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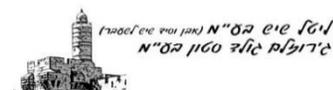
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Sigfried Giedion - Historiography and History of Reception on a Global Stage

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Abstract

Among the historians of the modern movement, Sigfried Giedion (1888-1968) was the most internationally active. His textbook, *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941), shaped the Avantgarde like no other. Giedion stood out from his contemporaries by framing the story of the early Chicago high-rise under the headline *The Chicago School*. He suggested that this modern development first reconciled art and engineering.

As a consequence of reconsidering Giedion's work on *the Chicago School*, the main contribution of my present paper is to expand on scholarly bibliographies by identifying hitherto neglected mentions of *the Chicago school*. In particular, Giedion followed an internationally oriented textbook that was published in New York between 1900 and 1907. Furthermore, Giedion's belief that Chicago thinking was a *via media* between two extremes, finds continuing confirmation in another source that attracted his attention, the philosopher William James who wrote an essay, *The Chicago School*, in 1904.

1 Introduction

In architectural history, *the Chicago school* is a recurrent term that attracted abundant attention from many authors. The Hathi Trust (the digital library of the major North American universities) counts over hundred thousand books that contain the phrase «Chicago school».¹ The biggest part of these essays, articles, monographs and city-guides focus on architecture, and the texts date from the second part of the 20th century. A general fascination with early Chicago high-rise can be observed, and this interest can be traced back to Sigfried Giedion. The Swiss historian lectured at Harvard in 1939. He published first results right away in a newly founded magazine named *Focus*. The same year, he also presented his findings at a symposium held at New York University. Finally, in 1941, Giedion his results in his opus magnum *Space, Time and Architecture*.

¹ The Hathi Trust digital collection has been gathered from a widespread network of North American university libraries. 1% of the records contains the phrase "Chicago School". The precise numbers as of May 5. 2015 are 12.7 Mio. books, 103,606 for Chicago School, and 61,747 for Chicago School and Sullivan. Source: www.hathitrust.org



Years before Sigfried Giedion entered the scene, European architects and historians already wrote on the early Chicago high-rise. Bruno Taut and Nikolaus Pevsner published their work in the U.K., however, they did not discuss the phrase *the Chicago school*. Then again, in the U.S., there was a recognized group of architects who called themselves *the Chicago School*. They were skilled, but built little high-rise. In 1893, the earliest date the grout might have come into existence, the construction-boom in Chicago was over.

Very soon, in July 1939, the National Council of Registration Boards officially mailed Sigfried Giedion to reprimand him. The letter listed the names of the living members of *the Chicago School*. Giedion's diverging definition of the term was called a "monumental error."¹ Nevertheless, the Swiss historian felt enough self-confident to go his path, and despite the critique, the references offered by his book are sparse and obscure.

Many historians observed the lack of proper sources, but all the scholarly work is based on bibliographies which shared the early view of the National Council of Registration Boards. The authors assumed that Thomas E. Tallmadge (1876-1940) first coined the term in 1908.² Tallmadge had many followers, including the historians Fiske Kimball, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Hugh Morrison, Mark Peisch and H. Allen Brooks. The latter three were professor and students. However, none of their texts can be seen as the proper context for Giedion's account of *the Chicago school*, because his definition of the term is in diametral opposition to Tallmadge.

Some scholarly work credited Lewis Mumford to have included early high-rise in the discussion of *the Chicago school*. In *The Brown Decades* (1931), Mumford used the term *the Chicago school* two times. As a reference, he quoted a great journalist and critic, Montgomery Schulyer, but that author used the phrase *Chicago idea* rather than school. My continuing research deals with Mumford, however, he will not be part of this current research paper. Detailed results of the research on Mumford will be described elsewhere.

2 Methods — Expanding the Bibliography, Validating the Results

Given that Giedion broke with his peers and re-defined the term *the Chicago school*, there is a need to equally stand out from the canon of scholarly bibliographies in order to find sources that better match with Giedion's work. The international importance of *Space, Time and Architecture*

¹ GTA Archive, 43-K-1939.07-06. Letter from the National Council of Registration Boards to Sigfried Giedion.

² David Van Zanten, "The Ambition and Reach of Chicago Progressive Architecture," in: David Van Zanten, Ashley Elizabeth Dunn, Leslie Coburn, *Chicago Architecture on the International Stage 1900-1925*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013.

