



Office of the Chicago City  
Clerk



O2012-598

Office of the City Clerk

City Council Document Tracking Sheet

<b>Meeting Date:</b>	2/15/2012
<b>Sponsor(s):</b>	Mendoza, Susana A. (Clerk)
<b>Type:</b>	Ordinance
<b>Title:</b>	Historical landmark designation for Harriet F. Reese House
<b>Committee(s) Assignment:</b>	Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards



DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
CITY OF CHICAGO

February 9, 2012

The Honorable Susana Mendoza  
City Clerk  
City of Chicago  
Room 107, City Hall  
121 North LaSalle Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60602

**RE: Recommendation for Chicago Landmark Designation of the Harriet F. Rees House,  
2110 S. Prairie Ave.**

Dear Clerk Mendoza:

We are filing with your office for introduction at the February 15, 2012, City Council meeting as a transmittal to the Mayor and City Council of Chicago the recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks that the Harriet F. Rees House be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

The material being submitted to you for this proposal includes the:

1. Recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks; and
2. Proposed Ordinance.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Esser Gorski, AIA  
Assistant Commissioner  
Historic Preservation Division  
Bureau of Planning and Zoning

encls.

cc: Alderman Robert W. Fioretti, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward (w/out encl.)

OFFICE OF THE  
CITY CLERK

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## ORDINANCE

### Harriet F. Rees House 2110 South Prairie Avenue

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the procedures set forth in the Municipal Code of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), Sections 2-120-630 through -690, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") has determined that the Harriet F. Rees House, located at 2110 South Prairie Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, as more precisely described in **Exhibit A** attached hereto and incorporated herein (the "Building"), meets three criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Sections 2-120-620 (1), (4), and (5) of the Municipal Code; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is one of just seven historic residences remaining on Upper Prairie Avenue, Chicago's most fashionable late 19<sup>th</sup> century residential street; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is a distinctive and outstanding example of a Romanesque Revival-style townhouse, with its ashlar limestone façade, dominant two-story bowed bay, Romanesque-arched window colonnade, and steep gable peak with stone finial; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is remarkably intact inside and out, retaining its historic room configurations, decorative woodwork in a rich variety of woods, and numerous fireplaces and surrounds; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building was designed by the noted Chicago architectural firm of Cobb & Frost, who designed a number of significant buildings in Chicago, including the Potter Palmer House (demolished) and the Ransom Cable House (a designated Chicago Landmark); and

**WHEREAS**, working alone, Henry Ives Cobb designed other designated Chicago Landmarks, including the Former Chicago Historical Society, the Chicago Varnish Company Building, the McGill House, and the Newberry Library (part of the Washington Square District); and

**WHEREAS**, the Building meets at least three criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4), and (5) of the Municipal Code; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building retains more than sufficient physical integrity to express its "historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value" as required by Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, through its location, setting, and overall design quality. The Building retains the great majority of its historic materials, design, and detailing to convey its architectural and historic values; and

**WHEREAS**, on January 5, 2012, the Commission adopted a resolution recommending to the City Council of the City of Chicago that the Building be designated a Chicago Landmark; now, therefore,

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO:**

**SECTION 1.** The above recitals are expressly incorporated in and made a part of this ordinance as though fully set forth herein.

**SECTION 2.** The Building is hereby designated a Chicago Landmark in accordance with Section 2-120-700 of the Municipal Code.

**SECTION 3.** For purposes of Section 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code governing permit review, the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are all exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building; and first-floor public rooms, including entrance hall, parlors, and dining room as indicated in **Exhibit B**.

**SECTION 4.** The Commission is hereby directed to create a suitable plaque appropriately identifying said landmark and to affix the plaque on or near the property designated as a Chicago Landmark in accordance with the provisions of Section 2-120-700 of the Municipal Code.

**SECTION 5.** If any provision of this ordinance shall be held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the invalidity or unenforceability of such provision shall not affect any of the other provisions of this ordinance.

**SECTION 6.** All ordinances, resolutions, motions or orders in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

**SECTION 7.** This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage and approval.

### **Exhibit A**

#### **Harriet F. Rees House Property Description**

##### **Legal Description**

THE SOUTH 24 AND 8/10 FEET OF LOT 3 IN BLOCK 25 IN JOHN A. GURLEY'S SUBDIVISION OF BLOCKS 24 TO 28, INCLUSIVE, IN THE ASSESSOR'S DIVISION OF THE SOUTHWEST FRACTIONAL QUARTER OF SECTION 22, TOWNSHIP 39 NORTH, RANGE 14 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

##### **P.I.N.:**

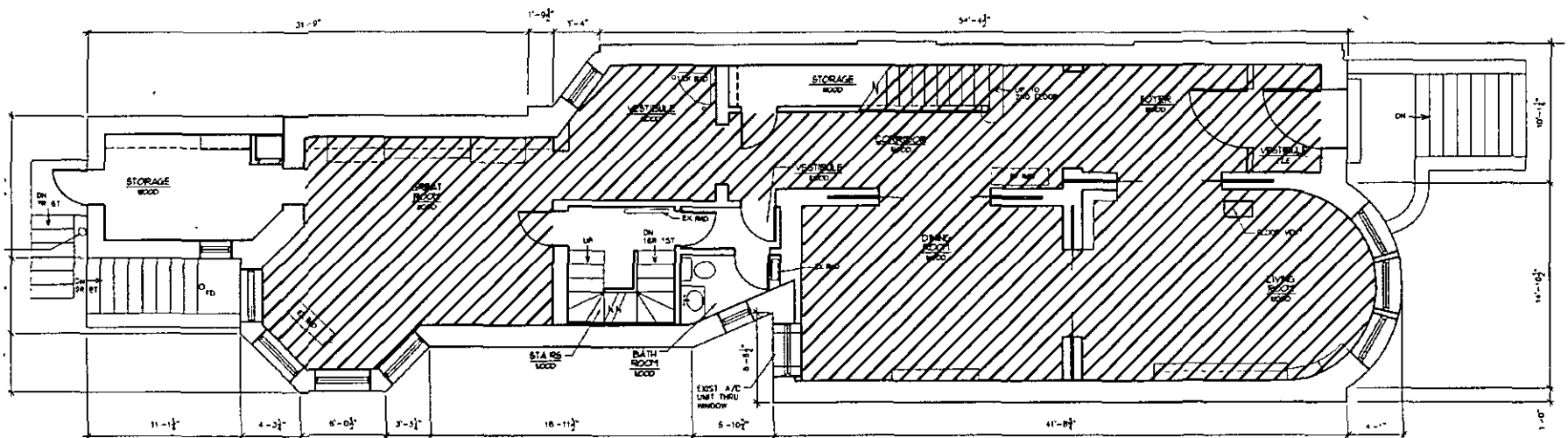
17-22-320-010-0000

##### **Address Commonly known as:**

2110 South Prairie Avenue, Chicago, Illinois

**Harriet F. Rees House  
2110 S. Prairie Ave.**

**Exhibit B  
Significant Historical and Architectural Features - Interior**



**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"  
NORTH

 **Significant Interior Historical and Architectural Features - First-floor public rooms (entrance hall, parlors and dining room)**

**CITY OF CHICAGO  
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

January 5, 2012

**RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF CHICAGO THAT  
CHICAGO LANDMARK DESIGNATION BE ADOPTED FOR THE**

**HARRIET F. REES HOUSE  
2110 SOUTH PRAIRIE AVENUE**

**Docket No. 2012-02**

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**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago:**

Pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code of the City of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") has determined that the Harriet F. Rees House (the "Building"), located at 2110 South Prairie Avenue, is worthy of Chicago Landmark designation. On the basis of careful consideration of the history and architecture of the Building, the Commission has found that it meets the following criteria set forth in Section 2-120-620 of the Municipal Code:

1. *Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*
4. *Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*
5. *Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history of development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

**I. BACKGROUND**

The formal landmark designation process for the Building began on October 6, 2011, when the Commission received a "preliminary summary of information" at the Commission's regular meeting of October 6<sup>th</sup> from the Department of Housing and Economic Development ("HED") summarizing the historical and architectural background of the Building. At said meeting, the Commission voted to approve a "preliminary landmark recommendation" for the Building, based on its finding that it appeared to meet three of the seven criteria for designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 of the Municipal Code, as well as the integrity criterion set forth in Section 2-120-630(ii) of the Municipal Code.

The Commission's Landmark Designation Report for the Building, initially adopted by the Commission on October 6, 2011, and revised as of this date, which contains specific information about the Building's architectural and historical significance, is incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit A** (the "Designation Report").

At its regular meeting of December 1, 2011, the Commission received a report from Andrew J. Mooney, Commissioner of HED, stating that the proposed landmark designation of the Building supports the City's overall planning goals and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans. This report is incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit B** (the "HED Report").

On December 16, 2011, the Commission officially requested consent to the proposed landmark designation from the owner of the Building. On December 20, 2011, the Commission received a consent form, dated December 19, 2011, and signed by Ignazio Martorina, representing the owner of the Building, consenting to the proposed landmark designation of the Building.

