



Ramsey County Historical Society
"History close to home"
Landmark Center, 75 W. 5th St.
St. Paul, MN 55102

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



Volume 16
Number 2

Ramsey County History

Published by the
RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Editor: Virginia Brainard Kunz

Contents

Beer Capital of the State

St. Paul's Historic Family Breweries

by Gary J. Brueggmann Page 3

Volume 16
Number 2

Montgomery Schuyler Takes on 'the West'

By Patricia Murphy Page 16

1910's 'One-horse' Gladstone Recalled

By Lucile Arnold Page 21

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY is published semi-annually and copyrighted 1981 by the Ramsey County Historical Society, Landmark Center, 75 West Fifth Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102. Membership in the Society carries with it a subscription to *Ramsey County History*. Single issues sell for \$3. Correspondence concerning contributions should be addressed to the editor. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors. Manuscripts and other editorial material are welcomed but no payment can be made for contributions. All articles and other editorial material submitted will be carefully read and published, if accepted as space permits.

Cover Photo: This photograph of the Yoerg Brewery, nestling up against the bluffs of St. Paul's West Side, was taken in 1933. The brewery was located at Ohio and Ethel streets. Photos with the story on St. Paul's family breweries are from the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society. Sketches for the Montgomery Schuyler story are reproduced from Vol. LXXXIII, Number 497, of Harper's New Monthly Magazine for 1891 (pages 736-755).

Montgomery Schuyler Takes on 'the West'

BY PATRICIA MURPHY

In 1891, Montgomery Schuyler (1843-1914) a leading late 19th century architectural critic from the east coast, penned some vituperative remarks about Twin Cities architecture. His commentary is of interest today for several reasons. It demonstrates the dichotomy of the 1890s between American architects who were following the models provided by the architectural traditions of the east coast, and those who were trying to create a particularly "western" expression.

Schuyler's article also reveals an easterner's haughty and superior views toward the culture and architecture of the midwest. In addition, his commentary provides insights about the architecture of the Twin Cities, and about the effects of the rivalry between St. Paul and Minneapolis on the architecture of both cities.

Schuyler spent most of his long and prolific career writing perceptive essays about the architecture of such east coast cities as Boston and New York. His articles appeared in *Harpers*, *Scribners*, *Architectural Record*, the *New York Times* and other widely circulated periodicals and newspapers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Schuyler, who had attended but never graduated from Hobart College in New York State, was eastern-educated and eastern-oriented and, perhaps as a result, he lavished most of his attention on Richard Morris Hunt, Henry Hobson Richardson, and other prominent eastern architects.

Yet, Schuyler was also intrigued by the architecture of "the west" in the rapidly expanding cities of Chicago (which to him was the center of the west), St. Paul and Minneapolis, which he visited in 1890. He lauded the efforts of major Chicago architects Louis Sullivan, John Wellborn Root, and Daniel Burnham, but he had less than favorable remarks about the architecture of the Twin Cities. These were published in *Harpers* in 1891, in an article entitled "Glimpses of West-

ern Architecture: St. Paul and Minneapolis."¹

SCHUYLER'S ARCHITECTURAL criticism is provocative, witty, progressive, and even biting. He was an accomplished writer of both architectural and literary criticism. Though not an architect, he was acquainted with most of the prominent eastern architects of the period, and won their respect through his insightful commentary. An extremely well-read man, he employed complex literary allusions in his writings on architecture, often without a clue as to their source. His writing style is often confusing and convoluted since he often referred to something mentioned in passing several pages previously.

In his 1891 *Harpers* article, Schuyler began his analysis of the architecture of the Twin Cities by referring to Anthony Trollope's observations on his visit to Minnesota, published in *North America* in 1862. Schuyler noted that:

"As might be expected, he (Trollope) admired with enthusiasm the works of nature, and as might certainly have been expected, he found little to admire in the handiwork of man."

Schuyler seems to agree with Trollope's estimation. His article reveals his deep-seated belief in the cultural superiority of the east coast over "the west," which to him encompassed the entire section of the country west of Pittsburgh.

