



## A TALK BY LEIGH ROETHKE ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2005

The Cass Gilbert Society will present Leigh Roethke who will be speaking on **The House That Minnesota Built**. In this centennial year we celebrate the Capitol building that Cass Gilbert designed for his home state and the determination of Minnesotans to have a shining monument in Saint Paul worthy of Minnesota and the achievements of its people. For one hundred years the Minnesota State Capitol has been a seat of government, symbol of the state, public gathering place, and point of pride for Minnesotans. Ms. Roethke, author of *Minnesota's Capitol: A Centennial Story* (Afton Historical Society Press, 2005), will discuss the many functions of the building past and present and how Minnesotans have made themselves comfortable in their house on the hill.

Leigh Roethke is completing her doctorate in Art History at the University of Minnesota. She has taught courses in the history of art and design at the University of Minnesota and the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. The special focus of her work is the interrelationship between art and popular culture.

After the lecture, Ms. Roethke will sign copies of her book. Donors of at least \$200 to the Cass Gilbert Media Project may pick up their books that evening.

Copies of *Minnesota's Capitol* are being distributed to schools throughout Minnesota thanks to grants from Target; The Cargill Foundation; the Harlan Boss Foundation for the Arts; Mary A. Anderson in honor of William R. Anderson, Jr.; Xcel Energy; AIA Minnesota; Bailey Nurseries, Inc.; the Cass Gilbert Society; Ecolab; Home Federal Savings Bank; Hubbard Broadcasting Foundation; Ridgeway International, Inc.; The Whitney Foundation; Norlin and Carole Boyum; Howard and Betsy Guthmann; Malcolm McDonald; and Dick and Nancy Nicholson. The Cass Gilbert Society contribution is providing copies of the book to Capitol Hill Magnet School in Saint Paul.

Join us at the University Club, 420 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, on Tuesday, September 20, 2005, at 7:00 P.M. Admission is free to Society members. There is a nominal charge for nonmembers. Refreshments will be served after the lecture. Support for Cass Gilbert Society lectures is provided in part by the Minnesota Humanities Commission.



Saint Paul Winter Carnival festivities by the Capitol, 1917  
*Minnesota Historical Society*

### Mark Your Calendars

October 8-9, 2005      Cass Gilbert Society tour in Montana. See insert.

October 15, 2005      Capitol Centennial Symposium. See inside.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT By Marjorie Pearson

The Cass Gilbert Society has selected Twin Cities Public Television (TPT) as the producer of the Media Project. Filming began in late June. Dianne Steinbach, executive producer, and Daniel Bergin, producer, anticipate that work will be completed this fall. Titled **Cass Gilbert: Standing the Test of Time**, the project is aimed at middle-school students but should be of interest to a larger audience as well. If you have not yet contributed to the project, you still have the opportunity to do so. Donors of at least \$200 will receive a signed copy of Leigh Roethke's book. You may pick up your copy on September 20 or other arrangements can be made.

We note with sadness the death of **Albert W. Lindeke, Jr.**, on May 11, 2005. He and his wife Georgia have been staunch supporters of the Cass Gilbert Society since its founding. They lived for many years in a house designed by Clarence Johnston, Sr., Cass Gilbert's fellow MIT

student and early Saint Paul colleague.

From Maurita Baldock, archivist at the **New-York Historical Society** comes word that she has processed 669 boxes of the **Cass Gilbert Collection**, not including the architectural drawings which are not yet processed. The processed collection includes project files, office files, personal files, and some information on Minnesota projects. The finding aid for this collection can be found at <http://dlib.nyu.edu/affiliates/NYHS/findingaids/proomlinks.html> under "G" for Gilbert.

Due to increasing professional demands, **Troy Musel** has submitted his resignation as treasurer of the Cass Gilbert Society. His service during the past two years is much appreciated.

### UPDATE ON THE AUSTIN, NICHOLS AND COMPANY WAREHOUSE BUILDING

Last year we noted that the owners of the Austin, Nichols and Company Warehouse Building on the Brooklyn waterfront were seeking a zoning variance for large inappropriate rooftop additions. That effort was denied by the New York City Planning Commission. Supporters of the building are now seeking local landmark designation to protect the building. Unfortunately, both the building owner and the local city councilmember oppose designation.

Last month Marjorie Pearson submitted testimony on behalf of the Cass Gilbert Society to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission supporting the designation of the building as a New York City Landmark. Her letter is excerpted:

As Sharon Irish, a scholar of Gilbert's work, has observed, his warehouse designs for New York clients built on the work he had done in Minnesota. This is particularly true in the area of reinforced-concrete construction. Gilbert's firm designed flat-slab floor systems in two warehouses, one in St. Paul, and one in Minneapolis, as early as 1906.

