

## **REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE BOARD**

### **Marjorie Pearson, November 9, 2006**

The Cass Gilbert Society has had an active year in 2006 with a wide spectrum of activities.

#### **Lecture Series**

February 28, 2006 –Patty Dean, former staff member, Minnesota Historical Society, “UNIQUE AND HANDSOME”: CASS GILBERT’S DESIGNS FOR THE MONTANA CLUB. This lecture was held at the University Club. The lecture has been published in *Drumlummon Views*, the online journal of Montana arts and culture.

May 9, 2006 – William Towner Morgan, Professor emeritus, St. Cloud State University, THE REDISCOVERY OF THE KERR BLOCK IN ST. CLOUD; Marjorie Pearson, President, Cass Gilbert Society, CASS GILBERT: ARCHITECTURAL AMBASSADOR. The two lectures were given at the University Club.

October 31, 2006– William Seale, historian and architectural restoration specialist, REMINISCENCES OF CASS GILBERT, JR., AND THE LATE WORK OF CASS GILBERT. The lecture was held at the University Club.

Herb Grika has continued to record all of our lectures. They are available on DVD at a cost of \$15 each. He donates \$7 from each sale to the society.

Unfortunately we lost the funding for our lectures from the Minnesota Humanities Commission. All funds had been allocated when we submitted our application in July. Then in September the commission announced that it was dissolving its Grants and Community Programs areas, due to budget cuts.

#### **Special Events**

September 28, 2006 Work-in-Progress Tour of the Lightner-Young House and the W.H. Lightner House on Summit Avenue. The tour was held to raise funds to further the mission of the society. The weather cooperated, and about 75 people attended. Tom Blanck provided the background notes and informal tours through the second Lightner house. Thanks to Tom Mohr and Dick Nicholson, the respective owners, for making the buildings available.

November 17-19, 2006 Tour of the University of Texas, Austin, designed by Cass Gilbert, and San Antonio. The tour has been organized by Linda Bjorklund and will be attended by 10 CGS members and friends. Thanks to Lawrence Speck of the University of Texas, and Chancellor Mark Yudof.

#### **Communications**

Three issues of the *Newsletter* were published that featured upcoming events and continued items of interest and news pertaining to Cass Gilbert. This year the newsletter has emphasized websites and online links to information about Cass Gilbert and his architecture.

The Society’s website is available at [www.cassgilbertsociety.org](http://www.cassgilbertsociety.org). It is maintained by Factor of 4. We applied for a matching grant from the Minnesota Historical Society to upgrade our website and received \$3000, half of what we had asked for.

## **Media Project**

The 18-minute version of the documentary, *Cass Gilbert: Standing the Test of Time*, was distributed to Minnesota schools, along with related educational materials, in VHS and DVD formats. It is also web-based through the TPT website. The 30-minute version was broadcast two or three times a month between January and June 2006. It also received two regional Emmy awards in the categories of Best Documentary—Cultural and Best Photographer—Program.

## **Preservation Issues**

The Austin, Nichols and Company Warehouse on the Brooklyn waterfront, designed by Cass Gilbert in 1909 and built in 1914-1915, remains threatened with inappropriate additions for development. The building was the subject of public hearing for local landmark designation. The Society submitted a statement in support of the designation. The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to designate on September 20, 2005. The New York City Council voted to deny the designation on November 22, 2005. Mayor Michael Bloomberg subsequently vetoed the Council vote, but the Council then overturned the mayor's veto.

William Towner Morgan's talk helped bring attention to the continuing tenuous status of the Kerr Block. Although the unsightly metal cladding has been removed, the current owner is uncertain about the long-term maintenance of the building.

Cass Gilbert Society member and Waterford, Connecticut, town clerk Robert Nye brought the plight of the Seaside Sanatorium to our attention. Sympathetic redevelopment of the site that would preserve Gilbert's buildings and landscape remains tangled in Connecticut politics.

On a happier note, the dome of the West Virginia Capitol has been restored under the direction of Swanke Hayden Connell Architects of New York.

A restoration campaign is beginning for the Minnesota State Capitol, although bond funding will be dependent on the upcoming legislative session.

## **Lectures**

I was asked to give presentations to the Rochester chapter of the Friends of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in April and to the Arden Hills-Shoreview Rotary Club in September. I presented two versions of CASS GILBERT: ARCHITECTURAL AMBASSADOR.

## **Thank you**

Let me offer my thanks and appreciation to all officers, board members, and committee chairs. I have enjoyed working with all of you during the past four years I have served as president. We also appreciate the willingness of Jim Noonan to sponsor us for our meetings at the University Club. Thanks also to Herb Grika who continues to record our speakers to provide a permanent record of our lecture series.