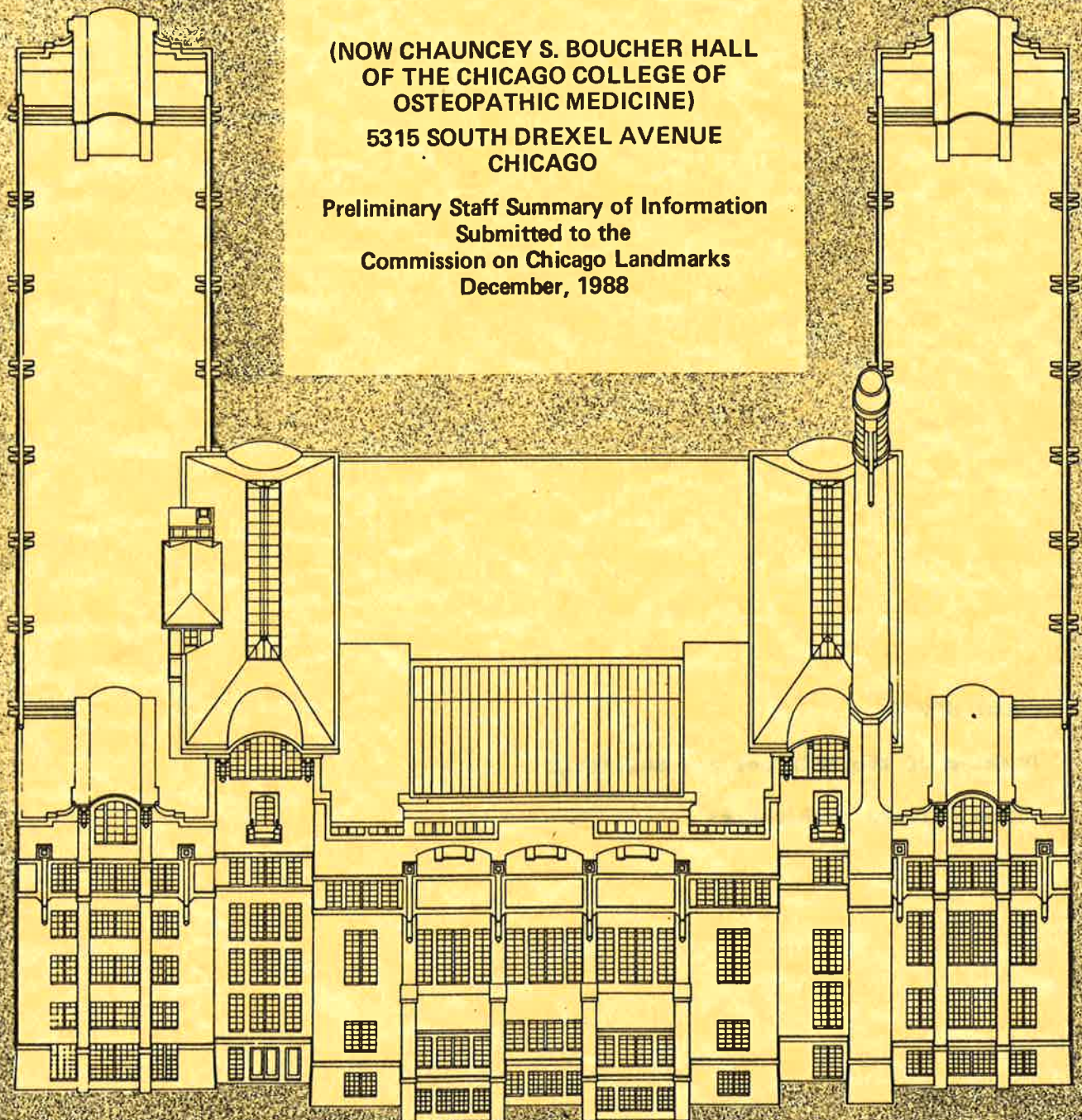


YMCA COLLEGE BUILDING

(NOW CHAUNCEY S. BOUCHER HALL
OF THE CHICAGO COLLEGE OF
OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE)
5315 SOUTH DREXEL AVENUE
CHICAGO

Preliminary Staff Summary of Information
Submitted to the
Commission on Chicago Landmarks
December, 1988



FRONT COVER

Drawing of the YMCA College Building.

(from *Chicago Architects*)

YMCA COLLEGE BUILDING

(now known as Chauncey S. Boucher Hall of the Chicago
College of Osteopathic Medicine)
5315 South Drexel Avenue

Date: 1910-15

(dormitory addition, 1918-19)

Architect: Emery Stanford Hall

In the half century from approximately 1875 to 1925, Chicago established a reputation for innovation in architectural thought and practice, and was recognized for two major design movements: the Chicago School of commercial architecture and the Prairie School, relating primarily to domestic design. While these schools are justifiably pre-eminent for their impact on modern architecture, they do not define the scope of progressive architectural design in the city. Designs by George Washington Maher, Irving and Allen Pond, Howard Van Doren Shaw, Robert Spencer, Hugh Garden, and others were abstractions from modern European architecture, especially English Arts and Crafts design. The works of these architects defined a varying, if lesser recognized, approach to modernism.

One building that stands out in this context is that for the YMCA College built in 1914-15 from designs by Emery Stanford Hall. Planned as a training facility for YMCA instructors, called "secretaries," the building provided a number of functional amenities in a strikingly modern structure that rivaled contemporary buildings here and abroad for innovation in form.

The Young Men's Christian Association in Chicago

The Chicago chapter of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was among the earliest institutions established for mediating the city's drive for commercial success with religious and humanitarian values. It was founded in 1858 by a number of religious and lay individuals who, according to Emmett Dedmon in *Great Enterprises, 100 years of the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago* (1957), set as its goal, "the improvement of the spiritual, intellectual, and social conditions of the young men." As a step toward meeting its goals, the association rented space in a building on West Randolph Street for a library and meeting rooms. The activities of the association were carried out by committees and volunteers and consisted of efforts to assist members and strangers in obtaining employment, visiting the sick, and "preparing a list of boarding places in which young men might find homes in Christian families and thus be brought under such genial influences as would overcome any desire to associate with the dissipated and profane during their hours of leisure." A vital aspect of the YMCA's mission was protecting unsuspecting newcomers from the sinister elements of the city.

