

1896-97

ALTGELD HALL, THE ORIGINAL LIBRARY BUILDING  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS: ITS HISTORY,  
ARCHITECTURE AND ART

(murals 1898-98)

BY

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THESIS

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY  
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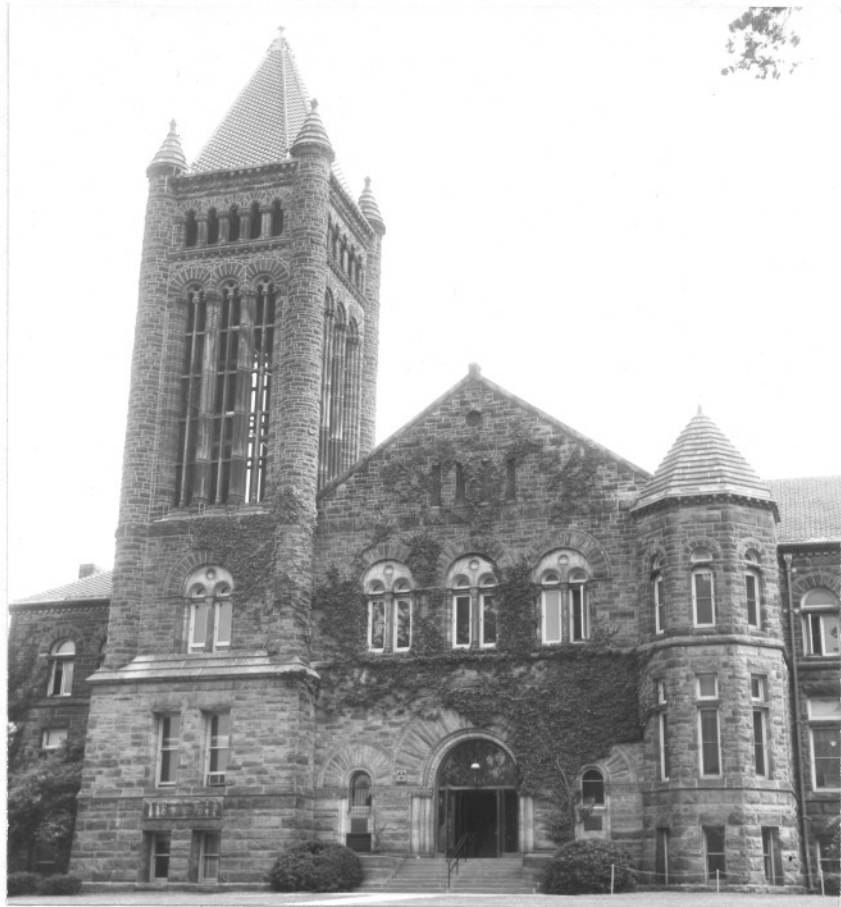
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1. Altgeld Hall  
1897

## INTRODUCTION

Among the many who will examine the building today are doubtless, mechanics capable to judge the workmanship. I hope they will examine it critically, for it will bear it. We, who have watched the building, from day to day, from beginning to end, take pleasure in assuring our friends that it is thoroughly built, that it is just as solid and substantial as it looks, and that the State has received a full equivalent for every dollar put into it.

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<sup>1</sup> 19th Report (1898), 139. James M. White was speaking for himself and senior architect Nathan C. Ricker, at the dedication ceremony, June 8, 1897. The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois published Reports, herein cited as Report, preceded by volume number and followed by year of publication.

The story of the original library building, now known as Altgeld Hall, goes beyond Trustees' reports or an analysis of its architectural design, for forgotten letters and clippings in brittle scrapbooks yield evidence that the men who participated in the initial planning and budgeting stages were also responsible in their way for its style. They groped and vacillated but were determined to have an impressive, enduring monument. Surely the building's rugged and formidable appearance expresses that resolve.

When Andrew Sloan Draper was inaugurated<sup>in 1894</sup> as University President, Governor John Peter Altgeld spoke of their shared ideals. They wanted an institution, he declared,

which shall be free from the dillettantism that is weakening the East, and that shall inculcate those fundamental principles of liberty, of national union and supremacy, and of local self-government that have given our country its marvelous career of progress and development. We want an institution that shall be thoroughly modern in spirit and effort, and from whose halls shall go forth men and women of such strong moral fiber, such industry and such fervor of soul, that they will lead our people on to loftier planes and greater glory. We must have in this State a university that all the people in the world may be blessed by its light. We must have<sup>1</sup> a university whose fame shall be co-extensive with civilization.

Altgeld saw the University as "modern in spirit," but in a continuum of established traditions, a theme reiterated often by the

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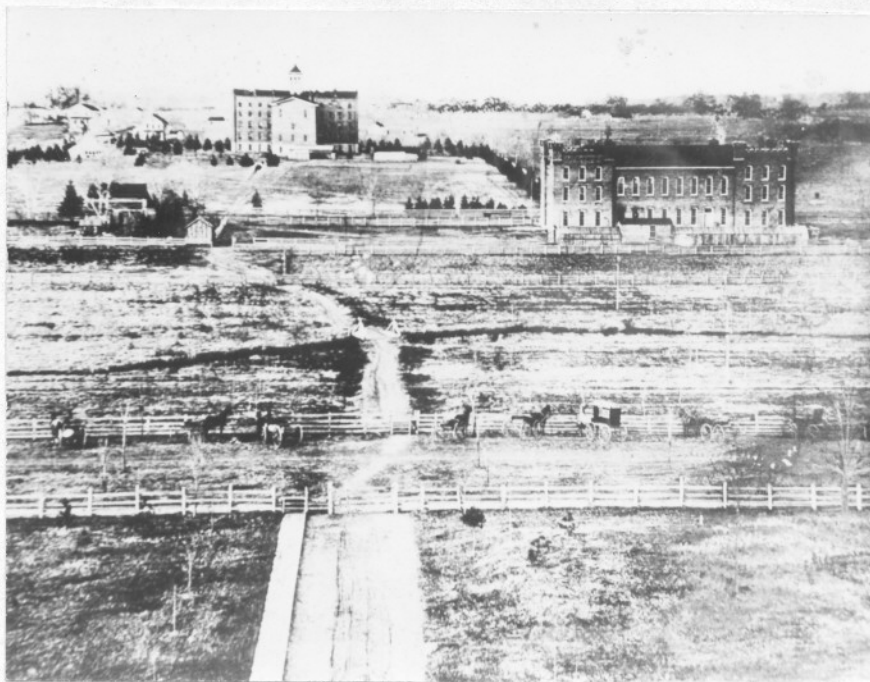
<sup>1</sup> John P. Altgeld, "Address," Proceedings and Addresses at the Inauguration of Andrew Sloan Draper, Nov. 15, 1894 (Urbana, 1895), 23. See fn p.6

architects and artist. Ricker and White were satisfied that the new building was "solid and substantial," and Newton A. Wells remarked that his decorations were meant to create an atmosphere of historical association, "so that those entering these halls should feel [that] the spirit of the mighty past was brooding here and inspiring to the emulation of its noblest achievement."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Champaign County News, Mar. 17, 1900.





2. Campus, 1874

## I. PHENOMENAL GROWTH

### Appropriations and Status

In the "flattest, plainest, most monotonous section of Illinois"<sup>1</sup> the two rural communities of Champaign and Urbana offered the new state University--on condition that it be located in Urbana--970 acres of farmland, \$100,000 in county bonds, a building worth \$75,500 (Ill. 12), and \$2000 in shrubbery and trees. Legislative investigators recommended the site, reporting that the countryside was unsurpassed "for the beauty of the landscape, the richness and variety of its soil . . . [and] groves of fine timber and streams of pure water." At best,

<sup>1</sup> Allan Nevins, Illinois (Urbana, 1917), 41.

<sup>2</sup> The original building, called "The Elephant," is illustrated on page 95.

the description was an exaggeration. Possibly the Committee's vision had been blurred by too many quail dinners, oyster suppers and light refreshments graciously furnished by Twin-City promoters, yet it must be recognized that the building and the sizeable tract of land were realistic inducements. The prairie was, after all, an appropriate place to locate an agricultural school, and on March 2, 1868, the Illinois Industrial University opened--in Urbana.<sup>1</sup>

Because the appellation "Industrial" was resented by some graduates and misunderstood by the public, the institution was renamed the University of Illinois in 1885; the change created an uproar and some charged the academicians with "robbing the people of a labor school, un-American pandering to a false pride."<sup>2</sup> But derision turned to respect as evidence of accomplishment and scholarship was manifested. At first, seventy-seven students and four faculty members had 1,092 books and just one building; the figures were virtually the same for some twenty-five years, but then, in 1895-96, we find 855 students, eighty-four faculty members, some 28,000 volumes, and nine buildings. And the income had multiplied over eight times to \$594,938.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Winton U. Solberg, The University of Illinois, 1867-1894 (Chicago, 1968), 76-79; "Report of Joint Select Committee to Visit Champaign County," Illinois Reports (1865) I, 319-20, quoted in Solberg, 71. The first University seal was inscribed with the motto "Onward and Upward," and "Farmers and Mechanics." 1st Report (1868), 29.

<sup>2</sup> Illini Years: A Picture History of the University of Illinois 1868-1950 (Urbana, 1950), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Nevins, 359.



The question that might be asked is what caused such phenomenal growth?

<sup>Two</sup>  
~~The~~ knowledgeable men of differing political views assumed their prestigious public offices at about the same time: John Peter Altgeld ~~was~~ inaugurated Governor in January of 1893, and Andrew Sloan Draper formally installed as University President, November 1894. They were forty-six years old, both ~~primarily~~ lawyers and administrators, not scholars; neither was a political newcomer. So purposefully did they work, that we can trace the University's transformation from a small school to an influential educational power to their tenure.

A pattern of increased state appropriations was established from that time on. Although the legislators had not been disposed to give money for the "professors" to spend, Altgeld manipulated and forced greater financial support each year. Profoundly motivated by the democratic idea that all deserving students have equal opportunities for a good education,<sup>1</sup> Altgeld was almost always available to aid the young school. Years later, President Draper wrote that the Governor "stood by the University in the hour of her first great growth and of her imperative need; he exerted the powers of his great office in her behalf to

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<sup>1</sup> Altgeld knew what it meant to struggle for an education. Brought to America as an infant by impoverished and illiterate German parents, ~~and having~~ ~~he had~~ little opportunity for formal schooling, he worked as an unskilled laborer, as school teacher, and ultimately was able to study law.

the very limits; and while all the friends of that University, now grown great, may dissent with some of his opinions, no one of them is at liberty to speak unkindly of him."<sup>1</sup>

Altgeld's concern did not remain only at the political-financial level, but as we shall soon see, moved into the arena of architectural choice as well. With the most honorable of intentions, involvement bordered on interference.

### The Campus

Aesthetic concerns were of little consequence to those charged with establishing the new school, and the campus developed without a uniform style or cohesive plan. From its very beginnings the University's architecture had been in the mainstream of mid-nineteenth century building practice, that of deliberately borrowing and reviving traditional schemes to effect--much of the time--grandiose structures that are best described as genuinely eclectic. <sup>①</sup> In order to place the original library building, designed by Nathan C. Ricker and James M. White in 1896, in its historical context, it seems appropriate to detail briefly Illinois' earlier campus growth,<sup>2</sup> as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Sloan Draper, "Governor Altgeld and the University of Illinois," Alumni Quarterly, VII (April, 1913), 82. His account is so relevant and interesting, that a long excerpt is in Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> Existing earlier buildings are identified in an aerial view of the campus (Ill. 124).

<sup>(1862)</sup>  
~~The Original Building, called the "Elephant," ~~erected in 1862~~~~

<sup>rose</sup>  
 (Ill. 12).<sup>1</sup> Rising above a bleak and dusty prairie dotted with farm  
<sup>at the north end of campus,</sup>  
 houses, the Illinois Industrial University inherited <sup>an</sup> ~~this~~ abandoned  
<sup>called the "Elephant" (1862)</sup>  
 seminary building, from the Urbana-Champaign Institute in 1867. (Ill. 12) The  
<sup>founders thought it</sup>  
 "Beautiful in its architectural proportions and very imposing in its  
 appearance," <sup>and had it</sup> ~~the structure was~~ repaired, remodeled and landscaped,  
 and opened to students the following year. ~~Located at the north end of~~  
~~the present Illini Field,~~ <sup>Illinois</sup> It housed dormitories, classrooms, chapel  
 and club rooms for more than one hundred students. <sup>but unfortunately, a</sup> ~~Unhappily, a~~  
<sup>the</sup>  
 fierce windstorm wrecked ~~this~~ historic edifice in 1880.

~~The Mechanical Building and Drill Hall, 1872 (Ill. 13).~~ Battle-  
 ments and machicolations capped many buildings of that generation.  
<sup>The Mechanical Bldg + Drill Hall, a</sup>  
~~This~~ castellated brick fortress, <sup>designed by John Mills Van Osdel</sup> <sup>2</sup> 1872, (Ill. 13),  
 served as gymnasium, armory, materials testing and hydraulic labora-  
 tory, and in the Gallery, as setting for commencement exercises. Fire  
 caused its destruction in 1900.

~~University Hall, 1873 (Ill. 14).~~ Van Osdel's picturesque

<sup>1</sup> "Report of Joint Select Committee to Visit Champaign County,"  
Illinois Reports (1865), I, 319-320, quoted in Solberg, 71.

<sup>2</sup> John Mills Van Osdel (1811-1891), the first architect to practice  
 "in Chicago or the west," served as a member of Illinois' original  
 Board of Trustees. Frank Randall, History of the Development of  
Building Construction in Chicago (Urbana, 1949), 24.

University Hall (1873, <sup>Ill. 14</sup>)  
 Victorian building boasted two towers, one for clocks, the other for bells.<sup>1</sup> The chapel, library, art gallery, and museums of natural history, and engineering and architecture--as well as classrooms and offices--were contained in this spacious structure which was recognized as the University <sup>symbol</sup> ~~trademark~~ for many years. Measures taken to secure the building by combating termites, decayed wood, crumbling of brickwork, and even bracing of the rickety towers, failed. After a ceiling collapsed in 1938, the building met its demise. The Illini Union was erected on its site.

Traffic signals were unnecessary on the campus in 1874 (Ill. 2). University Hall's high windows provided a good vantage point to photograph Green Street, Springfield Avenue, the Boneyard Creek, the original Institute Building, and the Drill Hall. <sup>T</sup>the cow path is now Burrill Avenue. Cattle and pigs were kept away by fences and the campus was often so marshy that students and faculty had to wear galoshes to cross.

The Chemistry Building (1878, <sup>Ill. 15</sup>)  
 currently Harker Hall, was a work of Nathan C. Ricker (~~Ill. 15~~). Prominently featured were patterned shingles in its mansard roof, stone arches contrasting with the brick, and columned porticoes; it was strikingly reminiscent of the McCormick House on Rush Street, Chicago, 1873. Early-twentieth century

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<sup>1</sup> The design met with such approval by University of Arkansas planners, that they purchased the specifications and built a replica, inside and out; it still stands at Fayetteville.

remodeling (Ill. 16) altered the building's character by removing exterior staircases and columns, transforming the front entrance, and changing the roof. The old one had been destroyed by fire.

The Old Armory (1890, <sup>Ill. 17</sup>) presently called Gymnasium Annex, <sup>was another</sup> (Ill. 17). Ricker designed this building too. When erected, the new "military building" was described as "100 by 150 feet in one grand hall . . . <sup>[with]</sup> ample space for company and battalion maneuvers, and for large audiences upon special occasions."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>9</sup>In the Natural History Building (1892, <sup>Ill. 18</sup>), Ricker used pointed arches in the roof, and horizontal trim around the first two floors; the design is a simplified version of the Old Art Museum, Boston, 1872-75. To secure greater fire resistance, cast iron beams, columns and walls were utilized, the first such construction at the University.<sup>2</sup>

Engineering Hall, 1894 (Ill. 19). Engineering enrollment had been increasing at the rate of 25 percent each year and a new building was urgently needed.<sup>3</sup> After a competition of University alumni, George M. Bullard, class of '82, was appointed architect.<sup>4</sup> The contest rules stated that the "exterior design will be left to the competitors . . . and

<sup>1</sup> 15th Report (1890), 182.

<sup>2</sup> 16th Report (1892), 99.

<sup>3</sup> Ira O. Baker and Everett E. King, A History of the College of Engineering at the University of Illinois (Urbana, 1918), 141.

<sup>4</sup> An interesting coincidence ought be noted: prize-winner Bullard was the brother of the President of the University's Board of Trustees, Sam Bullard, who was an architect.

that the committee expresses preference for a design with a tower,"<sup>1</sup>  
 but he created a simple--and undistinguished--structure of pressed  
 brick faced with terra-cotta slabs and limestone trimming.

~~The Astronomical Observatory, 1896 (Ill. 20).~~ <sup>The small,</sup> Unadorned and  
~~Astronomical Observatory of 1896 (Ill. 20)~~ functional, ~~this small building~~ commanded "as good a horizon as can  
 be had in the neighborhood." The dome revolved on trucks rolling on  
 a circular rail, and was turned by hand with a rope and sheave.<sup>2</sup>

Almost thirty years had passed since the University of Illinois  
 was established, and during that time apparently only minimal official  
 attention had been given landscape and architectural design. But as  
 the University established its reputation and the need for space became  
 more urgent, aesthetic requirements were considered along with those  
 of function. No architectural historian was needed to catalogue the  
 effects of prairie windstorms, fires, termites and inferior materials,  
 and when the time came to plan for the new library, the pragmatic Trus-  
 tees had every intention of making that important building "more per-  
 manent and artistic than any other of the University group."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 17th Report (1894), 131. Draper assumed his presidency soon  
 after the completion of Engineering Hall; the tower which the Trustees  
 wanted, materialized with the construction of the library building three  
 years later.

<sup>2</sup> G. W. Myers, "The Astronomical Observatory," Technograph,  
 XI, (1897-98), 106-107.

<sup>3</sup> Illini, Mar. 14, 1900.



3. University Hall,  
library



## II. PLANNERS

With the University's rapid growth, overcrowding became a general campus complaint and demands for expanded library facilities intensified. The library wing of University Hall contained not only the library (Ill. 3), but museums of industrial art, of natural history, and an art gallery. The reading room, intended to supplement classroom instruction, was open "throughout the day for study, reading and consulting authorities."<sup>1</sup> The faculty voted--on February 24, 1892--for engineering, library, and museum buildings, "the order not to imply preference, all being considered absolutely necessary."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>15th Report (1890), 182, 186.

<sup>2</sup>17th Report (1894), 53.



Several months later, Nathan C. Ricker outlined, as requested, general plans and requirements for the buildings, and the Trustees voted that construction be commenced as soon as possible.<sup>1</sup> At the next meeting, the Committee on Buildings and Grounds recommended that appropriations be given for museum and engineering structures but the library was not mentioned.<sup>2</sup>

Students continued to grumble about conditions in the dark and cramped University Hall library, with its piled up, often inaccessible books, and the faculty recommended--since funds seemed to be limited--that the engineering and library buildings be constructed first.<sup>3</sup>

Urgency notwithstanding, not much was said or done for almost two years. Professor C. M. Moss submitted a bitter letter to the Board asking to be relieved of his post as librarian--a job given without his knowledge until he was actually appointed. He cited archaic restrictions in purchasing books, an irrational cataloguing system, and inadequate appropriations. Prevailing space limitations were most emphatically stressed:

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<sup>1</sup>16th Report (1892), 255-256.      <sup>2</sup>17th Report (1894), 31-32.

<sup>3</sup>Illini, Sept. 27, 1894; 17th Report (1894), 154.

The urgent need for more room is apparent. The incongruity of having 100 or more students studying, conversing, and reading in the same room is also apparent. It has been impossible to preserve quiet in the room, and inadvisable to attempt it. Our shelves are full. . . . We need, and need now, a new, modern building, with all appliances for this vital part of our University work. Upon this probably every member of the faculty is agreed, and that it is our foremost need in the way of buildings.

