

**CITY OF CHICAGO
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

May 7, 2026

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

**CHICAGO DAILY NEWS BUILDING
2 North Riverside Plaza / 400 East Madison Street**

Docket No. 2026-06

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 Chicago Daily News Building (the "Building") 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 satisfies the following five (5) 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.*
3. *Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development 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 or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*
7. *Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.*

I. BACKGROUND

The formal landmark designation process for the Building began on April 2, 2026, when the Commission approved a preliminary landmark recommendation (the "Preliminary Recommendation") for the Building as a Chicago Landmark. The Commission found that the Building meets criteria one (1), four (4), five (5), and seven (7) of the criteria for designation, as

well as the integrity criterion, identified in the *Chicago Landmarks Ordinance* (Municipal Code, Section 2-120-580 *et seq.*). The Preliminary Recommendation, incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit 1**, initiated the process for further study and analysis of the proposed designation of the Building as a Chicago Landmark. As part of the Preliminary Recommendation, the Commission identified the “significant historical and architectural features” of the Building as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building.
- The riverfront plaza spanning from Madison Street to Washington Street, including but not limited to the fountain, balustrades, obelisks, and light fixtures overlooking the river.
- Basement 1 dock arcade (river wall) facing the Chicago River. The dock interior is not considered significant.
- The first-floor, southwest (Madison Street) Building vestibule, corridor/lobby, two elevator lobbies, and stair up to the second-floor lobby. The existing non-historic ADA lift in the vestibule and non-historic lighting throughout are not considered significant historical and architectural features for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation.
- The second-floor, southwest Building lobby and the stair down to the first-floor lobby, and the two elevator lobbies, including the north corridor. Existing non-historic turnstiles, security desk, screen walls, bench seating, and overhead lighting are not considered significant historical and architectural features for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation.
- The double-height, second-floor concourse spanning from the east riverfront entrance to the west bridge to the Ogilvie Transportation Center, including but not limited to:
 - Overall spatial volume of the double-height concourse and upper-level arcade;
 - Stone wall finishes, revealed finished returns on the columns and detailing, historic display cases, and grilles;
 - Ornamental exterior east entrance surround and two side entrance vestibules flanking the main east entrance to the concourse;
 - The outer lobby connecting the concourse to the second-floor lobby;
 - The non-historic digital screen on the west wall of the concourse is not a significant historical or architectural feature for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation. In-kind replacement of this screen shall be allowed by the Commission.

For the purposes of Section 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code, the following “Additional Guidelines – General” shall apply to the Building:

To the extent the significant historical and architectural features are specifically identified in the designation ordinance, the Commission's review of work proposed for these spaces should ensure that the historic features and character of the interior and exterior of the Building and the riverfront plaza are preserved long-term while allowing reasonable flexibility to meet continuing and new needs, whether related to the continued current uses of the riverfront plaza and the interior and exterior of the Building or in accommodating future uses and to the extent such consideration is not otherwise inconsistent with the intent of the Chicago Landmarks Ordinance.

Also, as part of the Preliminary Recommendation, the Commission adopted a Designation Report, dated April 2026, the most current iteration of which is dated May 7, 2026, incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit 2** (the "Designation Report"). At the April 2, 2026, meeting, Commission staff indicated that they were doing further research to assess whether the Building also meets Criterion 3 for its association with Significant Persons for possible inclusion in the proposed designation.

At its regular meeting of May 7, 2026, Ciere Boatright, Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD), provided a report supporting the proposed landmark designation of the Building. This report is incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit 3** (the "DPD Report").

On April 22, 2026, the Commission officially requested consent to the proposed landmark designation from the owner of the Building, 2 N. Riverside Owner, LLC. The owners provided a form dated April 29, 2026, signed by the owners consenting to the proposed landmark designation.

At the Commission's May 7, 2026, meeting, upon review of additional information in the Designation Report, the Commission found that the Building satisfies criteria one (1), three (3), four (4), five (5), and seven (7) of the criteria for designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 of the Municipal Code.

II. FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code, the Commission has reviewed the entire record of proceedings on the proposed Chicago Landmark designation, including the Designation Report and all of the information on the proposed landmark designation of the Building; and

WHEREAS, the Building meets the five (5) criteria for landmark designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (3), (4), (5), and (7) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, from its completion in 1929 until 1960, the Building was owned and occupied by one of the United States' most prominent and innovative daily newspapers, *Chicago Daily News*. This paper was the first mass-circulating, daily newspaper in Chicago, and was widely recognized for the quality of its writers and cartoonists, and for its pioneering foreign news service, which served as a model for other American newspapers; and

WHEREAS, the Building is one of the first that was designed with its primary orientation to the Chicago River, in fulfillment of one of the goals of the widely influential 1909 Plan of Chicago, which was developed by Daniel H. Burnham and Edward Bennett; and

WHEREAS, widely recognized as a “newspaperman’s newspaper,” *Chicago Daily News* employed a host of notable writers and cartoonists, including Eugene Field, Vaughn Shoemaker, Finley Peter Dunne, Paul Scott Mowrer, Edward Ansel Mowrer, John T. McCutcheon, George Ade, Edward Price Bell, Carl Sandburg, Ben Hecht, Peter Lisagor, Robert Joseph Casey, Edwin A. Lahey, John Gunther, Lois Wille, and Mike Royko. Thirteen Pulitzer Prizes were awarded to the paper between 1925 and 1972, including the first Pulitzer Prize awarded to a Chicago newspaper and the first Pulitzer awarded for foreign correspondence; and

WHEREAS, Melville Elijah Stone and Victor Fremont Lawson, founders of the *Chicago Daily News*, are two of the most remarkable figures in journalistic history whose principles of independence and integrity, innovative management, and insistence on concise, appealing writing made the *Chicago Daily News* one of the most respected newspapers in the United States and helped to shape journalism in the twentieth century; and

WHEREAS, during his over two decades at the *Chicago Daily News*, legendary editor Henry Justin Smith nurtured writers who would go on to literary fame, including Ben Hecht, who became a successful playwright and an influential, Academy Award-winning screenwriter and whose play-turned-movie *The Front Page* captured the zeitgeist of Chicago’s cut-throat newspaper competition at the turn of the twentieth century; and Carl Sandburg, who reported on societal causes of the 1919 Chicago Race Riots for the paper while working on the poem “Chicago” and who would go on to become one of America’s most cherished poets; and

WHEREAS, the *Chicago Daily News*’ pioneering foreign news service, established in 1898, became a model for other American newspapers and had an international reputation for employing some of the best correspondents in the world. Among the standouts were the newspaper’s first correspondent, Edward Price Bell, who oversaw the European bureaus from London and whose work led him to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize; Paul Scott Mowrer and his brother Edgar Ansel Mowrer, both of whom won Pulitzer Prizes for their foreign correspondence; and John Gunther, who reported from dozens of world capitals before writing the successful *Inside* book series; and

WHEREAS, the *Chicago Daily News* had a series of well-respected, syndicated columnists and cartoonists who used humor to comment on Chicago and larger social and political issues, including Eugene Field, John T. McCutcheon, George Ade, and Pulitzer Prize winners Vaughn Shoemaker and Mike Royko;

WHEREAS, the Building is a significant Art Deco skyscraper that epitomizes the style with its bold geometric form, use of setbacks (influenced by the 1923 Chicago zoning ordinance), and modern stylized ornament. The Building exhibits fine craftsmanship and detailing in its use of materials, including limestone, granite, marble, and bronze- and silver-finished metal; and

WHEREAS, the Building's bas-relief panels and sculptural ornament by noted Illinois artist Alvin W. Meyer are excellent examples of Art Deco design using symbolic and figurative references to the history of writing, printing, and American newspaper publishing; and

WHEREAS, the Building is significant as the first major office building in Chicago to be constructed using air rights over railroad tracks and for its innovative engineering solutions to the difficulties of such sites, including its truss and cantilevered framing system over railroad tracks and its novel venting system for railroad engine exhaust. Additionally, its pedestrian concourse was an inventive solution to the separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic which linked to a commuter railroad station; and

WHEREAS, the Building's riverfront plaza was the first public plaza for a private office building in Chicago and ranks as one of the earliest in the United States, predating New York's Rockefeller Center by several years; and

WHEREAS, the Building has been noted by critics for its architectural excellence and innovation since its completion in 1929. The design and construction of the Building was covered in numerous architectural journals, newspapers, and magazines, and has been cited by architectural historians as a significant example of Art Deco architecture. The Building was also awarded gold medals from the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Architectural League of New York; and

WHEREAS, the Building is the work of Holabird & Root, one of the most significant early twentieth-century Chicago architectural firms and the successor firm to Holabird & Roche, whose "Chicago School" buildings influenced the development of modern steel-and-glass skyscrapers; and

WHEREAS, the firm, led by partners John A. Holabird (1886-1945) and John Wellborn Root, Jr. (1887-1963), was preeminent in the United States for its innovative, stepped-back commercial skyscrapers, with their crisp geometric forms, recessed vertical bands, and modern ornament; and

WHEREAS, Gilbert Hall (1884-1971), one of the firm's chief designers and a nationally important draftsman and architectural renderer, was an important contributor to the Building's distinctive appearance; and

WHEREAS, with its riverfront plaza and dramatic setback design, the Building is one of most prominent historic buildings along the South Branch of the Chicago River; and

WHEREAS, in combination with the neighboring Civic Opera Building, the Building creates a distinctive cross-river urban ensemble, second only to the grouping formed around the Michigan Avenue Bridge by the Tribune Tower and the Wrigley, London Guarantee, and 333 North Michigan buildings; now, therefore

THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS HEREBY:

1. Adopts the recitals, findings, and statements of fact set forth in the preamble and Sections I and II hereof as the findings of the Commission; and
2. Adopts the Final Designation Report, as revised, and dated this 7th day of May, 2026, and
3. Finds, based on the Designation Report and the entire record before the Commission, that the Building meets the five (5) criteria for landmark designation set forth in Sections 2-120-620 (1), (3), (4), (5), and (7) of the Municipal Code; and
4. Finds that the Building satisfies the "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.
 - The riverfront plaza spanning from Madison Street to Washington Street, including but not limited to the fountain, balustrades, obelisks, and light fixtures overlooking the river.
 - The basement 1 dock arcade (river wall) facing the Chicago River. The dock interior is not considered significant.
 - The first-floor, southwest (Madison Street) Building vestibule, corridor/lobby, two elevator lobbies, and stair up to the second-floor lobby. The existing non-historic ADA lift in the vestibule and non-historic lighting throughout are not considered significant historical and architectural features for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation.
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 - The double-height, second-floor concourse spanning from the east riverfront entrance to the west bridge to the Ogilvie Transportation Center, including but not limited to:
 - Overall spatial volume of the double-height concourse and upper-level arcade;
 - Stone wall finishes, revealed finished returns on the columns and detailing, historic display cases, and grilles;
 - Ornamental exterior east entrance surround and two side entrance vestibules flanking the main east entrance to the concourse;
 - Outer lobby connecting the concourse to the second-floor lobby;

- The non-historic digital screen on the west wall of the concourse is not a significant historical or architectural feature for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation. In-kind replacement of this screen shall be allowed by the Commission.

For the purposes of Section 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code, the following "Additional Guidelines – General" shall apply to the Building:

To the extent the significant historical and architectural features are specifically identified in the designation ordinance, the Commission's review of work proposed for these spaces should ensure that the historic features and character of the interior and exterior of the Building and the riverfront plaza are preserved long-term while allowing reasonable flexibility to meet continuing and new needs, whether related to the continued current uses of the riverfront plaza and the interior and exterior of the Building or in accommodating future uses and to the extent such consideration is not otherwise inconsistent with the intent of the Chicago Landmarks Ordinance.

6. Recommends that the Building be designated a Chicago Landmark.

This recommendation was adopted unanimously (7-0).


Gabriel Dziekiewicz, Vice Chairman
Commission on Chicago Landmarks

Dated: 5.7.2026

EXHIBIT 1

Resolution
by the
Commission on Chicago Landmarks
on the
Preliminary Landmark Recommendation
for the

CHICAGO DAILY NEWS BUILDING

2 North Riverside Plaza / 400 West Madison Street

April 2, 2026

Whereas, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") preliminarily finds that:

- The Chicago Daily News Building (the "Building"), located at 2 North Riverside Plaza / 400 West Madison Street, Chicago, Illinois, meets the four (4) criteria for landmark designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4), (5), and (7) of the Municipal Code of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), as specifically described in the Preliminary Summary of Information (the "Preliminary Summary") submitted to the Commission on this 2nd day of April, 2026, by the Department of Planning and Development ("DPD"); and
- The Building satisfies the historic integrity requirement set forth in Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code as described in the Preliminary Summary; now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks:

Section 1. The above recitals are expressly incorporated in and made part of this resolution as though fully set forth herein.

