band of glass mosaic in high color (chiefly a brilliant blue) 'frame in' the bank exterior, which is further enriched by corner ornaments and a cornice of brown terra cotta. The two massive brick arches enclose stained glass windows which have a general effect of rich variegated green. The shop and

15 "A Bank Built for Farmers," *loc. cit.*, p. 184.

16 *The Story of Architecture in America*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1927, p. 225; see also Hugh Morrison, *Louis Sullivan: Prophet of Modern Architecture*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1935, p. 202.

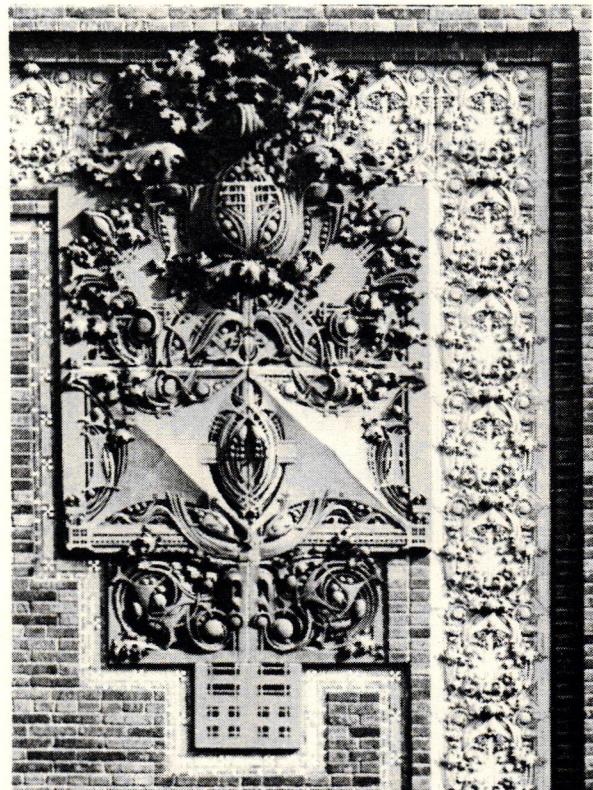
17 "Artistic Brick," *Suggestions in Artistic Brick*, St. Louis: The St. Louis Hydraulic-Press Brick Co., N.D., p. 10. This entire essay is reprinted on pp. 24-6 of this issue.



The magnificent cornice of the bank combines both simplicity of silhouette with complexity of detail. The alternate areas of plane brick courses and minutely treated terra cotta details also reflect this guiding principle of Sullivan's architecture. He was not interested in the barren simplicity of the developing European modernists nor was he content with the overblown complexity of many European Art Nouveau architects.

The large terra cotta ornaments below accentuate the upper corners of each facade. In the lower left can be seen the band of highly reflective polychromatic mosaic that frames each facade. At the top and right another band of greenish terra cotta provides a further subtle chromatic contrast.

Photos both by Richard Nickel.



5' 0" 5' 0" 5' 0"

