

## APPENDIX C. RICKER: ARCHITECT AND EDUCATOR

When Nathan C. Ricker (1843-1924) died, the student publication Archi remembered that he was affectionately called "good old Daddy Ricker," and that he had "inspired and guided the destinities of many prominent men." (Apr. 15, 1924)

Ricker wrote the story of his life when he was an old man; it is a remarkable paper,<sup>1</sup> documenting his experiences as an architect and educator and providing many insights into his era: Brought up in Maine, Ricker taught himself Latin, Botany, French and Geology--studies which later enabled him to graduate from the University after three years.<sup>year?</sup> Working in a mill and then as a competent carpenter in the building trade, he also made piano cases and repaired farm implements. Because of those experiences, and a strong interest in civil engineering, he entered the Illinois Industrial University to take the "course" in architecture. In his senior year the instructor who taught architectural design and rendering did not return and University Regent Gregory asked Ricker to take charge of the work; by teaching himself and three other students, he graduated from his own department the following March--thus becoming the first to graduate from an American college architectural

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<sup>1</sup>Nathan C. Ricker, "The Story of a Life," typewritten MS. autobiography (Urbana, 1922).

program. A regular appointment was then offered Ricker, providing he travel and study in Europe for six months; the young architect did so, studying at the Bauakademie in Berlin for six months where he learned the German system of instruction and gained valuable knowledge of architectural and art books that later served in establishing the University's outstanding architectural library.

Ricker was President of the Illinois Board of Examiners for eighteen years (aside from being Dean of the College of Engineering), as well as Chairman of the Illinois Commission for Codifying Building Laws. He was instrumental in getting the Architect's Registration Act passed, and held License Number One; the law did much to raise standards and the professional status of the architect. (Information obtained from E. L. Stouffer, Dec., 1963.)

Professor emeritus L. H. Provine remembered watching Ricker translate the volumes that were used for many years as textbooks: a dictionary at his elbow writing in fine longhand on a stenographer's tablet (some were written on parchment), and after typing the manuscript himself Ricker would then place it in the library for the students' use--all that done while on "vacation." (Interview with Provine, Dec., 1963.)