

Nineteenth Century



The American House

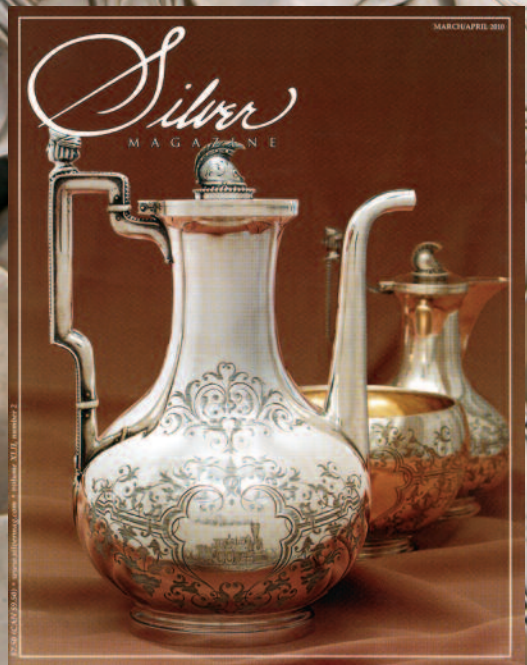
Magazine of the Victorian Society in America | Volume 36 Number 1



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Cover: Detail from *House Beautiful*,
November 1905.

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The Cedars, the Harry Fenn residence. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society.

All in the Family

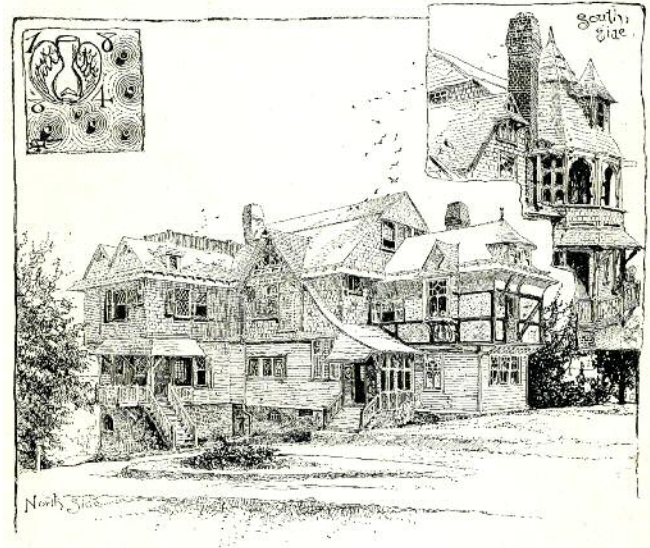
ARTS & CRAFTS, DUDLEY VAN ANTWERP AND HIS CREATIVE RELATIONS

Majda Kallab Whitaker

Early twentieth-century architect Dudley S. Van Antwerp (1867-1934) launched his regional practice in 1902 with a “wedding gift” residence for his wife and himself in Montclair, New Jersey. One of the town’s earliest examples of the small suburban house in the Arts and Crafts style, it expressed the architect’s ideals at the time of his marriage to the daughter of one of Montclair’s most celebrated residents—the “Dean of American Illustrators,” artist Harry Fenn (1837-1911).

Not just a romantic gift, the house positioned Van Antwerp as a leader of a new generation of architects interested in design reform and searching for an “American style.” In striking contrast to his father-in-law’s widely published picturesque manse, *The Cedars*, designed in 1884 by British-born architect H. Edwards Ficken (1844-1929), Van Antwerp created a functional, small-scale house: a spare, rectangular block with hipped roof, stucco exterior, overhanging eaves, Mission-style entrance, and individualistic Craftsman details on the interior. It served as an early, experimental template for the estimated 500 houses that he built in his lifetime.¹ Based on Van Antwerp’s photographic archive of commissions, close to 125 of these houses, dating from 1902 to 1924, have been identified by the author, firmly establishing the extent to which his work contributed to the Montclair regional character and rich architectural heritage.

Van Antwerp found a partner and collaborator in his wife, Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp (1880-1931); her name appeared on the architectural drawings as an “associate,” and she was variously referred to as an “artist” and “interior designer,” suggesting that the couple together developed their nuptial project. Showing great ingenuity in interpreting and adapting the Craftsman style, Van Antwerp’s work was published in *Concrete Country Residences*, *American Homes and Gardens*, and *American Architect*. This article elaborates and further defines his contributions, as seen through the prism of the architect’s own house, given its special significance in marking a generational shift in architectural thought and practice, and the role it would ultimately play in the design of a new house for Harry Fenn. Tracing the evolution in style from Fenn to Van Antwerp, four Montclair houses are surveyed: the Harry Fenn Residence, *The Cedars* (1885); the Mrs. Charles F. Coffin (Alice Fenn Coffin) Residence, *Eastward* (1901); the Dudley and Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp Residence (1902); and the Harry Fenn Residence (1906), designed by Van Antwerp.



Harry Fenn, *The Cottage, North and South*.

The Cedars: A Symbol of Artistic Achievement and Picturesque Taste

At least seven leading art and architecture publications in Britain and America featured articles about the Harry Fenn residence between 1885 and 1896, accompanied by sketches of the exterior and interior by Fenn himself.² The publicity gave the renowned illustrator and his house wide visibility in the years following his return from an extended stay in Britain, and no doubt delighted and inspired many readers. Born in Surrey, England, Fenn first came to the United States in 1856, where he built a career as an illustrator of books and magazines, and ultimately became a major contributor to the highly successful D. Appleton and Company series of *Picturesque America* (1872-74), *Picturesque Europe* (1875-79), and *Picturesque Palestine, Sinai and Egypt* (1881-84). Fenn’s greatest talent lay in the illustration of landscapes, architecture, and interiors; his success was made possible by and at the same time contributed to the rapid growth of the publishing industry, which in turn played a key role in the dissemination of art and culture in the late nineteenth century.³ He was also a superb watercolorist and founding member of the American Society of Painters in Watercolor in 1866.

Fenn came to Montclair as early as 1865, and was one of the first artists to reside in the picturesque community stretching along the slopes of First Watchung Mountains, twelve miles from New York City.⁴ A town of under two thousand inhabitants, Montclair was renowned for its rural

beauty, at the time still largely composed of farms, fields, and apple orchards. The town was Fenn's family base while he worked on *Picturesque America*, travelling across the nation, in 1870, in search of "the most unfamiliar and novel features of American scenery."⁵ In 1873 Fenn took his family to England for an eight-year period while he travelled throughout Europe and the Near East gathering material for the subsequent volumes in the series.

Through his various assignments, Fenn became an enviably well-traveled artist at a time when society held such experience in high esteem, and when artists' studios and artistic taste were the subject of widespread interest. Not surprisingly, it would appear that Fenn was well known among the fashionable British artists and literati of the day, including Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema, whose studio he illustrated for *The Magazine of Art* in 1884, and England's poet laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson, at whose home he attended many garden parties, and whose poems and house he also illustrated.⁶ For the last two years of his residency in England, Fenn and his family lived in a farmhouse in the Surrey countryside frequented by artists.

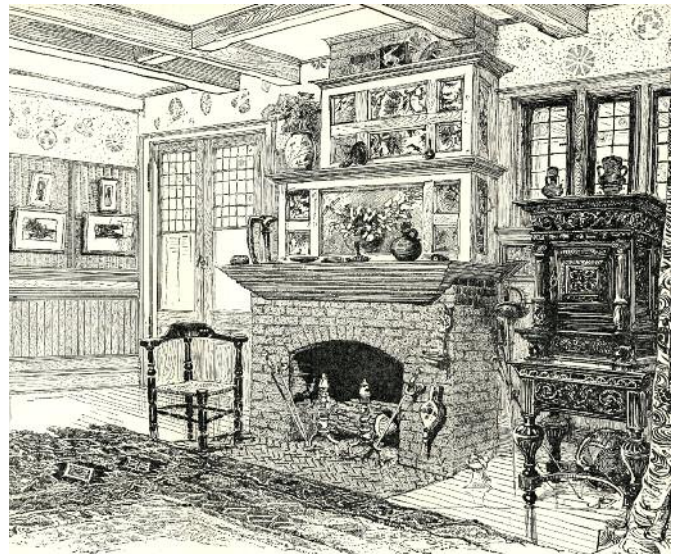
Fresh with impressions of the artistic houses of London and vernacular English country houses, Fenn returned to America in 1881 to settle down with his family and build his own house, establishing a kind of artistic pilgrimage site in the community. The architect he selected, H. Edwards Ficken, was of Scottish background, and came to the United States in 1869, eventually opening a New York office that produced many distinguished commissions.⁷ Ficken began his career as an architectural renderer, perhaps meeting Fenn in that capacity, and the project may have represented more of a collaboration than was usual in an architect-client relationship. For *The Century Magazine*, Fenn proudly illustrated the sweeping gable of his studio, which occupied most of the attic, with the phrase "This House Was Built In 1884" carved in the wood in Old English lettering, along with his distinctive overlapping initials, HF.⁸

Fenn's house synthesized Old English and American elements in its sprawling picturesque form, with projecting gables, balconies, a two-storied piazza with a polygonal,

turret-like cap, and a panoramic view from Coney Island to the Hudson Highlands and beyond, then visible from Montclair's heights. The exterior exhibited half-timbered work combined with unusual patterned stucco, dark clapboards painted brown, cypress shingles, and varied fenestration, from banded groupings to artistic leaded and latticed windows, all contributing to its irregular appearance and the great variety of surface textures. The house was held forth as an example of the progress in American domestic architecture, an example in which "common sense and good taste have prevailed," to quote *The Magazine of Art*.⁹ Editor George W. Sheldon selected it for inclusion in his important compendium of *Artistic Country-Seats* published by D. Appleton and Company in 1886-87.¹⁰

The interior, while conforming to then-popular Aesthetic tastes in many respects, generally avoided the visual complexity of Fenn's artistic contemporaries in Britain and America. Rather, it projected the simplicity of the Old English style, with a few choice antiques and a tasteful display of objects collected during Fenn's world travels. Fenn avoided the clichés of the Aesthetic style and the calls for "self-expression" and "art for art's sake," favoring architectural clarity, at least as conveyed in his illustrations. It was a commodious and comfortable home for an artist and his family, which in Fenn's case included five children. As summed up in *The Art Amateur* in 1896, the house was a "tasteful though not costly treatment of form and color."¹¹

Focusing on some of the key features, the central hall, which gave immediate access to the parlor, dining room, piazza, and staircase, conveyed the idea of the great hall of Old English-style houses, rising higher than adjoining rooms and dominated by a monumental chimneypiece.¹² The massive exposed brick fireplace, with its deeply molded wood mantel, projected the rusticity and warmth of the British vernacular house, as did the timbered ceiling and the wood wainscoting. Old English furnishings were depicted by Fenn in sketches of his informal hall settings, among them a carved linen chest dated 1693, a bannister chair, a rush-seat corner chair, a Jacobean baluster-leg cabinet with ebony and ivory inlay, and Oriental carpets.¹³



L to R: Harry Fenn, sketch of the drawing room and view of the hall at The Cedars; *The Hall Fireplace*. *The Magazine of Art*, January 1886.

The wall treatment reflected the requisite tripartite horizontal division of the Aesthetic interior that was one of the hallmarks of the late Victorian period.¹⁴ Fenn's evocative illustrations in *The Magazine of Art* in 1886 gave readers an inside look at how rooms could be visually unified in an Aesthetic decorative scheme. The "golden-hued" wood wainscoting continued through the three principal rooms of the ground floor, and paintings were hung on panels of "yellowish matting" at eye level. Japanesque, Moorish, and other exotic elements provided interest, from the patterned wall frieze composed of stylized Japanese crests and badges, to fireplace overmantel panels of "stamped and gilt Japanese leather," and "blue-and-white Delft and Spanish-Moorish platters" and "old Nankin blue-and-white porcelain" in the dining room's recessed-arch mantelpiece and on narrow wall shelving.¹⁵ The walls exhibited "a number of prints in red ink, after drawings by Mr. Burne-Jones."¹⁶

The focal point of the drawing room was a large fireplace "nook" with built-in window seating, separated from the main space by a broad, flat-arched entrance and overhead mantel displaying Moorish plaques. Within the inglenook, the mirrored mantelpiece with classical decoration captured the essence of the delicate Queen Anne style.¹⁷ Banded windows with opalescent glass roundels, or "bull's eyes," in the upper section bathed the nook in a warm, golden light, as described in *The Art Amateur*. The much-praised interior color effects of the house reflected the lighter Japanesque-inspired Aesthetic palette: warm golden and cream tones in the hall; light salmon in the dining room; and warm grays in the drawing room. Fenn placed his personal artistic stamp on the stairway's "ten-foot wide window of cathedral panes," over which he painted a life-sized dogwood tree, and on the dining room mantelpiece, which he decorated with a golden sunburst.¹⁸

The Next Generation: Learning from The Cedars

The Fenn house offered a formative experience for the next generation of Montclair architects and designers—including two of Fenn's daughters and his son-in-law Dudley Van Antwerp, who took inspiration from some of the home's artistic and constructive features. Van Antwerp gained first-hand knowledge of the Fenn house through Hilda Marguerite Fenn, the youngest of Harry Fenn's children, who was to become his wife at age twenty-one. Hilda, born in England in 1880 and brought to America in 1881, was raised in the house and would have absorbed the special environment of The Cedars.¹⁹ The house would also have made an impression on the young Van Antwerp, whose family settled in Montclair in 1880. Born in Indiana in 1867, Van Antwerp was just thirteen years old when they moved to Montclair, an age at which he could

appreciate the rapid expansion and building activity of Montclair in the decade of the 1880s.

Van Antwerp studied architecture in New York and worked as a draftsman with the firms of Young & Cable, R. C. Gildersleeve, Augustus H. Allen, and William B. Tuthill, the architect of Carnegie Hall (1891).²⁰ In 1894 he established the architectural firm of Van Antwerp & Brick (with Samuel R. Brick, Jr.), which existed until 1899 at 18 Broadway in New York. One of his independent New York projects has been located at 31 West 26th Street, within the present-day Madison Square North Historic District.²¹ A Beaux-Arts style façade of brick and terra cotta created for a pre-existing structure, it demonstrated Van Antwerp's knowledge of the architectural vocabulary then in vogue in New York City.²² Early in the 1900s, however, Van Antwerp changed directions and opened an office in Montclair, where he maintained an independent practice for more than twenty-five years.

Van Antwerp's shift in practice corresponded to his marriage to Hilda Fenn. The ceremony took place at the home of her parents on a late September evening in 1901. As reported in *The New York Times*, "The Cedars" was decorated with yellow and white chrysanthemums, palms, and smilax. The bride was gowned in a costume of white crepe de chine, over white taffeta. She was attended by sixteen young women, who wore costumes of white silk and white organdie, and who carried ropes of smilax, with which they formed an aisle for the bridal party."²³ The gowns and floral arrangements would have blended beautifully with the Aesthetic interior color scheme of The Cedars. It should be noted that Hilda, approximately 6 feet tall, towered over her husband, who measured just 5'3".²⁴

The couple's new home in Montclair was a "wedding gift," according to family members. Whether a gift from Hilda's father Harry Fenn or from Dudley to his wife is not certain, but from the published architectural plans, which credit Dudley Van Antwerp as architect and Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp as associate, it is apparent that husband and wife collaborated on the project.²⁵ Their personal bookplate displays the T-square and compass of the architectural profession.²⁶ Hilda, however, most likely acted in the capacity of an interior designer on their projects; her 1931 newspaper obituaries referred to her as an interior decorator and watercolor artist, following in the "chosen art" of her famous father, Harry Fenn.²⁷ It was unusual to find women credited in professional architectural publications in this period, though the movement toward professionalization of the field of interior design was well under way. Hilda was educated in the late 1890s at Rosemary Hall in Connecticut, an institution with progressive ideas about women's education, suffrage, and careers for women.²⁸



Top to bottom: The Cedars, the Harry Fenn residence. The Van Antwerp family c. 1915. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society.



Exterior of the Mrs. Charles F. Coffin residence, Montclair, N. J. *American Estates and Gardens*, November 1904.

A fertile artistic environment existed in the Fenn household, recalling something of the activity of William Morris and his circle in England. Walter Fenn (1864-1961), the only surviving son of Harry Fenn, was an accomplished illustration artist who spent a period on the West Coast, returning to live with the family in Montclair around 1900.²⁹ Alice Fenn Coffin (1862-1932), eighteen years older than her sister Hilda, was an “architectural designer,” a term that she herself employed.³⁰ In 1911, her work as an “architect” and “interior decorator” was featured in an article titled “The Decorative Ingenuity of Alice Fenn Coffin: A Clever Exponent of Original and Practical Elements” in *American Homes and Gardens*. She was praised for the “artistic” and “inventive qualities” of her work, including such embellishments as opalescent windows and fireplace tiles, wallcoverings of “Japanese gold fiber,” and a themed “Copper Room,” to name a few.³¹ While there is no direct evidence substantiating her work as an architect, there is reason to believe she was an accomplished designer, more than likely collaborating with Van Antwerp and other architects and mentoring her younger sister Hilda in interior design.³²



Living room of the Mrs. Charles F. Coffin residence in Montclair, N. J. *American Estates and Gardens*, November 1904.

Coffin was also a talented journalist, writing for *The Magazine of Art* two articles about the experience of living in the remote Surrey countryside with her family for two years, in the early 1880s, just prior to returning to Montclair.³³ The charming stories, written when she was in her early twenties, are filled with observations of farm life, nature, architecture, and literary celebrities, and illustrated by Fenn himself. She clearly had an acute eye, inherited from her father, and may have even been involved in the decorating projects at The Cedars, when she was in her early twenties but already immersed in the arts. Through her marriage in 1893 to Charles F. Coffin, a wealthy merchant from an old New England family, she gained important connections that set her on a path toward an interior design career, building also on those friendships and contacts she would have acquired through her artist father.³⁴

The Alice Fenn Coffin Residence: A Montclair Elizabethan Manor House

Eastward, the grand Elizabethan manor house of Mrs. Charles F. Coffin, was nearing completion at the time of Hilda and Dudley Van Antwerp’s marriage. Designed by architect Alfred F. Norris (1864-1915), a New York and Montclair practitioner whose work embraced a number of architectural styles, the house was published in *Scientific American* in 1902, and again in 1904, in the lavishly illustrated *American Country Estates* by architecture editor Barr Ferree.³⁵ The latter publication, filled with imposing palaces, placed the Coffin residence in the category of the country mansion, a smaller type of typical country house of the future,

often very charming, beautifully designed, admirably built, richly furnished, and thoroughly complete in all appointments and surroundings.³⁶

In Montclair, the Coffin house certainly ranked among the larger, high-style residences. The construction of this important house most likely made a deep impression on Dudley and Hilda, just as they were planning and executing their own, more modest project.

Half-timbered, with multiple gables in the Elizabethan style and an Arts and Crafts-influenced interior, the Coffin house was representative of the new suburban manor house, a considerable leap from the picturesque style of The Cedars, but not far from the traditional Old English examples young Alice Fenn may have seen in England. The interior design, while not credited to Coffin, clearly bore her highly evolved decorative stamp, with specialized wall, floor, and ceiling treatments, color schemes, and dramatic spaces, among them a vaulted, octagonal hall and muraled dining room. Architectural details, such as the flat Tudor-arch doorframes and fireplace openings, timbered ceilings, and windows filled with opalescent glass roundels, bear a strong resemblance to those later employed by Van Antwerp in his own house and in subsequent commissions. It was not unusual for architects to quote from each other in this period, often drawing from the same sources, and Van Antwerp later had the opportunity to build a similar half-timbered and brick manor house on the same street in Montclair, high up on the mountainside with a commanding view.

In this close-knit, but possibly competitive family network, it is interesting to note that Alice Fenn Coffin was related through marriage to architect A. F. Norris.³⁷ Coffin was thus closely linked with the two leading architects in Montclair at the time, Van Antwerp and Norris, who together are credited with designing as many as 1,000 houses in the community and its vicinity, many of them in the Arts and Crafts or Craftsman style that prevailed in the period leading up to World War I.³⁸ Coffin influenced and worked with both men—in addition to the Norris commission there are two documented Coffin residences in the Van Antwerp portfolio—and she herself may have created an additional body of work yet to be discovered, further revealing her role as a tastemaker in Montclair in the early twentieth century.

The Van Antwerp Residence: A Small Suburban House in the Arts and Crafts Style

It is always instructive to examine the houses that architects build for themselves, and Van Antwerp's is no exception. From the exterior, Van Antwerp's house represented a radical simplification of form, far from the visual complexity of Harry Fenn's picturesque house or his sister-in-law's Elizabethan manor. So starkly simple in comparison with other Montclair houses of the period, the Van Antwerp residence provides a sense of the experimental attitude of the generation of architects working in the Arts and Crafts style, as they searched for an appropriate national style.³⁹ Drawing on American forms, Van Antwerp's 1902

design featured a distinctive hipped roof with deep, bracketed overhang associated with the Prairie style of architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), and a Spanish-Moorish entrance arch and porch of stucco more typical of California Craftsman houses. The fenestration is varied, ranging from double-hung windows to Moorish arched openings over the porch, but also includes an early example of the tripartite, Chicago-style banded window that Van Antwerp later developed into a signature style.

The Van Antwerp house is, moreover, an early example of stucco over metal lath construction, relatively new in its application to domestic architecture, but increasingly used in the search for an American style of architecture appropriate for suburban living. In 1906, the influential publication *Concrete Country Residences* of Atlas Portland Cement Company featured the house and plans, along with two other works by Van Antwerp, including the residence he designed for his father-in-law Harry Fenn, in his late years.⁴⁰ The publication promoted the use of stucco over metal lath in domestic architecture as an economical and fire resistant building method. *American Homes and Gardens*, in 1907, published two Van Antwerp commissions, again including the Fenn House, as examples of "The Use of Concrete in the Building of the Small Country House." Subsequent articles featuring his work were titled "The Small House of Stucco" and "Two Typical American Homes."⁴¹

Van Antwerp's house responded to the realities of suburban life, as it was evolving in Montclair, by then a town of 14,000 inhabitants. Along with six other houses that he designed in the vicinity, the Van Antwerp house was located in Marlboro Park, a turn-of-the-century, railroad-era development planned by the Montclair Realty Company to emulate the British concept of the garden city.⁴² The middle class homes designed by Van Antwerp represented a more innovative, second phase of the development and probably cost more than the original builder models. Sales brochures described Marlboro Park as an ideal location with "no



The Dudley and Hilda Van Antwerp residence (1902). *Concrete Country Residences*, Atlas Portland Cement Co., 1906.

