

Special issue: 100 years of Minnesota architecture

# AM

*architecture minnesota*



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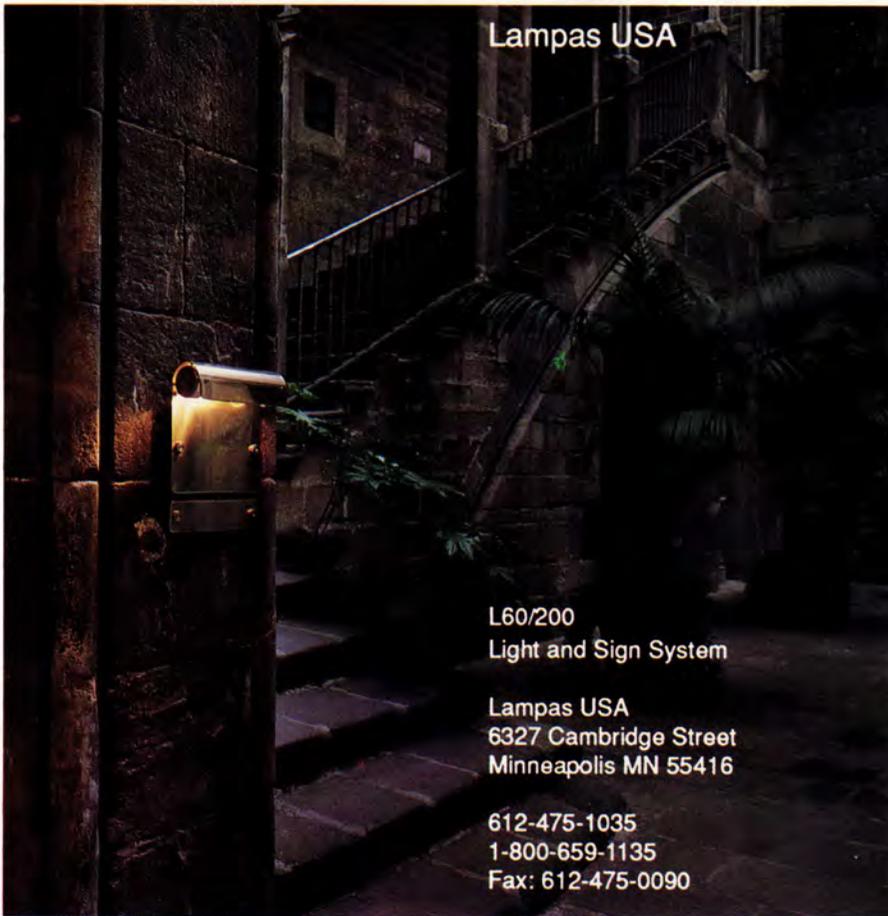


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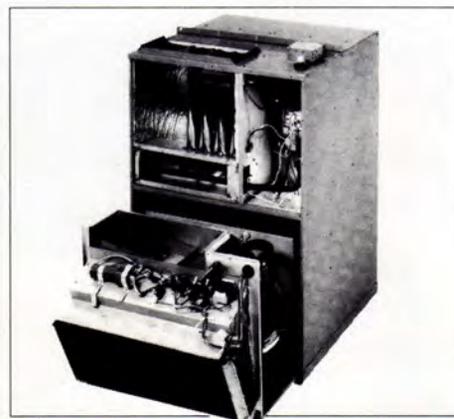
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# AM

## sketches

What's the best architecture in Minnesota? We asked our readers and AIA Minnesota members, and here's what they said towers above all the rest.

■ **1. IDS Center, 1973, Philip Johnson and John Burgee;**

**Edward F. Baker** It ushered Minneapolis into the big league, and people seem to remain eternally grateful for that.

■ **1. State Capitol Building, 1904, Cass Gilbert** Beaux-Arts extravaganza, by Minnesota's own master architect.

■ **2. National Farmers Bank, Owatonna, 1907-1908, Louis H. Sullivan, with George Grant Elmslie**

Form and function play a symphony of details in one of the truly great small-town banks.

■ **3. Abbey/University Church of St. John's, 1954-1961, Marcel Breuer** A concrete masterpiece from one of the great exponents of the new brutalism.

■ **4. Tyrone Guthrie Theater, 1962-1963, Ralph Rapson and Associates** Rapson's landmark theater catapulted Minneapolis into the national limelight with its innovative thrust stage and dazzling asymmetrical facade.

■ **4. Cathedral of St. Paul, 1906-1915, Emmanuel L. Masqueray** Perched on a hill, it remains one of the most visible—and most cherished—sites in St. Paul.

■ **5. Ordway Music Theater, 1984, Benjamin Thompson and Associates** High culture and high design in St. Paul's Rice Park.

■ **6. Metropolitan Building, 1888-1890; razed 1962, E. Townsend Mix** More famous in death than life, the building's demolition ignited the preservation movement in Minneapolis.

■ **7. Christ Lutheran Church, 1949-1950, Eliel and Eero Saarinen** A fine example of modernist liturgical design.



State Capitol Building



Cathedral of St. Paul



IDS Center, Norwest Center



Abbey/University Church of St. John's



Christ Lutheran Church

■ **8. Landmark Center, 1894-1904, Willowby J. Edbrooke** A melody of turrets and gables offers a counterpoint to the sedate styling of the neighboring Ordway Theater in Rice Park. ■ **8. Norwest Center, 1989, Cesar Pelli and Associates** One of the latest additions to the Minneapolis skyline is a throwback to the golden age of New York skyscrapers. ■ **9. Federal Reserve Bank Building, 1972, Gunnar Birkerts and Associates** A marvel of engineering, which may wind up a pile of rubble when the Federal Reserve leaves for new digs this decade. ■ **9. Minneapolis City Hall and Hennepin County Courthouse, 1888-1905, Long and Kees** The Richardsonian Romanesque style came home to roost on the mid-western landscape in all its piled-stone glory. ■ **9. St. Paul City Hall/Ramsey Co. Courthouse, 1931, Ellerbe Architects and Holabird and Root** A deco version of public power in St. Paul. ■ **10. Butler Square, 1906, 1973-1974, Harry W. Jones; Miller, Hanson and Westerbeck; Arvid Elness Architects** Industrial working space is now chi-chi office space. ■ **10. Frances W. Little House, 1913, razed 1972, Frank Lloyd Wright** An extinct species in Minnesota, but portions of the living room live on in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.



*Landmark Center*



*Federal Reserve Bank Building*



*Metropolitan Building*



*Ordway Music Theater*

Our readers and AIA Minnesota members chose the following as the 10 most influential Minnesota architects of all time. ■ **1. Ralph Rapson** ■ **2. Cass Gilbert** ■ **3. Purcell and Elmslie** ■ **4. Thomas Ellerbe** ■ **5. Edwin Lundie** ■ **6. Robert Cerny** ■ **7. Hammel Green and Abrahamson** ■ **8. Long and Kees** ■ **9. C.H. Johnston** ■ **10. James Stageberg** ■ **10. Leonard Parker** ■ **10. William Pedersen**



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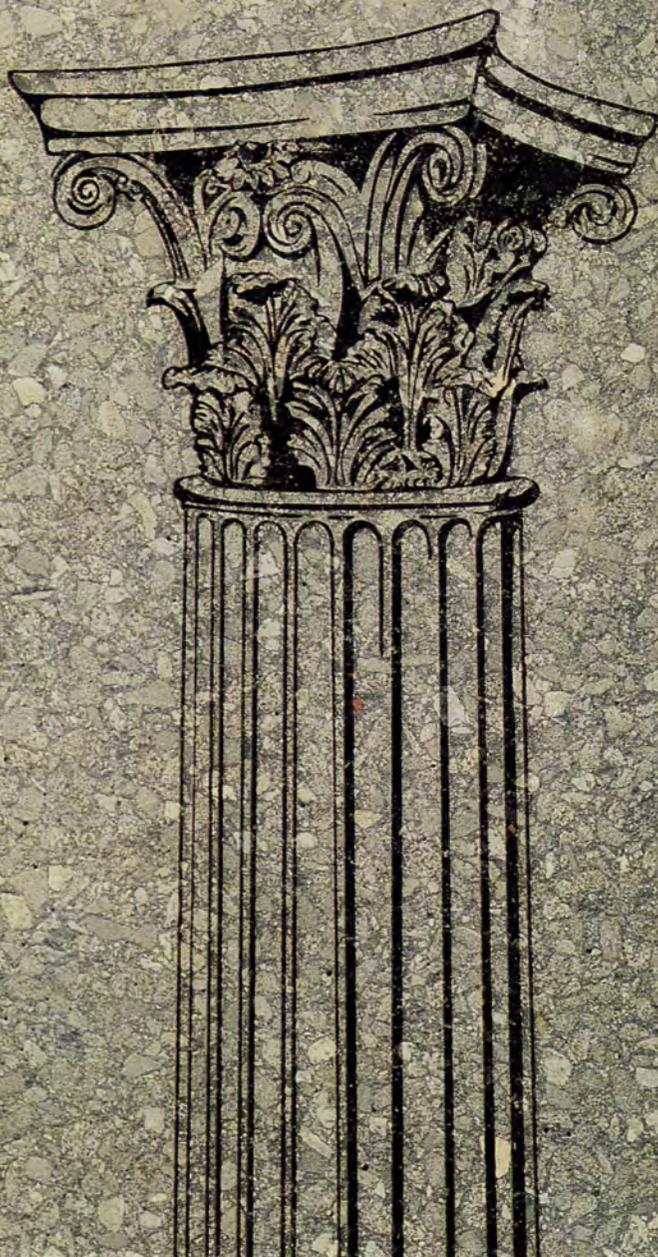
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previews

**Garden of Delights:  
Nature in Asian Art  
Minnesota Museum of Art  
Jemne Building Galleries  
Through Nov. 22**

Nature always has been a central focus in East Asian art. The subjects range from landscapes to intimate close-ups of the natural world. Even in the architectural world, such familiar Oriental structures as tea-houses are aligned with the natural environment. This exhibit features 53 objects from the museum's permanent collection, as well as from area collections. The art pieces include screen and scroll paintings, textiles, ceramics, wooden objects, lacquer and metals. Many works never have been displayed before.

For more information, call (612) 292-4355.

**Michael Manzavrakos and  
Linda Stojak  
New Works  
Carolyn Ruff Gallery  
Through Nov. 28**

Small-scale etchings, mezzotints, lithographs, monotypes and tempera on board are included in this exhibit of new work by Minneapolis artist Michael Manzavrakos. Linda Stojak's first exhibit in the Midwest since her highly acclaimed 1991 exhibit in New York will show work in wood and mixed media.

**This is not Brazil  
Paintings and Photographs:  
David Malcolm Scott  
Geometry Gallery  
Through Dec. 1**

Featured is a series of color and black-and-white photographs and paintings by local artist Malcolm Scott. The photos are intended to reflect the beauty and grandeur of the rain forests, particularly the

**Evolution! Revolution?  
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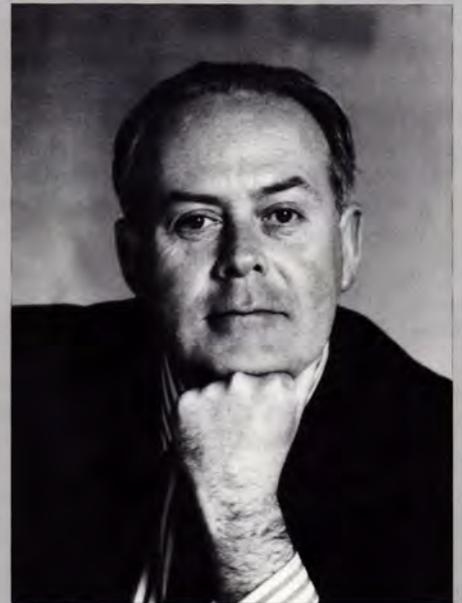
AIA Minnesota marks its 100th year with the grandest convention and products expo of them all—*Evolution! Revolution?* A series of programs and speakers will look at the past, address the present, and speculate about the challenges of the future.

Keynote speakers include San Francisco architect **Joseph Esh-erick**, AIA Gold Medalist, who will describe the evolution of the profession from his 60-year perspective as an architect and teacher. Also on the agenda is a keynote address by **Rodolfo Machado**, an adjunct professor of urban design and architecture at Harvard Graduate School of Design and a partner with Machado and Silvetti Associates in Boston. The final keynote presentation will include a panel discussion with **Donald K. Carter** and **Raymond L. Gindroz**, managing principals with UDA Architects in Pittsburgh, and **John Kari**, senior planner for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Council. They will discuss options for land reuse should the airport move.

The convention also includes the annual Honor Awards selections, this year judged by architects **Thomas H. Beeby** of Chicago, **James S. Polshek** of New York, and **Susan A. Maxman** of Philadelphia.

Among the special events planned are the Mighty Kimball Organ tour, a centennial exhibit, a display of images from the '80s, and an exhibit of antique architectural-drafting equipment. For those with an eye on the distant future, a time capsule that will be housed in Landmark Center and exhumed in 2092 will let people send memorabilia to architects of the late-21st century.

For more information, call the AIA Minnesota offices at (612) 338-6763.



Rodolfo Machado

Hoh Rain Forest in the Northwest. Malcolm Scott's photos are art and politics, as he urges us to preserve our natural environment in this era

of expanding industrial and urban development.

*Continued on page 100*

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# AM

*up close*

## **Nina Archabal: An eye on history**

By Camille LeFevre

For more than a decade, Nina Archabal, director of the Minnesota Historical Society, envisioned a state history center that, as a public institution, would actively address the needs of the users. "A place," she says, "where we could serve the public and the public's need for first-hand access to the collections. And where we also could return to the people of Minnesota, in exhibitions or galleries, the materials they have been giving to us for 143 years."

During the planning and building of the society's new history center, which celebrated its grand opening October 17 and 18, Archabal remained fiercely devoted to this vision. She and the center's staff generated 5-inch-thick documents detailing the specifications of every area. She insisted on the strict environmental conditions necessary to preserve the collections and archives. The architect-selection jury focused discussions on function rather than form. She kept costs within budget and development on schedule.

So when builders peeled the plastic off the new building last January, Archabal was amazed when "a magnificent public building emerged. . . .

I knew if we were articulate in our specifications, the building would function well. What I didn't realize was the enormous gift the architects [Hammel Green and Abrahamson] made to this project, which was the magnificence of the public spaces. Yes, we could do exhibitions. Yes, we

and hardwoods, with facades facing the State Capitol and John Ireland Boulevard, and whose L-shaped arms open to downtown St. Paul. "The building doesn't turn its back on the city in any direction," Archabal says. And she believes Minnesotans of every age, race and income will use the history center to discover their past and enrich their present.

Minnesotans long have displayed pride of place and past. In 1849, Alexander Ramsey created the Minnesota Historical Society as the fifth act of the First Territorial Legislature. (Other acts included forgiving a pauper, granting a divorce, and naming a printer for the Territorial Legislature.) "Ramsey had a serious sense that unless we kept a record of the past and kept keenly aware of who we were and maintained a profound sense of identity, our future would be compromised," Archabal says.

Since that time, Ramsey's mission has not changed. But the society has grown from primarily an academic organization to one of the largest state-historical organizations in the United States. Travelers feel the society's presence through its operation of 18



*Nina Archabal says the new Minnesota History center is an egalitarian place where all Minnesotans can come together to share in the state's heritage.*

Don F. Wong

could care for collections. But also the public had a grand public space designed for its use."

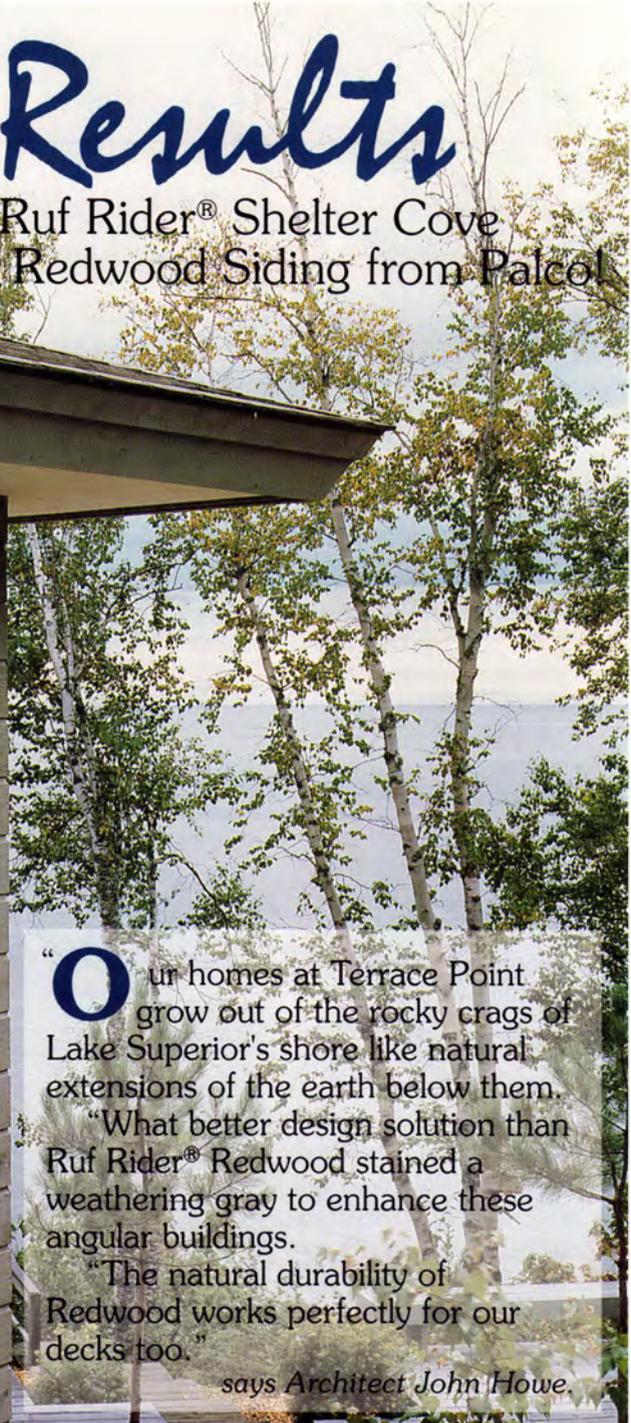
That public space is a 427,000-square-foot history center constructed of Minnesota granite, limestone

and hardwoods, with facades facing the State Capitol and John Ireland Boulevard, and whose L-shaped arms open to downtown St. Paul. "The building doesn't turn its back on the city in any direction," Archabal says. And she believes Minnesotans of every age, race and income will use the history center to discover their past and enrich their present.

*Continued on page 101*

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## The way of all flesh: Historic preservation in Minnesota

By Dan Hauser

Historic preservationists have seen better summers than this most recent one.

In late July, construction crews pulled up their cranes to the corner of Fourth Street and Marquette Avenue in downtown Minneapolis and began bashing the side of the 103-year-old Marquette Building. A few blocks to the northeast, another construction crew was getting ready to pummel the side of the 68-year-old Memorial Stadium on the campus of the University of Minnesota. In a matter of days, both structures came down in a mangled pile of wood, bricks and dust. In their place, two parking lots.

Folk singer Joni Mitchell once sang, "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot." Although the Marquette Building and Memorial Stadium were hardly paradise, they still held a place in the hearts of many Minnesotans.

The Marquette Building, actually two buildings that were joined as part of a remodeling to help market it, was the last remnant of Newspaper Row, which once lined Fourth Street earlier in the century. It was where the late Eric Sevareid cut his journalistic teeth.

Memorial Stadium, though nearly forgotten since the University took its football program indoors to the Metrodome in 1982, has its place in Minnesota sports history. Long before there were the Vikings, Twins and the like, there was the tradition of Saturday afternoon football with such greats as Bronko Nagurski, Bobby Bell and Paul Giel.

"These are hard times for preservation," says Martha Frey, the city of Minneapolis's staff person for its Heritage Preservation Commission. Frey has only been in her position less than two years and already she has seen the razing of the Marquette, the Nicollet Hotel and Memorial Stadium. She's also seen two historic structures—the Washburn-Crosby Mill on Minneapolis's riverfront and Dania Hall on the West Bank—gutted by fire.

Countless other buildings—the Minneapolis Armory, the Shubert Theater in downtown Minneapolis and several buildings on the riverfront where the Federal Reserve wants to build its new bank—could be in the way of the wrecking ball as well.



Minneapolis preservation in action: The Ritz Hotel, designed by Robert Cerny, comes down after only 30 years.

"I think preservation is always a battle," Frey says. "You're always going to have a property owner who doesn't want his building preserved. So you're always going to come up against walls."

With a sagging economy, property owners are often seen as the bad guys, which Beth Bartz, St. Paul's historic-preservation planner, says is unfair. Rather than paint an "us-vs.-them" scenario between historic preservationists and property owners, she says the two sides can work together so that both come out winners.

"You can hardly fault people for wanting their investment to pay off," Bartz says. But that doesn't mean property owners should be able wave their hands and knock down a 100-year-old structure, she adds.

"If a building is historic, the last thing a property owner will do is tear it down," says Kent Warden, executive director of the Minneapolis office of the Building Owners and Managers Association. "Generally when an owner is at the point where he has to demolish a building, he'd be tickled pink to sell it to someone else."

In other words, these are tough times when nearly one-quarter of the office space in downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul is empty. Sometimes the only economically prudent option left for a property owner is to cut his losses by tearing down an old building and putting up a temporary parking lot until the market improves.

That is what is happening with the Marquette Building site and what Opus

**"I think preservation  
is always a battle.  
You're always going  
to have a property  
owner who doesn't  
want his building pre-  
served.  
So you're always  
going to come up  
against walls."  
—Martha Frey**

Continued on page 102



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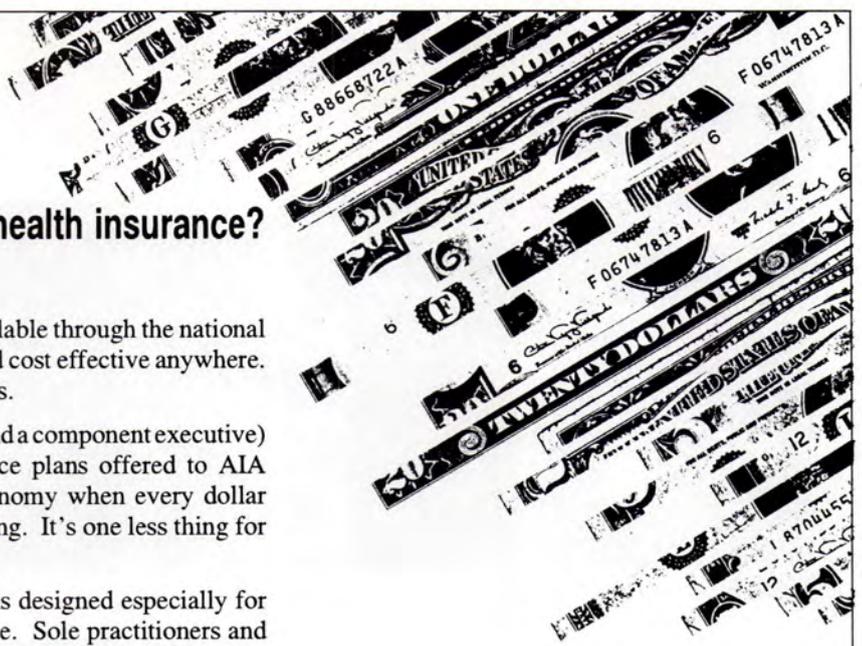
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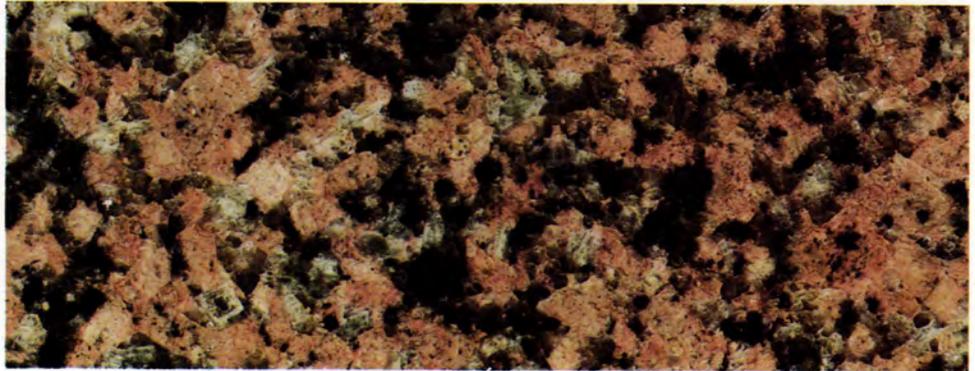


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## *editorial*

AIA Minnesota turns 100 this year. By midwestern standards, that's old. But in the grand scheme of things, 100 is still a pretty young and fragile age. After all, Rome has its Colosseum, China its Great Wall, and even Virginia its Monticello. The West and Midwest got late starts. Few buildings older than a century exist in Minnesota.

What the state lacks in age it makes up for in progress. The American Institute of Architects was founded in New York in 1857. Thirty-five years later 34 forward-thinking Minnesota architects chartered a state chapter of the AIA, recognizing the importance that the built environment has in shaping our lives. With this issue, we look back at the work of those founding fathers and, through a series of profiles, scan the decades to watch the profession grow.

Minnesota architecture is really a work in the making, and we need the benefit of time past to adequately judge the merits of that work. A building must be at least 50 years old to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Independence Hall in Philadelphia is 260 years old. Fifty years, by comparison, seems embryonic, not "historic."

So this issue, in fact, is not a historic retrospective. It's a capsule summary of a handful of individuals and firms who, from 1892 to 1992, helped pour the foundation for Minnesota architecture. There are many people out there who further will shape Minnesota's landscape. In another 100 years, some other editor will have an opportunity to examine just how solid that foundation is.