ROADWAY ELEVATION

BOTTOM OF GRADE

WATER LEVEL

STRETCH OF
STONE COULD
OVER 500 FEET.
NATURAL FLOW
AND POUR

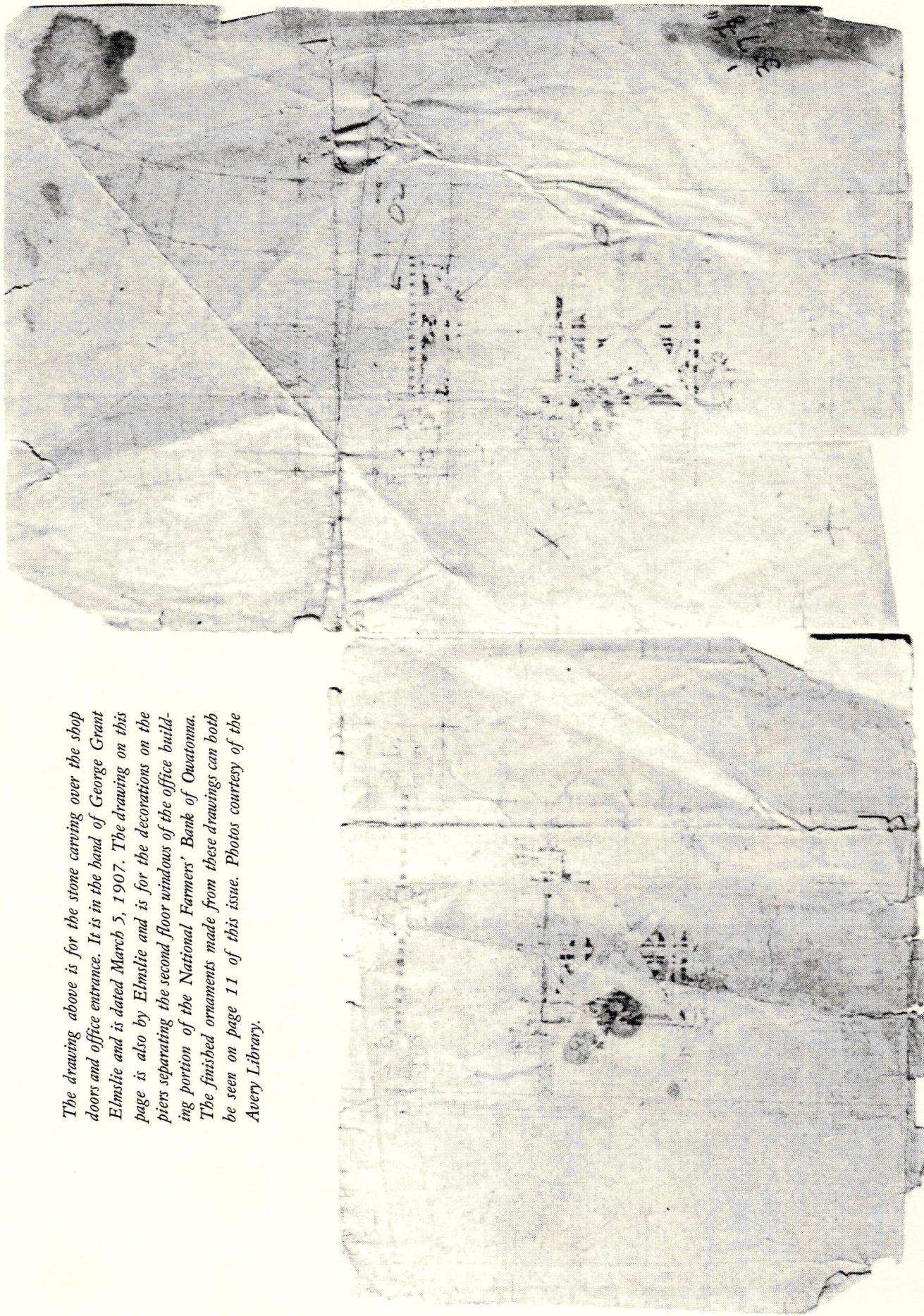
FILE STONEFALL

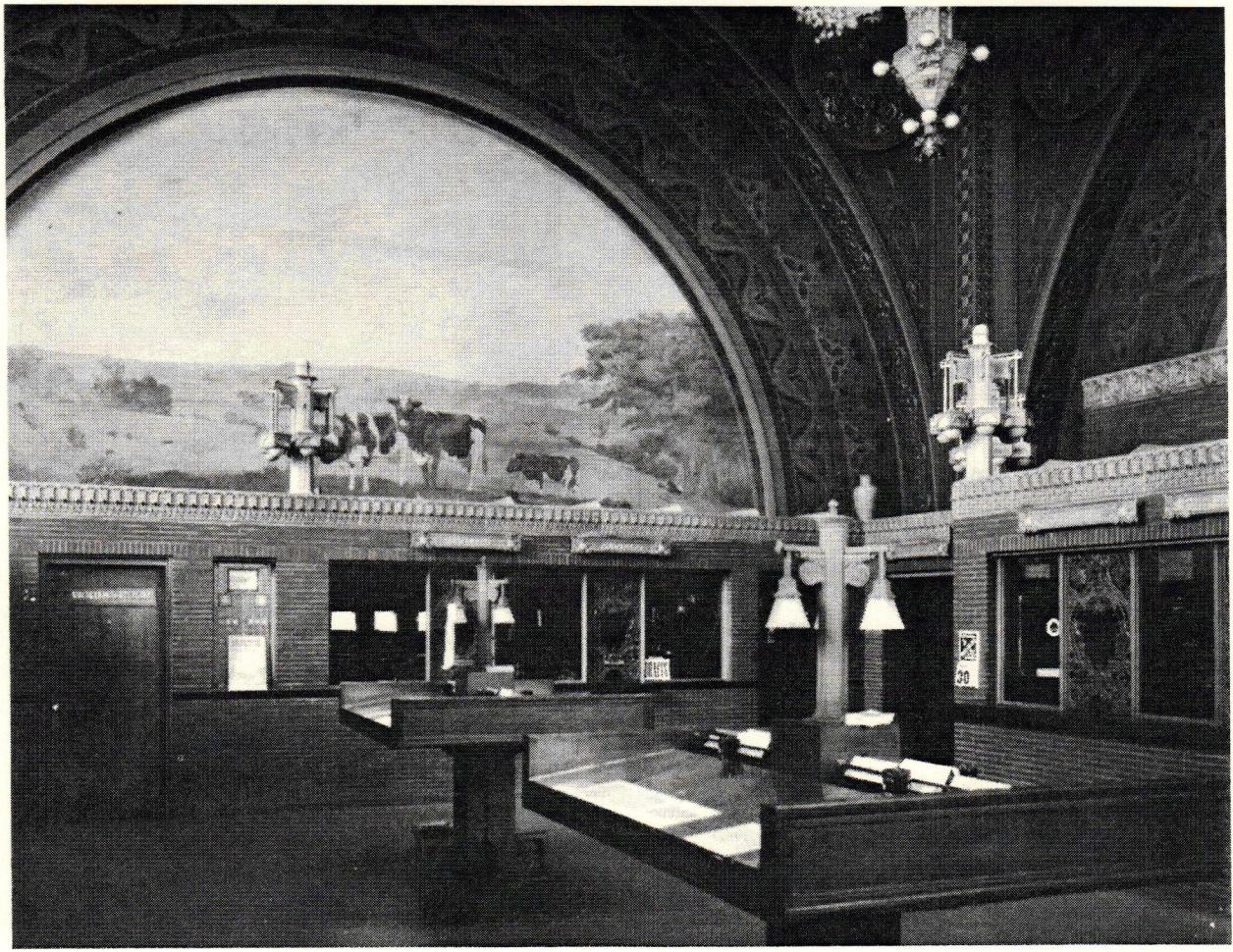
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JOINT

100

The drawing above is for the stone carving over the shop doors and office entrance. It is in the hand of George Grant Elmslie and is dated March 5, 1907. The drawing on this page is also by Elmslie and is for the decorations on the piers separating the second floor windows of the office building portion of the National Farmers' Bank of Quatonna. The finished ornaments made from these drawings can both be seen on page 11 of this issue. Photos courtesy of the Avery Library.





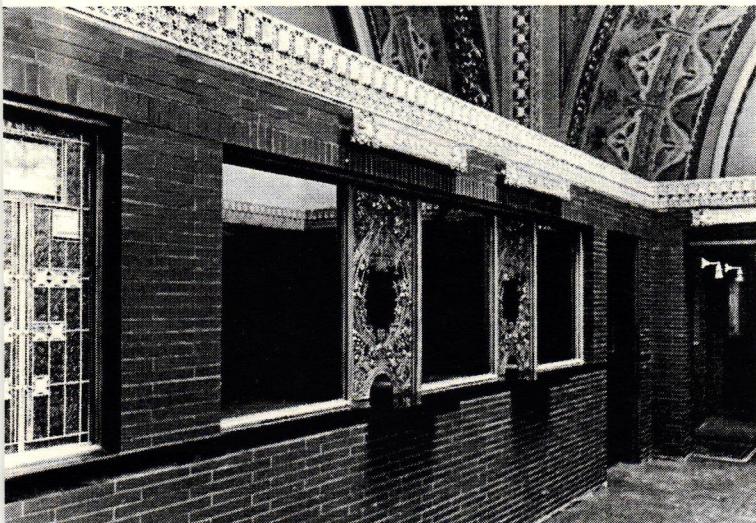
The walls opposite the great stained glass windows are large murals executed by Oskar Gross. This one illustrates a dairy scene such as might be seen in the area around Owatonna, Minnesota.

This bronze colored cast iron teller's wicket was somewhat of a departure from tradition at a time when vertical bars were the rule. Although he was probably following some minuscule sketch by Sullivan, George Elmslie developed the design into his own personal idiom. The result is one of the finest ornamental products that Elmslie ever designed. Fuermann Photo.

office portion of the building is notable for its piers of rich brown terra cotta, enlivened with ornaments of Teco green and bright blue. The color effect of the exterior is hard to describe for it has something of the color quality of an old Oriental rug, — that is, all the colors, when seen from a distance, blend into a general impression of soft red and green, while at close range, they maintain their strong and beautiful individuality. The exterior of the building gives at once the impression of strength and solidarity as well as beauty. Above all, it suggests 'bank' — a safe place for keeping and valuables.