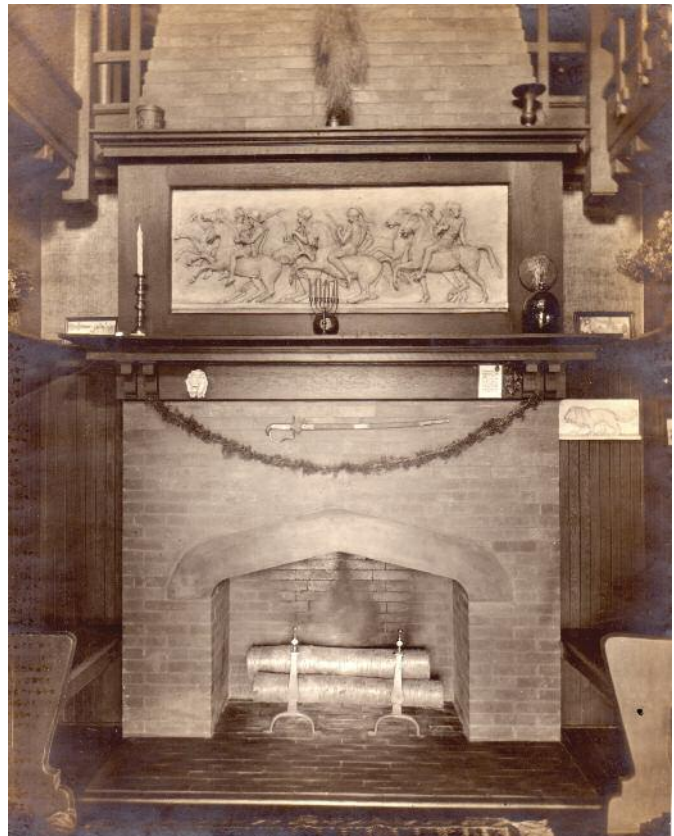
nuisance of any kind, not a saloon or factory anywhere in the vicinity.”⁴³ Van Antwerp also designed the new Watchung Congregational Church in close proximity to his house, bringing church and home within walking distance in the small community.⁴⁴

The interior of the house was a place to express more personal needs for beauty, convenience and comfort, and the ideals of the young couple as they planned their family life, eventually to include two children. In keeping with tradition, the concept of the living hall, albeit greatly reduced in size, was forcefully expressed with a symbolic hearth and inglenook seating at the entrance. Within the highly compressed space, the chimney rose dramatically through two stories of open space, giving a strong sense of verticality that can be compared to a cathedral. This sense was reinforced by a wrap-around stairway with balcony and gallery, and the repeated motif of the flat Tudor arch throughout the house, another of Van Antwerp’s hallmarks. The rustic Flemish-bond fireplace opening introduced the flat arch, and above the projecting mantel, Van Antwerp placed a framed plaster relief of the Parthenon equestrian frieze, as if to say, this is the home of artists. The resemblance to the hall scheme of The Cedars is strong, particularly with regard to the chimneypiece.

As is often the case when an architect builds for himself, Van Antwerp, working together with his wife, exhibited a passion for details. The appreciation of materials and good craftsmanship is evident in the dark woodwork that unified the hall and house. In a display of architectural ingenuity, Van Antwerp created an open balcony overlooking the great

hall, which was accessed by the hall stairs. Both Van Antwerps were members of the local theatrical club, and their sense of drama is evident as they invented this stage for their new life. Van Antwerp took pleasure in the device of the central staircase, and deliberately placed a slight swell in the balcony on axis with the entrance, anticipating that his future offspring could watch arriving guests or eat meals there, in the center of the house. Small details such as the staircase and balcony railings, shaped with flat Tudor arches connecting the posts and terminating in a cross design at the base, are unlike any other Van Antwerp commission.

Ties with the British domestic architecture tradition of the generation of the 1890s are evident in the Van Antwerp house. The simplicity and the unified appearance of the interior architecture recall the works of M. H. Baillie Scott, C. F. A. Voysey, Parker & Unwin and others of the British Arts and Crafts movement, who emphasized both integrated design and simplicity in their plans.⁴⁵ They shared a common goal in the quest for a national style in architecture based on local precedent and the use of honest materials, and the American public came to know their work through publications such as *The Studio* and Gustav Stickley’s *The Craftsman*. Van Antwerp himself was of Dutch ancestry and brought this vocabulary into his house designs as well. A member of the Holland Society and Sons of the American Revolution, he drew on these antecedents when he incorporated, with some degree of frequency, the Dutch door, the Dutch ledge, the Dutch fireplace hood, Flemish bond brick fireplace facing, Flemish gables, and the Dutch Colonial house type, all paying homage to not only his past, but to the



L to R: Hall stairway, balcony, arched doorway and fireplace in the Van Antwerp residence. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society.

origins of Upper Montclair, originally a Dutch settlement named Speertown.

As in virtually all of Van Antwerp's plans, the hall opened directly into the other ground floor spaces. British vernacular tradition is reflected in the living room, which had a built-in inglenook on a raised platform, an example of the cozy nook concept in evidence at The Cedars, but here fully developed in the Arts and Crafts manner. The high-back seating was

Reputedly hand made by Van Antwerp, this piece was in keeping with Arts and Crafts calls for plain, functional furniture and do-it-yourself projects for those without adequate funds to purchase new furnishings, as would have been the case for these newlyweds. The proportions of the Arts and Crafts hanging lamp fit the scale of the table, but the delicately proportioned rocking chair and fall-front free-standing bookcase were more typical of British Aesthetic



Living room, with raised inglenook and Moorish windows in the Van Antwerp residence. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society

handcrafted with butterfly key insets, creating a decorative effect with its exposed joinery. Three small Moorish-arch windows banded above the inglenook filtered light through amber opalescent glass roundels, as in the inglenook at The Cedars, with the requisite Moorish lantern. The same opalescent glass roundels were used in the Dutch-door entrance to the house, and in many other Van Antwerp commissions, suggestive of the Medieval as well as Oriental aesthetic. As in The Cedars, the nook was separated from the rest of the room by a broad flat arch, a device repeated in many Van Antwerp houses. Quoting a different source, the small living room fireplace opening had a green Grueby-tile surround and the hammered-brass hood and trim that were popular in American Arts and Crafts interiors.

Interior furnishings offer insight into how the Van Antwerps embraced both the British and American aesthetics in their informal lifestyle. The center table, with a wrap-around leather surface held in place by bold round tacks, resembles the furniture shown in Gustav Stickley catalogs.

furniture. Assorted books, pottery, candles, and wall art completed the casual but artistic arrangement of the room.

From the hall, stepping through the small den, one entered the dining room, an intimate space with wainscoting panels interspersed with stucco, plate rails, and a broad tripartite window filling the room with light. The room was distinguished by a painted frieze, executed by family members working together in the collaborative manner of William Morris, possibly with the participation of Harry Fenn.⁴⁶ The two panels portrayed a row of Dutch houses on a canal with boats and views of the peaceful countryside, in a symbolic reference to the rural, simple life and the Dutch past of the Van Antwerp family. The dining table, chairs, sideboard, and porcelain plates were almost certainly hand-me-downs from former Fenn residences, eclectic in their appearance juxtaposed with the Arts and Crafts architectural and design elements.⁴⁷



Exterior of the Harry Fenn residence by architect Dudley Van Antwerp. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society.

**The House of Harry Fenn:
Living the Arts and Crafts Lifestyle**

In 1906, as Van Antwerp was reaching his mature style, he had the pleasure of creating a new residence for his father-in-law. *American Homes and Gardens* featured the Fenn house in the April 1909 issue, as part of an article by Benjamin Howes about the use of concrete and stucco in the small country house. Howes commented:

A larger and more ambitious house designed by Mr. Dudley Van Antwerp for Mr. Henry Fenn of Upper Montclair is a pleasing and restrained treatment in half-timbered work in grey-green. The shingle roof is also grey green of delightfully varied texture, as the shingles take the color differently. The lines of the entrance are well suited to the stuccoed walls, with their broad square surfaces, and the window grouping is particularly attractive.⁴⁸

In the new Fenn residence, Van Antwerp created an environment in which the aging artist could feel familiar, recalling *The Cedars* with its half-timbered and stucco surfaces; the textural effects; the asymmetrical, sweeping front gable and side gables; and the inclusion of a generous porch and piazza facing south. But instead of the unbounded exuberance of *The Cedars*, there was restraint and a more rational plan appropriate for the smaller suburban house on a corner lot. The banded windows were perhaps one of the architect's most important organizing elements, in the eyes of the writer Howes,

indicating a feeling for concrete design in which economies of construction call for broad surfaces and concentrated window space.⁴⁹

The play of solids and voids across the façade of the Fenn house also demonstrated Van Antwerp's facility with stucco, and its ability to create sculptural effects with light and shadow.

Fenn's studio faced north in the new house, as is desirable for artists' studios, but rather than "rambling" through the attic as at *The Cedars*, it was now located on the ground floor with picturesque views of the garden and pergola, extending the house into nature. The effect was generously illustrated with photographs in the *American Homes and Gardens* article, including one image showing the artist Fenn leaning casually against a post. The garden pergola, offering an inviting place for rest and for climbing vines, was considered an important feature of Arts and Crafts houses situated on smaller plots. Also shown in the photographs was the picturesque entrance-gate and stair approach to the Fenn house, illustrating yet another potential use of concrete.



Artist Harry Fenn beneath the garden pergola at his residence by architect Dudley Van Antwerp. *American Homes and Gardens*, April 1909.

On the interior, there was also a pleasant sense of *deja-vu* in the Arts and Crafts detailing. The dining room mantelpiece design closely resembled the dining room mantel at *The Cedars*, with its recessed arch, mantelshelf, and plate rail displaying some of the same decorative plates and objects that were seen in Fenn's illustrations of *The Cedars*. In the "living-hall," as it was here termed, a screened fireplace inglenook recalled built-in features at *The Cedars*, but instead of the soaring ceiling of the past, the space was tightly constructed, making the most of the comparatively limited square footage of the new house, and no doubt contributing to better heating conditions. Van Antwerp's designs, of

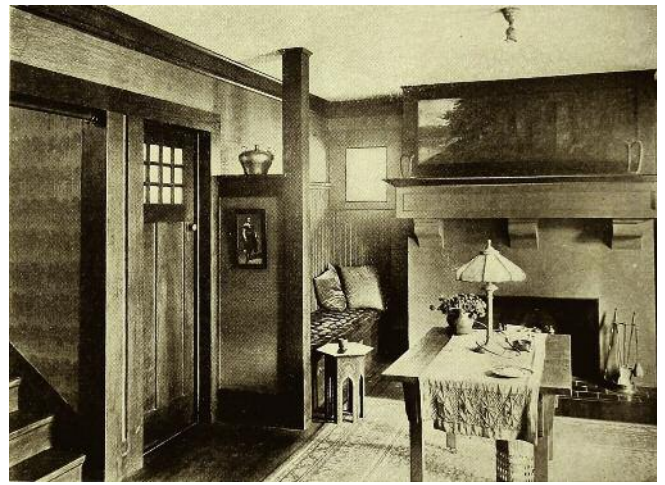
course, included the latest in heating and plumbing conveniences.

Furnishings were familiar too: the ebony cabinet-on-stand seen in the *American Homes and Gardens* photograph of the dining room is the same one shown in Fenn's illustration of the hall at The Cedars. A heavy Stickley-style Mission chair, Morris-style reclining chair, and center table with needlework table runner were new to the interior furnishings mix, but a Turkish end table and Colonial clock recalled the antiquarian eclecticism of The Cedars. Even the organizational wall divisions of the living hall, with "Flemish brown paneling" and walls "covered with golden-brown, Japanese grass cloth," evoked the The Cedars, now reinterpreted and part of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic, with a more sober color palette.

Van Antwerp introduced a new architectural idea in the design of the cast-in-place concrete fireplace, with heavy cornice and bracket supports, suggestive of the California Mission style. The writer for *American Homes and Gardens* commented: "An effective feature of the living-hall is a fireplace built of cement with a massive mantel."⁵⁰ Van Antwerp later used this type of mantelpiece in the sunrooms of his houses, combining it with a cement hearth. The landscape painting above the mantel, described as the work of the owner, Harry Fenn, brought natural beauty and artistic embellishment to the interior, recalling some of the painted features in Fenn's first home, and the taste for murals in the Van Antwerp and Coffin homes.

For his architectural studio, built circa 1910 when his practice was thriving, Van Antwerp chose to erect a small, shingled bungalow in the center of town, a remarkable expression of his continuing desire to make a new statement in architecture.⁵¹ Unprecedented in Montclair, its simplicity spoke strongly of Van Antwerp's values and commitment to the Arts and Crafts movement. While the multi-paned casement windows, clipped gables, and interior woodwork echoed the Craftsman features of his larger commissions, the structure was essentially a popular expression emanating from the California bungalow movement, unpretentious and welcoming. In the reception area, Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp established an exclusive shop for children's clothing specialized in smocking, perhaps inspired by interior designer Candace Wheeler's needlework enterprise ideas.⁵² The studio building was a harbinger of the future in small-scale residential design, never fully realized in Montclair, but elsewhere widespread. Converted into a house, it served as the idiosyncratic residence of the Van Antwerps during their later, less affluent years, after it was moved to a new location to make way for development in the central business district of Montclair.

The career of Dudley Van Antwerp coincided with a period of middle-class growth, which created an environment rich in opportunities for individual expression and experimentation in domestic architecture. Ideas were rapidly disseminated via a newly active popular press, with architects and interior designers playing the role of tastemakers. But following World War I, lifestyles changed,



Top to bottom: Arts and Crafts interiors of the Harry Fenn residence by Dudley Van Antwerp. *American Homes and Gardens*, April 1909. Bungalow studio of Dudley and Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp, c. 1910. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society.

building construction diminished, and it was harder to find a client able and willing to pay for a custom built house. In this climate, conformity and nostalgia for a classical, colonial past became the norm, and architect individualists like Van Antwerp had little place. The articles on Van Antwerp's work end around 1915, and only one Van Antwerp house has been identified from the post-war period.⁵³

Through his many documented commissions, reflecting British and American precedents and the artistic sensibilities of his own extended family, Dudley Van Antwerp demonstrated versatility and agility in interpreting and adapting the Arts and Crafts style. Though his portfolio included examples of the Classical and Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial, and Tudor Revival styles, and was not limited to domestic architecture, it was his Art and Crafts work that showed greatest originality. Stucco exteriors, sweeping roof lines, clipped gables, bracketing under extended eaves and bays, banded and eyebrow windows, leaded casements, battered walls, open and enclosed sun porches, applied trellises, and window boxes were integral

parts of Van Antwerp's vocabulary in his most imaginative works.

Favoring open plans organized around a central hall, unified by beamed ceilings and paneling used with restraint, and utilizing modern materials and technology, Van Antwerp successfully anticipated the direction that lifestyles would take in twentieth-century suburban towns. His versatility, sense of proportion, and graceful detailing are qualities that make the homes he designed stand out in the larger context of Montclair architecture, and they are an inspiration to current owners who wish to preserve his important legacy for the future. The remarkable pace of building activity and quality of design and construction maintained by Van Antwerp and his colleagues working at the dawn of the twentieth century will never be replicated; it is the aim of preservationists to recognize these achievements, recover lost knowledge of authorship where possible, and assure a long life for these noteworthy creations of domestic architecture.



I would like to thank the Montclair Historical Society for its support and permission to use selected photographs from the Society's archive. Many thanks also to author and Harry Fenn expert Sue Rainey for her contributions and generosity in providing additional images.

Notes

1. Obituary of Dudley S. Van Antwerp, *The Montclair Times*, January 19, 1934.
2. "Personal: Mr. Harry Fenn," *Harper's Weekly* (September 26, 1885): 627; Lizzie W. Champney, "The Summer Haunts of American Artists," *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* (October 1885): 848; *Building News* (December 18, 1885): 962-963; R. Riordan, "Artists' Homes: Mr. Harry Fenn's, at Montclair, New Jersey," *The Magazine of Art* (January 1886): 45-48; "Mr. Harry Fenn's House," George W. Sheldon, ed., *Artistic Country-Seats* (New York: D. Appleton, 1886), I, 13; "Suburban House of a New York Artist," *Scientific American* (March 19, 1887): 183; "The Home of Mr. Harry Fenn," *The Art Amateur, A Monthly Journal Devoted to Art in the Household* (November 1896): 126-127.
3. See Sue Rainey, *Creating a World on Paper: Harry Fenn's Career in Art* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013). I am indebted to Sue Rainey for her generous contributions to my research and permission to use selected images.
4. *Ibid.*, 24. Landscape artist George Inness, perhaps the best-known painter associated with Montclair's active but non-affiliated art colony, arrived later than Fenn, residing in the town from 1878 until his death in 1894.
5. *Ibid.*, 62.
6. Account of Dorothy Van Antwerp Walters, Harry Fenn Papers located at the Montclair Historical Society, Montclair, N.J.
7. Rainey, *Creating A World*, 194.
8. Champney, *The Century*, 848. The article also illustrated the "summer haunts" of artists Thomas Cole, George Inness, George Inness, Jr., Thomas Moran, Samuel Colman, Eastman Johnson, and R. Swain Gifford, among others.
9. Riordan, *Magazine of Art*, 46.
10. Sheldon, *Artistic Country-Seats*, 13.
11. *The Art Amateur*, 126-27.
12. For background on the British origins of American architecture in this period, see Richard Guy Wilson, "American Arts and Crafts Architecture: Radical though Dedicated to the Cause Conservative," in Wendy Kaplan et. al., *The Art that is Life: The Arts & Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1987), 101-131.
13. Exercising artistic license, Fenn moved some of these pieces about in his various illustrations, creating picturesque variations on the Old English theme.
14. The tripartite treatment calls for wainscoting or a dado at the bottom of the wall, a frieze or cornice at the top, and a field of varying height between the wainscoting and the frieze, sometimes called fill. See Roger W. Moss and Gail Caskey Winkler, *Victorian Interior Decoration* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1986), 116-23.
15. Riordan, *Magazine of Art*, 48.
16. *Ibid.*
17. For a discussion of the British Queen Anne and Old English styles see Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen*

- Anne' Movement 1860-1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977).
18. *The Art Amateur*, 127.
 19. Rainey, *Creating a World*, 156.
 20. Henry F. Withey and Elise R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970), 614.
 21. Matthew Postal, *Madison Square North Historic District Designation Report, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission* (June 26, 2001): 98.
 22. *New York Times*, February 1, 1906. The building housed the New Hilgert Institute, a center for highly dubious rejuvenation treatments with salt water and a "magic shoe." To quote: "Prof. Hilgert's establishment, or 'institute,' as he himself calls it, is a handsome, new structure in Twenty-sixth Street, just west of Broadway."
 23. *The New York Times*, September 27, 1901.
 24. Various family members have commented on the height difference.
 25. *Concrete Country Residences* (New York: Atlas Portland Cement Company, 1906), 24.
 26. The bookplate is located in Charles Holmes, ed., *Modern Pen Drawings: European and American* (London: The Studio, 1901). It bears the pencil inscription H. Fenn, probably Hilda Fenn, but possibly Harry Fenn. Private collection.
 27. Obituary of "Mrs. Hilda Van Antwerp," *The Herald Tribune*, March 23, 1931 and Obituary of "Mrs. D. S. Van Antwerp," *The New York Times*, March 23, 1931.
 28. The founder of Rosemary Hall was Mary Choate, a co-founder with Candace Wheeler of the New York Exchange for Women's Work, a philanthropic enterprise that aimed to give impoverished women opportunities for gainful employment through sales of needlework and other handicrafts. See Amelia Peck and Carol Irish, *Candace Wheeler: The Art and Enterprise of American Design, 1875-1900* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum and Yale University Press, 2001), 35.
 29. Rainey, *Creating a World*, 278.
 30. Alice Fenn Coffin, United States passport, October 31, 1921. I gratefully acknowledge Billie Smith Culler of Montclair, N.J. for supplying a copy of this document.
 31. Jonathan A. Rawson, Jr., "The Decorative Originality of Alice Fenn Coffin: A Clever Exponent of Original and Practical Elements," *Arts and Decoration* (October 1911): 476-478.
 32. There are two houses of Mrs. Charles F. Coffin in Van Antwerp's portfolio of commissions, one of which has been identified as the house associated with Coffin's interior design work in *Arts and Decoration* (October 1911): 476-478.
 33. Alice Maude Fenn, "The Borderlands of Surrey," *The Century Magazine*, 24 (August 1882): 483-494; and "Among the Red Roofs of Sussex," *The Century Magazine* 30 (September 1885): 709-723.
 34. Alice Fenn Coffin's passport of October 31, 1921, listed her domicile as "care of Roland R. Conklin," linking her to the wealthy Conklin family of Huntington, Long Island; Van Antwerp's portfolio of commissions includes the estate of S. L. Conklin in Huntington.
 35. "An Elizabethan Residence at Montclair, N. J.," *Scientific American Building Monthly* 102 (November 1902): 83, 86, 87, 98; Barr Ferree, *American Estates and Gardens* (New York: Munn & Company, 1904): 225-230. The *Scientific American* article places the construction date of Eastward as fall, 1901.
 36. Ferree, *American Estates*, 21.
 37. A. F. Norris's wife, Julia Coffin Norris, was the niece of Charles F. Coffin, husband of Alice Fenn Coffin, as has been pieced together from obituary notices.
 38. Obituary of Alfred F. Norris, *The Montclair Times*, May 22, 1915; Obituary of Dudley S. Van Antwerp, *The Montclair Times*, January 19, 1934. Van Antwerp's obituary claimed he built 500 houses; Norris's estimated 400-500 houses.
 39. Wilson, *American Arts and Crafts*, 102. Regarding the Arts and Crafts movement, Wilson says: "In a sense Arts and Crafts represented not a true movement but a widespread group of very individualistic designers who had a sometimes kindred spirit and an allegiance to creating an organic art and architecture that owed its origins to William Morris."
 40. *Concrete Country Residences*, 21.
 41. Benjamin A. Howes, "The Use of Concrete in the Building of the Small Country House," *American Homes and Gardens* (April, 1909): 164-172; Kirby Hendricks, "The Small House of Stucco," *American Homes and Gardens* (May, 1913): 163; "A Stucco House at Montclair, New Jersey," *American Homes and Gardens* (March, 1914): 80; Gardner Teall, "Two Typical American Homes," *American Homes and Gardens* (February, 1915): 56-58.
 42. Eleanor Price, "Marlboro Park: Forgotten Railroad Development." Reprint from *The Montclair Times*, Montclair, N. J. See also Eleanor McArevey Price, *Montclair 1694-1982: An Inventory of Historic, Cultural and Architectural Resources* (Preservation Montclair, A Project of the Junior League Montclair/Newark, April 1982).
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. Family members were active in the Union Congregational Church of Upper Montclair. Harry Fenn provided sketches for the design of the Norman-style church in the 1890s.
 45. I am grateful to British Arts and Crafts historian Alan Crawford for suggesting these sources during a visit to the house in the 1990s. See M. H. Baillie Scott, *Houses and Gardens* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 1995), first ed. 1906, George Newness Ltd. See also Gustav Stickley, *Craftsman Homes: Mission-Style Homes and Furnishings of the American Arts and Crafts Movement* (New York; Gramercy Park Books, 1996).
 46. Family accounts vary on this point: the mural outline may have been sketched by Harry Fenn and painted by his son Walter Fenn, an artist who lived with his family in Montclair at that time. Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp, an artist, may also have been involved.
 47. Some of these furnishings and ceramics are seen in unidentified Fenn interiors, perhaps predating The Cedars. Fenn Papers at the Montclair Historical Society, Montclair, N.J.
 48. Howes, *American Homes*, 166, 168.
 49. *Ibid.*, 163-164. The comment refers to the fenestration of another Van Antwerp commission reviewed in the same article.
 50. *Ibid.*, 168.
 51. In addition to various articles in *American Homes and Gardens*, Van Antwerp received coverage for the "House of Charles T. Droste, Esq.," *The American Architect* (July 6, 1910).
 52. See endnote 28.
 53. The house was built in 1924, and included in an AIA exhibition in Newark, New Jersey in 1927.

