



RETURN ENGAGEMENT

Geoffrey Blodgett, political and architectural historian and Robert S. Danforth Professor of History at Oberlin College, will be featured speaker at the Cass Gilbert Society's lecture series at 7 p.m. Tuesday, November 14, at the University Club, 420 Summit Avenue, St. Paul.

His talk will focus on the years 1880-82, when twenty-year-old Cass Gilbert returned

to the United States from a European tour and found employment at McKim, Mead & White in New York, a firm destined to become preeminent in American architecture. McKim, Mead & White helped train Gilbert in the art of architecture and introduced Gilbert to the business of architecture. As a parting gift, the firm also provided Gilbert with his first independent architectural projects in the West and Midwest, projects Gilbert designed for the Northern Pacific Railroad. In addition, all of the firm's principals continued to maintain personal and professional relationships with Gilbert.

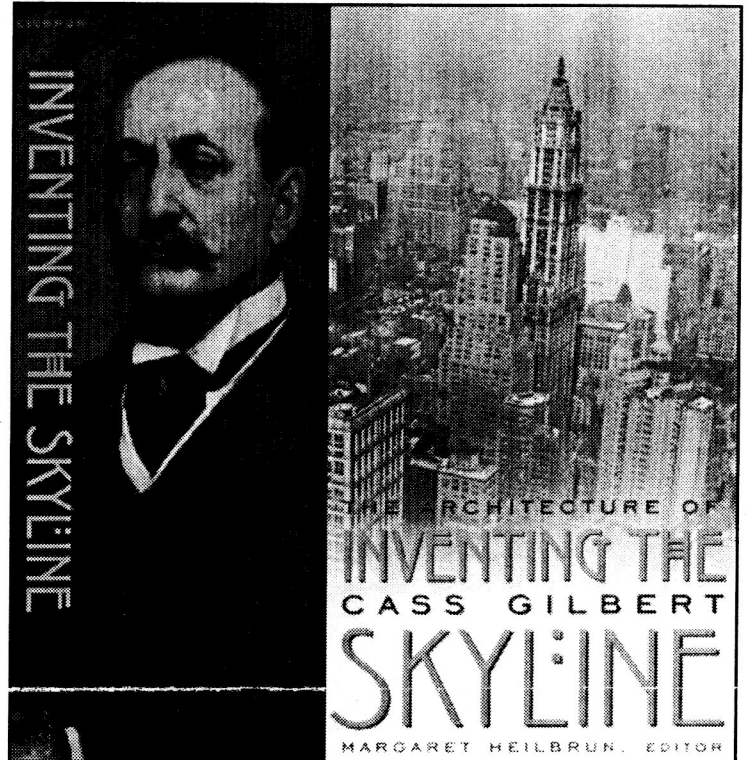
Dr. Blodgett was born in Hanover, New Hampshire, and attended public schools in Schenectady, New York. He attended Oberlin College, and was graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1953. He then served three years in the U.S. Navy, assigned to the Pacific Fleet. After his military service, he enrolled at Harvard University, earning his Master of Arts degree in 1956 and his Ph.D. degree in 1961. Since then, he has been a member of the history department at Oberlin.

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 nonmembers; 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 SPEAKS

At the most recent meeting of the Cass Gilbert Society on October 3, 2000, Steven Flanders spoke to an appreciative audience on "Cass Gilbert, Life and Work: Architect of the Public Domain." His was a personal account of how Gilbert's work had touched his life in many ways, as he began his career with the federal judiciary in Washington, D.C., working in the United States Supreme Court Building, one of the Gilbert's later designs. When Flanders served as the Circuit Executive and regional administrator of the Second Judicial Circuit of the United States between 1980 and 1997, he experienced many courthouses and found that most of them did not work well. Gilbert's courthouses were an exception, serving the needs of both their occupants and visitors. Flanders presented some of the lesser known Gilbert commissions for public buildings and their impact on the popular imagination, including the Essex County Courthouse, Newark, New Jersey, the St. Louis Public Library, the New York County Lawyers Association Building, and the West

