

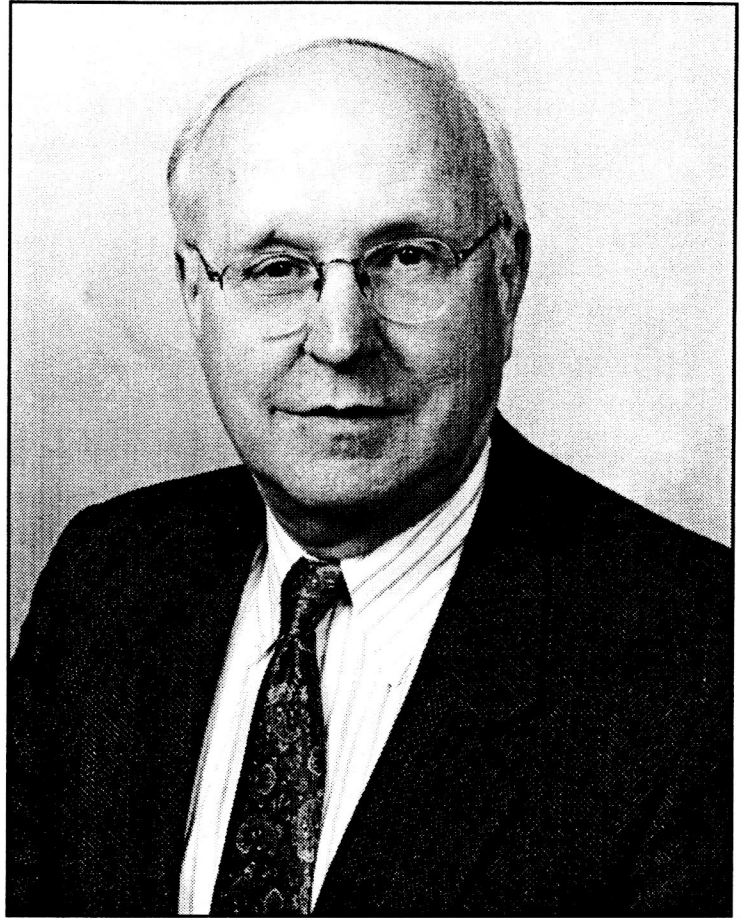


STEVEN FLANDERS TO SPEAK

Consultant and lecturer Steven Flanders will address the Cass Gilbert Society at 7 p.m. Tuesday, October 3, at the University Club, 420 Summit Ave., St. Paul. Mr. Flanders will draw upon several portions of the forthcoming *Cass Gilbert, Life and Work: Architect of the Public Domain*, which he has edited with Barbara Christen for release this fall by W.W. Norton. The focus will be Gilbert's capacity to enlarge the humdrum realities often presented by his clients to yield exciting design solutions that work, in both practical and symbolic terms. He will emphasize examples of Gilbert's work that are less known to Minnesota audiences, such as the New York County Lawyer's Association and the Essex County Courthouse (New Jersey).

In 1998-99, Mr. Flanders initiated and directed a national celebration of Cass Gilbert that focused on Gilbert's civic and public design. Cooperating institutions included the U.S. Supreme Court, State of Minnesota, Alliance for Downtown New York, Oberlin College, and the University of Texas. From 1980-97, Mr. Flanders served as Circuit Executive of the Second Judicial Circuit of the United States. Mr. Flanders earned a Ph.D. from Indiana University in 1970. He has many publishing credits and is currently working on four books.

The Cass Gilbert Society's 2000 Lecture Series is sponsored by the Minnesota Humanities Commission. Admission is free to members. There is a nominal fee for non-members; however, those who join the society on the evening of the lecture will not be charged an admission fee. Membership in the Cass Gilbert Society, registered as a non-profit organization, is \$25 per family and is tax deductible.



Steven Flanders

FILM PROJECT IN THE WORKS

Herb Grika, Professor of Art at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, is working on a video project that documents the 1998 Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum's exhibition: Cass Gilbert, His Vision for the University of Minnesota. The film begins with a series of still-images from the exhibition. Interviews with key personnel will supplement views of the exhibition and views of the campus, its sites and students. Members of the Cass Gilbert Society's fundraising committee are working with Mr. Grika to raise \$15,000 to complete the project. Anyone interested in contributing technical or financial assistance can contact Herb Grika (612-822-2747).

CASS GILBERT SOCIETY

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The mission of the Cass Gilbert Society is preserve our cultural heritage through advancing scholarship in and appreciation of Cass Gilbert's influence on American architecture.

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

By Marjorie Pearson

I have the pleasure of looking out my office window at the Cass Gilbert-designed Realty Company Warehouse, 105 N. First Street, in the Minneapolis Warehouse District. This red-brick structure with Gothic arches, built over many years (1895-1909), is now the home of the Theatre de la Jeune Lune, a reminder that Gilbert's architecture can be versatile as well as elegant.