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL



Planning the Suburban House

ROBERT SPENCER'S ADVICE TO CLIENTS

Paul Kruty

Robert C. Spencer, Jr. (1864-1953), a prolific architect, is remembered as one of the pillars of the group headed by Frank Lloyd Wright, which is now known as the Prairie School.¹ One of Spencer's lasting contributions to this movement, however, involved crafting words not buildings. Through his accessible writings Spencer popularized the new style and inspired potential clients to commission houses from his associates and himself. A major set of articles, some three dozen essays written between 1905 and 1909 for readers of *House Beautiful*, address the new suburbanites who were the primary clients of Spencer, Wright, and their colleagues, and confirm Spencer as a critically important proselytizer of the Prairie School.²

Spencer knew his audience. In one piece he described the ridicule heaped on the new class of suburban commuters by their urban colleagues:

To the chronic flat-dweller, one block from the 'L' or the subway, the suburbanite is a poor, foolish fellow who rises before the cold, gray dawn to plow his way a weary distance, and stand on a snow-swept platform waiting for the train that is always late when the weather is worst or business engagements most urgent.³

Spencer was being ironic; indeed, among these foolish fellows we would have to include the architect himself, in 1908 living in suburban River Forest, Illinois, in a new house with his wife and three children, and walking most of a mile each day to catch the train to his office in downtown Chicago.⁴ And in his essays for *House Beautiful* Spencer intended to show how these same suburbanites, an enlightened middle class benefitting from American prosperity, could live "surrounded at a comfortable distance by intelligent neighbors, neither poor nor rich" in comfortable, practical, and economical houses.

Catching the attention of suburbanites was of no small concern for Spencer. The residences they built in the new suburbs of major Midwestern cities constitute the greatest number of buildings actually constructed to the designs of Prairie School architects. Frank Lloyd Wright and Walter Burley Griffin could attract clients by the force of their personalities, but in order for the new architecture to significantly alter the suburban landscape, as opposed merely to placing individual buildings in it, a much larger group of clients needed to be convinced of its value than could be influenced individually. Robert Spencer, more than any other single individual, attempted to accomplish this feat. Spencer understood the importance of addressing clients in his

writings, rather than architects or builders. His articles—more than eighty published between 1898 and 1918—appeared in other popular journals as well as *House Beautiful*, such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Country Life in America*, and *Suburban Life*.⁵ By tapping into contemporary cultural values, such as the rhetoric of the Arts and Crafts movement as well as the much discussed "practicality" of Americans, instead of arguing points of architectural history and aesthetics, Spencer greatly increased the possibility that he would successfully reach middle-class clients who contemplated building a house in the suburbs.

By Way of Background

The driving force behind the values espoused by Spencer and the Prairie School architects was the charismatic figure of Louis H. Sullivan (1856-1924), whose call for a modern American architecture free from what he considered the deadening rhetoric of historic formulas had inspired a bevy of acolytes in the 1890s. These devotees hailed Sullivan's Transportation building at the World's Columbian



Masthead for the series "Planning the House," as it appeared in *House Beautiful*.

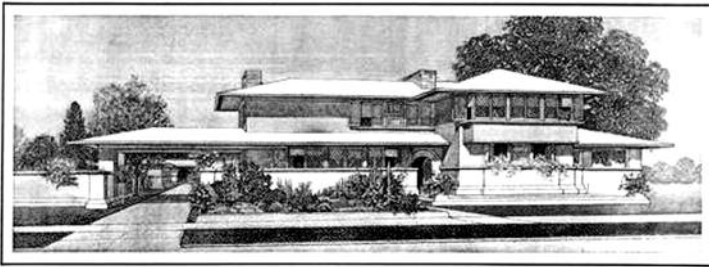
Exposition in Chicago and his Wainwright building in St. Louis as the initial victories in their continuing struggle. Among the original group of Sullivan's followers were Frank Lloyd Wright, whose William H. Winslow house of 1893-94 is the first major response to Sullivan's new architecture. Wright's colleague and friend Robert Spencer was also an early follower of Sullivan.

Spencer and Wright maintained a close association in the years just before and after 1900. As they experimented with a variety of novel forms, construction materials and methods, their buildings often showed great similarities at any given moment.⁶ Spencer and Wright also joined in the critical debate of the 1890s surrounding Sullivan's call to arms, publishing articles in local art journals and exhibition catalogues. In 1899, through New England connections not available to Wright, Spencer secured a contract from the

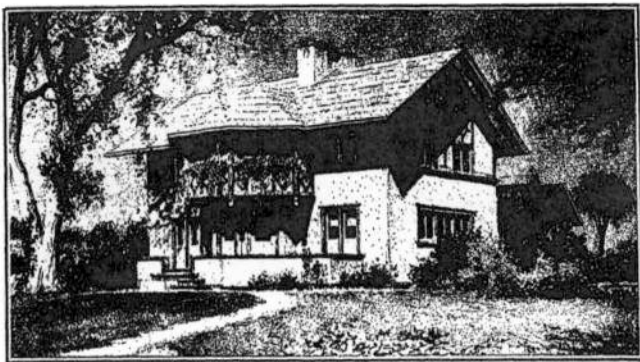
A Home in a Prairie Town

By FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

This is the fifth design in the Journal's New Series of Model Suburban Homes Which Can be Built at Moderate Cost



Above: Detail from "A Home in a Prairie Town," by Frank Lloyd Wright, as published in *Ladies' Home Journal*. Below: Project for "A Plaster Farmhouse for \$2600." *Ladies Homes Journal*, May 1901. Robert C. Spencer, Jr., architect.



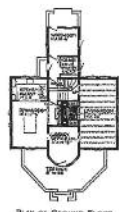
A Plaster Farmhouse for \$2600

By ROBERT C. SPENCER, Jr.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR



ONLY by the greatest simplicity of planning and economy of construction can a modern farmhouse be built for the above sum, large enough to comfortably shelter an average farm household, yet warm, durable, equipped with modern heating and sanitary appliances, and not without some evidence in its design of a regard to beauty as well as use.



PLAN OF GROUND FLOOR

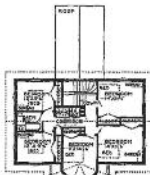
Few farm-houses have good floors; the one illustrated on this page has double floors, nicely finished and stained, with heavy felt paper between. The heating is done by a hot-air furnace, with piping to every room. The plumbing and drainage are first-class. The plumbing fixtures are pits and porcelain, with hot and cold water supply. Sinks, cases, drawers, cupboards, dressers, etc., being built in, are included in the cost of the house.

Stairs for interior woodwork, without varnish, are cheaper than paint and require no special. The beamed ceiling of the living-room has no plaster surfaces to crack.

In arrangement, the house is so simple as almost to captivate itself. The rear entrance passes under the stair landing to a hall containing living-room and dining-room. The former is large, with a bay chimney alcove, and French windows and opening upon the terrace in front. The dining-room and kitchen are almost one apartment, and are

separated by the above treatment just enough to retain the convenience and economy of the old-fashioned farm kitchen, which usually serves as dining-room, and often as living-room also. With its low arch, simple window surfaces, and based over the range, the above will be so well ventilated that the fumes of cooking will not be annoying.

Connecting the living-room and dining-room is the office and front entrance



PLAN OF SECOND FLOOR

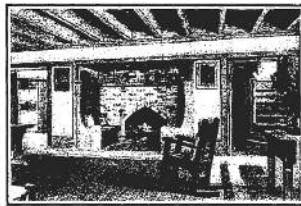


THE LIVING-ROOM IS LARGE, WITH AN INGLE-BOUR

hall—a room useful in various ways and not apt to be a thoroughfare except in pleasant weather, or on "company" occasions, as the dining-room also opens directly upon the terrace. Chairs and table supplies are kept handy in the large china-cabinet and sideboard built into the above neck of the great chimney. From either end of the house the staircase is readily accessible, leading to a compactly

arranged second story, with a bathroom, a linen-closet and two bedrooms, with large wardrobe-closets. The balcony has pleasant feature of this story.

Stairs lead to the attic, where two additional comfortable rooms may be finished off.



In the woodshed wing is a large cool-storage pantry with space for refrigerator (to be filled from outside), and plenty of good shelving.

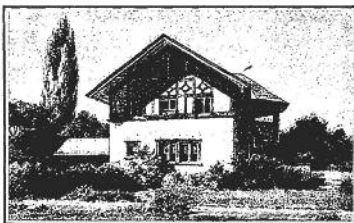
In the basement is a laundry with two stone-ware tubs. Under this estimate of cost the cellar floor is not cemented.

The exterior construction is cement and lime mortar "rough-cast" plaster on present sheathing laid over the ordinary balloon frame construction. The woodwork is left rough, and stained with creosote stain. The slungings on the roof are left to weather.

The foundation is six inches above grade.

The rock finished according to contractor's estimate, is as follows:
 Masonry.....\$ 750.00
 Carpentry, ceiling and trim, built in the kitchen..... 1500.00
 Plastering, inside farm-house..... 250.00
 Plastering, outside..... 400.00
 Painting and papering..... 100.00
 Plumbing and piping..... 125.00
 Total.....\$2950.00

Field stones for the foundation are to be furnished and hauled by owner, who is to excavate and grade. Calculating, painting of interior plastering, and systems of outside drainage and sewage disposal are not included in estimate.



THE EXTERIOR IS CEMENT AND LIME MORTAR

COMPLETE BUILDING PLANS OF THIS FARMHOUSE HAVE BEEN PREPARED
 —Complete in every respect, so that any one can build from them. There are several blue-prints drawn to such a scale that every part of the house is thoroughly and carefully illustrated and explained. These blue-prints are accompanied by printed specifications and a careful detail. A complete set of drawings and specifications, either of this farmhouse or any one of the other five already published in the series, will be mailed, postage free, for five dollars (\$5.00). Address: The Curtis Publishing Company, Philadelphia.

Architectural Review of Boston to publish the first major article on Wright. This article appeared in June 1900, and it introduced many of the subjects still mentioned in discussing Wright, ranging from the claim that playing with wooden blocks as a child had somehow inspired Wright's later forms, to the charge that Wright's rival, George Washington Maher, had used the Winslow house as his chief design model.⁷

By this time, Spencer had embarked on a second career as an architectural journalist. He provided copy for professional magazines like *The Brickbuilder*, including a three-part review of "Brick architecture in and around Chicago," and penned many articles for *Architectural Record*. These business associations garnered him the commission from the popular *Ladies' Home Journal* of Philadelphia to create a series of seven model farmhouses, complete plans of which were offered to readers by mail for five dollars. Spencer utilized this connection to get two publishing jobs for his friend Wright: the seminal designs of 1901, "A Home in a Prairie Town" and "A Small House with 'Lots of Room in it.'" Typical of Spencer's offerings was the sixth in his series, "A Plaster Farmhouse for \$2600."⁸

In 1905, Spencer's journalistic path took a major turn when in May he began the series of illustrated essays under consideration here, addressed to the subscribers of another well-known homemaker magazine, one that was less linked directly to women readers than was *Ladies' Home Journal*. As Spencer explained in the opening paragraph of his first essay,

The purpose of the writer is to give to the readers of the *House Beautiful* the same sort of helpful, professional advice concerning the designing and decorating of houses that he would try to give to them as clients.⁹

Naturally, the tone of such an article needed to be distinctly different from one for a professional trade journal, but its purpose was also very different from that of the mail-order plans for *Ladies' Home Journal*. In place of an offered design, there was merely sound, rational advice, with photographic examples of good building casually interspersed—carefully chosen examples, of course, which could carry subliminal messages to these potential clients that the new architecture appearing in the Middle West was the best route to go for a practical and pleasing house.¹⁰

"Planning the House"

Spencer's first set of twelve articles for *House Beautiful* appeared monthly from May 1905 to April 1906. With the second set, the series gained its own masthead—T-square, plans and tacks—which was maintained well into the third set. So popular was Spencer's elucidation and advice on the subject of planning a new house that he was immediately contracted by the editors for another dozen articles.

These began after a hiatus of six months, running from November 1906 through the end of 1907. Finally, the format was repeated once more, beginning in February 1908 and ending with a last installment in January 1909 (the complete list is given in the appendix). These thirty-six issues, covering almost four years from spring 1905 to winter 1909, coincided with the crucial years in which the singular achievements of Sullivan and the first blossoming of a handful of works by his followers were succeeded by the emergence of the next generation of major designers in the movement, including Walter Burley Griffin and the firm of Tallmadge & Watson, and the first indications that elements of the new architecture were appearing in the work of an ever widening circle of architects, builders, and craftsmen.

What exactly was the purpose of Spencer's essays? Midway through the first set, he paused to explain, "It is not the purpose of these articles to make every man his own architect, but to help those to whom the special, personal services of an expert architect are not easily available."¹¹ Spencer's explicit hope was that his explanations would "enable homebuilders to co-operate more intelligently with the men who design their homes, to appreciate their skill where they are skillful, to guide and assist them when they are unskillful." And to what economic bracket did he imagine his audience belonged? In July 1907, well into the second installment, Spencer acknowledged, "Throughout this series, the writer has endeavored to recognize the fact that the majority of his readers are interested in houses of small or moderate cost."¹² He variously estimated such buildings to be priced between \$3,000 and \$15,000, a range that would include most of his own work and that of his Prairie School colleagues, excepting Frank Lloyd Wright and George W. Maher, who regularly worked with wealthy patrons. In 1906, a comfortable suburban dwelling could be constructed for \$5,000.¹³ Ten thousand dollars would house a banker or a lawyer.

The first series proceeded roughly in the order of subjects as they might be approached by client and architect: siting, cost, materials, and the design of particular parts, including some that are obvious, like "Kitchens and Pantries," "Bathrooms, Closets, and Dressing-Rooms" and "the Staircase;" and several that are loaded issues for Spencer and his Chicago colleagues, which are obvious to us but not so apparent to Spencer's readers: the fireplace and also casement windows. The second and third sets of twelve articles repeated this structure, in each case establishing the "Preliminaries" of planning, materials and cost, while examining such questions as plumbing, electricity, and the bathroom—yet always doing so with a new twist and, naturally, with newer examples.

Good Advice and Hidden Meanings

Following an initial article tentatively titled "Planning the Home" and with the nonchalant subtitle, "A Chapter on Porches," Spencer and his editors hit their stride. The first series began in earnest with the second installment, "Economical Floor Plans." Spencer, who had studied for several terms in Boston at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology after completing an engineering degree at the University of Wisconsin, revealed his Beaux-arts training immediately: he argues for the primacy of the plan,

explaining, "In the words of the late Professor Eugène Létang of Boston 'Tech.', 'a plan is an elevation'" because "the latter is a corollary of the former."¹⁴ As he tells his readers, this is both rational and economical: "the logical order of procedure in designing any building is to first work out, roughly at least, the ground plan."

There is stylistic significance to this, Spencer reports:

Many architects make the mistake of beginning at the wrong end and trying to make floor plans to fit some preconceived scheme of exterior. This is one of the errors involved in attempting to copy or 'adapt' from the work of dead predecessors.

In fact, economy dictates simplicity.

Within the narrow restrictions imposed by an appropriation of from three to ten thousand dollars, there is little opportunity for ornament or enrichment. Skillful massing and composition, judicious arrangement and grouping of openings, and a happy choice of color and texture in material are the means available to artistic ends...In fact, no building unless well proportioned and composed, can be saved by ornamentation.



The William E. Davis house, 1906, Winnetka, Illinois, which Spencer merely identified as "a typical simple house with rough cast exterior." *House Beautiful*, September 1908. Robert C. Spencer, Jr., architect.

Thus, the values of both Louis Sullivan and the Arts & Crafts movement—appropriateness and simplicity—find expression in practical explanations.

Spencer maintains this pragmatic, rational mode of argument throughout the series, only subtly and gently revealing his personal position regarding broader architectural values. In "The Cost by Comparison," he argues against the popular Colonial Revival style—which even *House Beautiful* happily supported—on economical rather than aesthetic grounds:

A wooden colonial house designed by careful regard for historical detail is one of the most expensive types, owing to the present high cost of clear finishing lumber for outside work and the amount of detail to be executed in wood, such as columns, capitals, pilasters, cornices, balustrades, and molded door and window trim.¹⁵

Similarly, when comparing wood, plaster, concrete block, and brick construction in this same article, he concludes that

for suburban or country houses costing from \$5,000 to \$15,000, the frame house with exterior plaster on metal lath is doubtless at the present time the most satisfactory type of construction, where the cost must be moderate and the construction durable.¹⁶

He is simultaneously addressing a typical reader of *House Beautiful*, answering a typical client of his and his colleagues, and describing a typical building produced by this group between 1901 and 1909.

When not addressing the housing needs of his middle-class readers, Spencer provided an occasional glimpse at estates and country houses, subjects more popular with *House Beautiful's* competitors. When thus veering from the suburban-house norms of his discussions, he was much more likely to explore the possibilities of smaller residences for lesser budgets, or "cottages," which he defined as "any modest, unpretentious house designed on strictly economical lines."¹⁷ These can be very successful if approached without an attempt at "sham elegance and elaboration," he says, noting that "since simplicity is one of the main attributes of a well designed cottage, its charm and effectiveness must depend upon the quiet excellence of its proportion."



Arthur Davenport house, 1901, River Forest, Illinois. Frank Lloyd Wright, architect. *House Beautiful*, February 1907.

Spencer uses Wright's Arthur Davenport house, erected in River Forest in 1901, as the prototypical modest dwelling of this kind:

The River Forest cottage is a very completely planned and equipped little house, decidedly original and attractive in conception and execution. The space has been most economically used, and, although the lot has a frontage of but 50 feet, the wing arrangement gives the dining-room, as well as the living room, an outlook toward the street, independent of the closely adjoining building.¹⁸

He continues the analysis in this vein, without mentioning the architect, but conjuring up an idyllic picture:

In summer, the square wooden flower boxes...filled with flowers and hanging vines...and the charming little leaded casement windows...sufficiently soften and enrich the little place, which is in striking and happy contrast to the neighboring houses of the uninteresting average suburban type, the kind usually built to sell or to rent.

Who could resist such enticing praise?

Although Spencer usually seems to address a non-specific, gender-neutral audience, the suggestion remains that he is writing for the client-husband. Yet as a practicing architect he knows the pivotal role of the wife in all transactions, which he occasionally expresses. Discussing "Alterations and Additions," Spencer suggests,

If the means are very limited...the mistress of the house (for it is nearly always she who has to bear the brunt of these burdens) may be her own architect and accomplish good results with the aid of reliable contractors.¹⁹

Arguing for the advantages of a bungalow in "All on the Ground Floor," he begins,

With the peculiar conveniences of a commodious flat in mind, housewives often dream of building a house with practically all of the rooms on one floor.²⁰

Spencer also introduces images of family life to make his points. He discusses the planning of rooms in terms of middle-class teenage dating patterns, when young men called on young women at home. About Wright's Davenport house he explains,



L to R: The August Magnus house, as published in *House Beautiful*, November, 1907. Robert C. Spencer, Jr., architect. The J. J. Walser house. *House Beautiful*, September, 1905. Frank Lloyd Wright, architect.

The den, or study, on the second floor, will doubtless prove a very practical feature in later years, when the living-room will be demanded at times by the two daughters, who are now children. It will then serve as a supplementary living room for father and mother.²¹

What kind of house might Spencer's readers have commissioned had they followed his practical advice? Clearly one that looks like his accompanying illustrations. The first essay presented three buildings by Spencer himself, including his early Prairie masterpiece, the August Magnus house, as well as two other iconic works of early twentieth-century Chicago architecture: Howard Shaw's own Arts and Crafts home, Ragdale, and Myron Hunt's double house for Catherine White.²² Spencer chose as the lead illustration of "Country Houses" Arthur Heun's Brinsmaid House, built in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1901, an early masterpiece of the Prairie movement but unpublished prior to Spencer's use of it here; while in "The Staircase" he showed the entrance hall of Richard Schmidt and Hugh Garden's Madlener House of 1902, a house that had previously appeared only in an article by Spencer himself in the professional journal *Brickbuilder*.²³ In "Plaster Houses and Their Construction" he casually inserted the first published photograph of Wright's J. J. Walser house, built in Austin, Illinois, in 1903. In "the Bathroom" of April 1908 he praised Wright's progressive plumbing by showing the Larkin Administration Building's famous wall-hung toilet—"an ideal form for residences," according to Spencer.²⁴

As the three series progressed, Spencer continued to use his essays as showcases to bring the radical work of his colleagues to a wider public. He introduced Griffin's work in July 1907 with interiors of the William Emery house (begun in 1903 in Elmhurst, Illinois); in October 1908 illustrated Griffin's 1906 Harry V. Peters house (marked "Irving Park house," a building never published again in Griffin's lifetime); and finally used Griffin's two-flat house for Mary Bovee in his last *House Beautiful* article of January 1909. Such was Spencer's perception of Griffin's rising significance, that the three constitute all of Griffin's published work before 1910.

