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Associate Editor
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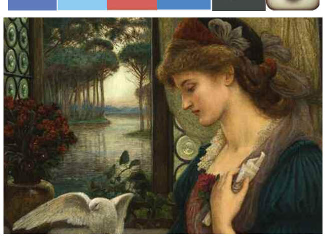
For information on The Victorian Society in America, contact the national office:

1636 Sansom Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
(215) 636-9872
Fax (215) 636-9873
info@victoriansociety.org
www.victoriansociety.org



Cover: Marie Spartali Stillman, *Love's Messenger*, 1885. Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Memorial, Delaware Art Museum.

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THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE ART,

AND

ILLUSTRATED BY EIGHTY-TWO COPPERPLATE ENGRAVINGS.

BY EDWARD SHAW, ARCHITECT.

SIXTH EDITION, REVISED AND IMPROVED.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

TWENTY COPPERPLATE ENGRAVINGS,

ALSO,

A TREATISE ON GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE, WITH PLATES, &c

BY THOMAS W. SILLOWAY AND GEORGE M. HARDING,

ARCHITECTS.

BOSTON:

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MDCCCLII.

From Hammer to Drafting Pen

Edward Shaw of Boston

JAMES F. O'GORMAN

The name Edward Shaw does not often come up when the early nineteenth-century architecture of Boston is the topic. Walter Kilham's *Boston after Bulfinch*, for example, fails to mention him; later books give him an inch or two.[1] There are only a couple of recognizable buildings from his pencil remaining in the city, although there are surviving drawings for a few he did not see erected. We don't have much personal information about him, although we do know that he was born elsewhere and died elsewhere; he apparently did not belong among the locally distinguished Shaws. No personal papers, no recognized portraits, have come to light. We must largely guess at his relationship to other Bostonians. Why, then, bring such an apparent low profile to the attention of the readership of *Nineteenth Century* magazine? Because, if for no other reason, as Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. has put it, "Asher Benjamin, Minard Lafever, and Edward Shaw rank as the three major authors of American builders' handbooks during the second quarter of the nineteenth century."[2] And such handbooks formed the School of Architecture of the era.

There are standing today, as far as current research can tell, two buildings by Shaw that are of more than passing interest: The Adam W. Thaxter, Jr. house on Beacon Hill, and the older part of the City Hall in Manchester, New Hampshire. But it is his publications which more importantly claim our attention. Three different texts are to be found within his five titles, two on architecture and one on masonry construction. They were in one form or another revised, reissued, or reprinted continuously from 1830 to 1900 (neither Benjamin's nor Lafever's works reappeared after the 1850s), and they spread his influence across the country, from Boston to the Carolinas, the Midwest, Texas, Oregon, and many points in between.

Boston

Edward Shaw (1784-1859) was born and died in New Hampshire. He arrived in downtown Boston about 1822 as a middle-aged housewright, apparently spent a few years as assistant to English-born Peter Banner, architect of the Park Street Church, declared himself an architect in 1828, and published the first part of his first book in 1830. That book, *Civil Architecture*, is based, as the title page tells us, on Vitruvius, the one surviving work on architecture from antiquity, and Stuart, Chamberlain, and Nicholson, then standard English authors on the subject. As we move though that text and those of his other books, however, we find that Shaw quotes more than the works of that quartet. His pages are chock-a-block with references to a large library of current reading, architectural and otherwise. In this way he brought a wide literature on the subject to the attention of architects and their clients in Boston and beyond. Where did a provincial housewright acquire such learning? Not, probably, in New Hampshire.

He could easily have known the contemporary publications of his Boston colleague Asher Benjamin, and perhaps those of New York's Minard Lafever, or Philadelphia's Owen Biddle and John Haviland, as well as many English titles. Through Alexander Parris he might have gained access to the books of the Mechanic Apprentices' Library Association or the Architectural Library of Boston.[3] In the 1832 edition of *Civil Architecture* he thanks Charles W. Moore for suggestions to the Introduction and text. Moore was a well-known printer, publisher, historian, and major figure in the Masonic world in and beyond Boston. How they came to meet we do not know, but Moore's *Boston Masonic Mirror* was the first to praise the appearance of Shaw's first book. And Moore's sometime partner, editor and historian William W. Wheildon, was a man close to the local architectural scene. In his *Rural Architecture* of 1843, Shaw cites a letter concerning the measurements of the Parthenon from the Rev. John Pierpont, Unitarian clergyman, lecturer, author, scholar, advocate of phrenology, spiritualism, and temperance, among other things; in short, a characteristic nineteenth-century Boston activist intellectual. And, to mention just one other of his close contacts, the Rev. Louis Dwight, the prison reformer and erstwhile partner in some jail designs of architects like Shaw and Gridley J. F. Bryant. That such men contributed to his work demonstrates that they respected and perhaps furthered his intellectual accomplishments.

William Wheildon's name can be found among Shaw's earliest architectural clients.[4] So can those of Deming Jarvis, founder of the Boston and Ipswich Glass Company, George Parkman and David Sears, among the wealthiest of early Brahmin Bostonians, and Alan W. Thaxter, Jr., a prominent merchant. Shaw obviously had their respect as an architect. In addition, a number of Shaw's peers endorsed his first book. They included John Kutts, C. G. Hall, Joseph Jenkins, architects, and William Austin, who directed granite cutting and finishing operations at the state prison in Charleston. Younger architects Thomas W. Silloway and George M. Harding contributed to a later edition of his *Civil Architecture*. Kilham may have left him out of the picture, but Shaw was very much a part of the architectural scene in the city from the 1820s into the 1850s.

In 1830, a reviewer of his first book described Shaw as "well known as a practical architect, and a gentleman of mechanical skill and research." He was well-versed in the theory and practice of architecture, rose to a respected position in the architectural life of the city during his maturity, and produced a body of professional literature that spread his name across the country until the end of the century. Although little of his built legacy survives, for his influential, long-in-print, and widespread books alone he deserves a position in nineteenth-century American architectural history among his better known Boston contemporaries. His faint reputation stems from our lack of information rather than his lack of accomplishment.

Buildings

That Shaw's books remain his most important contribution to our architectural history should not cause us to overlook his role as designing architect. That achievement gave authority to his published words.

The list of known Shaw designs is short, and the list of executed buildings is even shorter. It would seem, however, that he was as busy as his Boston colleagues at the drafting board. Like his peers during the great expansion of the city from the 1820s on, Shaw designed many, usually brick, row houses. One was commissioned by William Wheildon. Due to the churning subsequent history of the ever-swelling city, with two exceptions all seem to have disappeared. We know from various sources, too, that Shaw designed a house for William W. Warren in Arlington (1840),[5] and a house for David Sears in Brookline (1842), both now gone. Among ecclesiastical works, in 1833 he laid out the First Unitarian Meeting House in Calais, Maine, for Harvard-educated Rev. Win A. Whitewell.[6] It no longer stands. The Middlesex County House of Correction (1837, 1839) is long gone, too, but known from portfolios of his drawings.[7]

Town Hall, Manchester, New Hampshire, 1844-1845. Photo c. 1870.

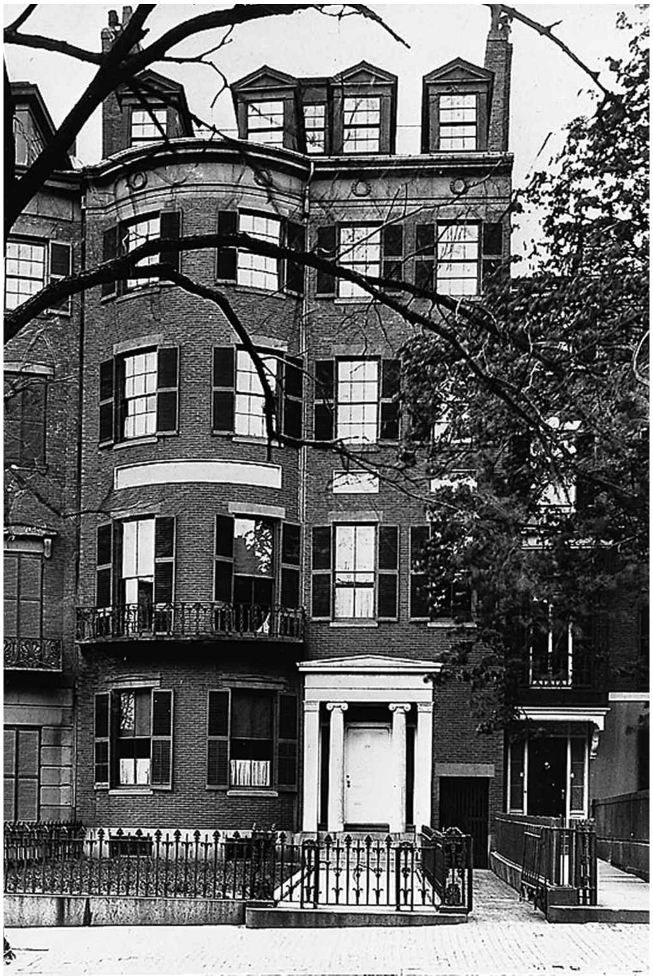
Over the years Shaw entered many competitions, to present knowledge winning only that for the Town Hall in Manchester, New Hampshire. He prepared unrealized proposals for the City Hall, Albany, New York (1829)[8]; Masonic Temple, Boston (1830; had it been erected, wrote an anonymous journalist, "it would have been the finest pile of architecture in America."[9]); Girard College, Philadelphia (1832)[10]; New York Halls of Justice (The Tombs, 1835; the partnership of Louis Dwight and Shaw placed third)[11]; U. S. Custom House, Boston (1837)[12]; State Capitol, Columbus, Ohio (1838);[13] Boston Athenaeum (1845);[14] and the Deer Island Almshouse Hospital (1849)[15]

Other than a series of Gothic cottages in Webster Park at West Newton (1847; extant but altered) that seem to have stemmed from an unidentified and apparently unexecuted project of 1846 known from a set of drawings,[16] there are just three standing buildings that are proven Shaw designs: a characteristic Beacon Hill townhouse at 4 Pinckney Street of 1833,[17] the splendid Adam W. Thaxter, Jr. house of 1836-37 at the top of Mt. Vernon Street on the Hill, and the Town (now part of the City) Hall of Manchester, New Hampshire, of 1844-45. These represent the loci of his life, and the latter two embrace with distinction the poles of popular architectural style of the period. The former has a universally admired, text-book example of an entrance aedicule in the Grecian Revival style; the latter is among the more inventive works of the early Gothic Revival.

The younger Adam Thaxter was a principal in the Commercial Wharf mercantile establishment of Bates & Co., a concern that traded with Holland and Russia.[18] He was the perfect model of a well-fixed Bostonian of the day, one who hung Copley's portrait of Samuel Adams in his new house, and retained all the documentation created for the dwelling's design and construction. That documentation includes original drawings (by Shaw) and those for later alterations (by Gridley J. F. Bryant), specifications, survey (by Alexander Wadsworth), architects' and mechanics' bills, notes, and correspondence.[19] Such complete documentation is rare in this period.

The plan of front and back parlors and side entry hall with eye-catching stair rising to the upper floors was standard for town house design in the era, although the octagonal observatory above the roof, with its breadth-taking, 360-degree view of the city, rivers, Back Bay, harbor, and countryside beyond, was—and remains—a special feature. The principal rooms are on the "Basement" (first) and "Parlour" (second) floors. The walls of the basement or reception floor are articulated with neo-classical Ionic pilasters and paneled doors set into fluted Corinthian frames capped by a low pediment. The pilasters "support" other low pediments set above an architrave decorated with rosettes. Shaw's drawing for this treatment survives.

The most dramatic feature of the interior is the circular stairway rising from the entry hall. In his *Rural Architecture* (1843) Shaw describes such a staircase as admitting, if large, "greater beauty" than a rectangular one, and if small, "greater conveniency (*sic*)." In the Thaxter house, the small and beautiful staircase of swirling steps and handrails elegantly spins its way down from the parlors and chambers above and flows



(L to R): Exterior view of Adam W. Thaxter, Jr. house, 1836-37. Interior view of the entry hall with staircase. Photos c. 1900.

into the entry hall below, with the railings curving into raking scrolls.

The four-story plus attic, four-bay façade of the house is beautifully shown in a tinted drawing by Shaw, and remains unchanged today. There is a two-bay bow or "swell" to the left, and a two-bay flat wall to the right where the entrance opens above a short flight of steps, very typical of townhouse design on Beacon Hill and elsewhere in the city. But that entrance is framed by a Grecian, distyle-in-antis frontispiece with low-sloped pediment detailed in another drawing. Shaw's invoice itemized "2 days work on Plan for Frontispiece" in January 1837. In May the stone carver billed Thaxter for "Flutting Collums" for the entrance. A photograph of it appeared in Howard Major's pioneering *The Domestic Architecture of the Early Republic* of 1926, and it remains one of the most memorable details of Beacon Hill, a place rich in such architectural rewards.

Shaw's invoices indicate that he received $75 for the original drawings on March 11, 1836; others through 1837 show that he revised his original design until the signing of mason's and carpenters' contracts, and then visited the construction site on 110 days until early December, 1837. He billed Thaxter $772.75 for drawing and supervising.

This example of Shaw's urban domestic architecture can be contrasted with his one remaining example of civic architecture: the Town House in Manchester, New Hampshire.[20] When in August 1844 the existing Town House burned, officials voted to replace it as soon as possible, "and put a clock and bell" on it. A committee given the authority to solicit designs held a competition and picked that of Edward Shaw for "the beauty of its architecture, convenience of its plan, and the durability of the structure," a formula written by someone familiar with Vitruvius's famous triad. The author goes on to say that "the architecture is unique, being similar to the Gothic, but not exactly of that order." (In the thinking of the time, as exemplified in Shaw's books, Gothic was usually discussed as an order supplementary to the five orders of ancient classical architecture rather than a complete system of structural synergy as it is often described today.)

A slightly later author, who calls the building "of a very peculiar style of architecture, nothing of the classical or pure about it, but still a fine looking structure," goes on to say that Shaw proposed a building "entirely of stone, the columns hammered and the wall of ashlar work; but the committee deviated from his plan, and the building is of stone and brick, the columns and caps being of hammered stone, while the walls are of brick, painted and sanded to imitate stone." The selectmen paid Shaw $75 for the design and $2127 for what must have been very close supervision of the rising work.

The interior has been reworked. There were originally stores at street level. The combination of commercial and governmental spaces in one building was as least as old in New England as Faneuil Hall (1742) in Boston. And, it has been pointed out that not only governmental buildings but churches of the period might also contain ground floor shops (despite Christ's anger at the money changers in the temple!).[21] Shaw certainly had in mind the church he published as Figure 2, Plate 51, in his *Rural Architecture* when he designed the Manchester Town Hall a year or so later. (Was it only a coincidence that an ad for that book appeared in the local newspaper on the same day his design was chosen by the committee?)

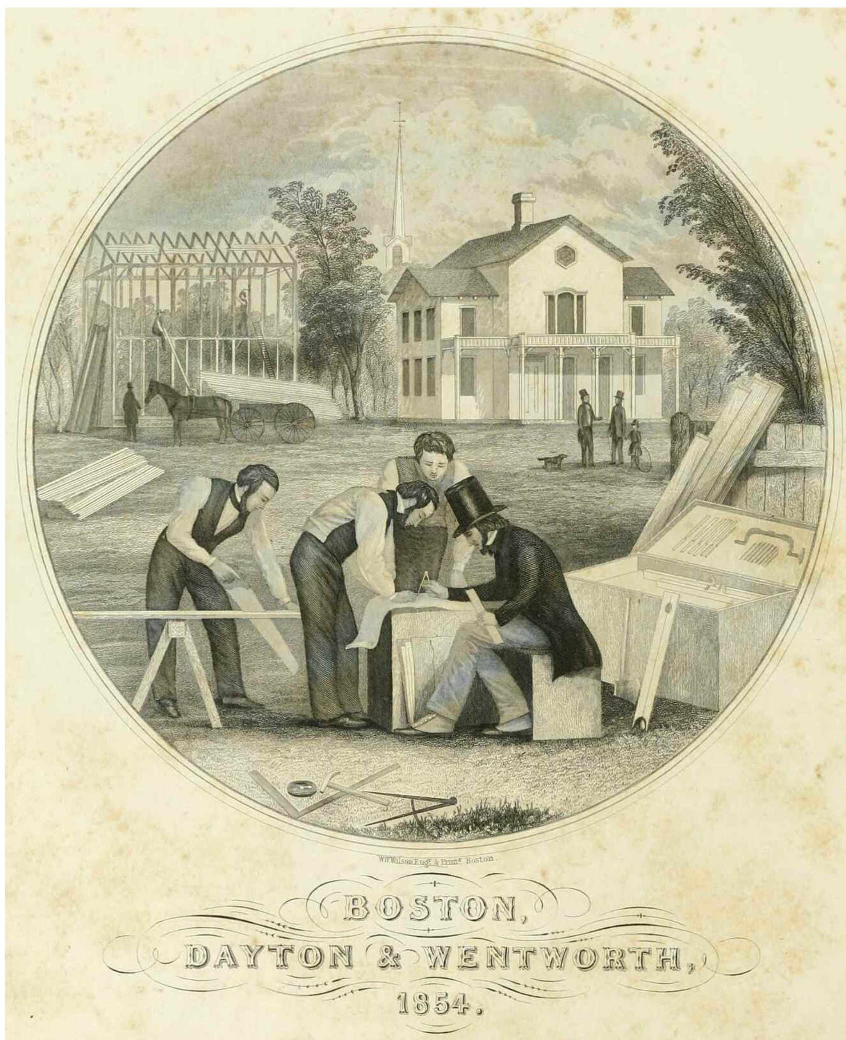
The exterior of the building survives. It rises a four-square, three-by-five-bay block, with a tall clock tower soaring above the entrance on one narrow side, its rectangular, hammered-granite framework infilled with brick walls (no longer painted in imitation of stone). Decorative details of medieval origin can be found in the lancet windows and ornamental battlements along the top of the ground floor. It is, then, best thought of as a classical frame with early Gothic touches. Thought "peculiar" or "unique" by contemporary commentators, the building is in fact an original combining of the two architectural styles—classical and medieval–prevalent in New England at the time Shaw designed it, and usually thought of as antitheses. The citizens who ordered the building did not quite understand what Shaw had accomplished, but its survival affirms that they were demonstrably proud of it, and the current government of the city remains so today. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The quality of design in the Manchester hall caused John Coolidge, in his *Mill and Mansion* of 1942, to recognize the success of Shaw's design despite the prejudice of the time against nineteenth-century eclecticism: "Here," Coolidge wrote, "as in the best early romantic buildings, the new discovery (i.e., the Gothic style) does not run away with the designer. At bottom there remains a splendid sense of proportions and of the relationship of masses, while the detail merely gives a needed touch of fantasy to the severe regularity of the scheme."

Books

Most of the architects of his generation, like Shaw, began life as builders, as carpenters, masons, and such. For the most part, they knew how to build what owners or others roughed out on paper or scantling, or described orally. In early nineteenth-century Boston as elsewhere, there began to appear "mechanics" who slowly assumed the title of architect, men like Asher Benjamin, Alexander Parris, Peter Banner, and others. Shaw made the leap too, and his publications can be seen as his attempt to raise through learning the status of other mechanics to that of architects. This we can glean from comments by reviewers and colleagues alike. And the full title of Shaw's last book, *The Modern Architect; or, Every Carpenter His Own Master*, promises such. The 1854, tondo-shaped frontispiece to that book, engraved by William W. Wilson, illustrates the result of this half-century of progress.

The tondo depicts a rural construction site in which carpenters in the background raise a barn while, in the foreground, an architect, clad in top hat, frock coat, and spats, with drafting instruments in hand, explains his drawings to the mechanics in shirtsleeves with heads uncovered. One rips a board with a hand saw and other construction tools are visible in the box behind the architect and in the foreground. Status is written in habiliment and implement: the well-dressed architect directs from his design, the product of his intellect; the unfrocked men work with their hands to execute the designer's directions. This is a representation of the professional architect, one who had evolved over the previous half century, as had Shaw himself,



The frontispiece of *The Modern Architect; or, Every Carpenter His Own Master*, 1854. Engraved by William W. Wilson.

into a distinct type who is master of the building site. Study this book, Shaw promises, as do some of his reviewers, and you will rise to the same status.

Shaw produced five titles, all illustrated with engraved plates: *Civil Architecture*, which made a partial appearance in Boston, privately printed, in 1830 (and now known in one copy only), and then began a run of editions and reprints from 1831 to 1900.[22] There are some variations from edition to edition. *Rural Architecture*, 1843 (with an edition of 1850 known in two copies only). *The Modern Architect*, 1854, with reprints to 1859 is very close to a reprint of *Rural Architecture*. In addition to those strictly architectural publications, Shaw issued two titles that are essentially the same book on stonework (the second changed in size and somewhat augmented in text): *Operative Masonry*, 1832, and *Practical Masonry*, 1846.

Civil Architecture must have been prepared in 1828-29. It was therefore more or less contemporary with the sixth edition of Asher Benjamin's *The American Builder's Companion* (1827) and Minard Lefever's *The Young Builder's General Instructor* (1829). Benjamin covers "practical" geometry, a little history, the orders of architecture including the Grecian, building and decorative details, and a number of model domestic and ecclesiastical designs. His instructions are generally brief. Shaw's history also covers "practical" geometry, building and decorative details, and the orders including Grecian. There are no house or church designs, but what sets Shaw's treatise apart from Benjamin's and those of his American contemporaries are the fullness of his discussions in which he quotes many more authorities than he mentions on the title page, his inclusion of bridge design and construction, and his glossary. More important, yet, is his discussion of design using perspective projection and shades and shadows, or sciography, a topic then unprecedented in the architectural literature (and nearly so in practice) in this country. The usual architectural design up to 1830s was presented in plan and elevation alone.

> From a knowledge of...(projection and shadows)," Shaw wrote, "the architect is enabled to draft his plans, and give to them their true effect....(N)o building can ever appear to the eye in the precise form of a geometrical elevation upon paper...(T)o form a judgment of the appearance of the edifice when actually erected, it is...just to the proprietor, to furnish him with views of the intended structure from different points of sight, accompanied by its attendant outbuildings, shrubbery, &c. such as they may be expected when brought to perfection.

What appears obvious to us was a new idea at the time, as, with the exception of immigrant architects such as Benjamin Henry Latrobe or their American students, the use of rendered perspective views of projected buildings hardly existed.[23] Nor was Shaw one to practice what he preached, for none of his drafted designs follow this injunction, and only in *Rural Architecture* (repeated in *The Modern Architect*) did he show houses, including that for David Sears, in perspective outline. They are devoid of ambience and have the appearance of having been stuck like decals onto the page.

Shaw's *Rural Architecture* appeared coeval with A. J. Davis's *Rural Residences* (1836-37) and A. J. Downing's *Cottage Residences* (1842), with their fully rendered views of architecture and setting. The difference is due to the fact that Shaw's books were mater-of-fact builder's guides while Davis and Downing were producing something new–seductive house pattern books aimed at clients.[24] Downing may have reached a more numerous readership, but Shaw, however old-fashioned his graphics might have appeared, was not without a broad following.

