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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

100 Years
of Campus
ARCHITECTURE

by Allen S. Weller

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CENTENNIAL YEAR 1967-68



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100 Years
of Campus
ARCHITECTURE
at the
University of Illinois
by Allen S. Weller

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"It is well to have, not only what men have thought and felt, but what their hands have handled, and their strength wrought. . . ."

JOHN RUSKIN, *The Lamp of Memory*

A hundred years of history at the University of Illinois have left a tangible record in the stones and bricks and steel and concrete of its three campuses. Obviously, without its physical plant a university could not exist, but buildings reflect many things other than pure utility. A campus is a diary of the times reflecting the vigor of the University, the economic and social climate of the country, and the changing tastes and ideas of each era.

The University of Illinois has been fortunate in its building program. Some magnificent challenges have arisen. Chicago Circle offered planners a breathtaking opportunity to create a campus at a single stroke. At the Medical Center in Chicago, planners have had to grapple successfully with a collision of powerful expansion forces against the restraints imposed by a complex urban setting. At the Urbana-Champaign campus, architecture reflects the major tastes and trends of the century past — leavened by unity but lightened by innovation.

The architecture of a university can be read by the trained observer just as a geologist reads history in a river bed. Dean Allen Weller of the College of Fine and Applied Arts reads the story of a hundred years of architecture at the University of Illinois; John Severns, architect, writes of the Medical Center campus. Dolores M. Hanson made vital contributions to the preparation of the text and supervised the production of the book.

CHARLES S. HAVENS

*University Director of Physical Plant Planning
and Construction*

University Hall

URBANA-CHAMPAIGN CAMPUS

When the University of Illinois (then known as Illinois Industrial University) opened in 1868, it was housed in a former seminary building which stood on the present Illinois Field. Students lived, studied, and attended classes in this single building until 1871 when a second building was constructed.

University Hall, an important landmark of those early years, was built in 1874 and stood until 1938 on the site now occupied by the Illini Union. Of an uncompromising Victorian style, with twin towers at each end, University Hall was the work of John Mills Van Osdel who is credited with being the first professional architect in Chicago or the West. Van Osdel was a member of the University's Board of Trustees from 1867 to 1873.

University Hall housed all aspects of the University — classrooms, offices, library, chapel, a natural history museum, a museum of engineering and architecture, even an art gallery complete with casts of Greek and Roman statues. The University of Arkansas purchased Van Osdel's plans for University Hall in 1873 and erected an identical structure which still stands at Fayetteville.



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Altgeld Hall

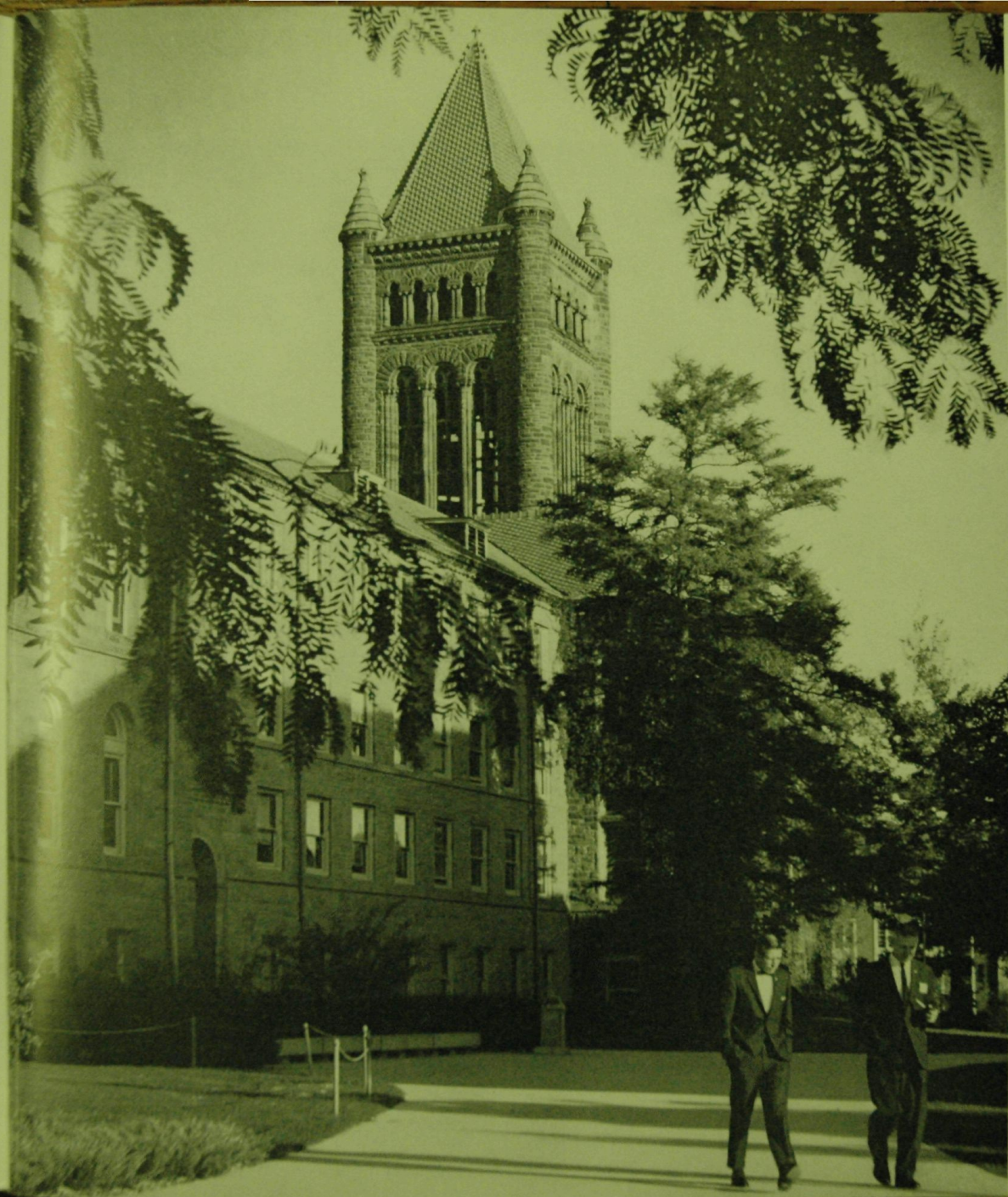
Altgeld Hall, completed in 1897, was built and used as the University Library for nearly thirty years. The building then served for almost the same length of time as the home of the College of Law, and since 1955 has been assigned to the Department of Mathematics. The architect was Nathan C. Ricker, a graduate of the University who founded the Department of Architecture and for many years served as Dean of the College of Engineering.

Altgeld Hall's handsome Romanesque tower, rough surfaces of a hard pink sandstone, excellent detail, and asymmetrical but balanced composition, make it a notable period piece. The only building of Romanesque design on campus, Altgeld Hall reflects with considerable distinction the style which, in this country, is chiefly associated with Architect H. H. Richardson.

As a library, Altgeld Hall, with a capacity of 90,000 volumes, reflected the dimensions of the University in the 1890's. The building was named in 1940 for John Peter Altgeld, during whose term as governor of Illinois (1893-1897) the University received significant appropriations, and whose personal enthusiasm for medieval architecture led to the rejection of two earlier designs.

