



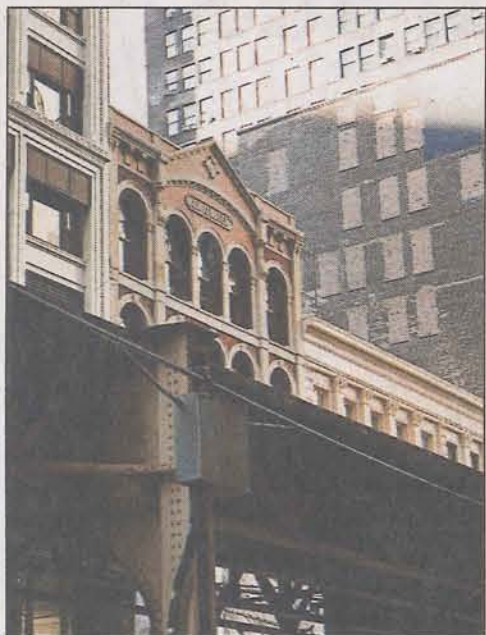
'Swearing and negativity'

◀ Fiery Kathy Griffin lets it fly at the Chicago Theatre, through Thursday. **PAGE 3**

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▶ Chicago's movie industry fights back. **PAGE 3**



TRIBUNE EXCLUSIVE

Detective work leads to architectural gold on South Wabash.

'There was some unbelievable stuff back there.'

'Lost' Sullivan uncovered



By Blair Kamin
TRIBUNE CRITIC

The legacy of Louis Sullivan, poet of the skyscraper, has taken so many hits lately that you'd think Tony Soprano had a contract to rub out the man's architecture.

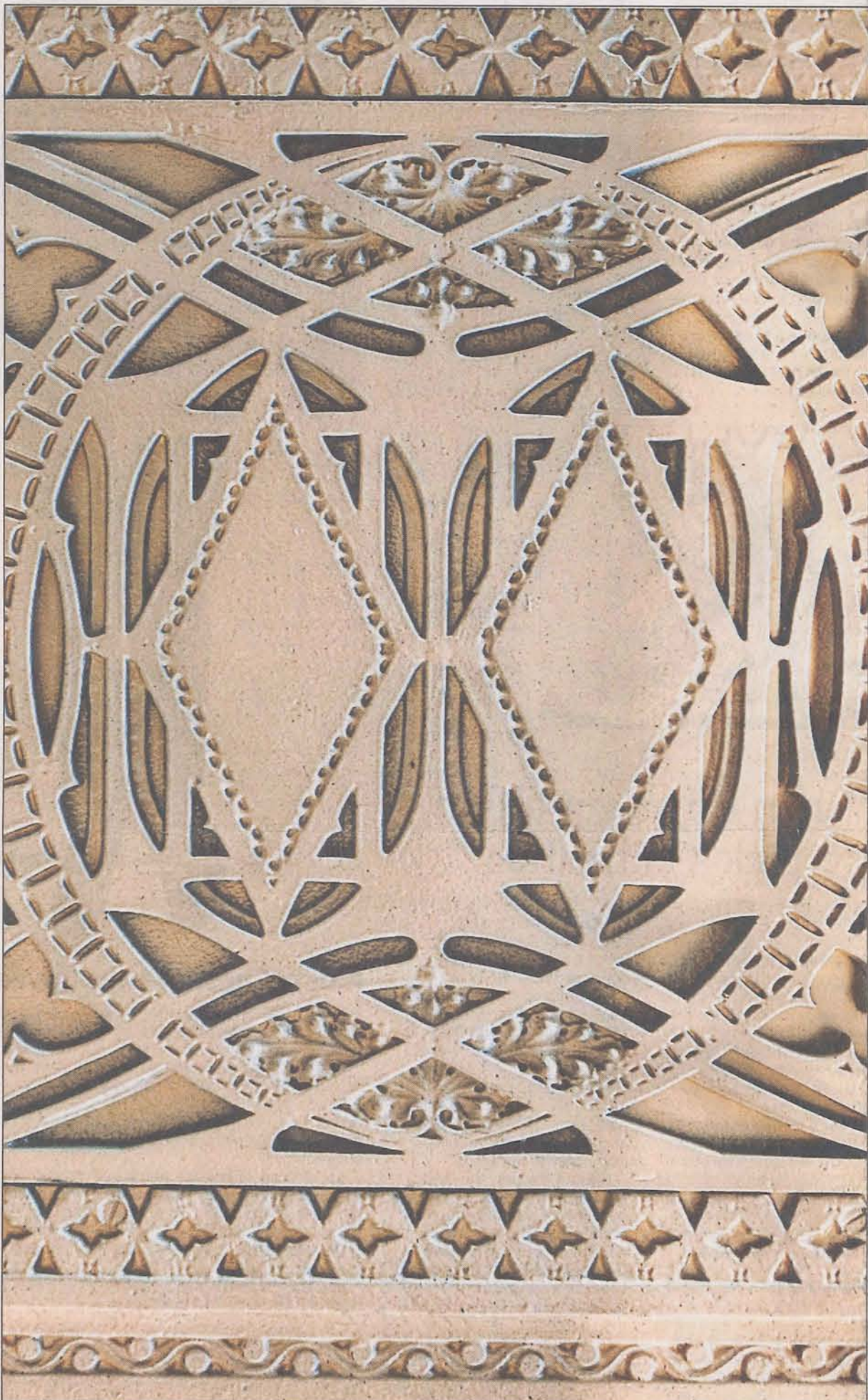
Hurricanes, floods and fires, along with human ignorance and carelessness, have all dealt their blows.

