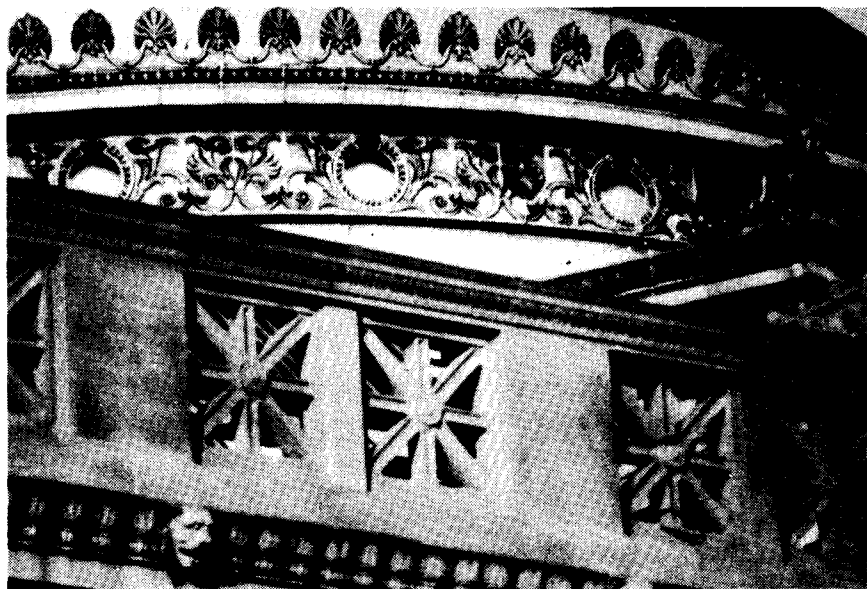


# Hyde Park's Legacy of Architectural Terra Cotta Ornament

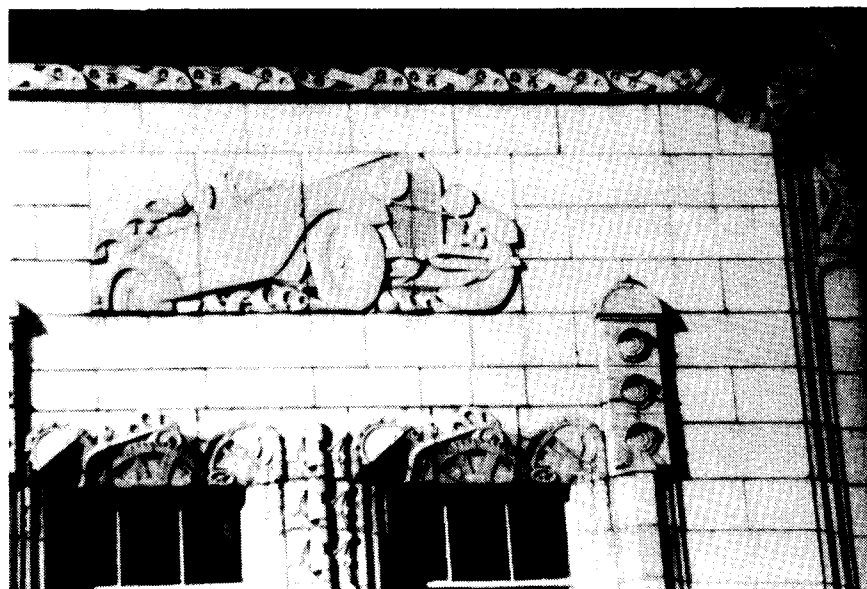
Text and Photographs by Edward A. Campbell

The anthemion motif on one of the domes of the Museum of Science and Industry and the motorcar relief on the Ritz Garage encompass about 5000 years in the history of ornament. Known also as the palmette or honeysuckle ornament, the anthemion is of great antiquity and was used for centuries before it appeared on the cresting of Greek temples, ca. B.C. 700; succeeding Classical, Romanesque, Renaissance and later buildings displayed this enduring design. Of similar antiquity is the egg and dart border seen on a capital of the porch of the Chandler house; it was applied to the entablature of King Solomon's Temple by the architect Hiram. The meander (a.k.a. Greek fret, Greek key, key, labrinth) shown above the egg and dart on the Chandler house, is a recurring form from the Natufian and Neolithic periods (ca. B.C. 10,300-4,500.) Each of these historic decorative elements is found in terra cotta form on many buildings in Hyde Park built between the 1890's and the 1930's. An eclectic taste for borrowing from historic styles prevailed during that time so that characteristic elements from many major periods are exemplified.