**Eric Kudalis**  
Editor

### **Centennial vibes**

# Making history

The Minnesota History Center strikes a heroic pose in St. Paul

By Larry Millett



*The Minnesota History Center (above) is well sited between several historic St. Paul landmarks, with the Cathedral of St. Paul within walking distance. The exterior is composed of bands of stone and granite (right).*

The new Minnesota History Center in St. Paul is a building so heroic in scale that only metaphor seems able to communicate its daunting presence. Already the building has been likened to everything from Minnesota's version of the Kremlin wall to a vast treasure chest. One especially imaginative wordsmith even has put a dental spin on the building, comparing it to a giant molar threatening to grind history into submission. This resort to imagery, whether appropriate or not, suggests a certain discomfort with the building, a sense that it is so overwhelming as to be almost unapproachable. Although the center is actually quite people friendly, the apparent unease over

its size reflects our society's ambivalence toward monumentality in public architecture. On one hand, we admit great displays of architectural splendor—witness the reverential treatment accorded Cass Gilbert's State Capitol—yet we distrust anything that smacks of lavish public expenditure. Finding a suitable middle ground between unseemly opulence and bare-bones utilitarianism is one of the great challenges of contemporary public design, and it is the challenge that the center's architects—Hammel Green and Abrahamson—have admirably met.

In fact, it is fair to say that the history center is the most impressive work of monumental architecture in



George Heinrich

Minnesota since the Capitol itself. Equally important, it's a building that comes quite naturally by its heroic dimensions. The building's sole occupant, the Minnesota Historical Society, is one of the largest institutions of its kind in the nation, with immense collections that have languished largely in storage for lack of display space. The center's huge exhibit halls finally will allow these treasures to go on public view. In addition, the building will enable the society to consolidate many once-scattered functions. Moreover, the center's powerful presence is entirely in keeping with its location, since it occupies a site midway between the Capitol and the St. Paul Cathedral—

two structures that define the concept of monumentality in Minnesota.

What is most impressive about the 427,000-square-foot center is how calm and confident it seems at a time when architectural design is wallowing in one of those states of vociferous confusion to which it periodically succumbs. Amid the current babble of architectural voices, the history center speaks with utter self-assurance. The designers—led by HGA's Loren Ahles—clearly knew what they wanted to do and they did it, without a lot of stylistic fuss, creating a structure that exudes midwestern solidity. It is direct, practical, plain-spoken and not at all likely to look dated 10 or 20 years from now.

The building derives its power from its no-nonsense massing—two big, rectangular blocks linked to form a giant L—and from its stern yet sensuous façades of banded stone. With their alternating courses of gray granite and buff-colored travertine, the façades are the handsomest to adorn a public building in Minnesota in many a moon. Pilaster-like, vertical folds provide a visual counterpoint to the horizontal courses and also create wonderful shadow lines. Overall, the building cannot easily be pigeonholed into a stylistic category. If anything, the center brings to mind something almost ancient, its battered walls, blocky forms and palpable sense of heft suggesting Egyptian or even pre-Columbian architecture. Yet the metallic mechanical pods that erupt from the ends of the building leave no doubt as to its modernity.

The distinctive L shape is a response—and quite a brilliant one—to the difficult site, which is a virtual island in the midst of freeways. The L configuration allowed HGA to exploit views of the Capitol to the north

and the Cathedral to the south, while maintaining a strong visual link with downtown St. Paul to the east. The building's most formal façade faces west, toward John Ireland Boulevard, and here can be found a suitably dramatic grand entrance. As it turns out, however, the real main entrance is one level below on the east side of the building, near the parking lot. Here, a barrel-vaulted corridor leads to a silolike rotunda known as the Great Hall, which occupies the crook of the L. Rising next to the Great Hall is a curious, battered tower that strikes a picturesque profile of its own. The hall and tower give an informal, relaxed quality to this side of the building, which is nice, but many people may feel when they use the east entrance that they are coming in the back door.

Inside, the building is, for the most part, every bit as strong as it is on the outside. The east entrance leads into a handsome corridor that flows past a restaurant and then into the base of the Great Hall, where two museum shops and an information desk are located. The Great







George Heinrich

*A grand stairway (opposite) leads to the upper level. Exterior detailing is carried inside. A plaza (below) fronts the rotunda entrance, where visitors enter along the gallery level (left).*

Hall is actually a rotunda, topped by a domed roof finished in white oak and forming the lines of an 8-pointed star around a small skylight. A grand staircase leads up from the Great Hall to the next level and into the main circulation corridors, which cut through the building's two wings at slightly skewed angles to take advantage of views, especially toward the Capitol. Roofed in oak and rising from thick pillars of banded stone, these echoing corridors are hallucinatory in scale, and they have something of the power and beauty of an old Romanesque nave. On this level, the corridors provide access to the reference library, the newspaper-microfilm library, offices and a special children's area near the John Ireland Boulevard entrance. The two floors above contain the exhibit halls, as well as executive offices and other working spaces. The building also has huge basement storage areas for the society's collections, which include 100,000 artifacts and 500,000 documents.

Detailing of the public spaces is almost uniformly first-rate, with bronze and stainless steel used as accents. Here and there, however, lesser materials—especially wallboard—crop up, and they seem like crude interlopers in so splendid a setting. There are a few other missteps, as



well. The entry sequence from the east door is a bit disappointing, since you end up in a rather dark area at the base of the rotunda and have to go up a stairway off to one side before you really begin to sense the forceful flow of the building's spaces. A more direct staircase might have been better. A little more color inside also would have been welcome, where the wintry gray to buff palette cries out for an occasional hint of summertime warmth.

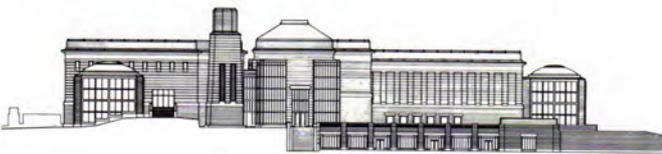
On the outside, perhaps the least successful feature is a curving stone wall intended to embrace the doorway on John Ireland Boulevard, thereby creating a more ceremonial entrance. But the wall blocks views from large windows behind it and seems only to increase the building's fortress atmosphere.

Most of these complaints are relatively minor, but one other is not: the building's limited natural light in a number of key places, most notably

George Heinrich



The lobby to the reference and microfilm rooms (above) frames views of the Capitol. A barrel-vaulted ceiling (opposite) offers a grand image in the main halls. The building is based on an L-shaped plan (floor plan below). The rotunda is in the crook of the L.



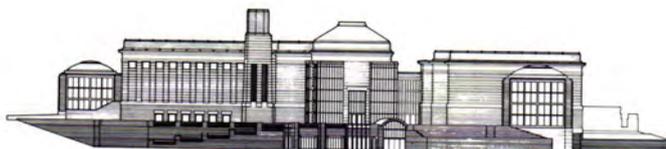
South Elevation



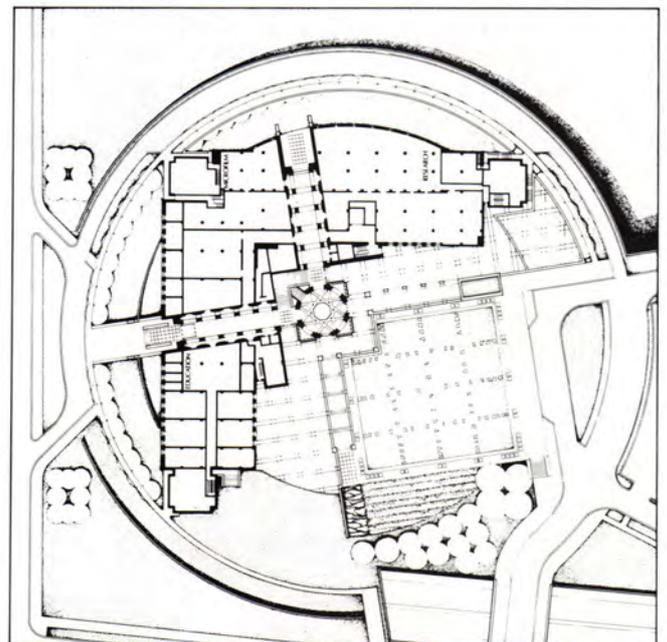
North Elevation



West Elevation



East Elevation



Great Hall Level

the reference-library reading room. This oddly configured room is disappointing, not only for its shortage of daylighting but also because of its uninspired finish and detail. The library faces north and could have offered wonderful views of the Capitol. But the clerestory windows are too high to provide views, and even those were a compromise, Ahles says, because the society's program called for no daylighting in any area where artifacts might be used or displayed. The library's paucity of natural light is a product of today's curatorial mentality, in which natural light is viewed as an enemy because of its potential to degrade sensitive collections. There are highly regarded lighting experts, however, who believe that natural light, suitably filtered, is by no means incompatible with the preservation of archival material. One only wishes that the society would have solicited their advice.

That aside, the history center is a sterling performance, surely HGA's best public building ever. With its completion, Minnesotans now have a building that is in every respect worthy of their past and that should also meet the expanding needs of the future.



# The founding fathers

100 years ago, 34 Minnesota architects gathered to charter the Minnesota Chapter of the American Institute of Architects—their impact still reverberates throughout the state

By Steven Buetow

In 1892, the Twin Cities were in the midst of a building boom. The bumper harvest of 1891 had followed a period of unprecedented growth and prosperity as the population tripled in the previous decade. The 1892 Republican National Convention was held in Minneapolis, reflecting a growing national importance for this center of midwestern energy and industry. Within a year, James J. Hill would complete his rail line to Seattle. The Panic of 1893, however, would slow this growth and bring a decade of tepid building activity.

The gathering of Minnesota's first architects took place within an ongoing flux of architectural styles. The exuberance and excess that is often



Minnesota Historical Society

William Channing Whitney

represented by the Queen Anne, Richardsonian Romanesque and other Victorian styles were the choices of the builders and pioneers of the previous decade. The young men in this founding group, however, were among the first in Minnesota to be formally educated in architecture, and many of them had made artistic pilgrimages to Europe. Cass Gilbert, C.H. Johnston, Harry Wild Jones and Charles Buechner were all 32 years old in 1892. During the succeeding decades these men, with the help of other young designers, would bring change, inspired by the classical teachings of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Architecture, urban planning and park design soon would follow Beaux-Arts

## Odyssey through the past



Courtesy Steven Buetow

Carl Buetow

*Carl Buetow began work as a drafting trainee at the St. Paul firm of Reed and Stem in February 1910 when he was 16 years old. He had been hired with two conditions—that he continue his education and that he would not be paid for the first few months. Thus began what would become a 50-year career in architecture. He wrote the following anecdote in 1969.*

After several weeks in that office, my ambition went a little too far and I was called to the drafting table of the senior draftsman, Mr. Mehner. He showed me a drawing and told me to go to C.H. Johnston's office and get the column

centers of the Scott Building on Seventh Street. Since I had no experience in building design or planning, it was entirely new to me and I gladly made the errand. I went to the counter at C.H. Johnston's office and asked for the column centers of the Scott Building. The man at the counter said, "I will get them for you." A few minutes later he came out and said, "Do you want the large ones or the small ones?" I replied that I didn't know but that I thought they were the small ones. He went out again and returned saying, "We don't have the small ones but I think you can get them in Hartford and Jacobson's office on the floor below."



J. Walter Stevens

principles, seen in all their splendor at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. Some of the older Minnesota designers, like William Channing Whitney (1851-1945), would adapt to the newer style. Others, like German-born Augustus Gauger (1852-1929) and Edward P. Bassford (1837-1912), remained stuck in the older styles. Bassford, in fact, was the senior ar-

chitect of this group, and he had provided opportunities in his prosperous and prolific office for many of the young generation of architects that eventually would eclipse him.

Two hotels in St. Paul, designed by charter members, illustrate this stylistic adjustment. The Ryan Hotel by Bassford represents the decorative excess, compositional asymmetry and freedom that the older styles allowed. In contrast, the St. Paul Hotel by Charles A. Reed (1858-1911) and Allen H. Stem (1856-1931), which was completed about 1910, exhibits the accurate historical references that the students of Beaux-Arts felt were so important.

Some of the lesser-known charter members also were quite quotable. Charles Sedgewick (1856-1922) claimed that his designs were "pretentious without regard to size or cost, and invariably complex in plan and agitated in outline." In contrast, Frederick G. Corser (1849-1924) espoused the view that questions of style and decoration were secondary to the problems of site, orientation, context and structure.

LeRoy S. Buffington (1847-1931), a prominent Minneapolis architect, called himself an architect of "grandiose but elegant taste." He claimed to have invented the structural system that allowed buildings to reach the height of a skyscraper, or "cloudscraper," as he called it.



A.F. Gauger

I went to that office, asked for the same and was told by Mr. Hartford that C.H. Johnston's office didn't mean his office but, rather, he meant Buechner and Orth's office. I proceeded to that office and Mr. Orth told me he gave them to Mr. Linhoff at the last architectural meeting. I went to Linhoff's office in the Old German American Bank Building, where the First National Bank is now standing, and inquired about the column centers. Allan Fleischbein reported that they were given to Mr. Holyoke.

I returned to Holyoke's office but when I got there, he was out. I waited for him until he came in and questioned him again about the col-

umn centers. He replied, "I believe you will find them in Mr. Cedarberg's office or you will find them in your own office." Since Mr. Cedarberg's office was two floors below ours, I thought I should go back to our office to make a telephone call. When Mr. Mather came to me and asked, "Carl, what are you looking for?" I told him that the boys had sent me out for the column centers. He said, "Tell the boys to send you out for that on anytime other than office hours."

What a grand awakening that was for me.

One young fellow working in our office was sent to C.H. Johnston's office some months later for column cen-

ters of a building. He was given a skylight bar about 12 feet long, which he could hardly carry. In his efforts to carry out the task, the young man had to find a janitor to let him in the freight elevator of the building. When he entered our office, somebody had to hold the door open to let him in. Finally in the office, Dave Carlson said, "You haven't got the column centers; you've got the beam centers!" With a disgusted look on his face, the young man proceeded to return the skylight bar back to C.H. Johnston's office.

*Carl Buetow*

But the member of this founding group who actually merited distinction for skyscraper design was Cass Gilbert (1859-1934). The Flemish Gothic Woolworth Building in New York was the tallest office structure in the world for almost 20 years from the time of its completion in 1913.

The geographic span of buildings by this group is also considerable, and reaches from one coast to well beyond the other. One of the country's most famous monuments of Beaux-Arts commercial architecture—Grand Central Station in New York—was designed by the St. Paul firm of Reed and Stem.

The farthest-flung commission from this charter group is on the beach at Waikiki in Hawaii. After designing many prominent Duluth buildings, including the City Hall and Fingers Brewery, Oliver Traphagen (1854-1932) tired of winters on the Lake Superior shores. He migrated to Hawaii in 1897, where he designed, among other buildings, what is now the oldest hotel on that famous beach of the Hawaiian royalty—the Moana Hotel.

More than 200 buildings by these architects still exist in Minnesota. Many are on the National Register

of Historic Places. A brief list would include the Minneapolis City Hall, Pillsbury Hall, the McColl Building, Butler Square, the Pillsbury "A" Mill, the Grain Exchange, the Lumber Exchange, the Flour Exchange, the State Capitol, Park Square Court, the Endicott Building, the Mall at the University of Minnesota campus in Minneapolis, Hennepin Center for the Arts, the St. Paul



Allen H. Stem with wife Lucy

Building, Dayton Avenue Presbyterian, the Governor's Mansion, more than 60 houses on Summit Avenue in St. Paul, the Minnesota Historical Society Building (now the Judicial Building), and other important buildings around the state.

Today there is one AIA Minnesota member for every 4,000 people in the state; in 1892 there was one for every 32,000 people. The founding fathers certainly have had a large impact relative to their numbers. These 34 men who convened a century ago continue to have an impact on the artistic quality of our built environment and the historic character of our cities.

#### AIA Minnesota's founding fathers

Edward P. Bassford	(1837-1912)
George E. Bertrand	(1859-1931)
Charles W. Buechner	(1859-1924)
LeRoy S. Buffington	(1847-1931)
F.A. Clarke	
Frederick G. Corser	(1849-1924)
J.H. Coxhead	
William H. Dennis	(1845-1909)
Warren B. Dunnel	(1851-1931)
Augustus F. Gauger	(1852-1929)
Cass Gilbert	(1859-1934)
G.M. Goodwin	(1846-1892)
H.R.P. Hamilton	(1858-?)
Warren H. Hayes	(1847-1899)
Clarence H. Johnston	(1859-1936)
Harry Wild Jones	(1859-1935)
Frederick G. Kees	(1852-1927)
Franklin B. Long	(1842-1913)
Charles McMillan	
Denslow W. Millard	(1840-?)
G.W. Orff	(1836-1908)
Emmel S. Palmer	
Walter Stone Pardee	(1852-1925)
James C. Plant	
Charles A. Reed	(1858-1911)
Charles E. Sedgwick	(1856-1922)
Edward S. Stebbins	(1854-1934)
Allen H. Stem	(1856-1931)
J. Walter Stevens	(1857-1937)
Carl F. Struck	(1842-1912)
James Knox Taylor	(1857-1929)
Oliver G. Traphagen	(1854-1932)
C.A. Wallingford	
Wm. Channing Whitney	(1851-1945)



Charles W. Buechner

# Clarence H. Johnston

*Founding Father*

Chances are good that you've spent some time in a Clarence H. Johnston building. He designed much of the state's tasteful background architecture, from grammar schools to buildings at the University of Minnesota, downtown offices, the Minnesota Club, Glensheen Mansion, and even Stillwater Prison. He was one of only two charter members of the Minnesota Chapter of the AIA who was native to the state. Born in Waseca in 1859, he attended school in St. Paul and received his architectural education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He then traveled through Europe, but returned to practice in Minnesota in 1883.

As young men Johnston and Cass Gilbert were close friends and together they studied, traveled and talked architecture. They exchanged sketches and watercolors of Greek ruins and Roman towns. The forms and details of the classical world were their inspiration, and each of them continued to express himself through the restrained and



*Clarence H. Johnston*

tasteful styles of the Beaux-Arts tradition throughout his career. Still in their 20s, they began to build separate practices. When Minnesota sponsored the competition for a new State Capitol Building, the two young architects were in their early 30s. Johnston sent a Greek-revival proposal. Gilbert's submission, which we see today, won. Gilbert eventually left for New York, while Johnston stayed, built a successful practice, and in 1901 became the architect for state institutions. It was a position he held until 1930, during which he designed nearly all state buildings, in addition to his

private commissions. From his office on the seventh floor of the Manhattan Building (which he designed) in downtown St. Paul, he managed a large and prominent firm that carried his name well into the middle of the century.

Clarence H. Johnston Sr., died in 1936, but the end of Johnston's career is not clear. Like his old friend Cass Gilbert, who was succeeded by his son, Cass Jr., Johnston was succeeded by his son, Clarence H. Jr. As early as 1920, the younger Johnston (who would have been 32 years old) had much of the responsibility for the firm's design work. New design blood allowed the firm to begin to progress beyond the Beaux-Arts style to the deco and art moderne. The first Northwestern Bell Telephone Building in St. Paul, the J.F. Bell Museum of Natural History and the critically acclaimed Coffman Memorial Union on the Minneapolis campus, all by the younger C.H. Johnston, follow the family tradition of designing important public buildings. *Steven Buetow*



*The original 1915 Minnesota Historical Society building (above) and the 1907 Folwell Hall (right) at the University of Minnesota.*



Parker Associates

Minnesota Historical Society

# Cass Gilbert

Founding Father

His colleagues criticized his work as grandiose, heavy in scale and impractical. But the public loved Cass Gilbert's buildings. When his Woolworth Building in New York City was completed in 1913, it was the world's tallest office tower, and arguably the most popular.

Perhaps his personality accounted for some of the sourness with which other architects regarded him. He was a demon for details, a determined salesman, pompous, lacking in tact and stubborn. These qualities, balanced by his industriousness and basic honesty, kept his talents in demand throughout his long career and placed his projects in the limelight.

Gilbert was born on the eve of the Civil War in Zanesville, Ohio, in 1859. At the end of the war, his family relocated to St. Paul, where as a young man he assisted in an ar-



Cass Gilbert

Minnesota Historical Society

chitect's office. That was the beginning of his training in architecture, which included study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, journeys through Italy, France and England, and experience as a draftsman at the prestigious firm of McKim, Mead and White.

His years at McKim began with a difficult assignment. "The first job they gave me to do was to design a base for a statue by St. Gaudens," he recalled years later. "Naturally, I approached my task a bit nervously, and, try as I would, I could not seem to make the thing go at all. When I was in the darkest part of my struggle [Stanford] White came to my table to see how I was pro-

gressing, and I had forebodings of instant dismissal! Luckily, at the same moment, St. Gaudens himself dropped in, and took up the cudgels in my favor, saying that it was a very difficult problem to solve. He took the pencil from me and endeavored to scheme the thing out himself, but he soon floundered as hopelessly as I did."

By 1882 Gilbert was back in St. Paul, practicing in partnership with James Knox Taylor. Within a few years Taylor left the practice and moved away from Minnesota, eventually leaving his mark on countless federal-court buildings and post offices as architect for the U.S. Treasury Department in Washington, D.C.

As a solo practitioner, Gilbert initially had to rely on his skills as a watercolor painter to make a living. By the late-1880s and early-1890s,



Minnesota Historical Society

St. Clement's Episcopal Church (above), 1894; Bethlehem Church (right), St. Paul.



Northwest Architectural Archives

however, his architecture business was keeping him busy with commissions to design private homes, churches and business buildings in the Twin Cities. During this period Gilbert completed such projects as the German Presbyterian Bethlehem Church and the Virginia Street Church, both in St. Paul; St. Martin's by the Lake Episcopal Church in Minnetonka Beach; and a railroad depot in Willmar.

Gilbert received an enormous professional boost in 1893 by beating out 40 other architects and submitting the winning design for the Minnesota State Capitol. With its columned interiors, grand staircases and symmetrical layout, the Minnesota State Capitol brought the Beaux-Arts style to the state in a big way. In later years, Gilbert also designed state capitols for West Virginia and Arkansas.

By the turn of the century, when Gilbert had moved to New York, his work had grown nationally in scope. Although he continued occasionally to work on Minnesota projects—including the Soldiers' and Sailors' monument in Duluth, the Church of St. John the Divine in Moorhead and several buildings on the campus of the Shattuck School in Faribault—most of his work ranged far from the Upper Midwest. Such varied structures as the New York Life Insurance Building in New York City, the George Washington Memorial Bridge connecting New York with New Jersey, the U.S. Supreme Court Building, the Woolworth Building, the St. Louis and Detroit public libraries, and the U.S. Customs House in New York City sprang from his designs. Gilbert also designed a plan for the campus

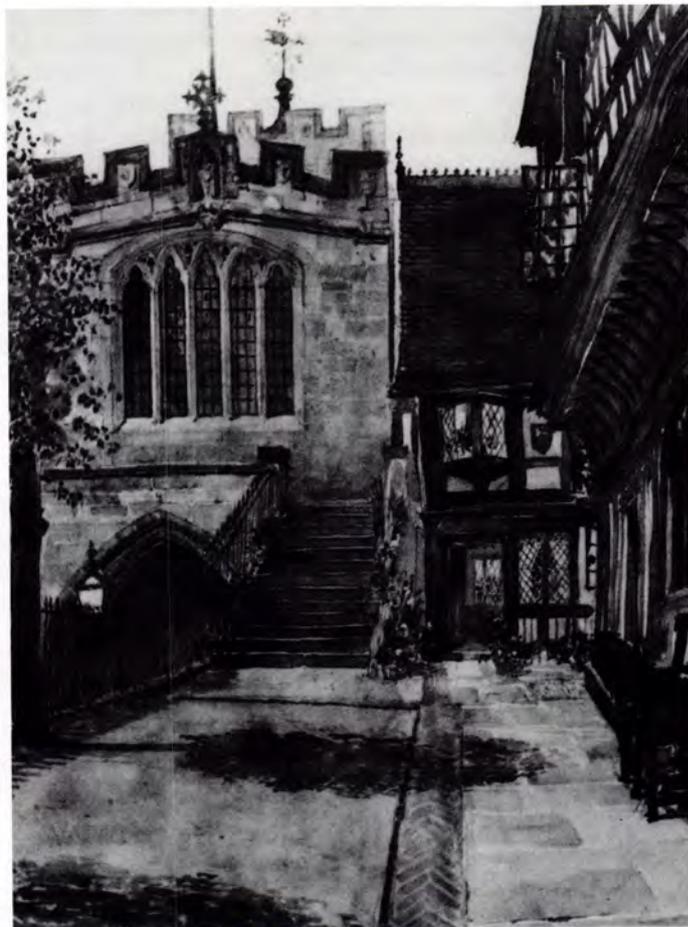
of the University of Minnesota, but the construction of Coffman Memorial Union and other buildings spoiled his scheme to create a grand landscape of terraces from Northrop Auditorium to the Mississippi River.

Before his death at age 75, Gilbert took advantage of the chance to advise a dictator. When he heard that Benito Mussolini had announced plans to raise a tower similar to the Woolworth Building in Rome, Gilbert dispatched a letter protesting that the addition would destroy the existing unity of Rome's architecture. Mussolini eventually scrapped his plan.

**Jack El-Hai**



Minnesota State Capitol (above), 1904; watercolor sketch of courtyard, Leicester Hospital, Warwick (below).



Minnesota Historical Society

Northwest Architectural Archives

# Long and Kees

Founding Fathers



Frank B. Long



Frederick Kees

Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871 proved fertile training ground for young architects, as the demand to rebuild the growing city with fireproof buildings offered limitless job opportunities. For two of Minneapolis's best-known architects, Chicago is where it all started.

