

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Rookery Building

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

209 South LaSalle Street (south east corner of LaSalle  
and Adams Avenue)

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7th

STATE

Illinois

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF  
CODE

COUNTY

Cook

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT  
☒ BUILDING(S)  
☐ STRUCTURE  
☐ SITE  
☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC  
☐ PRIVATE  
☐ BOTH  
**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**  
☐ IN PROCESS  
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED  
☐ UNOCCUPIED  
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS  
**ACCESSIBLE**  
☒ YES: RESTRICTED  
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED  
☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE  
☒ COMMERCIAL  
☐ EDUCATIONAL  
☐ ENTERTAINMENT  
☐ GOVERNMENT  
☐ INDUSTRIAL  
☐ MILITARY  
☐ MUSEUM  
☐ PARK  
☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
☐ RELIGIOUS  
☐ SCIENTIFIC  
☐ TRANSPORTATION  
☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

J. Parker Hall (land leased from City of Chicago)

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Trustee under Rookery Building Trust A, 111 West Washington Street

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

STATE

Illinois

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Cook County Recorder of Deeds

STREET &amp; NUMBER

County Building

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

STATE

Illinois

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Building Survey

DATE

1963

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

National Park Service, Department of the Interior

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

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## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT  
☐ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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#### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Completed in 1886 at a cost of \$1,500,000, the Rookery contained 4,765,500 cubic feet of space. Rising eleven stories above a basement to a height of 164 feet. The exterior construction on Adams and LaSalle Streets is of heavy granite columns from which rise a series of brick piers. On the upper floors on the building's flanks the wall load is carried on cast-iron columns joined by wrought-iron spandrel beams--a demonstration of true skeletal construction (Condit).

The plan was a hollow square allowing light on all four sides and from the interior as well over the central court which is 62 by 71 feet in the opening, built of glazed white terra cotta. An iron and glass roof covers the open court on the level of the second floor. The upper floors were reached by 10 elevators for passengers and one for freight. An elaborate oriel staircase on the court back of the LaSalle Street entrance and staircase from the Adams Street entrance give access to the upper stories. The corridors are floored and wainscoted in Italian marble. The wood finish throughout is antique oak (Ornamental Iron, Volume 1, November 1893, p. 96).

The exterior elevations, particularly on the LaSalle and Adams Streets sides are outstanding demonstrations of Burnham and Root's penchant for doorways covered with rich ornamental detail but of excellent basic workmanship--rough granite blocks precisely cut combined with delicate carving.

The minor changes that have occurred include the removal of some of John Root's ornament in the court which was replaced in 1905 by stair rails, light fixtures and urns designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Some of the glass has been covered with waterproof paint and a recent ground floor alteration by a tenant bank are minor changes--the Rookery stands today very much as it was in 1888.

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# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

## PERIOD

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1886-1888

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Daniel Burnham and John Wellborn Root

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"The Rookery and the Monadnock Building join the Marshall Field Wholesale Store [demolished] and the Auditorium as the final monuments of the art of masonry architecture."<sup>1</sup> Combined with the heavy masonry exterior the interior of the Rookery is a suprising light open space--full of intricate ornament and illuminated by a glass and iron vault--a descendant of Joseph Paxton's great Crystal Palace in London (1851). It took the special imagination and creaturty of men like Richardson, Burnham and Root and Louis Sullivan to combine the techniques required to build multi storied commercial structures that were also beautiful--both in scale and detail.

The building was erected by the Central Safety Deposit Company on land leased from the city. Originally there was a reservoir and water tank on the property as well as a temporary City Hall. Both structures were a favorite roost for pigeons and were known all over Chicago as "The Rookery"--John Root's sense of humor apparently prevailed and the new building retained the old name.

Some of the structural innovations include the use of cast iron and stone in new ways that allowed for the use of "ribbon windows" which allowed much more light into a high rise structure, the imaginative plan which integrated office spaces with shops in the interior court. This graceful court is enhanced by ornament in terra cotta and iron work, some by Root, the rest by Frank Lloyd Wright. A contemporary architect of that period, Henry Van Brunt, praised the court:"'The Rookery' is not only a noted example of great fertility of design, but there is nothing bolder, more original, or more inspiring in modern civic architecture either here or elsewhere, than its glass-covered court....the work has been committed to such a multitude of new devices in construction, and such a prodigality of invention in ornament, etc... .' Van Brunt goes on to describe the wonderful cast iron stairway "...the audacity of the double iron staircase which, supported by ingenious cantilevers, ramps with double curvature

<sup>1</sup>Condit, Carl The Chicago School of Architecture. University of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 58

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Burnham, Daniel Hudson, 1846-1912, Diaries 1895-1910, 16 vols. In manuscript, Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.  
Burnham, Daniel Hudson, 1846-1912, Letters, business and personal, 1890-1912, 21 vols., Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.  
Renwick, Ralph, Rookery building letters concerning the Rookery building and the origin of skeleton construction, August 1948, March 1950, Burnham

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A 1 6 4 4 7 5 50 4 6 3 6 3 3 0  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B \_\_\_\_\_  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C \_\_\_\_\_  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D \_\_\_\_\_  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 33 to 39 and 44 to 50 and East 50 feet of lots 40 to 43 in Block 116.  
School Section Addition to Chicago in Section 16. Township 39 North, Range 14.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Carolyn Pitts

ORGANIZATION

DATE

National Park Service - Historic Sites Survey

March 1975

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1100 L Street NW.

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Washington,

D.C.

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL \_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_

LOCAL \_\_\_\_

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Commission on Chicago Historical and  
Architectural Landmarks 1962 Local  
320 North Clark Street  
Chicago, Illinois

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out into open space, meeting at a landing in the sky, as it were."<sup>2</sup> He compares it to the fantasies of Piranesi's famous etchings.

The Rookery was honored by the Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks Commission in 1962. Burnham and Root was one of the great pioneering Chicago architectural firms and most of their Chicago structures have been demolished.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid, page 64

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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PAGE 2

Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.  
Rookery building. Ten sheets of architectural drawings by Burnham and Root.  
Gift of D. H. Burnham, Jr., to the Burnham Library in the Art  
Institute of Chicago. (Also on Microfilm: Roll 27).  
Rookery building, original drawings, Chicago, 1891, Microfilm: Roll 25,  
frames 1-19 and Roll 27, frames 1-86, Burnham Library in the Art  
Institute of Chicago.

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