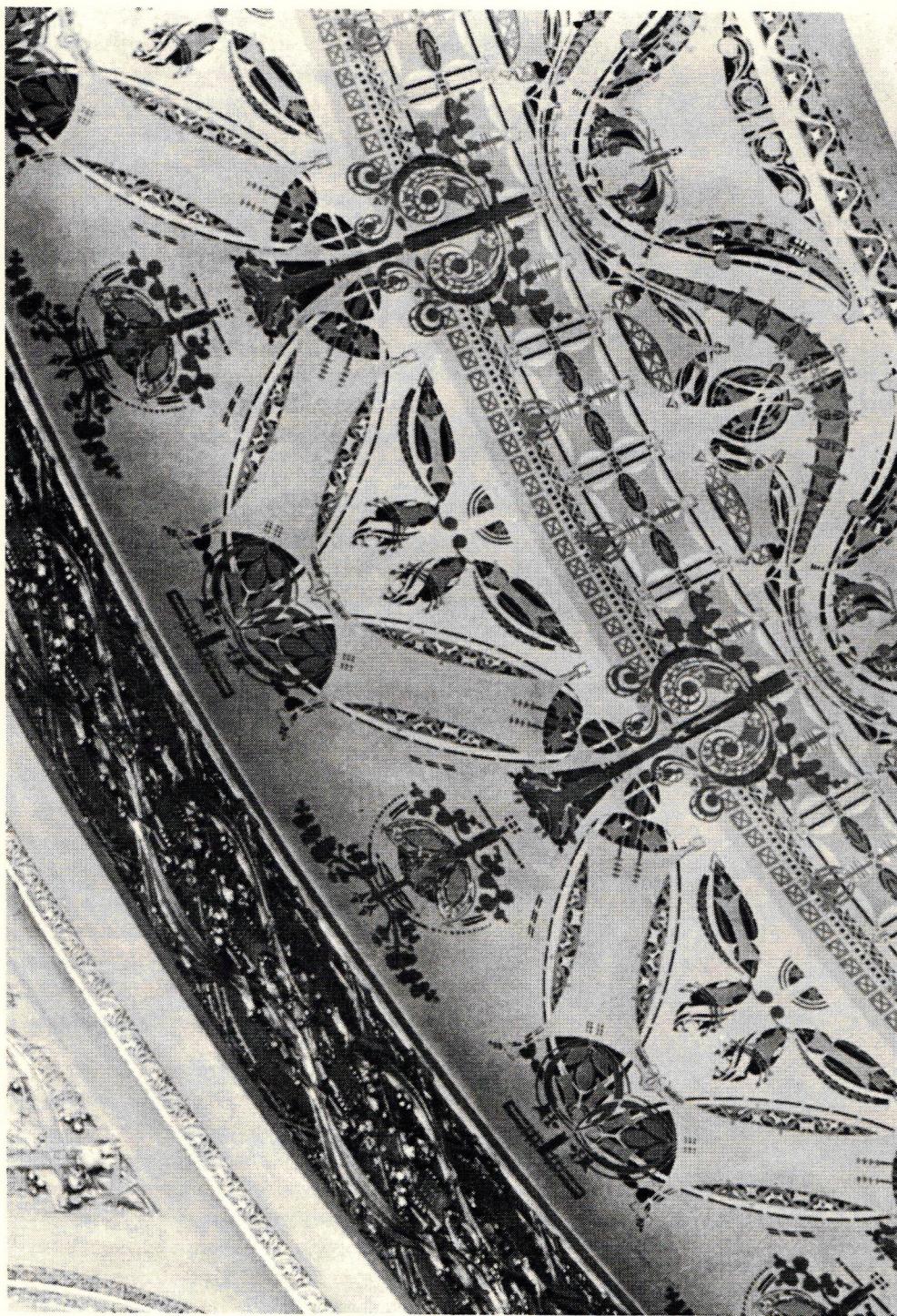
Within, a floor of plain green tile is laid over all. The wainscoting is made of Roman bricks of a rich red color, capped with an ornamental band of green terra cotta. The counters and partitions are of these same red Roman bricks capped with green terra cotta and the counter tops and deal plates are of Belgian black marble. Above the wainscoting the walls and ceiling are a glory of luxuriant color and form. The colors of early spring and autumn predominate, with a steady note of green throughout the entire scheme

Cast iron is not usually thought of as a good medium for art expression, but the grilles or wickets and the electrolliers show marvelous



Fuermann.

Of all the decorative areas in the bank only the color stencil
framing of the four great arches of the interior represents the
unduplicated work of Louis Sullivan. This interest in stencil
decorations goes back to the early 1870's when Sullivan de-
signed fresco decorations for Moody's Church and Sims
Symagogue in Chicago. This elegant stencil must be seen to
be appreciated so much does its total effect depend upon
subtle variations in tone and intensity of color. Photo by

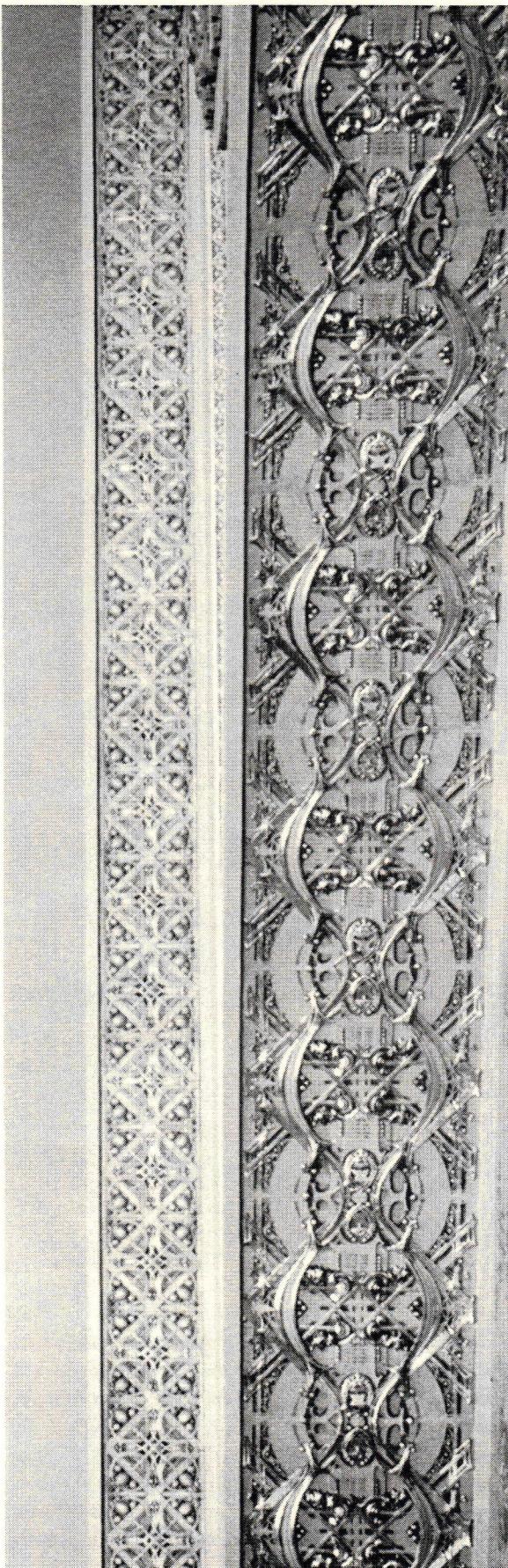


taste and skill in shaping this material into forms that are both useful and beautiful, and that show strong individuality in design and handling. Another detail that does much to make up the beauty of the whole is the way in which color has been used on the walls and in the stained glass of the windows. The general effect is warm, rich and glowing without being overbrilliant.¹⁸

This lovely bank at Owatonna ushers in the twilight years of Sullivan's career. It was not the manifesto of a young man eager to alter the course of architecture, to make it a living organic art intimately related to the times from which it had sprung. Rather the bank represented the continued affirmation by an older man of a youthful vision of architectural change. Sullivan never lived to see the realization of his vision and, in 1906, when he designed the National Farmers' Bank, he could not have had much hope that the seeds he had planted would ever survive the overwhelming tide of a re-emergent classicism. Yet the bank at Owatonna stands, nonetheless, as a monument to Sullivan's unyielding efforts to turn that tide, to the vow of this lonely man to stand firm, unwavering and devoted to his ideal, even though as a result of this decision his personal world was crumbling about him.

It is an American tragedy that this magnificent bank at Owatonna should have to stand in silent witness to the triumph of those very feudal and anti-democratic forces against which Sullivan inveighed in his 'What is Architecture: A Study of the American People of Today'. The eventual capitulation of nearly all progressive American architects to the autocratic power of commercial classicism permitted the European avant-garde to capture the lead in architectural modernism. Their very different view of what the new architecture ought to look like, a view which gradually came to prevail during the second quarter of the century, has had the effect of making the post-1905 work of Wright, Elmslie and Sullivan seem somehow estranged and exotic in the American architectural landscape. Yet it was this very architecture — the architecture of the Farmers' National Bank — that was native to American soil. Had it not fallen victim to a historicism, foreign both in time and place to twentieth century American conditions, it might well have come to occupy so significant a place in the American scene that works like Sullivan's Owatonna bank would not only seem completely in character

