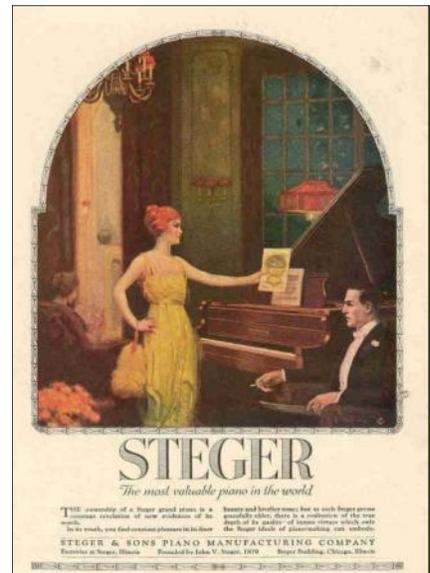


LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



Steger Building 28 E. Jackson Blvd.

Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, April 4, 2013



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. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

STEGER BUILDING

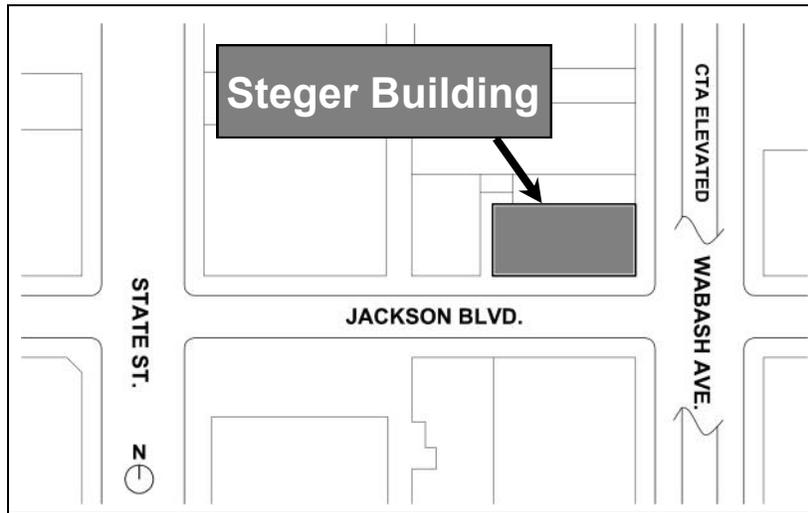
28 E. JACKSON BLVD.

BUILT: 1909-10

ARCHITECTS: MARSHALL & FOX

The Steger Building is a nineteen-story commercial skyscraper built for the headquarters of the Steger & Sons Piano Manufacturing Company, one of the country's largest and most successful piano manufacturers during the early twentieth century. Located at the northwest corner of E. Jackson Boulevard and S. Wabash Avenue in Chicago's Loop, the Steger Building forms an integral part of Chicago's historic "Music Row"—a group of buildings clustered along Wabash Avenue between E. Adams Street and E. Congress Parkway that were constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to house the city's most important musical-instrument manufacturers. The development of Music Row was part of the larger post-Chicago Fire development of the thriving Loop retail district along State Street and Wabash Avenue.

The Steger Building is a handsome Classical Revival-style building with finely detailed terra-cotta ornament manufactured by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, the largest of Chicago's terra-cotta manufacturers in the early twentieth century. The building's prominent location at the intersection of Jackson Boulevard and Wabash Avenue, and its high level of design and craftsmanship, helped establish a high standard of quality for commercial structures along Wabash Avenue. The Steger Building's three-story base is ornamented with a variety of Classical-style detailing. The building's handsome first-floor lobby is also richly decorated with an ornate plaster ceiling and walls covered with terra-cotta garlands, swags, medallions, rosettes, and foliated bands.



The Steger Building is a nineteen-story commercial office skyscraper located at 28 E. Jackson Blvd., in the heart of Chicago's historic "Music Row" on the northwest corner of Jackson Blvd. and Wabash Ave. "Music Row" was the part of the Loop's larger retail area where musical-instrument manufacturers and other music-related retailers located their businesses during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



The Steger Building is designed in the Classical Revival architectural style and is clad with white-glazed brick with white terra-cotta details manufactured by Chicago's Northwestern Terra Cotta Company.

The building was commissioned by John Valentine Steger to serve as the headquarters for the Steger & Sons Piano Manufacturing Company, one of the most successful producers of pianos in the Midwest during the late-19th and early 20th centuries.

Top: A view of the building's two-story, terra-cotta-clad base.

Left: The building's main entrance with its finely-detailed terra-cotta surround.

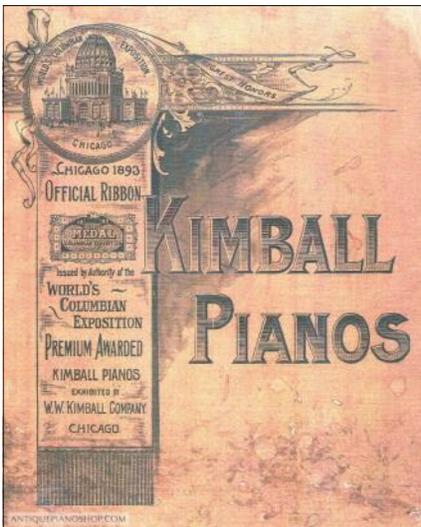
The Steger Building was the first tall office building to be designed by Marshall & Fox, a significant early twentieth-century architectural firm in Chicago. Practicing together between 1905 and 1926, Benjamin Marshall and Charles Eli Fox catered primarily to the city's wealthy elite, specializing in luxury apartment buildings, hotels, theaters, and clubs. Prominent Chicago buildings designed by Marshall & Fox include the Blackstone Hotel on South Michigan Avenue (a designated Chicago Landmark); the adjacent Blackstone Theater on E. Balbo; several buildings in the East Lake Shore Drive Chicago Landmark District, including the Drake Hotel; the 1550 North State Parkway apartment building overlooking Lincoln Park; and the original section of the Uptown National Bank Building (a designated Chicago Landmark).

PIANO MANUFACTURING IN CHICAGO

In the century before radio, motion pictures, and television captured American hearts, the piano held an important place in the average home. Prior to 1930, piano playing was a primary form of entertainment, and owning a piano was a status symbol for middle-class American families. In 1867, historian James Parton declared that “the piano was only less important to the American home than the kitchen stove,” a statement borne out by the fact that by 1905 there were more pianos and organs in America than there were bathtubs. Pianos provided the first introduction to music for many citizens; during the 1880s, half a million people were learning to play the piano and seven out of ten pupils in American public schools were being taught to read music, most likely using a piano. Piano instruction had become more than entertainment, and was considered an important part of a young person's education.

