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A livelier and richer essay in the architecture of commerce than Richardson's store is The Rookery, which stands today in sound condition and full occupancy, little altered over the years of its long and useful life (Fig. 21). Like the Montauk, the building was commissioned by Peter and Shepard Brooks of Boston, who again employed Owen Aldis as their agent and Burnham and Root as their architects. The location of The Rookery, at 209 South La Salle Street, was the site of the temporary city hall and water tank from 1872 to 1884. Half the pigeons in Chicago seem to have selected these structures as a roost; consequently, they came to be known popularly as "The Rookery." When the building was completed in 1886, the owners, in a moment of practical and humorous good sense, decided to retain the name. It seems likely that the idea was a product of Root's irrepressible sense of humor.

In plan The Rookery is a hollow square surrounding an interior court. Bounded by Quincy Street and an alley on the elevations opposite the thoroughfares (La Salle and Adams streets), it is thus naturally lighted on four sides and in the interior. The exterior walls along La Salle and Adams up to the top story are composed of a series of stout, widely spaced granite columns surmounted by brick piers. At the top story the window rhythm is doubled, and the piers merge with the wall surface. On the periphery of the court, however, and at the first two stories along Quincy Street and the alley, the wall load is carried on a series of cast-iron columns joined by wrought-iron spandrel beams—in short, true skeletal construction. The brick piers

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the wall load is carried on a series of cast-iron columns joined by wrought-iron spandrel beams—in short, true skeletal construction. The brick piers above the second story on the rear elevations are thus carried by the iron columns of the base. By extending the spandrel beams a few inches beyond the outer edge of the columns along these elevations, the architects were able to open the walls at the second story into continuous windows divided by extremely narrow iron mullions. This marked one of the early uses of the so-called ribbon window, which has now become a standard feature of commercial and sometimes domestic building.

The inner elevations around The Rookery court form an open, simple, nicely proportioned and articulated expression of the iron skeleton that supports them (Fig. 22). The court walls are perfectly homogeneous compositions of rectangular cells of glass, each filling the entire bay, with a single mullion dividing the opening into a pair of windows. The spandrels and piers are covered with white glazed brick, and a pronounced horizontal emphasis is

<sup>44</sup> John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, *The Architecture of America: A Social and Cultural History* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1961 [© 1961, by American Institute of Architects]), p. 186.

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achieved through continuous ornamental bands of tan terra cotta extending around the entire periphery of the court at the sill and lintel lines of each story. It is the same device that Root used in the street elevations of the Montauk. The Rookery court is exceptional in that seldom has an architect given so much attention to the visual satisfaction of tenants who occupy the inward-facing offices.

The glass and iron vault over the inner court and the curving iron stairways on its west side provide a remarkably impressive example of their kind of construction, which had become common in the best commercial buildings of the nineteenth century following the Crystal Palace (Figs. 23, 24). The vault and the court that it covers won high though somewhat qualified praise from Henry Van Brunt, one of the leaders of eastern architectural taste, who was seldom disposed to find anything acceptable in the advanced Chicago work.<sup>45</sup>

"The Rookery" is not only a noted example of great fertility of design, but there is nothing bolder, more original, or more inspiring in modern civic architecture either here or elsewhere than its glass-covered court. Where the work has been committed to such a multitude of new devices in construction and to such a prodigality of invention in ornament, it is not strange that one may find reasonable objection to certain points of detail. One may admire the audacity of the double iron staircase which, supported by ingenious cantilevers, ramps with

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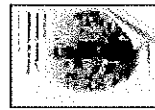
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double iron staircase which, supported by ingenious cantilevers, ramps with double curvature out into open space, meeting at a landing in the sky, as it were, from which the straight second run rises soberly backward to the stories above. One may admire this and wonder whether such an obvious *tour de force* is worth the study which must have been bestowed upon it. Even the imaginative prison visions in the etchings of Piranesi, with their aerial ladders and impossible galleries, present nothing more audacious.<sup>45</sup>

Unfortunately, much of the beauty of the dome, with its intricate geometric pattern of translucent glass and black iron tracery, was lost when the owners of The Rookery covered the outer surface of the skylights with a waterproof membrane and painted the inner surfaces of the glass and iron a uniform gray. The present interior ornament of the court was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and executed in 1905. The combination of Root's delicate ironwork and Wright's elaborate gold and ivory decorations provides a rich and luxurious but perfectly disciplined effect, suggesting a nineteenth-century

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Van Brunt's comment on Burnham and Root's Masonic Temple, p. 106.

<sup>46</sup> Henry Van Brunt, "John Wellborn Root," *Inland Architect and News Record*, January, 1891, as quoted in Monroe, *op. cit.*, p. 277. On the matter of the stairway, the hangers that appear in the illustration were added in 1905, after Van Brunt wrote his description. The stair runs originally stood free and literally appeared to meet "at a landing in the sky."

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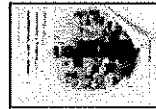
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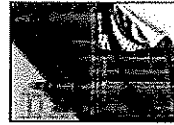
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counterpart to the profusion, magnificence, and delicacy of Baroque architecture.

Equally in the spirit of Piranesi—to follow Van Brunt's parallel—is the cast-iron stairway that rises continuously from the second floor to the tenth and is housed in a semicylindrical curtain of glass and bolted cast-iron panels, the whole enclosure projecting entirely beyond the plane of the west court wall (Figs. 25, 26). The whole stairway has the form of a half-helix divided along its longitudinal axis, or rather, a succession of half-turns of a helix, each of which is made by a single flight mounting between adjacent floors. The stairway functions as a fire escape reached by the broad corridor between the elevator bays.

The architectural excellence of The Rookery's outer elevations grows chiefly out of the extraordinary openness of the walls, the airy yet vigorous articulation of the elevations, precise scale and pleasing proportions, and the firm integration of many diverse elements of decorative detail. The main entrances of the building, on Adams and La Salle streets, are among the best features of the outer elevations and are expressive of Root's love of richly ornamented entraceways (Fig. 27). There is a great diversity of figures, textures, and materials, but the many details form a true architectural ornament, exactly subordinated to the main features of arch, spandrels, and surrounding wall. The entire portal complex is set in a ground of massive, rough-faced granite blocks laid with precisely made and extremely narrow

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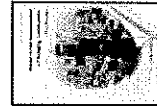
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rough-faced granite blocks laid with precisely made and extremely narrow joints of superb workmanship. The fan-like design in the lunette above the doorway, the floral pattern in the archivolt, and the intricate geometric pattern in the spandrels, suggesting the iron tracery of the court dome, constitute a luxurious but well-harmonized association of stone and iron. All of this work is now covered by a black patina and badly needs cleaning; only the polished granite of the columns at the base retains its original color of dark red.

At the time he designed the building Root wondered whether the profusion of ornament would stand the test of time. It has, through his sure sense of organization and his subordination of detail to mass and structure. In spite of the elaborate decorative elements on the street elevations—the arches at the seventh and tenth stories, the corner pinnacles, the five-part horizontal composition, the highly ornamented parapet—The Rookery is a sure and powerful revelation of its pier-and-lintel and pier-and-arch construction.

The Monadnock Building differs radically from the older Rookery in every respect (Fig. 28). Originally known as the Monadnock and Kearsarge, it was built between 1889 and 1891 at 53 West Jackson Boulevard. The first discussion of plans for the Monadnock appeared in a series of letters between Peter and Shepard Brooks and Owen Aldis during the period from