After still another year, the Trustees finally adopted a resolution that the state appropriate \$150,000 for a new library building--the existing one was inadequate in size and not fireproof, they acknowledged--and that the Committee on Buildings and Grounds immediately consider its erection. They further authorized a \$1200 competitive prize for its design.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent events, however, indicate that the style of this important building was not determined on the architect's drawing board alone.

University officials began to plan for the new building, and imbued with the idea that it ought to be a particularly distinctive structure, President Draper and Colonel Richard P. Morgan,<sup>3</sup> chairman of

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<sup>1</sup> 17th Report (1894), 250-251.

<sup>2</sup> 18th Report (1896), 113-114. The allotment of \$150,000 constituted a considerable sum and the architects kept the cost to "within one hundred dollars of the original appropriation." 19th Report (1898), 138.

<sup>3</sup> Board member Morgan's qualifications were really to be tested; he billed himself "Civil Engineer and Railway Expert," on his stationery. State Archives, Springfield. *[Find more accurate identification of Morgan, e.g. from published sources.]*

the Building Committee, visited Chicago and Minneapolis to personally acquire practical knowledge of other library buildings. Draper was a stern and exacting organizer, "of broad vision, remarkably free from prejudice. . . . If a building was to be erected, he wished the plans perfected, the materials ready, the ground surveyed, and the money appropriated before earth was turned."<sup>1</sup>

Invitations were issued to architects to enter into competition, with the only definite stipulation that the building be fireproof throughout.<sup>2</sup> Several months later, the jury reported that its search for a design that was "noble, dignified and strong, yet quiet and reposeful and free from pretentiousness and show" was fulfilled by an "especially commendable" project titled "Via Veritas Vita," and awarded it first prize (Ill. 21). The Committee met with the winner, Edward G. Bolles--a young man from Springfield--and asked that he supervise the construction, but he declared himself inexperienced in that respect and introduced a partner who had been a "practical constructor." But the Committee did not favor such an arrangement and abruptly terminated the interview. That evening they called on the Governor and unanimously voted to reject all the competition entries, and to call on a prominently

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<sup>1</sup> Nevins, 154.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 162.

known architect instead.<sup>1</sup>

The distinguished Chicago firm of D. H. Burnham was called upon, and accepted the challenge. Morgan wrote to Burnham: Governor Altgeld "has manifested a decided interest in regard to the character of this building . . . and also has a preference in regard to the exterior lines."<sup>2</sup>

Draper's letters hint at some of the problems he might have then been experiencing:

. . . I am glad indeed to learn of the employment of D. H. Burnham and Company in connection with the new library building. I am sure it is not only above criticism but that it will be a complete answer to any gossip which may have started, and that it will meet the approval of the people of the State. . . .<sup>3</sup>

The Governor does not seem to be having his way in the matter of the plans and I feel<sup>4</sup> sure that in the end his way will prove to be a good way.

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<sup>1</sup> 18th Report (1896), 190-191; Illini, Sept. 27, 1895. Bolles held the title "Prizewinner" for a mere two weeks, but received his award. After the negotiations with the next architect were completed, Draper wrote: "I think this is the most satisfactory outcome of the whole matter. I am not at all certain that the \$1200 which we paid for plans will be wasted, and I feel sure that under such a management we will get a much better building. . . ." Draper to Armstrong, Oct. 4, 1895. Unless otherwise noted, unpublished materials are located in the University Archives.

<sup>2</sup> 18th Report (1896), 191.

<sup>3</sup> Draper to Morgan, Oct. 3, 1895.

<sup>4</sup> Draper to Smith, Oct. 7, 1895.

[Burnham's sketches] were without merit. . . . So we told him what we wanted and he made very copious notes . . . in the course of the day he several times remarked that he was becoming more and more convinced that the Governor's style of architecture was not suited to this building . . . and that he would see the Governor about it.<sup>1</sup>

Daniel H. Burnham was not to be trifled with. He had served as powerful chief architect at the Chicago Fair in 1893 and headed an architectural firm that "had probably the largest practice in the United States . . . and prestige that was unchallenged and invaluable."<sup>2</sup>

Colonel Morgan attempted to placate Burnham: "Whatever may have been said to you by this committee in regard to any plan for the library building . . . you will kindly accept as suggestive only, because the design is to be yours"; but demonstrating relentless perseverance, Morgan added, "While this is true, and perhaps you may not be able to concur with the suggestions which have been made as the result of a recent conference between Governor Altgeld and the sub-committee, still it is to be suggested that the design last suggested to you by the Governor will be as completely and carefully perfected in every respect for presentation to the Trustees as your

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<sup>1</sup> Draper to Morgan, Oct. 15, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas E. Tallmadge, The Story of Architecture in America (Chicago, 1927), 198.

own design, should you present an alternative."<sup>1</sup>

The Building Committee tersely announced that Burnham would present "perfect designs" on December 11.<sup>2</sup> Unable to attend that crucial meeting, the imperious Governor sent two communications to Draper: a letter, December 9. Reminding him of his architectural preference, the Tudor-Gothic with towers, he left no room for doubt. "Mr. Burnham will present another plan of a low building, with no towers, for a library. While I do not wish to influence the board [emphasis mine] on this question, I do feel very strongly that this is not the style of building we want and need at the University at present." And the next day, Altgeld dispatched a telegram: "Impossible for me to come there today. Did you get my letter of yesterday? Please answer."<sup>3</sup>

With "regret" the Board found itself "unable to approve the design in the style of architecture most admired by Governor Altgeld "because the cost estimates for the Gothic plan were considerably higher than the

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<sup>1</sup>18th Report (1896), 194.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 198. The Governor engineered the gloomy castle on the Rhine that still guards administrative personnel at Eastern Illinois University; it lacks only a portcullis and moat (Ill. 22). What is most astonishing is that Altgeld fought the Urbana and Charleston battles at virtually the same moment. Eastern Illinois' Trustees had tentatively engaged an Indianapolis firm on October 5, 1895; two days later, Altgeld intervened and had the plans cancelled--and that was just after he had had Urbana's prizewinner scrapped. Another idea was offered and that too was rejected. Finally another firm, from Bloomington, was favored with the contract. History of Eastern Illinois University (Charleston, n. d.), 27.

budget allowed, and since eight of the ten Board members voted for the Grecian design" on the ground that it was more attractive and appropriate to modern educational uses, and particularly to library purposes than the Tudor design."<sup>1</sup> Undaunted, Altgeld called a special session, but Burnham, probably weary of downstate bickering and indecision, unexpectedly resigned.

And so it was resolved--on a motion of John Peter Altgeld--that the University's own architectural staff be asked to present designs for the library building. Professors Ricker and White promised and produced, in less than thirty days, four sketches and cost estimates, and on February 4, 1896, their Romanesque plan was found acceptable to all--including the highest official in the State of Illinois.<sup>2</sup>

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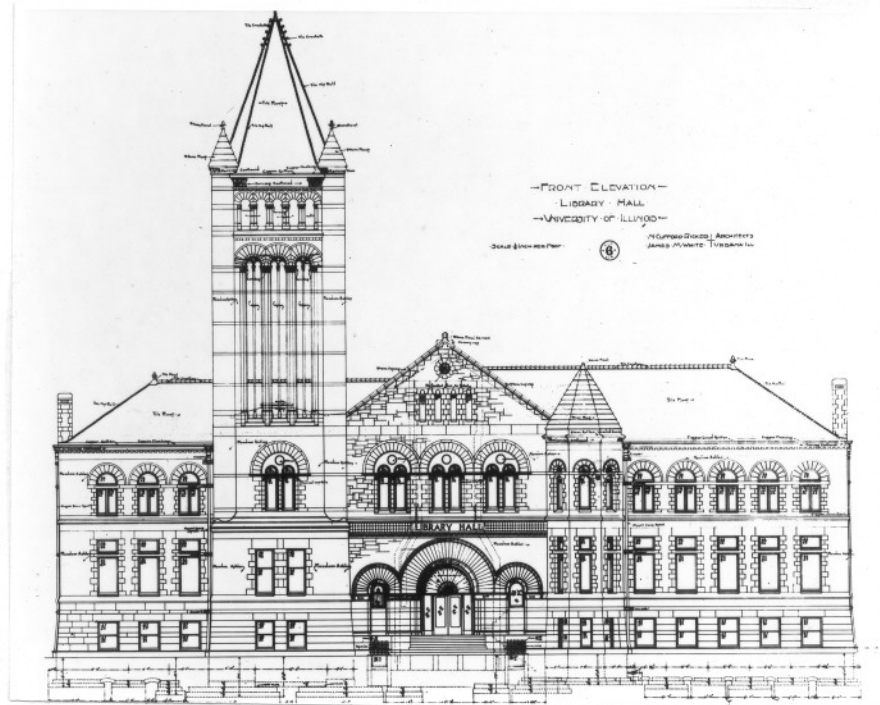
<sup>1</sup> 18th Report (1896), 198-200.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 233. Draper exaggerated when recalling the affair: ". . . after the most famous architects of the United States had failed to present satisfactory plans, the matter was turned over to the dean of the architecture department, Ricker." Chicago Tribune, Mar. 14, 1900. The Governor's architectural predilections were recalled by Draper some seventeen years later: "It is true that he had a zeal and an outlook which made us some troubles. He was bound to put a German castellated style of architecture upon all the buildings in the State in his administration, and did not propose to let our library building escape. He telegraphed me asking me to come to his house by the next train. I feared the Tudor architecture and had occasion to. He had a book full of it and argued that it was economical and attractive. I urged that the motif and essence of that architecture was military defense, not education and generosity: it would do for an armory but not for a library. . . . Mr. Burnham made some designs which the Governor did not like and which led to a row between the two and happily put an end to the Governor's kind of architecture at the University. Other institutions were less fortunate." Andrew S. Draper, "Governor Altgeld and the University of Illinois," Alumni Quarterly, VII (April, 1913), 80-81. For Altgeld's views on architecture, see Appendix B.



4. Ricker and White:  
Library Hall,  
front elevation

1896



### III. ARCHITECTS

#### Eclecticism

Reflecting Victorian taste for nostalgia and sentiment, American builders at first deliberately resurrected a variety of old architectural forms to arouse symbolic and spiritual associations; soul elevating requirements tended to supersede considerations of practicality and taste. Because edifices were meant to convey a sense of timelessness and permanence, the nineteenth century saw a continuing succession of historical styles--many <sup>unintentionally</sup> ~~unintentionally~~ parodying their original models. Roman rotundas were followed by Greek temples,

and by about 1850, both classical types were displaced by medieval assemblages called Victorian-Gothic.

Eclecticism became an American standard. A point had been reached, Lewis Mumford thought, "at which disorder had resulted in almost physical brutality, and ugliness conducted a constant assault and battery wherever one turned one's eye."<sup>1</sup> That may be true, but Alan Gowans reminds us that High Victorian tastemakers called themselves eclectics" and were proud of it. When McGuffey titled his most famous work The Eclectic Reader, for instance, he meant it as an advertisement; he meant that he had 'drawn from the best'--literature in this case--of the past, and made something modern, something recognizably belonging to his own time, out of it."<sup>2</sup>

American architecture was to take still another direction under the leadership of Henry Hobson Richardson. After graduating from Harvard in 1859, Richardson traveled in Europe and for five years studied at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. He wrote his fiancée that he preferred to stay that long rather than "return to America a second rate architect. Our country is overrun with them just now. I will never practice until I can do my art justice."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Mumford, The South in Architecture (New York, 1941), 92.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Gowans, Images of American Living (Philadelphia, 1964), 383-84.

<sup>3</sup> Wayne Andrews, Architecture, Ambition and Americans (New York, 1955), 159.

Richardson established the prototype for Romanesque revival architecture in the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In using older models--not merely as an archeologist or copyist--he transformed them into intelligent and personal adaptations (Ills. 29-30); his approach was both scholarly and aesthetic. Oliver Larkin has written that this influential architect derived from a deeper source: "He was a child of the age of masonry and he used masonry to symbolize the strength and self-reliance which were in his grain and in the American grain. . . . He was a craftsman who responded to the texture of brick and the color of sandstone as he responded to food and drink."<sup>1</sup> While many domestic dwellings tended to cling to the jigsawed and shingled Queen Anne style, it was not long before grandly conceived Romanesque edifices multiplied and quickly dominated the South, New England (with the exception of New York City), and the Midwest for some fifteen years; Chicago especially favored the style and architects adapted its forms to fulfill the requirements of commercial buildings.

At the time of Richardson's death in 1886, knowledgeable Americans were tiring of the fashionable and often badly designed, remotely-Romanesque; they seemed ready for a change. The invention of the high speed elevator and then the skeleton iron frame in 1887 revolutionized architecture by making the skyscraper possible. An emphasis

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<sup>1</sup> Oliver Larkin, Art and Life in America (New York, 1949), 285.

on rugged stone was the essence of Romanesque, but with the new skeleton steel construction, heavy solid masonry walls were unnecessary. The time had come for worn counterfeit modes to be replaced by fresh forms.

Probably responsible for another decade of the derivative and imitative was the huge World's Columbian Exposition that dominated Chicago in 1893; Frank Lloyd Wright observed that it

became the occasion of modern architecture's grand relapse. The nature of man was there reduced to the level of a clever trained animal. Architecture contrived as a hackneyed ruse to cheat modern life of its divine due instead of serving to glorify it.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate, after 1893, as more universities established schools of architecture and travel to Europe became more commonplace, the Beaux Arts influence continued, affecting buildings such as the "Italian Renaissance" Boston Public Library, and the "Classical Roman" New York Public Library. Through it all, the Romanesque tenaciously persisted.

Ricker and White

Mid-nineteenth century architects--practical constructors--probably would have difficulty obtaining a license to practice now; the first president of the American Institute of Architects, founded

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<sup>1</sup> Frank L. Wright, Writings and Buildings (Cleveland, 1960), 33.

in 1857, never went to college.<sup>1</sup> Few builders travelled abroad or had access to great reference libraries, and styles and details were obtained mostly from pattern books, architectural journals and building manuals. The first schools of architecture in the United States were established after the Civil War: at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1865, and at the University of Illinois in 1868.<sup>2</sup> Illinois' architectural students were expected to be masters of practical problems. In a speech delivered in 1885, Selim Peabody observed that "their lessons are the work of the carpenter, the joiner, the cabinet maker, the turner and all the practical details of the Builder's art. Precision of measurement, accuracy of fit, perfection in detail, are all points insisted on. Complete mastery of the tools is demanded and secured."<sup>3</sup>

Nathan C. Ricker headed Illinois' architecture department from 1873 to 1910 and was Dean of the College of Engineering from 1878 to 1906; several University buildings were designed by him as well, but his contribution to the development of architecture extended beyond Urbana. Ricker's career ought "not be allowed to fall into oblivion.

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<sup>1</sup> John Maess, The Gingerbread Age (New York, 1957), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Turpin C. Bannister, The Architect at Mid Century (New York, 1954), 97.

<sup>3</sup> Selim H. Peabody, "Address," Dec. 28, 1885, 19.

. . . [his] appreciation for the history and literature of architecture as well as its ethical and informed practice helped to set the standard for architectural education in the Middle West."<sup>1</sup>

In the planning of the Library, Ricker wrote that he had associated James McLaren White<sup>'90</sup> with himself as "equal partner," and that they had employed several students and graduates for "designing and superintending its erection. So that with the sole exception of the mosaics in the entrance hall, the entire work is the product of the Department of Architecture."<sup>2</sup> White was only twenty-eight then and had just returned from a year of study abroad; he could not have been an "equal" partner; it would be more accurate to say that they divided the work. He seemed to have been occupied with the decorative aspects of the design, issuing informative progress reports to the public, and corresponding with the artist, Newton A. Wells.

Another young architectural graduate, Grant C. Miller '94, was probably responsible for some of the ornamental motifs. His long and scholarly article, "Romanesque Architecture," had just been published

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<sup>1</sup> Mark L. Peisch, The Chicago School of Architecture: Early Followers of Richardson and Wright (New York, 1964), 16. Additional notes on Ricker are contained in Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> Nathan C. Ricker, "The Story of a Life," typewritten MS autobiography (Urbana, 1922), 28. Architects Loring H. Provine, professor emeritus, and Ernest L. Stouffer, retired University architect, worked with both Ricker and White and are of the opinion that Ricker designed the building, and that White carried on the day-to-day details. In interviews, Dec., 1963.

*with author*

in the University journal Technograph,<sup>1</sup> the illustrative material was taken from architectural reference books, and several details are very close to those used in the new Library.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that the architects borrowed ideas from a variety of sources. It was an American custom, and they were rushed for time. In his "Story of a Life," Ricker tells us that he had a "deep knowledge" of architectural styles, especially the Medieval French, from having seen them in Europe and by the many articles he translated, dealing for example with ornamental ironwork, joinery, mural painting and medieval construction.<sup>2</sup> Apparently Ricker had gathered data<sup>3</sup> and given thought to the architectural possibilities of the Library

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<sup>1</sup> Grant C. Miller, "Romanesque Architecture," Technograph, X (1895-96), 118-140.

<sup>2</sup> Ricker, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Before Ricker ever submitted his ideas for the Library Building, he had obviously had his share of frustrations. Referring to a recent communication from Burnham, Ricker wrote Draper that there was not going to be "anything crooked in this matter, so far as I am concerned. But, if you approve, I have no objection to furnishing to Mr. Burnham all the data I have collected, including that used by the Committee in making out its report upon the designs submitted in the Library competition. This would be done for the benefit of the University and as a personal favor to Mr. Burnham. I wish to disclaim any desire to influence the design of the Library [emphasis mine] or the execution of the work in any manner, having no such intention, only wishing to devote my work to its legitimate course in the Engineering College." Ricker to Draper, Oct. 18, 1895.

And in January, an obviously agitated Ricker informed Draper of a letter that had just come from a Chicago architectural firm: "They are

and, when charged with producing designs, he and White furnished several choices to the Board of Trustees for consideration.

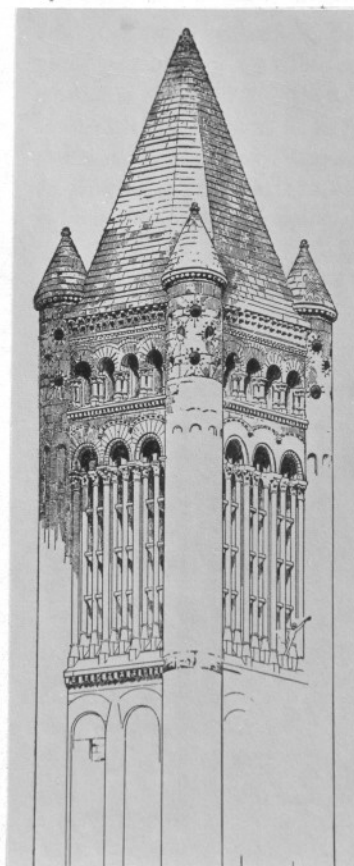
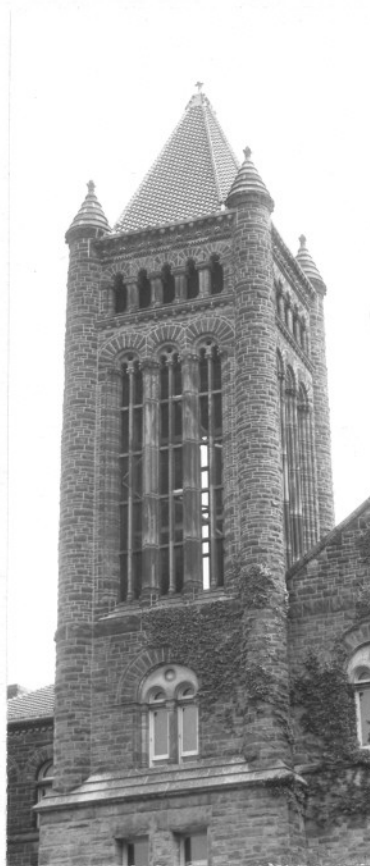
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exceedingly persistent, not to say pestilent, in the matter of the library. . . . The Architectural department will either carry out this work without a consulting architect, or must decline to have anything to do with it, since this would be a suggestion of inability to do the work, which I am not willing to accept. Should I advise consultation with an expert in case of unforeseen difficulty, I should certainly not suggest the name of a persistent seeker after the job." Ricker to Draper, Jan. 9, 1896.

