

## **Louis Sullivan** **1856 - 1924**

**An American architect, called the “father of modernism,” mentor to Frank Lloyd Wright. Built many cutting edge buildings and early skyscrapers in the 1880/1890’s. During the Columbian Exposition (1893) public opinion turned towards the more traditional neoclassical style, which Sullivan claimed “set the course of American architecture back by two decades.”**

**1856** – born in Boston to Irish/Swiss immigrants.  
**1872** – begins architectural schooling at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at the age of 16.

**1873** – moves to Philadelphia briefly and is hired by architect Frank Furness; in November arrives in Chicago, becomes a student of William Le Baron Jenney’s (considered the father of the modern skyscraper).

**1874** – leaves for Paris to study further at the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

**1879** – meets Dankmar Adler and forms partnership which lasts 14 years.

**1880** – returns to Chicago; Grand Opera House, Chicago.

**1883** – Third McVickers Theater, Chicago

**1884** – Zion Temple

**1887** – Martin Ryerson Tomb, Graceland Cemetery

**1888** – Frank Lloyd Wright joins the Adler/Sullivan firm.

**1889** – Auditorium Building

**1890** – Pueblo Opera House, Pueblo, CO; Carrie Eliza Getty Tomb, Graceland Cemetery, Chicago; one of 10 U.S. architects chosen to design a major structure for the “White City,” the World’s Columbian Exposition.

**1891** – Wainwright Building in St. Louis; Schiller Building (later Garrick Theater), Chicago; Pilgrim Baptists Church, Chicago

**1893** – World’s Columbian Exposition is held in Chicago (Transportation Building) and is a huge disappointment for Sullivan; rift with Wright, who had been moonlighting houses under his own name while still working for Adler & Sullivan.

**1894** – Chicago Stock Exchange Building

**1895** – Guaranty Building (now Prudential) in Buffalo, NY; partnership with Adler ends.

**1898** – Bayard Building in New York City

**1899** – Carson Pirie Scott Store @ State & Madison

**1908** – National Farmer’s Bank in Owatonna, MN

**1910** – Standard Club, Chicago

**1911** – People’s Savings Bank, Cedar Rapids, IA

**1913** – Henry Adams Building, Algona, IA

**1914** – Merchants Bank in Grinnell, IA; Home Building Association Bank, Newark, OH; Purdue State Bank, W. Lafayette, IN

**1918** – Thrift Building, Sidney, OH

**1919** – Farmers & Merchants Bank, Columbus, WI

??? - reconciles with Wright.

**1924** – dies alone, penniless, alcoholic; Wright helps raise funds to pay for funeral.

### Books & Articles by Louis Sullivan

*The Autobiography of an Idea*, 1924

*Kindergarten Chats and Other Writings*, 1902

*Louis Sullivan, The Public Papers*, 1988

*The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered* (1896)

### Books about the Person

*Louis Sullivan – Prophet of Modern Architecture*, Hugh Morrison

*Louis Sullivan – His Life and Work*, Robert Twombly

### Notable Sources

[www.geocities.com/soho/1469/sullivan](http://www.geocities.com/soho/1469/sullivan)

[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

[www.artic.edu/libraries/rbarchives/sullivan/index](http://www.artic.edu/libraries/rbarchives/sullivan/index)

### Field Trips

Auditorium Building - Currently in Roosevelt College

Carson Pirie Scott Store, State & Madison  
Graceland Cemetery: Martin Ryerson Tomb, Carrie Eliza Getty Tomb

Chicago Stock Exchange Building (the trading room from Stock Exchange was removed intact prior to the buildings demolition and was subsequently restored in the Art Institute).

Zion Temple  
Standard Club

### Personal Essays/REMEMBER

\* Sullivan was deeply disappointed in the World's Columbian Exposition and in the resulting style of architecture it brought into popularity. Describe a time you have been very disappointed by something or someone.

\* Write about a time you created/built something you were really proud of.

\* What was the first skyscraper you ever went to the top of? How old were you? What did you see, how did it make you feel?

When Sullivan arrived in Chicago in 1873, the city was experiencing a building boom following the great Chicago Fire. Have you ever been involved in helping to rebuild something - a community project, an old house, planting a garden,

### Reports/DISCOVER

What is the process an architect goes through to complete a building? The steps?

### Opinions/DECIDE

\* How would you interpret "form follows function," Sullivan's architecture axiom?

\* What "new" skyscraper do you think Sullivan would have approved of in Chicago? Disapproved of? (name some buildings)

\* Provide an overview of American architects Thomas Jefferson, Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan. Compare and contrast their architectural styles.

### Historical Fiction/IMAGINE

\* Write an imaginary dialog of the falling out between Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright.

\* Pretend you are Sullivan and trying to convince another architect, following the World's Columbian Exposition, why the neo-classical style is so lacking.

Sullivan played a critical role in establishing Chicago as a hotbed of innovative American architecture. Over the course of two decades he designed some of the city's most recognized and influential buildings, yet he died poor and alone. What do you think happened?