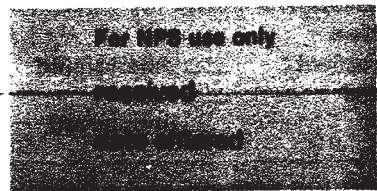


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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Columbia Club

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 121 Monument Circle N/A not for publication

city, town Indianapolis N/A vicinity of congressional district

state Indiana code 018 county Marion code 097

3. Classification

Table with 4 columns: Category, Ownership, Status, Present Use. Includes checkboxes for building type, ownership status, and various uses like agriculture, museum, etc.

4. Owner of Property

name Columbia Club, Inc.

street & number 121 Monument Circle

city, town Indianapolis N/A vicinity of state Indiana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City County Building

street & number 200 East Washington Street

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Regional Center Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date Summer 1980 federal state county X local

depository for survey records Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission, 1821 City-County Bldg.

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana 46204

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Site

The Columbia Club is prominently sited on the northeast quadrant of the Circle, which defines the center of Indianapolis and the heart of the downtown area. To its immediate west is Christ Church Cathedral, a small, stone church modeled on the rural parish churches of the Early English Gothic period. It is the oldest surviving structure on the Circle (1857) and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The parish house, which directly abuts the west wall of the Columbia Club, dates to 1898-1900. To the Club's immediate east is the 12-story American Fletcher Building, a glass, curtain-walled office building designed by Skidmore, Owens, and Merrill dating to 1958. At the time of the Club's construction, its neighbor to the east was the Indianapolis Water Company office, a remodelled, two-story, brick Italianate residence. Directly across the brick-paved Circle from the Club building is the 1890s Soliders' and Sailors' Monument, the centerpiece of the city and a civic amenity exhibiting some of the finest public sculpture in the state. To the north and across the alley (East Wabash Street) stood the Hume-Mansur Building, an 11-story office building constructed in 1911 and demolished in 1980. The site is now cleared, awaiting construction of a proposed high-rise structure.

General

The Columbia Club is a 10-story building of reinforced concrete frame, floors, and flat roof with foot-thick brick curtain walls. Institutional in nature, the clubhouse presents the appearance of an office building, in large measure owing to its urban site and its height. The exterior of the main facade, of oolitic Indiana limestone of dressed-face ashlar, is relieved and enriched by sculptural detailing inspired by the transitional period of late Gothic/early Renaissance architecture. (See Item 8C.) The dominant compositional element of the main facade is its oriel window, which spans the three central bays of the five-bay-wide front and extends from the third through the eighth floors. This feature sets up the three-part organizational theme that is followed in all 10 stories of the main elevation.

Main Elevation

The right-hand entrance to the Columbia Club is the only element to break the exacting symmetry of the facade. The portal is defined by a pointed arch, the most readily identifiable stylistic feature of Gothic inspiration. A revolving door (not original) is set into the span of the arch below impost level, which is somewhat obscured by the fabric canopy that in recent years has extended from the door across the sidewalk to the curb. Compound moldings of the archivolt are highlighted by regularly spaced blocks carved in an identical leaf pattern. The contrasting marble field of the tympanum is executed in low-relief sculpture. Two small shields with fleur-de-lis and bird flank a large, central cartouche on a draped background. Symbols of the Columbia Club that are carved into the tympanum include the entwining, double C's and the ancient cap that has come to represent liberty. Raised banner posts define the spandrels of the arch, which contain sculpted quatrefoil medallions. Two original copper light fixtures hang from brackets at either side of the entrance.

The same type of crossed banner posts as surround the door frame the three windows of the west first-floor bay and the sculpted panel above the windows. This panel depicts a supposed scene of pioneer Indiana, with Indian tepees and a stockaded fort in the background of the forest primeval. The triple windows each contain a stained glass inset of an S-curve within a circle.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
			<input type="checkbox"/> science
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sculpture
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
			<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
			<input type="checkbox"/> theater
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1924-25

Builder/Architect Rubush and Hunter

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

Introduction

The Columbia Club possesses considerable significance in the history of politics, social clubs, architecture, and art in Indianapolis and Indiana. As the social headquarters of the Republican Party of Indiana and as the club of leading figures in Indianapolis' business and civic affairs since 1889, the Club and its three clubhouses have hosted many notable visitors to the city and important political and social events. The present clubhouse's elegant late Gothic/early Renaissance design by Indianapolis architects Rubush and Hunter adds a refined architectural presence to Monument Circle, carefully calculated to pay deference to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. Artistically, the present Columbia Club building presents fine examples of the work of Indianapolis sculptors Alexander Sangernebo and Joseph Willenborg and decorator Henry Richard Behrens.