## **II. FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

**WHEREAS**, the Building is one of just seven historic residences remaining on Upper Prairie Avenue, Chicago's most fashionable late 19<sup>th</sup> century residential street; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is a distinctive and outstanding example of a Romanesque Revival-style townhouse, with its ashlar limestone façade, dominant two-story bowed bay, Romanesque-arched window colonnade, and steep gable peak with stone finial; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is remarkably intact inside and out, retaining its historic room configurations, decorative woodwork in a rich variety of woods, and numerous fireplaces and surrounds; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building was designed by the noted Chicago architectural firm of Cobb & Frost, who designed a number of significant buildings in Chicago, including the Potter Palmer House (demolished) and the Ransom Cable House (a designated Chicago Landmark); and

**WHEREAS**, working alone, Henry Ives Cobb designed other designated Chicago Landmarks, including the Former Chicago Historical Society, the Chicago Varnish Company Building, the McGill House, and the Newberry Library (part of the Washington Square District); and

**WHEREAS**, the Building meets at least three criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4), and (5) of the Municipal Code; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building retains more than sufficient physical integrity to express its "historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value" as required by Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, through its location, setting, and overall design quality. The Building retains the great majority of its historic materials, design, and detailing to convey its architectural and historic values; now, therefore

### **THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS HEREBY:**

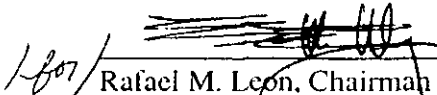
1. Incorporates the preamble and Sections I and II into its finding; and
2. Adopts the Designation Report, as revised, and dated as of this 5<sup>th</sup> day of January 2012; and
3. Finds, based on the Designation Report, HED Report, and the entire record before the Commission, that the Building meets three out of seven of the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4), and (5) of the Municipal Code; and
4. Finds that the Building satisfies the historic integrity requirement set forth in Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code; and

5. Finds that the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are identified as follows:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building; and
- First floor public rooms, including entrance hall, parlors, and dining room.

This recommendation was adopted unanimously; (7-0).

Dated: 1/5/12

  
Rafael M. Leon, Chairman  
Commission on Chicago Landmarks





DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
CITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

December 1, 2011

Report to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks

on the

Harriet F. Rees House  
2110 S. Prairie Ave.

**The Department of Housing and Economic Development finds that the proposed designation of the Harriet F. Rees House as a Chicago Landmark supports the City's overall planning goals for the surrounding Near South Side community area and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.**

The Rees House is an excellent example of a Richardsonian Romanesque-style house, an architectural style that was extremely popular in Chicago in the late 1880s and 1890s. It was built for Harriet Rees, the widow of pioneering Chicago land surveyor James Rees, and is one of a handful of surviving houses from the heyday of South Prairie Avenue, Chicago's most socially-prominent street of high-style mansions in the late 19th century. The building is the work of the significant Chicago architectural firm of Cobb and Frost. Owner Nick Martorina has restored the building as a single-family residence.

The building is located in the Near South Side community area and is three stories in height. It is zoned DX-5. This zoning district is primarily intended to accommodate office, commercial, public, institutional and residential development in the downtown Chicago area. The district promotes vertical mixed-use (residential/nonresidential) projects that contain active ground-floor uses.

Many surrounding properties located to the north and west are also zoned DX-5. Some properties located to the south along S. Prairie are zoned DX-7. This zoning district is primarily intended to accommodate commercial and service uses that are essential for the livelihood of businesses and residents of the downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods. The district allows a mix of small-scale office, commercial services, public uses, transportation and communication services, and industrial uses. Property to the east is part of planned development 675, which calls for a hotel development on the east side of S. Prairie Ave.

The subject property is located within the Michigan-Cermak Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district. This TIF is intended primarily to support the development of anchor projects along Cermak Rd. that support the Near South Side community and the expansion of the nearby McCormick Place convention center. Covering 15 full and partial blocks, district resources are intended for projects that facilitate the assembly and preparation of underutilized sites for new development and for the rehabilitation of existing buildings. Priorities also include street and traffic improvements, enhanced landscaping, and upgraded utilities to support the current and future needs of the convention center and adjacent businesses.

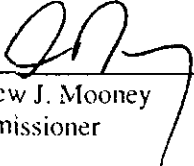
The subject property is well served by public transportation, including CTA bus routes running along Cermak Rd. and nearby State St. and Michigan Ave. A CTA Red Line station is located seven blocks west at Cermak and Wentworth

Many nearby properties have been designated as Chicago Landmarks, including the Prairie Avenue District, Wheeler-Kohn House, Clarke House, Glessner House, American Book Company Building, R. R. Donnelley & Sons Calumet Plant, Chess Records, Motor Row District and Second Presbyterian Church. Other designated Chicago Landmarks in the area are the On Leong Merchants Association Building, Quinn Chapel, Cermak Road Bridge District, White Castle #16, Wood-Maxey-Boyd House, Kent House, and historic railroad bridges built for the Pennsylvania Railroad and St. Charles Air Line. A number of these properties are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Motor Row Historic District, R. R. Donnelley Calumet Plant, Glessner House, and Kent House. Also listed on the National Register is the Hilliard Homes public-housing complex.

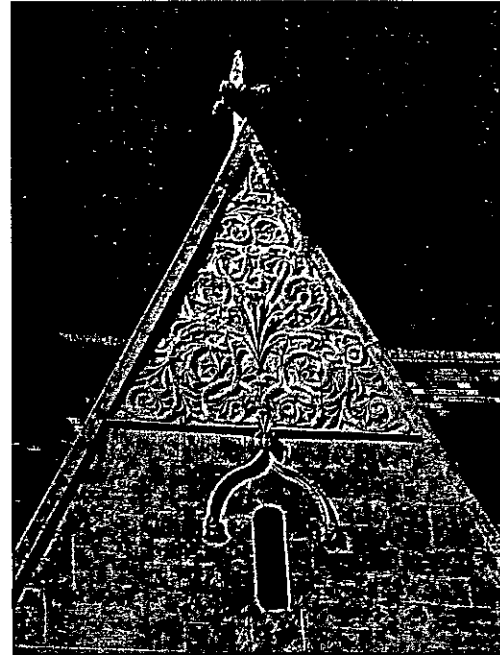
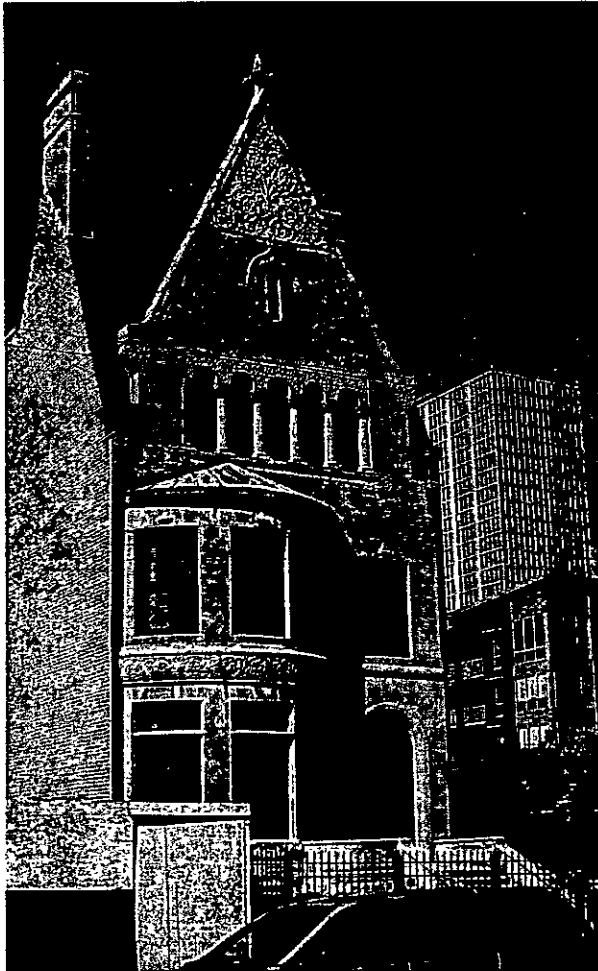
Landmark designation and the preservation of historic buildings is supported by several City of Chicago plans that pertain to the Near South Side community area within which the subject property is located, including the "Chicago Central Area Plan," adopted in June 2003, and the "Central Area Action Plan," adopted in August 2009, both of which comprehensively looked at the Central Area. In addition, one of the guiding principles of the "Near South Community Plan" is the preservation of historic resources. The plan states, "Buildings with architectural and historical interest, which help give the Near South a distinctive image and identity, should be preserved, protected, and enhanced."

HED supports the designation of the Harriet F. Rees House as a Chicago Landmark. Preserving buildings such as this provides many long-term benefits to the City. Chicago Landmark designation assists in the preservation of Chicago's architectural heritage and the visual evidence of our rich history. Designation also supports economic development, employment, and an enhanced property tax base with the rehabilitation of this long-vacant building. It serves as a model for sustainability by retaining existing buildings and adapting them to modern conditions, versus tearing them down and depleting resources with the construction of an entirely new development. It also maintains the unique features of our city as a continued draw for tourists and new residents.

In conclusion, landmark designation of the Harriet F. Rees House supports the City's overall planning goals for Chicago's Near South Side community area and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.