Against that dark backdrop comes a small but significant ray of light: the discovery of a "lost" Sullivan-designed, cast-iron storefront at 22 S. Wabash Ave., complete with the architect's renowned nature-inspired ornament.

The public will be able to see Sullivan's artistry, possibly within the next week, when construction workers remove a cloak of scaffolding from the four-story, post-Chicago Fire building. And there will be more to take in.

As part of the same project, another Sullivan-designed storefront, located to the north at 18 S. Wabash, has been magnificently restored and will be able to be viewed in its entirety for the first time in decades.

For good measure, there's a third, handsomely restored building at 28 S. Wabash, the Atwater Building, a five-story structure by the noted post-Fire



Details of the Louis Sullivan-designed ornament at 18 S. Wabash Ave. (above) and 22 S. Wabash Ave. (left) show the architect's use of nature-inspired geometric forms. The two buildings belong to a trio of newly restored, post-Chicago Fire structures. Parts of the Atwater Building (top), with its distinctive rounded arches, and the other two buildings—to the right—can be seen behind the Loop's elevated tracks. PHIL VELASQUEZ/TRIBUNE PHOTOS

Inside

Ignorance and disasters have diminished Louis Sullivan's legacy.

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Detective work reveals 'lost' Sullivan

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architect John Mills Van Osdel. Its facade of red brick and Joliet limestone features multiple rounded arches.

"It's nice to have the discovery of an unknown Sullivan piece instead of losing it," said Chicago architect T. "Gunny" Harboe, who worked on the job with colleague Douglas Gilbert.

Pressed against the elevated tracks, the glistening storefronts form a little-noticed part of the \$190 million restoration of the former Carson Pirie Scott & Co. store on the block bounded by Wabash as well as State, Madison and Monroe Streets. Aided by \$23 million in tax-increment financing subsidies, developer Joseph Freed and Associates is rehabbing the nine-building complex, which it has fittingly re-named the Sullivan Center.

The detective work that led to the discovery of the Sullivan-designed storefront began two years ago.

The architects suspected that a metal panel on 18 S. Wabash's facade concealed more of Sullivan's distinctive ornament than was visible from the

street. At their urging, contractors cut a patch in a metal panel above the building's street-level windows. Lo and behold, said Harboe, they found Sullivan ornament beneath—a cream-colored version of cast-iron, with diamonds and rectangles set within circles.

It was a nice discovery, but hardly shocking because experts there already had established that Sullivan refashioned the lower two stories of the building's front in 1896. He did the job for the building's original owner, the Schlesinger & Mayer Department Store.