Since our last newsletter came to you, the officers, board members, and committee chairs of the society met to review the accomplishments of the organization since its inception two years ago and to set priorities for the future. Priorities include: raise funds and assist in other ways with the publication of Herb Grika's book on the Minnesota State Capitol; establish a Cass Gilbert website to broaden our outreach both locally and nationally; and publish a tour guide to local Cass Gilbert sites. The latter goal has been partially realized through the walking tour booklets written by Thomas Blank and Charles Locks for our two annual Cass Gilbert Strolls.

Cass Gilbert has been honored by two chapters of the Victorian Society of America. In May, Tom Blanck spoke to the North Star Chapter at its Queen's Day tea. At its annual awards ceremony on June 5, the Metropolitan New York Chapter recognized the following individuals and groups for the Cass Gilbert Symposium and related events: Committee on History and Commemorative Events, Judicial Council of the Second Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals, (Hon. Jose A. Cabranes and Hon. Pierre N. Leval, chairs), Barbara Christen and Steven Flanders, coordinators. Sharon Irish also received an award for her book, *Cass Gilbert, Architect, Modern Traditionalist*. Dr. Irish was enthusiastically received by the Cass Gilbert Society on April 25, speaking on "Beyond Modern Traditionalism: The Architecture of Cass Gilbert in the Twentieth Century."

The New-York Historical Society is scheduled to open an exhibit of Cass Gilbert drawings and photographs in its collection in mid-September. Initially planned by former architectural drawings curator Mary Beth Betts, the exhibit has been curated by the society librarian, Margaret Heilbrun. While the focus is on Gilbert's work in the New York area, it includes a section on the Minnesota State Capitol. In conjunction with the exhibit, Columbia University Press has published a beautiful hardcover volume, *Inventing the Skyline: The Architecture of Cass Gilbert*, that contains the following essays: "Cass Gilbert in Practice, 1882-1934" by Sharon Irish; "From Sketch to Architecture: Drawings in the Cass Gilbert Office" and "Cass Gilbert: Twelve Projects" by Mary Beth Betts; "The Architect as Planner: Cass Gilbert's Responses to Historic Open Space" by Barbara Christen; and "Cass Gilbert's Skyscrapers in New York: The Twentieth-Century City and the Urban Picturesque" by Gail Fenske. If travel plans take you to New York this fall, be sure to visit the New-York Historical Society exhibit as well as Gilbert's great New York monuments. Both the Woolworth Building and the U.S. Custom House, now the home of the Museum of the American Indian, are "worth a detour." The book is available at Ruminator Books or request your local public library to purchase a copy.

Two preservation matters may be of interest to you. George W. Edwards has left his post as executive director of the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, one of the groups with which the Cass Gilbert Society has fostered ties. A national search will be conducted for his successor. The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society and the Preservation Alliance are sponsoring Preserve Minnesota, the annual Minnesota historic preservation conference, to be held September 28-29 in Winona, Minnesota.

We hope that many of you can join us for our trip to the Schumacher Hotel on September 24 and that we will see you at Flanders' lecture on October 3.

SCHUMACHER HOTEL TOUR

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

QUESTIONS?

CALL JUDY

(651-227-4509)

ELECTIONS COMING SOON

The Cass Gilbert Society's second annual meeting will be held November 14 at the University Club. Don Woods and Jim Noonan are preparing a slate of nominees who are willing to serve as officers or committee chairs for 2001. Please call Jim Noonan (651-222-3010) or Don Woods (651-222-0009) if you are interested in serving on the board, joining a committee, or volunteering in other ways. We need you!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The final talk of the Cass Gilbert Society's 2000 Lecture Series will be November 14 at the University Club. Details to follow in the next newsletter.

AFTON PRESS

WELCOMES SUPPORT

Paul Clifford Larson, the first speaker in the Cass Gilbert Society's 2000 Lecture Series sponsored by the Minnesota Humanities Commission, has a new book project with the Afton Historical Society Press (AHSP). The topic is Cass Gilbert's early years, from Minnesota to New York. The AHSP is 501(c) 3 organization that welcomes contributions toward this project. Those giving \$1000 or more will receive a deluxe hand-bound edition (limited to 100 signed and numbered copies) with a personalized review of the property of your choice by the author. Contributors of \$2500 or more also receive acknowledgement in the printed book. Please contact Pat Levy, AHSP Development Officer, to learn more about this opportunity (651) 436-8443.

SINGULARITY IS ALMOST INVARIABLY A CLUE

By Charles Locks

The great detective Sherlock Holmes pronounced it so. And the subject, a big old brown house on the corner of Virginia and Laurel, possesses a singularity that derives from mysterious birth, celebrity, age, and hard times. It was once owned by Judge Charles E. Flandrau, the son of Aaron Burr's law partner. Flandrau came to Minnesota in 1853 with Horace Bigelow, and the two became law partners. An associate justice of the state supreme court when the Sioux Uprising occurred in 1862, Flandrau raised a militia in St. Peter and set off to deliver New Ulm from the attackers. After the insurrection, Bishop Whipple of Faribault was able to convince President Lincoln to intervene, as the intention of the court was to execute 303 Indians. Lincoln commuted the sentences of most of the Indians, but he personally selected the names of the thirty-eight Indians hanged in the largest mass-execution in the history of the United States.

