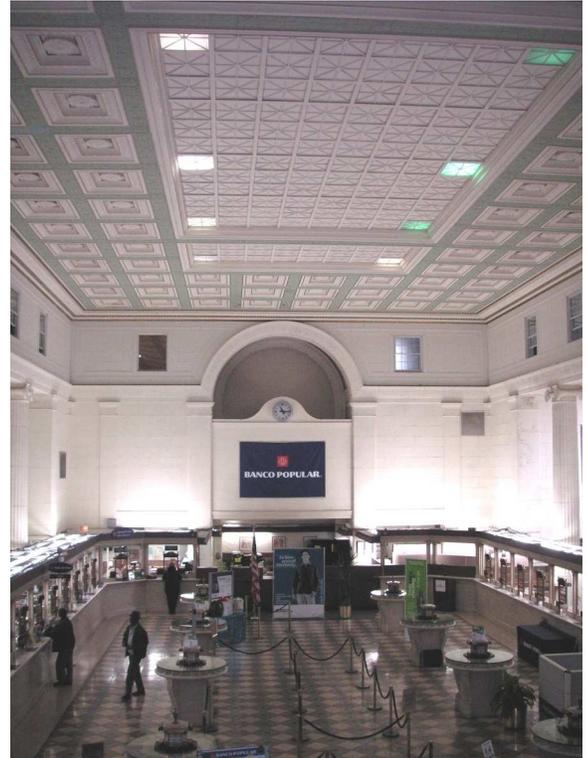


LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



(Former) Pioneer Trust & Savings Bank Building

4000 W. North Ave.

**Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks,
April 5, 2012**



CITY OF CHICAGO
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Department of Housing and Economic Development
Andrew J. Mooney, 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 a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

(FORMER) PIONEER TRUST AND SAVINGS BANK

4000 W. North Avenue

DATE: 1924
ARCHITECT: KARL M. VITZTHUM

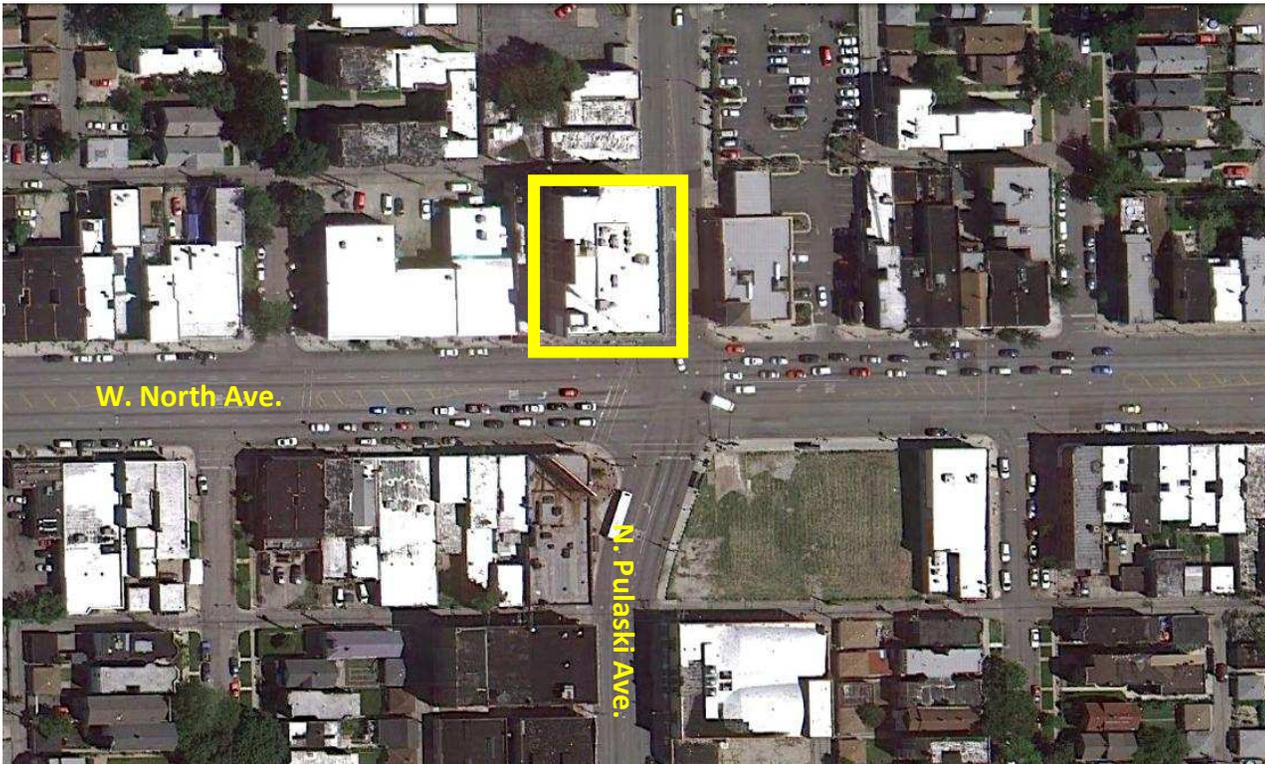
From the post-Chicago Fire period up to the Great Depression of 1929, Chicago experienced rapid growth, creating a “city of neighborhoods” each with its own commercial and economic life. Independent neighborhood banks provided financial services and security in Chicago’s outlying communities that helped shape the city’s growth as a patchwork of distinct neighborhood. Many of these institutions profited from the growth of their surrounding neighborhoods and reinvested in their respective communities with architecturally distinguished bank buildings.

