PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS IN JUNE 2025







BANKERS BUILDING 105 W. Adams St.



CITY OF CHICAGO Brandon Johnson, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development Ciere Boatright, Commissioner

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Map	2
Building Design and Construction	2
Daniel Hudson Burnham, Jr. and Hubert Burnham: The Burnham Brothers, Inc.	16
Criteria for Designation	18
Significant Historical and Architectural Features	20
Select Bibliography	21

BANKERS BUILDING

105 W. Adams Street

CONSTRUCTED: 1927

ARCHITECTS: BURNHAM BROTHERS, INC.

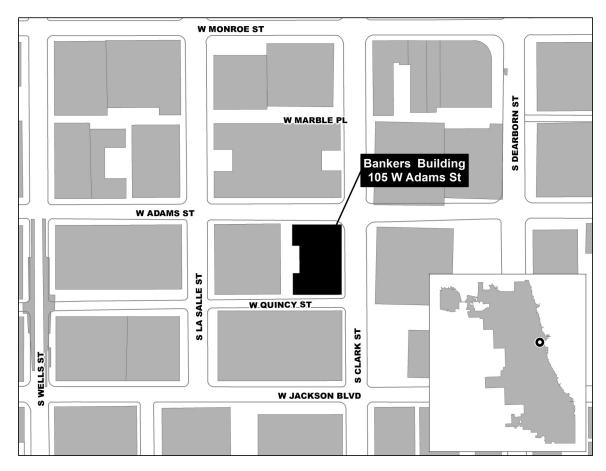
Engineer: Charles Harkins

BUILDER: DILKS CONSTRUCTION CO.

The Bankers Building is a 476-foot-tall commercial office building at the southwest corner of Clark and Adams streets in the Loop. It is located in the heart of the Loop's financial district, and it catered to financial service firms, a professional sector that was growing in the strong economy of the 1920s. When completed in 1927, it was the tallest building in Chicago's financial district and the fourth tallest building in the city.

The composition of the building incorporates setbacks and exterior light courts that were a direct response to Chicago's first zoning ordinance of 1923 that sought to balance a demand for taller office buildings while maintaining sunlight and air flow at street level. The Bankers Building also combines the verticality of an Art Deco-style skyscraper with a traditional program of Classical ornament at its base.

The architects for the building were the Burnham Brothers, Inc.: Daniel Hudson Burnham, Jr. and Hubert Burnham, sons of the eminent Chicago architect and planner Daniel Hudson Burnham. The Burnham Brothers are best known for their design of the Carbide and Carbon Building (1929, a designated Chicago Landmark) and for their civic work to bring the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago to fruition in 1933.



The Bankers Building is located at the southwest corner of Adams and Clark streets in the financial core of Chicago's Loop.

BUILDING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

The Bankers Building was commissioned by the Adams-Clark Building Corporation, which was formed and directed by Ernest A. Jackson. He was born in 1882 in Iowa as the son of that state's governor, and his early working life was devoted to the cattle business in Texas followed by some time in South Dakota promoting the development of land along the Chicago & North Western Railway.

Jackson came to Chicago in 1924 and began acquiring commercial buildings in the Loop, including the Transportation Building at 708 South Dearborn St., the Montgomery Ward Building at 6 N. Michigan Ave. and the Wabash-Monroe Building at 36 S. Wabash Ave. which he leased to Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company for its men's store. The Bankers Building appears to have been the only building that Jackson commissioned.

Jackson financed construction of the Bankers Building by selling real estate bonds to the public



With its flat wall surfaces, soaring vertical piers and setbacks, the Bankers Building exemplifies the Art Deco style of architecture applied to a commercial skyscraper. $$\rm 3$$





Construction of the Bankers Building was documented by the Chicago **Architectural Photo**graphing Company beginning with the demolition of the six-story Lakeside Building that stood on the site (upper left) to the placement of caissons (upper right) and construction of the steel frame and its cladding (right and following page). Contemporary accounts noted that the building was completed in a mere ten months. Source: Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago.