Robert Bruegmann, "The Myth of the Chicago School," in: *Chicago Architecture Histories, Revisions, Alternatives*, edited by Charles Waldheim and Katerina Ruedi Ray. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005, 15-29.



as well as the assumption that a great historian could potentially have based his work on interesting material, motivated my belief that it might be insightful to find those sources.

Expanding the existent scholarly bibliography has to start with generating a big picture and effectively identifying relevant publications. A number of distinct entities are named *the Chicago school*. Even in the 19th century, the phrase has been printed countless times in American publications.¹ However, much of the material is out of context. There are texts on public schools, articles on the Chicago School of Art (1876), on the Chicago School of Elocution (1887), as well as other similar records.

In my research, I used methods from the Digital Humanities to get an overview over the vast material. As a first step, I resorted to an approach that was implemented by Harvard researchers in 2010.² I plotted *n-grams* to see how the frequencies of occurrence for the phrase «the Chicago school», «the Chicago School of Architecture», «the Chicago School of Sociology» etc. changed over time.

Second, based on a series of well known algorithms, I developed a tool to simulate a reader's associative memory.³ The implementation can be described as follows: For each record 1) recognize and extract the Named Entities, 2) build a directed graph in reading direction, with weighted edges to reflect occurrences of succession, 3) set node weights by running Power Iteration with Restart to the beginnings of the paragraphs, 4) remove nodes that fall under a preset threshold. This tool was run on a corpus of 300 manually de-duplicated records that contained the phrase «the Chicago school». The collection was gathered from the four most relevant digital libraries: the Hathi Trust, the Gutenberg project, JStor and the Avery Index. The works are non copyrighted, and they mostly date before 1920. I first focused on the pair of terms «the Chicago school» — «Sullivan». I also included Sullivan's most prominent buildings: the Auditorium Theater, the Schiller / Garrick Theater, the Gage Building, the Fisher Building etc.

My idea was to simulate a reader that was assiduous enough to read everything, but he would dismiss the majority of the names judging them unimportant. The output of the algorithm was only a few items. In fact, there was only one book that I didn't know: A.D.F. Hamlin's *Text-book of the History of Architecture*. The book was neither a first, nor a last edition. It dated before 1908, and it identified the Chicago school with early commercial high-rise. At this point, the output was small enough for me to further process the results manually.

¹ Source for the data: google books

² Jean-Baptiste Michel, Yuan Kui Shen, Aviva Presser Aiden, Adrian Veres, Matthew K. Gray, The Google Books Team, Joseph P. Pickett, Dale Hoiberg, Dan Clancy, Peter Norvig, Jon Orwant, Steven Pinker, Martin A. Nowak, and Erez Lieberman Aiden. "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books. *Science* 331 (2011) [online 12/16/2010].

³ Based on my pseudocode, the computer code was written by Petter Castro, Swagatam Guhathakurta, Arnab Mukhopadhyay as part of the data mining course of Irina Matveeva at.



The following step was a systematic critic research at several archives including the Archives of the Art Institute of Chicago (Tallmadge papers), the Avery Archives (Hamlin papers) and the GTA Archives (Giedion papers). This research was targeted at understanding the context around A. D. F. Hamlin's text-book and Giedion's works, as well as their relationship. At the archive, I also searched for other sources, and this revealed William James' essay *The Chicago School* (1904).

3 Results — New Insights on the Chicago School of Architecture

The technical objective of this current paper is to revise and expand scholarly bibliographies in order to better understand the Chicago school and Giedion's contribution. I make the results readable as a revised history, mostly preserving a chronologic order. Giedion's reading of the term *the Chicago school* owes very much to older ideas about the evolution of modern American architecture out of the French Fine Arts education. The reconciliation of art and engineering is therefore a frequent topic. This is of particular interest because, Giedion was an author surrounded by Avantgarde artists. I therefore emphasize the relationship between art and engineering throughout the presentation of my results.

3.1 Henry Van Brunt: the New School

Henry Van Brunt (1832-1903) was an American architect active on the East Coast as well as in the Mid West. He also was an architectural critic and translated Eugène Viollet Le Duc's *Discourses on Architecture*. In the context of this current article it is relevant that Van Brunt observed the emergence of *a new school*; the term was essentially congruent to *the Chicago school* as later defined by Hamlin and Giedion.

