United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name On Leong Merchants Association Building

other names/site number Chinatown City Hall; Chinese Temple; Pui Tak Center

Name of Multiple Property Listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

street & number 2216 South Wentworth Avenue ☐ not for publication

city or town Chicago ☐ vicinity

state Illinois county Cook zip code 60616

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: ___ **national** ___ **statewide** ___ **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ **A** ___ **B** ___ **C** ___ **D**

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date

Illinois Department of Natural Resources - SHPO
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

On Leong Merchants Association Building
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [X] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- [X] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	**Total**

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE / TRADE – business, organizational
SOCIAL – meeting hall, clubhouse, civic
EDUCATION – education-related
RELIGION – religious facility
RECREATION AND CULTURE - auditorium

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE / TRADE – business, organizational
SOCIAL – meeting hall, civic
EDUCATION – education-related
RELIGION – religious facility
RECREATION AND CULTURE - auditorium

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER – CHINESE ECLECTIC

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE
walls: BRICK, TERRA COTTA
roof: TERRA COTTA, ASPHALT, CLAY TILE
other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

The On Leong Merchants Association Building (or On Leong Building) is located at 2216 S. Wentworth Avenue in Chicago's Chinatown neighborhood within the city's Armour Square community area, approximately two miles south of Chicago's downtown Loop commercial district. The building is situated at the northwest corner of Wentworth Avenue (east) and 22nd Place (south) along Chinatown's busy Wentworth Avenue commercial thoroughfare, just south of the intersection of Wentworth Avenue and Cermak Road (called 22nd Street before 1933) and the Chinatown Gate spanning Wentworth Avenue, completed in 1975. The On Leong Merchants Association Building is the most prominent and recognizable structure in Chicago's Chinatown, and today is rivaled as a visual landmark by the Chinatown Gate, which was constructed over Wentworth Avenue just south of Cermak Road in 1975.

The On Leong Building was completed in 1928 and designed by Chicago architects Michaelsen & Rognstad in a highly decorative Chinese Style, a Western interpretation of traditional Chinese architecture. For over five decades, the building served as the home of the On Leong Merchants Association, a Chinese men's business and social organization, and became known as the Chicago Chinatown's "City Hall" and "Chinese Temple" of Chicago's Chinese community. After the building's sale to the Chinese Christian Union Church in 1993, the interior underwent a major renovation followed by an exterior rehabilitation in the late 2000s. The building remains in operation today as the Pui Tak Center, providing educational, family and community services.

The building's proposed National Register listing boundaries encompass the entire footprint of the On Leong Merchants Association Building.

Narrative Description

Site and Massing

The On Leong Merchants Association Building is located at the northwest corner of S. Wentworth Avenue and W. 22nd Place, situated on a roughly square parcel measuring approximately 100' x 100', and is built to the lot line on all sides. The building's primary east elevation fronts onto Wentworth Avenue and houses the center's main entrance as well as several storefront entrances. The primary south elevation faces W. 22nd Place and contains secondary service and egress entrances. The secondary north elevation faces an alley, and the tertiary west elevation faces a secure gangway and is nearly invisible from the public way.

The building is a three-story steel and concrete structure, nearly square in plan, with exterior walls clad in brick and terra cotta. The roof is flat, with prominent five-story pagoda-style towers at the northeast and southeast corners. False pagoda roofs conceal the parapets on the east and south elevations. A rectangular mechanical penthouse projects from the southwest corner of the roof.

Exterior

The street-facing east and south elevations of the building are clad in earth-toned brick and terra cotta and are lavishly decorated with polychrome terra-cotta ornament that was custom designed for the project, based on Chinese prototypes, by the American Terra Cotta Company.[1]

[1] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report, September 1988, 6.

The utilitarian west and north elevations are unornamented and feature exposed concrete framing and common brick walls. All elevations are regularly fenestrated with original windows.

East Elevation

The primary east elevation is symmetrical and framed by northeast and southeast towers, with commercial storefronts along the first story and open loggias on the second and third stories. The first story is clad in buff-colored terra cotta above a dark green granite base and is capped by a terra-cotta frieze with multi-colored panels decorated with variety of geometric and animal forms. The recessed main entrance to the building is located at the center of the east elevation and framed by an ornate polychrome terra-cotta surround with animal figures and foliate and geometric ornament. A metal canopy extends from the top of the surround. The entrance consists of a pair of original stained wood doors with large center lights, flanked by identical single doors, set into an original metal frame with a three-part transom above. The glass in the doors and transoms features geometric lead caming. Storefronts with recessed entrances flank the main entrance; these storefronts retain the original decorative cast-iron frames and many retain their original doors. At the base of the northeast and southeast towers, doorways are framed by polychrome terra-cotta surrounds with geometric and foliate details, topped by pagoda-inspired lintels. The recessed storefront under the southeast tower features a center entrance with original door and sidelights, original angled storefronts, and original transoms with geometric lead caming.

The upper stories of the east elevation are clad in variated earth-toned brick with terra-cotta ornamentation. Loggias extend between the two end towers on both the second and third story. At the second-story loggia, ten evenly spaced brick piers divide the openings. The paired piers flanking the three center openings extend to the top of the third-story loggia, creating a symmetrical arrangement that emphasizes the center main entrance below. The second-story balustrade is terra-cotta, with decorative green and yellow terra-cotta panels running along the base between the piers. The tops of the second-story openings feature terra-cotta brackets and lintels. The third-story balustrade consists of solid terra-cotta with terra-cotta balusters above a geometric terra-cotta band. The recessed brick walls on the inner face of the loggia are regularly fenestrated with original casement windows with transoms, interspersed with glazed doors that open to the interior spaces. Above the third-story loggia is a false pagoda-style clay tile roof with upward curving corners and paired brackets.

The upper stories of the northeast and southeast corner towers are identical. Single window openings at the second and third stories are framed by terra-cotta surrounds. The second-story surround is more elaborate, with floral detailing along the sides and at the winged lintel. The base of the surround has the same panel detailing used along the balustrade of the second-floor loggia, with terra-cotta dragon forms at each end. The third-story surround features a simpler earth-toned terra cotta frame with pagoda inspired lintel. The base of the opening matches the third-story loggia's balustrade. Recessed niches on each side of the window opening hold terra-cotta urns. The windows are original leaded glass casement windows with leaded glass transoms.

The fourth story of each tower is clad in terra cotta, with ornamental panels above and below, and houses three square leaded glass windows. A clay tile pagoda-style roof with paired brackets and swooping corners tops the fourth floor. The smaller fifth story is set back on all sides, fenestrated with three square leaded glass windows, and clad in terra cotta with ornamental terra cotta banding above and below the windows. Above the fifth floor is a clay tile pagoda-style roof, capped by a square copper top piece with a Classical-style finial.

South Elevation

The south elevation, facing West 22nd Place, is similar in arrangement, materials, and detailing to the east elevation. The ground floor is generally symmetrical between the two end towers, with a narrow center bay flanked on each side by larger bays. The bays are separated by terra-cotta piers with ornamental flat capitals, and multi-colored terra-cotta

frieze above the storefronts continues above the ground floor of the elevation. The easternmost bay houses an original storefront window. Directly west, the adjacent bay is infilled with face brick; three small rectangular window openings are located at the top of the bay. The windows are set in a rowlock brick frame, with small terra-cotta dragons at the lower ends. The easternmost opening houses a non-historic metal louver. The remaining two openings house historic leaded glass windows. The narrow center bay is infilled with brick and houses one window opening with rowlock brick framing, which houses a metal louver. West of the center bay, the larger adjacent bay holds a center secondary entrance set in a simple terra cotta frame. The door itself is an original wood and glass door set in an ornamented metal frame with a leaded glass transom above. Brick walls with brick windows matching the windows in the other bays flank the entrance. The westernmost bay is infilled with face brick and unfenestrated.

The second and third stories between the towers feature eleven window bays, each separated by brick piers. Each bay holds an original leaded glass casement window with leaded glass transom. The terra-cotta detailing at the base of the window bays is identical to the balustrades on the east elevation loggias. Colorful terra-cotta medallions depicting a variety of animals are centered above the second story windows Above the third story is a clay tile pagoda-style roof, identical to the roof above the loggias on the east elevation.

The south side of the southeast tower is identical to the east side. The south side of the southwest tower is identical to the southeast tower through the fourth story. The first-story entrance surround holds a pair of metal doors with applied geometric panels, set in an ornamented metal frame. Instead of a pagoda roof, the fourth story (top) of this tower is capped with a decorative terra-cotta parapet.

North and West Elevations

The secondary north and east facades, mostly out of view from the public way, are highly utilitarian in character, with their steel-reinforced concrete frames left visible and infilled with common brick and regularly fenestrated with service doors and wood and metal windows much more typical of 1920s Chicago commercial buildings.

Interior

The On Leong Merchant Association Building's highly efficient interior layout has commercial spaces restricted to the ground floor, with the former On Leong office, classroom, and worship spaces located on the two upper floors. Of the four large original commercial spaces on the ground floor, the two outer north and south spaces remain tenant commercial spaces while the two inner spaces flanking the building's main entrance have been converted to administrative offices and classrooms for the Pui Tak Center.

On Leong's facilities were accessed from the street via the main east entrance centered along Wentworth Avenue. Just inside the original wood and glass front doors is a narrow vestibule with terrazzo flooring, walls clad in "art marble" (a manufactured stone product composed of marble chips, Portland cement, and color pigments), a plaster ceiling with plaster trim, and an original hanging pendant light fixture.[2] A pair of wood and glass doors with transom glass inset with a Chinese muntin pattern opens into a narrow stair hall with terrazzo floors and art marble wall panels. A colorful painted plaster frieze transitions to a plaster ceiling with plaster trim. The ceiling-mounted pendant light fixtures are original. Non-historic metal and glass doors on the north and south sides of the narrow stair hall provide access to adjacent commercial spaces, which now house the Pui Tak administrative offices. A wide flight of terrazzo steps with simple brass handrails leads to an intermediate landing and two separate north and south stair flights up to the second-floor main corridor.

[2] Original plans and elevations for the On Leong Merchants Association Building, Pui Tak Center collection. Chicago Art Marble Company, "Art Marble: Products of Chicago Art Marble Company," 1931, B2986.

The second floor's double loaded north-south running corridor acts as the first large arrival space for visitors to the On Leong Building. The corridor connects to refurbished offices, the northeast elevator, and the Wentworth Avenue loggia to the east; a narrow south corridor and south bedrooms, converted to offices in the 1990s; and a large columned west hall that can be subdivided into smaller classrooms. The second floor's wide main corridor displays beige, brown, and black terrazzo flooring in simple orthogonal patterns; plaster walls with stained wood doors with decorative stained wood door surrounds; a band of continuous painted plaster wall trim inset with Chinese symbols above head level, and a painted plaster segmented barrel-vaulted ceiling with a half-decagonal arch. Bands of painted trim decorate the ceiling over the center stairwell and at the corridor's north south end. The north end of the corridor provides access to a terrazzo-clad third floor stairwell and displays red-painted brackets suspended from the barrel-vaulted ceiling. Across the full length of the corridor ceiling is suspended a row of original decorative pendant lights.

Offices along the east end of the second floor's main corridor have non-historic floor, wall, and ceiling finishes. Original French doors open out to the Wentworth Avenue loggia. The outdoor loggia displays quarry tile flooring, brick and terra cotta tile walls and balcony ledges, and a plaster ceiling. The second floor's south corridor and former bedrooms have been converted into offices, with non-historic carpeted flooring, drywall walls, non-historic doors with original stained wood door surrounds that reference traditional Chinese gates (*paifang*) and dropped acoustical tile ceilings.

The second-floor west hall is a large space divided into six sections by a row of square center columns and perimeter plaster pilasters. The space displays carpeted floors; plaster walls and center columns with painted base trim; a plaster ceiling with deep plaster beams decorated with plaster cornices; and non-historic fluorescent lighting. Non-historic room divider systems along the center row of columns and along the outer west bay can be used to subdivide the large hall into smaller classroom spaces. Refurbished bathrooms are located to the north of this large second floor hall.

Accessed by the second-floor corridor's north stairwell, the third-floor hall is the building's largest primary space. Historically used to house the On Leong's religious shrines and the informal On Leong "courtroom" and gathering space, the third floor is today used for events and worship. The hall extends across the full east side of the building and is divided into ten quadrants by rows of square columns. A center-west recess once housed the Guan Gong shrine and flanking portraits of Dr. Sun Yat-sen and George Washington, which have been removed. The space displays beige, brown, and black terrazzo in simple orthogonal patterns. Walls, pilasters, and center columns are flat plaster with painted base trim. A plaster ceiling with deep plaster beams and cornices is supported by highly colorful brackets and decorated with painted bands of floral trim. The ceiling features highly decorative original pendant light fixtures and non-historic fluorescent lighting. A non-historic dais has been erected along the south end of the hall. The non-historic northeast elevator along the east wall is enclosed in simple painted drywall.

Small northeast and southeast offices and support spaces located in the Wentworth Avenue pagoda towers are accessed through door openings with highly decorative stained wood surrounds. Through these offices is access to the third-floor outdoor loggia, which features quarry tile flooring, brick and terra-cotta tile walls and balcony ledges, and a suspended ceiling.

A service corridor at the west end of the third floor connects the third-floor hall to bathroom facilities, a kitchen, dining room, and a classroom.

The basement of the building contains several meeting and storage rooms and features dropped acoustical tile ceilings, poured epoxy floors in the corridors, and carpeted floors in the meeting rooms.

Integrity

The On Leong Merchant Association Building displays exceptional historic integrity with its highly intact original façade and roofline features including original brick and terra cotta masonry, doors, and windows. Inside, all of the

primary public spaces used by the On Leong – the first-floor vestibule, lobby, and stair; second-floor corridor and hall; and third-floor hall – retain their original spatial layouts and Chinese-inspired finishes, decoration, and light fixtures.

Alterations include: replacement of select exterior façade brick and terra cotta as part of the late 2000s exterior rehabilitation; first floor commercial space changes made by tenants and by the Pui Tak Center to accommodate new administrative offices; reconfiguration of the second floor's south corridor and bedrooms for Pui Tak office spaces; the introduction of a new elevator core at the east center end of the building that affected a north end portion of the third-floor hall; and the removal of the third floor hall's millwork associated with its religious shrines and "courtroom." Despite these changes, the building's 1928 façade is remarkably intact and its upper floor interiors retain their original spatial layout and most of their original decorative features, including light fixtures.

The building continues to express its historic location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association that make it an important part of the story of Chicago Chinatown's social and commercial life and a significant example of Chinese-inspired architecture in Chicago.

On Leong Merchants Association Building
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

[X] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

[ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

[X] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

[ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

[X] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

[ ] B removed from its original location.

[ ] C a birthplace or grave.

[ ] D a cemetery.

[ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

[ ] F a commemorative property.

[ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance
CRITERION A – 1928-1970
CRITERION C – 1928

Significant Dates

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)
Chinese American

Architect/Builder
Michaelsen & Rognstad

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The On Leong Merchants Association Building at 2216 S. Wentworth Avenue in Chicago, Illinois, is eligible for National Register listing under two National Register criteria:

- The building is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Social History for the building's associations with the On Leong Merchants Association (or simply "the On Leong") and its important role in the social and commercial history of Chicago's Chinatown neighborhood and Chinese American community. The On Leong Merchants Association owned and operated out of the building from its completion in 1928 until the late 1980s where until c. 1970 the organization was a leader in business, social and religious life in Chicago's Chinatown.

- The building is also nationally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for the building's ornate and intact Chinese-Eclectic design by Chicago architects Michaelsen & Rognstad. The building is one of only a handful of large-scale Chinese-Eclectic buildings that remain in American Chinatowns outside of San Francisco and Los Angeles and represents the ways that Chinese communities throughout the United States used the application of distinctive design elements of traditional Chinese architecture to Western-style buildings to project an exotic and picturesque image that would attract tourists while also visually defining those communities. Of those Chinese-Eclectic buildings that remain, the On Leong Merchants Association stands out for its high degree of architectural integrity. The building is also significant for its extensive use of polychromatic terra cotta ornament to express the symbols of traditional Chinese architecture.

The On Leong Merchants Association Building is the most visually prominent building in Chicago's Chinatown, rivaled only by the adjacent Chinatown Gate that was constructed across Wentworth Avenue in 1975. For nearly a century, the On Leong Building has been a powerful symbol of Chinese life in Chicago, a center for fellowship, education, and opportunity for Chinese Chicagoans, and a destination for visitors to the Chinatown neighborhood. The On Leong Building is also an excellent and well-preserved example of a unique style of Chinese Eclectic architecture used in Chinese-American commercial districts throughout the United States, which combined elements of traditional Chinese architecture with Western building forms and technologies to create a distinctive expression of the Chinese community.

The On Leong Merchants Association Building's period of significance for Criterion A spans from 1928 (year of completion) to 1970, reflecting the period during which the On Leong Merchants Association served as a prominent part of Chicago's Chinatown community. The building's period of significance for Criterion C is 1928, the year of the building's completion.

The On Leong Merchants Association Building historically housed a third-floor shrine to the Chinese deity Guan Gong (also called Guan Yu or Guandi) and is currently owned and operated by the Chinese Christian Union Church. Despite its use in part both historically and currently as a worship space, the building satisfies the requirements of National Register Criteria Consideration A in that the building derives its significance from its associations with Chicago Chinatown's social history, its role as Chinatown's "City Hall," and its exceptional architecture.

The On Leong Merchants Association Building was designated an individual Chicago local landmark on December 1, 1993, and was documented by the School of the Art Institute's Historic Preservation Graduate Program as part of the Historic American Buildings Survey in 2008.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

National Register Criterion A: Social History (Local Significance)

Chicago's Chinese Community and South Side Chinatown Neighborhood

Chinese immigrants first arrived in Chicago in the early 1870s. Most early Chinese immigrants to the city were laborers from the Taishan district of the southern Chinese province of Guangdong who arrived in the Midwest after working in California. The new Chinese arrivals in Chicago were part of a wave of migration in the mid-19th century; many were fleeing unrest in their home country and initially settled along the American West Coast, securing low-paying and often dangerous jobs in agriculture, mining, small industries, and the new transcontinental railroad system. Following the completion of the railroad and facing severe discrimination in California, many Chinese moved east to the country's largest cities including Chicago, New York, and Boston.[3]

Chinese populations in Chicago and other cities remained small due to several factors. First among these was the large gender disparity that persisted in the community through the early 20th century—as late as the 1920s, women made up less than 6% of Chinese Chicagoans, limiting it's the community's population growth. Many of the Chinese men entering the United States in the mid-19th century were sojourners whose aim was to earn money to send back to their families in China; leaving their wives and children at home, where the cost of living was much lower, made economic sense. The Page Act of 1875, which in theory was enacted to restrict 'undesirable' immigrants like unskilled laborers and prostitutes from Asian countries, in practice also served to further limit the immigration of Chinese women to the US and perpetuated the gender disparity within the Chinese community.[4]

The passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the subsequent exclusion acts passed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries further suppressed the Chinese population in Chicago and throughout the United States. These acts effectively banned the migration of skilled and unskilled laborers from China and declared existing Chinese immigrants ineligible for naturalization. These laws resulted in a sharp decline in the overall Chinese population in the United States through the early 20th century. Exemptions for certain classes—including merchants, students, and clergy—also shaped the demography of the Chinese immigrant population during this period.[5]

Chinese Chicagoans encountered language, cultural, and racial barriers and faced continued official and unofficial discrimination and segregation in their new home well into the 20th century, in effect creating insulated Chinese communities across the city. The earliest of these Chicago "Chinatown" social and commercial districts was established by Chinese immigrants in the 1880s near the downtown intersection of Clark and Van Buren Streets. Facing local harassment, rent increases by White landlords, and internal strife among Chinese neighbors, as well as the widespread demolition of their community for the construction of a new downtown federal building, in early 1912 many Chinese residents relocated from downtown Chicago to a new Chinatown centered on what was then a predominantly Italian enclave at the intersection

[3] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report, September 1988, 1-3.
"Chinese," Encyclopedia of Chicago, accessed February 15, 2023, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/285.html.
Susan Lee Moy, "Chinese in Chicago – The First One Hundred Years: 1870-1970" (Masters thesis, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1978), 27-29.
Chuimei Ho and Soo Long Moy for the Chinatown Museum Foundation, ed., *Images of America: Chinese in Chicago: 1870-1945* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2005), 9-10.
Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones, ed., *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 380-381.

[4] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report, September 1988.
"Chinese," Encyclopedia of Chicago, accessed February 15, 2023, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/285.html.
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Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones, ed., *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 380-381.

[5] "Chinese," Encyclopedia of Chicago, accessed February 15, 2023, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/285.html.

of West 22nd Street (now West Cermak Road) and South Wentworth Avenue, an approximately 2.5 square-mile area in what is today the Armour Square community area hemmed in to the north, east and west sides by railroads.[6]

This second (and current) Chinatown expanded rapidly with the influx of new residents, businesses, and religious and social organizations. Work and daily life in Chinatown were dominated by family, business, and community organizations, some of which occupied existing late 19th and early 20th-century buildings and others that constructed their own purpose-built homes. These included the powerful Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), a national organization that established its Chicago branch in 1906. The CCBA provided social services, resolved local disputes, and in effect governed life in Chinatown. Businessmen's associations, traditionally called "tongs," like the On Leong Merchants Association and to a much lesser extent the Hip Sing tong also served as unofficial governing forces in Chinatown. As they had among Chicago's first Chinese arrivals, Cantonese-speaking families with roots in Guangdong would continue to represent the vast majority of the Chinese population in Chicago's second Chinatown – and members of the On Leong Merchants Association – until the mid-20th century.[7]

Encouraged by increasingly relaxed U.S. immigration laws, new groups of native Chinese moved into American cities in the 1940s and 1950s. Many were Mandarin-speaking refugees fleeing the new People's Republic of China established in 1949. Though its population increased dramatically after World War II, Chicago's Chinatown remained a Southern Chinese, Cantonese-speaking community, and many Chinese newcomers as well as new arrivals from other Southeast Asian countries chose to settle in other parts of Chicago and its suburbs.[8]

Already bound by railroads on three sides, expansion of Chicago's Chinatown was further limited by the post-war construction of Interstate 55 and the widening of Archer Avenue. A rare growth opportunity arrived in the mid-1980s with the departure of the Santa Fe Railroad from its railyards north of Archer Avenue, making 32 acres of land north of Chinatown available for development. Between 1988 and 1993, the Chinese American Development Corporation used plans by Harry Weese & Associates to create Chinatown Square, a mixed-use development that included a two-story open-air mall, condominium residential blocks, and Ping Tom Memorial Park, which extended along the Chicago River north and south of 18th Street. Though Chinatown Square's open mall and public square have in many ways become Chinatown's new commercial hub in recent decades, Chinatown's historic Wentworth Avenue and 22nd Street remain busy commercial thoroughfares, accentuated by the large Wentworth Avenue Chinatown Gate designed by architect Peter Fung and completed in 1975.[9]

Early History of the On Leong Merchants Association

As Chicago's downtown Chinese community began to relocate to the second Chinatown at Wentworth Avenue and 22nd Street, they encountered hostility from many of their new neighbors. To impose a Chinese-led order in their new community and to help protect Chinese families and businesses from harassment and violence from hostile neighbors (and each other), Chinese Chicagoans relied on self-governing organizations known as associations, societies, clans, or the more traditional "tongs" – membership groups made up of male businessmen, usually from the same family group. Often local extensions or replications of much older tongs in their home country, these new American tongs oversaw Chinese commercial and political activity in their respective communities, maintained business and cultural relationships with brother tongs in China and in other American cities, and adjudicated business and personal disputes among members and their families. The tongs also served as benevolent societies that provided support to members and newcomers to the community, represented Chinese interests among White local government officials and business leaders, and protected Chinese social and business interests within the community, sometimes with diplomacy and sometimes using brute force. The tongs' renown among outside observers for their resourcefulness and generosity were tempered by charges, often unfair or inflated, of insularity,

[6] "Chinatown," Encyclopedia of Chicago, accessed February 15, 2023, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/284.html.
"Armour Square," Encyclopedia of Chicago, accessed February 15, 2023, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/71.html.
[7] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
"Chinese," Encyclopedia of Chicago, accessed February 15, 2023, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/285.html.
[8] "Chinese," Encyclopedia of Chicago, accessed February 15, 2023, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/285.html.
[9] Paul Gapp, "Chinatown gets its symbol – a gateway," *Chicago Tribune*, November 6, 1975.
Stanley Ziemba, "Purchase of rail yard gives Chinatown room to grow," *Chicago Tribune*, December 15, 1988.
"Chinatown Square," Blueprint: Chicago, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.blueprintchicago.org/2010/08/03/chinatown-square/.

aggression, and violence. The nation's three earliest and largest tongs were the Chih Kung, the oldest American tong, founded in 1850 in Hawaii; the Hip Sing, founded in the 1870s; and the On Leong, founded in New York in 1899. Dozens of smaller American tongs would rise and fall through the 19th and 20th centuries.[10]

Among the country's largest tongs was the On Leong Merchants Association (or simply "On Leong" which in Cantonese means "prosperity, comfort, and peace"). The On Leong tong was founded in New York in 1899 to counter the Hip Sing tong. A violent feud between the On Leong and the Hip Sing would span decades among brother tongs nationwide until a truce was made in 1932. The On Leong expanded to include chapters in several major American cities. Chicago's On Leong chapter was established in 1907 by members of three Cantonese Chicago families – the Lees, the Moys, and the Chins. Laundry business owner Harp Lee and grocer T.C. Moy (Moy Dong Jue) were among the first Chinese immigrants to arrive in Chicago in the early 1870s. Other Chicago On Leong founders included Moy Don Hoy, Moy Dong Yee and Moy Louie You (Moy Foot). As their Chicago families grew, the Lees, the Moys, and their descendants played leading roles in the commercial and social life of Chinese Chicago and the On Leong Merchants Association, and the membership of the On Leong would continue to represent Chinese American men mostly with roots in the southern Chinese Guangdong province.[11]

The On Leong quickly asserted their political and commercial dominance in Chicago's Chinese community by vocally siding with pro-republican forces during the Chinese Revolution of 1911, a popular nationalist stance among early 20th-century American Chinese. The tong's leaders also leveraged their organizational skills and commercial connections to shift the new center of the Chinese community south of downtown and away from the influence of the rival Hip Sing tong In 1911, the On Leong negotiated leases on approximately fifty commercial spaces at Chinatown's main intersection of Wentworth and 22nd from the H. O. Stone real estate management company. In February 1912, the organization moved its member businesses en masse from downtown to their new South Side Chinatown commercial spaces. This near overnight transformation of the South Side Italian neighborhood into a Chinese commercial hub earned the intersection the name "New Chinatown."[12]

As Chicago's new Chinatown grew and flourished, the On Leong tong were unrivaled in their influence over the social, political, and commercial affairs of the Chinese enclave, which they almost singlehandedly brought into existence in the early 1910s. The On Leong set up headquarters at 235 W. 22nd Street, just west of the heart of Chinatown at 22nd and Wentworth. Through the mid- 20th century, news accounts bestowed upon the various leaders of the On Leong Merchants Association (usually members of the Moy family) the title of "Mayor of Chinatown."[13] A White writer's account of a visit to Chinatown in 1931 referred to the organization as "The All-Powerful On Leong" and conveyed these flamboyant and brutal observations of the Association and the Chinatown its leaders helped oversee:[14]

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[10] "Chinese in Chicago – The First One Hundred Years: 1870-1970," 27-29.
"On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
Images of America: Chinese in Chicago: 1870-1945, 9-10.

[11] "Chinese in Chicago – The First One Hundred Years: 1870-1970," 27-29.
"On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
Images of America: Chinese in Chicago: 1870-1945, 58.
Ling, 134-135.
Susan Moy and Chinese American Museum of Chicago, email communications with Ramsey Historic Consultants, Inc., March 2023.

[12] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
"Chinatown," Encyclopedia of Chicago, accessed February 15, 2023, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/284.html.
"Chinese," Encyclopedia of Chicago, accessed February 15, 2023, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/285.html.

[13] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report, September 1988.
Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview.

[14] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
Images of America: Chinese in Chicago: 1870-1945, 58.
"Armour Square," Encyclopedia of Chicago.
Huping Ling, *Chinese Chicago: Race, Transnational Migration, and Community Since 1970* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 132-139.
Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview.
Edmund Moy and Stephen Moy, oral history interview with the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, November 19, 2022.