  
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Andrew J. Mooney  
Commissioner

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



# Harriet F. Rees House

2110 S. Prairie Ave.

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Preliminary Landmark recommendation approved by  
the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, January 5, 2012



**CITY OF CHICAGO**  
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Department of Housing and Economic Development  
Andrew J. Mooney, Commissioner

*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development, 33 N. LaSalle St., Room 1600, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200) phone; (312-744-9140) fax; web site, <http://www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks>.*

*This landmark designation report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation proceedings. Only language contained within the City Council's final landmark designation ordinance should be regarded as final.*

# HARRIET F. REES HOUSE

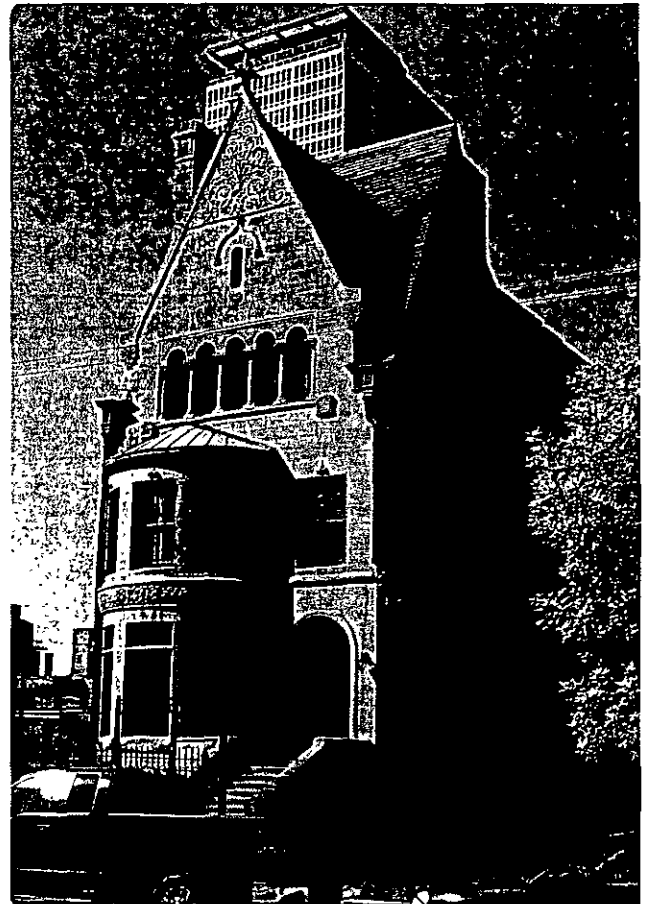
2110 S. PRAIRIE AVENUE

BUILT: 1888

ARCHITECTS: COBB & FROST

The Harriet F. Rees House was built in 1888 on Upper Prairie Avenue, one of Chicago's most prestigious residential neighborhoods in the late 19th century. Today it is only one of seven historic homes still standing on Prairie Avenue between 18th Street and Cermak Road. Designed by nationally-renowned architects Cobb & Frost, it is an excellent and remarkably intact example of the Romanesque Revival style as expressed in the urban townhouse type. The ornate limestone exterior and the interior detailed in rich woods and filled with fireplaces and other built-in features, is virtually unchanged from its original historic appearance.

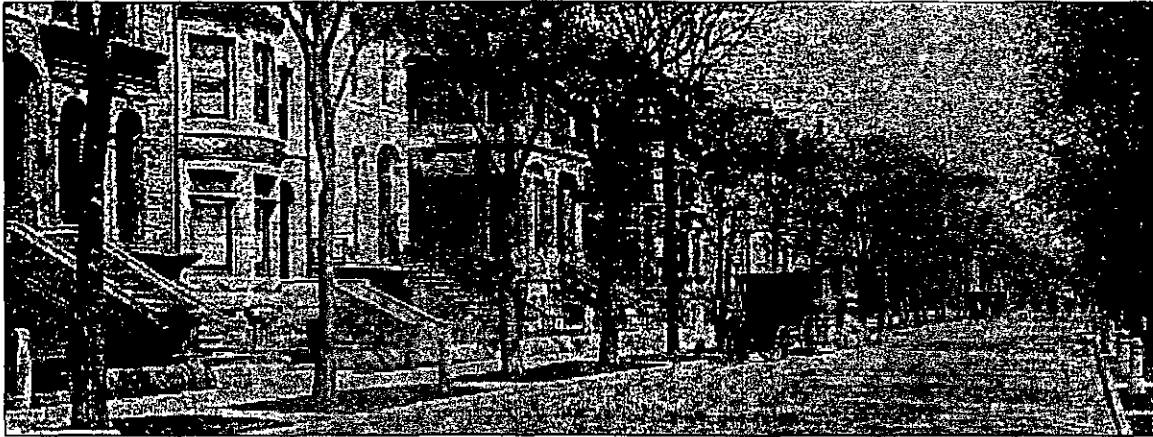
Its first owner was Harriet F. Rees, widow of real estate pioneer and land surveyor, James H. Rees, who lived there just four years until her death at age 75 in 1892. Second owners were Edson Keith, Jr., a milliner, and his family. Keith's daughter, Katherine (Mrs. David Adler, Jr.) was a published author. The home was used as a restaurant from 1970 and later a residence, until purchased by its present owners in 2001.



*The Harriet F. Rees House is one of the last few historic residences remaining on Prairie Avenue, Chicago's most fashionable late 19th century residential street.*

## HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

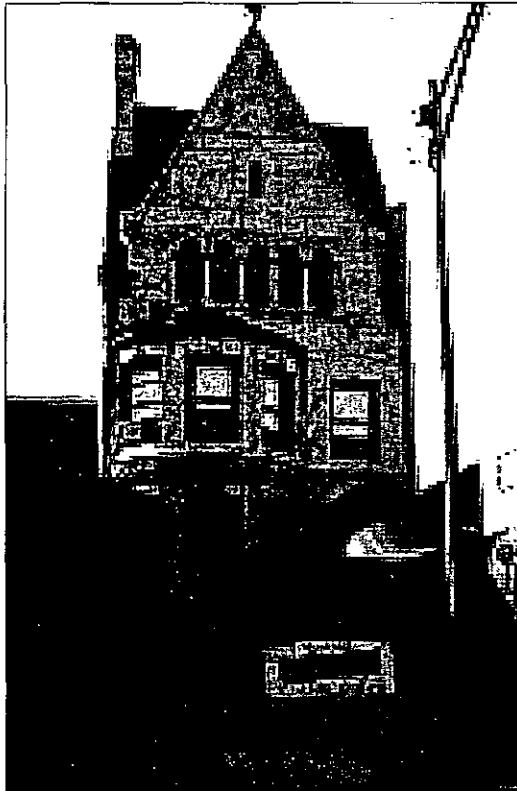
The Rees House is located in the Near South Side community area of Chicago, approximately two miles south of the Loop. Although once part of a dense urban residential street lined with substantial two- and three-story homes that stretched south from 16th Street, today the Rees House is the lone survivor on its block. Just north of Cermak Road and in the



*This street view of Prairie Avenue north of 22nd Street from c.1895 shows the Rees house amongst its neighbors, the second house from the left.*

shadows of the McCormick Place complex, it is surrounded by light industrial buildings and parking lots.

Built in 1888, the Rees House was one of the last single-family homes constructed on the block. Wedged into a narrow 24 x 178 foot parcel, the north sidewall was formerly a party wall shared with a now demolished home to the north. All architectural detailing on this three-story structure is confined to the limestone front elevation while the other three

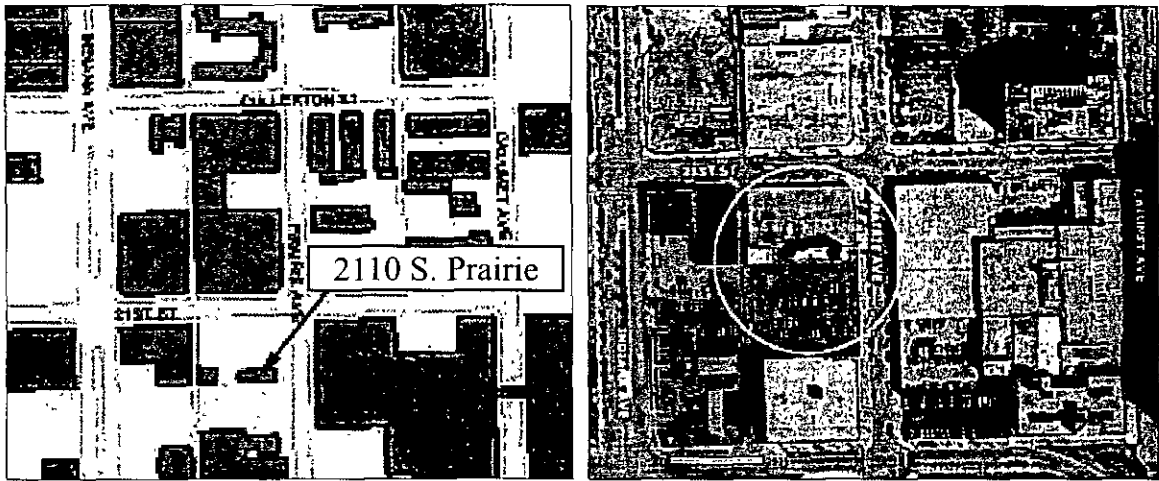


*The Rees House survived through the 1970s as the home of the Prairie House Café.*

facades are unadorned brick. In the rear stands the south half of a two-story coach house that was once shared with the property to the north and predates this house.

Mrs. Harriet F. Rees, widow of James H. Rees, a real estate pioneer who introduced the concept of abstracts of title in the City of Chicago, purchased a lot on Prairie Avenue on April 9, 1888 from Mark and Elizabeth J. Kimball, for \$15,000. A building permit was issued on June 18, 1888 for a three-story dwelling, 20x80x44 at a cost of \$20,000. She commissioned the architectural firm of Cobb and Frost to design her new home.