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CASS GILBERT BOOK AND EXHIBIT

By Charles Locks

Cass Gilbert opened his St. Paul office in January 1883. In 1896, he opened an additional office in Boston to take on the Brazer Building. He closed the Boston office when the Brazer Building was completed. In 1899, he opened an office in New York for the Broadway Chambers Building. Gilbert never closed his New York office. He won the competition for the U.S. Custom House in New York in the fall of 1899, and the following year he moved his family to New York. Although he would never sever his ties with Minnesota, in 1911 he closed his St. Paul office. Thomas Holyoke, his right-hand man for nearly twenty years, had already been in independent practice for several years, and George Carsley, the man in charge of the St. Paul office the last half-dozen years of its operation, relocated to Montana. When Gilbert closed his St. Paul office, he left behind an architectural legacy that spanned an average architectural career. When he arrived in New York, he had the opportunity to create another entire career. Not many men are afforded such an opportunity, but not many men take advantage of such an opportunity when it is afforded them. Perhaps that is Gilbert's greatest personal achievement.

Gilbert's papers are located in various repositories around the country, but the bulk of them are owned by the New-York Historical Society, which estimates that the linear footage of Gilbert papers in its possession rivals the height of the fifty-five-story Woolworth

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Cass Gilbert.

James Simon Taylor.

St. Paul, Minn., April 22nd - 1887

To The St Paul Society of the New Jerusalem Church
To Gilbert & Taylor, W.

Architects: 39 Gilfillan Block.

For professional services rendered,

In matter of New Building for said Society.
1/2 the Commission due on letting the Contract.

Cost. 4639⁰⁰. @ 5% 1/2 of same.

\$119⁰⁰.

A. C. [unclear] Ready Pay Gilbert & Taylor
per Harry C.

VIRGINIA STREET CHURCH COSTS \$4639⁰⁰

The Cass Gilbert Society thanks Lucy Fricke for this bill Gilbert and Taylor sent to the St. Paul Society of the New Jerusalem Church for its work on the Virginia Street Church. This document was found in the papers of Lucy's grandfather, a member of the church.

**CASS GILBERT SOCIETY
ANNUAL MEETING**

Will be held at the University Club on
November 14, beginning at 5:00 p.m.
Officers and Board Members will dine together.

Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

If you have suggestions for
New officers or Board Members for 2001
call Jim Noonan (651-222-3310) ASAP.

Nominate yourself!

MISSION STATEMENT

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

**LIST OF OFFICERS OF
CASS GILBERT SOCIETY**

- President: Jean Velleu
- Vice President: Marjorie Pearson
- Secretary: Mary Michael Connolly
- Treasurer: John Lynden
- Member at Large: Eva Schnasse

Building (792 feet), a building Gilbert completed in 1913. Currently, the New-York Historical Society is featuring an exhibit on Gilbert, "Inventing the Skyline." Columbia University Press has published an eponymously titled companion volume. It features essays by Gilbert scholars Sharon Irish, Mary Beth Betts, Barbara S. Christen, and Gail Fenske. Betsy Gotbaum, President of the New-York Historical Society, Margaret Heilbrun, editor of *Inventing the Skyline*, and Huge Hardy, an architect involved in the restoration of two important Gilbert buildings, offer additional insights into the career of Gilbert.

Irish and Fenske have delivered lectures to the Cass Gilbert Society, so they are familiar to many members. Barbara S. Christen is currently working on the forthcoming *Cass Gilbert, Life and Work: Architect of the Public Domain*, which she is co-editing with Steven Flanders, the Cass Gilbert Society's most recent speaker. Mary Beth Betts, formerly with the New-York Historical Society, is now with New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

All the essays focus on Gilbert's New York career, but Gilbert did not reinvent himself when he relocated to New York. He did move away from residential and ecclesiastical architecture toward big office buildings, big warehouses, monumental public buildings, and campus and city planning. Still, Gilbert had been engaged in planning for many years while practicing in Minnesota. No building he designed is more monumental than the Minnesota State Capitol, and the smaller warehouses and office buildings he designed in Minnesota are an important link to the larger projects he designed later. In fact, his first New York building, Broadway Chambers, was designed in his St. Paul office.