Frank B. Long was born in New York state on March 3, 1842. His family moved to Illinois when he was 17, and he began work as a carpenter and builder before becoming an apprentice architect in Chicago. Frederick Kees, who was 10 years younger than Long, also came west as a young man. Kees worked as a

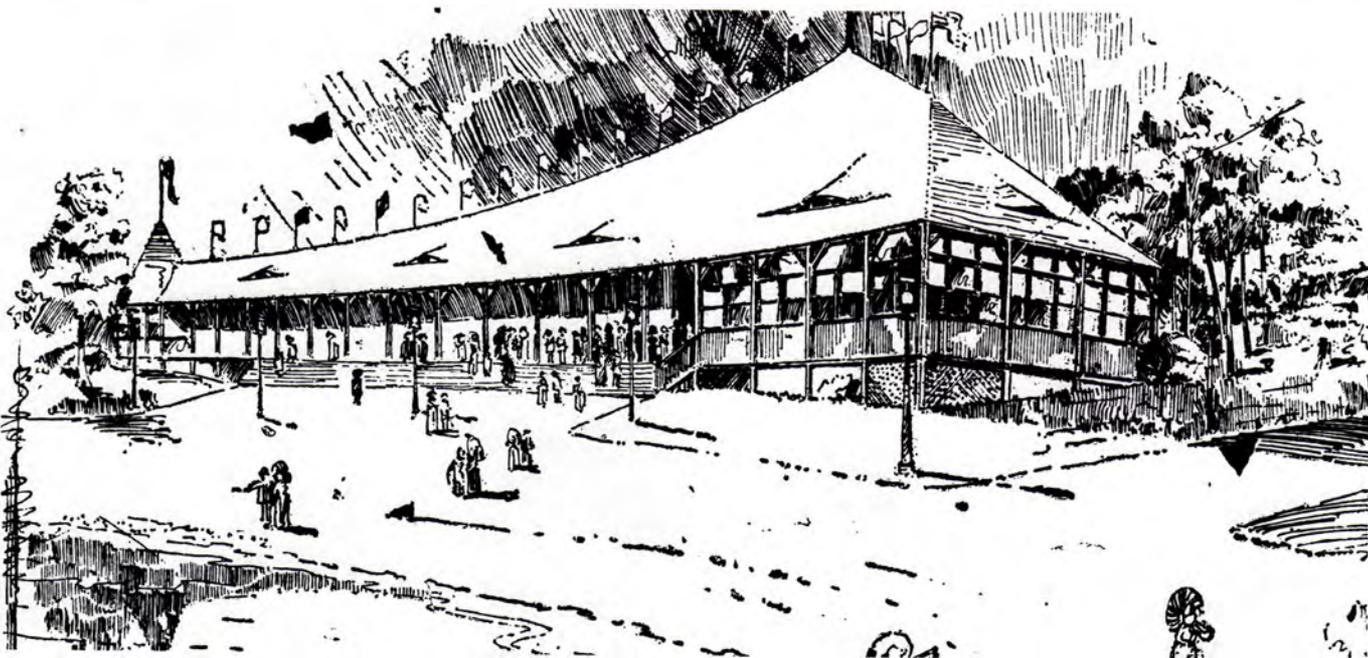
draftsman in his native Baltimore, but moved to Chicago while in his 20s.

This building boom stretched to Minneapolis, which was expanding rapidly. Between 1880 and 1890, the population of Minneapolis grew by 251 percent. Long moved north in 1868, in part because of the building opportunities, but also because he believed the climate would

help his ailing health. Kees, after returning to Baltimore briefly, relocated to Minneapolis in 1878, where he worked in LeRoy Buffington's office before forming a partnership with B.W. Fisk.

Long and Kees attracted recognition after forming their partnership in 1884. Together they took advantage of two of the driving forces in architecture of the day, the popularity of the Richardsonian Romanesque style developed by H.H. Richardson, and the development of the skyscraper.

Richardson's Romanesque style, characterized by massive, rounded arches and rusticated stonework,



Lake Harriet Pavilion, 1888.

Hennepin County Historical Society

Minnesota Historical Society

caught on partly due to late-19th-century prosperity. As more buildings were erected and a sense of well-being continued, architecture sought to express this prosperity through elaborate designs. Richardson's style became especially popular in the Midwest. Long and Kees's design for the Minneapolis City Hall and Hennepin County Courthouse, built from 1888 to 1905, resembles Richardson's Allegheny County Courthouse in Pittsburgh. Yet the building is no mere knockoff. Long and Kees were gifted designers, and the courthouse remains a fine building in its own right.

Long and Kees also designed some of Minneapolis's first skyscrapers, which incorporated Richardsonian elements. From the 1880s until World War I, Minneapolis was the world's largest lumber and grain miller. The team designed the Minneapolis headquarters for both of these operations. The Lumber Exchange Building at the corner of Hennepin Avenue and Fifth Street South was the first Richardsonian commercial building to reach nine stories. Although the interior has been remodeled, the exterior remains an example of Long and Kees's enduring signature. Their Masonic Temple (now the Hennepin Center for the Arts) stands one block from Lumber Exchange. The structure blends Richardsonian arches and stonework with lighter details. The corner towers, for instance, were crowned originally with onion domes, traces of which remain on the 4th-story façade. Other projects include several residences, churches, including the original building of the First Baptist Church, and the Minneapolis Public Library, which was razed in 1959.

Long and Kees went separate ways in 1898, although both continued to practice architecture. Kees teamed with Serenus Colburn. He also served as president of Western Architect Publishing Company before his death in 1927. Long was a successful businessman and invested in real estate. He later formed an architecture firm with his son, Louis, and Lowell Lamoreaux. Long died

in Minneapolis in 1913, but his legacy continued. Although the partners changed many times—from Long, Lamoreaux and Thorshov to Long and Thorshov; Thorshov and Cerny; and Thorsen and Thorshov—the continuity of the various partnerships established the firm originally started by Long and Kees as the longest-existing architectural firm in the state.

*Erin M. Hanafin*



Minnesota Historical Society



AM files

Lumber Exchange Building (top), 1885; Minneapolis Public Library (above), razed 1959; and Minneapolis City Hall and Hennepin County Courthouse (left), 1888-1905.



Minnesota Historical Society

# Harry Wild Jones

Founding Father

Harry Wild Jones was one of Minnesota's most prolific and respected architects at the turn of the century, and his best work ranks among the Twin Cities' finest historic buildings. Even today, 57 years after his death in 1935, he continues to inspire architects. Jones's shingle-style band shell and privies at Lake Harriet provided inspiration for the latest band shell, designed by Milo Thompson. (The privies, a bit tattered, still stand.) Butler Square (then Butler Brothers Warehouse), renovated in the 1970s and now on the National Register of Historic Places, was a bread-and-butter commission in 1906, but today is one of downtown Minneapolis's prized possessions.

Although Jones designed numerous houses for wealthy Twin Citians,



Minnesota Historical Society

Harry Wild Jones

including his own home at 5101 Nicollet Ave., he specialized in church design, not surprisingly considering his heritage.

He was born in Schoolcraft, Mich., on June 9, 1859. His father was a Baptist minister, as was his pa-

ternal grandfather, who was a missionary in Bangkok. His maternal grandfather, Rev. Samuel Francis Smith, was religious—and patriotic. He wrote the hymn "America." Harry Jones graduated from Brown University in 1880, studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for two years, traveled to Europe, and then went to work for H.H. Richardson in Boston.

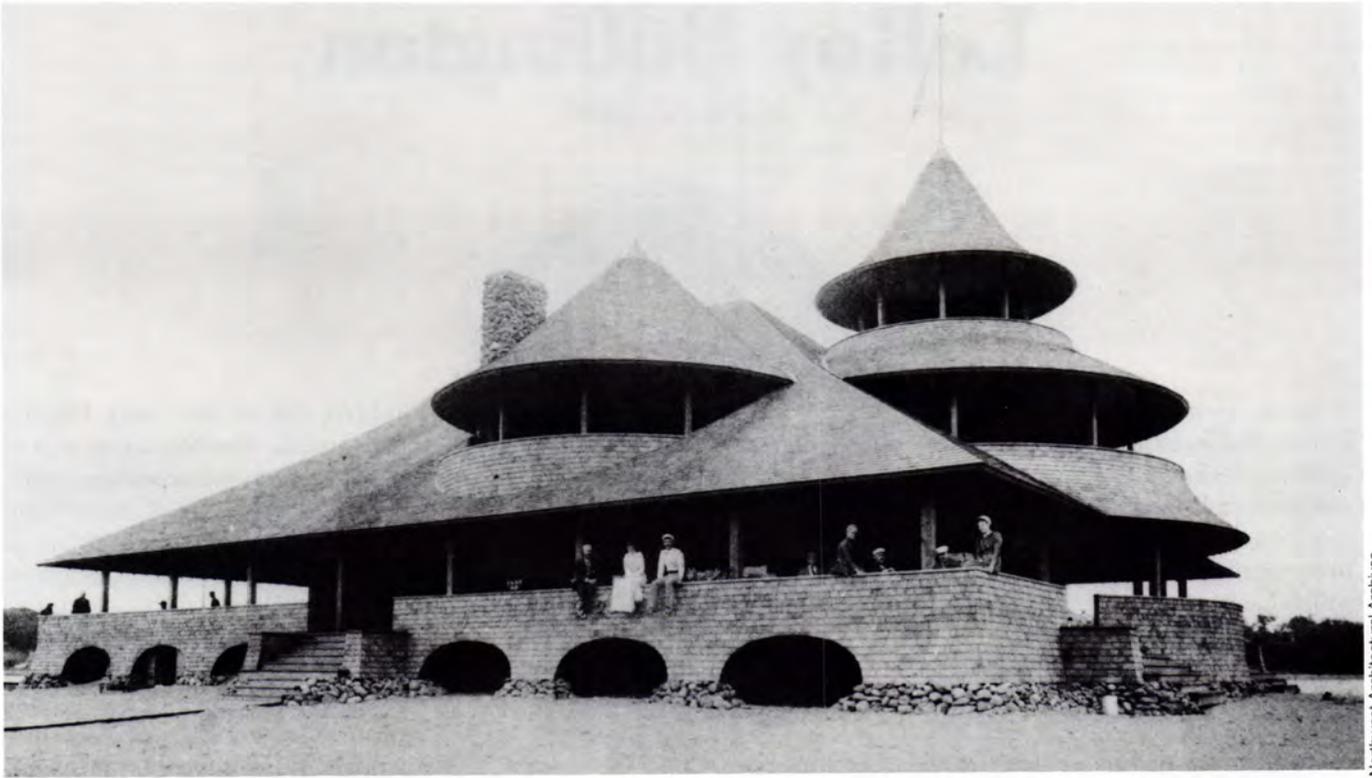
Much of the Northwest was still an unchartered frontier, ready to be conquered by those ambitious enough to do so. Jones headed for Minnesota in 1883 to honeymoon with his new bride, Bertha J. Tucker, and stayed to chart a career.

He opened his own shop in 1885. While the majority of Jones's work is confined primarily to Minnesota, his churches can be found throughout the world, some 200 from Minnesota to China, India, New York and throughout the Midwest. The Calvary Baptist Church, where Jones was a member, still stands at the corner of 26th and Blaisdell in south Minneapolis. Jones traveled widely and made a round-the-world trip with his wife around 1908, gleaning inspiration from many sources. His masterpiece of liturgical design, the Byzantine-style Lakewood Cemetery Memorial Chapel of 1910, is modeled after the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. The stout, reddish-gray granite exterior is marked by a red tile dome, bronze front doors, and mosaic art-glass windows. The 200-capacity interior, designed with Charles R. Lamb of New York, is a dazzling display of mosaic artistry, rendered with more than 10 million tiles by six artisans from Italy. Four main figures, representing Faith, Hope, Love and Memory, overlook the room, while 12 an-



Butler Square, 1906.

Courtesy Rolf Anderson



Northwest Architectural Archives

gels outlined in gold-inlaid tiles encircle the 65-foot-high dome.

Not all of Jones's work was quite so beatific. In addition to Butler Square, he did numerous other industrial buildings in Minneapolis, including the Lindsay Brothers Building, and the Washburn Park water tower. He also designed two band shells at Lake Harriet, and for the Minnetonka Yacht Club a pagoda-style clubhouse, which went up in smoke 50 years ago.

Jones may well have initiated the Minnesota tradition of combining practice with teaching. From 1891 to 1893 he taught architecture in the College of Mechanic Arts at the Uni-

versity of Minnesota. He recognized the need for formal architectural training in the young and growing city, but despite his urging to the Board of Regents to expand architecture courses, the program dwindled until it was revived again in 1912. He also lectured on church architecture at the University of Chicago from 1912 to 1924.

Jones was not necessarily an innovator, nor did he brandish an individual style. His various buildings display influences of Byzantine, Richardsonian Romanesque, pagoda, Beaux-Arts, and the Chicago School architecture. Instead of innovation, he created a sturdy archi-

architecture in the polite Minnesota tradition. And for those who work at Butler Square or visit Lakewood, or still use his many buildings, that may well be enough.

*Eric Kudalis*



Minnesota Historical Society

*Jones's diverse designs include the Minnetonka Yacht Club Clubhouse (top), burned early 1940s; Detroit Lakes Baptist Church (above), burned 1970; and Lakewood Cemetery Memorial Chapel (left), 1910.*



AM files

# LeRoy Buffington

Founding Father



Minnesota Historical Society

LeRoy Buffington

“I never see a picture of a skyline,” LeRoy Buffington once observed, “without feeling a thrill of pleasure and accomplishment at the thought that I have had a part—even though unrecognized—in this movement which has sent great structures higher and higher.”

Although Buffington ranked among Minnesota’s busiest architects from the 1880s through the early decades of this century, designing scores of structures throughout the Upper Midwest, he apparently took pride in his largely uncredited role in creating a new type of building that he never had the opportunity to build: the skyscraper.

A native of Cincinnati, Buffington learned his trade at several architectural firms in Ohio through 1871. That year, two years after his marriage to Mary Ellen DePew, he set up a new practice in St. Paul with partner A.M. Radcliffe. Buffington embarked on a solo career in 1874, opening an office at Washington and

Hennepin avenues in Minneapolis, and in short order had as much work as he could handle. He designed 42 hotels, and also such important buildings as the Pillsbury “A” Mill, Burton Hall on the campus of the University of Minnesota, the West Hotel, and the Boston Block (all in Minneapolis); schools and churches throughout the region; and the old Union Depot and the original Minnesota State Capitol (1882) in St.

Paul, as well as the North Dakota State Capitol. The Minnesota seat of power, a Romanesque building modeled after the New York State Capitol, proved too small within a decade. Cass Gilbert’s Capitol stands in its place.

Even so, Buffington’s influence on Minnesota architecture remained strong. During the 1880s, he later claimed, the first Minneapolis building ordinance was written in his office.

Early in that decade, he began formulating plans for the unrealized project that would occupy him for much of the remainder of his career. Around 1880, while reading from the works of Viollet-le-Duc, he came across the Frenchman’s discussion of the possibility of using a framework filled with stone to construct a stool. Buffington postulated that the same principles could apply to buildings, using a braced-metal frame to support shelves holding a veneer of masonry. By thus eliminating the need for a base to carry the entire load of the building, taller structures were suddenly possible. Self-supporting walls in office buildings were obsolete, he claimed. No walls were strictly necessary, in fact, except to keep the wind out.

By 1883, Buffington finished his plans for a 28-story “cloudscraper” in Minneapolis, and he presented the idea to the convention of the Western Association of Architects two years later. He patented the idea of a metal-shelved building in 1888 but could not secure backers for his Twin Cities skyscraper. Critics viciously attacked his new concept. “He does not know that the expansion of iron



Minnesota Historical Society

Pillsbury Hall, University of Minnesota, 1887-'89.

would crack all the plaster," noted a writer for the *Architectural News* in 1888, "that in a few years there would only be a shell left. Iron is good in its place, but not to build buildings entirely of." Somewhat more encouragingly, the *New York Sun* observed that Buffington's patent "is probably the production of a crank, but the cranks of one generation are sometimes the prophets of the next."

Meanwhile, other architects were thinking along similar lines to Buffington's, as the introduction of the elevator in the 1850s and '60s made tall buildings feasible. Metal-framed office buildings began appearing in

American cities during the 1880s. William Le Baron Jenney of Chicago is generally credited with inventing the skyscraper. His 10-story Home Insurance Building (1884) used iron and steel construction. Later, Louis Sullivan and Dankmar Adler of Chicago further advanced construction technology with the use of all-steel framing in the 1890s. The proliferation of skyscrapers left Buffington out in the cold.

Buffington launched a series of patent-infringement lawsuits against the skyscraper builders. He eventually spent \$30,000 in these unsuccessful efforts to protect his idea. By the time the architect's patent expired, he had not collected a single penny from the builders.

Despite failing vision, Buffington remained at his drawing board. Among his final projects was a plan to enclose the entire Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago within a tentlike building.

Two years before his death from heart failure, Buffington finally received token recognition for his role in inventing the skyscraper. Rufus Rand, builder of the Rand Tower in Minneapolis, sent an unsolicited four-figure royalty check to acknowledge Buffington's place in history. The Rand Tower was designed by Holabird and Root, successors to William Le Baron Jenney. "A few of us know how much this generous act meant to the old man then nearing the close of his long, valuable, and useful life," the *Minneapolis Journal* editorialized. "He could not speak of it without emotion."

*Jack El-Hai*

## Harvey Ellis



Minnesota Historical Society

Although the "cloudscraper" is attributed to Buffington, evidence suggests that Harvey Ellis, who worked for Buffington, actually designed the building.

Ellis maintained a nomadic lifestyle, often shunning publicity and recognition. He was born in Rochester, N.Y., in 1852 and after a semester at West Point and a three-year stint in Europe, became an apprentice architect in Albany, N.Y. In 1879, Ellis and his two brothers opened an architectural office in Rochester, where Ellis, as chief designer, found inspiration in the Romanesque style of H.H. Richardson. Within due time, however, Ellis became restless and abandoned the firm, moving to Minnesota in 1886.

He was the first to admit he spent 20 years of his life "preserved in alcohol," wandering like a gypsy throughout the country, working for various firms. He's most frequently associated with Buffington's office. Although none of his drawings bears his name, he's said to have designed Pillsbury and Nicholson halls on the University of Minnesota campus, as well as the St. Paul Building in downtown St. Paul.

His design approach leaned to the emotional, concerned more with aesthetics than function, and eventually he redirected his energy to painting. Ellis moved back to Rochester, N.Y., where he continued to paint—and drink. In 1903, he was hired to design furniture for Gustave Stickley. He reintroduced himself to architecture through his many designs for Arts and Crafts-inspired house plans and renderings.

After a colorful but unfulfilled life, Ellis died unknown and impoverished on Jan. 2, 1904.

*Erin M. Hanafin*

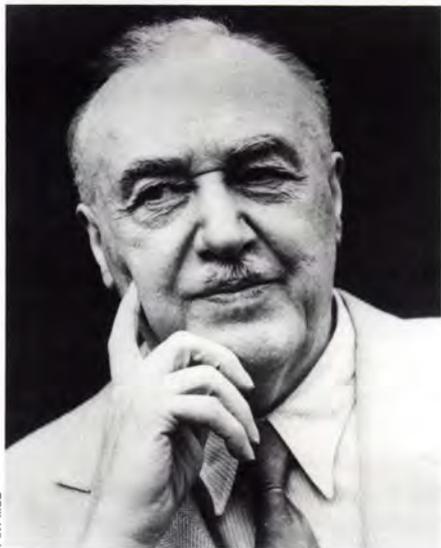


Northwest Architectural Archives

Cloudscraper, ca. 1888.

# Purcell and Elmslie

The partnership of William Gray Purcell and George Grant Elmslie remained in existence just more than a dozen years, from 1909 to 1922. Yet in that short time it became one of the



William Gray Purcell



George Grant Elmslie

leading architectural practices of the early-20th century and emerged as the most important Minnesota firm within the Prairie School.

Much has been written about Purcell and Elmslie and the firm's best-known works: the dramatic Bradley Bungalow, the remarkable design of the Merchants National Bank, the brilliant spatial planning achieved at Lake Place, Purcell's own home, and the Woodbury County Courthouse, the only major civic building constructed by any of the architects of the Prairie School. These buildings possess great conceptual strength and incorporate ornament with spectacular designs in leaded glass, terra cotta and sawed wood.

What was behind this success and creativity? Their skills were certainly complementary, and they shared a well-articulated architectural philosophy. Perhaps more important, there was strong mutual respect. Elmslie considered Purcell his "main inspiration and source." And Purcell said of Elmslie, he was "a strong man, a gentle man, he was Chopin for the eye, he just poured it out." Such admiration surely helped each man bring out the best in the other.

And if Purcell and Elmslie each had a strong belief in the other, their clients certainly believed in them as well. Within just seven years the Bradley family built three houses, one by Louis Sullivan while Elmslie was still in his employ, and two by Purcell and Elmslie.

My own home in Minneapolis was designed by Purcell and Elmslie in 1915 for Charles and Adeline Backus, who must have felt this same inspiration. Backus was already in his 50s when he and his wife decided to leave what must have been a settled lifestyle in their

company, who met Purcell while tuning his piano. Nonetheless, Backus believed in what he saw at Lake Place, and he and his wife proceeded to commission a house that was carefully designed to meet their needs.

Their satisfaction with the house was affirmed by Purcell nearly 25 years later in 1939 when he corresponded with Marion Backus, Charles and Adeline's daughter and only child, who had returned to live in the family home after the death of her parents. Purcell wrote, "It was good of you to send me these nice little pictures that recall the

dwelling we made for your appreciative father so many years ago. . . I had forgotten all about the interesting system of cases and bookshelves, astonishingly modern, anticipating decorative forms that have only recently appeared. . . I was very fond of your father, and



Bradley Bungalow, Woods Hole, Mass.

AM files

Northwest Architectural Archives

Dick Kronick

always stopped to visit with him on his semiannual inspections of our piano.”

A discussion of the Backus house, particularly from a 1992 perspective, may also help us understand the ability of Purcell and Elmslie. The house is a classic example of Prairie-style architecture, with broad, sheltering eaves, and carefully balanced façades featuring bands of casement windows and horizontal trim. It is said to be the firm's only house in Minnesota whose original stucco has not been painted, thus retaining the intended harmonious color scheme between the tinted plaster, trim and casements. Yet, even though we usually experience a building from the exterior, the true measure of a building's success is how it functions for its occupants.

The interior-spatial design is described as the culmination of Purcell and Elmslie's experimentation with the small open plan. The main living area is essentially a single space with the only separation between the entry, living and dining rooms consisting of slant screens built from oak. These same spaces are joined visually by horizontal trim, bands of shared casements which extend from one space into the next, and a continuous ceiling plane. The overall effect is one of remarkable spaciousness in a relatively small area. This same space is both practical and functional, with an extensive storage system including shelves, cabinets and a sideboard occupying a 25-foot wall, large window areas all protected from the summer sun, and screens and storm windows that are easily changed from the inside.

This same thoughtful attention to detail is seen throughout the house. Corner kitchen cabinets feature mitered-wooden bins that open out to provide easy access. Two rooms on the second floor are creatively

joined to form a master suite. Oak doors fold back to create a large opening with the jamb falling directly between two windows, which are part of a continuous band shared by both rooms, while the transition between the spaces is softened by a low soffit. A completely intact bathroom includes a claw-foot tub carefully spaced from the wall and an

Historians will remember Purcell and Elmslie for their major contributions to one of the most important periods in the history of American architecture. Those who actually experience their creations will recall inventive and ingenious designs that captivate the eye and engage the mind.

**Rolf T. Anderson**



Purcell-Cutts house  
(Lake Place), Minneapolis.

entire wall of built-in storage.

All told, the house remains a remarkably functional place. Yet what I find amazing are the forms and spaces, which are truly dynamic creations. Purcell's comment on the "disclosure of a life in the building" seems no overstatement. And here the architecture had to speak for itself. There was no budget for an elaborate site, leaded windows or sawed wood. In fact, the Backus house was built for less than \$3,000.

H. Allen Brooks in his book *The Prairie School* summarizes the accomplishments of Purcell and Elmslie by stating, "As a team they worked splendidly together and their designs always showed an exemplary concern for problems of how a building worked. By judicious planning and subtle manipulation of interior space they created an environment that was efficient and pleasant in which to be."



Backus house  
(above and below), Minneapolis.



Northwest Architectural Archives

Courtesy Rolf Anderson

# Liebenberg and Kaplan

Liebenberg and Kaplan's partnership spanned four decades. The firm was one of the busiest in the city with more than 7,000 commissions, including more than 200 movie theaters and 600 residences.

Jacob J. ("Jack") Liebenberg was born in Milwaukee in 1893. He was in the first class from the new School of Architecture at the University of Minnesota in 1916. He received a master's in architecture from Harvard the following year. He entered the U.S. Army Air Corps, and after the war, returned to Minneapolis to join the firm of D.C. Bennett and teach in the School of Architecture from 1919 to 1921. In 1921, Liebenberg left Bennett and the University to establish a long and productive partnership with his brother-in-law, Seeman Kaplan.



Northwest Architectural Archives

Jacob (Jack) Liebenberg

Kaplan, two years younger than Liebenberg, was a native of Minneapolis who graduated from the University of Minnesota's architecture program in 1918. During his partnership with Liebenberg, Kaplan managed the engineering and business details of the company until his death in 1963. Liebenberg continued to practice until his re-

tirement in 1980. He died in Minneapolis in 1985.

The partners designed a number of houses near the lakes in Minneapolis, and several model homes for the Thorpes Country Club development in Edina from 1927 to 1928. Their commissions also included commercial structures, churches, synagogues, hospitals, and radio and television stations.