Although the first pianos to grace American homes were imported from Europe, by the mid-nineteenth century several east-coast manufacturers—Chickering and Gilbert of Boston, Nunns and Clark of New York, Meyer of Philadelphia—were producing pianos that rivaled the quality and construction of European models. American piano makers made significant contributions to improvements in piano design and construction, and American piano manufacturers such as Joseph P. Hale and W. W. Kimball were the first to apply industrial production methods to the manufacture of pianos, which lowered costs and opened the industry to a whole new market. At the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, hundreds of American models were displayed by a variety of different makers. As historian Alfred Dolge noted in *Men Who Have Made Piano History*, the Centennial Exposition “established once and for all the superiority of the American piano as an *industrial* product, in comparison with other similar products of other countries.” During the 1880s and 1890s, pianos became one of the first luxury items to reach the mass market, and American piano manufacturers were poised to meet the demand. Between 1890 and 1900, the number of pianos in American homes increased at a rate five times faster than the growth of the population. American pianos accounted for more than half of the world's production, and were built by 263 firms employing 18,000 workers.

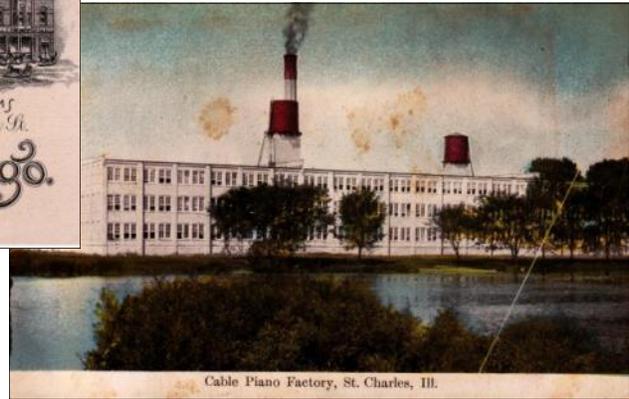
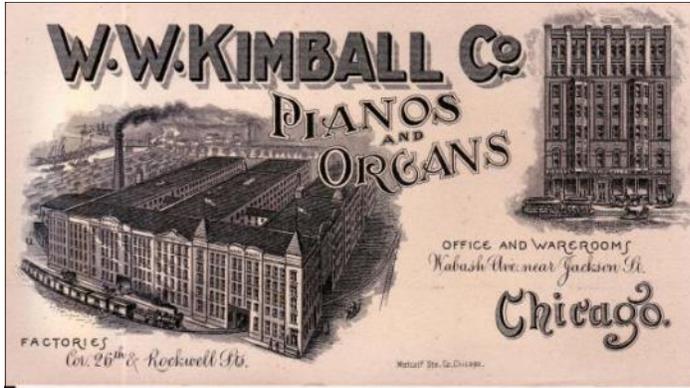
During the last half of the nineteenth century, Chicago developed into a major center for the manufacture of musical instruments in general, and pianos in particular. This was not surprising given Chicago's growing dominance during this period as a major manufacturing and distribution center for all kinds of products. The city's natural advantages as a manufacturing center—central location, national network of railroads and transportation lines, growing population, and



In the mid-1800s, Eastern manufacturers dominated the American piano market. However, the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, generated valuable publicity for Chicago piano manufacturers such as Bush & Gerts, Cable, Kimball, Lyon & Healy, and Steger & Sons. After the fair, the sale of Midwestern-made pianos skyrocketed.

Top: A view of the Court of Honor, World's Columbian Exposition, 1893.

Bottom (left to right): Kimball Piano Catalog, 1893; Cable Company Catalog, 1910; Steger & Son's advertisement, circa 1910.



By 1910, Midwestern brands constituted over half of all piano sales in the United States. Chicago surpassed New York as the country's largest producer of pianos in the early 1920s, with nearly 125,000 pianos produced annually.

Clockwise from top left: Kimball Co. advertisement, circa 1900; Cable Piano Factory in St. Charles, IL, circa 1920; Lyon & Healy Factory, circa 1920; Steger & Sons Factory in Steger, IL, circa 1910.



proximity to an abundance of raw materials—translated well to piano manufacturing. In 1880, fourteen piano factories were operating in Chicago. Just one decade later, there were thirty-one. Chicago’s piano industry reflected the broader acceptance of pianos produced in the western half of the United States, which were initially seen as inferior to established East Coast brands such as Steinway. In 1893, the World’s Columbian Exposition sparked a national marketing competition between “upstart” Midwestern piano companies and more venerable Eastern brands. The Exposition generated valuable publicity for Chicago brands such as Bush & Gerts, Cable, Cable-Nelson, Conover, Hamilton (Baldwin), Kimball, Lyon & Healy, and Steger & Sons. After the Exposition, the sale of Midwestern-made pianos skyrocketed, and by 1910 they constituted over half of all piano sales in the United States. Chicago surpassed New York as the country’s largest producer of pianos in the early 1920s, with nearly 125,000 pianos produced annually.

THE STEGER & SONS PIANO MANUFACTURING COMPANY

One of the most successful Chicago piano manufacturing firms to emerge during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was the Steger & Sons Piano Manufacturing Company. John Valentine Steger, an enigmatic and dogged industrialist, immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1871. After first working in a brass foundry, Steger used his savings to form a partnership with a piano tuner and open a piano store. After gaining experience in the industry as a piano dealer, Steger founded Steger & Sons in 1879 with an inventory of five pianos housed in a second-floor shop on State Street. Trained by his father as a cabinet maker, Steger’s pianos quickly became popular, and his business grew by the 1890s into one of the most successful piano manufacturing concerns in the Midwest.

In 1891, Steger moved his retail location to an existing building on the northwest corner of S. Wabash Avenue and E. Jackson Boulevard, becoming one of the first piano manufacturers to relocate to what would become known as Chicago’s “Music Row.” Steger also purchased twenty acres of land in the village of Columbia Heights, located south of the city, where he constructed a manufacturing plant and several workers cottages to house his employees.

Steger was one of the many upcoming Midwestern piano manufacturers to exhibit at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition held in Chicago. In a review of musical instruments featured at the world’s fair, Charles A. Daniell noted that “the peculiar excellence of the Steger piano consists of its fine quality of tone....it is very musical, liquid, round, yet sufficiently brilliant to satisfy the most fastidious taste.”