From its inception, the local association was marked by an intense religious zeal, an outlook that was reinforced by the involvement of Dwight L. Moody, one of the most prominent evangelists of the nineteenth century. Moody was born in Massachusetts and came to Chicago in 1856 to seek his fortune as a shoe salesman. His nascent interest in religious ministry flourished full force in Chicago and led him to found various social welfare agencies with religious overtones. Moody's involvement with the Chicago YMCA furthered both of their spiritual ambitions. As general secretary from 1861 to 1866 and president from 1865 to 1869, Moody had a strong impact on the early development of the local association. During the Civil War, Moody was instrumental in organizing relief services and spiritual counseling for soldiers at the battle fronts and in military prisons. Along with John Farwell, a prominent merchant and one-time partner of Marshall Field, Moody also oversaw the construction of one of the first buildings solely devoted to YMCA functions, Farwell Hall, which opened in 1867.

The Chicago association was a relative latecomer to the international organization which had been founded in London in 1844. George Williams, a clerk in a dry-goods store, established the association to hold religious services and Bible classes for commercially employed young men who, like Williams, were recent arrivals in the city. The movement took hold in industrial centers throughout the United Kingdom and by 1851, two affiliates had been established in North America, in Boston and Montreal. Throughout its first decade, the international association also refined its fundamental principles. Primarily religious in character from its founding, the association added service facilities for ministering to the intellectual and social needs of young men.

As an outgrowth of its social programs, the association initiated a physical department as a means of promoting both physical and character development. The U.S. association advocated gymnasiums as early as 1860 as "a safeguard against the allurements of objectionable places of resort, which have proved the ruin of thousands of the youths of our country." For almost three decades, the Chicago association objected to what it saw as the undue emphasis on physical training. The objections of the local association were based on the belief that such activities would detract from the evangelical work of the chapters and a fear that the character of the association might be transformed into that of a club. By the late 1880s, however, the Chicago YMCA's prevailing evangelism was absorbed into the more balanced policies of the national group.

The membership base of both the national and local YMCA increased substantially throughout the nineteenth century as branch associations for railway employees and college students were formed in addition to the continued establishment of urban and rural chapters. Neighborhood affiliates were formed in Chicago and other cities beginning in the early 1890s.

Throughout its early history, most of the YMCA's work was carried out by volunteers, but as the movement and its programs expanded, a need for trained and experienced men was recognized. Two individuals- Robert Weidensall, the general agent for the YMCA in the West, and Robert McBurney, secretary of the New York City association - were the principal promoters of the secretaryship as a profession as early as 1871. According to C. Howard Hopkins in his *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America* (1951), a secretary was defined as "the officer of the Association who is salaried to give all or a specified portion of his time to the work of the society."

Training for secretaries was initially undertaken at annual association conferences through prepared papers that were published and distributed. In the hopes of raising the status of YMCA employees, more standardized training was urged. The idea was opposed initially because of the widespread acceptance of the traditional apprenticeship and in-service training concepts of many professions at the time. However, high personnel turnover dramatized the need for continuity in the training of secretaries.

During the mid-1880s, two important educational initiatives occurred. In 1884, Weidensall and the state secretaries of Wisconsin and Illinois established the Western Secretarial Institute at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. The institute was a summer school for YMCA personnel, and as indicated by Weidensall its founding was predicated on training young men dedicated to YMCA service in the manner developing among other professions:

What a law school is to a young man who aims to enter the profession of law, or what a medical school is to such a one as desires to practice medicine, so should this institute be a place where young men could best study the work of the Association and especially of a General Secretary. (quoted by *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America*).

The idea quickly took hold and was copied by other regional associations.

In 1885, David Allen Reed, a Congregational minister and an important figure in religious education, established the School for Christian Workers at Springfield, Massachusetts. The school, which eventually became Springfield College, included a department for the training of YMCA personnel, offering instruction in a variety of association topics, including history, organization, business management, department methods, and instruction in specific academic courses. The same impassive response that greeted the training concept was accorded this first full-time training program. The facility gained gradual acceptance, and in 1890, the school's department separated into the International YMCA Training School.

Noting the success of the Springfield effort, I.E. Brown, one of the founders of the Lake Geneva institute, proposed the establishment of a

permanent educational program in Chicago, and in 1890 such a facility was opened. Six years later, the Lake Geneva and Chicago schools were merged as the Western Secretarial Institute and Training School. (The name of the school was changed again in 1913 to the Young Men's Christian Association College.) Though both the Springfield college and the Chicago school were technically not associated with their respective local YMCA organizations, the Chicago institute differed from its counterpart by the close relationship it had with Midwest associations, particularly the Chicago YMCA. Housed in the Chicago chapter's downtown building for many years, the school also drew its instructors from the staff of the local association. Together, the Chicago and Lake Geneva schools provided comprehensive instruction in physical education, religious education, group education, camping, and the study of adolescents.

The YMCA College Building

Throughout the first decade of the century, the training institute sustained growth sufficient to warrant undertaking plans for its own facility. In 1910, Emery Stanford Hall, a Chicago architect who had distinguished himself through several designs for the Lake Geneva YMCA camp, was engaged to design the new educational structure. From the earliest discussions, the functional qualities of the building were stressed in its planning. With the purchase in 1911 of the block bounded by 53rd and 54th streets, Drexel and Ingleside avenues, Hall was able to tailor the conceptual requirements into a specific scheme.

The college building has a unique form derived as much from its singular functional characteristics as from aesthetic considerations. Sited at the north end of the block, it is comprised of three wings arranged in a U-shaped plan surrounding a quadrangle opening to the south, and in plan, the building is oriented toward the interior court rather than the streets. Two principle entrances are situated in the corners of the quadrangle; two other service entrances are located on the 53rd Street and Drexel facades. The tripartite plan was conceived as a means of separating three widely different activities. The central wing, which is oriented along 53rd Street, contains the physical education facilities; the west wing, along Drexel, houses classrooms and administrative offices; and the east wing, on Ingleside, contains dormitories, a dining room, kitchen, and rooms for other related activities.