IN HIS ESSAY Schuyler talked generally about the development and architecture of both St. Paul and Minneapolis. In a somewhat florid passage, he noted that:

"St. Paul has been developed from the frontier trading post of the earlier days by an evolution the successive stages of which have left their several records, but Minneapolis has risen like an exhalation, or to adopt an even mustier comparison, has sprung from the heads of its projectors full-panoplied in brick and mortar."

Schuyler observed astutely that the character of downtown St. Paul was influenced by its constricted location on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River and below the bluffs of Summit Avenue. He noted that due to the limited amount of space for expansion, by the late 1880s and early 1890s tall buildings were a necessity if the city's commercial district were

About the Author: Patricia Murphy is director of the historic sites survey of Ramsey county which is being conducted jointly by the Ramsey County Historical Society and the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission. A St. Paul native, she holds a master of architectural history degree from the University of Virginia. She was curator of the University Of Minnesota Gallery exhibition, "Cass Gilbert: Minnesota Master Architect."

to continue to grow. By that time, too, advances in building technology and the popularity of the elevator made it possible to build taller buildings. He reported that:

"In St. Paul the elevator came as a needed factor in commercial architecture since the strip of shore to which the town was confined in Trollope's time still limits and cramps the business quarter, and leaves only the vertical dimension available for expansion. Towering buildings are the normal outcome of such a situation."

He added that Minneapolis had more room for new buildings in its business district:

"Minneapolis, on the other hand, occupies a tableland above the river, which at present is practically unlimited."

However, Schuyler perceived that the tremendous rivalry which governed all facets of life in the two cities was of greater importance than the availability of room for expansion in St. Paul versus Minneapolis. He commented that:

"... it is necessary to bear in mind not only the rapidity of the growth of the two cities, but the intensity of the rivalry between them — a rivalry which the stranger hardly comprehends, however, until he has seen the workings of it on the spot... the altitude (i.e. height) of the newest and tallest structures of Minneapolis could scarcely be explained without reference to the nearness of St. Paul, and the intensity of the local pride born of that nearness. If the physical necessities of the case prescribed ten story buildings in St. Paul, the moral necessity of not being outdone would prescribe twelve story buildings for Minneapolis."

Schuyler was not alone in noting the impact of this rivalry on architecture. Writing at about the same time, the accomplished Chicago architect John Wellborn Root noted that:

"In cases like St. Paul and Minneapolis, every move of either city is watched by the other with the keenest interest, and every structure of importance in one city becomes only the standard to be passed by the other."

The effect of this intense competition was that St. Paul architects almost never designed buildings in Minneapolis and vice-versa, even though in both cities out-of-state architects were often called in from great distances to design prestigious buildings. It was a considerable feat, then, for a St. Paul architect to receive a commission in Minneapolis, or vice-versa, and it seems that when this did happen the client often would be from outside the state, and perhaps unaware of the ramifications of such a move. As Schuyler explained:

"It is an odd illustration of the local rivalry



The Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church, still standing at Dayton and Mackubin.

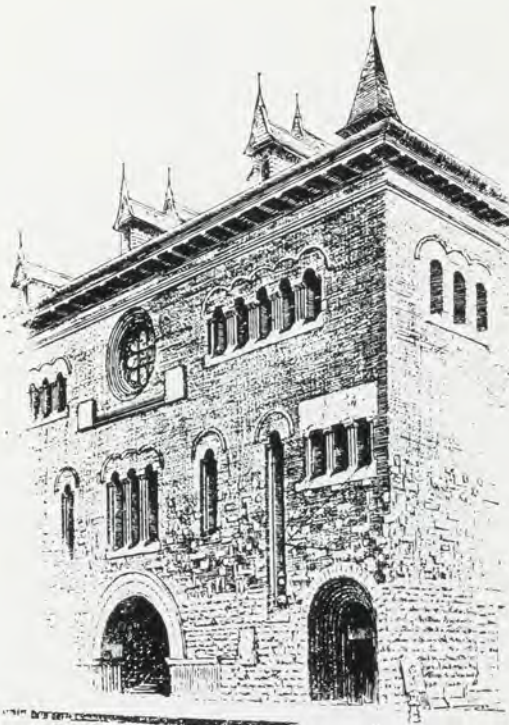
that although the cities are so near together, the architects are confined to their respective fields, and it is very unusual, if not unexampled, that an architect of either is employed in the other."