> The dominating families, or clans, of our Chinatown today are the Lees…, the Moys…, and the Chins…. The influence of these families focuses in the On Leong, a tong (association) which pretty completely directs the economic, political, and social life of the community. Where there is great power there is always some misuse of power, and the brotherhood of the On Leong… is no exception to that rule. It has governed with a stern hand and has about extinguished the power of the Hip Sings…, partly because it always has been able to hire the best lawyers. In short, it is of the same piece with some of our American manifestations of super government – like Tammany – and as such it has its virtues of efficiency and its perils of tyranny. The 'grand old man' – as he is called – of the On Leong is Frank Moy, a silent being whose principal impartment to me was a cigar portly enough, I should say, to be useful as a sofa pillow. The outstanding attributes of the colony are thrift, industry, temperance – there is little opium smoking now – benevolence, and a passion for education.[15]

The On Leong flourished in the 1910s and 1920s, boosted by a growing cadre of paying members from all backgrounds and professions in Chicago's Chinatown. In 1919, the national On Leong Merchants Association opened their membership to laborers as well as merchants, officially changing their name to the On Leong Merchants *and Laborers* Association (though the organization and its headquarters remained known by its previous name) and dramatically expanding their influence among Chinese residents and businesses. Throughout its six decades in their Chinatown headquarters, the Chicago On Leong restricted membership only to men but still grew to an organization that reflected all stations of Chinese life in America.[16]

Construction of the On Leong Merchants Association Building

Planning for a new On Leong headquarters officially began in 1921, when the organization purchased a 50- by 100-foot lot at 2212-2214 S. Wentworth Avenue from the Mee Dong Company, just southeast across an alley from On Leong's existing headquarters at 235 W. 22nd Street (additional land must have been purchased later, as the 1928 building's footprint ultimately spanned a full 100 by 100 feet).[17]

In 1926, On Leong director Jim Moy commissioned the Chicago firm of Michaelsen & Rognstad to design the organization's new building. Jim Moy's cousin was the longtime Chicago On Leong leader Frank Moy (1874-1937), then serving as the "American" (English-speaking) Secretary of the On Leong, the position recognized citywide as the unofficial "Mayor of Chinatown." Michaelsen & Rognstad had previously overseen the renovation of Jim Moy's Peacock Inn Restaurant in 1920 (1024 W. Wilson, demolished) in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood (though the restaurant was widely believed to actually be owned by Frank Moy).[18] Michaelsen & Rognstad's Chinese Eclectic design for the building blended the exterior form, interior layout, and building technology typical of 1920s commercial and institutional building in Chicago with a rich array of design elements inspired by traditional Chinese architecture.

The *Chicago Daily Tribune* anticipated that the new On Leong headquarters would be "one of the most expensive and elaborate buildings ever erected in America by the Chinese," noting that it would be the first Chinese inspired building in Chicago's Chinatown, "now lacking in any visible Oriental splendor."[19] The On Leong Merchants Association Building was officially opened on May 2, 1928 "with firecrackers dragons, and a typical Chinese celebration," and was feted by the

[15] James O'Donnell Bennett, "Chinatown – It's Queer Mixture of Old and New," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 20, 1931.
[16] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
Images of America: Chinese in Chicago: 1870-1945, 58.
"Armour Square," Encyclopedia of Chicago.
Ling, 132-139.
[17] Al Chase, "Business Men of Chinatown Buy Property," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 20, 1921.
[18] "New $1,000,000 Chinese Center to Be Opened May 2," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 27, 1928.
"Chinatown – It's Queer Mixture of Old and New."
"Raid cabarets for hip flasks; fill up cells," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 24, 1924.
"On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
[19] "Chicago Chinese Merchants Plan Gorgeous "City Hall," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 4, 1926.

Chicago Daily Tribune as Chinatown's new "City Hall." The Tribune reported a construction cost of $1,000,000, including the building and its interior furnishings.[20]

Chicago Chinatown's "City Hall"

From 1928 through the 1960s, the On Leong Merchants Association Building was a center of commercial, social and religious activity in Chinatown. From their conspicuous headquarters at 2216 S. Wentworth Avenue, the On Leong controlled much of Chinatown's business, social and religious life from 1928 through the 1960s.

The most publicly accessible portion of the On Leong headquarters were its ground floor commercial storefront spaces, rented by the On Leong to members who operated grocery and gift stores, coffee shops and restaurants; some eating establishments at the On Leong Building were open twenty-four hours to feed the laborers and policemen who worked overnight. The basements below these commercial spots sometimes housed public commercial establishments but were mostly used by the tenants for storage, but also for meetings of the American Legion and private socializing.[21] Well-remembered establishments at the On Leong Building include the Chopstick Inn, Golden Gate Restaurant, Giftland, and Asian Image (current tenant) at 2212 S. Wentworth Avenue; the Quong Hop Lung Gift Shop, Chinatown Bazaar Gift Shop, and Pui Tak Christian Book Store at 2214 S. Wentworth Avenue; the Artist Barber Shop in the basement below 2214 S. Wentworth Avenue; the Kai Kai Restaurant at 2218 S. Wentworth Avenue; the American Legion Chinatown Post in the basement below 2218 S. Wentworth Avenue; and the Kee Chong Lung Co. grocery store, Sun Chong Lung grocery store, and the current Giftland at 2220 S. Wentworth Avenue.[22]

Through the headquarters' main front doors along Wentworth Avenue and up the wide central flight of stairs, the On Leong's new facilities combined modern office and assembly spaces with traditional Chinese architectural features and symbols that would have been familiar and welcoming to their 2,000 members along with visitors of all kinds, fulfilling the On Leong's vision for their new Chinatown "City Hall."[23] A florid 1933 account in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* observed "…the portly magnificoes of the quarter laconically transacting business in a structure that unites under one pagoda-sentineled roof the activities of city hall, chamber of commerce, and temple…"[24] A 1939 account in a WPA Federal Writers' Project guide to Illinois gave the building the official name of "Chinese City Hall," said it was open to the public "except during Tong meetings," and called it "one of the finest examples of Chinese architecture in America."[25] The Illinois guide gives a rare view into the headquarters' interiors:

> Adjoining the reception hall is the shrine room [once in the center of the third floor assembly hall], with portraits of George Washington and Sun Yat Sen, father of the Chinese Republic. Teakwood chairs along the walls have backs of striped marble, selected to suggest seascapes, landscapes, and fantastic creatures of Chinese folklore. An elaborate shrine to Quan-Kung, a teacher of the third century who emphasized honest dealings in business, has a painting of Quan-Kung half hidden in its gilded recesses. Here joss sticks are burned, and a perpetual oil light glimmers on ceremonial objects and ornaments symbolizing various qualities and virtues of the good life. In the building are meeting halls, a courtroom for settling business

[20] "New $1,000,000 Chinese Center to Be Opened May 2."
"Chinatown – It's Queer Mixture of Old and New."
"The Truth About Tongs," *Popular Mechanics*, June 1929, 919.
[21] Original plans and elevations.
Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview with the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, November 9, 2022.
Edward Jung and Belinda Young, oral history interview with the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, December 28, 2022.
[22] Susan Moy and Chinese American Museum of Chicago, email communications with Ramsey Historic Consultants, Inc., March 2023.
Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association directories, Chinese American Museum of Chicago.
Gerald Moye and Calvin G. Chin. *Ling Long Museum (The High Lights of Chinese History) and Chicago's Chinatown* (Chicago: Ling Long Museum, 1935), 65.
[23] "The Truth About Tongs," 919.
[24] "Chinatown – It's Queer Mixture of Old and New."
[25] Federal Writers' Project of the Works Project Administration for the State of Illinois, *Illinois: A Descriptive and Historical Guide* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1939), 292.
"Chinatown – It's Queer Mixture of Old and New."

disputes between tong members, and a schoolroom for the instruction of Chinese youth in the language and customs of China.[26]

Initially constituted as an organization of "merchant" members with businessmen among its leading recruits, the On Leong's primary mission was to encourage and protect Chinese business interests in Chinatown and beyond. With Chinatown lacking a formal "Chamber of Commerce," the On Leong stepped into the role of encouraging and controlling business activity among the South Side Chinese. The On Leong established "one mile one laundry" and later "one mile one restaurant" rules to regulate competition among Chinese-owned businesses in Chicago, implementing these regulations by force when necessary. Internal political, business, and family disputes were litigated in an unofficial court regularly held upstairs in "a very modern American-style council chamber and courtroom" at the south end of the third-floor hall (seating and dais now missing, see Figure 23). Such courts were common among Chinese Americans who often did not trust outside institutions and wished to avoid outside interference and difficulties in communication.[27] A 1931 journalist saw "[o]n each side of the judges' dais in the courtroom stood the flags of the two republics [presumably flags of the 1911 Republic of China and the United States]… The decoration of the courtroom was rich but reserved and – for an American – in humbling contrast to the rawness and glare of our own local halls of justice."[28]

The On Leong acted as mediator between their Chinatown community and the larger city beyond its borders, supporting Chinese individuals in interactions with outside businesses and government officials. The On Leong connected Chinese entrepreneurs and other newcomers with capital from American banks and assisted Chinese-speaking bank customers in navigating financial transactions, including the transfer of money to and from family and friends back in China. The On Leong later became involved in real estate development in Chinatown, building a 1946 bachelor "rooming house" designed by Michaelsen & Rognstad at 214 W. 22nd Place just east of the headquarters (a wide disparity in gender among Chicago's Chinese remained the norm well into the mid-twentieth century).[29] The On Leong also assisted members and their families with financing to purchase their own homes.[30]

The On Leong's Wentworth Avenue headquarters acted as a first stop for Chinese immigrants arriving to Chicago in waves, particularly after the start of the Chinese Civil War in 1927 and the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949.[31] Chinese youths hired by the On Leong met new arrivals at local train stations downtown, escorted them south to Chinatown, and assisted with housing and job placement. The On Leong's headquarters offered translation services for newcomers along with English language classes for children and adults. A Catholic parochial school for Chinese children – the forerunner of St. Therese Chinese Catholic School –organized by the Catholic Mission and operated by the Sisters of Notre Dame also operated inside the On Leong headquarters from 1941 to 1961.[32]

In addition to teaching English to newcomers and housing a Catholic school tenant, the On Leong created a second-floor Chinese school program, accessed from the southwest entrance along 22nd Place, which instructed younger generations – first through sixth graders – in Chinese language and customs on weekday afternoons after school. Older students who had

[26] *Illinois: A Descriptive and Historical Guide*, 293.
[27] Ling, 135-136.
"The Truth About Tongs," 919.
[28] "Chinatown – It's Queer Mixture of Old and New."
Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview.
Edmund Moy and Stephen Moy, oral history interview.
[29] Ling, 136-137.
Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview.
214 W. 22nd Place building permit street index, December 4, 1946.
Chicago Historic Resources Survey.
[30] Ling, 136-137.
Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview.
[31] Until the late twentieth century, the On Leong remained staunch supporters of the Republic of China established under Sun Yat-sen in 1912 and replaced in 1949 under Mao Zedong with the People's Republic of China.
[32] Ling, 135-137, 157.
Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview.
Edmund Moy and Stephen Moy, oral history interview.
Edward Jung and Belinda Young, oral history interview.
Thomas May and Robert Hoy, oral history interview with the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, January 4, 2023.

to leave Chinatown to attend high school usually did not have time after school to attend these programs. Walter Moy, born in Chicago in 1934 and raised in Chinatown by his parents who arrived in the city in 1931, recalled Chinese school at the On Leong Building during World War II in the early 1940s:[33]

> …[T]hat was basically every Chinese-American kid's experience in Chinatown. You went to Haines [Elementary] School [which let] out at three o'clock, you went home, had a snack, and you picked up your Chinese school bag …[with] your writing brush pen, your ink well, your reader, your copy book, and you went to Chinese School at 22nd Place. Chinese school bell rang at four o'clock. You get there at three-forty-five and you just played out on 22nd Place, running around playing tag, playing ball, knocking the ball off the wall at On Leong. And then [at] four o'clock the school bell rang, the doors opened, and we lined up and went up the stairs to the second floor. [34]

Walter Moy recalled weekly assemblies held on Mondays when the principal gave orations telling the students to "study hard, work hard, be good at home, [and] raise money for the war effort." Lessons were held in the second floor's subdivided classrooms where students, many of whom spoke only basic Chinese at home, were taught reading, brush writing and recitation in rudimentary Toisanese Chinese by, as Moy recalls, graduate students from the University of Chicago. After-school instruction usually ran from four o'clock to seven o'clock with only a short recess. "It was a long day," Moy remembered, "but it was well managed. …It was fun being with other Chinese kids in the Chinese school classroom. …We saw a very positive side of what a language would do for young people. It brought the kids together. It [showed us] Chinese art, Chinese calligraphy, Chinese culture, and our own Chinese ethnicity." [35]

The On Leong's open-columned third-floor hall housed the previously-mentioned On Leong "courtroom" and also hosted banquets and parties, weddings, graduations, dances, and even funerals for members and their families. The columned center of the third-floor hall was also home to a permanent shrine to Guan Gong (also called Guan Yu or Guandi), a third century A.D. Chinese general turned deity who was believed to protect merchants and who, though many of Chicago's On Leong members worshiped in Christian churches, was regularly acknowledged and paid homage to during On Leong member meetings and other events.[36]

Many in the wider public outside of Chicago's Chinatown were fascinated by the Chicago On Leong and their impressive headquarters, which they thought captured the essence of a culture that was unfamiliar and somewhat mysterious to them. The On Leong was often the subject of news articles, including a notable June 1929 article in the magazine *Popular Mechanics* that purported to reveal "The Truth About Tongs." The article called the wider national group of On Leong "the most important tong in the United States because its local chapters include practically all the more well-to-do merchants" and observed that "[i]n San Francisco, Chicago, and New York elaborate tong houses have been built, blending Chinese and American architecture in a striking new composite."[37] *Popular Mechanics* gave its readers glimpses of the just-completed On Leong headquarters in Chicago, complete with rare images of the third floor shrine room and the Chicago On Leong's leader Frank Moy (see Figures 22 and 23).[38] And though most of the building was exclusively for "members only," the On Leong often allowed visitors from outside of Chinatown to visit Chicago's "Chinese Temple" where they could "enter their temple, said to be the finest in the country, without admission fee or guard," view the shrine, and even burn a joss stick.[39] In 1931, a visiting journalist from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* described for his mostly White readers the third-floor hall then filled with religious shrines (since removed), capturing in words the exotic smoke-filled air of Eastern adventures that most outsiders associated with the On Leong:

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[33] Walter Moy, oral history interview with the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, January 26, 2023.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Dorothy Perkins. *Encyclopedia of China: The Essential Reference to China, Its History and Culture* (USA: Roundtable Press, 1999), 192.
Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview.
[37] "The Truth About Tongs."
[38] Ibid.
[39] "A line o' type or two: Mr. Pepys goes to Chinatown," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 11, 1942.
Edmund Moy and Stephen Moy, oral history interview.
Agnes Lynch, "Clubwomen see old and new on Chinatown tour: Ancient Culture Blends with Modern," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 27, 1952.
Jacquelin Southerland, "You can find family fun in Chinatown: Visitors are Assured of a Welcome," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 7, 1958.

> I was ushered into a splendor of spirituality. Serene, august, the place lowered the voice…. Here if not the beauty of holiness, thought I, the holiness of beauty does assuredly abide, and the fact that a flourishing card game was going on among Chinese executives and clerks on the floor below did not much blur my awed impression.
>
> This temple chamber seemed sentient, breathing incense upon me and softly exhaling its loveliness of bronze and marble and precious woods, of tapestries and brocaded banners and most delicate carving heavily overlaid with gold. Everlasting lights were burning in recessed shrines and cups of tea stood beside the lights. Before the principal shrine, or altar, at the west end of the long chamber were screens of carved and gilded bamboo out of which peeped many strange, symbolic figures of birds and flowers, and to the right of the altar as you faced it rose a tall cherry tree carved in gilded wood….
>
> Like ghosts of ourselves we silently moved on; over somber rugs that hushed the footfall; amid furniture of teakwood and ebony inlaid with mother of pearl, and tall porcelain vases of the Ming dynasty of five centuries ago; past a massive teakwood table… in the center of the chamber, and past a long narrow table that stood in front of the altar that was laden with incense burners and small banners which are reduced copies of the banners carried by the victorious troops of Gwon Gun [sic] in ancient days.
>
> The central altar glowed with gold and scarlet and incense smoldered before it…. Bronze vessels on the altar held tapers and fortune-telling sticks and on its ledge stood three tiny cups of tea which are replenished on the first and fifteenth of every month…. Deeply recessed in the altar was a picture in oils of Gwon Gun [sic], ancient here now worshiped, and he was surrounded by a dazzling grill work or filigree of hold in which appeared figures of priests, dragons, sacred lions, deer, peacocks, bats, roses, and suns.…Moving to the east end of the shrine chamber I beheld portraits of two liberators – on the right… the sad countenance of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, founder of the Chinese republic, who died in 1934, and on the left our Washington.[40]
>
> …[L]ater Frank Moy, 'the mayor of Chinatown,' told me that only 24 karat gold leaf had been used in the embellishments."[41]

And like the many White union and fraternal halls in the city which housed large meeting spaces for member initiation and larger organization gatherings, the On Leong's third floor hall also doubled as what some members in 1931 called "'the lodge' where members of the On Leong take the oath of fealty to their order, as in a Masonic lodge."[42]

Chicago's On Leong looked beyond the welfare of their own members in Chicago and were prolific fundraisers for causes affecting their friends and families in China. The On Leong participated in fundraising events and demonstrations to aid Chinese affected by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in northern China in 1931 and the subsequent Japanese occupation of Guangdong, the home province of most On Leong members, beginning in 1937. Though women were officially barred from membership in the all-male tong, the On Leong provided meeting facilities for the Women's Association, a Chinese women's group also focused on providing aid in the wake of the Japanese invasion and occupation of China. During World War II, the On Leong also played a leading role in fundraising for Chinese aid relief, with On Leong member Y.C. Moy chairing the Chinese Emergency Relief Society.[43]

The On Leong headquarters briefly served as an international stage for Chinese relief in March 1943, when the On Leong hosted a visit from Madame Chiang Kai-Shek (Soong May-Ling, 1898-2003), wife of the leader of the Republic of China, as she toured the United States speaking about the need for U.S. and Chinese partnerships during wartime and raising Chinese aid money.[44] "For the first time the tiny Chinese community was the hub of the city," reported the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, as up to 20,000 Chicagoans filled the streets of Chinatown hoping to catch of glimpse of the visiting dignitary. The Chinese Boy and Girl scouts played music and drums outside the headquarters as Madame Chiang's car arrived at the Wentworth Avenue entrance. A short ceremony was held upstairs in the third-floor hall, which was "decorated with flags…

[40] "Chinatown – It's a Queer Mixture of Old and New."
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ling, 138.
Martha Murphy, "Mme. Chiang Receives $68,087 War Aid Fund in Chinatown," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 22, 1943.
[44] "Chinatown Gets Spruced Up for Madame Chiang," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 16, 1943.
Encyclopedia of China, 192.

[and] red brocaded chairs [bearing] the name of an American or Chinese guest on a placard in delicate hand brushed lettering. From the dais hung the portraits of the late Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Chinese republic and Mme. Chiang's brother-in-law; Lem Sim, president of the republic; and Gen. Chiang. Mme. Chiang faced a white silk banner reading, 'Welcome, Mme. Chiang Kai-shek.'"[45] At the event, Madame Chiang received aid checks from organizations across the Midwest before speaking about Chinese war efforts and thanking the crowd, which included representatives of Chinese communities from over a dozen American cities. Her speech was broadcast via a public address system to the thousands assembled outside along Wentworth Avenue. It was noted that Madame Chiang delivered her remarks in Mandarin Chinese, not the Cantonese that prevailed in Chicago's Chinatown, though "no one seemed to have difficulty understanding her."[46]

Later History of the On Leong Merchants Association Building / Pui Tak Center

Members of the Moy family remained at the helm of the On Leong in Chicago into the late 20th century, maintaining the headquarters building, organizing, and teaching classes, fundraising for local causes, and hosting events for visitors from Chicago and beyond. After the 1937 death of Frank Moy, who had led the On Leong since the community's move from downtown to the South Side, the organization had several notable leaders including Frank Moy's nephew Gerald H. Moye (1900-1956); Harry P. Lee (1890-1952); Poo Eng, who served both president of both the Chicago On Leong and the national organization in the 1960s; Bow Nom Lee; Richard Moy; Wilson; Edmund Moy; and Steve Moy.[47]

The On Leong Merchant Association's position in the Chinatown community changed in the second half of the 20th century. Descendants of On Leong leaders and members recall the slow decline of the On Leong tong's dominance of Chinatown, in part due to the rise of other business, social and religious organizations and other changes in Chicago's Chinatown community. The repeal of anti-immigration laws in the United States beginning in the 1940s made movement and property ownership easier for newcomers, who assimilated into American life more quickly and needed less support from tong organizations. Though many older Chinese Chicagoans including members of the On Leong remained fiercely anti-communist even after the Maoist takeover of China in 1949, the nationalist cause was of less importance to later generations in Chicago, weakening the political bonds that held the tong together and attracted membership for the first half of the twentieth century. Second and third generation Chinese Chicagoans had significantly less need for On Leong services and protections, and many moved their families to communities outside of Chinatown. The diversity of Chinese newcomers to Chicago also made assimilation into the South Side Chinatown more difficult. While early 20th century newcomers were usually southern Chinese and Cantonese-speakers, later arrivals, especially after the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Peoples Republic of China in 1972, were more often northern Chinese and Mandarin-speaking and started a gradual multi-decade transition in which Mandarin-speakers from other regions of China arrived and set down roots in Chicago. These language and cultural differences made the newcomers less likely to seek support in Chicago's Cantonese-dominant Chinatown and from the On Leong. A significant portion of Chinatown east of Wentworth Avenue was demolished in the 1950s and 1960s to build the Dan Ryan Expressway (Interstates 90 and 94) and mid-20th century urban renewal efforts included substantial demolition and redevelopment in Chinatown as well. Another center of Chinese life in Chicago – the city's third Chinatown – was developed by the Hip Sing tong at the North Side intersection of Broadway and Argyle beginning in the 1970s.[48]

As a result of these significant community changes, the centrality of the On Leong and its Wentworth Avenue headquarters waned. In the 1970s, On Leong leadership ended most public services and events in the building, and the premises evolved

[45] "Mme. Chiang Receives $68,087 War Aid Fund in Chinatown."
[46] Ibid.
[47] Edmund Moy and Stephen Moy, oral history interview.
"Frank Moy dies: noted as Mayor of Chinatown," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 18, 1937.
"Mayor Moye of Chinatown takes a bride: Mayor of Chinatown weds," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 27, 1928.
"Bury Harry Lee in Chinatown funeral rites," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 28, 1952.
"Hundreds pay Moye tribute at his funeral," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 3, 1956.
"That world we call Chinatown," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 5, 1978.
[48] Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview.
Chuo Li, "Interrogating Ethnic Identity: Space and Community Building in Chicago's Chinatown," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Fall 2015, Vol. 27, No, 1., 56-58.
Lucy Key Miller, "Front Views & Profiles: Chicago's Chinatown," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* March 19, 1954.

into something closer to a social club with entry restricted with door buzzers, security cameras and even iron gates at the top of the main stair up to the second floor. Few members of the public entered the building, and stories spread of illegal gambling and other suspicious activities taking place in the former On Leong offices, classrooms, and assembly spaces upstairs.[49]

The On Leong's tenure in the building ended abruptly in 1988, when a federal investigation into the On Leong's illegal gambling activities in Chicago, Houston and New York came to a head. On three separate occasions from 1984 to 1986, federal marshals raided the headquarters, arrested members, and ultimately took control of the building, ousting the Association and shuttering the property. Of several On Leong members indicted, sixteen pled guilty to charges that included tax evasion and racketeering. Though commercial activity continued on the ground floor, the second and third floors remained empty for nearly five years and fell into disrepair.[50]

In 1993, the federal government sold the building to the Chinese Christian Union Church (CCUC), one of the On Leong's longtime neighbors at 2301 S. Wentworth Avenue. The original price for the building was $1.8 million, but upon learning that the property had been recommended for designation as a local landmark, the federal government reduced the price to $1.4 million to account for the increased costs expected to rehabilitate the building to preservation standards. The church supported the building's preservation and local landmark designation, which was finalized on December 1, 1993. In a multi-million-dollar renovation in the mid-1990s, the CCUC converted the upper floors for its own use and for use by the Pui Tak Center, a charitable organization founded by the church to serve the Chinese community through educational, family, and community services. The community celebrated the opening of the Pui Tak Center on November 18, 1995. [51]

The Pui Tak Center made national news in 2007 when it was selected as one of 25 Chicago area historic sites to participate in the Partners in Preservation program, a rehabilitation grant program sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and funded by American Express. Supporters from across the country successfully voted online to award the Pui Tak Center the program's largest grant of $110,000 which was used to complete a $531,000 repair the building's ornate terra cotta façade.[52]

The On Leong Merchants Association remains in operation at 218 W. 22nd Place, just west of their 1928 building. The On Leong's former headquarters is today used by the CCUC, which hosts worship services and religious programs, and the Pui Tak Center, which provides adult education and training, children and youth services, and community programs that serve thousands within the Chicago Chinese community each year.[53]

National Register Criterion C: Architecture (National Significance)

The On Leong Merchants Association Building on Wentworth Avenue in Chicago's Chinatown neighborhood is one of the United States' finest and best-preserved examples of an iteration of Asian Eclectic architecture—variously referred to as "Chinese Eclectic," "Chinese Adaptive," "East Asian Eclectic," "Orientalist"/"Oriental Revival" or the pejorative "Pseudo-Chinese"—that proliferated in many American Chinatowns in the early 20th century. Developed largely by Western[54]

[49] Cameron McWhirter, "Landmark Chinatown site may shed its checkered past," *Chicago Tribune*, March 27, 1993.
United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. on Leong Chinese Merchants Association Building, et al., defendants-appellants, 918 F.2d 1289 (7th Cir. 1990), accessed February 15, 2023, https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/918/1289/24872.
Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview.

[50] Cameron McWhirter, "Landmark Chinatown site may shed its checkered past," *Chicago Tribune*, March 27, 1993.
United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. on Leong Chinese Merchants Association Building, et al., defendants-appellants, 918 F.2d 1289 (7th Cir. 1990), accessed February 15, 2023, https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/918/1289/24872.
Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview.
Edward Jung and Belinda Young, oral history interview with the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, December 28, 2022.

[51] "Pui Tak Center: About," Pui Tak Center, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.puitak.org/en/history.
Susan Lee Moy and Corwin Eng, oral history interview.

[52] Ibid.

[53] "Landmark Chinatown site may shed its checkered past."
David Wu, oral history interview with the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, November 1, 2022.
C.W. Chan, oral history interview with the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, November 2, 2022.

[54] In this context, the term "Western" refers to customs, traditions, architecture, etc. that originated in Europe or are based on European culture.

architects for prominent Chinese American businesses or for family, regional, fraternal, or merchant organizations, this hybrid architecture merged popular Western styles and building types with highly symbolic and recognizable elements of traditional Chinese architecture. Most extensively used in the rebuilding of San Francisco's Chinatown in the decades after its destruction by the 1906 earthquake, but also used in the designs of prominent buildings in Chinatowns in the West, Midwest and East Coast of the US, this Chinese Eclectic style was strategically implemented by elites within Chinese immigrant communities to both visually define those communities and to project an exotic, picturesque image that helped promote these Chinatowns to tourists. The rise of Chinese Eclectic architecture within America's Chinatowns in the early 20th century roughly corresponded with the emergence of other Exotic Revival styles, including Egyptian Revival, Moorish Revival, and Mayan Revival. While the popularity of these other styles waned after the 1920s, Chinese Eclectic architecture continued to evolve within Chinatowns across the country, with architects incorporating traditional Chinese elements into Art Deco, Art Moderne, and Mid-Century Modern designs. Although derided by critics as inauthentic and "kitschy," the Chinese Eclectic architecture constructed in American Chinatowns – exemplified in Chicago at the On Leong Merchants Association Building – served as both savvy marketing ploys and cultural signifiers for the Chinese American community as they negotiated their place within their adopted country. Many of the buildings rendered in this hybrid style, including the On Leong Building, continue to serve as important visual landmarks within historic Chinatowns throughout the U.S.