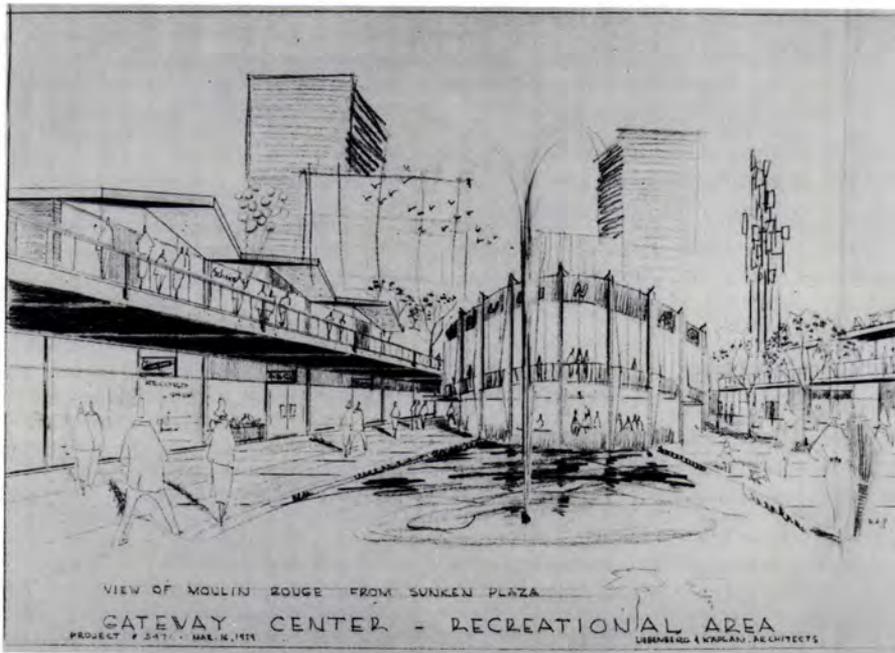
But Liebenberg and Kaplan's art-deco movie theaters brought them fame. Built in the 1930s, they are considered among the nation's finest.

The theaters' exteriors were bright with neon, color, concealed spotlights and animated marquees. Brick, stone, glass, metal and Vitrolite (a tile manufactured in a wide variety of colored glass tempered with minerals to make it more durable, smooth and mirrorlike) were used to create streamlined, futuristic façades.

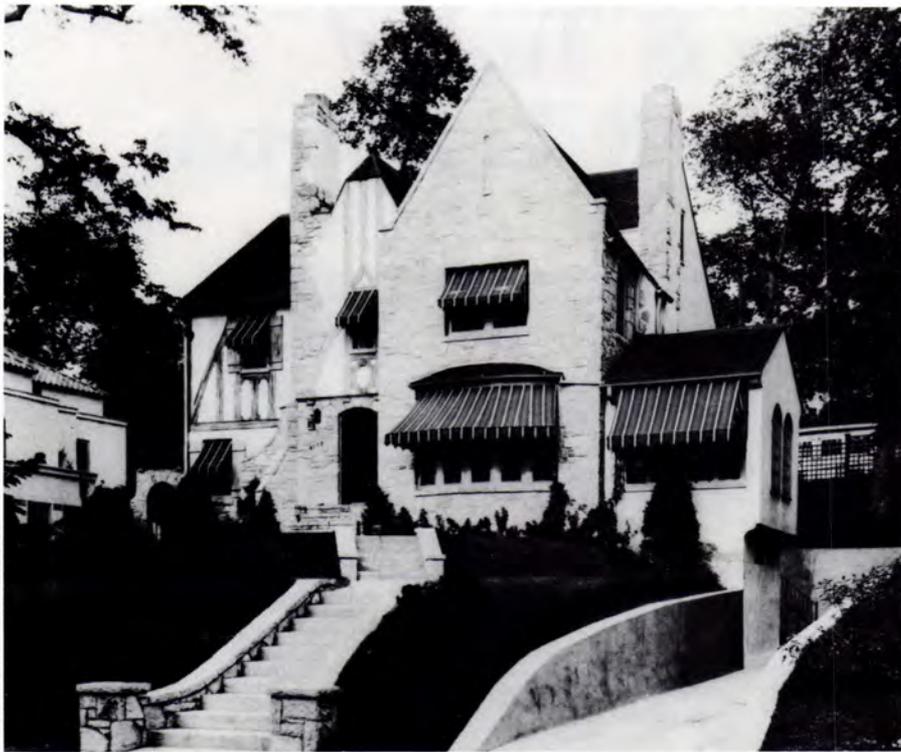
The most striking features of the theaters' interiors were the lobbies and auditoriums. Lobbies were designed to attract the customer to the fantasy worlds within that offered escape and respite from the workaday life outside. They were seductively lighted and furnished to offer luxury, comfort and relaxation to many who could otherwise never experience such amenities.

Auditoriums were usually built in the "stadium" manner. Seating in the last rows was installed on a series of steps or tiers. This eliminated the need for balconies and was an innovation that Liebenberg introduced to Minneapolis in his atmospheric theaters in the late-1920s.

The interiors featured curvilinear decors that often consisted of lines



Proposed plaza for the Gateway urban-renewal project, Minneapolis.



curate memory could always be counted on to know precisely which buildings he designed, the dates, and information about the clients and how he obtained the commissions.

Liebenberg and Kaplan's papers were deposited in the Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota in 1975. The collection consists of presentation drawings, job files, specifications and photographs documenting many of their projects. Some 430 researchers have used the papers for restorations, alterations and studies of Liebenberg and Kaplan's work. Drawings from the collection have appeared in a half dozen exhibits locally and nationally, as well as on a television program that paid tribute to this remarkable firm.

*Alan Lathrop*

of color that flowed down the walls and toward the stage, directing the eye irresistibly to the screen. Walls and ceilings were covered with sound-absorbing Absorbex (made of compressed wood fibers) or Acousti-Celotex (compressed cane fibers) tiles painted in bright colors. Indirect lighting fixtures of metal in matching curvilinear shapes, glass block, colored-tapestry glass, and sweeping metal railings and seat trim were used to dramatize the themes of machine-age streamlining and color.

The firm's best examples of art-deco theaters are the Granada (today Suburban World), Hollywood, Varsity, Uptown, Rialto, and Campus, all in Minneapolis. Others in Minnesota include the Time in Austin, the Maco in Virginia, and Norshor in Duluth, as well as the Fargo in North Dakota. Many still exist and have been restored and placed on the National Register of Historic Places or protected by local designation.

Liebenberg was an easy-going man who was unfailingly courteous. He was a treasure trove of stories about his commissions and his clients. Liebenberg's amazingly ac-



Clark Residence (top), Minneapolis; rendering of Varsity Theater (above) in Dinkytown, near University of Minnesota.

# Magney & Tusler/ Setter, Leach & Lindstrom

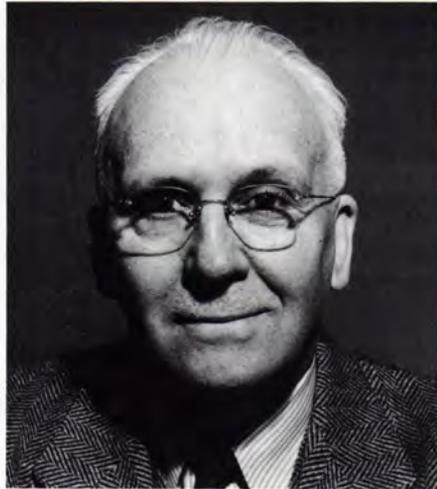
Setter, Leach & Lindstrom began in 1917 as Magney & Tusler Architects and Engineers, a partnership between Gottlieb Magney and Wilbur H. Tusler. The firm, which would eventually design such Minneapolis buildings as the Young-Quinlan Building, Foshay Tower and the Minneapolis Post Office, began with small commercial buildings, houses and churches.

In 1919 French architect Leon Arnal formed a professional relationship with Magney & Tusler that became the basis for some of the firm's most highly regarded work. Arnal's work with Magney & Tusler included the Calhoun Beach Club, the original Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Woman's Club overlooking Loring Park.

The relationship between Arnal and Magney & Tusler, which lasted until 1934, offers an early example of the teacher-architect model still prevalent today. Arnal was trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and after serving in World War I, he accepted a position with the University of Minnesota School



Gottlieb Magney



Wilbur H. Tusler



(From left) John Lindstrom, John Magney, Stowell Leach and Donald Setter looking over shoulder of Wilbur Tusler.

of Architecture.

The most recognizable example of this collaboration is the 1929 Foshay Tower, modeled after Minneapolis businessman Wilbur Foshay's favorite structure—the Washington Monument. The interior of the Foshay follows many of the same principles that guide office-building designers today: a central service core; windows in every office; underground parking complete with car wash and repair services; and an elegant lobby that creates an impression of substance. Unfortunately, by the

time the building opened in 1929, the stock market had crashed and Wilbur Foshay was under investigation for mail fraud.

In the early-1930s, Magney & Tusler received the Minneapolis Post Office commission, a project that helped pull them through the Depression. Working again with Leon Arnal, Magney & Tusler created one of the finest art-deco buildings in the Twin Cities. The streamline-moderne complex is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The 4-story, 540-foot-long stone building, according to Magney, would last 100 years or longer, unless, of course, "the handling of mail is turned all topsy-turvy from the way it is done at present." Although he didn't foresee the growth of the city, Magney was certainly right about the building's quality. A 1990 addition not only respects the original design but reiterates it precisely.

In fact, several of Magney & Tusler's best buildings have been carefully restored recently. The Young-Quinlan Building on Nicollet

Mall exemplifies this trend. Designed in 1926 as one of Minneapolis's first department stores, the building now houses a Ralph Lauren store. The gracefully arched display windows, the "jewelry-box" display cases flanking the entrances, the ornate ceilings and the curved mezzanine stairway offer an ideal setting for the upscale merchandise.

In 1939, Donald P. Setter became a partner in Magney & Tusler, followed by Stowell D. Leach and John Lindstrom in 1952. Setter established and supervised what was to become a 50-year relationship with Northwestern Bell Telephone Co. The firm has completed more than 1,000 projects for the telephone company, including a recent renovation of the U.S. West central-office building in Minneapolis.

The name Setter, Leach & Lindstrom Inc., was adopted in 1959 when the firm changed from a partnership to a corporation. The firm continued its tradition of public architecture when it began working with a collaborative team in the 1980s to design the new Minneapolis Convention Center. Other recent projects include the Cannon Falls Elementary School, and a nine-school renovation project for the Edina school district. The firm has designed more than 150 projects for



Hedrick-Blessing

the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus, as well as work for Gustavus Adolphus and Carleton colleges.

With experience in educational, governmental, medical, commercial and light-industrial facilities, Setter, Leach & Lindstrom today is a well-established, nationally recognized firm. *Janet Whitmore*

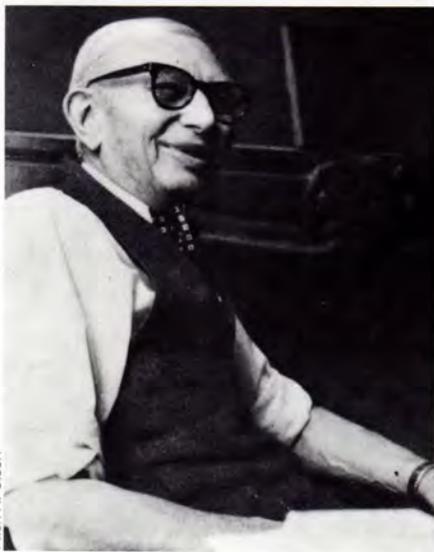


Walker Art Center (top); Calhoun Beach Club Apartments (above), 1927-'29; Woman's Club of Minneapolis (left), 1926.

# Edwin Lundie

A decade ago I sat in my favorite leather-and-ash Jorgenson chair in the Fireplace Room at the Arboretum, bored with the drone of one of my academic colleagues, and staring at the beautiful timber framing and turned-wood light fixture above me. I wondered who had designed this comfortable room, which I had come to appreciate over several academic retreats. At recess one of my colleagues informed me that the architect was Edwin Lundie. I now know that my colleague must have never met the man, otherwise he would have surely used the moniker, "Mr. Lundie."

A decade later, after viewing some 75 of Mr. Lundie's projects, having had great conversations with



Allen R. Olson

Edwin Lundie

his daughter, his draftsmen, his clients and his colleagues, I realized that he always was referred to as Mr. Lundie. This proper title commonly bestowed on gentlemen in the '20s remained with him for life. It

seems aptly to reflect both the great respect he was given, along with his penchant for tradition. While the architectural community around him was following the tide to modernism in both casual speech as well as architectural style, Mr. Lundie pursued his steadfast course of cultural continuity. Today, many clients, countless guests and some architects have come to appreciate Mr. Lundie's resolve.

Edwin Lundie was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1886, where he was immersed in romanticism under the tutelage of his grandparents. Showing an early aptitude for sketching, he soon found himself in St. Paul apprenticing with Cass Gilbert. You

may have seen the aerial perspective of the State Capitol, so frequently published in Cass Gilbert's work, which was the product of Edwin Lundie's hand. Following Gilbert's departure to New York, he continued his apprenticeship under Thomas Holyoke, and then Emmanuel Masqueray. During these years he gained a great respect for the importation of style and its relevance in the cultural representation of a new frontier. He also learned the rigors of application and hard work, traits that he retained throughout his career. In his own practice, he was said to work an eight-hour day at the office and then go home to work another eight-hour evening. During apprenticeship, he also honed his rendering and drafting skills through a school that Masqueray founded, along with sessions at the Gargoyle Club.

By 1922 he had embarked on a



Courtesy Dale Muffinger



Entry to Musser house, (left) Sunfish Lake, Minn.; interior of Thompson "Shooting Box" (above), Windom, Minn.



purpose of building, not for the protection in a litigious world. He nurtured a cadre of craftsmen whom he knew could execute his creations. He sustained relations with his previous clients by sending them sketches of their projects as holiday gifts. Thus he created a paradigm for an intimate cultural connectedness so often missing in the modernist, somewhat elitist proposition of service.

Today, scholars such as Linden Groat at the University

of his own, which would eventually span 50 years and produce some 300 designs. He left behind the large institutional clients common to his apprenticeship and pursued residences, cabins and a few public buildings such as the Arboretum and Lutsen Lodge. Mr. Lundie's designs have gained importance due to his love of local materials and craftsmanship. Styles, like *a parti*, became simple themes through which he could explore his craft. Relying on his ability to sketch picturesque images and his penchant for consummate details, he created drawings that included templates for builders to work by. Builders have noted their joy in working on these projects, which went together like a fine piece of furniture.

Mr. Lundie's clients were commonly the wealthy of St. Paul for whom he did elaborate country estates, hunting lodges and North Shore cabins. His clients, however, also included professors, as in the Grove in St. Paul, and others of modest means. The Andersons, both school teachers, were amazed by the joy with which Mr. Lundie designed their modest house in Mendota. Today, neighbors still treasure the simple elegance of this Cape Cod image

on evening strolls.

The lessons from Mr. Lundie are more than the legacy of fine structures, but also the alternative model of practice that he demonstrated. He gave great importance to the transformation of convention and style, like having pride in a great quotation. He also drew for the

of Michigan are re-evaluating architects' position as creators of cultural artifacts. Mr. Lundie and others of the picturesque genre of the '30s may serve many of us today as mentors to the humility of architecture when practiced in the midst of a cultural milieu.

**Dale Mulfinger**



Daniels estate (top), Gem Lake, Minn.; exterior of Thompson "Shooting Box" (above).

# Thomas Farr Ellerbe

The name Ellerbe calls to mind images of both a remarkable man and a nationally recognized architecture-and-engineering firm. Until recently, it seemed impossible to separate Tom Ellerbe from his creation. Although his father, Franklin, actually established the firm in 1909, Tom transformed it from a small, sole proprietorship into a major force in the medical design field. At his retirement in 1966, the firm employed more than 500 people.

Immediately following his father's death in 1921, Ellerbe was



Thomas Farr Ellerbe

forced to exercise the authority and decisiveness that became the hallmarks of his managerial style. When a senior architect announced that he

known for his pragmatism and perspicacity—traits that proved invaluable in the medical design field.

By the early-1920s, the firm had established strong relationships with such clients as the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. Ellerbe faced the challenge of keeping pace with a phenomenal growth rate in the medical industry. One of Ellerbe's first tasks was planning the Plummer Building for the Mayo Clinic. "Nobody could have written a program for the Plummer Building because the clientele was growing like crazy," Ellerbe recalled. "The Plummer Building started out as a 5- or 6-story building with a floor added as things evolved. And all of a sudden, we found out that we were at a 10-story building. We kept adding floors, not knowing where the [roof] was going to be."

Soon after completion, the Plummer Building was filled to capacity. Harry Harwick, Mayo's business manager, called Ellerbe to discuss additional building plans. "The patients are coming in droves and we can't handle them," Harwick told Ellerbe. "We've decided the Plummer Building has been so successful that we'll build another just like it someplace else."

Ellerbe convinced the clinic that this was a "cockeyed idea" and that his scheme for "an exaggerated tent" would prove more practical. This approach provided Ellerbe and his staff with the time to complete "an intelligent analysis of the problem."

"We built a whole series of Quonset huts and hooked them up with the subway system," Ellerbe explained. "This solution turned out to be a phenomenal success. People



St. Paul City Hall/Ramsey County Courthouse, 1931.

and his associates had decided to take over the firm, Ellerbe fired him on the spot. This unexpected power play left a strong impression on Ellerbe. For many years, he lacked confidence in the loyalty of his key staff members. He became a demanding and, according to some, "dictatorial" leader. Yet he was also

# James Stageberg



Don F. Wong

James Stageberg

Two years ago when James Stageberg published *A House of One's Own* with his wife, author and essayist Susan Allen Toth, he sought to demystify the architectural profession by showing the nuts-and-bolts of house designing. Architect-designed homes are not exclusively for the rich, the book suggests, nor are they esoteric, avant-garde dwellings for eccentric artists. Oh, no! Stageberg's book was a guide to designing the "house of your dreams," a dream that can be quite accessible.

Stageberg certainly seems to have been bitten by the writing bug. He's now fleshing out notes for his next book, a personal memoir about the life of an architect. "We are a splendid profession, and I want to write about that," he says. "Architects are some of the most professionally moral people I know. They have great integrity. Architects are given a high moral purpose in their education. I think we

believe what we do has an impact on the lives of people. A building comes and stays. It's not like a painting, which is either hung or not hung."

Nevertheless, Stageberg admits that the high social mission of the modernists—that architecture can change the world—didn't exactly pan out. "Modernism hasn't made a better society," he says. "Other things have to come into play. Yet what we do has a strong impact on the society in which architecture is placed."

Despite it all, Stageberg considers himself a modernist at heart, and he was trained in architecture in the post-World War II era when mod-

ernism was the new architecture, imported from Europe by the likes of Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe. He graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1952, and completed a master's in architecture from Harvard in 1954. He worked for various Twin Cities architects—including Thorshov and Cerny; Hammel Green and Abrahamson; and Setter, Leach & Lindstrom—before forming his own firm in the early-'60s. In 1969 he formed a partnership with Thomas Hodne that lasted through the early-'80s.

The rational principles of modernism still guide Stageberg's work, although his application has



Shin and Joel Koyama

Screened gazebo (below), Marshfield, Wis.; Seventh Street parking-transit facility (right); Stickler residence (opposite top), Lake Pepin, Minn.; writer's studio (opposite center), Lake Pepin, Minn.; Fourth Street parking-transit facility (opposite bottom).



Christian Korab

changed a bit over time. His recent works are looser, less controlled by modernist dogma. Particularly in his own weekend getaway, Wind Whistle, which he designed for Toth, color and playful forms come into focus. A screened gazebo for a rural-Minnesota couple and a colorful garden house for a Wisconsin couple express similar notions that architecture can be fun.

"Postmodernism and deconstructionism have loosened up the form," he says. "Architecture has gotten better because of more freedom, expressed by such architects as Frank Gehry."

Despite the new freedom, Stage-

shunned such labels as “regional” or “national” firm, Ahles says. Quite unexpectedly, however, the completion in 1976 of the Omnitheater at the Science Museum of Minnesota extended the firm’s sphere of influence beyond the Twin Cities. HGA has designed similar complexes in Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and other cities.

Importantly, HGA recognizes the state’s appreciation for commerce, the arts, health and education, and worship. And early projects proved watersheds in establishing HGA’s pre-eminence in these fields. When Hammel and Green met for their first luncheon in 1952 at the St. Paul Hotel (which HGA renovated during the early-1980s), the two young architects were about to embark on a joint venture, the Chelsea Heights School. This small-scale project, completed in 1953, provided the foil



Warren Reynolds

wood-sheathed box with a tripod roof and separate bell tower, was built in two stages between 1958 and 1960. Two decades later, HGA reasserted its talent for sacred architecture by blending 20th-century engineering with Puritan simplicity at the Colonial Church of Edina, an

Without crystal chandeliers and Italian marble, HGA created both a design and civic champion for Minneapolis to savor for generations. It’s a marvel in terms of economy. Green says with glee that Orchestra Hall would today cost \$15 million, whereas the recently completed concert



Warren Reynolds

for securing the commission to build Highland Park Junior High School, which was innovative in terms of its floor plan and lighting, and later many other secondary and post-secondary facilities throughout the state.

With the baby boom and suburban migration in high gear, new churches were sprouting throughout the region. And HGA quickly established its deft hand at constructing reverent worship spaces within a modernist vocabulary. The first such project, the Lutheran Church of the Reformation in St. Louis Park, a

approach that the firm successfully repeated around the country.

HGA also has a long history of designing arts-and-entertainment facilities. The completion of the Benedicta Arts Center at the College of St. Benedict in 1964 graced the cover of *Architectural Record* and led to similar projects at Gustavus Adolphus and Luther colleges. Lauded for its acoustics, the Benedicta Arts Center foreshadowed one of HGA’s most prestigious and successful projects—Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis with Hardy, Holzman, Pfeiffer.

hall in Dallas, which has the same seating capacity, cost a whopping \$150 million.

“They’re expressions of modesty,” Green says about HGA’s achievements. Over the years much of their work has been featured in the national press. Yet HGA doesn’t seek out architecture for publicity’s sake. Instead, the Firm of the Year strives for architecture distinguished by quality and economy, architecture that is simply deserving of recognition.

*David Anger*

# Hammel Green and Abrahamson



Courtesy HGA

Pictured from left to right: Curt Green, Richard Hammel, Bruce Abrahamson.



Franz Hall

Delano Elementary School (above), 1992; O'Shaughnessy Auditorium (right) at College of St. Catherine, 1971; St. Bede's Priory (opposite top), Eau Claire, Wis., 1967; Minneapolis Clinic of Psychology and Neurology (opposite center), 1966.

In the beginning, there was Richard Hammel and Curt Green. Two years later in 1955, Bruce Abrahamson joined them in their quest to design modern architecture in the Upper Midwest. So, one of Minnesota's leading architectural firms—Hammel Green and Abrahamson—was formed. Now celebrating its 39th year, HGA has been selected by the AIA Minnesota as the first recipient of the Firm of the Year Award.

Beginning as a two-person shop in Curt Green's home, HGA has grown incrementally to its current size of 200-plus staff members with offices in Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Denver. Despite the recession, the firm is eyeing expansion. HGA's imprint on the Twin Cities and its architectural landscape is difficult, if not impossible, to ignore. Skeptics need only drive across the Twin Cities, with a copy of *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* in hand, to be convinced of

HGA's ubiquity.

When asked what HGA projects had in common, Green replies, "They're all modest." Since the three founding principals had roots here, they naturally understood the community. In fact, HGA's longevity may rest in the fact that they realized something that outsiders often miss, which is that Minnesotans opt for quality over quantity, durability over fashion, and economy over glitz. This commitment to community continues as staff serves on a variety of charity and civic boards. Partner Loren Ahles says, "We're residents, not visitors."

If HGA's work is considered by many to be Minnesota modest, it is also characterized by some as Minnesota nice. HGA's work is rarely dramatic or brash and, yes, it is often polite. Having endured modernism and postmodernism, HGA never embraced a manifesto. Inevitably, of course, the firm's *oeuvre* reflects the times, but HGA avoids initiating design "movements" or producing any "star" architects.

So, HGA has not produced any flops or follies. And even if it has, blame it on gambling fever, as in Canterbury Downs, or despots, as in the Shah of Iran's Pahlavi Library, which was never built. After a brief sojourn in the New York market during the early-1970s, HGA has



Joe Ketola

had begun producing work in the modern style, such as Elizabeth and Winston Close, and Bob Cerny, but it wasn't until Rapson took charge of the architecture school that the new style was officially sanctioned here.) It soon became clear that Rapson was a force to reckon with, and that a new Bauhaus-trained, Scandinavian-inspired International style was here to stay.

Over the subsequent 30 years at



natural materials and a respect for the art of construction. His philosophy was that "all work by the stu-

dent should be based on reality—not artificial, not just theory, but a part of life." As proof of the efficacy of his



the University, Rapson was able to blandish his style of modernism on thousands of students through a wit and wisdom gathered over a wide-ranging practice that included the design of large college campuses to technically complex theaters, from high-rise buildings to bentwood rocking chairs. Through all of his work, there is a consistency of purpose that is true to the solid educational foundation he received at Cranbrook under Eliel Saarinen's leadership. The great Finnish master instilled in all of his students a love of

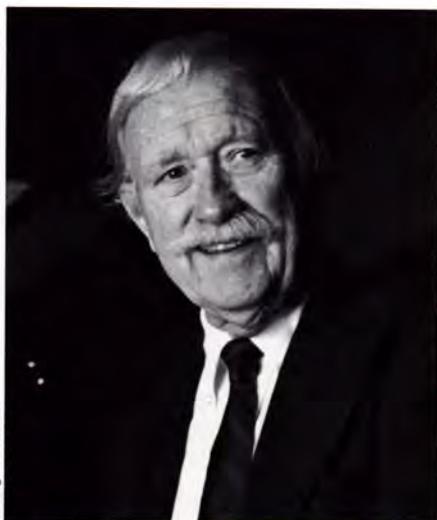
method, Rapson has won six national AIA Honor Awards and dozens of local and regional awards to date.