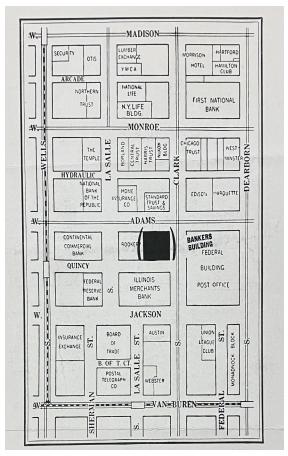






like stock, a common practice in the 1920s. He signed the contract for the building in July 1926 and commissioned the Dilks Construction Company of Chicago to build it. Lorenzo C. Dilks was a structural engineer who specialized in steel bridges and structural frames, as well as steel-framed ships for the federal government during World War I. In September 1926, the six-story Lakeside Building that occupied the site was razed while at the same time the new building's caissons were being placed. Erection of the steel structural frame began in November 1926 and was completed by February 1927. Masonry work was completed in April 1927, and the building was ready for occupancy in the summer of 1927. Contemporary accounts of the building's construction noted that it was completed in a remarkably short time of 240 working days.

The Bankers Building is located in Chicago's Loop at the southwest corner of Clark and Adams streets on a half block that is approximately 178 x 125 feet. The location in the center of the city's financial district was intended to attract financial services firms, and promotional materials for the building noted



Promotional material for the Bankers Building showed its location at the very center of Chicago's financial district. Source: Abakanowicz Research Center at the Chicago History Museum.

that it was within a one-block radius of nine major banks and close to the Federal Reserve Bank, as well as the Chicago Board of Trade, and across the street from the old U.S. Federal Building and Post Office.

Chicago's 1923 Zoning Ordinance

With its setbacks and light courts framed by wings, the form of the Bankers Building is shaped by Chicago's first zoning ordinance that was passed in 1923. The law sought to balance a demand for office space in the Loop while maintaining sun light and air at street level. The 1923 zoning code allowed the base of buildings to rise to 264 feet, and above that height buildings could rise higher with a tower with two restrictions: the footprint of the additional tower could occupy no more than 25 per cent of the building lot, and the cubic volume of the tower could be no more than one-sixth of the cubic volume of the main building. This envelope

influenced commercial architecture in the Loop in the boom years of the 1920s, including the Bankers Building. In her 1995 book *Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago* author Carol Willis showed how Chicago architects developed two solutions to the zoning envelope established in 1923.

One approach was a "base-with-tower" form consisting of a blocky 264-foot-tall base covering the entire lot topped with a slender tower. Examples of this approach include the Carbide and Carbon Building (1929), Trustees System Service Building (1930), 333 North Michigan Avenue (1928) and the Mather Tower (1928).

The second approach had a more integrated massing which Willis described as giving the "impression of one central tower emerging from a low base (usually four to six stories) and flanked by tall wings of about twenty-three or twenty-four stories." Rather than placing light courts within the center of the building (e.g. the Rookery or Pittsfield Building), light courts are placed on the exterior creating "U" or "H" shaped plans.

The Bankers Building exemplifies this second response to the 1923 zoning ordinance, and it was the first building to do so in 1927. The base of the building fills the entire half-block site. From the 5th floor up to the 25th floor, the volume of the building is reduced by light courts carved into the east and west facades forming an H-shaped plan. From the 26th floor to the top of the building the volume of the building steps back further forming a tower with a rectangular plan. Other examples of this approach to the 1923 zoning envelope are One North LaSalle (1930), the LaSalle-Wacker Building (1930), the Chicago Board of Trade (1930) and the Field Building (1934).

