

Reliance Building  
32 N. State Street;  
southwest corner of State  
and Washington Streets  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1029

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
30-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Washington Planning and Service Center  
1730 North Lynn Street  
Arlington, Virginia

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS...

## RELIANCE BUILDING

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
30-

Location: 32 N. State Street, southwest corner of State and Washington Streets, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: Karoll's Men's Store, Ben Saitlin, Controller, 32 N. State Street, Chicago, Illinois.

Present Occupant: Karoll's Men's Store (first floor) and office tenants.

Present Use: Clothing Store and office building.

Statement of Significance:

An important example of the early Chicago School, it anticipates future developments in skyscraper design. Terra cotta was employed for exterior surfacing for the first time in this building /C. E. Jenkins, "A White Enameled Building: Reliance Building, corner of Washington and State Streets, Chicago, Ill., D. H. Burnham and Company, C. B. Atwood, Architects," Architectural Record, Vol. 4 (January-March, 1895), p. 299/. The Commission on Chicago Architectural Landmarks has cited it: "In recognition of the early and complete expression, through slender piers, small spandrels, and the skillfully restrained use of terra cotta with large areas of glass, of the structural cage of steel that alone supports such buildings."

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

## 1. Original and subsequent owners (chain of title):

- a. Legal description of the property: Reliance Building, 32 N. State Street. Lot 1, Block 58 of Assessor's Re-subdivision of Subdivision of lots 1 to 5 of Assessor's Division of lots 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of Block 58, Original Town Section 9-39-14.
- b. Abstract of chain of title from Book 455B, p. 121-127, Cook County Recorder's Office.

On December 15, 1882 William E. Hale, for whom the Reliance building was later built, purchased the property with its existing buildings from Lucius G. Fisher (Document 438596). On November 18, 1890, Hale entered into a party wall agreement with Lewis Z. Leiter (Document 1236125). The title then passed to the Reliance Office

Building Corporation, and the State Street Properties Inc. On December 28, 1962, Max Eckerling purchased the property from State Street Properties Inc. (Document 1868476). The present owner is Karoll's Men's Store /"State St. Landmark May Be Demolished," Chicago Daily News, June 26, 1963/.

- c. The following additional description of the ownership of the property is taken from: "Office Building in Loop is sold for \$400,000," Chicago Tribune, March 7, 1948, Page A, Part 3.

The 15 story Reliance building. . . and the leasehold estate, were purchased yesterday for \$400,000 by State Street Properties, Inc. . . The title was conveyed by the 32 to 36 North State Street Building Corporation. . . The land on which the Reliance building stands fronts 55 feet on State and 85 feet on Washington. It has been in possession of the Otto Young family for more than a half century, and is owned by the Otto Young estate. Otto Young leased the land in 1893 for 200 years to the Reliance company which erected the building in 1895. The ground rental was \$24,000 annually.

Charles W. Partridge who acquired the leasehold estate in 1910 negotiated a long term sublease in 1919 from the Reliance company for \$30,000 additional annual rental, making the total ground rental \$54,000. The leasehold changed hands several times, being acquired by the 32 to 36 North State Street Building Corporation in 1923. The corporation negotiated a \$750,000 bond issue on the building and leasehold and remodeled the structure with the proceeds. . . The former bondholders have received \$123 for each \$100 per share of stock following the present sale of the title to State Street Properties, Inc. The leasehold has 145 years to run.

2. Date of erection: Lower story (ground floor and mezzanine) 1890; upper 13 stories 1894.
3. Architect: Burnham and Root. Original plans for a 16-story building were made in 1890 by John Root. The final plans for the upper floors were made in 1894 by Charles B. Atwood of the staff D. H. Burnham and Co. The engineer was Edward C. Shankland of London /Jenkins, loc. cit./.
4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: Built by George A. Fuller and Company /Prominent Buildings erected by the George A. Fuller Co. (New York: George A. Fuller, 1904), pp. 66-67/. Terra cotta by North Western Terra Cotta Company, ornamental iron work by the Winslow Brothers Company, and elevators by Winslow Brothers Elevator Company /"Reliance Building,

Chicago," Ornamental Iron, Vol. 2 (May, 1895)7.

