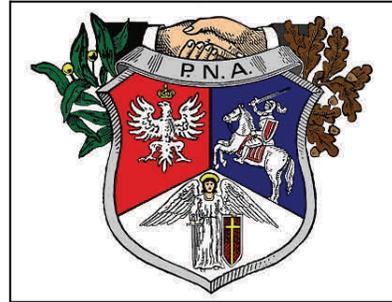


LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



Polish National Alliance Building 1514-1520 W. Division St.

Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, August 7, 2014



CITY OF CHICAGO
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Department of Planning and 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.

POLISH NATIONAL ALLIANCE BUILDING

1514-1520 W. DIVISION ST.

BUILT: 1937-1938
ARCHITECT: JOSEPH A. SLUPKOWSKI

Chicago is renowned as a “city of neighborhoods,” many of which are historically associated with ethnic-European immigrant groups that founded and nurtured a wide variety of institutions, churches and commercial ventures. The Polish National Alliance Building is a significant example of a building constructed by an ethnic fraternal organization that served one of Chicago’s most prominent ethnic communities. Located near the geographical center of “Polish Downtown,” Chicago’s largest and oldest ethnic-Polish neighborhood, the building served from 1938 to 1976 as the headquarters of the United States’ largest Polish-American fraternal organization, the Polish National Alliance (PNA), also known as the *Zwiazek Narodowy Polski*.

The Polish National Alliance Building exemplifies the historic importance of ethnic fraternal organizations, social clubs, and mutual aid societies to the social, cultural, and political development of Chicago’s immigrant communities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Founded in 1880, the PNA was established by Polish-American leaders to provide economic assistance to Polish newcomers entering American society, to preserve Poland’s language and culture in their new homeland, and to aid in the global cause for Poland’s political independence in Europe.

The Polish National Alliance moved to their new purpose-built headquarters on West Division Street in 1938 and remained there until 1976. This 38-year period coincided with America’s second large wave of Polish emigration after World War II, and the subsequent growth of Chi-

chicago's "Polonia" into the city's largest such ethnic community. The organization's occupancy of the West Division building was also marked by its rise to national importance as a key player in the establishment of the Polish-American Congress, a nationwide federation of influential Polish-American groups formed in part to support the cause for a free and independent Poland. With over 300,000 members today, the Polish National Alliance remains the United States' largest ethnic fraternal benefit society.

In addition to its historic significance, the Polish National Alliance Building is a finely-designed and –crafted Art Deco-style institutional office building. Designed by Polish-American architect Joseph A. Slupkowski, the building's rectilinear form, symmetrical massing, deeply-inset vertical window openings, and "Modern Classical" ornament, combining both traditional and non-historic details, are all hallmarks of 1930s Art Deco-style architecture.

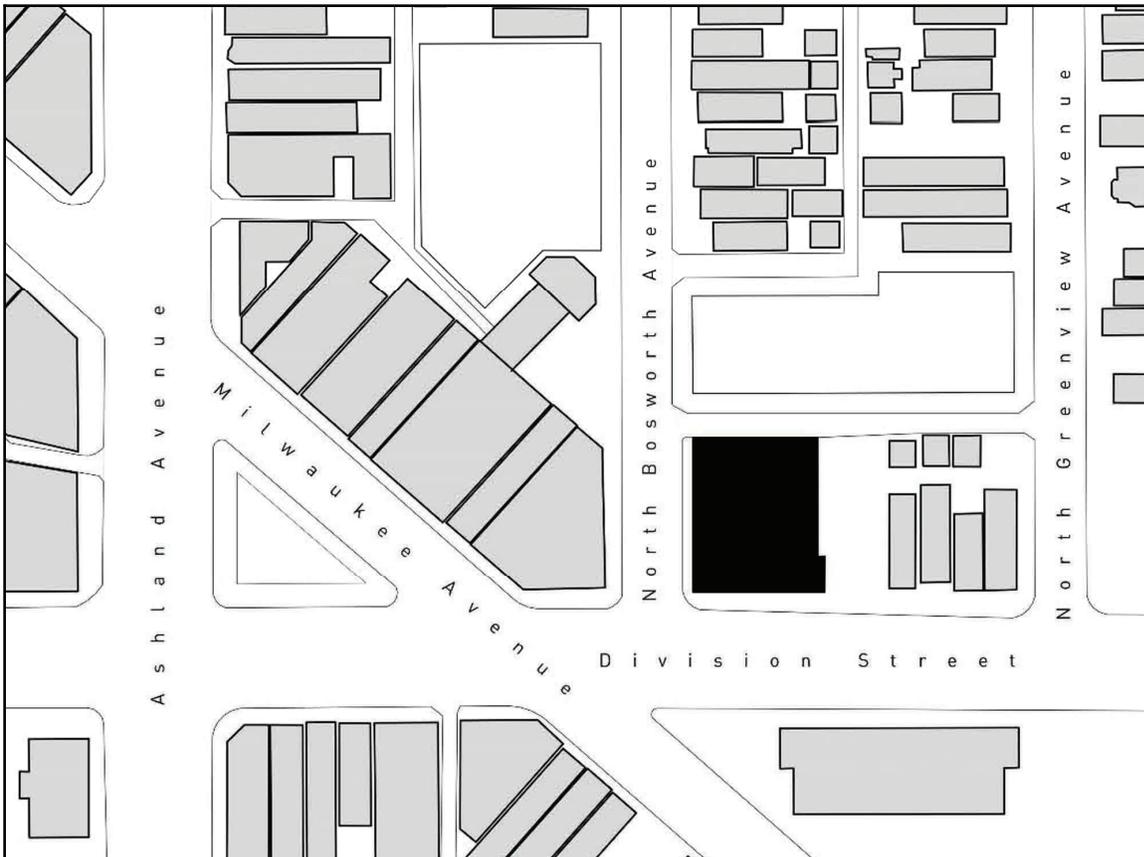
BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

On September 1, 1937, the Polish National Alliance received a City of Chicago building permit for a "2-sty. office bldg., 93 x 116 x 34" at the northeast corner of W. Division St. and N. Bosworth Ave. on Chicago's Northwest Side. "J. Slupkowski" was listed as the architect and Victor Markiewicz as the contractor. The permit estimated the building's cost at \$180,000. Permit records indicate that the building was completed and ready for occupancy in May 1938.

