



Organized to preserve the work of Minnesota's most important architect.

Gilbert Society Invasion of New York Subject of February Lecture

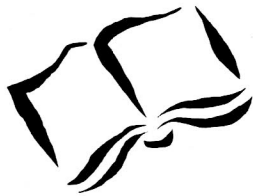
The date has been set, so mark your calendars now for February 25, 2003. The 18 Cass Gilbert members who toured New York City in October 2002 are anxious to tell you about the highlights of what they did and saw. With beautiful weather to help us and superb tour guides imparting knowledge all along the way the group has much to report and many images to show. We toured Upper Manhattan, Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn and what a tour it was.

Participants will describe harrowing climbs to the top of the Woolworth Building, seeing history made on the street, in the heart of the fashion district, as Gilbert's 130 West 30th Street building becomes a condominium plus the taking of forbidden photographs of the New York Life Building interior. Sites include the Brooklyn Army Terminal, New York Lawyers Association, Woolworth Building, 130 West 30th Street, Federal District Court #2, Customs House, West Street Building, Broadway Chambers and the Rodin Studios. ☐

New

**Cass Gilbert Abroad,
The Young Architect's European Tour**

by Paul Clifford Larson



Now available in bookstores. This 128 page, Afton Historical Society Press hardcover publication contains eighty color and black and white illustrations done by Cass Gilbert while on a European excursion in 1880. To order, contact www.aftonpress.com or call 800-436-8443.

The lecture will be held at the University Club of St. Paul, at 7:00 PM, Tuesday, February 25, 2003. Admission is free to members of the Cass Gilbert Society. There is a nominal charge for nonmembers. ☐

<i>Inside This Issue</i>	Mark Your Calendars
From the President 2	<p>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. The Club is located at 420 Summit Avenue.</p> <p>Tuesday, February 25, 2003 - Lecture: Gilbert Society Invasion of New York</p> <p>Saturday, January 11, 2003 - Forum on State Capitol History and Art</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Now is the time to renew your membership</i></p>
January Forum On State Capitol History and Art 2	
Carol Highsmith Lecture 2	
Cass Gilbert's Architectural Aesthetics 1890-1934 3	
CGS Holds Annual Meeting 3	
CGS Membership Form 4	
CGS Membership Renewal	

Message from the President

By Jean Velleu

In February 2003, we will all have a chance to compare our Minnesota heritage with the monumental works in New York City. This will happen because 18 members recently traveled to the Big Apple to tour the work of Cass Gilbert. They will report what they saw and heard on tour. And what a tour! Two things stand out about the tour above all else... the tour guides! Steven Flanders and Mary Beth Betts gave us two days of sight seeing in Upper and Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn. Their wealth of information and ease of getting around by subway enabled us to see and learn so much about the famous works there. We are truly indebted to them both for their willingness to guide us so professionally.

At the Annual Meeting, November 12, new officers were elected to begin serving for the next year. Since I will be stepping down as President of the Cass Gilbert Society, I want to welcome the new officers, thank the Board for its many contributions and tell you, the members, how much I have enjoyed being your President the last four years. It has been a service I willingly gave because I love architecture and art. I believe Cass Gilbert loved them too and was remarkably skilled at both.

I will always treasure the memories of the trials and tribulations and successes of this still new organization. Since its fledgling beginnings in 1998, the Society has had a strong core of support from researchers, historians, scholars, architects, friends and volunteers. One could sense the feeling that Cass Gilbert deserved to be celebrated, not only by the Smithsonian, the New York Historical Society and others on the East Coast but also, in Minnesota and across the nation. Early in 1998 the Minnesota Humanities Commission gave us monetary support, which allowed us to establish our Lecture Series. Scholars and historians were invited to make presentations four times annually to our members and the public. They told us new and little known information about Cass Gilbert's life and career. And what a career it was! In the last four years at least five new books have been published about Gilbert. I want to thank you the members for your interest and ongoing allegiance to a fine organization. There is still much more to come! ☐

P.S. Please note the Cass Gilbert Society has a new mailing address and a new phone number:

Cass Gilbert Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 4066
St. Paul, MN 55104-4066
612-338-1987

JANUARY FORUM ON STATE CAPITOL HISTORY AND ART

Date: January 11, 2003
Time: 1:30 - 4:30 P.M.
Location: Minnesota History Center
3M Auditorium

The centennial of the Minnesota State Capitol will be celebrated in 2005. In preparation for this event, a forum on the history of the Capitol and its art will be held in January 2003. The forum will review the history of the Capitol's construction, the art created for its public spaces, and will explore opportunities for the future. Speakers include Thomas O'Sullivan, author of a book on the Minnesota Capitol, Patricia Burnham, an art historian who has written on public art in America, and James Moore, director of the Albuquerque Museum. The event is free and the public is invited. ☐



Carol Highsmith Lecture

November 12th, Carol Highsmith, a nationally prominent photographer, gave a Minnesota Humanities Commission sponsored lecture at the University Club. She has photographed, in detail, several Gilbert Buildings; her lecture included 125 images from across the county. Highsmith, the photographer for several large historic preservation projects and for numerous books on architecture, is walking in the footsteps of Frances Benjamin Johnston who, at the turn of the previous century, photographed many of America's important structures including Cass Gilbert's St. Louis Exposition and the United States Supreme Court Building. Like Johnston she has given 50,000 of her images to the Library of Congress; even more importantly, she is starting on a multi-year effort to photograph American cities for the Library of Congress. This effort will result in many images of Gilbert's monumental buildings in their present urban contexts. ☐

Membership Renewal Time!

Annual Memberships Expired December 31, 2002

If you haven't done it yet, it is time to renew your membership for 2003. Our membership year runs from January 1st to December 31st of each year. How can you tell if you have renewed or not? It's easy. *If there is a blue dot on your mailing label, you have not renewed and this will be your LAST newsletter.* Make the newsletter editor happy and renew today so that you continue to receive our quarterly newsletter.

Please use the form below to renew, and mail it ASAP to the address on the form so that your name remains on our mailing list. You will notice that not only can you renew using this form, but you can also become a new member, make an additional tax deductible contribution, or give a gift membership. Remember: members attend our lectures for free.

If you have membership questions call 612-338-1987.

Membership Renewal Form—2003

- _____ I would like to become a **new member** of the Cass Gilbert Society *
- _____ I would like to **renew** my membership
- _____ 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 / Household or _____ \$50.00 / Business made out to Cass Gilbert Society, Inc.

Member's Name _____	Gift Recipient _____
Address _____	Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____	City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone (_____) _____	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., P.O. Box 4066, St. Paul, MN 55104-4066

CASS GILBERT'S ARCHITECTURAL AESTHETICS 1890-1934

On September 24, 2002, Dr. Mary Beth Betts spoke at the University Club to the Cass Gilbert Society on Cass Gilbert's architectural aesthetics during the course of his career.

According to Dr. Betts, Gilbert was called a "master of style" by his contemporaries because of his ability to use a variety of architectural styles ranging from the Neo-Gothic and Renaissance Revival to industrial modernism. This ability to use diverse styles so fluidly was considered unusual in an era when architects tended to adopt one or two styles as their signature. Instead Gilbert thought that it was more important to choose a style based on the particular situation and type of building.

What was good design for Gilbert? In the absence of articles and published speeches, architectural historians have looked to his voluminous correspondence, notebooks, and sketchbooks to find an answer. Gilbert was renowned for his sketches and watercolors. He focused on details, which provided a vocabulary from which he could pick and choose. Gilbert worked from precedents, but they had to be appropriate to the overall design and function of the proposed new building. All three state capitol buildings designed by Gilbert have domes and follow in the lineage of the Massachusetts State House in Boston, the United States Capitol, and the Rhode Island State House in Providence. By contrast, the United States Custom House in New York was designed without a dome, despite the preferences of the client. Gilbert successfully argued that the space was not right for a dome, that a dome did not relate to the program or plan, and that a dome would convey the wrong associations for the building's intended use.