The (former) Pioneer Trust and Savings Bank building is a fine example of the many historic bank buildings located throughout Chicago, and designation of the building was first proposed in 2007 as part of a group of sixteen neighborhood bank buildings. At time of writing, thirteen of those buildings (listed on page 15) have since been designated as Chicago Landmarks and one is under consideration by City Council. These buildings, as well as Pioneer, share a common history, all having been built in a legal and economic environment that encouraged the proliferation of independent banks.

Pioneer and the other neighborhood banks which have been designated also share a common architectural theme; in their design and construction these buildings represent some of the best historic architecture found in the city’s neighborhoods. Like Pioneer, most were built during a golden age of bank architecture in America which flourished after the financial panic of 1907 before being abruptly halted by the Great Depression in 1929; a period in which bankers and their architects created monumental bank buildings that would signal to the banking customer the notion that their money would be safe and the bank was here to stay. High-style architecture and expensive materials reinforced this message, and conveyed the perception that the bank was a well-capitalized and cultivated institution.

BUILDING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

The Pioneer State Bank was founded in 1914 and ten years later it absorbed the Scheubert & Amberg State Bank and the new institution was renamed the Pioneer Trust & Savings Bank. With the merger, Pioneer Bank also invited twelve architects from Chicago and New York to submit proposals for a new bank building on the site of their earlier building at the northwest corner of North and Pulaski Avenues. On April 20, 1924, the Chicago *Tribune* reported that Chicago architect and specialist in bank architecture, Karl M. Vitzthum, was awarded the commission. Construction of the building began in August 1924 and was completed in the autumn of 1925. During construction the bank continued operating at temporary quarters at the same intersection.



The (former) Pioneer Trust and Savings Bank building is located at the northwest corner of North and Pulaski Avenues in the Humboldt Park community area on the Northwest Side.



The five-story bank building is a visually prominent anchor at a busy neighborhood intersection. Like many banks of the 1920s it employed a monumental Classical Revival-style design to convey a sense of security and permanence.

Described as “Chicago’s most beautiful bank” upon completion in 1926, the five-story building cost approximately \$650,000. The monumental Classical Revival-style structure is rectangular in plan measuring 83’ across its North Avenue (south) elevation and 125’ along the Pulaski Avenue (east) elevation. A polished gray granite plinth forms the base of these street-facing elevations while the walls are faced with coursed limestone ashlar with carved limestone Classical columns and decorative details. The less-visible north elevation facing the alley is beige face brick. The first two stories of the west elevation are obscured by an adjoining building while the upper floors are common brick. A combination of masonry and steel make up the building’s structure.

The primary south elevation facing North Avenue is dominated by a three-story tall portico inspired by the temple fronts of Classical Greece and Rome. Projecting slightly from the rest of the façade, the portico consists of two “giant-order” Ionic columns flanked on either side by pilasters of the same order. The columns and pilasters carry a plain frieze which is topped with a cornice with lion heads and a dentil band all in carved limestone. Four entrance doors leading to the banking hall are located at the center of the portico (the projecting entrance canopy is not historic). The doors are framed with cast-iron surrounds ornamented with thin colonettes, Classical urns, and topped by banding with the words, “Pioneer Trust and Savings Bank.”

Above the entrance doors rises a two-story tall arched window framed with carved limestone molding and topped with a cartouche carved with the letter “P”, details which display a very high degree of craftsmanship in carved limestone. The rectangular windows flanking the central arched window form a Palladian motif. Like all of the windows on the first three floors, these are steel framed with decorative wrought-iron grillwork at the first story.

