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THE WRITINGS OF RUSSELL STURGIS AND PETER B. WIGHT: THE VICTORIAN ARCHITECT AS CRITIC AND HISTORIAN

by

MARJORIE A. PEARSON

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1999

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

THE WRITINGS OF RUSSELL STURGIS AND PETER B. WIGHT: THE VICTORIAN ARCHITECT AS CRITIC AND HISTORIAN

by

Marjorie A. Pearson

Adviser: Professor Rosemarie Haag Bletter

The focus of this dissertation is on the writings of Russell Sturgis (1836-1909) and Peter B. Wight (1838-1925). As part of a movement that professionalized the practice of architecture in the United States, they brought an awareness of the role of architecture to a larger public, both through their buildings and their writings. Their joint beginnings in the American Pre-Raphaelite movement led to their journalistic endeavors in the *New Path*, published between 1863 and 1865 in New York City. As proselytizers for Ruskinianism in their architectural work and words, this pervasive force was to remain an important influence throughout their writing careers. The concurrent functionalist influence of Viollet-le-Duc was equally important. As they reflected these currents in their writings and sought to forge an ideal drawn from both Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, they were in turn able to influence their contemporaries.

This study analyzes the various ideas and themes they shared -- truth in design; the nature of architectural style as a vehicle for truthful architecture; the problem of architecture as an art, even while the architect had to be a businessman; sound construction and especially fireproof construction and its implication for architectural design; and the nature and role of architectural criticism. Very few of Sturgis's and

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Wight's buildings survive, and the Victorian Gothic style in which they designed fell out of favor, but their prolific writings, which reflect their shift away from strict Ruskinian dogma to an ideal of "truthfulness" in design fashioned from Ruskin and the functionalism of Viollet-le-Duc, remain as a guide to interpreting many aspects of the development of American architecture in the second half of the nineteenth century. Overlooked or ignored by earlier scholars who have not found them to be sufficiently "modern," Sturgis and Wight can be better appreciated and analyzed as we have gained more knowledge and perspective on the development of nineteenth-century America and its architecture.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation has been very long in making. I initially became aware of Peter B. Wight and his architecture through Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church, located on West 142nd Street in Manhattan. This building, which was designated a New York City Landmark in 1975, had been constructed in 1902-04, using the exterior stonework of Wight's National Academy of Design. The research done for that designation by the late Ellen Weil Kramer made me aware of the Ruskinian antecedents of Wight's design and peaked my interest in his works and writings. I discovered the writings of Russell Sturgis through the Ph.D. dissertation of John Peter Simoni, "Art Critics and Criticism in 19th-Century America" (Ohio State University, 1952) read in conjunction with coursework in American art undertaken with William Gerdts. My interest in the development of architecture as a profession in the United States of the nineteenth century led to an awareness of the concomitant development of architectural journalism and architectural criticism. Sturgis and Wight, with their extensive lifelong connections including a shared aesthetic and philosophical background, were pivotal in this movement and prolific in their writings.

My initial dissertation advisor, the late Eugene Santomasso, encouraged me to analyze the writings of Sturgis and Wight together, rather than deal with one or the other. His direction and comments on the first draft of my dissertation helped me to sharpen the focus of this work. Rosemarie Haag Bletter, who succeeded him, has been equally helpful. The members of my examining committee also provided useful input to the final version.

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The research necessary to prepare this dissertation would not have been possible without the resources of the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library and the Butler Library at Columbia University and the New York Public Library and the superb staff members who do so much to make those resources available to researchers.

Paul E. Sprague introduced me to the excitement of architectural history at the University of Chicago. The experience of working for the late Henry-Russell Hitchcock provided me inspiration and an example I have sought to emulate.

I must also acknowledge the encouragement of several chairmen, especially Gene Norman and David Todd, Commissioner Sarah Bradford Landau, and many staff members, past and present, of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, including Janet Adams, Betsy Bradley, David Breiner, Gale Harris, Virginia Kurshan, Dorothy Miner, Joan Olshansky, Matthew Postal, Charles Savage, Jay Shockley, and Elisa Urbanelli. During my tenure at the Landmarks Preservation Commission, several of us have gone through various stages of the dissertation research and writing process. The mutual support we were able to offer each other has been beneficial. Other colleagues who have provided help and encouragement include Barry Bergdoll, Mary Beth Betts, Mary B. Dierickx, Andrew Dolkart, Nancy Goeschel, and Nancy Evans Hays.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vi

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ix

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR PERIODICALS xv

INTRODUCTION 1

Chapter

1. CRITICAL BEGINNINGS: NEW YORK AND CHICAGO IN THE FORMATIVE YEARS 18

2. PROFESSIONALISM AND THE EDUCATION OF THE ARCHITECT 63

3. THE PROBLEM OF STYLE 96

4. ARCHITECTURE AS ART 138

5. THE ART AND PRACTICE OF FIREPROOFING 219

6. THE ROLE OF THE CRITIC 282

CONCLUSION 328

ILLUSTRATIONS 334

BIBLIOGRAPHY

General Background 410
Background on Russell Sturgis 417
Background on Peter B. Wight 419
Books by Russell Sturgis 421
Reviews of Books by Russell Sturgis 422
Periodical Articles by Russell Sturgis 424
Books by Peter B. Wight 438
Periodical Articles by Peter B. Wight 439

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. Free Academy of the City of New York (later City College), from *King's Handbook of New York* (Boston: Moses King Publishing Co., 1893), 269

Fig. 2. All Souls' Unitarian Church, New York. Photograph from the New-York Historical Society

Fig. 3. New York Custom House (later United States Sub-Treasury, now Federal Hall), from *King's Handbook of New York* (Boston: Moses King Publishing Co., 1893), 698

Fig. 4. New York Merchants Exchange, later National City Bank. Photograph from Library of Congress

Fig. 5. A. T. Stewart Department Store, Broadway between Reade and Chambers Streets, New York, from *New York Herald*, 26 Sept. 1846

Fig. 6. Astor Library, Lafayette Street, New York, from *King's Handbook of New York* (Boston: Moses King Publishing Co., 1893), 326

Fig. 7. Trinity Church, New York. Photograph from Library of Congress

Fig. 8. Grace Church, New York, from Robert Dale Owen, *Public Architecture* (New York: Putnam, 1849)

Fig. 9. St. George's Church, Stuyvesant Square, New York, from Library of Congress

Fig. 10. Illinois Central Railroad Depot and Freight House, Chicago. Photograph from Illinois Central Railroad

Fig. 11. St. James Church, Chicago. Photograph from Chicago Historical Society

Fig. 12. National Academy of Design, New York, from *The Builder* 25 (12 January 1867): 29

Fig. 13. New York Crystal Palace, from Museum of the City of New York

Fig. 14. Terrace Bridge in Central Park with Jacob Wrey Mould. Photograph from New York Public Library

Fig. 15. Church of Divine Paternity, New York, from *King's Handbook of New York* (Boston: Moses King Publishing Co., 1893), 387

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Fig. 16. John B. Sherman House, Chicago, from *American Art and Building News* 1 (30 Sept. 1876)

Fig. 17. Montauk Building, Chicago, from A.T. Andreas, *History of Chicago* (Chicago, 1884-86)

Fig. 18. The Rookery, Chicago. Photograph from the Library of Congress

Fig. 19. Design for an ideal church by A.W. Pugin, from *True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (London, 1841)

Fig. 20. Ruskin's drawings of windows of Early Gothic palaces, from *Stones of Venice* (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1880) 2: pl. 17

Fig. 21. Viollet-le-Duc's design for a concert hall in stone, iron, and brick, from *Entretiens sûr l'architecture* (Paris, 1864)

Fig. 22. Diagram from article on "Construction," in Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française*. (Paris, 1854)

Fig. 23. Trinity Chapel, New York, from *King's Handbook of New York* (Boston: Moses King Publishing Co., 1893), 346

Fig. 24. Cast-iron building on Broadway designed by Russell Sturgis, from Thomas DeLeeuw, *Both Sides of Broadway* (New York, 1910), 248

Fig. 25. Administration Building on the Court of Honor, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, from *Photographs of the World's Fair* (Chicago, 1894)

Fig. 26. Byzantine architecture as exemplified by the Hagia Sophia, Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey), from Banister F. Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, 5th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 201

Fig. 27. Temple of Hera II, popularly called the Temple of Neptune, Paestum, from Russell Sturgis, *The Appreciation of Architecture*, 7th ed. (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1913), pl. I

Fig. 28. Temple of Castor and Pollux, Rome, and Temple of Mars Ultor, Rome, from Russell Sturgis, *The Appreciation of Architecture*, 7th ed. (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1913), pl. X

Fig. 29. Forum of Nerva, Rome, from Russell Sturgis, *The Appreciation of Architecture*, 7th ed. (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1913), pl. XIV

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Fig. 30. Bayard Building, New York, designed by Louis H. Sullivan. Photograph by Wurts Brothers

Fig. 31. Reid Murdoch Building, Chicago. Photograph by Chicago Architectural Photographing Co.

Fig. 32. Madison Square Garden, New York, from Russell Sturgis, "Great American Architects Series: The Works of McKim, Mead & White," *Architectural Record* (May 1895): 15

Fig. 33. Theater of the Maison du Peuple, Brussels. Photograph by F. Stoedtner

Fig. 34. Hamilton Hall at Columbia College, New York, designed by Charles Coolidge Haight, from Russell Sturgis, "Great American Architects Series: The Works of Charles C. Haight," *Architectural Record* (July 1899): 7

Fig. 35. Boston Public Library, Boston, designed by McKim, Mead & White. Photograph from Library of Congress

Fig. 36. House of William Ward, Portchester, New York. Photograph from Portland Cement Association

Fig. 37. Loft building designed by Richard Morris Hunt at 476 Broadway, from *American Architect and Building News* 1 (15 July 1876)

Fig. 38. Manhattan Life Insurance Co. Building, New York. Photograph from New-York Historical Society

Fig. 39. American Surety Building, New York. Photograph from the Museum of the City of New York

Fig. 40. St. James Building, New York, from Russell Sturgis, "Great American Architects Series: The Works of Bruce Price," *Architectural Record* (June 1899): 13

Fig. 41. Whitehall Building, New York. Photograph from New-York Historical Society

Fig. 42. American Express Co. Building, Chicago, from *The Land Owner* (November 1872, Supplement)

Fig. 43. Champlain Building, Chicago. Photograph from Commercial Photographic Co.

Fig. 44. Marquette Building, Chicago. Photograph from Commercial Photographic Co.

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Fig. 45. Fisher Building, Chicago. Photograph from Commercial Photographic Co.

Fig. 46. Central Trading Company Building (later Mandel Brothers), Chicago. Photograph from Chicago Architectural Photographing Co.

Fig. 47. Carson, Pirie Scott & Co. Store, Chicago. Photograph from Chicago Architectural Photographic Co.

Fig. 48. DeVinne Press Building, New York. Photograph from New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

Fig. 49. Judge Building, New York, from Russell Sturgis, "Great American Architects Series: The Works of McKim, Mead & White," *Architectural Record* (May 1895): 64

Fig. 50. Powerhouse of the Schoenhofen Brewery, Chicago. Photograph from Municipal Reference Library of Chicago

Fig. 51. View of main hall of the Vanderbilt House, New York, from Russell Sturgis, "Great American Architects Series: The Works of George B. Post," *Architectural Record* (June 1898): 5

Fig. 52. William Kent House, Tuxedo Park, New York, from William Sheldon, *Artistic Country Seats* (New York, 1887)

Fig. 53. T.B. Burnham Residence, Tuxedo Park, New York, from Russell Sturgis, "Great American Architects Series: The Works of Bruce Price," *Architectural Record* (June 1899): 50

Fig. 54. Marshall Field House, Chicago. Photograph from Chicago Historical Society

Fig. 55. E.W. Blatchford Residence, Chicago. Photograph from More Collection, Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago

Fig. 56. Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul, Minnesota. Photograph from Library of Congress

Fig. 57. Yorkville Branch, New York Public Library. Photograph from New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (Stephen Senigo)

Fig. 58. St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, New York. Photograph from New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (John Barrington Bayley)

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Fig. 59. Yale School of the Fine Arts (later Street Hall), Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. Photograph from Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago

Fig. 60. Winona Savings Bank, Winona, Minnesota, from David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 383

Fig. 61. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Photograph from Library of Congress

Fig. 62. New York Stock Exchange, New York. Photograph from Library of Congress

Fig. 63. Porch of St. Bartholomew's Church, New York, from *Architectural and Decorative Features of St. Bartholomew's Church in the City of New York*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1956)

Fig. 64. West front of Trinity Church, Boston, from Russell Sturgis, "Great American Architects: The Works of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge and Peabody & Stearns," *Architectural Record* (July 1896): 43

Fig. 65. Advertisement for the Wight Fireproofing Company, from *American Architect and Building News* 10 (5 January 1884)

Fig. 66. Mutual Life Insurance Co. Building, New York. Photograph from New-York Historical Society

Fig. 67. Drake and Wight patent for fireproof columns of iron, Patent No. 154,852, Sept. 8, 1874

Fig. 68. Johnson and Kreischer patent for hollow-tile floor, Patent No. 112,926, Mar. 21, 1871

Fig. 69. Tribune Building, New York. Photograph from Prints and Drawings Collection, Octagon Museum, American Architectural Foundation

Fig. 70. Home Insurance Building, Chicago. Photograph by J.W. Taylor

Fig. 71. Revell Building, Chicago. Photograph from Kaufmann & Fabry Co.

Fig. 72. Diagram of "slow-burning" mill construction, from *Engineering Magazine* 2 (November 1891): 148.

Fig. 73. Stairway of St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, New York, from *Brickbuilder* 10 (Sept. 1901): 188

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Fig. 74. View of fire damage in the A.H. Revell & Co. Store, from *Fireproof* 3 (October 1903)

Fig. 75. Ayer Building, also known as the McClurg Building, Chicago. Photograph from Commercial Photographic Co.

Fig. 76. Frontispiece from Banister F. Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, 5th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR PERIODICALS

AABN	*American Architect and Building News*
ARec	*Architectural Record*
ARev	*Architectural Review and American Builders Journal*
ARev (Boston)	*Architectural Review* (Boston)
BB	*Brickbuilder*
BP	*Building Progress*
FP	*Fireproof Magazine*
HB	*House Beautiful*
IA	*Inland Architect*
JAIA	*Journal of the American Institute of Architects*
JSAH	*Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*
NP	*New Path*
NYT	*New York Times*
WA	*Western Architect*

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INTRODUCTION

Russell Sturgis (1836-1909) and Peter B. Wight (1838-1925), whose writings are the subject of this study, were both born and grew up in New York City during the 1850s, a formative period in the city's development. The city was expanding rapidly in physical size and population, accompanied by much building which helped to establish its architectural character. Lifelong friends, Sturgis and Wight became professional colleagues in the practice of architecture, opening an office together in 1862, and in their writing, as co-editors and authors for most of the articles in the *New Path*, the journal of the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art, published between 1863 and 1865 in New York City. Linked by their passion for "truth in architecture" and their youthful enthusiasm for the writings of John Ruskin, they were among the co-founders of the Association, often called the American Pre-Raphaelite movement. Both were skillful architects and had active practices in New York City through the 1860s. Wight won early and lasting acclaim for the National Academy of Design (designed 1861, built 1863-65), while Sturgis was praised for several buildings at Yale University, namely Farnham Hall (1869-70), Durfee Hall (1871), and the Battell Chapel (1874-76), a few years later. Both used polychromatic Gothic-inspired architecture as a vehicle for "truthful" and functionally expressive design, working in a style which is now called Victorian Gothic, although Wight's initial design for the National Academy was of "astylar" Italian Romanesque inspiration. While Sturgis lived and worked in New York (with sojourns in Europe) throughout his professional career, Wight relocated to Chicago in 1871, continuing his architectural practice there. If they only had designed buildings,

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it is likely that they would be remembered merely as minor players in the story of architecture in New York and Chicago in the post-Civil War era. Because of the impressive growth of these two cities and their concomitant dominance of commerce on the East Coast and in the Midwest respectively, they not only were perceived as rivals but also attracted the greatest number of architects and set the standards for American architecture during the second half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. Wight would probably be remembered more than Sturgis because of the widespread fame accorded to the National Academy of Design.[1] This study is not of their buildings, interesting though they may be, but rather of the much broader influence of their architectural writings as well as what influenced them. As writers of architectural criticism and architectural history, they molded a profession that had not previously existed in the United States, providing an example for others to follow.

Sturgis and Wight began writing in the early 1860s and continued to do so until their deaths in 1909 and 1925 respectively. Their early advocacy of truthful design, as

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[1]The building was discussed in the British publication, *The Builder*: "New York National Academy of Design," 21 (21 Nov. 1863): 829; "The New York National Academy of Design," 25 (12 Jan. 1867): 21-22, illus. 28-29. Accounts (many of them by Sturgis) in American periodicals began shortly after construction, continuing into the twentieth century. See [Russell Sturgis], "The Conditions of Art in America," *North American Review* 102 (Jan. 1866): 1-24; [Charles Eliot Norton], review of *National Academy of Design* by P.B. Wight, *North American Review* 103 (Oct. 1866): 586-589; Susan Nichols Carter, "The National Academy of Design," *Appleton's Journal* 8 (21 Sept. 1872): 325-328; Russell Sturgis, "Architecture without Decoration," *Proceedings of the Architectural League of New York* (New York: Architectural League, 1889), 87, 91; Russell Sturgis, "Modern Architecture in Europe," *Architects and Builders Magazine* 5 (October 1903): 10; "The Metropolitan Building, New York City," *Architects and Builders Magazine* 6 (Jan. 1905): 145-146; Montgomery Schuyler, "Italian Gothic in New York," *ARec* 26 (July 1909): 46.

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derived from their studies of Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, in the *New Path* captured popular attention despite the periodical's limited circulation. For them, truthful architecture was good architecture. Such architecture rejected copyism and emphasized construction, or what Wight called "constructivism" or "constructive principles," namely, the use of forms and materials that expressed the construction methods and techniques of a building. Such architecture also had moral overtones and expressed a belief system which was shared by many of their contemporaries and which neither questioned. They continued to explore the manifestations of the theme of truthful design throughout their writing careers, as they dealt with architectural professionalism and education, the problem of style and evolution in architecture, the art of architecture, the need for sound construction (especially fireproof construction), and the role of the critic. Each dealt with these matters somewhat differently, but because of their close, lifelong associations, they regularly looked to each other as they wrote about these topics. For example, Wight used Sturgis's *European Architecture* as the basis for expounding his ideas about evolution in architecture, while Sturgis built on Wight's ideas about fireproofing to develop an aesthetic of fireproof architecture. As their reputations increased and the number and scope of various journals and newspapers expanded, they had ever more opportunities to express their views and influence others. Almost all of Wight's writings appeared in the architectural press and technical journals; most of Sturgis's critical writings appeared in periodicals which appealed to an educated general audience. His reporting on contemporary buildings and writings on architectural history were usually published in architectural journals.

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Sturgis and Wight were part of a movement that professionalized the practice of architecture in the United States and brought an awareness of the role of architecture to a larger public, both through their buildings and their writings. Architecture as a profession was barely found in the United States, except for a handful of architects in larger cities, prior to the Civil War. Moreover, accounts of architecture, whether reporting, historical analysis, or criticism, were extremely limited. Both Sturgis and Wight were prominent in the reorganization of the American Institute of Architects, the first professional organization for architects in the United States, in 1865; Sturgis was a founder of the Architectural League of New York in 1881, while Wight was involved in the Western Society of Architects, founded in 1884. They consistently advocated the importance of professional associations and societies. It was through their extensive writings on the role and professionalism of architecture and related activities that they were able to influence their fellow architects about the importance of architecture in shaping modern life. Their influence was profound, not just on their fellow architects but also on the public at large, as they forged a critical profession. The examples they had to follow were few: art critic and journalist Clarence Cook, who also wrote for the *New Path* as well as other journals in New York City, and the German-born and -trained architect Leopold Eidlitz who published in the short-lived *Crayon* in the 1850s. Sturgis and Wight began writing early in their careers and continued to write, they were prolific, and they displayed a breadth of knowledge and interests which captured the attention of their readers and helped to set standards for architectural writing.

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Sturgis and Wight were highly regarded by their contemporaries for their professional activities and writings, as witnessed by numerous laudatory obituaries in 1909 and 1925 respectively.[2] Despite the length and diversity of their careers, they have been dealt with only incidentally in more recent literature on nineteenth-century American architecture, even as scholars have explored various aspects of that topic. Initial revival of interest in the two occurred in conjunction with the rediscovery and examination of the American Pre-Raphaelite movement, starting in 1953 with David Howard Dickason, a literary historian, and culminating in a notable exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in 1985.[3] The American Pre-Raphaelite movement was largely inspired by the works and writings of John Ruskin. Historians beginning with Henry-Russell Hitchcock, in discussing the publication history of Ruskin in the United States

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[2]See, for example, for Sturgis: Everett P. Wheeler, "Russell Sturgis," *City College Quarterly* 5 (March 1909): 10-11; Montgomery Schuyler, "Russell Sturgis," *ARec* 25 (March 1909): 220; Montgomery Schuyler, "Russell Sturgis," *Scribner's Magazine* 45 (May 1909): 635-636; Robert Craik McLean, "Russell Sturgis," *WA* 13 (March 1909): 29; Peter B. Wight, "Reminiscences of Russell Sturgis," *ARec 26* (Aug. 1909): 123-131. For Wight: Irving K. Pond and Arthur Woltersdorf, "Obituary. Peter Bonnett Wight," *JAIA* 13 (October 1925): 386; Robert Craik McLean, "Peter Bonnett Wight, F.A.I.A., An Obituary," *WA* 34 (October 1925): 100-103; Arthur Woltersdorf, "Peter Bonnett Wight, An Appreciation," *WA* 34 (October 1925): 103.

[3]David Howard Dickason, *The Daring Young Men* (Bloomington, Ind.: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1953) provides short biographical and critical synopses of Sturgis and Wight and their roles in the movement's journal, the *New Path.* Lawrence Wodehouse, "'New Path' and the American Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," *Art Journal* 25 (Summer 1966): 351-354, discusses the architectural views expressed by Sturgis, Wight, and others in the *New Path.* An impressive catalogue was published In conjunction with the Brooklyn Museum exhibition; see especially, Linda S. Ferber, "'Determined Realists': The American Pre-Raphaelites and the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art," in *The New Path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites* (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum, 1985): 11-37, for a discussion of the establishment of the movement and Sturgis's and Wight's role in it.

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and in analyzing Ruskin's architectural influence in America, have traced the effect of Ruskin on Sturgis's and Wight's architectural works. None of these studies focuses on the writings of Sturgis and Wight during this period.[4]

Monographs on Wight by Michael Klare Thomas and Sarah Bradford Landau have dealt more with his works than with his writings.[5] The only recent account of Sturgis's career, by Karin Alexis, has discussed both his architecture and his critical writings.[6] These studies have all provided valuable information about Wight and Sturgis,

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[4]Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "Ruskin and American Architecture, or Regeneration Long Delayed," in *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, ed. John Summerson (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968): 166-208, demonstrates the influence of Ruskin in the works of Sturgis and Wight, especially the National Academy of Design. Roger Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967) establishes a useful overview of Ruskin within the larger context of nineteenth-century American thought, but architectural problems are not his main concern. David T. Van Zanten, "Jacob Wrey Mould: Echoes of Owen Jones and the High Victorian Styles in New York, 1853-1865," *JSAH* 28 (March 1969): 41-57, discusses the influence of Ruskin on the development of the High Victorian Gothic in Mould's work and its effect on such contemporary architects as Sturgis and Wight. Michael W. Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1987), chap. 13, discusses Ruskin's influence in America as a short-lived phenomenon, manifested in the work of such architects as Sturgis and Wight.

[5]Michael Klare Thomas, "The Life and Architecture of Peter Bonnet Wight," (M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1968), is a relatively brief study that does not deal at all with Wight's writings. Sarah Bradford Landau initially discussed the work of Wight and his writings on fireproofing in her doctoral dissertation, *Edward T. and William A. Potter: American Victorian Architects* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979), 120-122 and 239-241. Landau greatly expanded her study of Wight in an exhibition for the Art Institute of Chicago and related catalogue, *P.B. Wight: Architect, Contractor, and Critic, 1838-1925* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1981). While she discusses his role as a critic, she does not analyze his writings in any great detail.

[6]Karin May Elizabeth Alexis, "Russell Sturgis: Critic and Architect," (Ph. D. diss., University of Virginia, 1986).

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clarifying information that had been unclear or ambiguous, but they do not discuss the two of them together, except incidentally. Alexis establishes Sturgis's importance as a critic, discusses his critical writings in relation to his architecture, and focuses particularly on his criticism of American architecture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Wichit Charernbhak has discussed the writings of both Sturgis and Wight only as they deal with Chicago School architects.[7] My study looks at the writings of both in a broader framework, examining their historical as well as critical perspectives, and their relationship to each other. Sturgis and Wight had joint beginnings in the American Pre-Raphaelite movement which led to their journalistic endeavors in the *New Path.* As proselytizers for Ruskinianism in their architectural work and words, this pervasive force was to remain an important influence throughout their writing careers. The concurrent functionalist influence of Viollet-le-Duc was equally important. Ruskinianism and functionalism were the major currents shaping later nineteenth-century American architectural thought and work. As trained architects, Sturgis and Wight were able to bring a certain practical perspective to these sources. As they reflected these currents in their writings and sought to forge an ideal drawn from both Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, they were in turn able to influence their contemporaries. From a twentieth-century perspective, an analysis of the working out of these influences broadens our understanding of nineteenth-century American architectural thought.

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[7]Wichit Charernbhak, *Chicago School Architects and Their Critics* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1981), passim.

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Because the two were so close and shared so many common interests and viewpoints, it adds to our understanding of the writings of each to examine them together.

Given Sturgis's impact and influence it is surprising that not more has been written about him, even in reference to studies of other architects and critics. Wight, like many of his contemporaries, was an avid and diligent letter writer. David F. Ransom addressed this role in his study of George Keller, an architect who had apprenticed with Wight.[8]

The scholarly study of nineteenth-century American architecture also brought a growth of interest in nineteenth-century American architectural critics as well as American architectural journalists, most notably in Montgomery Schuyler because of his "proto-modern" sensibility.[9] William Jordy and Ralph Coe established a model for dealing with the writings of Schuyler which was subsequently followed by historians such as Donald Hoffmann and William H. Coles for the architects John W. Root and

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[8]David F. Ransom, *George Keller, Architect* (Hartford: Stowe-Day Foundation/Hartford Architectural Conservancy, 1978). The Stowe-Day collection contains 62 letters that Wight wrote to Keller. Most date from about the time of World War I; Wight retired in 1918 and moved to Pasadena, California. Ransom characterizes Wight's advice to Keller as "liberal helpings of common sense derived directly from facing the facts." Such as an assessment would have pleased Wight who considered himself to be a practical man.

[9]"Editors' Introduction," in *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1961), 2 vols. Jordy and Coe examine Schuyler's influence and explain the impact of Leopold Eidlitz on Schuyler. William John Thorn, "Montgomery Schuyler: The Newspaper Articles of a Protomodern Critic (1868-1907)," (Ph. diss., University of Minnesota, 1976), continues an examination of Schuyler's writings, contrasting his work favorably to the writings of contemporary critics, including Sturgis and Wight.

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Henry Van Brunt.[10] In this model, excerpts of the critic's (in the case of Schuyler) or architect's (in the case of Root and Van Brunt) writings, chosen to convey the editor's (Jordy and Coe's, Hoffmann's, or Coles's) sensibility, were selected, accompanied by biographical information and a general analysis of these writings, usually intended to show their relevance for present-day readers. Such an approach offers the reader firsthand experience of the critic's or architect's writings, which can be useful especially when these writings are found in sources that are otherwise inaccessible. While I do not follow this model for this study, it is one that Sturgis or Wight may merit in the future. Instead, I have analyzed the writings of Sturgis and Wight thematically, quoting passages to illustrate my points. This approach enables me to provide my reader a better understanding of the context in which they wrote and to explain their relationship to each other in greater detail.

The scholarly examination of American architectural periodicals has brought another perspective to nineteenth-century architectural journalism. Robert Vincent Prestiano's study of the *Inland Architect* and its founding editor, Robert Craik McLean, is particularly useful.[11] McLean went on to publish the *Western Architect.* Wight wrote for both publications, and Prestiano provides a detailed review of the themes that Wight

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[10]Donald Hoffmann, "Introduction," in *The Meanings of Architecture: Buildings and Writings by John Wellborn Root* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967); William H. Coles, "Introduction: The Writings," in *Architecture and Society: Selected Essays of Henry Van Brunt* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1969).

[11]Robert Vincent Prestiano, "'The Inland Architect': A Study of the Contents, Influence and Significance of Chicago's Major, Late Nineteenth-Century Architectural Periodical," (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1973).

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explored in the *Inland Architect*. The issue of architectural criticism and journalism has been examined somewhat more peripherally by contributors to *The Architectural Historian in America*, a 1990 study which grew out of a symposium on the development of this discipline. None of the essays discuss the writings of Sturgis or Wight.[12]

Sturgis and Wight shared a common educational background and training (as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1), a similar social background, and similar interests. Both married within a few months of each other in 1864, when they were managing the Sanitary Fair in New York's Union Square, to raise funds for the Union effort in the Civil War. In reminiscences written late in his life, Wight vividly depicts their youthful curiosity and enthusiasms. Their writings show shared ideas and themes -- truth in design; the nature of architectural style as a vehicle for truthful architecture; the problem of architecture as an art, even while the architect had to be a businessman; sound construction and its implication for architectural design; the nature and role of architectural criticism. Their shared outlook was undoubtedly a product of their friendship and mutual respect (in addition to the impact of Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc), and they regularly praised the other's work. Nonetheless, their approaches reflect their personalities and personal circumstances. Sturgis was a scholar and an intellectual as well as a more self-aware critic and historian. Curiously, although he had studied in Germany, he rarely wrote about German architecture or reviewed or referred to German

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[12]Elisabeth Blair MacDougall, ed., *The Architectural Historian in America* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1990). See especially, Mary N. Woods, "History in Early American Architectural Journals," and Suzanne Stephens, "Architecture Criticism in a Historical Context: The Case of Herbert Croly."

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architectural writers or critics. (His revision of the architectural history originally written by Wilhelm Lübke was a notable exception.[13]) As the oldest child of a prosperous merchant, Sturgis had sufficient supplemental income to travel widely in Europe and to purchase the architectural books and photographs which enabled him to prepare his scholarly studies from his home at 307 East 17th Street on Stuyvesant Square. In addition, he was blessed with a prodigious visual and verbal memory -- a major asset in the face of progressively failing eyesight for much of his adult life.[14] Despite this handicap, he continued to write about contemporary buildings throughout his career, relying on photographs, and in fact, his productivity seemed to increase as his eyesight failed. His family background and marriage also provided him with extensive social connections which further enhanced his career and standing, enabling him, for example, to play an important role in the founding of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1870 and the Avery Memorial Architectural Library at Columbia University in 1892. Among his close friends he counted Richard Watson Gilder, editor of *Scribner's* and the *Century*; William Crary Brownell, critic, editor, and literary advisor to the publisher, Charles Scribner's Sons; critic Montgomery Schuyler; and the artist John La Farge.[15]

In contrast to Sturgis, Wight approached his subjects as an enthusiast and with the practicality of an architect. The youngest child of a lawyer, he was more of a self-made

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[13]Wilhelm Lübke, *Outlines of the History of Art*, edited, minutely revised and largely rewritten by Russell Sturgis (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1904), 2 vols.

[14]Alexis, 38.

[15]*Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. "Sturgis, Russell" by T[albot] F[aulkner] H[amlin].

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man who had to support himself and his family through his architectural practice, fireproofing business, writing, and editing. A gregarious person, he involved himself in a wide variety of professional organizations and functions, which must have been an asset in his various business activities. While he traveled regularly between New York and Chicago in the 1870s and 1880s for business purposes, and to various cities in the eastern half of the United States for the American Institute of Architects, his only known travel abroad was to Norwich, England, in 1882, to marry his second wife, Marion Olney. While Wight used photographs to assist him in his analyses and critical assessments, he generally wrote about buildings that he knew from firsthand experience; hence the emphasis on New York and Chicago, as well as California architecture following his retirement and relocation to Pasadena.

I deal with the published works of Sturgis and Wight because that is how they were widely known and exercised their greatest influence. I undertook a comprehensive search for articles by Sturgis and Wight in contemporary periodical literature, primarily, but not exclusively, in architecture and trade publications, as well as periodicals of more general interest. I also believe that I have discovered all their published books; these, as well as the periodicals, are located primarily in the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, and in the New York Public Library. Manuscript and typescript materials in the Avery Archives for Sturgis and the Art Institute of Chicago for Wight are generally preliminary versions of their published writings. This study does not deal exhaustively with all of their published works, but it does cite and analyze the majority of their writings in the context of the thematic chapters which follow.

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Sturgis maintained his architectural practice under the name of Russell Sturgis, and also wrote under that name or Russell Sturgis, Jr., prior to his father's death in 1871, or just "R.S." Wight practiced architecture as P.B. Wight, but most of his articles were signed "Peter B. Wight" or "P.B.W." In the notes to the chapters which follow, I have carefully cited their names as they appear at the time of publication. In Wight's case, this helps to establish the shifts in his career from architect, to contractor, to writer and editor. Both published unsigned articles as well (see Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion of credit and attribution).

While reading the writings of Sturgis and Wight, I was struck by their shared interests, their mutual advocacy of the other's work, the parallels between them, and their lifelong insistence on "truth" and high standards. I have grouped their writings under specific topics, virtually all of which were shared by the two. (They were certainly not alone in their interests, but they had the opportunity and the means to make their viewpoints known.) This study looks at their shared themes and interests, and at their approaches, to explore their influence on each other as well as on their reading public. In each of the six chapters which follow, I discuss and analyze an important aspect of their writings, relating their perspectives to each other as well as setting this theme into the broader contemporary cultural context . I have chosen to order the chapters in a manner that begins with their early architectural and writing careers, then their efforts in establishing standards for education and professionalism, which, in turn, leads to various "artistic" aspects of architecture.

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Chapter 1 establishes the critical beginnings of Sturgis and Wight, what was happening in New York and Chicago (the two most important cities in the United States for establishing the standards for architecture in the nineteenth century) that shaped their careers and their writings and especially the themes they explored in the *New Path.* First and foremost of these themes was the necessity of the architect to seek after what they called truth in design. The implications of following this tenet are manifested in various ways, as I discuss in the chapters that follow. This chapter also looks at the significance of the National Academy of Design, as it provides the first full-blown model for Victorian Gothic architecture in the United States.

Chapter 2 deals with professionalism and the education of the architect. Because Sturgis and Wight perceived a lack in their own training and experiences, they were particularly active in fostering architectural professionalism, both through their writings and by example as they trained younger architects in their offices and assumed leadership roles in such architectural societies as the American Institute of Architects. At the same time, they dealt with the dilemma of the architect who wanted to design artistically (and thus "truthfully") while still running a business. They also grappled with the issue of architectural competitions, a subject of intense discussion among contemporary architects, and how they could benefit both the cause of professionalism and good, truthful design. In looking at the issue of architectural education, Sturgis contrasted what the aspiring architect could learn in school -- a scientific knowledge of the principles of modern construction, architectural theory, and the history and traditions of architecture --

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with what he could learn in practice -- the fundamentals of design, particularly those developed by drawing and modeling, and a knowledge and love of materials.

Chapter 3, "The Problem of Style," explores their concern with the nature of style, and its historic development, as a vehicle for truthful architecture, a theme that appeared as early as their writings in the *New Path*, in which they explained the articles of the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art. Both shared a romanticizing view of Gothic architecture and the role of the stone carvers in creating the sculpture which was such an integral part of that architecture. Stone carvers had played such a role in the National Academy of Design, following the precedent of the University Museum at Oxford (1855-61), designed by Deane & Woodward. Nonetheless, Sturgis stated that no medieval style, whether the round arch of the Romanesque or the pointed arch of the Gothic, could be the basis for modern office buildings and similar building types. Thus this discussion of style shows their acceptance of the idea of evolution (still a fairly new concept in philosophical thought) to explain how architectural styles develop and change incrementally to bring forth new styles and also artistic architecture. They also acknowledged non-Western architecture as a subject for study. In addition, this chapter looks at the importance of their writings in architectural history.

Style, while very important to them and their contemporaries, is a subset of a much broader topic, "Architecture as Art," the subject of Chapter 4. This often elusive concept is the heart of this study. Also this idea was central to the establishment of an American architecture during the second half of the nineteenth century. Above all, Sturgis and Wight sought to encourage the art of architecture as an embodiment of

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certain principles through their writings for other architects and for intelligent, well-to-do readers who were potential clients of those architects, by criticism of architectural shortcomings and praise of successful achievements. How architects approached and solved new problems of architecture -- the new building types, the new materials or old materials used in new ways, and new methods -- most captured their attention. If architects were successful, they created architecture that was modern and of its time and thus artistic. In addition, the appropriate use of sculpture and other decoration and the quality of that sculpture and decoration had an important impact in determining the artistic merit of a work of architecture.

Chapter 5, "The Art and Practice of Fireproofing," focuses mostly on a very important aspect of Wight and his writing. While these are not critical writings (although the subject of fireproofing is touched on in Wight's critical writings), they set forth a history of modern fireproofing as a major component of sound construction and what this implied for architectural design. This is the perspective which most interested Sturgis. Wight's concern with fireproofing was very much an outgrowth of his early Ruskinian predilections. Through his passion and advocacy for improved fireproof construction, Wight set a standard and raised the awareness of the public and the architectural profession about a major issue in urban life which helped pave the way for modern buildings of the twentieth century.

The role of the critic, the subject of Chapter 6, focuses mostly on Sturgis, who sought to use the power of architectural criticism to foster and shape the art of architecture throughout his writing career. Sturgis wrote regularly for the architectural

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press, but most of his critical writings appeared in periodicals which appealed to an educated general audience. Through his writings on the topic of criticism as well as his example, he did much to establish a standard for professional critical writing, despite his regular protestations over the difficulty of dealing with visual arts using verbal means. I have gone beyond Alexis's study in my discussion of Sturgis and his self-conscious critical role, and this self-consciousness sets Sturgis apart from Wight and his fellow critics. Sturgis believed that it was the role of the critic to educate the public, which, once educated, could demand better architecture. Wight, by contrast, felt that the role of the critic was to educate architects with the goal of encouraging them to design good architecture as American architecture evolved.

This study aims to enhance our understanding of the writings of two fascinating, but neglected, nineteenth-century American architects. Very few of their buildings survive, and the Victorian Gothic style in which they designed fell out of favor, but their prolific writings, which reflect their shift away from strict Ruskinian dogma to an ideal of "truthfulness" in design fashioned as well from the functionalism of Viollet-le-Duc, remain as a guide to interpreting many aspects of the development of American architecture in the second half of the nineteenth century. Overlooked or ignored by earlier scholars who have not found them to be sufficiently "modern," Sturgis and Wight can be better appreciated and analyzed as we have gained more knowledge and perspective on the development of nineteenth-century America and its architecture. This is what I have set out to do.

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CHAPTER 1

CRITICAL BEGINNINGS: NEW YORK AND CHICAGO IN THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Russell Sturgis and Peter Bonnett Wight grew up in a New York City that was undergoing tremendous change. Born in 1836 and 1838 respectively, they lived in a city which was fast becoming the nation's commercial and cultural center as it experienced a tremendous growth in population (both native-born and immigrant), bringing an influx of capital and talent. Both Sturgis and Wight grew up in comfortable middle-class families in the area south of Union Square, a residential neighborhood that began to be built up in the 1830s. Sturgis was the son of Russell and Margaret Appleton Sturgis, one of three children. Russell Sr. was a shipping merchant and Commissioner of Pilots for the Port of New York.[1] Wight was the youngest of six children, the son of Amherst and Joanna Sanderson Wight. His father, a graduate of Brown University, was a lawyer.[2] Both went to local public schools, and, when the time came to further their education, attended the Free Academy (now known as City College) [Fig. 1], a tuition-free institution of higher learning located on Lexington Avenue between East 22nd and East 23rd Streets and

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[1]Russell Sturgis first appeared in *Doggett's New York City Directory* in 1843/44, and was listed as a marine surveyor boarding at Carlton House. The following year he was listed as living at 138 Tenth, then two years later at 164 Tenth between Third and Fourth Avenues. Under New York's current street numbering system this is 90 East 10th Street. Sturgis is first listed as a merchant in 1851. "Commissioner of Pilots" was a political appointment. The younger Sturgis signed many of his articles Russell Sturgis, Jr., until his father's death in 1872.

[2]The Wight family lived at 119 Spring Street, between Mercer and Greene Streets until 1846. Amherst Wight's home address is first given as 93 West 13th Street (near Sixth Avenue) in the 1846/47 directory.

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established in 1847 by the City of New York to provide a liberal secondary education for young men who had graduated from the "common schools" of the city.[3] Wight entered the Free Academy at the age of twelve,[4] graduating in 1855 with an A.B., two months short of his seventeenth birthday. He stayed on for an additional year to continue his studies in drawing.[5] Sturgis, while two years older than Wight, was less precocious, entering the Free Academy at age 15 in 1852 and graduating with his A.B. in 1856.[6]

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[3]Common schools educated pupils through what today would be considered the eighth grade. The Academy opened on January 15, 1849; 202 students were admitted the first year. The courses given to all were mathematics, history, composition and declamation, elements of moral science [ethics and philosophy], the constitution of the United States, drawing, bookkeeping, penmanship, and the Latin, French, and Spanish languages. See Landmarks Preservation Commission, *City College, City University of New York, North Campus, Designation Report* (LP-1036), report by James E. Dibble (New York: City of New York, 1981), 5. According to Gary Hermalyn, students were admitted after taking entrance exams and had to be at least twelve years old; the minimum age limit was eventually raised to fourteen. The program was five years long. In 1853, the Free Academy was given the authority to bestow college degrees and call itself the "Free College." A full four-year college course was introduced the next year with a sub-freshman preparatory course of one year. It became the City College of New York in 1866. *Morris High School and the Creation of the New York City Public High School System* (Bronx: Bronx County Historical Society, 1995), 6-7.

[4]Robert Craik McLean, "Peter Bonnett Wight, F.A.I.A., An Obituary," *WA* 34 (October 1925): 100.

[5]Ibid. Wight would have experienced the transition in the system from Free Academy to Free College, and the introduction of the five-year program.

[6]Everett P. Wheeler, "Russell Sturgis," *City College Quarterly* 5 (March 1909): 5. "A.B." was the manner in which the Free Academy specified its degree, rather than the "B.A." which is commonly used today for the undergraduate degree. When the Free Academy was established, its curriculum was more that of an academic high school than the undergraduate college it later became.

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During these years at the Free Academy, Sturgis and Wight, who had become fast friends, determined to become architects.[7] While the Free Academy did not offer courses in architecture, both received instruction in drawing and engineering. Writing many years later, Wight recounted how their interest was captured by the construction of All Souls' Unitarian Church (1854-55) at the southeast corner of 20th Street and Fourth Avenue [Fig. 2], which they passed on the way home, and by Jacob Wrey Mould's drawings for the building:

> And such drawings! I have never seen better ones since. . . . It became our habit every day to study those plans and compare them with the work being executed. . . . Our friendship was cemented by the study of Mould's drawings, and then we commenced to read architecture. We read all the books on the subject to be found in the college library, including a set of Ruskin's 'Seven Lamps' and 'Stones of Venice,' which had just come out, and Sturgis began to buy books, as he had more spare money than I had, and I began to devour them.[8]

Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849, published U.S. 1849) and *Stones of Venice* (1851, vol. 1; 1853, vols. 2 and 3; published U.S. 1851, vol. 1; 1860, vols. 2 and 3)[9] praised the medieval buildings of northern Italy and served as the pair's intellectual introduction to the use of polychromy. Mould's horizontally-striped church, of red brick

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[7]Peter B. Wight, "How Best *Now* to Study the Medieval Architecture of France with Some Confessions of a Retired Architect," *WA* 31 (April 1922): 52.

[8]Peter B. Wight, "Reminiscences of Russell Sturgis," *ARec* 26 (August 1909): 123. Wight's comments suggest that they actually looked at Mould's drawings and plans for the contractors on-site, as they stopped by every day on their way home.

[9]Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "Ruskin and American Architecture, or Regeneration Long Delayed," in *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, ed. John Summerson (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), 170, 172, gives the publication history.

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and yellowish Caen stone, was architectural polychromy exemplified. Although Ruskin's writings proved to be widely popular, Mould's All Souls' Church was a different story:

> That large class of persons who, though illy [sic] informed concerning architecture, are very fond of making seemingly wise and witty comments upon everything new, were treated to an entirely new sensation, and one which was destined to gratify to the fullest extent their yearning for a fruitful object of criticism. . . . the first attempt at color decoration on the exterior of a building was hailed with shouts of derision, . . . But the few who at first appreciated the work, saw in it the first budding of a new era.[10]

Thus Wight would seem to suggest that while Ruskin's ideas might be appreciated in the abstract, they were more difficult to understand when translated into an actual building. Nonetheless, Mould's work offered an approach to a new way of architectural design.

New York Architecture in the 1850s

What was the nature of New York's architecture during the 1850s? Contemporary accounts were often highly critical of its state, yet praised attempts to develop a cosmopolitan architectural expression. By 1855 the city south of 14th Street was dominated by a commercial midsection extending east and west of Broadway, the major street. The town of 60,000 inhabitants of 1800 had become a city of over half a million by 1850.[11] The ubiquitous brick and brownstone-fronted rowhouses, rarely designed by architects but rather by builders with plans adapted from pattern books, lined the streets of the residential sections, punctuated occasionally by spired churches. Broadway, of

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[10]W.[Peter B. Wight], "What Has Been Done and What Can Be Done," *NP* 1 (October 1863): 70.

[11]Ellen W. Kramer, "Contemporary Descriptions of New York City and Its Public Architecture ca. 1850," *JSAH* 27 (December 1968): 264.

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course, was characterized by commercial buildings, and overall the only constant seemed to be one of incessant change -- as pointed out by resident diarists Philip Hone and George Templeton Strong, poet-journalist Walt Whitman, and travelers from abroad.[12] John C. Myers's account was characteristic: "[The stranger from abroad] here sees that nothing is fixed, nothing is permanently settled."[13]

An influx of English and European architects, beginning in the late 1820s and 1830s, was a major force in changing the physical character of New York during Sturgis's and Wight's youth. Among them were the Englishmen Frederick Diaper, 1838; Henry Dudley, 1852; J.W. Mould, 1853; J.B. Snook, 1849; Griffith Thomas, 1839; Thomas Thomas, 1839; Richard Upjohn, 1845; Calvert Vaux, 1856; and Frank Wills, 1848; and the Germans Leopold Eidlitz, 1846; Henry Fernbach, 1856; Detlef Lienau, 1848; Frederick A. Petersen, 1850; and Alexander Saeltzer, 1844.[14] American-born architects who were making their impact on the city included A.J. Davis, 1827; Minard Lafever, 1831; James Renwick, 1843; and John Kellum, 1850. Talbot Hamlin discussed the rise of eclecticism in New York architecture of this period as it shifted away from the Greek Revival and Gothic Revival while responding to a desire for greater freedom in internal planning and exterior form and a need for new building types "which an emerging

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[12]Ibid., 267.

[13]Quoted in Ibid.

[14]The dates listed are for the establishment of their architectural practices in New York City, and are drawn from Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1980).

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industrialized culture and growing city produced."[15] He saw the work of Leopold Eidlitz (1823-96) and Detlef Lienau (1818-87) as key in giving the movement for a new architecture discipline and direction.[16] If Lienau brought an early European cosmopolitanism to New York,[17] Eidlitz was to have a profound effect on New York architecture for the rest of the century, both through his built works and his theoretical writings.

Domestic architecture was not widely commented on, but commercial and public buildings, the visible symbols of the growing metropolis, elicited criticism, both positive and negative. Two buildings begun in the 1830s, dominated Wall Street, even by 1850 the financial center of the United States -- the Custom House, later the Sub-Treasury Building (now Federal Hall), (1831-41) by Town & Davis, Ross and Frazee, [Fig. 3] and the Merchants Exchange (1836-42) by Isaiah Rogers.[18] [Fig. 4] Both exhibit the Greek Revival style of their era, and by 1850 were thought to be old-fashioned in style and functionally obsolete.[19] But if these two icons of commerce were then thought to be out of date, other business buildings exhibited more "progressive" tendencies.

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[15]Talbot F. Hamlin, "The Rise of Eclecticism in New York," *JSAH* 11 (May 1952): 8.

[16]Ibid, 6.

[17]See Ellen W. Kramer, "The Domestic Architecture of Detlef Lienau, a Conservative Victorian," (Ph.D. diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1957).

[18]Doubled in height in 1907 by McKim, Mead & White, this became the headquarters of the National City Bank, later a branch of Citibank. (The building was converted for use as a hotel in 1997.)

[19]See Kramer, "Contemporary Descriptions," 278.

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Most prominent among these was the A.T. Stewart Department Store at Broadway between Reade and Chambers Street. [Fig. 5] Designed by John B. Snook and opened in September 1846, it "seemed best to symbolize the spirit of the new commercial age. . . its well-organized, though simplified, Italian Renaissance design made it one of the real turning points in the history of New York's commercial architecture"; "it was one of the few buildings in New York which achieved a really monumental effect."[20] Among those who praised the design were diarist Philip Hone, critic Clarence Cook, and architect M. Field.[21] The Italian Renaissance mode introduced by Stewart's store was quickly adopted for New York's commercial buildings, and by 1855 was the prevalent style. Wight himself wrote about the store in 1876, following Stewart's death, calling it "a remarkable building, [one which] even now holds its own in comparison with any other business structure in its style in the city . . . the best example of classic or Italian store architecture in New York."[22]

The so-called "Venetian" style was introduced to the New York commercial palace in the much-commented-on Bowen & McNamee Store, 112-114 Broadway, designed by Joseph C. Wells and built in 1849-50. Marble-fronted like Stewart's store, it

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[20]Ibid., 270, 271.

[21]Hone is quoted in Ibid., 270. [Clarence Cook], "Modern Architecture of New York," *New York Quarterly* 4 (April 1855): 117-118. M. Field, *City Architecture* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1853), 31.

[22]P[eter].B.W[ight]., "A Millionnaire's [sic] Architectural Investment," *AABN* 1 (6 May 1876): 147.

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had a facade which emphasized openness and verticality.[23] Wight, writing in 1863, called the Bowen & McNamee Store an attempt "to break loose from the classic and Renaissance dominion."[24]

Contrasting with the A.T. Stewart Store was the Astor Library at 425 Lafayette Street. [Fig. 6] Like the Bowen & McNamee Store it was inspired by Venetian Quattrocento sources with the addition of elements of *Rundbogenstil*, the round-arched style that was then popular in progressive German architecture. Built in 1849-54, it was designed by German émigré architect Alexander Saeltzer. While characterized by Cook as a fair specimen of a bad school of architecture, a kind of bastardized Italian,[25] it was praised by Wight, because like the Bowen & McNamee Store it was not classic or Renaissance.[26] Of course, both Wight and Sturgis knew the building intimately as readers in the library during and after their Free Academy days.

Ecclesiastical architecture, unlike commercial and domestic architecture, was not in the Greek Revival or the Italian Renaissance styles. Rather, by the 1840s, medieval forms, particularly the Gothic, were prevalent and continued well towards the end of the

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[23]See Kramer, "Contemporary Descriptions," 272-272, for further discussion. The facade was articulated by projecting pilasters and recessed spandrels with arcades at first and fourth stories. The use of interior iron columns supporting the floors allowed for a very open non-load-bearing facade.

[24]W., "What Has Been Done," 1 (September 1863): 57.

[25]Cook, 115.

[26]See note 24. More recent scholarship, most notably that of Kathleen Curran, "The German Rundbogenstil and Reflections on the American Round-Arched Style," *JSAH* 47 (Dec. 1988): 369-370, has discussed the *Rundbogenstil* aspects of the design, but Wight does not discuss the building in that context.

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nineteenth century. Wight recalled that Trinity Church (1839-46, Richard Upjohn) [Fig. 7] had aroused his own interest in Gothic architecture at a very young age when his father had taken him to see the building under construction.[27] Later, in his student days, he drew a church front with a tower based on a picture of Antwerp Cathedral, but the actual details were inspired by Trinity.[28] Writing in 1863 under the influence of Ruskin, Wight called Trinity "an example of the best features of the worst Gothic architecture that has ever existed. It gives us all the good things in Perpendicular work and leaves out many of the bad ones. . ."; "Trinity Church being so large, costly and prominent, of course settled the question of Church Architecture for a time."[29] Grace Church (1843-46, James Renwick) [Fig. 8], while eliciting much contemporary comment, did not conform to the structural principles espoused by the Ecclesiological movement. Consequently, Wight called Grace Church a "bad cop[y] of the [Flamboyant] Gothic of a corrupt period, not even possessing the little spirit of the original."[30]

A variation on medieval forms in church architecture was provided by the round-arched Romanesque, most notably St. George's Church (1846-48) by Karl (Charles) Otto Blesch and Leopold Eidlitz, on Stuyvesant Square. [Fig. 9] Praised by many including

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[27]"How Best Now," 52.

[28]Ibid., 52-53; Peter B. Wight, "Reminiscences of the Building of the Academy of Design," *NYT* 22 April 1900, 25.

[29]W., "What Has Been Done," 56.

[30]Ibid., 57.

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diarist George Templeton Strong,[31] St. George's was cited by Wight as a "shining example of excellent Romanesque design" because its originality, clear expression of structure, and truthful forms.[32]

The city was growing and new building types, the commercial palace and the office building, were being further refined and developed. New churches served the spiritual and social needs of the expanding population, while the increasing number of cultural institutions felt the need for permanent homes to express their stability and importance. Despite their studies at the Free Academy and further self-training in the architectural volumes and periodicals at the Astor Library, Sturgis and Wight needed further architectural training to practice as architects in this environment. No formal architectural schools then existed in the United States, and study in a European academy

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[31]See Kramer, "Contemporary Descriptions," 276.

[32]"How Best Now," 53. Wight was an admirer of Eidlitz's work, citing the Second Congregational Church (1856-59), Greenwich, Conn., as a notable example of Early English Gothic, as well as several examples of what he called "German Gothic": Continental Bank (1856-57), Nassau Street between Wall Street and Pine Street, Manhattan; American Exchange Bank (1857), Broadway and Cedar Street, Manhattan; the Produce Exchange (1860-61), Pearl Street and Whitehall Street, Manhattan; and the Brooklyn Academy of Music (1860-61), Montague Street, Brooklyn. The "German Gothic" phrase was later echoed by Montgomery Schuyler in "A Great American Architect: Leopold Eidlitz," *ARec* 24 (Sept. 1908): 164-179; (Oct. 1908): 277-292; (Nov. 1908): 365-378, as reprinted in *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1961), 1: 136-187, see especially pp. 161-168. Sturgis and Wight would have become familiar with Eidlitz and his work through reading the *Crayon*, to which Eidlitz was a regular contributor and in which accounts of his buildings were published. Sturgis had a complete run (8 volumes) of that journal in his collection. It was sold at auction in 1879. Cited in *Catalogue of Fine Ancient and Modern Engravings, Woodcuts, and Illustrated Books, Parts of the Collection of Charles Eliot Norton, Esq., and Russell Sturgis, Esq.* (New York: George A. Leavitt & Co., Auctioneers, 1879).

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was a novel idea. The accepted practice was to join an architect's office as a "student."[33] In 1856 Wight went to the office of Thomas R. Jackson (1826-1901) for eighteen months.[34] His first full-fledged architectural job seems to have been with Isaac Perry (1822-1904), from which he was fired.[35] Sturgis chose to further his architectural career in the office of Leopold Eidlitz, which he joined in 1857, staying for about a year.[36]

Chicago in the 1850s

In October 1858 at the age of 20,[37] Wight went to Chicago with the encouragement of Josiah L. James, a long-time friend of Amherst Wight and owner of Chicago real estate. He and his partner George Springer offered Wight the job of

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[33]H. Van Buren Magonigle described what it was like to be such a student in 1881. He was not a formal apprentice, nor was he paid. Neither did he pay a fee to the architect. He was not supposed to work on jobs in the office, except for practice work as part of his education. H. Van Buren Magonigle, "A Half Century of Architecture: A Biographical Review," *Pencil Points* 14 (November 1933): 477.

[34]The English-born Jackson had been the office manager for Richard Upjohn prior to setting up his own practice. Jackson specialized in the design of warehouses and factory buildings and was the architect of the headquarters of the *New York Times* (1857-58) on Printing House Square at Park Row, near City Hall.

[35]See Sarah Bradford Landau, *P.B. Wight: Architect, Contractor, and Critic, 1838-1925* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1981), 13, 14, and Wight, "Reminiscences of Building." Wight alludes to differences with Perry as the reason for being fired. Wight is first listed in the New York City business directory as an architect in 1858, located at 229 Broadway, as were Jackson and Perry. See Francis, 43, 61, 82. Perry, a specialist in hospital design, was the architect for New York State Inebriate Asylum in Binghamton, New York (1858-63) while Wight was in his employ.

[36]See Karin May Elizabeth Alexis, "Russell Sturgis: Critic and Architect" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1986), 12.

[37]In P.B. Wight, "Reminiscences of Chicago in 1859, Architectural and Otherwise," *IA* 20 (August 1892): 3, Wight says he was 19. His birthday was on August 1, so he would have recently turned 20.

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enlarging and remodeling the "Commercial College" building at the southwest corner of State and Randolph Streets, and according to Wight, James "filled my brain with visions of the 'Great West' in general and Chicago in particular."[38]

Chicago in 1858 was very different from cosmopolitan New York with its population of over half a million people. Chicago had only been platted in 1830 and incorporated as a city in 1837, but by 1854 Chicago had become the railroad center of the west.[39] One of the nation's fastest growing cities, it was a source of opportunity for many (Wight being among them); nonetheless, it was not the art and cultural center New York was, nor did it have the architectural pretensions of New York, and its population was only 60,000.

Accounts of Chicago's architecture during the 1850s are relatively rare, which adds to the value of Wight's own reminiscence, written in 1892.[40] In March 1857, an anonymous New York writer for the *Crayon* had commented favorably on Chicago's "ambition for architectural embellishment" and

> [was] astonished on a late visit to that city, whose origin is but of yesterday, at the number and vastness of its numerous warehouses, and the expensive effort at architectural ornamentation which they displayed. Store-houses for produce, mammoth railroad depots, warehouses of the grandest proportions, stand, not isolated but forming long avenues, thronged with a moving tide of trade that rivals the busiest sections of our

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[38]Ibid.

[39]Harold M. Mayer and Richard C. Wade, *Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 28.

[40]Wight, "Reminiscences of Chicago," *IA* 20 (August 1892): 3-4; (September 1892): 13-14. Still, allowances must be made for accuracy because of the long time gap between Wight's experiences and the date of this account.

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> own metropolis. . . . With one stride this queen city of the West attains a position which has only been reached by us in half a dozen generations of progressive buildings.[41]

The author was particularly struck by Chicago's fine building materials, a yellow brick from Milwaukee and a cream-colored prairie marble,[42] which "at Chicago, regardless of precedent, they have gone to work to use their own material, so as to develop its best uses and greatest beauties." The railroad depots were also remarked on, especially that of the Illinois Central Railroad (Otto Matz, 1856). [Fig. 10] "On all sides these depots and other buildings of the most magnificent proportions are springing up like magic. Already the New Yorker feels he is at home there, since so many of the characteristics of his own metropolis are duplicated."[43]

Like the writer in the *Crayon*, Wight was impressed by Matz's Illinois Central railroad station: "To run into that fine station on the cars gave one an excellent introduction to Chicago, and an impression which it was difficult afterward to sustain."[44] From the railroad station, Wight found accommodations in the newly-built Adams House (1858). Despite some fine buildings, much of Chicago was still insubstantial and haphazardly built in 1858. Wight's account focused on buildings which he could evaluate in the light of his own experience and the architects who were giving form to

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[41]"Architecture," *Crayon* 4 (March 1857): 87.

[42]According to Frank A. Randall, *History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1949), 7, this was Lemont limestone, often called "Athenian marble" or "Athens marble."

[43]"Architecture."

[44]Wight, "Reminiscences of Chicago," 3.

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the growing city. John M. Van Osdel (1811-1891), Chicago's first architect, did much to shape the architectural character of the Chicago that Wight saw in 1858-59. Among Van Osdel's many buildings, Wight commented on the William B. Ogden House, built in 1837 for Chicago's first mayor, and the Court House and City Hall (1853, enlarged 1858). Wight characterized the Ogden House as "one of the few buildings that looked as if it had long been here and had come to stay."[45] Ironically, the Ogden House and the Court House/City Hall were destroyed in the 1871 fire. Asher Carter, whom Wight identified as Chicago's second architect, had begun his trade as a carpenter and had come to Chicago to superintend the construction of James Renwick's Second Presbyterian Church at Wabash and Washington (also destroyed by the fire).[46] Carter and his partner Augustus Bauer, who came from New York,[47] gave Wight space in their offices while he worked on the project for James and Springer. Wight found the Second Presbyterian

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[45]Ibid., 4.

[46]Wight says Carter arrived in 1852. Thomas M. Tallmadge, *Architecture in Old Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941; reprint, 1975), 96, says Carter arrived in 1849. Henry Ericsson, *Sixty Years a Builder* (Chicago: A. Kroch and Son, 1942), 150, gives the year as 1850; he also quotes T. Andreas, *History of Chicago*, and the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 December 1850, listing Chicago building projects in 1850; two were by Carter. According to Wight in "Reminiscences of Chicago," 4, and Peter B. Wight, "A Portrait Gallery of Chicago Architects: Asher Carter, FAIA," *WA* 34 (January 1925): 13, Carter began to design houses in his spare time and gradually gained a practice. Both Tallmadge, 89-90, and Carl M. Condit, *The Chicago School of Architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 146, name Edward Burling as the city's second architect. Burling, who came to Chicago in 1843, began his career as a contractor and builder.

[47]Wight says he came in 1858; Tallmadge, 96, says 1853.

