



EHLINGER & ASSOCIATES

ARCHITECTURE

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THE RELIANCE BUILDING

The Reliance Building on State Street corner Washington in the Loop of downtown Chicago is this issue's limited edition print of a sketch by Ladd P. Ehlinger. It was designed by Burnham & Root as a four story building originally in 1890, and extended to its present height in 1894. When the Reliance Building was designed, Chicago was in the midst of an architectural and structural revolution of sorts because of the advent of structural steel as a material in construction a few years earlier, and the recent technological advances that allowed large glass panels to be manufactured. These were the years and the location of the birth of the skyscraper as a building type and as an aesthetic expression native to America. This building is one of the first pure expressions of a "curtain wall" skyscraper. Here the structure is a steel frame and the exterior cladding of the building is glass and creamy white terra cotta, hung like a curtain from the frame, rather than supporting any of the building. The glass area was maximized, and it and the terra cotta cladding were designed to express the steel frame geometry on the exterior. The terra cotta and other masonry were used to fireproof the steel frame also. The

windows of the building are maximized to admit the greatest amount of light possible. The sills are only 2' off the floor. The window patterns are variations on the "Chicago window" (two narrow operable sash windows on the sides of a center large fixed piece of glass). You can see the "Chicago windows" on the corners of the Reliance Building. The central bay window has adjoining "Chicago windows" sharing the operable sash in the center.

The buildings to the rear of the Reliance



Building are of more recent vintage, but their heritage can be traced to the Reliance Building. The structural frame is expressed. The windows are in groups of three, and the walls are non load carrying.

The Burnham & Root firm was at the forefront of technological development in the Chicago scene at the time. Daniel Burnham was one of the initiators of the steel frame technology in many other Chicago skyscrapers, and a visionary in many other areas as well. He was instrumental in planning the parks along the lakefront in Chicago that were the residual benefit of the Colombian Exposition of 1893 that he also headed up. His motto was: "Make no little plans!". Burnham's partner, John Root, was the designer of the Monadnock Building, the last and tallest structural masonry building built in Chicago, and the Rookery. He also was designed the first Reliance Building, but died at age 41 in 1891. The firm name

reverted to D. H. Burnham & Company. The rebuilding design credit is given to Charles B. Atwood, of the D. H. Burnham & Company firm, but many elements of Root's design were retained. Originally the Reliance Building was leased to doctors and dentists, other professionals, and craftsmen such as dental technicians that liked the large amount of light available. It has been recently restored and converted in 1999 into a 122 room hotel appropriately named "Hotel Burnham". The restoration is well done, the room rates are reasonable, and the location is right in the middle of all of the downtown action. It is well worth a stay.

WELCOME ABOARD

Michael James Del Giudice

Michael del Giudice has just joined E&A as an intern Architect. Michael is a 2002 Bachelor of Architecture graduate of LSU. Michael comes to us possessing a high interest in the profession. His recognizable determination is an indication that great things are soon to follow.

"Mike" currently resides in Prairieville, LA and concedes that the hour-long commute to work each day is well worth the exposure he receives here at E&A. "What attracted me to this environment was an intimate setting. I'm just not ready for large corporate firms and parking meters yet."

This is Mike's first job in architecture. His previous jobs, to mention a few, includes Bartending, Music, Industrial Construction, and the occasional model building contracts picked up along the way. He is passionate about songwriting and his favorite color is red. In his off hours, Mike spends a lot of time listening to local bands and enjoying Cajun food. When he's on the clock, he's professional and a pleasure to be around.

NOT SO GREAT STUFF

There are several different expandable foaming insulation products on the market. They generally come in standard spray can sizes, to which a straw is attached, and the material can then be sprayed into small openings. Once sprayed, the material expands and hardens, filling the shape of the cavity. The material is fairly expensive; about \$4.00 a can, and it can fill just over 1 cubic foot of space. Once a can is opened, it is extremely difficult to store, so it is best that the entire can be used after opening. It is also very difficult to clean if it gets on your skin, or falls onto unprotected areas.

The first time I encountered foaming insulation was when I was toying with model railroad sets in 1982. Often, foaming insulation is used to create the mountains and other landscapes for model railroads, because once the foam has set, it is relatively easy to carve and shape with a knife. Afterwards, plaster can be applied over the foam, and finished as desired.

In construction and repair, the legitimate uses of this product are relatively limited; the filling of small cavities that require insulation for one reason or another. For example, I recently had to re-



install the folding attic ladder in my 1940's era house, and the new standard ladder sizes are smaller than the one I had. After creating the smaller opening within the large opening, I was left with several gaps which were too small to stuff batt insulation within, but too large to seal with standard silicone sealant. So I ran to Wal-Mart and bought some "Great Stuff" (one product name), and it worked wonderfully.

More and more often, though, I am seeing these foaming insulation products used in applications where it was never meant to be used. My favorite one is the accompanying picture, taken at a Gas Station near Uriah, Alabama. Apparently, there were serious water leaks at their chimney / wall junction. Instead of hiring a roofer to place some proper metal flashing, "Great Stuff" (or one of their competitor's products) was used, leaving an unsightly yellow bead of incongruous foam bubbles down the side of the chimney and door. Now, this solution may have worked in the short term - but foaming insulation is not a weather proofing material, and over time, the foam degrades and collapses, and then the problem will be worse than before applying the foam, because the foam will need to be removed before a true solution to the problem can be applied.

In seeking a solution for another problem at my home, I discovered that rodents are quite capable and willing to eat through foaming insulation, if it happens to be in their way. So, if you have a field mouse problem in your old house, don't rely on "Great Stuff" to fill the hole they're entering through (but vinyl concrete patch does work!). *R. Perrin Ehlinger*



Recent photo of the \$6 million Harney Elementary School under construction in New Orleans