The central three-story portico is flanked on either side by smooth limestone walls decorated with a pair of medallions carved with eagles, and the top of the third story is marked by a decorative band with swags and eagles. Above this band the fourth and fifth stories consist of eight bays formed by a series of pilasters with Corinthian capitals. Recessed windows with a decorative cast iron spandrel are located at the central six bays; the two bays at each corner are smooth limestone. A plain frieze and classical cornice tops the front elevation.

The Pulaski Avenue (east) elevation is nearly identical to the foregoing description of the front façade with the exception of the entrance portico. In its place eight pilasters extend from the granite plinth to the top of the third story where they are topped with Ionic columns. The pilasters are topped with a frieze carved with the name of the bank. Three-story tall windows located between the pilasters illuminate the banking hall interior.

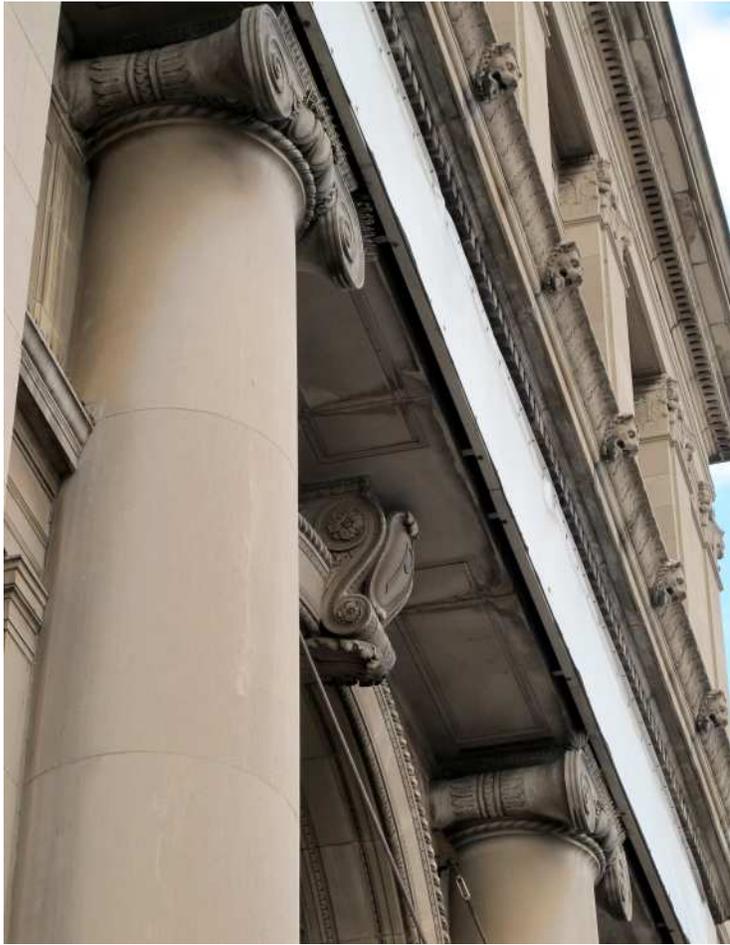
Noteworthy features of the building are four sculptural panels located at the corners of both street elevations. Influenced by the Social Realism movement, the panels depict men at work in construction, blacksmithing, mining and shipping all rendered in low-relief carved limestone.

Like many banks of the 1920s, Pioneer was a mixed-use building that in addition to the three-story banking hall included rental offices on the fourth and fifth floors. The three-story tall banking hall is a particularly distinguished historic interior. Following the Classical Revival

The front elevation (top) facing North Avenue includes a three-story tall entrance portico with "giant order" Ionic columns and pilasters and Palladian windows.

The side elevation facing Pulaski Avenue (bottom) reflects the internal function of the building. The triple height banking hall is illuminated by the large windows at the base of the building. The smaller windows at the upper stories were designed for commercial offices on floors four and five.





Details of the Ionic column capitals and soffit of the temple-front entrance portico (left) and of the entablature on the east elevation (below) illustrate the building's fine detailing and craftsmanship in carved limestone.



The sculptural panels at the corners of the building depict allegorical scenes of labor including mining (fig. a), construction (fig. b), shipping and trade (fig. d) and blacksmithing (fig. d).



(fig. a)



(fig. b)



(fig. c)



(fig. d)

style of the exterior, the grand banking hall is based on the form of a Roman basilica. Used for judicial and market buildings in ancient Rome, the basilica was typically an oblong rectangle in plan with a high ceiling and a row of columns on each side of the space and an apse at the end—all of these features are present at the Pioneer banking hall.