The Polish National Alliance Building is a two-story with raised basement institutional office building. Its primary elevations, facing Division (south) and Bosworth (west) are clad with ornamented gray limestone, while east and north (alley) elevations are clad with unornamented common brick. The building's overall form is sharply rectilinear and cubic. A raised basement forms a high water table of ashlar limestone. The Division Street (south) elevation is symmetrical with a central entrance set within a deeply-recessed rectangular opening. The Bosworth Avenue (west) elevation is balanced but not completely symmetrical, with a secondary building entrance on the building's northwest corner balanced by a window on the southwest corner.

The main building entrance remains intact with metal and glass double doors surmounted by a large transom overlaid with a metal decorative screen. A medallion above the door is inscribed with the letters "ZNP" for *Zwiazek Narodowy Polski* ("Polish National Alliance" in Polish). The emblem of the PNA—a shield with an eagle, a knight riding on horseback, and the Archangel Michael, symbolizing the three main regions of the historic Polish commonwealth—is carved into the limestone parapet above the entrance bay. Shields are also carved into the parapet at each end bay. The secondary entrance on Bosworth consists of a set of painted metal double doors.

On the two street-facing elevations, second- and third-floor windows in each structural bay are paired and are set within deeply-recessed openings. Decorative-metal spandrels with Art Deco-style geometric ornament separate windows in each recessed opening. Paired, fluted piers separate these inset window bays. Carved Art Deco-style detailing, including chevrons, sunbursts, and abstracted floral motifs, form a continuous band above second-story windows, accentuating

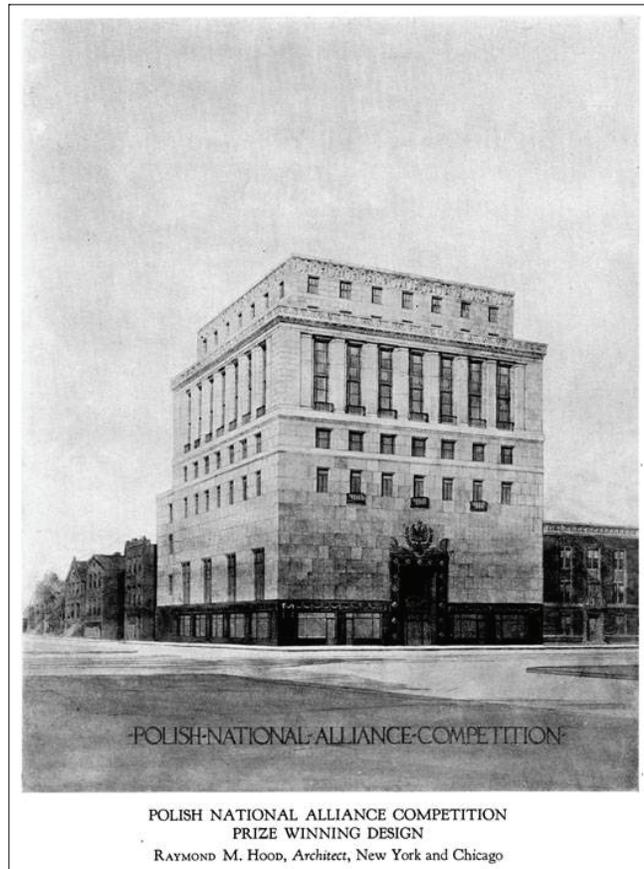


The Polish National Alliance Building is located at 1514-1520 West Division Street in a portion of Chicago’s Near Northwest Side commonly known as the “Polish Downtown.” The building was constructed in 1937-1938 by the Polish National Alliance as this Polish-American organization’s new headquarters.

The construction of the Polish National Alliance Building followed the organization's explosive growth after World War I. In 1924, having purchased property at the northwest corner of Division Street and Bosworth Avenue, the PNA planned a new building.

Right: Raymond M. Hood of New York, well known as the winning architect of the 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower competition, won the building commission as part of a well-publicized competition. However, his mid-rise design remained unbuilt due to leadership disputes within the PNA and the onset of the Great Depression.

In 1937, the Polish National Alliance selected local Polish-American architect Joseph A. Slupkowski to design a more modest building for the same site. Below: Slupkowski's Art Deco-style design for the building as seen in a postcard.



a stepped parapet without any kind of projecting cornice. Window sash on the building's primary (south and west) elevations are one-over-one replacement windows within original openings.

The common-brick east and north elevations are much plainer and flatter than street-facing elevations. Single window openings on these facades are regularly spaced and contain original steel sash windows.

Architect Joseph A. Slupkowski

Joseph A. Slupkowski (1884-1951), the architect of the Polish National Alliance Building, was born in Chicago in 1884 to Polish-American parents. Slupkowski attended the Holy Trinity parish school, then studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Armour Institute (later the Illinois Institute of Technology), and the Association Institute. After graduation, Slupkowski worked with the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad as an architect and engineer. He received his architectural license in 1917 and established his own firm with fellow architect Clement L. Piontek, best known for his earlier work with Chicago architects Worthmann & Steinbach.

Slupkowski & Piontek's office was located at 1263 N. Paulina St., in "Polish Downtown," the area on Chicago's Northwest Side historically the center of the city's Polish-American community, and the firm catered primarily to Polish-American individuals and institutions. Many of Chicago's largest Polish social and religious institutions were counted among the firm's clients. Slupkowski & Piontek's best known works include the St. Joseph Home of Chicago (2650 N. Ridgeway, 1928, demolished); a large facility for Holy Trinity School (1443 W. Division St., 1928, extant); and Weber High School's Francis Gordon Gymnasium (1521-1525 W. Haddon St., 1920s, extant). Slupkowski & Piontek also designed several single-family bungalows in Chicago's West Town community area.

The firm of Slupkowski & Piontek dissolved sometime after 1928. Slupkowski's most prominent work of the 1930s include the Spanish Colonial Revival-style St. Francis Friary in Burlington, Wisconsin, and the Polish National Alliance Building. In addition to serving as architect for the new headquarters, Slupkowski was a longtime member of the PNA's Chicago Society and a supporter of the group's youth programs. He also served on the Chicago Plan Commission from 1941 through the late 1940s.

