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SCHOOL ARCHITECTURE IN CHICAGO DURING THE PROGRESSIVE ERA:  
THE CAREER OF DWIGHT H. PERKINS

By

Donna R. Nelson

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

May

1988

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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A study of this nature cannot be accomplished without the cooperation and assistance of many people. Special appreciation is extended to Mary Woolover at the Art Institute of Chicago; Lynn Arbeen of the Chicago Board of Education, Bureau of Architecture; and Geri Fudema and Cynthia Hasemeier for their expertise and assistance with typing and computers. Special recognition is given to Lawrence Perkins for his time and scholarly advise on this project.

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## PREFACE

While doing exploratory research work related to the topic of school architecture, I became captivated with the designs of a notable Chicago architect, Dwight Heald Perkins. The career of Dwight Perkins paralleled the period of the Progressive Era when major educational reforms were taking place. This was also a period marked by rapid social and technological change and is noted by architect Peter Wight in this assessment of Perkins's work: the work of Perkins revealed "evidence of the progressive spirit and independent thought that have characterized the work of a large number of Chicago architects" during the early twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

As an educator, the question most frequently asked while pursuing this research was, What does school architecture have to do with learning and education? If the school building can be conceptualized as a major educational tool that is utilized in the teaching process, it has a great impact on learning. It is the atmosphere and environment that contributes to the growth of each child's physical, mental and spiritual potentials. It is the school building that gives individuals their first impression of the learning environment. It may be intimidating, it may be overpowering, or it may be warm and inviting.

In the late nineteenth century Henry Barnard (U.S.

Commissioner of Education, 1867-70) identified some general principles of school architecture. In order to gain "pedagogical efficiency" he said that certain requirements must be established that are related to the unique physical and moral culture of students.<sup>2</sup> Research on the moral and intellectual aspects of student culture has been conducted, but it has not related the physical/architectural environment to existing and changing pedagogical views. This research is centered around the career of Dwight Perkins and analyzes his contributions to the educational field through his architectural designs.

There are several reasons that this topic is important to educational history. First of all, educational theory and practice does not exist in a vacuum, and the Progressive Era was a time in history when pedagogical theory was altering practice. These changes were felt in the curriculum, in administration, and in the concept of the student as a unique individual. At the elementary level, child-centered activities were stressed, while vocational education and practical training were promoted in secondary schools. It has been assumed, but never investigated, that architectural designs reflected these changes also.

Secondly, with its rapid ethnic growth, Chicago experienced all of the necessary conditions for Progressive reform. Residents such as John Dewey and Colonel Francis W. Parker were providing theoretical and practical models for this reform. Dewey viewed the schools as the avenue through which the latest innovations could be realized. Parker considered the common

school system in America to be the most divine institution that ever sprang from the heart of man inspired by the eternal God, but in need of reform that would elevate the importance of the child over the importance of the curriculum.<sup>3</sup> At the turn of the century, these educators had made their influences felt in Chicago while carving out their places in history. Also, Chicago is an important location for this study, because it had become a major center for industrialization during the time period in question. Pullman, Armour, Palmer, Sears, and Field are but a few of the business magnates who helped to transform the city from a frontier community to an urban industrial center.

Dwight Perkins was selected as the major figure for this research project because his style was well known enough to have influenced his contemporary and future peers. His buildings exhibit a unique style of architectural and educational design; and according to Condit, Perkins has been acknowledged for "[setting] the standard for scholastic building in Chicago."<sup>4</sup> Perkins "translated into reality the progressive ideal of the public school as a community center."<sup>5</sup> Between 1905 and 1910 Perkins held the office of architect for the Chicago Board of Education. During his tenure, approximately forty new schools and additions to schools were erected from his designs. Two of his schools, Carl Schurz and Grover Cleveland, have been designated as historical landmarks. The designs of Perkins ranged from the great Chicago technical high schools down to the city's one-story school for crippled children. Public schools

prior to the influence of Perkins were designed in conventional styles that involved attempts to give them "architectural effects" instead of "pedagogical efficiency." These buildings were exteriorly more costly and elaborate than those designed by Perkins.

While the work of Dwight Perkins was highly applauded by his colleagues, it was not entirely appreciated by the school board. In March 1910, the controversial architect was tried by the trial committee of the board of education on charges of incompetence, extravagance, and insubordination. Conducted singlehandedly by the board president, this committee convicted him of the last two charges and removed him from office although many felt that he was a victim of city politics. The hearings did not stifle Perkins. In fact, his influences expanded to greater horizons when he resumed his private practice.

At first blush, my instinct was to question whether or not Perkins was another Chicago political figure who became enmeshed in a controversy of his time and lost his job with the Chicago Board of Education? As my research developed, it became apparent that the contrary was true. My investigation revealed a man far ahead of his time who not only designed remarkable educational buildings, but also contributed to the welfare of the community through the network of park systems and forest preserves which remain today as a memorial to Dwight Perkins. Since the appraisal of Henry Barnard's "General Principles of School Architecture," not much effort was involved with "pedagogical

efficiency" until Perkins began designing schools. His plans for schools illustrate a unique concern for individuals. His ideas and ideals will be with us for many generations to come.

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Figure 1. Dwight H. Perkins, architect for the Chicago Board of Education 1905-1910. Brickbuilder 24 (June 1915) 146.

## VITA

The doctoral candidate, Donna R. Nelson, is the daughter of Nels Arvid and Mary Elizabeth Nelson. She was born on 06 October 1952 in Chicago, Illinois.

Her elementary and secondary education was obtained in the public schools of Elmwood Park, Illinois. She received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Rosary College in 1975 and the Master of Arts degree in Education from Condordia College in 1979.

In June of 1975, she began her teaching career where she taught summer school at the elementary level in the public schools of River Forest, Illinois. In September 1975, she was employed by the Chicago Public Schools as a diagnostic teacher working with children with learning disabilities. Employment with the Chicago Board of Education continued to the present time with a brief interruption for a sabbatical leave for completion of graduate work.

From September 1986 through December 1987, she was granted a graduate assistantship at Loyola University of Chicago where she worked as an editorial assistant for Vitae Scholasticae. In March 1987, she was recognized as an alternate for the Schmitt Fellowship by the Graduate Fellowships Committee.



"Dwight H. Perkins: Contributions and Influences to School Architecture" was presented at the 1987 Spring Conference of the International Society of Educational Biography in Montreal Canada. A copy of that presentation will appear in a forthcoming volume of Vitae Scholasticae. Also accepted for publication in 1988 is an article dealing with "School Architecture in Chicago" that will appear in a future issue of Chicago History published by the Chicago Historical Society.

Ms. Nelson has received recognition for dedicated teaching from the Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers and her local Chicago school district.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### ARCHITECTURE AND EDUCATION

From the one-room adobe schoolhouse in a remote village of Eastern Africa to the complex, modern school building in an urban environment, school buildings convey a message. Architecture, like artwork, is a reflection of society. It is a symbolic representation of the period of its creation. "It writes the record of civilization."<sup>1</sup> Architecture is created when groups of people have specific needs to be accommodated. The group is a social unit defined by the activities in which it engages. Our schools may be the collaboration of architects, administrators and teachers. Architecture is the physical form of social institutions. Physical elements of the environment can create an atmosphere that is conducive to the learning process. The buildings provide space and shelter for the functions of social groups. It is the architect who gives form to the functions of society, and we are the perpetual users of architecture.

The design of an educational institution carries a symbolic message. With the roots of American schools deeply embedded in the past, our school buildings are symbolic of

free, self governing people. In the thirteenth century, the colleges like those found at Oxford, looked like monasteries because the establishments were theocratic. The one-room school houses constructed of logs in the nineteenth century represented symbols of strength and frontier life. Modern schools resemble factories and are frequently associated with regimenting students like the labor force of our commercial and industrial society. The selection of materials in the construction of a building, as well as the size and location convey messages as well. The choice of wood for the walls of an entrance hall may intend to express simplicity and congeniality as opposed to the lavishness and permanence through the use of marble. A large room is frequently associated with importance and station.

Architectural and educational changes are often the result of rapid changes that occur in society. As America transformed from a rural to an urban society, the school buildings grew larger and more complex. The typical school building in the early years of the nineteenth century was the rural, one-room schoolhouse which may have had varied purposes of schoolhouse, teacher's home, and community center. Architect, Frank Irving Cooper, has documented the evolution of the school building in a 1929 article written for Encyclopedia Britannica:

Originally the school building consisted of a single room or hall. As the schools developed there came into the use that

treatment of this building having a room in each of the four corners with a hallway through the center; then came the two story plan, duplicating the first story, followed by the three story building with the third story containing the assembly hall. These buildings were usually surmounted by a cupola containing the school bell. As the number of pupils increased the need for more space resulted in the addition of more rooms and there followed diversity of arrangement in the general type of plan.

These may be classified as the closed and open types; the closed type being the solid rectangle, the hollow rectangle, and the rectangle with interior auditorium and courts, the open type being in the form of one of the following letters; I, T, U, E, or H. In determining the type of plan, consideration should be given to the following factors, in the order named: (1) orientation, (2) natural light and natural ventilation of the class rooms, (3) expansiveness, (4) flexibility, (5) light corridors, (6) effective supervision, (7) reduction of vertical travel. The World's



Fair held in Chicago in 1893, and in Paris in 1900, brought together a brilliant exhibition of school plans which brought immediate results in the planning and designing of school buildings. At the same time the public began to show more liberality in the appropriations, and to expect of the architect a high grade of design and construction. The National Education Association in the United States appointed a committee of its foremost educators and architects to study in the planning of school buildings. This committee's report, 'School House Planning' 1925, provided for a set of standards by which a schoolhouse plan might be measured for right use of floor space, and contained chapters on the process of planning a school building, choice of plan, determination of the schedule of rooms, illumination, etc. The National Fire Protective Association, acting with the American Engineering Standards Committee, published a report, 'Safety to Life in Schools' 1927, giving rules for planning corridors, stairways, exits, and general

construction. Previous to 1900 the usual secondary school was easily housed in the old form of school building. There was comparatively little architectural development except in ornamentation. Within the first quarter of the 20th century, however, there developed a movement in school administration, brought about by the rising costs of school housing that made a marked impression on the schoolhouse plan.

The idea that each pupil should have one central desk and additional stations elsewhere has been shown to be based on a false conception of school needs. The superintendent of schools in Gary, Indiana adopted an education idea that had been used in Europe, and evolved a program of studies and time periods that made it financially possible for all school committees to give their pupils the benefits of a more enriched program than was possible under the old plan of administration. The program plans that every room, hall, shop, gymnasium, and recreational center shall be occupied and

in use every school period [The Gary Plan]. Physical training is now often required, and this has led to some buildings being provided with gymnasiums, showers, and swimming pools. There is a growing tendency to plan a building so that it may be altered to meet the demands of a changing school program without undue cost. In general this means providing rooms that may be enlarged or reduced in size without destroying vital parts of the school house structure. There is a small but insistent demand for rooms equipped so that the laboratory method of teaching may be employed. By this method the pupil may receive instruction based on his own examination, inquiry and experiment. The modern school building in many communities is equipped for radio reception and also for talking moving picture. The principal's office may have a microphone transmitter connected to loud speaking telephones in each classroom; thus the principal is able to address the entire school from his desk. In the auditorium the works of the master musicians providing

the world's best music may be heard by the pupils by means of auditorium reproducers, actuated by record disks, microphones and amplifiers. Three secondary school buildings near Boston were so equipped in 1927-8, the first installation of this kind in the world. There is also a tendency for auditoriums to be reduced in size and to plan two or more different sizes in the same building. Rooms for the school nurse, physicians and dentists are often added in administrative suites to those of the Principal, his clerks and assistants.<sup>2</sup>

#### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Historically, we can trace the evolution of school architecture to the two great names of Horace Mann and Henry Barnard. Both of these men are credited with major improvements in the school plant. It is often said that Henry Barnard accomplished in Connecticut and Rhode Island what Horace Mann was able to do in Massachusetts for the common school movement. Horace Mann described deplorable conditions of the schoolhouses in Massachusetts in his first report as Secretary to the newly created State Board of Education, and made specific recommendations for their improvement.

Henry Barnard viewed architectural designs for schools as

the best source for discovering what actually happened in a classroom. "Designs for classrooms not only tell us much about the didactic means that were used in them; they also reveal the essence of pedagogy that directed the educative efforts of past times."<sup>3</sup> A keen sense of architectural judgement was combined with a profound understanding of education. School improvements were related to the physical, intellectual and moral culture of students. Barnard's view of the schoolhouse, as a work of architecture, enhanced the school's performance of its cultural task to an emblem for its pupils of high ethical and rational standards. Barnard saw children as independent, potentially rational persons who while in school were developing the standards they would accept in the range of manners, morals and mind. From the point of view of architecture, it was more important to ask the child what they would learn from the school as opposed to what they would learn at school.

Barnard was responsible for bringing architecture and pedagogy together; thus determining the principle concerns to which designers of schools still attend and to which Dwight Perkins paid a great deal of attention to. In order to gain pedagogical efficiency, Barnard said that certain requirements must be established that are closely related to the unique physical and moral culture of students. He identified some general principles of school architecture. These principles set standards for the following: location, style and

construction; size; light; ventilation; temperatures; library; seats and desks for scholars; arrangements for the teacher; and the school yard and external arrangements.

In the writings of Barnard and Perkins, a clear distinction is made between architecture and building. Observations on architecture and building by the architects from the firm of Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton can be found in the volume, Educational Buildings.

It is a fine art that architecture has established itself in the hearts of men. If it had been merely the science of buildings or even of building well, its appeal would not have brought to it minds such as those of Ictinus and Michael Angelo. To good building, architecture adds high qualities of the imagination. It disposes of masses and details in ways that arouse us by their beauty, power or dignity. . . .

The architect, though primarily an artist, must still be the master, either in himself or through others, of all the applied sciences necessary to sound and economic building sciences that have generated and that attempt to satisfy many of the exacting and complex demands of modern

life.<sup>4</sup>

From Barnard's principles, we can determine that "school building becomes architecture when the builder's arts are used to advance the cultural concerns of the educator."<sup>5</sup> It is written that,

The architect aspires to create an edifice that will intensify spiritually the lives of its inhabitants, thus giving beauty and meaning to the human environment; the builder seeks to erect a structure that is physically sound, that will be reasonable in cost, and that will adequately serve its physical functions.<sup>6</sup>

The fundamental difference between architecture and building is that "the architect is primarily concerned with the cultural rather than the physical attributes of an edifice."<sup>7</sup>

Two designs from the hand of Henry Barnard include the Windsor and Washington district schoolhouses in Connecticut. For reasons of association, both schools were given the Greek Revival facades. He felt that;

Every school house should be a temple, consecrated in prayer to the physical, intellectual, and moral culture of every child in the community, and be associated in every heart with the earliest and strongest impressions of truth, justice,

patriotism, and religion."<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting to note the similarities in concept between Barnard and Perkins. Barnard, like Perkins, ignored ornamentation and icons on his school buildings as a means of gaining cultural significance. Barnard went to great measures to explain the spiritual importance of a child's physical surroundings. Physical short-comings, along with "inconvenient layouts, bad air, uncomfortable furniture, inadequate sanitary facilities and extremes of temperatures lowered the aspiration of students and teachers [and became] graphic symbols of general disrespect for education."<sup>14</sup>



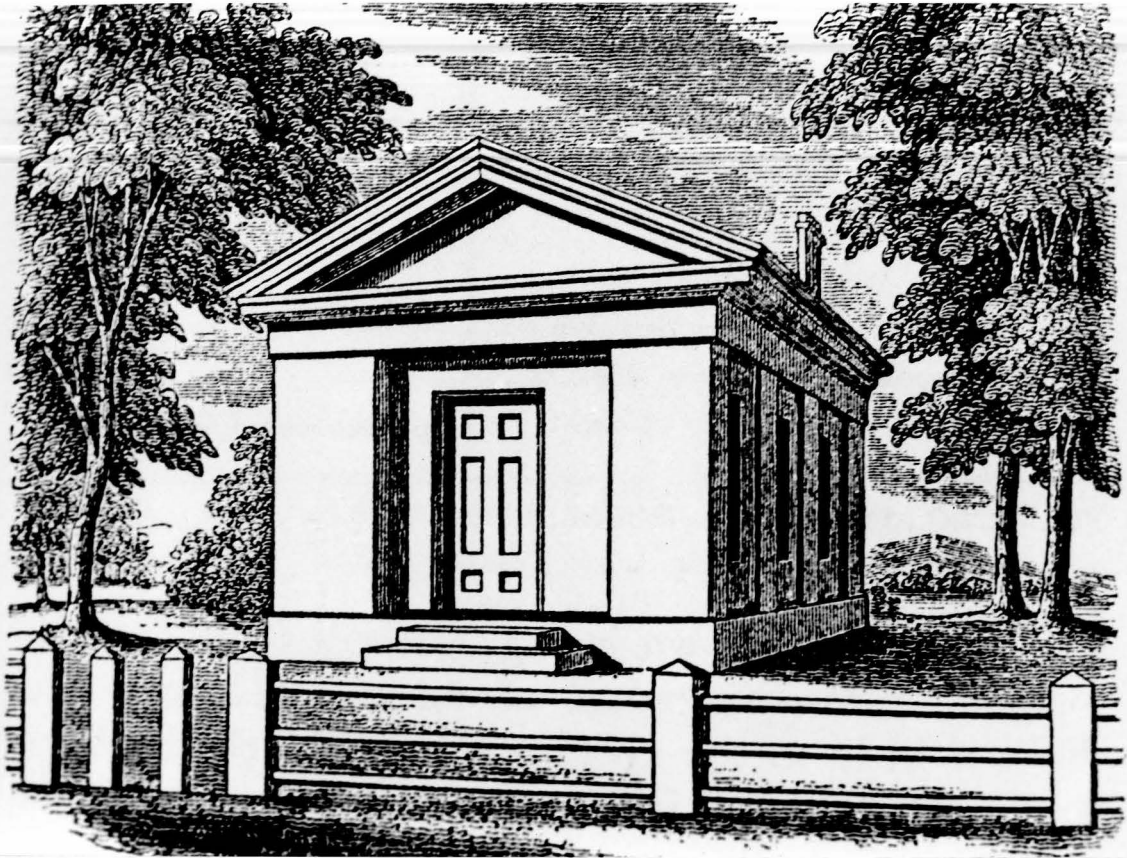


Figure 2. A Greek Revival School House designed by architect Henry Barnard (1839-40) located in District No. 6, Windsor, Connecticut.

Jean McClintock and Robert McClintock, ed., Henry Barnard's School Architecture (New York: Teachers College Press, 1970), 120.

The essence of Barnard's conception of school architecture is found in his observation that,

It is not to be wondered at that children acquire a distaste for study and a reluctance to attend school, so long as schoolhouses are associated with hours of prolonged weariness and actual suffering from a scanty supply of air, and seats and desks so arranged and constructed as to war against their physical organization.<sup>15</sup>

#### CHICAGO'S EARLY SCHOOLS

Illinois' educational system has its historical basis in the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The Land Ordinance of 1785 reserved sections of public land for the maintenance of common schools. The Ordinance of 1787 promoted education as necessary for good government and that schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.

A chronicle of the first steps towards education in the frontier town (Chicago) was recorded by William H. Wells, Superintendent, in the Fourth Annual Report of the Public Schools of Chicago for the Year 1857:

The first regular tuition given in Chicago was in the winter of 1810-11, by Robert A.

Forsyth, late paymaster in the United States Army, and the first pupil was our present respected citizen, John H. Kinzie, Esq. The teacher was about thirteen years of age, and the pupil six. The principal aid employed in the course of private lessons was a spelling book that had been brought from Detroit to Chicago in a chest of tea. The first school taught in Chicago was opened in the fall of 1816, by William L. Cox, a discharged soldier, in a log building belonging to John Kinzie, Esq. The house had been occupied as bakery, and stood in the back part of Mr. Kinzie's garden, near the present crossing of Pine and Michigan Streets. The children composing this school were John H. Kinzie, with two of his sisters and one brother, and three or four children from the Fort.<sup>9</sup>

There is a record of the next school that opened in 1820, taught by a sergeant, inside Fort Dearborn. In 1829, Charles H. Beaubien taught the various children of the two Beaubien families (J.B. Beaubien, the agent of the American Fur Company, and Mark Beaubien). Stephen Forbes opened a school in 1830 in a large, gloomy log building that belonged to J. B. Beaubien. Mr. Wells's report describes this school:

The first school which in personnel, if not in its source of maintenance, resembled the public school, was one opened in June, 1830, by Stephen Forbes, on the west bank of the Chicago river, then flowing south at that point, which is now the crossing of Randolph street and Michigan avenue. . . . Mr. Forbes' school numbered about twenty-five pupils, of ages from four to twenty, and embraced the children of those belonging to the Fort, and of Mr. J.B. Beaubien, and a few others. It was taught in a large, low, gloomy log building, which had five rooms. The walls of the school room were afterwards enlivened by a tapestry of white cotton sheeting. The house belonged to Mr. Beaubien, and had been previously occupied by the Sutler of the Fort.<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Watkins, the second teacher employed to teach in Chicago taught for several years in a subscription school (paid for by private citizens; not in any part by public funds). The building he used as his first schoolhouse belonged to Colonel Richard J. Hamilton (commissioner of school lands for the county) and was erected as a horse stable and utilized as same. The building was twelve square feet. Benches and desks were

constructed from old store boxes. The school was later moved to a double house.

In 1833, the year the town was incorporated, Miss Eliza Chappel came to Chicago and founded what was later to be known as the town's first public school. The school began as a subscription school and met in a small log store that belonged to John Wright located just off the Fort Dearborn military reservation. The school was moved four months later to the First Presbyterian Church on the southwest corner of Lake and Clark streets. The school became a public school when the county commissioner voted it funds to continue its work. It was located in the middle of a bog and was reached by pupils and teachers by wading through mud. The four children of the Brooks family paddled across the stream morning and evening by canoe.