Early Adaptations to the Built Environment of America's Chinatowns

Before the early 20th century, the built environment of Chinatowns throughout the United States did not differ substantially from that of the cities and towns in which they were located. Although San Francisco's Chinatown, widely recognized as one of the oldest in the country, began to coalesce within the city's commercial center in the 1860s and early 1870s, most of the buildings within the enclave did not exhibit overtly Chinese architectural features prior to its rebuilding after the 1906 earthquake. Non-Chinese visitors to the area described San Francisco's Chinatown in the 1890s as "neither picturesque nor Oriental," and noted that "the architecture is thoroughly American."[55] As they moved away from the West Coast to other urban centers in the late 19th century, Chinese immigrants largely settled within neighborhoods that had formerly been developed and occupied. In New York City's Chinatown, which arose east of the Five Points neighborhood in the 1870s, Chinese residents "moved into the same old townhouses and tenements that had stood in the neighborhood for decades: Two to five-story buildings not different from the tenements found throughout the Lower East Side."[56] Settlers within the nascent Chinatowns in Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia also made use of existing neighborhood building stock. Originally located within a vice district along Clark Street known as the Levee, Chicago's original Chinatown consisted of a small cluster of existing three- and four-story commercial buildings, and Chinese businesses and organizations often shared space within these buildings with guest houses, grocery stores, and restaurants run by other ethnic groups.[57]

Although Chinatowns in the 19th century were primarily made up of Western-style buildings, Chinese communities did make subtle changes to their built environment during this period. Some of the earliest houses constructed by the Chinese in San Francisco were pre-fabricated structures imported from China. The majority were simple houses made of camphor-wood panels that could be assembled without the use of nails, and many of these structures lined the narrow pedestrian alleys within the district.[58] French journalist Etienne Derbec described the houses as being "of two types: in the European or Celestial styles, with grayish interior and exterior designs, their roofs almost flat and their windows decorated, with sheets of tortoise-shell taking place of window panes."[59] Larger pre-fabricated stone commercial structures were also imported to the city from China in the 19th century and assembled by Chinese laborers. One such building, known as the Parrott Granite Block, survived the 1906 earthquake but was later demolished. [60]

[55] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *Essays and Miscellany*, Vol. 38 (San Francisco: The History Co., 1890), 318.
[56] Kerri Culhane, "'Chinese Buildings' in Chinatown," NYC Department of Records and Information Services Website (accessed September 15, 2024 at https://www.archives.nyc/blog?author=6197e8302a74234094a43a64).
[57] Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 193-194.
[58] *San Francisco Chinese American Historic Context Statement (Draft 1),* draft report prepared by the San Francisco Planning Department in collaboration with the Chinese Historical Society of America, submitted June 9, 2021, D-80 (accessed September 1, 2024 at https://sfplanning.org/sites/default/files/documents/preserv/ChineseAmericanHCS/ChineseAmericanHCS-draft.pdf).
[59] Ibid, D-3 – D-4.
[60] Ibid.

In New York, Chicago, and other Chinatowns outside of California, Chinese residents also began to alter existing buildings to suit their needs. Among the most common modifications was the installation of upper-floor open-air galleries, which were a characteristic feature of the traditional Chinese *tong lau*, or shophouse building. This mixed-use multi-family building type was a fixture of urban centers throughout China's Pearl River Delta, which was the source of most Chinese immigration to America in the mid-to-late 19th century.[61] In her writing on the built environment of Manhattan's Chinatown in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, architectural historian Kerri Culhane notes that, beginning in the 1880s, Chinese building owners and tenants hired Western architects to update tenement buildings with covered galleries that "expanded usable living space. . . and brought light and air into the often overpopulated building."[62] New York architect John A. Hamilton, who worked on several buildings in Manhattan's Chinatown in the late 19th century, referred to these galleries as "essentially a chinese [sic] device and desired by them as being more like the stores in CHINA."[63] While some buildings were retrofitted with deeply inset galleries, other owners in Chinatown crafted projecting metal balconies that also served as fire escapes, which were required by New York building codes. Historic photographs of Chinatowns in Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, St. Louis, and Boston show that similar galleries were installed on buildings in those communities around the turn of the century; some examples also featured shallow tiled roofs with upturned "flying" eaves or carved wood or decorative metal screens and balustrades that referenced traditional Chinese architecture.

The Rebuilding of San Francisco's Chinatown and the Emergence of Chinese Eclectic Architecture in America's Chinatowns

In the early hours of April 18, 1906, a massive earthquake occurred near the center of San Francisco. The quake toppled buildings and started a devastating fire that destroyed huge swaths of the center city, including much of its existing Chinatown. Many of the city's Chinese immigrant population relocated, either temporarily or permanently, to nearby Oakland or Berkeley, but approximately 400 Chinese remained in San Francisco, living in segregated displacement camps on the outskirts of the city.

Anti-Chinese activists and White business and government leaders hoped to seize the opportunity created by the destruction of Chinatown to relocate the Chinese community and open the site of its former enclave in the center of the city for redevelopment. Days after the earthquake, San Francisco Mayor Eugene E. Schmitz ordered all Chinese be relocated to Hunters Point at the southern edge of the city. Intent on keeping Chinatown in its historic location, Chinese residents and community leaders swiftly organized to fight the relocation plan. Chinese communities in other cities across the U.S. donated money to support the rebuilding effort, and the Chinese government sent diplomats to oversee the construction of temporary shelters and provided financial support.[64]

To persuade government officials to allow Chinatown to remain in the heart of the city, San Francisco Chinatown's business leaders—most notably Look Tin Eli (1870-1919), a Chinese-American businessman who served as general manager of the Sing Chong Bazaar—proposed rebuilding Chinatown in an "Oriental" style that would help to rehabilitate the neighborhood's reputation outside of the city's Chinese community. Anti-Chinese activists had long decried San Francisco's Chinatown as a "noisome swamp" and "a breeding ground for disease and crime," but the salacious and often racist tales of the district as a mysterious, dangerous ghetto filled with vice had also drawn curious outsiders to Chinatown in the late 19th century, as well as to emerging Chinatowns in Chicago and New York. Tourists could take guided tours where they would visit gambling houses, opium dens, and other "criminal hideouts," often staged by professional guides with hired Chinatown residents.[65] Although they held more favorable views on the Chinese immigrant population, bohemian writers and artists also romanticized the real poverty and overcrowding within Chinatown as picturesque and authentic, and considered its "mixture of beauty and squalor" as "an escape from Western bourgeois society."[66]

[61] Culhane, "'Chinese Buildings' in Chinatown."
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] San Francisco Chinese American Historic Context Statement (Draft), D74-D75.
[65] Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) Kindle edition, Location 273.
[66] Emma J. Teng, "Artifacts of a Lost City: Arnold Genthe's *Pictures of Old Chinatown* and its Intertexts," in *Re/colleting Early Asian America: Essays in Cultural History,* Josephine Lee, Imogene L. Lim, and Yuko Matsukawa, eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), *59*.

In their plan for the rebuilding of San Francisco's Chinatown, Look Tin Eli and other community leaders sought to leave behind once and for all the district's reputation as run-down, dangerous, and "premodern," while continuing to encourage a different kind of tourism, one where the visitor's attention was "focused on exotic performances, curios, and cuisine rather than scenes of depravity and danger."[67] Central to this plan was the construction of new, modern buildings designed in an "Oriental" style, which would visually unify the district and serve as an advertisement for its businesses. Eli envisioned a new Chinatown "so much more beautiful, artistic, and so much more emphatically Oriental, that the old Chinatown, the destruction of which great writers and artists have wept over. . . is not worthy to be mentioned in the same breath."[68]

To fulfill this vision for a "New Oriental City," San Francisco Chinatown's business leaders turned to Western architects to create designs that merged Western building materials, techniques, and programming with elements that clearly symbolized Chinese culture in a way that would be easily recognizable and appealing to Westerners. While the architectural references used in the rebuilt Chinatown would also doubtless have also been familiar to Chinatown's residents, the main purpose of these Chinese Eclectic designs was not to faithfully represent Chinese culture or the Chinese community itself, but instead to repackage the district for easier consumption by members outside of the community, thereby ensuring its survival. The merging of Chinese design elements with buildings that were "forthrightly urban and commanding in scale," with modern features also helped the Chinese community in San Francisco—and later in other Chinatowns throughout the country—to "project a vision of urban Chinese life that was clean, safe and professional."[69]

American and European Interpretation of the Architecture of China in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

The choice of Western architects for the rebuilding of San Francisco's Chinatown was born in part out of necessity. Architecture as a profession did not exist to any meaningful extent in China until the 1920s, and the design and construction of traditional Chinese structures had previously relied on building techniques passed down largely through oral tradition to generations of master craftsmen.[70] The elevation of professional architects within Chinese society began in the late 19th century, following the Opium Wars of the mid-1800s, the forced opening of China's ports to European trade, and the subsequent arrival of Western missionary architects. In the first decade of the 20th century, wealthy Chinese families sent their children abroad to be educated in Western universities, and Chinese students entered European and American architecture and engineering programs with the intention of returning to China. The country's first generation of Chinese architects began practicing within the country in the 1910s and 1920s and organized the first professional organization for architects, called the Chinese Society of Architects, in Shanghai in 1927.

Similarly, architectural history as a dedicated field of study did not emerge in China until the 1920s. The first scholarly studies of Chinese architecture were spearheaded in Europe and America in the mid-to-late 19th century as an offshoot of the emerging field of Sinology, driven in large part by the expansion of the Chinese art market. Monographs on Chinese architecture were written in the mid-19th century by British architect Thomas Allom (1804-1872) and British architectural historian James Fergusson (1808-1886), both of whom had traveled extensively in East Asia. As the foreign population in China rose, academic work by European and American scholars increased through the last quarter of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century, and the bulk of scholarly writing on Chinese architecture until the establishment of the first scholarly architectural society in China in 1930 came from Western writers and by a growing number of Japanese historians.[71]

Without a deep understanding of its language or culture, most Western scholars writing on Chinese art and architecture relied heavily on figurative or visual analysis, leading to "a partiality that the visible difference" between China's built environment and Western architecture "transcended above all other qualities."[72] They also tended to ignore regional vernaculars and the growing influence of Western architecture and modern building techniques, particularly around the

[67] Rast, "The Cultural Politics of Tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown, 1882-1917," 50-51.
[68] Look Tin Eli, "Our New Oriental City—Veritable Fairy Palaces Filled with the Choicest Treasures of the Orient."
[69] Josi Ward, *"'Dreams of Oriental Romance,' Reinventing Chinatown in 1930s Los Angeles." Buildings and Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum, Vol. 20, Number 1 (Spring 2013), 33-34.*
[70] Min-Ying Wang, "The Historicization of Chinese Architecture: The Making of Architectural Historiography in China, from the Late Nineteenth Century to 1953," Doctoral Thesis, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Columbia University, 2010, 108.
[71] Ibid, 37-38.
[72] Ibid, 55.

southern port cities, instead limiting their focus to the timber-frame imperial palaces of the Ming and Qing dynasties and monumental religious structures like temples and pagodas. This narrow and shallow approach to the architecture of China led most Western scholars to regard it as static and relatively uniform, flattening its variety and development over time. Sir Banister Fletcher's categorization of Chinese architecture – along with the architecture of other non-Western countries – as "non-historical" in the fourth edition of his hugely influential *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method* (1901) neatly captures the Western attitude toward Chinese architecture as standing outside of the march of Western progress. Even German architectural historian Ernst Boerschmann, whose studies on Chinese architecture in the early 20th century sought to "to lift the manually produced traditional architecture in China from the lowly status accorded to it by imperial Western experts to a fully-fledged artistic concept," focused heavily on what he considered "the unity of architecture, culture, and religion" in the country over the historical development and regional variety of its building traditions, which may have reinforced popular Western perceptions of Chinese architecture as "timeless."[73]

With this limited understanding of Chinese architecture gleaned from academic work that "reduced Chinese architecture to several visually compelling symbolic images," American architects working in Chinatowns in San Francisco and elsewhere in the United States designed buildings that were essentially Western in form, while adding visual interest with highly symbolic but academically inaccurate essentializations of Chinese traditional architecture, including curving, tile-clad roofs with overhanging eaves, colorful ceramic work, carved ornament, decorative painting, and pagodas.[74] Built primarily as follies throughout the gardens of Europe in the 18th and early 19th century, the pagoda as a modern architectural element was first prominently featured on the Chinese Pavilion at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago and in the Chinese Building and Bazaar at the California Midwinter International Exposition in Golden Gate Park the following year.[75] By the 1930s, the pagoda had become a common visual element within America Chinatowns, giving credence to well-known British Sinologist Walter Perceval Yetts'(1878-1957) observation in 1927 that the pagoda "passes in the West as a sort of symbol for China."[76] Hipped roofs with curving, overhanging eaves, almost always covered in green or red ceramic tiles, were also used extensively on Chinese Eclectic buildings within Chinatowns, and could be found covering upper-story galleries and storefronts. Although less widely used, some Chinese Eclectic designs also featured decorative renditions of *dougong*, a system of intricately interlocking wooden bracket sets that were part of the structural system of traditional Chinese timber-frame construction—decorative *dougong* were rendered in pressed metal at the entrance to the Kong Chow Temple in San Francisco.[77]

Ironically, this Western interpretation of Chinese architecture later informed the "Chinese Renaissance Style" (called "Big Roofs" architecture by critics), which was promoted within China in the 1920s and 1930s by Western architects and by the first generation of Chinese architects, who had absorbed Western representations of traditional Chinese architecture through their training at European and American architecture schools.[78] The Chinese Renaissance Style's most prominent American practitioner was New York architect Henry K. Murphy (1877-1954), who promoted what he termed a Chinese "adaptive architecture" to the country's new Republican Government in the 1910s and 1920s as a way to modernize China's built environment while preserving the most important design elements of its traditional architecture. The Oriental Department of Murphy's firm, Murphy & Dana, designed "adaptive" buildings for the campuses of Yenching University in Beijing and the University of Shanghai, combining Western technologies and programming with the curving rooflines and detailing of imperial-style palaces. Murphy also brought his "adaptive architecture" to the United States, designing a small cluster of eight Chinese-inspired residences in Coral Gables, Florida in 1927.[79] Canadian-born architect Harry Hussey (1882-1967), a member of the Chicago firm Shattuck & Hussey, designed dozens of YMCA buildings in China and other Asian countries in the early 20th century, many of which displayed the overall form and materials used in their other designs in Chicago with

[73] Eduard Kögel, *The Grand Documentation*: *Ernst Boerschmann and Chinese Religious Architecture (1906-1931)*, Kindle edition (Berlin & Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 550.
[74] Ibid, 68.
[75] Rast, "The Cultural Politics of Tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown, 1882-1917," 50-51.
[76] Walter Perceval Yetts, "Writings on Chinese Architecture," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 50, No. 288 (March 1927), 124.
[77] Philip P. Choy, *The Architecture of San Francisco Chinatown* (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 2008), Kindle edition, Location 176.
[78] Kerri Culhane, "Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee," *Chinese Style: Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee, 1923-1968*, Brochure published by the Museum of Chinese in America, 2016, 9.
[79] Kerri Culhane, "From China to Chinatown: Poy Gum Lee and the Politics of Self-Representation," *Varia*, Volume 19 (2021), accessed September 7, 2024 at https://journals.openedition.org/abe/12534.

more subtle Chinese design elements.[80] Among the best known of their designs in the Chinese Renaissance Style was the Peking Union Medical College Hospital, which earned national attention upon its completion in 1917.[81]

Given the Chinese Nationalist Party's embrace of the Chinese Renaissance Style in the decades immediately following its rise to power in 1911, and the widespread support given to the party by Chinese immigrant communities in the U.S. through the mid-20th century, the construction of Chinese Eclectic architecture in America's Chinatowns can also be viewed through a political lens as a way for Chinese Americans to visually announce their affinity with the Nationalist Party, as well as to project a new sense of collective national and cultural pride through the use of architectural elements that had been reserved for high-ranking Chinese buildings during the imperial period of the country's history.[82]

The Chinese Eclectic Style in San Francisco's Chinatown

The strategy proposed by Look Tin Eli and other leaders in the Chinese community to rebuild San Francisco's Chinatown as a mecca for tourists was largely met with enthusiasm by the city's government and business leaders, and the city's Real Estate Board passed a resolution recommending that "all property owners. . .have their buildings re-built with fronts of Oriental and artistic appearance."[83] Among the first Chinese Eclectic structures to be completed in San Francisco's Chinatown after the earthquake were the Sing Fat and Sing Chong Buildings, prominently located at the intersection of Grant Avenue and California Street. Architect Thomas Paterson Ross and engineer A. W. Burgren were commissioned by Eli and Sing Fat president Tong Bong to design the two buildings, and the firm created complimentary designs that applied symbols of traditional Chinese architecture to what were essentially Western-style structures.

The most prominent features of both buildings were the massive steel pagodas that topped the corner towers at the intersection, which bore a striking resemblance to those used in the Chinese Pavilion at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Ross had submitted a design for the California Building for the exposition, and he almost certainly would have known of the design for the pavilion. Tiled pyramidal roofs with curving, overhanging eaves—often referred to as "flying eaves"—topped the three other towers along the principal facades of the Sing Chong Building, and flying eaves were also placed at the remainder of the roofline on the second story of the towers. Although the Chinese-inspired ornamentation was less extensive on the Sing Fat Building, it boasted the more impressive pagoda, which rose three levels and culminated in a polygonal bell-cast finial. The jade-green color of the pagoda walls was echoed in ceramic-tile detailing at the second and third stories. The pagodas and other Chinese elements on the buildings served as advertisements for the most successful import businesses in Chinatown and as powerful visual markers to the boundary of San Francisco's new Chinatown long before the installation of its famous *paifang*-style gate, while the Western-style display windows on the lower stories of both buildings, filled with "trinkets and souvenirs for tourists and antiques for serious collectors," drew passersby into the establishments.[84]

Completed in 1907 and 1908, respectively, the Sing Chow and Sing Fat buildings served as prototypes for other Chinese Eclectic designs that were constructed in San Francisco's Chinatown through the 1930s. While the Sing Chow and Sing Chat buildings occupied large parcels on corner lots, most buildings in Chinatown were narrower and featured only one street-facing façade, necessitating a slightly different design approach. Like their 19th-century predecessors modeled after the *tong lau*, many of these mid-block buildings featured upper-story galleries that often served double-duty as fire escapes, with designs ranging from simple painted metal balconies to more elaborate galleries with highly ornamented balustrades covered by flying eave canopies. A prominent gallery at the top floor, sometimes recessed behind the plane of the facade, usually indicated the presence of a meeting hall on the top floor and was often protected by a larger flying eave canopy with colorfully painted coffered ceilings and other decorative elements. Behind these Chinese-style features, the facades of these buildings largely hewed to Western styles, exhibiting elements of Queen Anne, Classical Revival, and other historical

[80] Cristopher DeWolf, "Hong Kong's Colonial Heritage, Part XV: The Chinese YMCA's Chicago Roots," *Zolima City Magazine*, accessed September 7, 2024 at https://zolimacitymag.com/hong-kong-colonial-heritage-chinese-ymca-chicago-roots-shattuck-hussey/.
[81] Wang, 68-69.
[82] Culhane, "From China to Chinatown: Poy Gum Lee and the Politics of Self-Representation;" Winston Kyan, "Electric Pagodas and Hyphenate Gates: Folklore, Folklife, and the Architecture of Chinatown," *Amerasia Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2013), 36.
[83] Phillip P. Choy, *San Francisco Chinatown: A Guide to its History & Architecture* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2012), 44.
[84] Ibid, 115.

revival styles of the early 20th century. A typical example of this merging of East and West is the four-story masonry mixed-use building at 55-65 Waverly Place, which combines the projecting polygonal bays characteristic of Queen Anne commercial buildings with Chinese-inspired tile roofs with and a prominent wrought-iron fourth-story gallery along its east elevation.

Those residents who had relished San Francisco's Old Chinatown for what they considered its picturesque "authenticity" rejected Look Tin Eli's vision as mere kitsch. But to the city's Chinese residents, the exuberant hybrid designs constructed in the wake of the 1906 quake represented "a selective process of accommodation" that was necessary in order to secure stability for their community.[85] They were under no illusions that the new buildings faithfully represented Chinese architecture or culture—rather, they understood them as architectural commodities that widened the commercial appeal of the district and served as a potent reminder to city officials of the community's economic power.

Chinese Eclecticism in Chinatowns Outside of San Francisco

Because the devastation of the 1906 earthquake necessitated its complete rebuilding, San Francisco's Chinatown contained the largest concentration of Chinese Eclectic architecture in the United States, and the success of the reconstructed district led other Chinese communities to adopt the style—although usually on a more limited scope—in Chinatowns throughout the country in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. During this period, Chinese Eclectic architecture also became indelibly associated in the popular imagination with American Chinatowns.

Los Angeles' New Chinatown

Outside of San Francisco, the most extensive use of Chinese Eclectic architecture could be found in Los Angeles' New Chinatown, although most examples were built after the 1930s, with later examples applying more subtle Chinese-inspired design elements to Mid-Century Modern designs that were popular during the post-World War II period. As in San Francisco, Los Angeles' Chinese community had to contend with the threat of dislocation in the early 20th century—the city's original Chinatown in the Plaza neighborhood was first proposed for redevelopment as part of the construction of the new Union Station in the mid-1920s. With demolition of the Old Chinatown assured by 1931, a consortium of Chinese community members organized under the Los Angeles Chinatown Corporation (LACC) to develop a new Chinatown that would be owned and controlled by Chinese residents. LACC purchased a largely vacant parcel of land north of downtown from the Santa Fe Railroad and initiated plans to build the new development.[86]

As community leaders had done in San Francisco's Chinatown, LACC also deployed the "strategic use of stereotypes" in its Chinese Eclectic design for New Chinatown.[87] Although the parcels were developed separately by individual members of the corporation, most were designed in complementary styles by the same architects—Erle Webster and Adrian Wilson. In giving direction to Webster and Wilson for the design of four buildings in the early years of the development, immigration attorney Y. C. Hong "sent Wilson to San Francisco along with an introduction to his colleague Kenneth Y. Fung, to whom he wrote: 'I would very much appreciate your efforts in showing him around your Chinatown as he is gathering ideas and material for our project.'"[88] Hong's wife Mabel also collected books and writings on Chinese architecture to share with the architects as the designs progressed. The resultant buildings were an "exuberant pastiche" of pagodas, flying eave rooflines, and colorful painting and tilework.[89] Although it was developed at a higher density than other areas of Los Angeles, the layout of New Chinatown was spacious and open compared to Old Chinatown, with generous pedestrian streets and open courtyards that featured electric lights and Chinese lanterns that made the new district feel safe and modern.[90] In the decades after New Chinatown's official opening in 1938, other Chinese American residents not involved in LACC purchased or rented properties surrounding the development, and new Chinese-inspired buildings were constructed nearby.

[85] Ward, 22.
[86] Ibid, 31-32.
[87] Ibid, 8.
[88] Ibid, 34.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

In other American Chinatowns located within previously built-up neighborhoods, where wholesale redevelopment like that seen in San Francisco and Los Angeles was unnecessary, Chinese Eclectic buildings were not as widespread, and many examples of the style designed in the early decades of the 20th century, particularly in Chinatowns in smaller cities and towns, were renovations of existing buildings that were like those in 19th-century Chinatowns. Upper-floor galleries, sometimes with shallow tiled flying eave canopies, were a common feature; colorful painted or neon signs were also a relatively inexpensive way for Chinese businesses to project an exotic air and attract tourists. A typical example of this type of remodeling was the Hip Sing Tong building in Boise, Idaho. Hip Sing occupied one section of a larger Western-style commercial block in the early 20th century. To distinguish its headquarters, the tong constructed a gallery topped with a tile canopy on the second story of the façade and placed a triangular projecting pediment at the roofline that was a stylized version of Chinese pagoda rooflines. Although the gallery remains, the tiled canopy and pediment were later removed. Similar remodelings were also made to commercial buildings in other Chinatowns.

Chinese Association Buildings and the Chinese Eclectic Style

The most elaborate examples of Chinese Eclectic architecture in Chinatowns in Chicago, New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Washington DC and other urban centers outside of San Francisco were largely reserved for prominent family, benevolent, or merchant associations, although smaller-scale examples were also built for Chinese businesses like restaurants that catered to Western tourists and residents. Among the earliest of these substantial Chinese Eclectic association buildings outside of San Francisco was a purpose-built structure for the On Leong Merchants Association in New York City. Located on Mott Street in the heart of the city's original Chinatown, the six-story building was designed for the association by Richard Rahmann of Rahmann & Sons and completed in 1919. The original structure included a restaurant on the ground floor, dining rooms and sleeping spaces for association members on the second through fifth floors, and a meeting room and library on the sixth floor. The building featured a shallow gallery at its second floor, and a more deeply recessed gallery for the meeting space on the sixth floor. A Chinese-style tiled polygonal roof covered the sixth-floor gallery, and a small pagoda-style structure topped the building. In the late 1920s, the roof over the sixth-story gallery was removed and the gallery expanded. A more extensive remodeling of the façade in the 1970s replaced the ornamental detailing and galleries of the early 20th century with a severely Modernist design that contained more subtle Chinese design references.[91]

In the late 1940s, New York's On Leon Merchants Association announced plans to construct new headquarters at the corner of Mott and Canal Streets. The association commissioned architect Poy Gum Lee, a Chinatown native who had spent much of his early career designing Chinese Renaissance Style buildings in China, to prepare plans for the new structure in 1948. Lee's initial renderings of the building, which show an Art Moderne main structure with upper-floor galleries and a pagoda-like tower, illustrate the evolution of Chinese-inspired architecture in Chinatowns through the post-World War II period. Although the building's final design is attributed to Andrew J. Thomas, Lee's influence on the appearance of the building is evident, and the second On Leong headquarters still stands as one of the most recognizable landmarks in New York City's Chinatown.[92]

The On Leong headquarters in Boston's Chinatown was also a post-war design that replaced its earlier headquarters. In the early 20th century, the associated had operated out of a Western-style building at the intersection of Tyler and Beach streets that had been remodeled to include a top-floor gallery. In the late 1940s, the association commissioned Edwin Chin-Park to design an expanded, modern headquarters nearby, at the intersection of Kneeland and Albany streets. Chin-Park's design of the building, like Poy Gum Lee's for the On Leong headquarters in New York, combined a relatively streamlined structure with elements that symbolized traditional Chinese architecture, including recessed upper-story galleries and a prominent roof-top pagoda with geometric metal railings and a green tiled roof. Just three years after its completion in 1951, the building was threatened with demolition by plans for a new expressway—ultimately a substantial section at the east end of the building was removed to accommodate the new road. The architecture firm Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson & Abbott, who were tasked with redesigning the exterior of the downsized structure, enclosed the galleries on the west façade to regain square footage, but retained the pagoda.

[91] Culhane, "'Chinese' Buildings in Chinatown."
[92] Culhane, "From China To Chinatown: Poy Gum Lee and the Politics of Self-Representation, 1945-1960."

An earlier and better-preserved example of Chinese Eclectic architecture in Boston is the former Goon Family Association Building at 10 Tyler Street. Designed by Ralph Harrington Doane and completed in 1928, the four-story building features second and fourth-story galleries protected by projecting tiled-roof canopies. Although the storefront level has been altered and the fourth-story gallery enclosed with windows, most of the building's historic features have been left intact.

In Washington DC's Chinatown, the former On Leong Merchants Association Building at 618-20 H. Street NW still stands as a reminder of the community's efforts to increase its visibility after being forced to relocate from Pennsylvania Avenue in the 1920s to make way for the Federal Triangle development. Working with architect Marcus T. Hallett, the association transformed two existing mid-19th-century rowhouses at 6118-20 H Street NW into a prominent new headquarters that featured tiled flying eave roofs at both the storefront level and the upper parapet, as well as distinctive lintels that more subtly referenced traditional Chinese rooflines. Although the building did not feature the characteristic galleries on its upper stories, the windows on the third story of the façade were outfitted with metal balconettes. As with the other On Leong buildings mentioned above, the On Leong Headquarters remains one of the most visually prominent symbols of DC's Chinatown.

