

= Rookery Building =

The Rookery Building is a historic landmark located at 209 South LaSalle Street in the Loop community area of Chicago in Cook County , Illinois , United States . Completed by John Wellborn Root and Daniel Burnham of Burnham and Root in 1888 , it is considered one of their masterpiece buildings , and was once the location of their office . The building measures 181 feet (55 m) , is twelve stories tall and is considered the oldest standing high @-@ rise in Chicago . It has a unique style with exterior load @-@ bearing walls and an interior steel frame , which provided a transition between accepted and new building techniques . The lobby was remodeled in 1905 by Frank Lloyd Wright . Beginning in 1989 , the lobby was restored to the original Wright design .

The building was designated a Chicago Landmark on July 5 , 1972 , and was added to the National Register of Historic Places on April 17 , 1970 and listed as a National Historic Landmark on May 15 , 1975 .

= = Name = =

The name of the building is an allusion to the old City Hall building that occupied the land before the Rookery . That building was nicknamed the Rookery not only in reference to the crows and pigeons that inhabited its exterior walls , but also because of the shady politicians it housed (given the rook 's perceived reputation for acquisitiveness) . After the Great Chicago Fire a dilapidated building was used as an interim City Hall at this location (LaSalle and Adams) . However , pigeons became such a nuisance that a complaining citizen began referring to the building as " a rookery " , a term the press quickly adopted . Although several names were considered when a new structure on the site was proposed , " the Rookery " won out .

= = Construction = =

= = = Burnham & Root = = =

The Rookery was built in 1887 ? 1888 by the architectural partnership of Daniel H. Burnham and John Wellborn Root , known as Burnham and Root . In the architectural boom that followed the Great Chicago Fire , architects in what would become known as the Chicago School of commercial architecture competed with each other to create the world 's first true skyscrapers . By mixing modern building techniques , such as metal framing , fireproofing , elevators and plate glass , together with traditional ones , such as brick facades and elaborate ornamentation , Burnham and Root sought to create a bold architectural statement . At the same time , they intended their buildings to be commercially successful . This building is one of the few results of their partnership that is still standing .

As the master artisan , Root drew upon a variety of influences in designing the interior and exterior spaces , including Moorish , Byzantine , Venetian and Romanesque motifs . He also provided the architectural innovations that brought together many contemporary cutting edge building techniques . Of particular note was a " floating " foundation ? a reinforced concrete slab that provided the building 's weight with a solid platform atop Chicago 's notoriously swampy soil . The term for the type of foundation that Root designed is grillage foundation , a foundation where iron rails and the structural beams are combined in a crisscross pattern and encased in concrete to support the building 's immense weight without heavy foundation stones . This construction is particularly useful when structural loads are high compared to the natural bearing capacity of the soil .

= = = Light court = = =

Making prodigious use of light and ornamentation , Root and Burnham designed a central light court to serve as the focal point for the entire building and provide daylight to interior offices . Rising

two stories , the light court received immediate critical acclaim . " There is nothing bolder , more original , or more inspiring in modern civic architecture than its glass @-@ covered court " , wrote Eastern critic Henry Van Brunt . At a time when Chicago 's bold experiment in architecture was looking eastward for affirmation , this was welcome praise . The light court provides natural illumination for the interior offices .

Frank Lloyd Wright was a young architectural assistant working with Adler and Sullivan at the time the Rookery was built in 1886 . Architect Daniel Burnham was a friend of Wright patron Edward C. Waller . Waller managed the Rookery ; Wright had his offices in the building in 1898 ? 1899 . In 1905 Wright received the commission to redesign the lobby in the building ; at the time considered the grandest in Chicago . Wright 's work on the Rookery recast the entryway in his Prairie style and added a sense of modernity through his simple but effective lighting design . Wright 's work on the Rookery is his only work on any building within the downtown cityscape .

Among Wright 's most significant alterations was the addition of white marble with Persian @-@ style ornamentation . The marble and decorative details added a sense of luxury to the lobby 's steel @-@ laden interior , marked by Burnham and Root 's skeletal metal ribbing . The entire interior space is bright and open . A double set of curving , heavily ornamented stairs wind upward from the lobby 's second floor into the building 's interior . A wrap @-@ around balcony on the second floor enhances the feeling of being within the interior of a " clockwork . " The Wright remodel opened the building up to more of the available light .

= = = Load bearing walls and steel structure = = =

The red marble , terra cotta and brick facade of the building is a combination of Roman Revival and Queen Anne styles that embraced Richardsonian Romanesque architecture . The building , which is a combination of iron framing and masonry bearing walls , marked a transition from masonry load @-@ bearing structures to steel skeleton load @-@ bearing structures . In fact , the Landmarks Commission citation commends " development of the skeleton structural frame using cast iron columns , wrought iron spandrel beams , and steel beams to support party walls and interior floors " . Aside from the first two floors of metal @-@ framed perimeter walls , the walls are all masonry . The building is known for its semi @-@ circular staircase west of the light court .

= = = Renovations = = =

While much of the Loop 's 19th @-@ century architecture has been lost to demolition and redevelopment , the Rookery has been spared this fate through a series of well executed renovations . The building remains a commercially successful rental office building , as it was when it was first built .

Beginning in the early 20th century , the building underwent three major renovations . In the first , from 1905 to 1907 , Frank Lloyd Wright was retained to remake the interior spaces . In keeping with contemporary tastes , Wright 's design covered Root 's elaborate wrought iron finishes with white carved Carrara marble surfaces . Wright was highly regarded by the public at this point , and his changes brought enhanced status to the building , making the Rookery one of the most sought after buildings of Chicago . Some of Wright 's other changes included incorporating simplified ironwork and adding his trademark style planters and light fixtures .

The second renovation , completed August 24 , 1931 by former Wright assistant William Drummond , modernized many of the interior elements , including new elevators , and brought period touches to the building , such as Art Deco detailing . The third renovation , in 1992 , brought the building back to much of its original splendor , reopening the light court ceiling after it had been covered over to protect against leaks .

After their purchase of the Rookery in October 2007 , the new owners announced plans for an extensive renovation of the building 's common areas .

= = = Tenants = = =

Burnham & Root had their offices at the Rookery for a while upon its completion , and at one time Frank Lloyd Wright had an office in the building as well . Current tenants include US Bank , Brooks Brothers and TVS Partnership / Architect .

= = Current ownership = =

The building was purchased in October 2007 for \$ 73 million by an investment group controlled by a European family , and advised by Zeb Bradford of Metzler North America Corp. The seller was Broadway Real Estate Partners of New York , which had bought the Rookery for \$ 56 million in April 2006 . BREP was reported to have increased occupancy of the building 's 281 @, @ 000 sq ft (26 @, @ 100 m2) from 80 % in January 2007 to 96 % at the time of the sale .

= = Visiting = =

The Preservation Trust offers thirty @-@ minute tours inside Mondays and Fridays at noon . The Chicago Architecture Foundation additionally provides tours approximately twice a month .

= = In popular culture = =

The Rookery Building was featured in the film Home Alone 2 : Lost in New York , in which the exterior and one of the lower levels were modeled as the toy store Duncan 's Toy Chest .

The Rookery was used by Frank Norris in his novel The Pit as the site of the office of fictional financial speculator Curtis Jadwin .

The Rookery was featured prominently in the 1987 film The Untouchables as the police headquarters of Eliot Ness .