

# DECOLONIZING THE CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER

SETTLER COLONIAL CITY PROJECT  
2019 CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE BIENNIAL





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The Settler Colonial City Project is a research collective focused on the collaborative production of knowledge about cities on Turtle Island/North America as spaces of ongoing settler colonialism, Indigenous survival and resistance, and struggles for decolonization.

At the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial, the Settler Colonial City Project worked in partnership with the American Indian Center of Chicago. This publication is one of the results of this partnership. The following people and organizations were part of the Settler Colonial City Project in Chicago:

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Cover: Drawing of Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago Tribune, June 23, 1886.

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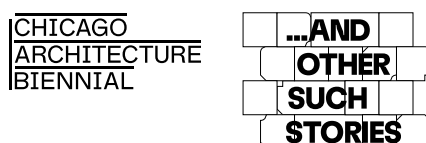
This publication was published by the Settler Colonial City Project in 2019 on the traditional territories of the Council of the Three Fires—the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi. We recognize Indigenous sovereignty, the ongoing effects of colonization and colonial state violence, and the global struggle for the self-determination of Indigenous communities.

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Commissioned by the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial  
...and other such stories, curated by Yesomi Umolu, Sepake Angiama, and Paulo Tavares



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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*In recent years it has become a trend to acknowledge the traditional homelands of the Indigenous peoples of a particular area through a land acknowledgement. This type of activity is designed to bring more awareness and understanding of the history of Indigenous peoples and their territories. But a land acknowledgment should also be more than that; it should be a call to rethink one's own relationship with the environment and the histories of all peoples. The American Indian Center has crafted the following land acknowledgement to help all rethink their relationships with the city, the land and the environment.*

Chicago is the traditional homelands of the Council of the Three Fires: The Odawa, Ojibwe and Potawatomi Nations. Many other Tribes like the Miami, Ho-Chunk, Sac and Fox also called this area home. Located at the intersection of several great waterways, the land naturally became a site of travel and healing for many Tribes. American Indians continue to call this area home and now Chicago is home to the third largest Urban American Indian community that still practices their heritage, traditions and care for the land and waterways. Today, Chicago continues to be a place that calls many people from diverse backgrounds to live and gather here. Despite the many changes the city has experienced, both our American Indian and Architecture communities see the importance of the land and this place that has always been a city home to many diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

American Indian Center of Chicago

# **PREFACE: THE SETTLER COLONIAL CITY PROJECT**

The Settler Colonial City Project is a research collective focused on the collaborative production of knowledge about cities on Turtle Island/North America as spaces of ongoing settler colonialism, Indigenous survival and resistance, and struggles for decolonization.

The concept of “settler colonialism” has recently emerged as a name for a distinctive form of colonialism that develops in places where settlers permanently reside and assert sovereignty. While the settler colonial dimensions of American cities have been centered in contemporary urban activism, these dimensions have been, at best, only tentatively explored in contemporary architectural and urban studies. Investigating the settler colonial history and contemporaneity of cities on Turtle Island/North America (and similar examples beyond), we aim to foreground Indigenous knowledge of and politics around land, life, and collective futures, as well as settler colonialism as an unmarked structure for the distribution of land, quality of life, and imagination of those futures.

Chicago has been inhabited and sustained by Indigenous peoples for millennia and into the present, when it has the third-largest population of urbanized Native Americans in the United States, and so it is a paradigmatic site for our work. At the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial we are collaborating with the American Indian Center, the first urban-based Native community center in the U.S., to carry out a program of interrelated public projects that document, engage, and interpret Chicago’s conjoined Indigenous and settler colonial histories. This publication is one of these projects.

# INTRODUCTION: DECOLONIZING THE CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER

The Chicago Cultural Center has been justly celebrated as a “people’s palace”: “it was made for everyone and welcomes everyone,” wrote renowned Chicago journalist M. W. Newman.<sup>1</sup> This claim, echoed many times by many others, testifies to the Center’s enduring status as a public monument accessible to all. Given this status, the decision to locate the Chicago Architecture Biennial in the Chicago Cultural Center is entirely logical.

This building for the people of Chicago, however, was only made possible by the extraction of land, labor, and resources from other people, near and far, in colonialist contexts. If the Chicago Cultural Center is a palace for Chicago’s people, then it is also an archive of the exploitation of colonized people whose land, labor, and resources yielded this palace’s constituent parts. According to *The People’s Palace: The Story of the Chicago Cultural Center*, the building is “a celebration of the arts, education, Chicago, and the world.”<sup>2</sup> Attention to the building as an archive of colonialism suggests that it is also an inadvertent yet vivid memorial to colonial extraction, dispossession, and violence.

To focus attention on colonialism as the key condition of possibility for the creation of the Chicago

Cultural Center is not at all to diminish the building’s beauty and grandeur or call into question its importance in Chicago’s urban history. Rather, it is to compliment and complicate this history by revealing the ways in which even this renowned achievement of U.S. culture is related to colonial exploitation and violence that this culture has ignored, forgotten or disavowed. In this context, the history of the Chicago Cultural Center offers a unique perspective on the enmeshment of late 19th-century U.S. culture in U.S. settler colonialism and Indigenous dispossession.

And yet, to inaugurate an effort to decolonize the Chicago Cultural Center is not only to attend to the building’s past and its relationship to colonialism, both in the United States and across the globe; this effort also can open up consideration of futures in which colonial pasts are remembered, addressed, and redressed. Decolonization is not a metaphor: this profound claim, made by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, also leads us towards an imagination of the Chicago Cultural Center as hosting new publics in new spaces in a new future, each defined by an awareness of Chicago’s colonial antecedents.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. W. Newman, “Introduction,” in Nancy Seeger, *The People’s Palace: The Story of the Chicago Cultural Center* (Chicago: Chicago Cultural Center, 1999), unpagged.

<sup>2</sup> Seeger, *The People’s Palace: The Story of the Chicago Cultural Center*, unpagged.

