



# CASS GILBERT SOCIETY

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

## LESSONS FROM WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT

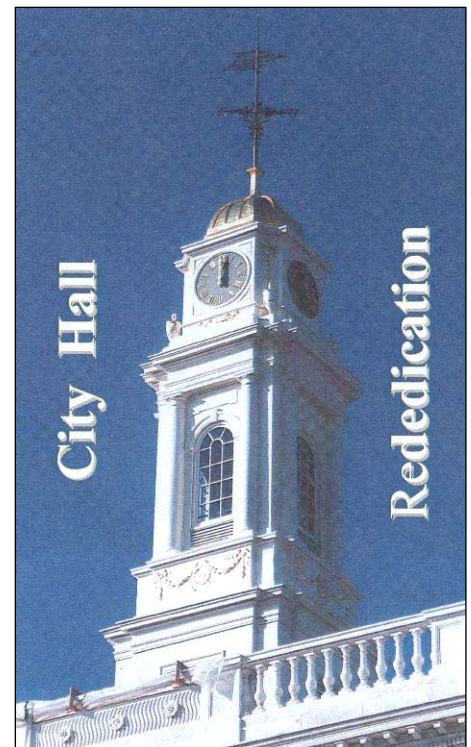
Join the Cass Gilbert Society on **Tuesday, November 15, 2011**, at the University Club, 420 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, at 7:00 P.M. when Ted Lentz, AIA, current president of the Cass Gilbert Society, provides a report on the restoration of the Waterbury City Hall. His talk is titled **Waterbury City Hall Renovation: Lessons Learned and Cass Gilbert's Continuing Impact on the City of Waterbury, Connecticut.**

The Waterbury City Hall is the centerpiece of Gilbert's ambitious plan for the City of Waterbury, begun in 1914. It served the city well for many years, but was vacated after years of neglected maintenance. In 2006, it was threatened with demolition but concerned citizens organized to save the building. In 2007, after the voters approved a bond issue to rehabilitate City Hall, the Waterbury Development Corporation drew up plans, and the city aldermen appropriated the funds. Members of the Cass Gilbert Society visited Waterbury in October 2007 on the Society tour of New York and Connecticut, shortly after the bond issue had been approved. Work was carried out in 2009-2010, and City Hall was officially rededicated on January 1, 2011.

Ted represented the Cass Gilbert Society at the symposium, "The Legacy of Cass Gilbert and the Revitalization of Our Beautiful City" held on April 9, 2011, in Waterbury at the Mattatuck Museum. Local community leaders and restoration architects who worked directly on the Waterbury Municipal Building were joined by nationally recognized architectural historians and preservation leaders to discuss Waterbury's past, present and future. Of particular interest were the remarks of Alan Platus, Ph.D., Professor of Architecture at Yale University who worked with Waterbury in 2007 to create a "design manual" for Waterbury's future development that built upon the existing building stock. He noted that preservation serves as an integral element in civic engagement and that it is always more sustainable to restore than to tear down existing buildings. He described the buildings at Waterbury as exemplars of the third great age of civic design. The new public monuments from the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th were created to provide a focal point for the community and reinforce the ties to revived democratic ideals of an earlier golden age.

Ted will illustrate his talk with "before" pictures taken by Cass Gilbert Society members in 2007 and others, as well as with ample "after" pictures that he took before and after the symposium.

Admission is free to Cass Gilbert Society members and students. Non-members are charged \$5.00.



## IMPRESSIONS OF DETROIT

By Marjorie Pearson

Nineteen members and friends of the Cass Gilbert Society participated in a tour of Detroit, October 21-23, 2011, that explored the work of Cass Gilbert and his contemporaries. Thanks to Carolyn Nayematsu, head of the tour committee, and Detroit residents Carol and Malcolm McAdam (also Nick Marcucci's aunt and uncle), we enjoyed a wonderful weekend. Gilbert scholar Barbara Christen was among the tour participants, and she was able to give us her insights and share her research on Gilbert's Detroit Public Library and the Scott Memorial Fountain. Context for Gilbert's work was provided by the Detroit Institute of Arts, designed by Paul Philippe Cret and located directly across Woodward Avenue from the library, and the work of Eliel Saarinen at Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, in suburban Detroit. Two Usonian houses, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, gave us contrasts in domestic architecture.