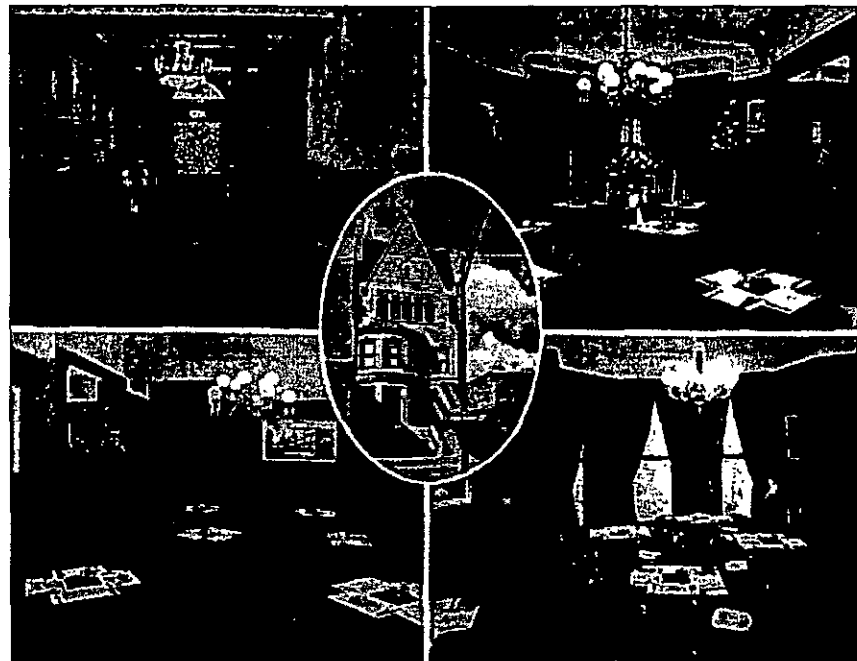
With a mere 24 feet between two existing homes, Cobb & Frost squeezed in an elegantly detailed Romanesque Revival home with a "marble front" as dressed ashlar limestone was sometimes referred to. The house features a steeply pitched cross gable roof of slate at



*This map and aerial photo of the Near South side show the location of the Rees house within an existing industrial and multi-family context.*

the front part of the house. An elegant two-story, bowed front bay topped with a shallow conical copper roof marks the façade, with a round-arched window colonnade above.

Although converted to a rooming house in the 1910s, and later serving as a restaurant, the interior of the home is remarkably intact in plan and pristine in architectural features, genuinely reflecting its 1888 construction. Any partitions that had been added over the years have been removed and there was little, if any damage to original elements. Historic room configurations are in place throughout, and there are numerous character defining architectural features including wood paneling, doors and trim in a wide variety of wood species, nine distinctive fireplaces, a unique staircase, and an original elevator cab. The Rees House was recognized in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey as an orange-rated building.



*The Prairie House Café retained the original spaces and handsome finishes of the Rees House interior, offering its patrons the experience of dining in an elegant residence.*

## THE REES HOUSE AND THE RICHARDSONIAN ROMANESQUE STYLE

The Harriet Rees House is an exceptional and now rare example of the Romanesque Revival style remaining on Chicago's near south side. The Romanesque Revival style is a picturesque style found in American buildings constructed from 1840 to 1900. Buildings in this style are always masonry, monochromatic, and usually with some rough-faced stonework. Wide, round arches of the kind found in Roman or European Romanesque architecture are an important identifying feature, and they often rest on squat columns. There is frequently decorative floral detail in the stonework, and sometimes on column capitals. Windows are typically single paned sash, usually deeply recessed into the exterior wall, and are often in groupings of three or more windows.



and are often in groupings of three or more windows. In the late 19th century the style was popularized by Bostonian architect Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886) and is frequently called Richardsonian Romanesque. Many of his peers, particularly in Boston, were influenced by Richardson, including Henry Ives Cobb and Charles Sumner Frost, both of whom began their careers in that city.

After H. H. Richardson's 1880 rectory for Trinity Church in Boston, his Romanesque style made a significant impact on architecture in Chicago and throughout the nation. From roughly 1885 to 1900, in Chicago alone hundreds of public and private buildings were built in this style, including



*The colonnade of windows at the third floor, with its squat columns, foliated capitals, and round arches, is a characteristic feature of the Richardsonian Romanesque Style. The flat ashlar limestone façade provides a backdrop for the rich ornamental motifs.*



the John J. Glessner House (1886) just up the street on Prairie Avenue, a Chicago Landmark and a National Historic Landmark. Despite being very expensive and more popular for large public buildings, many architect-designed residences in the Romanesque style were constructed for Chicago's elite in the 1880s and 1890s, with examples remaining in the city's most exclusive neighborhoods of the era.

The Rees House is remarkable in its refined elegance. Cobb and Frost masterfully chose to use smooth, ashlar limestone instead of rusticated stone for the principal façade. This smooth limestone serves as a restrained backdrop for the high relief Romanesque style elements that ornament the facade. The subtle curve of the two-story bay

dominates the front, with a stone rinceau frieze separating the two floors. A shallow conical copper roof with delicate ornamental scrollwork trim tops the bay. The decisive round arched entry echoes the colonnade of windows at the third floor, with the whisper of a round-arched window in the gable peak.

The colonnade, a signature element of the Richardsonian Romanesque style, establishes a strong horizontality in counterpoint to the otherwise steep verticality of the building. The deep recesses of the arch tops contrast with the ornate capitals of the squat columns. Above the colonnade, the steep pitch of the roofline rises above the slate roof behind it. The angles of the gable are visually dominant, with a flat, foliated panel in the gable peak having an



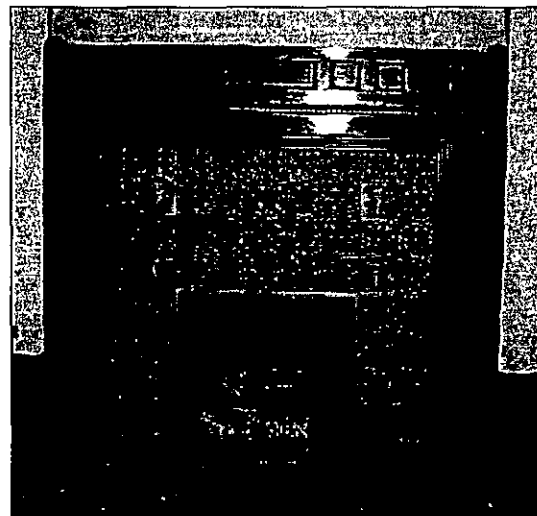
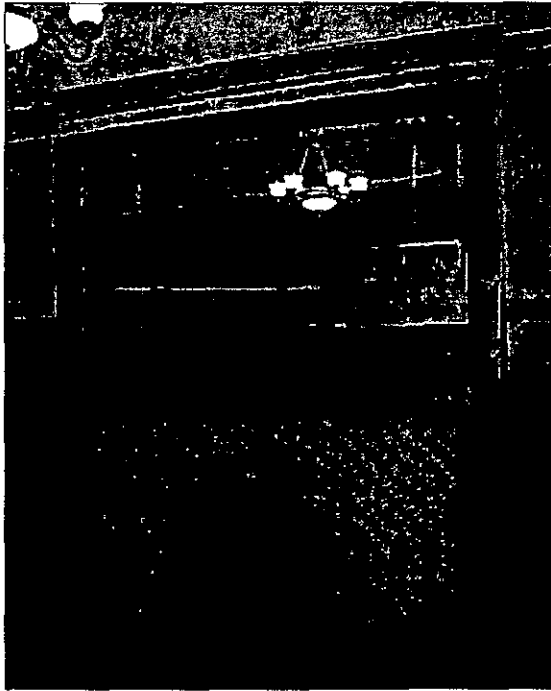
*The interior of the Rees House features wood paneled doors and pocket doors, elaborate window casings, baseboards, wainscoting, and other trim in a wide variety of wood species.*



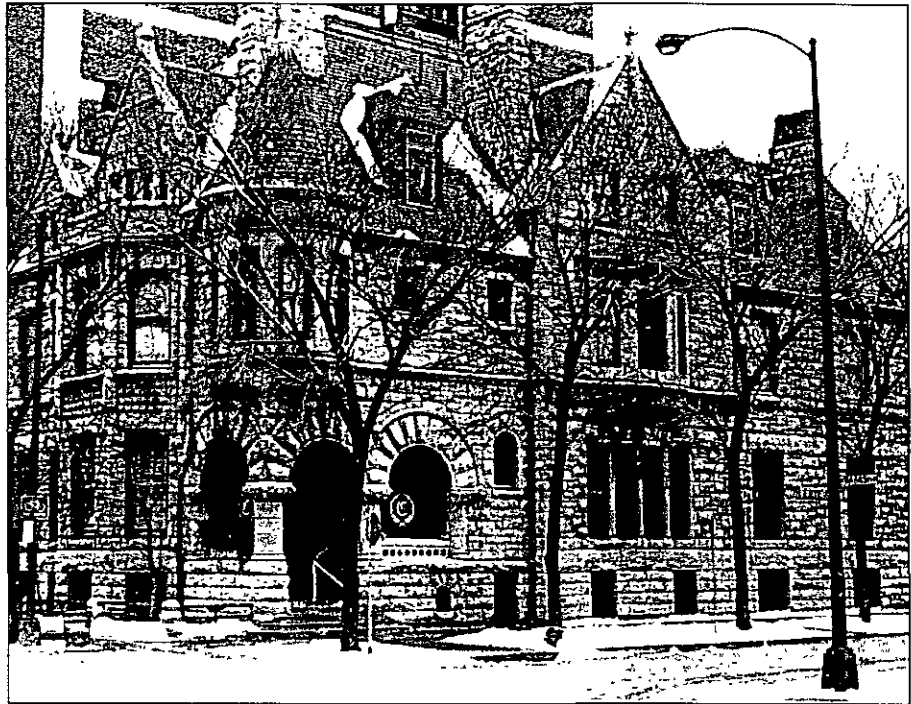
acanthus leaf at center. The decorative gable ends providing a rich texture while a stone finial at the very top stands out against the sky.