When the town of Columbia Heights officially incorporated in 1896, the name was changed from Columbia Heights to Steger to recognize the piano company’s importance to the town. By 1908, the Steger & Sons plant employed 1,600 men (over half of the inhabitants of the town) and it produced 16,000 pianos each year. Mr. Steger was viewed by most in the town as a benevolent patriarch. Along with providing many jobs, he encouraged homeownership and promoted commercial development in the town that operated independently of Steger & Sons company ownership. Immediately following the town’s incorporation, Steger served as the town’s first president. During his two terms, Steger oversaw development of the town’s volunteer fire department and its water and sewer facilities. In 1912, a series of articles ran in the *Musical Courier Extra* (an

STEGER
The most valuable piano in the world

WE enrich our lives with the possession of exquisite things. But compare the mute beauty of a finely fashioned vase or colorful canvas with the living, singing tone of a Steger grand piano and you'll understand the bond of friendship which exists between legions of Steger owners and the instruments they have come to love.

STEGER & SONS PIANO MANUFACTURING COMPANY
 Factories at Steger, Illinois Founded by John V. Steger, 1879 Steger Building, Chicago, Illinois

If it's a Steger—it's the finest reproducing photograph in the world.



German immigrant and cabinet maker John Valentine Steger founded the Steger & Sons Piano Manufacturing Company in Chicago in 1879 and was its long-time president. In 1891, Steger purchased twenty acres of land south of Chicago in what was then Columbia Heights, where he constructed a large piano-manufacturing facility that would eventually employ over 1,600 workers. The town was incorporated as Steger, Illinois, in 1896. John Steger served as the town's first president and was viewed by many as its benevolent patriarch.

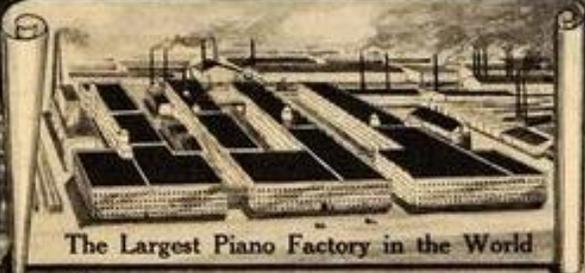
Top right: John Steger in 1896. Top left: Steger advertisement, circa 1910. Right: Steger advertisement, circa 1910.

STEGER
The most valuable piano in the world

THE ownership of a Steger grand piano is a constant revelation of new evidences of its worth. In its youth, you find constant pleasure in its finer beauty and leveler tone; but as each Steger grows gracefully older, there is a realization of the true depth of its quality—of innate virtues which only the Steger ideals of piano-making can embody.

STEGER & SONS PIANO MANUFACTURING COMPANY
 Factories at Steger, Illinois Founded by John V. Steger, 1879 Steger Building, Chicago, Illinois



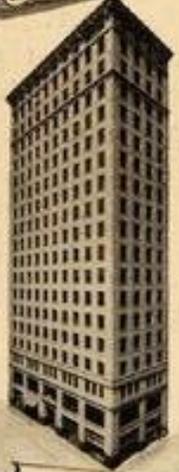


The Largest Piano Factory in the World

The Man and the Factories

Behind the Steger Piano

When you see the name **Steger & Sons** on a piano, remember that it means something more than mere name association. It means that the man who more than a quarter of a century ago built the first **Steger** piano supervises the manufacture of every **Steger & Sons** piano that leaves the factory. Under such conditions it is not surprising that their popularity has made the **Steger** factories the largest in the world—that these famous instruments sell at remarkably low prices, made possible only by the **Steger** policies of visible, audible result-valuation and small margin of profit.



19 Story
Steger Building

Steger & Sons

Pianos and Player Pianos

The True Representatives of Supreme Piano Satisfaction

FREE

We want every music lover to have our handsomely illustrated Free Catalog, a real necessity to those contemplating the purchase of a piano.

The **Steger & Sons** Piano is in a class by itself—each instrument is the supreme effort of an enormous corps of expert piano builders—under the personal supervision of Mr. John V. Steger, the greatest master piano builder the world has ever known—in the largest piano factory in the world at Steger, Ill.—the town founded by Mr. Steger.

The **Steger & Sons** Pianos and Player Pianos are delivered anywhere in the United States free of charge. The greatest piano value offered, within the easy reach of all.

Our Easy Payment Plans
Make Buying Easy
Liberal allowance made for old pianos.
Write us today for new Catalog—it is yours for the asking—and will give you some wonderful information.



Steger & Sons
Steger Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

John Steger was a tireless promoter of the Steger brand. Along with other Chicago manufacturers, he pioneered the use of assembly line manufacturing to produce affordable pianos on an industrial scale. Steger advertisement, circa 1910, which depicted the new Steger Building.

industry trade periodical) characterizing Steger's treatment of his employees as tyrannical and despotic. Steger sued the paper for criminal libel and emerged victorious after a long, drawn-out trial.

As president of the Steger & Sons Piano Manufacturing Company, John Steger pioneered the use of assembly-line manufacturing for pianos while recruiting German craftsmen to ensure that Steger pianos remained a quality product that would stand up in a competitive market. By 1920, Steger, Illinois was touted as "the piano capital of the world" thanks to Steger and his company. Steger's sons, George and Christopher, ran the company with their father. Christopher Steger became president of the business in 1916 after his father's tragic accidental death (he was found drowned in a reservoir near his factory). The company never fully recovered from the loss of its founding president, despite attempts in the early 1920s to branch into the emerging phonograph business. The factory in Steger, Illinois, closed in 1926.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOOP RETAIL DISTRICT AND "MUSIC ROW"

Since the 1870s, the blocks along State Street and Wabash Avenue in the Loop have comprised the heart of Chicago's thriving downtown retail center, with department stores, luxury retail shops, wholesalers, and discount stores sharing space with a wide variety of professional and personal-service providers, including doctors, attorneys, barbers, tailors, and countless others. Noted historian Neil Harris has called the district "the most concentrated retail section in the country." The dramatic and rapid growth along the State-Wabash corridor in the years between the Chicago Fire of 1871 and the stock market crash in 1929 mirrored the pace of the city's overall development in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a wide variety of buildings—including loft and office buildings, large department stores, specialty shops, tall shop buildings, hotels, and theaters—constructed between 1872 and the 1930s.

While State Street housed the area's most imposing structures, the noise and physical presence of the elevated train tracks along Wabash Avenue kept land values lower and delayed the construction of large new buildings along the street. But lower land values also made Wabash Avenue an entry point for smaller-scale retailers and entrepreneurs, and the street developed its own identity as home to a variety of specialized retail uses, including jewelry, furniture, books, and musical instruments. The development of specialized retail "nodes" within the larger Loop shopping district was part of a larger trend of segregation by function that occurred in the city during the post fire period Chicago historian Dominic Pacyga notes in *Chicago: A Biography*:

Retail continued to appear along State Street and also on Wabash. Cultural institutions developed south of Randolph on the west side of Michigan Avenue, government offices searched out Clark Street, while financial and legal offices opened on LaSalle Street. Over time a Music Row, occupied by instrument dealers, music instructors, and other such businesses moved to Wabash Avenue at Jackson, while to the north on Wabash, jewelers flourished....This resulted in a more efficient use of land in the downtown area and made the Loop more comprehensible to both Chicagoans and visitors.

