

## Jenney's Lesser Works: Prelude to the Prairie Style?

by Theodore Turak\*

*Theodore Turak is an associate professor of art history at The American University, Washington, D. C. He teaches courses in Medieval art and architecture and in the history of architecture from the Renaissance through the Modern. He studied art history at the University of Michigan where he earned a Ph.D. He specialized in the architectural phase of the discipline working under professors Leonard K. Eaton, George H. Forsyth, Oleg Grabar and Nathan T. Whitman. In 1964 he was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to Paris where he was able to research the education of William Le Baron Jenney as well as various aspects of French architecture of the period. He is currently working on a biography of Major Jenney to be followed by a history of French nineteenth century architecture.*



William Le Baron Jenney, (1832-1907)

\*I would like to express my thanks to several of the gracious people of Riverside, Illinois, who aided me in gathering information on their beautiful city. They were John L. Clark, President of the Riverside Historical Society; Mr. Herbert J. Bassman, Historian; and Mrs. Harold F. Zeigler and Mr. Robert Heidrich of the Olmsted Society. I am indebted to Mr. Heidrich for the photograph of the refectory of the Riverside Hotel. Father Lundberg of St. Paul's also furnished me with pictures and material regarding his Church. And I cannot forget Mrs. Schofield B. Gross Sr. a delightful lady who first showed me the houses built by Jenney.

The fame of William Le Baron Jenney rests upon his contributions to the development of skyscraper design in Chicago during the 1880's and 90's. The so-called "commercial style," however, constituted only one part of his architectural production. Although trained in France as an engineer, it is clear that he always considered himself an architect. Architecture was part of the curricula of his school, the *École centrale des arts et manufactures*, and several of his design problems included private dwellings and lesser buildings.<sup>1</sup> Jenney's choice of architecture as a career as opposed to that of an engineer was reached on his second trip to Paris in 1858.<sup>2</sup> It was not until 1867, after service in the Civil War and experience as a business executive, that he began to practice his chosen profession.<sup>3</sup>

Chicago, like other major cities, began to grapple with the problems caused by the industrialization of the post Civil War period. The city's commercial architecture and its anticipation of progressive European architecture by thirty years were, of course, not the only developments of the Chicago School.<sup>4</sup> The manner in which Chicago evolved formed the foundation of much twentieth century architecture.

1 Archives of the *École centrale des arts et manufactures*, *Promotion de 1853*. Jenney was given the project of a *Maison de campagne* in his second year. He was given the grade of "14" out of a possible "20."

2 Jenney attended the school from 1853 to 1856. He worked in Mexico in 1857 as a civil engineer. In 1858, he returned to Paris with the Berdon Bakery Co. as an engineer to build a "mechanical bakery" for the French Army. William Le Baron Jenney, *Autobiography*, pp. 4-8. A typed MS found in his scrapbook. Chicago Microfilm Project, Burnham Library, Chicago.

3 Letter: William F. Roelofson to W.L.B. Jenney, 9 March 1866, from Jenney's scrapbook. Also, William Mundie, *Skeleton Construction, Its Origin and Development Applied to Architecture*, Pt. I, 1932, pp. 163-164. An unfinished MS on Roll 23, Chicago Microfilm Project, Burnham Library, Chicago.

4 Jean Ache, *Acier et architecture*, Paris, 1966, p. 30.

Vincent Scully has shown that the roots of Frank Lloyd Wright's genius go deeply into the history of American architecture. Scully traced them back through the "shingle style" to the "stick style" and the theories of Andrew Jackson Downing.<sup>5</sup> Wright thus drew heavily upon the traditions of romantic rationalism of mid-nineteenth century America. It is possible that William Le Baron Jenney played more than a passing role in the transmission of these ideas.

Jenney's importance in the creation of advanced technical and aesthetic forms can be documented.<sup>6</sup> His relevance to the evolution of domestic and lesser buildings is more vague, but, the fact remains, that from his first appearance in the city, Jenney was considered one of Chicago's most prominent citizens.<sup>7</sup> His relationship as employer and teacher to Sullivan, Holabird, Roche, and others gave him a position in American architecture analogous to that which later would be held by Behrens and Perret in Europe.<sup>8</sup>

Jenney was thirty-seven years old before his architectural career began. Much of his maturing process had thus occurred before the war. Because his life straddled the better part of the nineteenth century,<sup>9</sup> he had been placed chronologically as well as geographically in an ideal position to influence subsequent events. His problem was the same as the nation's: the readaptation of habits of thought formed in an agrarian society to a vigorous and rather vulgar newly industrialized country. The movement was in two directions. The first was technological. The problems of real-estate costs and housing large business bureaucracies were solved by the tall building. The second involved middle-class housing and suburban planning.

Paris was always much on Jenney's mind and, in his first years of practice, French fashions of domestic architecture exerted some attraction for him. This seemed to have been particularly true of his interior decoration. One of his in-laws wrote:

... We lived in a "marble front" house on Wabash Avenue at Fourteenth Street that father

5 Vincent Scully, *The Shingle Style*, New Haven, 1955, p. 161.

6 For the sources of Jenney's style in commercial architecture see, Theodore Turak, "The Ecole Centrale and Modern Architecture: The Education of William Le Baron Jenney," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XXIX, 1970, pp. 40-47.

7 Everette Chamberlin, *Chicago and Its Suburbs*, Chicago, 1875, p. 416. The book gives a list of the "prominent" Chicago citizens who settled in Riverside. Jenney was among them.

8 Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time, and Architecture*, Cambridge, Mass., 1954, p. 369.

9 His dates were 1832 to 1907.

had bought. Mr. Jenney decorated our "parlors" with molded carved panels tinted with pastel shades and enlivened with gold leaf, all in the latest Parisian manner. . .<sup>10</sup>

Jenney expressed great admiration for Baron Haussmann's plan for Paris<sup>11</sup> and it was this enthusiasm that lay at the base of Daniel Burnham's grandiose plans for Chicago and Washington later in the century. With a few exceptions, Jenney generally eschewed the pomposities of the Second Empire and tried to develop ante-bellum romantic ideas.

