



EHLINGER & ASSOCATES

ARCHITECTURE

FIRST QUARTER 1995



WAINWRIGHT BUILDING
St. Louis, MISSOURI

Frank Lloyd Wright related the moment of the creation of the American skyscraper: "As [Sullivan] threw the 'stretch', with the first three bays outlined in pencil upon it, I sensed what had happened. In his vision, here beyond doubt, was the dawn of a new day in skyscraper architecture." Wright also saw or came to see that the "picturesque verticality....although appropriate, was still a mere facade....prophetic, if not profound." Even with this clear an analysis, Wright never lost respect for that moment of creation, or of "lieber Meister", his nickname for Louis Henri Sullivan, his mentor and teacher.

Sullivan was the architect for the Wainwright Building in St. Louis, Missouri (1890-91), the subject of this issue's limited edition signed print by Ladd P. Ehlinger. Sullivan coined the famous dictum (some say cliché): "Form follows function", which schooled several generations of architects. This dictum spawned the functionalist school of modern architecture, which strived to derive forms for buildings that expressed the functions they contained.

He also wrote profusely, of architectural philosophy and theory, much of it enigmatic and nervously incomprehensible. But his writings did enshrine him as a legend and publicize his achievements, which were considerable.

Sullivan's most understandable essay "The Tall Building Artistically Considered" was published in 1896, after the completion of the Wainwright Building. Even so, the opening premise of the essay is that the "very essence of every problem [is] that it contains and suggests its own solution." The program for the tall office building as Sullivan saw it was:

"Wanted—1st a story below ground, containing boilers, engines of various sorts, etc.- in short the plant for power, heating, lighting, etc. 2nd, a ground floor, so called, devoted to stores, banks, or other establishments requiring large area, ample spacing, ample light, and great freedom of access. 3rd, a second story readily accessible by stairways—this space usually in large subdivisions, with corresponding liberality in structural spacing and expanse of glass and breadth of external openings. 4th, above this an indefinite number of stories of offices piled tier upon tier, one tier just like another tier, one office just like all the other offices—an office being similar to a cell in a honeycomb, merely a compartment, nothing more. 5th, and last, at the top of this pile is placed a space or story that, as related to the life and usefulness of the structure, is purely physiological in its nature—namely the attic. In this the circulatory system completes itself and makes its grand turn, ascending and descending. The space is filled with tanks, pipes, valves, sheaves, and mechanical etcetera that supplement and complement the force originating plant hidden below ground in the cellar. Finally, or at the beginning rather, there must be on the ground floor a

main aperture or entrance common to all the occupants or patrons of the building."

The façades of the Wainwright Building are certainly in accord with Sullivan's program. However, many critics have blasted the blockiness of the building, the irrational structural expression of the large columns equal in size between every window of the offices (a real, structural column exists every two windows), and the excessively large cornice at the top that is not expressive of the structure. The wide elevations or façades of the building do not express the fact that it is "U" shaped in plan, to form a light court and provide for ventilation.

In any event, the Wainwright is generally recognized as the first tall building ever to aesthetically express its tallness in a non-eclectic manner.

Today the Wainwright has been restored in part and adapted in use as a bureaucratic office building by the State of Missouri and added on to with a low wing to the right of the view shown. The light court has been enclosed to form an atrium, rather clumsily. The building has been saved though, and is a national treasure worth seeing if you are in St. Louis.

*Palladio, o woe is
Palladio*



The so called "Post Modernist Movement" has afflicted us with an eclectic cliché that now permeates the façade of

virtually every building type there is -- from residences to palaces to hospitals and office buildings: the **Palladian window**! This window is actually three adjoining windows - a center arched window or door flanked by flat lintel headed windows.