<sup>3</sup> Eve Tuck (Aleut) and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor” *Decolonization Indigeneity Education Society* 1(1), 2012: 1-40.



**THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN  
PLACED ON THE  
ODAWA, OJIBWE,  
AND POTAWATOMI  
HOMELANDS  
BY THE SETTLER COLONIALISM  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Settler Colonial City Project, Sign proposed for  
Chicago Cultural Center, 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial,  
and installed at the American Indian Center of Chicago.

## SITE: LAND INTO PROPERTY

The Chicago Cultural Center—like the city of Chicago, like every other city in the United States, and like the United States itself—occupies land that European and U.S. settlers seized from Indigenous people. The Great Lakes region was for millennia traversed, occupied, and sustained by Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi people who allied themselves in the “Three Fires Confederacy.” As Potawatomi historian John Low writes, many different origin stories account for the presence of these people around the Great Lakes: they may have migrated south from what is now known as Canada; they may have migrated west from what is now known as the Atlantic coast; they may have descended from the people now known as Mound Builders; they may have been lowered through a hole in the sky at what is now known as the mouth of the Grand River at Lake Michigan; or they may have come to occupy their homelands otherwise. According to Low, these people came to occupy “an intertribal space that would have been routinely traveled to obtain resources, engage in social interaction, and trade”; in the language of the Potawatomi, this space was called Eschiigwa or Chicagou, meaning “place of wild onions” or “skunk.”<sup>4</sup>

As it expanded westward, the United States gradually seized this space through multiple battles and treaties, both with former colonial occupiers such as France and Spain and increasingly displaced and dispossessed Indigenous people.<sup>5</sup> This westward expansion was consolidated by the linkage of the Great Lakes to the Atlantic coast, first by waterway through the expansion of the Erie Canal (completed 1825), and then by rail through the growing transcontinental railroad

(completed 1869)—an infrastructural network that transformed the U.S. Midwest into an extractive landscape of grain, lumber, and meat. Cattle and pork, livestock non-Indigenous to the now-called American continent, came to replace the bison nation, which had cohabitated with, sustained, and been sustained by Indigenous people for millennia, before colonialism created the binary distinction between humans and non-humans.<sup>6</sup> The city of Chicago was the connection between the extractive landscape created by colonization and the markets on the Atlantic coast and beyond where the products of this landscape were sold.<sup>7</sup>

Amidst a series of treaties between the United States government and Native Americans, and the coercion, deception, and violence that accompanied those treaties, the 1833 Treaty of Chicago with Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi people was taken by the United States government as a surrender of Native American claims to Chicago and its surroundings; the city of Chicago was incorporated four years later. But at the end of the 19th century, when the building we now know as the Chicago Cultural Center was designed, constructed, and opened, the Pokagon Potawatomi laid claim to a part of Chicago that did not exist when the 1833 Treaty of Chicago was signed—this was the land east of Michigan Avenue created by landfill in the 1890s in the wake of the Chicago Fire. Sitting on Michigan Avenue, the building is therefore located on a frontier between ceded and unceded Indigenous land—a frontier that was and is denied and invisibilized by the beneficiaries of settler colonialism but asserted and visualized by the Indigenous people who colonialism displaced and dispossessed.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> John N. Low, *Imprints: The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and the City of Chicago* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2016), 11-12, 69.

<sup>5</sup> Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert King, “Where the Buffalo No Longer Roamed,” in <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/where-the-buffalo-no-longer-roamed-3067904/> (accessed 11 July 2019).

<sup>7</sup> William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

Chicago's post-fire landfills were the result of the need to dispose of vast quantities of rubble left by the fire's destruction. In the 1890s, this process yielded the creation of Lincoln, Grant, and Jackson Parks. The Pokagon band of the Potawatomi, who managed to remain in the Midwest unlike other displaced Potawatomi, made claims to this land because it did not exist in 1833 and so could not be ceded by the treaties they signed. As John Low writes, "from the Potawatomi perspective, there was no difference between the dry place now known as Chicago and the wet place now known as Lake Michigan"—both land and water were part of Potawatomi territory and suffused with Potawatomi presence.<sup>9</sup> In contrast with the capitalist understanding of land as a network of properties, the Potawatomi understood the landscape as a continuous whole and they mobilized this understanding to reclaim part of that landscape.

Eventually, in 1914, the Pokagon Potawatomi filed a lawsuit in the Federal District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. The case made its way to the United States Supreme Court in 1917. In its decision, the Supreme Court held that the Potawatomi claim to land was premised on its occupancy of that land, an occupancy that ended when they "abandoned" that land in the wake of the arrival of settlers; the court therefore decided the Potawatomi claim was without merit. In forcing the Supreme Court into an absurd argument—that land that did not exist could somehow be abandoned—the Pokagon Potawatomi revealed the imbrication of United States law in settler colonialism and the distance of each from an ethical relationship to land.

<sup>8</sup>See Low, *Imprints*, 67-94.

<sup>9</sup>Low, *Imprints*, 78.

## PROGRAM: PUBLIC LIBRARY, CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL, AND "INDIAN REMOVAL"

The building now known as the Chicago Cultural Center was originally built to house two distinct programs: one for a public library and the other for a memorial to the Civil War. But these two programs were also one and the same program: both the library and the memorial were structured around the westward advance of the United States empire accomplished by settler colonialism.