In 1909, Gilbert received the commission for a warehouse for Austin, Nichols and Company. This major grocery wholesaler had a prime Brooklyn waterfront location with adjacent railroad spurs. Both the waterfront piers and the railroad spurs would facilitate transfer and shipping of the company's goods. Gilbert worked with the Henry C. Turner Construction Company to create a reinforced-concrete structure with physical space organized in a way that would enhance the company's wholesale operations. The building was completed in 1913, the same year as the Woolworth Building.

In a retrospective of Gilbert's career following his death in 1934, two contemporaries called Gilbert a "master of style." Some have wondered at the apparent lack of "style" in Gilbert's warehouse and industrial designs. In 1921, one critic, perhaps straining for characterization, called the Austin, Nichols and Company Warehouse "an excellent example of the modern adaptation of Egyptian architecture to the present-day requirements of commercialism." More recent critics with different sensibilities have dubbed it "protomodern." More to the point, Gilbert knew that a warehouse was not a courthouse, or a skyscraper, or a public library, or any other type of building that required a more elaborate style. He wrote

in 1911: "I have tried to choose a style in each case which I thought best adapted to the needs." For industrial or warehouse buildings like Austin Nichols, he believed that simple, unadorned forms were the appropriate ones to use.

At the same time, those simple, unadorned forms have their own beauty, as depicted in at least two renderings of the Austin, Nichols and Company Warehouse, made in 1912 and 1913 by Thomas R. Johnson, one of Gilbert's staff designers. Both are in the collections of the New-York Historical Society. Gilbert's professional pride in the building is also evidenced by two design sketches that he submitted to a 1916 exhibition, three years after the Austin, Nichols and Company Warehouse was completed. The designation of the Austin, Nichols and Company Warehouse would add to the distinguished roster of buildings by Cass Gilbert that already enjoy Landmarks protection. Further, the designation would enhance the understanding and appreciation of a lesser known, but equally important, part of Gilbert's design work.



Austin, Nichols and Company Warehouse Building,  
Brooklyn  
*Courtesy of Martina Salisbury*

### **"A TOUCH OF CASS": RAMSEY HILL ASSOCIATION HOUSE TOUR 2005**

This year the tour features the residential and ecclesiastical work of Cass Gilbert, including the house he designed for his mother Elizabeth Gilbert (1884), 471 Ashland Avenue, and most of the units at Portland Terrace (1888), at the intersection of Portland Avenue and Kent Street. Also open for touring will be the Armstrong House (1895), 506 Grand Hill; the Freeman House (1896), 505 Summit Avenue; and the Crawford Livingston House (1898), 339 Summit Avenue. Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church, the Virginia Street Church, and the Church of St. John the Evangelist represent Gilbert's church architecture. Other buildings on the tour are the work of Gilbert's colleagues and contemporaries including Clarence Johnston, Sr., Thomas Holyoke, Emanuel

Masqueray, and J. Walter Stevens. The portable exhibit assembled by the Cass Gilbert Society for the AIA Minnesota convention in 2003 will be on display at the Davidson House, now the College of Visual Arts, 344 Summit Avenue. Look for signs throughout the neighborhood that mark other buildings designed by Cass Gilbert.

Tickets are available in advance for \$20 from local merchants or from the Ramsey Hill Association. Contact the Association at 651-228-9111 or [www.ramseyhill.org](http://www.ramseyhill.org) for more information about the tour and about a celebratory fundraising dinner on Saturday, September 10, to be held at the James J. Hill House.

### **"CAPITOL VIEWS: BUILDING, PUBLIC LIFE, AND CULTURE," A CAPITOL CENTENNIAL SYMPOSIUM**

The Capitol Centennial Symposium, sponsored by the University of Minnesota College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (CALA), is planned for October 15, 2005, beginning at 1 P.M. in the Ralph Rapson Hall Auditorium, CALA, 89 Church Street S.E., at the University of Minnesota. As the result of a call for papers issued throughout the University of Minnesota campus system, an interesting group of speakers, both faculty and graduate students, has been selected. They include Katherine Solomonson, speaking on Cass Gilbert and the Capitol; Dewey Thorbeck on the State Capitol in rural Minnesota; Anthony

Arrigo on "The State Capitol in the American Social Imagination"; Leigh Roethke on "The Large and Small of It: The Many Forms of Minnesota's Capitol"; Lance Neckar on the planning and landscaping of the Capitol; and Hyman Berman on the culture and politics of the Minnesota State Capitol. The afternoon will conclude with a panel discussion to be chaired by Kristine Miller on the State Capitol in public life. A reception will follow. The symposium is free and open to the public. For more information contact Nancy Miller, the symposium coordinator, at [nmiller@umn.edu](mailto:nmiller@umn.edu).

