



## Message from The Vice President

By Marjorie Pearson

On February 20, 2001, a large enthusiastic audience enjoyed the lecture given by Tim Coulter and Samantha Sanchez about the joys and frustrations of owning the house Cass Gilbert designed for the Seligman family in Helena, Montana. They affirmed the great psychic satisfaction that can be gained from living and working in good architecture and the great affection that daily contact with Cass Gilbert's architecture can engender.

Soon a select group of New Yorkers will have the opportunity to live in Cass Gilbert's most famous building. Several of the upper floors of the Woolworth Building (1913) are being converted for penthouse apartments. It is even possible that some of those living on the upper floors may work in the offices located on the lower floors.

Three years after the Woolworth Building opened, Gilbert designed the Rodin Studios, located in midtown Manhattan. This structure is an example of a building type largely found in New York City that combined double-height studio space for artists with adjacent living space. Like the Woolworth Building, the Rodin Studios make ample use of Gothic imagery in terra cotta. After World War II, the building was converted for office use. Given the renewed popularity of combination working and living space, it would undoubtedly find a ready market if it were converted back to its original function.

When Gilbert designed the New York Country Lawyers' Association Building (1929-30), he created an image of English domesticity for a clubhouse in lower Manhattan. It can be surmised that some of its lawyer members made it a "home away from home." A "home away from home" is certainly the case for the judges, who along with their clerks, work in the U.S. Courthouse (1933-36) on Foley Square.

That was vividly illustrated for me when I visited the chambers of Judge Pierre N. Leval, on the occasion of a wedding ceremony he conducted. Tucked away behind his office, well-adorned with law books and legal briefs, was a large bathroom and a full complement of exercise equipment. Perhaps not so incidentally, Judge Leval has been one of the great champions of Cass Gilbert and his courthouse. This courthouse has been in the news more recently as the site of the long-running Osama-bin-Laden terrorist trial.

Thank you for your ongoing support. We hope that many of you will be able to join us at the April 17 lecture and for the Mother's Day stroll on May 13. ☐

## CHANGE

### New York Trip Update

Several members have suggested that we postpone our New York trip from June to October, 2001. One of the reasons is that it would be a better time of the year to visit the city. Also moving the date to the fall would give us more time to plan and arrange our itinerary. We will be visiting the Woolworth Building, the Cus-Bowling Green, the Tower and more. We hope many of you will be able to join us in October. Watch for a special mailing that will explain our new plans, including all the details of the trip.



*If you have questions, please call Judy Pfankuch  
651-227-4509.*

## Of Note

The Preservation Alliance of Minnesota and the Irvine Park Association are co-sponsoring a self-guided walking tour of the Irvine Park and Upper Town areas of Saint Paul on Sunday, May 20, between 1 and 5 PM. About ten private homes and the Alexander Ramsey Historic Site will be open to tour members. Trolley service between the two areas will be available.

The cost is \$15 in advance and \$20 on the day of the tour. The tour will begin at the Alexander Ramsey Historic Site. For further information, call Jill Hirons at the Preservation Alliance, 612-341-8140. ☐

## NEW

### Cass Gilbert Society Library Collection

We are working on a new service for our members. Our Cass Gilbert library has several new books we'd like to share with you.

We also have videos of each of our lectures, featuring our speakers since the Society began. Periodically, an item will be reviewed in this column. Watch for more information in the next newsletter. ☐



## Cass Gilbert and Alexander Ramsey

On January 26, 1895, Marion Ramsey Furness wrote to her daughter Anita, studying at the Convent de l'Assumption in Paris, that "this evening the Schunemans (owners of a Saint Paul department store), the Cass Gilberts & Alice & Miss Robertson are coming to tea—Lobster a la Newbourg—Cold Turkey with oyster stuffing—Lettuce & cauliflower salad—meringues, cake, stuffed prunes. I wish I could send you some." She did not need to tell her daughter that Anita's grandfather, Alexander Ramsey, Minnesota's first territorial governor and second state governor, would also be present. Ramsey noted the occasion in his diary the next day.

At the beginning of 1895, Cass Gilbert, the president of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, was lobbying the Board of State Capitol Commissioners to improve the conditions under which the capitol competition design would be awarded.

