CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
425 East McFetridge Drive
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1207

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

HABS No. IL-1207

Location: 425 East McFetridge Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60605, adjacent to Soldier Field in Burnham Park

Present Owner/ Occupant: Chicago Park District

Present Use: Administration building

Significance: The Chicago Park District Administration Building is significant in Chicago history as the home of the park district for more than seventy years. It is also an important example of the modern movement in public architecture and of the work of noted designers Holabird & Root.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: 1938-1939.

2. Architects: Chicago Park District Staff Architects.
Consulting Architects: Holabird & Root.

3. Original and subsequent owners: Chicago Park District.

4. Original and subsequent occupants: Chicago Park District.

5. Builders, Contractors, Suppliers:
General Contractor: Lundoff-Bicknell Co.
Foundation: Paschen Brothers Construction
Steel framing: Bethlehem Steel Company; Concrete Engineering Co., Chicago, IL
Reinforced concrete framing (floors, roof, walls, columns): Jos. T. Ryerson & Son, Inc., Chicago, IL

Roofing: Advance Roofing & Sheet Metal Company, Chicago, IL
Limestone: Heltonville Limestone Co., Bedford, IN
Marble: Henry Marble Co., Chicago, IL
Pink Granite: Rockville Granite Corporation, Rockville, MN
Virginia Green Stone: Adam Groth Co., Joliet, IL
Bluestone: L.F. Owen Company, Chicago, IL
Steel windows: Campbell Metal Window Corporation, Baltimore, MD
Wooden doors and miscellaneous carpentry: Schick-Johnson Company, Chicago, IL
Metal and fire doors, etc.: F.P. Smith Wire & Iron Works, Chicago, IL; Ceco Steel Products Corp, Chicago, IL; Harris-Preble Fire Doors, Inc., Chicago, IL; The R.C. Mahon Company, Detroit, MI; Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co., New Britain, CT; Durabilt Steel Locker Co., Aurora, IL; Fiat Metal Manufacturing Company, Chicago, IL; Metal Door & Trim Co., LaPorte, IN; Scully Steel Products Co.
Miscellaneous metalwork for doors, windows, etc. -- material cast bronze, alumilited aluminum, nickel plating: General Bronze Corporation, Distinctive Metal Work, Long Island, NY; General Bronze Corporation, Western Division, Chicago, IL
Hardware for doors: Illinois Hardware Co.
Glazed tile walls: National Fireproofing Corporation
Acoustic tile ceilings: Luse-Stevenson Acoustic Tile Contractors, Chicago, IL
Ornamental plaster for boardroom: Belsan Plastering Company
Asphalt tile floors: Beaton Resilient Floor Co., Chicago, IL
Terrazzo floors: John Caretti and Co., Chicago, IL
Electrical Contractors: Central States Electrical Construction Co.
Miscellaneous electrical equipment and lighting: Major Equipment Company, Chicago, IL; Edwards and Co., Inc., Norwalk, CT; Allis Chalmers Manufacturing Co., Pittsburgh Works, Pittsburgh, PA; Beardslee Chandelier Mfg. Co., Chicago, IL
Elevator: Westinghouse Elevator Co., Jersey City, NJ and Chicago, IL; Dahlstrom Metallic Door Co., Jamestown, NY; The W.S. Tyler Company
Escalator: Westinghouse Electric Elevator Co., Jersey City, NJ; Schick-Johnson Company, Chicago
Steam heating system: The Haines Co. (General Heating Contractor); Robert Gordon, Inc., Heating & Plumbing Contractors; B.F. Sturtevant, Hyde Park, Boston, MA
Ventilation/fans: The Haines Co., Chicago, IL; Minneapolis-Honeywell Regulator Co., Chicago, IL
Ventilation/grilles: Barber-Colman Company

Plumbing: Robt. Gordon, Inc., Plumbing & Heating Contractor; Robert E. Murphy, Plumbing Sub-Contractor
Kitchen: Albert Pick Co., Inc., Chicago, IL

6. Original plans and construction: The Chicago Park District Special Collections include what may be the preliminary designs for the new headquarters building. The photographed drawings, labeled "New Administration Building for Chicago Park District," are dated October 29, 1936 and signed by architectural designer Sidney Minchin, a park district employee. Minchin's plans called for an elongated two-story building over a raised basement. The design echoed the classical detailing of Soldier Field and the adjacent Field Museum, with grand, pedimented entrances at the center of the north and south facades, and smaller temple-like constructions toward either end of the north facade. The proposed building was U-shaped in plan, with the north facade angled to follow the course of 14th Street (now McFetridge Drive) and the wings of the structure reaching northward toward Soldier Field. It is unclear whether the park district ever seriously considered Minchin's scheme. [Photographed Chicago Park District drawings in the Chicago Park District Special Collections; *Who's Who in Chicago, 1926*, 611]

In any event, consulting architects Holabird & Root had entered the design process by late 1936. The firm's preliminary drawings, dated December 1936, present a sprawling ground floor from which a four-story, 25-bay-wide central block rises. As with the earlier plan, the north facade is skewed to follow 14th Street. The building is in the modern style, devoid of classical details. Only tall, squared-off pilasters set off the main entrances. [Holabird & Root drawing collection, Chicago Historical Society]

Nearly a year later, on November 10, 1937, the park district officially hired Holabird & Root to "render certain architectural services for [the] project." These services included the preparation of "preliminary studies and estimates of costs; ...all necessary sketch plans, elevations, sections and details of exterior and interior features," and required construction specifications. [*Proceedings*, Vol. IV, 1937-1938] By the end of 1937, Holabird & Root had prepared yet another design for the administration building. The ungainly wrap-around first floor had disappeared in favor of a sleeker silhouette. Short, low wings now flanked the long, four-story central block. The firm's perspective drawings suggest stone reliefs carved into the north walls of the wings. [Holabird & Root drawing collection, Chicago Historical Society]

On December 28, 1937, the park district awarded a contract for demolition of Soldier Field's north bleachers and for necessary site grading. Excavations began in mid-January, 1938, and by February, Chicago Park District staff architects and Holabird & Root had prepared detailed drawings for the complicated system of wood, concrete, and composite piles and reinforced concrete foundations. The following month, the park district hired Paschen Brothers to begin constructing the foundations. By July, the north end of Soldier Field looked as though a fleet of bombing planes had concentrated its destructive efforts by blowing [a] big hole in the ground. [*Recreation News*, July 1938, 1] Before long, the foundations were in place, and laborers began erecting the steel skeleton that would support the building, as well as the elaborate wood molds into which the concrete for the north Soldier Field bleachers would be poured. Dated construction photographs reveal that the contractors were still working on the bleachers in mid-September, 1938. [Chicago Park District architectural drawings and photographs; *Annual Report, 1937*, p. 17; *Proceedings*, 1937-1938, Vol. IV, 705-706]