Only three weeks after Ricker's plans were accepted, the Governor was still taking an active interest. We get an inkling of this from Morgan's attempts to humor Altgeld about the site chosen for the Library: "I fully agree with you that it could be a disaster to erect the building there. Mr. McLean and I strenuously opposed the location and advocated the one which you so earnestly recommended afterwards. . . . I have directed Prof. Ricker to have both sites staked out so that the Trustees can clearly see the merits and demerits of each." Morgan to Altgeld, Feb. 29, 1896.



- 5. Altgeld Hall, tower
- 6. H. H. Richardson,  
Pittsburgh County  
Courthouse, tower



#### IV. LIBRARY HALL: DETAILS AND SOURCES<sup>1</sup>

All four of Ricker and White's projects seem vaguely familiar, yet not immediately identifiable. The first is a French palace-type of structure utilizing delicate embellishment (Ill. 23);<sup>2</sup> the second, a scheme dominated by two awkwardly placed towers (Ill. 24); and the third building has a badly proportioned clock tower set into an

<sup>1</sup> Comparisons serve to indicate the variety of sources readily available to the architects and artist; while not necessarily meant to identify specific antecedents, close relationships are to be noted in a number of instances.

<sup>2</sup> The nineteenth century Strassburg University buildings (Ills. 27-28) were also based on French palace architecture. It is not unlikely that Ricker was inspired by such suitable German monuments.

unimaginative facade (Ill. 25).

The last design was the only asymmetrical silhouette offered, sketched almost exactly as eventually built (Ill. 26). White termed its style "Modern Romanesque," and said that it derived from medieval church architecture.<sup>1</sup> Crediting Richardson with most successfully adapting Romanesque forms in this country, White cited several examples: Trinity Church in Boston, the Pittsburgh County Courthouse, and "the buildings erected by him for the Ames family at North Easton, Massachusetts."<sup>2</sup> Richardson's designs unquestionably provided the models for the projected library: the general configuration of the Albany City Hall (Ill. 29), and the tower of the Pittsburgh County Courthouse (Ill. 30).

The overall dimensions of Library Hall--now Altgeld Hall--are 118 by 167 feet, and the height of the tower 132 feet above ground (Ill. 4).<sup>3</sup> A three-storied structure, the middle floor contained the main library rooms, the second was devoted to offices and seminar rooms, and the museums were installed in the basement. Fireproofing was an absolute necessity and the architects stated that they had been accomplished for the entire building: ". . . the structural parts are so

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<sup>1</sup> 19th Report (1898), 138.

<sup>2</sup> Illini, Dec. 18, 1896.

<sup>3</sup> 19th Report (1898), 138.

protected that the burning of all the inflammable material which may have accumulated therein will not endanger its stability."<sup>1</sup>

In a letter dated March 9, 1896, Ricker wrote that "we consider the color effect of the exterior of the building of great importance, and desire to lay the principal emphasis upon this point."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 19th Report (1898), 138. Ricker and White were knowledgeable constructors, but they misjudged on several counts. They recommended a hot air blast system for heating: "This system is now no more expensive than any good indirect system and possesses many advantages besides affording sufficient ventilation in the large reading rooms. . . ."

Even in 1909 reforms were vigorously urged to correct the poor lighting and unhealthy conditions. "There has been complaint of the ventilation in the library ever since the building was built in 1897 and for twelve years the users of the library, not to mention those who must work in it, have suffered from impure air with consequent headaches." Annual Report of the Custodian, 1909, 3, quoted in Lucille E. Wilcox, "History of the University of Illinois Library, 1868-1897." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1931.

From the time of its opening, librarians and students were not wholly satisfied, and indications are that practicing librarians might have been consulted more in its planning. Two major faults were noted: the insufficient and unsatisfactory elevator service, and the low and inadequately lighted packing room in the basement, which was the only workroom provided. Other early reports listed the absence of book lifts outside stack rooms, disregard of floor levels, and an elevator too short for any known book truck on the market. Annual Report of the Head Librarian, 1897-98, 15-16, quoted in Wilcox.

<sup>2</sup> Ricker to Trustees, Mar. 9, 1896, University Architect. As evidence of the high priority placed on aesthetics, see Ricker and White's extensive correspondence with dealers of stone, University Architect.

Roughly hewn, randomly placed hard pink sandstone from the Kettle River quarry in Minnesota was used--and probably very effectively in contrast to the red tile roof--but weathering and grime have changed the color to more of a greyed-buff (Ill. 31). The richly textured stone catches light and shade and creates an animated surface, a significant element for the facade of the building which has sunlight only in the very early Spring. The stone was cut at the quarry into slabs the thickness of the ashlar courses, but the carving was done on the job, after the material was in place. Records indicate how much time was spent on the work: "cornices of front tower - 2-1/2 days work; corbel in rear stair wall - 9 hours; clustered columns in top of tower - 2 days; large mullions in main tower - 14 days."<sup>1</sup> Because of extensive rustication the structure appears massive, an effect

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<sup>1</sup> White, undated time sheet, University Architect. The job was still in progress and Draper wrote to the architects: "At the rate of progress now being made in taking away the debris about the library building, the work will not be finished before every one of us having anything to do with the building hears the blast of Gabriel's horn. . . . Kindly put your nerve into this matter." Draper to Ricker and White, Apr. 2, 1897.

The building was erected in less than one year: construction had begun in the summer of 1896, dedication ceremonies were held June 8, 1897, and it was occupied that September.

offset in the tower by light passing through the open spaces between mullions, and by slender clustered columns which emphasize verticality and airiness (Ill. 32).

Meant to be an imposing feature, the entrance<sup>n</sup> way carving details and delicate wrought iron tracery are striking against the rough masonry (Ill. 33). The zigzag or chevron archivolt is exactly like the one at the Ames Library (Ill. 34), but the curled leaf design is similar to fragments of Jedburgh Abbey and the Toulouse Museum capital (Ill. 35). Simple windows at either side of the entrance (Ill. 37) are articulated by an interplay of deeply set arches, sawtooth molding, elegant plant forms, and rugged masonry; rhythmically curling, leafy shapes fill the frieze (Ill. 38)--their forms suggesting earlier motifs in Vézelay, St. Gilles and Vaison (Ills. 39, 40, 42). A gargoyle every bit as fearsome as Viollet-le-Duc's in Notre Dame was placed above a small doorway on the west side of the building. ~~It is the only sculpture of its kind on campus.~~ (Ills. 43-44)

*Ms  
(There is one  
on Uni High)*

During construction, White stated that the rotunda was the "main feature of the interior. . . ." <sup>1</sup> (Ills. 45, 61) Just the year before, Albert F. M. Lange had written, in almost the same words, that the grand court of the Berlin Royal Polytechnikum (Ill. 46) was the "most

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<sup>1</sup> Illini, Dec. 18, 1896.

imposing feature of the interior . . . one of the most beautiful courts existing today."<sup>1</sup> The Royal Polytechnikum was known as the Bauakademie when Ricker studied there; evidently he was affected by its architectural details, for the stained glass ceiling, colonnaded arcades, portrait medallions, patterned wall designs, and mural decorations were later featured in the Illinois Library.

As originally built, the University rotunda conveyed a sense of openness and space because of the double stories extending upwards to the elliptical ceiling, and the reading rooms which stretched out from either side; a skylight suspended over the opalescent domed stained glass ceiling reinforced the airy effect by allowing natural and artificial light into the delivery room below. However, the original planners did not envision the overcrowding and congestion that necessitated four additions (Ills. 120-121) and finally another "new" library in 1926. When the most recent unit was added (Ill. 122), the east reading room was closed off from the rotunda by walling in the spaces between two rows of columns, and thus creating a corridor (Ill. 48).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Albert F. M. Lange, "The Royal Polytechnikum at Berlin and Student Life in Germany," Architectural Record, V (July-Sept., 1895), 72.

<sup>2</sup> When the east addition was built in 1956, the University had to have the Minnesota quarry reopened in order to match the sandstone to the original. Information obtained from E. L. Stouffer, in an interview, Dec., 1963.

↓  
w. the author

Structural decorations were detailed by the architects, as in an elevation (Ill. 47) which specified "three different designs in plaster capitals for the first floor, and set alternately." (Text, Ill. 47)

Desirous of maintaining the Romanesque idiom throughout the building, they were apparently stimulated by sourcebooks lavishly illustrated with both authentic and modern versions of the style: the base of a rotunda column recalls similar treatment in Gelnhausen (Ills. 49-50), and painted decorations on the intrados are analagous to those in another German church, St. Michael's in Hildesheim (Ills. 52-53). Individual elements of the Illinois capital (Ill. 52)--foliage, intertwined bands, abacus pattern--very nearly duplicate those features in a prototype in St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice (Ill. 51), but the nineteenth-century copy reflects the decorative spirit of its time: contours bulge and swell, and feathery flowing shapes swirl in a manner just hinting at Art Nouveau influence.

Newton A. Wells designed and executed the painted decorations, <sup>completing</sup> all but the "fresco work" ~~had been completed~~ in four months.<sup>1</sup> *MA*

<sup>1</sup> 20th Report (1900), 260. Wells began his library decorations Aug. 5, 1897; ~~and the four large murals in the rotunda lunettes~~ <sup>rotunda</sup> were unveiled Mar. 13, 1900. See Appendix D for more on the commission and his techniques.

[Place biographical note on Wells here; incorporate pt. of material on p. 52]



Stenciling patterns to a wall or coloring plaster capitals would seem a less than prestigious undertaking, but at that time, fine craftsmanship was held in esteem and the artist apparently regarded his tedious labors as intrinsically valuable and dignified.<sup>1</sup> The long-established European tradition of integrating frescoes, mosaics and painted decorations into the architectural design of public buildings was gaining popularity, and the artists who mastered these new techniques were achieving status. In 1896, Kenyon Cox observed that Americans were returning to the idea that "the highest aim of art is to make some useful thing beautiful . . . [and the] highest aim of the painter will be to beautify the walls of the temples and palaces of the people, so that the highest name he will give himself will be that of 'decorator.'"<sup>2</sup>

Stylized organic forms predominated in Wells' designs, formulated by combining Romanesque motifs with contemporary adaptations (Ills. 55-56, 59-60), or by closely following earlier models only; featured were the spiraling, extravagantly shaped floral decorations above the arches (Ill. 54), the fleur-de-lis patterns originally applied

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<sup>1</sup> Art masterpieces were recognized, stated one writer, "because the artists who made them were consummate craftsmen, splendidly gifted and perfectly trained in every detail of practice." A. Lys Baldry, Modern Mural Painters (London, 1902), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Modern French Painters, ed. John C. Van Dyke (New York, 1896), 28.

to second floor walls<sup>1</sup> (Ill. 61), and the meticulously painted simulated mosaics in the vestibule (Ills. 57-58). Cognizant of the importance of color, the artist told an audience that its uses could make "your houses warm, sumptuous and inviting; your churches inspiring, stately and religious; your theatres gay and magnificent; your libraries reposeful, dignified and studious."<sup>2</sup>

To achieve that ideal atmosphere, Wells painted architectural details mainly in pallid green, dark red, and muted (or faded) blue;<sup>3</sup> and for the floral decorations he added dulled pink, and more intense greens and blues to his palette. Virtually every capital, arch, frieze, wall and medallion was embellished with copious applications of gold--an abundance planned by Wells even before he received the commission:

All gilding to be the best gold bronze laid with a medium called 'artificial pear oil.' It is a very volatile substance and leaves the metal with a luster equal to that of gold leaf, nor does the metal tarnish or blacken afterward. If this were not used, I should employ water color gold, that is, the same quality bronze laid with water color fresco. With the new medium I can gild upon a flatted oil surface, which cannot be done with gum. . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Green paint (the anemic variety common to twentieth-century institutions) obliterates all traces of the original wallpaper-like designs.

<sup>2</sup> Champaign County News, Mar. 17, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to ascertain what the colors were like when first applied, for effects of dirt, atmosphere and spotty retouching are evident.

I have made such a free use of gold because it is not only one of the characteristics of the Romanesque ornamentation, but because the style becomes heavy without it. What I have tried to do in the entrance and rotunda is to produce an effect of extreme richness and dignity. The character of the lighting is such that, no matter where one stands in the rotunda, there will be some portion of the gilding that reflects the light from above.<sup>1</sup>

At President Draper's suggestion, medallion portraits of "America's greatest soldiers, statesmen and scholars" were placed in a frieze extending around the first floor of the rotunda (Ill. 61).<sup>2</sup> Conceived in classical style--Roman in this instance--they represent: Hamilton, Fulton, Irving, Mann, Lincoln, Grant, Bryant, Agassiz, Hawthorne, Bancroft, Hudson, Bradford, Washington, Franklin, and Stuart. Imitating ancient coins, bleached, yellow-ochre tones were used to define the facial contours of each subject, and for background, Wells applied the ubiquitous golden hue--now tarnished and dull.

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<sup>1</sup> Wells to Ricker and White, c. May 14, 1897, University Architect. Dates for several of Wells' letters and sketches were deduced from related materials.

<sup>2</sup> Champaign County News, Mar. 17, 1900.

7. Homeric Tableau,  
University of Illinois



## V. MURALS, MORALS AND THE GREEKS

" . . . to impregnate that atmosphere with the aroma of historical association." - Wells

One influential professional journal regarded murals as "dreams which every architect who has a fancy for colored decoration occasionally sees floating before his imagination . . . [and] there is no limit to which this great American art may be carried."<sup>1</sup> Nineteenth-century taste for extravagantly scaled pictures was a predisposing factor in American acceptance; the public had not had much exposure to wall paintings until, under Richardson's aegis, precedents were set in Trinity Church and the Albany Capitol building; architectural journals and popular magazines promulgated the idea that murals were desirable, inspirational and beautiful, and appreciation rapidly developed. The American Architect and Building News commented with satisfaction on the trend to "make the best of our artistic resources. . . . A few years ago not many Americans

<sup>1</sup> American Architect and Building News, LIX (Mar. 5, 1898), 73.

would have dared ask an artist of reputation to paint a wall. Today we fancy, few artists would refuse."<sup>1</sup> And still further admiration was aroused in 1893 as World's Columbian Exposition visitors enthusiastically responded to the grandly conceived, monumental decorations lavished on walls and ceilings of Fair buildings (Ills. 62-63).

Muralists, painters and sculptors alike placed heavy emphasis on subject matter and--more to the point--message. Catering to contemporary aesthetic standards, the Exposition's sponsors installed pretentious displays of academic works in the Palace of Fine Arts; slick handling and technical expertise often masked banal material, for artists of the nineties endowed their moralistic pictures with theatrical and unobscure symbols: drowning orphans and chaste muses were as likely to turn up as works bearing such titles as Love's Curse, The Cloister or the World?, and The Broken Idol. The public was especially enamored of classical allegory and legend and painters recklessly borrowed Greek themes, attitudes and costumes from every available source to produce far-removed, if sincere versions (Ills. 64-67). Idealistic themes were thought to be perfectly suited to general viewing, but an American iconography was still

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<sup>1</sup> American Architect and Building News, IV (Nov. 30, 1878), 153. Murals were so new to Americans that the terminology itself was inexact, and "fresco" signified any large painting applied to wall or ceiling.

lacking. "In the years to come," Larkin commented, "one building after another would perpetuate their fallacies upon its walls--the relaxed postures, the legato rhythms, and the cautious interpolation of modern dress among the chitons and togas."<sup>1</sup>

Wells exhibited a watercolor painting, The Great Enchantment,<sup>2</sup> in the Palace of Fine Arts and most probably attended the celebrated Fair as well; he must have been impressed by what he saw, and judging by his own later work, found the murals of Walter McEwen and Gari Melchers particularly unforgettable.

The commission to paint the murals at the University of Illinois marked the high point in Wells' artistic career; he was forty-seven years old when he made the trip West to begin the work--work which ultimately proved rewarding but arduous. The library was part of a great institution of learning, and the problem, Wells related, was to make the interior "not only exhale an atmosphere of quiet and reposeful dignity that should be in keeping with their uses, but also to impregnate that atmosphere with the aroma of historical association."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Larkin, 317.

<sup>2</sup> Official Catalogue of the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, 1893), 33.

<sup>3</sup> Chicago Sunday Tribune, Mar. 14, 1900. Voluble and expansive, Wells' cultural milieu was revealed in his public statements, articles and letters; they provide a major source of information for his artistic techniques and the iconography of his murals.

Despite all the Romanesque-derived decorations that Wells had painstakingly stenciled and painted, it is clear that his own historical and artistic commitment was to things Greek--the academic conglomerate that the nineteenth century accepted as Greek.

In 1897, Wells and Professor C. M. Moss were credited with being introducers of the first Greek tableaux ever presented to an American university audience (Ills. 68-70). The singing of the "Hymn to Apollo" was reported to be "solemn and weird," and as the figures appeared in the scene of "Homer, the Blind Bard" in the "pale blue light of the stereopticon, nothing in marble could have been more real. All recognized Dr. Burrill instantly, and his pose was perfect."<sup>1</sup> (Ill. 7) And the spectators responded with accolades, added the Illio, for the experience was a "distinctly aesthetic one, filling the eye for a time with noble images, and the mind with suggestions of a splendid past. . . . It was a distinct education upon aesthetic, spiritual lines."<sup>2</sup>

Wells asserted that he had spent a long time "studying the Greek costumes of a certain period." Imaginative and resourceful artists have traditionally derived ideas from the past and it is likely that Wells--

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<sup>1</sup> Illini, Nov. 19, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> Illio, V (1898), 34.



a highly trained painter--knew how to find suitable inspiration<sup>1</sup> in the plethora of ancient and modern models pictured in virtually every medium. A photograph that appeared in an American art book of 1896 (Ill. 72) bears a remarkable resemblance to Wells' pendentive figure (Ill. 71), a coincidence that raises questions about his statement that "all of these figures and compositions are original."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Champaign County News, Mar. 17, 1900. Wells held a Master of Painting degree from Syracuse University (1880), and had studied at the Académie Julian in Paris for several years.

<sup>2</sup>20th Report (1900), 261. The female figures in the pendentives represent: Agriculture, Commerce, Manufacture, and Mining. Champaign County News, Mar. 17, 1900.



8. Bouguereau:  
Les Oréades  
n.d.

## VI. FRENCH MASTERS

The rotunda murals unmistakably reflect the philosophy, the teaching, and the paintings of Wells' French mentors. Prior to receiving the commission, the artist wrote that if he were entrusted with the work he would "wish to return to Paris for the execution of the studies of the four compositions so as to benefit from the advice of my two masters."<sup>1</sup> He had been a student at the Académie Julian,

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<sup>1</sup> Wells to Ricker and White, c. May 14, 1897, University Architect.

under Adolph Bouguereau at first, and then with Jean-Paul Laurens, "the best draughtsman in France," and Benjamin-Constant, "one of the richest and most harmonious colorists of the French school."<sup>1</sup>

The Académie Julian had reputable salon painters on its faculty and required no entrance examinations--factors which encouraged the enrollment of many foreign students.<sup>2</sup> One Chicago critic was pleased that midwesterners were included, and thought others ought apply themselves to serious and direct academic study: "The simplicity of all great masterpieces is based on an understanding of construction, composition and values, while each decadence in art is marked by inventions, theories and experiments"<sup>3</sup>--an observation expressing the very essence of the academy aesthetic. Robert Henri attended the Académie Julian at about the same time as Wells, and remembered that "among the great numbers of students there were those who searched each other out and formed little groups which met independently of the school, and with art as the central interest talked about everything under the sun. But these small groups were rare."<sup>4</sup> Wells evidently adhered to the prescribed course of study,

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<sup>1</sup> Wells to Ricker and White, c. May 14, 1897, University Architect .

