

*The*  
**PRAIRIE  
SCHOOL**  
*Review*

Volume V, Number 1-2

First-Second Quarter 1968



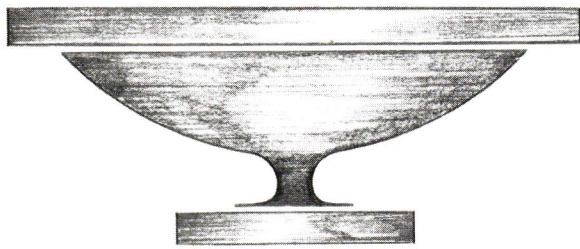


*LEFT: The last few years of Harvey Ellis' life were spent largely in executing strange, cryptic, often religious paintings such as the one illustrated here entitled "Our Lady".*

*COVER: Nicholson Hall still stands on the campus of the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. It, with Pillsbury Hall a short distance away, stands as testimony to the genius of architect Harvey Ellis.*

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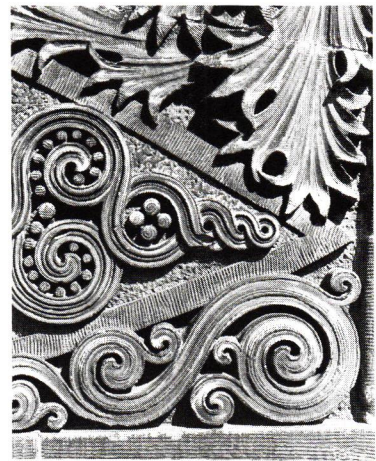
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*A detail from the Mabel Tainter Memorial Building.*





## *From the EDITORS*

*In our last editorial we wrote of the Chicago Landmarks Ordinance which has since been passed. We also urged the immediate appointment of a new Commission to implement the provisions of the Law.*

*The Chicago Commission on Historical and Architectural Landmarks is now official. Chaired by Samuel A. Lichtman, FAIA, the Commission also includes John D. Entenza, Hon. AIA, Director of the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and Clement Sylvestro, Director of Chicago's Historical Society. Other members of the Commission come with similar backgrounds and qualifications. Several organizational meetings have been held and the immediate concern of the Commissioners is the employment of a full time executive secretary to handle the day to day administration of the Commission.*

*Under the terms of the new law, the present landmark buildings of Chicago are not protected until the Commission redesignates them as provided for in the 1968 Landmarks Ordinance. Thus it is vital that the Commission act quickly and decisively.*

*In the interest of expediting implementation of the Landmarks Ordinance, your editor, as President of the Chicago School of Architecture Foundation, has offered the J. J. Glessner House as the first of the "new" landmarks. The Glessner House is owned outright by the Foundation and its Board of Trustees was unanimous in making this unqualified offer. Furthermore, the Foundation is prepared to enter a friendly lawsuit to contest the right of the Commission to make the Glessner House a Landmark Building. Thus, a precedent might be established to simplify designating other buildings as landmarks.*

*We urge the Commissioners to accept the offer outlined above on these or any other terms. If there is a better way, the CSAF will be glad to consider any alternative. What really matters is that the Landmarks Ordinance be made to work now.*



# Long Dark Corridors: Harvey Ellis

by Roger Kennedy \*

*The author would like to express his thanks for an introduction to the work of Harvey Ellis by William Gray Purcell, and to Mr. Purcell's biographer, David Gebhard for suggesting further research. Mrs. Eileen Manning Michels was the pioneer in the field and contributed excellent suggestions beyond the scope of her exemplary thesis. In Rochester, New York, Miss Elizabeth Ellis and Mrs. Donald Gazley, members of the Ellis family, were of great assistance as were Miss Elizabeth Holahan, Mrs. H. Alan Wallis and Mr. Blake McKelvey. In St. Joseph, Mrs. Lucille Boteler and Mrs. Doris Finley helped with research as did Miss Mary Patricia McCue in St. Louis. Two foundation grants administered by the Minnesota Historical Society made the investigative process possible, Wayne Andrews made it pleasant, and it would not have been done at all without the encouragement of my wife, Frances H. Kennedy, who rose to many an occasion.*

John Root without Daniel Burnham might never have become anything but a designer without clients. Louis Sullivan without Dankmar Adler declined into alcoholism, despondency, and years without important commissions, wasting his life and his talent. Root's and Sullivan's stories have been often told. But it is now time to patch together the clues and tell the story of Harvey Ellis, a third great designer, a third contemporary, who with Root and Sullivan brought midwestern architecture to its glory. Ellis never found his Burnham nor his Adler, yet, after his death in 1904, *The Western Architect* had this to say of him:

The drawings and designs of the late Harvey Ellis . . . came just short of influencing western work more strongly than that of any other designer, before or since his time . . . No one else could do such striking things and yet avoid the bizarre.<sup>1</sup>

\* Harvey Ellis has been the object of numerous other authors' efforts, usually in the form of brief articles in architectural journals of the early twentieth century. Actual scholarship has been neglected with one notable exception. The most comprehensive and reliable essay of Ellis' life and work, particularly in the area of stylistic analysis, is a master's thesis by Eileen Manning (now Mrs. Joseph E. Michels) entitled *The Architectural Designs of Harvey Ellis* (1953), in the University of Minnesota Library. The author is indebted to Mrs. Michels' work at various points noted in the footnotes of this article.

1 Obituary, *Western Architect*, III, February 1904, p. 15.

LEFT: A detail designed for the front door of the Mabel Tainter Memorial Building in Menomonie, Wisconsin.







*Carved wood ornament from the Merriam house. Photo by Kennedy.*

What do we know about Ellis? Claude Bragdon, the architect, stage designer and critic who helped defend the reputation of Sullivan during the long years of his disgrace, also knew Ellis, and gave his opinion:

Harvey Ellis was a genius. . . . Had it not been for the evil fairy which seems to have presided over at his birth and ruled his destiny . . . he might have been a prominent instead of an obscure figure in the field of American art; but even so, he exercised an influence more potent than some whose names are better known.<sup>2</sup>

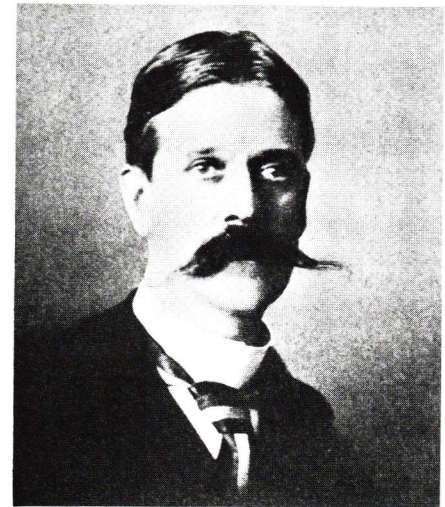
Bragdon knew him only during his last years, when he had returned, a reformed alcoholic, to his native Rochester, New York, and had virtually abandoned architecture. And Ellis was so secretive that Bragdon never knew how much he actually had accomplished in the west.

He never discussed his personal affairs, they seemed scarcely to interest him. . . . The only things he seemed to care for were to paint cryptic, unsalable pictures, under a still north light, with plenty of time and plenty of cigarettes and to talk about anything under the sun except himself to anyone who would listen.<sup>3</sup>

This was Ellis' reputation in Rochester. In St. Paul, Minneapolis, St. Joseph, Chicago and St. Louis he was occasionally mentioned in newspaper reports of the demolition of another of the great mansions he designed. Little was known of him, but these houses were so grand, so intricately ornamented, so subtly knit despite their huge dimensions, that even casual newspaper comment suggested that they had been conceived by a master. When the John L. Merriam house, overlooking the Minnesota State Capitol, was cleared of the clutter of forty years' use as a museum just before it was demolished, the grandeur of its great hall could at last be seen. The carved beams of the ceiling were

thirty feet above the floor. Dust eddied in the light pouring through vast expanses of stained glass and shone against the tooled leather of the walls, the rose marble fireplace, the brasswork, the rosewood and cherry paneling. As the museum's plywood partitions were removed from the next room, there was revealed a dining pavilion of wood painted in ivory and gold, marvelously carved in celtic coils like those of illuminated manuscripts.

Claude Bragdon never saw the Merriam house, nor the dozen great mansions Ellis designed in the



*Harvey  
Ellis,  
1852-1904*

next decade, nor his office buildings for western cities. Francis S. Swales had learned from Ellis that "the west . . . afforded him great opportunities — to design for the use of rough-hewn materials in great, picturesque piles," but he could draw out of Ellis little more than that. Therefore he concluded, with Bragdon, that his teacher was "a paper-architect".<sup>4</sup> Two generations have credited Ellis as a draftsman, a great draftsman, but little more. Frank Chouteau Brown thought Ellis "probably more than anyone, has helped to found an American school of archi-

2 Claude Bragdon, *Merely Players*, New York, 1929, pp. 71, 79.

3 *Ibid.*

4 Francis S. Swales, "Master Draftsmen, III: Harvey Ellis," *Pencil Points*, V, July 1924, p. 49.



tectural rendering",<sup>5</sup> and Swales summarizes the general impression Ellis gave in his last decade of life:

Architectural artist par excellence in pen and ink, charcoal and water color; designer of architecture in a very original and individual style; man of broad intellect and deep learning; philosopher, painter of charming decorative pictures; designer of the most delightful stained glass windows and of book covers and posters.<sup>6</sup>

This opinion does not encompass the larger reputation which Ellis had among architects who knew him and his work. One suspects that some, like George G. Elmslie and William G. Purcell, knew more about him than they told us — Purcell, for example, a few months before his own death, looking back over a lifetime in architecture, appraised Ellis again and said:

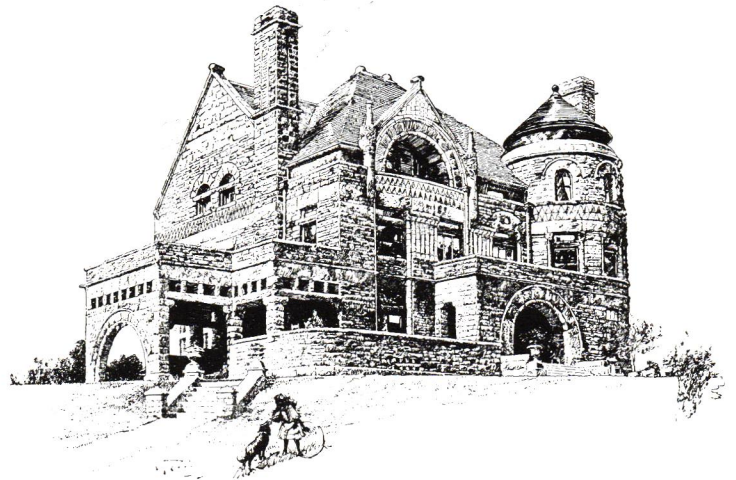
facing you — see a very great architect — before LHS, before Wright — paying no fealty to any — in my view greater than Richardson — you have a man to appraise who stands on his own feet.<sup>7</sup>

Ellis was a link between the great romantic, Richardson, and the masters of the Prairie School. As an architect, he conceived a skyscraper all of a piece from foundation to cornice, before Sullivan, and a bank like a jewel box before Sullivan, and (though his work seldom carried his own name) it

5 Frank Chouteau Brown, "The Architectural Rendering of F. L. Griggs," *Architectural Review*, II, August 1913, p. 223.

6 Swales, *op. cit.*

7 Purcell to the author, February 19, 1965.



*This sketch appeared in Montgomery Schuyler's American Architecture in 1892. It is the John L. Merriam house in St. Paul.*

can be argued that he brought the massive simplicity of the Southwest to the attention of the Prairie School architects and led them into the new century. One of them, Hugh M. G. Garden, had this to say: "He was a master of composition, both in his drawings and his designs of buildings and probably

*This photograph of the John L. Merriam house was taken while it was still being used as a residence. Later it served as a museum and finally was demolished. Photograph courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.*





no one in his time approached so closely to Richardson in the quality of his work. . . ."<sup>8</sup> That is a strong statement; others who worked in the Richardsonian mode included Stanford White, William R. Mead, John W. Root and Hugh Garden's mentor, Louis Sullivan.

Another of the pioneers of the Prairie School, Thomas E. Tallmadge, wrote in 1908:

An ideal artistic atmosphere pervaded the colony in the old lofts of Steinway Hall . . . the little band of enthusiasts who had raised their feeble standard of revolt against the disciplined ranks and vast array of custom . . . Perkins, Wright, Spencer, Myron Hunt, George Dean, Birch Long, and with them . . . associated in spirit if not in person — was the gifted but irresponsible genius, Harvey Ellis, poet-architect, whose pencil death stopped ere it had traced more than a few soft lines of his dream of beauty.<sup>9</sup>

Purcell said "no American artist had a more perfect technical language for architectural rendering. . . . His name was well known to everyone who read an architectural magazine from 1880 to well past 1900."<sup>10</sup>

Ellis was born in 1852, in Rochester, the son of an upstate politician. Family correspondence indicates that before he was twenty he was an anxiety to his mother, who constantly adjured his younger brother, Charles, to try to set Harvey upon a straight course. In 1870, to the relief of all, he won admission to West Point. But he was dismissed after a year, the records attributing his failure to a weakness in French, family lore attributing it to a weakness in chastity — he was said to have achieved a liaison with a lady, perhaps an actress, whom he secretly married.

There is some evidence that he was sent abroad to forget the lady. (Ninety years later his niece said that his father had had the marriage annulled while Ellis was in Europe; other draftsmen who knew him said he had studied there.) Scraps of sketches of

European monuments, drawn in Harvey's hand upon the back of Express Company documents, were found in Buffington's archives; an essay on the architecture of Venice, reading like a briefly dutiful son's report to his father, was scrawled upon a Rochester photographer's stationery, and kept in the family scraps.<sup>11</sup>

He was back in Rochester by 1875, for his mother was imploring his father through the mails to find something for him to do. He was already known as a rakehell in town. In the spring of that year Ellis was sending to his brother Charles for help in securing his trunk from his parents, who had moved to Albany. Their communications with the prodigal had been so completely severed that in August, when his father was in New York on a business trip, he spotted a familiar, tall silhouette against the window at the far end of an engineer's office on lower Broadway, and was startled to discover that it was, indeed, Harvey. He reported to his wife, that their son had been "steady" (on the wagon) for some months, and looked well. In 1877 and 1878 he joined the Albany office of Richardson, while that huge atelier was at work upon the city hall and the state capitol.<sup>12</sup>

In February of 1879 Harvey, once more taken in hand by Charles, was back in Rochester, where for the next five years they turned out scores of designs for buildings constructed throughout western New York and Pennsylvania. Those that can be identified today are modest commercial buildings, schools, small-town hotels, and some well-disciplined "Queen Anne" houses. There is no need here to jump into the critical broil about Louis Sullivan's

11 Swales, *op. cit.* See also Obituary, *The New York Times*, January 6, 1904. A good chronology of Ellis' movements has been compiled by Mr. Blake McKelvey from the Rochester, New York newspaper references to his career, and Mrs. Michels' thesis contains valuable evidence concerning his movements in Minnesota and Missouri.

The evidence of Ellis' trip to Europe is an undated memoir of Venice now in the Ellis archive at the Minnesota Historical Society, undated sketches of European monuments in the Buffington archive at the University of Minnesota, the reminiscences of his niece, Miss Elisabeth Ellis, as recounted to the author on November 6, 1965, and letters from Ellis' colleagues in the files of Mrs. Michels.

12 The correspondence discussed in this paragraph was found among the papers of Charles Ellis now owned by Mrs. Donald Gazley of Rochester, New York. Mother to father, February 5, 1875; Harvey to Charles, June 11, 1875; mother to uncle, August 3, 1875; Harvey to Charles, August 15, 1877. Portions of the Harvey and Charles Ellis office ledgers are also in Mrs. Gazley's care, including records of office move, with Harvey Ellis there on February 25, 1879, in Rochester. Mrs. Michels had checked the Albany City Directories and found Harvey listed there in 1877 and 1878.

8 Hugh M. G. Garden, "Harvey Ellis, Designer and Draughtsman," *Architectural Review*, XV, December 1908, p. 184. (This entire essay is reprinted elsewhere in this issue of *The Prairie School Review*.)

9 Thomas E. Tallmadge, "The 'Chicago School'," *Architectural Review*, XV, April 1908, p. 73. (Reprinted in *Architectural Essays from the Chicago School* edited by W. R. Hasbrouck, The Prairie School Press, 1967.)

10 William G. Purcell, "Forgotten Builders—The Nation's Voice," *Northwest Architect*, VIII, 6-7, 1944, p. 5.





work of this period, but it is fair to say that Ellis' compares with it very favorably.<sup>13</sup>

Ellis was in St. Paul in 1886: magazines carried his sketches for the most distinguished buildings built there in that era. His scrawled signature is decipherable though the attributions were always to others. Among his designs were the Merriam house, and Noyes Brothers and Cutler building. The latter might be thought to have been modeled on Louis Sullivan's Walker Warehouse to which it bears some remarkable resemblances until one discovers that it was built two years earlier. The Germania Bank

<sup>13</sup> For his whereabouts see footnote 11 above. The office ledgers do not indicate which of the buildings listed were designed by Harvey and which by Charles, but some judgment can be formed by comparing those Charles executed while Harvey was not in Rochester (1885-1892 certainly, possibly 1894) with those the two did together, and attributing the marked differences in style between the two groups to Harvey, then by noting likenesses between the Harvey-and-Charles group and those known to be Harvey's own work in other cities. Mrs. Michels has subjected Harvey Ellis' western work, as it was known at the time her thesis was written (1952), to an exhaustive stylistic examination.

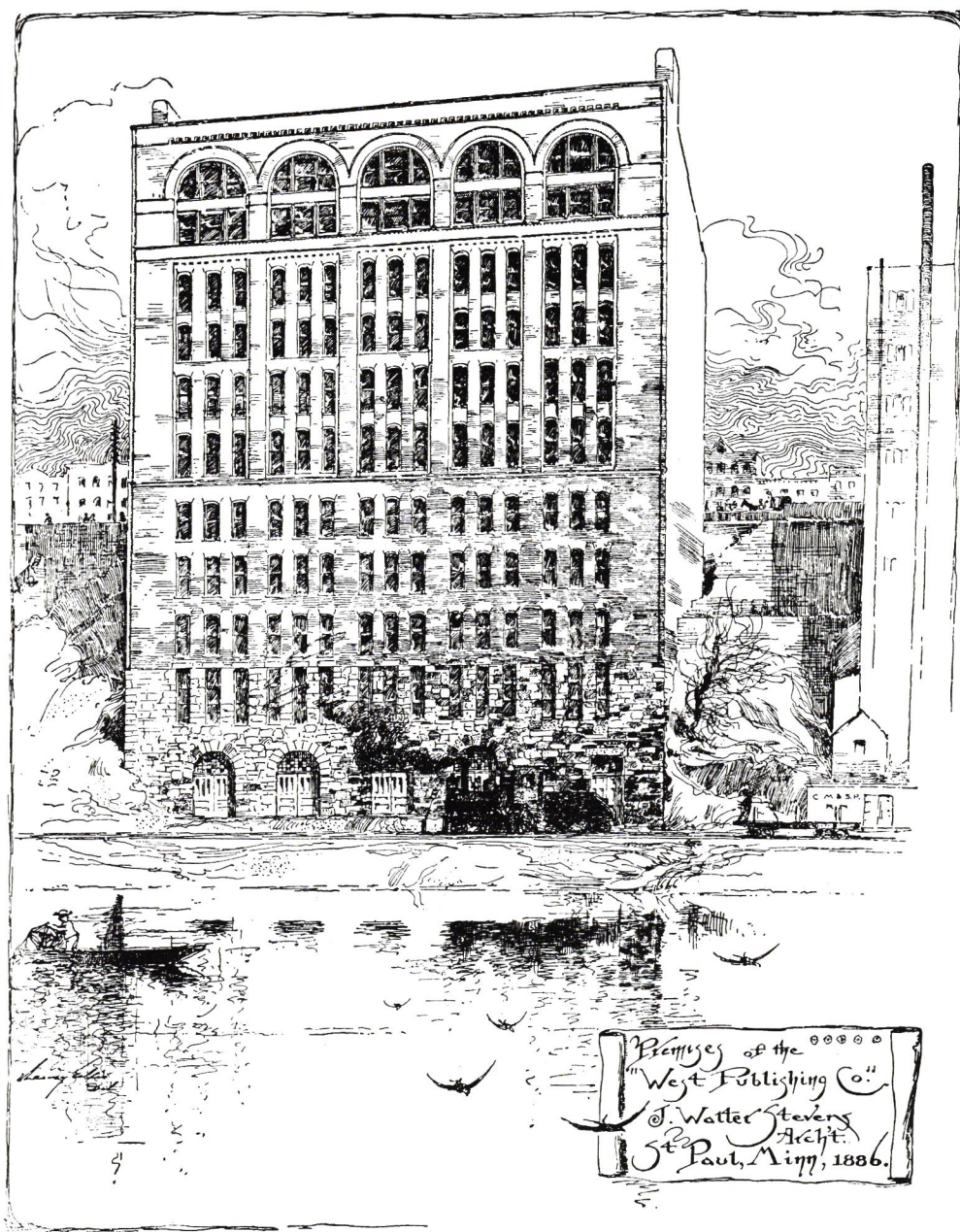
Only one of Harvey Ellis' Rochester (or Utica) designs was, apparently, nationally published before 1886: a competition design for a tomb for General Grant, *American Architect*, September 26, 1885, Supplement.

*The Noyes Brothers and Cutler building designed by Ellis for J. Walter Stevens in 1886. It can be compared favorably with Louis Sullivan's Walker Warehouse designed two years later in Chicago. Photo by Wayne Andrews.*

*The Walker warehouse was designed by Louis Sullivan in 1888.*







Building, designed for J. Walter Stevens, is still one of the most impressive office buildings in the city. On the Mississippi riverbank Ellis designed an unbroken office-tower of eleven stories for the West Publishing Company in 1886 which anticipated a higher "skyscraper" plan he created for Leroy Buffington, probably the next year.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Mrs. Michels noted that Ellis appeared in the St. Paul City Directory as a draftsman for C. T. Mould in 1886. A very handsome Ellis-like sketch of that house appears in Montgomery Schuyler's *American Architecture*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1892, p. 203, which was taken from an earlier issue of *Harpers Magazine*. (This same drawing can be seen in the Atheneum paperback edition of *American Architecture*, 1964, p. 154.) Mould was the record architect, practicing as Mould & McNichol, for the Merriam house, designed in 1885-1886. It is generally conceded to be Ellis'

Buffington had been practicing a disorderly "Queen Anne" before Ellis' arrival, and lapsed into a plodding classicism after his departure. But while Ellis was in his office, he enjoyed a national reputation which has persisted, to some extent, to this day. After a lifetime of litigating for the right to be known as "the father of the skyscraper", the old man admitted that the design of what he called "the

work, for the stylistic evidence is very weighty. The Noyes Brothers and Cutler building was, according to family reminiscence of the Cutler family, designed in the office of J. Walter Stevens during the same period, when Ellis was also working for Stevens. The West Publishing Building, for example, appears in *American Architect*, February 19, 1887, and other Ellis designs in *American Architect*, February 5, 1887, February 11, 1888, and March 26, 1892.





world's first tall steel frame office building", a twenty-nine story structure to be built in Minneapolis in 1887, was Ellis' work. The sketches which served as Buffington's basis for claiming royalties for later skyscrapers were almost certainly from Ellis' hand. Purcell said of this building that "in being a unit from sidewalk to roof and no forced values in the general design treatment to make it appear as if of solid masonry", it anticipated Sullivan's Wainwright Building of four years later.<sup>15</sup>

15 Buffington's admission and Purcell's comments appeared in the 1944 *Northwest Architect* cited above. Dr. Dimitris Tselos and Muriel B. Christison did pioneering work on the Buffington skyscraper design. See, for example, Hugh Morrison, introduction, "Buffington and the Invention of the Skyscraper," pp. 1-2; Dimitris Tselos, "The

Buffington, in 1891, published an Ellis sketch of a bank building. The original drawing, probably done in 1888, is in the Buffington archives at the University of Minnesota. Buffington removed Ellis' signature for publication. It was to be a jewel box, sixteen years before the first of Sullivan's small banks appeared. Rich terra-cotta and glazed ceramic tile anticipated the ornament of the Prairie School. Blank walls would keep out noise and dust, fans supply air, and electricity, light. A frieze of figures, an elaborately arched entry, and moorish niches all

Enigma of Buffington's Skyscraper," pp. 3-12; Muriel B. Christison, "How Buffington Staked his Claim, An Analysis of His *Memories* and Skyscraper Drawings," pp. 13-24. *Art Bulletin*, XXVI March 1944. Mrs. Michels' thesis also discusses Ellis' relationship to Buffington's skyscraper.