Architecture in the West (1889),¹ is the first major essay that presents Van Brunt's position. The commercial buildings in the city of Chicago are the central point of attention.² Van Brunt criticized both, the vernacular structures of the West, as well as the conservatism of the east. However, he suggested that the Chicago architects unconsciously blended Western construction methods with the Eastern style that stood in the tradition of the French Fine Arts school.³ The architect called the result bold, ingenuous, successful and felicitous.⁴

¹ Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture in the West," *The Atlantic Monthly. A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, and Polititcs*. LXIV, (1889).

² Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture in the West," *The Atlantic Monthly*, LXIV, 778.

³ Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture in the West," *The Atlantic Monthly. A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, and Polititcs*. LXIV, (1889), 776-777.

⁴Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture in the West," *The Atlantic Monthly*, LXIV, 782.



Van Brunt was aware that he was writing about a trend, and therefore, no single architect represented this mass phenomenon perfectly. The architects and buildings worth mentioning were too numerous, and the critic wrote that he feared serious omissions.¹ He nevertheless went on giving some examples. In first line, he named several tall buildings by Burnham and Root. Next, Van Brunt lauded the theaters built by Adler and Sullivan. A special mention went to the Auditorium building, which was a great piece of engineering and acoustics. Theaters were very popular in Chicago, and the shapes of the halls differ greatly from models that were perpetuated in Europe. There are other examples too, most of them being high-rise of their days, executed in a freely interpreted romanesque style. Van Brunt claimed that the “school [...] may be recognized in history as the proper exponent of this marvelous [American] civilization.”² 50 years later, Giedion suggested the same about the Chicago school.

In 1892, Henry Van Brunt wrote on the World’s Columbian Exposition. As a contributing architect, he also received the task to review the major buildings of the fair. The articles are useful as an update for Van Brunt’s older essay. He expressed his belief that the *new school*, as he called it, was emerging within the cities, and not as part of the world’s fair.³ This point of view also became part of Giedion’s argument.

3.2 A.D.F. Hamlin: the Chicago School

Henry Van Brunt’s partner, William Robert Ware(1832-1915), left the practice to establish the architecture school at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, it was the first architectural education in the United States). A. D. F. Hamlin (1855-1926) was one of his students.⁴ Later, when Ware established the architecture school at Columbia College in New York, he employed Hamlin as a design instructor and subsequently as a professor.⁵ Hamlin admired Ware, and he was also the person to write his obituary, from which it also emerges that he knew Van Brunt: “Most of Professor Ware’s work as a designer, in partnership with the late Henry Van Brunt, was done between 1865 and 1880, before the modern movement in American architecture was fully under way.”

Born in Turkey to an influential American family, Hamlin became one of the the most recognized American historians. His architectural style was a new romanesque similar to the one employed by Ware and Van Brunt, but Hamlin’s most prominent work at Columbia was

¹ Henry Van Brunt, “Architecture in the West,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, LXIV, 783-784.

² Henry Van Brunt, “Architecture in the West,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, LXIV, 776-777.

³ Henry Van Brunt, “Architecture at the World’s Columbian Exposition — III.” *The Century. Illustrated Monthly Magazine* XLIV (May-October 1892), 86-88.

⁴ Hamlin studied at MIT the year of 1876-1877

⁵ 1883, special assistant position. 1889, professor position.



the first comprehensive architectural history written in the United States. *A Text-book of the History of Architecture* filled more than 400 pages. The book was printed countless times, but between 1900 and 1907, five of the textbook's prints include a paragraph that deals with *the Chicago school*. The text anticipates Giedion's view.

In 1896, when A.D.F. Hamlin first published his textbook, he devoted one chapter to American architecture, which in turn contained a section *Commercial Buildings*. In concise sentences, the critic mentioned the most important elements of this type of construction: fireproofing, the need of light, the use of elevators, the rising property prizes and consequently, the quest of height, as well as the frames out of steel or iron. To illustrate his idea, Hamlin used a picture of the contemporary Times building, a merely 13 stories Romanesque design. However, in the accompanying text, he mentioned buildings of 20 stories, and he gave three examples from Chicago, namely the Auditorium, the Schiller and the Transportation Building, all of which were designed by Adler and Sullivan.¹ The historian did not want to mention living architects by their names. Even in the case of Adler and Sullivan, to stick to his rule, he wrote "a Chicago firm of architects," and he added a footnote explaining that the names of living architects had purposely been omitted. The solution was obviously unappealing. In March 1900 Dankmar Adler died untimely, and in October the same year, when the text-book was reprinted in a revised form, Hamlin wrote out Adler's name. As for Louis Sullivan, he found another solution; he wrote "the Chicago school."²