Architectural Description

While the 1923 zoning shaped the Bankers Building, the design of the building is also influenced by the Art Deco and Classical Revival styles of architecture. The Art Deco character of the building is derived from its overall verticality created by piers that rise unbroken to the roof line separating vertical banks of windows with recessed spandrel panels. The building's setbacks cause the building to become narrower as it rises higher, reinforcing its verticality. The flat, planar quality of the exterior walls is another character-defining feature of the Art Deco as applied to skyscrapers.

While the Art Deco was a forward-looking style of architecture, the Bankers Building also employs traditional Classical Revival ornament rendered in cast stone at its base and terra cotta at its top though much of the original terra cotta work has been lost.

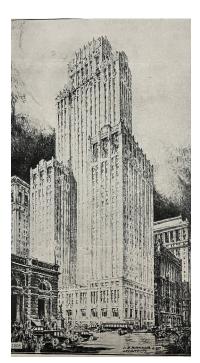
The building is 41 stories with an overall height of 476 feet with 400,000 square feet of floor area. It is fireproof construction with a steel frame (manufactured by the American Bridge Company) fireproofed with concrete and tera cotta. Floor plates are steel-and-clay-tile arches and interior partitions are fire resistant gypsum tiles. The building's foundation consists of 70

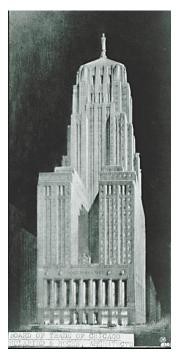






Author Carol Willis identified two skyscraper compositions that resulted from Chicago's 1923 zoning ordinance. One approach was a "base-with-tower" form consisting of a blocky 264-foot-tall base covering the entire lot topped with a slender tower. Examples of this approach include the Carbide and Carbon Building (above left), Trustees System Service Building (above middle), and the Mather Tower (above right). Source for Trustees, Carbide and Carbon: Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago. Source for Mather: Getty Images.







In 1927, the architects of the Bankers Building (above left) developed a second approach to the 1923 zoning envelope. It shows a more integrated massing which Willis described as giving the "impression of one central tower emerging from a low base (usually four to six stories) and flanked by tall wings of about twenty-three or twenty-four stories." Other examples of this composition include the Chicago Board of Trade (above middle) and the LaSalle-Wacker Building (above right). Source: Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Insitute of Chicago.



The Art Deco character of the building derives from its overall verticality created by piers that rise unbroken to the roof line and the building's setbacks, which cause the building to become narrower as it rises higher.



Ornament on the Bankers Building is Classical Revival and largely confined to the base of the building. This pair of crouching male figures are rendered in cast stone, a form of ornamental concrete manufactured by the Benedict Stone Corporation.

concrete caissons extending 100 feet to bedrock.

The overall design for the elevations is of a 4-story base consisting of a ground story of polished gray granite framing storefront openings. Above this ground floor from stories 2 to 4 the piers, walls, spandrels and ornaments are of cast stone except for the metal spandrel panels between the 3rd and 4th stories. The ornamental gray sat stone was manufactured by the Benedict Stone Corporation which opened a manufacturing plant in Chicago in 1924 when it received the very large commission to supply its building stone for the construction Soldier Field. The Municipal Building in Gary, Indiana is also clad in Benedict Stone. After the completion of the Bankers Building in 1927, the Benedict Stone Corporation opened a sales office in the building.

Classical ornament rendered in Benedict Stone features prominently at the building's main building entrance on the east façade fronting on Clark Street. The entrance composition is organized like a triumphal arch with a wide central bay flanked by half width bays. These bays are framed at their outside edges by cast stone piers.. At the center top is a middle relief sculpture of North America within a hemisphere with the date of the building completion (1927) below, carved in Roman numerals on a plaque. The location of Chicago is indicated with a five-pointed star. This globe is flanked by 2 male sculptures known as *Atlantes* holding cornucopias. The figure on the right is Hermes, with his helmet, holding a caduceus inside his left arm. The Greek messenger god is the patron of negotiation, trade and commerce, an appropriate association for a building meant to be occupied by bankers. The figure at the left is Hephaestus or Vulcan the god of fire and artisans, holding his hammer with his left hand as it rests on his anvil below, as he wears the apron of a blacksmith. Flanking this relief sculpture at each side and centered on the half width bays are half wreaths of oak leaves with ribbons above them that have a fringed scarf knotted around each.