CASS GILBERT SOCIETY, INC.  
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St. Paul, Minnesota 55104-4066  
www.cassgilbertsociety.org



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**Our Mission**

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

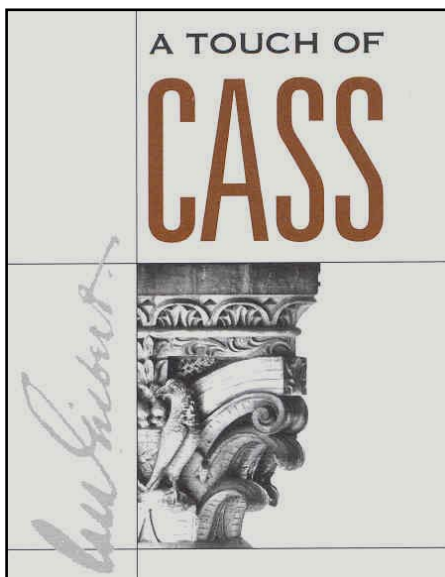
The Cass Gilbert Society, Inc., is a non-profit tax-exempt organization under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Have you renewed your membership for 2005? Would you like to renew your membership for 2006 or join the Cass Gilbert Society?  
See the Cass Gilbert Society website, [www.cassgilbertsociety.org](http://www.cassgilbertsociety.org), for more information and a membership form, or send a check for \$25.00 for an individual/household membership to the Cass Gilbert Society, P.O. Box 4066, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104.

Welcome to the following new members: Ellie and Bill Bisanz, Barbara Baer Bramar; M. Ann Buck, Jennifer Shaffner.



A HOUSE AND WALKING TOUR OF  
HISTORIC HOMES DESIGNED BY  
ARCHITECT CASS GILBERT AND  
HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Sunday, September 11, 2005  
11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

# THE CASS GILBERT SOCIETY TRAVELS TO MONTANA OCTOBER 8-9, 2005

Cass Gilbert Society member Linda Bjorklund has planned two days of sightseeing and related events pertaining to Cass Gilbert's work in Helena and Butte, Montana.

Participants are expected to make their own travel and hotel arrangements. Northwest Airlines flies to Helena, as does United Airlines. We recommend the following hotels – each is centrally located and willing to give the Gilbert Society a group rate if we book ten or more rooms (if not, the room rate will be \$20 more expensive per night):

The Downtown Helena Holiday Inn \$72.00 + tax for a double room; ask for Lila and tell her you are with the CGS group; (406) 443-2200.

The Best Western Great Northern \$95.00 + tax; ask for Carolyn and tell her you are with the Cass Gilbert Society; (406) 457-5500

The cost to members is \$125 per person for the weekend events which include:

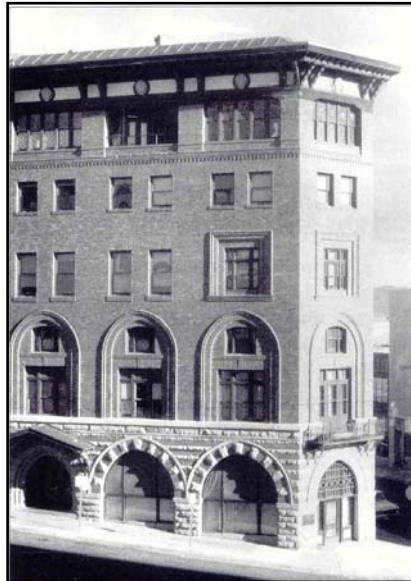
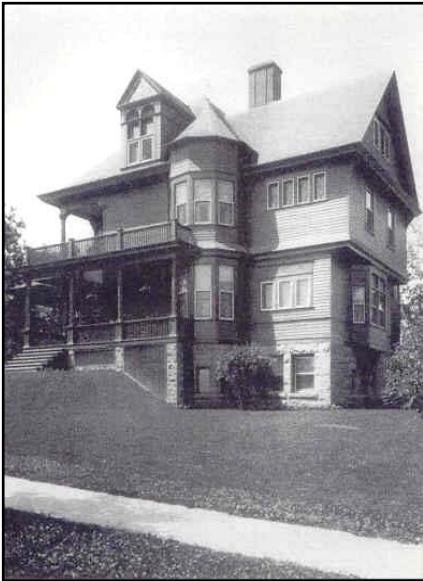
A walking tour of Helena

Dinner/tour at the 1887 Seligman House with a presentation by Steven Flanders

A bus trip to Butte to see the Metals Bank Building (1906)

Dinner at the Montana Club (1903-1905) with a presentation by Tom Blanck

We will visit five excellent examples of Gilbert's work in Montana. For more information contact Linda Bjorklund, 651-291-1541.



Left: A. J. Seligman House in Helena, about 1900,  
*Photo: Collection of Tim Coulter and Samantha Sanchez*

Right: The Montana Club in Helena  
*Photo by Tom Blanck*

Complete the form below and send it, along with a check for \$125.00 made out to the Cass Gilbert Society Inc., to PO Box 4066, St. Paul, MN 55104.

NAME/S: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE YOU WILL ARRIVE: \_\_\_\_\_

HOTEL WHERE YOU HAVE RESERVED A ROOM \_\_\_\_\_

DINNER PREFERENCE MONTANA CLUB (CIRCLE ONE): CHICKEN, BEEF, VEGETARIAN