The Chicago school of commercial high-rise was marked by a design that Hamlin called utilitarian, unconventional, extremely bold and effective. "The metallic framework [was] suggested by slender piers rising uninterrupted from the basement to the top of the building," the historian wrote to describe the designs. The Fisher building by Adler and Sullivan is a roughly 20 story high-rise that displayed these characteristics. Five further buildings by Adler and Sullivan served as additional examples. The strong presence of Sullivan's hand led Hamlin not to advertise for the Chicago school as a style that organically evolved over historic time. The word choice *school* offered room for artistic individualism.³

In 1908 Hamlin prepared a new edition, in which he started referring to living architects by their actual names. He abandoned both Adler and the Chicago school and candidly used "L. H. Sullivan" instead. Whether the detail of dropping the Chicago school also was a reaction to

¹ Hamlin, Alfred Dwight Foster, *A Text-book of the History of Architecture*, 1986.

² Hamlin, Alfred Dwight Foster, *A Text-book of the History of Architecture*, editions of 1900 -1907, 397-398.

³ Giedion too mourned that contemporary styles did not evolve the same way they had done in the past: "There have been periods in the past like the Renaissance, when owing to their own vitality they were able to assimilate the forms of the past, and from them evolve a new creative architecture." (Sigfried Giedion, "The danger and Advantages of Luxury" *Focus* 3, 1939, 36.)



Tallmadge's article earlier that year must still be identified. However, a clear trend after 1908, Chicago lost importance for Hamlin. The text grew dense with high-rise from New York. The New Times Building, and later the Woolworth Building served as images, while Chicago high-rise became less prominent.

The similarity between Hamlin's and Giedion's texts is symptomatic. Both authors wrote major textbooks that printed every second year. They spelled "the Chicago school" the same way, with Capital C and lowercase s. The focus lied on engineering, daylight, elevator, as well as high property prizes. The interest in tall structures was predominant, as much as the view that the Chicago school marked by utilitarian forms, while still allowing for a certain amount of individualism when it came to the artistic side of the buildings. Moreover, both authors believed that Chicago was leading in the early days. Besides these more obvious features, both authors wrote about anonymous architecture, an interest that was already present in Van Brunt's essays. Another common point of view, Hamlin associated the Chicago school with flat surface ornament, and similarly, Giedion had a strong interest in plane surfaces. In terms of format and content, the two stories of the Chicago school could not be more similar.

3.3 Jenney, Burnham, Tallmadge, Sullivan: the Chicago School of Architecture

Even before Hamlin used the term the Chicago school referring to contemporary architecture in the Mid West, technically *the Chicago School of Architecture* was the first program in Architecture offered in Chicago. It was an alliance spanning over two universities, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Armour Institute of Technology. The latter had been included to strengthen the faculty in mathematics and engineering. Consequently the Chicago School of Architecture had two locations: downtown on Michigan Avenue, and in the Romanesque building erected by Armour in Bronzeville.

Between 1893 and 1939, the major Chicago architects went in and out at the Chicago School of Architecture. William Le Baron Jenney (1832-1907) taught the first year for free. Daniel Burnham (1846-1912) was in the committee of architects among others. Thomas Tallmadge taught there too. And in 1915, Sullivan himself found his name in the committee of architects. Moreover, a student design of a temple was explained in the yearbook by using the architect's dictum "Form Follows Function."

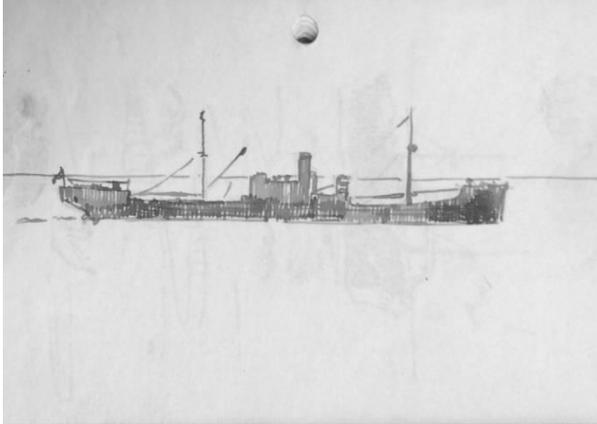


Illustration: Thomas E. Tallmadge and A. D. F. Hamlin, sketches from the notebooks on their trips to Europe. Image sources: Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago, Avery Library.

