



## A PRESENTATION ON THE CASS GILBERT SOCIETY MEDIA PROJECT, NOVEMBER 15, 2005

Dianne C. Steinbach, Executive Producer for Arts and Cultural Production for Twin Cities Public Television, and Daniel Pierce Bergin, producer-director, will present a preview of **Cass Gilbert: Standing the Test of Time**, and talk about the experience of making the documentary. It has been prepared in two versions, one of 15 minutes for distribution to schools throughout the state, and one of 30 minutes for future airing on TPT. The project is being released in DVD and video formats and will be accompanied by educational materials for classroom use and study. It will also be available in streaming video through the TPT website.

Daniel Pierce Bergin is an award-winning television producer, media educator, and independent filmmaker. Bergin has won and been nominated for regional Emmys for his documentary work, youth television, and news feature producing. Among his recent acclaimed works is **North Star: Minnesota's Black Pioneers**. Dianne Steinbach has more than 25 years of experience in creating award-winning performing arts and cultural documentary production for TPT.

Funding for the documentary has been provided by a major gift from The John R. Cross Fund in memory of Bert and Bernice Cross, with additional support from the Katherine B. Anderson Fund, the Ramsey Hill Association, the Minnesota Humanities Commission, and members of the Cass Gilbert Society. Thanks are due to the Cass Gilbert Society Media Project Committee, chaired by Wendy Weimer, with members Linda Bjorklund, Jim Hirsh, Lana Mahoney, Troy Musel, and Cindy Stephani.

Also that evening, the officers and board members for 2006 will be presented.

Join us at the University Club, 420 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, on Tuesday, November 15, 2005, at 7:00 P.M. Admission is free to Society members. There is a nominal charge for nonmembers. Refreshments will be served after the lecture. Support for Cass Gilbert Society lectures is provided in part by the Minnesota Humanities Commission.

Cass Gilbert by Capital Dome, 1901  
*Minnesota Historical Society*



### Upcoming Events

February 2006

Presentation on the Montana tour. Date to be announced.

**“CAPITOL VIEWS: BUILDING, PUBLIC LIFE, AND CULTURE”**  
**A CAPITOL CENTENNIAL SYMPOSIUM**  
**A Report by Marjorie Pearson**

The Capitol Centennial Symposium, sponsored by the University of Minnesota College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (CALA), took place on October 15, 2005, in the Ralph Rapson Hall Auditorium, CALA, at the University of Minnesota. A varied group of presenters considered the Minnesota Capitol from diverse viewpoints. **Katherine Solomonson**, Associate Professor in the Department of Architecture, discussed “Cass Gilbert and the State Capitol: Regional and National Perspectives.” Professor Solomonson noted that when the Capitol opened in 1905, it was considered a wonder and that from the view of the East, Minnesota had leaped into civilization. Minnesotans and Gilbert knew that the design of the Capitol was the result of a series of advances that had transformed the city of St. Paul from a frontier settlement to a thriving transport and merchandising hub connected to both coasts by the expanding railroad empire of James J. Hill. It was these advances that brought progressive architectural ideals to the Northwest and helped Gilbert foster a transcontinental architectural practice. In “The Large and Small of It: The Many Forms of Minnesota’s Capitol,” **Leigh Roethke**, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Art History, discussed the many ways that Minnesotans had appropriated the imagery of the Capitol and made it their own. **Lance Neckar**, Associate Dean of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, highlighted “Minnesota Malls: Cass Gilbert, the Capitol, and the University.” Gilbert believed that the architect should be the mastermind of the building and the site. In 1902, he began to a study of how to design the approaches to the Capitol and create an appropriate setting for the building. His proposals went through a series of changes during the next few years and were never completely implemented, due to financial and political constraints. Some of his planning concepts were transferred to a plan for the Northrop Mall at the University of Minnesota. Neckar noted that Gilbert might not recognize either mall as executed, but that both spaces work well as places of public assembly.

Following a break, **Dewey Thorbeck**, Director of the Center for Rural Design, spoke on “The State Capitol and Rural Minnesota.” Professor Thorbeck dealt with the role of public buildings in shaping culture. In particular he saw county courthouses as

counterparts to the Capitol and posited that the presence of the courthouse in a rural center was similar to that of the Capitol in the urban center. In “The State Capitol in the American Social Imaginary,” **Anthony Arrigo**, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Rhetoric and Scientific and Technical Communication, discussed the importance of the Capitol as a symbol and a representation of ideals. Arrigo explained the term “social imaginary,” coined by Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, as a kind of collective consciousness, how all citizens relate to community and culture. He related his personal experience of seeing the building it was. His talk explored the question of why he knew what the building was without prior knowledge. Finally, **Hy Berman**, Professor Emeritus in the Department of History, spoke on “The New State Capitol and the New Century: Minnesota Enters the Modern Industrialized World.” He placed the building in the context of its time in a Minnesota that had made a major transition in a span of about 25 years in population, culture, and economy. No longer largely an agricultural state populated by Northeast transplants and Northern European immigrants, Minnesota had been transformed by the railroads and new industries, including mining, milling, and lumbering. This in turn had led to new waves of immigrants, many from Eastern and Southern Europe. These changes helped foster political shifts to urban reform and led to the end of Republican hegemony in Minnesota politics.