Initially the blocks of South Wabash Avenue between E. Adams Street and what is now E. Congress Parkway were populated primarily by piano manufacturers, including Lyon & Healy, Kim-



CHICAGO IS PIANO CENTER

Largest and Best Equipped Factories in U. S.

LEADS IN ORGAN TRADE.

Also Surpasses in Brass and Stringed Instruments.

Chicago's growth as a piano manufacturing center has been phenomenal. Men of aggressiveness and foresight were behind the industry here. In spite of the big disadvantages under which they were laboring and the strong prejudice against the west in a

During the early 1900s, specialized retail "nodes" developed along Wabash Avenue in the Loop, which concentrated retailers of such items as jewelry, furniture, books, and musical instruments. Piano manufacturers were the first to begin clustering along the intersection of Wabash Avenue and Jackson Boulevard, but by 1915 Chicago's "Music Row" was home to over forty companies that produced and sold a variety of musical instruments, electric music machines, sheet music, and other music-related products.

Top: A view of Wabash Avenue, looking north from Van Buren Street towards the "Music Row" intersection of Jackson and Wabash, 1907. Note the painted wall sign for "Organs" and the projecting "Baldwin Pianos" (seen in reverse).

Left: *Chicago Tribune* article, 1910

ball, Hamilton (Baldwin), Cable, Cable-Nelson, Conover, Bush & Gerts, and Story & Clark. However, by 1915, “Music Row” housed over forty companies that produced and sold a variety of musical instruments, electric music machines, sheet music, and other music-related products. Piano companies formed the core of what became a much larger and more diverse shopping district. The intersection of Wabash Avenue and Jackson Boulevard became home to the most successful piano manufacturing companies in the city (Lyon & Healy, Kimball, Steger and Cable), and the buildings that these companies constructed served as “brick-and-mortar” advertisements for their products. A February 1925 article in *Presto* magazine declared this intersection to be “the world’s greatest piano market.”

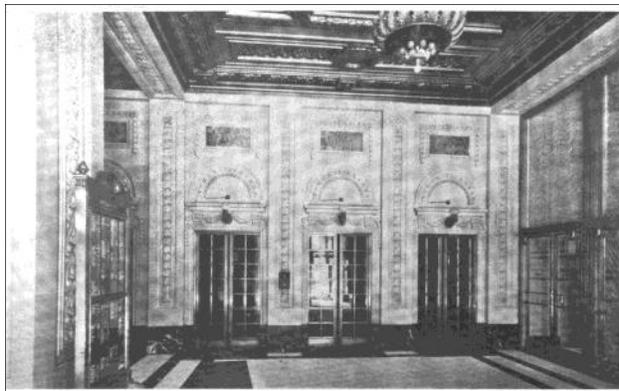
BUILDING DEVELOPMENT AND DESCRIPTION

In 1909, John Steger hired the noted Chicago architectural firm Marshall & Fox to design a new headquarters building and showroom that would be a physical manifestation of the company’s success. The location of the new building was the northwest corner of Jackson Boulevard and Wabash Avenue, replacing the already-existing building into which Steger had moved his retail business in 1891.

The Steger Building was Marshall & Fox’s first tall commercial building built in Chicago, but for John Steger the new building was the culmination of years of careful planning and astute business decisions. Steger had moved his Chicago showroom and sales center to leased space at the corner of Jackson and Wabash much earlier, in 1891, making the company one of the first instrument manufacturers to establish a presence on “Music Row.” He had secured long-term leases on the two parcels of land at the corner in 1906, paying over \$30,000 per foot of street frontage for the crucial corner lot, an amount many considered exorbitant and that the *Chicago Daily Tribune* noted was the second highest price paid for land in the city’s history up to that time.

Construction of the new Steger Building began in mid-1909 (the building permit is dated June 15), and the building was completed by the spring of 1910. Steger & Sons announced their formal move into the building in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on May 1.

The Steger Building is a nineteen-story, steel-frame, commercial skyscraper. Designed in the Classical Revival architectural style, the building’s overall composition is a tripartite “column” design, with an ornamented terra-cotta base, a more restrained glazed brick shaft, and a terra-cotta detailed top. The terra-cotta base of the building features garlands, buds and other floral ornament detailing the Classical-style piers and spandrel panels. Terra-cotta cornices are situated above the second and third stories; the lower cornice features a Greek key fret coupled with an egg-and-dart molding, while the upper cornice is bracketed and features floral detailing. The building’s upper stories are clad in plain white glazed brick through the seventeenth floor, with a secondary bracketed cornice between the sixteenth and seventeenth stories. The north (party wall) façade is clad with red brick. Marshall & Fox’s design for the building also included an elaborate terra-cotta cornice. Since removed, current plans for the building include a new cornice as part of a substantial rehabilitation.



ANNOUNCEMENT

1879

1910

The New Steger Building
 21 Stories in Height, Steel Construction,
 Entirely Fireproof.

Steger & Sons Piano Mfg. Co.
 Announce the removal to their new home,
THE STEGER BUILDING
 Wabash Ave. and Jackson Blvd.

With the increased facilities, including magnificent and spacious display rooms and private telephone exchange reaching all departments, they are enabled to meet all the requirements of their patrons.

Steger & Sons Pianos (Grand and Upright)
Reed & Sons Pianos
Singer Pianos
Steger Natural Player-Piano
 All in Choicest Variety of Designs and Wood Colorings

John Steger planned carefully for years to secure the rights to the coveted corner lot, at the center of "Music Row," on which the Steger Building was eventually constructed. Work began on the building in the fall of 1909 and was completed by May 1910.

Clockwise from top left: Steger Building in 1910; Chicago Tribune announcement, May 1, 1910 (note that the announcement states that the building is 21 stories in height, as opposed to the 19 actually built); Interior view of lobby, 1910.



The Steger Building was an imposing presence at the intersection of Wabash Avenue and Jackson Boulevard when it was completed, rising above most surrounding buildings, A view of Jackson, looking east from Plymouth Court, with the Steger Building (marked with arrow) at center, 1912.

The main entrance to the building on E. Jackson Boulevard features a terra-cotta cornice supported by brackets with gold-leafed rosettes, and a frieze displaying the name “STEGGER,” also in gold leaf. The entrance surround itself is decorated with terra-cotta swag-and-garland ornament and is framed with acanthus-leaf details.