<sup>2</sup> Herschel B. Chipp, Theories of Modern Art (Berkeley, 1968), 103.

<sup>3</sup> M. B. Bowers, "The Art Academy of the Julian Concour," Arts for America, VII (April, 1898), 481-82.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Henri, The Art Spirit (Philadelphia, 1960), 105.

unaware or ignorant of the experimenters of his day--impressionists, symbolists, and others who altered the course of art.

Solid artistic training was paramount at the Academy, and the literal copying of plaster casts and drawing from the nude model required exercises. But the school, as Henri knew it, was "a great cabaret with singing and huge practical jokes, and as such, was a wonder. It was a factory, too, where thousands of drawings of human surfaces were turned out."<sup>1</sup>

Bouguereau (1825-1905) was one of the most acclaimed painters of his time, his pictures ranging from what may be the ultimate in French "flesh painting" (Ill. 8) to canvases centering on sacred themes--both kinds produced with unfaltering aplomb. "Of the idyllic school he is one of the leading masters," wrote Bancroft, "and few are there whose works have been so widely appreciated throughout the world."<sup>2</sup> Because of his reputation, it is not unreasonable to assume that his works inspired imitation.

Technical adroitness and fine draughtsmanship were valued by Benjamin-Constant (1845-1902), and his compositions often conveyed

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<sup>1</sup>Henri, 104-105.

<sup>2</sup>Hubert Howe Bancroft, The Book of the Fair, IV (Chicago, 1893), 707. One of Bouguereau's paintings was described as "one of the latest and best examples of his much-prized and much-derided flesh paintings." William Walton, World's Columbian Exposition Art and Architecture, II (Philadelphia, 1893), 43.



an Eastern, exotic mood (Ill. 75). Wells' portraits<sup>1</sup> are superior to his mural paintings, and we may presume that he learned a great deal from this master, an able portraitist.

The American painter E. H. Blashfield told of Laurens' (1838-1921) consuming interest in past ages, his desire for grand drama simply expressed. Such scenes would seem to require frenzy and haste but Laurens' insistence that his subjects "stand about motionless"<sup>2</sup> contributes to the serene and tranquil character of his canvases<sup>2</sup> (Ill. 74); Wells was an apt pupil, in that his own work tended to be static. In recounting the story of the University murals, Wells used the phrases "reposeful dignity" and "peaceful repose" several times, saying that mural compositions

should be treated with a reserve and a reposeful dignity that will never weary the beholder by the violence of color contrasts and the insistency of line arrangements, or oppress the spirits by an appeal to emotions that are morbid and depressing. Garishness and triviality on the one hand, and somberness and morbid solemnity on the other, are the Scylla and the Charybdis between which the mural painter must steer if he would escape the rocks of adverse criticism and the whirlpool of sensationalism.<sup>3</sup>

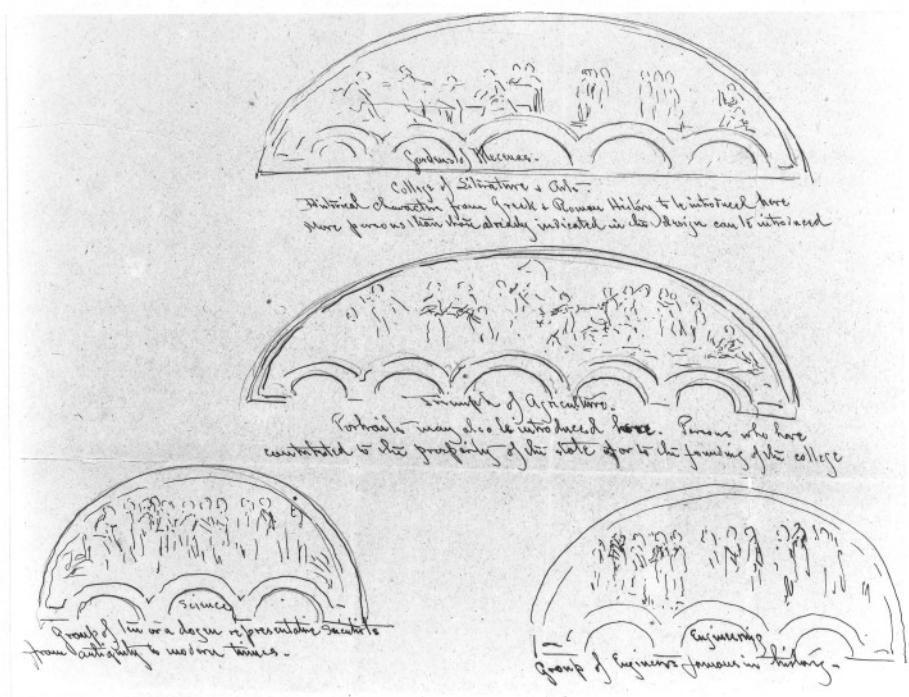
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<sup>1</sup> Wells' portraits of Burrill and Draper are hung in the main Library, and a portrait of Ricker is in the Architecture Building.

<sup>2</sup> Modern French Painters, 87.

<sup>3</sup> Newton A. Wells, "Some of the Esthetic Requirements and the Technical Difficulties Peculiar to Mural Painting," Brush and Pencil, VI (1900), 228-29.

9. Wells:  
original proposal  
1897.



## VII. MURALS: PROPOSALS AND DRAWINGS

" . . . eighteen months of solid work . . . " - Wells

Valuable practical experience was acquired by the artists chosen to execute the murals at the Chicago Exposition; except for Blashfield and Maynard, all were neophytes.<sup>1</sup> They initially misunderstood the limitations and requirements of their craft in simply enlarging their easel pictures to mammoth scale but slowly adapted themselves to the special conditions of mural work: distorted views due to positioning under a dome or under a ceiling demanded altered

<sup>1</sup> Pauline King, American Mural Painting (Boston, 1902), 66.

perspectives; murals were generally higher than eye level and decreased visibility of details had to be anticipated; and inadequate light, unexpected shadows and color changes had to be met with appropriate solutions.

To be aesthetically significant, it was imperative that murals be an integral part of the architecture. Wells appreciated this basic concept when he wrote that the wall surface was to be embellished, not "negated; the rendition of natural appearance must not be carried to that point of realism which imitates relief in space, which is perfectly legitimate in easel painting. Such treatment makes holes in the walls instead of decorating them. These are requirements which too many mural painters have forgotten or ignored, painting their wall surfaces as if they were independent of all surroundings."<sup>1</sup>

While the response to mural paintings was growing, most American artists of the nineties were not given the chance to practice their theories. Wells later confided that he had always been ambitious to create such a work, but "such opportunities are rare, and come but a few times in the lives of even greater artists than I dare flatter myself that I am:"<sup>2</sup> He had been studying in Paris when Draper wrote to

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<sup>1</sup>Wells, Brush and Pencil, 229.

<sup>2</sup>Champaign County News, Mar. 17, 1900.



tell him of the new library building and the competition for the decorations;<sup>1</sup> several letters were exchanged and the artist outlined his ideas, noting that he would be working "for reputation and not for money. The importance of the institution and the consequent publicity given to the work is my deciding motive, I frankly confess."<sup>2</sup>

Wells modified and altered his compositional schemes several times before painting the canvases. Three complete sets of drawings remain (only the first in its original form) and they provide us with valuable evidence of his artistic and iconographic sources.

The original proposal (Ill. 9) was based on the architects' suggestion that the lunettes represent each of the four colleges. Wells captioned the drawing with brief explanations:

Gardens of Mecenas. College of Literature and Arts. Historical characters from Greek and Roman History to be introduced here. More persons than already indicated <sup>in the design</sup> can be introduced.

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<sup>1</sup> Draper to Wells, June 20, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Wells to Ricker and White, c. May 14, 1897, University Architect.

Triumph of Agriculture. Portraits may also be introduced here. Persons who have contributed to the prosperity of the state or <sup>to the founding of the</sup> college.

Science. Group of ten or a dozen representative scientists from antiquity to modern times.

Engineering. Group of Engineers famous in history. (Text, Ill. 9)

The contract for the Illinois decorations was obtained, and after completing the first stage of the project, Wells returned to Paris to prepare a series of preliminary designs and cartoons for the mural compositions. The first set of scale drawings--he said they were "entirely from imagination"--was rendered in chalk at one quarter inch per foot<sup>1</sup> (Ills. 76-79); they lacked precise detail but clearly indicated how the figures were to be arranged in the architectural space. Only after the artist was satisfied with the general effect, were models employed to pose for more careful studies (Ills. 80-82), "in the majority of cases from the nude, the thin drapery necessitating an absolutely correct drawing of the anatomy."<sup>2</sup>

Upon completion of the chalk compositions, Wells laid out enlarged panels at two and a quarter inches per foot, and upon these he traced the figures, animals and background from the separate studies.

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<sup>1</sup>Wells, Brush and Pencil, 230.

<sup>2</sup>Chicago Sunday Tribune, Mar. 26, ~~1900~~. See Appendix D.  
1899

"I found it desirable," Wells recalled, "to make more or less change from the original imaginary studies."<sup>1</sup>

More time was spent in experimenting with color schemes, preparing the plaster walls, stretching and nailing canvas onto walls, and finally transferring his outline drawings before actually applying paint. As one lunette neared completion--The Sacred Wood of the Muses, in March of 1899--the Chicago Sunday Tribune ran a feature story on the murals, the illustrations presumably by Wells, and based on the enlarged panels(Pl. 83).

The muralist painted with a mixture of oil paints and dissolved white wax that dried slowly and did not discolor; another advantage of using wax instead of turpentine, Wells wrote, was that its use produced a "perfectly flat and lusterless surface, with a delicate and aerial bloom, like that of real fresco; and not the least of its good qualities is its preserving influence upon the color, protecting it from the contact of coal-gas, the bête noire of decorators in our climate."<sup>2</sup>

After about a year of work, Wells' "great allegorical paintings"

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<sup>1</sup>Wells, Brush and Pencil, 231.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 235-36.



(March 13, 1900)

--as Ricker and White termed them<sup>1</sup>--were unveiled, and "satisfaction was marked on the faces of everyone present," reported the Gazette, "when the American flags which had hidden the work from view were drawn."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>20th Report (1900), 261.

<sup>2</sup>Champaign County Gazette, Mar. 14, 1900. Wells was paid \$3500 for the decorations and murals. In a statement submitted to the Trustees at the time of the unveiling he said that after expenses and "eighteen months of solid work . . . it has been the most arduous and the least remunerative piece of work that I have ever executed, but I beg the President and the Board not to interpret this statement as a complaint; as I foresaw all of this when I first undertook the work, and was willing to undertake it for the opportunity which it afforded to show what I could do, and also for the privilege of impressing my own personality upon the art of my time in so important a work. I am not ashamed of my work, and if the President, the Board of Trustees, and the Architects, are satisfied with it, I shall feel amply repaid for all the time, toil, and anxiety which it has cost me." 20th Report (1900), 26.

Evidently his work pleased everyone concerned, for Wells stayed on at Illinois, first as Professor of the History and Practice of Painting, and from 1903 until his retirement in 1919, as Professor of Architectural Decoration. "Faculty Record," 1912.



10. Wells: study from life

*publ Technograph*  
1899-1900

### VIII. THE FOUR MURALS

" . . . choice spirits . . . separated from each other by centuries of time." - Wells

Control of one's emotions was considered an ideal virtue and calm, restrained figures not only conveyed an untroubled mood, but self-assurance as well. All four of Wells' murals express that attitude, an attitude which ultimately finds its source in the Library planners' profound confidence in the University's achievements and status.

True devotees of classical culture would have abhorred the frenetic revelers in Bouguereau's bacchanal (Ill. 73), but Wells discerned much in Bouguereau's art and philosophy to emulate: "I am very eclectic as you can see," observed the academician, "I accept and respect all schools of painting which have as their basis the

sincere study of nature, the search for the true and the beautiful."<sup>1</sup>

The American artist discovered truth and beauty in the staid academy aesthetic, and studied--in the spirit of acceptance and respect--the paintings of other artists; eclecticism was considered good form, even desirable, but Wells' borrowing seemingly bordered on kleptomania. It is both instructive and interesting to read the artist's comments on his works:

The Sacred Wood of the Muses (Ill. 84):

Casting about in my mind for a suitable setting and title for such a picture it occurred to me that the "wood sacred to the muses" would make not only an appropriate, but a well sounding title, and I immediately conceived a sunny glade among the wooded hills, a glade sheltered by ancient trees, and threaded by pleasant walks, where choice spirits might love to retire during leisure hours to discuss lofty themes or listen to Homeric tales.

I have not thought it best to insist upon too definite an identity of the personages represented, but rather to impart to the whole scene that air of contemplative repose which is essential to an education of profound intellectual problems.

It is true, however, that while composing the group gathered beneath the great cypress, on the left, I was thinking of those legendary days when Homer went from city to city reciting his immortal epic and so let that group stand for imaginary literature. While occupied with the group emerging from the shadows of the wood on the right, I was thinking of Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras, who represent philosophy--both speculative and practical--idealism and realism. In the three maidens on the extreme right, you may if you choose, recognize the arts of music and dancing, while upon the tall central figure buried in thought, you may hang the mantle of Demosthenes. The group of two at his right suggested to my mind the young Phidias making sketches from nature while his friend and patron Pericles looked interestedly over his shoulder.

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<sup>1</sup> Artists on Art, eds. Robert Goldwater and Marco Treves (New York, 1954), 288.

Thus I might go on until every figure in the composition had been given a definite character and significance, but that was not my purpose so much as it was to impart to the whole an impression of intellectual activity in an environment of peaceful repose, a repose that is never troubled by the presence of "cooking care."

What matters if these suggested personages were actually separated from each other by centuries of time? As we look backward down the long perspective of a far distant past, their shades seem to our mental vision to be walking together in one elysium, that of classic antiquity, and so I have ventured to represent them.

Determined to produce "reposeful" compositions, Wells apparently responded to the pervasively serene work of Puvis de Chavannes, The renowned French painter's desire for "Greek simplicity and grandeur [and for] Gothic sentiment and directness of expression," explained Kenyon Cox, led to "ever new suppressions of the useless, the insignificant, the cumbrous. . . . On the classic side his highest expression is perhaps in the Sacred Wood. Could the sense of idyllic peace and noble tranquility be more perfectly rendered?"<sup>2</sup>

Puvis' ethereal, scantily draped muses (Ill. 92) glide and posture in the painting that must have furnished title and composition to the library muralist, but in the course of various revisions (Ills. 88-91), Wells eliminated classical architecture, pressed figures closer to the

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<sup>1</sup>Champaign County News, Mar. 17, 1900. The News' account of the formal unveiling ceremony included the speech which Wells had read. (in 41  
archives)

<sup>2</sup>Modern French Painters, 25.



picture plane, and managed to transform naturalistic landscape into a stage set with backdrop: for Wells' "choice spirits" were nineteenth-century vintage, and their stilted, self-conscious poses reminiscent of living statues in Homeric tableaux.<sup>1</sup>

A common problem in composing lunettes and pediments is that of filling in the sloping ends of the architectural space, and the solution in this instance--Wells' dancing and lyre-playing muses at the extreme right--may have been suggested by a study of the central and side figures in McEwen's murals (Ills. 93-94). For the pretty piper, further research material was very likely provided in the paintings of Simmler and Bulleid (Ills. 95-96).

Arcadia (Ill. 85):

Agriculture also is as old as antiquity, and it was but natural that I should, while still under the spell of the mood induced by the "sacred wood," find my imagination picturing a rustic festival celebrating the 'gathering of the first fruits' in Arcadia. The van is led by young maidens bearing the sacred fire of the hearthstone and the loaf which typifies bodily sustenance. Following them are a youth and maidens bearing garlands and flowers and typical of the joys of love and courtship which lead to hymen's altar, the foundation stone of the home. Close upon their steps comes the family with its loved burdens and happy cares, and behind them troop the domestic animals to the sound of pan pipes, and guided by stalwart men and youths,<sup>2</sup> whose lustyhood speaks of a life of freedom and frugality.

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<sup>1</sup> Wells was reported to have worked on his landscape studies "in the garden of the Luxembourg at Versailles." Chicago Sunday Tribune, Mar. 26, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> Champaign County News, Mar. 17, 1900.

Wells' bucolic festival derives from Melchers' battle processions (Ills. 101-102); Arts of War was a temporary mural at the Columbian Exposition, while the more elaborate War was painted for perpetuity in the Library of Congress in 1897. The University artist most probably saw the original paintings or the photographs that appeared in guide books and periodicals, but his familiarity with Melchers' compositions is evidenced by the vaguely outlined figure holding a banner in the original chalk drawing (Ill. 98), and in the more obviously similar rearing horse, straining dog, and pubescent youths that found their way, more or less, into Wells' completed mural.

"The introduction of the domestic animals is a striking feature," the Tribune noted, "and an interesting item in regard to the stallion which is being led by a youth, is that Mr. Wells obtained a drawing for it at the horse market in Paris from which Rosa Bonheur painted her noted picture, The Horse Fair."<sup>1</sup> That might have been so. Wells might also have studied the sculptured frieze from the Parthenon (Ill. 103), as plaster casts of classical art were commonly available in art schools in this country and abroad.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chicago Sunday Tribune, Mar. 26, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> A cast of this frieze segment now hangs in the Ricker Art Library at the University, and it probably was in the original collection of plaster casts purchased for the University Art Museum which opened in 1875.

Details in Bouguereau's canvases (Ills. 104-105) appealed to Wells, and the image of a rather large child scrambling up onto the stoic provider<sup>1</sup> is echoed in Wells' chalk sketch (Ill. 98). Wells' maiden on her way to hymen's alter (Ill. 100) resembles St. John Harper's garlanded dancer (Ill. 106) in tilt of head, posturing and draperies--but the Illinois figure is swathed in gauzier fabric and manages to bare her breast, a not unseemly thing to do, in light of the direction she has taken.

The Laboratory of Minerva (Ill. 86):

Upon the western lunette, allotted to the college of science, I have chosen to represent an imaginary scene in which Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, stands at her reading desk instructing her hand-maidens from the book of knowledge. At her right sits Astronomy with the crystal globe of the heavens resting on her knee; next to her is Biology examining--well it may be a microbe--through one of Dr. Burrill's microscopes of latest model. Beyond her sits Physics with her balances and incandescent lamp. On the left of the goddess sits Mathematics with her measuring scale, Chemistry with her test tube, and below them stands Geology, busy with her hammer and fossils.

As a matter of pure caprice I have chosen to give to the draperies of these seven virginal figures, the colors of the rainbow arranged in their<sup>2</sup> order of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet and purple.

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<sup>1</sup> Madonnas and children frequently figured in Bouguereau's compositions and perhaps the Art Journal's correspondent was viewing such works when he wrote: "Of horribly realistic pictures it is sufficient to remark that they are as abounding as ever, and those with representations of vierges and demi-vierges occupy one-half the Salon." "The Paris Salons of 1896," Art Journal XLVIII (1896), 195.

<sup>2</sup> Champaign County News, Mar. 17, 1900.

Wells accommodated himself to American moral standards.<sup>1</sup>

The shifting drapery and unrestrained nudity that the French relished were obviously unsuited for high-minded college students; chitons might carelessly slip from shoulders, limbs might conceivably be indicated under voluminous garments, but the "seven virginal figures"--in the mural--were fully dressed (Ill. 110), their ripe, substantial forms covered in quasi-Greek garments very like those affected by their sorority counterparts (Ills. 111-112). These wholesome coeds might even have sat for the artist; one young student (on the right in the 1900 group portrait) resembles the seated figure of Physics holding an incandescent lamp. Actually, Wells scarcely

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<sup>1</sup> Morals, nudity and eroticism were as controversial in the nineties as now. In 1895, the New York State legislature attempted to prohibit the exhibition of the nude figure "under any circumstances," and the Decorator and Furnisher interviewed Napoleon Sarony--"that prince of photographers"--on the matter.