This certainly was the case in St. Paul where architects Cass Gilbert, James Knox Taylor, Clarence Johnston, and others played roles of immeasurable importance in shaping the architectural character of the entire city.

Local architects were well aware of this rivalry, as was noted in a local trade publication, the *Northwestern Builder, Decorator and Furnisher* (the title varies) in 1889:

"The Minnesota Architectural Sketch Club was organized just a few months ago and was composed, in the main, of the Minneapolis draftsmen. Just why the St. Paul draftsmen would not join the movement we are unable to learn. It may be that the young men of the two cities wanted to follow the universal example set by their elders and have rival organizations, and so such a rival was formed and called the St. Paul Sketch Club."

Schuyler's article also demonstrates the division in the American architectural profession in the 1880s and 1890s between those architects who were content to follow the models set by east coast architects and architects from the midwest and western parts of



The People's Church which once stood at 235 Pleasant avenue.

the country who were attempting to create a "western" style of architecture. Schuyler commented skeptically that:

"Evidently there could be no better places than the Twin Cities to study the development of Western architecture, or rather to ascertain whether there is such a thing."

Clearly, Schuyler would have preferred not to use the word "architecture" in referring to buildings designed by those attempting to create a western style. He uses the term "western" much as another writer might use an obscenity. In speaking of Edward P. Bassford's St. Paul City Hall and County Courthouse (built in 1889 and razed in the 1930s), he comments that it has "...congeries of unrelated and unadjusted parts and ... may be admitted to be characteristically w-----n." In the same vein he comments that the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce Building (built in 1889, now razed) that it,

"... consists architecturally of two very busy, and bustling fronts compiled of 'features' that do not make up a physiognomy and which stands upon a massive sash frame of plate glass. As a matter of fact these things have their counterparts in the East, only there they are not referred to by the geography, but to the illiteracy and insensibility of the designer."

As would be expected, Schuyler praises several St. Paul and Minneapolis buildings which were designed by eastern or eastern-educated architects, such as Babb, Cook, and Willard, and Cass Gilbert and denigrates the efforts of several local architects, such as J. Walter Stevens, whose work Schuyler thought did not bear the mark of an eastern education.

In his essay Schuyler discusses nine buildings in St. Paul, all of which had been constructed within five years of his visit in 1890. The buildings range from the High Victorian Gothic Hotel Ryan (built in 1885 by J.J. Egan of Chicago, razed) to the Richardsonian Romanesque Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church (built in 1886-88 by St. Paul architects Cass Gilbert and James Knox Taylor, extant). Of these nine buildings, one, the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce Building, was designed by an unknown architect; two were designed by Chicago architects (the Hotel Ryan, and the Pioneer Building, built in 1889 by Solon Beman and extant); one was designed by a New York architectural firm (the New York Life Insurance Company Building, built in 1888-89 by Babb, Cook and Willard and razed); and five were designed by architects then in practice in St. Paul, most of whom had been educated on the east coast. Of the St. Paul architects, all but one — Edward Bassford — were members of the younger generation of St. Paul architects who were more attuned to the architecture of the east coast than their elders.

THE BUILDINGS DESIGNED by St. Paul architects included the St. Paul City and County Courthouse, the People's Church (built in 1889 by J. Walter Stevens and now razed); the Bank of Minnesota (built in 1886 by Wilcox & Johnston and also razed); and the Endicott Building (1889-90) and the Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church (1886-88), both designed by Gilbert and Taylor. At the end of his article Schuyler included several illustrations of architectural details of a number of houses and one rowhouse in St. Paul, all dating from the late 1880s.⁴ He did not mention these houses in his essay, however, so they will not be considered here.

Schuyler's selection of buildings is of interest both for those that he included and those that he did not. While he did not overlook the Pioneer or Endicott buildings, two of the most impressive downtown commercial structures of the day, he did neglect to mention another sophisticated addition to the downtown skyline, the elegant Richardsonian Romanesque style Germania Building, built in 1888-89 by J.