The final construction drawings for the administration building, produced by Chicago Park District staff architects W.R. Weigler and M.J. Glicken, and approved by Holabird & Root, were ready by mid-April, 1938. Following these plans, the contractors poured the reinforced concrete floors and walls of the structure once the bleachers were finished. By March 1, 1939, the windows were in place, as was much of the limestone cladding. The exterior was essentially complete by the end of the month. By May, laborers were at work hanging acoustic tile ceilings and plastering interior columns. [Chicago Park District architectural drawings and photographs; *Recreation News*, August, 1939] On May 23, 1939, the park district estimated that the building was 86% complete. [*Proceedings*, Vol. VI, 1939-1940, 31]

The administration building was ready for occupancy on September 19, 1939, and the park board held its first meeting in the new boardroom on that day. The park district showed off the new headquarters building to the public during an October 18 "open house." [*Annual Report*, 1939, 12-13; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 20, 1939; *Chicago Tribune*, October 18, 1939]

7. Alterations and additions: Although Soldier Field has been altered numerous times to accommodate changing uses, the park district administration building itself has changed little. Over the years, a number of interior office partitions have been added on various floors, but the overall open plan has remained largely intact. In 1985, the park district retrofitted the north plaza and entrance with ramps and an automatic door to provide universal accessibility. (See Architectural Description for further information.)

B. Historical Context:

1. History of the Chicago Park District

The Chicago Park District is a municipal agency that currently manages and operates 555 parks comprising more than 7,000 acres of parkland. The organization's operating budget exceeds $300 million, and its workforce totals approximately 2,500 (including seasonal employees). The Chicago Park District was formally established in 1934. To fully understand the history of the agency and Chicago's significant and diverse collection of historic parks, however, it is necessary to describe park development since the city's early years.

Formally established as a city in 1837, Chicago began experiencing a flurry of land speculation in the 1840s. Although the nascent city government had not adopted any policies or plans to encourage park development, clever real estate speculators began creating small parks and squares to boost property values in the neighborhoods they were developing. These developers would donate small amounts of acreage within their real estate holdings to the City of Chicago for use as public land. As the city tended to make only modest improvements, most of these early parks were little more the small lots with grass and trees.

In 1849, real estate speculator and civic booster John S. Wright imagined a more ambitious scheme of park development that would benefit all of Chicago. He imagined the city encircled "with a magnificent chain of parks and parkways that have not their equal in the world." [Wright, quoted in *Chicago City Manual, 1914*, at p.7] Twenty years later, Wright's idea would lead to the development of one of the nation's first boulevard systems. In the 1840s, however, the concept did not move forward, and the city continued to purchase and accept donations of land on a piecemeal basis.

By the late 1850s, concern for public health and sanitation prompted citizens to rally for park development. One major focus of this issue was the public health threat posed by the City Cemetery located on the North Side, on the edge of Lake Michigan. Due to the sandy nature of the soil, the graves of recent cholera and small pox victims were quite shallow. Dr. John Rauch of the Chicago branch of the National Sanitary Commission led a successful protest to set aside a 60-acre unused portion of the cemetery as parkland.

This marked the beginnings of Lincoln Park. It also led to citizen demands for the complete removal of the cemetery, and brought attention to the need for a whole system of parks in Chicago. Citizens who rallied for park development drafted three separate acts of legislation establishing the Lincoln, South, and West Park Commissions in 1869. Although the three park commissions operated independently, the overall goal was to create a unified park and boulevard system that would encircle Chicago.

The Lincoln Park Commission soon began improving and enlarging the park, expanding the newly created Lincoln Park Zoo, and constructing Lake Shore Drive as the boulevard linkage with downtown. The commission also intended to improve Diversey Parkway as the boulevard that would connect the park with the West Park System. This was never realized, however, due to political problems and funding constraints.

The South Park Commission had sufficient funds to hire the nationally renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted to lay out its park system. The 1,055-acre site was known as South Park, and is now considered Jackson and Washington Parks and the Midway Plaisance. Improvements began in the Washington Park section. When Chicago was selected as the site for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, Olmsted was hired to create a plan for the fairgrounds at Jackson Park and the Midway Plaisance. Olmsted returned the site to parkland after the fair. After his death in 1903, Olmsted's sons sustained their father's important role in developing Chicago's south parks. Along with Daniel H. Burnham & Co. architects, the Olmsted Brothers designed a system of revolutionary parks that opened in 1905 to provide breathing space and social services to overcrowded tenement neighborhoods.

The West Park Commission hired William Le Baron Jenney, an architect and engineer who helped develop the nation's earliest skyscrapers, to lay out its parks and boulevards. Jenney created original plans for the system's three large parks, Humboldt, Garfield, and Douglas Parks. The commission could only make improvements in small phases, and Jenney's plans were never fully executed. During a period of reform and expansion beginning in 1905, a Danish immigrant, Jens Jensen, became General Superintendent and Chief Landscape Architect of the West Park System. Following his naturalistic design philosophies, Jensen made impressive large-scale improvements to the parks. Jensen later became known as Dean of the Prairie style of landscape architecture.

At the turn of the century, Chicago experienced significant growth and expansion. In addition to population increases resulting from the city's industrial growth, the city's boundaries had pushed north, south, and west. The most remarkable increases occurred in 1889, when residents of many townships and unincorporated areas outside of Chicago voted in favor of annexation to the city. At the time, the city grew from 43 to 169 square miles in size. Because these new areas were not within the jurisdictions of the Lincoln, South, or West Park Commissions, an 1895 state act allowed voters within these unserved areas to create their own park districts. By 1930, 19 new park districts had been formed, resulting in a total of 22 independent agencies operating simultaneously in Chicago.

A number of the new park districts were in neighborhoods located along the North and South Branches of the Chicago River. Here, landscape improvements could take advantage of the sites' natural attributes. Although these new districts had limited financial resources due to

small taxing jurisdictions, many of these parks included attractive field houses designed by prominent local architects such as Clarence Hatzfeld, who was also responsible for bungalows, fine apartment buildings, and commercial buildings in the same neighborhoods.

By 1934, all of Chicago's 22 park districts were rendered financially insolvent due to the Great Depression. For years there had been discussions about the inefficiency of having so many separate agencies providing recreational services and managing Chicago's parks. To reduce duplication of services, streamline operations, and gain access to funding through President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, voters approved the Park Consolidation Act of 1934, which established the Chicago Park District.

At the time of consolidation, the Chicago Park District inherited more than 130 parks, including 83 field houses, 50 swimming pools, 13 beaches, and five golf courses. As these parks facilities and landscapes were in various states of completion and disrepair, the park district began large-scale improvements utilizing significant federal relief funds. Although pressure to build quickly resulted in some poorly conceived and executed projects, many notable works of architecture and landscape design emerged during this period. These included designs by in-house architects and landscape architects, as well as by consulting architects such as Holabird & Root. Because the newly-formed agency needed a substantial amount of office space quickly, the large park district staff moved into temporary quarters in the former administration building of the 1933-1934 Century of Progress World's Fair in Burnham Park.