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Church noteworthy for its material, a "native black stone."[48] Wight called Bauer's M. C. Stearns residence (1858) Chicago's finest domestic building. In Wight's opinion the only church of architectural prominence was St. James (1857, enlarged 1868) at Huron and Wabash [Fig. 11] by the New York architect Frank Wills,[49] while he called the Portland Block, containing retail stores and offices and owned and built by Peter Brooks of Boston, the best business building.[50]

W.W. Boyington's Terrace Row on Michigan Avenue between Van Buren and Congress also made an impression: this was Chicago's first group of rowhouses, and Wight called it a source of great pride. If Chicago was emulating the architecture of New York and other East Coast cities in such rowhouses, the city tended towards more spread-out development schemes, sufficient for Wight to write in 1892 "that time has shown the New York plan is not for this city."[51] William W. Boyington (1818-1898) was another of Chicago's early architects, arriving there in 1853 from Boston. While Wight mentioned

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[48]Tallmadge, 83, calls this the work of Van Osdel and notes that Andreas called Second Presbyterian the "Spotted Church" or the "Church of the Holy Zebra." Apparently Wight did not equate this with Mould's New York work.

[49]Tallmadge, 82, credits this design to Edward Burling. The building is not listed in Phoebe B. Stanton, *The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste, 1840-1856* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), which deals extensively with Wills's career.

[50]Here Wight's memory failed him, for the Portland Block was built in 1872 and designed by William LeBaron Jenney (See Condit, 30-31). According to Donald Hoffmann, *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 19, Brooks acquired the building through a mortgage foreclosure in 1879.

[51]Wight, "Reminiscences of Chicago," 4.

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only Terrace Row, other Boyington work that would have been present in 1859 included the St. Paul's Universalist Church (1854) at Wabash and Van Buren, and the Wabash Avenue Methodist Church (1857) at Wabash and Harrison.[52]

Wight also listed the architects whose acquaintance he had made in 1858-59 in addition to Carter and Bauer: [W.W.] Boyington; [Edward] Burling; [O.L.] Wheelock; Frederick Baumann, then of the firm of Wallbaum & Baumann, mason contractors; and [T.V.] Wadskier.[53] And these were not the only architects active in Chicago. Wight apparently was not aware of an agreement signed about 1856 by several architects, enumerating fees for various kinds of work, found in the Van Osdel account book begun in that year. The architects were G.P. Randall, P.A. Nicholson, Robert Schmid, A. Bauer, Edward Burling, John M. Van Osdel, O.S. Kinney, O.L. Wheelock, W.W. Boyington, T.V. Wadskier, and A. Carter.[54] Wight later commended Boyington's early

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[52]Wight lists additional buildings by Boyington constructed prior to the fire but after Wight's year in Chicago, in Peter B. Wight, "Memorial to the Late W.W. Boyington," *IA* 32 (November 1898): 32.

[53]Wight, "Reminiscences of Chicago," 13.

[54]Randall, 24; Ericsson, 125, describes the agreement in greater detail and provides biographical information on the architects, 126-130. To refer specifically to the architects Wight met and who have not yet been discussed, Ericsson states Otis L. Wheelock began his career as a carpenter, working on Van Osdel's Tremont House in 1850, returning east, then coming back to Chicago in 1856, 129. Frederick Baumann joined Van Osdel in a short-lived partnership in 1854, 125, and Theodore V. Wadskier came from the Danish West Indies via Philadelphia, 129. Ericsson's analysis of Van Osdel's account books, 145-201, provides a vivid picture of Chicago and its building and business activity prior to the fire. The account books were given to Ericsson by Frank Van Osdel, John's nephew, and subsequently to the Chicago Historical Society.

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interest in the "association of architects for mutual improvement."[55]

In 1858-59 Alexander Hesler took a panoramic view of Chicago from the cupola of the courthouse. In October 1859, Wight, not finding additional work in Chicago after the James and Springer commission, returned to New York. What was intended to be a short visit to New York turned into a ten (or twelve) year hiatus.[56] But the Hesler panorama, which Wight saw in the Chicago *Tribune* office in 1871 as the city lay in ruins after the fire, made vivid his memory of the Chicago of 1859.

New York in the 1860s

Upon his return from Chicago, Wight set up shop again at 229 Broadway, and between jobs continued his architectural studies in the collections of the Astor Library.[57] Sturgis, after his stint with Eidlitz, also had chosen to travel, but not to find work, rather to study in Munich, doubtless with Eidlitz's encouragement. Although various sources disagree on when Sturgis left and how long he stayed, it seems clear that by 1861 he had returned to New York where he and Wight shared an office.[58]

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[55]Wight, "Memorial," 32. Boyington was the first president of the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, founded in 1870.

[56]In "Reminiscences of Chicago," 13, Wight says he did not return to Chicago until 1871; in "Memorial," 32, he says he saw Chicago again in November 1869.

[57]Francis, 82; Wight, "Reminiscences of Sturgis," 123.

[58]Alexis, 12-13, note 6 (40-41) has sought to trace Sturgis's European tenure and where he studied, concluding that he was in Europe between late 1858 and early 1861, and that he took courses at the Technische Hochschule and the Akademie der Bildernden Kunste. She further cites Michael Lewis's M.A. thesis (U. Penn., [n.d.]) as a source of information on Munich as a source of architectural education for Americans in the 1850s. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts had yet to achieve its later popularity for Americans. Hitchcock, 189-190, fn 4, states Sturgis went to the Akademie. Talbot F. Hamlin in

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The decade of the 1860s was to prove crucial for Wight and Sturgis, setting the stage for the varied aspects of their later careers. It marked their beginnings as full-fledged architects and their involvement with professional and educational activities in the field. Each began to write art and architectural criticism, first for the *New Path* and then for other more widely-circulated publications. In their work and their writings they were able to espouse the cause of art reform and the ideas of Ruskin. They discovered the ideas and writings of Viollet-le-Duc, whose principles of functionalism and rationalism they adopted, and Wight began to express his concerns for the necessity of fireproofing buildings.

By 1860 New York was recovering from the Panic of 1857, although apparently not enough to provide steady work for young architects like Sturgis and Wight. The city's artistic and cultural milieu, on the other hand, was crucial in fostering their architectural development. It provided them opportunities for intellectual growth. The collections of the Astor Library were unparalleled. The Astor Library had been established by the bequest of John Jacob Astor (1763-1848) as a free reference library available to all members of the public, age sixteen and older. The library had opened in

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Dictionary of American Biography, s.v. "Sturgis, Russell," states that after his year with Eidlitz, Sturgis spent one and a half years in Europe. Robert Craik McLean, "Russell Sturgis," *WA* 13 (March 1909): 29, says Sturgis did not leave for Munich until 1860. Wight, "How Best Now," 52, writes about his "chum traveling alone in Europe" while he, Wight, was working for other architects. In P.B.W. [Peter B. Wight], "A History of Architecture," *ARec* 27 (February 1910): 201, he says Sturgis went to Europe in 1858. Sturgis had returned to New York by 1861, for he was listed in the business directory for 1862 (information for such directories was customarily compiled during the previous year) and *Murphy's Confidential Directory* (published 1873) states he was established in 1861. See Francis, 73.

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January 1854. Extensively represented among the works in its collection were books on "civil engineering, public improvements, architecture, and the arts generally, . . . All of these belong to the class of subjects of particular interest in the present day, and form an indispensable part of the collections of the public library."[59]

The number of periodicals which dealt with artistic subjects as a matter of popular interest had increased and a role for critics as educators of artistic taste had been accepted and grown. Popular journals that published art criticism included *Putnam's Monthly* (founded 1853) and the *North American Review* (founded 1815).[60] Clarence Cook (1828-1900), the somewhat older contemporary of Sturgis and Wight, had become one of the better-known critics of the period. Cook had been an associate of architect A.J. Downing, founder of the *Horticulturist* (1846), a journal of landscape, gardening, and architecture. Cook's first effort for the *New York Quarterly*, founded in 1852, was Downing's obituary.[61] His 1855 essay "The Modern Architecture of New York"[62] is a

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[59]Quoted from the 1851 Annual Report. See Harry Miller Lydenberg, *History of the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations* (New York: New York Public Library, 1923), 3-32. By Wight's own accounts, as well as those of others, he and Sturgis were voracious readers. He recounted how Sturgis bought books and he "devour[ed] them. This habit, very convenient to me, was continued for fifteen years" (presumably until Wight's permanent move to Chicago), "Reminiscences of Chicago," 123; also Wight, "How Best Now," 52; McLean, "Wight," 100; and McLean, "Sturgis," 29.

[60]In 1853 and 1854 *Putnam's* published a series of articles on New York's architecture. See Frank J. Roos, Jr., *Bibliography of Early American Architecture* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1968), 151, entries 1900, 1901.

[61]John Peter Simoni, "Art Critics and Criticism in 19th-Century America," (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1952), 133.

[62]*New York Quarterly* 4 (April 1855): 105-123.

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notable portrait of New York's buildings at mid-century. The short-lived *Architects' and Mechanics' Journal* (1859-61) also published criticism and editorials with references to Ruskin's ideas about architecture.[63] Most notable was the *Crayon*, founded in 1855 by artists William J. Stillman and John Durand. It has been called the "first art periodical devoted to a definite aesthetic and critical point of view, which was that of John Ruskin and the English Pre-Raphaelites. . . . In Stillman's articulation of Pre-Raphaelite principles, he gave to American art a basis for aesthetic judgment and a standard for art criticism."[64]

The National Academy of Design

By 1860 New York was a city which could and did support professionals in artistic fields. The American Institute of Architects had been established in 1857 to foster architectural professionalism. The increasing importance of visual artists was manifested in the desire of the National Academy of Design for a building of its own. The competition for the National Academy was to have a profound effect on Wight's career and strikingly revealed the impact of Ruskin's thought and writings on his artistic contemporaries.

In December 1860, the *Crayon*, probably in the voice of editor John Durand, son of Asher B. Durand, the Academy president, noted that the National Academy of Design had purchased the property on the corner of Fourth Avenue and 23rd Street for its new

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[63]Hitchcock, 188, fn 1.

[64]Helene Emylou Roberts, "American Art Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century," (M. Librarianship thesis, University of Washington, 1961), 62, 64.

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building. It called for "an artistic symbol, in the shape of a public building . . . to set before [the public] an example of sound construction based upon the true principles of art -- beauty and economy of means."[65]

The building committee of the National Academy invited several prominent architects to compete. As the building committee had already determined the interior plan, the competitors were only to design the two major facades. The initial invitees were Leopold Eidlitz, Richard Morris Hunt, and Jacob Wrey Mould, well-established members of New York's architectural community. E. Dwight Church, a student at the National Academy and a former classmate at the Free Academy, told Wight about the competition and suggested that he enter. Seeing little chance for success, Wight "decided to make a design *to suit myself*, whether they liked it or not, and to make it original, and in no *definite* style."[66] The National Academy of Design [Fig. 12] is generally credited with being the first full-blown Ruskinian design in the United States,[67] although Wight had been preceded in the use of polychromy and banded arches by Mould, Frederick Clark Withers, and Richard Upjohn & Son.[68] Of the fourteen entries, Wight's was chosen in January 1861, "'mainly because of the color scheme'" (by his

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[65]"Architecture," *Crayon* 7 (December 1860): 353.

[66]Wight, "How Best Now," 53.

[67]See Hitchcock, 182-188. Ruskinian design uses polychromy, banded arches, and carved ornament in such a way as to express the structure of the building, in accordance with the principles espoused by Ruskin.

[68]Sarah Bradford Landau, *Edward T. and William A. Potter: American Victorian Architects* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979), 120.

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account),[69] and recommended to the trustees.[70] That such a design by a young unknown would be chosen over those of some of New York's best established architects, indicates how strongly the architectural ideals espoused by Ruskin had taken hold among the city's artistic establishment. Asher B. Durand, the Academy president, was an admirer of Ruskin. Wight's "astylar" winning design was Italian Romanesque in inspiration with round-arched arcades at the first and second stories; it called for Dorchester stone, a kind of buff-colored sandstone, red Philadelphia brick, and buff-colored brick to create banded arches and a diaperwork pattern at the third story with an extensive program of ornamental carving. Wight was awarded a $100 premium, while the trustees debated whether the Academy could afford to proceed. The Civil War broke out in the spring of 1861; Wight, after trying to volunteer as an engineer and being rejected, rethought and reworked his design twice, and was formally appointed architect on March 16, 1863. In his revised design, Wight substituted pointed arches for round arches, and stone in two colors, blue and white, for the brick and Dorchester stone (which was thought to be less expensive to build). It is likely that the revised design reflected the precedent of the University Museum at Oxford (1855-61), designed by Deane & Woodward.[71] As at Oxford, the stone carvers were asked to play a major role in the design of the

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[69]Wight, "How Best Now," 53.

[70]Only Hunt's design has survived. See Landau, *P.B. Wight*, 17. She conjunctures that Mould's entry also had banded arches.

[71]See Eve Blau, *Ruskinian Gothic: The Architecture of Deane and Woodward, 1845-1861* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) for an account of the museum and the role of Ruskin in the decorative aspects of the design.

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architectural sculpture, especially the capitals which were based on studies from nature. Construction took two years, and the building opened on April 27, 1865.[72]

Writing many years later Wight recounted how he had read Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice* in the Free Academy library, then Ruskin's other books related to architecture and drawing. He also discovered George Edmund Street's *Brick and Marble Architecture in the Middle Ages* (1855).[73] Such works, as well as others he found in the Astor Library, provided an ample basis for Wight's Italian Romanesque and Gothic-inspired Academy designs that would achieve the Ruskinian ideals of truth and beauty. Wight's use of Italian forms reflected his reading of the books available to him -- Ruskin and Street -- which emphasized Italian architecture. Unlike Sturgis, Wight did not have the luxury of traveling abroad for study purposes, and in the early 1860s, photographs were not widely available. One account, as the building was nearing completion, described the style as

> that revived Gothic now the dominant style in England, which combines those features of the different schools of architecture of the Middle Ages, which are most appropriate to our nineteenth-century buildings. The style has resulted from the efforts of many architects working together, to produce buildings which shall combine, harmoniously, convenience and beauty; and the success of their enterprise has shown that truly decorative architecture, or the art of making buildings beautiful, by the addition to them of color and sculpture, is not among the "lost arts," but is still to be cultivated by those who desire to surround themselves with beautiful things. If a name for the style be demanded, it can only be said that the

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[72]For a more detailed account see Landau, *P.B. Wight*, 16-18; Thomas S. Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design, from 1825 to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1865), 286-333; Wight, "Reminiscences of Building"; Wight, "How Best Now," 53.

[73]Wight, "How Best Now," 52.

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> name of no past style of Architecture is altogether appropriate to it: as the revived Gothic goes on towards more perfect success, it will find a name for itself.[74]

The New Path

While restudying his design and waiting for his appointment as architect for the Academy building, Wight opened an office at 98 Broadway with Russell Sturgis.[75] On January 27, 1863, at the instigation of the English painter Thomas Farrar, the two, along with six other Ruskin devotees, became co-founders of the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art, a group that has been dubbed the American Pre-Raphaelites after the English Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.[76] By the third meeting their

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[74]Cummings, 350. This description may actually be by Wight rather than Cummings, as Wight wrote other descriptions of the building for Academy publications. Cummings was the professor in charge of architectural drawing in New York University's School of Civil Engineering and Architecture, organized in 1854. Paul R. Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1980), 106.

[75]Wight, "Reminiscences of Sturgis," 124, says they joined forces in 1863, but Francis, 73, 82, indicates that they both were listed at 98 Broadway in the 1862 business directory.

[76]Wight, writing in 1884, stated that "the American reformers never called themselves Pre-Raphaelites. . . . They preferred to be called only 'Realists.'" P.B. Wight, "The Development of New Phases of the Fine Arts in America," *IA* 4 (November 1884): 65. Sturgis also disclaimed the Pre-Raphaelite label for Americans: "There has never been a Pre-Raphaelite picture painted by any American-born artist." [Russell Sturgis], "Pre-Raphaelitism," *Nation* 1 (31 August, 1865): 273. Other supporters of the artists involved were not reluctant to use the phrase. See Edmund Cary, "Some American Pre-Raphaelites: A Reminiscence," *The Scrip* 2 (October 1906): 1-7, and Elizabeth Luther Cary, *The Rossettis, Dante Gabriel and Christina* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), 43-52. Edmund Cary was the editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Union*, which was owned by art collector Gordon Ford. See William H. Gerdts, "Through a Glass Brightly: The American Pre-Raphaelites and Their Still Lifes and Nature Studies," in *The New Path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1985), 62. Aside from Wight's 1884 account, the first major study of the American Pre-Raphaelites was undertaken by David Howard Dickason: "The American Pre-

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numbers had grown to nineteen and included art critic Clarence Cook.[77] The goal of the Association was to work for reforms in American art and architecture, by encouraging and instructing its members and other artists and by educating the public. A series of "articles," drafted by Sturgis, Farrar, and geologist Clarence King, was adopted by the membership on February 18, 1863.[78] Wight stated: "These articles covered the whole ground. Firstly, defining the principles on which are based all right art, and secondly, stating what they proposed to do to carry out those principles, and thirdly, the form of the

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Raphaelites," *Art in America* 30 (July 1942): 157-165, and *The Daring Young Men* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1953). Linda S. Ferber in "'Determined Realists': The American Pre-Raphaelites and the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art," in *The New Path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1985), 19-24, gives a succinct and useful account of the Association and its journal, the *New Path.* The minutes of the Association were bequeathed to the Art Institute of Chicago by Wight and are now in the Ryerson Library. John Zukowsky, "Provenance and Checklists of the Wight Collection," in *P.B. Wight: Architect, Contractor, and Critic, 1838-1925* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1981), 84.

[77]The members never seemed to number more than 27, Ferber, 20. The minutes of the final meeting list the following: John Matthews, Jr., manufacturer; Clarence Cook, writer and teacher; Eugene T. Gardner, lawyer; James F. Gardner, geologist; J. Henry Hill, painter; Thomas C. Farrar, painter; Clarence R. King, geologist; Charles H. Moore, painter; Henry R. Newman, painter; Eastborne Hastings, architect; R.J. Pattison, painter; P.B. Wight, architect; James E. Munson, lawyer and reporter; Russell Sturgis, Jr., architect; J. Lyman Van Buren, lawyer and soldier; Eugene Schuyler, lawyer; Mary L. Booth, writer; Annie R. McLane; Louisa W. Cook; Sarah M. Barney. Ferber, 36, note 47. Louisa W. Cook was the wife of Clarence Cook; Sarah M. Barney married Russell Sturgis two months later; Annie McLane, herself a painter, married Thomas Farrar. Gerdts, 39.

[78]Ferber, 19. Clarence King (1842-1901) graduated from Yale with a B.S. in 1862. In May 1863, he joined a geological expedition which explored Nevada and California. His geological career culminated as the head of the newly-established United States Geological Survey in 1878. See *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. "King, Clarence." Certainly an accurate geological record could be a benefit to artists seeking a true depiction of nature. Ruskin himself had a keen amateur's interest in geology.

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organization."[79] Clarence Cook, the new president of the Association, called a meeting on March 28, 1863, to discuss the publication of a journal as a vehicle to educate the public. Named the *New Path*, it first appeared in May 1863 and continued until December 1865 for a total of 24 issues. Cook was the editor, assisted by Sturgis and Wight, and all contributed articles during its tenure.[80] The first number contained an introductory statement by Cook which set forth the aim of the journal: to promulgate "the earnest loving study of God's work of nature" and to treat art "with more justice and a broader criticism than it has thus far received at the hands of our public prints."[81] It also contained the articles of the Association and began a series by Sturgis, extended over four issues, which explained the articles in greater detail.[82] Wight's four-part piece followed, which related the principles of the Association to architecture.[83] These, their first published writings, reveal the influence of Ruskin's thought and set forth a number of themes which were to continue throughout their writing careers.

The articles of the Association stated that "the primary object of Art is to observe

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[79]Wight, "Development," (December 1884): 63.

[80]Most articles in the journal were not signed. Some used initials, as "W." for Wight. I have taken my attributions from other sources (Landau, *P.B. Wight*; Simoni, Ferber, Gerdts) or have used internal evidence by comparing the subject matter with articles written for other publications by the same author.

[81]"Introductory," *NP* 1 (May 1863): 3.

[82]Russell Sturgis, Jr., "Our 'Articles' Examined," *NP* 1 (May 1863): 4-9; (June 1863): 18-22; (July 1863): 30-36; (August 1863): 44-48.

[83]W., "What Has Been Done," *NP* 1 (September 1863): 52-59; (October 1863): 70-75; (November 1863): 80-84; (February 1864): 130-133.

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and record truth" and that to achieve that end the artist should seek for "faithful and loving representations of Nature," and strive for a union of architecture, sculpture, and painting to achieve "the full development of each" while looking to Gothic architecture as the best example of this union of the arts which employs "true and constructive building" and "calls for complete and faithful study of Nature for its decoration. Finally, the art reformation movement in England, particularly the Pre-Raphaelite school and the Gothic Revival, was commended as offering promise for the future of "true Art."[84]

Sturgis's goal in examining the articles was to assure that the members of the Association were, in fact, in agreement and that all were seeking the truth, even if viewing things from different perspectives.[85] The emphasis on seeking after truth was one of the major tenets of Ruskin, a constant theme in virtually everything written in the *New Path*, and one that Sturgis and Wight never abandoned, although the theme was not always so overt in their later writings. Of course, Sturgis and Wight were not alone in this emphasis on seeking "truth"; its necessity was self-evident in progressive nineteenth-century thought and did not need explanation.

Sturgis proceeded to deal with the architecture clauses of the First Article: " 'that, in all times of great Art, there has been a close connection between Architecture, Sculpture and Painting'; . . . It follows that, whenever, this state of things does not exist, then is no time of great Art."[86] He then went on to present a wide-ranging history of

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[84]"Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art," *NP* 1 (May 1863): 11-12.

[85]Sturgis, "Articles," 5.

[86]Ibid., 6.

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architecture to ascertain where and when this ideal union of the arts existed. Beginning with ancient Egypt, he moved through Assyria, and on to Greece and Rome, then to the architecture of the Middle Ages -- early Christian, Byzantine, Romanesque, and Gothic: "We find the architecture of the middle ages the richest in adornment, and the most universally adorned of all. Like the Egyptians, they possessed a system of building well calculated to engross the thoughts and satisfy the ambition of the builders; and, like them, they made it the servant to their abundant, varied, and significant decoration. All material became ornamental in their hands."[87] This early expression of Sturgis's interest in the history of architecture was to remain a major concern throughout his writing career.

Sturgis then dealt with much more recent architectural history, the rediscovery of Gothic in the nineteenth century and the resulting Gothic Revival. When the architects discovered certain "vital principles," they were then able to create modern architecture. Sturgis stated these as: (1) "variety, independence of narrow restrictions"; (2) "adaptability to all purposes"; (3) "use of all materials" in a truthful manner; (4) "capacity for adornment."[88] Finally Sturgis commended certain English architecture: "the English architects are further advanced than any others, having emancipated themselves fairly from servile copying of mediaeval work, and being on the threshold of a style that seems to have infinite power of development."[89] This introduced another theme that carried

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[87]Ibid., 22.

[88]Ibid., 44-48.

[89]Ibid., 48.

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throughout Sturgis's writings: what constituted modern architecture and what could be done to create it.

Wight, too, was interested in exploring the architectural principles and ideals of the Association, which he endeavored to place into a specifically American context in his series "What Has Been Done and What Can Be Done."[90] He began with a call for architects, and all whose "labor or money contributes to the erection of a building," to be guided "by the truths of nature and Nature's laws."[91] He then undertook his own history of architecture, not that of the ancient world and of Europe as Sturgis had done, but that of the United States. While he found little merit in the products of classically-trained architects, he commended the work of the anonymous builders of log cabins and Dutch farm houses for their "natural and constructive system of architecture." Cast-iron architecture came in for special criticism because "no single attempt has yet been made to adopt the construction and ornamentation of such buildings to the material used" despite the presence of the New York Crystal Palace, "which was the best constructed and best ornamented iron building that has ever been put up in this country."[92] [Fig. 13] Cast iron as a material lent itself to the design of thin, tensile, and open structures, but the common practice was to design such buildings with forms that imitated stone. When

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[90]See fn 83.

[91]Ibid., 52.

[92]Ibid., 55. Wight was reiterating and amplifying some of the comments and criticisms of the material that had been expressed by Henry Van Brunt, "Cast Iron in Decorative Architecture," and Leopold Eidlitz, "Cast Iron and Architecture," in papers read before the American Institute of Architects on Dec. 7, 1858, and December 21, 1858, and published in the *Crayon* 6 (Jan. 1859): 15-24.

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used in such a manner, cast iron was a "sham" material, which formed the basis for Ruskin's opposition to it.

As Sturgis had done for England, Wight provided a review of Gothic architecture as it was used in the United States, castigating many of the early examples, while commending the work of Mould and Eidlitz. The bridges and terraces of Central Park [Fig. 14] received special praise for the quality of their carvings: "We can fearlessly pronounce the carving on the pedestals . . . to be the best work that has ever been done in this country, as nearly as we can find out, the first and only attempt yet made in any architectural work to reproduce natural forms in stone faithfully and earnestly."[93]

Wight echoed Sturgis's theme of the nature of modern architecture and what could be done to create it by concluding his series with his prescriptions for reform, "to give form and consistency to the principles heretofore set forth."[94] While he did not think that reform could take place in only a few years, he felt that it would come if architects were "thoroughly acquainted with the needs of the present time," and if they "master the principles of the mediaevalists."[95] Architects must be educated; their architecture must be constructive and durable. So that the public could learn the standards of good construction and durability, Wight called for "fearless architectural criticism which judges everything from the standard of absolute right and wrong."[96]

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[93]Ibid., 74. These had been designed by Mould.

[94]Ibid., 80.

[95]Ibid., 81.

[96]Ibid., 83.

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Then "when we have made our buildings substantial, and have built them according to the best principle of construction then we can make them beautiful by ornamentation."[97] Finally, architects must have a knowledge of the development of styles, have a theoretical as well as practical knowledge of construction ("in theory lies all progress"), and "be an intense and reverent lover of nature" for "she will be to him the great book of knowledge to which he must go when all other sources fail."[98] Moreover, he must be aided by skilled mechanics, particularly stone cutters who, like the architect, have learned to study and execute forms from nature. "Thus only, we believe, the art of building can be revived, and brought up to the standard of five hundred years ago."[99] Wight was to return to this theme, the education of the architect and his relation to the skilled workman, over the course of his career.

A month before Wight's final prescriptions appeared, the *New Path* published a piece of that "fearless architectural criticism" for which Wight had called.[100] Possibly by Wight, the article criticized the Third Unitarian Church as an example of architectural falsehood:

> the lover of truth, if he be not deceived by the transparent imitations that gaze upon him from every side, sees, in almost every part of it, blatant, heaven-defying lies. . . . We hold that a church should be a living exemplar of the truth, . . . we believe, also, that the Architect should feel that he has just as sacred a duty to perform, in his work, as the minister

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[97]Ibid.

[98]Ibid., 130-131.

[99]Ibid., 133.

[100]"The Churches of Reservoir Square," *NP* 1 (January 1864): 111-113.

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> has in his, and should so do that all his labors may tend to the glory of God and salvation of man.[101]

This may be the Church of the Divine Paternity, Fifth Avenue and West 45th Street (1865-66), a vaguely Gothic design with asymmetrical towers, pointed arches, and buttressed walls. [Fig. 15] If so, the criticism would have been based on drawings, not the executed building.

By contrast, the construction of Wight's National Academy of Design building offered Sturgis the opportunity explain how it carried out the principles espoused by the Association:[102]

> The building . . . has evidently been designed in entire accordance with the views concerning Architecture which have always been set forth in this journal. It is the first building in this country. . . which has been so designed [following] two main principles, . . . *first* that all buildings should be designed in the mediaeval spirit, in other words should be 'Gothic' and not revived classic of any school; *second* that all carved ornament should be designed by the workmen who cut it, under such superintendence and instruction as the artist in charge may find necessary.[103]

The Gothic precedents were very important to Sturgis because

> the Gothic framework is beyond all comparison the most noble of all, the most varied and easily adapted to all purposes, the strongest, the most easily suited by all materials, and by far the most susceptible of decoration. . . . The National Academy of Design building . . . has been built in complete accordance with those views. *Firstly*, the building is so planned as to perfectly answer its purposes. . . . *Secondly* the building is so

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[101]Ibid., 112, 113.

[102]"An Important Gothic Building," *NP* 2 (June 1864): 17-32; "National Academy of Design - Fortieth Annual Exhibition. Introduction - Interior of the New Building," *NP* 2 (June 1865): 81-85.

[103]"Gothic Building," 17-18.

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> designed as to perfectly express its purposes -- or at least to express nothing contrary to them.[104]

Sturgis praised the design of the exterior as "not merely realistic and constructive, it is completely mediaeval and in the spirit of the central mediaeval art. It is such a building as a Gothic artist of the thirteenth century might well build, should he now live in New York, study our customs and needs, and become familiar with our materials and our workmen and their ways."[105] Many features on the exterior of the building have "added much to [its] beauty."[106] In particular, Sturgis commended the entrance steps with their fine naturalistic carvings and a public drinking fountain beneath, and the iron railing around the building and the iron gates to the main doorway -- "the first important examples we have of iron used properly for ornamental purposes."[107] The interior was called "good, but not admirable . . . We can see that the architect has shown by the interior that he is a practical builder, even as he showed by the outside that he is an artist."[108] What were the causes for the differences between exterior and interior? Sturgis saw several: the architect had less discretion in the interior design and ornament; it was more difficult to create "a rich and variedly ornamented interior . . . unless [the architect] has a knowledge of the past and its achievements very unusual to our

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[104]Ibid., 26-27.

[105]Ibid., 29.

[106]"Interior," 82.

[107]Ibid., 83.

[108]Ibid., 84.

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architects"; and "the design is really not so good within as without."[109] Nonetheless, Sturgis concluded, "this solidly and admirably built, richly decorated building, a noble design well carried out, will remain for ages unless fire destroy it; its lesson ought not to be lost upon this generation, it will not be lost upon the next."[110]

Architectural criticism provided a means of educating the public (even if that public in the case of the readers of the *New Path* was limited in number), as exemplified in a review of an exhibition of architectural designs at the National Academy of Design.[111] Since many architects were claiming that the architectural taste of the public had declined, "if they desire a higher standard on the part of the public, could they do better than to place before them a large number of their best studies and designs?"[112] The drawings of A.J. Davis served the "useful purpose . . . of marking the advance of architectural art during the last twenty-five years. . . . The views which led to and governed the designs of the architect twenty-five years since, will be seen to be widely different from those which inspire the best modern work. . . . These buildings had the advantage of being as well adapted to one family as to another, but the disadvantages of

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[109]Ibid., 85.

[110]Ibid., 85.

[111]"Architectural Designs in the Academy," *NP* 2 (July 1865): 113-116. This may be by Sturgis. He continued to write extensively on Hunt's designs for the Central Park gates. See "The Proposed Designs for the Central Park Gates," *Nation* 1 (10 August 1865): 186-188; "The Designs for the Central Park Gates," *Nation* 1 (28 Sept. 1865): 410-412; "The Central Park Gates," *Nation* 3 (27 Sept. 1866): 255-256.

[112]"Architectural Designs," 114.

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being ill-adapted to any."[113] Such a comment suggested that Davis designed in the abstract, without regard to specific conditions and situations. Thus Davis's buildings could neither "answer" nor "express [their] purposes."[114] Designs by Vaux & Withers were praised for their honesty with features that expressed well the buildings' character and purpose. Richard Morris Hunt's proposals for a series of Central Park gates came in for special criticism:

> So much interesting and beautiful work already graces the Park, that one might reasonably suppose the later additions would be influenced by this standard, advancing rather than falling behind it. The work already executed has been a most efficient means of public instruction -- interesting whoever has seen it, causing reflection, comparison, and a constant elevation of taste.
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> . . . Do these later designs take up the work where the others left it, and mark a fresh and decided advance? Do they abound in features which increasing cultivation and taste will dwell upon again and again with renewed interest? Is the feeling and sentiment of them appropriate to the place? An analysis, we think, will lead to quite an opposite conclusion.[115]

Cook had inaugurated the *New Path* with a call for "a broader criticism" which was more than personal opinion. Sturgis responded, not only with his comments on the National Academy of Design, but with a major article on art criticism.[116] John P. Simoni has called this "one of the earliest and most concrete evaluations of art criticism in America . . . [Sturgis] set up standards of art criticism, distinguishing between mere

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[113]Ibid.

[114]See Sturgis's comments on the National Academy of Design, fn 104.

[115]Ibid., 115-116.

[116]"Art Criticism," *NP* 1 (April 1864): 153-157.

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journalistic comment and formal criticism. He also conceived that the art critic must share the artist's experience, interpret, and pass critical judgment upon his work in terms of philosophic values. He was concerned with semantics and art terminology."[117]

Sturgis saw criticism as "a natural consequence of all art, . . . a necessary concomitant to good art" and a means of advancing art.[118] The critic must empathize with the artist, and like the artist, have a love of beauty and truth; moreover, he must have knowledge, "not mere dead knowledge of so-called rules of art, and of formal canons of criticism, but a living acquaintance with facts and principles," particularly "a familiar and intimate knowledge of nature," both practical and scientific. Also needed are a knowledge of the history of art and a knowledge of "such arts or sciences as underlie the fine arts and upon which they are dependent. Thus . . . rightly to judge architecture one should understand physics and the art of building." A knowledge "of materials, of colors and processes" is also advised so that the critic may realize the limitations of the media.[119]

Sturgis advised the critic not to be an artist himself, for fear that he would judge works of others too much by his own experience as well as lose his independence and boldness as a critic because of personal influence from his colleagues.[120] The critic's "great mission" was "to teach the public to appreciate and regard art properly . . . by

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[117]Simoni, 36.

[118]"Art Criticism," 153.

[119]Ibid., 153-154.

[120]Ibid., 154.

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devoting himself to improving public taste and knowledge, he in this way advances the cause of the beautiful and true."[121]

Critics should use technical terms properly; they should not judge a picture by the "emotions and thoughts it excites"; one thing should not be blamed for not being another; the use of "ludicrous epithets and comparisons" is "contemptible."[122] Sturgis recognized the difficulty for critics in reaching this standard, particularly when critics and artists are friends. But he meant to take his own advice:

> Having set thus high the standard of a true critic, we may be accused of arrogance if we ourselves undertake to pass judgment on the works of artists. We can only say that whenever we criticise we shall endeavor to be strictly impartial and have in view only the truth. Our knowledge may be limited and our judgment feeble, but we shall try to speak plainly of what we do know, and to investigate what we do not.[123]

The role and duty of the critic remained a concern of Sturgis throughout his writing career, and he constantly sought to adhere to the standards he set, particularly in the matter of educating the public. Sturgis's piece was quoted almost in its entirety in the *New York Daily Tribune* on May 7, 1864, presumably due to the influence of Cook who had become the art critic for the *Tribune* that spring.[124]

In May 1864 the *New Path* published a spirited defense, possibly by Sturgis, of

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[121]Ibid., 155.

[122]Ibid., 157.

[123]Ibid.

[124]Simoni, 40, notes the Sturgis quote in the *Tribune*.

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Cook's new position.[125] Noting that the press had been publishing ever more about art in response to public demand, the author commented,

> It behooves those whose duty it is to take care that this opportunity to teach the truth is not left unimproved. . . . We are trying to improve our opportunity. Once in a while we have help. . . . But we have never had such help, such hearty assistance from any fellow soldier, as has recently been given us in the columns of the *New York Tribune*.
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> . . . As we read these notices . . . we experience the new sensation of reading in a newspaper criticism meant to be true and not popular, teaching for popular judgment, not flattery of it.

In his essay "Pictures and Studies,"[126] Sturgis sought to educate the public, as well as offer advice to artists. In his concern with terminology, in this case defining the difference between "picture" and "study," he adhered to his own critical standard. A picture includes "all representation by copying forms and hues on a flat surface" and is a finished work. Studies are "an artist's lessons, his schooling, his means of acquiring information like other students, his way of recording facts, noting down thoughts, embodying conceptions before they escape. . . his studies are to give him power of hand, as well as of eye and memory." A picture, on the other hand, "should have more in it than faithful work, more than faithful record; a picture should be not study but the result of study, not the learned lesson but the intelligence formed by many and many a lesson. . . . A picture should be thought on canvas or paper."[127] In other words, a picture was more than a copy from nature. It was a synthesis of the artist's expression of nature. It, not the

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[125]"Our Artists and Their Critics," *NP* 2 (May 1864): 3-7.

[126]*NP* 2 (July 1864): 36-47.

[127]Ibid., 37, 38, 39.

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study, was the work of art. He cautioned artists against selling their studies and of thinking of them as art, for if they made studies to sell, they would lose their value as tools for learning.[128] With these preliminary cautions in mind, Sturgis then commented on a series of ten photographs from studies by young artists, recently published by the *New Path*, noting that "these studies are made in the right spirit, and are studies of the right kind."[129]

The editors of the *New Path* sought to do for the decorative arts what they had done for painting and architecture by raising the standards of criticism and educating the public. Various aspects of this field were to concern all three of them professionally in future years. Wight's particular interest was furniture design and it seems likely that "Our Furniture: What It Is, and What It Should Be" is by him.[130] Almost all contemporary furniture is "painfully ugly . . . utterly uninteresting and unnoticeable," even if costly, with the exception of some pieces influenced by the Gothic Revival. Furniture, like architecture, must follow the "law of constructive beauty" and the "principle[s] of truth in art."[131] He cited the importance of studying surviving medieval furniture and illustrated manuscripts for examples and noted the value of the examples in Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire Raisonné du Mobilier Français* (1858). "The most important characteristic

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[128]Ibid., 42.

[129]Ibid., 43.

[130]*NP* 2 (April 1865): 55-62; (May 1865): 65-72. The title alone is very suggestive of his architectural series "What Has Been Done and What Can Be Done."

[131]Ibid., 58, 61.

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follows from this; that great secret of all the splendor and perfection of the art of the time. . . . The ornament all grows out of and exhibits the construction," while "the adaptation of the ornamentation to the nature of the material is as universal and as beautiful as the adaptation of the ornament to the structure."[132]

A two-part article "How Shall We Furnish Our Houses?" may be by Cook or Sturgis.[133] As with other artistic matters, bad and ugly design was castigated, and the beautiful was praised. The reader was urged to think of all elements of a room and how they worked together. Finally "Our principal purpose is to ask readers to think for themselves about things concerning which they do not think at all, . . . Should you find a practical difficulty in the way of any new notion which we or your own thoughts suggest, do not, therefore, reject the notion. . . . the best way is to be found by experiment."[134]

Viollet-le-Duc

If Ruskin had been their initial inspiration and one not to be forgotten, Sturgis and Wight had also discovered his French contemporary Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc. A section of his comments and theories on furniture were published in the *New Path*, and

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[132]Ibid., 69-72.

[133]*NP* 2 (August 1865): 121-126; (Sept. 1865): 141. Sturgis did a similar series for the *Nation* the following year. See "On Papering Room Walls," 2 (8 Feb. 1866): 170-171; "On Painting Room Walls," 2 (22 Feb. 1866): 236-238; "Floors and Floor Coverings," 2 (22 March 1866): 363-364; "Domestic Upholstery - Window Curtains," 2 (4 May 1866): 570-571. Cook's publications on the subject came much later. *The House Beautiful* was published in 1877, *What Shall We Do with Our Walls?* in 1881. Elizabeth Luther Cary, 51-52, attributes these *NP* articles to Cook.

[134]"How Shall We Furnish Our Houses?," 126.

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they were further discussed in Wight's furniture article.[135] Viollet-le-Duc's comments on furniture design accorded with the ideas of art reform espoused by the *New Path*, particularly in the emphasis on truth and rejection of cheap, false luxury:

> We are in a state to distinguish the true from the false; why, then, should we, in private life, smother these sentiments, pretend to be other than we are, and cling to the ancient shams in which no person really believes? . . . Let us hope for a return toward these healthy ideas, and that, in matters relating to furniture, as in everything, we shall come to understand that good taste consists in seeming to be that which wears, and not that which we desire to be.[136]

Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879), the French architect, scholar, and architectural theorist, is often considered to be a counterpart to John Ruskin in his influence on American architecture and architectural thought. As Pevsner has succinctly pointed out, both were "Gothic enthusiasts" and in particular, espoused the Gothic of the thirteenth century. Both insisted on "what Victorians called *reality* in architecture." But "their whole conception of Gothic . . . differs radically. Ruskin admires the Gothic building as alive with the life which the carver gives it who, loving his work, endows it with beauty, Viollet-le-Duc admires the design for his grip on the logic of rational construction."[137]

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[135]"Conclusion of *Dictionnaire Raisonné du Mobilier Français, Premiere Partie, Meubles* by Viollet-le-Duc," *NP* 2 (July 1864): 48; Wight probably did the translation. "Our Furniture."

[136]Viollet-le-Duc.

[137]Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, "Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc: Englishness and Frenchness in the Appreciation of Gothic Architecture," in *Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc 1814-1879* (London: Architectural Design Profile, Academy Editions, 1980), 48-49, reprinted from the Walter Neurath lectures (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969).

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Like Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc was known in the United States through his writings; because of the language barrier, these were disseminated neither so widely nor so quickly as those of Ruskin. They consisted of three major works: the *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI^e^ au XVI^e^ siècle*, published in ten volumes between 1854 and 1868; the *Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier français de l'epoque carolingienne à la renaissance*, published in six volumes between 1858 and 1875; and *Entretiens sûr l'architecture*, published in two volumes in 1863 and 1872. Certainly Sturgis and Wight were aware of the initial volumes by the mid-1860s. The dictionary on furniture and furnishings has been mentioned above. Sturgis presented a lengthy review of the dictionary of architecture in the *Nation* in 1869 as a "remarkable series of works . . . approaches completion."[138] Sturgis's admiration for Viollet-le-Duc's literary project reflected ideas espoused in Sturgis's earlier writings for the *New Path*: his work is based on "accurate knowledge" gained in a "scientific and practical way"; "these books . . . analyze both style and construction, set up and prove theories, establish points that have been doubtful, explain, state general truths"; his knowledge has been "shaped by sound judgment and power of discrimination."[139] Sturgis commended the many drawings which illustrated the principles set forth in Viollet-le-Duc's writings; these have "accuracy in the place where it is needed, certain success in giving the true character of the work represented. . . . In like manner, in his writings we may find truth in all essential

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[138]"Viollet-le-Duc's French Mediaeval Architecture," *Nation* 9 (12 August 1869): 134-135; (26 August 1869): 173-174.

[139]Ibid., 135.

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particulars, establishment nearly always complete of the theories advanced, an almost complete freedom from unfounded assumptions."[140] Finally Sturgis noted that Viollet-le-Duc continually compared the principles of medieval building and decoration to modern practice, for the purpose of citing its deficiencies.[141] Although in his *Nation* review, Sturgis seemed less interested in citing the applicability of Viollet-le-Duc to modern architectural practice, this was not to be the case in the future.

Awareness of the *Entretiens* seems somewhat more complicated. According to Robin Middleton, Viollet-le-Duc had written and published the first four lectures in 1858, as the result of his initial teaching venture in 1857.[142] His first ten lectures were published as the first volume of the *Entretiens* in 1863, prior to his disastrous appointment at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Henry Van Brunt reviewed the first volume in the *Nation* in 1866.[143] In this review Van Brunt called Viollet-le-Duc the leading architectural reformer of France, who was developing a theory of architecture "in

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[140]Ibid., 173-174.

[141]Robin Middleton has called the *Dictionnaire* "a work of propaganda for the development of a nineteenth-century architecture based on a scientific exposition of the Gothic." *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: Macmillan, Free Press, 1982), s.v. "Viollet-le-Duc, Eugène Emmanuel," 4: 328.

[142]Ibid., 329.

[143]"Architectural Reform," *Nation* 2 (5 April 1866): 438-439; (12 April 1866): 469-470. Van Brunt had been Sturgis's rival and successful competitor for the design of Harvard's Memorial Hall (1865-78) (Kermit Vanderbilt, *Charles Eliot Norton: Apostle of Culture in a Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1959), 90, n. 39.) and later translated both volumes as *Discourses on Architecture* (Boston: Osgood, 1875, 1881).

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harmony with the progress of civilization" that could be the basis for an architecture of the nineteenth century.

Wight seems to have come upon the *Entretiens* in a somewhat different way. In 1868, he read his translations of the notes for Viollet-le-Duc's lectures given at the Ecole in 1864, as published in the *Gazette des Architects et du Bâtiment* (1863-64). Wight's translation was published two years later in the *Manufacturer and Builder.*[144] This would suggest that Wight discovered Viollet-le-Duc in the *Gazette* before he had access to the first volume of the *Entretiens.* Also Wight must have been rather confused about the publication history, for in his translator notes, he stated that the lectures in the *Gazette* were enlarged and extended in the *Entretiens.* Of more interest, however, are Wight's comments on Viollet-le Duc. He called him "the most eminent living apostle of the revival of Gothic and Rationalistic architecture. . . . [in these lectures he] displays that sound appreciation for all art that is founded on a study of nature and a rational application of natural laws, which must actuate every true reformer."[145] Clearly Wight took the work of Viollet-le-Duc and related it to the concerns that had motivated his own work and writings during the 1860s.

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[144]P.B. Wight, translator, Viollet-le-Duc, "The History of Art and Aesthetics from the Earliest Time to the Fall of the Roman Empire," *Manufacturer and Builder* 2 (November 1870): 323-326; (December 1870): 355-357; 3 (January 1871): 11-13. A more complete version of the lectures was published in the *Revue des Cours Litteraires de la France et de l'Etranger* (1864). A full English translation of the first lecture is published in *Viollet-le-Duc*, 20-25.

[145]Wight, trans., 323.

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The *New Path*, in debt and without prospect of additional funding, had ceased publication by the end of 1865. According to Wight this was because the editor and principal contributors had been engaged by other journals; Cook had gone to the *Tribune*, Sturgis was hired as the art critic for the newly-formed *Nation*.[146] They also thought the purpose of the journal had been fulfilled.[147] Wight himself was heavily involved in his architectural career, and he too began to write occasional articles for other publications. All took topics initially explored in the *New Path* and continued to expand upon them.

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[146]The first issue of the *Nation* was published on July 6, 1865, under the editorship of Edwin Lawrence Godkin, whose interest in an intellectual weekly had been aroused by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. One of the purposes of the new journal was "to criticize books and works of art soundly and impartially." (Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1938), vol. 3, 333.) According to Mott, book reviewing "to the *Nation*, meant criticism of the scholarship, the philosophy, the investigation, of the times." (334) In addition to Sturgis, one of the first to write on art was Charles Eliot Norton; they were later joined by Earl Shinn and Charles H. Moore. (335, 336).

[147]Wight, "Development . . . Fine Arts," 64.

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CHAPTER 2

PROFESSIONALISM AND THE EDUCATION OF THE ARCHITECT

Early in their careers Sturgis and Wight had manifested keen interests in architectural professionalism and the interrelated area of architectural education. They thought it was necessary to educate the public through criticism, teaching, and study to know and create a demand for good architecture. Further, it was necessary to educate the architect to produce good architecture in response to such a demand. In turn, good architecture could be a means of educating the public which would then foster architecture as a profession. Inspired by the Ruskinian ideal of achieving moral and spiritual health through good architecture, Sturgis and Wight knew from their own experiences that architects needed proper training to achieve that architecture. Hence, their advice in *New Path* articles to study the history of architecture, particularly Gothic architecture, to learn the principles of good architecture of the past, and to study and learn from nature.[1] Their formal drawing courses at the Free Academy had trained their powers of perception and given them the skills to record both architecture and their observations from nature. Their enthusiasm for reading carried them far, and Sturgis, at least, was part of a group of students known for its political and literary enthusiasm.[2] Following graduation, "each started to go through the usual routine of work, without instructions in architects' offices, the hit-or-miss course then open to all who could draw

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[1]See Chapter 1, pp. 43-48.

[2]Everett P. Wheeler, "Russell Sturgis," *City College Quarterly* 5 (March 1909): 5.

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a little in a country in which there were no schools of architecture."[3] While the *New Path* gave them an initial forum to call for higher standards in architectural education and professionalism, they were soon able to seek wider support for their cause through their activities and their other writings.

Office Training

Both brought young architects into their offices for training. In New York, precedent for such training had been established by Richard Upjohn in his office in the Trinity Building, 111 Broadway, beginning in 1854, and Richard Morris Hunt, first in 1857, in his studio in the University Building on Washington Square, then beginning in 1858 in the Studio Building, 15 West 10th Street.[4] By the late 1850s Sturgis and Wight had started the "usual routine of work." Upjohn was insufficiently progressive, designing predominantly in a conservative version of the Gothic Revival, and it is unlikely that the French-trained Hunt would have appealed to their Ruskinian and other English predilections. Sturgis and Wight opened an office together at 98 Broadway, opposite Trinity Church, in 1861 or 1862.[5] While they shared expenses, they practiced independently, except for one collaboration about 1868 for the unrealized Mutual Life

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[3]Peter B. Wight, "How Best *Now* to Study the Medieval Architecture of France with Some Confessions of a Retired Architect," *WA* 31 (April 1922): 52.

[4]Judith S. Hull, "The School of Upjohn: Richard Upjohn's Office," *JSAH* 52 (Sept. 1993): 281-306; Paul Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1980), 100-105.

[5]See Chap. 1, n. 58 and n. 75.

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Insurance Building in New York.[6] According to Wight, several younger architects received architectural training while working for them.[7] Presumably Sturgis and Wight tried to make their instruction more useful than that they themselves had received, but it was by no means the kind of formalized *atelier* offered by Hunt. George Keller, who went on to establish an architectural career in Hartford, Connecticut, worked for Wight in 1863.[8] About 1865 Sturgis hired George Fletcher Babb, who had practiced independently in the late 1850s and with Nathaniel Foster in the 1860s; Babb stayed with Sturgis until 1879, then went to McKim, Mead & Bigelow, before joining Walter Cook and Daniel Willard, in the firm of Babb, Cook & Willard.[9] In the mid-1860s Charles Buek, later a specialist in rowhouse design, and Henry R. McLane, who had become a partner with Sturgis by 1870, seemed to have assisted both Sturgis and Wight.[10] Charles F. McKim whose father was a friend and admirer of Sturgis came to Sturgis for training in June 1867, staying less than three months before leaving for further study at the Ecole

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[6]Sarah Bradford Landau, *P. B. Wight: Architect, Contractor, and Critic, 1838-1925* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1981), 27.

[7]Peter B. Wight, "Reminiscences of Russell Sturgis," *ARec* 26 (August 1909): 124.

[8]David F. Ransom, *George Keller*, Architect (Hartford, Conn.: Stowe-Day Foundation/Hartford Architectural Conservancy, 1978), 43.

[9]Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice New York City 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1980), 12, 31, 73; Leland M. Roth, *McKim, Mead & White Architects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 373, n. 5. The firm was initially called Babb & Cook.

[10]Francis, 54, 73; Landau, 12, n. 7; 26, n. 48; 27, n. 50. McLane may have been a relative of the painter Annie McLane who married Thomas Farrar and was a member of the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art.

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des Beaux-Arts. According to the scholar of McKim, Mead & White, Leland M. Roth, the Sturgis-Wight philosophy of architecture affected McKim, who learned the principles of Ruskinian Gothic in their offices. Sturgis also introduced McKim to the works of Viollet-le-Duc, particularly the *Entretiens* which McKim was inspired to translate during his stay in Paris.[11] William R. Mead joined Sturgis in July 1868, staying until his departure for studies in Italy in 1871.[12] These two, of course, were to go on to form one of the most famous architectural firms in America, and one that had an outstanding reputation for training young architects.[13] In the fall of 1868 Sturgis moved his office to 57 Broadway, taking Babb, Mead, and McLane with him. Wight called this "the beginning of the second architectural 'bird's nest' in New York."[14] Joining Sturgis at 57 Broadway in 1869 or 1870 was Henry Ogden Avery whose father Samuel Putnam Avery, an engraver, art dealer, art collector, and one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, initially had made Sturgis's acquaintance in 1864 through Wight;[15] he stayed about two years before leaving for the Ecole. The Frenchman Alexandre Sandier,

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[11]Roth, 5-6.

[12]Roth, 12.

[13]Roth, 5-6.

[14]The first was in the Trinity Building (Richard Upjohn, 1851-52), precursor of the current building by that name. Wight, "Reminiscences," 124.

[15]"The Avery Library at Columbia University," *ARec* 32 (Nov. 1912): 479; Russell Sturgis, "Samuel Putnam Avery," *Columbia University Quarterly* 7 (Dec. 1904): 15, 21. Sturgis was also one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum in 1870.

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an Ecole student, worked for Sturgis in about 1871-75.[16] Wight retained the office at 98 Broadway until his move to Chicago.[17] In 1870 he hired Henry W. Bishop, later a professor at Yale, through the introduction of Keller.[18]

Wight had kept up a correspondence with Asher Carter in whose office he had set up shop during his earlier year in Chicago. Wight called the ten years following his return to New York, "one of the busiest experiences of my life." Then "my good fortune came nearly to an end. . . . I had thought much of satisfying my ambition by looking for a new field of work; when suddenly and unexpectedly opportunity came through one of the greatest disasters that ever befell an American city."[19] In the wake of the Chicago fire on October 8 and 9, 1871, Carter offered Wight a partnership in his firm of Carter & Drake. Wight accepted and left for Chicago. In Chicago, as in New York, Wight sought young architects for the office. He first brought architectural sculptor James Legge from New York. Then in January 1872 he sent for John W. Root, who had asked for work in Wight's New York office early in 1871. Wight later wrote, "I had a great desire to take him into my office, for he showed me original designs which were entirely in harmony with my ideas of the proper conception of architecture as an art."[20] In Chicago, Root

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[16]Wight, "Reminiscences," 124; Landau, 27, n. 50.

[17]Francis, 82, indicates that Wight kept the New York office open until 1872 or 1873.

[18]Landau, 27, n. 50.

[19]Peter B. Wight, "A Portrait Gallery of Chicago Architects. IV. Asher Carter, FAIA," *WA* 34 (January 1925): 12.

[20]P.B. Wight, "John W. Root as a Draftsman," *IA* 16 (January 1891): 88.

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became the head draftsman of Carter, Drake & Wight, and was certainly introduced to the ideas of Viollet-le-Duc, if indeed he had not already discovered them.[21] Late in 1872 Daniel H. Burnham joined the firm as a student. Although Wight had hoped to make Root a partner, Burnham persuaded Root to join him in their own firm, established in June 1873.[22] Writing many years later Wight stated that "whatever influence I may have had on their work was through Mr. Root."[23] Wight was Root's consistent admirer, particularly of Root's ability "to apply the constructive principles of the best Gothic work of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to the materials, facilities and necessities of our own time, using only the details as models and conforming them to our best use,"[24] which made him

> a thorough exponent of the principles of Viollet-le-Duc. . . . His works have demonstrated . . . that the best architecture of the nineteenth century is not trammeled by precedents, . . . that the best works of past ages are models for study only, . . . and that if we only grasp the knowledge of the best architecture of other days, seize upon the capacities of the materials of today and mold them into things of beauty, we will develop an architecture worthy to be associated with the other arts of the nineteenth century.[25]

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[21]Donald Hoffmann, *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 9.

[22]Hoffmann, 12.

[23]Peter B. Wight, "Daniel Hudson Burnham and His Associates," *ARec* 38 (July 1915): 6. Burnham himself wrote of Wight's personal impact, citing Wight's "scholarly quality" which had a "deep effect" on him. Thomas S. Hines, *Burnham of Chicago: Architect and Planner* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), 13-15.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Wight, "Root," 88.

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Undoubtedly Wight was thinking of such buildings by Root as the John B. Sherman House (1874) on Prairie Avenue [Fig. 16], the Montauk Building (1881-82) [Fig. 17], and the Rookery (1885-88) [Fig. 18], all in Chicago. In these buildings, Root used his materials to make "things of beauty" and an architecture that was worthy of being remembered.

Beginnings of Architectural Professionalism

Much of Sturgis's and Wight's time in the years following the Civil War was devoted to activities which would strengthen the profession of architecture, an involvement which they would continue throughout their careers. Donald Hoffmann has hypothesized that Root was attracted to Wight because he was "a young leader in the profession" as well as an excellent draftsman.[26]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the American Institute of Architects had been founded in 1857 to foster architectural professionalism. Conceived by Richard Upjohn, the fledgling organization consisted of some two dozen members, including A.J. Davis, Leopold Eidlitz, Richard Morris Hunt, Detlef Lienau, Jacob Wrey Mould, Henry Van Brunt, Calvert Vaux, and Thomas U. Walter. The AIA foundered during the Civil War, suspending activities from 1862 until 1864. Both Sturgis and Wight became active in the revitalized organization; Sturgis was elected a fellow on December 5, 1865, Wight a few months later on June 4, 1866.[27] Although the AIA was intended to be a national

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[26]Hoffmann, 9.

[27]See American Institute of Architects, *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Convention . . . Philadelphia, November 17 and 18, 1880* (New York: AIA, 1881), 44-45.

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organization, most of the members were from New York. To broaden the scope, it was proposed to establish local chapters; the New York Chapter was organized on March 19, 1867.[28] In 1916, Wight, recounting the beginnings of the chapter system, stated, incorrectly, that it occurred in conjunction with the annual meeting of 1868. While the AIA was split on the issue, Wight was among a younger group which advocated the chapter system and put forward a slate of sympathetic officers. Their candidates, Upjohn as president, Sturgis as secretary, and R.G. Hatfield as treasurer, were elected by a large majority. Then a resolution to adopt the chapter system was voted unanimously.[29] Wight's memory may have faltered on the dates, but Sturgis was indeed elected secretary of the national organization in 1868, a position he held for one year. Wight succeeded him to that post in 1869 and served until November 1871. Five additional chapters were organized in those years, Philadelphia and Chicago in 1869, Cincinnati and Boston in 1870, and Baltimore in 1871.[30]

News of the New York Chapter as reported in the *Proceedings* indicate that Sturgis and Wight played an active part. In 1868 Wight read his translations of Viollet-le-Duc and in 1869 delivered a paper on fireproof construction, which was subsequently

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[28]*Proceedings, Twenty-fourth Annual Convention, Washington, October 22-24, 1890* (Chicago: AIA, 1891), 99. Baker, 108-117, and 167-171, contains a good account of the early years of the AIA and the professional concerns the organization addressed: education of the public, standards for architectural competitions, architects' fees, and architectural education including lectures and establishment of a library.

[29]*Proceedings of the Fiftieth Annual Convention . . . December 6, 7, and 8, 1916* (Washington: AIA, 1917), 39-40.

[30]*Proceedings of the Twenty-fourth Annual Convention*, 99.

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published.[31] That same year Sturgis lectured on interior decoration and furniture. Under the auspices of the Education Committee Wight gave a series of ten lectures on the history and aesthetics of architecture in 1871, while Sturgis presented a similar series in 1872.[32]

Following his move to Chicago, Wight became active in the Chicago Chapter although its activities had been disrupted by the fire. According to Wight its first work thereafter was to assist the Board of Underwriters of Chicago in framing new building laws.[33] The following year, 1873, the AIA held its annual convention in Chicago for the first time. In the absence of W.W. Boyington, president of the Chicago Chapter, Wight gave the annual address, setting forth the goals of the organization. He spoke on the value of fellowship among architects and the qualities that are essential to an architect:

> He must be artistic -- his feeling for beauty must be developed -- a knowledge of the whole range of art must be his. He must be scientific -- his knowledge of the science underlying construction must be thorough -- he must not only know what *has* been done constructively, but he must understand chemistry, mathematics, the law of forces, and the strength of materials. With this knowledge he can *invent* construction and produce

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[31]P.B. Wight, "[Fire-Proof Construction]," *ARev* 2 (August 1869): 99-108; P.B. Wight, "Fire-Proof Construction," *Van Nostrand's Eclectic Engineering Magazine* 1 (November 1869): 1017-1024; P.B. Wight, *Remarks on Fire-proof Construction*, a paper read before the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, April 8th, 1869 (New York: Library Committee of the American Institute of Architects, 1869).

[32]*Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention, New York, December 8, 1868* (New York: AIA, 1869), 14; *Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention, New York, November 16 & 17, 1869* (New York: AIA), 17, 19-22; *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention, Boston, November 14 & 15, 1871* (New York: AIA, 1871), 15; *Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Convention, Cincinnati, November 12 & 13, 1872* (New York:AIA, 1873), 16.

[33]*Proceedings, Fiftieth Annual Convention*, 40.

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> that which has never been done before. Thirdly, he must be practical -- he must understand all the processes in use, and must be apt in combining them, and levying contribution on all past experience. These three qualifications are the means for producing successful results. And in these results -- the finished work of the Architect -- the completed structure -- the whole world is largely interested.

The Institute aimed to promote the efficiency of the profession: "If we elevate the standard of professional skill and professional morality surely all pretenders will be left in the lurch, and will pass quickly into obscurity." The Institute had influenced the implementation of improved building laws, the establishment of architectural schools, and the publication of architectural books. "And, last of all, it may be proudly claimed that the great advance of our art, as seen in the numerous buildings erected in all our large cities during the last ten years, is largely due to the spirit of emulation which exists among the members of this body." Wight hoped the aspirations of the AIA for architects would have a special meaning for Chicago which rebuilt so quickly following the fire, "that architecture may here take that high rank which the importance of this city warrants; and that her practitioners may be sensible of their high calling, and fulfill the promise conveyed in the works which they have set before us."[34]

Wight retained his loyalty to the AIA and held several terms of office as president and secretary, but also became involved in the Illinois State Association of Architects, which was part of the Western Association of Architects. The Western Association was formed in 1884 because architects in the Midwest felt the AIA was neglecting their

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[34]*Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Convention, Chicago, October 15, 16 & 17, 1873* (New York: AIA, 1874), 5-9.

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professional interests.[35] The Western Association grew very rapidly and soon its numbers outstripped the AIA. A consolidation of the two bodies was achieved in 1889 at the annual convention, held that year in Cincinnati. Following the convention the Illinois State Association merged with the Chicago (AIA) Chapter and the name was changed to the Illinois Chapter.[36] According to McLean, Wight tried to resign his AIA membership when he was running his fireproof building company, but the Chicago Chapter declined to accept it.[37]

Like Wight, Sturgis remained involved in the activities of the AIA, particularly as a member of the Education Committee. Also like Wight he joined another professional organization which seemed to speak to the interests and concerns of local architects, the Architectural League of New York which had been founded in 1881. Becoming a member in 1888, he subsequently served four terms as president, from 1888 to 1892, and often lectured to the membership at its regular meetings.[38] Both Sturgis and Wight wrote about the value of societies related to art and architecture.[39]

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[35]Baker, 327; Peter B. Wight, "An Appreciation of Daniel Hudson Burnham," *American Institute of Architects Quarterly Bulletin* 13 (July 1912): 130.