The Steger Building’s first-floor lobby is L-shaped and finely decorated in the Classical Revival style, with white glazed terra-cotta ornament on the walls, painted plaster detailing on the ceiling, and elaborate cast-iron grillwork at the entrance and stair. The ceiling and walls throughout the lobby interior are richly decorated with a variety of Classical-style ornament, including garlands, swags, medallions, rosettes, and foliated bands. A monumental open stair at the northwest corner of the lobby has marble treads and a decorative metal balustrade with an ornate scrolled newel post and wood handrail. Historic plans and photographs show that metal-and-glass display windows and doors originally pierced the northeast wall of the lobby, leading into a ground-floor piano showroom. The upper floors of the building contain offices opening off central corridors.

The Steger Building served as Steger & Sons’ general headquarters, with piano showrooms and sales offices, from its completion in 1910 until 1924. The company sold the building in April 1924 to the Starck Piano Company, which used the building for its Chicago offices and showrooms until its sale of the building in 1947. Through the 1930s and 1940s, ground-floor tenants included shops devoted to men’s wear, jewelry, and shoes, including a Florsheim Shoes outlet.

The Steger Building is identified as “orange” in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey. It is also a contributing building within the Loop Retail Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

The Classical Revival Architectural Style

With its Classical Revival-style design, the Steger Building is a Chicago skyscraper that exemplifies the Classical architectural tradition, which was inspired by the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome and the subsequent revivals and reinterpretations of Classical traditions from the Renaissance up to the twentieth century. Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, with its grandly-scaled “White City” of Classical Revival-style exposition buildings and monuments, played an influential role in reinvigorating the style both in Chicago and nationally from the 1890s through the 1920s. The Classical Revival architectural style was increasingly adapted to a wide variety of building types, including banks, university buildings, railroad stations, theaters, hotels and office buildings.

In the early twentieth century, Classical forms and ornament were very often used in Chicago high-rise architecture. Such ornament typically was based on that highly ornamental Italian Renaissance and Baroque periods. The Steger Building, with its overall tripartite form, its Classical-style ornament crafted in architectural terra cotta, and finely-detailed building lobby, exemplifies the importance of the Classical Revival architectural style as a dominant architectural style for Chicago skyscraper design during the period.

ARCHITECTURAL TERRA COTTA IN CHICAGO

Due to the intricacy of historic ornament, architectural terra cotta was often used on skyscrapers designed in historic architectural styles such as the Classical or Gothic Revivals, where the malleability of terra cotta allowed easy replication of historic ornament. The Steger Building is a handsome example of the material's use.

Earlier terra cotta, used since 1870 in Chicago for both fireproofing and ornamentation, had originally been unglazed and used to create applied designs of all styles, often used in conjunction with brick facades. Following the Chicago Fire of 1871, there was widespread use of terra-cotta tiles as fireproofing in commercial structures. By the mid-to-late 1880's, light colored terra cotta was being manufactured and used to imitate limestone decoration to contrast with brick facades. In 1894, however, architect Charles Atwood pushed terra-cotta technology. Instead of confining its use to ornamentation or fireproofing, he used white glazed terra cotta to entirely clad the Reliance Building, which led to the recognition of architectural terra cotta as a material able to clad steel-frame buildings in their entirety.

The use of architectural terra cotta for the complete cladding of skyscrapers revolutionized the terra-cotta industry and caused it to expand rapidly. Many Classical Revival-style buildings constructed in Chicago during the 1910s and 1920s featured ornamentation rendered in terra cotta. It offered many advantages as a building material—it was durable, inexpensive, and infinitely adaptable. Terra cotta could be modeled into a wide range of forms, from flat patterned blocks to large three-dimensional figures, and could be glazed in a multitude of colors and finishes.

The architectural terra cotta used for the Steger Building was manufactured by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company of Chicago, which by 1900 had become the nation's largest terra-cotta producer and remained so for thirty years. Northwestern was founded by a group of Chicago investors in 1878, including G. Hottinger, John R. True and F. Wagner. By the early twentieth century, the company had constructed a large plant on the city's Northwest Side which employed over 1,000 workers. The company went on to establish plants in Denver, St. Louis and Chicago Heights.

Northwestern soon became known as one of the most innovative terra-cotta manufacturing companies, developing both state-of-the-art production and installation techniques. Northwestern's regular clients included such prominent Chicago architects as Daniel Burnham, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright, and the company manufactured terra cotta for many of the city's most important buildings, including the Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Building, the Marquette Building, the Civic Opera House, the Gage Building, the Fisher Building, the Chicago Theater, and the Steuben Club Building, all designated Chicago Landmarks. The company's extensive experience with large-scale buildings such as these made it a natural fit for the fine ornament designed by Marshall & Fox for the Steger Building.

The use of architectural terra cotta peaked in the 1920s, before being eclipsed by modern curtain-wall construction of glass, exposed steel and concrete. Business for Northwestern Terra Cotta declined during the Great Depression and never regained its earlier levels. The last plant was closed in 1965 and the company went out of business, leaving a wealth of significant architecture throughout the country.



The Steger Building's terra-cotta detailing, used both on the building's exterior and in the finely-detailed building lobby, is rendered in a variety of Classical-style motifs, including floral garlands and swags, egg-and-dart moldings, rosettes, Greek key designs, and acanthus-leaf moldings.