Shaw's books carried his verbal and visual lessons across the land. One would expect to find copies in the hands of New England builders and architects, and it is easy to prove that fact by examining volumes now deposited in libraries. Within months of the appearance of the second edition of *Civil Architecture*, for example, the housewright Jirch L. Ferguson of New Bedford, Massachusetts, signed his name in his copy,

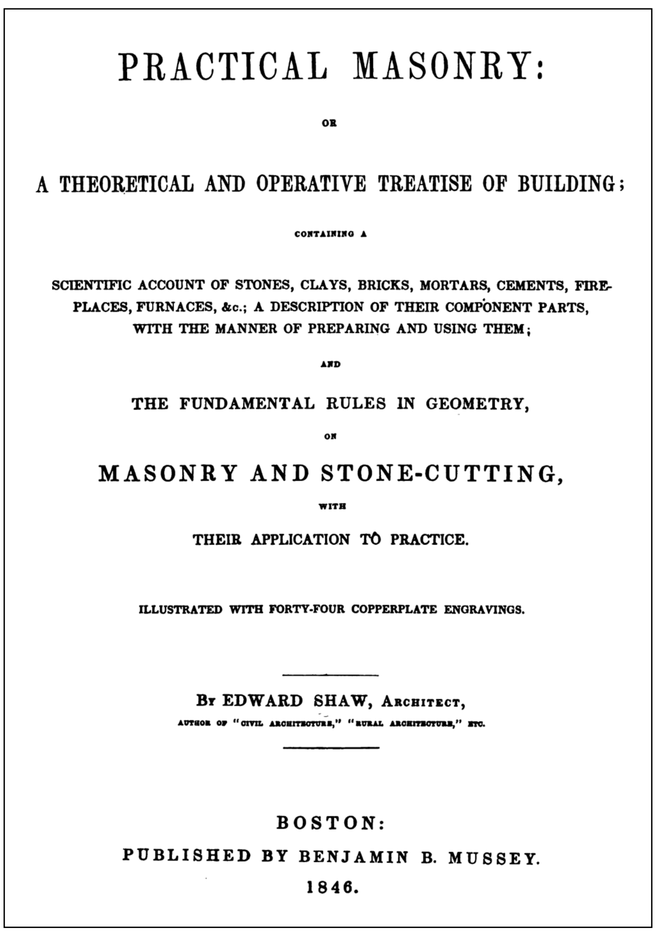
Gold-stamped front cover of *Civil Architecture*, 1852, depicting a Nativity scene.

as did Thomas Marshall of Lowell in his, while George F. Hersey of Hingham marked his ownership the next year. But Shaw's words and images flew further afield. The 1836 edition, for example, landed in Kentucky where John McMurtry followed Shaw's design for a front doorway in his frontispiece for The Elms near Lexington, while Thomas Lewinski cribbed a shop front for the entrance bay to his James Clay villa in Lexington.[25]

For the sixth edition of 1852, *Civil Architecture* (published by the same house that issued *Uncle Tom's Cabin* at the same time), two architects of the younger generation, Thomas W. Silloway and George M. Harding, contributed an essay on English Gothic churches and designs for an Italianate church and villa. The package was now aimed at the bibliophile as well as the builder. The quarto volume could be purchased in an embossed cloth binding with a gold-stamped Nativity scene on the front cover. The ornamental spine was gold-stamped with a square composition of carpenter tools, and a perspective rendering of a church tower and spire unlike anything Shaw was to show in his later books. It seems more Upjohnian than Shavian. A book such as this was not intended to be carried to the construction site; its ornamental spine begged to be admired resting on an eye-level book shelf in a private library. *Rural Architecture* had already appeared in various bindings including one in leather with gold-stamped ornaments. It was described as a "splendid quarto," being "as ornamental as useful...(and) should be found in the library of every liberal gentleman and scholar." So, it seems, Shaw's publishers soon sought a public beyond the mechanics.

Shaw's aim in the latter work, the same commentator wrote, is "to lay before the reader, and especially the practical architect, a variety of plans, elevations, &c...principally (of) dwelling-houses, and places of worship." The first part of the text is loaded with the names of English and French sources. The second is a selective survey of the architecture of his peers, from Washington to Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. There is a discussion of Gothic architecture inspired as much by Sir Walter Scott as by the actual buildings Shaw had (so far as we know) never seen.

Rural Architecture elicited an oft-cited, scathing, *ad hominem* review in which Arthur Gilman, then a young university-trained critic and architect, guessed that Shaw "can draw the contract and indite the specifications for carpenters' and masons' operations,...(but) we do not see... any evidence of much greater ability."[26] The model house designs Shaw shows, Gilman continues, have "faultlessly exact" details "no doubt minutely transcribed from Stuart; but it is only the skin of the lion on the body of an ass. The parts are grouped into grotesque...forms, and fitted together as a child fits the pieces of a wooden puzzle." But, as one of Gilman's fellow critics observed about this time, he "thinks a lofty, sarcastic tone may ride him safely over all. He has, no doubt, learned to believe ridicule his *forte*."



PRACTICAL MASONRY:

OR

A THEORETICAL AND OPERATIVE TREATISE OF BUILDING;

CONTAINING A

SCIENTIFIC ACCOUNT OF STONES, CLAYS, BRICKS, MORTARS, CEMENTS, FIRE-PLACES, FURNACES, &c.; A DESCRIPTION OF THEIR COMPONENT PARTS, WITH THE MANNER OF PREPARING AND USING THEM;

AND

THE FUNDAMENTAL RULES IN GEOMETRY,

ON

MASONRY AND STONE-CUTTING,

WITH

THEIR APPLICATION TO PRACTICE.

ILLUSTRATED WITH FORTY-FOUR COPPERPLATE ENGRAVINGS.

BY EDWARD SHAW, ARCHITECT,

AUTHOR OF "CIVIL ARCHITECTURE," "RURAL ARCHITECTURE," ETC.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY BENJAMIN B. MUSSEY.

1846.

Shaw's *Practical Masonry*, 1846.

Despite Gilman's assault, research in various collections reveals that the one edition of *Rural Architecture* managed to find its way across the land and the years. It was inscribed "owned & used" by John Purrington, a carpenter and builder in South Reading, Massachusetts; Shaw's Doric house, the one Gilman particularly loathed, seems to have been the source for the 1846 Thomas W. Ward house in Austin, Texas; and it has been said "to offer a prototype" for the recessed portico of the Jacob Conser house of 1854 in Jefferson, Oregon.[27] As late as 1895 Louis H. Gibson praised the design in his *Beautiful Houses*, and a hundred years later Thomas Gordon Smith had his students at the School of Architecture at Notre Dame building models of the same domestic design.

The Modern Architect is largely a reprint of *Rural Architecture*. Like the earlier work, it was available in a handsome embossed binding gold-stamped on the cover with the Wilson frontispiece of the architect directing the workmen at a construction site. The texts are more or less identical; there are some new designs–a church, storefronts, and an Italianate villa–but the series of order-inspired domestic designs is repeated despite Gilman's attack. A comparison to Samuel Sloan's two-volume *The Model Architect* of 1852 demonstrates just how visually dated Shaw's graphics had become. Despite that, the book was to be found in the hands of builders and architects (and no doubt gentlemen) away from the eastern urban centers. John Wheeler signed his copy at Crown Point, Lake County, Indiana, in August 1856.[28] He was a farmer, teacher, surveyor, and journalist who died with the rank of colonel at Gettysburg. Shaw's Doric house, as republished in this title, continued to impress: it was the inspiration for the Lorenzo Ling house of 1856 in Pulaski, New York.[29] The original main entrance to the Iowa County Courthouse in Dodgeville, Wisconsin, of 1858, was copied line for line from Plate 14 of this book.[30]

Shaw's two books on stones and stonework, *Operative Masonry* and *Practical Masonry*, 1832 and 1846, derive from his days as a mechanic but are augmented by much erudition. The text, for which he styles himself the "compiler," is more or less identical in both titles. It is an *omnium-gatherum* of Shaw's own experience and references to (and unacknowledged quotations from) an extraordinary range of European and American authorities, including *The Operative Chemist* of Samuel Frederick Grey, published in 1828. Even as late as the appearance of the second title, there was no effective American competitor to these basic works, although there were English precedents such as Peter Nicholson's *Practical Masonry* of 1830.

Charles W. Moore, whom we know assisted Shaw in writing the edition of *Civil Architecture* that appeared in the same year as *Operative Masonry*, published a review of the latter in which he lamented the flimsy wooden architecture of his time.[31] "Not only should our wealthy fellow-citizens in the country, as well as in town," Moore wrote, "turn their attention to more durable materials...,but they should do well in inquire if science in planning, and elegance of execution, may not very properly be encouraged." Moore was a Masonic scholar who described “operative masonry” in his *The Masonic Trestle-Board* of 1843 as alluding to

> a proper application of the useful rules of architecture, whence a structure will derive figure, strength, and beauty (the Vitruvian triad again)...It furnishes us with dwellings, and convenient shelters from the vicissitudes...of the seasons; and while it displays the effects of human wisdom, as well in the choice as well as the arrangement of the sundry materials of which an edifice is composed, it demonstrates that a fund of science and industry in implanted in man.

There follows a discussion of the five orders of classical architecture. Did Shaw teach Moore the meaning of the orders, or did Moore expand their meaning for Shaw? Whatever the answer, Shaw should be remembered as much for broad learning as for focused practice. His was a pedagogical method as old as Vitruvius.

Notes

1. Perhaps as a sign of things to come, W. Barksdale Maynard cites Shaw’s words six times in his *Architecture in the United States, 1800-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
2. Edward Shaw, *The Modern Architect* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), with an introduction by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. Shettleworth, the Maine State Historian, initiated research on Shaw’s career many years ago. This research was conducted with a Faculty Research Grant from Wellesley College, whose Maggie DeVries assisted with the illustrations. I am preparing a monograph on Shaw at his urging, supported by a Franklin Research Grant from the American Philosophical Society.
3. Martha J. McNamara, “Defining the Profession: Books, Libraries, and Architects,” in Kenneth Hafertepe and James F. O’Gorman, eds., *American Architects and their Books to 1848* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 73-90.
4. Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, Boston Building Contracts, 1830 to 1850. These have been indexed by Shettleworth in volumes available at Historic New England.
5. James F. O’Gorman, ed., *Drawing Toward Home* (Boston: Historic New England, 2010), 36-37.
6. *Christian Register*, Boston, August 10, 1833.
7. Middlesex County Courthouse, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
8. Emerson Gallery, Hamilton College, *A Neat Plain Modern Style: Philip Hooker and his Contemporaries* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 262-79.
9. *American Traveler*, Boston, September 7, 1832.
10. Bruce Laverty, Michael J. Lewis, and Michelle Taillon Taylor, *Monument to Philanthropy* (Philadelphia: Girard College, 1998).
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23. See James F. O’Gorman, *The Perspective of Anglo-American Architecture* (Philadelphia: The Athenaeum, 1995).
24. Charles B. Wood III, “Asher Benjamin, Andrew Jackson Downing: Two Divergent Forms of Bookmaking,” in Hafertepe and O’Gorman, *American Architects and Their Books to 1848*, 181-198.
25. Clay Lancaster, *Antebellum Architecture of Kentucky* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1991), 185, 295. As we learn from this book, Shaw was not the only author whose publications found widespread use beyond the East Coast.
26. (Arthur Gilman), “Architecture in the United States,” *North American Review* 58 (April, 1844), 475-81.
27. Marion D. Ross, “Architecture in Oregon, 1845-1895,” *Oregon History Quarterly* 57 (March, 1956), 38.
28. Author’s collection.
29. Judith Wellman, ed., *Landmarks of Oswego County* (Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1988), #179.
30. “The Iowa County Courthouse, Dodgeville,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 22 (September, 1938), 27-28.
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Anglo-Japanese wardrobe, made in New York City by Herter Brothers, c. 1875. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

A New Look at Victorian Furniture

Triumph of the Picturesque

OSCAR P. FITZGERALD

The idea of the picturesque as an alternative to classical design had been slowly developing over the course of the eighteenth century. Classicism remained dominant but was strongly challenged by the rococo at mid-century and to a lesser degree by Chinese, Egyptian and Gothic exotica. However, with the introduction of neoclassicism late in the eighteenth century it seemed that classicism had swept the design field. Although an occasional Gothic arch, a japanned finish, or a few Egyptian sphinxes or sun disks spiced up the bland Federal style, even these tokens of the picturesque were nowhere to be found on the best furniture in the final phase of neoclassicism.

Precursors of the Picturesque: "Fancy" and "Gothic"

This was certainly true at the high end of the furniture market. But on another level the picturesque, in the guise of "fancy," gathers strength in the early nineteenth century. As Sumpter Priddy in his study *American Fancy* so convincingly argued, the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century was giving way to Romanticism in the nineteenth century. Classicism and reason were challenged by fancy and emotion. Imagination superseded rationality.[1]

Fancy objects were associated with women who were seen as more receptive to an emotional response than men. And the domain of women was now the home, where they had supplanted men as the ruler of the house. No longer running a farm or a small business from home, husbands went off to factories and offices to amass their fortunes leaving the decoration of the house and the raising of the children to their wives. Fancy meant painted and wallpapered interiors with varied and fanciful scenes; ceramics and textiles with novel and imaginary motifs; and glass and metal with rough textures and jagged outlines.

If fancy objects presented the most overt affront to classicism, a new genre of Gothic literature was no less influential in undermining classicism's hold on the Anglo-American culture. The Medieval tales by Sir Walter Scott were filled with Gothic castles and chivalrous knights who set examples of gentlemanly virtue. Gothic literature, freed from classical rules of rationality, could now express individuality, irrationality and even the macabre. Cheap English horror stories, called "shilling shockers," titillated readers everywhere struggling to express their own personality. In America Edgar Allan Poe explored the dark side of human nature in the "The Pit and the Pendulum" and other macabre tales.

Boredom with the old and a desire for the new have always been factors in the adoption of new styles. By the mid nineteenth century the new was waiting. With fancy leading the way, America by the 1840s was ready for a radical departure from classicism. Gothic emerged in the 1840s as the first style to reflect fully the principles of the picturesque–irregularity, roughness, variety, movement, intricacy, novelty and surprise. Since the first Gothic mansion begun by Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill in the 1750s, Gothic architecture along with Gothic furniture slowly gathered steam.

Gothic Revival chair, possibly made in New York City by Gustave Herter, c. 1855. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Much of the appeal of Gothic derived from its associationism. This idea held that beauty derived, not from innate characteristics such as symmetry, proportion or composition, but from the associations that the mind made with the object. Although John Locke and David Hume first espoused this idea earlier in the eighteenth century, David Hartley in his 1749 *Observations on Man* first codified them. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Sir Uvedale Price and Archibald Alison at the end of the century expanded on these ideas.[2] Alison posited that nothing was intrinsically beautiful in itself, but that beauty was perceived by the mind, which associated that image with other pleasurable images. Richard Payne Knight, a connoisseur and sometime philosopher, argued more specifically in an 1805 essay that discriminating among beauty, sublimity and the picturesque was a subjective judgment based on associationism.[3]

The idea of associationism remained a pillar of aesthetic thought until after the Civil War. In his essay on taste at the Crystal Palace Exposition in 1850, Ralph Nicholson Wornum, an artist, art critic and Keeper of the National Gallery in London, wrote that, "Ornament is not a luxury, but, in a certain stage of the mind, an absolute necessity." Ornaments "produce that variety of effect so essential to the steady gratification of the eye: one ornament, in fact, suggests many."[4]

In the early nineteenth century Greek Revival architecture, and indeed the government of the New Republic, itself, had been associated with the values of ancient Greece. Gothic was associated with education and religion. The Gothic revival began in England in the seventeenth century as a way to link the crown with its Catholic past lending legitimacy not only to the crown but also to the venerable centers of Christian learning at Oxford and Cambridge. In America in the nineteenth century, the associations with education and religion continued to resonate as hundreds of schools and churches rose in the Gothic style across the land.

Gothic was also associated with liberty. Mindful that the Goths had sacked the Roman Empire and destroyed classical civilization, Italian Renaissance scholars naturally considered it ugly and barbaric. In England, however, it was the Angles and the Saxons–brothers of the Goths from Northern Europe–who had defeated the Romans and freed England from their domination. And later in the twelfth century the Anglo-Saxon yeomanry had placed the first controls on the Norman monarchy by forcing King John to sign the Magna Carta. When Gothic came to America, the Gothic associations with liberty became conflated with America's struggle for independence.

John Ruskin, perhaps the most influential nineteenth-century art critic in both Britain and America, valued Gothic and the picturesque because of the associations with God.[5] He also believed in truth to nature because he saw God in nature in much the same way as Ralph Waldo Emerson and other American Transcendentalists. At a time when America was experiencing a religious awakening in the early nineteenth century, Ruskin's popularity rested on his linking of art with morality and religion. He saw Gothic as an antidote to materialism and industrialization sweeping the country in the early nineteenth century. He rejected the classical, rational approach to nature in favor of a more emotional, metaphysical and picturesque view.[6]

Ruskin directly influenced Andrew Jackson Downing, one of the earliest American spokesmen for Gothic and the picturesque. Beginning in the 1840s, Downing published several influential books culminating with *The Architecture of Country Houses* in 1850. Boasting nine printings and 16,000 copies, it was the most widely read authority on mid-nineteenth century residential architecture in the United States.[7] It was, in effect, an abridged version of the influential English *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture* (influencing even Ruskin) first published in 1833 by John Claudius Loudon, himself an exponent of the picturesque.

Although Downing was primarily concerned with architecture, he devoted an introductory chapter to beauty and the picturesque and two other chapters to furniture and furnishings for country houses. For Downing, beauty in the classical sense had "unity, proportion, harmony" while the picturesque

> is seen in ideas of beauty manifested with something of rudeness, violence, or difficulty. The effect of the whole is spirited and pleasing, but parts are not balanced, proportions are not perfect, and details are rude.[8]

He went on to explain:

> As regularity and proportion are fundamental ideas of absolute beauty, the Picturesque will be found always to depend upon the opposite conditions of matter –irregularity and a partial want of proportion and symmetry.[9]

Picturesque Continued: Rococo Revival

While Downing used a number of terms to describe styles of interior decoration in his country house at mid-century, they fell mainly into the categories that are called today Neoclassical, Gothic, Rococo and Renaissance Revivals.[10] He dispatched the Neoclassical or Grecian style as "almost too familiar to the eyes of our readers to need any explanation" and found the Gothic, on the wane by 1850, most appropriate for the library.[11]

The style which he variously referred to as Italian, Florentine, Venetian, Modern French, Louis Quatorze and Louis Quinze today is simply called Rococo Revival. This furniture clearly owed a debt to eighteenth century British and French Rococo furniture, but the Victorian iteration presented a much more robust, rougher and more complex interpretation. Downing observed:

> It addresses itself more to the feelings and the senses, and less to the reason or judgment, than the Grecian style, and it is also capable of a variety of expression quite unknown to the architecture of the five orders. Hence, we think it far better suited to symbolize the variety of refined culture and accomplishment which belongs to modern civilization than almost any other style.[12]

Although he thought it was generally too ornate for most country houses except perhaps for a lady's boudoir or a parlor, he acknowledged that it was the most admired style.

Rococo Revival furniture exhibited all the anti-classical elements of variety, irregularity, roughness, intricacy and movement that characterized the picturesque.[13] Writing in 1840 just as the Rococo was gaining ardents, Edgar Allan Poe complained:

> Straight lines are too prevalent–too uninterruptedly continued–or clumsily interrupted at right angles. If curved lines occur, they are repeated into unpleasant uniformity. Undue precision spoils the appearance of many a room.[14]

The straight line of classicism, first attacked by William Hogarth in the eighteenth century, would finally be vanquished by the full-blown Rococo Revival at mid-century. Blackie and Son captured the essence of the picturesque in their admonition to carvers:

> The general rule should be to produce soft and rounded masses, swelling up in one part like the hills and mountains in nature; in another spreading out like the plains at their feet, and contrasted here and there by a sharp, cutting edge or bold projecting-line; while in parts, the points may be thrown up to catch bright sparkles of light.[15]

The manual could have been describing a sofa by John Henry Belter of New York City, with movement of its triple back "swelling up" like hills and the intricate carving on the frame catching "bright sparkles of light." The irregular silhouette of the Belter piece contrasted with the smooth outline of an early nineteenth-century Federal style cabriole sofa.

Like Gothic, Rococo Revival furniture evoked a panoply of associations. The most obvious association was with flowers. The best Rococo Revival furniture by John Henry Belter and other American manufacturers presented a veritable flower garden carved in wood. City dwellers who had given up the farm for a more prosperous life in the city certainly appreciated the reminder of the beauties of nature in their parlors. Many came to see their new urban home as tainted while nature and the country remained uncorrupted. They saw flowers, even if wooden, as helping to counteract that effect.

Picturesque Continued: Renaissance Revival

The other major style popular at mid-century, the Renaissance Revival was based on the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries but also included references to Louis XVI French furniture and elements of neoclassicism called Neo Grec. As Blackie and Son observed in their 1853 manual, these design threads were often mixed together to "be multiplied indefinitely, by engrafting the decorations of one on the forms of another...."[16]

(L to R): Rococo Revival sofa and chair, made by in New York City by John H. Belter c. 1850–60. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Downing referred to the style as Elizabethan because it came to America by way of England.[17] Although he pointed out that it "violates all rules of art, and indulges in all manner of caprices," he concluded that:

> Viewed, however, as a style addressed to the feelings, and capable of wonderfully varied expression, from the most grotesque and whimsical to the boldly picturesque and curiously beautiful, we see much in that style to admire....[18]

He found it particularly popular among recent immigrants to America who had grown up with similar furniture and also among those who enjoyed collecting antiquities. As with most of the popular furniture styles at mid century, he credited the French with the best mastery of the style pointing out that:

> Their works, especially in interiors and furniture, retain all the picturesqueness and antique beauty of the works of the fifteenth century, with more artistic execution and a more select and chaste arrangement of the details.[19]

Downing identified one picturesque feature of Renaissance-style architecture that also had specific parallels in furniture: the Bracket Style characterized by "brackets and beams of beautiful forms, perforated, carved, and highly decorated."[20] In the hands of creative designers, "It is certainly capable of great variety, force, and picturesqueness."[21] This concept helps explain the popularity of the profusion of bracketry on the undercarriages of Renaissance Revival tables and chairs and other forms of furniture at mid-century.

Writing in 1851 about furniture displayed at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London, artist and art critic Ralph Nicholson Wornum also focused particular attention on the Renaissance Revival. Some pieces displayed at the exhibition featured "the classical orders and ornaments combined with conventional Byzantine scroll-work, Moorish tracery and interlacings, scrolled shields, fiddle-shapes, and strap-work, natural imitations of animal or vegetable forms of every description, and the grotesque arabesques."[22] The Moorish influence, first apparent on furniture at the Crystal Palace exhibition, became a recurring theme on Renaissance Revival furniture. As new, exotic cultures were discovered in the nineteenth century, they quickly became design sources for furniture and other decorative arts.

Wornum went on to state that the Cinquecento, the culmination of the Renaissance in Italy, contained "the most perfect forms, and the most pleasing varieties; Nature and Art vying with each other in their efforts to attract and gratify the eye." He did not use the term picturesque, but it was clearly inferred from his reference to "varieties" of ornament in art and nature vying to "attract and gratify" the eye.[23] He concluded that "in the Renaissance, we have also a well understood detail, but a prevalence of the bizarre, and a love of profusion of parts; great skill of execution, but upon the whole a bewildering and fantastic effect, still one more agreeable to the generality than the simple purity of the Greeks...."[24]

(Top to bottom): Renaissance Revival sideboard, made by Alexander Roux c. 1853. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Table made by Berkey and Gay, Grand Rapids, Michigan, c. 1870. Grand Rapids Public Museum.

Like the Rococo Revival, the Renaissance Revival also conjured up numerous associations. Downing particularly, addressed the associations that made Renaissance Revival furniture so popular:

> the charm of this antique furniture is in its *romance*–in its long association with times, events, and names that have an historical interest, and that move our feelings deeply by means of such powerful associations.[25]

The most obvious association was with the Renaissance and the classicism that was rediscovered in that era. Large display cabinets, for example, took their form from Italian Renaissance examples even down to the brackets flanking the case. The figural imagery carved so prominently into Renaissance Revival chairs and cabinets derived largely from Renaissance luminaries.

The style was also linked to the court of Louis XVI, the last of the eighteenth century French monarchs. Feeding on nostalgia for the French monarchy, Victorian interpretations of Louis XVI furniture quickly spread, reappearing in pattern books in the 1850s and were featured at the Paris Exposition of 1855. Empress Eugenie and her husband, Napoleon III, who ruled France in the 1850s and 1860s, resurrected this style for their official residences.

Other Renaissance Revival furniture sported bits and pieces of classical ornament but in a decidedly picturesque and unclassical way. Neo Grec variously incorporated urns, anthemia, Greek keys, paw feet, medallions, swags, bow knots, Greek goddesses and other classical motifs. Also considered Neo Grec was furniture decorated with Egyptian motifs such as sphinxes, lotus blossoms and palmettes.[26] Downing explained:

> The basis of the style is Roman and Italian art, but the treatment of details is far more picturesque than in the strictly classical or even the Roman style–sometimes being rather rude, and even grotesque in character, but always quaint, and often, in the more elaborately carved specimens, very rich and magnificent.[27]

Despite the classical associations, however, the classical references–whether Renaissance, Louis XVI, or Neo Grec–were interpreted as clearly picturesque particularly emphasizing variety, irregularity, roughness, movement and intricacy which included the concept of surprise.[28] The very mixing of styles contributed to the variety so prized by the Victorians. Renaissance Revival furniture also exhibited the characteristic spiky, irregular outline of mid nineteenth century furniture as compared to the straight lines of earlier classically inspired furniture. The elaborately carved, rough-looking surfaces on both case pieces and seating furniture contrasted sharply with the relatively smooth, two-dimensional decoration of neoclassical furniture.