A second entrance to the building is on the north elevation fronting on Adams St. and it is decorated somewhat similarly to what has been described for the main entrance at Clark St. The flanking piers do not extend continuously down to the top of the granite but here are each interrupted by a festoon and ornamental metal lamp at the head height of the ground floor storefront windows.

At the central bay of the entrance surround between the 3rd and 4th stories are metal spandrel panels embossed with sunflowers. Below the 3rd story windowsills are paired plaques of flowers composed either side of a diagonal ribbon or belt.

The half-width bays at the ground floor contain a window opening at the south bay and a door opening at the north bay. The wall from the sidewalk to head height is granite. Above this height to the 5th floor the wall and piers are cast stone. Above the window and door at each half width bay is a panel containing a festoon. Further above that at each side is a decorative panel that rises slightly above the 2nd story windowsill and contains a medallion with flanking bunches of fruit that also provides an extended shelf at the base of each 2nd story niche. The



The Bankers Building holds the distinction of being Chicago's tallest brick building. Repairs to the façade in the recent past have included replacement brick that will match the historic brick's buff color once it is returned to a clean state.

unusual decorative piers flanking these openings in the half width bays consist each of a 3-part pier with plain outsides and pier caps with a doubly grooved center ending in a complex floral capital/head piece that resembles Art Nouveau. Earlier photographs show cylindrical bronze-banded light fixtures with translucent lenses located at the grooved center of these piers right below the large bronze address plaque. We do not know if these were original. They are now missing. Further to each side of the half width bays are decorative wrought iron balcony railings/guardrails that sit on the 2nd floor belt course and extend to the 2nd floor windowsills. They are ornamented with stylized sunflowers at their centers.

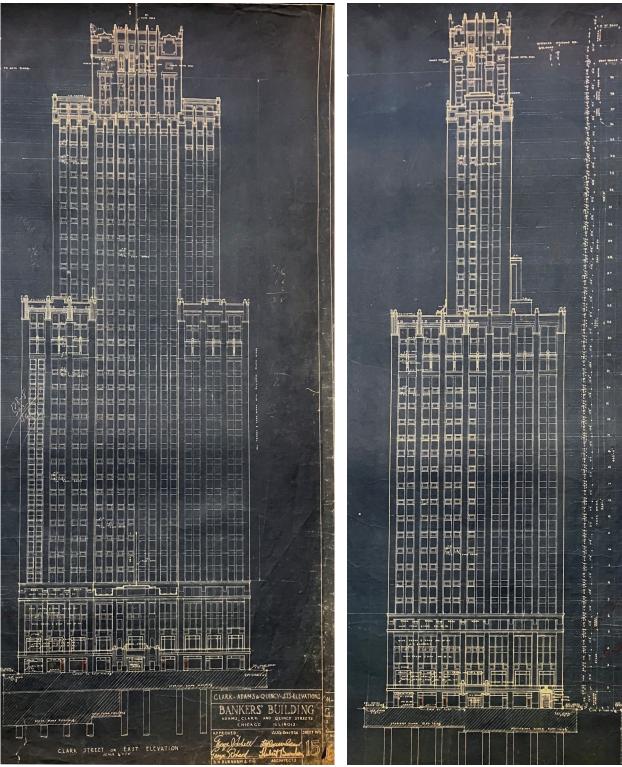
The building's brickwork cladding begins at the 5th story, and it has been said that this building is the tallest brick-clad building in the City of Chicago. The color of the brickwork is buff and hopefully the brick used during the recent repairs is a close match. The 5th story is a transitional story set between 2 projecting belt courses with continuous ornamental moldings below each. In this story are located ornamental capitals for the primary piers that run up from the 2nd story windowsill belt course. The ornamental capitals appear to be wider and thinner baskets of flowers all with a central rosette and flanking, framing foliage.