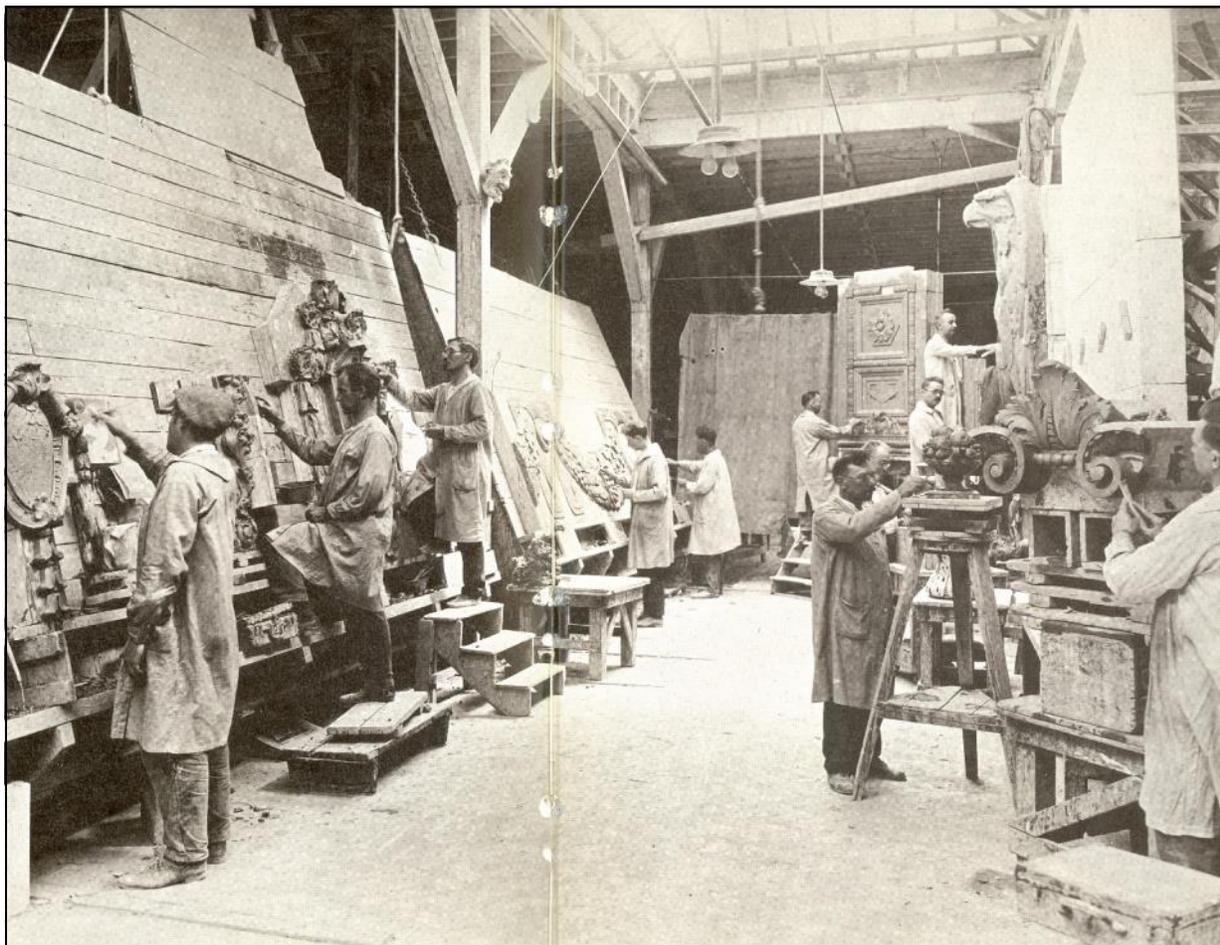
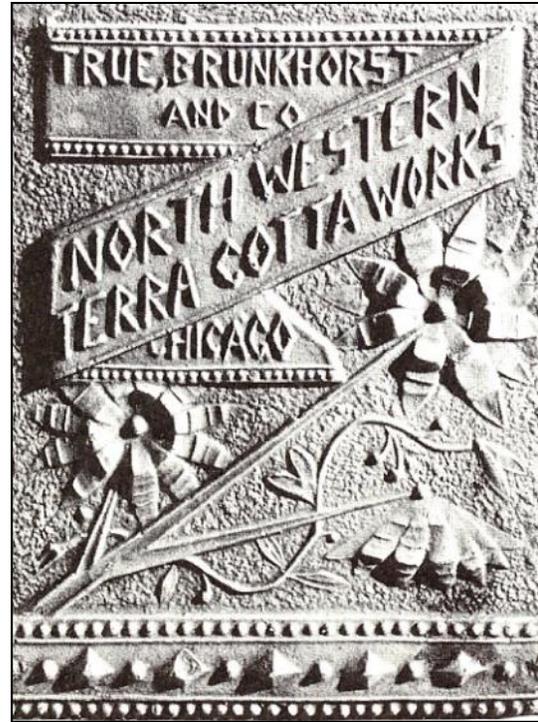
Top: A view of a portion of the decorative surround for the building's main entrance, facing Jackson Boulevard.

Bottom (clockwise from top left): A cornice detail with rosettes, egg-and-dart, and Greek key moldings, found above storefronts; a bracket detail with a boldly-molded garland, decorating a window sill; terra-cotta ornament above building-lobby elevators, including a sunburst and swags.



The architectural terra-cotta ornament that embellishes the Steger Building was manufactured by Chicago's Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, one of the largest producers of architectural terra cotta in the United States. Northwestern produced terra cotta for many buildings designed by well-known Chicago architects, including Daniel Burnham, Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Right: Sample Northwestern tile, ca. 1884.
Bottom: Modeling room at Northwestern Terra Cotta, ca. 1925.



ARCHITECTS MARSHALL & FOX

The Steger Building was designed by Marshall & Fox, a significant and prominent early twentieth-century architectural firm in Chicago. Practicing together between 1905 and 1926, Benjamin Marshall and Charles Fox catered primarily to the City's wealthy elite, specializing primarily in luxury apartment buildings, hotels, theaters, and clubs. The Steger Building is considered the firm's first commercial high-rise building.

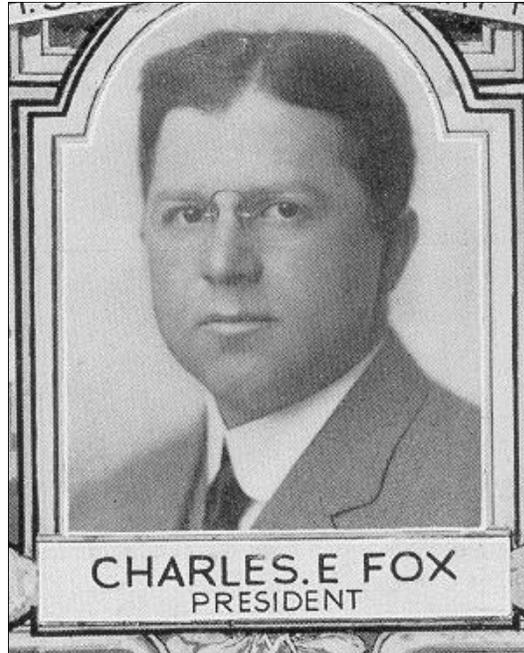
Benjamin H. Marshall (1874-1944) was born in Chicago as the only son of a wealthy miller and baking company owner. Marshall received his only formal education from the Harvard School in Kenwood, an elite prep school where he was a classmate of John B. Drake II, from whom he would later receive some of his most prestigious commissions, including the Blackstone and Drake hotels. At an early age he was influenced by the extravagant Classical Revival-style buildings of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, constructed in Jackson Park not far from Marshall's South Side home.

At the age of nineteen, Marshall, who had been employed as a clothing designer for a wholesale clothier, began working as a clerk in the Chicago architectural firm of Marble and Wilson. Two years later Oliver W. Marble died, and Marshall became Henry R. Wilson's junior partner under the firm name of Wilson & Marshall. In 1902, Marshall decided to open his own practice after Wilson retired. His most notable buildings during this period were the Illinois Theatre (demolished) and the Iroquois Theatre, which suffered a tragic fire in 1903. In 1905, he went into formal partnership with Charles E. Fox.

