



# They All Fall Down: Richard Nickel's Struggle to Save America's Architecture

By Richard Cahan

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"Richard Nickel, whom I had the delight of knowing during his all too brief life, is one of the unsung heroes of Chicago architecture. He was not an architect himself, nor a designer. He simply took pictures, but what pictures! He was, for want of a better description, one of the most sensitive of architectural photographers. More than that, his life—and ironically, tragically and poetically, his death—were fused to Chicago architecture. How he died tells us how he lived: for the beauty in the works of Sullivan, Wright and the others. His story is one that must be told."

—**Studs Terkel**, author

"He was completely understanding of architecture and genius and of the quality of the work he was dealing with. He was single-minded in his pursuit and dedication to quality in history, art and architecture. That is an increasingly rare quality."

—**Ada Louise Huxtable**, former *New York Times* architecture critic

"Richard was an excellent photographer—sensitive and intelligent, and a very good craftsman".

—**John Szarkowski**, former Director, Photography, Museum of Modern Art, New York

"Richard Nickel was one of those who saw architecture, and who passionately and skillfully pursued its portrayal. He was one of a very small number, and to make his work known would be a fundamental service to architects, students, and teachers as well as to the art of architecture."

—**Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.**, architectural historian

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

If Chicago is an architecture lover's paradise today, it is largely due to the efforts of a single individual. Richard Nickel (1928-1972) was not "just a photographer who happens to take pictures of buildings," as he modestly called himself. He was a soft-spoken missionary whose passionate one-man campaign to preserve Chicago's ornate 19th century architectural masterpieces--earmarked for destruction by Mayor Richard J. Daley in the name of progress--inspired a nationwide movement. Richard Cahan's superb biography of Nickel depicts the photographer's heroic and ultimately tragic struggle to salvage everything he could get his hands on, first with his trusty view camera and then with a hacksaw and chisel.

#### From [Booklist](#)

You wouldn't expect to read about a photographer when you research American architecture, but Richard Nickel is an integral part of the story. A shy yet passionate man, Nickel developed a deep love for architecture and great skill as an architectural photographer. He also became one of the first to publicly demand the preservation of landmark buildings in Chicago, his hometown. Nickels would, undoubtedly, have been remembered for his stunning photographs and preservationist zeal, but his tragic, martyr-like death in the rubble of the once magnificent Stock Exchange Building in 1972 ensured his immortality. Cahan tells Nickel's story with tremendous empathy, setting it within a history of Chicago architecture, especially the work of Nickel's idol, Louis Sullivan. Nickel set himself the task of finding and documenting all of Sullivan's creations but soon discovered that many of those glorious structures were suffering from neglect or, worse, were about to become victims of urban renewal. The master photographer became a witness to those thoughtless demolitions, meticulously documenting the demise of buildings he loved. Not content with pictures, Nickel also became a devoted salvager of Sullivan ornament, enabling museums to preserve fragments of Sullivan's art. Now Cahan has preserved Nickel's memory in this handsome volume illustrated by more than 70 of Nickel's photographs. *Donna Seaman*

#### From the Publisher

This riveting biography chronicles the life of a crusader and the early days of the historic preservation movement. Beginning with a portrait of Nickel's youth on Chicago's West Side in the 1930's to his army service as a paratrooper and photographer, it progresses with his studies at the Institute of Design in the 1950's and his attempts thereafter to save Chicago's buildings, especially those of Louis Sullivan. Includes 70+ illustrations and a special portfolio of duotone photos, printed on fine paper, taken by Nickel during his lifetime.

### Users Review

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##### Judy Brewer:

Have you spare time for the day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity intended for spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to the Mall. How about open as well as read a book titled **They All Fall Down: Richard Nickel's Struggle to Save America's Architecture**? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You know beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can cleverer

than before. Do you agree with their opinion or you have various other opinion?

**Patrick Myers:**

Spent a free time and energy to be fun activity to do! A lot of people spent their free time with their family, or their particular friends. Usually they accomplishing activity like watching television, planning to beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your own free time/ holiday? Can be reading a book can be option to fill your free of charge time/ holiday. The first thing that you'll ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to try look for book, may be the book untitled They All Fall Down: Richard Nickel's Struggle to Save America's Architecture can be fine book to read. May be it could be best activity to you.

**Sara Kelly:**

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**Mildred Kershner:**

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