Constructed in 1929, the On Leong headquarters at 2136-2168 Rockwell Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio is the only Chinese-influenced design that remains in the city's historic Chinatown, which was centered on Rockwell Avenue in the early to mid-20th century. Cleveland's Chinese community moved several times through the early 20th century as discriminatory housing policies, rising rents, and redevelopment forced them out of various locations. As in Chicago, the On Leong led the transition from a former settlement along Ontario Street to a new location along Rockwell Avenue, and by the late 1930s the majority of Cleveland's Chinese community was living in this new Chinatown. When the On Leong headquarters opened, it was described by the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* as "one of the few [buildings] to be completely occupied by a tong outside of San Francisco, New York, and Chicago."[93] The Rockwell Avenue Chinatown began to decline in the 1980s, and the opening of Asia Plaza in the city's Midtown neighborhood in 1990 again caused its Chinese population to shift toward this new development, and by 2002 the Rockwell Chinatown had shrunk to a single block, with the On Leong Building at its center.[94] Photographs from the 2000s show the building as a simple one- and two-story yellow-brick structure distinguished by stylized "flying eaves" ornamentation along its center parapet. A second-story recessed gallery has been filled with windows but is still evident on the façade of the building. In more recent years, the building has been embellished with elaborate gold-and-red storefronts with green-tiled canopies, and metal screens installed across the upper-story windows.

Although not an association building, the Chinese Cultural and Community Center, located at 125 N. 10th Street in Philadelphia's Chinatown, is an interesting and highly-detailed post-World War II iteration of Chinese Eclectic Architecture. Originally constructed as a three-story row-house in 1832, the building housed the Chinatown YMCA in the 1950s before being purchased by Tien-teh Chang in 1966. Under Chang's ownership, the building was extensively renovated for use as the Chinese Cultural and Community Center (CCCC). The design for the renovation is attributed to Cho Cheng Yang, a Taiwanese architect who had designed the Chinese Pavilion at the International and Universal Exposition in Quebec, Canada in 1967. Yang's design for the CCCC building featured an elaborate façade topped by a two-tiered imperial-style roof with green roof tiles and colorfully painted brackets. A shallow tiled canopy marked the ground floor entrance, and recessed galleries extended by projecting balconies and ornamented with painted panels and brackets were centered on the second and third stories of the façade. Elaborately carved stonework flanking the entrance at the base of the building recalled the raised stone bases of imperial timber-frame palaces. The building officially reopened in 1971 and quickly became the most recognizable landmark within Philadelphia's Chinatown. Although the building's interior was gutted by subsequent owners after the center closed in 2007, recent efforts to preserve and restore the exterior have been successful.[95]

[93] Quoted in Emily Aronson & Robert Kent, "A Midwestern Chinatown? Cleveland, Ohio in North American Context, 1900-2005," *Journal of Cultural Geography*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 315.
[94] Ibid, 317-318.
[95] Melissa Romero, "Inside the Historic Chinese Cultural and Community Center's Comeback," Curbed Philadelphia website (accessed September 22 at https://philly.curbed.com/2016/8/18/12532844/chinatown-ymca-community-center-philadelphia-restoration)l; "Chinatown YMCA," Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, August 17, 2012, 20-23.

Chinese Eclectic Restaurants

Although their buildings were generally smaller in scale, Chinatown restaurants—which often served both the local Chinese communities as well as non-Chinese residents and tourists—also frequently used Chinese Eclectic designs to clearly signal their cultural associations in the early 20th century. In Philadelphia's Chinatown, several early 19th-century buildings along Race Street were modified in the first decades of the 20th century to house Chinese restaurants. Of particular note was the building at 907-909 Race Street, a c. 1825 three-story building that was remodeled around 1910 as the Far East Chinese Restaurant. Historic photographs of the building show that the restaurant owners had remodeled two existing rowhouses with Chinese Eclectic elements, including a wrought-iron projecting gallery at the second story covered by a flying eave roof; a deeply recessed gallery at the third story of the rowhouse at 907 Race Street, and flying eave canopy over the ground-floor entrance. Similar restaurants also lined Mott and Doyer streets in Manhattan's Chinatown and Tyler and Harrison streets in Boston's Chinatown in the early-to-mid-20th century.

In addition to smaller establishments that occupied the lower floors of existing buildings, large purpose-built restaurants like the Won Kow Building in Chicago (Michaelsen & Rognstad, 1928) and the Wo Fat Building in Honolulu (Y. T. Char, 1938) rivaled many of the Chinatown family and merchant associations in visual prominence. Completed just two years after the On Leong Merchants Association and designed by the same architects, the Won Kow Building exhibits an overall design that is very similar to the On Leong Building, with recessed second and third-floor galleries flanked by square bays. Although more restrained than the On Leong Building, the ornamentation on the Won Kow Building features more subtle references to Chinese architecture—shallow tiled roofs adorn the third-floor gallery and main entrance, window surrounds on the upper stories of the towers reference ornamental gateways, and terra cotta tiles at the main entrance and the galleries contain foliate and animal motifs.

The Wo Fat Building in Honolulu's Chinatown, designed by Chinese American architect Yuk Ton Char and completed in 1938, housed one of the city's oldest and most successful Chinese restaurants until its closure in 2005, and the building still commands a prominent location in the district at the corner of Hotel and Maunakea Streets. Char's design for the building, in keeping with the evolution of Chinese Eclectic designs through the mid-20th century, features Chinese-inspired elements applied to a streamlined façade. A shallow tiled rooflet with wood brackets extends along the street-facing facades, with upturned eaves at the corner entrance bay. A third-story polygonal tower with flying eave roof rises above the main roof at the entrance bay, creating an effect similar to a pagoda. A third-story banquet hall, which was originally recessed behind the facades, also featured a tiled roof with upturned eaves—a later addition expanded the banquet hall and altered the original appearance of the principal facades, but the building is still among the most widely recognized within Honolulu's historic Chinatown.

The On Leong Merchants Association Building and Chinese Eclectic Architecture in Chicago's Chinatown

In Chicago, the On Leong Merchants Association Building was the first Chinese Eclectic building in the city's new Chinatown district, and the association's decision to construct the new headquarters with overt references to traditional Chinese architecture spoke to its powerful position within Chicago's Chinese community in the early 20th century. The On Leong had been instrumental in successfully moving Chinatown to 22nd Street and Wentworth Avenue in 1912, and the relocation away from the Hip Sing tong and the city's growing central business district provided an opportunity for the association to distance itself and the larger Chinese community from tong violence. The move also allowed Chicago's On Leong to present their New Chinatown "as a dedicated commercial community deploying selected aspects of Chineseness as a basis for integration into American society."[96] Like the Chinese-American businessmen who proposed a reconstructed Chinatown of "veritable fairy palaces filled with the choicest treasures of the Orient" after the 1906 quake in San Francisco, Chicago's chapter of the On Leong turned to Chinese Eclectic architecture to project a respectable, tourist-friendly atmosphere in Chicago's new Chinatown.[97]

[96] Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 220-221.
[97] Eli, "Our New Oriental City – Veritable Fairy Palaces Filled with the Choicest Treasures of the Orient."

The first building funded by the On Leong in the New Chinatown was a large three-story brick building at 219-249 W. 22nd Street (now Cermak Road), which contained 30 apartments and 15 storefronts. A *Chicago Tribune* article detailing plans for the building noted that "Among the residents of the colony will be Frank Moy, called the mayor of the old Chinatown at Clark Street; Hip Lung, the chief advisor of the present Chinatown, and Foy Fung and other Chinese merchants, many of whom have been residents of the old Chinatown for thirty years or more."[98] Although the design of the building was similar to other commercial blocks in the city, the ornamentation on the upper floors—which included terra cotta banding featuring a dragon motif—and the placement of an inset gallery near the center of the building provided subtle references to Chinese architecture.

The On Leong Merchants Association moved its headquarters into the new 22nd Street building in late 1912, but its members understood that this would only be a temporary location. In 1921, the association began to acquire land along Wentworth Avenue just south of 22nd Street, and in 1926 hired Michaelsen & Rognstad to design a building that would serve as both an advertisement for the New Chinatown and a physical representation of the association's power and influence within the growing district.

Michaelsen & Rognstad and the Design of the On Leong Merchants Association Building

The Chicago-based firm of Michaelsen & Rognstad was led by architects Christian S. Michaelsen (1888-1960) and Sigurd A. Rognstad (1892-1937), whose partnership spanned from 1920 (the Peacock Inn was one of their first commissions) to Rognstad's death in 1937.[99] The son of a Norwegian American building contractor, Chicago-born Christian S. Michaelsen began his training in 1905 as a draftsman with architect Arthur Heun (1866-1946), a prominent designer of city and country homes for Chicago's elite. From 1910 to 1913, Michaelsen worked for architect Howard Van Doren Shaw (1869-1926), whose society connections and mastery of a variety of architectural styles won him commissions for some of the Chicago area's largest homes, office buildings, and industrial buildings. Also a Chicago native of Norwegian descent, Sigurd A. Rognstad began his career as a freelance draftsman and in 1915 he joined the firm of architect Frederick W. Perkins (1866-1928) who, like Michaelsen's early employers, made his name as a designer of large Chicago-area residences.[100]

In their seventeen-year partnership Michaelsen and Rognstad developed a portfolio of projects, primarily in Chicago, that were diverse in size, type and architectural style, which made them popular architects especially during the building boom of the 1920s. Their Chicago commissions included the Beaux Arts Style Midwest Athletic Club at 6 N. Hamlin Avenue (completed in 1928, extant); the Renaissance Revival Style North Side Auditorium Building at 3728-3734 N. Clark Street (completed 1928, extant); the Art Deco Style East 7th Street Hotel at 701 S State Street (completed 1930, extant); and the Georgian Revival Style Jefferson Park Congregational Church at 4733 N London Avenue.[101]

Michaelsen & Rognstad completed some of their best known work in the late 1920s as architects for the Chicago West Park Commission from 1927 to 1929, designing several projects funded by a $10 million voter bond issue in 1927, including the Tudor Style Douglas (now Douglass) Park Fieldhouse; the Spanish Colonial Revival Style Garfield Park Administration Building and Fieldhouse with its prominent gold dome; the Tudor Revival Style Humboldt Park Fieldhouse; the Renaissance Revival Style La Follette Park Fieldhouse; and the Colonial Revival Style Austin Town Hall Park Fieldhouse.[102]

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[98] "$200,000 Building in Chinatown," *Chicago Tribune,* August 20, 1912, p. 15.

[99] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
"Garfield Park Fieldhouse," City of Chicago Preliminary Landmark Designation Report, September 3, 2009, 16-19.
"Michaelsen & Rognstad: Architects of Fanciful Jazz Age Buildings."
"S.A. Rognstad, Partner in Architects' Firm, Dies," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 19, 1937.

[100] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
"Garfield Park Fieldhouse," City of Chicago Preliminary Landmark Designation Report, September 3, 2009, 16-19.
"Michaelsen & Rognstad: Architects of Fanciful Jazz Age Buildings."

[101] Chicago Historic Resources Survey.
"On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
"Michaelsen & Rognstad: Architects of Fanciful Jazz Age Buildings."

[102] "Michaelsen & Rognstad: Architects of Fanciful Jazz Age Buildings."
Tomaz G. Deuther, ed., *1927-1929 Report of West Chicago Parks on the $10,000,000 Bond Issue* (Chicago: West Chicago Park Commissioners, 1929).

Michaelsen & Rognstad's work with Jim Moy on the Peacock Inn (1920) and the On Leong Merchants Association Building (1926-1928) made them a trusted architectural firm in Chicago's Chinese community, and their Chinatown portfolio grew as a result. Their work for Chinese Chicago clients can also be seen in buildings along Chinatown within blocks of the On Leong Merchants Association Building: the Won Kow Restaurant at 2233-2239 S. Wentworth Avenue (1928, extant); the Moy D.K. Association at 2238 S. Wentworth Avenue (1928, 1932, extant); 207 W. Cermak Road (extant); 214 W. 22nd Place (extant); and 216 W. Cermak Road (extant).[103]

Though both architects in their younger years had studied with masters of architectural eclecticism – Michaelsen with architect Howard Van Doren Shaw and Rognstad with architect Frederick W. Perkins – by the time of their On Leong commission in 1926 it does not appear that Michaelsen & Rognstad had any professional experience working for Chinese clients or designing in a traditional Chinese architectural language other than their limited renovation of Jim Moy's restaurant in 1920.[104] After receiving the On Leong commission from On Leong director Jim Moy, the architects reportedly studied available European and American academic works on traditional Chinese architecture, including *Chinesische Architekture (Chinese Architecture)* by Ernst Boerschmann, a two-volume book of color plates, scale drawings, and black-and-white photographs published in Germany in 1925. Based largely on extensive documentation collected through Boerschmann's three-year research trip taken between 1906 and 1909, the book was presented as a visual catalogue of the formal aspects of traditional Chinese architecture—he described the work in its introduction as a guide to the "artistic culture of Old China and its architectonic world of forms."[105] While the organization of the book into chapters corresponding to discrete architectural elements and building types – pavilions, towers, roof decoration, glazed terra cotta, pagodas – removed any possibility of understanding the architecture within a broader historical or cultural context, it did provide architects unfamiliar with Chinese architecture with detailed images and line drawings from which they could draw inspiration. In his book on Boerschmann, architectural historian Eduard Kögel writes that *Chinesische Architekture* was a popular reference work among China's growing number of professional architects, as well as throughout the West. In illustrating its impact on American architecture, Kögel cites Michaelson & Rognstad's design for the On Leong Merchants Association, as well as the design of the interior theater space in the Skinner Building in Seattle, which was completed in 1926.[106]

Michaelsen & Rognstad's original construction drawings (see Figures 12 through 16) show a design for the On Leong that incorporated an exterior form, building technologies, and an interior layout that very much reflected Chicago commercial and institutional building of the 1920s. The basic form of the new headquarters included clearly legible ground floor commercial space with a main entrance centered on the Wentworth façade. Two regularly fenestrated upper floors housed On Leong office, classroom, event, and worship spaces, and the building was topped by a flat roof that was articulated by false mansard roofs and corners along the street facing facades. The north alley and west rear facades were left mostly unadorned and clad in common brick with utilitarian fire escapes. The headquarters was built using a steel-reinforced concrete frame, and the materials used for its exterior cladding – modular brick laid in common bond (stretcher courses with outward-facing headers at each sixth course) and glazed terra cotta ornamentation manufactured by the American Terra Cotta and Ceramic Company – would have been accessible to any builder in the city.[107]

Inside, the building's ground floor was divided into four large leasable commercial spaces facing the street through large plate glass windows with recessed openings, which was also typical of commercial developments of the period. A small Wentworth Avenue vestibule and lobby directed visitors up a wide stairwell up to the second floor. Visitors to the building after 1939 remember the stairwell's upper landing as home to a large and well-known painted depiction of a tiger painted by artist Zhang Shanzi (1882-1940) and purchased as a fundraising effort by the On Leong; the tiger painting is now in the collection of New York's On Leong Merchants Association.[108] The efficiently planned second floor had a vaulted corridor connecting street-facing offices, overnight accommodations (called a "small hotel" in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*), and a

[103] Chicago Historic Resources Survey.
"On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
*AIA Guide to Chicag*o, 371-372.
[104] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
[105] Kögel, 729.
[106] Ibid, 742-743.
[107] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report; "New $1,000,000 Chinese Center to Be Opened May 2; "Chinatown – It's Queer Mixture of Old and New."
[108] 1939 tiger painting photo, collection of the Chinese American Museum of Chicago.

large hall which could be divided into two smaller spaces using accordion folding doors.[109] A large three-bay wide hall with a recessed speaking / temple alcove at the west end of the center space occupied most of the third floor and could also be subdivided for different uses (the third floor speaking area, now a church pulpit, has been relocated to the hall's far south end). This large upper floor assembly space resembled a guild or union hall that would have been familiar to Michaelsen & Rognstad and was typical in Chicago's working neighborhoods. A third-floor rear service corridor accessed a kitchen, a private dining room and offices. All spaces were fitted with radiator heat and electric lights and outlets, and the second and third floors provided modern toilet facilities for both sexes (some fitted with bathtubs). The only modern convenience missing from the three-story On Leong Merchants Association Building were passenger elevators; a modern elevator was later constructed at the center east end of the building by the Chinese Christian Union Church. [110]

Chinese Eclectic Features of the On Leong Merchants Association Building

Though Michaelsen & Rognstad's basic concept for the headquarters' construction and layout was conventional for its time, it was the layers of Chinese-inspired architectural elements and symbols their architects applied to the building's facades and interior spaces, likely following their clients' vision and under their scrutiny, that made the On Leong Merchants Association Building the centerpiece of Chicago's Chinatown. The architects referenced a variety of Chinese architectural elements on the Wentworth Avenue and 22nd Place facades, including heavily bracketed tile roofs with upturned corner eaves, pagodas, and colorful and highly symbolic terra cotta tilework.

The building's primary east-facing Wentworth Avenue facades are highly symmetrical, with two five-story towers framing the three-story block, a center ground floor main entrance, second and third floor recessed galleries, and bracketed roofline at the parapet level. The south façade, facing 22nd Place, is also roughly symmetrical, though ground floor retail windows are irregular in placement and the southwest entrance and four-story southwest tower are distinct from the features at the taller southeast tower. The overall massing of the On Leong Building is rectangular in shape, and the horizontal banding and gallery railings between floors, the heavy bracketed cornice line above the third floor, and the multi-tiered roof lines at the northeast and southeast pagoda towers recall traditional Chinese architecture's own emphasis on the horizontal.

Though faced with brick and terra cotta masonry, traditional Chinese modular timber frame construction is referenced in the slender vertical brick piers at the east façade's second and third floor galleries; vertical brick pilasters framing windows along the south façade; window surrounds that resemble traditional Chinese gates, or *men*; and the heavy *dougong* (brackets) and *mune* (ridges at the roof) along the third-floor roofline. Traditional Chinese latticework is also expressed in the muntin patterns of the On Leong Building's windows, doors, and transoms.[111]

Michaelsen & Rognstad chose variegated earth-toned brick for the On Leong Building's street-facing façade, with colors of yellow, beige, brown, and orange that would have been seen on other new Chicago builds of the 1910s and 1920s. The architects employed a highly polychromatic palette for decorative work, using red at the Wentworth Avenue canopy and at the roof cornices and pagoda towers; green at the windows, doors, *dougong*, and tiled roofs; and a rainbow of colors on terra cotta decorative panels and surrounds, most notably amber, green, and creamy white, closely resembling the colors of Tang Sancai, glazed decoration on Chinese ceramics dating from the Tang dynasty (618-907).[112]

The On Leong's exteriors display a vast array of terra cotta flora and fauna referencing symbols of traditional Chinese religion and culture. The use of highly ornamental terra cotta helped to define Chicago's built environment in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the extensive use of this building material to express the symbolic decorative elements in the design of the On Leong Merchants Association building differentiates it from surviving large-scale Chinese-Eclectic buildings in other Chinatowns. Michaelsen & Rognstad also used terra cotta in their subsequent designs for the Won Know Restaurant (1928) and the Moy D. K. Association (1932). The terra cotta surround at the main Wentworth Avenue entrance displays glazed green peacocks within cinquefoil arches; the peacock is an auspicious bird in Chinese culture, symbolizing

[109] Original plans and elevations; "Chicago Chinese Merchants Plan Gorgeous 'City Hall.'"
[110] Original plans and elevations.
[111] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
[112] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report; Anita Luk, email communications with Ramsey Historic Consultants, Inc., March 2023.

nobility, luck, beauty, longevity, wisdom and marital bliss, and with its feathers open symbolizes openness, purity, and peace. Also at the surround are images of the phoenix, symbolizing balance, harmony in the universe, peace, and prosperity; phoenixes are also associated with the five Confucian virtues of benevolence, loyalty, honesty, decorum, and justice. Set into the header above the main entrance is a terra cotta plum blossom, one of the Chinese "Flowers of the Four Seasons," representing the season of winter and by extension perseverance, bravery and hope. Fanning out from the center plum blossom are four datura buds pointing at the cardinal directions; daturas, also known as the devil's trumpets, have Buddhist cultural significance and are considered one of four sacred flowers. Paired representations of guardian lions (*fu dog*) on the facades at entrances and windows reference decorations seen in similar locations on traditional Chinese palaces, which were intended to ward off evil spirits. Butterflies seen on the On Leong facades symbolize transformation, rebirth, freedom, beauty, love, and the human soul. Lotus flowers seen on the On Leong facades have close connotations to Chinese Buddhism and represent strength, rebirth, and physical and mental purity. Clouds, depicted as wave-like patterns on the On Leong facades, represent happiness, peace, and luck. [113]

Atop the building's southwest stair tower are green and yellow dragons (more closely resembling Renaissance European depictions of dolphins). In traditional Chinese culture, dragons symbolize wealth and power. Green dragons, also called azure dragons, are one of the four great beasts of Chinese mythology and represent healing, health, peace, and growth. Yellow dragons, the color of the Chinese emperor, represent power, good fortune, wisdom, and wealth. Among the many traditional Chinese symbols used both inside and outside the On Leong Building are rendered Chinese characters for "good fortune" and "longevity;" characters for the five Confucian virtues; and mirrored swastikas, symbols sacred in Chinese Buddhism and used in both Eastern and Western cultures across the ancient world, all fashioned in modern terra cotta similar to that of traditional Chinese tiles, or *liu li.* [114]

Inside, the layouts and relationships between the On Leong Building's upper floor classroom, office, and assembly spaces show little connection to those in traditional Chinese building and instead display Michaelsen & Rognstad's understanding of American union halls and fraternal organization buildings. This uniquely 20th-century American facility does, however, display a variety of Chinese decorative themes in the wood, plasterwork, stair railings, and light fixtures throughout the building. The wide second floor corridor, the primary arrival point for anyone visiting the On Leong Building, also displays door openings resembling traditional *men or paifang* (gates); and a vaulted ceiling reminiscent of those seen in important traditional Chinese spaces.[115]

In addition to its general references to traditional Chinese design, Michaelsen & Rognstad's work also alluded to specific traits of buildings found in Guangdong, the home province of most of the Chicago On Leong. The On Leong Building most notably displays open second and third floor galleries along the Wentworth Avenue façade, similar to the *tong lau* buildings seen throughout southern China; Michaelsen & Rognstad would use similar upper floor galleries at other Wentworth Avenue projects in Chinatown, including the Won Kow Restaurant (completed 1928) and the Moy D.K. Association (completed 1932). Other Guangdong-specific features include the accent colors of green and white used across the street-facing facades, the avoidance of any circular structures, and the heavy use of carved and sculpted elements, all made with modern terra cotta.[116]

After their headquarters' initial completion in 1928, the On Leong had Michaelsen & Rognstad return to continue work on the building, specifically interior renovations and the partial reconstruction of the gallery piers along Wentworth Avenue.[117]

Chicago's Chinatown after the Construction of the On Leong Merchants Association Building

[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.
[116] Chicago Historic Resources Survey, City of Chicago.
Julia Bachrach, "Michaelsen & Rognstad: Architects of Fanciful Jazz Age Buildings," Julia Bachrach Consulting, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.jbachrach.com/blog/2019/10/31/michaelsen-amp-rognstad-architects-of-fanciful-jazz-age-buildings.; "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report;
Kenney Ng, Jerry K. Moy Gee, and Jeremy Li, oral history interview with the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, January 9, 2023.
[117] "On Leong Merchants Association Building," City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report.

In the years following the erection of the On Leong headquarters in 1928, Chicago's Chinese community flourished. Wentworth Avenue emerged as the commercial center of the district, and Chinese businesses pushed south along the street in the 1930s as non-Chinese businesses moved out. Although most businesses and associations in the community operated out of existing buildings, two handsome Chinese Eclectic-style structures—also designed by Michaelsen & Rognstad—were erected south of the On Leong Building in the late 1920s and early 1930s. While the architects' design for the Won Kow Restaurant at 2233-2239 S. Wentworth Avenue (1928, extant) hewed closely to their previous design for the On Leong Building, the Moy D.K. Association Building was more in keeping with mid-block family and benevolent association buildings constructed in the early 20th century in San Francisco and New York, which often featured ground-floor storefronts and a deeply recessed or projecting top-floor gallery indicating the location of a meeting hall. Like the On Leong Building, the Moy D. K. Association is richly ornamented with terra cotta tile work—including herons, dragons, and highly detailed geometric and floral motifs—rendered in shades of jade green, yellow, and cream.

As in other Chinatowns, not all new buildings constructed in Chicago's Chinatown after the On Leong Merchants Association Building were designed in the Chinese Eclectic style, but instead reflected the popular Western architectural styles of the era. Among the most prominent Western-style buildings erected in the late 1920s was a three-story merchandise center at 151-155 W. 22nd Street, built for Jay W. Rapp & Company and Hoy Yoon and designed by Mayo & Mayo. The *Chicago Tribune* noted in its announcement for the building that "this structure will not find its architectural motif in the land of the dragon and the home of chop suey but will be ultra-modern in design."[118] The building was later demolished to make way for on ramps to the Dan Ryan and Stevenson expressways.

With the impressive On Leong headquarters serving as an "exotically seductive lure which could be seen for blocks around," the city's new Chinatown became an increasingly popular destination for both Chinese and non-Chinese residents of Chicago, as well as for tourists. Grocery stores, which sold fresh produce as well as dry goods, herbs, teas, fabrics, and porcelain imported from China, were the backbone of the Chinatown economy, providing retail goods to local Chinese residents and often acting as wholesalers for Chinese-run businesses, with some of the largest firms conducting business throughout the Midwest. Although they catered more to the tastes of the Chinese community than those outside of the district, restaurants in Chinatown also attracted a growing number of non-Chinese diners and acted as an initial draw for the district's tourist trade. To cater to the growing number of tourists to the neighborhood, the On Leong stationed a receptionist in its lobby to welcome visitors to the building, and enterprising Chinese residents offered tours to diners leaving Chinatown restaurants. In 1933, Gerald Moye, who served as president of the Chicago On Leong after Frank Moy's death in 1937, opened a small tourist attraction called the Ling Long Museum on the first floor of the Moy D. K. Association Building. The museum featured dioramas showing the "Highlights of Chinese History and Chicago's Chinatown" and offered visitors a pamphlet outlining a walking tour of Chinatown that included the On Leong Building, the Methodist Church, and several souvenir shops.[119]

Chinese-Inspired Design in Chicago's Chinatown through the Late 20th Century

As in other Chinatowns throughout the United States, Chicago's Chinatown has continued the practice of using design elements taken from traditional Chinese architecture to define its built environment. In 1953, the Chinese Christian Union Church dedicated its new church and community center at 2301 S. Wentworth Avenue, a more modern interpretation of traditional Chinese architecture with a corner pagoda tower.[120] A prominent pagoda also marks the former Chiam Restaurant 2323 S. Wentworth Avenue (now occupied by Pacific Global Bank), completed in 1966.[121] In 1975, the community commissioned Chinese-American architect Peter Fung to design Chicago's Chinatown gateway, which was installed over Wentworth Avenue at Cermak Road (formerly 22nd Street) and today serves as the formal entrance to Chinatown. The painted steel structure features three tiered roofs covered with green tiles and set on top of a row of beams meant to mimic traditional *dougong*. A panel below the beams is inscribed with the phrase "The World is for All," a quotation from Chinese Nationalist Part founder Sun Yat-Sen (1866-1925), in Chinese characters. A second panel on the south side of the gate

[118] "Modern Design for Structure in Chinatown," *Chicago Tribune, July 22, 1928, p. 35.*
[119] McKeown, 219-220.
[120] "Chinese Church Plans to Build New Structure: Opens Drive to Raise $100,000 Fund," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 26, 1946; "Chinese find church offers real treasure: Christian Union Story One of Teamwork," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 8, 1953.
[121] "Down Here at the Bottom, It Says," *Chicago Tribune*, November 27, 1966, p. 122.

contains a quotation from former Nationalist Part leader Chiang Kai-Shek (1887-1975) – "Propriety, Justice, Integrity, and Conscientiousness." Chinatown gates like the one in Chicago proliferated throughout Chinatowns in the 1970s and early 1980s—many were erected with funding from the Nationalist government in Taiwan and represented the party's continued influence within overseas Chinese communities.[122]

In the 1980s, the Chinese American Development Corporation (CADC) purchased a 32-acre site owned by the Santa Fe Railway between Cermak Road and 18th Street, allowing for new development that expanded the boundaries of Chinatown north of Cermak for the first time in its history. Chicago architect Harry Weese was commissioned to design an expansive development for the Chinese community that included a two-story outdoor mall called Chinatown Square, as well as market-townhouses and senior housing. Weese's design for Chinatown Square, which was completed in 1993, featured two groupings of two low-rise commercial buildings that faced each other across a narrow center courtyard; open galleries on the courtyard sides of the buildings provided access to shops and offices, and featured metal railings with a Chinese-inspired latticework design. A central plaza was surrounded by twelve marble statues of zodiac animals imported from China, and three-story painted steel pagodas marked the northwest and northeast corners of the square. The Chinese-inspired elements of Chinatown Square were meant to attract tourists to the new development, and no Chinese design features were included on the residential buildings.[123] In the early 1990s, the CADC purchased additional land north of the development along the Chicago River for use as a public park. The first phase of the park, designed by landscape architect Ernest C. Wong and completed in 1999, featured an open pavilion topped by hipped roofs with upturned corners, and the park's entrance was marked by the "Four Dragon Gateway" which features four columns etched with Chinese dragons.[124]

The On Leong Merchants Association and Comparable Chinese Eclectic Designs

Despite this proliferation of more recent Chinese-inspired architecture within the district, the On Leong Merchants Association remains the finest of Chinese Eclecticism in Chicago's Chinatown, and is among the best extant examples in the country of large-scale Chinese Eclectic architecture from the early 20th century. Completed in 1928, the On Leong building in Chicago is among the earliest known extant examples of this type of architecture outside of San Francisco's Chinatown, and reflects the merging of building materials and technologies commonly used in American cities in the early 20th century with elements taken from traditional Chinese architecture. Among other examples from the early-to-mid-20th century in cities like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, Chicago's On Leong headquarters is distinctive for the richness and detail of its exterior design and its high degree of integrity. Architects Michaelsen & Rognstad employed a variety of materials to the principal elevations of the building, including multi-tonal beige brick, polychrome terra cotta, and decorative metalwork around window and door openings.