Starting at the 6th story, the remainder of the building runs up very plainly, to the 21st story except for recessed brickwork spandrel panels with squarish recessed centers. At the 20th story the thinner secondary piers terminate at the window heads below a pronounced projecting windowsill course that runs uninterrupted across the bays. Above the projecting windowsill course the secondary piers begin to rise up again but are altered to become grooved, curved, projecting brackets that provided bases for vases crowned with sculpted fruit that sit slightly below the 22nd story windowsill level. The spandrel panels below the windows at this story are cast ornamented with swags of flowers.

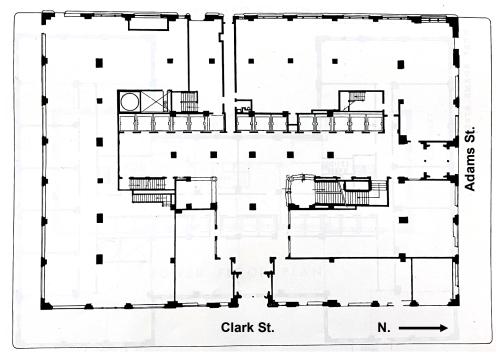
After the first setback, the building walls run up from the 24th to the 36th stories similarly as they had from the 6th to the 21st stories below.

The upper story tower from the 37th floor to the top of the building is articulated differently than the elevations below. At each end of the volume and corresponding to a structural bay, there are paired windows at floors 37 to 39 joined between by metal spandrel panels that make the 3 stories of windows and panels appear as a single unit. These window/panel groups are further framed by wider piers. On the 39th floor above each of these window groups is a smaller rectangular opening in the masonry wall framed all around with a molding of rosettes, especially at the corners, with braids in between. The 41st story at its corners is separated from those below by a sloping belt course. Between this belt course and its coping is a large empty plaque framed with an elaborate molding with rosettes. There is a festoon centered at its top.

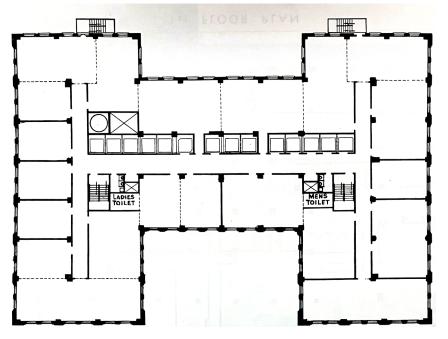
At the center of the tower between the corner masses are 4 vertical rows of individual windows separated by metal spandrel panels. From floors 37 to 39 there are wider double hung windows between thinner vertical piers. These are visually separated from those at the 40th floor by a pronounced windowsill molding of grooved blocks. On the 40th floor the windows change to



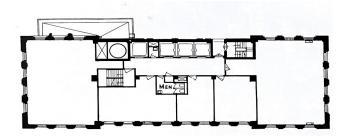
Blueprints of the Bankers Building as approved on August 2, 1926, showing the front or Clark St. elevation facing east (upper left) and the Adams St. elevation facing north (upper right). Some terra cotta ornament concentrated at the top of the building's wings and tower no longer survive. Note the narrowness of the tower as seen from the Adams St. elevation. Source: Daniel H. Burnham, Jr. and Hubert Burnham Papers, Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago.



Gound floor plan of the Bankers' Building showing the main entrance at Clark St., a secondary entrance at Adams St. and service entrance at alley. Also shown are lobby, elevator and stair core and retail spaces.



Typical floor plan from 5th to the 23rd floors showing the light courts in the front and rear of the building creating the building's H-shaped floor plans at these levels. The floors are subdivided to include elevators, stairs, toilet rooms and exterior fire escapes..