2. The Need for a Headquarters Building

The Chicago Park District staff began operating out of the former Century of Progress headquarters in early 1935. Designed by Edward Bennett, Hubert Burnham, and John Holabird. Park and originally intended to house the South Park Commissioners after the fair, the structure was "completely remodeled" to suit the needs of the new park district. [Bruegmann, Vol. III, 145-150; *Annual Report, 1935*, 48; *Handbook of Chicago's Parks*]

Almost immediately after the Chicago Park District moved into the remodeled Century of Progress administration building, it became clear that the structure was too small to serve the consolidated district's purposes. By the end of 1936, the building housed a growing staff overseeing a broad range of federally funded parks projects. In that year alone, the park district was involved in 58 Works Progress Administration ("WPA") projects and at least 10 Public Works Administration ("PWA") projects, including extensive improvements to Outer Lake Shore Drive. The added staffing soon "overtaxed" the building's capacity and necessitated the relocation of the Recreation Department to the former South Park Commission administration building in Washington Park, five miles away. This occasioned a "lack of coordination and...delays and lost motion," prompting the park district to look for an alternative solution. [*Annual Report, 1936*, 32-46, 132-134; *Annual Report, 1937*, 17; *Daily News*, December 22, 1936]

The park district soon determined to construct a large new administration building across the north end of Soldier Field. The structure would double as the end wall for a new north grandstand and concrete stage. This approach was particularly clever, because funding for the project could be drawn from a surplus remaining from the original bonds issued for the construction of Soldier Field -- funds that were earmarked solely for work on the stadium. [*Annual Report, 1937*, 17]

3. PWA Funding

For the remaining funds, the park district turned to the PWA. Created by Title II of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1935, the PWA helped fund projects costing more than $25,000 through grants and loans to both Federal and non-Federal entities. By the close of 1937, the agency had already financed more than 26,000 construction projects nationwide. The PWA favored new construction projects located in areas with high unemployment such as Chicago. Further, PWA funds had relatively few strings attached. Unlike the WPA, the PWA had no requirement that 90% of the construction workers be drawn from relief roles. And, while PWA staff reviewed projects for "economic soundness and technical adequacy," they left decisions regarding architectural and engineering matters largely under local control. [Ghirardo, 136-137, 155; Short and Stanley-Brown, I, VI]

In December of 1936, the Chicago Park District applied for a PWA grant for 45% of the cost of "the completion of Soldier Field, including an Administration Building at the North end." [*Proceedings,* 1937-1938, Vol. III, 403] Nine months later, the PWA awarded the park district a grant of $879,545. In accepting the grant, the park district noted that the federal aid would be used primarily for removal of the side seats at the north end of Soldier Field, but also for "architectural treatment of the north end." The park district went on to state, perhaps somewhat disingenuously, that "incidentally some usable space may be developed in the structure...which can be put to practical use by fitting it as office space for the central administration of the business of the [park district]." Under the terms of the grant, work was to begin within 14 weeks of the grant offer and be completed by June 30, 1939. [*Proceedings,* 1937-1938, Vol. IV, 104, 368-371.] (The completion date was later extended to September 1, 1939.) [*Proceedings,* 1939-1940, Vol. VI, 30]

4. Holabird & Root, Consulting Architects

In late 1936, around the time of its PWA grant application, the park district enlisted the Chicago architecture firm of Holabird & Root to provide design and construction assistance. Holabird & Root was the logical choice for the role of "Consulting Architects." The experienced firm had designed adjacent Soldier Field in the mid-1920s and played a significant part in developing the 1933-1934 Century of Progress World's Fair in Burnham Park. Moreover, Holabird & Root had acquired, by the 1930s, a national reputation for designing outstanding modern office buildings.

The firm had its start in 1880, when engineer William Holabird and engineer and landscape architect Ossian C. Simonds left the office of William Le Baron Jenney to form their own firm, Holabird & Simonds. Two years later, architect Martin Roche joined the pair, and the firm was renamed Holabird & Simonds & Roche. When Simonds went off on his own in 1883, the firm became Holabird & Roche. [Bruegmann, Vol. I, xiii]

The firm's true calling presented itself in the mid-1880s, when it obtained its first commissions for commercial buildings in Chicago's Loop. Beginning with the Tacoma Building of 1886, Holabird & Roche took a prominent role in developing the influential Chicago School of Architecture. The firm employed new building technologies -- skeleton framing and large plate glass windows -- and a spare aesthetic -- narrow, continuous piers, recessed spandrels, and a tri-partite building scheme -- to create its signature style. Through about 1910, Holabird & Roche applied this general formula to a substantial number of "high-rise" commercial buildings, including the Marquette Building (1894) and the Chicago Building (1903-1904) in Chicago's Loop. [Bruegmann, Vol. I, 21, 120-129, 244-247; Condit, 117-118, 121; Blaser, 29] During the first decade of the 20th century, the firm also began to stray from the clean, spare detailing of its Chicago style to a more eclectic range of classical revival ornament. Notable examples of the firm's eclecticism are the Neo-Classic Cook County Courthouse/Chicago City Hall (1904-1910), the Gothic-revival University Club (1904-1908), and the Tuscan Monroe Building (1910-1912). [Bruegmann, Vol. I, xiv-xv; 255-264, 268-277, 379-383; Huxtable; Irving, 9]

Among the firm's best-known designs of the early 1920s was Chicago's Soldier Field (1919-1926). Holabird & Roche produced the winning entry in the South Park Commission's 1919 competition to design a vast stadium on lakeshore landfill in the newly-created Burnham Park. The firm's design took the form of a U-shaped amphitheater, with its open end facing north toward the Field Museum. *Architectural Forum*'s February 1925 issue explained that the firm placed "monumental porticoes" atop the east and west stands to complement the classically-inspired museum. These colonnades featured "Doric columns...[that] closely follow those of the portico in the temple of Athena, commonly called the Parthenon." [*Architectural Forum*, February 1925; Bruegmann, Vol. I, xiii, 141-149]

After the deaths of William Holabird and Martin Roche in the mid-1920s, the firm was renamed Holabird & Root, for principles John Holabird, Sr., son of William Holabird, and John Wellborn Root, Jr., son of the noted 19th century architect of the same name. Holabird & Root quickly became known for limestone-clad, Art Deco masterpieces such as the Chicago Daily News Building (1925-1929) and the Chicago Board of Trade (1928-1930). [Bruegmann, Vol. II, 311-325; Bruegmann, Vol. III, 23-39; Blaser, 68-69] The firm's national standing was assured in 1930, when the Architectural League of New York awarded the Daily News building the Gold Medal of Honor "for the great distinction and high architectural quality...achieved in the solution of the American Office Building." [Award citation, quoted in *Pencil Points*, February 1938]