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Davenport Hall

The architectural eclecticism of the turn of the century is shown in the various styles of the earlier University buildings. By 1901, when *Davenport Hall* was completed, the Victorian French mansard roof of University Hall seemed old-fashioned, and the asymmetrical Romanesque style of Altgeld Hall, romantic. Joseph C. Llewellyn, who was graduated from the University in 1877 and carried on a long architectural practice in Chicago, designed the new building for the College of Agriculture.

Davenport Hall has a strictly symmetrical plan of almost classical proportions and a strong horizontal emphasis, with slender Ionic columns framing the recessed entranceway. Modest terra cotta decorations contrast with the red brick walls, and an unusual use of inscriptions on the cornice above the second story identifies the subject-matter areas housed within. Buildings erected during this period seem to have been thought of primarily as external designs, rather than as necessarily developing outward from specialized functions.

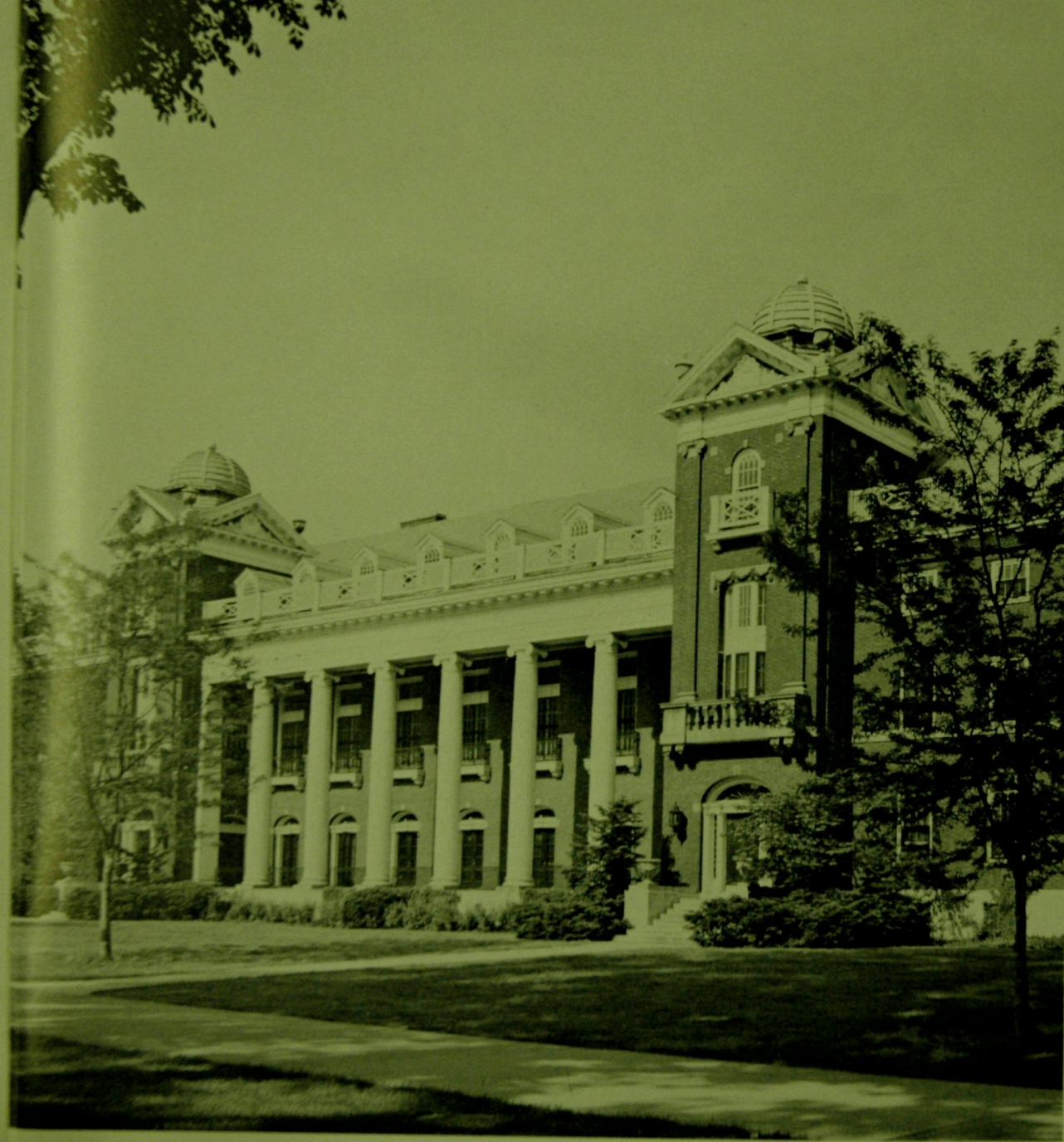


English Building

The *English Building* was built originally as the "Woman's Building." In its most important elements, the building is the work of McKim, Mead and White, which was at that time (1905) probably the most celebrated architectural firm in the United States.

The English Building, with its central colonnade, twin-pedimented towers with low domes, dormer windows, and richly developed detail, is the high-water mark of the classic phase of University architecture. The building was added to in several directions and its functions changed over the years; it remains, in many ways, a puzzling complex which carries certain exterior characteristics into the interior of the building. The long front of the building, however, remains a stately element along the principal mall of the University.





Auditorium

The *Auditorium* built in 1908 established the central mall, the heart of the University. It was designed by Clarence H. Blackall, an early graduate of the Department of Architecture who became an important architect in Boston, where he specialized in theatre. In the early years of the century, he seems to have been the first architect consulted about the development of campus planning. In 1905 he was commissioned to design an auditorium which, to a large degree, determined the character of the campus plan for years to come.

The Auditorium reflects the stately classic taste of its time, with a broad flight of steps, coupled columns, elaborate acroteria, and low dome. Unfortunately, the building was never finished. The stage area at the rear was not constructed according to the architect's plans, and areas of rough-hewn stone across the front, meant to be carved as bas-reliefs, were left unfinished.

For its time, the Auditorium was an appropriate and handsome structure; this fact is now largely forgotten because its seating capacity of 1,950 persons no longer is adequate.



Smith Memorial Hall

Smith Memorial Hall, completed in 1920, was the first University building constructed from funds which were not state appropriated. Built to house the School of Music, funds were provided by Thomas J. Smith, a lawyer and trustee of the University, as a memorial to his wife, Tina Weeden Smith. The designer was James M. White, University Architect for many years.

Smith Memorial Hall follows the classic style which had been established on the campus since the beginning of the century; it has the most striking temple-like façade of any of the campus buildings. The greater part of the building is devoted to a large recital hall which is surrounded by offices, classrooms, and practice rooms. Smith Music Hall is architecturally well proportioned; its detail is designed and executed with considerable elegance.

Like most of the buildings of its period, Smith Memorial Hall is completely inadequate for current needs, not only because of increasing enrollment, but because of the introduction of many new fields of professional instruction unthought of when the building was planned.





Mumford Hall

Beginning in 1921, the architectural character of the University was determined for more than a decade by the work of Charles A. Platt. He developed a comprehensive campus plan and designed nine important buildings. The first of these was the agricultural building, *Mumford Hall*, completed in 1924. Platt used a splendid version of Georgian style, generous in scale, with great refinement and considerable elaboration of detail. This harmonized remarkably well with the earlier more classic buildings, which he ingeniously incorporated into his organic plan.