A typical floor plan in the building's tower from 24th to 36th floors showing large offices at the ends with windows on three walls. paired casements with tightly gridded transoms above. Further above these windows are brick panels containing ram's heads, above these is a molding with a centered rosette and finally between each pier a molding of bunched fronds at the coping. The piers between each row of windows end at the coping with a grooved panel that extends down from the coping to the head of the windows below and sits on a bracket.

Later History of the Bankers Building

Information about the Bankers Building after its construction is limited to newspaper reports that mention tenants or events related to the building.

By late 1927, more than 80 per cent of the office space in the building had been leased including 30 financial services firms like Moody's Investor Services, Merrill, Lynch & Co., the building's intended clientele. By 1930 at the beginning of the Great Depression, 93 per cent of the space had been leased, but as the Depression deepened the Bankers Building was compelled to reorganize in federal bankruptcy court in 1934 as it had defaulted on its mortgage and payments to bond holders who financed its construction.

In the 1930s newspapers reported of J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (F.B.I.) visiting the Bankers Building which held the Chicago office of the F.B.I. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (S.E.C.) also maintained offices in the building. The presence of federal offices in the Bankers Building are likely due to its proximity to the old Federal Building directly across Clark St.

In 1952, radio station WBEZ, at the time owned by the Chicago Board of Education, leased two floors at the Bankers Building for its offices and broadcast studio. Three years later, the Board of Education launched its television station, WTTW channel 11, in the Bankers Building.

DANIEL HUDSON BURNHAM, JR. AND HUBERT BURNHAM: THE BURNHAM BROTHERS, INC.

The Bankers Building was designed by Daniel H. Burnham, Jr. (1886-1961) and Hubert Burnham (1882-1969), architects who enjoyed an especially eminent patrimony as their father was Daniel Hudson Burnham, the celebrated Chicago architect and city planner. Both Hubert and Daniel H. were educated at private Massachusetts preparatory schools, respectively Phillips Academy and Middlesex. Hubert went on to attend the United States Naval Academy, graduating in 1905 and then studying at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris from which he graduated in 1912. During World War I he served as a Navy Lieutenant, doing aviation construction in France. Daniel H. completed a special course in architecture at Lawrence Scientific School of Harvard University. Both joined their father's firm, D. H. Burnham and Company in Chicago. After the death of the senior Burnham in 1912, the firm became Graham, Burnham & Company until1917 when it was reestablished as D. H. Burnham & Company. In 1928 the name was changed simply to Burnham Brothers, Inc.



A circa 1900 photograph of Daniel H. Burnham with his family which included the young Daniel, Jr. and Hubert, future architects of the Bankers Building at the left end of the front row with their sister Margaret B. finishing out the front row. Back row: John, Ethel and Daniel B. and Rollin Woodyatt. Source: Daniel H. Burnham Collection, Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago.

In addition to the Bankers Building, their notable buildings include the Carbide and Carbon Building, a designated Chicago Landmark at 230 N. Michigan Avenue (1929); the United States Custom House, listed in the National Register of Historic Places at 610 S. Canal St. (1933); the Burnham Building at 160 North LaSalle St. (1924, now the State of Illinois Building), Seneca Hotel at 200 East Chestnut Street (1926), and Carson, Pirie, Scott & Company Men's Store (1928).

Both continued their father's tradition of active civic and public service. The brothers worked to bring the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago to fruition in 1933. Daniel H. Burnham, Jr., was secretary and director of Public Works for the fair and Hubert Burnham served on its Architectural Commission. Both were members of the Illinois Society of Architects and the Fellows of the American Institute of Architects.



With its distinctive dark green and gold terra cotta, the Carbide and Carbon Building (1929, a designated Chicago Landmark) is arguably the Burnham Brother's most important contribution to Chicago's skyline.