Among Jenney's first works in Chicago were, surprisingly, not buildings but parks. He had been given instruction in landscape design at the *Ecole centrale*<sup>12</sup> and no doubt the *Bois de Bologne* provided the inspiration. The parks he designed were in the West Park system and included Douglas, Central (now Garfield) and Humboldt parks. None are in their original state. Done in the *jardin anglais* tradition they were replete with meandering paths, serpentine lakes and picturesque bridges. The object of their construction was not as exalted as Haussmann's "lungs" of Paris. Rather, the parks were to act as "... a stimulus to land speculation and investment and the key to the situation of the real-estate market."<sup>13</sup>

Though the aesthetic aspect seems to have been secondary, the parks proved popular and represented a deep love of nature on Jenney's part.<sup>14</sup> In 1868, he cooperated with Olmsted and Vaux in the planning of Riverside, Illinois. Olmsted at this time had commissions throughout the country and it was essential that he select competent assistants. The preliminary survey and planning were done by Olmsted and Vaux for the Riverside Improvement Company. The firm of Jenney, Schermerhorn and Bogart was retained as their architects and engineers.<sup>15</sup>

The importance of Riverside is fairly well known. It was not the first suburb built according to romantic, picturesque principles, but it was among

10 Letter: Arthur Cobb of Orange, New Jersey to Louise Cobb of Cleveland, Ohio 28 Feb. 1945. A typed MS in the possession of Mrs. James Stewart of Shaker Heights, Ohio.

11 William Le Baron Jenney, *Principles and Practice of Architecture*, Chicago and Cleveland, 1869, p. 42.

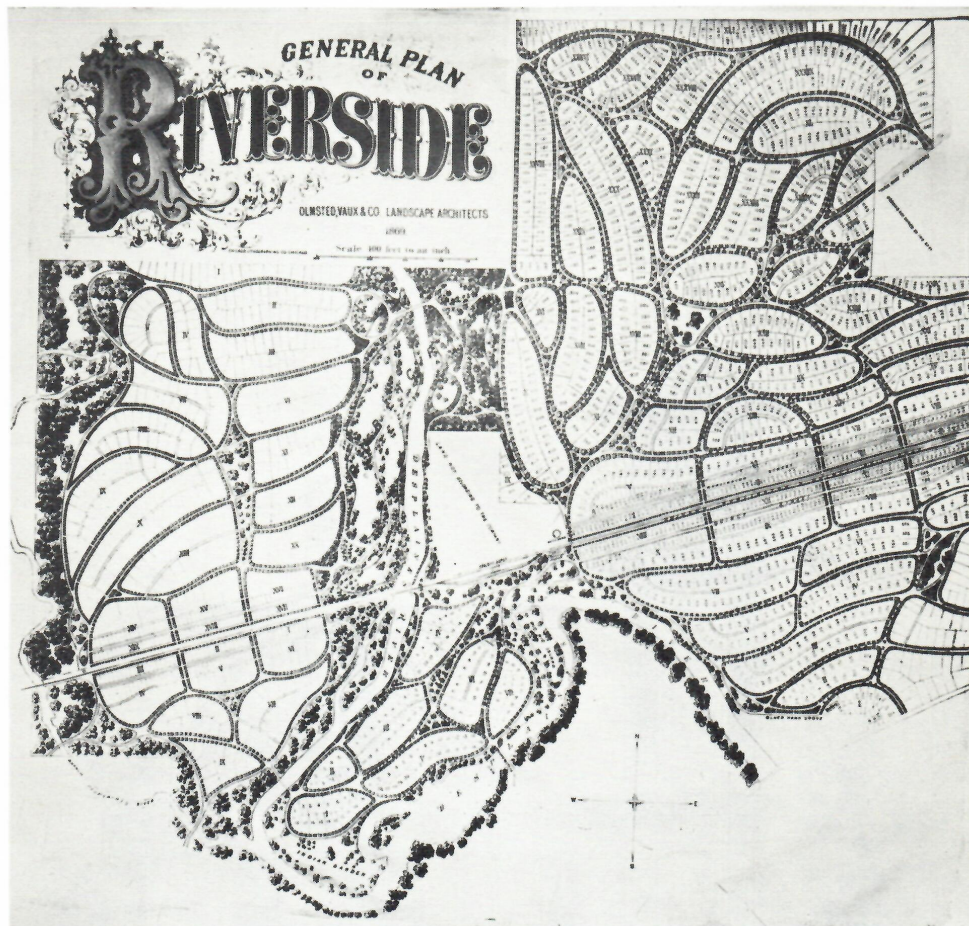
12 Archives of the *Ecole centrale*, *Promotion de 1853*, second year.

13 Chamberlin, *Chicago and Its Suburbs*, pp. 327-332. Jenney's work seems to have been completely redesigned by Jens Jensen in 1906. Leonard K. Eaton, *Landscape Architect in America*, Chicago, 1964, p. 30.

14 Mundie, *Skeleton Construction, Its Origin and Development Applied to Architecture*, Pt. I, p. 4.

15 *Riverside in 1871*, Riverside Improvement Company, Chicago, 1871, p. 6.





*The General Plan of Riverside prepared by Olmsted, Vaux and Company in 1869, is essentially the same today. The street pattern was carried out, as was the park system for the most part. There was to have been a so called "park way to Chicago" starting in the upper right hand corner of this drawing. It was never done. The landscaping proposed by this plan has matured to a point where the village is today a model of superb planning and delightful suburbia. In 1970 the Village of Riverside was declared a National Historic Site by the National Park Service.*

the most influential.<sup>16</sup> Jenney's commitment to romantic rationalism was complete. In his book *Principles and Practice of Architecture* (1869) he combined praise for romantic ideals with a plea for the professional architect as opposed to the vernacular

builder. His writing indicated that both the vernacular and the classical revival were fighting a fierce rear-guard action at this time. Jenney attacked the idea of symmetry for its own sake, colonnades that obscure light from interiors and the inadequacies of unprofessionally designed houses.<sup>17</sup> But even the rawness of the West which he found offensive could be corrected. He wrote:

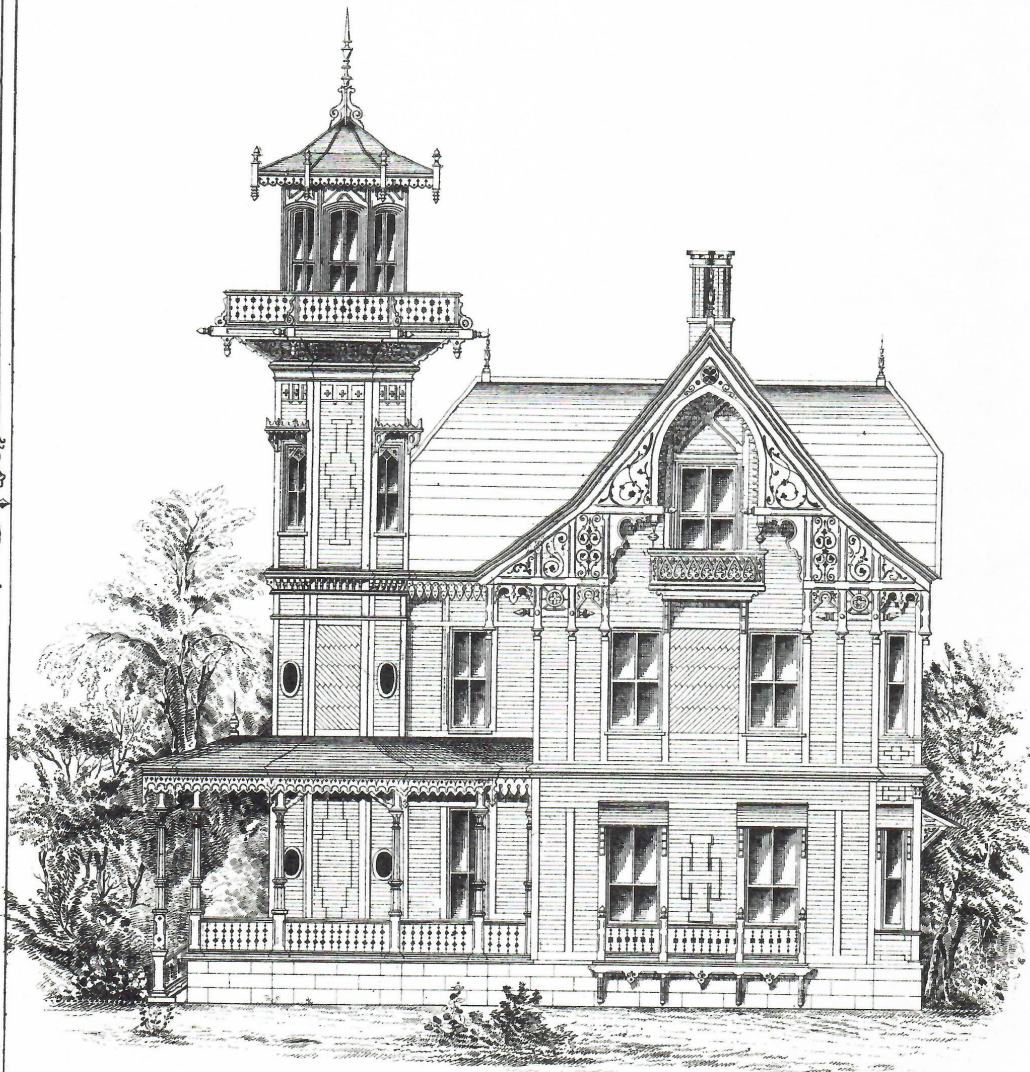
There is a great want of intelligence in matters of art in American country villages, especially in the West; such books as Downing's have done much to supply this want, and should be more generally read. A few trees from the forest, a few vines and flowers from the nearest nursery would render picturesque many an unattractive residence.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Blake McKelvey, *The Urbanization of America*, N.Y., 1963, pp. 117-118.

<sup>17</sup> Jenney, *Principles and Practice of Architecture*, pp. 13-14, 21.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.





FRONT ELEVATION

SCALE OF FEET.

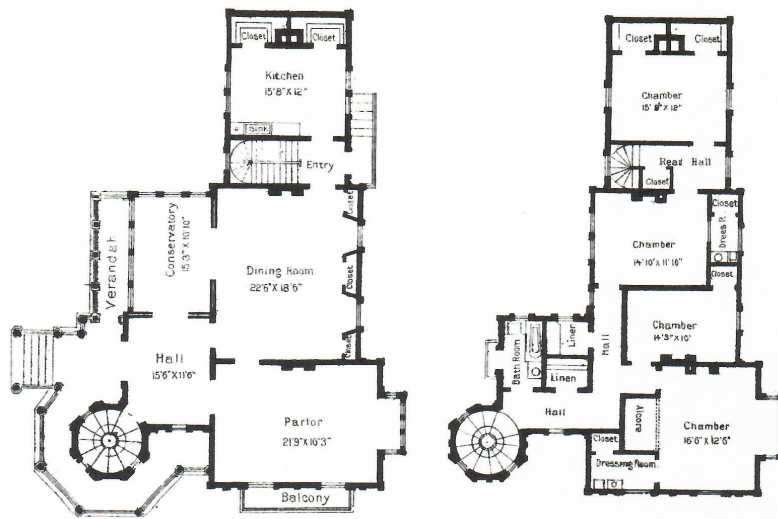


Loring & Jenney Architects

Merchants Lithographing Co. Chicago.

Example & Plate





**ABOVE:**

The plans for Jenney's picturesque Swiss style chalet show an open circulation which can be compared to Wright's early work. The house was built for Colonel James H. Bowen in Hyde Park, then a suburb on the south side of Chicago.

**LEFT:**

This Swiss style chalet was copied by Jenney from one built at the Paris Exposition of 1867. It was published in his *Principles and Practice of Architecture* and is illustrative of his early acceptance of French architectural ideas.