The concept of movement was not always as readily apparent as variety, intricacy irregularity and roughness. A consistent characteristic of the sublime and picturesque beauty was massiveness, but it was a massiveness tempered by movement of the façade in and out. This characteristic was seen in landscape painting of the era particularly in the progression of hills from the background to the foreground and in architecture. Robert Adam had described the effect in architecture years earlier:

> Movement is meant to express the rise and fall, the advance and recess with other diversity of form, in the different parts of a building, so as to add greatly to the picturesqueness of the composition, for the rising and falling, advancing and receding, with the convexity and concavity and other forms of the great parts, have the same effect in architecture that hill and dale, foreground and distance, swelling and sinking, have in landscape; that is, they serve to produce an agreeable and diversified contour that groups and contrasts like a picture, and creates a variety of light and shade which gives great spirit, beauty and effect to the composition.[29]

This sense of movement was apparent in the elaborate pediments of massive Renaissance Revival sideboards found in dining rooms of the wealthiest households. Massive étagères and bookcases showed the same layering of ornament on their pediments.

Picturesque in Patent Furniture and New Materials

Intricacy, as defined by novelty and curiosity or surprise, was one of the most appealing attributes of picturesque Rococo and Renaissance Revival furniture. As Uvedale Price explained, nothing in design will "compensate the absence of every obstacle to curiosity, and every hope of novelty."[30] That designers of patent furniture in particular heeded this dictum helped to explain the proliferation of this genre in the nineteenth century. Novel convertible furniture, dating at least to the seventeenth century, was ripe for invention in the nineteenth century. Charles Lock Eastlake illustrated a seventeenth century sofa from Knole whose cheeks could be let down to form a settee or a couch for reclining.[31] But such furniture was rare until the mid-nineteenth century. One of the first published designs for convertible furniture (an arm chair that reclined for an invalid) appeared in John Hall's design book in 1840; thereafter dozens of related designs received patents. In 1853, Augustus Eliaers of Boston patented an elegant Rococo Revival armchair whose back flipped over to become a library steps. The Gates Manufacturing Company of Worcester, Massachusetts, patented a novel "Work, Study, Card, or Office Table" in 1877. The top even rotated and adjusted so that it could be used by children, and their ad stated that it was "equally entitled to be placed" in the sitting-room, library, office or sickroom.[32]

Although much patent furniture addressed the demands of small quarters in which many families were forced to live as they migrated to the cities from the country, its widespread acceptance was in large part based on the picturesque interest in surprise and novelty. Most combination furniture involved ways to conceal beds which folded out of everything from sofas, sideboards and wardrobes to desks and even ice boxes. Charles Hess received a patent in 1866 for a piano that converted to a bed, and in 1883 Bruschke & Ricke of Chicago advertised a "Combined Sofa and Bath Tub" that they were sure was "The Common Sense Invention of the Age."[33]

New materials added to the picturesque intricacy and novelty of Victorian design. Wood was the traditional material for furniture, but in the nineteenth century designers could choose from a variety of new materials including iron, steel, brass, wicker and most surprising–steer horn. With the discovery of coal in Pennsylvania in the 1840s, the production of cast iron became cheaper, and its use increased.[34] Cast iron was a logical choice particularly for garden furniture where durability was a necessity, but it was also used to make hat racks, umbrella stands, pedestals for flower pots and bedsteads. In a nod to the Victorian love of surprise some of the hat racks, usually called hall trees in the period, actually recalled the shape of a tree. With the beginning of the American steel industry in the 1840s, this versatile material began to turn up in furniture as well. The Centripetal Spring Armchair designed by Thomas E. Warren for the American Chair Company in Troy, New York, about 1850 combined both cast iron ornament with steel springs and a sheet steel back.[35] Steel wire was woven into many intricate shapes mostly for garden furniture. George Hunzinger upholstered many of his chairs with flocked, steel tape. By the mid nineteenth century, brass was also fashioned into furniture particularly plant stands and calling card receivers.

Appealing to the love of the picturesque, wicker furniture, made from the rattan plant and woven on bentwood frames, evoked the exotic Orient where the plant flourished. One Mr. Topf of New York exhibited a wicker Garden Chair at the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition, and the catalogue of that show confirmed that it "possesses much novelty, and no little taste, in its ornamental design."[36] Rattan had served as a packing material for imports from the Far East. Realizing the potential for using it in furniture Cyrus Wakefield established the Wakefield Rattan Company in Boston in 1855. He used the cane for chair seats and wove the reed into furniture. As Gervase Wheeler observed in his 1852 style book, *Rural Homes*, wicker had "durability, elasticity, and great facility of being turned and twisted into an almost endless variety of shapes...."[37] Often associated with the porch or garden, wicker

Settee with fabric-covered steel mesh, made by George Hunzinger c. 1876. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

was equally popular for bedrooms and parlors where it fit well with the prevalent Anglo-Japanese taste.

Perhaps the most surprising new materials pressed into service to make furniture were steer horns and occasionally elk and deer antlers. The Wenzel Friedrich Company in Texas advertised chairs, tables, hat racks and stools made out of this unlikely material. Confirming the allure of this approach, the company won an award at the New Orleans World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exhibition of 1884 and 1885.[38] Appealing to the Victorian love of surprise, one example by an unknown manufacturer installed horns on a chair crest rail in the shape of a ten gallon hat.

The Victorian fascination with roughness helped to explain the popularity of rustic furniture. Furniture of rough-cut tree branches, burls and roots first appeared in American cemeteries and city parks following in the eighteenth century British tradition. Shirley Hibberd's *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste* first published in 1856 in England, along with articles in *Godey's Lady's Book* and other American periodicals spread the popularity of this embodiment of roughness. Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect for New York's Central Park, argued in 1866 that park furniture should be "as agreeable as possible to the taste, and at the same time entirely different from the objects connected with those occupations by which the (human) faculties have been tasked."[39] Rustic furniture fit that description.

Horn parlor chair, c. 1895.
The Autry National Center of the American West.

Picturesque in Decline

The picturesque aesthetic as epitomized in Rococo and Renaissance Revival furniture peaked in popularity in the years after the Civil War. By the 1870s the public began to tire of the profusion of Rococo flowers and Renaissance ornament. Although interior decorators, art critics and style setters continued to use the term "picturesque," its meaning began to change. Originating as a concept of nature as expressed in landscape design and landscape painting, it was not surprising that picturesque reached its fullest expression in Rococo and Renaissance Revival furniture whose dominant ornament was derived from nature. Its association with Gothic architecture highlighted the key component of the picturesque–its anti-classicism.

Even as early as the 1820s critics began to charge that the relationship of art to nature and God existed only in the mind and that nature did not necessarily embody God. German philosopher Georg Hegel, building on the earlier work of his countrymen Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller, observed that feeling for art was fleeting and therefore not a path to God. Rather, art was an end in itself and a way of achieving self-realization. Beauty in art was created by the artist and comprehended by the viewer. It was not innate in nature. Charles Darwin, in his 1866 edition *On the Origin of Species*, further undermined the idea that beauty was innate when he posited that evolution, not God, accounted for the diversity in nature. Art was no longer to imitate nature or find God in nature, but to render an idea that sprang from the mind of the artist.

While writers on aesthetics and interior decoration continued to describe objects as picturesque, the word no longer had the strong symbolic moral and religious associations that it carried earlier. Still, the art critic and journalist Clarence Cook, writing in *The House Beautiful*, the widely circulated advice book on home furnishing published in 1877, used the term at least a dozen times to highlight various picturesque characteristics. An elaborately carved doors on a Chinese cabinet exhibited roughness, variety and complexity. A silver chandelier sported a spiky silhouette. Two sets of corner shelves showed "unexpectedness" or novelty in their design.

Although picturesque objects continued to impress the mind and evoke emotions, the use of these objects was changing. At the height of the Rococo and Renaissance Revival, furnishings served as stage props. Rococo Revival parlor sets reinforced principles of social organization: an armchair for the head of the family, a lesser chair for the mother and side chairs for those lower in the social hierarchy. In the dining room, massive sideboards festooned with fruits, vegetables, fish and fowl reminded diners where their meal came from.[40]

By the 1870s, the parlor as a stage set had been replaced by the parlor as canvas upon which the wife, as head of the household, painted a scene that expressed her unique personality. As Oscar Wilde, the flamboyant English promoter of the aesthetic movement, declared, it was "Art for Art's Sake."[41] The furnishings still influenced, but the influence was in the realm of aesthetic instruction rather than moral training. Harriet Spofford's *Art Decoration Applied to Furniture* was one of numerous books available to help homemakers "in the matter of house furnishing." On the effect of ornament she stated:

> It is considered by able critics that ornament is something to please the eye and the emotions thus affected, and not to arouse the intellect or the moral sense; and, in this view, beauty, the simple pleasure of line and tint, absolute fitness, takes rank before symbolism or the suggestion of hidden meanings....[42]

Cook added, "The room ought to represent the culture of the family,–what is their taste, what feeling they have for art...."[43] He advocated the display of bric-a-brac as "educations of certain senses" and particularly recommended the use of "well-kept" old furniture over new in creating the tasteful environment. By a careful selection of objects:

> We ought to seek (at least so it seems to me) the individual expression of ourselves, of our own family life, our own ways of living, thinking, acting, more than the doing as other people are doing, more than the having what other people are having.[44]

Eastlake, Anglo-Japanese and Colonial Revival Furniture

Customers in the 1870s and 1880s could choose from the Gothic-inspired Eastlake style, the Oriental-inspired Anglo Japanese taste or Colonial Revival furniture inspired by America's colonial past. In some ways this last style represented the last gasp of the picturesque and anti-classicism. This may seem surprising since the furniture that cabinetmakers revived from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was originally dominated by classical design. But in designing the revivals, Victorian craftsmen, consciously or unconsciously, injected the principles of the picturesque with which they were so familiar.

If classical design exhibited smoothness, regularity, symmetry, and repetition then Colonial Revival furniture exhibited, even if ever so subtly, the telltale signs of the picturesque–roughness, irregularity, asymmetry, and intricacy.

The most popular style was Eastlake or Modern Gothic (often called Queen Anne in the period). Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste*, first published in England in 1868 with at least eight American editions and Bruce Talbert's design manual, *Gothic Forms Applied to Furniture, Metal Work, and Decoration for Domestic Purposes* issued the year before, spread the style in America. Spofford describes 14 different furniture styles beginning with the "barbarously rich and picturesque" Gothic and ending with the "quaint and picturesque" Eastlake which was the most important. She explained that manufacturers often preferred to call the Eastlake style Medieval or Gothic since:

> it so nearly fulfils the requirements of the mediaeval as scarcely to need a separate name–not of the lovely pointed Gothic, indeed, with its perpetual poetry and beauty, but of the modernized Gothic, in which the principles of early manufacture are recognized, and whose less striking shapes are better suited to common domestic use.[45]

Compared to the early nineteenth century Gothic style, Eastlake was more rectilinear, less irregular in outline, more two dimensional. It was stylized and impressionistic like the art of the time. Gone were the spiky outlines on Gothic, Rococo and Renaissance Revival furniture, but complexity and variety persisted in the geometric Eastlake facades.

While the Eastlake style supplied the mass market, the Anglo-Japanese style dominated high end furniture. Influenced by the Japanese collection displayed at the London International Exhibition of 1862, E. W. Godwin, an English architect and pioneer collector of oriental art, almost single handedly created the style that he characterized as possessing:

> no mouldings, no ornamental work, and no carving. Such effect as I wanted, I endeavored to gain as in economical building, by the grouping of solid and void and by more or less broken outline.[46]

Godwin's furniture designs were widely published in America. Although Herter Brothers and other firms who catered to the wealthiest clients decorated their furniture with the richest of inlays and the finest of carving, their debt to Godwin in form and concept was clear. As on much Japanese art that inspired Anglo-Japanese design, the best Anglo Japanese work drew on nature for inspiration, but it was a conventionalized nature, not the realistic rendition of nature of the earlier Rococo and Renaissance Revivals.

Until the mid-nineteenth century the aim of art had been to imitate nature. Even though the perception of nature changed from a classically beautiful Newtonian universe to the rough and awe-inspiring picturesque landscapes of Alfred Bierstadt and others, artists still strove to capture nature's beauty. By the 1870s imitating nature was considered weak. The idea was to wow by using imagination not just to copy nature which had wowed in the past because it was thought to represent God. Now the connection to God had been broken so the wow factor had to be augmented by the imagination. Even though the house interior was still picturesque, the picturesqueness came from the stylization and imagination that the designer applied to the objects.

A realistic rendition of nature had been the goal of most artists since the Renaissance. The best art faithfully copied nature–the classical beauty in nature in the eighteenth century and the picturesque beauty of nature in the

Anglo-Japanese chair made by in New York City by Herter Brothers, c. 1877. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

nineteenth. But then in the 1860s artists tried a new approach. Capturing the effects of light had always been important to artists, and until the mid-nineteenth century they used it to enhance the realistic interpretation of the subject. Beginning in the 1860s and 1870s, however, Impressionists began to exploit light to deform or dissolve their subjects. In contrast to their predecessors, they understood that color was not innate in an object but was determined by the viewer's perception based largely on the way the light hit the object. Even though earlier artists had been aware of the effects of light on color, most ignored them in favor of achieving truth to nature.

Beginning in Paris, the Impressionist movement exerted wide influence even in the United States where American painters flocked to France to learn the latest techniques. Perhaps the most famous American painter to show the influence of the Impressionists was James McNeill Whistler. Rather than realism, he hoped to evoke a mood much like music and even titled his paintings after musical composition such as harmonies, symphonies and nocturnes. Although Impressionism fell out of favor in the 1880s, art would never be the same.

Following the lead of art, the Gothic revival of the early nineteenth century became a half century later stylized in both form and ornament. Gone were the realistic baskets of flowers and fruit, trailing vines, and the bounty of nature. Designers of furniture in the Anglo-Japanese style, following the lead of fine art, continued to decorate furniture with flowers, but they covered the surface with unidentifiable, conventionalized blossoms. Taking their cue from Oriental design and echoing the sentiments of nineteenth century designers such as Bruce Talbert, Owen Jones and Christopher Dresser, Eastlake specifically renounced "those trophies of slaughtered hares and partridges which you may occasionally see standing out in bold relief" on dining room sideboards and stated categorically that "nature may be typified or symbolized, but not actually imitated."[47] This sentiment explained the popularity of Oriental carpets which also featured stylized floral designs.

At the same time that Whistler and other Impressionists were influenced by Japanese prints, the Oriental influence was especially pronounced in furniture. Whistler, Claude Monet and other Impressionists collected Japanese prints, and Americans saw Japanese art firsthand at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876. In the 1870s and 1880s Japanese imports of lacquer ware and metalwork flooded the country. Even before the Philadelphia Centennial celebration Herter Brothers and other manufacturers featured Japanese motifs on their furniture. The ubiquitous, stylized sunflowers that decorated furniture in the 1870s and 1880s stemmed from the study of Japanese prints. In another example, an ebonized, Herter Brothers wardrobe featured inlaid, stylized, cherry blossoms falling from branches in the crest down the doors into drawers at the base also recalled a Japanese print.

Conclusion

The theoretical debate about beauty that raged among the philosophers, art critics and artists throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may have seemed little more than intellectual mind games, but it was the outcome of these debates that shaped the legs of chairs and determined the ornament on chests through three centuries of American furniture. The eighteenth century furniture makers leaned largely on architectural design books for classical inspiration. By the nineteenth century, as furniture designers increasingly received formal training in design schools, the inspiration for their design sense was informed more by the study of art. Early in the nineteenth century, art imitated nature, a two-faced nature that was both beautiful and picturesque. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century at the same time that Impressionist artists gave up on imitating nature, furniture designers abandoned the naturalistic ornament of the Renaissance and Rococo Revival styles and adopted a stylized approach. The furniture was still picturesque in its intricacy and variety and some even exhibited roughness, but it lost the irregularity and movement of Gothic furniture from early in the century. With the introduction of smooth, unadorned Arts and Crafts furniture at the turn of the century, most traces of the picturesque were expunged.

Arts and Crafts armchair designed by Harvey Ellis for Gustav Stickley, c. 1903. Wadsworth Atheneum.

Notes

1. Priddy uses the term *fancy* "to signify almost any activity or object that delighted the human spirit or stirred the imagination..." Sumpter Priddy, *American Fancy: Exuberance in the Arts 1790-1840* (Milwaukee: Chipstone Foundation, 2004), p. xxv.
2. James Kirwan, *Sublimity: The Non-Rational and the Irrational in the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 141. It is interesting to note that this concept was rediscovered by Sigmund Freud in the late 19th century.
3. Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1967), p. 78.
4. Ralph Nicholson Wornum, "The Exhibition as a Lesson in Taste," In *The Crystal Palace Exhibition: Illustrated Catalogue*, London: 1851: An Unabridged Republication of the Art-Journal (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1970), pp. xxi-xxii.
5. Ruskin was following the lead of A.W.N. Pugin and others in England, but Ruskin was by far the best known English advocate of the Gothic in this country.
6. For the profound influence of Ruskin in America see Roger B. Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).
7. John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 263.
8. A. J. Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), p. 28.
9. Downing, *Architecture of Country Houses*, p. 29.
10. Downing essentially clarifies J.C. Loudon's classification of styles into "the Grecian or modern style, which is by far the most prevalent; the Gothic or perpendicular style, which imitates the lines and angles of the Tudor Gothic Architecture; the Elizabethan style, which combines the Gothic with the Roman or Italian manner; and the style of Louis XIV, or florid Italian, which is characterized by curved lines and excess of curvilinear ornaments." Quoted in John Gloag, *Introduction to The Victorian Cabinet-Maker's Assistant* (New York: Publications, 1970), p. vi.
11. Downing, *Architecture of Country Houses*, p.379.
12. Downing, *Architecture of Country Houses*, p. 380.
13. Carroll L. V. Meeks, *The Railroad Station: An Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), pp. 4-7. Meeks was the first person to study the effects of the picturesque on style in the 19th century. He focused on the architecture of the railroad station, but much of his analysis of the picturesque in his introductory chapter can be applied to furniture styles as well. I am indebted to Kenneth Ames who made me aware of this work through a citation in his Ph.D. dissertation, "Renaissance Revival Furniture in America" (University of Pennsylvania, 1970).
14. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Furniture," *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1940, p. 243 as reproduced at www.eapoe.org. I am grateful to Donald Fennimore for bringing this essay to my attention.
15. Blackie and Son, *The Victorian Cabinet-Maker's Assistant* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1970), p. 59.
16. Blackie and Son, *The Victorian Cabinet-Maker's Assistant*, Preface.
17. Downing also refers to it variously as Roman, Norman, Flemish, or Swiss and even includes 17th century American antiques in this category. Contemporary cabinetmakers, such as George Henkels of Philadelphia, used the term Elizabethan to denote spool or twist turned furniture. Downing illustrates some of this furniture, but he does not directly call it Elizabethan, preferring instead to use the term in a larger sense to signify the Renaissance Revival. The fact that he was a landscape gardener, not a cabinetmaker, may account for his imprecise use of the furniture style terms.
18. Downing, *Architecture of Country Houses*, p. 391.
19. Downing, *Architecture of Country Houses*, p. 392.
20. Downing, *Architecture of Country Houses*, p. 394.
21. Downing, *Architecture of Country Houses*, p. 395.
22. Ralph Nicholson Wornum, "The Exhibition as a Lesson in Taste," in *The Crystal Palace Exhibition: Illustrated Catalogue*, London: 1851: An Unabridged Republication of the Art-Journal (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1970), p. iv.
23. Wornum, "The Exhibition as a Lesson in Taste," p. iv.
24. Wornum, *The Crystal Palace Exhibition*, pp. v-vi. He found the Renaissance superior also to the Louis Quinze style which he declared "essentially a superficial style aiming at a glittering or attractive display...."
25. Downing, *Architecture of Country Houses*, p. 450.
26. Ernest Hagen, a New York cabinetmaker in the late nineteenth century, directed his opprobrium specifically at this "most awfull gaudy" Neo Grec. Quoted in Elizabeth A. Ingerman. "Personal Experiences of an Old New York Cabinetmaker." *The Magazine Antiques* 81 (November 1963), pp. 579-80.
27. Downing, *Architecture of Country Houses*, p. 448.
28. Meeks, *The Railroad Station*, pp. 4-7.
29. Hussey, *The Picturesque*, pp. 189-190.
30. Meeks, *The Railroad Station*, p. 7.
31. Charles L. Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), Plate xii.
32. David Hanks, *Innovative Furniture in America from 1800 to the Present* (New York: Horizon Press, 1981), pp. 173-175, 180-181.
33. Hanks, *Innovative Furniture*, pp. 170-171.
34. Hanks, *Innovative Furniture*, p. 77.
35. Donald C. Pierce, *Art & Enterprise: American Decorative Art, 1825-1917* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1999), pp. 162-163.
36. *The Crystal Palace Exhibition*, p. 168.
37. Quoted in Oscar P. Fitzgerald, *Four Centuries of American Furniture* (Iola, WI: Krause Publications, 1995), p. 263.
38. Hanks, *Innovative Furniture*, pp. 95-96.
39. Quoted in Craig Gilborn, "Rustic furniture in the Adirondacks, 1875-1925," *The Magazine Antiques* (June 1976), p.1214.
40. See Kenneth Ames, *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985) for an elaboration on these concepts.
41. Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement*, (New York: Excalibur Books, 1981), p. 111.
42. Harriet Prescott Spofford, *Art Decoration Applied to Furniture* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publisher, 1878), p. 74.
43. Clarence Cook, *The House Beautiful* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), p. 48.
44. Cook, *The House Beautiful*, p. 319
45. Spofford, *Art Decoration*, p. 150.
46. Quoted in Doreen Bolger, *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), p. 149.
47. Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste*, pp. 68-69.

Marie Spartali Stillman, *Self Portrait (On a Balcony)*, 1874. Watercolor and gouache on paper. Collection of Robert and Ann Wiggins.

Marie Spartali Stillman

A Pre-Raphaelite in America

MARGARETTA S. FREDERICK

> *In Mrs. Stillman's pictures there is something very exquisite…This lady is a really profound colourist; but the principal charm of her work is the intellectual charm–that thing which, when it exists, always seems more precious than other merits, and indeed makes us say that it is the only thing in a work of art which is deeply valuable…*[1]
>
> Henry James

Marie Spartali Stillman was in her lifetime lauded on both sides of the Atlantic, having successfully produced and exhibited work among the Pre-Raphaelites in London and in the United States under the banner of American Aestheticism. Described by the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne as "…so beautiful I feel as if I could sit down and cry,"[2] she modeled for Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and others and inspired characters in the novels of Benjamin Disraeli and George Du Maurier. In America she was closely aligned with intellectual and artistic circles in Boston and New York, and exhibited her work frequently in the Northeast. While her participation in the Pre-Raphaelite milieu has received occasional acknowledgment, her active role in American art circles has been largely overlooked. It is the purpose of this essay to flesh out Marie Spartali Stillman's simultaneous presence on both continents, the result of a careful strategy based on the observation and assessment of the subtle differences in transatlantic cultural tastes and trends.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Study for "Dante's Dream": Head of Marie Spartali (Mrs. W. J. Stillman)*, 1870. Chalk on paper. Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum.

In March of 1844 Marie Euphrosyne Spartali was born in Middlesex, England, the youngest daughter of Michael and Euphrosyne Spartali. Her father was a wealthy merchant and Greek Consul-General based in London, part of a group of well-to-do Greek expatriates who formed a community in the city in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. She grew up in a Georgian mansion on Clapham Common in London ("The Shrubbery") filled with Old Master and contemporary paintings and *objets d'art*. Her parents welcomed artists, writers, and cultural cognoscenti of the day, many of them associated with the young avant-garde Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Summers were spent on the Isle of Wight, a gathering place for an eminent group of Victorians, including the photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, for whom Marie modeled, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the poet laureate.