[36]See *Convention of the American Institute of Architects, the Western Association of Architects, and the Consolidation of the American Institute and the Western Association . . .1889*; *Proceedings, 50th Ann. Conv., 1916*, 40.

[37]Robert Craik McLean, "Peter Bonnett Wight, F.A.I.A., An Obituary," *WA* 34 (October 1925): 101.

[38]"Sturgis, Russell," *National Cyclopedia of American Biography* (Clifton, N.J.: James T. White, 1899), 9: 330.

[39]In his entry "Societies of Architects" for Sturgis's *Dictionary of Architecture and Building* (New York and London: Macmillan Co., 1901), 3: cols. 536-543, Wight

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Professional Standards

Architects' societies and professional organizations not only provided fellowship, but helped raise the standards of professional practice. In an era when press accounts were filled with news of building collapses (Wight regularly reported on such occurrences in his columns in the *American Architect*), it was in architects' self-interest to press for proper training and the enactment of adequate building laws. Sturgis and Wight did not hesitate to address the issue of professional standards in their writings. For them this issue was closely linked to a proper understanding of the constructive principles of architecture, which they had absorbed from their studies of Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, for if an architect were to follow these principles, he would create an architecture that was both good and sound.

The profession was feeling growing pains, and responsibility for bad buildings was being laid at its feet. Wight described several Illinois cases in the columns of the *American Architect*.[40] The new Illinois capitol, begun in 1868 and occupied in 1874

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describes societies devoted to the fine arts in which architects have been involved in various European countries, as well as past and present architectural societies in the United States. Sturgis's 1901 article "Art Societies and Societies of Artists" discusses fourteen reasons why artists may wish to form societies, "not merely as a union of interests," or for the purpose of "holding . . . a business-like exhibition once a year." Sturgis was convinced of the value of a multiplicity of societies, many with specialized purposes, and was quite clear that one may belong to several societies. *Scribner's Magazine* 30 (Dec. 1901): 765-768. In fact, it was such predilections which led him to become one of the founders and first president of the Fine Arts Federation. Wheeler, 12.

[40]*AABN* was founded in 1876, partially at the instigation of the AIA which made it the "organ of publication" for the society. (See Baker, 508, n. 8.) Wight served as a correspondent, often signing his entries with the same W. that he had used in *NP*. Some "Correspondence" columns from Chicago I have attributed to Wight on the basis of place, subject matter, and style of writing.

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although not completed, was much criticized for its poor design and construction; in 1877 the State Senate Commission on State House Commissioners issued a report that was particularly critical of the architect while ignoring the poor materials and workmanship.[41] That same legislative session came forward with bills to punish architects for recklessness and incompetence, and a bill to punish building committees for spending too much. "All that is needed after this is a bill to punish committee-men for impositions upon confiding architects, and to punish architects for putting too much confidence in building committees," was Wight's sarcastic comment.[42]

But the issue which captured the greatest attention was the collapse of the Winnebago County Courthouse in Rockford, Illinois, in the spring of 1877. The interior walls and roof of the building fell without warning, burying nearly all the workmen. In the wake of this disaster, Wight, his fellow architect Edward Burling, and civil engineer William Sooy Smith, were appointed to investigate the collapse. Their report was critical almost equally of the architect (Henry L. Gay of Chicago), the contractor (W.D. Richardson of Springfield), and the building superintendent (F.E. Latham of Rockford who also served on the building committee). The architect, in particular, was criticized for not inspecting the site frequently enough to assure that the work was proceeding

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[41]For information on the capitol see Frederick Koeper, *Illinois Architecture from Territorial Times to the Present: A Selective Guide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 276.

[42][P.B. Wight], "Correspondence. The Illinois State-House Imbroglio - Bills to Punish Architects for Recklessness, to Complete the Lincoln Monument, to Protect Guests in Hotels, to Punish Building-Committees. Chicago," *AABN* 2 (May 26, 1877): 165-166.

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properly, and for miscalculating the strength of the brickwork. The report, which noted that the architect was not allowed to select the building superintendent, is of interest for what it says about the architect's responsibilities on a job, and also for the emphasis it places on the architect as the presumed lead professional on the job, both issues that would concern architects as they sought to exert their professionalism.[43]

While architects wanted to assume primary responsibility for jobs as a way of asserting their professionalism, they were dependent on contractors, craftsmen, and other workers to see that their designs were realized. In 1887, several years after Wight had left the practice of architecture to run his fireproof terra-cotta business, he spoke to the Convention of National Builders. Citing the necessity for uniform building contracts to protect the interests of architects, contractors and owners, he urged cooperation with the AIA and the Western Society of Architects in developing such contracts.[44]

Wight's concern for professional standards led him to spend many years in the cause of architects' registration and licensing. Prior to the adoption of laws regulating such, architects were governed solely by the codes and canons of ethics of their professional societies.[45] The country's first licensing law, passed by Illinois in 1897, was

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[43][P.B. Wight], "Correspondence. Fall of the Winnebago County Court House at Rockford, Ill. Chicago. May 12," *AABN* 2 (19 May 1877): 158; Edward Burling, William Sooy Smith, and P.B. Wight, "Report of the Experts Upon the Rockford Court House Disaster," *AABN* 2 (2 June 1877): 171-173, and "Supplementary Report," 173-174; [P.B. Wight], "Correspondence. The Rockford Court House. Chicago, June 2," *AABN* 2 (9 June 1877): 182-183.

[44]P.B. Wight, "Building Contracts," *IA* 9 (April 1887): 33-34.

[45]Sturgis commented on the code of one such group, the Boston Society of Architects. R.S., "Ethics of Architectural Practice," *New York Evening Post*, 22 March

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drafted by Wight, Dankmar Adler, and Nathan Clifford Ricker, chairman of the School of Architecture and dean of the College of Engineering at the University of Illinois.[46]

Wight held the position of secretary-treasurer to the Illinois Board of Examiners for the licensing of architects between 1897 and 1914. Robert Craik McLean considered Wight's participation in the framing and enforcement of the law to be his "greatest public as well as professional service."[47] Three years after the law went into effect, *Inland Architect* excerpted a speech Wight made before the annual convention of the Architectural League of America, explaining the operation of the law in Illinois. He reported widespread acceptance by architects, builders, and clients, and increased self-respect among architects. More significantly, no building accidents had resulted from the carelessness or incompetence of architects since the law went into effect: "The State of Illinois is securing protection against incompetence and ignorance and recklessness in the construction of buildings." Wight also noted that he had advised architectural associations in several other states on similar laws.[48] Wight wrote several articles on the

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1895, in Russell Sturgis Scrapbooks, 2: 52-53, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

[46]Landau, 42.

[47]McLean, 101.

[48]Peter B. Wight, "Operation of the License Law in Illinois - The Examination and Licensing of Architects," *IA* 35 (May 1900): 29-30.

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subject of licensing for the *AIA Journal*, and he continued to work for improvements in the Illinois law, which occurred in 1917.[49]

From the teachings of Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, Wight had absorbed a strong moral concern. This concern is expressed throughout these articles in the constant emphasis on public safety, that it was of primary importance to protect the people of a state from incompetent architects; only when that was accomplished should the profession of architecture be protected by determining under what circumstances a practitioner could use the title "architect." He was also an advocate of incorporating "unprofessional conduct" as listed in the canons of ethics of the AIA and similar bodies as "dishonest practices in the pursuit of [one's] profession" into state licensing laws. If an architect carried out one or more dishonest practices, his license would be revoked.[50] Thus the public would be protected, the architectural profession would benefit, "rational design [would] follow rational construction, and that is what the world wants, rather than false construction to back up theoretical and therefore false design."[51] For Wight, the

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[49]Peter B. Wight, "The Illinois Law Admitting to Practice Defended," *JAIA* 3 (February 1915): 87-88; Peter B. Wight, "The New York Registration Law Criticised by Its Friends," *JAIA* 4 (October 1916): 432-433; Peter B. Wight, "The Law for Licensing Architects in the State of Illinois and Its Operation," *JAIA* 4 (November 1916): 462-466; Peter B. Wight, "Regulating the Practice of Architecture as a Profession - Dishonest Practice Should Be Declared Unlawful and Dishonest Practitioners Expelled from the Profession," *JAIA* 4 (December 1916): 526-527; Peter B. Wight, "Regulating the Practice of Architecture as a Profession," *JAIA* 5 (February 1917): 56-57; Peter B. Wight, "The New License or Registration Law for Architects Now in Force in the State of Illinois," *JAIA* 5 (September 1917): 453-455.

[50]See *JAIA* 4 (December 1916): 526-527; *JAIA* 5 (February 1917): 56-57.

[51]*JAIA* 4 (November 1916): 466.

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connection between professionalism and rationalism was clear; if the architect was sufficiently professional, rational, and therefore *true*, design would follow.

Government Architecture

In addition to licensing, two closely related subjects that impacted directly on the issue of architectural professionalism were of great concern to Sturgis, Wight, and their contemporaries. The first was government architecture and government architects -- how the government should build its buildings and who should design and build them. The second was the issue of architectural competitions.

Why was government architecture important? Wight set forth the case in a paper he read before the ninth annual AIA convention in 1875, subsequently published in the *American Architect*:[52] "As we read the history of the world in past ages by its monuments, just so surely will ours be read by our monuments."[53] Wight then proceeded to give a short history lesson on the architectural monuments of previous civilizations and other countries, and to explain how the government systems for architectural design worked in England and France. He noted that competitions had worked well in France and that government architecture in England had suffered from the ignorance of non-professional building commissions. The United States, too, had suffered, particularly in the design of the U.S. Capitol, from "the intermeddling of ignorant and officious

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[52]P.B. Wight, "Government Architecture and Government Architects," *AABN* 1 (4 March 1876): 75-77; (11 March 1876): 83-85; (18 March 1876): 91-93.

[53]Ibid., 75.

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Commissioners, and periodical disposition of those in authority to interfere with the legitimate professional duties of the architect."[54]

Such a situation was not unique to the U.S. Capitol. The New York State Capitol was subjected to similar interference when the Advisory Committee to the New York Capitol Commissioners succeeded in having Thomas Fuller's design modified by H.H. Richardson and Leopold Eidlitz. Wight commented acerbically in 1876: "The profession here [in Chicago] will frown upon all attempts to mutilate Mr. Fuller's design without his assent. The principle should be maintained, that an architect, after his design has been approved, and his work commenced, must be respected and sustained in whatever he does to jealously guard his reputation."[55]

Wight completed his AIA paper by recounting the history of official government architecture in the United States. At that time, it was in the hands of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury, a post established in 1853, and in 1875 being filled by William A. Potter. But there were limitations to a system in which the designs of all public buildings were in the hands of one man. Wight called on the AIA to aid in a solution to the problem.[56]

Finally in 1893, with the full support of the AIA, Congress passed the Tarsney Act, which authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to invite architects to compete for commissions for federal government buildings, although supervision of construction

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[54]Ibid., 85.

[55][P.B. Wight], "Correspondence: Chicago," *AABN* 1 (22 April 1876): 134-135.

[56]Wight, "Government Architecture," 92.

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would remain with the Supervising Architect. Enforcing legislation finally put the act into effect in 1897.[57] Two years later, Wight wrote an article advocating a Bureau of Government Architecture "which will have full authority to administer the designing and erection of all public buildings" thus "mak[ing] it possible to get the best results in every structure the Government may erect." Echoing some of his sentiments of twenty-two years earlier,[58] Wight stated, "The question is not what are the most appropriate styles of architecture for public buildings, but how can we best develop style in our own public architecture." The Tarsney Act was being used to invite experienced architects to compete for the largest and most important public buildings. Smaller buildings were still being designed by the Supervising Architect. In Wight's viewpoint it was:

> just as important for the welfare and progress of art that these should be as well designed as the larger ones, and that they should not only reflect the architectural abilities of the country but have an educational influence wherever located, which is quite as important as in the case of larger structures. It should not be within the province of one man or one organized office to do this. The Government should encourage the arts of design everywhere.

His solution: "the smaller ones, equally important in their localities as object lessons, should be assigned to architects through free and open competitions regulated by proper rules." The office of the Government Architect would then become supervisory, rather than design oriented, and also serve as custodian of all public buildings and monuments. In Wight's opinion, government had a "prime duty" to encourage "an architecture that is

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[57]See Baker, 437-438.

[58]See note 52.

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evolutionary and progressive, . . . that will reflect the progressive life of the nation in science and art." He thought his proposal would assist in achieving that end.[59]

Architectural Competitions

The subject of architectural competitions, a hotly debated topic among nineteenth-century architects, impacted directly on their professionalism. The AIA and other architectural societies repeatedly tried to institute standards for architectural competitions, but found great difficulty in getting their members to adhere to them. Sturgis pointed out the reasons: "It is because each separate piece of work is of more importance to the architect than to another professional or tradesman . . . The architect, only, is in the way to receive half of his year's income in one job, as well as great glory and advancement of his professional standing. The architect, only, finds himself unable to resist the temptation of seeking a job, and in doing so to give something for nothing."[60]

Wight, of course, had gained his early fame and reputation as the result of his success in the National Academy of Design competition. Even so, that competition, like many others, had its pitfalls for the entrants. Wight was not one of the invited competitors who were paid only a nominal $100 for their costs (the AIA later advocated a fee of one percent of the proposed building costs, which in the case of the National Academy were $50,000), and there was no assurance that the winning architect would

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[59]Peter B. Wight, "Effective Administration of the Tarsney Act," *IA* 34 (November 1899): 26-28.

[60]Russell Sturgis, "Architectural Competitions," *ARev* (Boston) 4 (October 1897): 45.

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actually end up supervising the design.[61] Sturgis, too, had tried to make a name for himself early in his career by entering competitions, most notably that for Harvard Memorial Hall; in 1897 he used his unsuccessful experiences to point out the problems of competitions.[62]

Sturgis and Wight both acknowledged the necessity of competitions for the design of government buildings, and, as discussed above, Wight even advocated the expansion of such a system because he saw it as a means of insuring better architecture. To encourage good and experienced architects to compete, Sturgis proposed that competitions be carried out under rules that would: limit the number of competitors, compensate competitors for their entry costs, assure an award would be made and the successful competitor would be paid the standard fee for professional services, and, further, each competition would have a professional advisor to draw up the program and examine submissions. Only then would competitions "prove not unattractive to men of ability and standing."[63]

Changes in the Architectural Profession

Sturgis and Wight were both interested in the changing nature of the profession of architecture as it was practiced in the United States by the turn of the century. This was most manifest in the growth of architects' offices. Their own offices had always been

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[61]See Landau, 16-18, for information on the National Academy of Design competition.

[62]Sturgis, "Architectural Competitions," 43-47.

[63]See Ibid. and [Russell Sturgis], "Competition Among Architects," *New York Evening Post*, 19 May 1897, in Russell Sturgis Scrapbooks, Avery Library, 2: 90.

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small, but several of their pupils and apprentices went on to form two of the largest architectural offices in the United States: John W. Root and Daniel Burnham established Burnham & Root, later D.H. Burnham & Co.; and Charles McKim and William Mead joined Stanford White in the firm of McKim, Mead & White. Sturgis and Wight recognized that such growth was brought about by changes in American society, but were concerned with the implications for the art of architecture.

Following the death of Daniel Burnham in 1912, Wight commented on the nature of the Burnham office; he recognized that it had grown and functioned as it did because Burnham was a superb organizer and that the firm would continue to function because of this organization. Wight also knew that Burnham himself could not have designed all the large buildings that came out of the firm, but believed that Burnham planned them:

> When a man has no time to make large drawings, he has to make small ones, and he has to reduce the size of his sheets of papers as the demands upon his time increase. That is what Burnham did. He could lay out the plan for a large office building on sheets six inches square; and he would not only make one plan but would use sheets enough to lay it out according to every arrangement he could conceive of until he found the best one to recommend to his client. That is what I have seen him do.[64]

Many great works of architecture had been designed collaboratively throughout history, not just by the architects to whom they had been ascribed, as Sturgis recognized: "Architecture is a matter of association and of fellow-craftsmanship, and its greater works are never the solitary achievement of a powerful spirit immersed in its own

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[64]Wight, "An Appreciation," 134-135; see also Wight, "Daniel Hudson Burnham."

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thoughts."[65] In contemporary practice, the designs produced by an architectural office could vary with changes in office personnel. Even if the architect himself did the preliminary studies, he was often compelled to turn the final design over to a subordinate because of the pressures of business. Perhaps the assistant was a "designer of ability." Alternatively, "the architect in chief may equally be the best designer in his office, and it may be with some regret that he sees work which he recognizes as inferior [that] must of necessity be the final shape, and that because of sheer lack of time to set the thing right."[66] For Sturgis this was not the way to achieve "the renewal of the architectural art"; instead, to achieve that, the architect would have to limit his designs to those he could do himself.[67]

Architectural Education

The subject of architectural professionalism could not be separated from that of architectural education, both formal, as in schools of architecture, and informal, through criticism and self-study. The subject was of particular concern to Sturgis and his involvement reflects the predilections and prejudices of his own training and experience. His view of academic architectural education differed from that of such contemporaries as William R. Ware, founder of the first program of modern architectural education in

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[65]Russell Sturgis, "The Authorship of Architecture," *ARev* (Boston) 7 (November 1900): 126.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid., 127.

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America and head of the school of architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology which opened in 1868.[68]

Wight, writing as a correspondent for the *American Architect*, announced in July 1878 that Sturgis had been appointed to the position of Professor of Architecture and the Arts of Design at the College of the City of New York, a post which had been proposed by his old classmate, the lawyer and civil-service reformer Everett P. Wheeler (1840-1925). The College was still located on East 23rd Street, in the building where Sturgis and Wight had attended the Free Academy. Wight praised the appointment: "With such a man in such a position [City College] will rank with Boston [MIT], Cornell, and Ann Arbor [Univ. of Michigan] as an architectural school. The experiment . . . promises no small amount of criticism, and with a man of such energetic enthusiasm for his art as Mr. Sturgis possesses, the matter will be made, interesting, however it may result."[69]

Unlike Ware's MIT course, Sturgis's was not based on the *atelier* method of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, which emphasized work in the studio. Its philosophy was heavily influenced by his understanding of Ruskin (with its emphasis on nature as represented by art) and Viollet-le-Duc (with its emphasis on how a proper understanding of construction would lead to an architectural style). Also it reflected Sturgis's more general concerns

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[68]See *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: Macmillan, Free Press, 1982), s.v. "Ware, William R.," by William A. Coles, 4: 373-374. Other early programs were established at Cornell, 1871, and the University of Illinois, 1873. Ware went on the establish the architectural program at Columbia University in 1881. The University of Michigan program was established in 1876.

[69]W., "Correspondence. The Dull Season. - The New Architectural Professorship. - Country House at Islip, New York," *AABN* 4 (24 July 1878): 33; Wheeler, 9.

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about the education of public taste, something he had been trying to do through his writings since the 1860s. City College was creating well-educated citizens first, then potential architects.

The program aroused sufficient attention during its first year that Sturgis was invited to speak about it at the AIA convention. The City College program was not one solely devoted to the training of professionals; rather it was a two-year elective course in the broad, humanistic undergraduate curriculum.[70] The first year dealt with elements of architectural practice, in particular architectural drawing and the translation of perspective sketches into plans, elevations, and sections, and the understanding of technical terms: "To understand the whole scope and bearing of the commoner technical terms used in building was to understand a great deal about building itself; to know all that was implied in the words 'archivolt,' 'entablature,' 'architrave,' and the like was to understand a great deal about the edifices in which those members were found, and about the styles which chiefly employed them." Not only did the student learn by doing, but he learned to understand architecture by drawing and defining its components. The second year was spent in relating architectural theory to the history of art, showing how "in the transition from one style to another, the point of view from which art is considered, and nature as represented by art, changes."[71] Thus a proper study of history led to an

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[70]See Chap. 1, note 3.

[71]"Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects," *AABN* 7 (13 March 1880): 104; see also *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Convention . . . New York, Nov. 19 and 20, 1879* (Boston: American Institute of Architects, 1880), 28-31.

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understanding of architectural theory.

Sturgis's course lasted only its initial two years, for in 1880 he took leave of his New York practice to spend four years studying and traveling in Europe. According to Wheeler, the City College post was left open, but there was no successor.[72]

As early as 1871, Sturgis was calling for "a genuine and worthy system of education" for the architect as a means of developing and advancing a style of architecture so that "a future of truly modern and appropriate fine art applied to good buildings would be . . . assured."[73] In his writings around the turn of the century, Sturgis sought to explain what were the proper principles of architectural education, what subjects should be taught in the schools, and what was more appropriately learned in the studio, over the drafting board, and in practice in an architect's office. These were a confirmation of his writings from the mid-1860s and '70s and of his experiences at City College. According to Sturgis, the school was appropriate for teaching the prospective architect a scientific knowledge of the principles of modern construction, architectural theory, and the history and traditions of architecture and other fine arts. But there were other things that the architect needed to learn outside of the school, either in the studio or in architectural practice: the fundamentals of design particularly those developed by drawing and modeling, a knowledge and love of materials, and practical matters necessary to carry out the architectural profession.

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[72]Wheeler, 10.

[73]Russell Sturgis, Jr., "Modern Architecture," *North American Review* 112 (April 1871): 377. It was through articles such as this that Sturgis sought to educate the public taste. The concept of style is explored in much greater detail in Chapter 3.

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Sturgis's skepticism about architectural education showed itself in an 1898 commentary on the Ecole. Because of the nature and needs of modern construction, it was necessary for the aspiring architect to acquire a scientific knowledge of its principles in a school: "If, however, the school passes beyond the teaching of theory and science; beyond the knowledge of materials and of constructive principles; beyond the history of the past and its application in warning or in encouragement for the present, it is then found to be in imminent danger of trying to do the impossible." Designing itself must be taught in the studio, and couldn't be taught in a school. In that respect the French *atelier* system was a virtue. However, "there lingers around the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and among its graduates the wholly mistaken belief that what the student has learned while still a student is all that he need learn, and that the well-taught man of the school is the thoroughly accomplished man, the finished artist -- a heresy which no great leader of French architectural art could ever be got to approve."[74] Neither studio nor school could fully educate the architect; the architect needed instruction from both. Moreover, to be a truly educated architect he needed to continue learning beyond his formal training.

Sturgis's thoughts on the subject of artistic and architectural education surfaced again in 1902 when Columbia University was considering the establishment of a Fine Arts Department. Again he emphasized the idea that the art and practice of design and technique had to be acquired manually by practice in the studio. On the other hand, "university education has to do with all that can be taught in words, and all that is

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[74]R.S., "Schools of Architecture and the Paris School," *Scribner's Magazine* 24 (December 1898): 768.

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expressible in the language of words. A manual art has nothing to do with the thoughts which are expressible in words; by it thoughts are expressed wholly otherwise."[75] He was willing to condone a school of architecture in a university "because architecture as practiced in modern times is not a manual art, but is a combination of an intellectual but non-artistic study with science, and with artistic traditions now embodied in books."[76] He was then quick to point out that for the architect as for the artist there were things which the university could not teach, which he would have to learn and develop for himself.[77]

One of Sturgis's most interesting essays on the subject, "The True Education of an Architect," appeared in 1898. The goal of a "true education" should be to train architects who were skilled in the ways of building yet capable of creating architecture which was a fine art. There were three essentials to be taught: how to build, how to draw, and how to model. "His knowledge of building may be theoretical [i.e. can be learned in school] . . . but his knowledge of drawing and of modeling must be of the most practical nature." The science of building was essential for sound construction. Drawing examples of buildings and architectural details was crucial for developing visual memory that could be put to use in new designs; in particular the skill of expressing that design in

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[75]Russell Sturgis, "Study of Art in the University," *Brush and Pencil* 10 (September 1902): 332.

[76]Ibid.

[77]See "Over the Draughting Board: Universities and the Fine Arts," *ARec* 11 (November 1902): 655-656, and "Over the Draughting Board: Opinions Official and Unofficial: The Universities and the Fine Arts," *ARec* 13 (April 1903): 389-394, for commentary on Sturgis's views.

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appropriate perspective was much more useful for conveying the conception of a building than an elevation drawing. Acquiring skill in modeling was especially desirable as it allowed the architect to develop his skills in the design of original architectural sculpture and of detail, so he would not be compelled to use examples copied from pattern books or be left to the devices of marble cutters. If architects were taught these skills then they would know the ways of building, yet have the information and knowledge to create architecture which was a fine art.[78]

What was the result when schools attempted to teach design -- what Sturgis called the "school method"? It was based on "authority" derived from Roman prototypes and their antecedents. The professor set a design problem, the results of which were easier to judge if they could be limited to those set by the "authority": "The accuracy . . . of the Ionic or the Roman Doric colonnade, its accuracy in general proportions and in the larger and smaller details according to the standard of this, that or the other recognized authority, is easy to decide."[79] In the United States the school method was identified with neo-classic styles, but Sturgis pointed out that medieval styles were prevalent in English and German academic training.[80] Perhaps Sturgis's greatest criticism was that school

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[78]Russell Sturgis, "The True Education of an Architect," *Atlantic* 81 (February 1898): 246-255. See Montgomery Schuyler, "An Architect's Education," *NYT*, 7 February 1898, 4.

[79]Russell Sturgis, "School and Practice Designing," *ARec* 19 (June 1906): 415.

[80]Despite his own academic training in Germany, Sturgis did not discuss the German practice of students taking academic architecture courses, then working as apprentices during break periods. Presumably this reflects the ascendancy of French architectural training by this time.

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designing was not based in reality; it was "a world of paper architecture in which designs are made flat, and in which exultation over a clever drawing is quite equal to that which the practising man feels is a working structure of merit."[81]

By contrast, if the architect has gone beyond the limitations of the school, by drawing in the studio, in the field, after books and photographs, and by learning to model, so that he internalized a myriad of design details, he could then design according to what Sturgis called the "practice method," which consisted of "summoning up from the resources of the memory such architectural forms as seem best fitted to the larger task, about to be imposed upon the designer."[82] Like the "school method" it had a basis in tradition, but unlike that method, the practice method started with the necessities of plan and structure, and then freely adapted forms and details to the problem at hand. What would be the result?

> Nothing absurd will come of it, because you will know how to hold your details in hand and make them work together, . . . Nothing ugly will come of it, because you are assumed, by the conditions, to have some sense of massing and proportioning, some feeling for contrast and for repetition, some joy in monotony and some interest in variety. And if people are troubled because they cannot name your Chosen [sic] style, you will be pleased, and will answer that you are not an archaeologist when you design.[83]

Sturgis believed that the practicing architect was never fully formed; that to improve his art the architect had to keep learning and studying. In 1890 Sturgis

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[81][Russell Sturgis], review of *The American Vignola: Part I. The Five Orders*, by William R. Ware, *Nation* 76 (28 May 1903): 442.

[82]"School and Practice Designing," 414.

[83]Ibid., 418.

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recommended to the AIA that it not concern itself with the programs of well-established architectural schools, but rather that it should encourage the chapters and other local architectural societies to foster education for practicing architects, draftsmen, and assistants.[84] The lectures that he gave to the New York Chapter and the Architectural League fit this pattern.

Sturgis and Wight had learned and studied architecture from Sturgis's extensive collection of books and photos. Sturgis acquired two such collections, the first begun in the 1850s and dispersed in 1879 prior to his second European sojourn. The second was begun during that sojourn and continued until the end of his life.[85] When Samuel Putnam Avery came to Sturgis in 1890 seeking advice on how to commemorate his son Henry Ogden Avery (Sturgis's former pupil), Sturgis was quick to recommend the establishment of such a collection: "those very costly books which every student should have access to, but which no one should be compelled to buy." Sturgis also suggested that it be located at Columbia University because its library was the only one in the city open late in the evening.[86] Avery and Sturgis selected the initial volumes for the library in 1892; Avery set up a purchase fund, and Sturgis, along with the Avery Librarian, and the Professor of the Department of Architecture, served on the purchase committee until his death.[87]

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[84]*Proceedings of the 24th Annual Convention . . . 1890*, 16.

[85]See Wheeler, and Wight, "Reminiscences of Sturgis."

[86]Under Ware's leadership, Columbia held evening courses in architecture to attract a wider spectrum of students.

[87]Sturgis, "Samuel Putnam Avery," 14-23.

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Wight never had the same involvement in architectural education as Sturgis, but he occasionally expressed some of the same concerns, no doubt influenced by their long-term friendship.[88] Like Sturgis, Wight took a humanistic approach, advocating the ongoing study of historic architecture as a means of understanding and absorbing the principles which underlie the art of architecture:

> They should be impressed with the idea that they study history, not to become servile copyists, but for the very reason that they would be thereby truly impressed with the idea that in all the great periods of art . . . problems were being worked out as part of the development of civilizations of those times. . . . What is needed is a correct history, and if we must have it let us have all of it, consecutively told, without comment or prejudice, and not taught in such a way as to back up any one denomination or school of architecture. No good can come of it unless there is catholicity in the teaching.[89]

And while he called for catholicity in teaching, he advocated the study of the architecture of medieval France as being particularly useful. His emphasis on France rather than Italy shows the ascendancy of Viollet-le-Duc over Ruskin. If the architect mastered the principles that underlie French medieval architecture, these principles "will be an unfailing guide to modern architects in developing an American architecture which will

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[88]What I believe to be one relatively early expression is: W. "Self-Made Architects, Letter to the editor, Cambridge, Illinois, November 1, 1877," *AABN* 2 (17 November 1877): 371. Cambridge, Illinois, is in Henry County, in western Illinois, enroute to Rockford where Wight's Norman C. Thompson house was built in 1876-77. In this letter, the writer advocated the cause of the architect who gained his skill and abilities through natural gifts and "persistent private study." According to the writer, scientific knowledge alone, as gained in the technological institute, was not enough to produce a skilled architect with practical knowledge.

[89]P.B. Wight, "Architectural History as a Study," *IA* 27 (June 1896): 42.

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be more truthful and rational than most of the work which is done today."[90] Wight recommended three works in particular for this study: the entry on Construction in Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire*, available in translation as *Rational Building* by George Martin Huss; Charles Herbert Moore's *Development and Character of Gothic Architecture* (1890, 1899), and Henry Adams's *Mont-Saint Michel and Chartres* (1904, 1912). "The first two cover the technique of Gothic architecture of the best period better than any other," the last tells "the civil and ecclesiastical history of the Middle Ages in France, better than it ever before was done, especially as this history is reflected in the development of its wonderful architecture."[91]

Much of the emphasis of architectural education and the proper training of architects dealt with architectural style. The path of professionalism led inevitably to the problem of style. This will be analyzed in greater detail in the following chapter.

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[90]Wight, "How Best Now," 51.

[91]Ibid., 55.

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CHAPTER 3

THE PROBLEM OF STYLE

Style was a pervasive topic of discussion in architectural circles throughout much of the nineteenth century in the United States as well as in England, France, and Germany. As Sturgis and Wight began their careers, architects at organizational meetings discussing architectural styles, became "so embittered as almost to disrupt their organizations. . . . At that time architects had little historical or practical knowledge of the styles they were talking about."[1] Through their writings Sturgis and Wight were able to add significantly to a historical and practical knowledge of style. In dealing with style, their writings may be organized into two major categories. One dealt with the nature and evolution of style, its historic development, and its relation to a national architecture. Sturgis's historical analyses were a major contribution to the field, while Wight regularly raised the issue of an American architecture. The other category focused on the lessons and influence of the Gothic, which may be seen as an outgrowth of their youthful fascination with the Gothic Revival.

Nineteenth-Century Views on Style

The United States did not have the long architectural tradition of a European country, either to copy or to rebel against. Colonial America inherited the traditions of English architecture, and its currents, brought by emigré architects and publications, remained strong throughout the nineteenth century. But in New York, as has been

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[1]Peter B. Wight, review of *The Scammon Lectures* [by Ralph Adams Cram, Thomas Hastings, and Claude Bragdon] *for 1915*, In *ARec* 41 (April 1917): 370.

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pointed out in Chapter 1, the Germanic strain was also strong. By mid-century it began to be easier for architects as well as their potential clients to travel abroad, and those who could not travel increasingly began to discover the world of art and architecture through publications. The search for style must be seen as part of a search for tradition and legitimacy in American culture.

Style as a way of categorizing art and architecture appeared during the eighteenth century as the English, French, and Germans set out to describe the world in dictionaries and encyclopedias. For the nineteenth-century architect, the concept of style arose in conjunction with an increasing historical consciousness. No longer did the architect design and build unself-consciously, knowing only that he was building in a certain time and place and responding to certain needs. The vast array of historical buildings had preceded him; if he chose, he could use a vast array of stylistic examples to meet his own design needs.[2] Throughout much of the nineteenth century the two prevalent modes were

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[2]Sturgis perceptively described the architect's dilemma: "A man goes to college, to the Gymnasium, the Realschule, or the Lycée. He studies history and theories. . . . Before he begins to practice art, almost as soon as he begins to study it, he finds himself surrounded by a mass of book knowledge and of theory which is much too learned for him to despise. . . . The present age is one of critical observation, . . . It has, on the one side, physical science with its discoveries and the news it has told of the constitution of the universe; and on the other side it has the spirit of investigation into the facts of antiquity; it has created the science of archaeology, it presents the arts of the past to us, . . The enormous amount of writing in all the great modern languages devoted to the subject of the fine arts, their history and their practice, has all to be assimilated. . . . We cannot, if we would, shut our eyes to our already gained knowledge. We must of necessity go on in our self-conscious way, looking as a partly instructive community with the well-informed eyes of the archaeologist, and not with the unschooled memory of our ancestors, at all works of fine art." Wilhelm Lübke, *Outlines of the History of Art*, edited, minutely revised and largely rewritten by Russell Sturgis (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1904), 2:477-479.

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the classic and the medieval, especially the Gothic. (Sturgis later discussed the "Trabeated" and the "Arcuated," calling them the "two principal Ways of Building.")[3] Each brought with it a set of associations; each had its adherents. Some architects, even while choosing a style, sought to move beyond its limitations to experiment with forms drawn from a wide variety of sources to produce buildings that would meet the needs of an increasingly urbanized and industrialized culture, what Talbot Hamlin has dubbed the "rise of eclecticism."[4]

Classic vs. Gothic

In a lecture on May 1, 1860, at the Architectural Exhibition of the Architectural Association, the British architect Robert Kerr discussed the "battle of the styles."[5] Reviewing the use of architectural styles in England from the post-Renaissance period on, he chronicled the rise and conflicts of Classicism and Gothicism, as well as eclecticism ("the principle was that all authentic styles were on an equal platform of eligibility for adoption, according to circumstances") and "Latitudinarianism," a movement which rejected imitation and sought novelty and the development of new forms. He saw the Classic and the Gothic approaching a common alliance as architects used and modified those styles; "the result might not be any new style,-- for it was questionable whether the phraseology of architecture, except in respect of new materials,

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[3]Russell Sturgis, ed., *Dictionary of Architecture and Building* (New York: Macmillan, 1898), s.v. "Style," by R.S.

[4]Talbot F. Hamlin, "The Rise of Eclecticism in New York," *JSAH* 11 (May 1952): 3-8.

[5]"The Battle of the Styles," *Builder* 18 (12 May 1860): 292-294.

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was not exhausted long ago . . .; but there would be a federation and unison of purpose."[6] The French and the Germans had similar discussions.[7]

For architects who chose the Gothic as opposed to the Classic style, there were three great nineteenth-century advocates of their viewpoint: Pugin, Ruskin, and, to a lesser degree, Viollet-le-Duc, who all saw Gothic architecture in moral terms.[8] Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852) has been characterized as a "prophet of the Gothic style" who "began to preach with fervour that there was no other style but Gothic possible for a Christian architect who wished to build a Christian church, or who wished to build any kind of building in a Christian country."[9] While extremely active as an architect and as a designer of the decorative elements of architecture, Pugin advocated his cause through a series of books: *Contrasts: Or, A Parallel Between The Noble Edifices Of the Middle Ages And Similar Buildings Of The Present Day; Shewing the Present Decay of Taste* (1836, rev. 1841); *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian*

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[6]Ibid., 294. See John Summerson, "The Evaluation of Victorian Architecture: The Problem of Failure,"in *Victorian Architecture: Four Studies in Evaluation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 7-12, for a synopsis of Kerr's writings and changing views of style.

[7]Nikolaus Pevsner, *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) and Robin D. Middleton and David Watkin, *Neoclassical and 19th Century Architecture* (New York: Abrams, 1980), both provide useful information on this subject.

[8]Paul Frankl, *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 553-578, offers a helpful perspective.

[9]Basil F.L. Clarke, *Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century: A Study of the Gothic Revival in England* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1938), 45.

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Architecture (1841) [Fig. 19]; *The Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England* (1843); and *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (1843). Phoebe B. Stanton has called *Contrasts* "the best known and admired tract on the struggle between the styles and the nature of the practice of architecture produced in the nineteenth century."[10] In *True Principles* Pugin stated the general principles from which excellent design was derived and explained how these principles were found in Gothic architecture. These emphasized construction, materials, ornament, and decoration that accentuated construction, what Stanton calls a forecast of the aesthetic theory of functionalism.[11]

W. R. Lethaby observed that "the critical work of Pugin was continued on a higher plane and universalized by Ruskin into a general philosophy of art."[12] Ruskin consistently espoused the Gothic, if not the Gothic Revival, particularly the Gothic of Italy and the English "early decorated period" (as in "The Lamp of Obedience," Chapter 7 in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*). In "The Nature of Gothic" (Vol. 2, Chapter 6 in *The Stones of Venice*) Ruskin set forth the moral nature of Gothic architecture, thus expanding on Pugin's *Contrasts*. [Fig. 20]

Like Pugin, although without the moralizing tone, Viollet-le-Duc set forth general principles of architecture as found in the Gothic and other forms of medieval

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[10]*Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: Macmillan, Free Press, 1982), s.v. "Pugin, Augustus Welby Northmore," by Phoebe B. Stanton, 3:484.

[11]Ibid., 491.

[12]W.R. Lethaby, "Philip Webb and His Work: Some Architects of the Nineteenth Century and Two Ways of Building," *Builder* 128 (1 May 1925): 676.

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architecture, with an emphasis on construction and materials. [Fig. 21 and Fig. 22] This theory of architecture was to prove most influential with a host of nineteenth-century architects.[13] The publication history of Viollet-le-Duc's books has been cited in Chapter 1. In his *Dictionnaire* he dealt with the question of "style," contrasting it with "styles."

> Styles enable us to distinguish different schools and epochs from one another. The styles of Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Romanesque, and Gothic architecture differ from each other in ways that make it easy to classify the monuments produced by these various types of art. . . .
>
> We will speak here of *style* only as it belongs to art understood as a conception of the human mind. Just as there is only *Art* in this sense, so there is only one *Style*. What, then, is style in this sense? It is, in a work of art, the manifestation of an ideal based on a principle.[14]

In matters of architecture, style transcended styles. Architecture could be classified, but ultimately it was more than classification.

Evolution and Style

Kerr saw nineteenth-century architecture moving towards a fusion of styles and a unity of purpose, if not a new style. Sturgis, and especially Wight, seemed much more interested in the idea of stylistic evolution. They did not see eclecticism or Latitudinarism as Kerr had defined them as valid ways to achieve a new style; neither

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[13]Middleton has pointed out that the illustrations in Viollet-le-Duc's dictionaries were actively exploited for architectural details by his contemporaries. *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: Macmillan, Free Press, 1982), s.v."Viollet-le-Duc, E. E.," by Robin D. Middleton, 4:324.

[14]Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *The Foundations of Architecture: Selections from the Dictionnaire raisonné*, trans. Kenneth D. Whitehead (New York: George Braziller, 1990), 231-232. In his introduction to this work, "The *Dictionnaire raisonné*: Viollet-le-Duc's Encyclopedic Structure for Architecture," Barry Bergdoll points out that Viollet's approach to style was in direct contrast to that of Quartremère de Quincy in his dictionary, which was begun in 1785 and in widespread use by the 1830s, 23-25.

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would "stylistic fusion" and "unity of purpose" achieve the desired goal. Of course, Sturgis and Wight did not have unique concerns. Peter Collins set forth the "fundamental dilemmas" of the nineteenth-century theorists: "whether architecture evolves progressively or by cycles, and whether it evolves automatically by environmental influences or in accordance with stylistic determinants chosen by the designers themselves."[15] Collins saw the demand for a new architecture as arising primarily from architectural historians and journalists who saw

> a modern building [as] essentially a collection of potential antiquarian fragments which one day would be rediscovered and studied by future historians with a view to determining the social history of the Victorian age. . . . It was in vain that more moderate critics, including the architects themselves, suggested that an evolution might well be apparent to future generations, even though it was proceeding too slowly to be noticed by those living at the time.[16]

Collins also pointed out the problem of historical consciousness: "The Revivalists were dominated by their awareness of the legacy of history. The anti-Revivalists were dominated by their awareness of the evolutionary nature of history."[17]

While the concept of evolution goes back in the English language to the mid-seventeenth century, evolution as a philosophical and technical means of thought was largely formulated and popularized by Herbert Spencer in his *Development Hypothesis* of 1852 (and subsequent writings) and given a biological context in Darwin's *Origin of the*

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[15]Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1965), 67.

[16]Ibid., 131-132.

[17]Ibid., 133.

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Species, published in 1859.[18] Richard Hofstadter pointed out the wide-ranging intellectual consequence of Darwinism and evolutionary thought in the nineteenth century as "thinkers... seized upon the new theory and attempted to sound its meaning for the several social disciplines."[19] Evolutionary theory, adopted from the biological model, became popularized and was widely accepted in the United States in the years following the Civil War for many areas of study, including the social sciences. Sturgis's and Wight's emphasis on an evolutionary tradition in architectural development is quite understandable in light of this background.

An "American" Style for the Nineteenth Century

Did America need a national style? Critics such as Robert Kerr, writing some thirty years after expounding on the battle of the styles in England, thought it was inevitable that, "by the mere everyday operation of the natural laws of intellect, there must in due time be developed, in the peculiar circumstances of American progress, a particular variety of that artistic treatment of building which is one of the instincts of mankind, is a proposition that is scarcely open to debate."[20] For Kerr, a national style had the virtue of originality. The American architect had three sources of inspiration to develop that originality: "the English or Anglo-Saxon, the Continental European or

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[18]The earliest citation for the word in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 1647. The *OED* is very useful for tracing the changing meanings and uses of the word, while citing sources.

[19]Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1959), 4.

[20]Robert Kerr, "The Problem of National American Architecture," *ARec* 3 (October-December 1893): 121.

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French, and the independent if not native American," but "the absolutely only way in which [the American] can become an artistic architect worthy of his generation is to learn all that he can from the architecture of past times and then do his best to better it."[21]

While Sturgis and Wight discussed the idea of an American architecture, it was less to urge the creation of an architecture that was original than to urge the creation of an architecture that was good. Sturgis, in particular, began commenting on the state of American architecture fairly early in his career. Writing in 1866, he found little to praise in American architecture: "There are no remains of good architecture of past times left us to study; and our architects have not as yet built us any new buildings that can much instruct us."[22] But he thought that America had the potential to create a good "national art" (which included architecture as "the consummation of all art"). What was required? "Artists of ability and a public of intelligence," both of whom must learn to judge art critically in order to improve it.[23] Sturgis called the National Academy of Design [Fig. 12] good architecture, and the New York Trinity Chapel (R. Upjohn, 1865) [Fig. 23], a "clever building." Some five years later, Sturgis still did not see much cause for optimism, but had prescriptions to remedy the situation. He was not advocating an American architecture for its own sake, but stated that by "putting new ideas into designs . . . new styles of architecture begin. . . . It is not desirable that people should annoy

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[21]Ibid., 126, 127.

[22][Russell Sturgis], "The Conditions of Art in America," *North American Review* 102 (January 1866): 4.

[23]Ibid., 22-23.

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themselves about the invention of a new style; it will come of itself when we have common sense and simplicity enough to let it come."[24] Some progress towards putting new ideas into designs had been made in residential architecture, especially country houses. However there were several obstacles in the way of the architect who wished to use new ideas to create good designs: (1) the many and varied demands on the architect who had to function more as a businessman than as an artist; (2) modern materials and building processes which had been unfavorable to "good artistic effect"; (3) the high cost of building; (4) the desire for ostentation on the part of the client; and (5) "the timidity of men," which could only be remedied by education.[25] If the architect designed a building which met the needs of the situation, used forms and materials that were best suited to the design, and was ornamented with "fresh and natural decoration," it "must be wholly independent of any style of past time." Styles "that can be called by name or fixed by date," are not "fit for a basis or for a universal guide, or for anything but a stimulating study."[26] Instead the architect was urged to forget style for its own sake and practice the art of good design. Sturgis took the opportunity to promote his own ability to practice this art by praising a cast-iron fronted building on Broadway that he had designed ("an attempt at something reasonable and right"). [Fig. 24]

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[24]Russell Sturgis, Jr., "Modern Architecture," *North American Review* 112 (January 1871): 165.

[25]Ibid., 171-176.

[26]Sturgis, "Modern Architecture," (April 1871): 388.

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Wight began to write about the problems of style and a national architecture in the context of architecture in the Midwest (what he called the "Western states"). In 1880 he saw evidence of a national style which he explained as "the tendency of a number of architects -- whether working in concert or not -- to follow nearly uniform principles in construction and design, uncontrolled by the tradition of previously existing styles." He went on to define this style's characteristics: the employment of

> straight lintels placed flush with the walls and in connection with the horizontal band courses; also continuous sills and visible bond courses in the piers, cornices for wall protection only, and not for shadow effects; and, generally, ornamentation of the *surface* of wall and *within* the surface plane. The design of such buildings, though it has little in common with any historical style, has been largely *influenced* by the study of mediaeval Gothic architecture and the works of Viollet-le-Duc, which have had such extensive circulation in this country.[27]

Undoubtedly he was alluding to his own work and the work of John W. Root (see Chapter 2). Public governmental buildings were criticized because they had copied Greek, Roman, Italian, and French Neo-Grec details. By contrast, public institutional buildings like hospitals and asylums were more commendable because their designs were more readily adapted to their materials, especially brick.[28] Wight saw his national style most readily in business buildings and residences. In residential architecture Wight saw progress where there had been an emphasis on "adopting a constructive style best adapted to the materials employed, and setting aside all precedents in the use of detail."[29]

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[27]P.B. Wight, "The Condition of Architecture in the Western States," *AABN* 7 (13 March 1880): 108.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Wight, "Condition of Architecture," (20 March 1880): 119.

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Although not specifically mentioned, Root's Sherman house on Prairie Avenue in Chicago [Fig. 16] was an example of such a constructive style. Wight found it particularly hopeful that the public was open to being educated about architecture, that what he called the "popular mind" was "more inclined to consider that architecture is an art in which the comfort, well-being, and aesthetic education of all is concerned."[30]

The Historical Development of Style: Lessons for Modern Architecture

The 1890s brought a series of writings by both Sturgis and Wight dealing with the historical development of style and lessons for modern architecture. This may be related to several factors. Sturgis had given up an active architectural practice although he maintained his New York office.[31] During these years, in addition to continuing his extensive critical writings and numerous and wide-ranging book reviews, Sturgis began to write a series of architectural histories in an effort to educate the public as well as his fellow architects with greater depth and comprehension. Wight, too, had more time, as well as financial necessity, for writing, having closed the Wight Fireproofing Company and taken up architectural practice although on a more limited basis.[32]

The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition was a factor in creating a climate in which to assess the state of modern architecture. The effect of the fair on American

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[30]Ibid.

[31]See Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1980), 73.

[32]See Sarah B. Landau, *P.B. Wight, Architect, Critic, and Contractor* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1981), on "necessity," 51; the closure of the fireproofing company, 48; and his architectural work in the 1890s, 41-43, 49.

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architecture has been a much-discussed topic which does not need repeating.[33] Baker, among others, pointed out that the fair was "the culminating American public cultural event of the nineteenth century," and the fifteenth of the great international expositions held during the second half of the nineteenth century.[34] While it ostensibly celebrated Columbus's 1492 discovery of America, its primary intent was to show American progress, and industrial, manufacturing, and artistic achievements. Laid out around a court of honor in accordance with Beaux-Arts planning principles, the fair, at the instigation of McKim, utilized classical motives on a modular system for the majority of its buildings. The unity of effect was achieved largely under the inspiration of Hunt, and the large-scale planning and construction effort was carried out under the direction of Burnham.[35] In the fair, American architects showed that they could undertake a project which produced a unified, harmonious architectural design, on a large scale, in a short period of time. If such a result could be achieved for the Chicago exposition, why couldn't American architects achieve equally good results under other circumstances?

Wight's experience with the fair was both personal and extended; he served as a consulting architect and building supervisor, supervising the construction of the Ohio, Maryland, and California state buildings, and the Venezuela and Merck buildings. He also designed the model Homeopathic Hospital, located between the Woman's Building

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[33]See for example, Dimitri Tselos, "The Chicago Fair and the Myth of the 'Lost Cause'," *JSAH* 26 (December 1967): 259-268.

[34]Paul R. Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1980), 392, 394.

[35]See Ibid., 396-397, 400.

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and the entrance to the Midway Plaisance.[36] These experiences allowed him ample opportunity to see McKim, Hunt, and Burnham at work and to judge the efforts of their labors. Prior to the fair, Wight felt it would be seen as a record of architectural progress in the preceding decade, which found "the opportunity for expression. . . . It is all that it is possible to give as an exhibit of American architecture." It was equally notable because "never before at an international exposition had architecture been made the most prominent exhibit."[37] A seven-part article published at the end of 1893 in *American Architect* gave Wight the opportunity to discuss the architecture of the fair in much greater detail as well as assess its effects and implications for American architecture.[38]

The Exposition was praised as "a spectacle" that "has never before been equalled." The Court of Honor was described as

> a one-and-indivisible, harmonious and complete composition, to which every art ever practised by man has contributed; a composition which has never been equalled in extent, proportion and harmonious blending of all its component parts; not a triumph of architecture alone, or even comprised of perfect architectural elements, but as nearly perfect as a whole as human brains, hearts, and hands have ever devised.[39]

Hunt's Administration Building [Fig. 25] "by one of the great living masters" and his "greatest monumental work" towered above the Court of Honor. "It dominates and is the

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[36]Landau, 41.

[37]P.B. Wight, "After Ten Years," *IA* 21 (February 1893): 5.

[38]P.B. Wight, "The Great Exhibition Reviewed," *AABN* 42 (7 October 1893): 7-8; (14 October 1893): 21-23; (21 October 1893): 32-34; (28 October 1893): 47-49; (4 November 1893): 57-59; (18 November 1893): 86-88; (30 December 1893): 158-159.

[39]Ibid., 7.

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key note to the Grand Court as a whole. It cannot be appreciated in all its beauty and grandeur except in connection with the surrounding structures."[40] Wight noted that the Court of Honor was the work of many "master-minds." But "one master-mind, that of D.H. Burnham, acted as the moderator and balance-wheel for the rest." Because he was able to bring the leading members of the profession together, acting in cooperation "yet independently as to design and details," this effective result was achieved in such a short time.[41] Because the architectural spectacle was so effective, it had become as important an exhibit as anything within the building.[42]

However, in his final article Wight asked the question: Was the Grand Court "an example of the best architecture of modern times"? He answered:

> The Grand Court is an example of the best that has been done with a group of buildings designed in styles that are based on what we call Classic architecture. They are of many styles, yet harmonious, and the beauty of the whole effect comes from this variety. They are not an argument for the revival of Classic styles, but only show that the Classic styles are capable of grand effect which might also be produced in other styles if used under the same circumstances. . . . Their influence for better architectural effects will live as a potent educator in future years. It will teach us that the beauty of our cities can be enhanced as much by careful consideration of the relation between building and building as by the superior excellence of individual but adjacent structures.

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[40]Ibid., 7, 23.

[41]Ibid., 8, 21. Wight was to continue to praise Burnham's administrative ability at the Exposition. See Peter B. Wight, "An Appreciation of Daniel Hudson Burnham," *American Institute of Architects Quarterly Bulletin* 13 (July 1912): 132-133; Peter B. Wight, "Daniel Hudson Burnham and His Associates," *ARec* 38 (July 1915): 9-10.

[42]Ibid., 8.

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He also pondered the effect of the World's Fair architecture upon the future of architecture in America. He felt that it would have an influence on the grouping of buildings, that it would result in "a greater popular appreciation of the latent ability of the architectural profession in this country," and that it offered lessons in administrative management for the erection of a large number of buildings.[43]

But while the architecture of the World's Fair had shown the capabilities of American architects in planning and effective construction, it had not shown either innovation or the process of evolution in architectural style. How could American architects move beyond the constraints and limitations of Classic architecture and use the principles derived from an understanding of Gothic architecture to create a truly American architectural style? Sturgis and Wight each addressed the problem in his own way, but both drew the basis of their approach largely from Viollet-le-Duc's *Entretiens*, which dealt with the history of architecture in different times, places, and cultures.

In 1893 architect Henry Van Brunt (and translator of Viollet's *Entretiens* as *Discourses on Architecture* (1875-81)) published *Greek Lines, and Other Architectural Essays*. Like the Classic architecture of the World's Fair, this publication gave Wight the opportunity to comment on the implications of Classic architecture for American

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[43]Ibid., 159. Tselos, 259, n. 1, states that Montgomery Schuyler was the first to write about the effect of the fair on future American architecture, citing "Last Words About the World's Fair," *ARec* 3 (Jan.-March 1894): 271-301, reprinted in *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1961), 556-574. Clearly Wight preceded Schuyler.

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architecture.[44] He praised Van Brunt's description of the Greek line because Van Brunt showed it as "the line of feeling and intellectual expression," that which distinguished Greek art from other art. When properly understood Greek lines did not lead to eclecticism, but formed the basis of such principles of architecture as truth in construction, beauty, and intelligence: "They are the basis of truth in construction, as they are of truth in decoration, sculpture and painting, which together comprise the art of architecture."[45] Wight noted that Van Brunt looked to certain nineteenth-century architectural movements to see how the principles of "Greek lines" were worked out in a modern context. Van Brunt found these in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts under the influence of Henri Labrouste, in an eclecticism "subject to Greek motives," and in the Romanesque developed by H.H. Richardson.[46] But Wight saw less reason for optimism than Van Brunt: "It certainly looks as if the times were not ripe for a consistent revival of rational architecture conceived on the lines of beauty and intelligence. Education is not yet sufficiently diffused to make the result hoped for possible."[47] Architects like Richardson and Root were expressing the underlying principles of architecture in their work, yet "it cannot be denied that there has been a revulsion against purity and simplicity of style [of the sort displayed by Richardson and Root] within a very short time. It has been coming

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[44]P.B. Wight, "Henry Van Brunt - Architect, Writer and Philosopher," *IA* 23 (April 1894): 29-30; (May 1894): 41-42; (June 1894): 49-50; (July 1894): 60-61.

[45]Ibid., 30.

[46]Ibid., 41.

[47]Ibid., 42.

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for ten years past, but has burst upon us with force within three years."[48] Fashion, particularly that espoused by the Beaux-Arts trained Classicists, had replaced principle. Wight was particularly hopeful that Van Brunt's essays "may awaken a spirit of cooperation, and a certain intelligent unity of effort among architects toward rational methods in design, whereby alone progress is possible."[49]

Wight was acutely aware that the nineteenth century was what he called "the age of investigation, . . . the age of encyclopedias, the age of research," not an age "of development or creation."[50] He was hopeful that a "correct and unprejudiced" history and philosophy of architecture which dealt properly with the true principles of architecture, as seen in Greek design and its successor, Byzantine design, not just that espoused by the French school, could be an impetus to modern architects to "be true to our own convictions, our unbounded opportunities, our unrivaled progress in the mechanic arts, and develop an art which shall be a true link in the world's history."[51] Some twenty years later when reviewing *Byzantine and Romanesque Architecture* by Thomas Graham Jackson, Wight again reiterated the idea that Greek architecture was the progenitor of "all subsequent architectural art worth having," and that careful study of previous architectural art was a vehicle to bring about the gradual development of "a progressive

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[48]Ibid., 50.

[49]Ibid., 61.

[50]P.B. Wight, "The Point of Departure between Classic and Medieval Architecture," *IA* 25 (March 1894): 14.

[51]Ibid., 16.

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architecture for our own day . . . which will be, like that of old, the result of evolution based on an intelligent understanding of the motives that influenced their development in past ages."[52] [Fig. 26]

Wight wrote generally of Greek principles. Sturgis looked more to a discussion of the forms of Greek architecture and their interpretation as the basis of developing a modern architectural style: "The revival of a style must be of its essence and not of its mere outside forms alone."[53] Addressing the AIA in 1894, Sturgis called Greek architecture "simple, autochthonous, arising naturally out of the necessary processes of building."[54] He identified the characteristics of Greek architecture: tranquility and serenity; the use of few and larger parts proportioned to themselves; dependency on post and beam construction; the use of free sculpture to set off a building. He then set down nineteen "general laws," describing how the characteristics of Greek architecture might be applied to modern needs and building types.[55]

But Sturgis did more than just offer prescriptions for a modern style. His years of study in Europe and his conscientious acquisition of architectural books and photos resulted in two major architectural histories (*European Architecture: A Historical Study*

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[52]Peter B. Wight, review of *Byzantine and Romanesque Architecture*, by Thomas Graham Jackson, In *JAIA* 2 (June 1914): 323, 324.

[53]Russell Sturgis, "Modern Style Founded on Ancient Greek Architecture," in *Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Convention . . . New York, October 15, 16 and 17, 1894* (Providence: AIA, 1895), 84.

[54]Ibid., 85.

[55]Ibid., 86-87, 89-91.

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(1896) and *A History of Architecture* (1906, 1909)) of the sort that Wight had called for in 1894, as well as *The Dictionary of Architecture and Building* (1901).[56] Wight noted that "until Viollet-le-Duc came on the field we had no authority on the historical sequence of architectural style,"[57] and, indeed, Viollet-le-Duc was undoubtedly the inspiration for these works. Sturgis had praised the *Dictionnaire raisonné* in 1869 (see Chapter 1, note 138). Following Viollet-le-Duc's death, Sturgis commended his books in general:

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[56]Prior to the publication of these works, Sturgis was the editor for the decorative arts and mediaeval archaeology of the *Century Dictionary* (1889), editor for the fine arts of *Webster's International Dictionary* (1890 edition), and editor for architecture and fine arts of *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia* (1893-95 edition). In 1896 he compiled an *Annotated Bibliography of Fine Art, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Arts of Decoration and Illustration*, ed. George Iles (Boston: The Library Bureau, 1896) for the American Library Association. In his preliminary note to the entries on Architecture and Landscape Gardening, he offered a brief synopsis of style as it related to architecture: "The Fine Art of Architecture has a curious history. From the earliest historical times to the XV. century there was a general tendency for styles to develop naturally and spontaneously one out of another. One style would perhaps disappear in a time of conquest and in the ruin of the civilization which had created it; then the conquerors, perhaps after a long time of little artistic production, would evolve a new style. Occasional attempts were made to revive a style of former times, but these were never of much importance. In the XV. century, however, a deliberate attempt was made in Italy to return to the style of the Roman Empire; . . . This was caused less by admiration of the beauty of those structures than by reverence for the mighty traditions of the Roman Empire, and by the revival of classical learning which was going on at the same time. . . . The style of architecture so created by deliberate effort was at first in the hands of most able artists, accomplished sculptors and painters, and it had a fresh and original beauty of its own. Soon, however, it grew to be a more nearly exact copying of the ancient structures. In different forms this artificial style went on developing itself through the XVI., XVII., and XVIII. centuries. During all these years, as in previous times of more natural styles of architecture, no man would build in any other style than the one accepted; but since the French Revolution all has been chaos." (p. 38)

[57]Wight, "Point of Departure," 14.

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> His mission was to instruct, to criticise, to build up a whole system of study, and to set an example of constant, intelligent, and uninterrupted labor. His books are extraordinarily new, underived; they are the result of his own investigations. . . Now, of all this mass of fact, and of explanatory theory deduced from fact, there is scarcely a line that is not our author's own -- the measurements and the knowledge of buildings are of his own getting. The conclusions are of his own drawing. . . . In the "Entretiens" his subject is the architecture of all ages, and certainly in that treatise the analysis of each style and the comparison between styles is critical in the highest acceptation of that term.[58]

Much of what Sturgis said of Viollet-le-Duc could be applied to Sturgis's own writings.

The two Sturgis histories are particularly relevant to the problem of style. They show that Sturgis approached his subject in a way that was "scientific" and conformed to evolutionary theory. Above all, his aim was educational, "to show that the history of architecture is a study of absorbing interest," and further "that the true nature of each favourite style of ancient art should be made more familiar to our practising architects and their draughtsmen," so that they could learn discrimination among the less good, the better, and the best in architecture, and avoid the copying of "mere exterior details."[59]

Sturgis defined architecture as a decorative art; "that is, it consists in applying fine art to certain objects of utility--in this case to buildings," and in *European Architecture* he set out to study those ancient architectural styles which most influenced later styles as well as those later styles themselves. In studying these styles he saw several cycles of progress and decline; this view accorded with evolutionary theory.[60]

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[58][Russell Sturgis], "Viollet-le-Duc," *Nation* 29 (2 October 1879): 220.

[59]Russell Sturgis, *European Architecture: A Historical Study* (New York and London: The Macmillan Co., 1896), v, viii.

[60]Ibid., xxiii.

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Beginning with ancient Greek architecture, he moved through eight more chapters whose subject matter was arranged in chronological order: Roman Imperial Architecture, The Architecture of Europe 350 to 750 A.D., The Architecture of Europe from 750 to 1150 A.D., The Architecture of Western Europe 1150 to 1300 A.D., The Architecture of Western Europe 1300 to 1420 A.D., The Architecture of Western Europe about 1420 to 1520 A.D., The Architecture of Western Europe 1520 to 1665 A.D., The Architecture of Western Europe about 1665 to 1789 A.D.

What determined style for Sturgis? Chronology (time period), geography (place), methods and materials of construction, plan, use of decoration and/or architectural sculpture. In his *Dictionary* he defined style:

> A peculiar type of building, of ornament, or the like, and constituting a strongly marked and easily distinguished group or epoch in the history of art; thus we say that in Europe the Romanesque style prevailed from the fall of the Western Empire until the rise of the Gothic style; . . . For a style to exist, there must be a recognized artistic treatment common to all the buildings of an epoch, or of a group, while these buildings have also their individual peculiarities.[61]

His approach to Greek architecture displayed his methodology.[62] Of course he cited and discussed examples of such buildings as the second temple of Hera, commonly known as the Temple of Neptune, at Paestum. [Fig. 27] But first he wanted his reader to understand the form and construction of various building types, particularly the temples. The orders were described and explained; he particularly focused on the attention to architectural detail to show that it, while following a general pattern, was still

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[61]*Dictionary of Architecture*, s.v. "Style."

