



KATHERINE SOLOMONSON TO SPEAK ON NOVEMBER 11, 2008

Katherine Solomonson, Ph.D., will speak to the Cass Gilbert Society on November 11, 2008, at 7 P.M. at the University Club, 420 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul. Her talk is titled **Cass Gilbert: Re-Imaging the Western Landscape**. Admission is free to members and students with current student identification cards; there is a \$5 charge for nonmembers of the Cass Gilbert Society. Refreshments will be served following the lecture.



Katherine
Solomonson
*Photo: University of
Minnesota*

Dr. Solomonson, associate dean for academic affairs in the School of Architecture, College of Design, at the University of Minnesota, has been researching and writing about the Minnesota career of Cass Gilbert and the work of his St. Paul office as it shaped the perception of architecture in the Great Northwest. She has focused on the role of Gilbert in fostering architectural professionalism in the late nineteenth century, the growth of architectural offices, and the development of architect-client relationships.

The railroad was a key factor in the furtherance of Gilbert's career, both as a client and in enabling him to pursue a geographically wide-ranging practice.



The Northern Pacific railroad, one of Gilbert's clients, also enabled him to travel for jobs throughout the Northwest.

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society



Cass Gilbert designed a major addition to the Northern Pacific offices, seen at left, in 1896. The earlier section of the building dates from 1878 and was designed by New York architect Bradford L. Gilbert (no relation to Cass). The building stood in Saint Paul's Lowertown at Prince and Broadway.

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society

SAVE THE DATE

February 17, 2009 Gail Fenske, Ph.D., professor at Roger Williams College and author of the recently published *The Skyscraper and the City: The Woolworth Building and the Making of Modern New York* (University of Chicago Press), will speak at the University Club, Saint Paul.

LIVING WITH CASS GILBERT, SEPTEMBER 28, 2008: A REPORT

The weather cleared sufficiently to allow a sizable group of participants to enjoy the Sunday afternoon tour. A very interesting article in the September issue of the *Highland Villager* helped to generate turnout. A synopsis of the tour notes follows.

548 Portland Avenue, east end of Portland Terrace

This house, one of a row of five houses, was designed by Cass Gilbert and James Knox Taylor in 1888 for attorney Leidum Sharpe, who lived here with his family and rented out the other four units.

Notable Saint Paulites at 548 Portland include Edward and Mollie Fitzgerald, who conceived their famous son Francis Scott while living here in late 1895. Other residents have included organist Elsie Bookstaver, writer Grace Flandrau, and historian Priscilla Farnham. Gar Hargens, the current owner, is the principal of Close Associates, Inc., Architects. He and his wife Missy Thompson faced the challenge of living in the house while it was being renovated.

The skylight over the central stair is an original feature. The folding doors and pocket door between the front hall and the dining room separated family activities from business dealings in the front part of the house.



548 Portland Avenue
Photo: Marjorie Pearson



552 Portland Avenue
Photo: Jean Vellen

552 Portland Avenue

This is the middle of five units of the Portland Terrace row houses, the complex designed in 1888 by Cass Gilbert and James Knox Taylor for attorney Leidum Sharpe. Around the turn of the twentieth century, all of the units in Portland Terrace were sold to individual families. Since then, each family has left its unique imprint on the interior design of the house.

From removing first floor walls and moving fireplaces (1930s) to a complete kitchen makeover (2000) to a renovated third-floor sunroom and central air conditioning (2008), all have maintained the integrity of the home while honoring Gilbert's vision and design. The current owners, Nicholas Marcucci and Ann Schroder, have lived in 552 since 2004. Nancy Peterson, the previous owner, was among the participants on the tour and offered her insights. The Friday before the tour, Nick and Ann were especially pleased to have discovered the long-misfiled original building permit for the row of houses in the Saint Paul Building Department archives at the Ramsey County Historical Society, Landmark Center, Saint Paul.

505 Summit Avenue

Cass Gilbert designed this house for George W. Freeman, president of the Gotzian Shoe Manufacturing Company, in 1896. When architect Peter O'Brien and his wife Duffy Pierce purchased the property in 1990, it had fallen into considerable disrepair. Several serious leaks in the roof had resulted in fallen plaster throughout much of the house.

The former owner, a photographer, had installed sinks and darkrooms in several first- and second-story rooms. Fully one-third of the woodwork in the house had been painted either pink, green, or white. Determined to return the house to Gilbert's original design, O'Brien has been restoring the house, room by room. The non-original closets on the first and second stories have been removed, and O'Brien has installed hand-carved replacement moldings for all missing pieces. The painted woodwork has been stripped and refinished. The original dining-room wall paper has been restored.



505 Summit Avenue
Photo: Jean Vellen



513 Summit Avenue
Photo: Jean Vellen

Les and Eileen Meltzer opened their garden at **513 Summit Avenue**, west of the Freeman House, for Cass Gilbert tour participants. This site was once occupied by a beautiful Victorian home that was destroyed by an arson fire in 1970. In 1997 the Meltzers, who lived in the adjacent house to the east, created a garden inspired by the Manor House at Villandry which they had seen on a bicycle tour of the Loire region of France. The distinctive arbor vitae trees that surround the garden were approximately one foot high when originally planted.

NEWS OF NOTE

Brian Pease has been named the Minnesota State Capitol Site Manager. He succeeds Carolyn Kompelien, who retired on June 1, 2008. Brian faces the challenge of managing this grand historic building to meet the needs of the twenty-first century, which preserving its historic architectural character.

The Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut, hosted a lecture by **Alan Plattus** on Cass Gilbert on October 8, 2008. Plattus is a professor of architecture and urban design at the Yale University School of Architecture and a member of the board of the Connecticut Main Street Center. Professor Plattus helped to support the effort for the renovation of Cass Gilbert's Waterbury City Hall, a project which is now underway. Gilbert also designed the Bridgeport Savings Bank.

CASS GILBERT SOCIETY, INC.
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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.

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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

It is time to renew your membership in the Cass Gilbert Society or join the Society for the first time. The Cass Gilbert Society maintains its membership records on a calendar year basis (January – December). If you renew your membership before the end of 2008, your membership will extend through December 2009. The membership expiration date is printed above your name on the address label. If you are on our complimentary mailing list, the label reads COMP. Please see the enclosed form for more information about membership and giving levels, or check the Society website, www.cassgilbertsociety.org.

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