But Spencer presents this novel architecture in the most offhand manner: he merely describes the Peters design as "a modest house...showing a harmonious composition of gabled roofs." Its plan is the first example among Griffin's independent works of his revolutionary ell-shaped plan, invented by him in 1900 for a house for his then-employer, Dwight Perkins, and made famous in 1907 in Wright's "borrowed" version as the "Fireproof House for \$5,000."²⁵ Yet typical of Spencer's oblique references to such significance, he merely notes the "current tendency in planning...to increase the size of the living room," while reducing "the space allotted to entrance-halls and services...to the minimum consistent with convenience."²⁶

Roofs, Fireplaces, Casements

Spencer does not push specific matters of style or aesthetic intent, except in the most oblique way. Even when approaching "Good and Bad Design" in April 1906 in the last installment of the first series, he discusses design in terms of universal values of composition, proportion and harmony. Alluding to the deeply overhanging eaves of Wright's

Davenport house, for which Midwest modern architecture was becoming known already by 1907, he admitted:

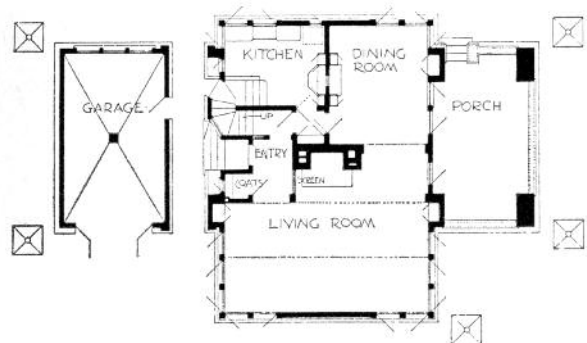
The only criticism of the exterior that might be made is that the flare and projection of the eaves has been somewhat exaggerated...

Even here, he is really taking the position of devil's advocate, for he defends the effect at the Davenport house by noting that, in contrast to it,

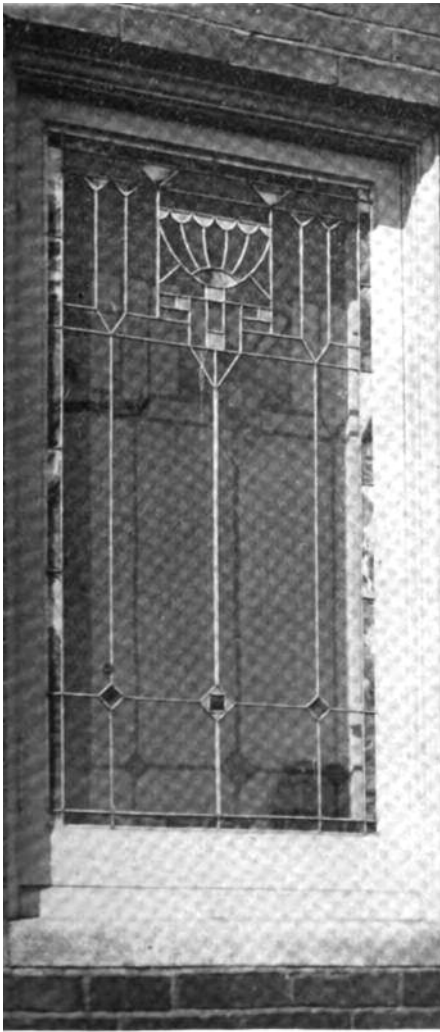
the roofs of most small houses do not project enough and are without the sheltered unifying effect given by a deep shadow at the eaves.

In his final article, on roofs, he describes Griffin's 1907 Bovee two-flat as "a house with exterior walls of hollow building tile, rough-casted, and roofs of large square asbestos shingles laid diagonally," and places it on the same page with an antebellum mansion from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, that "illustrates the durability of a good tin roof."²⁷ Here are two good examples of successful roofs—one on an old house and the other on what is apparently a typical example of modern building, not the radical expression of abstract form that, in fact, it was—preceding Wright's similar house in Oak Park for Laura Gale by two years.

Fireplaces and casement windows—two of the attributes most identifiable with the so-called Prairie Style—are treated in several articles throughout the three series. Admitting in "The Fireplace" that "in the modern American home the fireplace has become a necessary luxury wherever it has ceased to be a necessity," he proceeds to explain what the client needs to know about how fireplaces actually work and what many contractors get wrong when building them.²⁸



The Harry V. Peters house exterior and floor plan, 1906, Chicago, Illinois. *House Beautiful*, October 1908. Walter Burley Griffin, architect.



Warning that

in the average house the money put into the building of a fireplace which is not to be used, to say nothing of the space which it occupies, had best be saved for other and more practical uses,

Spencer admonishes his readers, “Do not build fireplaces for show, or merely as architecture ‘features.’” The reason to add a fireplace to a house that already has central heating?

Build them because you revel in open fires, and are willing to burn up wood and coal regardless of expense, for the enjoyment the fire gives you, and build them right.

Not a word about the aesthetic meaning of the Wrightian fireplace.

Spencer’s treatment of windows, an issue of paramount importance to Wright and his colleagues, is another case in point. As with all of his discussions, Spencer explains that “the question is one of light, ventilation, beauty, convenience and architectural style,” in the order of practicality first and aesthetics second. He argues that casements offer better air circulation because the entire window can be opened, rather than the fifty percent ever possible with “guillotine” windows. After carefully laying a seemingly straightforward case for the superiority of casements to double-hung windows in strictly practical terms, he gets to the heart of the matter: that they are “particularly adapted to decorative treatment in leaded glass.” He then inserts, almost casually but also as the definite endpoint of his unfolding logical discourse, the following:

Within recent years a number of Chicago architects have been particularly successful in thus enriching houses designed by them, the windows being leaded throughout in modern and original conventional designs.

By “conventional” Spencer means what elsewhere he and Wright called “conventionalized” and we would call “abstracted.” But the readers know this already, at least subconsciously, for the article is graced with a wide range of “modern and original conventional designs,” including the so-called “Tree of Life” window from Wright’s Darwin Martin house, built in Buffalo, New York, in 1904 (and now magnificently restored).



Above: An example of a single casement window at the home of Robert C. Spencer, Sr, Milwaukee.

L to R: Exterior of Robert C. Spencer, Jr.’s home, River Forest, Illinois, illustrating the use of casement windows. Mrs. R. C. Spencer, Jr., demonstrating the cleaning of a casement window from the interior of the home. Spencer praised casements as “a great comfort after a hot summer’s day.” *House Beautiful*, July 1908.

Returning to the subject of casement windows two years later, Spencer added “ease of cleaning” to their other virtues, illustrating the article with a picture of his wife washing one of the casements in their River Forest home, and concluding,

With the women so emphatically in favor of it, and a number of our best-known architects, men of national reputation among their fellows, equally devoted to its use, the casement seems destined to become in time our typical *home* window. (emphasis original)²⁹

Apparently, if the reader merely follows all the practical advice given by Spencer, the result will invariably turn out to be a Prairie-School house.

Matters of Style

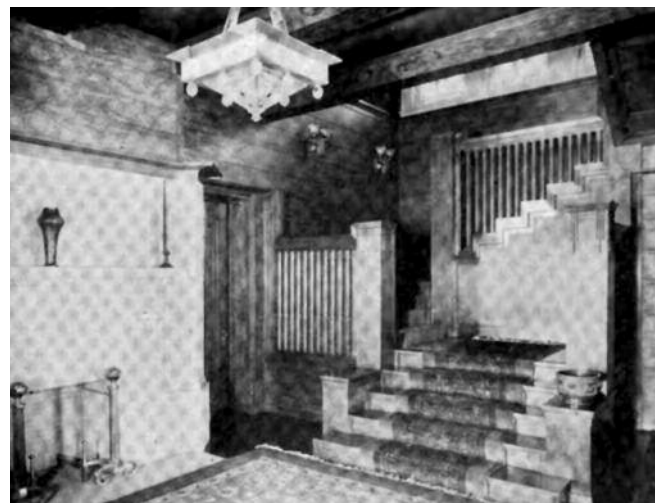
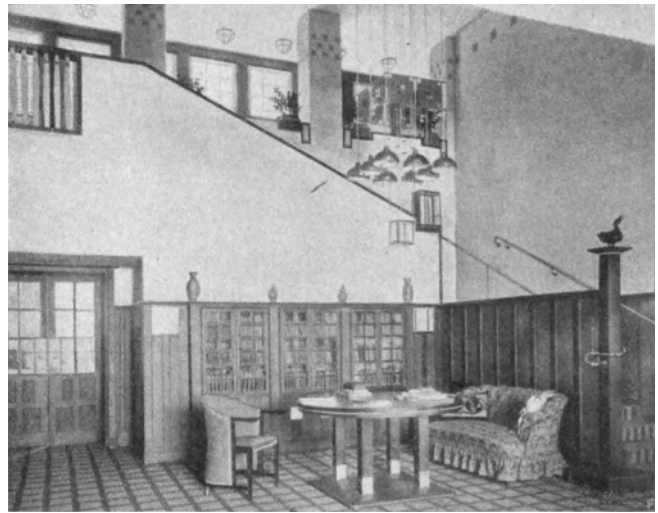
There was one other architectural movement of which Spencer approved and felt convinced that his reader’s would understand—what he called “modern German design.”³⁰ As Spencer acknowledged to his readers,

In the field of interior design, furnishing and decoration, we already owe much to the so-called ‘Modern Secession Movement’ in Austria, Germany and England; a movement which is meeting with much sympathetic appreciation on the part of American designers.³¹

The source of this acquaintance was quite regional. During the spring and summer of 1904, that is, the season before Spencer began his first series in *House Beautiful*, St. Louis held a world’s fair that was meant to rival Chicago’s Columbian Exposition of a decade before. Millions of Americans, and every able-bodied Midwesterner, traveled to Forest Park on the city’s west side. The German industrial arts display, and to a lesser degree the many fewer Austrian rooms, caught the attention of progressive Chicago artists and architects, and was touted in numerous professional journals and popular magazines.³² The extravagant curvilinear forms of Belgium and France—of Victor Horta, Hector Guimard and their followers—never held much interest for these architects, but this new German and Austrian work was immediately perceived as closely related to their own work and hailed as worthy of close study. As is well known, Wright sent members of his staff to visit the fair. The German display was also covered in the homemaker magazines. As Spencer shared with his readers,

One of the most grateful features of the so-called ‘secession’ movement in architecture and the allied arts (a movement which made its greatest headway in Austria, Germany, and the British Isles) is its intelligent recognition of the beauty of broad, simple surfaces of wood, a beauty which the Japanese have recognized for centuries.³³

So widespread was the positive response to modern German design that Spencer felt comfortable in using examples of this work in his articles. For example, in January 1906 in “The Staircase,” immediately below the entrance hall of Richard Schmidt and Hugh Garden’s Sullivanesque Madlener house on Chicago’s near-north side, he reproduces an interior of Josef Hoffmann’s 1901 Henneberg house in Vienna, with the caption “A German Hallway and Staircase,” without further comment. In “the Hall” of August 1908, he showed another “Modern German hall by Professor Olbrich”—the Hans Christiansen house at the grand duke’s



Top to bottom: Josef Hoffmann, Hugo Henneberg house, 1901, Vienna, Austria. Hugh Garden for Richard E. Schmidt, Ernest Madlener house, 1901, Chicago, Illinois. As published in *House Beautiful*, January 1906.

artists’ colony at Darmstadt. Discussing “Inside Finish,” Spencer explained,

(W)e have not as yet developed the art of staining and finishing woods to the high point which has been attained in Europe as so beautifully demonstrated in the German and Austrian exhibits in the recent St. Louis exposition.³⁴

What is revealing here is that, while Spencer is ready to label the German work as part of a particular movement, he refrains from ever giving a name to the kind of design solutions he so clearly champions. Although he periodically damns what he terms “Art Nouveau” designers and praises Secessionist architects, he makes no analogy between their work and what was already being labeled “The Chicago School” and what we would call the Prairie School.³⁵ Only once, late in the third series, does Spencer discuss style as such, and that in the context of furnishing bedrooms, not the building’s design itself. Counseling that planning for furniture beforehand is of great importance, he notes that buying new furniture is not necessary. He does note that, “where means permit” and the owner plans to acquire new furnishings,

the furniture should, if the house conforms to a definite historic style, correspond with the color scheme in view.³⁶

And then he adds, almost as an afterthought,

If the house is designed in the modern spirit among somewhat original individual lines, possessing a style and character of its own, the furniture and fittings should be designed by the architect, and specially made for its setting by a good craftsman.

Thus, the “modern spirit” appears to enter the equation only where furnishings are concerned and then only “where means permit.” The impression remains that the American buildings shown in Spencer’s *House Beautiful* articles are the result of decisions of economy and practicality combined

with good design, but without ideological motives or partisan aesthetics.

As we have seen by way of a brief introduction to these essays, Spencer set about explaining the choices and possibilities facing a family contemplating building a new house. He approached his task during these crucial years, not in terms of aesthetic, historical, or moral appropriateness, but in light of the imperative to make potential clients believe that the new architecture of Sullivan, Wright, Maher, Griffin, Tallmadge & Watson, and his own firm of Spencer & Powers was superior to its competitors in terms that they could understand—to convince hard-boiled businessmen and their progressive wives that commissioning houses from these radical architects was a sound investment, and the only practical and logical choice to make.



Notes

1. The major account of the Prairie School and Spencer’s role in it remains H. Allen Brooks’s *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and his Midwest Contemporaries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972). For a discussion of the place of *House Beautiful* in the context of homemaker magazines, see Jean Gordon and Jan McArthur, “Popular Culture, Magazines and American Domestic Interiors, 1898-1940,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 22 (March 1989): 35-60. An analysis of plans comparable to Spencer’s farmhouse series offered by the *Ladies’ Home Journal* appears in Kathryn Dethier, “The spirit of progressive reform: the *Ladies’ Home Journal* House plans, 1900-1902,” *Journal of Design History* 6 no. 4 (1993): 247-61.
2. During the years when Spencer’s articles appeared, *House Beautiful* was published in Chicago and edited by Herbert S. Stone, one of the partners of the publishing house of Stone & Kimball.
3. Robert C. Spencer, Jr., (hereafter RCSJ), “The Suburban House,” *House Beautiful* (hereafter *HB*) 24 (October 1908): 110. A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians, 15 April 1999, Houston, Texas.
4. Indeed, the previous year Spencer had counseled his readers, “A daily walk or sprint of a mile or so to train or trolley will, if you are a business man, give you much needed exercise, and compel you to take it in all weather. An equally long walk to school will be just as good for the children”; RCSJ, “Planning and Building,” *HB* 21 (May 1907): 12.
5. In May 1907, Spencer described the market for homemaker magazines in these terms: “Within the past decade several excellent American periodicals have successively entered the then neglected field of house and garden art, while others have added to or expanded a special department in the same field. Those (readers) who have culled and classified with discrimination the material thus offered have at hand, when ready to build, an excellent library of valuable suggestions”; RCSJ, “Planning and Building,” *HB* 21 (May 1907): 12.
6. For a comparison of Spencer’s J. Stanley Grepe house of 1894 and Wright’s Nathan Moore house of 1895, see Paul Kruty, “Wright, Spencer, and the Casement Window,” *Winterthur*

Portfolio 30 (Summer/Autumn 1995): 108-09.

7. RCSJ, “The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright,” *Architectural Review* 7 (June 1900): 61-72.
8. Just what the ultimate effect was of such mail-order offers, however, is hard to judge. At least one of Spencer’s designs has been found matching an existing house, as seen on the left; but in Wright’s case, the architect himself seems to have made more prior and subsequent use of the ideas coalesced in these published works than did any readers of the magazine.
9. RCSJ, “Planning the Home: A Chapter on Porches,” *HB* 17 (May 1905): 26.
10. Although Spencer had contributed three pieces to *House Beautiful* in 1901 and 1902, this was his first complete series addressed directly to the client.
11. RCSJ, “Planning the Home: The Staircase,” *HB* 19 (January 1906): 25.
12. RCSJ, “Inside Finish,” *HB* 22 (July 1907): 31.
13. Wright’s famous “Fireproof House for \$5,000,” published in the April 1907 issue of *Ladies’ Home Journal*, similarly aimed at a middle-class client with an average budget for a house, was priced at exactly that amount.
14. While teaching design at M.I.T., French-born Eugène Létang (1842-1892) influenced a generation of American architects, including Spencer, between 1874 and his death in 1892. See “Eugène Létang,” *Architectural Review* 1 (September 1892): 74.
15. RCSJ, “The Cost by Comparison,” *HB* 24 (September 1908): 81.
16. *Ibid.*, 80.
17. RCSJ, “Four Cottages,” *HB* 21 (February 1907): 23.
18. *Ibid.* The other three cottages of “Four Cottages” are by Spencer himself.
19. RCSJ, “Alterations and Additions,” *HB* 22 (June 1907): 32.
20. RCSJ, “All on the Ground Floor,” *HB* 21 (January 1907): 27.
21. RCSJ, “Four Cottages,” *HB* 21 (February 1907): 24-25.
22. RCSJ, “Planning the Home: A Chapter on Porches,” *HB* 17 (May 1905): 26, 27.
23. RCSJ, “Country Houses,” *HB* 19 (December 1905): 23; “The Staircase,” *HB* 19 (January 1906): 27.
24. RCSJ, “The Bathroom,” *HB* 23 (April 1908): 30.
25. For the evidence that Griffin designed a summer home using the “open plan” while working for Dwight Perkins, see Paul

- Kruty, "A Prairie-School House in Coastal Maine," *Nineteenth Century* 27 (Fall 2007): 11-18. For Wright's version of Griffin's plan, see Frank Lloyd Wright, "A Fireproof House for \$5000," *Ladies' Home Journal* 24 (April 1907): 24.
26. RCSJ, "The Suburban House," *HB* 24 (October 1908): 111.
 27. RCSJ, "The House and its Roof," *HB* 25 (January 1909): 41.
 28. RCSJ, "The Fireplace," *HB* 18 (November 1905): 26.
 29. RCSJ, "Casements," *HB* 24 (July 1908): 47.
 30. RCSJ, "Bedrooms," *HB* 23 (March 1908): 15.
 31. RCSJ, "Preliminary," *HB* 23 (February 1908): 17.
 32. As *House Beautiful* itself reported in November 1904, "It is not necessary to cross the water this summer in order to study the best work of modern German architects and decorators, for it has been brought to our own doors"; Jean Hamilton, "German Interiors as Seen at the St. Louis Fair," *House Beautiful* 16 (November 1904): 15. The article held five illustrations, including a photograph of Joseph Maria Olbrich's Summer House for an Art Lover.
 33. RCSJ, "Inside Finish," *HB* 22 (July 1907): 45.
 34. RCSJ, "Inside Finish," *HB* 22 (July 1907): 45.
 35. Thomas E. Tallmadge, "The 'Chicago School,'" *Architectural Review* 15 (April 1908): 69-74, 78.
 36. RCSJ, "Bedrooms," *HB* 23 (March 1908): 15.

Appendix

"Planning the House"
Three Series of Articles for *House Beautiful* Magazine
By Robert C. Spencer, Jr.

Series 1, 12 Articles

1. "A Chapter on Porches," *House Beautiful* 17 (May 1905): 26-27.
2. "Economical Floor Plans," *House Beautiful* 18 (June 1905): 22-23.
3. "The Abolition of the Back Yard," *House Beautiful* 18 (July 1905): 20-21.
4. "The Question of Cost," *House Beautiful* 18 (Aug 1905): 14-16.
5. "Plaster Houses and Their Construction," *House Beautiful* 18 (Sep 1905): 23-25.
6. "Kitchens and Pantries," *House Beautiful* 18 (Oct 1905): 23-26.
7. "The Fireplace," *House Beautiful* 18 (Nov 1905): 26-30.
8. "Country Houses," *House Beautiful* 19 (Dec 1905): 23-27.
9. "The Staircase," *House Beautiful* 19 (Jan 1906): 25-28.
10. "Bath-Rooms, Closets, and Dressing-Rooms," *House Beautiful* 19 (Feb 1906): 20-23.
11. "Windows," *House Beautiful* 19 (Mar 1906): 22-25.
12. "Good and Bad Design," *House Beautiful* 19 (Apr 1906): 22-24.

Series: 2, 12 Articles

13. "Some English Plans--Beginning a New Series of Twelve Practical Articles," *House Beautiful* 20 (Nov 1906): 28-31.
14. "Cottages in the Country," *House Beautiful* 21 (Dec 1906): 27-30.
15. "All on the Ground Floor," *House Beautiful* 21 (Jan 1907): 27-28, 31-32, 34.
16. "Four Cottages," *House Beautiful* 21 (Feb 1907): 23-25, 28-29.
17. "Floor Plans of Inexpensive Houses," *House Beautiful* 21 (Mar 1907): 29-32, 34.
18. "Some New Ideas in Electric Lighting," *House Beautiful* 21 (Apr 1907): 30-32, 34, 36.
19. "Planning and Building," *House Beautiful* 21 (May 1907): 12-14, 28.
20. "Alterations and Additions," *House Beautiful* 22 (June 1907): 32-34, 49-50.
21. "Inside Finish," *House Beautiful* 22 (July 1907): 31-33, 45-46.
22. "Three Bungalows," *House Beautiful* 22 (Aug 1907): 33-34.
23. "Some English Country Houses," *House Beautiful* 22 (Sep 1907): 29-31, 45.
24. "What Material?" *House Beautiful* 22 (Nov 1907): 27-30.

Series 3, 12 Articles

25. "Preliminary," *House Beautiful* 23 (Feb 1908): 16-18.
26. "Bedrooms," *House Beautiful* 23 (Mar 1908): 15-18, 48.
27. "The Bath-Room," *House Beautiful* 23 (Apr 1908): 28-30, 32.
28. "The Kitchen," *House Beautiful* 23 (May 1908): 30-32, 44.
29. "The Attic," *House Beautiful* 24 (June 1908): 19-21.
30. "Casements," *House Beautiful* 24 (July 1908): 44-47.
31. "The Hall," *House Beautiful* 24 (Aug 1908): 49-52.
32. "The Cost by Comparison," *House Beautiful* 24 (Sep 1908): 79-82.
33. "The Suburban House," *House Beautiful* 24 (Oct 1908): 110-113.
34. "Decorative Use of Stucco and Cement," *House Beautiful* 24 (Nov 1908): 133-137.
35. "The Water-Supply of Country Houses," *House Beautiful* 25 (Dec 1908): 18-22.
36. "The House and its Roof," *House Beautiful* 25 (Jan 1909): 40-42.



The home of Thomas Van Reyper, now known as the Van Reyper-Bond house, on the campus of Montclair State University.