Marie Spartali and her sister Christina were considered great beauties and, predictably, attracted the attention of artists of the day, for many of whom they both modeled. These included members of the pre-Raphaelite circle, the group of young men who set about to reform the conservative conventions of the London art world of mid-nineteenth century. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed–somewhat loosely–in late 1847 when seven young artists and writers–including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, and William Holman Hunt–began meeting regularly to share their aesthetic ideals. They were uninspired by what they viewed as the out-of-touch, overly sentimental genre scenes promoted by the Royal Academy and the style of loose or painterly brushwork taught in their schools and shown at their annual spring exhibitions. And so, they looked instead to the art of the early Renaissance–the art of the time "before Raphael." They viewed the art of this earlier period as simpler and more pure than that of their own time and, following the call of the young and upcoming critic John Ruskin, vowed to, "go to nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remembering her instruction; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing…and rejoicing always in the truth."[3]

It was this stimulating aesthetic atmosphere that awoke in Marie Spartali an innate desire to create and led her to embark on a career as a professional artist–a bold choice for a female of the Victorian era. She studied under Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), who, having received his training in Europe in the academic system, incorporated a hybrid teaching method of drawing from life and the study of Old Masters–and, unusually for the period, tailoring his approach to the individual talents of each student. While not a member of the original seven of the Pre-Raphaelite

Brotherhood, Brown served as a mentor to them, and through him Spartali would have continued her associations with this circle of painters.

Spartali made her exhibition debut at the Dudley Gallery in 1867, sending five paintings, four subject pictures and an Isle of Wight landscape. The Dudley was a new exhibition venue for works on paper, open to both professionals and amateurs, founded in 1865 as a progressive alternative to the established, members-only watercolor societies of the day. It attracted artists whose stylistic approach was less formal in structure than that espoused by the Royal Academy, softer-focus and evocative, prompting its designation as the "poetry-without-grammar school."[4] She continued to submit work to the Dudley for the next four years. In 1870 two paintings were accepted at the Royal Academy in addition to works presented at the Dudley and the Paris Salon, signaling her acceptance into more conventional artistic circles.

Just at the moment when Spartali's career as a professional artist commenced, William James Stillman (1828-1901), an American journalist and occasional painter, arrived in London fresh from covering the Cretan uprising. Already known to the Greek community through his fundraising efforts on behalf of the Cretan rebels, and connected with the Pre-Raphaelite circle through his earlier friendship with John Ruskin, Stillman fitted easily within the social sphere inhabited by Spartali. In London, he frequented the studios of Brown and Rossetti, providing opportunities for the two to meet. Fairly swiftly they developed an intimate relationship, and, against the wishes of her parents, were engaged, marrying in 1871. William, a widower, brought to the household three children from his first marriage, daughters Lisa and Bella and a terminally ill son, John Ruskin Stillman.

The New-England-born William Stillman was actively involved in artistic and intellectual circles in both New York and Boston. In New York he had served as fine-art editor for the *New-York Evening Post* in the 1850s, then under the editorship of William Cullen Bryant. He was acquainted with artists of the Hudson River school, including Thomas Cole and Frederic Edwin Church, apprenticing briefly with the latter. Through his editorship of the short-lived *Crayon*, an art periodical with a distinct Ruskinian bias, Stillman came to the attention of members of the Boston intellectual elite, including James Russell Lowell, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and, later, Charles Eliot Norton.

Immediately after their marriage William and Marie traveled to America where he introduced his young bride to a broad spectrum of his cultural compatriots. Many of the acquaintances Marie made on this initial visit developed into lifelong friendships as a consequence of her charismatic personality. And, of course, this core group of associations led to further introductions, so that she came to be part of a broad, active circle of artists, writers, and cultural movers and shakers in America. Thus in addition to being a significant participant in the British Pre-Raphaelite circle, Marie was an initiate of an artistic coterie that was the core of the American Aesthetic movement. This group of artists, writers, and critics included John La Farge, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Richard Watson Gilder, and Helena de Kay. Marie's paintings were exhibited in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia in the 1870s and 1890s and continued to be shown into the first two decades of the twentieth century. Her work was reviewed in the American press, and she developed a devoted group of patrons and supporters in this country.

That Stillman actively solicited a "second market" for her work, outside of the United Kingdom, is an important consideration in assessing her oeuvre as a whole. A certain amount of shrewdness was necessary to determine popular aesthetic trends in a country that was not her own and to tailor her work accordingly. In the early years, work that did not sell in the United Kingdom might be shipped to America in exploration of American reception. Later, as she gained more certain knowledge of the American palate, she narrowed the subject matter to salable images of British landscapes and flower paintings.

In 1873 two of Stillman's paintings were included in an exhibition in the United States for the first time, at the Boston firm of Doll & Richards. The same two works, *Forgetfulness*, exhibited originally in Liverpool in 1871, and the so-called *Galilean Monk*, which was first seen in 1872 at the Dudley Gallery in London with the title *A Chaldean Priest*, were also included in a Loan Exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York the following year. The exhibition checklist records their having been loaned by the American plein-air painter, muralist, and interior decorator John La Farge. He was familiar with Pre-Raphaelite art having visited England in 1857 and found inspiration in the work of the Pre-Raphaelite artists, particularly Ford Madox Brown, Stillman's teacher and mentor.

La Farge was almost surely acquainted with William Stillman, both having been early tenants of the Tenth Street Studio Building in Greenwich Village beginning in 1858.[5] It is unclear whether La Farge actually owned these paintings, but he may have simply been acting as Marie Stillman's sponsor to aid in the promotion of her work in America.

Marie Stillman's strategy of exhibiting the same work or works in several American locations achieved exposure to a diverse pool of potential patrons, while limiting the expense of shipping multiple paintings overseas. Sending works to America that had gone unsold in the United Kingdom was another strategy for maximizing her return, as William Stillman's income seems to have been somewhat limited and sporadic, necessitating a second financial source for the family. In addition, the marketing of works in multiple venues reduced the onerous effort of preparing work for exhibition simultaneously on two continents, especially as Marie's new family obligations would not always have allowed her the time to create enough work to fulfill such an ambitious exhibition schedule.

Marie Stillman continued to seek a market in America with the presentation of another work at Doll & Richards in 1875, this time a self-portrait, also titled *On a Balcony*. This painting was singled out in a review by Henry James that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*:

> The interest resides partly in the peculiar beauty of the model, and partly, chiefly even, in the remarkable, the almost touching, good faith of the work. The type of face and the treatment suggest the English pre-Raphaelite school, but in so far as the artist is a pre-Raphaelite, she is evidently a sincere and, as we may say, a natural one. There is a vast amount of work in the picture, little of which is easy and some of which is even awkward, but its patience, its refinement, its deep pictorial sentiment,

> give the whole production a singular intensity...We have seen things of late which had more skill and cleverness, but we have seen nothing which, for reasons of its own, has been more pleasing. There is something in Mrs. Stillman's picture which makes a certain sort of skill seem rather inexpensive, and renders cleverness vulgar; an aroma, a hidden significance, a loveliness.[6]

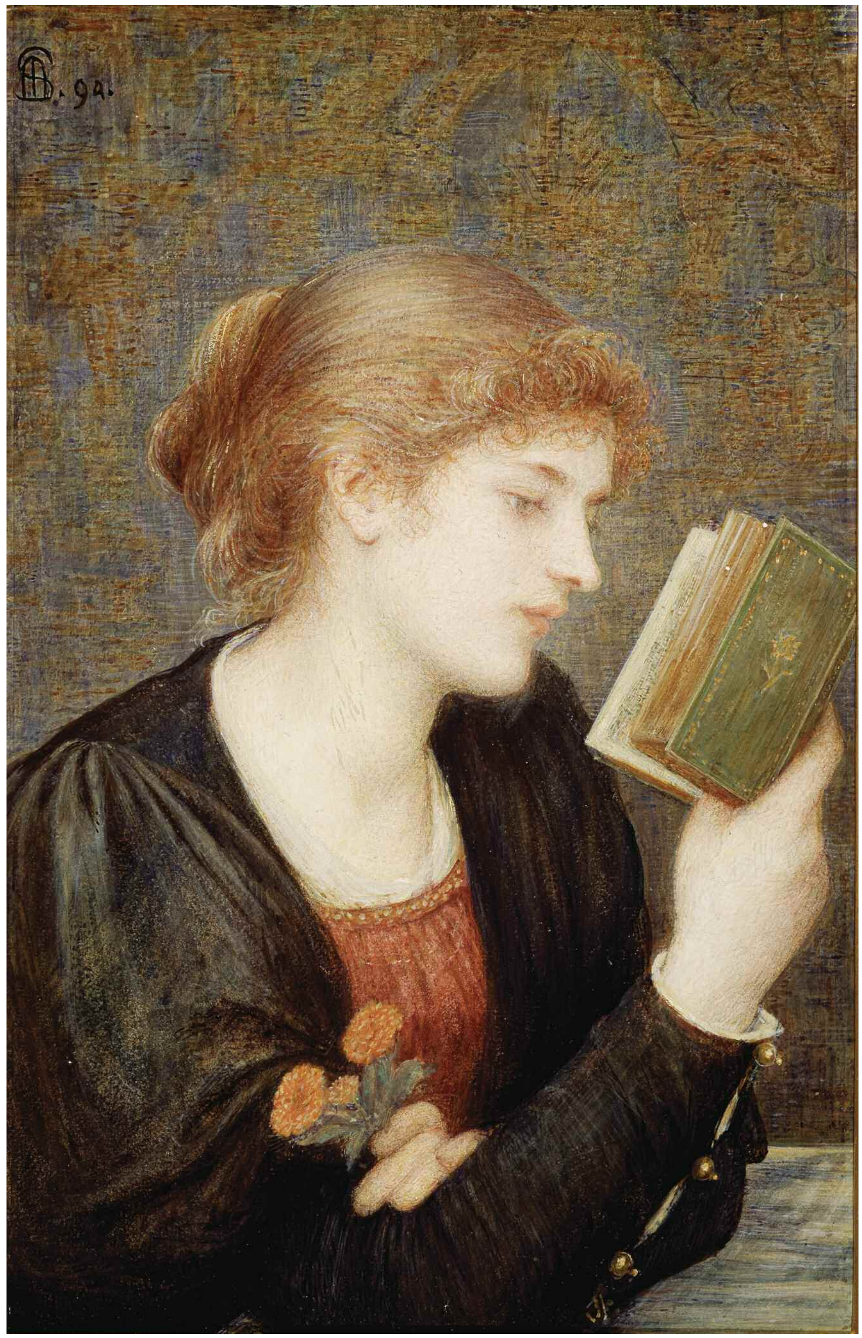
The same painting was also included in the annual exhibition of the American Society of Painters in Water Colors, at the National Academy of Design in 1875. Again, Henry James singled out her work noting, "The most interesting things...were not American...Mrs. Spartali Stillman, who works in England, under the shadow of Messrs. Burne-Jones and Rossetti...has inherited the traditions and the temper of the original pre-Raphaelites...she is a spontaneous, sincere, *naïf* pre-Raphaelite."[7] *On a Balcony* was purchased from the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition by Colonel John Hay.[8]

Stillman sent three flower pieces to the American Society of Painters in Water Colors in 1877: *Kingcups and Blackthorn*, *Lilies*, and *Roses*. The choice of genre was surely a reflection of her assimilation of American aesthetic trends. Various members of the artistic circles she inhabited, including La Farge, Helena de Kay Gilder, and Maria Oakey Dewing, were recognized for their flower still lifes. And of course all of these painters would have looked to the examples of Henri Fantin-Latour, an artist whom Stillman knew through her father's collection.[9]

In 1878 the Stillman family took up semi-permanent residence in Florence. Family responsibilities, including the birth of a son, Michael, in October (their second child, a daughter, Effie, having been born six years earlier) and William's prolonged absences abroad, left Marie little time for producing enough work to satisfy a two-pronged exhibition program, and so work was sent only to London. Despite her move to Italy (and subsequent cessation of exhibition in the United States), Stillman continued to draw notice in the American press. In "Florence the Beautiful," an article by the American critic and collector James Jackson Jarves, which appeared in the *New York Times*, Stillman and two other Pre-Raphaelite expatriates, Charles Fairfax Murray and John Roddam Spencer Stanhope, were noted for the Renaissance inspiration in their work. Stillman's work was described in glowing terms:

> The paintings of Mrs. Stillman are romances in color. Her color sense is so strong that it overpowers every other artistic feature, and she breathes, thinks, and works under its absolute dictation. For it all other points in picture composition are sacrificed or made wholly subservient. It is an effect of temperament, and modified only by a picturesque poetical sentiment which finds its native expression in heart-warm tints and glowing combinations and contrasts. These two forces beget a kind of troubadour and medieval literature in color, pastoral lyrics, and whatever breathes innocence, culture, transparent, stainless emotions and character...[10]

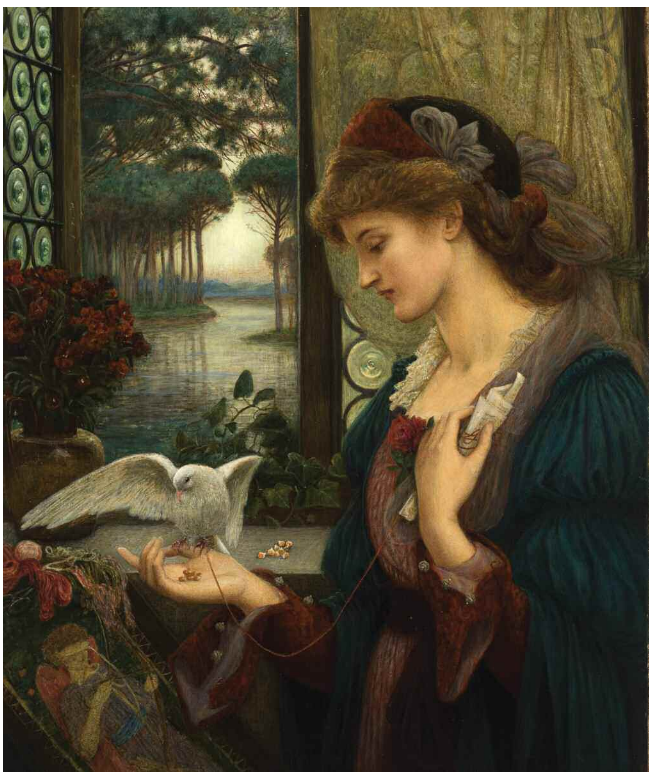
Rarely if ever did she receive such unadulterated–or poetic–praise in the British press. Jarves had moved permanently to Florence in 1852, signaling the commencement of his significant contribution to American art criticism and the formation of his own personal collection



Marie Spartali Stillman, *Love Sonnets*, 1894. Watercolor and gouache on paper. Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Memorial, Delaware Art Museum.

of Italian early Renaissance art (now largely at the Yale University Art Gallery). His appreciation of Marie Stillman's work is based on her new assimilation of early Italian artistic culture. Ironically, her embrace of this culture and time period, gained through total immersion, grants her more authentic "Pre-Raphaelite" status than many of the members of the original Brotherhood.

Stillman renewed the presentation of her work in the United States upon her return to London in 1883, sending two paintings to the American Water Color Society: *Among the Willows of Tuscany* and the *Meeting of Dante and Beatrice on All Saints' Day*.[11] Both paintings had been exhibited previously in London (Grosvenor Gallery, 1880 and 1881 respectively), finding no buyers. The work received scant review, warranting only a brief, dismissive mention (at the very end) of a review of the exhibition in the *New York Times*: "Mrs. Spartali Stillman, a Greek lady...offers two large medieval water-colors...In these the medievalism is of the Rossetti type, and, therefore, unfortunately belongs to a fashion whose essential hollowness can be no longer concealed."[12] Stillman would have been sensitive to the criticism of the stylistically dated Pre-Raphaelite aspect of her work as future submissions reflected new directions inspired by the Aesthetic Movement.



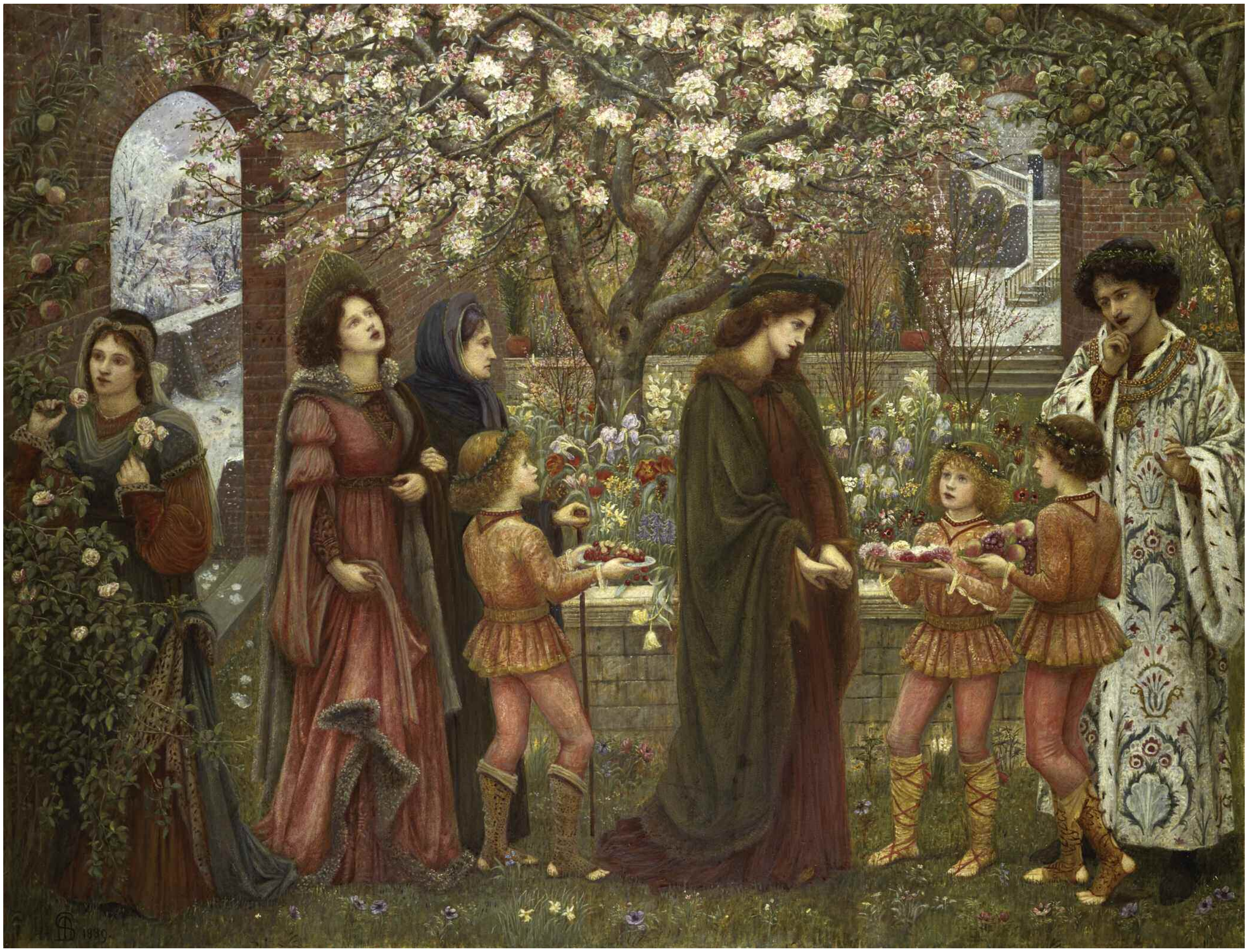
Marie Spartali Stillman, *Love's Messenger*, 1885. Watercolor and gouache on paper. Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Memorial, Delaware Art Museum.

Her American presence was once again diminished with William Stillman's appointment as Rome correspondent for the London *Times* in 1886 prompting another extended residency in Italy. The family remained in Rome until 1898. Once again she limited the display of her work to England, participating in the inaugural exhibition of the New Gallery, an offshoot of the Grosvenor, established in 1888.

Meanwhile Marie and William's children, all of whom were engaged in the arts, began to develop their own circles of influence in the American cultural world. Lisa trained at the Slade School and was tutored by George Frederic Watts; she won a commission from Richard Gilder, then editor of *Century Magazine*, to illustrate and article by the American poet Emma Lazarus on William Morris in 1886.[13] Michael became an architect, and moved permanently to America, having gained employment with McKim, Mead and White beginning in 1899. Effie trained as a sculptor under the French Prix-de-Rome winner Charles Desvergnes, and exhibited annually at the New Gallery from 1891. She developed close relationships amongst the Gilder and Norton families among others.

Recognition from America came via a new patron in the form of Samuel Bancroft, a Delaware cotton mill owner, who purchased Stillman's *Love Sonnets* from the 1894 New Gallery exhibition. This relationship was further extended through Effie, who, would go on to fulfill a commission guided by Bancroft for a public memorial sculpture in honor of Delaware statesman, and Ambassador to the Court of Saint James, Thomas Francis Bayard. Bancroft did not meet the artist until 1900 when, on one of his many transatlantic excursions, he visited the Stillmans at their home, Deepdene, in Frimley Green, Surrey. As a parting gift, he sent her Rossetti's handwritten draft for the poem "Fiammetta." Bancroft's interest in the Pre-Raphaelites had begun when he was shown Rossetti's *Fiammetta* at the home of the Manchester patron William Turner. He recalled being "shocked with delight" upon viewing this painting, for which Marie, then Spartali, was the model. His zeal for the work of the Pre-Raphaelites included the avid pursuit of acquaintances with those associated with the circle, as well as the acquisition of both art and memorabilia with Pre-Raphaelite associations.[14] In thanking him for the gift, Marie Stillman acknowledged this. "Knowing how you treasure these relics of Rossetti, I feel all the more touched at your kindness in ceding this to me."[15] The following year, Bancroft purchased Stillman's painting *Love's Messenger*, having seen it hanging in Effie's London studio. Bancroft's interest in Stillman and her work continued maintained through a steady stream of correspondence throughout 1902 and early 1903.

After William Stillman's death in July 1901, his wife renewed efforts to pursue her American career. She returned to the United States in July 1903 after an absence of more than thirty years. She spent the first part of the year preparing works to take to America for exhibition. These included *The Enchanted Garden of Messer Ansaldo*, *Dante and Beatrice on All Saints' Day*, *Dante Meeting Beatrice and Joan*, *The Marriage Scene from Dante's Vita Nuova*, *Saint Francis Liberating the Pigeons*, and several garden scenes, including at least one of Kelmscott Manor, the home of William and Jane Morris. It had been four years since she had last seen her son Michael, who had moved permanently to the United States. During this trip Stillman spent time among Michael's artist acquaintances in Windsor, Vermont, located near the art colony at Cornish, New Hamphire, centered around the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Michael was an active participant in this circle, through his associates at McKim, Mead and White. She described the environment:



Marie Spartali Stillman, *The Enchanted Garden of Messer Ansaldo*, 1889. Watercolor and gouache on paper. Pre-Raphaelite Inc., by courtesy of Julian Hartnoll.