Walter Stevens with Harvey Ellis and still standing at Fifth and Wabasha as the St. Paul Building. This omission may have been intentional, since Schuyler was extremely critical of Stevens' People's Church, and he may not have wanted to speak favorably of another design by Stevens. Schuyler devoted considerable attention to the People's Church, which once stood at 235 Pleasant Avenue, and also discussed at length the Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church at Dayton and Mackubin. Yet, he fails to mention Central Presbyterian Church, built in 1889 by Minneapolis architect Warren Hayes and an imposing Romanesque design still standing at 500 Cedar Street in downtown St. Paul. It may be that the reason for this oversight is that since the building was designed by a Minneapolis architect, it did not fit conveniently into Schuyler's theories about the dichotomy between St. Paul and Minneapolis.

IN DISCUSSING Twin Cities church architecture, Schuyler referred to the People's Church as representing the epitome of eastern versus western architectural style, or the lack thereof. A drawing of the People's Church, used to illustrate the article, shows a square, rockface masonry and brick building with Richardsonian Romanesque rounded arched window and door openings, a classically inspired cornice, and peculiar steeply pitched gabled dormers with finials which project from a roof which appears to be either flat or hipped. The building lacks many of the features commonly associated with late Victorian ecclesiastical architecture — steeply pitched gabled roofs, towers and spires, transepts and entrance porches. Admittedly from the illustration this building does not immediately bring to mind a church, though we do not know whether this was the effect intended by the architect. Schuyler, nevertheless, insisted that the reason the building did not look like a church was that the architect was attempting unsuccessfully to create a western-style church. He explained that the designer of the People's Church:

"... seems purposely to have avoided an ecclesiastical expression, and to have undertaken to typify in brick and stone the wild, free theology of the West. He has so far succeeded that nobody could possibly take the results of his labors for a church in the usual acceptance of the term, but this negative attainment does not yet constitute a positive architectural success."

Clearly, Schuyler leaves no doubt as to his opinion of either the design or the architect. He was more impressed by the Dayton Avenue

Presbyterian Church, a Bayfield brownstone Richardsonian Romanesque-style structure which has all the standard features of a Victorian Church — corner tower and broach spire, steeply-pitched gabled roof, rounded-arched entrance porch, a nave with two transepts, and stained glass windows.

SCHUYLER WAS PROBABLY the first critic of the design to note that it had been directly inspired by Henry Hobson Richardson's Church of the Unity, as well as his North Congregational Church, both located in Springfield, Massachusetts.⁵ This is not surprising since this was the first major church design to be awarded to Gilbert and Taylor, young architects who had recently returned from Boston where they had studied Richardson's designs while in the architecture school at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Schuyler reported that:

"A more conventional and a quite unmistakable example of church building is a Presbyterian church in St. Paul, which follows the established ecclesiastical type, albeit with a recognition of the modern demand that a church shall be a good place in which to preach and to be preached to..."

Despite all his reservations, Schuyler was at least pleased that Gilbert and Taylor's design looked like a conventional church.

It was Schuyler's view that, given the accruing wealth and expanding population of the

Entrance, New York Life Insurance Building, built in 1888-89, and razed.



Twin Cities, there was a tremendous emphasis on material things, to the neglect of culture, architecture and other aesthetic considerations. He noted that:

"In the material and materializing development of the West it is not surprising that the chief object of local pride should not be the local church, but the local hotel."

In this respect he thought that Minneapolis's West Hotel, built in 1883-84 by Leroy Buffington, was far superior to St. Paul's Hotel Ryan. He described the Ryan as follows:

"For the caravansary of the older town (i.e. St. Paul) is an example of the kind of secular Victorian Gothic that was stimulated by the erection of Sir Gilbert Scott's Midland Hotel in London that which a less eligible model could scarcely be put before an untrained designer, since there is little in it to redeem an uneasy and uninteresting design except carefully studied and carefully adjusted detail."