The Chicago Public Library that was housed in the current Chicago Cultural Center was opened in the 1890s, at the end of the U.S. government's project of "Indian Removal"—a project that forced Native Americans to give up tribal lands for territory west of the Mississippi River and, in many cases, practically amounted to extermination as Indigenous people were separated by force from the land and resources that they sustained and that sustained them in turn.<sup>10</sup> As Indigenous people "disappeared" into the west, the United States literature that the library was at least partly built to house became increasingly preoccupied with explaining this disappearance; typically, these explanations revolved around the savagery or primitiveness of Indigenous people and their corresponding incapacity to fit into the emerging United States modernity. As Eric Sundquist has written,

*Because Indian tribes seems destined to recede or vanish in the face of advances by white pioneers ... the Indian often became for white writers a nostalgically or ironically charged symbol, capable of representing a variety of ideas: the loss of innocence the progress entails; a mythic*

*age that would give historical scope to an America eager to assert its nationalism; or a primitivistic stage of social organization preferable to an increasingly urban, industrial world. Most of all, perhaps, the Indian could be figured as a noble hero, tragic in defeat but in pride and stoicism also a mask—at times a mirror—for white anxiety over the destruction of Native American tribal life.<sup>11</sup>*

The United States authors whose names are written in mosaic tile on the arch of what was the library's majestic lobby (now the Washington St. lobby) and over the doors leading into the room now known as Yates Hall were each invested in romanticizing and thereby legitimizing the supposed disappearance of Indigenous people through "Indian Removal" and their threatened extinction by colonial violence.<sup>12</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne's fictions made ample use of savage and uncivilized Native characters, as did the poetry of William Cullen Bryant.<sup>13</sup> Henry Wordsworth Longfellow's renowned poem, "The Song of Hiawatha," consolidated the 19th century concept of the Native American as a noble savage who belonged only in the prehistory of the nation.<sup>14</sup> In "The Indian Question," poet and essayist John Greenleaf Whittier argued that the Indian could be "enlightened and civilized, taught to work ... and take delight in the product of his industry" through education at Indian schools. In "Traits of Indian Character," essayist and short story writer Washington Irving described his subject in terms of a primitive nature that "resembled those wild plants, which thrive in the shades of the

<sup>10</sup> For a timeline of United States settler colonialism and a bibliography of this history see NYC Stands with Standing Rock Collective. 2016. "#StandingRockSyllabus." <https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standingrocksyllabus/>, particularly "United States Indian Policy, Sovereignty and Treaty-Making."

<sup>11</sup> Eric J. Sundquist, *Empire and Slavery in American Literature, 1820-1865* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 71.

<sup>12</sup> See Helen Carr, *Inventing the American Primitive: Politics, Gender, and the Representation of Native American Literary Traditions, 1789-1936* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> See Margaret B. Moore, *The Salem World of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (University of Missouri Press, 1998) and Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Savages of America: The Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965).

forest, but shrink from the hand of cultivation, and perish beneath the influence of the sun.”<sup>15</sup> Even philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson’s famous “Letter to Martin Van Buren,” which criticized the U.S. government’s removal of Cherokee people from their territory, praised the Cherokee as able to “redeem their own race from the doom of eternal inferiority” because they could “borrow and domesticate in the tribe the arts and customs of the Caucasian race.”<sup>16</sup>

By transforming Indigenous peoples into the objects of nostalgia, fantasy, and demise, these authors materially contributed to their elision as contemporary active subjects and their exclusion from contemporary political, social, and geographical space.

In the late 1880s, Chicago’s Library Board chose Dearborn Park as a site for the city’s new public library. The Illinois state legislature, however, had reserved part of this park for an organization of veterans of the Civil War. In the compromise that was eventually struck between city and state, the new building to be erected in the park would house both Chicago’s public library and a Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) Memorial Hall, where soldiers who fought for the Union would be remembered and honored. To memorialize the Civil War, however, was also to memorialize the violence against Indigenous people that was initiated by and connected to the Civil War, each part of the westward advance of the United States empire.

As built, the building contains a G.A.R. Rotunda decorated with plaster carvings of iconic military

equipment—swords, shields, helmets, and so on—and a series of memorial rooms in which the names of significant Civil War battles were inscribed. But this memorial for Union soldiers elided their role, along with that of many soldiers of the Confederacy, as shock troops of empire redeployed to the frontier during the era of Reconstruction. As historians Boyd Cothran and Ari Kelman have argued, the post-Civil War project of demilitarization in turn accelerated the conquest and colonization of the West:

*The Civil War emerged out of struggles between the North and South over how best to settle the West—struggles, in short, over who would shape an emerging American empire. Reconstruction in the West then devolved into a series of conflicts with Native Americans. And so, while the Civil War and its aftermath boasted moments of redemption and days of jubilee, the era also featured episodes of subjugation and dispossession, patterns that would repeat themselves in the coming years. When Chief Joseph surrendered, the United States secured its empire in the West. The Indian wars were over, but an era of American imperialism was just beginning.*<sup>17</sup>

The history of a pair of memorial sculptures that originally faced each other in Chicago’s Lincoln Park vividly testifies to the conjunction of Civil War and “Indian Removal.” In 1891, five years after Ulysses S. Grant’s death, a large equestrian memorial to the Civil War hero and United States president was unveiled in

<sup>14</sup> See Theresa Gaul, “Discordant Notes: Longfellow’s Song of Hiawatha, Community, Race, and Performance Politics,” *Journal of American Culture* 27, no. 4 (2004).

<sup>15</sup> See Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., “Washington Irving and the American Indian,” *American Indian Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (May 1979), 138-139.

<sup>16</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Emerson’s Letter to Martin Van Buren,” in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 7th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton

and Co., 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Boyd Cothran and Ari Kelman, “How the Civil War Became the Indian Wars,” in *New York Times* (25 May 2015), <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/05/25/how-the-civil-war-became-the-indian-wars/> (accessed 13 July 2019).<sup>18</sup> “A Signal of Peace,” in *The Official Website of the Chicago Park Service*, <https://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks-facilities/signal-peace> (accessed 11 July 2019).

the park. In 1893, a smaller equestrian memorial depicting “an Indian chief ... holding a staff with a feather on it, symbolizing peaceful intentions” entitled *A Signal of Peace* was exhibited at the World’s Columbian Exhibition.<sup>18</sup> This memorial was authored by sculptor Cyrus Edwin Dallin, who produced it in Paris utilizing an “Indian” from the visiting Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show as a model. Chicago-based Judge Lambert Tree purchased *A Signal of Peace* in 1894 and had it placed in Lincoln Park facing the Grant Memorial. According to Tree, Native Americans had been “oppressed and robbed by government agents, deprived of their lands ... shot down by soldiery in wars fomented for the purpose of plundering and destroying their race, and finally drowned by the ever westward tide of population.”<sup>19</sup> Thus situated, *A Signal of Peace* was turned into a reminder of past atrocities connected to the legacy of Grant.

