

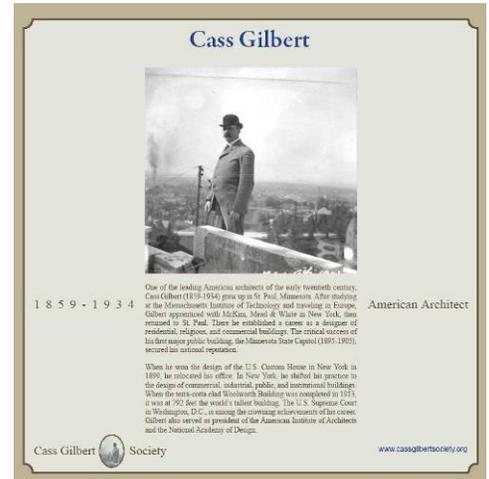


CASS GILBERT SOCIETY

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

150 YEARS OF CASS GILBERT

The Cass Gilbert Society installed its exhibit on the work of Cass Gilbert in the Minnesota State Capitol during the last two weeks of the regular legislative session, May 10-22, 2011. The exhibit had first been installed in the capitol during November 2009 to celebrate Gilbert's 150th birthday. Thanks to a Legacy Grant administered by the Minnesota Historical Society, the exhibit has been doubled in size, providing more information about works designed by Gilbert during his long and fruitful career. Both the location and the timing allowed thousands of visitors to the capitol to learn more about the designer of the Minnesota State Capitol.



MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND AT ROSELAWN CEMETERY

The Roselawn Cemetery Chapel (1902-1904), designed by Cass Gilbert and Thomas Holyoke in the style of a medieval English country church, will be open for visitors on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, **May 28, 29, and 30, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.** There will be an organ concert each day beginning at 11 a.m. on Saturday and Monday, and noon on Sunday. While the cemetery, designed by Gilbert in 1902, is open to visitors all year, the chapel is normally open only for funerals and memorial services. Roselawn Cemetery is at Larpenteur Avenue and Victoria Street, Roseville, Minnesota. For more information, see www.roselawncemetery.com.



Roselawn Cemetery Chapel. Photo: Sonja Mason

SAVE THE DATES: CASS GILBERT AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES IN DETROIT

The Cass Gilbert Society is planning a trip to Detroit, **October 21-23, 2011**, to visit the works of Gilbert and his contemporaries. More detailed information will be sent to members by email once the itinerary is finalized. You may also contact Carolyn Nayematsu at nayem001@umn.edu or 651-699-7407.

WATERBURY REPORT by Ted Lentz

The symposium, **The Legacy of Cass Gilbert and the Revitalization of Our Beautiful City**, was held on April 9, 2011, in Waterbury, Connecticut. It continued the 2011 New Year's Day grand opening celebration of the \$32 million restoration of the Waterbury Municipal Building. Helen Post Curry, Cass Gilbert's great granddaughter, my wife Ona, and I represented the Cass Gilbert Society at this symposium on architecture, history and community revitalization. Local community leaders and restoration architects who worked on the Waterbury Municipal building were joined by nationally recognized architectural historians and preservation leaders to discuss Waterbury's past, present and future.

The symposium participants were Barbara Christen, Ph.D., Cass Gilbert scholar and CGS member, who spoke on "Experiencing the City: Vision, Opportunity & Civic Engagement," providing a historic context for the built environment of the Waterbury community; Matthew D. Hofstedt, M.A., Associate Curator, U.S. Supreme Court, who spoke of Gilbert's design process at the U.S. Supreme Court Building and noted how it, like the Waterbury Municipal Building, has been adaptable over time to changing needs and demands; Alan Platus, Ph.D., Professor of Architecture at Yale University, who worked with Waterbury in 2007 in creating a "design manual" for Waterbury's future development that built upon the existing building stock; and Robert Gryzwacz, DeCarlo and Doll, project architects, who detailed several of the specific problems discovered and their resolution. Tours of the restored building followed the symposium. The Municipal Building appears set for another century of productive use. It brings credit to the entire community and sets the stage for strong, community focused redevelopment.



Participants in the Waterbury symposium. Ted is at the far left

REPORT ON THE TARBOX HOUSE VISIT

On May 7, 2011, a group of Cass Gilbert Society members and friends were welcomed by Ellen and Tom Fridinger to the Tarbox House, a "cottage" designed by Cass Gilbert in 1889 and built on Manitou Island in White Bear Lake, Minnesota. The sprawling Shingle-style house was built as a summer retreat for the Tarbox family. Jasper Tarbox, a shoe manufacturer, had met Gilbert through his business interests in South Park (today in South St. Paul), and he also leased space in the Endicott Rantoul Warehouse. Our visit was enriched by the insights provided by Gilbert scholar and University of Minnesota professor, Kate Solomonson. The Fridingers were the first year-round residents of the house when they purchased it in 1980.