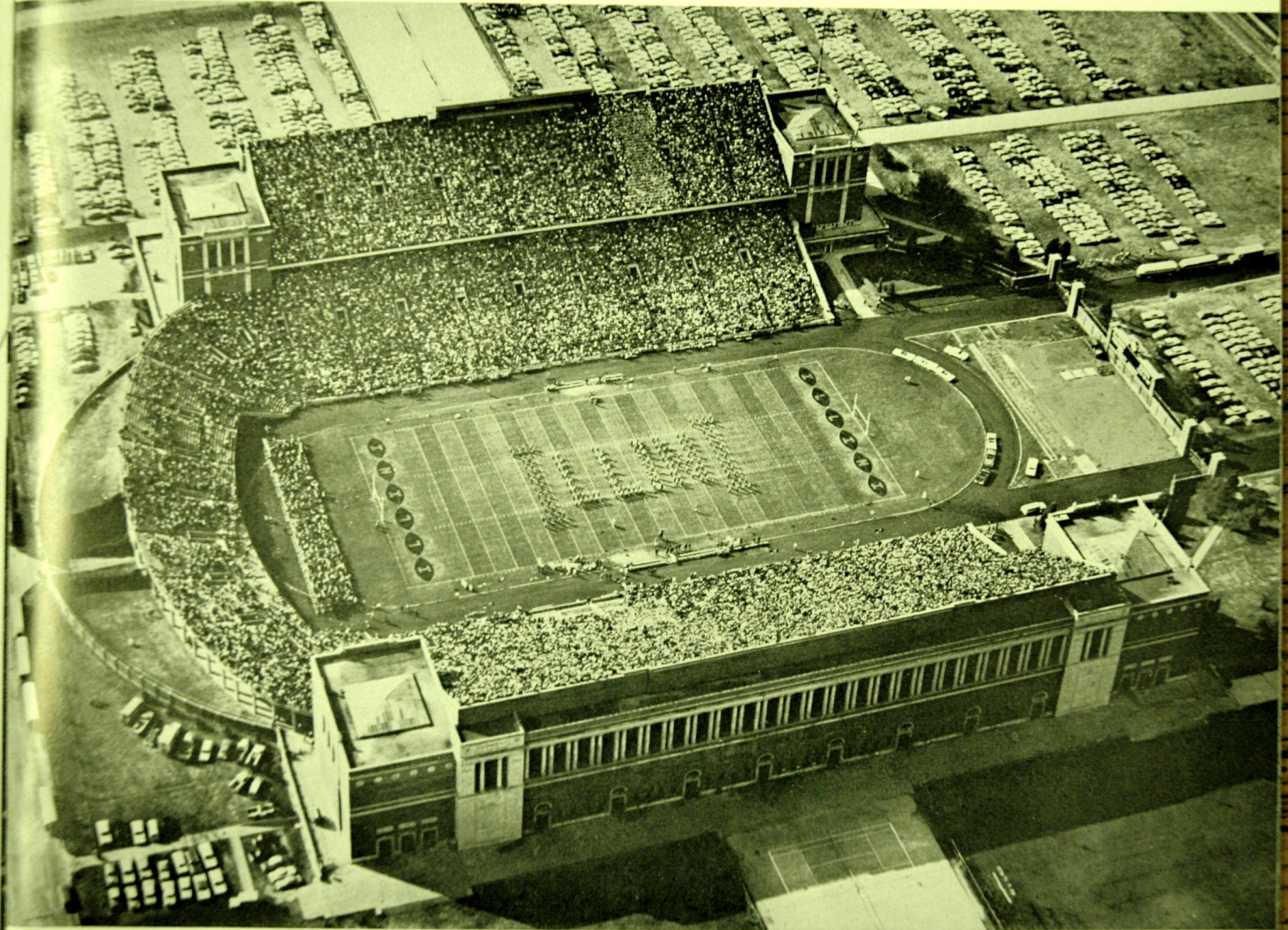
Mumford Hall is typical of the monumental quality which Platt gave to his version of Georgian style. The building is severely symmetrical; its central elements are emphasized and accented; it has a series of colossal chimneys, dormer windows, and a sloping roof.



Memorial Stadium

The University's *Memorial Stadium*, completed in 1924, was built through a campaign to raise private funds honoring Illinois students killed in World War I. Designed by the Chicago firm of Holabird and Roche, the stadium is contained within an imposing shell which cleverly introduces a majestic colonnade in harmony with the Georgian buildings designed and erected at the same time.

The stadium has a seating capacity of 71,227. Original plans with a campanile, fountains, and monumental approaches envisaged far more elaborate surroundings than were ever actually accomplished.



Library

The new Library, built in 1926, is one of architect Charles A. Platt's most distinguished achievements. With a grand staircase, high-ceilinged rooms, and beauty of detail, the Library represents a palatial concept of a great library. Beautiful brickwork, elegance in carving and paneling, and a satisfying sweep in its proportions make the library the focal element it was meant to be in the stately and ordered plan which Platt developed for the University.

From the beginning the Library was planned for additions, which have been made in several stages through the years. When the first elements of the great new structure were completed, library holdings on the Urbana campus totaled about 650,000 volumes; today there are about 4,083,000 volumes, making it the greatest of the state university libraries.



Women's Gymnasium

The *Women's Gymnasium*, completed in 1931, was the last building Charles A. Platt designed for the University. The grand balance which he achieves between the emphatic entranceway and the imposing chimneys at each end gives the building great dignity and character. In perfection of proportion, appropriate use of materials, unity of concept, and judicious use of detail, the Women's Gymnasium is a model of what an adaptation of Georgian style to the new functions should be.





Illini Union

Building operations on the campus came to an abrupt halt with the Depression. In some respects, the University has never caught up with space deficiencies which have developed in the ensuing years; the outstanding exception to this pattern is the *Illini Union*, completed in 1941 and financed by federal rather than state funds. Architects of the Union were Howard L. Cheney and John C. Leavell. They continued with remarkable skill the style and spirit of the buildings designed by Charles A. Platt.

It is difficult to think of a finer example of a modern adaptation of Georgian style than the Illini Union with its stately portico, four pairs of columns, well-conceived pediment, and octagonal cupola with clock and interesting skyline. The interior was designed and executed with particular care and elegance and has remained in impeccable condition.

When large additions were made to the Union in 1963, the original style of the building was almost duplicated. The central mall of the campus, with the Union at one end and the Auditorium at the other, remains a satisfying heartland for a great institution.



Electrical Engineering Building

When it became possible to resume building after World War II, Platt's Georgian style no longer seemed desirable or even possible. Platt's campus plan, developed without awareness of today's traffic problems, was no longer adequate. The new buildings avoided the gable roofs and monumental chimneys of the earlier examples, and indulged in little of the elaborate detail which gave richness to Platt's personal Georgian style. Designed much more from the aspect of interior function, the buildings show more consciousness of the need to utilize every inch of space.

The *Electrical Engineering Building* was the first in a new building campaign. Designed by Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, its first phase was completed in 1949. Some years later another story and a large extension were added. The Electrical Engineering Building marks a calculated transition from the earlier Georgian style (which is still echoed discreetly in entranceway and window elements) to the bare functionalism of much postwar building.



Law Building

With the *Law Building*, completed in 1955, a complete break was made with earlier campus styles. Ambrose Richardson, the architect (and a former member of the University staff), worked very closely with the building committee of the College of Law and produced a highly functional design. Large areas of glass, a frank use of new materials, beauty of proportion rather than reliance upon decorative detail, and a balanced but asymmetrical massing of the principal elements make the Law Building a distinct change from earlier conceptions.