In the mid-1920s, *A Signal of Peace* was displaced to a site off Lake Shore Drive (between Belmont Avenue and Fullerton Parkway) to allow for the adjacent Lincoln Park Zoo to expand. Then, in the early 1940s, a Chicago-based post of the American Legion petitioned the Chicago Park District to further displace *A Signal of Peace* to the Caldwell Woods in the Cook County Forest Preserves but the Park District Commission denied this petition.<sup>20</sup> Even removed from its temporary confrontation with Grant, the statue was a reminder of violence that U.S. veterans would prefer to forget.

<sup>18</sup> Theodore Karamanski, “Monuments to a Lost Nation,” *Chicago History* 32, no. 3 (Spring 2004).

<sup>19</sup> Karamanski, “Monuments to a Lost Nation.”

<sup>20</sup> “A Signal of Peace,” in *The Official Website of the Chicago Park Service*.



Louis T. Rebisso, *Ulysses S. Grant Memorial*, Lincoln Park, Chicago, 1891.  
Image Source: Robert N. Dennis collection of stereoscopic views, New York Public Library's Digital Library, United States Public Domain, cropped.

Cyrus Edwin Dallin, *A Signal of Peace*, originally placed facing the Grant Memorial in Lincoln Park, Chicago, 1893; displaced to the opposite side of Lincoln Park in the 1920s to accommodate the expansion of the Lincoln Park Zoo. Image Source: Alanscottwalker (29 May 2011), CC BY-SA 3.0, cropped.

## LABOR: EXPLOITATION, RESISTANCE, AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

Late 19th century Chicago, where the Chicago Public Library/G.A.R. Memorial Hall was imagined, constructed, and opened, was the site of vibrant resistance on the part of organized urban labor to the exploitation of laborers in industrial capitalism. Indeed, the planning of the Chicago Public Library/G.A.R. Memorial Hall in the early 1890s was bookended by two renowned events in United States labor history: the Haymarket Strike and Massacre of 1886 and the Pullman Strike and Massacre of 1894, each which took place in Chicago.

For both industrial capitalists and the state, it was useful to approach labor unrest in terms of Indigenous resistance to settler colonial displacement. For capitalists, the figuring of organized labor's resistance to exploitation in terms of the seemingly failed Indigenous resistance to colonialism offered a way to symbolically manage that resistance; according to this figuration, the restive working class would be pacified just like restive Indigenous people had been. For the state that depended on and supported its capitalist beneficiaries, the relationship between organized labor and Indigenous people was even closer; the military forces that had been assigned to pacify or at times annihilate Indigenous people were brought to Chicago to pacify or at times annihilate organized labor.

The history of the memorial commemorating the most famous instance of Indigenous resistance in the history of Chicago—the Battle of Fort Dearborn or so-called “Fort Dearborn Massacre”—powerfully reveals some of the ways in which Native Americans and organized labor became intertwined with one another in late 19th century Chicago. During the War of 1812, Potawatomi, Odawa, and Chippewa warriors

allied with the British attacked Fort Dearborn and, in the course of the battle, around thirty-eight United States soldiers were killed, along with two women and twelve children who were members of families that had taken shelter in the fort. In the 1870s, industrialist George Pullman purchased the site where the battle took place and built a mansion. The surrounding area eventually became home to Chicago's most privileged and wealthy families. After building his mansion, Pullman hired Carl Rohr Smith, a Danish sculptor who was working in Chicago on a project for the Columbian exhibition, to design and produce a memorial to the “Fort Dearborn Massacre.”

Smith based his memorial on a prominent legend—that Potawatomi Chief Black Partridge, in the midst of the battle, was moved by his conscience to save the white wife of an officer from imminent death at the hands of another Indigenous man. As Theodore Karamanski writes,

*The artist obtained his models by visiting Fort Sheridan, the United States Army base established in Chicago's northern suburbs after Haymarket to maintain urban order. At the fort, Rohr Smith encountered survivors of Wounded Knee, whom he described as “Indians of the most untamed sort.” The men who fought what was perhaps the last organized effort against American continental expansion served as the fierce models for the Fort Dearborn Massacre, making the figures an unstated tribute to Native American resistance.<sup>21</sup>*

Only one year after the memorial's dedication, however, Pullman's own employees initiated what became a

<sup>21</sup>Karamanski, “Monuments to a Lost Nation,” 17.



a nationwide strike against the Pullman Company and a boycott of any train that carried a Pullman-made railcar. These actions, which threatened to paralyze business across the nation, were only subdued by military forces deployed in cities across the United States. In Chicago, the U.S. Army's Seventh Cavalry, which had been responsible for killing around 300 Lakota men, women, and children in the Wounded Knee Massacre, was enlisted to manage striking laborers and their allies; in the course of the Seventh Cavalry's deployment, around thirty workers were killed at Pullman's factory.

The construction of the Chicago Public Library/ G.A.R. Memorial was just beginning during the two months of the Pullman Strike and Massacre. Somewhere in the background of the work on the building carried out by laborers, craftsmen, and artisans was the story of Pullman's workers, whether told by those workers or by the managers and business owners who exploited them. And somewhere behind the story of those workers was the story of Indigenous people, whether told by Indigenous people themselves, their white sympathizers, or, most likely, all those who benefitted from their colonization.