A partial listing of elements from the past would include from classical Greece; the anthemion, the meander, bead and reel, the acanthus, the Corinthian capital, the lily, the laurel branch, ivy, dentils; from Roman buildings: the festooned skulls of oxen, the fasces, the round arch, urns, the Vitruvian scroll, the rose, the foliated band; from the Byzantine: arabesques, fish, birds, vines; from the Romanesque: Christian symbols,



*The Museum of Science and Industry. 1893.  
Originally The Palace of Fine Arts. Charles B. Atwood, architect.*



*Ritz Garage. 1929. 5508 Lake Park Avenue.*



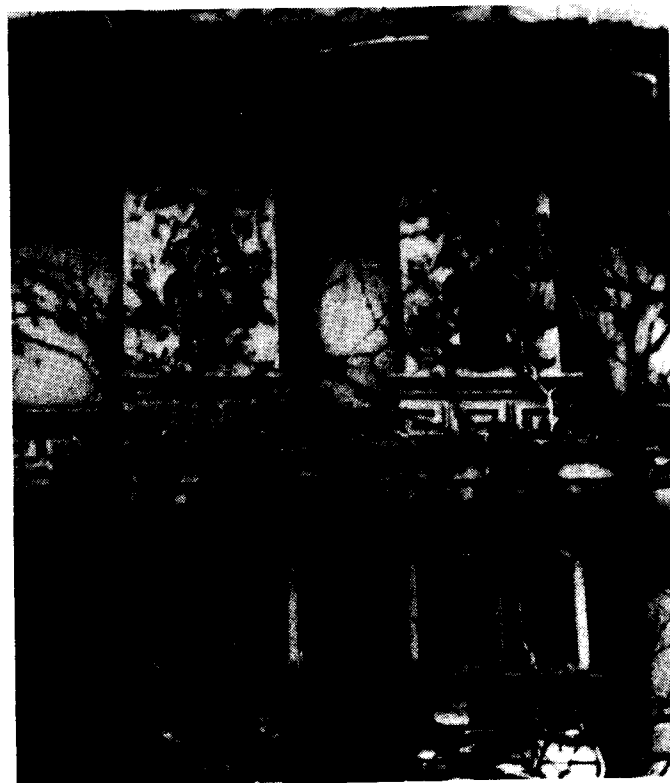
round arches with zigzags, rosettes, billets; from the Gothic: pointed arches with cusps and crockets, quatrefoils and trefoils, gargoyles, fleurs-de-lys; Tudor England is represented with elaborate chimneys, tablet flowers, paterae, four-centered door-heads, heraldic devices; Renaissance elements combine Classical cornices, consoles, capitals, friezes, pilaster shafts and pediments. Echos of other styles are found as well as twentieth century contributions in Art Deco and International Style.

The identification of ornament must be extended to include original designs of abstract patterns in relief, animal and plant forms, mythical and fantastic creatures, as well as allegorical studies and human figures and faces.

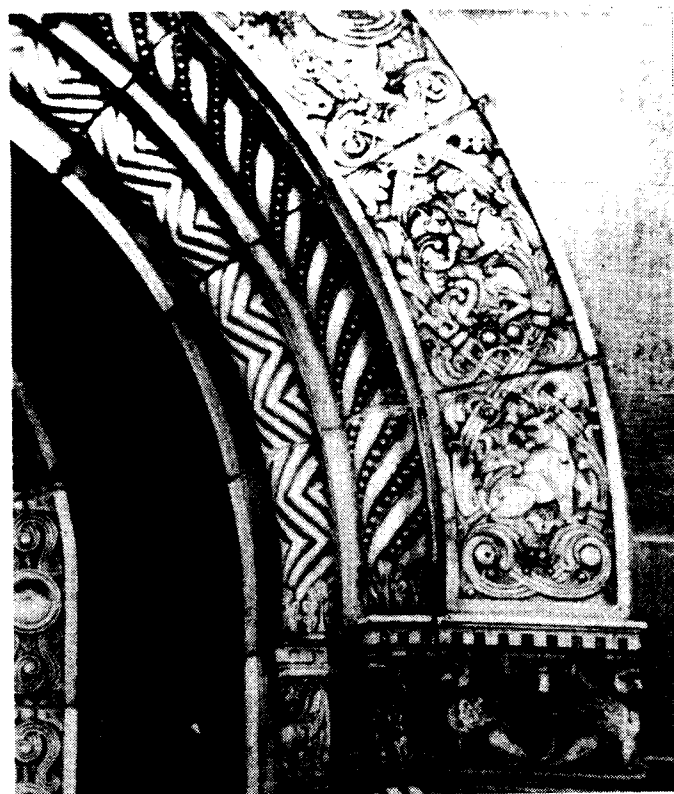
Terra cotta is molded clay which has been glazed and fired. For thousands of years it has served for utilitarian and decorative objects and has appeared as architectural ornament since the third and fourth millennia, B.C. Its modern manufacture began in England in the 19th century. The first major application in the United States for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts employed terra cotta imported from England in 1870.

In this country, the first terra cotta was produced around 1860 in imitation of cut stone ornaments for door and window caps, cornices and crestings, and chimney tops. With the improvement of manufacturing techniques in the 1870's and the development of new applications, particularly the sheathing of skyscrapers, the industry experienced tremendous expansion through the rest of the century and into the next; productions doubled between 1890 and 1900, and quadrupled between 1900 and 1912.

Glazed terra cotta became the characteristic facing and decorative material for American buildings between the 1890's and the 1930's.



*Chandler House. 5130 University Avenue, 1895.  
Treat and Foltz, architects.*



*The Barclay. 4940 East End Avenue. 1929.  
B. Leo Steif, architect.*