

At Loeb & Loeb, glimpses of the past and a view of the present

Dropping into a Chicago law firm to find walls adorned with photos and paintings that depict the city is certainly not uncommon. But most firms don't do it like Loeb & Loeb.

The office — one of seven the multi-service firm has worldwide — has hallways, stairwells and conference rooms loaded with framed black-and-white photographs of the city dating back to the 19th century.

When office head Douglas Masters helped open the office in the 321 N. Clark St. building eight years ago, he and his colleagues were inspired by Loeb & Loeb's New York office when determining how to adorn the 32,649 square feet of space on the 22nd and 23rd floors.

"That office has photographs of black-and-white New York sports," Masters said. "When we were considering options for this office, it seemed like (Chicago images) made sense because it's what we were used to looking at in the New York office."

As with many downtown high-rises, the large windows offer spectacular views of the city — especially the corn-cob towers of Marina City — that make for an interesting contrast to the pictures on the walls: modern views coupled with photographs that any city history buff would appreciate.



Photos by Ralph Greenslade

Office Director Douglas Masters' office

"I think my office might need therapy," Masters said, jokingly.

Indeed, his office is singular, as it is a melange of all the things that represent his personality and his work — namely his intellectual property sports practice with a list of high-profile clients including the NCAA, the Women's Tennis Association and individual athletes such as NFL quarterback Robert Griffin III.

Atop a large cabinet in his office are a row of lined-up seat cushions branded with the logos of NCAA basketball tournaments and Super Bowls he's attended. Masters has attended major NCAA games since 2002.

"I've been fortunate over the years to do some fun things with my sports practice," he said.

Most items in his office are work-related, except for a few things — including the inflatable walker his assistant gave him as a gag gift



A photo of Oak Street Beach hangs in the firm's stairwell.



A view of Madison Street after a 1916 newspaper strike.



when he turned 50 and artwork from his wife Jane, an English teacher. Perhaps the highlight of Masters' space is a life-size statue of a black Labrador retriever. It's a mascot of sorts that's often brought out for office parties.

"My son and I found it at a garage sale, and I kept it in our living room because we thought it was funny," Masters said. "My wife redid our living room and kicked the dog to the curb. I couldn't bear to see it go, so I brought it to the office."

City history

On the wall of the main conference room on the 22nd floor is the firm's largest photo, a 25-foot-long panoramic picture of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. The picture captures a wide swath of the fire's damage with a small break near the middle that can barely be seen from a distance.

Taken by Joseph Battersby, "Chicago Fire of 1871, Aftermath" offers a view looking northeast from Lake Street and Wacker Drive from the roof of a five-story building that escaped

the fire. Eighty hours of Photoshop work were required to clean up the 130-year-old image.

Other photos include:

- An uncredited picture of Chicago's great Ferris wheel, taken in 1893. The wheel was the first to hold the name "Ferris," as it was created as the centerpiece of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, a 400th anniversary celebration of Christopher Columbus' arrival to the New World as well as a celebration of the city's resurrection after the fire.

- A 1959 photo of the victory celebration following the Chicago White Sox's American League pennant win. The photo depicts Mayor Richard J. Daley speaking to a crowd, next to White Sox owner Bill Veeck and Daley's then-teenage son, Richard M. Daley. The photographer, Art Shay, still manages a weekly photo blog on chicagoist.com.

- Carl Ulrich's "View of Michigan Avenue," taken several feet above Wacker Drive and Michigan Avenue. The image, captured at some point in the 1920s, shows the then-brand-new Chicago Tribune Tower, which was completed

in 1925. At the corner below where the photo was taken is a bronze marker designating the site of Fort Dearborn, the settlement built at the beginning of the 19th century that is considered Chicago's first white settlement.

- Fred Ekhart's 1908 photo depicts Fire Engine No. 32 traveling north on the 500 block of South Michigan Avenue with the Congress Hotel annex in the background. The "engine" consisted of several galloping horses pulling a man and a cart holding fire-fighting equipment.

- George Kufrin's "Construction of Prudential Building" shows men working on beams many stories high while building the high-rise. The 1955 photo was taken the same year construction was completed on the building, which served as headquarters for Prudential's Mid-America company. It was the first new skyscraper erected in the city in more than two decades and was the last building connected to Chicago Tunnel Co.'s underground freight tunnel network. ■

By Dustin J. Seibert



A panoramic view of damage from the Great Chicago Fire in the firm's main conference room.