Benjamin Marshall was known as an eccentric character who enjoyed hobnobbing with Chicago's social elite. He avoided professional and civic commitments and favored entrepreneurial endeavors, parties, the playing of golf, theater-going, and fishing. From his early training as a suit-maker, Marshall designed much of his distinctive wardrobe, which was characterized by white suits and shoes and topped off by a white hat with a black band. His flamboyant style was evident in his architectural designs, including a luxurious thirty-room, lakefront estate built for his own use in the North Shore suburb of Wilmette. Designed in the Spanish Renaissance Revival style, it featured a visually-flamboyant, glass-enclosed tropical garden and cost one million dollars to construct in 1921.

Charles Eli Fox (1870-1926), Marshall's partner, was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, and received his architectural training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he received his degree in 1891. That same year he moved to Chicago to work on projects at the World's Columbian Exposition with the prominent Chicago firm of Holabird & Roche. Fox specialized in the new steel-frame construction that was developing in Chicago during this period. While with Holabird & Roche, he worked on several of their most notable buildings of the period, including the Old Colony, Marquette, Monadnock and Republic buildings.

Similar to Marshall, Fox also enjoyed a leisurely life, and he was a renowned yachtsman, serving as the commodore of the Chicago Yacht Club and sailing in the annual Chicago-to-Mackinac Island race. He was more professionally and civically oriented than Marshall, serving as president of the Illinois Society of Architects and as an organizer of the Architects Club of Chicago.



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Top left: A portrait of Benjamin Marshall published in *Chicago and Its Makers* in 1929. Top right: A photo of Charles Fox as president of the Illinois Society of Architects. Bottom: One of Marshall & Fox's most important Chicago designs was for the South Shore Country Club at 71st St. and South Shore Dr., designated as a Chicago Landmark.



Marshall and Fox were best known for their luxury apartment and hotel buildings. Top left: The Marshall Apartments on N. Lake Shore Dr., was built in 1910 as the firm's first luxury apartment building. (It has since been demolished.) Top right: The Blackstone Hotel (an individually-designated Chicago Landmark) on S. Michigan Ave. was also completed in 1910. Bottom: The Edgewater Beach Hotel, which opened in 1916, was a lavish resort hotel on the City's far north lakefront. (It was demolished in 1969.)



Top: The firm of Marshall & Fox, along with Benjamin Marshall working alone later in his career, designed several buildings in the East Lake Shore Drive Chicago Landmark District, including 999 N. Lake Shore Dr. (#1), 209 E. Lake Shore Dr. (#2), The Breakers Apartments (#3) at 199 E. Lake Shore Dr., the Drake Tower Apartments (#4) at 179 E. Lake Shore Dr., and the Drake Hotel (#5).

Right: Marshall also designed the Bernard A. Eckhart House (now the Polish Consulate) at 1530 N. Lake Shore Dr. (a contributing building in the Seven Houses on Lake Shore Drive Chicago Landmark District).



Fox was also a member of the Chicago Club, the Mid-Day Club, Exmoor Country Club, and the Chicago Athletic Association. Fox's role as a founding member in the newly-formed South Shore Country Club led to the firm's 1906 commission for the original clubhouse building.

Prior to receiving the commission from Steger, Marshall & Fox designed their first apartment building, the Marshall Apartments, which was located at 1100 North Lake Shore Drive and financed by Benjamin Marshall's father. This was one of the first luxury apartment buildings on the Drive and would serve as a prototype for the many other luxury high-rise residences for which the firm would become known. Described by the *Chicago Evening Post* as an "ultra high class apartment building," individual apartments in the Marshall featured such amenities as oak and mahogany woodwork, a large salon, an "orangerie," or glassed-in solarium, three large bedrooms, and servants' quarters. Due to the overwhelming success of the design, the firm completed several other luxury apartment buildings that were similar in plan and designed primarily in popular historic revival styles, including the Second Empire, Beaux-Arts, Adamesque, and Georgian Revival. Most of these buildings were located in Chicago's elite Gold Coast neighborhood. They include 1550 North State Parkway (1912), the Breakers (1915), and the Stewart Apartments (1913).

Other prominent Chicago buildings designed by Marshall & Fox include the Blackstone Hotel on South Michigan Avenue (an individual Chicago Landmark) and the adjacent Blackstone Theatre on East Balbo (a contributing building in the Historic Michigan Boulevard District); the Drake Hotel, located in the East Lake Shore Drive Chicago Landmark District; and the original section of the Uptown National Bank Building (an individual Chicago Landmark).

After Fox's death in 1926, Marshall went into practice on his own, designing notable buildings such as the Edgewater Beach Apartments in 1928 and the Drake Tower Apartments (located in the East Lake Shore Drive District) in 1929. With the onset of the Great Depression and the cessation of most building construction, these commissions would mark the end of Benjamin Marshall's illustrious career as an architect to Chicago's elite. In 1936 Marshall sold his home and studio in Wilmette to Nathan Goldblatt, co-founder of Goldblatt Brothers Department Stores, and he moved into the Drake Hotel, where he lived until his death in 1944.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sec. 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 Steger Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.



Marshall & Fox designed a number of legitimate theaters in Chicago, including (top left) the Blackstone Theater (now Merle Reskin Theater, DePaul University) on E. Balbo (a contributing building to the Historic Michigan Boulevard Chicago Landmark District); and (top right) the Illinois Theater (demolished).

Two additional Marshall & Fox designs of note are (bottom left) the John B. Murphy Memorial Auditorium at 50 E. Erie; and (bottom right) the 1550 N. State Parkway apartment building.

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, the State of Illinois or the United States.

- The Steger Building, built as the headquarters of the Steger & Sons Piano Manufacturing Company, is significant in the economic history of Chicago as a building that exemplifies the city's historic importance as a national center in musical-instrument manufacturing, especially as a leader in the large-scale production of pianos. John V. Steger, the founder of Steger & Sons, was an important figure within the industry. From humble beginnings as a cabinetmaker in Germany, Steger rose to prominence as president of one of the Midwest's most successful piano manufacturers and the founder of the Chicago-area company town of Steger, Illinois.
- The Steger Building, located at the northwest corner of S. Wabash Avenue and E. Jackson Boulevard, is an important building within a surviving group of buildings along Wabash Avenue that historically comprised Chicago's "Music Row," the area within the Loop's retail commercial area centered on State Street and Wabash Avenue, where musical instruments, sheet music and other music-related things were sold.
- The Steger Building's use of architectural terra cotta for cladding and ornamentation exemplifies the importance of terra cotta to early Chicago skyscraper design and the significance of the terra-cotta industry in Chicago during the early twentieth century. The building's elaborate terra-cotta ornament was produced by Chicago's Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, one of the United States' major terra-cotta companies and the producers of terra-cotta cladding and ornament for many of Chicago's most important buildings.