In addition to its widely-respected skyscrapers, the firm designed a series of streamlined office buildings for various government entities. These included the Jefferson County Courthouse (Birmingham, Alabama, 1928-1931); the Racine County Courthouse (Racine, Wisconsin, 1929-1931); the St. Paul City Hall/Ramsey County Courthouse (St. Paul, Minnesota, 1930-1932); and the North Dakota State Capitol (Bismarck, North Dakota, 1931-1934). Though of varying form, all four buildings were steel-framed and limestone-clad. They possessed little exterior detailing beyond the metal spandrels between the windows of the bays. Each structure had public spaces embellished with marble, wood veneers, and recessed lighting; non-public areas were essentially unornamented and meant for business. [Bruegmann, Vol. III, 63-69, 136-140, 194-204, 212-219]

While the foregoing projects were brought to completion well after the Stock Market Crash of 1929, the Depression brought a dramatic drop in the firm's commissions, eventually necessitating a reduction in staffing from several hundred to fewer than ten people. John Holabird helped to keep the firm afloat through his role on the official Century of Progress Architecture Committee. Together with fellow committee members Hubert Burnham and Edward Bennett, Holabird designed the previously mentioned fair administration building (1929-1930) and the widely heralded Travel and Transportation Building (1930-1933). Holabird & Root designed at least eight other Century of Progress buildings and exhibits, including the Chrysler Building (1932) and the Streets of Paris (1933-1934), and developed schemes for many more. Through this work, the firm became intimately familiar with the challenging conditions of the sandy Burnham Park site. [Bruegmann, Vol. III, 145-157, 231-239, 242-255, 263-266]

5. The Park District Administration Building as "Modern Architecture"

Holabird & Root's celebrated skyscrapers and understated public buildings were part of a broader, forward-looking movement in architecture. This "modern" movement followed various paths. Spurred by the Paris Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes of 1925, the Art Deco style took firm hold in the United States, particularly for commercial structures. Art Deco largely abandoned historicism, and relied instead on restrained ornament. Deco ornament was primarily rectilinear in form, but also included geometric curves. As applied to skyscrapers, the style stressed verticality, with setbacks imposed by newly implemented zoning regulations leading the eye ever upward. [Whiffen, 235-240; Weber, 22-23]

Another branch of modernity, the International or Bauhaus style, also arose in the 1920s, in Germany, France, Switzerland, and Holland. The "radical" practitioners of this style vehemently rejected architectural precedents, eliminating all forms of ornament and instead concentrating on the volume and regularity of a building. [Lane, 3-4; *Modern Architecture*, 14-150; Mock, 17-18] In Germany, the Bauhaus style was widely accepted, and architects Walter Gropius and Erich Mendelsohn, among others, obtained many public commissions for their work. Controversy followed construction, however, and after 1930, the Nazi party stepped in to set the standards for a more conservative "National Socialist" architecture. Though Nazi policies endorsed a return to

historicism, in practice Hitler's lead architect, Albert Speer, combined "modernity with neoclassicism." Speer's Nurnberg Zeppelinfeld stadium, for example, was profusely columned, yet boxy and severe. [Lane, 3-4, 193-194; Weber, 22-23; Bayer, 20-23]

Despite the widespread acceptance of modernism for American commercial structures, minimally ornamented, ahistoric designs were more controversial for public buildings in the United States. In 1931, R.W. Sexton wrote in his *American Public Buildings of Today* that "the 'Modern' movement...threatens, it seems to some of us, the equilibrium we were gaining" in public architecture. Yet Sexton included Holabird & Root's spare Racine County Courthouse among his photographic collection of exemplary public buildings. [Sexton, Forward, 94-95] In 1936, the *Federal Architect* reported that government architects were gradually abandoning the eclecticism of recent decades, but that "there are almost as many opinions about modern architecture as there are architects trying to design it." [*The Federal Architect*, October 1936, 16]

Notwithstanding the controversy surrounding modernism, a 1939 study of PWA-funded public architecture found that half of all designs for non-Federal projects had been built in the modern style. [Short and Stanley, II] Author Diane Ghirardo has described the hallmarks of the style as applied to public buildings:

> In the external treatment of the simple rectangular volumes, the architects literally stripped away such decorative elements as pediments, free standing columns, open porticos and towers... Decorative treatments consisted of moulded string courses or vestigial cornices, fluting of the shaft of shallow pilasters, or perhaps some decorative limestone friezes.

[Ghirardo, 169-172]

Because a substantial number of government buildings were constructed with such spare detailing, commentators have variously termed the style "PWA modern," "stripped classicism," and "government moderne." [Condit, 26; Ghirardo, 169-172]

The Chicago Park District administration building designed by Holabird & Root and park district architects is a noteworthy, if severe, example of this modern style of American public architecture. (Unfortunately, the handsome office building has been sorely underappreciated; even architecture critic Carl W. Condit labeled the structure "uninspired." [Condit, 26]) Like the best of such designs, the administration building is solid and imposing, yet built with "extreme simplicity." [*Recreation News*, July 1938, 1] The monumental limestone rectangle is virtually devoid of external ornamentation beyond the metal window spandrels and Virginia greenstone portals of the primary entrances. Inside, the ornamentation is equally elegant and restrained, with luminous marble walls highlighting the public areas and sparsely-detailed wood partitions

providing continuity throughout the rest of the building. The Chicago Park District recognized the architectural merit of its new home, proclaiming the administration building one of the "outstanding structures in Chicagoland devoted to public service," and lauding its "extremely simple, yet imposing...design." [*Recreation News,* August, 1939, 1]

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Chicago Park District Administration Building, with its long, stark facades of recessed limestone piers, is a particularly spare example of the "PWA modern" style of public architecture.

2. Condition of fabric: Throughout its 60-year history, the Chicago Park District Administration Building has remained in good condition. Today, the building, situated between the Museum Campus and Soldier Field, stands in the way of a new underground parking structure that will serve museum patrons and sports fans at the soon to be remodeled stadium. Demolition of the administration building will begin during the fall of 2001.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The structure rises 4 stories -- 67'-3" above grade on the north elevation. The building's long north and south facades measure 450' across. Each comprises 29 bays, with 25 central bays measuring 15' each, and two additional bays on either end measuring just over 18' each. The much narrower east and west facades measure 66' each, and are only four bays wide.