A. Political Significance

Closely identified with the Republican Party of both Indianapolis and Indiana for over 90 years, the Columbia Club occupies a position of importance in Indiana political history that few other organizations can claim.

The Club's ties to the "Grand Old Party" (G.O.P.) extend back to the club's beginnings in 1888. In August of that year, leading local Republicans organized a marching society of about 150 young men to boost the candidacy of General Benjamin Harrison for the U.S. presidency and to conduct visiting delegations and dignitaries from Union Station to the general's North Delaware Street home.¹ After Harrison was elected, his marching society decided to organize as a permanent organization, the Columbia Club. The Club adopted articles of incorporation in February, 1889. In 1892 the Club members were instrumental in securing the renomination of President Harrison and worked indefatigably for his re-election. Though Harrison lost the 1892 election, the Columbia Club rapidly became recognized as the principal Republican club of the city. The leading G.O.P. officeholders of the day joined the Club and gave it leadership, including ex-President Harrison, future Vice-President Charles W. Fairbanks, U.S. Senator Albert J. Beveridge, and former U.S. Attorney General W.H.H. Miller. The Columbia Club became a frequent stopping point for national figures in the Republican Party. G.O.P. presidents William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and William Howard Taft all visited the Club during the first two decades of its existence.²

About 1900, the Columbia Club membership decided to adopt a new set of "tenets of faith" to broaden its appeal to a regional and even national constituency. Besides promoting "absolute loyalty to the government of the United States" and pledging to seek "honesty, efficiency, and economy" in government, the Club tenets included a pledge of complete allegiance to the Republican Party.³ Although the Columbia Club efforts to gain a national scope of membership met with only modest success, a 1916 campaign for new members canvassed the entire State of Indiana. From that year, the Club assumed the status of a statewide organization, as well as a leading club of Indianapolis.⁴ Despite occasional efforts to abandon the Club's requirement for membership in the Republican Party, the

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Indianapolis West

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	6	5	7	2	1	8	0	4	4	0	2	2	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

74 3/12 feet on the Circle x 131.40 feet rear, Lot 12, Square 45

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N.A. code county code

state N.A. code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Ellen Gadski, Architectural Historian; James A. Glass, Historian

organization Indianapolis Historic Preservation Comms. date August 1982

street & number 1821 City-County Building telephone (317) 236-4406

city or town Indianapolis state Indiana 46204

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 12-22-82

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

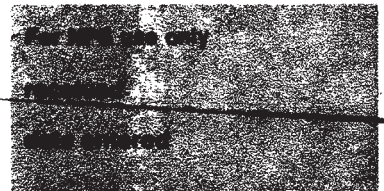
date

Chief of Registration

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EX. 12/31/84



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The center three bays of the first floor are composed of a grouping of seven identical rectangular windows. Each window is divided vertically by a central mullion and horizontally by two cross rails at the top and bottom. Originally these windows were double-leaf casements, painted a light color. The glass is divided by lead comes into rectangular and trapezoidal panes, forming a pattern typical of early French Renaissance buildings. Directly above these windows and at mezzanine height are square windows capped by a curving stone hood molding from which rises a wave pattern sculpted in high relief. At the center of each of these windows is a shield set into an octagonal enframing, executed in multicolored stained glass. Paired, second-floor casement windows of the end bays are accentuated by the lower moldings of the belt course between the second and third floors. These moldings break to simulate "labels" typical to the windows of late Gothic/early Renaissance buildings.

The Oriel

The six-story oriel is supported by a corbelled base that rises from the top line of the mezzanine windows. The corbel is intricately sculpted in a grapevine pattern. At the level of the belt course between second and third stories, the oriel displays a banding of 14 plain shields set into recessed quatrefoils. The diagonal projection of the end windows of the oriel is distinguished by a wide, continuous stone strip that extends upward through the six stories. The oriel's first- and second-level fenestration (corresponding on the interior with the main dining room) is similar to that of the first story: the casement windows exhibit the same type of leaded divisions. The second level of these windows sports multicolored central shields, as do the small, semielliptically arched windows above with sculpted surrounds. The windows of the third through sixth levels of the oriel are identical, rectangular, double-hung windows of six-over-six lights. The three spandrels between these four floors are composed of square panels carved in an abstract, eight-petal flower pattern. In contrast, the spandrels between the second and third levels of the oriel are delicately carved in low-relief panels that exhibit central shields on alternating backgrounds of crossed swords and heraldic eagles. Crowning the oriel is a pierced balustrade that displays a wave pattern similar to that above the mezzanine windows.