[62]*European Architecture*, chapter 1, 2-50.

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specifically designed for a building, a lesson that the modern architect would not learn as long as he remained only a copyist.

Roman architecture was contrasted to Greek architecture while seen, in some respects, as its outgrowth: "the Roman architect of the time of Hadrian had a love for the architectural forms which the Greeks had taught him."[63] The most characteristic feature of Roman construction was the use of the arch, a very different approach from the post-and-lintel system of the Greeks, which nonetheless the Romans adopted and decorated in their colonnades and peristyles at the Temple of Castor and Pollex, the Temple of Mars Ultor, Rome, and the Forum of Nerva. [Fig. 28 and Fig. 29] Sturgis found it particularly interesting that

> every city would naturally present, side by side, structures of the genuine Roman sort, containing large closed halls, rooms and corridors vaulted in mortar-built masonry of small stones, and decorated with a pseudo-structural display of columns and entablatures, and other structures which we may properly call Graeco-Roman, in which the column and its load acting by mere vertical pressure were everything, in which mortar was not used for the main structure, and in which Greek modes of decoration, as by fully realized human sculpture, largely prevailed.[64]

The Roman orders were also described, explained, and contrasted with the Greek orders.[65] He found merit in the Roman attention to interior space and in the quality of Roman construction.[66]

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[63]Ibid., 56.

[64]Ibid., 84.

[65]Ibid., 102.

[66]Ibid., 107, 108.

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Sturgis continued this approach in his subsequent chapters: a discussion of the forms and construction methods of various building types; a description and explanation of the role of architectural detail in any particular architectural style; a demonstration of how a particular style developed from the style preceding it and how it reflected certain national tendencies, new needs, and new conditions. His evolutionary approach was evident as he cited examples of "attempts at something new in building," which failed and then later reappeared, or which prevailed and were "a main feature of Western architecture."[67]

As might be expected, he devoted a great deal of his discussion to Romanesque and Gothic architecture, the two great styles of Western Europe after the decline of the Roman empire. Sturgis was particularly interested in the development of plans for churches and how that in turn influenced the development of vaulting systems and their supports. His emphasis on structural systems made clear that it was these components which determined the Romanesque and Gothic styles, not superficial architectural detail. He also tried to trace and define the national variations in these styles over time. If the French carried Gothic architecture to its purest and most developed form, as judged by nineteenth-century scholars, the English, Germans, and Italians all made worthy contributions to the style, as judged by Sturgis.

Italian Renaissance architecture as it reproduced Roman forms was described as a development of national character. But to Sturgis, Renaissance architecture was flawed:

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[67]Ibid., 119.

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> It is evident that these architects had in mind the procuring of architectural effects by means of proportion alone. . . . to reject at once the constructional interest and the sculpturesque adornment of the construction which the Middle Ages had bequeathed.
>
> . . . .
>
> The Italians have never been an architectural people in the highest sense. No great style of architecture has originated in Italy; nothing that can compare with Greek or Byzantine, early Egyptian or Gothic. An artistic race is not necessarily great in architecture, nor, on the other hand, are good builders necessarily good architects. The Roman engineers of the Empire were excellent builders; the Italians of the fifteenth century were an artistic race of the highest gifts and in the noblest mood of devotion to art, their work in painting, from walls to manuscripts, and in sculpture, from colossi to sword-hilts, was unequalled by any work done since the great times of Greece; but to neither set of men was it given to create a great architectural style.[68]

To Sturgis the Italians and the adherents of Renaissance architecture were derivative, not evolutionary. They copied the forms and details of ancient architecture but, unlike the Greeks and Romans, did not express its constructional principles, instead concealing or ignoring the elements of structure. Sturgis described how the Renaissance style was gradually accepted throughout Europe, in part because of the influence of Palladio and Vignola, although the Gothic style continued to flourish and was commingled with the Renaissance, depending on national sentiment. "After 1665 national styles tend to disappear, and the one grand would-be classic style to prevail alike from Naples to Stockholm."[69] Unlike many of his contemporaries who were promoting the classic as the basis for a modern architectural style, Sturgis thought that the adherence to classicism halted the progress of modern architectural design.

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[68]Ibid., 374, 377.

[69]Ibid., 390.

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In the last period he discussed (Western Europe between 1655 and 1789), Sturgis recognized the rise of the individual architect and the tendency for architectural drawings which workmen must follow to substitute for general drawings which allowed workmen great freedom in the execution of their work. Thus new architectural styles would be less likely to evolve as the result of worker experimentation. He related the change in architectural design to the neo-classic style and its various forms of architectural expression. His history still expresses a romantic attitude about the workers and their role in creating style.

In conclusion, Sturgis explained the fault of the neo-classic style: "There was no system of construction peculiar to the neo-classic art, and therefore there was no steady development from style into style, . . . This state of things lasted for three hundred years, or roughly from 1489 to 1789, the close of our record."[70] But he did not condone this state of affairs:

> in the world which we know best, healthy life has never been separated from growth and what we now call *evolution*. . . . So far we know, it will only be when the architectural designer stops copying consciously this or that style of past times that he will produce anything worth having. In other words, it is only when each designer feels free no longer, and begins to work under the influence of his neighbours and contemporaries, friendly rivalry and eager jealousy alike spurring each man to vie with and surpass his fellows, but always in the same line of work as near as he can bring it out,--it is only then, when the artist is fettered, that art will be free.[71]

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[70]Ibid., 539, 541.

[71]Ibid., 541.

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The architect would not progress in his art by direct historical copying. Rather he could use rivalry and competition with his fellow architects to spur his design prowess.

In his wide-ranging *History of Architecture*, only two volumes (Vol. I, Antiquity; Vol. II, Romanesque and Oriental) of which were completed before his death, Sturgis did not change his approach from his earlier work. Instead he looked at a wider range of architectural examples and more national and geographic areas to show how the evolutionary development of architecture and its accompanying style was universally applicable. Rather than using general stylistic labels, he usually classified style by chronology and geography (e.g. Egyptian Moslem style).

The first volume presented some special problems because virtually everything he discussed no longer survived or had been drastically changed. Instead of presenting a "history 'from the monuments,'" Sturgis offered "a history of the opinions as to the monuments," one in which he used his critical judgment and artistic assessment of numerous scholarly works to "[create] in his own mind an image of what the lost building or the ruined building was really like."[72] He started with the architecture of ancient Egypt, then moved on to the architecture of Western Asia, Greece, the Italian Peninsula, and Imperial Rome. He was particularly interested in construction methods and how they related to materials as well as the development and use of architectural sculpture. Variations, development, and influences were discussed in greater detail in

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[72]Russell Sturgis, *A History of Architecture* (New York: Baker & Taylor Company, 1906), 1: v-vi.

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the chapters on Greek and Roman architecture, in part because the historical record was better and had been more studied.

Vol. II was particularly wide-ranging in scope. While his discussion of stylistic development and evolution was seen primarily in his accounts of Byzantine and Romanesque architecture -- what he called the "Styles Resulting from the Decline of Ancient Art,"[73] he did not forget such remote areas as Scandinavia and Armenia. Neither did he neglect the architecture of the Far East and India, and his account of Moslem architecture was quite thorough even though reflecting certain prejudices. In any case, he urged that these architectural expressions be studied for their artistic beauty first rather than "whether their ethnic relations or their religious creed swayed their methods of design very notably."[74] Sturgis was particularly interested in the development of plan as it was expressive of style and the role of cross-cultural influences from the East (Persia) and the West (Imperial Rome) as they were worked out in Byzantine and Romanesque architecture. He carried the theme further in reviewing the influences of the Byzantine empire and Persia on the development of Moslem architecture, as well as manifestations of style as it expressed national character.

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[73]This is Sturgis's title for his Book VII in Russell Sturgis, *A History of Architecture* (New York: Baker & Taylor Company, 1909), vol. 2.

[74]Ibid., vii.

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Evolution and Modern Architecture

Wight enthusiastically reviewed both of Sturgis's works, seizing upon the ideas presented and methods used as reinforcing an evolutionary theory of architecture.[75] As Wight stated it, Sturgis's system of study was "a series of deductions from the facts of history in synthetic order presented in a manner never before attempted to demonstrate the evolutionary nature of architecture from the dawn of art in Greece to the end of the eighteenth century."[76] Wight was particularly encouraged by Sturgis's focus on "new thought" in architecture because he saw this approach as offering parallels for the development of American architecture if it declared its independence from the "French Official School" and sought a new architecture by evolution, not eclecticism.[77]

Wight continued to discuss the evolutionary nature of architecture, whether it was or could be a "living art," and how this related to style in several articles for *Inland Architect* in the late 1890s. He did not see architecture as it was practiced in the second half of the nineteenth century as a living art, citing the "vacillating and unstable nature of the designs embodied in [modern works]" which lacked "the knowledge and appreciation of the masses of the people to become a subject of common thought, nurtured and sustained by popular sympathy, to say nothing of enthusiasm." He gave a definition of "living architecture": "the *evolution of building in a way that reflects the progress life*

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[75]Peter B. Wight, "Russell Sturgis - Architect, Encyclopedist and Critic," *IA* 28 (January 1897): 56-58; P.B.W., review of *A History of Architecture*, In *ARec* 27 (February 1910): 200-201.

[76]Wight, "Sturgis," 57.

[77]Ibid.

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[sic] *of a nation in science and art when upheld by popular appreciation.*"[78] This was followed by a highly idealized vision of a society in which architectural practice and development were governed by mutual good and mutual support, and architecture changed in accordance with the "law of evolution."

> In all periods when architecture was a living art, those who stood in the place where modern architects now do were the instruments of society, whose part it was to create the monuments through which so much of its history was to be read in future ages. . . . they were but the exponents of the spirits of their times. The development of the arts which they practiced went hand in hand with national development and national thought. There were no archaeologists in those days, the architects and builders knew no style but that which belonged to their own country. . . . All worked for a common purpose, and personal rivalry gave way to mutual support. In other words, their architecture knew no law but that of evolution.[79]

He saw architecture as following this pattern until the sixteenth century. The French Academy was criticized for its role in supporting architectural design:

> The existence of this very support is the best evidence that it is not a living architecture. A living architecture must exist through natural and

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[78]Peter B. Wight, "Is Architecture a Living Art?," *IA* 29 (February 1897): 4. This article was based on a paper read by Wight to the Illinois Chapter of the AIA, as reported: "Future of American Architecture," *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, 20 December 1896, clipping in Russell Sturgis, Scrapbooks, 3: 7, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University. Wight may have sent Sturgis the clipping, for it is unlikely that Sturgis would have been a regular reader of the Chicago newspaper. Wight's paper was part of an ongoing discussion within the Illinois Chapter. The Chicago architect, Frederick Baumann, an exponent of the ideas of Gottfried Semper, also spoke to the Chapter: Frederick Baumann, "Two Questions Considered. First: Is Architecture a Living Art? Second: Can Architecture Become a Living Art? Preceded by a Historical Review of the Art," *IA* 29 (April 1897): 23-26. See Roula Mouroudellis Geraniotis, "German Architectural Theory and Practice in Chicago, 1850-1900," *Winterthur Portfolio* 21 (Winter 1986): 293-306. Dwight H. Perkins also spoke to the Chapter. See Dwight H. Perkins, "Is Architecture a Living Art?" *IA* 29 (May 1897): 35-36.

[79]Ibid., 6.

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> not artificial causes; most of all it must be progressive and evolutionary. The facts show that French architecture has not been progressive but stationary. . . .
>
> The style of architecture used for the exteriors of buildings as inculcated by the French Academy, is not a true expression of the art of building as practiced in France, but a mask and an applied decoration like that which the Roman emperors imported from the Greeks - whom they had captured to cover the works of their great constructive engineers.
>
> If, therefore, a so-called national architecture is not natural in its growth, but nurtured like a hot-house plant, is neither progressive nor evolutionary, and is not universal in its employment, it cannot be a "living architecture." It is an architecture prescribed by professors and doctors, one provided *for* the masses of the people, not proceeding *from* the people.[80]

In American society, governed by democratic ideals, a national living architecture must proceed from the people. Wight's attitude about the workers who created architecture was very similar to Sturgis's. A living architecture of the past would not have arisen from democratic ideals like those in nineteenth-century America, but the craftsmen who created the architecture in accordance with the needs of their society nonetheless would have created a living architecture. Wight had seen progress in American architecture, particularly as inspired by the work of Richardson and Root: "We had apparently cut loose from the influence of style [the artificial distinction of Classic vs. Gothic], and hundreds of architects were apparently working together. . . . The public even was actually beginning to take an interest in architectural art." But then the

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[80]Ibid., 4-5.

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movement was thwarted by "the influence of the French style seen in the work of a few eastern architects" and fostered by the World's Columbian Exposition.[81] [Fig. 25]

> We have imitated the styles of architecture of all eras, but produced none of our own -- nor will we do so, unless by some process not yet known to us we can reconcile the utilities of the building art, which is constantly advancing, to forms of artistic expression which are in sympathy with the spirit of the age. . . .
>
> Unless [the architect's] work gives evidence that it is part of that endless chain of evolution in a way that reflects the progressive life of a nation in science and its longing, if it has such, for beautiful things, his architecture will never be a living art.[82]

This is an echo of Sturgis's conclusion in *European Architecture*.

Like Sturgis, Wight recognized that the consciousness of historical architectural styles could not be erased or disregarded. Instead he urged architects to use the lessons of history to develop an architectural style that was expressive of American life and society, one that was based on "the underlying principles of a true architectural art."[83] Wight set forth several fundamentals, prescribing that the architect begin by designing for his materials, not fitting materials to his design. Historical styles that had developed in a similar manner could be a guide; "if any of his materials had no counterpart in history he is free to use them without regard to it. Here he at once begins to feel his emancipation from precedents." Details could be copied from good examples, but soon the architect "will begin to feel that they do not exactly suit him, and he should not

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[81]Ibid., 5.

[82]Ibid., 6, 7.

[83]Peter B. Wight, "The Fundamentals of the Development of Style," *IA* 29 (May 1897): 32.

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hesitate to modify them according to his rational understanding of their use, and his feeling for what he considers beautiful." These would all be steps in the development of a style.[84]

While such principles were to be a starting point, "there are so many other vital principles of our own time that must enter into a rational and consistent modern architecture."[85] This would come from using "the methods of construction developed by modern science. Such an architecture will be a natural evolution from the art of building as practiced at the present day, and in all periods when building was a progressive art."[86]

Both Wight and Sturgis believed that architectural styles evolved. Both believed that an understanding of historical styles was necessary for a style to evolve. Further, both felt that one other element was crucial to encourage the development of style and the revival of architecture as a living art, namely the banding together of architects for a

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[84]Ibid., 33.

[85]Peter B. Wight, "The Possibilities of American Architecture," *IA* 29 (July 1897): 55.

[86]Ibid., 57. Wight repeated this theme in "Effective Administration of the Tarsney Act," *IA* 34 (November 1899): 26. "A progressive, modern architecture must be founded upon construction methods similar to those practiced in the Roman Empire during the first two centuries of the Christian era, avoiding all illogical practices to which that period was addicted, and profiting from the progress made by their successors. Such will be the new Renaissance if it is only to depend upon the study of the experience of past ages. But the problem is complicated by the multitude of new requirements and the advance that modern construction has made, which has not been accompanied by a corresponding development of architectural expression suited to the emergency. These are the problems for the progressive architects of the day to work out. When they do we will have an architecture that is evolutionary and progressive. It will reflect the progressive life of the nation in science and art. When, if ever, it is upheld by a popular appreciation, as we are led to believe was the case with the Greeks in the case of Pericles, it may well be said that it is a living art."

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common purpose, sharing progress in construction methods and adapting architectural detail.[87] "Evolution in architecture. .. is only possible when everyone copies the best work of his neighbor, and adds something to it of his own; and his neighbor thanks him for so doing, and goes and does likewise."[88]

An "American" Style for the Twentieth Century

By the turn of the century, Sturgis and Wight saw some modest means for hope and began to analyze modern examples and discuss an "American" style. Sturgis did not advocate originality in architecture for its own sake: "Let it be admitted once and for all that our constant demand for originality has something unreasonable about it. Let it be admitted that the true system of architectural design is not to ask for originality but to build on the lines laid down by one's predecessors and let originality come if it will." Echoing Wight, he noted that "if architects were compelled to fall back upon their building, their construction, their handling of material as their sole source of architectural effect, a new and valuable style might take form." He recognized that some architects were, in fact, designing in this fashion and cited examples in masonry, steel cage construction (Sullivan's Bayard Building, New York) [Fig. 30], and wood frame which had promise for a new style.[89]

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[87]See Wight, "Fundamentals," 34; Wight, "Possibilities," 57; and P.B. Wight and R[ussell]. S[turgis]., "Architectural Practice - Mutuality not Individuality," *Scribner's Magazine* 29 (February 1901): 253-256.

[88]Wight and Sturgis, 256.

[89]Russell Sturgis, "Good Things in Modern Architecture," *ARec* 8 (July-Sept. 1898): 92, 93.

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Moreover, he recognized that most architects did not even have the facility to design in historical styles:

> The only reason why a modern designer finds it easier to copy than to invent is that he is not really familiar with the style, nor really in the habit of designing in it. . . . he has accustomed himself to go straight to books where all his details are to be found complete, and with their relative dimensions figured, and to copy them. . . If he really knew his style so that he felt at home in it -- so that he felt it to be plastic in his hands; so that he dared play with it and alter its details in absolute conviction that he would not abandon its essential characteristics in so doing -- then he would find *it easier to invent than to copy.*[90]

Sturgis also advocated "adopt[ing] an ancient style and work[ing] in it until we can work out of it" because "fine art is tradition, slowly developing from shape to shape." One style that he thought had possibilities was the French Renaissance because its form and detail could be adapted to modern building techniques.[91]

Both Sturgis and Wight thought that a new American architectural style, one that was both rational and constructive, was being developed in the Midwest and discussed manifestations of such a style. Wight first had seen hope for such a style in the work of Root and Richardson but felt that it had been halted by the World's Columbian Exposition and the ascendancy of the French School.[92]

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[90]R[ussell]. S[turgis]., "Field of Art," *Scribner's Magazine* 26 (September 1899): 384.

[91]R[ussell]. S[turgis]., "Architectural Style," *Scribner's Magazine* 28 (October 1900): 509, 511, 512.

[92]See Wight, "Living Art," 5, and Peter B. Wight, "Modern Architecture in Chicago," *Pall Mall Magazine* (London) 18 (July 1899): 299-300.

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Sturgis thought that Sullivan's work, citing specifically the Guaranty Building in Buffalo and the Bayard Building in New York, "seem[ed] to be conceived in the right spirit, designed in the right way, almost exactly what they should be as attempts at casing the steelcage." Root's Monadnock Building was praised as one of the "first attempts at sensible realism in these lofty buildings . . . it will be hard hereafter to design a rational outside [sic] of a lofty, steel-framed business building without recalling its form and character."[93]

Writing in 1910, Wight stated that, as the result of evolution, a new style was beginning to manifest itself in the Midwest in utilitarian architecture. Because investors in such property were willing "to give it a distinctive and attractive character, within the bounds of economy," architects were encouraged "to give serious study to the design of such buildings." Wight was not prepared to name this "evolved style" but felt it shared with "the school of certain architects of the Middle West who have done so much good and original work in recent years in the design of buildings for other than business purposes," a "negation of so-called architectural precedent."[94] His article was profusely illustrated, and he was careful to point out the artistic features of his utilitarian examples, such as the Reid Murdoch Building (George C. Nimmons, 1912-13). [Fig. 31] Of Schmidt, Garden & Martin's American Snuff Company Building on the outskirts of Chicago he wrote, "It illustrates perhaps better than any of the other examples cited the

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[93]Sturgis, "Architectural Style," 510.

[94]Peter B. Wight, "Utilitarian Architecture at Chicago," *ARec* 27 (February 1910): 189, 190-191.

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principle embodied in the recent movement by the best informed architects of Chicago, for a rational and constructive architecture in a class of buildings in which elaboration for the sake of ornament would be entirely out of place."[95]

Sturgis looked to another building type, the American country house, to trace the development of an American style: "By 1880 architects of excellent training . . . had begun to apply really artistic methods to . . . a . . . building up of the exterior from obvious practical requirements. . . . The building up of the exterior (and of the more noticeable parts of the interior as well) from obvious practical requirements is a good way to begin the development of a style."[96] By 1906 he saw manifestations of this new style at the annual exhibit of the Architectural League, and commented on the artistic qualities of many of the country house designs on display.

The Gothic and its Lessons for Modern Architecture

The Gothic occupied a special position in the writings of Sturgis and Wight regarding style. They began their careers as Gothicists, inspired by Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, and appreciated and extolled the Gothic's lessons. For them its great virtue was that an understanding of its principles could serve as a means to developing another and new American style. Hence, their views on the development of that style and its efficacy for modern conditions are particularly interesting.

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[95]Ibid. (March 1910): 257.

[96]Russell Sturgis, "Tendency toward an American Style of Architecture. Its Development Traced," *Craftsman* 10 (April 1906): 4.

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As early as 1872, Sturgis, in a review of Charles Eastlake's *A History of the Gothic Revival*, criticized aspects of the Gothic Revival as it had been carried out in England. Its weakness was its "imitative copying" and its failure to bring the style into the evolutionary cycle by "study[ing] modern materials and the way to use them in accordance with the style, and then to let the art develop itself gradually, as art has done in all great times." Nonetheless, at that time Sturgis felt that Gothic forms and principles of design could be carried out "with modern materials, to serve modern needs."[97]

Writing in 1880, Wight stated that the study of medieval Gothic architecture and the works of Viollet-le-Duc had influenced domestic architecture in such a way as to give evidence of a "tendency toward a national style." Wight noted that some architects "adopt[ed] a constructive style best adapted to the materials employed, and set aside all precedents in the use of detail. The Gothic influence has been most largely felt in these works, but its details are not reproduced."[98] Four years later Wight wrote that the Gothic Revival, and the related efforts of Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had "been the leaven of all good art work to the present time."[99] However, by the 1890s Sturgis and Wight saw the Gothic Revival as a style whose time had past and the forms of Gothic architecture as ones that were not relevant to modern needs.

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[97][Russell Sturgis], "Eastlake's 'Gothic Revival'," *Nation* 14 (25 April 1872): 276.

[98]Wight, "Condition of Architecture," 108, 119.

[99]P.B. Wight, "The Development of New Phases of the Fine Arts in America," *IA* 4 (November 1884): 51.

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Sturgis traced the development and manifestations of Gothic architecture in his *European Architecture*. In its purest form he called it an "architecture of construction and organization, of reason and logic, of perfect proportion and harmony of part with part."[100] Wight saw its decline: "after it had reached perfection in the thirteenth century it gradually became overwrought with detail, and pure invention was taking the place of a rational expression of the art of building. . . . Decorative treatment was no longer in harmony with structural forms."[101] To the extent that the English Gothic Revival sought to adhere to the underlying principles of the Gothic, "to frankly express in all classes of buildings the constructive methods best suited to our times, and, discarding all meretricious ornament, to enrich them with ornament appropriate to the material employed," it was successful. The general influence of the movement led to the work of such architects as Richardson and Root; this Wight saw as an expression of the principles of the Gothic Revivalists.[102] Such architects "were seeking only for a truthful expression of modern needs in architecture."[103]

As the nineteenth century neared its end, Wight characterized it as an "age of utility"; "an age in which the spirit of utility predominates can only produce a utilitarian architecture or combination of engineering and decoration," which "will be characteristic

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[100]Sturgis, *European Architecture*, 319.

[101]Wight, "Living Art," 4.

[102]Ibid., 5.

[103][Peter B. Wight], "Editorial [Edward T. Potter obituary]," *FP* 6 (February 1905): 66.

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of the spirit of the age."[104] Gothic architecture as it was understood by Wight did not fit into this category.

In contrast to the views he had expressed at the beginning of his career, Sturgis stated outright in 1900 that no medieval style, whether the round arch of the Romanesque or the pointed arch of the Gothic, would serve modern needs, especially for tall office buildings and similar structures: "No arcuated style, no system of building and of design which depends almost wholly upon the vaulted roof and the arched opening, can answer the requirements of a system of building which is absolutely and exclusively one of posts and ties."[105] He noted that:

> The Gothic style has been tried in modern times; and it manifests this very evident weakness, that its picturesque character, its vivacity, its variety, the very upward-striving character of its lines, are features contrary altogether to those which modern requirements suggest, and which, perhaps on that account, modern taste demands. . . I who use these words was a Gothic revivalist once, but, as has been said more than once, I have seen the folly of it. . . . Picturesqueness is not what the modern man wants in his architecture. Gravity and a tranquil look of delicate finish make up his idea of beauty.[106]

So, if "the modern world can hardly turn to the Mediaeval world for direct inspiration in building," one could still "take Mediaeval art as a subject of abstract and yet loving contemplation."[107] It was a subject still worthy of study.

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[104]Wight, "Living Art," 6.

[105]Sturgis, "Architectural Style," 511-512.

[106]Russell Sturgis, "St. Paul's Chapel," *ARec* 21 (February 1907): 86. These are the qualities that he espoused as virtues in Greek architecture.

[107]R[ussell] S[turgis], "Notes and Queries: The Remoteness of Mediaeval Art," *ARec* 17 (April 1905): 339, 340.

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Wight did not advocate the Gothic as a source of direct inspiration, but he continued to recommend the study of French Gothic architecture to his fellow architects "to inculcate the principles which underlie the progress of all architectural art."[108] The development of Gothic architecture

> has involved principles of construction and design applicable to any architecture that has existed or may be developed in the future. When recognized and accepted, they may readily be our guide in the study of any previously existing or subsequent prevailing style of architecture. The lesson to be conveyed is that the recognition and understanding of these principles and their expression in practice are essential to all progress both now and hereafter. They are necessary to enable us to understand the nature of evolution, which is continuous among all intelligent people, and that no construction is true to the laws of nature that is not rational and logical; while good construction and the economic use of materials available is essential to all architectural progress and the development of an architectural art that illustrates the advance of civilization.[109]

Through all the nineteenth-century turmoil on style, had there been any progress? Writing in 1917, Wight noted:

> The last thirty or forty years have witnessed a vast amount of research and investigation that was lacking before, and disputants are now furnished with facts which make it possible to construct learned arguments on each side. The volume before us is a signal example of the advance in knowledge. It is equally notable as testimony to the effect that increased knowledge has brought about little, if any, progress toward stylistic agreement.[110]

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[108]Peter B. Wight, "How Best *Now* to Study the Medieval Architecture of France with Some Confessions of a Retired Architect," *WA* 31 (April 1922): 51. He recommended reading Charles Moore, *The Development and Character of Gothic Architecture* (1899 edition), which analyzed the vaulted churches of France, and Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint Michel and Chartres.* See Chapter 2.

[109]Peter B. Wight, "Jackson's 'Gothic Architecture'," *ARec* 40 (September 1916): 282-283.

[110]Wight, Scammon Lectures, 370.

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Ultimately for Sturgis and Wight, style was subsumed into a larger problem: how to create an architecture which was worthy of being called "art."

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CHAPTER 4

ARCHITECTURE AS ART

Architecture as art is the dominant theme of Sturgis's and Wight's writings, and this idea was central to the establishment of an American architecture during the second half of the nineteenth century. While style was very important, what made architecture an art was more than style. The overlapping and related themes and characteristics that they explored as they wrote of the expression of art in structures and materials and its manifestations in various building types is of central importance in their work. They saw artistic architecture as an embodiment of certain principles, and this analysis looks at these themes of structural expression as manifested in various building types in relation to such principles.[1] The questions of how architects approached and solved new problems of architecture, the new building types, the new materials or old materials used in new ways, and new methods, most captured their attention in dealing with architecture as an art. If architects were successful, they created architecture that was modern and of its time and thus artistic. This approach went beyond Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, who as medievalists wanted to return to the past or to reconstruct the past (if not to copy it exactly). Sturgis and Wight abhorred copyism for old and new building types, but emphasized construction, or what Wight called "constructivism," and evolution, believing that incremental change would bring forth not only a new style but also artistic architecture.

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[1]These principles have been identified in Chapter 3. See pp. 104-107 and Peter B. Wight, "The Fundamentals of the Development of Style," *IA* 29 (May 1897): 32.

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Sturgis and Wight approached the issue of architecture as an art by urging the architect to learn and understand the principles of nature (thus expounding the teachings of Ruskin), then to translate these principles to create art, as Wight himself had done with the design of the National Academy of Design and its sculpture. This approach was widely understood and accepted. Thus the architect had to begin with a proper understanding of building materials and a proper expression of structure (ideals derived from Viollet-le-Duc). From this followed style, both in the sense defined by Street (see Chapter 3) and in the sense that it displayed a character of a certain time and place (and particularly a character that was "modern" and national). This, in turn, led to good architecture. Decoration was another quality important in dealing with architecture as an art, especially for Sturgis. Not all artistic architecture was decorated, but the quality and use of decoration had an important impact in determining the artistic merit of a work of architecture.

Sturgis usually wrote on architecture as an art in his role as a critic, and most customarily he wrote for a professional audience.[2] While it was important for the public to be educated to the attributes of artistic architecture so they could demand such an architecture, it was even more important to educate and inspire architects about their responsibility to create this architecture. Most of his writings on the subject appear in architectural magazines and, as a consequence, most of these writings appear during the last fifteen years of his life when architectural magazines began to proliferate in the

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[2]Sturgis took his role as a critic in educating the public very seriously, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, but in that context his concerns were broader than architecture as an art.

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United States. Wight dealt with the topic throughout his writing career, and, like Sturgis, usually wrote for a professional audience.

Contemporary Approaches to the Principles of the Art of Architecture

Sturgis's and Wight's awareness of the issues of architecture as an art and the principles governing it came through their study of Ruskin; it was his voice they sought to expound in many of their early writings, as I have shown in Chapter 1. In this, they were not alone; they were joined by many of their contemporaries. For example, as early as 1861, the unidentified editors of the *Architects' & Mechanics' Journal*,[3] called for the principles of architecture to be derived from a study of the principles of nature with proportion and symmetry forming the foundation. Less concerned with style for its own sake as seemingly espoused by Ruskin in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, they advocated creating architecture that was "sensible and truthful," respecting nature's forms and materials.[4] In the Ruskinian view, nature inherently incorporated proportion and symmetry, and the meanings of these terms would be understood as applied to architecture.[5]

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[3]See Chapter 6, note 21, for information on the editors of the *Architects' and Mechanics' Journal*. This periodical was published in New York.

[4]"The True Source of Progress in Architecture," *Architects' and Mechanics' Journal* 3 (9 February 1861): 181. They wrote, "We stand in no need of any new or universal style."

[5]Later nineteenth-century architectural definitions of the terms are useful in this discussion. *Proportion.* "In an architectural composition, the relation of one part to another and to the whole, especially in respect to size and position; the relative dimensions and arrangement of parts, . . . Good proportion in a design depends upon the relative importance given to its subdivisions, or the degree of subordination of its parts, not only in respect to dimensions, but in respect to comparative emphasis of architectural

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G.E. Street (1824-1881) was a widely-esteemed British contemporary and Victorian Gothicist whose buildings and writings incorporated Ruskinian ideals.[6] When he expounded on the principles of the art of architecture in Ruskinian terms to the students of the Royal Academy in 1881, he was careful to differentiate them from rules: "The principles of the art of architecture are as eternal and reasonable as the so-called 'rules' are arbitrary and ephemeral."[7] First and foremost he dealt with construction, which "must be good if it is to be a work deserving of our respect." Good construction displayed five major qualities: (1) permanence; (2) demonstration of, rather than concealment of, internal structure and plan on the exterior; (3) naturalness -- "proper to the place, as simple as the case allows, and not strained or eccentric in its character of detail for the mere sake of producing effect"; (4) suitability of material to the purpose; (5) use of the latest discoveries and inventions, but only when consistent with the other conditions. If the principles of good construction were followed then a building would

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treatment, according to the just value of each in the general scheme, and upon their mutual disposition, so as to secure harmony and balance by agreeable contrasts." *Symmetry.* "In architecture and decorative art, the balance of part by part; a balance which may be precise repetition, or repetition in counterpart, or may deviate very widely from that, as it involves merely the supposed equivalent value of one part to another." Russell Sturgis, ed., *Dictionary of Architecture and Building* (New York: Macmillan, 1898), s.v. "Proportion" by Henry Van Brunt and "Symmetry" by R.S.

[6]See David B. Brownlee, *The Law Courts: The Architecture of George Edmond Street* (New York and Cambridge, Mass.: Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1984), 20. "As the theoretician of High Victorian architecture, Street was practically unchallenged." See also Michael W. Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 143, 156-165.

[7]G.E. Street, "Principles of the Art of Architecture," *AABN* 9 (16 April 1881): 185.

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achieve "style," which he defined as "the perfect harmony between the means and the end" and was not the same thing as "styles of architecture." Inherent among the qualities of "artistic" architecture was rhythm -- "an art depending on numbers and proportions." Finally the architect was cautioned to design all parts of a building equally well and to avoid sham features, particularly for the sake of symmetry or uniformity.[8]

By 1881, Street's list of principles was scarcely original to him, but his architecture and writings were well known to Sturgis and Wight who had discovered him some twenty years earlier while reading in the Astor Library.[9] Street's principles display the current of progressive architectural thought through much of the nineteenth century, and this approach to architecture was one familiar to Sturgis and Wight as they made their judgments on architecture. They consistently espoused such widely discussed principles as honesty of expression, truthful construction, the necessity of designing a whole building as a unified composition, and evolution as a vehicle to achieve artistic architecture, while dealing with the role of the architect in creating that architecture.

When Sturgis, writing as a theorist, set forth principles that made architecture an art, he explained why an understanding of such principles was necessary, first stating the problem: "whether architecture, in our time, will improve in its artistic character, or will deteriorate until that character is wholly lost."[10] Because modern buildings were

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[8]Ibid., 185-187.

[9]See Chapter 1, p. 25.

[10]Russell Sturgis, "Introduction," *Principles of Architectural Construction* by John Beverly Robinson (New York: Architectural Record Co., 1899): [i].

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constructed in haste for clients who were ignorant of design, architects, first of all, had to appeal to the clients' business sensibility. When financial considerations were foremost for client and architect, the "artistic problems connected with grouping, massing, subdivision, relation and proportion have but little weight."[11] By setting forth general principles of design, architects would be helped in future work -- both the majority of practitioners who "need much help in these matters" and "the few who are specially gifted in this matter of abstract composition" but "are none the worse for the possession, ready at hand, of a clear statement of the theories which underlie their natural practice."[12] Furthermore, the "lay" public also was urged to study the principles of design so it could become better critics (and clients) of the architect-artist.

What were some of the characteristics Sturgis thought necessary to good design?:

> (1) The architects of a given time and place should be nearly of one mind as to the character of their buildings, the general architectural style to be employed, and the general use of materials and the like. (2) The interior should be allowed to express itself very freely in the exterior by means of fenestrations, grouping of roofs, and the like. (3) The artist who undertakes a new building must really be content to give to it a great deal of patient thought and to elaborate his interior with constant mental reference to the exterior which is to accompany it. If these conditions are fulfilled, it appears that there may grow up in any country, among any modern people, an architecture with a certain satisfying quality, a certain

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[11]Ibid., [ii]. Writing of the work of Clinton & Russell two years earlier, Sturgis recognized the difficulties of designing "buildings erected for the purposes of business enterprises" in an artistic manner because the clients of such buildings never allowed the architect sufficient time to thoroughly develop a design and consider the details. Russell Sturgis, "A Review of the Works of Clinton & Russell," *ARec* 7 (October - December 1897: special supplement): 35, 37-38.

[12]Ibid., [iv].

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> intellectual merit appealing to our reason and our sense of the fitness of things.[13]

Thus, we see that his first and third points spoke to the role of the architect in creating a design, while the second called for honesty of expression.

The use of detail was another important aspect of design. A composition could not be considered

> independently of the details, large and small. . . . the whole of the effect of a large building may be greatly enhanced or marred by the disposition of details, even if they are as small as the sculpture of architraves or of capitals. . . . Buildings which are to be completed without the use of sculpture should be designed with a view to the effect which they may be made to produce without the assistance of such detail; and those buildings which are not to have arcades, colonnades, piers, parapets, bay windows, towers, or similar breaking up of the surface and variation of the skyline should be designed with a view to doing without them.[14]

A design could be good without detail, but detail by itself or in the wrong context was not sufficient make a design good.

Sturgis's comments on Stanford White's Madison Square Garden [Fig. 32], which he found to be successful because of the excellence of the architectural details and overall organization, illustrate the relation between design and detail.

> A festal structure: and yet it is very plain indeed for the most part; built of yellow brick without pilasters, moulded window-jambs, string-course, or the like; very plain for the most part, and its minuter ornament not good in itself, as we have found reason to think. How then is it so truly decorative as it proves to be? This is the question the answer to which is a really excellent lesson in modern architectural possibilities. That answer is, that the larger details, the architectural details proper, are employed with almost unexampled skill and success. . . . all these separate parts of the

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[13]*Dictionary of Architecture*, s.v. "Design" by R[ussell]. S[turgis].

[14]*Dictionary of Architecture*, s.v. "Detail" by R[ussell]. S[turgis].

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> decorative design are so combined with one another, and with the vast and massive block of the main structure, that a piece of architecture of extraordinary impressiveness is the result. It would be one of the worthiest buildings of the time even without the great tower.[15]

The art of architecture was further deterred by copying and the lack of originality, as Sturgis commented: "There has been great annoyance to the lovers of architecture from the recent instances of copying on a large scale. . . . the citizens who are hoping against hope for signs of life in our fine art of building have been scandalized in the literal sense of the word."[16] The lack of originality showed not only in exterior design but also in poor interior planning. If the client was not asking for originality in architecture, why should the architect expend his time, or that of his firm, in producing original work? Sturgis responded:

> Originality in architectural design is not for him who seeks it eagerly for its own sake; it is for him who considers his problem patiently, for days or for moments only, until the right inspiration comes to him. Neither the faithful following of a well-known style nor the rejection and disregard of all established styles can help very much in the search for originality: . . . And the lack of originality visible in our American work of these latter days is not caused by the absence of any accepted style in which all may work, though to have one would help us; it is not caused by any unusual rarity of the artistical [sic] gift, there is a great deal of that, running to waste: it comes simply of want of thought. . . . prompt decision, business-like despatch are the qualities desired in an architect's office as in a

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[15][Russell Sturgis], "Madison Square Garden: An Architectural Study," Russell Sturgis Scrapbooks, 1: 116, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

[16]Russell Sturgis, "Lack of Originality in Architecture," *Engineering Magazine* 6 (October 1893): 11. Sturgis may be alluding to the World's Columbian Exposition when mentioning "recent instances of copying on a large scale."

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> mercantile house; . . . Design, alone, must needs suffer; and originality, as the true essence of design, must needs remain unregarded.[17]

Wight, as a practical man, assumed that the principles that made architecture an art were self-evident but constantly emphasized the truthful expression of construction and the role of evolution. Although probably not consciously, he seemed to borrow ideas and phrases from his more theoretical contemporaries, like Thomas Graham Jackson (see below) and Sturgis (for example, architecture as living art, and the lessons of Roman architecture for contemporary design), then restate them in his own terms for the benefit of his colleagues, and in some instances, the general public. His curiosity was more that of the informed lay person than that of the scholar.

The Problem Facing the Architect

Another British contemporary, Sir Thomas Graham Jackson (1835-1924) saw the art of architecture to be intimately connected with building: "For architecture to live again she must cover the whole field of building as she once did; we must get rid of the distinction between architectural and non-architectural building. Architecture is simply the art of building well and beautifully."[18]

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[17]Ibid., 15-16.

[18]Quoted in W.R. Lethaby, "Philip Webb and His Work: Some Architects of the Nineteenth Century and Two Ways of Building," *Builder* 128 (8 May 1925): 725. This is taken from T.G. Jackson, "On True and False Ideals in the Education of an Architect," *Architecture, A Profession or an Art*, ed. R. Norman Shaw and T.G. Jackson (London: John Murray, 1892), 223. See also Chapter 3 above, pp. 124-125, for Wight on architecture as a living art.

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As I have noted in Sturgis's definition of design, he was acutely aware of the problems that faced an architect if and when he sought to practice architecture as an art. He found

> no occupation more honorable and none more useful. It is a many-sided occupation; at once artistical [sic] and scientific; at once theoretical and full of the commonest details of everyday necessity. . . . It is full of the most grateful triumphs, as when one works through his finished building, which but a few months before existed only in his thought, and sees it, solid and enduring, ingenious and useful. . . . It allows of and in a sense calls for the closest study of the noble buildings of the past and of the greatest triumphs of modern scientific construction. It allows of powerful and refined design alike of whole structures and of details in color and in form.[19]

At the same time there were many pressures on an architect which worked against artistic (if not financial or professional) success: lack of time to design, the need to function as a businessman rather than as an artist, the lack of demand from clients for artistic designs.

> The profession of architecture alone, among all professions, can be practiced with perfect integrity, respectability and honor without any success at all in that one branch of it which many persons supposed to be almost the whole thing -- namely, the artistic side of it all. It is notorious that many of the highest standing . . . are without the artistic sense, and disregard wholly that part of the work.[20]

Architects could no longer work strictly in a historical tradition because "many modern requirements are absolutely opposed to the pursuit of design according to the old principles [and] many modern materials and methods of building . . . compel the

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[19]Russell Sturgis, "Great American Architects Series: The Works of McKim, Mead & White," *ARec* (May 1895): 1-2.

[20]Sturgis, "A Review of the Works of Clinton & Russell," 38.

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introduction of new forms and new combinations."[21] Under such circumstances Sturgis advocated that architects build plainly, without architectural detail and sculpture. "If the architects were compelled to fall back upon their building, their construction, their handling of material as their sole source of architectural effect, a new and valuable style might take form."[22]

Sturgis consistently espoused the idea that a building could not be artistic or decorative (he thought that in architecture the terms were "synonymous") unless the architect were willing to spend time thinking about the design and exercising artistic thought. He saw Babb, Cook & Willard's design for the New York Life Insurance Company Building (1888-89) in St. Paul as an example of this, resulting in "one of the best things in modern original design."[23]

Wight took a different approach from Sturgis when dealing with the problems facing architects as they sought to design artistic work. Nonetheless, the deaths of three major contemporaries -- Henry Hobson Richardson, John Wellborn Root, and Richard Morris Hunt -- occasioned essays for *Inland Architect* about their achievements and the qualities that made their work artistic. In Wight's opinion, Richardson's and Root's sympathy for the teachings of Viollet-le-Duc were factors leading to their artistic success. Wight noted that "unlike nearly every other American student of architecture who

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[21]Russell Sturgis, "Good Things in Modern Architecture," *ARec* 8 (July-Sept. 1898): 92.

[22]Ibid., 93.

[23]Russell Sturgis, *The Appreciation of Architecture: How To Judge Architecture*, 7th ed. (New York: Doubleday Page & Co., 1913), 210-211, 213-214.

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attended the French *Ecole*, [Richardson] cut loose from the trammels of the style in which he had been trained, as soon as he felt his own freedom." Moving from French Gothic, to Renaissance, to the "severe Romanesque trial in the Brattle street church," Richardson found success in Trinity Church, Romanesque in style "but with a decided feeling for the beauty of Byzantine ornamentation. . . . It fixed his style and made his reputation as an individual designer." Like Ruskin, Richardson admired Byzantine architecture for its massiveness and romanticism, but Wight thought that Richardson's understanding of Viollet was a factor in his propensity for "constructive rudeness" combined with "the refinement of art in some exquisite detail." Finally, Richardson's "absolute devotion to his art and unremitting labor were . . . the concrete on which his great success was built."[24] While Wight did not use Sturgis's terminology, he knew that Richardson had overcome the problems facing the architect to achieve artistic success. Comparing Root to Richardson, Wight thought that Root, who had "shown that we can have good, true and beautiful architecture without style," had done more for American architecture than Richardson, who "took an old style and Americanized it." In this respect, Wight considered Root's lack of formal architectural schooling to be an advantage, as he was "not trammeled by precedents." As "a thorough exponent of the principles of Viollet-le-Duc," Root "was quick in seizing on the capacity of all building materials for architectural expression, . . . he designed for the materials, and did not have to find materials for carrying out his designs. . . . He sought to make everything he touched beautiful rather than architectural." Root's architecture taught his

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[24]P.B. Wight, "H.H. Richardson," *IA* 7 (May 1886): 59-60.

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contemporaries "that if we only grasp the knowledge of the best architecture of other days, seize upon the capacities of the materials of today and mold them into things of beauty, we will develop an architecture worthy to be associated with the other arts of the nineteenth century."[25]

By contrast, Sturgis, in reviewing Harriet Monroe's study of Root, wondered if he has been a great architect whose work would endure:

> There is no doubt of the originality of conception and vigor of design which Root showed in his work. He was one of the few who designed as a trained instinct bids them in view of the requirements of a structure, and the plan which those requirements have brought into being. Yet it can hardly be said that anything portrayed in these pages is likely to be considered a monument of architecture such as the world will desire to preserve.[26]

Wight contrasted Hunt's approach to the art of architecture with that of Richardson and Root. Hunt "was not a great architectural genius in the usual acceptation [sic] of the term"; unlike Richardson and Root he did not strive for originality or modern design for its own sake. "He did not believe that any modern work would ever surpass the old work of which we still have remains, and in this respect regarded architecture to which he devoted his life as a lost art which we are striving to revive with very little hope for success." Wight found his most original work to be the short-lived Administration Building [Fig. 25] at the World's Columbian Exposition and thought that Hunt ultimately

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[25]P.B. Wight, "John W. Root as a Draftsman," *IA* 16 (January 1891): 88.

[26][Russell Sturgis], review of *John Wellborn Root: A Study of His Life and Work*, by Harriet Monroe, In *Nation* 64 (4 March 1897): 170.

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fostered the art of architecture, not through his work, but through his efforts in raising the standard of the architectural profession in America.[27]

Sturgis noted that in becoming professionals both architects and engineers of the twentieth century had moved away from being artists-craftsmen (the condition that had prevailed in earlier centuries and had been romanticized by Ruskin, William Morris, and W.R Lethaby, not to mention Wight and Sturgis himself); but, in his opinion, the engineer remained more of a creator than the architect:

> He has learned to use his gained knowledge of the strength of materials, their nature, their adaptability; and he has gained a special power of calculating in advance the combinations of materials necessary to produce a certain result; and then, out of the abstract he produces the concrete. He figures in advance, and his figures produce tangible and ponderable results.[28]

The resulting creation was not necessarily artistic. The mass and weight of masonry might have a beauty that a slender steel skeleton did not, at least not in Sturgis's eyes. The building tradition of Western architecture as it originated in Imperial Rome called for solid walls, carefully arranged openings spanned by lintels or arches, large arches with special adornment. He reiterated the "great principle of design that the structure should dictate it, that the design itself should grow out of the structure."[29] But Sturgis noted that the contemporary architect and engineer no longer built naturally, "as our instincts lead us, now that we are altogether too learned to act without conscious

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[27]P.B. Wight, "Richard Morris Hunt," *IA* 26 (August 1895): 3-4.

[28]Russell Sturgis, "Aesthetics in Engineering Design," *Proceedings of the Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education* 9 (1901): 210.

[29]Ibid., 217.

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imitation of the past, and that we are unable . . . to agree upon any plan of decorative building."[30] Thus he urged a return to another Roman device -- build first and adorn afterwards: "Their structures were great when they did not adorn them."[31] He urged the modern engineer to do the same thing, since both metal and mortar masonry (i.e., rough brick) structures would have to be covered up with terra cotta or fine brickwork. If engineers worked in the tradition of Western building, an artistic structure would result; meanwhile, others could design the coverings.

Wight looked at "building art" in the United States, seeing analogies with the architecture of Rome:

> The Romans were great builders; so are we. The structural parts of their great buildings were designed by engineers. Our architects, not trusting themselves, employ engineers to construct their buildings, following modern engineering methods. The structures of Rome were not designed architecturally, except as to their plan and arrangement, . . . In our present practice we more resemble the Romans than any others.
>
> But the building art with us, by the assistance of engineers, has advanced beyond anything dreamed of by the Romans. Now, if there is any hope for our architecture . . . it will be in the appropriate decorative treatment of these modern structures by the use of decorative material.
>
> An age in which the spirit of utility predominates can only produce a utilitarian architecture or combination of engineering and decoration.[32]

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[30]Ibid., 223.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Peter B. Wight, "Is Architecture a Living Art?" *IA* 29 (February 1897): 6. Wight seems to have derived this view of Roman architecture from Sturgis. See *European Architecture: A Historical Study* as discussed in Chapter 3.

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Wight, perhaps inspired by Thomas Graham Jackson, contrasted this building art with "living art": "All the world agrees that architecture, at various times during the historical period of the world's civilization, was not only a living art, but the greatest of arts."[33]

The Role of Construction and Materials

Construction and materials played a key role in the creation of an artistic architecture. Sturgis generally considered construction in the context of traditional architectural forms and their application to modern materials. A case in point was his exploration of classical orders and their possible application to modern design.[34] While "the Grecian plan of unchanged proportions whatever the scale employed cannot be successfully adapted to modern use," the Roman use of orders offered more precedents: "The Romans at the beginning of the great empire held the orders plastic in their hands, and were prepared to do with some boldness such works as we are compelled to undertake today."[35] The Romans and the architects of the Renaissance were able to adapt the orders to their needs. For contemporary needs, the orders lent themselves well to trabeated architecture "which the modern metallic construction dictates." Iron construction had made the arch obsolete, so Sturgis urged the study of the post and beam building. "We can design in a pure modern taste, taking our traditional suggestion from the finest things of the past, laying it out on lines of our own, going slowly because our

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[33]Ibid., 4. See p. 146 above.

[34]Russell Sturgis, "How to Treat the Classical Orders," *ARev* (Boston) 6 (May 1899): 59-62.

[35]Ibid., 59.

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successors will do better than we in the light of our own experience and our own partial success."[36] The essence of the future building would be the "concealed slender skeleton, the clothing of brick and cement, . . . and the sheathing of the whole in its terra cotta skin. Out of that a system of design has to be built up."[37]

The theater of the Maison du Peuple (Victor Horta, 1901) [Fig. 33] was notable for its iron construction, "very like in spirit to that ideal designing of the middle of the nineteenth century which Viollet-le-Duc put into shape for his pupils."[38] Sturgis was both excited and troubled by the design: "How far can a building ever become impressive to the student of art if built entirely of slender rods, bars and ties. The architecturally trained mind asks for weight."[39] Nonetheless Sturgis valued the design for its possibilities: "What is indeed possible to the designer of the future, using masonry only as a veil or screen -- using metal as his constructional force?"[40]

A building design which followed the dictates of its construction and its material, as seen in good modern architecture, would be rational and thus artistic: "Buildings designed upon the old lines may be the prettiest buildings, but they are not the most

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[36]Ibid., 61.

[37]Ibid., 62.

[38]Russell Sturgis, "Modern Architecture in Europe," *Architects' and Builders' Magazine* 5:10.

[39]Ibid., 10, 15.

[40]Ibid., 15.

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important to us when we are considering the matter artistically."[41] Sturgis discussed various examples. Those in France -- the new buildings of the Paris Law School (architect not given), the Church of Castellane (M. Paul Lorain), the Church of Rambouillet (Anatole de Baudot, 1866-68) -- used masonry with a freedom that expressed its constructive qualities. The American builder and architect had a more difficult task when masonry concealed an iron framework. But the works of some American architects rationally expressed the metal construction within -- the ferry house of the Pennsylvania Railroad at the foot of West 24th Street, New York (probably McKim, Mead & White); the Bayard Building, 65 Bleecker Street, New York (Louis H. Sullivan, 1897-99). [Fig. 30] A Shingle style wood frame house in Orange, N.J. (Babb, Cook & Willard) was cited as a straightforward example of wood construction with no effort made to conceal the framing with anything other than wood. While Sturgis regretted that Americans did not have a strong masonry tradition, indeed being more dependent on the wood construction tradition of England, he encouraged architects to make all that they could out of the "very peculiar character" of the American system of slender uprights and ties, whether of wood or iron.[42] At the same time he urged the development of masonry buildings which used as little wood as possible for reasons of solidity and fire safety, thus following such precedents as Charles Coolidge Haight's buildings for Columbia College (1874-84) [Fig. 34], McKim, Mead & White's Boston

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[41]Sturgis, "Good Things in Modern Architecture," 92.

[42]Ibid., 102.

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Public Library (1887-95) [Fig. 35], and his own Mechanics' and Farmers' Bank (1873) in Albany.

For Wight, construction, or what he called constructive building, properly understood, could be a vehicle towards the creation of architecture as an art. He explained why the "constructive element" was important:

> Because the main desideratum to be considered in [the building's] erection is strength. Where this receives due consideration we may always see a tendency in the right direction. . . . In strength made evident to the senses, we find the first dawn of architecture. The better it is expressed, the better the art. It is the artistic expression given to construction which distinguishes architecture from engineering.[43]

Intrinsic to the issue of construction for Wight was a proper understanding and use of one's materials, an outgrowth of the Ruskinian concern for truth. Certain materials particularly captured his attention as he sought to encourage the art of architecture.

The first of these was wood, both for architecture and furniture. Wight had become interested in furniture design in the early 1860s, writing on the subject for the *New Path* (see Chapter 1); he subsequently undertook the design of furniture for many of his commissions, beginning with the National Academy of Design (1862-65) and the Brooklyn Mercantile Library (1865). (The academy furniture was never executed.) By the mid-1870s Wight was designing furniture for manufacture by the Chicago furniture

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[43]P.B. Wight, "The Condition of Architecture in the Western States," *AABN* 7 (20 March 1880): 118. This article was excerpted, excluding the introductory section, from P.B. Wight, "On the Present Condition of Architectural Art in the Western States," *American Art Review* 1(1880): 137-143.

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maker, D.M. Swiney & Brother.[44] Thus he had ample practical grounds on which to base his knowledge.

Following the lead of Ruskin and other similarly inspired thinkers, Wight called for the constructive use of wood "in best accordance with its own structural character . . . with a view to developing the best properties of the material in the simplest manner."[45] He identified the "remarkable properties" of wood which adapted it to many varied uses: "its resistance to compression, together with its toughness, and the ease with which it is worked, . . . the variation in color and grain of its various species, and their capacity for taking the most perfect polish."[46] When wood was properly used, the result would be constructive furniture or constructive architecture which was both well-made and beautiful.

> The aesthetic gratification to be derived from it arises mainly from a consciousness that it is best made for its purpose. Without this no one can properly appreciate its higher and purely artistic treatment. . . . Decoration which bears no relation to construction, and which is as appropriate to one object as another, cannot be as beautiful as that which grows out of the thing itself.[47]

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[44]Sarah Bradford Landau, *P.B. Wight: Architect, Contractor, and Critic, 1838-1925* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago), 20, 24, 38.

[45]P.B. Wight, "On the Constructive Use of Wood," *AABN* 1 (2 December 1876): 391.

[46]Ibid., 390.

[47]P.B. Wight, "Constructive Furniture," *ARev* 3 (October 1870): 194.

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Wight pointed out, "If we can get our furniture well constructed, the decoration of it will soon take care of itself. A new decoration will thereby and necessarily be developed."[48] Wight saw the same as being true for architecture in wood, particularly as it applied to the design of interiors. The result would be something "good, beautiful, and lasting, . . . beyond the sway of fashion and caprice."[49]

At the World's Columbian Exposition, Wight was particularly impressed by the Japanese buildings based on the Ho-o-den, describing their exterior and interior designs, finishes, and fittings in great detail.[50] Most fascinating to him was the Japanese construction technique. The buildings were pre-assembled in Japan, then disassembled with the pieces marked, shipped to Chicago, and re-assembled on site using only twenty-four men. Although constructed of wood, Wight called the buildings a genuine product of labors and materials never before seen in North America. The craftsmanship was truly remarkable, and was expressed by the framing which required hardly any braces or struts. This was truly constructive architecture and an example worthy of study, not only by architects but also by American carpenters.

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[48]Ibid., 195.

[49]Ibid., 198. This is essentially a paraphrase of what he had written in "Our Furniture: What It Is, and What It Should Be," *NP* 2 (May 1865): 66, 72. "All good design is constructive. All good adornment grows naturally out of the structure. . . . The adaptation of the ornamentation to the nature of the material is as universal and as beautiful as the adaptation of the ornament to the structure."

[50]P.B. Wight, "Japanese Architecture at Chicago," *IA* 20 (December 1892): 49-50; (January 1893): 61.

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Concrete was another material which fascinated Wight, because of its constructive and fireproof properties. An example which he wrote about on several occasions, was the house of William Ward in Portchester, New York, designed by Robert Mook and built in 1873-77.[51] [Fig. 36] In 1877 he commended the building, not as a work of art, but because "an attempt has been made -- and a successful one, too, considered in its scientific aspects -- to produce architectural effects never before attempted on such a scale, and with concrete all moulded and wrought *in position*, and not showing any joints."[52] Wight was particularly interested in the construction of the floors with a combination of light rolled iron beams, small iron rods, and concrete. Some thirty years later, Wight was still convinced that Ward had invented reinforced concrete in his floor system.[53] The house was not unusual in form or plan, and originally had been designed with brick hollow wall construction and timber floors. Wight called it "a well-preserved specimen of Hudson River villa architecture."[54] But Ward had been studying Portland cement; the great attraction of the material was its fireproof and

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[51]Wight's parents, Amherst and Joanna Wight, lived in Portchester between 1861 and 1879, the year of Amherst's death. William Ward Wight, *The Wights: A Record of Thomas Wight of Dedham and Medfield and of His Descendants 1635-1890* (Milwaukee: Swain & Tate, 1890), 101.

[52]"Your Correspondent" [P.B. Wight], "Correspondence. Concrete as a Building Material. - A Remarkable House at Portchester," *AABN* 2 (18 August 1877): 266.

[53]Peter B. Wight, "The Pioneer Concrete Residence of America," *ARec* 25 (May 1909): 360. Ellen W. Kramer and Aly A. Raafat call it "to the best of our knowledge the first reinforced concrete structure in the United States," and it also "appears to have been the first to give the new material architectural expression." "The Ward House: A Pioneer Structure of Reinforced Concrete," *JSAH* 20 (January 1961): 34, 37.

[54]Wight, "Pioneer . . . Residence," 359-360.

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sanitary qualities. The result was a house which was lasting, "successful in its results, . . very satisfactory to himself and, as he believed, economical also."[55]

In contrast to wood and concrete which could be used constructively to produce work that was beautiful and true to its material, Wight found iron to be more problematic. Like many of his contemporaries, Wight criticized iron fronts for their cheapness and lack of honesty in their imitation of stone. But he cited some exceptions, the work of architects "who brought their best endeavors to the work of using iron in full acknowledgement of its particular merits." He commended Richard Morris Hunt for his commercial loft buildings at 476 and 478-482 Broadway [Fig. 37],[56] Robert G. Hatfield for his "iron-work,"[57] and Russell Sturgis, for the Austin Building (1876) at Houston and Broadway [Fig. 24] where iron was used "in such a way that nobody could doubt that it was an iron and not a stone structure."[58]

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[55]The Editor [Peter B. Wight], "The Historical Ward Concrete House at Port Chester, N.Y., as Described by Its Owner," *FP* 9 (July 1906): 56. Ward had described his house in "Beton in Combination with Iron as a Building Material," *American Society of Mechanical Engineers Transactions* 4 (1883): 388-403. My thanks to Quentin S. Jacobs for providing me with a copy of his unpublished research paper, "An Examination of Some Aspects of the Building of the William E. Ward House, Rye Brook, New York," Columbia University, 1985.

[56]These were built in 1873-74 for the Roosevelt Hospital, as income-producing property; only 478-482 survives.

[57]Hatfield's best-known work in iron is his building for the *Baltimore Sun* (1851), which took the form of an Italian Renaissance palazzo. It is not likely that Wight had this example in mind. Somewhat later work listed in the catalog of D.D. Badger's Architectural Iron Works (1865) is more illustrative of the inventive use of cast iron; for example, the cast-iron Corinthian storefront at 48-50 Walker Street (1856-57).

[58][Peter B.] W[ight]., "Correspondence. Iron Fronts. - New Office Buildings. New York," *AABN* 6 (5 July 1879): 6.

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Architecture as an Art: Building Types

Business Buildings, Office Buildings, Utilitarian Buildings

The art of architecture took form in various building types. Not surprisingly, Sturgis and Wight devoted much of their critical attention to the artistic characteristics of *new* building types -- the ones that would speak for the age and embody an American architecture. What were these types? The office building or business building, the warehouse, the factory, and other utilitarian buildings -- these were the new architectural problems; certain well-established principles of design had to be applied (especially regarding mass and proportion) with both the exterior cladding and the ornament following the logic of the new structural systems of steel and iron and expressing constructive principles. The skyscraper in particular presented special problems in artistic design.[59] In a series of articles and comments written during the late nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century, Sturgis regularly discussed office buildings and skyscrapers and how they could be designed to give them artistic character. By the early 1890s, advances in technology and demands of commerce were giving rise to ever higher buildings, and while reviewing the annual exhibition of the Architectural League, Sturgis analyzed how architects designed such tall buildings, focusing on two issues in particular -- how to design a solid-looking base and how to design all visible sides of a tall building:

> Nothing is more interesting just now than the question of how to make the lofty business-building of the day somewhat tolerable in its architectural effect. One of our contemporaries has well pointed out the great difficulty there is in the way: the absence of any solid basement to afford what will

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[59]"Skyscrapers. The November Meeting of the Architectural League of New York," *Architects' and Builders' Magazine* 5 (December 1903): 117, 119.