Particularly intriguing is the essay by Betts: "From Sketch to Architecture: Drawings in the Cass Gilbert Office." In this essay on the anatomy of a design, she details the steps taken in Gilbert's office to turn the abstract into the concrete, an idea into a project of bricks and mortar. It is easy to marvel at a building such as the U.S. Custom House, and while an observer would concede that a great amount of attention was paid to its design and construction, it is difficult to grasp the magnitude of the effort until Betts reminds us that 2,168 drawings of it survive in Gilbert's papers. For those looking for a local connection to the building's design, both Thomas Holyoke and John Rachac, Jr. of the St. Paul office did considerable work on the project.

Whether or not a trip to New York to visit the exhibit is in your plans, a visit to your local bookstore to pick up a copy of this well-written and well-illustrated book is a worthwhile excursion.

- Steven Flander Speaks continued from page 1 -

Virginia State Capitol, constructed some twenty years after the Minnesota State Capitol. The comparison of the two capitols was particularly interesting. Flanders observed that many people know Gilbert's work but do not know his name. His work became unfashionable in the last decade of his life, and the rehabilitation of Gilbert's architectural reputation still has a long way to go. Certainly the founding of the Cass Gilbert Society and its accomplishments during the past two years are a measure of progress in the revival of that reputation. Flanders concluded by urging the Society to push for the issuance of U.S. postal stamp honoring the Minnesota State Capitol on its centennial.

BUS TOUR TO NEW PRAGUE

By Jean Velleu

Everything about this excursion was enjoyable. The weather was sunny, the bus luxurious, the countryside was beautiful and the trip was of comfortable duration. Not only that, Judy Pfankuch had taken great care that every detail of this experience went smoothly. As we traveled Tom Blanck gave a short history of Gilbert's experiences with hotels in his career. He did not design many. Our hosts at the Schumacher Hotel allowed us to wander self-guided through most of the second floor rooms that had been enlarged and equipped with luxurious bathrooms and interesting furnishings. When the hotel was designed by Cass Gilbert in 1898 it housed small rooms for dealers who looked at and sometimes bought wares displayed on the first floor.

When we were seated in our private dining room to enjoy the wonderful German menu, Mrs. Schumacher told us of the history of the hotel and changes she and Chef John Schumacher have made. The front porch has been restored and enclosed to accommodate guests, the balustrades across the front have been replaced, so the hotel from the front looks very much as it did in old photos. And to top it off, the food was delicious!

Our enthusiastic participants on this trip voted to have another excursion in 2001. We will begin to plan.

LOWERTOWN TOUR

The Presbyterian Alliance of Minnesota sponsored a tour of St. Paul's Lowertown on Sunday, October 22. Among the sites featured were two Gilbert buildings. The Gilbert Building at 413 Wacouta Street was built for the Boston Northwest Real Estate Company in 1893-94 to house T.L. Blood & Company, a paint wholesaler. The other building was built at 352 Wacouta Street in 1895 for C. Gotzian & Company, a manufacturer and jobber of boots and shoes. For many years, it was a factory and warehouse for the American Beauty Macaroni Company.

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 DICK VELLEU



The Cass Gilbert Society wishes to acknowledge the many efforts Dick contributed to the society beginning with his founding membership until his death September 3, 2000. He and Jean spent many hours at the New-York Historical Society compiling a handwritten list of its finding guide, identifying Gilbert's regional projects. Dick also videotaped all the lectures sponsored by the Cass Gilbert Society.



THE CASS GILBERT SOCIETY
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