Comparable Chinese Eclectic Designs in San Francisco and Los Angeles
While the relative rarity of large-scale Chinese Eclectic architecture in Chinatowns outside of the West Coast gives additional weight to the significance of these few examples that remain, the On Leong Merchants Association Building in Chicago is also comparable in overall quality of design with the most prominent examples of the style within San Francisco's and Los Angeles' historic Chinatowns, which both contain much higher concentrations of Chinese-inspired architecture than elsewhere in the country. The Chicago On Leong building is also distinguished from early 20th-century West-Coast examples of the style through its extensive use of ornamental terra cotta, which reflects the influence of local building traditions and trends on the design of Chinese Eclectic structures throughout the United States.

In San Francisco, the most significant large-scale Chinese Eclectic buildings in the city's historic Chinatown—the Sing Fat building and the Sing Chong Building—were also the first to be completed after the 1906 fire. Both buildings were designed by architect Thomas Paterson Ross and engineer A. W. Burgren and served as the visual gateway to Chinatown. The Sing Fat Building at 555-597 Grant Avenue was completed in 1907 and features an impressive three-tiered pagoda topped by a polygonal bell-cast finial at its northeast corner. The building's relatively plain buff brick exterior walls are enlivened at the

[122] Chuo Li, "Interrogating Ethnic Identity: Space and Community Building in Chicago's Chinatown," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review,"* Vol. 17, No. 1 (Fall 2015), 58-59.
[123] Ibid, 62-63.
[124] Alice Sinkevitch, ed., *AIA Guide to Chicago* (New York: Harcourt Books, 2004), 371-372; "New Chicago Landmark planned for Chinatown."

upper stories with jade-green tilework. A series of large display windows marked the principal elevations of the building at the second and third stories, and ground-floor storefronts were located on the ground floor at Grant Avenue. The building has been altered over the years—the second- and third-story windows have been replaced in downsized openings, and the brackets under the roofs of the corner pagoda have been removed. The Sing Chong Building at 601-615 Grant Avenue was completed the year after the Sing Fat Building and exhibits a similar design. The building boasts a two-tiered steel pagoda at its southeast corner, and hipped roofs with flying eaves top three shorter towers along the east and south elevations. Like the Sing Fat Building, the Sing Chow building also contained large display windows on its second story and at the towers on its third story—these openings remain intact. While the Sing Fat Building lacks the upper-story galleries that were a common feature of late 19th and early 20th-century Chinese Eclectic buildings, The Sing Chong building contains a single, shallowly-recessed third-story gallery at the north end of its east elevation.

In Los Angeles, the earliest extant examples of Chinese Eclectic architecture, including the Nirvana Apartments at 1775-1781 N. Orange Drive (1925) and Grauman's Chinese Theater at 6911-1927 W. Hollywood Boulevard (1927), were part of the 1920s trend toward Exotic Revival styles, and were not constructed for or by the city's Chinese community. The Chinese Eclectic designs that are most directly comparable to the On Leong Merchants Association in Chicago are those that were constructed as part of the New Chinatown planned development in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Many of the more prominent designs in New Chinatown are colorful and highly-ornamented, with steeply curving eaves marked by oversized brackets on pagoda roofs and an abundance of geometric detailing at windows and upper-floor galleries. Because they were designed to accommodate retail/commercial businesses or restaurants, the buildings in New Chinatown are more modest in size than the On Leong building in Chicago. However, their exaggerated detailing creates maximum visual impact within a small area.

Notable buildings in New Chinatown include the Hong Building at 445 W. Gin Ling Way (1938); Madame Wong's at 951 N. Sun Mun Way (1940); the Joy Yuen Low Restaurant at 951 N. Broadway (1940), and the Golden Pagoda Restaurant at 946 Mei Ling Way (1940). The Hong Building housed the offices of You Chung Hong, the first Chinese-American to pass the California State Bar Exam. The building features a painted stucco exterior and rectangular massing. The two-story entrance bay near the center of the façade is topped by a two-tiered pagoda roof and features a recessed ground-floor entrance and small recessed gallery at the second story. A roof deck west of the entrance bay is covered by a geometric wood pergola. Madame Wong's, located near the center of New Chinatown, is one of the most elaborate designs in the development, featuring a projecting second-story gallery with flying eaves hipped roof and geometric metal railing that wraps around the corners of the façade. The building features colorfully painted exterior walls and detailing, with substantial wood brackets at the corners of the hipped main roof and the roof of the third-story tower and intricately carved vergeboards at the gallery openings. The Joy Yuen Low Restaurant is an unusual brick-clad example in the development and features a prominent corner tower with a two-tiered pagoda roof and second-story gallery that extends along the south elevation. The dominant feature of the Golden Pagoda Restaurant is its impressive five-story corner pagoda, which serves as the main entrance to the building. The geometrical grills over the first-story windows of the pagoda are echoed in the design of the solid railings on the second-story galleries along the north and south elevations of the building. All of these examples in New Chinatown are well-preserved, with alterations generally limited to replacement windows and storefronts.

Comparable Examples of Large-Scale Chinese Eclectic Architecture Outside of the West Coast

Outside of the highly concentrated collection of buildings that remain within San Francisco's Chinatown and in the New Chinatown development in Los Angeles, many Chinese Eclectic style buildings from the early 20th century in other U. S. Chinatowns have been altered or lost through demolition necessitated by urban renewal in the post-war period or to more recent gentrification and redevelopment. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has highlighted the vulnerability of US Chinatowns as part of its America's Chinatown Initiative, which was launched in 2022. In a survey of US Chinatowns undertaken as part of this initiative, the National Trust identified 83 Chinatowns throughout the country, ranging from historic Chinatowns like San Francisco, New York, Boston, and Chicago that emerged during the first wave of Chinese immigration and developed during the era of exclusion, to satellite and commercial Chinatowns that developed in the 1960s and 1970s and often catered to broader Asian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. Of the 48 historic Chinatowns identified in the survey, 16 remain today, and only five—Chicago, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston—are located outside of the West Coast. Many of the later commercial Chinatowns identified in the survey—including Chung

Wah Lane in Stockton, California, Chinatown Mall in Sacramento, and Olive Boulevard in St. Louis—developed after post-World War II urban renewal efforts or redevelopment razed traditional Chinatowns in the area.[125]

Within the relatively few 19th and early 20th century Chinatowns that have survived in major urban centers outside of San Francisco and Los Angeles, the handful of extant large-scale Chinese Eclectic designs—including On Leong headquarters in New York City, Washington DC, and Boston, the Chinese Cultural and Community Center in Philadelphia, and the former Wo Fat Restaurant in Honolulu—remain as important landmarks that help to signify the location of these Chinatowns, even with the later addition of Chinatown gates in the 1970s and 1980s. In areas like the former Rockford Street Chinatown in Cleveland, which no longer serve as enclaves for Chinese and Chinese-American populations, Chinese Eclectic-style buildings like the former On Leong Merchants Association Building also serve as visual clues to the locations of former Chinatowns.

On Leong Merchants Association Building, 2136-2168 Rockwell Avenue, Cleveland, OH (1929)

Constructed one year after the On Leong Merchants Association Building in Chicago, the On Leong headquarters at 2136-2168 Rockwell Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio remains as the only Chinese-influenced design in the city's historic Chinatown, which was centered around Rockwell Avenue through the mid-20th century. The headquarters building, a simple one- and two-story yellow-brick block with a flat roof and storefronts at its ground floor, is like other 1920s commercial blocks built throughout the Midwest, but originally exhibited several features that were inspired by Chinese architecture. The three-story center section of the building featured a recessed gallery at its third story, and highly stylized flying eaves ornament marked both the main entrance to the building and the parapet wall at this section. In recent years, the building has been embellished with elaborate gold and red storefronts and green tiled shed-roof canopies at the at the storefront and upper-floor entrances, while the third-story gallery has been enclosed with non-historic windows.

On Leong Merchants Association Building, 618-620 H. Street NW, Washington DC (c. 1855, remodeled 1932)

Unlike the purpose-built association buildings in Chicago, Boston and New York, the On Leong Merchants Association Building in Washington, DC was designed as a remodeling of two existing mid-19th-century rowhouses. Completed in 1932, the remodeling was designed by local architect Marcus T. Hallett. While the building retains the massing, exterior brick cladding, and fenestration patterns of the original rowhouses, elements inspired by traditional Chinese architecture were added to the façade during the remodeling, including "flying eave" hipped roofs with green ceramic tiles at the storefront and parapet levels. Instead of a long upper-story gallery, a series of wrought iron balconettes were installed along the third-floor window openings; these balconettes, along with the windows on the front façade, are painted vibrant red, which matches the red detailing at the storefront level and roofline. The second-story windows feature painted wood lintels with upturned ends that reference the "flying eave" roofs, and round plaques inscribed with Chinese characters mark the façade above the third-story windows. Because the building originally shared party walls with other rowhouses along H Street, ornamentation is restricted to its front façade; the exposed party wall on its west side is painted brick, and unfenestrated.

The On Leong Merchants Association Building in Washington, DC retains good integrity, with only minor alterations to its 1932 exterior.

Wo Fat Building, 115 N. Hotel Street, Honolulu, HI (1938)

The Wo Fat Building in Honolulu's Chinatown, designed by Chinese American architect Yuk Ton Char and completed in 1938, illustrates the growing influence of the Art Moderne and Art Deco styles on Chinese Eclectic designs in the 1930s. Home to the Wo Fat Restaurant until its closure in 2005, the building exhibits a simple, relatively streamlined façade marked with regular window openings overlooking Hotel and Maunakea streets. A shallow tiled roof runs along the length of the principal facades above the second story and is supported by wooden brackets. The corner of the building is marked by a polygonal bay that extends above the second story, culminating in a tiled roof with curving eaves at each corner of the bay.

[125] Karen Yee, "Preserving Chinatowns in the United States," National Trust for Historic Preservation (accessed October 21, 2024 at https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3fa093b1c6194409ac979b03a4e77ed6).

A second tower extends from the roof near the back of the building. The building's recessed penthouse level, which originally contained a banquet hall, was later expanded and has altered the appearance of the primary facades. The building was rehabilitated and converted into a hotel in the early 2020s.

On Leong Merchants Association Building, 83 Mott Street, New York City (1949)

The On Leong Merchants Association Building in New York City's historic Chinatown, completed in 1949, is one of several extant Chinese Eclectic designs built after World War II. Although the architect of record for the building was Andrew J. Thomas, the design of the New York On Leong headquarters is attributed to Chinese-American architect Poy Gum Lee, who prepared initial renderings for the building in 1948. Lee's design for the building combined elements common in many Chinese Eclectic buildings—including a prominent three-tiered pagoda rising from the front (southeast) end of the building and upper floor galleries on the street-facing elevations—with Art Moderne-inspired multi-light metal casement windows that wrap around the corners of the front façade. The building retains good integrity, with alterations mainly limited to the ground-floor storefronts. Like the On Leong building in Chicago, the building serves as a visual landmark in New York City's historic Chinatown.

On Leong Merchants Association Building, 20 Hudson Street, Boston, MA (1951, east end removed 1954)

Another post-war interpretation of Chinese eclecticism is the On Leong Merchants Association Building at 20 Hudson Street in Boston. Later named the Chinese Merchants Association, the building was designed by Chinese-American architect Edwin Chin-Park and completed in 1951. Chin-Park's design is the most emphatically modern of the Chinese Eclectic buildings discussed in this nomination—its simple rectilinear massing was covered in a simple, undecorated skin of stone panels, which was punctuated by vertical and horizontal groupings of windows. Elements of traditional Chinese architecture included recessed galleries on the second, third, and fourth stories of the front façade, as well as low-relief spandrel panels between windows at the west end of the south elevation showing pastoral scenes and Chinese characters. The building's most prominent Chinese-inspired elements was an oversized roof-top pagoda with geometric railings and a green tiled roof.

The building was substantially remodeled in 1954 by Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson & Abbott to accommodate part of a new expressway. In addition to removing the entire east end of the building, the architects also enclosed the recessed galleries to reclaim some of the lost square footage, covering the entire center section of the façade with a grouping of aluminum windows. It is not known whether other alterations to the building, including a modernized main entrance with projecting steel-clad canopy and replacement windows on the front (west) and south elevations, occurred as part of the 1950s remodeling or were made later. The rooftop pagoda remains intact.

Chinese Cultural and Community Center, 125 N. 10th Street, Philadelphia, PA (1832, remodeled 1971)

The Chinese Cultural and Community Center in Philadelphia's historic Chinatown is an unusual late example of a Chinese-Eclectic remodeling during the post-war period. Originally built as a three-story row house, the building was remodeled for use as the Chinese Cultural and Community Center in the early 1970s. The design for the renovation, which was attributed to Taiwanese architect Cho Cheng Yang, included a highly detailed façade topped by a massive two-tier imperial-style roof. A smaller tiled roof protects the main entrance to the building, and the second and third floors are marked by galleries decorated with painted panels and wood railings. The intricately carved stone flanking the entrance at the base of the building was meant to recall the stone bases of timber-frame imperial palaces. Although the building's interior was gutted by subsequent owners after the center closed in 2007, the exterior has recently been restored.[126]

Criteria Consideration A - Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes

[126] Melissa Romero, "Inside the Historic Chinese Cultural and Community Center's Comeback," Curbed Philadelphia website (accessed September 22 at https://philly.curbed.com/2016/8/18/12532844/chinatown-ymca-community-center-philadelphia-restoration)l; "Chinatown YMCA," Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, August 17, 2012, 20-23.

The On Leong Merchants Association Building historically housed a third-floor shrine to the Chinese deity Guan Gong and is currently owned and operated by the Chinese Christian Union Church and used for religious services. Though it was both used in the past in part for religious purposes and is currently owned and used in part by a religious institution for religious purposes, the On Leong Merchants Association Building's historic significance is not established on the merits of a religious doctrine but on the important and purely secular architectural and artistic values and historic and cultural forces it represents. As described in full above, the building clearly demonstrates significance in the areas of Ethnic Heritage, Social History and Architecture from its associations with Chicago Chinatown's social history, specifically in its longtime role as Chinatown's "City Hall" and from its exceptional Chinese Eclectic architecture, the best example of its kind in the city of Chicago and one of the finest examples in the United States.

Conclusion

For almost a century the On Leong Merchants Association Building has served as a symbol of Chinese Chicago, the resilience of the city's Chinese community, and of the power of the On Leong and its central role in creating and expanding Chicago's Chinatown. From its completion in 1928 until the building's gradual evolution in the 1970s into a more private club, the On Leong headquarters housed programs that welcomed new arrivals from China and assisted them in finding employment and housing; educated Chinese Chicagoans young and old in the languages and customs of both China and the United States; mitigated business and family conflicts among its members; protected Chinese interests by facilitating communications with outside businesses and government leaders; served as home for political activism and private religious devotion; welcomed non-Chinese visitors wishing to learn about Chinese culture and religion; and hosted countless events marking the growth of Chicago's Chinese community. The On Leong Merchants Association Building was also the first permanent large-scale building completed in Chicago that blended elements of traditional Chinese architecture with conventional Western building forms and technologies and remains one of the most significant and well-preserved examples of Chinese Eclectic Architecture in America's Chinatowns.

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On Leong Merchants Association Building | Cook County, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
____previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
__x__recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #__**HABS IL-325**__
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
__X__Local government
____University
__x__Other
Name of repository: Chinese American Museum of Chicago

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

On Leong Merchants Association Building | Cook County, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	41.852469 (Latitude)	-87.6322816 (Longitude)	3	_____ (Latitude)	_____ (Longitude)
2	_____ (Latitude)	_____ (Longitude)	4	_____ (Latitude)	_____ (Longitude)

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The On Leong Merchants Association Building's proposed National Register listing boundary aligns with the building's roughly rectangular-shaped footprint bound by S. Wentworth Avenue to the east; W. 22nd Place to the south; an adjacent building with which the On Leong Building shares a common party wall to the west; and a public alley to the north.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The On Leong Merchants Association Building's proposed National Register listing boundaries align with the building's historic footprint.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lara Ramsey and John Cramer date March 28, 2025
organization Ramsey Historic Consultants, Inc. telephone 312-613-1039
street & number 1105 W. Chicago Avenue, Suite 201 email lara@ramseyhcinc.com
city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60642

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

On Leong Merchants Association Building | Cook County, Illinois
Name of Property | County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Name of Property: On Leong Merchants Association Building

City or Vicinity: Chicago

County: Cook **State:** Illinois

Photographer: Lara Ramsey, Ramsey Historic Consultants, Inc.

Date Photographed: September 22, 2022

Photo 1 of 13: Wentworth Avenue (east) facade, looking southwest.

Photo 2 of 13: Wentworth Avenue (east) facade detail, looking west.

Photo 3 of 13: Wentworth Avenue (east) facade detail, looking southwest.

Photo 4 of 13: Wentworth Avenue (east) facade detail, looking northwest.

Photo 5 of 13: 22nd Place (south) facade, looking north.

Photo 6 of 13: Wentworth Avenue (east) facade southwest entrance, looking north.

Photo 7 of 13: Wentworth Avenue (east) main entrance, looking west.

Photo 8 of 13: First floor main stair hall, looking east.

Photo 9 of 13: First floor main stair hall, looking southwest up main stair to second floor.

Photo 10 of 13: Second floor main corridor, looking south.

Photo 11 of 13: Second floor classroom hall, looking west.

Photo 12 of 13: Third floor north stairwell down to second floor, looking west.

Photo 13 of 13: Third floor hall, looking south.

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Figure 6: On Leong Merchants Association – 2009 third floor plan. Source: Historic American Buildings Survey.

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Figure 8: "King of Chinatown Frank Moy and Oscar L. Halberg sitting at a table in a room, Moy is subscribing for a Liberty Loan: Group portrait of King of Chinatown Frank Moy and Oscar L. Halberg sitting at a table in a room in Chicago, Illinois, where Moy is subscribing to a second Liberty Loan. The persons in the image are identified as: Lia Qung, Reta Moy Gwing, Frank Moy Gwing, Moy Wahjung and Oscar L. Halberg." Source: *Chicago Daily News* Photographs, Chicago History Museum.

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Figure 23: On Leong Merchant Association Building third floor south courtroom, looking west., c. 1928. "Long tables, chairs, and a podium in a room in the Chinese city hall building: Interior view of a room full of long tables, chairs, and a wide podium at the front of the room, located in the Chinese city hall building in the Chinatown community area of Chicago, Illinois." Source: *Chicago Daily News* Photographs, Chicago History Museum.

Figure 24: On Leong Merchants Association, 1929. Source: "The Truth About Tongs," *Popular Mechanics*, June 1929, 917.

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Figure 27: On Leong School students in 1932. "(Left to right) Lorraine Moy, Florence Tom, Grace Tom, Phillip Chan and George Eng at the On Leong School on Wentworth Avenue in Chinatown, Chicago, Illinois, 1932." Source: *Chicago Daily News* Photographs, Chicago History Museum.

Figure 28: 1939 photograph of the well-known tiger painting at the top of the On Leong's main stairwell. The back of the photograph reads: "For Chinese American Museum of Chicago. Mr. Zhang Shanzi, a famous painter of tigers, came to the U.S. with Cardinal Paul Yu Pin during the Sino-Japanese war. To raise money for the war effort, Zhang created a huge tiger painting in Chicago, which was purchased by On Leong on Oct. 10,

1939. Zhang Shanzi is the third from the left. [Photo] Provided by Hoi Chan Csiu in 2005." Source: Collection of the Chinese American Museum of Chicago.

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Figure 36: The Sing Fat and Sing Chong Buildings in San Francisco's Chinatown. The buildings, designed by Ross & Burgren and completed in the years immediately following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, were the first large-scale Chinese Eclectic designs erected in the city's reconstructed Chinatown. Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sf_chinatown11.JPG).

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Figure 39: The On Leong Merchants Association Building at the northwest corner of Kneeland and Albany streets in Boston's Chinatown. The building was designed by Edwin Chin-Park and completed in 1951. The construction of a new expressway in the mid-1950s necessitated the removal of a substantial section of the building's east end. Source: Google Streetview.

Figure 40: The On Leong Merchants Association Building in Washington DC, located at 618-620 H Street NW, is the result of a 1920s remodeling of two mid-19th century rowhouses. Source: "On Leong Chinese Merchants Association," *DC Historic Sites* (https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/453).

Figure 41: The Chinatown YMCA Building at 125 N. 10th Street in Philadelphia, is an 1832 rowhouse building that was extensively remodeled with a new Chinese Eclectic design that was completed in 1971. The design is attributed to Taiwanese architect Cho Cheng Yang, who had designed the Chinese Pavilion at the International and Universal Exposition in Quebec in 1967. Source: Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination, Chinatown YMCA.

Figure 42: The Wo Fat Building in Honolulu's Chinatown was designed by Chinese American architect Yuk Ton Char and completed in 1938. The building housed the Wo Fat Restaurant, one of the city's oldest and most successful Chinese Restaurants, until its closure in 2005. Source: Historic Hawai'i Foundation (https://historichawaii.org/2023/03/06/wo-fat-chop-sui-house/).

Figure 43: The On Leong Merchants Association moved into its new headquarters at 2150 Rockwell Avenue (shown below) in 1930. This historic photograph dates from 1939. Although the design of the building largely resembled that of other early 20th century commercial blocks built in Cleveland and other Midwestern cities, the On Leong Building did feature a pagoda-like motif at the main entrance and center parapet, as well as a recessed gallery at the third story. The building has recently been updated with Chinese-inspired storefronts and window screens, and the gallery has been enclosed. Source: Cleveland Press Collection, Cleveland Memory Project (https://clevelandmemory.contenddm.oclc.org/digital/collection/press/id/15265/re/6)

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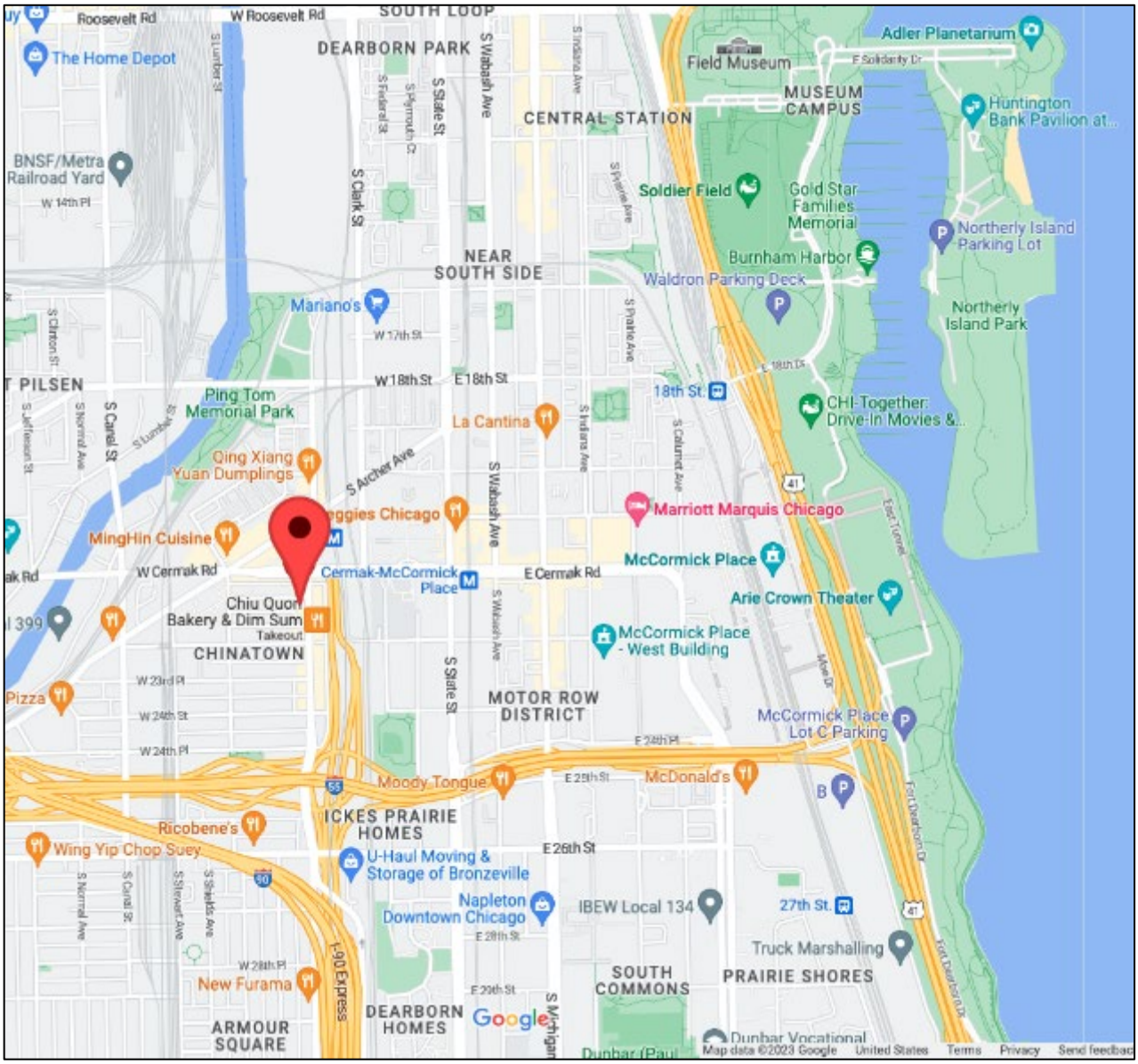

