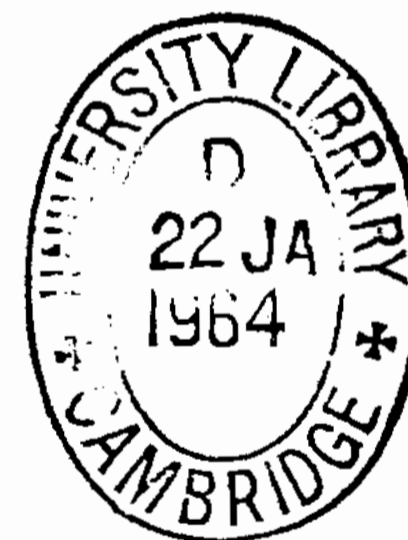


# Chicago the Pagan

A mind guide to Chicago's soul—its hurried leisure, sensuous pleasures, polygenous architecture, streets of adventure, sights of rarity, and its denizens questing after life

by Weimar Port



1953  
JUDY PUBLISHING COMPANY  
CHICAGO

## A MANUSCRIPT READER'S SNEAK PREVIEW

It is perhaps true of any big city, but particularly true of Chicago that no two people see it in the same light.

The farmer sees it as a market for his produce, the architect as a field for his ingenuity and talent, the real estate agent as an ever-growing field for exploitation, the banker and financier as a place to make money, the young doctor as a place to build his practice and the politician considers its possibilities for his own particular brand of exploitation.

The artist, the thief and the bum each have still different views. One could go on indefinitely naming the widely differing views of the many types and classes of people who make up this composite that is Chicago.

If you were born in sunny California or the easygoing South, you may at first despise Chicago's noise, bustle and dirt—the very bigness of it all, but live in Chicago for a year, and it “gets” you. The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker—all are agreed on this point. Yet ask any one of them just why and you are not likely to get a definite answer. Maybe it is the many and varied opportunities that it offers; maybe it is the people, who represent a cross-section not only the nation but of the entire world.

No one seems to know why, but everyone seems to love Chicago.

Mr. Port's conception of Chicago as a woman with a pagan soul is only one man's idea but a rather interesting one. She bids you welcome with a come-hither look and irresistible friendliness. Tho' you may hate or despise her at first, live in Chicago for a year and its aura will hold your heart captive. You can't get away from it—you won't even try. Let anyone criticize Chicago and you will resent it no matter whether or not you feel it is logical criticism.

It is a mid-western city with mid-western vigor and good nature with neither the slow motion of the south, the inhibitions of the east nor the glamour of the far west—but definitely lovable.—A note written by MARION HARDING after reading the manuscript on its way to the printer.

COPYRIGHT, 1953  
JUDY PUBLISHING COMPANY

THIS IS THE FIRST EDITION  
PRICE THREE DOLLARS

Purchase it at any bookstore preferably or order direct from the publisher. Printed in the United States of America. All rights domestic and foreign reserved. Excerpts to a reasonable extent can be made but with full credit to author and publisher.

'64.9221

*Typesetting by Clarke-McElroy*  
*Presswork by Clarke-McElroy*  
*Illustrations by Marion Chapin and the author*

TO  
JAMES J. LEY

FELLOW WANDERER IN AND ABOUT  
CHICAGO MANY YEARS AGO WITH  
MEMORIES OF

Roger Sullivan campaigning for the U. S. Senate, Boston baked beans and brown bread at Pixley & Ehlers, loafing in the court room while Clarence Darrow addressed a jury, sitting beside Boise Penrose on the platform as Hughes was nominated for president

## CHAPTER 58

**CHICAGO'S FORGOTTEN FIRE**

Fame is fickle; and a footnote on history's page often is a matter of happenstance. Two men rode thru the nite to warn the New England colonists that the British were coming, but we remember Paul Revere only. So, the 1871 fire in Chicago made world-history.

Three years later the Chicago fire of 1874 repeated much of 1871, tho mostly on the near southside.

On July 14, 1874, a frame building near Clark and Van Buren Street (449 South Clark Street) was on fire, and about ten hours later, by midnite, it had done more damage than the 1871 fire in a similar period.

This FORGOTTEN FIRE destroyed almost every structure from Van Buren Street south to 12th Street (Roosevelt Road) and from Clark Street east to Wabash Avenue—60 acres, 812 buildings.

This 812 included 709 stores, and buildings, 89 barns, 8 churches, 4 hotels, 1 schoolhouse, 1 postoffice.

Thirty-one four-story brick buildings were in the lot. Well, here are the balance—126 one-story, 471 two-story, 21 three-story, 1 four-story—all frame or wood. Fourteen one-story, 99 two-story, 41 three-story, 31 four-story, 5 five-story—all brick, 3 two-story stone.

*This fire, destroying almost a thousand buildings in the heart of a city within ten hours, should have been world news; but we doubt that one out of one hundred citizens of Chicago today even knows of the 1874 fire.*

The city was so intent upon rebuilding from the 1871 disaster and perhaps so fire-conscious, that the second disaster registered little.