Having retired from active teaching in 1985, Rapson is enjoying a renewed popularity as a visiting lecturer at numerous architecture schools across the country, many headed by former students. At these talks, Rapson is fond of reciting his "Ten Commandments" of architecture. With a wry glance to John Ruskin's "Seven Lamps of Architecture" and R. Buckminster Fuller's "Nine Chains to the Moon," Rapson identifies the 10 essentials that must be addressed successfully in every building if good architecture is to happen: historical content (community), context (the site), program (or use), structure, integrity of materials, technical systems, space-form, architectural expression (or symbolism), managerial-and-fiscal responsibility, and the totality of the creative act. Above all, he believes, as did Saarinen, that architects should design to the potential of their times, to be fully a part of life in all its ramifications. For Rapson, that is a forgone conclusion. *Bruce N. Wright*

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# Ralph Rapson



George Heinrich

Ralph Rapson

When Ralph Rapson designed the Guthrie Theater in 1963, the 49-year-old architect already had designed six U.S. Embassies and consulates in Europe, won several national design competitions, and taught at M.I.T. alongside such architectural luminaries as Alvar Aalto, William W. Wurster and Pietro Belluschi. Before that he was head of the architecture department at the Institute of Design in Chicago from 1942 to 1946, studied at Cranbrook Academy under Eliel Saarinen and with classmates Eero Saarinen, Harry Weese, Charles and Ray Eames, Harry Bertoia, and Edmund Bacon, and traveled west to visit the work of Shindler and Neutra in California and Wright's Taliesin West in Arizona. Rapson also had traveled to France, Greece, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Holland as part of his growing international practice with work for the State Department after World War II.

The Guthrie Theater was a watershed building for Rapson, and its sway over American theater design across the country has reverberated through theatrical circles ever since.

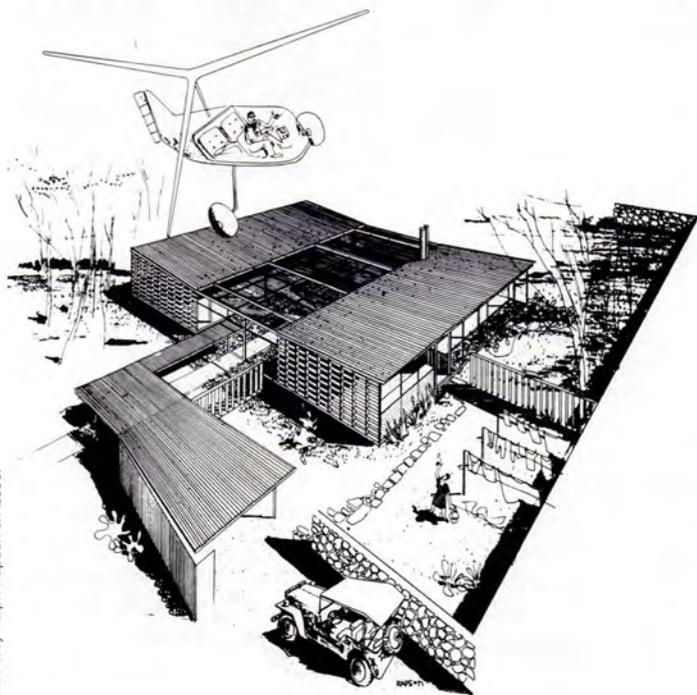
But the influence of Rapson's architectural sensibilities has been carried much further through other work, such as his designs of the Cedar Square West new-town development on Minneapolis's West Bank and several private residences, and his leadership at the University of Minnesota School

of Architecture and Landscape Architecture.

Rapson assumed the deanship of the University of Minnesota School of Architecture nine years before the Guthrie commission and began assembling a strong faculty of practitioner/teachers like James Stageberg, Leonard Parker, Bob Cerny, John Meyers, Roger Clemence, John Rautama, and others. This was in keeping with his own experience at M.I.T., where then-dean William W. Wurster had established the precedent of hiring professors who were practicing



Case Study House No. 4, "Greenbelt House" (below), 1945; Rarig Center (right) at University of Minnesota, 1971; Tyrone Guthrie Theatre (opposite top) with original screens, 1962-'63; watercolor from Taos, N.M. (opposite center); The Glass Cube (opposite bottom), Amery, Wis., 1976.



Courtesy Ralph Rapson & Assoc.

architects first, and teachers second. Modernism, or the International style, was all the rage then. Walter Gropius had re-established the Bauhaus ideals at Harvard, and by 1946, when Rapson left Chicago to teach alongside Alvar Aalto at M.I.T., modernism was in full force among a handful of enlightened East Coast schools of architecture.

When Rapson took charge of the University of Minnesota School of Architecture in 1953, the majority of the school's faculty were full-time teachers steeped in the tenets of a classical Beaux-Arts training. Through his appointments, Rapson was able to bring modernism alongside another strong tradition of the Midwest, the Prairie School, which had Minnesota connections of its own through the work of Minneapolis-based architects Purcell & Elmslie. (A handful of Minnesota architects

plete each other's designs. But they didn't hover over each other at the drafting table. Elizabeth, who is fond of telling anecdotes, is more intuitive, and Winston, whose conversations veer toward lectures, is more methodical.

"Lisl and Win were answering to a higher God, which meant that they had to be very truthful and direct to each other," says architect Gar Hargens, who worked with the Closes for two decades before buying Close Associates in 1987. Reflecting on their partnership, Winston says, "We concluded that together we did better work than either of us would have done alone."

Across the Twin Cities and throughout the Midwest exists a brilliant constellation of, as the design cognoscenti simply say, "Close homes." Perhaps best known as residential architects, the team also designed many institutional projects,

In fact, she recalls a client's inability to secure a mortgage because of the home's flat roof.

Today a Close home is sought after and new owners seek out Close Associates to make adjustments. Hargens recently designed a home for the son of a partner at Red



Hedrich-Blessing

Wing's Interstate Clinic, which the Closes designed in the late-1930s. Yet, like the child of a famous politician, Hargens acquired not just a firm but a persona, too.

"The hardest thing to overcome is the perception the Closes also tried to overcome, which is 'you guys only

"That was right down our alley," says Winston about prefab housing. "They were efficient and simple." Elizabeth adds, "For architects, the trick was to design it so you could pack it in one truck load." Yet, the high production costs ultimately made prefabrication too costly. Elizabeth sighs, "The trouble was the salesmen would get into the act, adding this and that."

Other great midwestern architects—Wright, Rapson, Purcell and Elmslie—also set out to halt the housing crunch through good design and did not succeed. Yet, the Closes can take solace in the fact that the country appears poised to tackle these difficult issues. In addition to continuing the firm's tradition of designing quality homes for the disadvantaged and affluent, Close Associates asserts its commitment to community-based projects, such as the new Harriet Tubman Women's Shel-



Saari & Forrai

including the award-winning Gray Freshwater Biological Institute.

For the Closes, site, efficiency and simplicity rule. These flat-roofed, inward homes, organic in tone but geometric in form, are in Minneapolis architect Bob Roscoe's view Minnesota's most "indigenous" houses. But Elizabeth modestly shrugs, and says in slightly accented English, "People have gotten used to them."

do expensive, modern houses'," Hargens remarks, "when, in fact, always we've done much more."

It is interesting that this design duo, who would eventually work for Minnesota's elite, began their careers attending to the housing needs of the state's poorest citizens. Also, during their early career, the Closes designed packaged prefabricated homes.

ter, Riverside University Family Practice Clinic, and Children's Hospital of St. Paul.

"The issues that concern us the most are the same that excited Lisl and Win at the beginning," explains Hargens. "They set out to build affordable housing and I am, as they were, committed to projects that try to create better communities."

*David Anger*

# Elizabeth and Winston Close



Don F. Wong

Winston and Elizabeth Close

Perched on a Lowry Hill cliff, the current occupants of John and Dorothy Rood's home, designed by architects Elizabeth and Winston Close and completed in 1948, take in views of the Minneapolis skyline and Sculpture Garden. While the home is the epitome of mid-20th-century sophistication, intelligent in an Adlai Stevenson way and stylish in an Edsel fashion, the owners must also contend with less serene modern manifestations, such as Interstate 94 and Summer Field.

The latter has deteriorated into a bleak and grimy housing project distinguished by streaks of gang graffiti and crumbling streets. Completed over several decades, the Closes designed part of the complex. The proximity of affluence and poverty reveals the failure of the American dream to produce decent, affordable housing. For the Closes, informally known as Win and Lisl, the contrast holds an ironic resonance.

Winston says the couple left M.I.T. for Minnesota during the late-1930s with the "vim and vigor" to solve the housing crisis. Elizabeth inherited her idealism from her father, a Viennese lawyer and politician, who was an early champion of

public housing. As a child she learned the tenets of modernism, since her family's home was designed by Adolf Loos. Apparently, the architect's adage, "ornamentation is a crime," stuck.

When the Closes met at M.I.T., Winston was also a committed modernist. As an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota's School of Architecture, he says his class abandoned the eclectic Beaux-Arts style. "We knew that we wanted to do something other than Corinthian columns—what, exactly, we didn't know." Then came news of the Bauhaus and suddenly modernism's pledge that "less is more" held the promise of reversing architecture's previous indifference to social ills.

Arriving here as the Depression lingered, the couple must have been something of a novelty, with their offbeat notions of flat-roofed houses and unconventional marriage. They shared a practice called Close and Scheu, and Elizabeth retained her maiden name until, when pregnant, it became an "embarrassment." So



George Heinrich

Private residence (above), Lake Minnetonka, 1984; private residence (right, for son of earlier client), Red Wing, Minn., 1992; Interstate Clinic (opposite top), Red Wing, 1939; Gray Freshwater Biological Institute (opposite center), 1974.



Gar Hargens

the name of the firm was changed to Close Associates. As divorce statistics indicate, marriage is a difficult proposition. Coupled with a professional arrangement it seems impossible. But at ages 85 and 79, the Closes appear to have mastered both.

Like any couple married more than 50 years, the Closes can finish each other's sentences and, during their working days, they could com-

Airport main-terminal building, the University of Minnesota School of Architecture and Metropolitan Stadium. Other work over the years included a long list of office buildings, schools and colleges, churches and such religious buildings as St. Olaf's Catholic Church.

Throughout his 40-year career, Cerny exerted great influence on

blight, namely the Gateway area. Cerny envisioned eliminating an 18-block area and designing a cluster of public buildings (slab towers) arranged in a civic-center form. Plans moved slowly, much to Cerny's frustration, yet he continued to promote the concept weekly in speeches to civic groups, the mayor's office, and anyone who would listen.

By 1952, only a new public library was planned for Fourth and Hennepin. After 1958, when federal monies for urban renewal were granted, the final count-

down began. In early-1960, the wrecking balls came in, wiping out 40 percent of the loop, 17 blocks in all. Thorshov and Cerny were retained to design the Public Health Building, the State Employment Security Building, and the Federal Courthouse.

The results of Cerny's modernist visions for Minneapolis finally were being realized.

In 1983, Cerny was awarded the AIA Minnesota Gold Medal. His disciples and rivals alike

came to pay tribute, only to witness a once-tireless leader in a wheelchair, debilitated by cancer and Alzheimer's disease. Two years later in 1985 he died in St. Paul at 76. Cerny's influence lives on with the many architects who went on to head their own firms after Cerny and Associates disbanded. John Lackens, president of The Alliance, spoke for many as he reflected recently, "When I left Cerny Associates, I stated that any success I would achieve would be strictly due to Bob Cerny, the school and his office as a mentor." **Bette Hammel**

Minnesota architects. Early on he fought to change the type of architecture taught at the University from classic and French to contemporary. It was a frustrating battle because many severely criticized the school for experimenting in the new mod-

ern style. But Cerny continued to advocate modernism. The best and brightest students were increasingly attracted to his firm from the late-'40s on because he hired them as apprentices, encouraged them and gave them broad freedom to pursue quality.

Urban renewal was a passion of Cerny's. He was convinced that Minneapolis had to become a modern-looking metropolis in order to prosper. Following World War II, as executive secretary of the Civic Center Development Association, he lead the group to address downtown

## Roy Thorshov



**Roy Thorshov was literally born into the architecture profession. His father, Olaf, was a partner with Long, Lamoreaux and Thor-**

**shov, an outgrowth of Long and Kees. It was only natural then that young Roy should study architecture at the University of Minnesota, where he graduated in 1928. After going to France for further study at the Fontainebleau School of Fine Arts and returning for graduate study at Minnesota, Thorshov acquired practical experience at his father's firm.**

**In 1936, he took over the practice, renaming it Long and Thorshov and taking in a fiesty young partner, Bob Cerny.**

**In contrast to Cerny, Thorshov loved many of the old buildings in the city and eventually became dedicated to historic preservation. In 1972, he became the first chairman of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission and helped redevelop the 1906 Butler Brothers warehouse into the award-winning Butler Square.**

**During the Thorshov and Cerny years, Roy's favorite work included the First Unitarian Society, St. Olaf's Catholic Church, American Hardware Mutual Insurance Company, and the student center and administration building at St. Olaf College (a joint venture with SMSQ). In 1960, Thorshov parted company with Cerny and teamed up with Willard Thorsen to form Thorsen and Thorshov. There he continued to direct projects ranging from schools, churches and office buildings to shopping centers.**

**In 1974 he was elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects. He was director of the Norwegian American Historical Society, director and vice president of the Norwegian American Museum in Decorah, Iowa, held many other offices within the Sons of Norway, and in 1962 was knighted in the Order of St. Olaf by the Norwegian government. During his last decade, he won a merit award from the city of Minneapolis for his work on historic preservation. He died in March 1992.**

**Bette Hammel**



Courtesy Bentz/Thompson/Fletow



# Robert Cerny



AM files

Robert Cerny

In 1965, the ever-eloquent Bob Cerny drove Barbara Flanagan, then a fledgling reporter for the *Minneapolis Tribune*, down Hennepin Avenue, preaching his visions for the city. Flanagan recalls, after commenting that she loved the old buildings, Cerny's fiery reply, "We should blow up the whole street! Basically, everything should go." In retrospect, that summed up his philosophy, the ideals of an ardent early modernist who firmly believed that for cities to thrive they must be planned with clusters of high-rise buildings and other contemporary architecture.

From the time Wisconsin-born Cerny earned his master's degree in architecture from Harvard University in 1933 and won a traveling fellowship to Europe the next year, he believed passionately in modern architecture. He saw that Scandinavian cities, in particular, were already using modern urban-planning techniques. He became convinced that this was the wave of the future. After three years as an associate architect with the Tennessee Valley Authority, Cerny accepted a teaching post in 1936 at the University of Minnesota's School of Architecture (having graduated from there with honors in 1932), and began a lifetime dedicated to modern architec-

ture, whether through teaching, designing, building or speech-making.

"He saw his responsibilities as an architect in far broader terms than most, believing that to build a better urban environment one must become involved in more than just design," says Fred Bentz, who spent many years in association with Cerny.

Indeed, Cerny served as chairman of the Urban Renewal Committee of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and wound up as president of the Downtown Council, the only Minnesota architect to fill those shoes.

By his own admission, Cerny was not an easy man to deal with. He was aggressive, outspoken, opinionated—"an elegant zealot," some said—yet sensitive and caring about his students and his team of talented young designers.

From the beginning, Cerny wanted to head his own firm but had to wait out the waning years of the Depression. In 1937, soon after he began teaching at the University, he and Roy Jones, who headed the School of Architecture then, started a practice with Cerny as a partner for five years. Together, they designed many contemporary houses around the Twin Cities. In 1942, in what proved to be a strategic move,

he teamed up with Roy Thorshov. Over the next 18 years, the firm, Thorshov and Cerny, prospered and grew to 125 staff members in the '50s, with Cerny as the driving force. Ultimately in 1960, Thorshov left to go into partnership with Willard Thorsen, leaving Cerny as president of Cerny and Associates.

Cerny's commitment to modernism stood out in all the firm's work, such as the Radisson South and Sheraton-Ritz hotels, Minneapolis-St. Paul International

Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (below), 1961; The Church of the Holy Name (opposite top), Minneapolis, 1962; American Hardware Mutual Insurance Co. (opposite bottom), Minneapolis, 1957.



Franz Hall



to Minnesota to study at St. Paul's Luther Theological Seminary. During World War II, he joined the Marine Corps as a pilot and was tempted to stay in aviation. Instead, he decided to study architecture at Yale University, where he graduated with a master's of architecture in 1949. He then returned to Northfield to start his practice and teach design and graphics part time at St. Olaf (an association that lasted almost 35 years).

Sovik's firm has designed more than a dozen buildings at St. Olaf. Perched on a hilly site overlooking the southern-Minnesota farmlands, the campus retains an old-world look, thanks to the use of gray Lannon stone from Milwaukee. In the



early days working with the college, Sovik says the temptation was to be modernistic. "But we tried to continue the scale and stone of the Norman-Gothic buildings already there and keep the orientation," he says. The buildings' interiors, however, show the classic modernist's touch, with extensive use of glass, honey-colored oak, tile floors and open classrooms.

Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., also has been a continuous client since SMSQ created the master plan in the '50s, designing about 12 buildings since. For Carleton College in Northfield, SMSQ did the new library addition, the chemistry wing and various dorms.

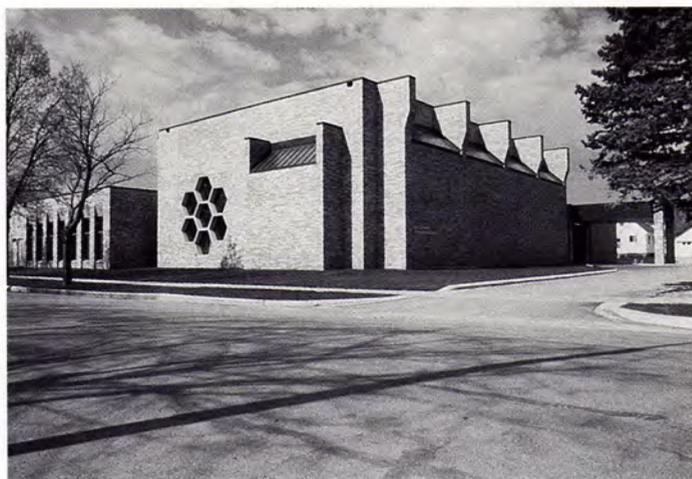
The main thrust of Sovik's work, however, continues to be churches. His most recent commissions include two Catholic churches—the Church of Good Shepherd in State College, Penn., and St. Albert the Great (an addition) in south Minneapolis—plus a remodeling for Garrett Evangelical Seminary, connected with Northwest-

ern University in Evanston, Ill. Through all these projects, Sovik carries out the three qualities he believes are essential for religious architecture: scale, touchability and beauty.

Designing baptismal fonts with running water has become one of his fortes. "I take certain joy in the fact that we were the first to make a baptismal font big enough for immersion (done in 1954 for a church in Williston, N.D.)," Sovik says. "We can't have the subject of God's grace be a birdbath."

Is modernism still flourishing? Sovik definitely thinks it is. "But not the doctrinal modernism of the '40s and '50s," he says. "Postmodernism is dead. Modernism is alive, though somewhat revised, one that perhaps tends to symbols and is more oriented toward human relationships than technical issues. The merger of functionalism and symbolism is what makes good architecture."

Form may follow function, but evoking the beauty, mystery and spirituality of religion is what Sovik is all about. **Bette Hammel**



Christiansen Hall of Music (top) at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.; Our Savior's Lutheran Church (above), Jackson, Minn.; Trinity Lutheran Church (left), Princeton, Minn.

**W**hen American soldiers returned home after World War II, something was afoot on the home front. A new prosperity greeted them. And a new way of thinking about the world—and about architecture. Walter Gropius, fleeing Nazi oppression, brought the ideals of the Bauhaus to America in 1937. The Great Depression and the war sapped the nation's resources, leaving little opportunity for architects to build, but plenty of time for them to think. With the likes of Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer, Eliel Saarinen and Gropius, a rumbling could be heard in the nation's leading architecture schools. From Harvard and M.I.T. to Cranbrook and the Illinois Institute of Technology ( Armour), these exponents of modernism were discarding the Beaux-Arts for a cleaner, more honest architecture.

As early as 1932, an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York identified the new architecture taking shape in Europe. "Modern Architecture: International Exhibition," sought to explore this International-style architecture as more than a fad. And indeed it was more. The deans of modernism—Gropius, Mies, Le Corbusier, et al.—had more than spare, cubic, "less-is-more" styling in mind. Modernism would create a better world.

With war-torn Europe in ruin and America crawling from the wreckage of the Depression, the world was ready for change. American prosperity after the war provided the modernists with an outlet to apply their theories, and soon the American landscape forever would be changed, for better or worse.

In Minnesota, modernism was already taking hold in the late-'40s under the guidance of such architects as Winston and Elizabeth Close and Robert Cerny, but it wasn't until Ralph Rapson arrived in 1954 as head of the architecture program at the University of Minnesota that modernism became the official architecture of Minnesota. Rapson, however, was not alone. The following pages profile a handful of architects who trained in the new architecture. And whether they call themselves modernists or not, they were among the emerging voices heard in the first decades after the war.

**Eric Kudalis**

## Ed Sovik



Don F. Wong

Ed Sovik

Surrounded by his fine-books collection in his Northfield, Minn., office, Ed Sovik reflects on the focus of his life's work, the architecture of religion. "Ideally, religious design ought to reflect the essential qualities of faith," says Sovik, who has designed approximately 400 churches in 23 states. In liturgical architecture, Sovik stresses the need to evoke hospitality, humanity, reality and beauty. He refers to British artist Eric Gill who says, "Take care of truth and goodness, and beauty will take care of itself."

Sovik represents a rare breed. When he speaks of religious architecture, he does not mean the obvious. The recital hall in Christiansen Hall of Music at St. Olaf College, designed by Sovik and his firm SMSQ in 1976, is a shining example of his philosophy. The oak-paneled room of perfect proportions, including a balcony, is not

enclosed, as are most concert halls, but has one wall of vertical, 2-story-high windows overlooking the countryside. A red-and-gold acoustical tester, designed by Sovik, hangs from the ceiling. "We tried to make this a large salon, to give it a sense of celebration," Sovik says.

The offices of SMSQ (Sovik, Mathre, Sathrum, Quanbeck, Schlink and Edwins, originally founded as Northfield Architects by Ed Sovik in 1949) sit on the banks of the Cannon River. Inside the concrete-block building is an open workshop-style office, where a staff of 16, plus six partners, carries on an active general practice, ranging from theater restoration, residential and industrial to educational buildings and churches. Thanks to Sovik's early mentor at St. Olaf, Arnie Flaten, an art professor with many Lutheran-church connections, Sovik got into church and college work early. His first two associates left in 1953, and Sewall Mathre, a Cranbrook graduate, joined him as a full partner. In 1971, staff architects Quanbeck and Sathrum also became partners, and recently, Schlink and Edwins.

Sovik was born in China to Lutheran missionary parents of Norwegian origin. They spent their furloughs in Northfield, Minn. So it was natural that Ed and his two siblings became St. Olaf students, Ed as an art major. Through Flaten, he was exposed to architecture. After graduating with honors in 1939, he attended the Art Students League of New York for a year, then returned

would enter the buildings from the subway and couldn't tell the difference."

The structure was so flimsily built that if a doctor didn't like the way a particular space functioned, workers could literally tear down the walls overnight and build something new. For Ellerbe, this life-size, rip-and-tear model proved that people "had to use things to know whether they were right."

Because Ellerbe was hospitalized more than 30 times, he often drew on his own experience to generate patient-oriented design improvements, such as putting bathrooms in each hospital room. While hospitalized for a back injury in a facility that featured his firm's radial design, Ellerbe noted, "The atmosphere in the [radial unit] was wonderful. It was like going from darkness to daylight. A nurse could stand at the center of this unit and see all of the patients. It convinced me that things worked as we claimed they would."

For Ellerbe, a successful building satisfied the client's practical needs. He emphasized this point by forbidding his employees to compete for design awards, frowning upon "architecture for architecture's sake." In several instances, the firm's designs set new functional standards. The first circular-care unit the firm created, for example, cut from 5.2 to 3.8 the number of miles a nurse walked each day.

While his firm's medical design innovations brought it national recognition, Ellerbe made other significant contributions to the architectural and engineering professions. Volumes could be written about his roles as a social visionary, organizational master and patron of the arts. As a founding member of the United States Cooperative League, he put his political theory into action by working with the Rural Electrification Association to bring electricity to remote areas. Although he led his firm with unquestioned authority, he greatly appreciated the contributions his employees made to the firm's success. In the 1920s, he was one of the first in his



Plummer Building, Mayo Clinic (above) 1926-'28; "Indian God of Peace" (below) by Carl Mills, inside St. Paul City Hall.

field to institute a profit-sharing plan. Ellerbe, who was the sole stockholder in the firm for decades, gave all of his shares to his employees when he retired.

Five years after Ellerbe's death in 1987, the prestige of the firm he led for 45 years continues to increase. In 1988, Ellerbe acquired the West Coast firm of Welton Becket Inc., and in 1991 *Building Design & Construction* magazine identified Ellerbe Becket as the largest architecture-and-engineering firm in the United States. Yet more than Ellerbe Becket's size is noteworthy, as the firm continues to collect local and national design awards. With 900 employees in Minneapolis, New York City, Washington, D.C., Kansas City, Los Angeles and Tokyo, Ellerbe Becket maintains the legacy of its namesake with a thriving, growing firm.

*Heather Beal*





berg believes that the essence of good architecture cuts deeper than stylistic trappings. "It's critical that architecture be understood beyond style," he says. "This goes back to the purpose and kind of value architects can bring to the built environment, such as better working conditions due to light and circulation, better maintenance."

For Stageberg, that means becoming attuned to the clients' needs, creating architecture that serves the clients well. He applies these principles in practice, and passes them on to his students at the University of Minnesota, where he has taught architecture since the mid-'50s.

Serving the client well extends to the entire community, especially in the case of Stageberg's most visible public projects, three parking ramps on the west side of downtown Minneapolis for approximately 6,800 cars. Stageberg remains particularly proud of the ramps. They have helped revitalize the west end of downtown, and they have helped improve the design of other municipal ramps since built. "To make art forms of ramps has been a real challenge," he says.