Schuyler did have some kind remarks to make about some of the office buildings which had recently been constructed in downtown St. Paul. It is not surprising that the buildings he particularly admired were almost all designed by out-of-state architects or by local architects, such as Gilbert and Taylor, who had been educated on the east coast.

SCHUYLER WAS particularly impressed with the talents of Chicago architect John Wellborn Root who was the partner of Daniel Burnham until his untimely death in 1891. Root, according to Schuyler, had an influence on the commercial architecture of St. Paul which could be seen in the utilitarian design of some of the commercial buildings of the late 1880s and early 1890s.

It is indeed intriguing that Schuyler admired Root's architecture since before his death Root had been an adamant champion of the "western style of architecture" — the very idea of which Schuyler seems to have found to be abhorrent. Root, along with Louis Sullivan, Daniel Burnham, and others founded the Western Association of Architects in 1884, marking "a moment in history epitomizing the division between the West and the East, and the growing consciousness among the Chicago architects of a common interest."⁶

One of the buildings in downtown St. Paul which Schuyler thought bore the mark of John Wellborn Root was the Pioneer Press Building which, not surprisingly, was designed by Chicago architect Solon Beman who was certainly well-acquainted with Root's designs.⁷ Schuyler described the Pioneer Building:

"Among the business blocks of St. Paul the building of the Pioneer Press newspaper is eminent for the strictness with which it conforms itself to the utilitarian conditions of the structure, and the impressiveness of the result attained, not in spite of those apparently forbidding conditions, but by means of them. Here also Mr. Root's buildings, to which this praise belongs in so high a degree, have evidently enough inculcated their lesson upon the designer of the present structure. An uncompromising paralleloiped of brown brick rears itself to the height of twelve stories, with no break at all in its outline, and with no architecture that is not evolved directly from the requirements of the building."

Schuyler was even more complimentary about the New York Life Insurance Company Building designed by the prominent New York architectural firm of Babb, Cook and Willard:

"Of far more extent and pretension . . . indeed being perhaps the costliest and most 'important' of all the business blocks of St. Paul is the building of the New York Life Insurance Company."

After a long and eloquent description of the virtues of this building Schuyler gets to the crux of the matter. To him, the building's chief virtue lay in its embodiment of east coast architectural ideas. In describing the main entrance to the building, Schuyler wrote that:

"Its extreme delicacy, indeed, almost gives the impression that it is meant to be a still small voice of protest on the part of an 'Eastern architect' against a 'boisterous and roughhewn' Westernness."

Despite his disparaging remarks about churches, commercial and public buildings in the Twin Cities, Schuyler did have some generous comments about the residential neighborhoods of St. Paul, though he did not specifically mention any houses he admired:

"The natural advantages with respect to the quarters of residence seem to be strongly on the side of St. Paul. The riverfront at Minneapolis is not available for house building, nor is there any other topographical indication of a fashionable quarter . . . On the other hand, the fashionable quarter of St. Paul is distinctly marked out by nature. It could not have been established anywhere but at the edge of the bluff overhanging the town and commanding the Mississippi . . . There are perhaps as skillfully designed houses in the younger city, and certainly there are houses as costly: but there is nothing to be compared with the massing of the handsome houses of St. Paul upon the ridge above the river."

Schuyler ended his analysis of St. Paul and Minneapolis architecture with a discussion,

often repeated at that juncture in our history, as to whether there was really such a thing as a true American architecture. He extended this further to complete his probing of the existence of an eastern architecture versus that of a western architecture in this country, and suggested, finally, that out of the efforts to create regional architectural styles would come a truly national architecture.

He observed that:

"The question whether there is any American architecture is not yet so triumphantly answered that is other than provincial to lay much stress on local differences. The general impression that the Eastern observer derives from Western architecture is the same that American architecture in general makes upon the European observer, and that is that it is a very much emancipated architecture."

He concluded by noting that "there are among the emancipated practitioners of architecture in the West men who have shown that they can use their liberty wisely, and whose work can be hailed among the hopeful beginnings of a national architecture."

