



# Carrara Marble & Tiffany Glass

*By Piera Salvione*

Chicago is the one city that holds many wonders: Navy Pier, Ms. Monroe, "Bean", and of course the Chicago Style Hot Dog. However, none of these compare to the Chicago Cultural Center. As soon as you walk into this building, you will immediately acknowledge that you are in the presence of greatness. □ It all started with Chicagoans needing a place to store their 12,000 books. After the Great Chicago Fire, British authors donated books to help Chicago recover what was left of the city. With their public library diminished they knew it was time to rebuild. □ The priority of the Library Board was to have a place that would enrich Chicago's cultural and intellectual life. This building was held so highly that once the financial details were taken care of, it was time to hold a nationwide bid to have the privilege of designing the library. □ In February 1892, the Boston firm of Shepley Rutan & Coolidge (today it is known as Shepley Bulfinch Richardson & Abbott) was awarded the contract to design the library. □ The architects' final concept for the library was a neo-classical building that included powerful Greek columns and sturdy Roman

arches. Shepley Rutan and Coolidge's design showed a unified exterior with an interior that served the purposes of a library and war memorial. □ Five years later, the magnificent, neo-classical granite and limestone "palace" called the Chicago Public Library was finished. During the first week of October 1897, the people of Chicago marveled at the sparkling building that housed a very classy library and a touching Grand Army of the Republic War Memorial. □ The now Cultural Center has two main entrances: Randolph Street and Washington Street. Whichever entrance you choose is crucial to your entire experience. The Randolph entrance begins with a lobby that leads to the public reading room. Just past the reading room lies a grand staircase that leads to the war memorial. The decor possesses a rustic and Victorian feel with intricately detailed vault ceilings, brass fixtures, and rich brown fabrics and furniture. The Washington Street entrance is the complete opposite. Here lies grandeur; this is the home of the Carrara marble and Tiffany Glass.