5. Original plans, construction, etc.:

a. The first building on the site was erected 1867-68 for the First National Bank of Chicago and consisted of a high basement plus four floors. It survived the 1871 fire, although about a third of the building was destroyed and had to be rebuilt /The Reliance Building, Chicago, 1890, and continuation, 1894, Microfilm Roll 3, Frame 220/. William E. Hale, who purchased the building in 1882, commissioned Root in 1890 to draw up plans for a 16 story building to be built on the site. Although the bank on the lower floor had moved in 1890, the lease on the upper four stories did not expire until May 1, 1894. As a result, work was begun on the ground floor and foundations in 1890 while the upper stories and their tenants were held up by jack screws. In 1894, these were demolished and thirteen stories of steel construction were added to the completed ground floor without disturbing its tenant. It took less than two days to erect each story. The building was completely closed in on November 8, 1894 and was due to be occupied January 1, 1895. From 1890 to 1894 Root's original plans had been changed by Atwood so that the resulting upper stories are of cream-white terra cotta while the original first story was of polished Scotch granite. /Jenkins, loc. cit.; "Reliance Building, Chicago," op. cit., p. 91/. The present building is 15 stories, a height of 200 feet. Beams and rails were used in the spread foundations. Grey columns were used with plate and lattice girders for wind bracing /Frank A. Randall, History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 121/.

b. The following early description is taken from: "Reliance Building, Chicago," op. cit. pp. 91-92.

This somewhat unique example of modern architecture is located on the southwest corner of State and Washington Streets, the site of one of the two structures in the heart of the city which escaped destruction in the great fire. It may be tersely described as a glazed terra-cotta tower in which plate glass figures conspicuously. The architect met the problem presented to him in the most direct manner and with the greatest apparent frankness. Light was demanded and provided for in abundance, the tilemaker did not rest. The result is by no means displeasing, but the charm lies more in the novelty of a veritable porcelain tower rearing itself two hundred feet above grade than in any other

architectural quality of the building.

The lower story of the Reliance was built in 1890, under the three upper stories of the old building, the upper stories being supported by jackscrews during the process and the tenants therein being undisturbed. In 1894, these upper stories were removed and thirteen stories of steel construction were superimposed without interfering with the tenant on the ground floor or discommoding the pedestrians of the crowded corner. The steel skeleton was erected with unusual rapidity, something less than two days being occupied for each story.

The building has a frontage of 55 feet on State Street and a depth on Washington Street of 85 feet. Cubic contents, 1,158,000.

The distinctive feature of the building is the use of cream white enamelled or highly glazed terra cotta for the exterior walls. This was manufactured by the North-Western Terra Cotta Co. There is today neither in this country nor anywhere else on the face of the globe another building in which this material has been used so extensively and in equal perfection; nor is there another factory that could fill so large an order within the limited time of a few months.

The first floor is occupied by a single tenant, the next four are subdivided into large sales-rooms, the others into office suites, especial provision being made for occupancy by physicians and dentists.

In the interior the columns and wainscots are in Italian marbles; the floors in mosaic, the woodwork in mahogany.

The elevator service of four cars is exceptionally perfect, the owner, Mr. W. E. Haley bringing into exercise in its construction his extended experience in the elevator business. The plant was furnished by The Winslow Bros. Elevator Co. [An article fully descriptive of this plant will be found on page 101, Ornamental Iron, Vol. 2 (May, 1895)].