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 Steger Building is a handsome example of a Classical Revival-style commercial skyscraper. The Classical Revival was a significant architectural style in the early twentieth century in Chicago, and the Steger Building exemplifies the importance of the style, used widely for a variety of building types, from small-scale residences to soaring high-rise commercial buildings.
- The Steger Building displays excellent ornamentation and craftsmanship in terra cotta. The building's exterior has a plethora of Classical-style terra-cotta detailing, including the building's entrance surround with terra cotta swag-and-garland ornament and acanthus-leaf details.
- The Steger Building's L-shaped lobby is finely decorated in the Classical Revival style, with white glazed terra-cotta ornament including garlands, swags, medallions, rosettes, and foliated bands. The ornate ceiling mimics these details in plasterwork. A monumental open stair at the northwestern corner of the lobby has marble treads and a decorative metal balustrade with an ornate scrolled newel post and wood handrail.

Criterion 5: Work of a 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.

- Marshall & Fox, the architects of the Steger Building, was a significant and prolific early twentieth-century architectural firm in Chicago. Partners Benjamin Marshall and Charles Fox designed many of the city's most prominent apartment buildings, hotels, theaters, and commercial buildings, including the Blackstone Hotel on South Michigan Avenue (a designated Chicago Landmark); the Drake Hotel (a contributing building in the East Lake Shore Drive Chicago Landmark District); and the original section of the Sheridan Trust and Savings Bank Building (a designated Chicago Landmark)
- The Steger Building was the first tall commercial office building designed by Marshall & Fox, and the building set the standard for many of the firm's subsequent commercial designs in Chicago with its tripartite façade division and white glazed terra cotta cladding.

Integrity Criterion

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

Retaining its historic integrity of location and setting, the Steger Building is located on a rectangular parcel at the northwest corner of E. Jackson Boulevard and S. Wabash Avenue. The building's overall massing is intact, with no major additions. The primary, street-facing (south and east) elevations retain a majority of their original glazed-brick and terra-cotta materials, detailing, and workmanship, including the building's main entrance surround, floral ornament detailing the Classical-style piers and spandrel panels at the base of the building, and terra-cotta cornices at the second and third stories. Elements of the building's rooftop terra-cotta detailing also remain.

Exterior changes to the building include, as is typical of many Chicago commercial buildings of this vintage, window and storefront replacements and the removal of the building's rooftop cornice. The original ground-floor storefront windows and all but two of the second-floor Chicago-style windows have been replaced with non-historic aluminum sash within original openings. On upper floors, original double-hung windows in the building have been replaced with non-historic but visually-similar, aluminum double-hung windows within original openings.

At the building's original entrance facing Jackson Boulevard, the original door and associated framework has been replaced with a non-historic metal and glass assembly. However, the original opening of the entrance is still readily apparent and the decorative entrance surround remains intact.

As with many early-twentieth century commercial skyscrapers, the Steger Building has lost its original terra cotta cornice. However, historic architectural plans and photographs document the appearance of the original cornice. A proposed rehabilitation of the building intends to replace the missing cornice as well as install new historically-appropriate storefronts.



Additional views of the Steger Building's Classical-style terra-cotta ornament.

The Steger Building's first-floor entrance lobby remains largely intact, retaining its original floor plan, decorative terra cotta, plaster and decorative-iron detailing, marble flooring, and monumental stair. Changes to the lobby are relatively minor and include the replacement of original open elevator grilles for building code purposes, the installation of non-historic light fixtures, and the closure of an original entrance into a former first-floor piano showroom.

Despite these changes, the Steger Building retains the ability to express its historic, community, architectural, and aesthetic values as a finely-designed and –crafted terra-cotta-clad commercial building designed in the Classical Revival architectural style by the significant architectural firm of Marshall & Fox, and for its historic associations with the Steger & Sons Piano Manufacturing Company, a historically important company in the history of Chicago piano manufacturing. The building's historic integrity is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such values.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant historical and architectural features” of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark. The Commission has identified the significant features for the Steger Building, and these are defined in the Commission's “Recommendation to the City Council of Chicago that Chicago Landmark Designation be adopted for the Steger Building,” dated April 4, 2013.

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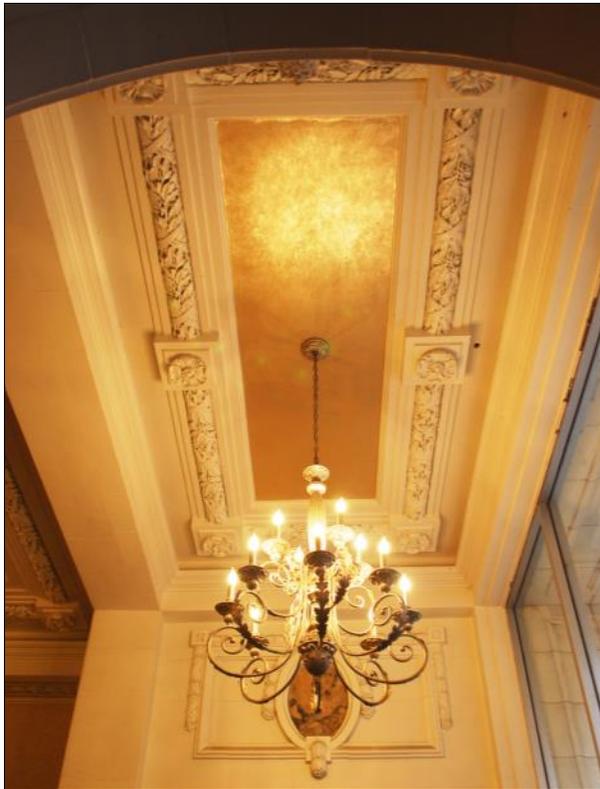


1910

The Steger Building has overall good historic integrity. It retains its historic siting, overall exterior form, and the majority of its historic exterior details. The building has lost its rooftop cornice, a change typical of Chicago skyscrapers of its age.



2012



The Steger Building's first-floor building lobby has excellent historic integrity and is finely detailed with terra-cotta wall ornament, a decorative plaster ceiling, and an ornate metal-and-stone staircase.

Clockwise from top: The building lobby, with its staircase and decorative elevator ornament; a detail of a newel post from the staircase; the lobby ceiling just inside the entrance.

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Information on Marshall & Fox drawn from the Collection Summary of the Marshall & Fox collection at the University of Texas Libraries, <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utaaa/00003/aaa-00003.html>, accessed February 22, 2012.

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From Felix Mendelsohn, *Chicago and Its Makers*: pp. 16 & 22 (top left).

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Chicago History Museum, Street Files for Jackson Boulevard: pp. 15 (top right) & 31 (left).

From miscellaneous internet sites: pp. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (all), 13 (top) & 35.



A postcard of the Steger Building.

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