The hall is reached by passing through the small vestibule and lobby inside the central entrance doors and then up a short staircase. The terrazzo staircase is enclosed with an ornate brass railing decorated with the letters “PTSB,” the monogram of the historic bank. Rows of eight ionic columns march down each side of the room. These columns carry an enclosed partial mezzanine that encircles the banking hall. A round-arched opening frames the recessed apse at the far end of the space.

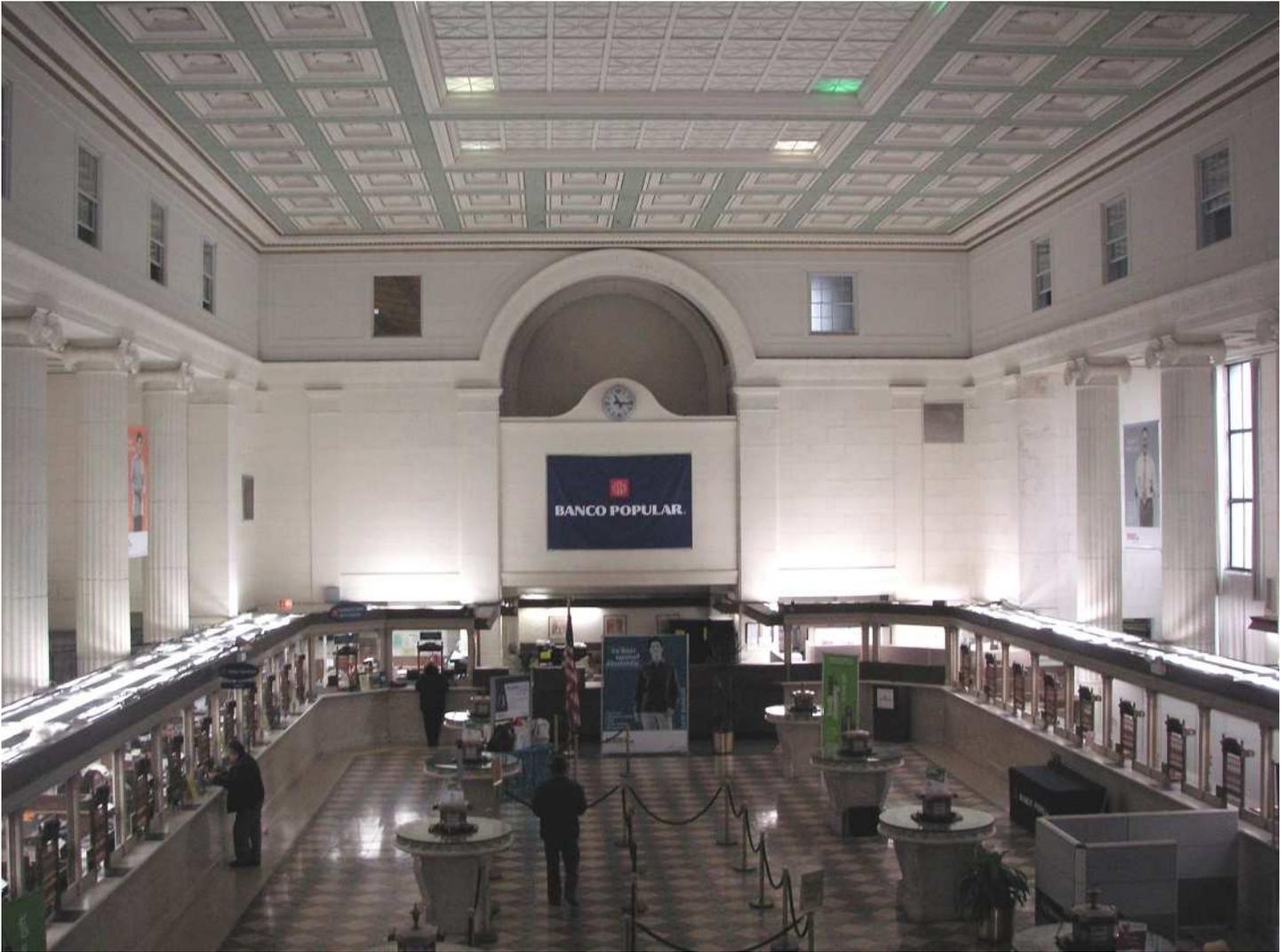
The walls, ceiling and columns are finished with flat and decorative plaster rendered to resemble weathered stone and painted in a cream and pale green palette. The center of the coffered ceiling contains a large artificially-lit skylight (now painted over), and the floor is terrazzo set in a geometric pattern of pink, green and cream. The banking hall retains its original marble check desks, and the original marble and bronze teller counters are located at the perimeter of the banking hall.