Most of our group were not familiar with Detroit, except perhaps the airport terminal as a transfer point. Given the dramatic decline in fortunes and population of the city during the past 30 years, we were not sure what we would find. But lovers of great architecture and the work of Cass Gilbert are adventurous, and we were amply rewarded. We stayed at the Inn on Ferry Street, a group of late 19th-century converted mansions, in Midtown Detroit near Wayne State University, just down the street from the library and the art institute. The Inn and the immediate neighborhood are interesting restoration projects in their own right.

The library displays Gilbert's ability in creating a grand civic monument as a unified artistic statement. He worked with some of his favorite artists including muralist Edwin Blashfield, decorative painters Paris and Wiley, and ironworker Samuel Yellin. A special addition to the library were fireplaces in two of the reading rooms featuring decorative art tiles from the Detroit-based Pewabic Pottery.

The Eliel Saarinen House (1929) at Cranbrook with its emphasis on *Gesamtkunstwerk* (a total work of art) and Frank Lloyd Wright's Affleck House (1940) and Turkel House (1955-58) have a very different sensibility. Gilbert had largely abandoned the design of houses by the time he relocated to New York City in 1900, so one wonders what he would have thought of these examples. All three display a type of modernity that he would have probably considered more appropriate for warehouse or factory design than for residential architecture. We, however, do not need to be so rigid in our architectural categories.

Several of the tour participants will be making a presentation on the tour early next year (date to be determined). We look forward to seeing you there.

*Cass Gilbert Society tour members  
by the Scott Fountain, Belle Isle Park.  
Photo: Barbara Christen*



## A HOLIDAY CELEBRATION AT THE FREEMAN HOUSE

The Cass Gilbert Society is hosting a holiday celebration on **Sunday, December 4, 2011**, at the Freeman house, 505 Summit Avenue at Mackubin Street, Saint Paul, between 5 and 7 P.M. to raise funds to further the research activities and enhance the website and online database of the Cass Gilbert Society. History player and actor Alan Johnson will welcome guests in the role of Cass Gilbert. The Mount Curve String Quartette will provide musical entertainment, and light refreshments will be served. The cost is \$50.00 per person.

Cass Gilbert designed the house, completed in 1897, for George W. Freeman, president and son-in-law of Conrad Gotzian, founder of C. Gotzian & Company, manufacturers and jobbers of shoes and boots in Saint Paul's Lowertown. Gilbert had previously designed two warehouse buildings for the company in 1892 and 1895. The house is faced with Oneata and Indiana limestone and features Byzantine-inspired ornament on the exterior. The interior has several grand spaces suitable for entertaining, including an impressive multistory stairhall.

The current owners, architect Peter O'Brien and his wife, Helen (Duffie) Pearce, have generously made the house available over the years for Ramsey Hill house tours and a previous Cass Gilbert Society tour. It can also be seen as the site of some of the interviews featured in *Cass Gilbert: Standing the Test of Time*, the Cass Gilbert Society-sponsored TPT production.

Members of the Cass Gilbert Society and others on our mailing list will receive separate invitations to this event with more detailed information.



*Freeman House in 1902. Photo: Charles P. Gibson, Minnesota Historical Society*

CASS GILBERT SOCIETY, INC.  
P.O. Box 4066  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55104-4066  
www.cassgilbertsociety.org

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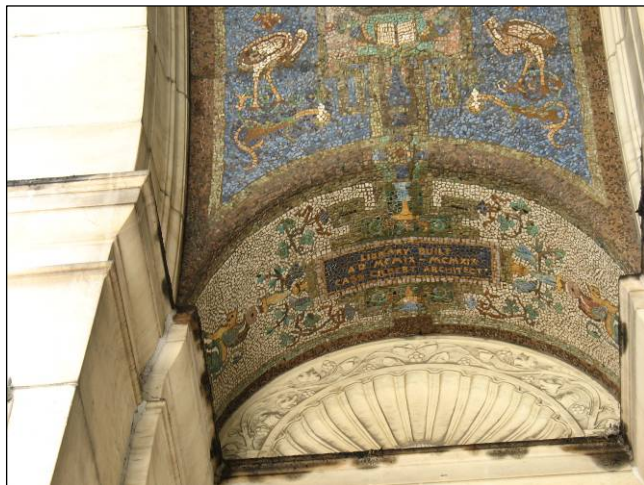
**Our Mission**

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

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

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Your membership expiration date is on your mailing label.

You will find a membership form at the Cass Gilbert Society website, [www.cassgilbertsociety.org](http://www.cassgilbertsociety.org), which you may mail to the address listed above. You will also receive a separate membership mailing.

*Mosaic panel with date of the Detroit Public Library and Cass Gilbert's name.  
Design by Francklyn Paris. Photo: Marjorie Pearson*