   The •new• north Soldier Field bleachers and entry ramps to the sub-basement parking lot extend beyond the building proper. The north bleachers arc across the length of the south end of the building, stretching 110'-10" southward at their center point. (A "splendid open-air stage," now demolished, once extended forward another 38'-3". [*Annual Report, 1937,* 17]) The entry ramps, which were originally designed for pedestrian use, but later used exclusively by automobiles, begin at grade and slope downward. Their above-grade limestone cheek walls, however, extend approximately another 92' east and west at the south side of the building. The limestone walls rise nearly 29' above the ground.

2. Foundations: The building's foundations are composed of reinforced concrete. Because they support both the administration and the adjacent bleachers, the foundations do not form a simple rectangle, as in many structures. The north wall of the building is perched upon a concrete slab that rests on concrete piers extending 6'-0" beyond the north wall of the basement. Below the basement level, the north side of the foundation slopes back southward to the sub-basement floor. Sand and rubble support this angled wall.

   At the south side of the building, columns transfer the weight of the limestone-clad exterior wall to the ground. The sub-basement floor extends southward beyond these columns (and others supporting the concrete bleachers) to meet the leading edge of the bleachers.

   Specifications for foundation reinforcements varied greatly depending on the particular location. For example, the architects directed that the sub-basement floor, a 5" slab, be studded with alternating straight and bent 5/8" steel rods spaced at 8" on center.

   The reinforced concrete foundations are footed on concrete, wood, and composite piles of various shapes and sizes. This complex system of footings was deemed necessary to support the massive building on its sandy lakefront site.

3. Walls: The building's exterior walls are constructed of reinforced concrete, and clad with large, smooth-faced Bedford, Indiana limestone ashlars laid in regular courses. The individual limestone units are fixed in place with "2 anchors to top bed each stone" and "2 dowels to bottom bed each stone." Across the greater part of all four facades, the limestone is not arrayed as a simple flat wall, but rather as a series of vertical piers or engaged buttresses. These piers flank recessed bays holding vertically alternating pairs of steel-sashed, double-hung windows and flat metal spandrels. At the top of each bay, simple decorative detail is provided by a recessed rectangular limestone panel oriented parallel to the ground.

4. Structural systems, framing: The framing of the building comprises I-beams used as joists and columns. Floor slabs are constructed of reinforced concrete. The original building specifications provided that the concrete slab for the first floor measure 5-1/2", with the top of the structural slab 1/4" below the level of the finished floor and the top of the structural steel joists 5" below the finished floor. The slab floors of stories two, three, and four are slightly shallower: 5" thick, with the top of the steel 4-1/2" below the finished floor.

Typical interior columns measure 1'-10" on the first and second floors and 1'-8" on the third and fourth floors. Beneath the four exposed sides of these columns lie the structural I-beams encased in tile fireproofing materials.

5. Entry plazas and exterior dining court: A simple yet impressive plaza of concrete and stone leads to the primary north entrance of the administration building. Beyond the street and the sidewalk, a few concrete steps lead to a wide plaza. Originally, this area was simply a broad expanse of concrete. In 1955, however, the park district added a pair of large, shallow planting boxes and lined the plaza with benches. At the southern edge of the plaza is the main staircase to the building. Four pink granite steps, measuring 31'-0" across, bring one to a concrete platform. The staircase then rises another seven steps to a second, wider concrete platform that leads into the building. Limestone benches bracket the upper landing. Limestone buttresses and platforms for light standards flank the staircase and lower landing. Beyond the buttresses are limestone planters, standing approximately 9' high and girdled by limestone benches. The planters and benches extend another 37' east and west on either side of the staircase buttresses.

In 1985, the park district retrofitted the plaza to provide universal access. Long ramps now line either side of the concrete plaza between the sidewalk and the staircase. And a cleverly designed and unobtrusive ramp wraps around the east and north (back) sides of the east planter and opens directly onto the upper platform.

The shallow south plaza runs the entire length of the building, terminating in limestone end walls. The long concrete platform intersects with the back edge of the north Soldier Field bleachers and originally served as a functional extension of them. Since the truncation of Soldier Field in 1974, the south plaza has rarely been used, although it was designated a smoking area in the early 1990s.

A much smaller staircase and plaza lead up to the west entrance to the building. Here, the ten granite steps run perpendicular to the exterior wall. The top step opens onto a concrete platform. The entire construction is masked from the street by a 5'-4" limestone cheek wall topped by a simple wrought iron railing.

At the opposite end of the building, just beyond a wall of glass at the east end of the basement dining room is a sunken courtyard for outdoor dining and relaxation. The 76'-0"x42'-6" space is set within a high concrete retaining wall topped by a painted metal fence. Just inside the retaining wall is a low limestone planter that runs along the north, east, and south sides of the "room." The "floor" of the dining court is paved with square bluestone slates edged with red brick. An

open metal staircase provides a means of emergency egress from the space.

6. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The building has entrances on all four sides. The primary entrance is located at the center of the long north facade. There, the architects placed three stainless steel revolving doors. The middle door has since been replaced with an automatic door to provide access to the building for persons with disabilities. Until the late 1990s, this central door was crowned with stainless steel letters reading "Chicago Park District." Each of the three doors is set in a decorative oxidized cast bronze surround with a modified Greek key pattern across the lintel. Above each lintel is a large, fixed, plate glass transom. Each door and transom combination sits within a simple but substantial portal of Virginia green stone.

On the opposite (south) side of the building, there are four exterior doors. Two doors lie near the center of the south facade, flanking three bays of large steel-framed plate glass windows with side lights. Each doorway holds a pair of hinged •tubular steel• doors that open outward, as well as a pair of wooden screen doors that open inward. The bronze door hardware includes spare exterior handles and interior push bars that are simply flat extrusions of metal. Each set of doors is surrounded by plate glass transoms and sidelights. Five bays to the west and four bays to the east of these central doors are two more sets of double doors. These are hollow metal fire doors that open outward from the fire stairs within.

Another two tubular steel doors are located on the west side of the building. These are single, rather than double, doors, each measuring 3'-6"x7'-0". Large transoms top the doors, and each fills the entire width of its recessed bay.

On the east end of the building, the doorways are at the basement, rather than the first floor level. In truth, these are not actually entrances, but provide a means of accessing the sunken courtyard off the employee dining room. Originally, these openings were filled with two sets of double tubular steel doors with large plate glass windows and bronze hardware. These doors have been replaced with single steel doors equipped with panic bars and flanked by narrow sidelights.

b. Windows: The Campbell Metal Window Corporation manufactured more than 400 "electro-galvanized and bonderized" steel-sash windows for this building. According to the original construction drawings, Campbell finished all the window sashes with two coats of baked-on enamel, and installed water-rolled finish bronze hardware, including fasteners, lifts, levers, and chains.

