

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL 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

Auditorium Building

AND/OR COMMON

Roosevelt University

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

430 South Michigan Avenue

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7th

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois

CODE

COUNTY

Cook

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY  | OWNERSHIP                                  | STATUS  | PRESENT USE  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED        | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM                       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE           | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED                 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE              | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH              | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE                   | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                  | <b>ACCESSIBLE</b>                                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT                 | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC                    |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION                |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> NO                         | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:                          |

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Roosevelt University

STREET & NUMBER

430 South Michigan Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Cook County Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

County Building

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

STATE

Illinois

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

August, 1963

FEDERAL     STATE     COUNTY     LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, NPS, Dept. of Interior

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                                     |                                       | CHECK ONE                                   | CHECK ONE   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD                 | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR                 | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED    |   |   |

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

Bounded by Wabash Avenue, (162') Michigan (187-1/2') and Congress Street (362') the Auditorium covers 63,500 square feet of ground. The building is rectangular with the hotel on the east was 45' deep (Michigan Avenue facade, Congress Street flank). The offices faced Wabash Street. The load bearing masonry building had a basement and rose 10 stories (240') surmounted by a 17 story tower. The tower provided the high rent office space, below were spaces for 136 offices and stores on ground level on the Wabash Street side, this construction wrapped around the interior theatre and secured it from street noise. Rusticated gray granite was used on the first three stories, smooth Indiana limestone sheathing above. The arcade on Congress Street was cut through in 1952 when the street was widened. The weight of the office tower required ingenious engineering devices which Adler worked out--he used cast iron interior frame with wrought iron trusses to support the weight of the tower which was 15,000 tons, Adler used all his skill--Hugh Morrison described the problem: "The actual area of the tower was 2,870 square feet, but its foundation was much larger, spreading...over 6,700 square feet. It might be described as a kind of platform composed of a five-foot thickness of concrete reinforced by two layers of heavy timbers, three layers of criss-crossed steel rails, and three layers of iron l-beams...

But still the necessary settlement had to be allowed for and this introduced one of the most baffling problems, and one of the most ingenious solutions in the entire structure of the Auditorium...Under normal conditions, the settlement of the foundations would have progressed uniformly as the building continued to rise and the load was increased. But the foundation under the tower was designed to support between six and seven thousand tons more than the adjacent wall the weight would be insufficient to compress its foundations, the adjacent walls would settle more than the tower walls, and cracks in the masonry would ensure. The problem was to load the tower foundations concurrently with the wall foundations in proportion to their ultimate loads so that the settlement would be even throughout...

The only solution was an artificial loading of the tower. This Adler did by means of adding pig-iron and brick in vast quantities to the lower stories and basement, increasing the artificial load gradually as the height of the walls and tower approached the tenth story, but always maintaining a constant mathematical equation between the relative weight of the adjacent wall to its foundation-capacity. Thus the settlement proceeded absolutely uniformly. After reaching the tenth story the full settlement of all the foundations had been reached. Above this, as the tower rose above the adjacent wall, the problem was

(CONTINUED)

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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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION   | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART          | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input checked="" 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 1889

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The architectural firm of Adler and Sullivan brought together two men with rare talent-one complimenting the other. They created between 1886 and 1889 the Chicago Auditorium, which was the most important structure of its time in Chicago and probably in the United States. Before it was completed it housed the Republican National Convention in 1888 (Benjamin Harrison and Levi Morton were nominated) and in 1889, they returned as President and Vice President for the dedication.

The Auditorium grew out of Chicago's need for a civic center housing primarily a concert hall and opera house but also space for political conventions, charity balls, etc. Sullivan's biographer, Hugh Morrison, documents carefully the developing plans and ideas that gave the final structure its form. He writes that the building had to finally financially support its size and "cultural services" and had to also be revenue producing so that business offices and hotel were designed to enclose the theatres. The Chicago Auditorium Association was formed and the architects began to solve the enormous design and engineering problems. The final cost reached \$3,145,291 but it was the most important complex under a single management, the theatres; Chicago's best, the hotel the most beautiful, the large banquet hall the finest public room. Carl Condit writes that: "On the Auditorium, the later success of Adler and Sullivan was built, and in good measure, the later fame of the Chicago school and of the city itself."<sup>1</sup>