Ramsey himself was involved with the new state capitol as a member of the committee appraising the property that was purchased for the new site. After a second design competition, Gilbert was awarded the capitol commission at the end of October 1895, and work began the following year.

At the cornerstone laying on July 27, 1898, the members of the Board of State Capitol Commissioners, state officials, the architect, and a vast throng of onlookers were present. Ramsey was given the honor of applying the mortar for the cornerstone with a ceremonial silver trowel, adorned with a garland of moccasin flowers; the handle was of tamarack used in the old Central House, which served as the first territorial capitol. During the course of construction, Gilbert proposed that a statue of Ramsey be placed inside the capitol building, but such a statue was never executed.

Gilbert's involvement with the Ramsey family was renewed when the 1927 state legislature authorized a com-

mission to raise funds for a Ramsey Memorial on the capitol grounds. (Ramsey had died in 1903.) Marion Ramsey Furness had been appointed to this commission, but according to her daughter Anita, she thought that such a memorial would not be suitable. Instead, Marion persuaded the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Minnesota, of which she was a founding member, to erect a bronze plaque inside the capitol that commemorated the services of Governor Alexander Ramsey to the state. Cass Gilbert designed the plaque, and the Rev. Frederick Elliot, minister of Unity Church, wrote the text. The tablet was unveiled by Ramsey's granddaughters, Anita and Laura Furness, on February 8, 1929.

The family continued to socialize with the Gilberts, inviting eleven people to a lunch party in their honor on September 16, 1930. While Marion noted the event in her date book, she did not record the menu. Did it include Lobster a la Newbourg? According to a number of accounts, she continued to serve it at social gatherings at the Ramsey family home on Exchange Street, and her daughters continued the tradition. ■

By Marjorie Pearson

## NEW CGS History Albums

We have been working on preserving the history of our Society. The result is a compilation of art, photographs, news clippings and memorabilia that chronicles the Society from its inception in 1998. Volume One is now completed. If you are interested in reviewing this album please call Nancy Peterson — 651-221-0389. ■

### Mark Your Calendars

Please put these dates on your calendar so that you will be able to join us. The lectures begin at 7:00 PM and are held at the University Club of St. Paul, unless otherwise noted.

*Tuesday, April 17, 2001 - Lecture*

*Sunday, May 13, 2001 - Architectural Stroll*

*Tuesday, September 18, 2001 - Lecture*

*October Wisconsin Bus Tour: Details to be Determined*

*Tuesday, November 13, 2001 - Lecture*

### Do You Have A Blue Dot??

*This may be your last issue of the newsletter.*

If you have a blue dot on your label this will be your last newsletter unless we hear from you. We are in the process of reviewing our membership list and there are a few of you that we have not yet heard from. If you need to renew, please use the form on the back of this newsletter and mail to the address on the form.

*We really don't want to lose you, so do it today.*

*Thank You!*

# Membership News

- Welcome to our new members:

Geoffrey Blodgett, Margaret Allan Bostelmann, Robert T. Coulter & Samantha Sanchez, Rob & Janne Eller Isaccs, Joan Grant, James & Debra Hirsh, Scott & Mary Koch, Patty McCartin & Paul Luttio, Judy Neiswander, Louise Pope, David Weissbrodt, and Kowalski's Company.

- Our 2001 membership renewal project is underway. *If your mailing label has a blue dot, your membership has expired and this will be your last newsletter.* To renew your membership, please use the form below.
- CGS membership extends from January—December. The fees are: \$25.00 per year/household, \$50.00 per year/business. If you have membership questions please call Sheila Meyer (651) 222-4364.

## Membership Form



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

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to renew my membership

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

Enclosed is my check for \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 / Household or \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 / Business made out to Cass Gilbert Society, Inc.

Member's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

\* CGS is a non-profit tax exempt organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code and contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

**Send Check and form to: Cass Gilbert Society, Inc., 550 Portland Ave., St. Paul, MN 55102**

### CASS GILBERT SOCIETY, INC.

550 Portland Avenue  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55102  
651-298-1127

#### Our Mission

To preserve and enhance the nation's cultural heritage through advancing scholarship and appreciation of Cass Gilbert's contribution to American architecture.

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

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