The windows are almost entirely double-hung, with two large, moveable sashes. Along the north and south walls, the windows measure 4'-1-1/2" wide; on the east and west, they are 4'-8" wide. A fixed transom tops each double-hung on the first floor, so that the whole assemblage measures 10'-9-1/2" tall. The double-hung windows of the upper floors lack transoms and are therefore shorter, in general measuring 7'-1-1/2" on the 2nd and 3rd floors, and 7'-8" on the 4th. Small screens can be found on a few of the double-hung windows.

A very limited number of windows are of a different type. Twelve windows (four on each of the top three floors) "hopper out" on hinges located at the bottoms of the sashes. These hopper windows provide ventilation for the fire stairs located on the south side of the building. In addition, the east wall of the basement dining room is constructed largely of square lights set in steel sashes. While most of these lights were fixed, eight originally "awninged out" from top hinges for ventilation.

7. Roof: The roof is essentially flat. It is penetrated by a number of exhaust pipes and ventilator shafts, as well as by three "penthouses" that accommodate elevator housing and two sets of fire stairs, one at either end of the building.

To facilitate drainage, the area around the roof perimeter, just behind the parapet walls, slopes downward approximately 4'-9" to a short wall measuring 1'-8". The main field of the roof drops another 2" toward a series of low points located at intervals along the center point of the roof. Here, runoff empties into 4" internal leaders or downspouts. The main roof field was originally covered with tar and gravel, while the sloped portions of the roof immediately behind the parapet walls were clad with composition roofing. The architectural drawings specified lead-coated copper flashing to seal the junctures between the roofing materials and the building elements.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: All four upper stories occupy the full floor area of the 450'x66' structure. While each floor includes a limited number of enclosed rooms, particularly on the building's south side, the overall floor plans are quite open. Further, as the *Recreation News* noted, "the building is so laid out that the most economical and effective use of the large floor space can be made." [*Recreation News*, July 1938, 4]

On the first floor, the main (north) entrance opens onto a large lobby with a central information desk and a set of escalators. Off the northeast corner of this lobby is a sunken foyer that leads to the Chicago Park District boardroom. Just south of the boardroom runs a long corridor. Midway along the building, the corridor jogs northward to an unenclosed service staircase and then continues east. Offices and an open work area lie off this corridor. A second long corridor runs past another service staircase to the west end of the building, where a small lobby lies just inside the west entrance. Enclosed offices line the south wall. Along the north wall, corner offices and a classroom bracket a large, open workspace.

The upper floors are more open still. Each opens off a small central escalator lobby, with a long corridor running lengthwise across the building. Individual executive staff offices lie at the east end of the second floor. Offices and other enclosed rooms line most of the south wall. The second floor's north side and far west end were originally devoted almost entirely to open work areas set off only by short partition walls. Four cashiers' cages were once the only enclosed area along this wall, but additional partitioned offices have since been added. The third floor is similarly arrayed, with offices, including those of the law department, concentrated at the east end and open work areas at the west end. On the fourth floor, there is still more undivided space, with only a few enclosed areas. A blueprint room and several conference rooms lie on either side of the escalator. A few offices can be found at the far east end of the floor. A single supervisory office is located along the north wall of the west end.

In the basement, which has a somewhat more irregular footprint than the upper floors, various vaults and utility rooms line the north and south sides of the building along a central corridor. At the east end of the basement is a large employee dining room that adjoins a sunken terrace for outdoor dining. A fully equipped kitchen lies next to the employee dining room. Beneath the basement is a sub-basement, used primarily for parking, but also for housing the building's mechanicals and records storage.

As the functions of the park district headquarters staff shifted over the years, the uses of various building areas changed accordingly. For example, a large classroom or auditorium off the first lobby, originally intended for "public gatherings," has had many uses, and most recently served as office space for the Lakefront Region's permitting office. The northeast corner of the first floor, most recently occupied by the purchasing department, initially housed the park district's own police department, which was disbanded in 1959. Men's and women's locker rooms originally used by recreation and landscape department crews have long since been remodeled for other uses, including the fourth floor Chicago Park District Special Collection room. Changing circumstances have also dictated the construction of a certain number of additional offices in previously open spaces. In spite of these alterations, the overall floor plan and open character of the building has remained largely intact.

2. Stairways: The building has two pairs of staircases (four total), one a pair of "service" stairways, the other a set of fire stairs. The former supplement the central escalator, providing easy access between the basement and fourth floor at either end of the building. These staircases, modern in style, are among the administration building's finest interior details. Each has metal stringers and risers, and asphalt tile treads and landings. Despite the heavy materials, these essentially unenclosed staircases appear to float in mid air from certain angles. The west staircase is particularly airy-looking. Their 3'-high metal railings have three horizontal members, with the lower railings being simply flat bands of painted metal and the streamlined bronze nickel handrails having slightly hipped tops. The railings curve gently at each landing. Metal lath and plaster covers the soffits beneath the stringers.

3. Flooring: The flooring varies from room to room throughout the building. Although some of the more utilitarian rooms, particularly in the basement, have bare concrete floors, most benefit from some type of floor covering. Much of the flooring is original.

For example, John Caretti and Co. laid the original terrazzo floors in the main lobby and foyer, as well as in the various restrooms throughout the building. The lobby floor is laid in a two-tone scheme. Speckled ivory tiles form the floor's main field. One-quarter-inch metal strips set off groupings of four tiles each, while 1/16" strips separate the four tiles in each grouping. Light gray tiles make up the floor's border. Beneath the revolving doors of the main entrance, the Caretti Company laid disks of ivory terrazzo. The foyer floor has the same combination of ivory and gray terrazzo, though the few steps are clad with marble. The terrazzo for the restrooms, according to drawings by Caretti, is

composed of 75% Cardiff green chips and 25% red Levanto chips set in a white Medusa cement with green pigment. One-eighth-inch, heavy top brass strips separate the 19-1/4"x17-3/8" tiles.

The park district specified carpet for the sloping aisles of the boardroom floor. Not surprisingly, the original carpeting has since been replaced. (The stepped floor beneath the auditorium seating is of bare concrete.) Carpet has also been installed as replacement flooring in certain other rooms around the building.

Asphalt tiles cover most of the floors in the work areas on the upper floors. Much of this tile is original to the building. The individual dark brown tiles are rectangular, measuring 24"x12".

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

a. Walls: Throughout much of the building, the walls are of painted plaster over metal lath and scored, fireproof tile. This is true of the inner surfaces of the exterior walls, as well as of most interior walls. Throughout the building, glass panels interrupt the walls of certain office spaces and conference rooms. These "borrowed light partitions" facilitate transmission of light either into or through these rooms. The typical borrowed light partition includes a series of textured, frosted, or plate glass panels set 3'-5" above the floor and measuring 3'-7 1/4" in height. Panel width varies according to location. In the third floor library, the lights begin 7'-7" above the floor and measure 2'-1 1/4" x 2'-10 9/16".