CHICAGO POLONIA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHICAGO'S POLISH DOWNTOWN

Old-World poverty, often combined with political upheaval and religious or ethnic oppression, fueled the desire for a better life on the part of countless European immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Polish immigration epitomized this history by being closely tied to struggles in Poland to establish an independent state and to defend it from foreign powers. The autonomous Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, created in 1569 and a source of much pride by later generations, was toppled in 1795 after a series of invasions by the neighboring empires of Russia, Prussia, and Austria. The region remained subjugated and split between competing powers through the 19th and early 20th centuries, until Poland emerged from World War I as an independent republic established in 1918.



The Polish National Alliance Building has a sharply-rectilinear exterior overall design that is typical of Depression-era, Art-Deco style design.

Above: The building's Division Street (south) facade. Below: The building's Bosworth Avenue (west) façade.





The Polish National Alliance Building has crisp-edged, geometric and foliate ornament carved from gray limestone and decorative-metal grilles and window spandrels, typical of the Art Deco style.

Left: The building's main entrance.

Top: Ornament above the entrance, including the PNA's initials in Polish.



Additional views of the building's Art Deco-style ornament:

Top: Parapet ornament, including the PNA's insignia.

Right: Foliate decoration and incising in a decorative-metal spandrel.

Bottom: A building bay defined by hard-edged, Classical-style pilasters and decorated with metal spandrels.



This short-lived Second Polish Republic was crushed by the invasion of Nazi Germany in 1939. Although Poland was reestablished as a country at the end of World War II, it was swiftly swept behind the “Iron Curtain” as a satellite state of the Soviet Union. It remained under de facto Soviet control until 1989, when, in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse, Poland asserted its independence, rejected Communism and embraced the West.

This history of political repression, accompanied by much economic deprivation, encouraged millions of Poles to seek their fortunes in the New World. Between 1850 and 1914, an estimated three million Poles fled their homeland. A majority became Americans, entering the United States by way of New York’s emigration processing center at Ellis Island, and then settling in predominantly Polish communities in growing American industrial cities such as New York, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Chicago.

Since the mid-1800s, when the first substantial number of Poles migrated to the American Midwest, Chicago has been the center of “American Polonia,” a collective name for the country’s Polish and Polish American community. Among Chicago’s first Polish settlers were exiled Polish nobles who fled the Polish-Russian War of 1830-1831, arriving in 1834 seeking to build a “New Poland” in the Illinois wilderness. The first substantial wave of Polish immigration to Chicago, beginning in the 1850s and ebbing in the 1920s, included a mass migration of predominantly Catholic peasants to the United States in search of “*za chlebem*” (“for bread”). Polish immigrants of the late nineteenth century quickly settled in city neighborhoods that soon became closely identified with these immigrants.

Arriving Poles soon established Chicago’s most populous Polish-concentrated community along the west bank of the Chicago River’s North Branch, approximately two miles northwest of the city’s downtown business district. Polish immigrants first settled in this part of the Northwest Side in the 1860s near two new Roman Catholic parishes—St. Stanislaus Kostka, founded in 1867 at Noble and Bradley Streets, and eventually the largest Polish Catholic congregation in the city; and nearby Holy Trinity, founded in 1872 at Noble and Chapin Streets. In addition, older Catholic parishes grew and additional new ones were formed—St. Hedwig at Hoyne and Webster Avenues in 1888; St. John Cantius at Chicago and Milwaukee Avenues in 1893; St. Mary of the Angels at Wood Street and Bloomingdale Avenue in 1897; and Holy Innocents at Superior Street and Armour Avenue in 1905. Throughout this period of great growth, Polish Chicagoans established and grew over forty Roman Catholic parishes.

By 1900, the Northwest Side Polish American community centered on Milwaukee Avenue near Division Street, was known to local residents as “Stanislawowo-Trojcowo” (after the area’s two earliest Polish Catholic parishes) and to the rest of Chicago as “Polish Downtown.” It was home to tens of thousands of Chicago Poles who lived, worked, learned, and worshipped within a one-square-mile area of the intersection of Division Street, Ashland Avenue, and Milwaukee Avenue, a busy traffic crossing commonly known as the “Polish Triangle.”

Between 1890 and 1937, the city’s Polish population grew more than ten-fold to over 500,000, and Polish Downtown became the economic and cultural heart of Chicago Polonia. Polish Downtown’s main commercial streets—Noble Street, Division Street, Ashland Avenue and Milwaukee Avenue—were lined with Polish-owned businesses serving both Polish-speaking neighborhood residents and far-flung Polish Chicagoans visiting from other parts of the metro-



Chicago's "Polish Downtown"—historically the center of Chicago's Polish-American community, grew up around the Roman Catholic church parishes of St. Stanislaus Kostka (top left) and Holy Trinity (right). By the twentieth century, Polish Downtown (below) was one of the country's largest Polish-American communities.



politan area. Polish business ventures were funded by Polish-run and Polish-friendly banks and building and loan associations established in the community, including the Polish Crown, the Pulaski Building & Loan, the Bank Polski, the Home Bank and Trust, and the Northwestern Trust and Savings Bank. (The Home Bank and Trust Company Building at 1200-08 N. Ashland is a designated Chicago Landmark.)

Polish-language theatrical and musical performances were first held in local school auditoriums, then later housed in large new theaters and music halls near the Polish Triangle, including the Crown Theater (1605 W. Division St., completed 1909, demolished) and the Chopin Theater (built 1918, 1541 W. Division St., extant). Polish Downtown was the heart of the city's Polish press, home to publications read in Chicago and across Polish-speaking America: the *Gazeta Polska* (*Polish Gazette*); the *Gazeta Polska Katolika* (*Polish Catholic Gazette*); the *Dziennik Chicagoski* (*Polish Daily News*); the *Dziennik Zjednoczenia* (*Union Daily News*) and *Narod Polski* (*Polish Nation*), both published by the Polish Roman Catholic Union; and the *Zgoda* (*Harmony*) and *Dziennik Zwiazkowy* (*Alliance Daily News*), both published by the Polish National Alliance. Among the tens of thousands of Chicago Poles who called Polish Downtown home was August J. Kowalski, who in 1888 became the city's first Polish American alderman. Pulaski Park, located west across Noble Street from St. Stanislaus Kostka Catholic Church and named for the Polish-born hero of the American Revolutionary War, became a centerpiece of Polish Downtown at its completion in 1914.