> Mountains pine clad and rushing water and fertile meadows and woods of oak and birch and elm. Nice little wooden country houses and colonial looking homes among the trees. A pastoral play came off that very afternoon and there was a dinner party here last night for me and I find myself among a lot of people I have met here and there quite unexpectedly...Everything is very informal and cordial and the hospitality so genuine.[16]

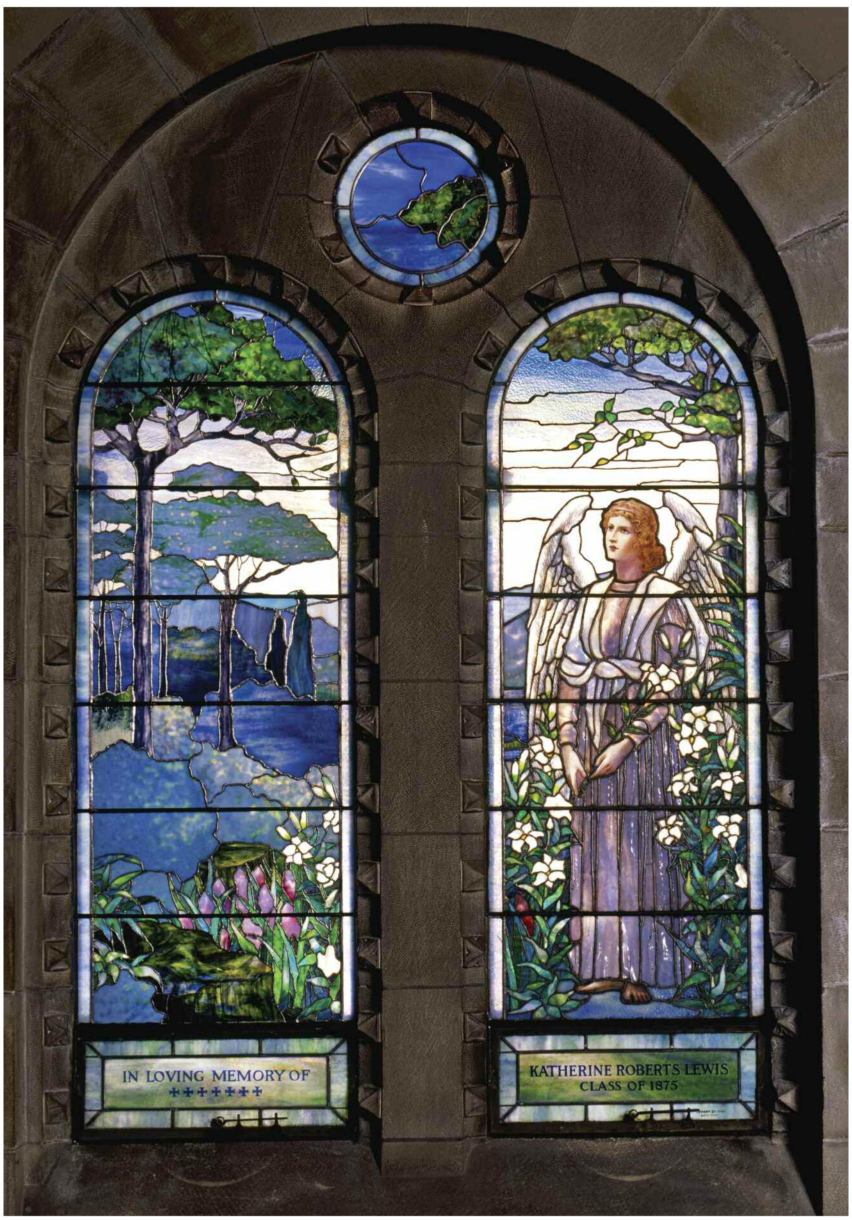
Marie Stillman's time in America was divided between caring for Michael, who seems to have suffered from over-exertion, and advancing her career. The latter included travel to Chicago, perhaps to investigate exhibition opportunities. She described the city to Helena Gilder as "so very American."[17]

In October, two pieces were included in an exhibition at the Curtis & Cameron Studios in Boston–*Dante with Beatrice on All Saints' Day* and *The Enchanted Garden of Messer Ansaldo*. The latter is one of Stillman's most ambitious compositions, illustrating a scene from Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The narrative pictured revolves around the seduction of a noblewoman in which a winter garden meadow is magically transformed to springtime. Having seen the painting on exhibition, Samuel Bancroft expressed an interest in purchasing it. Stillman responded from New York, "I am glad you liked my picture of the Magic Garden and I wish it were yours, but both those pictures you saw at Curtis & Camerons belong to Mr. T. E. Stillman. He bought them as soon as they were ready. I am going to try to induce him to let me exhibit the garden at the Water color Exh[ibition] here next month with several other things."[18] In this she must have been successful, as *Ansaldo* was included at the Annual Exhibition of the New York Water Color Club at the American Fine Arts Gallery in November, along with two other pieces. A review of the exhibition included mention of all of Stillman's work, concluding, "She is one of the links between the present and the past, and her work shows that composite of Italian and British thought heralded by Ruskin."[19]

During this period she also reinstated her relationship with the Boston dealers Doll & Richards, as numerous of her works appear on their inventory records.[20] Seven were on view during the fall of 1903 but failed to find buyers. She wrote despondently to the Boston socialite and activist Marian Clarke Nichols, "I believe Mr. Richards will withdraw my pictures from the public gaze this week. They have not met with that appreciation which brings money."[21] In 1904 however, three of her paintings were sold through the gallery: *Marriage Scene from Dante's Vita Nuova*, *Kelmscott Manor*, and *Saint Francis's Legend of the Monks*.[22]

Stillman was finally able to visit Samuel and Mary Bancroft at their home in Wilmington early in 1904, just before her return to England, and to see her pictures hanging amid his growing collection of Pre-Raphaelite art. She wrote in thanks afterwards, noting, "I was also very much encouraged by my visit to Wilmington and seeing my poor little pictures in such good company in your beautiful home for I have felt these later years that painting pictures that nobody wants is a selfish enjoyment and I could have done better in scouring the floors and mending stockings etc. in the good old fashion and leaving art alone."[23] Stillman grappled with a natural inclination toward humility, particularly in regard to her painting. One wonders if, living at this time of relative inequality for women, she struggled inwardly to properly estimate her talent, a characteristic that was noted in Fairfax Murray's description of her "running down her own work."[24]

Late in 1904 Stillman received an invitation to submit a design for a stained-glass window at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, "in memory of a lady."[25] A letter to Marian Nichols indicates her success: "I got the order to design the window for Vassar and have been busy with St. Catharine of Alexandria and St. Dorothy. I hope they may please the client and that it might lead to doing other windows for over there."[26] She must have been aware of Edward Burne-Jones's work on the American Church in Rome, which was ongoing at the time of her residency there, and this may have been a resource as she embarked in this new decorative genre. The year 1904 was one of extensive building on the Vassar campus, including several major stained-glass commissions, such as the Great Window in the library and windows for the college chapel. The chapel, begun in 1902 and completed in 1904, was intended to memorialize Vassar graduates. This was the locus for the window pair given by Mary Roberts in memory of her sister, Katherine Roberts Lewis, of the class of '75.[27] The window is on the east side of the chapel, closest to the chancel. Historically, all of the windows in the chapel have been credited to Louis Comfort Tiffany, John La Farge, and Robert de Leftwich Dodge. The Roberts window pair is clearly labeled as the work of Tiffany Studios, but no designer is mentioned; Stillman's correspondence now suggests she should be credited in this role. Her letter to Marion Nichols indicates that the commission was for two figural subjects, Saints Catharine and Dorothy. In the event, for unknown reasons, the final design consists of a full-length figure, more angel than saint, paired with a flower landscape typical of Tiffany designs. This leaves authorship of the design unclear–perhaps the patron requested an alteration in design –and one can only hope future discoveries will shed further light.



Pair of stained-glass windows, c. 1902. Vassar College Chapel, Poughkeepsie, New York.

In the fall of 1908 Stillman returned to America to arrange for an exhibition of her work at the Oehme Galleries in New York. The exhibition was covered in the *New York Times* in a brief announcement on December 7 and a longer and favorable review on December 9. The reviews confirmed Stillman's understanding of the salability of her garden and landscape scenes in America. "Mrs. W. J. Stillman...is at her best in her garden subjects, especially where the gardens are those of England."[28] The exhibition included twenty-five paintings, of which all but four were landscapes. A third notice in the *Times* was in the form of a Letter to the Editor, written by Helena Gilder, who described the exhibition as "a modest collection of pictures, so different from anything we see in our exhibitions, so personal, and so filled with a sense of beauty, so little preoccupied with a desire to 's'épater' or 'show off,' or 'shout,' that in our noisy world they may be unheard."[29] Stillman was flattered at her friend's efforts, writing; "I can't tell you how proud I feel that you should speak and write of my humble efforts as you have done and that you feel them to be sincere and as true as I could make them."[30] Her relationship with the Oehme Gallery continued, as additional listings in *American Art News* announce a second solo exhibition in 1909–10. Unfortunately, the success with Oehme was not to continue. On 27 January 1911, all of Julius Oehme's stock was offered at public sale due to "continued ill-health."[31]

There was, however, one last solo exhibition in New York, after World War I, held at the Willow Brook Company in December 1919. A notice in the *New York Times* stated, "At the age of 74 she (Mrs. Stillman) still is painting views of Kelmscott Manor, and painting them with no diminution of her delicate precision in detail."[32] Included in the exhibition was *The Pilgrim Folk*, inspired by a passage from Dante's *Vita Nuova*, and possibly her last large-scale work. It could be interpreted as Stillman's farewell to Italy, the place that had played such an important role in the development of her mature style. In this composition Dante conveys the sad news of Beatrice's death to a group of newly arrived pilgrims. Stillman has placed the poet looking down from a window upon a city square, at the center of which is a well where the crowd have stopped for rest and refreshment. The moment is conveyed with a kind of bittersweet sadness, accentuated through the lovingly detailed medieval Florentine street scene.

Marie Stillman made one final visit to America in 1923. She was now almost eighty years old, and four years away from her death. Still, she continued to paint, exhibiting two flower subjects at the thirteenth annual Newport Art Association exhibition, one of them *Tulips in a Tall Vase*.

Throughout her life, Marie Spartali Stillman struggled with an innate reticence and genuine modesty with regard to the promotion of her work, while balancing a real need to contribute to the family income when her husband was between employment opportunities. Despite her prudent and persistent campaign to exhibit on both continents, the gender bias of the period in which she lived minimized her footprint in the history of Victorian art. While she has always retained

Marie Spartali Stillman, *The Pilgrim Folk*, 1914. Watercolor and gouache on paper. Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Memorial, Delaware Art Museum.

Marie Spartali Stillman, *Tulips in a Tall Vase,* undated. Watercolor and gouache on paper. Private collection.

recognition for her role as model and muse to the (male) Pre-Raphaelite painters, the presence of her own work, particularly on American soil, has been largely overlooked. This omission will be redressed through a forthcoming exhibition, with accompanying catalogue, at the Delaware Art Museum.

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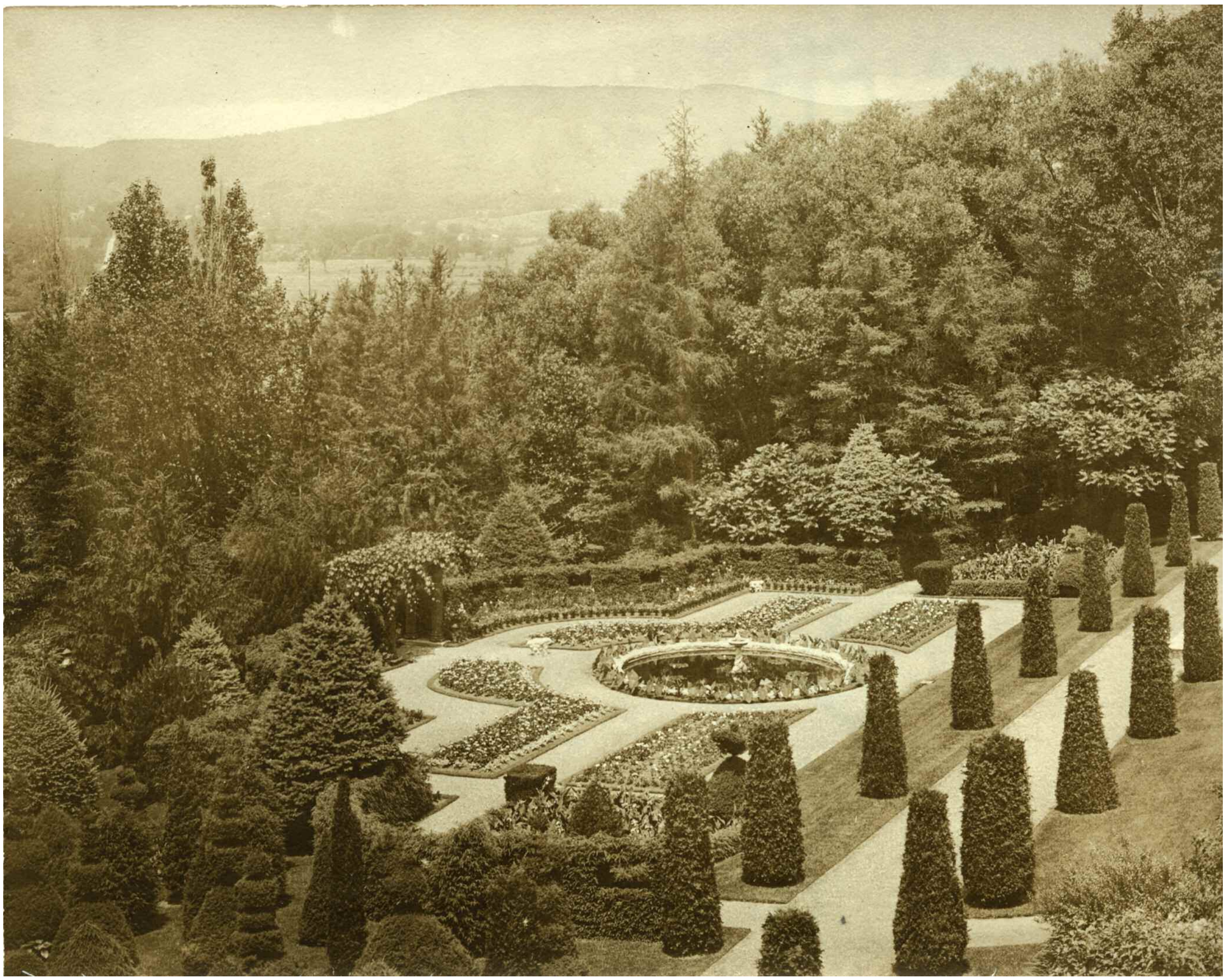
The exhibition, *Poetry and Beauty: the Pre-Raphaelite Art of Marie Spartali Stillman*, co-curated by Margaretta S. Frederick, Chief Curator and Annette Woolard-Provine Curator of the Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Collection and Jan Marsh, a noted Pre-Raphaelite scholar (currently working on the Late Victorian catalogue for the National Portrait Gallery, London) will be hosted at the Delaware Art Museum (November 7, 2015-January 31, 2016) before traveling on in reduced form to the Watts Gallery, Compton, Guildford, England.

Notes

1. Henry James, *The Galaxy: A Magazine of Entertaining Reading* 20, no. 1 (July 1875): 89.
2. Thomas Armstrong, *C. B., A Memoir, 1832–1911*, ed. L. M. Lamont (London: Martin Secker, 1912): 195–96.
3. “Pre-Raphaelitism,” *Economist* (23 August, 1851):933.
4. *Westminster Review* 35, no. 2 (April 1869): 584.
5. William’s tenancy was of short duration, lasting just over a year. La Farge held a studio here until 1910.
6. “Art,” *Atlantic Monthly* 35, no. 207 (January 1875): 118–19.
7. “On Some Pictures Lately Exhibited.” *The Galaxy: A Magazine of Entertaining Reading* 20, no. 1 (July 1875): 89.
8. Clara Erskine Clement and Laurence Hutton. *Artists of the Nineteenth Century and Their Works: A Handbook Containing Two Thousand and Fifty Biographical Sketches*. (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1879): 265. Although untraced, one assumes this to be a reference to the American statesman, writer, and poet (1838–1905). Hay served as an assistant editor of the *New-York Tribune* beginning in 1871.
9. For flower painting in America during the last decade of the nineteenth century, see Maria Oakey Dewing, *Art and Progress* 6, no. 8 (June 1915): 255–62.
10. Jarves, “Florence the Beautiful: The Home of Art in Italy. A City Devoted to the Aesthetic as a Practical Interest in the British Pre-Raphaelite Works of Murray, Stanhope, and Mrs. Stillman: Poetry in Pictures,” *New York Times* (29 April 1879) 2.
11. Both of these paintings remain unlocated today, as is the case with a large number of her works.
12. Anonymous, “The Water-Colors,” *New York Times*, 27 January 1883: 5.
13. Emma Lazarus, “A Day in Surrey with William Morris,” *Century Magazine*, July 1886: 388-97.
14. Samuel Bancroft’s collection of Pre-Raphaelite art, library, and related archives are now housed at the Delaware Art Museum.
15. MSS to Bancroft, 23 November 1900, box 16, folder 7, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Archives, Helen Farr Sloan Library, Delaware Art Museum.
16. MSS to Charles Fairfax Murray, 27 July (1903), no. 654, MS 1281, Charles Fairfax Murray Collection, John Rylands Library, Manchester, UK.
17. MSS to Helena de Kay Gilder, undated (c. 1903/4?), box 14, Gilder Manuscript Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.
18. MSS to Bancroft, 26 October 1903, box 16, folder 14, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Archives. T. E. Stillman was a retired railroad lawyer, living at East Seventy-Eighth Street, New York. He was not closely related to Marie’s in-laws but may have had some family feeling nevertheless.
19. “Harmonies in Pictures: Pastels and Water Colors invade The Fine Arts Building,” *New York Times*, November 22, 1903: 7.
20. Doll & Richards Gallery Records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
21. MSS to Marion Clarke Nichols, 22 December 1903, box 7, folder 131, A-170, Nichols-Shurtleff Family Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University.
22. MSS to Bancroft, 12 February 1904, box 16, folder 15, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Archives.
23. MSS to Bancroft, 12 February 1904, box 16, folder 15, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Archives.
24. Quoted in W. S. Spanton, *An Art Student and His Teachers in the Sixties* (London: Robert Scott, 1927), 83.
25. MSS to H. D. Gilder, 5 December (1904), box 14, Gilder Manuscript Collection.
26. MSS to M. C. Nichols, 7 September 1904, box 7, folder 131, A-170, Nichols-Shurtleff Family Papers.
27. Katherine Roberts taught at Vassar from 1875 to 1878, before her marriage. She died in 1880. Vassar Alumnae Directory.
28. “Gallery Notes: Mrs. Stillman’s Water Colors—Old Engravings on Exhibition,” *New York Times*, 9 December 1908.
29. H. G. (Helena de Kay Gilder), “Mrs. Stillman’s Pictures (Letter to the Editor),” *New York Times*, 23 December 1908.
30. MSS to H. D. Gilder, 30 December (1910?), box 14, Gilder Manuscript Collection.
31. *Illustrated Catalogue of the Valuable modern paintings belonging to Mr. Julius Oehme New York City* (New York, 1911).
32. Anonymous, “Notes on Current Art,” *New York Times*, 14 December, 1919: 10.



Evergreen garden, Naumkeag, looking northwest, c. 1906.

Restoration of the Gardens at Naumkeag

JANE ROY BROWN

In 1885, a prominent New York City attorney named Joseph Hodges Choate Jr. and his family moved into their new country estate in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, in the Berkshire Hills. Like Bar Harbor, Newport, and other scenic rural places, the Berkshires were becoming a vacation enclave for wealthy "rusticators." Many, like the Choates, arrived from New York City, only a half-day's train ride away.

Stanford White of McKim, Mead & White designed the Choates' 44-room cottage. As Mabel, the fourth of the Choates' five children, later recalled, "there was no need to choose an architect, for Charles McKim was an intimate friend." McKim, however, was engaged to be married, and, "with the day of his marriage fast approaching he turned us over to a promising young man in his office, Stanford White." Mabel went on to describe how, when construction started, White took her mother, Caroline Choate, shopping for antique furnishings all over New York,[1] and teased her when she grew impatient at the pace of construction. "Mr. White would say 'Why Mrs. Choate, you don't weep and tear your hair enough—that is the way people get things done.'"[2]

The house stood atop a hill overlooking terraced formal gardens and, at the bottom, a farm that produced food for the estate. From this elevated vantage point, the Choates could take in dramatic views of the distant hills. Modest by the standards of Newport and even neighboring Lenox, the building married different styles and distinguished them with contrasting materials: The western (rear) facade, facing the gardens and principal views, was clad in wood shingles like the Shingle-style country houses for which White and his firm were then well known. The Norman-revival entrance facade, flanked by turrets with conical roofs, was built of fieldstone and brick. The Choates named their country estate "Naumkeag," an Algonquian word for Salem, Massachusetts, where Joseph Choate was born.[3]

Naumkeag's stalwart mansion stood on a forty-nine-acre property that also included other typical estate features of the day: barns and greenhouses, gardens and paths, a summerhouse and an orchard. Nathan Franklin Barrett (1845–1919), a landscape architect and planner based in New Jersey, laid out the estate, working with the architects to locate the house and other features.[4] To create the formal gardens, Barrett carved four descending terraces into the steep hillside. In the same spirit as the house, Barrett's gardens emphasized harmonious proportions over elaborate formality.

The Choates' daughter Mabel inherited Naumkeag in 1929, but she had already been managing the estate for several years. Seeking to refresh the aging formal gardens near the house, now four decades old, she invited landscape architect Fletcher Steele to visit Naumkeag in the summer of 1926. Thus began a spirited collaboration between a highly inventive designer and his equally adventurous client: Over a span of thirty years, Mabel Choate and Steele reimagined the landscape of Naumkeag, gradually overlaying what Steele called the good Victorian "bones"[5] of Barrett's gardens with a series of distinctive designs, each of which captured the spirit of its own time.

Because Mabel Choate bequeathed Naumkeag to The Trustees of Reservations, a statewide historic preservation and conservation organization, the property has been open to the public since 1959–one of the few publicly accessible Steele-designed landscapes. Three decades later, landscape historian Robin Karson published a biography of Steele, raising awareness of Naumkeag's landscape in the emerging field of landscape history and, eventually, to a wider audience.

The Choates of New York and Stockbridge

Joseph Hodges Choate Jr. (1832–1917) built his career in New York City, where he rose to national prominence. A talented orator famous for his wit, he argued several important cases before the Supreme Court, served as ambassador to England, and helped negotiate the Hague peace conference treaty of 1907.[6]

When Caroline Dutcher Sterling (1837–1929) met her future husband, she was studying art in New York City, wearing a ring inscribed "wedded to art."[7] Even after marrying, in 1861, she remained committed to her first love, drawing, painting, and supporting the arts throughout her life.[8] Also a passionate advocate for women's higher education, Caroline Choate was among the founders of New York's Brearley School for Girls and Barnard College, where she also served as a trustee.[9]

Mabel Choate (1870–1958) survived a childhood darkened by the loss of two of her siblings, who died as young adults, and a third, who suffered a nervous breakdown in college from which he never fully recovered. Mabel attended the Brearley School in the mid-1880s and subsequently enrolled at Barnard but did not graduate. In 1900, while the family was living in England, she, too, experienced a breakdown, but she recovered.[10]

The Barrett Landscape

Nathan Franklin Barrett (1845–1919) was the son of a Staten Island nurseryman. Barrett started out as a planner, designing the industrial community of Pullman in Chicago and residential suburbs including Chevy Chase, Maryland, as well as country estates.[11] When Barrett designed the

Naumkeag, c. 1890.

Naumkeag landscape, and the formal terraced gardens in particular, he worked within a late-Victorian design vocabulary that included floral beds and parterres, clipped evergreens, and discrete but connected garden rooms. The gardens responded to White's design for the house in subtle ways, especially in their spatial proportions.

In 1910, the writer and horticulturalist Wilhelm Miller described the formal gardens at Naumkeag in *Country Life in America*. Miller's article, illustrated with photographs by Arthur G. Eldredge, remains the best record of the Barrett design, then twenty-five years old. In Miller's account, the Choates' garden was

> too simple, almost, for a diagram–just a garden of about an acre, the lower half formal, the upper half informal, with a walled driveway dividing the two portions. Trees all around the garden–high enough to give seclusion and comfort, but not high enough to spoil the view. Steps descending to the four successive levels, where one may walk without apparent effort. A fountain shimmering in the sunshine. Borders of perennial flowers glowing against the evergreen hedges. A few simple flower beds in stately order.[12]

Barrett's design possessed a clear, linear geometry as well as a Victorian sense of formality. He placed the beds on the north side of the house, one level below the mansion's rear portico. Anyone emerging from the house receives the stunning impact of the mountain scenery, framed by the portico's stout columns–away from the distractions of floriferous beds.

A gravel path lined with arborvitae crosses the terrace between two shield-shaped formal gardens, once filled with great stands of delphinium. Views into the garden could be enjoyed from this walk or from a summerhouse perched above its north end. (This allée balances the sole formal feature on the south side of the mansion, the Linden Walk, created later.[13]) A great oak continued to thrive on the lawn that gradually became orchard and fields.

