

Bruegmann's *The Architects and the City* is a skillful synthesis of architectural and urban history, presenting a marked contrast to the typical emphasis in architectural history on the analysis of a single architect's works independently of a particular urban or environmental setting. Bruegmann instead concentrates a good part of his effort on the history of Chicago as a city, from the boom period of the late 1880s, followed by the bust of 1893, and, finally, through the second boom that peaked in 1910, at which time Holabird and Roche, having contracted in 1893 to as few as three employees, comprised more than one hundred draftsmen, making it one of the largest firms in the country. Within these economic cycles of boom and bust, the firm designed hundreds of individual works, which piece by piece shaped the streets of Chicago, most prominently among them State Street and Michigan Avenue. In doing so, Holabird and Roche participated in the city's breathtaking process of urban modernization, which incorporated new transportation systems and new technologies of building—innovative techniques of metal framing, isolated footings, and fireproofing—and fostered the professionalization of the architect as well as the engineer. Accompanying these major changes, Bruegmann argues, were a plethora of equally important supporting technologies, including the telephone, telegraph, and new methods of lighting, heating, and sanitation, all of which engineers and inventors conceived to serve the city's expanding hives of well-paid managerial employees, who sought in turn well-lit, refined, and up-to-date spaces for office work close to the heart of the city.

Bruegmann views the city's skyscrapers as but a single phenomenon within the context of a much broader urban panorama. The latter by its very nature incorporated many other building types, among them automobile showrooms, hotels, public buildings, telephone exchanges, and private clubs. Beyond the city's core, it featured houses in the streetcar suburbs and even a camp, the Coleman Lake Club, built on the remains of the logging industry in the countryside. Bruegmann's analysis of the skyscraper, however, is particularly distinctive in overturning certain common assumptions held by a previous generation of scholars, chief among them the notion that William Le Baron Jenney's Home Insurance Building (1884-1885) merited its long-standing iconic stature as the world's "first" metal-framed skyscraper and, as such, served as the signature achievement of the so-called "Chicago School."

In Bruegmann's reinterpretation of the Chicago skyscraper, Holabird and Roche's Tacoma Building (1886-1889) is analyzed as the earliest example of true "skeleton construction," that is, as a metal frame with a thin terra cotta cladding that served as a bona fide envelope, as opposed to the bulkier Home Insurance Building, in which the walls, still carrying some of the structural load, functioned in a more ambiguous relationship with the frame. Bruegmann finds the Tacoma Building equally important for the method by which its builder, George A. Fuller, constructed it. For the first time in Chicago, Fuller assumed responsibility under a single contract for virtually all of the construction work, with the aim of "delivering" the completed project to its owner, Wirt D. Walker, for a contractually predetermined fixed price on "schedule time" (p. 82). Thus, the Tacoma marked the emergence of a wholly new phenomenon, the "general contractor." Bruegmann relates key buildings and building types to particular urban conditions. On State Street, the city's retail axis, the firm developed a new type of building, the "tall shops building," as exemplified by the Republic, North American, and Century buildings, which fused the steel-framed loft typology with an elegant, ornamental exterior of white glazed terra cotta, featuring large plate glass windows. At Michigan Avenue and East Monroe Street, its designs for the University Club and Monroe Building paired visually to form a dignified portal to the avenue. Along South Michigan Avenue, the firm designed automobile showrooms to create an urban sequence known as "automobile row." Hotels such as the Congress, La Salle, and Sherman House, featuring gracious public spaces in distinctive historical styles, among them a Pompeiian Room, Celtic Bar, and German Grill, served as microcosms of "what was best in the city as a whole" (p. 335). The firm's telephone exchanges in the downtown as well as the city's neighborhoods functioned as nodes in the city's nervous system. The monumentality, order, and stateliness of the Cook County Courthouse and the Chicago City Hall embodied the city's aspirations

for a better government amid the day's bureaucratic bungling and municipal corruption. Bruegmann never wavers from his central theme: Holabird and Roche succeeded not only in shaping the physical city as it was experienced and perceived at the turn of the twentieth century but also in bringing dignity to the daily lives of its inhabitants. The firm aspired, moreover, to ennoble future generations with "quiet" buildings distinguished not by their visual novelty or showiness as "art architecture" but instead by propriety and grace.