Two unequalled fires in extent within four years gives Chicago the title of Fire City also.

## CHAPTER 59

**BAHA'I TEMPLE**

If you are interested in any one of these subjects—architecture, religion, beauty, you must see one of Chicago's prime prizes for the eye and mind.

Journey north on the Outer Drive. As you leave Evanston and come into Wilmette near the Lake, your sight is drawn with fascination to a building which can rival the Taj Mahal in India for splendid and mystic beauty.

This is the BAHA'I TEMPLE (note spelling).

The pleasing dome is said to be the sixth largest in the world in diameter.

Apart from the bases of the belief of the Bahaists, this center of sightseeing drama has its entire surface covered with symbolism in lace-like pattern. But these mystic lines are not carved in marble; the millions of dollars needed for marble were not necessary as a new process of casting concrete was used, a process learned of while the building was in construction. Terra cotta was not permanent enuf; concrete solved a perplexity for the builder of the structure.

But to give the eerie lumination, sand was not in the mixing; crushed white quartz was used.

The eye now delites to rove back and forth over a cream-colored, smooth-surfaced area. White marble is not dense, wears away, and weather is its enemy. The Baha'i Temple has sought permanence befitting its universal creed thru the manner outlined.

For unusual outline, for circular silhouet against the sky, for intricate ornamentation, and perhaps for an unusual religious creed—take time to see the Baha'i Temple by Wilmette Harbor, a thing of beauty, of eye rest, of mental pleasure, all in contrast to the puffing traffic which skims by its side every hour of the day and far thru the nite.



Our thanks to the Chicago Tribune columnist (and his employers) Charles Collins for permission to reprint Chicagoan items. Clara Edmunds-Hemingway in *The Line O'Type or Two* writes of that unusual, beautiful structure on Sheridan Road just north of Chicago as one drives into Wilmette, the Baha'i Temple, as impressive as a solitary haystack on a well-kept lawn, as follows, under the caption *Temple by the Lake*:

*Baha'i Temple, domed from gray to white,  
Is tipped with folded wings, all angel-wise,  
Symbolic of the peace of prayer that lies  
In sanctuaries, be it day or night.  
How intricately lovely to our sight,  
Few things more exquisite beneath the skies—  
A symphony to rest one's weary eyes  
Or fill a heavy heart with quick delight.*

*Nonagonal, its delicate design,  
With infinite detail of wonder, shows  
Devotion from a people at a shrine.  
Whatever one's belief, religion grows  
When great harmonic beauty looms divine;  
Then blessing from God's heaven overflows.*

## CHAPTER 60

## LOST ARCHITECTURAL BEAUTY

A sad result of close building in cities is to shadowize good architecture, and all the little departures made in walls, windows, doors, gables and roofs.

As an aside—we hope that we have discerned correctly a tendency to get away from the almost insane objective to build into crowded areas, to erect homes and business structures tight against each other or with party walls. Cities should spread out; concentration brings high rents, poorly lighted and ventilated quarters, crowded traffic, delays, and above all, a new danger—that from bombings.

*Cities should be suburbs completely, should be small towns enlarged, should be areas of green plats, wide boulevards, not too high buildings, and above all, spaces for leisurely shopping, promenading, loafing and sightseeing.*

But back to our subject, which is hidden beauty of architecture.

Hundreds of residences in Chicago—or any other crowded city, if placed on a green knoll in the countryside, would draw ahs and ohs from passersby—chateaus, castles, palaces, dreams of architecture! But most of them in the city are seldom noticed for their beauty; pushed as they are near to some other structure, their sides and rear utterly lost to view of the spectator, they languish in slow oblivion.

We are meandering greatly but at last we have arrived at 1600 north, North Avenue, misleadingly named as are a hundred other streets in Chicago. The founding fathers have sinned greatly against us in their naming of streets. Western Avenue runs north and south. We have East South Water Street, West South Water Street, etc., etc.

North Avenue is a main traffic street from the lake west to a score of livable, suburban towns. It was a favorite settling point around the 1890's for German-originated citizens. The Bavarian flare for cupolas, roof ornaments, and numerous gewgaws can be seen in the facades of the buildings. The shapes are varied—garden vegetables such as beets and broccoli, animal suggestions in lions, unicorns, goats, horses, etc., etc.

*In fact, there are many localities in Chicago where this late nineteenth century flare for ribbons and flowers in the hair is evident.*

Some of the efforts are excellent. Near our office building, in the 33rd and Michigan area, one comes upon building entrances adorned with designs, which if on some much touted European building, would be hailed as fruits of genius. We recall two lion heads, one on each side of the entrance to a building now a dirty, foul-smelling tenement, which appear to us to be excellent pieces of sculpture.

*The extreme trend today to right angles, straight lines, flat sides, and matchbox silhouets is useful, of lower cost, but surely not of greater beauty. The straight line never can hope to be as appealing as the circle.*