Section 2. The Commission hereby adopts the Preliminary Summary and makes a preliminary landmark recommendation concerning the Building in accordance with Section 2-120-630 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 preliminarily identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building.
- The riverfront plaza spanning from Madison Street to Washington Street, including but not limited to the fountain, balustrades, obelisks, and light fixtures overlooking the river.
- Basement 1 dock arcade (river wall) facing the Chicago River. The dock interior is not considered significant.

- The first-floor, southwest (Madison Street) Building vestibule, corridor/lobby, two elevator lobbies, and stair up to the second-floor lobby. The existing non-historic ADA lift in the vestibule and non-historic lighting throughout are not considered significant historical and architectural features for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation.
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Section 4. The Commission hereby requests a report or statement from the Commissioner of DPD, which evaluates the relationship of the proposed designation to the City’s governing plans and policies and the effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding neighborhood in accordance with Section 2-120-640 of the Municipal Code.

This recommendation was adopted unanimously (7-0).


Ernest C. Wong, Chairman
Commission on Chicago Landmarks

Dated: April 2, 2026

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



CHICAGO DAILY NEWS BUILDING **2 NORTH RIVERSIDE PLAZA/400 WEST MADISON STREET**

**Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago
Landmarks, May 7, 2026**



CITY OF CHICAGO
Brandon Johnson, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Ciere Boatright, Commissioner



Looking northwest at the south pavilion of the Chicago Daily News Building plaza with the riverfront arcade below, c. 1929. (Source: DN-0020222A-LG, *Chicago Sun-Times/Chicago Daily News* collection, Chicago History Museum)

(Cover photo by Patrick Pyszka)

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CHICAGO DAILY NEWS BUILDING

2 North Riverside Plaza / 400 West Madison Street

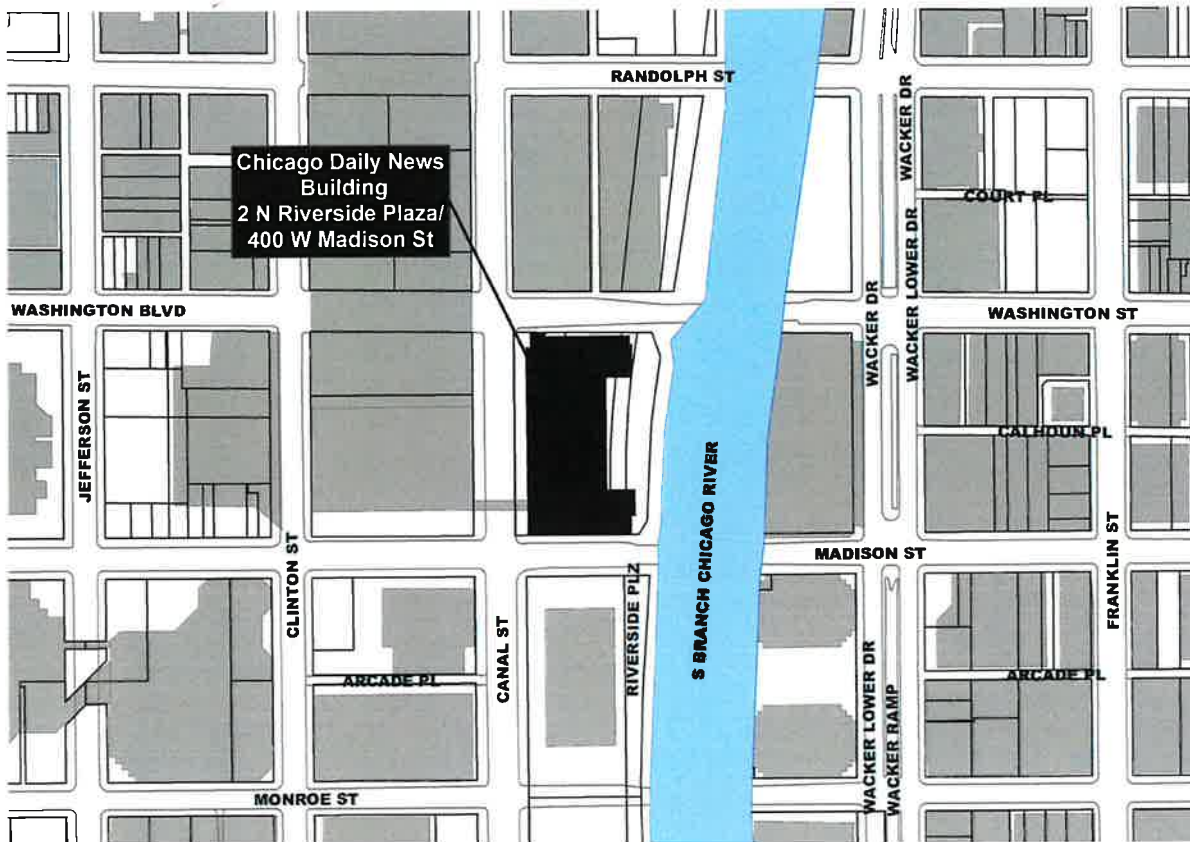
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1928-1929

ARCHITECTS: Holabird & Root

Together with its public plaza along the west bank of the South Branch of the Chicago River, the Chicago Daily News Building is one of Chicago's most significant 1920s-era skyscrapers and an important building in the history of the former *Chicago Daily News*, one of the city's, indeed the nation's, most influential newspapers. Designed by Holabird & Root, the Chicago Daily News Building is one of this leading firm's premier Art Deco-style designs. Its bold geometric form and distinctive setbacks show the influence of chief designer Gilbert Hall and reflect his innovative design solutions to Chicago's 1923 zoning ordinance. The low-relief limestone ornament that adorns the exterior of the building, designed by Illinois sculptor Alvin W. Meyer, reflects the close collaborations with modernist artists that helped to elevate Holabird & Root's best work. The building was widely praised by architects and critics after its completion and it has been recognized in numerous publications as a significant work of Art Deco architecture.

The Chicago Daily News Building is also important in the city's engineering and planning history as the first office building built over railroad tracks and for such innovative design features as a special venting system for railroad locomotive exhaust. The building's riverfront plaza is the first privately developed open space for an office building in Chicago and one of the first in the United States. The building's engagement with the riverfront reflects the influence of the 1909 *Plan of Chicago*, which advocated for the installation of commercial buildings and public spaces along the Chicago River.

From its completion in 1929 until 1960, the Chicago Daily News Building served as the headquarters and main printing plant of *Chicago Daily News*, one of the city's most important and widely read daily newspapers. Founded in 1875, *Chicago Daily News* earned a national reputation for its journalistic integrity and innovative management under Victor



Above: The Chicago Daily News Building is located at 2 North Riverside Plaza / 400 West Madison Street, bound on the west by South Canal Street, on the north by West Washington Street and on the south by West Madison Street. The east elevation and plaza face the Chicago River.



Left: The Chicago Daily News Building, looking northeast at the Canal Street and Madison Street elevations. The semi-transparent bridge to the Ogilvie Transportation Center extends west from the concourse of the Chicago Daily News Building.



Above: The main building entrance is located at the west end of the Madison Street elevation. Stylized geometric detail is carved into the limestone and used on the central window's metal spandrel panels, canopy fascia, and grillwork above the entry doors. (Photo by Patrick Pyszka)

Lawson, who served as publisher from 1876 until his death in 1925. Lawson, along with founder and editor Melville Stone, built *Chicago Daily News* into the city's first mass-circulating newspaper through a combination of pioneering business strategies and a concise and engaging journalistic style, and the paper maintained its reputation as one of the country's best through the mid-twentieth century. Widely recognized as a "newspaperman's newspaper," *Chicago Daily News* was known for the quality of its writers and cartoonists, employing such notables as Eugene Field, Finley Peter Dunne, John T. McCutcheon, Edward Price Bell, Carl Sandburg, Ben Hecht, Peter Lisagor, and Mike Royko. The paper's pioneering foreign news service, established by Victor Lawson in 1898, garnered international attention and became a model for other American newspapers. Thirteen Pulitzer Prizes were awarded to the paper between 1925 and 1972, including the first Pulitzer Prize awarded to a Chicago newspaper and the first Pulitzer awarded for foreign correspondence.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The Chicago Daily News Building at 2 North Riverside Plaza/400 West Madison Street, completed in 1929, is a 26-story, steel-frame, Art Deco-style skyscraper that occupies a full city block bounded by Washington Street on the north, the Chicago River on the east, Madison Street on the south, and Canal Street on the west. The main mass of the building is located at the west end of the block along Canal Street, with two lower, three-story wings extending east to frame a long, narrow plaza overlooking the Chicago River. The building is clad in gray Indiana limestone, with polished black-and-rust-colored granite panels covering the ground-floor level along Madison Street and at the base of the east wings. The building's main entrance is located at the western end of the Madison Street elevation and leads to the first-floor main lobby and elevator lobbies with stairs up to the same on the second floor. A second entrance located in the south wing of the building on the river-facing elevation provides access to a second-floor concourse extending through the entire south end of the building. This concourse originally led to a second-story pedestrian bridge across Canal Street that connected the building to the Chicago & North Western Terminal. The terminal and original bridge were demolished in 1984, and a new bridge was constructed in its place to connect the building to the Ogilvie Transportation Center (completed 1987).

The building's overall massing is defined by a series of cliff-like setbacks with flat roofs that begin at the third story. At the lower levels, the building is U-shaped, with two wings that extend from the north and south ends of the east elevation to embrace the riverfront plaza. The center, north, and south sections of the east side of the building rise to the second story; the wings, which are enlivened by a series of small setbacks, continue to the third story. The dramatic setbacks at the building's third and fourth stories are continued at the fifth story, resulting in a long, narrow tower that is further reduced by additional setbacks at the upper stories.



Above: Looking north across the plaza at the east elevation. **Below:** Looking southwest toward the plaza. The plaza is open to the sidewalks along Madison and Washington Streets. (Photos by Patrick Pyszka)





Art Deco bas-relief panels on the exterior of the Chicago Daily News Building designed by Illinois sculptor Alvin W. Meyer. Thematic panels depict historic references to printing, publishing, and writing. Top: Quill pens are centered in the panels at the top of the plaza fountain; above in the distance is a medieval printer's mark featuring a dragon. Bottom: Famous publishers and printers are named in a series of panels across the façade facing the plaza . (Photos by Patrick Pyszka)

The first and second floors of the building feature large, mostly non-original storefront display windows, the longest stretch of them along the Madison Street elevation. A handful of ground-floor storefronts are scattered at each elevation while the central portion of the Washington street elevation contains garage doors, delivery entries, and infilled bays. The large, multi-paned windows on the east elevations of the north and south wings are original, noted as cast iron in architectural drawings. Windows on the lower levels facing the plaza are recessed within vertical channels, with metal spandrel panels separating the windows at each floor. The tower is regularly fenestrated with smaller, fixed, single-pane windows with an applied horizontal grille at their centers (presumably meant to look like the building's original one-over-one, double-hung windows).

Most of the building's ornamental detailing is concentrated on the lower stories of the east elevation facing the plaza. There, a concave fountain dedicated to longtime *Chicago Daily News* publisher Victor Lawson marks the center of the elevation and is flanked by limestone sculptures called "conventionalized griffins" in the January 1930 *Architectural Forum*. On either side of the fountain, low-relief stone panels set in pairs above the second-story window openings have foliate designs alternating with panels depicting well-known figures from American newspaper history: Lawson, Benjamin Franklin (publisher of *Poor Richard's Almanack*), Joseph Pulitzer (publisher of New York's *The World*), Horace Greeley (founder of the *New York Tribune*), Joseph Medill (publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*), James Gordon Bennett, Sr. and James Gordon Bennett, Jr. (publishers of *The New York Herald*), Samuel Bowles III and Samuel Bowles IV (publishers of the *Springfield Republican*), and Charles Anderson Dana (publisher of New York's *The Sun*). On the east elevation of the wings, two panels at the top of south pavilion reference the history of writing and two at the north pavilion the history of printing while angled panels above both pavilion's center windows feature three masks, with the words "Art," "Drama," "Comedy," and "Epic" inscribed below. At the setback fourth story of the plaza-facing elevation, panels above the window bays depict various medieval printers' marks. Sculptor Alvin W. Meyer, who designed these sculptural elements, worked closely with Holabird & Root on several other commissions, including the Chicago Board of Trade.