In the 1950's it was still possible to think of University buildings as long and low, suggesting the flatness and spaciousness of the prairies; that urban necessity — the high-rise building — was just around the corner.



Krannert Art Museum

The *Krannert Art Museum*, dedicated in 1961, is the gift of a 1912 graduate, Herman C. Krannert,* Mrs. Krannert, and other donors. Designed by Richardson, Severns, Scheeler and Associates, the building was planned to differ in character from other campus structures. The museum is distinctive in material — white Vermont marble; a gold-plated grill screens its only windows. A reflecting pool contains a large plinth upon which stands a striking piece of abstract sculpture, *Initiation*, by the Italian artist Mirko.

Krannert Art Museum is connected with the Fine Arts Building by a one-story, glassed-in lounge which has become a center of campus activity. Construction of this beautiful museum has notably aided development of the University's permanent art collections as well as its exhibition program.

* A prominent Indiana industrialist who also donated funds for the Krannert Center for Performing Arts, see page 38.

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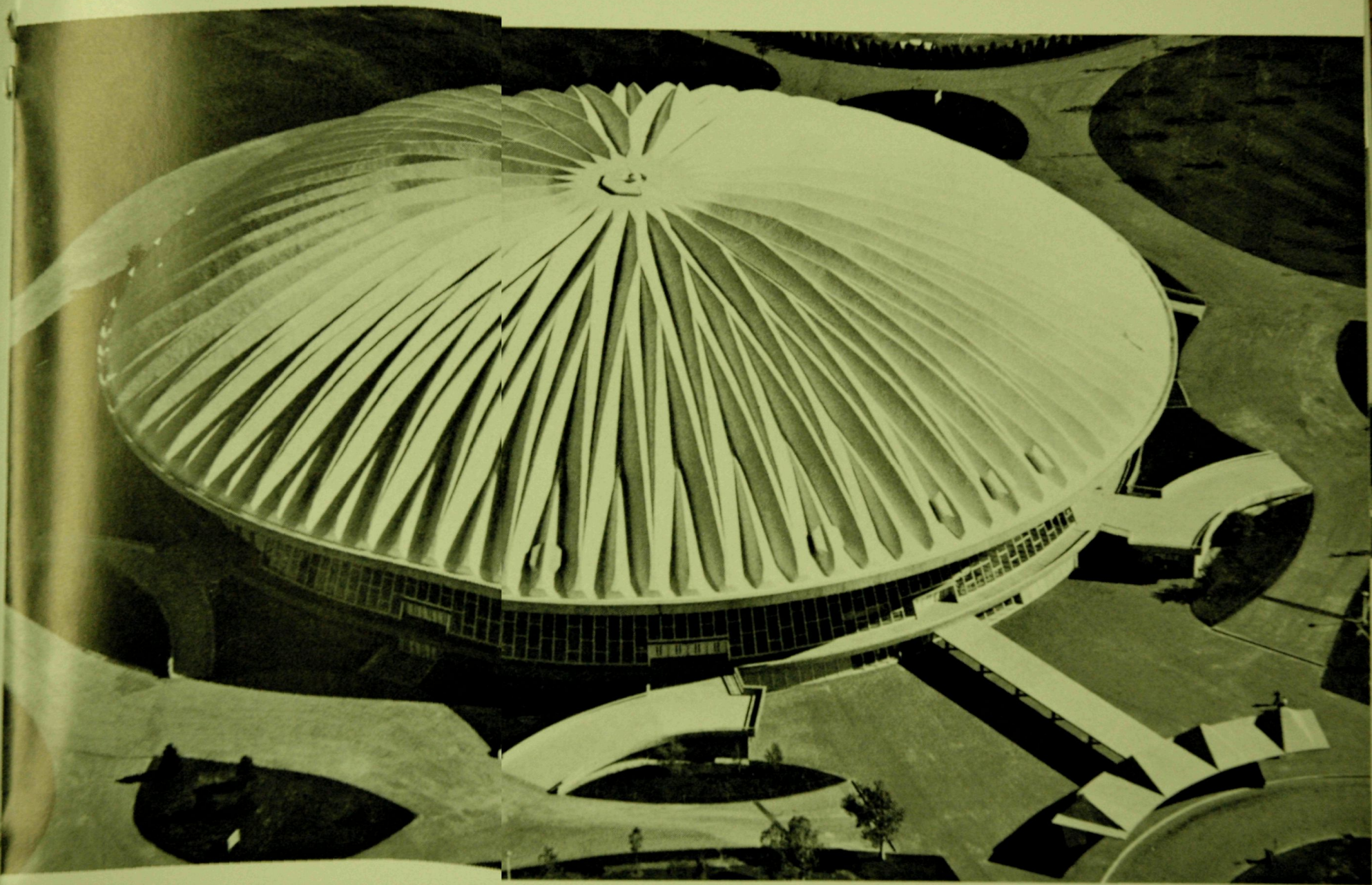


Assembly Hall

Undoubtedly the most exciting structure of the post-war period is the enormous *Assembly Hall* designed by Max Abramovitz, a 1929 graduate of the University. Completed in 1963, this colossal circular structure has 16,000 permanent seats. Two thousand temporary seats can be added as needed.

When its total resources are utilized, the Assembly Hall is ideal for many types of sports events and provides a superb setting for large convocations and commencement exercises. It also has been used successfully for such large-scale entertainments as ice shows, ballets, and big musical productions. One section of the Assembly Hall can be used as a theatre seating 4,200.

The world's largest edge-supported dome, 400 feet in diameter, arches 128 feet above the activity floor. Abramovitz's bold design, with "folded" cast-concrete roof, powerful supporting structure, dramatic use of material, and logical relationship to surroundings, has attracted national attention.



Education Building

Construction of the *Education Building* in 1964 marked the first intrusion of a completely contemporary design into an area of the campus long dedicated to the Georgian style. Designer A. Richard Williams, a staff member of the Department of Architecture, collaborated on the Education Building with the firm of Lundeen and Hilfinger.

By a skillful use of proportions of materials that harmonized with the older buildings, Williams showed a juxtaposition of old and new was entirely possible. A dramatic overhang for the upper story, large areas of glass, a walled-in garden area, sensitive handling of metal elements — all combined a splendid openness with needed isolation and specialized use of space.



Illinois Street Residence Halls

Campus planners of the past had no presentiment of the future need for huge dormitory complexes. As enrollments increased, universities have had to assume more and more responsibility for student housing. The *Illinois Street Residence Halls*, completed in 1964, are characteristic of projects of this type. Designed by Richardson, Severns, Scheeler and Associates, these residences dramatically contrast high-rise living elements with connecting areas containing cafeterias and social rooms.

In the Illinois Street Residence Halls large areas of glass allow for interpenetration of outside and inside — an insistent characteristic of recent architecture. The buildings rise above street level from a terrace illuminated by light globes on slender stems; the complex is enlivened by interesting use of colors and contrasting materials.