That find raised new suspicions about whether Sullivan had also remodeled the building next door, 22 S. Wabash. So, six months ago, contractors sliced another patch into a metal panel above the windows at 22 S. Wabash. And they struck architectural gold.

"That was the aha moment," said Paul Fitzpatrick, Freed's senior vice president of development. "There was some unbelievable stuff back there."

Specifically, the architects found brown-green cast-iron decoration with squares, ovals and little round bumps that resemble berries. The ornament runs atop the windows of the 40-foot-wide storefront and descends to the sidewalk in narrow piers.

But a question lurked: Was the one-story storefront at 22 S. Wabash in Sullivan's own hand or was it merely "Sullivan-esque," a copy done by a skilled imitator?

The architects found an old Chicago Tribune story that said a long-term ground-floor lease at 22 S. Wabash expired in 1903. That piece of the puzzle suggested that Sullivan couldn't have worked on the building until then.

Chicago Cultural Historian Tim Samuelson confirmed Sullivan's involvement, Harboe and Gilbert said, by producing Sullivan correspondence from 1903. The letters detail Sullivan's concerns about a Wabash Avenue storefront for Schlesinger & Mayer. In one, he demands changes, saying that "a bungled piece of work is being done."

This job, in contrast, is anything but bungled. Behind the facades are gloriously tall retail spaces supported by original cast-iron columns. They make a mockery of the "facade-echo-tomies" across Wabash, where developers have retained nothing but the fronts of old buildings to make room for new condo towers. This is a better alternative: historic preservation that is richly three-dimensional, not a skin-deep substitute.

Treasures have been lost, harmed

During his lifetime (1856-1924), Chicago architect Louis Sullivan designed such masterpieces as the former Carson Pirie Scott & Co. store on State Street. But a combination of human ignorance, carelessness and natural disasters has significantly diminished Sullivan's architectural legacy.

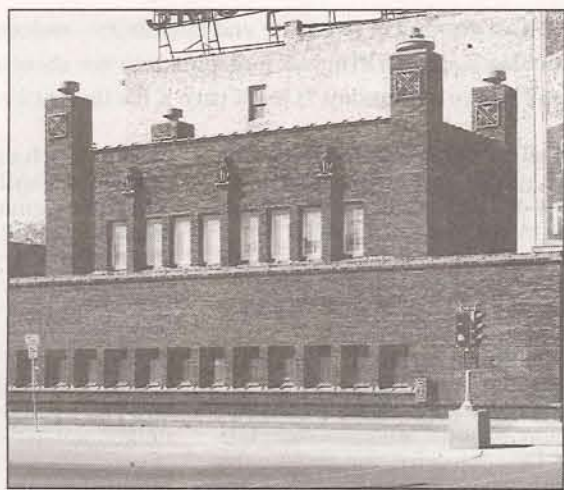


▲ 1961: In a textbook act of civic barbarism, Chicago allows the demolition of the 17-story Garrick Theater building at 64 W. Randolph St., by Sullivan and partner Dankmar Adler, to make way for a parking garage.

1972: Another Adler & Sullivan gem, the 13-story Chicago Stock Exchange Building at 30 N. LaSalle St., is demolished to make way for an undistinguished modern office building. The Stock Exchange's trading room is rebuilt within the Art Institute of Chicago. Its entrance arch, reconstructed outside the museum at Columbus Drive and Monroe Street, becomes known as the "wailing wall" of historic preservation in Chicago.

2005: The storm surge from Hurricane Katrina seriously damages Sullivan's vacation cottage in Ocean Springs, Miss., a project for which both he and his onetime employee, Frank Lloyd Wright, claimed authorship.

2006: A succession of fires casts a pall over the 150th anniversary of Sullivan's birth, destroying or seriously damaging three Sullivan buildings in Chicago, including Adler & Sullivan's Pilgrim Baptist Church. Workers using torches to repair the church's roof spark the blaze.



▲ 2007: Flooding in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, inundates Sullivan's Peoples Savings Bank (now a branch of San Francisco-based Wells Fargo Bank), one of the great small-town banks he completed at the end of his career.

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—Blair Kamin

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