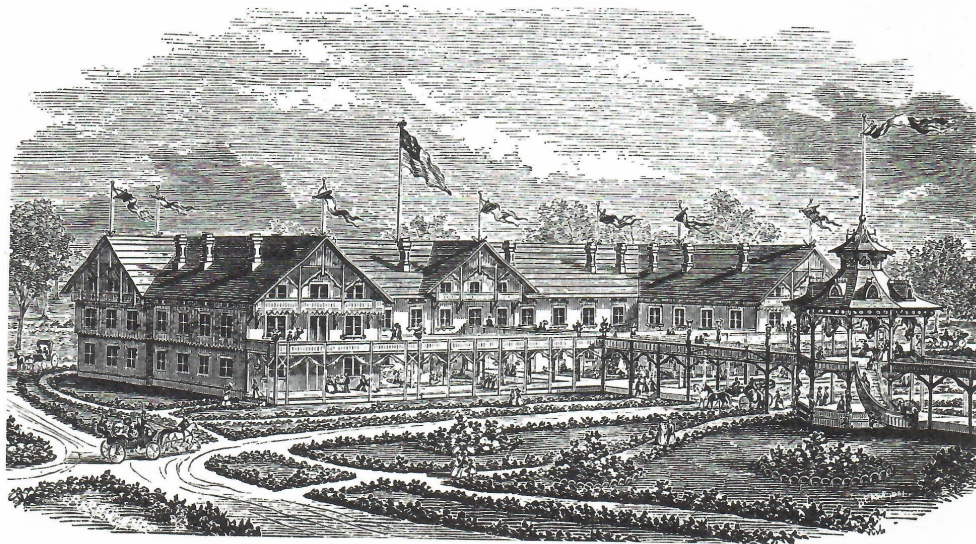
This sketch is the original Riverside Hotel, long since destroyed. It was located on the north side of Lawton Road and here we see the main building and the "music pagoda". Drawing from *Riverside, Then & Now*.

The town of Riverside was an elaboration of this principle on a rather grand scale. It was a park with residences, restricted to homes of three thousand dollars, and possessing all of the conveniences not generally found in the country. Nature was not to be disturbed but enhanced.<sup>19</sup>

It is evident that Jenney had had over-all control of the town's architecture. He built many of the houses and provided the basic motif in the water tower and the resort hotel. He described the hotel as follows:

The Swiss style was selected . . . as the best

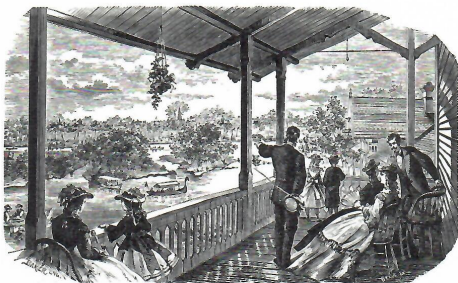
<sup>19</sup> The additions to the site were substantial. Seven hundred of the 1,600 acres were devoted to parks and recreation. The company added 47,000 shrubs, 7,000 evergreens, and 32,000 deciduous trees, some of them quite huge. *Riverside in 1871*, p. 17.



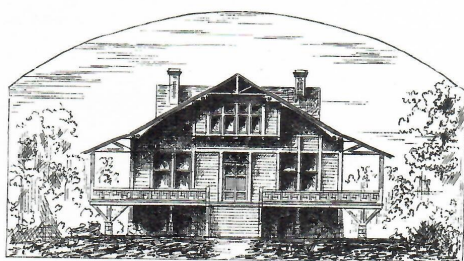




The Refectory for the Riverside Hotel was constructed about 1871. Jenney intended that the complex blend with the informal planning of Riverside. Photograph from *Riverside, Then & Now*.



Above is a woodcut from *Riverside, Then & Now*, showing a scene from the verandah of the Riverside Hotel Refectory in 1870-71. Below is a drawing from E. C. Gardner's *Illustrated Homes*, first published in 1875. This "Planter's House" bears a marked resemblance to Jenney's Refectory built four years earlier.



adapted to a rural hotel, giving opportunities for the most desirable features; extensive broad verandas, overhanging roof, shaded balconies and many pleasing though inexpensive details.<sup>20</sup> The hotel was a sprawling "E" shaped design of 124 rooms connected by a covered runway to a "music pagoda" and refectory.

The refectory resembles the "Planter's House" published in E.C. Gardner's *Illustrated Homes*, Boston 1875, and which Vincent Scully cites as a distant ancestor of Frank Lloyd Wright's Ward W. Willits home.<sup>21</sup> Neither, of course, had a direct influence on the master, but Jenney's work lies more completely within the historical chain of cause and effect.

Several houses designed by Jenney survive in Riverside. All of them are in excellent condition, but one reflects his philosophy most completely. His own house, on 200 Nuttall Road, burned in 1910, but the house built for his partner Mr. Schermerhorn can be found at 124 Scottswood Road. It is now owned by the Daleo family and has been beautifully preserved. The interior has been only slightly altered. It was described as follows:

The building is of the Swiss style, convenient, but at the same time studiously economical in its general arrangement.

The central hall is small, communicating on the right with a parlor and library, and on the left with dining room and dependencies, while in front is a sliding door communicating with the stairway.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup> Scully, *The Shingle Style*, p. 161.





This drawing of the L. Y. Schermerhorn house appeared in *Riverside* in 1871, and was described as being "Swiss cottage style . . . exceedingly pretty and cottage like". It still stands with only minor exterior changes.

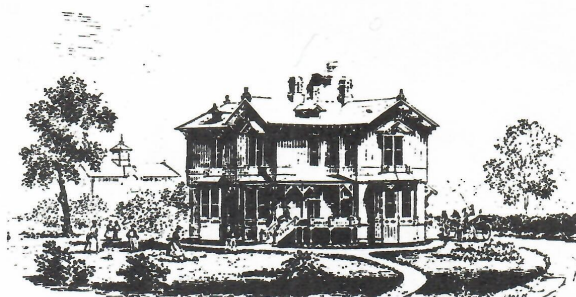
The chambers above are five in number decorated with walnut and butternut moldings following the line of the ceiling. The house is finished in hardwood and is exceedingly pretty and cottage like.<sup>22</sup>

This house illustrates Jenney's flexibility in planning and the extent to which the plan was reflected on the exterior. It is board and batten, and possesses overhanging roofs and rich detailing. The porch breaks from the core and fuses with the surrounding landscape. The Schermerhorn residence is particularly elegant with its play of sharply outlined cubes and the simple but variegated silhouette of its gables. Even without a ground plan, it is obvious that the cubes and gables radiate from the stairwell in the center. The individuality of each of Jenney's houses is marked and it is not surprising to find this architectural attitude corroborated by his writings:

Imagine one's self going through the daily habits of life: the man coming from business — going to dinner, then to the library . . . the woman superintending the cleaning of rooms, receiving her callers, looking after her children, etc.; nor must the servants be neglected; see that the kitchen is as large as required, the closets conveniently arranged . . . for each family have certain habits . . . always keep in mind that this is the time to experiment; partitions, doors, and windows can be promenaded about with little trouble and no cost.<sup>23</sup>

22 *Riverside* in 1871, p. 28.