The seventy-year old artist stated in part: "The greatest minds recognize the truth that the highest effort of art is the human figure clothed only with ideal grace. . . . The white light of moral and physical truth that is radiated from such figures as these (and here Sarony showed his visitor about a dozen new and captivating productions) can only be appreciated by the purest and most artistic souls. . . .

...  
 "Legislative interference with art should address itself to cleansing the Augean stable of filthy-mindedness in the masses, and the best method of doing this is to disseminate everywhere the ideal portraiture of the human form in its perfection, not simply the 'nude' in art, but the nude figure clothed with a refined, poetic interpretation of nature . . . that unconscious yet captivating beauty of the flesh that expresses the purest movement of the spirit." William Bradshaw, "The Nude in Art," Decorator and Furnisher, XXIV (June, 1895), 91-92.



lacked suitable models, for the type he favored persistently appeared in art publications of his day (Ills. 113-115).

In the various stages of planning the mural (Ills. 107-110), Wells turned bodies, removed columns, substituted props--prop-tractor for coiled wires, globe for gear, microscope for ship model--and, most interestingly, transformed the robust figure of war into the buxom handmaiden of Physics.

" . . . face to face with the activities of the twentieth century." - Wells

The Forge of Vulcan (Ill. 87):

Turning now to the eastern lunette you will perhaps feel something of a mental wrench, for this mood induced by historical association and antique legend is suddenly dissipated, and in its stead we are brought face to face with the activities of the twentieth century.

Possibly we may think of the forge of the Vulcan and the labors of the Cyclops, but they are the Vulcan and the Cyclops of to-day, and they are forging one of those great steamer shafts whose strength is born of fire and force.

For a hundred times must the furnace heat  
And a thousand blows must the hammer beat.  
'Ere the mighty shaft for its task is mete.

What scene more appropriate to represent the genius of modern engineering--the harnessing of force--the taming of that fire which Prometheus<sup>1</sup> stole from heaven in order to make man an equal to the gods?

An unabashedly unclassical theme distinguishes this lunette from the others, and no information is available which would explain

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<sup>1</sup> Champaign County News, Mar. 17, 1900.

the substitution. Wells had originally projected the idea of painting a group of famous engineers but worked out a composition of a foundry interior instead (Ills. 116-119), a subject, explained the Tribune, which was "taken from a twentieth century standpoint, and shows an immense steel hammer forging a modern steamer shaft. . . . The drawing of this interior was made at Cleveland, where is located one of the largest steam hammers in the country."<sup>1</sup> In order to obtain the most authentic drawings possible, Wells might have gone to Ohio, but more likely he used photographs as a guide for this, the most realistic and unromanticized of his four murals. President Draper was Cleveland School Superintendent from 1892 to 1894 and it is conceivable that he furnished the artist with illustrated material on the Cleveland foundries.

Wells made no attempt to idealize the workers: stocky, balding men absorbed in their task, oblivious of the spectator. No muses, no symbolism, no pretense--for the muralist had, in fact, created a straightforward and untheatrical depiction of a then-current engineering achievement. "Each of the four frescoes is beautiful and significant," commented the Tribune, "but the Forge of Vulcan, the one modern subject, will appeal to many as being the strongest."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chicago Sunday Tribune, Mar. 26, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Mar. 14, 1900.

And the Illini thought that the "panels are all excellent, but if there is any choice, many would doubtless give it to the Forge of Vulcan representing the College of Engineering. . . . The play of the clouds of steam and smoke is magnificent. The chief charm about this panel is the decided contrast which it forms with the other three."<sup>1</sup>

New murals, new century--but cultural tastemakers and their public continued to anachronistically yearn for some remote, euphoric past in an age of increasing technology and scientific demands. Nevertheless, an American iconography was emerging--as indicated by just one of Wells' murals, the Forge of Vulcan--and the farm and working youth who had come to the University for an education must have found that realistic picture most compelling and relevant.

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<sup>1</sup> Illini, Mar. 17, 1900.





11. Altgeld Hall,  
detail of frieze

## CONCLUSION

This is to certify that Professor Newton A. Wells has completed the mural decorations of the Library Building, including the great allegorical paintings in the rotunda. He has produced a very pleasing and harmonious interior, in complete harmony with the style of architecture and construction employed in the building. The great oil paintings are original in composition and treatment, worthy to rank with similar works to be found in any of the libraries in the United States or in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 20th Report (1900), 261. Ricker and White submitted the statement to the Trustees, Mar. 13, 1900.

To its planners, Library Hall was an especially significant structure, tangible evidence that the "cow college" of 1868 had been transformed into an institution of higher education worthy of a place in the ranks of the select. Of the elements of the design, none more than the murals furnish an insight into the <sup>sensibilities</sup> sensitivities of those closely associated with the project: the allegorical paintings were more than artistic embellishment for they suggest by their very existence--as well as by their lofty themes--the University's commitment to scholarship and culture.

A fortuitous blend of Romanesque, Gothic, Classical and Byzantine motifs, Altgeld Hall is an imposing stone monument dominated by a square carillon tower, its aura of weighty tradition reinforced by isolation from surrounding buildings. Of impressive size, the structure is simply composed and presents a commanding silhouette; textural richness is provided by the rugged masonry and ornamental details are confined mostly to the entrance--and considering that it was built in an age dedicated to the use of ostentatious decoration, such restraint is laudable. Ivy now clings to the stone, effecting an impression both psychological and visual.

The murals are an integral part of the architecture. Familiar, old-fashioned forms and shallow space establish a restful and undisturbing environment, while the low-keyed, ungaudy color scheme

employed to simulate true fresco, further serves to unify the four allegorical paintings.

Experience has shown that no structure, no matter how carefully planned, can adequately meet for more than a limited time the accelerating demands of a technology-obsessed society and many a noble and priceless edifice has crumbled under the "skull cracker" suspended from the boom of a crane. During its seventy-two years of existence, Altgeld Hall has fared rather well--on the exterior. The various additions have been restrained and in the spirit of the original building, albeit reduction of free surrounding space has diminished its singularity and aura of formidability. Not so with the rotunda where partitioning, modification of lighting, installation of air conditioning units, and obliteration of wall decorations have violated its dignity, atmosphere and integrity. The substitution of impersonal, cold fluorescent strip lighting for the charming (and admittedly inadequate) twin-shaded wall and conical desk lamps is incongruous, but most disappointing and regrettable is the alteration of the original opalescent stained glass ceiling, presently plastered and painted <sup>neutral</sup> ~~neuter~~-tan.

In the end, somehow, it is not the spirit of the mighty past that broods in those halls, for while musing handmaidens and elaborate decorations are interesting, they are eclipsed by the spirit of



an intensely principled, compassionate human being. John Peter Altgeld lost out in the matter of architectural style but his presence is pervasive in the building bearing his name. His unreserved support for the University and idealism transcended political considerations, and his commitment to the oppressed and misjudged led to rejection by the voters of Illinois--until 1941, when recognition was belatedly given:

Because of his insight into the essential relations between education and the state, his term as Governor and Trustee marks an epoch in the history of the University of Illinois. This building, in the planning of which he took an active part, originally housed the University Library. The College of Law, in the organization of which he was also deeply interested, occupied it since 1927. In recognition of his services to the University the Trustees of the University have named the building Altgeld Hall.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 41st Report (1942), 332-33.

*see p. 33 re additions*  
*1896-97 Univ Lib bldg.*  
*1927 - occupied by Law College*  
*1941 - renamed Altgeld Hall*  
*Oct 1956 - appropriation*  
*for remodeling*  
*for math dept*  
*1957 - math dept moved in*

## APPENDIX A. DRAPER ON ALTGELD

Andrew Sloane Draper (1848-1913) was President of the University of Illinois from 1894 to 1904, and later wrote about the dedicated, controversial Governor, John Peter Altgeld (1847-1902). An edited version of Draper's article follows.<sup>1</sup>

Governor Altgeld's interest in the University of Illinois was keen, rational, and effective. The fact of it is beyond question and the genuineness of his interest is not open to doubt. Of course he likely thought it good political policy to aid the University. The governors of the state had all alleged their regard for the institution, but their concern had not been of the aggressive kind. There had not been much in the preceding years to quicken their concern about it, for the State University movement had not therefore shown much vigor or determination. But when Mr. Altgeld became governor it was becoming clear enough to discerning men that it was going to have an early and decisive evolution in all of the states. He doubtless saw a political opportunity. The governors before him had been Republicans, and he was a Democrat. The board of trustees had from the founding consisted almost wholly of Republicans, but now it had a majority of very capable Democrats. He was astute enough to see that he and his party would get credit for being interested in the University. Indeed they might gather a large measure of credit for it because the Democratic party had not ordinarily been credited with any special concern about liberal education. But it would be wholly unjust to assume that his interest was merely partisan or political. He was not only a leader of the Democratic party: he was intensely democratic in his feelings: he sympathized with the poor: he literally hated aristocracy, and he reasoned that endowed universities were aristocratic: he wanted all the boys and girls of the state to have the same educational opportunities as the children of the wealthy, and he believed that a tax-supported university developed up to the plane of the other universities would not only do much for many deserving students who would otherwise not have their opportunity, but also much for the common thinking, for the ordinary industries, for the other institutions of the state, and for the administration of the state itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Sloane Draper, "Governor Altgeld and the University of Illinois," Alumni Quarterly, VII (Apr. 1913), 77-82.

I became president of the University soon after he became governor, and very likely in consequence of it, although we were total strangers. My political sympathies were completely at variance with his and with those of two-thirds of the trustees. I had not been a candidate for president; the trustees had come into another state and sought me out and urged me to accept the position. There were many things to make me wonder at it and this difference in politics was one of the most striking of them. I had alluded to it and they had assured me that politics had nothing to do with the administration of the University; that they cared nothing about my politics for they knew I would not obtrude my political affiliations upon the institution; and that the Governor was in full accord with them and anxious I should accept their invitation.

Governor Altgeld came to the University to see me the first day of my service, August 1, 1894. I had gone there early so as to get settled and learn the roads around and through the buildings before the teachers and the students returned from their vacations. Learning that I was to be there that day, he was on hand to see what sort of a foreigner the trustees had caught. [Draper had been Cleveland Superintendent of Public Instruction prior to his tenure at Illinois.] But his curiosity about me was certainly no greater than mine about him. He had a reputation which had aroused my interest, possibly my apprehension. We went into a room alone and communed together for a long time. What he said satisfied me of his sincere interest in the institution and gave me confidence that we could work together. Of course he complained about the lack of support and of the bad management of which he alleged the Republicans had been guilty. I assured him that there was no harm in his saying that, but I would have to pass it by if the delinquents would tread the winepress with sufficient assiduity thereafter. He talked of the things he wanted done: they were good things to do and showed that his sympathies were genuine and that he had given not a little thought to an involved and rather depressed situation. He wanted more buildings, more teachers, more students, more carrying of liberal learning to all the people and all of the interests of the State, and much more money to do things with. It was a little surprising to hear a live governor talk like that but there was nothing in it to dishearten me. I put the political business squarely up to him saying that we could make no substantial headway and in time would surely come to grief unless we ignored all partisanship and urged all partisans to work with us to upbuild a real university. He accepted this completely and said he would ask nothing of me in the special interest of his party or any member of it, and that he would personally

and officially respond so far as he properly could to all the calls I should make upon him in the interests of a far great university.

He kept that promise with enthusiasm. We not only knew that University appropriations which passed the Legislature would have the executive approval, but he was not at all averse to helping us get appropriations through the legislature. And he made it very easy and pleasant for us to go to him at all times and places. Let me illustrate by a concrete instance. The first legislature in my administration was Republican in both branches. The University asked for \$150,000 for a new library and administrative building, and small sums (\$12,000 each I think) for an observatory and a president's house. The operating appropriations was asked to be advanced, if I remember rightly, from \$60,000 to \$90,000. These appropriations were thought large. Senator Dunlap had, with his usual skill, engineered the bill through the Senate after the elimination of the observatory and president's house, but the seasoned political skippers who managed appropriations in the House determined in their mess-room that that \$150,000 for the library building must be killed. So they appointed a sub-committee of the appropriations committee, consisting of the most seasoned of their members, to consider the matter and report. It was well understood that they would report against the library building, and it was feared that their report would be adopted before the University people could do anything to stop it. It was eleven o'clock on a bad night when I received a message from Senator Dunlap that the sub-committee would report and the full committee would act at 2 p. m. the next day. Professor Burrill, Mr. Pillsbury, and I procured a "hack" and drove to Tolono through the mud and reached Springfield about daylight. Now think of calling up a governor on the telephone before seven o'clock upon such an errand. But that is what I did, and he said he was not dressed yet but to come to the mansion at once and he would see me very soon. I told him we could split up the Republicans on the committee, but we had got to have the solid Democratic support at once to save the library building. He said, "You attend to the Republicans: pay no attention to the Democrats, and I will see that every one of them is in the committee and votes for whatever you want." We did as he said. The sub-committee recommended that the library appropriation be stricken out, and then to show how very fair it wanted to be it recommended that the little appropriation for the observatory which the senate had stricken out, be re-inserted. We had a member of the committee ready with a motion to re-insert the library building and then took the opportunity to talk to them, and the motion to re-insert was



adopted 17 to 6. The Republicans divided, but the solid Democratic vote did the trick. In this way the observatory appropriation was left in, and both appropriations passed both houses and were approved by the Governor. Very late in the session and just before the bill passed, the chairman of the House Committee telegraphed me asking my consent to leaving out the library building on condition that an appropriation for a president's house should be inserted. The consideration for selling out the University was insufficient and the proffer was declined. In the end Professor Shattuck proposed to sell an outlying farm and put the money into a president's house, and that was done, with the cordial approval of all concerned.

. . . . .  
 [That was] only an example of Governor Altgeld's positive and continual activity for the University. . . . Governor Altgeld was misjudged in two directions. He was a far abler man than was realized, and he was not the anarchist that he was very commonly thought to be. He was intensely an American, understood the philosophy of our institutions very well and the structure of our framework of government very thoroughly. . . . Perhaps he was the boss "Progressive" of his day. His trouble was possibly that he felt for the unfortunate too deeply and without sufficient discrimination; he loathed, none too bitterly, the course of the lower courts in Chicago which dealt with the underworld, but he let his disgust carry him too far; he hated too intensely the opponents whom he could not like: he read German socialistic literature too exclusively and let it have too large an influence upon the mind of a man who had reached his eminence. Yet none can say that his thought was not being projected into directions and dealing with hard problems that are compelling the serious thought of the country more and more year by year.

And in any event, he stood by the University of Illinois in the hour of her first great growth and of her imperative need: he exerted the powers of his great office in her behalf to the very limits; and while all the friends of that University, now grown great, may dissent with some of his opinions, no one of them is at liberty to speak unkindly of him.

## APPENDIX B. ALTGELD ON ARCHITECTURE

Governor Altgeld expressed his architectural convictions on several public occasions.<sup>1</sup>

In his second biennial message to the State Legislature:

Owing to the rapid growth of our population and the great demand for room in public institutions, but little consideration was given to the subject of architectural design in public buildings in the past, the principal effort being in each case to get as much floor space as possible. Consequently, while the Senate has a large number of buildings, there are but few whose exterior architecture is commanding or impressive. The appropriations made during the present administration were so small as not to admit of ornamentation; but it was felt that the time had come when we should not only fireproof buildings, but give a little more attention to their external appearance. After an examination of the subject I became satisfied that the most inexpensive, as well as the most impressive style for buildings that are to stand alone in a grove, or in a field, is what has been called Tudor-Gothic style, as the effect is produced by simply carrying the mason work, that is the wall, above the cornice lines in such a way as to produce small towers, battlements, etc. This style has consequently been adopted in most of the buildings that have been erected during the last two years, and is found to be very effective. Had we possessed large appropriations so that Grecian columns, Roman arches, and other forms of ornamentation could have been indulged in, it is probable that some other style of architecture would have been selected; but for the money which the State has expended it would have been impossible to get the same desirable effects in any other style.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts from Altgeld's speeches are quoted in Waldo R. Browne, Altgeld of Illinois (New York, 1924), 228-29.

In a speech at the laying of the cornerstone of the Rock Island Hospital for the Insane:

You have observed that the style of architecture adopted is what has been called Tudor-Gothic and has something in common with some of the famous castles found in Europe. . . . In the centuries which are to come, as the intelligent traveler shall ascend the great Father of Waters and see this magnificent structure commanding a view of the surrounding country, he will exclaim: 'There stands a monument to the intelligence, the civilization and the humanity of the people of northwestern Illinois.'

## APPENDIX C. RICKER: ARCHITECT AND EDUCATOR

When Nathan C. Ricker (1843-1924) died, the student publication Archi remembered that he was affectionately called "good old Daddy Ricker," and that he had "inspired and guided the destinities of many prominent men." (Apr. 15, 1924)

Ricker wrote the story of his life when he was an old man; it is a remarkable paper,<sup>1</sup> documenting his experiences as an architect and educator and providing many insights into his era: Brought up in Maine, Ricker taught himself Latin, Botany, French and Geology--studies which later enabled him to graduate from the University after three years.<sup>year?</sup> Working in a mill and then as a competent carpenter in the building trade, he also made piano cases and repaired farm implements. Because of those experiences, and a strong interest in civil engineering, he entered the Illinois Industrial University to take the "course" in architecture. In his senior year the instructor who taught architectural design and rendering did not return and University Regent Gregory asked Ricker to take charge of the work; by teaching himself and three other students, he graduated from his own department the following March--thus becoming the first to graduate from an American college architectural

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<sup>1</sup>Nathan C. Ricker, "The Story of a Life," typewritten MS. autobiography (Urbana, 1922).

program. A regular appointment was then offered Ricker, providing he travel and study in Europe for six months; the young architect did so, studying at the Bauakademie in Berlin for six months where he learned the German system of instruction and gained valuable knowledge of architectural and art books that later served in establishing the University's outstanding architectural library.

Ricker was President of the Illinois Board of Examiners for eighteen years (aside from being Dean of the College of Engineering), as well as Chairman of the Illinois Commission for Codifying Building Laws. He was instrumental in getting the Architect's Registration Act passed, and held License Number One; the law did much to raise standards and the professional status of the architect. (Information obtained from E. L. Stouffer, Dec., 1963.)

Professor emeritus L. H. Provine remembered watching Ricker translate the volumes that were used for many years as textbooks: a dictionary at his elbow writing in fine longhand on a stenographer's tablet (some were written on parchment), and after typing the manuscript himself Ricker would then place it in the library for the students' use--all that done while on "vacation." (Interview with Provine, Dec., 1963.)

## APPENDIX D. WELLS: ARTIST

After the murals were completed, President Draper recommended that the artist be appointed professor on a full time basis: "Dean Ricker informs me that the work of Professors Wells in the department of architecture equips that department more completely than any other similar department in the country, and that the latter is without peer as a worker and a teacher in industrial and decorative art."<sup>1</sup>

Newton Alonzo Wells (1852-1923): Biographical Notes

Bachelor of Painting, 1877, Master of Painting, 1880, Syracuse University. Studied under Bouguereau, Laurens and Benjamin-Constant, at Académie Julian, Paris.

Taught drawing at Union College, 1877-79, and at Syracuse University, 1879-89; Dean, School of Arts, Western Reserve University, 1899-90. Prof. of History and Practice of Painting, 1899-1903, and Prof. of Architectural Decoration, 1903-19, University of Illinois.

