

Early Chicago Iron Work

Chicago

Cook County

Illinois

HABS No. Ill.-155

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
7-

Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

~~PHOTOGRAPHS~~

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. Ill.1

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Earl H. Reed, District Officer  
435 North Michigan Ave., Chicago.

EARLY CHICAGO IRON WORK  
Chicago, IllinoisHABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIC,  
7-Owners - VariousDate of Erection - 1850 - 1875Builder - UnknownPresent Condition - FairMaterials of Construction - Cast Iron and Wrought Iron

Additional Data: The story of iron and ironwork in Chicago begins with the coming of Daniel McKee, Government blacksmith of the Second Fort Dearborn erected in 1816, his craftsmanship having been probably centered on Government property. Trading companies had long brought iron items to the Indiana and Early Settlers, but it was not until 1837, after the incorporation of the village, that Chicago's first foundry was established by Stow and Company. Then came the Granger Iron Foundry in 1839 and that of Philetus W. Gates and Hiram H. Scoville in 1842, including also a machine shop. By 1846 stoves were manufactured here, Scoville was making the first locomotive west of the Alleghenies in 1848 and the Rinker Bell Foundry was in operation. Railroad work and machinery and farm implements formed the bulk of the iron products of the young city, though in 1860 Chicago had two ornamental iron foundries, one of which was that of Frederick Letz, established in 1847 and operated by U. S. Bouton as the Union Foundry Works after 1857.

It would be difficult to ascertain who made the ironwork included in this series of photographs, or the source of the patterns for casting. Remaining examples are mostly to be found in the districts of the city spared by the great fire of '71. In spite of a considerable variety of patterns, repetitions are frequently encountered. One newel post is often used with different rail units. Some examples like the rich free running Acanthus rail at 1013 South Wabash Avenue, are of outstanding interest. Strap iron assemblies are not as well designed as the cast iron ones and generally belong to a later date.

Much of this ironwork was erected on detached dwellings, but many row houses, like those on Wabash Avenue and Washington Street, had grilles, railings and cast iron mantel fronts of merit. It is interesting to note that there are to be found in the re-built burned-over areas of the north side, many examples

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
7-

exactly similar to those remaining on West Wash-  
ington Street buildings which were untouched by  
the great fire.

Source: History of Chicago - Andreas.

By

E. J. Jansson

Approved

E. J. Jansson