The Pioneer Bank building was constructed during a major period of development in Humboldt Park which spanned the first three decades of the twentieth century. Norwegian, German, Polish and Italian immigrants were drawn to the Northwest Side neighborhood at this time by industrial jobs at the factories established near the Chicago and North Western Railway railroad lines at the northern and western perimeter of the neighborhood. The architectural character of Humboldt Park’s residential blocks is dominated by two-flat houses, one- and two-story frame dwellings with a smaller number of brick bungalows and apartment buildings from the turn-of-the-twentieth century up to the onset of the Depression in 1929.

North Avenue developed as the commercial spine for the Humboldt Park neighborhood offering residents an almost continuous row of store buildings, banks, theaters and other commercial establishment. By 1895 streetcars were operating on North Avenue as far west as Pulaski Avenue. In 1911 streetcars began service on Pulaski (then Crawford) Avenue making the Pulaski and North Avenue intersection a focal point of commercial development in the neighborhood which in addition to the bank included a theater and a large combined bowling and billiard hall. Many of Chicago’s neighborhood banks were located at similar commercial intersections throughout the city.

Unlike other banks in the city, the Pioneer Trust & Savings Bank survived the Great Depression and by the 1960s maintained its position as one of the 300 largest commercial banks in the nation. In the mid-1990s, the bank was purchased by Puerto Rico-based Banco Popular reflecting the neighborhood’s large Hispanic population. In 2008 Banco Popular moved to a new facility across Pulaski Avenue and the bank building remains vacant at time of writing.

The Pioneer Trust & Savings Bank building has excellent physical integrity on both its exterior and interior banking hall. Minor alterations on the exterior include the installation of replacement windows on the upper floors and the addition of the exterior canopy above the entrance



The grand banking hall (top) is a triple-height space modeled on a Roman basilica, a long room with a recessed apse at the far end and rows of columns on the sides.

Like many banks built in the 1920s, Pioneer was a highly specialized interior designed down to the last detail in fixtures and furnishing. Examples include the brass railing (bottom left) rendered with the bank's monogram and the marble check desk (bottom right) with integrated lighting and calendar.

doors. Aside from new furnishing and additional light fixtures, the banking hall interior appears unaltered from its original design.

Architect Karl M. Vitzthum

The firm of K.M. Vitzthum & Co. specialized in bank architecture, having designed more than fifty banks throughout Chicago and the Midwest region. Karl M. Vitzthum (1880-1967), principal partner of the firm, was born in Tutzing, Germany, and educated at the Royal College of Architecture in Munich before coming to the United States in 1902 and to Chicago in 1914. Vitzthum initially worked for such prominent architectural firms as D.H. Burnham and Co., and its successor firm, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White. After 1919, he headed the firm of K.M. Vitzthum & Co., designers of bank, office and apartment buildings and manufacturing plants. Some of the firm's most visible buildings in Chicago include several designated Chicago Landmarks such as and the Steuben Club Building (1929, 188 W. Randolph St.), One North LaSalle Building (1930), and the Old Republic Building (1924, 307 N. Michigan). The firm also designed St. Peter's Catholic Church (1953) at 110 W. Madison Street.

Several neighborhood banks in Chicago designed by Vitzthum are designated Chicago landmarks including the Hyde Park-Kenwood National Bank (1928, 1525 E. 53rd St.), the Marquette State Bank (1924, 6314 S. Western Ave.), the Fullerton State Bank (1923, 1425 W. Fullerton Avenue) and the Home Bank and Trust Company Building (1926, 1200-08 N. Ashland Avenue).