After a development peak in the 1940s and 1950s, post-World War II changes to the community, including the 1960 completion of the Northwest Expressway (today's Kennedy Expressway) and the settlement of new ethnic groups in the area, caused many of Polish Downtown's older Polish residents to relocate out of the community into outer Chicago neighborhoods and suburbs. Though the ethnic and business makeup of Polish Downtown is no longer predominantly Polish, the large Roman Catholic parishes of St. Stanislaus Kostka and Holy Trinity remain important Chicago Polonia institutions.

ETHNIC MUTUAL BENEFIT SOCIETIES AND FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS IN CHICAGO

Along with several Polish American churches and businesses, Chicago's Polish Downtown was home to several influential Polish American member-supported benevolent organizations, including the Polish National Alliance, that gave financial support to the city's new arrivals to the city and encouraged nationalist pride among the city's Polish community. These Polish ethnic mutual benefit societies and fraternal organizations were part of a larger historic movement of immigrants to Chicago banding together to support each other financially, socially and culturally.

During the many waves of European immigration between 1850 and 1960, tens of thousands of foreign arrivals to Chicago relied on member-supported ethnic mutual benefit societies and fraternal organizations to assist them in their first years in America. Almost all of Chicago's foreign-born populations—Germans, Italians, Slovaks, Czechs, Poles, Romanians, Lithuanians,



Besides the Roman Catholic church, Polish-Americans living in Chicago looked to member-supported local mutual benefit societies and fraternal organizations for economic and educational support and civic leadership. Local organizations like the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America (above), the Polish Women's Alliance (bottom left), the Polish Falcons of America (bottom right), and the Polish National Alliance were important fixtures of social and political life in Polish Downtown.

and many others—were served by these ethnic-focused voluntary social associations, often with male- or female-exclusive membership, formed to foster immigrant community cohesion and prosperity. Often founded by small groups of socially-conscious local citizens, many ethnic fraternal organizations like Chicago’s Polish National Alliance expanded over time to include large nationwide member rosters and to offer wide varieties of financial and social services.

Most Chicago immigrants hailed from politically and economically unstable European states; poverty remained a pressing problem for immigrant families after their settlement in Chicago. In response, ethnic mutual benefit societies offered Chicago’s immigrant families low-cost insurance policies that provided income in the event of the insured’s death or injury. Many of these societies also offered their members loans and home mortgages administered by friendly officers with like ancestry and language.

Ethnic fraternal organizations often sought to inform their members on the politics and culture of their members’ home countries by publishing foreign-language newspapers with both local and international news. These organizations often raised funds for the relief of the poor and displaced back home, and sometimes even actively campaigning for foreign political causes. Fraternal organizations also raised money for local needy and charitable institutions like hospitals and orphanages serving their fellow immigrants. Most organizations fostered ethnic pride and identity and attracted outside press and larger memberships by sponsoring adult and youth cultural programs that celebrated ethnic history, language, literature, theater, music, dance, and sport. Chicago’s fraternal organizations also sponsored public celebrations and parades on political and religious holidays, asserting both their spiritual and cultural ties to their old homes and their sense of belonging to their new ones.

Though proud to celebrate their unique heritage, many Chicago ethnic fraternal organizations also encouraged and helped to facilitate immigrant assimilation into mainstream American culture. Groups such as the Polish National Alliance acted as unofficial liaisons between federal immigration officials and local immigrant communities, assisting newcomers as they came through ports of entry and helping them find local housing, training, and employment. Even as they supported the continued use of their home languages, ethnic fraternal organizations often offered English-language lessons to new Chicagoans, helping them effectively adopt American speech and customs.

Large ethnic fraternal organizations often owned dedicated meeting halls, recreational facilities, club houses or other fraternal buildings within their community’s commercial district. Often these buildings displayed elaborate architectural designs including decorative motifs and signage that celebrated the organization and the ethnicity they represented. These organization facilities were fully funded by membership dues and often contained small lodge halls, offices, libraries, and classrooms for small assemblies and auditoriums, gymnasiums, museums, bars, and dining rooms for large public events. Examples of ethnic fraternal organization buildings in Chicago include the Germania Club Building at 110-114 W. Germania Pl. (designed by Addison & Fiedler, completed 1889) and the On Leong Merchant Association at 2216 S. Wentworth Ave. (designed by Michaelsen & Rognstad, completed 1927), both designated Chicago Landmarks.

As the makeup of these ethnic fraternal organizations associations gradually transformed over the twentieth century from first- to second- to third-generation Americans, Chicago's ethnic fraternal organizations gave fully-Americanized members ways to meet and socialize with those of similar heritage and to celebrate the culture and language of their ancestors. Their dedicated fraternal organization facilities, however, have usually not survived such changes in membership, and many early fraternal structures have either been lost or repurposed.