The afternoon concluded with a panel discussion on “The State Capitol in Public Life,” chaired by **Kristine Miller**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture. She was joined by Professor Berman; Dean Thomas Fisher of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture; Carolyn Kompelien, Capitol Site Manager for the Minnesota Historical Society; architect Phillip Koski; and Nancy Stark, Executive Secretary of the Capitol Area Architecture and Planning Board. Much of the discussion focused on the public perception of the building and prospects for its rehabilitation and restoration, including the intriguing question of what would be built if something were to happen to the existing building. Special thanks are due to Dr. Nancy A. Miller, who coordinated the event.

## A REPORT ON THE CASS GILBERT SOCIETY VISIT TO MONTANA

Cass Gilbert contributed richly to Montana's architecture from the 1880s through the turn of the twentieth century. The twenty members who were fortunate enough to visit Montana in October saw his wonderful buildings firsthand.

The weekend began with walking tours in Helena. Chere Jiusto, Executive Director of the Montana Preservation Alliance, introduced the group to the city's history through a visit to a pioneer cabin and Reeder's Alley, an area of Helena that has been lovingly restored and remains a quaint, but vibrant commercial area. The group walked Last Chance Gulch to tour Gilbert's Placer Hotel – now a mixture of commercial and residential suites. Kate Hampton of the Montana Historical Society was the guide through the historic mansion district in West Helena. A visit to the original Northern Pacific Railroad Depot building, now a multiple residence, was a highlight of the afternoon. The owner of the property, Andy Onushco, has a great appreciation for the building's history and has long-range plans to restore it. The first evening included a tour through the Seligman House (1887)– Cass Gilbert's largest and most thoroughly restored single-family residence in the country. The group of twenty-one sat down to a gourmet meal in the mahogany-paneled dining room. The gracious hosts, Samantha Sanchez and Tim Coulter, did not consider the visit unusual; they often open their house for events to benefit the Helena community.

The second day started with a scenic bus trip to Butte. Cass Gilbert's Metals Bank Building (1906) still remains one of the tallest and most commanding structures in the city. Mitzi Rossilin, archeologist, and Mary McCormick, historic

preservation expert, work for Renewable Technologies Inc., a tenant in the building. They guided the group through the structure, arranged a wonderful lunch, and led the group on a walking tour of historic Butte. The afternoon included a tour of the grand Montana State Capitol in Helena – recently restored for 26 million dollars. The weekend concluded that evening at Gilbert's Montana Club (1903-1905) in Helena with a guided tour and a delicious meal. Following dinner, Steven Flanders, co-editor of *Cass Gilbert, Life and Work* (Norton Press), and Tom Blanck, an architect and contributor to the same book, made presentations on aspects of Gilbert's work.

The Cass Gilbert Society is also grateful to the following Montanans who helped to make this trip successful: Boyd Taylor, owner of the Metals Bank Building who graciously opened his property; Lea Drosten, manager of the Placer Hotel who provided the brave souls in the group the opportunity to peek into nooks and crannies not normally seen by the public; Paul Putz, Montana Historic Preservation Officer, who created wonderful maps of Gilbert projects in Helena; Kathy Macefield, Helena City Planning Office, who identified resources and provided guidance throughout the planning process; Deb Mitchell, Montana Historical Society, who arranged the Capitol tour; and J. Anne Roberts, Montana Club manager, who has been an ardent supporter of the Cass Gilbert Society and went out of her way to provide the group a wonderful experience in the Gilbert building she has cherished during her decade of tenure at the Montana Club. Special thanks to Linda Bjorklund for coordinating the tour arrangements.



The Metals Bank and Trust building in Butte, Montana.

Photograph by Jean Velleu

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**Our Mission**

To preserve our cultural heritage through advancing scholarship in and appreciation of Cass Gilbert's influence on American architecture.

The Cass Gilbert Society, Inc., is a non-profit tax-exempt organization under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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It is time to renew your membership for 2006. See the Cass Gilbert Society website, [www.cassgilbertsociety.org](http://www.cassgilbertsociety.org), for more information and a membership form, or use the form included in this Newsletter. Send a check for \$25.00 for an individual/household membership to the Cass Gilbert Society, P.O. Box 4066, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104.

Welcome to the following new members: Barbara Anderson, Brad Daniels, Patty Dean, Lisa Gehrke and Emily Goble, Peter Hall and Kathy McNay, Manuel Rosales.

**IN MEMORY OF DEWEY BERSCHIED**

Dewey Berscheid, a founding member of the Cass Gilbert Society, died on September 18, 2005, at the age of 72. Dewey and his wife Ellen Berscheid had lived in the Cass Gilbert-designed Douglas Armstrong House at 2 Crocus Hill, prior to moving to Menomonie, Wisconsin. Dewey, a longtime reporter at the *St. Paul Dispatch* and then the *Pioneer Press*, was the first editor of the Cass Gilbert Society *Newsletter*. He brought humor and grace to the task. Among his notable features was a story on the national Capitol building of Cuba, which aroused his interest when the baseball team of St. Thomas University traveled to that country for a series of games. Local Cuban lore has assigned a Cass Gilbert connection to the design. Dewey also served a term as vice president of the Society (2003-2004). Gardening, wildlife, and formula car racing were among his other interests. Our deepest sympathies to his wife Ellen and other family members.

## Membership Form – 2006

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to become a **new member** of the Cass Gilbert Society \*

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to **renew** my membership for **2006**.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to make a **tax deductible contribution** of \$\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I am a member but would like a **gift membership** for a friend, listed below

Enclosed is my check for \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 / Household or \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 /Business made out to Cass Gilbert Society, Inc.

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***Send check and form to: Cass Gilbert Society, Inc., P.O. Box 4066, St. Paul, MN 55104-4066***