

After graduating, he returned to the Chicago area and worked for fellow Evanstonian Daniel Burnham. He was there for seven years, leaving when he won a Falkenau Traveling Scholarship in 1904 from the Chicago Architectural Club.

This money enabled him to travel through Europe. On his return he opened his own practice, Tallmadge and Watson, with Vernon Watson with whom he had worked with in Burnham's office.

Tallmadge lived in Evanston and Watson lived in Oak Park. They initially developed a practice building houses in these suburbs, mostly versions of what became known as the Prairie Style.

Their houses were like the work being done by Frank Lloyd Wright and by many of Chicago's younger "progressive" architects. Tallmadge and Watson's houses were mostly stucco with timber trim that banded windows together. Many of their houses had other Prairie Style features such as low-pitched hipped roofs with wide overhangs. Margery Perkins' 1984 book *Evanstoniana* lists 25 houses in Evanston designed by Tallmadge and Watson.



Linthicum House, 1315 Forest Ave. Credit: James Brannigan

My favorite is the Linthicum House built on Forest Avenue in 1907, with its wide front porch supported on masonry piers, three-part windows, and central arched dormer. It is a bit reminiscent of work by architect George Maher.



Kretsinger House, 1000 Forest Ave. Credit: Granacki Historic Consultants

Also equally interesting is the Kretsinger House also on Forest Avenue a few blocks to the south. It has Prairie influences which seem to be coupled with references to the Austrian Arts and Crafts movement.

While their early work was residential, Tallmadge and Watson's first important nonresidential commission was the 1909 Gothic Revival First Methodist Church in Evanston. By 1914, they had designed over 30 churches and were known for their ecclesiastical work, which also included Evanston's Colonial Revival First Congregational Church on Hinman Avenue.



First United Methodist Church, 516 Church St. Credit: Granacki Historic Consultants

While Chicago's younger progressive architects were against the eclectic use of historic architectural styles in 1915, the *Western Architect* magazine, writing about Tallmadge and Watson's work, noted, "...they had no hesitancy in using historic forms." Tallmadge would later write in his book, *The Story of Architecture in America*, about the demise of the Prairie School after World War I, that, "...the failure of this style to rise beyond a merely local movement or to exist beyond the generation may be ascribed to several factors: it never became fashionable. Not enough people of consequence adopted it to give it authority..." Perhaps because it was too idiosyncratic to become a model for the typical American house.

While Vernon Watson was considered the primary design talent in their firm, Tallmadge was better known both locally and nationally. In addition to practicing architecture, he was a historian and the author of numerous articles and three books on architecture including *Architecture in Old Chicago*. He is credited with coining the term "Chicago School" (of architecture) to describe the early 20th century progressive commercial and residential work done here.

Tallmadge was also an educator. He taught architecture from 1906 to 1926 at the Armour Institute which later became IIT (Illinois Institute of Technology). He also lectured at the School of the Art Institute. Vernon Watson retired from their practice in 1936, but Tallmadge continued to practice architecture and to write until his untimely death in 1940 in an Illinois Central train accident in downstate Illinois.

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