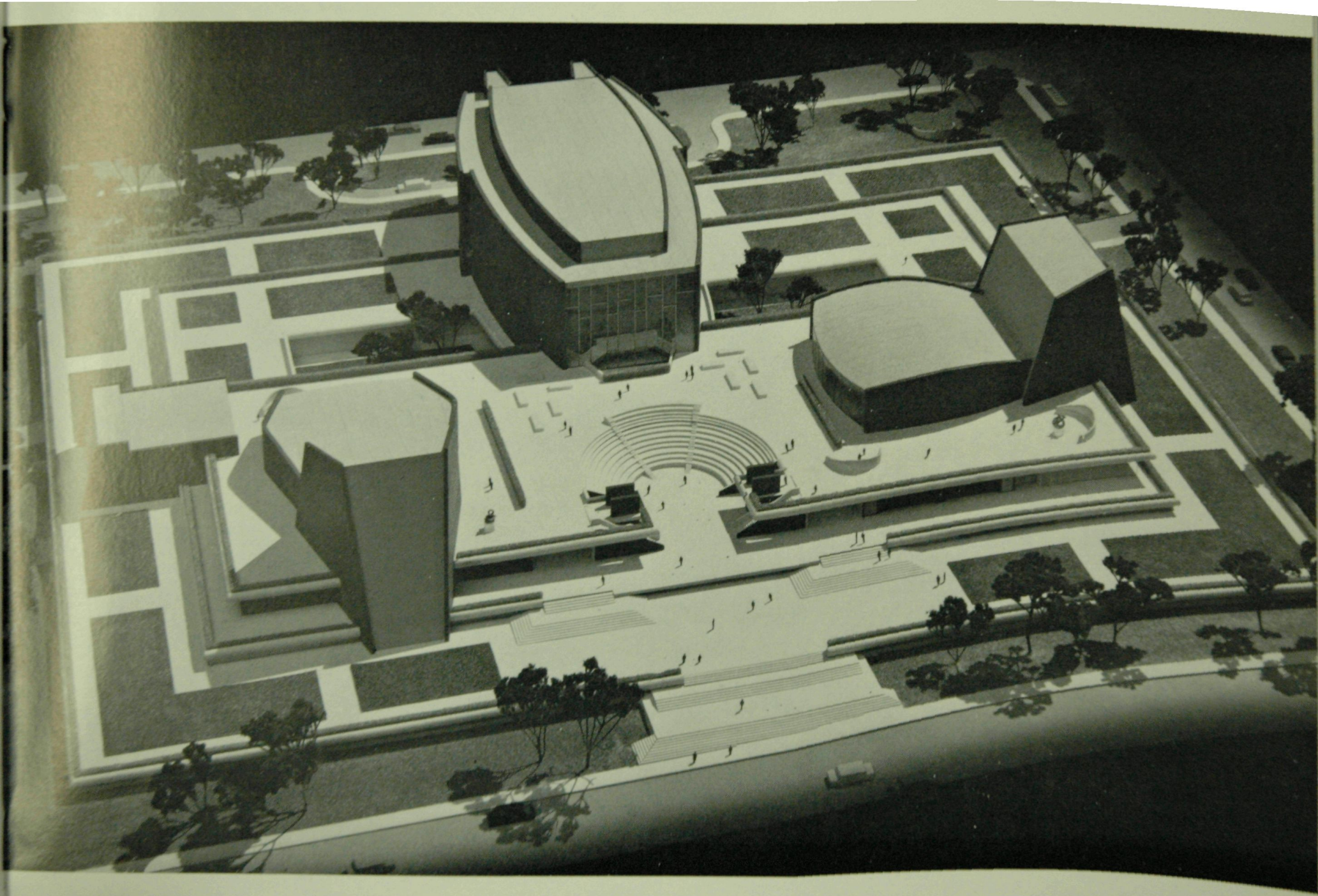


Krannert Center for the Performing Arts

Among buildings now under construction, the most remarkable in many ways is the *Krannert Center for the Performing Arts* which will occupy two full blocks east of the main campus. Made possible through a magnificent gift from Mr. and Mrs. Herman C. Krannert (see page 30), this great complex will provide long-needed facilities for orchestra, choral organizations, opera, theatre, and dance.

Four separate and highly specialized theatres rise above a two-level terrace. The Great Hall, designed for large-scale musical events, seats approximately 2,200; the Music Theatre, 1,000; the Drama Theatre, 600; and a small, highly flexible studio or laboratory theatre, which can be either a proscenium-type theatre or a theatre-in-the-round, seats 150. In addition, there are large rehearsal areas, public circulation areas, offices, stage-scenery shops, dressing rooms and showers, and about 650 underground parking spaces on two levels. A large outdoor amphitheater is a central element.

The imposing forms of the stage structures are handled frankly and dramatically. It is doubtful if any other University will have so complete and splendid a facility for performing arts.



Psychology Building

Undergraduate Library

The *Psychology Building*, designed by Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum, is under construction. A severely proportioned rectangular structure, it is unlike most other University buildings in that the main mass is of limestone, with strongly accented window openings, and brick stairwell towers at the corners. The ground level opens onto its surroundings, and a small courtyard below grade at the main entrance provides an element of variety.

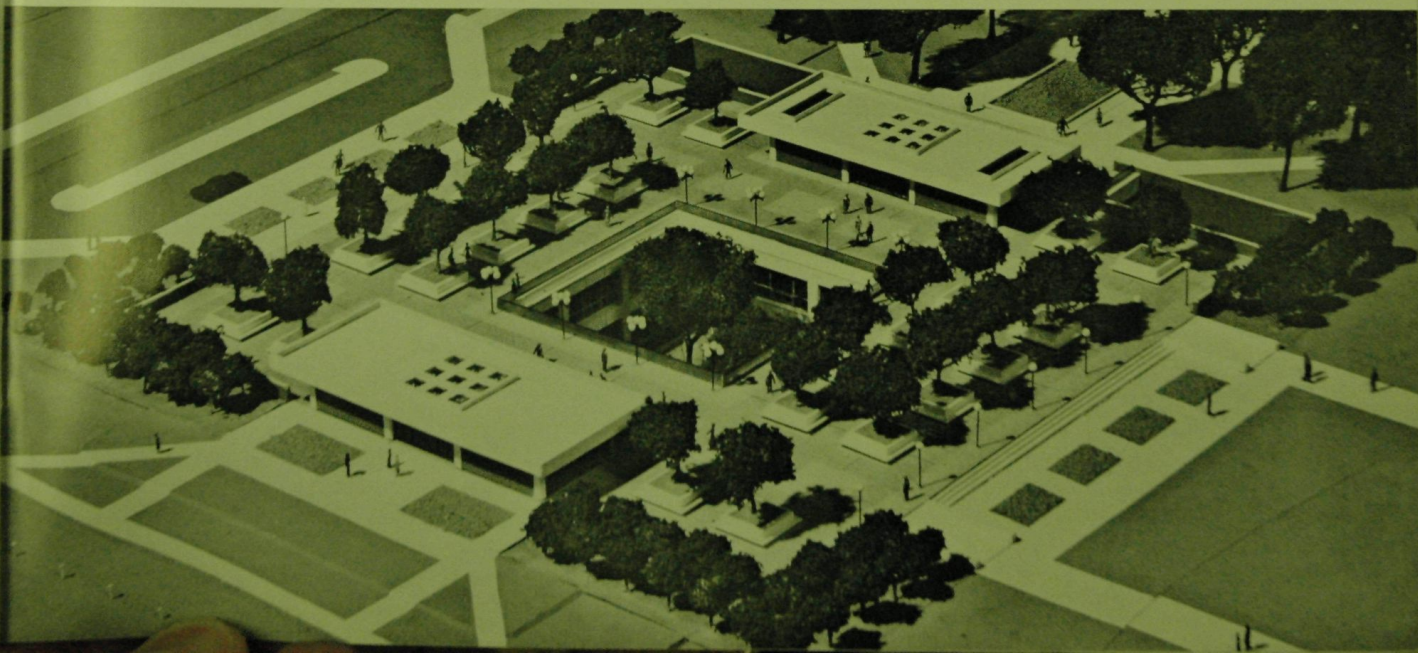
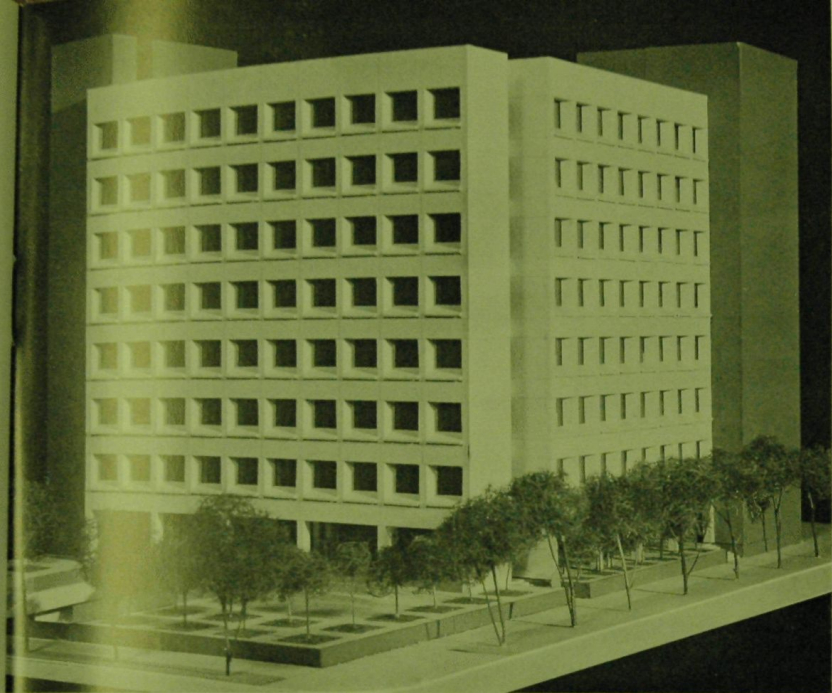
Now under construction is the *Undergraduate Library*, located east of the general Library and south of the Auditorium. Designed by Richardson, Severns, Scheeler and Associates, this two-story underground structure is planned so as to leave relatively uninterrupted the central space of the south mall.

