INTRODUCTION

Among the many who will examine the building today are doubtless, mechanics capable to judge the workmanship. I hope they will examine it critically, for it will bear it. We, who have watched the building, from day to day, from beginning to end, take pleasure in assuring our friends that it is thoroughly built, that it is just as solid and substantial as it looks, and that the State has received a full equivalent for every dollar put into it.

19th Report (1898), 139. James M. White was speaking for himself and senior architect Nathan C. Ricker, at the dedication ceremony, June 8, 1897. The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois published Reports, herein cited as Report, preceded by volume number and followed by year of publication.
The story of the original library building, now known as Altgeld Hall, goes beyond Trustees' reports or an analysis of its architectural design, for forgotten letters and clippings in brittle scrapbooks yield evidence that the men who participated in the initial planning and budgeting stages were also responsible, in their way, for its style. They groped and vacillated but were determined to have an impressive, enduring monument, surely the building's rugged and formidable appearance expresses that resolve.

When Andrew Sloan Draper was inaugurated as University President, Governor John Peter Altgeld spoke of their shared ideals: they wanted an institution, he declared,

which shall be free from the dilletantism that is weakening the East, and that shall inculcate those fundamental principles of liberty, of national union and supremacy, and of local self-government that have given our country its marvelous career of progress and development. We want an institution that shall be thoroughly modern in spirit and effort, and from whose halls shall go forth men and women of such strong moral fiber, such industry and such fervor of soul, that they will lead our people on to loftier planes and greater glory. We must have in this State a university that all the people in the world may be blessed by its light. We must have a university whose fame shall be co-extensive with civilization.

Altgeld saw the University as "modern in spirit," but in a continuum of established traditions, a theme reiterated often by the

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1 John P. Altgeld, "Address," Proceedings and Addresses at the Inauguration of Andrew Sloan Draper, Nov. 15, 1894 (Urbana, 1895), 23. See fn p.6
architects and artist. Ricker and White were satisfied that the new building was "solid and substantial," and Newton A. Wells remarked that his decorations were meant to create an atmosphere of historical association, "so that those entering these halls should feel [that] the spirit of the mighty past was brooding here and inspiring to the emulation of its noblest achievement."¹

¹Champaign County News, Mar. 17, 1900.