From Maine to Oregon

THE DISTRIBUTION OF EDWARD SHAW'S ARCHITECTURAL PUBLICATIONS

James F. O'Gorman

Readers of the last issue of this magazine learned something about the life and work of the antebellum Boston architect and author Edward Shaw (1784-1859). An unknown number of copies of his five books, three on architecture and two on masonry materials and construction, went out across the country after 1830. Such publications, and those of rival authors such as Asher Benjamin, constituted the only home-grown literary schooling in architecture and building to be had before the Civil War. Examples of Shaw's works can now be documented as once having been spread from Maine to Michigan, North Carolina to Arkansas, and Texas to Oregon. There is no such broad survey of the ownership of the books of his competitors.¹

How do we know who owned Shaw's publications? In some cases newspaper accounts connect a book to an owner. In others, matching a detail of a building to a plate in one of his books affirms location and access, if not necessarily ownership. The recessed portico of the Jacob Conser house of 1854 in Jefferson, Oregon, for example, seems to have derived from an image in Shaw's *Rural Architecture* of 1843.² But best of all is the signature of an owner, in some cases a series of owners, printed, scrawled, wrought calligraphically, or stamped within a book, along with, in the optimum case, place and date. A bonus is found when there are added comments, or marginalia, to the text. We might assume all signers to have been architects or builders, but that is not necessarily the case. Although some of his titles went to institutional libraries such as that of the War Department in Washington, Stationers' Hall in Toronto, or many of the several societies of mechanics and tradesmen, we are here interested in some representative individual owners.³

Although many architects and builders began full working lives with Shaw at hand, many others went on to distinguished careers in related or even distant fields. The following selection of Shaw owners is not intended to suggest that his works led single-handedly to their users' accomplishments, nor that his was the only book they owned, nor that an owner copied a specific feature in a building. But at the beginning of their journey, Shaw gave them a hand, and his works were something we know they all had in common.

There are, of course, many copies of Shaw's books without an owner's inscription. From some others that are inscribed, we learn little or nothing beyond a name. We know, for example, that the carpenter and farmer Gridley F. Hersey of Hingham, Massachusetts, owned a copy of *Civil Architecture* as well as one of *Operative Masonry*, both published in 1832, but nothing else about him has yet come to light. Who was the John F. Hunt of Laredo, Texas, who in May, 1882, signed

a copy of the 1876 reprint of *Civil Architecture* now in the Avery Library? And there are others that we wish we knew better. That J. M. Buzzell of Manchester, New Hampshire, for example, who signed the first edition of *The Modern Architect* (1854) now at Brown University with a flourish that included a full-page, swirling, calligraphic image of a bird, perhaps an eagle. But there are other owners that we can profile in more detail, if not as completely as we might wish.⁴

The *Eastern Argus* of March 30, 1838, listed a half dozen titles on architecture recently donated by Charles Quincy Clapp to the Apprentice Library of the Maine Charitable Mechanic Association in Portland. Among them was "Shaw on Masonry," that is, his *Operative Masonry* of 1832, the first American work on the subject. Clapp (1799-1868) was remembered at his death as possessed of "an unusual taste for architecture, in which he was excelled by few, every building erected under his auspices was designed and modelled by himself." He was, in fact, a real estate developer, but in the role of self-taught "gentleman architect" he provided his native city with some of its finest neo-classical monuments.⁵

In 1832 Clapp directed the remodeling of Portland's long gone Federal-style market house and town hall, adding a monumental portico whose stumpy Ionic columns, their proportions perhaps forced on him by the existing building, were severely criticized because they fell far short of the slender elegance the order demanded. He had, however, been studying the proportions of the orders to the point where he could lecture about them at Mechanics Hall. And in the same year he built a brick temple-form residence for himself, and that may have been why he acquired Shaw's work on masonry. (Since *Operative Masonry* has only one plate showing a classical order, the Doric column, Clapp may also have owned one of the first editions of Shaw's *Civil Architecture*, 1831 or 1832, where the orders are all illustrated.) Roman in form but Grecian in detail, the Clapp house still stands as part of the multi-building Portland Museum of Art. Ionic columns and pilasters, set upon a high podium achieve properly graceful proportions. The interior features a central circular room lighted by a skylight above the second floor.

Clapp went on to design many works in the city over the next thirty years. Not a professional architect, he was, as Joyce Bibber has written, "an astute businessman who used his architectural skills to improve his commercial properties." Shaw's book was one of the whetstones on which he honed those skills.

A copy of the same edition of Shaw on masonry now housed at the Kroch Library at Cornell University is signed



L to R: Charles Quincy Clapp House, Portland, Maine, c. 1850. Library of Congress. The house today as part of the Portland Museum of Art.

“Wm F. Durfee / New Bedford Mass 1856.” William Franklin Durfee (1833-99) was a civil and mechanical engineer trained at the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard. He worked in New Bedford as architect, civil engineer, and city surveyor, designed and saw constructed the Gosnold Iron Works there, served as a state representative, and conceived a submerged gun for the Union cause, all before 1862. In that year he was put in charge of designing, overseeing construction of, and operating an experimental steel works at Wyandotte, Michigan. It was erected to test the William Kelly, or “Bessemer,” process for making steel. As a result, Durfee was credited with producing the first steel rails in this country.

He went on to other creative work such as providing the steel used in the landmark Eads Bridge across the Mississippi River at St. Louis. In 1885 for the Bridgeport Paper Company, he oversaw the moving of a hundred-foot-high brick chimney thirty feet to a new location, perhaps recalling his early study of Shaw’s book. He was elected to all the prestigious societies in the field of civil engineering, and died with a full complement of professional honors.⁶

A copy of the 1832 edition of Shaw’s *Civil Architecture* in a private collection in Maine is inscribed “Property of Hon. Charles G. Bellamy, Bought at Boston, Mass, in October, 1834. Price \$7.50 while he was a student with Professor John Kurtz (i.e., Kutts) the celebrated Architect and a Dane, from Danmark in Europe—west of Russia, and south of Norway and Sweden.” It goes on to list the drafting instruments he had acquired: “Also (bought) a Right-Angle, steel tongued, Pigeon Blue, Square Price. \$3.00 of a 20 inch tongue with Brass and supporter with a Boxwood Rule & Scale with Brass & Steel Divider \$5(.)80. And other articles too numerous to mention.”⁷

Charles Gerrish Bellamy (1811-99), member of an old Kittery, Maine, family and resident of the landmark Pepperell Mansion there, worked from 1834 as a carpenter and building contractor after a “training in civil architecture and practical geometry” obviously garnered from Shaw’s tome.⁸ He built a bridge spanning Spruce Creek at Kittery Point (bridge building was a topic Shaw discussed in this book). Bellamy then followed an active public life serving as Justice of the Peace in Kittery; on the commission that settled the

boundary dispute between Maine and New Brunswick (the Webster-Ashton Treaty of 1842); and became active in national Democratic Party politics in association with Hannibal Hamlin.

After service in the Maine House of Representatives (1842-43) and Senate (1846-47), he assumed the title of Inspector of Timber at the United States Navy Yard in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and originated the Portsmouth boat, noted for its durability. Given the date at which he included the title of “honorable” to his signature in the book, he seems to have remained proud of his architectural origins well into a midlife mainly dedicated to other pursuits.

Not all ownership of Shaw’s volumes dated from early in the century. The signature of “Hiram G. Phillips / Hartford Conn. / 1874” appears in another copy of the same edition of *Civil Architecture*. Phillips is listed as a carpenter in Greer’s Hartford directory for 1873. That copy is now housed at Historic New England as part of the Arthur Little and Herbert W. C. Browne Collection, catalogued there as owned by Browne. Little & Browne practiced as one of Boston’s leading architectural offices from the early 1890s until the 1920s. As a pace setter in the Colonial Revival style, Browne (1860-1946) would no doubt have viewed that book, which he acquired in the 1890s, as he did others he owned by Asher Benjamin, for information about early neo-classicism and early building technology.

As one who in his youth had travelled abroad (where it is highly doubtful Shaw had ever been) and studied in Florence and Paris, Browne could recognize Shaw’s provincial blind spots. In reaction to the author’s comment concerning chimney pieces that “It is a remarkable fact, that neither the Italian nor the French, nor indeed any other of the continental nations, have ever excelled in compositions of chimney pieces,” there is a penciled harrumph in the margin, “What was he thinking of?,” that is most likely Browne’s.

Still another copy of the popular 1832 edition of *Civil Architecture*, this one at the Hay Library at Brown University, is signed “Jared Buell Guilford CT.” According to local information, Buell was a joiner by trade who worked in partnership with his nephew, the master builder William E.

Weld. Buell's biography is sketchy. He was born about 1800, married in 1819, and moved to Clinton, Connecticut, in 1853. On Boston Street in Guilford stands the originally double residence known as the Jared Buell house. It is a boxy Italianate of about 1850, with, it is said, some touches reminiscent of the work of New Haven's Henry Austin. Weld (b.1815), a carpenter and lumber merchant, became an active builder in the town for nearly a half century. His own 1850 Greek Revival house also stands on Boston Street.

Another copy of this edition of *Civil Architecture*, it too housed at the Hay Library of Brown University, is signed by Nathaniel Mowry of Smithfield, Rhode Island, and stamped "Wm. G. R. Mowry" as well as "Wm. T. Nicholson." The Mowrys were members of a family long resident in Rhode Island. Nathaniel's son, William Gulley Randall Mowry (1810-92), apprenticed to a carpenter at age 17, worked as a builder in the 1820s and 1830s, established the lumber and building firm of Mowry & Steele in the 1840s, and became an important public figure in Providence. In 1856 the firm erected Mowry's own house on Smith Hill there. In the 1870s he served on the Board of Commissioners for the new City Hall.

William T. Nicholson (1834-93), founder in 1864 of the Nicholson File Company in the city, acquired the Mowry house and remodeled it twice, in 1867 and 1877. It is now known as the Mowry-Nicholson house and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A civic leader, Nicholson was among the supporters of the establishment of the Providence Public Library in 1877. He was inducted into the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame in 2004.⁹

The same fourth edition (1836) of *Civil Architecture* found a place in the workshop of James Sampson (1806-61), free African-American carpenter of Wilmington, North Carolina, the well-to-do head of a family of builders, whose own house still stands in the city.¹⁰ Another, now at the University of Kentucky, reached that state by the 1840s. We know because Thomas Lewinski (ca. 1800-82), an émigré engineer and architect working there, copied some of Shaw's designs. London-born Lewinski, like others chronicled here, followed a number of pursuits in his life. He trained as a Roman Catholic priest, studied architecture, and then became a soldier in South America. He reached Kentucky about 1838. In Lexington he joined Cassius Marcellus Clay in his anti-slavery crusade, and, in 1842, with the patronage of Henry Clay, began an architectural practice that flourished until the Civil War. Thereafter he held the position of Secretary of the Lexington Gas Works.¹¹

In an announcement published in the *Lexington Observer* for February 14, 1846, Lewinski wrote that he would be "pleased to make such drawings, specifications, & c., as are necessary for the construction of Public Edifices and Private Residences." Many of his resulting works, landmarks of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. And some of them, according to Clay Lancaster, attest to the use of Shaw's plates for details. This is true of the James B. Clay villa in Lexington and Ashland near Georgetown. The Elms, the William Leavy villa near Lexington, now gone, also showed the marks of this edition of *Civil Architecture*.

Not surprisingly, there were many designers in the Northeast who kept Shaw at hand. Bangor, Maine, was home to at least two of them, one we will meet now, and one later. The copy of the expanded sixth edition of *Civil Architecture* (1852) now at Rutgers University is signed "Wm. G. Morse." This was most likely William Gilbert Morse (b. 1829) whose early career exemplifies the progress of American architects from the use of carpenters' tools to the plying of drafting instruments. In the process, he became what Shaw was to call, in the subtitle of his last book, *The Modern Architect*, "his own master."

The son of a family of builders, Morse did not join the local Mechanic Association, as was customary, but trained as a draftsman and became a precocious designer. In a burst of creative energy in his early twenties, Morse provided his native city with the chapel of the Theological Seminary (1851, erected 1858), the Columbia Street Baptist Church (1853-54), and the Norumbega Market Hall (1854-55), as well as many houses.¹² His drawings for the Congregational Church on Isle au Haut, Maine (1855) survive. No doubt his acquisition of Shaw's work coincided with this rush of activity. His later career is lost to history but the *Civil Architecture* that we reasonably assume early sat on his drafting table survives at Rutgers University to bear witness to Shaw's presence in Morse's early career.

As we have seen, not all of Shaw's books are to be found in public depositories. There was on the antiquarian market in 2015 a copy of the same sixth edition of *Civil Architecture* which has, on its title page, ink stamps naming R. S. Beetley and William F. Stone as well as, written in ink, "Aug 6/54 \$6.00." The first is most likely Robert S. Beetley of Baltimore (ca. 1820-96). His biography as traced through various sources, especially the *Baltimore Sun*, reads as one of continual upward mobility in the fields of building and more.



William Gilbert Morse, Congregational Church, Isle au Haut, Maine, 1847-48. Courtesy of Earl G. Shettleworth, Jr.

Born in Alexandria, Virginia, he was early on a ship joiner; by the 1850s he was teaching navigation. He appears as a bookkeeper in 1860, as City Commissioner in 1861, as a builder in 1865, as an architect in 1867, as commissioner of the city's Jones Falls Improvement Project in 1872, and as Inspector of Public Buildings by 1878.

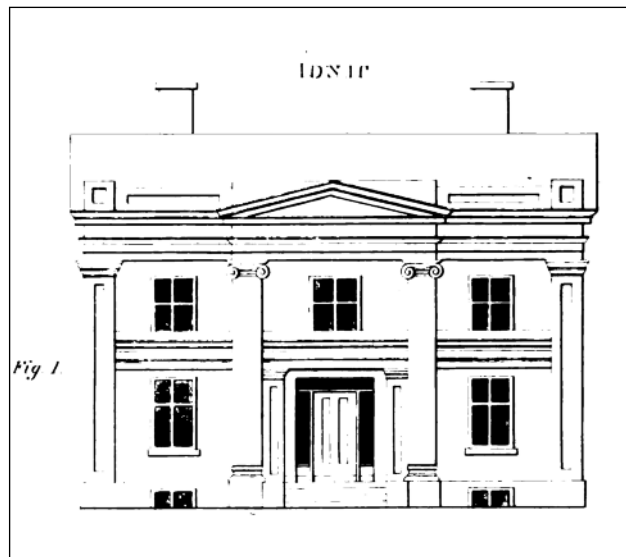
The other signatory to this copy, William F. Stone, Jr., was a Baltimore architect who in the early 1930s joined Taylor and Fisher as associate architects under the supervision of James A. Wetmore, architect of the Treasury, in the design of the Art Deco United States Appraisers' Stores building. He is also credited with the Arden House of 1927-29 in Catonsville, Maryland, in a modern Tudor design, and eventually became the architect of the Episcopal diocese of Maryland. William H. Stone (1930-2013), also an architect, worked with his father. So this book, as did some other examples, passed through generations before landing on the market. There it ceased to be operational and became historical evidence of Shaw's broad chronological and geographical reach.

Civil Architecture, in its many editions and reprints, was Shaw's most lasting and widespread title. It was largely filled with lessons in geometry, the orders, construction details, and some decorative devices. It was not until his later books that Shaw published designs for houses and churches. Those



possessed or had access to one of them. His work on the George Stetson house of 1847-48, still standing in Bangor, demonstrates how these mid-century builders-turned-architects practiced when the profession was aborning. They could study the books of Shaw or Asher Benjamin and still maintain a certain independence. The front elevation of the Stetson house is based closely on Plate 23 of Shaw's recently published *Rural Architecture* (1843), so Deane either owned it or knew someone who did. The plan, however, veers from that source, and some interior details were taken from Asher Benjamin's *Practice of Architecture*.

The copy of the 1856 reprint of Shaw's third architectural title, *The Modern Architect; or, Every Carpenter His Own Master*, that is now at the American Antiquarian Society is inscribed "Otis A. Merrill Haverhill Mass Feb 13th 1867." There is also a bookplate: "ARCHITECTURAL LIBRARY / OF / OTIS A. MERRILL / Lowell, Mass." Merrill (b. 1844) worked as a carpenter in Haverhill, Massachusetts, for a few years after mustering out of the Union Army as a decorated veteran (he received a bronze medal of honor from Gen. Quincy Adams Gillmore for gallant and meritorious conduct during the fighting for Morris Island off Charleston). He then moved to Lowell to practice his trade and study architecture, obviously with the help of Shaw's publication. In 1883 he



L to R: Benjamin S. Deane, George Stetson House, Bangor, Maine, 1847-48. Courtesy of Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. Plate 23 of Shaw's *Rural Architecture*, 1843.

later publications as well proved useful to builders and others across the country.

Bangor's Benjamin S. Deane (1790-1867), a generation older than William Morse, whom we met above, was that city's most important mid-nineteenth-century architect. He arrived in 1834 and, as a housewright, joined the Mechanic Association. As an alderman and surveyor of lumber for the town, he became one of its upstanding citizens during a thirty-three year career. Working not only in Bangor but in many surrounding Maine communities, he designed and built houses and a series of simple Greek Revival churches, and, in one instance, provided an exterior for an ecclesiastical plan by Richard Upjohn.¹³

There is no written document that proves Deane owned any of Shaw's books, but there is physical evidence that he

took his draftsman, Arthur S. Cutler (b. 1854), into partnership. Merrill & Cutler was an active firm through the end of the century. Among their many buildings, the City Hall in Lowell (1890-94), a commission the firm won in competition, is an impressive example of the Romanesque Revival.¹⁴ Their Neo-Colonial/Shingle Style Henry Bradford Lewis house of 1897-98 in Andover, Massachusetts, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The owner of the copy of the first edition of *The Modern Architect* (1854) now in the Lilly Library at Duke University was not content with signing within the book (although he did that too). On the front cover, beneath the gold-stamped version of William W. Wilson's engraved frontispiece showing an architect directing a building site, we find his name gold-stamped in block letters: THOMAS C. VAN

REYPER. The name appears twice within, written in large, flourishing script. That of his wife, Mrs. Caroline S(peer). Van Reyper, daughter of the family that founded Upper Montclair, New Jersey, also appears, a rare occurrence for a woman in these books, in more modest size. Pasted to an early free page is an engraving of Richard Upjohn's Trinity Church in New York City, finished in 1846. Thomas Cadmus Van Reyper (1833-1909) was a New Jersey farmer and master builder. His 1872 Italianate house, now on the campus of Montclair State University (and known as the Van Reyper-Bond House), is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Although Van Reyper was a builder, as we have seen not all owners of Shaw's works were architects or remained architects or builders. A battered and abused copy of the 1855 reprint of *The Modern Architect* passed through the author's hands during this study.¹⁵ This title appeared in an impressive format: quarto, two inches thick, weighing four pounds, with marbled fore edges and end papers, embossed leather binding, repeated decorative pattern on the spine, and, on the cover, that gold-stamped reproduction of the frontispiece engraved by William W. Wilson. Such a volume was surely as attractive to bibliophiles as to operatives.

Now missing part of its spine, its covers loose, lacking some pages and plates, this copy has within many scrawled outline drawings (of farm animals, trains, and such) suggesting that it had been used at one time as a child's sketchbook, as we find in many other examples. (Some other volumes were used to press flowers, leaves, or ferns.) The

amateurish, shaded drawing of a mother holding a child on her lap on the verso of the frontispiece suggests a more mature, if still unskilled, hand. As with so many copies of Shaw's books, it is what is added by others—the marginalia that enhance their value as historical documents no matter their condition.

This is an association copy of interest well beyond the architectural field. On the verso of the image of mother and child, there is this inscription: "John Wheeler, Crown Point, Lake County, Indiana, Aug 1856." Connecticut-born John Wheeler came with his father (who may have been the Edgar C. Wheeler who also signed the book) to Indiana in 1847. Early on he worked laying drainage pipes, as a farmer, and as a teacher. By 1853 he had been elected county surveyor (which may account for his buying the book, although it could have come from his father), and in 1857 he founded the local newspaper, *The Crown Point Register*. His son, Edgar, was born in July, 1856—just a month before John himself signed this copy—so the sketch of mother and child may be a homey memento of that event.

At the start of the Civil War John Wheeler raised, at his own expense, a volunteer company that joined the 20th Indiana Regiment.¹⁶ After a series of engagements including the Second Bull Run, in 1863, now a colonel and regimental commander, he led his forces at Chancellorsville and on to Gettysburg. There, at Rose Woods, near Devil's Den, on July 2, he was killed in action. His body returned to Crown Point. The Middle School there now bears his name. Architecture had the last word.



Notes

- Mary Wallace Crocker, "Asher Benjamin: The Influence of His Handbooks on Mississippi Buildings," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 38 (October 1979), 266-70, discusses the use of Benjamin's books in one state, but not the users. Throughout this research I have been aware that ownership does not prove readership—how many unread tomes sit on our shelves!—but it does track distribution. My thanks to Maggie DeVries of Wellesley College for help with illustrations.
- Marion D. Ross, "Architecture in Oregon, 1845-1895," *Oregon Historical Society Quarterly* 57 (March, 1956), 38-39.
- The search continues. The author would be pleased to learn from readers with information about inscribed books in public or private collections.
- This sketch is extracted from current research into Shaw's career, tentatively titled "Edward Shaw of Boston: Antebellum Architect and Author," encouraged by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. and supported by grants from Wellesley College and the American Philosophical Society.
- Joyce K. Bibb, "Charles Q. Clapp," *A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine* (Augusta: Maine Historic Preservation Commission, 1988).
- Rossiter Johnson, editor-in-chief, *The Twentieth-Century Biographical Dictionary of Notable Americans*, Vol. III (Boston: The Biographical Society, 1904).
- Roger G. Reed, "John Kutts," *The Architects of Winchester, Massachusetts* 7 (Winchester Historical Society, 2006).
- Yvonne Brault Smith, *John Haley Bellamy, Carver of Eagles* (Portsmouth, Maine: Portsmouth Marine Society, 1982), 2-5, 7-8, 10, 13, 15, 19, 49-50. John was Charles's son. Charles Bellamy's papers (1842-60) are at the William Clements Library of the University of Michigan.
- Information gathered from Google searches.
- See the *North Carolina Architects & Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*, online, and *A Guide to Wilmington's African American Heritage* (Wilmington, North Carolina: City of Wilmington, 2013). The volume is now in a private collection.
- Clay Lancaster, "Major Thomas Lewinski: Émigré Architect in Kentucky," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 11 (December 1952), 13-20; William B. Scott, Jr., "Lewinski, Thomas," *The Kentucky Encyclopedia* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky), 1992, 547.
- Deborah Thompson, *Bangor, Maine 1769-1914: An Architectural History* (Orono: University of Maine Press), 1988, 346-50 and passim.
- Thompson, Bangor, 88-92.
- Prentiss Webster, ed., *The Story of the City Hall Commission* (Lowell, Massachusetts: City Newspaper Co., 1894).
- The volume has now been deposited at the Lake County Historical Museum in Crown Point, Indiana.
- John Wheeler is well discussed on Wikipedia.



The Woodrow Wilson Family Home in Columbia, South Carolina, as it stands today. Courtesy Historic Columbia.