The elevation designs have an appealingly complex character which is the direct result of the varied interior functions. The individual street elevations of the wings are identical to their corresponding courtyard facades. Overall, the composition is anchored by the central physical education block. Containing a regulation size swimming pool, a small gymnasium, and a larger two-story gymnasium, this section is articulated by three large bays defined by substantial masonry buttresses and broad segmental arches at the top story. The elevation

designs reflect the varying functional requirements of the different spaces in this block. Metal frame, industrial sash windows provide light and air to the pool and small gym on the first and second floors. However, since the main gymnasium required wall space in addition to light and air, the gym was situated at the top of the building in order that the facades could be left windowless and the space illuminated by a large skylight. A series of small openings under the eaves provides ventilation for the space. On the exterior, courses of panelled brickwork are inserted under the segmental arches to eliminate the visual top-heaviness of the windowless upper story.

Flanking the central block and forming transitional elements to the adjoining wings are a pair of stair towers. Functionally, the towers integrate the varying floor heights of the different parts of the complex. They also contain additional space in their attics for dormitory and laboratory use in the east and west wings respectively. Aesthetically, the towers reiterate the design's prevailing arch motif in their large, top-story vaulted window openings and in their projecting, low-arched roof eaves.

The central block is topped by a large, north-facing skylight providing daylight for the top-floor gymnasium. The frank expression of this feature was consistent with modern architectural tenets, and, in conjunction with the picturesque profiles of the tower roofs and the massive, asymmetrically placed chimney adjacent to the west stair tower on 53rd Street, roofs, provides a striking roofline silhouette recalling progressive, early twentieth-century, European architecture.

The west and east wings have a more conventional composition in terms of the regularity of the window openings, corresponding to their more prosaic classroom and residential uses. The west wing has a battered, or sloping, brick base. Above, the structural bays are articulated by a series of brick buttresses, each bay topped by a broad masonry arch. Each module in turn is vertically divided by two continuous mullions which simultaneously enhance the vertical character of the design and establish a horizontal visual rhythm. The wall treatment of the five-story dormitory wing to the east is much simpler, consisting of a flat wall punctuated by a series of segmentally arched windows.

Much of the overall architectural effect of the building relies on the extensive use of decorative brickwork. While photographs convey something of a brooding, monolithic, almost medieval character to the facade, the use of bricks of varying colors and textures and decorative bond courses give infinite variety and lightness to the exterior. The base of the building, up to the level of the high first floor, is strongly defined by the use of smooth round-edged paving bricks of a reddish-brown color and given a subtle horizontal emphasis by the raking of the horizontal joints and the flush filling of the vertical joints. Above the ground level windows, wire-cut, variegated "tapestry" brick laid up in a common bond was used. Employing tones of red, yellow, light and dark brown, purple, and black, tapestry brick

was introduced in the early twentieth century and was given great popularity through its use by architect Louis H. Sullivan in many of his commissions of the period. Each brick was given a rough textured surface by wire cutting, and the coloration of the individual bricks varied by the different colors and hues obtained during firing of the clay. In an essay entitled "Artistic Brick," Louis Sullivan described the visual qualities of the brick:

The general tone suggests that of a very old oriental rug and the differing color values of the individual bricks, however sharply these may seem to contrast at close view, are taken up and harmonized in the prevailing general tone.

The use of tapestry brick on the upper walls gives a warmth and variety to what would otherwise have appeared as heavy and monolithic expanses of masonry.

The third story is set off by its smooth, red brick facing. Above, tapestry brick set in a Flemish bond and other decorative brick coursings formed an effective termination of the exterior masonry. The parapet is capped by a glazed green coping, matching the color and finish of the pan-tile roof. Applied ornamentation was confined to inset panels of colored tiles. The quality of craftsmanship employed in the YMCA College not only enhanced the school's own image but also made an urbanistic gesture for the manner in which it allowed the institutional building to blend with the multi-family residential designs that were and still are the predominate building type in the neighborhood.

The use of tapestry brick and patterned brickwork is carried through to the interior, to the entrance vestibules of the dormitory and classroom wings, and used with decorative tiles and sand-float plaster for the wall finishes. A particularly handsome and similarly detailed feature is the drinking fountain located at the north end of the first-floor office lobby. A visual terminus to the hall, the composition is framed by decorative brick coursing, at the center of which is the projecting, semi-circular basin. Above the basin is a painted tile frieze of a pastoral scene. The extensive use of brick and plaster gives a functional and durable character; aesthetically, the creative use of these materials with their warm earth tones and textured surfaces imparts a more cordial atmosphere than is usually associated with institutional design.

The building has other equally distinctive spaces. On the first floor, another public space is the social room in the central block. The room is rectangular and has a segmental-arch vault, the lines of which are articulated by dark-stained wood ribs. The walls are finished with a textured, sand-float plaster set off by simple millwork. Also on the first floor, in the east wing, is the dining room the wainscot of which is of art tile. A full-size marble and mosaic tile swimming pool occupies part of the basement and first floor. In addition to the classrooms and dormitory rooms throughout

the west and east wings, other large spaces include a second-floor chapel and third-floor library. The top-story gymnasium is impressive for its spatial quality which is enhanced by the open steel truss work. This steel was to have remained exposed; however, the steel had to be fireproofed with portland cement to comply with the building code.

For its stylistic inspiration, the design of the YMCA College draws heavily on the international Arts and Crafts movement, an approach to architecture and the decorative arts that originated in England in the 1870s and which emphasized the use of materials in a straightforward and structurally expressive manner. Although it promoted designs with simple unornamented lines, compositions were enriched by the quality of design and handcrafted materials. Underlying its stylistic vocabulary the movement had a strong reform ethic promoting ideals of craftsmanship and traditional family virtues in reaction to the anonymous qualities engendered by industrialization. In an essay in *Chicago Architecture, 1872-1922* (1987), Richard Guy Williams discussed the philosophic as well as artistic interests of the movement and noted that:

The fundamental interests of the Arts and Crafts movement were not in style, but in achieving a sense of "rightness," a favorite term. Thus, a house should belong to its locality and not be an intruder, and equally important, its furnishings should be in harmony with its exterior.

In England the movement took its design cues from Elizabethan architecture, but the general philosophical orientation lent itself to a broad range of expressive regional variations, including the German Jugendstil, the Amsterdam School, and the Viennese Secession.