3.4 Thomas E. Tallmadge's contribution

Compared to the MIT, the architecture school at Columbia University initially had a more pragmatic approach, with more focus on construction materials and less French influence. This educational line was installed by Ware and Hamlin. A similar teaching style was present at *the Chicago School of Architecture*. Tallmadge's design classes for example indicate a strong focus on materials. A close look at book *the Story of Architecture in America*, written by Tallmadge in 1927, reveals even deeper connections. The first and foremost person credited in this publication is A. D. F. Hamlin, "a teacher and torch bearer to thousands of students throughout the land."¹ Hamlin's *History of Architecture* is the only textbook mentioned to contain information about American architecture, and Hamlin is also the first author named for his contributions is architectural journals in the United States. This strong credit indicates a great admiration. Tallmadge seems to have followed on Hamlin's footsteps: he first worked as an architect, he was then employed as design instructor, then he went on a trip to Europe, guided by Hamlin's textbook. The print most likely included the paragraph on the Chicago school of commercial buildings. When he returned to Chicago, he wrote his seminal article *the Chicago School*, and he became a lecturer in architectural history.

Both, Hamlin and Tallmadge admired Louis Sullivan. But by 1908, Sullivan had increasingly separated himself from his peers. Hamlin observed that Sullivan became a figure too isolated

¹ Thomas E. Tallmadge, *Architecture in America*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1927, reprinted 1936 p. 2.



to give rise of an architectural style. Tallmadge's contribution was then to reform the Chicago School by setting Sullivan in the center of a group of young followers. Initially, some of the young architects identified themselves with the group, they published their work, and they taught at the *Chicago School of Architecture*. However, as early as 1916, Tallmadge showed resignation that the architectural style of Sullivan's young followers never became American mainstream. The reform was nevertheless persistent: it is this group of architects that was known to National Council of Registration Boards in 1939 when it mailed Giedion.

3.5 Moholy-Nagy and Mies van der Rohe

By 1938, the *Chicago School of Architecture* gradually lost the original pragmatic approach. Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) was called to Chicago and his first task was to revise the curriculum. After one year, he discontinued using the name *The Chicago school of Architecture*, possible reasons involve his lack of a proper function at the Art Institute, hopes to build a campus at Armour, or simply the decay of a long-lasting co-operation.

A Bauhaus colleague of Mies, László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) took a different route. He tried to revive the Bauhaus in Chicago, but failed at the funding. He subsequently renamed the institution *the School of Design in Chicago*, and it was also known as the *Chicago School of Design*. The n-gram indicates that the *Chicago School of Design* was the first of the Chicago Schools to be frequently mentioned in American publications. The School literally went viral immediately after its establishment, but the activity lasted for less than one decade due to frequent name changes, the untimely death of Moholy-Nagy, and finally the institute was merged with the school of Mies van der Rohe to become the current day Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT).

Through exponents such as Moholy-Nagy and Mies van der Rohe, Giedion's story of the Chicago school became a source of inspiration for the Avantgarde.¹ The n-gram further substantiates this thesis: the phrase «the Chicago school» displays the same trend as the word “the Avantgarde” after 1938. A frequent co-occurrence of the two terms can be detected as well.² A detailed reading points into the same direction: in *Space, Time and Architecture* the word Avantgarde appears only once. It is used to write on Mies van der Rohe, who was also seen as the heir of the Chicago school.

3.6 Sigfried Giedion and the Chicago School: the Archival Findings

¹ By the term the Avantgarde I refer to a vanguard movement of European, mostly German and French origin, whose exponents came to the U.S.A. mostly between 1937 and 1941.

² The same phenomenon cannot be observed for the word “vanguard.”