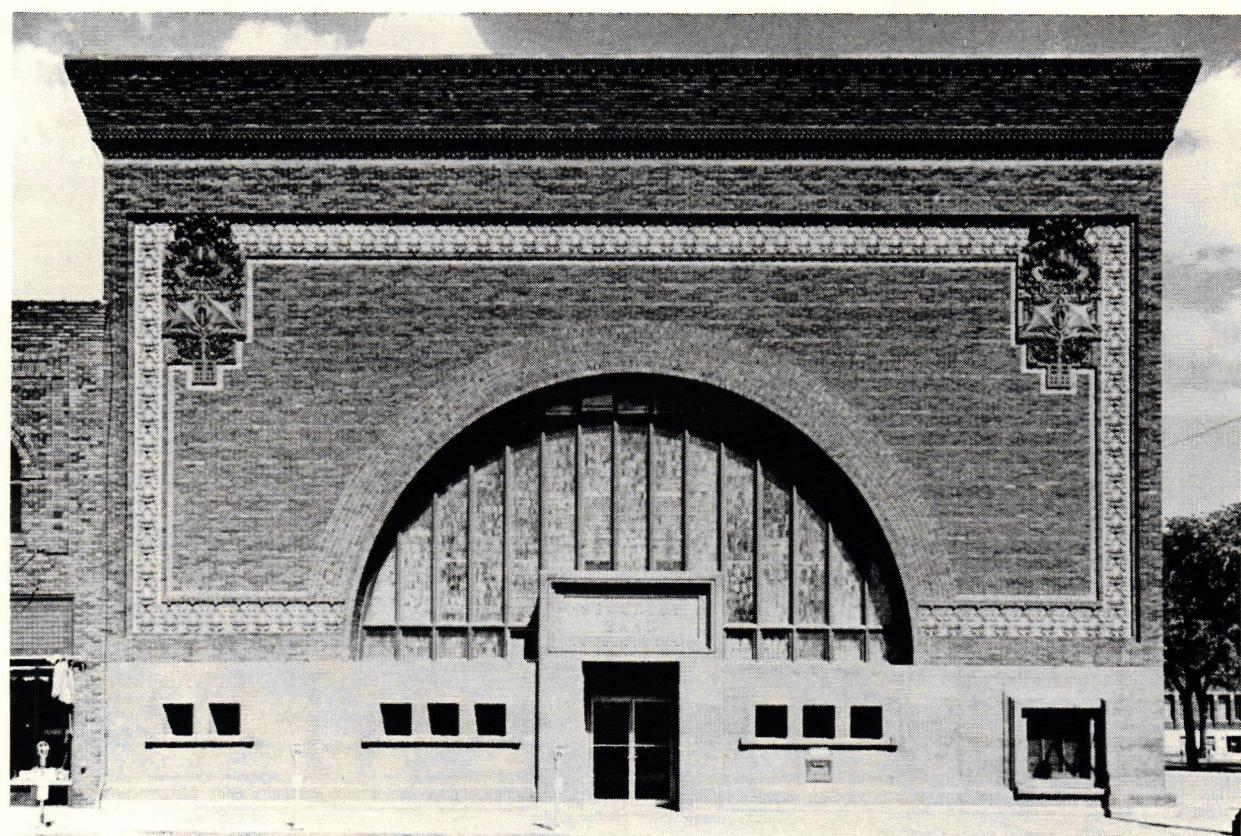
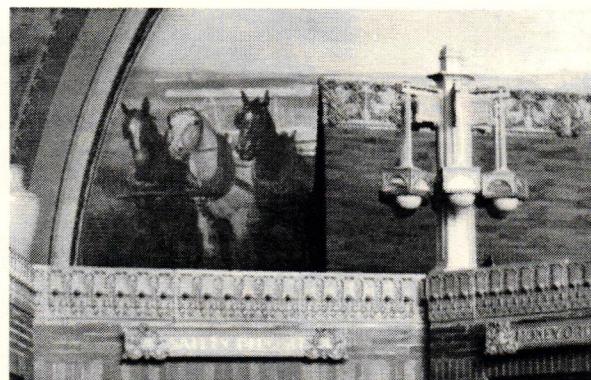
18 "A Bank Built for Farmers," *loc. cit.*, pp. 183-85.



but would also appear as specific forerunners of modern architecture. But destiny ruled otherwise and what was genuinely native to America now seems somewhat foreign and unnatural.

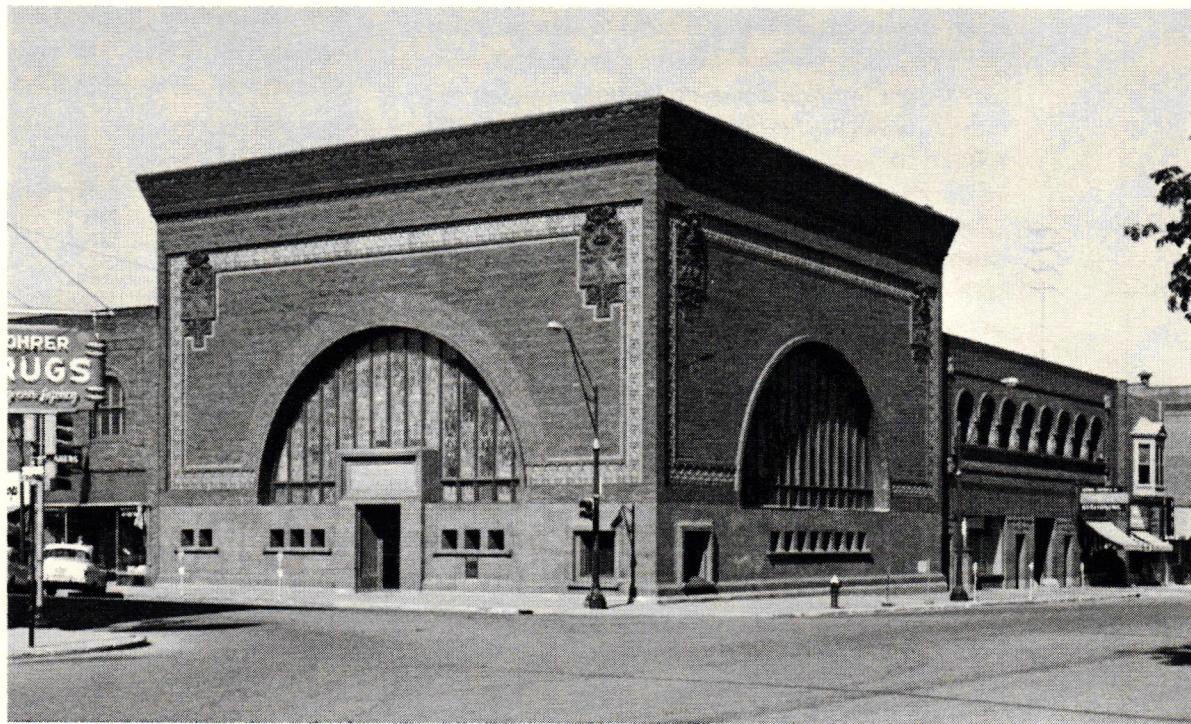
As such, the significance and validity of Sullivan's bank at Owatonna rests exclusively on its own intrinsic qualities. It was not Sullivan's first manifesto of a new non-historical architecture. Neither was it Sullivan's finest building, though it was surely among his finest. Nor was its style especially typical of Sullivan's commercial style during his most successful period between 1890 and 1900. Nor did the building exercise any significant influence on the subsequent evolution of architecture. Rather it has been entirely upon its own intrinsic aesthetic qualities that this elegant architectural creation has stood the test of time. From its planning, spatial organization and massing to its materials, colors and ornamental details the National Farmers' Bank of Owatonna, Minnesota, has proved to be one of those rare, nearly perfect

specimens of the architectural art. It stands alone and unchallenged, among its undistinguished colleagues, both historic and modern, as a great and unique work of art. And it stands also as a testimony to the democratic spirit, for it is indeed a monument to the freedom and integrity of two individuals of vision and genius, the one a businessman-banker, Carl K. Bennett, and the other, an artist-architect, Louis H. Sullivan.



