The Second Leiter Building: William Le Baron Jenny

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(Edited and with material added)
The Second Leiter Building was crafted with the intent to house a single, major retail establishment, while still leaving the ability to subdivide the space. Historically, the building has successfully fulfilled its purpose.

**Timeline**

- **1891-1898**: Siegel, Cooper & Co
- **1899-1931**: hosted tenants
- **1932-1986**: Sears, Roebuck & Co
- **1987-1998**: hosted tenants
- **January 14th 1997**: Building named Chicago landmark
- **1998**: Became home to Robert Morris University
Building Characteristics

Interior: Eight floors, each **50,000 square feet** with **16 foot ceilings**.

Exterior: The white Maine **granite** building runs **402 feet** long down State Street. The State Street façade consists of **nine bay windows** separated by wide **pilasters**. These pilasters are topped with simple capitals and along the entire structure runs an **unadorned cornice**. The Congress/Van Buren side has **three bay windows**, within each containing **four vertically aligned windows**.
• Interior: The building’s iron supports and steel beams opened interior walls. This innovation allowed masonry buildings capable of holding larger windows, ushering in more light and freeing up space otherwise taken by a light court.

• Exterior: The exterior of the building reflects an interior that is incredibly spacious. Henderson states that the “forward looking exterior foreshadows modernism,” and is thought to be a “manifestation of a new age.” Overall the modern composition of the building given the time frame proves how remarkable this building’s design was, and the effect it had on future architecture.

Henderson, “Sustainable Urban Future.”
Innovations, Technologies and Materials

- The First Leiter building, designed by William Le Baron Jenney in 1879, featured:
  - Seven stories
  - Skeleton frame with iron columns
  - Heavy exterior masonry
  - Terra-cotta fireproofing
  - Elevators

http://cdn2.all-art.org/Architecture/images15/architecture/50.jpg
• Jenney’s 1885 Home Insurance building was an improvement on the First Leiter.
  • Ten stories
  • Skeleton frame made of both iron and steel
  • Terra-cotta fireproofing
  • It was called the first ‘real’ skyscraper of the time

http://classconnection.s3.amazonaws.com/489/flashcards/877489/jpg/home_insurance_building1328586986832.jpg
The Second Leiter building (1891) is one of the earliest commercial buildings built with a steel skeletal frame.

- The beams and girders of the skeleton frame were steel, and the interior supports were cast iron.
  - This allowed a more spacious interior on all eight floors
  - The granite masonry did not need to be heavy to support the building so larger glass windows could be used for the exterior.
  - A light court was unnecessary so the space ordinarily designated for that could be used for other purposes
  - The design allowed for a spacious and naturally lit department store.

- Natural illumination of the interior space was a prime Jenney goal in developing steel frame construction.
Detail of a typical column-and-beam joint. Applied in Jenney’s Fair Store, constructed the same time as the Second Leiter.