The second formal garden, occupying the lower terrace, is screened by conifers on all sides, designed to focus inward. Hemispherical flowerbeds enfolded a circular marble fountain. A rustic arbor sheltered a bench facing the garden, interrupting a crenellated hedge on the downhill edge of the main formal garden. Flanking the fountain were gravel paths and narrow rectangular beds planted richly in great stands of color bordered in contrasting hues.[14] The adjacent topiary garden, a common feature of late-Victorian estates,[15] earned Miller's praise for what it did *not* contain, namely the "elaborate grotesques" then in fashion: "St. George and the dragon are absent; ditto the lion and the unicorn."[16] In Miller's view, the garden's charm lay in its welcoming human scale and its lack of ostentation.

Naumkeag Reshaped

As an unmarried woman, Mabel Choate lived with her parents in New York and cared for her aging mother after her father's death. As she gradually assumed the management of Naumkeag, she made few changes to the gardens described by Miller until 1918, when she hired landscape architect Marian Coffin (1876–1957) to update the flower gardens. The following year, Percival Gallagher of the Olmsted Brothers firm consulted on new hillside plantings.[17]

As described by her nephew-in-law Geoffrey Platt, Mabel was "tall and well built, had a lively manner, full of laughter, was interested in everyone and everything."[18] After knowing her for many years, Steele once wrote that despite persistent bouts of ill health, "(t)he one thing she will not do to conserve her failing strength is to give up the quest of active happiness. She is a constant inspiration."[19] In the Berkshires, Mabel Choate enjoyed entertaining and was a member of several garden and horticultural organizations. She also took an interest in historic preservation, eventually restoring an eighteenth-century house in Stockbridge to serve as a museum.[20] Geographically and aesthetically adventurous, she traveled widely and collected ceramics, furniture, and fine art.[21] As Steele later observed, "She had no fear that Chinese garden ornaments, Gandhara sculpture, ancient English metal tubs and Vermont troglodytical rocks could not be pulled together in her picture."[22]

By the time he met Choate, Steele had achieved a national reputation as a superb and inventive landscape architect, his fame buoyed by lectures as well as his lively, opinionated writing. (Steele's articles appeared in popular garden magazines, and his first book, *Design in the Little Garden*, had been published two years earlier.[23]) With the exception of the Camden (Maine) Public Library Amphitheater, a charming and ingenious public park,[24] he continued to specialize in residential landscapes. Many of these were in the Northeast, a number of them in Rochester and Boston. Sophisticated, charming, witty, and fastidious, he enjoyed popularity with his largely female clientele.

On their first tour of Naumkeag, Choate told Steele she wanted a pleasant place to sit near the house, like the outdoor rooms she had seen in California. Karson summarizes Steele's account of the experience:

> "Together (Miss Choate and I) agreed that the bones of what had been first done were good and should not only be preserved where possible but that the old spirit should be followed in all that was to come. The 'feeling' of Victorian elaboration must be continued...Nothing must look 'up-to-date.'"[25]

These decisions made, he then insisted on designing a new service court. "I couldn't possibly work for anyone whose back door looks like that," Steele sniffed as they walked toward the house for the first time. "Looking at it with new eyes," Choate later wrote, "I saw that he was right. It was dreadful."[26]

After creating a walled service courtyard, Steele proceeded to plan the outdoor room. Adjacent to the south side of the house, the drawing-room-sized rectangle became known as the Afternoon Garden. Its giddy mix of elements expressed the qualities that united client and designer from that point forward–a spirit of adventure, bold experiment, and flat-out fun. Steele had often included exotic references and objects in his work, but he reached dizzying heights with his new client. Only a designer of great skill and artistic imagination could weave a kind of magic from such disparate details within a small space: a French parterre, Moorish shell fountains, a rustic pergola, and timbers carved to resemble Venetian canal poles.

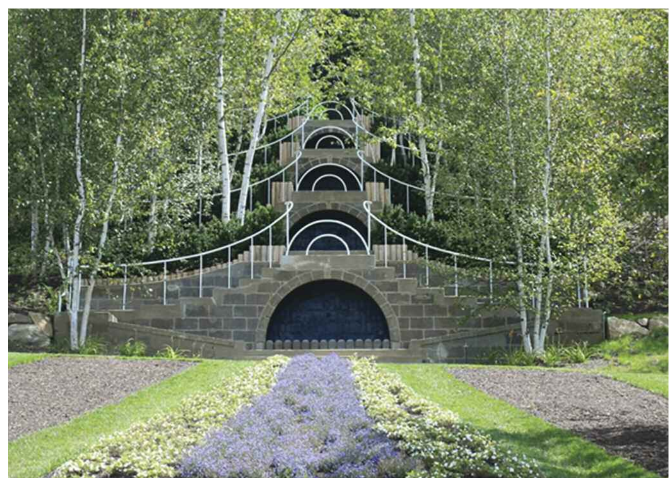
Walled on two sides, leaving an open view to the western hills, the garden is anchored by a bronze sculpture of a boy entwined with an enormous heron (the sculpture was designed by Frederick W. MacMonnies for a niche near the front door). Karson recounts how Steele and Choate decided where to place the statue:

> A young farm boy (without heron) was asked to stand in for the statue and moved about on a stepladder until he looked right from all angles, and there the sculpture was placed, marking the corner of the new room... Developments throughout the estate would be determined by similar experiments, typically conducted as part of the cocktail hour, which in Steele's case began at one in the afternoon.[27]

For the next endeavor, reclaiming the view of a mountain from the new vantage point in the Afternoon Garden, the pair assembled an "army of tree men" and strung a telephone line between the garden and the woods below. Equipped with cocktails and binoculars, they directed the cutters to emulate the curve of the mountain. Steele exulted in the effect: "Thus the strongest design line furnished by Nature was brought back and made the major motive of the future landscape design."[28]

And so, until Mabel Choate's death, in 1958, the two partook in a continual stream of merry-making and garden-making, gradually filling out the south side of the property with new features: the Ronde Pointe creates a small garden theater between Perugino View and Barrett's Linden Walk, which Steele embellished with a patio and a Spanish wrought-iron bench painted purple. A pagoda of the same wrought iron enshrines Choate's "troglodytic" chunk of limestone, crowning a sloping flowerbed rimmed with giant clam shells. The Oak Lawn harbors a pool of shade, and the South Lawn mirrors the curves of the distant mountain in its sculptural forms and its long edge rimmed with cedar posts. The Blue Steps, an icon of American garden design, cascades through a grove of white birch to the working farm below. At each of four landings, a central water runnel in the staircase fills a trickling fountain in a recessed niche painted deep blue.

On the north side of the service drive, Steele preserved Barrett's Arborvitae Walk and the large formal garden (now called the Evergreen Garden), simplified but still anchored by the central marble fountain. Steele's unusual rose garden, created in the 1950s, plays with the Victorian love of pattern but is modernist in spirit, with wavy ribbons of gravel cut into a lawn, rose bushes spiking the crests and troughs of the curves. The flower garden for which Coffin designed plantings in the teens gave way to a Chinese garden, suggested by Ralph Adams Cram after Mabel Choate's trip to China in 1935. The garden's centerpiece is a temple that Steele designed, roofed with tiles that Choate had shipped from China. The garden is entered via a traditional zig-zagging "Devil Walk" and filled with a variety of plants, including gingko, peonies, and petasites, which resemble lotus. In 1955 Steele created a moon gate in the enclosing wall that made it possible to walk the entire property as a circuit.



(L to R): The Blue Steps before and after restoration.

The Afternoon Garden and the Blue Steps alone would have made Naumkeag a masterpiece. But Karson's biography established that these gardens, as well as the South Lawn, introduced modernism into American landscape architecture, which gives the design broader significance. When, at Choate's death, Naumkeag passed to The Trustees of Reservations–a bequest made at Steele's urging[29]–a layered complexity came with it. The house was conventional for its time and relatively easy to interpret for the public. The landscape was a different matter.

The Landscape Restoration

Thanks to Mabel Choate's bequest, Naumkeag has been open to the public since 1959. The National Park Service also

(L to R): Pagoda from south lawn, 1937. Pagoda under restoration. Photo by Mark Wilson.

designated the site a National Historic Landmark in 2007. Subsequently, The Trustees received an anonymous grant to restore Naumkeag's aging Steele gardens. Now nearing completion, the restoration has produced surprises as well as repaired fountains, renewed paths, and newly planted trees.

A design composed of growing things amplifies the complexity inherent in historic preservation. As plants grow, change shape, and die, the design begins to lose its integrity, despite regular maintenance. Such gradual changes, however, can go unnoticed, especially in a richly planted landscape. One of many examples at Naumkeag is the Perugino View, originally comprising dozens of species of trees and shrubs that framed a mountain vista but which had lost all of these plantings over the past forty years. At the same time, the critical manicured tree canopy that repeated the mountain's silhouette had outgrown its shape, obstructing the view. A 1972 blizzard brought down the largest of Naumkeag's greenhouses. Century-old water pipes clogged. Gravity, too, was having its way. "The whole landscape was sliding downhill," Wilson says.

Operating with limited funds, The Trustees usually conduct historic preservation one project at a time, guided by a master plan for each property. But in 2012, an anonymous donor gave a $1 million challenge grant to restore the Fletcher Steele gardens to their original condition in two years. (The organization is raising an additional $2 million to meet the challenge.)

The restoration, underpinned by close study of these original documents as well as the book, rolled out in phases, leaving no frost-heaved stone unturned. As Karson wrote in a recent blog, "If designs are to live beyond the lives of the plants that structure and enliven them, they need to be taken apart and put back together again." With the intricate Afternoon Garden and Chinese Temple Garden, this literally took place, after workers replaced more than a mile of rusted water pipes.

Fletcher Steele and Mabel Choate at the Moon Gate, c. 1955.

One surprise is the true hue of the Blue Steps, which turns out to be an inky midnight hue instead of the lighter shade shown in earlier well-known color photographs. Wilson explains that conservators consulted Steele's notes, which said the fountain pools were painted the same color as two other water features on the estate. "We took samples from those two features to get the right blue," he says.

The birches flanking the steps had also aged. Only nineteen sickly specimens of the original seventy-five survived, looming overlarge. Now all but ten of these plus the yews on the landings have been replaced by fresh nursery stock, and their lithe, slender presence is reminiscent of eager children standing in the too-large shoes of their elders. "And, we uncovered the footprint of Mabel's lost cutting garden at the bottom," Wilson says. "That was the reason why she asked Steele to design steps, to get up and down that slope to cut flowers." (The grand result of this utilitarian commission came as a surprise to Choate.[30]) And so, the humble destination spreads out below the regal steps once again.

With the restoration nearly complete, every curve in the gardens is crisp, every line taut. The greenhouses will be back at the end of this year. But the most striking aspect is the deep, vibrant color in the repainted garden structures, which glow like navigational beacons signaling the next destination. Light dances on the carved finials of the Afternoon Garden's gondola poles, now resplendent in gold, purple, and red. Violet gleams on iron railings and benches, and the pagoda enshrining the hunk of limestone hums in blue, purple, and gold. The cobalt glaze on the roof tiles of the Chinese temple bounces light back to the sky. Hundreds of perennials and shrubs, replaced according to the original plant lists, complement the rich colors and bring back long-gone fragrance.

For regular visitors to Naumkeag, the overall effect will be like seeing Venus de Milo don her original bling–it takes some getting used to. Karson, knowing how Steele relished the romance of an old garden "A good garden abounds in suggestions of the past,"[31] he wrote) welcomes the preservation of Naumkeag, but not without a wistful look back. "I only wish that I had made one last trip to say good-bye to the garden I knew. The one with the ancient lindens and the encrusted, tottering walls," she wrote after visiting the gardens midway through the restoration. "The new one, in some respects, will be scrubbed behind the ears–younger than I am. None of us will see that old garden again. Not in this lifetime."[32]

Notes

1. Robin Karson, *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect: An Account of the Gardenmaker's Life, 1885–1971* (Amherst, Mass.: Library of American Landscape History, Revised edition, 2003), 106–107; 303, n. 10: Mabel Choate, "Naumkeag Notes" Memoirs, Naumkeag Archives (now The Trustees of Reservations Archives), 1952–1954, I, 2.
2. Karson, *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect*, 107; 303, n. 11: Choate, Mabel, quoted in Naumkeag (Milton, Mass.: The Trustees of Reservations, 1965, 2.
3. Definitions, including "fishing place," "eel place," and "sandy land," vary according to the source. Huden, John C., comp., *Indian Place Names of New England* (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1962), 139; archive.org/stream/indianplacenames00hude_djvu.txt.
4. The Choates initially hired the firm founded by Frederick Law Olmsted to lay out their estate. Whoever represented the Olmsted shop insisted that the only suitable place for the house was midway down the slope, near the family's cherished oak; the Choates begged to differ. Karson, *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect*, 106–107; 303, n. 8: Mabel Choate, "Naumkeag Notes," XIX, 1.
5. Karson, *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect*, 108; 303, n. 18, Fletcher Steele, "Naumkeag Gardens Develop" (unpublished essay, May 1947, Library of Congress), 2.
6. *New York Times*, May 15, 1917, "Joseph Hodges Choate Dies Suddenly; Famous Lawyer and Statesman Was 85; Last Week's Activities Weakened Him," archived PDF, www.nytimes.com, n. a., n. p.
7. Miriam B. Spectre, *Guide to Mabel Choate Papers Regarding Naumkeag, 1855–1958*, NK.MS.Coll.I (Sharon, Mass.: The Trustees of Reservations Archives & Research Center [TTOR Archives], April 2015, PDF), 4.
8. Ibid., 3.
9. Ibid., 4.
10. Ibid.
11. Judith Helm Robinson and Stephanie S. Foell, "Barrett, Nathan Franklin," in *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*, Charles A. Birnbaum and Robin Karson, volume editors (New York, San Francisco, etc.: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 10–11.
12. Wilhelm Miller, "Lessons from a Hillside Garden," *Country Life in America* (August 1910), 434.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., photo caption, 435.
15. Andrew Clayton-Paine and Brent Elliott, *Victorian Flower Gardens* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson Ltd., 1988), 124–125.
16. Miller, "Lessons from a Hillside Garden," 434.
17. Robin Karson, *A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press in association with Library of American Landscape History, 2007), 330; 391, n. 22: Coffin's plant orders, 1918–1921; n. 23: Percival Gallagher to Mabel Choate, 5 November 1919, both Naumkeag Archives (now Mabel Choate Papers Regarding Naumkeag, TTOR Archives).
18. Karson, *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect*, 128; 304, n. 63: "Geoffrey Platt, "Narration—Garden Party, Naumkeag" (audiotape transcription, Naumkeag Archives, 21 July 1983), 1.
19. Karson, *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect*, 260; 306, n. 40: Steele to Esther Steele, 18 October 1950.
20. Known as the Mission House, it is also owned and operated as a house museum by The Trustees of Reservations. Choate commissioned Steele to design its Colonial Revival gardens, which are still extant. Karson, *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect,* 116–117.
21. Ibid.,105.
22. Ibid.; 303, n. 7: Steele to Charles D. Webster, 25 June 1968, Fletcher Steele Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
23. Ibid., 105. Library of American Landscape History published a new edition of Design in the Little Garden (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1924) in 2011, with a new introduction and photographs.
24. In 2013, Camden Public Library Amphitheater was named a National Historic Landmark, recognized as significant because of its association with Fletcher Steele. The ceremony recognized Robin Karson for her role in raising awareness of Steele's importance.
25. Karson, *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect*, 108; 303, n. 18; Steele, "Naumkeag Gardens Develop" (unpublished essay, May 1947, Library of Congress), 2.
26. Ibid., n. 19: Daniel Kiley, telephone interview by author (Karson), 8 April 1988. This story was told to Kiley by Fletcher Steele when Kiley visited Naumkeag in 1932; n. 20: Mabel Choate, "Naumkeag Garden" (tourbook of the garden, Stockbridge, Mass., Summer 1956), 2.
27. Karson, *A Genius for Place*, 331.
28. Karson, *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect*, 125; 303, n. 61: Steele, Design in the Little Garden, 41.
29. Steele could trace a professional legacy to The Trustees of Reservations. Established in 1891, the organization is the brainchild of visionary landscape architect Charles Eliot (1859–1897), who was practicing at the Olmsted office when Steele's mentor, Warren H. Manning (1860–1938), started his career at the firm.
30. Karson, *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect*, 210; 306, n. 47: Mabel Choate, "Naumkeag," 4.
31. Ibid., 279, Steele, "The Charm of Gardens, the Appeal to the Intelligence," *Arts*, May 1923.
32. Karson, "Naumkeag Deconstructed," Library of American Landscape History News Blog lalh.org/naumkeag-deconstructed/, May 9, 2013.

Sleuthing...

Frank Furness's Armchairs for the Gibson House

DAVID L. BARQUIST

Frank Furness (1839-1912) is renowned as the most significant architect working in Philadelphia in the post-Civil War era. During a 45-year career, he produced over 700 buildings; his clients included the city's economic and artistic elite as well as its leading corporations, most notably the Pennsylvania Railroad. For many of these commissions, Furness and his office produced designs for interior woodwork, mantelpieces, lighting, staircases, iron grilles, and other "built-ins." However, his designs for movable pieces of furniture were infrequent.[1]

Furness seems to have designed no furniture on independent commission; all of the surviving examples made from his designs were connected to one of his architectural or renovation projects. The majority of Furness's designs for movable furniture were concentrated in the years 1868 to 1875, during his partnerships with John Fraser (1825-1906) and George Wattson Hewitt (1840-1916). Among the projects for which Furness created furniture were new buildings for Congregation Rodeph Shalom of 1868-69 and the Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion of 1870-75, both on North Broad Street, and interiors for the Washington Square home of his brother, the Shakespearean scholar Horace Howard Furness (1833-1912) in 1870-71 and for the home of Theodore Roosevelt, Sr. (1831-1878) in New York City in 1873. Aside from Furness's sketches, there is very little documentary evidence for any of the surviving furniture. Dates assigned to these objects have been based on the assumption that the furniture was made at the time the building or renovation was completed, although there is always the possibility that some of these objects were produced at a later time.[2] After 1875, Furness created furniture for fewer architectural commissions, and designs such as those he produced for the Social Arts Club in 1878 or the First Unitarian Church in 1883-86 were more conventional.

The desk that Furness created for his brother in 1870-71 is characteristic of his furniture designs from this time. Scholars including David Hanks and Wendy Kaplan have cited Furness's indebtedness to British architects and designers who were part of the "reform" movement, including Owen Jones (1809-1874), Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), and Bruce J. Talbert (1838-1881). Talbert in particular advocated the articulated construction, low-relief carving, and ornament derived from non-classical sources seen in Furness's desk.[3] The diaper pattern carved on the desk's doors is similar to a plate published by Talbert; the same stylized leaves with scalloped edges are found in designs published by Owen Jones.[4] Although he never traveled to Europe, Furness studied in New York with Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895), first American architect trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and these kinds of reference books would have been found in Hunt's renowned library. Moreover, Dresser traveled to Philadelphia and presented lectures at the fledgling Pennsylvania Museum (now the Philadelphia Museum of Art) in 1876.

Furness absorbed these principles and used them to generate strikingly original furniture. Not surprisingly, his designs were more or less congruent with his contemporary architectural work. Compared to the British designs, Furness's furniture was less overtly medieval with fewer historical references. British designers like Talbert favored planar surfaces with veneer or shallow carved ornament, whereas Furness preferred forms with a series of planar recessions and a sculptural treatment of surfaces and edges. Despite the desk's rich ornament of intaglio, low relief, and high relief carving, it has a rigorous, abstract quality of a structure creating and enclosing volume.

(L to R): Armchair, c.1870, pre- and post-conservation. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

In 2013, the Philadelphia Museum of Art acquired an armchair that had been part of a set long used in the "directors' room," which doubled as the library, at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. The Academy's 1871-76 building was among Furness's masterpieces and launched his career; the chairs were assumed to be designs that Furness created as part of the commission.[6] The last record of the chairs at the Academy is a photograph taken in 1957, when they were being used as podium seating

(L to R): Dining room, Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., house, New York City, 1873. Dining table designed by Frank Furness for Theodore Roosevelt, Sr.. c. 1873. Virginia Carol Crawford Collection, High Museum of Art, Atlanta.

in the auditorium. Joseph Thompson Fraser, Jr. (1898-1989), director of the Academy from 1938 to 1969, was quoted as saying the chairs were "extremely ugly, very uncomfortable, and someone had tacked ugly material on the seats."[7] In response to a query about the chairs in 1972, curator Robert Stubbs learned from faculty members that about ten years previously, "...Mr. Fraser put them in the freight elevator and told interested parties to take them if they chose."[8] Rescued by less aesthetically doctrinaire academy students, three of the chairs eventually found homes in institutions: the Allentown (Pennsylvania) Art Museum; the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California; and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.[9]

That Furness designed the four armchairs has always seemed certain. Composed of a series of square, rectangular, circular, and cylindrical forms, they have the bold, architectonic quality characteristic of his furniture. The sides of the seats and the lower back rail are shaped with deep cavetto moldings, heightening the sense of spatial recession. Details such as the shaped corners of the handholds and the scallops or stylized dentils on the front seat rail appear on Furness's buildings, including the Academy, as well as other furniture he designed. The beading across the lower back rail and the shallow-carved border of rosettes on the seat and crest rail evoke upholstery on a chair intended not to be upholstered, a type of whimsical detail Furness occasionally included in his furniture. The Roosevelt dining room table, supplied in the same years that the Academy was under construction, had a base composed of cranes confronting frogs who peer incautiously into the cranes' open beaks. The chairs Furness produced for this interior had the same low backs and deep, square seats as the Academy chairs.[10] Dining room chairs that Furness created for his brother in 1871 similarly featured low backs, schematic carving, and recessed rosettes and shaped edges on their handholds.[11]

The archives of the Pennsylvania Academy retains detailed records and receipts for the building's construction and furnishing. In searching through these records, the present author was unable to find any record of payments to a cabinetmaker for furniture of the quality and presumed cost of these chairs. A single payment was made to the firm of Allen & Brother for a "showcase," but otherwise the building's furniture seems to have been acquired from retailers instead of cabinetmakers and presumably was of utilitarian, institutional character different from the armchairs' eccentric design.[12] The largest payments were made to William Sanderson, who owned a retail furniture showroom at 425 Walnut Street, one block from Furness's offices, and to Thomas Birch and Son at 1110 Chestnut Street.

A clue to the chairs' origin was offered by Margaret Caldwell, who noted the existence of a similar set of chairs owned by Philadelphia distiller and banker Henry Clay Gibson (1830-1891). In 1870, the firm of Fraser, Furness and Hewitt was engaged by Gibson to renovate the first-floor interiors of his home at 1612 Walnut Street. The renovation was intended to improve the spaces for displaying Gibson's extensive collection of contemporary European art, considered one of the finest in the United States. As described in 1883 by George William Sheldon, "Instead of building for them (Gibson's paintings) a distinct and lofty gallery, the owner has constructed a series of apartments called cabinets, that not only open into each other, but are integral parts of the house itself."[13] A distinctive feature of Furness and Hewitt's designs for this sequence of rooms was built-in wooden screens that functioned both as room dividers and as pedestals for specific pieces of sculpture and ceramics.[14] The arched openings and other elements of these screens were inspired by a variety of historical prototypes, and in July 1871, the Public Ledger published a description of an unnamed Philadelphia house, apparently Gibson's, in which the different styles allowed visitors to experience the sequence of spaces as the passage of time:

> ...(I)t is on the interior that the architect has lavished his ingenuity, and here may be seen Moorish columns, with fretted horse-shoe arches, from the Alhambra, groined arches from the Gothic cathedrals, and narrow mullioned stained glass windows from the same; and in the distance the eye rests on a recess formed by Grecian fluted columns with Corinthian capitals. The spectator is apt to conclude that more than one architect was employed on the building...[15]

Gibson intended these rooms to be available for public viewing by appointment; Sheldon's chapter in Artistic Houses began, "To a multitude of Americans who cultivate the fine arts, Mr. Henry C. Gibson's house...has long been an object of interest, as containing one of the largest and most valuable collections of oil-paintings in the United States."[16]

The four interior views of the Gibson House included in the 1883-84 publication *Artistic Houses* reveal that it was furnished with conventional, over-upholstered forms of the period, although as part of the renovation Furness designed a library table. In addition, careful examination of the view of the dining room shows an armchair very similar to the Pennsylvania Academy chairs in the alcove at the back, partly concealed by a marble tripod stand. A second chair apparently was positioned to the left of the large porcelain bowl but was moved while the photograph was being exposed, leaving a ghostly shadow. A better view of these chairs was provided by later photographs of Gibson's art gallery at his Wynnewood country house, "Maybrook," designed in 1881 by George Hewitt in partnership with his brother William (1847-1924), in which three chairs of this design appeared. In these photographs the chairs had no seat cushions; in the photograph of Gibson House dining room, the visible chair appeared with a patterned cushion.