Restoration of the Woodrow Wilson Family Home

Rik Booraem

Woodrow Wilson, 28th president of the United States, was one of three chief executives who grew up as a minister's son—that is, in that small group of Victorian families who enjoyed high status but had no fixed home, moving frequently from place to place and dependent on the goodwill of the churches they served. So it is no surprise to find two homes associated with “Tommy” Wilson's boyhood in the Southeast, located in cities sixty miles apart, both sharing his story with the public; but it is startling to see the radically different approaches they take. The Boyhood Home of President Woodrow Wilson, in downtown Augusta, Georgia, maintained by the Historic Augusta Foundation, offers a carefully researched and restored antebellum brick home with the customary dependencies, summer kitchen and carriage house. Thirteen pieces of furniture in the house were acquired by Mrs. Wilson and used during the family's stay, but belonged to the First Presbyterian Church, which Reverend Wilson served during a twelve-year pastorate. Thus they were preserved there for many years. Complemented by other period pieces, they make it possible for guides to interpret the home as the residence of a middle-class Southern family, complete with enslaved African-American domestic servants, and to focus on the routines of daily life, like food preparation and consumption, child care, and leisure activities—with due attention, of course, to Woodrow Wilson's twentieth-century career as a national and world leader.

The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, in downtown Columbia, South Carolina, shares with its Georgia counterpart the narrative of Wilson's drama-filled political story—but not much else. Frame instead of brick, it is an Italianate style villa of the sort recommended by Andrew J. Downing, built after the Civil War, not before, by a local builder, to designs chosen and perhaps modified by Mrs. Wilson, with a repeating theme of arches on the porch, on the windows, and in the interior. It was home to the Wilsons for only two years instead of ten. And, most conspicuously, its rooms display not period furniture, but exhibits on the history and politics of Columbia and the South during the tumultuous era of post-Civil War Reconstruction.

This unprecedented approach for the former presidential historic house was to some extent forced on Historic Columbia, which administers the building for Richland County, the owner. No Wilson furniture came with the house, which was not connected with a church as the Augusta one had been. Reverend Joseph R. Wilson moved

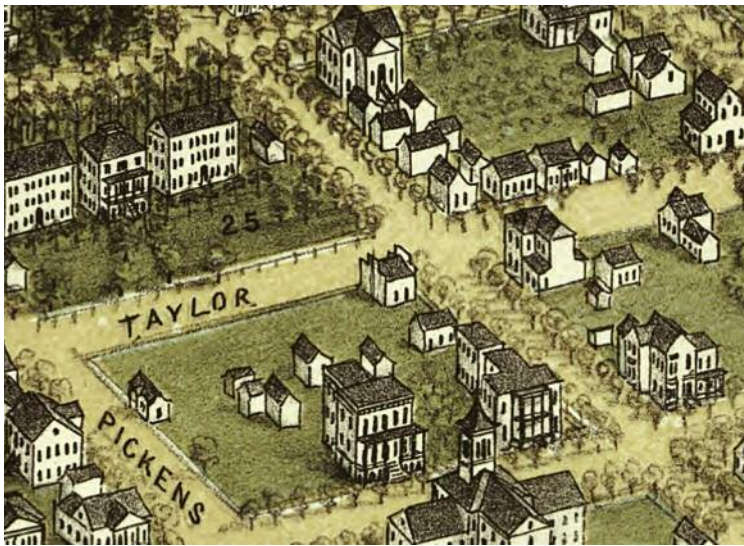
his family to Columbia in 1870 to accept the professorship of rhetoric at the Columbia Theological Seminary, a permanent, high-prestige position. Once in the city, he agreed also to act as interim pastor (in Presbyterian parlance, “stated supply”) for what is now called Columbia's First Presbyterian Church, but he did not live in a supplied manse. On the contrary, the lot on Plain Street was bought, the residence designed and paid for, by the Wilsons in the expectation that they were settled for life with the Seminary. All the furniture was the Wilsons', and when they left only four years later, after a series of internal clashes upended Dr. Wilson's calculations and forced him to resign from both his positions, they took it with them, eventually selling the house two years later. The home went through a several owners and identities before becoming a presidential shrine about sixty years later. At that time, admirers did acquire a few Wilson family pieces—the bed in which the future president was born, a dresser, a sideboard and a quilt.

No photographic evidence existed to guide the reproduction of the building's interior settings. Knowing



Boyhood home of Thomas Woodrow “Tommy” Wilson, Augusta, Georgia. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.

this, and appreciating that previous approaches to historic house museums were a thing of the past, Historic Columbia opted to approach the rehabilitation and reinterpretation of the site in a manner very different than in earlier years. Analysis of paint samples from the house enabled restoration in the original colors, including a distinctive gray trimmed with yellow and brownish-red for the exterior; an



Top: Map of Columbia, South Carolina, by Camille N. Drie, 1872.
L to R: Reverend Joseph R. Wilson and Jessie Wilson, "Tommy" Wilson.

Plain (now Hampton) Streets. One block north appears an antebellum mansion converted into a school building—the Columbia Theological Seminary where Dr. Wilson taught. Commissioned by and for an audience of businessmen, boosters by definition, the map does not depict damaged or ruined buildings, but some blocks near the State House, where the damage was most severe, are suspiciously empty or filled with small shacks. Contemporary photographs on the walls of the living room show government facilities erected in the same years—the massive Greek-Revival Federal courthouse, and the controversial Second Empire City Hall put up by the black-dominated city government, which Democrat leaders with the local business establishment considered a wild extravagance. The environment of the Wilson home, then, was a small city undergoing massive change. A local newspaper, *The Columbia Phoenix*, estimated 250 new buildings in 1871-1872.

The portrait photographs in the cases, however, are of African-American men, to spotlight the political leaders who presided over the rebuilding process, like Beverly Nash, an influential state senator who built his home across from the new Federal courthouse. Blacks also had familiar roles in the process as drivers and construction workers, as they would have had before the war, but with a crucial difference: they were paid for their labor, and at least a few put away part of their wages in hopes of becoming businessmen themselves. Rebuilding, in short, though not an intentionally biracial effort, closely entwined the energies of both races.

Another exhibit on the first floor makes the same point, focusing on religion and the Wilson family. Presbyterianism, of course, was central to the life of the family, not just through Reverend Wilson but also through his wife's brother, James Woodrow, who taught natural science at the Seminary and whose presence was part of the reason why the Wilsons had relocated to Columbia. A large interactive family chart of the Wilson/Woodrow connection occupies one wall of the dining room and shows the prestige they enjoyed in the community. But the display also reminds viewers that the story of religion in Columbia during Reconstruction, in contrast to politics, was one of increasing racial separation. During slavery times, most African-Americans attended their masters' churches; so did the few free blacks in the city. There were no exclusively black churches. Freed from the bonds of slavery, black families moved rapidly to dissolve the bonds of church attendance as well, setting up their own congregations with or without white assistance. A photograph shows the Benedict Institute, an all-black school set up with the aid of Rhode Island Baptists, which evolved into Benedict College. Black ministers would shortly enjoy

archaeological search of the grounds revealed a few clues about the Wilsons' occupancy. Some Victorian architectural features remained including a rear service staircase and an early water closet. Some, like the two-story kitchen house and servants' quarters, could be conjecturally restored. But with all the achievements, they remained far short of recreating the home.

The solution they adopted, which has earned them this year's Preservation Award from The Victorian Society in America, is largely a matter of reversing emphasis. All historic sites, to some degree, explain the social and political context in which the site was created—so why not make that context the principal story? The Wilsons moved into their home in late 1871, at the height of one of the most remarkable periods of American history—Reconstruction, when the victorious Northern states attempted to transform Southern society by a massive shift of power from rich planters to liberated field hands—and South Carolina, with its majority African-American population, was at the center of the transformation. Why not make the Wilson home a 21st-century museum in a 19th-century house with the interpretive focus on Reconstruction as it took place in Columbia, South Carolina?

In the case of Columbia, "reconstruction" has a double meaning, as fire destroyed the central third of the city in February 1865, in the waning months of the Civil War, and the Wilson home can be said to be a late part of the rebuilding process. Thus it is appropriate that the first artifact a visitor sees in the living room, reproduced on an interactive screen, is a commercially printed birds-eye view of the city done in 1872 by Camille N. Drie, who made such views of a dozen American cities and sold them to subscribers. The Wilson home, accurately reproduced, appears at the corner of Henderson and

comparable status in their community to that of the Wilsons and Woodrows. But Christian belief remained a strong common possession of the two races.

Religion played a central part, too, in this period of Woodrow Wilson's life. In 1873 Tommy Wilson, as he was then known, and two friends, sons of businessmen's families, became formal members of the Presbyterian Church at a revival held in the Seminary chapel. This public commitment, intensely meaningful on a personal level, as the boy's diary demonstrates, also led to closer contact with the Seminary and his scholarly Uncle Woodrow, a Heidelberg graduate who read a range of English and Continental publications, and thus to contact with some main themes of Victorian thought on both sides of the Atlantic. A visitor sees the effect best by climbing the stairs to Tommy's small bedroom in the center of the second floor front, where an engraving of the reforming British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone hangs on the wall. Unable to respect American political leaders who had inflicted such hardship on Columbia and the South, Tommy saved his admiration for the moral Protestant statesman across the ocean, and English journals made up a large part of his reading.

A small exhibit, "Pantry Politics," in the kitchen area of the first floor puts visitors in touch with the material Victorian world outside the home—the proliferation of canned goods and fancy foods made possible by the expanding transportation system. Grocers were prosperous men in Reconstruction Columbia; an advertisement lists some of the canned goods in stock at a local grocery. A large reproduction of a magazine engraving features elaborate desserts and fish dishes. The domestics who prepared and serve these meals were no longer enslaved people with quarters on the premises, but employees who may have gone home at night. Two, women named Minnie and Nannie, are pictured in an 1892 photograph of members of the Howe and Woodrow families.

Tommy Wilson, who turned fifteen shortly after the family moved into the house, was at an important point in his development—what we would think of as the end of high school and the beginning of college years. The second-floor exhibit on education in Reconstruction makes it clear that Columbia's new public schools were eschewed by his parents. Their energies were focused on a very different task: supplying basic education to children whose parents had been illiterate by their masters' command and, to a numerically lesser degree, for lower-income whites. With considerable help from Northern benefactors, African-Americans dedicated State funds to this monumental task, erecting public schools in which white children were welcome, but whose main purpose was, ultimately, to train the next generation of African-American leaders. A photograph shows the Howard school, begun by Northern philanthropy (the father of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, who led the heroic all-black Massachusetts 55th Regiment) and purchased by the state, the first black public school in South Carolina, which lasted into the twentieth century. Another

shows the biracial faculty and students of the state college in Columbia, with an impressive group of black Reconstruction-era graduates who went on to high positions as ambassadors (to Liberia) or college presidents. But when Tommy entered college in the fall of 1873, with the other college-age boys of his acquaintance, he did not go to the University of South Carolina but took the train a hundred miles north to Davidson College, a small, all-white Presbyterian college near Charlotte. Clearly, there were two widely separated educational worlds in Reconstruction Columbia.

The same contrast existed at a lower level. While large sums of state and Northern philanthropic money nourished public preparatory schools for African-American boys, Wilson and his friends attended one-teacher schools that met in residences or rented houses in the white residential



Woodrow Wilson (third row, left) with the Howe and Woodrow families, with domestic employees Minnie and Nannie, c. 1892. On display in the exhibit "Pantry Politics" at the Woodrow Wilson Family Home. Courtesy Historic Columbia.

areas. Small wonder that when he arrived at Davidson he was found deficient in several subjects.

That the outstanding graduates of USC never made it to elective office on the state or national level is partly due to the fact within two years of the Wilsons' leaving Columbia, Reconstruction ended in South Carolina: the University was re-segregated, the public schools downsized, most of the African-American officeholders turned out and most of their laws repealed. This is the aspect of its history that visitors to South Carolina find most difficult to understand: that a political transformation containing so many progressive and praiseworthy features, in effect for eight years and seemingly establishing itself, could be swept out of existence. The story, of course, is a sad object lesson in the power of racism, and Historic Columbia does not shrink from presenting the repellent details in its interpretation of the Wilson Family Home. (But the downbeat conclusion helps explain why there are so few museums of Reconstruction.)

Weapons and conspirators, inevitably, make up a large part of this gripping exhibit, in the last two upstairs rooms of the Wilson house on the tour. From the installation of the

biracial government in 1868, and even before, acts of violence from ambush pursued its leaders and supporters. The exhibit begins with the murder of the gifted African-American State Senator Beverly Randolph in 1868. Photographs show Randolph, his burial site, and his memorial in Columbia. A neighboring exhibit, with a pistol and a shotgun, shows one way in which white South Carolinians held on to large collections of firearms by the formation of rifle clubs around the state, ostensibly for recreation. Protected by the presence of Federal troops, African-American leaders had no fear of a direct armed confrontation, but numerous whites made their opposition clear.

In 1869 the Ku Klux Klan movement, formed in Tennessee, came to South Carolina and formed clubs in some parts of the state to terrorize African-American voters and their families. There was no KKK organization in Columbia, but the Federal trials of Klansmen in 1871-72, after U. S. Army troops had broken the strength of the organization, were held in the capital. The women of the Wilson family brought aid to a Presbyterian clergyman who had been jailed as a Klan supporter.

When the KKK was put out of business, resistance to the Reconstruction government took other forms, as detailed elsewhere in the room: the Grange, a farmers' organization (1869), was a way of mobilizing white opposition, as was the Taxpayers' Convention of 1871, which protested against the unprecedentedly high appropriations of the state government to fund its new programs and intimated that many were made for corrupt purposes. The Taxpayers' movement won converts not only in South Carolina but in the North. A case displaying work from the talented pen of the New York-based German-American cartoonist Thomas Nast shows 1871 political drawings condemning the Klan, followed by others from the same artist a few years later attacking the African-American government for graft and dishonesty. Gradually national support for the Reconstruction government declined or disappeared.

The final, complicated step in overthrowing the Reconstruction government came at the presidential election of 1876, which Republican Rutherford B. Hayes won by the narrowest of margins (one electoral vote) over Democrat Samuel J. Tilden. In South Carolina the white resistance united behind Confederate General Wade Hampton III under the label "Red Shirts," borrowed from the Italian resistance movement a few years earlier. Red-shirted men with rifles paraded the streets in support of Hampton; they terrorized and intimidated black voters and their few white friends, killing a few; and they seized control of the voting process in several counties, sending in fraudulent majorities for Hampton and Tilden. The settlement of the election in South Carolina produced victories for both sides. The presidential vote was given to the Republicans; in return, Hampton was installed as governor, and Hayes promised to remove the Federal troops. Visitors entering the room see a replica of a Red Shirt in a case on the wall; nearby, an actual Red Shirt, emblem of racial warfare, is preserved in a drawer against damage from light but can be viewed. A quote on the wall from a Red Shirt supporter sums up their case:

Was all this justifiable? Yes—for unlike elections at other times our very civilization was at stake. We could not live in South Carolina if Negro rule continued...Our plan of campaign was an evil, but its success overcame a greater evil.

The overthrow of Reconstruction in South Carolina came after the Wilsons had left the state. Tommy Wilson was a busy freshman at The College of New Jersey (now Princeton), another Presbyterian institution, when it happened. A letter from a Columbia friend breathes certainty that, if Wilson had been there, he would have acted with the Hampton/Red Shirt movement; but he had no direct involvement until forty years later, when as president, he screened the first movie ever shown in the White House. Titled *The Birth of a Nation*, this silent film presented a thrilling, emotional, grotesquely inaccurate version of Reconstruction in an unnamed Southern state, clearly meant to be South Carolina. The film was based on a novel by an old classmate of Wilson's at Johns Hopkins, Thomas R. Dixon, who had asked him to see it. The recently widowed president felt it would be inappropriate to view it in a theater while he was in mourning, so he had it shown privately.

The Birth of a Nation, directed by D. W. Griffith, was anti-black even by the standards of 1914; unfortunately, it contains supporting quotes from Wilson's historical works; even more unfortunately, it is reluctantly recognized by most film historians as one of the great works in the development of American moviemaking techniques. Thus the final exhibit of the tour considers both the public memory of Reconstruction and Wilson's own memory. Clips of *The Birth of a Nation* allow visitors to experience the power and bias of the film; other displays, including a video of biographer Scott Berg, review Wilson's national and world achievements, his championing of progressivism and women's rights, and attempt to situate his Reconstruction experience and his racial attitudes within that context. The exhibit does not supply easy answers for the questions it raises: Was Wilson a progressive statesman or a racist? Why did the United States attempt to transform Southern society and then drop the attempt? (or, in the language of today: Reconstruction: the Bad Guys won. Why? And who were the "Bad Guys?") These are live questions, passionately debated on today's campuses. Most prominent among these is Princeton University, where a broad public discussion has been taking place on the topic of removing Wilson's name from their school of government. Ending the tour with them can leave visitors not with an impression of an era or a personality, but with an intense intellectual experience.

With its rapidly shifting sequence of topics, an effective tour of the Wilson Family Home requires an unusually competent guide—someone who is competent in Victorian culture, Presbyterianism, and early film history as well as the history of Reconstruction in Columbia. Luckily, the presence of the state university, with its graduate students, offers the promise of a supply to reinforce the Historic Columbia team. Since the house reopened two years ago in its present character, a well-prepared, articulate group of interpreters has led hundreds of surprised visitors on an unexpected journey from the biography of a Victorian man and the layout of a Victorian house to problems of racial policy and contested historical reputations.



In Search of the Unspoken Language of Rooms

FURNISHING EDITH WHARTON'S BEDROOM SUITE AT THE MOUNT

Pauline C. Metcalf

Historic interior restorations present many challenges but the situation is compounded if the original decoration was the expression of an emerging tastemaker such as Edith Wharton. First, what is the extent of documentary evidence about the interiors from photographs of rooms; what were the original wall finishes; do original furnishings exist? Subliminal factors also play a role especially understanding the changes that have taken place in society and culture, and finally what “story” do the current owners wish to tell the public?

Edith Wharton Restoration was founded in 1980 to preserve and restore The Mount, not only as a tribute to its remarkable creator but to celebrate her intellectual, artistic and humanitarian legacy. The house, designed officially in 1901-2 by Francis L. V. Hoppin, had interiors by Ogden Codman with much contributed by Edith Wharton herself.¹ Though lived in by Edith Wharton and her husband, Edward, known as Teddy, for only a short time from 1903 until 1911, her home in Lenox, Massachusetts holds a special place in American cultural history.² Several publications have been written about the history and restoration of the property including an historic structures report in 1997; another about the furnishing and restoration of Edith Wharton's bedroom suite in 2009; and in 2012, an extensively illustrated work that was published about Wharton's life at The Mount.³

A mission statement about The Mount's interiors was prepared by the board of Edith Wharton Restoration. It determined that the guiding principles for the restoration should reflect the taste and philosophy of classical interior decoration as expressed in *The Decoration of Houses*, written by Wharton and Codman in 1897, and aided by extant photos, and documents from Wharton's collection.⁴ *The Decoration of Houses* advocated a return to eighteenth century classical design, and is still considered the bible of traditional taste as practiced today. Personal letters between Wharton and Codman during the 1890s provide information not only about his work for her house in Newport, Lands End, but also their mutual concern about what interior decoration tells about one's social status. Though photographs indicate that some furniture and curtains were brought to The Mount from Land's End, none of the furnishings have survived.

A myriad of complications relating to the use of the property (which are not pertinent to this article) delayed the actual restoration and furnishing of The Mount's interiors until after the year 2000. At that time it was decided that Wharton's bedroom suite, which consists of a boudoir, master bedroom and bath, was the most significant area to restore and furnish as historically accurately as possible. Wharton's bedroom commanded special attention because of

its importance as the place where she did her writing. One of the first challenges that arose in the furnishing of the bedroom suite was to find the correct balance between the dictates of *The Decoration of Houses* and the taste and personality of its creator and mistress. Wharton, herself, allowed that she did not always follow the “rigorous rules” laid down in her manual of good taste.

Boudoir

The most formal room of the second floor bedroom suite is the boudoir. However, the only specific evidence of the appearance of the room is a black and white photograph, taken c.1905, that only shows a portion of the room. As no original furniture existed, the first step was a visit to Paris with the curator, director and myself (a member of the Interior Committee) to the *Marché aux Puces*, the most noted flea market for eighteenth and nineteenth century furniture. Our trip resulted in the purchase of a number of Louis XVI-style pieces of furniture including a painted *canapé* (sofa), a caned *chaise longue*, a painted *fauteuil* (armchair), a writing table-desk, and fire tools; all pieces that were specified for a proper boudoir in *The Decoration of Houses*. From the evidence of photos, we determined that Wharton's furniture consisted mostly of late nineteenth century revival pieces.

The selection and implementation of the textiles proved to be among the most challenging aspects for the room décor. One definite, however, was the fabric of the curtains, a printed French cotton, a *toile de jouy*, seen both in the 1905 photo, as well as a photograph of her bedroom at Land's End



Boudoir, with recent installation of toile curtains and upholstery.



Top to bottom: Edith Wharton's bathroom, with reproduction of original wallpaper; detail of wallpaper; master bedroom with painted Louis XVI-style furnishings.

where she had enlisted the aid of the "clever young Boston architect" (referring to Codman). Important to the classical taste recommended by Wharton and Codman was that the use of this simple cotton material was "more appropriate to the boudoir than silk and gilding...and a good plan to cover all the chairs and sofas...matching the window-curtains." For under-curtains, a dotted Swiss cotton fabric was hung on the inside of the window, in spite of the comment from *The Decoration of Houses* that "lingerie effects do not combine well with architecture."⁵

We were fortunate that the notable textile firm of F. Schumacher & Co. had in its archives a circa 1900 sample of the popular red and white toile, "Le Meunier, Son Fils, et L'Ane,"⁶ which matched the pattern shown in the photograph. Alas, when the long-awaited curtains were hung on either side of the rustic-red marble mantel, the deep red burgundy shade of the toile clashed badly with the marble. The contrast was such an aesthetic contradiction to Wharton's taste, there was no choice but to remake the curtains, and re-cover the furniture and cushions.

Fortunately more research led to a source for historic fabrics in France, the firm of Casal Tissus d'Ameublement, who was able to reproduce the *toile de jouy* in a colorway that worked harmoniously with the color of the marble.⁷ The process of re-making the curtains allowed other alterations to be made giving greater stylistic accuracy to the historical appearance; a finer weave of the cotton improved the depth of the ruffled edge, in addition to lengthening the curtain panels to the floor.⁸

The most difficult decision about the appearance of the room was yet to come: determining the color of the walls and decorative plasterwork. Several paint analyses were done by noted firms involved with other aspects of the restoration which produced conflicting results as to the original colors. A complicated history of the early construction of the room added to the difficulty of deciding which paint sample to approve. It was finally determined that the first layer of paint had been applied before the decorative painted floral panels had arrived; but, after their installation, Edith evidently chose a different color scheme, thereby allowing us to establish as the second layer the one that was historically valid.⁹ While the strong color of the blue-green walls has surprised present-day viewers, the effect would be muted if a glaze was used on the walls, a custom that was often followed in the early 1900s. Yet another factor effecting the color is that the earlier paint would have contained lead. Notwithstanding the health safety laws that do not allow the use of lead in paint, its inclusion provided a subtlety of tone to colors that present-day paint does not have. There are still areas of conjecture about the furnishing of this room, such as the expense of placing straw matting over the parquet wood floor as seen in the photo, although the oriental rugs cover the majority of floor space.