In 1924 the Burnham Brothers also designed the namesake Burnham Building at 160 N. LaSalle St. which now houses offices of the State of Illinois which infilled the light court with additional offices and a sculpture by Richard Hunt entitled "FREEFORM." Source: Historical Marker Database, hmdb.org.







CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for designation" and that it possesses a significant degree of historic integrity to convey its significance. The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Bankers Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

CRITERION 1: VALUE AS AN EXAMPLE OF CITY, STATE, OR NATIONAL HERITAGE

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- With its setbacks and light courts framed by wings, the form of the Bankers Building is shaped by Chicago's first zoning ordinance that was passed in 1923 which sought to balance a demand for taller office buildings while maintaining sunlight and air at street level.
- The Bankers Building was built for financial services firms and the building reflects the rapid growth of the banking sector in Chicago in the 1920s.

CRITERION 4: EXEMPLARY ARCHITECTURE

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The Bankers Building exemplifies an Art Deco skyscraper, a building design that emerged in Chicago and other American cities in the 1920s. Character-defining feature of the design include its ornament restricted to the base of the building, flat wall planes, verticality created by piers that rise unbroken to the roof line and the building's setbacks, which cause the building to become narrower as it rises higher.
- In addition to its Art Deco composition, the Bankers Building includes Classical Revival ornaments at its base including figures from Greek mythology and symbols such as cornucopia, swags of fruit and the caduceus.

CRITERION 5: IMPORTANT ARCHITECTS

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The Bankers Building was designed by Burnham Brothers, Inc. which consisted of architects Daniel H. Burnham, Jr. (1886-1961) and Hubert Burnham (1882-1969), sons of eminent Chicago architect and planner Daniel H. Burnham.
- The Burnham Brothers designed the Carbide and Carbon Building in 1929, a designated Chicago Landmark and arguably the finest example of an Art Deco skyscraper in Chicago in its vertical massing, geometric ornament and use of colored green and gold terra cotta.

INTEGRITY CRITERION

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architecture or aesthetic interest or value.

There have been no building additions to the exterior of the Bankers' Building since construction was completed in 1927. Of course there have been numerous interior renovations. However, there have been numerous changes that have resulted in the location of HVAC equipment, piping and cooling towers on the main roof, and on roofs at the 38th and 24th stories.

There has also been an ongoing program of masonry restoration and replacement. This has also included column, shelf angle and lintel replacement. In this process many areas of brick masonry have been replaced with new brick masonry. It is likely that the color and finish of the replacement brick has been chosen to match that of the original masonry, and once the entire façade is cleaned all of the brick will match.

In the process of this masonry replacement certain architectural ornamental details have been removed. These include ornamental urns and vases of carved fruit at the different roof coping levels and window locations at the 22nd and 24th floor. Also some of the higher parapets at the 24th floor have been lowered. Some ornamental moldings have also been removed completely and not replaced. Mostly these changes have occurred at the upper floors and are not readily visible from the sidewalks around the base of the building.

The doors and revolving door at the Clark St. entrance have been replaced with doors in a gold anodized finish characteristic of the 1950s. The light fixtures that flanked the main entrance at Clark St are missing although we cannot determine whether they were original. Additionally, the ornamental metal lamps that flank the Adams St. entrance were probably installed when the hotel use became a tenant.

The building's original design and features are intact as seen in its massing, decorative entrance surrounds, stone base, belt courses, and projecting cast stone detailing. It still possesses sufficient integrity to convey its historic architectural and cultural significance.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark. Based on its evaluation of Bankers Building, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

• All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The Bureau of Citywide Systems and Historic Preservation would like Patrick Pyszka, Principal Photographer, City of Chicago Department of Assets, Information and Services (AIS) for the professional photography featured in this report.



Interior view of the dining room of the Bankers Lounge Club at the 27th floor of the Bankers Building. Source: Daniel H. Burnham, Jr. and Hubert Burnham Papers, Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago.