G. Lloyd Preacher's Atlanta City Hall: The Phoenix Rising

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INTRODUCTION

Within the context of Atlanta architecture, G. Lloyd Preacher's Atlanta City Hall of 1929 stands out as a unique example of the set-back, Gothic skyscraper popularized in New York City following the passage of the 1916 zoning laws. Originally arising out of the desire to preserve precious light and air in New York's crowded downtown district, the zoning laws sparked a new aesthetic for skyscraper architecture, exhibited in such famous buildings as Eliel Saarinen's Chicago Tribune entry of 1922, Raymond Hood's American Radiator Building of 1923, and Voorhees, Gmelin, and Walker's New York Telephone Building of 1926. Following these examples, cities all over the country began building their own versions of the Gothic skyscraper as conspicuous monuments to their economic growth and urban progressiveness. Preacher's Atlanta City Hall illustrates Atlanta's attempt to create just such a monument, one of the first of its kind in the Southeast. Such a building, it was hoped, would spur an architectural reformation within the city and throughout the region, in general, by serving as a successful local application of what were perceived to be primarily Northeastern design aesthetics.

In the 1920s, Atlanta was riding the tide of economic prosperity, and as the transportation center and economic leader of the Southeast, the "Gate City" occupied an important role within the region. In this context, Atlanta businessmen and city leaders defied the stereotypes of the agrarian plantation South by presenting to the nation a progressive, commercialized city in keeping with Henry Grady's New South philosophies.[1] Radically different from both civic and commercial structures in Atlanta,

[1] The concept of a "New South" first appears in the Post-Reconstruction period. The basic tenets of the New South were industrial development and commercial growth with the goal of bringing the largely rural, agrarian Southeast up to speed with the Northeastern region. In the 1880s, Henry Grady (1851-1889) became a major proponent of the New South principles, speaking throughout the Southern states, and in the Northeast, as well, on issues such as race relations, the Southern man, and the Southern economy. Grady, a native Georgian, lived in Atlanta and concentrated much of his efforts there. Grady's importance to the city

the City Hall is the architectural manifestation of the progressive agenda of this commercial-civic elite.[2] In its soaring tower form, the Atlanta City Hall is, and was intended to be, a powerful symbol of Atlanta's resurgence from the ashes of Sherman's destruction. Furthermore, in choosing a commercial architectural form and language for this important civic building, Atlanta sought to establish itself as a modern American city, competitive New York, St. Louis, and Chicago. The Atlanta City Hall now stands as testimony to the ambitious and lofty aspirations of a city which had turned its back on the Old South, and envisioned a time when Atlanta would stand among the greatest cities in the nation.

The adaptation of the commercial skyscraper tower to a civic function was not unheard of among American cities in the early twentieth century, albeit less common than the traditional neoclassical domed and pedimented structures that form the overwhelming majority of American public buildings. It was Bertram Goodhue's Nebraska State Capitol, 1922-32, followed by Austin, Martin, and Parkinson's Los Angeles City Hall of 1928 that gave true credibility to the commercial-civic skyscraper tower. Among the Southeastern states, however, where architectural conservativism heralding the past

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is indicated by the bronze statue erected less than two years after his death on Marietta Street in the heart of the bustling business district that he helped to create. The term "New South" continued to be used well into the twentieth century by advocates of an industrialized, commercialized, and largely urbanized South, especially during the prosperity of the 1920s. For more information about the New South in the 1920s, see Edwin Mims, *The Advancing South* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1926), and William J. Robertson, *The Changing South* (New York: Boni and Liveright, Publishers, 1927). For an interesting contemporary source on Henry Grady's life and speeches, see Henry W. Grady, *The New South* (New York: Robert Bonner's Sons, 1890).

[2] In *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930*, Blaine Brownell defines the "commercial-civic elite" as "the business-oriented middle class that asserted itself in southern cities in the late nineteenth century...It was composed primarily of those businessmen and civic leaders whose social and economic interests extended beyond the boundaries of a single section or neighborhood yet were focused mainly in the local urban area." According to Brownell, this included "larger merchants, real estate agents, insurance brokers, bankers, contractors, and a variety of other persons who were either associated directly with commercial enterprises or agreed substantially with business middle-class goals and priorities--attorneys, journalists, physicians, educators, clergymen, and city officials." The term will be used throughout this paper to describe those who were in control of Atlanta politics and economics. See Blaine A. Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 47.

glories of the Old South was the dominant form of architectural expression even in larger cities, Preacher's City Hall skyscraper is an extraordinary building. Even in Atlanta, a city which prided itself on its progressiveness, the majority of civic buildings in the 1920s were of the same unimaginative Beaux Arts neoclassicism espoused by local architect A. Ten Eyck Brown, one of Preacher's greatest rivals. The unconventional Gothic skyscraper City Hall is a decided departure from these models intended to attract national attention to Atlanta in the same manner as the influential civic buildings of Nebraska and Los Angeles. But more than just civic ambition, Preacher's City Hall Tower is indicative of contemporary changes within government. The selection of the commercial skyscraper form for Atlanta's primary municipal structure is the logical extension of the current trend in government towards an increasingly bureaucratic, corporate organization.

Despite their significance to the history of Atlanta and the Southeast, little research has been done on either the Atlanta City Hall or G. Lloyd Preacher. Until recently, the building had been credited to A. Ten Eyck Brown in the *AIA Guide to Atlanta*, an error which has led to much confusion as to the origins of this severely neglected building.[3] It has been largely dismissed by scholars as an architectural anomaly

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[3] American Institute of Architects, Atlanta Chapter, *The American Institute of Architects Guide to Atlanta* (Atlanta: Atlanta Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 1975). Confusion as to the architect of the Atlanta City Hall has apparently existed since the building's construction. In an article "Architect brought 'taste of the modern' to South's structures," from the August 5, 1987 *Atlanta Journal*, local architect Preston Stevens, Sr., is quoted as saying that "Preacher got all the credit, but an up-and-coming member of his firm named George Harwell Bond designed it." The article goes on to state that it was an "open secret in the architectural community that Bond did the City Hall design in 1927." While it is certainly the case that architects often take credit for work done in their office by other architects and draftsmen, there is no evidence to support this claim. Contemporary sources reveal no indication of the supposed "open secret," of the City Hall design. Furthermore, Stevens states in the afore mentioned article that Bond left Preacher and Company in 1928 to start his own firm, however, it was not until March of 1928 that the first designs for the new city hall were published in *The City Builder* (fig. 38). Even if Bond had been the architect of this early design, the Atlanta City Hall as executed, produced after Bond's departure, is significantly more refined and skillfully articulated than the previous design, reflecting a greater degree of sophistication. On a more formal level, an unexecuted design by Preacher and Company for the Dinkler Hotel reproduced in the January 1930 issue of *The City Builder*, bears striking formal similarities with the early City Hall design, suggesting that both designs were the product of G. Lloyd Preacher. For Stevens comments on Bond and the City Hall design, see the *Atlanta Journal* (Atlanta), 5 August 1987. For images

with little connection to the city's architectural history and virtually no influence on it. An important exception to this interpretation is Robert M. Craig's *Atlanta Architecture: Art Deco to Modern Classic, 1929-1959* (1995) which discusses the building in relation to the Art Deco movement in Atlanta and has provided a point of departure for this thesis.[4] Useful introductory material is also found in William L. Lebovich's *America's City Halls* (1984) which places the Atlanta City Hall within the context of architectural and thematic trends in American city halls of the period.[5]

Likewise, the significance of architect G. Lloyd Preacher to the history of Southeastern architecture has yet to be fully explored, although an attempt was made in a 1987 masters thesis (Augusta College) entitled "G. Lloyd Preacher, Southern Architect: A Study of His Career," written by Julian Wade Adams.[6] Unfortunately, primary source connected directly with Preacher or the firm of Preacher and Company are unknown. Though family members recall such records having existed at one time, it is believed that they have been destroyed or lost. Even in the city of Atlanta, itself, minimal information can be found on either the Atlanta City Hall, or G. Lloyd Preacher, aside from the basic

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of the Dinkler Hotel design, see *The City Builder*, January 1930, 2. The attribution of the Atlanta City Hall to A. Ten Eyck Brown in the 1975 *AIA Guide to Atlanta* appears to be a mistake, perhaps derived from a proposal by Brown for a new city hall published in *The City Builder* in 1925. See *The City Builder*, June 1925, 49.

[4] Robert M. Craig, *Atlanta Architecture: Art Deco to Modern Classic, 1929-1959* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1995), pp. 42-43.

[5] William L. Lebovich, *America's City Halls* (The Preservation Press, 1984), pp. 152-153.

[6] Adams' thesis is primarily a list of buildings supposedly constructed by G. Lloyd Preacher throughout his career, either individually or through his firm of G. Lloyd Preacher and Company, interspersed with minimal biographical information. The number of buildings Adams credits to Preacher is quite extensive and includes work all over the country. It is unclear, however, what the sources are for the attribution of these buildings to Preacher and therefore the thesis is less useful than one might wish. Furthermore, Adams limits his interpretations of Preacher and his work to some basic observations on the formal nature of the buildings, and the architect's overall role as a major architect in the Southeast in the first quarter of the twentieth century. See Julian Wade Adams, "G. Lloyd Preacher, Southern Architect: A Study of His Career" (MA thesis, Augusta College, 1987).

secondary biographies and descriptions. However, several organizations keep useful files with a fair amount of both contemporary and historical information, most especially, the Atlanta Urban Design Commission, which was instrumental in the restoration of the building in the mid-eighties.

The research presented here relies almost entirely on primary sources in the attempt to establish contemporary perceptions about the city, the building, and architecture of the period. The most significant of regional primary sources include the monthly magazine of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, *The City Builder*, representing the viewpoint of the commercial-civic elite, *The Southern Architect and Building News*, and the *Atlanta Constitution*. G. H. Edgell's *The American Architecture of Today* (1928), Thomas E. Tallmadge's *The Story of American Architecture* (1927), and Fiske Kimball's *American Architecture* (1927) are used to establish national trends in contemporary architecture for the purpose of discerning modern aesthetics in skyscraper design.[7] Secondary sources of significance include Blaine A. Brownell's *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930* (1975), and Franklin M. Garrett's *Atlanta and Environs* (1954), both of which are relied on heavily here to establish the historic context for the Atlanta City Hall.[8]

While it is true that the building did not bring about the architectural reform that

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[7] G. H. Edgell, *The American Architecture of Today* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928); Thomas E. Tallmadge, *The Story of Architecture in America* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1927); Fiske Kimball, *American Architecture* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1928).

[8] Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975); Franklin M. Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs: A Chronicle of Its People and Events*, vol. 2 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1954). Blaine Brownell has written or edited several other very useful books on Southern urbanism in the early twentieth century. See Blaine A. Brownell and Warren E. Stickle, eds., *Bosses and Reformers: Urban Politics in America, 1880-1920* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973); and Blaine A. Brownell and David R. Goldfield, eds., *The City in Southern History, The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1977).

both Preacher and the city leaders hoped for, the building is perhaps the most salient expression of 1920s Atlanta and the progressive vision of the commercial-civic elite who dominated the city throughout the decade. Few buildings in Atlanta, if any, so thoroughly and successfully communicate the hopes, aspirations, and ambitions of the era in which they were built. In light of these facts, this thesis reinterprets the significance of Preacher's Atlanta City Hall in the architectural and social history of the city of Atlanta through the examination of the building in relation to its historical context. The building will first be presented as the realized vision of the 1920s commercial-civic elite, a very specific group which dominated the politics and economics of the city during the 1920s. The skyscraper will be shown to bear an important role in the formulation of urban identity in Atlanta, and Preacher's City Hall will be presented as the architectural manifestation of this identity. The civic and commercial architectural context for the Atlanta City Hall will be established both locally and nationally for the purpose of discerning formal influences on Preacher's design, with particular emphasis on the meanings behind the selection of the skyscraper form, the incorporation of the set back, and the use of Gothic detail. Lastly, the Atlanta City Hall will be shown to be the conscious attempt to provide Atlanta with its own version of the modern New York set back skyscraper to proclaim Atlanta's progressive identity.

I "FORWARD ATLANTA"

Atlanta in the 1920s

Atlanta City Hall

Construction on the new City Hall began in March of 1929, on the block bounded by Mitchell, Washington, Central, and Trinity Streets, adjacent to Edbrooke and Burnham's Georgia State Capitol building of 1889 (fig. 14) and W. L. Stoddard's Trinity Methodist Church of 1911 (fig. 73). Previously the site of Sherman's Headquarters during the Civil War and, more recently, the Old Girl's High School, the inexpensive and spacious Mitchell and Washington block was located in a relatively undeveloped section of downtown Atlanta, separated from the city's central business district by a major railroad artery (fig. 1-2). The Central Improvement Association had targeted this area for the next phase in the city's growth, encouraging development with the opening of the Central and Pryor Street Viaducts in the same month that work on the city hall began.

Built entirely by Atlanta labor, the completed Atlanta City Hall, constructed of steel clad in buff terra-cotta, rises 15 stories above the street level, with large four story flanking wings and a setback at the twelfth and fourteenth stories, altogether yielding 1,044,419 square feet of office space (fig. 3). The interior public spaces, including the first and second floor lobbies, are finished in Roman travertine, Georgia marble, brass and birch veneer, with elaborately carved woodwork gilt with gold paint (fig. 4). Originally, the ground floors housed those departments that dealt most closely with the public. On the basement floor were located the health department, warden's office, water works, and department of records, as well as a convenient refreshment stand. On the first floor were the city clerk's office, tax offices, and the street improvement collector, while the mayor's office, council chamber and committee rooms were located on the second floor. The third floor housed the construction department, and the top six floors were

occupied by the public school offices, with various other city offices and departments occupying the three floors in between. The building alone cost almost a million dollars, funded by the passage of a civic improvement bond under Mayor I.E. Ragsdale in 1926, and all of the materials, with the exception of the Roman travertine marble found in the lobbies, were supplied locally. The completed City Hall building, occupied on February 22, 1930, was praised as "a beautiful building, well worthy of the city which it officially represents...it is an edifice of which Atlanta may be proud."[9]

Atlanta in the 1920s

The history of the city of Atlanta begins in 1837 with the story of Stephen Long, a young civil engineer, who is said to have driven a stake into the ground to mark the terminus of the Western and Atlantic Railroad, around which the small town of Marthasville would subsequently form. Possessing the natural advantages of a strategic location and an active railroad line, this small town, renamed Atlanta in 1847, grew quickly into a key transportation crossroads and one of Georgia's largest and most successful cities. After the city was burned to the ground by Sherman's army in 1864, Atlanta was quick to rebuild, and with the removal of the state capitol from Milledgeville to Atlanta in 1868, Atlanta secured its position as one of the most important cities in the South. In 1886, prominent Atlantan businessman and New South spokesman Henry Grady was invited to be the first Southerner to address the New England Society. Speaking on the conditions and aspirations of the reconstructed New South to an all "Yankee" crowd including General Sherman himself, Grady boldly stated those words which have embodied the spirit and identity of the city of Atlanta for over a century: "I want to say to General Sherman, that from the ashes he left us in 1864 we have raised a

[9] The City Builder Extension Bureau, "Our New Municipal Building," *The City Builder*, March 1930, 18.

brave and beautiful city; that somehow or other we have caught the sunshine in the bricks and mortar of our homes, and have builded therein not one ignoble prejudice or memory."[10]

In 1925 this could not have seemed more true. It was the year in which the Chamber of Commerce embarked on its "Forward Atlanta" campaign to promote commercial growth and civic pride, and the decision was made for a new city hall building to be erected. In 1917, a disastrous fire had destroyed close to two thousand houses and churches in the residential area just northeast of downtown Atlanta, but following the end of the First World War, Atlanta experienced a tremendous economic boom that lasted throughout the 1920s, facilitating a massive residential and commercial building campaign.[11] Municipal authorities seized the opportunity to pass several multi-million dollar civic improvement bonds between 1921 and 1926 to fund the furnishing of Atlanta with much desired modern amenities. Atlanta saw the building of its first airstrip in 1925, and the new Spring Street Viaduct provided vehicular access to the central business district just as Atlanta's first traffic light was installed on Peachtree Street. By 1929, natural gas lines ran to every household within the city limits and the mayor made the first transatlantic telephone call. An unprecedented 762 new businesses sprung up between the years of 1925 and 1929, prompting the Chicago Association of Commerce to open an office in Atlanta in July of 1928, a point of considerable pride to the city. In response to this frenzied state of growth, one out-of-town visitor to Atlanta wrote in 1926, "I...can understand why you are proud of the Gate City, for everybody visiting here

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[10] Ivan Allen, *Atlanta from the Ashes* (Atlanta: Ruralist Press, Publishers, 1928), 8. ******

[11] First National Bank of Atlanta, *Atlanta Resurgens* (Atlanta: Atlanta National Bank, 1971), 57.

can see its progress."[12]

A large part of Atlanta's success came from its strategic location, resulting in the natural development of Atlanta into a transportation hub for Southeastern railroad and highway lines. Concurrent with Atlanta's perception of itself as the "Gate City" of the Southeast was the assertion that this fortuitous geographical location, combined with the recent economic boom had elevated Atlanta to its rightful position as the leader of the entire region. "The history of Atlanta is the history of the railroads entering Atlanta," wrote Louis D. Newton in *The City Builder*, "*Terminus* was the first name given Atlanta and that word signifies the reason for the establishment here of the South's leading city. It is the gateway to the South, the natural crossroads."[13]

Pride in Atlanta's identity as a transportation crossroads is repeatedly emphasized throughout the issues of *The City Builder*, which are full of articles, features, photographs, and illustrations of Atlanta's booming trade, facilitated by transportation advances and manifested visually in the city's skyline. One such article, printed in August on 1925, boldly boasts that "Just as in ancient times all roads led to Rome, sooner or later all important highways in this section of the country...will reach this city," a potent statement of overwhelming confidence and pride.[14] Another representation of Atlanta, found on the cover of the October 1927 issue, shows the city as "the Heart of the Southeast's Trade," marked by a large star at the center of the Southeastern states, with the distances from Atlanta to key cities within the region marked to demonstrate to readers the great speed and ease of travel by train (fig. 5).[15] Above is the magazine title,

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[12] J. Hampton Morgan, "editorial," *The City Builder*, March 1926, 31.

[13] Louis D. Newton, "A Greater City Than We Thought," *The City Builder*, January 1927, 9.

[14] Fred Houser, "Atlanta the Focal Point," *The City Builder*, August 1925, 20.

[15] "Atlanta, the Heart of the Southeast's Trade," *The City Builder*, October 1927, cover.

superimposed onto an image of the Atlanta downtown business district, densely populated with ten to twenty story commercial buildings, among which the Healey building is the most prominent. Below are juxtaposed six images proudly highlighting the technological advances made in air, sea, and land transportation throughout the ninety years since Atlanta's founding. The covered wagon, the schooner, and the primitive locomotive, serving as symbols of Atlanta's frontier past, are contrasted with the modern steam engine, oceanliner, and "aeroplane", heralding the city's present glory.

By 1925, Atlanta considered itself to be the "principal city" in the Southeast, west of the Mississippi, due to its "continuation to maintain business supremacy over all cities in Georgia, and, in recent years, over all the cities in the South," a claim, in should be noted, that was also made by rival cities Birmingham and Nashville during this period.[16] With this perceived role, however, came a new urban consciousness on the part of Atlantans, who suddenly realized they commanded the powerful focal point of a far-reaching sphere of influence that extended well beyond the boundaries of the city itself, and even the state of Georgia. In 1921, this sphere of influence was illustrated in a seventh grade primer for Atlanta schools which suggested instructing students to place their hands on the table with fingers outspread, imagining their palm to be the city of Atlanta and their fingers to be the railroad lines leading to all of the key cities in the nation.[17]

The Commercial-Civic Elite

From its earliest beginnings as a railroad terminus, the City of Atlanta had been governed by the demands of commerce and industry. In this respect, the city departed

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[16] Fred Newell, "Historical Outline of Atlanta," *The City Builder*, February 1925, 62.

[17] Blaine A. Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1975), 97.

from the majority of contemporary Southern towns which had formed to meet the trade needs of an almost entirely agricultural economy based on the South's primary cash crops. Georgians recognized Atlanta's unique commercial character within the context of the agrarian South, overtly manifested in the battle for the relocation of the State Capitol to the young and prosperous Gate City from nearby Milledgeville. In defense of the town of Milledgeville, one citizen spoke disapprovingly of Atlanta in 1868 as "scarcely more of a Georgia city than a Tennessee, Ohio, or European city. Its faith is in itself...It feeds on Georgia and the rest of mankind...Self-seeking is the inspiration for its tremendous energies. She wants the Capitol for the profit that is in it."[18]

After the Reconstruction, this economic focus and commercial environment produced a new class of progressive-minded young businessmen who rose to political and financial prominence. In 1879 the *Atlanta Constitution* described this new class as composed of "live energetic men. They have no long line of ancestry with coat-of-arms to keep up...They live to drive their business."[19] Conscious of the stereotypes of the old plantation South, young Atlanta businessmen in the 1880s were eager to establish that in Atlanta there was "nothing in the Old South about it, and all the traditions of the old-time South, which are made poetical to dignify effete pride and logical poverty, have no place in the men of the present in the young and thriving Gate City. The young men are not the dawdling, pale-faced, soft-handed effeminates which were so often visible in the nurslings of the slave. They have keen, expressive eyes; their faces are bronzed; their hands are often the tell-tales of labor; their step is elastic and their habits are energetic."[20]

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[18] *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 47 (December 1963): 362.

[19] *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta), 2 March 1979.

[20] Alexander K. McClure, *The South: Its Industrial, Financial, and Political Conditions* (Philadelphia: 1886), 58-59.

It was these men who were instrumental in the rebuilding of the city following the Civil War, and under their leadership and unbending commercial agenda, Atlanta again became a bustling urban center. At this time many of Atlanta's most successful and important businessmen were Northern "carpet-baggers," such as Hannibal I. Kimball whose Kimball Opera House was a central feature in the urban landscape well into the 20th century. This open acceptance of non-locals, and non-Southerners, in the interest of bringing new capital into Atlanta's economy led Henry Grady to boast that Atlantans "put business above politics."[21]

Blaine Brownell explains that "the business-oriented middle class that asserted itself in southern cities in the late nineteenth century became dominant in virtually every regional urban area after 1900."[22] Dubbing this new dominant class the "commercial-civic elite," Brownell goes on to state that "The conflict between an older aristocracy of birth and a newer elite of entrepreneurial spirit had given way by the 1920s in most of the larger southern cities to a pattern of cooperation among the members of the upper class, due to intermarriage and the power of influence of the rising businessmen."[23] In Atlanta of the 1920s, a common interest among the commercial-civic elite in the success and growth of the city as a whole crystallized in a collective and cooperative civic boosterism under the auspices of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, which adopted as its particular goal the improvement of the highly visible downtown business district. In 1920, membership in the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce had risen to 2,890 individual members, and when the Forward Atlanta campaign was coordinated in 1925, it boasted

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[21] Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 38.

[22] Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South*, 47.

[23] Ibid.

the sponsorship of 350 commercial and professional organizations.[24]

In addition to the Chamber of Commerce, various other city-wide clubs and organizations took an active role in the improvement of Atlanta, often sharing much of their membership with each other and the Chamber of Commerce. Between the years 1913 and 1922, the commercial-civic elite of Atlanta formed chapters of the Rotary, Kiwanis, and Civitan, as well as the Presidents Club which declared itself "United for Civic Advancement," and the Exchange Club. These organizations, along with the more socially oriented Druid Hills and Piedmont Driving Clubs, provided the men of the commercial-civic elite with an environment in which they could casually discuss the issues of the day and plan the developments of the future.

By the 1920s, the commercial-civic elite dominated the political and economic affairs of the city of Atlanta to an unprecedented extent through the influence of the Chamber of Commerce and the municipal government itself which was largely composed of local business leaders. The promotion of civic boosterism within the city through *The City Builder* magazine, to be sure, indicated a genuine desire to improve the city for the benefit of its citizens, but perhaps more importantly reflected the personal agendas of Atlanta businessmen who stood to benefit financially from the urbanization and modernization of their city. Taken in this context, the selection of Preacher's design for the new city hall illustrates the physical manifestation of the commercial-civic agenda in which the city of Atlanta was presented as a prosperous progressive city with the goal of attracting both clients and corporate investors to the central business district.

With Atlanta as the region's ambassador to the rest of the nation, the city's commercial-civic elite in the 1920s used this influence to promote not only their perception of the progressive new Atlanta, but also of the New South in the attempt to

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[24] Ibid., 49.

combat the stereotypes and prejudices of "Northerners [who] have grown up to believe the South is just one great swamp, reeking with disease," where Southerners, lacking in ambition and alien to industry, "tie themselves down to a comfortable income from a farm or a peach orchard and fight the mosquitoes in a rocking chair all day."[25] Since Henry Grady's famous speech to the New England Society in 1886, the term "New South" had been used to represent the South of the Post-Reconstruction period, a region that had been "reborn intellectually, socially, industrially, agriculturally, financially, and transportation-wise," since the days of the backwards, slave-based Confederacy.[26] Atlantans had bought into the New South philosophy from the beginning, applying Grady's concepts of commercialism and industry to municipal goals and visions beginning most markedly in the 1880s and continuing well into the city of today.

Taking up the mantel of the New South image, the commercial-civic elite in Atlanta of the 1920s, led by the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, adopted a somewhat patriarchal attitude towards the rest of the region, encouraging the same commercial positivism and political progressivism that characterized their own Forward Atlanta campaign. Claiming to have the best interests of the region at heart, Atlanta's civic boosters justified their policies with passionate statements of regional solidarity such as this one from the November 1925 issue of *The City Builder*: "Atlanta's ours, we clothe its every need -- / But better yours and mine when this we heed: / One great Southeast in

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[25] Craddock Goins, "The Red Old Thrills of Georgia," *The City Builder*, January 1925, 20. This fairly lengthy article was written by a transplanted Northerner, Craddock Goins, and was published in *The City Builder* to represent the views of Northern businessmen towards the city of Atlanta and the South. The general theme of the article is to encourage Atlanta businessmen to abandon any and all previous prejudices towards Northerners and to concentrate on making Atlanta as progressive and economically successful as possible, thereby attracting more non-local investment in the city. The article, then, firmly supports the agenda of the commercial-civic elite and the Chamber of Commerce.

[26] "The Progressive South," *The City Builder*, August 1925, 35.

perfect union blent!"[27] Every year *The City Builder* devoted an issue to an examination of the economic conditions of various states and cities throughout the Southeast, using the magazine to promote the New South image of an industrialized, urbanized region no longer dependent on a cash crop based, agrarian slave economy. The cover of the November 1925 issue of *The City Builder*, entitled the "Southeastern Cities Edition," presents the Atlanta commercial-civic elite's conception of the New South (fig. 6).[28] A map of the Southeastern United States is shown, dominated by greatly overexaggerated clusters of skyscrapers representing the major Southern cities, connected by railroad and highway lines. Above the map are several of the region's newest major buildings, ranging in location from Richmond, Virginia to Little Rock, Arkansas, while below, panoramic photographs of four major port cities of the South are shown. Here, then, the Chamber of Commerce presents the twin signs of the modern, progressive American city: building and transportation. The intended image of the Southeastern region is clearly that of a heavily urbanized, commercially active trade center competitive with the Northeast. Far from a "reeking swamp," the South is shown as a thriving region with large, developed cities and a healthy agricultural climate, tied together by a web of transportation lines. This interpretation of the New South was widely encouraged by the city of Atlanta, for naturally the greater the state of the region, the greater the city of Atlanta for leading it.

City leaders were especially conscious of the fact that with the city of Atlanta functioning as a model for the larger region, the new city hall building would likewise serve in some capacity as a symbol of the entire Southeast, and therefore, the selection of a design for the building took on greater significance. Craddock Goins explained that "if Atlanta can help give the world a better impression of the South through showing the

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[27] Platt Young, "Welcome-Southeastern Cities," *The City Builder*, November 1925, 3.

[28] *The City Builder*, November 1925, cover.

world a great, progressive city, then Atlanta will be serving the South - all of its neighboring cities."[29] Preacher's design for Atlanta City Hall in its set back skyscraper tower was entirely in accord with the image of the New South that the Atlanta commercial-civic elite so emphatically endorsed, most markedly, that of commercialized, progressive, urbanized region. The Atlanta City Hall served as a highly visible architectural model for the region, introducing the cosmopolitan language of the New York skyscraper in a conscious attempt to direct the architecture of the South away from the unimaginative forms of current commercial structures throughout the region.

Atlanta's relationship with the Southeast, however, appears to have been somewhat ambiguous in the 1920s. The role the city played as leader of the Southeast was, to be sure, the source of civic and regional pride on the part of Atlantans, however, contemporary sources reveal perhaps a bit of frustration that the city of Atlanta was bridled with the negative stereotypes of the pre-war South, in spite the fact that such stereotypes had never really applied to the city. Furthermore, despite the fact that many Southern cities of the 1920s, such as Nashville, Mobile, and Birmingham, shared Atlanta's progressive spirit, much of the South still lagged behind the Northeast in commercial and industrial production. Although Atlanta was well on its way to becoming a nationally recognized urban center, it was obvious to Atlantans that their city would "stand or fall with the destiny of the South."[30] Painfully aware of this fact, Atlanta's commercial-civic elite urged Southerners everywhere to "clean up, to paint up, to make the towns and villages attractive, to stir the pride of the men and women," as Atlanta was doing, thereby creating "a spirit of friendly cooperation and friendly competition to see which can do the greatest good for the individual community and for the progress of the

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[29] Goins, "The Red Old Thrills of Georgia," 53.

[30] Ibid.

whole South." [31]

The selection of a distinctly New York influenced design for the new Atlanta City Hall reflects this ambiguous relationship with the Southeast. The building was certainly intended to represent and to serve as an architectural model for the Southeastern region, yet at the same time the failure to adopt strongly regional forms with their connotations of the Old South suggests a desire on the part of Atlantans to distance themselves from the socially and economically backwards agrarian South which stood in opposition to the principles of the New South. Atlanta chose to associate themselves, instead, with the large Northern cities with which the city shared the common goals of commercialism and industrialism.

G. Lloyd Preacher, by the 1920s a well-established, successful middle-aged man, was an important and influential member of this elite class of civic-minded businessmen, and firmly associated with the New South vision (fig. 7). Preacher's marriage in 1905 immediately placed him within the privileged business class. His wife, Fannie McDaniel, was "a representative of one of the old and prominent families of the state," and the daughter of a man with close ties to the Southern Railroad, one of the largest and wealthiest corporations in the South.[32] By 1917 Preacher's work in Augusta earned him an entry in Lucian Knight's social directory *A Standard History of Georgia and Georgians*, and in 1926 Howell Clark included him in his own *A History of Georgia*. In 1918 Preacher was accepted into the Georgia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and in that same year he was appointed to the Georgia AIA Review Board, an important position which gave him a great deal of influence within the architectural

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[31] Richard H. Edmonds, "The New Era of Friendliness is Dawning," *The City Builder*, October 1925, 76.

[32] Clark Howell, *A History of Georgia*, vol. 4 (1926), 25; Lucian L. Knight, *A Standard History of Georgia and Georgians*, vol. 6 (1917), 3046.

community.[33] After Preacher's move to Atlanta in 1922, he became a member of both the York and Scottish Rite Masons, the Mystic Shrine, and the Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks, as well as the Druid Hills Golf Club and the Atlanta Automobile Club. But perhaps most important to his career was his membership in the Capital City Club, an elite private organization of successful businessmen in Atlanta which would have provided Preacher with an ideal opportunity for networking. Preacher was a member of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, and a strong supporter of the Forward Atlanta campaign, to which his firm G. Lloyd Preacher and Company donated $1,560.00, an unusually generous contribution.[34]

Preacher's selection as architect of the new Atlanta city hall firmly associates the building with the New South movement as promulgated by Atlanta city leaders in the 1920s. In addition to being recognized for his practical skills and design capabilities, Preacher was identified from the very beginning of his career with the building of the New South, an association that Preacher cultivated and which proved quite lucrative for the firm. As early as 1917, *Augusta Magazine* cited Preacher as "the leading architect in Augusta and one of the foremost men in his profession in the Southern states," and an example of how "genuine talent, united with industry and perseverance, never fails to conquer success."[35] Only one year after the opening of the Atlanta office, the *Atlanta*

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[33] Preacher was, however, removed from the Georgia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1927 following allegations of illegal handling of construction funds in relation to two major projects, the Cape Fear Hotel in Wilmington, NC and the Wynne-Claughton Building in Atlanta. Although formal investigations into the charges by the national AIA and local governments in both Wilmington and Atlanta failed to find any wrongdoing on Preacher's part, the Georgia AIA under the presidency of well known Atlanta architect Thornton Mayre dropped Preacher from the membership. According to Julian Wade Adams, Preacher wrote in a letter that his ejection from the Georgia AIA was a reflection of Mayre's personal dislike of Preacher, although Mayre emphatically denied this. See Julian Wade Adams, "G. Lloyd Preacher, Southern Architect: A Study of His Career" (MA thesis, Augusta College, 1987), ****.

[34] *Report of the Forward Atlanta Commission, 1926-1929* (Forward Atlanta Commission, 1930), 32.

[35] Knight, *A Standard History*, 3045.

Constitution says of Preacher and Company that "the firm is looked upon as a great Southeastern institution rather than a purely local Atlanta business," proudly boasting that "the headquarters of the company remains in Atlanta."[36] In the year that the Atlanta City Council passed the one million dollar bond to finance the cost of a new city hall, Clark Howell says of Preacher that "Imagination is a priceless crystal in the vision of the man who achieves and it is this quality which has brought G. Lloyd Preacher to a position of leadership in architectural circles in Atlanta....notable examples of his creative genius are found...throughout the Southeast."[37]

In the 1920s, Preacher was riding the crest of the economic success of the post-war South, receiving commissions for building projects in practically every major city in the Southeast from Miami, Florida to Wilmington, North Carolina. Preacher and Company clearly recognized the potential advantage of this regional association as indicated in their advertisement in a 1924 issue of *Manufacturers Record* (fig. 8), in which a carefully selected sample of the firm's work is pictured, under the title of "Modern Southern Buildings."[38] The advertisement states that "In the recent tremendous development of the South, the erection of imposing buildings of the most modern character has had a very significant place...in every progressive community. It has been the privilege of G. Lloyd Preacher and Company to have a conspicuous part in this huge program during the past several years."[39] Firmly identified with the progressive New South that the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce emphasized in their "Forward Atlanta"

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[36] Julian Wade Adams, "G. Lloyd Preacher, Southern Architect: A Study of His Career" (MA thesis. Augusta College, 1987), 63.

[37] Howell, *History of Georgia*, 22.

[38] "Modern Southern Buildings," *Manufacturers Record*, 11 December 1924, 655.

[39] Ibid.

campaign, Preacher and Company was an excellent choice for the new city hall commission, which was awarded to the firm in the early months of 1928.

Atlanta as the Phoenix

Atlanta had always presented itself as a progressive, commercial city in contrast to the traditional cities of the Old South such as Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans, an urban identity that continues into the present day. As early as 1868, Atlanta had already begun to describe itself as "young, thriving, and beautiful, with its face set towards the future rather than the past," in contrast with the older "aristocratic and fossilferous" towns in Georgia, such as its conservative rival in the battle for the state capitol, Milledgeville.[40] Following the Civil War, the presence of a growing number non-Southerners, often well traveled and well educated, further contributed to the progressive attitude and liberal politics of Atlanta. Although Henry Grady had claimed a mere 774 Northern-born among more than 46,000 residents in Fulton County of 1880, by the 1920s a great number of Atlantans were from outside the South, drawn to the city by a booming economy and an active trade.[41]

Atlanta's progressive identity was clearly reflected in the city's skyline, which, by the outbreak of World War I, boasted nearly a dozen skyscrapers of greater than ten stories, and rapidly developing residential districts featuring the most grand and elegant in contemporary domestic design. Robert Craig contrasts this architectural progressivism which the antebellum images and conservative architectural aesthetic of Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans which would "retain for generations their respective architectural characters as historic towns formed by Old South values and sustained by

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[40] *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (December 1963): 361.

[41] Henry W. Grady, *The New South* (New York: Robert Bonner's Sons, 1890), 183.

traditionalism and a deep sense of family lineage."[42] In 1917, a visitor could say of Charleston (fig. 9) that it was "perhaps the only city in America which has slammed its front door in Progress' face and resisted the modern with fiery determination. There are no skyscrapers, no blighting factory chimneys, no glaring electric signs... Everything is leisurely and sleepy and mysteriously reminiscent."[43] Atlantans of the same period, however, were faced with such rapid change that it was said even native-born citizens "are sometimes undecided about which corner to turn, right in sight of the block in which they were born." (fig. 1)[44]

Reveling in the prosperity and positivism of the Post War economic boom, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce avidly encouraged progressivism, using *The City Builder* to spread their views in the city, and throughout the Southeast. The basic credo of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce in the 1920s is well summarized in an article entitled "Tests of a Town" from the June 1925 issue of *The City Builder* magazine, in which the author encourages Atlantans to gauge the success of their city by asking themselves, "Shall I find that I am in a live town having a progressive city government, active civic organizations, modern fire department, adequate police protection, organized measures for accident prevention, and pull-together spirit in everything - a town with a future?"[45] Conservative resistance was brushed aside by *The City Builder* writers who urged Atlantans to put away their anxieties about rapid change and progress, virtually synonymous at the time. "Away then with the gloom of despair, the picture of a world

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[42] Robert M. Craig, *Atlanta Architecture: Art Deco to Modern Classic, 1929-1959* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1995), 15.

[43] Mildred Cram, *Old Seaport Towns of the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 125.

[44] Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South*, 1.

[45] "Tests of a Town," *The City Builder*, June 1925, 31.

growing worse," a *New York Times* article reprinted in *The City Builder* demanded, "and up with a song of thanksgiving, that beneath all the scum of the hour there is being refined the pure metal of higher and holier aspirations all over the world."[46] The reference to "refined metal" was, no doubt, intended to invoke directly an image of the commercial steel frame skyscraper which defined the downtown of the progressive city, a reference reaffirmed in one author's plea for Atlantans to recognize that Atlanta "is building now for a large city. She is catching her stride. She has passed the stage of adolescence. Let us not cramp her style."[47]

Atlanta adopted the phoenix as the new city seal only a year after Henry Grady's speech likening Atlanta to the mythical bird rising from the ashes of Sherman's destruction (fig. 10). Above the phoenix, in between his outspread wings, is the word "resurgens," meaning "rising again," and below are the dates 1847 and 1865, the former being the founding of the city, and the latter being the end of the war, and, consequently, the beginning of the New South's resurrection. The iconography and symbolism of the seal is discussed by Franklin Garrett, who states that "the seal tells, with a single emblem, the story of a resurrected city, rebuilt by dauntless citizens who refused to accept defeat and determined to make their city greater and more beautiful than before."[48] Garrett goes on to explain that just as "the phoenix, fabled bird of myth and story, rose from its ashes to begin a new life, the people returned to the ashes of their city without bitterness or self-pity, and began the gigantic task which lay before them."[49] This story of a city's

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[46] "The Industrial South," *The City Builder*, October 1925, 45.

[47] Richard W. Alger, "Atlanta is Graduating from Small City Class," *The City Builder*, July 1929, 8.

[48] Franklin M. Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, vol. 2 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1954), 131.

[49] Ibid.

rebuilding may also be applied to the image of the New South in which traditional ways of the Old South were abandoned in favor of commercialism and industrialism.

Intended to make reference to these meanings, the phoenix rising city seal is prominently placed in various key locations throughout Preacher's City Hall, serving as, interestingly, the only form of iconography to be found on the building (fig. 11). The selection of the phoenix as the sole symbolic image, in marked comparison to other civic buildings of the 1920s, is suggestive of contemporary interpretations of the city's antebellum history as "ugly skeletons of a dark day that Atlantans of great minds put behind them many years ago when they set to work not just to rebuild a city, but to build one that would be one of the prides of the nation!"[50] In the interpretation of their city history, Atlantans rejected the myths of the plantation life, choosing instead to present Atlanta as the product of the frontier culture of adventurers and Indians. Rather than identifying with the elegantly clad plantation owner watching over his fields of cotton as they are tended by the hands of his black slaves, Atlantans represented their forefathers as brave animal-skinned explorers and strong railroad workers. According to Blaine Brownell, these frontiersmen "began a tradition of growth, progress, and local loyalty" so strongly valued by Atlantans in the 1920s, and served as "a symbol of the post-Civil War New South," emphasizing the present and future rather than the past.[51]

While it is true that the most significant event in the history of Atlanta was unquestionably felt to have been Sherman's burning of the city in 1864, citizens of Atlanta did not derive the same Lost Cause angst from the destruction of the Civil War as was the case with many contemporary Southern cities. Rather, Atlantans in the 1920s saw Sherman's burning as a blessing in disguise, freeing the city from any debt it might have

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[50] Goins, "The Red Old Thrills of Georgia," 47.

[51] Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South,* 214.

owed to the Old South and providing a blank canvas on which to build a new and greater city.[52] While Charlestonians talked of their antebellum glory as "vital, glowing history...saturated with authentic story that springs like grass from her soil...weaving a golden thread of romance through the years of her existence,"[53] Atlanta youths were taught that the actions of the early Atlanta citizens after Sherman's burning "showed a spirit of determination and pluck by building upon the ruins a new city, finer, greater, and more beautiful than the old one."[54] In light of this sentiment, the use of the phoenix at City Hall is entirely appropriate as the only historical symbol which represented the urban identity of Atlanta as "the wonder city of the South, youthful in years and energy," continually renewing and improving itself through civic cooperation.[55] Free from the burden of the Old South and the Civil War, Atlantans turned their backs on the past and concentrated on their vision of the golden future.

In its fascinating representation of the past, present, and future of Atlanta as a linear progression of five successive tiers from bottom to the top, the cover of the September 1927 issue of *The City Builder* serves as a highly significant representation of the city of Atlanta as perceived by the Atlanta commercial-civic elite (frontispiece).[56] Occupying the central role throughout the tiers are the twin themes of building and transportation as represented in the icons of the locomotive and the skyscraper, shown in their various forms throughout the history of Atlanta, always increasing in height and speed throughout the panorama in the inevitable tide of progress. The lowest tier shows

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[52] Ibid., 204.

[53] Harriette Kershaw Leiding, *Charleston: Historic and Romantic* (Philadelphia: 1931), 285.

[54] Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South,* 203.

[55] Ibid., 215.

[56] "Forward Atlanta," *The City Builder*, September 1927, cover.

the pioneer history of the city, personified by a railroad surveying team, among them Stephen Long, and a covered wagon drawn by a team of horses. The second tier shows an image of the supposed earliest structure in Marthasville, the Wash Colliers Groceries, with an early steam locomotive. The middle tier shows an image of the pre-Civil War downtown taken from a well known documentary photo. The panorama then moves directly to the city skyline of the 1920s and the large railroad junction. There are no images of the city in ruins following the Civil War, nor are there any representations whatsoever of the city in the Reconstruction period. The 1920s skyline serves to provide an image of the contemporary city, which at the time included many of the city's earlier commercial buildings, shown as short, squat rectangular buildings shadowed by the larger structures of the early twentieth century, with the Healey Building, once again, occupying the focal point.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this image, however, is the vision of the city's future, shown in the highest tier, towering above the massive, awkward brick boxes of the 1920s skyline. The futuristic, vertical set-backed buildings, clearly referencing the latest developments in New York architecture, rise out of the clouds, like the phoenix rising from the ashes, surpassed in height only by the airplane, heralding a new and great era in Atlanta. The accompanying text on the inside cover reads: "We pass on to the depiction of the Atlanta of the Future. Here is a city towering to the skies. Here is indeed a vision of the future...We see the picture. We learn to believe it. And we go out and make it come true. For that is the spirit of Atlanta that has grown about the wooden stake driven by Stephen Long in 1837."[57] It was this vision of the future that demanded a new and better city hall building for Atlanta, a building that would symbolize those defining characteristics of the Gate City of the South: progressivism, positivism, ambition, pride. Far from the Richardsonian Romanesque of the old city hall, the new city hall would be a

modern skyscraper on the cutting edge of architectural form, a building that would show the nation that Atlanta was indeed a modern city, and the just leader of the New South. The new city hall would be a grand, beautiful emblem of civic and regional pride that would usher in a new phase of architecture in Atlanta and the South.

[57] Ibid.

II "TOO MAGNIFICENT TO BE CALLED A CITY HALL"

Atlanta City Hall as Civic Building

The Skyscraper and Urban Identity

As shown in the powerful image from the September 1927 issue of *The City Builder* (frontispiece), architecture, primarily the skyscraper, was an important part of Atlanta's identity in the 1920s, and had been since the city's first phase of skyscraper building in the early 1900s. To the urban citizen, it was the skyscraper which conveyed the prosperity and success of a city, as expressed by one writer for Nashville's local paper, *The Tennessean*, who explained that a city's commercial structures were of paramount importance because they were "the outward show of an inward spirit of citizenry."[58] Recognizing this fact, Atlantans took great pride in their buildings, especially in a region that could boast only a few cities large enough to have any attracting national recognition. In 1926, an article entitled "Atlanta - The South's Biggest Office Building City" in the March issue of *The City Builder* stated that "if the question should be asked 'what was the one greatest factor in making Atlanta the city it is today,' the answer should, unhesitatingly be, 'its fine office buildings'...In no other Southern city can be found so many modern, high class office buildings as in Atlanta."[59] Even Northern visitors appeared to have been struck by the Atlanta skyline, such as Craddock Goins, who passionately praised the city's skyscrapers as "things of beauty and awe...made out of Georgia's own bosom."[60]

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[58] *Tennessean* (Nashville), 26 May 1920.

[59] Fred Shaefer, "The South's Greatest Office Building City," *The City Builder*, March 1926, 22.

[60] Craddock Goins, "The Red Old Thrills of Georgia," *The City Builder*, January 1925, 20.

The Post-War era saw the issuing of increasing numbers of building permits, and the skyline changed so rapidly Atlantans joked that the city "is getting her face lifted and putting on new clothes and 'stepping out,' so that old friends hardly recognize the old lady."[61] This invariably meant that older buildings would have to make way, as one Atlantan observed, "Here in Atlanta, we have, plenty of room to expand, it would appear...But we are tearing down buildings, all the same."[62] Most viewed this loss as a necessary sacrifice in a growing city, taking pride in the "handsome new structures where old buildings had outlived their usefulness."[63] Atlanta businessmen and politicians credited the city's healthy commerce and honest citizens for "Today's phenomenal skyline...There is no section in Atlanta or its vicinity, or throughout the state that is standing still."[64]

The particular focus of *The City Builder* on architecture in relation to urban identity, suggested in the name of the magazine, illustrates the belief that it was the skyscraper which determined the character of the city, and had the power to attract national attention. One such image is found on the cover of the March 1929 issue of *The City Builder*, which displays a montage of the city's own buildings, with the Georgia State Capitol in the center, hovering over the ruins of a burned city (fig. 12).[65] "A city rising out of the ashes" is printed along the bottom, recalling Henry Grady's words, and the city seal is proudly displayed, hovering over the charred ruins of a brick building. The beacons atop the two radio towers shine upon the city, proclaiming Atlanta's greatness

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[61] Dudley Glass, "Tear it Down and Build it Bigger - and Better," *The City Builder*, July 1929, 3.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., 4.

[64] Hal Steed, "All Georgia Enjoying Growth in Building," *The City Builder*, July 1926, 8.

[65] "A City Rising Out of the Ashes," *The City Builder*, March 1929, cover.

which is evident from the many fine buildings shown of the downtown commercial district. The cover shows the strong civic pride of the citizens of Atlanta in the 1920s, and the significance that the skyscraper had in the urban identity, further illustrated in the following poem published in July of 1929:

> Man builds of steel. His lofty structure peers
> To skyward realms and breasts the azure there,
> Daring the tumult of the storm and air.
> Each section of the building code appears
> His rule and law, and when completion nears
> His dream becomes a landmark towering there,
> Proving a man of deeds beyond compare
> Who marches to the music of the years.[66]

The skyscraper bore additional significance as it was perceived to be the only distinctly American architectural form with the ability to express success, power, stability, and efficiency. In this important context, the Atlanta City Hall took on special meaning, not only as the center of municipal government, but also, by nature of the building form, particular importance to the American urban character and a powerful place in the city's skyline. Commenting on Preacher's design, *The City Builder* proclaimed that the "buildings is expected to be one of the most important assets of the City Government, and a point of progressive pride for all citizens," a perception reaffirmed in the crowning of the City Hall with a symbolic pyramid surmounted by an American flag flying high above the commercial skyline of the proud city.[67]

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[66] Platt Young, "The Builders," *The City Builder*, July 1929, 2.

[67] *Georgia Magazine*, October 1928, 70.

Atlanta City Halls

In its outward appearance, the Atlanta City Hall is essentially a commercial skyscraper; however, clear distinctions are made in the design to assert the central significance of the building and its decidedly civic role. The prominent display of the phoenix rising had been mentioned briefly as being placed in key locations at City Hall, most importantly, in the olive terra-cotta panels between the windows on the exterior of the building, and etched in the brass of the elevator doors in the first floor lobby (fig. 13). But more than just the display of the city seal, the footprint and surroundings of the City Hall immediately signal an important civic structure. The City Hall occupies an entire block, placed towards the front of the block on Mitchell Street, and is located adjacent to the even more imposing State Capital Building on one side (fig. 14), with A. Ten Eyck Brown's Fulton County Courthouse of 1914 only a block away (fig. 15). Directly in front of City Hall is an urban park which provides a clear and impressive view of the City Hall towering above the city (fig. 16). Furthermore, the building footprint is quite large, but the volume is then reduced significantly in the shaft of the tower. This liberal use of space immediately distinguished the Atlanta City Hall from a commercial skyscraper, which almost by definition must make the most efficient use possible of an urban downtown lot.

In the Southeast, civic buildings in the forms of skyscrapers are uncommon, though when the civic skyscraper tower is found, it tends to be in those cities within the Southeast which, like Atlanta, are relatively young in comparison to the traditional Old South cities and towns. In the construction of new civic buildings, traditional Southern cities almost invariably chose neoclassical Greek Revival designs for their civic buildings, reflecting their conservative politics and Old South ideologies. The Atlanta City Hall, although built when the city was nearly a century old and had by then its own old traditions, rejects traditional civic neoclassical language as well as iconographical formal elements such as the dome, rotunda, and grand stair hall in favor of American

business imagery. Cities such as Savannah, Georgia, however, would continue to use these elements in their new civic architecture throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, even when at the height of economic success, clearly making reference to the Old South origins of the city, as in the case of Witcover's baroque-inspired domed and columned Savannah City Hall of 1904 (fig. 17). Other traditional cities such as Charleston, SC, would go to great lengths to keep their antebellum city halls in use, despite major inconveniences in terms of size and modern amenities, preferring a physically decentralized and poorly accommodated civic government to the abandonment of the civic houses of their forefathers, as in the case of Gabriel Manigault's Charleston City Hall of 1800 (fig. 18).

Atlantans, however, had no such attachments to the city's older civic buildings, having gone through four city halls previous to G. Lloyd Preacher's City Hall tower. Atlanta's first permanent city hall, built in 1854 and said to be the most handsome in the South at the time, was a relatively simple Greek Revival brick structure with a small wooden cupola rising from the roof proclaiming its civic status (fig. 19).[68] This city hall was one of the few buildings in Atlanta to be spared by Sherman's troops, along with the adjacent Church of the Immaculate Conception. However, it is clear that Atlanta city leaders bore no sentimental attachment to the old city hall building, one of the few architectural remnants of the ante-bellum period of the city's history, as the building and the lot on which it stood were offered to the Georgia state government in the 1860s as a bargaining piece for the acquisition of the State Capitol. Atlanta city leaders were successful in acquiring the State Capitol in 1868 which was housed in a temporary rented structure until 1884 when the first Atlanta city hall was demolished to make way for the current Georgia State Capitol building.

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[68] Green B. Haygood, "Sketch of Atlanta," *William's Atlanta Directory* (Atlanta: 1859), 13.

By 1884, Atlanta had grown by leaps and bounds and the civic government was moved to the rented Kimball House at Pryor and Hunter Streets, previously a hotel, in the heart of the business district. The Kimball House served as the seat of the municipal government until 1910, when the city hall was moved down the street to the Old Federal Post Office Building, an austere, polychromed Victorian Romanesque structure with two bell towers rising from the top story (fig. 20). When the city offices were moved to the Old Federal Post Office Building, the structure was already over three decades old and considered to be a horribly outdated and unattractive structure. Furthermore, having been constructed to accommodate completely different needs than those of a municipal government, the Old Federal Post Office Building was poorly suited to the spatial and practical considerations required of a city hall. The city government managed to tolerate the structure for twenty years, before moving into Preacher's own City Hall in 1929. The old federal post office buildings was demolished several weeks later, to the great relief of city officials.

This long string of moves by the municipal government of Atlanta illustrates a throw away attitude among city officials towards civic buildings. It is clear that the city hall buildings were continually seen as temporary, presumably until a permanent city hall could be constructed, and the selection of the buildings was determined almost exclusively by the practical requirements of convenient location and abundance of space. When these buildings no longer served their purpose, the city government moved elsewhere and the old buildings were demolished. Preacher's City Hall was the first and, no doubt, long awaited permanent city hall building for Atlanta since 1854, and therefore the design for the building was of paramount importance to city officials and the citizens themselves. The requirement that the building be fifteen stories and the reservation of an entire city block for the building furthermore indicates a desire to avoid the problems of the past city halls by providing for future growth in the city government. The Atlanta City

Hall was intended to last for a long time, and so when selecting a proper design for the building, the city officials chose the commercial skyscraper form as the most likely to endure as an acceptable and appropriate building form. The Atlanta City Hall has currently been in use for 68 years, almost twice as long as any of the previous city halls, indicating that the building has, indeed, been a success. Having escaped the wrecking ball in the mid-eighties, the Atlanta City Hall has now achieved National Register status, making Atlanta's fifth city hall the first to be recognized as a historically significant architectural monument.

In 1922, Sinclair Lewis wrote his influential *Babbit*, in which he contrasts the "shingle tortured mansard, the red brick minarets of hulking old houses," the architectural grotesqueries of a past age, with modern skyscrapers, "austere towers of steel and cement and limestone, sturdy as cliffs and delicate as steel rods."[69] Richard Guy Wilson relates this significant quote to the context surrounding the rapid construction in Atlanta of the 1920s, suggesting that Lewis' statement "could be taken as the credo of many Atlanta businessmen and politicians who in the 1920s transformed the city from a stodgy Victorian into a modern metropolis."[70] This particular stylistic contrast between dark and gloomy pollution-stained Victorian buildings and the clean, sleek modern streamlined skyscraper serves to explain some of the decisions that surrounded the design of Atlanta's new City Hall.

Already 37 years old in 1910 when the city government moved in, the Old Federal Post Office Building was immediately unsatisfactory to city officials. As early as 1915, plans were being made for a new city hall to be a central element in a large civic precinct. This civic precinct, designed by Chamber of Commerce member Haralson Bleckley,

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[69] Richard Guy Wilson, forward to Robert M. Craig, *Atlanta Architecture: Art Deco to Modern Classic, 1929-1959* (Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, Inc., 1995), 9.

[70] Ibid.

consisted of a series of civic buildings, among them, the existing State Capitol and a new city hall to be executed according to neoclassical, Beaux-Arts principles, enclosing a large public open space. Bleckley's vision of the civic City Beautiful, however, was never realized, and by the time the money became available for the new city hall, Atlanta had very different ideas in mind.

By the early 1920s, city officials were already pushing for a civic improvements bond to fund the construction of a new city hall building. In 1926 Preacher dubbed the current city hall "the great exception to our public good."[71] Preacher added hopefully, however. "fortunately, our city hall will probably be removed with the passage of the proposed bond issue, which provides a new and more imposing building to house the city government."[72] Such a dark and cumbersome city hall was not only the source of practical inconveniences to city officials, but was also felt to be inappropriate for such a progressive, successful modern city as Atlanta. With the passing of the civic improvement bond in 1927, the city of Atlanta could finally set about the task of building a new and glorious modern city hall to accurately represent the city as well as accommodate its growing needs.

There is some indication, however, that a Gothic skyscraper might not have been what everyone had in mind when talk of a new city hall began in the mid 1920s, and indeed, the adoption of the Gothic language for a civic building is unprecedented in the history of Atlanta architecture. In light of the civic buildings constructed in Atlanta from the late 19th century and into the 20th century, the majority of which are of neoclassical design, one might have expected the new city hall to follow suit. One of Preacher's greatest rivals within the architectural community in Atlanta, the prominent and well

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[71] G. Lloyd Preacher, "Architectural Atlanta," *The City Builder*, April 1926, 45.

[72] Ibid.

respected A. Ten Eyck Brown, had not only been the architect of the new Fulton County Courthouse of 1914 (fig. 15), executed in Brown's trademark Beaux-Arts neoclassical style, but would also be selected to design the new Federal Post Office Building of 1931 (fig. 21). Brown, as well, appears to have thought himself the logical choice for the new city hall commission, as is evident from his design for "a Modern Idea for the New City Hall whenever Atlanta can have one."[73] The proposed design shows the new city hall of 20 stories adjacent to his own Fulton County Courthouse, and executed in a similar stylistic manner (fig. 22). Brown was to see this design realized five years later in the Dade County Courthouse in Miami, Florida (fig. 23), but the city of Atlanta rejected his city hall proposal in favor of Preacher's distinctly commercial building form, indicating the desire to depart from the conservative stylistic approach of the traditionally civic neoclassical language. Possible sentiment directly against the use of the neoclassical style itself is overtly suggested by the statement made in the June 1930 issue of *The City Builder*, which describes the Georgia State Capitol as "not a thing of beauty by any means."[74]

In contrast to Atlanta's progressive City Hall, the persistence of conservative building traditions in the cities of the Old South cities reflects antebellum perceptions of civic government, where wealthy elite families were accepted as the right and natural leaders due to high birth. This ideology is reaffirmed in the interior treatments of traditional city halls, such as New Orleans' Gallier Hall of 1845, which gives one the impression of being in the private home of a wealthy planter with the opulent furnishings, rugs, paintings, and fixtures, as well as in the architectural language which borrows from domestic precedents. Atlanta City Hall, however, is the product of the Progressive Era belief that civic government should be run in the same way as a large corporation, which

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[73] Craig, *Atlanta Architecture*, 43.

claimed to reject the archaic ideas of pseudo-aristocratic rule by virtue of elite class membership in favor of the working civic machine lead by elected officials with the purpose of serving the tax-paying citizen. Just as the skyscraper appealed to the common man and sought to display the wealth and grandeur that the company offered upon entrance into the lobby, Atlanta City Hall was likewise intended to represent the city government as a corporation in the business of servicing the people in its interior public spaces (fig. 4). The City Hall was not the private domain of the elite ruling class where the tax payer might very well feel like a trespasser when he went to pay his bills. The lobby and ground floors of the Atlanta City Hall were specifically intended to welcome the citizens of Atlanta, and to show the success of that city at providing for their needs through the execution of a beautiful and grand lobby.

The Commercial-Civic City Hall

The use of direct commercial language to the degree that is seen at Atlanta City Hall is unusual in a civic building, to be sure. A long standing relationship exists, however, between commercial and civic architectural function and iconography. Throughout the history of American towns, civic buildings have traditionally been located directly adjacent to, or within, business districts. Charleston City Hall was originally built in 1800 as a bank building, but was bought by the city to serve as their city hall in 1818 (fig. 18). The building is located at the terminus of one of the central business streets, with a commanding view of the business district, but clearly set apart from and superior to it in both high style architectural language and in the physically placement of the building, freestanding, and overlooking the others. Savannah City Hall was constructed in 1904, and it too occupies an urban lot within the business district, at the end of a long street axis (fig. 17). The architectural presence of the Savannah City Hall is a bit more

[74] Ben E. Adams, "That Growing Southern City," *The City Builder*, June 1930, 40.

imposing, and in its Beaux-Arts neoclassicism, the building establishes itself as a civic structure superior to the surrounding commercial buildings. The City Hall of Mobile, Alabama, built in 1855 in the Italianate style, bears a much closer relationship to commerce, with its street level arcade serving as a covered space for conducting business. However, the architectural style of the building is decidedly domestic, and direct borrowing from commercial architectural language is avoided.

Whereas the traditional city hall acknowledges commerce but sets itself apart from and superior to it, progressive city halls of the early 20th century bear an even closer relationship to commerce, blurring the distinctions between the commercial and the civic architectural forms. Atlanta City Hall adopts the commercial language but clearly establishes itself as a civic structure with its spacious site in the newly established civic precinct, several blocks away from the business district, but still having a commanding presence over it in the tower form (fig. 1). The adaptation of the commercial skyscraper to a civic building had first been seen almost twenty years earlier at Oakland City Hall in California of 1911 (fig. 24), designed by Palmer and Hornbostel, which combines the early brick box form of the Chicago style commercial building with a wide, neoclassical base and a civic cupola crowing the building. Although a bit awkward in design, the Oakland City Hall is a symbol of centralized government, housing the entire municipal body, including a jail and a hospital, in one structure.

At the time of its construction, the mayor of Oakland stated proudly that "This type of building, being out of the original and conventional style, will attract notice everywhere, and will put Oakland in the front ranks of modern cities in the magnificence and attractiveness of its chief public building."[75] Interestingly, the Oakland City Hall was constructed after the adoption of the city-commissioner form of municipal government,

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[75] William L. Lebovich, *America's City Halls* (The Preservation Press, 1984), 128.

which applied corporate philosophy to city management towards the goal of more efficient and speedy implementation of municipal policy. Fifteen years later, Edgell would comment that the building was more closely related to "the commercial skyscraper than to the monumental, domical civic building...The designers have conceived of their building as part of the busy environment of the modern city and have brought it into harmony with its surroundings."[76] Four years after the construction of Oakland City Hall, in 1915, Tampa, Florida would follow suit with its own version of the civic-commercial building, designed by M. Leo Elliott who incorporated similar formal elements into his design.

The most influential civic precedent, however, bearing both thematic and formal relationships to Preacher's City Hall, is Bertram Goodhue's Nebraska State Capitol, designed in 1920 and constructed from 1922 to 1932 (fig. 25). Like Atlanta, Nebraska was born of the railroad, formed in 1854 to facilitate the building of the transcontinental railroad across the great plains. Nebraska's first settlers were young entrepreneurs looking to strike it rich through land speculation, and throughout the first stage of its existence, Nebraska was a state governed almost entirely by economic interest groups. When Lincoln was made the capitol of Nebraska in 1867, a state capitol building was hastily constructed according to the design of a little know Chicago architect. The state capitol building, a strange and awkward combination of neoclassical, Victorian, and Gothic elements , was soon universally despised by Nebraskans, who took the poor quality of construction and ugly appearance of the building as evidence that "Lincoln was the sink of official corruption," governed by the self-serving and short-sighted interests of the land speculators.[77] The second state capitol, constructed between 1880 and 1889, was a

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[76] G. H. Edgell, *The American Architecture of Today* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), 238.

[77] Frederick C. Luebke, ed., *A Harmony of the Arts: The Nebraska State Capitol* (Lincoln:

contemporary of the Georgia State Capitol and, as most state capitols constructed in that period, bore a close resemblance to the United States Capitol.

In 1918, Samuel R. McKelvie was elected governor of Nebraska, and among the top items on his agenda was the erection of a new state capitol. McKelvie, "a classic progressive of the era," sought to "modernize everything in sight," including Nebraska's primary civic building.[78] After a limited architectural competition in 1920, the Capitol Commission anonymously selected Bertram Goodue's now famous design for the Nebraska State Capitol. In the wake of two poorly constructed neoclassical failures, it is not surprising that the jury praised Goodhue's design for being "as free from binding traditions as it is from prejudice."[79] The professional advisor to the state capitol competition was Thomas R. Kimball, a nationally recognized Omaha architect, indicating that although the Capitol Commission invited national architectural firms from all over the nation, they valued the input of a local architect for the new State Capitol. The jury's final decision came down to the selection of Goodhue's modern design over Pope's more predictable Beaux Arts design, just as the Atlanta city officials rejected A. Ten Eyck Brown' Beaux Arts design in favor of Preacher's more progressive Gothic set back design.

From these two examples of civic design, one can see the first seeds of approaching Modernism, at a time when neither architects nor patrons were entirely sure what to make of these new architectural trends or whether or not to accept them. Edgell refers to the Nebraska State Capitol in 1926 as a "great monument of American modernism," but then goes on to say that "What the Nebraska State Capitol will mean for

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University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 9.

[78] Ibid., 10.

[79] Ibid., 13.

the future is pure guesswork. It may be an isolated phenomenon caused by the special interest of one man's genius, or it may break for all time the classic trend in similar state buildings."[80] In light of this uncertainty about Modernism, it is not surprising that both Goodhue and Preacher attempted to execute designs that blurred these stylistic distinctions, perhaps less out of their own hesitation than out of a desire to appease civic officials and popular opinion. According to *A Harmony of the Arts* (1990), the Nebraska State Capitol design reflects a conscious attempt by Goodhue to "develop a new architecture that might occupy ground between the dead historicism of the past and the unforgiving dominance of modernism," a description that could very well have been applied to Preacher's Atlanta City Hall.[81] As a result of the architects' attempts to straddle the stylistic fence, these transitional designs were both to become obsolete almost before they were completed, as architecture was to embrace Modernism following the arrival of the Depression.

Shortly after the Nebraska State Capitol Competition a similar competition produced the design for the equally significant Los Angeles City Hall, completed in 1927 by architects John C. Austin, Albert C. Martin, and John Parkinson (fig. 26). Adopting the tower form rising from the widened base of the Nebraska State Capitol and taking its cue from Goodhue's modernist interpretation of the Gothic, the Los Angeles City Hall abandons any attempt at ornament in favor of modernist minimalism. The dedication pamphlet printed in 1928 states that "The tower and flanking wings may be regarded as 'modern American,' influenced, in a measure, by the present day setback, or pyramidal, type of construction."[82] City officials recognized the powerful symbolism and

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[80] Edgell, *The American Architecture of Today*, 235.

[81] Luebke, *A Harmony of the Arts*, 31.

[82] George P. Hales, *Los Angeles City Hall* (Board of Public Works of the City of Los Angeles, California: 1928), 14-15.

commanding presence of the tower form, whose "great height, its long vertical lines, and its stepped roof, serves to produce a striking silhouette against the sky, and an impressive landmark of glistening whiteness when viewed from any point on the compass," in contrast to the sprawling Beaux Arts designs.[83] Atlantans in the 1920s thought of Los Angeles as a kind of kindred spirit to their own city in urban matters, and took notice when Los Angeles built itself a beautiful new modern city hall. The significance of the Los Angeles City Hall to the urban identity of its citizens was eloquently expressed in the concluding words of the dedication pamphlet:

> The three salient features of the building may be compared to the characteristics of the City for which it serves--the broad and solid base is typical of the City's firm foundation at the strategic point of the great Southwest; the flanking wings rising from the base typify its marvelous growth from the original pueblo; while the soaring lines of the tower symbolize the indomitable spirit of its citizens that made it possible. May it endure so future generations shall benefit from what their forefathers wrought.[84]

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[83] Ibid., 17.

[84] Ibid., 63.

III "IF NEW YORK HAS A SKYSCRAPER, SO MUST WE"

Atlanta City Hall as Commercial Skyscraper

Corporate Government

The prevailing national sentiment in the 1920s was that economic and population growth, as well as physical expansion were the mark of a healthy city, and, in fact, crucial to its survival. Throughout the first several decades of the twentieth century, national census records reveal a massive influx of people from rural areas into the city, with the result that by the year 1920, the majority of Americans were living in cities for the first time in American history.[85] Correspondingly, the city of Atlanta experienced an eighty per cent growth in population between the years 1900 and 1920, swelling to an all time high of 325,688.[86] As in other cities across the United States in the nineteen-teens and 'twenties, however, this unprecedented growth in Atlanta rendered existing public facilities and services wholly inadequate, resulting in a municipal government that was strained beyond capacity and could not accommodate the overwhelming needs of the city. In July of 1920, anxiety to this effect was expressed by one writer for the *Atlanta Constitution* who felt that "Atlanta is suffering, every day of its existence under present conditions, by reason of the inadequacy of its public municipal facilities."[87] The *Constitution* went on to conclude that with such uncontrolled rapid growth "there is the tendency to break into sections or classes, so that team work, denied team thinking as its

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[85] George E. Mowry and Blaine A. Brownell, *The Urban Nation, 1920-1980*, The Making of America, ed. David Herbert Donald (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 3.

[86] Blaine A. Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1975), 16.

[87] *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta), 4 July 1920.

logical predecessor, becomes ragged or impossible."[88] Failure to resolve these municipal inadequacies, it was feared, would eventually lead to an urban infrastructure crippled by decentralization and fragmentation, ultimately inhibiting the city's survival.[89]

In this context of rapid, seemingly uncontrollable growth, city leaders of the 1920s were faced with a difficult dilemma. Brownell explains that "the very growth and expansion that they [city leaders] promoted and welcomed was accompanied by troubling and unpredictable consequences which threatened to undermine their interests and the type of city which they believed essential for progress and continual growth."[90] In this atmosphere of civic disorder, city officials sought to foster a sense of cooperation and community spirit among citizens that would extend beyond the boundaries of a particular neighborhood or individual interest group, thereby unifying the citizenry behind a common identity and goal.[91] In Atlanta, the unifying cause was the improvement of the city, lead by the Chamber of Commerce, and the focal point of this unity and collective identity was the new City Hall building. The adoption of the fifteen story skyscraper tower form provided a highly visible and imposing symbol of the city, and reinforced the city's emphasis on centralized government and orderly growth.

The rise to power of the commercial-civic elite in the 1920s corresponds directly to changes in the American economy, described in *The Urban Nation 1920-1980* as "the rise of the new mass-production-consumption economy."[92] Following the First World War, the average American discovered that he could purchase mass produced goods at an

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[88] *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta), 31 December 1920.

[89] Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South,* 100.

[90] Ibid., 124.

[91] Ibid., 127.

[92] Mowry, *The Urban Nation,* 5.

affordable price resulting in a tremendous boom in the economy sparked by this increased demand. In response to this exploding market, corporations began to alter their business philosophies, presenting themselves as in essence public institutions generously providing needed services to the consumer in much the same way as the government provides for the American citizen.[93] With an almost socialist appeal, corporations such as The Woolworth Company preached a harmony of interests between management and the worker to achieve mutual satisfaction, with the public reaping the benefits of less expensive goods and services.[94]

Recognizing the overwhelming success of the corporate system in providing for the needs of the consumer, public leaders turned to the corporation as a model on which to base municipal government. As early as 1896, industrial pioneer John Patterson of Dayton, Ohio, made this analogy in his statement that "a city is a great business enterprise whose stockholders are the people."[95] Out of this sentiment came a reorganization of civic government in which corporate management skills were applied to urban problems, including the successful city-commission and city-manager forms, in which "The voters were seen as stockholders, and the commissioners as corresponding to the board of directors of 'an ordinary business corporation.'"[96] Furthermore, local governments responded to urban growth by becoming increasingly bureaucratic, creating new departments to meet the growing needs of the expanding city, hiring additional employees to fill these new positions. With civic governing increasing rapidly in size with the incessant urban population growth, city hall buildings such as the Old Federal Post Office

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[93] Ibid., 9.

[94] Ibid., 10.

[95] James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State: 1900-1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 93.

[96] Ibid., 96.

in Atlanta were no longer large enough able to house the municipal staff, prompting city leaders to push for the construction of new civic buildings. As a result, traditional conceptions of civic structures were widened to include the commercial tower, as in Oakland, Tampa, Los Angeles and Atlanta.

In Atlanta, the commercial-civic elite quickly adapted the corporate philosophy to their own municipal government, as indicated by the *Atlanta Constitution* in 1921 which described the city of Atlanta as "nothing other than a big corporation," adding that "its affairs must be managed by men who are acquainted with at least the rudimentary elements of business."[97] Atlanta never did adopt the city-commissioner or city-manager plans whose purpose was to "make government more businesslike and to attract businessmen to government," perhaps due to the fact that the Board of Alderman and the City Council were already dominated by members of Atlanta's business class including physicians, lawyers, real estate agents, and various merchants.[98] Atlanta did, however, select the quintessential American commercial icon of the skyscraper to represent its chief civic building as had progressive cities before them.

In March of 1928, Chamber of Commerce member J. Henson Tatum announced in *The City Builder* that "Another skyscraper will pierce Atlanta's sky line within the next eighteen months when the new city hall building is erected. The structure, of semi-Gothic set-back design, monumental and imposing, will tower fifteen stories above ground, and its walls will enclose twice as much floor area as the present city hall provides."[99] As suggested by Tatum, Preacher's City Hall of fifteen stories was a solution to the issue of physical space to accommodate an enlarged municipal staff, but also, as Robert Craig

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[97] Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South,* 141.

[98] Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State,* 97.

[99] J. Henson Tatum, "Atlanta's Magnificent New City Hall," *The City Builder Magazine*, March 1928, 3.

proposes, an indication of the increasingly bureaucratic nature of civic government.[100] Tatum went on to assure Atlantans who might have been uncomfortable with the adaptation of such an overtly commercial architectural form to their city hall that "According to the architects, monumental type of construction is distinctly American and has gained widely in favor in recent years, much modern construction in the large cities being of this type. Such design of structure lends itself to ample window spacing, it is stated, which is a decided advantage in a public building."[101]

The use of the skyscraper form for the Atlanta City Hall may be seen as an attempt to counteract contemporary anxiety about government corruption, a major issue in the nineteen-teens and 'twenties in Atlanta, as in many cities throughout the nation, by presenting the sleek, white soaring tower as the symbol of a morally sound municipal government. Contemporary sources indicate a serious concern among the citizens of Atlanta that crime and corruption among city officials was widespread and uncontrollable. In 1921, a grand jury investigation into a supposed crime racket involving Atlanta policemen prompted the *Atlanta Constitution* to remark that "Society has reached a point at which human life, to say nothing of property, is not even reasonably safe and secure."[102] Furthermore, the 1920s saw the rise of "keyhole" journalism which, much like the supermarket tabloids of today, made careers of digging up as much dirt and scandal on prominent individuals as possible, no doubt agitating existing anxieties on the part of Atlanta citizens.[103] The Atlanta City Hall Tower was an attempt to refute this perception

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[100] Robert M. Craig, *Atlanta Architecture: Art Deco to Modern Classic, 1929-1959* (Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, Inc., 1995), 43.

[101] Tatum, "Atlanta's Magnificent New City Hall," 3.

[102] *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta), 17 March 1921.

[103] Mowry, *The Urban Nation,* 19.

of municipal corruption by abandoning the neoclassical forms of the previous generations in favor of the architecture of corporate morality. "The American skyscraper," writes scholar R. W. Sexton in 1928, "stands as a noble expression of the high standards and ideals of modern American business. Strength, honesty, and sincerity are features of its design as they are characteristic of commercial enterprise."[104]

In addition to these moral qualities, the concept of efficiency was deemed especially important in both corporate and civic management as "Individual efficiency is the foundation of all constructive effort and when merged with mass-efficiency, whether it be a corporation or a community, the sum total of the result is reflected in achievement. The close kinship between efficiency and cooperation thus manifests itself."[105] Atlanta's own concerns about municipal inefficiency led the city to consolidate many of its departmental divisions in 1922.[106] In a decade when government inefficiency and corruption were rampant, the skyscraper seemed to many to be a statement of the high principles of the organization housed within, as expressed by one Birmingham author in 1926, "God may our souls bloom sweeter too / Climb high into the clearer air / Cast out the drab, enthrone the fair."[107]

Atlanta Skyscrapers

Although Atlanta already boasted a healthy downtown business district in the 1920s featuring several of the South's tallest and most well known commercial buildings, it was clear to the commercial-civic elite, and to G. Lloyd Preacher, that the skyscrapers

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[104] Kenneth Turney Gibbs, *Business Architectural Imagery in America, 1870-1930* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984), 1.

[105] Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South,* 141.

[106] Ibid., 16.

[107] Ibid., 129.

of the Atlanta skyline were of the past generation, and that for the new city hall Preacher would have to look elsewhere for suitable models. Since the turn of the century, major commercial buildings in the city of Atlanta rose anywhere from ten to eighteen stories, with the rectangular or triangular block massing articulated in the familiar early commercial formula of a pronounced base of one to three stories, a rising shaft of little distinction, and a crown of one or two stories punctuated with a heavy classical cornice. Considered Atlanta's first true skyscraper, the Equitable Building, was one such building. Located on an irregularly shaped lot at the juncture of Pryor and Edgewood Streets, the Equitable Building was built by Burnham and Root in 1892 and rose eight stories (fig. 27). Five years later, Atlanta acquired the eleven story Flatiron, or English-American Building, designed by New York architect Bradford Gilbert (fig. 28). These highly visible early skyscrapers established the precedent in Atlanta for the commissioning of architects from outside the South for major commercial structures, and indicates the city's deference towards New York and Chicago in matters of skyscraper architecture.

With the Grant-Prudential Building of 1898, the basic aesthetic for commercial buildings would move away from the highly sculptural, polychromed surfaces of the Victorian period towards a more functional, Sullivanesque approach (fig. 29). The ten story Grant-Prudential Building, designed by Atlanta firm Bruce and Dillon, clearly reflects its steel cage construction of the building in its vertical piers and horizontal bands of window spaces, and exhibits the influence of the Chicago School in the articulation of the facades of the building with a pronounced, rusticated base and crown capped by a wide overhanging cornice.[108] Throughout the next three decades, construction in Atlanta's rapidly growing business district would produce several dozen skyscrapers, many of which would far surpass the Grant-Prudential Building both in height and

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[108] Atlanta Urban Design Commission, *Atlanta Historic Resources Workbook* (Atlanta: Atlanta Urban Design Commission, 1981), 159.

ambition, but nearly all would retain this basic aesthetic of base, shaft, and capital, until the construction of Preacher's Atlanta City Hall.

In 1906, Coca-Cola magnate Asa G. Candler commissioned the construction of what was to become one of Atlanta's most well-known landmarks, the seventeen story Candler Building, designed by George Murphy and George Stewart (fig. 30). The tallest building in Atlanta when built, the Candler building was so successful that its form would be closely followed in both the eighteen story Third National Bank Building of 1911, designed by Morgan and Dillon with W. T. Downing, and the seventeen story Hurt Building of 1913, designed by New York architect J. E. R. Carpenter (fig. 31). Not completed until 1924, the Hurt Building was to be described by Fred Shaefer in the March 1926 edition of *The City Builder* as "the largest office building South of New York City...ranked fifteenth largest in the United States." The Healey Building of 1913, designed by Morgan and Dillon with W. T. Downing, departed from Atlanta's previous commercial buildings in its adoption of the Gothic language as opposed to the more popular neoclassical style of such major projects as the Candler and Hurt Buildings, but otherwise adhered to the formal three-part facade articulation of its predecessors (fig. 32).

Cut short by the arrival of the First World War in 1914, major construction on Atlanta's business district resumed in the early with the twelve story 101 Marietta Street Building, built in 1924 by Burge and Stevens (fig. 36-37), and New York architect Leonard Shultze's twelve story Biltmore Hotel (fig. 38). The monstrous Biltmore Hotel, according to *The American Architect*, was felt to illustrate "a type of architecture characteristic of the feeling and traditions of the South," in its use of the traditional neoclassical language and ample space, and indeed, most of Atlanta's hotels, as well as the majority of its commercial office buildings, adopted the neoclassical style and the three-part elevation indicating a general consensus of appropriateness among architects

and patrons.[109] Preacher was himself a major figure in Atlanta's commercial building campaign of the 1920s, designing among others the twelve story Wynne-Claughton, or Carnegie, Building of 1926 (fig. 39), and the twelve story Medical Arts Building of 1927, both of which illustrate Preacher's preference for the three-part elevation, with a shaft of brick and the pronounced base and capital of limestone with neoclassical detailing, in keeping with Atlanta commercial architecture (fig. 8). This formula for the articulation of the tall building reoccurs again and again in Preacher's designs, changing very little from the execution of Preacher's first major commercial commission of the ten story Augusta Chronicle Building of 1912 erected in Augusta, Georgia, to the Medical Arts Building in Atlanta, built on the eve of Preacher's selection as the architect of the new city hall.

The aesthetic repetition and stagnation evident from Atlanta's commercial architecture throughout the first quarter of the 20th century did not go uncriticised. Atlantans were well aware of the fundamental differences between the architecture of their own downtown and those of cities such as New York, Chicago, St. Louis and Detroit, which had largely abandoned the unimaginative forms of the Chicago School of commercial architecture following the completion of Cass Gilbert's innovative Woolworth Building of 1913 (fig. 40-42). Throughout the 1920s, it was exactly those conservative forms that Atlanta continued to incorporate in their commercial structures that were being targeted nationally among architectural circles in the wake of Saarinen's Chicago Tribune entry (fig. 43) as outdated and old fashioned. Edgell writes that "One thing is for certain, we shall never go back to the first type of skyscrapers, box-like structures, built like expandable bookcases on end, unit placed upon unit, until the desired height is reached. And we may expect, as well as devoutly trust, that the enormous and illogical cornices which were felt necessary as crowning features to our early tall

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[109] American Institute of Architects, Atlanta Chapter, *The American Institute of Architects Guide to Atlanta* (Atlanta: Atlanta Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 1975).

buildings have disappeared for all time."[110] Edgell went on to explain that "To the modernist the conservative is an unimaginative beast in a treadmill, monotonously turning over lifeless repetitions of the masterpieces of the past."[111] The November 1927 cover of *The City Builder* (frontispiece) demonstrates the desire on the part of Atlanta city leaders for Atlanta architecture to move away from the "squatty structures reminiscent of another and earlier life in the time of the community" towards the minimalist set back towers of the future metropolis that architectural scholars such as Edgell and Tallmadge preached, and national architects such as Raymond Hood practiced.[112]

Among Southern architects, the issue of embracing modern trends in architecture was present throughout the late 1920s, as indicated by an article from the January 1930 issue of *The Southern Architect and Building News* entitled "are we going Modern?" Although published almost a year after the completion of Preacher's Atlanta City Hall, it is clear that the South is still undecided on whether or not to incorporate what they viewed as predominantly northeastern architectural forms into their own buildings. The author of the article admits that "The old idea of heavy masonry walls and overhanging cornices, ornamental frieze and the like, so much used in the past, does seem absurd," but is not willing to abandon traditional forms and language.[113] An issue of the same magazine published in November of that year is devoted almost entirely to an examination of the most current in Southern skyscraper design, featuring dozens of architect's drawings and photographs, of which the author states almost with disgust that

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[110] G. H. Edgell, *The American Architecture of Today* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), 76.

[111] Ibid., 83.

[112] *Birmingham Age Herald* (Birmingham, Alabama), 31 March 1926.

[113] Ernest Ray Denmark, "are we going Modern?," *The Southern Architect and Building News*, January 1930, 49.

"I do not believe more than a casual glance over the photographs to appear in this issue of *The Southern Architect*...is necessary to come to a fairly definite conclusion that there is considerable room for improvement in the design of office buildings in the South."[114] G. Lloyd Preacher himself expresses his own dissatisfaction with the commercial architecture of Atlanta's business district in a 1926 article from *The City Builder*, but adds that "the architecture of our city is certain to improve and to become of more interest to strangers within our gates - who we hope can give our downtown buildings the same credit and applause he now gives our residences."[115]

Modern Design Elements as Atlanta City Hall

Two years later, Preacher had the opportunity to be personally instrumental in the transformation of downtown Atlanta into the modern metropolis that the commercial-civic elite had envisioned in *The City Builder* cover image with the new city hall commission. Faced with this momentous task of creating a building that would accommodate the civic needs of a growing city as well as serve as a modern architectural model for future commercial buildings, Preacher quite naturally turned to New York City for inspiration. Elegantly described by Fiske Kimball as "the magic mountain of steel and stone, shining and glorious, as one of the crowns of human endeavor," New York City was widely recognized throughout the Southern region as the cultural center of the United States.[116] In response to Southern fascination with New York, the Nashville *Tennessean* commented that "If New York has a skyscraper, so must we; if Manhattan boasts of

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[114] *The Southern Architect and Building News*, November 1930, 13.

[115] G. Lloyd Preacher, "Architectural Atlanta," *The City Builder*, April 1926, 46.

[116] Fiske Kimball, *American Architecture* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1928), 224.

something which is necessary to her economic life, we immediately pounce upon it, though there is no justification for it."[117] Similarly, the *Atlanta Constitution* published a long running column entitled "Bits of New York Life" throughout the twenties, showcasing the cosmopolitan events and glamorous lifestyles of New York's finest and wealthiest.

Architecturally, New York City boasted the largest, most impressive and most numerous skyscrapers in the world, "in the most up-to-date design."[118] Atlanta, the "New York of the South," expressed its cosmopolitan ambition with the commissioning of New York architects, such as W. L. Stoddard, for major Atlanta buildings throughout the early twentieth century. G. Lloyd Preacher had a long-term association with Stoddard, with whom he collaborated for the design of the Augusta Chronicle Building, and the sixteen story Southern Finance Building in Augusta, Georgia (fig. 44). Built in 1913, the Southern Finance Building consisted of a sixteen-story tower rising from a widened base of twelve stories, foreshadowing the set back of the Atlanta City Hall some thirteen years later. Preacher again joined efforts with a New York firm in 1930 in the design of the unexecuted Dinkler Hotel in Atlanta, which, like the Atlanta City Hall, exhibited modern tendencies in the final drawings (fig. 45). Furthermore, in the deliberations for the new Atlanta City Hall, the City Council hired well-known Columbia architect William A. Boring as a consultant. In his design for the Atlanta City Hall, Preacher consciously incorporates several formal elements of the New York skyscraper including the set back form, the use of the Gothic, and minimalist, abstracted detailing, all in an attempt to stimulate the adoption of the cosmopolitan forms in the city of Atlanta and throughout the South.

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[117] Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South,* 94.

[118] Edgell, *The American Architecture of Today*, 363.

By the 1920s, the set back massing of the New York City skyscraper, first incorporated in compliance with the 1916 zoning laws, had become the latest architectural aesthetic, and had a profound effect of Preacher's design for the Atlanta City Hall. The Atlanta City Hall was the first true set back building in the Southeast, and the use of the set back further indicates Preacher's desire to create a building for Atlanta that would serve as a model of the modern skyscraper in the South. Tallmadge credits the genius of Saarinen's visionary Chicago Tribune design (fig. 43) to the skillful way in which he handles the set back such that "the expression of upward growth against a composition of rectangular masses" gives a "pyramidal effect to the building, and allow[s] the greatest subtlety in the arrangement of the masses."[119] He goes on to say that "these colossal structures with their new silhouettes, are certainly one of the most original phases of recent work."[120]

Despite nation-wide praise of the set back skyscraper, however, there was some initial resistance to the form among Southern architects as perhaps an inappropriate or unnecessary element within the context of the Southern city. The *Southern Architect and Building News*, while publishing a great deal on the modern skyscraper, did not completely support the idea that the form could, or should, be transplanted into the Southern city without at least some modifications, advising architects to "look at this movement with open minds to see first if it can be adapted in the South to our best interest."[121] Many architects and critics felt that the adoption of the set back form in Southern architecture was a false representation of the building structure, since conditions not present in the Southern city, namely extreme crowding and light depletion, had forced

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[119] Thomas E. Tallmadge, *The Story of Architecture in America* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1927), 294.

[120] Ibid., 36.

[121] Denmark, "are we going Modern?," 49.

its use in New York City. Blessed with an abundance of space, it was argued, the Southern architect should design without the unnecessary set back, so as to "retain such dignity and spaciousness of horizontal dimensions in architectural form as to maintain something of the amplitude and broad hospitality of the Southern tradition."[122]

Preacher's interest in the application of the set back massing is evident as early as the Southern Finance Building of 1913 (fig. 44), but is not taken up again until his designs for the Atlanta City Hall. Preacher writes of the set back form that "The set back type building meets the growing needs of a city in that it allows better and greater ventilation facilities. These new types of buildings will be as equally tall as others built in recent years, but the effect will be different from that of the well known straight up and down skyscrapers."[123] In the earliest design for the Atlanta City Hall, the setbacks are greatly emphasized, creating an effect much like a ziggurat pyramid, indicating Preacher's desire to incorporate the set back in its true sense (fig. 46). In the design as executed, however, the set back is less pronounced, most likely due to the practical necessity to maximize office space in the tower (fig. 3). The sides of the building retain their set back form, but the two main facades of the building are contained entirely on a single plane. Through this technique, Preacher has skillfully designed the facade to appear from the street as if it were set back at the twelfth and fourteenth story in the articulation of the single exterior bays of the thirteenth and fourteenth floor, producing the overall effect of the set back in a building of much smaller scale than its New York counterparts. This skillful adaptation of the set back bears a close formal relationship to Raymond Hood's American Radiator Building of 1923 (fig. 47-48)

In his short biography of G. Lloyd Preacher, Charles Lowe describes the years

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[122] Ibid.

[123] Adams, "G. Lloyd Preacher, Southern Architect: A Study of His Career," 107.

between 1882 and 1929 as the "era of the Superlative, when the best, biggest, fastest, and most powerful in any field of activity stood both as an encouragement and as a challenge to ambition."[124] It is no coincidence that these years mark the introduction and rise to prominence of the skyscraper in America, which perfectly embodies this quest for the "best, biggest, fastest" in its incessant determination to thrust higher and higher into the sky, like a modern day Tower of Babel. The skyscraper is by definition an exercise in height and verticality, dominating the skyline and thought of modern urban America in much the same way as the Gothic cathedral in a medieval town. Although verticality had always been the central theme in the skyscraper, the designs of the 1920s marked a period of innovation in skyscraper construction where verticality was expressed not only in the sheer height of the building, but in the formal articulation and aesthetic treatment of the building through clean, uninterrupted vertical lines, most typically represented in Saarinen's Chicago Tribune entry of 1922 (fig. 43). Louis Sullivan expressed what he felt to be the essence of the skyscraper in the following quote: "It must be tall, every inch of it tall...It must be every inch a proud and soaring thing, rising in sheer exhaultation that from bottom to top it is a unit without dissenting line."[125] Fiske Kimball quoted extensively from Sullivan in his *American Architecture* (1928), published with a diagrammatic image of the skyscraper on the title page which represents well this philosophy of verticality (fig.49).

This modern architectural trend was widely acknowledged in Southern architectural circles, although the extant examples of this aesthetic of design are fewer than in the major cities of the North and Mid-west. Atlanta's own Frank P. Smith of the well known firm of Pringle and Smith wrote in 1928 that the "pronounced vertical lines

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[124] Charles Lowe, "Biography of G. Lloyd Preacher," *Augusta Magazine*, Fall 1981, 16.

[125] Kimball, *American Architecture*, 157.

from the base to the top...of such monuments as the Chicago Tribune building are one of the most characteristic features of modern architecture in America."[126] Preacher used his Atlanta City Hall design as a powerful opportunity to see this philosophy of verticality realized through the combination of pronounced vertical members and the use of the Gothic detailing (fig. 50).

The constant quest for maximum height was frequently associated with speed, as represented in an advertisement for buff terra-cotta cladding published in *The Southern Architect and Building News*, contrasting the new skyscraper of the 1920s with the old commercial buildings of the past (fig. 51).[127] The old block building is shown in the background, heavy, bulky, and awkward with a clumsy tug boat behind, lazily churning along, belching filthy smoke into the air. In the foreground is the new, sleek, modern skyscraper rising to the sky, whose vertical lines are likened to the horizontal lines of the swiftly sailing oceanliner. The elevator was the ultimate symbol of this union between the soaring height of the skyscraper and the speed of modern transportation, as it was the elevator, in conjunction with steel, which made the idealism of the towering skyscraper a practical reality. One author in *The Southern Architect and Building News* describes the elevator not as a functional necessity, but as a modern wonder: "we are impressed with the speed at which we move, with the absolute perfection of the mechanical powers of the modern elevator and smoothness of the ascending journey."[128] Otis elevator company, the most successful elevator company of the early 20th century, logically used the aesthetic of verticality that was being explored in architecture to sell their product, as shown in one

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[126] Frank P. Smith, "Modern Architecture in America," *The City Builder*, February 1928, 10.

[127] "Why 'Camouflage' Your Building?" *The Southern Architect and Building News*, November 1928, 12.

[128] "Office Building Design," *The Southern Architect and Building News*, November 1930, 16.

contemporary advertisement which presents the modern skyscraper as a series of parallel vertical lines, suggesting the speed and height achieved by the Otis elevator (fig. 52).[129] The prominence given to the elevator at Atlanta City Hall clearly demonstrates its importance to the building as a skyscraper. This point is even more significant when considering the traditional civic building, in which a dramatic entrance hall invariably leads to a grand central staircase, with elevators stashed off to the sides. Preacher's City Hall abandoned this civic architectural convention in favor of the commercial skyscraper lobby in which the elevator is presented as the *raison d'etre* not only for the lobby, but for the entire building.

The Gothic Skyscraper

Preacher's attempts to incorporate cosmopolitan architectural elements at Atlanta City Hall is also reflected in his choice of Gothic detailing, a stylistic language considered most appropriate to the American skyscraper in the nineteen twenties. The exterior Gothic detailing at City Hall consists of several abstracted "Gothic" decorative elements, repeated throughout the articulation of the building's elevation (fig. 50). Perhaps the most widespread is the use of Flamboyant terra cotta Gothic tracery, which can be seen in the panels between the windows, the parapets at the top stories of the tower and flanking wings, and in the cornice above the doorways of the main entrance (fig.11). The terra-cotta window panels of the third and twelfth stories display the proud seal of the City of Atlanta, with the mythical phoenix rising from the ashes emblazoned upon buff colored terra-cotta shields. It is perhaps no coincidence that Preacher chooses Flamboyant Gothic tracery, *flamboyant* from the French for *flames*, to grace the facade of the seat of municipal government of that city which identified so closely with fire, both in

[129] "Vertical Transportation for Office Buildings," *The Southern Architect and Building News*, January 1930, 10.

Sherman's burning of Atlanta in 1864 and in the disastrous fire of 1916.

Tabernacle-like hoods punctuate the windows of the eleventh and twelfth story, serving as a horizontal break to the rising piers of the tower. Gothic pointed lancet arches are found in the windows and doors of the grand entranceway (fig. 54), heightening the allusion to the triple portals of a medieval church west end (fig. 53). The Gothic trefoil graces the fourth story corbelling of the central tower, and hangs in stalactite drops from the arches over each main portal, together serving to emphasize the elaborate entranceway as the focus of the elevation (fig. 55). The use of corbelling, both simple and more elaborate, is found at the fourth story, the fourteenth story set back, and the fifteenth story, appropriately signaling the termination of the elevation of the building at those levels. Furthermore, the strong verticality of the central tower, with the two structural terra-cotta clad steel piers dominating the elevation, and the secondary, more slender piers in between, recalls the nave of a Gothic masterpiece, a comparison strengthened by the respond-like forms of the four main piers of the entranceway (fig. 53).

The use of the Gothic is extended to the hardware and fixtures of the building, as well as throughout the primary interior spaces of the lobbies, central staircases and hallways, and the council chamber. The brass lampposts and attached lamps along the exterior of the building adopt the Gothic explicitly in the brass finials, trefoils, and lancet forms (fig. 56). The central first floor lobby, clad in travertine and Georgia marble and finished in birch veneer, gold gilding, and brass, exhibit Gothic detailing in carved wooden and gilt capitals of the structural piers, the carefully carved balusters of the main marble staircases, and in the brass light fixtures (fig. 57-59). Most striking, however, is the elaborate brass elevator casing which immediately catches the eye upon entrance into the lobby (fig. 60). Each elevator door is surmounted by an ogee arch capped with crockets and delicate finials, with Flamboyant tracery in the tympanum between underneath, and a rounded brass arcade flanking the arch (fig. 61). A square hallway,

accessible through heavily Gothicized glass doors on both sides of the elevators, runs the circumference of the first floor, originally housing those offices most directly associated with the public (fig. 62). The hallway is finished in marble, with brass doors pierced with tudor arched windows and strips of floral motifs which resemble the quatrefoil piercing of a Gothic arcade (fig. 63-64).

At the second floor level, the lobby is less elaborate, with the elevator doors again dominating (fig. 65). The council chamber takes on the formal characteristics of a medieval hall, with a ceiling of exposed wooden beams, elegantly painted in various bright colors (fig. 66). Although the roof is supported structurally with steel beams, the wooden ceiling is articulated as if actually serving as the supporting structural system, with wooden arches springing from stone corbels, the weight of which is grounded through the stone piers and responds (fig. 67). The Gothic theme is extended to include even the hardware, such as one second story doorknob which features a brass image of the Preacher's City Hall with the city seal (fig. 68).

From its formative beginnings, the skyscraper had long been associated with the Gothic cathedral, due to their perceived similarities of construction and pronounced vertical emphasis. In his *The American Architecture of Today*, published in 1928, G. H. Edgell explained the relationship between the Gothic and skyscraper design:

> There is, indeed, a close analogy between Gothic and steel. The Gothic system is a skeleton of masonry, the modern designer attains much the same expression in steel. The constant ideal of the Gothic designer was to push his building higher and higher to the limit of financial resources and structural safety. The designer of the skyscraper does much the same. In short, the Gothic ideal and even the Gothic vocabulary is well adapted to steel construction and has been proven so in a number of great monuments.[130]

[130] Edgell, *The American Architecture of Today*, 73.

Because of these formal similarities, the Gothic language was adapted to the American skyscraper from its earliest beginnings as a solution to the age-old question of style.

To be sure, no monument illustrated this so well as Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building of 1913 (fig. 40-42). Enormously influential in the field of commercial architecture, the Woolworth Building was widely accepted as the model Gothic skyscraper. Gilbert's design for the Woolworth Building would resonate in such important later skyscrapers as Raymond Hood's Chicago Tribune Building of 1923, Charles Klauder's "Tower of Learning" of 1926, and Bertram Goodhue's Nebraska State Capitol of 1922-1932, all of which were featured in the October 1925 issue of *The City Builder*, the monthly publication of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, along with a small drawing of a medieval castle with several projecting towers (fig. 69).[131] Preacher's Atlanta City Hall pays homage to the Woolworth Building in the adoption of this dominant tower form rising from a widened base, as well as in the use of buff terra-cotta cladding, periodic horizontal bands of Gothic detailing to divide the facade into base, shaft, and crown, and the rhythm of strong and weak vertical piers (fig. 50). Most striking, however, are the similarities between the two buildings in the particular application of Gothic detailing. The terra cotta panels separating the windows of the Woolworth Building show Gothic tracery similar to that of the Atlanta City Hall, as does the detailing of the Gothic string courses and tabernacle hoods of both buildings. Raymond Hood's Chicago Tribune Building, described by Edgell as "one of the most beautiful buildings in America" also served as a source of Gothic inspiration for Preacher's City Hall as evident in the massing and articulation of the central shaft as well as in the Flamboyant Gothic tracery repeated throughout the exterior of the building (fig.

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[131] *The City Builder*, October 1925, 14.

70-71).[132]

Within the city of Atlanta, few examples could be found of the Gothic skyscraper. The Marietta Street Building, a substantial office building of 12 stories, built by Burge and Stevens in 1923, made use of a limited amount of Gothic detailing on the exterior, primarily concentrated around the entrance and the cornice of the building (fig. 36). The building did, however, extend the Gothic theme to the interior of the building in the use of austere stone tudor archways and wooden arcading (fig. 37). In 1925, a new Chamber of Commerce building of 12 stories was proposed by Pringle and Smith employing the Gothic language on the exterior, again primarily at the top floor, in the form of terra-cotta arcading and four false gables decorated with cusps and finials (fig. 72). Although this proposal was not carried through, it does indicate an attempted application of the Gothic to a civic building before Preacher's City Hall. The selection of the Gothic for the Chamber of Commerce, the civic organization most intimately connected with the business and commerce in the city of Atlanta, appears to indicate an accepted association between the Gothic and the commercial building.

The most significant local precedent to Preacher's City Hall is the Healey Building, the home of the Preacher and Company offices during the designing of the Atlanta City Hall (fig. 32). Built in 1913 by Atlanta architects Morgan and Dillon in conjunction with New York architect W. L. Stoddard with whom Preacher had a long standing association, the Healey Building rises sixteen stories, and was one of the tallest and most prominent buildings in Atlanta in the 1920s. Constructed, like City Hall, of steel clad in buff terra-cotta, the Healey Building employed the Gothic extensively on both the exterior and the interior of the building in strikingly elegant and dramatic detail. Essentially a typical and unimaginative commercial building in elevation rising from an

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[132] Edgell, *The American Architecture of Today*, 366.

expanded two story base, the Healey Building is distinguished by the unique use of colossal tudor arches framed by clusters of slender, respond-like colonnettes (fig. 33). The cornice is articulated with English fan vaulting springing from slender engaged columns that rise uninterrupted the full height of the building, and terra-cotta tracery caps the windows at the top story (fig. 34). The lobby of the Healey Building is nothing short of spectacular, with a single story hallway leading from each of the four surrounding streets to a central two story domed octagonal atrium with a glazed oculus at the center of the dome, and a clerestory level flooding the space with natural light (fig. 35). The space is lavished with Gothic details, consisting primarily of tudor arched doorways, terra-cotta arcading along the walls, and slender colonnettes rising to support the elaborately ribbed dome. Preacher, who spent every day in the building, was enchanted with the bewildering swirl of Gothic detailing, stating that the "Healey Building, an example of business Gothic, is architecturally beautiful. The modern requirements of height, light, and economically compact spacing are admirably combined with the grace and symmetry of this medieval design."[133] Preacher's only complaint was its location, which prohibited the beauty of the Healey from being clearly viewed. "Were it possible to secure a more adequate vista of the building as a whole," Preacher wrote, "it would be even more impressive."[134] Preacher was no doubt pleased several years later that his own Gothic skyscraper would have ample clear space around it, providing a dramatic view of the Atlanta City Hall from almost all points within the city.

Another Gothic building influential to Preacher's Atlanta City Hall was Trinity Methodist Church, built by New York architect W. T. Downing in 1911 on the lot directly southeast of City Hall (fig. 73). The similarities between the massing of the

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[133] Preacher, "Architectural Atlanta," 44.

[134] Ibid.

church bell tower and the massing of City Hall, both northeast oriented, is quite remarkable (fig. 74). The set back of both towers, and the articulation of their elevations into three sections through the placement of two secondary vertical piers, indicate that Preacher was acutely aware of buildings surrounding City Hall, and that he sought to embrace the existing Trinity Methodist Church by taking the church tower as a point of departure for his own City Hall Tower (fig. 75-76). In the City Hall Tower, Preacher embraced the Gothic church, privileging the structure rather than obscuring it in the shadows of his greater and more prominent building. Furthermore, the Gothic detailing at Trinity Methodist may have provided Preacher with another model for City Hall, as suggested by the lancet arcading and tracery surrounding the church doorways.

Though Preacher's use of the Gothic language at City Hall is very literal in some cases, such as in the exterior trefoil tracery and brass elevator details, much of the Gothic bears a noticeable tendency towards abstraction, placing Preacher's Atlanta City Hall within a transitional phase in Atlanta architecture, poised between the archaeological detail of the Healey Building and the minimalist art deco of the Southern Bell Building of Mayre, Alger, and Vinour (fig. 77). By the early twenties, architectural commentaries reveal a general turning away from the literal historicist decoration of the Woolworth Building and Hood's Chicago Tribune as too restrictive, favoring instead the abstracted Gothic forms of Saarinen's Tribune entry and Hood's Radiator Building.

This trend towards minimalist, non-literal detail is seen both in the Nebraska State Capitol and the Los Angeles City Hall. Beertram Goodhue was reportedly pleased with the lack of stylistic restrictions in the Nebraska State Capitol Competition of 1922, stating afterwards: "Never, in any competition, have I been set free as in this one."[135] Edgell summarizes this modern architectural aesthetic in his analysis of the Nebraska State

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[135] "The Nebraska State Capitol," *American Architect* 145 (October 1934), 7.

Capitol, which he praises for "Eschewing the classic vocabulary, using forms that were new without fearing an occasional reference to forms that were old, alive to the suggestions in design brought about by the use of steel and the tremendous verticality of much American commercial work."[136] Similarly, of the design for the Los Angeles City Hall, the 1928 commemorative pamphlet states that "the architects determined not to confine themselves to any particular style of architecture in the design of the building, and the completed structure shows that such determination was carried into effect."[137] Fiske Kimball, as well, speaks to the stylistic issue in his discussion of the New York Telephone Building of 1926 (fig. 78), of which he states "Trivial reminiscences of the Gothic have fallen away; puerile suggestions of historic style no longer mar the interior."[138] "It is in these buildings," Kimball concluded, "that we see the larger unity of American modernism, toward the poles of which--functional expressiveness and abstract form--its masters have variously striven."[139] These architectural trends filtered down South fairly quickly, as expressed in an article from *The Southern Architect and Building News* from 1930 which instructed Southern architects to recognize that "In the simple, truthful expression of the steel shaft and the possibilities for interesting masses lies that path toward which every designer should look with renewed interest," although the author was not ready to completely dismiss historicism, going on the say that "There is still an opportunity to effectively use the basic elements of our traditional styles, and I am not yet convinced that the most refined bits of ornament of the old order cannot be used."[140]

Clearly it was this latter, more conservative approach to the modern architectural

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[136] Edgell, *The American Architecture of Today*, 231.

[137] Hales, George P., *Los Angeles City Hall* (Los Angeles: Board of Public Works, 1928), 14.

[138] Kimball, *American Architecture*, 216.

[139] Ibid.

aesthetic that Preacher chose to adopt in his design for the Atlanta City Hall, preserving some "archaeological" Gothic detail, while experimenting with the abstracted forms of the art deco interpretation of the Gothic as expressed at the Nebraska State Capitol. It is interesting to note that Preacher's first design for the Atlanta City Hall implies a much more literal application of the Gothic, as well as a much more pronounced, ziggurat-like set back in the upper stories of the building (fig. 46). Preacher's City Hall design as executed strips away most of this "garish" detail in favor of a few carefully selected repeating elements. Preacher's abstracted Gothic details, such as the stepped, compound massing of the four entrance piers, the tapered corbeling of the fourth story cornice, and the rocket-like base of the brass lampposts flanking the entranceway reveal striking, undeniable parallels to the massing studies in Hugh Ferriss' revolutionary *Metropolis of Tomorrow* published in the year Preacher was selected as the architect of the new City Hall (fig. 79-82). These similarities clearly indicate an attempt on the part of Preacher to incorporate the most recent architectural trends into his progressive design. Preacher's abstracted forms also bear close affinities, as well, with those of Hood's Radiator Building in the massing of the piers (fig. 48).

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[140] "Office Building Design," 16.

CONCLUSION

When the City Hall opened its doors after only eleven months of construction, *The City Builder* magazine praised Preacher's design as "too magnificent to be called a city hall...It is a beautiful building, well worthy of the city which it officially represents...it is an edifice of which Atlanta may be proud."[141] Atlantans praised it as "one of the finest municipal buildings in the country," and shortly after the opening day, city officials decided to hold an open house to show off the "most beautiful and modern city hall building in the entire South."[142] Despite local and regional acclaim, the Atlanta City Hall did not trigger the architectural reform which Preacher and city leaders had intended, and *The City Builder* vision of an Atlanta skyline composed of set back skyscrapers was never realized due to the arrival of the Great Depression. When the city finally climbed out of the recesses of the Depression, flamboyant, luxurious architectural expressions such as Preacher's City Hall were viewed as inappropriate and wasteful for a civic building. Preacher's City Hall, which experimented with cosmopolitan, modern elements unfamiliar to the Southeastern region, is now somewhat of an architectural anomaly, poised somewhere between the conservative commercial styles of 1920s Atlanta and the progressive aesthetics of the Northeastern metropolis.

The transitional and paradoxical nature of the Atlanta City Hall, however, is a direct reflection of the era in which the building was designed, and is perhaps a more pure expression of an historical moment than anything else that has been built in the city

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[141] The City Builder Extension Bureau, "Our New Municipal Building", *The City Builder*, March 1930, p. 18.

[142] Julian Wade Adams, "G. Lloyd Preacher, Southern Architect: A Study of His Career" (MA thesis, Augusta College, 1987), 89; *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta), 23 February 1930.

before or since. Brownell writes of this era in Atlanta that the commercial-civic elite were "anxious to reconcile growth with order, diversity with unity, and change with stability - to guide their cities into a metropolitan world while retaining control of that world - through notions of *local* patriotism, civic consensus, and a corporate urban community."[143] The Atlanta City Hall is the architectural manifestation of these conflicting goals as envisioned by those businessmen and politicians who, in the decade before the Great Depression, had virtual autonomy in which to carry out their progressive agenda of civic pride and economic growth.

G. Lloyd Preacher, reputed architect of over 400 buildings throughout the Southeast, died in 1972 at 80 years of age, and he has since taken a back seat in architectural history to such local architects as A. Ten Eyck Brown, Marye, Alger, and Vinour, and Pringle and Smith. Records of G. Lloyd Preacher and his successful firm are scarce, and the city of Atlanta seems to have forgotten the man who played such an important role in the building of the New South, and the city of Atlanta. The Atlanta City Hall, however, is an undeniable testament to its creator, who used his the technical skill and creative genius to realize the finest architectural expression of the era. Recently restored as a part of the new City Hall building addition, Preacher's Atlanta City Hall now stands as a unique and impressive monument to the prosperity, progressiveness, and positivism of 1920s Atlanta (fig. 83).

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[143] Blaine A. Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 126.

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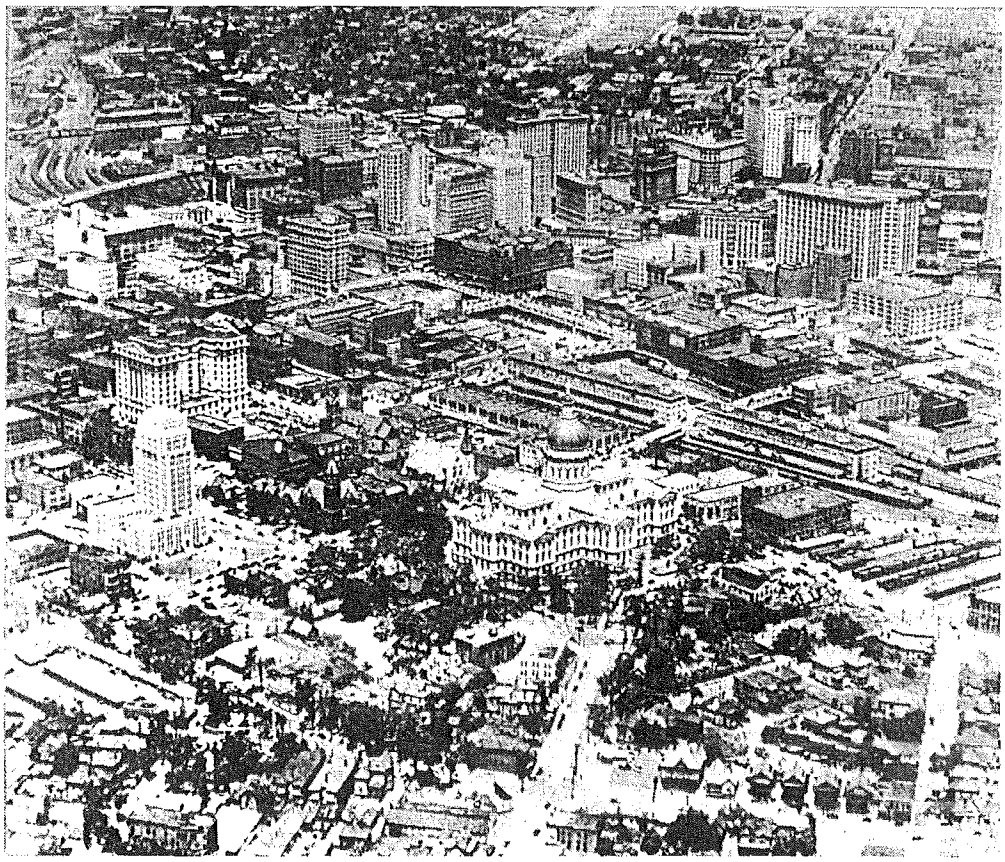
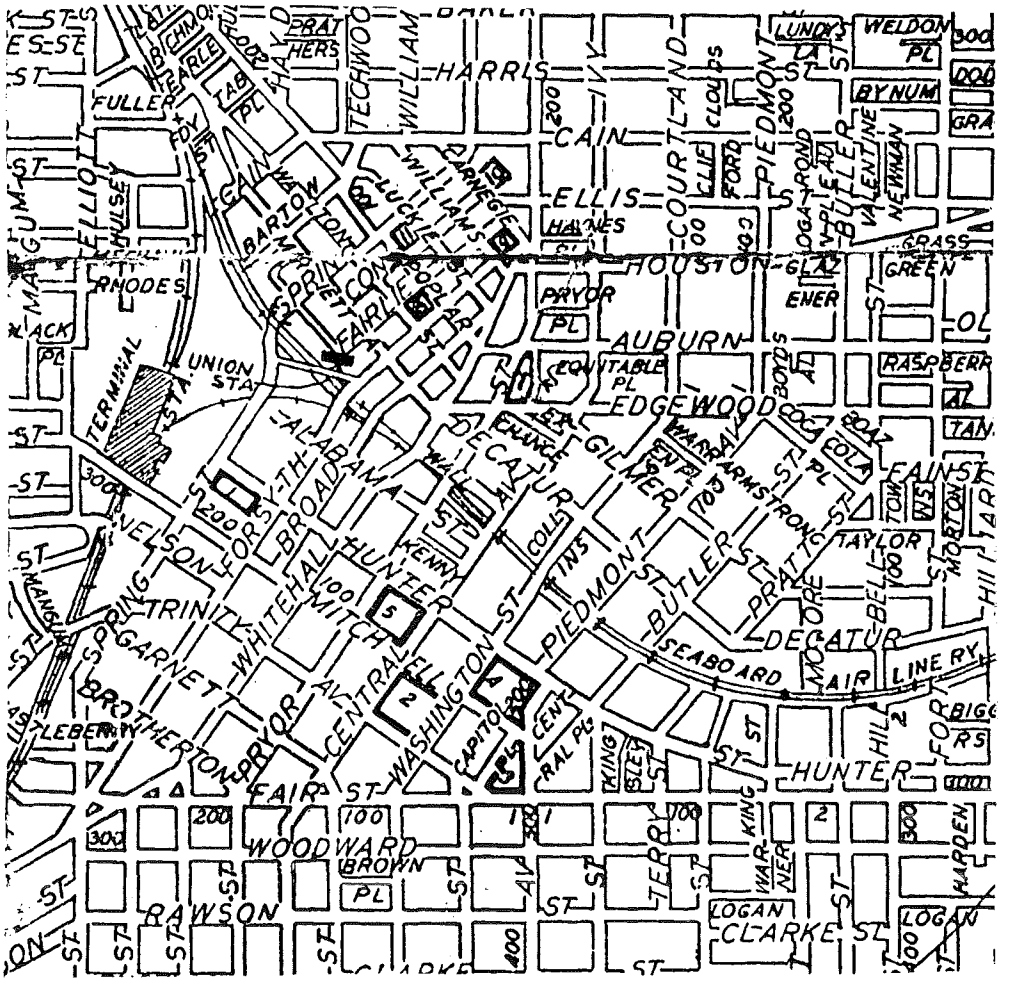
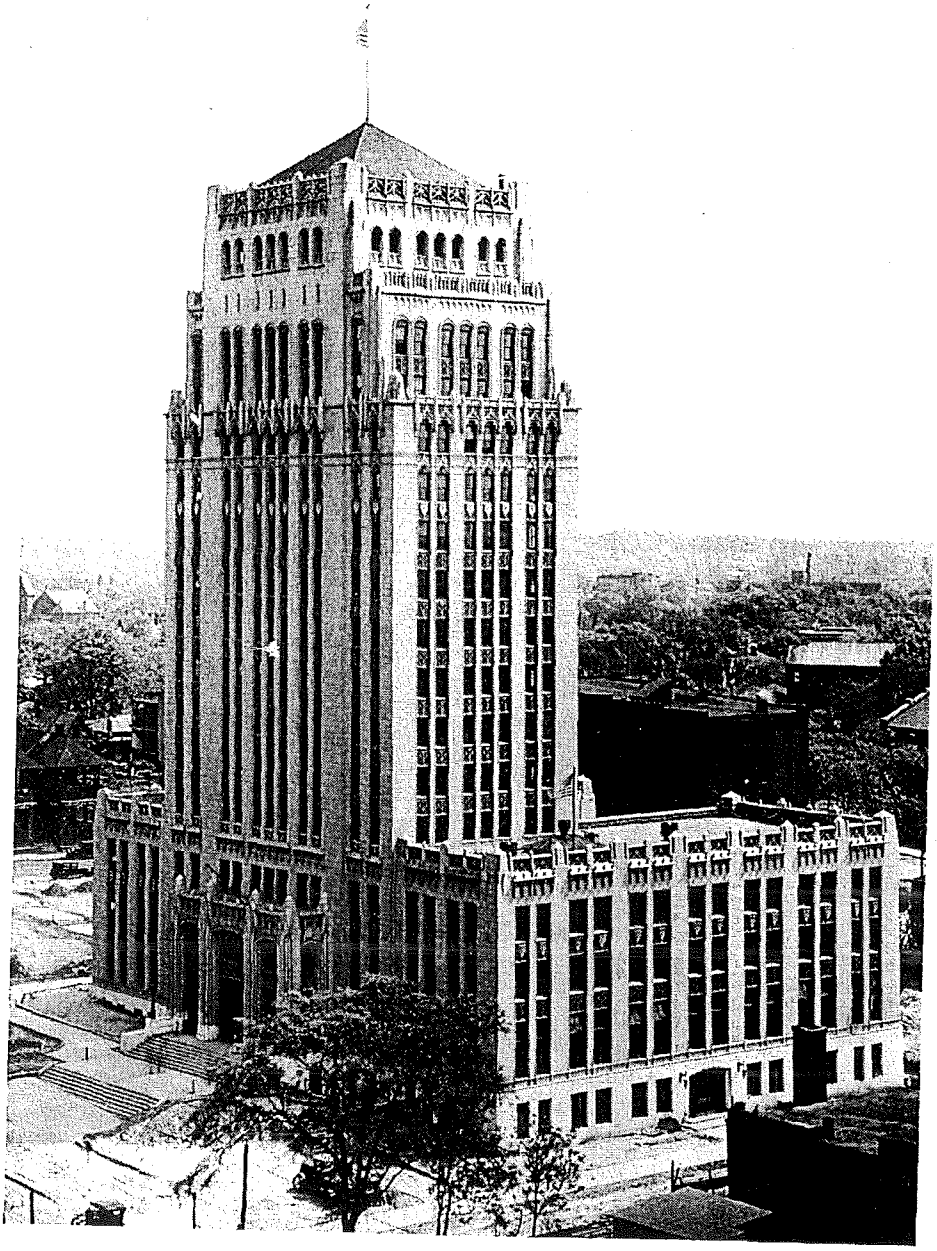


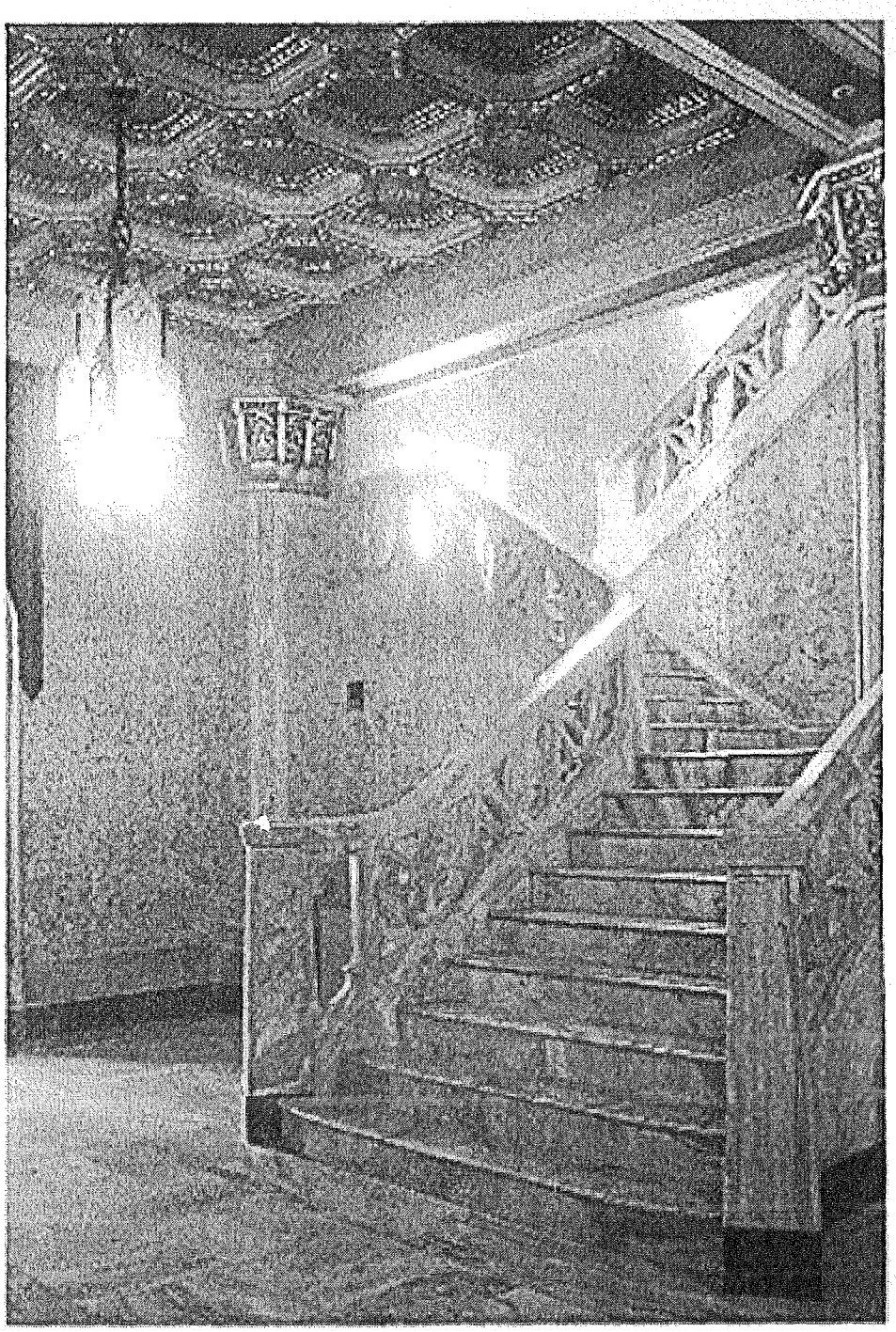
1. Aerial View of Atlanta, 1930
Atlanta Historical Society



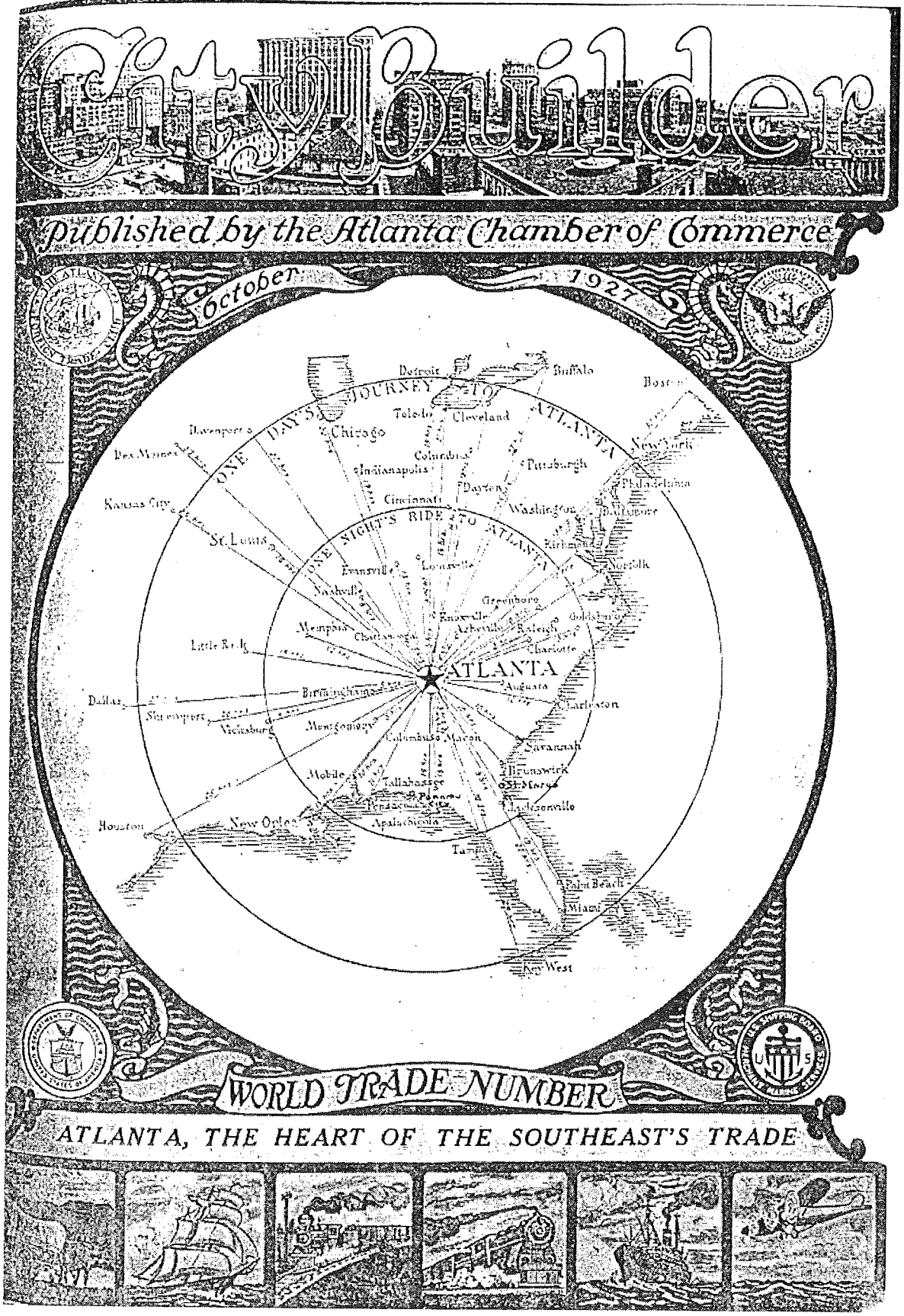
2. Street Map of Atlanta, 1930 (City Hall Site Marked by Number 2)
Fulton County Public Library, City maps File



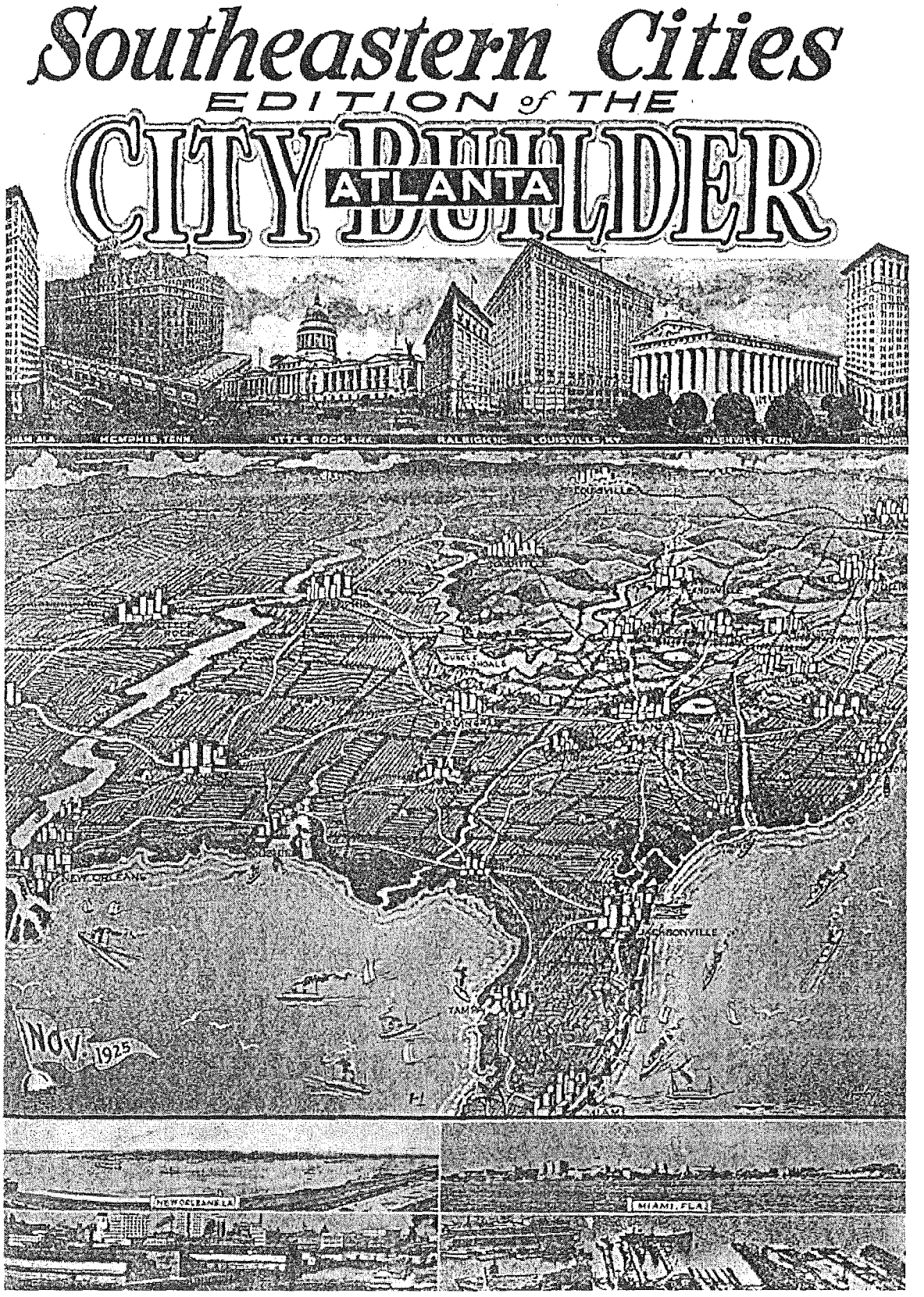
3. Atlanta City Hall, 1930
Atlanta Historical Society



4. First Floor Lobby, Atlanta City Hall
Craig, 85.



5. "Atlanta, the Heart of Southeast's Trade"
The City Builder, October 1927, cover.



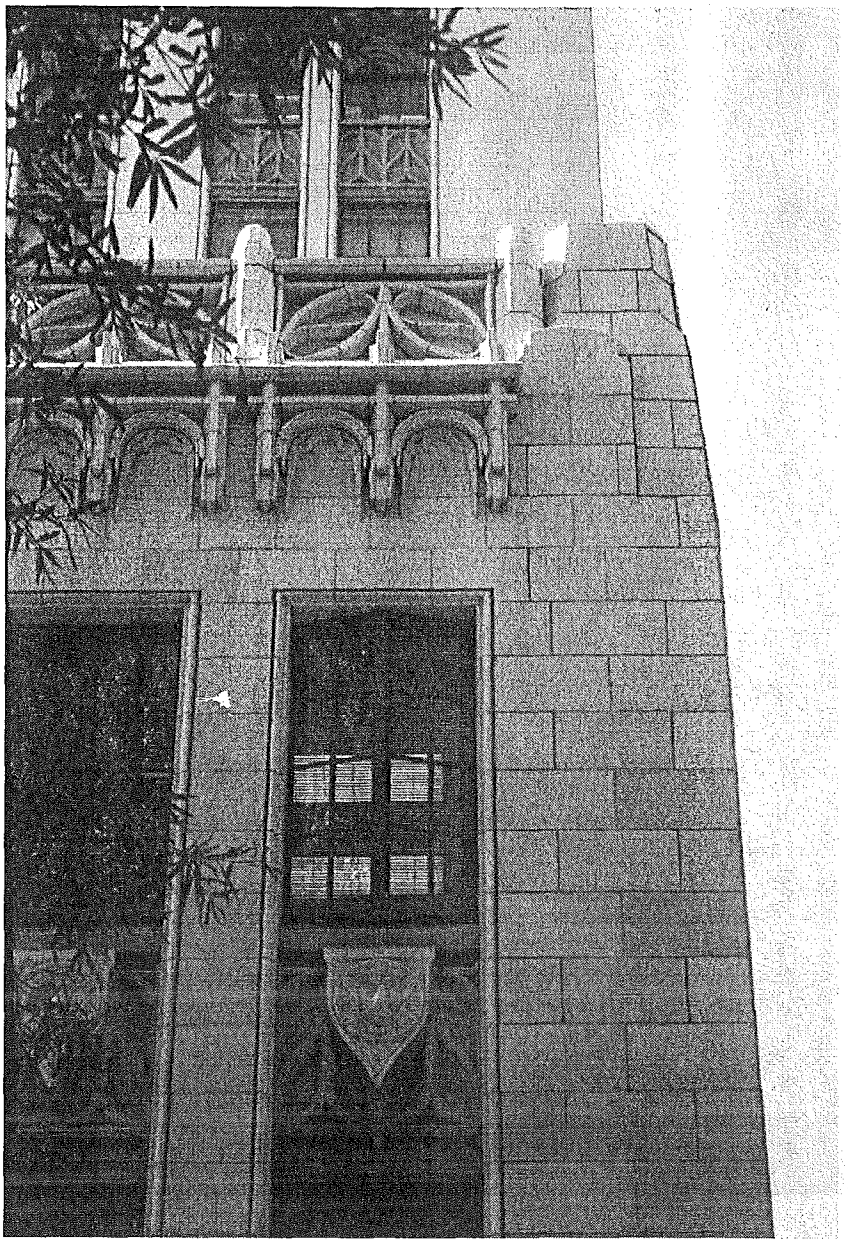
6. "Southeastern Cities"
The City Builder, November 1925, cover.

7. Geoffrey Lloyd Preacher, 1926
Adams

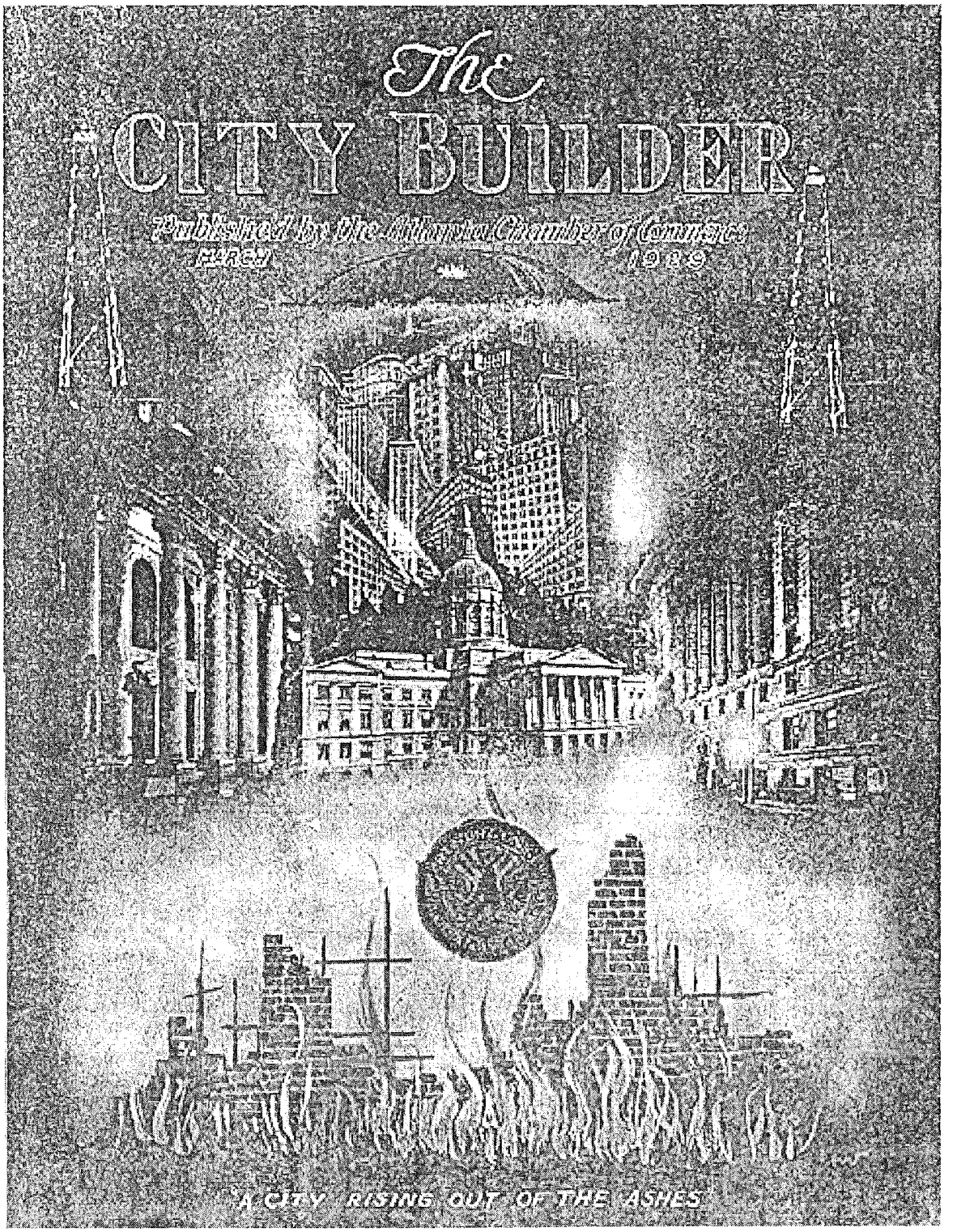
8. "Modern Southern Buildings," advertisement *Manufacturers Record*, December 1924, 655.

9. Aerial View of Charleston (Contemporary View)
Sobel, fig.41.

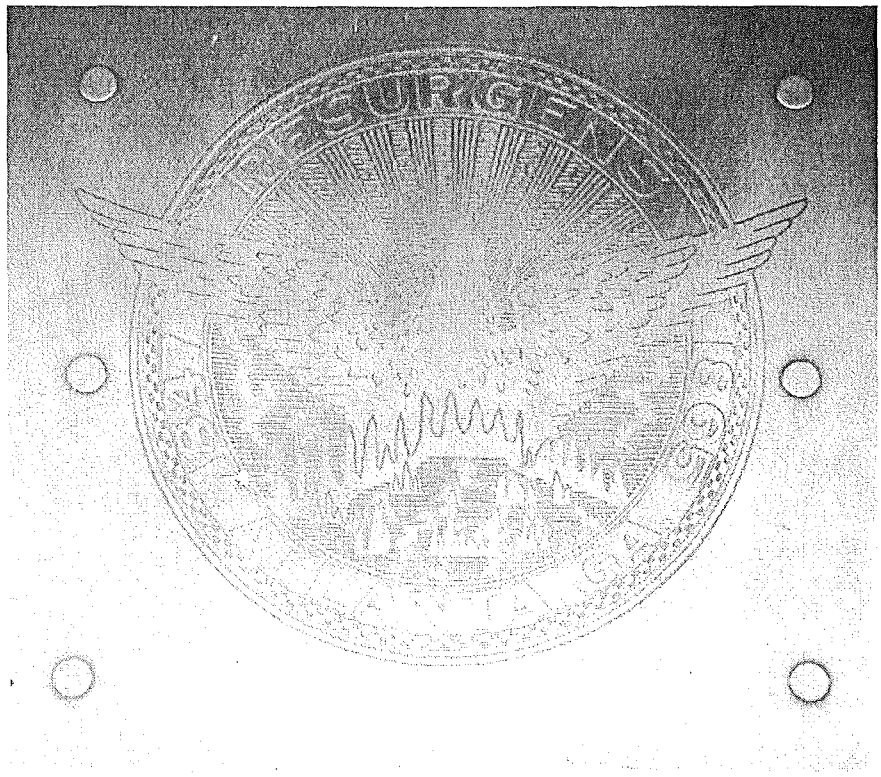
10. Atlanta City Seal
Garrett, *Yesterday's Atlanta*, 8.



11. Flanking Wing, Atlanta City Hall
Author



12. "A City Rising Out of the Ashes"
The City Builder, March 1929, cover.

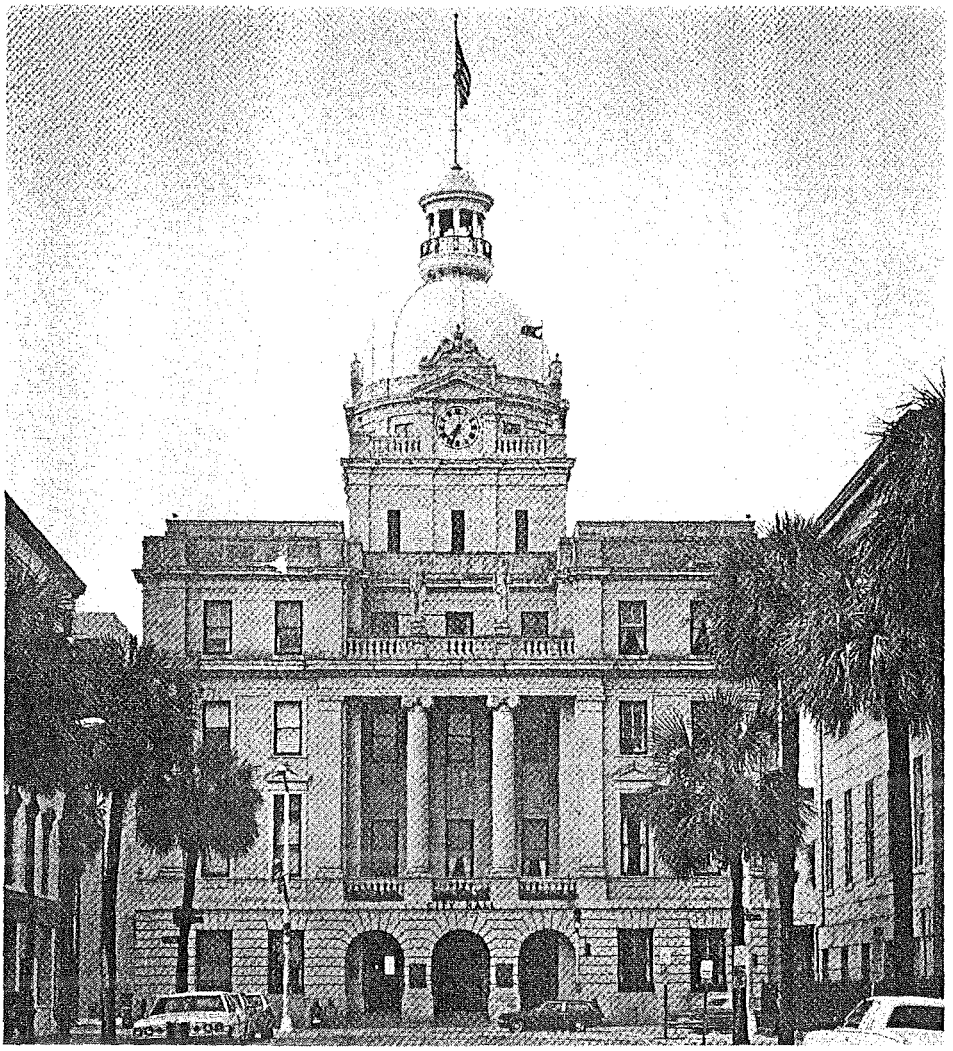


13. Brass Elevator Door, First Floor Lobby, Atlanta City Hall
Author

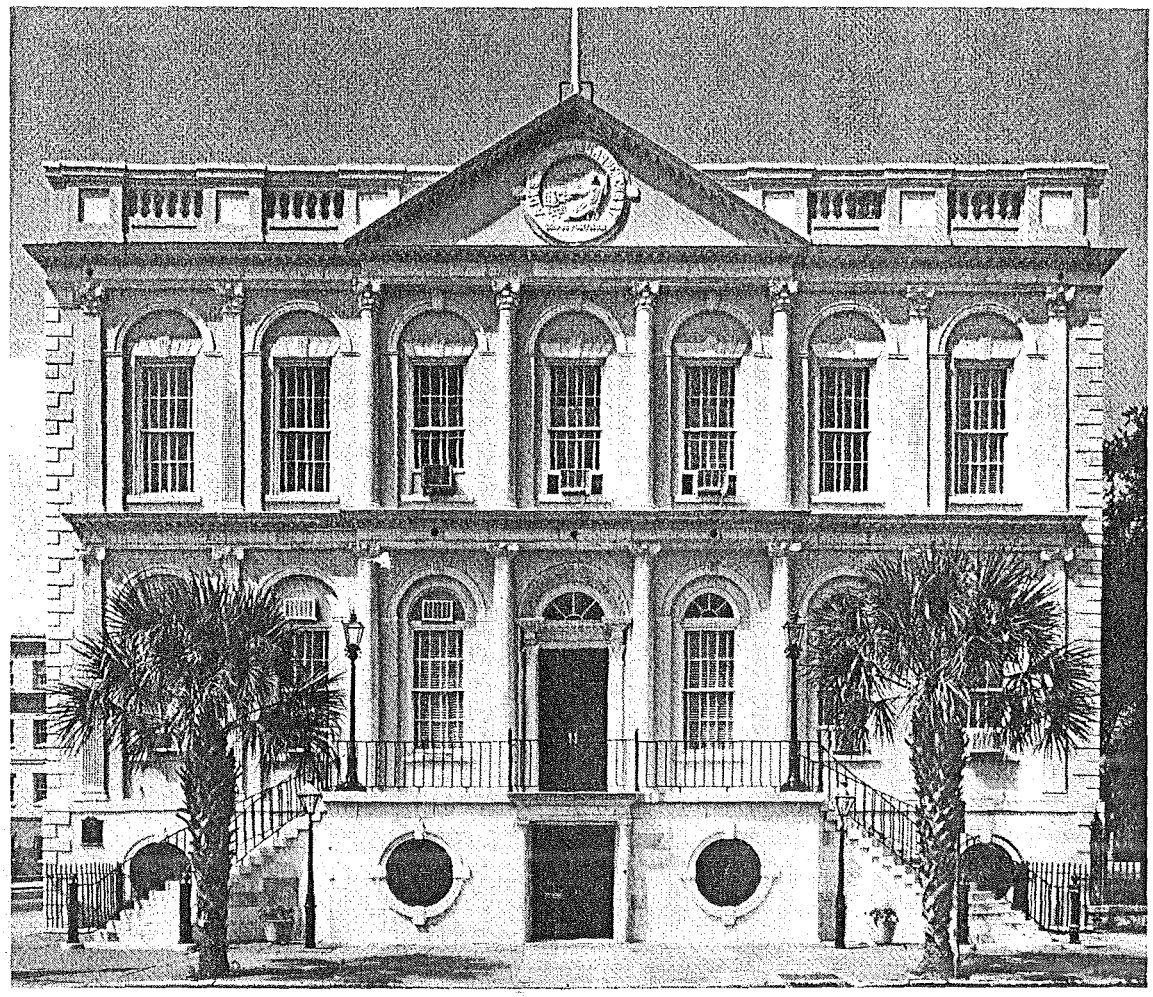
14. Georgia State Capitol, Late 19th Century
Weaver, frontispiece.

15. Fulton County Courthouse
Atlanta Urban Design Commission, 64.

16. Atlanta City Hall
Author



17. Savannah City Hall
Lebovich, 113.



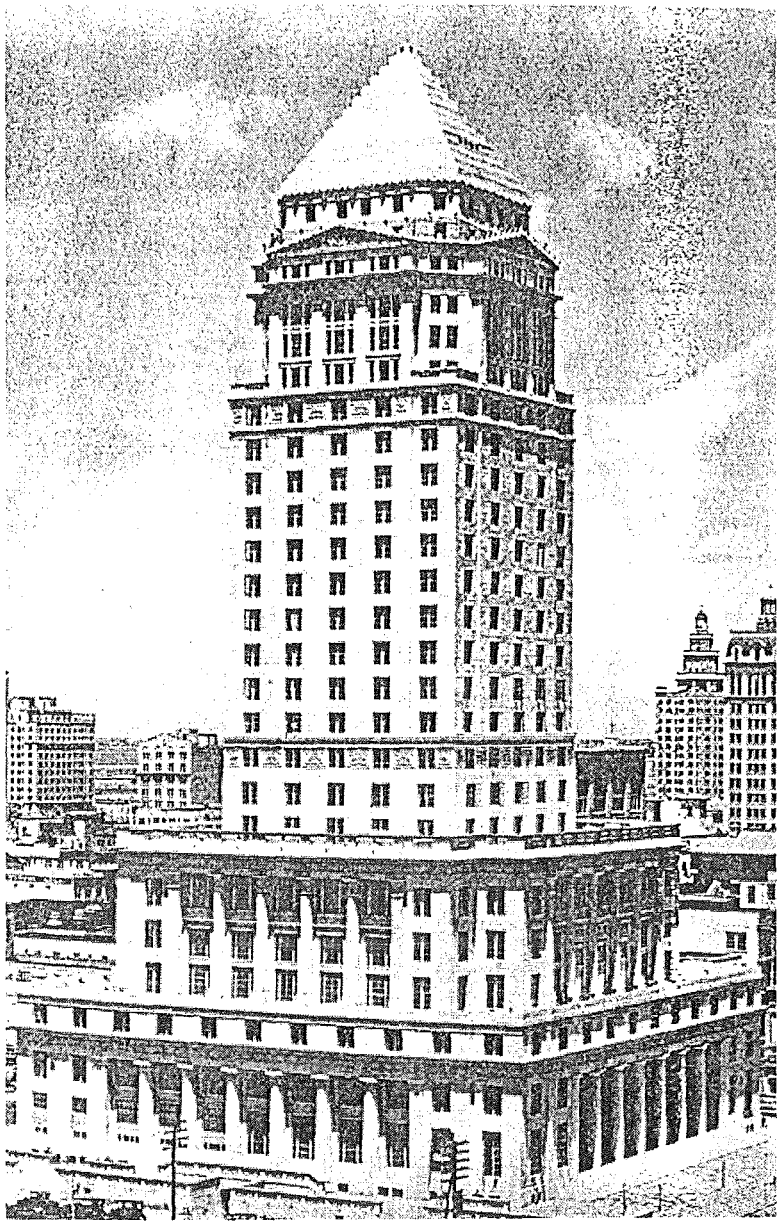
18. Charleston City Hall
Lebovich, 45.

19. Atlanta's First City Hall
Miller, 35.

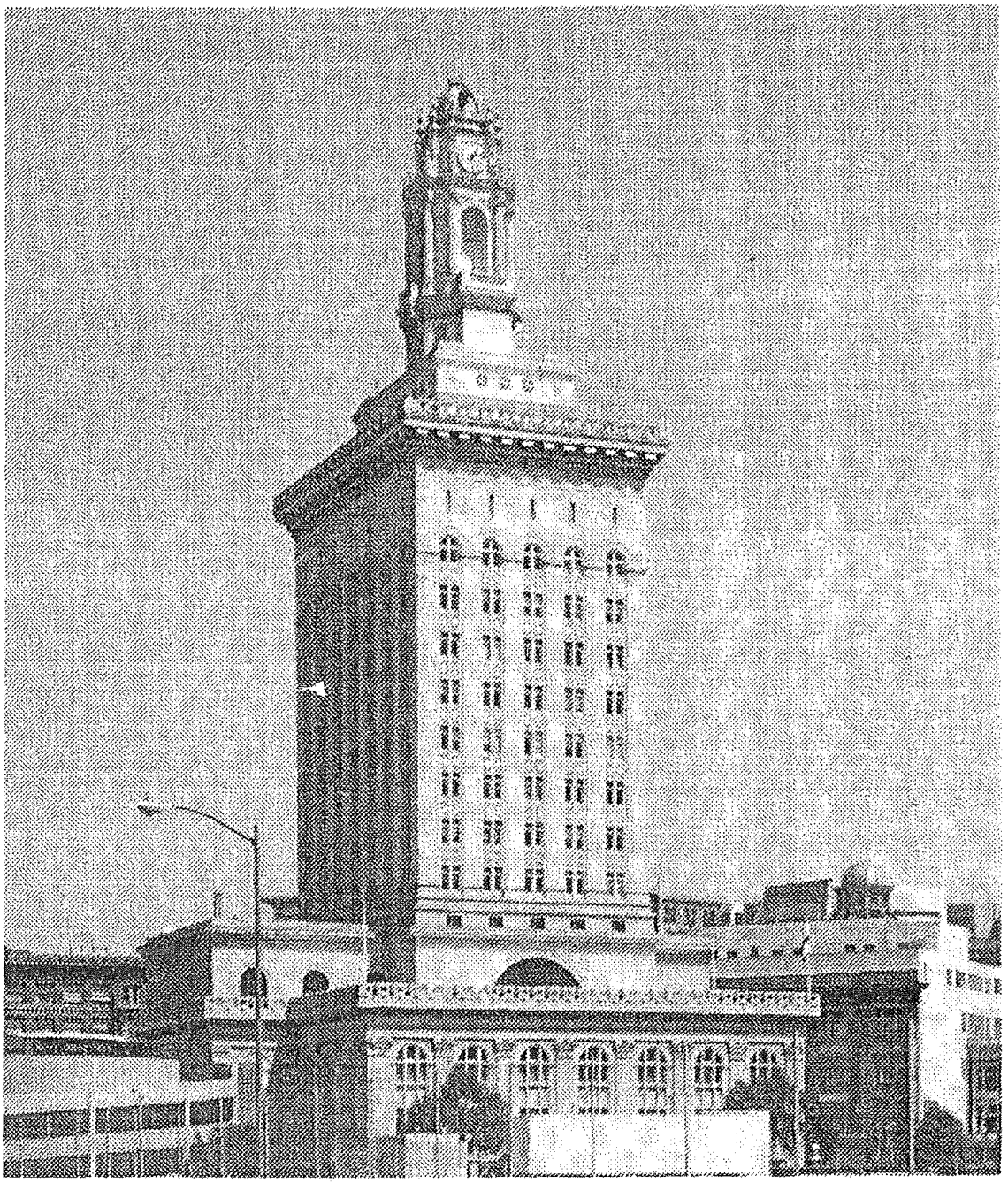
20. Atlanta's Third City Hall (Old Federal Post Office)
Garrett, *Yesterday's Atlanta*, 79.

21. New Federal Post Office Building
Craig, 95.

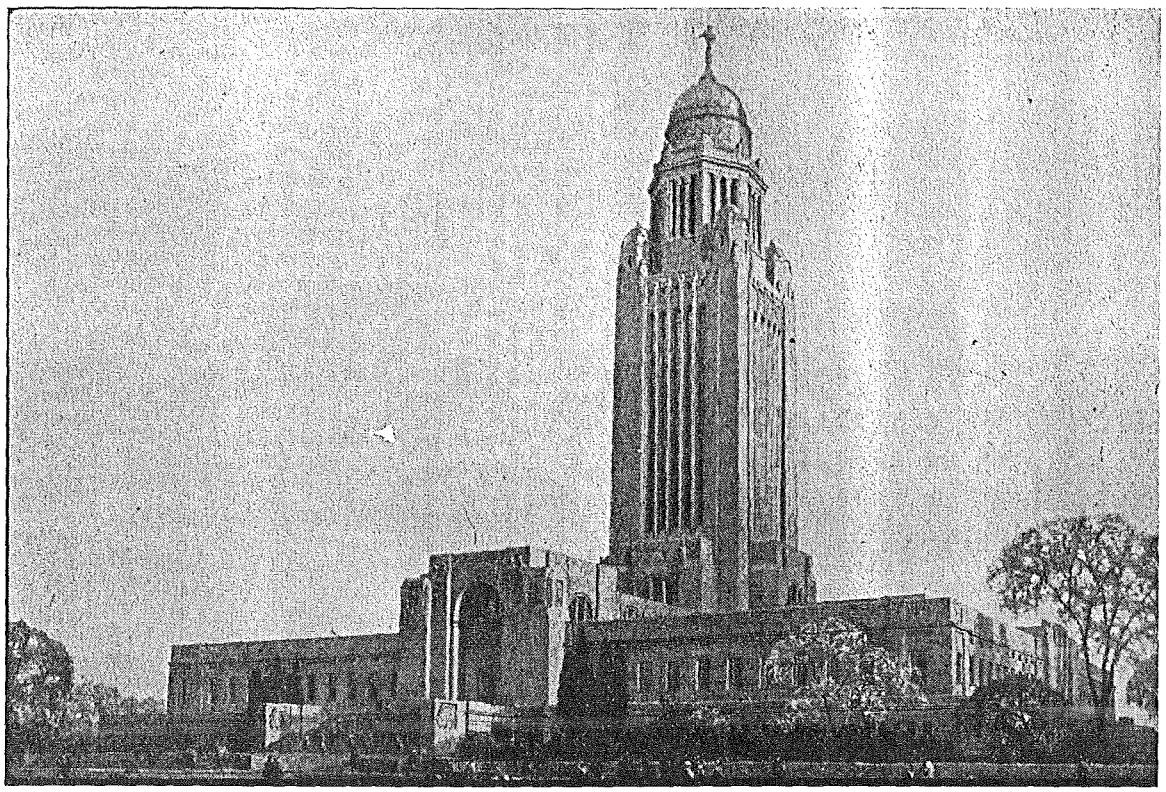
22. "a Modern Idea for a New City Hall"
Craig, 44.



