

The Booker Building



Overview:

The Booker Building is part of that vanishing breed -- the vintage corner commercial building. These corner buildings were the pillars supporting Chicago's neighborhood commercial life marking the intersections of bustling shopping streets. Because of their prominent position on the street, developers often blessed them with their finest architectural efforts. They offered retail on their first floors with office and residential above, the very formula now being rediscovered as "mixed use." At the moment when these buildings could contribute most to the commercial revitalization of Chicago's neighborhoods they are being demolished at an alarming rate. The Booker Building is one of our finest remaining corner commercial buildings.

History:

The Booker Building was completed in 1914 and was designed by Horatio Wilson (1857-1917). Wilson was one of Chicago's most popular and prolific turn-of-the-century architects. He designed not only high-quality commercial buildings but also houses, factories and theaters. The Booker Building displays fine "arts and crafts" brick work, excellent terra cotta detailing and a low-hipped "prairie school" style roof. It was a cornerstone of the thriving 47th Street/Cottage Grove commercial district until the mid-'60's and is one of the street's last surviving vintage buildings.

Address: 4700 S. Cottage Grove Ave.

Architect: Horatio Wilson

Date: 1914

CHRS Rating: Green

IL Historic Structures Survey: Listed

Style: American Arts and
Crafts Commercial

Chicago 7: The Booker Building Continued:

Threat:

The preservation of vintage commercial buildings is crucial to the re-establishment of a viable, lively commercial atmosphere in Chicago's neighborhoods. Although Wilson's nearby Harper Theater Building (53rd Street and Harper Avenue, 1913) will receive a full preservation rehab as part of a mixed-use redevelopment project sponsored by the University of Chicago, the Booker Building is scheduled for complete demolition as part of a TIF-financed project.

Recommendation:

Two of the vintage corner buildings at the intersection of 47th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue have already been lost. A third one, the South Side Trust and Savings Bank, has recently been rehabbed and is part of the proposed City of Chicago "Neighborhood Bank Buildings" landmark designation. The most successful neighborhoods in Chicago -- Lincoln Park, Andersonville, Pilsen -- work because they have saved, rehabbed and used their historic commercial buildings. Preservation Chicago recommends that the Booker Building be preserved and adaptively reused and integrated into the larger redevelopment project planned for this site. Preservation of historic buildings is a valuable and integral part of neighborhood redevelopment, and is not a threat to commercial progress.



Photos of Booker Building: David Schalliol