This view of the principle facade emphasizes Sullivan's continued adherence to academic principles even after inventing a new architectural and ornamental vocabulary. The classical repose is here associated with traditional Renaissance architecture achieved by means of symmetrical design with the traditional arrangement of base, middle and cornice, and the idea of making each facade a closed composition. The large arch, the horizontal series of square windows and the clean-cut character of the openings are legacies of Richardson. The polychromatic character of the facade and the architectural ornament goes back to the Gothic Revival. Sullivan made good use of "Tapestry Brick" in gaining the effect he desired for this structure. Photo by Richard Nickel.

The Restoration of Sullivan's Bank in Owatonna



The bank as it appears today.

Sullivan's bank at Owatonna still stands. Today it is the Security Bank and Trust Company of Owatonna. The exterior has mellowed with the patina of over 60 years aging but remains virtually unchanged. The interior has been altered twice. The photos on these pages show the bank as it appears today.

In the early 1930's the interior of the bank was remodeled and much of the spacial quality of the original interior was lost. The magnificent ornamental tellers' grilles were also removed at that time. This was the condition of the bank when Clifford C. Sommer became president in 1955.

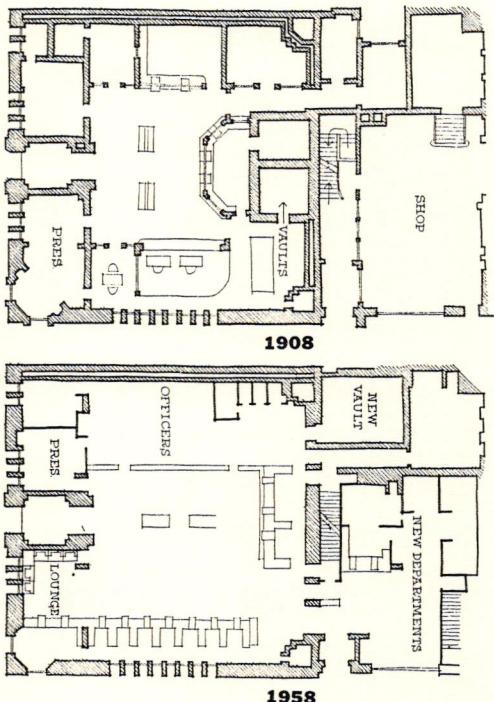
LEFT: Upon entering the bank, the visitors' balcony appears in place of the brick tellers' room provided by Sullivan. The massing of the new element is similar to the original and it is a successful alteration. Photo by Clark Dean, Infinity, Inc.





Mr. Sommer, with the support of his Board of Directors and the Bank's parent company, Northwest Bancorporation, began a program of renovation. He employed A. Moorman & Company as architects. Harwell Hamilton Harris was engaged as consulting architect and under his direction the needs of a modern bank were tastefully incorporated into the great space originally conceived by Louis Sullivan. The results clearly demonstrate how a thoughtful combination of alterations and restoration can permit an architectural masterpiece to continue to serve the needs of its owners even though the requirements may have changed with the years.

The bank today is a monument to private enterprise. It is one of the very few, perhaps the only, major work of architecture to have been saved entirely through the efforts of a business, its management and its money. It was the best investment the Security Bank and Trust Company will ever make.



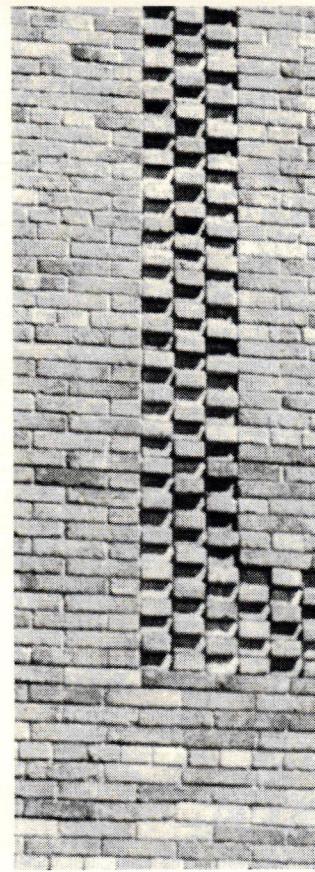
ABOVE: Plans courtesy of the ARCHITECTURAL FORUM.

LEFT: The view of the entrance to the bank from the interior.

BELOW: The major change in the plan is the addition of these tellers' cubicles along the south wall of the bank.

Photos by Warren Reynolds and Associates.





Artistic Brick

By Louis H. Sullivan

*This essay first appeared as a foreword to a pamphlet entitled *Suggestions in Artistic Brickwork* which was published by the Hydraulic-Press Brick Company, St Louis. Although it was not dated, the pamphlet appeared in 1910. Sullivan continued to use the type of brick described in this essay for the remaining years of his career.*

There are many instances in modern building construction where the use of a clean-cut mechanically perfect pressed brick is desirable. Particularly so perhaps for large office buildings and structures where exact surfaces and lines are desired. As the modern mechanically pressed brick with its many colors and shades is a development of the old red brick, so is the rough-faced brick an outgrowth of the "Paver."

The paver served to call attention to the artistic advantages of a brick not strictly uniform in color and shape. This created the desire and made possible the change from the old single or "shirt front" buildings, to the full four-front or all-around structures of simple but excellent materials.

The growth in the use of terra cotta kept pace with the new practice and the new demand; and improvements in manufacture and coloring quickly followed. New glazes and slips were produced, and the use of terra cotta and brick took on new life and new meanings.

With these facilities at the hand of the architect, he began to feel more sensible of the true nature of a building as an organism or whole: an individual or fully-expressed structure, rather than a mere slice showing one character for the front and another for the sides. And with this sensibility began

to come the vision that the exterior of the building is, in essence, the expression, the full expression of the plan.

Hence this new style brick, if we may call it so, has led to a new development, namely, that in which all the functions of a given building are allowed to find their expression in natural and appropriate forms — each form and the total shape evidencing, instead of hiding, the working conditions of the building as exhibited in its plan.

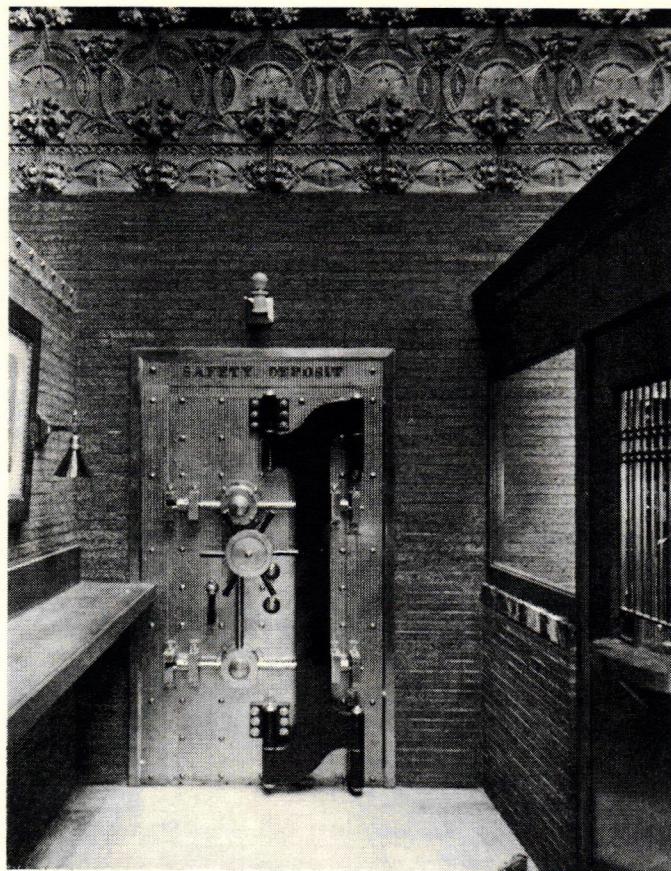
This is nature's continuously operative law, whereby every single thing takes up its individual form in materials, and is recognizable as such. This law is not only comprehensive, but universal. It applies to the crystal as well as to the plant, each seeking and finding its form by virtue of its working plan, or purpose or utility; or, if you choose to say so, by virtue of its desire to live and to express itself.