# MATERIALS: COLONIAL EXTRACTION AND CIVIC GRANDEUR

The Chicago Public Library/G.A.R. Memorial Hall was built as “an enduring monument ... worthy of a public-spirited city.”<sup>22</sup> Befitting this ambition, the building’s exterior was clad with limestone and granite and its interior fashioned with a variety of luxurious marbles, mahogany doors opening to ornamental mosaics, a grand staircase ascending to “a coffered ceiling with decadent Tiffany chandeliers,” and two glass domes.<sup>23</sup> These materials, and the labor and capital responsible for their use, encompassed geographies that reveal the building’s indebtedness to both national and global processes of colonial extraction.

Colonialism on the American continent, for example, yielded the Bedford Blue Limestone from Indiana that is prominently featured on the buildings exterior walls. While most sources attribute the “discovery” of this limestone to American settlers, terming the material an “American Classic” with a “monumental tradition” unfolding over “nearly 200 years,” limestone was first used by Indigenous people in the Midwest to make tools and ceremonial objects.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the removal of Indigenous people in order to quarry and transport resources such as limestone simultaneously inspired settlers to erase Indigenous history and craft another history of colonial progress—a progress that encompassed such achievements as the quarrying and crafting of limestone.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, global colonialism yielded the mahogany wood used to construct many of the stately

doors in the building. British companies began to export mahogany from colonized lands in the West Indies, Mexico, and Central America in the 1820s.<sup>26</sup> By the late 19th century, when the Chicago Public Library/G.A.R. Memorial Hall was constructed, logging was starting to deplete mahogany stocks and deforest landscapes in the Americas, and mahogany extraction intensified in West Africa and East India, with the wood for the Chicago Cultural Center doors coming from the latter.<sup>27</sup> Logging in all of these sites devastated the plant, animal, and human systems that mahogany and other harvested wood was enmeshed within. Along with the clearing of forests by logging, forest ecosystems were damaged and destroyed by road building, the harvesting of animals for food for loggers, the dispersal of Indigenous communities that had sustained forests, and many other interventions. In short, the mahogany used to build the doors in today’s Chicago Cultural Center came from a space of extractive violence; that violence is therefore intimately connected to the doors’ indisputable beauty.

While it was Indigenous people who were displaced and disciplined in colonial spaces of material extraction, spaces of material extraction in Europe also served to displace and discipline threatening populations. If it was Indigeneity that threatened colonial regimes, then it was political radicalism that threatened the regimes of European nation-states and spaces of extraction in those nation-states functioned to both produce and manage anarchists, revolutionaries, and other radicals. Marble

<sup>22</sup> Seeger, *The People’s Palace: The Story of the Chicago Cultural Center*, unpagged.

<sup>23</sup> Seeger, *The People’s Palace: The Story of the Chicago Cultural Center*, unpagged.

<sup>24</sup> Indiana Limestone Company, “Building the Nation,” <https://www.indianalimestonecompany.com/our-quarries/our-story/building-the-nation/> (accessed 20 July 2019); Office of the State Archaeologist, University of Iowa, “Ground Stone Artifacts,” <https://archaeology.uiowa.edu/ground-stone-artifacts-0> (accessed 20 July 2019).

<sup>25</sup> The displacement of Indigenous people for limestone extraction continues in the United States into the present. In 2019, for example, the Cherokee

Nation and Trail of Tears Association are fighting a proposed limestone quarry that would threaten a section of the Trail of Tears in Arkansas: see Mike Jones, “Quarry Plan Raises Trail of Tears Worry,” *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* (14 January 2019), <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2019/jan/14/quarry-plan-raises-trail-tears-worry/> (accessed 20 July 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Jennifer L. Anderson, *Mahogany: The Cost of Luxury in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Tim Samuelson, personal communication with authors, 15 July 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Tim Samuelson, personal communication with authors, 22 July 2019.

<sup>29</sup> “A Stronghold of Anarchists,” *New York Times* (19 January 1894).

from Carrara, Italy, has been prized for centuries and it can be found in prominent locations on the interior of the Chicago Cultural Center, including the pale white statuary marble of the Washington Street lobby and main staircase, combined with the richly veined panels in the adjoining Preston Bradley Hall.<sup>28</sup> In the late 19th century, when this marble was quarried, Carrara was known as “a stronghold of anarchists”: exploited quarry workers were inspired by anarchist organizers to rise up against the conditions and system responsible for their exploitation.<sup>29</sup>

The Italian state fiercely put down these efforts, leading many Carrara marble workers, along with marble workers from Connemara, Ireland, to emigrate to the United States, where they found work at marble and granite quarries in Vermont. The city of Barre, Vermont, thereby became an epicenter of both the granite industry and the U.S. anarchist movement.<sup>30</sup> Marble from Vermont adorns the walls of the Chicago Cultural Center’s Randolph Street entrance.<sup>31</sup> With an understanding of how these materials were extracted, their presence in the building traces the conjoined exploitation and organization of labor in the ongoing settler colonialism of American history.

<sup>30</sup> “Granite, Slate and Marble,” in *Vermont History Explorer*, <https://vermonthistory.org/explorer/vermont-az/vermont-gh/206-graniteslatemarbleaz> (accessed 11 July 2019).

<sup>31</sup> “The Randolph Street entrance features an entry lobby with horizontally veined white marble from Vermont, and rooms beyond combining veined white marble from Carrara, Italy with pinkish-gray marble from Knoxville, Tennessee. On the exterior, the walls are largely composed of solid blocks of limestone from quarries near Bedford, Indiana, but the low street-level base and broad entry stairs are of durable granite from Maine.” Tim Samuelson, personal communication with authors, 22 July 2019.

# DECORATION: TIFFANY & CO. AND THE “WILD WEST”

The Chicago Public Library/G.A.R. Memorial Hall was decorated by Tiffany & Co., a world-renowned American jewelry company whose work at the building became one of its most renowned architectural achievements. Tiffany designed and crafted the building's extensive mosaics and marble inlays, as well as the dome in today's Preston Bradley Hall; constructed from over 30,000 pieces of Favrite glass, this dome was and remains the largest Tiffany-built dome in the world.