Bathroom

Edith Wharton's bathroom was designed to be a practical space with modern conveniences, but it is interesting to note that, according to the original floor plan, she changed the entrance from her bedroom to the vestibule, and eliminated a closet. This alteration allowed "greater privacy," allowing a maid to enter the bathroom without disturbing the mistress while she was in her bedroom. Returning period bathroom

fixtures was the most important aspect of restoration here, in addition to reproducing a wallpaper that was found in several bathrooms at The Mount. The design features a pattern that simulates the appearance of tiles with a repeat of six different flowers within borders on an off-white ground. The design, which imitated tiles, provided the room the requisite architectural flavor to adhere to the argument in *The Decoration of Houses* that “the chief fault of the American bathroom is that...the treatment is seldom architectural.”

Bedroom

Edith’s bedroom presented the greatest challenge because there was no photographic documentation, nor were there other examples to be seen in other historic houses. Possibly cameras were not invited into bedrooms, because of the issue of privacy. For Edith, the most important function of this room was that it be conducive for her habit of early morning writing from bed.¹⁰ Four windows on the north and east sides of the room supplied ample morning light, and were supplemented by four wall sconces on the east and west walls. The advice of *The Decoration of Houses* states “that in this part of the house simplicity is the most fitting”; hence the room has been furnished with a caned Louis XVI-style bed, a commode, a dressing table, and two bedside tables. White or pale painted furniture was in keeping with the Codman-Wharton aesthetic, similar to that used by Codman for his clients, such as Cornelius Vanderbilt’s rooms at The Breakers in Newport. Likewise, following the dictum relating to the “unhealthiness of sleeping in a room with stuff (sic) hangings, (and) heavy window-draperies,” the four windows have been hung with simple dotted Swiss curtains.

Regarding the decoration of the bedroom walls with paper, Wharton and Codman had expressed distaste, primarily because a busy pattern effaced “the architectural lines of a room.” Nonetheless, a fragment of a paper was found behind a period mirror in the center of the east wall; it was a solid color, of a type often used as lining paper, and

referred to as “cartridge paper.” Although the actual color is still conjectural, a paper was installed in a colorway that correlated to the wall color of the boudoir. Similar paper had also been used at Land’s End. In a letter to his mother, Codman commented that Wharton had decorated her bedroom at Land’s End juxtaposing a *toile de jouy* fabric with “plain green cartridge wallpaper and a very pretty room it will be.”¹¹

The search for correct furniture to furnish these rooms is never-ending. The donation of three gilt framed portraits of Edith’s father and brothers from descendants provide important personal details about her life as well as wall decoration. A variety of sources have provided period hand-embroidered linens for the bed, and donations of period bibelots give the rooms some of the essential qualities about the period and the person who decorated the rooms. In 2015 The Mount received an extended loan of (primarily) bedroom furniture from the Preservation Society of Newport County. The addition of these pieces has enhanced the period impression of The Mount’s rooms greatly, a number of them documented from a local furniture shop in Newport, Vernon & Co., that was likely an important source for Wharton. Such pieces were used frequently by Newport’s summer colony in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and help to lend a greater sense of the period, giving a bit of soul to the remarkable woman who lived here.

Though it is not possible to include all the details that are involved in furnishing rooms at an historic landmark, such as The Mount, they are the key to unlocking the unspoken language of rooms. As Wharton wrote in *The Decoration of Houses*:

There is no absolute perfection, there is no communicable ideal; but much that is empiric, much that is confused and extravagant, will give way before the application of principles based on common sense and regulated by the laws of harmony and proportion.



Notes

1. Ogden Codman, Jr. (1863-1951) provided decorating advice to the Whartons at Land’s End, and was initial architect chosen for The Mount; after a falling out, Francis L.V.Hoppin (1867-1941) of the firm Hoppin & Koen was hired as official architect but Codman was later rehired to design the interiors of the principal rooms.
2. Previous owners of The Mount include Mary and Albert Shattuck (1912-38), Louise and Carl Van Anda (1938-42), The Foxhollow School (1942-76) prior to founding of Edith Wharton Restoration.
3. See the following: the late Scott Marshall, a Wharton scholar and preservation historian, wrote *The Mount, Home of Edith Wharton* (1997) with documentation from John G. Waite Associates, Architects, Albany, New York; former curator, Erica Donniss provided a fully documented report: “Restoration of Edith Wharton’s Bedroom Suite at The Mount,” February 6, 2009; Richard Guy Wilson, *Edith Wharton at Home, Life at The Mount*, The Monicelli Press, 2012.
4. Wharton’s most important archives are at the Beinecke Library, Yale University, and Historic New England.
5. Edith Wharton, *A Backward Glance*, 1934. D. Appleton-Century Co., p. 110
6. The pattern, “Le Meunier, son Fils et L’Ane”(the Miller, his son and the Ass) was originally designed in 1806 by Christophe Philippe Oberkampf; the red and white color was one of the original color ways.
7. Letter from Jean-Mathieu Prevot, President of Casal, to Erica Donniss, 5/30/2006, regarding the many times the fabric had been reproduced, and the difficulty in selecting a period color due to fading and other factors.
8. Board member Michael Simon, a noted designer of historic French interiors, worked with the local fabricator to determine the accurate dimensions.
9. There was a lengthy dispute between Codman and Wharton over responsibility for the inaccurate measurements for the openings for the decorative panels.
10. Among published volumes on which Edith Wharton worked on in her bedroom are: *Sanctuary* (1903), *Italian Villas and Their Gardens* (1904), *The House of Mirth* (1905), *Italian Backgrounds* (1905), *The Fruit of the Tree* (1907), etc.
11. Ogden Codman to Sarah Fletcher Bradlee Codman, January 25, 1897, Codman Collection, Historic New England.

Preservation Diary

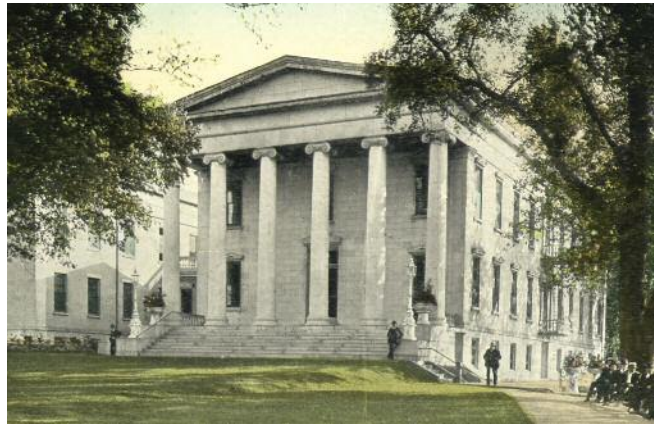
Revitalizing Staten Island's Landmark Snug Harbor

James Lim and Graham Hebel

For centuries, the Kill Van Kull has been one of New York City's most important maritime channels, conveying commercial vessels between the New York Harbor and points in New Jersey. Along the southern shore of this strait lies a rare gem: Sailors' Snug Harbor, an 83-acre park that is at once a remarkable vestige of the city's nineteenth-century maritime history and a cultural destination for contemporary New Yorkers.

Founded posthumously as a charity in accordance with the terms of the will of the wealthy shipping merchant Robert Richard Randall, Snug Harbor, one of the country's first homes for retired and injured sailors, was inaugurated in 1833 with a striking Greek Revival building, now known as Building C. From then on, Sailors' Snug Harbor distinguished itself as a lively, self-sustaining community, home to nearly 1,000 residents and comprising more than 50 buildings, with its own working farm and hospital. One of its most notable residents was retired sea captain Thomas Melville—brother to Herman, of *Moby-Dick* renown—who served as the community's governor from 1867 to 1884. As stipulated in Randall's will, the support and growth of Sailors' Snug Harbor were to come from the rental of his land holdings in lower Manhattan, which he bequeathed to the charity.

The original center three Greek Revival structures grew to become the core of an integrated five-building administration and dormitory row, known as the "Front Five," that stands today as one of the most ambitious evocations of the classical style in the United States. In



"Building A" at Sailor's Snug Harbor, c. 1907. New York Public Library Digital Collection.

September 2015, the western-most of these dormitories, Building A, opened its doors as the new home of the Staten Island Museum, an institution with a nineteenth-century history of its own. New York-based Gluckman Tang Architects, a firm whose particular expertise includes museum design as well as sensitive adaptive reuse of historic structures, oversaw four years of restoration of the building's historic exterior and extensive renovation and remodeling of its neglected interior. The path that led from the original sailors' campus to the day of the museum's ribbon cutting, however, was a winding one.

John Whetten, a retired sea captain, was appointed the Harbor's first governor in 1836, with a guiding mandate to regulate the behavior of the residents with a set of "wholesome rules."¹ This was because the less mannered, sometimes carousing culture of the sailors could cause conflict with the trustees and their fine breeding and sense of decorum in the early days of Snug Harbor.

Eventually, the trustees' by-laws included expanded regulations for residents' behavior: they were not to bring spirits to the campus, nor appear intoxicated, nor brawl, nor leave the premises without permission. Church attendance was mandatory, as were attendance at communal meals and rising and retiring at appointed hours.² This policy somewhat curbed, but did not completely eliminate the former sailors' tendency to curse and drink with abandon; after all, this had been the very nature of their long life at sea.

Still, the growth of Sailors' Snug Harbor was largely positive. In 1856, a new chapel was dedicated; while the initial building had held just 37 men, the new structure could hold 300. After Melville's appointment, the population nearly doubled, and income from Randall's Manhattan land allowed the Harbor to augment its facilities. Four new



Retired sailor mending a tennis net, c. 1910. Library of Congress.

dormitories, including the flanking Buildings A and E of the Front Five, were built from 1876 to 1880, housing a total of 800 residents. Each resident worked on the farm, in the gardens, or on the grounds of Sailors' Snug Harbor for at least 15 hours per week, which kept operations going at a healthy pace.³ On a visit, Theodore Dreiser, author of *Sister Carrie*, marveled at the efficiency of the place: "The entire kitchen staff numbers thirty all told," he wrote, "and the thousand sailors are served with less noise and confusion than an ordinary housewife makes in cooking for a small family."⁴

Melville's successor in 1884, Captain G.D.S. Trask, was even more committed to building the Harbor. His ambitious campaign included an even larger white marble church, a new recreation hall, and a 600-seat music hall that would become the center of cultural life at Sailors' Snug Harbor, even welcoming neighboring Staten Islanders. It was only with Trask's retirement in 1898 that this era of major growth came to an end, ushering in several decades of tranquil enjoyment for the residents of Sailors' Snug Harbor.⁵ In 1922 the *New York Times* reported that the organization was the richest charitable institution in New York, and in 1924, the *New York Herald Tribune* lauded it as the best paying farm in the country.⁶

By the mid-twentieth century, Snug Harbor had gone into decline; the establishment of the Social Security Administration and other federal aid programs had reduced the immediate need for the charity. By 1945, the resident population had dwindled to half its peak, and Randall's Manhattan land holdings had begun to decrease in value, dramatically reducing the institution's income. As a result of their neglected state, many of Snug Harbor's buildings were later demolished: the sanatorium, hospital, farm buildings and service buildings were torn down in 1951, and the white marble church in 1952.

In the 1960s, a great battle for the future of Snug Harbor erupted. While the institution's trustees sought to raze the structures and erect high-rises in their stead, advocates for the preservation of the island's architectural history, including the Staten Island Museum, campaigned to save the Greek Revival complex. Through a protracted series of court battles, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission succeeded in classifying the Front Five buildings as New York City landmarks in 1965. Sailor's Snug Harbor was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976. The National Register of Historic Places would go on to describe the complex as "a rare surviving example of mid-nineteenth-century urban planning, architecture, and landscaping, scarcely equaled in the nation."

The small remaining community of sailors was finally moved to South Carolina in the 1970s (the residential program has since ended, but the organization remains active, providing financial support to retired sailors). Meanwhile, the city acquired Snug Harbor and developed a master plan for the site. The nonprofit Snug Harbor Cultural Center was established in 1975 to operate it, but revitalization was slow to arrive.

A major component of the master plan involved the future of the Staten Island Museum, the borough's oldest cultural institution. This museum's inception dates to 1881, when a group of early environmentalists resolved to establish a collection of natural objects native to the island. By the early

20th century, the group had established itself as a public museum and expanded its purview to include art and artifacts. Another focus of its mission was the documentation and preservation of Staten Island's natural and built environments. Additionally, it had become a key advocate for



Top to bottom: Interior conditions before construction, looking north along the central corridor. Looking west through the original tripartite wood windows and surrounds with integral shutters. Courtesy Gluckman Tang.

the cultural development of Staten Island, contributing to the establishment of a botanical society, a zoo, and a historical society—all of which are still in operation today.

The museum had long been housed near the Staten Island Ferry Terminal, on the island's northeast tip, but its building was cramped and inadequate for its particular needs. Recognizing the museum's massive cultural import to Staten



L to R: Looking east toward the A/B Hyphen. Original corbels and archways were replicated and adjacent cast-iron staircase restored. Courtesy Gluckman Tang. East view after restoration and renovation. Photo by Bruce Damonte.

Island and its natural fit with the Snug Harbor site, the city moved to earmark Buildings A and B, two of the original Front Five buildings, to eventually serve as its permanent home. However, when renovations began in the 1980s, the city's budgetary crisis stalled the process. Early in the twentieth century, the city undertook a separate project to stabilize Building A: the repair and restoration of the historic wood windows and replacement of the standing-seam copper roof. In 2005, under the Department of Design and Construction's Design Excellence Program, the Staten Island Museum selected Gluckman Tang Architects to transform Building A into the Museum's new home at Snug Harbor. The firm was selected for the commission because of its extensive experience with museum and renovation projects. In 2007, an additional ten million dollar grant in city capital funds ensured that the restoration of Building A would commence.

The Staten Island Museum is the city's only general-interest museum: in the style of the Smithsonian, its holdings include a fantastic array of treasures, from ancient Egyptian statuary to contemporary art by Staten Islanders to hundreds of thousands of animal and plant specimens gathered from the local environment. Such a diverse collection necessitated a design approach that prioritized flexibility.

Gluckman Tang's design was divided into two phases. Phase one involved the renovation and restoration of Building A and the original A/B Hyphen that connected the two buildings and allowed sailors to travel between the buildings while remaining indoors; phase two will encompass the renovation and restoration of the adjacent Building B. As a result of previous renovation attempts, the original Building A was in a state of extreme disrepair. During phase one, the interior and compromised structure of Building A were completely removed in response to their

neglected condition and the need to meet the stringent recommendations of the American Museum Association. This entailed increased floor-load capacities, the fulfillment of more strict environmental energy requirements, and an upgrade to a museum-quality climate control system.

Throughout this process, existing building elements were retained and restored whenever possible; these included the original historic cast-iron staircase and its supporting masonry walls, the building's original exterior masonry walls, its historic wood windows, and its restored copper roof.

The restoration architect's "building-within-a-building" solution replaced the deficient wood structural framing with a steel structure that was erected within the building's exterior envelope, creating a liner that transformed the interior into exhibition spaces with state-of-the-art environmental controls for temperature and humidity. Within the architects' contemporary design, the nineteenth-century feel of the dormitory has not disappeared. The landmarked windows, their original wooden surrounds and integrated shutters restored, are framed by new insulated interior windows, allowing abundant natural light to enter the galleries. Light levels can be controlled and refined by deploying the historic shutters and new scrim shades. Furthermore, visitors can view the original windows from inside the galleries through the new interior windows. The structure's original wood framing was salvaged, re-milled, and used for wood flooring in the museum's galleries and common areas.

The project's scope included additional restoration of the building's exterior, including brick masonry repair and repointing, repair and cleaning of the Tuckahoe marble front portico and steps, and refurbishment of the cast-iron window lintels and ornamental metal railings.



The design's major sustainable aspect is the closed-loop geothermal system, concealed beneath the restored lawn and landscape of Snug Harbor. The system heats and cools the building while reducing its energy consumption and operational costs. As a result of Gluckman Tang's design, the Staten Island Museum is the first historical landmark building on Staten Island to achieve a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

With the move to Snug Harbor, the museum expanded to over 21,000 square feet of useable space, which includes four climate-controlled galleries, an auditorium/performance venue, and education space for school children. Building A's 11,000 square feet of exhibition space gave the Staten Island Museum the ability to display objects that had long been relegated to storage.

Looking out through the restored windows, museum-goers can see some of the same sights that resident sailors might have gazed upon when the building first opened in 1879: the neighboring Greek Revival buildings; the landscape of Snug Harbor; and the busy Kill Van Kull, its ships still sailing.



Above: Exterior of the restored Building A and A/B Hyphen. Below: Interior hallway with restored cast-iron staircase. Photos by Bruce Damonte.



Editor's note:

The restoration architect's offices reports that all of the Front Five are still standing today. Building B is slated for restoration and renovation in the near future by their office. Though the construction schedule is yet to be set, once it is complete, B will be the home of the Staten Island Museum's science exhibits, whereupon Building A will be exclusively devoted to art exhibitions. Building C is currently Snug Harbor's Eleanor Proske Visitor's Center, where visitors can learn about the development's history. Building D is home to the Noble Maritime Collection, a museum dedicated to the artwork of sailor John A. Noble (1913-1983). This museum was originally located in Noble's Staten Island home, and moved to Building D in 2000 after an award-winning restoration carried out by the Noble Crew, a group of dedicated volunteers. Building E is currently unoccupied and undergoing restoration.

Notes

1. Barnett Shepherd, *Sailors' Snug Harbor, 1801-1976* (New York: Snug Harbor Cultural Center in association with Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, 1979), 19.
2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, 23.
4. Theodore Dreiser, *The Color of a Great City*, 1923 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 152.
5. *Ibid.*, 27.
6. *Ibid.*, 31.

The Bibliophile

WINNER OF THE W. E. FISCHER AWARD

in recognition of its important contribution to the history of nineteenth-century art and artists

Sargent: Portraits of Artists and Friends

Richard Ormond, with Elaine Kilmurray. Contributions by Trevor Fairbrother, Barbara Dayer Gallati, Erica E. Hirshler, Marc Simpson and H. Barbara Weinberg. London and New York: National Portrait Gallery and Skira/Rizzoli, 2015.

Sargent: Portraits of Artists and Friends, is the catalogue which accompanies the exhibition that was on view in 2015, first at the National Portrait Gallery in London, then at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The show was conceived by Richard Ormond, who is surely first among scholars of John Singer Sargent's work. Curator of the exhibition, and co-author with Elaine Kilmurray of this catalogue, Ormond is a former Deputy Director of the National Portrait Gallery, London, Director of the John Singer Sargent multi-volume catalogue raisonné project, and a grandson of Violet Sargent Ormond, Sargent's sister. He has been nobly assisted by Kilmurray and important scholar/curators in the development of the exhibition and catalogue. In his introduction, Ormond sets out the premise that both show and book gloriously succeed in proving: that John Singer Sargent was not merely "a bravura painter of the old school," a society portraitist "of limited imagination and originality," but a thoroughly modern talent who stood "in the vanguard of contemporary movements in the arts, in music, in literature and the theatre."

The paintings selected for the exhibition include formal portraits commissioned by friends, portraits of people he sought out, sketches of artists and companions on painting holidays, and refined charcoal drawings. Some are finished, others are studies or loose *plein-air* oils, and many are inscribed as gifts to the sitter. They include leading lights in every creative field, and demonstrate a wide range of friendships, and Sargent's participation in the intellectual and cultural circles of the day. His virtuoso society commissions are notably absent. A chronological framework was used for both book and exhibition, with five categories based on locations: Paris, 1874-85; Broadway, 1885-9; London, 1889-1913; Boston and New York, 1888-1912; and Europe, 1899-1914. The introductory essays for each section of the book explain important developments in successive phases of the artist's career, while the catalogue entries are fascinating biographies of each sitter, casting light on different aspects of Sargent's life.

John Singer Sargent was born in Florence in 1856, to expatriate American parents. Their constant moves across Europe gave Sargent and his sisters, Emily and Violet, a thoroughly cosmopolitan education; they were exposed to art, music and literature wherever they went. By the age of 18, Sargent had decided to study painting and the family moved to Paris, where he was enrolled at the *École des Beaux-Arts*. He also studied privately in the atelier of Carolus-Duran. Five years later his striking portrait of this maestro made Sargent's name in the artworld. Portrait commissions of friends soon followed, but most of the paintings in this section are of other artists, such as Paul Helleu, Auguste Rodin and Claude Monet. Sargent was attracted to Impressionism, especially the work of Monet who

influenced his style of *plein-air* painting. His rising star was abruptly halted by the scandal caused by "Madame X," his entry to the Paris Salon of 1884. Sargent left Paris soon after.

He landed on his feet in London, thanks in great part to the friendship of Henry James. He was invited to join an informal art colony in the Cotswolds, and spent several summers in the rural village of Broadway in a convivial circle of English and American artists and their wives. *Plein-air* paintings of friends working outdoors record the relaxed productivity of that period. His great achievement of the summers of 1885 and 1886 was *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*. Its successful reception in London was followed by portrait commissions from well-placed patrons. He remained in England and signed a lease for a residential studio at 13 (now 31) Tite Street, Chelsea, which was his London home until his death in 1925. The paintings in this section constitute a splendid gallery of writers, musicians, composers and actors: portraits of Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth; Robert Louis Stevenson; Henry James; Gabriel Fauré; and Coventry Patmore, to name a few.

In 1887 he made his first professional visit to the United States, to Boston and New York. He was well-received in both cities. He became a great friend of Isabella Stewart Gardner in Boston. In New York City, friendship with Stanford White led to significant mural commissions for the Boston Public Library, then on the drafting board of McKim, Mead and White. This work would occupy him for the rest of his life and he considered the murals his artistic legacy. Among the portraits done in three trips to America are those of Mrs. Gardner and actors Edwin Booth and Joseph Jefferson.

In 1906, Sargent was honored by the Uffizi Gallery in Florence with a request for a self-portrait for the Vasari Corridor. He later claimed that it was while painting his "mug" that he resolved to quit portraiture to pursue other branches of art. This he did in 1907, and spent the years up to the outbreak of war in 1914 traveling to paint with his sister Emily and their friends in the mountains and countryside of Europe. These informal yet brilliant portraits of friends and family in the landscape round out the catalog.