Elsewhere, the building's exterior features restrained detailing rendered in stone and metal, including stone and metal spandrel panels, low-relief sculptural stone elements on select bays at the upper stories, and fluted stone vertical piers on the north and south elevations. A bronze-clad, one-story pavilion marks the concourse entrance at the plaza's south pavilion and a flat metal canopy with bronze accents protects the Madison Street entrance, which features bronze grillwork at the transom.

The building's open public plaza, the first to be created by a private developer in the city, acts as both a gathering space and a pedestrian thoroughfare between Washington and Madison Streets. The east edge of the plaza along the river features a low stone balustrade decorated with obelisks incorporating light fixtures. Below the plaza, an arcaded dock provides direct access to



Above: Looking south at the interior of the Madison Street entry with its intricate metal grillwork. Below: Looking south along the marble-clad walls and floors of the first-floor lobby/corridor. The stepped profile ceiling follows the corridor layout, zig-zagging in tandem with the walls which narrow just out of view of this photograph. (Photos by Patrick Pyszka)





Above: Stairs opposite a first-floor elevator lobby lead to the main second-floor lobby. Below left: A letterbox adorned with the image of a trimotor airplane. Below right: Matching octagonal clocks on the first and second floors are suspended by arms featuring women in profile with flowing fabric. (Photos by Patrick Pyszka)



the river, and was historically used to receive shipments of paper and other materials, which were stored in the basement levels of the building.

The main entrance to the building at Madison Street opens through a vestibule into a highly finished corridor leading to a main lobby space with two separate elevator lobbies at the north end. Walls in the corridor and lobbies are clad in dark-cream-colored marble and fitted with substantial black trim. The floors are covered with cream, pink, and black marble set in geometric patterns. Subtly stepped profiles spread across the ceilings. Art Deco metalwork is used throughout the corridor and lobbies for the grillwork, elevator doors, signs, mailboxes, octagonal clock affixed to the ceiling, and other trim. Opposite the first elevator lobby, a staircase with marble treads and an elaborate metal balustrade leads to the main second-floor lobby, which then links to the west end of the concourse.

The second-story concourse, which extends east to west through the south end of the building, is a long, double-height space clad in travertine marble. The concourse slopes upward from the eastern entrance to the main, level portion lined with storefronts. Above the storefront level, open arcades span the length of the concourse. Concourse walls feature Art Deco-style metal grilles and display cases. Although the storefronts are not original, the original openings to what would have been side aisles have been retained. They are framed by stepped profiles in the marble and there are decorative carved panels at the top of the returns. The west end of the concourse opens into the pedestrian bridge connecting the Chicago Daily News Building to the Ogilvie Transportation Center. Just east of the skyway opening, an octagonal metal clock is mounted to an arched entry and an outer lobby east of this on the north side of the concourse leads to the main second-floor lobby. Substantial metal door surrounds and storefronts are accented with repeating vertical strips of metal at the transom level and decorative plates on the doors. Lobby ceilings have a mix of stepped profiles, angled and flat decorative ceiling moldings, and sections with articulated beams. Floor to ceiling strips of vertical metal trim adorn lobby walls and columns.

The concourse's curved ceiling originally featured a strikingly modern, Futurist mural designed by John Warner Norton, a prominent Illinois painter and muralist. The 180-foot-long mural which encapsulated the three newspaper publishing functions taking place within the Chicago Daily News Building—Gathering the News, Printing the News, Transporting the News—was removed from the building in 1993.

The remainder of the building's first and second floors contain retail and office space, as well as a small first-floor parking garage accessed via a ramp on Washington Street. The basement level of the building is largely occupied by rail lines, with offices, storage, and electrical and mechanical rooms located at the northwest corner and three sub-basements below. Floors above the second floor house commercial office space.



Above: Looking south through the largely intact main second-floor lobby. Metal trim accents the columns and pilasters below a ceiling with wide, angled decorative molding. Below: Looking west at the second-floor elevator lobby opposite the stairs. Crown-like panels project above decorative elevator doors. Their central “jewel” accents are repeated in the ornate metal plaques mounted above each elevator. (Photos by Patrick Pyszka)





Looking east along the double-height concourse clad with travertine marble. Floor-to-ceiling wall sections edged with stepped profiles emphasize the height of the space between the arched openings. Opening returns have “capitals” with geometric designs. (Photo by Patrick Pyszka)



Inside the east entrance to the concourse (Photo by Patrick Pyszka)

HISTORY OF *CHICAGO DAILY NEWS*

Founding with Principles

Chicago Daily News was founded in 1875 by Melville Eljah Stone, William Dougherty, and Percy Meggy. A native Chicagoan and son of a Methodist minister, Stone had worked at several local papers, including *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, *The Chicago Republican* (which later merged with *The Inter Ocean*) and *Chicago Post and Mail*, before operating *The Chicago Daily Herald* with reporter William Dougherty in the early 1870s. *The Daily Herald* folded after only four months, and in 1875 Stone and Dougherty partnered with British journalist Percy Meggy to found the city's first evening penny paper, *Chicago Daily News*, using money that Meggy had received from an inheritance. The partners moved equipment from the short-lived *The Chicago Daily Herald* to a building at 153 Fifth Avenue (now North Wells Street) that housed *Skandinaven*, a Norwegian-language paper, and the first edition of *Chicago Daily News* was published on December 23, 1875.

The idea of a penny paper was not a new one. The penny press had first emerged in New York in the 1830s as an alternative to the "six-penny papers"—commercial newspapers that appealed to more affluent readership and which operated by subscription fees and money from political parties. Penny papers offered a new economic model based on advertisements, which kept prices low and allowed for a much wider circulation. With this new model, penny papers focused on providing accurate, timely, and entertaining information that appealed to a mass audience and was independent from any political party. Although, by the 1870s, most newspapers had adopted at least some of the innovations of the penny press, many established papers—including *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, the leading paper in Chicago—were still associated with partisan politics and often catered to elites.

Stone envisioned *Chicago Daily News* as a newspaper for the city's working and middle classes, modeling the paper on other penny papers known for their independence and concise and intelligent reportage, including *New York Daily News*, *The New York Herald*, and the *Philadelphia Evening Star*. According to James Gordon Bennett, founder of *The New York Herald*, these newspapers in particular had distinguished themselves from six-penny papers by not being beholden to "banks and corrupt cliques of men" who "control them altogether," but also strove to produce a higher quality of journalism from other penny papers, which tended to rely on sensationalist reporting and gossip to boost readership. Stone's decision to bring this journalistic model to Chicago was also born out of personal experience. During his time as an editor for *The Inter Ocean*, he "had become disgusted with the subservience of journalists to politicians," and was "determined never to go, hat in hand, begging news or money from politicians, or, for that matter, from advertisers either."



Chicago Daily News was founded in 1875 and flourished under the partnership of Melville Eljah Stone (above) and Victor Fremont Lawson (below). As touted in the ad at left, they marketed the newspaper as high-quality journalism for Chicago's working and middle classes, charging a penny per paper. (Photo above by William J. Root. Source: Wikipedia. Photo below, source: March 10, 1917, *Chicago Eagle*. Image at left, source: *American Pageant*, v2.)



In the first six months after its initial publication, Stone struggled to keep *Chicago Daily News* afloat, working as both a reporter and editor alongside Dougherty while attempting to drum up advertising revenue and organize distribution and circulation. Although the front-page masthead of the paper boasted that *Chicago Daily News* had a "Larger City Circulation than any other Evening Paper in Chicago," the lack of competing evening papers made this no great achievement. Within a few months, a frustrated Dougherty had quit the paper and Percy Meggy had returned to England. With funds dwindling, Stone hired John J. Flinn as assistant editor and Platt Lewis as city editor, but Stone himself continued to take on the lion's share of work. Lewis recalled seeing Stone "sitting. . .with no very agreeable expression on his face, writing editorials with one hand and taking in advertisements with the other."

Desperate for money, Stone appealed to Victor Fremont Lawson, an old high school classmate who was also the landlord for the *Chicago Daily News* headquarters. Lawson had inherited a real estate fortune when his Norwegian immigrant father died in the early 1870s. Included in the estate was the building that housed *Skandinaven*. Lawson's great-uncle had served as editor of the Norwegian weekly, and his father had also held a financial interest in the paper. Lawson agreed to purchase *Chicago Daily News* for \$6,000, and in July of 1876 the two men signed a contract that gave Lawson financial control of the paper while providing Stone with a weekly salary and a one-third share in the paper's profits.

The partnership of Stone and Lawson proved to be an inspired one. Lawson initially served as publisher and business manager, while Stone retained his position as editor. Lawson's first task was to put *Chicago Daily News* in good financial standing, while keeping the ideals set for the paper by Stone. According to Charles H. Dennis's biography on Victor Lawson, when faced with a shortage of pennies in the city, Lawson and Stone persuaded retailers to mark goods at odd prices (49 cents or 99 cents) and provided them with pennies purchased by the barrel from the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia. Customers purchasing the odd-priced goods could then use their change to buy copies of *Chicago Daily News*. In order to keep the army of teenage newsboys Lawson hired to stand on street corners throughout the city's business district selling papers, they provided them not only with steady pay, but also provided amenities. By 1900, an expansive recreation room had been installed in the *Chicago Daily News* headquarters on Wells Street for the newsboys, which included a gymnasium, restaurant, and theater. For residential areas outside of the central business district, Lawson sold copies of the paper in advance at wholesale rates to branch news agents within various regions of the city, who would then deliver them to individual newsboys.

In dealing with advertisers, Lawson presented a single, fixed rate based on current circulation numbers, refusing to give preferential treatment to any one company by offering lower rates. In October 1876, the paper established the practice of publishing its sworn circulation numbers at the top of the editorial page every week. Lawson also kept Stone's prohibition against including display advertisements on the front page of the paper save for short notices clearly labeled as advertising.

While Lawson managed the business of *Chicago Daily News*, Stone attracted readers by filling the paper with short, snappy news items that appealed to a wide audience. Stone excelled in what he called “detective journalism,” a forerunner of investigative journalism, hunting down clues in criminal cases and exposing the corrupt practices of local governments and businesses. An early instance of Stone’s “sleuthing” occurred after the abrupt failure of the State Savings Bank of Chicago in August 1877. When bank president D. D. Spencer, who was suspected of embezzling funds from his depositors, disappeared immediately after the bank’s closure, Stone tracked his movements through Canada and Europe, and a *Chicago Daily News* reporter eventually discovered Spencer in Germany. Although the indictment against Spencer was later dismissed, *Chicago Daily News*’ reporting of the case eventually led to federal laws requiring regular inspection of bank records.

Lawson’s sound business practices and Stone’s dogged approach to journalism helped to propel *Chicago Daily News* to a circulation of over 20,000 by 1877. That same year, the newspaper established its working class bona fides in its coverage of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, the first major rail strike and the first general strike in American history. When numerous railroad companies, including the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad implemented steep wage cuts and reduced workdays for employees, rail workers along the east coast responded with acts of resistance to disrupt rail traffic in an effort to force the rail companies to rescind the cuts. Many of these protests turned violent as local police, the National Guard, and federal troops were dispatched to quell the strikes, which by July had spread from Baltimore to Chicago. *Chicago Daily News* was the only paper in the city which supported the strikers. As the unrest moved west from Baltimore to Pennsylvania, the paper published editorials denouncing the wage reductions that had precipitated the strike. When workers joined the strike in Chicago, Lawson and Stone rebuffed pleas from its advertisers to temporarily suspend publication; instead, the paper sent reporters mounted on horseback to report from the mobs of strikers flooding the streets and published multiple editions each day with the latest updates. During the week of the strike, circulation rose to an average of over 68,000, peaking at a high of over 77,000 in a single day.

Expansion

Under Lawson and Stone, *Chicago Daily News* continued to expand through the late 1870s and early 1880s. In 1878, Lawson purchased the rival *The Evening Post* (formerly *Chicago Post and Mail*), which had gone into receivership. The purchase included the paper’s Western Associated Press franchise, which afforded *Chicago Daily News* easy access to national and international news stories. By 1880, *Chicago Daily News* had become the leading afternoon paper in the city. Buoyed by this success, in 1881 the partners established a morning edition of the paper, called *The Morning News* (renamed *The Record* in 1893). The partners also tried new concepts and, in 1883, *Chicago Daily News* became the first newspaper in Chicago to

introduce illustrations, with local artist William Schmedtgen serving as its first staff artist. Although Stone worried that illustrations would prove to be a fad, the practice soon expanded to other publications in the city.