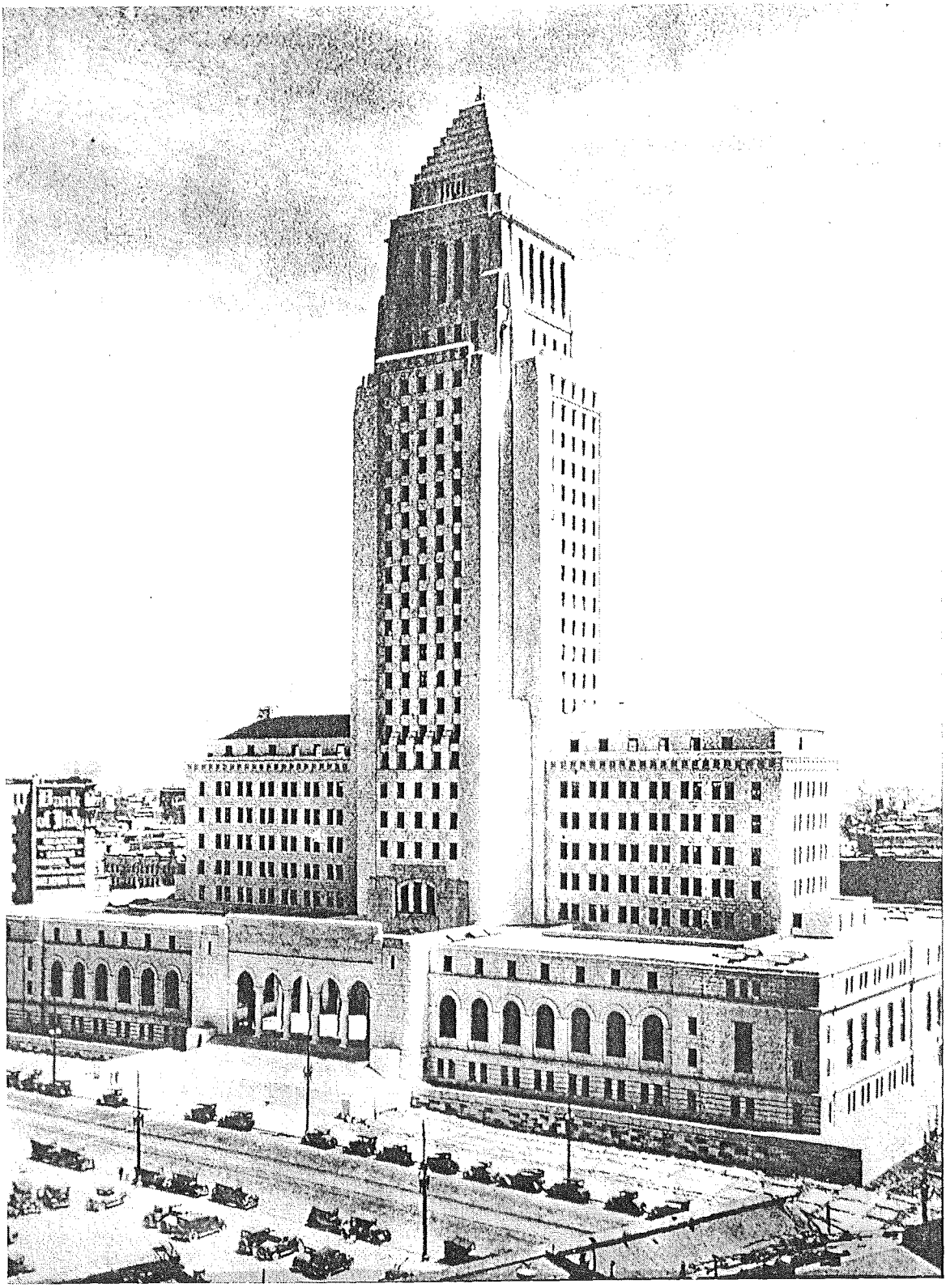
23. Dade County Courthouse, Miami
Private Collection



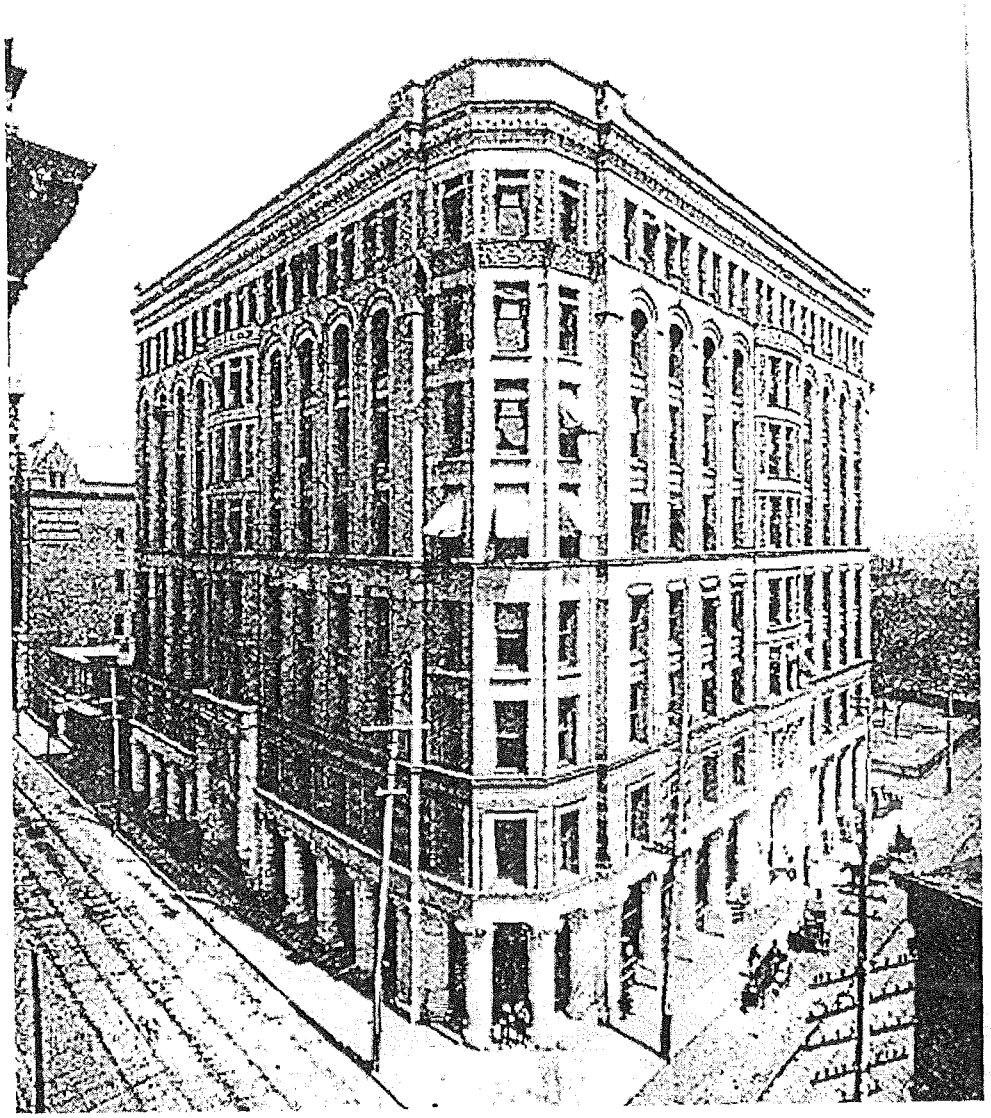
24. Oakland City Hall
Lebovich, 128.



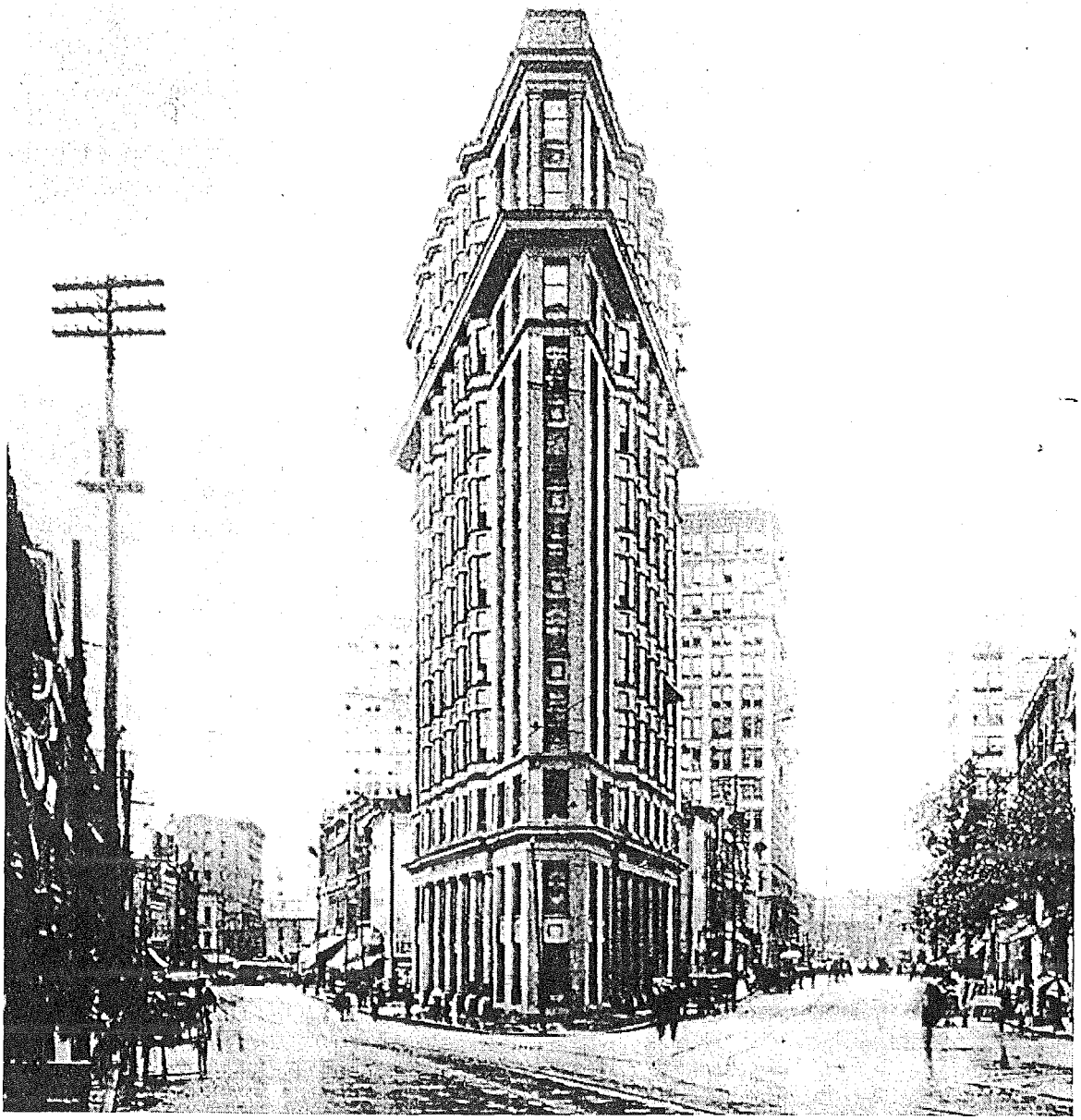
25. Nebraska State Capitol
Craig, 42.



26. Los Angeles City Hall
Lebovich, 144.



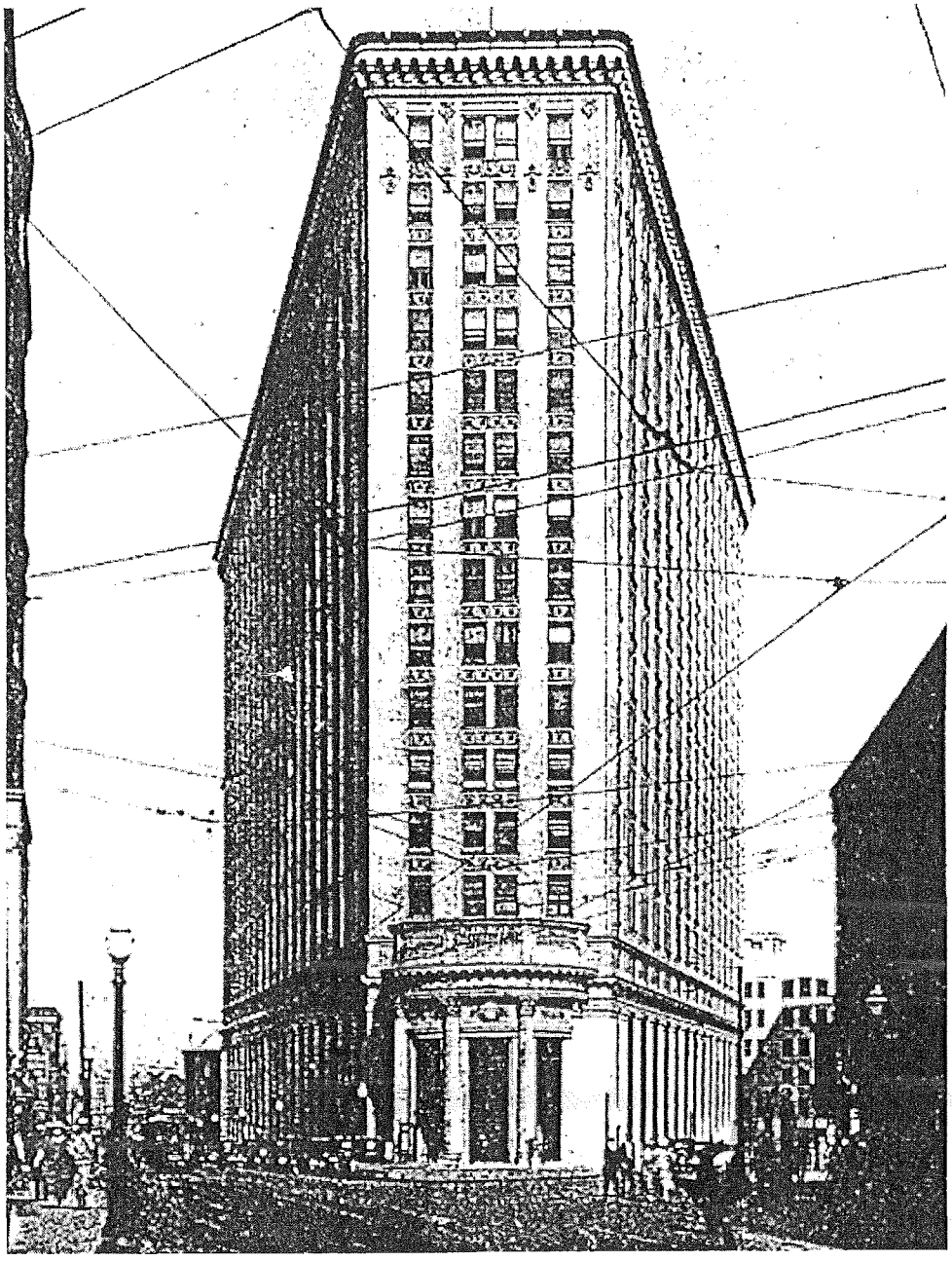
27. Equitable Building
Garrett, 69.



28. Flatiron Building
Weaver, 24.

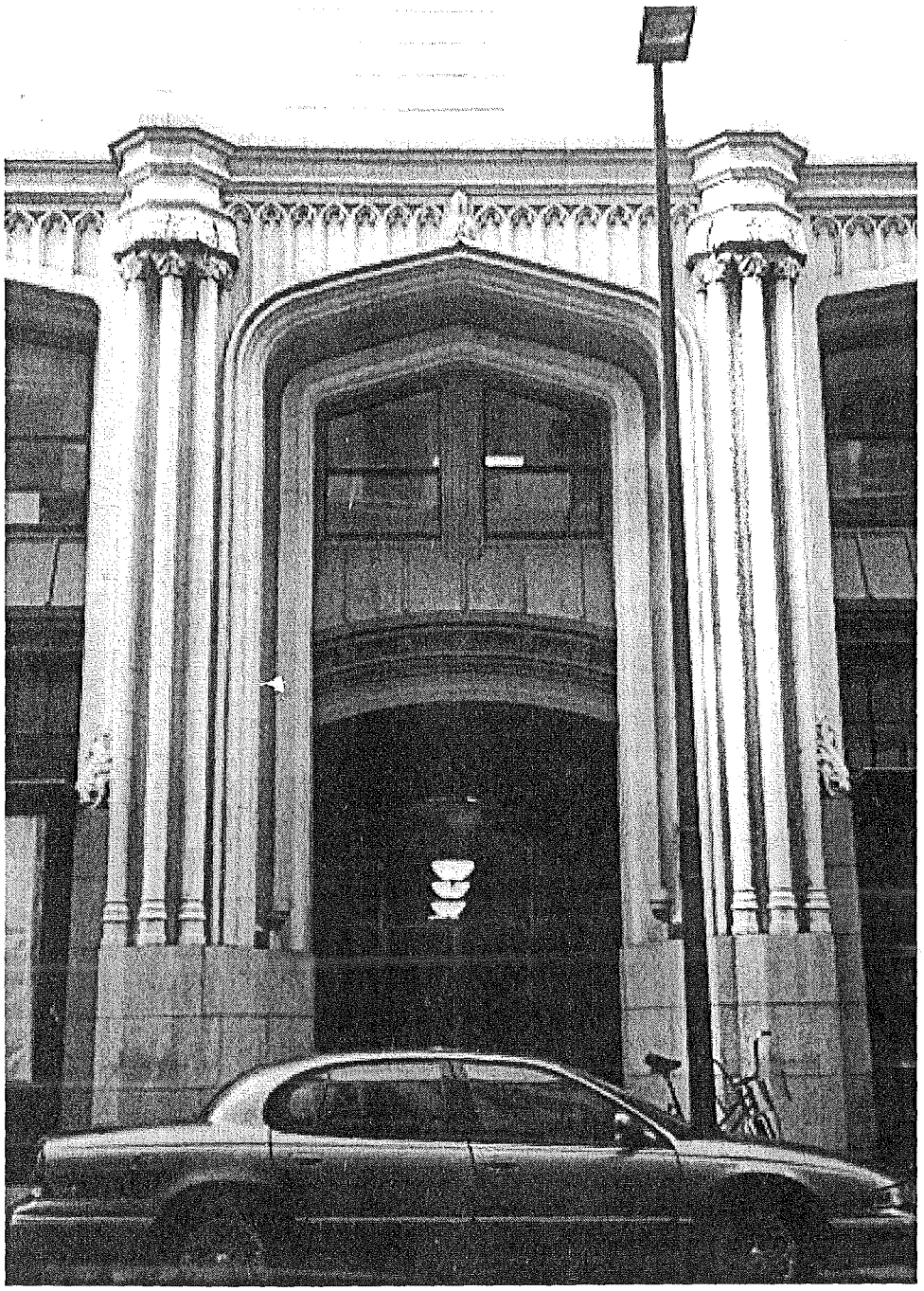
29. Grant-Prudential Building
Atlanta Urban Design Commission, 159.

30. Candler Building
Lyon, *Atlanta Architecture: The Victorian Heritage, 1837-1918*, 69.



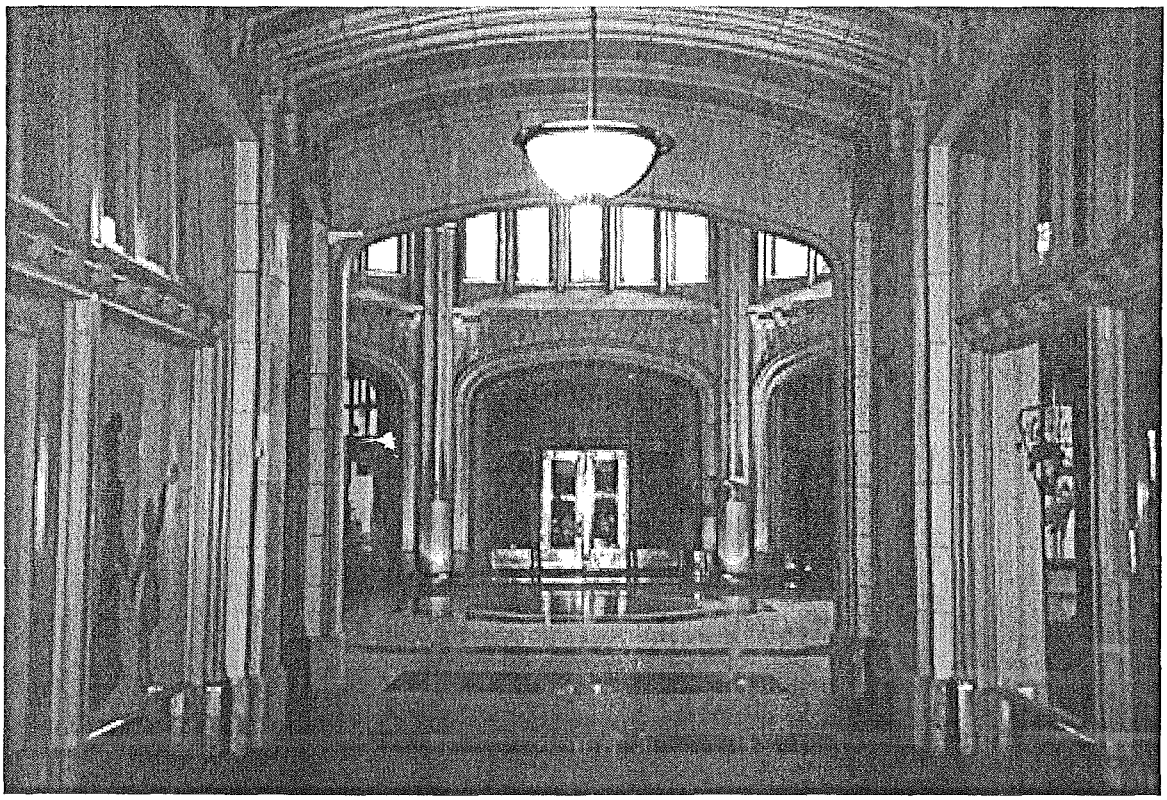
31. Hurt Building
Weaver, 37.

32. Healey Building
Weaver, 35.



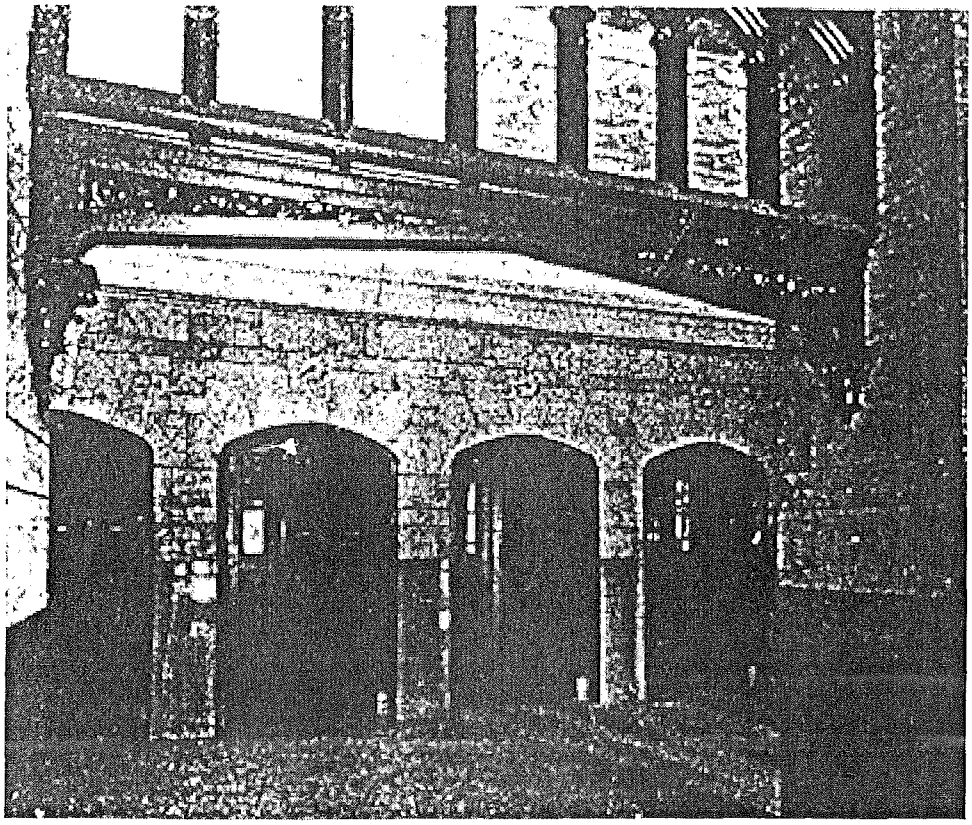
33. Side Entrance, Healey Building
Author

34. Cornice, Healey Building
Author

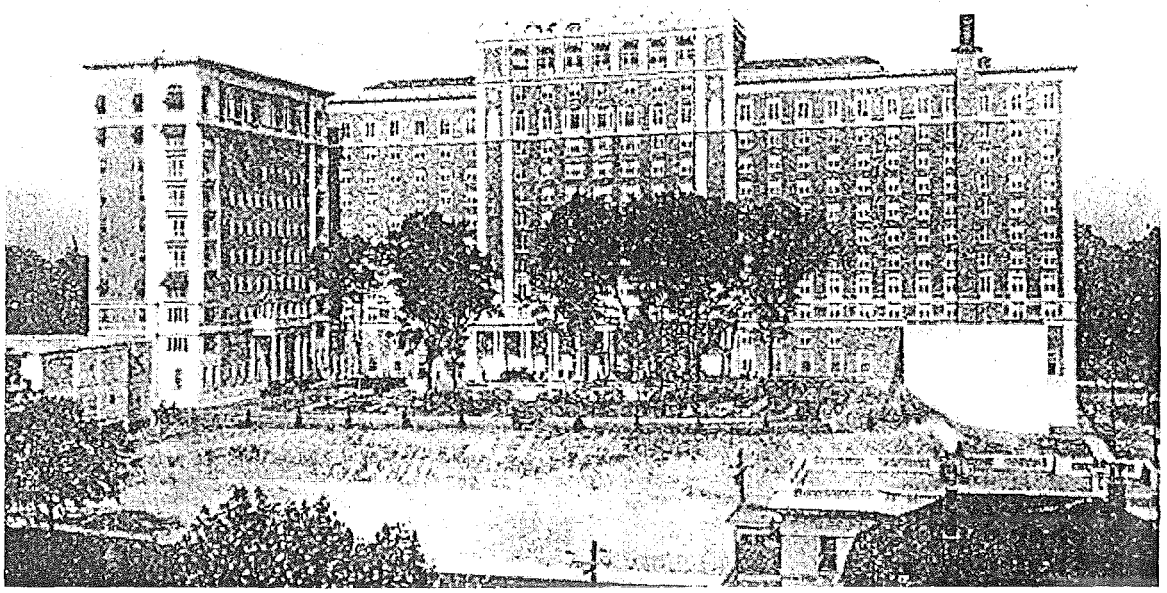


35. Hall View Towards Lobby, Healey Building
Author

36. 101 Marietta Street Building
Lyon, "Business Buildings in Atlanta: A Study in Urban Growth and Form," 398.

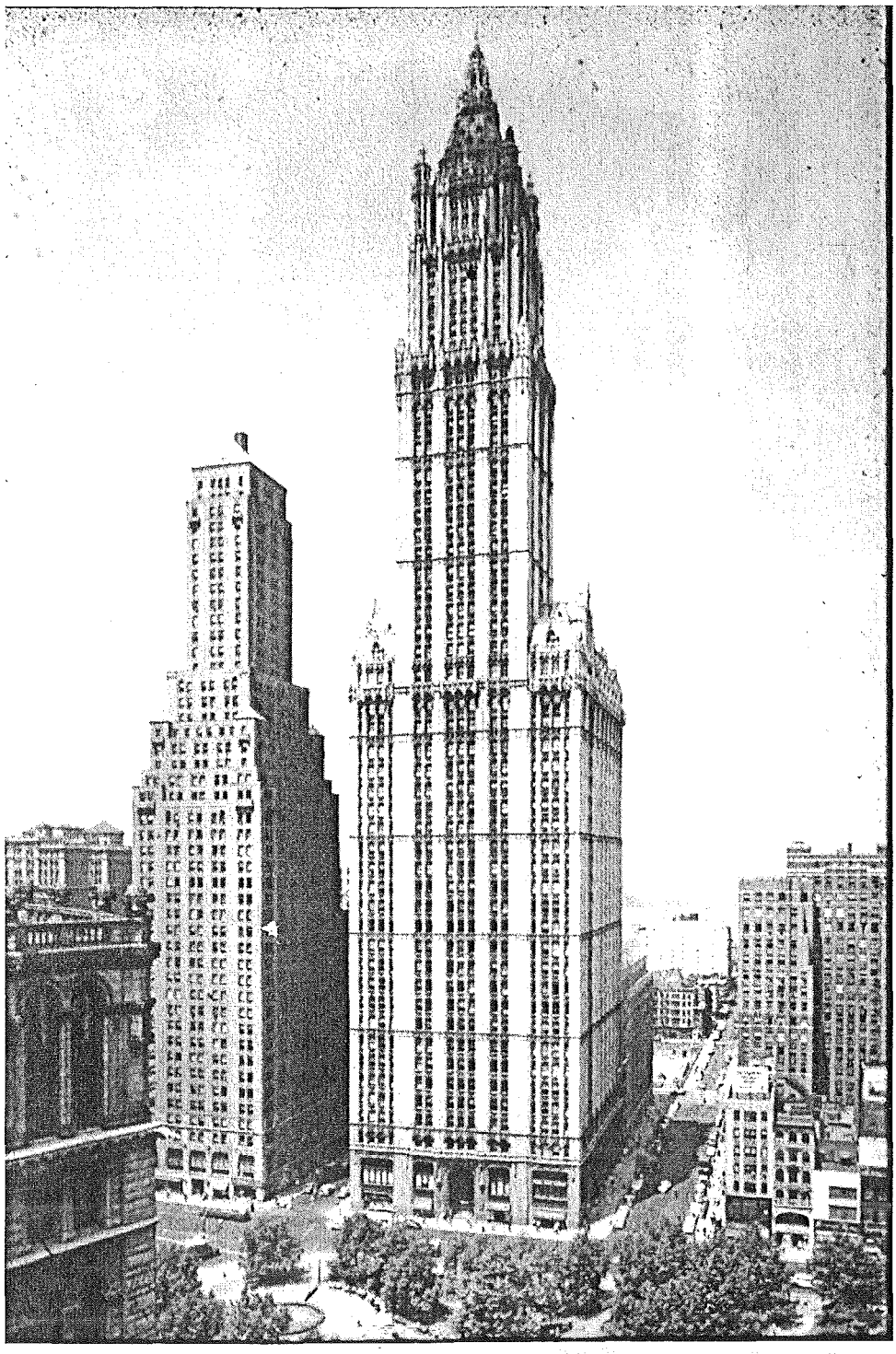


37. 101 Marietta Street Building, Interior Lobby
Lyon, "Business Buildings in Atlanta: A Study in Urban Growth and Form," 398.

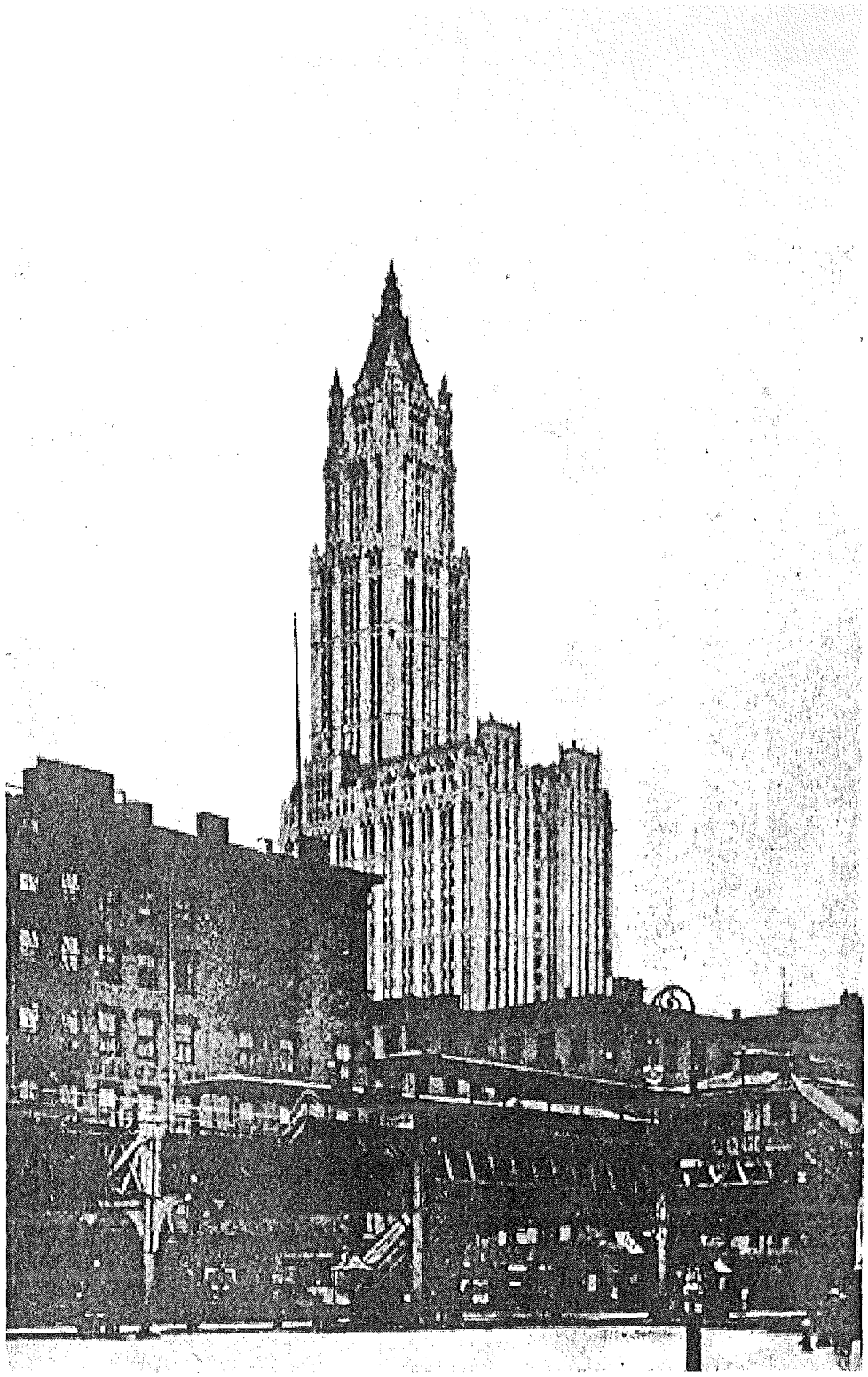


38. Biltmore Hotel
Weaver, 26.

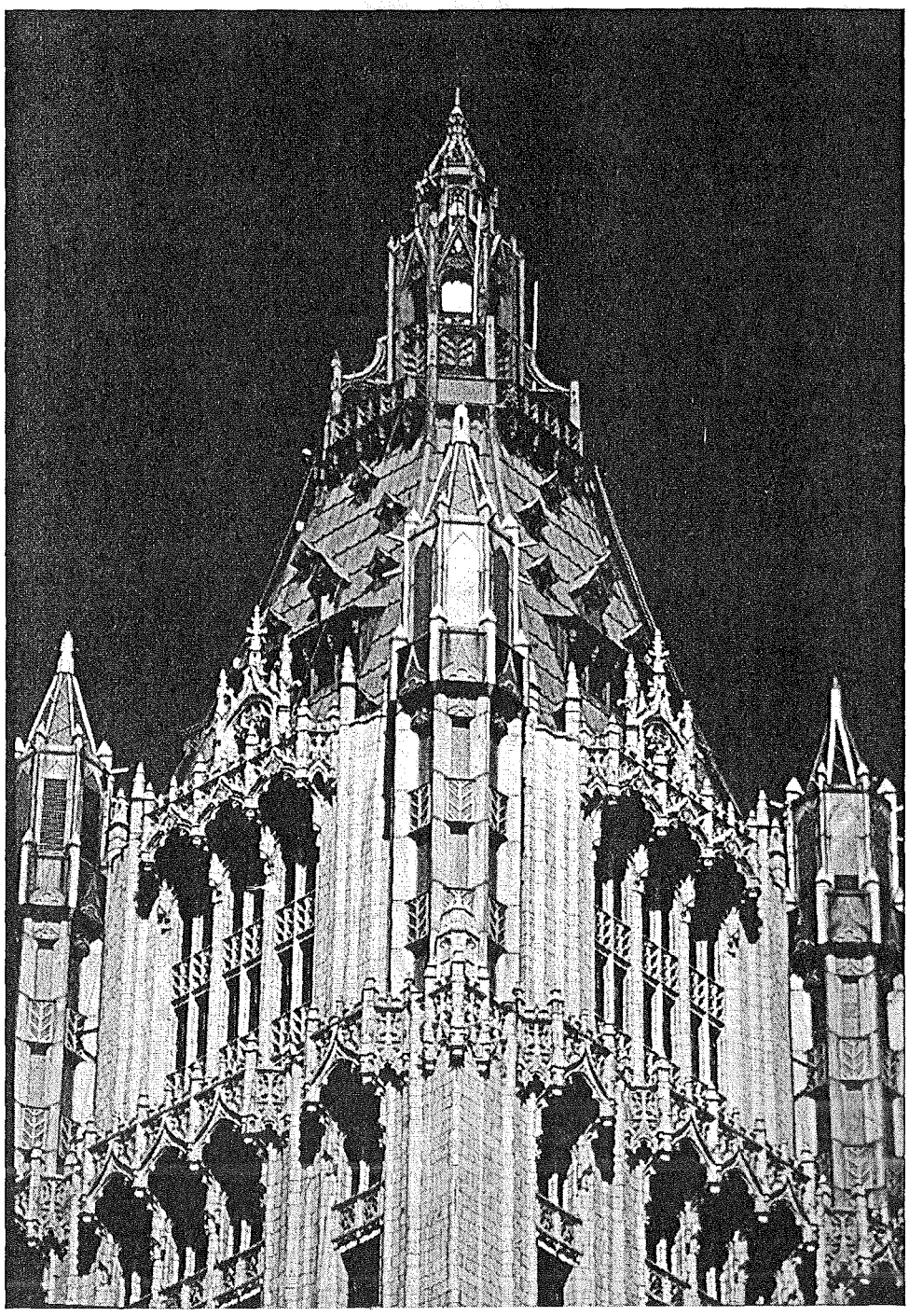
39. Wynne-Claughton Building
Lyon, "Business Buildings in Atlanta: A Study in Urban Growth and Form," 411.



