



CASS GILBERT SOCIETY

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

Pillsbury Hall and the Legacy of Architect Harvey Ellis
Thursday, May 5, 2016, 7 P.M.
Mill City Museum, 704 South 2nd Street, Minneapolis

The Cass Gilbert Society is sponsoring a discussion by architectural historian John C. Guenther about how architect Harvey Ellis (1852-1904) came to be described as the link between H. H. Richardson and the masters of the Prairie School. Ellis, a contemporary of Cass Gilbert, had a peripatetic architectural career, working for several architectural firms in St. Paul and Minneapolis, including the firm of Leroy Buffington, where he was acclaimed for his architectural renderings and designs. Ellis' most noteworthy contribution from this time was Pillsbury Hall (1887-1888) for the University of Minnesota. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP, is president of the Society of Architectural Historians, St. Louis Chapter. Craig Rafferty, FAIA, whose firm has developed the preliminary design for the renovation of the building for the University of Minnesota English Department will also speak.



The event is free. Paid parking is available on the street and in the Mill City Garage across the street.

CASS GILBERT SOCIETY NEWS

The board of the Cass Gilbert Society held its **annual meeting** for 2015-2016 on March 13, 2016, at Como Dockside. The following officers and board members were elected: Ted Lentz, President and Recording Secretary; John Yust, Vice President and President Elect; Vincent Platt and Carolyn Nayematsu, Co-Treasurers; Marjorie Pearson, Meeting Chair and Newsletter Editor; Carolyn Kompelien, Sonja Mason, Cindy Stephani, Jean Velleu, Art Weeks, Linda Bjorklund, Fundraising Chair. Nathan Stone Buttlemann has resigned as General Counsel because of other commitments. Ted Lentz presented his annual report on the State of the Cass Gilbert Society that recounted key events of 2015 in support of the general purpose of the Cass Gilbert Society.

On April 5, 2016, at the University Club, Mary Lahammer, award-winning anchor, reporter, and producer for Twin Cities Public Television, presented a rough cut version of **Connections to Cass**, a compilation of *Almanac* program segments that have featured notable Cass Gilbert buildings and interviews with building owners and representatives. This project was undertaken in collaboration with the Cass Gilbert Society and will be broadcast on Twin Cities PBS, Channel 2 on Sunday, June 2. Before screening the program, Mary recounted how she became a journalist and a Minnesota State Capitol reporter.



SAVE THE DATE: Connections with Cass will be broadcast on Twin Cities PBS, Channel 2, on Sunday, June 2, 2016, 7:30 P.M.

NEWS - CONTINUED

Saturday, October 17, 2015, was a lovely fall day for the **Cass Gilbert Society tour to Owatonna and Faribault**. Our first stop was a visit to the National Farmers' Bank (now a branch of Wells Fargo) in Owatonna, designed by Louis H. Sullivan and built in 1907-1908. The interior is notable for the stained-glass windows designed by Louis J. Millet and the murals of agricultural scenes by Oskar Gross. We then went on to Faribault to visit the Shattuck-St. Mary's School campus which features a group of buildings designed by Cass Gilbert and Clarence Johnston. After being greeted by Lonnie Schroeder, we were guided by Father Henry Doyle through the Gilbert-designed armory/drill hall and library (1907) and the Johnston-designed Whipple Memorial Hall (1925-1926). We also visited the handsome Chapel of the Good Shepherd, designed by Henry Congdon of New York and built in 1872-1873, with a chancel addition designed by Johnston and built in 1927. After lunch at the Depot Bar and Grill, we met Father Doyle at the Episcopal Cathedral of Our Merciful Savior, designed by James Renwick and built in 1862-1869. The adjacent Memorial Guild Hall designed by New Haven architect William H. Jewett and built in 1893-1894 contains interior work by Cass Gilbert in the form of two large fireplace mantels installed in 1894.

On November 12, 2015, Cass Gilbert Society President Ted Lentz gave a presentation at the University Club titled **Minnesota State Capitol: Preservation, Renovation, and Engagement**. He focused on the architectural design, history, renovation, preservation, and recent efforts to develop programs for art at the Capitol. As part of the renovation, much space previously inaccessible will be available for the display of public art. Follow the Capitol restoration work online at <http://mn.gov/admin/capitol-restoration/>.

CASS GILBERT BUILDING NEWS

The **White Bear Lake Town Hall**, commissioned in 1885 and designed by Cass Gilbert, served as the meeting place for the town board for over 125 years. Threatened with demolition in part because of its location near Highway 61, the building has been moved to a new location in Polar Lakes Park with the aid of the White Bear Lake Historical Society and White Bear Lake Township. This is the fourth location for the building; it was moved on November 21, 2015. The goal is to preserve the building and restore and renovate it as a functional, aesthetically appealing building for a variety of community programs.



White Bear Lake Town Hall, 2011

In 2005, the **Austin, Nichols and Company Warehouse** on the Brooklyn waterfront was threatened with a large addition that would have removed the distinctive cornice and overwhelmed the original Cass Gilbert design (*CGS Newsletter* August 2005). The project was not realized due to the Great Recession. Recently it has been announced that the building is being converted to a condominium apartment building called the Austin Nichols House: <http://austinnicholshouse.com/>. The project has been designed by architect Morris Adjani.