In the interior, although constrained in plan by the narrow site, unique architectural detailing and a rich use of materials make each room exceptional. The interplay of a repeating circle pattern overlaid with intersecting geometric lines, and a curving, leafy motif with vines, acanthus leaves, and grapes, offers both naturalistic as well as simply aesthetic detail. Highly crafted ornament, with intricate geometric and foliated motifs, is expressed in architectural elements throughout the home. The use of different woods with a variety of colors and grains, as well as different ceramic tile patterns in each of the nine unique fireplaces, some with figurative designs, show this home to have been executed by skilled designers who were able to create a cohesive expression throughout the interior with the use of repeating decorative motifs.

Cobb and Frost were challenged to create a residential design for a demanding client on a prestigious street, but within the constraints of a very narrow lot. With Romanesque as the style of choice, the architects immediately created a tension between expressing majesty on such a limited site. Although relatively diminutive by physical standards, the Rees House is monumental in its expressive power.



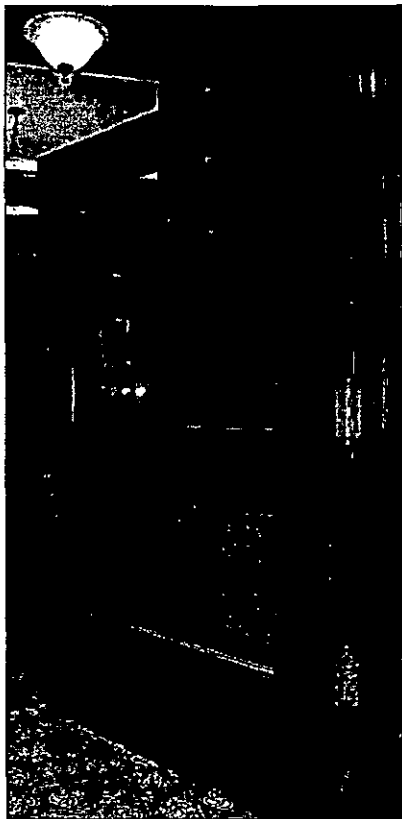
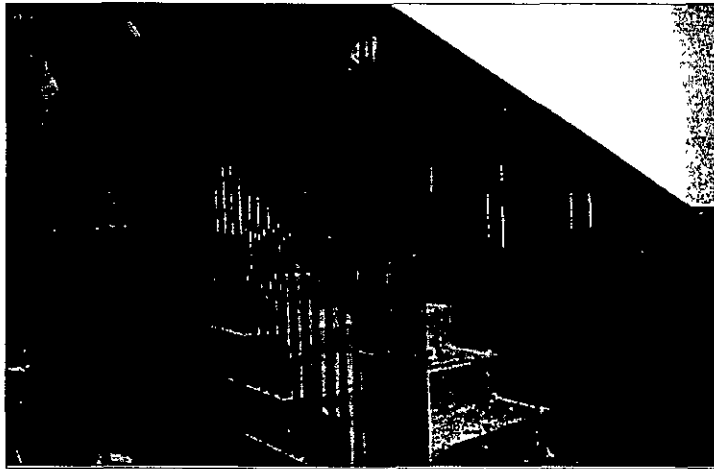
*Nine distinctive fireplaces can be found throughout the house, each with an original ornate wood mantel, and ceramic tile hearth and firebox surround. Some have individual inset ceramic tiles with animals or figures.*



*Still standing at 25 E. Erie, is the picturesque Richardsonian Romanesque style home also designed by Cobb & Frost in 1885. The recessed corner entry of this Chicago Landmark is distinguished by heavy round arches atop squat piers.*

*Also still standing and within the Prairie Avenue Historic District is the Kimball House at 1801 S. Prairie Avenue, designed by Solon S. Beman in 1890 in the Chateausque style.*





*The principal staircase showcases the signature motif of a repeating series of circles with intersecting orthogonal and diagonal lines. The elevator cab in the rear, which serviced the basement kitchen and all upper floors of the house, is still intact. The entry door displays handsomely-carved foliate ornament.*



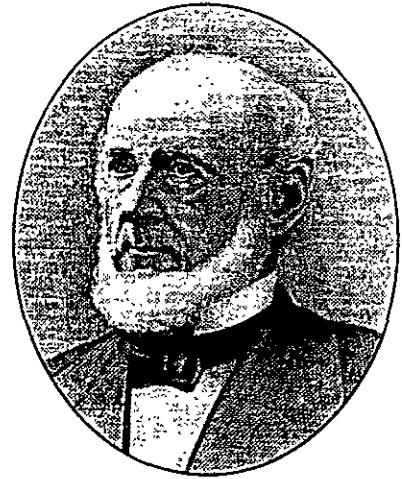
## HARRIET REES AND LATER OWNERS

The residence at 2110 South Prairie Avenue was constructed in 1888 for Harriet Frances Butler Rees (1817–1892), the widow of real estate pioneer and land surveyor James H. Rees. James H. Rees (1813–1880) was an east coast native who moved westward at the age of 21 seeking real estate surveying opportunities. He settled in Chicago, then a fledgling city, where he became the first City Surveyor in 1836. He furthered a career in real estate when he joined the firm of Mayor William B. Ogden in 1839, serving as a draftsman and clerk at his office. However, it was when Rees opened up his own real estate business in partnership with law clerk Edward R. Rucker in 1847 that he left his mark on real estate history.

Rees' and Rucker's monumental achievement was introducing the concept of abstracts of title. Their service was revolutionary in a rapidly growing city that needed documentation of every recorded instrument and legal proceeding regarding a particular property in order to transfer title. Rees further left his mark by creating a series of maps that recorded the Chicago area in 1851. The following year, Rees began investing in real estate in Lake View Township just north of the city limits. He subdivided 225 acres in 1852-1853, an ideal location for residences along the Lake Michigan shoreline, and co-founded with Elisha Hundley in 1854, the Lake View House a summer resort hotel. Rees also was called to serve in government as an Alderman, an Assessor, and also a Collector for South Chicago.

James Rees' real estate holdings yielded a tremendous fortune. He married Harriet Frances Butler on June 4, 1844, and lived a very comfortable life. They were charitable, including supporting the Woman's Hospital of the State of Illinois and its building fund. The couple had one daughter, Mrs. Carrie (L.H.) Pierce. On September 20, 1880, James Rees passed away in their home on Wabash Avenue after battling diabetes for many years.

In 1888, at the mature age of 71, Harriet decided to build a home for herself on one of the last remaining parcels on Prairie Avenue, then Chicago's most fashionable street. On the 2100 block of Prairie Avenue, Harriet joined prominent neighbors John B. Sherman, the head of the Union Stockyards Company, the M. M. Rothschilds, meat packer Philip D. Armour, and Byron L. Smith, founder and first president of the Northern Trust Company. After only a short time in the home, Harriet Frances Rees died at her residence on December 10, 1892 at the age of 75.



*The Rees House was built for Harriet Frances Butler Rees, widow of real estate pioneer and land surveyor James H. Rees. Mrs. Rees spent \$15,000 to purchase the last undeveloped lot on Prairie Avenue and spent \$20,000 on the home she was to live in until her death in 1892 at the age of 75.*



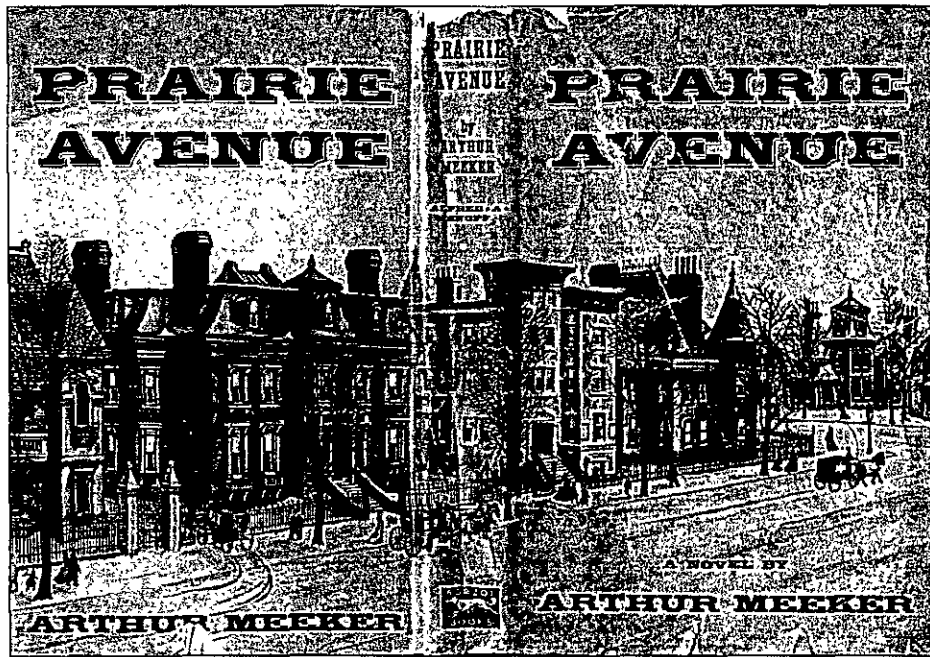
*The second owners of the home were Edson Keith, Jr., and his wife, Nettie Keener Keith, a couple with family ties to other homes on Prairie Avenue. Their daughter, Katherine Keith Adler (wife of renowned architect, David Adler, Jr.), was a published author of two books, *The Girl* (1917) and *The Crystal Icicle* (1930).*

