

# The Century & Consumers Building



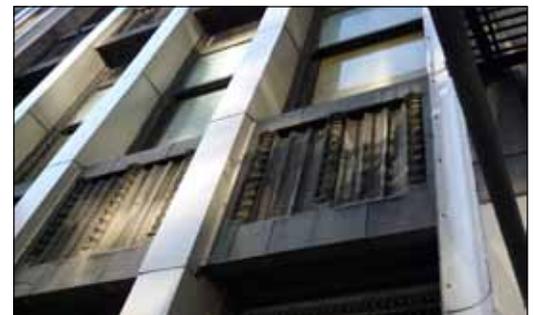
Century Building

<http://www.chicagoarchitecture.info>



Century & Consumers Buildings

<http://www.gsa.gov>



Detail of Century Building

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## Overview:

Commanding an imposing presence on the 200 block of South State Street, two historic terra cotta buildings, located at 202 and 220 South State Street respectively, could be lost to future redevelopment by the Federal Government.

## Significance:

The **202 S. State** Street Building was designed by the noted firm Holabird and Roche. It is historically unique for two important reasons. First, the distinct vertical expression of the exterior elevations of this building portends the transition from the Chicago School buildings of the late 19th Century to the Art Deco of the 1920s. Emphasis of verticality is achieved with strong, deep verticals with understated recessed spandrels. Second, the overall design of the façade ornament is a rare example of Neo-Manueline (inspired by the historic Portuguese style) influenced architecture in the Midwest. The proliferation of complex ornament around building openings, such as windows and doors, features shields with dragons, botanical motifs and pinnacles, and contributes to the diversity of the architectural environment within the Chicago Loop.

### Century Building

**202 S. State** (State and Adams St.)

**Architects:** Holabird and Roche

**Date:** 1915

**CHS Survey:** Orange Rated

### The Consumers Building

**220 S. State** (State and Quincy St.)

**Architects:** Jenney, Mundie, & Jensen

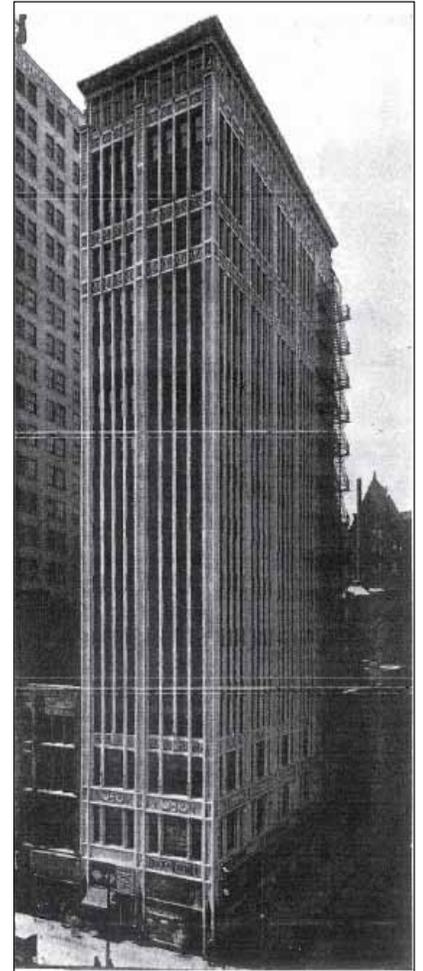
**Date:** 1913

**CHS Survey:** Orange Rated

## Chicago 7: Century & Consumers Buildings Continued:

This 15-story office building is listed as a contributing structure to the Loop Retail Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. It has been determined by a GSA (General Services Administration) study that it may be eligible for an individual National Register listing according to a March 2006 Cultural Resources Survey. It also received an Orange rating in the 1996 Chicago Historic Resources Survey. An Orange rated building “possesses some architectural feature or historical association that made them potentially significant in the context of the surrounding community.”

The firm, Jenney, Mundie, and Jensen, designed the **220 S. State** Street Building, completed in 1913. This iconic building represents the last of the Chicago School designs (also known as the Commercial style), along with its neighbor the Century Building. Typical of the school, the building is constructed with a steel-frame and boasts minimal ornamentation. Overall, the building stands at 21 stories and is clad in a white terra cotta facade. The steel structure is supported with 38 caissons that took 200 men two months to drive into the ground. One week after the building permit was granted, a new Chicago building code limited the height of buildings to 200 feet. Windows adorn all four sides so that light reaches all parts of the floor plates. An interior light well is eliminated from the design because of the windows. Floors two to four show the typical Chicago window, while the remaining floors are aluminum double-hung windows. The street facades are recognized for the tripartite design, which consists of a base, shaft and capital separated by simple, conservative cornices. The spandrels are detailed either with a centered rectangle and a diamond on each side or just a simple rectangle. In contrast, the interior spaces are highly ornamented. The revolving door entrance to the building is set off-center and is surrounded by bronze and granite with an etched transom above marked with the words, “1 Quincy Court.”