X Murals in Altgeld Hall, ~~University Auditorium (later removed)~~, Sangamon County Courthouse, Springfield, and Colonial Theatre, Boston; designed Soldiers' Monument, Tuscola, mosaic panel before entrance to Ricker library, and portraits of Burrill, Draper and Ricker.

*ms. and other murals were by F. Millet*

Exhibitor in Paris Salon, 1896-98, Columbian Exposition, 1893; member of professional associations, and writer of several articles of art: on color, Psychological Bulletin, VII (June, 1910); on mural painting, Brush and Pencil, VI (1900); on color in architecture, Inland Architect (1909).

<sup>1</sup> 20th Report (1900), 258. Biographical material in "Faculty Record," 1912; Baker, 309.

Wells: Chronology of the Library Decorations<sup>1</sup>

1896

June 20, Draper to Wells. "Since receiving your letter the other day I have been thinking of you in relation to the decorative work to be done in our new library building. The building has just been commenced. . . . I know of no one who can do it as you can, and I should be glad to have you do it. I send you today some blueprints and a communication from Prof. White . . . " [We presume that Draper and Wells had met in the course of their professional activities in New York State.]

1897

Apr. 18, Wells to Draper. Will enter competition; is studying Romanesque style.

May 3, Draper to Wells. Urges him to quickly send sketches on. "You certainly labor under great disadvantage in competition with others who have opportunity to see the building . . . You will have strong competition from Chicago, but that fact ought not to discomfit you." [Draper proves to be a staunch supporter.]

May 14, Wells sends "Explanatory" letter to Ricker and White.

June 9, Trustees order all artists' plans rejected.

June 26, Wells sends Ricker and White "revised proposition."

c. July 9, Wells' original proposal for the murals was probably sent to architects on this date.

July 19, Ricker and White suggest that Wells see building and have personal interview before entering into final agreement.

July 26, Wells to Draper. Will go to Champaign the following week; is grateful for "your good offices for me with the committee."

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<sup>1</sup> Information culled from letters and documents in University Archives, University Architect's Office and Trustees' Reports.



Aug. 5, Wells in Champaign and working on the rotunda decorations.

Sept. 21, Committee announces that Wells is winner of competition.

c. Dec. 31, Wells sends New Year's greeting to Draper and informs him of his intention to return to Paris.

### 1898

May 26, Draper anticipating Wells' coming in the Fall.

c. May, Wells tells Draper of his Salon success.

June 7, Draper glad to hear of Wells' commission.

Oct. 11, Draper to Mrs. Wells in Syracuse. "I have not heard from Mr. Wells since the middle of August. . . . I should be glad to be advised of what you know as to his movements. Our people became very much attached to your husband and son last winter and there are many inquiries as to when Mr. Wells will return."

### 1899

Mar. 26, Chicago Sunday Tribune illustrated feature story on Wells' murals.

### 1900

Mar. 13, unveiling of the four murals in the Library Building.

### Wells: Mural Techniques<sup>1</sup>

The custom of nineteenth-century American muralists had been to work on large canvases in the studio, then remove them from the stretchers and have them permanently installed. That procedure

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<sup>1</sup>Wells, Brush and Pencil, 231-36; King, 78.

was followed by Melchers and McEwen at the Chicago Exposition; but other painters applied their pigment directly to the plaster surfaces--an arduous enterprise. William Morris Hunt wished to create an authentic fresco by painting directly on the walls of the Albany State Capitol but unfortunately the walls were not of fresh plaster, but stone, and dampness, poor construction, tottering pillars and a leaky roof contributed to the destruction of his murals just one year later.

Wells' technique was still different, and seems to have been efficient; he did not paint on canvas in a studio, nor did he apply paint to stone, but because of the huge size of each of the library walls--about twelve by forty feet--Wells put the canvas up into place and then painted directly on it:

When these enlarged panels [see p. 50] were finally completed to my satisfaction, I pinned over them a stout parchment tracing-paper, through which the drawing was perfectly visible, and painted upon this with oil-colors, diluted in spirits of turpentine, which causes the pigment to dry flat and with the suggestive effect of finished work. This procedure saved the labor of tracing and transferring for the color studies, and permitted as many trials at the color-scheming as was desirable to reach a satisfactory result without the danger of injuring the scale drawing. The color schemes do not require to be worked out in detail; only the broad masses with their relative intensities and tonal values are necessary or desirable at this stage.

When all of this work had been accomplished, occupying a period of six months, I was ready to attack the walls themselves.

These were prepared by first giving them two coats of white lead in oil. As soon as this was dry, the surface was covered with a cement made of white lead, with just enough oil, varnish, and turpentine to make it workable with a stiff brush. Upon this freshly covered surface was stretched a plain and unprepared canvas and

nailed all around the edges. It was then rolled down until completely imbedded in the white lead, and then immediately covered with a coat of the same, diluted with oil and turpentine. This required a full month to dry hard in an artificially heated atmosphere, after which the surfaces were covered with a coat of preparation made of lead, Spanish whiting, oil and turpentine. When this had become perfectly hard, the surfaces were rubbed down with fine sandpaper, and were ready for the pictures.

While the walls were in process of drying, I busied myself with the preparation of the full-sized working cartoons. These were drawn upon manila paper with charcoal, or, I should have said, traced, because they were drawn by the aid of a stereopticon, a lantern-slide having been made from each of the large scale drawings. These scale drawings had been previously laid out in squares equivalent to feet upon the wall surface, and it was only necessary to enlarge the drawing until these squares were one foot square; then pin up the paper upon the screen and trace the drawing, squares, and all. With line and chalk the wall was also laid out in foot squares when it was only necessary to apply the cartoon to its proper place upon the squares, and then transfer the drawing by means of sliding under it, when its upper edge had been secured in place with small tacks, a large sheet of transfer-paper inserted underneath, and then going over the lines with a hard blunt point. This saved the trouble of pricking the outlines and then pouncing them by the old method. The transfer-paper I made myself by spreading upon a large sheet of manila paper a mixture of lampblack and mutton tallow, stirred together while the tallow was hot, and spread upon the paper with a rag while the mixture was still warm. One such transfer-paper served for all the panels.

After the outlines were in place I was ready to attack with the color. For this work I used the oil-colors put up in tubes of quadruple size, with the exception of zinc-white, which I bought in bulk. Instead of thinning and tempering my colors with turpentine, I used a medium made by dissolving white wax in petroleum--ordinary kerosene--over a hot-water bath. Enough wax should be added to make a jelly when cold. Of this medium I added about one part to two parts of pigment when mixing my colors on the palette. It has the double advantage of drying slowly and allowing perfect deliberation in the work, and it does not change color or darken at all that I can discover during the drying process. This, and the fact that the dried color readily softens by the application of a little turpentine to its surface, makes it easy to join the work of each succeeding day, or after any lapse of time, without a break or visible "lap." The wax

has also the additional advantage of producing a perfectly flat and lusterless surface, with a delicate and aerial bloom, like that of real fresco; and not the least of its good qualities is its preserving influence upon the color, protecting it from the contact of coal-gas, the bête noire of decorators in our climate.

Decorative pictures of smaller dimensions might be executed to greater advantage upon prepared canvas in the studio, perhaps, but wall spaces of the size and shape of those in the library--about twelve by forty feet--could not be thus handled.

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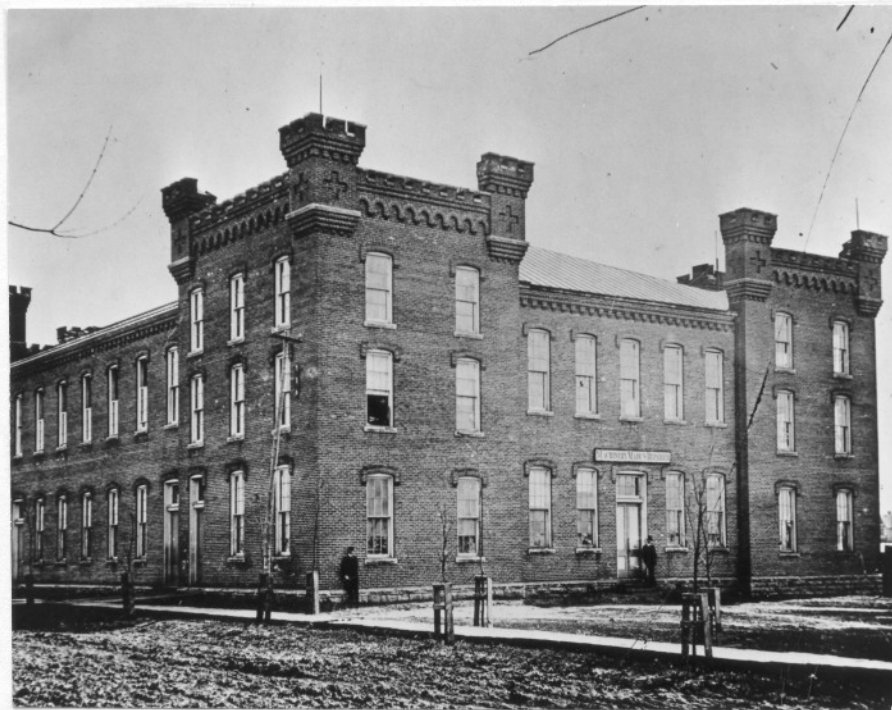
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## ILLUSTRATIONS



1862

12. The Original Building, called the "Elephant"



1872

13. The Mechanical Building and Drill Hall



14. University Hall

1873-1938



1878

15. Chemistry Building (original state)



16. Chemistry Building, now Harker Hall (present condition)





1878

15. Chemistry Building (original state)



16. Chemistry Building, now Harker Hall (present condition)





1890

17. Old Armory, now Gymnasium Annex

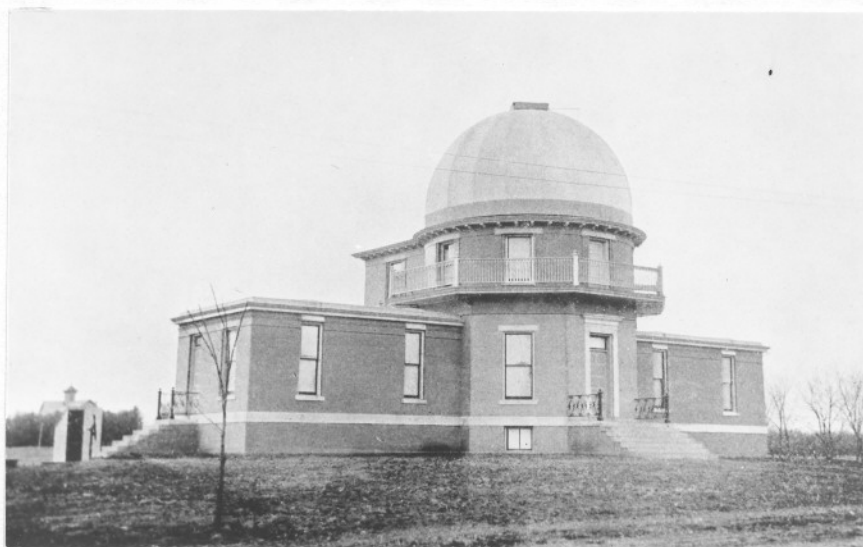


1892

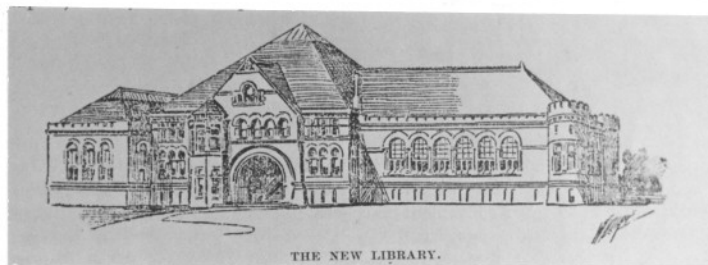
18. Natural History Building



19. Engineering Hall



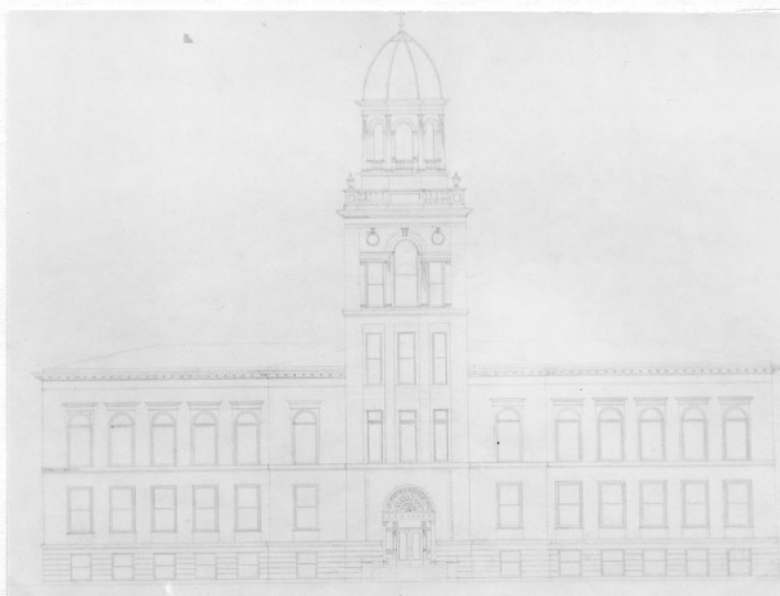
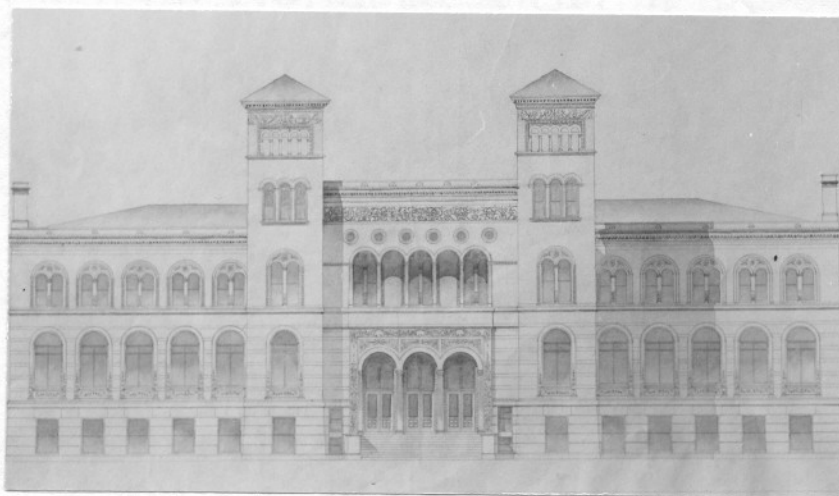
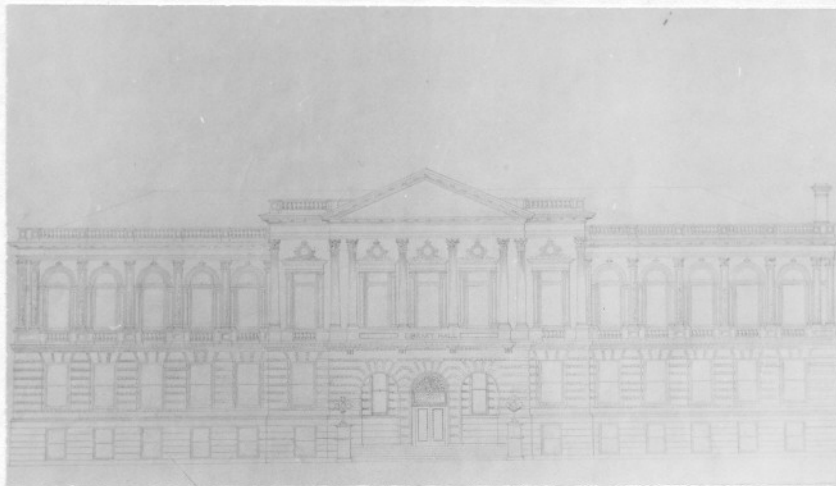
20. Astronomical Observatory