Planned for a capacity of about 150,000 volumes, the new library will be developed around a central court and connected by an underground passageway with the existing Library. That recent structures have not only reached high into the sky but now descend into the earth indicates a new era in campus planning.

Building, designed by Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum, is under construction. A severely proportioned rectangle, it is unlike most other buildings in that the main mass is a brick stairwell tower at the ground level opens onto a courtyard, and a small courtyard behind the main entrance provides variety.

Construction is the Undergraduate Library, located east of the general building. Deane, Severns, Scheeler designed this two-story underground library so as to leave relatively open the central space of the south

Planned for a capacity of 100,000 volumes, the new library is located around a central courtyard by an underground passage-way to the existing Library. That recent building not only reached high into the sky but also descended into the earth in its campus planning.



Dentistry Medicine Pharmacy Buildings

MEDICAL CENTER CAMPUS

The professional colleges of the University of Illinois at the Medical Center, Chicago, were housed in many different buildings during their early years. Necessity was a bigger factor than choice in early housing. It sometimes happened that one college would move into a building as another moved out; Pharmacy, the first college to be organized, was dispossessed for a time by the Great Chicago Fire.

The Medical Center began to assume its present shape in 1931 when the College of Medicine moved into quarters at Polk and Wolcott streets. Architecture of this *First Unit of Dentistry-Medicine-Pharmacy* had been largely keyed to the small Research and Library Unit built in 1925. The *Second Unit of Dentistry-Medicine-Pharmacy* completed the Polk Street façade of the campus in 1937. Designed by Granger and Bollenbacher in the style of earlier Medical Center architecture, the building is a blend of large-scale masses with suggestions of the Collegiate Gothic style popular at the time. The building houses the College of Dentistry and the administrative offices of the College of Nursing; it is by far the most striking building on the campus and often serves as a symbol of the Medical Center.

The bold scale and Gothic forms and details were characteristic of Chicago architecture of the period. There was, also, a conviction that a building's utilitarian function did not preclude a façade of compelling architectural interest. The Collegiate Gothic style was meant to instill in students the spirit of Old World scholarship by borrowing the cloistered charm and historic associations of Oxford and Cambridge.





Hospital Addition

The *Hospital Addition*, designed and completed in 1953 by Holabird and Root, is the primary in-patient facility of the Research and Educational Hospitals. The building also serves as a base for many supporting hospital services including some clinical research facilities.

A demand for the functional and economical in hospital architecture was characteristic of the postwar period and is evident in the façade of the Hospital Addition. Unable to repeat the depth of façade and richness of Gothic detail of the older nearby buildings, the architects chose to use, instead, a planar façade with a horizontal window expression. A demand for maximum use of interior space is evident in the projecting entry as contrasted with the deep Gothic entry of the adjacent Dentistry-Medicine-Pharmacy Building.

East Dentistry Medicine Pharmacy Building

The *East Dentistry-Medicine-Pharmacy Building* principally serves the College of Pharmacy. This example of functional design, completed in 1954, was designed by W. H. Binford of PACE Associates.

The severe planar, horizontal effect is a pleasant contrast to the vertical articulated character of buildings of the 1920's and '30's. The fenestration pattern shows clearly the structural and laboratory modules from which the design evolved.





Medical Sciences Addition

The *Medical Sciences Addition*, completed in 1964, provides facilities for the Basic Science Departments of the College of Medicine, the Out-patient Clinic of the Research and Educational Hospitals, and the Research Resources Laboratory. It was designed by Richardson, Severns, Scheeler and Associates and Shaw, Metz and Associates. The designers made a deliberate effort to relate this addition to the earlier First Unit Dentistry-Medicine-Pharmacy Building and at the same time to express the building's function as a laboratory.