*An interior view of the Mabel Tainter Memorial Building. The interior is filled with carved wooden ornament such as that illustrated. Ceilings are often decorated with stencil work similar to that used so successfully by Louis Sullivan. Photo by Kennedy.*

*The Mabel Tainter Memorial building. Photo by Wayne Andrews.*

provide a clear anticipation of Sullivan's Transportation Building of 1893 and of Sullivan and Elmslie's Owatonna bank of 1907.<sup>16</sup>

According to Bragdon, Buffington "gave Harvey, at the end of every day, amounts varying from a quarter of a dollar to several dollars, and, whatever the sum, in the morning it was gone."<sup>17</sup> Ellis gave Buffington a succession of designs more powerful than anything that that crafty manager could ever produce for himself. In Menomonie, Wisconsin, for example, inside a heavy sandstone fortress called the Mabel Tainter Memorial Building (1889) there is a small theater of fiery stained glass, fanciful screens, walls gilt and stenciled, its colors still glowing and its plan pronounced by a recent professional critic to be "beautifully designed". In Minneapolis, Pillsbury Hall still dominates the University of Minnesota campus and another Ellis design, Nicholson Hall, is nearby.<sup>18</sup>

Ellis designed many more private residences for Minneapolis and St. Paul, all gone. A contemporary

16 "A Revival of Pen and Ink Rendering: The Work of Harvey Ellis," *Western Architect*, XVII, March 1912, p. 36, 2 plates. Additional selections following during the next 12 months. Also reproduced in Purcell's article, *op. cit.* See David Gebhard's letter, *The Prairie School Review*, IV, #4, p. 35.

17 *Merely Players*, *op. cit.*

18 *Western Architect*, XVIII, August, 1912. See also the Buffington archive at the University of Minnesota, which has a hundred or more Ellis buildings, including Pillsbury Hall. See also *American Architect*, January 21, 1888.





description of the interior of one, designed by Ellis for Samuel Gale in Minneapolis, says:

Off the hall and partially separated by Moorish screen work is an alcove divan. On one side is an alabaster and mosaic mantel extending from the floor to the wooden-beamed ceiling. At the central point will be a beautiful silver plaque. . . . The entire hall will be wainscoted to the ceiling in oak finished to a pale amber green. . . . The library and morning room are finished in mahogany with elaborate plaster ceilings. . . . The drawing room is white and gold, with a ceiling of pale yellow silk with a pattern of plush of a pale blue appliqué thereon . . . the pattern emphasized with silver-headed nails. . . .<sup>19</sup>

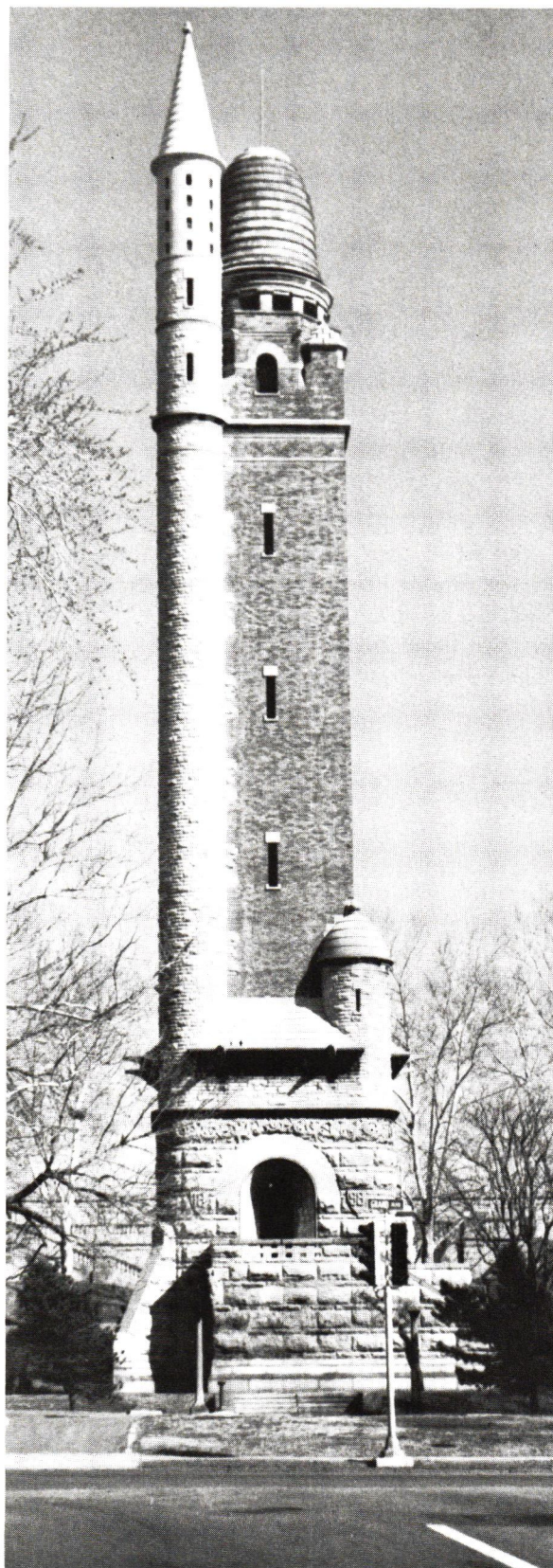
Throughout Ellis' work, even in the final years of his discouragement, he celebrated color, dancing mosaics, jeweled stained glass. He was, in this respect also, a precursor of Sullivan, Elmslie and Wright. The Hershell Bartlett house in St. Joseph, Missouri, with its tapestried walls, Tiffany fixtures and carved wood (though probably only a remodelling), is the least altered of his interiors.

From 1888 to 1893 Ellis spent most of his time in Missouri. For Edmund J. Eckel and George R. Mann in St. Joseph he did another German-American Bank, many residences and warehouses, and a police station. Later, for Mann alone, he designed houses, a hospital, park entries and the City Hall in St. Louis. The Compton Heights Watertower, a St. Louis landmark, was designed by Ellis in 1893 but was not completed until the closing years of the century.<sup>20</sup> There is a very strong possibility that that city's only rival to the Wainwright Building, the wonderful railroad station attributed to Theodore Link, was another Ellis work. The date, ornament, stained-glass, materials and style are his. Link was an indifferent designer who broke his classicist pace for this building alone, and his partner at the time of the station competition was an old colleague of Ellis from Albany.<sup>21</sup>

19 *Northwestern Architect and Improvement Record*, VII, No. 10, October 1889.

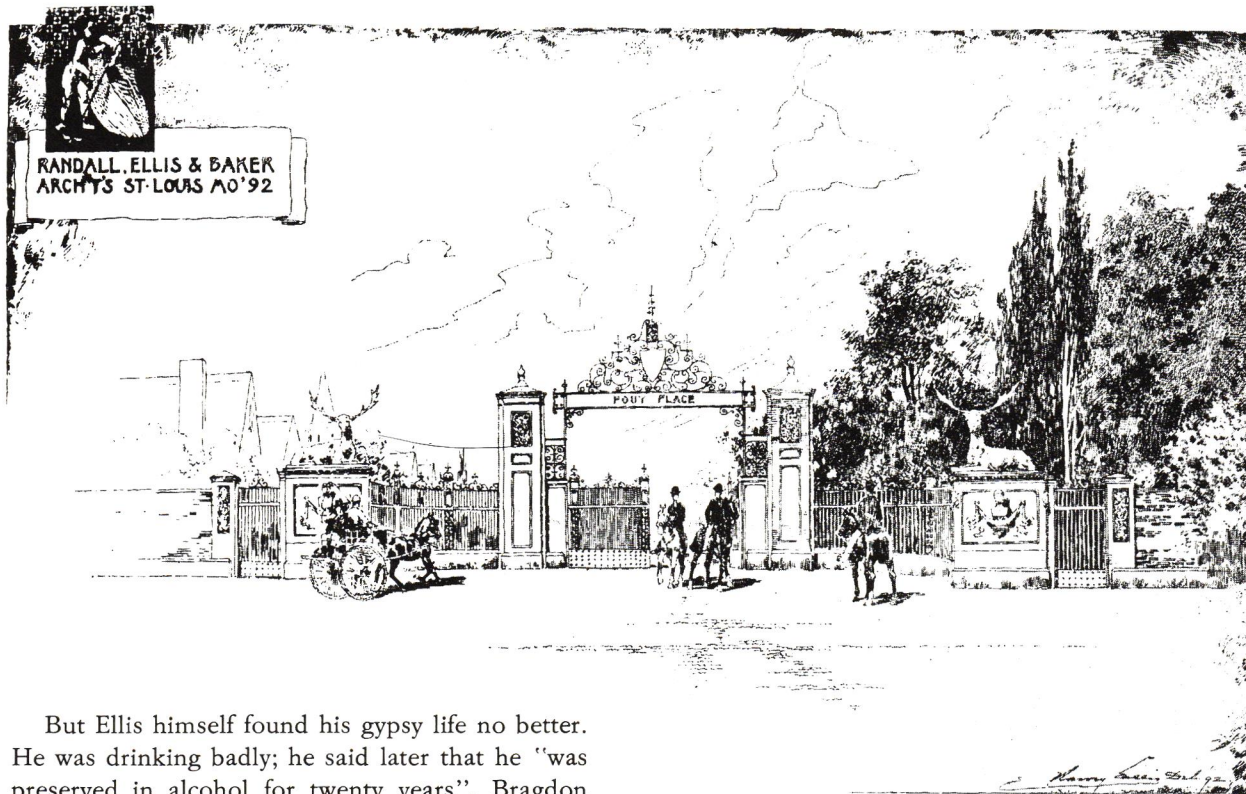
20 *Western Architect*, January and February 1904, September 1911, March, 1912. *Architectural Review*, December 1908. *American Architect*, September 20, 1890. *Inland Architect*, May, 1890. *Northwestern Architect and Building Budget*, June, 1892, January, 1892, March, 1892, August, 1890, September, 1890.

21 Miss Mary Patricia McCue is the expert upon the history of the St. Louis Railroad Station. She has supplied the following facts: Link's partner during the competition and early construction phase of the station was Edward A. Cameron, who had been construction supervisor at the New York State Capitol Building during the period when Ellis was also employed there by the Richardson office. (James Cox, *Old and New St. Louis*, St. Louis, 1894, 348-349 and



*The Compton Heights Water Tower is located in St. Louis on Grand Avenue at Shaw. Ellis designed it in 1893 but it was not built until 1898. Photo by Buford Pickens.*





But Ellis himself found his gypsy life no better. He was drinking badly; he said later that he "was preserved in alcohol for twenty years". Bragdon says "he never knew what salary he was getting. When he found his pockets empty he went . . . for more money, and got it." But he continued to turn out buildings of a high quality, no longer Romanesque but increasingly in the Francis I manner which Richard Morris Hunt had introduced into America. Ellis' compositions tended to be more original, less scholarly, than Hunt's — they were also more "bizarre".<sup>22</sup>

Swales, *op. cit.*) The competition invitations were issued in April, 1891 for return by July 1, 1891 and judged on July 7. (Minute Book of the Board of Directors of the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis, April 13, 1891, p. 61 and July 7, 1891, p. 66.)

We also know that Ellis was the draftsman for the submission of George R. Mann. *Inland Architect*, December, 1891. But many of his characteristic devices slipped into the design of the building between the time that Link and Cameron won the competition at its construction: carved gryphons and other ornament, iron work, light fixtures, and Francis I elements. More were added when the adjacent Hotel was completed under Link's direction (drawings for the Hotel were approved in January 1894). Link never professed to be a designer, nor, it seems likely, was Cameron. This would not have been the first occasion in which Ellis worked for *both* competitors, and the facts *could* be: When Mann lost, Link, who had submitted a rather ill-digested Ellisite design, called upon Ellis to make extensive changes and complete the interior. (These aspects of the finished building were not in the competition drawings or were changed from them.) Ellis was not working exclusively for Mann during this period (signed drawings executed for Buffington and for Randall, Ellis and Baker are extant as are buildings or ornament suspiciously like his which were prepared for Orff and Joralemon.)

22 Claude Bragdon, "Harvey Ellis: A Portrait Sketch", *Architectural Review*, XV, December 1908, p. 174. (This entire essay is reprinted elsewhere in this issue of *The Prairie School Review*.)

Sometime during this period, it is almost certain, he made a trip to the southwest, probably as far as San Antonio, possibly to Los Angeles. In Ellis' work for Eckel and Mann, and briefly for a firm known as Randall, Ellis and Baker (with two associates of mediocre talent) a new, simplifying, refining impulse entered midwestern architecture. Surfaces were cleaned of decoration or heavy masonry. Hipped or pyramidal tile roofs appeared over deep-shadowing eaves. Balconies, like cloisters, set on square pavillions, became a part of his style.<sup>23</sup>

The relationship of Ellis to Louis Sullivan, their mutual influence upon one another, is an unmined lode for scholarly inquiry: the stylistic similarities of the two in the early 1890's, indicated above, are suggestive. The peculiar anticipation of Auditorium Building ornament appearing in Ellis' houses of 1886, his association in St. Louis with Healy and LaFarge (the frescoists of the Auditorium) the likenesses of Ellis' terra-cotta work for Washington Terrace to the Wainwright Building's terra-cotta (executed by the same St. Louis manufacturer at nearly the same time) all invite curiosity. And so, too, does this juxtaposition, in an Ellis essay of 1903, on the southwestern mission style and the domestic work of Louis Sullivan:

The solution of the problem of domestic architecture based upon, but in no sense in servile imitation of, the old Spanish type, is to be

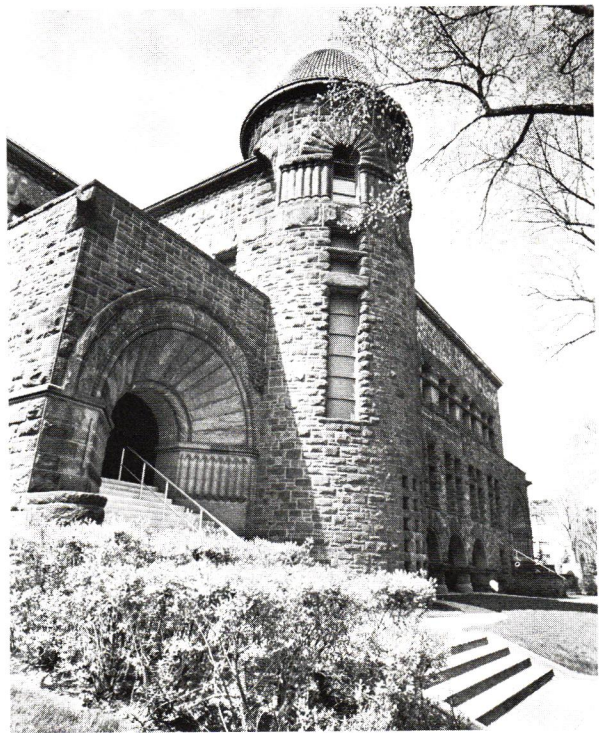
23 Mrs. Michels' thesis suggests the southwestern trip, based upon correspondence with Ellis' colleagues; these letters are in her possession. For drawings see *Northwestern Architect and Building Budget*, IX, No. 1., January 1891 and *Architectural Review*, XV, articles by Bragdon and Garden reprinted elsewhere in this issue of *The Prairie School Review*.



found in the extraordinary creations of some of the younger architects of Chicago. . . . It is curious to note how the spirit of the Renaissance, as expressed by these Fathers of the missions, combined with the curious Gothic trend of imagination, has produced the splendid and appropriate art of Louis Sullivan, who, since these mission Fathers, seems to be one of the few men in the United States, at all events, who have comprehended the meaning of the word architecture, or, in other words, who have forgotten the schools and become architects of equal ability with the good Franciscan Father Junipera Serra.<sup>24</sup>

Ellis was in St. Louis in 1892 and 1893. One drawing from Brighton, New York is dated from 1894. In 1895, back in Rochester, Ellis rejoined his brother Charles in an architectural office and, though he designed at least one office building and two splendid interiors, he was largely occupied with painting.<sup>25</sup> Why did he leave the West? Francis Swales suggests that "realizing that all was not going to his satisfaction he broke away from the habits and acquaintances which he had cultivated to his disadvantage and returned east to seek some quiet nook where he could work in peace and be away from roistering friends."<sup>26</sup> Bragdon puts the event somewhat more directly, "On a certain day of a certain year (1895?) . . . he rose from his besotted bed and for a period of ten years did not touch alcohol until, a few months before his melancholy death, weakened by disease, he sought its aid to give him strength for his daily task."<sup>27</sup>

During the last years of the nineteenth century Ellis worked, as a painter, in a two-dimensional mode derived from an intense study of Japanese prints. This was in accord with one of the tendencies of his time, a current which flowed from Gauguin and Vallotton toward Munch and the Expressionists. Some of Ellis' less earnest paintings were akin to the illustrative work of Walter Crane, and Ellis tried his hand at illustration. A watercolor of his surrounds a poem of Robert Stoddard in the December 1899 issue of *Scribner's*, and an Ellis painting serves as the frontispiece to the 1903



*Pillsbury Hall still stands on the campus of the University of Minnesota. Buffington was the architect of record but this, like so many of his buildings, was designed by Harvey Ellis. Minnesota Historical Society Photo.*

volume of *The Craftsman*. Ellis' paintings were seldom sold; Bragdon says "he could not endure the patronage of the rich buyer, while if a true connoisseur expressed a liking for one of his pictures, Harvey usually insisted on making him a present of it."<sup>28</sup> Swales says that "He permitted himself to be continually cajoled into giving away his sketches, and even drawings, paintings and etchings upon which he had spent several days' or weeks' time."<sup>29</sup> In Rochester he taught, read, painted, and talked; always he talked.

In the last two years of his life he worked for Gustave Stickley's *Craftsman* magazine in Syracuse designing furniture, textiles, interiors — none of which had the breath of life in them.<sup>30</sup> He was drinking again, in pain, and his story dragged out to a melancholy close. Bragdon, ever attempting to

24 Harvey Ellis, "Sermons in Sun-dried Bricks", *The Craftsman*, V, December, 1903, pp. 212-216.

25 The drawing is in the author's possession. The Rochester buildings of this period are listed in "A Chronicle of Architecture and Architects," now in the possession of the Rochester City Historian, under "Ellis", printed in 1939, and indicated in the office ledgers in the Bazley archive cited above.

26 Swales, *op. cit.*

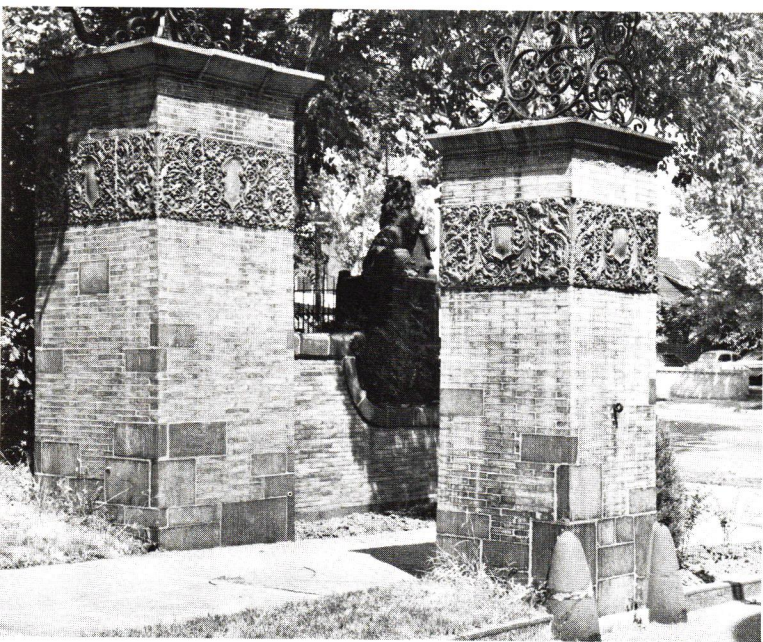
27 "Harvey Ellis: A Portrait Sketch", *op. cit.*

28 *Ibid.*

29 Swales, *op. cit.*

30 His *Craftsman* work can be found in nearly every issue of that magazine for 1903 and in January and February, 1904. Obituaries appeared in *The New York Times* of January 6, 1904 and in the *Union and Advertiser* of Rochester, New York. A few of his paintings can be seen in the Rochester Museum but most of them are reposing in the private collection of Mrs. Homer Strong of Rochester. The Minnesota Historical Society, Mrs. Michels and the author have a few sketches. See also *Palette and Bench*, September, 1910.





*These gate posts are found in St. Louis at the entrance to the Washington Terrace area. Ellis designed them while in the office of Eckels and Mann. They and others like them are still in excellent repair. Photo by Wayne Andrews.*

dignify Ellis, suggested how it ended:

He had the dress, bearing, and manners of a gentleman; there was a certain quiet dignity about him, and I think it was never more present, nor better became him, than in that crowded public ward of a city hospital to which (before his friends rallied to his aid) he had been taken, mortally stricken.<sup>31</sup>

He died on January 2, 1904.

In assessing the relationship between the art of architecture and the triumphant materialism of the middle west it is important to clear the mind of the prejudices of critics who are incapable of appreciating the circumstances under which a man like Harvey Ellis was working. Francis Swales, for example, could admit that the West afforded Ellis great opportunities. But he was then constrained to say that the area

probably lacked at that time, certain amenities essential to the well-being of the thorough-going artist that Ellis was. Among them, competition, intelligent and appreciative criticism and honest understanding of his endeavors. He was consequently almost wholly without companionship of men of his own intellectual class during his long sojourn in the prairie cities and except when 'buried' in producing some fanciful decoration or architectural design was

depressed and unhappy. However, he kept that so well concealed beneath an always apparent good humor and flow of bright comment that few, even of his intimates, suspected it.<sup>32</sup>

In fact, however, Ellis did very well in the West until the depression of 1893 discouraged those who had been his patrons, and the eastern cult of classic propriety in architecture triumphed over the romantic and innovating spirit of the 1880's, of which he, Root and Sullivan had been the leaders. The spread throughout the West of a "uniform ceremonious style" after Burnham's Roman triumph at the Chicago Exposition left no opportunity for a man with a gift for fantasy and a disdain for dullness. It was not western barbarism but eastern Philistinism which blighted Ellis' career as an architect.

The West was not in the 1880's what Sir Thomas Beecham was later to call it, "the nation's cultural dustbin". It was fertile in ideas and architectural innovation. To confront Swales' argument directly, there was plenty of "competition, intelligent and appreciative criticism". Professional architects and amateurs were enjoying extravagant opportunity to build whole cities in that decade. The architectural sketch clubs which flourished in all the major western cities nurtured greater vitality, better talk and stronger commitment to architecture as a living art than in the exhausted, sluggish and inhibited architectural communities which settled in the great eastern centers after the deaths of Richardson and Stanford White. The draftsmen of the West were minnesingers of the graphic arts. They maintained a vigorous if vagrant community, witty, irreverent and contributing joyous preparation for the achievements of the Prairie School. Both Frank Lloyd Wright and William Gray Purcell insisted that their work was a continuation of the exuberant, innovating spirit of these men and these years.

This is no place to demonstrate, city by city, that the craftsmen in stained glass, wood-carving, stonework, terra-cotta and textiles who were developed during the 1880's made it possible for the designs of the Prairie School to be executed in all their glory. But there is no doubt of the development of an assemblage of crafts which Sullivan, Wright, Purcell and Elmslie brought to full use.

It is also important to point out that the midwesterners were a highly sophisticated lot, well aware of what was being done by venturesome contemporaries in Europe well before Wright and Purcell made their celebrated explorations of Holland, Germany and Scandinavia. Ellis, for example, executed designs for stained glass which are in close

<sup>31</sup> *Merely Players, op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Swales, *op. cit.*



parallel to the *Jugendstil* and to the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and his Glasgow group. Two panels in the author's possession, dating from 1897, shortly after Ellis' return to Rochester, are extraordinarily like Wassily Kandinsky's 1901 Poster for the First Phalanx Exhibition in Munich. Earlier, Ellis had designed an admirable "Bowling Alley and Club" for St. Louis in the manner of Charles F. A. Voysey, and there are other Voyseyesque designs in the Buffington archive, bearing dates around 1890 and signed by Ellis. (George Mann, Ellis' St. Louis employer, published "Selections from an Architect's Portfolio" in 1893. So far as we can determine, only one copy is extant outside of the St. Louis public library, that being in the author's possession, and examples of its contents appear elsewhere in this issue of *The Prairie School Review*.) The relationship of Ellis to the *Art Nouveau* is further evidenced by an elaborate cast-bronze chandelier in that tortured style, found in a house in St. Joseph, Missouri, which Ellis remodelled in 1890. It is impossible to fix it firmly at that date or to prove that it is an Ellis design, but it is tantalizing.

The picture emerges of a sensitive, sophisticated artist, in close touch through periodicals with the current European scene and exchanging ideas with a



*This is a side entrance to the Mabel Tainter Memorial Building, located in Menominee, Wisconsin. The ornament is typically Ellis, while the form is reminiscent of Richardson. Photo by Wayne Andrews.*

boisterous comradeship of western draftsmen, including men (like F. W. Fitzpatrick) of great taste and talent.

It was not the West, but his own nature, which determined his tragedy. This is the second point in which Swales' analysis is misleading. Ellis had departed West Point because, according to family lore, he became "involved with a dancer". He was packed off to Europe, and returned to work in Rochester, but was more to be found among saloons and bordellos than in the parlors of his family's respectable friends. Carl Schmidt, a Rochester historian and draftsman, told the author that "when any big competition came up the first architect who could find Harvey would win. He would sober him up, set a draftsman to watch him and keep him sober until the design was done and then dump him out". Nearly all the buildings said by Claude Bragdon to have been designed by Ellis in Rochester were officially attributed to other architects; it is certain he did work for many offices, there, just as he did in the west.