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> seem a sufficient support for the lofty superstructure. . . . In some way the lowest story, if very high, or the lowermost two or three stories, must be so designed as to have a massive look. . . . The basement must be treated in a somewhat novel fashion. Great solidity must be given to it, and the appearance of great solidity, which still is pierced with large openings. . .
>
> There is another difficulty to be met, the lack of any proper connection between the street-front and the two 'gable-walls,' and a still greater difficulty, the presence in a corner building of two facades adjoining one another and two walls coming next to the adjoining properties. As long as these were merely blind walls, concealed by the adjoining buildings, or evidently intended to be concealed very soon, the eye did not perceive them in any disagreeable way. . . . But when the building soars a hundred feet clear above all the neighboring roofs, something different is needed. . Keep down your standard of expense; seek simplicity; design in low-priced brick and in simple forms of cut-stone or of terra cotta; don't design an elaborate and costly front, and then complain if your client won't let you carry this along the flanks; but design at once, and in the first place, something for front and flanks alike, something not beyond your client's means or his inclination. . . .
>
> In general, however, the front of the narrow and high office building has to be accepted as a succession of piers, more or less well tied together by the other members of the composition.[60]

The Manhattan Life Insurance Co. Building (1893-94) on Broadway [Fig. 38], designed by Kimball & Thompson, which was to be the city's tallest building, merited Sturgis's generally favorable comments:

> But in one very important feature, Messrs. Kimball & Thompson, the architects, have scored; they have solved the roof problem in one of the good ways. On each corner of the building, in front, is set a square pavilion, two stories high, and between them, and a little withdrawn, is a central tower-like cupola-topped structure, rising perhaps sixty feet above them. All this, standing upon a level cornice, does extremely well for the front, and on the flanks the side walls of the two pavilions are carried back in a simple and obvious way that is very satisfactory. . . .

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[60][Russell Sturgis], "The Architectural League. Eighth Annual Exhibition. Second Notice," *New York Evening Post*, 10 Jan. 1893, Russell Sturgis Scrapbooks, 1: 113-114.

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> The streets of the business quarter in New York are rapidly putting on the look of deep cañons sunk between vertical precipices ten stories high. But now begins the day of sixteen-story and twenty-story buildings, and so long as each of these towers 120 feet above its tallest neighbors, and twice as much above the remaining buildings of the time before 1875, there will be that same difficulty of the architectural treatment of walls which separate the building in question from those next adjoining, and which they would hide if they were equally high. Certainly, the right way with it is to make the front so inexpensive in its material and so simple in its details that a similar treatment may, without unwarranted expense, be carried along the flanks at top; and something like this Messrs. Kimball & Thompson seem to have had in mind.[61]

In 1897, Sturgis examined the relative success of Clinton & Russell in dealing with the problem of designing tall buildings, generally praising those with a severity of effect, criticizing proportions and ornament, recognizing that "boldness, dash, some freedom in the general design, and some indifference as to the arrangements of solids and openings . . . are what are needed for the designing of our high business buildings."[62]

By 1898 when Sturgis wrote a major piece on the work of his contemporary George B. Post (1837-1913), Post had built up one of the largest architectural offices in the United States. Sturgis focused primarily on the firm's commercial works, which he called "appropriate and enduring, useful and worthy but they are often found to be without especial charm."[63] Sturgis reiterated his viewpoint earlier expressed, that it was the office building or business building that would shape modern architecture, "if indeed,

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[61][Russell Sturgis], "The Architectural League. Ninth Annual Exhibition. First Notice," *New York Evening Post*, 20 December 1893, Russell Sturgis Scrapbooks, 2: 11.

[62]"Works of Clinton & Russell," 22.

[63]Russell Sturgis, "Great American Architects Series: The Works of George B. Post," *ARec* (June 1898): 3.

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it is capable of taking any shape."[64] Post, a pioneer in the use of steel-frame structure, had struggled with the problem of office buildings which could be designed in accordance with a new set of principles because the conditions of the tall steel-framed building were not those of stone and brick architecture.[65] Moreover, the problems of site, the necessity for speed in design and construction, and the need to get maximum rental in a business building made it very difficult for an architect to produce a business building which was artistically successful. Given such limitations, Sturgis analyzed many of Post's business buildings, identifying both the problems -- blank walls and awkward massing -- as well as the successes -- a straightforward use of materials and the placement of windows -- of their designs. In general, he thought the shorter buildings were more successful than the taller ones.

Bruce Price's business building designs merited much favorable comment from Sturgis in 1899. While he thought that Price was eclectic in spirit, taking his inspiration from many historical architectural styles, although not yet developing a style of his own, Sturgis found the results to be "unmistakably agreeable."[66] Price dealt with the two skyscraper problems that interested Sturgis -- the design of all visible facades and a strong base. Even given the limitations of site and cost, Price tried to design business buildings so that all the facades were finished; the most notable example of this was the

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[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid., 11.

[66]Russell Sturgis, "Great American Architects Series: The Works of Bruce Price," *ARec* (June 1899): 3.

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American Surety Building (1893-95) at Broadway and Pine Street, New York. [Fig. 39] The result was a tower which was a generally effective design. The base of the American Surety Building with its Greek portico was also a strong design. On the other hand, the base of the St. James Building (1896), Broadway and 26th Street [Fig. 40], had large show windows which seemed to destroy the effect of massiveness where it was most needed. However, because the building was steel-framed it did not need a massive structure, leading Sturgis to puzzle over the problem of designing a base for such a structure: The architect is "compelled to force something of the old effect when there is no massiveness of structure."[67]

Another approach was offered by the Whitehall (1902-03) [Fig. 41], an office building in lower Manhattan designed by Henry J. Hardenburgh, described as "a perfectly utilitarian building, built inexpensively, without elaborate decorative treatment, without sculpture, without much breaking up whether of sky-line or of plan." It was attractive because of "its simplicity and the obvious nature of the design," and because of "the use of external color to give variety and movement to a large flat front."[68] The color effects were created by the use of red and yellow brick, but Sturgis would have preferred to see more variety in the laying of the brickwork.

The office building constructed in conjunction with the Thomas Music Hall (now Orchestra Hall, D.H. Burnham & Co., 1904-05) in Chicago was praised for its rational

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[67]Ibid., 17.

[68]Russell Sturgis, "The 'Whitehall'," ["An Experiment in Color"], *ARec* 14 (July 1903): 71. The building was subsequently enlarged in 1909-11 by Clinton & Russell.

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system of solids and openings which articulated a design that grew out of the requirements of the situation -- an ample entrance lobby at street level, a *piano nobile* opening onto lofty public rooms, and floors of small offices above. The result was a design made according to logic, and "somehow designs made according to logic are very apt to be effective, very apt indeed to appeal to something in the human mind which is not altogether artistic in feeling, but which is closely related thereunto."[69]

Sturgis observed that "the young artist in architectural forms is hampered by the supposed necessity of doing the big and ponderous thing with very costly reveals and soffits of cut granite, all of which, however, form no part at all of a structural building -- all of which are mere reminiscences of a time when buildings were really built of stone."[70] Instead Sturgis advocated that office buildings have plain brickwork with no ornamentation but "patches of color, a row of dentils or corbels under a sill-course, a pierced parapet, and such like simple devices to get light and shade as well as color."[71] Commendable examples of such treatment were to be found in the side elevations of the Broad-Exchange Building, seen at the corner of Broad Street and Exchange Place (Clinton & Russell, 1901) and the New Street front of the office building at 42 Broadway

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[69]Russell Sturgis, "The New Thomas Music Hall," *ARec* 16 (August 1904): 163-164.

[70]R[ussell] S[turgis], "Notes and Queries: The Reverse of the Broad Exchange Building," *ARec* 17 (February 1905): 143.

[71]Ibid.

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(Henry Ives Cobb, 1903). Sturgis only regretted that architects were not willing to try these methods of design on Broadway itself.[72]

The Carleton Dry Goods Company building in St. Louis (Mauran, Russell & Garden, 1904) containing offices, warehouse space, and a dry goods store, was commended because "steel does the work, and masonry does the filling and the covering. . . . In this building the structure seems to be perfectly well accepted as the motive for design."[73] Sturgis noted analogies to the Monadnock in Chicago (which he had praised five years earlier for the "sensible realism" of its approach to designing a tall building)[74] and the Prudential in Buffalo in the articulation of the steel columns, the treatment of the window openings in realistic fashion, and the emphasis of the corner piers. Indeed, he was only critical of "superfluous ornament tacked on to the otherwise completed building."[75] Above all, ornament, unless it was pure sculpture, should follow the logic of the structure, that "some necessity should seem, at least, to dictate its presence."[76]

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[72]Ibid., 143; R[ussell] S[turgis], "Notes and Queries: The Rear View of Broadway Skyscrapers," *ARec* 17 (February 1905): 144.

[73][Russell Sturgis], "Notes and Comments: The Carleton Building," *ARec* 17 (June 1905): 514.

[74]See Chapter 3, note 93.

[75]Ibid., 517.

[76]R[ussell] S[turgis], "Notes and Comments: The Chapin & Gore Building, Chicago," *ARec* 19 (February 1906): 154-157.

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Wight focused much critical attention on what he called the business building -- the building type in which he had the greatest amount of practical experience -- and its subset, the "high building" (although the latter did not often meet with his approval).

Wight began to write about business buildings much earlier than Sturgis, first discussing those in Chicago as the architectural correspondent for the newly established *American Architect*. The fire had provided numerous opportunities for rebuilding, but Wight found the architecture of business to be a "general mediocrity of cheap and showy buildings." There were exceptions, both "substantial" and "beautiful." The most notable was the American Express Co. Building (1872-73), designed by Gambrill & Richardson. [Fig. 42] Because Wight superintended its construction, his opinion cannot be considered unprejudiced. He described it as "the only good modern example of the thirteenth-century French architecture, as it was employed in civil buildings."[77] He also cited William LeBaron Jenney's Portland Block (1872), "a substantial example of fine brick and stonework, with an inlay of tile," as well as good examples of polychromatic brick architecture: five by his own firm of Carter, Drake & Wight, and one by S.A. Treat.[78]

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[77][Peter B. Wight], "Correspondence:[Chicago]," *AABN* 1 (1 April 1876): 110. Thirteenth-century French architecture was commended because it was pure, rational, and expressive of construction.

[78]Ibid., 111. Wight did not specify which buildings these were. Possible candidates from his firm were: Cyrus Hawley Store (1872), Lenox Building (1872), the Springer Block (1872), Stewart-Bentley Building (1872), J.E. Otis Store (1871), and a commercial building for Mrs. O. Morrison (1872). See Landau, 30-34, 78-79, 81.

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In reviewing such buildings in the Western States, Wight noted that there were a few good examples of constructive buildings in Chicago, as well as Cincinnati, citing "a store now erecting on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Monroe Street."[79]

When Wight wrote about Chicago architecture in 1899 for *Pall Mall Magazine*, he found a great deal of progress in the art of the business building, especially during the eleven-year period from 1882 to 1893.[80] As he had in 1880, he commented on simplicity in design, the avoidance of "formulated styles of architecture," and the influence of medieval architecture as it "developed a rational treatment on constructive lines."[81] But by 1899 the business building was generally a "high building," what Wight called "the supreme result of commercialism's influence upon modern building." He found it commendable that the architects of such buildings in Chicago "have simply treated them as high buildings, and have not concealed the fact. They have not tried to turn them into architectural monuments, but have found in their designing a possible step in the evolution of one feature of modern architecture."[82] The article was illustrated with such works by Holabird & Roche as the Champlain and Marquette Buildings [Fig. 43 and Fig.

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[79]Wight, "Condition of Architecture," 118. The Chicago building was William LeBaron Jenney's first building (1879-80) for Levi Z. Leiter at the northwest corner of the present-day Wells and Monroe Street. The Cincinnati example is undoubtedly the Shillito Stores (James McLaughlin, 1876-77).

[80]Peter B. Wight, "Modern Architecture in Chicago," *Pall Mall Magazine* (London) 18 (July 1899): 293. "The art of architecture came to life, as if it had been buried in fallow ground for years." (p. 298)

[81]Ibid., 299. This may be seen as evolutionary progress from Gambrill & Richardson's American Express Building.

[82]Ibid., 302.

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44], Burnham & Root's Masonic Temple, Rookery [Fig. 18], and Western Union Building, D.H. Burnham & Co.'s Fisher Building [Fig. 45], and Jenney & Mundie's New York Life Building and the Isabella Hotel, all "intended to show what the architecture of a city is, when judged by its best examples, and the tendencies of thought which they embody."[83]

Two years later Wight singled out Holabird & Roche's Central Trading Company Building (1900-01, later Mandel Brothers) at the northwest corner of Wabash and Madison [Fig. 46], for considering the problem from "the point of view of artistic design." He commended the broad windows that "emphasize and harmonize the constructive lines with commercial demand for the greatest amount of daylight," the minimal wall which is "only sufficient to cover the steel structure and sustain the window frames," and the detail which "does not show its derivation from any of the historical styles of architecture." He concluded: "Some may say, 'This is not art,' but let the future decide that."[84] Clearly, Wight thought that it was art, appropriately expressed for this building type.[85]

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[83]Ibid., 308.

[84]Peter B. Wight, "Fire-proofing. The Central Trading Company's New Building at Chicago. Another Illustration of the Evolution of Constructive Architecture," *BB* 10 (May 1901): 103.

[85]On the occasion of the 1907 AIA convention held in Chicago, Wight continued to cite business buildings in Chicago as examples "of rational and enduring architecture which is not the result of the study of ancient precedents, but of the problems which confront us to-day." "American Institute of Architects," *FP* 11 (November 1907): 164.

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By the first decade of the twentieth century, Wight had become very interested in the "skyscraper question," and thought that both Chicago and New York had lessons to teach. Wight disapproved of such high buildings, both on aesthetic and practical grounds. Chicago had attempted to curb building heights, but by 1907 the height limit stood at 260 feet, and four buildings had been constructed that stood higher than that, according to Wight.[86] New York had no height limits; there "they are erecting buildings as high as they think it practicable to do so; seemingly without much regard to their value as investments in the long run, and often evidently as advertising propositions."[87] Wight saw such buildings as fire hazards, particularly if they were built close together, thus allowing fire to pass from one building to another, especially at higher stories beyond the reach of fire-fighting equipment. Moreover such buildings contributed greatly to street congestion, which he thought ultimately would become so bad that owners of tall

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[86]Wight does not specify which buildings. The most obvious example is the Masonic Temple (Burnham & Root, 1891-92, 21 stories, 274 feet). Other possibilities are the Majestic Building (Edmund R. Krause, 1905, 20 stories, 302 feet), the tower of the Auditorium Building (Adler & Sullivan, 1887-89, 19 stories, 270 feet), the Fisher Building (D.H. Burnham & Co., 1896, 18 stories, 230 feet), and the Columbus Memorial Building, 31 North State (W.W. Boyington, 1892-93, 14 stories, 251 feet). The number of stories and heights are taken from Frank A. Randall, *History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949).

[87][Peter B. Wight], "Editorial," *FP* 11 (October 1907): 124. New York City held public hearings under the jurisdiction of the Heights of Buildings Commission of the New York Board of Alderman Building Commission on legislation to curb building heights and deal with other zoning issues the following year. The Commission's report was issued in 1913. When the zoning resolution was adopted in 1916, it did not contain an absolute limit on heights. See Sally Kitt Chappell, "A Reconsideration of the Equitable Building in New York," *JSAH* 49 (March 1990): 90-92, and Mardges Bacon, *Ernest Flagg: Beaux-Arts Architect and Urban Reformer* (New York and Cambridge: Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1986), 220-223.

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buildings would see their investments decrease and thus want to remove the upper stories in their own interest.[88]

Meanwhile, he recognized that such buildings existed and would continue to be built and so sought to analyze them from an aesthetic viewpoint. Writing in 1910, he contrasted the experience of Chicago and New York architects in their design approach to such buildings. "The New York architects tried to give them 'style' by piling up the 'orders' of architecture and introducing many horizontal bands to try and reduce the effect of height. Some monstrous apparitions, with great overhanging cornices, were the result."[89] Chicago architects "made the vertical lines more prominent" with a strong base and several stories at the top "joined together in a unique design" often without a cornice. "The treatment was usually called 'the base, shaft and capital style,' and was accepted all over the country as the best type of design for high buildings yet discovered."[90] He also praised designs which made windows as wide as the space between the vertical steel supports of the exterior walls. "The result was that the windows furnished dark horizontal *masses*, taking the place of narrow horizontal *lines*. The effect was

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[88]Ibid., 127-128. The issue of fire in tall buildings will be discussed in Chapter 5.

[89]Peter B. Wight, "Additions to Chicago's Skyline: A Few Recent Skyscrapers," *ARec* 28 (July 1910): 16.

[90]Ibid. Of course, New York architects employed this technique. Bruce Price's American Surety Building is a notable example, although it had a prominent cornice. The contemporary critic Montgomery Schuyler cites it as one of two New York examples which served as the genesis of this base-shaft-capital treatment. *The Woolworth Building* (New York, 1913), reprinted in *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1961), 613. The other was George B. Post's Union Trust Building (1889-90). "The 'Skyscraper' Up-To-Date," *ARec* 8 (Jan.-Mar. 1899): 231-257, reprinted in Ibid., 437.

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remarkable."[91] He cited such examples as the Marquette Building (1893-94) [Fig. 44] and the Champlain Building (1903) [Fig. 43], both by Holabird & Roche, and Louis Sullivan's Carson, Pirie Scott & Co. Store (1899, 1903-04, 1906). [Fig. 47]

Nonetheless, he felt that Chicago architects were mainly imitating the work of their Eastern counterparts, with too much emphasis on "orders," horizontal lines, and cornices rather than on skylines,[92] although he thought that overall the architects of Chicago had had more success in solving the problem of the tall business building than their New York counterparts. Wight did not discuss the size of the footprint of such buildings, but generally business buildings in New York City were constructed on more constrained sites, a factor which contributed to their greater height as well as the favored design solution.[93]

The business building architecture of Milwaukee, a Midwestern city about 90 miles north of Chicago along Lake Michigan, also received his praise. On Wisconsin Street, Milwaukee's main street, Wight found "an illustration of the progress of American architecture in the Middle West, better than I have ever seen elsewhere, in great and costly structures built within the last forty years, . . . giv[ing] evidence of great public

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[91]Ibid.

[92]Ibid., 18.

[93]Carol Willis, *Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995), discusses the role of site constraints as they relate to height. See esp. pp. 23 and 34-47.

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spirit on the part of Milwaukee's capitalists and great corporations."[94] The buildings he mentioned -- E. Townsend Mix's Mitchell Building (1876-78) with its mansard roof, the "scholarly French Renaissance" Wells Office Building (1904) by H.C. Koch & Co., S.S. Beman's Pabst Office Building (1891) with its "picturesque tower suggestive of the towers of Ghent and Lille" -- while more indebted to historical sources than many in Chicago, still were business buildings that served the art of architecture. Finally he dealt with the buildings of the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company, the first by Mix, "a sort of nondescript Gothic"; the second of 1886, a Richardsonian design by S.S. Beman; and finally the 1914 building by Marshall & Fox, which Wight greatly admired for its engineering, despite its debt to classical Roman architecture for its details.

> It certainly is a monumental building so far as concerns its reproduction of the essential elements of the best developed architecture of Rome, yet it is in no respect, notwithstanding its massive proportions, a reflection of Roman construction. On the contrary it is an example of all the modern engineering expedients in building construction which have distinguished the building art of the last forty years in this country. If the designs and art of the Romans can be consistently revived in concert with modern engineering devices, this building demonstrates it, as no other that I know of can.[95]

One of Sturgis's last writings on a business building was an extensive and controversial criticism of Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building (1904-06) in Buffalo.[96]

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[94]Peter B. Wight, "Milwaukee Revisited: The Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company's Last New Building, Marshall & Fox, Architects," *ARec* 40 (August 1916): 130.

[95]Ibid., 144. Wight had espoused this position almost twenty years earlier when discussing architecture as a living art in *Inland Architect*.

[96]Russell Sturgis, "The Larkin Building in Buffalo," *ARec* 23 (April 1908): 310-321.

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Sturgis did not understand the building or what Wright was trying to achieve, and Wright was anxious to defend himself.[97] Sturgis, who analyzed the building only from plans and photographs (surely, in part, because of his deteriorating health and failing eyesight), was not able to find it artistic, instead calling it "extremely ugly." Sturgis only could conceive of such a building happening because Wright, the architect, did not understand the principle of evolution in architecture -- the proper way of designing a building. Instead, according to Sturgis, Wright exemplified the "architects of the modern world [who] during fifty years of struggle have failed to make anything of the old system -- the system of following the ancient styles with the avowed purpose of developing some one of them and going on to other things."[98] He felt that Wright, instead of being artistic, was responding to the practical requirements of an economical working building and was not "pretend[ing] to build a monument of architecture when a working structure was desired."[99] Sturgis did not see any artistic qualities in the Larkin Building, so he tried to prescribe qualities that would beautify such a building, in particular light and shade: "When the great buildings of the world were designed everything else which was capable of design received it; and all design in pure form, as in sculpture, in relief modeling, in

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[97]In his book, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building: Myth and Fact* (New York and Cambridge: The Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1987), 113-116, Jack Quinan discusses Sturgis's article and Wright's response, printed in a very limited edition under the title *In the Cause of Architecture* in April 1909. Wright's article was reprinted as Jack Quinan, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Reply to Russell Sturgis," *JSAH* 41 (October 1902): 238-244, and is also printed as Appendix L in Quinan's book. Sturgis's article is printed as Appendix K.

[98]Sturgis, "Larkin Building," 313.

[99]Ibid., 315.

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grouping and massing, is design in light and shade."[100] Light and shade could be achieved through the use of moldings and projections. Mass and proportion could be used to make a building artistic, and finally, there was color, which could be achieved with varied brickwork or mosaic, to enhance a building's artistic effect.

The other new problem seen by Sturgis and Wight was the design of utilitarian buildings. Ironically, some of the very qualities Sturgis criticized in the Larkin Building (because it was an office, or business, building), he found commendable in warehouse and factory buildings. He looked to these buildings even though he called them "non-architectural" because he saw in them the hope for the future of architecture, and he kept emphasizing this point in his discussion of various examples.[101]

While Sturgis recognized that warehouses and factories had different functions, he grouped the two building types together for the purposes of architectural discussion, finding them

> devoted to the rougher kind of business enterprise; that is to say, not primarily to offices where professional men sit quietly or clerks pursue their daily task, but one where the goods are piled up, where the unloading and loading, the receiving and shipping of such goods goes on continually, where the floors are to a great extent left open in great 'lofts' and where in consequence the general character of the structure within and without is the reverse of elegant. It may be costly, it may be thoroughly built, it may

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[100]Ibid., 317.

[101]See, for example, R[ussell]. S[turgis]., "Notes and Comments: The Whittemore Building Again," *ARec* 18 (October 1905): 307, 309. "Here are two ways out of the Slough of Despond in which we wallow -- . . . the putting up of frankly non-architectural things which may lead to something architectural, by and by. . . . In this absence of original architectural buildings, I have ventured of late into the field of factory buildings, warehouse buildings, storage buildings --; and it is surprising what fine things have been discovered."

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> be . . . an architectural monument; but it can hardly be minutely planned, with many refinements in the way of interior arrangement, nor can it be the recipient of elaborate decorative treatment of any kind.[102]

Sturgis saw meritorious and artistic qualities in a group of buildings from the 1880s, and he also cited them as prototypes for such buildings at the beginning of the century. Among them were several buildings by Babb, Cook & Willard:[103] No. 173-175 Duane Street (Babb & Cook only, 1877-80), the DeVinne Press Building (1885-86) at 393-399 Lafayette Street [Fig. 48], and the Hanan Building (1885) at White and Centre Streets, which used masses of "natural" material (brick and terra cotta) to produce color effects and bold architectural forms, particularly arches. McKim, Mead & White's Judge Building (1888-90) at Fifth Avenue and West 16th Street [Fig. 49] had similar qualities but a more decorative system of design which made the treatment more like that of an office building, which seemed only appropriate to Sturgis because of its Fifth Avenue location.[104] Charles Coolidge Haight's Garvin Machine Company Building (1896) at Spring and Varick Streets was praised as a "perfectly successful design of extreme simplicity" while being a "typical work of low cost and obvious utility."[105]

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[102]Russell Sturgis, "The Warehouse and the Factory in Architecture," *ARec* 15 (January 1904): 1-2.

[103]Babb had been Sturgis's student-employee.

[104]Sturgis, "The Warehouse and the Factory," 10. In "Great American Architects: McKim, Mead & White," 61, 63-66, Sturgis had categorized a group of buildings as free in design, less dependent on historical precedent, with the focus on material rather than ornament, which had the potential for creating a new architecture: "[The Judge Building] is a modern business building, and a downright sensible one."

[105]Ibid., 12, 14.

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Looking at principles developed in the 1880s -- effective use of color and materials, strong architectural forms, emphasis on moldings rather than ornament, and, to the extent possible, the expression of interior structure for the treatment of such buildings -- Sturgis used them to judge more contemporary examples. He noted his pleasure in

> the necessary comparison to be drawn between buildings so like in character in the general principle of their design, while they are yet varied so much in distribution in the larger details. That is the way in which a style of architecture has always developed itself -- not in bold attempts to break away from all preceding practice, but in slow modification, each man trying to do a little better than his predecessor. No doubt the appearance, now and then, of an innovating genius is necessary to healthy progress, and so it will be found to have been in this matter of the round arched, red brick warehouse, for some one of these interesting buildings must have been a very bold enterprise on the part of the architect who devised it.[106]

In these warehouses and factories Sturgis found "little evidence of money spent on ornament of any sort" and "no trace of money spent in making the plan of the exterior traditionally architectural at the expense of every-day use" and thus their design must be "separated from any and all of the recognized historical styles of architecture." If "modern devices" such as iron and steel framing were required in building, "those must be used boldly, simply and without disguise."[107] If the architect designed without ornament and without resorting to historical styles, good design had to arise from those principles of color, form, and material earlier developed.

Sturgis regularly discussed and illustrated examples of such buildings for the *Architectural Record*, commending them when they embodied the qualities of good

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[106]Ibid. (February 1904): 125.

[107]Russell Sturgis, "Factories and Warehouses," *ARec* 19 (May 1906): 369.

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design, at the same time pointing out where they fell short, usually chiding the architects for not being sufficiently bold: "One longs to see the designers of these realistic buildings face the situation fairly, defy traditional architecture in cases when they cannot follow its behests gracefully, naturally, easily, and in the whole structure alike."[108]

The majority of his examples were from New York (not surprisingly) and Chicago. Some of the more interesting were the Schoenhofen Brewery (1902) in Chicago [Fig. 50], designed by Richard E. Schmidt, as Sturgis observed, with no need for orders or other conventional architectural detail as taught in architectural schools -- "there can be no doubt that the most essential characteristics of a good modern industrial building are here, shown in the design"[109] -- and the Street and Smith Building (1904) at Seventh Avenue and West 15th Street, designed by Henry F. Kilburn, which might be seen as offering "a vague hope of a new architecture based upon construction and plan, upon construction and logical significance."[110] Similarly he placed the U.S. Leather Company Building, 28 Ferry Street,[111] and the I.T. Williams & Sons Building, at 25th Street and Eleventh Avenue, in this category.

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[108]R[ussell] S[turgis], "Notes and Queries: The Factory of the National Biscuit Co.," *ARec* 17 (January 1905): 65.

[109]Russell Sturgis, "The Schoenhofen Brewery," *ARec* 17 (March 1905): 207.

[110]R[ussell] S[turgis], "Notes and Comments: Some New York Commercial Buildings," *ARec* 18 (September 1905): 233.

[111]The building has been demolished, and Ferry Street is now incorporated into the Southbridge Towers housing complex in lower Manhattan.

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While Sturgis thought of warehouses and factories as "non-architecture," they had lessons to teach for architecture. In warehouses and factories, Sturgis recognized that the architect must "approach that problem of how to make the needed thing architectural before the twentieth-century style will have become a living entity." The designers of warehouses in the twentieth century had been able to raise works of utility "into something finer as opportunity might serve. . . . We have not yet begun to build buildings of high cost and great pretension on those lines, but [given such examples] that will come in turn."[112]

Wight was not concerned whether utilitarian buildings were architecture. He approached the design of such buildings, first and foremost, as an architectural problem to be solved; decorative details were secondary. In Chicago he looked at two building types: the automobile showroom and the storage warehouse. Both were a response to modern needs and concerns and were a product of evolution in architectural design.

The development of the automobile showroom as a utilitarian building type had taken place on Michigan Avenue, originally a prestigious residential street south of the downtown area. According to Wight, because of the length and width of the street and its fine paving, it quickly attracted driving enthusiasts, followed by automobile dealers, who used the street for tryouts. Between thirty and forty buildings were erected along the fourteen-block stretch between 12th and 24th Streets during 1908-1910. Why were such buildings a new architectural problem? Although buildings for the business of carriage sales might seem to offer precedents, Wight found a different set of conditions: the need

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[112]Russell Sturgis, "Some Recent Warehouses," *ARec* 23 (May 1908): 381-382.

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for large show windows, street-level space for display and stock maintenance, indoor demonstration space requiring fireproofing and ventilation due to the use of gasoline, and a place for repairs and vehicle washing. Wight pointed out, "New problems in plan naturally suggest new problems in design; because of the difficulty of using the old conventional details. Freedom from the old precedents in design is the natural consequence."[113] He found a common approach among the many architects who had designed these structures along Michigan Avenue, in an effort "to make them more attractive than purely utilitarian factories and warehouses." The buildings shared certain features: a common height, usually three stories; facing materials of enameled terra cotta in white or buff tints and different kinds of pressed or paving bricks; and modeled ornament, which, although derived from historical sources, did not create a historical effect. In this Wight saw "the crude beginnings of a new architecture," one that in hindsight he hoped would be regarded "as merely a stepping stone in the evolution of a better and, let us hope, more beautiful architecture than we have yet produced."[114]

Wight saw the storage warehouse as a problem of "external design" because competition among storage warehouse companies made their buildings a form of advertising. (A storage warehouse of the kind Wight considered was different from the more generalized warehouse discussed by Sturgis.) However, the architect was constrained by the limitations of form (a square or rectangular box) and the need for

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[113]Peter B. Wight, "The Transmutation of a Residence Street, Resulting in Another Solution of a Utilitarian Problem by Architects: [Michigan Boulevard, Chicago]," *ARec* 27 (April 1910): 288.

[114]Ibid., 288, 289.

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economical materials: "In other words, the architect must fall back upon the decoration of the wall surface to make them presentable to the passerby, and he is limited to the materials of construction for all decorative effects." He noted that Ruskin had dealt with the problem in the first volume of the *Stones of Venice*, but "he gave no suggestions applicable to the modern storage warehouse."[115] Wight looked at a number of examples in Chicago which were "not so much works of art as rational solutions of practical problems in the most simple and direct manner. The main questions have been the disposition of windows, so they will fulfill their useful functions and still remain effective points in the exterior composition; and then how to decorate large wall surfaces without the introduction of extraneous and expensive materials."[116] Of his examples, virtually all attained their effects through the careful handling of the brick facing materials. He concluded,

> The illustrations have been selected to show that some of the buildings of this class have been objects of careful study upon the part of their designers in accordance with the viewpoints herein set forth. . . . they have demonstrated some of the possibilities of humble and economical materials, when used with intelligence, in contributing to relieve one class of commercial and utilitarian buildings from the charge that they can only be disfigurements to our streets.[117]

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[115]Peter B. Wight, "Studies of Design Without Ornament: Recent Demonstrations of the Intelligent Use of Economical Materials," *ARec* 29 (February 1911): 167. In Vol. 1 Ruskin analyzed and described the components of architecture. Wight was most likely referring to Chapter 5, "The Wall Veil" (Ruskin's term for the main portion of the wall between the base and cornice), and Chapter 26, "The Wall Veil and Shaft," which deals with decoration and ornament on these two components [wall and shaft of pier or column].

[116]Ibid., 168.

[117]Ibid., 176.

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Residential Buildings

Office buildings and utilitarian buildings were highly visible in the public sphere and the subject of much discussion in the general as well as the architectural press. By contrast, residential architecture was private in its manifestation, yet had a major impact on the public streets and for that reason presented some analogous design issues.

Residential architecture was of particular interest to Sturgis, both in its urban and its suburban forms (the "city house" and the "country house"), not because it was a new problem per se, but because he thought it was a means to developing a new, modern, artistic architecture. Sturgis seemed to have three motives in writing about domestic architecture and its artistic qualities. One was to educate the intelligent, well-to-do, reading public about the qualities and characteristics that made a house comfortable, livable, and well designed, and thus create a demand for such houses. The second was to point out to architects the qualities that made a house artistic. The third was to explain why domestic architecture was a new "old problem." The tone he used was different for the two audiences, although his concerns were similar. When writing for architects he focused more on the exterior design of houses. Sturgis was acutely aware that his advice was limited by the tendency to buy ready-made houses, particularly in New York, and his discussion was intended to encourage the reader to build his own city house rather than buy one ready-made. He noted that the builder of such houses "builds what will fairly well suit any person in search of a certain class of house: he cannot, of course, build what

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would exactly suit any one person or any one family, and that the future owner will discover."[118]

In a series of articles for *Scribner's* and *Harper's*,[119] Sturgis sought to educate his readers (who, presumably, were prosperous enough to afford a private city house) about the history of the urban house as it took form in the cities of the East Coast, particularly New York, and what qualities a homeowner should seek in a comfortable, livable, and artistic house. Sturgis recognized that high land costs resulted in a tendency to build houses in rows. He discussed local variations in the placement of the house on the lot and its relation to the street, as well as variations in the entrance placement and treatment. But he did not deal in any great detail with exterior design, instead sounding a cautionary note: "There is no doubt that until very much greater familiarity with the possibilities of our narrow fronts has been gained by close and minute study of their decorative treatment by our architects, severe restraint and an almost complete abstinence from ornament form the only safe course to pursue."[120] The corner house was an exception; because it had a long visible side as well as a narrow front, all faces were to be treated as parts of the same

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[118]Russell Sturgis, "The Building of the Modern City House," *Harper's Magazine* 98 (March 1899): 579.

[119]Russell Sturgis, "The City House [The East and South]," *Scribner's Magazine* 7 (June 1890): 693-713; this was reprinted as Russell Sturgis, "The City House in the East and South," *Homes in City and Country* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 1-34. "The Building . . . City House," 579-594; "The Equipment of the Modern City House," *Harper's Magazine* 98 (April 1899): 810-822; "The Interior Decoration of the City House," *Harper's Magazine* 99 (July 1899): 208-221.

[120]"The City House," 707.

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design using the same material. Such a treatment is analogous to his recommendation for the design of office buildings.

Instead, Sturgis chose to focus his attention on interior planning, "equipment," and interior decoration. He examined the plan of the city house as it was used in the first half of the nineteenth century and its evolution later in the century to provide greater comfort and amenities. Clearly these were houses for the prosperous classes. Two planning features engendered his particular criticism. One was the high stoop leading to the main entrance of the house (what he called the "high stoop of Gotham"[121]), thus placing all visitors in close proximity to rooms used for family living. Although the high stoop may have originated as a matter of practicality to get the principal rooms away from the street, he thought it remained in use because of the lack of trained servants to guide visitors from the entrance to other rooms of the house. The other feature was the large, centrally-placed stair hall, which had become prevalent by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. He felt that it took up too much space, was not comfortable as a sitting room because it was too public and was difficult to heat, and was particularly awkward for entertaining when guests entered in the midst of activities spilling into the hall from rooms on both sides. Sturgis much preferred the American basement plan, which began to be prevalent about 1885. In houses with this plan one entered a few steps above street level, into a main hall, then one ascended a staircase up to the principal rooms on the floor above. The ground floor reception room was reserved for formal callers and persons visiting on matters of business, while the floor above was kept free for family, guests, and entertainment. "The

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[121]"The Building . . . City House," 580.

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superiority in comfort, and the feeling of quiet, and of a certain removal from the street noise, the street mud, and the street annoyances, . . . seems as obvious to the student as it is found to be in practice."[122]

Sturgis was anxious to encourage the use of modern materials, such as porous terra cotta or cement, while discouraging the use of wood, because of the danger of fire in built-up urban areas. New materials required better workmanship, so he anticipated a resulting simplification of plan.

Changes in plan also would result from the accommodation of new "equipment" in a house. In this category he included closets, dumb waiters and lifts, electricity, plumbing, and heating -- all elements that the client and architect would have to take into account when planning a new house. Sturgis seemed quite aware of the potential of electricity to change the quality of life within the house and the use of various spaces (even closets, which he disliked).

While planning and equipment made a house comfortable and livable, the treatment of the interior made the house artistic. One must remember that Sturgis had expressed similar concerns in the 1860s in his writings in the *New Path*. These concerns must also be considered in the context of the contemporary Aesthetic Movement whose advocates for reform in interior design he knew, even if he did not mention them by name.[123] Sturgis urged the consideration of the interior treatment from the beginning of

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[122]Ibid., 587.

[123]The most prominent of these were the Associated Artists whose members included Louis Comfort Tiffany, Lockwood deForest, Candace Wheeler, Stanford White, and Samuel Coleman.

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the planning process. Instead of adorning a house with purchased and movable works of art, he preferred that the house "be adorned in itself, and mainly by means of the appurtenances appropriate to each room."[124] What were these appurtenances? In a library, bookcases filled with books; in the dining room, the sideboard and the fireplace and mantelpiece. The decoration achieved its greatest artistic effect when it was a natural and necessary part of the house; for example, the walls were "the actual walls of the house, outer walls and partitions alike being solidly built," faced with a stone dado capped by a stone molding and a frieze of tiles, the ceiling beams were carried on stone corbels, the window sashes of light iron were set in stone frames, and the doorways were framed in stone. Sturgis urged that architects give their attention "to the problem of carrying out decoration of a natural, permanent, and safe character at a price not wholly prohibitory. A truly structural decoration is immeasurably nobler, and it need not be more expensive than the inferior, less worthy, and less artistic system."[125] This kind of construction, an example of what Wight would have called the constructive principle, was far removed from the typical New York City builder rowhouse or the town houses built on speculation for wealthy clients and finished off by decorators.

Writing in 1903, Sturgis seemed to be more pessimistic about the state of interior decoration: "We have, indeed, as the American problem, the standing problem of interior decoration . . . [of] the wholly unorganized, unconsidered, untreated, horizontal and vertical surfaces . . . with which surfaces we may do whatever we please to select, and can

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[124]"The Interior Decoration," 208.

[125]Ibid., 212.

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afford."[126] Under such circumstances, where furniture often dominated whatever forms were present in the room, the use of color was a way of making a room attractive. In larger, more costly, residences, the architect often had more opportunity to introduce forms into a room to create a decorative effect, and Sturgis proceeded to discuss several examples. Dadoes and wainscoting and their relation to friezes and cornices, paneling and mantelpieces, and ceiling treatments were all devices of form that could create the interior decoration of a room. These could be combined with fabric or leather wall coverings or even mural paintings. Continuing the approach he advocated in his *Harper's* article thirteen years earlier, Sturgis particularly praised those forms which related to the constructional qualities of the building. The dining room of the Schieffelin residence, 5 East 66th Street (Richard Howland Hunt, 1898-1900) with its stonework, carved sculpture by Karl Bitter, and beamed ceiling was a case in point.[127]

In his analysis of the work of George B. Post, Sturgis reiterated his viewpoint that it was the private house that would shape modern architecture. In Post's private houses "a much more serious result has been possible in the way of fine art."[128] Especially successful were his interior designs for such wealthy clients as the Vanderbilts. [Fig. 51]

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[126]Russell Sturgis, "The Decoration of Costly Residences," *ARec* 13 (May 1903): 397.

[127]Ibid., 410-412. The dining room in the house of Gifford Pinchot on Scott Circle [mislabeled as Dupont Circle], Washington, D.C. (Heins & LaFarge, 1901) seemed to suggest constructional qualities with crossed ceiling beams resting on pilasters, but Sturgis pointed out that this was not the case; the pilasters did not carry the beams, 406.

[128]Sturgis, "Great American Architects: Post," 53.

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These interiors were made even more successful with the integration of murals by John La Farge, Will H. Low, H. Siddons Mowbray, Elihu Vedder, and Maitland Armstrong, and sculpture by Augustus St. Gaudens and Karl Bitter. Sturgis praised the "harmonious proportions in classical themes. . . Mr. Post's work in decorative interiors is almost uniformly admirable."[129]

Writing for an architectural audience, Sturgis focused on exterior design, raising some of the same issues that concerned him in office building design. He commented on the architectural and artistic qualities of several recently built houses on the stretch of 54th Street between Sixth and Madison Avenues for their unity, their use of materials, and their sculptural detail.[130] Because so many architects did not design architectural sculpture themselves, instead taking it directly from photographs, Sturgis was always anxious to point out notable architect-designed examples. He noted with satisfaction that most of the houses he discussed were of the American basement plan. No. 19 East 54th Street (Hiss & Weekes, 1899-1900) was praised for its simplicity and "its still better general proportion." He noted contemporary Florentine precedents for the design. The projection of the front some four feet beyond the adjacent houses allowed for returns of the facing, moldings, and cornice, thus adding to the "general dignity of the front."[131] This

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[129]Ibid., 101-102.

[130]Russell Sturgis, "The Art Gallery of the New York Streets," *ARec* 10 (July 1900): 93, 96.

[131]Ibid., 105. Houses built with an American basement plan did not require the same degree of setback as houses built with high stoops, a fact which Sturgis chose to ignore.

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concern with the design of all visible facades is a variation on the office building problem.

So too was a house for E.E. Jackson, 424 Clinton Avenue, Brooklyn, designed by Babb, Cook & Willard, which followed Sturgis's prescription for good exterior design:

> an instance of that character in design which one seeks, and for which, indeed, one cries out in accents which are considered much too piercing. Its details have been studied, each by itself and in connection with all the rest. The complete design of the facade has only been researched by the marshalling of these details so as to help one another and to subserve the purposes of the architect who has tried to make a whole design out of many parts.[132]

The design also was aided because the house was placed so that three sides were visible and the mass could be studied as a whole. The stepped gables at front and rear, the treatment of the porch, and the sculptured details, were other details which worked together to create a unified design.

Like the Jackson house, the Madlener House (1902), at Burton Place and North State Street in Chicago, designed by Richard E. Schmidt, had three visible sides.[133] The site allowed for ample sunlight which enhanced the brickwork and the buff Bedford limestone trim. Sturgis felt that the carefully considered proportions of the exterior design created an impressive composition within limitations. The effect of the window treatment and stone trim was that the house was divided into "a series of horizontal bands of extreme solidity of appearance."[134] Nonetheless, he spent much time fretting about the

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[132]R[ussell] S[turgis], "Notes and Queries: A House in Brooklyn," *ARec* 17 (January 1905): 63.

[133]Russell Sturgis, "The Madlener House in Chicago," *ARec* 17 (June 1905): 491.

[134]Ibid., 498.

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height of the windows and whether they allowed for adequate light into the interior rooms. Here Sturgis's concern for "comfort" came to the fore, but it would seem that he had not yet fully absorbed the potential impact of interior electric lighting.

In discussing urban domestic buildings as a type, as opposed to office buildings and utilitarian buildings, Sturgis seemed less interested in originality for the sake of originality, being "modern," or in creating a new style. Sturgis did not emphasize the idea of experimentation in plan, although he assumed that modern materials and construction techniques (moving away from the carpenter) would have an impact on interior planning as would modern "equipment" and conveniences. Because of the sheer number of houses in a city, they would have an enormous impact overall on a city, but he seemed to minimize this. He decried the monotonous brownstone fronts of New York and encouraged the use of other local stone to enhance the character of a city. While individually-designed houses could make an "art gallery" of New York streets, he saw the architect's main responsibility as working with the client to create a livable, comfortable house (although interior artistic effects would grow out of those used on the exterior if Sturgis's prescriptions were followed). Sturgis himself designed several innovative houses, and he may have done one of the earliest American basement houses (1863),[135] but he did not recommend the private urban house as the vehicle to create a new architecture. Here Sturgis showed the limitations of his environment. The densely built-up blocks of New York City were very different from the suburban expanses which allowed such architects as Frank Lloyd Wright to experiment with a new architecture in

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[135]"The Building . . . City House," .

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the first decades of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, logic would suggest that a client's heightened sensibility in residential design might lead to a demand for better design for other building types.

When Sturgis turned to non-urban domestic architecture, he found Bruce Price's classically-inspired buildings, particularly the private houses, to be notable as their designs aimed at "simplicity and directness rather than elaboration."[136] Sturgis praised Price's country houses in Tuxedo Park [Figs. 52 and 53] as "examples of this natural, this in-born tendency toward the vigorous and expressive in architectural design which shows alike in every style of architecture which the designer may have chosen to employ."[137] In these houses, he found an originality of design that seemed to be leading towards a true American architecture. The problem was how to translate this into costly city buildings, but given Price's record of design, Sturgis believed that he might succeed.[138]

Residential buildings were not a major component of Wight's architectural career. Nonetheless he related the building type to the art of architecture. As discussed in Chapter 3, he had examined the "dwelling house" in the Western states for its contributions to an American style. As such buildings adopted "a constructive style best adapted to the materials employed" and set aside "all precedents in the use of detail," they contributed to architectural progress.[139] Such a characterization contrasted sharply with

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[136]Sturgis, "Great American Architects: Bruce Price," 18.

[137]Ibid., 41.

[138]Ibid., 44, 48.

[139]Wight, "Conditions of Architecture," 119.

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his analysis of the A.T. Stewart mansion two years earlier.[140] He prefaced his comments with the criteria for good architecture that he drew from Ruskin ("truth") and Viollet-le-Duc ("expression of function"):

> It is not good architecture unless in arrangement it subserves its purpose in the best way, is wisely and economically built, using all materials most appropriate for their places and in proper quantity, combined so as to make their respective offices evident to the eye, and ornamented only so far as not to conceal their purposes. Every example of good architecture means progress, and every example of bad architecture means retrogression.

By this standard he found Stewart's mansion to be a "bad influence" on "those who might otherwise have been elevated and educated through the benign influence which the expenditure of so much money might have exerted, had it been invested in a well-designed and artistic structure."[141]

He did not find much to commend in Chicago's residential architecture, characterizing the dwelling-house architecture of Chicago as "always [having] been far behind that of her business buildings. It has been an admitted fact that Chicago had no homes."[142] Although Chicago, like New York, had rowhouses, the most progress had been made in freestanding residences which showed the improved taste of the patrons and an influx of talented architects. He called Richard Morris Hunt's house for Marshall Field (1871-73) the "first really artistic dwelling house." [Fig. 54] His pupils D.H. Burnham and

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[140]P[eter]. B. W[ight]., "A Millionnaire's (sic) Architectural Investment," *AABN* 1 (6 May 1876): 147-148. The mansion, designed by John Kellum and built in 1864-69, stood at the southwest corner of the intersection of Fifth Avenue and 34th Street.

[141]Ibid., 148.

[142][P.B. Wight], "Correspondence: [Chicago]," *AABN* 1 (1 April 1876): 111.

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John Wellborn Root had just finished the John B. Sherman House (1874). [Fig. 16] "It is a good sign, that this house has been generally recognized as a work of art." Finally he cited his own E.W. Blatchford residence (1874) [Fig. 55] which was "attracting considerable attention, not only on account of its size, but [on account] of the novelty of its design and arrangement. It . . . is treated with great freedom from the restraint of style."[143]

When more than forty years later Wight wrote about residential architecture in a country or suburban setting rather than an urban one, he still held to his criteria for good architecture, even though the forms were different and stylistic sources had changed over time. He was much less concerned with plan and interior features than Sturgis, and he focused less on wealthy clients. Examining four houses by Howard Van Doren Shaw in a profusely illustrated article of 1917, Wight saw Shaw "relying for artistic effect upon a balance of opposite parts rather than upon symmetry," thus "adapt[ing] his plan naturally to the circumstances of the site and of the household." The design was "conceived as an expression of function, a premeditated expression formulated with the urbanity of art."[144]

Following his retirement to Pasadena, Wight set out to analyze the residential architecture of Southern California, finding in its homes "the expression of the life of the American people," as well as a wider expression of art than in other building types. He saw several reasons for artistic progress in the design of private homes there: Southern

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[143]Ibid. and [P.B. Wight], "Correspondence: Chicago," *AABN* 1 (15 April 1876): 126.

[144]Peter B. Wight, "Recent Country House Work of Howard Shaw," *ARec* 42 (December 1917): 499.

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California had a larger proportion of educated architects who had ample opportunities to observe each other's work; these houses showed a response to local building materials; and patrons displayed an "evolution from the social conditions of society" in which a leisure class "has given more time and thought to its personal needs than the similar class in Eastern cities whose time is so much engrossed in business and other activities."[145] Wight divided this residential architecture into four types according to characteristics of style and building materials and examples discussed. One he called California Colonial or "Mission" which was of frame and stucco or of hollow tile and stucco and stylistically based on the Hispanic architecture of Mexico. The second was the constructive frame house of unpainted wood which was harmonious with the natural surroundings. He praised the works of Charles Sumner Greene of Greene & Greene as "remarkable examples of rational and constructive wood work" and noted that Greene also insisted on designing the layout of grounds, gardens, and external accessories in harmony with the architecture as well as all interior decoration and furniture.[146] A third type was the Italian villa, built of wood or hollow tile covered with stucco and painted white. Finally there was the type Wight called "Mexican colonial" which to him was based on the style of the Hopi Indians with the addition of ornament adapted from Churrigueresque decoration. The Harold P. Warren house by Reginald Johnson, an example of this type, had a "very plain exterior, finished with white stucco, and depend[ing] mainly upon good proportions

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[145]Peter B. Wight, "The Residential Architecture of Southern California," *WA* 29 (September 1920): 91-93.

[146]Ibid., 94.

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and adaptability to site for its artistic effect."[147] Even though the four types were different in their expression, all showed the characteristics of art.

Public and Institutional Buildings

Although the design of public and institutional buildings did not always involve new problems, Sturgis and Wight emphasized their importance because such buildings were generally conspicuous, costly, and the subject of much notice and often controversy. As such they set an example. Under such circumstances Sturgis felt that the architect of a public building had a responsibility to create an artistic design. What made such a building artistic for Sturgis? To be artistic, it should not be a copy, it should express originality in its approach to new problems (such as urban libraries and hospitals), it should follow consistent design principles (like the Lake Forest Town Hall), it should be well adapted to its site (the failure of Mt. Sinai Hospital in this regard vs. the success of St. Paul's Chapel). Essentially these were the same criteria Sturgis applied to any building type. In his discussion of such buildings, Sturgis focused on the idea of evolution as a means to create an artistic design because in so doing the architect could look to earlier works, then refine and expand upon them, with incremental change occurring with each new example.

Sturgis used the Minnesota State Capitol (Cass Gilbert, 1895-1903) to discuss the failure of modern architects to create artistic public buildings. The Minnesota Capitol [Fig. 56] was a particular disappointment because it was a copy, and it might be "a shame and a sin . . . to go on perpetuating these copies of copies of copies of a decadent style."

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[147]Ibid., 96.

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As an alternative, the architect was urged to follow an evolutionary approach, to "begin with this style [even though decadent], or another inferior and mechanical style," then

> vary it, . . . remodel it in part -- . . . remodel it a little more in each new case, until it is new made . . . the thing to do is to try -- when the late neo-classic is ordered -- to try to remake it for the needs of the new building. And each new structure which goes up without the appearance of such remaking, by means of original thought given to the work, is just one more disappointment.[148]

The dome, a copy after that of St. Peter's, Rome (even though not an exact copy) came in for particular criticism. In its variation Sturgis felt that it had lost the grace of the original. Furthermore it was coupled with the long, narrow mass of the Capitol office structure which contradicted the upward thrust of the dome.

Sturgis's remedy for modern architects who wanted to continue copying was "to take a structure of somewhere near the size and cost of their own intended edifice (taking not one feature alone, but the whole design)," and then

> try to give it an original treatment. It is nearly in that way that the styles of architecture have developed; and since, in these twentieth century copies of the great past, original treatment is the last thing expected, the last thing tried, and the last thing suggested to the designer, . . . it behooves the designer to be all the more particular as to what he copies.[149]

In so doing the architect would be taking the evolutionary approach that Sturgis preferred.

Perhaps the design of a small public building was easier for Sturgis to praise. He called the Lake Forest Town Hall (1898), designed by Frost & Granger, "a most attractive design: the proportions are graceful without losing that picturesque energy which so small

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[148]Russell Sturgis, "Minnesota State Capitol," *ARec* 19 (January 1906): 31, 33.

[149]Ibid., 35.

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a public building seems to require."[150] It achieved this effect because it insisted on certain principles of design -- the contrast of colors, materials, and textures and the control of the walls by "the large and single roof."

Sturgis addressed a new building problem in an examination of Carnegie branch libraries [Fig. 57] in the New York Public Library system, encouraging artistic design by responding to function. Because of the high cost of land in Manhattan, these libraries were located on relatively narrow midblock sites, and their facades of conservative neo-classic design echoed those of private houses. Sturgis was very critical of this approach because it ignored the need for adequate front windows to light the interior spaces (unlike the rears of these buildings which had large windows). Unlike some of his contemporaries, he disputed the notion that the facade of the Bibliothèque Ste. Genevieve in Paris was an appropriate model for small libraries because of differences in scale. Instead he urged a different approach from "the private house, the private office building, the public building of municipal and governmental offices, [which] are all more or less akin in the amount of daylight they require and in its disposition."[151] This approach would use bands of windows, rather than a regular disposition of solids and voids. "The authorities of the public library would confer a benefit on the modern world if they would use the opportunity now in their hands to enforce a front as logically planned for its

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[150]R[ussell] S[turgis], "Notes and Comments: Lake Forest Town Hall," *ARec* 18 (October 1905): 310.

[151]R[ussell] S[turgis], "Notes and Queries: The Carnegie Libraries in New York City," *ARec* 17 (March 1905): 245-246.

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requirements as are the rear walls of their own branch libraries."[152]

Sturgis recognized that the plan and arrangement of the Mount Sinai Hospital complex (1898) in New York, designed by Arnold Brunner, were geared to creating "a faultless modern hospital," but wondered "what is 'Architecture,' the fine art of architecture, when existing in connection with a huge and costly building of strictly utilitarian plan and disposition?"[153] He found the buildings to be clustered too closely on a constrained site, the result of putting each department into a separate building, and felt that Brunner had not succeeded in uniting the buildings into a harmonious whole even though they were of the same style, "with details of the same character, built of the same materials, and having the same general aspect."[154] Those were qualities that should, in theory, create an artistic architecture.

Sturgis called St. Paul's Chapel (1904-07), Columbia University [Fig. 58], designed by Howells & Stokes, one of the best things ever done in New York by virtue of its siting, function, and structure. As set among neighboring campus buildings, it "fills a place which it was hard to fill, that of a mediaevally built church among pseudo-classic edifices of greater size and greater pretensions, without introducing one discordant element."[155] He analyzed the building in functional and structural terms "for it is not as a

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[152]Ibid., 246.

[153]Russell Sturgis, "Mt. Sinai Hospital," *ARec* 17 (November 1905): 367, 369.

[154]Ibid., 371.

[155]When he characterizes St. Paul's as "mediaevally built," he seems to be referring more to its structural system than its style and plan, which is typical of the small centralized church of the Renaissance period.

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work of pure form that a building put to modern uses can ever be judged."[156] According to Sturgis, the structural system followed medieval precedents because it was of solely self-supporting masonry without iron ties and concealed braces, although it was not built without centering, as would have been the case with Byzantine architecture. However, because centering was used "in the freest and most scientific modern way," the architect was able to use the materials themselves to create "a system of decoration wholly constructional, built up with the walls and identified with weight-carrying arches and the very shell of the structure."[157]

Wight used his own works as a context for discussing the larger problem of artistic design in public and institutional buildings, emphasizing constructive principles, the use of materials, and the expression of function. Wight's interest in public and institutional buildings, began with the National Academy of Design. [Fig. 12] As discussed in Chapter 1, this was the building which established Wight in his career, and he wrote about it at the time of its completion as well as much later. For Wight the building had lessons to teach, both in its merits and shortcomings, about the art of architecture. At the time of its construction, he saw himself as part of a movement to revive a system of constructive building and natural decoration which was associated with the Gothic Revival; for him the building was a prime example of both.[158] (The precedent for the National Academy was

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[156]Russell Sturgis, "St. Paul's Chapel," *ARec* 21 (February 1907): 92.

[157]Ibid., 95. These elements used the Guastavino system of vaulting and tiles, which will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

[158]P.B. Wight, *National Academy of Design. Photographs of the New Building, with an Introductory Essay and Description* (New York: S. P. Avery, 1866), 5.

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the University Museum, Oxford, built in 1855-61 and designed by Deane & Woodward.) The exterior he called "an important addition to the street architecture of New York, as being the only Gothic building of any importance, other than a Church, yet erected within the city limits, and as being more richly decorated by sculpture than the exterior of any building in America."[159] In his writings contemporary with the building's construction, he gave a great deal of attention to the sculpture and how it was created. For him it was a crucial part of what made this building worthy of being called "art," while at the same time he realized that it could not be an example for all future work because of the difficulties of controlling and instructing the workmen in carving naturalistic forms from life, rather than from an architect's drawings.[160] He believed that if the carvers were encouraged to think and were given regular opportunities for carving from nature, that good work could result. Wight also felt that the decorative wrought ironwork, "the only examples executed in the Mediaeval manner that we yet have," was also important in adding to the artistic effects of the building.[161]

Writing of the building in 1900, Wight looked at its lessons for the art of architecture from a somewhat different perspective. He explained why he had used the

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[159][P.B. Wight], "Description of the Building," *Ceremonies on the Occasion of Laying the Corner-stone, October 21st, 1863, and the Inauguration of the Building, April 27th, 1865* (New York: Miller and Matthews, 1865), 68.

[160]Speaking to the Architectural League of New York on December 3, 1888, Russell Sturgis described the problems that Wight had in training and inspiring the architectural sculptors. Russell Sturgis, "Architecture Without Decoration," *Proceedings of the Architectural League of New York from Organization to January 1889* (New York: Architectural League, 1889), 91.

[161]Wight, *NAD, Photographs*, 9-10.

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Italian Gothic style while pursuing a system of constructive building:

> I knew no better how to express the purpose of a building devoted to the fine arts than by seeking inspiration in the best Gothic work of Italy. . . . But I did not employ any details, however their beauty may have impressed me, except when they were not inconsistent with or when giving emphasis to rational constructive methods. The difficulty of reconciling these two ideas was manifest all through, and convinced me that the less we were dependent upon Italian Gothic details, however beautiful they might be, the better would be the results.

He explained that experience later taught him that architects adhering to the principles of the Gothic Revival [Gothic revivalists] should not limit themselves to expressing rational ideas in architecture "through the medium of what was once a rational style, . . . [and] that a rational use of modern materials and methods of construction does not necessarily find its expression in Gothic forms."[162]

Following the National Academy of Design, Wight's next major work was the Yale School of the Fine Arts (1864-66), later Street Hall, at Yale University. [Fig. 59] In 1878 Wight reviewed its artistic merits in context with other buildings at Yale, heaping ample praise on its precedent setting role.[163] In Wight's eyes, his building "with its freedom from precedent, and evident adaptation to a purpose, . . . seems to have commenced a new era of college architecture at New Haven . . . It was not only a new building but a new department of study. It was natural, therefore, that it should result in a new architecture.

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[162]Peter B. Wight, "Reminiscences of the Building of the Academy of Design," *NYT*, 22 April 1900, 25. Wight was asked to write this article as the building was about to be demolished for replacement by a new building for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Sturgis was also writing architectural commentary and books reviews for the *New York Times* at that time.

[163][Peter B.] W[ight]., "New Haven Revisited," *AABN* 4 (9 November 1878): 155-156.

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With the erection of this building the record of Yale's architectural progress begins." A year earlier Sturgis had praised the art building "as being not only excellently well built, but also rationally and intelligently designed, with an exterior in many ways truly expressive of the purpose and of the interior arrangement of the building and with a little good ornamental detail, is a great thing for Yale College and for New Haven to possess.[164]

Three subsequent buildings designed by Russell Sturgis received Wight's praise for their artistic quality. Farnham Hall (1869-70) "shows what can be done with common brick and blue stone," and made extensive use of moulded brick. Durfee Hall (1871) was praised for "the quiet dignity of its roof and chimneys." While the "chapel for the divinity school" (sic) [Battell Chapel] (1874-76) was criticized for its siting (although Wight realized that Sturgis had no control over this), he called its detail "the best . . . of all that the college has erected."[165] Two works by J.C. Cady were praised, the Peabody Museum (1873-76, demolished 1917) "in the advanced Gothic [style], the materials brick and stone" in a polychromatic treatment, and the Sheffield Scientific School Building [North Sheffield Hall] (1872-73, demolished 1967) "with buff and red bricks used in ornamental patterns with its high, round-headed windows and machiolated cornice, . . . a decidedly Lombardic effect."

The city of New Haven was praised for its City Hall extension (1871) by David R.

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[164][Russell Sturgis], "The Yale College Art Building and Exhibition," *Nation* 5 (8 Aug. 1867): 115.

[165]Wight may have been slightly confused. Sturgis's Battell Chapel, located between Farnham and Durfee, was designed as a Civil War Memorial. Marquand Chapel, predecessor of the present building by that name, was built in 1871 for the divinity school and designed by Richard Morris Hunt.

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Brown and a "good, new, and practical" police building by Rufus G. Russell, as well as the refurbished Trinity Church (Ithiel Town, 1813-14) with pyramidal spire and refitted and newly decorated interior by Emlen T. Littell (1870, pyramid removed 1930). While Wight called these buildings artistic, he doesn't explain why. But all are Victorian Gothic and so would meet his criteria for artistic architecture.

Wight used the architecture of the campus of the University of Chicago to examine artistic progress in academic architecture. While Yale had been constructing its campus for over 100 years when Wight wrote about it, the University of Chicago had had a relatively short history. Begun in 1891, the 100-acre campus had a plan by Henry Ives Cobb which called for buildings in the English Gothic style. Wight thought that the University of Chicago was "remarkable in the annals of American architecture, in that it is the newest and one of the largest of American seats of learning, that all its buildings are in some form of English Gothic, and that all are built of uniform materials [Bedford limestone]."[166] In examining the use of the style over twenty years by different architects, Wight saw precedents of evolution. "Mr. Cobb's buildings are all good in design, and there are evidences of progress in many of them."[167]

Many of the buildings which followed Cobb's work were designed by the firm of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge. Wight noted that the group of buildings at Hutchinson Court introduced "modern scientific building methods . . . in the construction of Gothic

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[166]Peter B. Wight, "Three New Buildings at the University of Chicago, Holabird & Roche and Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, Architects," *ARec* 41 (February 1917): 129.

[167]Ibid., 133.