NEIGHBORHOOD BANKING IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHICAGO

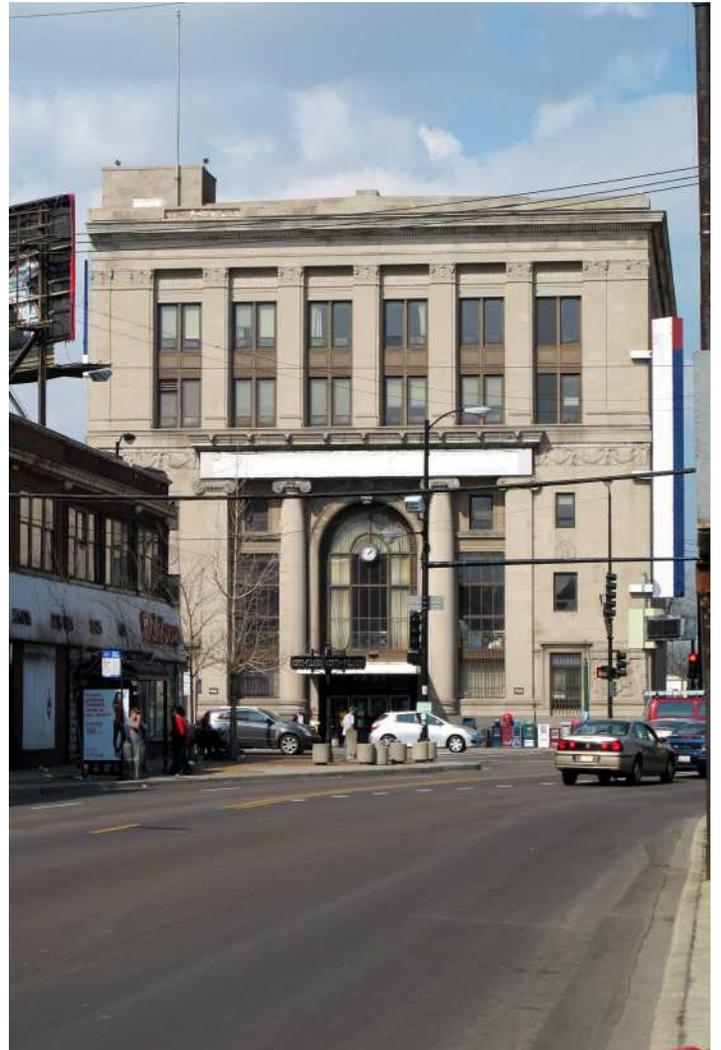
During the early-twentieth century, the establishment of independent banks played a major role in bolstering the development of Chicago's neighborhoods. The rapid expansion of the city and its transportation network resulted in a vast series of outlying neighborhoods by the early 1900s, each with its own identity and shopping district. Bustling local commercial centers—typically located near the intersection of street car or elevated rail lines—offered a wide range of venues for shopping and entertainment, featuring clusters of small shops, restaurants, theaters, office buildings and department stores. These “cities within a city” met the basic needs of residents, who saw no reason to travel downtown regularly.

During the same period, Illinois state law prohibited banks from opening branches. The intention of the law was to encourage the establishment of small, independent banks to serve the many small farm communities scattered throughout the state, and to discourage bank monopolies. In Chicago the legislation resulted in the large number of independent banks located in the city's neighborhoods where they offered mortgages, business loans, and checking and savings accounts for middle- and working-class residents. Reflecting their neighborhood focus, banking institutions were typically organized by prominent local businessmen who served as directors and officers, and their stock was generally owned by local residents and merchants.

A national financial panic and recession in 1906 led to the establishment of the Federal Reserve in 1913 which reformed and stabilized the banking industry. The increased stability further encouraged the growth of banks nationally and in Chicago, and Pioneer Bank was established a



Historic photos of Pioneer in 1934 (top left) and 1948 (bottom left) reveal the bank's historic prominence at the corner of Pulaski and North Avenues, a neighborhood commercial center within the larger Humboldt Park community area. They also show that the building retains excellent physical integrity.



The building is a prominent visual feature in the Humboldt Park neighborhood, visible from several blocks south on Pulaski Avenue.

year after the enactment of the Federal Reserve making it one of sixty-six neighborhood banks in the city with deposits of \$126 million in 1914. The number of banks nearly tripled by 1924 and by 1929 there were 195 banks in Chicago. There were more deposits in Chicago's outlying neighborhood banks than in all the combined banks of six states—Idaho, New Mexico, Wyoming, Delaware, Montana, and North Dakota.

The growth of Chicago's banks reflected the physical and economic growth of the city, particularly in the 1920s. A July 28, 1921, advertisement in the *Chicago Tribune* highlights a contemporary view of neighborhood banks:

The result of the very bigness of Chicago has brought about localized business centers. Step by step with the growth of Chicago has come the establishment of a wonderful array of outlying banks. These financial institutions exert a tremendous influence on the business and civic life of Chicago. They are more than clearing houses of their respective community. In most cases they are the community centers as well. On the evenings in the hours these banks open their doors to the public, hundreds of thousands of people assemble to transact their banking business. Not only are these banks safe, convenient depositories for the funds of the people, they are investment centers.