Following the death of Harriet Rees, the home was sold for \$42,500 to newlyweds Edson Keith, Jr. and his wife Nettie Keener Keith who had been married in Denver, CO on April 15, 1891. Native Chicagoan Edson Keith, Jr. (1862–1939) was the son of Edson and Susan Woodruff Keith, Sr. whose family home was down the street at 1906 Prairie Avenue. An 1884 graduate of Yale University with a Ph.B. in dynamic engineering and an 1889 graduate of Columbia Law School, Keith, Jr. was an engineer, attorney and composer. He became vice-president of his family's company, Keith Brothers & Company, a wholesale millinery firm in 1897. Keith, Jr. was also accomplished as a composer, with musical compositions published by Schirmer & Company and Lyon & Healy. He and his wife had two children, Katherine (Mrs. David Adler, Jr.), an author of two books, the semi-autobiographical *The Girl* (1917) and *The Crystal Icicle* (1930); and Frederick Walter Keith, who continued in the family business.

Sometime between 1910 and 1920, the home was converted into a rooming house. In 1920, it was being operated by Bonnie James with sixteen borders. In 1923, the Keith Family sold the home to Rolla W. and Katherine McClure, who took over the rooming house operation, and by 1930 were renting it out to six different households. By 1938, the home was sold again to Patrick Cosgrove and his wife. The house was reincarnated once again as The Prairie House Café, a restaurant operating in 1970. By 1971, the property's owners were in Cook County Court – Chancery Division and the property sold to a trust at Exchange National Bank and then to Peter Fung in 1975. It remained in the Fung family until 2001 when purchased by its current owners, the Martorina Family.

## **HISTORY OF UPPER PRAIRIE AVENUE**

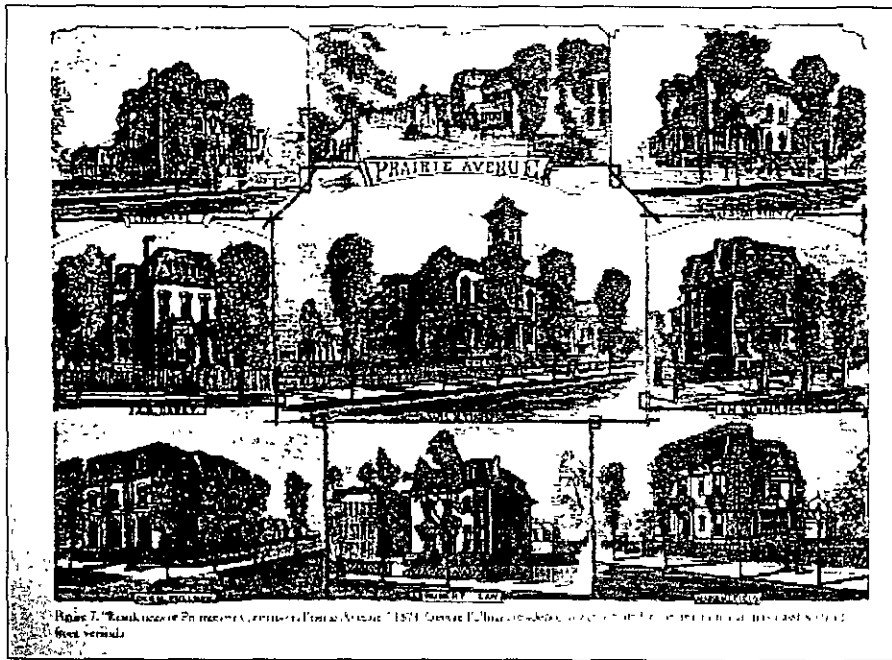
The Harriet Rees House was built at the south end of what is known as “Upper Prairie Avenue,” one of Chicago’s most prestigious residential streets of the late 19th century. From 16th Street to 22nd Street, the northern section of late-19th century Prairie Avenue boasted uninterrupted blocks of imposing, well-built mansions designed by prominent architects in fashionable styles. Along this north/south avenue, Chicago millionaires such as George Pullman, Philip D. Armour, and Marshall Field took residence in the years following the Great Fire of 1871. At that time, Chicago’s pioneering families rebuilt their homes away from the increasingly commercial downtown area, and on land untouched by debris from the fire.



*This popular novel, Prairie Avenue, by Arthur Meeker, faithfully recreates the lives and times of Prairie Avenue during the author's childhood there in the early 1900s.*

Prairie Avenue and nearby streets were first laid out as the Assessor's Division, a subdivision stretching from 17th Street on the north, 22nd street to the south, the Illinois Central Railroad tracks to the east, and State Street to the west. Sometime before June 1852, John N. Staples, a brick manufacturer, is believed to have constructed the first house on Prairie Avenue, a two-story Italianate residence at 1702 South Prairie Avenue. Development on the Avenue was briefly slowed by the Civil War but accelerated soon after. By 1870 Prairie Avenue received one of the avenue's most expensive homes, costing an exorbitant \$100,000. For Daniel M. Thompson, a grain elevator operator, an Italianate villa was constructed at the corner of Prairie Avenue and 20th Street on a site where lots were nearly 200 feet deep. Soon, numerous families of means began to call Prairie Avenue home, including prominent businessmen and industrialists. Chicago novelist (and Prairie Avenue resident) Arthur Meeker referred to Prairie Avenue as the "sunny street that held the sifted few."

By the late 1880s, most lots on Upper Prairie Avenue had been improved with two to three story single-family detached residences. Many were on standard 25-foot lots with similar setbacks, while others covered two or more lots. Homes were lavishly detailed on their principal façade, or on two facades when situated on a corner. Its residents commissioned designs by noted architects of the era, both nationally and locally. Of the seven still standing, there are two by S. S. Beman, the Kimball House at 1801 S. Prairie and the Marshall Field Jr. House at 1919 S. Prairie; the Glessner House at 1800 S. Prairie by H. H. Richardson, the William Reid House at 2013 S. Prairie by Beers, Clay & Dutton. A second house on the street designed by Cobb & Frost is the Romanesque Revival-style brownstone for Joseph



The May 1874 issue of *The Land Owner* illustrated the homes of some of Prairie Avenue's most prominent residents, including retailing magnate, Marshall Field, railroad chieftan, George Pullman, and millinery wholesaler, Edson Keith, Sr.

G. Coleman in 1886 at 1811 S. Prairie. The oldest house of the collection is the Keith House at 1900 S. Prairie, built in 1870, whose architect was John W. Roberts.

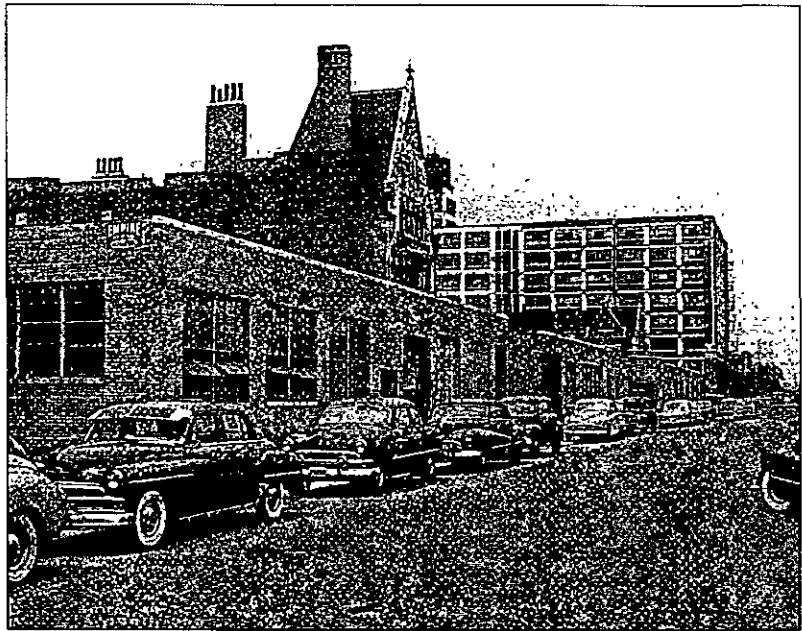
Masonry construction dominated Prairie Avenue, particularly the widespread use of quarried limestone. The richness of the high-quality stone appealed to the residents of Prairie Avenue, whose homes needed to reflect their affluence. Buff white when freshly quarried, the "marble" was then polished to a smooth finish. Marketed as "Athens Marble" and "Joliet Marble," the stone product from both the Joliet, IL and Lemont, IL quarries could be cut to specific sizes. Lemont limestone was particularly sought after for dimension stone since it was free from visible fossil bodies, had a fine grain and standard color without streaks, and was found in layers thick enough to be cut into blocks. Limestone was also used in brick residences along Prairie Avenue for decorative accents.