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buildings for the university, much steel having been used while preserving the style as far as the exteriors and interiors can now be seen."[168] This would seem to be quite a step away from the constructive and rational principles espoused by Wight for Gothic architecture in the 1860s and 1870s. Nonetheless, he thought that by using steel construction and modern fireproofing methods to create varying interior plans adapted to practical uses, the architects were expressing the "modern spirit" which he hoped would "eventually prevail in gradually bringing the university architecture out of the rut of old precedents; possibly, if this progressive tendency continues, there will here be developed from the remote influence of medieval architecture a newer and better architecture without creating an unpleasant contrast with that which the first board of trustees instituted."[169]

Contrasting with the large multi-building campus of the University of Chicago was the YMCA College (1915) in Chicago, designed by Emery Stanford Hall and housing all of its functions in a structure covering an entire city block. Wight saw it as "designed with due regard to its artistic effect, and in a spirit of independence of the influence of architectural precedents; executed with the best materials obtainable; handled by skilled workmen. . ., and built for a noble, righteous and enlightened purpose."[170] The exterior design of the structure which housed four departments, Class Room Instruction,

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[168]Ibid.

[169]Ibid., 134.

[170]Peter B. Wight, "The YMCA College in Chicago, Emery Stanford Hall, Architect," *ARec* 39 (May 1916): 395.

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Administration, Physical Education, and Residence, reflected the interior uses. Because the building was designed in accordance with real architectural principles but left out the "architecture" (i.e., the self-consciously designed and copied details associated with classical architecture of the period), it was "a work of art."[171]

Finally, Wight praised an unusual bank building (1914) in Winona, Minnesota [Fig. 60], designed by George W. Maher, both for its artistic qualities and its ability to educate the public, one of the major roles played by public and institutional buildings. Noting that Maher "is well-known as one of the 'progressive' architects of Chicago," he described the building as "unique and original in its conception and execution, for it is doubtful if there is another financial institution like it in this or any other country."

> The State of Minnesota is becoming famous for its new banks showing progressive tendencies in architectural design. . . . They have proved attractive to visitors, who have recognized in them works of art as well as of utility; they have therefore exerted an educational influence in communities heretofore indifferent to architecture because of conventional and prosaic design.[172]

Typically bank buildings of the period were designed as neo-classical temples intended to denote strength and stability. Given Wight's comments, he saw them in a different light.

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[171]Ibid., 418.

[172]Peter B. Wight, "The Winona Savings Bank and Winona National Bank Building, Winona, Minn., George W. Maher, Architect," *ARec* 41 (January 1917): 37, 48. While Maher never cited such a precedent, the building has Neo-Egyptian qualities that suggest stability and security. Wight does not mention other banks by name but undoubtedly was thinking of such examples as the National Farmers Bank (Louis H. Sullivan and George Grant Elmslie, 1907-08) in Owatonna and the Merchants' National Bank (Purcell, Feick & Elmslie, 1911-12), also in Winona.

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Decoration and the Art of Architecture

Decoration and the decorative arts played an important role in the creation of an artistic architecture. Architects who used decoration effectively had moved beyond constructive principles, the expression of function, and the use of materials, although all of those qualities could create artistic architecture, as I have tried to demonstrate in this analysis. Ideally, decoration should be an inherent part of the architecture, as sculpture was inherent to Gothic architecture. Alternatively, decoration in the form of sculpture and painting could be applied to architecture, in the way that the Romans applied sculpture to their architecture. Sturgis was particularly fond of that analogy.

Sturgis was cognizant of the role of decoration and the decorative arts in creating an artistic architecture. In part, this relates to his historical understanding of architecture. One need only think of his characterization of the Greeks as masters of art, with their art inherent in the form of their buildings, vs. the Romans as masters of engineering who could only create artistic architecture by decorating their buildings. (See Chapter 3 above, p. 118) In his *Dictionary* Sturgis gave a rather succinct definition for decorative art: "the art by which that which otherwise would be merely useful is rendered delightful to the eye or interesting to the mind, by the use of form and colour, arrangement of parts, and frequently expressional or descriptive painting or sculpture."[173]

He related this to architecture:

> Architecture is a decorative art because it has to do with making beautiful, suggestive, or attractive [that] which might exist and do its necessary work perfectly well without the possession of any aesthetic charm.

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[173]*Dictionary of Architecture*, s.v. "Decorative Art" by R[ussell] S[turgis].

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If architecture itself was a decorative art, nonetheless, the contemporary architect found it difficult to incorporate other kinds of decorative art in his work because of

> the greatly changed and still rapidly changing conditions of building, . . . as is shown by the hopeless way in which old architectural forms are applied as mere surface ornaments to buildings which are constructed in a wholly novel manner and which assume wholly novel proportions.[174]

Some ten years prior to the publication of the *Dictionary*, Sturgis had spoken to the Architectural League of New York of the difficulties of designing architecture that incorporated decoration.[175] Gothic Revivalists in England and the United States had tried to develop such an architecture in a modern context while adhering to two principles: "perfect honesty of construction and the naturally inspired conception of the workmen for decoration."[176] The first principle "has become the common property of all designers worthy of the name." But the movement failed, according to Sturgis, because workmen found it impossible to design decorative sculpture, and the designer of such sculpture was incapable of executing it.[177] So Sturgis advocated facing the situation: "If we cannot get workmen who are also decorative artists, we can still get workmen, and we can still get artists."[178] Thus, the architect should create a mass of simple, heavy forms, simplifying

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[174]Ibid.

[175]Russell Sturgis, "Architecture Without Decoration," in *Proceedings of the Architectural League of New York from Organization [1881] to January 1889* (New York: Architectural League, 1889), 85-103.

[176]Ibid., 89.

[177]Ibid., 90.

[178]Ibid., 94.

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the problems of construction; he would "become an organizer, a distributor of the work of the painter and the sculptor; providing the well-exposed, well-lighted wall-surface for the one; for the other the salient angles and dusky niches which his statuary needs, and the sunny and sheltered nooks which his bas-reliefs require."[179] The result would be artistic architecture because it incorporated effective decoration.

In *A Study of the Artist's Way of Working in the Various Handicrafts and Arts of Design*, published in 1905, Sturgis discussed the role of the architect in creating a decorative architecture.[180] Sturgis described architecture as a "purely decorative" art (as opposed to a representational one), and in Chapter 26, "The Decorative Treatment of Buildings," he described the architect's "artistical task" in creating a decorative building:

> He must know how to mass, how to group and proportion the larger parts of his building; . . . he must have a feeling for the smaller details, for the capitals and bases of columns and mouldings around windows; . . . [and] also the more rich, elaborate, and unusual details which go to make up what we call architectural sculpture; . . . he must be a good natural judge of proportion; of what is fine and what is not so fine in relative size, relative curvature, relative verticality, horizontality, or the like.[181]

Thus we see that Sturgis's conception of decoration as applied to architecture was very broad. Color and sculpture, two obvious components of decorative architecture, were

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[179]Ibid., 100-101.

[180]Russell Sturgis, *A Study of the Artist's Way of Working in the Various Handicrafts and Arts of Design* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1905), 644. Despite its title and his intention as stated in the foreword ("The purpose of the work has been to explain, little by little, how the creative artist goes at his work in each one of the numerous crafts and processes which are within his reach."), he dealt less with the artistic role and intention and more with the actual processes themselves.

[181]Ibid., 562-569.

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viewed somewhat differently. Color in architecture beyond that found in materials was more the domain of the mural painter and the mosaicist, and the "artistical" architect would provide space for them to adorn but otherwise let them create their own art. On the other hand, he thought that the architect must provide the guidance for sculpture, feeling that it was an intrinsic part of the structure.

The Role of Sculpture

If in 1888, when speaking to the Architectural League, Sturgis could decry the failure of architects to successfully integrate sculpture into overall architectural designs, within the following decade he had the opportunity to review the works of several sculptors which were incorporated into major buildings of the era. In this context, some of the sculptors provided work that was decorative, subordinated to the building, and non-figural, while other work he discussed was, in fact, representational but not necessarily removed from the architecture.

In 1896, Sturgis defined architectural sculpture as "sculpture of a purely decorative character, excluding statuary and even sculpture in relief, when representative and expressional even more than decorative."[182] Some of the later work of H.H. Richardson followed this formula, incorporating Byzantine and Romanesque-inspired carving executed on capitals, arches, and similar elements. Carved detail in the works of other contemporary architects was also commended: "The important question now is how there

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[182]Russell Sturgis, "Architectural Sculpture in America," *Engineering Magazine* 10 (February 1896): 883.

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can be made possible the production of more, very much more, of it."[183]

This view of architectural sculpture as decorative and non-representational was brought to bear in Sturgis's analysis of the Library of Congress building (Smith & Pelzmeyer, 1890-93) [Fig. 61] :

> The very considerable display of enriched capitals, . . . of festoons around labels and of arabesques above windows, is effective in making the Entrance Pavilion an enriched and brilliant one instead of the cold pseudo-classic embodiment of formulas which it might so easily have been . . . yet the exterior is not a very important piece of decorative architecture; chiefly because no one intelligence has been called in to combine this very considerable amount of valuable material into a common whole.[184]

Similar criticisms were applied to the architectural sculpture of the interior. Often well done in and of itself, it was diminished because it did not fit into an overriding and unifying architectural conception. Such a conception was essential to creating a truly decorative architecture, no matter the excellence of the sculptural details.

Sturgis dealt again with architectural sculpture when dealing with the New York Stock Exchange (George B. Post, 1903) [Fig. 62], which had an abundance of classically-inspired decorative sculpture in the colonnade and entablature, but was dominated by the pediment filled with a representational figural group by J.Q.A. Ward and Paul Wayland Bartlett. Two critiques illustrate his approach for two different audiences. For *Scribner's Magazine* Sturgis analyzed the sculpture on its own merits without regard to the building as a whole, except as it related to the pediment and how it was perceived from ground

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[183]Ibid., 898.

[184]Russell Sturgis, "The New Library of Congress: A Study in Decorative Architecture," *ARec* 7 (January-March 1898): 302.

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level.[185] For *Architectural Record* Sturgis analyzed the facade as a whole, relating the sculpture to the overall design. He questioned the use of the pediment at all, since it rested against a flat wall rather than filling a gable end as would be appropriate in the classical prototype. He speculated that Post, the architect, wanted a sculpture by Ward, and found it easier to persuade the client that a pediment required sculpture than it would have been to persuade the client to adorn a flat wall with sculpture.[186] That said, Sturgis found the sculpture itself to be admirable: "The result is exceptionally strong and real: even if the ideal architectural treatment of sculpture [one that is more intrinsically incorporated into the architecture] be postponed until a day of more general use of such stately adornment."[187]

Perhaps the work of contemporary architectural sculpture which intrigued Sturgis most was the porch of St. Bartholomew's Church (1872, Renwick, Aspinwall & Russell) [Fig. 63] which was added in 1900-03 as a memorial to Cornelius Vanderbilt. Designed by Stanford White of McKim, Mead & White, the porch incorporated the work of four of the era's noted sculptors, Daniel Chester French assisted by Andrew O'Connor, Herbert Adams, and Philip Martiny, who executed the bronze doors and their surrounding arches,

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[185]Russell Sturgis, "The Pediment of the New York Stock Exchange," *Scribner's Magazine* 36 (September 1904): 381-384.

[186]Russell Sturgis, "Facade of the New York Stock Exchange," *ARec* 16 (November 1904): 474.

[187]Ibid., 482.

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friezes, and tympanums.[188] The overall design was inspired by the Church of St. Gilles, St.-Gilles-du-Gard, France.[189] Even at this late date, Sturgis retained his preference for medievally inspired examples.

Sturgis pointed out: "It is quite unavoidable that we should speak of the architecture and sculpture together. There is no possibility of treating either art as embodied in this portal apart from the other, for the whole is in effect one design."[190] Stanford White's role as organizer and the lead artist was key: he was praised for his ability to "so arrange his general design as to include and utilize the work of men not accustomed to subordinate their sculpture to other considerations than those springing from their own general designs for a monument of any sort -- to so arrange his general plan of action that each one of those able men could work in harmony with him and with each other for the production of such design as we have before us."[191] While enhancing the excellence of the overall design, the sculpture was meritorious on its own terms. Sturgis praised Herbert Adams as "one of the first of decorative sculptors . . . producing

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[188]At the Library of Congress, Adams executed some of the bas-reliefs in the bronze entrance doors, while both Martiny and French designed some of the sculpted figures on the interior, but in Sturgis's opinion, the quality of the sculpture suffered because of the lack of a "unifying architectural conception," as discussed above.

[189]Sturgis wrote about the porch several times. Russell Sturgis, "The New Portal of St. Bartholomew's Church," *Scribner's Magazine* 35 (February 1904): 253-256; Russell Sturgis, "A Fine Work of American Architectural Sculpture: The New Portals of St. Bartholomew's," *ARec* 15 (April 1904): 293-311; Russell Sturgis, "St. Bartholomew's Facade," *International Studio* 38 (July 1909, supplement): xix-xxii; Russell Sturgis, *The Interdependence of the Arts of Design* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1905), 189-190.

[190]Sturgis, "The New Portal," 255.

[191]Sturgis, "A Fine Work," 296.

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what we need most when we ask of sculpture its noblest artistic result in glorifying a building beyond and outside of its utilitarian purpose. That is to be a decorative sculptor indeed."[192] Ironically, for Sturgis, this representational sculpture was much more modern and original than the architecture itself: "The immediate impression given is one of extreme modernity set into a framework of an ancient design [a composition in what still may be called the Romanesque style]."[193] He saw modern art as "alive as to sculpture of human subject, but it is not strictly alive as to architecture" because "there is no American architecture, nor any twentieth century style anywhere, nor any nineteenth century style."[194]

Thus, despite the excellence of a St. Bartholomew's Church, Sturgis would seem to see it as just a confirmation of his opinion in 1888 that there was no true, original, decorative architectural sculpture.

He contrasted St. Bartholomew's porch with the west front of Trinity Church, Boston [Fig. 64], designed by Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, which was particularly noteworthy because it allowed for the inclusion of decorative architectural sculpture. "It is only once in a decade that the chance is given an American architect to use sculpture as he would like to use it, and it is only in buildings of mediaeval character that sculpture runs any chance of being treated on original lines."[195]

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[192]Ibid., 301.

[193]Ibid.

[194]Sturgis, "The New Portal," 256.

[195]Ibid., 42.

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The Role of Mural Painting

The role of color in decorative architecture took its most interesting form for Sturgis in mural painting, a technique rarely incorporated into American architecture until late in the nineteenth century.

The mosaics, murals, and color in general of the Library of Congress elicited Sturgis's comments. The firm of Smithmeyer & Pelz was responsible for the design, but in 1892, Edward Pearce Casey was appointed architect and director of "adornments" in which capacity he coordinated the work of sculptors and painters. Overall, Sturgis found the decorative work to be very successful, leading the visitor

> to realize the important fact that he is within the most ornate and, moreover, the most interesting building in the United States. . . . the general scheme of adornment is like nothing he has seen elsewhere. . . . In this Northern Vestibule . . . the system of decoration, by means of painting in lunettes above walls faced with marble, treated architecturally with some richness, beneath mosaic-covered vaults, is like nothing elsewhere.[196]

Thus the Library of Congress would seem to have satisfied Sturgis's dictum that the architect had to provide the space for the artist in color but still control the overall design.

The mural paintings of John Singer Sargent in Sargent Hall of the Boston Public Library were to Sturgis the most impressive of the era. He called the painting on the south wall "worth a journey across the continent to see . . . promising much -- claiming greatness -- and not likely to be disputed in this claim of art lovers of whatever predilection," and "one of the finest things of modern times, able to hold its own against

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[196]Sturgis, "The New Library of Congress," 305.

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any composition of the nineteenth or twentieth century."[197] According to Sturgis, Sargent had decorated the north wall in 1895-96 in a style that owed much to his portrait paintings. The south wall was decorated in the winter of 1902-03. Sturgis contrasted the two:

> From the more informal and swift techniques [of the north end] to the compact and severe design, the pervading harmony of thought, and the unsurpassed decorative sense, [of the south end]. . . .
>
> As for the technical treatment of the whole, there was never anything seen more attractive than this subduing of the swift and dexterous hand, the almost unrivalled freedom of touch, to the conditions of a mural decoration.[198]

He found much to commend in "this frank return to decorative principles, this frank adoption of a decorative purpose, on the part of a consummate modern painter."[199]

Sargent's French contemporary, Puvis de Chavannes, was also recognized by Sturgis for his excellence. Characterizing Puvis as "the first decorative painter of modern times," Sturgis described his wall painting, "the largest single composition in Europe," executed in 1889-91 for the amphitheatre of the Sorbonne. The amphitheatre itself was of great interest to Sturgis who called it "effective, stately, practical in appearance," and "a

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[197]Russell Sturgis, "Boston Public Library. The South End of Sargent Hall," *ARec* 15 (May 1904): 422; Sturgis, *Interdependence of the Arts of Design*, 224-225.

[198]Russell Sturgis, "Sargent's New Wall Painting," *Scribner's Magazine* 34 (December 1903): 766-767.

[199]Sturgis, "Boston Public Library," 427.

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piece of practical modern architecture"; Puvis's mural became an integral part of the design.[200]

Unlike Sturgis, Wight did not often address the role of decorative arts in creating an artistic architecture. But a proposal in 1914 to finish the mural decorations of the Capitol dome in Washington, D.C., aroused his interest. Thomas U. Walter, architect of the dome, had originally called for sculpture in bas-relief. Instead as a cost-cutting measure, Congress had hired an Italian painter, Constantine Brumidi, to undertake *trompe-l'oeil* painting simulating sculpture. Wight called the whole thing a "miserable sham" which should not be continued. Instead he encouraged the complete redecoration of the dome with "color, as mural painting should be done only" or, alternatively, the painting out of Brumidi's work, leaving the dome undecorated "so that future generations will not brand the age in which we live as one of shams, imitations, and ignorance."[201] Thus, Wight continued to reveal his commitment to Ruskin's dictum that architecture to be "artful" should be truthful.

Above all, Sturgis and Wight sought to encourage the art of architecture as an embodiment of certain principles. How architects approached and solved new problems of architecture -- the new building types, the new materials or old materials used in new ways, and new methods -- most captured their attention. If architects were successful,

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[200]Russell Sturgis, "A Great Hall and Its Decoration," *Scribner's Magazine* 38 (October 1905): 509.

[201]Peter B. Wight, "The Decorations in the Capitol Dome: A Protest Against the Proposed Method of Completing Them," *JAIA* 2 (September 1914): 434-435. Brumidi's murals survive intact, and no other murals were added.

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they created architecture that was modern and of its time and thus artistic. Furthermore, the appropriate use of sculpture and other decoration and the quality of that sculpture and decoration had an important impact in determining the artistic merit of a work of architecture.

In addition, architecture that was artful and truthful had to be well built. The problem of well-built architecture manifested itself in a form of interest to many nineteenth-century architects, one to which Wight devoted much of his career -- namely, how to construct buildings that would withstand fire, particularly in densely-built urban areas.

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CHAPTER 5

THE ART AND PRACTICE OF FIREPROOFING

Could the art of architecture be fully practiced and carried out if the architect did not employ sound construction and good building techniques? Sturgis and Wight, with a concern growing out of the tenets espoused by Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, certainly believed this to be the case. The issue of sound construction particularly manifested itself in Wight's extensive writings on fireproofing, which he called an art, using the phrase "the art of fireproofing," although fireproofing also was a matter of some interest to Sturgis as I will demonstrate.[1] I will argue that among Wight's many enthusiasms and professional concerns, it was the cause of fireproof construction on which he expressed the greatest passion and which had the farthest-reaching impact. As an advocate for the cause, his writings may be grouped into several categories: in his early writings, the current state of the "art" and the knowledge of fireproofing; further developments based on experience; various fireproofing techniques with an emphasis on structural components and materials; the role of the individual innovator; and the effects of fires.

Wight's Early Interest in and Writings on Fireproofing

Wight had a life-long interest in the subject of fireproofing and in 1902 rather amusingly recounted his boyhood habit of "'running with the machine.' Like all other boys, I was first actuated by a love of excitement. But this was soon changed to curiosity to see how the fire really progressed. It became a fascination. I took no interest in the

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[1]See page 277 below for a discussion of Sturgis's writings on fireproofing.

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extinguishment of fires, but heartlessly wished them to spread so that I could trace their action."[2]

Wight's boyhood curiosity developed into a genuine concern about and interest in creating fireproof construction, a matter of great importance in densely-built urban environments like New York and Chicago where fire was a constant danger, and even a small fire could lead to a major conflagration. He began to write and lecture on the subject early in his career, seeking to heighten architects' awareness of the necessity of fireproofing, and how to accomplish it.[3] Through these early writings, he traced developments and advances in fireproof construction in an effort to educate his fellow architects while urging them to foster artistic principles.

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[2][Peter B. Wight], "Notes by an Expert," *FP* 1 (August 1902): 28.

[3]Surviving records of Wight's and Sturgis's early buildings generally do not indicate whether fireproof construction was used. Sarah Bradford Landau, *P.B. Wight: Architect, Contractor and Critic, 1838-1925* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1981), 22, note 35, states that the Yale School of Fine Arts was not built in the fireproof manner that Wight wanted. The National Academy of Design used exposed decorative iron columns and much paneled interior woodwork, elements that Wight would criticize in his later writings for their non-fireproof qualities. Sturgis himself discussed the fireproof qualities -- the lack of wood and the brick and iron construction -- of his Mechanics' and Farmers' Bank (1874-75) in Albany, New York, in "Good Things in Modern Architecture," *ARec* 8 (July-Sept. 1898): 106-108. Robert Craik McLean, "Russell Sturgis," *WA* 13 (March 1909): 29, made much in this obituary notice of the fireproofing of the bank. The fact that Wight built non-fireproof structures was a vivid demonstration of the difficulties faced by architects in achieving fireproof construction and undoubtedly was a factor in why Wight kept trying to educate architects and their clients of its necessity.

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Wight's first major paper on the subject was read on April 8, 1869, before the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects,[4] which identified several kinds of fireproof construction, as understood at the time. Wight defined a fireproof building as one built of non-combustible materials (materials which could not burn such as brick, stone, and iron). Because a building constructed of such materials often housed large amounts of combustible materials, such as drygoods, books, paper records, or was used for certain kinds of manufacturing processes, it was important that the building be constructed in such a way as to prevent the spread of fire from one part of a building to another. This could be achieved either (1) by using horizontal compartments with *fireproof floor construction*, although Wight pointed out such buildings still needed stairways and windows, both of which were factors in the spread of fire; or (2) by using vertical compartments, with *fireproof party walls* set about fifty feet apart and carried above roof level. Wight discussed examples of fireproof floor construction, particularly those using iron floor beams, and recommended improvements. These examples he contrasted with earlier construction:

> Before the "iron period", when our Washington Capitol, our City Hall, our old Exchange and Custom House were built, the Roman and Mediaeval vaults only, were used -- either of stone or of brick plastered. When the width of a room was too great for one span, granite columns or brick piers

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[4]P.B. Wight, *Remarks on Fire-proof Construction*, a paper read before the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, April 8th, 1869 (New York: Library Committee of the American Institute of Architects, 1869). Its significance was demonstrated by its subsequent circulation among the architectural, building, and engineering professions through re-printing: P.B. Wight, "Remarks on Fire-proof Construction," *ARev* 22 (August 1869): 99-108; and P.B. Wight, "Fire-Proof Construction," *Van Nostrand's Eclectic Engineering Magazine* 1 (November 1869): 1017-1024.

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> were used, as in our old Exchange, now the Custom house [55 Wall Street, architect Isaiah Rogers]. The floors above the vaults were leveled up and paved with flags or marble tiles. As far as grace, strength and absolute relief from the dangers of fire were concerned, this was a perfect system. But now space is demanded; there must be no more heavy piers and no great thickness of floors. We are therefore forced to use a material which, though not combustible of itself, will do little work if exposed to great heat; and in this is seen the great difference between our fire-proof buildings of the brick period and those of the iron period, and the inferior fire-proof qualities of the latter. The problem now is, to use the minimum of brick and the maximum of iron. I think therefore it must be conceded that with the best we can do with this material, there is danger; and the problem might be put thus: "Given Iron, make as nearly fire-proof buildings as possible out of it."[5]

Wight also suggested that cast-iron plates be used for flooring and that interior walls be lined with stone or marble instead of plaster.

Nonetheless, Wight did not want to forget architecture. He urged the architect, even while dealing with the problem of fireproof construction, not to lose sight of constructive principles:

> First, let your work be strong and well balanced--no part too heavy--no part too light. Then decorate it in harmony with its constructive features, never concealing materials except where necessary to protect them, and emphasising the main lines of construction by ornamentation. Thus only can the great problem of the day be solved, and the fire-proof architecture of the nineteenth century be made worthy of a rational and progressive age.[6]

Some two and a half years later, the tragedy of the great Chicago fire which had occurred in October 1871, provided Wight the opportunity to report on its effects and derive lessons for fireproof construction, particularly in regard to building materials and

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[5]Wight, *Remarks*, 5.

[6]Ibid., 8.

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how they were used.[7] The extent of destruction was unprecedented in an American city, vividly illustrating that buildings constructed of incombustible materials were not fireproof, contrary to popular belief.[8]

Wight found that not all brick and stone withstood the fire equally well. Some very soft brick actually burned; other brick cracked; very hard bricks, especially those made of white clay, endured the heat.[9] Very soft limestone calcined; other limestones cracked; granite cracked or exploded; the sandstones survived largely undamaged. In several cases, brick walls collapsed when stone foundations were broken. The reaction of iron to the fire varied: unprotected cast-iron columns, as those in the Chicago Post Office, collapsed. In some cases, the ends melted and the columns bent; in others the columns broke. Unprotected rolled-iron floor beams also collapsed when the undersides were exposed to heat and sagged; in the face of such evidence, Wight exhorted the Institute (AIA) to recommend that such beams be covered with cement, artificial stone,

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[7]"Address by Mr. Wight on the Effects of the Fire in Chicago," in *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects* held in Boston, November 14th and 15th, 1871 (New York: American Institute of Architects, 1871), 45-49.

[8]Wight later reported that of the twelve incombustible buildings erected in Chicago before the fire, all but one were destroyed. P.B. Wight, "Recent Fireproof Building in Chicago," *IA* 5 (April 1885): 52-53. Wight used the terms "incombustible" and "non-combustible" interchangeably. Both refer to the quality of not catching fire and burning.

[9]The resistence of brick to fire depends largely on the quality of clay used in manufacturing the bricks. Some clays are much more fire resistant than others. See Cecil D. Elliott, *Technics and Architecture: The Development of Materials and Systems for Buildings* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1992), 40-41.

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or terra cotta.[10] The paneled iron shutters of the post office withstood the fire, but not all shutters had been closed and the building was destroyed. The corrugated iron arches in the Tribune building and the courthouse survived. According to Wight's assessment, this was because they were protected by the concrete floor arches of which the corrugated iron formed a part.[11]

Even if buildings were solidly constructed, with thick brick partition walls, protected iron floor beams, and fireproof iron shutters for all windows, Wight still saw a problem in the roofs. Many in Chicago were of tar and gravel, which were not sufficient to deflect heated air currents. The best roof he knew was that of the post office which had brick arches covered with brick.

The Chicago fire was not an isolated incident. Consequently, five years later, Wight again had the opportunity to address the AIA on the "fire question,"[12] commenting that "the serious disasters from fire which have taken place in many countries during the past five years have awakened an inquiry upon this subject never before equalled."[13] Wight had learned new lessons from every major fire, which in many cases had disproved previously held notions about fireproof construction. As a result, Wight admonished architects on their responsibility to promote and improve fire-resisting

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[10]*Proceedings . . . Fifth Annual Convention*, 48.

[11]Ibid., 47.

[12]P.B. Wight, "The Fire Question," *AABN* 1 (17 June 1876): 195-197; (24 June 1876): 203-204; (1 July 1876): 211-212. By this time, Wight and his architectural partner, William H. Drake, had formed the Wight Fire-Proofing Company.

[13]Ibid., 195.

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construction in three ways: (1) by providing fireproof exterior walls with the ability to resist the exit or entrance of a fire; (2) by preventing conditions that would allow a building to take fire within itself; and (3) by providing construction methods that would enable a building to resist the action of fire within itself.[14] The Chicago fire of 1871, and a major fire in Boston the following year had shown how fire could spread rapidly among buildings that were not fire-resistant on their exteriors. The Pantechnicon fire in London in 1873 showed that inflammable goods when ignited could destroy a building constructed of non-combustible materials which were not protected by non-conducting materials. Similarly, the Alexandra Palace in London, built of non-combustible but light and unprotected materials, had been destroyed by fire in 1875. (Both of these were exhibition buildings.) In Paris during the disturbances caused by the uprising of the Commune, many buildings constructed of non-combustible materials were destroyed by fire because of the light combustible materials used for interior finishes.

Because fire could spread so easily in heavily built-up urban areas, Wight's first concern was fireproof protection for building exteriors, and he specified how this could be achieved given the knowledge of the time: walls of sufficient depth backed by fire-resisting materials and carried above the roofline in the case of flat roofs; a fireproof roof of cement or brick laid in cement over boards, then covered with a weather-proof roof; scuttle-doors, skylights, gutters, and dormers constructed of non-combustible materials; iron shutters on all rear windows and rolling or folding shutters on all front windows.[15]

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[14]Ibid., 196.

[15]Ibid., 204.

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Turning to interior fire protection, Wight articulated the goal of confining a fire within the smallest possible area.[16] Again he advocated the compartment system he had described in 1869. But most of his remarks delineated techniques of protecting the interior construction of a building with non-conducting and non-combustible materials; in particular, methods for applying fireproof ceilings to wooden floor joists: corrugated iron lath, wire lath, porous terra-cotta tile -- in all cases plastered; corrugated iron filled with plaster; tubulated plaster castings applied to wooden or iron joists.[17] Because it was equally essential to protect iron columns, Wight and his partner, William H. Drake, had devised a column that could be readily protected. Wight noted ways of stopping drafts that carried fire within a building via hoisting wells, light-holes, loft shafts, and stairway openings. Finally, he urged avoidance of superfluous interior woodwork.

Given the success of his topic, the next year, 1877, Wight again addressed the "fire question" at the AIA convention, this time looking at "first-class fireproof buildings" -- those that preserved the materials of construction, particularly iron, from the effects of fire -- while emphasizing fireproof floors and columns, giving more details than he had done previously.[18] He reiterated the recently established knowledge that incombustible

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[16]Ibid., 211.

[17]P.B. Wight, "Corrugated Iron Arches," *AABN* 1 (5 August 1876): 255. In this letter to the editor, Wight expressed the view that corrugated iron arches were fireproof only when filled over with concrete arches.

[18]P.B. Wight, "The Fire Question," *AABN* 3 (2 March 1878): 75-76. P.B. Wight, "The Fire Question," in *Proceedings of the Eleventh and Twelfth Annual Conventions of the American Institute of Architects . . . October 17, 1877 and November 13 and 14, 1878* (Boston: American Institute of Architects, 1879), appendix, 24-30. "The Convention of the Institute. Report of the Eleventh Annual Convention of the American Institute of

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buildings were not, in and of themselves, fireproof: "experience has demonstrated that such structures, though they will not *burn*, may still be *destroyed*."[19] Wight described three effective methods of fireproofing floors: (1) a flat arch of non-conducting and incombustible material sprung between the lower flanges of iron beams; (2) iron beams encased in Portland cement and iron rods laid over the beams encased in concrete, forming a reinforced concrete floor; and (3) iron beams encased with porous terra cotta, and segmental brick arches sprung from beam to beam, creating panels filled with terra cotta, the whole being plastered (a method used in the Mitchell Building (Edward Townsend Mix, 1877-78) in Milwaukee -- this building had been fireproofed by Wight). Girders, which were exposed on the sides as well as on the bottoms, needed to be similarly protected.

Cast-iron columns had come into widespread use for internal support; when exposed to the heat of a fire, such columns would expand, as much as one inch in twelve feet, then soften and bend because of the weight. To be fire-resistant, cast-iron columns had to be protected -- whether by Portland cement, or plaster within a double iron column, or by being combined with a non-conducting and incombustible material.

Even as he was advocating new methods, Wight continued to be aware of the artistic problem as he had been in 1869:

> If we cannot reconcile these new methods to our preconceived ideas of artistic propriety, it seems to me that in the present exigency we would be

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Architects, held at Boston, October 17, 18, and 19, 1877," *AABN* 2 (8 December 1877): 391-392.

[19]*AABN* 3 (2 March 1878): 75.

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> recreant to the evident demands of necessity, were we to sacrifice the former or attempt any compromise with the latter. . . The student of art has a new problem before him. The reconciliation must come when we know more than we now do.[20]

By the end of the 1870s Wight's expertise on fireproofing was being recognized by more professions than just architects. Addressing the New York State Association of Supervising and Adjusting Insurance Agents at its seventh annual meeting, he drew on the information he had presented to the AIA but sought to speak to the concerns of this particular audience. He urged architects and insurance agents to learn from each other: agents needed to understand building construction and how buildings could be made fireproof; architects needed to learn from insurance statistics what kinds of buildings were most resistant to the start and spread of fires. Wight told the insurers that it was in their self-interest for economic reasons to promote fireproof construction, and that if they did so, they would have the support of architects: "When you throw your influence and power into an effort to reform prevalent abuses in the art of building, and thereby prevent these extensive conflagrations, you will always find the architects on your side."[21]

In his talk, Wight described fireproof buildings as falling into two classes according to insurance classifications: the first included "buildings constructed of incombustible materials, thoroughly protected from the action of fire." The second

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[20]Ibid., 76.

[21]P.B. Wight, "On the Relation of Architecture to Underwriting," *AABN* 5 (31 May 1879): 170-173; (7 June 1879): 179-180; (14 June 1879): 189-190. This was also printed as a pamphlet: P.B. Wight, *The Relation of Architecture to Underwriting*, address to the New York State Association of Supervising and Adjusting Agents at the 7th annual meeting, Syracuse, New York, May 20, 1879 (New York: N.Y. Economical Printing Co., 1879). The significance of the talk is indicated by this dual publication.

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comprised "buildings constructed partially of combustible materials, also thoroughly protected from the action of fire."[22] He explicitly stated a general principle for fireproof construction: "the only building materials that will resist fire sufficiently . . . are those which are solid in their nature and at the same time porous. Porosity gives [the material its] the non-conducting property and toughness or resistance to fracture."[23] He asserted that the only materials that fell into this category were brick, terra-cotta tiles, and similar products made of fired clay. Presumably his advocacy of such reflected his own experiences in their use.[24]

Wight had largely ignored fireproof buildings of the second class when speaking to the AIA (in part, because he had an interest in encouraging architects to design buildings of incombustible materials), but, when speaking to the insurers, he recognized that for economic reasons, many more such buildings were likely to be constructed than those built completely of non-combustible materials.[25] That being the case, it was

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[22]Ibid., 171. The classification of buildings as first class, second class, etc. was made by fire insurance companies, based on construction methods and fireproof qualities and was not based on type or quality of business and occupants.

[23]Ibid., 179. Twentieth-century materials used for fireproofing, such as concrete, asbestos, and fiberglass have some of these same qualities.

[24]P.B. Wight, "Gauged Mortar and Iron. Boston, July 12, 1879," *AABN* 6 (19 July 1879): 23. In this letter to the editor, Wight responded to a letter from C.H. Waters, stating that gauged mortar does not corrode iron wires. He referred to Waters's Syracuse address, noting that his own comments pertained to sheet-metal used for lathing and not to wires, and he reiterated his recommendation for plastering over porous tile instead of lathing.

[25]In "Correspondence," *AABN* 3 (16 February 1878): 59, Wight had commented on the rebuilding of a new fireproof building in Chicago for the Singer Manufacturing Co. on the northeast corner of State and Washington. "In carrying out this scheme, the

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equally important that such buildings be fireproofed to prevent conflagrations in urban areas.[26]

In such buildings he recommended that all interior construction be of heavy wood, but that floors, ceilings, and roofs be protected in ways similar to those in first-class buildings by enclosing beams in plaster, porous concrete, or clay. In large buildings requiring interior columns and girders, Wight recommended heavy oak because it burned more slowly than many other kinds of wood. In buildings requiring heavy floor loads, he advocated oak in combination with cast iron (for columns) or wrought iron (for girders) with iron encased in the protective oak.[27] If such fireproofing techniques were properly carried out, then fire destruction would be limited to combustible finishing materials.[28]

Finally, as he had done on previous occasions, Wight reiterated the need to prevent the spread of fire within a building. If a fireproof building was planned with a series of compartments, then a fire could be confined to its place of origin. But elevator-

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architect in charge, Mr. James Van Dyke, who has come from New York for the purpose, has determined to avail himself of the results of recent investigation. . . . Iron beams, girders, and columns will be used throughout; but they with all other constructive ironwork will be fire-proofed by non-conducting materials. . . . Altogether ii is a strong argument in favor of the use of iron, which is now cheaper than ever before, and within the reach of many who could not have employed it a few years ago. The prospect of its extensive use in the future, coupled with the recent discovery of its weakness as a fire-resister, points with greater force than ever to the importance of adopting safe methods of constructing fire-resisting ceilings under the beams."

[26]Wight, "On the Relation of Architecture," 179.

[27]Wight had taken out Patent No. 154,852 on September 8, 1874, to encase iron columns in oak gores. See Landau, *PBW*, 45-46.

[28]Wight, "On the Relation of Architecture," 180.

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wells, light-holes, and stairways all could conduct fire through a building unless they could be closed off or covered. Wight cautioned, "unless due attention is given to closing all vertical openings, . . . the construction of fire-proof ceilings and floors will be of little avail, and will not be worth the necessary expenditure."[29]

Thus, during this ten-year period, Wight conveyed his knowledge of fireproof construction as it had advanced, detailing techniques of fireproofing floors, ceilings, and columns, all with the goal of minimizing or halting the spread of fire within a building.

Further Developments in Fireproofing as Described in Wight's Writings

Wight largely suspended his writing activities for several years, while he carried on his fireproofing business, seeking to refine and improve fireproofing materials and obtaining patents.[30] [Fig. 65] He learned much during those years, so that in 1885 Wight could write that fireproofing had assumed "the dignity of a science," based on the careful study of the intensity of heat in burning buildings.[31] By then (and over the next fifteen years) he was espousing the efficacy of terra-cotta and hollow-clay tiles over brick or any

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[29]Ibid., 190. The previous year, Wight had described an automatic hatchway closer system. [P.B. Wight], "Correspondence. Improvements in Fire-Protection. -- Automatic Hatchway-Closers. -- Fire and Smoke Escapes for Theatres. Chicago," *AABN* 3 (23 March 1878): 102-103. The following year, he offered advice on the disposition and arrangements of elevators so as to reduce fire hazards, and the different ways to deal with the fireproofing of open elevators and shaft elevators. [Peter B.]W[ight]., "Elevator Shafts," *AABN* 7 (7 February 1880): 44-45; (14 February 1880): 55.

[30]Landau, *PBW*, 46, 48, notes 96 and 97, describes Wight's patents. Assessing the career of Wight and his contemporary Chicago architects, Arthur Woltersdorf asserted, "As head of the Wight Fireproofing Company he did more in advancement of modern fireproof construction than any other man, perhaps." Arthur Woltersdorf, "The Father of the Skeleton Steel Frame Building," *WA* 33 (February 1924): 21.

[31]P.B. Wight, "Recent Fireproof Building in Chicago," *IA* 5 (April 1885): 52-53.

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other material that he previously had advocated as a fireproofing material. Moreover, Wight continued to support fireproofing as a matter of practicality; and with an increase in its reliability, he saw fireproofing not only as a science but as a matter of and for art. This duality -- fireproofing as both art and science -- paralleled architecture itself as an art and as a science. As had been the case early in his career, Wight continued to direct his remarks and writings largely to architects, both to inform them of advances in the field and to encourage them in the use of fireproofing, particularly for commercial buildings.

Wight was convinced that the United States had taken precedence over Europe in matters of construction in general ("The art of building was practically developed in the United States in the nineteenth century.")[32] and fireproofing in particular. Within the United States he saw the cities of the Midwest, particularly Chicago, as in the forefront of the fireproofing movement. In 1885, Wight noted that eighteen fireproof buildings were under construction in Chicago. He interpreted this as a message from Chicago capitalists who "saw the faults of old methods, and waited until they could see their way clear to erect really fireproof buildings. They would not build until they learned how to do it so that their property might withstand a general conflagration."[33] Wight detailed the characteristics of these buildings which made them fireproof. Most had brick and terra-cotta exteriors. All were built without brick partition walls; instead they had partitions of

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[32]Peter B. Wight, "The Evolution of Building Construction and Its Lessons," *FP* 5 (August 1904): 43.

[33]Wight, "Recent Fireproof Building," 52.

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hollow tiles. The floors were supported on iron columns and wrought-iron girders which were encased in terra cotta or fire clay and finished in plaster. The majority had rolled-iron floor and roof joists, while the others had wooden floor and roof joists. The I-beam floors had flat hollow-tile arches, and the wooden floor joists had suspended flat hollow-tile ceilings. In both cases, to insure fire resistance, not only was all constructive ironwork thoroughly protected, but the tile ceilings were continuous from wall to wall.[34]

Wight continued his report on the state of fireproofing in Chicago buildings in 1892,[35] emphasizing its advances in conjunction with the development of high buildings, particularly those using iron and steel construction. Given Chicago soil conditions, a building that could go up to sixteen stories, or 210 feet, with load bearing walls, could go up as high as thirty stories with iron columns in exterior walls and iron and steel rails, set in concrete, in the foundations. Of course, it was crucial that a high building be fireproof.[36] Wight cited the first example of an exterior wall of iron columns with fireproof treatment as the rear wall of the Phenix Insurance Building (Burnham & Root, 1885-86).[37]

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[34]Ibid., 53.

[35]P.B. Wight, "Recent Fireproof Building in Chicago," *IA* 19 (March 1892): 21-22; (April 1892): 32-34; (May 1892): 45-47; (June 1892): 57-58; (July 1892): 69-72.

[36]Ibid., 21.

[37]Ibid., 22. Wight spelled it "Phoenix." Donald Hoffmann, *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 55, 64, gives the correct spelling. Located at 111 Jackson Boulevard until its demolition in 1959, it was later the Western Union Building and then the Austin Building. Carl Condit, *The Architecture of the Chicago School* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 57. According to Condit, 23, note 11, the exterior walls employed concrete

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Wight noted that different kinds of columns were available for vertical support, but he thought that experience in the construction of tall buildings had shown that channel steel columns were best for exterior walls, while Phoenix columns, the type used in the Chicago Board of Trade (W.W. Boyington, 1882-85), provided the best independent interior support.[38]

Wight described three new kinds of fireproof floors, none of which used rolled-iron or wooden joists as an indication of technological advance from 1885; all were of steel, protected by fire-clay arches.[39] One kind incorporated flat hollow-tile arches which reduced floor weight while increasing a floor's strength. Wight noted several early examples of their use including two instances of his own work: the Montauk Block (Burnham & Root, 1881-82) in Chicago [Fig. 17] and the Mutual Life Insurance Co. Building (Charles W. Clinton, 1883-84) in New York.[40] [Fig. 66]

A second kind of flat arch using the "end-pressure" principle had come into use about 1890, which used porous terra-cotta blocks to form continuous ceilings and floors.

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blocks produced by the Frear Stone Manufacturing Co. Wight described the Phenix Building as "the first building in which a complete skeleton wall was built. . . . the rear wall, or about one hundred lineal feet of it, is a complete skeleton construction, with enameled brick on the outside, and a hollow tile wall on the inside. Each is supported on its own system of horizontal beams." Wight is quoted in a letter to D. Everett Waid printed as part of an article titled "Skeleton Construction," *BB* 4 (January 1895): 13.

[38]"Recent Fireproof Building (1892), 32. See also note 58 below. Condit, 123, note 5, states that the Phoenix column was invented in 1862 by Samuel Reeves of the Phoenix Iron Co., Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. It is made of rolled iron built up of four or eight flanged segments, bolted together through the longitudinal flanges.

[39]Ibid., 34.

[40]Ibid.

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When tested for strength in the Equitable Building (Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul, 1890-92) in Denver, this flat arch sustained very high floor loads, but Wight did not feel that the method was superior in fire tests. Because the end-pressure system was likely to be more expensive while no more effective for fireproofing than other methods, Wight did not see any particular need to use it.[41] The third kind of fireproof floor described by Wight employed hard burned hollow tiles in the construction of long-span segment arches, from ten to twenty feet. Concrete also could be used, but hollow tile had about half the weight.[42] Wight described the Commerce Building in Chicago with fireproofing by the Pioneer Fireproof Construction Co. as the first to use long span arches of this type.[43]

Repeating his earlier admonitions, Wight urged his fellow architects not to forget about fireproofing a building's roof: "The fireproof qualities of most of Chicago's buildings end at the ceilings of the upper story. But from that point downward they are the best in the world."[44]

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[41]Ibid., 46-47. He later changed his mind.

[42]Ibid., 57.

[43]The Commerce Building (Burnham & Root, 1885-86), located at 319 South LaSalle Street, was 50 feet wide and nine stories tall, and is discussed and illustrated in Hoffmann, 54-55, fig. 36, 37. Wight might also be referring to the Chamber of Commerce Building (Baumann & Huehl, 1888-89). Condit, 87-88, describes the construction methods of the Chamber of Commerce Building as a wrought-iron and steel skeleton on a steel-rail foundation set in concrete. Both Root and Baumann advocated hollow terra-cotta tile for fireproofing.

[44]"Recent Fireproof Building (1892)," 70.

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As he had so many times before, Wight concluded with the essentials of fireproof construction, now even more important in high buildings, prescribing not just techniques, but the material itself: (1) the material must be indestructible by fire; (2) it must be secured in place so it could not be dislodged or broken in a fire; and (3) it must be non-conducting to keep heat away from structural parts. And he repeated his opinions on clay as the most desirable material, advocating it in two forms: hard fire-clay tiles, which were effective only when hollow; and porous terra cotta which was non-conducting and could be used in solid blocks.[45]

Speaking the following year to the World's Congress of Architects, Wight reiterated in an even stronger fashion, some of his previous points:[46] (1) fire protection had become a scientific study; (2) fireproofing involved not only proper materials, but a proper understanding of building systems and planning to prevent the spread of fire; (3) it was absolutely necessary to use clay for fireproofing -- hollow fire-clay to protect interior construction, terra cotta for exterior adornment, with exterior walls of brick or steel construction enclosed with brick.[47] Presumably drawing on earlier experience, Wight now recommended certain kinds of fire-clay, all refractory, and all white or buff, not red

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[45]Ibid., 72.

[46]P.B. Wight, "Fireproof Construction and the Practice of American Architects," in *Proceedings of the Twenty-Seventh Annual Convention . . . Chicago, July 31 and August 1, 1893 and World's Congress of Architects* (Chicago: American Institute of Architects, 1893). His remarks were published under the same title in *AABN* 41 (19 August 1893): 113-115.

[47]Ibid., 114.

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or salmon-color. Equally important was the fastening of fireproof clay in ways that would resist fire.[48]

Even though Wight emphasized developments in the *science* of fireproofing, he expressed concern about its relation to the *art* of architecture, finding it fortuitous that fireproofing had "kept pace with the development of the higher -- that is, the artistic -- education of the profession." Thus, Wight felt it was in architects' self-interest to ensure that their buildings used the best fireproof methods:

> The art of architecture in America has been raised to such a high plane, that nothing should be omitted to make structures that are worthy to be seen for all time, sufficiently durable to last for all time. . . . It is fully as important that [the building] should resist fire as that its foundation should resist settlement, its piers refuse to be crushed or its floors to sag.[49]

Moreover, with advances in the manufacture of *ornamental* terra cotta, architects had a fireproof material for *exterior* use, making clients more willing to pay for an artistic building, while still securing their investments.[50]

Wight continued to make this point in his synopsis of developments in fireproofing for *Inland Architect* in 1900:

> The art of building at the present day has been brought up to such a high standard of excellence that no structure can be considered to be of the best class unless every improvement that scientific investigation and

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[48]Ibid., 115.

[49]Ibid., 113.

[50]Ibid., 114.

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> experiment have developed in the direction of protecting it from the destructive effects of fire has been embodied in its construction.[51]

Fireproofing Techniques

As I have shown, in his periodic assessments of the state of fireproofing in the United States, Wight described various techniques and materials and how they could be applied to a building's structural components. He also wrote articles with greater detail on these aspects of fireproofing, which not only provided information to his fellow architects but allowed him to advocate certain materials and techniques above others. (And it is in his role as an advocate that he made his most significant contribution.) A more detailed examination of these writings is in order and will focus, first, on structural components -- columns and floor and ceiling systems, and advances in their protection -- and, second, on materials -- terra-cotta tiles and concrete, the former being consistently advocated.

Structural Components: Columns

One of Wight's first concerns in fireproofing was for the proper protection of columns, "the most vulnerable feature of modern fire-proof buildings."[52] Writing in 1876, he stated that he "became convinced of the fallacy of using unprotected iron columns for the support of interior brick walls of buildings constructed of fire-proof materials, by the experiences of the old United States Custom House in the great Chicago

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[51]Peter B. Wight, "Development of the Fireproofing of Buildings," Supplement: Technical Review of the Interesting Development of the Building Arts *IA*: 34 (January 1900): 8.

[52]Peter B. Wight, "Fire-proofing Department. Details of Fireproof Construction with Burned Clay," *BB* 6 (August 1897): 175.

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fire."[53] His study of how best to protect iron columns from fire led him into the field of fireproof construction, establishing the Wight Fireproofing Co. [Fig. 38] with his partner William H. Drake. (See above, p. 231). In his 1876 piece Wight set forth his premises for fireproofing iron columns:

> 1st, that weak wooden posts were better in a fire than strong iron ones; 2d, that solid, or filled-in columns, beams, and lintels stood fire better than hollow ones; 3d, that the greatest amount of non-conducting material could be combined with the greatest amount of iron, to make a solid post, by giving the first the form of gores and the second the form of radiating webs; 4th, the importance of a *mechanical* method of uniting these materials so as to preserve the column against all the contingencies of a fire, such as the unequal expansion of its parts, sudden cooling by water, or injury from falling bodies or violence of any sort.[54]

Wight received a patent in 1874 for a fireproof column of iron with four or more flanges, covered with gores of oak.[55] [Fig. 67]

Of course, Wight was not alone in developing methods for fireproofing columns, and in 1897 he reviewed progress in that field,[56] beginning with an 1862 patent by Englishman William Stratford Hogg for protecting iron columns by building circular bricks around them and leaving an air space between. He explained why his own patent could not be used economically, but pointed out that a similar iron column, which substituted porous terra-cotta tiles for oak gores, was used as early as 1874 in the

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[53][P.B. Wight], "Fire-Proof Columns," *AABN* 1 (22 January 1876): 30-31.

[54]Ibid., 30.

[55]See note 27.

[56]Wight, "Details of Fire-proof Construction," 173-175. He had previously reviewed the development of columns in "Recent Fireproof Buildings (1892)," 72.

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Chicago Club (Treat & Foltz, 1876) on Monroe Street and the Milwaukee Board of Trade Building (Edward Townsend Mix (1877-78).[57] More technologically advanced columns of larger diameter, twelve or more inches, covered with terra-cotta sections two-and-a-half inches in thickness were used in the cast-iron store building (Mortimer L. Smith, 1879-80) built in Detroit for Dexter M. Ferry and leased to Newcomb, Endicott & Co., and a similar terra-cotta covering system was applied to Phoenix wrought-iron columns in 1884.[58] Wight particularly stressed that these methods were most reliable, regardless of the thickness of the terra-cotta covering blocks (he felt that a two-and-one-half-inch thickness was sufficient under any circumstance), when the blocks were mechanically fastened to the iron cores (as opposed to being mortared in place). He described a method of such mechanical fastening developed by his fireproofing company and used in at least thirty buildings constructed by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department between 1880 and 1890: the columns were covered with terra-cotta tiles with grooved edges, and iron hoops were dropped into the grooves

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[57]Ibid., 173. Wight had written in 1878 about the latter building: "All the iron columns throughout the interior are of the radiating web pattern and made fire-proof by Wight's process. The girders are enclosed with porous terra-cotta; and the spaces between the iron beams are filled by a system of brick arches and hollow tiles, which fully protects the beams, and affords a very light construction, said to be not exceeding 40 pounds per foot. This is the invention of Sanford Loring of the Chicago Terra-Cotta Works. . . . This is the first building in which it has been employed." [P.B. Wight], "Correspondence," *AABN* 3 (2 February 1878): 43.

[58]Wight used this system in both the Chicago Board of Trade Building (W.W. Boyington, 1882-85) and the Home Insurance Building (William L. Jenney, 1884-85). See Gerald R. Larson and Roula Mouroudellis Geraniotis, "Toward a Better Understanding of the Evolution of the Iron Skeleton Frame in Chicago," *JSAH* 46 (March 1987): 45-46.

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to hold the tiles to the columns; thus these fastenings were protected from heat and fire.[59] He advocated porous terra cotta as a covering for the columns because it was a non-conducting material and did not require a hollow space. But because "any fire-proofing material was liable to be forced away from the column by its own *lateral expansion in the direction of the length of the column*, . . . it must be fastened directly to the column by mechanical means, countersunk for their own protection."[60]

No matter how effectively the columns were fireproofed, that alone was insufficient for a fireproof building. Wight wrote ruefully of the destruction of the Grannis Block (Burnham & Root, 1880-81). The terra-cotta covering of the fireproof columns survived intact, but that did not save the building: "Columns that had fallen down in the ruins were taken out with their fire-proofing attached."[61]

Structural Components: Floor and Ceiling Systems

Fireproof floor and ceiling systems were perhaps even more important than fireproof columns in the creation of a fireproof building. Wight wrote an extensive synopsis of the history and development of fireproof floor construction in 1897 for *Brickbuilder*.[62] Beginning with an account of experiments in the 1850s, he related the development of such systems with the need to protect iron floor beams, particularly I-

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[59]Ibid., 175.

[60]Ibid., 175.

[61]Ibid., 174. The fire occurred on February 19, 1885. See also Hoffmann, 24.

[62]Peter B. Wight, "Origin and History of Hollow Tile Fire-Proof Floor Construction," *BB* 6 (March 1897): 53-55; (April 1897): 73-75; (May 1897): 98-99; (July 1897): 149-150.

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beams which also were developed during this period. This synopsis detailing gradual, incremental change and progress towards a better, more perfect result shows Wight's evolutionary approach. Wight amply described the floor and ceiling systems his firm had developed; by putting them in the context of other systems, he aimed to show their superiority.[63]

Wight began with Frederick A. Petersen's 1855 patent for the floor system employed in the Cooper Union Building (which Wight called the Cooper Institute): hollow burned clay tiles set between some of the first I-beams rolled in the United States (by the Trenton Iron Works, 1854) with the bottoms of the beams covered with cement flush with the tiles. Joseph Bunnett of England took out a patent in 1858 for wide segmental arches of hollow tiles between wall plates of angle iron connected by iron tie rods. This patent had the earliest claim for using independent voussoirs for hollow-tile arches and was the first for pressing the tiles through dies by machinery. In 1866 Maurice Abord, a Frenchman, took out an English patent for a solid tile arch in one span with an arched top and a flat bottom for use between wooden floor joists, and that same year he took out a United States patent for brick arches set between I-beams. But Vincent Garçin's patent of the following year for flat hollow-tile arches in voussoirs was described by Wight as the first "practicable flat hollow-tile arch . . . [of the kind] now so

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[63]It must be remembered that Wight apparently ceased his business as a fireproofing contractor because he was undercut by others espousing cheaper, and in his mind, less reliable, fireproofing methods. Moreover, he sustained at least one lawsuit for patent infringement, alluded to here. Ibid., 98. See also Landau, *PBW*, 47-48.

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extensively used in this country."[64] The Roux Frères flat hollow-tile floor and ceiling arch, patented in 1868, was an improvement on the Garçin arch with alternate notches and ledges at the upper corners of the tiles and the soffits of the voussoirs below the bottoms of the I-beams. Wight related that the flat hollow-tile arch form, patented by George H. Johnson and Balthasar Kreischer in 1871 [Fig. 68], was used in the floors of the New York Post Office (Alfred B. Mullett, 1869-75), the Kendall Building (John M. Van Osdel, 1872-73) in Chicago, and the Singer Building (1876) in St. Louis. At the urging of Richard Morris Hunt, the Fire-Proof Building Co. of New York, headed by Leonard H. Beckwith, employed flat hollow floor arches based on French methods in the Tribune Building (1873-75) [Fig. 69] and the Coal and Iron Exchange (1873-76), both designed by Hunt.[65]

In 1882 Wight had employed hollow-tile floor arches of fire clay, set between I-beams, in the Montauk Building (Burnham & Root, 1881-82) in Chicago. [Fig. 17] Weighing only twenty-five pounds per superficial foot (a nineteenth-century term for the measured area of a surface, as opposed to a linear dimension, e.g. square feet), these arches allowed a significantly higher building than would otherwise have been possible, while the terra-cotta floor system was thoroughly fireproof.

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[64]Ibid., 55.

[65]See Sarah Bradford Landau, "Richard Morris Hunt: Architectural Innovator and Father of a 'Distinctive' American School," in *The Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt*, ed. Susan R. Stein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 54-60.

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Porous terra cotta for flat beam arches was first employed in the roof of the south wing of the United States Patent Office (Cluse & Schulze, 1885) in Washington, and the work was carried out by Henry Maurer of New York.[66]

Writing for *Brickbuilder* in 1896, Wight had detailed how several buildings constructed with flat hollow-tile floor arches had successfully survived severe fires.[67] He cited the Home Insurance Building (William L. Jenney, 1884-85) [Fig. 70], the Auditorium Building (Adler & Sullivan, 1887-89), the Ellsworth Office Building (J.M. Van Osdel, 1892) on Dearborn Street, and the Schiller Building (Adler & Sullivan, 1891-92), all in Chicago.

Wight was particularly proud of his 1883 patent for soffit tiles to cover beams, which he described as "a feature which made the flat arch a complete fulfilment of the demand for a continuous fire-proof ceiling and protection for the iron beams as well as support for the floor, independent of any construction over the beams."[68] He first had employed these tiles in the Mutual Life Insurance Co. Building (Charles W. Clinton, 1884-85) on Nassau Street in New York.[69] [Fig. 66] (See p. 234.)

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[66]Wight, "Origin and History," 75. He misstates the architects' names as Chiss & Schultz. Landau, *PBW*, 48, ascribes the fireproofing to Wight. He states, "On my suggestion, the architects decided to use only porous terra cotta. The contract for the roof fell to Henry Maurer of New York."

[67]Peter B. Wight, "Fire-proofing Department. Some Experiences in Modern Fire-Proofing Material in Actual Tests," *BB* 5 (November 1896): 211-212; (December 1896): 230-232.

[68]Wight, "Origin and History," 98.

[69]The holder of the Johnson & Kreischer patent challenged this use, but was only partially sustained as such tiles had never been actually used in floor construction prior to

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In "Origins and History" (1897), Wight explained some of the differences between side-pressure and end-pressure arches as used in floor construction -- a subject of debate and experiment at the time -- and the merits of each type. Both types employed hollow terra-cotta tiles. First to be developed were side-pressure arches in which the channels in the tiles ran parallel with the floor beams. Wight thought that such arches were easier to construct with less chance of weakness from inferior workmanship or defective tiles, and had the advantage of "greater distribution of any concentrated load over a greater surface."[70] End-pressure arches, in which the channels ran perpendicular to the floor beams and in the direction of the arch, began to be more widely used in the 1890s, although Leonard F. Beckwith had received a patent for a two-part end-pressure arch in 1879. End-pressure arches appeared to be somewhat stronger under severe fire conditions, and weighed less than equivalent side-pressure arches. Wight was to return to this subject later in some of his articles dealing specifically with clay as a fireproof material (see below).

Several years later Wight described (but did not judge the efficacy of) a method of fireproof floor construction, developed by E.V. Johnson of the Pioneer Fireproofing Co., which, for reasons of economy, sought to do away with I-beams.[71] Instead Johnson's method relied on steel girders, retaining only small I-beam struts to maintain the rigidity

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the Mutual Life Building. Ibid., 98.

[70]Wight, "Origin and History," 150.

[71]Peter B. Wight, "Fire-proofing. The Johnson System of Floor Construction," *BB* 11 (October 1902): 214-217.

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of the steel skeleton. Rather than using flat arches, Johnson's floor system encased terra-cotta tiles in Portland cement, reinforced with tension members of steel placed beneath the tiles and embedded in concrete, the whole forming a monolithic plate. Johnson first used the system in 1898 at the H.B. Camp Factory in Greenstown, Ohio,[72] and it was sufficiently successful to be used in the roof of the United States Government Building (James Knox Taylor, 1900) in Chicago.

In his review of structural components, Wight did not neglect the importance of fireproof ceilings. Rather than describing their development and construction in any great detail (the potential for variations being less than that for floors), he related the experiences of buildings that had sustained major fires and the impact of fireproof ceilings thereon, thus emphasizing their importance.[73] Porous terra-cotta ceiling tiles helped the Wilshire Building (John H. Edelmann, 1882) in Cleveland and the Revell Building (Adler & Sullivan, 1881-83) [Fig. 71] built for Martin Ryerson and located at the northeast corner of Wabash and Adams in Chicago, sustain major fires, although both, housing retail stores, contained large quantities of combustible materials. A fire was contained within a wallpaper warehouse (Adler & Sullivan, 1884) built for Martin Ryerson on Randolph Street opposite the Central Music Hall, because it had ceiling tiles of hard fire clay. While the fire caused the plaster to fall from the ceiling, none of the

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[72]The H.B. Camp Company manufactured hollow burned-clay products. See note 128 below.

[73]Wight, "Some Experiences."

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tiles cracked, none of the fastenings were loosened, and the tiles of the first story ceiling held the water used to extinguish the fire until it was released by cutting a few holes.