Flandrau never lived in the house he bought in 1889 from St. Paul real estate developer J.J. Watson (no relation to Dr. John Watson of Harley and Baker Streets), but his Harvard-educated son, Charles M. Flandrau, lived there five years. After his son left, Flandrau let the house to Jerusha Sturgis, the widow of General Samuel D. Sturgis. In 1900, Flandrau sold the house to Mrs. Sturgis. Mrs. Sturgis' daughter (also Jerusha) had her coming-out party there in 1906. She would later marry John S. Pillsbury, Jr. Many subsequent owners left their mark, and when Tom Blanck purchased the house in 1974, it contained ten apartments.

Blanck initiated a two-prong program: return the house to something resembling its original condition, and determine who built it and when. Neither was a simple chore, but the backbreaking aspect of the challenge was the first to be achieved. The mind-numbing challenge continued for twenty-five years. Every inquiry into the building's provenance resulted in dead-ends or more questions. There was no early building permit, no early records.

Blanck realized that the detailing of the gable with its courses of shingles, river gravel imbedded in stucco, and half-timbering was current with the work of McKim, Mead & White in the early 1880s. There was only one man in St. Paul in the early 1880s who was current with the work of McKim, Mead & White. That man was Cass Gilbert, who had worked for the firm in New York and Baltimore for two years before returning home to St. Paul to open his architectural practice.

During his prying, Blanck came across a drawing of the Goodrich Avenue Presbyterian Church, designed in 1885 by Gilbert & Taylor. Many elements of the design of the church's gable were consistent with the design of the gable on his house at 130 Virginia Street. Blanck was now convinced that Gilbert had designed his house, but when? And why had the building been unsympathetically remodeled at a very early date?



130 Virginia Street designed by Cass Gilbert in 1883.

The identification of the "House on Virginia Ave.," a watercolor rendering by Cass Gilbert, was an important clue in solving the puzzle. Michael Conforti, a Baker Street Irregular working undercover as curator of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, recognized the building. The rendering was certainly 130 Virginia Street, and it pointed up important changes made to the house's design. It also failed to show the adjacent house, which was built in 1882. Gilbert would never have executed such a rendering. The only thing that made sense was that the house was moved to its present site. But from where? And by whom?

In 1887, Clarence Johnston won the contract for the Aberdeen Hotel at Virginia and Dayton. A plat map reveals existing houses on

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CASS GILBERT SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Yes, I would like to become a member of the Cass Gilbert Society.

I am a member but would like a gift membership for a friend, listed below.

Enclosed is my check for \$25/Household or \$50/Corporate
to Cass Gilbert Society, Inc.

Member's Name _____

New Member Information:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Send your check to:

Cass Gilbert Society, Inc., 550 Portland Ave., St. Paul, MN 55102

The Cass Gilbert Society is structured as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization.

IN MEMORIAM



**THE C.W. BUNN COTTAGE, 2250 MANITOU ISLAND,
DESIGNED BY CASS GILBERT IN 1895 AND RAZED IN 1978.**

*- Singularity is Almost Invariably a Clue
continued from page 3 -*

the hotel's site. The house at 189 Virginia Street shows a footprint that matches the house at 130 Virginia. A building permit shows that house was cut in half and moved. The New York Historical Society finding guide lists presentation drawings in 1883 for T.L. Schurmeier. The city directory shows that Theodore L. Schurmeier, a principal in the dry goods firm of Lindeke, Warner & Schurmeier and a director of First National Bank, occupied the house from 1883 to 1887. In 1882, Schurmeier married Caroline Gotzian, the daughter of Conrad Gotzian, an important client of Gilbert. Schurmeier was a social friend of Gilbert but not a loyal client. In 1886, Gilbert and Johnston both prepared rowhouse designs for Schurmeier, but he elected to build the design of A.F. Gauger. In 1887, Schurmeier sold his house to J.J. Watson and hired Johnston to design a new house for him at 5 Crocus Hill.

Elementary logic suggests that Clarence Johnston may have the distinction of being the first architect to unsympathetically alter one of Gilbert's designs, for someone, early on, added overhanging eaves, eliminated windows, and removed the header over the bay window, allowing the bay to sag. There are conflicting accounts, but one source has it that Johnston met Professor Moriarty at an inn a few miles from Reichenbach Fall in 1883; however, there is no evidence the two men engaged in a subsequent conspiracy.

A final note: Why Virginia is both a street and an avenue has one thing in common with the giant rat of Sumatra—it is a story for which the world is not yet prepared.

THE CASS GILBERT SOCIETY
550 Portland Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55102