Something vehement occurred during the mysterious, anonymous years 1893-94.<sup>33</sup> He returned to Rochester, "dried out", and became a convert to the Roman Catholic Church. His paintings became intensely religious, more and more stylized, returning to medieval themes and forms. He buried himself in Froissart, Mallory, the Sagas, the brothers Grimm. In an essay which appeared in *The Craftsman* shortly before his death, Ellis spoke of the role of the jester, impotent of action but with the power of speech, "who feels keenly — most often a member of a suffering and oppressed class, whose only weapons are words of which the sharpness may glitter and play, but must never strike."<sup>34</sup>

33 Ellis' passion for anonymity, his mysterious movements in these years and his influence upon other draftsmen often resulted in difficulties of attribution. For example: signed sketches of his, dated in the last months of 1892, were published in the *Northwestern Architect and Building Budget*. None, I think, were published dated 1893 or 1894, but a series of drawings very much like his appeared, signed "Albert Levering". See Volume 11, No. 4, No. 5 of the *Northwestern Architect and Building Budget*. Levering's name appears in the Minneapolis City Directory for 1893, 1894-95 and 1895-96 and then disappears. The "Levering" sketches were prepared for the office of Fremont D. Orff and Edgar E. Joralemon (old associates of Ellis in the Buffington office) for whom Ellis himself worked briefly before going to St. Joseph. Then, in what seemed to be almost a "memorial issue" to Ellis, the *Western Architect*, III, January, 1904, published a "Levering" design in Ellis' wildest manner, covering two pages. Were they the same man? We know very little of Ellis' whereabouts during this period.

34 "Puss in Boots," *The Craftsman*, IV, No. 5, 1903, p. 373.



Ellis had previously sought release from the world in alcohol, in flights to the west and then from city to city. In his last years he retreated into painting and irony. We know something of how Ellis talked from Swales and Bragdon.

He could joke about his poverty: "Art is long and artists are usually short." He thought pictures should be composed, not copied from nature: "A man should go sketching with his hands in his pockets." Among other things he thought that "Americans are so fond of nature that they would use the Palisades for advertising purposes and replace the sea beach with . . . cement." And, as to his own small following and peculiar reputation, he only commented that "devout Bostonians cross themselves and breathe a prayer when the name of Bulfinch is mentioned, yet if he were among them today they would stone him to death — in the newspapers."<sup>35</sup>

Ellis became a teller of tales illustrated by curious murals and paintings, in which his own earlier architectural achievements are mocked as back-grounds for "fairy stories," of which the "point" might be appreciated only by children.

Ellis, who abandoned architecture (according to his obituary in *The American Architect*) because he was "repelled by the modern practice of the profession," was repelled by much more than that. He was not willing to be one of those — as he described them in an essay on "Puss in Boots" — "who, while feeling their superiority of intelligence, yet bow their heads, forcing themselves to be humble and insinuating."<sup>36</sup> Smug were too many of the people to whom he would have to turn for patronage, and deferential to smugness he could not be.

In the world of triumphant tycoons Harvey Ellis had been an architect of fables — castles for frontier barons and tombs for bishops and heroes. After the depression of 1893 he became the painter of fables. He said "the charm of the fairy tale (lies in) the desire common to all sorts and conditions of men . . . to escape from the work-a-day world."<sup>37</sup>

For readers of this journal, perhaps the most tantalizing area of inquiry remaining to be probed in the career of Harvey Ellis is his contribution to the progression of architectural ornament. There is no doubt that he was a great ornamentalist, far more lively and inventive, in the author's opinion, than Stanford White. From fragments remaining, one can

observe the progression of his work from a free adaptation of Morrisite, Celtic and Byzantine motifs, best represented in his St. Paul and Minneapolis work, through increasing refinement and abstraction to a style somewhat like that of Mackintosh. A fat monograph would be necessary to do the subject justice, but two large questions can at this point be posed:

(1) To what extent is Ellis' hand apparent in the designs of the Richardson office for the New York State Capitol and the Court of Appeals Chamber in Albany? As has been shown earlier, Ellis was there, and had probably already been in Venice where much Byzantine work was to be seen. Is Henry-Russell Hitchcock correct in suggesting that Richardson himself is responsible for the superb bosses in the Appeals Chamber?<sup>38</sup> Richardson did not profess to be an ornamentalist and never did comparable work. Ellis was and did a lot of it. In the George Soule-George Eastman house on East Avenue in Rochester, there is a teak-and-brass room which Ellis may very well have done and which has many similarities to the Albany ornament. (Ellis worked on many other occasions with Andrew Warner, the record architect, and the date is right.)

(2) Did Ellis have a part in the transition of Louis Sullivan's ornament from the heavy, over-scaled work preceding the Auditorium Building to the marvelous, sinuous accomplishments found there and thereafter? David Gebhard is the expert on the relationship of Ellis to George Elmslie and the Sullivan office, and has suggested in conversation with the author that Elmslie may have known Ellis, but that Elmslie denied any effect of Ellis ornament upon Sullivan.<sup>39</sup> If we could establish with certainty that Ellis had worked on the Auditorium with Healy and LaFarge, then it might have been he who brought them into the St. Louis railroad station project with Theodore Link. The stylistic evidence of an association with Sullivan appears in surviving ornamental work of Ellis' Merriam house in St. Paul of 1885-86, including its lighting fixtures, stained glass and woodwork, and teasingly similar work in Sullivan's new style in the Auditorium building. This is a field for experts, and at this point, the author withdraws, tipping his hat to Harvey Ellis and to those experts who might be sufficiently intrigued by his wit and skill to pursue these mysteries down the long, dark corridors of his life.

38 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *The Architecture of Henry H. Richardson and His Times*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936, p. 196.

39 See *Minnesota History*, Fall, 1966, pp. 106-107, an earlier article by the author based upon earlier data. See also Gebhard's letter to this journal cited in footnote 16.

35 Swales, *op. cit.* Claude Fayette Bragdon, "Harvey Ellis", *The Brochure Series*, III, No. 9, September, 1897, p. 143.

36 *Op. cit.*

37 *Ibid.*



# The Architectural Review

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## Harvey Ellis: A Portrait Sketch

By Claude Bragdon

HARVEY ELLIS was a genius. This is a statement which may excite only incredulity in the minds of the many who never heard his name or knew him only by his published drawings, but it will have the instant concurrence of the few who knew well the man himself. There is the genius which achieves, and the genius which inspires others to achievement. Had it not been for the evil fairy which presided at his birth and ruled his destiny, Harvey Ellis might have been numbered among the former; that is, he might have been a prominent, instead of an obscure, figure in that æsthetic awakening of America, now going on, of which he was among the pioneers; but even so he exercised an influence more potent than some whose names are better remembered. I do not know how many of the strong-nerved young draughtsmen of the Middle West nicked the edges of their T-squares in the vain effort to reproduce his "crinkled" pen-line (the product, had they only known it, of nerves unstrung), but it was more than one or two; and I have seen artists whose work is featured in the leading magazines bending over his water-colors trying to discover by what means he imparted to them the depth and richness of a Persian rug. He was among the first to develop the flat, decorative treatment of water-color so largely employed by the so-called "Charcoal school,"—some of the ablest exponents of which were his very pupils.

My acquaintance with him dated only from the time when he was reaping the harvest of his ill-sown earlier years; when worldly success had forever passed him by; when already, though he knew it not, disease had entered and entrenched itself within the body's stronghold; and when, his two brothers having been stricken by it, the curse of madness loomed before him as a dread possibility;—yet it was to him that I and

others turned for the solace of good talk, wise counsel, brilliant wit, and for inspiration and instruction in the admirable arts of which he was master.

For the benefit of those who are interested in physical details, I would say that he was a man slightly under medium height, gracefully and compactly built, and of erect and soldierly carriage. His clear, gray-blue eyes—thoughtful, serene, perceiving—looked out from beneath a delicate, high white forehead; his nose was well shaped, but not large; a drooping mustache concealed a not altogether pleasant mouth set in a somewhat heavy jaw. His dual nature, the embodied intelligence and the amiable epicurean within him, thus found objectification in the features of his face.

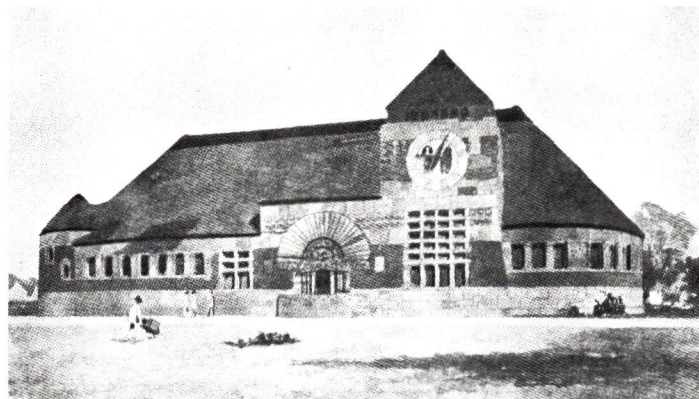
His hands were small and fine, the forefinger stained yellow by cigarettes; the thumb phalange too small for a man who would leave his stamp upon the age. He had the dress, bearing, and manners of a gentleman; there was a certain quiet dignity about him, and I think it never was more present, nor better became him, than in that crowded public ward of a city hospital where (before his friends rallied to his aid) he had been brought, mortally stricken.

To paint an authentic human portrait glowing colors will not suffice: it is the shadows which tell the story, and one black shadow, already outlined, I must proceed to block in at once. During the major portion of his life Harvey Ellis was the slave of drink. I hasten to correct and complete the picture by putting in the high-lights. On a certain day of a certain year—a day too long delayed, alas!—he rose from his besotted bed and for a period of ten years did not touch alcohol until, a few months before his melancholy death, weakened by disease, he sought its aid to give him strength for his daily task.

He had no more conception of the value of

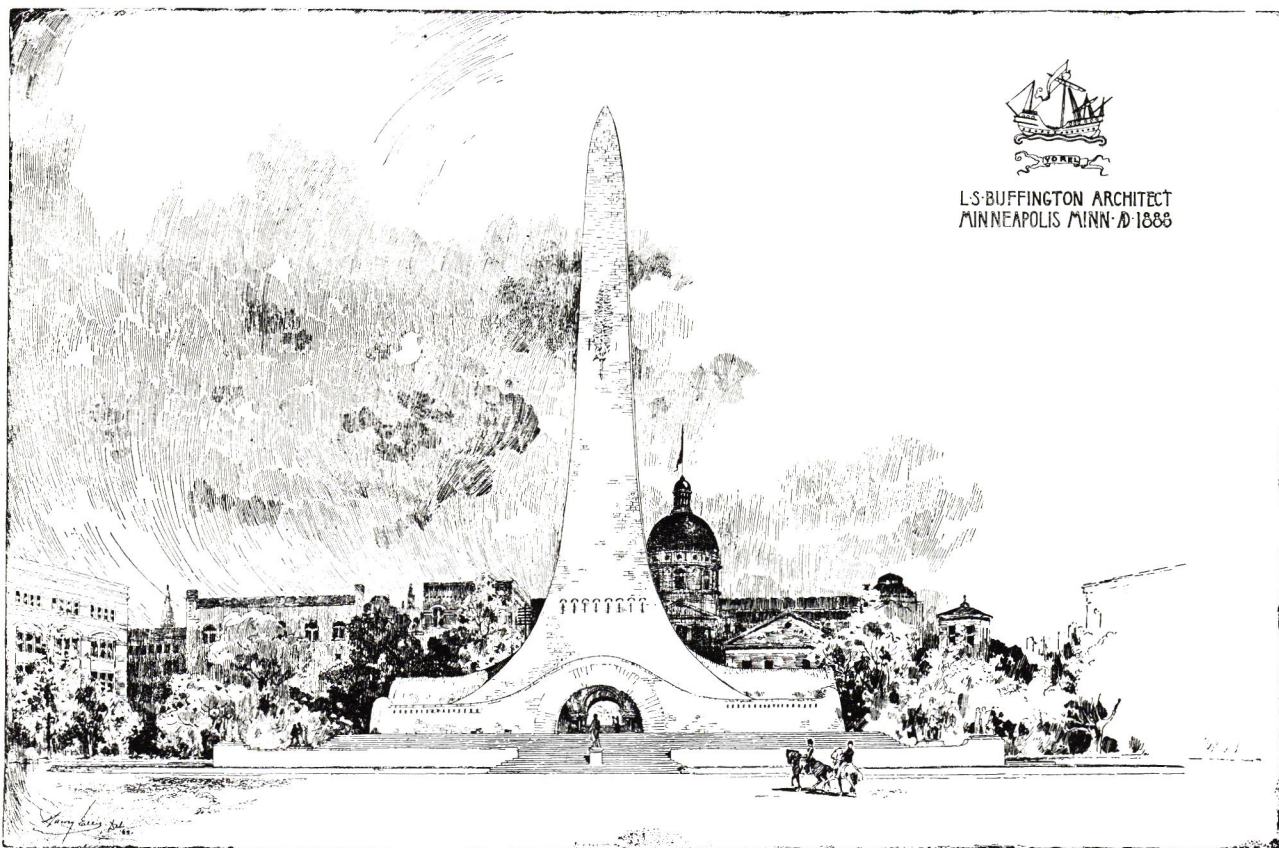


Portrait of Harvey Ellis.



Water-color Study by Harvey Ellis for Building, University of Minnesota.  
L. S. Buffington, Architect.



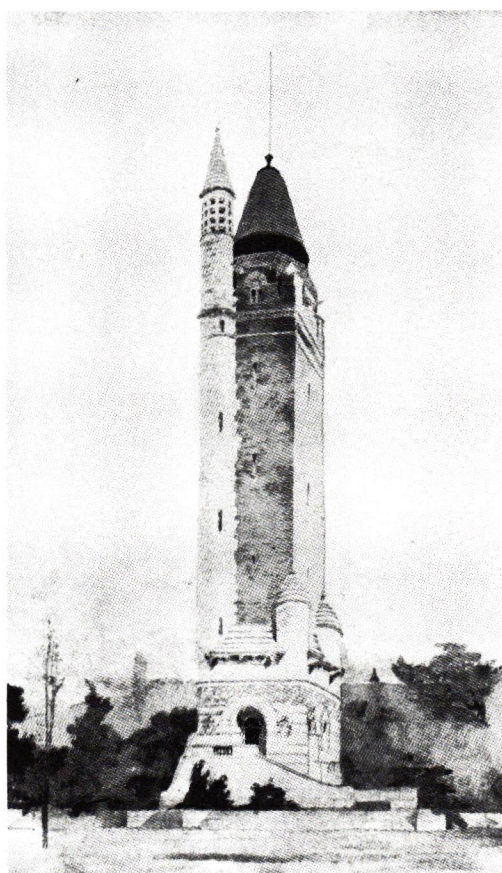


Sketch by Harvey Ellis for Competitive Design for Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument.  
L. S. Buffington, Architect.

money than a child; he never gave it serious consideration. During the period that he worked for Eckel and Mann of St. Louis he did not know the amount of his salary. When he found his pockets empty he went to them for more money, and got it — he left all keeping of accounts to them. Buffington found it necessary to deal with him on a somewhat similar basis. He gave Harvey, at the end of every day, amounts varying from a quarter to several dollars; and whatever the sum, in the morning it was gone. The prize money which he won in the first New York Grant Monument competition he dissipated (with the help of boon companions) in three days. He seldom sold a picture, because he could not endure the patronage of the rich buyer, while if a true connoisseur expressed a liking for one of his pictures Harvey usually insisted on making him a present of it.

I crave the reader's indulgence if I continue to refer to Harvey Ellis by his given name, for among his friends the practice was universal. "I never had but one office-boy who did n't call me Harvey," he once said; and then, after a little, added, in his solemn drawl, "That one called me Harve!"

Although he possessed the power of inspiring admiration and affection in others, I believe that Harvey possessed little real capacity for friendship. His friends chose him, rather than he them, and the burden of sustaining



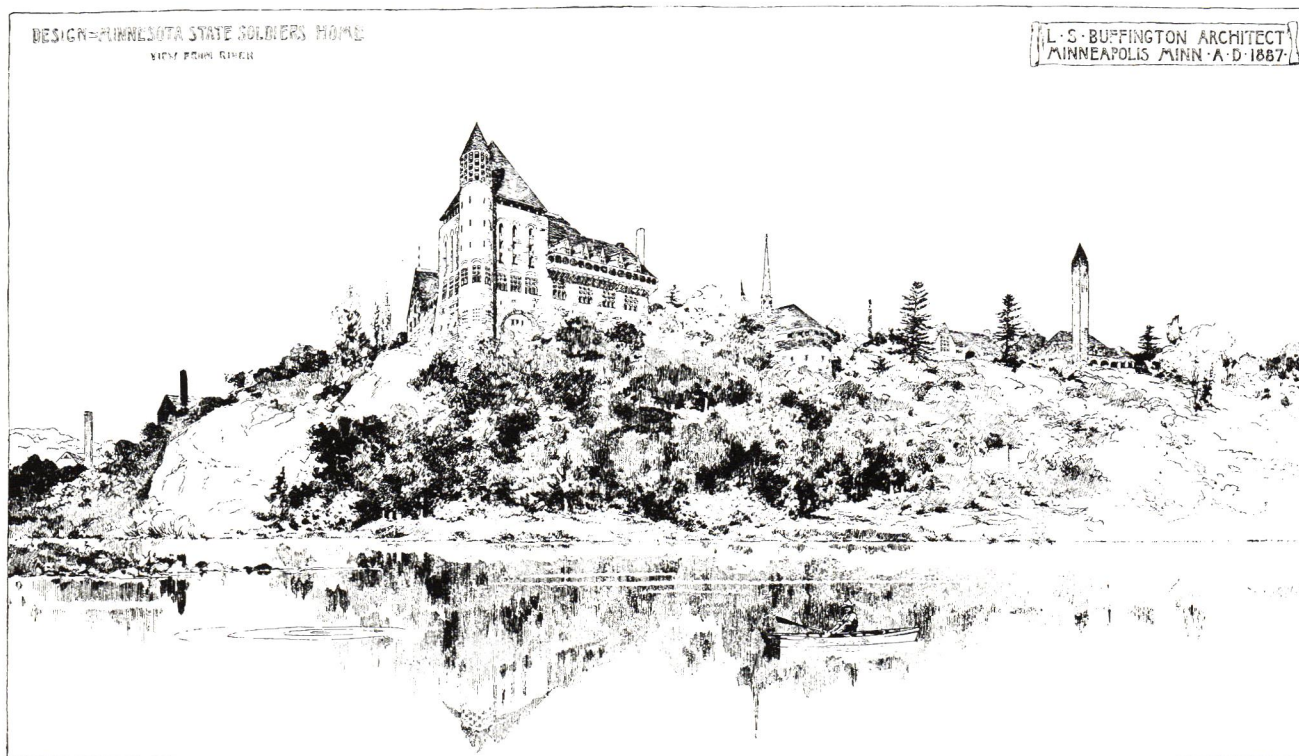
Study by Harvey Ellis for Water-tower, City of St. Louis.

the relation was theirs also. When I knew him he was the most impersonal person I ever met. He never spoke of his own private affairs; they seemed scarcely to interest him. He was what Schopenhauer would have called "the knower, the pure subject of knowledge;" the liberation, the manumission, of his intellect from the service of his will seemed to have taken place in him, and with it the predominance of knowledge over volition. The things he cared for were to paint cryptic, unsalable pictures, under a still north light, with plenty of time and plenty of cigarettes, and to talk about anything under the sun except himself to any one who would listen.

Of his art I shall have a word to say presently: his gift of talk deserves more than a passing mention. It made him sought after outside the narrow circle of those whose interests were predominantly æsthetic; and not alone in the studio, but in the café, the club, at select dinner-parties — wherever, in fact, the conversational rose is wont to put forth blossoms — he was easily and without effort the center of a charmed attention.

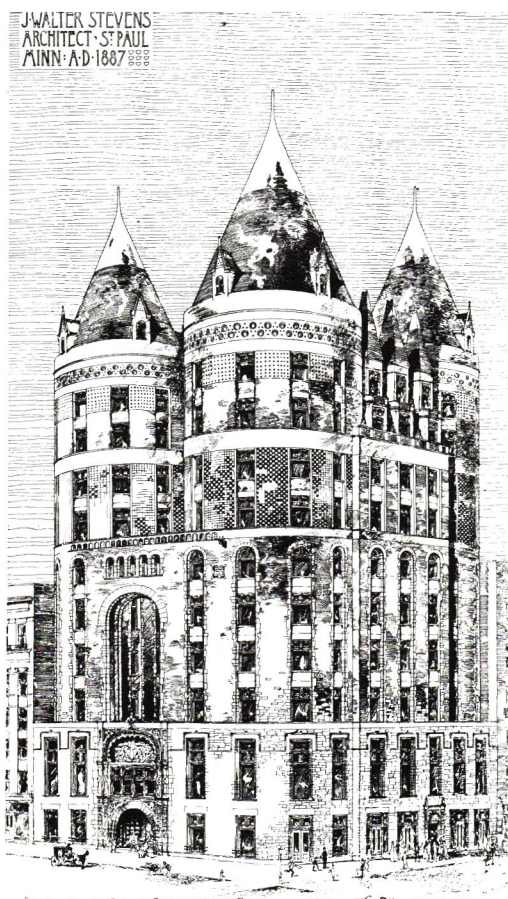
It is a perilous thing to attempt to translate to the hard, uncompromising black and white of the printed page the vaporous and many-colored flora of the conversational depths and shallows; like sea anemone, they fade and wither out of their own proper medium; but one or two examples of Harvey's





Perspective by Harvey Ellis for Soldiers' Home on Bluff over the Mississippi, near Minneapolis.  
L. S. Buffington, Architect.

power of repartee may not be amiss. I remember the talk once turned to music, and a heated argument arose on the subject of the wedding march from "Lohengrin." Grierson contended that such an obvious, almost trivial melody, following close upon the involved and sonorous music which had gone before, was an anti-climax and bad art. Harvey held the reverse, and to enforce his point said, "There are different kinds of climaxes: did you ever go into a boiler foundry and hear the noise of a hundred hammers, and then hear them one by one stop — *and the foreman say a few words?*" There was a thoughtful quality in his wit, a knowledge of life and of human nature, manifested in such remarks as, "It's surprising what a poor statesman McKinley will be if there's a drouth in the West this summer." He was apt at framing aphorisms which appeared more true the more they were pondered. Such were "Chairs were made to sit in." "Go sketching with your hands in your pockets." Sometimes he indulged in sheer nonsense, as in his manner of telling me that I was probably wrong when I took a swarthy American for an Arab. "His knowledge of Arabic is confined to the numerals." "George is so sympathetic," he declared, "that he'd have *delirium tremens* in a corn-field." After he had overcome his besetting weakness he even found the heart to be funny about it. I complimented him on looking so young. "You must remember," he replied, "that I've been preserved in alcohol for twenty years."



Study by Harvey Ellis for Office Building, St. Paul, Minn.  
J. Walter Stevens, Architect.

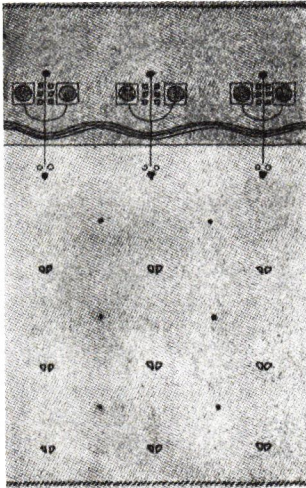
His wonderful memory and his power of mental assimilation enabled him to talk with authority on almost any subject, though no one could discover where he picked up his knowledge, which was perhaps after all more wide than deep. For a contemporary American he had unusual literary tastes. He loved the Latin poets, and Dante, Malory, and Chaucer. He was fond of folk-lore, Icelandic Sagas, Buddhist Jakatas, Froissart's Chronicles. Fairy-stories were his delight, particularly those of Andersen and Grimm. He preferred the leisurely, discursive, old-time manner of writing to the nervous, flashlight prose of today. Among moderns, William Morris was his favorite author.

His taste was Gothic rather than Classic; in other words, it was the taste which instinctively prefers the gargoyle to the caryatid, — vital ugliness to moribund beauty; the organically imagined to the deliberately composed. Indeed, it was from him that I first learned the classification of minds into Gothic and Latin, which Mr. Burgess has since popularized (under the names of Sulphite and Bromide) in his "Sulphitic Theory." "There's one type of mind," Harvey remarked, "which would discover a symbol of the Trinity in three angles of a rail fence; and another which would criticize the detail of the Great White Throne itself." Symmetry (the love of which is a sure index of the Classic mind) was his particular abhorrence. "Not symmetry, but balance," he used to say.

It is not my purpose to discuss

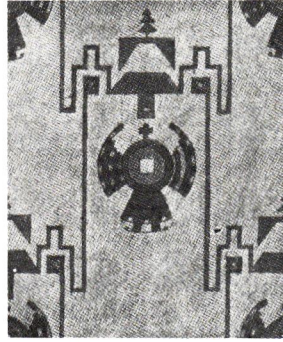


(From "The Craftsman.")



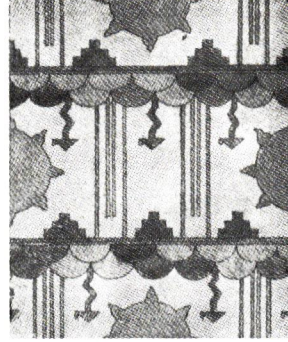
Design for Appliqué Door-hanging.