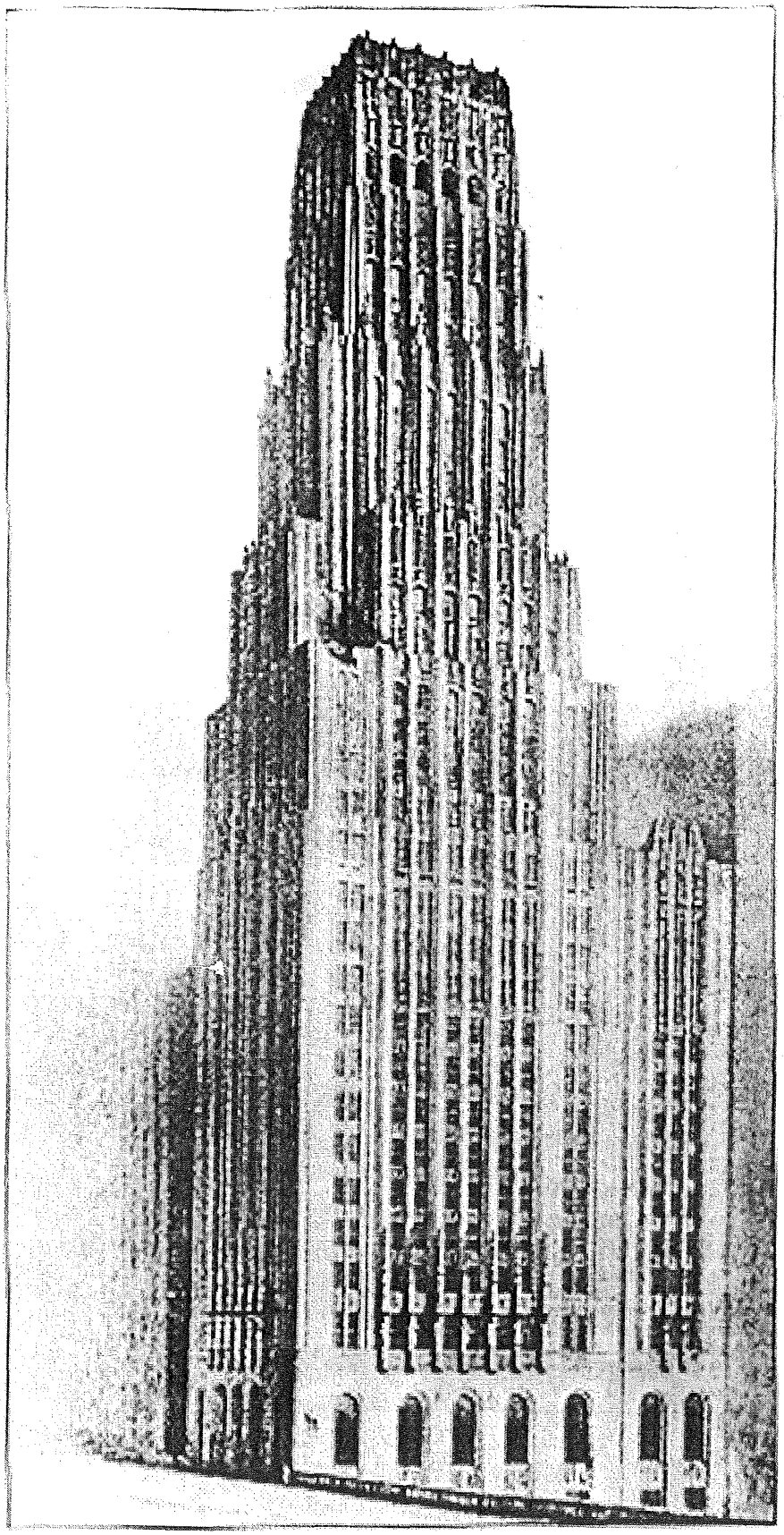
40. Woolworth Building
Fiske Kimball Fine Arts Library, Slide Collection



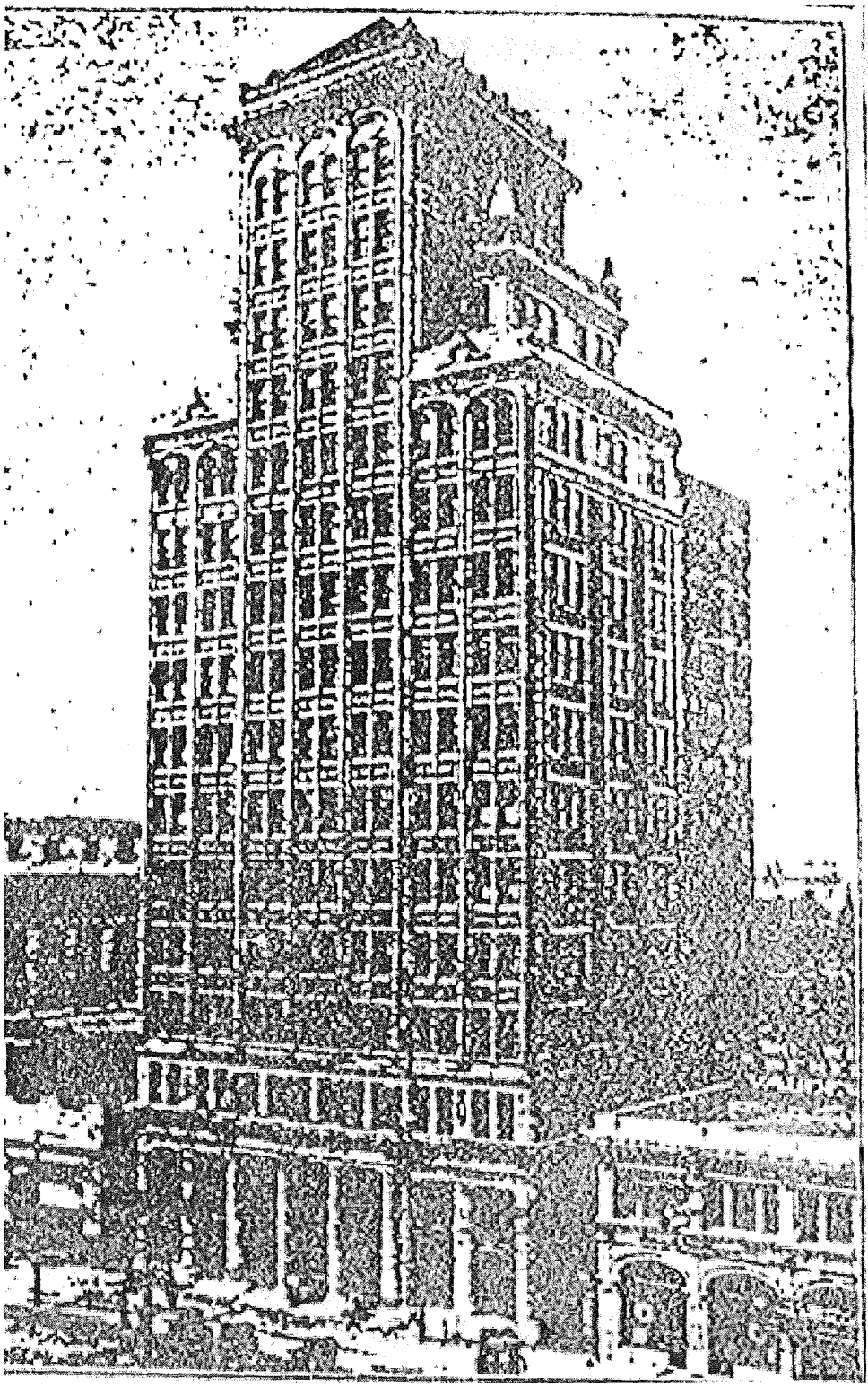
41. Woolworth Building
Edgell



42. Detail of Crown, Woolworth Building
Fiske Kimball Fine Arts Library, Slide Collection

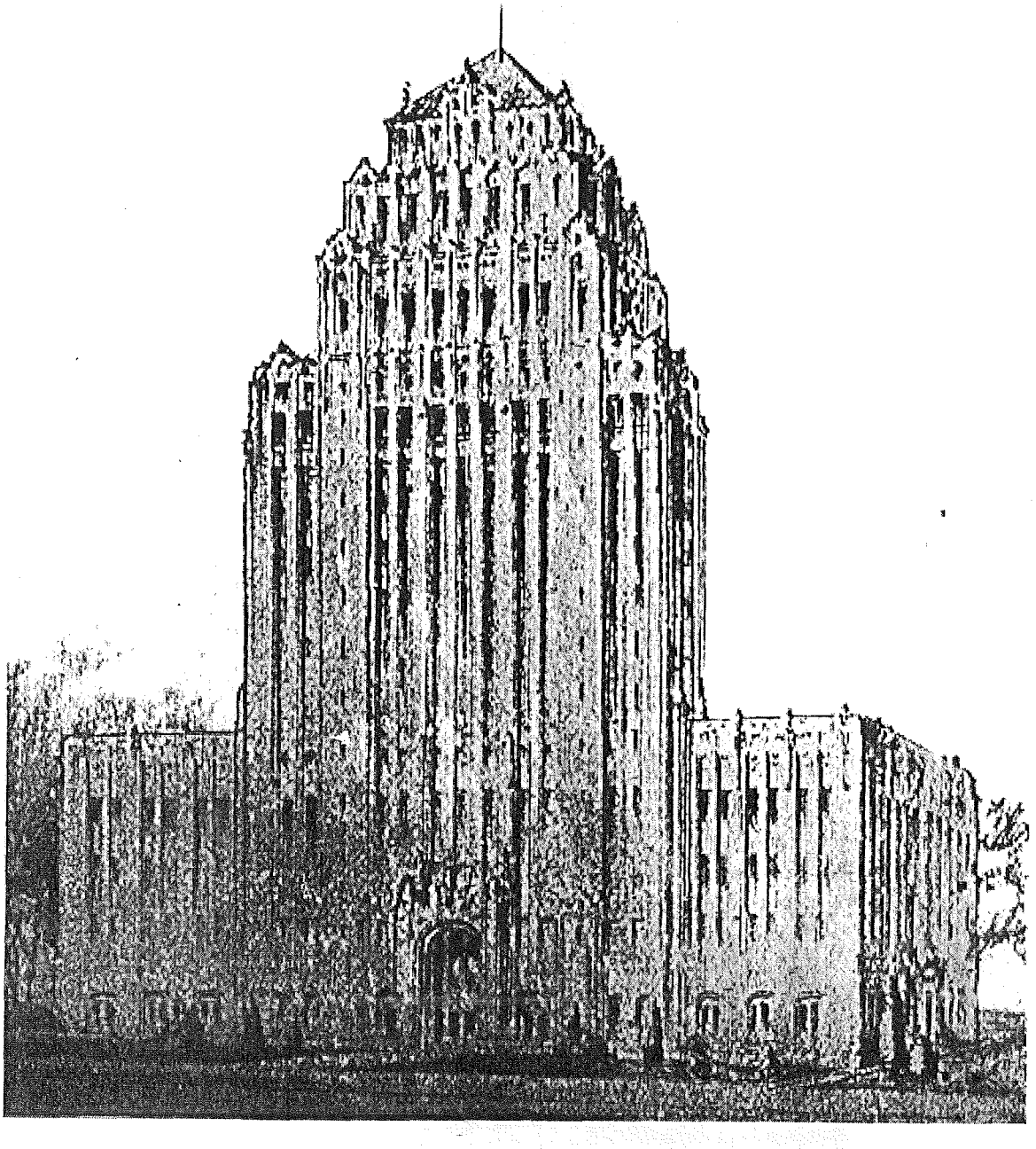


43. Saarinen's Chicago Tribune Design
Craig, 46.



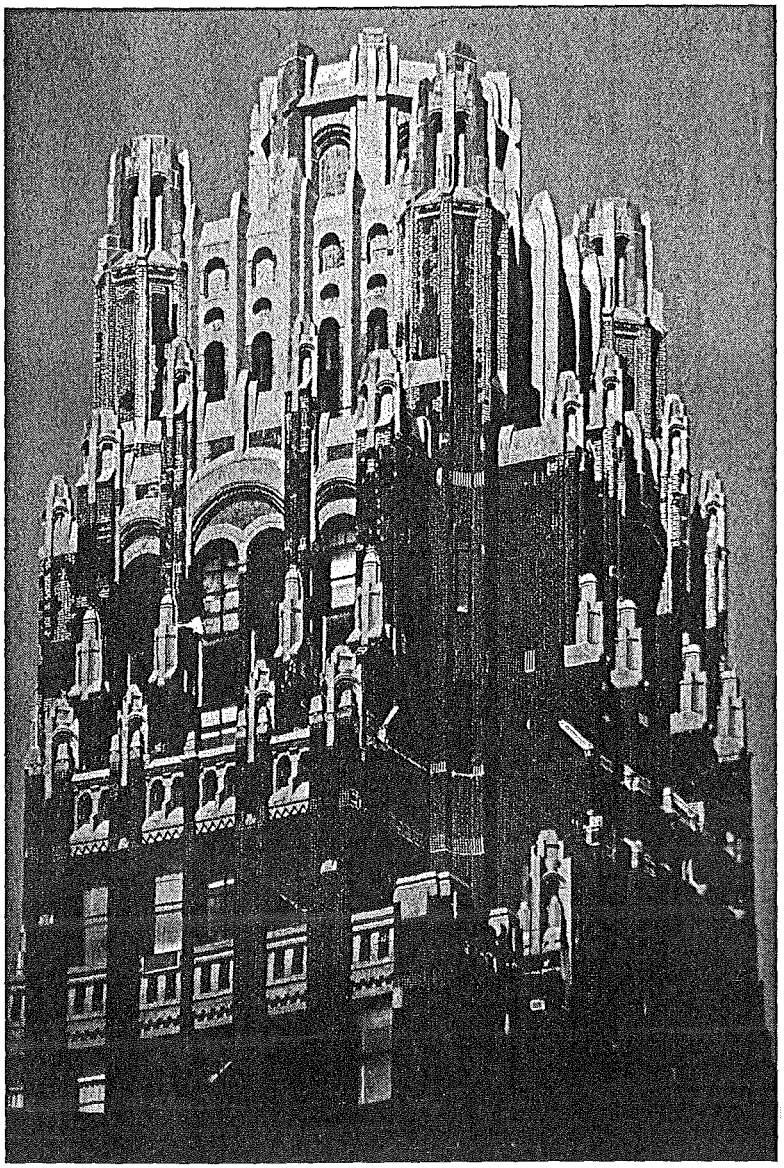
44. Southern Finance Building
Adams

45. Dinkler Hotel (Unexecuted)
The City Builder, January 1930, 2.

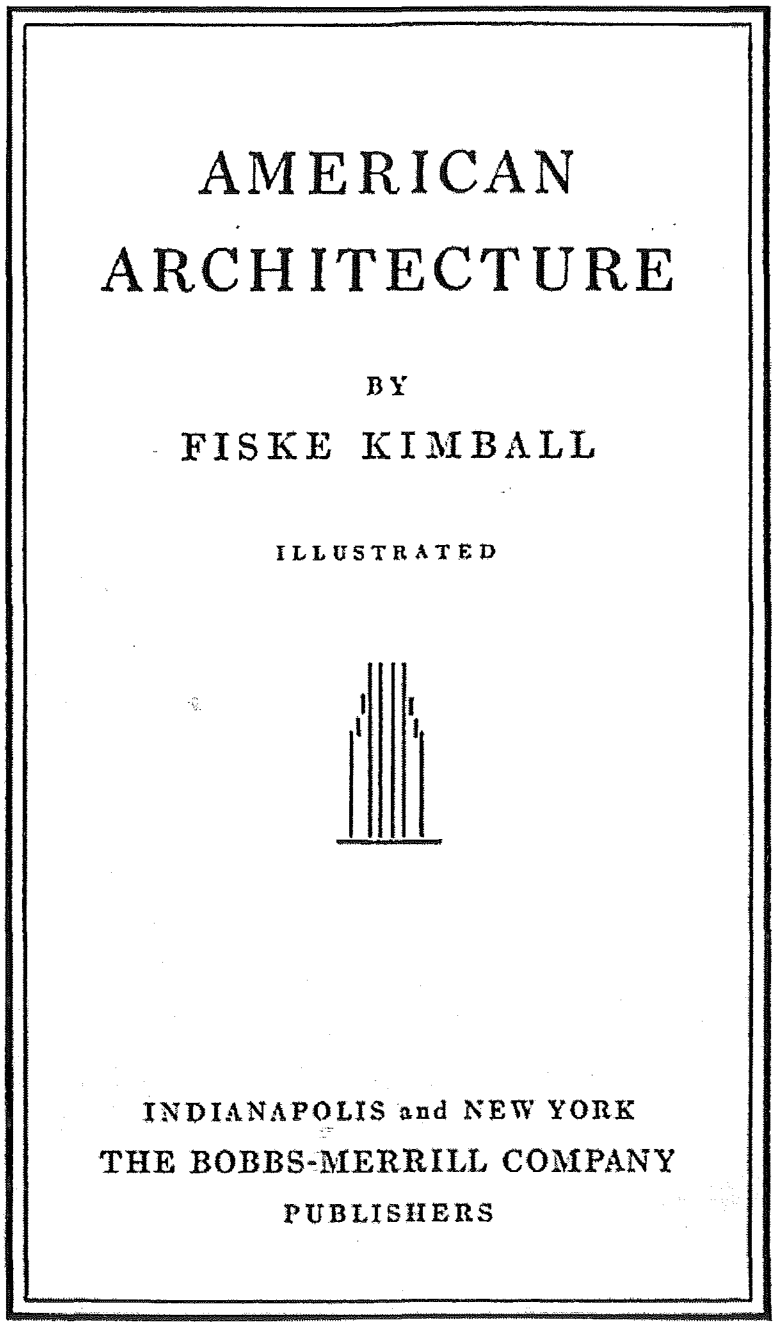


46. Atlanta City Hall, Early Design
"Atlanta's Magnificent New City Hall," *The City Builder*, March 1928.

47. American Radiator Building
Fiske Kimball Fine Arts Library,. Slide Collection



48. Detail of Crown, American Radiator Building
Fiske Kimball Fine Arts Library, Slide Collection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ARCHITECTURE

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INDIANAPOLIS and NEW YORK
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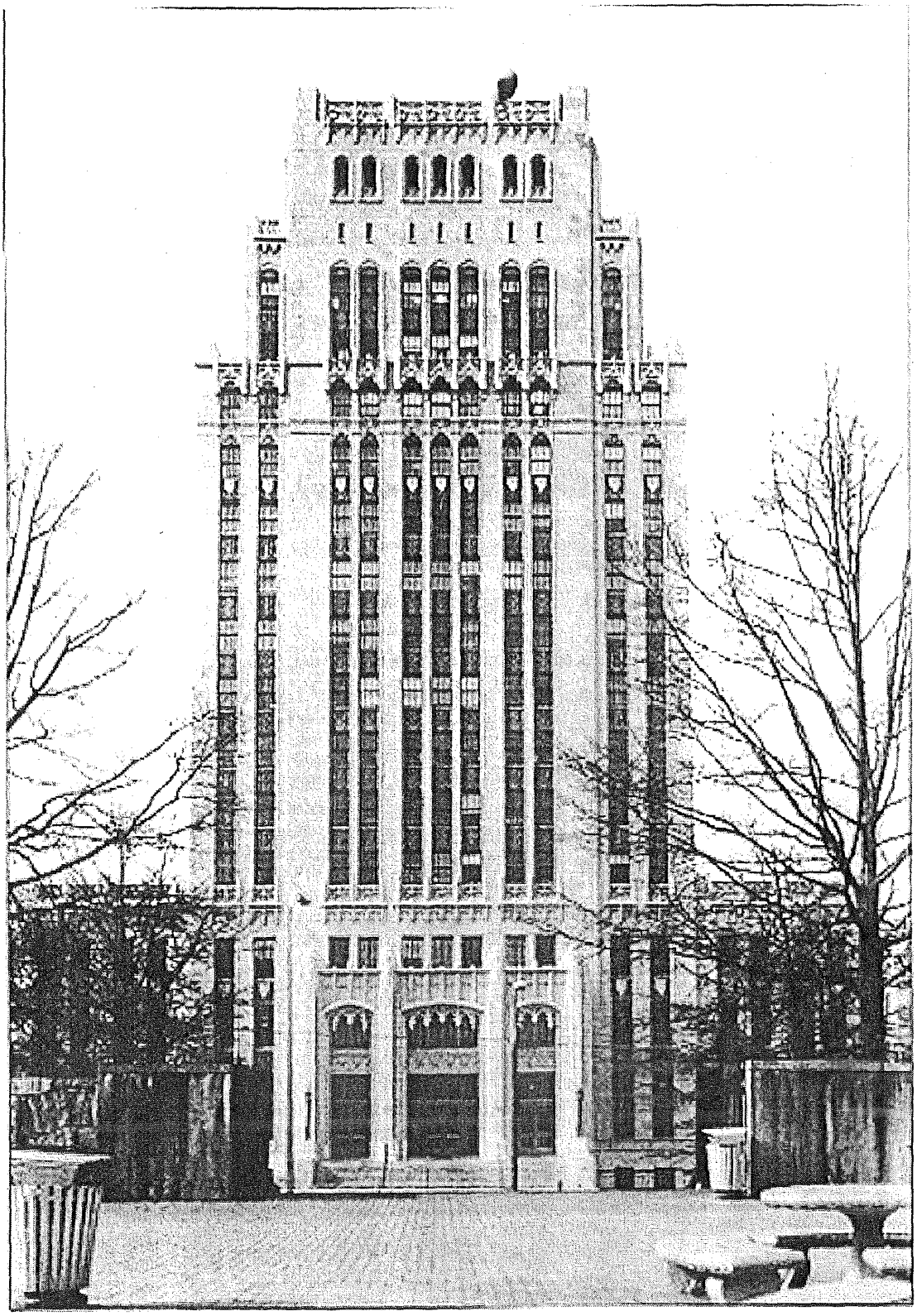
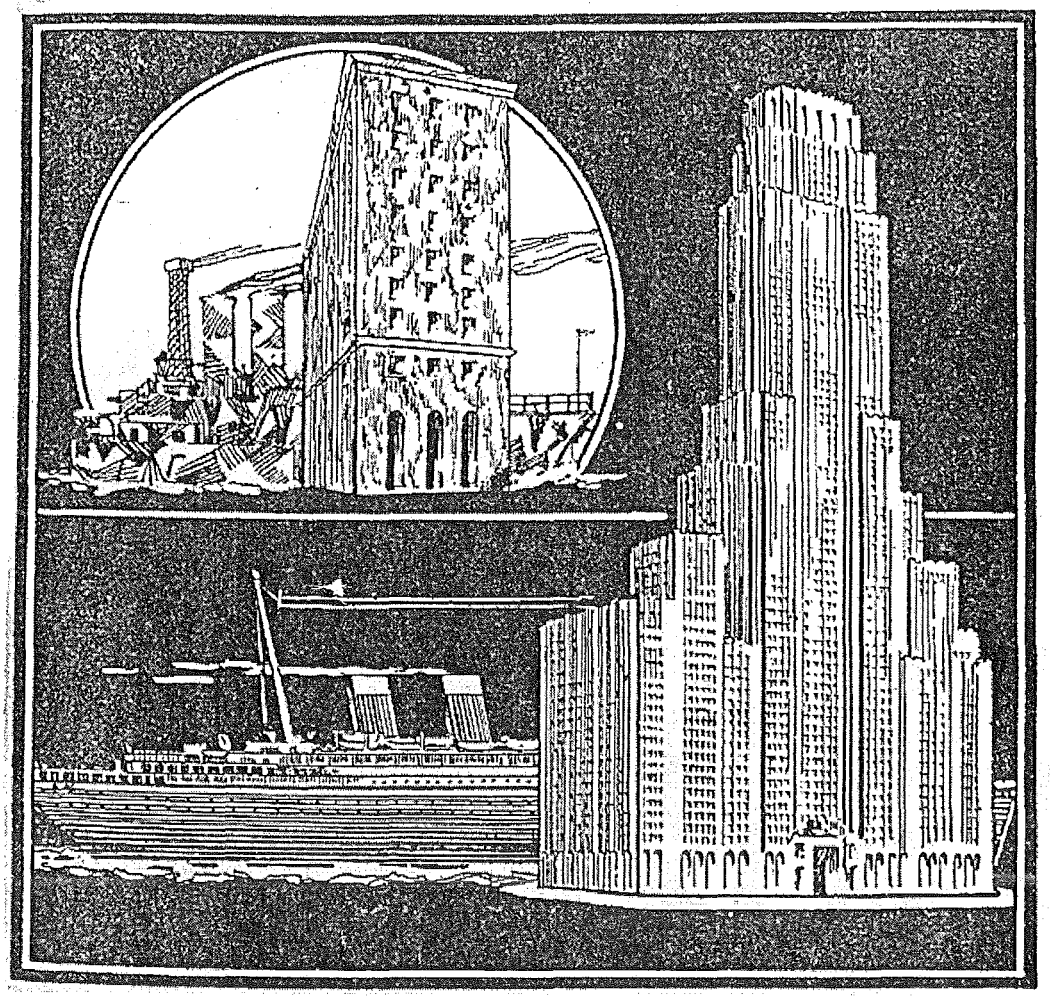
49. Skyscraper Diagram
Kimball, title page.



50. Atlanta City Hall
Craig, 46.

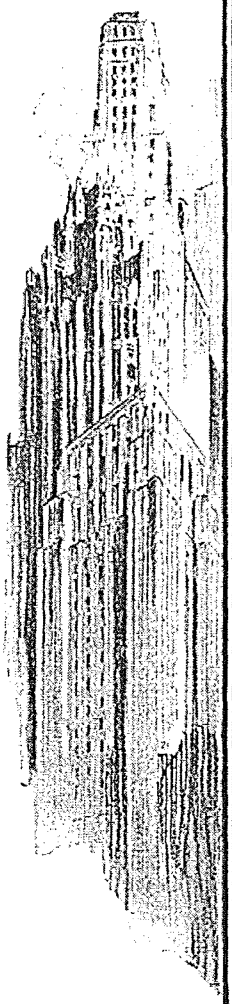
Why "Camouflage" Your Building?

Why disguise its structural planes?
Why reduce its visibility?
Why lessen its visual appeal?



51. "Why Camouflage Your Building?"
The Southern Architect and Building News, November 1928, 12.

Vertical Transportation *for* Office Buildings



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For office buildings of smaller size the long-established standard Otis Car Switch Control Elevator provides maximum service for buildings which do not require the highest speed, intensive service.

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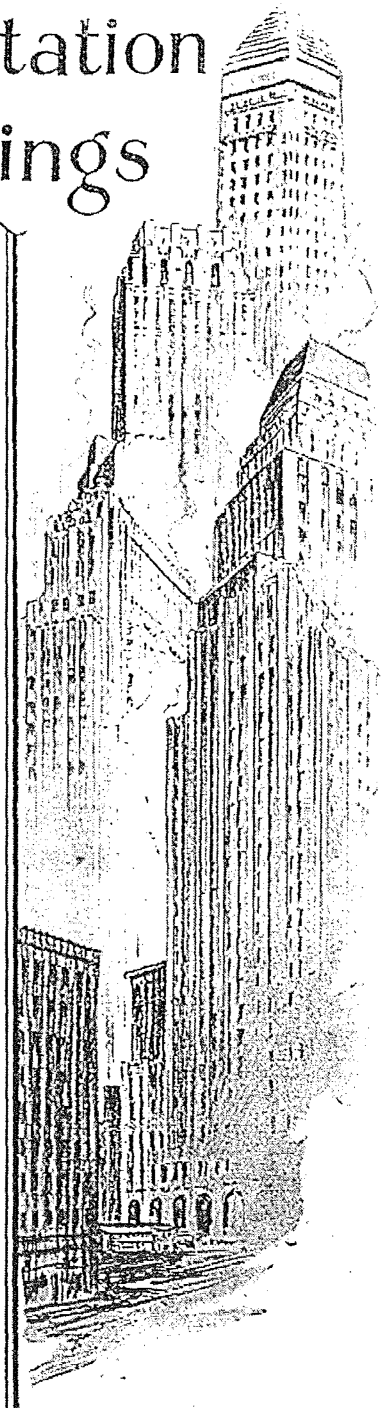
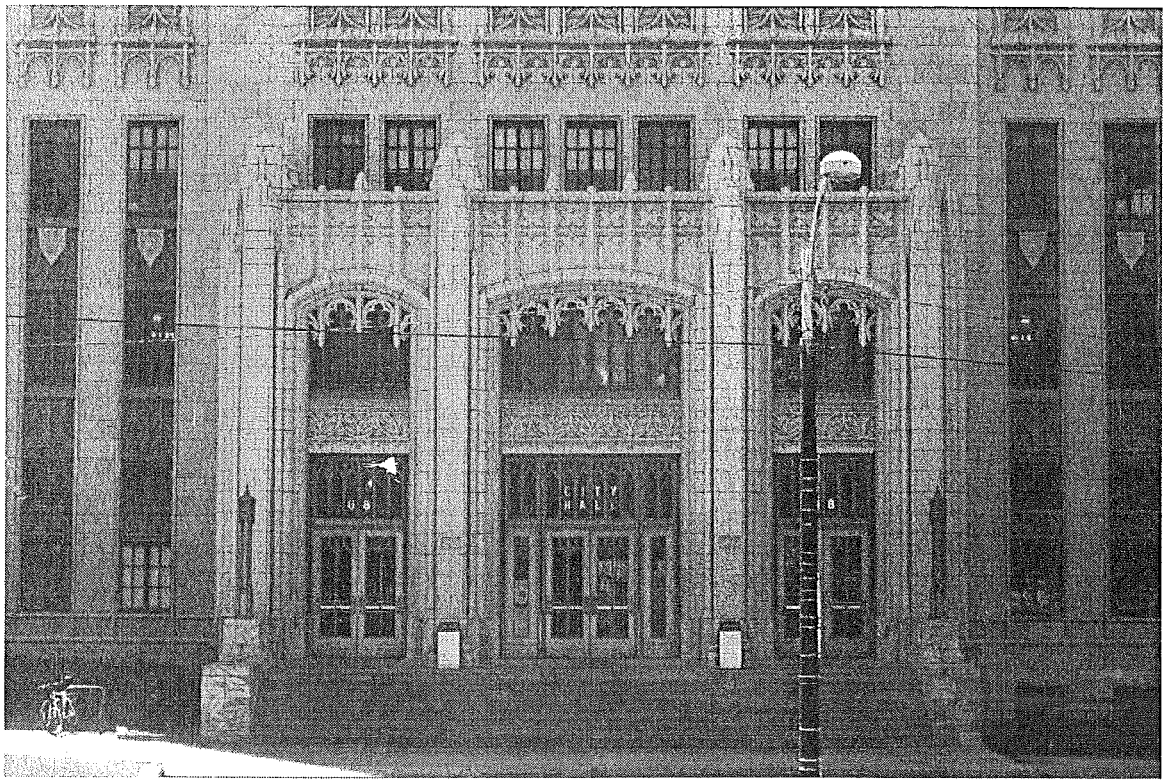


OTIS ELEVATOR COMPANY

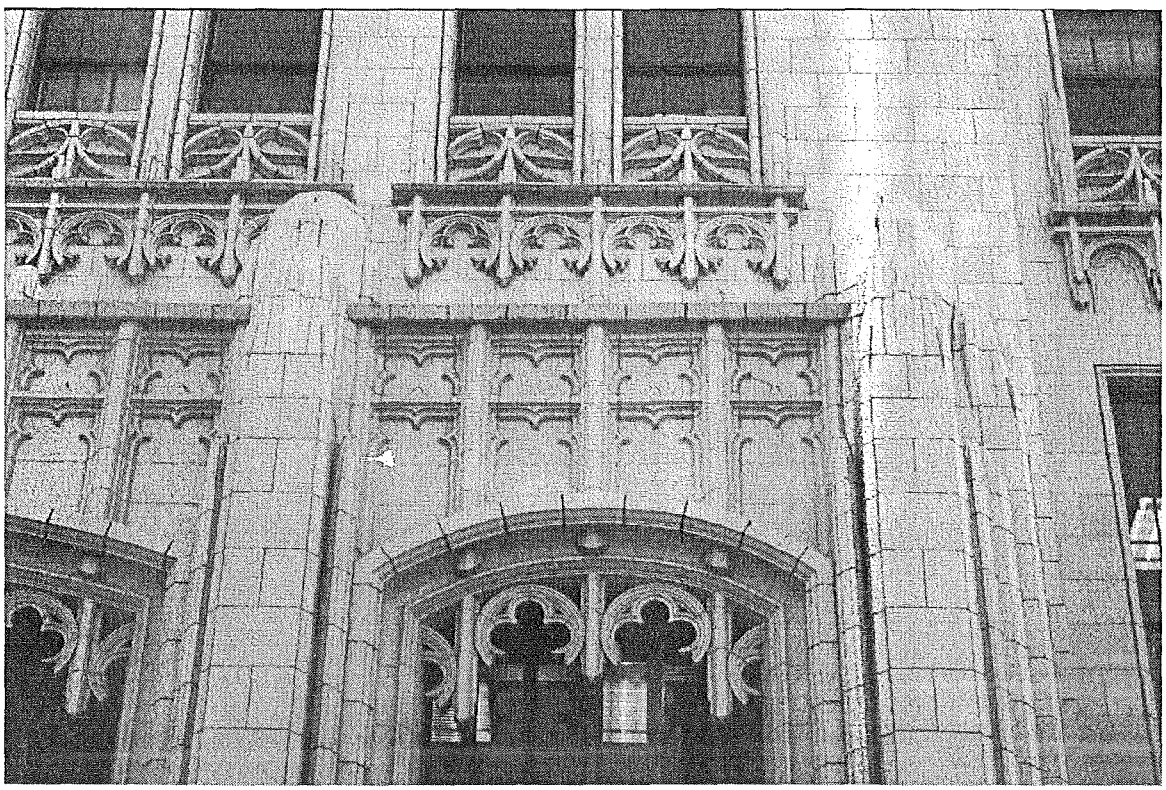
OFFICES IN ALL PRINCIPAL CITIES OF THE WORLD

52. "Vertical Transportation for Office Buildings" *The Southern Architect and Building News*, January 1930, 10.