Footnotes

1. Vol. LXXXIII, no. 497, pp. 736-755. All quotations from Montgomery Schuyler are from this article, and are thus not cited individually. A collection of Schuyler's writing was published in 1961, entitled *American Architecture and Other Writings* by Montgomery Schuyler, edited by William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard, 1961).
2. "The City House in the West." *Scribner's*, vol. 8 (Sept., 1890), p. 434.
3. Vol. 3, no. 11 (Nov., 1889).
4. These illustrations include the Riley Row at Nina and Laurel by Wilcox and Johnston, extant; the Edgar C. Long House, 318 Summit Avenue by Gilbert & Taylor, extant; the John L. Merriam House (later the Science Museum of Minnesota), 51 University Avenue by Mould and McNichol, probably with Harvey Ellis, razed; the Amherst H. Wilder House, 226 Summit Avenue by Wilcox and Johnston, razed; and the Rugg House, 251 Summit Avenue by Hodgson and Stem, extant.
5. Schuyler refers in his comments to Richardson's Church of the Unity in Springfield (1866-69). However, an examination of this church and the North Congregational Church (1868-73) which was also in Springfield demonstrates that both were influential in Gilbert and Taylor's design. These churches are illustrated in Henry-Russell Hitchcock's *The Architecture of Henry Hobson Richardson and His Times*, 1935, rpt. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1975, plates 3 and 26.
6. Donald Hoffman. *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973, p. 9.
7. Solon Beman would later design a four-story addition to the building.

1910's 'One-horse' Gladstone Recalled

BY LUCILE ARNOLD

*The house has been razed.
Remaining cement front steps
lead to friendly ghosts.*

L. Arnold

Frost Avenue in Maplewood, which begins at Lake Phalen and ends at the Ramsey County Nursing Home, is a beehive of activity today. This area has the Keller Golf Course, a trailer park, the Gladstone Lumber

About the Author: Lucile Arnold grew up in Gladstone, began recording her memories of early Maplewood in a creative writing class at Wilder Senior Citizens Center, St. Paul. This is her second contribution to Ramsey County History.

Mart, Gladstone Baptist Church, Gladstone Improvement Company, Gladstone House, Maplewood Bowl, Maplewood city offices, a large shopping center, the Community Education Center, the Cross Lutheran Church, and apartment houses.

In the 1910 decade, this area was known as Gladstone to the post office and Gloster to the Northern Pacific and Soo Line Railroads, and its population was 250. There was no 1402 Frost Avenue. That was just the house where the Reeves family lived and which later was occupied by the large Miller family, of which I was a member.

A two-lane dirt horse-and-buggy road



Ramsey County History
published semi-annually by
the Ramsey County Historical Society
Landmark Center
75 West Fifth Street
St. Paul, Minn. 55102

THE GIBBS HOUSE

at 2097 West Larpenteur Avenue, Falcon Heights, is owned and maintained by the Ramsey County Historical Society as a restored farm house of the mid-nineteenth century period.

The Ramsey County Historical Society was founded in 1949. Its chief function is to collect and preserve the history of the city and the county and share that history with the people who live here. The Society is the county's historian. It preserves those things from the past that are the community's treasures — its written records through the Society's library; its historic sites through establishment of the Irvine Park Historic District and its successful efforts to help prevent destruction of the Old Federal Courts Building, now Landmark Center. It shares these records through the publishing of its magazine, brochures, pamphlets, and prints; through conducting historic sites tours of the city, teaching classes, producing exhibits on the history of the city, and maintaining its museum on rural county history. The Gibbs Farm Museum, the oldest remaining farm home in Ramsey County, was acquired by the Society in 1949 and opened to the public in 1954 as a museum which would depict the way of life of an early Minnesota settler. In 1966 the Society moved onto the property a one-room rural country schoolhouse dating from the 1870s. Now restored to the period of the late 1890s, the school is used for classes, meetings, and as the center for a summer schoolhouse program for children.

Society headquarters are located in Landmark Center, an historic Richardsonian Romanesque structure in downtown St. Paul, where it maintains the center's only permanent exhibit, a history of the building during the seventy-five years it was the federal government's headquarters in St. Paul.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Paul, MN
Permit #3989