The ninth-floor windows and the end bay windows of the fourth through eighth floors of the building are paired, rectangular, double-hung windows similar to those of the upper half of the oriel. The triple windows of the third floor are the only arched windows of the end bays; their surrounds are similar to those capping the second level windows of the oriel. The entire composition of the first nine floors is unified by pilasters at the edges of the facade. An elaborately carved pierced parapet once extended across the full width of the facade at the level of the capping element of these pilasters. Its removal constitutes the only significant modification to the original design of the exterior.

The tenth story of the Columbia Club is designed to appear as an attic story of a truncated, steeply pitched roof. The exterior wall is sheathed in copper sheets with prominent, vertical standing seams. Corresponding to the central oriel is a composition of 11 arched windows set into a flat-roofed dormer. Before the 1958-64 remodeling of the 10th-floor ballroom, these windows were divided into small lights. Two small, gabled roof dormers with a single, arched window flank the central dormer and further emphasize the end bays. (They are, however, blocked off on the interior.) Running along the

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roof-line is a delicate copper cresting of Tudor flowers, which are individually aligned with the row of fleurs-de-lis below and the lines of the standing seams.

Other Elevations

The building's footprint was largely determined by the constraints of the urban site and the original platting of Circle lots. The main elevation curves to follow the arc of the Circle. As originally constructed, the east and west walls were built on the lot lines, and the building stepped back above the fourth floor at a depth roughly corresponding to three-fourths of the length. From an aerial perspective, the building would have appeared T-shape in plan. The west elevation remains unchanged. The 10-story portion is faced in limestone, and the remaining portions exhibit a cream-colored-brick veneer. Only a portion of the east facade is visible from the Circle, where the abutting American Fletcher Building is set back approximately a dozen feet. Here the limestone veneer occurs only at the first two stories, above which there is common bond, red brick. Stone quoins accent the corner in the manner of "chainage" typical of Louis XIII architecture. Along the back portion of the east wall, a recent addition of six stories was built into the former stepback above the fourth floor. The angled north wall (along the alley and the rear) is of common red brick now painted gray; numerous window openings have been bricked-in in this area.

Interior

The functions of the Columbia Club are divided as follows. The major portion of the first floor is devoted to lobby, lounge, and reading area, with the cigar shop, front desk, coat room, and restrooms located along a corridor extending back from the main entrance, and a restaurant and bar in the northwest portion of the plan. Surrounding the two-story-high main lounge on three sides is a mezzanine level that serves as ancillary lounge space; the remainder of the second floor is devoted to offices. On the third floor is the two-story-high main dining room, with the remainder of the floor given to subsidiary dining rooms such as the Columbian Grille at the rear and the Circle Room in the southeast corner. The completely remodelled fourth floor contains private banquet rooms, while the fifth floor has been converted entirely to offices. All of the Club's sleeping rooms and suites are now found on the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth floors. There are approximately 25 to 30 rooms per floor, most of which are located along the main, longitudinal corridor. The tenth floor, which was completely remodelled between 1958 and 1964, has always served as the ballroom and banquet hall. Most of the basement is devoted to athletic facilities.

The first floor retains more of its original 1920s character than any of the other nine floors. The plan has remained the same, and with the exception of the Harrison Room restaurant, most interior finishes are original. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of these finishes is the floor-to-ceiling walnut panelling that covers all walls. It is divided into recessed, rectangular panels approximately 1½ by 2 feet and is variously ornamented by applied details, shields and linenfolds being favorite motifs. The floors are of Tennessee marble — white with black diamond insets. The plastered ceilings feature a low-relief, molded banding of crested birds and an undulating grapevine. Close to the entrance and along the east wall, a travertine marble staircase, with walnut railing and wrought-iron balusters, climbs to landings at the mezzanine, third and fourth floors.

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A screen separating the main entrance hall from the front lounge area contains nine ogee arches with elaborate finials reminiscent of the late-15th-century French Gothic, all carved in deep relief in wood to simulate stone. The stained glass contained within the arches depicts two tree boughs with heart-shaped leaves that spread across the screen.