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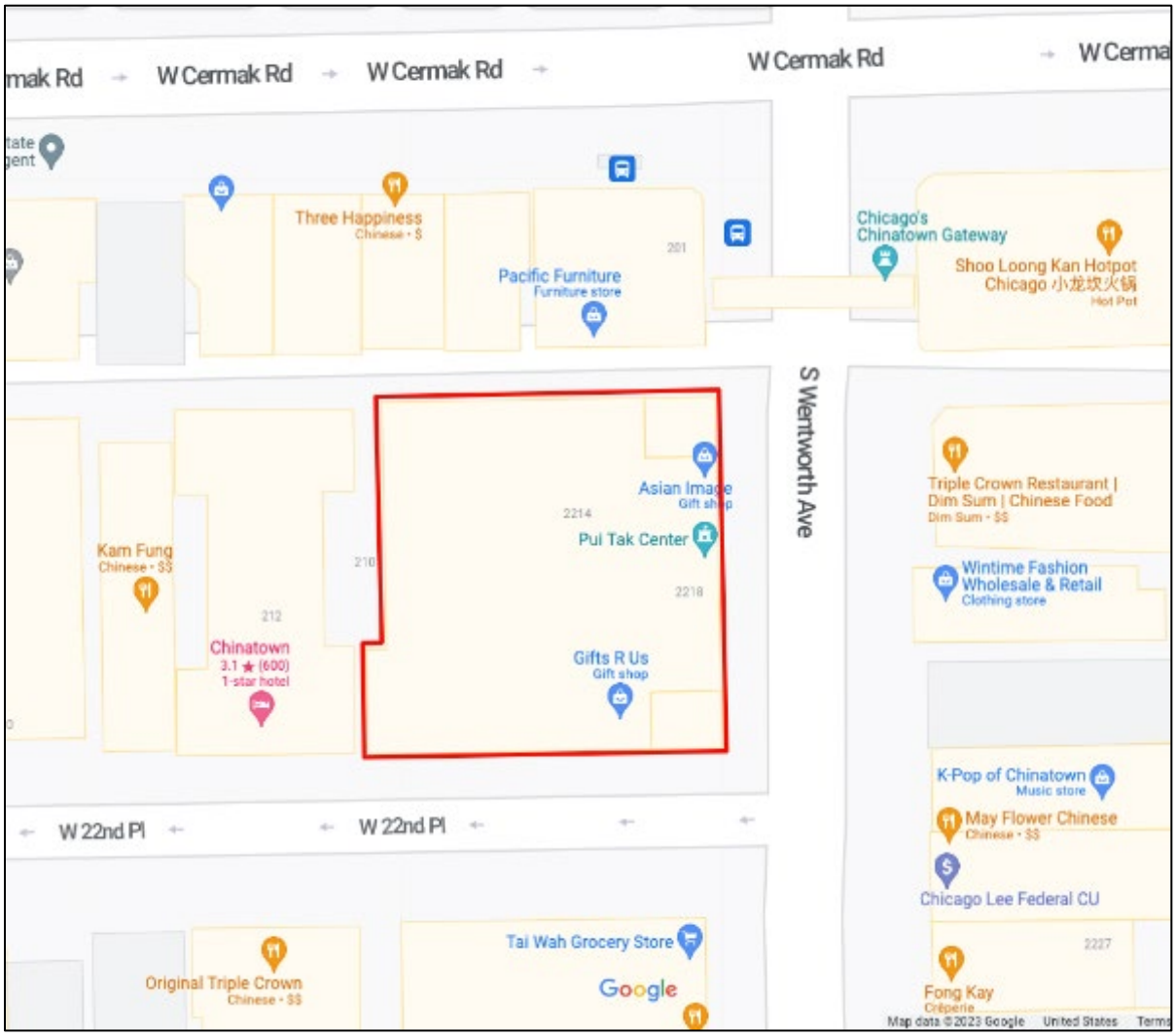

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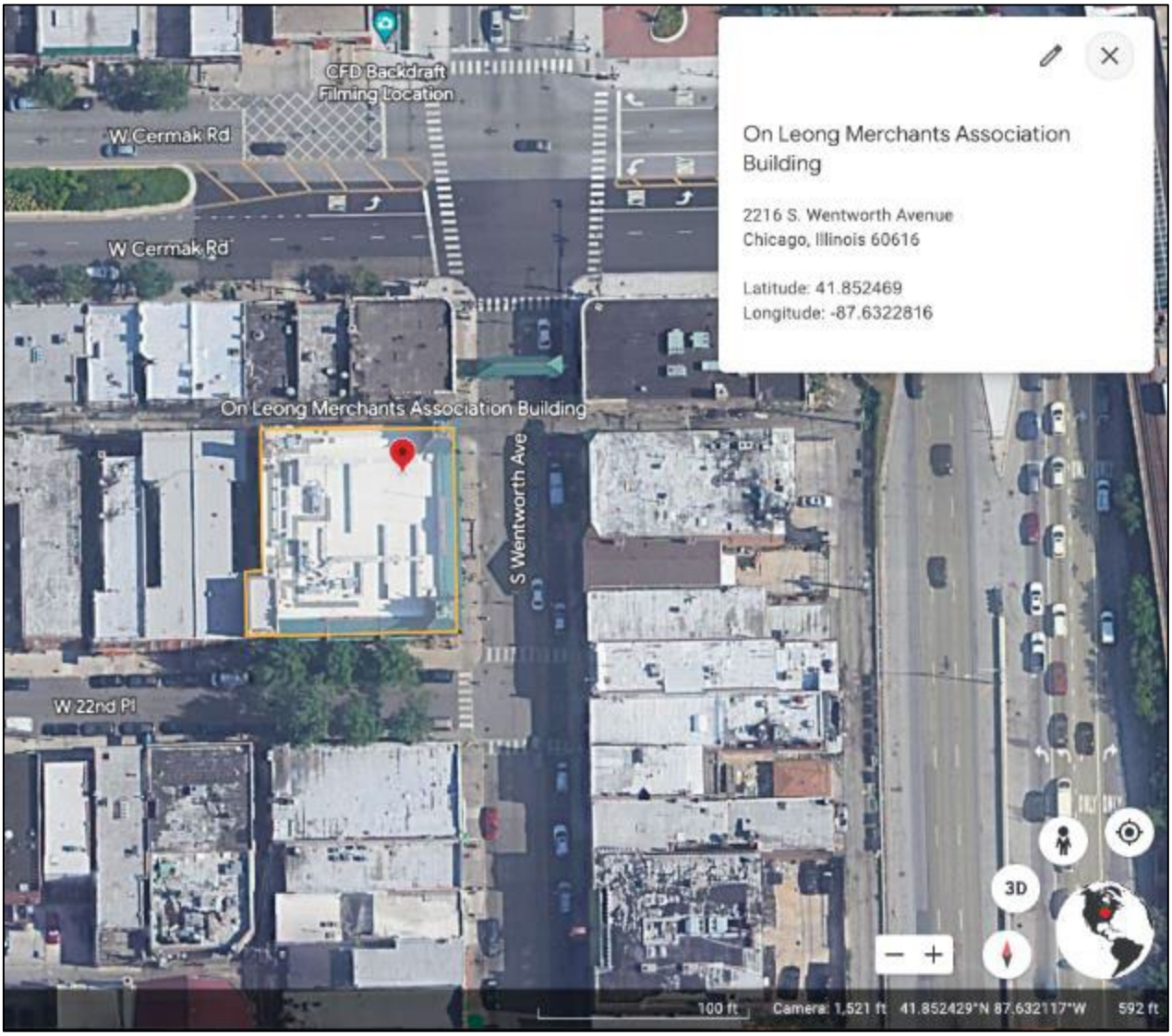

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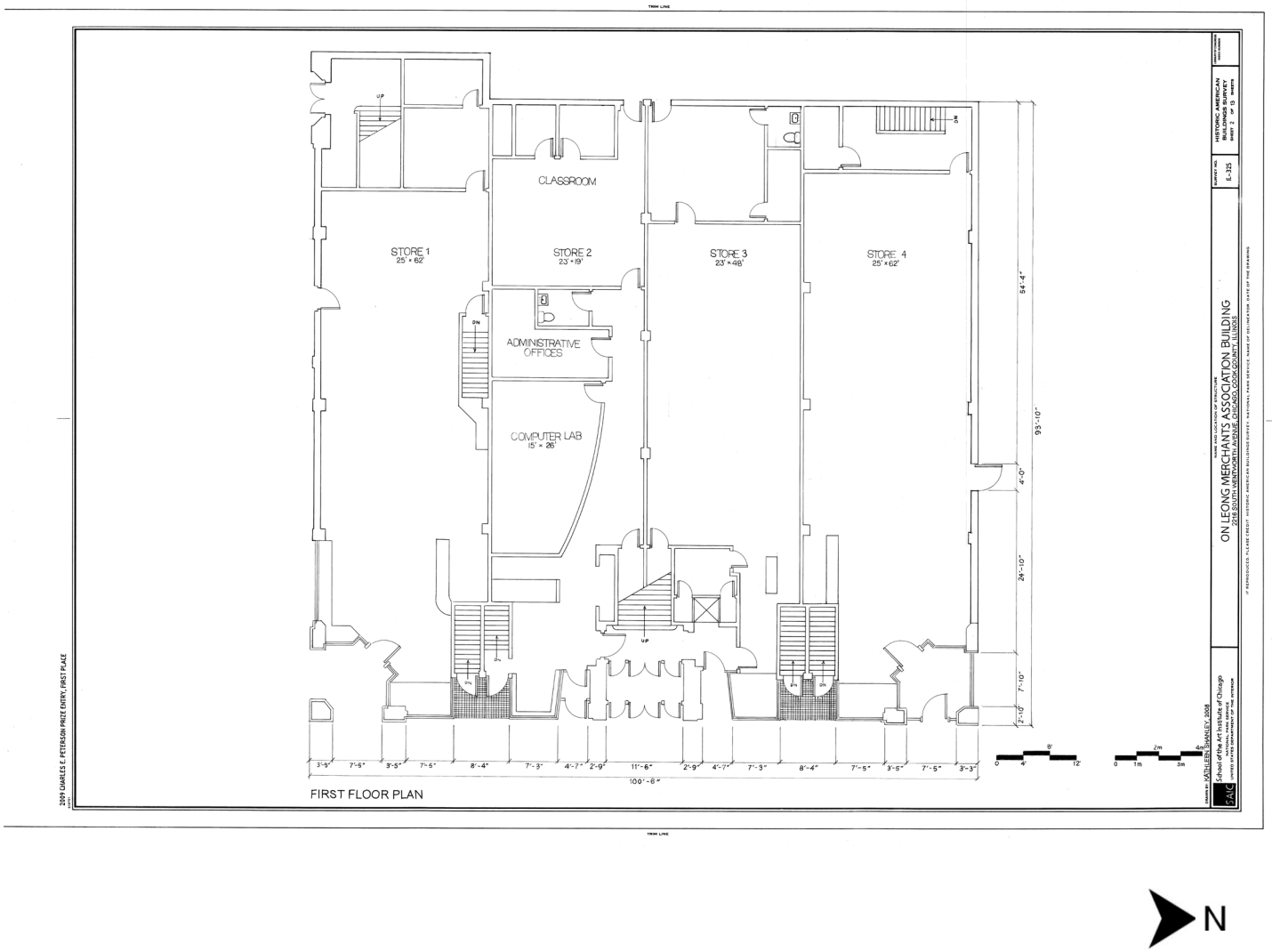

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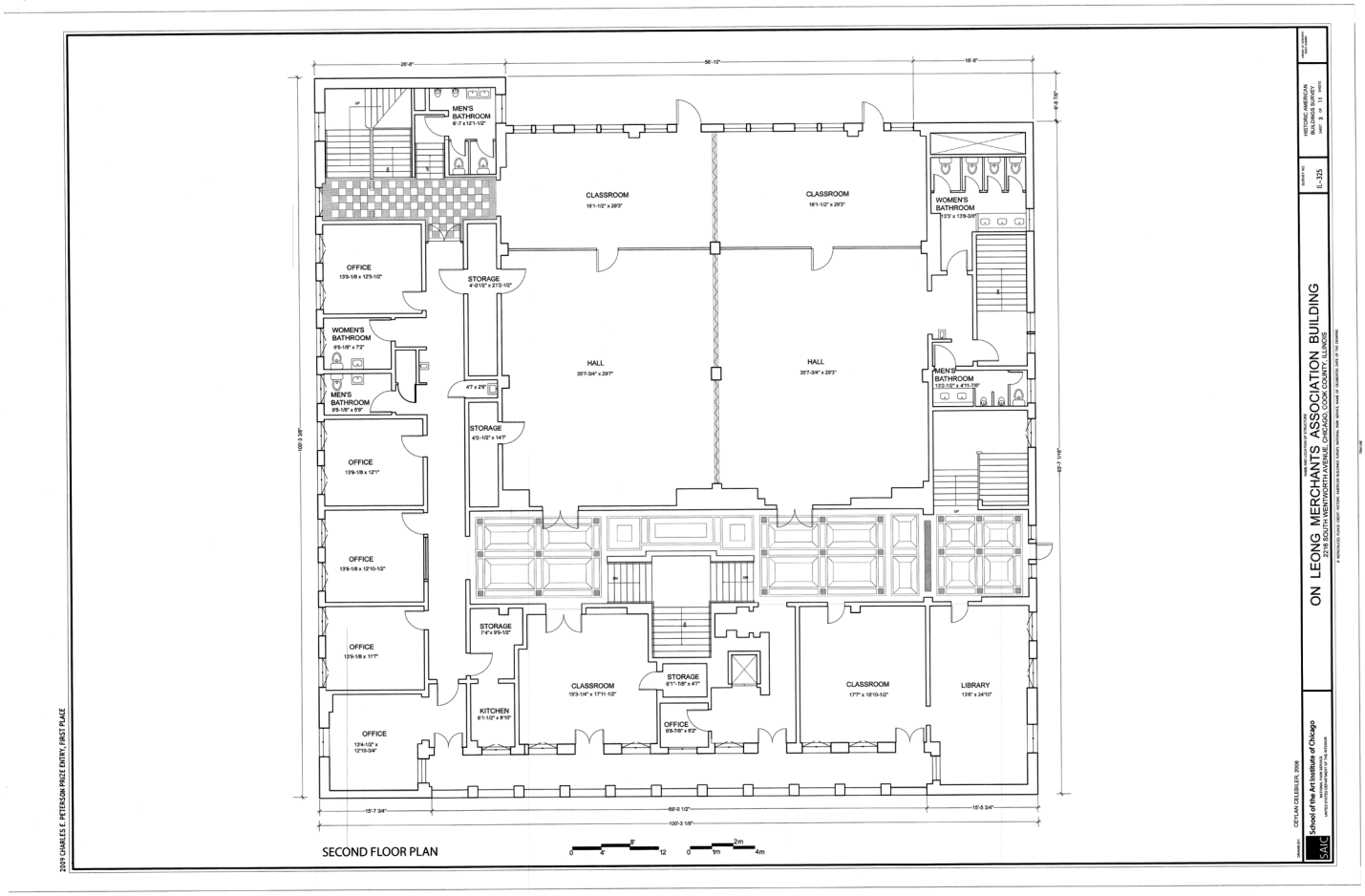

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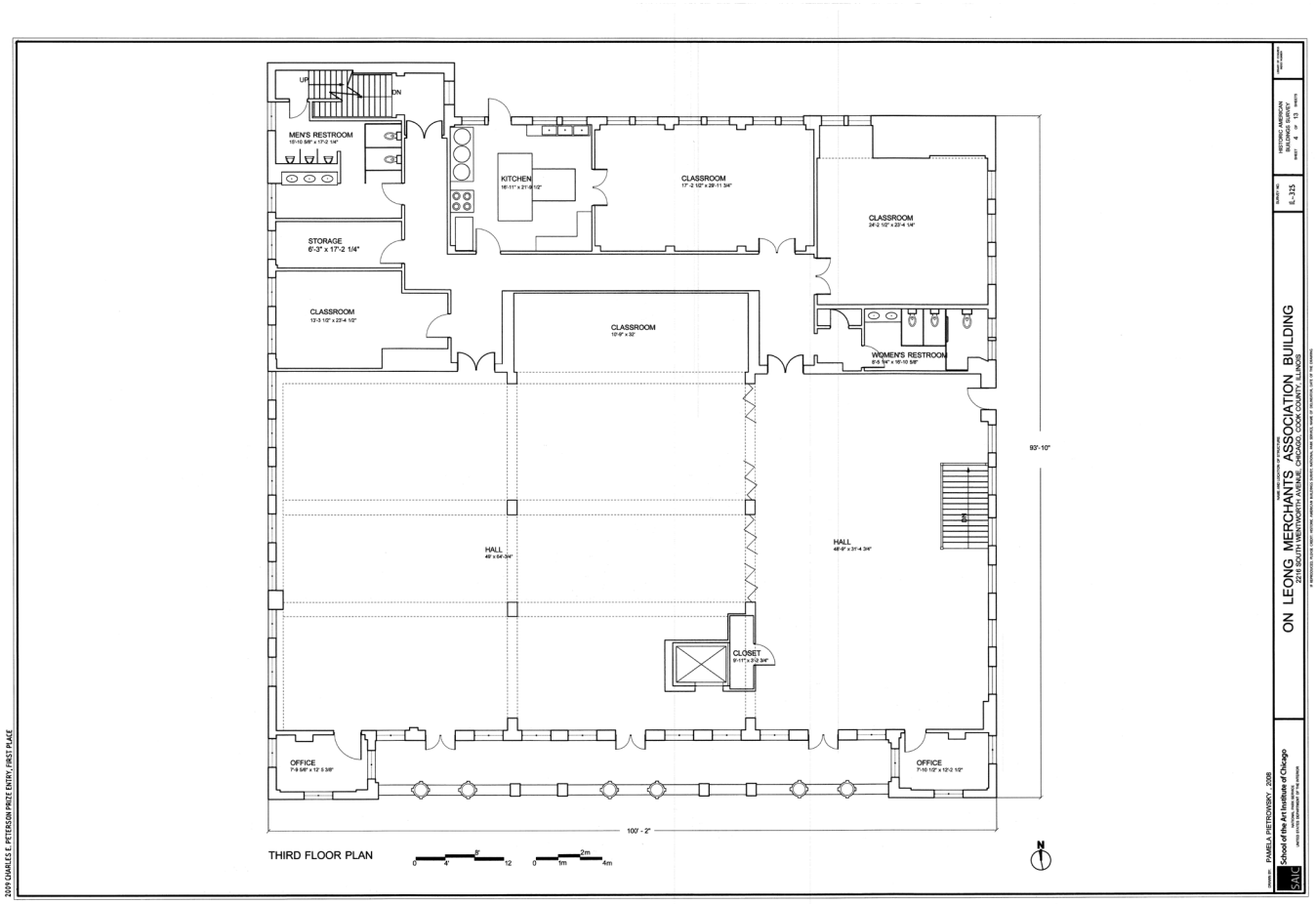

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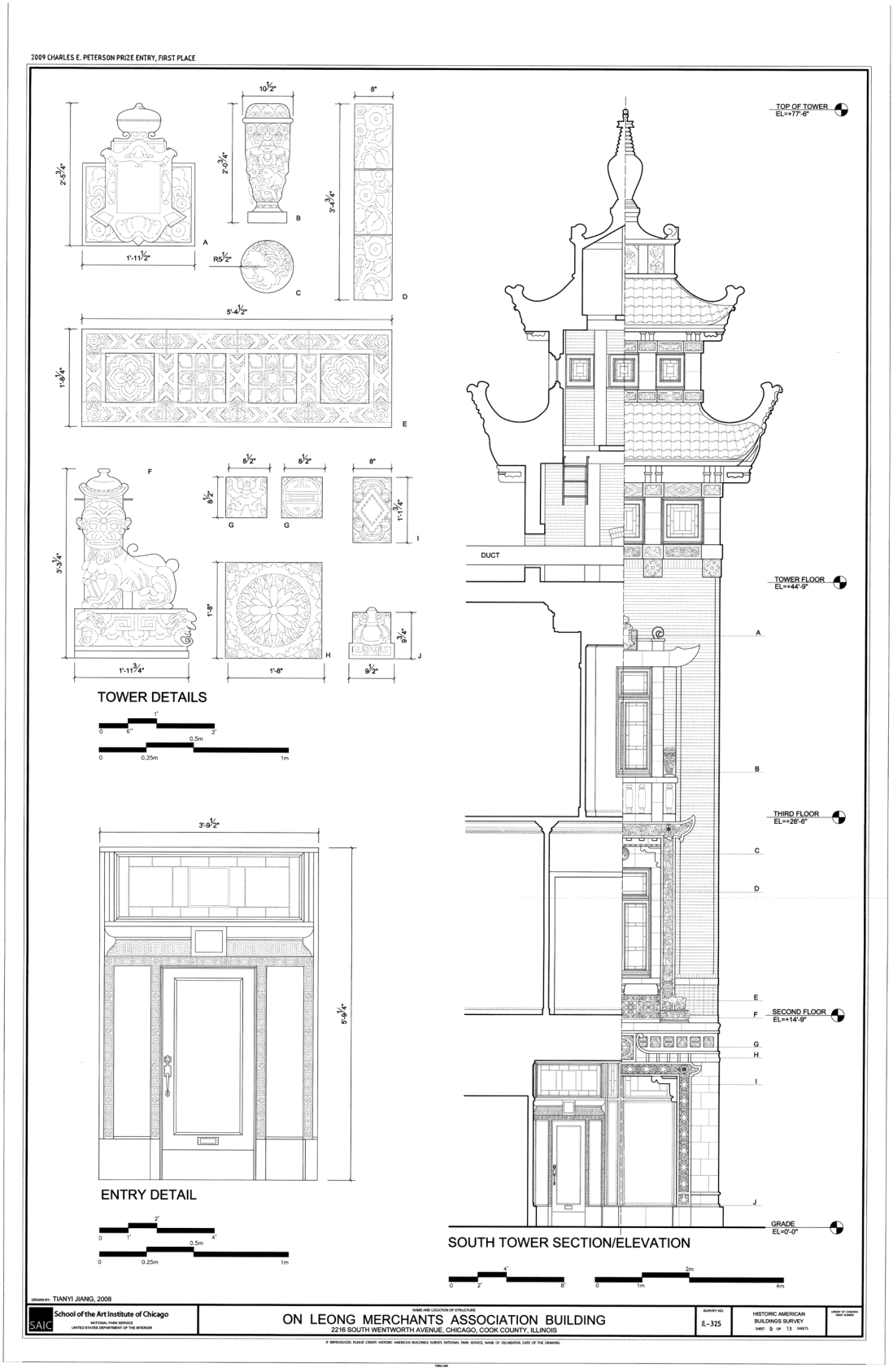

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Property name: On Leong Merchants Association Building
Illinois, County: Cook

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"Chicago Finishes Its 'City Hall'," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 27, 1928.

[TRIBUNE Photo.]

CHINATOWN FINISHES ITS "CITY HALL." Building at 22d street and Wentworth avenue erected by the On Leong Chinese Merchants' association. *(Story on page 34.)*

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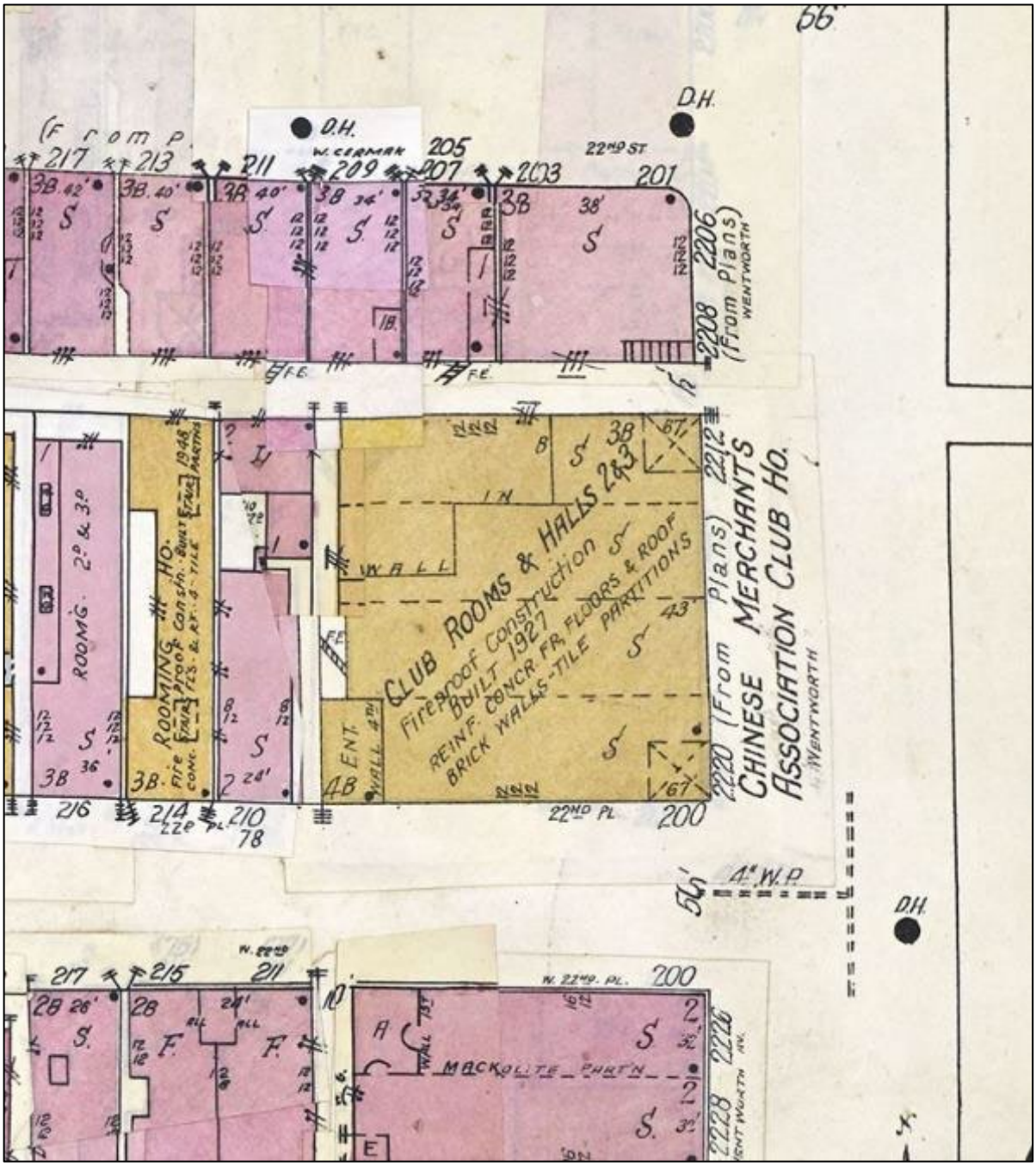

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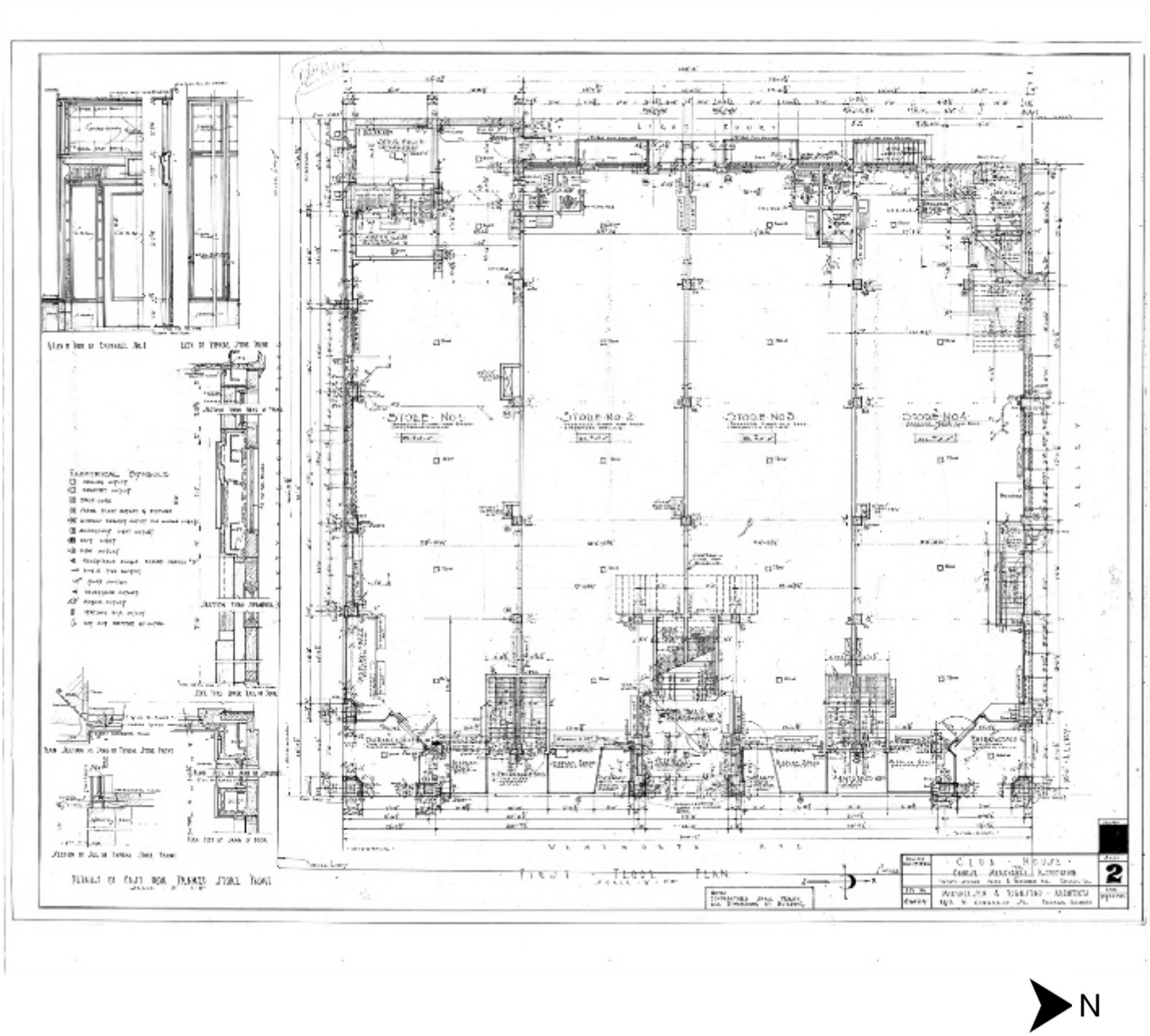