Through the early 1880s, Lawson and Stone worked to develop the morning edition of *Chicago Daily News* into a paper that could compete with the city's other prominent morning dailies like the *Chicago Tribune* and *The Chicago Times*. Staffed largely by existing reporters and editors from the afternoon *Chicago Daily News*, the paper initially struggled to distinguish itself from its more popular later edition. When a libel suit against *The Chicago Morning Herald* forced a change of management, Stone was able to recruit most of its disgruntled editorial staff to *The Morning News*, which helped the morning edition to establish itself. Stone also hired Eugene Field, a humorist and poet whose daily column became a huge success and was syndicated in numerous papers.

With Lawson's able business management, Stone had the resources to hire a growing number of experienced editors, reporters, and columnists, and through the 1880s the quality of both the morning and evening editions of the paper continued to improve. Field's "Sharps and Flats," along with George Ade's column "Stories of the Streets and of the Town," often accompanied by illustrations by John T. McCutcheon, were immensely popular with readers. Finley Peter Dunne, who was hired away from *The Chicago Telegram* by managing editor Harry Ten Eyck White in 1885, was at *Chicago Daily News* for only three years but during that time he established a well-received and influential sports column.

On May 25, 1888, Melville Stone abruptly announced to staff that he was retiring from *Chicago Daily News*, and Victor Lawson agreed to purchase Stone's one-third interest in the paper. Although he was still relatively young, Stone claimed that his "constitution could no longer bear the strain" of the unending work and long hours required for the job. After traveling abroad, Stone returned to Chicago and became the general manager of the Associated Press, a position that he held until his retirement in 1921.

Now the sole owner, publisher, and editor-in-chief of *Chicago Daily News*, Lawson shouldered the dual responsibilities of ensuring the profitability of the paper and maintaining the high journalistic standards established by Stone. Although over time he took more control over the editorial side of the paper, initially Lawson made no major changes to staff or editorial policies, ensuring continuity during the transition. Despite fears that *Chicago Daily News* would falter without Stone, circulation of both the morning and evening editions continued to rise through the 1890s, reaching an average daily circulation of over 270,000 by 1900.

A Leading Newspaper

Chicago Daily News' reputation for journalistic excellence, first established by Melville Stone, expanded in the early twentieth century under editor Henry Justin Smith. Smith sought out

literary writers to bring a quality of journalism and perspective to the *Chicago Daily News* that would set it apart from other newspapers. These included names which became famous well beyond the confines of journalism such as Ben Hecht and Carl Sandburg.

Although *Chicago Daily News* had long included stories on foreign affairs—the paper had introduced a regular foreign news roundup in 1879 and correspondents like William E. Curtis sent occasional dispatches from abroad—Lawson took the first steps in establishing a foreign news service for the paper during the Spanish-American War in the 1890s. In July of 1898, Lawson formally announced the creation of a permanent foreign news service, making *Chicago Daily News* one of the first American newspapers to operate foreign news bureaus during peacetime. Although he initially followed the more common practice of hiring foreign journalists to staff the bureaus, Lawson soon switched to sending American reporters—often taken from *Chicago Daily News* staff—who could better interpret the news for local readers. Lawson also made a point of not competing with the Associated Press on short, factual pieces or “spot news,” but instructed his correspondents to focus on pieces that provided background and analysis from an American perspective. Although most reports from the foreign bureaus were initially published in the morning *The Record*, when Victor Lawson sold the morning paper to the *Chicago Herald* in 1901, its foreign correspondents were transferred to *Chicago Daily News*.

One of the first *Chicago Daily News* journalists to be sent overseas was Edward Price Bell, who headed the paper’s London bureau for over two decades. Bell had developed an early reputation as a hard-working and fearless reporter, covering a skirmish between the Chippewa and U. S. Marshalls in Minnesota and the violent overthrow of the multi-racial city government in Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1898. Bell was assigned to the London bureau in 1900, and remained there until 1922, serving as both the paper’s chief London correspondent and the manager of its European bureaus. Under Bell’s guidance, the paper’s foreign coverage became a model for other American newspapers, employing such notable correspondents Robert Joseph Casey, John Gunther, Paul Scott Mowrer, and Edgar Ansel Mowrer.

While Lawson’s development of the *Chicago Daily News* foreign service showed his commitment to providing a wide range of news to its readers, fellow publisher James Keeley noted that Lawson also “believed in a varied menu, that all interest was not centered in the local ‘yesterday’ and the telegraphic ‘today.’” Under Lawson, the paper expanded to include more human-interest stories, special features, and criticism, and it was among the first American papers to publish serialized fiction. In 1921, Lawson established a radio department at *Chicago Daily News*, tasking office manager Walter Strong with developing a broadcasting station for the paper. The station, WGU (later WMAQ – which stood for “We Must Ask Questions”), began broadcasting on March 25, 1922, and was the first station owned by a newspaper company in Chicago. Not wanting the station to compete with *Chicago Daily News*, Lawson shaped it as an entertainment medium, broadcasting music, sports, and cultural and comedy

shows. Early broadcasts included the first radio performance of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the first local broadcast of a Chicago Cubs game.

A New Home

On August 19, 1925, Victor Lawson died of a heart attack at his home in Chicago. Although he had served as a faithful steward for *Chicago Daily News* for nearly 50 years, he left no instructions on the future of the paper in his will. Walter Strong, a relative of Lawson's wife who had worked closely under Lawson as the paper's business manager, organized a corporation with 36 other investors (including former Illinois Governor Frank O. Lowden and Sears, Roebuck and Company owner Julius Rosenwald) to buy *Chicago Daily News*. On December 23, 1925, the corporation purchased the paper for \$13.5 million—the highest price paid for a newspaper up to that time—and Strong became controlling owner and publisher.

Strong's first priority as publisher of *Chicago Daily News* was the construction of new headquarters for the newspaper. Although it had grown to become one of the most successful newspapers in Chicago, *Chicago Daily News* still operated primarily out of its original Wells Street location, which had expanded through the decades from the original four-story building into neighboring structures. Before his death, Victor Lawson had planned to erect a modern building for the paper—he had purchased a long-term lease for a property north of Madison Street and east of the Chicago River in 1913—but he had delayed moving forward with the project due to high building costs. Deeming Lawson's chosen site insufficient for the paper's needs, Strong sold the lease of the property to Samuel Insull, who later erected the Chicago Civic Opera Building on the lot. For the new Chicago Daily News Building, Strong then selected a large lot directly across the river bounded by Madison Street, Canal Street, and Washington Street. It was occupied by the tracks of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad. Strong negotiated the lease of air rights over the train right-of-way, and, in 1927, *Chicago Daily News* announced plans for the new building, which would include a printing plant and newspaper offices on the lower floors and rental office space above.

Strong commissioned prominent Chicago architects Holabird & Root to design the new building with Frank E. Brown as the chief structural engineer of the project. The building's construction over existing rail lines represented a breakthrough in Chicago's central business district which would allow for future westward expansion beyond the Loop. However, the site presented the architects and engineers with several challenges. One of them was how to support the floor loads of portions of the building, including the two-story portion east of the tower which contained the load-intensive printing plant, over the railroad tracks to the east. Cantilever girders west of the tracks allowed girders to be extended over the tracks with intermittent support from columns precisely placed between the tracks below. At the northern end of the site, however, tracks converged as the railroad's land narrowed, leaving no room for columns over east-to-west expanses of up to 100'. A team of Holabird & Root structural engineers working under team leader W. B. Gray designed a truss system at the third- and



Above: *Chicago Daily News* publisher Walter A. Strong and cashier Miss Harriet Dewey, September 21, 1928, the day the cornerstone was laid for the new *Chicago Daily News* Building. Strong saw that Victor Lawson's dream of a new home for the paper became a reality. Dewey was a link to the history of the paper as cashier of the organization since it had begun 53 years earlier. She retired two years later and Strong passed away the year after that. (Source: DN-0086667, *Chicago Sun-Times/Chicago Daily News* collection, Chicago History Museum)



Above: The *Chicago Daily News* Building under construction, c. 1928. The building was notable not only for its Art Deco design, but as the first major office building in Chicago constructed using air rights over railroad tracks. At left, a train at exits from under the building and plaza, the city's first privately built public plaza for an office building and one facing the river, a rarity. (Source: DN-0086512, *Chicago Sun-Times/Chicago Daily News* Collection, Chicago History Museum)

fourth-floor levels, hangers from which supported the lower floors over the tracks. Another major issue involved the effective removal of smoke from the coal-fired steam engines traveling under the building. Consulting engineer Joshua D'Esposito designed a series of smoke chambers above the building's basement level, where the tracks were located. The arched ceiling above each track was fitted with openings that narrowed as they entered the chambers to draw the smoke up and away from the tracks. The smoke was then dispersed into larger chambers and drawn up, with the aid of exhaust fans and flues, through vertical shafts that extended to the top of the building, where it was discharged. Through years of experiments prior to the project, D'Esposito had found that the intermediate chambers were necessary to "store" the smoke, thereby giving suction a chance to effectively draw the fumes to the outside.

The first six floors of the building were reserved for *Chicago Daily News*' operations. The northwest corner of the first three floors was occupied by an enormous press room, where three banks of R. Hoe & Company presses printed over 100,000 newspapers each hour. The rest of the second and third floors housed the circulation department, service bureaus, and a two-story cafeteria for employees. The purchasing, promotion, payroll, advertising, and personnel departments were located on the fourth floor, while the fifth floor contained the composing room, etching and engraving departments, and the proof room. The sixth floor housed the executive offices, a library, and the Victor F. Lawson memorial room, a two-story conference room used for board meetings. Editorial offices at the east end of the floor overlooked the plaza and river. The seventh through the twenty-fourth floors contained rental offices. The Chicago & North Western Railway was an early tenant in the building, leasing approximately one-third of the office space.

The top three floors of the building contained recreation facilities for *Chicago Daily News* staff and broadcasting studios for WMAQ, the newspaper's radio station. The radio station had been looking to the future with plans to obtain a license for an experimental television station so Lawson made sure a television studio was also built there. In 1930, a variety show was broadcast from the twenty-fifth-floor studio to a handful of receivers in homes and Sears Roebuck stores across the city with some success. With the radio station supplying sound, the schedule of subsequent picture-only programming was published in the *Chicago Daily News*. It proved to be a short venture, however, and the station was sold and soon shut down as newer technologies prevailed over its mechanical-scanning visual broadcasting.

Holabird & Root's design for the expansive plaza, the first privately developed public open space in downtown Chicago built in concert with an office building, reflects the influence of Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett's 1909 *Plan of Chicago*. The plan called for land along the Chicago River to be developed with fine commercial buildings, plazas, and double-deck streets. In addition to providing access to Union Station and the Chicago & North Western Railway for commuters, the plaza also contained a private lower-level dock that allowed for the efficient transfer of paper and ink into the building via ships.



Left: Exterior vestibule at the plaza's south pavilion. The sign extending above the parapet reads "Chicago Daily News Building" and below that "Entrance" and "Chicago & North Western Railway Station." This photo was taken c. 1929 shortly before the dedication ceremony and there are two workmen atop the vestibule still readying the building, one on a ladder leaning against the cast iron window frame. (Source: DN-0089219, Chicago Sun-Times/Chicago Daily News collection, Chicago History Museum)



Left: The plaza fountain dedicated to Victor Lawson incorporates "conventionalized griffins" by Alvin W. Meyer at the base. Decorative cast iron grilles, visible to the left and right of the fountain, are inserted into the ground-floor window openings along the plaza. Photo c. 1930. (Photo by Kaufmann & Fabry Co. Source: Ryerson & Burnham Archival Image Collection.)

Construction of the Chicago Daily News Building began in December 1927, and the \$13 million structure was completed by mid-1929. The formal opening of the building was held in its new riverfront plaza on July 8. In a message read over the radio by U. S. Commerce Secretary Robert P. Lamont, President Herbert Hoover cited the significance of the newspaper and its new building for Chicago and the United States:

I congratulate The Chicago Daily News on its splendid new building and the fifty-four years of distinguished public service which has made it possible.

I congratulate Chicago on the fact that one of its great institutions has made such an important contribution to the beauty of the city and by establishing the principle of air rights construction opened the way to a greater development of its business and commercial resources.

I cordially extend my best wishes to The Daily News. I hope that with the finer facilities of its new home and equipment The Daily News will continue to be a leader of public enterprises and a mold of sound public opinion, valuable alike to its community and the nation.