Stageberg considers himself a generalist. A survey of The Stageberg Partners' recent projects easily confirms that conclusion: The Recreational Sports Complex (with Ralph Rapson) at the University of Minnesota, a high-rise in Des Moines,



Shin and Joel Koyama

Iowa, the King Memorial Center at Camp Courage North in Lake George, Minn., and the parking-transit facilities in downtown Minneapolis, to name a few.

Along with partners Bill Beyer and Dennis Sacks, The Stageberg Partners generates 95 percent of its income through large-scale, commercial projects. Stageberg says he has a hand in all the projects that go through the office. But small-scale, residential work, which comprises about one-third of the firm's commissions (or 5 percent of the income), are primarily Stageberg's "babies." And they may surely be his forte. He's designed houses, cabins, gazebos, garden houses, and most recently a separate writer's studio at Wind Whistle for Toth. "The reward in housing is more immediate," he says. "I get a satisfaction out of every project built. But the house design is more personable, more graspable. I love to do them."

At 67, Stageberg seeks new challenges. "Architects get smarter with experience; they have better judgment," he says. "Everyone in my office I see getting better and better."

*Eric Kudalis*



Shin and Joel Koyama

# Leonard Parker



Don. F. Wong

Leonard Parker

of Seattle).

In fact, there's hardly a place in Minneapolis and St. Paul that doesn't bear the Parker stamp. At the University of Minnesota, for example, he's designed numerous buildings, including the modernist, brick-and-concrete Law School, the Scandinavian-inspired Humphrey Center and the Psychology Building. In downtown St. Paul, he did the Minnesota Public Radio Headquarters; at Macalester College, the Leonard Natatorium & Gym; and in Apple Valley, the Dakota County Western Service Center. Nationally and internationally, there's the U.S. Embassy in Santiago, Chile, and the Labor & Industries Building in Tumwater, Wash.

Louis Sullivan proclaimed that form follows function. Mies van der Rohe espoused that less is more. Parker adds to this roster of tenets the need to meld beauty with function. One needs only to look closely at the Natatorium or Humphrey Center or Jewish Community Center to discern Parker's design signature, rendered in expressive brick detailing. At the convention center, stylized



Balthazar Korab

Minnesota Public Radio Headquarters (above), 1980; Psychology Building (right) at University of Minnesota, 1969; U.S. Embassy (opposite top), Santiago, Chile; Jewish Community Center (opposite center), St. Paul, 1964; Labor & Industries Building (opposite bottom), Tumwater, Wash.

Leonard Parker is a man of convictions. For Parker, good architecture is dictated by site, function, and beauty, not by the latest stylistic frosting. Since establishing his 24-person firm in 1958, Parker has sought to give his clients appropriate design that will have lasting value. Today, The Leonard Parker Associates includes eight principals. A look at the firm's projects—past, present, and future—indicates that Parker knows lasting value.

The Jewish Community Center, one of his earliest commissions, has held up so well over the years that it recently received an AIA Minnesota 25-Year Award. But Parker is not one to rest on past laurels. The last few years have been one of the busiest in his firm's history, having added to the architectural pegboard the Minnesota Judicial Center on the Capitol Mall and the 800,000-square-foot Minneapolis Convention Center (a collaborative effort with Setter, Leach & Lindstrom of Minneapolis and Loschky Marquardt & Nesholm



Balthazar Korab

precast panels enliven the facade. And for the Washburn Public Library in Minneapolis, it's not brick but color and light that come into play. A lively mural in the children's



TLPA

Venturi, Kevin Roche, Gunnar Birkerts, and others. Parker's foundation in architecture was well formed by the time he moved back to Minneapolis to open his own office. In the Minnesota architectural tradition, he's combined practice with teaching, having held a position with the University of Minnesota since 1959. He teamed up with George Klein in 1968, maintaining a nine-year professional relationship.

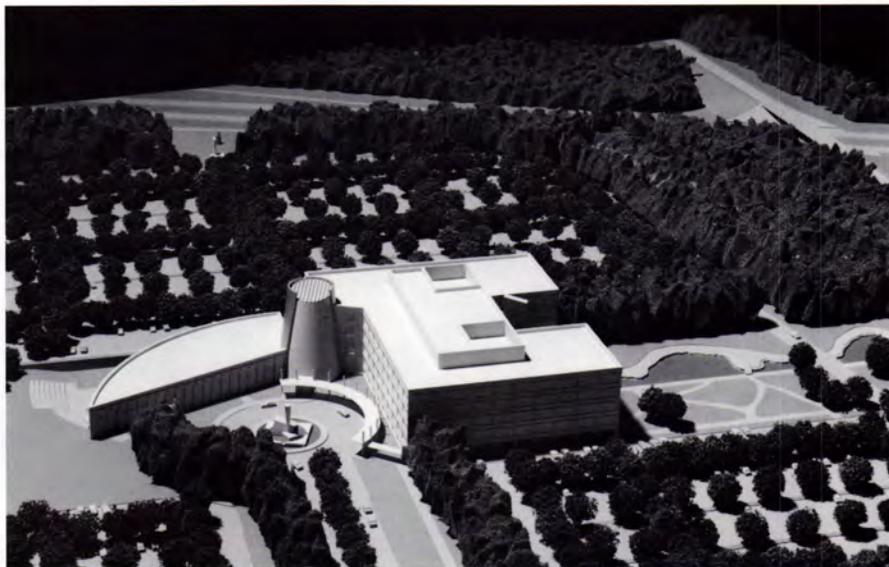
Within the profession, Parker's commitment to teaching and practice has earned him well-deserved recognition. He is one of only six recipients of the AIA Minnesota Gold

reading room offers a playful and functional setting.

Parker's commitment to lasting architecture is rooted in his training. He was born in Poland, raised in Milwaukee, served in World War II, and came to Minnesota for a visit and stayed for college. After graduating from the University of Minnesota in 1948, he headed to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he completed his master's in architecture in 1950. The head of the architecture program recognized his talent and recommended him to Eero Saarinen. Parker spent six years in Saarinen's office in Michigan. Saarinen's office in the 1950s was one of the hottest training grounds for young architects in the country. Among the distinguished alumni were Cesar Pelli, Robert



Christian Korab



TLPA

Medal. In addition, he's won more than 60 local and national design awards, most recently an AIA Minnesota Honor Award for the classically inspired Minnesota Judicial Center.

Now approaching 70, when many are eyeing retirement, Parker has the satisfaction of seeing his firm continue to prosper. The U.S. Embassy and Labor & Industries Building further will enhance the firm's national prominence. If architecture is the handwriting of civilization, then Parker has had a role in chronicling civilization. For more than 30 years he's helped shape the Twin Cities' architectural landscape.

*Eric Kudalis*



# The 1980s and beyond

Wading through postmodernism, deconstructivism and a recession or two, Minnesota firms continue to prosper

By Bruce N. Wright

The 1980s were troubled times architecturally speaking. This was the decade that saw the general acceptance of postmodernism and the introduction of deconstructivism, that was washed by an undercurrent of pluralistic tendencies. It was the anything-goes decade, an invasion that began in the '70s and swept through the '80s.

As with many social and artistic periods throughout history, there are never any clear-cut demarcations between the end of one trend and the beginning of the next. There is always a blurring—an amalgam of ideas, styles and tendencies—that produces not one stylistically coherent tapestry, but a bundling of many skeins of ideas, some of which

overlap and others that pick up an idea or trend and carry it further.

And so, the beginnings of the two most dominant architectural philosophies of the '80s—postmodernism and deconstructivism—are found in the rumblings of the late-1970s. And both movements began with theoretical bases put forth by architects uncomfortable or dissatisfied with the status quo. This is when linguistic analogy and historical reference supplanted the modernist practice of functional-and-technological supremacy.

Economic times also were critical to the practice of architecture in the

'80s. Though it's often dangerous to label a period without the wisdom of several decades of hindsight, social historians have identified the '80s as a time of unprecedented economic expansion. The period helped spawn a record number of architectural firms in Minnesota between 1980 and 1990.

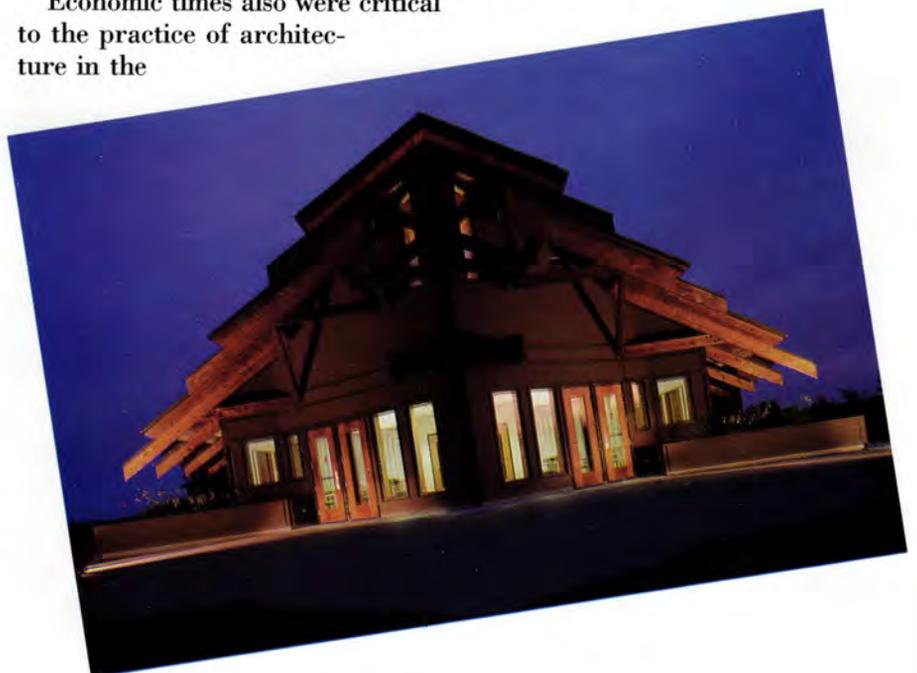
Although AIA Minnesota's annual firm directory is not an all-inclusive directory (firms listed must be members of the association and pay an annual fee), it is a true indicator of the overall trend of

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Private residence, by Harrison Fraker, photo by Thomas Hysell; Purina Farms, by Thorbeck Architects, photo by Robert Pettus; Zion Lutheran Church, by ATS&R; Baker Golf Course Clubhouse, by Kodet Architectural Group, photo by Christian Korab.

*(Opposite page, left to right)*

Colonial Church of Edina, by Hammel Green and Abrahamson, photo by Denes A. Saari; U. of Minn. Civil/Engineering Building, by BRW Inc.; Sahara West Library and Museum, by Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle; Kerze cabin, by David Salmela, photo by Peter Kerze; Children's Hospital Child Care Center, by Williams/O'Brien Architects, photo by Lea Babcock.





design-firm prosperity.

In sheer numbers, more new firms were listed with AIA Minnesota's firm directory in the 1980s than ever before. In 1982, there were 185 firms listed; in 1988 there were 220 listed; yet by 1990 the total number dropped to 200 firms. Now, however, the 1992 directory shows 231 firms.

A recent article in *The New York Times* business section showed that the collapse of the stock market between 1973 and 1975 was "worse than 1929 to 1933, when the inflation of the 1970s and the deflation of the 1930s are taken into account." The 1970s saw the first drop in revenues for construction-related industries since the 1940s, when the draft sapped most domestic-labor efforts. This was followed, according to *The New York Times*, in 1981 and 1982 by the deepest recession since the '30s.

Every profession likes to think

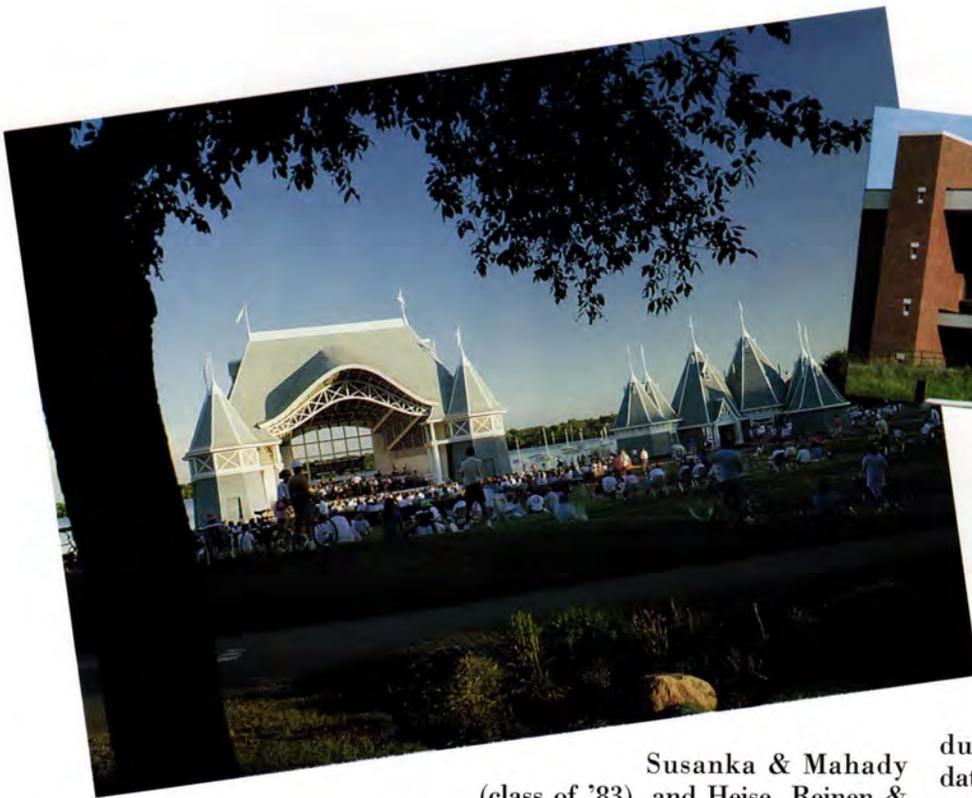
itself the bellwether of national economic trends, but it's clear that when times are tough, companies stop building—and when building stops, architects' phones stop ringing. Yet, there is always hope. Even during the Depression, architects began new practices with small commissions and a faithful few clients that toughed it out. And during the 1980s, Minnesota's architects started companies. In 1980, there were 14 new firms that opened shop, followed by 21 new firms in 1981. The numbers taper off toward mid-decade, however, with only six new firms opening their doors in 1986, and two in 1989. Typically, new firms open up during recessions, perhaps because many architects have no choice but to start

their own firms after being laid off from their jobs. In the early '90s, with the recession bearing down, we see the number of new practices increase.

But the number of failed firms is equally an indicator of the times. Of the 122 new firms created in the 1980s, the overwhelming majority were one- to three-person firms when they began. Forty-four (or 36 percent) of those failed or were subsumed by other larger firms by the year 1990.

The true test should be the architecture produced. Perhaps the star example from the 1980s is Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle (class of '81). More than any other firm created during that turbulent decade, MS&R represented the spirit of the new theoretically based architecture that was gaining recognition. Also unique to the firm was the balance of design-driven management (each partner is a lead designer, unlike many successful practices where partnerships are formed around a tripartite division of design, marketing and management). All three





partners at MS&R teach at the University of Minnesota College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, a routine that has served other prominent architects in Minnesota of older generations as well. Each partner has expressed the satisfaction and stimulation that teaching can bring to his work, and likewise, the practical experience that client work informs their teaching—the very reason Ralph Rapson established this format at Minnesota in the early-1950s. MS&R has earned numerous Minnesota AIA Honor Awards and one national AIA Honor Award since its inception.

Other successful firms from the '80s generation include Mulfinger,

Susanka & Mahady (class of '83), and Heise, Reinen & McRae (class of '84). Unlike MS&R, which designs a wide range of building types, the latter two firms have chosen to specialize in specific building types (housing for Mulfinger, Susanka & Mahady; retail and specialized commercial for Heise, Reinen & McRae), a wise business move in times of a market-driven economy. Both firms have grown in size as a result. Likewise, Walsh Bishop Associates (class of '84) has grown with its emphasis on commercial office buildings.

There are other noteworthy firms from the 1980s, but their roots are in previous decades. Rafferty Rafferty Tollefson Architects; KKE; BRW; Damberg, Scott, Peck & Booker; Arvid Elnes Architects;

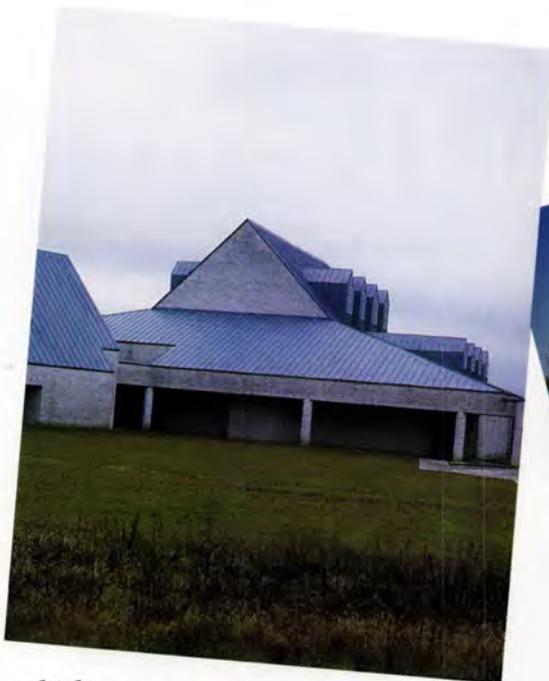
and The Alliance, among others, continued to prosper in the past decade, while firms like The Stageberg Partners (class of '69 and '82) and Kodet Architectural Group (class of '62 and '83) defied partnership break-ups to flourish and produce some of their best work to date.

Other firms thrived during the shakeout or came into their own, such as RSP Architects (class of '78), The Leonard Parker Associates (class of '58), Hammel Green and Abrahamson (class of '53), or the revitalized Ellerbe Becket (class of '09 and '87). The Leonard Parker Associates has produced some of the most important public buildings the state has seen since the 1950s (when Brooks Cavin designed the Veterans Service Building in 1953) with its designs for the Minnesota Judicial Center and the Minneapolis Convention Center (in collaboration with Setter, Leach & Lindstrom, and Loschky Marquardt & Nesholm).

Like much of the Midwest, Minneso-



ta did not hasten to join any stylistic bandwagon during the '80s. As a rule, Minnesota never has been advanced or *retardataire* in its embrace of new architectural theory, always solidly practical, never shirking its public responsibility, always squarely in the mainstream of design. But, like a river that has jumped its bed, the architectural zeitgeist of the late-'70s shifted away from modernism, and so too, did Minnesota in the '80s. There are good—even excellent—examples of postmodernism and deconstructivism to be found, but these tend to diffuse the aesthetic with a form of modernism that could only be called Minnesotan. If anything, the trendiness of postmodernism, deconstructivism and all the other -isms only helped loosen some of the constraints, allowing Minnesota to



continue to produce solid design.

Purina Farms by Thorbeck Architects, for instance, is rooted strongly in the vernacular tradition of its Missouri site. St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church by Rafferty Rafferty Tollefson is a stirring example of the power of liturgical architecture on an Indiana prairie. The houses of Salmela Fosdick avoid stylistic labeling, with such award-winning projects as the Kerze cabin and Thompson residence (both by David Salmela) and the Pruitt retreat (by Cheryl Fosdick) inspired from widely different aesthetics. Milo Thompson of

Bentz/Thompson/Rietow studied Lake Harriet history when designing one of Minneapolis's most lauded buildings from the '80s, the Lake Harriet band shell. McGuire/Engler/Davis, much to its credit, seldom strayed too far from the teachings of the Prairie School. And firms like James/Snow Architects looked to midwestern, rural architecture and early-modernist German factories for its design of the Phillips Plastics Short Run Division building in New Richmond, Wis.

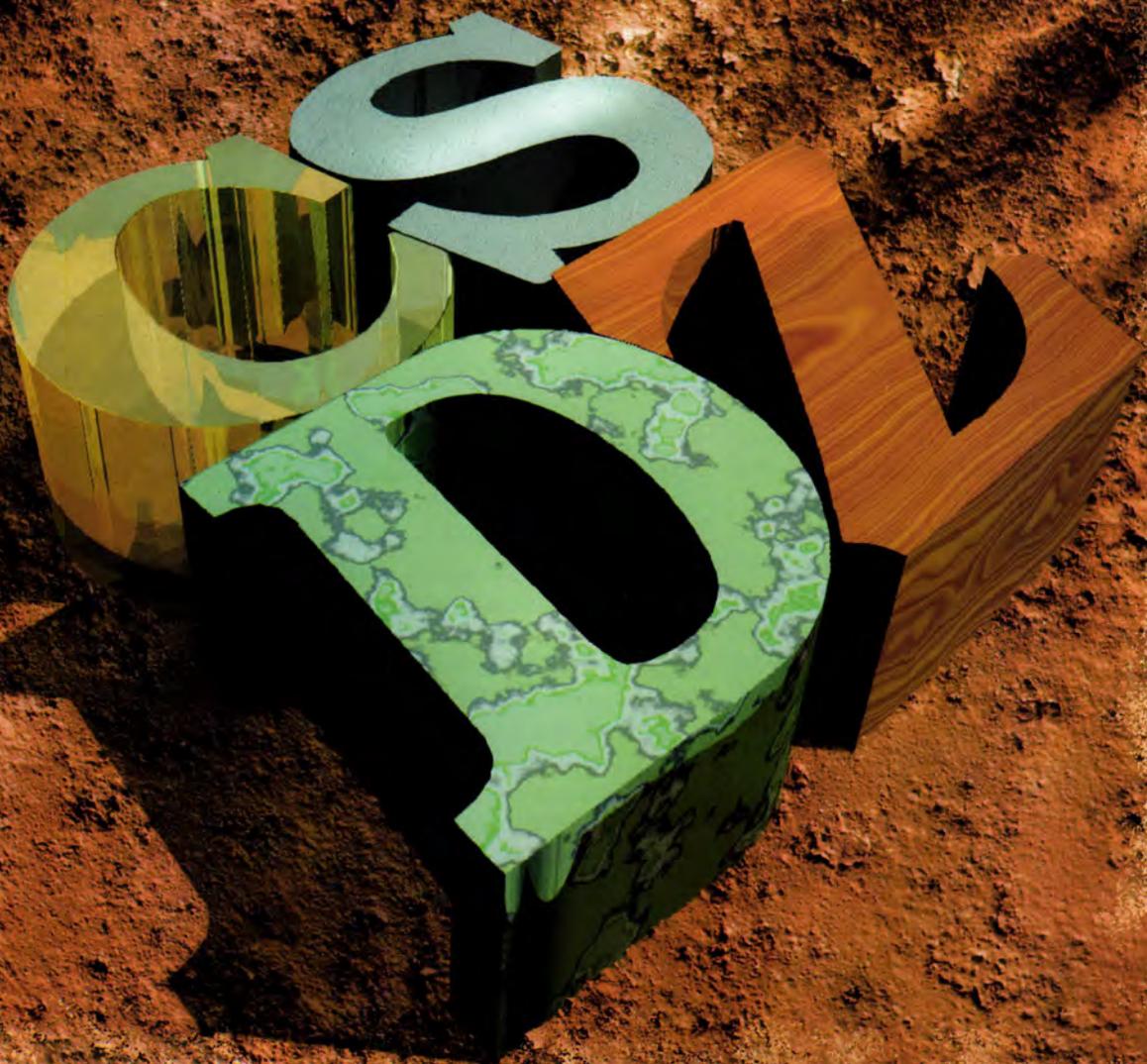
These aren't trendy designs. They're responsible designs that serve their clients well. And that may be the true characteristic style of Minnesota design in the '80s. In all, the '80s saw Minnesota firms begin to gain the national prominence they once had when firms like Cass Gilbert and Purcell & Elmslie held sway. If the work that is now nearing completion by today's Minnesota architects is any indication, the '90s should bring the state's architecture into even greater national esteem.



(Opposite page, left to right)  
 Lake Harriet Band Shell, by Bentz/Thompson/Rietow, photo by Christian Korab; Desch office building, by McGuire/Engler/Davis; computer-generated Paper Architecture submission, 1989; private residence, by Robert Gerloff of Mulfinger, Susanka, Mahady, photo by Peter Kerze; Zapp Bank, by KKE Architects, photo by Shin and Erich Koyama.

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 St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church, by Rafferty Rafferty Tollefson, photo by Phillip MacMillan James; Target Greatland, by RSP, photo by Bob Pearl; private residence, by Thomas Hodne, photo by Phillip MacMillan James.