The building's fine interior detailing is exemplified by the spare, lustrous marble walls of the main lobby, the boardroom, and foyer that connects them. Panels of light and dark gray marble clad the lobby walls. The original drawings label the lighter stone on the exterior walls "clear face Carthage marble." The darker stone surrounding the north and south doors and covering the floor-to-ceiling partition wall behind the escalator (and the information desk) is "French gray marble." The light Carthage marble runs several feet into the foyer to the base of the staircase. Beyond this point, wood paneling – "English oak flexible wood" according to the drawings -- covers the plaster walls of the foyer. This 1/32" wood veneer continues into the boardroom, where it is applied in small, square panels beneath the windows, and in large sheets beneath them. The "windows" of the boardroom and foyer are not true openings to the exterior, but rather extension of the walls. The casements have wood frames finished to match the surrounding veneer and frosted glass to allow diffused light to

enter these spaces.
In the various restrooms, "vein Carthage" marble wainscoting covers the walls to a height of approximately 7'-0". Glazed tile lines the vestibules of the two sets of fire stairs. The original "Schedule of Finishes and Trims" specified "unscored tile" for miscellaneous utility rooms and basement vaults. This, too, remains in place.

b. Ceilings: Most of the ceilings of the first floor are suspended metal lath and plaster. The coffered boardroom ceiling comprises molded plaster "beams" and recessed panels of 12"x12" acoustic tiles. A Greek key pattern adorns the plaster beams. (This decorative element constitutes one of the few directly classical references in the building, though even here the design is quite streamlined.) Deep, curving plaster cove moldings accent the rounded marble wall behind the escalator. Shallow moldings highlight the plaster ceilings on the escalator stringers.

On the upper floors, only the ceilings of the escalator "lobbies" are metal lath and plaster. The vast ceiling surfaces elsewhere on these floors are primarily of suspended 16"x16" acoustical tiles. Ceilings in a few offices, etc., are covered with newer 12"x12" acoustical tiles.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Due to its largely open floor plan, the administration building has relatively few interior doors for a structure its size. As with other aspects of the design, the doors in the largely public first floor and in the executive offices are the most elaborate. The wood doors off the first floor north lobby are of birch with an ebony finish. Each measures 7'-0"x2'-4" or 2'-6" wide, and is fitted with a large window that takes up much of the door's area. Other first and second floor doors are paneled and constructed of natural birch.

Throughout the rest of the building, the 7'-0" doors are of natural finish birch with simple brass hardware. The doors are of several varieties, but their common materials, trim, and height give them a uniform appearance. The width of the doors varies from 2'-4-1/2" to 3'-2", depending on their location. Some are simply flush expanses of wood. Others are equipped with grilles near the bottom. Many of the doors have large windows, most measuring 3'-2"x2'-1". While some of the window openings are filled with plate glass, most hold frosted or textured glass. This feature provides privacy, while allowing borrowed natural light to illuminate the corridors. Each door is surrounded by a simple wood frame with trim measuring

either 2-1/4" or 3-7/8" wide.
The concept of borrowed light is also employed in the boardroom and adjacent foyer, where two walls of glass divide the boardroom from the foyer, and the foyer from the lobby. These partitions each include four 7'-0" doors with long glass panels set in ebonized white oak frames. Above the doors are large transoms that run all the way to the ceiling (another 7'-3" in the case of the board rooms doors).

b. Windows: Each of the building's many steel-sash double-hung windows (discussed in detail above at Section II.B.) is situated within a window well recessed approximately 2'-6" from the main wall. The painted sashes sit immediately above the steel radiator covers at the base of these wells, and vary in height from approximately 7' to 11'.

6. Decorative features and trim: Built in the spartan years of the Depression, the administration building has relatively few decorative features. The focal point of the streamlined main lobby is the central information desk. Clad in French gray marble to match the interior wall behind, the octagonal desk stands 3'-3" high, inclusive of a 5" recessed base and a 1 1/4" counter. It measures more than 11' across at its widest point. Cylindrical marble columns bracket the substantial desk. Beyond these columns extends a simple yet elegant bronze railing set on a French gray marble base. Intended to restrict access to non-public areas of the building, this attractive railing has two sets of sparely-detailed swinging gates, one on either side of the information desk.

Another significant group of architectural elements likewise serves both functional and decorative purposes. These are the short partition walls that run throughout the building. These partitions, generally measuring 3'-4" high and 6" across, divide the work areas from the corridors and open staircases. To facilitate movement throughout the building, the architects created openings at intervals. Some of these openings are fitted with swinging doors. Natural birch baseboards and side walls and black painted hand rails distinguish these partitions. The spare decorative touches help to visually unify the various areas of the structure.

When built, the administration building contained a final area of decorative distinction, the enclosed cashiers' cages on the second floor. Two of the four cages remain in place, but the park district recently converted the others to office space, and much of the original ornament was removed. The remaining cages are set off by a 3'-8" wall of natural birch that complements the partition walls and doors throughout the building. Atop this wall is a black linoleum counter and a series of plate glass windows that rest on a 6" sill. The actual cashiers' windows are simply sheets of plate glass with pass-through trays beneath. This utilitarian

design replaces a much more elaborate one, in which each of the four windows was demarcated by a marble counter and an elaborate bronze grille. The lower portion of each grille was hinged inward to allow for the exchange of cash.

7. Hardware: Most of the door and window hardware is fairly utilitarian and unremarkable. Numerous original doorknobs and face plates still found throughout the building are quite interesting, however. The flattened knobs are adorned with concentric circles. The face plates have horizontal banding at top and bottom and graduated edges in a ziggurat configuration on either side. A popular expression of the Art Deco style, the form was also embodied in the staggered setbacks of Art Moderne skyscrapers.

8. Mechanical equipment:

   a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The administration building is heated by a four-zone (northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest), vacuum-pump steam heating system. The heating plant at the nearby Field Museum originally provided the steam for this system (and the Soldier Field system before it). The park district installed a new, gas-fired Kewanee steam boiler (Model # 71288, 13,838,00 BTUs/hr.) in 1972.

      The cast iron steam radiators throughout the building are "Corto" models manufactured by the American Radiator Company. Each unit is tucked into a window well and masked by a streamlined radiator cover with an opening at the bottom and a grille at the top.

      To cool the building, the Haines Company installed an extensive ventilation system, with large fresh air intakes and fan rooms on every floor. Ducts carried fresh air to steel vent grilles throughout building. The July 1938 issue of the *Recreation News* reported that the administration building would include a partial air conditioning system that could be extended to cool the entire structure at a later date.

