



## LECTURE SERIES WILL FEATURE ARCHITECT GAIL FENSKE

Architect and historian Gail Fenske, professor of architecture at Roger Williams University in Bristol, R.I., is the featured speaker at the Cass Gilbert Society's lecture series at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 19, at the University Club, 420 Summit Ave., St. Paul.

Fenske will lecture on Gilbert's most famous contribution to the art of the skyscraper, the Woolworth Building on Broadway in New York City.

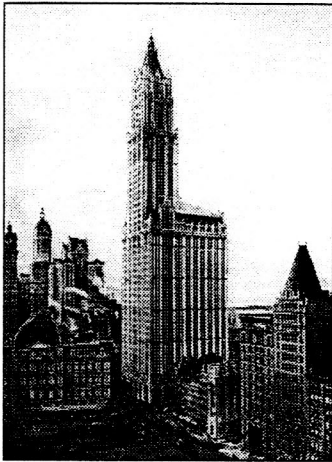
The focus of Fenske's research is 19th-century American and European architecture. She has published numerous articles and essays on Cass Gilbert, on the architecture and the urbanism of the skyscraper, the history of the building technologies and on the reception of European modernism in the United States. She is the author of a book on the Woolworth Building. The book currently is being reviewed for publication.

Fenske earned a Bachelor of Architecture degree at Arizona State University, graduating magna cum laude. Her Master's and Ph.D. degrees

were earned at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her dissertation for her doctorate is titled "The 'Skyscraper Problem' and the City Beautiful: The Woolworth Building."

She has been a member of the faculty in the School of Architecture at Roger Williams University since 1990. Prior to then, she taught at M.I.T. and at Harvard University. She currently serves as president of the New England Chapter, Society of Architectural Historians.

Among Fenske's publications are articles about Cass Gilbert for the "Dictionary of Art" and "The Dictionary of American Art before 1914." Another article, "The Skyscraper and the City: Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building and the



*Illustration of the Woolworth Building from "Master Builders of the World's Greatest Structure." New York, 1913.*

Making of Modern New York," is in the process of publication.

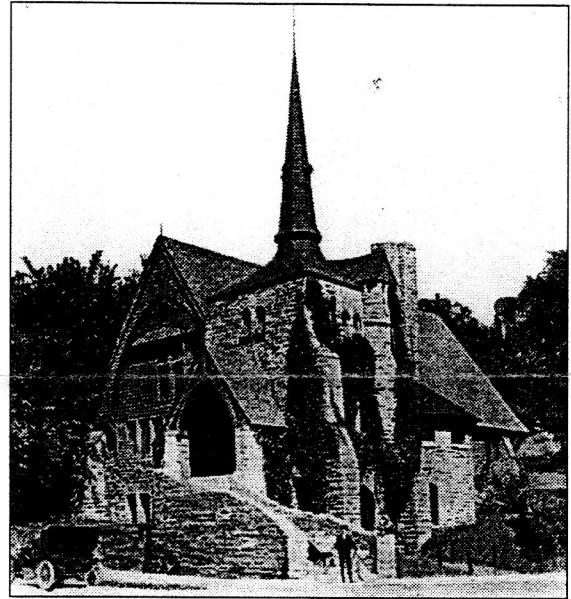
Fenske resides in Winchester, Massachusetts.

Once the world's tallest building, the 55-story Woolworth Building was started in 1910 and completed in 1913. It was not Gilbert's first mark on the Manhattan landscape. He also was the architect for the Broadway-Chambers Building, built 1899-1900. It was on the strength of this commission that Gilbert moved his offices from St. Paul to New York City.

New York's first skyscraper was built for Frank W. Woolworth, who asked Gilbert to model his headquarters after London's 19th-century Gothic Revival houses of Parliament. According to a brochure published by the Alliance for Downtown New York, "Gilbert took Woolworth's request regarding Parliament as license to continue experimenting in secular skyscraper Gothic."

Woolworth was born in Rodman, NY, in 1852. In 1879, he established a "five cent store" at Utica, NY, moving the business to Lancaster, PA, later that year. Out of that business grew a great chain of five and ten cent stores in the United States and several foreign countries. From these stores, Woolworth, the ultimate coin collector, amassed a great fortune.

Woolworth died in 1919, but the company he founded still exists (it recently was renamed the Venator Group), and still is headquartered in the elegant tower designed and built for him by Cass Gilbert.



*Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, Cass Gilbert's favorite building.*

## TOM BLANCK TO LECTURE ON BETHLEHEM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The history of the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, which Cass Gilbert described as his favorite St. Paul building, is the subject of a lecture to be given by architect Tom Blanck at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Nov., 16, at the University Club, 420 Summit Ave., St. Paul.

Blanck, a native of the city and a founder of the Cass Gilbert Society, practices architecture in St. Paul. He is a graduate of the University of Minnesota School of Architecture. His interest in Gilbert stems from working on buildings designed by Gilbert, and from living in St. Paul's Summit area, epicenter of Gilbert's Minnesota architectural legacy.

Blanck currently is completing a survey of the production emanating from Gilbert's St. Paul office from 1882 to 1910. To date, he has located about 150 projects from this prolific era of Gilbert's career. Blanck's survey is supported by the Butler Foundation, the University of Minnesota and the Cass Gilbert Society.

The Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, located at the foot of Ramsey Hill at Pleasant Avenue, has been used for many purposes since serving as a church for a German congregation of Presbyterians. But through the years, its exterior is little changed from its original Cass Gilbert design.

The church was founded by a group of German worshippers at the Goodrich Avenue Presbyterian Church, led by the pastor of their small congregation, the Rev. Niklaus Bolt. Rev. Bolt was born in Lugano, Switzerland, on June 16, 1864, and moved to St. Paul when he was 23.