After the message was read, *The New York Times* reported that President Hoover then “pulled a switch in the White House which started the mighty presses, capable of printing 600,000 forty-page papers an hour, located on the first and second floors of the twenty-five-story structure.” In his address to the crowd, Walter Strong emphasized the enduring importance of *Chicago Daily News* and other newspapers in American life, noting that “Seventy-five per cent of those who read [,] read nothing but newspapers. A much greater percentage spend ninety per cent of their reading time on the newspapers. Surely this is a serious responsibility for the newspaper man with a conscience.”

At the time of the building’s opening, *Chicago Daily News* had reached a daily circulation of approximately 430,000 and boasted a staff of over 2,000. Under Strong’s management, the paper retained its reputation as one of the finest in the country, even as its circulation numbers were surpassed by other dailies like the *Chicago Tribune* and *The Chicago American*, a sensationalist evening daily published by William Randolph Hearst. Describing Strong’s management of the paper, *Time* magazine reported that “The paper lost none of its integrity or decency but did become much brighter than in the days of the ultra-conservative Lawson.”

After Strong’s death in 1931, the paper continued under the management of Colonel Frank Knox, publisher of New Hampshire’s *Manchester Union Leader* and former general manager of Hearst publications. Knox guided the paper through the Depression and increased funding for its foreign news service during World War II, while also serving as Secretary of the Navy under Franklin D. Roosevelt. When Knox died in 1944, *Chicago Daily News* was purchased by Knight Newspapers and managed by veteran publisher Jonathan Knight, who owned the *Akron*



The Chicago Daily News Building

CHARACTER *in Crisis and in Calm*

"Character is a by-product; it is produced in the great manufacture of daily duty."

—Woodrow Wilson, in an address, May 31, 1915

THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS has been engaged "in the great manufacture of daily duty" for sixty-three years. A contemporary described its birth as "the latest curiosity in the newspaper line." And, as its character was forged, its honesty and sincerity proved, it did become a curiosity.

Its "daily duty" simply was to serve its readers as faithfully as it knew how; to distinguish clearly between news and editorials and paid advertising matter; to be enterprising and accurate in its reporting; to be fair and alert in its editorial comment; to fight unreservedly for what it believed to be best.

Chicagoans, as a consequence, have pitted their faith in this newspaper. They know it stands strong in time of crisis

or in time of calm. It has weathered wars and hard times. It has battled corruption. It unhesitatingly has thrown its support behind the men and measures it believed would be of greatest service to the most people.

Today, The Chicago Daily News is truly an important Chicago institution. It has *greater* Home Coverage and reaches *more* Able-to-Buy families than any other daily newspaper in Chicago. Its circulation, penetrating every section of the city, exactly parallels Chicago's purchasing power. As evidence of its economy and effectiveness in the movement of goods and the sale of services, The Chicago Daily News has carried *more* Total Display and *more* Retail Advertising than any other newspaper in Chicago — morning, evening or Sunday — *as far back as the records go.**

* Sources: Advertising Record Co., Media Records, Inc.

THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS

Chicago's HOME Newspaper

WITH THE MOST VALUABLE CIRCULATION IN THE CITY

A May 1939 advertisement for *Chicago Daily News* from *Esquire* magazine. Despite increasing competition in the 1930s and 1940s, under the leadership of editors Walter Strong and Colonel Frank Knox, *Chicago Daily News* retained its reputation as one of the finest newspapers in the country.

Beacon Journal, *The Miami Herald*, and *The Detroit Free Press*. In a statement issued after the sale, Knight pledged to keep *Chicago Daily News* “politically independent,” and to “continue the sound policies and enviable traditions” of the paper. Although the foreign service was reduced under Knight’s ownership, the publisher kept the paper on a sound financial footing, and its editing staff continued to produce the concise, snappy copy that had become its hallmark. A memo penned by Clement Lane, who served as city editor from 1942 until his death in 1958, ordered reporters to keep copy as short and clear as possible, citing a Chicago restaurant owner who directed his kitchen staff to “slice the meat thin. It’ll never be tough.”

The Last Years

In January 1959, Knight announced the sale of his majority interest in *Chicago Daily News* to Field Enterprises, Inc, owners of the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Marshall Field IV—whose father, Marshall Field III, had rented offices in the Chicago Daily News Building for his fledgling *Chicago Sun* in the early 1940s—took over as publisher. The following year, Field Enterprises sold the Chicago Daily News Building to the Riverside Plaza Corporation, and *Chicago Daily News* operations were moved into the new Chicago Sun-Times Building at 401 North Wabash Avenue, which was completed in 1958 (demolished 2004). In 1965, Marshall Field IV died at the age of 49, and *Chicago Daily News* was managed by executives of Field Enterprises until 1969, when 28-year-old Marshall Field V took control of the paper.

Marshall Field V’s management of the paper coincided with a precipitous fall in readership of *Chicago Daily News* and other afternoon dailies throughout the country, brought on by the rise of television, declining interest in national and international news, and increased automobile traffic that complicated afternoon distribution. The long-standing prohibition against publishing *Chicago Daily News* on Sunday, instituted by the religiously devout Victor Lawson in the early days of the paper, hampered it even further, and circulation fell from an all-time high of over 600,000 in 1959 to under 300,000 in the mid-1970s. In a final attempt to save *Chicago Daily News*, Field handed editorial control to *Chicago Sun-Times* editor James F. Hoge in 1976. To preserve its dwindling resources, Hoge promptly closed the paper’s foreign bureaus, ending what at that time was the longest continually operating foreign service of any American paper, and cut staffing at its Washington bureau. Even with these cuts and Hoge’s editorial changes, advertising revenue for the paper continued to plummet, and Field Enterprises announced that *Chicago Daily News* would cease publication after March 4, 1978. In the paper’s final edition, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Mike Royko lamented “If it had been a cheap rag, its death would have been easier to take. But the *Daily News*, while it had some bad days, was still one of the best papers in this country.” Riverside Plaza Corporation retained ownership of the former Chicago Daily News Building (renamed the Riverside Plaza Building) until 1975, when it was purchased by Chicago financier and real estate developer Sam Zell. In 2025, 2 North Riverside Owner, LLC purchased the building.

Notable Newspapermen

For decades, *Chicago Daily News* stood as a beacon of journalistic excellence and innovation in American media, making a substantial impact through its reporting, editorial prowess, and artistic contributions. Aside from figures like its founders Elijah Melville Stone and Victor Fremont Lawson, whose vision and work helped to shape American journalism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there were hundreds whose exceptional talents made the newspaper one of the best in the country. Below are some of the most influential journalists, editors, cartoonists, columnists, and correspondents affiliated with the publication.

In 1883, Melville Stone hired **Eugene Field (1850-1895)**, a humorist and poet who was managing editor of *The Denver Tribune*. Field's daily "Sharps and Flats" column in *The Morning News* (the morning edition of *Chicago Daily News*, renamed *The Record* in 1893) became one of the most popular columns in the country in the 1880s and 1890s and was syndicated in numerous papers. Field used humor and satire to comment on current issues and personalities, often poking fun at Chicago. Field was also well known for the poems he wrote for children including the work "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod." He published several books of these poems and his 1904 *Poems of Childhood* was illustrated by Maxfield Parrish.

John T. McCutcheon (1870-1949), who has been called the "Dean of American Cartoonists," began as an illustrator for the morning edition of *Chicago Daily News* in 1890. Without photography yet in use for newspaper printing, McCutcheon's work provided images to illustrate articles of all kinds. On the occasion of the 1896 presidential election, Victor Lawson asked McCutcheon to draw a cartoon for the front page and McCutcheon was able to switch from serious to humorous output. Also a good writer, in 1898, while traveling abroad, he was in the Philippines to witness the start of the Spanish-American War firsthand and filed a story which his editor called "the finest piece of war reporting" that he had known.

John T. McCutcheon was a Purdue University fraternity brother of **George Ade (1866-1944)**. Ade joined McCutcheon at the *Chicago Daily News* after moving to Chicago in 1890. Ade first worked as a reporter covering a variety of subjects but began to turn some of the stories into humorous satires. In 1893, he was given ownership of the "Stories of the Streets and Town" column which appeared in *The Record* during the 1890s. Ade, from a small town in Indiana, shared the same experience as many of the paper's readers, having moved from a small Midwestern town to the big city, and gave humorous accounts of the difficulties encountered in this transition. In his writing, Ade had recurring characters and used the distinctive, often ethnic-based vernacular language which was heard in Chicago where the majority of people were either foreign-born or first-generation descendants of immigrants. Ade introduced a second column in the literary form of fables in 1897, leaving *Chicago Daily News* in 1899 to focus on its national syndication. Both his "Stories" and fables columns were published as anthologies. Ade went on to work as a librettist, Broadway playwright, and Hollywood screenwriter.



The *Chicago Daily News* was known for journalistic excellence, employing notable writers and artists, many of whom won Pulitzer Prizes for their work with the paper.

Above left: Editorial cartoonist Vaughn Shoemaker

(Source: DN-0084408, *Chicago Sun-Times/Chicago Daily News* collection, Chicago Historical Society)

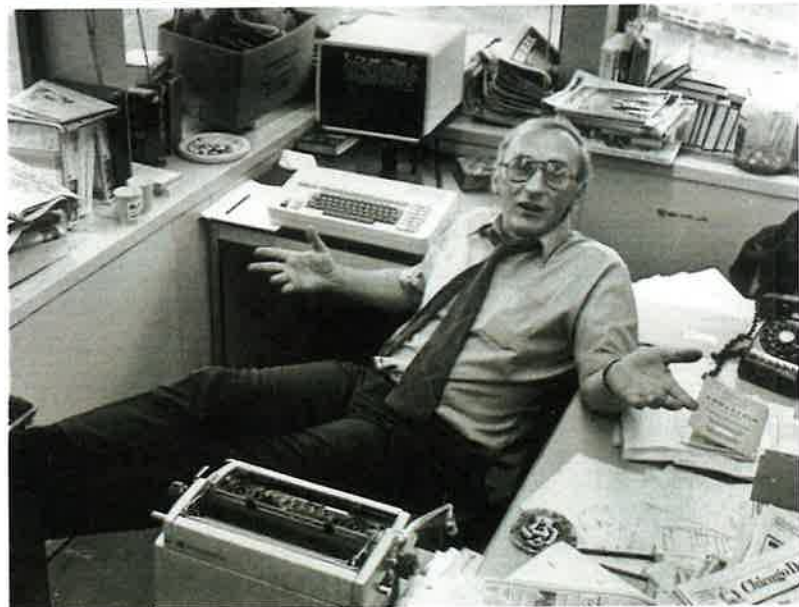
Above right: Poet, journalist, and novelist Carl Sandburg
(Photo by Elizabeth Buehrmann. Source: Poets.org.)



Center left: Humorist and poet Eugene Field (Photo by I. West Tabor. Source: Denver Public Library Special Collections, Call No. X-22196)

Center right: Foreign news correspondent and poet Paul Scott Mowrer (Source: DN-0069525, *Chicago Daily News* Collection, Chicago History Museum)

Right: Newspaper columnist Mike Royko (Source: April 30, 1997, *Chicago Tribune*)



Another writer known for capturing contemporary dialect was **Finley Peter Dunne (1867-1936)**, who was hired away from *The Chicago Telegram* by managing editor Harry Ten Eyck White in 1885. Though Dunne remained at *Chicago Daily News* only for three years, his work in that time helped to shape modern sports writing through his use of player's slang in the paper's baseball coverage. Dunne is credited with coining the term "southpaw" in reference to left-handed pitchers.

Though separated by more than half a century, **Mike Royko (1932-1997)** continued the humorist tradition established early in *Chicago Daily News* history. Royko was born in Chicago and grew up on the Near Northwest side where his Ukrainian father and Polish-American mother owned a tavern on Milwaukee Avenue. Working his way up through local Chicago North Side Newspapers and then the Chicago City News Bureau, he joined the staff of *Chicago Daily News* in 1959. After reporting on local and state government, he began to write weekly columns on county government, adding the commentary which would become his signature style. By 1964, he became a daily columnist for the paper. With witty, satirical humor, he pointed out the absurdities of daily Chicago life and shone light on wrong-doers, all from the moral perspective of an average guy like the ones he'd grown up around in his parents' bar. The slow-to-die vestiges of Chicago machine politics and its players were a favorite topic, but he also looked at national politics, cultural changes, societal issues, and sports. From rich to poor, judge to criminal, much-loved to much-despised, his gaze and commentary, at times wickedly biting and other times mercifully tender, excluded no one. Reverend Jesse Jackson called him "an equal opportunity shot taker."