The engineering genius of Dankmar Adler was at its height in the complicated construction and machinery needed to make the mass of the auditorium function. Sullivan's understanding of space arrangement makes the interior coherent and it is in these spaces that one can see the organic ornament that was his special genius. The exterior of the Auditorium is rugged and devoid of delicate ornament because, as Carl Condit points out, Adler and Sullivan and Ferdinand W. Peck, a Chicago civic leader had admired H. H. Richardson's Marshall Field Wholesale Store of 1885. Most scholars agree that this building marks the turning point in Sullivan's career and that it reveals his development

<sup>1</sup>Condit, Carl. The Chicago School of Architecture, Chicago, Illinois, University of Chicago Press, 1965, pp. 77

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Adler, Dankmar. "The Chicago Auditorium," Architectural Record, Vol. 1, April-June, 1892.
- Adler, Dankmar. "Foundations of the Auditorium Building, Chicago," The Inland Architect and Newsletter, Vol. XI, No. 3, March, 1888.
- Adler, Dankmar. "Theater Building for American Cities," Inland Architect, November, 1967.
- ~~"The Auditorium Building - Its Component Parts - The Interior Decoration," The~~

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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

UTM REFERENCES

|   |      |                   |                    |   |      |         |          |
|---|------|-------------------|--------------------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | 1, 6 | 4, 4, 6, 1, 7, 10 | 4, 6, 3, 5, 98, 10 | B |      |         |          |
|   | ZONE | EASTING           | NORTHING           |   | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C |      |                   |                    | D |      |         |          |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Part of Original Lot 5 and Original Lots 6,7,8,9, and 10 in block 9 in Fractional Section 15, Township 39 North, Range 14, East of the Third Principal Meridian.

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

National Park Service - Historic Sites Survey

DATE

3/10/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

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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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

merely to translate artificial load into real load, and this was done by gradually removing the pig-iron and bricks as the tower grew to its full height and weight. When the tower reached the top, ninety-five feet higher than the adjacent walls, all the artificial load was gone, but the total weight was just the same as it had been at the tenth-story level.<sup>1</sup>

However, the even greater problem involved the large theatre in the building's core which had to provide for hydraulic stage equipment to be housed in the basement which was seven feet below the water level of Lake Michigan--he made it water tight. Seating capacity in the theatre was 4,237 and it takes up 1/3 of the interior space of the building. Vision and acoustics were near-perfect even in the highest balcony and the vast enclosure was cooled by air tempered by roof sprays--it was the first air conditioned structure. Hugh Morrison has again described it vividly "Sullivan made them [the ceiling arches] the dominate theme of the interior and the repeated curves have a grand sweep over the hall. They are decorated by plaster reliefs, chevron mouldings dividing the faces into hexagons enclosing the grilled bosses, and smaller triangles enclosing other foliage designs. The whole surface is covered by gold leaf and studded with electric lights, gleaming like dull, mellow gold. Even the borders of the arched panels are enriched by relief bands and an inner lace-like pattern delicately stencilled in gold. Rarely has there been such a wedding of large and majestic simplicity with refined and subtle detail. The effect is superb."<sup>2</sup>

This structure is so complex and an unquestioned architectural engineering triumph that further descriptions can be seen. (HABS measured drawings and documents)

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<sup>1</sup>Morrison, Hugh. Louis Sullivan, W. W. Norton and Company, New York, 1935  
p. 90-92

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 103-104

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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of the theories that clearly express the logic of tall buildings, the genesis of skyscraper construction as we know it today.

The complex flourished for 40 years but in 1929 a new opera house was built and the depression further threatened the aging office and hotel facilities; bankruptcy came in 1940. In 1945, Roosevelt University began a courageous program to restore this famous building and today the building is serving as a city college and public theatre. Although slightly altered to serve as a college (the banquet hall is now the library), the building survives and is a source of pride to the University--the Auditorium is one of the outstanding examples of American ingenuity and genius.

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