The ornamental iron work in the Reliance building, its most noticeably artistic feature, is from the works of The Winslow Bros. Co. The broad expanse of plate glass in the lower story is set in bronze frames and the treatment is carried out in the same material in open work design on the polished granite columns. The door-plates are of bronze, as is likewise the large south wall near the entrance. The elevator enclosures, German gothic

in design, are of wrought iron, treated by the Bower-Barff process. The arrangement of the gates, permitting ingress and egress at the same time, is a feature worthy of notice, as is also the mechanism by which the doors are operated whereby the operator is in a large measure left free to give closer attention to the movement of the car. The elevator cars are designed in the same style in like material and treated by the same inimitable process and this is true of the wall light holders. The large mail box in the vestibule is of cast iron with decoration in relief. This has likewise received the Bower-Barff treatment. The stairway, including newel posts, balustrades, stringers and risers and all the facias are of cast iron in designs to correspond with the style adopted and with relief ornamentation, all being subjected to the Bower-Barff process bringing it into pleasing harmony with the highly polished, parti-colored marbles in the vestibule or entrance hall to the building. The general effects secured, as can be seen in the illustration, are exceptionally fine.

6. Alterations and additions: The building was remodeled in 1923 /"Office Building in Loop is sold for \$400,000," Chicago Tribune, March 7, 1948, Page A, Part 3/. Commercial alterations and signs have disfigured the lower floors. The cornice was removed after 1948.
7. Important old views: See Bibliography.

C. Bibliography:

1. Burnham, Daniel Hudson. 1846-1912. Diaries, 1895-1910. 16 Vols. In Manuscript. Burnham Library, in the Art Institute of Chicago.
2. Burnham, Daniel Hudson. 1846-1912. Letters, business and personal, 1890-1912. 21 Vols. Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.
3. Condit, Carl W. The Rise of the Skyscraper. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952. pp. 148, 165-166, 167, 207, photograph p. 100.
4. Freitag, J. K. Architectural Engineering (1901). Contains floor plan, steel framing plan, photographs of steel erection, details of terra cotta front and piers, spandrel sections, and column splices.
5. "In Memorium: Daniel H. Burnham," (1912-13). Mounted articles and clippings from newspapers and magazines dealing with his death in 1912. Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.

6. Jenkins, C. E. "A White Enameled Building: Reliance Building, Corner of Washington and State Streets, Chicago, Ill., D. H. Burnham and Company, C. B. Atwood, Architects," Architectural Record. Vol. 4 (January-March, 1895). pp. 299-306. No plan.  
Series of pictures during construction: July 16, 1894 to November 8, 1894, when completed. Also includes a lengthy description of the structure and specifications for the building materials and construction.
7. "Office Building in Loop is sold for \$400,000," Chicago Tribune, March 7, 1948. Page A, Part 3.  
Picture (with cornice). Clippings, Chicago Historical Society Library. Includes a partial chain of title.
8. Poole, Ernest. Giants Gone; Men Who Made Chicago. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1943. pp. 178-189, 327-339.  
General material on D. H. Burnham.
9. Prominent Buildings Erected by the George A. Fuller Co. New York: George A. Fuller, 1904. Photograph # p. 67, Plan # p. 66.
10. Randall, Frank A. History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949. pp. 15, 121, (Bibl.), photograph p. 139.
11. Rebori, A. N. "The Work of Burnham and Root, D. H. Burnham - D. H. Burnham and Co., and Graham Burnham and Co.," Architectural Record. Vol. 38 (July, 1915). p. 62, photograph p. 150.
12. "Reliance Building, Chicago," Ornamental Iron. Vol. 2 (May, 1895). pp. 91-92.  
Excellent early description. Plans # p. 91. Photographs # pp. 94-97; interior details, elevators, stairs, iron work.
13. Schuyler, Montgomery. "A Critique (with illustrations) of the Works of Adler & Sullivan, D. H. Burnham & Co., Henry Ives Cobb," New York Architectural Record. December, 1895.  
General material.
14. "State St. Landmark May Be Demolished," Chicago Daily News, June 26, 1963.  
Picture.