Skyscraper design presented a different kind of problem because there were no strong precedents or long-standing models to follow. The Woolworth Building, Gilbert's most famous skyscraper, has applied Gothic detail that emphasizes the building's verticality. Nonetheless, Gilbert could have used different stylistic details, as several of his contemporaries had done for their skyscraper designs. He did not receive another skyscraper commission until the 1920s. By that time the architectural debate over the appropriate style for skyscraper design had passed. During that decade Gilbert created a series of innovative warehouse designs with traditional stylistic details. Dr. Betts argues that these designs can be considered "modern" because Gilbert wanted an appropriate expression for the warehouse building type and its function.

Gilbert emphasized proportion, scale, color, and effects of light and shade in his work. His concern was often manifested in the production of full-scale drawings and models of crucial details erected on site. Gilbert's focus on color can be seen in his attention to interior finishes and choice of building materials. The effects of light and shade are conveyed in renderings, especially those of Thomas R. Johnson and Hughson Hawley.

Later in his life, Gilbert became more conservative in his design aesthetic, focusing more on the Colonial Revival and quoting its precedents more literally in such work as the New York County Lawyers Association building. He also began to re-evaluate such early designs as the Minnesota Capitol and the U.S. Custom House. Looking back, he would have made them more austere. He had mixed feelings about the Woolworth Building, acknowledging the recognition it had brought him, yet stating that it made him too much a "one-note architect." A large rendering produced by the Gilbert office graphically conveys his architectural diversity and illustrates the great buildings of his career: the Minnesota Capitol, the U.S. Custom House, the Woolworth Building, the Detroit Public Library, and the U.S. Army Terminal. ☐

- Marjorie Pearson

Cass Gilbert Society Holds Annual Meeting

The Executive Committee and Members of the Board of Directors held their annual meeting over dinner at the University Club on November 12. Business before the Board included discussions about the Grand River Excursion around July 4, 2004 and the Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Capitol in 2005. The Cass Gilbert Society plans to be involved in both these events.

Committee Chairs reported a successful year for the Society with all events being self sufficient in monetary terms and successful in attendance. Our membership remains constant and a **renewal drive will now begin for 2003**. An effort will be made to expand our membership appeal to a broad national audience as well as maintain our core support from local members.

The Society has again been invited to submit a proposal to the Minnesota Humanities Commission for funding for our 2003 Lecture Series. Watch for notices for upcoming lectures.

The following officers were elected by the Board to serve for 2003.

President: Marjorie Pearson

Vice President: Open

Secretary: Mary Michael Connolly

Treasurer: Troy Musel

Member-At-Large: Eva Schnasse

Members of the current Board are: Dewey Berscheid, Don Woods, Linda Bjorklund, Perrin Lilly, Jean Velleu, John Lynden and Jim Noonan. ☐

CASS GILBERT SOCIETY, INC.

P.O. Box 4066

St. Paul, Minnesota 55104-4066

Place
Stamp
Here

Our Mission

To preserve and enhance the nation's cultural heritage through advancing scholarship and appreciation of Cass

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.

Board Members

Jean Velleu, *President*

Marjorie Pearson, *Vice President*

Mary Michael Connolly, *Secretary*

John Lynden, *Treasurer*

Eva Schnasse, *Member at Large*

Dewey Berscheid

Linda Bjorklund, *Fund Raising*

Perrin Lilly

Troy Musel, *Publicity*

Donald Woods

James C. Noonan, *General Counsel*

Nancy G. Peterson, *Archivist*

Membership News

- By becoming a Cass Gilbert Society member you will receive our quarterly newsletter as well as any special mailings, and you will also enjoy free admission to our lecture series. Please use the form below and mail your check today.
- 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 would like to gift CHS this amount \$ _____

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

Enclosed is my check for _____ \$25/Household or _____ \$50/Business made out to Cass Gilbert Society, Inc.

Member's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (_____) _____

Name of friend for whom a gift membership is made _____

Address _____

*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, P.O. Box 4066, St. Paul, MN 55104-4066