21. Bolles project

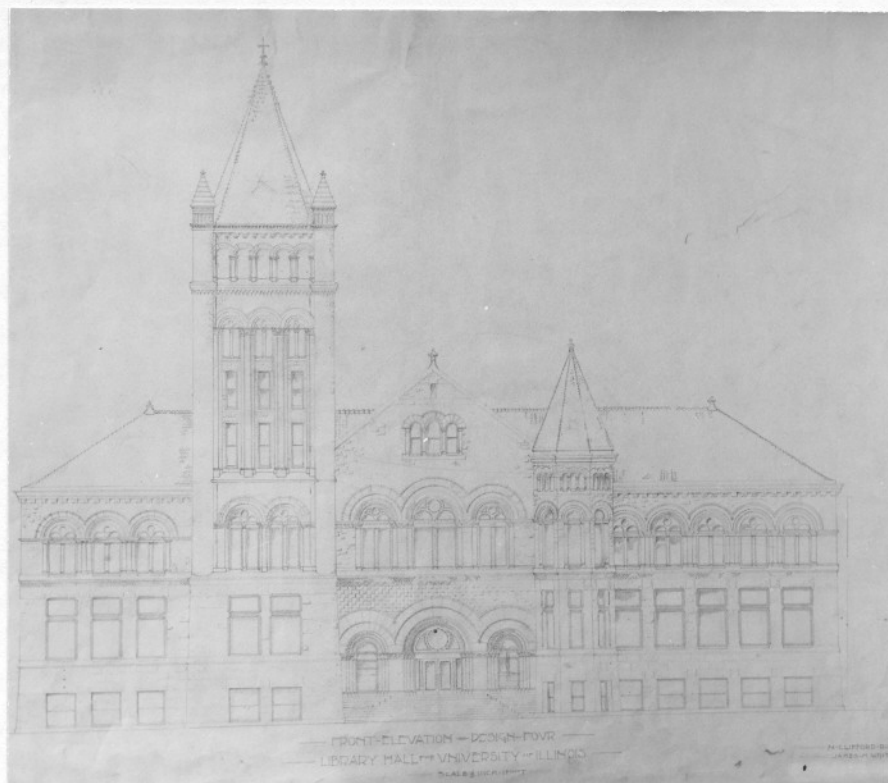


22. Eastern Illinois University,  
Administration Building

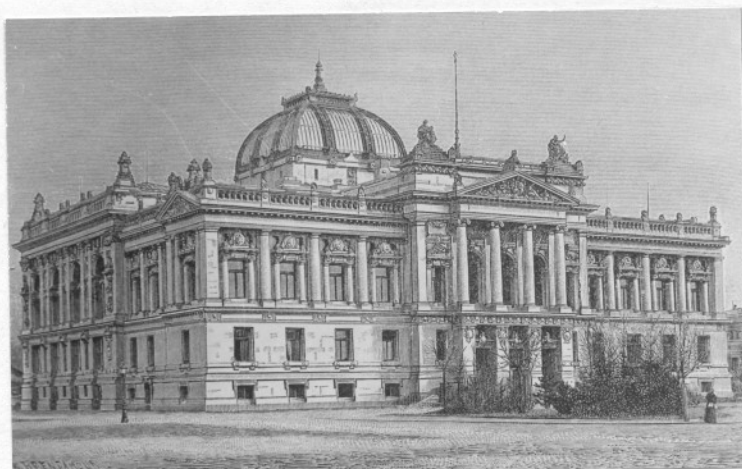


23-25. Ricker and White, rejected projects 1896

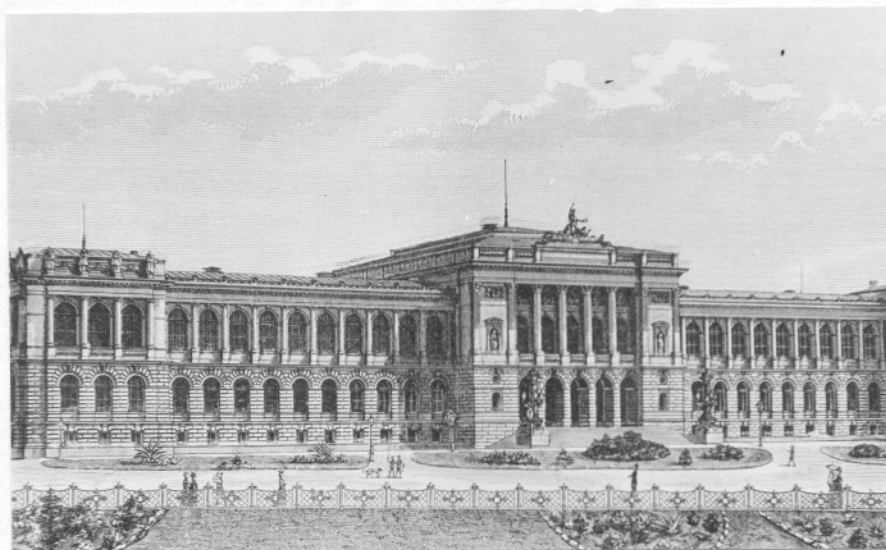




26. Ricker and White, accepted project 1896



27. Strassburg, University Library



28. Strassburg, Kaiser Wilhelms University





29. H. H. Richardson, Albany City Hall



30. H. H. Richardson, Pittsburgh County Courthouse



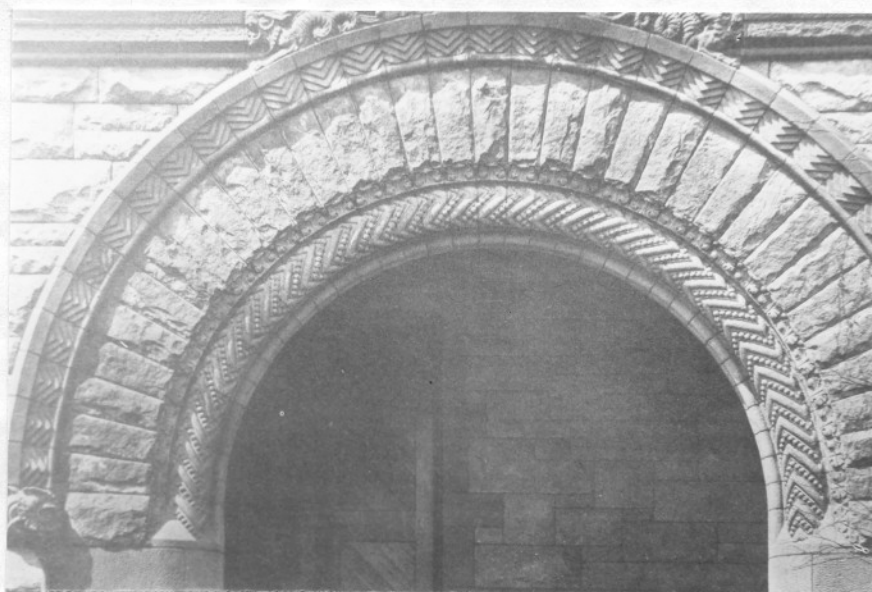
31. Altgeld Hall, masonry detail



32. Altgeld Hall, tower detail



33. Altgeld Hall, entrance detail

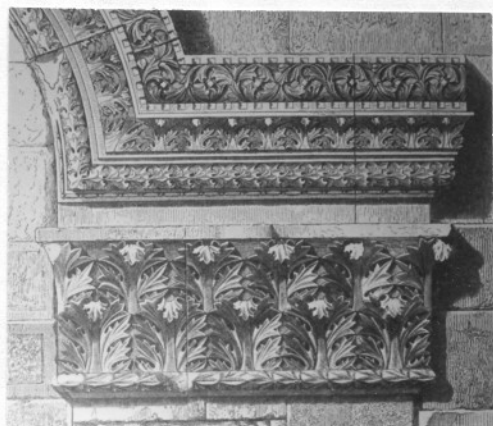


34. H. H. Richardson, Ames Library, entrance detail

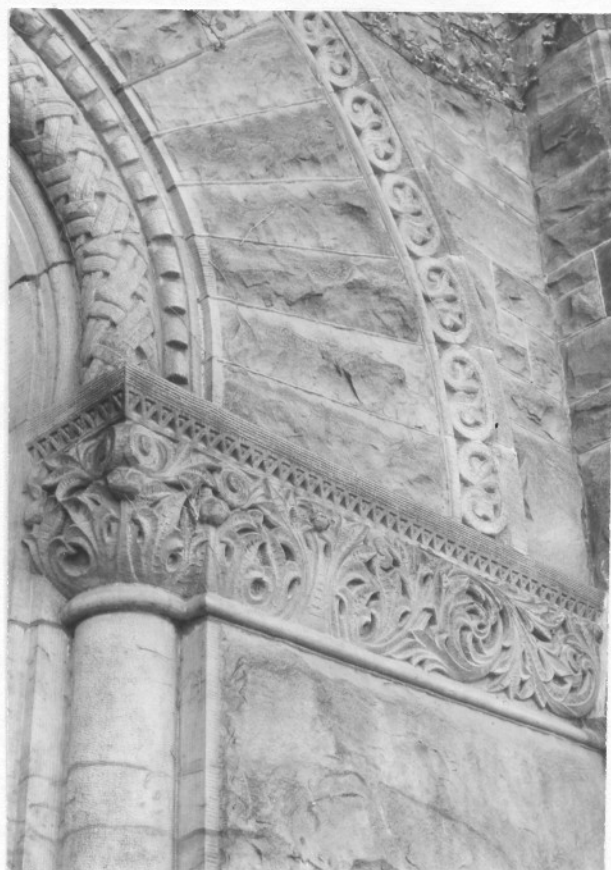




35. Toulouse Museum, capital



36. Jerusalem doorway,  
detail



37. Altgeld Hall, window detail



38. Altgeld Hall, frieze detail



39. Vézelay, capital detail



40. Vaison, carving detail

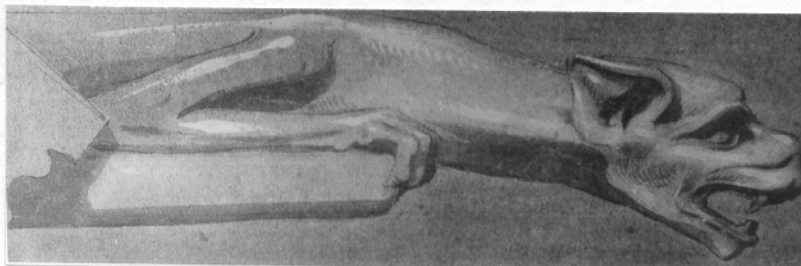


41. Toulouse, 42. St. Gilles, capital decorative motifs





43. Altgeld Hall, gargoyle



44. Viollet-le-Duc, Notre Dame de Paris, gargoyle



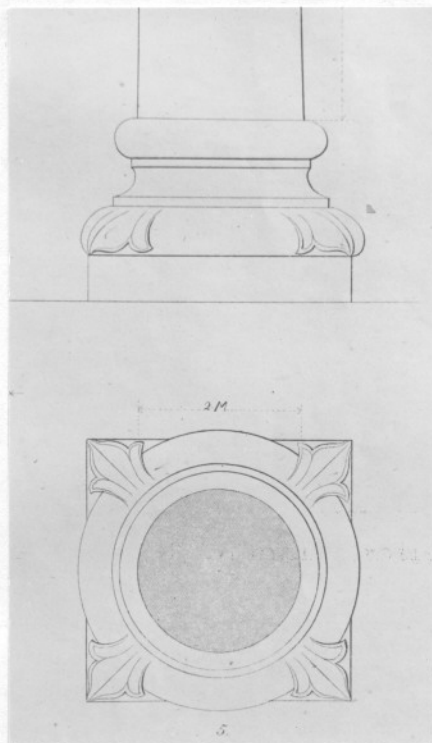


45. Altgeld Hall, rotunda (original state)





48. Altgeld Hall, rotunda detail (present condition)'



49. Gelnhausen, column,  
detail of base



50. Altgeld Hall, rotunda column,  
detail of base

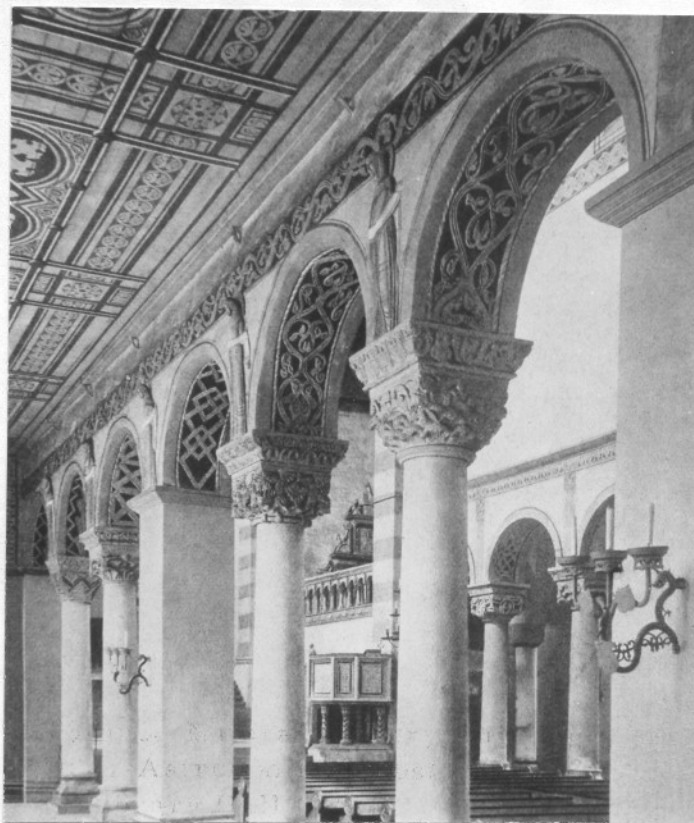




51. Venice, St. Mark's  
Cathedral, capital



52. Altgeld Hall, rotunda, intrados  
and capital

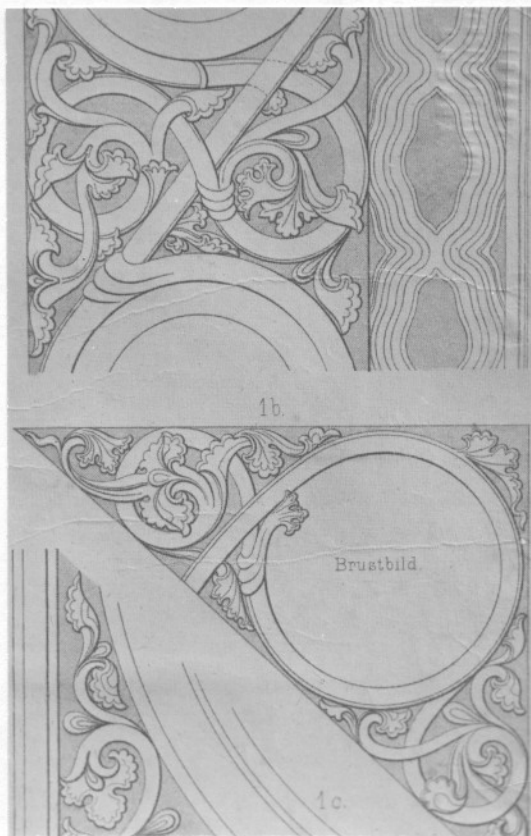


53. Hildesheim, St. Michael's Church,  
interior

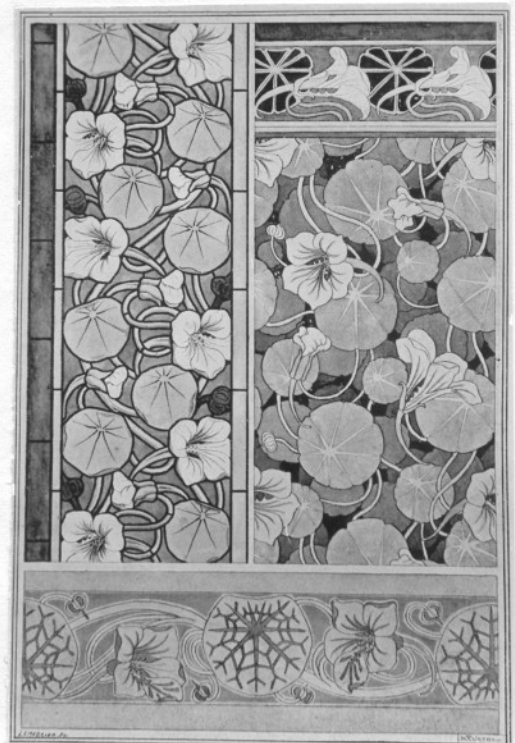


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54. Altgeld Hall, rotunda, wall decoration



55. Hildesheim, St. Michael's Church, decorative motifs *publ 1891*



56. Decoration: La Capuchine

1897





57-58. Altgeld Hall, vestibule, simulated mosaics



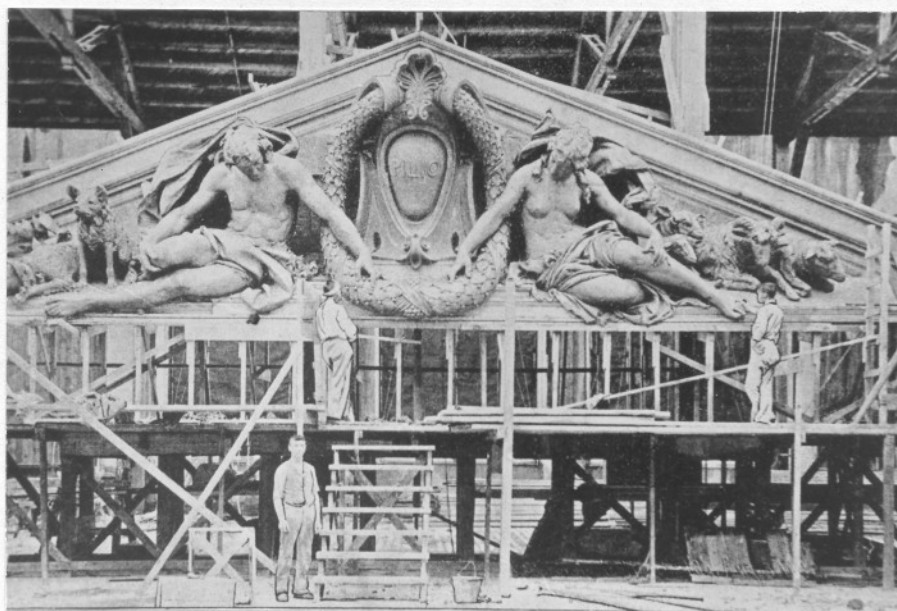
59. Huston: Byzantine arch 1894-95



60. Illustration: Chants Populaires Tchèques



61. Altgeld Hall, rotunda (original state)



62. Chicago Exposition, Agriculture Building, pediment 1893



63. Chicago Exposition, Palace of Fine Arts,  
United States section 1893





64. McEwen: Chicago Exposition, Music

1893



65. Gardner: At the Water's Edge 1895



66. Photograph,  
Tell Me,  
Maiden Binding  
Roses



67. Photograph:  
Salute of the Rose 1896



68-70. Homeric Tableaux, University of Illinois 1897





71. Wells: pendentive figure



72. Photograph:  
When Evening Cometh 1896



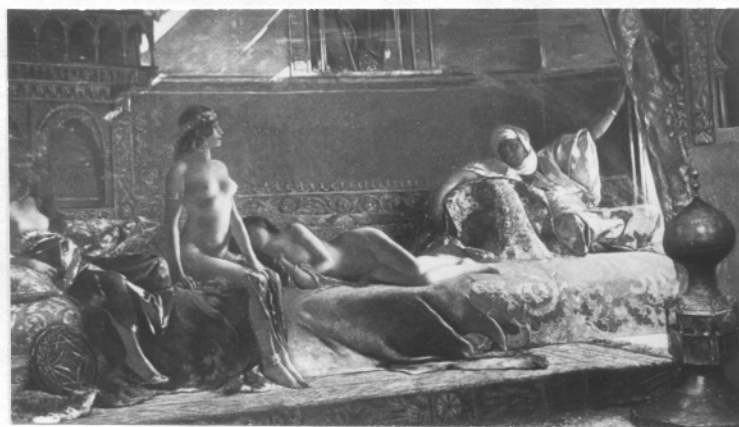
73. Bouguereau: La Jeunesse de Bacchus

1884



74. Laurens: Vengeance d'Urbain VI

1884



75. Benjamin-Constant: Les Chérifas

1884



76-79. Wells: original studies in chalk

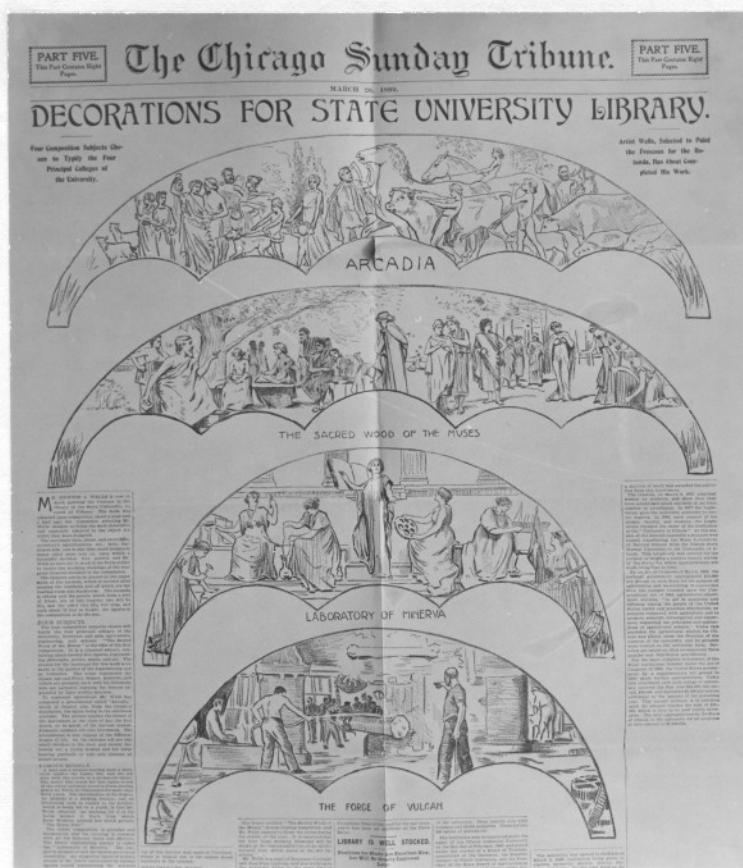
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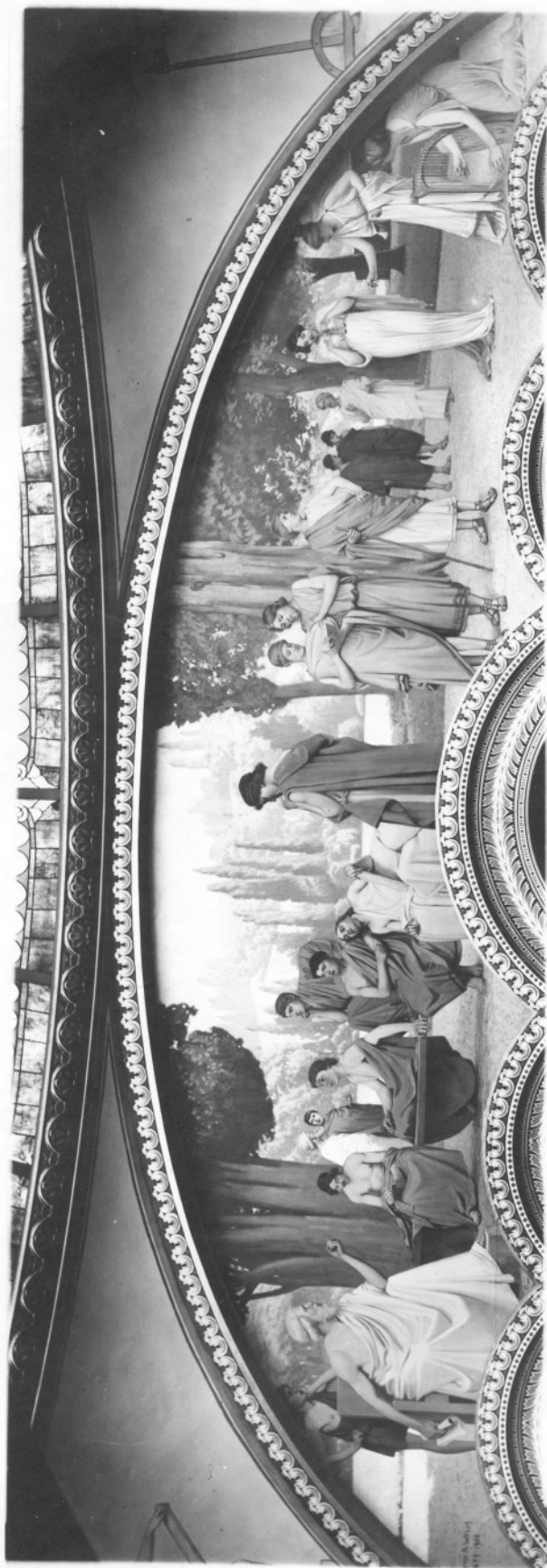
80-82. Wells: studies from life