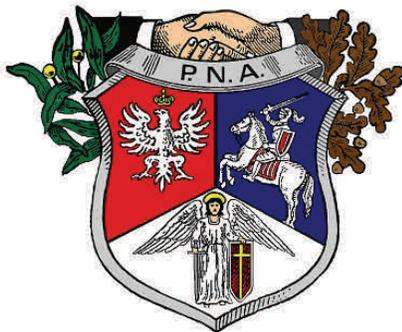
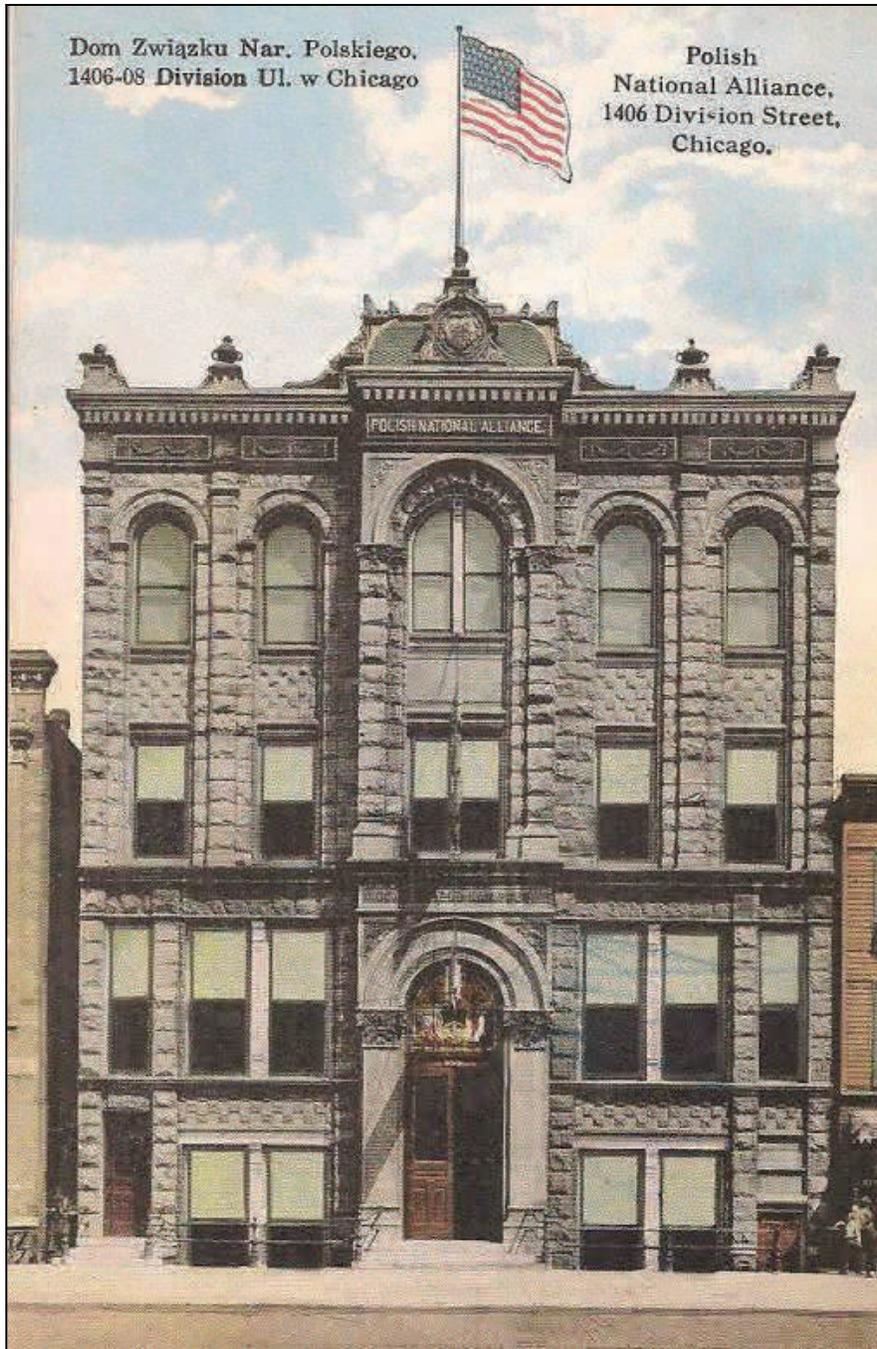
Chicago's Polish Fraternal Organizations

Chicago's Polish fraternal organizations played an enormous role in the city's immigrant Polish community. Second in importance and membership only to local Roman Catholic parishes, Polish fraternal organizations in Chicago attracted tens of thousands of local and nationwide members. As not only the economic and cultural heart of Chicago Polonia but also among the most populated and prosperous Polish American communities in the country, Polish Downtown was the birthplace and home of the majority of Chicago's Polish fraternal organizations. There were the Polish Falcons (or *Sokol*), later expanded into the Polish Falcons of America, founded in Chicago in 1887 and dedicated to the link between physical fitness and moral and spiritual purity; Nest #2 of the Polish Falcons was later headquartered at a large masonry facility at 1062 N. Ashland Ave. (extant) in Polish Downtown. The Polish Women's Alliance (PWA), founded in 1898 as a counterpart to the Polish National Alliance, was dedicated to the relief of Polish immigrants and the liberation of their Polish motherland; the PWA was housed for decades in a Georgian Revival-style structure at 1309 N. Ashland Ave. (extant). The longtime home of the Polish Welfare Association, founded in Chicago in 1922, was an Art Deco-style storefront building at 1303 N. Ashland Ave., just south of the Polish Women's Alliance. There was also the Polish Alma Mater, the Polish Businessmen's Association, the Polish Union Printers Association of Chicago, the Polish Journalists Association, the Pulaski Legion of America (formerly the Polish Military Alliance), the Polish American Democratic Organization, and dozens of other religious and social associations dedicated to fostering their own unique Polish-American identities. Almost all of these organizations were located in Chicago's Polish Downtown.

The nation's two largest and most respected Polish fraternal organizations were both based in Chicago's Polish Downtown: the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America (PRCUA) and the Polish National Alliance (PNA). The PRCUA, the country's oldest Polish fraternal organization, was founded in Detroit in 1873 to preserve both the ethnic cultural identities and devotion to the Roman Catholic faith of Polish immigrants to America. Initially a structurally loose association of small local groups, the PRCUA (in response to the growing stature of the strictly secular Polish National Alliance) soon centralized its organizational structure and relocated in 1913 to a new four-story structure at 984 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Chicago's Polish Downtown where the organization still remains today. (Its long-time headquarters building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.)

HISTORY OF THE POLISH NATIONAL ALLIANCE

The size and reach of the PRCUA was rivaled only by that of the Polish National Alliance (*Zwiazek Narodowy Polski*, or PNA). Inspired by the call of Polish revolutionary Agaton Giller (1831-1837) to build a Polish American confederation "[l]oyal to the flag of our Fatherland



Above: Chicago's first Polish National Alliance Building (now demolished) was located at 1406 W. Division St. It was completed in 1896 and occupied by the PNA until 1935.

Left: Emblem of the Polish National Alliance.