> The lesson to be learned from this experience is that fireproof ceilings are only reliable when they form a perfect surface from wall to wall. When this is accomplished they may stand as severe fire tests as any other systems on the surface. But the possibility of their being tampered with or broken by accident is an argument in favor of complete incombustible as well as fire-resisting construction.[74]

By contrast he reserved great criticism for the ceiling system of the Manhattan Savings Institution building (Stephen D. Hatch, 1889-91) at the northeast corner of Broadway and Bleecker, the upper stories of which were destroyed by fire in 1895. The ceiling tiles, although fireproof, supported nothing and were plastered on the underside, with the plastering continuing under the T-irons that held the ceiling tiles and the I-beams. The plastering, not the tiles, was the only protection for the iron members, and the interior iron columns and girders were equally unprotected. "It is clear to anyone that it was a break-neck race between the girders, the beams, or the light T-irons to see which would go down first. In this contest the tiles, which were undoubtedly fire resisting in themselves, had nothing to do but tumble down when their time came."[75]

Fireproofing Materials: Terra-Cotta Tiles

By 1893 when Wight spoke to the World's Congress of Architects, he was firmly convinced that burned clay products, particularly hollow terra-cotta tiles, were the best fireproofing materials. In various articles published over the next fifteen years, he

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[74]Ibid., 230.

[75]Ibid., 232.

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consistently advocated burned clay, contrasting its effectiveness with the deficiencies of concrete. The terminology of Wight and his contemporaries for burned clay products was often very loose. While "burned clay" was a generic term, it was generally used synonymously with "terra cotta." "Tiles" and "blocks" were often referred to interchangeably, and were sometimes described as "hollow brick."[76]

Writing for *Brickbuilder* in 1896, Wight asked the question: What constitutes a fireproof building material? He answered,

> It is something which is not only incombustible, but not subject to become useless for the purpose for which it is intended, under the conditions to which it may be subjected. There are a considerable number of materials that fulfil the first condition, but few which comply with the last. . . . Of all known materials of such reasonable cost as to make it practicable to use them, *clay* (my italics) is the only one that will stand [the] ordeal [of severe fire and sudden cooling without losing its integrity]. It is the only material which can be so used that is itself the product of fire.[77]

This was not a new position on Wight's part,[78] but by 1896 far more had been learned about the material. He compared hard and porous terra-cotta tiles, and found both to be effective for fireproofing if the clay used was of good refractory quality. He concluded that hollow clay block was the only basis for "a true fire-proofing system."

He echoed this opinion the following year in his discussions of fireproof floor and ceiling construction: "I believe that clay hollow-tile floor arches have come to stay for a

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[76]One source for contemporary definitions is Russell Sturgis, ed., *Dictionary of Architecture and Building* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1901), 3 vols.

[77]Peter B. Wight, "Fire-proofing Department. What Constitutes a Fire-Proof Building Material?," *BB* 5 (September 1896): 169-170.

[78]See Wight, "Recent Fireproof Building in Chicago (1885)," 53.

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long time yet, and that good burned clay will always be the best fire-proof building material."[79] And "it has been demonstrated that ceilings of fire-clay tile, and only of tile, will endure tests that no other material will stand, even hollow tile itself"; hollow tile, if properly installed, will demonstrate its worth as "a material absolutely indestructible by fire and water."[80]

When he spoke before the Engineers' Society of Western Pennsylvania in 1902, Wight emphasized the role of hollow clay tile in the development of the high building, citing his experiences with the Montauk Building and stating that "the hollow building tile made of refractory clay is the material which has actually developed the high office building as we find it to-day, and I think it will always hold the most important place in such constructions."[81] Hollow tile provided the necessary and lightweight protection for the iron or steel skeleton which allowed the building to rise to ever greater heights. Wight also took the occasion to praise the effectiveness of a newer product, semi-porous hollow terra-cotta tile, which avoided the softness of porous terra-cotta tile and the brittleness of hard terra-cotta tile.[82]

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[79]Wight, "Origin and History," (July 1897): 150.

[80]Peter B. Wight, "Fire-proofing Department. The Present Condition of the Art of Fire-proofing," *BB* 6 (November 1897): 251, 252.

[81]Peter B. Wight, "The Fire-Proofing of High Office Buildings," *BB* 11 (July 1902): 146. Wight's talk was also published under the same title in *FP* 1 (July 1902): 44-47.

[82]Ibid., 147.

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"The Use of Burned Clay Products in the Fireproofing of Buildings in the United States of America," a paper read by Wight at the Seventh International Congress of Architects in London in July 1906, was an excellent and widely disseminated synopsis of the development of burned clay and its use in fireproofing systems.[83] Wight repeated much that he had written in the previous ten years, but he also detailed the most recent advances in the field. By this time fireproofing tiles were being fabricated in vertical steam presses of the type originally invented for making sewer pipe, which by reducing costs made their use "practicable and economical for building purposes."[84] Hard hollow tiles had fallen out of favor because of "their brittleness and liability to expansion on exposed sides, the built-in parts being subject to less expansion in a fire." Instead, porous terra-cotta tiles and semi-porous terra-cotta tiles were preferred.[85] Wight explained that terra-cotta tile could be used in two ways in fireproof buildings: (1) for construction, as in floors, roofs, and partitions, in which case it must "sustain strains and at the same time

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[83]Peter B. Wight, "The Use of Burned Clay Products in the Fireproofing of Buildings in the United States of America," *FP* 9 (August 1906): 94-96; (September 1906): 123-133; (October 1906): 160-169. This was published under the same title in *AABN* 90 (1 Sept. 1906): 67-69, (8 Sept. 1906): 75-78, (15 Sept. 1906): 84-86. Wight presented the same lecture to the Technical Society of Kansas City (Dec. 5, 1906), the Chicago Architects' Business Association (Jan. 1907), and the Engineers Club of Cincinnati (March 21, 1907). See John Zukowsky, "The Wight Collection: Provenance and Checklists," in Landau, *PBW*, 84. The popularity of this paper indicates the keen interest of the building professions in the topic.

[84]"Use of Burned Clay," *FP* 9, 95.

[85]Ibid., 123.

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resist heat for its own protection"; and (2) as a nonconducting material to protect the steel members of a building.[86]

He detailed some of the recent advances in floor construction, illustrating in particular the Johnson system, the Bevier system, and the Kahn system, all patented. All three systems used tiles in conjunction with steel tension fabric or members, and concrete combined with the tiles to resist pressure. In all three cases the result was a very strong fireproof floor. Wight noted that the principles of construction were the same as those used in the reinforced concrete floors of Monnier and Hennebique, recently introduced into the United States, but that the tile floors weighed at least thirty percent less than reinforced concrete floors of equal strength.[87]

Wight concluded with an exhortation in favor of burned clay, although he did not claim for it

> absolute perfection. Like all the other efforts of mankind, it is still in evolutionary development. It is an art which is not practiced with equal conscientiousness [sic] by all. The material of which I speak has too often been used as a sham and pretense to mislead the victims of the greedy imposter into a sense of security for which there is no reason. More than one burned building has proved this. But more than a hundred others have been saved from fires in their early stages that would have been wholly destructive in buildings of the ordinary class.[88]

Why was Wight such a strong advocate of terra-cotta tile and similar products as a fireproofing material? Because clay was abundant and widely available, it was

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[86]Ibid.

[87]Ibid., 126.

[88]Ibid., 167.

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relatively inexpensive to use.[89] Moreover, although he regularly cautioned that terra-cotta tile and other clay products had to be properly installed to insure their fireproofing qualities, the material itself was inherently sound. Thus from Wight's viewpoint, it was the most logical and scientific material to use for fireproofing and the one best able to foster the art of architecture. By contrast, concrete was, in the eyes of Wight and many of his fellow architects, much less reliable as a material for construction and fireproofing, and Wight's writings on the subject emphasized that unreliability.

Fireproofing Materials: Concrete

In his *Dictionary*,[90] Russell Sturgis defined concrete as "a building material made by mixing small fragments of hard material with mortar, so as to form a kind of artificial stone." W.R. Hutton, in adding to the entry, commented that the composition of the mortar varied with the purpose of the work, and he recommended what proportions of sand, cement, and broken stone and gravel should be used to make the mortar under various circumstances. Hutton also wrote the definitions of cement for the *Dictionary*,[91] explaining the differences among Rosendale cement, Roman cement, and Portland cement, the three most commonly used types. While all three forms of cement used crushed limestone which was burned until calcined, Portland cements, in particular, were mixed with clay, which gave them much better fireproof qualities.

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[89]Ibid., 94.

[90]*Dictionary of Architecture*, s.v. "Concrete," by R[ussell]. S[turgis].

[91]Ibid., s.v. "Cement," by W.R. Hutton.

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The uncertainties and potential for error in the composition of concrete were major factors in Wight's criticism of the material, as seen in his remarks to the Engineers' Society of Western Pennsylvania:

> The fact that extraordinary strength has been developed in constructions in which various combinations of Portland cement, sand and steel have entered, has made them very attractive to gentlemen of your profession. I admit the strength and the ability to prevent fire from passing from one story to another within a given time, and to one who seeks only for these results they are satisfactory. But house building has many ramifications. The conditions under which houses are built are various. Among the most important of these are *time* and *climate*. Another one is permanence. . . . Time may show that the high grades of cement made at the present day come next to [burnt clay], but we cannot wait for the outcome. Finely divided steel, with which it is combined, is a very delicate material, and scientists all over the world are discussing the question "What is the best material to paint steel with?" -- even where it is used in heavy members of construction. . . . For as the steel must be protected from fire and every inch of it covered, it is certain that when protected from one element it will be found to be pretty well clothed against the storms that try to beat against it and the insidious dampness that steam heat expels.
>
> I have said that the architect will always be a believer in *the brick* and its substitutes, and his affection will always cling to his brother, the mason, even though houses may be built without heavy walls. With these materials and his skillful assistants he does not fear the terrible enemy to cement, Jack Frost, and he can get his work done fast enough to suit his client.[92]

In his role as the editor of *Fireproof Magazine* (between 1904 and 1907) and in his column "Notes by an Expert," Wight discussed problems with concrete as a fireproofing material. He was particularly concerned with the misuse of cement in the making of bad concrete.

> It is this constant effort [on the part of the average contractor] to use not only low grade diluents [diluting agents] such as cinders, and cement that

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[92]Wight, "Fire-Proofing of High Office Buildings," 148.

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> had probably been condemned for sidewalk and engineering works, that convinces architects that there is *great risk* in using concrete, especially when subject to transverse strains (a condition which engineers do not allow in their work), and variations of weather, or the manipulations of unskilled workmen.

On the other hand, "good concrete is the most valuable handmaid of the civil engineer,"[93] for the construction of bridges, dams, and the like -- structures which did not require fireproofing. Thus we need the contrast of engineering with architecture.

He cited the role of *Fireproof* had played in educating its readers about concrete as a material for fireproofing:

> The use of concrete for interior construction had resulted in so many failures, due mainly to ignorance and incapacity on the part of those using them, that we have published only such information concerning the use of this material as is calculated to lead to its fabrication on lines of greater safety and endurance. The several papers that have been reprinted are by experts who are thoroughly informed and disinterested observers. In every case that new building ordinances have been passed or urged for passage we have published all the requirements for reinforced concrete equally with those for other fireproof materials. The fallacy of using partly consumed cinders in any concrete intended to resist fire or compressive strains has been so fully demonstrated in these pages that the result is already in evidence in the few instances in which it is used in buildings of importance or called for in architects' specifications. It is mainly heard of in the contractor's alternate *cheap bid*, which unfortunately sometimes "catches on" with the parsimonious owner, who is satisfied to have his building fireproof in name only. The articles on concrete . . . that have appeared in these pages for a year and a half past would make an excellent text-book for all who contemplate using concrete construction in fireproof buildings.[94]

In his editorial capacity, Wight sought to educate his readers further on the fireproof qualities of concrete (or lack thereof) by reporting on the results of fire tests

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[93][Peter B. Wight], "Notes by an Expert," *FP* 3 (September 1903): 15-16.

[94][Peter B. Wight], "1906 [Editorial]," *FP* 8 (January 1906): 4.

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made by Professor Ira H. Woolson at the testing station of Columbia University in New York, characterizing them as the "first authoritative and unprejudiced test of the fire-resisting quality of hard concrete."[95] Wight noted that Woolson himself (not a self-interested contractor working for Woolson) had prepared his own samples, which were heated to 1800 degrees F. on all sides and allowed to cool in the air before weight tests were made to crush the concrete blocks. In Wight's opinion these conditions were similar to those a concrete column would sustain in an actual fire. What was the result? "While it is admitted that concrete is one of the best non-conductors of heat, we think it has been demonstrated that it is subject to slow disintegration on the exterior, going deeper and deeper while the exposure continues, and all the while losing its strength in proportion as this proceeds."[96]

Wight also reported on fire tests made by the British Fire Protection Committee, which appeared in the form of reports known as "Red Books."[97] Wight characterized these fire tests as being "made with such accuracy and fairness that they are worthy of being accepted as demonstrations of fact on both sides of the Atlantic."[98] Materials and systems of construction had to be presented for testing under one of three classifications:

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[95][Peter B. Wight], "Lessons from Professor Woolson's Tests [Editorial]," *FP* 8 (April 1906): 123.

[96]Ibid., 124.

[97][Peter B. Wight], "Some Fire Tests by the British Fire Prevention Committee, showing the Necessity for High-Grade Concrete in Fireproof Construction [Editorial]," *FP* 9 (September 1906): 99-102.

[98]Ibid., 99.

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full protection, partial protection, or temporary protection. Items tested under "full protection" were subjected to heat of at least 1800 degrees F. (not to exceed 2200 degrees F.) for four hours, followed by the application of water for five minutes. Tests were made of two partially reinforced concrete floor systems, one on August 17, 1905, the other on February 24, 1906. While the construction methods of the floors were virtually identical, the floor in the earlier test failed miserably, while that in the second test sustained almost no damage. The difference was the composition of the concrete, the first containing a large amount of gravel, the second containing slag and crushed coke. To Wight this further demonstrated the need for careful specifications for concrete manufacture to insure its adequacy for use in fireproof construction. And until manufacturers and contractors were willing to adhere to such specifications, Wight was unwilling to advocate concrete as a fireproofing material.

The Role of the Individual Innovator

Advances in fireproof construction often had been made by individual innovators. As an advocate of fireproof construction, Wight regularly referred to his own role in its development. He also addressed worthy contributions to the field which had been made by other individuals, most notably Edward Atkinson and Rafael Guastavino.

Atkinson was a businessman, not a technical innovator, but Wight explained how Atkinson had come to his role as an advocate of fireproof construction, first as a stockholder and officer of a textile mill, and then, from 1877 on, as president of the Boston Manufacturers' Mutual Fire Insurance Company.[99] In this latter role Atkinson

[99]Peter B. Wight, "The Late Edward Atkinson," *FP* 8 (January 1906): 11-15.

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sought to develop an applied science for preventing loss of property by fire and water (a particular hazard in the textile mill industry), "which he always spoke of as a national calamity and a great obstacle to industrial progress in the United States."[100] After enforcing the regulations of his own company for textile mill construction (the so-called "slow-burning" system, because it was intended to slow a local fire in a combustible building until the fire could be extinguished by existing fire-fighting equipment or automatic sprinklers), Atkinson persuaded other mutual companies to adopt them.[101] However, architects of other building types, such as wholesale stores, took up "slow-burning" mill construction using heavy timber floors with planed and exposed woodwork, and adding open stairways and elevator shafts, resulting in conditions which were conducive to the spread of fire. [Fig. 72]

In 1905, shortly before his death, Atkinson sought to educate the public and architects on the misuse of "slow-burning" construction, publishing a pamphlet and an article in *Fireproof* (March 1905).[102]

> He never claimed that [slow-burning construction] was in any sense fireproof or any approach to fireproofing, any more than he considered the mills fireproof. He believed in fireproof construction whenever economic conditions made it possible, and that fire prevention was more possible in

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[100]Ibid., 12.

[101]See also *Dictionary of Architecture*, s.v. "Slow-Burning Construction," by Edward Atkinson, and Edward Atkinson, "Prevention of Loss by Fire in the United States of America," *AABN* 81 (8 August 1903): 43-46.

[102]*Slow-Burning Construction - What It Is and What It Is Not.* In that issue Wight felt the need to comment, "a building is either fireproof or it is not. Some buildings may burn slower than others, but all such are combustible." [Peter B. Wight], "Mr. Atkinson's Last Words on Slow Burning Construction [Editorial]," *FP* 6 (March 1905): 126.

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> a fireproof than in a "slow-burning" building. But he did not fail to criticize many of the so-called fireproof buildings which he had seen erected without precautions against the spread of fire in their contents, and in which doubtful methods of construction were used.
>
> The importance of fire prevention, in whatever way it may be accomplished, has been the shibboleth which he has proclaimed for many years past from one end of the land to the other. No one else has done it so forcibly as he has. He always had an attentive audience. The public has been impressed with it. It is beginning to believe that fire prevention is a reform that is essential to national development and progress along industrial lines. Mr. Atkinson was its most conspicuous prophet.[103]

If Atkinson was commendable as an advocate of fire prevention, Guastavino was of particular interest and fascination to Wight because of his experiments and inventions in cohesive construction, which was, among other things, a system of burned-clay fireproofing.[104] Wight was the first to write extensively about the work of Guastavino in the United States in a series of articles for *Brickbuilder* in 1901.[105]

Wight praised Guastavino's system for its great contribution to the art of architecture:

> He has through extraordinary perseverance, not only merited the confidence which many of the leaders of architectural thought have placed in him, but made possible the development of architectural design in

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[103]Wight, "Late Edward Atkinson," 14, 15.

[104]Wight, "The Use of Burned Clay Products," 163.

[105]Peter B. Wight, "The Works of Rafael Guastavino," *BB* 10 (April 1901): 79-81 ("As Architect"); (May 1901): 100-102 ("What is Cohesive Construction?"); (September 1901): 184-188 ("The Practice of Architecture and Cohesive Construction in America"); (October 1901): 211-214 ("The Practice of Architecture"). Landau, *PBW*, 50, credits Wight's articles as "the basis for modern studies of Guastavino's unique vaulting and his architecture," citing in turn, George R. Collins, "The Transfer of Thin Masonry Vaulting from Spain to America," *JSAH* 27 (October 1968): 176-201, and her own "The Row Houses of New York's Upper West Side," *JSAH* 34 (March 1975): 24-25.

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> directions heretofore considered impracticable. While this has made possible many projects in design which were heretofore thought to be difficult and almost prohibitively expensive in execution, and carried them out with a simplicity of construction by many considered daring if not impossible, it may be said that we have as yet but reached the beginning of the possibilities of original designs, for the execution of which we may intend to employ "Cohesive Construction." This is the name which Mr. Guastavino has applied to the system of which he is the father and main exemplar. After these nineteen years of untiring effort, the architects of America owe him a debt of gratitude for not only having been a faithful and conscientious contractor, but for having made possible a larger field for architectural design.[106]

Wight presented a synopsis of Guastavino's career in Spain, as an architect and a builder, and described his experiments with Portland cement, concrete, and tile to produce cohesive construction, which made fireproof the buildings in which it was used. Based on a paper given by Guastavino at the World's Congress of Architects at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, Wight gave a definition of cohesive construction to include all structures in which several materials were combined to produce a monolithic material.[107] Hard-burned flat clay tiles formed the principal part of the mass, and cementing materials, Portland cement mortar and plaster, formed the smaller part of the mass. Tiles, set to form self-supporting arches, gave decreased weight and increased strength in proportion to each unit of weight, which made the system superior for floor, roof, and dome construction.

Once Guastavino immigrated to the United States in 1881, he sought to interest architects in his system, with very limited success, and also practiced architecture

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[106]Ibid., 79.

[107]Ibid., 100.

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himself, using his arch system for several projects. But by the 1890s he was established as a building contractor and his cohesive construction was used in the work of "our most eminent architects,"[108] such as McKim, Mead & White and Heins & La Farge. Wight was particularly impressed with his domes over large areas, noting, for example, the dome and stairway in St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, New York (William Schickel & Co., 1892) [Fig. 73], which appeared to be "'daring', only because at first we do not understand them. If we study awhile we will see that there is nothing daring in this work. He who made it certainly did not think it was, else he would have left it undone. The very life and soul of architecture is seen in the construction before us."[109]

Not only was the construction impressive, it was also fireproof. Wight had described its fireproof qualities in an article for *Construction News* in 1899, partially reprinted in *Fireproof* in 1902.[110] The Guastavino arches had successfully withstood extreme fire tests, and when the tiling was of refractory clay and set properly, it protected the steel frame from fire; "hence this is nearly perfect fireproof construction."

Effects of Fires and Impact of Fireproofing

One important tactic used by Wight to promote fireproofing from the late 1890s into the early years of the twentieth century, was to report on the effects of major fires and the need for fireproofing. In this manner he demonstrated both the effectiveness of good fireproofing systems and materials and the failures of poor ones.

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[108]Ibid., 186.

[109]Ibid., 188.

[110]Peter [B.] Wight, "The Guastivino (sic) Arch," *FP* 1 (August 1902): 37.

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A very severe fire in Pittsburgh, on May 2-3, 1897, gave Wight the opportunity to examine firsthand its effects on several buildings which had been constructed with fireproof materials and methods and to explain its lessons.[111] The fire had started in the non-fireproof Jenkins Building, a large wholesale grocery warehouse, which had open lofts, ten elevators, and was filled with combustible goods. Then the fire spread across a twenty-foot wide alley and a sixty-foot wide street, destroying some buildings and damaging others including three constructed with fireproof methods. What was to be learned? First, fireproof buildings which were "competent to protect themselves, on account of the incombustible nature of their materials" from fire within, might be exposed "in certain localities to tests of a severity never before anticipated."[112] Second, even though damaged, the fireproof buildings were clustered in a group that formed an effective barrier to the spread of fire in the direction of the main business center of Pittsburgh.[113]

The first described fireproof building, the James L. Horne & Co. Department Store (W.S. Frazer, 1892) was "of steel construction throughout," and was "the first building of that kind ever tested by an actual fire which permeated every part of its interior. . . . The value of burned clay in protecting steel construction, however defectively used, has been fully demonstrated in what all admit to be a crucial test."[114]

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[111]Peter B. Wight, "The Recent Fire at Pittsburgh," *BB* 6 (June 1897): 117-123.

[112]Ibid., 117.

[113]Ibid., 120.

[114]Ibid., 120.

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The fire which came through the windows forming about sixty percent of the front, moved upward through a central light court. The steel frame was protected by hard hollow tiles, manufactured and installed by the Empire Fire-proofing Co. of Pittsburgh, and the floor was constructed of hollow side-pressure arches. While the tiles cracked and fell in certain places due to uneven expansion, they did not lose their strength or consistency.[115]

The adjacent fireproof Horne Store and Office Building (W.S. Frazer, 1893) also caught fire through its front windows; the fire spread through the light shaft that formed a flue, although tile partitions between the stores, around the stairway, and between the offices kept the fire from some of the rear rooms. While the exterior walls were brick without any steel, the interior was steel and hollow tile of semi-porous red clay, made and set by the Pittsburgh Terra-Cotta Lumber Co. The floor construction employed end-pressure flat arches, and "this is the first actual fire in which they have ever been tested. . . . To the honor of this material be it said that I could not find any arch displaced or the bottom of any tile broken off. . . . The value of semi-porous tiles was completely demonstrated in this fire."[116]

Wight contrasted the value of hollow terra-cotta tile in protecting structural integrity in these two buildings with the Methodist Episcopal Building (Charles Bickel, 1891), the third fireproof building, in this case constructed with exceptionally heavy brick walls and steel floors and roof. The fireproofing materials were concrete and

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[115]Ibid., 122.

[116]Ibid., 123.

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plaster, which failed when exposed to fire and water, causing the floor and ceiling beams to sag.

Three years later the Horne Department Store, which had been rebuilt on the exterior to a design by Peabody & Stearns of Boston with improved fireproofing by the Pittsburgh Terra-Cotta Lumber Co., experienced another fire.[117] To Wight's surprise, some of the old hard clay terra-cotta tile was reused, and new hard tile was installed, although he thought that the semi-porous terra cotta used in the Horne office building was a superior product. Moreover, certain structural elements, particularly at the roof, were partially exposed; others were protected only with plaster. As a result of the fire the plastering fell off at the fourth floor, although the columns and girders were intact; the covering of the vertical columns and the hollow-tile floor arches cracked on the fifth floor although the girders were unscathed; and the rear halves of the roof and ceiling were lost as the plaster fell from the expanded metal. Wight was quick to explain that the value of the fireproofing was not diminished despite the damage caused by the fire:

> It will, of course, be asked, What are the lessons of this second fire test? . . That the hollow tile everywhere protected the steel skeleton is evident. That it did not save itself everywhere is due to the fact that it was too hard. The loss where it did fail was but a small percentage of the part exposed. That the three principal floors were saved, and the contents damaged only by water, when exposed to fire both above and below, notwithstanding the existence of a great open light-shaft in the center, is evidence that the fire-proofing of the building was remarkably effective in performing its office.

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[117]Peter B. Wight, "Fire-proofing. The Second Fire in the Horne Department Store at Pittsburgh," *BB* 9 (May 1900): 97-101.

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It was important to Wight as an advocate to explain how properly fireproofed buildings withstood fire as in two Chicago examples: the A.H. Revell & Co. Store (Adler & Sullivan, 1881-83) [Fig. 74] and the Mallers Building (Flanders & Zimmerman, 1884).[118] In the Revell Store, the cast-iron columns, I-beam girders, and wooden floor joists had been covered with porous terra-cotta tiles by a method that Wight himself had patented before 1880 (although the patent had since expired). While part of the contents of the building burned (there were no automatic sprinklers), the building itself survived intact, except for the plastering. The Mallers Building had brick walls, cast-iron columns, and rolled-iron girders and floor beams, all protected with hard hollow fire-clay tiles from the Pioneer Fireproof Construction Co. Although the fire started in a basement saloon and spread up the elevator shaft, it extinguished itself by the eighth story because it had nothing combustible in its way, thus proving the fireproof qualities of the building.

Baltimore experienced a major fire in February 1904. Many business buildings burned, but those with adequate fireproofing survived. As Wight pointed out a year later,

> The main fact after all is that these buildings stood up against one of the greatest conflagrations of modern times. No one claims that any one of them was the perfection of fireproof construction and finish, but no one can question that *if all the buildings of the burned district had been*

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[118]"An Expert"[Peter B. Wight], "A Building Twenty Years Old with Modern Floor Construction, Fireproofed with Porous Terra-Cotta, and 'Tested' with Fire August 26, 1903," *FP* 3 (October 1903): 29-32; [Peter B. Wight], "A Fire That Was Not Much of a Fire and Why," *FP* 8 (April 1906): 146-148. Wight had discussed the fireproof qualities of both buildings in "Recent Fireproof Building in Chicago (1885)." He had described another earlier fire in the Revell Building in 1896. See note 73.

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> *equally good there would have been no conflagration at all.* The fire would have been stopped in its early stages.[119]

The San Francisco earthquake of 1906 and the accompanying fire allowed Wight to demonstrate the effectiveness of the fireproofing used in a number of buildings.[120] In the five examples discussed by Wight, all had been fireproofed with hard burned, hollow fire-clay tiles. The tiles fireproofing the steel columns came off in many cases because no allowance was made for the expansion of tile when it was exposed to heat, but the steel columns themselves survived largely intact, as did the hollow-tile floor construction.

Notable Fireproof Buildings

It was equally important to Wight's cause to describe good new fireproof buildings, explaining the fireproof improvements.

The nine-story Ayer Building, better known as the McClurg Building (Holabird & Roche, 1898-1900) [Fig. 75] at 218 South Wabash Avenue in Chicago "will have every element of protection against fire known to science, except covering for the front windows." What were these elements? Steel skeleton construction covered with hollow porous terra-cotta tiles; floors of I-beams and flat end-pressure hollow porous terra-cotta arches; and the front of architectural terra cotta.[121]

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[119][Peter B. Wight], "Last Words on the Fire Losses at Baltimore in February 1904," *FP* 6 (March 1905): 148.

[120]Editor [Peter B. Wight], "Lessons from the San Francisco Conflagration," *FP* 9 (September 1906): 114-122.

[121]Peter B. Wight, "Fire-proofing. Recent Improvements in Fire-proof Construction at Chicago. The Ayer Building," *BB* 8 (February 1899): 33-34.

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The Peoples Gas Company office building (D.H. Burnham & Co., 1909-11) in Chicago was praised by Wight for its hollow-tile floor arch system, of fifteen-inch I-beams carrying long-span hollow semi-porous tile arches sixteen inches deep, devised by E.V. Johnson of the National Fire Proofing Company. Unlike many earlier floor systems, this one completely eliminated a cinder-concrete filling below a wooden floor surface. Such a filling had proved to be unstable in fires, and the sulphur in the cinders tended to corrode the pipes and conduits laid in the floor. Instead this new system "prevents all danger from fire under the floors, even if the wood floors and nailing strips are completely consumed." Also, as there was no need for concrete with its lengthy drying time, the building could be completed and occupied much more quickly.[122]

Wight found the ten-story loft building, later called the Polk-Wells Building (D.H. Burnham & Co., 1910-12), constructed for the Marshall Field estate at Fifth Avenue (Wells Avenue) and Polk Street, Chicago, to be notable for its floor construction of semi-porous burned-clay hollow tiles, set in segmental arches or barrel vaults, supported by fireproofed steel columns. Both the I-beams and the arches themselves carried the very heavy floor loads.[123]

Wight commended the decision of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Co. of Chicago to construct a new fireproof addition for its modeling room and sculpture studio in 1911 after a major fire: "The [architectural terra cotta] company determined immediately to

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[122]Peter B. Wight, "Improved Fireproof Floor Construction in the Peoples Gas Building at Chicago," *BP* 1 (January 1911): 4-7.

[123]Peter B. Wight, "Latest Improved Fireproof Construction Seen in the New Field Loft Building at Chicago," *BP* 1 (September 1911): 276-278.

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erect a model fireproof building in place of the old one and set to work at once to plan a structure perfectly adapted to its requirements." This building had brick walls, steel and concrete columns, and steel girders and floor beams carrying hollow-tile arches.[124]

Wight advocated the fireproofing of structures other than standard office and warehouse buildings, and reported at least twice on fireproof grain elevators and bins. At the Seventh International Congress of Architects (1906) he cited the work of George H. Johnson and his son E.V. Johnson in developing the form, and seven years later he wrote a much more detailed, chronological article on the subject.[125] In Buffalo in 1869, George H. Johnson built his first fireproof grain elevator of two courses of common brick with a two-inch air space between the courses and the outside banded by cast-iron plates. Bins were first covered by cupolas of hollow terra-cotta tile in Chicago in 1872. Then in 1899 in Minneapolis E.V. Johnson began to experiment with circular bins of hollow tile with the assistance of James L. Record of Minneapolis, continuing to refine the form for major milling companies in Minneapolis and King William, Ontario. In addition to the proven fireproof qualities of these grain bins, Wight was impressed that the system allowed for winter construction without structural defects (a major concern in the harsh climates of Minnesota and Ontario).

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[124]Peter B. Wight, "A Fireproof Addition to the Works of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, Chicago," *BP* 1 (November 1911): 325-330. Northwestern Terra Cotta manufactured architectural terra cotta for exterior building use. While a fireproof material, it was not used for fireproofing purposes. It is ironic that the company had not occupied a fireproof building previously.

[125]Wight, "The Use of Burned Clay Products," 166-167, and Peter B. Wight, "Evolution of Fireproof Grain Elevators with Circular Tile Storage Bins: The Canadian Northern Elevator at Fort Williams, Ontario," *BP* 3 (March 1913): 68-74.

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Fireproof residential architecture was also a subject for Wight's advocacy, as fireproof construction methods had been generally neglected except for large residential buildings in heavily built-up urban areas. Thus Wight was eager to cite examples of fireproof suburban and country houses, examining and explaining the construction techniques.[126] Many of these were built with hollow-tile floors and roofs and often had hollow-tile walls covered with cement. Some of them used extensive reinforced concrete construction, which Wight described as an evolution from factory construction.[127] Interestingly, a number of the examples were houses designed and built by architects for their own use.[128]

Why Build Fireproof Structures?

As an advocate for fireproof architecture, Wight considered the impetus for building it. Several factors influenced such a decision: high insurance rates for non-fireproof structures, changes in public attitudes as fireproofing systems and techniques became more reliable, and the impact of building codes; Wight discussed all of these.

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[126]Peter B. Wight, "Some Fire-Resisting Country Houses," *AR* 25 (May 1909): 364-374; Peter B. Wight, "Fireproof Suburban Houses," *HB* 25 (May 1909): 139-141.

[127]Wight, "Some Fire-Resisting Country Houses," 371.

[128]In Ibid., Wight illustrates the house of G.E. Bergstrom of Parkinson & Bergstrom of Los Angeles (p. 366), the house of Matthew Sullivan of the firm of Maginnis, Walsh & Sullivan of Canton, Mass. (p. 376), and the Tuxedo Park house of Charles Clinton of Clinton & Russell (p. 372). The house of Henry B. Camp, designed by Charles Henry & Son, was built in Akron, Ohio, for this manufacturer of hollow burned-clay products. See p. 246 above for the fireproof floor system in the H.B. Camp Factory.

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As early as 1897 Wight stated the problem: "The question is often asked, 'Why should buildings be fire-proofed when it is cheaper, all things considered, to build them otherwise?'" If the investor were looking out solely for his self interest, "he is only looking for the best percentage on his investment, and takes his chances of fire with the insurance companies," although he would only be reimbursed for eighty percent of the building's cost in case of fire. Thus he might introduce some fireproof features in the building to lower his insurance rates. He might also fireproof his building because the building law said "it must be fire-proofed if it exceeds certain dimensions."[129]

Moving beyond such negative reasons for fireproofing, Wight sought to answer the question in broader terms a few years later, citing the greater social good (beyond the narrow interests of the investor) as justification for fireproofing:[130]

> Numerous instances could be cited in which a building constructed of fireproof materials, though surrounded by those of the most inflammable character, has thwarted the spread of a conflagration. Some . . . have suffered from burning of the contents in a portion thereof, but preserved intact other apartments. Others . . . have at least afforded that immunity from loss of life . . . had the common inflammable construction been involved in such building, all of which connect society in general, in its genuine interest, with the art of fireproofing. (p. 164)
>
> The voice and influence of every person can in no more practicable way be made to inure to the general progress, safety and security than in recognition of the benefactions and advantages of non-combustible homes, mercantile and social buildings. . . . For how shall we be justified in our temptation of the fates in so exposing persons or property in dangerous or insecure structures, without a cause, when buildings filling most of our requirements, protected against fire hazards are now available

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[129]Peter B. Wight, "Fire-proofing Department. The Present Condition of the Art of Fire-proofing," *BB* 6 (November 1897): 250.

[130][Peter B. Wight], "The Public Attitude," *FP* 8 (May 1906): 163-166.

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> in all thickly populated communities, or how shall we atone for the disaster incurred as the result of our negligence in failing to observe the primitive law of self-preservation? (pp. 165-166)[131]

The Role of Building Ordinances

Despite the role of self-interest and advocacy such as his, Wight felt ultimately that building ordinances and regulations were necessary to promote and to ensure fireproof construction, and he worked strenuously for their implementation. Large cities had efficient fire departments which could prevent the spread of conflagrations; smaller cities could not afford fire departments. "Therefore, they must protect themselves by fire-preventive measures. In the long run there is no doubt but that this is the only sensible and economical course to follow."[132]

Wight did not hesitate to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of such regulations. He was particularly critical of the notion of "fire limits," which generally required buildings within such limits to have brick or stone walls, but did not necessarily prohibit the use of other combustible materials. Buildings outside the limits were generally of wood, often "frame cottages . . . huddled close together around the boundaries of the 'limits,' which, in future years, will not only be a dangerous fire menace to these neighborhoods when the cities grow and a demand is created for better

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[131]In "To the American People - A Word About Fireproof Dwellings and Simple Architecture," *FP* 6 (January 1905): 3-4, Wight had written of the need to increase the interest of the observant public in the fireproof construction of buildings, pointing out that such construction could be applied to dwellings and simple architecture.

[132][Peter B. Wight], "Lessons from the Fire Statistics for 1905," *FP* 8 (March 1906): 83.

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improvements, but will check the advance in the value of the land under them."[133] Instead of geographical boundaries, "the walls of every building should be its 'fire limits,' both against interior and exterior fires. A party wall should be a perfect fire-stop without any assistance from the fire department."[134]

He particularly commended the Chicago building ordinance which after the 1871 fire mandated seventeen-inch thick party walls in buildings higher than four stories.[135]

On the other hand, when the Chicago building ordinance was revised in 1898, it defined and allowed for "slow burning" and "mill" construction, neither of which were fireproof.

> According to these definitions the only difference between "slow burning" and "mill construction" is that in the former any kind of floor and roof construction can be used, provided the ceilings are made with metal lathing and plaster and the floor and roof deadened with 1-1/2 inches of mortar; and in the latter these are not required if the wooden girders and floor joists exceed 100 inches in sectional area and are covered with wooden floors and roof 3-3/4 inches thick. . . . The difference in cost between this and what the law calls "ordinary construction" (apologetic words for *dangerous* construction) is only found in the cost of metallic lathing and the additional cost of plastering upon it. . . . "Slow-burning" buildings have been erected by the dozen under this provision of the building ordinance, at very little expense over what would be required for "ordinary construction." The people who use them and the investors who buy them are being systematically imposed on. They are not slow-burning in any sense. . . . A building may be slow-burning according to law and quick-burning according to practice.[136]

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[133][Peter B. Wight], "Notes by an Expert," *FP* 2 (January 1903): 33.

[134]Ibid.

[135]Ibid.

[136][Peter B. Wight], "Notes by an Expert," *FP* 1 (September 1902): 24-25.

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He contrasted this to the previous (and preferable) construction system in which the ceilings and all the constructional members including wooden floor joists were covered with porous or hard clay tiles.[137] Wight considered it fortunate that the Chicago law did not classify mill construction as slow-burning, because he thought mill construction had been seriously misused when applied to modern warehouses or any high buildings (as I have shown in his assessment of the work of Edward Atkinson). "All considerations of economy and practicability point to the fact that all such buildings should not only be incombustible, but absolutely fireproof, which means built of steel and burned clay; the less of the former used and the more of the latter the better they will be."[138]

By 1905, when the Chicago building ordinance was again being revised according to the recommendations of a commission, Wight could not help but comment on earlier progress in the field, made possible by his efforts as well as the efforts of others.

> But this performance of the city council will have no effect upon the character of the fireproof buildings to be hereafter erected in Chicago. The models of good fireproofing which in that city date back twenty years were not the result of requirements of city laws, but the outgrowth of the demands of Chicago capitalists and the ability of Chicago architects, assisted by experts in fireproofing, to comply with them. All the perfected clay systems had their birth and development in that city, and will continue to be used in the best structures. There is already enough good hard concrete fireproofing there also to demonstrate by comparison that cinders are only a cheap makeshift.[139]

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[137]See the discussion of Wight's recommendations in this regard on pp. 227 above.

[138]*FP* (Sept. 1902), 26.

[139][Peter B. Wight], "Chicago's New Building Ordinance," *FP* 6 (April 1905): 164.

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In 1903, Wight was quick to commend the State of Illinois for seeking to legislate fireproof construction in all state buildings and additions to state buildings, and, in cities of more than 25,000 population,

> all theaters, school buildings, hospitals, asylums, armories and other structures designed for public use, and all hotels, tenement houses and apartment buildings more than three stories in height, and 50x100 feet ground plan that may hereafter erected, shall be fireproof throughout. In addition it requires that *all buildings* hereafter erected having steam boilers for power in the basement shall have the floor immediately above the basement "constructed of fireproof material."[140]

While Wight anticipated there would be objections to certain provisions of the bill, he thought the legislature had a moral obligation to pass it.

In the early years of the twentieth century, many American cities set out to revise their building ordinances to reflect the conditions of urban life and changing technologies of building. One of these was Cleveland which proposed what Wight called "the most systematic and comprehensive building ordinance ever framed by an American city. . . . It is not worded like a specification as is the case with most building laws, but arranged on a scientific and analytical basis, which all other framers of such laws would do well to study."[141]

Of course, Wight was particularly interested in the provisions regarding fireproof construction, as they were applied to three classes of buildings with the class being determined by the height of the building. Fourth-class buildings in the ordinance were

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[140][Peter B. Wight], "Notes by an Expert," *FP* 2 (February 1903): 40.

[141]Peter B. Wight, "A Digest and Review of the Proposed Building Law of Cleveland, Ohio, so far as it Relates to Fireproof Buildings," *FP* 4 (April 1904): 31.

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"semi-fireproof or composite buildings" and did not include mill construction unless all parts were covered with fireproof material. Otherwise mill construction was in the fifth class and "*outside of the fireproof or semi-fireproof classes.*"[142] According to Wight, "the most interesting feature of the law is that it not only defines what are fireproof materials and how made, but it also defines materials and ingredients of materials that are prohibited in buildings of each of the first three classes," a subject of great concern to him.[143] He then proceeded to summarize and quote excerpts of the law pertaining to the use and composition of terra-cotta tiles and concrete. The ordinance favored porous or semi-porous terra-cotta tiles and concrete of three kinds "defined as 'arched concrete,' 'slab concrete' and 'lintel concrete'" for fireproofing materials. He was particularly impressed with the specifications for the composition of the concrete and the prohibition of the use of cinder concrete and plaster-of-Paris as a concrete constituent.

> Such are the brief requirements of a law which is not aimed against the use of concrete fireproofing in its proper place and under proper restrictions, but which, when adopted and enforced, will serve to prevent the lamentable accidents and failures of concrete floor construction, which have recently been a scandal and disgrace to those who have encouraged and practiced them.[144]

He also noted that "this ordinance is no less severe in its restrictions in the use of burned clay products."[145]

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[142]Ibid., 32.

[143]Ibid.

[144]Ibid., 34.

[145]Ibid.

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Wight concluded that, if adopted, the ordinance would put Cleveland in the forefront of "fire protected" American cities and be a model worthy of study by others, for

> It is not fireproof buildings alone that we want, but *fireproof cities*. [my emphasis] There is no safety from great conflagrations except a bulwark of such numbers and so close together that a conflagration among the old firetraps cannot break through it [as had been the case in the Pittsburgh fire of 1897]. If such a law as that proposed for Cleveland had been adopted fifty years ago in all large cities there would be no more conflagrations, for American cities are practically rebuilt every fifty years.[146]

St. Louis became the second large American city in 1904 to propose a thorough revision of its building laws. Modeled after the ordinances of New York and Chicago, it had the limitation of reading too much like a specification, according to Wight.[147] He proceeded to explain certain sections of the law including the definition of "fireproof" (""fireproof" shall be taken to mean not only non-inflammable, but fire-resisting and non-heat conducting."') and the four classifications of buildings. First-class buildings were to be fireproof, and such buildings included those from 90 to 150 feet in height, and all "school buildings, hospitals, asylums or sanitariums; also, lodging houses or tenement houses, or office buildings having fifty or more rooms above the first story, or more than

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[146]Ibid., 35.

[147]Peter B. Wight, "A Review of the Proposed New Building Ordinance for St. Louis," *FP* 4 (June 1904): 45. This article was reprinted in *The Builder* (St. Louis) 11 (August 1904): n.p. My thanks to Charles Savage for this citation. The editorial in *FP* 5 (October 1904): 10, noted that *The Builder* had reprinted the article without crediting *FP*.

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four stories in height above the basement; also, theaters, seating five hundred or more persons and having seats for spectators above the first floor thereof."[148]

But Wight was very critical of the lack of standards and specificity for fireproof materials and how such materials should be attached or fastened (in contrast to the Cleveland ordinance). Second-class buildings could be between 75 and 90 feet in height and of ordinary "mill construction" with iron or steel columns fireproofed, or ordinary "mill construction" without fireproofed wooden columns and girders, a situation which Wight deplored.[149] Third-class buildings, less than 75 feet in height, were of "the most ordinary of 'ordinary' construction," while fourth-class buildings of frame construction, had to be erected outside the fire limits, although certain kinds of frame sheds were allowed within the fire limits.[150]

Wight disapproved of a number of factors affecting fire protection: wall thickness of only thirteen inches; inadequate protection for boilers, furnaces, and ovens; automatic hatch doors, which Wight thought should be eliminated; and the inclusion of elevators in stairwells. To its credit the law mentioned hollow tile as a fireproofing material, although not with sufficient specificity; it required wire glass in skylights over elevators; and it made proper provisions for restricted and unrestricted floor area: "The proper treatment of the subject is to make the privilege of an unrestricted floor area a reward to those who take every precaution for the prevention of fire and the safety of

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[148]Ibid., 46.

[149]Ibid., 48.

[150]Ibid.

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employees and public; and to enforce the requirements for unrestricted floor areas to the letter."[151]

Baltimore set out to revise its building ordinances after the fire in 1904, but two years later changes were still not in place. Wight was particularly critical of new "ordinary construction" that had taken place without the impetus of a changed building code, as well as delays in rebuilding because of the failure to change the law. The result was an opportunity lost for good fireproof architecture.[152]

Wight had an active career as a fireproof contractor for only some ten years, but his interest in and advocacy for the subject continued virtually throughout his entire writing career, as I have shown. And it is due to the efforts of Wight and his like-minded contemporaries that fireproofed buildings in urban areas are now taken for granted. If he thought of fireproofing as an "art," it was also an evolutionary science, as he understood the term. As both art and science, it ultimately served the cause of the art of architecture.

Russell Sturgis and Fireproofing

While Sturgis wrote occasionally on fireproof construction, his perspective was quite different from that of Wight. Wight advocated fireproofing as a necessity of good construction, but Sturgis was more interested in the artistic effects which could be

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[151]Ibid., 49-50.

[152]The Editor [Peter B. Wight], "One Year After the Baltimore Conflagration," *FP* 6 (February 1905): 67-70; [Peter B. Wight], "More Delay in Baltimore Building Ordinance [Editorial]," *FP* 8 (February 1906): 45-46.

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expressed in fireproof materials.[153] He pointed out the role of James Bogardus in advocating iron construction, which made tall buildings possible and the underlying structure resistant to fire, but

> There still remains the question not very easy to answer: What is the utility of such resisting powers in the framework, if the building, apart from the framework, is so combustible as to be destroyed, within; or its costly outside to be hopelessly defaced by a not very formidable conflagration? . . .
>
> Against this danger there is nothing to be set up, except the substitution of that material which minds heat but little for those materials which cannot resist it for any length of time, together with the substitution inside the building of stuff that will not burn for that which will.[154]

Sturgis recognized that office buildings were the most fire-resistant building type in America, but urged further improvements including: the use of protective shutters, wire glass over skylights, and the exclusion of wood finishes on the interior unless the wood could be made fireproof. In this, he echoed many of Wight's recommendations. In particular, he called for the use of brick and terra cotta for the facing of exterior walls, noting the instability of stone when subject to fire.

> The trouble with introducing any improvement in building in this direction is the queer superstitions (sic) about dignity and stateliness which possess the popular mind. And it must be observed that the popular mind is the millionaire property owner, or millionaire donor of buildings

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[153]Russell Sturgis, "An Unscientific Enquiry Into Fireproof Building," *ARec* 9 (January 1900): 229-253. Wight occasionally took this perspective. See Peter B. Wight, review of *Architectural Terra-Cotta, Standard Construction*, *JAIA* 2 (September 1914): 441-442, for a discussion of architectural terra cotta as a fireproof exterior cladding material.

[154]Sturgis, "An Unscientific Enquiry," 232, 233.

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> to public institutions, fully as much as it is the mind of the man who rents a small dwelling house.[155]

Sturgis sought to persuade architects, who in turn could persuade their clients, that brick and terra cotta could be as attractive as stone.[156] He also had extensive recommendations for fireproof interior finishes to substitute for wood: iron, tile, and brick, and how they could be attractively used. His ideal standard was no wood in the building itself, its walls, doors, or fittings. "[The owner and architect] will assuredly have more beautiful buildings if they work in this way; and that fact is hereby offered as an additional inducement to those who would fain have buildings that will not burn."[157]

Two years earlier in 1898 he had written: "The problem which Americans should set themselves is . . . to eliminate wood as much as possible," not just to improve fire safety but because masonry and iron buildings promoted opportunities for better design.[158]

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[155]Ibid., 238.

[156]An unsigned article in *BB* commended Sturgis's article and its emphasis on brick and terra cotta, although noting: "As a matter of fact, however, the stern practical necessity that has presided at the inception and development of the modern commercial building has forced both architect and client into the acceptance of brick and terra-cotta for the outside of every building which is intended to be absolutely fire-proof, though the extension of the same ideas to other buildings equally important progresses but slowly." "Fire-proofing. 'An Unscientific Enquiry into Fire-proof Building'," *BB* 9 (April 1900): 81. Wight, of course, had pointed out that such considerations had influenced architects and clients in Chicago as early as the 1880s.

[157]Ibid., 253. See also Russell Sturgis, "Bricks and Tiles for Interior Finishing," *BB* 8 (January 1899): 3-5; (February 1899): 27-29, for a discussion of how architects could use these fireproof materials in a sculptural and decorative manner.

[158]Sturgis, "Good Things in Modern Architecture," 105, 108.

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Sturgis had written to Wight on the subject on Dec. 22, 1902: "'My own feeling about the matter is that the mere exclusion from building of all materials that will burn is really easier than the architects will admit. I think that it is only the unwillingness to adopt such novel principles of design as the really fireproof construction would involve that prevents the improvement needed.'"[159]

Sturgis continued to address the problem of creating attractive fireproof buildings, particularly houses.[160] "Fireproofing is so very important that even with the most artistically-minded thinkers it must take precedence of questions of fine art."[161] In particular, he urged architects to think of new ways of designing, using such traditional incombustible materials as brick and terra cotta, while not imitating wood: "Why -- when you design to build something that won't burn, -- why retain the old look of the very combustible houses of the past?"[162] And, as he had with office buildings, he offered specific recommendations for interior finishes and design. He noted that all his suggestions had been carried out in public buildings and business buildings, but that thin and strong partitions and good light doors still needed to be developed for private houses, although with that problem solved,

> the private house would be as easy to build as it should be built. There is no reason why it should not be as comfortable as the existing fire-traps,

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[159]Peter B. Wight, "Reminiscences of Russell Sturgis," *ARec* 26 (Aug. 1909): 129.

[160]Russell Sturgis, "Simple Ways of Fireproofing," *ARec* 13 (February 1903): 119-133.

[161]Ibid., 120.

[162]Ibid., 121.

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> more free from smells and from vermin, immeasurably more permanent and solid, and, of course, elegant and stately in a way, and to an extent that the unpracticed thinker on such matters can hardly conceive.[163]

Sturgis also wrote about the dangers of wood in a review of results of fire tests conducted by the British Fire Prevention Committee,[164] which was published in the *Nation* (a rather unusual choice of periodical for such a technical study). This two-volume report contained numerous tables on the fire tests conducted on floors, ceilings, partitions, doors, and glazing, and how well they resisted fire when made of different materials. He noted the very high incidence of fire in England and the United States due to the extensive use of wood for building, even in "so-called fireproof buildings."

> What is surprising is the apparent willingness in England and America to accept as final a tentative condition of things in which all efforts are directed towards a mitigation of the evil inherent in the old ways of building with great proportionate amounts of wood, both in construction and in finishing joinery, while almost nothing is said or done about replacing combustible material with that which will not catch fire.[165]

Sturgis's greatest concern was to urge architects and designers to be "artistic" in their use of fireproof materials. If Wight brought to the subject the sensibility of the practical expert, exhorting his fellow architects again and again, Sturgis expressed his sensibility as a critic, educating the public to demand fireproof buildings and then judge their artistic qualities.

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[163]Ibid., 133.

[164][Russell Sturgis], "Fire Prevention," review of *Facts on Fire Prevention*, In *Nation* 76 (7 May 1903): 380-381.

[165]Ibid., 380.

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CHAPTER 6

THE ROLE OF THE CRITIC

From his early writings for the *New Path* published at the beginning of his career to the end of his life, Russell Sturgis thought and wrote about the role of the critic and the power of architectural criticism to foster and shape the art of architecture, as this chapter will demonstrate. It was this self-consciousness which set him apart from his colleagues. Wight, by contrast, wrote criticism, but he did not manifest this kind of self-consciousness about his critical role and did not necessarily seek to set a critical standard.

Sturgis as Critic: As Viewed by His Contemporaries

If judged by the praise of his colleagues and other contemporaries, Sturgis was the most acclaimed critic of his generation. The breadth and depth of his writings, the long period over which he wrote (some 47 years), and the standards he set were all the subject of commendation, both during his lifetime and in numerous obituaries after his death in 1909.

Everett P. Wheeler, a City College classmate who was best-known as a lawyer and Civil service reformer, called Sturgis

> our great art critic. None was more appreciative or discriminating. None could possibly have been more void of the disturbing influence of prejudice, pride or passion. . . . His style was not as pictorial as that of Ruskin. . . . But Sturgis was the greater art critic. He had the quality of impartiality which Ruskin never had. His style was luminous and clearly expressive of his clear thought.[1]

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[1]Everett P. Wheeler, "Russell Sturgis," *City College Quarterly* 5 (March 1909): 10, 11. In addition to their City College ties, both Wheeler (1840-1925) and Sturgis were

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Montgomery Schuyler (1843-1914), his fellow critic and colleague at *Architectural Record*, praised Sturgis for his

> accuracy and secureness in matters of fact [which] are a great source of strength to a critic or an historian. They give his readers the confidence which Mr. Sturgis, . . . never failed to inspire. . . . In his case, knowledge was power. But knowledge combined with geniality, with a desire to find out the good rather than the bad in the work he set himself to judge. Combined also with perfect and unsuspectible disinterestedness. . . . whatever he did or said was done or said simply in obedience to the dictum of an unselfish and impersonal interest in art, and from a desire for its advancement. . . . It was this disinterested interest which gave him his unique position and enabled him to exert a unique influence.[2]

Further, "having the nature of a connoisseur [he] acquired the art of a critic. . . . Only in ceasing to practise [the] art [of architecture] and in devoting himself to appreciating it did he find his true vocation."[3] Finally, "There are more architects as good as [he] was, and, to the progress of architecture, his critical work was even more helpful than his architectural work."[4]

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members of the Century Association, the influential men's club devoted to promoting the advancement of art and literature. It is interesting to note Wheeler's comparison of Sturgis to Ruskin, even after Ruskin's critical methods had been discredited.

[2]Montgomery Schuyler, "Russell Sturgis," *ARec* 25 (March 1909): frontispiece, 220. These qualities of knowledge and impartiality were vital to Sturgis's critical approach as will be discussed.

[3]Montgomery Schuyler, "Russell Sturgis," *Scribner's Magazine* 45 (May 1909): 635, 636.

[4]"Russell Sturgis's Architecture," *ARec* 25 (June 1909): 410. This unsigned article, probably by Schuyler, also could have been written by Herbert Croly or H.W. Desmond, both editors of that periodical. Schuyler's critical reputation has eclipsed that of Sturgis, due in large part to the advocacy of Lewis Mumford in *The Brown Decades* (1934) and the publication of Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1961) 2 vols. In their introduction Jordy and Coe cite Mumford's role

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Robert Craik McLean, the publisher of *Western Architect*, noted that "since 1880, [Sturgis's] work has lain along those literary lines which have made him the most famous architectural critic and writer of his time, and has given architecture in the United States a foundation for a literature."[5]

Sturgis as Critic: As Viewed by Later Writers

Later writers have not always been so positive about his criticism but continued to affirm its importance.

A young Carroll Meeks described Sturgis as the "first great American critic of architecture" and praised his competence, "great erudition, perfect impartiality, and complete honesty." He thought Sturgis's criticism lacked "a balance of emphasis, between the elements of architecture, but this is the limitation of his theory."[6]

John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown acknowledged the lead taken by Sturgis (and followed by Wight) in accepting "a hardheaded philosophy of realism in design,"

(p. 1) and note that "Schuyler shared his progressive point of view with a cluster of more or less like-minded commentators. . . . In critical acumen they ranged from Sturgis, who was perhaps closest to Schuyler in enlightenment and at the time more prominent, to [Herbert] Croly." (p. 2) Schuyler himself in his *Scribner's* obituary (p. 636) of Sturgis, commented that Sturgis attained "a knowledge of the history of art, and of architecture and sculpture especially, which made his requirements in this respect the envy and despair of his like-minded but inferiorly equipped acquaintances." (Presumably he was alluding to himself, among others.)

[5]Robert Craik McLean, "Russell Sturgis," *WA* 13 (March 1909): 29.

[6]C[arroll] L.V. Meeks, "Architectural Criticism in America (1864-1929)," (M.A. essay, Yale University, 1934), 40-41.

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but claimed that "his eye was never so sure, his judgment so dependable, as Montgomery Schuyler's."[7]

From this author's viewpoint, Sturgis's knowledge and erudition make his critical viewpoints consistently interesting, if often more "conservative" than those of Schuyler. As the end of the twentieth century nears, I find Schuyler's proto-modernism to be less compelling than Sturgis's life-long effort to bring the ideals of "truthfulness" in design, as he understood it, to public attention. Moreover, it would seem that given the breadth and productivity of his writing, his reading public concurred.

Sturgis's Critical Career

As discussed in Chapter 1, Sturgis began his critical career with his writings for the *New Path*, then, following the demise of that publication, moved on to the *Nation*. By the end of his life, "more than five hundred monographs and articles in periodicals dealing with fine art" were cited as having "come from his pen."[8] In addition, he served as editor for the entries on decorative art and medieval archaeology in the *Century Dictionary* (1891), entries pertaining to the fine arts in *Webster's International*

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[7]John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, *The Architecture of America* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1961), 241. William John Thorn, "Montgomery Schuyler: The Newspaper Architectural Articles of a Protomodern Critic (1868-1907)," (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1976), 30-32, claimed that Burchard and Bush-Brown wrote that both Sturgis and Wight were too enamored of medieval-inspired architecture (the Gothic Revival and the Romanesque) to appreciate the protomodern spirit that Montgomery Schuyler espoused (a mis-interpretation of Burchard and Bush-Brown on Thorn's part). Further, that because Sturgis and Wight were practicing architects, they were less inclined to praise radical, less acceptable designs. I will demonstrate in this chapter that Sturgis took a skeptical view of criticism by practicing artists and architects.

[8]Barr Ferree, "In Streets and Papers," *Architects and Builders Magazine* 5 (August 1904): 545.

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Dictionary (1890), the articles on architecture and fine art in *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia* [later *Appleton's*] (1893-95), and the articles on art in the *New International Encyclopedia* (1901-03) and the *Encyclopedia Americana* (1904-05).[9] Certainly while his numerous writings display his critical perceptions and sensibility, not all are criticism (as the discussion of Sturgis's writings in previous chapters has noted).

Although Sturgis wrote for the architectural press, most of his critical writings appeared in periodicals which appealed to an educated general audience. Thomas Bender has pointed out how such magazines as the *Nation* functioned as vehicles for the creation of an American intellectual elite in the years following the Civil War.[10] Founded in 1865, the *Nation* was edited by E. L. Godkin, an Irish Protestant immigrant with connections to Charles Loring Brace and Frederick Law Olmsted. Godkin wanted the magazine to appeal to writers, editors, professors, the cultivated generally, "gentlemen." It was a magazine "written by gentlemen for gentlemen."[11] Sturgis certainly fit into that mold, and the *Nation* was the publication with which he had the longest associations. Morever, this association helped bring him assignments with other

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[9]Ibid.; Wheeler, 11.

[10]Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 181-184.

[11]Ibid., 182, 183. See also Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1938) 3: 331-333, for a concise history of the *Nation* and its connections to other publications, particularly the *New York Evening Post*.

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periodicals.[12] Other periodicals for which Sturgis wrote in the 1860s were the *Galaxy*, based in New York, and the Boston-based *North American Review*. He wrote for *Scribner's Monthly* in the 1870s. During this period he maintained an active architectural practice, which he gave up in 1880 for a four-year period of study and travel in Europe (see Chapter 2).

When Sturgis returned to New York, he took up a writing and lecturing career, drawing on his extensive experience and knowledge to write his books on art and architecture, as well as to edit dictionaries and encyclopedias. By the late nineteenth century, many more American periodicals had been established, giving Sturgis greater opportunities to publish his criticism. Besides writing for the *Nation* and the *Post* in the 1890s and into the twentieth century, Sturgis was a regular book reviewer for the *New York Times*, which was published from 1896 on by Adolph Ochs; he also wrote architectural commentary for the *Times*. Based on the evidence of his scrapbooks, Sturgis's writings for the *Post* consisted of exhibition reviews, especially those of the Architectural League, book reviews, and notices and commentary on contemporary architecture. Sturgis wrote for the *Book Buyer* in the 1890s, the *Independent* and the *International Monthly* in the first years of the twentieth century, and, of particular importance, a regular feature for *Scribners' Magazine* called the "Field of Art" from 1898

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[12]Sturgis's writings appeared regularly in the *Nation* between 1865 and 1879, when the magazine was edited by E.L. Godkin; then again between 1890 and 1906, when Wendell Phillips Garrison was the editor. During the latter period it was issued as a weekly edition of the *Post*. Mott, 344. And it was during this period that Sturgis wrote regularly for the *Post*. See Russell Sturgis Scrapbooks, 3 vols., Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

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until his death. And, of course, he wrote numerous articles for *Architectural Record* and *Architectural Review* (Boston), both of which had been established in 1891.[13] Many of the articles ascribed to Sturgis, particularly in the early years of the *Nation* and the *Post*, were not signed.[14]

Throughout his career, Sturgis was quite explicit in various articles about the role of the critic. In other writings, particularly his book reviews and his book introductions, the critical role is implicit. Frank Luther Mott has pointed out the importance of book reviewing to the *Nation*, quoting Godkin in the first number: "One principal object of the *Nation* is to promote and develop a higher standard of criticism."[15] Mott went on to say:

> But it must be remembered that when we discuss book reviewing in the *Nation*, we are not dealing with a department or activity limited to belles-lettres, or functioning only as literary criticism proper, but with that broad survey of books as representative of the world's thought which has been characteristic of the great reviews. Book reviewing to the *Nation*, meant

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[13]Mott, 4: 323.

[14]Two major sources were consulted by me for listings of articles by Sturgis: *The Nation. Volumes 1-105. New York, 1865-1917. Indexes of Titles and Contributors*, comp. Daniel C. Haskell (New York: New York Public Library, 1951); *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1882), vol. 1. The introductions to both of these works explain the methodology of the compilers for determining the authorship of articles. Also, listings of unsigned articles by Wight appear in the latter source. I have also discovered one case of an article signed by Russell Sturgis, Jr., "The Boston Young Men's Christian Association," *Bay State Monthly* 1 (April 1884): 249-258, which I believe to be by Sturgis's second cousin once removed of the same name, the older brother of John Hubbard Sturgis, the architect of the building in question.