23 Jenney, *Principles and Practice of Architecture*, p. 34. Jenney could also look upon his task with amused detachment. He wrote: "Architects live in an environment consisting of clients — male and female — very exacting and often unreasonable. They require novelty, beauty, thorough protection from the



The first residence which Jenney built for himself was built in about 1870 on Nuttall Road. It was described as "exceedingly well built, and presents a very picturesque appearance". Woodcut from *Riverside* in 1871.

The quotation is no statement of the individuality of the architect, but it does proclaim that a house must be designed around people, which reflects a kind of romantic humanism. The structure does not focus attention on the individual. It is formed around the individual, unfolding itself as one moves through it while performing his tasks. Dimly, and certainly not so poetically, Jenney anticipated the spatial continuum found in Wright's houses.<sup>24</sup>

The conception of architectural morality and integrity of materials was also present in Jenney's thinking. He could not abide sham especially when it involved the using of cheap materials in imitation of expensive ones. He wrote:

. . . Visit any country church; the pastor . . . remarks that it is modest, unpretentious . . . and yet you find that this modesty . . . consists of walls divided into blocks and colored white to imitate stone . . . ribs and a vaulted roof that, were it what it would have you believe it to be, its execution would have tried the skill of the Gothic architects.<sup>25</sup>

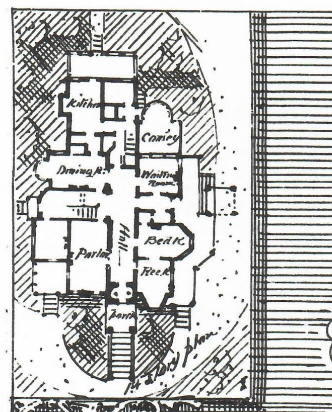
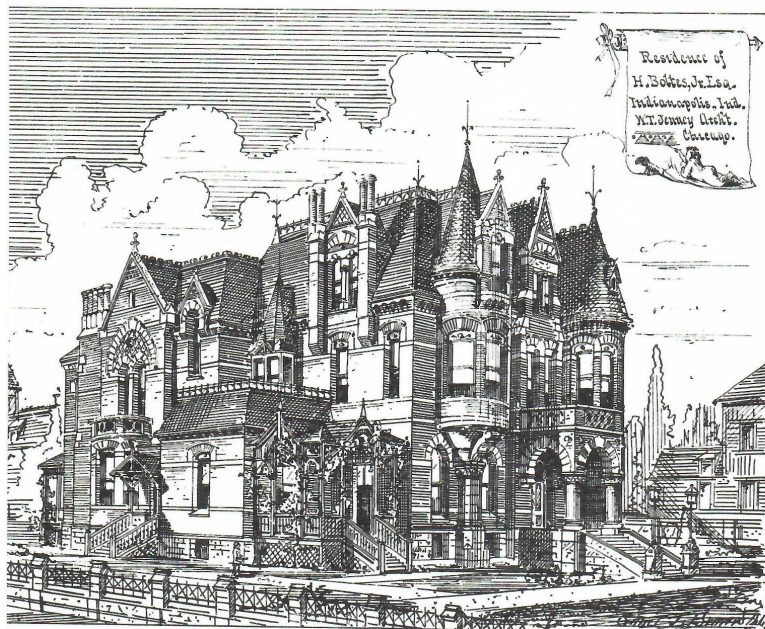
It is obvious that Jenney was experimenting and seeking new means of expression as were all progressive members of the architectural profession.

elements. They must be warm in winter, cool in summer, comfortable at all times. There must be universal adaptability of things. Every one of their whims and needs, habits and notions, must be satisfied. Each one must have something handsomer, more novel and generally better than anyone ever had before. All this must often be crowded into a 25 foot lot, and be produced at an expenditure that will not pay for half." William Le Baron Jenney, "A Few Practical Hints," *Inland Architect*, XIII, 1889, p. 7.

24 Vincent Scully, *Frank Lloyd Wright*, New York, 1960, p. 13.

25 Jenney, *Principles and Practice of Architecture*, p. 30.





Boltes plan.

*The Boltes Residence is reproduced from The American Architect and Building News.*

That he had not reached any definite conclusions was observed by Olmsted. In 1876, Jenney sought the professorship of architecture at the University of Michigan. Mr. Olmsted was asked to write a letter of recommendation. He gave the following evaluation:

I have received your letter . . . asking me to give you confidentially my opinion of W.L. Jenney . . . I reply with pleasure, but regret that I cannot do so more satisfactorily.

I know and esteem Mr. Jenney . . . but must say that I am apprehensive that he has not been a sufficient student. When I knew him six or eight years ago he seemed more in the condition of feeling his way, than a thoroughly disciplined designer working with sure hand and fixed principles.

But I know no one likely available I would better recommend . . . <sup>26</sup>

12

Jenney continued in the romantic mold. Most of his works in the seventies were in the Gothic revival. The Boltes residence seems the antithesis of the Prairie Style. It was vertical and complex, yet if one looks at the ground plan he finds freedom and flexibility. Jenney, like most partisans of the Gothic, saw it not so much as a re-creation of the past but as a point of departure for the future. He also saw it as a bulwark against the nonfunctional Queen Anne and Colonial styles which had become popular as a

<sup>26</sup> Letter: F.L. Olmsted to President James B. Angell, 8 Aug. 1876, *University of Michigan Historical Collection*.