The Polish National Alliance provided an important political voice for Chicago's Polish-American community, celebrating Polish history and heritage.

Above: A 1920s demonstration of Polish National Alliance members in Humboldt Park.

Below: A view of the 1945 Polish Constitution Day Parade. In 1891, the Polish National Alliance established the city's first annual Polish Constitution Day celebration, held each year since on May 3, to commemorate the ratification of Poland's Constitution on May 3, 1791.

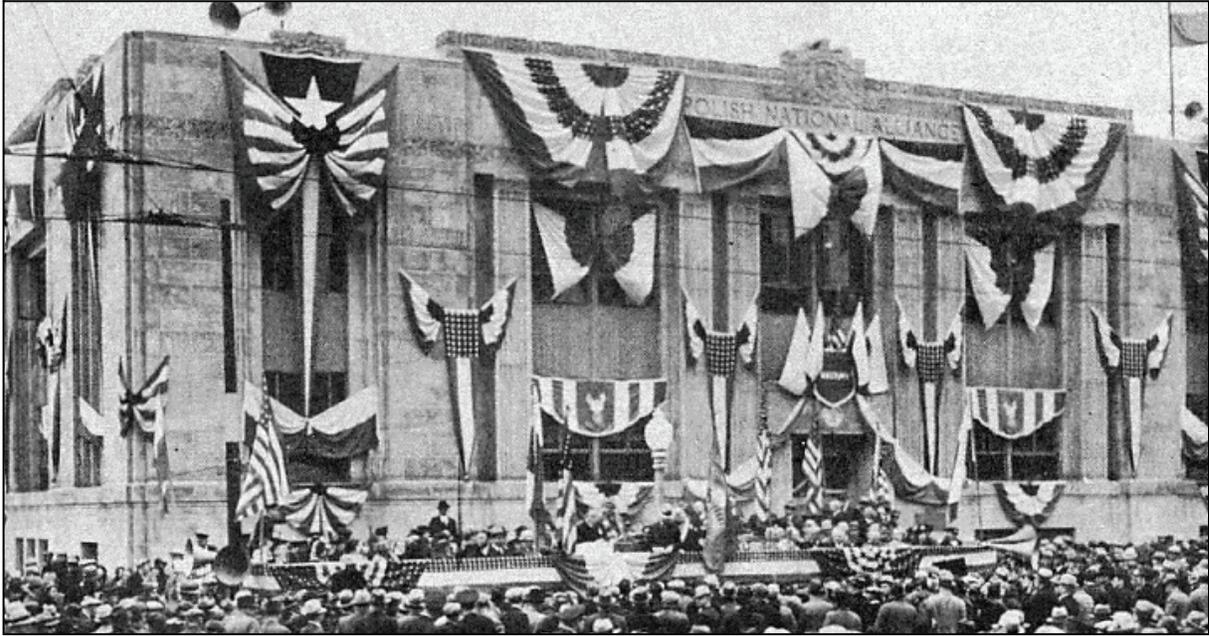
[and] loyal to the traditions and faith of your fathers,” the PNA was founded in Philadelphia on August 10, 1880. The new Alliance soon established its home in Chicago, occupying a building at Division and Noble streets in Polish Downtown. The inaugural male-only membership of nine local groups and 109 individual members soon grew by 1899 to 15,000 male members of Polish extraction. By the 1910s, the PNA had over 20,000 members, including women.

Like other ethnic fraternal organizations, the PNA was dedicated to building stability and prosperity among Polish newcomers and others in need. Immediately upon its founding, the PNA established agreements with federal immigration officials to protect Polish immigrants and to ease their transition into American life. The PNA offered low-cost insurance to its members, soon becoming one of the largest fraternal insurers in the country. From 1880 to 1937 alone, the PNA paid over \$30 million in death benefits, among the highest fraternal benefits issued in the United States at the time. The Alliance was also a substantial benefactor to local charitable organizations and supported important causes across the country and the world. The PNA offered English-language lessons, awarded scholarships to Polish youth, and even established its own institutions for higher learning, the Polish National Alliance High School and Technical Institute in Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania. Later called Alliance College, this school opened in 1912 and educated thousands of Polish-American students until it closed in 1987.

While the PNA played a key role in helping newcomers fit into their new American life, the organization also hosted programs to help Polish-Americans retain and rediscover their Polish heritage. The PNA established the first Polish Constitution Day Parade on May 3, 1891, to celebrate the centennial of Poland’s short-lived 1791 constitution. The PNA was best known for sponsoring Chicago’s first Polish language “supplementary schools,” which were weekend courses for Polish-American children to ensure that the stories, folk songs, traditional dances, and most importantly, the language of their mother country would not disappear. Beginning in 1908, the PNA established a number of supplementary or Saturday schools in Polish communities across the city, including at Polish Downtown’s Eckhart Park at Chicago Avenue and Noble Street. The PNA today continues to sponsor traditional Polish Saturday schools in Chicago and across the country.

The majority of PNA’s early members, however, believed the organization’s primary mission was to inform all Americans of the plight of occupied Poland and to support with words and funds the establishment of a free and independent Polish Republic. The PNA’s primary tool for activism was its Polish-language weekly newspaper, *Zgoda* (Harmony). By 1905, *Zgoda* maintained a nationwide circulation of 40,000 and had a substantial impact on the national discourse surrounding the future of Poland and America’s proper role in its liberation. The PNA also maintained a “National Treasury” to fund political and humanitarian efforts in Poland through which members donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to aid their stricken countrymen.

Increasing its national stature before World War I, the PNA often voiced support for American political figures while urging them to action on the issue of Poland. In 1910, the PNA assembled a “Polish Congress” of thousands of members of the PNA and other Polish American groups to travel to Washington, D.C. under the auspice of unveiling statues of American Revolutionary War heroes Thaddeus Kosciuszko and Casimir Pulaski. The unveiling ceremony led by the PNA was attended by President William Howard Taft and other government officials.



During its 38-year ownership of the W. Division St. building, the Polish National Alliance remained an important organization to Polish-Americans, both here in Chicago and nationwide.

Above: The new Polish National Alliance Building's grand opening in May 1938.

Right: The leadership of the new Polish American Congress meets at the Polish National Alliance in 1944.