Part of the eminence that Tiffany & Co. was endowed with in the second half of the 19th century came from its investments in the mythical imagery of the “noble savage” and the “wild west frontier.”<sup>32</sup> Before, during, and after supplying the Union Army with imported rifles, cutlasses, and cartridge boxes during the Civil War, Tiffany & Co. produced ceremonial swords awarded to officers for service in the Civil, Mexican-American, and “Indian Removal”; firearms displaying such “exotic” scenes as an American “buffalo-hunting expedition”; and decorated Smith and Wesson handguns and Winchester rifles, the latter marketed as “The Gun that Won the West.”<sup>33</sup> Beginning with the Great Exhibition in London's Crystal Palace in 1851, objects such as these were displayed in American exhibitions at a

series of World's Fairs.<sup>34</sup> After the Civil War, when the concept of the “noble savage” emerged to legitimize the displacement and annihilation of Native Americans, Tiffany & Co. began to create objects that married supposedly Indigenous iconography with white bourgeois taste: a project that historians have affirmed as “a subtle integration of native American themes” into the company's work.<sup>35</sup>

In the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, for example, Tiffany & Co. created a series of pieces that were “inspired” by Zuni and Navajo pottery, Sitka and Hupa basketwork, and Sioux war shields.<sup>36</sup> The designers of Tiffany & Co. partly relied on depictions of Indigenous artifacts like these by white artists like George Caitlin. Beginning in 1837, however, the company also sent expeditions to the west to purchase artifacts from Indigenous peoples.<sup>37</sup> And so, just as Native Americans were being displaced by the gold and silver mining that yielded the raw material for Tiffany & Co.'s luxurious products, Native knowledge, culture, and lifeways were being appropriated and exploited by that same company's designers.<sup>38</sup> Rewarded by settler colonialism, Tiffany & Co. in turn rendered settler colonialism “beautiful.”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For a Chicago-based discussion of “noble savage” and “frontier” imagery, see Judith A. Barter, *Window on the West: Chicago and the Art of the New Frontier* (Chicago: Hudson Hills, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> Claire Phillips, “Introduction,” in *Bejewelled by Tiffany, 1837–1987*, ed. Claire Phillips (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 12.

<sup>34</sup> Jake Wallis Simons, “Lethal Beauty in the Wild West: Tiffany & Co's Rare Bejeweled Show Guns” *CNN Style* (20 June 2015), <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/tiffany-bejeweld-guns/index.html> (accessed 11 July 2019).

<sup>35</sup> Phillips, “Introduction,” in *Bejewelled by Tiffany, 1837–1987*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Katherine Purcell, “Tiffany and Paris 1850–1910,” in *Bejewelled by Tiffany, 1837–1987*, 36–39.

<sup>37</sup> Simons, “Lethal Beauty in the Wild West: Tiffany & Co's Rare Bejeweled Show Guns,” *CNN Style*.

<sup>38</sup> On Tiffany & Co.'s use of gold and silver from the United States, see Phillips, “Introduction,” in *Bejewelled by Tiffany, 1837–1987*, 18; on the displacement of Native Americans by silver mining, see Robert L. Spude, “A Land of Sunshine and Silver: Silver Mining in Central Arizona 1871–1885,” *The Journal of Arizona History* 16, no. 1 (January 4, 1975).

<sup>39</sup> Tiffany & Co.'s beautification of settler colonialism is also vividly on display in Chicago at the Marquette Building. Designed and fabricated by Tiffany & Co. concurrently with their work at the Chicago Public Library/G.A.R. Memorial Hall, the mosaics in the interior of the Marquette Building depict imaginary scenes of French explorers Marquette and Joliet peacefully meeting with Indigenous people: see Corning Museum of Glass, “American Indians in Tiffany's Marquette Mural,” 20 November 2017, <https://blog.cmog.org/2017/11/20/american-indians-in-tiffanys-marquette-mural/> (accessed 21 July 2019).



Settler Colonial City Project, Sign on windows of Yates Hall, Chicago Cultural Center, 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial. These windows look out across Michigan Avenue to land reclaimed from Lake Michigan beginning in the 1890s. Because this land did not exist in 1833, when the Potawatomi signed the second Treaty of Chicago ceding the remaining parts of their homeland to the United States government, the Potawatomi have pointed out since the early years of the 20th century that this land is unceded.

## BETWEEN OCCUPIED AND UNCEDDED INDIGENOUS LAND

The Chicago Cultural Center is built on occupied land. This land consists of both territory ceded through treaties that the U.S. government coerced Indigenous people to sign and unceded territory created by landfill after those coerced treaties were signed. The building stands at the edge of ceded land, its east windows looking onto unceded land east of Michigan Avenue and south of the Chicago River.

The Chicago Cultural Center is built of colonized materials. Its mahogany doors and Bedford Blue limestone walls were sourced from Indigenous lands and therefore products of settler colonialism's global processes of land displacement and resource extraction.

The Chicago Cultural Center is built by exploited labor. Its marble panels—from Carrara, Italy, Barre, Vermont, and elsewhere—bring together the struggles of organized labor in the U.S. and abroad. Its celebration of Civil War military force highlights the fact that this same force was used to suppress both Indigenous people and organized labor.

The Chicago Cultural Center participates in narratives that romanticize the “noble savage” and naturalize the “disappearance” of Indigenous people by uplifting some of the most prominent sources of these narratives: the U.S. authors celebrated in the lobby of the former public library and the imaginary of the “Wild West” produced by Tiffany & Co.