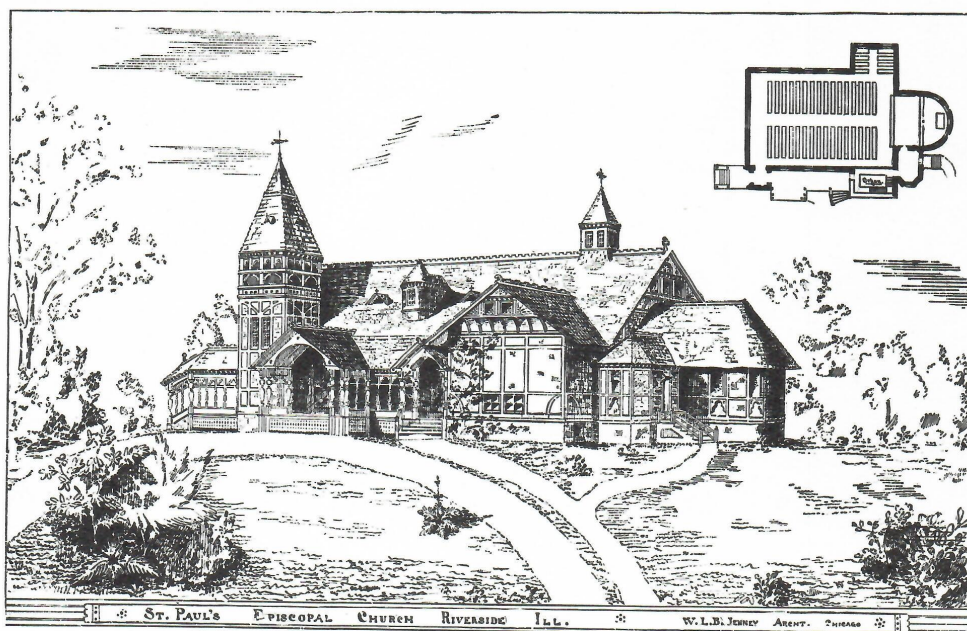


*The Riverside water tower, designed by Jenney about 1871, is still standing although the roof has been replaced. It was designed basically as a "Swiss Gothic" building with "a high sloping cut stone base".*

result of the 1876 Philadelphia World's Fair. Jenney wrote:

Only a few years ago there was great hope for a true national style. The American architects had joined the English in an endeavor to modify the





*This drawing of the St. Paul's Episcopal Church was published in the Inland Architect of 1883. The building still stands but was altered in 1930. The steeple and entrance area were remodeled.*

early English Gothic so as to adapt it to modern requirements, and well they were succeeding . . . but the fanciful transitional mixture of classic and Gothic, known as Queen Anne, was allowed to become the passing fashion . . . to stop the rapid progress we were making toward a style of our own. The Queen Anne and the colonial as well violate the best principles of architecture and cannot long hold the place they now have . . .<sup>27</sup>

In 1883, Jenney submitted a design for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Riverside, Illinois. It must have been quite charming in its original state. The ground plan was unusual for the basilican type church. One entered from the side through a chalet porch which jutted out into the landscape. The porch permitted carriages to discharge their passengers directly into the church and the closed end facilitated baptisms. The congregation need only turn to witness the ceremony. In the present state of the church, baptisms are performed in the remodeled porch hidden from the view of most of the worshippers.

Since the church was to cost only ten thousand dollars, it was to have a "rural character." The

<sup>27</sup> William Le Baron Jenney, "A Reform in Suburban Dwellings," *Inland Architect*, I, 1882, pp. 2-3.

exposed timbers were of common lumber "... painted in rich colors and filled with rough rubble masonry." There were to be "no small details of any description, the effect being produced by general forms and by color." The building was made to blend into its setting by vines, shrubs, and trees.<sup>28</sup>

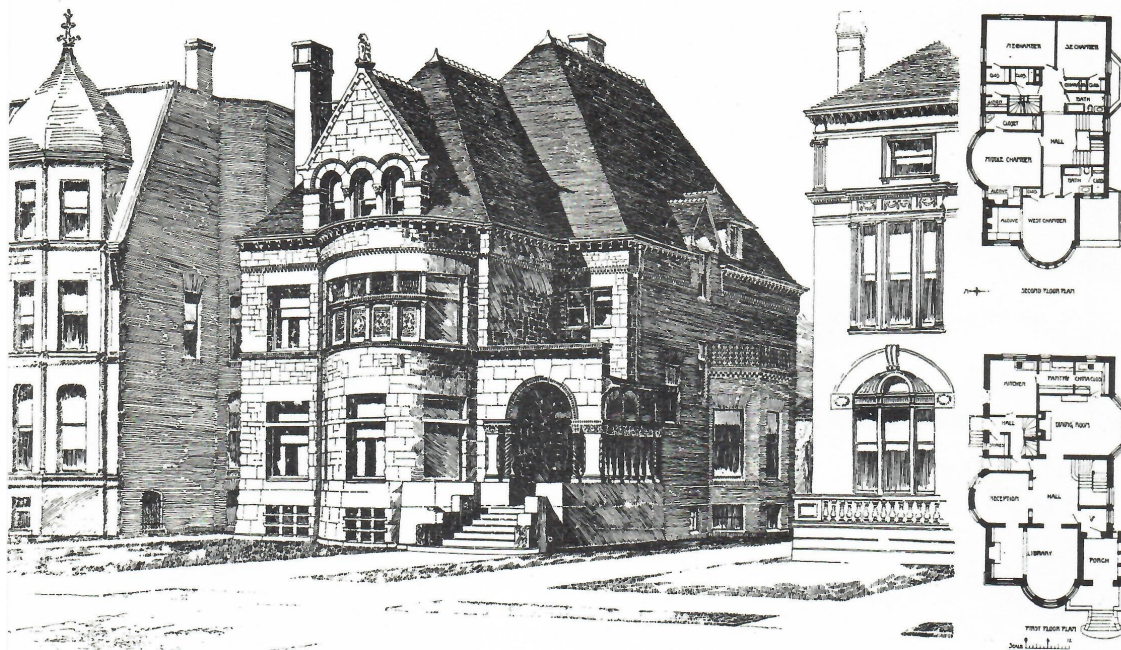
Like Sullivan and Root, Jenney felt the impact of H.H. Richardson's Romanesque revival. It no doubt seemed to be the answer to the American style that he had been seeking. One of his first works in this idiom was the Union League Club of 1884 which was described as "Lombardic."<sup>29</sup> Jenney never used Richardson's style for his commercial structures, but he frequently employed it in his smaller works. Montgomery Schuyler rightly criticized most followers of Richardson for being concerned with detail and not comprehending his broad and simple solutions. Jenney's works did not partake of the vice of over ornamentation. They follow Schuyler's general observations about Chicago's domestic architecture. He noted, "... the architect attempts to make the house of a rich man look like a home, rather than a palace ... here is very little ostentation of riches."<sup>30</sup> Two examples will suffice to illustrate his style.