The main difference between the Academy chairs and the Gibson chairs was the feet, which were square blocks on the former and squat, turned cones on the latter. After close scrutiny of the image and examination of the chair, the author determined that the Gibson armchairs were in fact the same chairs later used at the Pennsylvania Academy. Gibson served on the Academy's board of trustees for over twenty years and in 1891 bequeathed 102 works of art to the institution; the chairs apparently came to the Pennsylvania Academy as an undocumented part of his gift. During their years of use at the Academy, the chairs' original feet were cut off, presumably because of damage, and square blocks were doweled into the legs as substitutes. In addition, a back view of one armchair in the "Maybrook" photograph showed a flat metal hinge extending out from the domed handhold on the proper right arm; and holes on the back of the arm support confirm that a metal plate was screwed to it at one time. If these chairs were intended for use by visitors to Gibson's paintings collection, as seems likely from their placement in the "Maybrook" art gallery, these hinged covers could have concealed ash trays for gentlemen enjoying a cigarette or cigar while viewing the paintings. At a later date, these hinges were removed and the covers were screwed to the handhold. Guided by the evidence in these photographs, Behrooz Salimnejad, Elaine S. Harrington Senior Conservator of Furniture and Woodwork at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, recreated the feet and the hinge. The restored feet give the chair a whimsical, zoomorphic quality as well as providing better visual balance for the exaggerated handholds.

(Top to bottom): Library, Henry C. Gibson House, Philadelphia. Photo published in *Artistic Houses*, 1883; Library table seen in foreground of the library, designed by Frank Furness. Detroit Institute of Arts.

The identity of the Philadelphia cabinetmaker who made these armchairs remains unknown at present. Some of Furness's surviving furniture has been attributed to the German-born cabinetmaker Daniel Pabst (1826-1910), although the only firmly documented instance of their collaboration are the bookcases (and by extension, the movable library furniture) made for Horace H. Furness.[17] Among papers held privately by the Furness family, Maria Thompson discovered a document that had been placed behind the bookcases in February 1871 and found again in 1896 when the bookcases were removed from the house: "These bookcases...were designed by Captain Frank Furness and made by Daniel Pabst."[18] The quality of the execution of these bookcases and the Furness library desk is akin to that of the Gibson library table, similarly made of walnut with more refined and elaborate carving. The Gibson armchairs are quite different, made of oak with simpler forms, low-relief carving, and much less ornament. They in turn are closer in design and execution to Horace H. Furness's dining room chairs. These differences and similarities indicate that Furness had different effects in mind for different rooms and suggest that he deliberately outsourced different designs to different cabinetmakers. It is also possible that different designs for a single commission could have been assigned to different craftsmen in one large workshop, such as Pabst's.

Now correctly identified with their original context, the Gibson House armchairs offer significant insights into Furness's work for one of his most important clients. Made of walnut, the library table from this commission was highly finished and richly decorated, befitting its central, permanent location in a "cabinet" of art. In contrast, the chairs he designed for Gibson had a utilitarian, quasi-public function, moving around the house and gallery to meet the needs of visitors, and thus had simpler, more abstract forms and decoration. Made of oak, the chairs' combination of turned and rectangular elements gave them an almost machinelike quality that recalls Furness's staircase railing at the Pennsylvania Academy, with its cylinders and disks, described by Michael J. Lewis as "a stair hall from a dream world of crankshafts and turbines."[19]

Over the course of the twentieth century, the fate of the Gibson House armchairs followed a common trajectory for

Victorian furniture: once removed from their original, domestic context, they were used as institutional furniture until their style became unacceptable to modernist purists. Discarded as ugly and outmoded, they fortunately were rescued by art students who appreciated either their quirky individuality or their sturdy functionality. Now restored to its original appearance, the Philadelphia Museum's chair has returned to an institutional setting as a striking example of Furness's innovative interpretations of English reform aesthetics during the late 1860s and early 1870s.

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Detail of newel posts and lamps, Main Hall, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Library of Congress, Historic American Buildings Survey.

Notes

1. Standard references on Furness include James F. O'Gorman, *The Architecture of Frank Furness* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1973); George E. Thomas, Jeffrey A. Cohen, and Michael J. Lewis, *Frank Furness: The Complete Works* (Rev. ed. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996); and Michael J. Lewis, *Frank Furness: Architecture and the Violent Mind* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2001).
2. David Hanks, "Reform in Philadelphia: Frank Furness, Daniel Pabst, and 'Modern Gothic' Furniture," *Art News* 74 (October 1975), pp 52, 54; Wendy Kaplan, "The Furniture of Frank Furness," *The Magazine Antiques*, vol. 131 (May 1987), pp. 1088-95.
3. Kaplan, 1987, pp. 1090-91.
4. Bruce J. Talbert, *Gothic Forms Applied to Furniture, Metal Work, and Decoration for Domestic Purposes* (Boston: J. R. Osgood & Company, 1873), pl. 15; Owen Jones and Jules Goury, *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of the Alhambra* (London: n. p., 1842), vol. 1, plate 4; Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (London: Day and Son, 1856), plate 71.
5. Hanks 1975, p.54.
6. Kaplan 1987, p.1095.
7. Memorandum from Robert Stubbs to T. N. Armstrong, May 3, 1872, Archives, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia (hereafter PAFA archives).
8. Ibid.
9. Bruce Samuelson to David A. Hanks, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, June 27, 1995. Photocopy of original in American Art department accession files, Philadelphia Museum of Art. The armchair in London was published in Christopher Wilk, "Recent Acquisitions of Furniture and Woodwork at the Victoria and Albert Museum," *The Burlington Magazine* 135 (June 1993), p. 445.
10.. The present whereabouts of these chairs are unknown; the dining room table is in the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia (Donald C. Peirce, *Art & Enterprise: American Decorative Arts, 1825-1917*, The Virginia Carroll Crawford Collection (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1999), cat. 217).
11. These dining room chairs are owned by Horace H. Furness's descendants; one example is illustrated in Kaplan 1987, Fig. 5.
12. Receipt book, 1876-78, nos. 704, 726, 835, 856, 939, PAFA archives.
13. *Artistic Houses; Being a Series of Interior Views of a number of the Most Beautiful and Celebrated Homes in the United States* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1883), vol. 1, part 2, p. 149.
14. Arnold Lewis, James Turner, and Steven McQuillin, *The Opulent Interiors of the Gilded Age: All 203 Photographs from* Artistic Houses (New York: Dover Publications, 1987), p. 66.
15. "System in Art," *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), July 18, 1871, p. 2. I am grateful to Michael Lewis for bringing this reference to my attention.
16. *Artistic Houses* 1883, vol. 1, part 1, p. 149; Lewis 2001, p. 83.
17. Hanks 1975, p. 54; David A Hanks and Page Talbott, "Daniel Pabst–Philadelphia Cabinetmaker," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 73 (April 1977), pp. 18-20.
18. David A. Hanks, "Daniel Pabst: Philadelphia Cabinetmaker," *Art & Antiques* 3 (January-February 1980), p. 101.
19. Lewis 2001, p. 103.

Collecting. . .

"Blooks"

MINDELL DUBANSKY

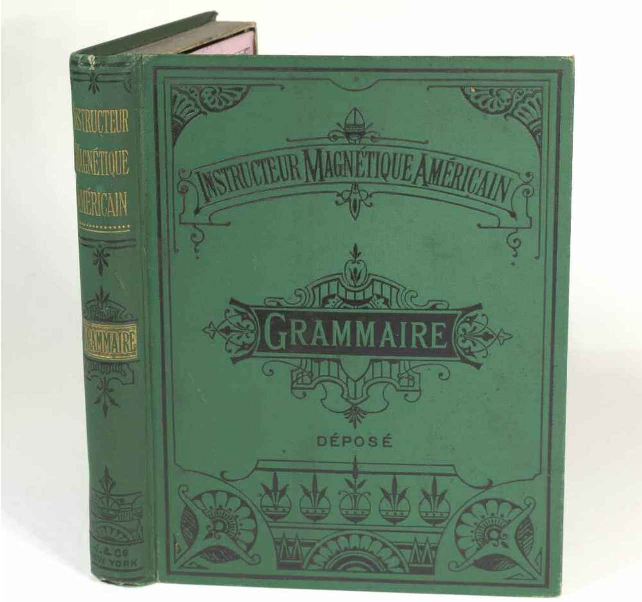
This January, New York's Grolier Club will host the first American exhibition about the panoply of evocative and amusing objects that have been made in the appearance of books. I call these *blooks*, an abbreviation of "book-look." Although blooks have been with us for hundreds of years, those hand-made and commercially manufactured during the Victorian era (1820-1920) are among the most diverse, authentic and well made. The exhibition, *Blooks: The Art of Books That Aren't*, which opens in late January 2016, will include more than 130 objects from my collection, including many created during the Victorian era. I invite members of the Victorian Society in America to visit the exhibition and contribute their feedback on this initial attempt to classify and present this newly defined genre that touches on the history of the decorative arts, book arts and material culture.

My interest in blooks germinated from my passion for actual books. Throughout my adult life, I have been immersed in the enjoyment, study, making and conservation of books. I love everything about them, including their ability to transform, educate and inspire, their staggering beauty, their smell, sound and feel. I love them for their durability, companionship and power of encouragement. When I look at books, it is impossible for me not to connect emotionally and intellectually with their makers. I often imagine their bookmaking journey and try to observe evidence of their tribulations, successes and failures. The use of the book motif, especially the codex, in the design of objects has existed for over a thousand years. As a result, blook and book cultures have a parallel existence, and blooks provide a revealing side-angle view on the use and meaning of real books.

Well before the Victorian era, makers and manufacturers realized that infusing an object with the bookish qualities of an iconic book, or even just the generic form of a book, creates a strong and often pleasurable emotional attachment to the object analogous to our connection to a favorite book, and this, in turn, increases the marketability of the objects. This is perhaps why the book motif is so frequently used for the design of decorative objects, when other forms would suffice. Whatever its genesis, there is a strong sensual and psychological connection to the image of the book independent of its ability to be read. This comes as no surprise to bibliophiles, who understand that, in addition to knowledge, the book embodies beauty, relaxation, learning, spiritual enhancement and interpersonal connection. Blooks are commentaries on books and are similar to them in many respects. They share subjects, titles, usage, physical formats, binding styles, decorative motifs, materials and techniques.

Fine hand-made and inexpensive mass-produced book objects were common in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were made to decorate the home and adorn the individual. Some are practical objects and others are decorative, or have greater meaning as talismans and love tokens. Many blooks serve a dual purpose as both a practical object and a commercial advertisement. Book-shaped match boxes, stamp cases, and needle cases, engraved or printed with the name of a company are examples of this common practice. The blook was also popular as a souvenir item, often made from site-specific materials, such as local stone, wood, metal or other materials. Examples of these are the marble paperweights and Sorrento ware boxes that were souvenirs of the Grand Tour, the carved pipestone books, made only in very few North American locations, the trench "bullet" lighters made from the refuse of the battlefields during the First World War and the folk art spruce gum boxes made by the loggers of North America. While many of the blooks are artistic works that exist primarily for their beauty or meaning alone, most are practical, everyday objects. They can be as humble as a matchbox or as luxurious as a gold bracelet. Whatever the use, blooks were special objects that were saved and treasured. They were made in a tremendous variety, for many purposes, for people of many countries, ages, sexes and social status. Their broad range is indicated by the thematic

Biscuit tin, School Books. Huntley & Palmers, Reading, England, 1910.



(L to R): Instructeur Magnétique Américain, Grammaire Déposé (grammar game), J & Company, New York. Trick snake book, c. 1900.

categories I used to classify them—religion, commemoration, photography, travel souvenirs, stimulating substances, food and candy, grooming and fashion, needlework, household items, books and writing, gags, props, and games and toys.

Blooks often mimic the forms and titles of particular genres of books, such as religion, poetry, literature, history, self-help, reference and instructional books. As it is widely regarded as being the best-selling book of all time, the Bible is a logical model for blooks, and several examples of blooks emulating Bibles and other devotional books are included in the exhibition, including a nineteenth century American maple sugar mold and a large German sewing box made in emulation of a family Bible. The blooks in this genre were used for the same purposes as the religious books they mimicked. They were held close to the body for spiritual solace and protection from ill forces, and they were placed visibly in the home as emblems of piety.

There are also numerous instances of secular objects made in imitation of books from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many will be familiar to readers, as they are often seen at antique fairs and in books about collectibles. They are gift and souvenir items made of the many techniques common to the period, such as shell-work, straw-work, Mauchline ware, tartanware, Sorrento ware and printed tin ware. A lovely example of a blook imitating a popular book is *Friendships Offering*, a daguerreotype case made to resemble a gift book of the same title and bound in a traditional gold-tooled leather binding.

Blooks falling into the genres of writing, stationery and book repair often look very much like real books. They sometimes have believable book titles and utilize traditional bookbinding materials and binding styles, such as the ubiquitous half-leather binding. Many blooks were produced in multiples or were designed as single items made to look like a group of books, in emulation of sets and series such as encyclopedias, sets of classic literature and history, and practical series. Examples of this are a wood and printed-paper pencil box designed to look like a shelf of literary classics, the well-known two-volume game backgammon/chess/checker boards with titles like *Evening Pastimes* and *Life of Hoyle*, and the Huntley & Palmers book-shaped biscuit tin *School Books*.

Some blooks are quite passive objects. For example, memorial blooks carved from a single piece of solid material such as stone or wood, are simple objects, yet they are imbued with great emotional feeling. Probably the most passive use of a blook is its most common use, which is as an unassuming receptacle for hiding, storing and protecting treasured or secret objects. Book boxes and book safes imitate a book's ability to disappear on the shelf and protect its contents. Conversely, book boxes can also serve to focus attention on and enhance their contents. Examples of these are the decorative printed or painted tins made as store displays and food storage.

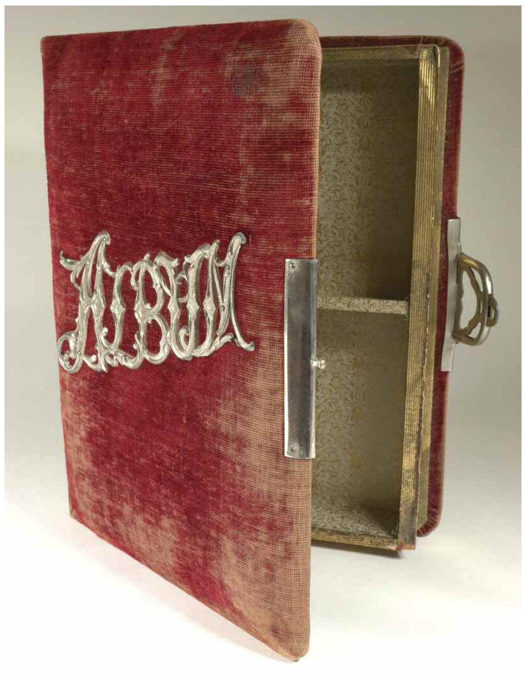
Active blooks are dynamic objects that engage, surprise and sometimes, both literally and figuratively, shock their readers. While book-shaped containers can be beautiful objects, it is the interactive blooks that interest me the most because they are creative, fun and enjoyable to share. I have included many examples of dynamic blooks in the exhibition, including the *Instructeur Magnétique Américain* grammar game, a folk art snake trick box, a sewing kit titled *The Gem*, and *Be Prepared*, an exploding novelty book.

Most people associate blooks with kitsch and humor and have not experienced those that are somber, thought-provoking, elegant and emotionally poignant. I have endeavored to present a diverse selection of blooks, including those that commemorate the personal loss of a loved one, such as the *In Memory* slate book; celebrate important life events, such as the carved wooden wedding box made for Hattie Amanda Johanson; or are the product of an historic event, such as the beautiful, detailed straw-work sewing box made by an unknown French prisoner during the Napoleonic Wars.

On the flip side are the playful, humorous and sometimes slightly vulgar blooks. While these objects would be funny even if they weren't in book form, it is perhaps because the book is such a significant cultural object that blooks are so funny when they turn out to be pranks. Take for example the well-known Bennington book flasks, or the flask *Secrets of the American Cup; or, the Cause of the Controversy.*

Students of bookbinding history will be interested in the ways in which bookbinding styles have been interpreted as blooks. Account books, albums, fine bindings, and trade bindings have all been translated into decorative elements of blooks. One of the most used styles is the archetypal half-leather binding with raised cords and gold or marbled edges. This is the binding that is most often associated with nineteenth-century reference works, history books and literary classics, and the style people think of when they are asked to describe a "real book."

Many blooks are modelled after photograph and scrap albums and autograph books. Examples are *Tylar's Unique Negative Storer*, an accordion construction in a book box for the housing of glass negatives; *Album*, a realistic velvet-covered box made for the storage of cartes-de-visite; and *Photograph Album*, an altered book safe that includes a photograph of Abraham Lincoln and his son Tad. The remaking of books into book objects is an old practice. Individuals have practiced it regularly throughout time, especially as it relates to the making of hollowed-out books for containing objects. There have been several periods in time when the practice has also been used widely by small manufacturers. One of these is the nineteenth-century French practice of hollowing out books to make bars, inkwells and boxes for the tourist trade.



Cartes-de-visite box, *Album*. Maker unknown, c. 1900.

In the exhibition and catalog you will see many examples of blooks that were inspired by particular genres and titles of books. The single object that turned my interest in blooks into a desire to collect and seriously study them is a humble blook made to resemble a prayer book, carefully carved from anthracite coal, which I purchased over twenty years ago at a Manhattan flea market. Much later, thanks to assistance from staff of the Anthracite Museum in Scranton, I discovered that the coal book was made to commemorate the life and untimely death of a Pennsylvania miner, James Fagen (February 14, 1875–July 22, 1897). Fagen was killed in a mining accident, leaving behind a young wife and child. When I first held this powerful object in the palm of my hand, I was surprised that I had a visceral response of sorrow, even though I knew nothing yet of its maker or the man it memorialized. This powerful emotional experience was the catalyst for my future desire to study the material culture of book objects and their connection to the history of the book.

For those of you who are interested in knowing more about blooks, as very few appear in reference books, one must look to other sources for information on their invention, development and context. Information can be found in books and websites geared to collectors, and in exhibition and auction catalogs. Some of the best resources are people who are experts in their respective fields. Nothing is more satisfying than the ability to engage with others who share one's interest, as they not only offer valuable information and the benefit of their experience, but also often provide support and encouragement.

All researchers and collectors long to find primary resource materials relating to their subject. For blooks, there are several sources: the objects themselves, the packaging material and instructions for use that accompany the objects, and descriptions and images of the objects in patents, trade catalogs, advertisements and contemporary periodicals. These documents are a treasure trove of primary resource information about blooks. As they were made for many purposes and audiences, over a long period of time and throughout the world, the sources they appear in are varied and interesting in themselves. The Internet and digitization have made it possible both to acquire the objects and to locate many previously elusive reference materials.

Inventors never tire of exploring the potential of the book format when designing objects for public consumption. The great number of patents for blooks tell us many things about their history. Among these are the name and abode of the inventor and manufacturer, the date of patent, other related patents, an object's intended purpose and how an object functions. A patent also includes technical drawings of an object that are helpful in their interpretation. Additionally, patents can be used to trace the evolution of a particular type of object and help one to understand the historic scope of a genre.

Blook patents indicate that the primary purpose of the manufactured book object is to be a practical and decorative container, and that such a container will add to the interest and profitability of that object. There was a boom of American patented blooks in the late nineteenth century, beginning in the 1860s, with a book-shaped pocket lantern, patented in 1861. Early in the 1870s, patents were granted for lunch boxes, book safes, flasks, office boxes and funeral ornaments. In the 1880s, these trends continue with the addition of stamp and medicine boxes, games, toys and book cameras. The 1890s brings more photographically related blooks, writing desks the introduction of the book bank. Since then, patents for blooks have appeared with regularity.

In trade catalogs, one can glean information about individual blooks and gain an understanding of their historical context. In the nineteenth century, when many people did not have ready access to shops and commercial merchandise, they depended on illustrated catalogs such as *The Inventors Agency Catalog* to provide them with a wide variety of useful and amusing objects for the family. This issue from 1878 includes only one book object, a postage stamp holder "made in the pattern of a small book."

Since that time, blooks have been advertised for sale in the mail-order catalogs of department stores, novelty companies and magic prop manufacturers, and wholesalers. The catalogue descriptions tell us about an object's design and color variants, marketing strategies, intended audience and price structure.

In conclusion, the study of book objects is a new field, and the Grolier Club exhibition and catalog are an early effort to illustrate its history and content. I sincerely hope that the members of the Victorian Society and readers of this journal will join me in the effort to shed light on the blooks of the Victorian era.

Blooks: The Art of Books That Arent Book Objects from the Collection of Mindell Dubansky.

January 28-March 12, 2016
Grolier Club, 47 East 60th Street
New York, NY • (212) 838-6690

Curator-led, free public tours of the exhibition every Thursday, 1-2 p.m., beginning January 28, 2016

To learn more about *"blooks"*, visit:
aboutblooks.blogspot.com

The Bibliophilist

How to Be Victorian: A Dawn-to-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life

Ruth Goodman, Liveright Publishing, 2014.

Ever wonder how exactly to make a sheep-gut condom? What it's really like to wear a corset? What would happen if you didn't wash your hair for a month? How to make toothpaste from cuttlefish bone? Or whether there are any special techniques for using a chamber pot? Well, no, neither did I. But the answers to these and many other similarly arcane questions about life in Britain are to be found between the covers of *How to Be a Victorian: A Dawn-to-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life*, researched, written, and intrepidly lived by Ruth Goodman (who, incidentally, prefers soot-based toothpaste to the type made from cuttlefish bone).

Goodman has made an unconventional career out of her investigations into British social history, specifically, the domestic quotidiana of ordinary people from the Tudor period to the mid-twentieth century. Self-described as a freelance historian, she works outside the theory-bound realms of academe and immerses herself in the physical demands of whatever period she becomes involved with. She doesn't–for instance–merely don costumes that look like their Tudor or Victorian equivalents but with zippers or modern underwear beneath; instead, she sews them herself, by hand when necessary, with authentic fabrics and closures and with every layer complete and period-correct. She eats what her subjects would eat (suet pastry, pig's trotters, roly-poly pudding, and brawn–which is jellied pig's head), she cooks the way her subjects would cook (which at one point resulted in an inadvertent petticoat fire), and she has undergone what she wryly terms "authentic laundry experiences," which, she writes, served to convince her that the "powered washing machine (is) one of the great bulwarks of women's liberation." She has parlayed this expertise into a series of television shows with the BBC: *Tudor Monastery Farm*, *Victorian Farm*, *Victorian Pharmacy*, *Edwardian Farm*, and *Wartime Farm*. She consulted on the film *Shakespeare in Love* and presently consults for the Victoria & Albert Museum, as well as other museum and British Heritage attractions.

How to Be a Victorian arose from her combined experiences on the *Victorian Farm* and *Victorian Pharmacy* series, as well as her ongoing research into the era and its daily routines. She blended more conventional research (i.e., that involving books, magazines, newspapers, diaries and other written records) with her personal experiments recreating recipes, following domestic manuals, using tools and machinery from the period, and generally scrutinizing every aspect of daily life that any given period and culture regards as self-explanatory: but of course you sleep with your windows open! It would be "madness to sleep in a room without ventilation—it is inhaling poison." The Victorians would probably be as horrified to learn of our corset-less existence and daily hair-washing regimes as my daughter was to contemplate tight-lacing and a shampoo-less personal hygiene ritual.

Leaving aside much of what conventional histories regard as important–government, politics, business, technology, literature, the arts–Goodman focuses instead on what it was really like to be alive at the time, and what the ordinary citizen experienced in the course of an ordinary day in England. To that end, the book is organized– as its subtitle suggests–around the shape of such a day. The first chapter, for example, is called "Getting Up," and starts, "It began with a shiver." Being cold, it seems, was an essential aspect of being Victorian; typically, few homes or even workplaces were heated. We then proceed to the stand-up wash, for indoor plumbing was also a late and very high-end development for the period. Cleanliness was deeply important to Victorians, but the details–down to dusting powder, toothpaste recipes, and (yes) even the euphemistically named "sanitary towels"–are revealed to be quite different from our modern means of achieving cleanliness.