At left: Tarbox House in 1891; photo Minnesota Historical Society. At right: Tarbox House in 2011; photo Marjorie Pearson

Cass Gilbert's Many State Capitols by David G. and Ann Thomas Wilkins

The destruction of the old **West Virginia Capitol** by fire on January 3, 1921, created an opportunity for both the state and Cass Gilbert; the result was a magnificent complex built between 1924 and 1932. The well-documented history of how Gilbert won and fulfilled this commission will be discussed in our forthcoming book on the Capitol (West Virginia University Press, 2012). Our research has, of necessity, engaged us in a study of Cass Gilbert's other state capitol designs.

While no architect of the period had more experience designing capitols than Cass Gilbert, his role in the competitions for the Montana and Wisconsin capitols has not been fully recognized. On April 7, 1921, Gilbert wrote to West Virginia Governor Ephraim Morgan, stating that he would be "very glad to be the architect of the New Capitol Building. I have had much experience in the planning and construction of public buildings. I designed and superintended the State Capitol of St. Paul, Minn., and the reconstruction and completion of the State Capitol at Little Rock, Ark. I won the first prize in the competition for the State Capitol of Montana, but owing to political conditions the enterprise was temporarily abandoned and I was again invited to compete, but declined. I won the competition for the State Capitol at Madison, Wis., but here again the Legislature postponed the work for several years and I was again invited to enter a competition, but declined on the ground that having won it in the first instance I was entitled to proceed. Both the Montana and Wisconsin instances were due, I think, to local political differences in which I had no part and involved no

criticism of myself either in a personal or a professional way."

While it has previously been reported that Gilbert placed second in the Montana competition, his account is supported by the *Architectural Record* for 1899, which identifies his plan as the "First Premiated Design." The report that he also entered the second Montana competition is disproven by his letter.

Cass Gilbert's first place in the Wisconsin competition is documented in the archives at the New-York Historical Society, which preserve a tattered newspaper clipping from the *Milwaukee Free Press* for February 1, 1905, that illustrates a "Design for Wisconsin State Capitol" with the headlines "Plans for New State Capitol, Cass Gilbert's Design Recommended." Across the top in pencil is written "Hurrah for us!! Oh but the other fellows are sore." Ultimately the Wisconsin State Capitol as built was designed by George B. Post and Sons.

Cass Gilbert was also invited to participate in the Utah Capitol competition; he did not enter, nor did other prominent architects, in part because of the manner in which the competition was designed. His September 1, 1911, letter of invitation from the Committee on Competition of the Utah Association of Architects is preserved at the New-York Historical Society.

By 1921, when West Virginia needed a new Capitol, Cass Gilbert was a most logical choice.

Meet Ted Lentz, Cass Gilbert Society President, 2011-2012

Ted Lentz, our new CGS President, a resident of St. Paul for over 40 years, worked as an architect for architectural firms and non-profit organizations, as well as heading his own firm. During the 1970s, Ted worked with the community-based teams that created St. Paul's Historic Hill National Historic District and the City of St. Paul Historic Preservation Commission, wrote or co-authored three books on community preservation efforts in the neighborhoods that border Saint Paul's Summit Avenue, and worked with various community organizations.

Ted earned a Master's degree in Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and a B.A. from Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio. During his four years in Oberlin he lived in, studied in, and was once even hospitalized in buildings Cass Gilbert designed on the Oberlin campus. After over 40 years of architectural practice focused on hospital and healthcare, he retired in 2008 to work as a volunteer architect with non-profit community and arts organizations. He and his wife Ona live at 692 Summit Avenue; they have three adult children and three grandchildren. They have both long been active participants in Cass Gilbert Society tours and lectures.

Ted's primary goals for the next two years are:

- To do as well as the three previous presidents in supporting the work of each board member and the volunteers within the Cass Gilbert Society,
- To work to maintain the standards of scholarship coupled with active participation that have marked the Cass Gilbert Society as an organization since its founding, and
- To take advantage of opportunities that come our way to create better understanding and increase the delight in the works of Cass Gilbert, Minnesota's most important architect.

CASS GILBERT SOCIETY, INC.
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Our Mission

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

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

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Waterbury Municipal Building Interior Staircase
Photos: Barbara Christen

May 2011

Have you renewed your Cass Gilbert Society membership for 2011?

Your membership expiration date is on your mailing label.

You will find a membership form at the Cass Gilbert Society website, www.cassgilbertsociety.org, which you may mail to the address listed above.