<sup>28</sup> *Inland Architect*, "A Rural Church," I, 1883, pp. 20-21.

<sup>29</sup> *Inland Architect*, "The Union League Club," II, 1884, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> Montgomery Schuyler, "Glimpses of Western Architecture," *American Architecture and Other Writings*, I, Jordy and Coe, eds., Cambridge, Mass., 1961, p. 278.





The Snitzler House, 1894, summarized Jenney's neo-Romanesque style in house design. The exterior was solid and compact with little extraneous decoration. The plan was as free as any found during the period. There was a great central hall from which radiated the living and reception areas. These were accompanied by a great fireplace and a monumental staircase. The large spatial units could be read on the outside through the projection of bays.<sup>31</sup>

What was probably his best design in the Romanesque mode recalled his first attempts in Chicago to build structures that were in some relation to their landscape settings. The refectory for Humboldt Park, designed in 1892, was in some ways prophetic. It seemed to nestle into the landscape with its long horizontal rhythms.<sup>32</sup>

The firm of Jenney and Mundie did some versions of what has since been called the Shingle Style, but Jenney continued to use an exposed frame as his favorite means of architectural expression. In a style we call Tudor today, and that he called Gothic, he carried his romantic principles into the 1890's. Despite the World's Fair of 1893, his attitudes toward plan and function remained unchanged. He elucidated ideas both of planning and decoration while commenting upon Pliny's

31 *Inland Architect*, "The Snitzler House," XXIII, 1894.

32 *Inland Architect*, "Refectory, Humboldt Park," XXII, 1892.

*This residence for Mr. J. H. Snitzler was built in Chicago in 1894 in association with Howard Van Doren Shaw. A typical neo-Romanesque house, the plan was still very open. Drawing from the Inland Architect.*

description of his villa. In discussing decoration he helped stem the tide of eclectic vulgarity, and he at least partially anticipated Wright's integrated ornament. He wrote:

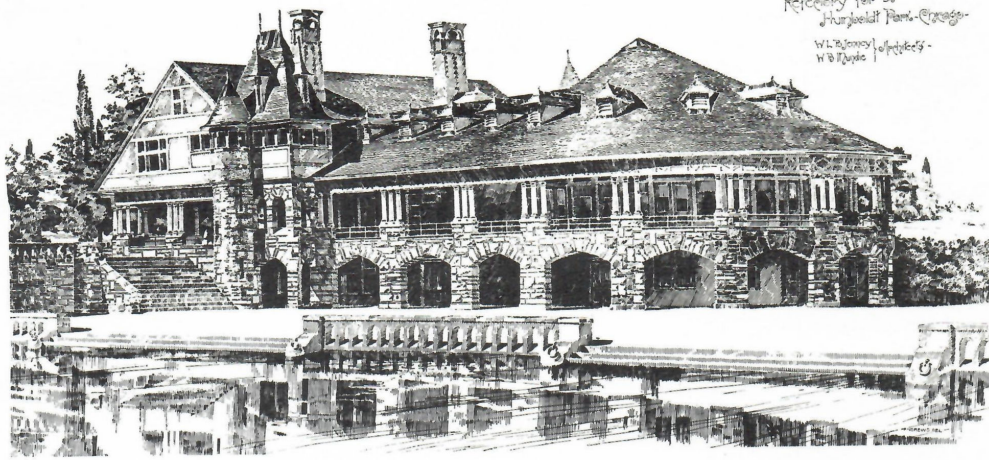
... it is evident that the plan was carefully studied, that each room should serve its purpose in the best possible way, and that no sacrifice was made to any other consideration...

If decoration is required then construction should be ornamented... that is accented, as for example the corners of posts, and cutting in the design in the edge of verge boards, etc. This is the opposite to the... applied ornament which characterizes such debased and transitional styles as the Queen Anne and colonial and many forms of classic renaissance and always indicates the low state of the arts... The woodwork of the interior should be well constructed and finely finished but very simple in design.<sup>33</sup>

These ideals were expressed in a handsome house that he built for himself in Bittersweet Place, Buena Park, Chicago in 1895. It was located to take advantage of the views of the lake and the adjoining Marine Hospital grounds. A broad veranda on the southeast corner provided a delightful retreat. The

33 Jenney, "A Reform in Suburban Dwellings," pp. 2-3.





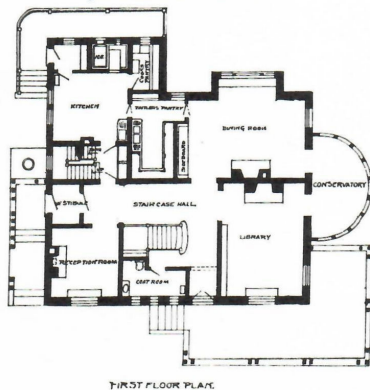
*The Refectory for Humboldt Park was designed in 1894. It was perhaps the most handsome work produced by Jenney's firm in the Richardsonian tradition. Drawing from the Inland Architect.*

exterior was "English villa; half timber, Gothic of simple character." The main entrance on the west side opened directly into a hall that extended to the east and continued across the library. It terminated in a small palm house, "producing an effect hardly to be expected in a house of such moderate dimensions."<sup>34</sup>

The question remains as to the exact role played by Jenney in Chicago architecture prior to the formation of the Prairie Style. It must be stated immediately that there is no evidence of any direct contact between Jenney and Wright. Wright made only the most passing references to Jenney in his

<sup>34</sup> *Inland Architect*, "Residence of William Le Baron Jenney," XXV, 1895.

*At right is the house Jenney designed for himself in 1895. It illustrated his adherence to Romantic principles to the end of his career. The first floor plan of the house is shown below. Illustrations from the Inland Architect.*



writing. Before coming to Adler and Sullivan, Wright worked for Lyman Silsbee and Beers, Clay and Dutton in 1887.<sup>35</sup> It was, nevertheless, possible that he was touched by some of the ideas which radiated from Jenney's firm.