Sargent: Portraits of Artists and Friends is a revealing study, beautifully written, illustrated and laid out. Sargent's life and career are presented in the context of his friendships. The subjects are artists, writers, composers, musicians, actors and patrons, and the accompanying text is a series of concise and fascinating biographies. The catalogue supports and expands what the exhibition reveals, that Sargent did indeed move among the aesthetic and social vanguard of his times.

Reviewed by Elizabeth B. Leckie

— WINNER OF THE HENRY-RUSSELL HITCHCOCK AWARD —
in recognition of its important contribution to the history of America in the Victorian era

Henry Howard: Louisiana's Architect

Robert S. Brantley with Victor McGee. Photographs by Robert S. Brantley and Jan White Brantley.
New Orleans and New York: Historic New Orleans Collection and Princeton Architectural Press, 2015.

It would be convenient if we did not know the names of New Orleans's historic architects. For its urban character has the distinctive unity that comes from a vernacular building culture, where traditional forms and types are replicated unselfconsciously, and where there is no excessive fretting about originality or individual expression. It is far easier to explain the architectural character of this city as the aggregate of anonymous and impersonal forces—economic, cultural, and material. But as it happens, its buildings were anonymous only to the extent that no one had bothered to find their architects. Now, through a staggeringly imaginative research campaign, Robert Brantley has brought into focus the career of the most prolific of all New Orleanian architects, Henry Howard (1818-1884).

Virtually all that was previously known of Howard's career comes from a five-page biographical fragment he dictated in 1872. It recounts how he was born in 1818 in Cork, Ireland, the son of a builder, and trained at the Mechanics' Institute there. He emigrated in 1836 to New York. There he failed in his attempt to apprentice himself to an architect (was anti-Irish prejudice at play?) and instead moved to New Orleans where he found work as a carpenter, eventually specializing in stair-building. "In 1845 I studied architecture for a short time with the late Col. James H. Dakin, an able architect of this city, also during the same year with a Prussian, Henry Molhausen (Möllhausen), a good surveyor and civil engineer." This was the extent of Howard's formal training; by the end of 1845 he was already in professional practice.

Howard's elegant Greek Revival plantation houses and stately Italianate townhouses, with their gracious verandas, contribute greatly to the physiognomy of the Mississippi Delta and New Orleans. He was not a terribly restless designer and, having found a winning formula, did not bother to change it. His antebellum sensibility persisted to the last, as if Ruskin had never written and Richardson had never built. His 1880 building for Henry Gardes, still standing on Camp Street, could have been designed twenty-five years earlier. But this says more about New Orleans than about Howard, who was clearly a forceful personality. In 1863, at the age of forty-five, he escaped from the Union-occupied city, having first scraped together one hundred dollars in gold to leave with his wife and their many children. He made his way to the Confederate naval works in Columbus, Georgia, where he spent the remainder of the war designing weapons and engines for ironclad warships.

Howard relaunched his architectural practice in grand New Orleans style, with the design of a fashionable bordello for Mary Jane

McKenney Kingsbury (1865). One can hardly imagine this in any other city (can anyone name another architect-designed brothel?). Madame Kingsbury had little time to enjoy her thirty-five room palace: returning from New York with a crew of fresh recruits for her operation, she and they were lost at sea when the steamship Evening Star was caught in a hurricane in October 1866. For Howard it was a case of bad news and good news: he lost his most profligate client but no longer had to contend with his principal competitor, the architect James Gallier (who was also an Irish immigrant but who changed his name from Gallagher to ingratiate himself among the local French population). There is a poignant footnote to the story: although Madame Kingsbury's establishment has long since vanished, its extravagant interior is well-documented in the photographs of E. J. Bellocq, the celebrated photographer of the prostitutes of Storyville.

All this is related here in rich documentary detail and with a generous corpus of illustrations, including many of Howard's architectural drawings. Still, its most impressive achievement is largely invisible. This is the ingenious way that Robert Brantley has been able to discover numerous unknown works by analyzing New Orleans's immense trove of nineteenth-century building contracts. Only a portion of these record the name of the architect, but by examining those signed by Howard and the distinctive phraseology of his specifications (he always called for his excavation trenches to be "level and solid"), Brantley has convincingly identified a large number of Howard buildings. Every scholar ought to study the way that he has managed to squeeze these documents like lemons, wringing every droplet of insight from them.

This book is the product of an unusually happy collaboration. It was written with the assistance of Howard's great-great-great-grandson, Victor McGee, who discovered Howard's biographical fragment in a trunk of family papers over half a century ago. He did not live to see the completion of the book, nor did Jan Brantley, who together with her husband, took the book's handsome photographs. Together they have produced a model book that fills a serious gap in the historiography of American architecture. But mighty gaps still remain. Who will follow Brantley's splendid example and produce those monographs we still need on T. U. Walter, Bruce Price, and the criminally neglected Wilson Eyre?

Reviewed by Michael J. Lewis

Arts & Crafts Stained Glass

Peter Cormack. New Haven and London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2015.

Readers interested in stained glass by the American artist Charles Connick (1875-1945) or British stained glass from the nineteenth-century onward know Peter Cormack, MBE, FSA, the foremost authority on both subjects. Former Keeper of the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, London, and honorary curator of Kelmscott Manor (William Morris's Oxfordshire home), Cormack has

published a wealth of information on British artists of the Arts and Crafts movement, including booklets on Karl Parsons (1884-1934), women stained-glass artists, and, perhaps most importantly, Christopher Whall (1849-1924), whose work is the foundational fabric of this book. As a founding director of the Charles Connick Foundation in Newton, MA, Cormack's almost-annual tours and

frequent contributions to the newsletter, Connick Windows, as well as his current biographical project on the artist, have demonstrated his thorough grasp of the American Arts & Crafts Movement of the East Coast. (Connick's Boston studio survived into the 1970s and was responsible for thousands of windows, notably in the Heinz Chapel in Pittsburgh, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, and Princeton University Chapel). Now, in *Arts & Crafts Stained Glass*, Cormack brings together his broad knowledge of the era and its windows in an elegantly-written and lavishly-illustrated large-format book that fills a void in our appreciation of this complex medium and its history. As he clearly states in his introduction, this is not a compendium of all of the artists and studios working in the idiom. Its purpose is rather "to explore the momentum for a new and powerfully appealing vision of how (stained-glass) windows should look and how they should be made." This last aspect, that of their manufacture, was of critical importance in this period, but is often overlooked in basic surveys. Cormack's deep understanding of stained-glass processes and materials and his gift for explaining these are a vital contribution to the literature.

Focusing primarily on British stained glass, with a chapter on American windows by those artists championed by the architect Ralph Adams Cram, Cormack draws a beautifully logical and coherent net around those artists, tying them all to Christopher Whall as its heart. Whall was an exceedingly original interpreter of the medieval formula for stained-glass design. Among his innovations were depicting architectural canopies as bowers of foliage and using a new type of glass, called Prior's Early English, that was thick and streaky with intense colors and silvery whites. Equally important, Whall was a teacher, first at the Royal College of Art in London, and then through apprenticeships in his studio. His 1905 book, *Stained Glass as an Art*, was one of the most influential

manuals on the craft in both Great Britain and the U.S. throughout the early twentieth century. His most important group of windows is in the Lady Chapel of Gloucester Cathedral. In the United States, his windows may be seen in the Church of the Advent and All Saints' Ashmont, both in Boston. Whall does not dominate this narrative so much as haunt it, peeking through in every chapter as the unifying thread tying it all together. With this approach, Cormack does not duplicate the work of the few existing studies of stained glass of the period, such as Martin Harrison's *Victorian Stained Glass* (1980), Charles Sewter's *The Stained Glass of William Morris and his Circle* (1974), Nicola Gordon Bowe's *Life and Work of Harry Clarke* (1989), or her newest book, *Wilhelmina Geddes* (2015). His approach is unprecedented in books on stained glass, and the insight he brings provides a foundation hitherto unseen to the development of the art of stained glass.

Many may quibble that the title of this book is misleading; there is vastly more to Arts & Crafts stained glass than the work of Whall, Connick and his competitors, such as Harry Eldredge Goodhue, Otto Heinigke, or Henry Wynd Young. The Prairie School, for example, or the stained glass of Dard Hunter or Greene & Greene find no place in this book. Others will be disappointed not to find the Scotsmen Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Ernest Archibald Taylor, or George Walton. But none of these designers looked to the English Arts & Crafts Movement for inspiration, or if they did, they did not follow Whall, and they therefore fall outside Cormack's theme. A close reading of this book will illuminate one strand—a very important, fundamental strand—of the multi-faceted Arts & Crafts movement, and even the cursory glance through its pages will excite with gorgeous photography, most of it by Cormack himself.

Reviewed by Julie Sloan

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

John La Farge and the Recovery of the Sacred

Jeffery Howe, editor. Essays by Jeffery Howe; James M. O'Toole; Cecelia Levin, Virginia C. Raguin, David Cave, and Roberto Rosa. Chestnut Hill, MA: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2015.

This is the catalog of an exhibition that celebrates the donation of a memorial window depicting Christ, St. Paul, and St John the Evangelist to the McMullen Museum of Art at Boston College by William and Alison Vareika. Their donation is important, as is the topic of the sacred in art. La Farge is a singular figure in American art. He was a painter, a stained-glass maker, an art critic, an entrepreneur, a Roman Catholic, and an intellectual, living in an increasingly secular age. His work and the title of this book offer many promising avenues of inquiry around the question of how La Farge visualized the sacred. The disparate essays in this volume barely begin the exploration, but the better essays give surprising insights into the spiritual in La Farge's work. Cecelia Levin's contribution, "In Search of Nirvana," offers a good summary of La Farge's interaction with Japanese art and his travels to Japan, noting that the artist found affinities between Buddhist and High Renaissance aesthetics. Jeffery Howe's essay "The Light of Memory—John La Farge and Stained Glass" reveals the artist's interest in nascent semiotic theory; he believed that perception of art was ambiguous and based as much on memory as empirical sensation. Howe explains that La Farge often used the Renaissance motif of the *sacra conversazione* as the basis of the composition for his memorial stained glass, including the Vareika donation. In that window the saints engaged in a silent, sacred conversation carried on in colored

light, thus evoking the whole Western tradition of spiritual communication, including the memorialization of the dead. Theologian David Cave, in "John La Farge and the Articulation of Nature's Light and of the Sacred Through Stained Glass," also wrestles with the nature of stained glass and the manner in which La Farge used it. Cave concludes that by using both abstract colored glass and painted glass for figural elements, especially faces, La Farge was a modernist, wanting to convey an intimate, human vision of the Divine. But, some essays are off topic: a biographical essay on La Farge's son (also named John) who was a Jesuit priest and a force against Nazism and for interracial justice, says nothing about La Farge senior. Unfortunately, the design and editing of this catalog truly disappoint. Most of the black-and-white photographs within the text are too small to convey the ideas the authors intended; there is no checklist or index or list of figures (and therefore no apparatus to connect the various essays); the typography and graphic ornament inappropriately recall Arts & Crafts design; and the binding is flimsy. While the color illustrations are sumptuous, and many well-argued points surface among the essays, the catalog does not cohere. Nonetheless, *John La Farge and the Recovery of the Sacred* does offer nuggets of insight into a little-studied aspect of this protean artist.

Work Sights: The Visual Culture of Industry in Nineteenth-Century America

Vanessa Meikle Schulman. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015.

This is a serious, yet readable, examination of the conflicting ways technology was portrayed in American illustrated periodicals, cartoons and paintings and the texts describing these images in the mid-Victorian era. Schulman argues that inventions such as transatlantic telegraph cables and industrial processes such as sugar production were seen both as rational and systematic AND unknowable and uncanny. Her period coincides with the heyday of *Harper's Weekly* which was saturated with atmospheric woodcuts, and she makes extensive use of these. For example, her analysis of illustrations and descriptions of the Corliss engine, a working exhibit

within the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, demonstrates that this behemoth was both admired and feared. Schulman makes it clear that Americans did not see managerial efficiency and the adoption of wizardly technology as an unalloyed benefit. The "incorporation of America" to use a phrase coined by Alan Trachtenberg to describe the later stages of the industrial revolution in America, was a messy process. By close analysis of images and the text accompanying them, Schulman shows us that technology and industry was alternately—and even simultaneously—embraced and rejected.

The People's Galleries: Art Museums and Exhibitions in Britain, 1800-1914

Giles Waterfield. New Haven and London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Yale University Press, 2015.

This book describes the rise and blossoming of municipal art galleries and temporary art exhibitions in Britain. It is a great stride beyond the hagiography commonly found in the histories of museums. Waterford covers not only the usual suspects in London but the great museums in places like Leeds, Glasgow and Manchester and lesser-known exhibition phenomena, such as the annual displays by artists' societies hosted by art museums. While acknowledging the arguments made by post-modern critics that museums were often agents of the reigning, oppressive social hierarchy, and exhibitions were often bewildering crass commercial enterprises, he understands these points to be only part of the story. Overall, he sees art museums and exhibitions as tangible outcomes of activist political forces that sought to improve the human condition. "No less than the contemporary municipal reforms, the libraries,

museums and art galleries of late Victorian England were the children of Liberalism." Waterford describes not only the architecture of museums and the contents of exhibitions, as might be expected, but the diverse cultural influences that formed museums and exhibitions. He explains the role of learned societies; the (limited) patronage supplied by the monarchy; the refuge museums provided in the menacing industrial cities; the advocacy given by reformers like John Ruskin; the rivalry between provincial centers vying for cultural supremacy; as well as significant artworks, donors, and buildings. He demonstrates that art museums and art galleries were indeed consonant with liberal, progressive ideals, and that they made art accessible to huge working-class audiences. Undeniably, they were, and remain, a force for good.

Saving Place: 50 Years of New York City Landmarks

Donald Albrecht and Andrew S. Dolkart, with Seri Worden, editors.

Essays by Robert A. M. Stern; Anthony C. Wood; Andrew S. Dolkart; Françoise Astorg Bollack; Claudette Brady; and Adele Chatfield-Taylor. Photographic portfolios by Iwan Baan.

New York City: Museum of the City of New York and The Monacelli Press, 2015.

This book, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the passage of the New York City landmarks preservation law is, happily, more than a triumphalist narrative or, in contrast, a cry to mount the barricades. This book tells a reasoned and documented story of the forces arrayed against preservation (neglect, developers, property owners, politicians – elected and unelected) versus the forces for preservation (the much more amorphous "society as a whole"). The authors are an honor-roll of preservationists in New York City. Anthony Wood's essay on the passage of the landmarks law shows that the destruction of Pennsylvania Station was only one of many incidents that tipped public opinion in favor of preservation over development. Andrew Dolkart's essay demonstrates that when it comes to designation, the aesthetic value of a structure is more important than historic or cultural considerations. He also describes the politics behind what was not designated or even put on the official calendar to be considered for designation (a legal first-step towards designation). Françoise Bollack's essay recounts a half-dozen incidents when the

Landmarks Preservation Commission was required to rule on the "appropriateness" of proposed new construction to be built onto a designated building or within a historic district. Claudette Brady offers a short description of how preservation has been taken up by community activists in Bedford-Stuyvesant, a Brooklyn neighborhood that is now experiencing both welcome and unwelcome development pressures. Adele Chatfield-Taylor provides thoughts on the past and future. The nicest surprise in this book is the photographic portfolios by Iwan Baan. We are used to seeing historic buildings photographed in their Sunday best—which means early Sunday morning, when the distractions of street and sidewalk traffic are minimal. Instead, Baan shows us these historic buildings in their everyday clothes, amid delivery trucks, pedestrians on the move, and construction workers eating lunch. Radio City Music Hall is the backdrop to a sidewalk bristling with picket signs that have nothing to do with preservation. This is what the landmarks law has wrought; life goes on. These old buildings never looked so good.

————— **WINNER OF THE RUTH EMERY AWARD** —————
in recognition of its important contribution to nineteenth-century regional history


The Dakota: A History of the World's Best-Known Apartment Building

Andrew Alpern, with contributions by Christopher S. Gray. Photographs by Kenneth G. Grant.
New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2015.

This book offers a pleasant peek inside the Dakota, the venerable apartment building in New York City on Central Park West and 72nd Street. Alpern has produced a straightforward history of the building, aided by prior published (but uncited) research from the prolific architectural writer Christopher Grey. This history is enlivened by extensive quotes from late nineteenth-century newspapers, period photographs, and reprints of articles showing the building's famous residents in residence. These have included Lauren Bacall, Jason Robards, Rudolf Nureyev, and John Lennon, who are mentioned, and Rosemary's baby, who is not. There are chapters on apartment houses built prior to the Dakota, which stood in uncharted waters between single-family brownstones and luxury hotels. The floor plans for these innovative early apartment houses are illustrated and their role as models for

the Dakota are analyzed. The contributions of both the builder, Edward Clark, of Singer Sewing Machine fame, and the architect, Henry Hardenbergh, who designed many grand apartment houses and hotels, are described. Photographs and newspaper articles show that the Dakota, opened in 1884, was rapidly surrounded by neighbors. Although the building has always carried the name "The Dakota" and among the carvings on the building is a bust of a Native American, Alpern traces the myth that it got that name because "it was so far west and so far North it might as well be in Indian territory" to an 1897 story by long-time building manager George P. Douglass. Something about the building inspires romance and fantasy. Both, as well as history, are amply documented in this enjoyable book.

Reviewed by Karen Zukowski

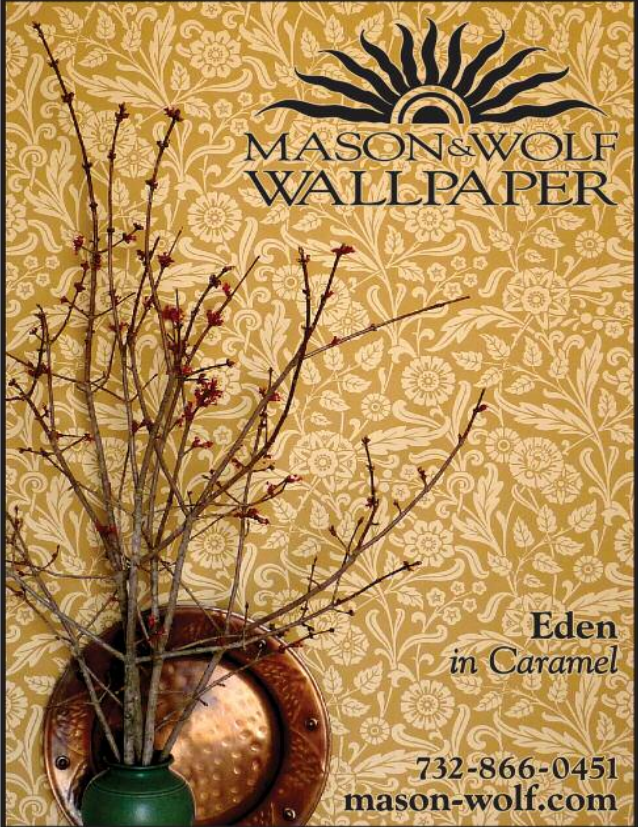


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Milestones

What the...Dickens?

Anne-Taylor Cahill

In 1842 when coming to America, Charles Dickens was greeted as a celebrity, a champion of factory worker reform and a humanitarian. The overwhelming welcome astonished him. Notwithstanding his humanitarian goals, his primary purpose in coming to America was to promote the law of international copyright. He was hoping to prevent American authors from pirating British and European authors. Dickens claimed to have been a victim of this himself. But here is where things get murky.

After visiting the Lowell, Massachusetts, factories where young women worked 12 hours a day in comparison to 16 hour days in Britain, Dickens was impressed with the humane American approach to factory workers. In Lowell they lived in clean boarding houses near the factory with lunch breaks and hot meals at end of the day. But Dickens was most impressed with the young factory girls of the Merrimack Mills. These young women were “of the humbler classes” as he deemed them. What especially impressed Dickens was what he considered to be the high caliber of these humble women. In their spare time, he noted, they enjoyed piano playing, library membership and even published their own periodical called *The Lowell Offering*. Dickens pronounced their literary efforts as comparing “advantageously with a great many English annuals.”

Shortly after his Lowell visit and returning home to England, Dickens published *A Christmas Carol*. That was in the year 1843. But where did he get his idea? According to Boston scholars



Winslow Homer, *The Bobbin Girl*, 1871. As published in *Song of the Sower* by William Cullen Bryant.

Natalie McKnight and Chelsea Bray, Dickens lifted his theme of the Christmas Carol from *The Lowell Offering*! Dickens freely admitted he had read “all 400 good solid pages” of the publication which contained several stories with same *A Christmas Carol* motif. Three of these stories were *A Visit from Hope*, *Happiness*, and *Memory & Hope*.

In *A Visit from Hope* the storyteller is seated fireside (like Scrooge) and is visited at midnight by a ghost. She is taken back through her past in order to provoke a change character for the better. The narrator concludes, like Scrooge, to profit from the advice given by the ghostly visitor. In *Happiness* the storyteller has a mystical dream and realizes that happiness can only be found in humble cottages. In *Memory & Hope* the narrator is visited by two spirits who represent two opposite views of life. The choices are depicted as life pursuing “a garland of fame” versus a life being “useful to my fellow creatures.” Like Scrooge who decides to “become a good friend, a good master, a good man,” the narrator makes a similar decision. Indeed these are not the only stories from *The Lowell Offering* that prefigure *A Christmas Carol*.

Could it be that Dickens plagiarized? Perish the thought! Yet, the issue is open to debate. Some scholars say that *A Christmas Carol* is just a retelling of a short tale in *The Pickwick Papers*. In this tale, *The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton*, an old grump, Gabriel Grub, is transformed by unearthly beings. This particular story was written six years before Dickens visited Lowell.

Whatever the case, *The Lowell Offering* presents much for scholarly discussion. Professors Natalie McKnight and Chelsea Bray affirm that indeed “*The Lowell Offering* closely anticipates the tone, structure and theme” of *A Christmas Carol* published after Dickens Lowell visit. Professor McKnight believes *The Lowell Offering* was certainly a catalyst for the Dickens story.

So did Dickens come to America to decry international literary piracy and then practically do the very thing he abhorred? Did he “borrow” from *The Lowell Offering* or was he merely inspired by it? The debate continues.



For further reading:

Charles Dickens
American Notes (Penguin Press, 2002).

Natalie McKnight and Chelsea Bray
Dickens, the Lowell Mill Girls and the Making of a Christmas Carol, in *Dickens and Massachusetts* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2015).

George Newlin, *Everything in Dickens* (Greenwood Press, 1996).

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