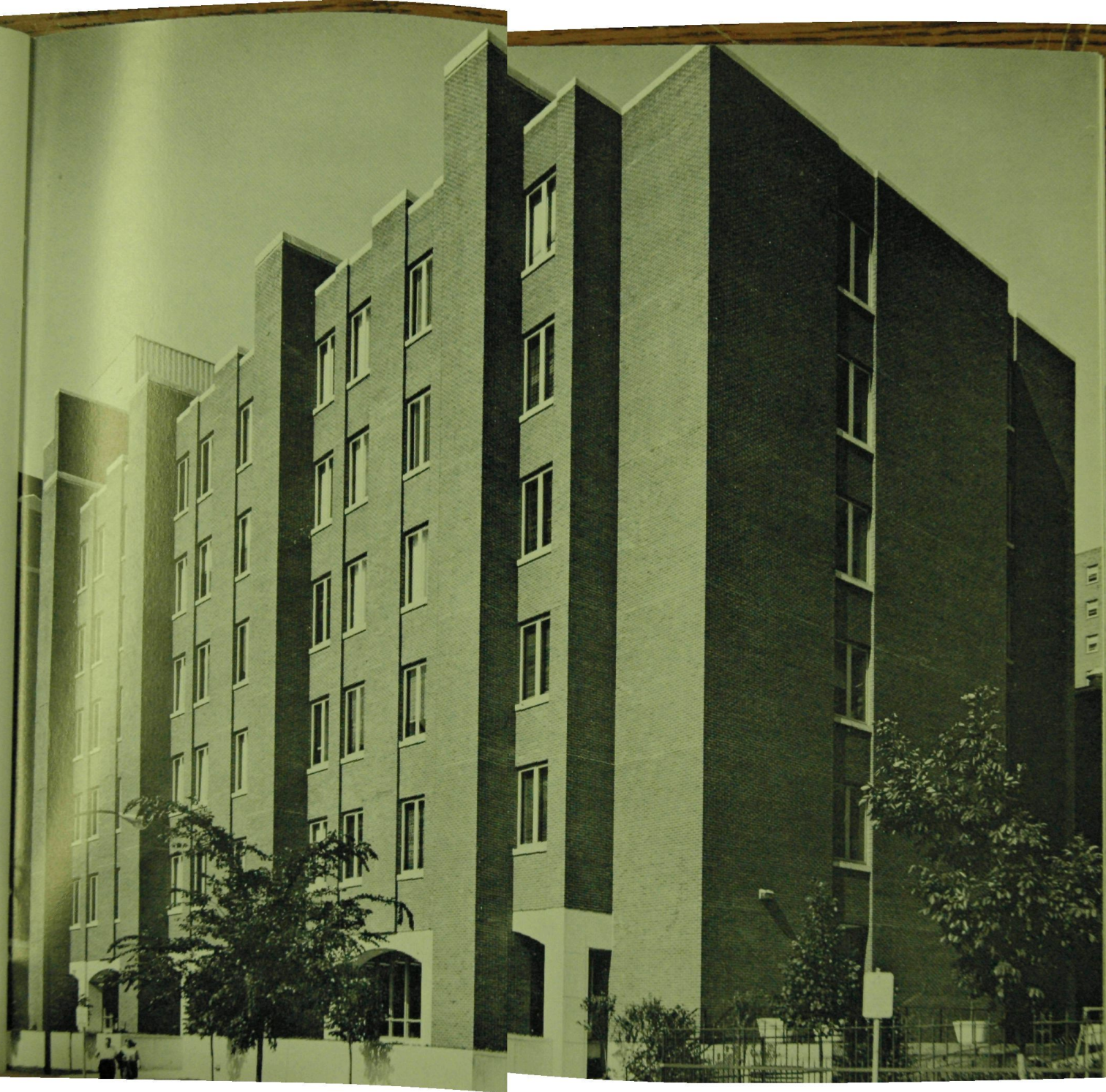
Alternating pipe and duct shafts and the projected columns re-create the vertical effect and interplay of planes so characteristic of earlier Collegiate Gothic style. The ground floor, with full-height glass set back from limestone arches, suggests the public character of the Out-patient Clinic. It recalls, too, the detailing of the entrances of the First Unit.

A second addition of two floors, now under construction, will complete the composition. This addition will further accent the vertical and terminate in a sloped attic reminiscent of the gable roof of nearby buildings.



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Chicago Illini Union

The new *Chicago Illini Union*, dedicated March 10, 1967, replaces the old Union located in the School of Pharmacy Building. C. F. Murphy, Associates designed the new Union which provides food services, conference, lounge, and recreational facilities for students, staff, and visitors to the Medical Center campus.

A simple palette of red brick, sand-blasted concrete, and gray glass combine with refined proportion and detailing to create a low, horizontal contemporary expression not at all in conflict with the Collegiate Gothic idiom of the major campus buildings. The same materials carry through the interior and are complemented by dark-stained oak woodwork and an excellent selection of furnishings. The entire composition is one of quiet dignity and repose.

College of Nursing

Training facilities of the College of Nursing at the Medical Center will be greatly expanded by its new building now under construction. Designed by Mittelbush and Tourtelot of Chicago, the building is functional, even severe, and will include classrooms, offices, and some laboratory space.



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University Hall

CHICAGO CIRCLE CAMPUS

With the opening of the Chicago Circle campus in February, 1965, a new era began in the history of the University of Illinois. Here, in the heart of a great city and close to its principal business district, was constructed an urban educational center. Designed by Walter A. Netsch of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, the new campus broke with many traditions of collegiate architecture.

Chicago Circle consists of an academic core of 40 acres; development is ultimately planned for 106 acres. Because of the restricted site, academic structures occupy an unusually large portion of the available space. *University Hall*, a 28-story complex of administrative and academic offices and of seminar and conference rooms, expresses the scarcity of urban space by the unusual way the upper stories expand above a stilted base.

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Lecture Center

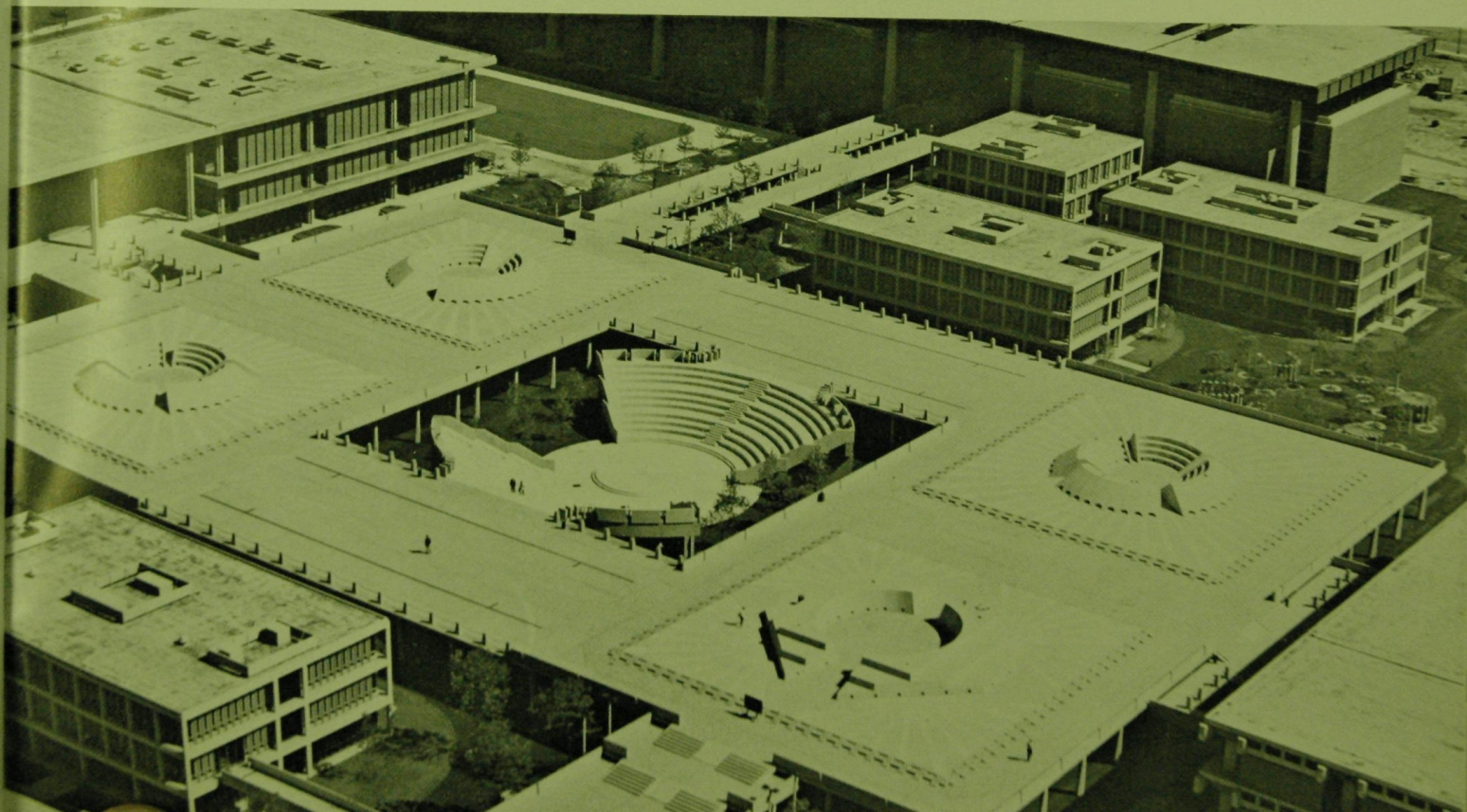
The campus focuses on a *Lecture Center* whose roof provides a central Great Court. This court is connected by second-floor walks to other buildings, parking areas, and a Rapid Transit station. Around the court are low-rise classrooms and laboratory buildings, the Library, and the student union. A great open amphitheater leads down to the lecture room entrances.