This desire to live and to express itself is also just as characteristic of the plan of the building, for such plan is but the expression of a desire for something useful, something that will functionate or work freely. The building plan therefore clamors for expression and freedom, not indeed in any one particular way or mannerism, but in a way that will satisfy its desires, and thus, in the so doing, ex-

Sullivan used tapestry brick in several of his small bank buildings, both interior and exterior.

RIGHT: An interior view of the Merchants' National Bank of Grinnell, Iowa. Photo by Child.

BELow: The Purdue State Bank of West LaFayette, Indiana. Photo by E. K. Warren.



press them unmistakably. This is, in essence, the natural basis of the anatomy and physiology of architectural planning and design. It is simple, perhaps too simple. For few have had the vision to see it entire and the will to grasp it entire. Thus, as all large things turn upon small, so a significant and promising architectural movement has hinged upon the advent of a new kind of brick. Yet this new kind of brick was but the herald of better things. Manufacturers by grinding the clay or shale coarser, and by the use of cutting wires,

produced on its face a new and most interesting texture, a texture with a nap-like effect, suggesting somewhat an Anatolian rug; a texture giving innumerable highlights and shadows, and a moss-like softness of appearance. Thus the rough brick became really a fine brick and brought with it new suggestions of use and beauty.

A feature, however, that was positively fascinating lay in the fact that these bricks, as they came from the kiln showed a veritable gamut of colors. Not merely a scale of shadings or gradu-

tions of intensity all related to a single average color, as in the "pavers," but a series of distinct colors, having each its own graduations and blendings. These colors are soft in tone and very attractive, modified in intensity as they are in each brick and in mass by the nap of the brick surface. They were at first, and, in many cases are now, the accidental effect of the position in the kiln and the kind of fuel used.

In these later days the subject has been made a matter of technical research, and specific treatment of the clays (burning in individual kilns, muffling the kilns, and fuel variations) have produced an added series of colors and shades, some of remarkable individuality and character.

Progress in the manufacture of terra cotta kept pace in tone and texture with the new color series in brick.

As might be expected, these recent bricks, depending, as they do, for their full effectiveness upon color and texture, are handicapped when laid with a flush mortar joint of whatever color or width. They are at their best when laid with a raked-out joint leaving the individual brick to play its part as a unit therein, and the mass free to express its color and texture in a broad way.

Inasmuch as the color scale varies from the softest pinks through delicate reds, yellows, (varying the intensity) through the light browns, dark browns, purples and steel blacks — each of these colors with its own graduations and blendings — the possibilities of chromatic treatment are at once evident. When laid up promiscuously, especially if the surface is large, and care is taken to avoid patches of any one color, the general tone suggests that of a very old oriental rug and the differing color values of the individual bricks, however sharply these may seem to contrast at close view, are taken up and harmonized in the prevailing general tone. Composed of many colors, this general tone is, in a sense, neutral and is rich and impressive. It lends itself admirably to association with other materials susceptible to color selection or treatment, such as stone, terra cotta, wood, glass and the metals, and admits in these, because of its broad, supporting neutrality, a great variation in range of treatment.

Thus arises before the mind of the architect the possibility, indeed the certainty of a feasible color scheme for the entire building, which it is within the power to vary from a substantial monotone to the higher development of polychromatic treat-

ment. He may segregate his bricks into separate color mosaics, he may graduate or blend them in any desired way, he may use them with mosaic effect, he may vary his forms to any rational extent, and finally he may effect combinations with other materials of any desired degree of richness or plainness of color and surface, in such wise as to secure an effect of totality or singleness of purpose.

To be sure a building may have its functions of plan and purpose expressed in a literal mechanical way that tends to repel, just as music may be written strictly according to rule and yet be unmusical. This certainly is up to the architect. For if the head and its intellectual activities be not suffused by that complexity of emotions and sentiments, we call the heart, no building can be beautiful, whatever means in the way of materials may be at hand.

In this sense architecture is truly a social function and form, and it is the feeling of humanity that makes a structure a beautiful creation. In its absence the building can be at the best but a statement of facts and at the worst a mis-statement of facts.

But this does not change the fact that the invention and perfection of a brick, new in texture and color, has opened up a new and wide field for the architect.

The brick itself is but the visible symbol of a train of social activities, an expression of industrial thought and energy.

It used to be said that it took two to make a building, the owner and the architect, and that each was necessarily the psychological counterpart of the other. It takes more than two. The intelligent brick manufacturer is today a most essential factor in modern building construction. The two may initiate, but it takes many men working their various ways and contributing technical support. Such is the development of modern society — new requirements, new forms to give them expression, and each reacting upon each and all.

We never know how important anything may become, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant its initial appearance.

So small a thing as a brick has wrought a significant modification in the architectural art, and this has reacted upon the sensibilities of the social body, through the subtle influence of its mere presence.

— Louis H. Sullivan.

Book Reviews

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, His Life, His Work, His Words, by Olgivanna Lloyd Wright. Horizon Press, New York, 1967. 224 pp., illus., \$7.50.

Exactly why was this book produced? The precise motivations which prompted it are not, at face value, apparent. Only when it is placed within the context of the author's earlier titles and within the larger syndrome of Taliesin hagiolatry, does the book fall into place. For, despite the stature of its subject and the good intentions of its author, it is, regrettably, little more than the lastest testimonial from a curious (and self-defeating) hero cult.

Frank Lloyd Wright, His Life, His Work, His Words, is the fourth volume in seven years by the architect's widow, Olgivanna Lloyd Wright. *Our House* (1959), *The Shining Brow, Frank Lloyd Wright* (1960), and *The Roots of Life* (1963), totaled over 850 pages of anecdotes, reminiscences, and nuggets of the world views of Frank and Olgivanna Wright. Some of the material was interesting, relevant, and charming. Much of it was not. Good or bad, however, most of the material in the first three volumes was Mrs. Wright's own, whether reprints of her newspaper columns, her informal talks to Taliesin colleagues, or rambling notes and memoranda of her life with Frank Lloyd Wright.

The new book, on the other hand, is comprised largely of long quotations from her husband's writings or statements and is presented in a roughly chronological and loosely biographical form presuming to cover Wright's entire life. Approximately one-third of the text consists of direct quotations from Wright's published works. In one particularly redundant section, Mrs. Wright quotes directly from her own recent works, *Our House*, and *The Shining Brow*. The non-quoted material is largely a close paraphrase of previously published works. Besides a few delightful anecdotes, the only "new" materials in the text are the direct quotations from Frank Lloyd Wright's informal talks at Taliesin, some of which are fresh, most of which, however, were variations or paraphrases by Wright, himself, of his own ideas previously or subsequently published elsewhere. The dates of the talks are not given and often have only slight relation to the "biographical" framework.

The first three chapters, drawn from Wright's oft-quoted *Autobiography*, skim lightly over his early years in Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and Chicago.