In 1971, *Boss*, Royko's unauthorized biography on Mayor Richard J. Daley, was released to wide acclaim and became a best-seller. In 1972, Royko received the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in recognition of his column for *Chicago Daily News*. When *Chicago Daily News* shut down in 1978, Royko moved to the allied *Chicago Sun-Times*. At this point, his columns were considered a major influence on local, state, and even national politics and his writing could also prompt criminal investigations. Upon its sale to Rupert Murdoch in 1984, Royko left the *Chicago Sun-Times* and landed at the *Chicago Tribune* where syndication meant his column was seen in 600 newspapers across the United States. He earned numerous other awards throughout his career including the H. L. Mencken Award in 1981, the Ernie Pyle Memorial Award for outstanding human interest reporting in 1982, and the National Press Club's lifetime achievement award in 1990.

Vaughn Shoemaker (1902-1991) won a Pulitzer Prize for "The Road Back," his 1938 cartoon for *Chicago Daily News* featuring a small globe worriedly telling a soldier he was going the wrong way as he marched back toward "World War." He won a second Pulitzer Prize in 1947 for a cartoon of a worker who was labeled "New Wage Demands" racing to get ahead of his "Cost of Living" shadow. Vaughn's boldly drawn editorial cartoons were powerful commentary on the issues of the day, often using the diminutive "John Q. Public" character he

created. Vaughn began in the art department of *Chicago Daily News* in 1921 and became the paper's chief editorial cartoonist from 1925 to 1952. Known as the "Gospel Cartoonist" to his co-workers for his religious nature, representations of faith sometimes became a focal point of his work.

Henry Justin Smith (1875-1936) spent almost his entire working career with *Chicago Daily News*, starting as a reporter in 1899 and working his way up to news editor by 1913 and managing editor from 1926 until his death in 1936. During his tenure as editor, Smith, who authored fiction and historical novels outside of his newspaper work, developed a fondness for hiring reporters with literary talent and aspirations. One of those hires, Ben Hecht, recalled that Smith "loved our paper with an interest that ignored circulation, and saw it as a daily novel written by a wild but willing bunch of Balzacs." During his two decades as an editor, Smith nurtured a number of young writers who would go on to literary fame, including Hecht, Carl Sandburg, and Vincent Starrett.

Carl Sandburg (1878-1967) is best known as one of America's finest twentieth-century poets whose work reflected the lives of everyday people in authentic language. The realism and unorthodox form of his poems made him one of the central figures in the "Chicago Renaissance" literary movement which influenced the development of poetry and prose during the 1910s and 1920s. He was hired as a reporter by *Chicago Daily News* in 1917 and worked for the newspaper intermittently through 1932, writing on labor and social issues. His 1919 series of articles shedding light on the broad social problems which contributed to racial tensions in Chicago before the city erupted in race riots in July of that year had a depth and evenhandedness that was the exception to the norm in mainstream journalism of the time. Over the course of a career that also included children's literature, biography, film reviews, a nationally syndicated column, and a novel, Sandburg was awarded three Pulitzer Prizes, two for poetry and one for history with his literary portrait of Abraham Lincoln. He was nominated three times for a Grammy in the Spoken Word category and won in 1960. In 1963, he received the International United Poets Laureate award as the Honorary Poet Laureate of the United States. President Lyndon B. Johnson awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964 and the NAACP recognized him in 1965 as a "Major Prophet of Civil Rights in Our Time."

Ben Hecht (1894-1964) was a successful journalist, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, essayist, and short story writer. Though his greatest fame came from his work on films in Hollywood, he began his career as a journalist, working for *Chicago Daily News* from 1914 through 1923. There, he covered the crime beat, sometimes with fellow journalist Charles MacArthur, with whom his writing career would continue to intertwine, and in 1921 created a daily column of literary sketches about the city called "Around the Town: A Thousand and One Afternoons in Chicago." He covered Berlin after WWI for *Chicago Daily News* and returned to Chicago in 1920.

His time as a journalist inspired his best known work, the play-turned-movie *The Front Page*, which captured the zeitgeist of Chicago's cut-throat newspaper competition in the 1920s. Reflecting on this foundation in his biography of Charles MacArthur, he said:

Our news sources were the plot turns of passion and skulduggery. This is one of the reasons why one reporter out of four in that day turned into a novelist, poet or dramatist. It was as natural for a police reporter to write a novel or a play as it was for an ant to climb a grass blade.

Hecht won the first ever Academy Award for writing in 1929 for the movie *Underworld* and won again in 1935 for *The Scoundrel* with co-writer and co-director Charles MacArthur. He also is credited with screenplays for dozens of movies including *His Girl Friday*, *Scarface*, *Notorious*, and *Spellbound* in addition to uncredited work on scripts for movies like *Gone with the Wind*, *A Star is Born*, and *Wuthering Heights*. All told, he is thought to have worked on hundreds of movies and is recognized as one of the people who helped to establish the form of genres like screwball comedy, gangster films, and postwar film noir.

Edward Price Bell (1869-1943) had learned to be a reporter at a small newspaper in Terre Haute, Indiana. On the staff of *Chicago Daily News*, he was resourceful and capable, covering important stories and interviewing top politicians. In 1900, Victor Lawson chose Bell as the first American reporter for his experimental approach using only American reporters to staff a foreign news service. For the next 23 years Bell was the newspaper's London correspondent. He analyzed current events and provided the background readers needed to understand them. Respected by London's powerful insiders, he was able to get interviews with leaders across Europe during a time when the world's events involved the United States more directly than ever. Bell became an advocate for Anglo-American unity and his work helped to improve international relations in the name of world peace. After leaving the London post, he traveled the world for the next decade to report on international and interracial issues. In 1930, he was a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize for his reporting leading up to the London Naval Conference, an effort by the world's major naval powers to limit overall naval capacity.

Under Bell's guidance, the paper's foreign coverage became a model for other American newspapers, employing such notable correspondents as **Robert Joseph Casey (1890-1962)**. Casey was a decorated World War I veteran who joined *Chicago Daily News* in 1920. His work included features on Chicago and "slice of life" stories, and he worked as a correspondent traveling the world for much of the 1920s and 1930s. In 1940, Casey covered the blitz from London. After covering the war in France, Africa, and the Pacific, he returned to Chicago where he worked for *Chicago Daily News* through 1947. Casey was a prolific writer and authored over thirty books on his wartime experiences, travel adventures, and the characters he came across in his work as a reporter as well as novels. His *New York Times* obituary called him "one of the best reporters and story-tellers of his time."



Chicago Daily News talent included correspondents, editors, and columnists, some whose work won Pulitzer Prizes.

Above left: Correspondent Edgar Ansel Mowrer (Source: 1948 *Michiganensian*. Source: Wikipedia.)

Above center: Columnist Ben Hecht (Source: DN-0009834, *Chicago Daily News* Collection, Chicago History Museum)

Above right: Correspondent Edward Price Bell (Source: *Chats on Feature Writing by Members of the Blue Pencil Club*, 1925)

Center right: Correspondent John Gunther (Source: Wikipedia)

Bottom Right: Reporter Lois Wille (Source: Pulitzer.org)

Bottom Center: Editor Henry Justin Smith (Source: *Born in a Bookshop*, University of Oklahoma Press)

Bottom left: Correspondent Robert Joseph Casey (Source: World War II on Deadline website)



John Gunther (1901-1970) worked as a Chicago reporter for *Chicago Daily News* starting in 1922 and then left for Europe in 1924, soon working again for the paper as a correspondent. He filled in for other correspondents in the newspaper's bureaus across Europe and his syndicated reports were carried by over 100 newspapers in North America. In 1930, he became head of the Vienna bureau, and headed up the London bureau from 1935-1936. He was an international, best-selling author of over thirty books including the *Inside* series of sociopolitical guides.

The recipient of the first-ever Pulitzer awarded in the category of [foreign] Correspondence went to **Paul Scott Mowrer (1887-1971)** in 1929. He had joined the *Chicago Daily News* in 1905 and become the newspaper's Paris correspondent in 1910. He delved into complex matters like the Balkan Wars, even disguising himself to sneak into the war zone for interviews. During World War I, he was director of the newspaper's war service in France and covered every European battlefield. Mowrer was awarded the French Legion of Honor for his work as a war correspondent in France. He returned to the United States in 1934 and became editor of the newspaper the following year. He retired from the *Chicago Daily News* in 1944, continuing to write books on European affairs and poetry, eventually settling in New Hampshire where he became the state's first poet laureate in 1968.

It was Paul who pressed his younger brother **Edgar Ansel Mowrer (1892-1977)** into a career in journalism, calling on him to serve as a reporter for *Chicago Daily News'* Paris bureau at the outbreak of World War I. From there he went to Italy in 1915 where he interviewed Benito Mussolini and covered the war's battlefronts. He stayed in Italy through 1923 when he moved to Berlin. In Berlin he witnessed the rise of the Nazi Party, authoring dispatches which cast doubt on the democratic nature of events taking place. In 1933 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in the category of Correspondence for his coverage of the tumultuous political crises in 1932 which led to the ascension of Adolf Hitler. In 1933 he also published his bestselling book *Germany Puts the Clock Back*. Its criticism of men who were now high-ranking officials and his public stance against things like book-burning led to Joseph Goebbels's demand that Mowrer resign his presidency of the Foreign Press Association of Berlin with veiled threats about his safety. Offering to leave in exchange for the Gestapo's release of a Jewish Austrian correspondent, Mowrer departed Berlin and replaced his older brother as chief of the *Chicago Daily News'* Paris bureau until France fell to Germany in 1940. After WW II, he became a syndicated columnist analyzing world affairs. He continued to write on the subject, authoring over a dozen books on the subject and following his older brother to New Hampshire in 1969.

Edwin A. Lahey (1902-1969) began at *Chicago Daily News* in 1929. During his early career, he was a hard-drinking reporter whose time in the bars of Chicago meant he "soon became known to most of the cops and crooks, bigwigs and bartenders in the city," as a *Time* magazine article put it in 1955, during which time he covered the likes of Al Capone and John Dillinger. He became a top reporter on U.S. labor, served as a foreign correspondent during World War II, and became a Washington, D.C. Bureau Chief. He was highly regarded in his profession and won a Nieman Fellowship for Journalism at Harvard in 1939.

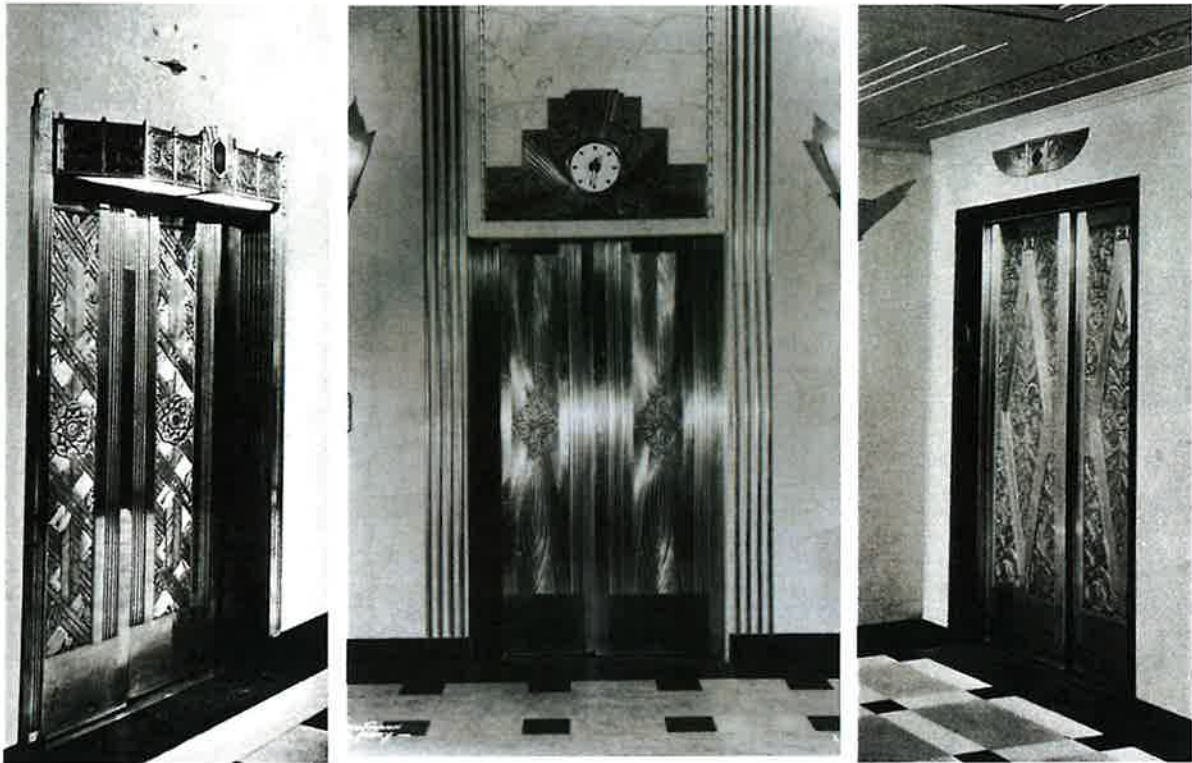
From 1959 to 1976, **Peter Lisagor (1915-1976)** was the Washington Bureau Chief of the *Chicago Daily News*. With a syndicated column and appearances on public affairs television shows, he was one of the best known and most well respected journalists in the country. His career with the newspaper began in 1939 as a sportswriter. He served in the United States Army during World War II and wrote for their *Stars and Stripes* publication, returning to the *Chicago Daily News* after the war. Lisagor was awarded a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University, the Newspaper Guild's Page One Award, and the George Foster Peabody Broadcasting Award.