Jenney was as interested in ideas as he was in buildings. He conceived of himself as much a teacher as an architect. He regretted not accepting a teaching post early in his career and seized the opportunity offered by the University of Michigan because, "... There is an opportunity for research and theoretical labor that does not occur in practice ..."<sup>36</sup> Jenney considered his firm as much an atelier as a business enterprise. He boasted, "... in my atelier in Chicago in the 70's the student earned

<sup>35</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials*, New York, 1942, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Letter: W.L.B. Jenney to President James B. Angell, 12 Jan. 1876, *University of Michigan Historical Collection*.



his expenses with no charge for instruction . . . " He also loaned his draftsmen books and recommended others which could be found at the library. Each of his students was moved from one project to another so that he would be given a well-balanced education.<sup>37</sup>

Besides the romantic aspects of planning and the integrity of materials already noted one finds certain similarities in attitude between Jenney and Wright that are not found between Wright and Sullivan.<sup>38</sup> Wright's reaction to Japanese architecture resulting from the Fairs of 1876 and 1893 is well-known. A sensitivity to like architectural qualities occurred even earlier in Jenney. He was certainly among the first important nineteenth century architects to experience "oriental" architecture first hand. His knowledge of the bamboo frame structures of the Philippines and East Indies<sup>39</sup> has been cited as the source of his skyscraper construction.<sup>40</sup> It also may have been behind his ready acceptance of the frame for architectural expression.

Far more important was Jenney's attachment to Viollet-le-Duc.<sup>41</sup> The writings of the great French architectural critic seem not to have impressed Sullivan<sup>42</sup> unduly, but he was almost venerated by Frank Lloyd Wright. When requesting texts for his courses at the University of Michigan, Jenney wrote to President Angell regarding the *Entretiens*:

With regard to Viollet-le-Duc Mr. Van Brunt translated only Volume I and does not contemplate as far as I can learn to translate the second volume at present. This book is very valuable and I contemplate using it extensively . . .<sup>43</sup>

Just when Jenney became aware of Viollet-le-Duc cannot be said exactly, but it is almost inconceivable that he did not encounter his name during his Paris days in the 1850's. The first volumes of the *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française de XI<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup>*

37 William Le Baron Jenney, "An Old Atelier in the Seventies," *Western Architect*, X, 1907, p. 72.

38 The aesthetic tension between Sullivan and Wright was described by Grant Manson, "Sullivan and Wright, An Uneasy Union of Celts," *Architectural Review*, CXVIII, 1955, pp. 297-300.

39 Jenney, *Autobiography*, pp. 2-3.

40 Mundie, *Skeleton Construction, Its Origin and Development Applied to Architecture*, Pt. II, p. 10.

41 Another curious parallel between Jenney and Wright was a mutual respect for Owen Jones who wrote *Grammar of Ornament*, London, 1856. Wright discovered Jones as well as Viollet-le-Duc in Madison. Jenney commented upon and quoted Jones extensively. Scully, *The Shingle Style*, p. 162 and Jenney, *Principles and Practice of Architecture*, pp. 9-10.

42 Hugh Morrison, *Louis Sullivan, Prophet of Modern Architecture*, New York, 1962, p. 266.

43 Letter: W.L.B. Jenney to President James B. Angell, 8 Aug. 1876. *University of Michigan Historical Collection*.

*siècle* began appearing in 1854.<sup>44</sup> During the last year of Jenney's studies at the *École centrale*, 1856, Viollet-le-Duc opened his atelier and began a series of lectures that were open to the public.<sup>45</sup> The first chapters of *Entretiens* were published in 1863 followed by *Histoire de l'habitation humaine* in 1875.<sup>46</sup> The last was published in the United States the following year in the *American Architect* as *Habitations of Man*.<sup>47</sup>

Jenney maintained cultural ties with France all his life and probably was one of the few (if not only) French-trained architects in the area during his early years in Chicago. In 1869, he copied a Swiss-style chalet that had been built at the Paris Exposition of 1867.<sup>48</sup> Three of his draftsmen in the 70's were French and he regretted that he did not have his "students" learn French.<sup>49</sup> From the very first, therefore, Jenney's firm was perhaps one of the most important sources of Viollet-le-Duc's rationalism in the Midwest.

Frank Lloyd Wright encountered Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire raisonné* while still a student in Madison. Years later, he offered the *Entretiens* to his son John Lloyd as the only worthwhile text on architecture.<sup>50</sup> One is tempted to think that Wright read Jenney's "Lectures on Architecture" published in the *Inland Architect* in 1883 and 1884 based upon Viollet-le-Duc's *Habitations of Man* and Fergusson's *History of Architecture* (a fact that he acknowledged).<sup>51</sup> Regardless of the sources, Wright synthesized ideas similar to those of Jenney's with impressions as widely diverse as Froebel kindergarten blocks, Silsbee's shingle style, Japanese temples and Louis Sullivan's nature mysticism to form a new architecture. Perhaps the fusion was the result of the long conversations Wright had with the *Lieber Meister*. Perhaps Jenney's ideas, which had little meaning for Sullivan, took on a new dimension as they were reworked in the course of the dialogue.

Doubtlessly, Jenney's greatest contribution to the Prairie Style was that he simply helped to clear the way for more radical forms by preaching functionalism, embracing romanticism, and damning mindless eclecticism.

44 Hubert Damisch, *Viollet-le-Duc, l'architecture raisonnée*, Paris, 1964, p. 177.

45 *Revue générale de l'architecture*, XIV, 1856, Col. 392.

46 Damisch, *Viollet-le-Duc, l'architecture raisonnée*, p. 177.

47 Scully, *The Shingle Style*, p. 35.

48 Jenney, *Principles and Practice of Architecture*, Example "G." The house was constructed with a wooden frame that supported a yellow brick fill.

49 Jenney, "An Old Atelier in the Seventies," p. 74.

50 John Lloyd Wright, *My Father Who Is on Earth*, New York, p. 69.

51 William Le Baron Jenney, "Lectures on Architecture," *Inland Architect*, I, 1883-1884, pp. 18ff. and II, 1884, p. 159.