The call to lecture at Harvard University reached Giedion in winter 1937. Soon thereafter, a personal note indicates that Giedion read Thomas Tallmadge's *The Story of Architecture in America*.¹ One might only assume that he read the chapter on Louis Sullivan. The frequent and negative mentions of Le Corbusier might have irritated his Swiss fellow. Nevertheless, in January 1939 Giedion met Tallmadge in Chicago, and the two historians had a lengthy discussion and also started nicknaming each other.² There is no record indicating that the discussion also dealt with the meaning of the phrase *the Chicago school*. However, a lecture held in 1947 makes it clear that Giedion knew Tallmadge's and Morrison's definition of the school. He found that it differed from his own, and he wrote down: "There exists a second Chicago School, a group of a dozen appealing talents that could have done an extraordinary job [...], but they failed due to financial reasons."³ This quote makes it clear, that Giedion could not have relied on Tallmadge or Morrison as a source for his definition of the term *the Chicago school*.

The same personal note from 1938 also indicated: "check Hitchcock."⁴ However Hitchcock learned the definition of *the Chicago School* from Morrison.⁵ He used that definition for instance in a publication of 1939.⁶ Hitchcock's book in a series edited by Nikolaus Pevsner *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, published in 1958 seems to agree with Giedion, however, in a later symposium, Hitchcock made it very clear that he strongly disagreed.⁷ On the other side, archival findings show that Giedion removed initial mentions of Hitchcock's work.⁸ Besides the fact that the definitions of the Chicago school do not match, the records make Hitchcock an unlikely source.

A. D. F. Hamlin is a very probable source from the point of view of the content. This impression is further strengthened by the archival material. It is evident that Giedion knew A. D. F. Hamlin, because he quoted one of his works. Furthermore, Tallmadge's *Story of Architecture in America* might have already made Giedion familiar with the *Text-book of the History of Architecture*. The Harvard University library where Giedion worked, owned two copies of Hamlin's textbook that contained the paragraph on the Chicago school. The archival material lets no doubt that Giedion

¹ GTA Archives, Giedion Papers, Notebook "first half of 1938."

² The calendar indicates a lengthy talk. The notebook remembers the sentence a talking about Romanesque before the World's fair, and Classicism thereafter. The address book contains Tallmadge two times, once as Thomas, and on the subsequent page as "TOM."

³ GTA Archive, 43-T-13-16-1. [Third lecture. May 1947.]

⁴ "Nachsehen wegen Hitchcock."

⁵ Terence Riley, "Portrait of the curator as a young man," in: *Philip Johnson and the Museum of Modern Art*, edited by John Elderfield. New York: MoMA, 1998.

⁶ Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "Rhode Island Architecture," Providence: Rhode Island Museum Press, 1939.

⁷ J. Carson Webster, editor. "The Discussion: Sir John Summerson [moderator], Henry-Russell Hitchcock, H. Allen Brooks [panelists]," *Prairie School Review* 9, 2 (Second Quarter 1972), 23-35.

⁸ GTA Archive, 43-T-13-1-5 [American architecture viewed from Europe. The Chicago School p. 2. Hitchcock removed in the edited version.]



made a conscious decision to write *the Chicago school* with lowercase s, the version used by Hamlin and Mumford, but not chosen by Tallmadge, Morrison, Hitchcock, or the National Council of Registration Boards. A. D. F. Hamlin died in the 1920's, but Charles E. Peterson, a young, and very influential preservationist in the United States put Giedion in contact with Hamlin's son, who similarly taught architectural history at Columbia. The entry in Giedion's address book is written in bold capital letters, with detailed indications how to reach Columbia University by subway. The two men and their wives met soon after Giedion lectured at New York University in spring 1939. They developed an enduring friendship and heartedly commenting on each other's works.¹

In the Giedion papers, the only records that contains explicit information on possible sources for the Chicago school is the correspondence with the Holabird & Root, one of the firms that built early Chicago high-rise. The firm was also one of the exponents of the school of architects mentioned in Van Brunt's essay *Architecture in the West*.² Giedion visited the Holabird & Root on his first trip to Chicago. Soon thereafter, Giedion sent a letter to one of the companies chief architects Frank B. Long.³ This letter, as well as the lecture material make it evident that Long told Giedion about his experience building for the World's Columbian Exposition. In that context, no doubt Long came in contact with Van Brunt. One might only suppose that Long also told Giedion about Van Brunt's *new school*. Giedion finally wrote Long: "I very much enjoyed your personal touch in telling me the history of the Chicago school."