The Joseph G. Coleman House (now known as the Coleman-Ames House) is another Romanesque Revival style home on Prairie Avenue that was designed by Cobb & Frost. Built in 1886 at 1811 S. Prairie Avenue, it is within the Prairie Avenue Historic District.



Most Prairie Avenue homes were designed to impress in the picturesque styles of the late 19th century, first in the Second Empire style, followed by Victorian Gothic Revival and the Queen Anne style. When architect Henry Hobson Richardson designed the masterful John J. Glessner House at 1800 S. Prairie Avenue (1886), the Romanesque Revival style (Richardsonian Romanesque) became the fashionable choice for the residential design of Prairie Avenue's upper



*As Prairie Avenue began its decline as an elite residential enclave, many homes were converted to boarding houses or demolished for industrial and commercial construction. By 1951 (the date of this photo), the Rees House was one of only two residences surviving on the 2100 block of Prairie Avenue, and was the only house remaining by 2002.*

crust. By the late 1880s when the Rees house was built, the influence of Richardson's monumental design with rusticated stone and arched openings was greatly felt.

Prairie Avenue's decline began soon after the World's Columbian Exposition and the nation's economic Panic of 1893. Challenged by Chicago's other elite neighborhoods such as the Gold Coast where prominent Chicagoan and hotelier Potter Palmer built his north side home, residential construction on Prairie Avenue ceased entirely by 1905. As land prices dropped in the early 20th century, Prairie Avenue faced transformation. The once high-end residential community became transient, as many of the grand homes were converted into rooming houses. When industries began to insert buildings into the residential streetscape in the first decades of the 20th century, Chicago's planners responded. By designating the entire area for commercial purposes in the first zoning ordinance of 1923, the residential district's demise was sealed. Many residences were demolished through the years, including those condemned at mid-century. By 1966, efforts were started to save remaining residences on Prairie Avenue when the Glessner House was rescued from demolition. Today, a locally-designated landmark district protects the late 19th century homes remaining on the 1800 and 1900 blocks of Prairie Avenue.

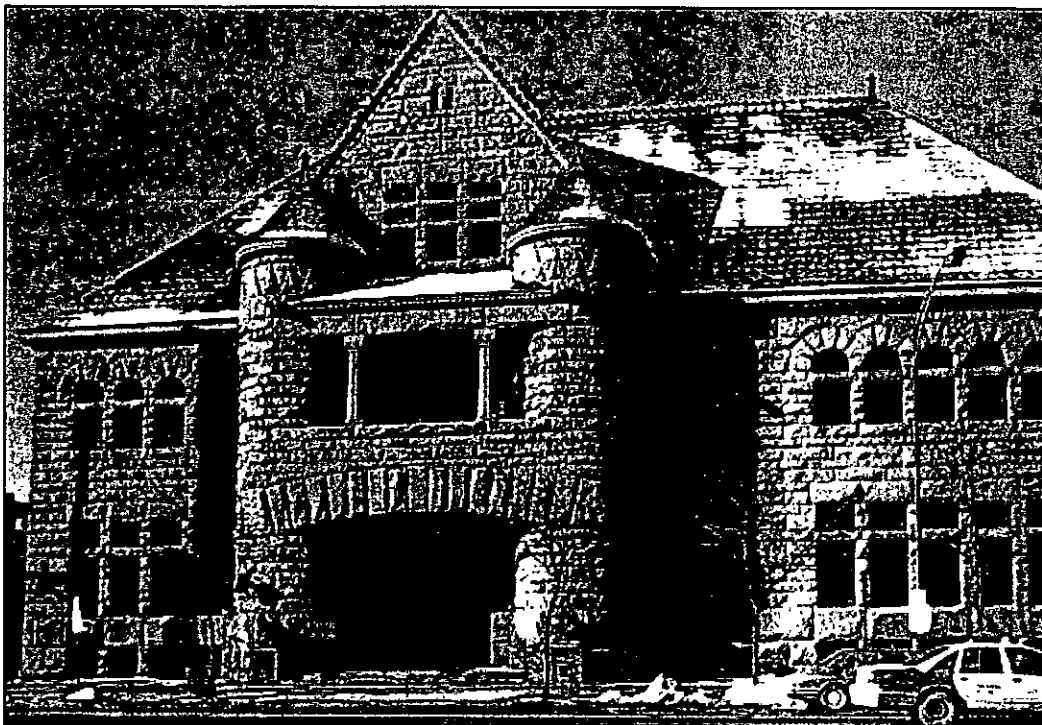
## ARCHITECTS COBB AND FROST

Late 19th and early 20th century architects who trained at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), America's first architecture program, made a significant contribution to architecture in Chicago. Partners **Henry Ives Cobb, F.A.I.A. (1859-1931)** and **Charles Sumner Frost, F.A.I.A. (1856-1931)** left Boston for Chicago and by the late 1800s had become reputable and highly successful architects in the Midwest. As two of the earliest trained American architects, the firm of Cobb & Frost quickly gained clients in the Chicago area.

Henry Ives Cobb was born in Brookline, Massachusetts on August 19, 1859 and received his architectural education through coursework at MIT and a degree from the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard. Born in 1856, Charles Frost was the son of a mill owner and lumber merchant in Lewiston, Maine and received a



*Boston architect Henry Ives Cobb (1859-1931) came to Chicago in 1881 and formed a successful partnership with fellow Bostonian, Charles Sumner Frost. In his day, Cobb was considered one of the best and most distinguished architects in Chicago, adapting European styles to the American urban environment.*

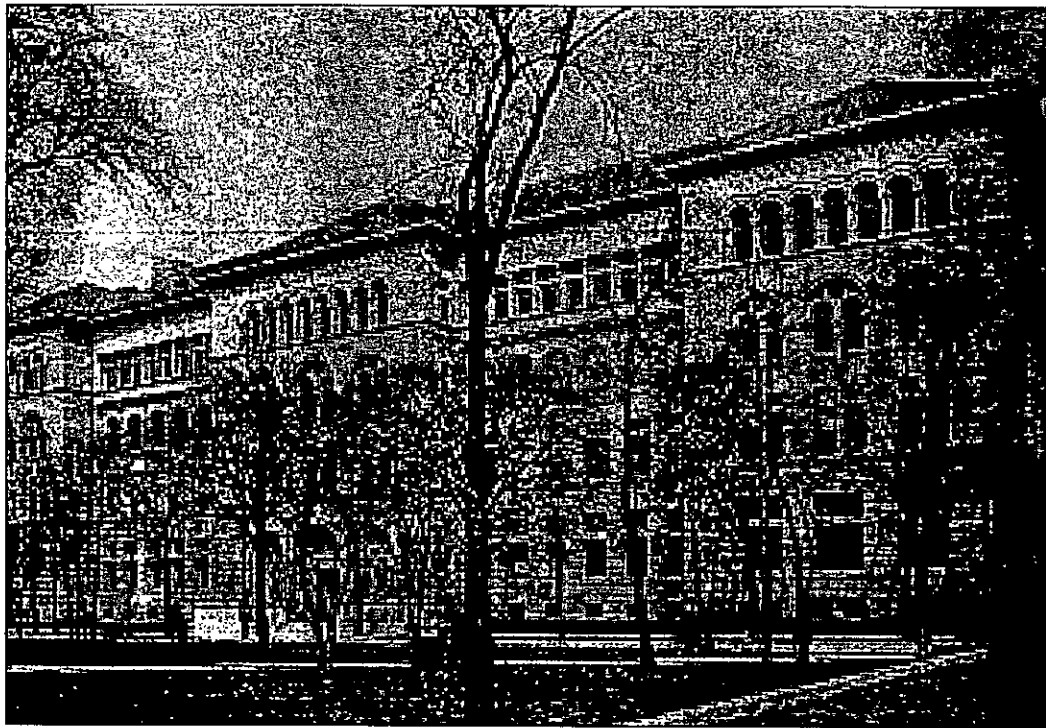


*A Henry Ives Cobb design from 1892 is the former Chicago Historical Society Building at 632 N. Dearborn Street. Although the scale of this institutional structure is massive, the characteristic round arches, prominent towers and rusticated elements display the same Richardsonian Romanesque style found in the Rees House.*



*Educated at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Charles Sumner Frost (1856-1931) joined Henry Ives Cobb in Chicago as partners in Cobb & Frost in 1882. Although partners for fewer than ten years, the firm gained an enviable reputation for its large-scale residential designs for prominent Chicagoans.*