The first floor lounge is defined by two-story-high, wide segmental arches, between which richly detailed walnut pilasters rise. Between these arches and the deep ceiling beams with polished walnut veneer, a wave pattern similar to that found on the exterior is executed in plaster. Medieval figures and entwined faces are placed in bracket locations on the pilasters. Beneath the mezzanine on the west is a reading area known as "Amen Corner," presumably because of its proximity to Christ Church. The focus of the lounge is an immense, French Renaissance style fireplace with a chimneypiece that rises to meet a ceiling beam. It is executed in travertine marble with terra cotta accents of a contrasting color. The fireplace opening is in the form of a Tudor arch approximately six feet high. The overscaled firebox is lined with square quarry tiles with random geometric accents. Another original feature of note in the lounge area is its lighting: three pendant fixtures of wrought iron are similar in character to those flanking the exterior. The doors to the Harrison Room are the only modern intrusions upon the original decor of this room.

Along the hallway, the clerk's desk, front office, coat room, and phone booths have all retained their original walnut enclosures and partitions. Survival of the walnut-and-glass display cases and wall cabinets of the cigar shop is of special note, as is the medieval screen effect intended for the coat room. The first floor elevators display a travertine marble surround in a basket arch form. Carved owls and crested birds on a foliar background flank the floor dials.

Much of the original character of the third floor main dining room — variously called the Venetian Room, Columbian Room, and Crystal Terrace Buffet — has been lost over the years. At the openings communicating between the hallway and the elevated west dining area, the original arched enframements and ornamentation have been removed. Former details that contributed to the desired "Venetian" effect included: the sailing vessels of the sculpted tympana; the wreathed, engaged columns flanking the openings; the stencilwork of the ceiling beams; and the light fixtures that hung from wall medallions. Although the ten lengthwise ceiling beams and four larger cross beams remain, they have been painted a dull brown. The grapevine detail of the plastered cornice, once gilded, is now obscured by the same brown color. The oriel window wall, which extends the illumination to ceiling height, remains as the glory of the room.

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Columbia Club has never broken with its most fundamental tradition. Even with the decline in membership and financial difficulties occasioned by the Great Depression, the membership voted down efforts to make the club nonpartisan.⁵

Meanwhile, the Columbia Club has continued to sponsor appearances by leading G.O.P. standardbearers. For example, during the 1920 campaign, the Club invited the principal contenders for the G.O.P. presidential nomination to speak to the membership, including General Leonard Wood, Senator Warren G. Harding of Ohio, Governor Frank Lowden of Illinois, and Senator Hiram Johnson of California. Later in the same campaign, Herbert Hoover and Charles Evans Hughes appeared in Indianapolis as guests of the Columbia Club. Five years later, the club brought back Hughes, then U.S. Secretary of State, to lay the cornerstone for the present clubhouse. The following year Vice-President Charles G. Dawes stopped at the new club building for its dedication.⁶

The Club has also sponsored nationally prominent Republicans as speakers for its annual Beefsteak Dinner.⁷ Prominent speakers since World War II include Senator Robert Taft of Ohio, Senator Everett Dirksen of Illinois, Barry M. Goldwater, Jr., Senator Roman Hruska of Nebraska, and Governor Walter Hickel of Alaska.⁸ The Club also takes pride in its record of having hosted every Republican president since 1889, either as a candidate or while in office.

Perhaps the closeness of the Club's ties to the Republican Party and hence to the political history of the city and state is best illustrated by a remark made in 1925 by Arthur E. Bradshaw, president of the club during the construction of the present clubhouse:

...the history of the Columbia Club for nearly four decades is closely interwoven with the history of the United States, especially Republican history, and bids fair, it is believed and hoped, to be identified with the Republican history of the city, state and nation so long as the semblance of its organization shall endure.⁹

B. Social Significance

In addition to the significance it has enjoyed in the political history of Indianapolis and Indiana, the Columbia Club has long held an exalted position as a social organization.