After "Getting Up," our Victorians get dressed, make "A Trip to the Privy," groom themselves, take some exercise, have breakfast, and go to work ("The Main Business of the Day"). Each of these activities is dissected, in a separate chapter, for our consideration–and often horror, or awe–to an astounding level of detail. We learn what their underwear looks like, how "night soil" was dealt with, what a hat signaled about its wearer, how fashions in facial hair fluctuated wildly over the course of the period (as it does indeed in our own), and the always fascinating topic of what wearing a corset does to the human body. Goodman's own experience wearing a corset over an extended period of time results in the following gem:

> At the end of the day, when I took off my corset, there was always a strange moment–an odd sensation when everything tried to return to its natural shape. I felt my ribcage re-inflating, which took a rather disconcerting five or six seconds.

After dealing with issues of toilette, the book becomes in many ways much more serious and unsettling. Goodman considers air pollution so thick at times in London that delivery men employed boys to hold a hand to the horse and knock a foot against the invisible curb to keep them on track. She addresses workplace safety at a time when new machinery was developed with little regard for loss of life or limb: "Deaths and injuries at work were greeted, in the main, with fatalism. Accidents 'happened.'" Child labor was an essential component of the Victorian national and household economy; universal schooling developed late in the period (and it included liberal applications of corporal punishment). Medicine is another area that leaves the modern reader agog: infants were habitually given "soothing tonics" containing opiates, to the extent that Goodman writes, "Drug abuse was widespread among Victorian babies." Cocaine, heroin, chloroform, morphine, and opium were also readily obtainable and widely used (or abused) by adults, with the result that "addiction, therefore, became a staple of the Victorian experience."

As the "day" described by the arc of the book winds down, we learn about leisure activities from child's play to organized sporting activities such as football (soccer), rugby, boxing, and horse racing; what constituted the evening meal; bathing before bed; and–voyeuristically–what went on "Behind the Bedroom Door." Debate raged in Victorian times over (male) masturbation and whether or not a woman could conceive if she had not "enjoyed" the sexual act. Goodman researched Victorian contraception resulting in the fascinating sheep-gut condom experiment ("the handwork required is remarkably precise and complex."). Although at times the details covered in the book range from the amusing to the tragic, the banal to the horrifying, the cumulative result paints an impressive portrait of life captured in a particular place and time in history. I'll give the author the last word on that:

> All these people, ordinary in so many ways, seem to me heroic in their endurance, fortitude, love and commitment to their families.

Reviewed by Ingrid Steffensen

The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement

Exhibition, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2015. Anna O. Marley, curator. Accompanying catalogue edited by Anna O. Marley. Essays by Anna O. Marley, Virginia Grace Tuttle, Alan C. Braddock, Erin Leary, Katie F. Pfohl, James Glisson, and Judith B. Tankard. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement, 1887-1920, a traveling exhibition that originated earlier this year in Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), features a stunning array of gardens depicted in works of art by some of America's finest late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century American Impressionist painters. Organized by Dr. Anna O. Marley, the museum's Curator of Historical American Art, the show travels to the Chrysler Museum of Art (Norfolk, VA, June 16-September 6, 2015); the Reynolda House Museum of American Art (Winston-Salem, NC, October 1, 2015-January 3, 2016); The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens (San Marino, CA, January 23-May 9, 2016); and the Florence Griswold Museum (Old Lyme, CT, June 3-September 18, 2016). It is accompanied by a catalogue featuring an introduction and an essay by Marley along with contributions and chapters by noted scholars, including art, landscape, and garden historians.

A quotation by landscape gardener (and landscape architect) Beatrix Farrand from "The Garden as a Picture" (*Scribner's Magazine*, July 1907) opens the exhibition with an important message regarding "the two arts of painting and garden design." Farrand describes these as "closely related, except that the landscape gardener paints with actual color, line, and perspective to make a composition...while the painter has but a flat surface on which to create his illusion." This connection sets the stage for Virginia Grace Tuttle, a garden historian, who goes on to state in her essay in the exhibition catalogue that Farrand was among those of her generation to promote the "creation of a distinctly American garden." Tuttle also makes mention of "dearly loved" and "old-fashioned gardens" that have created a "dignified" connection to bygone times. This seems appropriate. As Colonial Revival themes in American history painting gained popularity particularly after the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial and throughout the early twentieth century for their didactic, symbolic, and nostalgic reminders of our national past, it is likely that works of art featuring traditional gardens and characters have served a similar purpose. Marley emphasizes the role of the American Garden Movement as the context for the period served by the exhibition as well as the proliferation of suburban gardens planted by members of a "robust middle class" who could now live outside cities thanks to commuter railroads. She also discusses the connection between the "horticultural impulse in American Impressionist art at the turn of the twentieth century" and new "interest in public health" that led to portrayals of gardens "on paper, canvas and glass."

Utilizing the techniques, palette, light, and relatively unmixed colors characteristic of French Impressionism, paintings demonstrating the distinctive American version of the Impressionist painting style featuring gardens and human figures fill this extraordinary show. By the late 1880s, American artists had begun to absorb Impressionist theories and methods when they studied and travelled abroad, particularly in France, and when they visited exhibitions in Boston and New York–most prominently beginning with the 1886 exhibition at the Durand-Ruel gallery. (For further information on connections and relevance, see Paul Durand-Ruel: *The Gamble of the Impressionists*, on view at the Philadelphia Museum of Art during the summer of 2015.) It is also not surprising that on returning to the United States, these American painter-gardeners often chose to live in the new suburban communities or in artists' colonies, which provided the space for the development of the flower gardens that would supply sources for the iconography of their works.

The exhibition is divided into five sections: American Artists/European Gardens; The Lady in the Garden; The Artist's Garden; The Urban Garden; and The Garden in Winter/ Garden at Rest. The artists represented are among the finest of the time. For example, "The Artist's Wife in a Garden" of 1889 by the prolific Childe Hassam provides a view within Villiers-le-Bel–a quintessential example of the artist's use of the Impressionist palette and style, while incorporating an important figure (his wife) to ground the scene. Philip Leslie Hale's major work (chosen to illustrate the cover of the exhibition catalogue), "The Crimson

Rambler" of ca. 1908 (in the Pennsylvania Academy collection) features a large floral rambler rose and a prominent human figure, both idealized. Then, with a substantial display of important artists too numerous to mention, one moves through the five areas of the show to view paintings that epitomize not only the beauty and methods of the American Impressionist style, but to find intriguing variations of the garden story. For example, William Merritt Chase's *Wash Day* of 1896 is a painting of an urban backyard garden, but at the same time not a traditional garden at all, since the area is a laundry–a not uncommon use of such garden space at the time. Major Pennsylvania artists are appropriately represented, e.g., Daniel Garber, most notably in *The Orchard Window* of 1918. Also included are works by some of the important female artists of the day, including Cecilia Beaux and Maria Oakey Dewing; several of these artists had connections to PAFA during their careers.

While the exhibition itself is clearly appealing for members of several constituencies, including art historians, gardeners, and the sophisticated general public, the accompanying volume of essays by various scholars has provided opportunities to expand the subject into diverse topics. Edited by Anna Marley, the catalogue's introduction effectively sets the stage for the book's subject as well as the exhibition. Immediately following is Virginia Tuttle's essay containing an exploration of the many sources for garden paintings including the proliferation of illustrated magazines with large circulations: glorious photographs of beautiful suburban gardens; as well as books on gardening and the Arts and Crafts movement. She also examines nationalistic impulses, cultural associations, and the strong influence of France, especially Monet's gardens at Giverny (which still exist, beautifully preserved). Indeed, Tuttle makes a good case for the serious interest of French and American Impressionists in garden painting, a subject wholly suitable to "the optical sensations of light and color."

From these beginnings, other authors have delved into issues dealing with conservation debates and bird protection concerns, including the use of bird feathers in women's hats (described as offensive). Among other issues, Alan C. Braddock discusses Celia Thaxter's readings of meanings into her beautiful flowers beyond their beauty, e.g., the concept of plants growing next to one another as "friends." And Erin Leary oddly points to gardeners motivated by "impulses behind restrictionist (immigration) efforts...exclusionary politics." (Are we to really believe that plants are stand-ins for their ancestors? Do we subscribe to a notion that "tall grasses" and "specific flowers" denote "homeowner's political positions ?") From these questionable theories, the succeeding chapters' authors return to more straightforward assessments, including Katie A. Pfohl's connections of chromolithography to the proliferation of American Impressionism, James Glisson's effective essay on the relationship of the new style as it related to the iconography of urban parks, and Judith B. Tankard's fine discussion of the role of women in American landscape architecture and residential garden design.

This exhibition, then, focuses on garden paintings produced between 1887 and 1920, depicting various places, including cities, parks, suburban backyards, and artists' colonies. Whether the time of the year that provided the context for the works was fall, winter, spring, or summer, there can be little doubt that artists of the day were intently focused on the quality of their work, and this show pays serious homage to those efforts and successes. It is also interesting to ponder new–if sometimes controversial, even far-fetched–theories and speculations by later historians as to the meanings of these historic works. In the end, this exhibition makes a significant statement, and together with its catalogue hopefully lays the groundwork for much to come.

Reviewed by Barbara J. Mitnick

Isaiah Rogers: Architectural Practice in Antebellum America

James F. O'Gorman. University of Massachusetts Press, 2015.

The excellent first line of James F. O'Gorman's new book, "Those who would search for lasting fame should think twice about the practice of architecture," is more applicable to American architects of some periods than others. His subject, Isaiah Rogers, had the misfortune to live and practice in a period that scholarly, professional and popular communities routinely overlook. Within American visual culture, the antebellum period tends not to attract the same enthusiasm as the Revolution and Civil War that bookend it. At the same time, heroic accounts of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries tend to hold even greater interest among architectural historians and critics. As a result, the past ten years have seen publications on architects who flourished on both sides of this dark age but very little within it, with numbers increasing for twentieth-century architects of more overtly modernist stripes.

Isaiah Rogers: Architectural Practice in Antebellum America reveals part of the story that we have been missing. Isaiah Rogers (1800-69) is somewhat lesser known than his peers Thomas U. Walter, Minard Lafever, and Ithiel Town, whose greater contributions to professionalization, more robustly stylish designs, and East Coast addresses have attracted more attention from scholars. Rogers's story diverges from theirs in important particulars, including his broader geographic sweep and the character of his work, both of which expand our understanding of antebellum architecture and its practice. Illustrated with 85 photographs and drawings selected to represent, as much as possible, the original condition of his buildings and their environments, the book focuses on Rogers's working methods as much, or perhaps more than, the buildings resulting from these efforts. O'Gorman largely draws his narrative from the extraordinary trove of Rogers's surviving daybooks and other resources collected by Denys Peter Myers over fifty years. It is in this finely-grained study of Rogers's career that that the book really shines. Although more laconic than a historian might prefer, the architect's diaries record the details of daily work that create a comprehensive portrait of practice that is difficult to assemble for any period, especially so for the early nineteenth century. In short, O'Gorman presents Rogers's buildings not as the *fait accompli* typically described in more formalist studies but rather as the result of lengthy periods of hard work as recorded through the architect's own reflections on his daily activities.

Six dense chapters chart the arc of Rogers's "oscillatory" life; like few others of his generation, he took advantage of the new networks of transportation throughout the growing country. After training and early work in Massachusetts, he moved his practice to New York, Boston, and back again during the 1840s, then far westward to the booming towns of Cincinnati and Louisville through the 1860s. After a brief period of discouragement marked by idle time and poor health, in 1862 Rogers entered a federal position in Washington for three years, after which he concluded his days in Massachusetts. An appendix charts Rogers' enormous output executed during a forty-six-year career of some 315 buildings in 17 states (almost half of the 37 that existed at the time of his death).

Success stories of Rogers's best-known, monumental works (and several that deserve to be better known) are told along with descriptions of simpler structures of the sort that rarely capture historians' attention. Studies of exemplary projects reveal Rogers's capacity in variety of both conventional and new building types, including churches, houses, theaters, banks, city halls, custom houses, and, above all, hotels. Widely regarded as the country's first world-class luxury establishment, the Tremont House in Boston (1828-29) established Rogers as the country's hotel expert. A simple structure of Quincy granite, nearly astylar but for a Grecian tetrastyle portico and other subdued details, Tremont House also epitomized Rogers's straightforward approach to design. His habitual use of the words "plan" and "sketch" rather than "design" to describe his work at the drafting board is telling. With the exception of a few Gothic interludes and a singular flirtation with Egyptian motifs, most of Rogers's buildings tend toward severe trabeated structures with Grecian quotations constrained to porticoes and occasional rooftop *tholoi*—a bit of the Tower of the Winds here, a recollection of Choragic Monument of Lysicrates there. While the architect's simple taste consistently attracted a long line of clients, it also drew criticism from some who perceived too much of the cotton factory in his monumental hotels. In truth, and in comparison with his more bookish Grecophile peers, Rogers did not excel at formal design. Uninterested in stylistic statements, when he did stray from the trabeated Grecian model he often ran into compositional trouble, as seen in the incoherent medieval pile he proposed for the Smithsonian Intuition in 1846. Such disorderly elevations seem at odds with the clarity that Rogers could derive in the service of complicated functions on irregular sites; his planning could be as inventive as his facades were dour.

Rogers emerges from this assessment of his strengths and weaknesses as more accomplished within the problem-solving aspects of architecture; O'Gorman describes him as "practicing logistics rather than design." Rogers's daily activities, which often resemble the tasks of today's general contractors, reveal the general nature of architectural practice before the establishment of licensure laws and collegiate programs. Although the work of the architect is often (inaccurately) romanticized as the exercise of individual creative genius, Rogers's life shows that for him, as for most architects through the ages, work was collaborative. He spent comparatively brief periods in isolation imagining stylish tableau; instead, he was in regular contact with the mechanics and draftsmen on whom he depended and with the clients and committees with which he was required to consult. The book's realistic portrayal of Rogers's activities is further enhanced through considerations of the difficulties faced by most architects: unfair competitions, tedious lawsuits, broken partnerships, and unpaid bills.

Rogers's pragmatism determined his utilization of new technologies that improved the efficiency, safety and comfort of his buildings; it also guided his choice of materials, which tended toward locally available stone or brick that altered the character of his architecture. This approach to choosing and arranging materials has been highlighted as a way to leverage some respect from admirers of mid-twentieth-century Modernist architecture. O'Gorman offers the "Boston Granite Style" as an early illustration of the "nature of materials" mantra espoused by Frank Lloyd Wright and later raised as one of Modernism's banners for truth and integrity in architecture. Although such a reading might be construed from selective samples of Rogers' work, like the hefty masonry façade of the Boston Merchants' Exchange of 1840, the idea that Rogers's architectural forms derived wholly from the "nature" of his materials becomes less tenable when we see that interior columns of an unnamed material, decorated with scagliola that imitated Sienese marble, lurk beyond those substantial granite piers. While Rogers did respond to regional conditions insofar as he specified local brick rather than imported granite for inland sites, his attention to other materials within his buildings, especially iron (a wholly plastic material), shows that he was not concerned with exposing its true "nature" or exploiting "the effects achieved from a particular material," as O'Gorman claims. For example, a Gothic hardware store in Cincinnati designed in 1849 bears a hybrid façade of limestone and iron—the latter, assumedly, painted to imitate the former. Even more horrifying to a dyed-in-the-wool Modernist, the fence surrounding the 1850 Hatch House in Cincinnati is iron cast in forms imitating corn stalks while the house itself uses cast iron, terra cotta, and wood in a blend of Italian and Grecian details. A selective reading of Rogers's work might lean toward Modernist sensibility, but a broad view of his polyglot practice suggests otherwise; the architect was not a man of theory and did not record his own stance on matters of materials and style. We regret that O'Gorman remained so true to his stated objectives to take a "broad sweep" of Rogers' career rather than digging into these thorny issues of materiality and representation to shed light on architectural theory in the antebellum era.

Aside from this niggling issue, *Isaiah Rogers* is a significant offering to an overlooked period in American architecture. In taking soundings of Rogers's archives, it suggests the depths of source material that remains to be explored. As an introduction to his subject, O'Gorman graciously opens several doors to further research (this reader spies possibilities for at least a half-dozen potential articles or theses in its pages). In its study of a practitioner at a crucial moment in the development of the profession, the book adds richly to the surprising paucity of publications on the history of professionalization in America. Besides Mary Woods's fine work, *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth-Century America* (1999), readers must parse individual biographical studies (which, again, are all too rare for this timeframe) in hopes of locating a glimpse of a nineteenth-century architect's office. As a biographical study and portrait of practice for one of the country's most prolific antebellum architects, the book helps to fill an unfortunate void and forms a link between the Revolutionary generation led by Latrobe and later Modernist revolutions heralded by Wright.

Reviewed by Jhennifer A. Amundson

Milestones

Munshi Mania

ANNE-TAYLOR CAHILL

It all started with Abdul Karim, an Indian servant with ideas above his station. Initially sent to Queen Victoria's Court as a waiter, he rapidly became something else. Like John Brown before him, he developed an especially close relationship with Victoria much to the chagrin of her court and the Royal Family. Victoria called him handsome, distinguished and a "perfect gentleman."

Creating the fiction that his father was a surgeon-general in the Indian Army and that he himself a high-level clerk, Abdul persuaded Victoria to make him her personal secretary. No more waiting at table. In fact all photos of him acting as such were destroyed at his request on Victoria's command.

Moreover, Abdul became the Queen's *munshi* or teacher of Hindustani language and culture. They spent long hours together daily. So entwined was their relationship that Victoria often signed notes to him "Your loving Mother." When the Munshi became ill the Queen spent a great deal of time visiting him, arranging a special diet and fluffing his pillows. Her family and the Court were dismayed. They called it Munshi Mania.

Further insinuating himself, the Munshi got himself mentioned in the Court Circular and traveled with Victoria in semi-regal state escorted by his cat, his canary, and his own personal servant. On the Royal Train, he appropriated for himself alone the one bathroom reserved for the Ladies in Waiting.

The Munshi complained to Victoria that the press did not pay him enough attention and was most gratified when a French paper mistakenly called him a prince of India.Victoria complained to the British press that the Munshi should be mentioned more often in connection with the Court.

At his insistence the Queen awarded him several honorary orders. She gave him houses at Frogmore, Osborne and Balmoral. The Queen and the Munshi even spent a cozy weekend alone in a secluded spot on the Balmoral estate!

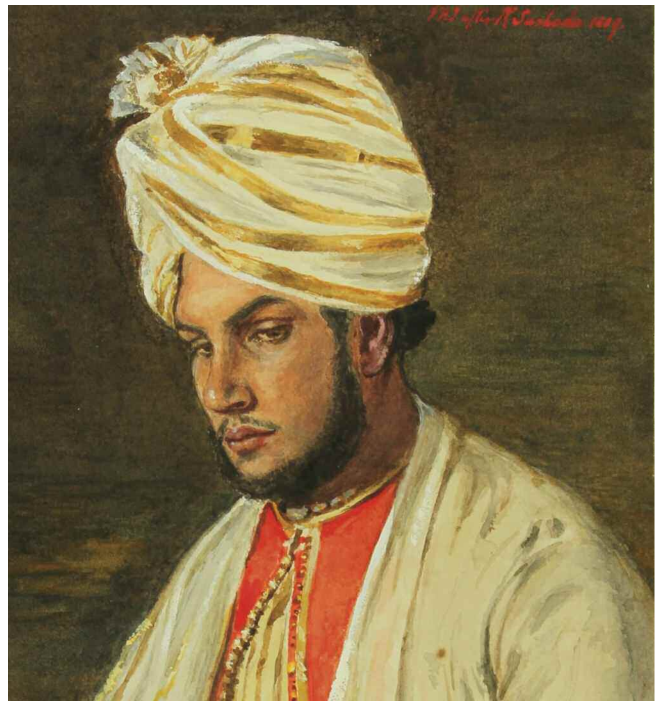
Never satisfied, the Munshi decided to bring over his Indian family and demanded that they should be treated as distinguished guests of the Queen. He was rude and arrogant to just about everyone he came in contact with–except the Queen.

The Royal Family and the Court were disgusted and refused to associate with the Queen's favorite. Deemed furtive and scheming, the complaints against him grew. He was even heard quarreling with the Queen and shouting at her.

Victoria refused to see reality. Eventually Abdul Karim's hubris was his undoing. The Prince of Wales (Victoria's son Albert Edward, the future Edward VII) had had enough. He asked Victoria's physician, Sir James Reid, to speak to the Queen one last time about the Munshi.

For some time, Sir James had been acting as mediator between the Royal Family and the Court on one hand and Victoria on the other on the subject of the Munshi, all to no avail. Victoria was informed by the doctor that her sanity was thought to be in question and that the Prince of Wales himself would attest to this against his mother if need be.

Moreover, the government was extremely concerned that a mere waiter with no real credentials had access to official documents. The Munshi (a Muslim) had even appointed himself advisor to the Queen on Hindu/Muslim policy in India.



The Munshi Abdul Karim (after Rudolf Swoboda), as painted by Queen Victoria, 1889. Courtesy Royal Collection Trust.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee fortunately provided a distraction from Munshi Mania. Things calmed down a bit. However, the Munshi tenaciously hung on until Victoria's death.

Only a few day after the Queen's funeral, the new King's wife Queen Alexandra, Victoria's daughter Princess Beatrice, and several Royal Guards appeared at Abdul's door demanding the handover of all correspondence from the Queen. It all was burnt in a huge bonfire on the lawn in front of the Munshi's house at Frogmore. The former Prince of Wales, now King Edward VII, demanded that the Munshi pack his bags and leave posthaste.

Munshi Mania was over. Abdul Karim died in India a few years later, in 1909.

For further reading:

Shrabani Basu
Victoria and Abdul (Rupa Publications, 2014).

Matthew Dennison
Queen Victoria; a Life of Contradictions
(Wm. Collins Press, 2014).

Kate Hubbard, *Serving Victoria* (Harper & Row, 2013).

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Submissions should be from 2,000 to 6,000 words in length, with illustrations and end notes as necessary. Submissions should be in a Microsoft Word document. Illustrations should be formatted as .jpg, .tiff, .eps or .pdf, 300 dpi or greater and submitted by **January 1** for publication in the Spring issue, and **July 1** for publication in the Fall issue. Manuscripts shall conform to the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*. It shall be the responsibility of the author to secure the rights to publish all images. The Victorian Society in America and the editors assume no responsibility for the loss or damage of any material.

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CONTRIBUTORS FALL 2015

Jhennifer A. Amundson is a professor of architecture and the Interim Dean of the School of Art, Design and Architecture at Judson University. She has recently prepared a monographic study of architect Thomas U. Walter for future publication.

David L. Barquist is the H. Richard Dietrich curator of decorative arts at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the president of the Decorative Arts Society in New York.

Jane Roy Brown is an author, editor, and landscape historian based in western Massachusetts. She is the former director of educational outreach at the Library of American Landscape History, in Amherst, publisher of *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect*.

Anne-Taylor Cahill is a professor of philosophy at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, and serves on the national board of the Victorian Society in America.

Mindell Dubansky is Preservation Librarian and head of the Sherman Fairchild Center for Book Conservation at the Thomas J. Watson Library, the main research library of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Oscar P. Fitzgerald is the author of *Four Centuries of American Furniture*, a standard textbook in the field. He teaches in the Smithsonian/George Mason University masters program in the history of decorative arts and has served as a consultant for a number of nineteenth-century historic houses.

Margaretta S. Frederick is Chief Curator and Annette Woolard-Provine Curator of the Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Collection at the Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

Barbara J. Mitnick is an independent art historian, teacher, curator and author. Her many projects include *Picturing History: American Painting, 1770-1930*, *George Washington: American Symbol* and *The Union League of Philadelphia: The First 150 Years*.

James F. O'Gorman, Professor Emeritus at Wellesley College, has twice won the Victorian Society's Henry-Russell Hitchcock Award. The present article is drawn from a book-length study in progress supported by a Franklin Research Grant from the American Philosophical Society.

Ingrid Steffensen has taught, lectured, and published widely on nineteenth- and twentieth-century art and architecture. She is a freelance writer and author and may be found at www.ingridsteffensen.com.