Other sections review briefly, and rather tiresomely, the great but familiar stories of the building of Unity Temple, the Larkin Building, the Imperial Hotel, the two Taliesins, "Falling Water", the Johnson Wax buildings, and the Guggenheim Museum. Fragments of Wright's architectural philosophy, artistic tastes, and literary preferences are extracted from various autobiographical works and repeated in concluding chapters.

Three appendices follow: a list of "innovations", some of which are validly "Wrightian", others (especially the early, more general ones) lending themselves to no such monopolistic claims; an illustrated section of undated projects by the Taliesin Associated Architects, presumably following Wright's death; and most significantly, an "official" version of a chronology, including bits of biographical data but dealing chiefly with "The Buildings and Projects of Frank Lloyd Wright". Containing several indisputable errors, major and minor, and other data of a somewhat arbitrary validity, the chronology is valuable chiefly as a frame of reference and a point of departure for future scholarly investigation. For example: Wright's birth year is erroneously given as 1869, not 1867 (though Mrs. Wright has subsequently acknowledged the latter year). There is no mention of Wright's childhood residence in MacGregor, Iowa. Wright entered the University of Wisconsin in 1886, not 1885.¹ The first name of his mentor, Allan Conover, is misspelled in the list and in the text. Wright's famous Hull House lecture, "The Art and Craft of the Machine" was not delivered in 1894, but in 1901, a difference of seven important years of ferment in Wright's thinking. And so on.

The problem of the dating of buildings is even more complex than unraveling the biographical tangle, since a prefatory note to the chronology states that "the dates given to his architectural designs are those that most closely refer to the time of conception." What does "conception" mean in this case? the first time that a possible design flashed through Wright's mind? the time when he related his store of abstract concepts to site and client? or the time he put them into initial or final blueprint form? Was not the Robie House, for example, designed in 1906 and completed in 1909? What is the meaning of Mrs. Wright's "conception" date of 1908? Indeed, most of the building dates

¹ "Frank Lloyd Wright—The Madison Years: Records versus Recollections" by Thomas S. Hines, Jr., *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Volume L, Number 2, Winter 1967, pp. 109-119.

are useful only as interpolative approximations pending more explicit dating and dating criteria from the Taliesin Archives. The book is rather vaguely documented in general. It contains no index.

Mrs. Wright is at her best in describing her husband's droll response to the King of Iraq, his delighted reaction to the Welsh countryside, and their mutual appreciation of the *Tragic Sense of Life* by the Spanish writer, Unamuno. Also valuable is her inclusion of Wright's own account of his troubled reaction, during a voyage from the Orient, to a Christian missionary's callous and bigoted burial at sea of a Shinto, Japanese child. She is less attractive (as was her husband) in her insulting references to Le Corbusier and other great architects of the "International Style".

The photographs in the book are excellent and do full justice to the complex people and the marvelous buildings they depict. Horizon Press, as usual, has designed and published an esthetically pleasing volume. One only regrets that its editors have not used more restraint in advising Mrs. Wright's literary ambitions in general. Would not her recollections, reminiscences, and anecdotes of life with her husband have been better presented in one solid, well-organized effort rather than scattered thro' the thousand pages of her four unwieldy volumes? If hers and Mr. Wright's informal talks to the Fellowship are of value and interest, could they not have been collected, edited, dated, and published as such? Whatever Mrs. Wright's notions may have been, her publishers obviously conceive of the book as a general, introductory treatment, or in publishing terms, appropriate for "young adults". But even on those grounds, would not such works as Finis Farr's popular biographical essay, despite its faults, be a better introduction for the young or uninitiated?

Allan Temko's reaction to Mrs. Wright's literary efforts in his 1959 *New York Times* review of *Our House*, holds equally true for her subsequent work:

These encomiums, incessantly reiterated, are embarrassing enough, but when Mrs Wright's own philosophical pronouncements follow them on page after page, together with rehashes of her husband's familiar disquisitions on architecture, nature, religion, and other high matters, the effect is wearisome. 'Mother,' she quotes Mr. Wright as saying to her, 'You are the only person in the world with whom I never get bored.' Alas, the reader wishes he could say the same.

Most serious scholars have quietly ignored the

problems raised by Mrs. Wright's subsequent books. Is it, indeed, the best policy to regard the books as harmless and understandably biased and get on to other things? Or should the books be criticized for the very thing that Mrs. Wright is apparently seeking to counteract in others — the minimization and misunderstanding of the genius of Frank Lloyd Wright?

Though Wright's work deserves and commands the highest honor, respect, and praise, his wife and his closest disciples would serve him better by exercising more restraint. For too long and too often they have expressed an unquestioning loyalty to Wright, in all his roles, with a saccharine piety and a patronizing simplicity that annoys even the staunchest Wrightophiles. Like her husband before her, Olgivanna Wright not only talks in a presumptuously personal vocabulary, but too often announces the most obvious platitudes in the gravest of tones. In both their own rhetoric and in that of their closest associates, there are too many ludicrous and uncomfortable religious metaphors that tend to deify a remarkable *human being*. Wright, himself, suggested this with such book titles as *A Testament*. A son's book was called *My Father Who is on Earth*. In *The Roots of Life*, Mrs. Wright reprinted an address to the Phoenix Art Museum League in which she had asked: "Can one individual represent his time? Does Frank Lloyd Wright represent the cultural level of America in his architecture?" followed by the question: "Did Christ represent His Era? He was a great rebel against the established religious dogmas of His time." So, she continued, "Can we then call great men characteristic of their time, in the sense of the seeing eye of their times, and prophets of the future? They are always trying to change the evils and prejudices of the time in which they live. . . ." After the glories of the Middle Ages, she asserted, there was a general cultural stagnation. "Architecture suffered the most, in a decline that continued for 400 years. Then Frank Lloyd Wright was born and the creation of new ideas in architecture began."

The same tone continues in her latest book. But leaving aside her sense of history, should not Mrs. Wright seek different Biblical comparisons? If she wants religious analogies, is not her husband's life rather closer to Job than to Jesus? If she presumes to write biography, should she not discuss the qualities in Wright's make-up that invited disaster as well as those that sustained him through it and allowed him to triumph over it?

Wright was a complex man, who, despite Herculean obstacles, made incomparable architectural contributions. He was neither a god who effortlessly sprinkled buildings about, nor an architectural prince who created by Divine Right. Indeed, Wright's work epitomized the artistic credo of William Faulkner's Nobel Prize address: "a life's work in the agony and sweat of the human spirit . . . to create out of the human spirit something which did not exist before." The attempts, conscious or unconscious, to deify Frank Lloyd Wright minimize, in effect, the *human* dimensions of his achievement.

As more biographical data is collected and analyzed, it seems highly probable that the contradictions between Wright's own contentions and the "objective" documents, between the records and his "recollections" can best be explained by Wright's need for a mythical personna to protect him from unpalatable realities. If such was the case, his critics should moralize with extreme caution, for without the myth, the Frank Lloyd Wright we know might never have materialized. Is it not possible that in the "real" world of America, the Middle West, Mamah Cheney, and Miriam Noel, Wright's genius might not have been able to survive except as guarded by a kind of protective screen that filtered and re-arranged the "facts" of life as Wright felt was necessary in order to get on? Like most artists of his stature, Wright's genius was tough and fragile at the same time. If the fragile side of his nature needed the myths in order to sustain the man who created the buildings, then are we not better off for it?

But can Mrs. Wright be similarly excused and exempted from having to face the facts as they are? Is she also entitled to play the game by *his* rules? One wishes that she were not and that instead of obfuscating her husband's complexities, she had tried honestly to explicate them and to help us understand them better. In their early life together, Olgivanna Wright, patiently and courageously, shared and perhaps ameliorated her husband's hardships and harassments, a side of the story that her writings virtually ignore. And their problems did not end in the 1920s. She has written at great length about their later celestial moments, but could she not also have dealt with the darker, earlier times that tried them and marked them so profoundly? By writing more candidly and critically, she might have made a truly unique contribution to our understanding and appreciation of Wright's genius.