The letter from Giedion to Long, Giedion's notebook, as well as the lecture notes also make clear that, in the context of the Chicago school, the two men lengthily discussed about the great Harvard Professor and philosopher William James (1842-1910). Ideas about William James and John Dewey might have also reached Giedion through Moholy-Nagy his best friend at that time who accompanied him at many places in Chicago.⁴ This interest links Giedion's interpretation of the Chicago school to early psychology at the University of Chicago.

3.7 The Chicago School of Thought: the Via Media

There are many *Chicago Schools* related to a number of departments at the University of Chicago, namely Sociology, Economy, Law and others. One of the important Professors associated with

¹ GTA Archives. Correspondence between Giedion and Hamlin.

² At that time the company was named "Holabird & Roche."

³ GTA Archives, 43-K-1939-1-30(6)1/3. Letter from Sigfried Giedion to Frank B. Long.

⁴ This has very well been addressed by Reto Geiser and by Gregor Harbusch.

Gregor Harbusch, "Work in Text and Images: Sigfried Giedion's Space, Time and Architecture, 1941-1967," *The Journal of Architecture* 4, 20 (November 2015), 596-620. [DOI: 10.1080/13602365.2015.1069371]

Reto Geiser, "Eine Reise durch den Mittleren Westen der USA, 1939," In *Sigfried Giedion und die Fotografie. Bildinszenierungen der Moderne*, edited by Harbusch, Gregor and Werner Oechslin. Zurich: GTA-Verlag, 2010
Another book in Giedion's library *Industrial Education and Industrial Museums* 1935 might have additionally showcased Dewey's importance in industrialization in Chicago.



this type of *Chicago school* is John Dewey (1859-1952). Maybe the earliest mention of a Chicago School in this context, the great psychologist and philosopher William James wrote an essay entitled *the Chicago School* in 1904, in which he proposed that Dewey was the central figure of a school of thought in psychology.

According to James, the merit of the Chicago School was to go a *via media* between transcendentalism and pragmatism. James' essay of 1904 might have been known to Giedion, and it is remarkable that his publication of early 1939 shows an interest in psychology: "This reaction against the functional, this leaning towards the emotional, is quite in accordance with the state of the architecture today. The problem is how to satisfy the feeling."¹ Giedion suggested that specialization was at fault for the loss of a more holistic approach. "In these days of specialization it is exceptional to find a painter who has a grasp of architectural problems, or an architect with a talent for painting."² The role of imagination and expression of emotions is further stressed: "Nothing has been so despised and persecuted by the public during the last hundred years as artistic imagination which tries to find emotional expression for an age which was incomprehensible even to itself. Yet imagination is the most valuable ingredient of architecture."³

Sigfried Giedion often searched for thesis, antithesis and synthesis. If art and engineering were two opposite poles, the Chicago school was the unison between them. William James' suggestion that Chicago thinking was a *via media*, might have been in tune with the historian's observations.

4. Conclusion:

This present paper reconsiders the historiography of *the Chicago school*. Authors such as Henry Van Brunt witnessed the emergence of a *new school* around 1890. Architectural motives from the French Fine Arts school were unconsciously adapted to new needs. A new style was evolving. Between 1900 and 1907, A.D.F. Hamlin, a professor at Columbia University wrote on *the Chicago school* in his comprehensive textbook. By that time Louis Sullivan's hand clearly led the development. In comparison to Van Brunt, Hamlin's Chicago school had to offer slightly more room for individualism. My research suggests that Sigfried Giedion's definition of the phrase *the Chicago school* stays in Van Brunt's and Hamlin's tradition. Moreover, Giedion found interest in the philosopher William James who wrote an essay on the Chicago school 1904. In this context, Giedion's ideas about the reconciliation of art and engineering might have been enriched by an attempt to understand the human mind.

¹ Sigfried Giedion, "The danger and Advantages of Luxury" *Focus* 3 (1939), 36.

² Sigfried Giedion, "The danger and Advantages of Luxury" *Focus* 3 (1939), 37.

³ Sigfried Giedion, "The danger and Advantages of Luxury" *Focus* 3 (1939), 37.



Illustration: Sigfried Giedion, "Chicago Reliance Building," lecture-slide. GTA Archives, Zurich, lecture slides box IV.