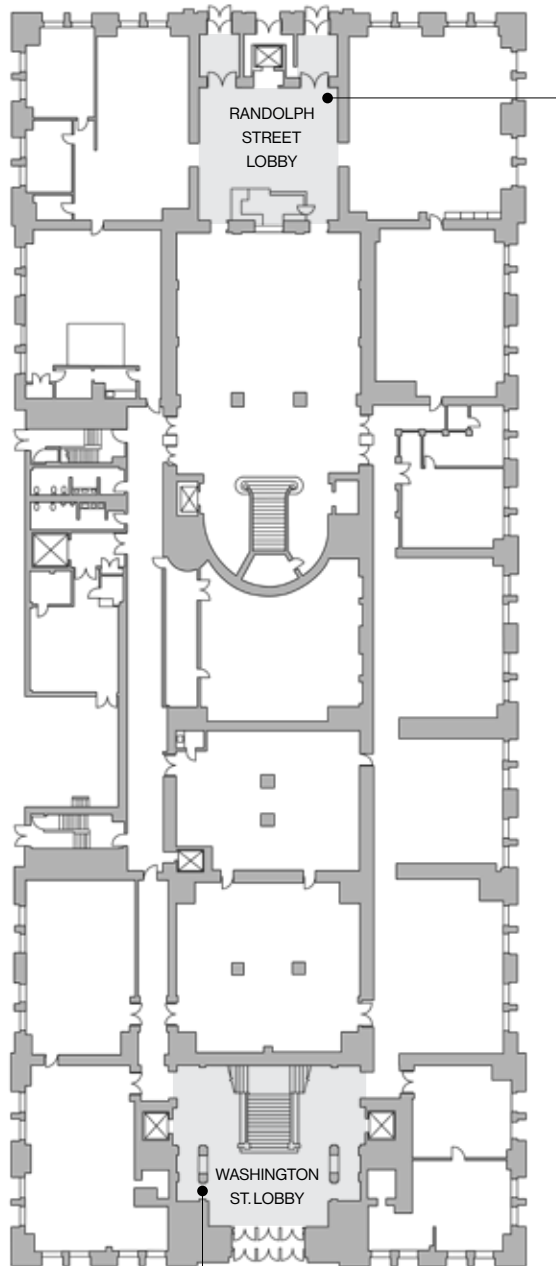
Featured prominently in Chicago's City Seal placed on the floor of the Washington Street lobby, an Indigenous man looks towards the arrival of a European sailing ship, while the city's Latin motto below proclaims “Urbs in Horto,” a “City in a garden.” A sheaf of wheat reminds us that the primary role of this garden is the production of commercial goods. An infant lying on a shell alludes to the city as the pearl of the lakes, conflating wealth and value.

The process of transforming this inhabited landscape into a cleared garden ready for capital extraction is absent from this vignette. However, we can also read the space on the City Seal between the building's sole Indigenous presence and the ship that approaches as a reminder of the threshold on which the Chicago Cultural Center stands—a threshold between what is unceded by Indigenous people and what is occupied by settler colonialism. The task of decolonizing the Cultural Center starts with revealing and making visible these histories of violence and erasure, but it doesn't end there. It opens to the presence of Chicagou *within* Chicago: to the many communities of Indigenous people whose life and labor co-creates the city's past, present, and futures. The sole Indigenous figure on the City Seal can be more than a relic from the past; he can also can be re-read as an augur of the just and sustainable futures that can be produced through decolonization.



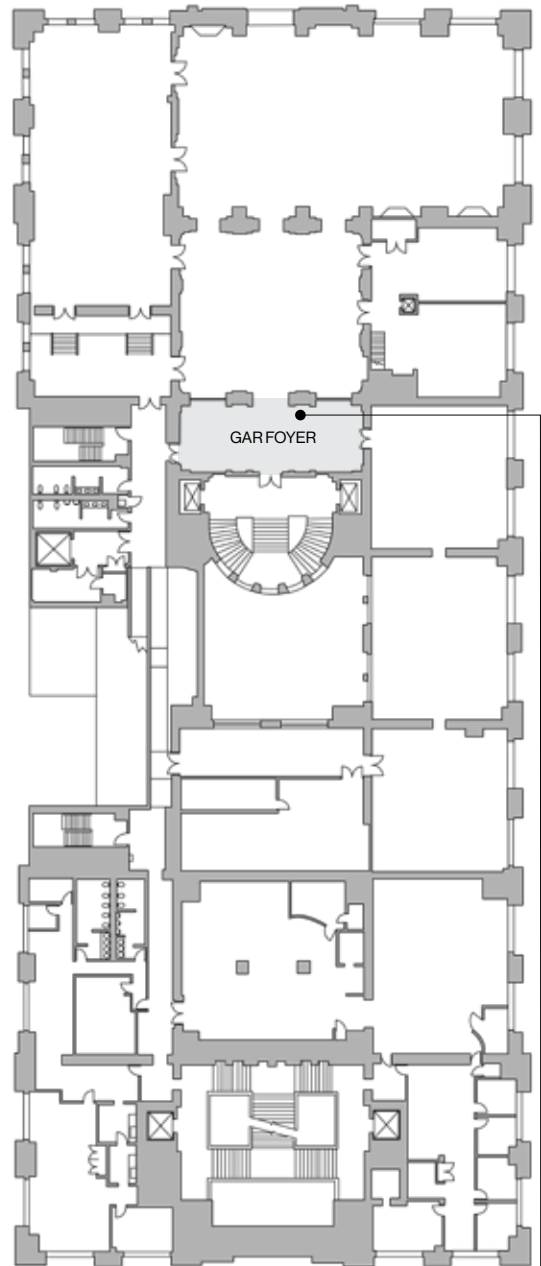
Chicago City Seal. This seal, designed in 1837 when Chicago was incorporated, represents settler colonialism as peacefully replacing an Indigenous world. Misrepresenting the violent history in which Indigenous land became a space of colonial settlement and extraction, the seal participates in both the legitimization of settler colonialism and its ongoing advancement.