Commissioners recognized the school founded by Greenville T. Sproat of Boston (originally begun as a subscription school) shortly after Miss Chappel's school became public. Mr. Sproat's school for boys was English and Classical. Classes commenced in the small building belonging to the First Baptist Society.

Prior to 1835, schools were located in log houses, store buildings, churches and upper chambers. John S. Wright, in 1835, constructed a building at his own expense at the request of his mother specifically for the purpose of schooling. The school was originally built for Miss Leavenworth's infant

school and subsequently opened as a school for young ladies. After a primary department was added, it became a public school.

In 1836, a private school was opened by Mr. John Brown in the North Division. He was beaten by a pupil and gratefully sold his lease to Mr. Edward Murphy who was made a public school teacher by the school authorities and taught for an annual salary of eight hundred dollars.

The incorporation of the city in 1837 brought a period of growth and improvement along with organization to the general methods of teaching. Ira Miltimore, a prominent citizen of Chicago--member of the Common Council--was responsible for securing the erection of a permanent school building. It was a two-story, brick building that was completed in the year 1845 at a cost of \$7,500. This building was perceived by many as far beyond the needs of the city. The mayor, Honorable Augustus Garrett, recommended that the building be sold or in the alternative that it be used as an insane asylum. Originally called, "Miltimore's Folly," School Number 1 received the name of Dearborn School in 1858. Upon the suggestion of the Chicago Historical Society, Blaine Place on the north side was renamed Miltimore Avenue in honor of Alderman Miltimore whose early efforts had a genuine impact on Chicago's educational system. By the end of the third year, there were 864 pupils attending Dearborn School thereby justifying the space and size of "Miltimore's Folly."<sup>11</sup>

Prior to the erection of Dearborn School, the only building owned by the city was the old District Schoolhouse that was built in 1836 for temporary use. This building was sold in 1845 for the price of forty dollars.

The need to develop other permanent school buildings in the year 1845 was described in a report of the committee on schools:

The schools in District No. 4 are held in very inconvenient rooms: one in a building originally designed for mercantile purposes, on the corner of Cass and Kinzie streets, which might comfortably accommodate a school of 50 children, instead of from 100 to 120 scholars--the number usually attending. The story is very low, and the room so illy ventilated that its foul atmosphere is plainly apparent; its dimensions are so contracted that scholars cannot move from their places without disturbing their fellows, and scarcely any space can be found for the formation of classes at their recitations. The same objections apply to the room used in the basement of the Episcopal church, with the further and weighty one that after a period of wet weather the room becomes

unhealthy for scholars and teachers from dampness. The number of scholars in this school is 151. The third school in this District is kept in the school house erected in the Dutch Settlement, and is fully as large and airy as the school requires.

The building occupied for schools in the Third Ward is wholly unfit for the purposes for which it is used--less commodious and convenient, if possible, than those in the Sixth Ward. One of these schools occupies the lower story and the other the attic of a story and a half house with light from the gable ends only, and in the summer, from its proximity to the roof, is uncomfortably warm.<sup>12</sup>

Schools may have been designed for administrators, board members, or other individuals who served on the building committees. At any rate, superintendents had much to say on the subject. When William H. Wells succeeded John C. Dore as superintendent of Chicago Schools in May 1856, school conditions were crowded. Mr. Wells had worked prominently for twenty years in educational work in Massachusetts and had held strong ties to the educational philosophies of Horace Mann and Henry Barnard. Thus, he was enthusiastic about implementing



progressive educational plans in Chicago. Two years prior to Mr. Dore's resignation, a recommendation was made that a high school be started to remedy the situation of overcrowded schools. Superintendent Wells called attention to the overcrowded condition of school buildings in his first report on Chicago Schools and estimated that there were three thousand children in the city who were destitute of school instruction. There was an urgent need for a high school.

In October, 1856, the first high school opened for boys and girls. Chicago was keeping abreast with the progress made in the East where older communities had recently established high schools. The first high school building located on Monroe Street one block east of Halsted Street was constructed of Athena stone at a cost of thirty three thousand dollars. The value of the site was twenty thousand dollars.

By the end of 1857, Chicago had ten public schools and two small branches of the grammar and primary grades. Mr. Wells made the following acknowledgement in his report for 1858 of the interest and endeavors taken by the men of the early school board:

When in the far distant future the philosophic historian shall write the history of our city; when the character and acts of successive generations shall be weighed in the scales of impartial judgement; when material wealth shall be

regarded in its true light, as the means to an end; when social enjoyment and intellectual cultivation and moral worth shall be rightly estimated as essential elements of prosperity, in every community--then will the wisdom of those who have laid the foundation of our public school system be held in grateful remembrance; then will the names of Scammon and Brown, and Jones, and Miltimore, and Mosely, and Foster, and their coadjutors, be honored as among the truest and most worthy benefactors of Chicago.<sup>13</sup>

The schools continued to grow rapidly through the fifties despite the pre-war turbulence. The superintendent's report of 1861 showed that pupil enrollment had increased from less than three thousand with 35 teachers to an enrollment of over eight thousand with 160 teachers. The school houses increased from seven in 1853 to fifteen with twelve branches in rented or temporary quarters in 1861. The city's population nearly doubled from 60,000 to 112,000. Schools erected in the 1880s and 1890s were characterized by high pitched roofs and towers that crowned Romanesque school buildings.

In the early years of the 1900s, the board of education adopted standard plans setting forth specific criteria for which school buildings were to be erected annually. Uniform

building plans resulted in a saving to the board for the cost of making new plans as well as the construction costs. The buildings were completely fireproof and contained a ground floor assembly hall and gymnasium, a manual training room, and a household arts room. The height of the building was limited to three stories with wide stairways and exits. Boiler and coal rooms were located outside the main walls of the building to reduce the dangers of fire and panic to the minimum. Conditions were extremely crowded and no one thought of the buildings as architectural or pedagogical landmarks. Perhaps they reflected Perkins's experiences in schools as a child as described by his daughter in his biography, Perkins of Chicago.

## CHAPTER ONE NOTES

1. Dwight Perkins, William Fellows, and John Hamilton, Educational Buildings (Chicago: Blakely Printing Company, 1925), 272.
2. Frank M. Gracey, "A History of Secondary School Architecture in Massachusetts" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1937), 13f.
3. Jean McClintock and Robert McClintock, ed., Henry Barnard's School Architecture (New York: Teachers College Press, 1970), 2.
4. Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton, 272.
5. McClintock, 7-8.
6. Ibid., 7.
7. Ibid., 27.
8. Ibid., 5.
9. J. Seymour Currey, Chicago: Its History and Its Builders. Vol. 3 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1912), 278.
10. Ibid., 279.
11. Ibid., 286.
12. Ibid., 287.
13. Ibid., 296.

## CHAPTER II

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

#### INTRODUCTION

The earliest of Dwight Perkin's memories of the city which he gave his work, his talents and his enthusiasm, is based on the impressions of a four year old boy when he wakened one night to find himself alone in the house. In search of his family he got out of bed and went to the window and remained there watching the flame filled sky. This was the October night of 1871 when Chicago was destroyed by fire. Perhaps the refusal of its people to be defeated and the courageous speed with which they re-made their city were an unseen influence on the boy.<sup>1</sup>

The accomplishments of Dwight H. Perkins are commendable and numerous. He is credited for the design and planning of two hundred public buildings while earning the title of "Father of the Forest Preserves and Small Parks and Playgrounds." Among the many hats worn by Perkins throughout his lifetime, were architect, artist, conservationist and civic leader. His

fame was attested to by the fact that his obituary notice appeared in the national and local newspapers as well as several of the prominent architectural journals.<sup>2</sup>

#### FAMILY BACKGROUND

The threads of Perkins's ancestry are delicately woven into the historical framework of America. The family is rich in heritage and talent. For instance, Daniel Webster wrote the following letter to Dwight's grandmother, Mary Lovejoy Perkins of Tremont, Illinois on 31 July 1842:

Will you do me the favor on your return to the west (from New Hampshire) to give my best regards to your father; whom I remember among the best and kindest of my early friends?<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to note that Mrs. Perkins, an ardent admirer of Daniel Webster, obtained a lock of his hair and carefully tied it into a lace paper doily which was affixed to the bottom of his letter.

Also, there is the following letter, dated 8 October 1859, that was written to Dwight's father by Abraham Lincoln acknowledging his practice as an attorney during the heat of the Lincoln-Douglas debates:

My dear Sir:

Reaching home yesterday, I found your letter of the 3rd enclosing your professional card. You are right in supposing you would be welcome to

use my name upon the card as you have. If it will be of any value to you, I shall be much gratified. Please present my respects to your father, mother and sister.

Yours truly,

A. Lincoln (signed)<sup>4</sup>

The following May, Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency by the Republican National convention meeting held in Chicago.

The roots of Perkins's ancestors can be traced back to the early seventeenth century settlers who came to the Massachusetts Bay Colony from England. At some point, probably in the nineteenth century, the family moved west eventually settling in Illinois. Dwight's father, Marland Leslie Perkins, was a frontier lawyer from southern Illinois. He originally came to the Chicago area only to finish his law readings; and after forming an acquaintance with Marion Held, Chicago became his home. Perkins's daughter described her grandparents as "two young Chicagoans who had just experienced deeply the cruelties of the Civil War and whose hearts were dedicated to 'The Union' and its great mission to freedom."<sup>5</sup> They were married in April of the year 1861. Leslie began his independent practice of law one full year prior to his wedding. The offices for his law practice were located at 157 Randolph Street at the corner of LaSalle, which was a location coincidentally preferred by Dwight in his practice of architecture. Abraham Lincoln was among the names of six well

known men on his business cards serving as guarantors.

Leslie's enlistment in the Ninth Calvary took him away from his wife in the early part of the Civil War. At the end of his two year volunteer period, he was discharged and was appointed as the Federal District Administrator for Tennessee by President Lincoln to represent the people of the state before the federal commission. He emerged from the war in poor health.

#### EARLY YEARS

Dwight, the only child of Leslie and Marion Perkins, was born in March of the year 1867 in Memphis, Tennessee. (Coincidentally, the year that Dwight was born, William LeBaron Jenney came to Chicago to begin his practice as an architect. Later he would be responsible for the founding of the Chicago School of architecture.<sup>6</sup>) Throughout his life, Dwight Perkins overcame adversity. At birth, he struggled to live. As a young boy, his father suffered a stroke which left him in bed and partially paralyzed. It was at this time that his mother decided to return to her home town of Chicago where her family remained. She located a dwelling of two rooms in which the family could reside and began to do clerical work for the Internal Revenue Service. Unable to make ends meet, the Perkins family moved in with Marion's mother and father in their home on Indiana Avenue. No longer able to care for her invalid husband, Leslie's physician father came to Chicago to



bring him home to Tremont Illinois where he would care for him. Dwight never saw his father again, and one year later his father died.

Dwight watched his mother survive continuous personal tragedies with selfless good cheer for the first sixteen years of his life. He attended the neighborhood Springer school as a young boy. (Years later, when his six year old daughter attended the same school for a few days, his wife withdrew her realizing it was not a desirable environment for elementary school children. His daughter would later describe it as "an unpleasant institution where children were confined and disciplined rather than taught.") Dwight graduated from eighth grade at the age of twelve and began to earn his own living which was required by his mother who felt that "It was the basis of human dignity for each one to earn his way. To give value for value received."<sup>7</sup> Dwight's first job consisted of transporting money for a weekly payroll from the bank to a packing house in the stockyards. Fearing his safety while transporting money, his mother sent Dwight to work with one his uncle's on a farm to help with the stock.

Dwight remained for the summer and returned home knowing that he was destined for other endeavors. He then found a job for himself as an office boy in the architectural offices of Wheelock and Clay. He worked for two years in their drafting room where an absorbing dream began to materialize in his mind. The dream influenced him so that he aspired to become and

architect and nothing else would satisfy his desire. According to his daughter, "unconsciously, he felt compelled to be an architect and builder of Chicago in order to keep it from destroying the wealth given it by nature." Chicago was growing at a phenomenal rate, and what an opportunity it would be to become a builder in this great city.<sup>8</sup>

### STUDY OF ARCHITECTURE

The place to study architecture in the United States was at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, (M.I.T.). In fact, the first collegiate program in architecture in the United States was established at M.I.T., in 1868. However a serious question arose as to how Dwight would gain acceptance to M.I.T., because he had only received three months schooling since his elementary school graduation in 1879. He immediately began to prepare for the examination by studying French and trigonometry. Although he failed these preliminary examinations, he did not give up. Instead he made arrangements to be tutored each morning for one-half hour before the workday by Mrs. Wilmarth whose home was at Harrison and Michigan (now the site of the Congress Hotel).

At about this same time his maternal grandfather died, which meant that Dwight's mother would no longer get the financial help that her father had given to that point. Even with his assistance, mortgage payments were long overdue and Dwight's mother was unable to bring the payment up to date from

her modest wages. It became clear to Dwight that he would have to assist the family financially. M.I.T. was out of the question.

In April of the year 1884, as the family was preparing to move and give up their home and furnishings, a letter was delivered. It read as follows:

Dear Madam:

The friends of your father and his family, having learned that there was a mortgage upon his homestead at the time of his death, have purchased it and herewith present the same to you. They will be pleased to have you consider their action in this matter in the nature of a tribute to the memory of good citizen and a faithful public officer, to their admiration for your own strength and bravery and to their esteem for your mother. They also enclose you a receipt for the taxes and special assessments on said premises for the current year.<sup>9</sup>

The letter was signed by people who were regarded as the more notable and great citizens of Chicago. It now looked as if M.I.T. would become a reality after all. One of the names on the letter was that of Mrs. Charles Hitchcock, a member of one

of the prominent families of Chicago, who assisted Dwight financially with his studies at M.I.T.<sup>10</sup> Perkins attended the institute for two years, 1885-87, and received a stipend from the dean in the third year for instructing freshmen in trigonometry and graphics.

This latter part of the nineteenth century marked the period when Perkins began to experience confusion about the way architecture was taught and being practiced in the United States. As wealth increased in America, the buildings became increasingly imitative of classical and european forms. They were large, but not great, and costly with a lack of inspiration and refinement. Perkins saw American building as a helter skelter variety of styles constructed under a single roof. Builders in America could do anything. Along with the increase and wide distribution of wealth came advances in engineering and modern transportation techniques. Materials were plentiful and available from all corners of the world. Marble was being imported from Italy and Greece, and teakwood came from India.

Perkins had kept fully informed of what was current with American architecture by attending lectures, viewing photographs, and intensive library research at M.I.T. Thus, it was at this stage of his career that he felt the need for the birth of a genuine American architecture that expressed the forms and needs of American life. His first opportunity to express himself as an architect took place while attending

M.I.T. in his third year, 1888. He was offered a job as a draftsman for a firm of Boston architects whose work he admired. He accepted this new opportunity immediately, thereby forgoing the opportunity of an increased stipend, additional responsibilities, and his architectural degree from M.I.T. One of his first commissions was designing a home for which he paid a fee of five hundred dollars. Perkins's tenure with the Boston firm was quite short. He decided to return to Chicago in the later part of 1888 to establish himself in the Chicago area and to assist his mother financially.

#### RETURN TO CHICAGO

His next association was with the largest architectural firm in Chicago, Burnham and Root, the acknowledged leaders of the new commercial style, i.e., tall commercial buildings replacing the modest skyscraper. Daniel H. Burnham was the "guiding spirit" behind the Chicago World's Fair and was responsible for reshaping Chicago's lakefront and Loop at the turn of the century. Burnham is quoted as saying, "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood. Make big plans, aim high in hope and work. . . ." <sup>11</sup> Perkins remained with the firm for approximately five years (from 1889-1893). John Wellborn Root, Sr. remained one of the strongest influences on the designs of Perkins.

At the age of twenty-four, Perkins was appointed general superintendent of the main office of Burnham and Root. He

stayed behind to run the main office while Burnham, Root, Holabird and Graham moved to the south side of the city to prepare the design and construction of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Perkins handled most of the business in Burnham's office during the fair. Perkins described the early days of his architectural career in a local Evanston newspaper:

My initial work in architecture came when I was only sixteen years of age. I began working in architects offices and had this experience in both Chicago and Boston. In January, 1889, I was first employed in the office of Daniel Burnham, remaining with him for five years. I acted as manager of his office while he was busy at work on the Chicago's Fair project. There were no [opportunities] for consulting with him at his office in those days, it was necessary for me to go out to the Fair to see him.<sup>12</sup>

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIS FIRM

Perkins's experience in managing the offices of Burnham and Root along with his precocity and farsightedness enabled him to establish his own firm in 1894. Daniel Burnham offered to set Perkins up on his own by guaranteeing him one year's office rent along with several important commissions that included a theater, a skyscraper and Steinway Hall.<sup>13</sup> Steinway

Hall became an important center for architectural activity at the turn of the century. The eleven story office and theater building is located at 64 East Van Buren Street. The loft and portions of the topmost floor were rented to a painter and three young architects: Jules Guerin, Myron Hunt, Robert Clossen Spencer, Jr., and Frank Lloyd Wright. Spencer and Hunt also studied at M.I.T. Wright was working on one of his first independent assignments, a settlement house. Recollections of the early days at Steinway Hall by Frank Lloyd Wright in his autobiography include:

I had met Robert Spencer, Myron Hunt, and Dwight Perkins. Dwight had a loft in his new Steinway Hall building--too large for him. So we formed a group--outer office in common--workrooms screened apart in the loft of Steinway Hall. These were young men, new comers in architectural practice like myself, were my first associates in the so-called profession of architecture. George Dean was another and Hugh Garden. Birch Long was a young and talented "renderer" at this time and we took him into the Steinway loft with us.<sup>14</sup>

Reminiscing about the early days, Wright wrote:

I well remember how the "message" burned within me, how I longed for comradeship

until I began to know the younger men and how welcome was Robert Spencer, and then Myron Hunt, and Dwight Perkins, Arthur Heun, George Dean and Hugh Garden. Inspiring days they were, I am sure, for us all.<sup>15</sup>

The turn of the century was a most interesting period in American architecture. The magnificent period of architecture referred to as the "Chicago School" was well established, and Perkins would inevitably play a leading role in the "Chicago School" movement. New technology and materials were being exploited by architects and engineers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This produced skeleton-framed skyscrapers that would transform cities around the world. The term "Chicago School" was coined by Thomas Eddy Tallmadge who used it as the title of an article he wrote in 1908.<sup>16</sup> The typical style of the "Chicago School" embraced the ideals and prophecies of Louis Sullivan whose buildings "like a classical column, had a base consisting of the lower two stories, a main shaft in which verticality was emphasized by piers between the windows . . . and an elaborate and boldly projecting terra cotta cornice."<sup>17</sup> The turn of the century was marked as a period when great social reformers and conservationist would emerge. Jane Addams's efforts towards social welfare and reform were ultimately realized at Hull House. The Chicago's World Fair inspired several city planners and intellectuals.



Chicago would be the most interesting and inspiring location for years to come. Dwight Perkins would also make significant contributions to the spirit of the times.

Other notable early works of Perkins in addition to Steinway Hall included the Abraham Lincoln Center, 1902-05; a Chicago settlement house; and the original sketches for the Monadnock building. Perkins rendering of the settlement house was originally shown as a project in the Chicago Architectural Club Exhibit of 1900. The design of this building with strongly defined lines placed Perkins in a group of emerging architects who were determined to create a new style of architecture and who ultimately produced an array of distinguished architecture throughout the midwest at the turn of the century. This group, related to the "Chicago School", came to be known as the "Prairie School" and was influenced by Louis Sullivan.<sup>18</sup>

#### MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Dwight was married to Lucy A. Fitch of Maples, Indiana. They were married in Hopkinton, Massachusetts on 18 August 1891. Lucy graduated from the Museum of Fine Arts School in Boston and taught at the Pratt Institute School of Fine Arts from 1887 to 1891.<sup>19</sup>

As Dwight served the children of Chicago through the design and planning of schools and playgrounds, Lucy reached millions of young children as an author and illustrator.

Lucy's initial entry to the literary world was primarily as an artist. She was an illustrator of juvenile books. Taking some new illustrations of children's pictures to a publisher, he suggested that she create a book around her illustrations. Lucy Fitch Perkins began by telling stories to various groups of children when her own children were little (see Figure 3). Her audience was referred to as "the poison squad." Before submitting a story or a book to the publisher, she read her stories to the "poison squad." The "poison squad" tasted each story as they listened and judged her work chapter by chapter. The stories in her books portrayed life stories of twins in various foreign countries. Her first book in the "Twins" series, The Dutch Twins, was written for her son, Lawrence Perkins.<sup>20</sup> Through her books, Lucy Fitch Perkins attempted to break down racial prejudice among children of all countries. Three of the common elements woven into the story of fabric of the "Twins" series included international peace, true Americanization, and social justice. Lucy felt:

When the opportunity came to reach the minds of children it seemed a chance to prepare the ground for the seeds of big ideas that they would have to cope with in later years.<sup>21</sup>

The books from the pen of Lucy Fitch Perkins severed as a link to several foreign countries. They gained immediate popularity and were out into schools all over the country. The books were

translated into several foreign languages. The Dutch Twins was put into braille for the blind in England. Other volumes from the series were printed in a special large type for children with defective vision.

The talented author and illustrator received several laurels in honor of her successful career. Carl B. Roden, librarian of the Chicago Public Library, presented a specially bound two millionth copy of The Eskimo Twins to Lucy when the series reached the landmark selling point.<sup>22</sup> An eight classroom elementary school serving grades kindergarten through sixth grade in Chicago was named in honor of her. An elementary school in Lincolnwood, bordering the Dwight Perkins Woods, dedicated a music room to the famed author. Literary editor of the Chicago Tribune, Fanny Butcher, describing Lucy Fitch Perkins in the following manner:

I doubt if there are more than two or three authors alive who can equal Mrs. Perkins' record, and none who begrudges it to her. For quietly, gently, but earnestly, she has been for a quarter of a century performing the humanizing task of making children conscious that other children, no matter how far removed geographically, are their brothers.<sup>23</sup>

Lucy's career spanned approximately four decades during which time she and Dwight raised their two children, Eleanor

and Lawrence, in the family home at 2319 Lincoln Street in Evanston, Illinois. They too entered the world of art and culture. Eleanore graduated from Northwestern University and did graduate work in drama at Radcliffe College. Much of her time was devoted to writing and lecturing. She traveled extensively collecting materials for book reviews. Lawrence, who presently resides in the family home, is a distinguished architect who to this day is an adjunct professor of architecture at the University of Illinois. Annually, he sojourns to France with his students on architectural explorations.