A long abandoned **railroad station located at Hunts Point Avenue and Bruckner Boulevard**, designed by Cass Gilbert as one of a group of stations in 1907-1908 for the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, has been acquired on a permanent easement by the Majora Carter Group LLC. The group proposes to renovate and convert the building as a restaurant incubator in the South Bronx. See https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1FLYcGDFuhE1Zh7bnif_4L-yabyOv11aavwt36kL2c/edit#slide=id.p for further background and explanation of the project. Majora Carter received an honorary degree from Augsburg College in 2014 for her work in urban revitalization.

Rendering of renovated Hunts Point Station.
RAFT Architects New York.



BOOK REVIEW: *Cass Gilbert's West Virginia State Capitol* by Ann Thomas Wilkins and David G. Wilkins. West Virginia University Press, 2014.

Ann Thomas Wilkins and David G. Wilkins provided a brief preview of their research on Cass Gilbert's state capitol designs in "Cass Gilbert's Many State Capitols" (*CGS Newsletter* May 2011). Their handsome and well illustrated volume on the West Virginia State Capitol was published in part as a celebration of the 75th anniversary of the building's completion in 1932. The Wilkinsons state in their preface: "We present the story of West Virginia's Capitol using the voices and words of the historical period whenever possible. Our intent is to re-create a sense of life in the 1920s and early 1930s, when Gilbert was dealing with West Virginia governors, members of the Capitol Building Commission and their hypercritical spokesperson," as well as contractors, sub-contractors, and building suppliers. The authors have combed a wealth of archival material (detailed in copious endnotes) to develop the story of Gilbert's West Virginia State Capitol, located in Charleston. The building, the fifth to be named the State Capitol, was necessitated after a fire destroyed the previous building on January 3, 1921. Gilbert received the commission in July 1921. He had written Governor Ephraim F. Morgan in April: "I would be very glad to be the architect of the New Capitol Building" and listed his credentials and experience with state capitol design. Based on their extensive research, the authors make a persuasive case that Gilbert actively sought the commission. The selection of Gilbert was not without discussion but was concluded within a few months. However, as the authors state: "Selecting a site, acquiring it, and approving a final design would take considerably longer." They detail the controversies over the site, the costs, the architect's fee, and the details of design.

Construction began on one of the office wings in 1924; the second office wing was not begun until 1926. Both phases were delayed by lack of appropriations and charges of corruption. Funding for the domed main building was not in place until 1929 under Governor William G. Conley, the third involved in the construction of the new Capitol. Plans for the main building, within the appropriated amount of 5 million dollars, were finalized in January 1930. Construction began in March. The structure of the dome was raised between February and May 1931. The building was largely completed by the end of 1931, and it was formally dedicated on June 20, 1932. The first legislative session in the new Capitol was convened in January 1933. Gilbert made his last visit to Charleston on December 18, 1933, accompanied by architect John Rockart. Despite later claims by Cass Gilbert Jr., the elder Gilbert, along with Rockart, was the key architect responsible for the design and supervision of the West Virginia Capitol as supported by archival material in the New-York Historical Society.

The authors devote a chapter to the background and work of Cass Gilbert to explain why he was chosen as the architect of the West Virginia State Capitol. It was the last project he would see completed. They quote Gilbert in 1932: "Public buildings, and especially the State Capitol, constitute the best evidences of the character of material, success and solidity, culture and civilization of a state." A chapter describes the architecture of the building and the symbolism of the ornamental detail. This discussion is informed by the prologue: "Cass Gilbert and the Classical Tradition of Architecture" by Bernard Schultz and Mary L. Soldo Schultz. An illustrated "Glossary of Relevant Architectural Terms" provides additional information for the reader.

Those familiar with the design and construction of the Minnesota State Capitol will see parallels with the West Virginia State Capitol design and construction some 30 years later. Like Minnesota, West Virginia achieved a memorable capitol that inspires love and pride among its citizens.

West Virginia State Capitol
Photo: Carol Highsmith,
Library of Congress



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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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A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

We mail *Newsletters* to provide information about Cass Gilbert and his works and as a way of informing members about past and upcoming Society events.

The Society has established a Facebook page, administered by board member Sonja Mason, as a means of posting more timely information about items of interest to Society members. Click on the Facebook logo from the Cass Gilbert Society homepage:

www.cassgilbertsociety.org.

We are also seeking to use email more efficiently as a way of providing more timely notices. *Please provide us an email address when you send in your membership dues, so we can add you to our emailing list.*

Do not fear; the *Newsletter* will continue to be mailed to Society members and other interested parties.



Find us on Facebook.

April 2016

RENEW YOUR SUPPORT FOR 2016

Please use the enclosed form to renew your Cass Gilbert Society support in 2016. Our records are maintained on a calendar year basis, with the expiration date noted on your address label. **We encourage you to provide your email address.** It will be used to send out announcements between the publication dates of the Newsletters.

You can show your support at various levels and any contributions above the basic level are much appreciated. Your support ensures that you will receive our Newsletter via U.S. mail, free admission to lectures, reduced fees for local tours, and eligibility to participate in regional tours. Your contributions are the major source of funding for operating expenses for our all-volunteer organization. You may also support us through **GiveMn.org.**