



Louis Sullivan

Chicago Architect

By Valerie Braglia

Louis Sullivan is a very renowned architect that designed some very significant buildings in the Chicago Loop. A few of his well-known creations is the Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company building at 1 South State Street, the Auditorium Building at 430 South Michigan Avenue, and Gage Brothers and Company building at 18 South Michigan Avenue. Each of these buildings stand out amongst the rest in this beautiful Chicago area.

The Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company building was originally Schlesinger and Mayer Department Store back in 1899 when it was built. It was sold to Carson Pirie Scott in 1904 and there were additions added in 1906 and 1961. The building is part of the Loop Retail Historic District.

The building is remarkable for its steel structure, which allowed a dramatic increase in window area, which in turn allowed more daylight into the building interiors, and provided larger displays of merchandise to outside pedestrian traffic. The lavish cast-iron ornamental work above the rounded tower was also meant to be functional. Sullivan designed the corner entry to be seen from both State and Madison, and that the ornamentation, above the entrance, would be literally attractive.

Sullivan's Auditorium building is significant to Richardson's style was his picturesque massing and roofline profiles, along with his mastery of rustication and polychromy, semi-circular arches supported on clusters of squat columns, and round arches over clusters of windows on massive walls.

The heavy Romanesque style was especially suited for grand public buildings. However, Romanesque buildings, with massive stone walls, were expensive to construct. Only the wealthy adopted the Richardsonian Romanesque style for private homes.

Louis Sullivan designed on of the Gage Brothers and Co. building, which is located at 18 S. Michigan Avenue. Sullivan's building has a remarkable ornamental façade. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 14, 1985, and it was designated a Chicago Landmark.

The façades of all of these buildings demonstrate two approaches to the

Chicago School, a design movement that led to the creation of modern commercial architecture. Out of the Gage Brothers three buildings, Louis Sullivan's was the very most expressive approach with these ornamental designs.

Sullivan's building is the tallest of the three Gage buildings that were designed. The ornamental flourishes at the top of Sullivan's façade were pushed upwards when different architects added four stories in 1902.

These are three of only five buildings in Chicago designed by Louis Sullivan that is still standing.