(From "The Craftsman.")



"The Thunder-bird."

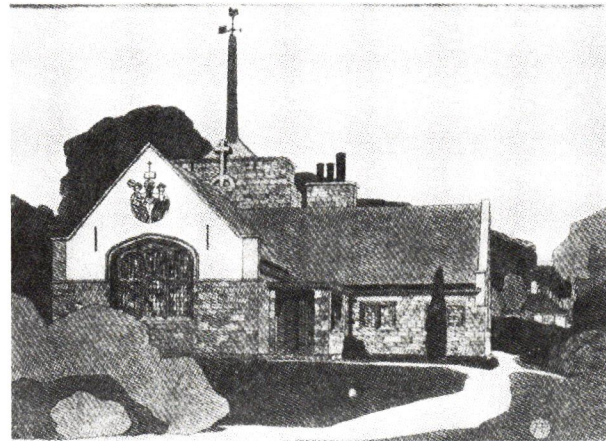
(From "The Craftsman.")



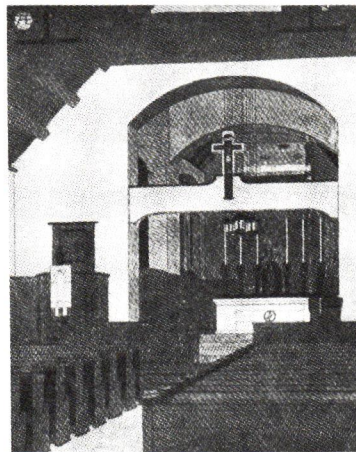
"The Elements."

Stencil Designs for Fabrics by Harvey Ellis.

(From "The Craftsman.")



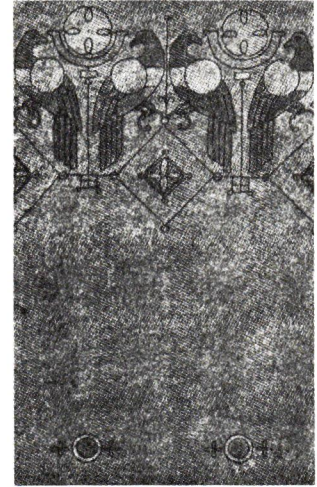
A Summer Chapel by Harvey Ellis.



Interior and Chancel of a Summer Chapel.

(From "The Craftsman.")

(From "The Craftsman.")



Design for Appliqué Door-hanging.

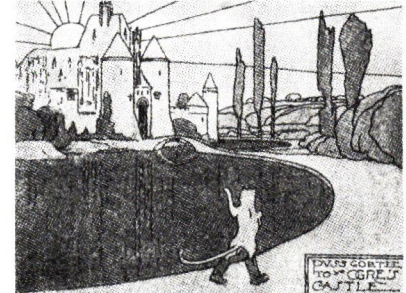
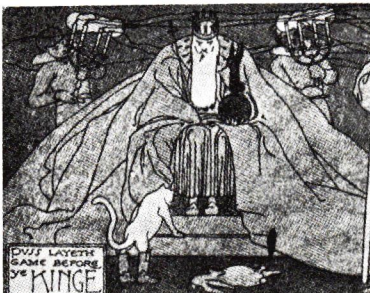
at length Harvey's architectural achievements. It would be absurd to claim much for an architect who has not left a single notable building to his credit, although there are in existence buildings a-plenty upon which his facile pencil may be traced. There could be no better statement of his particular "case" than that made by *The American Architect* in an editorial published shortly after his death. "Mr. Ellis was one of those brilliant draughtsmen, full of sympathy for all the artistic part of architecture, who are, apparently, repelled by the modern practice of the profession and prefer to devote themselves to drawing beautiful architectural compositions, leaving to others the task of carrying them into execution." He was a "paper" architect, incapable of realizing in ponderable form and in three dimensions his architectural imaginings; and cannot be numbered among the Nimrods of the profession, who, with toil, among difficulties and dangers, know the stern joy of conquest over earth's stubbornest materials. Their order of effort was foreign to his essentially supine nature. He plucked the flowers and avoided the nettles in the primrose path of art. For this reason he was at his happiest in problems unrestricted by utilitarian considerations, and the design he made for Buffington in the competition for the Cathedral of St. John the Divine

stands as his finest achievement. This power of pure design is the rarest of all qualities among us, and it is a distinct loss to American architecture that his was not the order of mind which "alike conceived and dared." Even so, by reason of the beauty and originality of his conceptions he exercised a potent influence on the younger generation of designers throughout the Middle West, and therefore, indirectly, on American architecture. The question whether this influence, like

that of Richardson, has not proved pernicious in some ways is one upon which I do not care to speculate. It is scarcely fair to saddle a man with the sins of his imitators.

One may praise, without qualification, Harvey's architectural pen-drawings. They are everything that such drawings should be: unlabored, economical of line, brilliant, beautifully balanced, with far more of color and body than is usual in pen-drawings. His early experience as an etcher doubtless accounts for his mastery over this difficult medium.

The key to the understanding of Harvey Ellis's evolution as an artist, as it is to Whistler's, is the Japanese color-print; and since I have coupled the names of these two men together I cannot refrain from calling attention to a parallel and a contrast in their work and in their lives. Both were educated at West Point; both



"Puss in Boots," Wall Decoration for a Nursery, by Harvey Ellis.

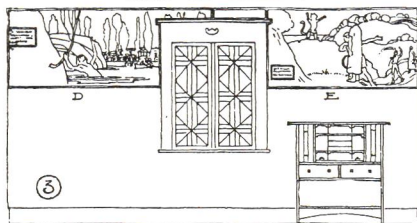


showed, while there, an extraordinary aptitude for drawing; neither graduated; both were etchers, both painters, both wits, the center of a little group of devotees; — yet how different (if I may use the word) their karma! Whistler was the darling dandy of London society, the first artist of his time, refusing more commissions than he accepted. Harvey, the Beloved Vagabond, whose dearest wish was a wall to decorate — and even this was denied him!

Whistler was of course incomparably the greater artist in point of achievement, but the two men stand on something approaching an equality in the kind and in the degree of influence they exercised on their contemporaries. They represented and disseminated an order of æsthetic ideas which they found most perfectly embodied in the color-prints of Japan\*. Any one who doubts that this was the source of much of Whistler's inspiration has only to compare his "Chelsea Bridge" with that Hokusai print containing exactly

\*These two men were not exceptional in this particular. A large and increasing number of artists have been and are being similarly affected. Few people appreciate the fact that it was Oriental art which first made visible the æsthetic darkness of the "scientific century," and that it continues to be a powerful factor in the growth of taste. In England, in what Henry James calls "the dim Victorian limbo," a few men banded together in a quest for beauty: they found it in Greek sculpture, in Gothic architecture; but in their own environment they found it nowhere except in random trifles — textiles, ivories, ceramics, bronzes — brought in the holds of far-faring vessels from India, China, and Japan. These they seized upon with such avidity that it became in time a national joke, immortalized in "Patience," and in *Punch*. The dados decorated with cat-tails, the stork and sun-flower screens, which were the first fruits of this so-called æsthetic movement in England, are only curious now, but they testify eloquently to the intensity of the enthusiasm for things Japanese. In Paris, a little later, the dealers of the *Rive Gauche* discovered a mar-

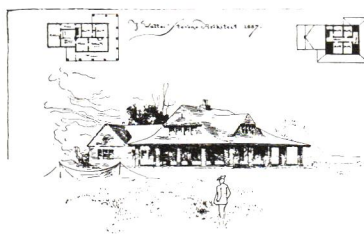
(From "The Craftsman.")



Elevation, Nursery Wall.



Early Drawing by Harvey Ellis.

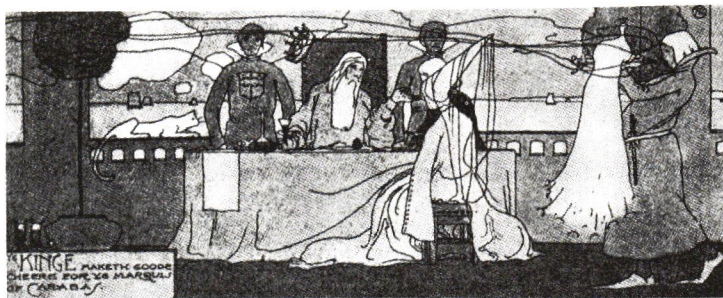


Early Sketch by Harvey Ellis.



Character Study (fragment) by Harvey Ellis.

(From "The Craftsman.")



"Puss in Boots," Wall Decoration for a Nursery, by Harvey Ellis.

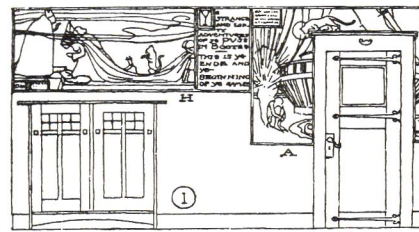
the same elements — a bridge, a boat, a bursting rocket — similarly arranged. His famous butterfly signature was the nearest approach he could make to the decorative ideograph of the Japanese artist.

When I knew him Harvey was just succumbing to the spell of Japanese art. He studied his little collection of prints to such purpose that he came to see things *à la Japonais*, in terms of pattern and denuded of shadow; that is, in their permanent rather than their ephemeral aspects. And as his eye became less of a camera and more of a kaleidoscope, so to speak, his art became less realistic, more conventional.

In the opinion of many of his admirers it suffered deterioration; and it is true that the pictures painted during his transitional period, when he had a foot in either camp, combine the fidelity to nature of his earlier efforts with the decorative quality of his later, and are therefore in many respects his best. His American Japanese prints (of which an example is here given) are ingen-

ket for Japanese prints among the artists of the *Quartier Latin*, and there resulted, in due course, the modern artistic poster, a thing so evidently of Japanese inspiration that it was given the name of "Parisian Kakemono." Meantime, Aubrey Beardsley, gifted child, had mastered the Japanese trick of line and *notan* composition, and straightway became the most talked about artist in England. Here in America the men who are to-day doing the best work in certain fields are students and lovers of Japanese prints, finding in them a school of technique and a source of inspiration. Thus it is that the great browsing beast of a public is coming to look for a new flavor in its accustomed fodder; that is to say, although the average layman — the man on the street — understands nothing and cares nothing for Japanese art, viewing with indifference or contempt its finest manifestations, yet he has come to look for and like its transmuted essence in the covers, illustrations, and advertisements of his favorite magazines; in pictures, in horticulture, and in house decoration. This is one of the practical jokes played by the Zeit-geist on the Jingo spirit!

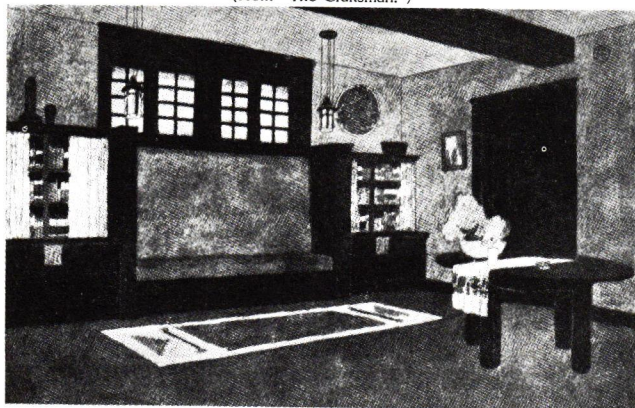
(From "The Craftsman.")



Elevation, Nursery Wall.

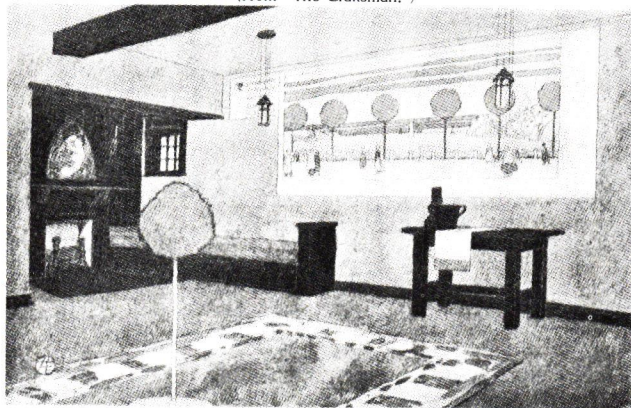


(From "The Craftsman.")



Seat and Bookcases in Living-room.

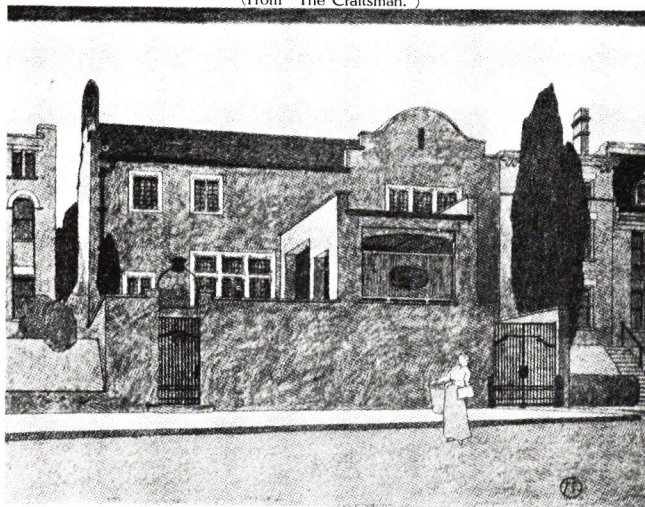
(From "The Craftsman.")



Fireplace in Living-room.

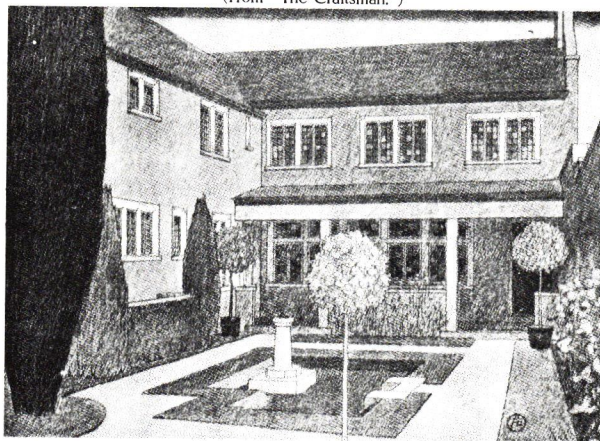
A Craftsman's House by Harvey Ellis.

(From "The Craftsman.")



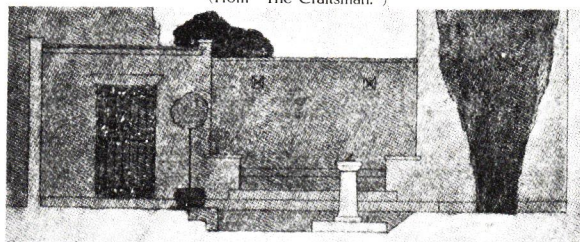
An Urban House by Harvey Ellis.

(From "The Craftsman.")



Formal Garden Back of an Urban House.

(From "The Craftsman.")



Rear Wall of Garden, An Urban House.

ious and clever, but they suffer by comparison with the real thing not only because they are (necessarily) inferior in draughtsmanship to Japanese drawings, but because American life is so much poorer than Japanese life in pattern-making material. It would seem as though Harvey came himself to realize this, for his final evolution was out of the realm of the actual altogether, into that of myth, allegory, and fable. He possessed neither the technical power nor the spiritual vision for these high regions, and his symbolic paintings, fine as they are in color and composition, cannot be called convincing. What Japanese art really did for Harvey was to emancipate his color-sense (the divinest part of his manifold talent) from the trammels of a slavish fidelity to nature. He learned to trust his instinct in the matter of color, and his instinct never played him false. His subjects were often ill-chosen, his composition mannered, his drawing careless sometimes to the verge of puerility, but his color was never wrong, and it became clearer, fuller, more sonorous, with the passing years.

Harvey was not only an artist; he was that totally different thing, a theorist about art. How helpful his formulæ would have been without his sense of color and composition is a question, since theory in art is generally useful only to the man who is able to dispense with theory. As Schopenhauer says, "The concept is unfruitful in art." Yet no estimate of Harvey Ellis's genius would be complete without some reference to his theories, for they reveal, perhaps better than anything else, the very complexion of his mind.

Like so many other men of a

mystical and speculative turn, he was much preoccupied with the correlation between color and music, made possible through the correspondence between the seven colors of the solar spectrum and the seven notes of the diatonic scale. He even worked out color triads which should be the correlatives of the two principal chords in every one of the major and minor keys, though I am not aware that he ever attempted to make practical use of these in any way. He endeavored to make every one of his paintings something in the nature of an acrostic — capable, that is, of being read (on its technical side) in several different ways: first, as a pleasing line-composition (in ink); second, as a *notan* — light and dark composition (in charcoal); and third, as a color-composition (in aquarelle), each developed in the order named and superimposed one upon another, as it is said the masters of the Renaissance drew the skeleton and then the muscular structure as a preliminary to the painting of their figures.

The color-composition became, in turn, an acrostic within an acrostic: all of the colors of the solar spectrum must appear in it, and in approximately the same proportions, so that the thing should be, in effect, a desiccated rainbow; though it must be understood that this law of proportion had reference not to the area occupied in the composition by the different colors, for this might vary indefinitely, but to the amount of pure pigment employed, the smaller areas thus tending to become vivid and large areas dull. The three primaries must show as principal elements, and as subordinate elements as well, but modified in the latter case into some new

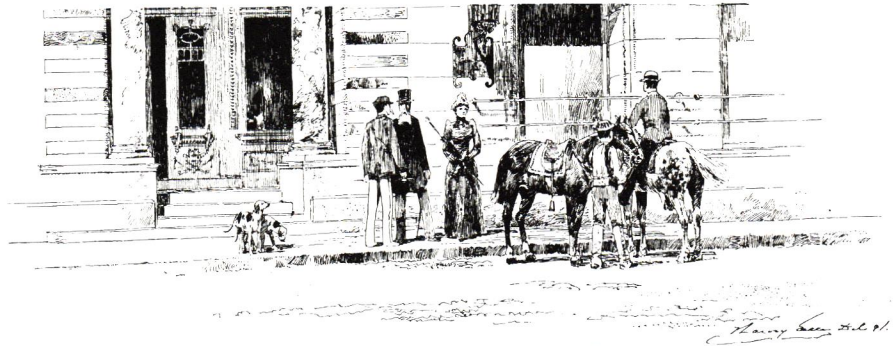


relation of light and dark, of cold or warm. In achieving this, Harvey often exercised great ingenuity: "The Burial of Elaine" contained three principal groups of figures; in each group one of the primaries predominated; each figure of each group of three showed, in turn, as a primary, and in the various articles of apparel and accoutrement of the single figures the three were again repeated in disguised form, the whole being a concrete working-out of the law of consonance, of correspondences, — expressed in the saying, "As is the small so is the great," — yet accomplished with such art that unless the beholder were given the clue he would apprehend only the harmoniousness and brilliance of the coloring.

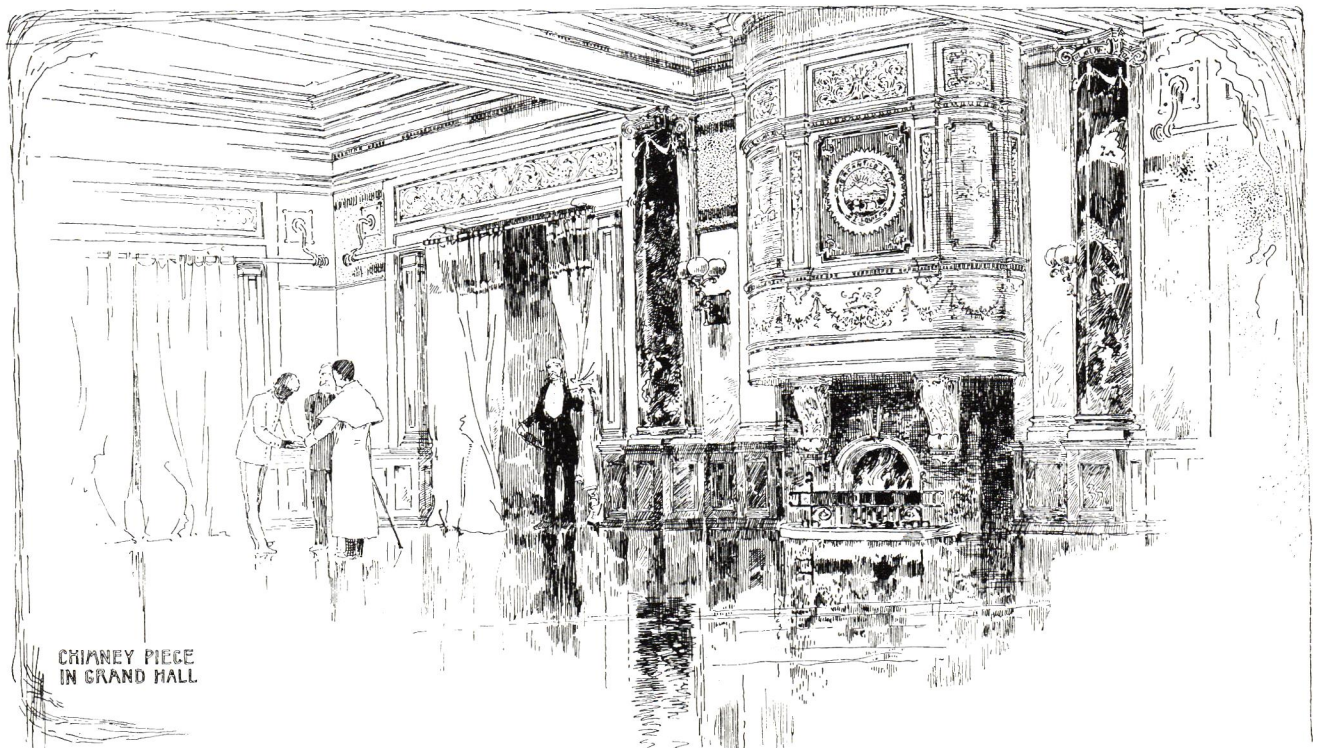
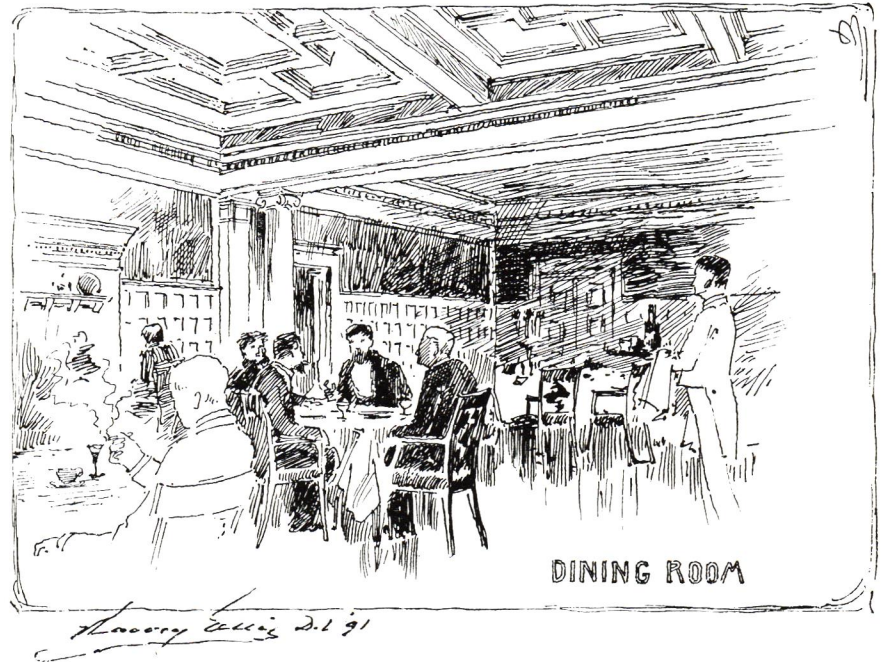
It is hard not to dwell longer on some of the individual charms of the renderings reproduced; the surprising accuracy of the many figures, both of people and animals, so prodigally shown on his drawings by a few expressive dots and lines.

Having already transcended the limits of my allotted space, I can also say nothing of Harvey as a teacher, as an etcher, as a decorator and worker in stained glass. No matter, if but this partial portrait gives the reader a glimpse of one of those ill-starred and unrewarded fishers for that "Tyrian shell" bearing the dye of dyes which Browning, in "Popularity," makes the symbol of that mysterious and magical kind of beauty revealed at an earlier day and through a different medium in the poetry of Shelley and Keats.

"Hobbs hints blue, — straight he turtle eats:  
Nobbs prints blue, — claret crowns his cup:  
Noakes outdares Stokes in azure feats, —  
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?  
What porridge had John Keats?"



Fragment of Drawing by Harvey Ellis, Showing Use of Figures.



Two Interiors by Harvey Ellis, Mercantile Club, St. Louis, Mo. George R. Mann, Architect.