The works of English architect C.F.A. Voysey, Josef Maria Olbrich of Austria, and H.P. Berlage of Holland received enthusiastic acclaim and support from Chicago architects who emulated the work of the European counterparts by the use of warm-colored brick and plastic, expressive forms. Through groups such as the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society and the Eighteen, an informal gathering of architects, Chicago architects promulgated these ideals and used the European work as a point of departure for their own compositions. With the exception of the Prairie School, none of the other Chicago architects' innovative approaches coalesced into a discernable aesthetic movement; instead, the works of Irving and Allen Pond, Howard Van Doren Shaw, George Maher, and others provided an diffuse backdrop of progressive architectural ideals. Designs by these architects bridged the philosophical and architectural disparities between architects who advocated designing buildings rich in historically derived precedent and those who favored compositions based on creative abstractions of function, technology, and environment.

Distinctive for the quality and extent of its architectural detail, the YMCA College is a rare illustration of the alternate strain of progressivism in Chicago architecture. In terms of Chicago archi-

ture, the college building is comparable only to the settlement-house architecture of architects Irving and Allen Pond. The Ponds' designs were quintessentially urban in character, representing stylized abstractions of British "Queen Anne" architecture. They were generally brick structures, detailed with ornamental brickwork, varied wall surfaces and rooflines, and period-inspired decorative features. The Ponds' designs for buildings such as the Hull House complex, the Chicago Commons, and the Northwestern University Settlement House, established an architectural type for social welfare institutions.

Although the college shares stylistic similarities with contemporary settlement house designs, the YMCA College is distinct from that building type. As a college facility used for educational, physical fitness, and residential purposes, the functions as well as the consequent aesthetic character of the YMCA building are altogether different from those of the settlement houses. In addition to architectural differences, the YMCA and settlement house movements also varied in their basic philosophic orientation. In 1895, Graham Taylor, one of the leaders of the settlement house campaign and the head of the Chicago Commons, proposed that the YMCA broaden its program and use its organizational efforts to directly address urban slums, crime, and other social evils. The local YMCA chose to maintain the larger policy of the international organization, focusing on the improvement of the individual as a means of reforming society.

The YMCA College is the best known work of its architect, Emery Stanford Hall (1865-1939). Research on Hall is limited, as are known or extant examples of buildings he designed. Biographical accounts emphasize his contributions to the administrative aspects of the profession. He was chairman of the state board for examining architects, president of the Illinois Society of Architects, a fellow and president of the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and was the editor of the annual Illinois Society of Architects *Handbook for Architects and Builders*.

Hall was born in Chatsworth, Illinois and received his architecture degree from the University of Illinois in 1895. He designed a variety of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings, and remodeled numerous theaters - including the Peoples, Haymarket, Alahambra, and the Great Northern - to conform with the new code standards established in the aftermath of the Iroquois Theater fire of 1903. Also notable among Hall's work are several commissions for projects at the Lake Geneva campus of the YMCA Institute and Training School, consisting of the administration building, called Weidensall Hall (c. 1910); a large reinforced concrete dining hall structure; a building (1912) for the railroad fraternity that comprised a major part of the YMCA's membership; and a general plan for the continued development of the site. Unfortunately, the basis for Hall's relationship with the YMCA, or the extent to which that affiliation might have influenced his association designs, is not known. Similarly unknown are the design movements and principles that influenced his architecture. However, the European Arts and Crafts character of the Lake Geneva Railroad

Building, together with the YMCA College, suggest that the movement was an important factor in his design ideology, placing him among a select group of progressive architects in Chicago.

Although planning for the building began as early as 1910, construction on the central and west blocks only, the physical education and classroom sections, did not begin until 1914, and the work was largely completed by the dedication of the building on November 30, 1915. As indicated in the *Chicago Commerce* magazine at the time the building was opened, the completion of the structure occurred at an auspicious moment in the local association's development:

A few days ago, the Young Men's Christian Association of Chicago, in a spirited campaign, increased its membership to 20,700. Chicago is now the world's center of Y.M.C.A. activities, having more real estate, more members, more endowment, and when its great hotel new under construction on Wabash avenue shall be finished it will do more business than any similar organization in the world.

This week Chicago has gained a new distinction as the center of trade, industry and education by the dedication of the second institution of its kind in the world, namely, the Young Men's Christian Association college.

The building gave the college the facilities to provide a extensive education to association secretaries, promoting the further development of the institution over the next decade. A graduate division was added in 1915, and four years later the school added a fourth year on to the undergraduate division. The dormitory wing was built in 1918.

From the time of its inception, the school had received significant financial support from the local YMCA chapter. However, that support was withdrawn at the time of the Great Depression, and the school suffered severe financial reverses. Renamed George Williams College in honor of the YMCA founder, the school was able to expand its curriculum by 1933, and thereby enlarge its enrollment. The increased income from the expanded enrollment helped in the effort to defray its substantial debt.

The college continued to operate from its Hyde Park location until 1966 when it moved to a 200-acre campus in Downers Grove, Illinois. The University of Chicago acquired the building and renamed it Chauncey S. Boucher Hall in honor of a former faculty member and dean. Used in a manner consistent with its original function as a dormitory and physical fitness center, the university retained the building until 1973 when it was sold to its present owner, the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine.