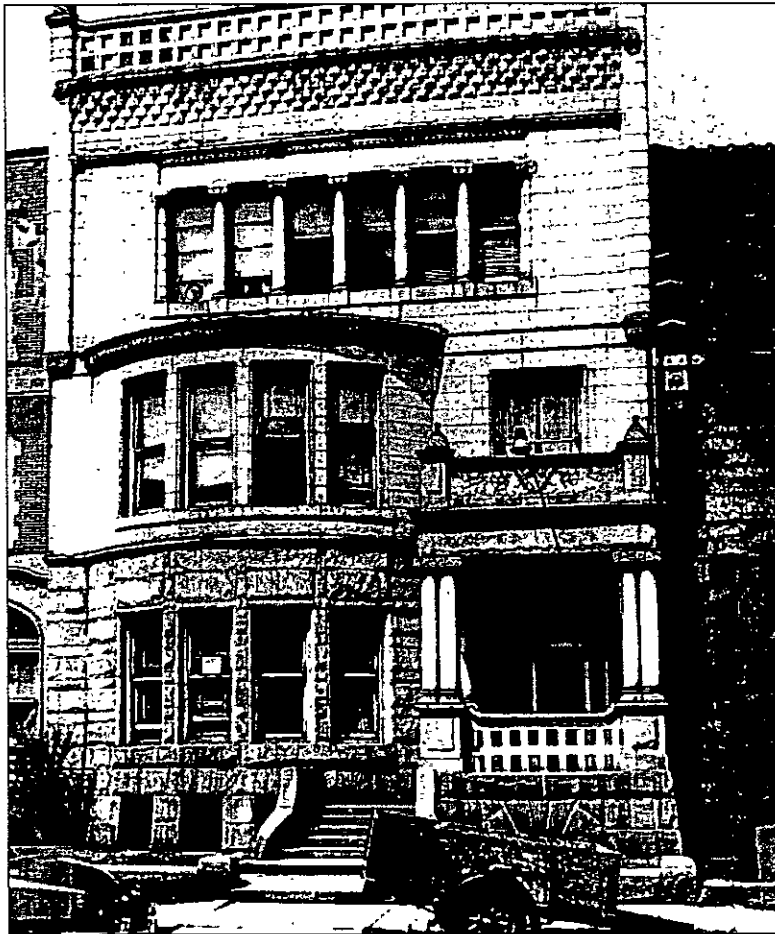
degree from MIT in 1876. Both were first employed in the Boston office of Peabody and Stearns. After winning an 1881 competition to design the now-demolished Union Club in Chicago, Cobb left Boston for Chicago. Charles Frost soon followed, and the two established their Chicago partnership in 1882. The firm quickly assumed and then maintained a highly regarded position in the architectural community, with high profile commissions. Many of these commissions were large-scale residential designs, particularly for prominent Chicagoans. Possibly Cobb and Frost's crowning achievement is one of their earliest designs, the prominent and palatial Potter Palmer Residence (1882-85), a crenellated Norman-style castle once located at Lake Shore Drive between Banks and Schiller streets. Also notable is the landmark 1885-86 Ransom R. Cable House, still standing at 25 East Erie Street. Many of Cobb & Frost's designs are strong and distinguished examples of historically derived architectural styles. Yet, their precise detailing



*The Richardsonian Romanesque style Newberry Library at 60 W. Walton Street was designed by Cobb and built 1888-1892. In contrast to the Historical Society building, its Romanesque expression is in flat, ashlar stone.*

has made Cobb & Frost designs of significantly higher caliber than some of their contemporaries.

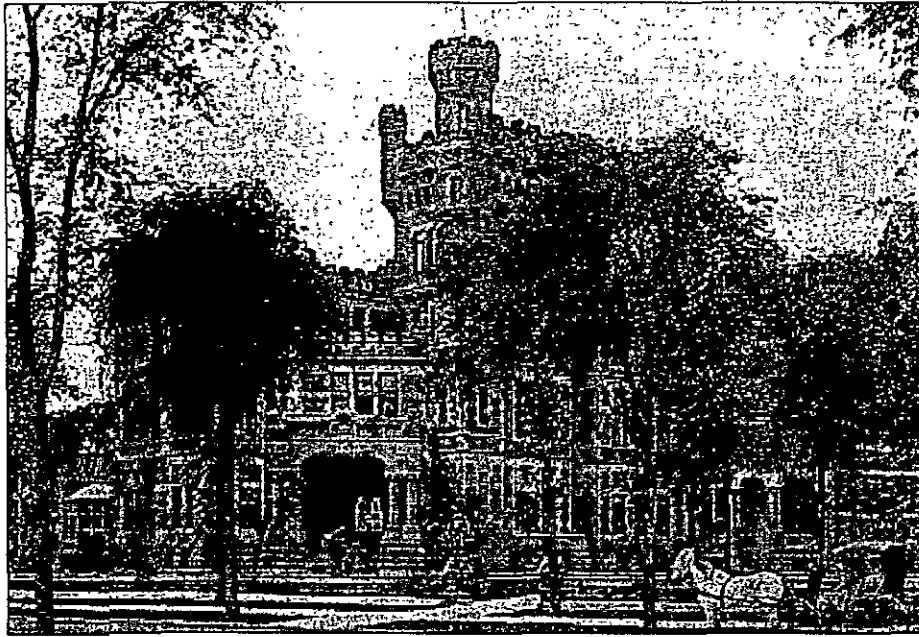
Cobb and Frost designed several residences on Prairie Avenue besides the Harriet Rees House. One of the most comparable houses is the Joseph G. Coleman House (now known as the Coleman-Ames House) located at 1811 S. Prairie. Constructed two years before the Rees House, the 1886 design shares similar Romanesque style elements, but it contrasts greatly with the refined elegance expressed in the smooth-faced Rees House. Instead, the Coleman-Ames House is weighty and massive, with squat columns and a rusticated



*The Osborn Keith Residence, designed by Cobb & Frost in 1886, stood at 1808 S. Prairie Avenue next door to the Glessner House. Stylistically, it shared several notable features with the Rees House, including the curved, two-story bay and the colonnaded third floor windows.*

dark brownstone exterior. Other known Cobb & Frost designs on Prairie Avenue included the Osborn R. Keith Residence, once located next to the world famous Glessner House, the A. C. Bartlett Residence at 2720 S. Prairie, and the Hiram Kelly House at 2716 S. Prairie (all demolished).

After the Cobb and Frost partnership was dissolved in the late 1880s, Charles Frost, in a new joint venture with Alfred Hoyt Granger, went on to a successful specialization in railroad station design. Working independently in Chicago until his move to New York in 1902, Henry Ives Cobb executed a number of important buildings that demonstrated his proficiency in different styles and building types. These include three designated Chicago Landmarks: the Richardsonian Romanesque Newberry Library at 60 W. Walton St., the former Chicago Historical Society building at 632 N. Dearborn St., and the Chateaufesque Dr. John A. McGill mansion at 4938 S. Drexel Boulevard, as well as eighteen English Gothic Revival style buildings and quadrangles at the University of Chicago.



*This imposing north Lake Shore Drive mansion was designed by Cobb & Frost for Potter Palmer and his wife, Bertha Honore Palmer, in 1882. One of the firm's earliest residential designs in Chicago, this crenellated Norman castle is considered by many to have been their greatest architectural achievement.*

The prominence of Cobb's clients is evidence of his success. Cobb was an architect who, without being completely literal, convincingly adapted European styles to the American urban environment. In his day Henry Ives Cobb was considered one of the best and most distinguished architects in Chicago. Quoting the famed architectural critic of the 1890s, Montgomery Schuyler, in an issue of *Architectural Record*:

[T]he architect has reached a personal expression within the limits of an historical style, and has given evidence of an artistic individuality in addition to the abundant testimony given in his work to a remarkable technical equipment and a really astonishing versatility and facility.

But as fast as Cobb's star rose, his practice rapidly declined. The financial panic of 1893 and the ensuing depression curtailed new construction, affecting Cobb and other local architects. Subsequently, Cobb and his historicist architecture fell out of favor. Historians later viewed the works of his contemporaries, Louis Sullivan and John Root as the prelude to Modernism.

## CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a final recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for landmark designation,” as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Harriet F. Rees House be designated a Chicago Landmark.

### ***Criterion 1: Value as an Example of City, State, or National Heritage***

*Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The Harriet F. Rees House is one of just seven historic residences remaining on Upper Prairie Avenue, Chicago’s most fashionable late 19th-century residential street.

### ***Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture***

*Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*

- The Harriet F. Rees House is a distinctive and outstanding example of a Romanesque Revival-style townhouse, with its ashlar limestone façade, dominant two-story bowed bay, Romanesque-arched window colonnade, and steep gable peak with stone finial.
- The Rees House is remarkably intact inside and out, retaining its historic first-floor room configuration, decorative woodwork in a rich variety of woods, and numerous fireplaces and surrounds.

### ***Criterion 5: Work of Significant Architect or Designer***

*Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The Rees House was designed by the noted Chicago architectural firm of Cobb & Frost, who designed a number of significant buildings in Chicago, including the Potter Palmer House (demolished) and the Ransom Cable House (a designated Chicago Landmark).
- Working alone, Henry Ives Cobb designed other designated Chicago Landmarks, including the Former Chicago Historical Society, the Chicago Varnish Company Building, the McGill House, and the Newberry Library (part of the Washington Square District).

### ***Integrity Criterion***

*The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express its historic community, architecture or aesthetic value.*

The Rees House has exceptional integrity, retaining most of its historic 1888 design and materials, and effectively conveys the work of Cobb and Frost. Although there were some interior changes that enclosed the open staircase when converted to a restaurant by 1970, these changes have been reversed by the present owners. The interior retains its 1888 plan in its principal first-floor rooms, and ornamental and architectural detailing remains in place. All windows are original wood, one-over-one, double-hung sash that were recently restored with double insulated glazing added. Although its surroundings have changed dramatically, it exemplifies the high-quality, urban residential character that was once a hallmark of Prairie Avenue.

### **SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES**

Whenever a building or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant features: of the property. This is done to enable both the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historic and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its evaluation of the Harriet F. Rees House, the Commission recommends that the significant historical and architectural features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building; and
- First-floor public rooms, including entrance hall, parlors and dining room.

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## **ILLUSTRATIONS**

Chicago History Museum. (p. 15) ICHi-31691. S. L. Stein Publishing Company; (p. 4) ICHi-36564; (p. 7) Portrait print; (p. 12) Portrait, Eugene Hutchinson, photographer, 1930.

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