

Meyer Building
301-11 West Van Buren Street
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1026

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
28-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

MEYER BUILDING

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
28-

Address: 301-11 West Van Buren Street, southwest corner of Franklin and Van Buren Streets, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: Continental Assurance Company.

Present Use: Wholesale store, occupied by various tenants

Statement of Significance: Designed by Adler and Sullivan, the building is distinguished by its broad horizontal windows and relatively ornament-free surfaces, expressive of its structure. In February, 1960, the building was designated a Chicago Architectural Landmark by the Commission on Chicago Architectural Landmarks.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lots 75-80 in Subdivision of Block 90 in School Section Addition to Chicago, Section 16-39-14.

The following is an abstract of the chain of title contained in Book 466 A, pp. 71-72, in the Cook County Recorder's Office.

The property was first recorded as belonging to Master Lucius J. Cobb, who transferred it on November 26, 1872 to George E. Brown (Document 70332). The Meyer Building was built for the estate of Max A. Meyer, whose name first appears in his inventory which was recorded on July 1, 1890 (Document 62P/590). The property remained in the Meyer family through many years. The last entry recorded in the chain of title on November 20, 1959, names the Continental Assurance Company as owner (Document 17721456).

2. Date of erection: 1893.
3. Architects: Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The building is seven stories high with a single basement on spread foundations [Randall, p. 136]. It has a steel frame, brick walls, and practically none of the ornament usually typical of Sullivan's buildings [Morrison, p. 168]. Total cost, \$205,825.61. The following information is extracted from the Adler and Sullivan manuscript chart showing cost of buildings of the firm 1879-1895, Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.

MEYER BUILDING - 1893

Cubic Contents	2,088,000
1. Foundations	()
2. Masonry	(0510)
3. Carpentry	()
4. Structural Iron	0162
5. Terra Cotta	0030
6. Cut Stone	0004
7. Plastering	0013
8. Sheet Metal	0012
9. Plumbing, Gas and Sewers	0030
10. Boilers and Tanks	()
11. Heating Apparatus	()
12. Ventilating Apparatus	(0095)
13. Pipe Covering	()
14. Elevators	()
15. Pumps	(0027)
16. Engines	()
17. Dynamos	()
18. Electric Wiring	(0080)
19. Painting	0023
20. Plain Glass	0023
Entire Building	.098
TOTAL COST	<u>205,825.61</u>
[Penciled below]	.100

5. Alterations and additions: The curvilinear cornice was replaced by a brick and tile parapet (date unknown). The main entrance was originally located at the north-east corner of the building. It has been moved to the north side of the building, 307 West Van Buren Street. [Richard Nickel, HABS Inventory Form, 1960].

B. Bibliography:

Adler and Sullivan, Manuscript chart showing cost of buildings, 1879-1895. Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.

Condit, Carl W., The Rise of the Skyscraper (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 197, 240; Fig. 64.

The Economist (Chicago), June 11, 1892, p. 878.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell, In the Nature of Materials (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942), pp. 13,14; Pl. 6.

Morrison, Hugh, Louis Sullivan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1935), pp. 168-169, 303; Pl. 53.

Nickel, Richard, HABS Inventory Form, July 1960. Indicates that there are measured drawings in the possession of A. Rubloff Company, Chicago.

Randall, Frank A., History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 136.

Schuyler, Montgomery, "A Critique of the Works of Adler & Sullivan, D.H. Burnham & Company, Henry Ives Cobb," Architectural Record, (New York), December, 1895.

Prepared by Osmond L. Overby, Supervisory
Architect

and

Larry J. Homalka, Historian
National Park Service
August, 1963

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural interest and merit: Designed by Adler and Sullivan, the Meyer Building is distinguished by its broad, horizontal windows and simple wall treatment nearly devoid of ornament.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories: Seven stories plus one basement.
2. Over-all dimensions: 120' (six-bay front) x 168'.
3. Layout--shape: Rectangular with courtyard.
4. Foundations: Rubble stone.
5. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick walls with emphasis on the horizontal. Tan colored face brick is laid in running bond. There is terra cotta trim in narrow bands or string courses at window head and sill heights. There is also an enriched classical cornice between first and second floors. The brick court walls are buttressed with T-flange iron columns with open webs.
6. Structural system, framing: Semi-mill construction, with cast-iron columns on first and second floors and timber columns on upper floors. Timber girders and joists. Interior bay spacing: 17'-6" x 9'. Upper floor live load is 60 pounds per square foot.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Classical glazed ceramic doorway at center of north side has an arched opening, enframed by fluted, cabled pilasters with enriched Doric capitals and entablature. Door is later.
 - b. Windows: Simple masonry openings with large windows on the ground floor.

There are paired windows on the second through the sixth floor which are separated by round, cast-iron colonettes with broad flat capitals. Above the ground floor, windows are double hung, with single light sash. There is a continuous band of windows on the top floor. Window frames are of wood. Court windows have iron shutters.

8. Roof:

a. Shape: Flat.

b. Cornice: Removed at an unknown date.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Typical loft building with open interiors.

2. Stairways: Two passenger elevators, two freight elevators and two simple wood stairways.

3. Flooring: Maple finish flooring over wood, plank sub-flooring.

D. Site and Surroundings: The building is at the southwest corner of Franklin and Van Buren Streets, with the main entrance facing north. This is in the mercantile district of the downtown Chicago area.

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Architect
National Park Service
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