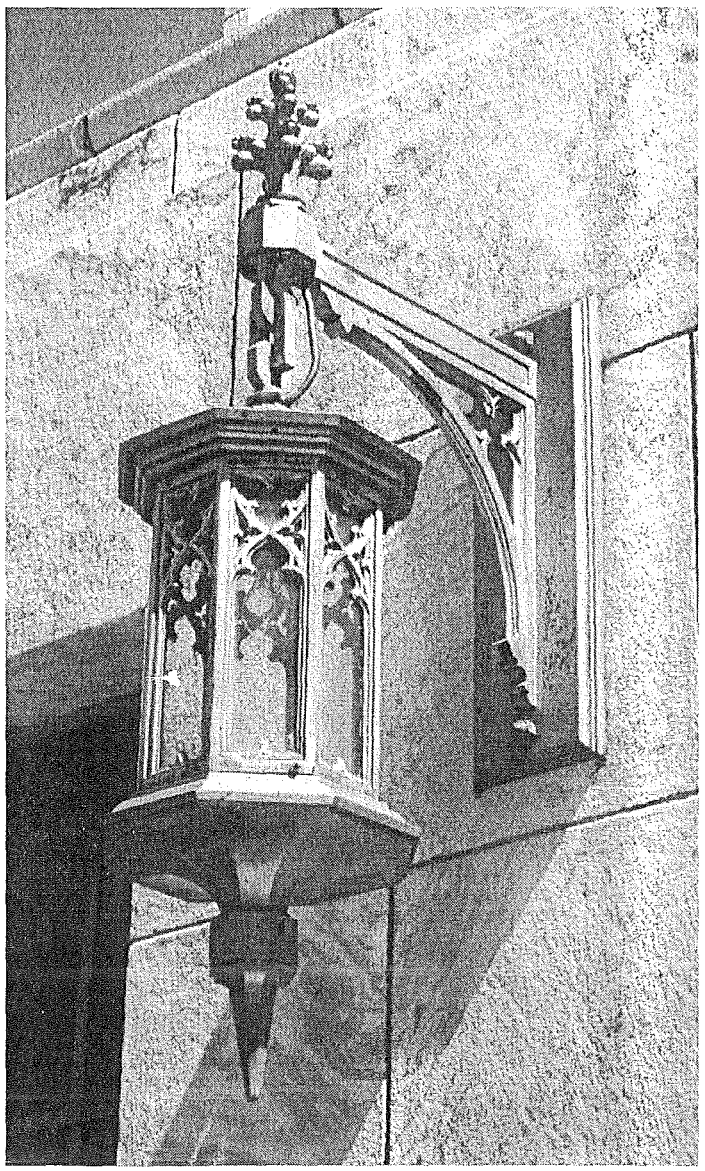


53. Entrance, Atlanta City Hall
Author

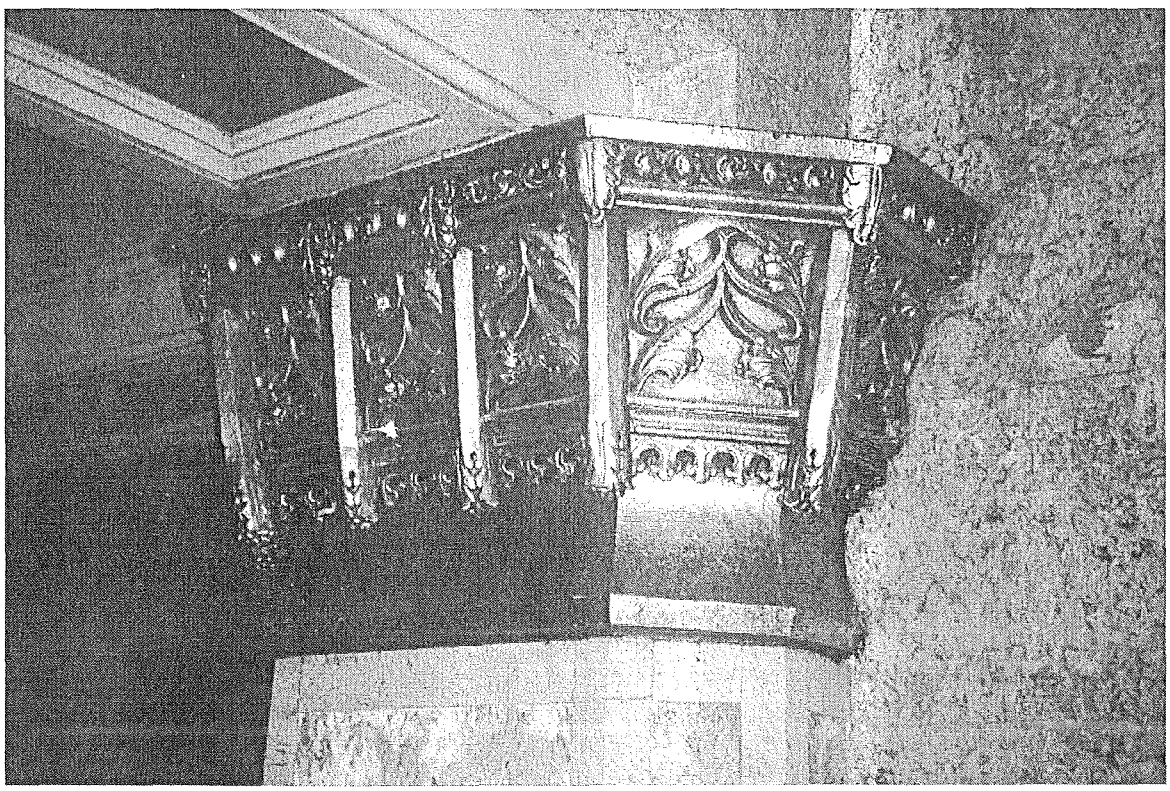
54. Entrance Detail, Atlanta City Hall
Author



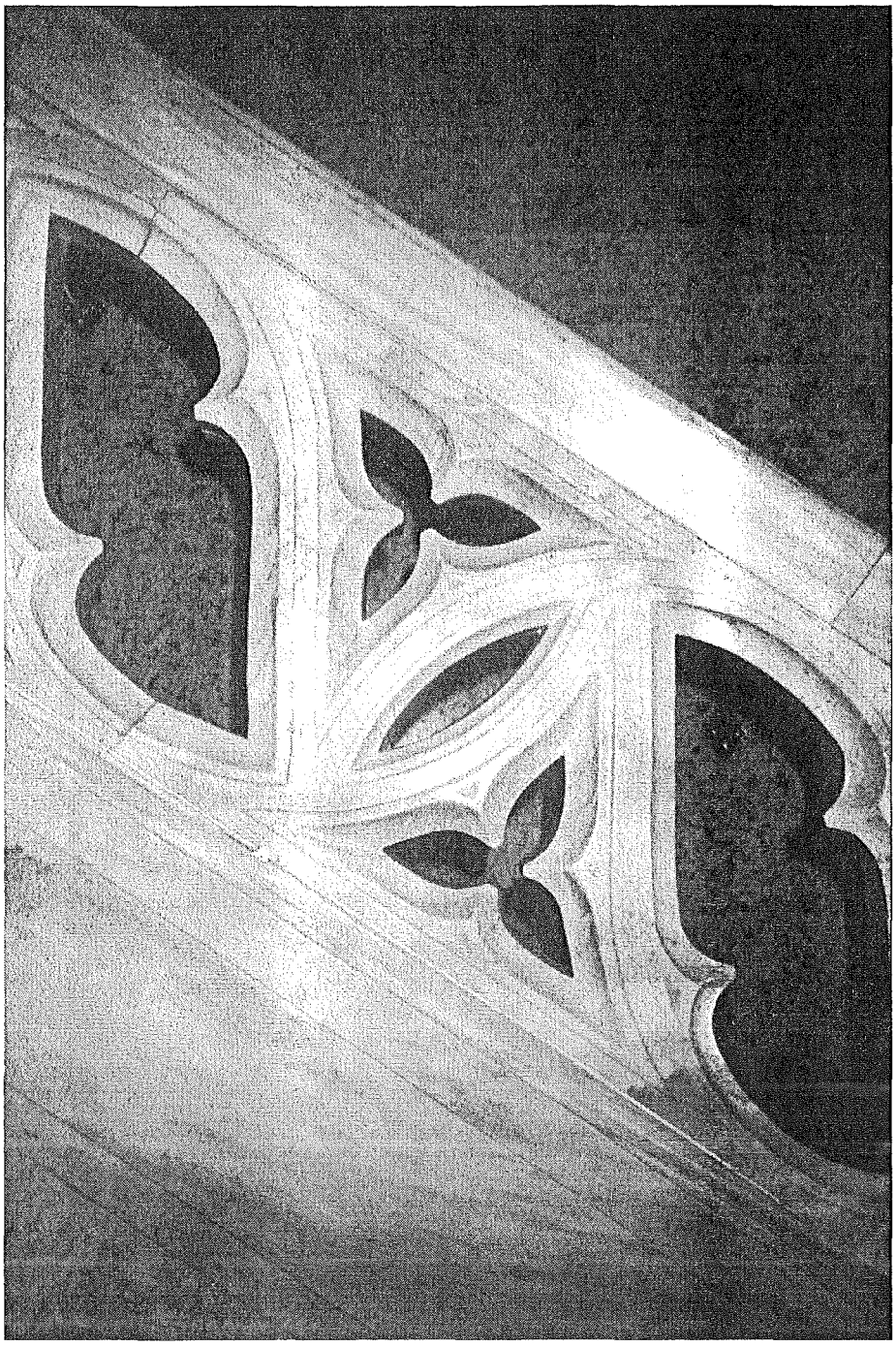
55. Entrance Detail, Atlanta City Hall
Author



56. Exterior Brass Lamp, Atlanta City Hall
Author

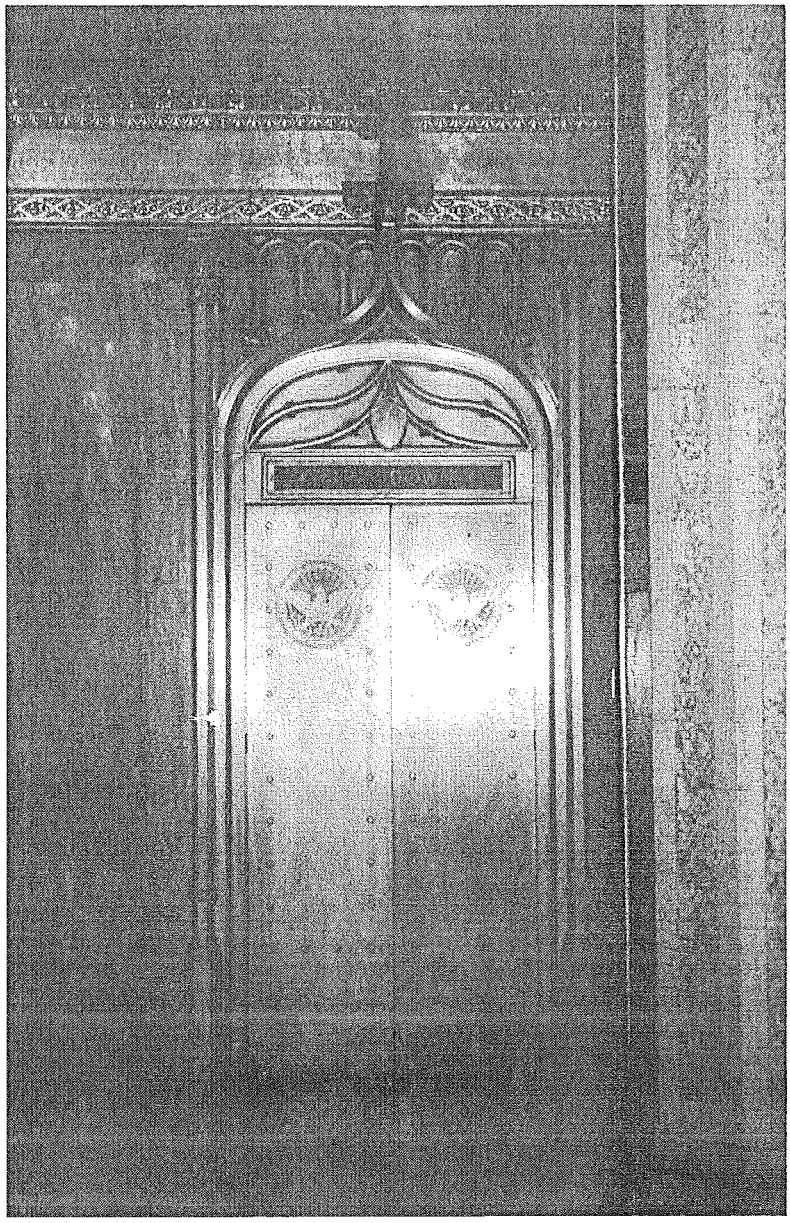


57. Capital Detail, First Floor Lobby, Atlanta City Hall
Author



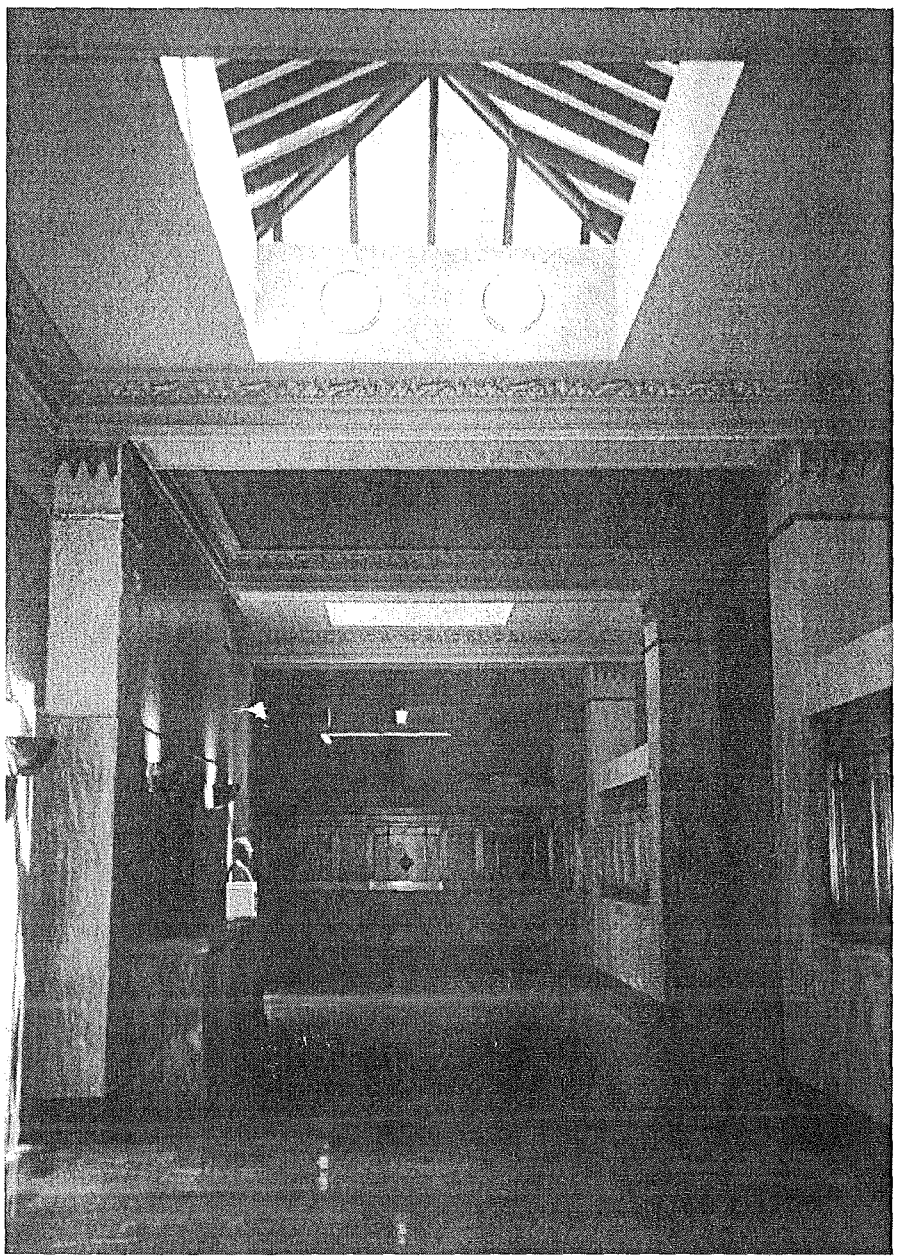
58. Main Staircase Detail, Atlanta City Hall
Author

59. Hanging Lamp, Second Floor Lobby, Atlanta City Hall
Author

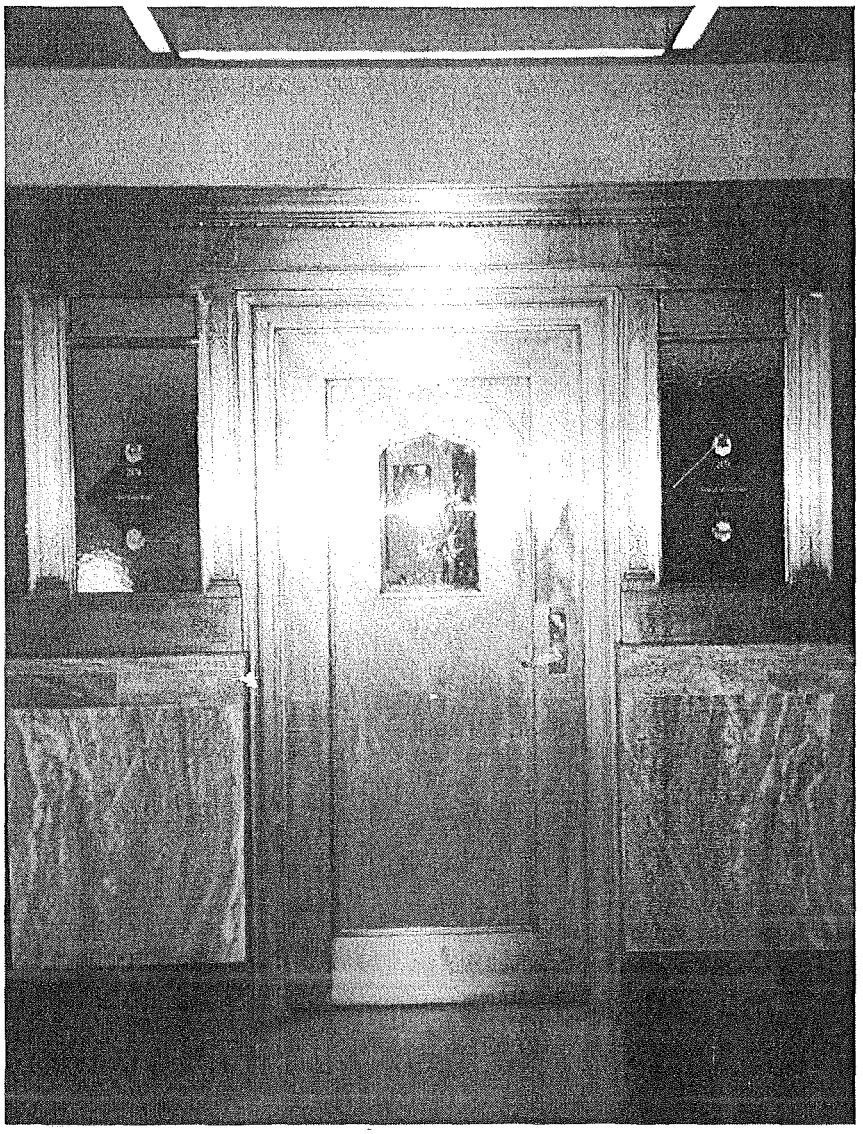


60. Elevator, First Floor Lobby, Atlanta City Hall
Author

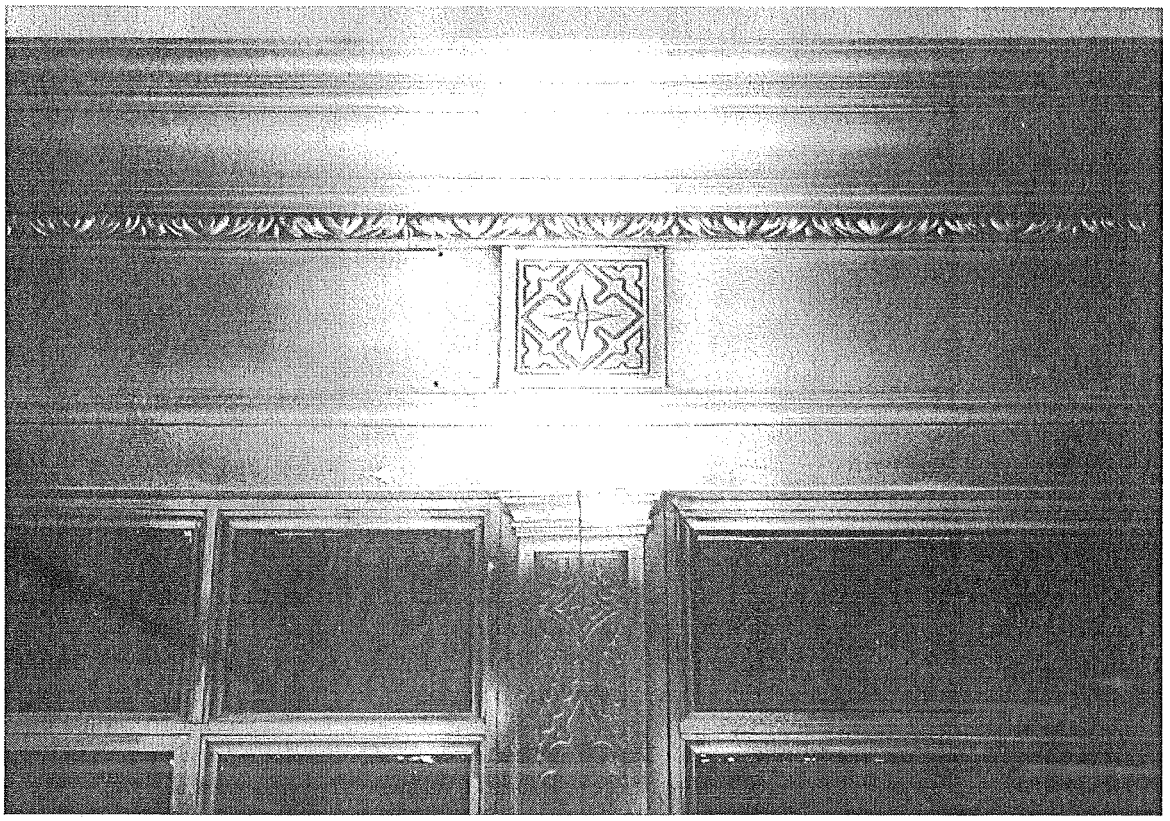
61. Elevator Detail, First Floor Lobby, Atlanta City Hall
Author



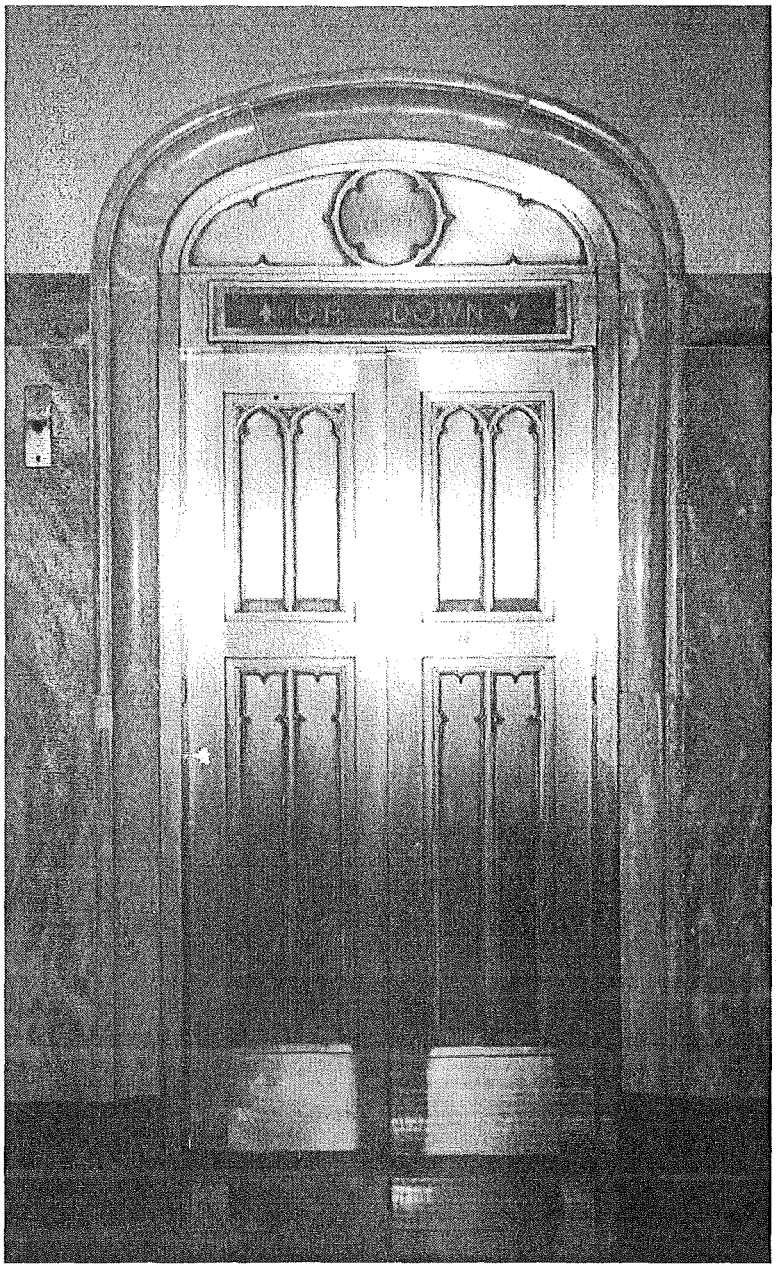
62. First Floor Hallway, Atlanta City Hall
Author



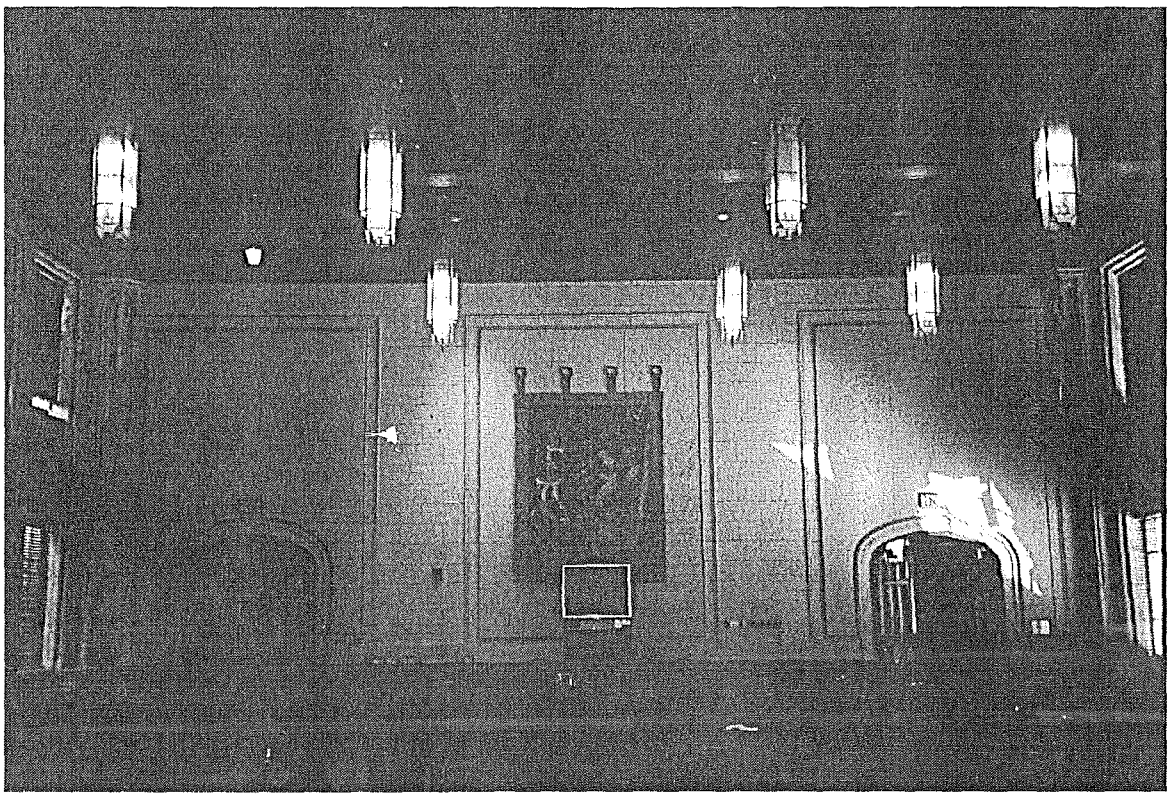
63. Brass Office Door, First Floor Hallway, Atlanta City Hall
Author



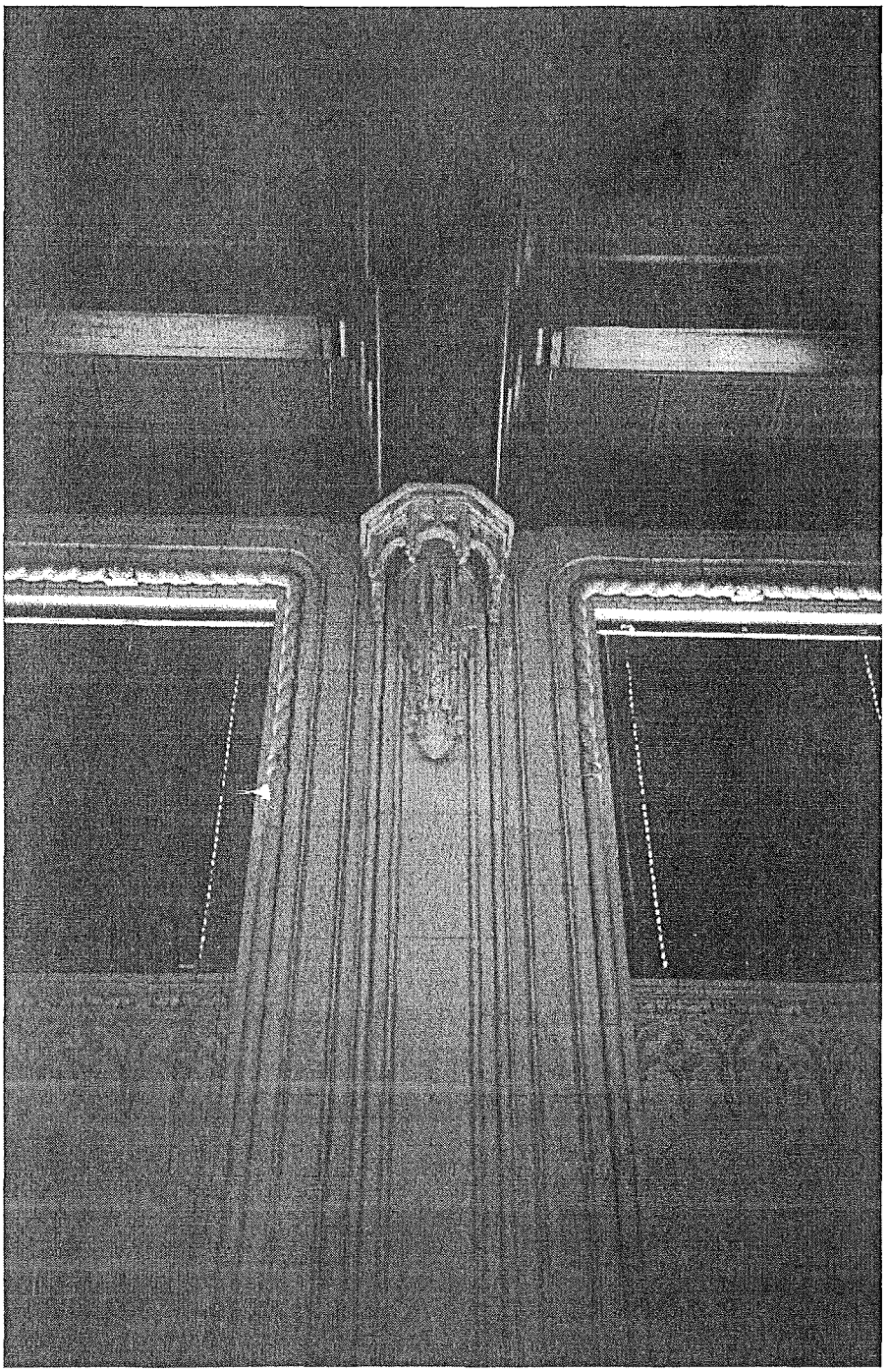
64. Detail, First Floor Hallway, Atlanta City Hall
Author



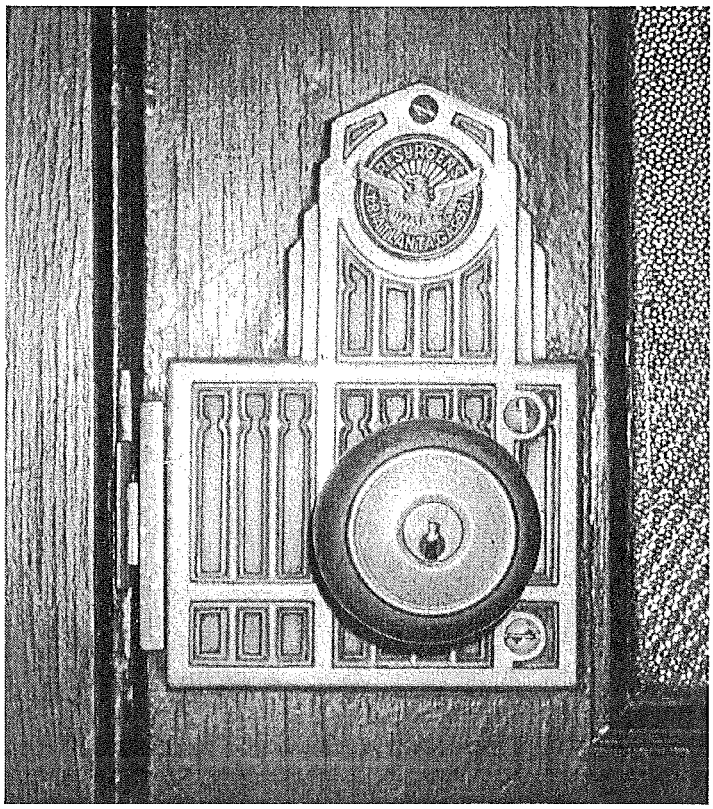
65. Brass Elevator Door, Second Floor Lobby, Atlanta City Hall
Author



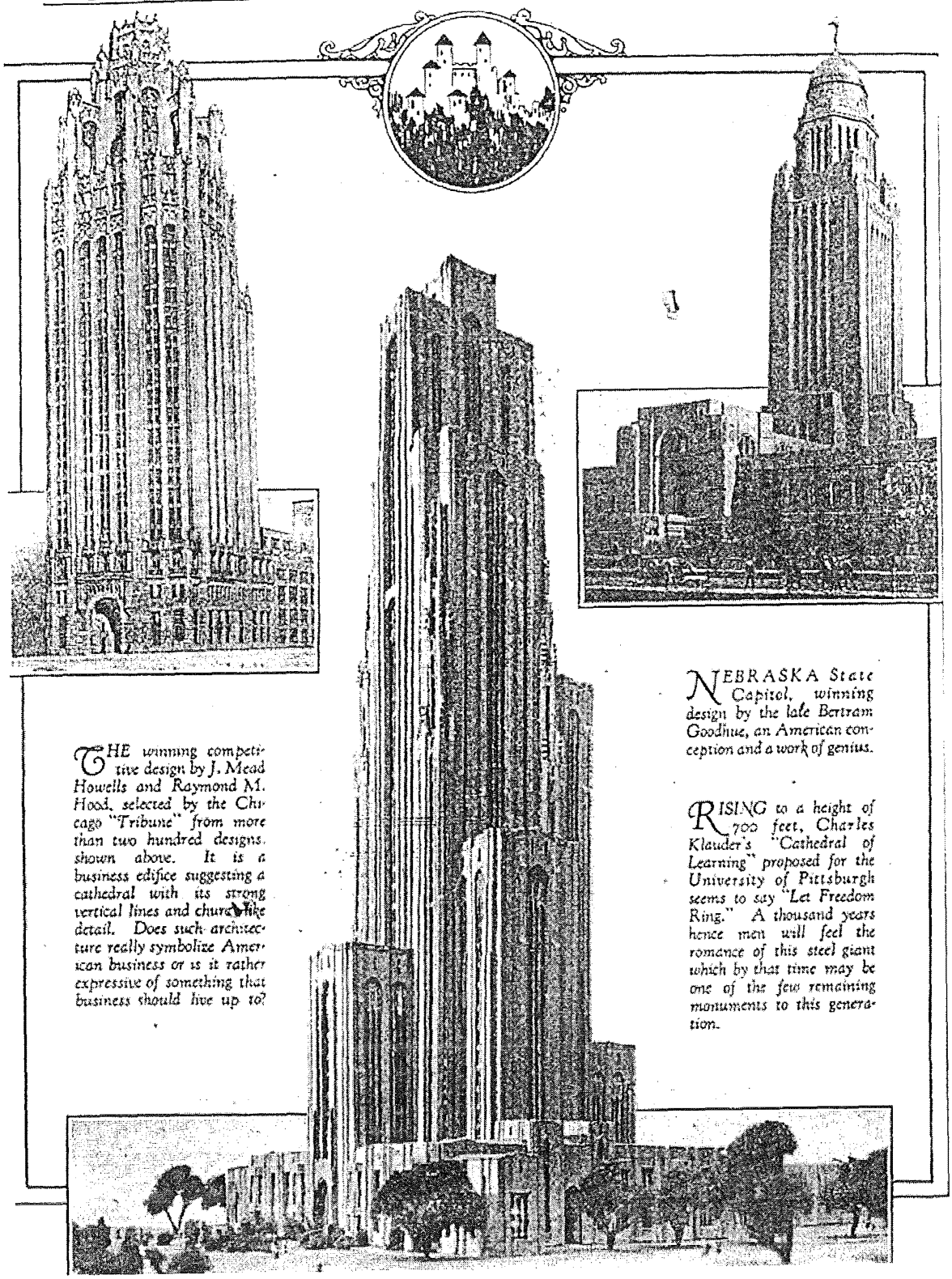
66. Council Chambers, Atlanta City Hall
Author



67. Detail, Council Chambers, Atlanta City Hall
Author



68. Doorknob, Second Floor Hallway, Atlanta City Hall
Author

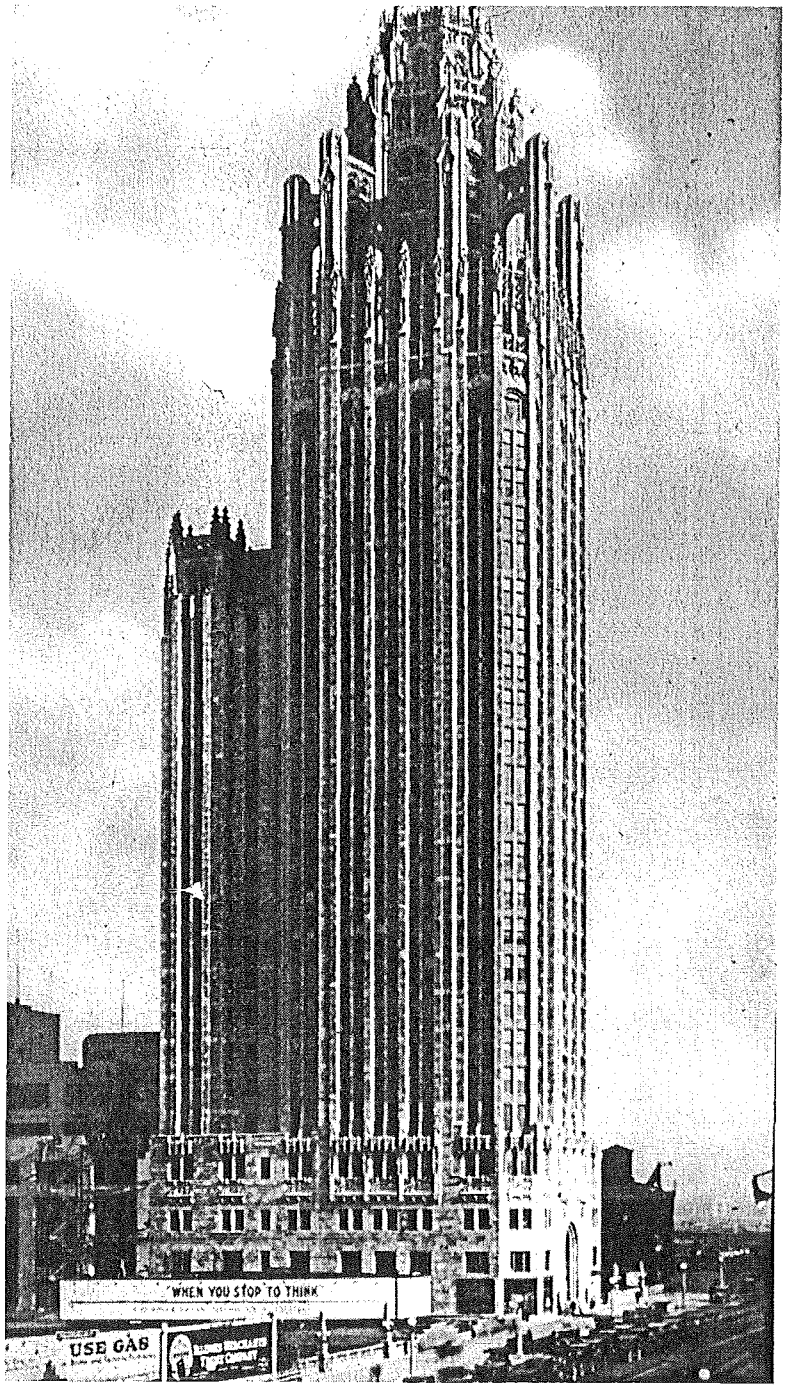


THE winning competitive design by J. Mead Howells and Raymond M. Hood, selected by the Chicago "Tribune" from more than two hundred designs shown above. It is a business edifice suggesting a cathedral with its strong vertical lines and church-like detail. Does such architecture really symbolize American business or is it rather expressive of something that business should live up to?

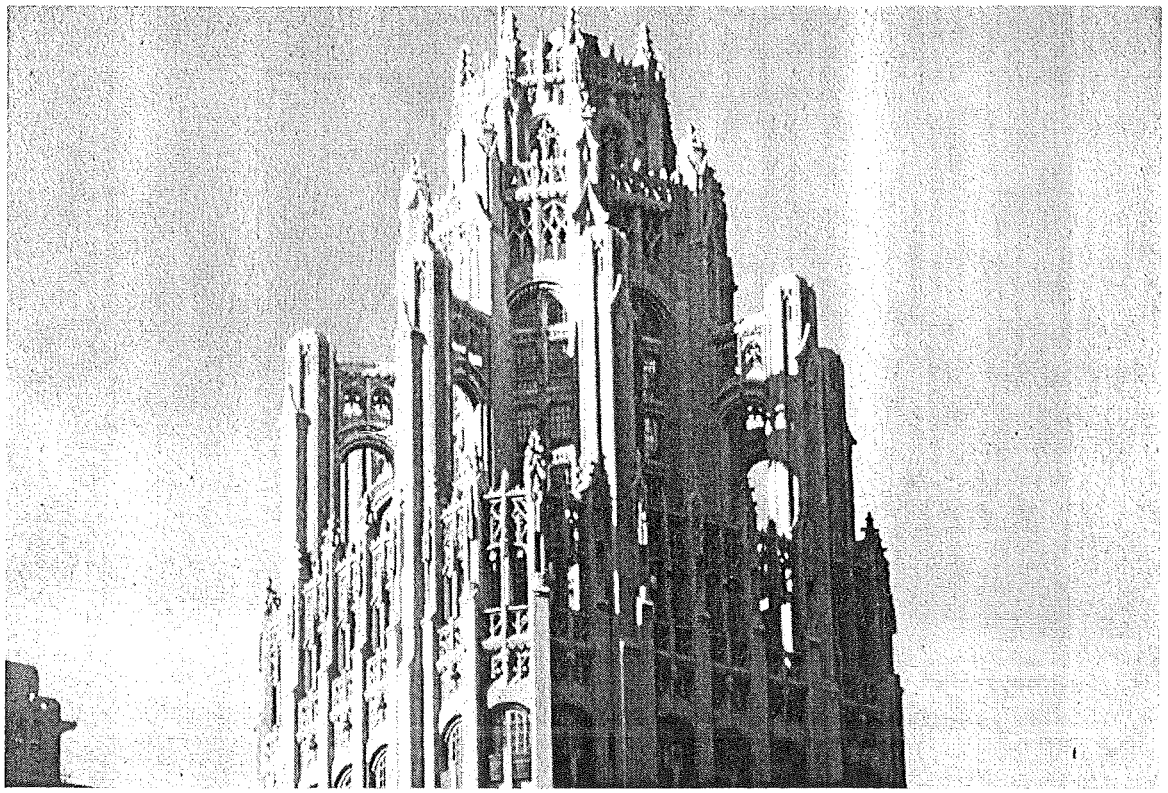
NEBRASKA State Capitol, winning design by the late Bertram Goodhue, an American conception and a work of genius.