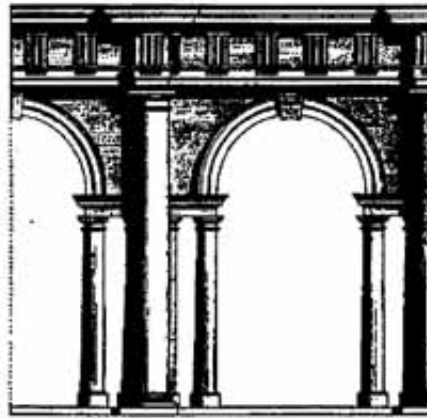


While Palladio used the form of this window, he certainly didn't invent it, even though popular literature today credits him with doing so. In Palladio's time and through the early twentieth century, these were called Venetian windows, because there were so many in Venice. Until recently, a Palladian window was a variant of the Venetian window that Palladio did publicize in his writings, where the flanking smaller openings were also arched.

This window type was first used by the Romans in the first century BC. From that time until the late 19th century, the form of the so-called Palladian window was always disciplined by the actual structure of how one spanned the opening to carry the weight of the wall above. This caused there always to be structural columns between the flanking windows and the center arched window to carry the weight of the beam over the flat windows and the greater weight and thrust of the arch over the center window.

Today, the supporting columns are conspicuously absent, rendering an unease to the opening, or at least a wonder at what is really holding up the wall above.

Andrea Palladio was born in 1508, lived most all of his life in Vicenza, and died in 1580. Almost all of what he designed was in Vicenza and the countryside of this small northern Italian city. Palladio studied and adapted from the classical Roman buildings, a preoccupation of most of his renaissance peers. Palladio's treatise *I Quattro Libri dell' Architettura* (The Four Books of Architecture) influenced many 18th century British architects who had heard of him and were introduced to his writings by virtue of the *grand tour* of Europe. One can see the difference as well as the grandeur of the Palladian opening as designed by Andrea Palladio in the Basilica of Vicenza:



Today, designers blithely ignore the structural rationale behind the Palladian window if they ever understood it to begin with. It has devolved into a kind of "joke-itecture", a cartoon where this window motif has even been applied to a double wide trailer!!



WELCOME ABOARD!

In the past quarter, E&A has brought on board four new architect employees: Eldred M. Fletcher, R. "Beau" Christison, Jr., Mark W. Brideweser, and Mark W. Clayton.

Eldred is a native of Athens, AL and is a 1993 BARCH graduate of the University of Southern California School of

Architecture. Beau is a resident of Madison, AL, and is a 1994 BARCH graduate of Louisiana State University School Architecture. They both work in the Huntsville office.

Mark Brideweser is a native of Canton, Ohio, and is a 1994 BARCH graduate of Tulane University. Mark Clayton is a native of St. Louis MO, and is a 1991 BARCH graduate of Tulane University. They both work in the New Orleans office, which has created much confusion, since they both have the same first name.

All four are in the Intern Architect development program. All 50 states have adopted virtually the same licensing law which requires that one be a graduate of an accredited school of architecture and participate and complete an internship, the structure of which is determined by N.C.A.R.B. (National Council of Architectural Registration Boards). The internship prescribes that each intern registers with N.C.A.R.B. and open a file with them, and that the applicant has to complete a certain amount of employed hours at various different tasks in a structured way.

For instance, a minimum number of hours of building code research are required, a minimum number of client contact hour are required; a minimum number of working drawing hours are required, and so on. Each applicant is assigned a counselor in the program who monitors their progress and advises how best to complete the minimum three year program. When the internship is completed, then the applicants are eligible to take the licensing exam, which is also confected by N.C.A.R.B. and is uniform to all 50 states.

The practical aspect of N.C.A.R.B. registration is that it functions as a national license. Once one has an N.C.A.R.B. file that is certified (passed the exam in a "base" state), then reciprocal licensing can take place. Only New York, California and a few other western states require an additional oral examination for licensing. New York is concerned about more detailed knowledge being utilized by the applicant in fire codes, and California requires the applicant to be knowledgeable in earthquake resistant design, the California Energy Code, and the California Accessibility Code.