Figure 3. This illustration appeared in the special booklet prepared for the funeral of Lucy Fitch Perkins, 18 March 1937. Standing to her left is her son, Lawrence. She is pictured reading one of her stories to the "poison squad."

## CIVIC APPOINTMENTS & PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENTS

Perkins was active in the establishment and development of a number of community groups that he regarded as integral components of community effectiveness. In 1897 the Chicago Arts and Craft Society was established at Jane Addams's Hull House. Charter members of the Chicago Arts and Craft Society included Frank Lloyd Wright, Robert Spencer, Irving and Allen Pond, Dwight Perkins and Myron Hunt. This movement began in nineteenth century England as a reform movement that was dedicated to the improvement of standards in design. The founder and chief protagonist was William Morris. The group was in opposition to the values espoused by the Victorian Era. Chicago became an early and important center for the activities of the Arts and Craft Movement in North America after Morris's death in 1896. The fundamental principles of their aesthetic theory included simplicity of forms, the elimination of excessive details and respect for materials. The Arts and Craft Society brought public awareness to the creative use of simple materials that were readily available.

The short lived luncheon club, "The Eighteen," was formed to discuss architectural problems and theories. Wright mentioned the club in 1957:

Before long a little luncheon club formed, comprised of myself, Bob Spencer, Gamble Rogers, Handy and Cady, Dick Schmidt, Hugh

Garden, Dean, Perkins, and Shaw, several others; eighteen in all. We called the group the "Eighteen."<sup>24</sup>

Perkins and other members of this group dominated the executive positions of the Chicago Architectural Club which later assisted in the establishment of the Architectural League of American in 1899.<sup>25</sup>

The Chicago Architectural Club provided a useful and effective forum for expression for the architects and local draftsmen associated with Steinway Hall and the Eighteen. The club sponsored design competitions, talks and demonstrations that were held in the club rooms of the Art Institute of Chicago. Each spring annual exhibitions were held in the galleries of the Art Institute. The Chicago Architectural Club called for a founding convention of delegated from all architectural societies in the United States to be held in Cleveland, Ohio in June 1899. The purpose of the convention was to increase cooperation between the various clubs in relation to education and exhibitions. The Chicago delegation was represented by George Dean, Birch Long, Dwight Perkins, Henry Tomlinson and Frank L. Wright.<sup>26</sup>

Perkins's participation in community groups was not limited to his profession of architecture. He was a true conservationist and enjoyed frequent hikes through the parks and wooded areas of Chicago. He felt that "contact with nature was essential towards the fulfillment of the human spirit" and

that "no human being could preserve their own soul without feeding it on beauty."<sup>27</sup>

Millions of residents of Chicago and Cook County have benefitted from the voluntary efforts extended at the turn of the century by a small group of men headed by Dwight Perkins in an attempt to preserve the wooded lands in Cook County. Perkins fought almost singlehandedly to establish the Cook County Forest Preserves which earned him the title of "Father of the Forest Preserves." He was the principal lobbyist for state legislation that would allow the formation of a forest preserve district for Cook County. Legislation to secure the forest preserves was brought up on three occasions before it was passed to the satisfaction of Perkins in 1912. By 1915 he was responsible for selecting the land. The battle began at the turn of the century for the preservation of the forest preserves by a group known under the various nomenclatures as the Prairie Club, the Chicago Dreamers for the Forest Preserves and the Committee of the Universe. The wooded lands of Cook County in the early 1900s were rapidly being transformed into subdivisions and farmland. Perkins and his group put forth an effort to preserve the natural beauty of the land fearing the wooded areas would soon give way to cemeteries and industrial buildings. In discussing the forest preserves, Perkins admitted:

I was interested in the beauty of the country, especially around Chicago. My



interest was probably a result of my work as an architect. I wanted to preserve the beauty of the land and the woods. The result of our work shows what can be done by the private citizen who has no political connections and no ax to grind. It simply shows what can be accomplished by private initiative.<sup>28</sup>

The wooded area in north Evanston covering a square block between Grant and Colfax Streets and Bennett and Ewing Avenues has been named Dwight Perkins Woods for recognition of the role Perkins played in founding the Cook County Forest Preserve System.<sup>29</sup>

Closely related to the efforts of preserving the natural wooded areas in Cook County were the efforts of the Municipal Science Club towards the improvement and expansion of the parks and playgrounds in Chicago. Perkins, along with landscape architect, Jens Jensen, was prominent in this civic group. With a concern for the interior of Chicago, the Municipal Science Club in 1899 conducted a study of Chicago's existing parks and playgrounds. The goal of this group was to preserve the natural beauty within the city that was dwindling through uncontrolled expansion and to establish open spaces and playgrounds in overcrowded areas of the city. Thousand of children had nowhere to play in a congested urban environment. The report of the group revealed the following findings that

were subsequently sent to the city council: (1) schoolhouses were destitute of playground spaces; (2) schools were built flush with the sidewalks; and (3) additions to schools were erected on precious playground space as opposed to buying additional land. The group felt it was now up to the city to provide parks and playgrounds for its citizens. The report resulted in City Council establishing a Special Parks Commission in 1901.<sup>30</sup> The membership of the commission included Perkins and Jensen along with other civic leaders, aldermen, and park commissioners. The Special Park Commission prepared a report that reproved the lack of parklands and became the basis for the immense expansion of the small park system during the following decade. Perkins served on the commission for approximately ten years. Other noteworthy appointments held by Perkins included: member of the Municipal Art Commission; honorary president of the Regional Planning Association of Chicago; and Fellow the American Institute of Architects.

The numerous civic appointments of Perkins corroborated his concern with the welfare of the community.<sup>31</sup> Architectural historian, Thomas Eddy Tallmadge, referred to Perkins as a citizen and a patriot before acknowledging him as an architect. Tallmadge assessed Perkins's work by concluding that if it is to be thoroughly appreciated, it must be regarded in the light of Perkins's high ideals of responsibility and opportunities of citizenship. Tallmadge continues on that Perkins would

"unhesitatingly state that the laws and obligations under which the commonwealth impose on him are more weighty than those imposed by his profession."<sup>32</sup> A. Allen Brooks of the University of Toronto stresses in The Prairie School that "public service was always a matter of priority for Perkins."<sup>33</sup>

The architectural and civic accomplishments of Dwight Perkins have earned him a respected place in the history of Chicago and shall have a continued influence on succeeding generations. His unselfish efforts in relation to the founding of the forest preserves was an enduring aspect of the environment in Cook County. His buildings were designed as a direct response to the specific needs and demands of the people. Nothing so clearly illustrates Perkins's dedication regarding the needs of children as his development of the numerous small parks and his contributions towards the design and planning of schools. It is to this latter area of accomplishment to which we now turn our attention.

## CHAPTER TWO NOTES

1. Eleanor Ellis Perkins, Perkins of Chicago (Evanston: Privately printed, 1966), 18. The quote continues on to say that ". . . refusal to be defeated was his characteristic.
2. Obituary notices in the following: Chicago Tribune, 3 November 1941, 24; New York Times, 4 November 1941, 26; local Evanston newspaper, 6 November 1941, miscellaneous clipping file on Dwight H. Perkins, Evanston Public Library; Architectural Record, 90 (December 1941): 14; Illinois Society of Architects Monthly Bulletin, (December 1941 - January 1942): 8.
3. Miscellaneous clipping file on Dwight H. Perkins, Evanston Public Library.
4. Ibid.
5. Perkins, 1.
6. The Chicago School of Architecture referred to in this section relates to the commercial architecture in Chicago in the latter part of the nineteenth century. For further information on the Chicago School see The Prairie School Review, 9 (1972); and Mark L. Peisch, The Chicago School of Architecture (New York: Random House, 1964).
7. Perkins, 23.
8. Ibid., 25.
9. Ibid., 26-7.
10. Charles Hitchcock was a benefactor of the University of Chicago where Perkins later designed several buildings including Hitchcock Hall, a men's residence in 1901.
11. Quoted in Spiro Kostof, America By Design (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 188.
12. "Myriad Interests, Artistic and Creative, Enrich the Activities of Dwight H. Perkins, F.A.I.A.," 2 May 1924, clipping file on Dwight H. Perkins, Evanston Public Library.

13. Thomas Eddy Tallmadge, "The 'Chicago School,'" Architectural Review, 15 (April 1908): 73. The Chicago School for Tallmadge referred to the architecture of Wright and his contemporaries after the turn of the century.
14. Steinway Hall, now the Chicago Musical College, was built in 1896. The building is eleven stories high. A photograph and floor plans are in Western Architect, November 1930. Daniel Burnham also assisted George C. Nimmons, who made his reputation as an industrial engineer, in setting up his private practice.
15. Frank Lloyd Wright, An Autobiography (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1958), 131-2.
16. Idem, "In the Cause of Architecture," Architectural Record, 23 (March 1908): 156.
17. John C. Poppeliers, S. Allen Chambers, Jr., and Nancy B. Schwartz, What Style Is It? A Guide to American Architecture (Washington D. C.: The Preservation Press, 1985), 72.
18. For an account of architects identified with the Prairie School Movement, see H. Allen Brooks, The Prairie School (New York: Norton, 1976), 8.
19. The Book of Chicagoans (Chicago: A.N. Marquis, 1917) 533; and Who's Who in Chicago and Vicinity (Chicago: A.N. Marquis, 1936) 791.
20. For an account of the first books published by Lucy Fitch Perkins and books other than those included in the "Twins" series, see "Lucy Fitch Perkins is Famous for Acquainting Children of Many Lands," The Evanston News-Index, Saturday, 9 January 1932, 12.
21. "Children's Books, Instruct, Amuse," The Evanston News-Index, Tuesday, 16 December 1924.
22. "Lucy Fitch Perkins' Twins Books Place Her in Two Million Class," 24 October 1935; and "Twin Series of Mrs. Perkins at 2 Million Mark," Chicago Daily Tribune, 19 October 1935. Miscellaneous clipping file on Lucy Fitch Perkins, Evanston Public Library.
23. Ibid., "Lucy Fitch Perkins," 3 April 1937.
24. Frank Lloyd Wright, A Testament (New York: Bramhall House, 1957), 34.
25. For information concerning the Chicago Architectural Club, see Peisch, The Chicago School of Architecture, 32.

26. "First National Convention of Architectural Clubs," Inland Architect and News Record, 33 (June 1899): 41.
27. Perkins, 155, 105.
28. "Perkins was Originator of Forest Preserve Plan," 2 January 1935, miscellaneous clipping file on Dwight H. Perkins, Evanston Public Library.
29. Ibid., "Evanston Woods is Named for D.H. Perkins," 12 August 1948.
30. Report of the Special Park Commission to the City Council, City of Chicago, 1901.
31. Carl W. Condit, "Dwight Heald Perkins," Dictionary of American Biography, III (New York, 1973), 599.
32. Tallmadge, Brickbuilder, 24 June 1915): 146.
33. Ibid., see also Brooks, The Prairie School, 114.

## CHAPTER III

### PERKINS IN CHICAGO, 1905-1910

#### ARCHITECT FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In 1905 when Dwight Perkins was appointed as architect to the Chicago Board of Education, he assumed a position in a fairly complex bureaucracy. The office of architect, as well as that of building and grounds superintendent and others, reported to the business manager appointed by the board. It was the business manager who recommended candidates for the offices reporting to him.<sup>1</sup> Perkins became architect to the Board of Education by taking a Civil Service competitive examination. As pointed out in a 1910 issue of Architectural Record,

no one can be architect for the Board of Education unless he knows how to plan, design and construct schools with his own hands, and is not necessarily dependent upon designers and draftsmen.<sup>2</sup>

The architect's job paid eight thousand dollars annually, and involved a wide range of responsibilities for the building, maintenance, and repair of Chicago's hundreds of public school buildings.<sup>3</sup> (There were 117 schools built and retained up to 1900, and seventy-two schools built between 1900 and 1910.)

In the first decade of this century, while the rate of school building increased slightly over what it had been, there were still not enough buildings to house all the children who were entitled to a public education. From 1900 to 1910, the city opened seventy-two new schools, and still needed more. This, however, was not a new problem. To keep pace with this demanding building program, the Board of Education had adopted as early as 1879 the practice of establishing "types" of schools--in terms of their design--mainly based on the number of rooms they contained.<sup>4</sup> (Refer to the appendix for a complete list of school types utilized in Chicago by the Bureau of Architecture.) This practice which inevitably led to the duplication of design, was one of the conditions Perkins inherited when he became architect to the board.

In the annual report of the president (Edward Tilden) of the board of education dated June 1906, covering the work of the office of architect for the preceding year, it was noted that

an emergency existed and the first duty of the department was to erect buildings without delay, and structures in general features similar to those of the preceding year were placed under contract, the principal difference being in their exterior design. Also for the sake of expediting work a number of exterior



designs were repeated several times.<sup>5</sup>

While Perkins was able to make design changes in this first year, the demand for new schools prevented him from making really radical departures. As the report continues to note, "a revision of the type of class rooms and school buildings was deferred, . . . that duty being regarded as secondary to the first duty mentioned above [the "emergency" need to "erect buildings without delay"].<sup>6</sup>

At the time of Perkins's appointment, most elementary schools were built of red brick with iron framing or interior bearing partitions. They were simply designed with narrow, widely-spaced windows and brick arches and trim. Until the 1890s, the style of ornamentation was romanesque; from the nineties until around 1910, Gothic. Up until Perkins's appointment in 1905, the huge high schools usually had full iron framing, red brick bearing walls, and Tudor-style groups of windows.<sup>7</sup>

School buildings erected in 1904 and 1905 were all of similar interior design. As described in the June 1906 president's report these buildings were:

entirely fireproof and 26-room buildings comprised an assembly hall on the first floor, seating 450 persons--a gymnasium on the third floor and manual training and domestic science rooms in the basement, in addition to the usual play rooms and toilet

rooms, and space for heating and ventilating apparatus. The size of class rooms was 26 feet 6 inches by 33 feet. One of the 26 rooms--generally the southeast corner in the first story was equipped with a special toilet room and facilities for kindergarten purposes.<sup>8</sup>

The one significant change Perkins was apparently able to make during his first year was to get the board to order that, after June 1906, all twelve room buildings (which could be expanded to twenty-four rooms and already included an adequate heating and ventilation system for the larger building) were to be planned to include a gymnasium as well as an assembly hall.<sup>9</sup>

The most far-reaching change Perkins made that first year was to secure approval for a plan including "tower toilets." Up until that time, toilet facilities were located in school basements. Perkins's innovation took into account the students' welfare and comfort by placing toilet rooms for each sex in each story of a school, including the basement. In the June 1906 president's report, the rationale for this change was explained:

The purpose is to subdivide the facilities now located at two points, placing them at eight points instead, and to prevent the congestion of large numbers of pupils of various ages at one time in the toilet rooms. It is also to permit the

more easy supervision by the teachers and to produce a situation more nearly approximating the condition of the home.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, Perkins was responsible for a great deal of activity that had little to do with architectural design. Included in his first report as architect is information about school yard improvements, revisions to city building ordinances as they affected schools and their facilities, the costs of running the architect's department, the organization of the department, and a summary of repairs made and their costs including items fabricated in the department's workshops (desks, blackboards, and foot scrapers). In that first year, Perkins's department made more than three thousand kick plates, put up iron fences at nine schools and flagpoles at six; and he nominally supervised a work force of one hundred fifty to two hundred carpenters, painters, laborers, clerks, and others.<sup>11</sup>

#### RANGE OF DESIGNS

During his five year tenure as board architect, about forty new schools and additions to schools were built from his designs and under his supervision. According to a contemporary appraisal of this work, all "give evidence of the progressive spirit and independent thought that have characterized the work of a large number of Chicago architects. . . ." <sup>12</sup> Also during those five years, laws were made to prevent another Great Fire, including those that required any school building of three or

more stories to be fireproof in construction. The contemporary account given above says that this requirement gave Perkins's buildings a "more permanent character than any previously erected . . . ."13

The sheer range of Perkins's work during this period speaks of the enormous task he undertook in becoming architect to the board. Between 1905 and 1910, he designed every type of building and addition, including a one-story school especially designed for crippled children and a huge technical high school that took up an entire city block. In between, his designs for less innovative types of school, nevertheless, included more extensive school grounds that were linked with city park facilities; schools that were designed for later expansion, plans for a "sky-scraper school" that was never built, and schools that allowed for maximum light.

The Spalding School for Crippled Children, as Perkins himself described in his annual report to the board in 1906, is "with the exception of the space for industrial training, all on one floor and includes space for cooking, dining and medical service."14 Thus did Perkins modestly describe an environment designed for children with special needs. Had these same children attended a conventional public school, they would not have received a conventional education. Perkins used ramps instead of stairs wherever he could, and gave the exterior a "homelike quality."15

The architect considered his design of the Lyman Trumbull

Manual Training High School (later named the Albert T. Lane Technical High School) "the most distinctive product of the year's work," in his report to the board in 1907. Lane was a formidable challenge: it was designed to accommodate sixteen hundred students in a variety of facilities. There were machine and woodworking shops; shops for electrical construction, electro-plating, and pattern making; a foundry and a forge; physiographical, botanical, chemical and physical laboratories; darkrooms and drafting rooms plus a gymnasium and running track; a huge lunchroom; and a full complement of tool, lecture, and locker rooms.<sup>16</sup> The same year that Lane was planned and construction was begun, Perkins's department constructed nineteen portable school buildings. The department also carried on all of the extensive repair and maintenance work required by Chicago's more than three hundred school buildings, some of which provided drafting services for several other departments reporting to the board.

Of the less publicized types of buildings erected under Perkins's leadership, there were "Nobel type" schools (named after the first building to be erected according to the design)--a complete thirty-one classroom structure designed for full occupancy at completion; "Warren type" schools, erected with twelve rooms and designed with an ultimate capacity of twenty-four; and "Moos type" schools, with full capacity at twenty-six rooms.<sup>17</sup>

Among the more commonplace schools, however, Perkins was

setting precedents. The Bernard Moos School, for example, was designed to include playgrounds at front and rear; in addition, those play areas in the rear adjoined "a number of carefully planned vegetable gardens." The plan of Tilton School was farsighted enough to allow for future expansion.<sup>18</sup> Tilton also had an ambitious domed assembly hall.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps no other design illustrates the precocity of Perkins more fittingly than his proposal plans for the "skyscraper school." Perkins submitted extremely radical and ambitious plans for a centralized commercial high school during his first year as board architect.<sup>20</sup> The Chicago City Council passed an order on 27 June 1904 that

the sum of \$500,000 be and the same is hereby appropriated for erection of high school of commerce on site of Jones School, and that the City Comptroller is hereby authorized and directed to set aside the said sum of \$500,000 out of the unappropriated balance of the building account for the said improvement, \$50,000 of which amount to be immediately appropriated, to begin said work.<sup>21</sup>

If the designs of Perkins had been approved by the greater powers of the Board of Education (a majority of the members of the Board of Education), Chicago would have been the first municipality to possess a "skyscraper school." Throughout his

tenure, architectural plans were changed, allocations were made and withdrawn, and other plans were finally scrapped because the various parties could not agree on a site or, the need for such an enterprise.<sup>22</sup> Perkins's original concept was for a "skyscraper school," which would house not only a large commercial high school, but a three-story assembly hall intended for public use as well as school use. It also included along with various school museums, offices of several departments of the Board of Education and other school administrative groups. There was some disagreement in the contemporary accounts of the reasons the school was never built. These ranged from money troubles to site troubles, to disagreements among politicians and civil servants over the need for such an expensive undertaking. On the other hand, Perkins's conception was regarded as extremely forward-thinking by other architects and city planners at the time. The commercial high school portion of the "skyscraper school" plan was eventually realized in Chicago in 1964 with the erection of Jones Commercial High School.<sup>23</sup>

#### INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL DESIGNS

An examination of Perkins's designs for individual schools revealed those qualities which would characterize his work and his contributions to public school design. First was his use of "plain" rather than ornamented style. The school buildings designed by Perkins embraced the principles that evolved from

the Arts and Craft movement of 1897; i.e., the elimination of excessive details, respect for natural materials and simplicity. Next was the provision for the maximum amount of natural light. Classrooms designed by Perkins faced either an easterly or westerly direction wherever possible. "Exclusively north-lighted rooms" were only built as additions to existing buildings where conditions were inescapable. Perkins regarded the orientation of natural light as follows:

The advantage of steady light from the north is recognized, but is not considered, by many including myself, as so essential as sunshine; and given a unilateral light, one cannot have north exposure and sunshine, too.

Those rooms which face south only receive too much sunshine and require the drawing of shades to such an extent that they do not get enough light. While they are better than north rooms they still are not perfect. The nearest approximation is a room facing either east or west. In the morning the east room gets sunshine and the west room gets steady light of north quality, and the afternoon conditions are reversed, giving the advantage of both north and south exposure in a modified



degree to all rooms.<sup>24</sup>

being farsighted, as previously mentioned with the Tilton school, he usually designed school buildings for future expansion. Finally, the inclusion of school grounds as an integral part of the overall design was unique to him. All of the features incorporated by Perkins into the plans/designs of his schools revealed a concern and respect for the occupants. To illustrate these qualities, the following projects will be described in detail: Bernard Moos School, Carl Schurz High School, Tilton School, Albert G. Lane Technical High School, Jesse Spalding School for Crippled Children, Grover Cleveland Elementary School, Stephen K. Hayt School, Rogers School, and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn School. Each of these has one or more of the unique design features described above.

