Sears Tower Encyclopedia Article

Sears Tower

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The Sears Tower looms over downtown Chicago, an unmistakable symbol of the city's pride in its heritage as the birthplace of a uniquely American concept, the modern skyscraper. Built in 1974 to a height of 1,468 feet, the Sears Tower succeeded the Empire State Building as the world's tallest building, and held that title until 1996. The building was designed by the distinguished and world famous firm of architects, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill to serve as the corporate headquarters for Sears Roebuck and Company. Its architectural style, while incorporating significant engineering advances, relates back to the impersonal glass boxes of the 1950s and 1960s rather than looking forward to the more idiosyncratic towers of the 1980s and 1990s. Though large and impressive, the building never quite captured the hearts of Chicago's citizens in the way that the city's John Hancock Center did. Nevertheless, the Sears Tower epitomizes the bustling prairie metropolis that Carl Sandburg called the "City of Big Shoulders."

Further Reading:

Douglas, George H. *Skyscrapers: A Social History of the Very Tall Building in America.* Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland & Company, 1996.

Goldberger, Paul. *The Skyscraper.* New York, Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1992.