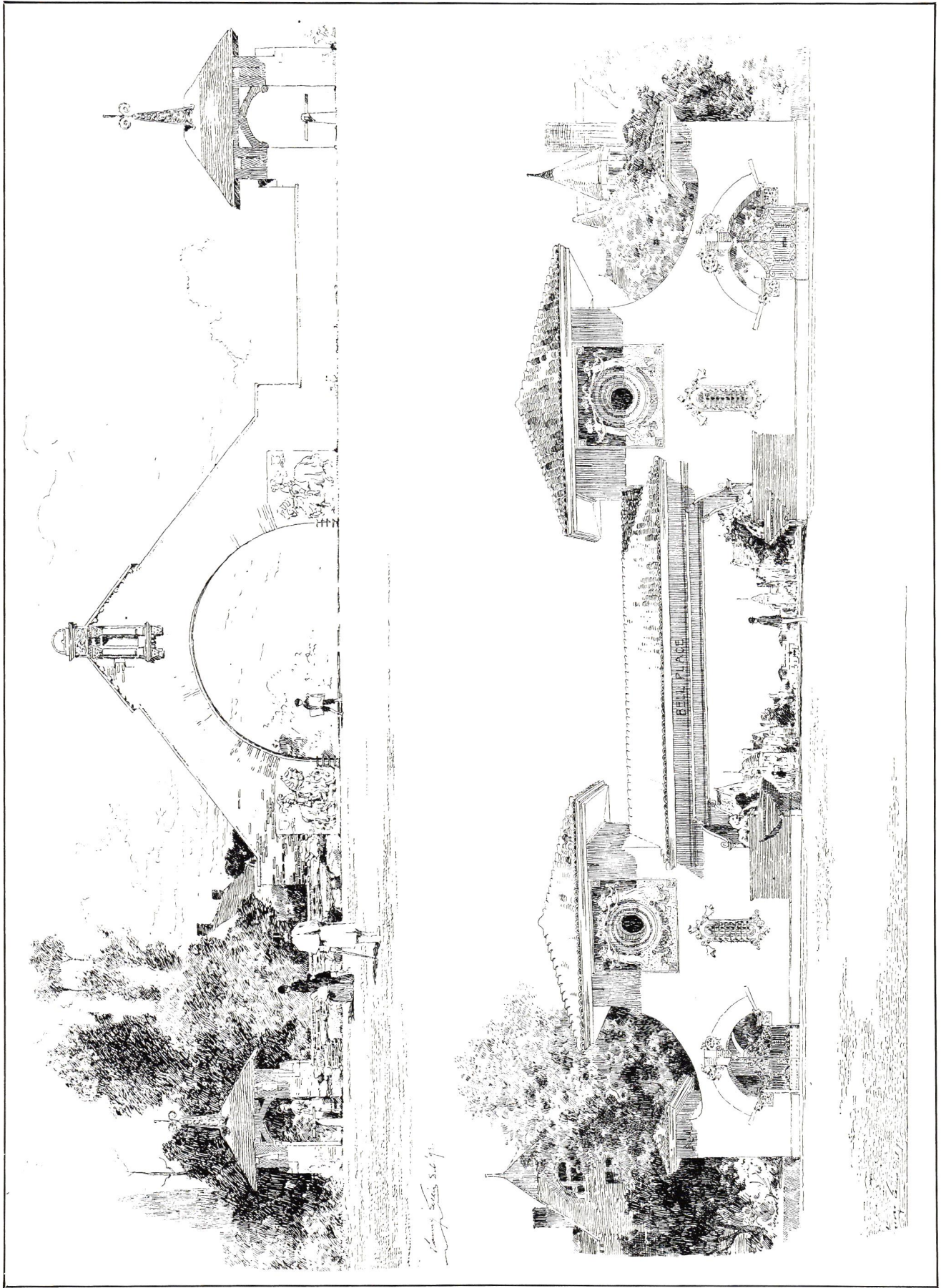


*This great arched entrance is the front door of the Mabel Tainter Memorial Building in Menomonie, Wisconsin.*



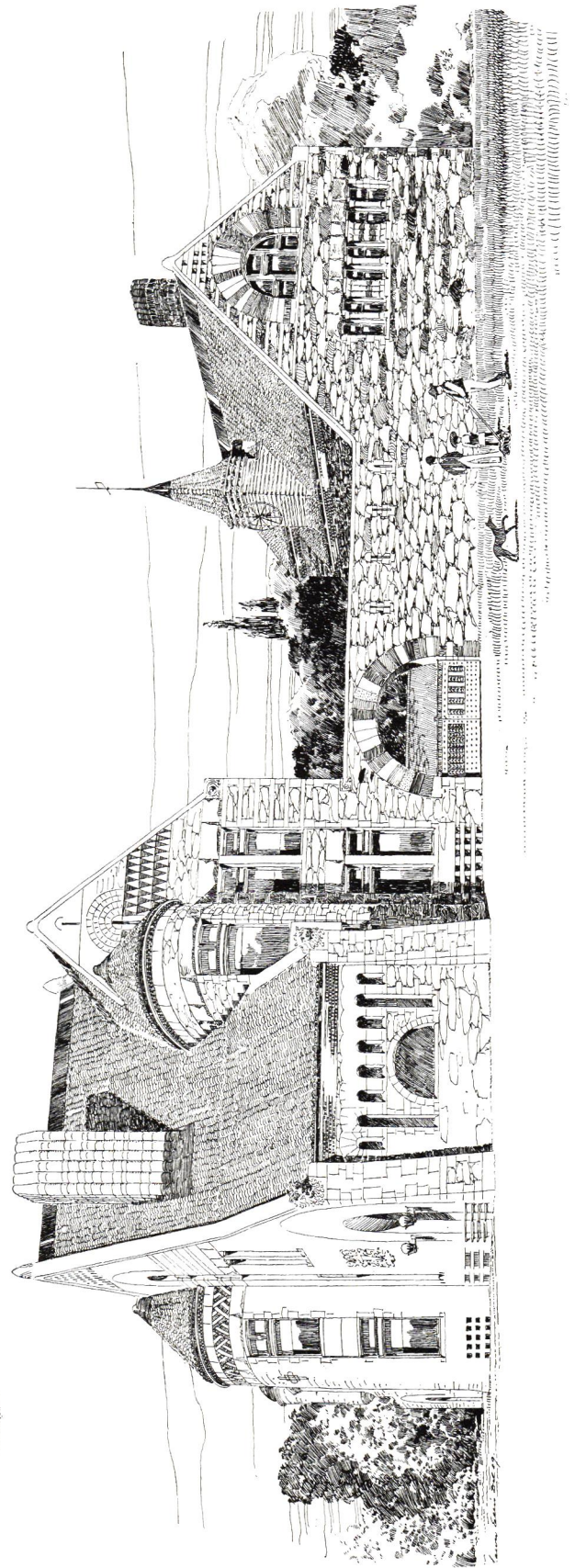
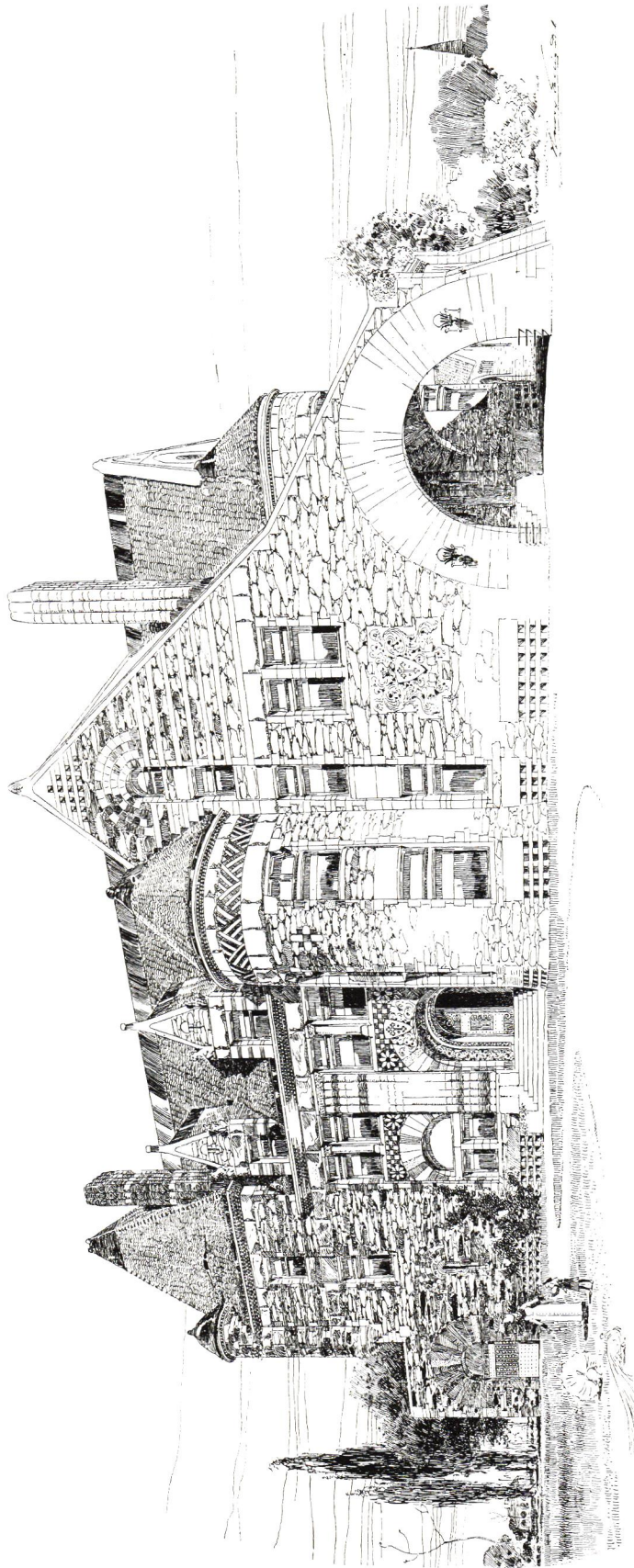




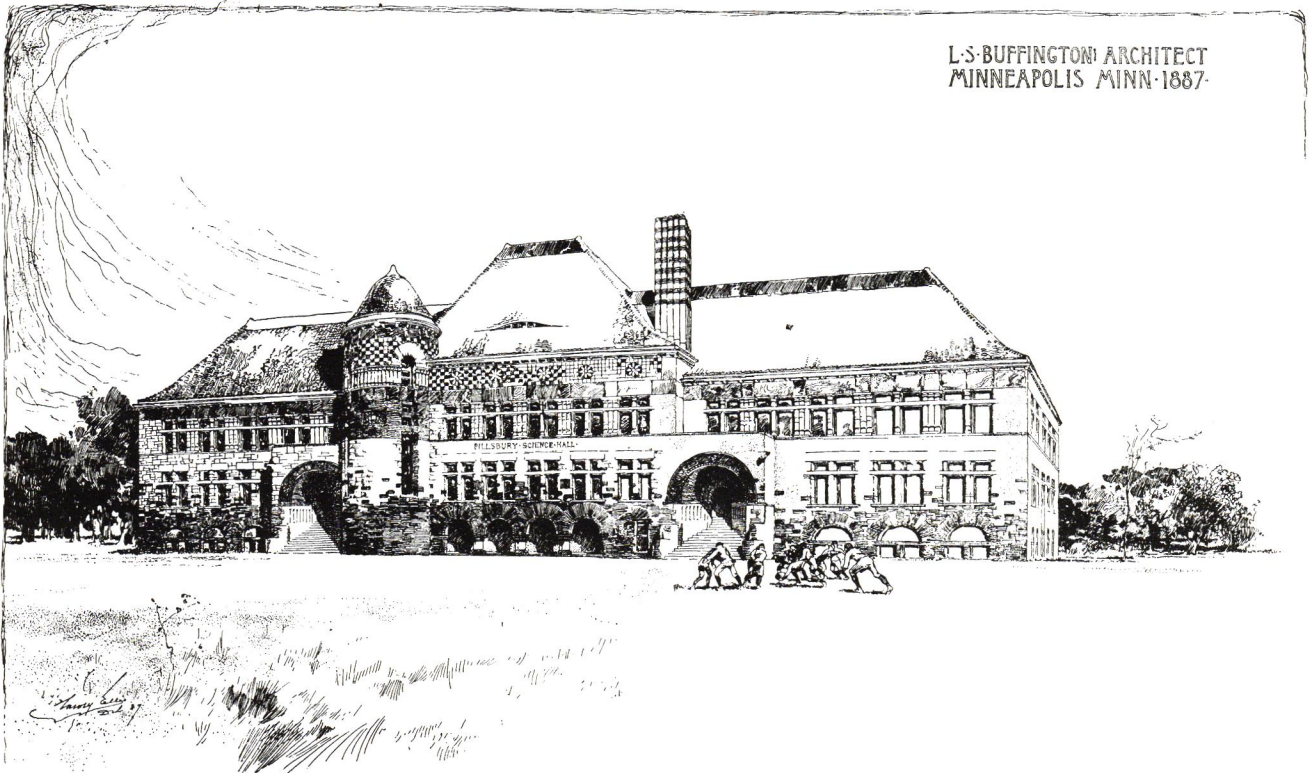


Perspective Studies by Harvey Ellis of Entrance to Private Streets, St. Louis, Mo. George R. Mann, Architect.

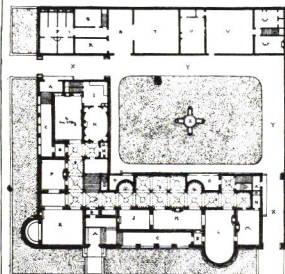
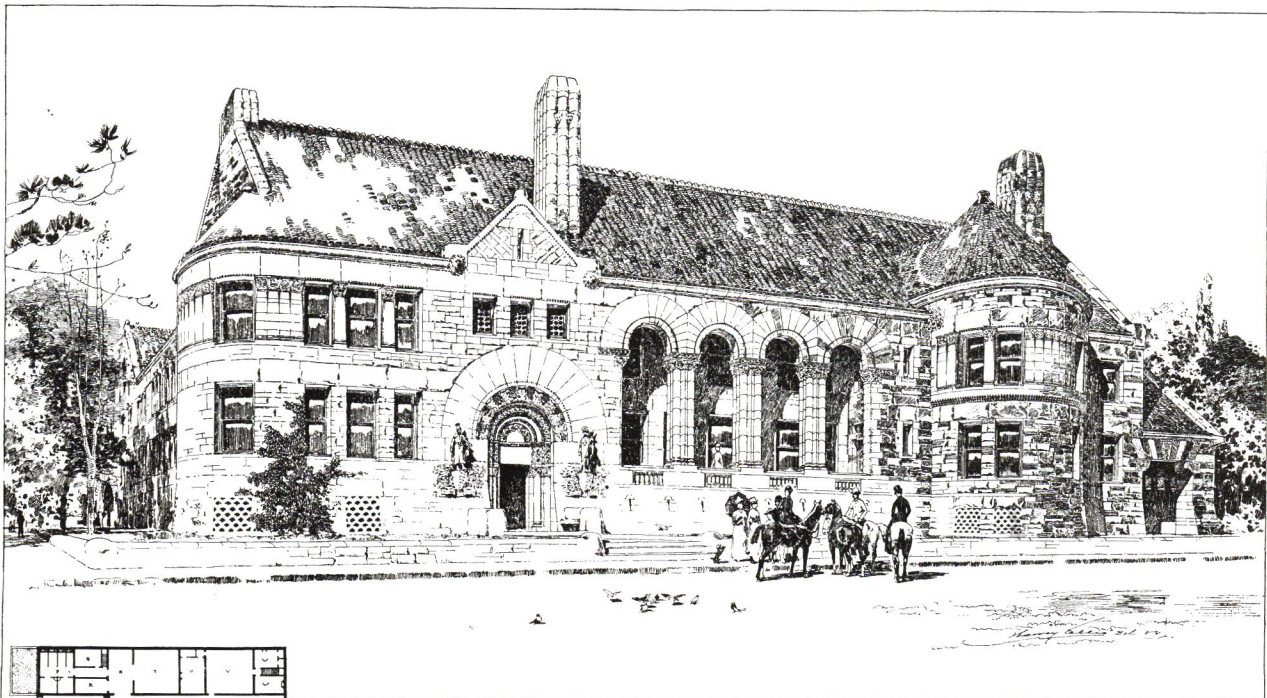








Perspective by Harvey Ellis for Pillsbury Science Hall, University of Minnesota. L. S. Buffington, Architect.



INDEX

A. Living Room	N. Library
B. Parlor	O. Dining Room
C. Kitchen	P. Breakfast Room
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M. Parlor	Z. Study

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

DESIGN FOR RESIDENCE OF MR. CHARLES A. PILLSBURY MINNEAPOLIS. L. S. BUFFINGTON ARCHITECT. MINNEAPOLIS MINN. 1888.

Perspective by Harvey Ellis for Residence of Chas. A. Pillsbury, Minneapolis, Minn. L. S. Buffington, Architect.



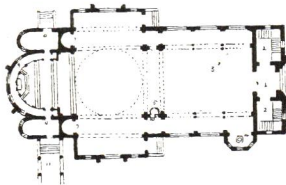


Charcoal Study for Office Building by Harvey Ellis.  
L. S. Buffington, Architect.

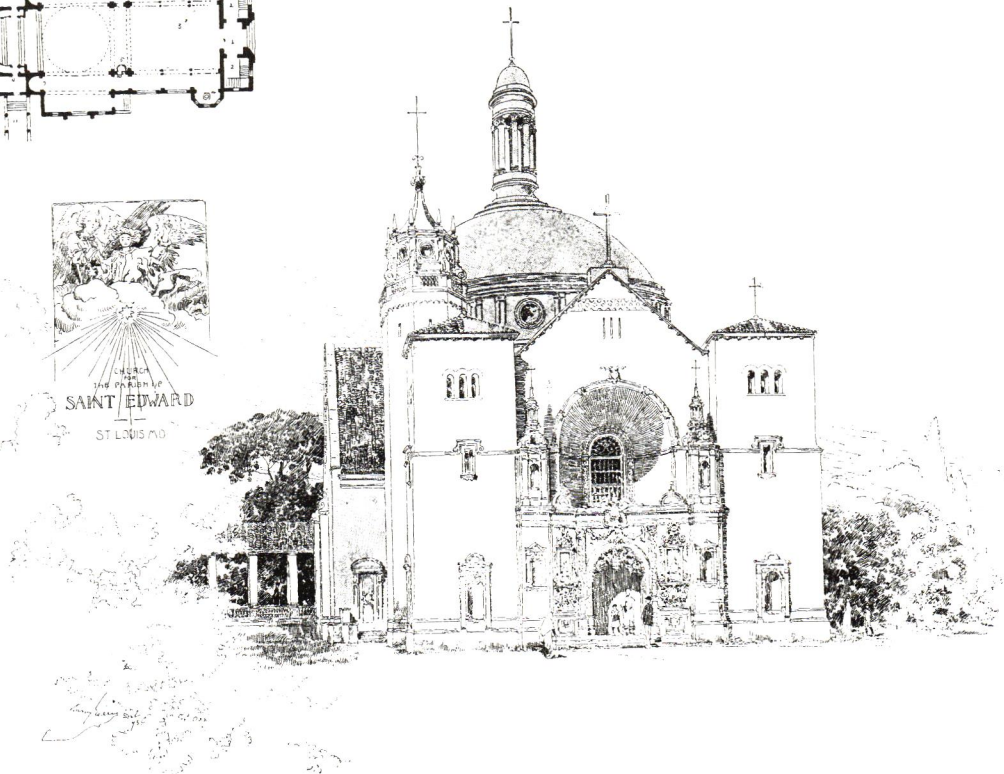
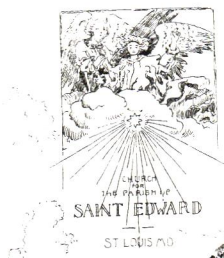


Water-color Study for Office Building by Harvey Ellis.  
L. S. Buffington, Architect.

Notes:  
1. Vestibule  
2. Office Building  
3. Roof  
4. Platform  
5. Entrance  
6. Lobby  
7. Elevator  
8. Staircase  
9. Rest Room  
10. Reception  
11. Conference Room  
12. Reading Room  
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28. Exits  
29. Fire Escapes  
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31. Fire Extinguishers  
32. Fire Hydrants  
33. Fire Pumps  
34. Fire Trucks  
35. Fire Engines  
36. Fire Ladders  
37. Fire Hooks  
38. Fire Axes  
39. Fire Shovels  
40. Fire Poles  
41. Fire Drills  
42. Fire Trains  
43. Fire Boats  
44. Fire Airships  
45. Fire Submarines  
46. Fire Tanks  
47. Fire Cylinders  
48. Fire Pipes  
49. Fire Valves  
50. Fire Fittings  
51. Fire Connections  
52. Fire Joints  
53. Fire Welds  
54. Fire Solder  
55. Fire Sealant  
56. Fire Gaskets  
57. Fire Washers  
58. Fire Cleaners  
59. Fire Lubricants  
60. Fire Greases  
61. Fire Oils  
62. Fire Fuels  
63. Fire Batteries  
64. Fire Generators  
65. Fire Motors  
66. Fire Pumps  
67. Fire Engines  
68. Fire Trucks  
69. Fire Engines  
70. Fire Trucks

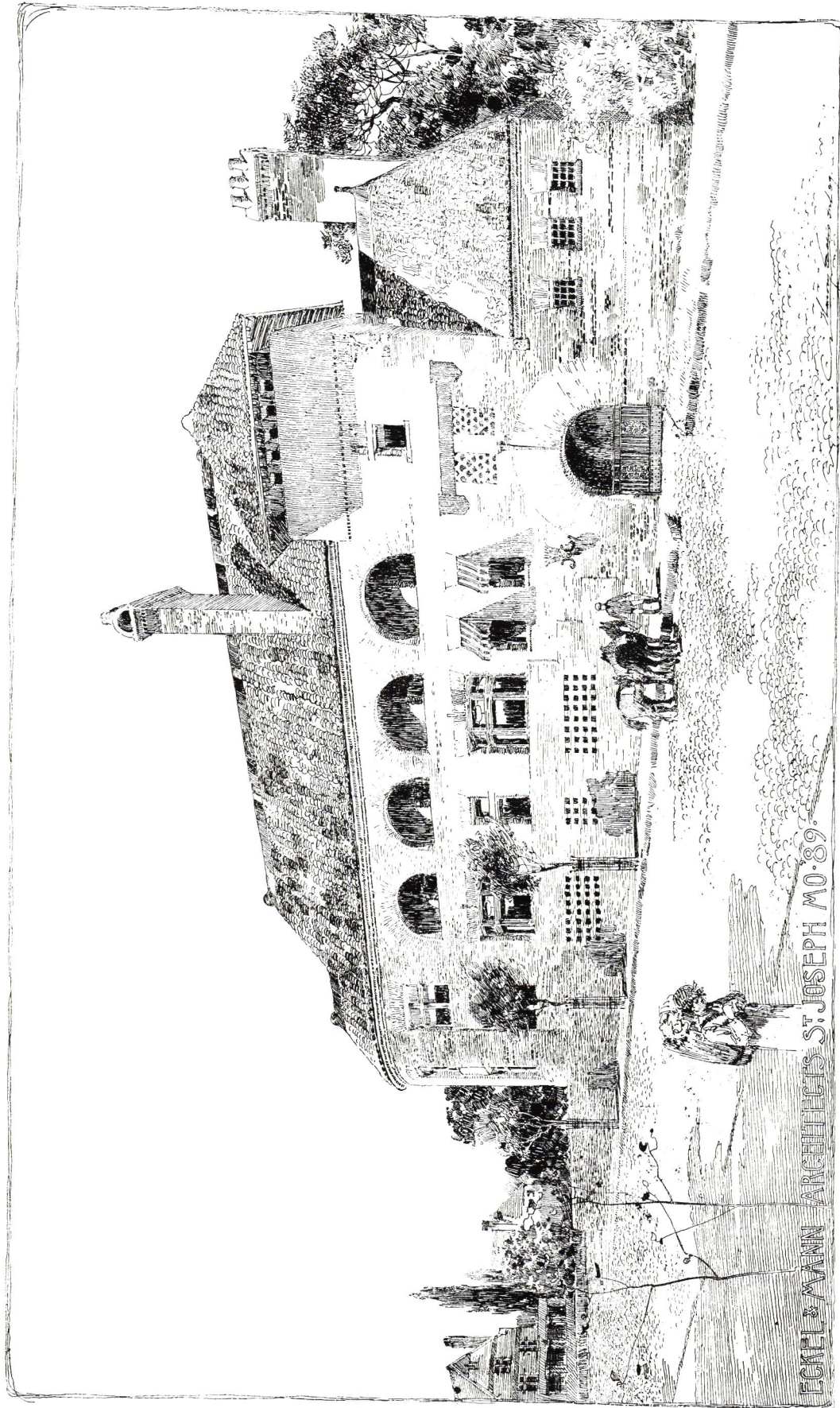


GEO. R. MANN ARCHT  
ST. LOUIS MO. D. 1893.



Pen and Wash Drawing of Church by Harvey Ellis. George R. Mann, Architect.