Reviewed by Thomas S. Hines, Jr.

THE FLOWERING OF ART NOUVEAU, by Maurice Rheims. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1967. 430 pp., illus., \$20.00.

Until recently, Art Nouveau was considered a decadent and crass art form which developed primarily in Europe to satisfy the masses who didn't really know what they were getting. However, the past decade has seen a new interest in the products and the history of Art Nouveau. Dozens of books have appeared on the subject covering every phase from Beardsley to Tiffany. The present volume is one of the better ones.

The author has assembled what might be considered a catalog of the Art Nouveau. He has given us twenty-three separate catagories plus an introduction, index, and acknowledgments. 595 separate examples are illustrated and described. The printing is magnificent. Unfortunately the text and photographs are almost always separated due to the fact that they were printed in the Netherlands and in France respectively. Only the half dozen or so tipped-in color plates are on the same page as their text.

It is a big, beautiful book, ideal for browsing but a bit difficult to use for reference.

Reviewed by W. R. Hasbrouck

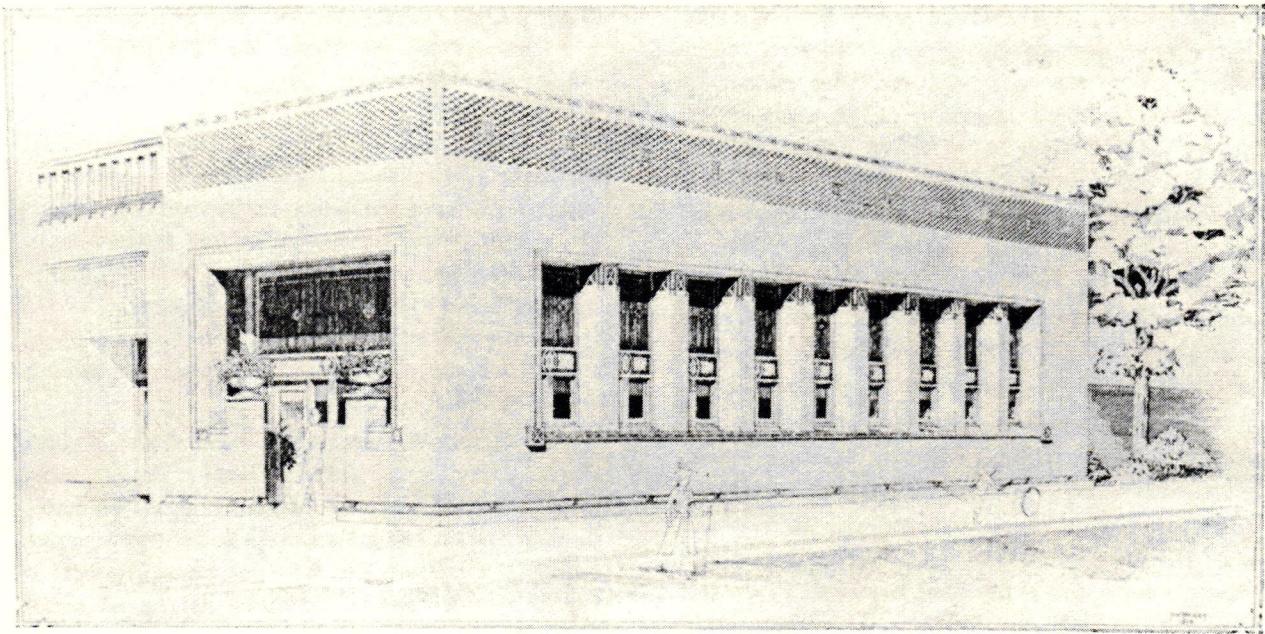
AMERICAN BUILDING: The Historical Forces That Shaped It, by James Marston Fitch. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1966. 350 pp., illus., \$12.50.

This book is a new edition of a volume with a similar title which appeared first in 1947 and has been a standard since that time. Actually, it is very nearly all new. Almost every page shows the effects of extensive rewriting and updating. The results are uniformly excellent.

The chapters concerning the major development of modern architecture are titled "1860-1893: The Great Victorians" and "1893-1933: Eclipse." Both headings are misleading since these pages are perhaps the best in the book. The later chapters are less interesting perhaps because of the difficulty of historical perspective when writing of one's own time.

The book is superbly illustrated with excellent photographs and drawings. It is well indexed and documented with footnotes throughout although these notes are placed at the end of the book which makes reference awkward.

Professor Fitch has written a fine book which should be in the library of anyone interested in the history of American Architecture.



Letter to the Editors

Dear Sirs:

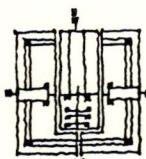
It was indeed a pleasure to see your recent publication of the works of the late Parker N. Berry. I had not been aware of the calibre of his private practice before this.

Your readers might be interested in knowing that further evidence of his close collaboration with Louis Sullivan is documented in the May 1916 issue of *The Architectural Record*. There, in an article entitled "An Architectural of Democracy" by A. N. Rebori, is an illustration of a rendering of the "Land and Loan Office" at Algona, Iowa, designed by Louis H. Sullivan. The rendering is signed in the lower right hand corner "P. N. Berry, 1914".

Lloyd Henri Hobson

We have reproduced the rendering Mr. Hobson refers to at the top of this page. The Editors.

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Preview

The next issue of Volume IV of THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW will be a special issue with a guest editor. It will be a photographic essay concerning the recently renovated Auditorium Theater in Chicago. The restoration of this building under the guidance of Architect Harry Weese and his staff has resulted in the theater being once more available for public use. It is expected that it will open in the fall of 1967.

Several recently published books will be reviewed, including:

R. M. Schindler, Architect
David Gebhard

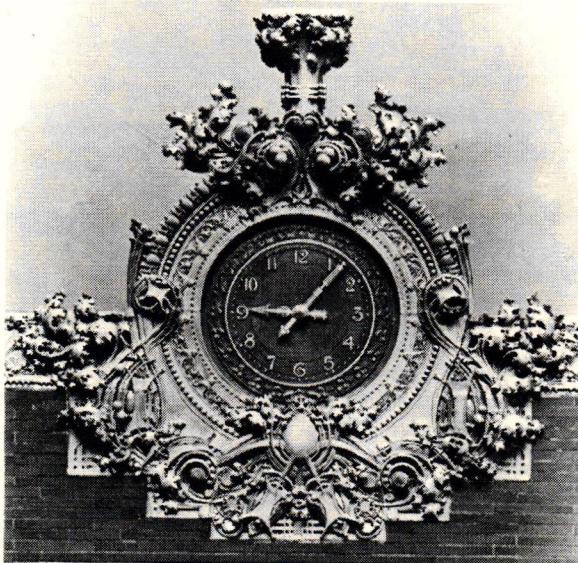
St. Croix Trail Country
William Gray Purcell

Several short reviews

We are embarking on an editorial policy of broadening our coverage of Architecture in America. Articles of general interest concerning the development of modern architecture will continue to be published. In addition, we will welcome articles concerning contemporary architecture done in the "Prairie Spirit". Critical essays will also be considered for publication. Any questions prospective authors might have should be directed to the editors.

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The clock in the National Farmers' Bank of Owatonna is another of Elmslie's exuberant terra cotta creations. In perfecting this style, which Elmslie developed with great individuality, Sullivan felt it necessary to supervise the design of the smallest element of his buildings. Note, for example, that both the clock face and the hands are enriched with Sullivanesque ornament. Photo by Fuermann.