RISING to a height of 700 feet, Charles Klauder's "Cathedral of Learning" proposed for the University of Pittsburgh seems to say "Let Freedom Ring." A thousand years hence men will feel the romance of this steel giant which by that time may be one of the few remaining monuments to this generation.

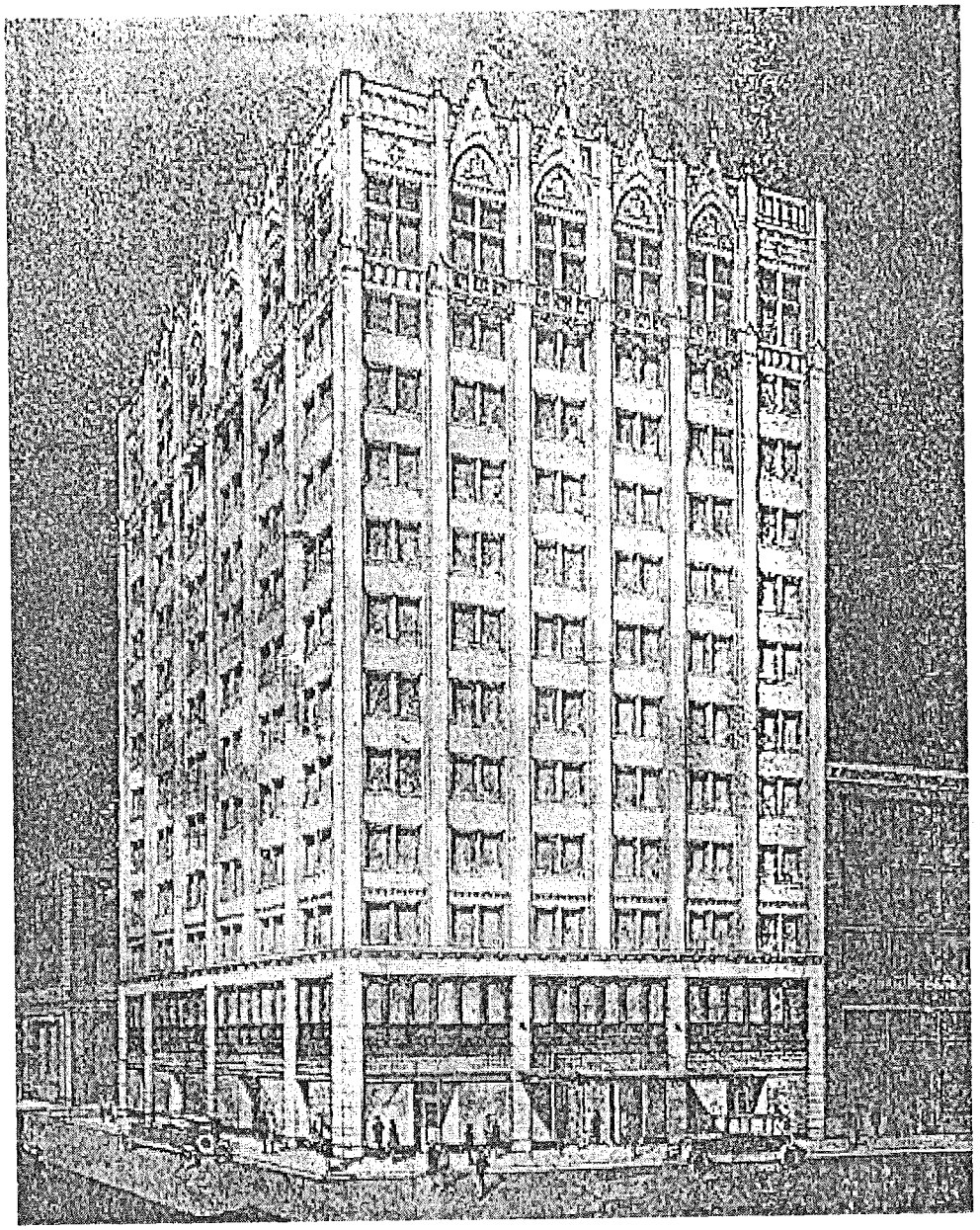
69. Gothic Skyscrapers
The City Builder, October 1925, 14.



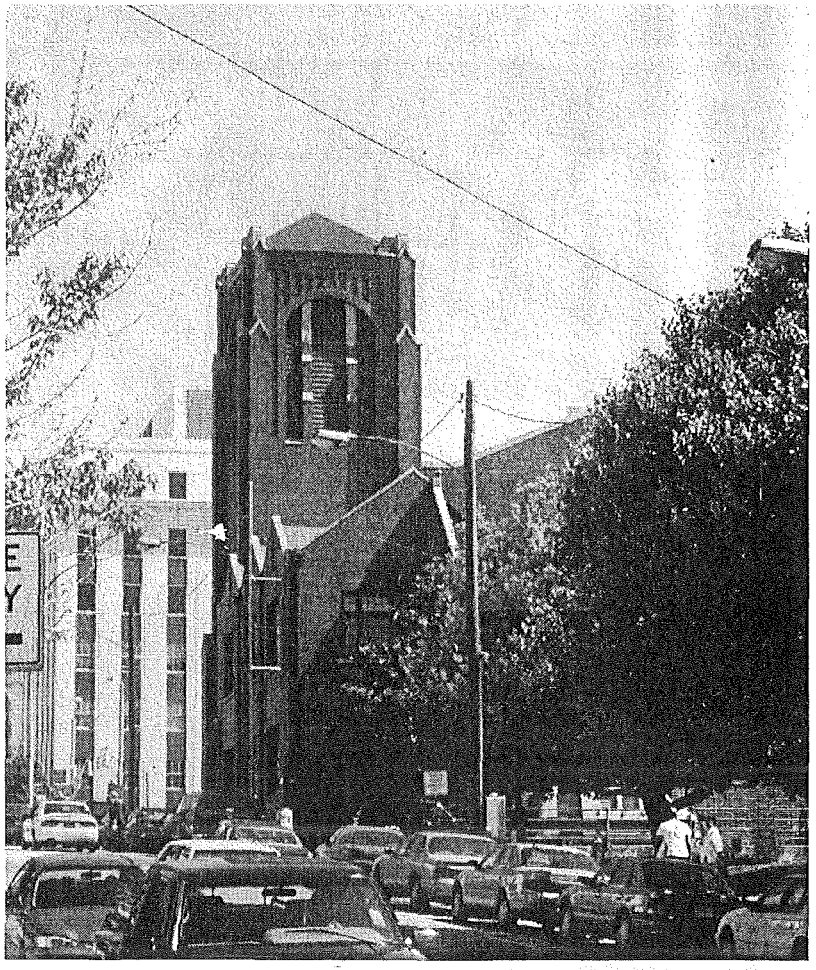
70. Chicago Tribune Building
Fiske Kimball Fine Arts Library, Slide Collection



71. Crown Detail, Chicago Tribune Building
Fiske Kimball Fine Arts Library, Slide Collection

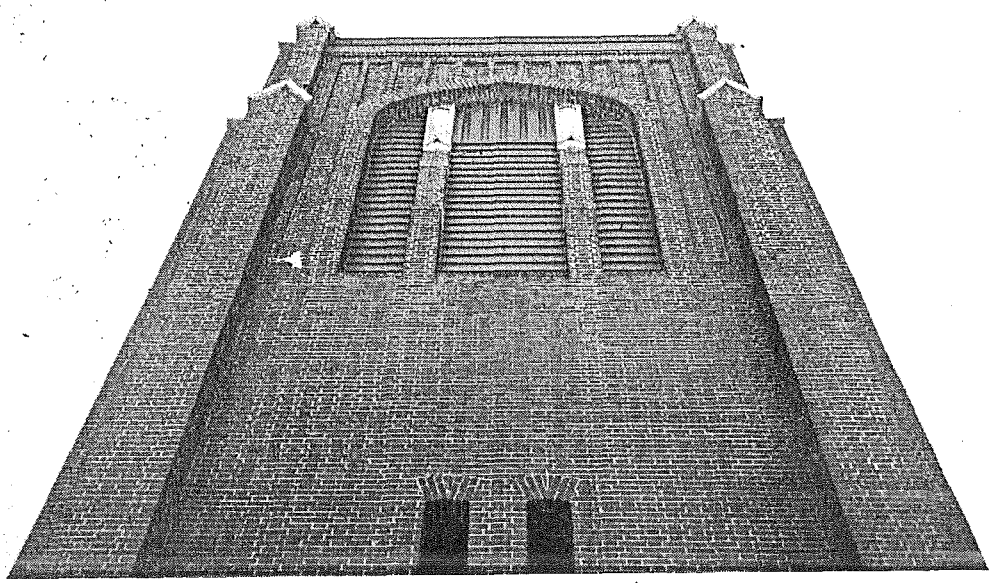


72. Proposed Chamber of Commerce Building
The City Builder, May 1925, 7.

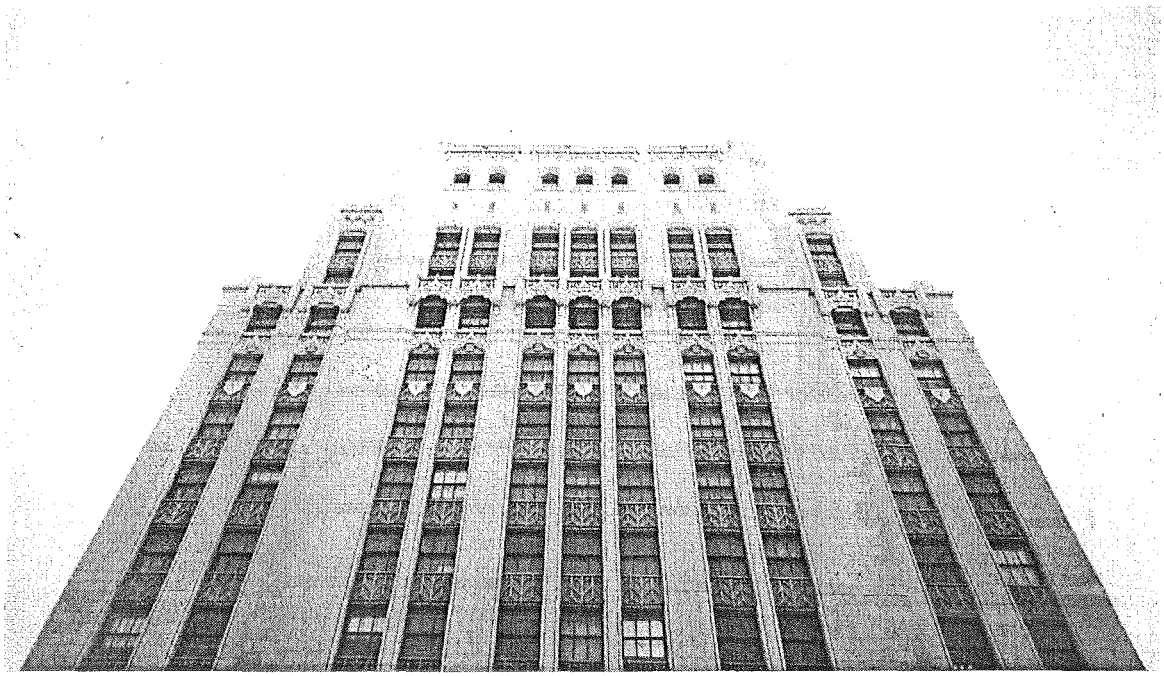


73. Trinity Methodist Church
Author

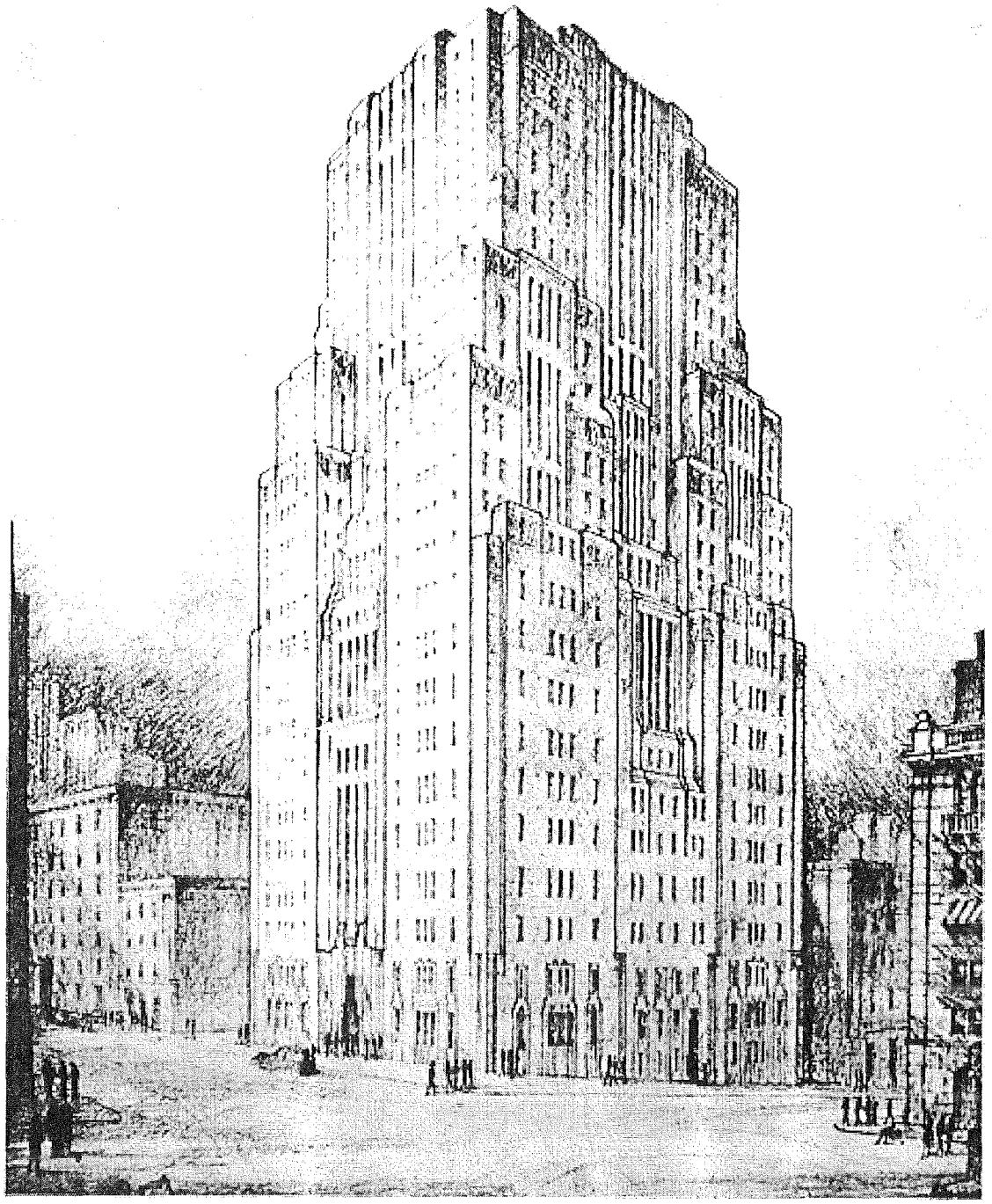
74. Aerial View of Atlanta City Hall, with Trinity Methodist in the Background
Craig, 42.



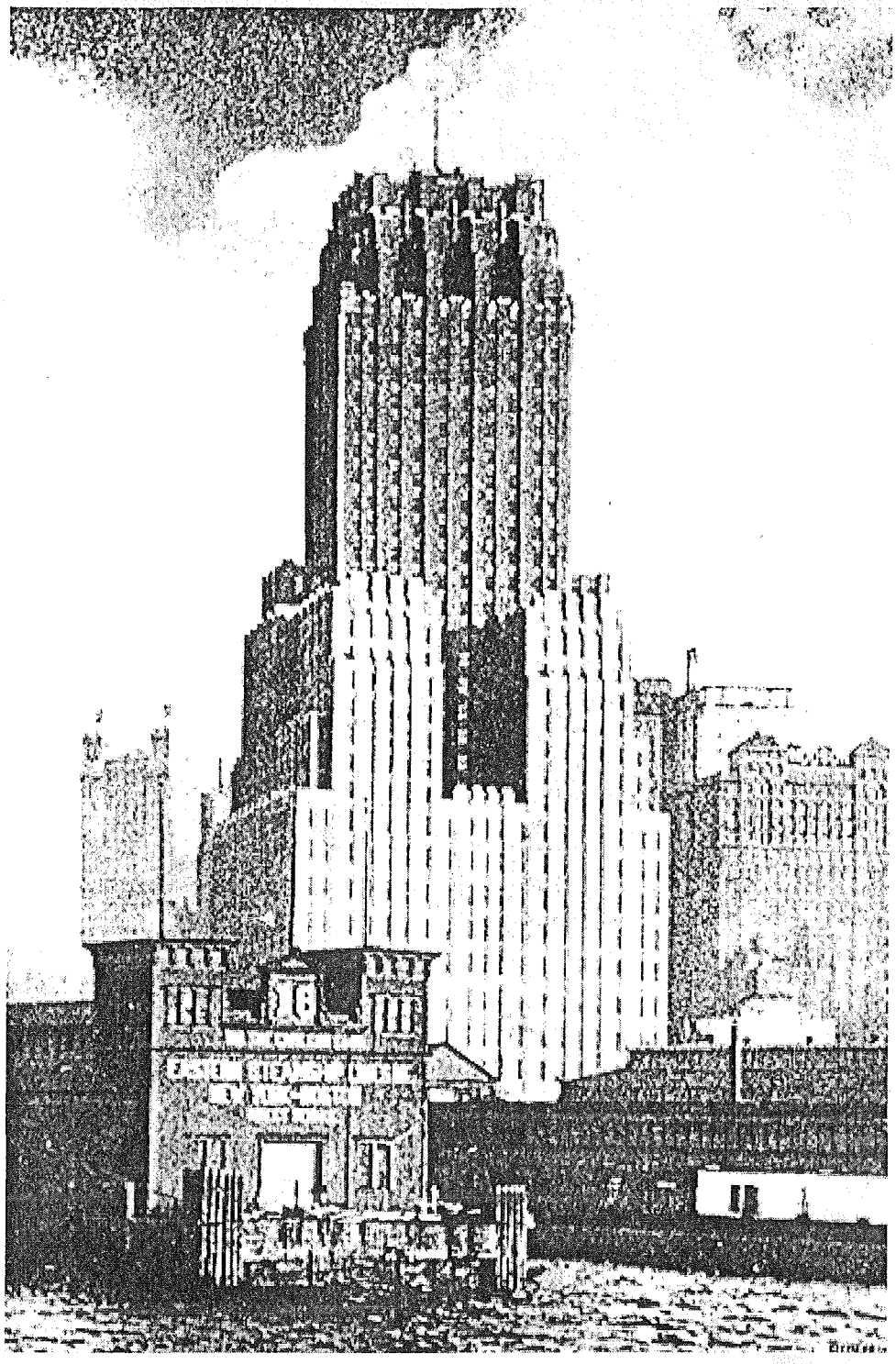
75. Tower, Trinity Methodist Church
Author



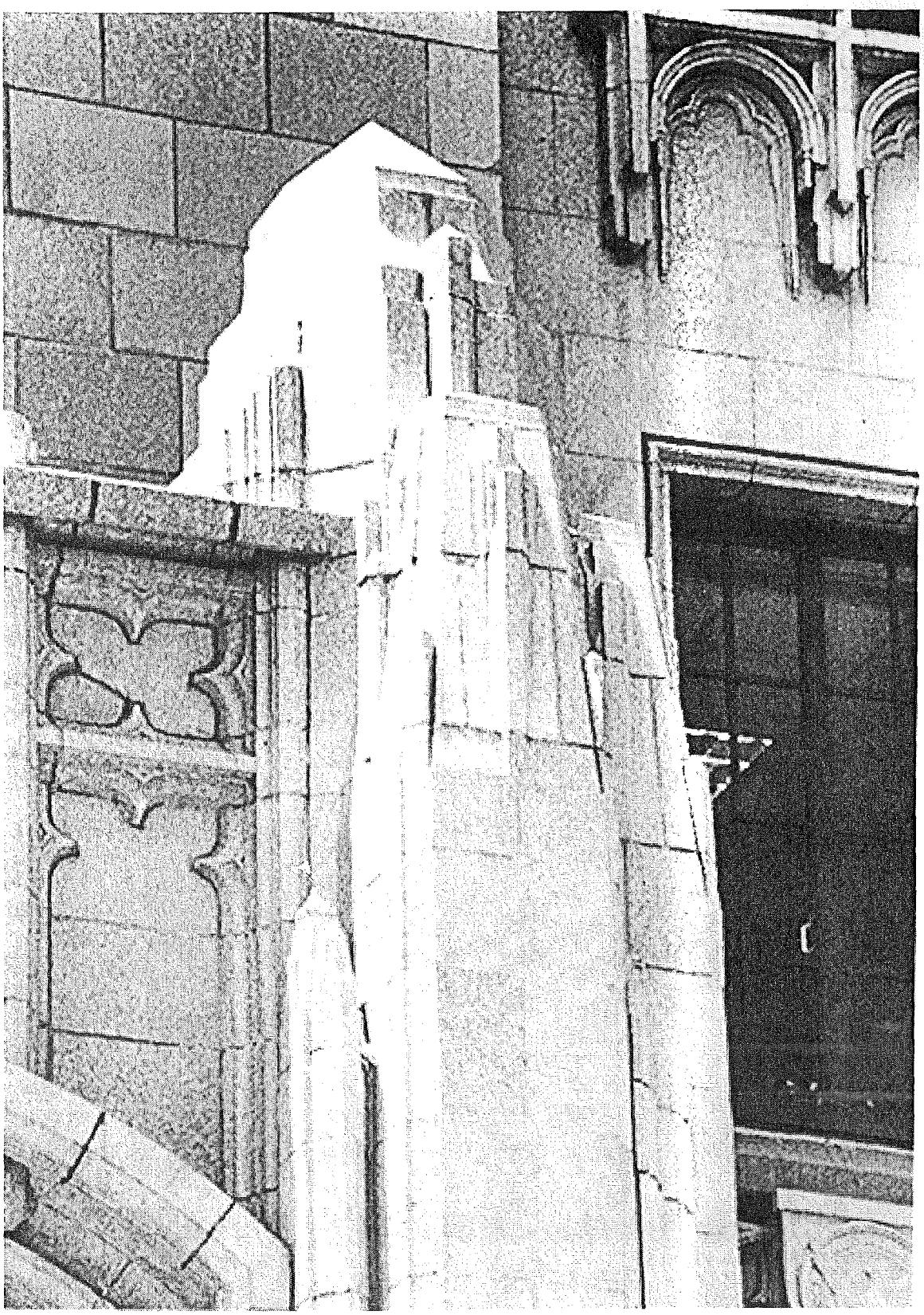
76. Tower, Atlanta City Hall
Author



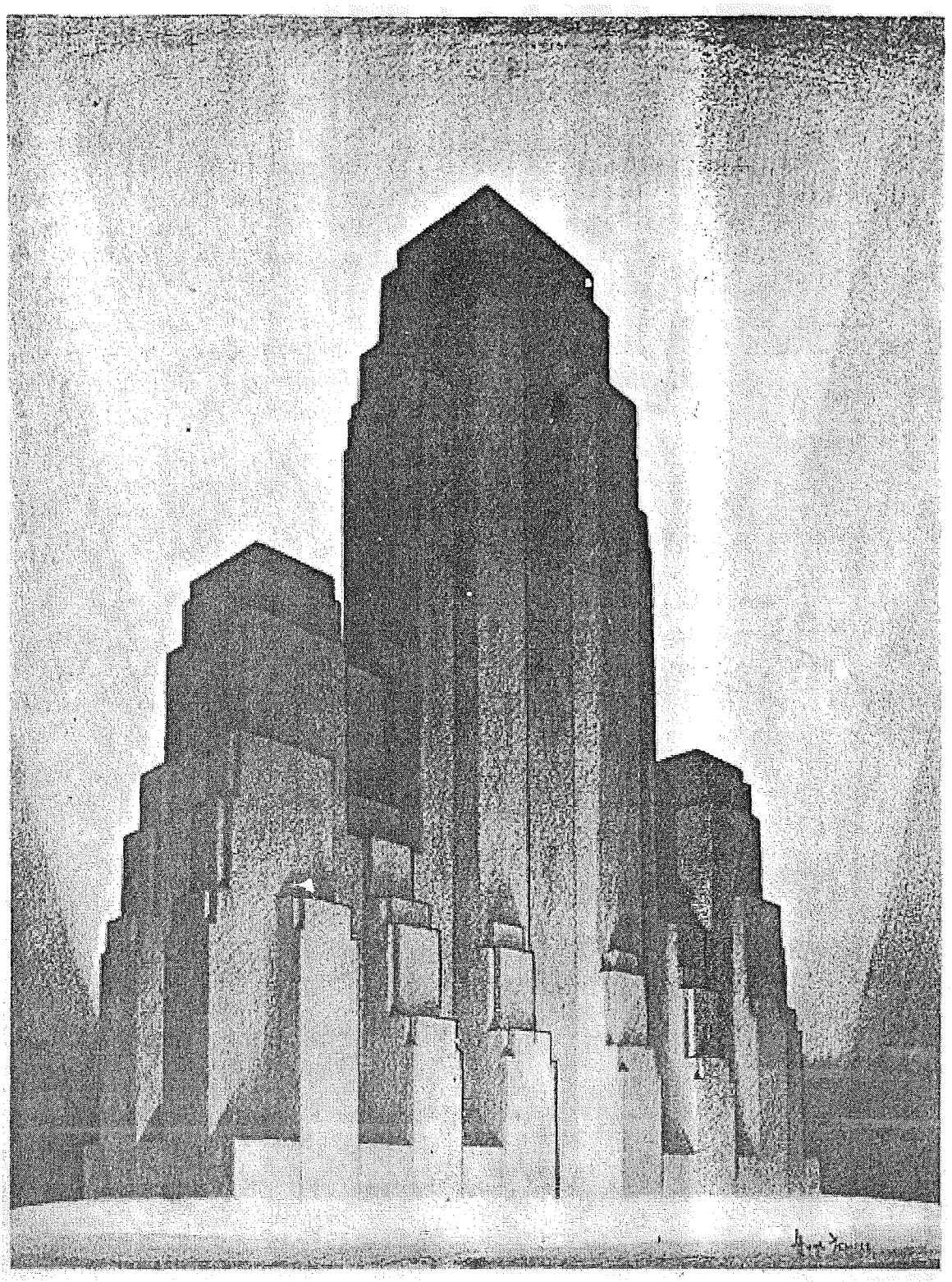
77. Southern Bell Building
Craig, 36.



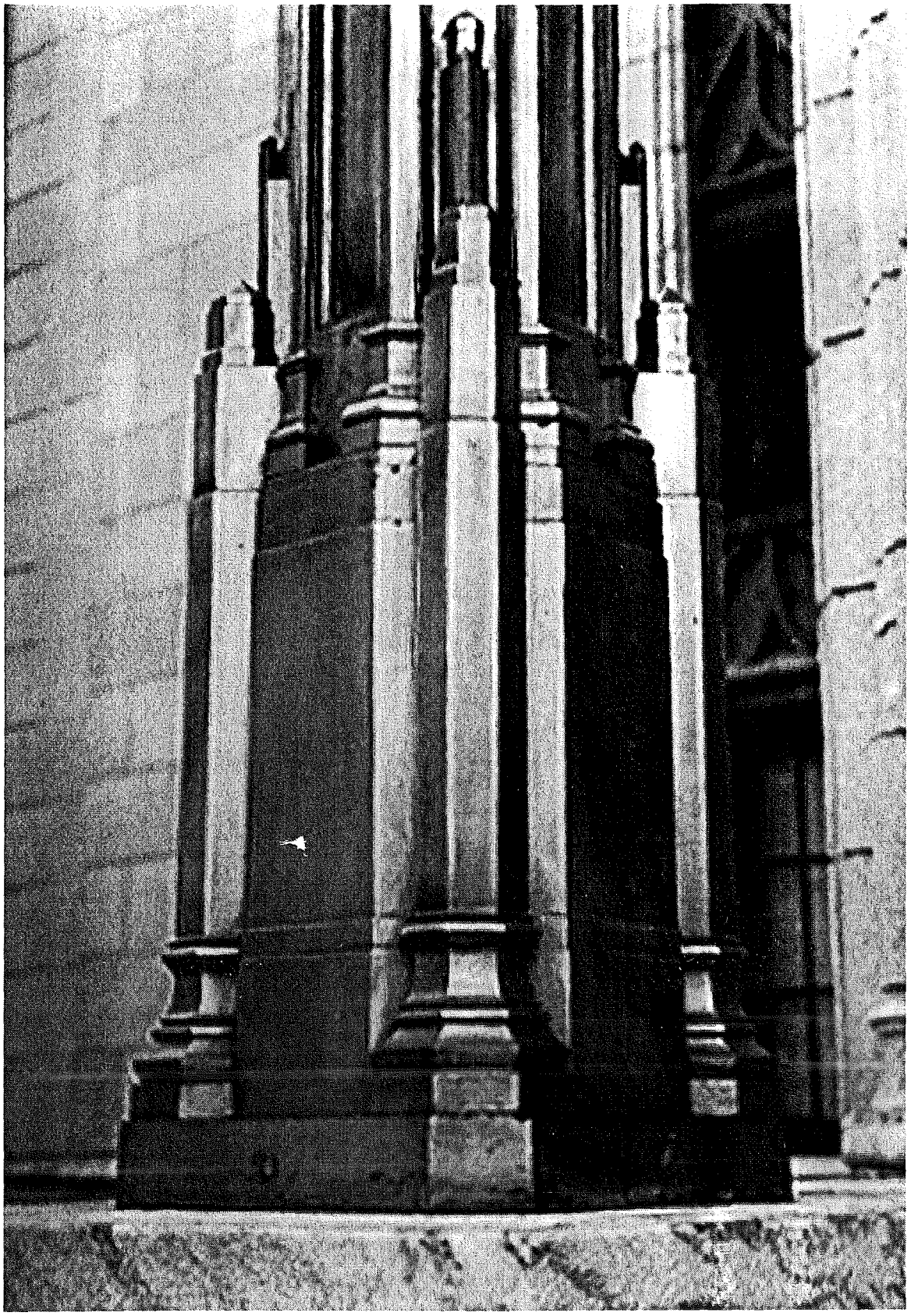
78. New York Telephone Building
Kimball



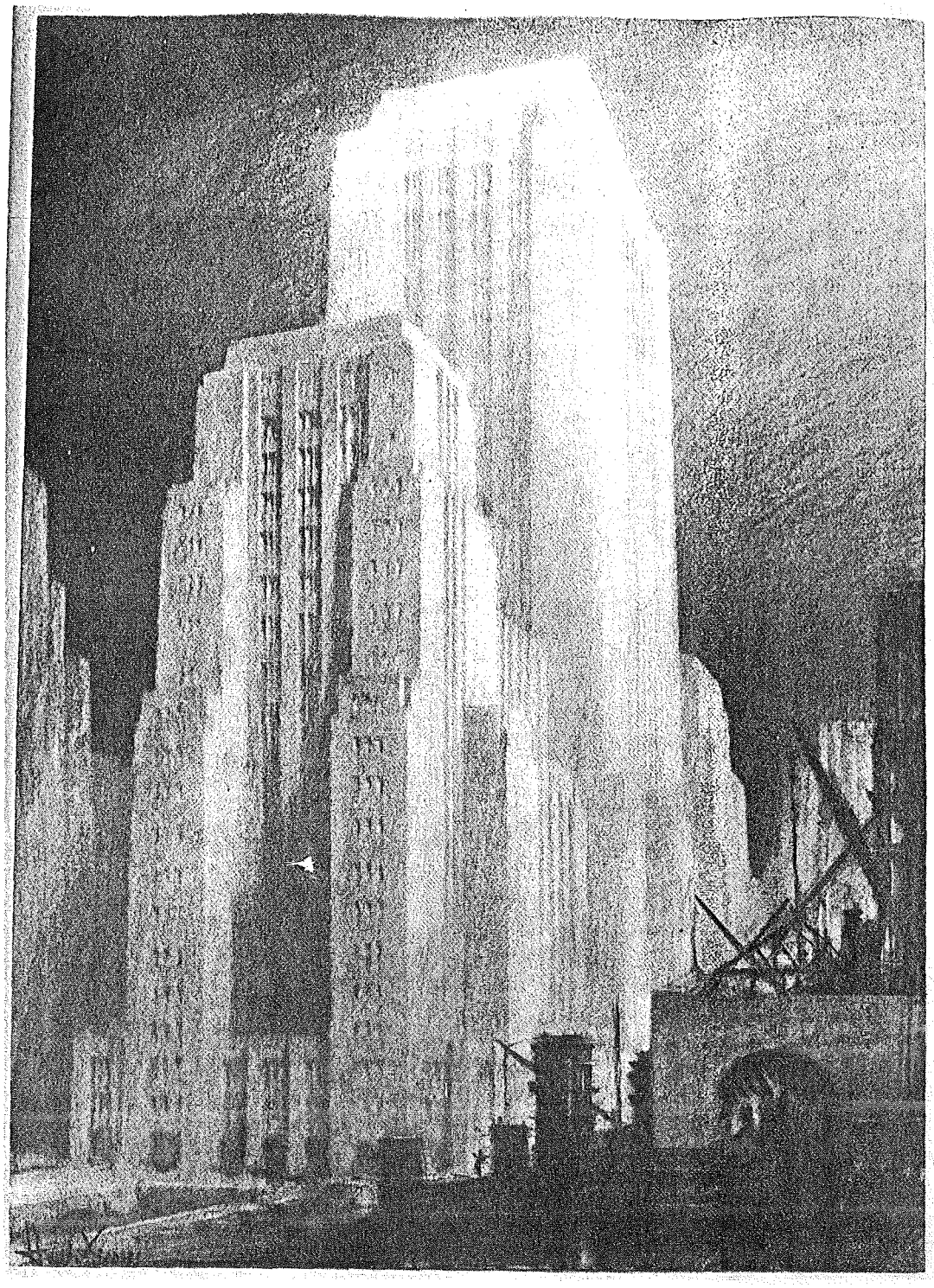
79. Detail of Entrance Pier, Atlanta City Hall
Craig, 45.



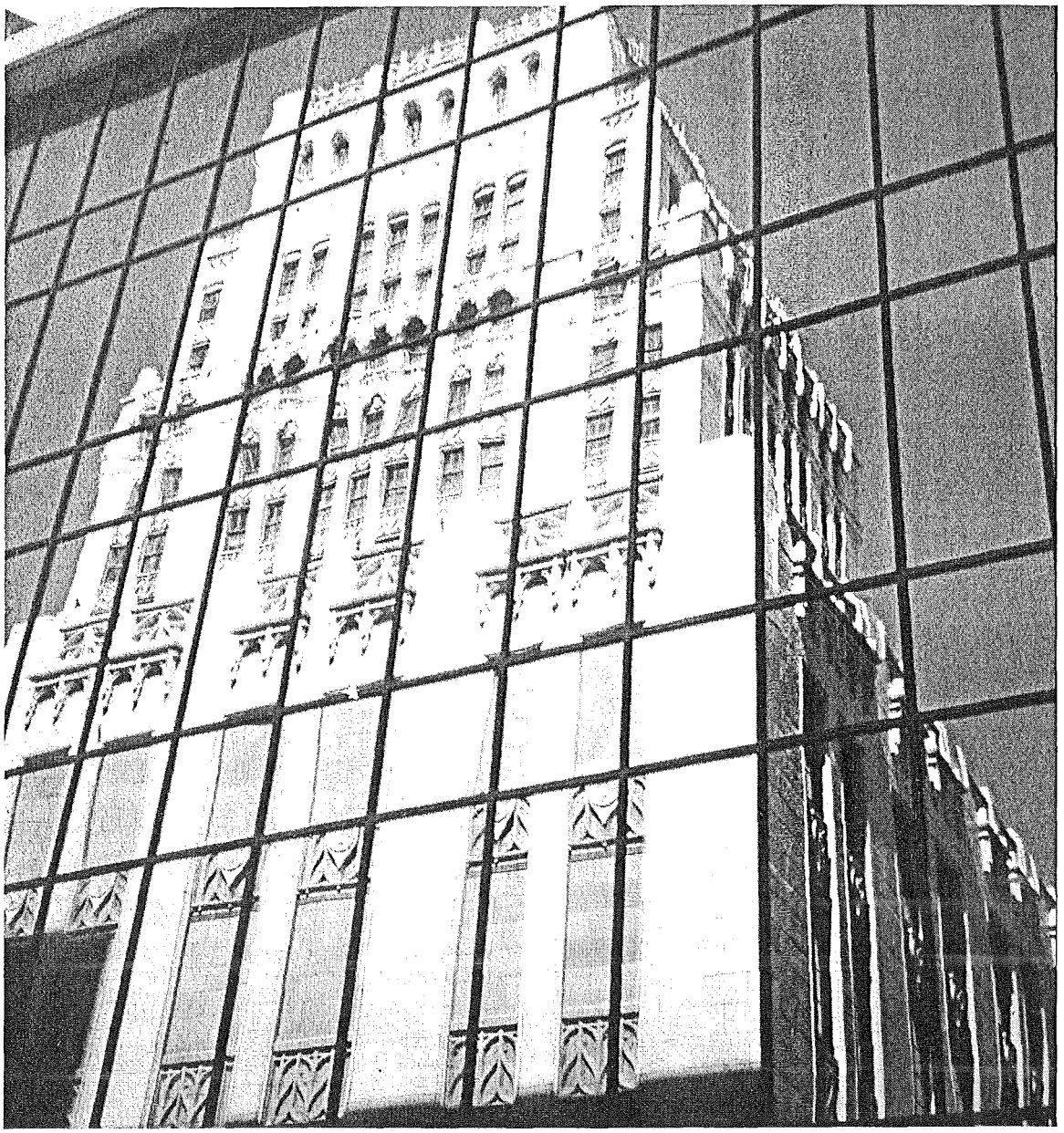
80. "Fourth Stage" Massing Study by Hugh Ferriss
Ferriss, 79.



81. Detail of Lamppost, Atlanta City Hall
Author



82. "Concrete" Building Design by Hugh Ferriss
Ferriss, 103.



83. Atlanta City Hall, Reflection of Tower in New Addition
Author