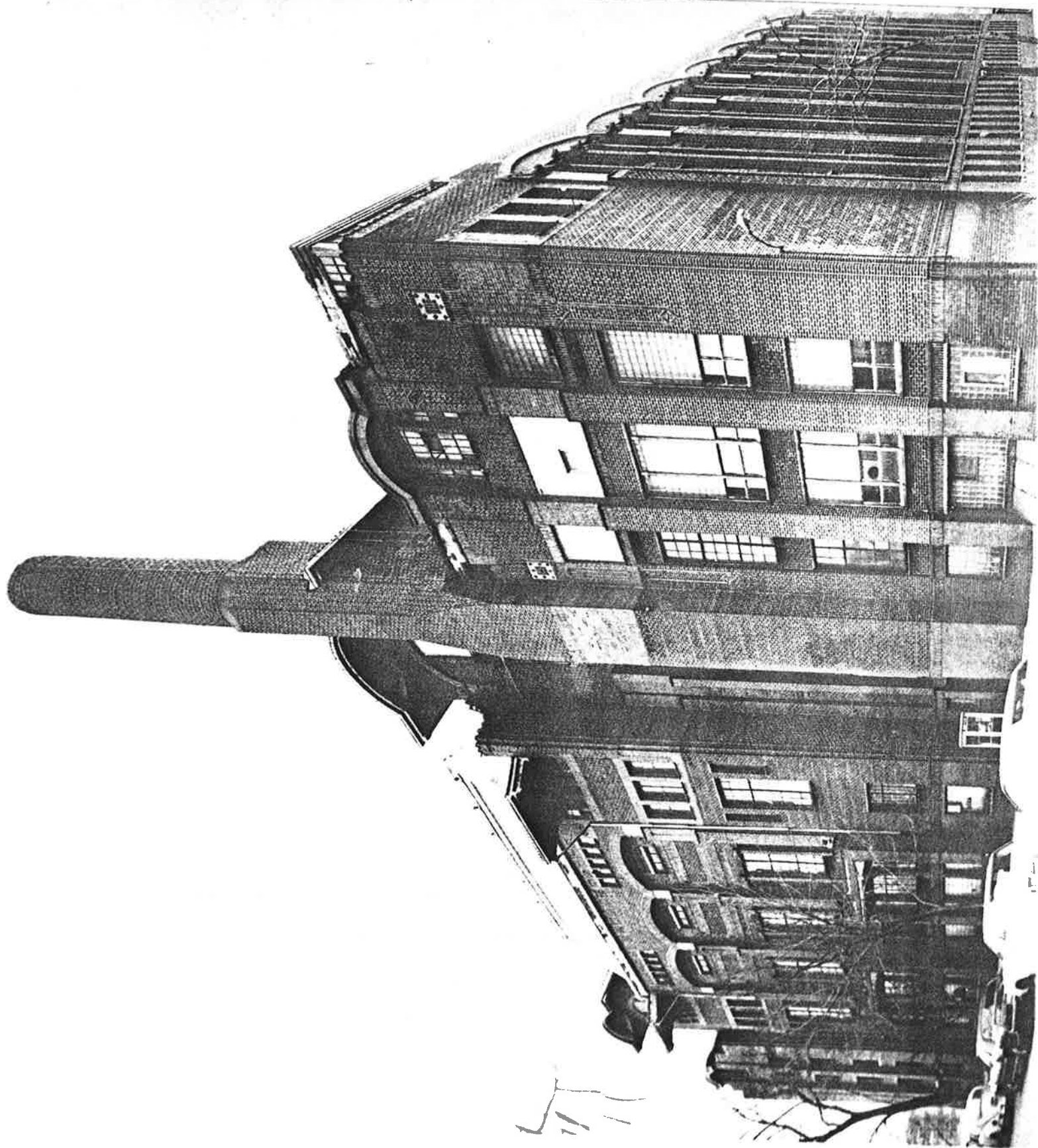
The YMCA College is a particularly important, if overlooked, building in history of modern architecture in Chicago. As noted by

Stuart Cohen in *Chicago Architects*, the building defines a previously "unexplored area of reciprocal international influence" between Chicago and European architecture. Examples of such European influenced, progressive architecture are rare in Chicago, indeed throughout the country, and are overshadowed by buildings whose designs illustrate more broadly accepted notions of modernism, such as those of the Chicago and Prairie schools. However, the richness of Chicago's architectural heritage apart from the legacies of Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Mies van der Rohe, has only begun to be appreciated in the last decade. In this context, the YMCA College further illuminates the diversity of modern architectural principles in Chicago and adds to the city's distinctive reputation for modern architecture.

OPPOSITE

The 53rd Street elevation of the YMCA College Building. The overall craftsmanship and straightforward exterior expression of interior spaces is characteristic of progressive early twentieth-century architecture.

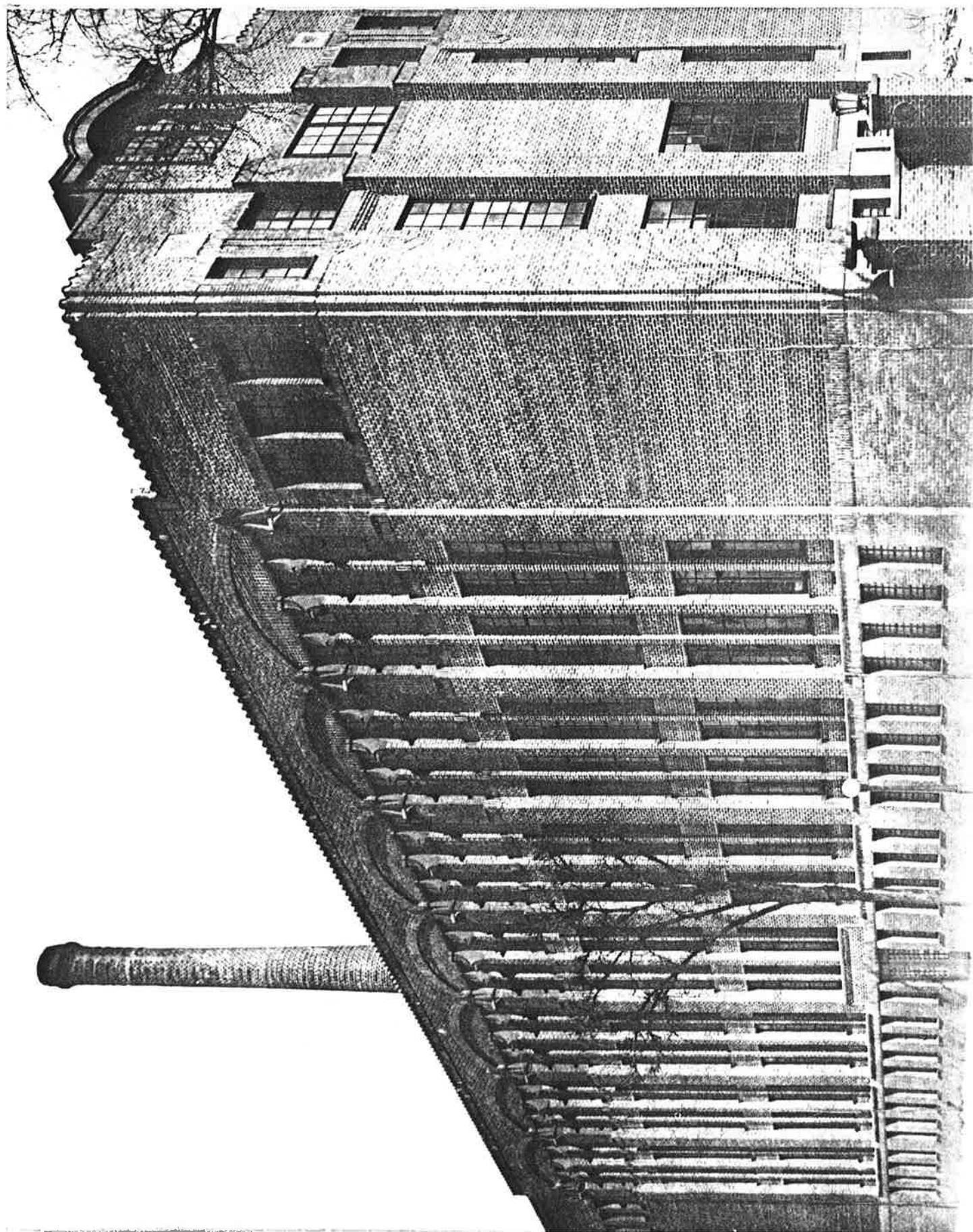
(from *Chicago Architects*)