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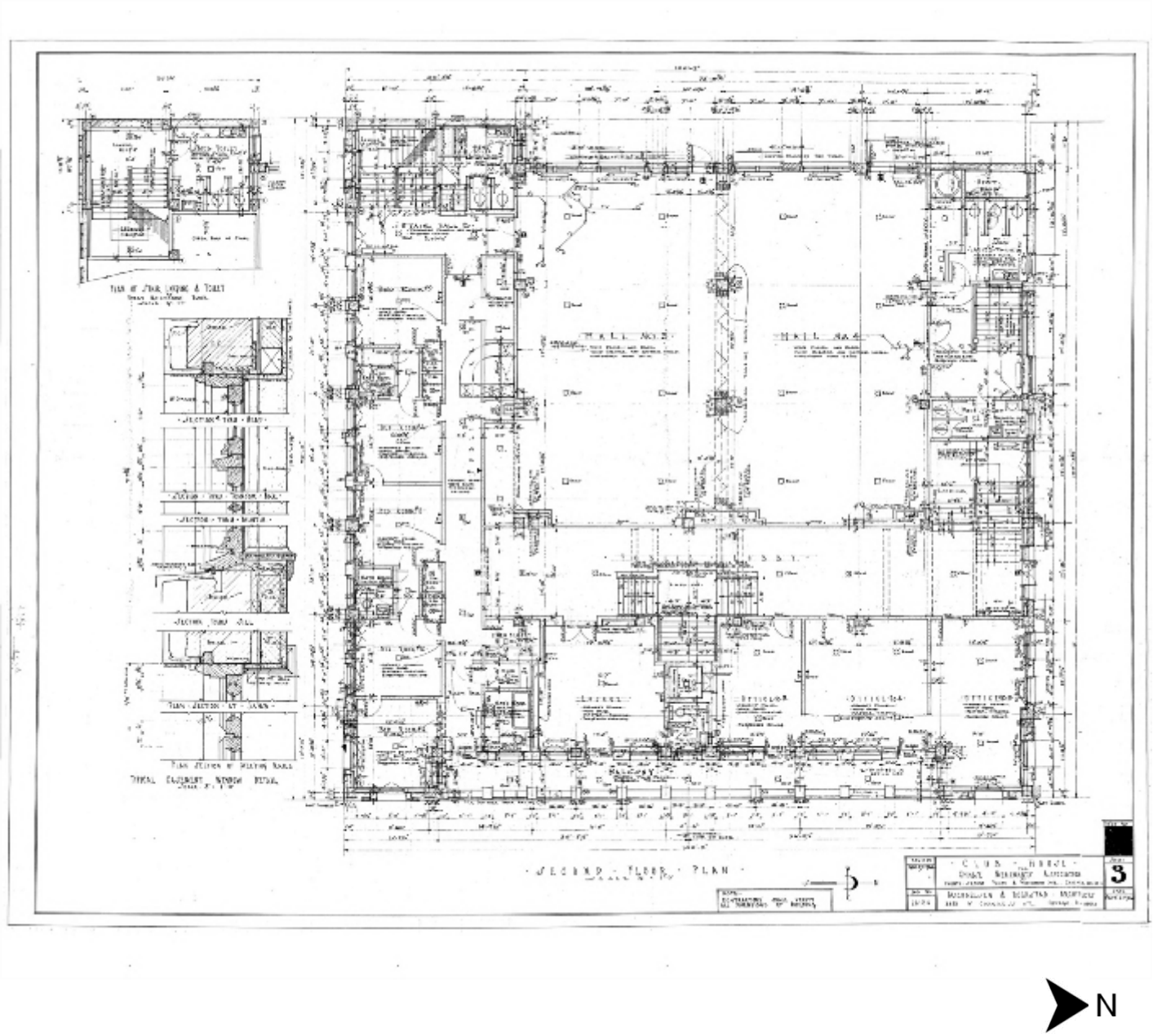

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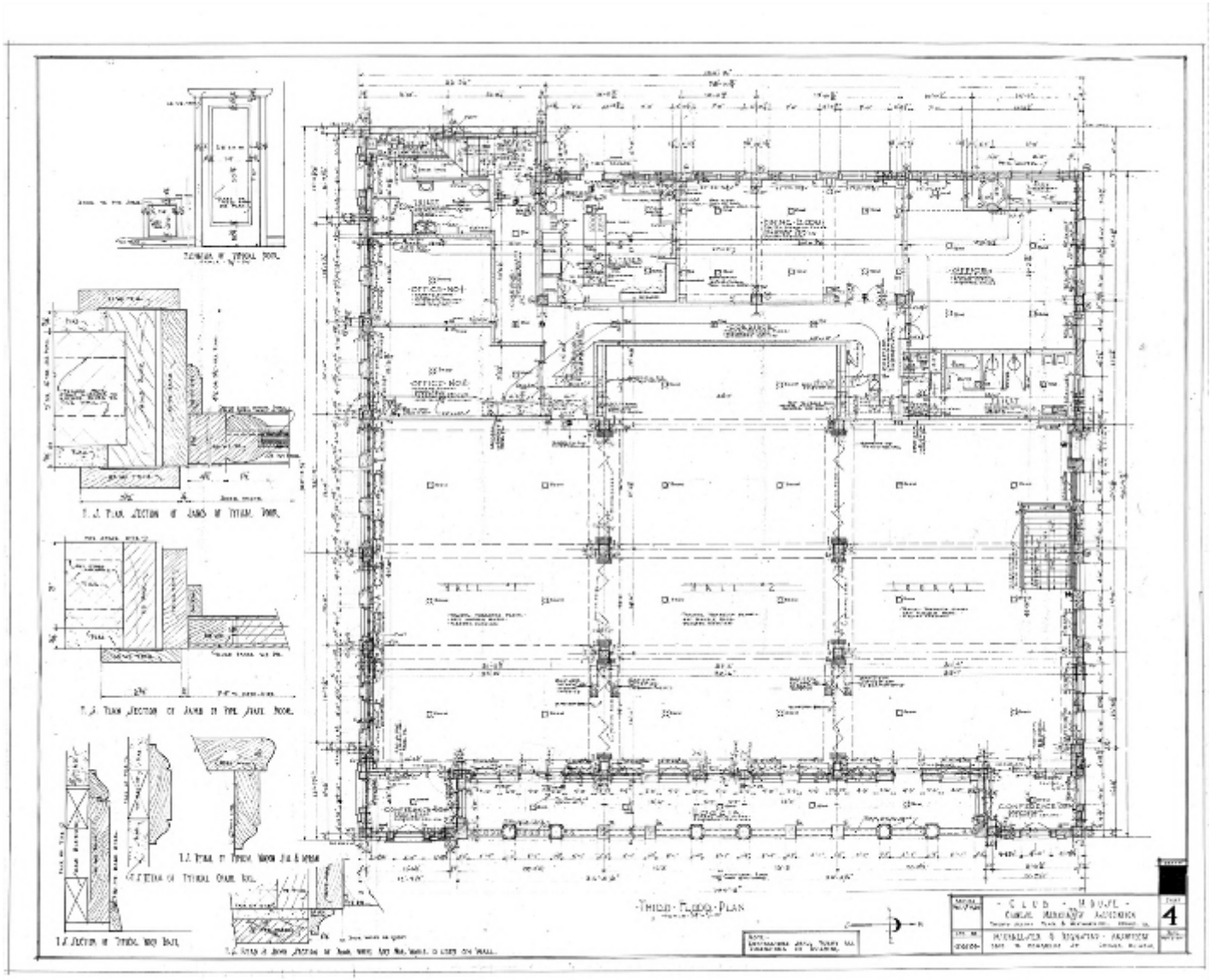

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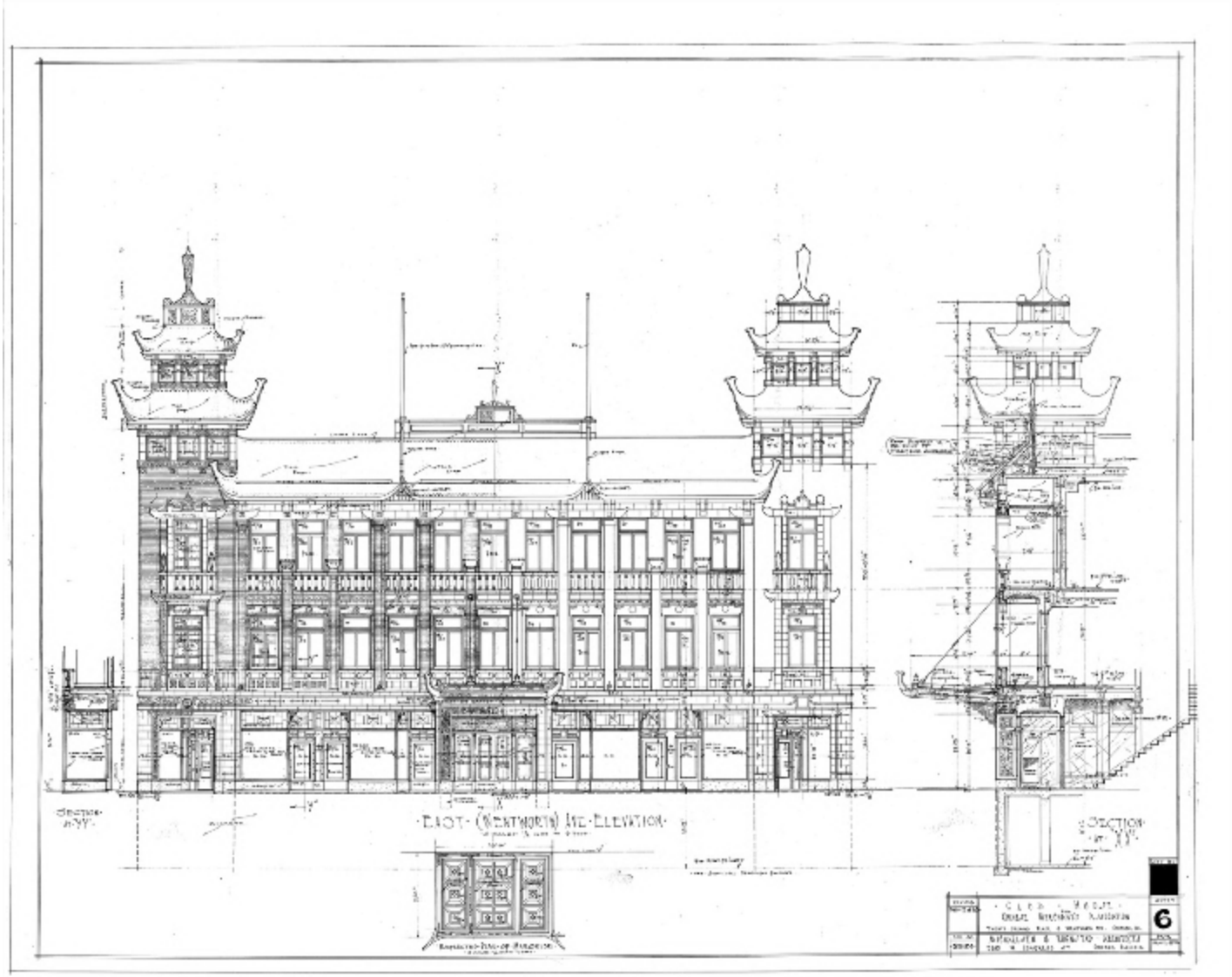

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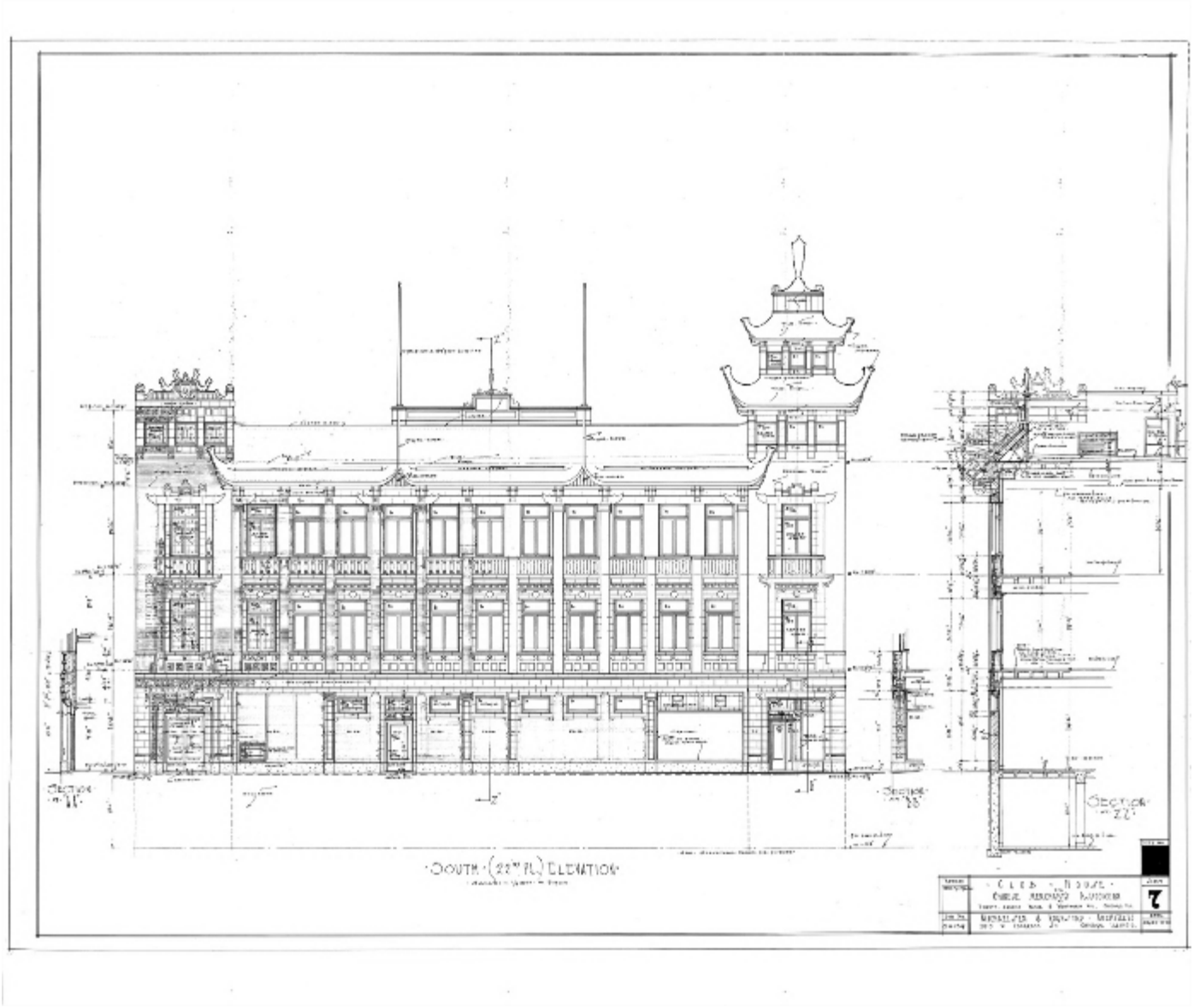

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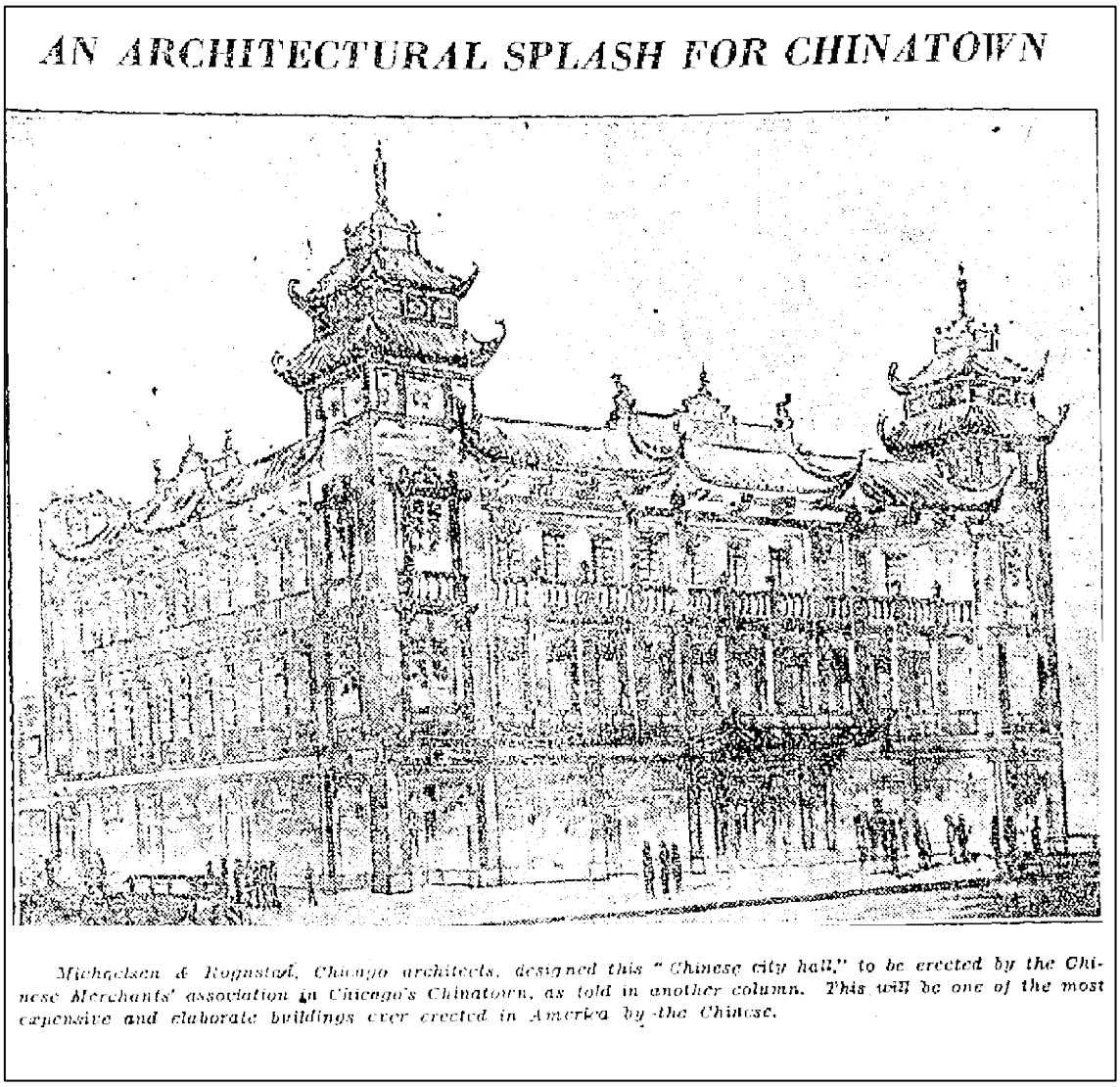

AN ARCHITECTURAL SPLASH FOR CHINATOWN

Michaelsen & Rognstad, Chicago architects, designed this "Chinese city hall," to be erected by the Chinese Merchants' association in Chicago's Chinatown, as told in another column. This will be one of the most expensive and elaborate buildings ever erected in America by the Chinese.

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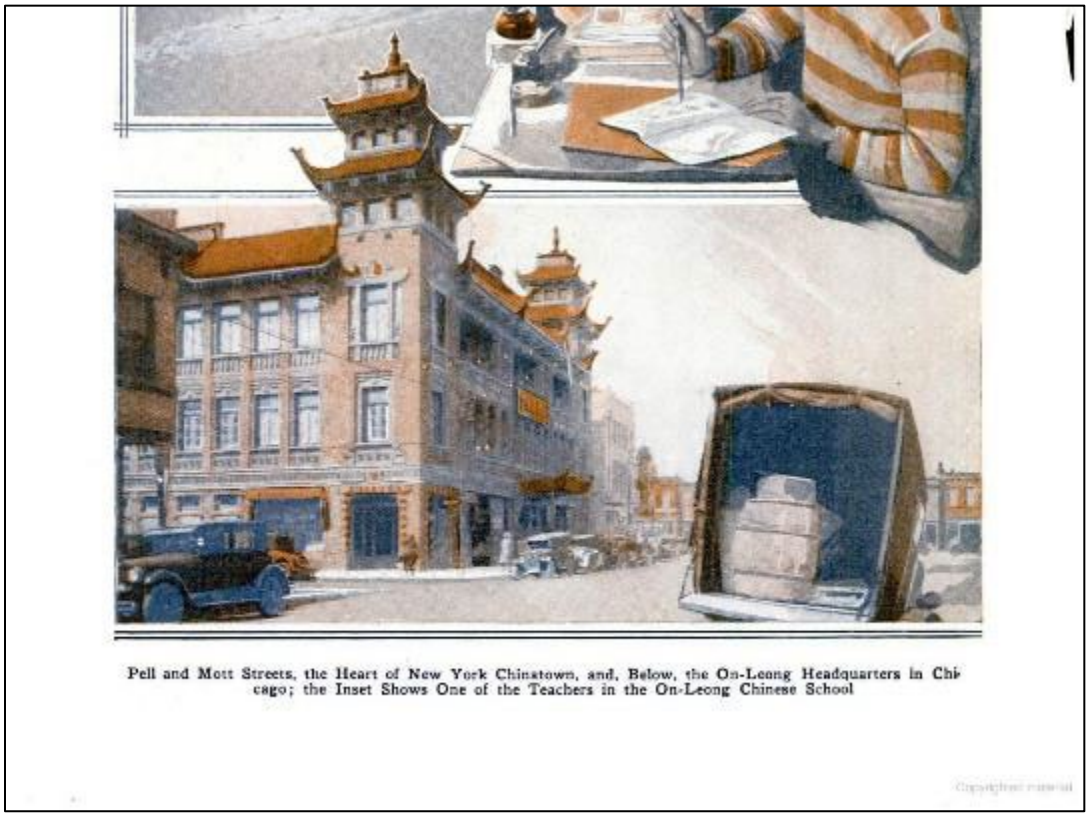
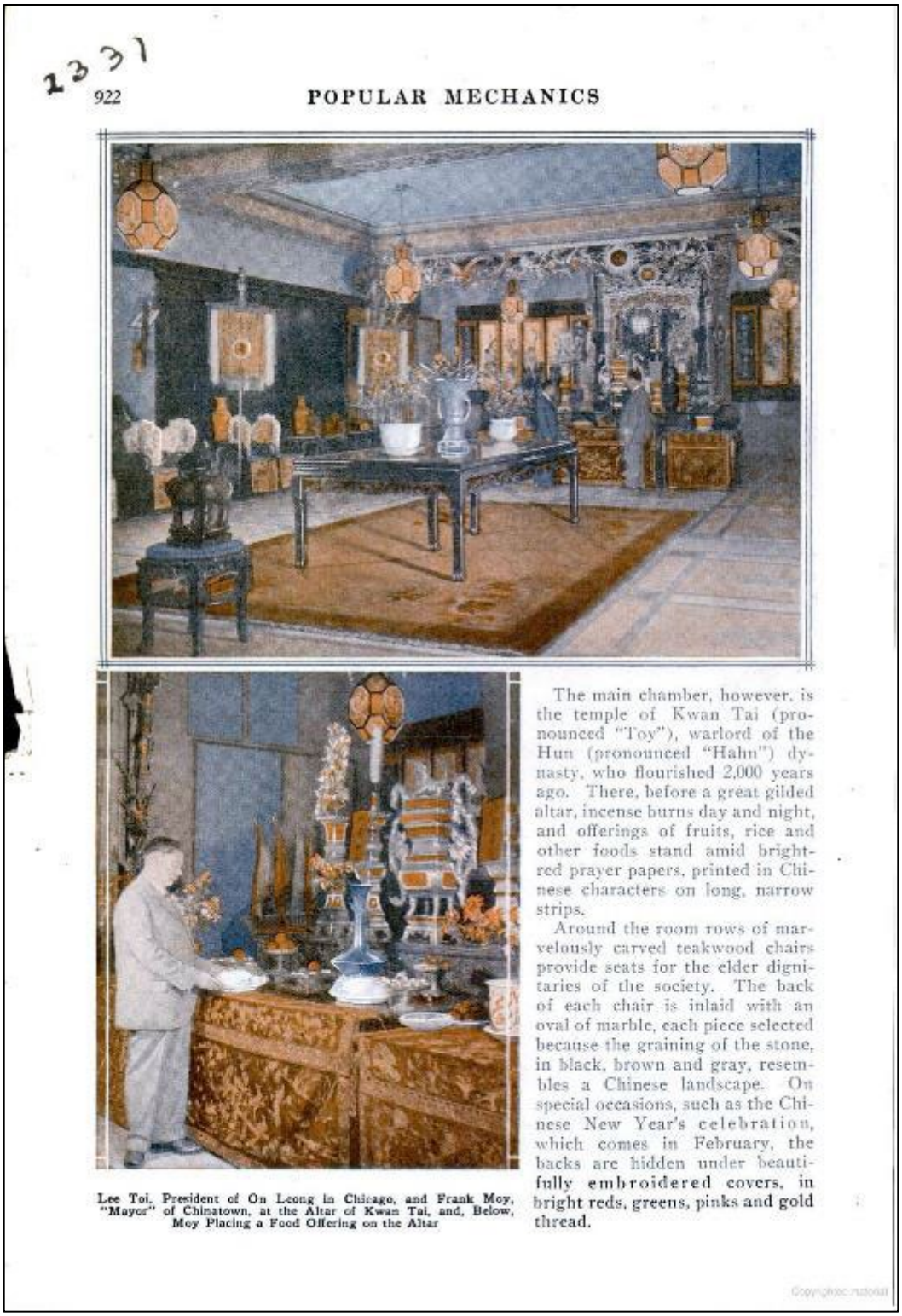
Figure 23: On Leong Merchant Association Building third floor south courtroom, looking west., c. 1928. "Long tables, chairs, and a podium in a room in the Chinese city hall building: Interior view of a room full of long tables, chairs, and a wide podium at the front of the room, located in the Chinese city hall building in the Chinatown community area of Chicago, Illinois." Source: *Chicago Daily News* Photographs, Chicago History Museum.

Figure 24: On Leong Merchants Association, 1929. Source: "The Truth About Tongs," *Popular Mechanics*, June 1929, 917.



Pell and Mott Streets, the Heart of New York Chinatown, and, Below, the On-Leong Headquarters in Chicago; the Inset Shows One of the Teachers in the On-Leong Chinese School

Figure 25: On Leong Merchants Association third floor shrine. Source: "The Truth About Tongs," *Popular Mechanics*, June 1929, 922.



2331

922 POPULAR MECHANICS

Lee Toi, President of On Leong in Chicago, and Frank Moy, "Mayor" of Chinatown, at the Altar of Kwan Tai, and, Below, Moy Placing a Food Offering on the Altar

The main chamber, however, is the temple of Kwan Tai (pronounced "Toy"), warlord of the Hun (pronounced "Hahn") dynasty, who flourished 2,000 years ago. There, before a great gilded altar, incense burns day and night, and offerings of fruits, rice and other foods stand amid bright-red prayer papers, printed in Chinese characters on long, narrow strips.

