

# Leaving a landmark

by [Martin E. Marty](#) in the [October 13, 1999](#) issue

As we moved out of the Old Colony building a few days ago, I remembered having written about the place back in 1977 when it—along with the Fisher building to the north and the Manhattan building to the south—was being considered for landmark status. I quoted *Chicago Sun-Times* architecture critic Paul Gapp: "Holabird and Roche designed the 1894 Old Colony, the only remaining downtown building of its time marked by gracefully rounded corner bays. The structure proclaims itself with typical Chicago vigor, and the use of portal arches in its windbreaking system was an important achievement in engineering history. . . . Loss of even one of the Big Three would be a tragedy." The *Chicago Tribune* wrote, "Some say the smell of death is already upon them."

We asked then for "prayers and support." We must have received both, since all three buildings are still full of life. But though the Old Colony retains its "typical Chicago vigor," the *Century* is moving on. The Old Colony will probably go condo—as the Fisher and Manhattan buildings already have. The neighborhood is changing from being a low-rent office area to being a high-rent residential area.

John Buchanan and David Heim have surrendered those "gracefully rounded bays" for the gracelessly square windows of our new building. I wrote back then that Dean Peerman "would be alienated for life were he dislodged from a National Landmark Pile of paperwork" that filled his office. They tell me a separate van carried much of that pile—accumulated in the years since Dean joined the staff in 1959—to our new home.

About myself I wrote, "Above my office door is a huge red-and-white illuminated FIRE ESCAPE sign." I no longer have a sign, an office door or an office, but I never found reason to escape. Instead, I've cycled from contributing to associate to senior and now back to contributing editor, and I still love to drop in at the office. Now we are all escaping, going into exile and on to a new beginning.

In the 1940s the city tore down our old home on Dearborn Street to make room for the Eisenhower Expressway, so in '41 we moved up the street to 407, where we

resided for exactly half the *Century's* 116-year history. Now we've "moved up" to the Monroe building at 104 S. Michigan Avenue. This building, too, was designed by Holabird and Roche, in 1912. If you check out a book on Chicago architecture, you will be invited to "step inside to see the vaulted lobby with its glazed Rockwood tile."

As the staff adjusted to the new office, some older-timers may have been caught wiping a nostalgic tear but then smiling as they looked around at this wonderful, not-yet-landmarked space, where this weekly will be produced, one hopes, for many years to come—with Chicago vigor and grace.