OPPOSITE

The Drexel Street elevation of the west wing. In contrast to the central physical education block, the west wing has a more regular pattern of wall and window openings, corresponding to the more prosaic use of the wing for classrooms and offices.

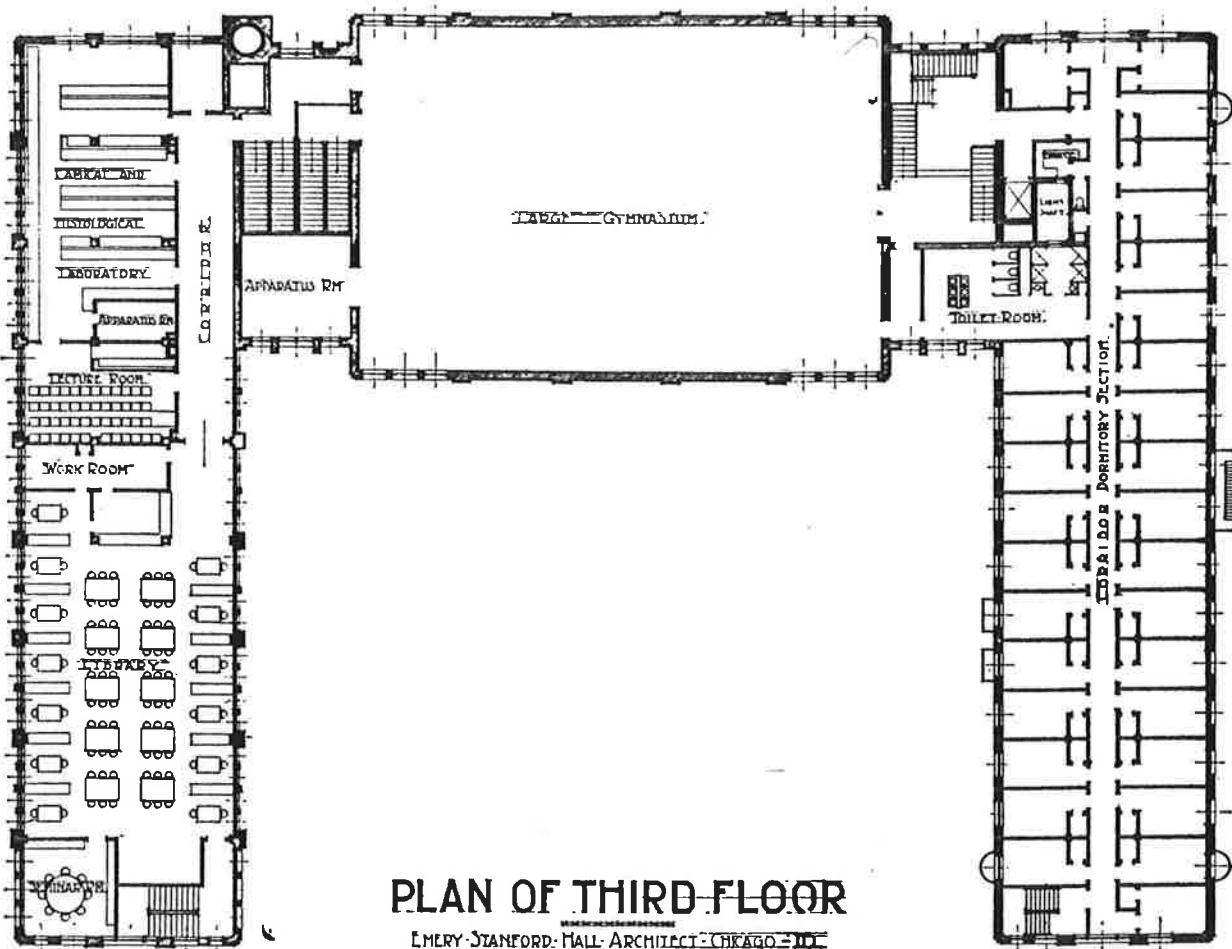
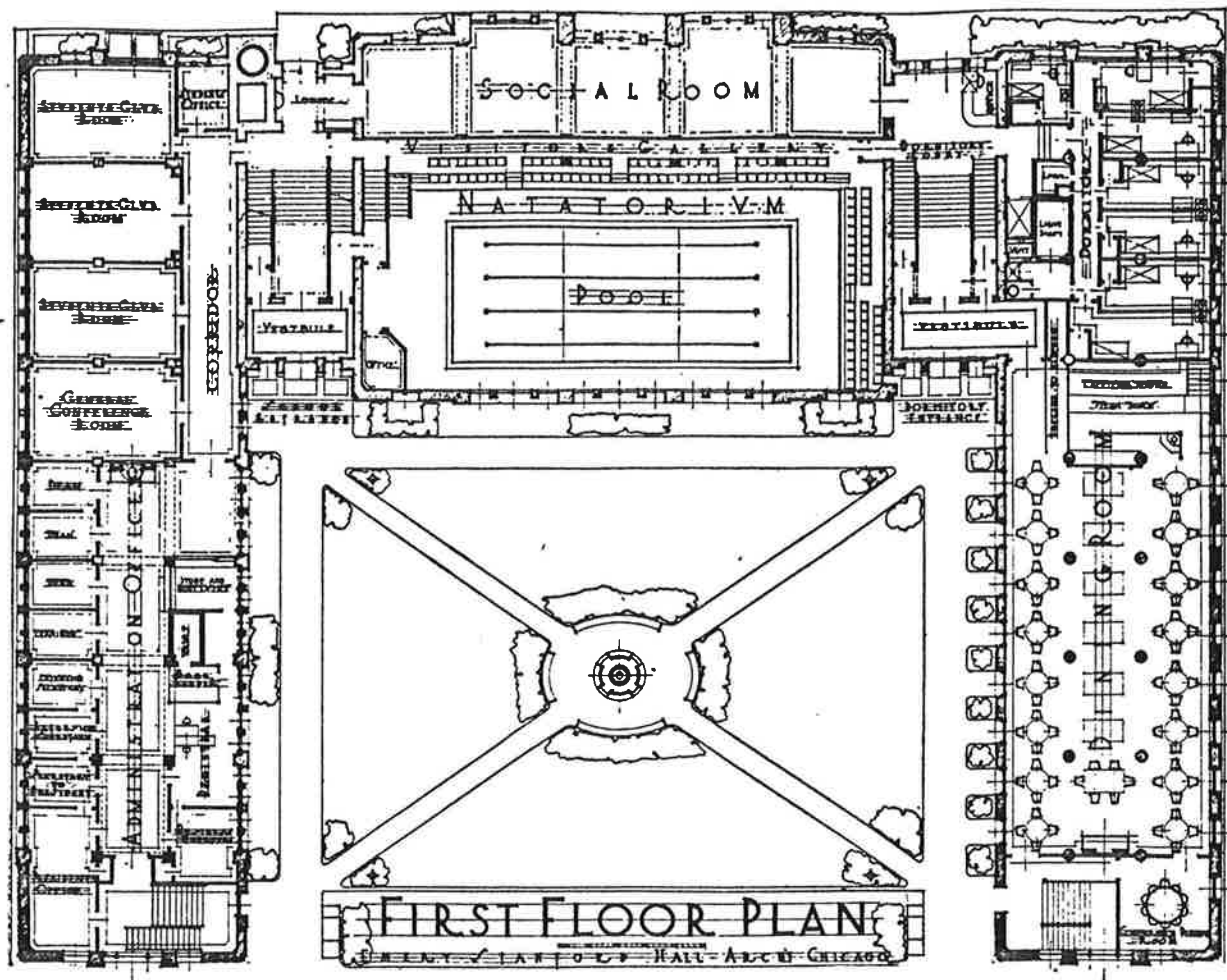
(from *Chicago Architects*)