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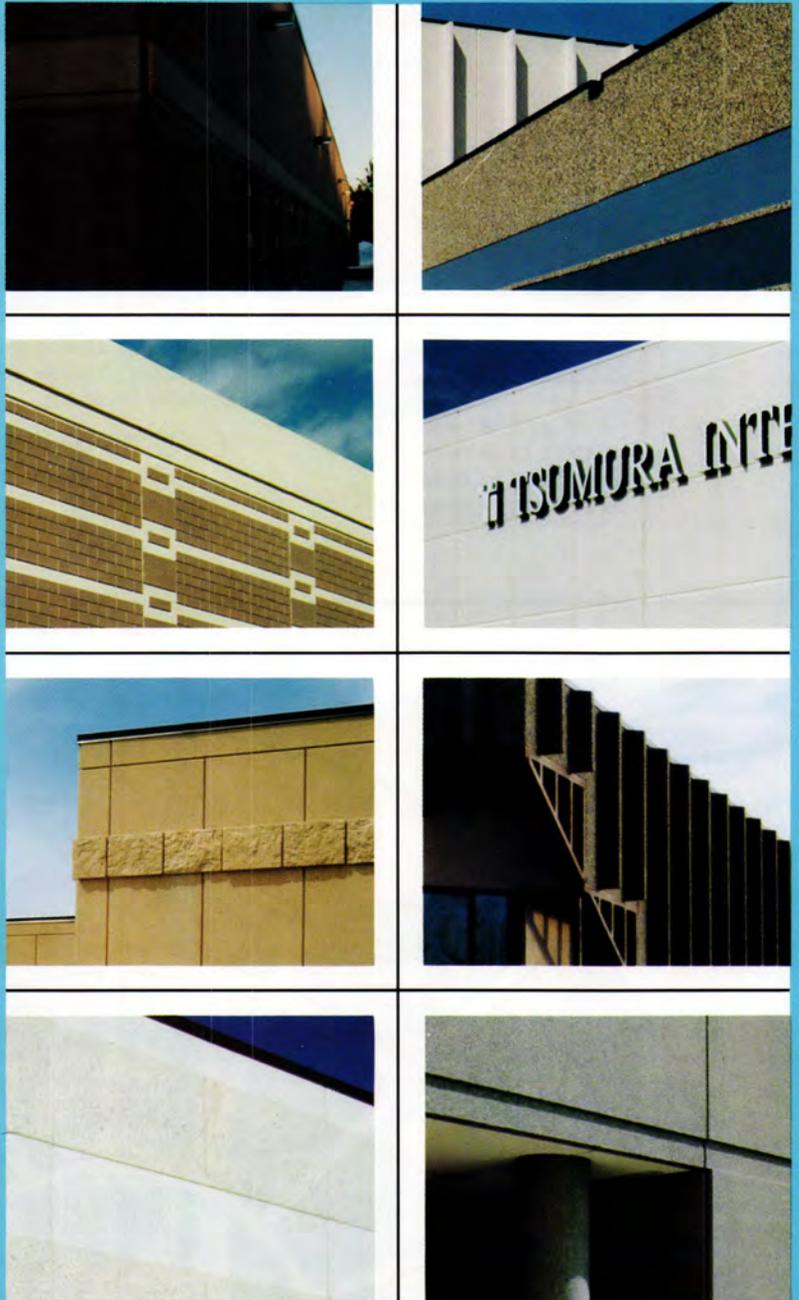
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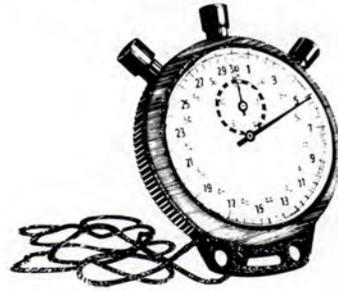
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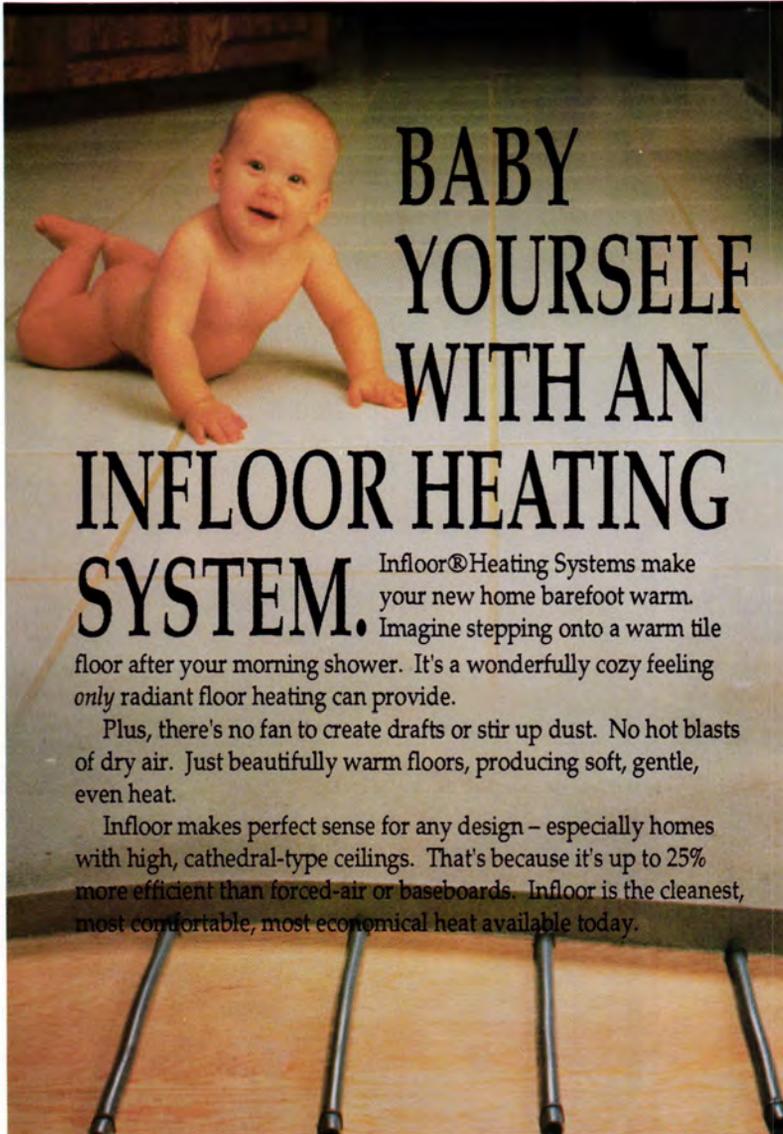
## Centennial Yearbook

The following pages present our "Centennial Yearbook," your introduction to those AIA Minnesota firms that have chosen to provide financial support for publication of this expanded Centennial issue of *AM*.

The presence of The American Institute of Architects in Minnesota started in February 1892. Now, a century later, the initial group of 34 members has grown to an organization with over 1,000 architects and over 225 architectural firms. While none of the 61 firms presented in our Yearbook is 100 years old, each is headed by architects who are part of Minnesota's continuing tradition within The American Institute of Architects.

*Architecture Minnesota* appreciates the support of these firms which has enabled us to broaden the scope of our editorial coverage in this special issue to profile many of the significant buildings, firms and people that have given Minnesota an outstanding record of architectural achievement for which it has become nationally known.

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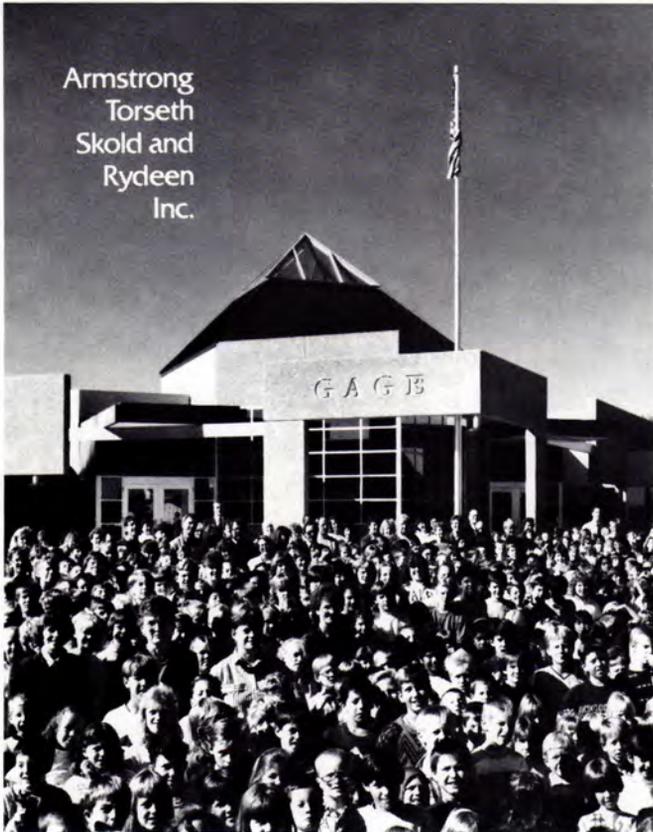
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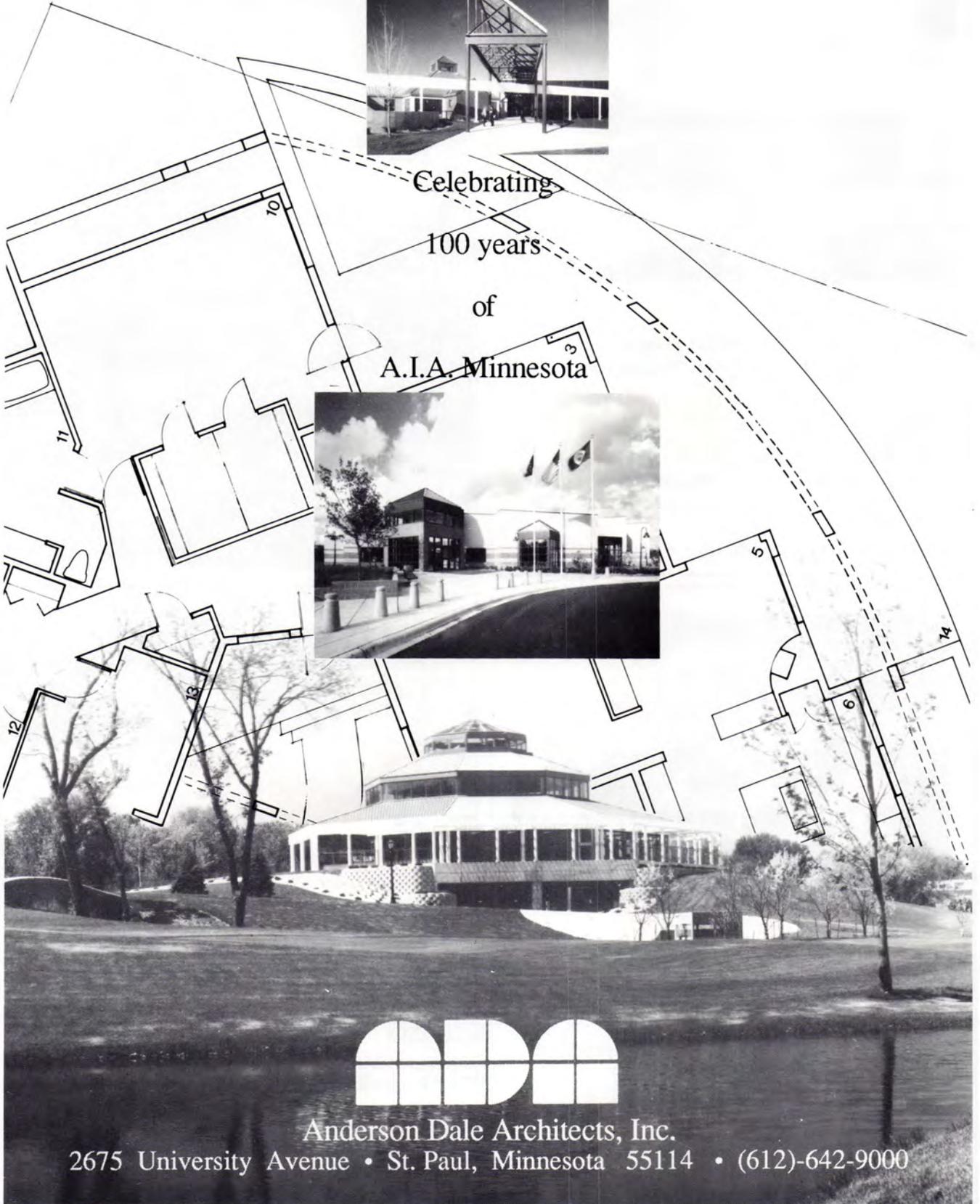
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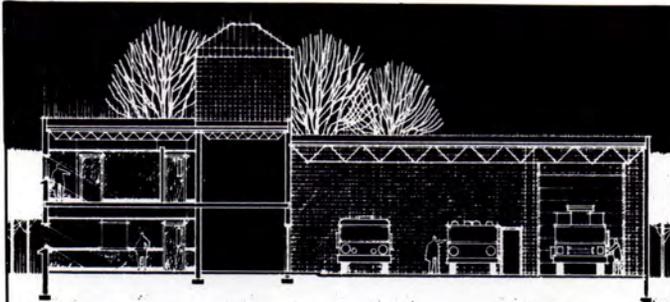
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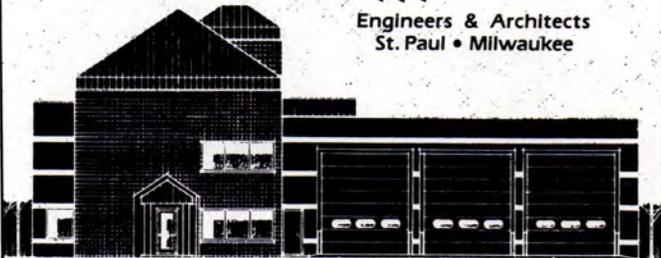
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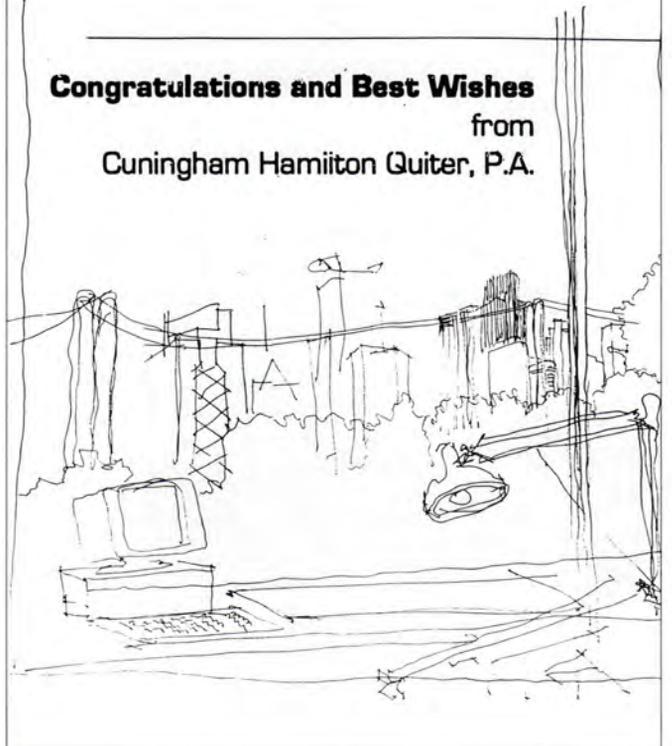
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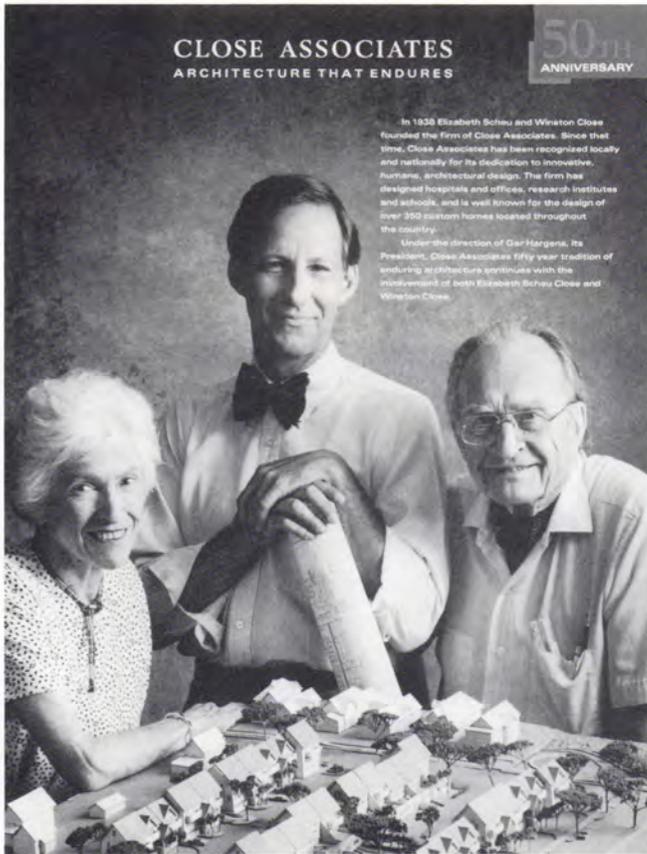
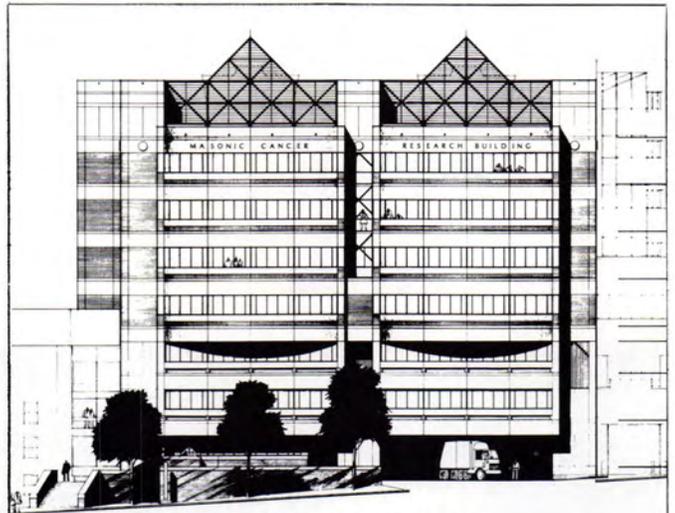
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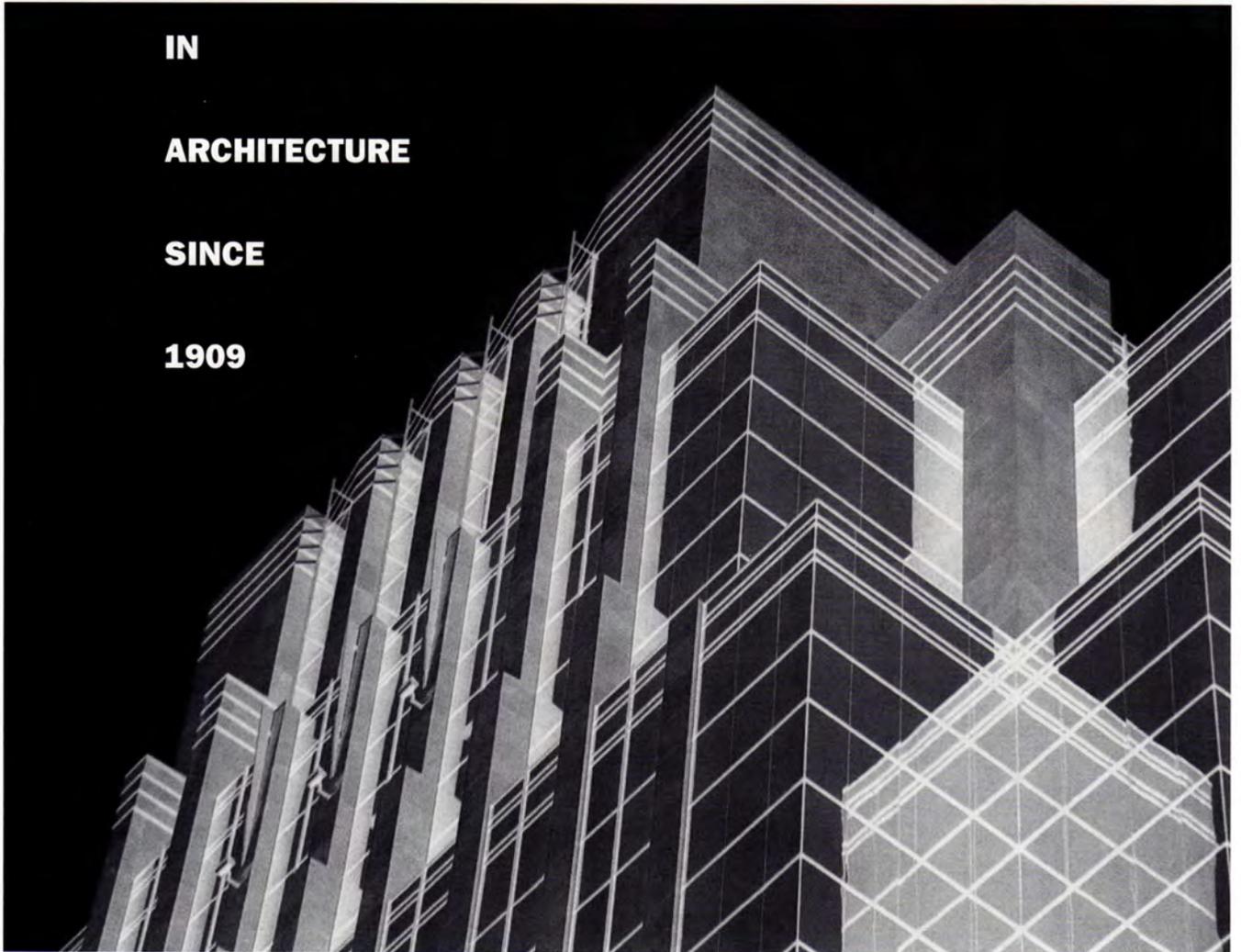


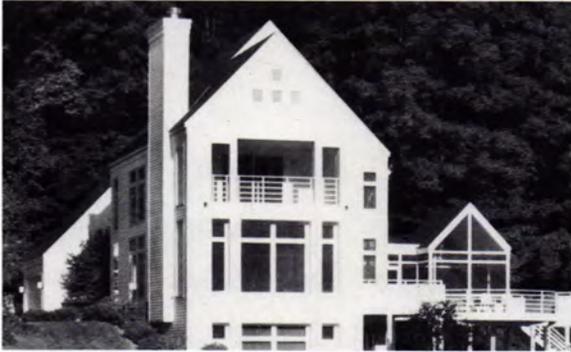
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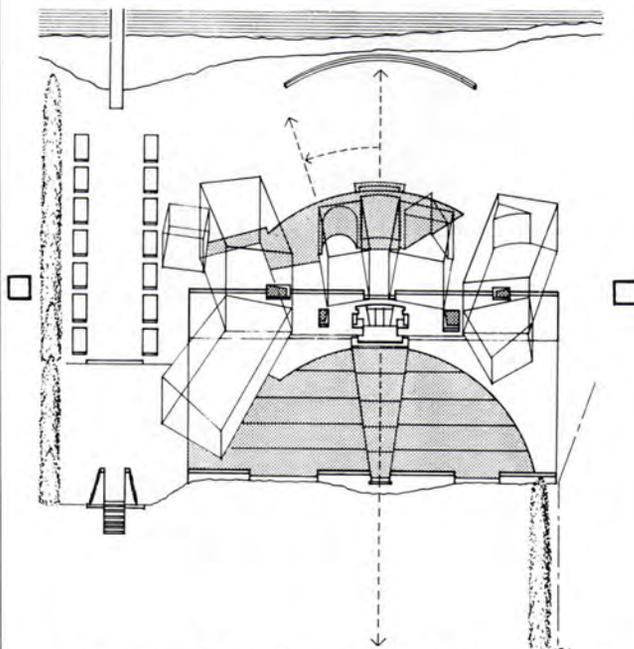
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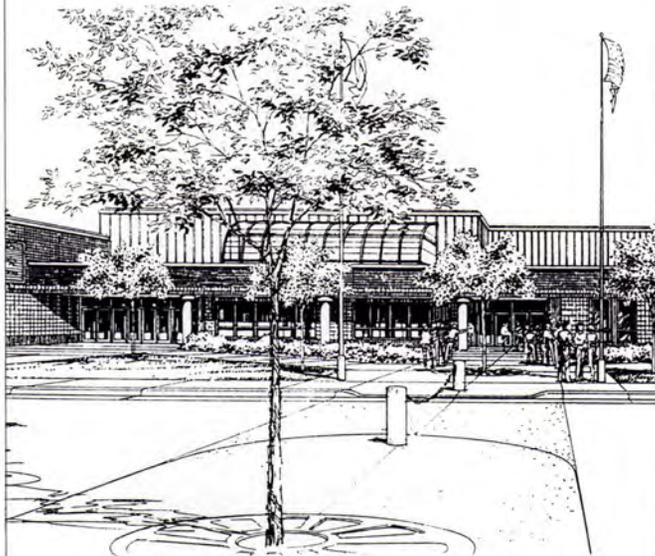
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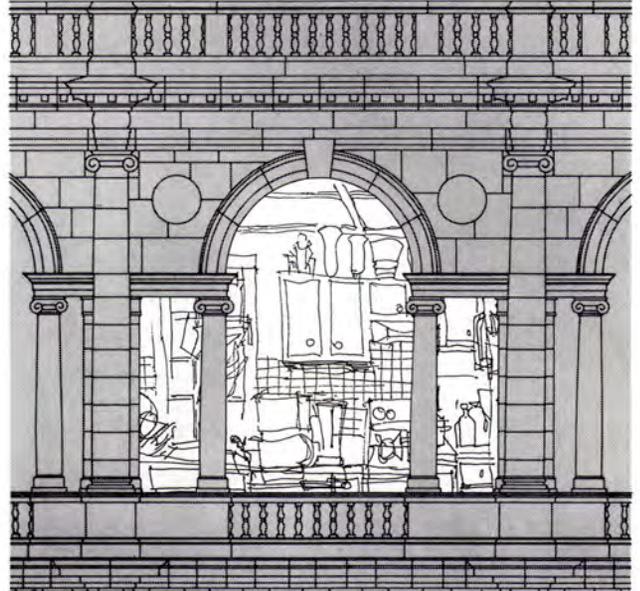
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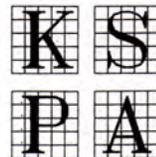
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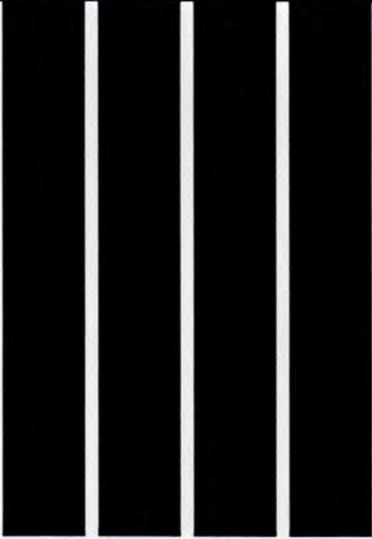
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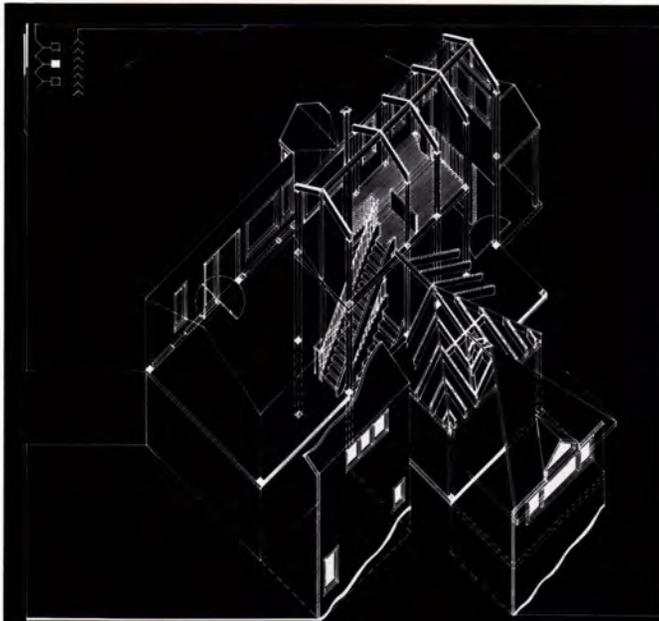
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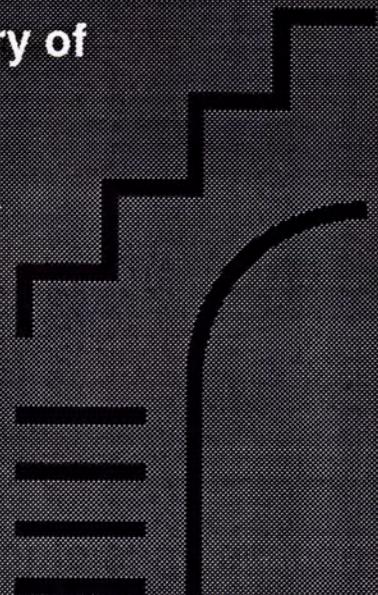
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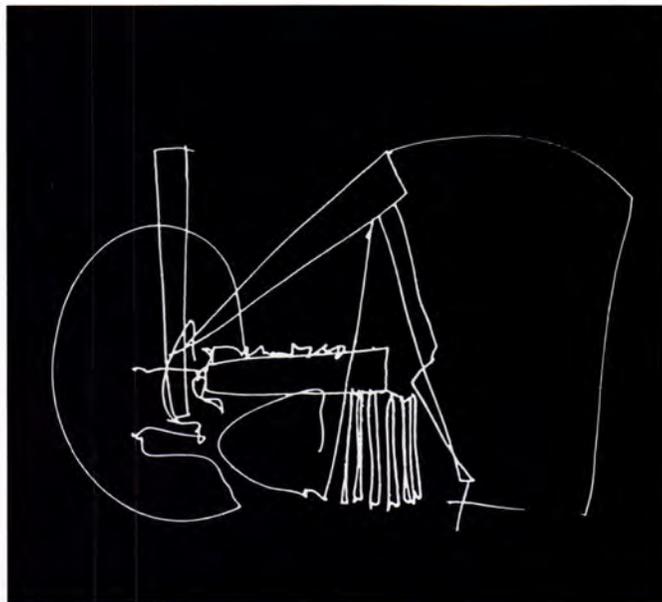