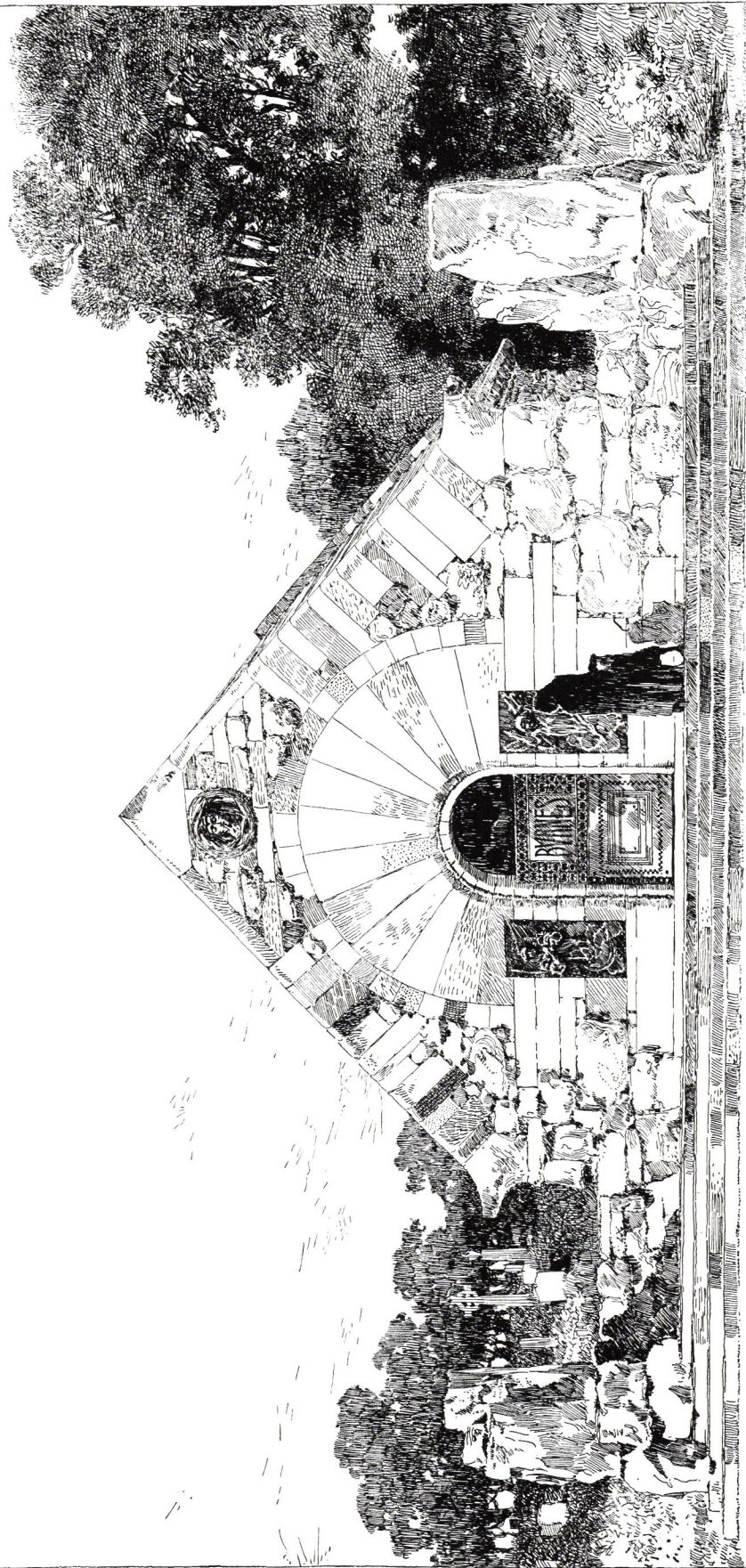


PERSPECTIVE STUDY BY HARVEY ELLIS. HOUSE AT ST. LOUIS, MO.

ECKEL & MANN, ARCHITECTS.

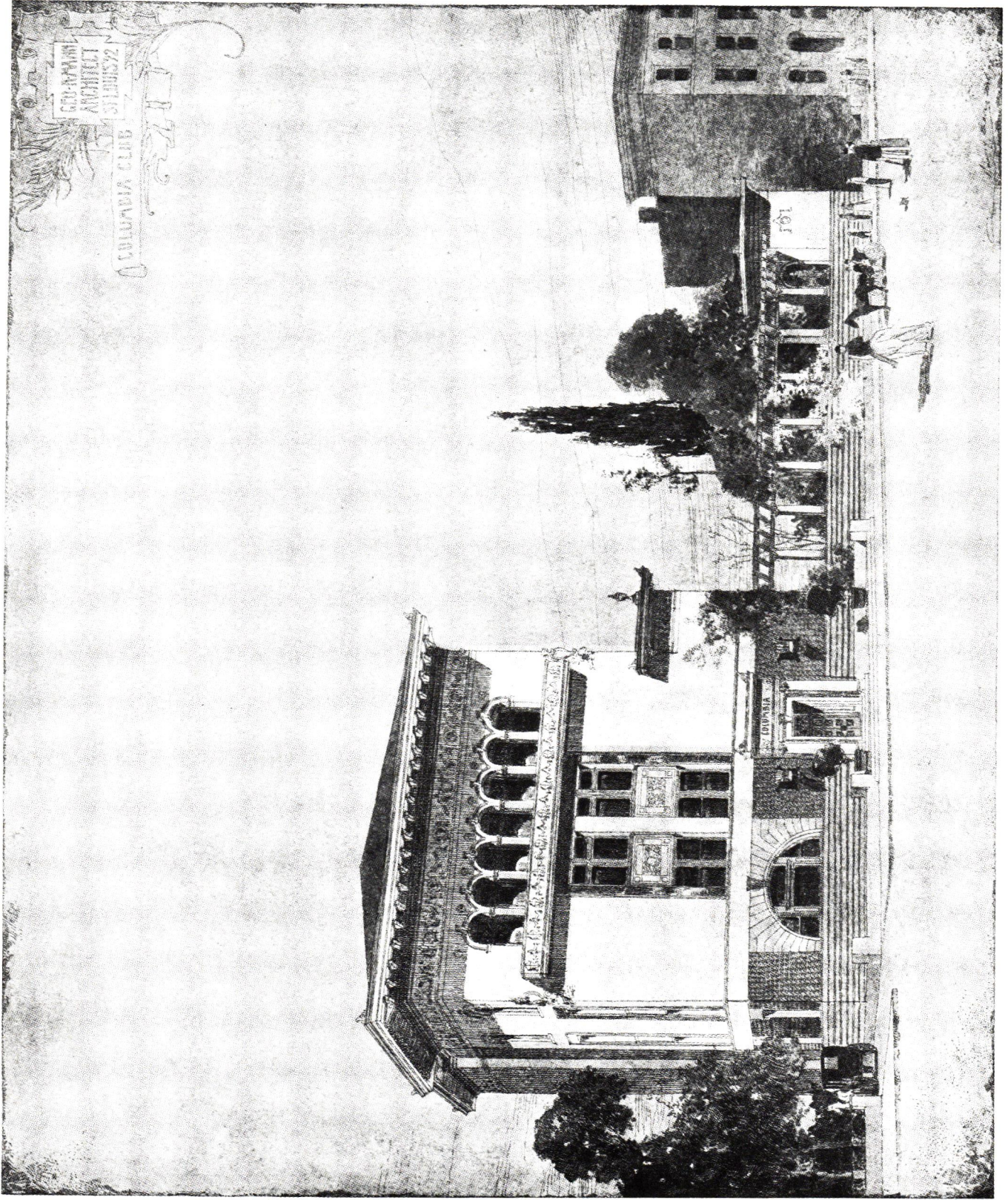


ECKEL & MANN ARCHITECTS, ST JOSEPH Mo. 1889.



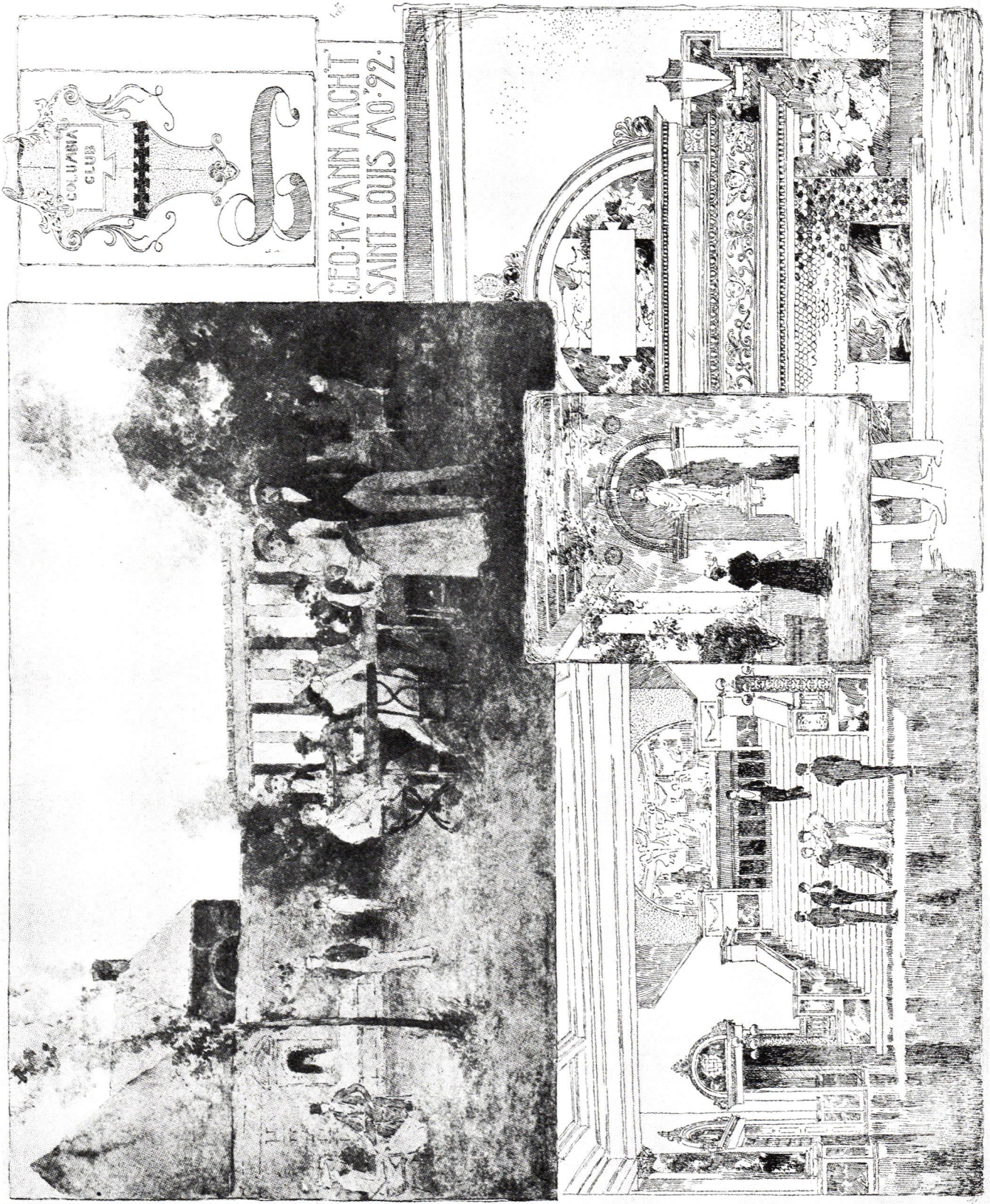
PERSPECTIVE OF TOMB BY HARVEY ELLIS.  
ECKEL & MANN, ARCHITECTS.





STUDY IN LINE AND WASH BY HARVEY ELLIS FOR COLUMBIA CLUB, ST. LOUIS, MO.  
 GEORGE R. MANN, ARCHTCT.





STUDIES BY HARVEY ELLIS FOR COLUMBIA CLUB, ST. LOUIS, MO.  
 GEORGE R. MANN, ARCHITECT.

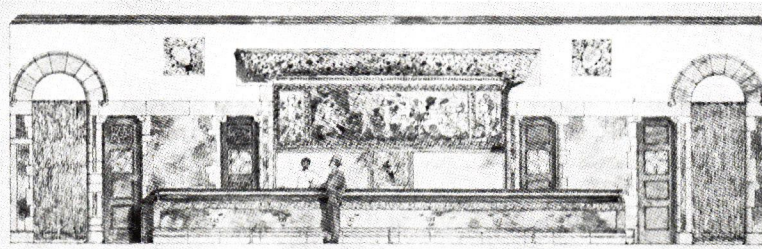


# Harvey Ellis, Designer and Draughtsman

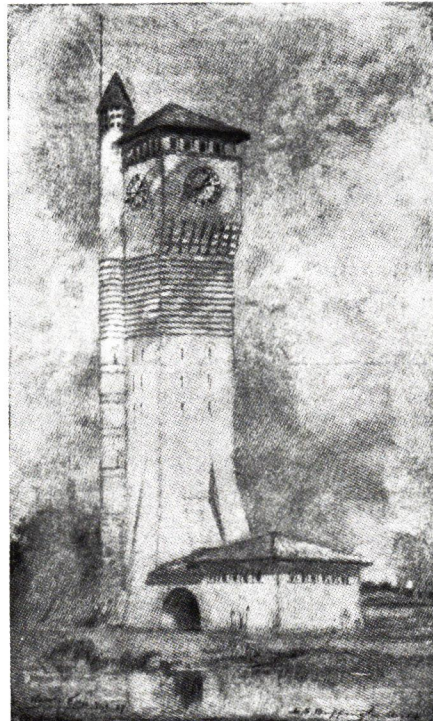
By Hugh M. G. Garden

IT is almost impossible to write of the work of Harvey Ellis without some reference to his rainbow personality. Gifted in many directions far beyond most men, even beyond most men of marked success; fascinating in conversation, with a range of general information touching almost every phase of our activities; able to hold and enchant alike a company of scholars or of the rougher and "broader" element that is found on the seamy side of our Western city life, Harvey Ellis was a man of fine culture, an excellent designer — but not really an architect. He was an artist and a romanticist, who loved to indulge his peculiar taste for life in the nearest and readiest direction, careless of results and apparently without any marked ambition. Although it is impossible to look at his ingenious and poetic drawings and designs, whether of architecture, decoration, or of sheer unbridled fancy, without knowing that he loved to draw, still he seems to have cared as much for mere talk, for teaching the young men who flocked around him and learned so much from him; or for any and all of the multitude of human relations that surround and distract the serious worker and are by serious workers relentlessly suppressed or avoided.

Indeed, he seems to have drifted into the practice of architecture with little, if any, special preparation, merely as the easiest method, for him, of keeping body and soul together, and he would perhaps have made as great a success (or failure) in any one of a dozen different directions; particularly, of course, those which open to men of artistic insight and invention. But he cared as much or more for the myriad activities that are by the industrious ones of this world grouped under the all-inclusive term of "idleness." A glutton for work when it had to be done, he was nevertheless incredibly lazy. The greater the task, the faster flew his nimble wits and fingers; always with the desire to have done and get back to the paths of his restless and insatiable fancy. Careless of methods and prodigal of his resources, he would sit and talk interminably if any one would listen — listening was always well worth while. He poured himself out, and cared nothing for the reward or the



Water-color Study by Harvey Ellis. L. S. Buffington, Architect.



Charcoal Study by Harvey Ellis for Water-tower. L. S. Buffington, Architect.



Study in Charcoal by Harvey Ellis for Bandstand at Lake Harriet, Minn. L. S. Buffington, Architect.

consequences. Necessarily, in a world given over to more conventional and tractable ways, he did not always meet with the smile of approval, and perhaps, therefore, he was not often happy; but, nevertheless, his was a fine, expansive nature and one for which those who

knew him are the richer. If he were ambitious, then he sacrificed his opportunities — and opportunity pursued him. He measured himself repeatedly in competition against the great ones of his profession, and often won; but the fire always burned out before the task was finished, and his executed buildings are uniformly disappointing. In speaking of his work it is entirely fair to ignore those who employed him, for the indelible Ellis touch is on it all, and nowhere is there evidence of any guiding or restraining hand.

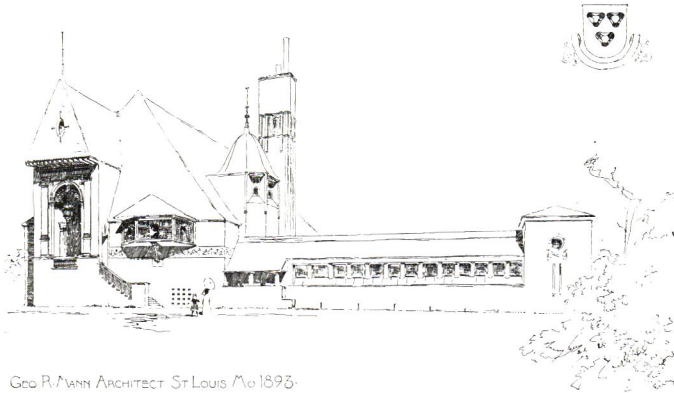
His architectural designs are generally reminiscent. He usually picked up some suggestion, generally mediæval, from some picture or photograph and twisted it to suit his own purpose; and he did not care greatly for its entire suitability or logical fitness, so long as it served him to make a pleasant pictorial composition — and that, as you may know, is not the way of the serious architect. Indeed, it is almost a pity that he dabbled in architecture at all, in spite of his many beautiful drawings, for as a painter and draughtsman he would have ranked far higher. Upon the rare occasions when he contributed pictures — generally water-colors — to the big exhibitions he invariably commanded attention; for he had a style absolutely personal and distinct, combining delicacy with strength and a finished and individual technique. He was a master of composition, both in his drawings and in his designs of buildings, and probably no one of his time approached so closely to Richardson in the quality of his work as Ellis did. Indeed, the so-called Romanesque revival which Richardson rediscovered for America owes much of what was best in it to Ellis. His quality, however, is less Titanic than Richardson's, less powerful, and more human. Had he survived to these days, when the Romanesque is again quite dead and gone, we should have seen a new Ellis; for he was adaptable and original,



and needed but the smallest suggestion of form or style around which to weave the always charming fabric of his romantic and human compositions.

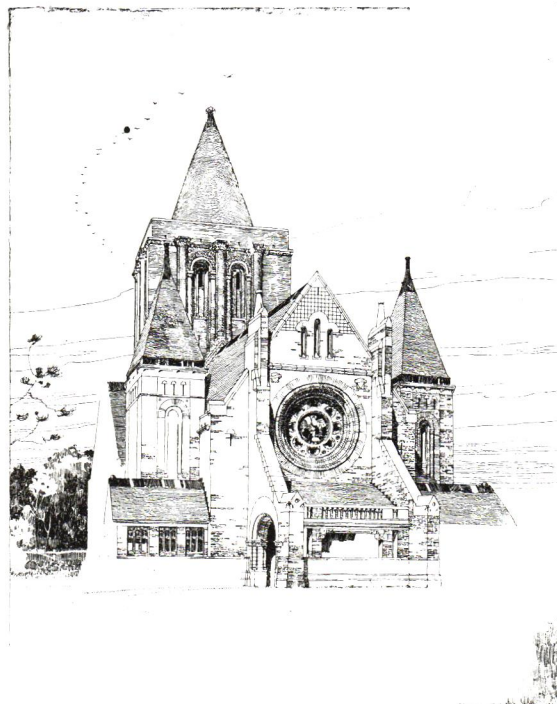
It is, however, as a draughtsman that he will be longest remembered. His sense of line has rarely been excelled, and certainly no draughtsman of his day had such a command of the difficult medium of pen and ink. Black ink on white paper had no terrors for him. Whether it was the soft outline of a cloud, high in the blank white field of paper, or the ragged edge of a rough stone wall, that thin and flowing line of jet black goes slipping along with equal facility and certainty, eloquent of cloud or rock, as the case may be. He used to say that he liked "egg-shell" paper because the pen went skipping over the little indentations with constant variety; and perhaps this gives some notion of the quality of his work, for every line is full of this variety, and you feel the nimble hand and the nimble and poetic mind meaning something new and various, even — as it were — in the intervals between the little indentations. In these days of "systems" of draughtsmanship, of cast shadows, and of certain rules for the making of certain kinds of architectural drawings, it is pleasant to turn for a moment to these drawings by a man whose only rule was his fine sense of the meanings and relations of everything within his field of knowledge.

"Culture is not measured by the greatness of the field which is covered by our knowledge, but



GEO. R. MANN ARCHT ST. LOUIS MO 1893

Unfinished Study by Harvey Ellis. George R. Mann, Architect.

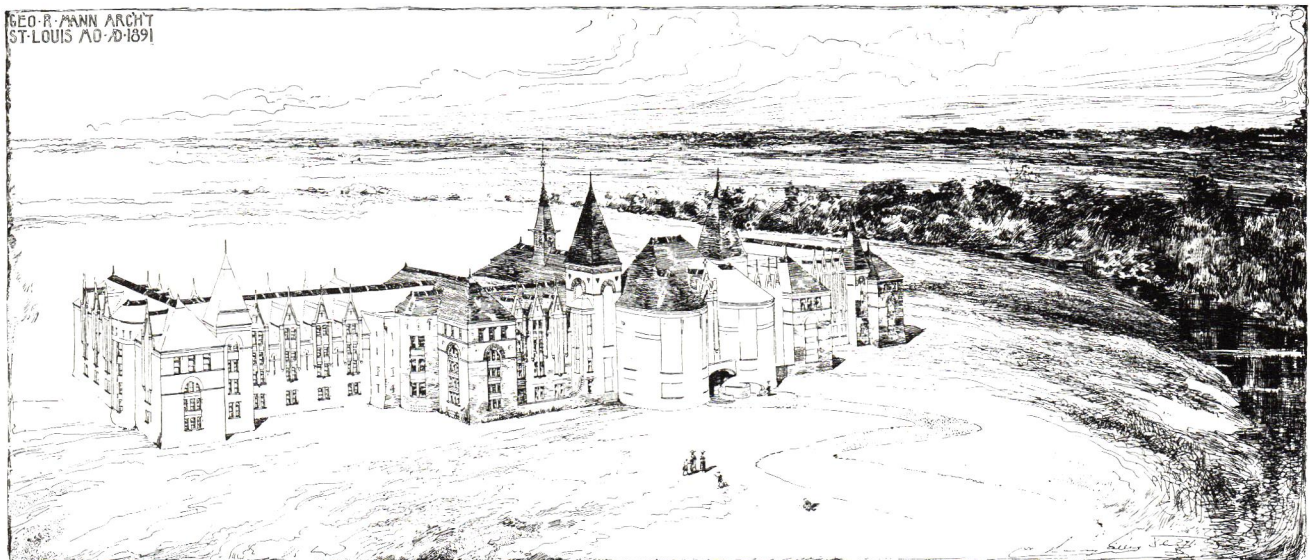


Unfinished Perspective of a Church by Harvey Ellis.

by the nicety with which we can distinguish the relations within that field, whether great or small."

To look at his drawing of the Minnesota Soldiers' Home is to see again the bluff that rises from the water where Minnehaha Creek joins the Mississippi; and to realize that Ellis saw it just so, that he felt and realized every form of rock and tree, of bank and water, and that he knew just that kind of a fisherman in his Mississippi punt.

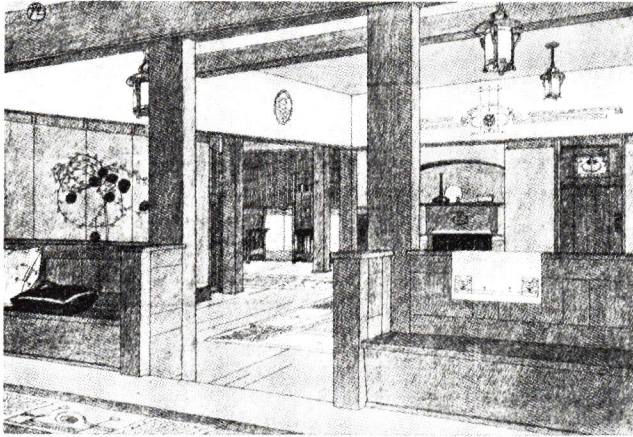
Harvey Ellis never tired of teaching those who came to him, and his methods were so vivid and inspiring that he became the center of a little group of enthusiasts, some of whom, so long as the master was near, could reproduce his very mannerisms of technique. With his passing, however, these minor performers have faded back into the obscurity from which his brilliancy had drawn them. A larger class, to whom his methods and his insight meant more, have gone on and developed under their own colors — not as imitators, but as original producers we still look to as potent factors in architecture, in illustration, and in the field of decoration, and we still find in their work his master influence. When Ellis first came to the front in his profession the art of the architectural draughtsman was struggling to escape from the dominion of the experts of the ruling-pen, who had possessed the field under the Victorian revival of Gothic, and whose strange and rigid pictures of buildings made exclusively with T-square, triangle, ruling-pen, and India ink, were



Unfinished Perspective by Harvey Ellis for State Institution Near St. Louis. George R. Mann, Architect.

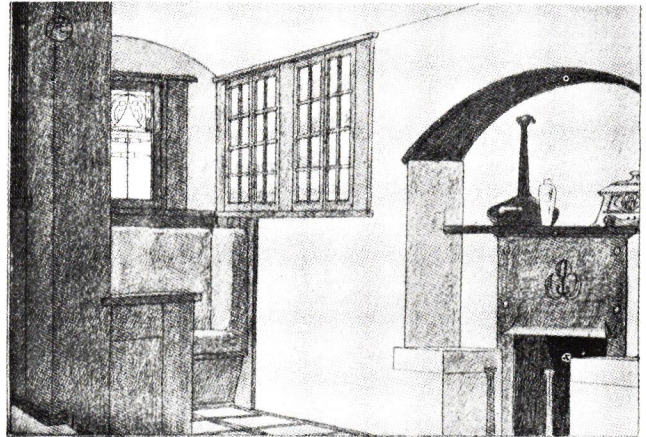


(From "The Craftsman.")