Although *Chicago Daily News* named as the recipient for the 1963 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service, **Lois Wille (1931-2019)** was the journalist behind the winning series on the restriction of birth control services in public health programs. She began working for the newspaper in 1956 covering stories for the women's section of the newspaper. When a spot opened up in the regular newsroom the following year, she successfully fought for the job, becoming one of only two women reporters at the paper. She covered civil rights and social welfare, doing investigative journalism until she was promoted to editor of the editorial page in 1977. When the *Chicago Daily News* shuttered in 1978, she went to work for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and in 1984 moved to the *Chicago Tribune* where in 1989 she received a second Pulitzer Prize in Editorial Writing.

THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS BUILDING AND THE ART DECO STYLE

The Chicago Daily News Building is one of the finest examples of Art Deco architecture in Chicago. The design of the building, with its bold geometric form defined by numerous setbacks, shows the influence of Gilbert Hall, one of Holabird & Root's chief designers. The strong horizontal emphasis created by the building's massive base is balanced by a series of vertical planes and channels that draw the eye up its long, narrow tower. The limestone exterior is enlivened by low-relief sculptural elements designed by Alvin W. Meyer. His most significant work on the building is the series of panels paying homage to pioneering American journalists and newspaper publishers as well as the handful of panels referencing the history of writing and printing, all visible from the riverfront plaza.

The entry vestibule, corridors, and lobbies at the southwest corner of the building are richly appointed with marble walls and floors in pink, cream, and black. The elevator banks are adorned with elaborate variations of metal decorative elements and metal panel doors featuring stylized plant motifs and geometric forms. Equally elaborate are the grilles concealing radiators and set above doors at the main entrance, and the railings incorporating fan shapes at the principal staircase between the first and second floors. Materials and details of the first floor spaces were detailed in the January 1930 *Architectural Forum*:



Examples of Art Deco metalwork in the Chicago Daily News Building. Clockwise from upper left:
 (1) From second-floor elevator lobby opposite main stairs; (2) From second-floor north corridor and lobby; (3) From first-floor north corridor and lobby; (4) Stairs at the second-floor main lobby; (5) First-floor radiator grilles and mailbox. (Photos 1, 3, 4 by Sigurd Fischer. Source: Jan 1930 *Architectural Forum*. Photos 2, 5 by Kaufmann & Fabry. Source of 2: Ryerson & Burnham Archival Image Collections. Source of 5: Chicago History Museum, ICHI-019848.)





Above: A view west along the concourse showing one of the original side aisles, since reconfigured. Stores in the side aisle used double-sided display cabinets centered within wall sections to advertise their services/goods as well as small illuminated and projecting signs. Businesses in this image include a book shop, the Madison Bank, and services offered by the newspaper such as a travel bureau. John Warner Norton's Futuristic mural is visible on the ceiling, since removed. (Source: "The Chicago Daily News Building II," Chicagology.com website)

Walls of Botticino marble with Belgian black trim, a marble floor, also with black trim, and elaborate ornamental metal work in silver tones contribute to the general effect. Shop windows and doorways show unusual details, such as a recessed and vaulted black marble doorway with display cases built into the walls, and a large shop window designed with a shallow bay effect. All the frames are of white, polished metal. Handsome elevator doors of hand-chased silver-toned metal are effectively framed in black marble... White metal is likewise used for radiator grilles and other metal trim throughout the [first-floor] arcade lobby and the public spaces on the second floor, the public concourse, and the large concourse lobby adjoining it.

Although less ornate and intact than the lobby spaces, the second-floor concourse features the original travertine-clad walls, “gray Tennessee marble” floors, and decorative metalwork. The *Architectural Forum* article noted that there were:

...metal doorway[s], stair rails, grilles and other metal work, bright silver in tone throughout the concourse and concourse lobby. The same metal is used for the elaborate elevator doors and indicator trims, and strips of it on the marble wall give the effect of fluted pilasters. Ornamental cornices, 18 inches wide, on flat ceilings, Botticino marble walls, terrazzo flooring and Belgian black trim complete the lobby.

The Chicago Daily News Building was praised by architects and critics at the time of its opening—it was awarded gold medals from both the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Architectural League of New York—and continues to be cited by architectural historians as a significant contribution to the history of Art Deco in America. In comparing the building to the more traditional neo-Gothic Tribune Tower, completed just four years earlier for *Chicago Daily News*’ long-time rival, the bold modernism of the Chicago Daily News Building can also be read as an advertisement for the newspaper’s position as a progressive paper for the masses, in stark contrast with the more conservative *Chicago Tribune*.

The Art Deco style, which emerged in America in the 1920s and continued through the 1930s, was one of a small number of modern architectural styles that gained widespread popularity in America in the early twentieth century. Its abstract, geometric lines, smooth finishes, and industrial materials reflected the aesthetic of the machine age and represented a larger enthusiasm for modernity. Art Deco had its beginnings primarily in the work of the *Wiener Werkstätte* and the larger Vienna Secession movement of the late 1890s and early 1900s, but was also influenced by Art Nouveau, the German Expressionist movement, and the geometric forms of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The style derives its name from the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, an exhibition held in 1925 in Paris, France, to showcase modern architecture, interior design, and decorative arts. The exposition affirmed the growing influence of modernism in Europe and helped expand its reach to an American audience.

In large urban centers like Chicago, Art Deco architecture generally took the form of the setback skyscraper. Although the abstract ornament and rich materials that defined these buildings were derived from modern trends in the decorative arts, their overall forms were developed in response to new zoning laws—New York passed its first zoning ordinance in 1916, and Chicago in 1923—meant to increase light and air into dense urban commercial centers. Although an American invention, the aesthetic possibilities of the skyscraper captivated European modernist architects, who saw the tall building as a symbol of what architectural historian Marcus Whiffen called “the modern world of the machine.” When the *Chicago Tribune* held a competition for the design of its new office building in 1922, 100 of the 260 submissions came from Europe. Although Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen’s entry took second place behind the neo-Gothic tower designed by Raymond Hood and John Mead Howells, Saarinen’s more modern design, which featured a series of setbacks and a strong vertical emphasis, proved to be more influential, helping to catalyze the movement away from historical styles in Chicago and other urban centers. Architectural illustrator Hugh Ferriss’s conceptual drawings showing the possible setback variations permissible within the 1916 New York zoning ordinance, published in 1923, also illustrated the dramatic effects that could be achieved within the limits of the new regulations.

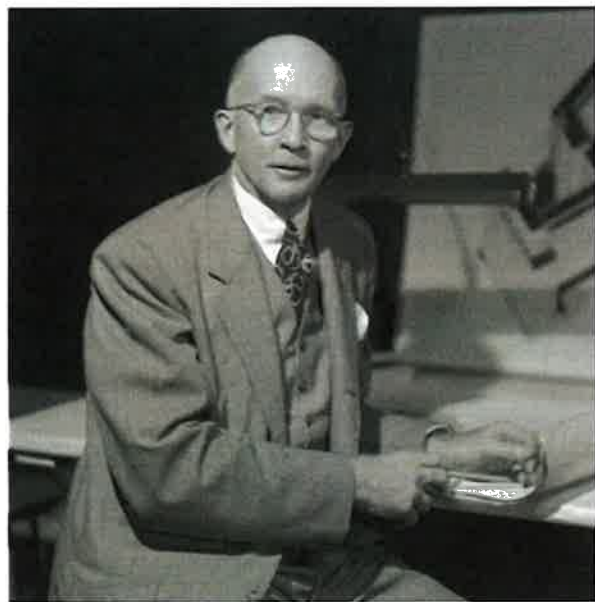
By the late 1920s, the setback Art Deco skyscraper had become the symbol of the modern American city. The style was initially developed in New York by architects like Raymond Hood, Ely Jacques Kahn, and William Van Alen, and quickly spread to Chicago. Local firms Holabird & Root and Graham, Anderson, Probst & White were the most prominent practitioners of the style. Holabird & Root’s 333 North Michigan Building (1928, designated Chicago Landmark) and Chicago Motor Club (1928, designated Chicago Landmark) were both early examples of the Art Deco skyscraper in Chicago. The firm also designed the Palmolive Building (1929, designated Chicago Landmark) and the Chicago Board of Trade Building (1930, designated Chicago Landmark). Graham, Anderson, Probst & White designed the Field Building (1934, designated Chicago Landmark) and the Civic Opera Building (1929, designated Chicago Landmark), commissioned by Samuel Insull and built across the Chicago River from the Chicago Daily News Building.

ARCHITECTS HOLABIRD & ROOT

The Chicago Daily News Building was designed by Holabird & Root, one of the most prominent and influential firms in the history of Chicago architecture. The firm, which is still active, is the successor firm to Holabird & Roche, a pioneering late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century firm known for its Chicago School skyscrapers, most notably the Marquette Building (1893, designated Chicago Landmark). Founder William Holabird died in 1923, and after the death of partner Martin Roche in 1927, control of the firm passed to Holabird’s son, John A. Holabird (1886-1945), and to John W. Root, Jr. (1887-1963), whose father had been a

founder of the Chicago architecture firm Burnham & Root. John Holabird and John Root, Jr. had first become acquainted while studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and worked together at Holabird & Roche in the 1910s and early 1920s.

In the years immediately before the death of Martin Roche, the firm began to shift towards modernism, particularly in its designs for downtown buildings affected by Chicago's new zoning ordinance. Holabird & Root were instrumental in the development of the modern setback skyscraper in Chicago, and the firm's work through the early 1930s includes some of the finest Art Deco architecture in the city. Likely influenced by their travels abroad and study in Paris, Holabird & Root successfully incorporated modern sculpture and mural painting into many of their designs. Through the 1920s and early 1930s, the firm collaborated with artists like muralist John Warner Norton and sculptors John Storrs, Fred M. Torrey, Carl Milles, Lee Lawrie, and Alvin W. Meyer, who designed the sculptural ornament for the Chicago Daily News Building and the Chicago Board of Trade Building.



John A. Holabird (left) and John W. Root, Jr. (right) headed the Holabird & Root architecture firm, known for its sleek, modern, Art Deco skyscrapers. (Top left source: HB-08709b, Hedrich-Blessing collection, Chicago History Museum. Top right source: HB-13601-D, Hedrich-Blessing collection, Chicago History Museum.)

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for landmark designation,” as well as possesses sufficient integrity to convey its significance. The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Chicago Daily News Building be designated as 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

- From its completion in 1929 until 1960, the Chicago Daily News Building was owned and occupied by one of the United States' most prominent and innovative daily newspapers, *Chicago Daily News*. This paper was the first mass-circulating, daily newspaper in Chicago, and was widely recognized for the quality of its writers and cartoonists, and for its pioneering foreign news service, which served as a model for other American newspapers.
- The Chicago Daily News Building is one of the first buildings that was designed with its primary orientation to the Chicago River, in fulfillment of one of the goals of the widely influential 1909 *Plan of Chicago*, which was developed by Daniel H. Burnham and Edward Bennett.
- Widely recognized as a “newspaperman’s newspaper,” *Chicago Daily News* employed a host of notable writers and cartoonists, including Eugene Field, Vaughn Shoemaker, Finley Peter Dunne, Paul Scott Mowrer, Edward Ansel Mowrer, John T. McCutcheon, George Ade, Edward Price Bell, Carl Sandburg, Ben Hecht, Peter Lisagor, Robert Joseph Casey, Edwin A. Lahey, Lois Wille, and Mike Royko. Thirteen Pulitzer Prizes were awarded to the paper between 1925 and 1972, including the first Pulitzer Prize awarded to a Chicago newspaper and the first Pulitzer awarded for foreign correspondence.