From its inception in 1888 to the admission of the first woman member in 1979, the Columbia Club was one of Indiana's leading "men's clubs."¹⁰ The forerunners of such organizations first made their appearance in Great Britain in the early 19th century. The clubs located along Pall Mall in London became especially well known in the United States: the Athenaeum, the Reform Club, Travellers' Club, etc. The English clubs were made up of gentlemen sharing common interests, such as literature, art, travel, or membership in a particular political party.¹¹

After the Civil War, men's clubs appeared in most of the major cities of this country. Some, like the Union League Club of Philadelphia and the Hamilton Club of Chicago, were Republican organizations.¹² Others, like the Algonquin Club of Boston and the Metropolitan Club of New York City, were primarily social in their orientation.¹³

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The Columbia Club joined the ranks of hundreds of men's clubs across the United States. In Indianapolis, at least five men's clubs were operating in the downtown area by the mid-1920s. All were housed in substantial clubhouses.¹⁴ Part of the historical significance of the Columbia Club lies in its survival and continuing reputation as a top social club after most of its earlier contemporaries have disappeared.

Several characteristics were responsible for maintaining the Columbia Club. The club's tradition of superb club facilities helped hold the allegiance of its constituency. Beginning with the William H. Morrison mansion, the first club headquarters, continuing with the second, Italian Renaissance style clubhouse of 1898-1900, and culminating in the present elegant facility of 1924-25, the Columbia Club sought the best in architectural design, furnishings and appointments.¹⁵ The location on Monument Circle also brought an undeniable element of prestige and visibility for the club. These advantages, when coupled with the Club's solid alliance with the Republican Party, its statewide membership, and its long-standing reputation as the gathering place of the business and civic leadership of the city, go far to explain its continued existence.

Most of the other local men's clubs of the early 20th century succumbed to the combined threats of changing tastes, the financial woes of the Depression, and competition from the newer suburban country clubs.¹⁶ Out of the five downtown clubs of 1926, today only the Columbia Club and Indianapolis Athletic Club survive.

In addition to political dignitaries, many celebrities have been honored at banquets in the Club. The current clubhouse hosted Queen Marie of Roumania and her entourage at a 1926 formal banquet in the Columbian Room. A year later, the Club welcomed American aviation hero Charles A. Lindbergh as guest of honor.¹⁷ Other notables who have enjoyed the present clubhouse's hospitality include General John J. Pershing, Prince William of Sweden, cartoonist John T. McCutcheon, Amelia Earhart, and Edna St. Vincent Millay.¹⁸

Perhaps the significance of the Columbia Club to the history of social, civic, and business affairs in Indianapolis and Indiana can be summed up in a 1935 quotation from The Columbian, the club's magazine:

...Its membership roll represents...the vital, present, year-in-and-year-out affiliation of WHO'S WHO IN INDIANA and their descendants."¹⁹

C. Architectural Significance

The Columbia Club was designed in 1924 by one of the most important architectural firms ever to practice in Indianapolis: Rubush and Hunter, with principals Preston C. Rubush (1867-1947) and Edgar O. Hunter (1873-1949).²⁰ By the mid-1920s, the firm had already gained considerable local prominence in its field through such buildings as the Masonic Temple (1907), City Hall (1909, now the State Museum Building), and the Circle Theater (1916). Highlights of the firm's later work include the Indiana Theater (1927), Circle Tower Building (1930), and the Coca-Cola Bottling Company plant (1931). Many of Rubush and Hunter's buildings were inspired by a particular historical style and demonstrate the designers' in-depth knowledge of their sources. The Columbia Club building is yet another example of a design derived from a specific period in architectural history.

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Although the building is technologically contemporary with its time in its major building components and structural system, the architects went back in time five centuries to a comparatively limited and little known period of architecture, relying upon both English and French sources for their design. Most of the elements of both the exterior and interior were modelled on features typical to secular buildings of two simultaneous phases in architecture: English Tudor architecture, the final development of the last phase of Gothic architecture (the "Perpendicular"), generally considered to date from 1485 to 1547, corresponding to the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII; and the transitional period in French architecture between the last phase of Gothic architecture (the "Flamboyant") and the early Renaissance, roughly dating from the 1494 to 1525, corresponding to the reign of Louis XII and the first 10 years of the reign of François I.²¹ The French period was characterized by an unusual hybrid quality in which the highly developed medieval forms of the Gothic were mixed with the new forms stemming from the influence of the Italian Renaissance, the two elements remaining distinct. Rubush and Hunter's personal eclecticism in their interpretation of these transitional phases in architectural history results in a unique admixture in the design of the Columbia Club. While many of the details are clearly Gothic in origin, the introduction of early Renaissance motifs — especially the exterior's rich surface ornamentation and the sculptural effect of its pierced balustrades — gives the building a character that is most uncommon in Indianapolis, and perhaps equally unusual in the 1920s Gothic trends in American architecture. (See "Description" section for more information on sources of design elements.)