Bottom: The Polish American Congress (including PNA President Charles Rozmarek at right) meets with U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the White House in 1944.



Following the ceremony, the assembled Polish Congress issued a statement asserting that “Poles have a right to a separate independent existence, and we consider it our sacred duty to strive to attain the political independence of our native land—Poland.” The Polish Congress of 1910 prompted a nationwide discussion of Poland’s political future, and elicited passionate protests from Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary.

In the years before World War I, PNA’s overtly political mission was roundly criticized by many as a potential violation of the United States’ diplomatic neutrality and as an endangerment to carefully constructed alliances with Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary. Others viewed the PNA’s devotion to the liberation of a foreign land as a betrayal of the country in which its members had resettled and prospered.

At the close of World War I, the efforts of the PNA and other activist groups were rewarded in President Woodrow Wilson’s “Fourteen Points,” his proposal for a post-war peace in Europe. Wilson’s thirteenth “point” called for “an independent Polish state . . . whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.” With the establishment of Poland’s Second Republic (1918-1939), support for the PNA soared. Membership reached 280,000 in 1937, including over 66,000 *harcerstwo*, or children’s groups, and circulation of the weekly *Zgoda* reached 200,000.

The PNA’s explosive post-World War I growth, reignited efforts to construct a new headquarters in Polish Downtown. The completion of the new headquarters at 1514-1520 W. Division ended a decade-long effort to move the PNA from its four-story facility at 1406 W. Division St., the organization’s home since 1896, to a larger, more modern structure that more clearly expressed the PNA’s importance to the Polish community. The PNA had purchased property at the northeast corner of Division and Dickson (now Bosworth) streets, just east of the Polish Triangle, in 1922 and hosted a well-publicized competition in 1924 to select an architect for the new building. The winner was Raymond M. Hood of New York, already familiar to Chicagoans as the winning architect in the Chicago Tribune Tower competition in 1922. Hood’s proposed design for the new PNA Headquarters was an imposing eight-story office block in the Classical Revival style clad in black granite and ashlar Bedford limestone and housing an auditorium, lodge halls, a library, a printing plant for the daily *Zgoda* newspaper, first-floor retail spaces, and upper-floor offices. Leadership disputes within the PNA and the onset of the Great Depression postponed the plan’s execution, and Hood’s ambitious and costly design was subsequently abandoned.

After a temporary move in 1935 to the third floor of the Home Trust Bank and Trust Company Building at 1200 N. Ashland Ave., the PNA finally moved forward with plans for a new headquarters facility on its property at Division and Bosworth. Architect Joseph A. Slupkowski’s two-story Art Deco-style design was substantially smaller than Hood’s earlier design, containing offices, a library, a reading room, a small museum, and vaults, all fully air conditioned but with no large auditorium or lodge hall. Anticipating the potential need for additional office space, the foundations of Slupkowski’s PNA Headquarters were built to accommodate two more stories, though such an addition was never built. The building was completed in 1938 for a cost of \$200,000.



During World War II and into the Cold War, the Polish National Alliance remained a strong supporter of Polish refugees in Europe and of Polish immigrants to the United States.

Top: Polish National Alliance war relief packages collected outside of the organization's former headquarters at 1406 W. Division Street. During World War II, the PNA raised \$25 million in war bonds and raised millions more to support Polish refugees in war-torn Europe.

Right: Polish American Congress and Polish National Alliance members greeting displaced Polish immigrants to Chicago, 1949.



The PNA's first year in their new headquarters coincided with the end of the Second Polish Republic and the Nazi invasion of Poland in September of 1939. Throughout the Nazi occupation of Poland and later the Soviet occupation, the PNA remained a passionate advocate for, and financial supporter of, Polish independence efforts and Polish refugees across Europe, particularly the thousands of Poles who came to America in the decade following World War II.

In its new Division Street headquarters, the PNA was a fervent supporter of Allied forces in World War II. The PNA alone raised \$25 million in war bonds, warranting the U.S. War Department to name one of its bombers the "Polish National Alliance." The PNA also raised millions to support Polish refugees in Europe, converting their former headquarters at 1406 W. Division into a Polish relief center for collecting and shipping food, clothing, and medical supplies overseas. After the war, PNA membership surged, reaching over 320,000 in 1950 and over 335,000 in 1960, with over \$100 million in organization assets.

The PNA's most significant achievement in its years at 1514-1520 W. Division was its critical role in the creation of the Polish American Congress (PAC) in 1944. Established and led for its first two decades by PNA President Charles Rozmarek (1897-1973), the PAC was formed as a federation of Polish American ethnic fraternal and cultural organizations, veterans groups, and religious congregations unified to lobby for U.S. and international intervention for Polish independence. The PAC remains today a powerful group active on issues important to Poland's political independence. Rozmarek simultaneously led both the PNA and the PAC until 1967, becoming the nation's most recognized Polish-American organizer and a formidable representative of Polish-American political and economic interests both at home and abroad. In 1944, Rozmarek along with other PNA and PAC leaders met with President Franklin Roosevelt in Washington to counsel him on the need for Polish independence. After the war, Rozmarek and the PNA were instrumental in the passage of federal legislation allowing 150,000 Polish refugees to resettle in the United States, many of them in Chicago. Many of these new citizens became active PNA members and were key to maintaining the PNA's viability in the post-war period, when many second- and third-generation Polish Americans were leaving traditionally Polish neighborhoods such as Chicago's Polish Downtown.

The PNA's building at 1514-1520 W. Division served as the PNA's national headquarters until 1976, when the organization moved to 6100 N. Cicero Ave., where it remains today. Today, the PNA remains the largest Polish fraternal organization in the nation and one of the United States' strongest supporters of Polish statehood and culture.

After its sale by the PNA, the Polish National Alliance Building became first a Social Security Administration facility, then was more recently occupied by the College of Office Technology. The building is currently vacant. It was color-coded "orange" in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey.