OPPOSITE

First- and third-floor plans of the college building. The building is organized to separate its functions of classroom instruction and administration, physical fitness, and residence.

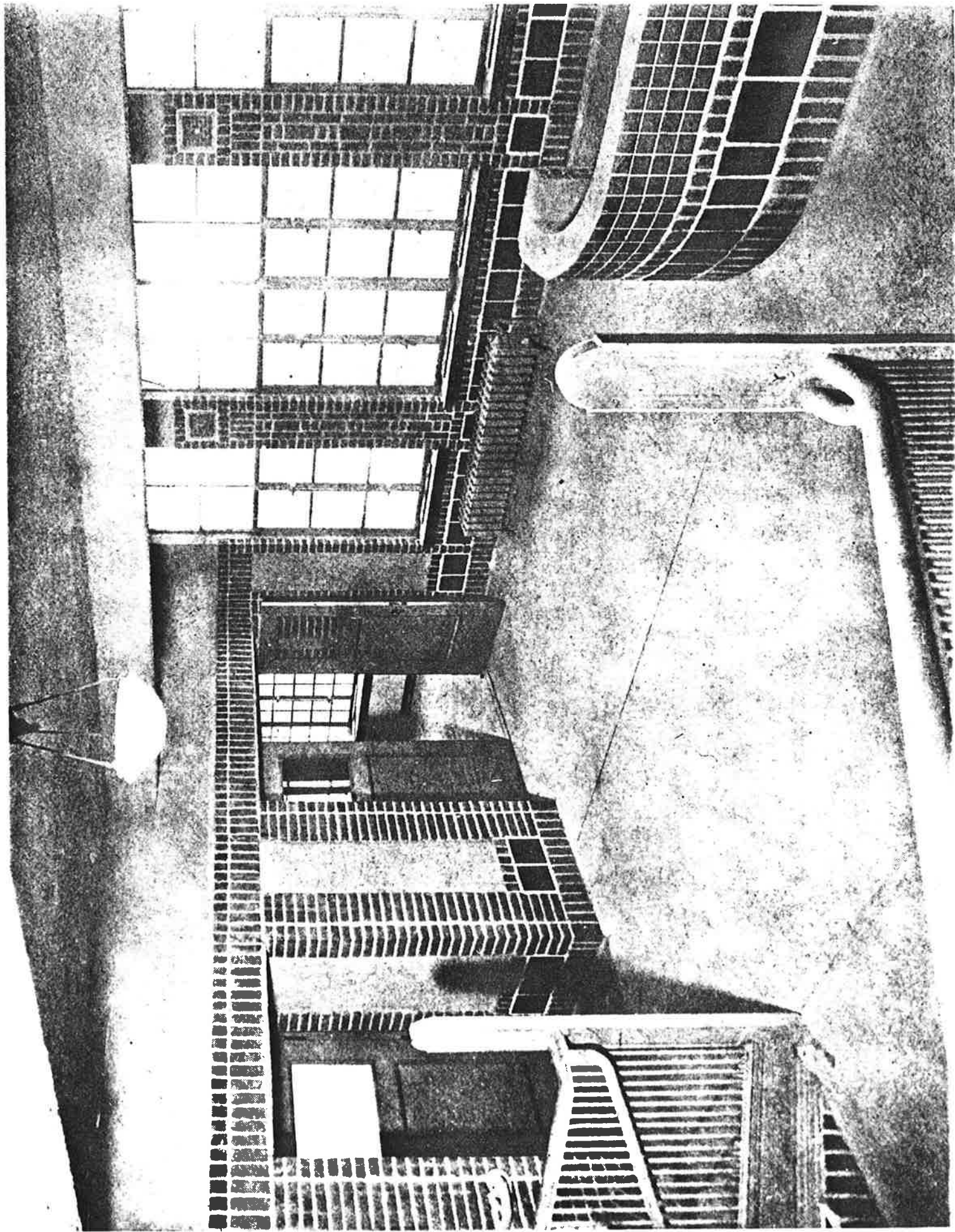
(from *The Architectural Record*, May 1916)