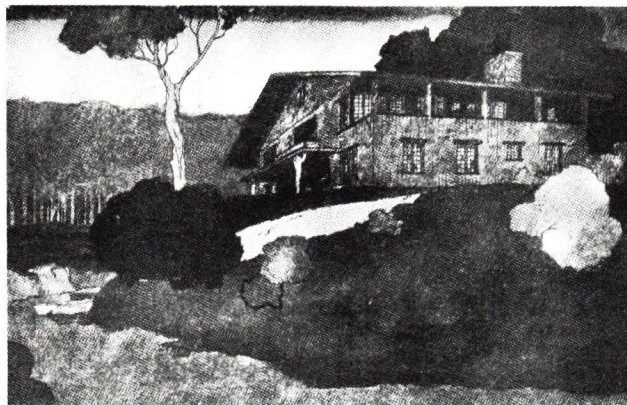
Living-room of an Urban House by Harvey Ellis.

(From "The Craftsman.")



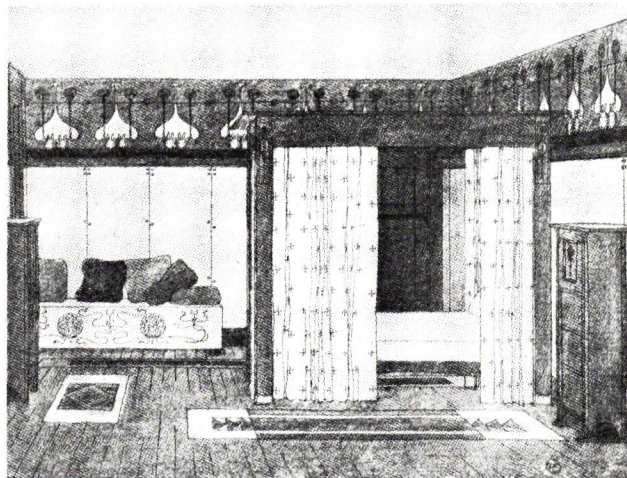
Ingle-nook of an Urban House by Harvey Ellis.

(From "The Craftsman.")



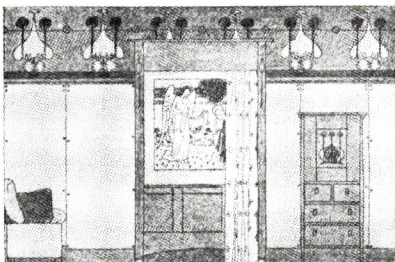
Sketch for a Camp in the Adirondacks by Harvey Ellis.

(From "The Craftsman.")

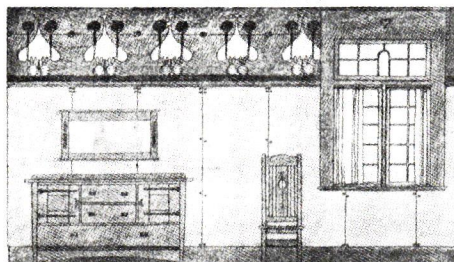


A Child's Bedroom by Harvey Ellis.

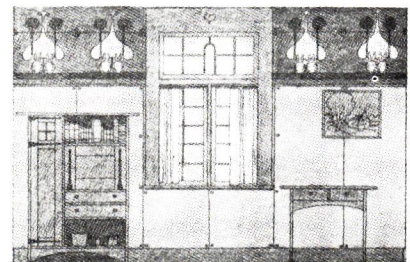
(From "The Craftsman.")



South Wall.



West Wall  
A Child's Bedroom.



North Wall.

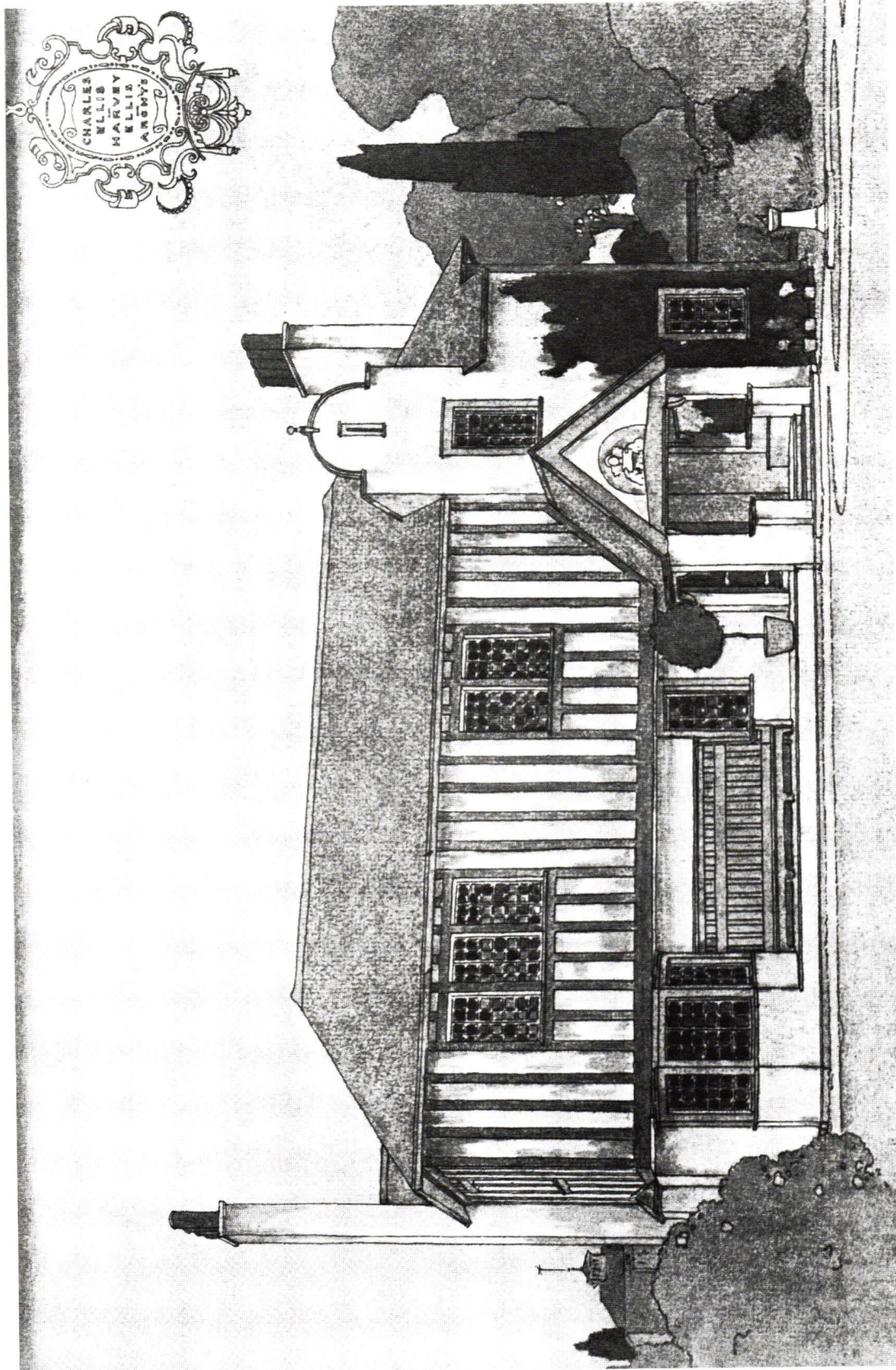
the wonder and the despair of all artists. By contrast his flexible, free-hand line was like a breath from heaven, and to this day has not been excelled. His wonderful drawings of the great Cathedral which he designed for New York City, plans, elevations, sections, and perspectives drawn in his flowing free-hand line without assistance of straight-edge or instrument, make an achievement in American draughtsmanship which has not been surpassed. When we consider that this elaborate set of plans is his own single-handed effort (for no one could ever work on Ellis's drawings, since nobody could quite duplicate his individual touch), we are filled with respect for his industry and for his lightning facility. His love for things Japanese (at a time when most of us had never seen a Japanese print) influenced all of his later work, and particularly his color. The decorative quality and the refinement of his low-pitched, mellow color-scale are ever present. The same nice discrimination, the same placid sureness of touch, is visible in everything he did. No drawing or painting of his is ever incomplete, even if unfinished (to be Irish); for all

of the steps toward its completion are in themselves sure and perfect. The little drawing of a church on page 185, herewith, is an illustration of this.

If London Dodd's philosophy of life—"My idea of man's chief end is to enrich the world with things of beauty and to have a fairly good time myself while doing so"—be accepted, then Harvey Ellis was a successful man. He did not enrich himself, but he did exert a powerful and lasting influence for the good of art; and he enriched the world with a series of drawings, water-colors, cartoons, and paintings, of a rare and fine distinction, that should now be collected and preserved.

His untimely death removed a picturesque and lovable character, and cut short at the height of his ability an artist of great discernment and tender feeling, to whom the expression of beauty was a constant need, and creation the simplest of tasks. A hard-headed and practical age turned an unsympathetic shoulder to a temperament so many-sided and volatile; but the world can afford many such failures, and American architecture is vastly richer for a man so much the artist and the poet, if so little practical.





WATER-COLOR STUDY FOR PLASTER HOUSE, BY HARVEY ELLIS

CHARLES & HARVEY ELLIS, ARCHITECTS



## Michael McGuire, Architect



*Michael G. McGuire began his education at the University of Chicago but left before graduation to study architecture at the University of Minnesota where he received his Bachelors in Architecture in 1954. After two years in the service he was discharged in Europe where he spent several months seeing "every kind of architecture". Upon his return to the States, he worked in the office of McKim, Mead and White in New York City for a few months and then returned to Minneapolis. Immediately upon receiving his license he began his own practice. He has a general practice, does about four houses a year, and recently has been doing substantially larger projects than those shown on these pages. Houses are still his major interest, however, and his primary problem is that of getting competent young people to work in his office who are interested in doing this kind of work.*

Photo by Robert Wilcox



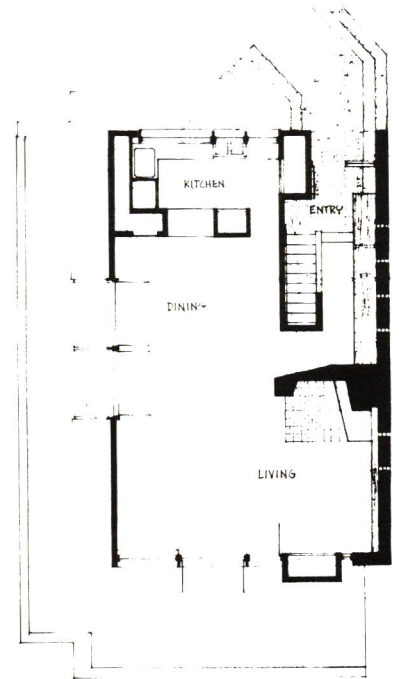
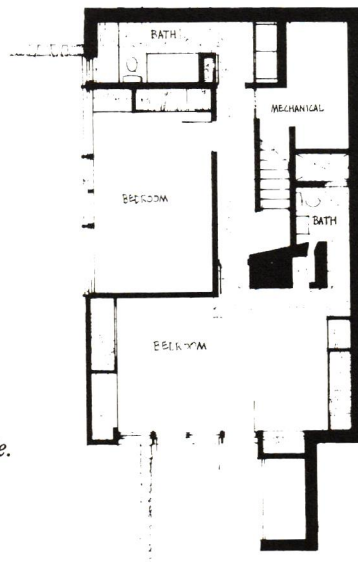
*This house was built for the Adrian Warren family on a very small but high point overlooking the St. Croix River near Stillwater, Minnesota. The house is built into the side of the point to provide privacy from an adjacent highway.*

*The roof is an attempt to open and direct the view to a spectacular scene downriver and yet provide a strong feeling of shelter. Furthermore, it reflects the steep hillside and anchors the house to the point.*

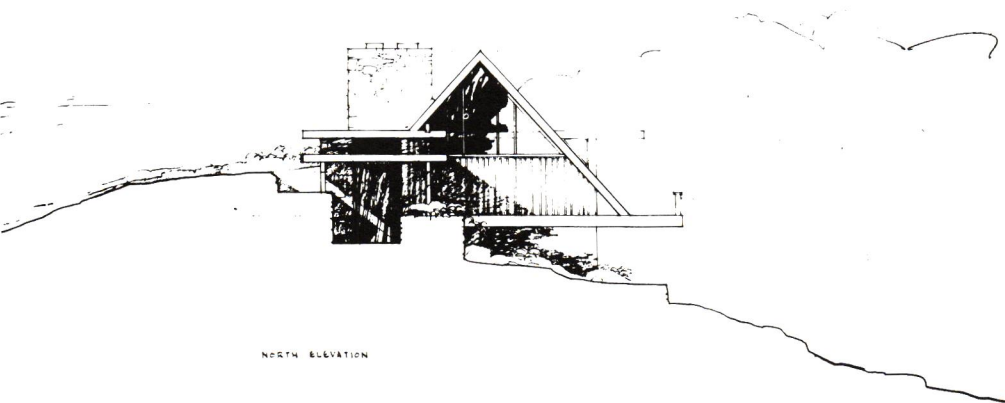




*The house is constructed with redwood board and batten, inside and out, with fir beams and deck. The stone is gray Wisconsin Lannon Stone and the roof is surfaced with Cedar shingles.*

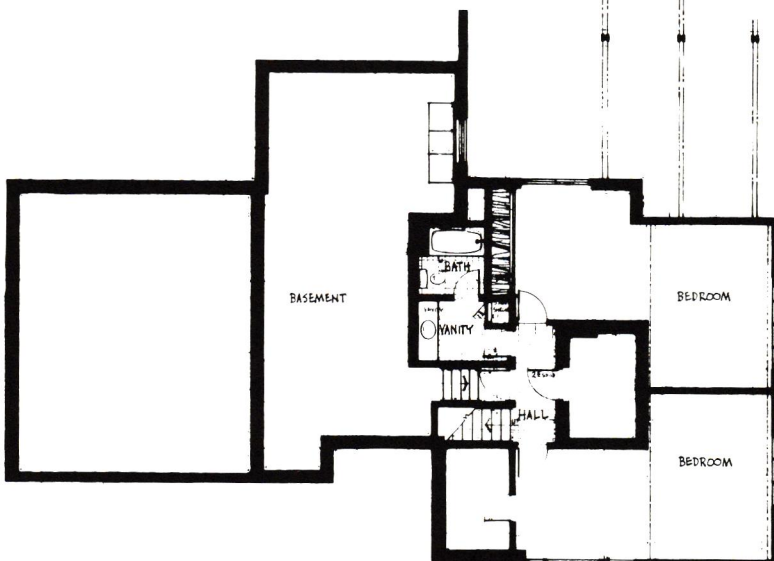
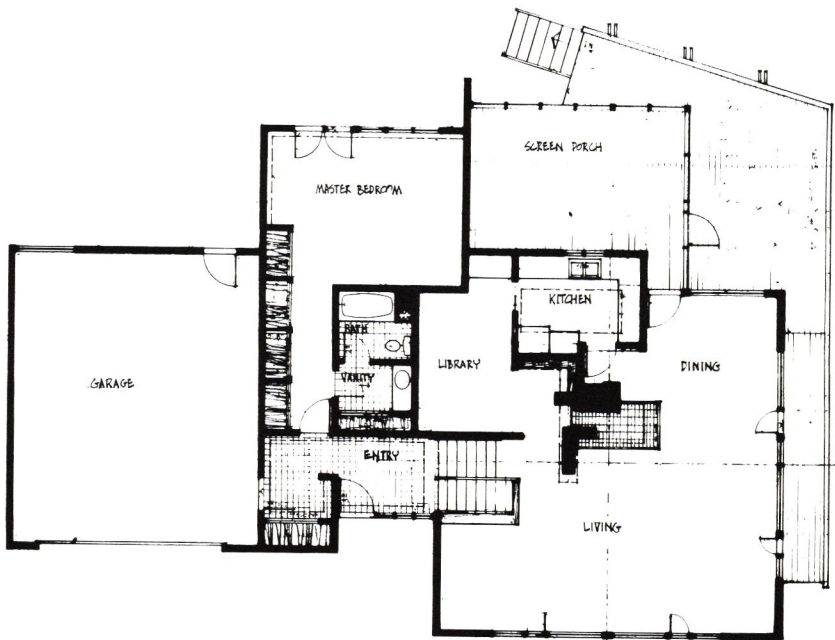
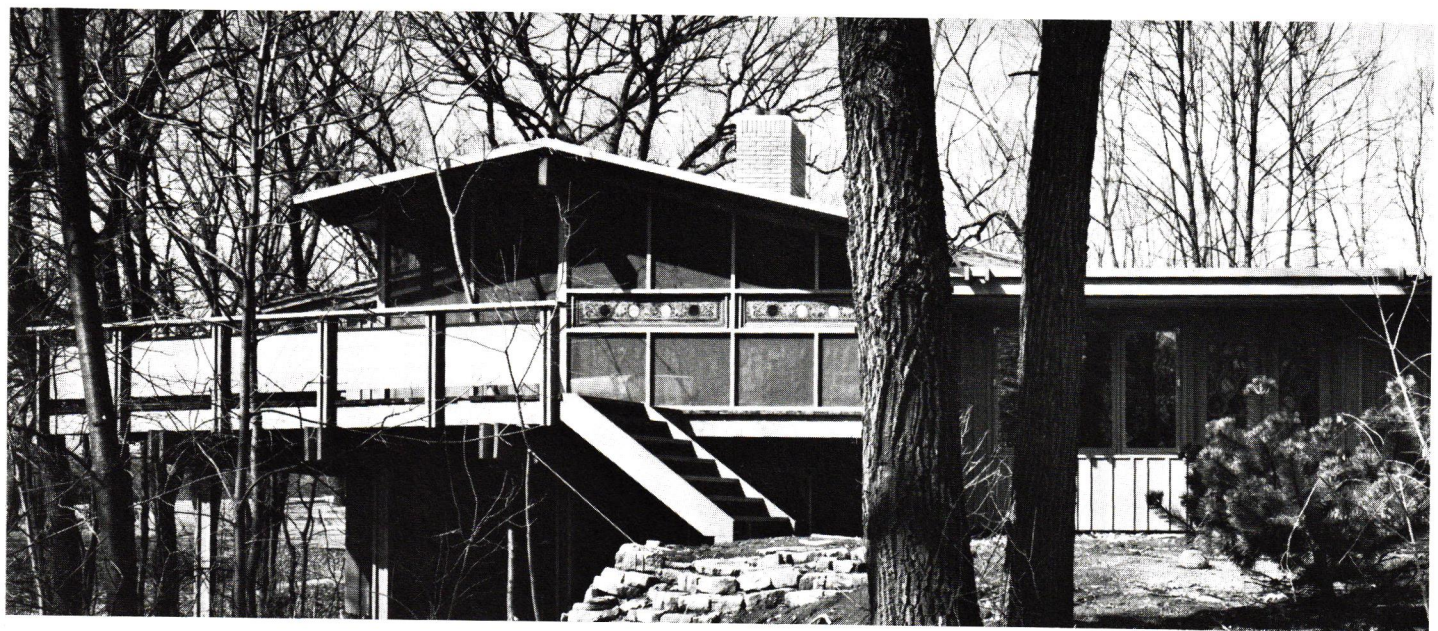


*The entire house is designed on a 6 foot module.*



NORTH ELEVATION





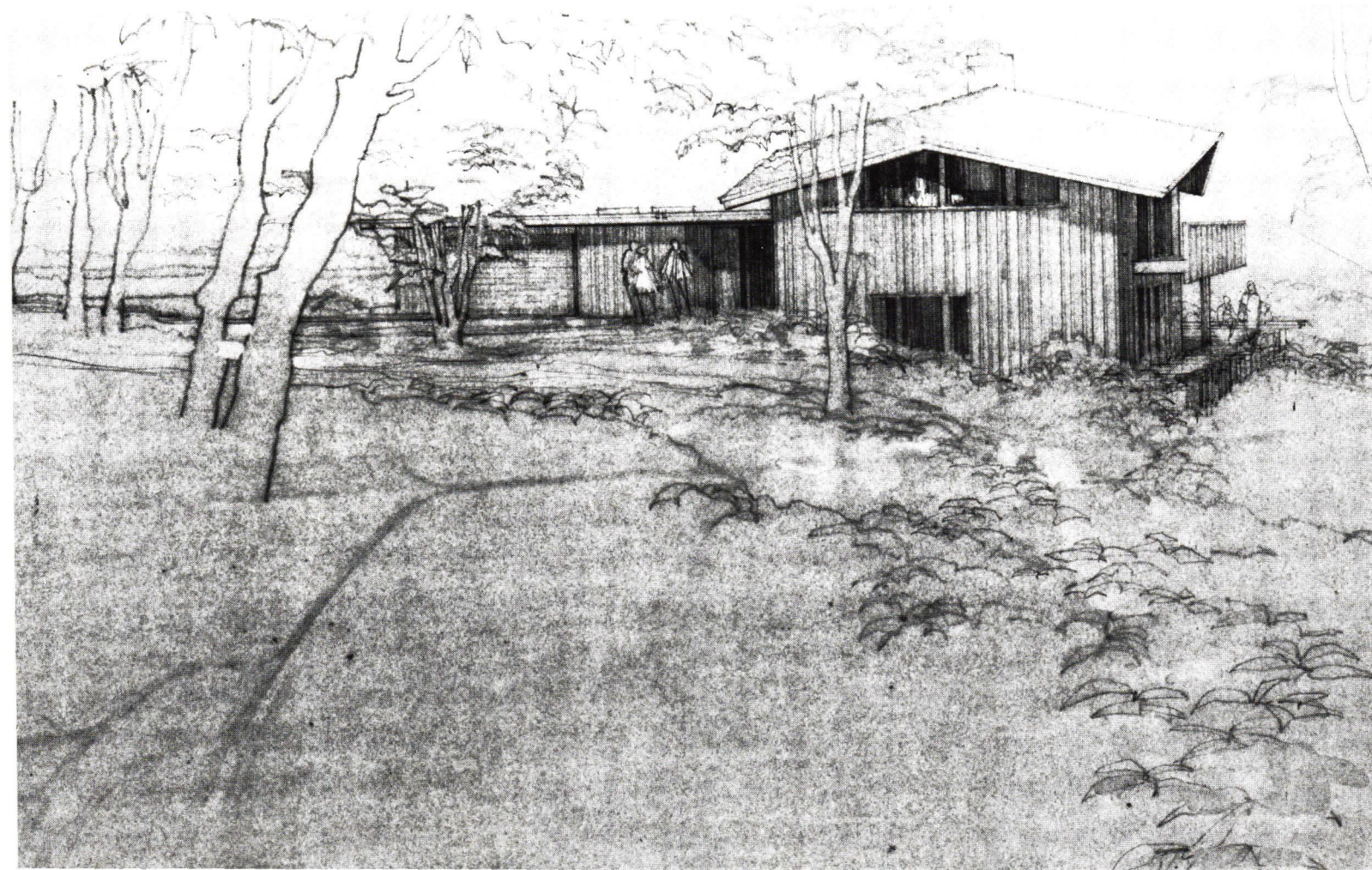
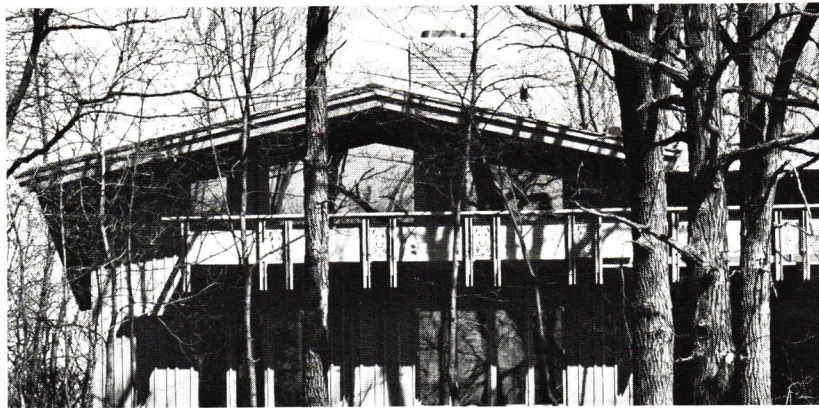


*One of McGuire's more recent buildings is this one on a wooded lot overlooking a park in St. Paul, Minnesota, for Mr. and Mrs. Roger Kennedy.*

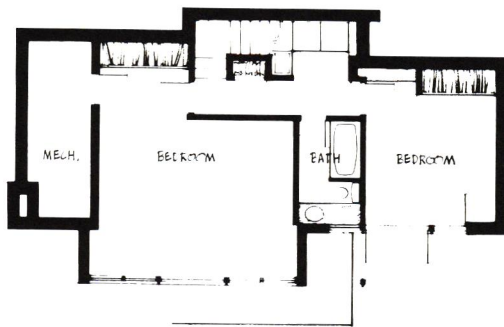
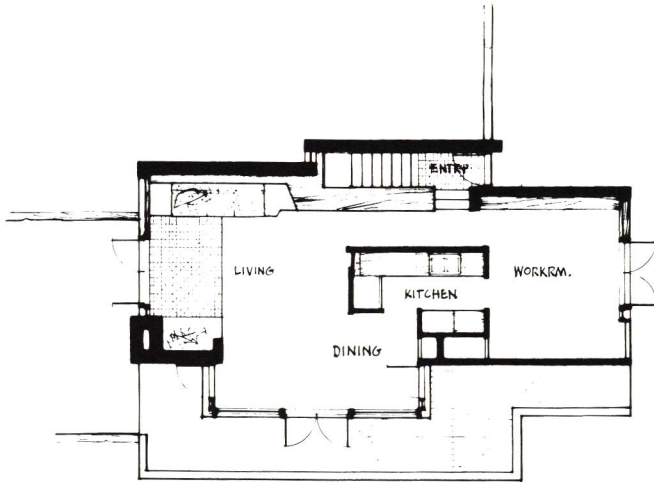
*Mr. Kennedy is a businessman with a keen interest in architecture. The plan was designed to make the study a part of the major space and yet hide the clutter of writing and research done there. The main living space was raised to take advantage of the park view. Bedrooms are on lower levels.*