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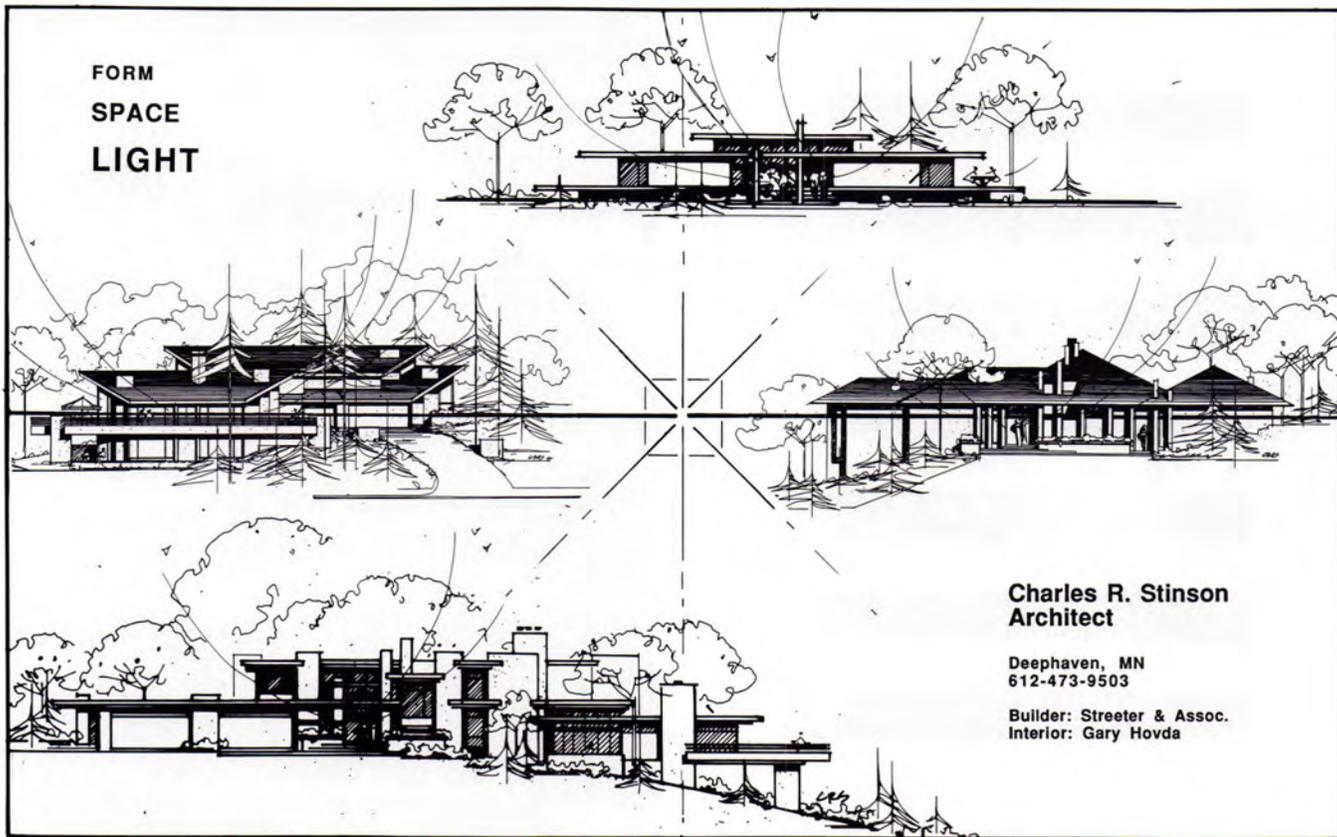
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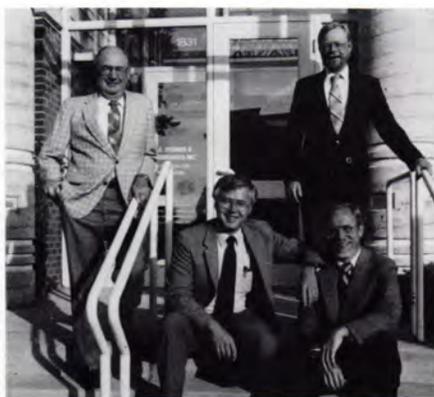
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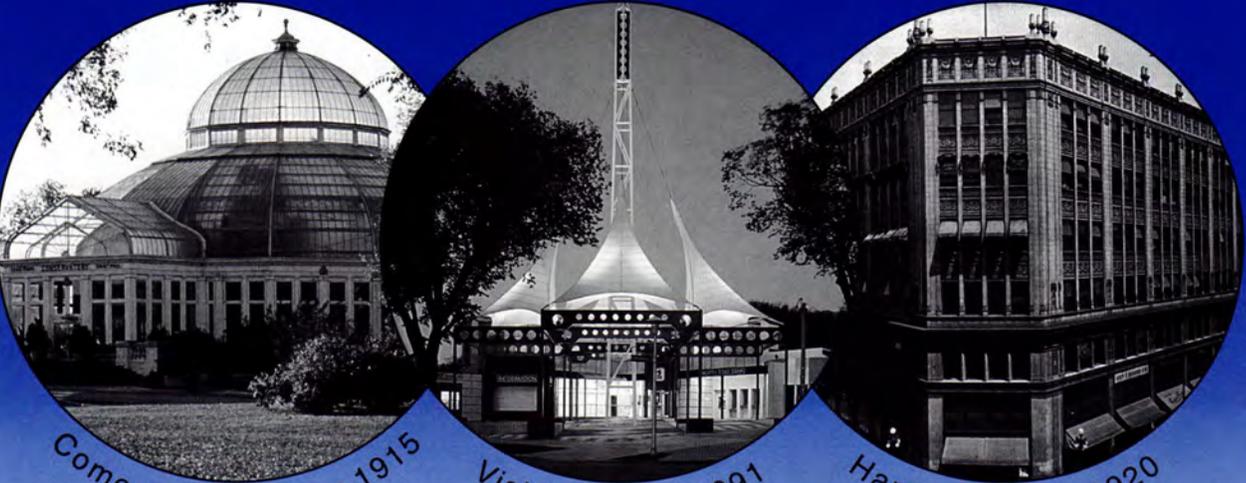
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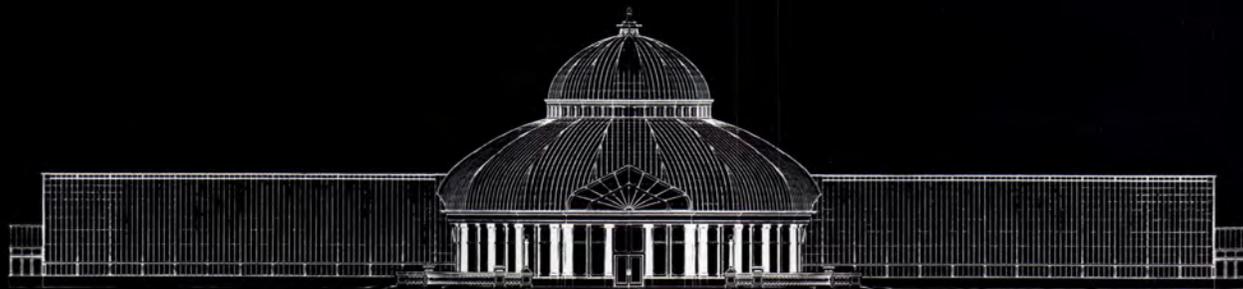


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# AM

*endangered species*



Don F. Wong

Fire recently tore through the B.O. Cutter House, one of the oldest houses in Minneapolis.

In 1856, St. Anthony was a rough city, newly cut from the edge of the territorial forest of Minnesota. Native Americans still wandered along the stump-cluttered streets while “nasty, piratical-looking pigs” foraged as they pleased. Across the Mississippi River, part of the Fort Snelling military reservation had opened for legal settlement the year before. Called Minneapolis, the western town would grow and swallow its older sister city 15 years hence.

A recent immigrant to St. Anthony was the builder, B.O. Cutter. Brought to the city to supervise the construction of Old Main at the University of Minnesota, he built a house for himself on the corner of 10th Avenue and Fourth Street. He chose to build in a new and romantic

style popularized by Andrew Jackson Downing, who published a number of pattern books on domestic architecture during the mid-19th century. Today we call the style Gothic revival, characterized by steeply pitched roofs, dramatically decorated gables, and open porches or verandas. Cutter made his reputation with his well-proportioned and beautifully decorated house according to the Feb. 28, 1858 edition of the *Evening News* of St. Anthony and Minneapolis.

The subsequent century did not do great damage to the structure. It was owned for many years by John B. Gilfillan, lawyer, educator, businessman, regent, and U.S. congressman. More recent years have seen the degradation of this fine house accelerate. Some detail was removed,

the wooden siding that was cut to look like stone was covered by stucco, the floor plan was changed to house a fraternity, and during the mid-'80s it was rehabilitated under the historic tax-credit provisions. Early this spring, however, it suffered a devastating fire, which has left it unoccupied and open to the elements.

It is among a handful of pre-Civil War houses in Minneapolis on their original sites. It was the home of important Minnesotans, and it is a rare and excellent example of its architectural style—a preservation home run.

*Steven Buetow*

#### *Editor's Note:*

*At press time, the Cutter house has been sold and ultimately may be saved.*



## previews

Continued from page 15

### **AIA Minnesota Centennial Exhibit Various sites Through 1992**

The art of architectural drawings continues in this traveling exhibit sponsored by AIA Minnesota. Organized as part of the society's year-long, 100th-birthday celebration, the exhibit includes drawings by some of the state's most influential architects, representing a variety of building types, styles and techniques. Among the hidden treasures are buildings never realized—pure fantasy on paper—and still others long ago razed.

The drawings, from details to complete works and preliminary design sketches, are a study in 100 years of architectural changes and innovations. Works include LeRoy

Buffington's proposed 1887 "Cloud-scraper," Ralph Rapson's Guthrie Theater, Edwin Lundie's country cottages, Cass Gilbert's State Capitol Building, Liebenberg & Kaplan's streamline-moderne theaters, and more.

With the assistance of the Minnesota Library Association, selected pieces will travel to libraries throughout the state through 1992. For further information about the exhibition schedule and locations, call the AIA Minnesota offices at (612) 338-6763.

### **Minnesota A to Z and Saving Places: Historic Preservation in Minnesota Minnesota History Center Ongoing**

The Minnesota Historical Society celebrates the grand opening of its new facility in St. Paul with two ongoing exhibits exploring the vast resources of the state's heritage. *Min-*

## Credits

(We encourage you to support the following architects, consultants and suppliers.)

### **Project: Minnesota History Center**

Location: St. Paul, Minn.

Client: Minnesota Historical Society

Architects: Hammel Green and  
Abrahamson Inc.

Principal-in-charge: Bruce Abrahamson

Principal-in-charge-of-design: Loren Ahles

Project architect: Lauren Wold

Project manager: Gary Reetz

Project designer: Vincent James

Project team: Loren Ahles,

Bruce Abrahamson, Bob Lundgren,  
Jim Butler, Tim Carlson, Joan Soranno,  
Gail Manning, David Fey, Linda Morrissey,  
Roxanne Lange, Doug Fell,  
Dave Gotham, Terry Tangedahl,  
Mark Hoel, Kermit Olson, Jim Husnik,  
Thomas Oslund, Kathy Ryan,  
Johanna Harris, Chick Cisewski,  
Lauren Wold, Vincent James, Gary Reetz,  
Tony Staeger, Ed Towey

Structural engineers: Hammel Green  
and Abrahamson Inc.

Mechanical engineers: Hammel Green  
and Abrahamson Inc.

Mechanical subcontractors: Harris  
Mechanical, Egan and Sons, NewMech

Electrical engineers: Hammel Green  
and Abrahamson Inc.

Electrical subcontractors: Hunt Electric

Civil engineers: Hammel Green  
and Abrahamson Inc.

Contractor: Borson/Knutson

Construction manager: CPMI

Interior design: Hammel Green  
and Abrahamson Inc.

Landscape architect: Hammel Green  
and Abrahamson Inc.

Elevator consultant: Lerch, Bates

Photographer: George Heinrich

Elevators: Schindler Elevator

Windows: W.L. Hall/Wausau

Glass: Alpine Glass

Roofing/waterproofing: Division 7

Stone/brick: Winona Travertine Limestone,

Bizanz Stone Company, Rockville

White Granite, Cold Spring Granite

Building precast: Spancrete

Precast pavers: Bend Industries

Structure/steel:

Horizon Fabricators, Concrete

Terrazzo: Grazzini Brothers

Carpet: Pink Supply

Ceiling systems/materials:

Architectural Sales/USG

Casework/woodwork: Shaw Lumber

Art glass: Brit Bunkley

Terrazzo inserts: James Casebere

Mezzanine storage system:

American Handling Company

Copper: Specialty Systems

### **Correction**

In the September/October issue we incorrectly listed Schuler & Shook Inc., as acoustical consultants for Wooddale Church. In fact, R. Lawrence Kirkegaard & Associates was acoustical consultants. Schuler & Shook was lighting consultant.

nesota A to Z showcases the Society's extensive collections. Arranged according to the 26 letters of the alphabet, the exhibit explores topics from *Animals*, *Baseball* and *Canoe* to *eXtravagance*, *Yankee Girl* and below *Zero*. Objects on display include the 10-foot boat Garry Spiess sailed across the Atlantic, kitchen appliances from the 1930s to '50s, and a 37-foot, birch-bark replica of a Montreal voyageur canoe.

*Saving Places* looks at historic preservation in Minnesota through 61 black-and-white photographs by Jet Lowe. A resource room allows visitors to learn more about historic preservation through interactive computer programs, films, videos, books, children's activities, and a "how-to" exhibit on doing one's own house history.

For more information, call (612) 296-6126. **AM**

## up close

Continued from page 19

historic sites within the state, such as Fort Snelling, Split Rock Lighthouse and the Jeffers Petroglyphs. The Minnesota Historical Society Press publishes a quarterly journal and maintains a list of nearly 200 titles.

The history center itself is projected to serve nearly 2 million people this year through its archival and research services, educational programs, and exhibitions drawn from vast collections that include everything from a birch-bark canoe, to a Dakota-language prayer book and Prince's attire from the movie *Purple Rain*. "There's no aspect of Minnesota life that isn't in some way recorded and kept track of in this building," Archabal says.

To encourage visitors, she adds, the board passed a permissive-use policy, which, in essence, "is not to hold the building tightly but return it to the community for its use. But accessibility is more than that. It also

has to do with people believing that it's appropriate for them to be here." The key to developing each visitor's ownership of the history center, Archabal says, is helping them bond with some facet of the building or its contents that resonates with the person's past.

For instance, while guiding a group of visiting executives through the center, one of whom was an African-American woman, Archabal stopped in the lower Great Hall at James Casabere's untitled floor sculpture. As she described the embedded charm modeled after a house that once stood in the nearby Rondo neighborhood, Archabal says, "I could see that woman connect with the idea that something that mattered to her had been brought back to life here in the history center."

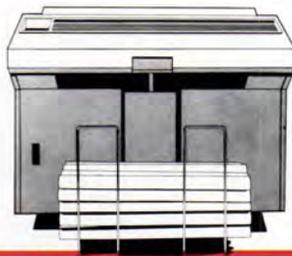
The center also aims to enliven history's dusty, dull reputation with dollops of humor and interactive strategies. One inaugural exhibition, *Minnesota A to Z*, playfully engages Minnesotans of all ages by exploring topics in an alphabetical format, while

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costumed actors interact with visitors. "People learn in the first person," Archabal says, "and we have to reach them in this way in order to create a sense of connectedness that is the basis of a successful experience at the history center."

As Ramsey intimated, that connection—with oneself, one's place and one's past—is as essential to being Minnesotan as it is to Minnesota's future. "To the extent that people have a sense of who they are and feel connected to a community, they are much more likely to be contributing members and builders of that community's future," Archabal says. "If you're a person who has no sense of who you are, or no pride in the community you belong to, you don't have much of a stake in its future. In a sense, what the history center really does is remind people that they have a tremendous stake in this place, because they are indeed part of it." **AM**

## insight

*Continued from page 21*

Corp., may do with the old Powers building at Fifth Street and Marquette Avenue. Frey isn't fighting Opus's plan, because the Powers building has been altered so much that it is no longer considered worth saving.

Warden says it's the marginal buildings, when there is a question of the structure's historic significance, that are being debated. Everyone can agree on saving and reusing a building like the Foshay or Dain towers. But when a building is ugly and nearly empty, it's harder to convince people that it's worth saving.

"I think one of the biggest problems in preservation right now is that we just don't save architecturally significant buildings," Frey says. "Everybody likes to save pretty buildings or high-style architecture." But the city needs also to save its historic buildings that might not be as aesthetically pleasing, she says.

For example, some of the buildings on the riverfront site where the

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis wants to build its new facility are not the most picturesque. "But they are the last remnants of Bridge Square, which was Minneapolis's first downtown and that's pretty significant," she says.

Bartz is running into a similar problem in St. Paul with the old St. Paul Athletic Club. "It's not a grand building, but it's important to the overall fabric of downtown."

Over the years, preservationists in St. Paul have had an easier time with their efforts. Minneapolis has grown much more quickly with its glass-and-steel skyscrapers while St. Paul has tried hard not to forget its past. When The St. Paul Companies decided to build new headquarters in downtown St. Paul, it worked around the old Mickey's Diner on Seventh Street.

"St. Paul has looked at its historic buildings as an asset not a liability," Bartz said. So she has focused her attention on the neighborhoods and strengthening the grass-roots system there.

Frey is hoping that Minneapolis

## Contributors this issue

**Rolf T. Anderson** is president of The Preservation Alliance of Minnesota. He previously wrote about Itasca State Park and rustic "parkitecture" for *Architecture Minnesota*.

**David Anger** is a frequent contributor to *Architecture Minnesota*. He most recently wrote about University Grove, and midcentury modernism.

**Heather Beal** is communication director for Michaud Cooley Erickson. She and her husband, Ken Potts, previously wrote about Tom Ellerbe for our March/April 1988 issue.

**Steven Buetow** is a St. Paul architect who writes our Endangered Species column. He is a member of the AIA Minnesota historic resources committee.

**Jack El-Hai** writes our Lost Minnesota column. His recently published book, *Minnesota Collects*, tells stories about the state's history using material from the Minnesota Historical Society's collection. It's available at area bookstores.

**Bette Hammel** is a local free-lance writer who chronicled the history of Hammel Green and Abrahamson in the book, *From Bauhaus to Bowties*. She contributes frequently to *Skyway News*.

**Erin M. Hanafin** is a student at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn., studying architectural history, criticism and design. She worked as an editorial intern for *Architecture Minnesota* this summer.

**Dan Hauser** is a Minneapolis writer who covered the downtown-Minneapolis development scene for *Skyway News*. He currently is editor of snowmobile titles for Ehlert Publishing Group Inc.

**Alan Lathrop** is professor and curator at the Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota.

**Camille LeFevre** is a Minneapolis-based writer who regularly contributes to our Up Close column.

**Larry Millett** is the architecture columnist for the St. Paul Pioneer Press. His latest book, *Lost Twin Cities*, is reviewed this issue. He previously wrote about Louis Sullivan and the Prairie-style Owatonna bank in *The Curve of the Arch*, published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press.

**Dale Mulfinger** is a principal with Mulfinger, Susanka, Mahady Architects in Minneapolis. He is documenting the work of Edwin Lundie in Minnesota.

**Janet Whitmore** is director of business development for BRW Inc., in Minneapolis. She is co-chair of the AIA Minnesota publications committee.

**Bruce N. Wright** is editor of *INFORM Design Journal* and a regular contributor to *Architecture Minnesota* and *Inland Architect* magazines.

residents get more involved with preservation through the city's Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

Charles Nelson, historical architect with the Minnesota Historical Society, says he thinks activism at the grass-roots level will help the future of historic preservation. When citizens feel they have a vested interest in a property, they will fight for it and have a better chance of saving it, he says. He notes that when the wrecking ball was menacing the Landmark Center in downtown St. Paul in the 1960s citizens stepped forward with their protests and pocketbooks and were able to save the old structure.

Sometimes it doesn't take an angry mob to save a building; politicians have enough sense on their own to step in and stop demolitions. Many preservationists point to the State Theater in downtown Minneapolis as an example. Long neglected and close to becoming extinct, the theater was saved and restored by the city of Minneapolis.

Still, sometimes neither the people nor politicians can decide a build-

ing's fate, and the decision is put in the hands of the court system, as is the case with the Minneapolis Armory. The building, which Hennepin County wants to raze in order to build a jail, still is in jeopardy. The city of Minneapolis and Minnesota Historical Society are suing to save the building. The courts will decide the fate of that historic structure.

It was a tough summer. But preservationists remain upbeat. "I would be foolish to say I'm not optimistic," says Nelson, who has been with the state historical society for 21 years.

Nelson, Frey and Bartz hope that someday the state legislature will create laws that would give property owners tax breaks on historic buildings so they would not have to choose demolition because they can no longer afford to pay taxes on an empty building.

Nelson says the push for such legislation is slow in the state, but he is hopeful that change will come before the next historic building is razed to make room for another parking lot.

AM



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## lost minnesota

As St. Paul *Pioneer Press* architecture critic Larry Millett shows in his new book, *Lost Twin Cities*, the loss of important buildings in Minneapolis and St. Paul is by no means a 20th-century phenomenon. "The

fate of the log chapel of St. Paul built in 1841 by Father Lucien Galtier offers a case in point," Millett notes. "In 1856 the tiny building—by then no longer in use—was dismantled. All the pieces were marked and numbered, with the idea that the structure would someday be rebuilt elsewhere. No one, however, conveyed this message to certain workmen, who mistook the logs for common firewood and burned all of them."

Most razings that have taken place in the Twin Cities since then, of course, have

not been accidental, and Millett's book details the social and economic forces that have led Minnesotans to pull down many of their finest buildings: the growth spurt both cities underwent in the 1880s through the turn of the century, the Great De-

pression that made buildings too expensive to keep up in the 1930s, and the frenzy of urban renewal that leveled entire districts beginning in the 1950s.

*Lost Twin Cities*, however, is no

erased—waterfalls, hills, caves, creeks and bluffs.

The 336-page book is divided into chapters focusing on the cities' landscape and street plans, their beginnings as cities, their mushrooming at

the end of the Victorian Age, and the changes that arrived with the 20th century. Set against the backdrop of the ever-changing downtown blocks of Minneapolis and St. Paul (the book focuses on the downtowns), *Lost Twin Cities* is as much a social and economic history as it is an architectural one.

Engaging, in-depth portraits of lost structures punctuate the book. Photos, many of them rare, are liberally used. For years to come,

architectural historians will thank Millett for his annotations and for the book's exhaustive index.

*Lost Twin Cities* belongs on the bookshelf of any Minnesota architect. And unlucky are those who keep it on the shelf.

**Jack El-Hai**