      In 1940, the Chicago Park District retrofitted the building with a chilled water mechanical refrigeration system. According to the *Sixth Annual Report of the Chicago Park District*, dated December 31, 1940, the equipment installed included "a [300-ton capacity] centrifugal compressor, one chilled water circulating pump, piping, insulation and controls."

b. Electrical system: The *Fourth Annual Report of the Chicago Park District*, dated December 31, 1938, indicates that, for the new administration building, the park district's Division of Construction and Maintenance developed "a complete electrical system for modern up-to-date lighting as well as for telephone service and power requirement for pumps, supply and exhaust fans, elevator, escalator, kitchen and miscellaneous motor driven equipment." The division also designed a transformer vault with switching equipment and high tension feeders to an existing sub-station at Soldier Field. Over the years, the park district has upgraded the electrical service as needed.

c. Lighting: The *Recreation News* of August, 1939 described the lighting in the new administration building as "indirect." The term, apparently, referred to the fact that the fixtures' incandescent bulbs were shielded by convex globes that obscured their glare. Though some of these original fixtures survive, many have been replaced to provide higher illumination levels.

Most visibly, the five original pendant fixtures in the main lobby remain in place. Each fixture comprises a 30"-wide flashed opal glass bowl suspended from a spun bronze "trumpet" or shaft. The 8" spun bronze plates once positioned at the bases of the globes have been removed to expose the 500-watt bulbs within. On the west side of the lobby, original flush "Controlens" fixtures remain tucked above the phone booths. In the small foyer that separates the lobby from the boardroom, an additional three original pendant fixtures are still in place. Each has a 24"-wide flashed opal glass bowl with an etched border and a turned bronze knob. Each decorative bowl conceals four 100-watt incandescent bulbs suspended at the base of tapered, 15" shafts of spun bronze over iron rods.

In the wide open general office areas, where most administrative personnel worked, the park district installed pendant fixtures in long rows running the length of the building and spaced at 15' on center. Suspended from long metal rods, these convex, banded metal fixtures had the look of inverted space ships. Because they had metal rather than glass globes, they apparently provided relatively little illumination. These fixtures were replaced with 4' fluorescents in 1955. The suspended fixtures hung end-on-end and ran diagonally across the open work areas. A newer generation of fluorescent fixtures, similarly configured, now illuminates these areas.

The park district's set of original drawings includes designs for miscellaneous other fixtures throughout the building. There were, for example, prismatic lens fixtures over the first floor escalators, and 5"x14" opal glass bowls for the hallways and escalator lobbies on the other floors. Few, if any, of these lights remain. Fixtures in the various restrooms appear to be original, but this cannot be confirmed through drawings, and the globes are missing in any event.

d. Escalators, elevators: Westinghouse Electric Elevator Co. manufactured the narrow central escalator, one of the building's most interesting features. The moving treads and risers of this escalator measure 2'-5 1/4" across, just wide enough for a single person. Some of the original wide-toothed treads and risers remain, but those running between the basement and second floors have been replaced. Nickel bronze trims the escalator's base, deck boards, and molding. Teak paneling lines the inner walls. At the lobby level, marble clads the outer balustrades.

Local legend has it that the Administration Building escalator came from a Century of Progress building and is therefore the oldest one in Chicago, predating those installed at the State Street stores of Marshall Fields (1934), Sears (by January 1935), and Carson-Pirie Scott (1936). [*Building and Building Management*, January 1934 and January 1935; July 10, 2001 e-mail from Tony Jahn, Marshall Fields archivist; *Chicago Tribune*, June 25, 2001.] Evidence in Chicago Park District records is inconclusive on this point. General specification blueprints prepared by the Westinghouse Company date to 1936. Actual construction drawings by Schick-Johnson bear dates in October and November, 1938. There is no direct evidence that the administration building escalators were moved and reassembled.

A single, 2,500 lb. Westinghouse freight elevator is located on the southwest side of the building.

e. Plumbing: Supply lines of various sizes bring hot and cold running water to restrooms and service sinks in the basement and on all four upper floors. Toilets have 4" soil pipes, while urinals, lavatories, and service sinks are served by 2" pipes. Booster pumps and a pneumatic cold water tank increase water pressure within the building.

In 1941, the park district installed an outdoor sprinkling and drainage system to facilitate maintenance of the grounds.

9. Original furnishings: In August 1939, just before the completion of the administration building, the *Recreation News* reported that: "All-metal, olive green furniture, with cabinets to match the desks, will be used throughout the building." Much of this original furniture survives, but it is being auctioned off rather than moved to the Chicago Park District's new headquarters location.

D. Site: The Chicago Park District administration building sits at the north end of Burnham Park. It is directly adjacent to Soldier Field and across McFetridge Drive from the south side of the Field Museum of Natural History. Although the rectangular severity of the newer building contrasts sharply with its Neo-Classical neighbors, the repeating piers of its north and south facades echo the colonnades of the stadium and museum. By deft design, the understated administration building plays a secondary role to the classically-inspired structures

The original approach to the administration building was nearly as spartan as the structure itself. A broad, flat concrete plaza spread out from the north facade. In 1955, the park district softened the look of the plaza by adding a pair of large, shallow planters and lining the area with benches. Beyond the central plaza, two long walks extend east and west along the north side of the building to twin flagpoles.

On either side of these walks are grassy areas lined with trees. Landscape plans prepared in 1939 by the park district's Landscape Design Section and approved by Holabird & Root called for a double row of elms stretching along the north side of the sidewalk. Hawthorns frame the building entrance, and hawthorn hedges trimmed in a rectilinear manner extend east and west along the front façade. At the extreme ends of the sidewalks, running parallel to the building, the landscape designers formally planted a pair of lindens. The overall planting design has remained intact, although Emerald Queen Norway maples replaced the elms in the mid-1980s.

For the sunken dining terrace at the east end of the administration building, the landscape designers planned a lovely shade garden. Several crabapples and hawthorns sheltered diners, and a garden of perennial flowers, shrubs, and vines edged the space.

The broader setting of the administration building changed dramatically in 1995, when the northbound lanes of Lake Shore Drive were rerouted to the east of the Field Museum and Soldier Field and the vacated land converted to green space. The administration building thus came to be an integral part of the 57-acre Burnham Park extension known as the Museum Campus.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

The Chicago Park District has a complete set of drawings by Park District staff architects, including demolition, architectural, structural, electrical, mechanical, landscape, alteration, and other drawings.

Preliminary studies (40 pieces) and blueprints (40 pieces) for demolition and grading are housed at the Chicago Historical Society.

B. Historic Photographs:

The archives of the Chicago Park District contain several folders of construction photographs, including interior and exterior views. Also in the collection are many pre- and post-construction photographs, many undated.

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Soldier Field, Chicago, Illinois. (Promotional brochure, ca. 1940)

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This report was prepared on behalf of the Chicago Park District by Elizabeth A. Patterson, Consultant, and Julia S. Bachrach, Planning Supervisor, as a donation to the Historic American Buildings Survey. The photography was produced by Judith Bromley.