The Columbia Club also demonstrates the influence of the ideas of William Earl Russ, an Indianapolis architect who advocated a set of architectural guidelines for buildings fronting the Circle. In 1921, during a period when there was much local discussion of building height limits as well as concern for retaining the prominence of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, Russ proposed a uniform height of 10 stories for Circle buildings, with a limit of three additional stories in a Mansard roof. Wishing to create on the Circle a civic composition comparable to the great squares of Europe, Russ stressed the importance of a commonality in materials and architectural style in addition to a uniformity of height. In deference to the Monument, he suggested that all buildings be faced in Bedford limestone and designed in "the American adaptation of the French renaissance style of architecture."²² The Columbia Club was the only building constructed after the publication of Russ' plan to follow the guidelines to any extent. Rubush and Hunter paid heed to the height proposal, designed a stepped-back top story, employed Indiana limestone in the exterior facade, and borrowed some design vocabulary of the early French Renaissance. The Columbia Club is therefore significant as the embodiment of an architectural planning scheme that could well have resulted in an incomparable exemplar of urban design in the country.

The building is also architecturally significant for its interior space planning. To meet the challenge of providing a building combining the functions of club facility, hotel, restaurant, athletic facility, and social gathering point on a confined urban site of irregular dimensions, the architects separated functions by floor while at the same time inserting two-story-high spaces within the floor matrix. The complicated plan in section of the first through fourth floors allowed for the most important gathering spaces — the main lounge and main dining room — to be accentuated by their ceiling heights. Subsidiary lounges and private meeting rooms were worked around these rooms in what results in an very efficient use of space.

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D. Artistic Significance

The chief factor in the artistic significance of the Columbia Club lies in the decorative work of local sculptors Alexander Sangernebo (1856-1930) and Joseph Willenborg and of interior decorator Henry Richard Behrens. These three men were all noted for their craftsmanship in the execution of designs.

Sangernebo was an Estonian immigrant who became well known as an architectural sculptor and chief designer of the Indianapolis Terra Cotta Company, at one time the only terra cotta manufactory in Indiana.²³ He had studied extensively in Europe before coming to the United States, including several years at the Ecôle des Arts Decoratifs in Paris. He contributed to the interior and exterior sculptural embellishment of over 50 buildings in Indianapolis, prominent examples among them being the Murat Theater, St. Mary's Church, St. Joan of Arch Catholic Church, the Big Four Building, the Traction Terminal Building, and the Hotel Lincoln (the later two now demolished). Significant in his work on the Columbia Club's exterior are the stone carving of: the bas-relief panel depicting a frontier Indiana scene, the detailed grapevine pattern of the oriel's corbel, and the tympanum over the front entrance. Judging from stylistic similarity, several elements of the interior are probably also the work of Sangernebo's hand, such as the medieval figures adorning the main lounge's mantelpiece and walnut pilasters.

Joseph Willenborg, another talented local sculptor, was the creator of the great fireplace of Italian travertine marble in the main lounge.²⁴ A native of Germany, his work at the Columbia Club was among his first commissions upon settling in Indianapolis to work for William Hermann and Son. Two years later, Willenborg collaborated with Sangernebo on another important building designed by Rubush and Hunter: the Indiana Theater (1927). Here he produced the elaborate proscenium arch and the two ornate organ grilles. The sculptor's best-known works include the sphinxes of the Walker Theater (1927), the Art Deco grillwork of the Circle Tower Building (1930), and sculptural panels for Purdue University's Music Hall (1940).

Henry Richard Behrens ran an advertisement in the 1925 Club publication on the history of the institution stating: "I am proud to have had the honor of decorating all the plaster surfaces and finishing the woodwork throughout the new Columbia Club."²⁵ The ornamental ceiling moldings and cornices and the rich walnut paneling — all of which contribute strongly to the significance of the interior finishes of the first floor — are thus documented to be Behrens' work. He had previously played an important role in the interior design of another notable building by architects Rubush and Hunter: the Circle Theater (1916).²⁶ (The significant Adamesque Revival interior of this theater owes much to the ornamental plaster friezes, classical detailing, and elaborate ceiling executed by Behrens.)