*Three beautiful leaded windows by Purcell and Elmslie form a window by the front door and the fireplace hood is formed by castings from Louis Sullivan's Owatonna National Bank. Other items of architectural interest are used throughout the house, particularly bits of ornament designed by Harvey Ellis, whose work has long fascinated Mr. Kennedy.*

*The exterior of the house is cedar board and batten with cedar ceilings also being used. Other interior walls are of drywall. The major roof covers a 30' x 30' area with a symmetrical hip turned 45 degrees.*

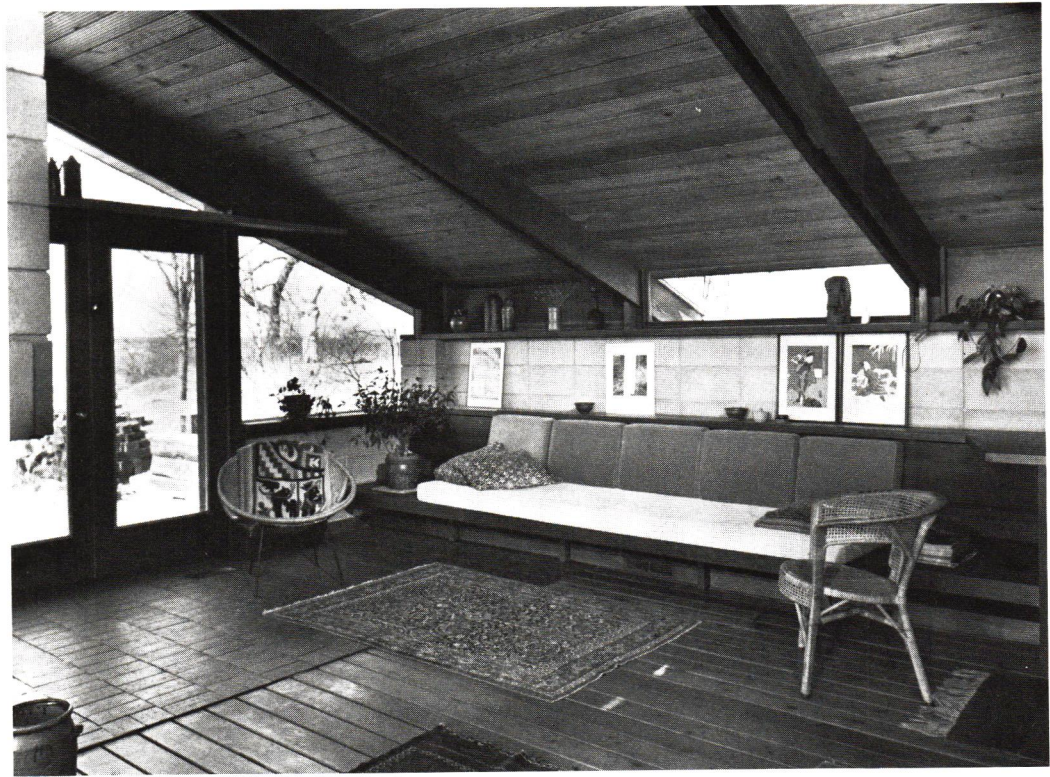






*Mike McGuire's own house is on a flat site along a steep bluff facing south and overlooking the St. Croix river not far from Stillwater, Minnesota.*





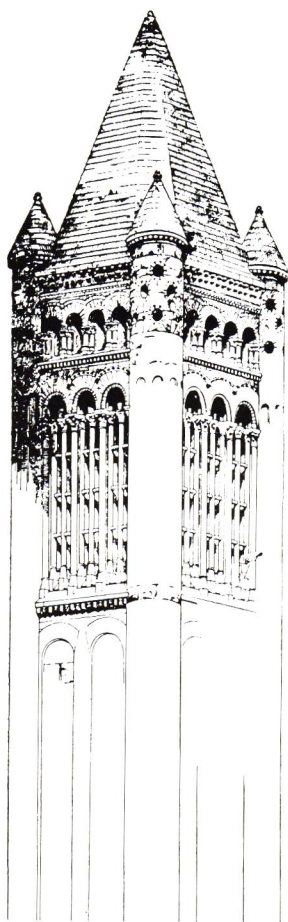
*The form of the house was determined by a desire for maximum sunlight but with an eye towards control of it. The solid doors on the east and west ends ventilate and open up for summer and close tightly for the winter months.*

*The house is built of concrete blocks and beveled cedar siding walls. The beams are fir and the deck is of 2 by 6 planks. The entire house is built on a 6 foot module.*





## Book Reviews



**ILLINOIS ARCHITECTURE** *From Territorial Times to the Present, A Selective Guide*, by Frederick Koeper. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968. 304 pp., illus., \$10.00 cloth, \$1.95 paper.

**THE ARCHITECTURE OF WISCONSIN** by Richard W. E. Perrin. The Society Press, Madison, 1967. 175 pp., illus., \$7.50.

**SIXTY SKETCHES OF IOWA'S PAST & PRESENT** by William J. Wagner, FAIA. Brown and Wagner, Des Moines, 1967. xiii plus 179 pp., illus., \$8.95.

**MINNESOTA HOUSES, An Architectural & Historical View**, by Roger Kennedy. Dillon Press, Minneapolis, 1967. 276 pp., illus., \$8.50.

**ARCHITECTURE IN MICHIGAN, A Representative Photographic Survey**, by Wayne Andrews. Wayne State University, Detroit, 1967. unpag., illus., \$6.95 cloth, \$2.95 paper.

**LANDMARK ARCHITECTURE OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA** by James D. Van Trump and Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr. Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, Pittsburgh, 1967. viii plus 294 pp., illus., \$8.50.

**THE ARCHITECTURE OF HISTORIC RICHMOND** by Paul S. Dulaney. University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1968. 208 pp., illus., \$2.45 paper.

**THE BUILDING ART IN ST. LOUIS: TWO CENTURIES, A Guide to the Architecture of the City and Its Environs**, by George McCue. St. Louis Chapter AIA, St. Louis, 1967. 104 pp., illus., \$2.50 paper.

**A CENTURY OF PORTLAND ARCHITECTURE** by Thomas Vaughan and George A. McMath. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, 1967. 226 pp., illus., \$2.50 paper.

**A GUIDE TO PORTLAND ARCHITECTURE**, Edited by Richard E. Ritz, AIA, et al. Portland Chapter AIA, Portland, 1968. 75 pp., illus., \$2.00 paper.

During the past several months a great many books have been published concerning regional architecture. These volumes vary widely in size, format and content, but are for the most part, of good to excellent quality.

Probably the most ambitious of these projects has been *Illinois Architecture*, edited by Frederick Koeper. This book has had the advantage of being sponsored by the State of Illinois or rather, the Illinois Sesquicentennial Commission as a "Means for commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the admission of the State to the Union". One wonders if the 150 buildings included are supposed to represent one for each year of the State's life.

*Illinois Architecture* covers a wide variety of structures throughout the state. Most of the great names are here, Wright, Sullivan, Burnham & Root, and Griffin as well as many lesser known figures. Koeper has had the good sense to include an occasional piece of anonymous excellence and sprinkled the book with some buildings of interest primarily from an historical point of view rather than as architecture. They are arranged alphabetically by location which is a bit confusing at first, and the lack of any maps also reduces its value. Considering, however, the monumental task of selecting only 150 significant structures in the State of Illinois without leaning too heavily on Chicago, editor Koeper has done a creditable job.



Illinois' neighbor to the north gets a somewhat different treatment by Richard W. E. Perrin in his collection of essays *The Architecture of Wisconsin*. Dick Perrin knows Wisconsin and her buildings, and he writes about his subject as though it were a very personal thing. It obviously is. The sixteen essays included here were first published in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* and have been revised only slightly for the current volume. The author makes no claim to be a scholar but the text is carefully footnoted and many "scholars" could do well to follow Mr. Perrin's example.

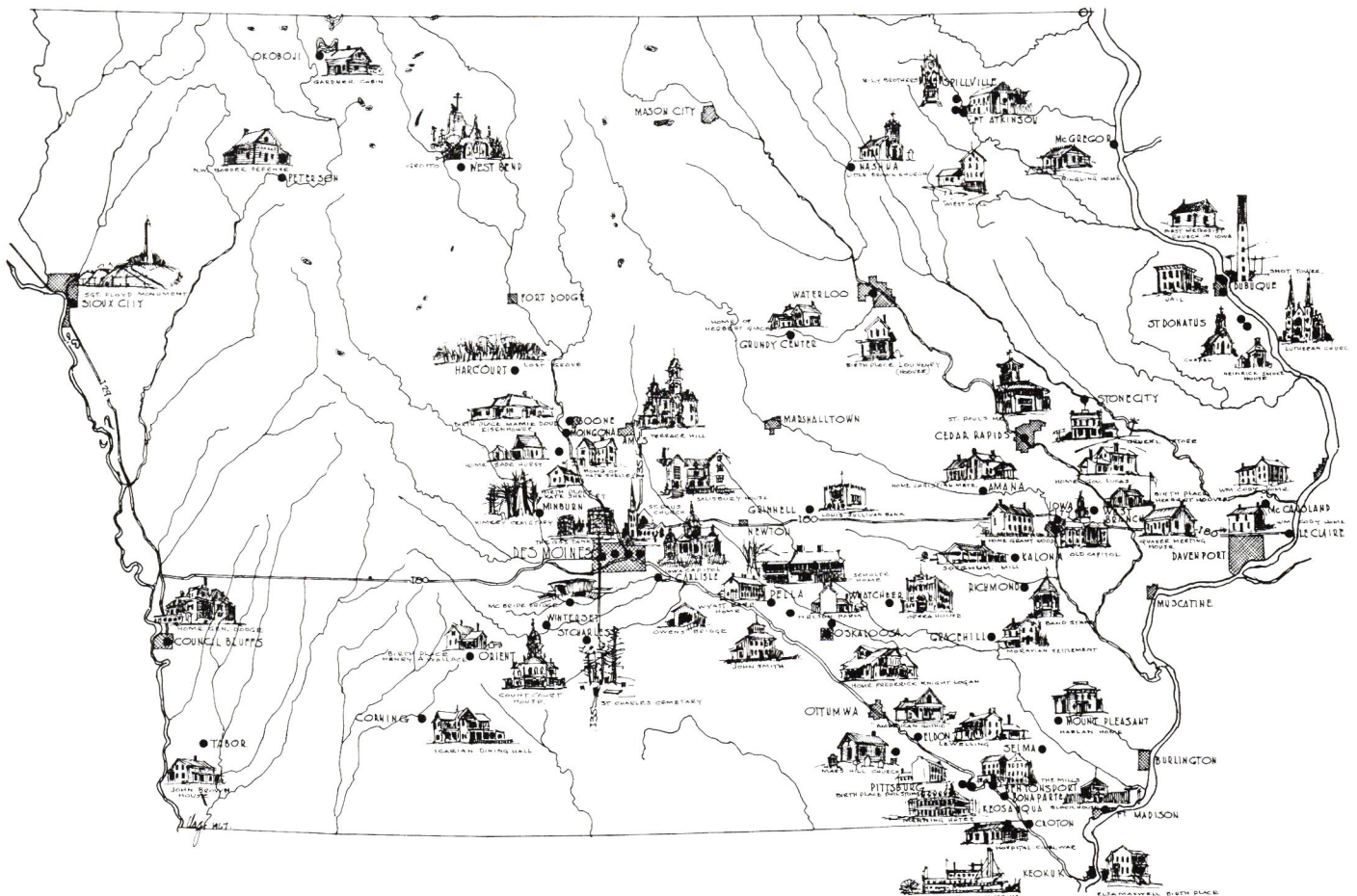
Wisconsin had and still has a broad variety of interesting historical buildings. Germans, Finns and Scandinavians all were much in evidence in the latter half of the nineteenth century and they left the mark of their heritage before taking the native stone and wood in hand to build an architecture peculiar to Wisconsin. The turn of the century saw great Victorian and Romanesque piles as well as creditable neoclassic work. The book ends with a chapter on Wisconsin's own Frank Lloyd Wright who built as well in his own state

as in an other.

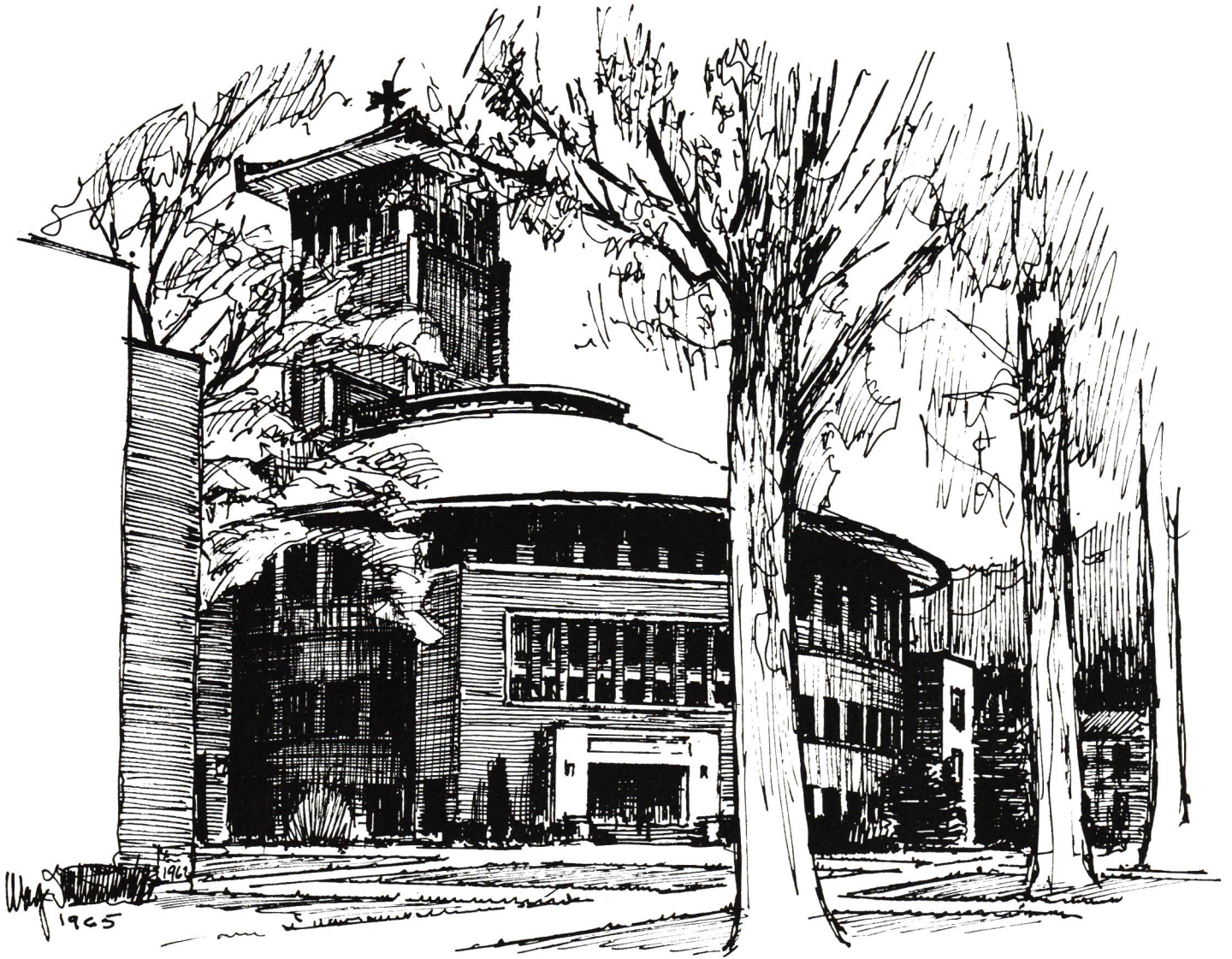
Perhaps the most important portion of this book comes in the introduction where Mr. Perrin outlines the need for preservation of Wisconsin's architectural heritage and suggests means for doing so. An interesting concept of his is to establish a series of outdoor museums or parks in which important buildings could be kept, often in their original settings, for the enjoyment of future generations. This would sometimes require the physical movement of structures which is not always desirable but may ultimately be the only means of saving them.

This is a nicely produced book with pages handsomely laid out. Photographs by the author are excellent, with a few done in green-black duotone. It is not a guidebook, rather it has been written strictly for the pleasure of the reader.

For too many years to count "Bill" Wagner has carried his sketch pad with him as he traveled Iowa and the world. In *Sixty Sketches of Iowa's Past & Present* he shares his talent with those of us who







wish we too could dispense with a camera and catch the spirit of a scene in a few strokes of pen or pencil. The title is misleading — actually there are nearly twice 60 sketches in this book. There are sixty brief essays about the sketches all from tapes made by architect Wagner and edited by Mrs. Donna M. Brown. John M. Henry has contributed the forward.

Any visitor to Iowa should have a copy of this book at his side while traveling. The convenient end paper maps will aid in finding the original buildings from which the sketches were made.

One important footnote not included in the book should be noted here. Many of the buildings illustrated would not still survive were it not for author William J. Wagner, FAIA. A preservationist of long standing he has been active in many ways including service on the AIA's Historic Buildings Committee, in seeing to it that Iowa's architectural heritage is both appreciated and preserved.

The State of Minnesota has a wealth of architectural excellence and a good portion of those buildings have been seen by Roger Kennedy. Like the authors of the books above, Kennedy is not a professional historian. The men previously named are all architects, however. Mr. Kennedy is a businessman who loves Minnesota's architecture and her history. Thus, *Minnesota Houses* also is in a category of its own.

Mr. Kennedy has written of Minnesota's buildings as they relate to the culture of the state's population. He has taken care to subtly point out that most of our indigenous architecture, whether designed by professionals or not, is a direct reflection of the persons involved. This point of view serves well in a book such as this one.

The book is divided in a roughly chronological manner covering work of the pioneers, ethnic groups, the various classic styles and ending with



the progressive work of Frank Lloyd Wright and his contemporaries, particularly Purcell and Elmslie.

Each of the various chapters has appeared previously, usually in slightly different form, in the Picture magazine of the Minneapolis *Tribune*. This may explain the variation in scholarship for the different chapters. Some are extensively footnoted, others not at all. Several appendices are included along with a glossary and a map of Minnesota.

*Architecture in Michigan* is primarily a photo essay of selected important structures in Michigan. Its author, Wayne Andrews, is Archives of American Art Professor at Wayne State University in Detroit.

Handsomely produced, with superb photographs, one wishes there were more than 105 photos of approximately 80 buildings. After a brief introduction, the text is confined to long captions. One notes the lack of plans but applauds the fact that most of the addresses are included. None of the photographs have been published before and many of the buildings are being seen in print for the first time. Several are by Wright, Albert Kahn is well represented and both Saarinen, Eliel and Eero, are included several times.

*Landmark Architecture of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania* by James D. Van Trump and Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr., is an example of a catalog of historic architecture, par excellence. With about 400 structures covered, each is named with address, architect, date, present use, etc. Following this, a description of each is given, varying from a few lines to a page or more. Most of the buildings are illustrated. All this scholarship is preceded by "An Introduction" by Mr. Ziegler and several pages of history by Mr. Van Trump. Finally, the book ends with several maps, a comprehensive bibliography and an excellent index. This work should serve as an example to all of the States now preparing their lists for inclusion in the National Register of the National Park Service authorized by Congress in 1967.

Just one step short of the book above is *The Architecture of Historic Richmond* by Paul S. Dulaney. In some ways the pocket sized book is even more useful. It opens with an historical survey of the city and its architecture and then moves into a format just slightly less comprehensive than the Pittsburg book by Van Trump and Ziegler. The buildings are covered in ten specific areas and a map for each is included with each site clearly shown. About 180 buildings are included. A chapter on historic preservation and two appendices concerning the 1964-65 inventory of historic buildings rounds out the volume. Finally an excellent

map is tucked in a pocket on the inside of the back cover.

Not all catalogs need be as comprehensive or as scholarly as the two just discussed above. For everyday use by interested architects and laymen, a simpler style and format is satisfactory. George McCue's *The Building Art in St. Louis* is a good example of such a useful guide. The current handbook is a revised and enlarged edition of a similar book prepared in 1964 for distribution at the National Convention of the American Institute of Architects.

This book follows the general format of the guidebooks above by including introduction, maps and descriptive material with a small photo of every building. Some major structures rate a full page. An index makes it an easy matter to find what you need.

This year's National AIA Convention is to be held in Portland, Oregon where two guides will be available. The first, *A Century of Portland Architecture* was prepared by Thomas Vaughan and George McMath in 1967 for the Oregon Historical Society. It includes only 68 existing landmark buildings. This limited but well balanced collection is illustrated with careful attention to detail in the text. A more comprehensive survey of Portland's architecture can be found in *A Guide to Portland Architecture*. This pocket sized handbook was prepared specifically for the 1968 AIA Convention under the editorship of Richard E. Ritz, AIA. About 300 buildings are included with more than half being illustrated. Addresses are given for most but many have no descriptive material. The buildings are divided into 25 districts with maps of each included in the body of the book. A larger map is tipped in on the back cover to aid in finding the various districts.

These books, in so many formats and of such varying style, have all been received within the past six months. They, along with others which have appeared in recent years and those which will appear in the future, form an archive of invaluable architectural data. They serve primarily to make us aware of the rich heritage we have in our relatively youthful nation.

In this era of mass demolition, urban renewal and reconstruction, it becomes increasingly apparent that we must recognize that architectural excellence of the past can often be preserved and used to provide the continuity and character that make our cities and urban areas more than mere bricks and mortar.

Reviewed by W. R. Hasbrouck, AIA



## Earl H. Reed, 1884-1968



Earl H. Reed, 83, dean of American architectural preservationists, passed away in Chesterton, Indiana on January 28, 1968. Mr. Reed had been ill for several months following a stroke he suffered upon completion of his Chicago IV Project for the Historic American Buildings Survey.

Mr. Reed entered the practice of architecture in 1914 after graduation from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and work at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He was chairman of the department of architecture at Armour Institute of Technology from 1924 through 1936. He was a past president of the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and served on the AIA's national committee on Historic Buildings for many years, having been chairman from 1951 until 1962.

Mr. Reed was an active participant in the Historic American Buildings Survey from its inception during the depression years. He received an award for meritorious service from the Secretary of the Interior for service on the advisory board on national parks, historic sites, buildings and monuments, on which he served from 1957 through 1963. He also received the Gold Medal of the Chicago Chapter of the AIA and the Edward C. Kemper Award for dedication to the preserving of historic architecture.

Mr. Reed was known throughout the United States for his activities in the field of preservation

of historical sites and buildings. He was considered an authority on Chicago architecture and was able to count many of the great and near great of the "Chicago School" among his acquaintances. He was a member of the Cliff Dweller's Club of Chicago and a Trustee of the Chicago School of Architecture Foundation. His library will go to the Chicago School of Architecture Foundation to form the nucleus of a collection which will bear his name.

### Preview

The next issue of *The Prairie School Review* will be devoted to the Prairie architecture of a small city in Iowa. Mason City is the site of one of the most charming planned communities in the midwest, Rock Glen. It was here that Walter Burley Griffin came in the early years of the twentieth century to build one of the largest concentrations of Prairie houses before or since. Others, including Wright, Byrne, and Griffin's wife, Marion Mahoney Griffin, also shared in building Rock Glen. Today it remains, with the charm of more than 50 years of life, still as significant as ever. The article has been prepared by a resident of Rock Glen who has devoted several years of evenings and weekends to telling the complete story of the community, its residents and its planners.

We also expect to include some of the work of a contemporary architect who has done some interesting and important work in Iowa and elsewhere.

The following books will be reviewed:  
*Architecture in California*

David Gebhard and Harriette  
Von Breton

*Henry Hobson Richardson and His Work*

Marianna van Renssalaer

*The Meanings of Architecture: John Wellborn Root*  
Donald Hoffmann, Editor

Letters to the editors are always welcome, particularly those containing critical comments concerning the content of *The Prairie School Review*. We also continue to be interested in articles for possible publication. Authors should submit outlines to the editors for review prior to completing their manuscripts.

After September 1, 1968, correspondence should be directed to the editors at 12509 South 89th Avenue, Palos Park, Illinois 60464.



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- Ellis collections of drawings and letters. Minnesota Historical Society.
- Ellis collection. University of Rochester (to receive Mrs. Donald M. Gazley's family papers).
- Microfilm files of Rochester newspapers (1870-1904), Mr. Blake McKelvey, City Historian of Rochester, New York.