15. The Architectural Work of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, Chicago, and Their Predisessors /sic/. Vol. 2. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1933. pl. 386.  
Photograph showing cornice.
16. The Reliance building, Chicago, 1890, and continuation, 1894, Microfilm Roll 3, frames 220-325. Burnham Library at the Art Institute of Chicago.  
Includes historical statement, original working drawings, plans, elevations, facade details, iron railing details for stair and elevator cages, interior elevations and finish details. Office layouts, structural drawings.
17. Wight, Peter Bonnet. "Daniel Hudson Burnham and His Associates," New York Architectural Record. Vol. 38, No. 1 (July, 1915).  
General material.

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka  
Historian  
National Park Service  
Osmund Overby  
Supervisory Architect  
National Park Service  
August 1963

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. The Reliance Building, with a remarkably light and open curtain wall about an iron skeleton frame, marked the culmination of the development and expression of the structural cage of skeleton construction.
2. Condition of fabric: Good. The interiors have been completely remodeled with shops on the ground floor and offices on the upper floors.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Rectangular, 55'-10" (State Street) x 84'-10" (Washington Street); 15 stories, 200' in height.
2. Foundations: Spread foundations, beam and rail grillage.



3. Wall construction: Ground floor: large areas of glass framed with polished Scotch granite trimmed with bronze, survive after alterations only in small areas. Upper floors: open rectilinear grill work of windows, framed with glazed white terra cotta colonettes and spandrels, Gothic forms used for tile work, clustered slender colonettes panelled spandrels with quatrefoils and lozenges, cream white color now very dirty.
4. Structural system, framing: The structural frame is entirely contained within the enclosing envelope of windows and tile work. Iron skeleton construction, irregular structural bay spacing, columns 12' and 13' on center at the perimeter, 15' and 20' on center on the interior. Building enclosed by non-bearing masonry walls on west and south sides.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Later.
  - b. Windows: Fully developed Chicago windows, large single, fixed pane of glass fills a whole bay except for narrow, moveable double-hung sash at either end in the diagonal planes of the projecting bays; strongly horizontal organization of the fenestration. Bay windows project 3' and are 23'-6" wide on the north and 26' wide on the east.
6. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Flat.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: The original cornice, which projected slightly deeper than the bay windows and had patterned soffits similar to the spandrels, has been removed.

C. Description of Interiors:

Floor plans: The building fills the entire rectangular plot, 55'-10" x 84'-10". A large light well, 16'-6" x 25'-4", is cut out of the southwest corner of the building, with the outside, enclosing wall faced with glazed brick. It was originally designed for shops on the ground floor and offices on the upper floors. The elevator and stair lobby are at the center of the south side of the building, with the entrance from the street at the south end of the east elevation. Original upper floor plans used a center corridor with about 20 office rooms ranged two deep. The ground floor, lobbies, elevators, and sixth floor, visited for this write-up, have all been completely remodeled.

D. Site:

General setting and orientation: The building is bounded by State Street on the east and Washington Street on the north. There are several entrances to the ground floor on both sides, and the entrance to the elevator lobby is on the east. Other business buildings adjoin on the west and south.

Prepared by Osmund Overby  
Supervisory Architect  
National Park Service  
September 1963

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS...

Addendum to:  
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Cook County  
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HABS No. IL-1029

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
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PAGE 10

Addendum to;  
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Data pages 1 through 9 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress. This is data page 10.

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One survey control contact print per plate; survey control information for each pair.

LC-HABS-GS05-T-2656-401L \* DIAGONAL VIEW, EAST AND NORTH SIDES

LC-HABS-GS05-T-2656-401R DIAGONAL VIEW, EAST AND NORTH SIDES

Left and right overlap: 95%

LC-HABS-GS05-T-2656-402L \* LOWER PORTION, EAST FACADE

LC-HABS-GS05-T-2656-402R LOWER PORTION, EAST FACADE

Left and right overlap: 90%

LC-HABS-GS05-T-2656-403L \* LOWER PORTION, NORTH FACADE

LC-HABS-GS05-T-2656-403R LOWER PORTION, NORTH FACADE

Left and right overlap: 90%

PROJECT INFORMATION STATEMENT

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