Another factor in the artistic significance of the Columbia Club is the stained glass of the ogee-arched screen of the main floor. Although research has not revealed the name of its designer, it is one of the most beautiful works of art in the building. The combination of clear and slag glass in the composition, the color, and the natural quality of the spreading boughs depicted all bear some resemblance to the work of the Tiffany studios. Documentation of the origin of this stained glass could well add considerably to the artistic significance of the building.

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18Tyson, pp. 64-65; Ernestine Bradford Rose, The Circle: "The Center of Indianapolis" (Indianapolis: Crippin Printing Corporation, 1971), p. 61.

19"An Indianapolis Institution," The Columbian, Vol. II, #6, (June 1935).

20Research files of the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission, "Architects — Indianapolis — Rubush and Hunter."

21Historic Architecture Sourcebook, edited by Cyril M. Harris. (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1977); Anthony Blunt, Art and Architecture in France, 1500-1700 (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1954); René Colas, Les Styles de la Renaissance en France (Paris, France: René Colas, 1928).

22"Unfolds Scheme to Make Circle Famed Beauty Spot," Indianapolis Star, December 10, 1921.

23Biographical information on Sangernebo was compiled from the following articles: "Sculptor's Work Graces Towering Edifices; Home is Art and Love," Indianapolis Sun, October 8, 1911, p. 10; Margaret M. Scott, "New Buildings Reflect City's Growth in Appreciation of Commercial Art," Indianapolis Star, September 11, 1927, p. 40; "Alexander Sangernebo, Noted Architectural Sculptor, Dies," Indianapolis News, January 23, 1930.

24Information on Joseph Willenborg was derived from the following sources: "Local Sculptor Models Sphinx," Indianapolis Star, December 19, 1927, and "Figures Modeled for Purdue Music Hall," Indianapolis News, July 31, 1940. The latter source singles out Willenborg as the creator of the Columbia Club's mantel. It is important to note that several Club publications erroneously state that the great fireplace was salvaged from the previous Columbia Club building (1898-1900).

25Stormont, p. 131. There is some question as to the involvement of local firm William Hermann and Son in the ornamental plaster work and composition wood carving. (See advertisement: Stormont, p. 118.) Since Willenborg was employed by William Hermann and Son, this firm could have been responsible for such interior details as the cable ceiling moldings of the mezzanine or the composition wood details that accent the paneling (shields, linenfolds, and the like).

26"Classic Beauty is Restored in Circle Theater," Indianapolis Star, December 22, 1933, p. 10.

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- ¹Harry K. Stormont, A History of the Columbia Club of Indianapolis (Indianapolis: Harry M. Franklin and Associates, 1925), pp. 9-11.
- ²Ibid., pp. 9-12; 15-16.
- ³Ibid., p. 23.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 31.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 31; John J. Sullivan, "A 75-Year History of the Columbia Club: 1889-1964," The Columbian [club magazine], Vol. 55, #8 (August 1964) p. 45.
- ⁶Stormont, p. 39; Sullivan, pp. 42-43.
- ⁷Sullivan, p. 45.
- ⁸Entries under "Columbia Club," in Indianapolis newspaper index, Indiana Division, Indiana State Library.
- ⁹Arthur E. Bradshaw, "Felicitations," in A History of the Columbia Club of Indianapolis. (Indianapolis: Harry M. Franklin and Associates, 1925), p. 5.
- ¹⁰"Columbia Club Bows to Women," Indianapolis Star, October 4, 1979, p. 1.
- ¹¹Stuart Rossiter (ed.), The Blue Guide to London (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1978), pp. 95-97.
- ¹²Stormont, p. 31.
- ¹³Bainbridge Bunting, Houses of Boston's Back Bay (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 191; Norval White and Elliot Willensky, AIA Guide to New York City (New York: Collier Books, 1978), p. 219.
- ¹⁴R. L. Polk and Co., Indianapolis City Directory (Indianapolis: R. L. Polk and Co., 1926), p. 48.
- ¹⁵Max S. Norris, M.D., "A Message from the President," The Columbian, August 1964, pp. 6-7.
- ¹⁶The University Club, one of the five major clubs of 1926, lost its large clubhouse during the Depression and had to move to much smaller quarters. See R. L. Greenleaf, "The Present Clubhouse at 970 North Delaware Street," in The University Club of Indianapolis: Its Origin, History and Lore (Indianapolis: the University Club of Indianapolis, 1968), pp. 9-10.
- ¹⁷Herbert C. Tyson, "Host to Famous People," The Columbian, Vol. II, #6, (June 1935), pp. 64-65.