OPPOSITE

East lobby on the first floor of the central building. Tapestry brick and textured, sand-float plaster is used throughout the interior in a manner characteristic of Arts and Crafts design.

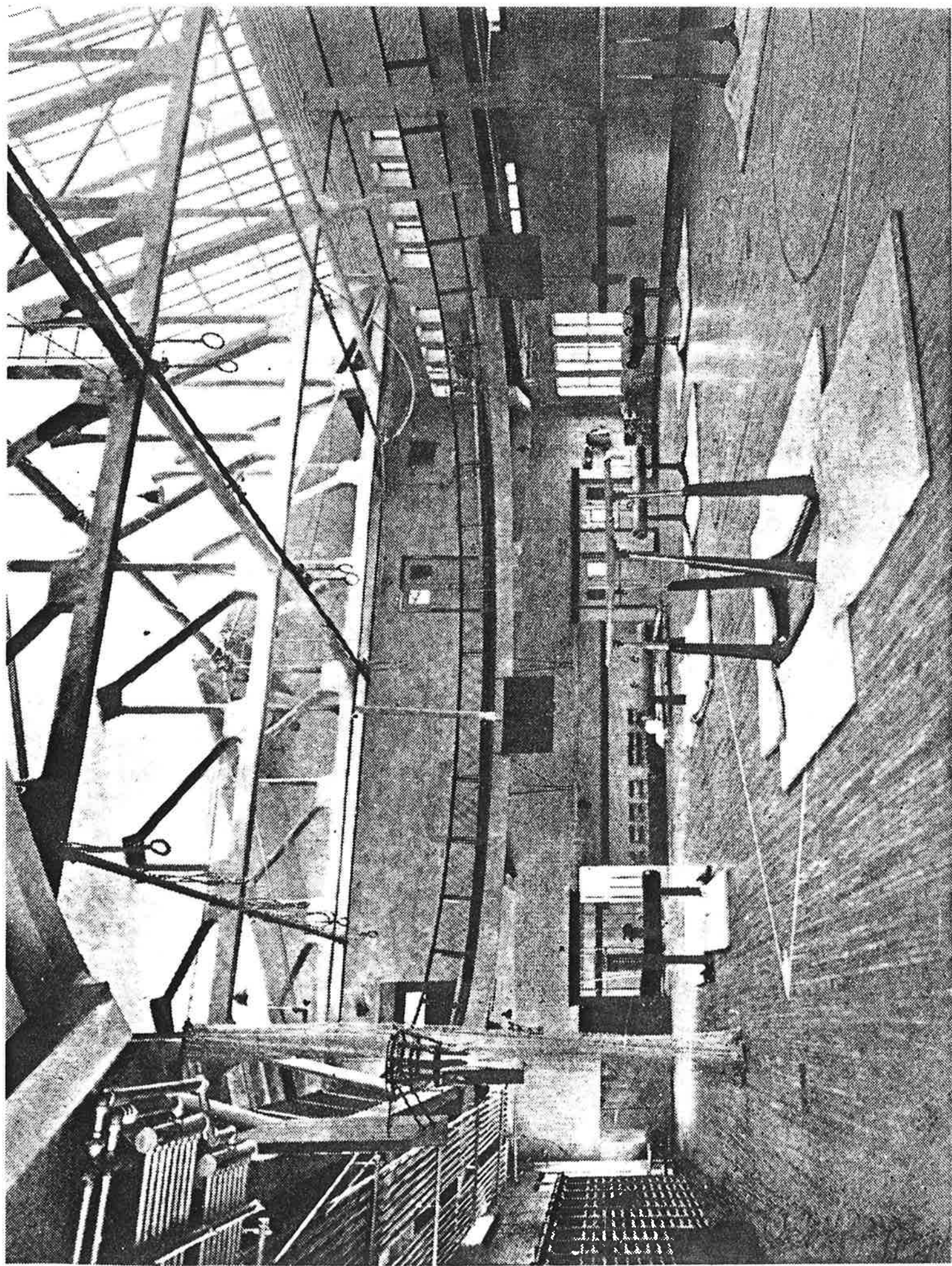
(from *The Architectural Record*, May 1916)



OPPOSITE

Steel trusses provide the clear span for the top-story main gymnasium. The space receives daylight from the large skylight.

(from *The Architectural Record*, May 1916)



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Additional research material used in the preparation of this report is on file at office of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks and is available to the public.

Staff for this publication

Timothy Barton, research and writing

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks was established in 1968 by city ordinance, and was given the responsibility of recommending to the City Council that specific landmarks be preserved and protected by law. The ordinance states that the Commission, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, can recommend any area, building, structure, work of art, or other object that has sufficient historical, community, or aesthetic value. Once the City Council acts on the Commission's recommendation and designates a Chicago Landmark, the ordinance provides for the preservation, protection, enhancement, rehabilitation, and perpetuation of that landmark. The Commission assists by carefully reviewing all applications for building permits pertaining to the designated Chicago Landmarks. This insures that any proposed alteration does not detract from the qualities that caused the landmark to be designated.

The Commission makes its recommendations to the City Council only after extensive study. This preliminary summary of information has been prepared by the Commission staff and was submitted to the Commission when it initiated consideration of the historical and architectural qualities of this potential landmark.



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