Construction of the church was completed in 1890 and dedicated on Christmas Day of that year. An article in the Pioneer Press, dated Dec. 26, 1890, describes the ceremony as "very interesting exercises." The morning service started at the Goodrich Avenue Church, located near W. Seventh Street. The congregation then marched "in solemn procession" to the new church, where Rev. Bolt delivered the dedication prayer.

The article lists several prominent people in attendance at the ceremony, including ex-Gov. Ramsey.

It also includes a brief description of the church, noting, "The structure itself is an architectural gem." Interestingly, the article does not identify its architect. Gilbert will get due credit in Blanck's Nov. 16 lecture.

## *From the President*

One of the most rewarding aspects of being president of the Cass Gilbert Society is working with the board of directors and the many volunteers. They come with their diverse and many talents, ready to go to work. Many hours of time in board meetings and major volunteer efforts are shown in our successes. We continue to plan events to make more people aware of the unique talents of Cass Gilbert and advocate to assure his place in architectural history. We welcome your suggestions and help.

Gilbert was a master at combining various historical architectural features, culled from his European travels, into one beautiful structure. His sensitivity eventually placed him as a Beaux Arts architect. Before that, he was a creative risk-taker, as we learned on this summer's Cass Gilbert Stroll.

The stroll, a fundraising event, was conducted on an afternoon when the temperature reached 99 degrees. But despite the heat, 62 stalwart fans showed up to learn about architectural details on 10 houses designed by Gilbert. And learn they did. Because of the turnout, four separate tours left from Nathan Hale Park on Summit Avenue. Participants walked the historic neighborhood, some with parasols and almost all with water jugs in tow. Each tour was led by an architect. We want to say a huge "thank you" to Tom Blanck, Bill Jacobson, Nancy Stark and Charles Locks. Many people taking part in the stroll expressed their appreciation and better understanding of everything from Shingle Style to Colonial Revival, and Queen Anne to Richardson influence. And thanks, too, to the many volunteers who signed up participants and helped us all stay cooler by providing water and areas of shade.

In addition to pointing out details on Cass Gilbert houses, the tour guides talked about the work of Gilbert's associates, James Knox Taylor and Thomas Holyoke. Taylor was a partner with Gilbert for several years, and Holyoke was Gilbert's top draftsman until he left to establish his own practice. Other pieces of information placed Cass and Julia at home in the Blair House during their first year of marriage, where they painted all the walls white and from where Julia wrote to a friend about learning to dust by "opening all the windows and letting the dust blow out."

If you missed the Cass Gilbert stroll and would like to do a self-guided tour, there are plans to reprint the guide booklet. They will be available soon. And, of course, there are many more houses to view and talk about, so new walking tours will be in the works.

Finally, I am most grateful to Gov. Ventura for appointing me to the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board. It is a pleasure to represent the Cass Gilbert Society at these meetings. The board's work now is largely centered on the north side of the Capitol and the interior spaces, such as the Rathskellar. As I gain more knowledge on the workings of this important board in preserving one of Cass Gilbert's most successful achievements, I will keep our members informed. My appointment is for four years...just short of the Centennial Celebration of the building in 2005.

— *Jean Velleu*

THE CASS GILBERT SOCIETY  
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## **HISTORICAL SYMPOSIUM**

The College of Visual Arts, 344 Summit Ave., is sponsoring a three-day symposium October 14-16, to be held at the James J. Hill House, 240 Summit Ave.

Events include a reception and keynote talk by Dr. Kenneth Bendiner from 7 to 9:30 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 14. A panel discussion of Victorian art, architecture and history, including the contributions of Cass Gilbert, will be presented from 3 to 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 15. These events will be at the Hill House.

On Saturday, Oct. 16, from 1 to 4 p.m., there will be an open house at the college and an optional tour of the Hill House. At 6 p.m., the college will conduct an art auction at its gallery, located at Selby and Western avenues.

All events except the art auction are open free to the public. Auction tickets are \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door, and \$35 per couple. The college is requesting those interested in the events make reservations by calling (651) 224-3416.

## **CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP**

The Cass Gilbert Society appreciates the support it has received from area businesses and organizations. Following is a list of the society's current corporate members:

Coat of Many Colors, 1666 Grand Ave., St. Paul.  
Edina Realty, 1050 Grand Ave., St. Paul.  
Grand Avenue Hardware, 1676 Grand Ave., St. Paul.  
Historic Hill Homes, 459 Portland Ave., St. Paul.  
Louisiana Cafe, 613 Selby Ave., St. Paul.  
Macalester College, 1600 Grand Ave., St. Paul.  
Mississippi Market Co-op, 622 Selby Ave., St. Paul.  
St. Clement's Church, 901 Portland Ave., St. Paul.  
The University Club, 420 Summit Ave., St. Paul.

## **RECENT NEW MEMBERS**

The membership committee of the Cass Gilbert Society reports six new memberships in August. These names were not included in the recent newsletter to members from the nominating committee. Please add these names to your membership list.

Stan Berger	Sheila and Ray Meyer
Mary Michael Connolly	Jenny Nilsson and Garrison Keillor
Lana Mahoney	Nancy Tracy

## **CAPITOL TOURS**

The Minnesota Historical Society will conduct special tours, "Shadows and Spirits of the Capitol," from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Oct. 22-23 and Oct. 28-30. A "night watchman" leads these tours of the Capitol lit only by its 1905 torchieres and sconces. Groups encounter historical characters and explore restored chambers, darkened hallways and the rotunda, softly lit by its six-foot chandelier. Cost of the tours is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors and \$3 for children. The tours are conducted every half hour. Reservations are required. For more information or reservations, call (651) 296-2881.