On the upper level, smaller amphitheaters, called exedrae, provide seating and invite informal meetings. Forms of the exedrae depict the central position of the Lecture Center in the whole campus plan, emphasize the Center's architectural character, and contrast with other open areas.

The lecture rooms provide for a great variety of teaching methods; rooms have facilities for closed-circuit television as well as for future electronic developments.



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Classroom and Laboratory Buildings

Classroom and laboratory buildings are usable for different types of courses — there are no separate “social science” or “chemistry” buildings. Scale and character of the various buildings are as different as possible. Surfaces that cannot be easily soiled or disfigured have been selected. Brick was designed in a special color and size to give unique character to the material. Six different finishes were developed in concrete to provide variation in texture relative to location and form.

Classroom buildings are relatively small in scale and are grouped with a certain informality. A special type of laminated glass in narrow vertical openings eliminates the need for venetian blinds or curtains.



Walkways

Elevated walkways connect all the buildings at the second-story level. These walks create an exciting sense of rising above the surrounding environment as well as provide ample circulation space for an area which is often densely populated.

Trees on the ground level give needed informality. Solid granite is used for the walkways since it is the only material permanent and sturdy enough to resist snow and ice removal and changes in temperature on the exposed surfaces. The monumental scale of the total design is reiterated by the heavy chain railing.

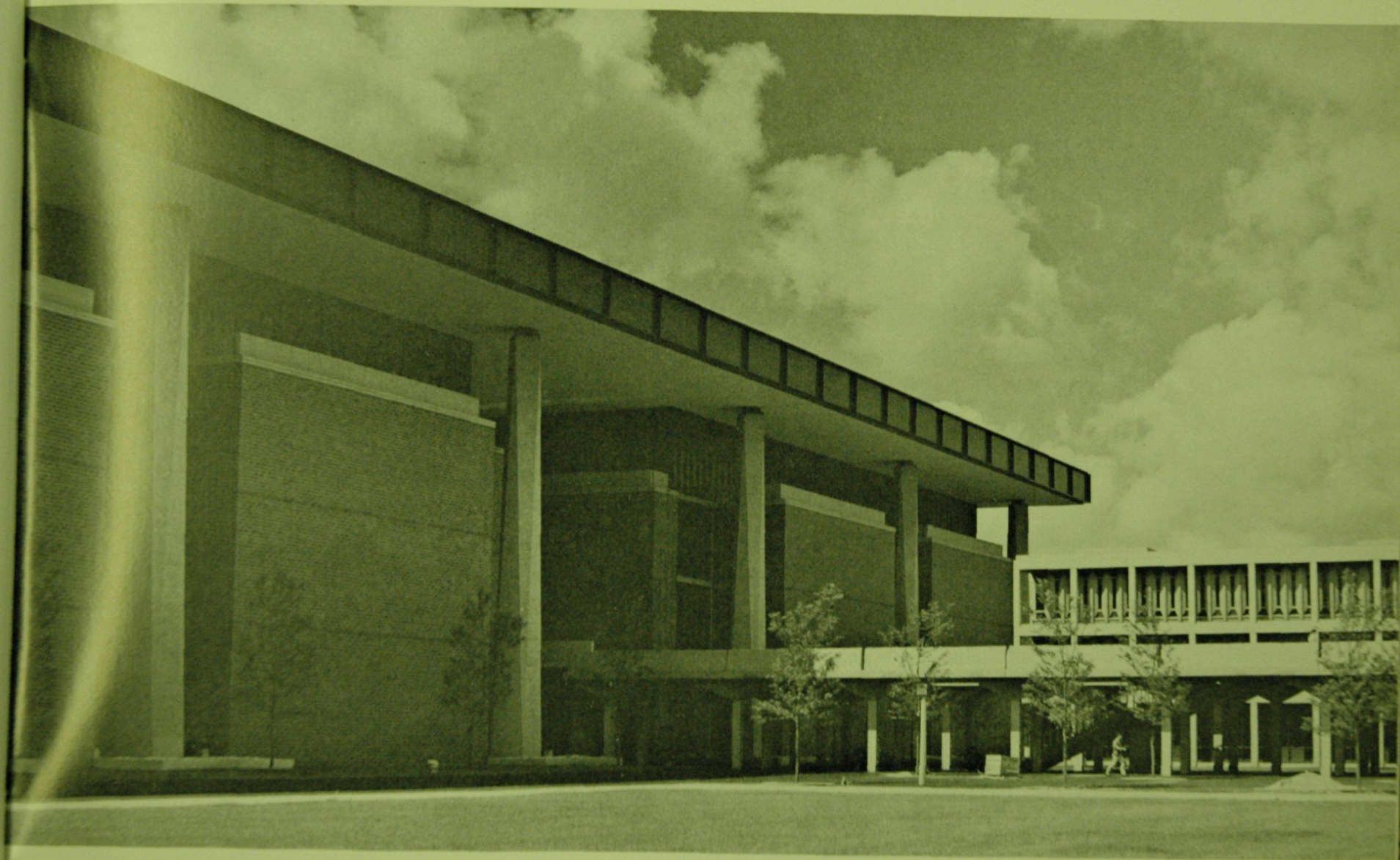
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Science and Engineering Laboratories

Massive girders and freestanding columns of the *Science and Engineering Laboratories* emphasize the role of the building as gateway to the campus. A typical walkway passes through the building. Much of the design of the Science and Engineering Laboratories is planned for future threefold expansion. When the whole scheme has been accomplished, visual identity of the building will be almost the same, but eight of the columns will be hidden. Second and third phases will have little effect on existing laboratory space.



Chicago Circle Center

Chicago Circle Center completes a major part of the campus architectural plan. The Center with bookstores, meeting rooms, food service, and recreational facilities is the focus of student social life on the Chicago Circle campus. The Center features an important piece of decorative architectural sculpture by famous Chicago architect Louis Sullivan — a work of great beauty and historic importance.





Art and Architecture Building

The *Art and Architecture Building*, now under construction, is in dramatic contrast to other Chicago Circle buildings. As unusual in its interior as it is outside, the building has many levels and a continuous flow of space from one area to another. Angular relationships and varied surfaces are emphasized. In contrast to University Hall to the west, the Art and Architecture Building seems to be a great piece of abstract sculpture.