Around the room rows of marvelously carved teakwood chairs provide seats for the elder dignitaries of the society. The back of each chair is inlaid with an oval of marble, each piece selected because the graining of the stone, in black, brown and gray, resembles a Chinese landscape. On special occasions, such as the Chinese New Year's celebration, which comes in February, the backs are hidden under beautifully embroidered covers, in bright reds, greens, pinks and gold thread.

Figure 26: On Leong School classroom in 1932. Source: *Chicago Daily News* Photographs, Chicago History Museum.

Figure 27: On Leong School students in 1932. "(Left to right) Lorraine Moy, Florence Tom, Grace Tom, Phillip Chan and George Eng at the On Leong School on Wentworth Avenue in Chinatown, Chicago, Illinois, 1932." Source: *Chicago Daily News* Photographs, Chicago History Museum.

Figure 28: 1939 photograph of the well-known tiger painting at the top of the On Leong's main stairwell. The back of the photograph reads: "For Chinese American Museum of Chicago. Mr. Zhang Shanzi, a famous painter of tigers, came to the U.S. with Cardinal Paul Yu Pin during the Sino-Japanese war. To raise money for the war effort, Zhang created a huge tiger painting in Chicago, which was purchased by On Leong on Oct. 10, 1939. Zhang Shanzi is the third from the left. [Photo] Provided by Hoi Chan Csiu in 2005." Source: Collection of the Chinese American Museum of Chicago.

Figure 29: "Chinese kids spend nights in Chinese studies'," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 11, 1949.

Grade School Youngsters Learn Chinese in Spare Time

There's no homework for these students who study Chinese language in Chung Wah (Chinese) school in Chinatown's city hall, 2216 Wentworth av. Attendance in class, which meets two hours nightly and on Saturday afternoons, is voluntary. These students attend public school during regular sessions. Pupils go from 1st thru 6th grades and learn to read and write the Chinese language.

Figure 30: "Wentworth Avenue in Chinatown: Street view looking north on Wentworth Avenue from 23rd Street in Chinatown, Chicago, Illinois, May 30, 1952. Chinatown's City Hall appears on right side of street." Source: Chicago History Museum.

Figure 31: "On Leong Building on the occasion of the 54th National Convention of On Leong Chinese Merchants Association in Chicago." Photo dated April 21, 1958. Source: Chinese American Museum of Chicago.

Figure 32: May 1959 photo of the St. Therese School's 1st and 2nd grades in the On Leong Building's second-floor classroom space. Source: David Wu, Pui Tak Center.

Figure 33: c.1960 postcard. Source: Ebay.

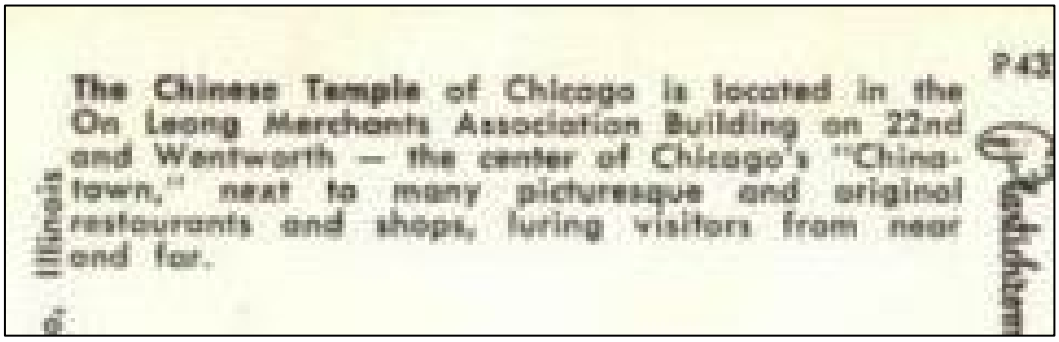


Figure 34: On Leong Merchant Association Building, 1968. "Chinese New Year celebrations in Chinatown: People celebrating the Chinese New Year in Chinatown with a parade, a band and a dragon at South Wentworth Avenue and West Cermak Road, Chicago, Illinois." Source: Chicago History Museum.

Figure 35: On Leong Merchant Association Building on October 10, 1971, commemorating National Day of the (1911) Republic of China. "Dragons dance next to firecrackers as the Chicago Chinese Independence Day Parade marches through the Chinatown neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois." Source: Chicago History Museum.

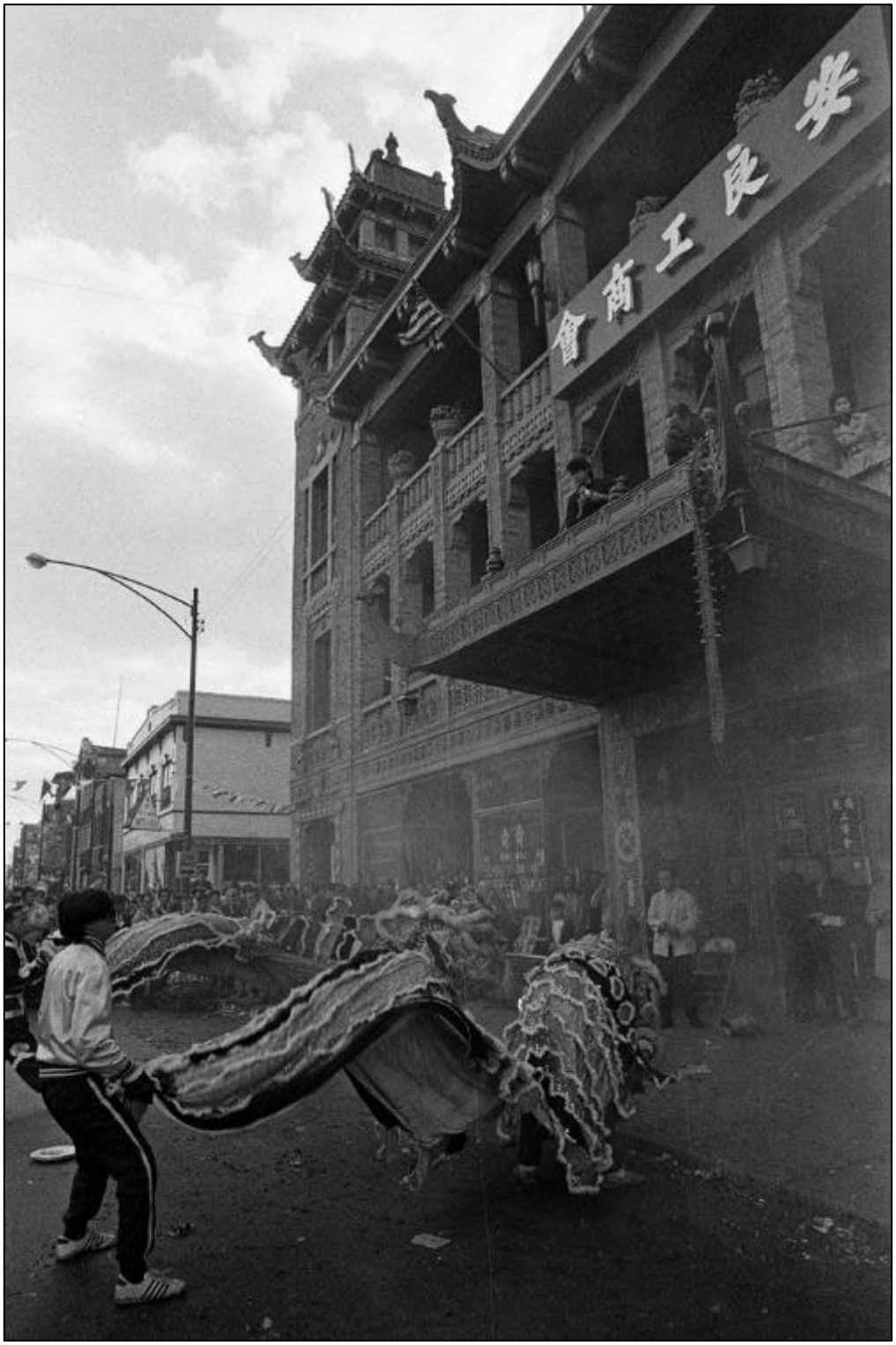


Figure 36: The Sing Fat and Sing Chong Buildings in San Francisco's Chinatown. The buildings, designed by Ross & Burgren and completed in the years immediately following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, were the first large-scale Chinese Eclectic designs erected in the city's reconstructed Chinatown. Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sf_chinatown11.JPG).

Figure 37: View of buildings facing the interior courtyard of Los Angeles' New Chinatown, which opened in 1938. Source: The Jon B. Lovelace Collection of California Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Property name: On Leong Merchants Association Building
Illinois, County: Cook

Figure 38: The On Leong Merchants Association Building at the southwest corner of Canal and Mott streets in Manhattan's Chinatown, New York City. The building was completed in 1949 and based on a design prepared by Chinese-American architect Poy Gum Lee. Source: Google Streetview

Property name: On Leong Merchants Association Building
Illinois, County: Cook

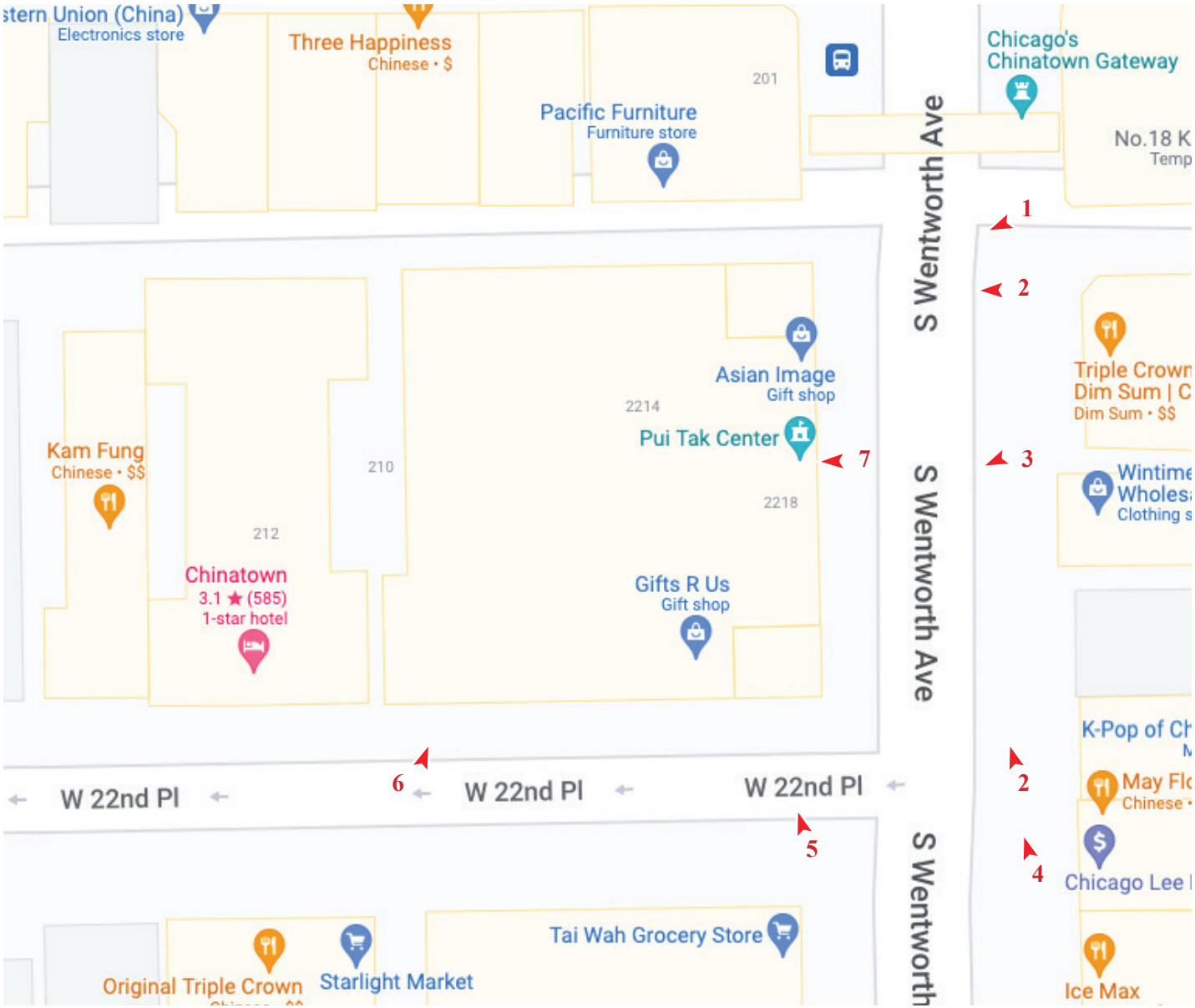
Figure 39: The On Leong Merchants Association Building at the northwest corner of Kneeland and Albany streets in Boston's Chinatown. The building was designed by Edwin Chin-Park and completed in 1951. The construction of a new expressway in the mid-1950s necessitated the removal of a substantial section of the building's east end. Source: Google Streetview

Figure 40: The On Leong Merchants Association Building in Washington DC, located at 618-620 H Street NW, is the result of a 1920s remodeling of two mid-19th century rowhouses. Source: "On Leong Chinese Merchants Association," *DC Historic Sites* (https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/453).

Figure 41: The Chinatown YMCA Building at 125 N. 10th Street in Philadelphia, is an 1832 rowhouse building that was extensively remodeled with a new Chinese Eclectic design that was completed in 1971. The design is attributed to Taiwanese architect Cho Cheng Yang, who had designed the Chinese Pavilion at the International and Universal Exposition in Quebec in 1967. Source: Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination, Chinatown YMCA.

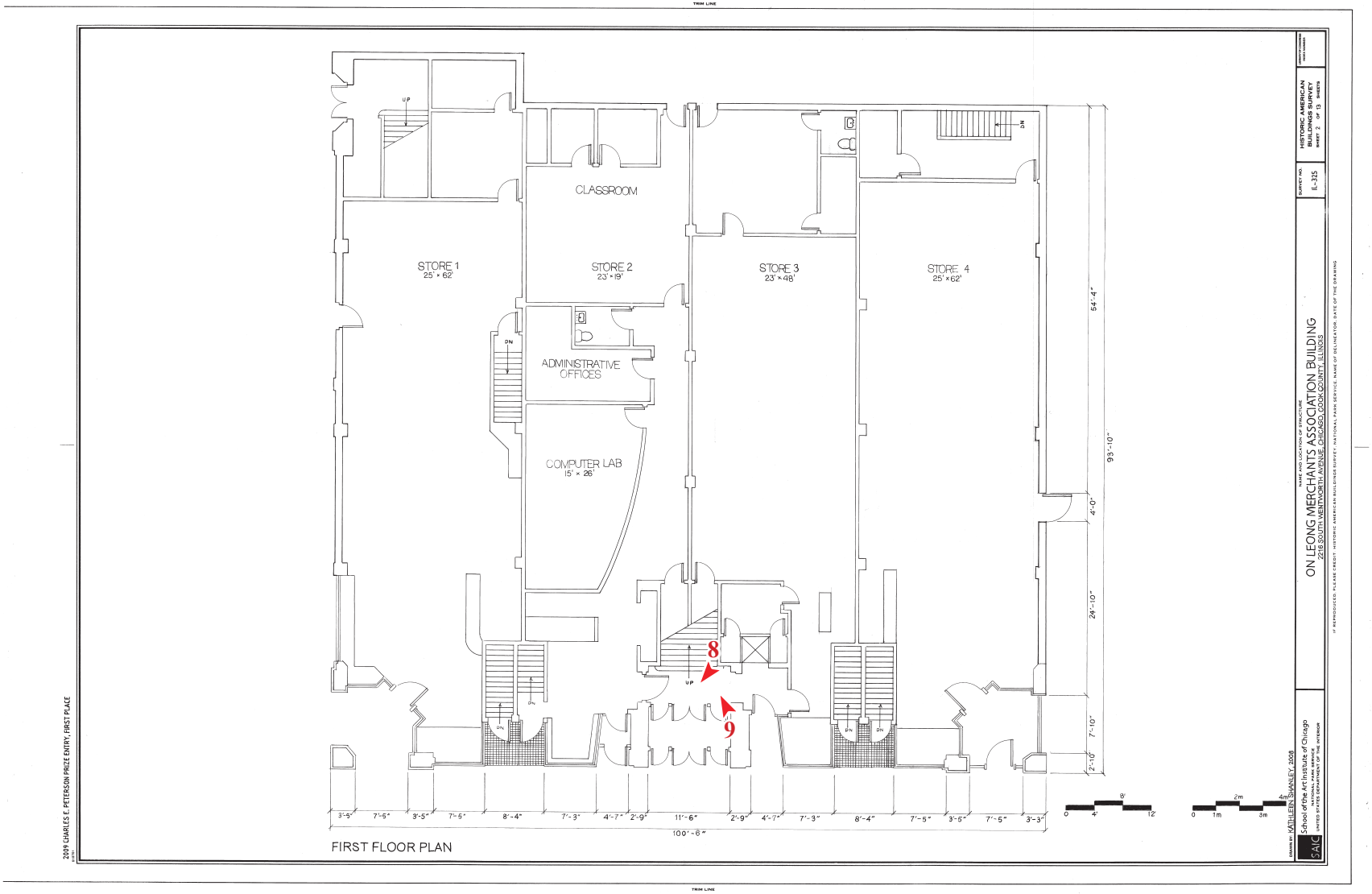
Figure 42: The Wo Fat Building in Honolulu's Chinatown was designed by Chinese American architect Yuk Ton Char and completed in 1938. The building housed the Wo Fat Restaurant, one of the city's oldest and most successful Chinese Restaurants, until its closure in 2005. Source: Historic Hawai'i Foundation (https://historichawaii.org/2023/03/06/wo-fat-chop-sui-house/).

Figure 43: The On Leong Merchants Association moved into its new headquarters at 2150 Rockwell Avenue (shown below) in 1930. This historic photograph dates from 1939. Although the design of the building largely resembled that of other early 20th century commercial blocks built in Cleveland and other Midwestern cities, the On Leong Building did feature a pagoda-like motif at the main entrance and center parapet, as well as a recessed gallery at the third story. The building has recently been updated with Chinese-inspired storefronts and window screens, and the gallery has been enclosed. Source: Cleveland Press Collection, Cleveland Memory Project, (https://clevelandmemory.contenddm.oclc.org/digital/collection/press/id/15265/re/6)



On Leong Merchants Association Building
2216 South Wentworth Avenue
Chicago, IL 60616

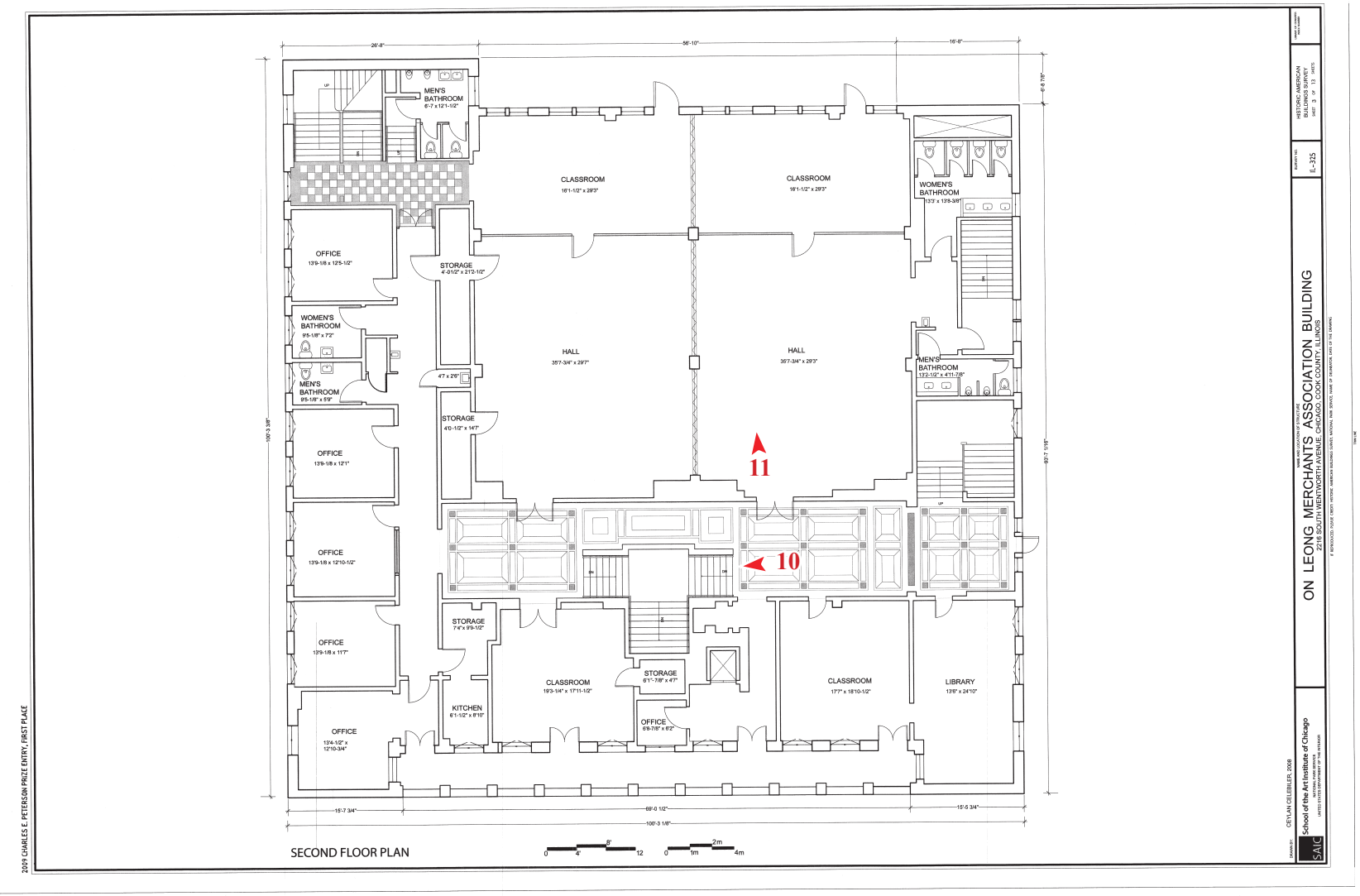
National Register Nomination
Photo Key
Site Plan



1st Floor

On Leong Merchants Association Building
2216 South Wentworth Avenue
Chicago, IL 60616

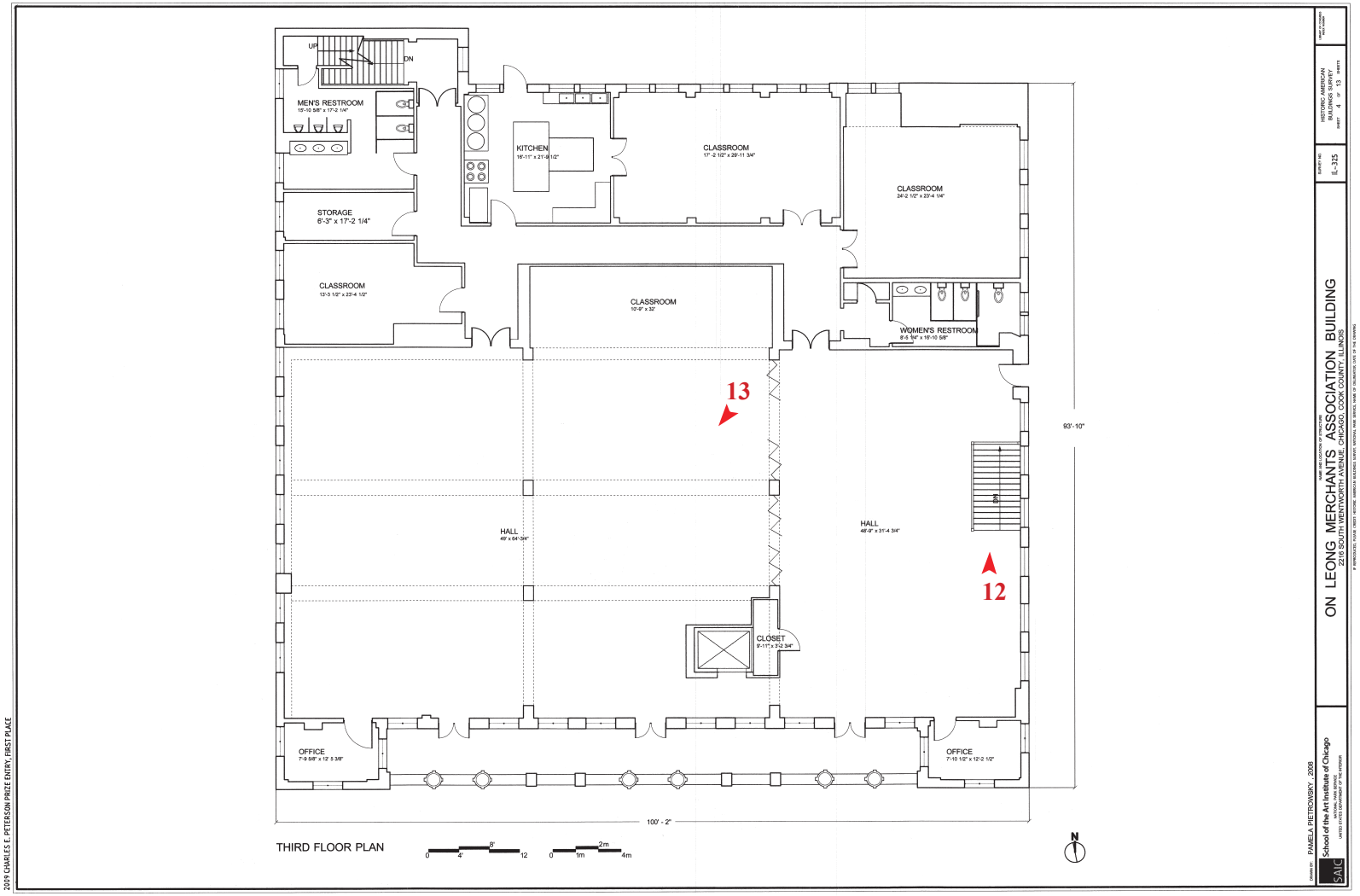
National Register Nomination
Photo Key



2nd Floor

On Leong Merchants Association Building
2216 South Wentworth Avenue
Chicago, IL 60616

National Register Nomination
Photo Key



3rd Floor

On Leong Merchants Association Building
2216 South Wentworth Avenue
Chicago, IL 60616

National Register Nomination
Photo Key

National Register Nomination
On Leong Merchants Association Building
2216 South Wentworth Avenue
Chicago, IL 60616

Photo 1. Wentworth Avenue (east) facade, looking southwest.

Photo 2. Wentworth Avenue (east) facade detail, looking west.

Photo 3. Wentworth Avenue (east) facade detail, looking southwest.

Photo 4. Wentworth Avenue (east) facade detail, looking northwest.

Photo 5. 22nd Place (south) facade, looking north.

Photo 6. Wentworth Avenue (east) facade southwest entrance, looking north.

Photo 7. Wentworth Avenue (east) main entrance, looking west.

Photo 8. First floor main stair hall, looking east.

Photo 9. First floor main stair hall, looking southwest up main stair to second floor.

Photo 10. Second floor main corridor, looking south.

Photo 11. Second floor classroom hall, looking west.

Photo 12. Third floor north stairwell down to second floor, looking west.

Photo 13. Third floor hall, looking south.

Illinois National Register of Historic Places Notification Form

The State Historic Preservation Office is federally required to notify the property owner(s), as well as the chief elected officials of the county and municipal political jurisdiction in which the property is located. Please make sure the information is current. This form must be completed before the nomination is reviewed by staff.

Historic Name & Address of Property Being Nominated:

On Leong Merchants Association
2216 S. Wentworth Avenue
Chicago, IL 60616

Name & Address of Property Owner. If there are more than two, please attach an additional page:

Pui Tak Center
Attn: David Wu
2216 S. Wentworth Avenue
Chicago, IL 60616

Name & Address of Chief Elected Official of Municipality:

Mayor Brandon Johnson
c/o Chicago Department of Planning and Development, Historic Preservation Division
121 N. LaSalle Street, Room 1000
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Name & Address of County Board Chair Person:

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle
Cook County Building
118 N. Clark Street, Room 537
Chicago, Illinois 60602