



# CHICAGO TEMPLE BUILDING



# INNOVATION, RESILIENCE, AND ICONICITY. THIS IS CHICAGO.

The Chicago Temple Building, majestically situated at Washington Boulevard and Clark Street, is more than an architectural landmark—it's a narrative that mirrors Chicago's very essence. Founded in 1831 by Methodist circuit riders—six years before the city's incorporation—it is Chicago's oldest church. Its journey from a log cabin to a towering skyscraper encapsulates the resilience, innovation, and indomitable spirit that define the city. What began as a congregation in members' homes later upgraded to a log cabin church in 1834, which was ambitiously moved across the river in 1838 to the "Methodist Corner." In 1845, they replaced the cabin with a brick church featuring a 148-foot spire. By 1858, they erected a four-story multi-use building with commercial spaces below and worship areas above—a precursor to modern mixed-use developments—reflecting Chicago's practical and forward-thinking ethos.

The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 razed the building, but undeterred, they rebuilt on the same site, epitomizing the city's resilience and transforming adversity into opportunity. In the early 20th century, as skyscrapers emerged, Chicago's strict height limits capped structures at around 260 feet, frustrating developers. The congregation's vision of a skyscraper church faced significant regulatory hurdles. In 1922, architects Holabird & Roche proposed a skyscraper with a sanctuary below, offices above, and a 140-foot spire. Building Commissioner C.A. Bostrom initially denied the permit due to code violations on spire width, but the congregation's persistence mirrored Chicago's tenacity.

Suspensions of political motivations arose, as tensions existed between the Methodists and Mayor William Hale Thompson's administration, leading to speculation that permit issues were political retribution. After eight months, the city granted an exception, allowing a 556-foot spire, making it Chicago's tallest building at the time and setting a precedent that led to changes in building codes. The Temple's height exemption ignited both admiration and contention. The Chicago Tribune expressed frustration, contemplating redesigning its own building to surpass the Temple. In 1923, a new zoning ordinance introduced the "Nimmons Loophole," allowing taller structures through setbacks, leading to iconic buildings like the Wrigley Building and Tribune Tower. The Temple's perseverance propelled the city's architectural evolution.

The Chicago Temple Building's story reflects Chicago—a city confronting challenges and emerging stronger. The congregation's commitment, despite hurdles, exemplifies the city's relentless pursuit of progress and blend of practicality with aspiration. Today, the building stands as a testament to faith, resilience, and innovation, serving the community with worship spaces and prime offices. Its Gothic spire remains a symbol of aspiration, reflecting Chicago's motto: "Urbs in Horto"—City in a Garden.

The obstacles the Temple faced were catalysts propelling both congregation and city to greater heights. Its history is intertwined with pivotal moments in Chicago's development. It embodies the essence of a city unafraid to innovate and resilient in adversity.

**The Chicago Temple Building is not just a part of Chicago; it is Chicago.**





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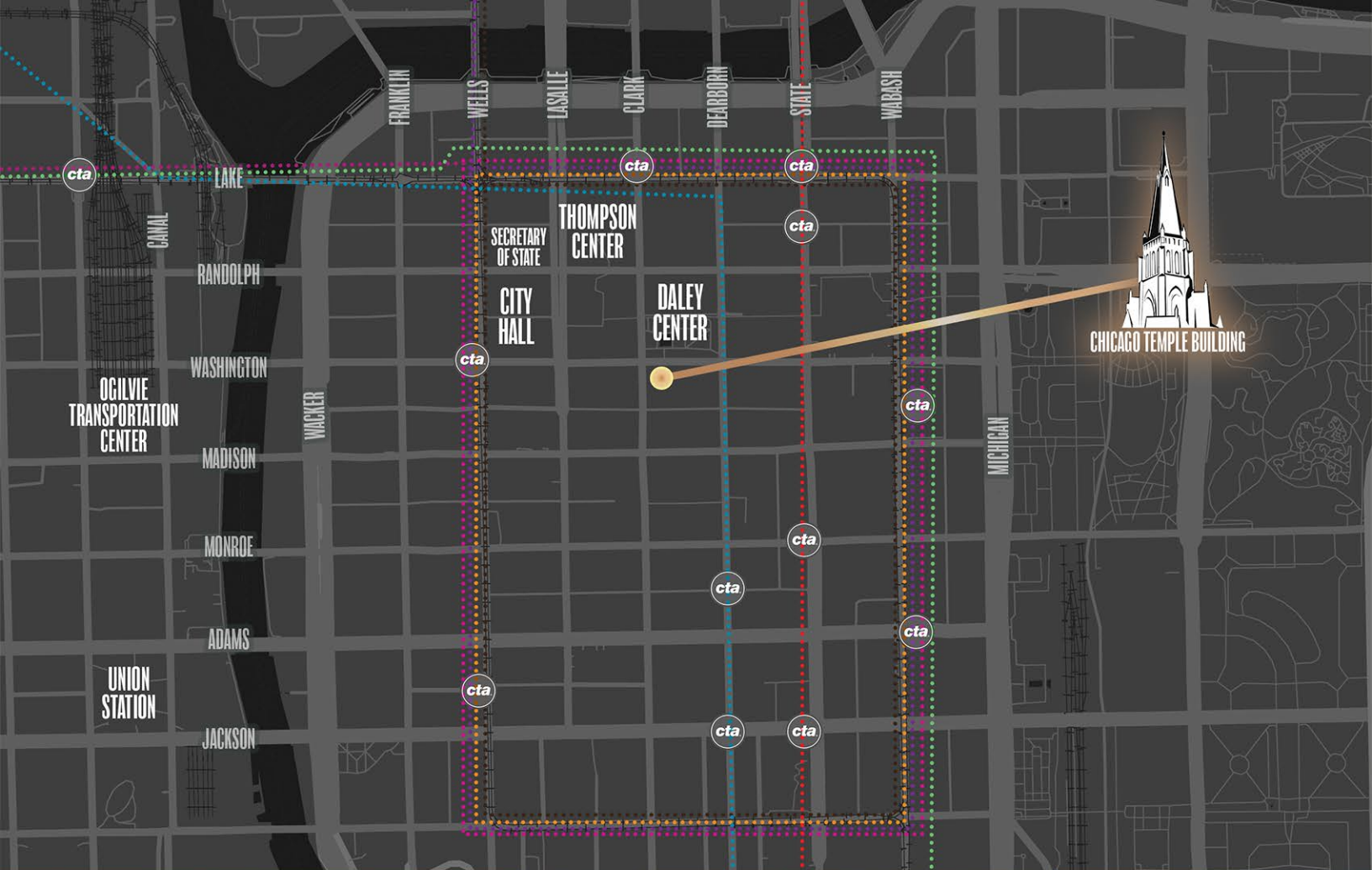
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