# THE SETTLER COLONIAL CITY PROJECT AT



**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**

CHICAGO'S CITY SEAL LEGITIMIZES  
SETTLER COLONIALISM  
THIS MARBLE WAS QUARRIED AND  
ASSEMBLED BY EXPLOITED LABOR

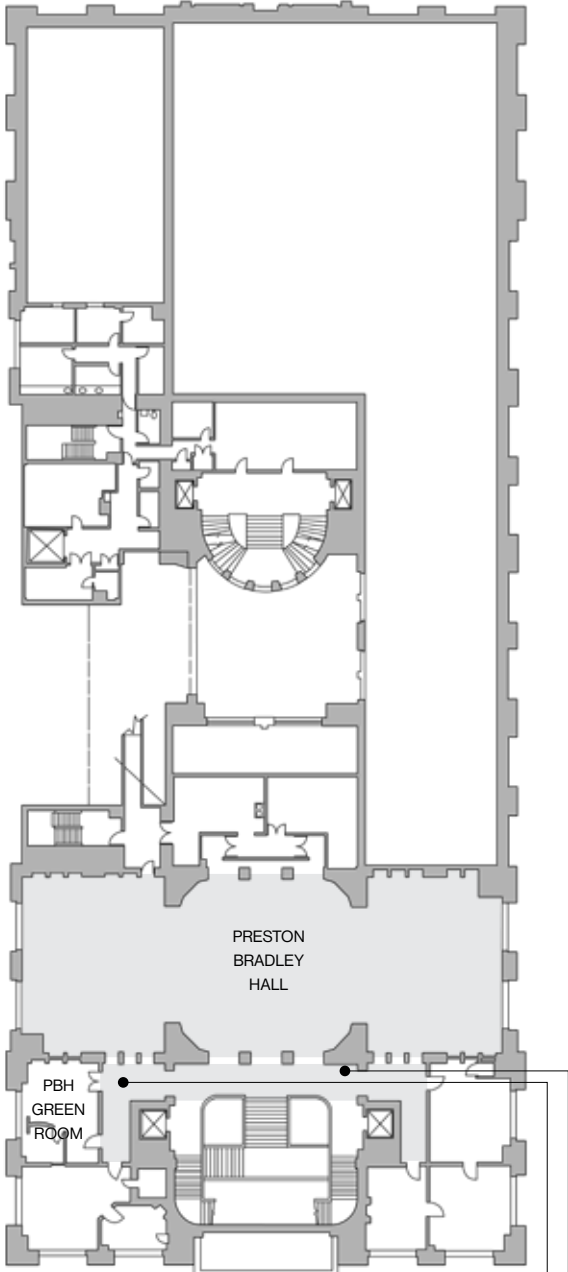


**SECOND FLOOR PLAN**

THE CIVIL WAR WAS ALSO  
A SETTLER COLONIAL WAR

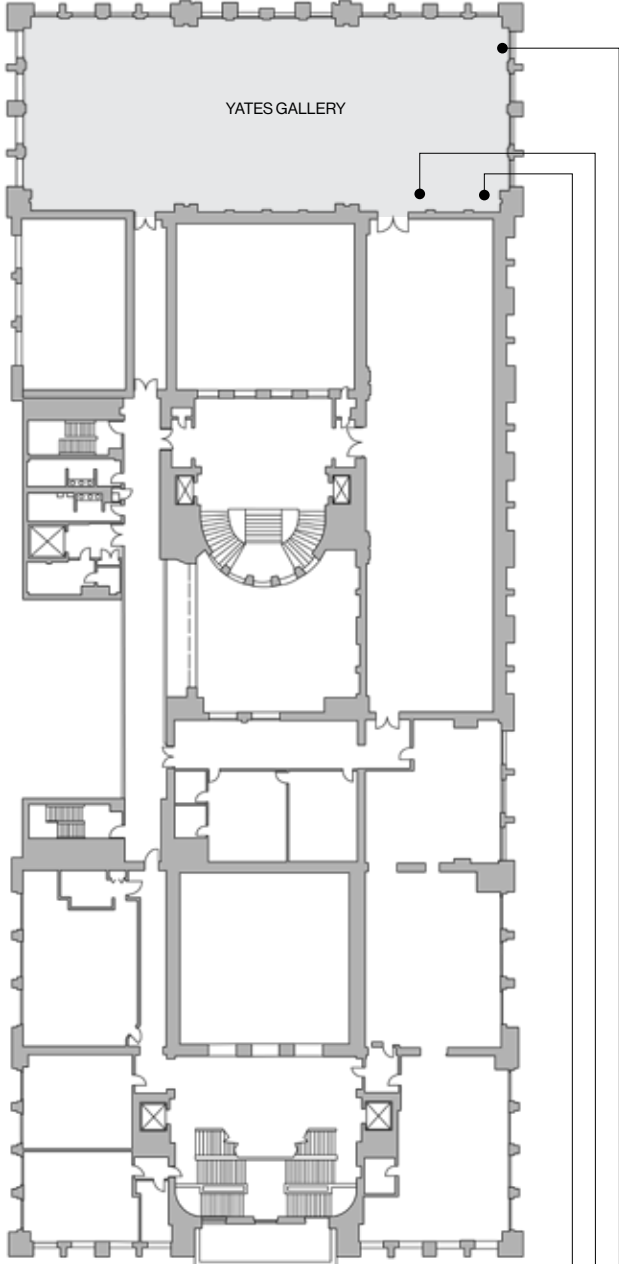


# THE 2019 CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE BIENNIAL



**THIRD FLOOR PLAN**

THIS MAHOGANY WAS EXTRACTED FROM INDIGENOUS LAND  
TIFFANY & CO. RENDERED SETTLER COLONIALISM "BEAUTIFUL"



**FOURTH FLOOR PLAN**

THIS IS ODAWA, OJIBWE, AND POTAWATOMI LAND.  
19<sup>TH</sup> C. LITERATURE IN THE UNITED STATES LEGITIMIZED "INDIAN REMOVAL"  
YOU ARE LOOKING AT UNCEDED LAND







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