ART DECO-STYLE ARCHITECTURE IN CHICAGO

The Polish National Alliance Building is a handsome example of an institutional office building in the Art Deco architectural style, an important non-historic style that was popular in the Unit-

ed States in the late 1920s and 1930s. The style took its name from the *Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* held in Paris in 1925, where jewelry, clothing, furniture, and architecture displayed a futuristic-looking, Cubist- and Futurist-inspired aesthetic based on new modern materials and industrial methods of manufacture. Unlike later iterations of modernist architecture, Art Deco design lacked a strong theoretical foundation, but was instead intended to be an exuberantly-decorative style pleasing to the eye. Typified by a spare sleekness of massing and stylized geometric and foliate decorative motifs, the style was popular with the public and readily applied to a range of building types, including residential, commercial and institutional. Early 1920s-era examples of the style in Chicago include the Palmolive Building at 919 N. Michigan Ave. (1927-1929), the Chicago Board of Trade Building at 141 W. Jackson Blvd. (1930), the Chicago Motor Club Building at 68 E. Wacker Pl. (1928), the Veseman Building at 442-444 N. LaSalle St. (façade, 1930), and the Union Park Hotel at 1519 W. Warren Blvd. (1929-1930), all designated Chicago Landmarks.

Examples of the Art Deco Style built later in the 1930s, including the Polish National Alliance Building, often combine stylized ornament with Classical-style symmetry and detailing. Called by a variety of names by historians, including Modern Classicism, Classical Moderne, or WPA Moderne, such buildings combine symmetry with hard-edged massing, accented by low-relief decorative details. With the Great Depression suppressing much private and commercial construction, Chicago's most prominent 1930s Art Deco-style structures were most often government- or organization-funded institutional projects. Examples include the Lawson YMCA Building at 20-34 W. Chicago Ave. (1931); the Chicago Federation of Musicians Building at 175 W. Washington Ave. (1933, 1949 top addition); the Anti-Cruelty Society Building at 159 W. Grand Ave. (1936); Loyola University Chicago's Madonna della Strada Chapel at 1032 W. Sheridan Rd. (1938, a designated Chicago Landmark); and the Illinois National Guard Armory at 1531-1559 N. Kedzie Ave. (1940).

The Polish National Alliance Building is an excellent and well-preserved example of a small-scale 1930s Art-Deco style building. The building's relatively flat, rectangular façades and sharply-delineated massing place an emphasis on rectilinear rather than curvilinear forms. Deeply-recessed windows and metal spandrel panels create a strong vertical emphasis. Geometric limestone ornament, including chevrons, sunbursts, and abstracted floral motifs, form a continuous decorative band above second-story windows, accentuate the stepped parapet and further emphasize the building's visually-distinctive architectural forms.

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 final recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object with the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of historic integrity to convey its significance.



In addition to the Polish National Alliance Building, other examples of 1930s Art Deco-style architecture in Chicago include: (top left) the Lawson YMCA Building (1931) at Chicago Ave. and Dearborn St.; (top right) the Field Building at 135 S. LaSalle St. (1934, a designated Chicago Landmark); (middle) Madonna della Strada Chapel, Loyola University Chicago (1938, a designated Chicago Landmark); and (bottom) the Illinois National Guard Armory (1940) at 1531-1559 N. Kedzie Ave.



The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Polish National Alliance Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: 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.

- The Polish National Alliance Building served as the headquarters for the Polish National Alliance (PNA), the nation’s largest Polish-American fraternal organization, from 1938 to 1974. The PNA historically was among Chicago’s largest and most influential Polish-American organizations and played a major role in the cultural and political life of Chicago Polonia,” or the large Polish-American community of immigrants and their descendants. The PNA remains today an important social organization for this community.
- The Polish National Alliance Building exemplifies the historic importance of Chicago’s Polish-American community and the “Polish Downtown” area on Chicago’s Northwest Side. One of the city’s largest ethnic-European groups, Polish immigrants settled in a number of Chicago neighborhoods, most prominently the neighborhoods surrounding the Polish Downtown, which was centered on the intersection of N. Milwaukee Ave., W. Division St., and N. Ashland Ave.
- During the 38-year period of its ownership and occupancy of the Polish National Alliance Building, from 1938 to 1974, the Polish National Alliance (PNA) was one of the United States’ most active organizations in support of the movement to re-establish a free and independent Poland. The PNA played a pivotal part in the 1944 founding of the Polish American Congress (PAC), an important partnership of ethnic-Polish organizations that advocated for and eventually played an important role in the establishment of a democratic Poland after the collapse of the country’s Communist dictatorship in 1989.

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 Polish National Alliance Building is an excellent and well-preserved example of an ethnic fraternal organization building, an building type important to the cultural and political development of Chicago’s immigrant neighborhoods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- The building is a handsome and finely-crafted 1930s-era, Art Deco-style institutional office building, exemplifying the style with its symmetry, hard-edged massing, and ornament combining traditional motives with non-historic geometric and floral details.
- The building’s use of materials, including gray Indiana limestone walls and decoration and ornamental-metal spandrels, is distinguished by its overall quality of design, detailing and craftsmanship.

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, architectural, or aesthetic value.

The Polish National Alliance Building retains very good physical integrity on its exterior, displayed through its historic location, overall design, historic materials, details and ornamentation. The building retains its historic gray limestone street elevations and common-brick side and rear walls.

Changes to the building are relatively minor and do not impact the building's historic and architectural significance. The most important changes to the building's exterior is the replacement of original window sash on street elevations with replacement sash and the addition of a non-historic electric sign at its southwest corner.

Despite these changes, the Polish National Alliance Building retains its ability to express its architectural and historical values as a significant Art Deco-style office building built for a leading Chicago ethnic fraternal organization. The building represents the important history of the Polish-American community of Chicago in general, and the Polish Downtown in particular. The building's historic integrity is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express such values.

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 the most important to preserve the historic and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its evaluation of the Polish National Alliance Building, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as:

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

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Joseph A. Slupkowski (1884-1951), architect of the Polish National Alliance Building, designed numerous structures for Chicago's Polish-Catholic community, including the St. Joseph Home of Chicago (top), Holy Trinity School (middle left), and the Francis Gordon Gymnasium (middle right). His 1930s works included St. Francis Friary in Burlington, Wisconsin (bottom).





Above: A c.1960 view of the Polish National Alliance Building

Below: Delivery trucks for the Polish Daily Zgoda, published by the Polish National Alliance, parked outside the headquarters building in 1946.



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