BUCK & RAYNER BUILDING, CHICAGO 1917  
Henry Ericsson Co., Builders Holabird & Roche, Architects

Upon entering the building, the lobby displays terrazzo floors and Italian marble for the walls and ceiling. Bronze fixtures, such as the building directory and the elevator doors sit within the lobby. Each wall of the lobby has large mirrored windows. Several alternations have been made to the facade of the building. The bronze canopy over the State Street entrance was removed along with two storefronts. These storefronts were replaced with modern storefronts. The original roof that included a frieze band and cornice with lights was also removed.

Century Building  
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### History:

The history of **202 S. State** began when Buck & Rayner, a pioneer Chicago drug firm (later absorbed by Liggett Drug stores) commissioned the noted Chicago architectural firm Holabird & Roche in 1913 to design a modern commercial skyscraper. Completed in 1915, the Twentieth Century Building is an excellent example of a tall shops building. Its upper floors were occupied by a wide variety of tenants through the years including tailors, furriers, beauty shops, clothes shops, lawyers, brokers, and dentists, reinforcing the commercial district within the Loop. The Twentieth Century Building's name was changed to the Century.

## Chicago 7: Century & Consumers Buildings Continued:



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Building in 1917 after the newly named Century Trust and Savings Bank signed a twenty-year lease for the second story. In 1949 Home Federal Savings and Loan Association purchased the Century Building resulting in alterations to the store front and lobby space. In 2005, with the power of eminent domain, the federal government seized 202 S. State St. and several other buildings fronting on State St. south of Adams St, based on increased security fears following September 11th.

The History of **220 S. State** began when Jacob L. Kesner, part of Kesner Realty Trust, initially purchased the two existing buildings on the site along with a lease for the ground under the buildings. The buildings were demolished in order for the skyscraper to be completed. The State and Quincy site was ideal for store frontage, light, and ventilation because there were no adjacent buildings. Kenser even went onto purchase the adjacent building at 214 South State Street so that no other skyscraper would be built there. The building was signed under two important leases, the first to A. Weis & Co., for the Winter Garden, a high class restaurant housed in the basement. Much of the interior ornament signified a high end restaurant decoration. The second lease went to the Hilton Company, a men's clothing store from New York City, which was placed in the corner store. A month later, the name changed to the Consumers Building, which signified the Consumers Company on the 20th and 21st floors. Upon occupation of the building, a 60-foot electric "Consumers" sign was placed on the roof of the building. This sign was later removed at an unknown date. Throughout the years, the building's tenants have included film companies, clothing dealers, Remington Type-

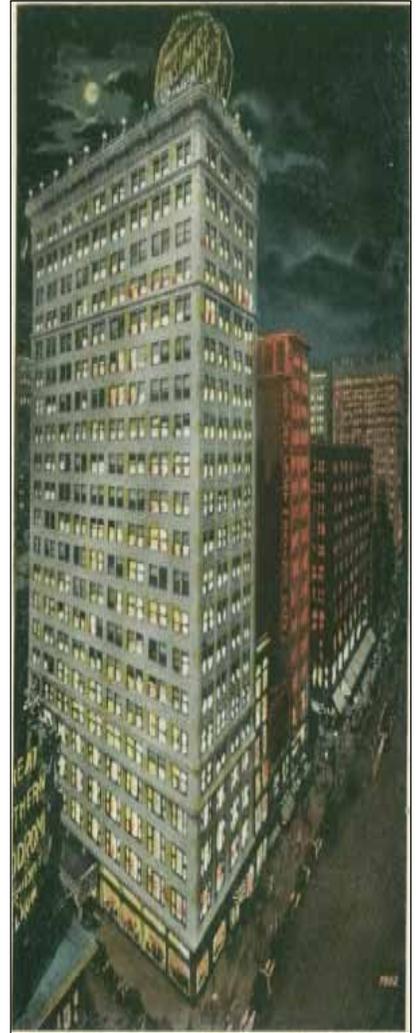
## Chicago 7: Century & Consumers Buildings Continued:

### Threat:

The irreparable damage that demolition of these historic buildings will have on South State Street cannot be underestimated. Their facades provide an important anchor for the existing street-wall. If demolished, not only will Chicago lose two important early Chicago School-influenced skyscrapers by two of the most important architecture firms, it will also create a lifeless void that will suck the energy out of one of downtown's most vibrant intersections. Chicago does not need another vacant lot or wind-swept plaza, nor does it need any more lost historic buildings. Every effort should be made to repurpose these buildings and get them back on the tax rolls. Moreover, there are also concerns regarding the impact that demolition of 202 S. State St. would have on two neighboring buildings that compose the historic Berghoff Restaurant at 17 W. Adams St. A recent structural survey has concluded that the Berghoff buildings would lose significant structural stability that they currently received from the structural frame of 202 S. State.

### Recommendations:

Every effort should be made to preserve both 202 and 220 S. State Street. Since the buildings are already owned by the federal government, they should be rehabilitated for government use. In an era of ever-shrinking tax dollars, now is not the time to use public dollars to destroy historic buildings. If properly repurposed for government use, these two buildings could serve the citizens for another 100 years.



Consumers Building,  
<http://www.gsa.gov>