publ. in  
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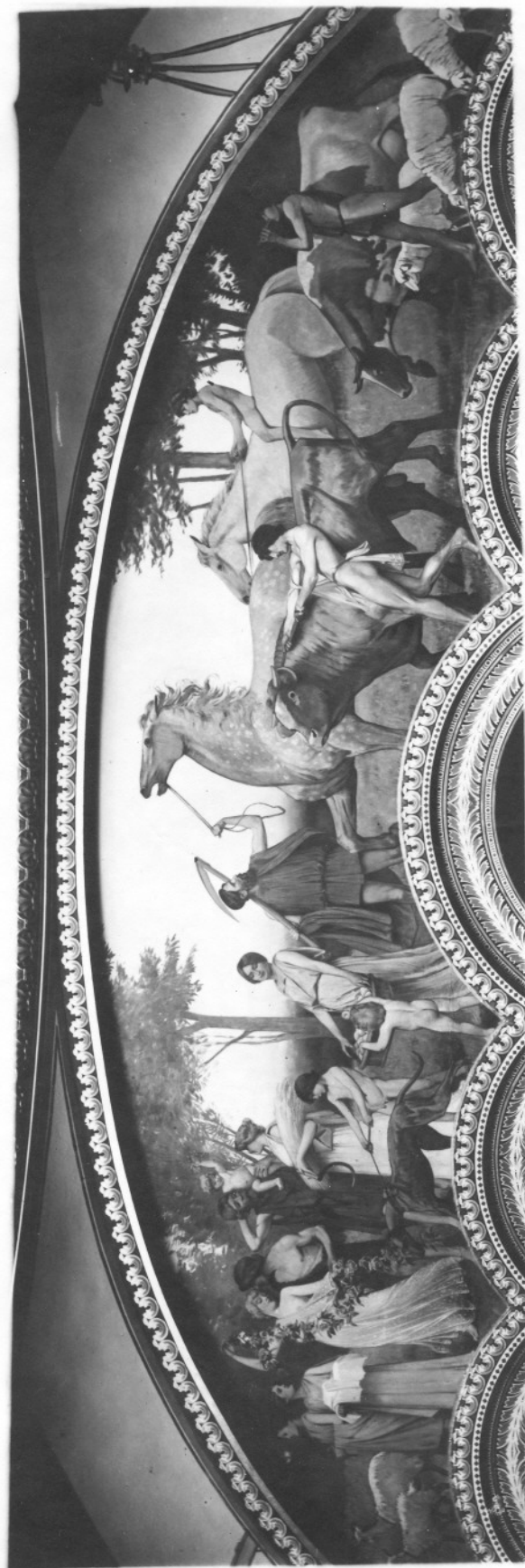


83. Wells: Chicago Sunday Tribune, drawings Mar. 26, 1899



84. Wells: The Sacred Wood of the Muses, south lunette





85. Wells: Arcadia, north lunette

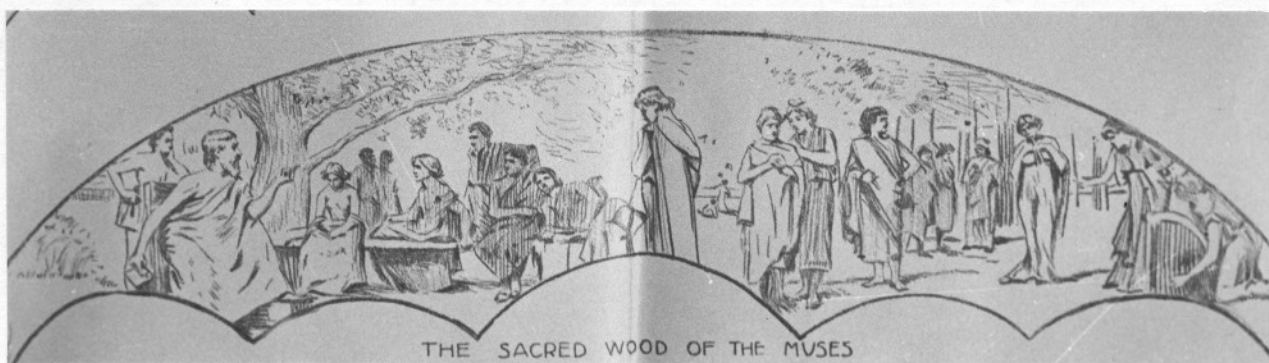


86. Wells: The Laboratory of Minerva, west lunette



87. Wells: The Forge of Vulcan, east lunette





88-91. Wells: The Sacred Wood of the Muses



95. Simmler: 1896  
Muse der Musik



96. Bulleid:  
Glycera 1896



92. Puvis de Chavannes: Le Bois Sacré,  
Cher aux Arts et aux Muses 1884

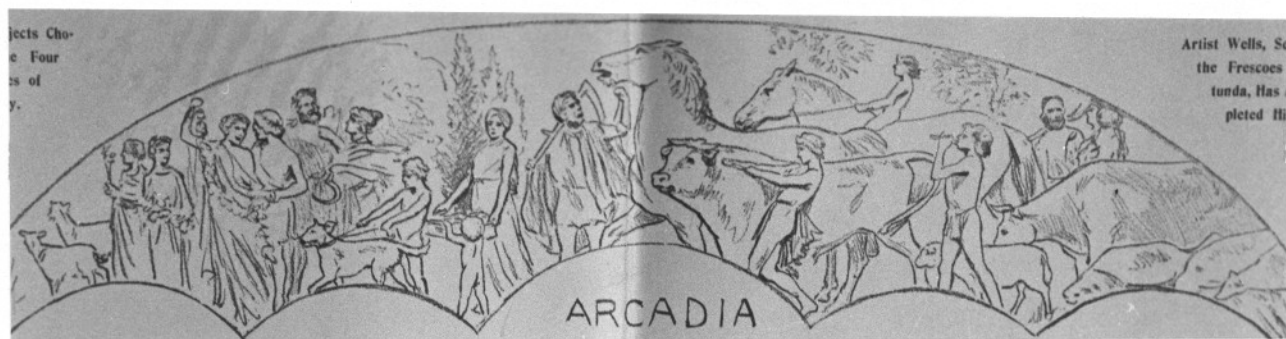


93. McEwen: Chicago Exposition, Life 1893

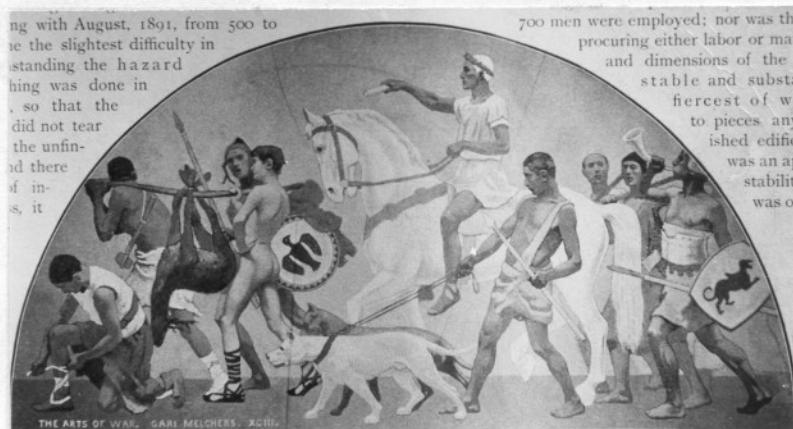


94. McEwen: Library of Congress,  
Prometheus 1897

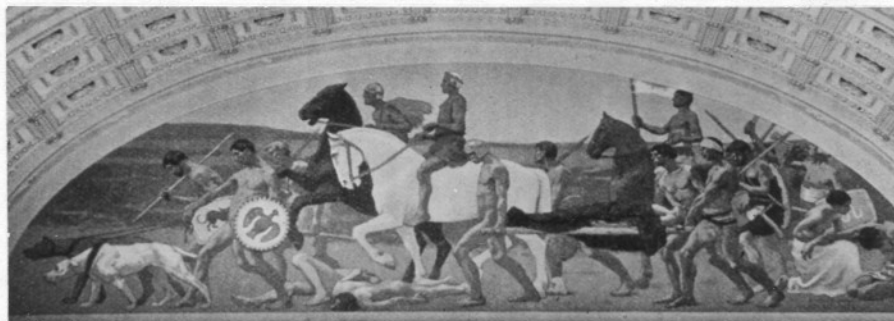




97-100. Wells: Arcadia



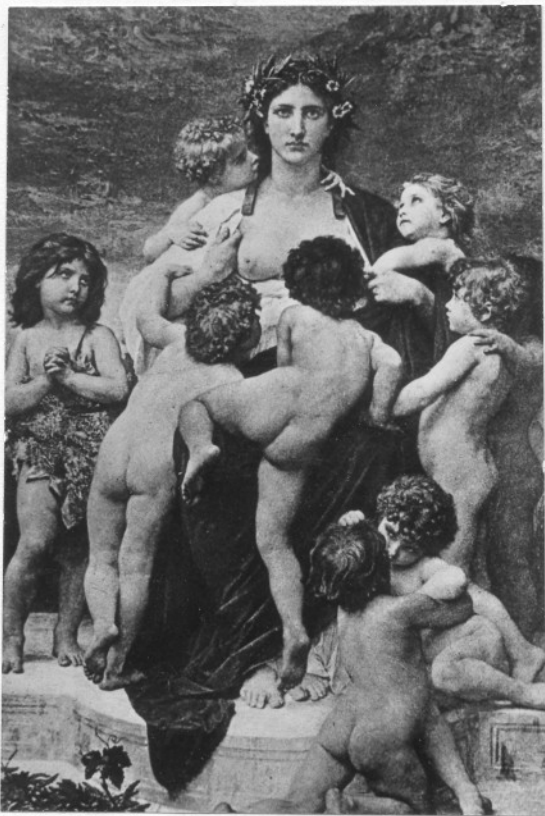
101. Melchers: Chicago Exposition,  
The Arts of War 1893



102. Melchers: Library of Congress, War 1897



103. Parthenon: frieze detail



104. Bouguereau: Alma Parens  
publ 1900



105. Bouguereau: Offrande à l'Amour 1900 publ.



106. St. John Harper:  
The Dance of the Flowers 1889





107-110. Wells: The Laboratory of Minerva



111. Nu Sigma Phi, University of Illinois, 1899



112. Nu Sigma Phi, University of Illinois, 1900





1896

113. Photograph:  
The Ghost of  
Vanished Joys



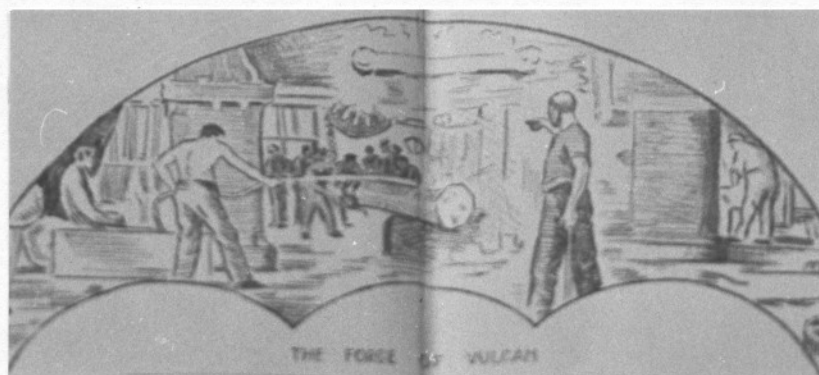
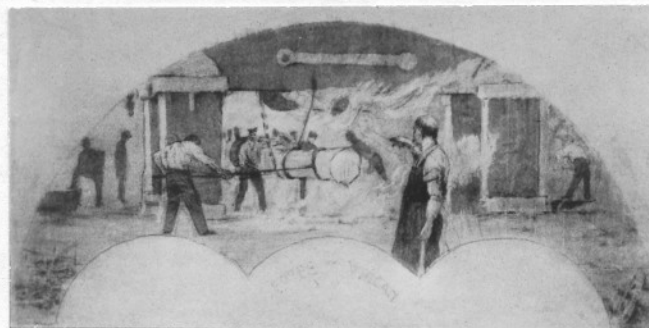
1896

114. Huger: Amusements of the Grecian Maidens

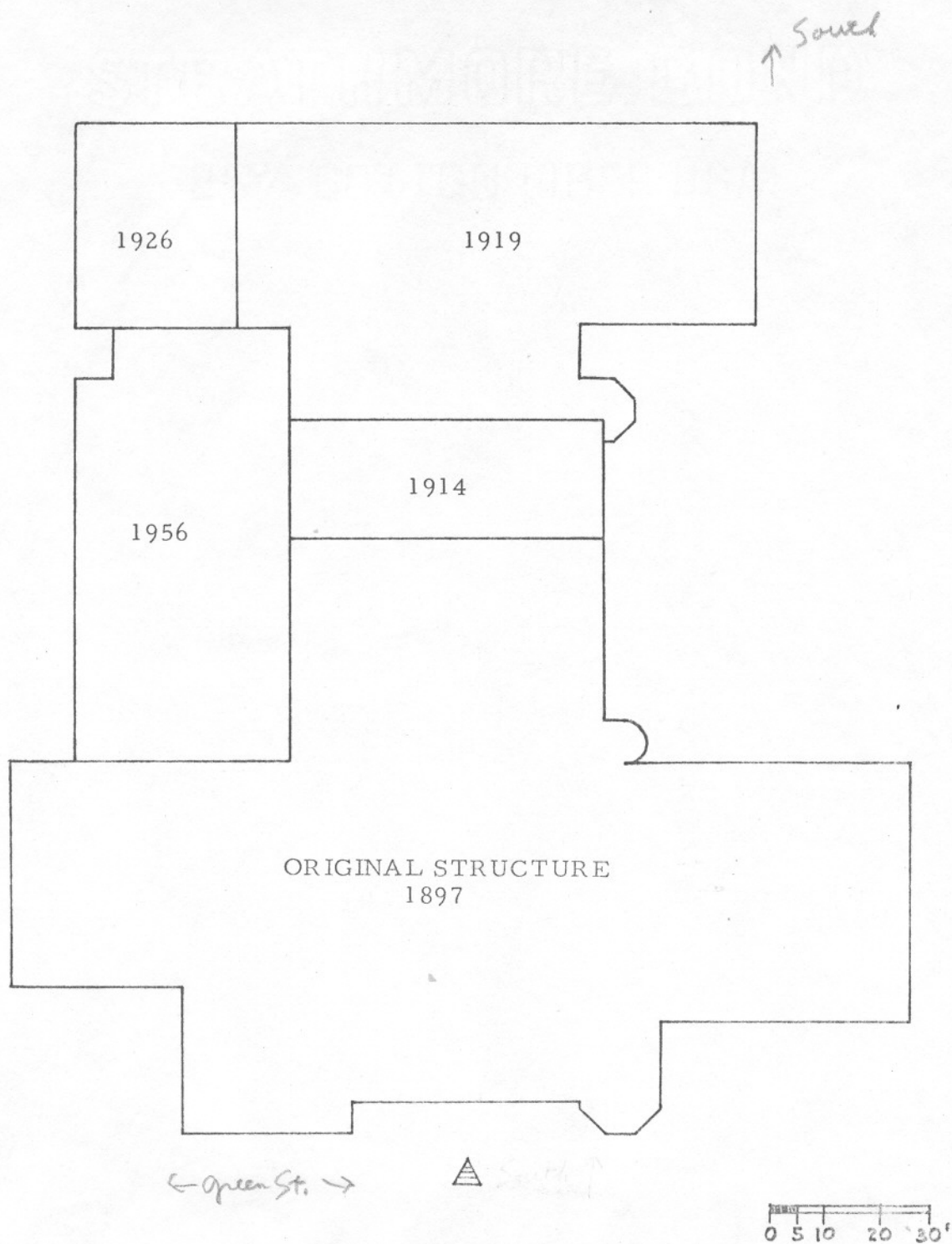


1896

115. Photograph:  
After the Game

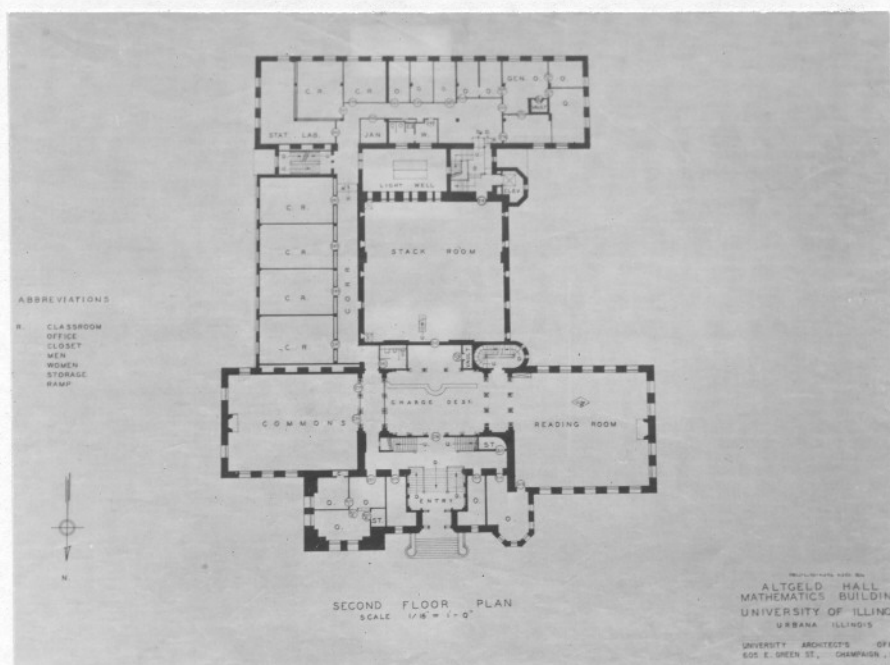


116-119. Wells: The Forge of Vulcan



120. Altgeld Hall, additions





121. Altgeld Hall, ground plan 1956



122. Altgeld Hall, east addition, 1956

123. Campus,  
c. 1910



124. Campus,  
1963



1. Harker Hall, originally Chemistry Building (1878); 2. Gymnasium Annex, originally Old Armory (1890); 3. Natural History Building (1892); 4. Engineering Hall (1894); 5. Astronomical Observatory (1896); 6. Altgeld Hall, originally Library Hall (1897)



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