Criterion 3: Significant Persons

Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- Melville Elijah Stone and Victor Fremont Lawson, founders of the *Chicago Daily News*, are two of the most remarkable figures in journalistic history, whose principles of independence

and integrity, innovative management, and insistence on concise, appealing writing made *Chicago Daily News* one of the most respected newspapers in the United States and helped to shape journalism in the twentieth century.

- During his over two decades at the *Chicago Daily News*, legendary editor Henry Justin Smith nurtured writers who would go on to literary fame, including Ben Hecht, who became a successful playwright and an influential, Academy Award-winning screenwriter and whose play-turned-movie *The Front Page* captured the zeitgeist of Chicago's cut-throat newspaper competition at the turn of the twentieth century; and Carl Sandburg, who reported on societal causes of the 1919 Chicago Race Riots for the paper while working on the poem "Chicago" and who would go on to become one of America's most cherished poets.
- The *Chicago Daily News*' pioneering foreign news service, established in 1898, became a model for other American newspapers and had an international reputation for employing some of the best correspondents in the world. Among the standouts were the newspaper's first American correspondent, Edward Price Bell, who oversaw the European bureaus from London and whose work led him to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize; Paul Scott Mowrer and his brother Edgar Ansel Mowrer, both of whom won Pulitzer Prizes for their foreign correspondence; and John Gunther, who reported from dozens of world capitols before writing the successful *Inside* book series.
- The *Chicago Daily News* had a series of well-respected, syndicated columnists and cartoonists who used humor to comment on Chicago and larger social and political issues, including Eugene Field, John T. McCutcheon, George Ade, and Pulitzer Prize winners Vaughn Shoemaker and Mike Royko.

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 Chicago Daily News Building is a significant Art Deco skyscraper that epitomizes the style with its bold geometric form, use of setbacks (influenced by the 1923 Chicago zoning ordinance), and modern stylized ornament. The building exhibits fine craftsmanship and detailing in its use of materials, including limestone, granite, marble, and bronze- and silver-finished metal.
- The building's bas-relief panels and sculptural ornament by noted Illinois artist Alvin W. Meyer are excellent examples of Art Deco design using symbolic and figurative references to the history of writing, printing, and American newspaper publishing.

- The Chicago Daily News Building is significant as the first major office building in Chicago to be constructed using air rights over railroad tracks and for its innovative engineering solutions to the difficulties of such sites, including its truss and cantilevered framing system over railroad tracks and its novel venting system for railroad engine exhaust. Additionally, its pedestrian concourse was an inventive solution to the separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic which linked to a commuter railroad station.
- The building's riverfront plaza was the first public plaza for a private office building in Chicago and ranks as one of the earliest in the United States, predating New York's Rockefeller Center by several years.
- The Chicago Daily News Building has been noted by critics for its architectural excellence and innovation since its completion in 1929. The design and construction of the building was covered in numerous architectural journals, newspapers, and magazines, and has been cited by architectural historians as a significant example of Art Deco architecture. The building was also awarded gold medals from the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Architectural League of New York.

Criterion 5: Important Architect

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, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The Chicago Daily News Building is the work of Holabird & Root, one of the most significant early twentieth-century Chicago architectural firms and the successor firm to Holabird & Roche, whose "Chicago School" buildings influenced the development of modern steel-and-glass skyscrapers.
- The firm, led by partners John A. Holabird (1886-1945) and John Wellborn Root, Jr. (1887-1963), was preeminent in the United States for its innovative, stepped-back commercial skyscrapers, with their crisp geometric forms, recessed vertical bands, and modern ornament.
- Gilbert Hall (1884-1971), one of the firm's chief designers and a nationally important draftsman and architectural renderer, was an important contributor to the building's distinctive appearance.

Criterion 7: Unique Visual Feature

Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.

- With its riverfront plaza and dramatic setback design, the Chicago Daily News Building is one of most prominent historic buildings along the South Branch of the Chicago River.
- In combination with the neighboring Civic Opera Building, the Chicago Daily News Building creates a distinctive cross-river urban ensemble, second only to the grouping formed around the Michigan Avenue Bridge by the Tribune Tower and the Wrigley, London Guarantee, and 333 North Michigan buildings.

Integrity Criteria

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.

The exterior of the Chicago Daily News Building retains a high degree of historic integrity including its limestone-clad walls and decorative stonework and metalwork. Storefronts have newer metal sash and signage and fixed-pane windows have replaced the original double-hung sash windows at upper floors. The riverfront plaza has been slightly altered with the conversion of its fountain into a planter, the addition of free-standing planters and seating, and replacement of original light fixtures on the obelisks. A platform for additional seating has also been installed on the roof of the lower section of the building directly west of the plaza. Also at the eastern elevation, the entrance at the north end has been filled in, which is a reversible change. Even with these alterations, however, the general historic character and most of its physical fabric, including its riverfront balustrade and obelisks and the dock arcade below remain intact.

The building's principal public spaces, including the main entrance vestibule, corridors, and lobbies on the first and second floors, the connecting stairs, and the second-floor concourse, retain most of their important materials, forms, and details. Some of the original elevators at the north end of the main lobby have been removed. The majority of Art Deco metalwork has been retained including elevator doors and decorative elements, grilles above doors and in front of radiators, objects such as mailboxes, and ornate balustrades and railings. Most original marble floor and wall cladding and decorative metal trim remain as does variegated decorative plaster ceilings and trim. The main entrance vestibule has been altered with a chair lift, but the space retains marble walls and decorative metal trim.

The concourse has been partially remodeled with the elimination of its side aisles and replacement of storefronts and signage. Although the John Warner Norton-designed ceiling mural that originally graced the concourse was removed in the early 1990s, the concourse retains its original marble walls with historic double-height arched openings (detailed with stepped profiles and foliate capitals), silver-finish display cases and grillwork, and elements such as a silver-finish clock. The historic pedestrian bridge connecting the concourse with the

Chicago & North Western Terminal was replaced by the current bridge when the Ogilvie Transportation Center was completed in 1987, but the connection remains and serves the same function. Therefore, the interior, though altered, has enough of the original materials, decoration, and configuration to appear much as it originally did.

Significant Historical and Architectural Features

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object 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.

Based on its evaluation of the Chicago Daily News Building, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.
- The riverfront plaza spanning from Madison Street to Washington Street, including but not limited to the fountain, balustrades, obelisks, and light fixtures overlooking the river.
- Basement 1 dock arcade (river wall) facing the Chicago River. The dock interior is not considered significant.
- The first-floor southwest (Madison Street) building vestibule, corridor/lobby, two elevator lobbies, and stair up to the second-floor lobby. The existing non-historic ADA lift in the vestibule and non-historic lighting throughout are not considered significant historical and architectural features for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation.
- The second-floor southwest building lobby and the stair down to the first-floor lobby, and the two elevator lobbies, including the north corridor. Existing non-historic turnstiles, security desk, screen walls, bench seating, and overhead lighting are not considered significant historical and architectural features for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation.
- The double-height, second-floor concourse spanning from the east riverfront entrance to the west bridge to the Ogilvie Transportation Center, including but not limited to:
 - Overall spatial volume of the double-height concourse and upper-level arcade;

- Stone wall finishes, revealed finished returns on the columns and detailing, historic display cases, and grilles;
- Ornamental exterior east entrance surround and two side entrance vestibules flanking the main east entrance to the concourse;
- The outer lobby connecting the concourse to the second-floor lobby.

The non-historic digital screen on the west wall of the concourse is not a significant historical or architectural feature for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation. In-kind replacement of this screen shall be allowed by the Commission.

For the purposes of Section 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code, the following “Additional Guidelines – General” shall apply to the Building:

To the extent the significant historical and architectural features are specifically identified in the designation ordinance, the Commission’s review of work proposed for these spaces should ensure that the historic features and character of the interior and exterior of the building and the riverfront plaza are preserved long-term while allowing reasonable flexibility to meet continuing and new needs, whether related to the continued current uses of the riverfront plaza and the interior and exterior of the building or in accommodating future uses and to the extent such consideration is not otherwise inconsistent with the intent of the Chicago Landmarks Ordinance.



Second-floor elevator detail. (Photo by Patrick Pyszka)



Stair between the first- and second-floor main lobbies. (Photo by Patrick Pyszka)

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Massive rolls of paper are unloaded off a cargo ship via crane at the riverfront arcade. An elevator was to bring the rolls down below the railroad tracks underneath. According to an *Architectural Design* article at the time, there was a "conveyor operated through the tunnel under the rows of tracks" which would have been used to get these rolls to storage. Paper and other materials could also be received by truck via a private driveway which ran from Washington to Madison or by train via a private rail spur. (Source: FN-0090137, *Chicago Sun-Times/Chicago Daily News* collection, Chicago History Museum)

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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 that individual building, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Historic Preservation Division, Bureau of City Planning, Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 121 North LaSalle Street, Room 1000, Chicago, IL 60602; phone: 312-744-3200; website: <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dcd/provdrs/hist.html>.

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.

COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

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CITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

May 7, 2026

Report to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks
on the
Chicago Daily News Building
2 North Riverside Plaza / 400 West Madison Street

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) finds that the proposed landmark designation of the Chicago Daily News Building located at 2 North Riverside Plaza / 400 West Madison Street supports the City's overall planning goals for the Near West Side Community Area and the Central Planning Region and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.

The Chicago Daily News Building is located between Washington and Madison Streets on the west bank of the Chicago River at the eastern edge of the Near West Side Community. The 26-story building was completed in 1929 and designed by Holabird & Root as the headquarters and printing plant for the Chicago Daily News newspaper, a pioneering American newspaper established in 1875. This art deco structure used new engineering solutions to become Chicago's first large office building built over active railroad lines and incorporated the city's first riverside public plaza built by a private entity.

The building was purchased by 2 N. Riverside Owner, LLC in June 2025. With occupancy currently around 50%, the new owners plan to renovate the office building to attract new business and commercial tenants. They plan to invest an estimated \$69.7 million in a historically sensitive renovation of the building and modernize obsolete vacant office space. Reactivated retail spaces on the lower floors would provide goods and services to downtown workers and visitors while plans to program the pedestrian plaza with active uses would enliven the city's waterfront.

In 2019, DPD was one of the city agencies working with the Chicago Department of Transportation to produce the "South Branch Riverwalk Implementation Plan." This plan provides a framework for future extension of the Main Branch Chicago Riverwalk along the east bank of the river from Lake Street south to Ping Tom Memorial Park at 16th Street. This includes the block between Washington and Madison. Though work at this section would focus on establishing a publicly accessible plaza along the Civic Opera House opposite the Chicago Daily News Building, the plan noted the Chicago Daily News Building's riverside plaza and dock for Wendella Water Taxis at that section of the river.

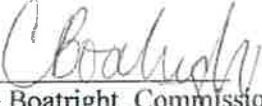
The Riverwalk Extension is one of the actions included in DPD's recently completed Central Area Plan 2045. This comprehensive downtown development plan was approved by the Chicago Plan Commission in November 2025 and establishes a community-guided vision for the central area's future. Noting that "the Central Area's mix of historic and modern buildings, parks, waterfronts, and cultural venues attract workers, residents and visitors," the plan's 20-year framework for growth identified 28 goals with actions and strategic projects across the Loop, Near North, Near West, and Near South sides and adjacent neighborhoods.

The Central Area Plan's policy framework used the seven quality-of-life pillars of the 2023 Citywide plan for Chicago and added an additional pillar of land use. Under the pillar of Land Use, the proposed project falls under the goal of redevelopment of underutilized properties. Planned improvements will revitalize one of the Central Area's outstanding architectural structures to attract new businesses and investment.

Under the pillar of Economic Development, one of the goals is to "Attract new businesses and retain existing downtown employers." Owners of the Chicago Daily News Building are hoping to do just that by investing nearly \$70 million to renew the building's historic exterior and interior spaces and modernize its office and retail spaces.

Lastly, under the Pillar of Environment, Climate & Energy, the plan provides the goal of maximizing publicly accessible open space. The Chicago Daily News Building is the progenitor of this type of work by the private sector in Chicago's central area. Planned repairs to the plaza will ensure the riverside plaza continues to provide publicly accessible open space.

Therefore, the Department of Planning and Development finds that the proposed landmark designation of the Chicago Daily News Building supports the City's overall planning goals for the Near West Side Community Area and the Central Planning Region and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.


Ciere Boatright, Commissioner
Department of Planning and Development