The spectacular growth banks over such a short period of time made the panic that occurred after the Stock Market Crash of 1929 all the more devastating. Between 1929 and 1932, nearly half of Chicago's neighborhood banks failed. As the growth of outlying banking in Chicago was closely tied to real estate developments in its neighborhoods, the tremendous deflation in Chicago real estate and real estate investments hastened the decline. The real estate situation grew steadily worse following a wave of bank failures that culminated in June 1931. The panic that ensued during "bank runs" at the time was described in a March 1932 article in Chicago's *Commerce* magazine:

There was scarcely a neighborhood bank that did not have an out and out run. In more than one hundred banks, at one time, crowds pushed and jostled as people fought to draw money. Hysteria was everywhere. Bank officers, directors and business men made speeches from the counter tops in crowded lobbies. Words availed but little and cash continued to be paid out. In six months after that twenty more banks had closed in the wake of that tidal wave.

By 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt concluded that only a national "bank holiday" would restore the system. Soon thereafter Congress changed most of the banking laws, and the established the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) was established to protect depositors against bank runs or thefts.

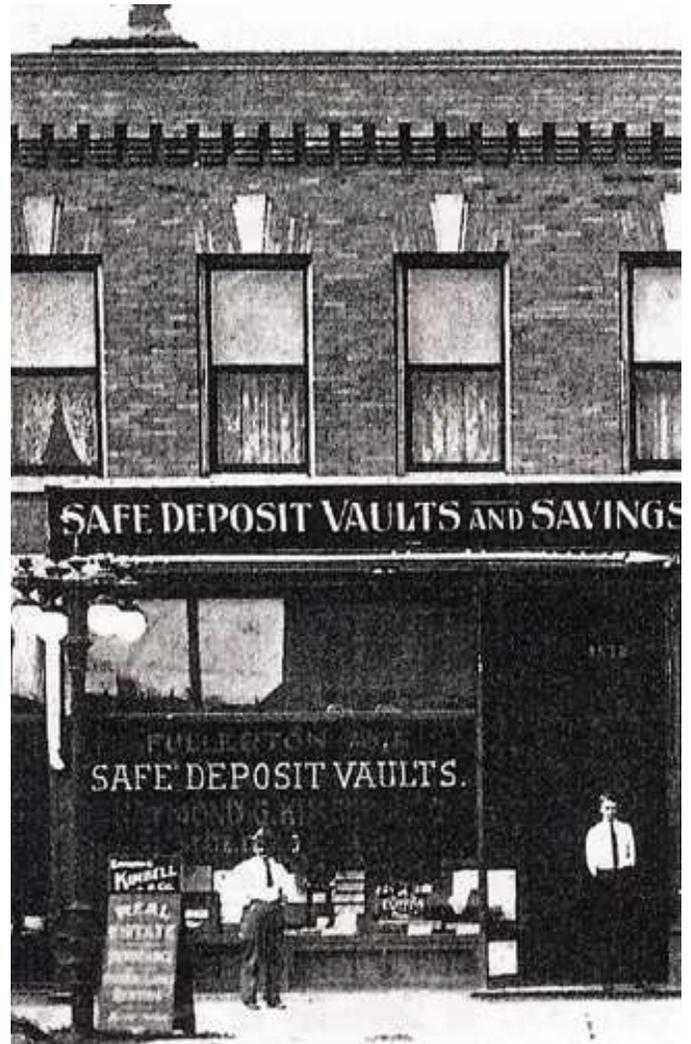
Construction of new banks came to an abrupt halt in 1929 with the onset of the Great Depression, and the hiatus on the establishment of new banks continued through World War II. By the time bank construction resumed in the 1950s, transformations in both the banking industry and architectural styles resulted in great changes in bank architecture.



The photo at left shows a “bank run” on the Milwaukee Avenue State Bank in August 1906. Bank failures and an economic recession in 1906 led to banking reforms under the Federal Reserve Act of 1913. Stabilization of the banking industry encouraged the establishment of banks.



Before the monumental banks of the 1920s, Chicago’s early banks were inconspicuous buildings that differed little from other commercial buildings. A good example is the bank on Fullerton Avenue from 1909 (right). The photo of the Milwaukee Avenue State Bank interior during the 1906 “run” (above) illustrates that early banking halls were similarly nondescript.



EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY BANK ARCHITECTURE IN CHICAGO

In the late nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century, Chicago's neighborhood banks were typically housed in a portion of a commercial building and were architecturally indistinguishable from other retail buildings. Gradually bank buildings developed as free-standing, self-contained and purpose-built structures. By the 1920s, the banks built in Chicago's neighborhoods had evolved into monumental structures that rivaled neighborhood churches and schools in terms of size, architectural design and quality of construction.

Pioneer Bank's location at the intersection of two prominent streets is typical of other neighborhood banks which are typically sited near key intersections in commercial districts, often on corners, serving as prominent visual landmarks for residents of those neighborhoods. By the 1920s these imposing structures were readily distinguished from the surrounding streetscape due to their distinctive designs, often incorporating classical and more monumentally-scaled elements, quality cladding materials, and fine craftsmanship.

Pioneer's Classical Revival-style design is consistent with the dominant trend in bank design in the 1920s. With its ability to convey a sense of security, permanence, and strength, the Classical Revival style was well-suited to the image bankers sought to convey. Ancient Greek and Roman architecture serves as the foundation of the style, as does later the Renaissance and the early-twentieth-century Beaux Arts classicism. Classical Revival-style bank facades were often designed to resemble either the column-and-pediment form derived from Greek and Roman temples, as at Pioneer, or an arcaded façade distinguished by repeating two-story round-headed arches.

Like Pioneer, several neighborhood banks retain their original banking halls which typically include expensive, durable, and fireproof finishes, especially marble, terra cotta, decorative plaster and custom architectural metalwork. Banking halls were highly specialized interiors that provided architects an opportunity to design down to the last detail in fixtures and furnishings. Prominent teller counters, with tall metal or glass cages, mark the separation between customer spaces and the secure working areas of the bank. As most transactions were recorded by hand in ledger books, separate tellers were required for withdrawals and deposits. Check desks, often with integrated lighting and calendar displays, were provided for customers.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation of landmark designation 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 landmark designation," as well as the integrity criterion. The criteria which the (former) Pioneer Trust and Savings Bank building satisfies are defined in the Commission's "Recommendation to the City Council of Chicago that Chicago Landmark Designation be adopted the (former) Pioneer Trust

NEIGHBORHOOD BANK BUILDINGS DESIGNATED AS CHICAGO LANDMARKS



BELMONT-SHEFFIELD TRUST AND SAVINGS BANK
1001 W. Belmont Avenue
Date: 1928-1929
Architect: John A. Nyden & Co.



FULLERTON STATE BANK
1425 W. Fullerton Avenue
Date: 1923
Architect: Karl M. Vitzthum



MARQUETTE PARK STATE BANK
6314 S. Western Avenue
Date: 1924
Architect: Karl M. Vitzthum



COSMOPOLITAN STATE BANK
801 N. Clark Street
Date: 1920
Architect: Schmidt, Garden and Martin



SOUTH SIDE TRUST AND SAVINGS
4659 S. Cottage Grove Avenue
Date: 1922
Architect: A. A. Schwartz



KIMBELL TRUST AND SAVINGS BANK
3600 W. Fullerton Avenue
Date: 1924
Architect: William Gibbons Uffendell



CALUMET NATIONAL
9117 S. Commercial Av.
Date: 1910
Architect: John A. Domickson



SHERIDAN TRUST AND SAVINGS
4753 N. Broadway
Date: 1924
Architect: Marshall and Fox
Additional Stories: 1928, Huszagh and Hill



CHICAGO CITY BANK AND TRUST
815 W. 63rd Street
Date: 1930
Architect: Abraham Epstein



MARSHFIELD TRUST AND SAVINGS
3321 N. Lincoln Avenue
Date: 1923-1924
Architect: William Gibbons Uffendell



STOCK YARDS NATIONAL
4150 S. Halsted Street
Date: 1924
Architect: Abraham Epstein



HYDE PARK-KENWOOD NATIONAL BANK
1525 E. 53rd Street
Date: 1928
Architect: Karl M. Vitzthum



SWEDISH AMERICAN STATE BANK
5400 N. Clark Street
Date: 1913
Architect: Ottenheimer, Stern, and Reichert

and Savings Bank building,” dated April 5, 2012.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district 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. The Commission has identified the significant features for the building, and these are defined in the Commission’s “Recommendation to the City Council of Chicago that Chicago Landmark Designation be adopted the (former) Pioneer Trust and Savings Bank building,” dated April 5, 2012.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Historic Preservation Division, Department of Housing and Economic Development: cover, pp. 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 (right), 15.

Chicago Daily News negatives collection, Chicago History Museum, <http://memory.loc.gov>: p. 13.

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