As previously noted, Bernard Moos School was one of the first Perkins produced. Its design became a prototype that was repeated several times in new schools built during his tenure as architect. Moos was also the first school to be designed with toilet rooms for each sex on each story and with a separate entrance to the assembly hall stage, so that speakers did not have to go through the auditorium in order to reach it.<sup>25</sup>

The exterior of the Moos School was of dark brown brick trimmed in matching terra cotta, and the gymnasium was built over the ground floor assembly hall. Both of these design

elements were to become standard throughout Perkins's career with the board. The provision of playgrounds in front and in back of the school was an indication of Perkins's growing interest in playground and open public spaces which was to continue throughout his life. The vegetable gardens at the rear of the Moos site were an innovation at the time.<sup>26</sup>

Carl Schurz High School has been called Perkins's "master-piece" and "an impressive example of the late Chicago style on a large scale."<sup>27</sup> The plans were first displayed at the Chicago Architectural Club's Annual Exhibition in March and April of 1908, and Perkins signed the final working drawings in October of that year.<sup>28</sup> The high school was

originally planned as a technical high school. The excellent machine shops and workshops--part of the city's effort to supply the growing need for young mechanics and craftsmen--were an impressive feature of this new type of school building.<sup>29</sup>

The building was opened in September 1910 on an eight-acre sight formerly occupied by a farm. Its extensive grounds showed off the design to good advantage, for the building has to be seen at a distance to be appreciated.<sup>30</sup> One critic said that

while the interior of the building differs little from the traditional planning of

big urban schools, the exterior is a brilliant exhibition of virtuosity that marks the high point of non-commercial architecture in the Chicago tradition.<sup>31</sup>

In plan, Carl Schurz

consists of a central east-west portion from which two long wings spread out on diagonal lines, the whole structure being about half a block in overall length. The building is dominated by a huge, steeply-pitched roof of red tile and green copper trim, almost over-powering in its immediate effect.<sup>32</sup>

Peisch finds the "heavy overhanging eaves . . . characteristic of the domestic architecture of the Chicagoans." He also finds the red brick exterior "heightened by the use of brown mortar."<sup>33</sup> Condit, too, mentions Perkins's use of color: "the brick envelope of the wall is burnt red, the roof of a softer red with green copper trim, the stone trim light buff," noting that the palette is part of the building's overall effectiveness.<sup>34</sup>

Brooks feels that the "strong, almost expressionistic design . . . owes something not only to Sullivan in its closely spaced piers and recessed spandrels, but possibly to German architecture as well." The latter can be seen in "the massiveness of the design [which] is enhanced by a robust

ground floor, topped by a strong belt course that serves as a plinth for the vigorous and assertive piers above."<sup>35</sup> Peisch also claims that the "banks of windows separated only by unbroken piers [give] the building's exterior a clarity not then common."<sup>36</sup> Condit, on the other hand, says that the distinctiveness of the building lies not in its individual elements, i.e.,--"pure forms exactly repeated, sharp-edged intersections, uninterrupted planes, the close vertical pattern under a dominating horizontal line"--but in the "unique and personal way" in which Perkins has combined them.<sup>37</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Tilton School was designed with expansion in mind. The most radical design innovation is Perkins's elimination of the basement floor, bringing the first floor practically to ground level.<sup>38</sup> This high school is often noted as an example of "Perkins's interest in unusual masonry patterns."<sup>39</sup> The pattern is of horizontal bands, with alternating courses of dark and light tones of buff brick. Bedford stone is used on the base, with terra cotta on the upper floors. A contemporary source judges that the "towers lend considerable interest to what might otherwise prove a monotonous and tiresome treatment of the facade and at the same time provide for toilet rooms on each floor." This innovation was to form part of Perkins's legacy to the future of public school design. With a view to eventual expansion to forty classrooms, Perkins designed the assembly hall (seating 750), the gymnasium, the manual training and domestic science

departments, and the heating and toilet facilities to sustain the full capacity of the building.<sup>40</sup>

At the time, Albert G. Lane Technical High School was considered "one of the largest and best equipped technical institutions in the world."<sup>41</sup> The exterior was designed for simplicity and for admitting the maximum amount of light into the building. The greatest challenge for Perkins lay with the interior and the need to accommodate sixteen hundred to eighteen hundred students. He allotted the interior space so as to have the various trades arranged by themselves and still closely allied to each other. In this way, little is lost by the scholars and such economy is necessary where so many pupils are accommodated in such a short part of each day.<sup>42</sup>

The numbers of furnishings and equipment that had to be allowed for in the design are staggering: 220 laboratory tables; 300 drawing and drafting tables; lockers and dressing rooms for 650 students at a time; shops with a working capacity of 400 pupils at a time; and a library with a capacity for 5,000 volumes.<sup>43</sup> The description of the Electrical Construction Shop provided by Perkins in his report to the board (1907) serves as an example of the extensive planning required by the architect on this project:

The Electrical Construction Shop is equipped with vise benches . . . and cases

for the reception of armatures and other examples under construction. The Tool Room adjoining the construction shop is furnished with cases and shelving for the storage of sheet metal, fiber, wire and other small parts used in the construction of motors, generators, arc lights, etc. Joining this room is a Plating Room equipped with vats used in electro-plating of finished examples . . . . The LECTURE and TESTING ROOM is furnished with one 12" x 5' engine lathe, independently motor driven also . . . . In conjunction with these rooms is a Dark Room for the storage of cells and the setting up of instruments for the measurement of light.<sup>44</sup>

Perkins's description of the lecture rooms on the upper floors also indicates the extent of his planning and awareness of the needs of pupils and instructors:

Each of the SCIENTIFIC LECTURE ROOMS is fitted up with cases for the storage of apparatus and with Instructors' tables 2'6" x 12' x 3'2" high; these tables have soapstone table tops with a sink at one end. At this sink are located outlets for steam, water, hot water, gas and air; at

other end of the table is located a switchboard which has the following electrical phase currents: 4 to 8 direct, 110 direct, 80 alternating, 1, 2 and 3 phase currents.<sup>45</sup>

Many of the laboratories and lecture rooms were also fitted with opaque, room-darkening shades so that the instructors could use the stereopticon in their lectures.

Technical education was considered as extremely important to the health of Chicago's and the nation's economy in this period. A contemporary account of Perkins's design of Lane describes the school as a "prep" school for the major technical universities, but insists that

its main purpose is to furnish a good education for foremen and superintendents of manufacturing establishments, and to supply a high order of mechanics than those who are obliged to work upward through manual labor alone. [Lane] was established in what might be called a mechanics' neighborhood, if not a poor neighborhood.<sup>46</sup>

The Jesse Spalding School for Crippled Children has been described earlier, in an attempt to trace the range of projects Perkins encountered in his work for the school board. Here it is worthwhile to look at the design of the building as a building, rather than as merely a structure to accommodate

children who cannot climb stairs. It has already been noted that Peisch sees a "homelike" quality in the "broad eaves and gently pitched roofs" of Spalding, likening it to a "prairie house."<sup>47</sup> Brooks, on the other hand, calls Perkins's design a "rather uninspired Queen Anne design that continued a trend established by Perkins in several commissions during the late 1890s."<sup>48</sup> Here Brooks seems to be referring to Perkins's youthful "predilection for high roofs, sharp-edged brickwork, and a complex massing," as shown by his designs for a Northwestern University Settlement (1900), and the earlier J.J. Wait house in Chicago.<sup>49</sup>

Grover Cleveland Elementary School is regarded by many as one of Perkins's most original designs. Brooks calls it "the finest design prepared under Perkins's stewardship," adding that "there is dignity and repose in the design; it is monumental without being formidable."<sup>50</sup>

Cleveland is planned in the shape of a short-stemmed T with three nearly identical wings. Again, Perkins's design intends to "secure the maximum amount of light and ventilation for all classrooms and offices."<sup>51</sup> As Brooks notes, the wall planes are

vitalized . . . by the rich tapestry  
brickwork establishing a broad, continuous  
border along the sides and across the top,  
. . . and . . . by the superimposed grill  
of piers which rests on a plinth that, in



turn, caps the projecting posts and lintels of the ground floor.<sup>52</sup>

Condit calls attention to the predominant "verticalism arising from the deep continuous piers," observing that it is "strongly bound by the heavy slab-like course of smooth stone at the sill line of the second floor and by the high parapet of brick surmounted by a stone coping." He notes that the walls are "enriched by a repetition of . . . motives formed in a variety of ways--by the piers and lintels of the base, the patterned bands of brick enframing the individual bays of the fourth story, and the similar bands enclosing the entire window area of each elevation."<sup>53</sup>

A more conventional design was used in the Stephen K. Hayt School, a three-story, high basement building. In this school, the toilet rooms are in the basement, instead of each floor, according to the old plan in effect when Perkins took office. The exterior is of light-colored pressed brick. One of the elements that links it with Perkins's other work is the vertical window bays and the balance afforded by the strong horizontals of the first floor and the cornice.<sup>54</sup>

In the Rogers School, a contemporary writer saw the "influence of some of Mr. Perkins's contemporaries . . . ," in his decision to "make the walls of the building, which perform the main function in their construction, assert their own dignity; to leave them blank where no windows were wanted, and

to cease treating them as surfaces for the support of so-called ornament." This particular critic applauded the "supreme simplicity" of the design, complimenting Perkins for preserving "its dignity and purity, without having recourse for inspiration to the works of our ancestors."<sup>55</sup>

The Friedrich Ludwig Jahn School is remarkable among Perkins's designs for its overhanging roof, an element of "Prairie" style that he had used in the Jesse Spalding one-level building, but seldom elsewhere. A critic of the time notes that while the roof tiling makes overhanging eaves logical, a more important result is that the copper leaders are made part of the design by the way in which they fit under the eaves. This is seen as an example of Perkins's ability to make the practicality of his designs graceful to the eye, and show his "refined appreciation of the importance of small things."<sup>56</sup>

The other feature worth noting about the Jahn School is that carving appears at the tops of the exterior buttresses and around the entrances. A contemporary observer notes that the carving is a reminder "that we can approve and admire the designs of . . . Perkins without missing that ornament which so many regard as a necessary concomitant of beauty . . . ."<sup>57</sup>

## COMPARABLE URBAN ARCHITECTURE

In order to place Perkins's work in Chicago in context, it is useful to look at public school building in other urban areas of the country and at nonschool architecture of the time. According to Brooks, Perkins's mentor was William B. Ittner of St. Louis. Ittner had studied architecture at Cornell University and became Commissioner of School Buildings in St. Louis in 1897. "By 1903, his work was nationally publicized, and in design quality it perhaps surpassed that of the Perkins firm."<sup>58</sup>

In a 1908 review of Ittner's work in St. Louis, a contemporary critic noted that the architect had employed a number of devices to introduce some variety into the long fronts of the massive buildings, only three stories high, usually, which otherwise might have been monotonous. Most often, Ittner makes entrances distinctive. In addition, he added architectural detail along the roof lines to compensate for the flat roof design of most of his work.<sup>59</sup>

Similarities between Ittner's work and Perkins's had more to do with the practical requirements of urban school buildings than with pure design. Sash construction was demanded by the need for as much light as possible; the massive size of schools only three stories high with their resulting long fronts, required some visual compensation. While Ittner varied style

among "cottage Gothic," Jacobean, renaissance, and colonial, Perkins more clearly developed a style of his own.<sup>60</sup>

Ittner and Perkins had one advantage over the builders of schools in New York: they were able to set their buildings back from the street and included landscaping and terraces with grass and trees in front. In New York, schools were built right to the street line, so that they could not be seen from much distance and their proportions or design appreciated.<sup>61</sup>

In a 1908 comparison of school building in New York, Boston, St. Louis, and Chicago, the differences among the cities themselves and the limitations they imposed on school architects became apparent. In New York, for example, schools were built in four stories, and planners were reluctant to give up the basement area for classroom space. In St. Louis and Chicago, where three stories were the norm in addition to spacious grounds around the buildings, the basement was given over wholly to the heating and ventilating equipment. In Boston, where land was too expensive to afford spacious grounds, height was limited to two stories.<sup>62</sup>

There were advantages to the "Chicago" plan in addition to eliminating the need for students to use the basement area; Perkins's notion of distributing the toilet rooms on all the floors was generally applauded in other cities. A further innovation of his, that of installing wardrobes in each classroom with sliding doors that served as blackboards when closed, was also considered for adoption by other cities. (His

use of the same wardrobes as ventilators, however, did not meet with the same approval.)<sup>63</sup>

While Perkins in Chicago, and Ittner in St. Louis, were able to use H-type or T-type plans, the New York City school builders were practically limited to an H-shape, because of the need to create a source of light within the buildings themselves. New York City schools were built to the street line and often shared party walls with other buildings of the same height or higher. For this reason, New York school architects used the "well" or "court" plan to provide as much natural light as possible.<sup>64</sup>

Perkins was building schools in Chicago at a time when many other cultural and educational institutions were being established, and so his designs existed in a rich context of public architecture. Surrounded as he was by the influence of the various esthetic tastes flowing the city, his development of a distinctive style for his school buildings was all the more remarkable.

Much public building was done in Renaissance style: Adler and Sullivan's Auditorium Building (1887-89), the Art Institute of Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge (1891-93), and their Public Library (1895-97). Of all the public institutions built during this period "none acquired the international influence and prestige of the University of Chicago."<sup>65</sup> Perkins himself, earlier in his career, designed Hitchcock Hall, a field house, and a settlement house for the university, which "gave him some

claim as a specialist" when he applied to become the city's architect to the Board of Education.<sup>66</sup>

The original Quadrangles plan for the University, embellished over the years, nevertheless retained a generally unified "Tudor Gothic" style, despite the many architects who designed individual buildings and groups of buildings.<sup>67</sup> Perkins retained some of this flavor in his first designs for the Board of Education, but by 1910 had developed a distinct style for school buildings that was all his own. Unfortunately, his individuality was about to clash with the ideas of the President of the Chicago Board of Education, Alfred R. Union. The citizens of the city of Chicago would no longer be the recipients of the architectural contributions of Dwight Perkins.

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE TRIAL

#### "BOARD OUSTS PERKINS"

So the front page headlines of The Chicago American read on 16 February 1910. Dwight H. Perkins was appointed as architect to the board of education on a wave of reform under mayor Edward Dunne in 1905 and dismissed in 1910 on the ebb tide of "business as usual" under mayor Fred Busse, Chicago's first four year mayor. It seems quite ironic that one of the nation's foremost architects was placed on trial and dismissed from his position as architect from the Chicago Board of Education for public services rendered to the Chicago Public Schools.

The appointment of Perkins as architect to the board of Education came during one of the most tumultuous eras in the annals of Chicago politics. The time was ripe for graft. Chicago's population had increased from 1.6 million to 2.1 million in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Minors were forced away from their jobs by child labor laws. The public schools were overcrowded, and the school board seemed unable to cope with the problems of growth. A recent fire in December 1903 at Chicago's Iroquois Theatre had killed 571

along with the Collingwood fire in Cleveland, Ohio. These disastrous fires produced a demand for safety regulations and fireproof construction to be required on all public buildings including, of course, school buildings.<sup>2</sup>

Challenge, responsibility, and difficulty accompanied the duties of architect to the board of education. Perkins's predecessors, William B. Mundie (December 1898 to May 1904) and Norman S. Paton (December 1896 to November 1898), were badgered out of office by a school board that was more interested in rewarding cronies than in quality scholastic architecture. Perkins was in charge of all school buildings, their erection, repairs, and maintenance. His position left him open to criticism from the taxpayers in the city of Chicago; those who had children; those who taught in the public schools; and those who built, maintained buildings, and completed their repairs.

Things went well for Perkins during the initial years of his appointment as architect (1905-1907). Because his style of architecture was unique, he began to establish a reputation for himself that was not to be surpassed for at least another thirty years in the field of educational architecture. Under Perkins, there was a steady improvement in school planning and construction. His buildings gained national recognition, and he was lauded for his iconoclastic designs which emphasized the use of horizontal lines and an innovative use of interior space and lighting.

The picture began to change when the republican candidate, Fred Busse, was elected to office in 1907. He began his attack on the Chicago school situation by appointing men who shared his shrewd and powerful tactics as a businessman. Alfred Union, attorney for the Armour Company, was appointed president of the Chicago Board of Education.<sup>3</sup> The power positions of other board members included the head of the legal department of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, President of the Diamond Glue Company, and two big real estate operators. The Busse faction earned the nickname of "Busse's big business board."<sup>4</sup> Inevitably tensions developed between the newly appointed Busse faction and the remaining Dunne faction. The Busse faction was determined to exploit the Chicago schools financially. In order to accomplish this, Superintendent of Schools Ella Flagg Young, and architect Dwight Perkins would have to be removed or replaced from their respective offices. Both represented opposing forces to the Busse appointees that stood in the way of payrolling and contractor graft. The architectural department under Perkins abolished the practice of letting general contracts and implemented letting contracts specifically for each building trade. The clerks from the architectural department supervised each construction job and kept a close watch on the amounts of money paid to contractors for the construction of schools. Materials specified for job completion were also monitored as to the amount and quantity of material used. These were practices that were previously

anathema to the school board.

Speculation grew over the controversy of Perkins's extraordinary school designs and his dismissal from the board of education. Many believed that the board members were too conservative to accept the unique designs of Perkins. The obituary notice for Perkins from the Evanston newspaper related the cause of his dismissal to the "bold, functional lines of his Trumbull elementary school."<sup>5</sup> Carl Condit identified that the true reason for Perkins's dismissal as related to the astonishment of the conservative members of the board of education and other municipal agencies by the radical school designs of Perkins.<sup>6</sup> The personal views of Perkins were that they were trying to put a man out merely because he was honest.<sup>7</sup>

It became apparent that Perkins's administration of the architectural department in Chicago for the Board of Education would not mesh with the politics of the day. The school board, determined to rid itself of Perkins, sought his suspension as architect. Union was directed by The Committee on Buildings and Grounds to request the resignation of Perkins following a meeting that took place on 2 February 1910. Perkins was officially informed of the written charges of his suspension on 16 February 1910:

Dear Sir--At a meeting of the Committee on Buildings and Grounds held Feb. 2, 1910, the following action on unanimous vote was

taken:

The matter of changes in the Architect's Department was discussed by the Committee in executive session, after which it was ordered that the President of the Board be directed to request the resignation of Mr. Perkins, Architect, and in the event that he does not resign, that the President be authorized to take such steps as may be necessary to remove him.

By direction thereof, a day or two later, I presented a copy of the prevailing motion and requested your resignation, which was peremptorily refused. Believing it to be the sense of the Committee that you should have full time to consider the request, I refrained from further action until to-day when I must report to the Committee, which is the next regular meeting.

You are hereby suspended from the office of Architect of the Board of Education, pending a trial, the day of which trial will be set by the Trial Committee no less than ten days hence, of which date you will be duly informed, this suspension being under Rule 130 governing the Board of

Education.

The grounds of your suspension and charges which will be based thereon are:

1. Incompetency in the line of work as Architect for the Board of Education.
2. Extravagance in expenditures, maintenance and operation.
3. Insubordination, general in its terms.

Until further order of the Board, you stand suspended.

Yours truly,

Alfred R. Urion, President<sup>8</sup>

Perkins's rebuttal was in the form of a letter that was sent to President Urion by special messenger. The letter read as follows:

I acknowledge receipt of your notice of Feb. 16 of my suspension as architect of the board of education in which you state as the grounds:

1. Incompetency in the line of work as architect for the board of education.
2. Extravagance in expenditures, maintenance and operation.
3. Insubordination, general in its terms.

As I stated to you in your office yesterday, these charges are not specific,



they are not in detail and they are not such as enable me to prepare a defense. I therefore, as suggested by you, write to request specific charges in detail, so that I may consult records, prepare my defense and arrange for witnesses, and I further request this at least one week before the trial.

In case you do not decide to give such details as was done in the Haskell trial I will be obliged to assume that you and the trial committee will permit me to enter a general denial, similar in character to your charges, and to introduce matter and witnesses, whether they are directly germane to your charges or not, and further, I shall expect the trial committee to give sufficient time to hear a concise statement of my administration.

I shall, if not provided with details by you, prepare an answer to the various items which you have given to the press such for instance, as the charge that I was guilty of extravagance at the Lane Technical High School. The price that you are reported to have given included the equipment. The

building proper, the portion under my department, is one of the cheapest structures in the country--a fireproof skeleton construction for 13 cents per cubic foot. The equipment I had nothing whatever to do with, except to make space for it. The records show, however, that the credit of this magnificent machinery is due partly to you as you were on the committee that inquired into the bids and recommended the letting of the contract.

As for incompetency, I shall show my buildings and tables, comparing them with other buildings. As for office department expenses, I shall show the circumstances for which I was not responsible and its effect upon the same.

In regard to insubordination, I now ask you to point to a single order from the board of the buildings and grounds committee with which I failed to comply. In addition, I assert that I have followed the directions of members as far as possible under board orders, and under conditions of buildings. I shall show, if I have to, that I have received suggestions from board members

that would tend to incur unnecessary expense and to building improperly.

You are reported to have said that I would not cheapen the cost of the Nobel school plan, and that the committee compelled me to do so when the Corkery plans were made. The Corkery School, which is now under contract, is 1 cent per cubic foot more expensive than the Nobel. The saving of \$35,000 is obtained by reducing the educational facilities. There is more money spent for ornament in the Corkery school by specific directions of Mr. Downey than was the case at the Nobel.

All of these things, and many more, I shall be able to prove and shall feel privileged to do so, unless you confine me to specific detailed charges.

I also at this time repeat my request for an open trial.<sup>9</sup>

Urion's response upon receipt of Perkins's letter was a short, caustic comment quoted in the headlines of the Interocean: "If Mr. Perkins keeps on in the present strain, he will be suspected of being an ass."<sup>10</sup>

The mighty battle carried out through the mail between board president, Alfred R. Urion, and suspended school

architect, Dwight H. Perkins, ultimately resulted in a trial before the trial committee of the board of education. Four members of the board of education represented the trial committee which was responsible for the hearing of evidence of charges against an individual and recommending what, if any, course of action the board of education should follow. Members of the trial committee consisted of three doctors and a dry goods merchant: Dr. Alexander L. Blackwood (chairman), Dr. Jeremiah H. Walsh, Dr. James B. McFatrigh and Oscar F. Greifenhagen. Although the trial committee members were capable men in their profession and business, not one member had an architectural back-ground. The trial commenced on 7 March 1910 and lasted approximately one month.<sup>11</sup>

Alfred Urion, Perkins's main antagonist, personally conducted the prosecution. Serving as attorney for a major meatpacking firm, Armour and Company, Urion had already established a reputation for himself in the Chicago area as a result of his antagonism toward labor unions and his frequent references to the Chicago schools as "another big business."<sup>12</sup> Perkins was defended by Chicago attorney, Frederick H. Gansbergen. On the 23rd of February, trustee Julius F. Smietanka had proposed a resolution to the school board urging three members of the school management committee be added to the trial board in order to avoid any suggestions of partiality. The board emphatically opposed the resolution with thirteen nays, two yeas, and one excused vote.<sup>13</sup>

The details of the charges against Perkins were not made public until two weeks subsequent to his suspension and one week prior to the trial.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Perkins received the charges in the form of a letter, eight typewritten pages in length. The charges were divided under the three headings of incompetence, extravagance, and insubordination.<sup>15</sup>

Upon commencement of the trial on 7 March, the accused architect stated, "Although my trial is about to begin, I am still in the dark as to the charges against me. I do not know what to expect."<sup>16</sup> Perkins faced the trial as a challenge and felt quite capable of defeating his opponents. His personal comments regarding the prosecution were found in the evening edition of The Chicago American on the first day of the trial:

The trial committee and President Union refused to give me sufficiently specific charges which I will be called on to answer, so I have tried to think of every conceivable one that might be urged and to prepare an answer to it. I am assured I shall be given time if necessary to prepare statements in answer to any accusation that may be brought against me. That's all I want--a fair trial. I am ready if Mr. Union is.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, Perkins was denied access to any records from the board's architectural department even though the

records were public and supposed to be available for inspection.<sup>18</sup>

Urion preferred the charges of waste, extravagance and incompetency against Perkins in his opening statements to the board trial committee. Just about every offense imaginable which could be laid at the door of an architect was charged against Perkins by Urion. Urion proclaimed that the most costly buildings of Perkins were "disgraces and miserable failures"--a gross distortion of reality. Urion even went so far as to accuse Perkins of being lax in his duties and allowing contractors to erect faulty buildings. He also stated that many new schools built were suffering from leaky roofs, and the schools that cost approximately \$250,000 were no better than the ones that were built a few years earlier for \$115,000. Mr. Urion accused Perkins of spending thousands upon thousands of dollars merely to satisfy his personal vanity. He said the new high schools being built were "monuments to the architect," and that one particular building had a dome that he referred to as the "glittering dome of Beacon Street." Urion intimated that the dome represented the glory of Perkins's achievements in building schools.<sup>19</sup>

To the chagrin of Urion, the defense of Perkins was masterful. Accusations made against Perkins were refuted by the testimony of the Superintendent of Schools, Ella Flagg Young; two notable school architects; the President of the American Institute of Architects, Irving K. Pond; and Urion

himself. It was shown through these expert witnesses that Chicago Schools under the administration of Dwight Perkins were well built and that Chicago was paying less for its school buildings than any other big city in the country.<sup>20</sup>

Ella Flagg Young was called to the witness stand by Urion to prove his contention that the schools designed by Perkins with an eye toward beauty as well as utility were no better than the old ones. Her testimony revealed that she preferred the use of assembly halls and gymnasiums that were designed by Mr. Perkins.<sup>21</sup>

The fate of Dwight Perkins was decided by a biased trial committee, in executive session, behind closed doors. Members of the press, representing the public, were permitted to attend the hearings as were board members, witnesses and an attorney for the defendant. There are no complete trial proceedings to be found at the Chicago Board of Education with the exception of formal suspension/dismissal notices, some letters, and various and sundry resolutions contained in the Proceedings of the Board of Education. The most thorough record of the trial proceedings brought against Dwight Perkins is chronicled in the various Chicago newspapers whose reporters rallied behind the defense of Perkins as did colleagues; scientific, architectural, and civic organizations; ministers; and personal friends.<sup>22</sup> The coverage in the newspapers ranged from front-page headlines to editorial comments and cartoons.

The "machinations" of Alfred R. Union did not go unnoticed. Famed cartoonist, Sidney Smith, who worked with The Examiner in 1910, portrayed a collection of classical sketches that implicated Union of intemperance during the Perkins trial. Union's public career was shattered. Union made the fatuous mistake of attempting to preside at the Perkins trial while in an inebriated condition that left him incapable and offensive.<sup>23</sup> His colleagues were compelled to adjourn the meeting even though important business was pending. Efforts seeking his resignation began to occur on a daily basis. Various members of the clergy called for his immediate resignation while certain citizens of Chicago sought his resignation through Mayor Busse.<sup>24</sup> Following the vast attention gained subsequent to the Perkins trial, Union voiced a determination not to resign, nor to be forced out of office until the end of his term--June.<sup>25</sup> On 28 December 1910, Union resigned as president and was replaced by Dr. James B. McFatrigh as the new board president.<sup>26</sup>

Perkins had won the hearings in the court of public opinion with the exception of the majority of school board members. A minority report presented by Oscar Greifenhagen and seconded by Julius Smietanka was presented to the board on 6 April 1910 requesting the substitution of it for the majority report which called for Perkins's dismissal. The minority report exonerated Perkins on the charges of incompetency and extravagance. The only charge of insubordination that was



applicable to Perkins throughout the testimony of the trial was the one with reference to the Commercial High School wherein Perkins freely admitted that he kept on two or three engineers because he believed that the Board of Commerce intended to recommend completion of this project. Union's attitude throughout the trial was identified in the minority report as being characterized by predetermination and inaccuracy. The motion to substitute the minority for the majority report was lost on the vote of two yeas and thirteen nays.<sup>27</sup>

The trial brought national recognition to Perkins and subsequently enabled the architect to develop one of the largest educational practices in the United States. Perkins received an additional 160 commissions in private practice prior to his retirement in 1935. Perkins never returned to the offices of the Chicago Board of Education from the date of his suspension, 16 February 1910. After his trial, he resumed his private practice with John Leonard Hamilton, Perkins and Hamilton, where he remained until 1911. The firm expanded to Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton in 1911 with the addition of William Kinne Fellows. Perkins continued with the firm until 1927. An account of the educational buildings rendered by Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton is bound together in the distinguished volume, Educational Buildings. The firm did extensive designing and planning in the following educational areas: elementary and secondary schools; high school manual training shops; college and park buildings; gymnasiums,

assembly halls, and auditoriums; dining halls and cafeterias; heating and ventilating plants; and reconstruction of old buildings. The office building for the firm, designed and built in 1907, was located at the intersection of Michigan Boulevard and Chicago Avenues (present location of Wally Findlay Art Gallery).

Perkins was forced to retire from the firm in 1927 as a result of a physical ailment. He was crippled by deafness from a condition that developed from torturing migraine headaches that he had suffered from since childhood. He formed a new partnership in 1927 with Melville Chatten and Herrick Hammond: Perkins, Chatten, and Hammond. His architectural skills were used in an advisory capacity. He remained with the firm until his retirement in 1935. Subsequent to his retirement, his time was divided between Evanston, Illinois and Flintridge, California where much of his time was devoted to painting and art work. On his return to Flintridge in the small railroad town of Lordsburg, New Mexico Dwight Perkins died on 2 November 1941. He lived on, however, in the legacy of his architecture which found no peers or equals for many years to come.

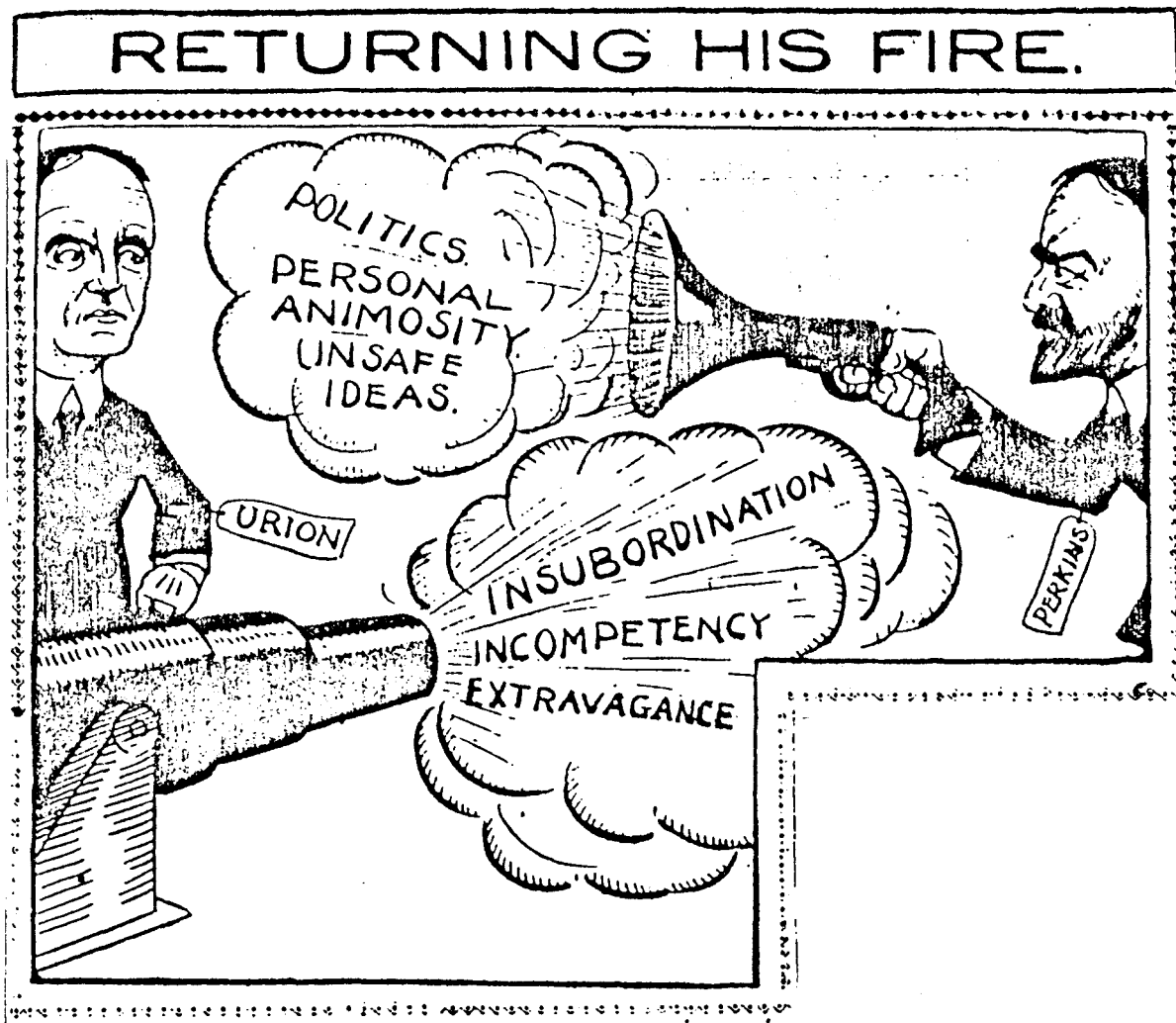


Figure 4. This illustration appeared in The Chicago American the day after the trial began, 8 March 1910.

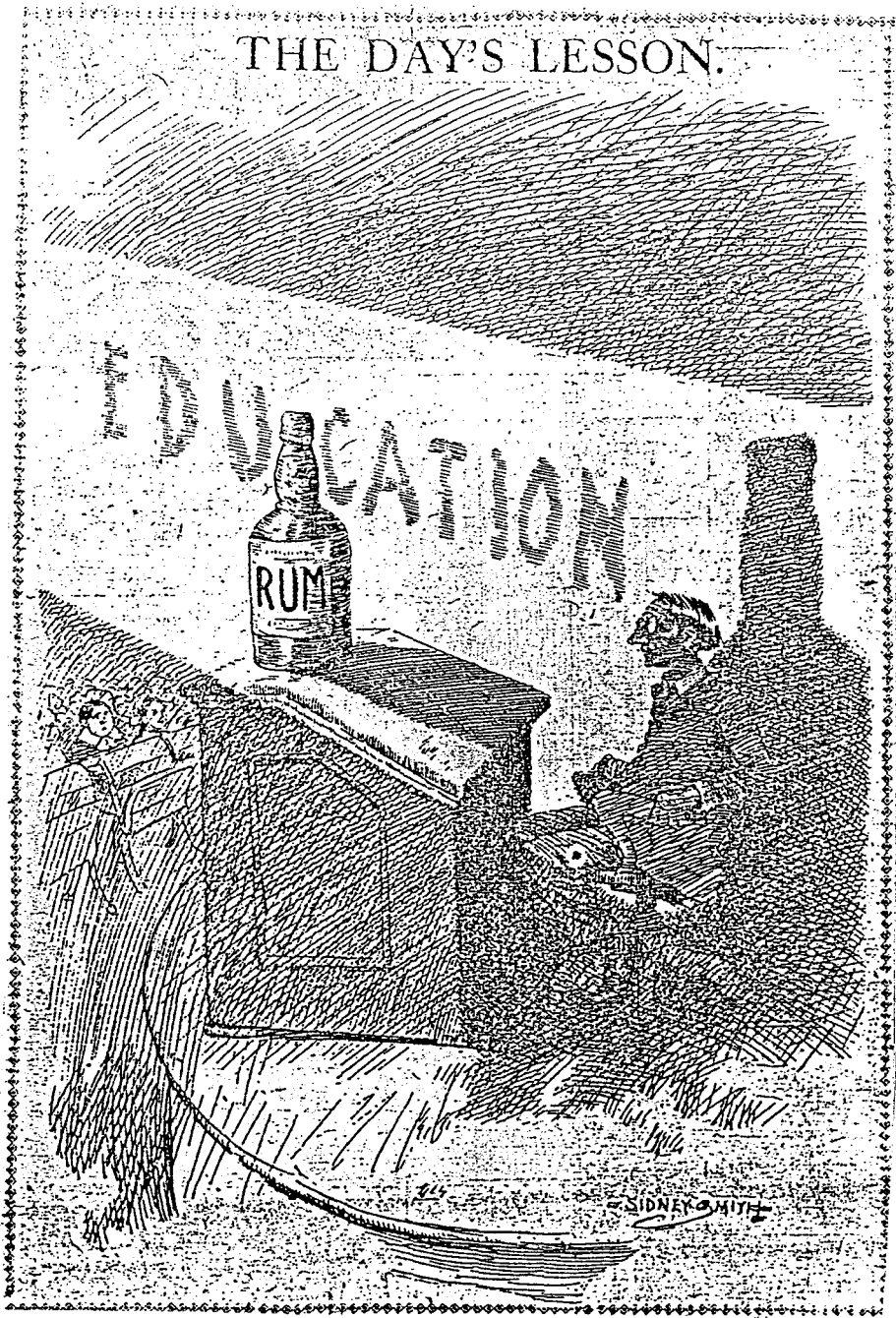


Figure 5. Sidney Smith's editorial page illustration of the trial. The Chicago Examiner, 1 April 1910.

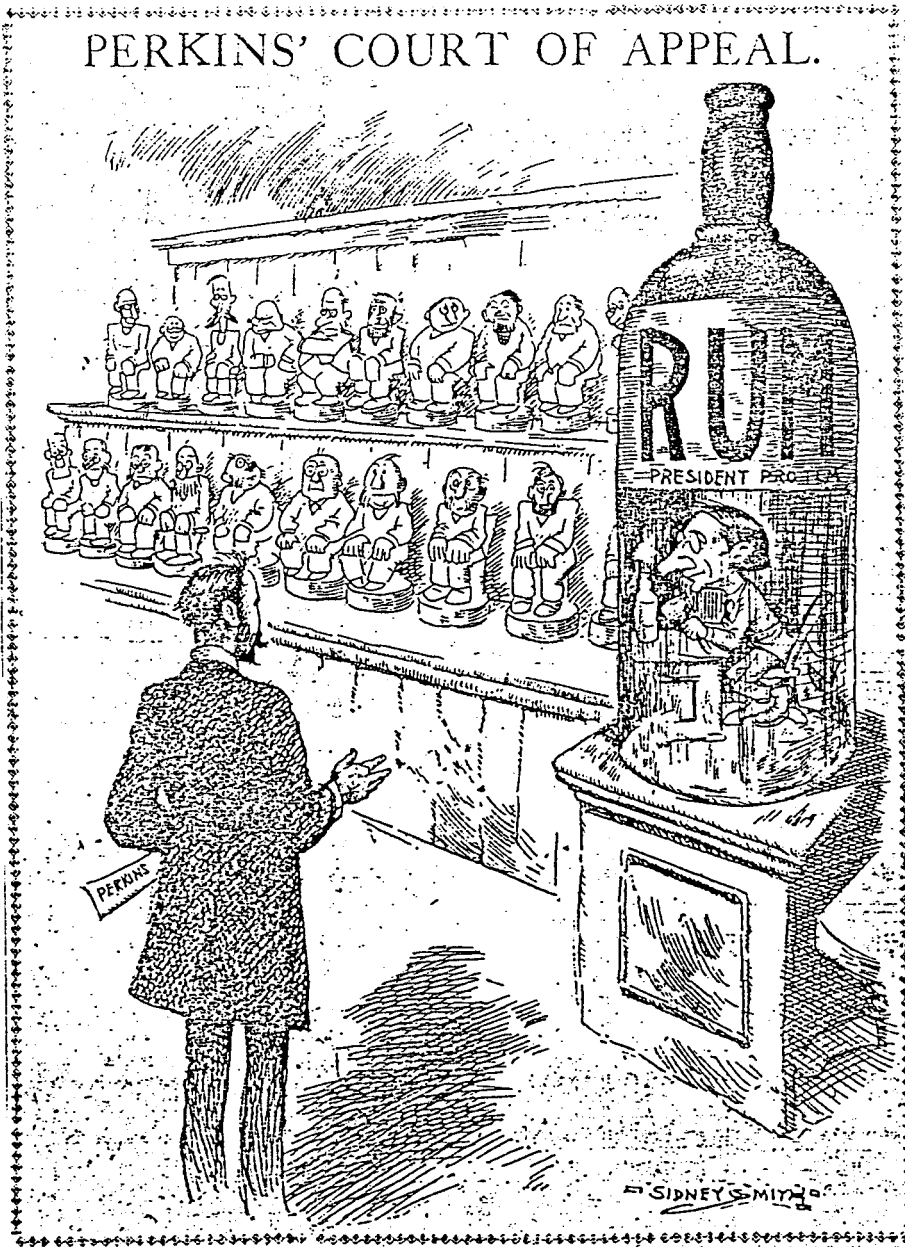


Figure 6. Sidney Smith's illustration of "Perkins' Court of Appeal." The Chicago Examiner, 2 April 1910.



Figure 7. Sidney Smith's illustration "Do It Now," urging Mayor Busse to oust Urion. The Chicago Examiner, 4 April 1910.



## CHAPTER FOUR NOTES

1. Perry R. Duis and Glen E. Holt, "Chicago As It Was. The Politics of Architecture," Chicago 30 (October 1981): 134-8.
2. Cara Reese, "Chicago Schools Which are Firetraps. Some Dangers Discovered by an Unbiased Investigator," Chicago Interoccean, 30 January 1910, 3 (M).
3. Proceedings for the Board of Education for the Year, 1909-1910 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1910), 1-2; "Urion is School Head . . .," Chicago Record Herald, 15 July 1909.
4. Eleanor Ellis Perkins, Perkins of Chicago (Evanston: Privately printed, 1966), 124.
5. Obituary notice from local Evanston paper, miscellaneous clipping file on Dwight H. Perkins, Evanston Public Library.
6. Dictionary of American Biography. Supplement Three 1941-45. "Dwight H. Perkins," by Carl W. Condit
7. For an elaboration on Perkins's comments regarding the trial see "Trial Verdict is Against Perkins," Chicago Daily Tribune, 1 April 1910; "Perkins Drops Contest: Says He Was Wronged," Chicago Daily Journal, 1 April 1910.
8. Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year, 1909-1910, 610-611, "Suspension of Architect Deferred Temporarily" Report No. 12960. The suspension of Perkins was adopted on 23 February 1910 with a vote of sixteen yeas and zero nays.
9. Ibid., 598. "Request for an Open Trial by Mr. Dwight H. Perkins" Report No. 12910-D; see also "Perkins Says Secret Trial is Unamerican," Chicago Evening Post, 15 February 1910 for a copy of Perkins's letter sent to school trustees and board members.
10. "Urion 'Suspects' Perkins is an Ass," Chicago Interoccean, 18 February 1910.
11. "Perkins Ready to Face Charges," Chicago American, 7 March 1910; "Perkins on Trial at Last," Chicago Daily Journal, 7 March 1910.
12. Duis, Chicago 136.
13. Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year 1909-1910, 598-9.



14. "Perkins Learns Why He Was Ordered Out," Chicago American, 28 February 1910, 1.

15. Ibid. For a complete statement of the charges brought against Perkins, see Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year 1909-1910, 724-6.

16. "Perkins On Trial At Last," Chicago Daily Journal, 7 March 1910, 2.

17. "Perkins Ready To Face Charges At Trial To-Day," Chicago American, 7 March 1910.

18. "Perkins Barred From Examining Board's Files," Chicago American, 10 March 1910.

19. "Perkins Vain and Expensive, Union Charges," Chicago American, 8 March 1910.

20. "Union Charge is Refuted By Own Testimony," Chicago American, 8 March 1910, 1; "St. Louis Man to Aid Perkins," ibid., 28 March 1910, 1; "Boston Expert Praises Perkins," ibid., 30 March 1910; "Local Schools Cost Less, Perkins Says," Interocean, 30 March 1910, 12; "Perkins Given Boston Aid," Chicago Daily Journal, 30 March 1910, 1; "Architects Take Side of Perkins," Chicago Daily Tribune, 30 March 1910, 9.

21. "Architects for Perkins," Chicago Daily Journal, 7 February 1910. Ella Flagg Young will be called from her vacation in Florida to give evidence of Perkins's ability at the trial. She has quoted that "there are only three school architects in the United States, and Mr. Perkins is one of them." "Mrs. Young Goes to Aid of Perkins," Chicago American, 8 March 1910, 1.

22. "Call School Board Unfair," Chicago Daily Journal, 24 February 1910; "Perkins' Foes are Laughed At," ibid., 12 February 1910; "Many Bodies With Perkins," ibid., 11 February 1910; "Architects for Perkins," ibid., 7 February 1910; "Mr. Perkins and The Chicago Board of Education," Brickbuilder 19 (May 1910): 128-9.

23. "Acrid Talk by Union Halts Perkins Trial," Chicago Record Herald, 26 March 1910.

24. "Mr. Union's Pressing Duty to the Public," Chicago Examiner, 1 April 1910, editorial; "Union Under Fire, Leaves for His Farm," Chicago American, 4 April 1910; "Union Must Go As School Head, Say Pastors," ibid., 5 April 1910, 1; "Choice for Union: Ousted By Busse or Resign Place," ibid., 2 April 1910, 1.

25. "Urion to Stay On Job," Chicago Record-Herald, 29 March 1910; "Urion Holds Board Job As Perkins Goes," Chicago American, 7 April 1910.
26. Fifty-Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1911 (Chicago: Board of Education).
27. "Perkins Finally Out After Hot Struggle," Chicago Record Herald, 7 April 1910; see also Proceedings for the Board of Education for the Year 1909-1910, 732-3.
28. Perry R. Duis and Glen E. Holt, "Chicago At It Was. The Politics of Architecture," Chicago 30 (October 1981): 134-8.
29. Cara Reese, "Chicago Schools Which are Firetraps. Some Dangers Discovered by an Unbiased Investigator," Chicago Interoccean, 30 January 1910, 3 (M).
30. Proceedings for the Board of Education for the Year, 1909-1910 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1910), 1-2; "Urion is School Head . . .," Chicago Record Herald, 15 July 1909.
31. Eleanor Ellis Perkins, Perkins of Chicago (Evanston: Privately printed, 1966), 124.
32. Obituary notice from local Evanston paper, miscellaneous clipping file on Dwight H. Perkins, Evanston Public Library.
33. Dictionary of American Biography. Supplement Three 1941-45. "Dwight H. Perkins," by Carl W. Condit
34. For an elaboration on Perkins's comments regarding the trial see "Trial Verdict is Against Perkins," Chicago Daily Tribune, 1 April 1910; "Perkins Drops Contest: Says He Was Wronged," Chicago Daily Journal, 1 April 1910.
35. Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year, 1909-1910, 610-611, "Suspension of Architect Deferred Temporarily" Report No. 12960. The suspension of Perkins was adopted on 23 February 1910 with a vote of sixteen yeas and zero nays.
36. Ibid., 598. "Request for an Open Trial by Mr. Dwight H. Perkins" Report No. 12910-D; see also "Perkins Says Secret Trial is Unamerican," Chicago Evening Post, 15 February 1910 for a copy of Perkins's letter sent to school trustees and board members.
37. "Urion 'Suspects' Perkins is an Ass," Chicago Interoccean, 18 February 1910.
38. "Perkins Ready to Face Charges," Chicago American, 7 March 1910; "Perkins on Trial at Last," Chicago Daily Journal, 7 March 1910.

39. Duis, Chicago 136.
40. Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year 1909-1910, 598-9.
41. "Perkins Learns Why He Was Ordered Out," Chicago American, 28 February 1910, 1.
42. Ibid. For a complete statement of the charges brought against Perkins, see Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year 1909-1910, 724-6.
43. "Perkins On Trial At Last," Chicago Daily Journal, 7 March 1910, 2.
44. "Perkins Ready To Face Charges At Trial To-Day," Chicago American, 7 March 1910.
45. "Perkins Barred From Examining Board's Files," Chicago American, 10 March 1910.
46. "Perkins Vain and Expensive, Urion Charges," Chicago American, 8 March 1910.
47. "Urion Charge is Refuted By Own Testimony," Chicago American, 8 March 1910, 1; "St. Louis Man to Aid Perkins," ibid., 28 March 1910, 1; "Boston Expert Praises Perkins," ibid., 30 March 1910; "Local Schools Cost Less, Perkins Says," Interocean, 30 March 1910, 12; "Perkins Given Boston Aid," Chicago Daily Journal, 30 March 1910, 1; "Architects Take Side of Perkins," Chicago Daily Tribune, 30 March 1910, 9.
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50. "Acrid Talk by Urion Halts Perkins Trial," Chicago Record Herald, 26 March 1910.
51. "Mr. Urion's Pressing Duty to the Public," Chicago Examiner, 1 April 1910, editorial; "Urion Under Fire, Leaves for His Farm," Chicago American, 4 April 1910; "Urion Must Goe As School Head,

Say Pastors," ibid., 5 April 1910, 1; "Choice for Union: Ousted By Busse or Resign Place," ibid., 2 April 1910, 1.

52. "Union to Stay On Job," Chicago Record-Herald, 29 March 1910; "Union Holds Board Job As Perkins Goes," Chicago American, 7 April 1910.

53. Fifty-Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1911 (Chicago: Board of Education).

54. "Perkins Finally Out After Hot Struggle," Chicago Record Herald, 7 April 1910; see also Proceedings for the Board of Education for the Year 1909-1910, 732-3.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LEGACY OF DWIGHT H. PERKINS

#### SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS

At least one historian has called Perkins "the architect who set the standard for scholastic building in Chicago."<sup>1</sup> Even during his brief five-year career as architect to the Chicago Board of Education, he "quickly established himself as one of the country's top school architects. National journals praised his . . . designs, which emphasized horizontal lines and innovative use of interior space."<sup>2</sup> Even a member of the committee which voted to dismiss him stated at the time: "His work has been influential in other cities, and, to our shame, his recognition has been greater abroad than at home."<sup>3</sup>

Donovan, in his standard work on school architecture, listed Perkins as one of a group of early architectural pioneers who, by their serious study of the problem and their good sense for simplicity in composition, have led the way in school architecture toward possibilities which have clearly exemplified the people's devotion to education and their appreciation for simple, substantial structures.<sup>4</sup>

Perkins's contributions to school architecture were made in three major areas: in the use of schools as community buildings, in their engineering, and in the integration of

solid educational philosophy in their design.

In 1909, in answer to a reporter's question about the school and its use by the community, Perkins stated:

Boards of education have, generally speaking, a responsibility only for the education of normal children under 18 years of age, but expansion is taking place and such boards will ultimately be charged with responsibility for the education of the entire community regardless of age or previous training, and will be obliged to make more and more use of school buildings outside of regular hours, for such public purposes.<sup>5</sup>

By the 1950's, Perkins was recognized as perhaps the formulator of the park-school concept--in which park districts and school boards work together, pooling their land resources, to provide more [land] and air and sunlight, and more space for play than might otherwise be economically possible.<sup>6</sup>

In fact, he had been appointed the first Commissioner of the Chicago Special Park Commission in 1899, a group charged with developing and acting upon "a systematic plan for meeting the city's space and recreational needs."<sup>7</sup> Perkins was also interested in the school

as center of community life, deliberately scaling auditoriums, assembly halls, gyms,

playroom[s] and shops to the year-round, day and evening use of both children and adults. He specifically favored planning school buildings so that these community facilities might be opened in the evening without opening the rest of the school.<sup>8</sup>

Perkins's community concept of the school was a direct reflection of progressive educational trends. In an article he published in 1915, Perkins stated:

The modern school problem requires the architect to plan a structure which is in itself a neighborhood or social center for daytime use by children. At the sametime, he automatically plans a social center building for adults to be used in the evening . . . . There is no essential difference between the two [except in] . . . the size of the furniture.<sup>9</sup>

He enlarged on the theme of "throwing away the front door key," in a second article the following month. Here he cited specific examples of schools that had been built with community use in mind, including one designed by his own firm, Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton. The first unit of that school, the Oakton School in Evanston, Illinois, was designed as an elementary school. Two other separate units were also part of the design: a gymnasium building and a domestic and manual

arts building.<sup>10</sup>

He described the activities organized by the other three elementary schools in the neighborhood:

Practically every evening the use of the various auditoriums is spoken for; it is either a lecture, a moving picture show, a sociable, a discussion of some current political or municipal subject, a dancing lesson, or an athletic game that one sees in the assembly halls every afternoon or evening.<sup>11</sup>

Even in schools where severe economy was the rule, Perkins asserted that it was possible to provide for community facilities by combining play and assembly areas: by installing a stage in the kindergarten room where the furniture is movable; or/and by locating community facilities with easy access to the outside or to private stairways.

Another of Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton's commissions was the New Trier township high school in Kenilworth, Illinois. This building was designed with separate wings for academic work, for the assembly hall and lunchroom, for the power plant and shops, and for physical culture activities. Perkins described the high school as

open the year around, and in summer time age limits are ignored. One may see children of kindergarten age in the swimming



pool and at other times the father and grandfathers of the district swimming . . . .

perkins felt that the public got the most use out of the assembly and luncheon halls. The stage in the assembly hall could be used for performances. He continued his description of the assembly hall and stated,

when the fireproof doors are swung and the asbestos curtain lowered, the stage is completely separated from the hall and becomes the music room for band, orchestra, and chorus drills and for club sessions and class conferences.<sup>12</sup>

He designed the lunch room, to seat 400 people at once, with tables and chairs that could be cleared quickly. According to him the plans allowed for the chairs to be

put in storage under the assembly hall stage, thus making the floor clear for dancing. Three double doors at the side of the hall lead directly to the social lunch room so that the two are used together. A lecture in the hall followed by refreshments and dancing in the lunch room is not an infrequent evening occurrence, and even in the daytime the most distracting program or expressive crowd cannot disturb the school sessions in the main building.<sup>13</sup>

Perkins believed in better planning of schools as a center, because he thought that good planning would link the community's social center "with the most permanent and deeply rooted civic institution yet conceived, namely, the public school."<sup>14</sup> At least Perkins was able to see the adoption of this idea during his career. In an article he published in 1924 about community buildings, he noted:

twenty years ago [assembly halls] were rarely included in schools; now they are essential to the complete school. The same is true of the gymnasium . . . . The night school has long made use of class rooms in schools, now it is expanding to make use of the shops, laboratories, libraries, social halls and rooms for music and for public speaking . . . . [Perkins considered] that the expanded school now seems to include features of the ideal community building [and] is indicative of an economic development of considerable importance. The free public school has come to stay and the scope of its activities is constantly widening--its buildings must exist by established law. With this in mind, how natural it is that an institution which is looked upon as so

great an agency for good in the child's life is now made to provide for the father's and mother's recreation and educational advancement as well, thus centering the family and community interests.<sup>15</sup>

In conclusion, Perkins noted that, a high school with a comprehensive plan

[becomes] the model community center. . . .  
For the reason that the school is democratic in support and management, it is reasonable to assume that its position and rank will be. . . the dominating model community building.<sup>16</sup>

Perkins's legacy was also apparent in the building and engineering of modern schools. In addition to the distribution of toilet facilities on all floors, including assembly halls and gyms in school buildings, and integrating buildings with playgrounds, Perkins made other, less obvious contributions to school design. First, he advocated the one-story plan for schools. Perhaps because he did much of his work in the Chicago area at a time when the Great Fire had not been forgotten, he was very aware of the danger of fire in public buildings. As he put it, with the one-story plan, "the fire risk is entirely eliminated. The children cannot be burned. Every window is a fire escape." Perkins also cited other

advantages: "a great gain in the ease and efficiency of administration," and "better light." He also noted that "besides being thoroughly serviceable, it is beautiful and unusual."<sup>17</sup>

Perkins had long been interested in the park system in Chicago, and one of the first schools he built after he resumed his private practice in 1911 was in suburban Evanston, Illinois. He went on to build other suburban schools, perhaps because he was attracted by the possibilities of sites where land was cheaper than in urban areas, and his designs would have "room." He had sound engineering and architectural reasons for preferring the one-story plan, as well as aesthetic reasons. In addition, he was aware of the economical value of the one-story building, because lighter construction was possible,

Stairway space and extra corridors [could be] eliminated, no fire escapes are necessary, [and] no fireproof construction is necessary as would be the case in a two-story [or higher] building . . . .<sup>18</sup>

Another of Perkins's overwhelming concerns was in providing sufficient light in school buildings, and this consideration had great effect on his designs. As noted, he advocated the one-story plan because the rooms could be lit from above as well as from the sides. In an article he published in 1916, Perkins used his firm's Lincolnwood School

in Evanston, as an example of an economical one-story school, in which there was "overhead light for every room, outside rooms as well as inside."<sup>19</sup>

The ideas implemented by Perkins on daylight and lighting in his plan of school buildings were far ahead of his time. His practices brought common sense and creativeness to the design of schools. His concern about the effects of light on the people in classrooms was expressed in these remarks:

Classrooms with large windows on two sides have cross lights which interfere with the uniform lefthand lightand cast conflicting shadows. In addition they cause windows to be directly in the eyes of either pupils or teacher, which results in their being obscured by drawing the shades most of the time . . . . The rear rooms of many of our new schools were better than the front ones where the windows were arranged with reference to exterior design only. Where we tried least we succeeded best, and the diffusion given by the factorylike rows of windows in the rooms makes them superior to many of those in the fronts where the glass area may be the same. We have, therefore, evolved a room in the latest schools which has five equal windows in a

row, separated by narrow piers. The end windows are close to front and rear end wall and blackboard, and they go as high as fireproof construction permits. The corner rooms have blank outside walls on the ends, making them identical with the inner rooms.<sup>20</sup>

Another of Perkins's ideas that contributed to the schools built long after his day, was a variation on the "form follows function" concept. His school designs embodied this concept in a number of features. Since he knew, for example, that he wanted to design as much natural light into a building as possible, it followed that he would have to deal with many windows in the exterior plan. Thus, the "horizontal" motif he is noted for was really an outgrowth of design considerations to accommodate the windows, and to balance their presence in a multi-story building with ground floor and roof-line treatments.

Particularly after he left his post as Board of Education architect, Perkins designed schools so that the various functions of the areas within them could be separated. As already noted, he was aware of the community nature of school buildings. In a 1924 article, he listed the features that should naturally be included in any school building to meet community demands: assembly hall and stage; gymnasiums for men and women; swimming facilities for men and women; lunch room,

banquet hall or restaurant; club rooms; library; committee rooms; class rooms; and laboratories and shops.<sup>21</sup>

When he had an opportunity to build in the suburbs, where land was more plentiful than in the city of Chicago, Perkins geared his designs for community use. In designing entrances and exits and access hallways, for example, he used the "form follows function" guideline because he knew that plans had to be arranged so

that free use [could] be made of the building for many functions at the same time without conflict, or without disturbing any needs of the school organization by reason of some structural obstacle.<sup>22</sup>

Even his early design for a "skyscraper school" for the Board of Education comes out of the "form follows function" concept. The building was designed to house not only a school but also to accommodate various administrative departments of education; the supply department for all the city schools; a large auditorium; and several school museums. Further, it was planned as a commercial high school for older pupils

preparing for a business career which in the majority of cases will be pursued in surroundings not very dissimilar to those in which they would thus become accustomed. Their quarters could be made

to exercise upon their minds a valuable influence their training for their life work. . . . 23

Writing in 1949, Lawrence B. Perkins and Walter D. Cocking predicted a future for school buildings similar to what Lawrence Perkins's father had seen:

Instead of one building under one roof, we foresee that most new school plants will consist of a series of simple structures each designed to carry out one particular function . . . . Multi-story school buildings will be long to the ages. The one-story building for all purposes will become the accepted type . . . . Structure will be simpler, lighter, more durable and more aesthetic . . . .<sup>24</sup>

#### PERKINS'S STRONGEST INFLUENCE

By at least one account, the tradition of scholastic design established in Chicago by Perkins was carried on by Barry Byrne, who had designed a large number of Roman Catholic schools and churches in Chicago and the smaller cities of the prairie West.<sup>25</sup> Byrne practiced in Chicago and other cities, eventually establishing a practice in ecclesiastical buildings in the small towns of the Midwest that appreciated his adherence to Gothic and Romanesque styles. Perkins's major



influence, however, was on his son, who became in mid-twentieth century, one of a group of young architects planning schools with an emphasis on the needs of the students.<sup>26</sup>

"The revolution in scholastic design that had been initiated by Dwight Perkins in 1905 reached a new fulfillment in the Crow Island School . . . in Winnetka," Illinois, a wealthy North Shore suburb.<sup>27</sup> Crow Island School was designed by Perkins, Wheeler and Will, the firm Lawrence founded, in collaboration with Eliel and Eero Saarinen, and built in 1939-40. It was the first school outside of California "to represent a direct architectural response to the progressive education." The project was the first for Perkins and Will, who eventually became "the leading school architects of metropolitan Chicago and . . . the United States."<sup>28</sup>

The two most remarkable features of the Crow Island Plan were

the treatment of each classroom as a separate enclosure extending outward from a common access corridor, . . . and the careful preservation of the child's scale throughout all spaces and details.<sup>29</sup>

Perkins developed the plan by studying teachers, children, and the physical arrangements of schools, making a classroom model, and then soliciting comments from children, administrators, the board of education, and even the janitorial staff before making the final plans. The essential plan, now so familiar,

consisted of a central, common space--lobby, auditorium, playroom, library--from which three separate wings for different groups of grades radiated.

The Crow Island Plan was based on the principles of progressive education, which recognized children's needs for "physical health, emotional and social adjustment, self-expression" and basic skills in reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography and science.<sup>30</sup> Elsewhere, it has been noted that

the aim [of the design] was to make the school environment as pleasant and comfortable as possible, so that it might become a positive tool in enhancing the learning process.<sup>31</sup>

Still, one commentator noted that the architects of Crow Island saw, before they took up T-square and triangle, the making and doing and expressing in ceaseless variety which was to be sheltered here, the seeing, hearing and speaking, the experiencing and growing, and around these they fitted their fabric so closely that it seems to share them all in a way not unlike that in which the human body shares the energies of the soul; and by the same process they have written into their constructed forms, both within and

without, that unity with the scheme of a wider life briefly channeled here--that awareness of a social usefulness and destiny--which are the heart of progressive teaching.<sup>32</sup>

Perkins, Wheeler and Will were at the time of the Crow Island project an inexperienced firm, but they applied to the Winnetka school board anyway, and secured a place on the project by agreeing to work with an established firm. It was Lawrence Perkins himself who approached the Saarinens, based on a long family friendship. According to Perkins, about eighty people contributed to the project in one way or another.<sup>33</sup>

The architects' close attention to the needs of the children resulted in many large and small details being scaled specifically for them. Door handles, light switches, drinking fountains, toilets and blackboards were at child, not adult, height; auditorium seats were molded to child's shape and graduated in size; rest areas were provided throughout. Minute attention to detail and to economy resulted in many unusual details. For example, a design in raised brick on the outside wall of the gymnasium that looked like decoration was actually a floor plan of the school, and the long narrow hallway into the nurse's office was the exact length required for standard eye tests.<sup>34</sup>

Another Dwight Perkins tradition in the design of Crow Island, was the amount of attention that was paid to light.

The light asphalt flooring was chosen to reflect ceiling and window light. The halls combined artificial and natural light from skylights, and each of the original classrooms had a skylight. Lawrence Perkins was also sensitive to the occupant comfortability in the use of natural materials. For example, wood strips at child height in the brick hallways look esthetic, but are there to prevent scrapes. As Perkins said,

Crow Island is neither a building venture nor an astonishing feat of construction. It is the outcome of the philosophy of taking relatively common materials and arranging them so they are socially acceptable for the activities of the children and teachers.<sup>35</sup>

In 1975, Perkins and Will were recalled to Crow Island to design a Resource Center in the basement of the original building. This project was later awarded a citation for design excellence by both the Illinois School Board Association and the American Association of School Administration. The center was designed to hold the school library and also to provide enrichment activities. It included a "cooking barn" for cooking and sewing; a photography lab; a wood shop; a math lab; a greenhouse; a "visio-pod" for viewing films, slides, and television; a "sonic-cell" for listening; and lofts and reading "caves" for relaxed study. Again, the design was based on the needs of the children.<sup>36</sup>

Crow Island received and continues to receive much recognition from architects, educators, and others. The American Institute of Architects recognized the school as the most advanced elementary school design in the United States, and gave Perkins another award twenty-five years later for architectural design of enduring significance, referring to the school as a

landmark in design for education which demonstrated that an inspired educational philosophy can be translated into an architecture of continuing function and beauty.<sup>37</sup>

Perkins and Will went on after Crow Island to design many outstanding schools. There was a boom in school building after the second World War, to catch up with the backlog caused by the war. In 1959-61, Perkins and Will designed Chicago Teachers College North, which has been referred to as "the most prominent and the most impressive of all the public facilities built under the jurisdiction of the board of education."<sup>38</sup>

The design incorporated many of Dwight Perkins's concepts. Except for a six-story office tower, the college was described in the following manner:

a continuous single-story building with its wings disposed in the form of a double open rectangle marked by an extreme horizontal extension of the narrow enclosures . . . .

The window walls, the colored tile pattern in the covering of the spandrel strips, and the grass-covered courts gave the college a bright and sunny quality that made it particularly inviting . . . .<sup>39</sup>

Perkins and Will broke out of the traditional mold in designing elementary schools as well. The Richard E. Byrd School (1958-60) was designed as part of a Chicago municipal housing project. Today this concrete-framed, glass-walled building is composed of three separate but connected pavilions in a landscaped court, an unusual design for an urban school and the first of its kind.<sup>40</sup> Another school Perkins and Will designed as part of a housing project was Ludwig van Beethoven (1960-62), which consists of separate but connected pavilions, this time in a straight line.<sup>41</sup>

One of the last of Chicago's major projects under the postwar building boom was Perkins and Will's design for Jones Commercial High School, a replacement for a much older school. The original plan for a replacement was first put forth by Dwight Perkins, in his "skyscraper" plan. Although the Jones school was not constructed until almost sixty years after Dwight Perkins's proposal, "in one respect, at least, it embodied [his] ideas . . . ."

The school is divided into three main buildings, of which the most prominent is a six-story classroom tower that is framed in

reinforced concrete for an additional sixteen floors; flanking it on two sides are the auditorium and the gymnasium buildings, both two stories and both connected to the academic tower by covered passageways.<sup>42</sup>

In a 1948 review of three different elementary schools designed by Perkins and Will, the common denominators of their designs were described:

the classrooms are carefully oriented for the best light; furniture in all the rooms is movable, hence adaptable to changing needs of curriculum or teaching method; they are all schemed as instruments to assist the educational process as well as possible, rather than as monuments. Access and circulation are convenient and direct; light, air, and sun are an integral part of each of the plans.<sup>43</sup>

In the same article, the architects themselves were quoted on the design of the southern classroom wall of one of the schools:

The design takes advantage of south light and uses overhangs and job walls to mitigate glare effects. Room dimensions with respect to height, depth, and length

are a partial step toward the low ceilinged, artificially lit, deep classroom which is an objective of this office. These windows separate the functions of ventilating and light by the use of fixed lights and unit ventilation. Windows themselves serve more of a psychological than utilitarian function.<sup>44</sup>

Another rich source of information about the influence of Dwight Perkins on his son, Lawrence, was found in Lawrence's own writings (another characteristic he shares with his father). In writing about the period during which his father's designs were built, Lawrence Perkins says:

thinkers and planners made specific studies and recommendations concerning the steepness of stairs, the size of stair wells, the width of corridors, the width of doors, and the amount of fenestration each room should require. Their work in New York, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, and smaller places furnished a flood of plans and buildings which aroused communities all over America to a more realistic approach to school architecture . . . Progress had not yet reached the point where the school building was designed



for its pupils, tailor made for its site and built to serve the community with utmost efficiency.<sup>45</sup>

He then goes on to cite the developments in the first quarter of the twentieth century that led to the philosophical changes in school design that made his own work so notable, i.e., the philosophical changes in theories of education which he and his partners translated into new school buildings designs:

growing acceptance that children learn to do by doing; school should help children live better now than in some future day; pupils should have the opportunity to understand the environment in which they live; how to live with others has to be learned; . . . mental development is dependent in large measure upon proper health and physical development; learning to work together in groups is a necessary part of one's growth; education is concerned with the whole person and one part affects all the rest; schools are for all children regardless of social or economic standing; schools are concerned primarily with present-day problems not alone those of the past; adults can learn as well as children, and their education is never completed; and

finally the dawning understanding that the school exists to make communities better, not just to teach knowledge.<sup>46</sup>

Each of these concepts was translated, in Lawrence Perkins's work, into a design element or feature of the schools he designed. An example of this connection between educational philosophy and school building design occurred in a talk Lawrence Perkins gave to the British Architectural Association in 1956:

I believe that it is possible to design a corridor which will tend to induce serenity and an atmosphere of low pressure to people who walk through it. I am sure that we can lessen nervousness together with the tendency to bustle and yell. I believe people can be delivered to their next point of activity to some degree refreshed and recharged for the approaching task. Conversely, I believe it is possible to design a corridor, legal in every respect, which will not only fail to achieve the forgoing list of virtues, but will actively induce jitters, disorder, near panic and a possible broken ankle each year.

Let me illustrate: our corridor is to be 12 feet wide; it shall have metal lockers

on each wall; it shall also be 12 feet high; there shall be classrooms on each side; the floor shall be of a suitable grade of terrazzo; the walls above the lockers and the ceiling shall be of hard finished plaster, painted; the paint shall be light brown; the lockers shall be brown; the doors leading to the classrooms shall be brown; the floors shall be gray; the color accents shall be a different value of brown; the lighting shall consist of 40 watt incandescent fixtures 32 feet on center, with supplementary light entering the corridor through peepholes in the doors and a blaze of light like the headlights of an oncoming vehicle at the distant end of our not so hypothetical corridor. This charge is to be detonated by a strident bell marking the change of period and signaling a rush to lockers and distant destinations. Thus, with vision dimmed, and unpleasant acoustics guaranteed, confusion and tension can mount during each minute of the interlude between classes until order can be achieved only by the methods of an old time sergeant major.

And, in the meantime, where went the educational values the students went to school to seek . . . .

The educational values referred to by Lawrence Perkins were perhaps the same values that Henry Barnard and Dwight Perkins sought to attain through their careful design of the school building. Lawrence Perkins described an exemplary corridor that attempted to achieve the "desirable objectives" in an educational plant:

This corridor is visually a part of the space of those classrooms. The glass over the lockers permits the ceiling to flow continuously from one space to the other, and suggests space unconfined by its own walls. The show case around the door not only permits the room to show its accomplishments to the rest of the school, but in a practical sense makes the door a good deal safe thing to open. Both glass areas pour light into the corridor. I believe this light, coupled with the heavy acoustical deadening on the ceiling, contributes to the success of teaching and learning . . . I have chosen corridors . . . to suggest that every part of the educational environment, indoors and out,

can and should be directed toward the increased effectiveness of the people within that environment.<sup>47</sup>

Lawrence Perkins and his partners had to solve the same problems of design and function that confronted his father in the early part of the century. On the school playroom or gymnasium, for example, Lawrence Perkins wrote:

there must be room to play, and often, room to watch . . . . There should be an open, invigorating atmosphere . . . . To gain a high ceiling without a sense of oppression, arched trusses can often be used to do their functional job and bring even more to the airy openness of the room. Finally, this must be a versatile room--a room for dances, band practicing, and PTA teas, as well as basketball games. There is a logical limit, however. Flat floor, lack of eye-directing lines, acoustical and scheduling problems most often make the gym-auditorium an unhappy compromise.<sup>48</sup>

Continuing his theme that the architect must think about the people who use a school and its purpose:

If the architect keeps these things in mind, he may be able to contribute . . . .  
to the achievement of the educator's goals

. . . by creating a building that is a tool for the teacher and an expression of the school's educational approach . . . by creating an atmosphere, a mood, to aid the student in every learning task set before him.<sup>49</sup>

### CONCLUSION

To the chagrin of many architects, architectural historians and traditionalists, modernization of today as exemplified by the rehabilitation efforts of the Chicago Board of Education has destroyed a number of Perkins's original designs to his historical buildings. For example, natural lighting through the use of large windows has been reduced by fifty per cent as a cost efficient measure. The Bureau of Architecture found it more economical to cover the top portion of the glass windows with a layer of panels. Ultimately conserving heat and simultaneously reducing light and altering design. Recently, the chief architect from the Bureau of Architecture found it necessary to remove two of the towers from the Trumbull School which enhanced the buildings distinctiveness. The rehabilitation efforts in the later part of the 1970s utilized the wide stairway landings to provide small classrooms for diagnostic purposes and specialty classrooms which would not have otherwise existed. These areas were designed by Perkins for easy flow of traffic in the event

of a fire hazard, and allowed natural light to expose upper and lower levels. Walls were placed across from the windows which completely blocks any outside light from entering the stairway passage area and the landing areas have been reduced significantly for passage.

The plans, designs and accomplishments of Perkins's are a true testimonial of his effectiveness as architect, civic leader, and conservationist. His career was devoted to satisfy the increasing demands of society. In fact, his patrons became the environment. His farsightedness enabled him to provide for generations yet to come, and his principles espoused at the turn of the century are presently held in the highest esteem by architects and educators.

Perhaps the person who best summarized Perkins was the renowned Louis Sullivan when he said to an associate, George Grant Emslie:

There is a real man, George. I have more respect for him than for any other architect in this part of the country. He acts like a man and can stand on his feet and think like a man.<sup>50</sup>

## CHAPTER FIVE NOTES

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4. John J. Donovan, School Architecture. Principles and Practices (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1921), 18.
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8. "Dwight H. Perkins," Architectural Forum 97, 120.
9. Dwight H. Perkins, "The School Building As a Social Center," Brickbuilder 24 (December 1915), 293.
10. Dwight H. Perkins, "The School Building As a Social Center," Brickbuilder 25 (January 1916), 3.
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13. Ibid., 6.
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17. Quoted in "Dwight H. Perkins," Architectural Forum 97, 121.
18. Ibid.
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24. Lawrence B. Perkins and Walter D. Cocking, Schools (New York: Reinhold, 1949), 246.
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29. Ibid.
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32. Joseph Hudnut, "Comment," Architectural Forum 75 (August 1941), 83.
33. Betty Williams Carbol, The Making Of A Special Place [pamphlet], unpagued.
34. Ibid.
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40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., 169.
42. Ibid.
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## APPENDIX A

## SCHOOLS IN CHICAGO BY PERKINS

1.	Altgeld	1905
2.	Beaubien	1905
3.	Bowen High School	1910
4.	Budlong	1907
5.	Cleveland	1910
6.	Cooley Vocational, originally, Albert G. Lane	1908
7.	Copernicus	1905
8.	N. Davis	1905
9.	Eberhart	1906
10.	Fiske	1905
11.	A. Graham	1905
12.	Harvard	1905
13.	Hayt	1906
14.	Hedges	1906
15.	Jahn	1908
16.	Key	1907
17.	Kosciuszko	1906
18.	Lloyd	1907
19.	Magellan EVGC	1909
20.	Marsh	1910
21.	May	1905

22.	McCormick	1905
23.	McLaren Occupational High School	1910
24.	Monroe	1905
25.	Moos	1907
26.	Nobel	1910
27.	Oglesby	1907
28.	Penn	1907
29.	Poe Branch (Brenan)	1905
30.	Pullman	1907
31.	Roster	1910
32.	Rogers	1908
33.	Schurz	1910
34.	Spalding	1906
35.	Stewart	1906
36.	Tilden	1905
37.	Tilton	1909
38.	Trumbull	1909
39.	Warren	1907
40.	Washburne	1909
41.	Washington	1907

## APPENDIX B



Figure 9. Bernard Moos Elementary School. Architectural Record 27 (January - June 1910), 500.

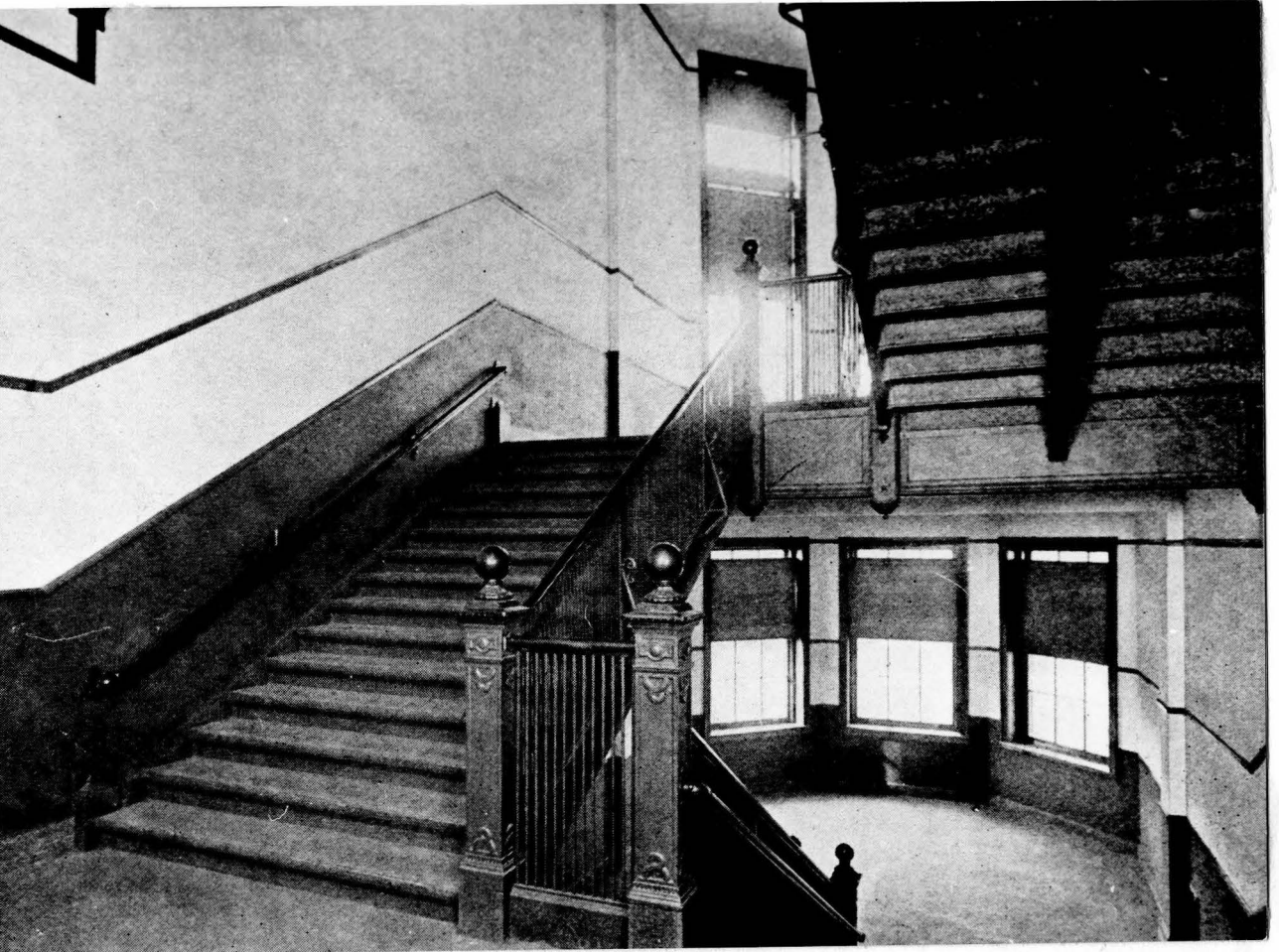


Figure 10. The stairway from the Bernard Moos School illustrates fireproof construction along with interior use of space and light. Architectural Record 27 (January - June 1910), 502.



Figure 11. Albert G. Lane Technical High School (Sedgwick and Division Avenues). Architectural Record 27 (January - June 1910), 496.





Figure 12. Workshop designed for the Lane Technical High School. Architectural Record 27 (January - June 1910), 498.

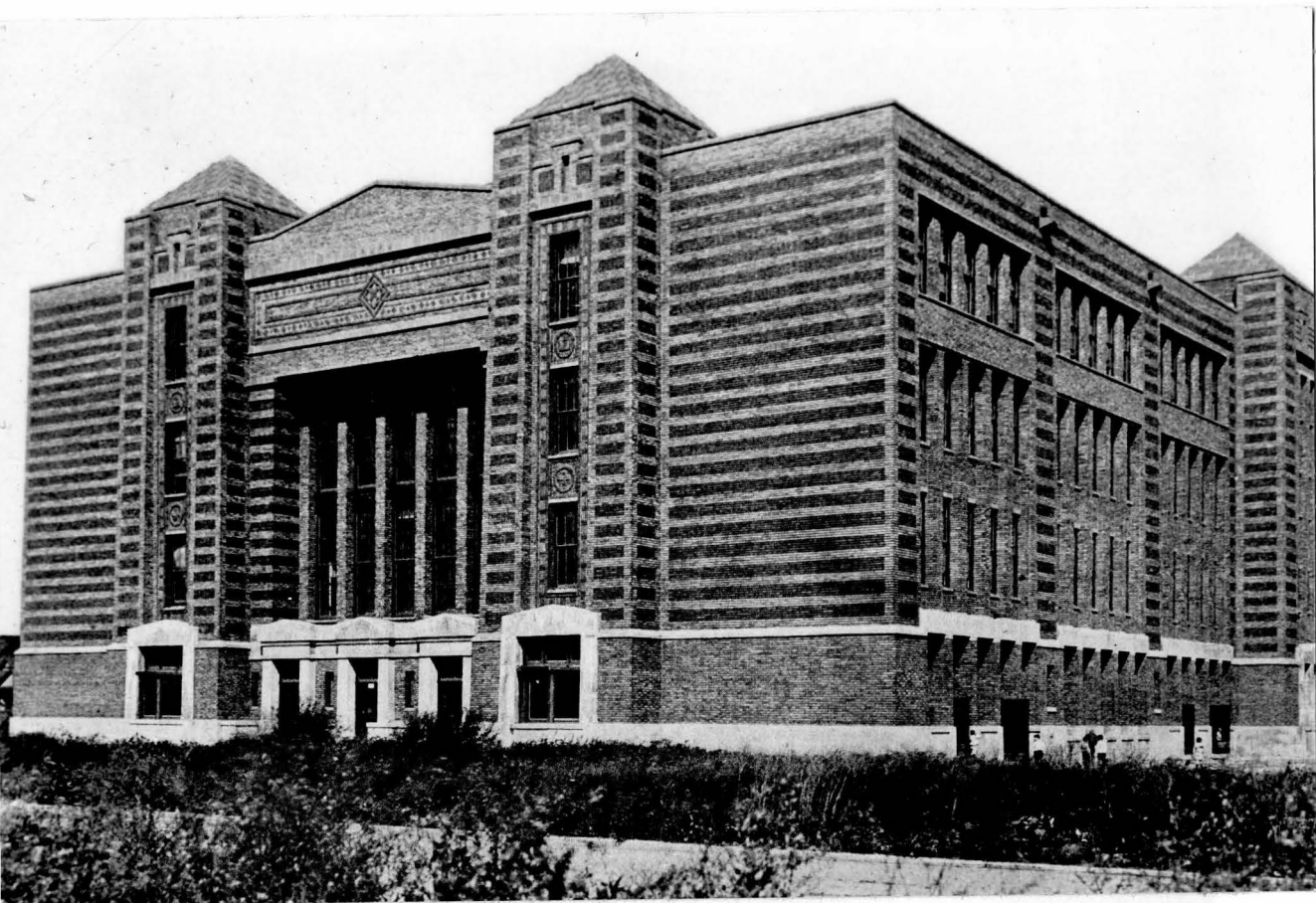


Figure 13. The George W. Tilton School. Lyman Trumbull School is similar to this building. Architectural Record 27 (January-June 1910), 505.

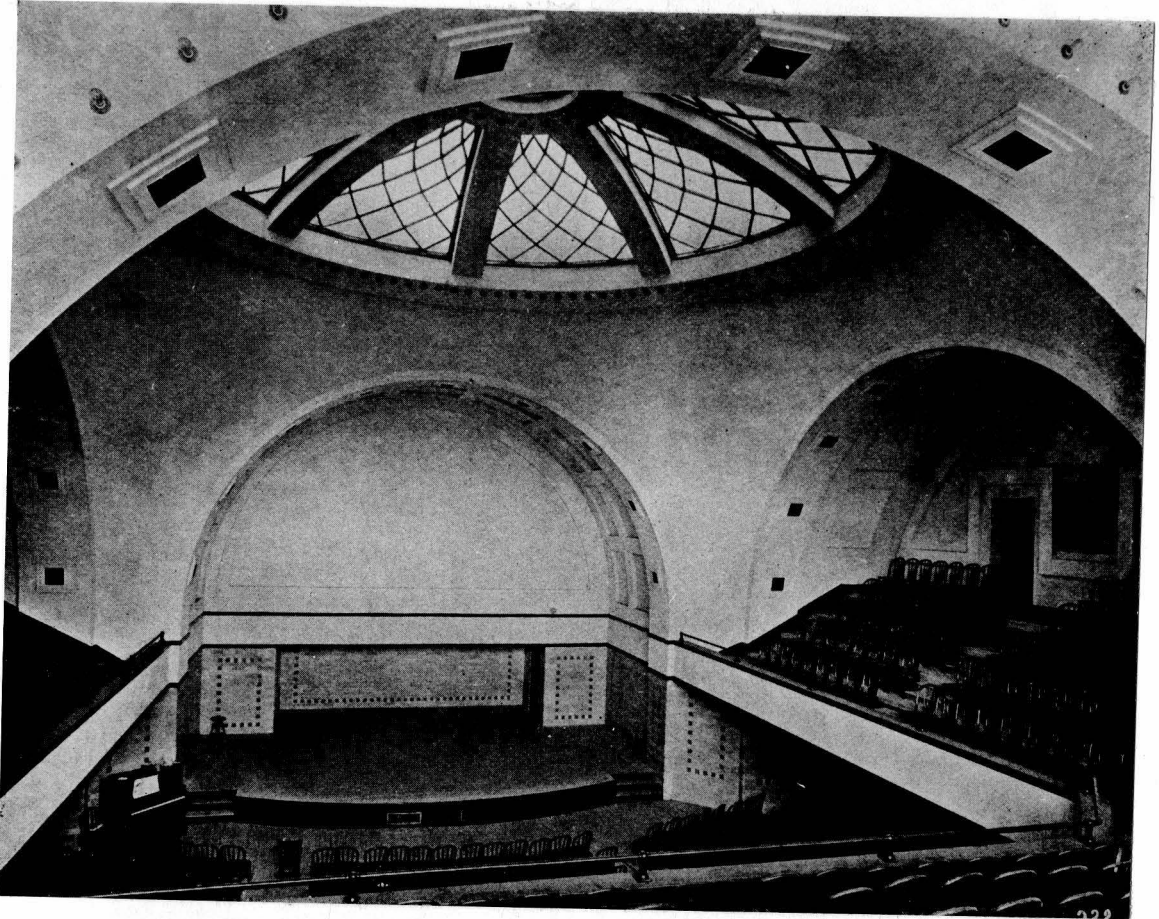


Figure 14. The "domed assembly hall" designed for the Tilton School. Architectural Record 27 (January - June 1910), 506.

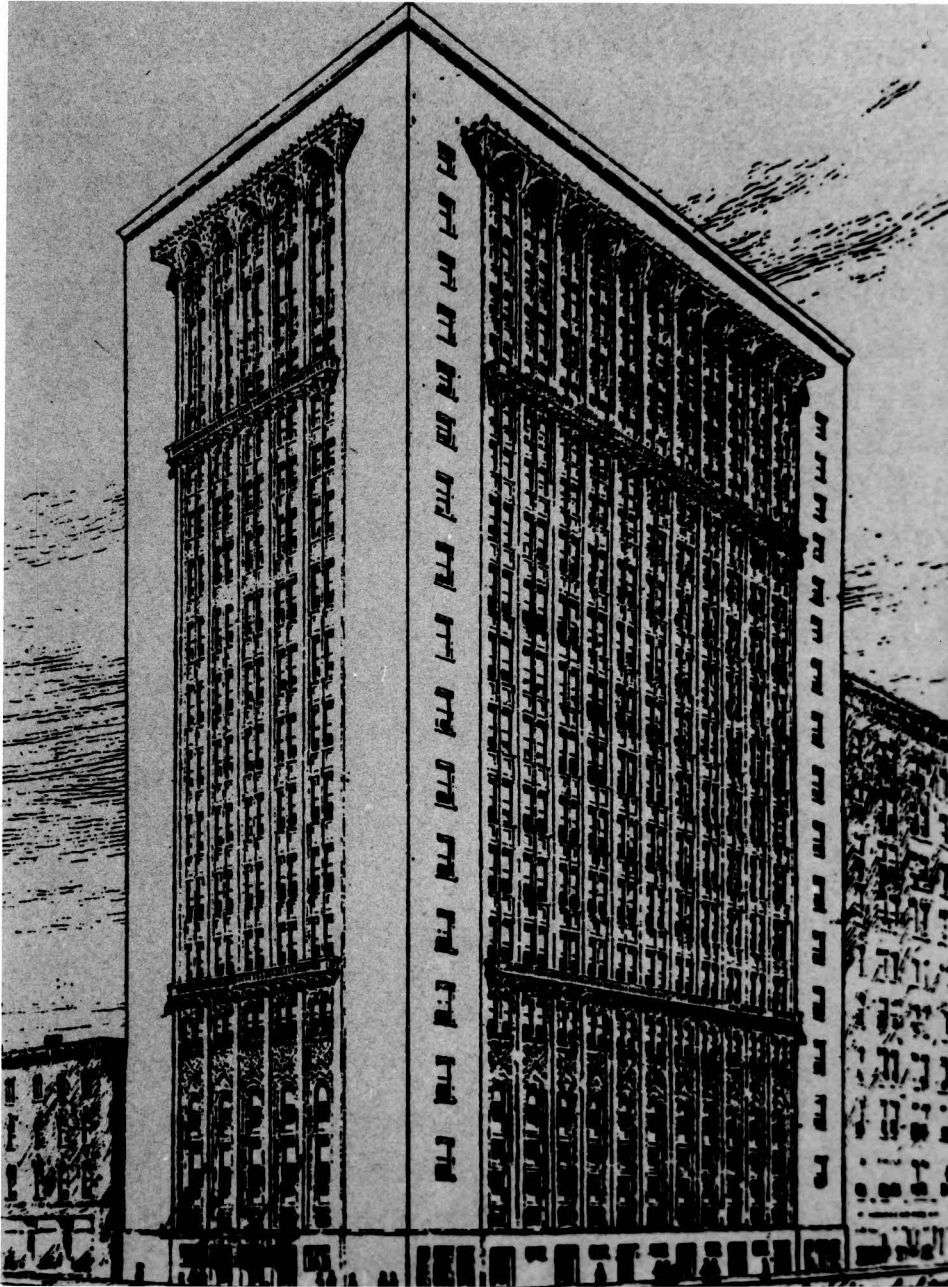


Figure 15. Perkins's proposed plans for the "skyscraper high school." Fifty-fifth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1909.



Figure 16. Jessie Spalding School for Crippled Children.  
Architectural Record 27 (January - June 1910), 512.



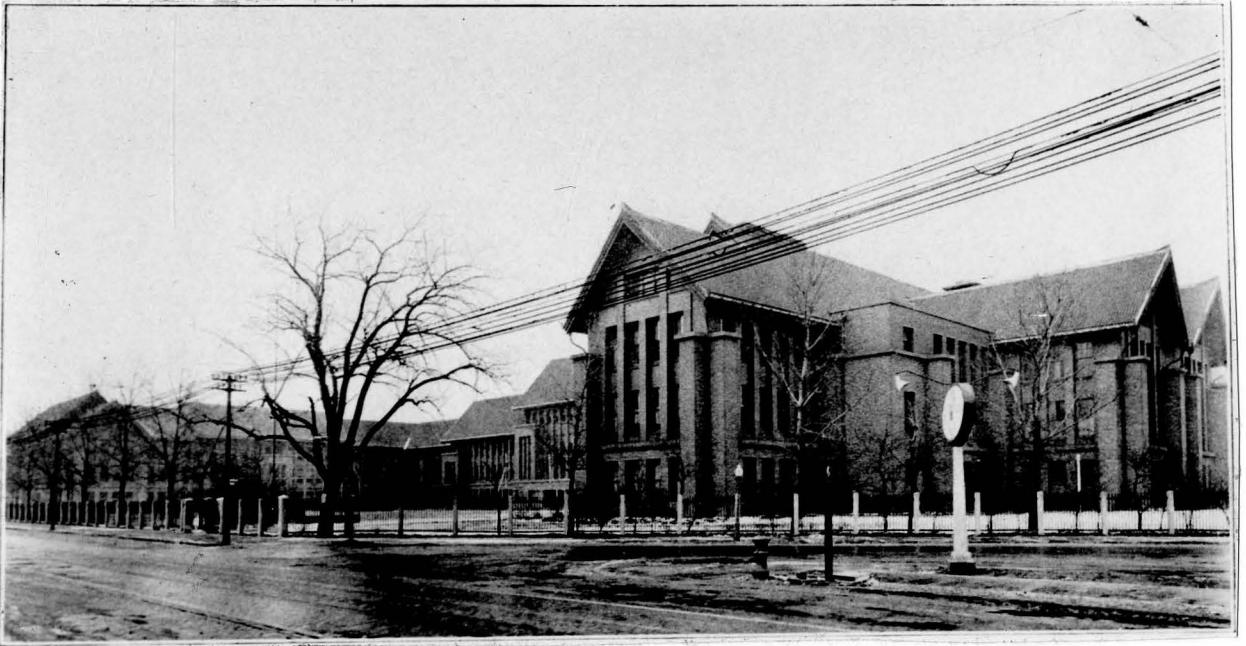


Figure 17. Carl Schurz High School. Courtesy of Chicago Board of Education.



Figure 18. James H. Bowen High School. Courtesy of the Chicago Board of Education.

**APPENDIX C**



## ARCHITECTS OF THE CHICAGO BOARD OF EDUCATION

Fred Baumann	23 February 1882 - 8 June 1882
Julius S. Ender	8 June 1882 - 12 September 1882
James R. Willet	October 1882 - 31 December 1883
J.J. Flanders	31 January 1884 - 12 December 1888
Charles Rudolph	12 December 1888 - 10 December 1890
J.J. Flanders	10 December 1890 - 1 February 1893
August Fiedler	1 February 1893 - 16 December 1896
Norman S. Patton	16 December 1896 - 16 November 1898
Fred A. Fielder	16 November 1898 - 4 December 1898
(Acting Architect)	
William B. Mundie	14 December 1898 - 1 May 1904
R. B. Williamson	1 May 1904 - 21 June 1905
(Acting Architect)	
DWIGHT H. PERKINS	21 June 1905 - April 1910
Arthur F. Hussander	February 1910 - December 1912
John C. Christensen	1921 - 1928
Edgar Martin	23 April 1924 - January 1926
(Supervisory Architect)	
Paul Gerhardt	1928 - 1931
John C. Christensen	1931 - 1947
Saul Samuels	June 1959 - 1976
(Structural Engineer)	
Kenneth Groggs	1977 - 1981
Richard A. Norton	2 May 1983 - present

**APPENDIX D**

## SCHOOL TYPES

## CHICAGO BOARD OF EDUCATION

<u>School</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>TYPE</u>
Abbott.....	"A"	Eberhart.....	DAVIS
Agassiz.....	KOHN	Ebinger.....	B-1
Altgeld.....	GRAHAM	Edgebrook.....	7 ROOM
Amundsen H.S...	KELLY	Edwards.....	"B"
Avalon Park ...	RYDER		
		Falconer.....	ORR
Barry.....	B-1	Farnsworth.....	"B"
Barton.....	"F"	Fenger.....	FENGER
Bateman.....	ORR	Ft. Dearborn...	"F"
Beaubien.....	BEAUBIEN	Foster Pk.....	7 ROOM
Beidler.....	Bauer		
Bennett.....	"F"	Gage Pk. H.S...	KELLY
Boone.....	"F"	Gale.....	RIIS
Brenan.....	B-1	Garfield.....	BAUER
Bridge.....	"A"	Garvy.....	7 ROOM
Budlong.....	KEY	Gary.....	CLEVELAND
Burbank.....	THOMPSON	Gillespie.....	10 ROOM
		Gompers.....	B-1
Caldwell.....	10 ROOM	Goudy.....	DEVER
Calhoun.....	BAUER	Graham.....	GRAHAM
Calumet H.S....	FENGER	Gray.....	KOHN
Carpenter.....	BAUER	Gunsaulus.....	ORR
Carter.....	KOHN		
Chappel.....	7 ROOM	Harper H.S....	CLEVELAND
Chopin.....	SABIN	Harvard.....	DAVIS
Clay.....	KOHN	Haugan.....	KOHN
Cleveland.....	CLEVELAND	Hay.....	ORR
Clinton.....	B-1	Hayt.....	KEY
Clissold.....	B-1	Henderson.....	Orr
Coles.....	B-1	Herzl.....	SABIN
Cook.....	"B"	Hibbard.....	SABIN
Copernicus.....	GRAHAM	Hirsch H.S....	SULLIVAN
Corkery.....	CORKERY	Hitch.....	B-1
Craiger.....	SABIN	Hookway.....	"F"
		Hubbard.....	THOMPSON
Darwin.....	DARWIN		
Davis.....	DAVIS	Irving.....	15 ROOM
Delano.....	KOHN	Irving Pk.....	CORKERY
Dewey.....	DARWIN		
Dixon.....	THOMPSON	Jahn.....	PENN
Doolittle.....	BAUER	Jamieson.....	F-2
Dubois.....	7 ROOM	Jenner.....	BAUER

<u>School</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>TYPE</u>
Kellog.....	7 ROOM	Palmer.....	B-1
Kelly H.S.....	KELLY	Parker.....	BD. SET#32
Kelvyn Pk. H.S.	SABIN	Parkman.....	KOHN
Key.....	KEY	Parkside.....	PERRY
Kohn.....	KOHN	Pasteur.....	B-1
Kociuszeko.....	MOOS	Peck.....	B-1
		Peirce.....	KOHN
LaSalle		Penn.....	PENN
LeMoyn.....	SABIN	Perry.....	PERRY
Lewis.....	B-1	Peterson.....	"B"
Lloyd.....	KEY	Piccolo.....	ORR
Locke.....	B-1	Poe.....	POE
Longfellow.....	LONGFELLOW	Pope.....	PERRY
Lovett.....	B-1	Portage Pk.....	SABIN
Lyon.....	B-1	Prosser.....	HANSON PK.
		Prussing.....	B-1
Mann.....	"A"		
Marquette.....	"B"	Raster.....	KOSCIUSZKO
Marsh.....	RASTER	Raster.....	MARSH JOB #259
Mason.....	ORR	Raymond.....	BAUER
May.....	BEAUBIEN	Reilly.....	HANSON PK.
McCormick.....	GRAHAM	Reinberg.....	"F"
McClellan.....	BAUER	Riis.....	HANSON PK.
McKay.....	"F"	Rogers.....	7 ROOM
Mitchell.....	BAUER	Roosevelt H.S.	FENGER
Monroe.....	GRAHAM	Ruggles.....	"B" (see O'Keefe)
Moos.....	KOSCIUSZKO		
Morrill.....	"C"	Sabin.....	SABIN
Morse.....	POE	Sauganash.....	7 ROOM
Mt.Vernon.....	THOMPSON	Sayre.....	THOMPSON
Mozart.....	KOHN	Scammon.....	B-1
Mulligan.....	MURPHY	Schiller.....	Truth
Murphy.....	RIIS	Schmid.....	8 ROOM
		Schubert.....	THOMPSON
Nightingale....	D-1	Sexton, A.O....	HANSON PK.
Nobel.....	CLEVELAND	Shepard.....	HANSON PK.
		Sheridan, M....	BAUER
Oglesby.....	KEY	Sherman.....	10 ROOM
O'Keefe.....	"B"	Shoop.....	"B"
Onahan.....	"F"	Smyser.....	F-1
Otis.....	BAUER	So. Shore H.S.	REMBRANDT
O'Toole.....	D-1	Spalding.....	B-1 & B-2

School.....TYPE

Stewart.....PENN

Stone....."F"

Sullivan H.S...HIRSCH

Sutherland.....B-1

Taft.....REMBRANDT

Thorp, O.A.....SABIN

Tonti....."F" BD SET #177

Twain.....B-1

Volta.....F-1

Wadsworth.....PERRY

Ward, J.....BAUER

Warren.....KEY

Whitney.....C-1

Wildwood.....4 ROOM

TYPE SCHOOLSBAUER TYPE - 12 ROOMS

Garfield	1882
Jenner	1880
Longfellow	1880
Raymond	1879

BAUER TYPE - 15 ROOMS

Beidler	1881
Calhoun	1881
Doolittle	1881
LaSalle	1882
McClellan	1881
Mitchell	1880
Otis	1879
Sheridan, M.	1881
Wicker Pk.	1881

15 ROOMS

Irving	1884
Keith	1882
Webster	1882

18 ROOMS

Froebel	1885
Haines	1886
(Old Harrison)	1886
Mulligan	1890

SAME TYPE WITH VARIATIONS  
IN BOILER RM & OFFICES15 ROOMS

Emerson	1884
Jeffereson	1884
Anderson	1885
Arnold	1884
Brainard	1885
Cooper	1885
Healy	1885
Motley	1884
Richards	1884
(Old Brennan)	1884
Von Humboldt	1885

4 FLOORS

Grant	1885
McLaren	1886

12 ROOMS

Garfield (2nd)	1884
Langland	1884

15 ROOMS

Columbus	1888
Logan	1889
McAllister	1889
Tilden Br.	1889
Hammond	1890
Mann	1890
Ryerson	1891
Bancroft	1892
Beale	1892
Burroughs	1893
Crerar	1892
Knickerbocker	1892

16 ROOMS

Drummond	1893
Everett	1892
Mitchell Add'n	1892
Blaine	1893
Howland	1893
Lafayette	1893
Van Vlissingen	1893

Brentano	1893
Curtis	1893
Lowell	1894
Whittier	1893
Nettlehorst	1893

Audubon	1894
Sumner	1894

Jirka	1899
Willard	1898

JOB #

113

92

<u>16 ROOMS</u>		<u>JOB #</u>
Spry	1899	112
Schley	1899	115
Darwin	1900	116
Dewey	1900	120
Burns	1903	175
Jungman	1899	174
Shields	1902	171
Revere	1903	180
Plamondon	1903	188
Morse	1904	187
Poe	1905	205
Spencer	1904	189
Henry	1904	197
Fiske	1905	208
Altgeld	1905	225
Copernicus	1905	222
Graham	1905	212
McCormick	1905	228
Monroe	1905	227
Whitney	1905	226
Beaubien	1905	221
May	1905	223
Davis	1905	234
Eberhart	1906	236
Harvard	1905	198
Budlong	1907	229
Key	1907	246
Lloyd	1907	251
Hayt	1906	253
Oglosby	1907	258
Warren	1907	260
Davis Gym Addition	1913	234 C
Warren " "	1913	260 A
Harvard " "	1927	

<u>16 ROOMS</u>		<u>JOB #</u>
Penn	1907	240
Stewart	1906	256
Jahn	1908	265
Washington	1907	263
Moos	1907	248
Pullman	1907	266
Kosciuszko	1906	268
Marsh	1910	259
Raster Add'n	1910	341
Nobel	1910	311
Harper	1910	333
Gray	1910	334
Cleveland	1910	336
Tilton	1908	301
Trumbull	1909	305
Irving Park	1911	350
Corkery	1911	349
Kohn	1911	352
Parkman	1911	354
Agassiz	1912	355
Mozart	1911	356
Gray	1911	363
Armstrong	1912	369
Haugan	1912	371
Delano	1913	382
Carter	1913	385
Peirce	1914	434
Clay	1916	486
Gage Park	1917	482
Sheppard	1914	414
Reilly	1913	421
A.O. Sexton	1914	436
Riis	1914	443
Lewis-Champlin	1916	474
Hanson Park	1918	507
Gale	1922	546
Gregory	1923	559
Murphy	1924	570



<u>16 ROOMS</u>		<u>JOB #</u>	<u>SABIN</u>	
Ryder	1913	381	Cregier	1914
Avalon Park	1917	477	Chopin	1917
Cregier	1914	422		
Herzl	1916	456		
Sabin	1915	424		
Portage Park	1915	459		
LeMoyne	1915	460		
Chopin	1917	480		
Hibbard	1916	483		
Kelvyn Park	1918	496		
O.A. Thorp	1918	503		
Parkside	1917	485		
Pope	1918	510		
Perry	1920	524		
Wadsworth	1920	528		
Taylor	1923	548		
Falconer	1918	519		
Mason	1922	536		
Bateman	1921	438		
Hay	1921	525		
Henderson	1923	563		
Mayfair	1923	558		
Gunsaulus	1924	567		
Young	1924	569		
Orr	1919	521		
<u>TYPE B</u>				
Cook	1925	614		
Ruggles	1925	615		
Edwards	1925	617		
O'Keefe	1925	618		
Farnsworth	1925	619		
Peterson	1925	620		
Marquette	1926	621		
Shoop	1926	635		
<u>TYPE B ADDITION</u>				
Marquette 1st Add'n	1928	621	P	
Shoop Add'n	1929	635	C	
Edwards Add'n	1929	617	B	
Cook Add'n	1929	614	B	
O'Keefe Add'n	1936	618	D	

<u>TYPE A</u>		<u>JOB #</u>	
Bridge	1926	629	
Mann	1926	630	
 <u>TYPE A ADDITON</u>			
Bridge	1929	629	B
Mann	1929	630	B
 <u>TYPE C</u>			
Morrill	1925	616	
 <u>TYPE D-1</u>			
Nightingale	1926	628	
O'Toole	1927	642	
 <u>TYPE B-1</u>			
Brenan	1925	622	
Lewis	1926	623	
Clinton	1926	624	
Coles	1926	625	
Hale	1926	626	
Scammon	1926	627	
Sutherland	1926	631	
Palmer	1926	632	
Peck	1926	633	
Lyon (old)	1926	634	
Hitch	1926	636	
Ebinger	1927	637	
Prussing	1927	638	
Gompers	1926	639	
Lovett	1927	640	
Pasteur	1927	641	
Twain	1927	643	
Barry	1927	644	
Locke	1927	645	
 <u>ADDITION B-1</u>			
Lyon Add'n	1936	634	G
Locke "	1936	645	E
Fenger High	1926	701	
Calumet High	1926	702	
Roosevelt High	1927	700	
Hirsch	1926	675	
Sullivan	1926	676	

<u>TYPE F</u>		<u>JOB #</u>	
Ft. Dearborn	1928	662	
McKay	1928	663	
Bennett	1928	664	
Boone	1928	665	
Onahan	1928	666	
Stone	1928	667	
Barton	1928	668	
Tonti	1928	669	
Hookway	1928	670	
Reinberg	1928	671	
 <u>TYPE F-1</u>			
Volta	1931	691	F
Clissold	1931	672	
Smyser	1932	735	
Jamieson	1937	736	
 <u>THOMPSON TYPE</u>			
Mt. Vernon	1928	690	
Sayre	1929	692	
Burbank	1929	693	
Hubbard	1929	694	
Schubert	1929	695	
Dixon	1929	696	
Manley	1928	679	
Foreman	1928	681	
Kelly	1928	680	
Amundsen	1930	686	K
Wright	1931	688	K
Verdi		689	K
Dvorak So. Shore (Not Built)		738	
Taft		741	
Rembrandt		742	
Oakenwald	1935	751	A
Grace St.	1936	764	
Mt. Greenwood	1936	765	
Newberry	1937	766	
Madison			
Dever	1935	749	A
Goudy (New)	1937	768	
Alcott (New)	1937	786	

<u>TYPE 4 ROOMS</u>		<u>JOB #</u>	
Oriole Park	1944		
Wildwood	1944		
Oriole-Clarence	1944		
Brownell	1939		
Manierre	1946		
108th Ave. H.	1947		
Raymond	1944		
Yale	1948		
<u>TYPE 7 ROOMS</u>			
Foster Park	1937	772	
Garvy	1937	773	
Sauganash	1937	774	
Rogers	1937	785	
Riverdale	1937	790	
Kellogg	1937	797	
Chappell	1937	799	
Edgebrook	1937	821	
Schmid	1946		
Abbott	1947		
Owen	1947		
<u>TYPE L ROOMS</u>			
Caldwell	1937	771	
Byrne	1937	775	
Gillespie	1937	784	
Sherman (New)	1937	798	
Luella	1944		
<u>7 ROOM TYPE ADDITIONS</u>			
Chappell (Not Built)		779	D
Edgebrook "		821	D
Sauganash "		774	D
Kellogg "		797	C
Garvy	1946		

10 ROOM TYPE ADDITIONS

Caldwell	1938
Byrne	1948
Luella	1948

Fuller	1938
Pulaski	1947

10 ROOMS WITH GYMNASIUM

Oketo-Balmoral	1946
Olcott-Myrtle	1946

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Donna R. Nelson has been read and approved by the following committee:

Reverend Michael Perko, S.J., Co-director  
Associate Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy  
Studies, Loyola

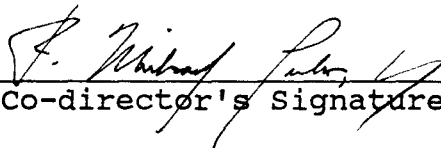
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Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies,  
Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the directors of the dissertation and the signatures which appear below verify the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

11 April 1988  
Date

  
Co-director's Signature

11 April 1988  
Date

  
Co-director's Signature