[15]"Critics and Criticism," *Nation* 1 (6 July 1865): 10. The entire article was reprinted in *Critical and Social Essays Reprinted from the New York Nation* (New York: Leypoldt & Holt, 1867), 11-18. Sturgis published his first critical piece for the *Nation* in the same issue. [Russell Sturgis], "Fortieth Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design," *Nation* 1 (6 July 1865): 26-28.

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> criticism of the scholarship, the philosophy, the investigation, of the times.[16]

The *Nation* gave Sturgis a wide-ranging voice for his criticism (even if its readership of "gentlemen" was usually only around 6000),[17] one that was potentially national in scope and differed in purpose and audience from the *New Path*, his initial critical venue, as I have discussed in Chapter 1.[18]

Critical Antecedents

Clarence Cook had inaugurated the *New Path* with a call for "a broader criticism," and Sturgis responded with a major article on art criticism.[19] What was the critical tradition upon which Sturgis was building? Cook himself in writing about the architecture of New York in 1855, after prefacing his remarks with extensive allusions to Ruskin, stated:

> Let us establish a few canons of architectural criticism, and by them judge of the present aspect of architecture in this country.
> 1. A building should be thoroughly adapted to its requirements.
> 2. It should be externally expressive of its use and purpose.

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[16]Mott, 4: 334.

[17]Bender, 183.

[18]Linda S. Ferber, "'Determined Realists': The American Pre-Raphaelites and the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art," in *The New Path: Ruskin and American Pre-Raphaelites* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum and Schocken Books, 1985), 24, points out that the *New Path* was "small in size, provocative in tone, with no advertisements and offering no remuneration to contributors or 'amusement' to readers. . . Contemporary response concurs . . . that *The New Path* enjoyed a measure of respect in some quarters and much notoriety in others, suggest an influence and impact far beyond what might be expected from confessedly amateur management, irregular publication, and a short lifespan."

[19]See Chapter 1, note 116.

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> 3. It should neither violate any of the laws of construction, nor appear to do so.
> 4. The nature of the materials with which the building is erected should stamp its character on the architecture; thus, stone should be used as stone, wood used as wood, and iron used as iron.
> 5. The site of the building with its relative position to other buildings, and to the neighborhood, should always be carefully considered.[20]

Despite Cook's references to canons, his five points speak to characteristics by which a building should be judged, not the role of the critic in making such judgments.

The short-lived *Architects' and Mechanics' Journal* published "A Common-Sense Platform for Popular Architectural Criticism" in 1860.[21] According to the author, a building was artistic when it displayed evidence of "logical, earnest, and loving" thought, expressed in a language founded on the "laws of symmetry, proportion and subordination of parts." (See Chapter 4 for a discussion of symmetry and proportion.) The purpose of these laws was to reveal "constructive truth" in various materials rendered in architectural forms. "Truth is the most important test of architectural excellence," particularly as exterior features expressed interior truth. "For architecture, after all, is nothing more than the monumental expression of the purposes to which the building it illustrates is devoted."

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[20][Clarence Cook], "Modern Architecture of New York," *New York Quarterly* 4 (April 1855): 109.

[21]*Architects' and Mechanics' Journal* 3 (22 Dec. 1860): 111. Alexander Harthill, a New York publisher of travel books, issued this periodical, the first for professional architects to be published in this country, between 1859 and 1861. Harthill was interested in publishing useful knowledge, but the unidentified editors, "members of the 'architectural and engineering profession'," wrote extensively on matters pertaining to architectural professionalism. Mary N. Woods, "History in Early American Architectural Journals," in *The Architectural Historian in America*, ed. Elisabeth Blair MacDougall (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1990), 77-78.

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While the language is more flowery and the latter writer does not mention Ruskin explicitly, he revealed much of the same sensibility as Cook, setting forth a general standard for judging buildings.

Wight commented on Sturgis's life-long adherence to the study of the truths of nature as exemplified in art -- a central tenet of progressive nineteenth-century architectural thought: "That creed affected all his critical articles. As he grew in knowledge his ideas broadened and he became tolerant of the opinions of others; but he never deserted the principles that he had enunciated in early life."[22]

But when Sturgis discussed art criticism in the *New Path*, he went beyond "truth," enumerating standards for the critic who judged not just architecture but art as a whole.[23] Unlike Cook, Sturgis set forth standards for the critic himself, not for the work of art or architecture. While these standards have been discussed in Chapter 1, I will reiterate them again in this context.

Sturgis's Early Views of the Critical Role and Standards

Sturgis felt that, of necessity, art and criticism went together. The presence of a work of art gave rise to criticism, while criticism had the power to advance, influence, and improve art. Thus, the critic had certain responsibilities and had to meet the standards that Sturgis set forth: 1) empathy with the artist and his point of view; 2) love of beauty and truth; 3) knowledge of facts and principles, particularly, a) a practical and

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[22]Peter B. Wight, "Reminiscences of Russell Sturgis," *ARec* 26 (August 1909): 130, 131.

[23][Russell Sturgis], "Art Criticism," *NP* 1 (April 1864): 153-157.

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scientific knowledge of nature; b) knowledge of the history of art and a knowledge of the arts and sciences that underlie the fine arts; i.e., anatomy to appreciate sculpture, and physics and the art of building to judge architecture; c) a knowledge of materials, colors, and processes and even practical experience in their use to know their limitations. Only with this kind of knowledge would the critic be able to judge the work's truth to nature; 4) the critic should not be an artist himself for fear of not speaking "with that independence and boldness which is one of the first requisites of a critic"[24]; 5) the critic's mission was "to teach the public to appreciate and regard art properly."[25] To do that he would dispense praise and blame in a reasoned and impartial fashion and not make judgments based on emotions but on knowledge and facts.

A month after Sturgis's article on art criticism appeared in the *New Path*, the periodical published "Our Artists and Their Critics," possibly also by Sturgis.[26] It focused on the importance and duty of the critic to educate the public on artistic matters:

> It behooves those whose duty it is to take care that this opportunity to teach the truth is not left unimproved. For they may be sure that the opportunity to teach falsehood will not be left unimproved. . . . Those who think there are improvements possible, have now their opportunity to speak and write and 'agitate the question' of truth in Art.
>
> We are of those who think very great improvements possible. We are trying to improve our opportunity.[27]

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[24]Ibid., 154.

[25]Ibid., 155.

[26]"Our Artists and Their Critics," *NP* 2 (May 1864): 3-7.

[27]Ibid., 4.

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Then followed a spirited defense of Clarence Cook and his criticism in the *New York Tribune*, "criticism meant to be true and not popular, teaching for popular judgment, not flattery of it."[28] Thus, Cook met, at least in part, Sturgis's standards for art criticism through his love of truth and efforts to teach the public.

Sturgis's next major piece on criticism appeared in the *North American Review*. This wide-ranging article on art in America set forth many of his ideas and standards for criticism.[29] He deplored the lack of critics and an educated public: "There is no body of art critics in the land whose opinions anybody will receive as of decisive importance. There is no class of true *connoisseurs* of these arts, . . . whose opinion it is worth anybody's while to ask. There is no large class of persons who care for these arts at all."[30] The public and the critic were necessary complements to each other: "The thoroughly competent critic is only found where the ready, capable, sensitive public is found. The public is only intelligently and justly instructed where the thoroughly competent critic exists."[31] Good art could educate, and a demand on the part of the public for good art would foster its production.[32] Sturgis saw a reason for hope in the changed tone of criticism, beyond indiscriminate praise to "slashing" criticism, which was gradually

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[28]Ibid.

[29][Russell Sturgis], "The Conditions of Art in America," *North American Review* 102 (Jan. 1866): 1-24.

[30]Ibid., 3.

[31]Ibid., 6.

[32]Ibid., 7.

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giving way to good criticism.[33] Again he reminded his readers (as well as potential critics) that "in every kind of art, truth to nature is an imperative law. . . . Truth-telling about nature . . . is the great end and aim of art."[34] Critics, the public, and artists all had responsibilities:

> Criticism must help the people to see aright. The critic must strive himself to see things as they are, and strive to make his readers or hearers see things as they are. . . . The duty of the public . . . is to learn to love art and to judge of art . . . The duty of the artists in respect to their critical powers is mainly this, -- to learn to judge aright of their own work and their fellows'. . . . If these conditions be fulfilled by the artist and by the public, the production of good, if not great, works of art will be assured.[35]

Several months later, Sturgis restated his standards for art criticism in the *Nation*.[36] After an explanation of what art criticism was not -- "the primaeval newspaper notice, . . . the affectionate laudation, . . . the patriotic congratulation . . .," he again explained his adherence to impartiality: "Criticism does not take sides, but sees all the contradictory facts and all the apparently irreconcilable data. . . . It is the business of criticism to look into the matter, to examine all the facts in order to ascertain the essential facts, and to proclaim these when ascertained." Again he stated his conviction that criticism must be based in knowledge which was accurate in meaning and expression. And, further, the critic had a duty "to teach the principles of that art which

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[33]Ibid., 11.

[34]Ibid., 21, 22.

[35]Ibid., 22-24.

[36][Russell Sturgis], "What is Art Criticism?," *Nation* 2 (19 April 1866): 504-506.

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appeals to the eye." Finally, "to instruct the ignorant of art, to interest the careless of art, seems to us the great objects of art criticism at the present time."[37]

Thus, the five principles he had enunciated in 1864 were condensed by 1866 to three: knowledge, impartiality, and education of the public. This did not mitigate the necessity for "truth" and "adherence to nature" as standards for good art, but without adequate knowledge, the critic would not be able to judge works of art for adherence to those standards. Further it was knowledge which formed the basis for a critic's impartiality and his ability to educate the public.

As he had written in 1864, Sturgis always sought to adhere to his own standards in his critical writings.[38] He reviewed books on many topics, not just those pertaining to the fine arts, for the *Nation.* He did not begin to write architectural criticism in earnest until he was no longer in active practice, thus adhering to the fourth principle he had annunciated in 1864.

But my purpose here is not to examine how Sturgis lived up to his own critical standards, but rather to examine Sturgis's views of those critical standards, how and in what forms they were expressed, and how they were stated over the course of his writing career, always keeping in mind that for Sturgis the ultimate goal of criticism was the production of good art.

In his early writings for the *Nation* Sturgis continued to emphasize the idea of knowledge and the need to educate the public, not just because of the increasing number

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[37]Ibid., 505.

[38]Sturgis, "Art Criticism," 157.

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of artists and the growing demand for paintings, but because of other changed social conditions.

The desire to build monuments to commemorate soldiers and events of the Civil War led Sturgis to deplore the lack of qualifications among those communities which would be selecting memorial designs: "It is not enough to have 'good taste' -- to have a correct natural feeling for beauty of form, or to be accustomed to drawings. No man is at all fit to pick out one design among many, unless he has some knowledge of what has been and of what can be done in actual marble, stone, and bronze."[39] In effect, the committees should be able to bring to their job the same qualifications that the critic should bring to his. And how would Sturgis have them acquire those qualifications?:

> The need of some knowledge on the part of our people of what other people have done to honor their illustrious dead becomes evident. . . When shall we learn that the way to teach people art is to show it to them? One great work of art is worth a thousand lectures on art. If the lectures are good, they will be better when the work of art is present to enforce their doctrine.[40]

Assuming that at least one committee would have the proper qualifications, he also had some specific advice for judging the proposals for Harvard's Memorial Hall:

> It must be a good building. It must be a noble building. Every memorial must have those two characteristics, or it is worthless; it must be rich and ornamental, and even profusely decorated; and it must be built to last for ever. . . . There must be evidences . . . of beauty sought for itself, and ornament loved for its own sake, and used to dignify the building.[41]

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[39][Russell Sturgis], "Something about Monuments," *Nation* 1 (3 Aug. 1865): 154.

[40]Ibid., 155.

[41]Ibid. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, p. 83, Sturgis was unsuccessful in his competition entry for Harvard Memorial Hall, the winning design going to William Ware

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The rise of restaurants as a social institution evoked from Sturgis some negative criticism of Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du Gôut*, as well as a spirited defense of restaurants' importance, much in the same terms that he might use to educate the public on the importance of art: "The restaurant is a potent civilizer. The restaurant is progress. The restaurant is as important a branch of that modern civilization of which we brag so heartily as the railroad or the telegraph. . . . The use of the restaurant is to raise the standard of good living. It cannot be set too high."[42] He concluded by recommending Delmonico's as a restaurant with standards which could educate its patrons to improve their tables at home.

Sturgis's review of John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* elicited his comments on the role of criticism to educate and develop judgment:

> Criticism of the highest rank must often take the form of analysis of the existing thing, with the view of suggesting the possible improvement. For criticism is not properly limited to giving an opinion of a single work or a group of works, nor even to giving such an opinion fortified by the statement of reasons and of principles of judgment. Criticism has as its very highest function the setting of the actual thing in its true light. It is the chief end of criticism to teach people to judge things as they are, and not as they have been said to be, or as tradition and custom represent them to be.[43]

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and Henry Van Brunt. Sturgis subsequently won the commission for Battell Chapel, another Civil War memorial, at Yale University, built in 1874-76. See Chapter 4, p. 203, for Wight's comments on the chapel.

[42][Russell Sturgis], "Restaurants and Their Function," *Nation* 1 (2 Nov. 1865): 561.

[43][Russell Sturgis], review of *Sesame and Lilies. Two Lectures Delivered at Manchester in 1864*, by John Ruskin, In *North American Review* 102 (Jan. 1866): 307.

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Similarly, in his review of an American edition of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, Sturgis recommended Ruskin's criticism and description as an aid to developing judgment while studying art: Ruskin had the "strong conviction that good in art is much like good in other things, not a creation of law, but the reason why laws are created: an absolute thing which, indeed, one may fail to reach and yet be forgiven, but which is never to be ignored without ruin following." In Sturgis's opinion,

> The general tendency of Ruskin's teachings in art is always right. The separate and detached expressions of opinion are always worthy of careful consideration, and are nearly always stimulating to thought, but are open to question as to their complete or partial rightness. . . . [But] the student had better take them all at first as absolutely true, and gradually learn to discriminate, than to close his eyes and ears by too much doubting.[44]

In his introductory essay to the catalogue of the Jarves Collection of early Italian paintings (1868), Sturgis pointed out that because of advances in criticism, the authenticity of these paintings (which lacked a signature or a traditional inscription) could be ascertained. As the rules of criticism were defined and more widely known, these rules could be used as a means of developing the kind of judgment necessary to determine the authorship of such paintings.[45]

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[44][Russell Sturgis], "Ruskin's Modern Painters," *Nation* 7 (27 Aug. 1868): 173-174. Sturgis was to develop much more skepticism about Ruskin's criticism later in his career (see below).

[45]Russell Sturgis, Jr., *Manual of the Jarves Collection of Early Italian Pictures*, deposited in the Gallery of the Yale School of Fine Arts. Being a catalogue with descriptions of the pictures contained in that collection, with biographical notices of artists and an introductory essay, the whole forming a brief Guide to the Study of Early Christian Art (New Haven: Yale College, 1868), 11. The full title is a clue to Sturgis's intention.

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In a major five-part article on the fine arts of Japan,[46] Sturgis sought to impart his own increasing knowledge of the many aspects of art to the public. At the same time, he was acutely aware of the limitations of his own criticism given his inability to understand the full cultural context:

> The pure representative art of Japan can be critically estimated so far as concerns the delineation of objects, and so far as concerns the method and design employed, and the general power and delicacy in them; but criticism is checked by the impossibility of understanding, without knowledge of the language, all the countless subjects which this art tries to express. The applied or decorative art can be criticised only so far as we know the material employed, and the limitations attending its use; and this is a real hindrance to adequate criticism, for there are many handicrafts they practise which either are not known to the people of Europe, or are followed by them in a manner and with purposes so different from the Japanese that they take a different character.[47]

As a book reviewer (in this case, of two works on Albert [sic] Dürer), Sturgis reiterated his standards for criticism, while recognizing the increasing knowledge which made such criticism possible: "The best criticism of the day is based upon an absolutely boundless curiosity about the facts and an entire willingness to take them as they prove to be, or seem to be, and account for them afterwards; and, going on from this, it seeks to place the fine arts aright in their relation to the whole of human life and knowledge, and to conceive of their proper influence over the world of the future." The result was books such as those reviewed, "about the best thing that is done for art nowadays, and is one thing at least that never could have been done before. . . . [Our age] can produce

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[46][Russell Sturgis], "The Fine Arts of Japan," *Nation* 7 (2 July 1868): 16-17; (16 July 1868): 56-57; (23 July 1868): 76-77; (30 July 1868): 96-97; (10 Sept. 1868): 215-216.

[47]Ibid., 16.

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approximately complete criticism of the Fine Arts, considered historically, and criticism that at least aims at completeness and perfection."[48]

Sturgis continued to reiterate that knowledgeable impartial criticism was key to the development of good modern architecture: "Modern criticism is of incalculable importance; the whole [architectural] fabric of the future, its knowledge and its original achievement, is to be built up according to the dictates of this criticism, and may be expected to assume extraordinary, novel, and splendid forms of perfection under this new influence."[49]

But Sturgis faulted Charles Eastlake for his lack of discriminating criticism in *A History of the Gothic Revival* (1872), a defect that he felt was hard for Eastlake, as a practising architect, to avoid: "It is almost impossible for him to speak with freedom of the works of his contemporaries and competitors."[50]

Sturgis continued to take this approach through the 1870s when reviewing books pertaining to various aspects of the fine arts.[51] They are praised for the new knowledge and historical information they impart, thus educating the reader. Yet Sturgis regretted a

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[48][Russell Sturgis], "English Lives of Albert Dürer," review of *History of the Life of Albert Dürer*, by Mrs. C. Heaton, and *Albert Dürer, his Life and Works*, by William Bell Scott, In *Nation* 10 (10 Feb. 1870): 92-93.

[49]Russell Sturgis, Jr., "Modern Architecture," *North American Review* 112 (Jan. 1871): 177.

[50][Russell Sturgis], "Eastlake's Gothic Revival," *Nation* 14 (25 April 1872): 276.

[51]One example is [Russell Sturgis], "The Fine Arts of the Italian Renaissance," review of *Renaissance Italy. The Fine Arts*, by John Addington Symonds, In *Nation* 28 (5 June 1879): 389-390.

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lack of artistic critical synthesis: "One [wishes] that the volume on the Fine Arts were the fruit of as much experience and practical knowledge as it is on long research, careful and patient thought, and sincere devotion to historical and critical truth."[52]

Later Writings on the Critical Role and Standards

The period from the 1890s until his death in 1909 was the most prolific of Sturgis's writing career. Producing all of his books (except for the already-mentioned Jarves collection catalogue) and writing articles and reviews for numerous publications, Sturgis had more opportunities than ever before to educate the public through his criticism. Ironically, while he had suffered from poor eyesight during much of his adult life, he seemed to become more prolific as it continued to deteriorate, depending on photographs and oral readers to aid him in making his judgments and assessments.[53] He had not written for architectural journals prior to this time, in part because their number was limited and often regional in focus (for example, *Inland Architect*) and in part, because those with a broader base were generally not interested in publishing the kind of historical and critical analyses that interested Sturgis.[54] When publisher Clinton W. Sweet established the *Architectural Record* in 1891, he wanted to attract a lay as well as

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[52]Ibid., 390.

[53]Karin May Elizabeth Alexis, "Russell Sturgis: Critic and Architect" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1986), 38.

[54]Mary Woods, Ibid., has examined the approach of the *Architects' and Mechanics' Journal*, *Architectural Review and American Builder's Journal*, *American Architect and Building News*, and the *Architectural Record* to architectural history, arguing that in these four journals, "the editors felt far more comfortable when history served only a limited function as handmaiden to design." (p. 77).

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architectural audience.[55] The initial editors were the journalist Henry W. Desmond and the young Herbert Croly.[56]

The role of Montgomery Schuyler with that journal is well-known,[57] but Sturgis's role has been less appreciated. In 1914 Sturgis was described as "one of the founders of this magazine, and was always in the background, and often to the fore, in the management of this journal, which has stood especially for scholarship in American architecture."[58] The *Architectural Record* offered Sturgis the audience he wanted and provided him the opportunity to write scholarly book reviews, sometimes under the general heading of "The Architect's Library," and to publish detailed and lengthy analyses of architects and their work (the "Great American Architects" series, for example).

During this period, Sturgis continued to write about the proper role of the critic and standards for criticism; some of his articles are quite specific on that subject. His book reviews and book introductions tended to approach the subject more by implication.

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[55]Ibid., 85.

[56]According to Bender, 222-223, Croly, the son of journalists David Goodman Croly and Jane Cunningham Croly, got the position because his father had been close to Clinton W. Sweet. He went on to found the *New Republic*, a reform-minded general interest publication, in 1914. See also Suzanne Stephens, "Architecture Criticism in a Historical Context: The Case of Herbert Croly," in *The Architectural Historian in America*, 275-287.

[57]Jordy and Coe, 12-13.

[58]Edward R. Smith, "Montgomery Schuyler and the History of American Architecture," *ARec* 36 (Sept. 1914): 264. Smith was the librarian of the Avery Architectural Library and had written entries for Sturgis's *Dictionary of Architecture*.

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Sturgis assessed books for what they provided to the critical literature of a field, emphasizing what facts were presented and how judgments were reached. For example, Charles Herbert Moore's book on Gothic architecture was "welcomed as one of the very few serious contributions to this critical study of Gothic architecture, and almost the only one in English."[59] But despite its merits, Sturgis found that it lacked certain facts to provide a solid basis for Moore's assertions.

By contrast, Sturgis found that a book solidly based on facts had the ability to educate its readers and provide a foundation for judgment. A.D.F. Hamlin's *A Text-Book of the History of Architecture* (1896) was praised by Sturgis because it "keeps before the student the knowledge so far gained and the inferences so far drawn as an encouragement to further investigation. . . . The text of the book is very valuable because of the singularly intelligent view taken of the building of each separate epoch. . . . The facts here given and the inferences drawn from them are the essential facts and the safe inferences."[60] Sturgis further praised Hamlin for his unbiased non-nationalistic assessment and judgment of architecture: "It is not merely that he is indifferent to what nation or people is proved to be the inventor of this style or that, his unprejudiced

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[59]Russell Sturgis, "Moore's Gothic Architecture," review of *Development and Character of Gothic Architecture*, by Charles Herbert Moore, In *Nation* 50 (22 May 1890): 416.

[60][Russell Sturgis], review of *A Text-Book of the History of Architecture*, by A.D.F. Hamlin, In *Nation* 63 (6 Aug. 1896): 111.

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largeness of view enables him to see the essential tendencies at work in each epoch and every land."[61]

Applying these critical standards to Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture* [Fig. 76], Sturgis found that the facts had been adequately presented, but that the analysis and judgment were faulty, both in the original 1896 edition and the revised and enlarged fourth edition of 1902.

> The reduction of a complex and subtile [sic] theme such as the critical history of architecture, to a series of brief and positive statements, brings with it this danger, that statements will often be made which cannot be perfectly maintained. The danger is greatly increased when much is made of the influences of race, climate and religion. The working of those influences is so very hard to trace and is so tempting to the bold theorizer, that the student should always be warned against architectural conclusions founded upon such non-architectural reasoning.[62]

Echoing these remarks six years later, he wrote:

> The "comparative method" as used therein is not in our judgment of much value as an historical or critical apparatus. . . . The "method" apparently most scientific, is in reality crudely empirical, and is frequently forced by a decidedly procrustean attempt at comparison. . . . It is quite another thing to demonstrate the thesis accurately and definitely so that a student may recognize with any degree of clear certainty the facts due to one cause and to another. . . Too often, indeed, the facts are read by the theory -- the theory is not logically and certainly read from the facts.[63]

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[61]Russell Sturgis, review of *A Text-Book of the History of Architecture*, by A.D.F. Hamlin, In *ARec* 6 (July-Sept. 1896): 93.

[62]Russell Sturgis, review of *A History of Architecture for the Student, Craftsman and Amateur*, by Banister Fletcher, In *ARec* 6 (July-Sept. 1896): 93-94. Sturgis had made similar remarks in 1868 on Japanese art and its context. See note 46.

[63][Russell Sturgis], "The Architect's Library," review of *A History of Architecture in the Comparative Method*, by Banister Fletcher, In *ARec* 12 (May 1902): 119.

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Sturgis applied his critical standards to more than architecture and in his reviews, he explained why certain critical methods were praiseworthy. For example, in his lengthy review of *Stained Glass as an Art* (1896) he explained:

> A careful reading of the synopsis of the book reveals a remarkable intelligence and rightness of theory and a consistent and thorough development of the thought from the beginning to the end of the work. Nowhere is there to be found a sounder theory of fine art as developed in the matter of decorative painting, . . . which we call stained glass; nowhere is the series of truths . . . more perfectly expressed in brief words of analysis than is found to be the case here.[64]

Similarly, a work on the ecclesiastical architecture of Scotland elicited favorable comments from Sturgis on its methods:

> The text . . . rises to a high excellence of historical demonstration, as is natural in a case where with equal knowledge, equal critical faculty and equal care the subject treated is larger and more attractive. It must be said in the plainest way that nowhere in the English language is there a better piece of historical and critical work in the department of architecture. . . . We have in this book a model study of its kind.[65]

And W.R. Lethaby's *Mediaeval Art* was described by Sturgis as

> a work of great research and of singular thoroughness. Two apparent characteristics of Mr. Lethaby are a laudable willingness to take pains, and a marked readiness to adopt positive opinions -- to reach final conclusions and avow them. . . The monuments have been carefully studied and minutely compared, the latest as well as the old standard authorities consulted, the religious and racial influence weighed.[66]

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[64]Russell Sturgis, "Decorative Windows in England and America," review of *Stained Glass as an Art*, by Henry Holiday, In *ARec* 6 (April-June 1897): 509.

[65]Russell Sturgis, review of *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland from the Earliest Christian Times to the Seventeenth Century*, by David MacGibbon and Thomas Ross, In *ARec* 8 (Oct.-Dec. 1898): 225.

[66][Russell Sturgis], review of *Mediaeval Art*, by W.R. Lethaby, In *Nation* 80 (27 April 1905): 339.

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Sturgis did not hesitate to comment on the critical defects of others. In his review of a biography of William Morris Hunt, he called Hunt "a sincere critic, and both quick sighted and clear sighted." But Sturgis thought that Hunt failed to truly educate his students and those who heard his lectures because he assumed too much previous knowledge of the principles of fine art on their part. Further, "the hearer would need the general power of appreciation in his own mind to be somewhat developed before he could hope to understand the phrases which Hunt let fall as he himself understood them." Still "always [Hunt] felt and acted as a preacher of the truth, and in this manner he was able to teach to his pupils and to a wider circle still, some of the important truths of fine art."[67]

Throughout these examples, we have seen how Sturgis continually emphasizes the need and desirability for knowledge and facts to educate the reader and develop his judgment.

The Critic Guides the Reader

If Sturgis offered an implicit explanation of the critical role in many of his book reviews, he was quite explicit in many of his book introductions on the necessity he felt to help the reader develop his or her critical judgment, even when recognizing the inadequacy and limitation of words to convey the meaning of a visual experience. This was particularly apparent in a series of three works on the appreciation of the major fine

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[67]Russell Sturgis, "An American Painter's Memorial," review of *The Art-Life of William Morris Hunt*, by Helen M. Knowlton, In *Book Buyer* 19 (Dec. 1899): 384, 386.

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arts: architecture, sculpture, and painting (or as he preferred, "pictures"), published between 1903 and 1905.

Beginning with architecture and publishing his book under the title *How to Judge Architecture*, Sturgis cautioned his reader that

> in trying to train the mind to judge of works of architecture, one can never be too patient. . .
>
> The reader must feel assured that there are not authorities at all in the matter of architectural appreciation; and that the only opinions, or impressions, or comparative appreciations that are worth anything to him are those which he will form gradually for himself. . . . [and he will remember] that in a subject on which opinions differ so very widely if one epoch be compared with another, there can be no such thing as a final judgment.
>
> The object of this book is to help the reader to acquire, such an independent knowledge of the essential characteristics of good buildings, and also such a sense of the possible differences of opinions concerning inessentials, that he will always enjoy the sight, the memory, or the study of a noble structure without undue anxiety as to whether he is right or wrong. Rightness is relative: to have a trained observation, knowledge of principles, and a sound judgment as to proprieties of construction and design is to be able to form your opinions for yourself.[68]

Then, in order to train his readers' critical faculties, Sturgis discussed architectural examples from the Greek Doric period to America of the nineteenth century.

When he turned to sculpture and critical standards for its appreciation, Sturgis stated that he would follow the method used "in another hand-book of this series," by taking "as our starting-point that sculpture which is the most generally recognized as without fault, humanly speaking, and even without serious short-coming," namely the

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[68]Russell Sturgis, *The Appreciation of Architecture: How to Judge Architecture* 7th ed. (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1913), 11-13.

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works of Greece in the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.[69] Sturgis voiced the frustration of the critic trying to express judgment in mere words:

> It is the plague of all attempts to write critically about the plastic arts, that, when an important question comes, words are not found by which that question can be stated -- much less answered. . . . How are words to express that minute increase in the projecting rotundity here, or there, its greater or less flattening? And yet it is upon such differences as these that there depends the greatness or inferiority of sculpture.[70]

And he concluded his account by reminding the public of its duties to art and the artists:

> What we require of [artists] is, then, an undisturbed and constant devotion to [their work]. And, that this may be possible to the artist, the public must learn that only artistic work is to be had from an artist, and must really stop asking him for moral teaching, and archaeological information, and general exhortation [in his works].[71]

Such demands for moral teaching, etc., might be particularly prevalent in painting, more so than sculpture or architecture. Beginning his appreciation of painting, Sturgis reminded his readers that "the purpose of this series of handbooks is to show the great arts of design from one and the same stand point [and] to show how independent is the artistical standard of judgment."[72] He thought it was easier to demonstrate the truths of artistic judgment in sculpture and architecture because

> it is easy to reduce all your most refined thoughts about sculpture and about architecture to considerations of form alone, and they are none the

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[69]Russell Sturgis, *The Appreciation of Sculpture: A Handbook* (New York: The Baker and Taylor Co., 1904), 11.

[70]Ibid., 34-35.

[71]Ibid., 224.

[72]Russell Sturgis, *The Appreciation of Pictures: A Handbook* (New York: The Baker and Taylor Co., 1905), 11.

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> less noble for that. But in the matter of picture-making there is the transference of actual form and of the appearance of form to a flat surface. . . there are the values, the relative strength in light and dark of every part of the picture . . . there is the representation of nature, or of incident.[73]

With so many things to consider when judging pictures, Sturgis posed the problem: "Whether there is really any difficulty in so training the powers of observation and so enlarging the sympathies that very different and even seemingly contrary tendencies may be enjoyed by a student of art." His remedy was to urge "more knowledge, more experience, more practice in comparing one work of art with another, a larger understanding of what artists were about -- of what they were trying to do."[74] This was the same prescription he had set for critics some forty years earlier.

In the Scammon Lectures, reprinted as *The Interdependence of the Arts of Design*, which Sturgis delivered at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1904, he sought to move beyond judgments of art in a historical context by setting forth critical standards to provide a basis for judging contemporary fine art.[75] From his critical perspective, he found an inherent difficulty, for "all art judgment must be comparative. There is absolutely no value in your opinion of a building or of a painting . . . until you have seen and studied a great number of works of art of the same class, and have in this way discovered for yourself the possibilities and proprieties of the situation."[76] How could he

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[73]Ibid., 14.

[74]Ibid., 21-22.

[75]Russell Sturgis, *The Interdependence of the Arts of Design* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1905).

[76]Ibid., 16.

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or any critic see or know enough contemporary works to form a comparative judgment? Nonetheless the critic had a responsibility "with others" to "*lead* popular opinion; and this popular opinion will be shaped out of the judgment of the special students of art, but this judgment will be formed slowly."[77] Sturgis's proposal, in the absence of a broad knowledge of contemporary works for comparison, was that recent art be evaluated in the context of older art which had been "accepted, ticketed, and indexed. You can, with a certain amount of research, discover what some excellent judges think of it."[78] Thus with a knowledge of historical works of art and critical judgments of the sort Sturgis sought to inculcate in his "appreciation handbook" series, one could learn to judge recent art.

The Critic on the Critics

After Ruskin's death in 1900, Sturgis wrote about Ruskin's failure as an art critic and the nature of art criticism, particularly as it addressed, not the artist, but the public who responded to that art.[79] This opinion of Ruskin was a major reversal from that Sturgis had expressed many years earlier (see p. 298 above).

> Ruskin was not a critic at all, either by nature or by gained capacity. . . . He had remarkable powers of observation and a retentive memory for what he had once observed. He had a sincere love of art in many forms and a hearty desire to sympathize with the artist. . . . There is no writer

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[77]Ibid., 19.

[78]Ibid., 20.

[79]Russell Sturgis, "Art Criticism and Ruskin's Writings on Art," *Scribner's Magazine* 27 (April 1900): 509-512.

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> upon art-subjects from whom it is better worth while to collect short passages.[80]

But Ruskin lacked knowledge and an overall critical intelligence, and he asserted his authority when he had no basis for doing so.

To Sturgis, this was not art criticism:

> In art criticism there is, of course, no such thing as Authority. Art criticism is a matter of suggestion, of comparison, of good-natured and sympathetic hints at possible short-comings, of hearty praise for probable excellences. Art criticism is addressed not to the artist -- as people who think they hate art criticism keep on asserting or assuming -- not to the artist, but to the public.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Criticism has nothing to do with telling the artist how he ought to work. Criticism consists exclusively in bringing up the public, man by man, woman by woman, by the ear, by the coat-lapel, or by the sleeve, and saying, in the simplest words which the subject will admit of, that the work of art in question deserves special notice on this account and on that -- may be best appreciated if so and so is kept clearly in mind. This has to be done again and again, the thought has to be phrased in half a dozen ways, the significance of the work of art to the critic has to be conveyed through effort and repeated experiment even to the willing student.[81]

Again Sturgis reiterated his opinion that knowledge -- the attribute that Ruskin ultimately lacked despite his powers of observation and memory (and which Sturgis had in abundance) -- was the foundation and basis of art criticism: The critic "cannot know too much, and he cannot know it too thoroughly. . . . He should have a 'vast and varied' knowledge of all the subjects which go to make up the artistic work which he has under

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[80]Ibid., 509.

[81]Ibid., 510.

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consideration."[82] The was the same prescription he had set for critics in the *New Path* some 36 years earlier.

Sturgis's brief assessment of his other mid-nineteenth century "mentor," Viollet-le-Duc, is a major contrast: "Viollet-le-Duc is the first in time and almost the first in merit of those architectural critics whose judgment of a building or a style is based upon a thorough understanding of its structural character."[83]

Sturgis compared his view of the critical role with that of his contemporary William Crary Brownell.[84] Sturgis set forth some of his long-held standards for criticism, while calling Brownell's book, *French Art, Classic and Contemporary Painting and Sculpture* (1901),

> apparently the most important piece of critical fine art work done in the English language by any person not a practicing artist. . . . He has taken the artist as he lives, and has tried to take his, the artist's, point of view, -- a thing quite immeasurably difficult for the non-artist. That point once gained as nearly as possible, he then looks calmly and discreetly at French art as it is to be judged in relation to the life of the modern world.[85]

As he had done in other contexts, Sturgis expressed frustration with the limitations of language, feeling that Brownell's use of language lacked precision: "That is the difficulty

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[82]Ibid., 511.

[83]Russell Sturgis, "The World's Best Architecture: Selection of Plates, Description and Criticism," *Architectural Studies* 1 (Aug. 1899): plate 31.

[84]Russell Sturgis, "William Crary Brownell as Critic on Fine Art," *International Monthly* 5 (April 1902): 448-467. Brownell (1851-1928) was primarily a literary critic.

[85]Ibid., 450, 451.

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with writing about fine art; you are driven to express in terms of one language that which has been conceived and expressed in terms of another language,"[86]

To Sturgis "the essential thing in the work of art is *external charm*, and that because there is nothing in the work of art except its own exterior, and that all the reading of inward sentiment into that work of art must be largely personal with the student himself."[87] The critic's responsibility was to judge the exterior, not the inward *sentiment.*

The problem was further intensified in painting: "He asks in art for evidence of a non-artistic sentiment which cannot always be present, least of all in the works of painters who are true painters, who seek form and color because that is their trade as well as art."[88] Instead the test should be

> *significance*, pictorial significance, decorative significance; -- the question is, Does the work of art mean anything as a piece of painting, as a piece of sculpture, as decoration? It is not a question of primary importance whether it is good archaeology, or true girlish sentiment, or an appeal to love of country.[89]

Brownell's major lack was of "a distinct recognition of the fact that the important thing to a work of art is artistic meaning." To thoroughly understand fine art, Sturgis would "study art always with conscious or unconscious reference to the point from which [it] started." Instead Brownell compared "thought, sentiment, observation of humanity

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[86]Ibid., 452-453.

[87]Ibid., 456.

[88]Ibid., 463.

[89]Ibid., 464.

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and of the external world as expressed in the graphic and plastic representation of objects and of humanity with a similar observation expressed in words."[90] This was a valid approach to art criticism and one which reflected Brownell's literary background, but it was not one that Sturgis would advocate. This critique points out the dichotomy between the critic who approaches art with a visual sensibility and the one who sees art with a literary sensibility. Clearly Sturgis was the former; he regularly voiced his frustration at expressing his visual sensibility in a literary context, but he consistently advocated that approach.

Since Sturgis felt that it was important for a critic to understand art from an artist's perspective, it is helpful to examine his restatement of the critical role in *A Study of the Artist's Way of Working in the Various Handicrafts and Arts of Design.* He pointed out that the book was

> not a History of Art in any sense; it is a treatise on the ways in which the artist's conceptions are formed and take visible shape. . . . It is with the artistical processes only, and what they reveal, that this book is concerned. The purpose is in every case to ask the question: What was the artist in search of as he wrought his work of art? -- How did he achieve the desired result? -- to ask these questions, and, if possible, to answer them.[91]

This kind of understanding was essential to the critical role.

Again he pointed out the problems of language when dealing with art:

> The artist is a man who has thoughts to express, and who expresses them in a language altogether different from the language of words. . . . The person who has produced [works of art] has had thoughts to express,

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[90]Ibid., 465, 466.

[91]Russell Sturgis, *A Study of the Artist's Way of Working in the Various Handicrafts and Arts of Design* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1905), vii.

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> which (in the Arts of Design) he seeks to convey either by pure form, or by expression of pure form on the flat surface, and, in either, by beautiful gradations of light and shade, . . . By these means are conveyed the thoughts of the artist in form and color.[92]

But, "without such verbal expression of the artistic thought, without such translation into language of words of the artist's own utterance of his thoughts, no criticism of a work of art is possible.

"The criticism of a work of art must consist first in an explanation of the apparent and the probable artistic intention of the artist." But Sturgis cautioned that art criticism had to be of the work itself, not "what else was or may be possible." Further, "the purpose of criticism is never to instruct the artist: the artist cares nothing for such criticism. . . What he hears from the critic can never be of use to him, and it is not for the sake of the artist that the criticism is written. Art criticism exists for the sake of the outside world."[93] He reiterated that

> a work of art may have a purpose other than an artistic one, but that is not the purpose to which the artist gave much thought once the subject was decided, nor is it to that subject that art criticism is directed . . . it is not criticism of a work of art to say . . . that the artist should teach this or that . . . To say that he should be a teacher of truth of any kind, a moralist, a revealer, or an expounder, or a preacher, is to substitute one set of thoughts for another and will never result in criticism.[94]

Before making a judgment, the critic, as a student of art, was urged to "look at a work of art many times, by itself, and also in comparison with other works of art." After

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[92]Ibid., 3-4.

[93]Ibid., 8-9.

[94]Ibid., 9-10.

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patient thought and examination, "he can really know that at last he has ascertained in part what the artist was trying to express."[95] And once the critic knew what the artist was trying to express, he could then criticize that art work and thereby educate the public.

Sturgis's final word on the role of the critic appeared less than a year before his death, in response to a piece by H.W. Desmond, his editorial colleague at *Architectural Record*.[96] Desmond had posed a problem which Sturgis paraphrased:

> Why is it that the architects of our time and their critics disagree so absolutely, and, as it were, unanimously, with regard to the condition of the art of architecture? . . . Architecture, so the critic says, is dead. It is not a living art. . . And yet the architects continue to work -- continue with some enthusiasm and much energy to practice their profession.[97]

Sturgis cautioned his readers that critics and architects had different perceptions of what constituted architecture. Because the practicing architect dealt with so many aspects of building -- planning, administering, solving structural problems -- beyond the mere creation of an artistic design, he could find satisfaction as a professional in dealing with those problems. (See Chapters 2 and 4.) The critic, by contrast, who thought only of artistic intent and expression, despaired at the lack of artistic progress. Sturgis reminded his readers once again that it was the critic's role to address the public, not the artist. The critic might

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[95]Ibid., 10-11.

[96]Russell Sturgis, "The Architect and the Critic," *Scribner's Magazine* 43 (Feb. 1908): 253-256. H.W. Desmond, "The Architect and the Critic," *ARec* 19 (April 1906): 279-282.

[97]Sturgis, "The Architect and the Critic," 254.

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> suggest a number of considerations which perhaps had not occurred to the author of the work in hand, and may not occur readily to the public -- to the readers of the criticism . . . some part of [the critic's work] may be insisted on a little more strongly than the rest, while yet he assumes no nearer approach to omniscience than he allows his reader.[98]

If the critic remembered that his role was to educate the public, then the public, once educated, could demand improved architecture.

In this examination of a variety of Sturgis's writings, I have shown that he *maintained a consistent approach to the role of the critic throughout his writing career.* In his book reviews he emphasized some aspects of the critic's role more than others. Even though I have not quoted his newspaper reviews, his approach there was similar. Sturgis modified his own critical judgments and assessments over time, as I have shown in Chapters 3 and 4, but this may be understood in light of his own increased knowledge and experience -- the very qualities that he regularly reiterated were essential for a critic to be truly successful and useful. If Sturgis kept repeating himself on the critical role, it was because he thought it so important for the critic to undertake it properly, with the ultimate goal of educating the public. More than once he expressed frustration because the language of criticism was so much more advanced in the fields of literature, poetry, and music.[99] Moreover, because the language of art criticism was less well known and the language of art had to be translated from non-verbal and visual forms to verbal ones, it had to be repeated often.

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[98]Ibid., 254.

[99]See Sturgis, "The Conditions of Art."

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Wight as Critic

Like Sturgis, Wight wrote architectural criticism throughout his career. Early on, he wrote for general interest publications like *Putnam's*, and he penned two major critical pieces for the short-lived *American Art Review* in the 1880s. While he was a regular correspondent for *American Architect and Building News*, this writing was usually reportage rather than criticism, given the predilections of that publication (as discussed above). By contrast, *Inland Architect* in the 1890s offered Wight major opportunities to write critical pieces, as did *Western Architect* in the last years of his life. Following Sturgis's death in 1909, Wight took up his critical pen for *Architectural Record.*

Unlike Sturgis, Wight was not self-conscious of his critical role and did not set forth extensive standards for art and architectural criticism. Those standards must be derived from his writings by implication. Further, I believe he looked to Sturgis and the standards that he had set.

Sturgis's first piece on criticism was published in the *New Path.* Wight too published in the *New Path* about the duty of the architect to the cause of universal truth, as has been discussed in Chapter 1.[100] He wrote of educating architects so that they could build good and truthful architecture, a concept that was part of the accepted currency of progressive nineteenth-century thought that was so understood it did not need further explanation. Such architects designing such buildings could educate the public. This, in turn, raised the issue of criticism and architectural standards:

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[100][Peter B.] W[ight]., "What Has Been Done and What Can Be Done," *NP* 1(Sept. 1863): 52-59; (Oct. 1863): 70-75; (Nov., 1863): 80-84; (Feb. 1864): 130-133; see Chap. 1, pp. 46-48.

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> If [the public] did but know the false from the true, [they] would not be slow in rejecting bad construction, but the fault is with them as it is with the generality of architects, their opinions are formed from what they see about them; not judging anything from a fixed and positive principle, but forming opinions from the comparison of standards equally bad, their conclusions are merely fancies, ever changing as the shifting sands of the desert, and coming to no good. What we need, therefore, and what we have never yet had, is fearless architectural criticism which judges everything from the standard of absolute right and wrong, and which will teach people how to judge the good and bad from some sure standpoint. The would-be practical men would then be met on their own ground, and condemned under their own statutes.[101]

But having made this rather sweeping statement, Wight did not go on to explain how to establish such a standard of absolute right and wrong. While Wight retained a life-long devotion to the cause of truthful architecture and regularly discussed architecture from this viewpoint, this was the only time he called for criticism on such terms.

Wight reiterated the concept of truthful architecture, setting it up as a critical standard, in 1884: "The fundamental *idea* which is the basis of all good art is that *there can be no beauty without truth*, and the effort to promulgate this idea has been mainly individual effort, aided by some good examples."[102] Wight concluded by citing the necessity for good art (which presumably would have been aided by good criticism):

> What the world needs is the refining influence of art, seen not only in our picture galleries, accessible to a few only, but in all the affairs of our daily life. It is that art which brings with it every refinement of life, which lifts us from drudgery and toil, from all selfish desires, all sordid ambitions, and surrounds us with those things which are true and beautiful, which

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[101]Ibid., 83.

[102]P.B. Wight, "The Development of the Phases of the Fine Arts in America," *IA* 4 (Nov. 1884): 52. Wight used the second part of this article to detail the history of the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art, and quoted and/or summarized the articles of the Association.

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> gives us a true insight of nature; which, as has been so often said, lifts us up from nature to nature's God.[103]

Like Sturgis, Wight used book reviews, not always on art and architectural subjects, as vehicles to at least implicitly set forth critical standards.

One of the most interesting of these is his review of Gladston-Lingham's *The Science of Taste.*[104] While disputing the author's contention that taste could be considered "as a science" because it is amenable to "laws founded on aesthetic appreciation," Wight praised much of the discussion and the book's illustrations. He noted that

> while endeavoring to lay down the fundamental principles of criticism, it severely criticises those who do not recognize them, with an air which savors almost of cynicism. . . . The author's contempt for all conventionalities in art and criticism, and his free treatment of the subject, are such as we should expect from an American rather than an English pen.[105]

Wight agreed that taste was the result of education and that "reason was the foundation of good taste in matters of [the fine arts]." The author equated "the general cultivation and dissemination of taste" with "a cultivation of the knowledge of what is good and bad in design." Thus by implication, Wight though it was the role of criticism to cultivate this knowledge, by means of education and reason.

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[103]*IA* 4 (Dec. 1884): 65.

[104]P.B. Wight, review of *The Science of Taste. Being a Treatise on Its Principles* by Gladston-Lingham, In *American Art Review* 2 (Dec. 1880): 77-78. The exact citation for this book remains somewhat of a mystery; so far, I have not found it listed by title or author in either American or English book catalogues of the period.

[105]Ibid., 77.

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Wight's review of W.J. Loftie's *Inigo Jones and Wren* praised the book's contribution to the philosophy of architecture, which "is calculated to set us thinking and to do good in the end, however narrow his own views may be."[106] But, according to Wight, the work failed in the author's inability to discriminate between good and bad work. Thus despite its valuable historical discussion, it failed as criticism.

In assessing Henry Van Brunt's *Greek Lines and Other Architectural Essays*,[107] Wight praised Van Brunt as "foremost among the few architectural critics who have had anything to say and been able to give intelligent expression to their ideas." Because Van Brunt had this critical faculty, his book "is intended to aid us in doing our own thinking."[108] Thus Van Brunt could move beyond mere knowledge of past architecture to a discussion of principles, specifically, Greek lines which "are the basis of the only principles we need to follow. They are the basis of truth in construction, as they are of truth of decoration, sculpture and painting, which together comprise the art of architecture."[109] This analysis recalls Wight's emphasis on truthful architecture as the basis of critical discussion in his *New Path* articles of some 30 years earlier. Because Van Brunt emphasized principles and condemned fads and fashions, Wight

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[106]P.B. Wight, "Inigo Jones and Wren," *IA* 23 (Feb. 1894): 6.

[107]P.B. Wight, "Henry Van Brunt -- Architect, Writer and Philosopher," *IA* 23 (April 1894): 29-30; (May 1894): 41-42; (June 1894): 49-50; (July 1894): 60-61.

[108]Ibid., 29.

[109]Ibid., 30.

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recommended the book to "the mature practitioner" even more than to the student.[110]

The publication of Sturgis's *European Architecture: A Historical Study* led Wight to praise Sturgis as "an architect who is a scholar and has an opportunity to give others the benefit of his scholarship and critical judgment."[111] In praising Sturgis, Wight cited the qualities of knowledge and impartiality in Sturgis that Sturgis had repeatedly emphasized were necessary for a good critic:

> He is not a product of any school and is unprejudiced, while he has a naturally encyclopedic mind. He is well versed in one branch of art study as another, and an acknowledged expert, not only in architecture, but in sculpture, painting and decorative art, so that he is competent to appreciate the true relations between them. To him the progressive development of any one of these is seen only in its relation to all the others and to contemporary history. This is the rare quality of broadmindedness.[112]

Wight felt this approach helped Sturgis develop an evolutionary theory of the development of architecture (see Croly on Wight below).

Finally, Wight restated his approval of many of Sturgis's critical qualities in a review of the first two volumes of *The History of Architecture*: "The author is always free to admit where it is in doubt. If he cannot give facts he says so candidly, and does not indulge in speculation. Another peculiar feature of Mr. Sturgis's treatment of this subject is the analytical method of explaining self-evident facts,"[113] including those

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[110]Ibid., 61.

[111]Peter B. Wight, "Russell Sturgis -- Architect, Encyclopedist and Critic," *IA* 28 (Jan. 1897): 56.

[112]Ibid.

[113]P[eter]. B. W[ight]., "A History of Architecture," *ARec* 27 (Feb. 1910): 200.

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which pertained to the nature and construction of architecture. This is more than just back-handed praise as Sturgis's analysis amplified what the reader initially thought was self-evident.

Other Critic's Views of the Critical Role

Sturgis ultimately believed that it was the role of the critic to educate the public, which, once educated, could demand better art and architecture. Although Wight greatly admired Sturgis and his approach to criticism, as is clear from his laudatory reviews and his "Reminiscences of Sturgis," he felt that the role of the critic was to educate architects with the goal of encouraging good architecture as an American architecture evolved. Such a criticism, one directed more towards architects than the public, seemed to accord more with the views of a number of contemporary critics.

One early issue of *American Architect and Building News*, probably in the voice of its editor William Longfellow, spoke of the need for good criticism.[114]

> The fact is, that among American artists . . . there exists no recognized system of working to furnish canons by which the excellence of their work can be judged. . . . The difficulty comes . . . in great measure from the fact that our architects and other artists have no common and systematic training.

Further, "there are no more deplorable systems to one who is interested in art in our community, than the prevailing want of faith in the honesty of any criticism, and the apparently hopeless tendency to degrade every expression of difference of opinion into a personal quarrel." Like Sturgis, Longfellow called for the critic to keep an open mind and to consider the artist's viewpoint. But Longfellow thought that both the artist's

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[114]"Artistic Criticism," *AABN* 1 (22 April 1876): 130-131.

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conception and the success with which it was carried out were appropriate for criticism. However, the criticism carried more validity if it was not just personal opinion, but the judgment referred "to some principle, code, or scheme, recognized, even if not accepted by the artist, to which he himself pays deference." He called for rules of art or criticism as an aid to developing art:

> For the mass of artists it would be a valuable means of training, as well as a wholesome restraint, if we could habituate ourselves to a kind of criticism such as prevails in the French *ateliers*, -- keen, incisive, well understood, and impersonal, and requiring that the artist be able to explain and justify the treatment of his work, as the critic does his criticism.[115]

Herbert Croly, inspired by Wight's views on "What is Evolution in Architecture?," also discussed the role of criticism in cultivating good architecture among architects.[116] Again echoing Sturgis, he called for "a becoming spirit of disinterestedness and humility," rather than arrogance and bias. He chided critics who forgot that their first business was to interpret, and failed to consider the artist's viewpoint and the "limitations of his material and technical resources."[117] On the other hand, a proper critical atmosphere, "an atmosphere of technical comment which is at once a stimulus and a check, and which can exist only in a group of sincere, enthusiastic, talented and well-trained craftsmen," would inspire good architects who could teach by example and begin

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[115]Ibid., 131.

[116]Herbert D. Croly, "Criticism That Counts," *ARec* 10 (April 1901): 398-405. See P.B. Wight and R[ussell]. S[turgis]., "Architectural Practice - Mutuality not Individuality," *Scribner's Magazine* 29 (February 1901): 253-256.

[117]Ibid., 398.

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a process of experimentation which could lead to "consummate architectural forms."[118]

Croly asserted that

> a certain kind of criticism has a most important part to play in the development. . . of an American architecture. The purpose of such criticism is to maintain a communicating current of ideas and visible experiments and suggestions throughout the whole body of American architectural practice. Its chief effort should be not so much to praise and condemn, as to select and popularize. Obviously the selection implies a standard . . . The general application of such a standard on the part of the architects themselves, or of people in touch with them, is, as we have said, the criticism that counts.[119]

The perception of the role of criticism as speaking to architects persisted. Writing in 1930, Alfred T. North stated that "printed architectural criticism is practically non-existent in America; it is, however, quite stridently vocal and voluminous among architects."[120] (This might be seen as a comment on the state of architectural writing following the deaths of Sturgis and Schuyler (1914).) He went on to paraphrase Professor Sidney Hook: "'American architecture lacks genuine significance because it lacks genuine criticism'." Then he posed the question:

> What would result from a genuine public criticism of architecture such as is found in leading European publications? . . . Criticism would cause architects properly to qualify themselves, to think twice and then make an honest creative effort rather than to be satisfied to reproduce or adapt in the all too commonly prevalent mechanical manner. . . . Of course,

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[118]Ibid., 400-401.

[119]Ibid., 404-405.

[120]A[lfred]. T. N[orth]., "Architectural Criticism," *Architectural Forum* 53 (Aug. 1930): 260.

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> genuine criticism cannot eliminate architectural mediocrity, but it certainly will recompense creative architectural ability.[121]

Talbot Hamlin further addressed the problem the following year:

> If we are to have architectural criticism, the quality of criticism becomes of vital importance. . . . Architectural criticism today must go behind archeology and behind personal whims; it must be founded on the bedrock of what architecture is . . . Only so can criticism guide, chasten, encourage, and at the same time grow with the growth of the artist's creative power.[122]

Defining architecture as "the art and science of building beautifully," Hamlin reminded his readers that architecture combined both structural and decorative elements, and that truly effective criticism would have to consider architecture from both viewpoints. It seems likely that both Sturgis and Wight would feel comfortable with such a definition. He went on to list architectural criteria which the critic should use to judge architecture: efficiency, economy, consistency, emotional effect, honesty, expressiveness, personality and graciousness, general form, decorative detail, and scale.[123] Then concluded, "This list, incomplete as it is, comprises the matters which seem most important in architectural criticism, and furnishes a canon that should prove stimulating and helpful to the architectural critic, for these qualities at least, we may demand of good architecture."[124]

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[121]Ibid.

[122]Talbot Faulkner Hamlin, "What We Should Consider Before We Criticise," *American Architect* 140 (Sept. 1931): 34.

[123]Ibid., 110.

[124]Ibid., 114.

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Did Sturgis and Wight achieve their goals as critics? If Sturgis's emphasis on the necessity for critics to educate the public has lessened over time, he achieved much himself during his writing career. Criticism was his passion, his way of bettering society, his reason for writing.

Wight's approach of critics educating architects has been more persistent. But do architects design and build according to critics' formulas? Think of Sturgis's last word (note 96). Maybe it is time again to think of the broader critical goal of public education. How else can the public demand a better built environment?

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CONCLUSION

This study has examined major issues confronting American architects in the second half of the nineteenth century through the writings of Russell Sturgis and Peter B. Wight, both practitioner-writers. What were these issues? Professionalism, creativity, artistic integrity, style as expressed in new building types, all in an American culture which was seeking to set itself apart from the precedents of European architectural styles and buildings.

The impact and influence of their writings began as early as the 1860s as they introduced and espoused the work of John Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc. Both Sturgis and Wight were prolific -- Sturgis even more than Wight -- and they wrote throughout their careers, from 1863 when they published in the *New Path* virtually until their deaths in 1909 and 1925 respectively. They were highly respected for their integrity as professionals and critics, and clearly their editors, their colleagues, and the public who read them, felt that what they wrote continued to be worth reading.

Sturgis was part of the progressive Eastern architectural establishment, as indicated by the publications for which he wrote: *Architectural Record*, *Architectural Review*, *Nation*, *Scribner's*, *Century*. Wight acknowledged and promoted a Midwestern sensibility, especially in his writings for *Inland Architect* and *Western Architect*, but he also wrote for Eastern publications, notably *American Architect and Building News*, *Brickbuilder*, and *Architectural Record* (after Sturgis's death).

Sturgis and Wight were urban architects who wrote about urban building types, especially the new urban building types in an urban context, more specifically New York

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City and Chicago. To them, the problem of designing a tall office building that was fireproof and expressive of its construction in its use of materials was more important than the problem of designing a grand public building in the City Beautiful manner. For example, Sturgis praised the office buildings of Clinton & Russell, Bruce Price, and Louis H. Sullivan in New York City, while Wight looked at the Chicago work of Burnham & Root and Holabird & Roche, as well as Sullivan. Such an attitude was indicative of their practical and evolutionary approach to architecture.

While Sturgis was renowned for his collection of architectural photographs, it does seem that both Sturgis and Wight wrote about buildings they had experienced firsthand for much of their careers. But by the beginning of the twentieth century, the limits of their health and physical capacity meant that much of their writing was from photographs, which also meant that they made mistakes, most notoriously Sturgis in his analysis of Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building (as discussed in Chapter 4). Further, they wrote very little about the plans of buildings, except for Sturgis's discussion of the plans of houses.

While non-Western architecture was seen as exotic, it is to Sturgis's credit that he discussed it in his book reviews and included it in his various histories of architecture. Sturgis and Wight were anti-Beaux Arts, although they had trained architects who went on to the Ecole. To them, the principles of Beaux-Arts planning and applied decoration were not "organic" and thus not relevant to the problem of the new American architecture. Sturgis, for example, was critical of the work of McKim, Mead & White, the country's foremost proponents of Beaux-Arts design by the turn of the century,

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although more so in his correspondence with Wight than in his published writings.[1] And his treatise on "school" vs. "practice" reflected his anti-Beaux Arts prejudice. Wight could praise the planning and the overall effect of the World's Columbian Exposition while decrying its impact on American design. This anti-Beaux Arts attitude set them apart from the generation that followed them and that embraced the Beaux-Arts movement as an effective vehicle for urban planning and design. Nonetheless, Sturgis and Wight with their interest in Gothic architecture and an emphasis on materials and utility in design had been very much within the progressive tendencies and thought of their own generation.

They were not afraid to bring the perspectives of their careers and experiences to their writings, from Sturgis tempering his youthful enthusiasm for Ruskin to Wight explaining the continued relevance of Gothic architecture as a subject for architects to study. Both had their passions: Wight for the cause of fireproof architecture; Sturgis for the cause of good criticism. While Wight had an active career as a fireproof contractor for only some ten years, his interest in and advocacy for the subject continued virtually throughout his entire writing career. And it is due to the efforts of Wight and his like-minded contemporaries that fireproofed buildings in urban areas are now taken for granted. If he thought of fireproofing as an "art," it was also an evolutionary science, as

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[1]In "Reminiscences of Russell Sturgis," *ARec* 26 (Aug. 1909): 123-131, Wight judiciously quotes from Sturgis's letters on the shortcomings of McKim, Mead & White. Sturgis in "The Works of McKim, Mead & White," Great American Architects Series, No. 1, *ARec* (May 1895), is more laudatory, citing the "artistical character" of the firm's work; "the buildings . . . , taken together, are as good as can be expected of any firm which is doing all the work it can get." (pp. 1, 111).

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he understood the term. As both art and science, it ultimately served the cause of the art of architecture. Sturgis, too, was interested in fireproofing as a means of furthering the art of architecture, but from his perspective his greatest concern was to urge architects and designers to be "artistic" in their use of fireproof materials. If Wight brought to the subject the sensibility of the practical expert, exhorting his fellow architects again and again, Sturgis expressed his sensibility as a critic, educating the public to demand fireproof buildings and then judge their artistic qualities. Both championed the cause of architectural professionalism. The cause of fireproof architecture, the cause of good criticism, and the cause of architectural professionalism were their greatest legacies, by advocacy and by example. Their impact on the issues of style and the art of architecture was less long lasting. Despite their rejection of Beaux-Arts architecture, they are not considered to be "proto-modern" like their colleague Montgomery Schuyler and as a consequence, they remain less known today, although they were equally or even more respected at the time.

As this study has noted, Sturgis and Wight were not the only architects among their contemporaries to write history and criticism. As students, they had the example of Leopold Eidlitz and others writing in the *Crayon*.[2] Henry Van Brunt and John Wellborn Root, if not as prolific, were well respected for their writings as well as their

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[2]See "Editors' Introduction," in *American Architecture and other Writings by Montgomery Schuyler*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap/Harvard University. Press, 1961), 24 and fn 35.

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architecture.[3] Their non-architect contemporaries writing about architecture included Montgomery Schuyler, Barr Ferree, and Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer. It was the coincidence of growing professionalism in architecture and the growth and proliferation of periodicals that gave all of these writers a vehicle to express their views and criticism.

While this has been a study of the major themes examined by Sturgis and Wight in their architectural writings, it is not a completely exhaustive analysis of their criticism and other writings. Sturgis, in particular, wrote about painting, sculpture, and literature – criticism, analysis, book reviews, and history – and was more frequently published in general interest periodicals for educated readers. While his early critical writings for the *Nation* dealing with painting have been studied,[4] his writings of the 1890s on the same subject for the *Nation* and the *New York Times*, for example, are worthy of further work. Furthermore, I have looked at Sturgis and Wight as historians and compilers of architectural history primarily in relationship to the issue of style. Sturgis's energy, ambition, and productivity in this regard should not be forgotten. His books, encyclopedia articles, and *Dictionary of Architecture and Building* played an important role in educating students, professional colleagues, and the general public about art and

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[3]William H. Coles, "Introduction: The Writings," in *Architecture and Society: Selected Essays of Henry Van Brunt* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1969); Donald Hoffmann, "Introduction," in *The Meanings of Architecture: Buildings and Writings by John Wellborn Root* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967).

[4]William H. Gerdts, "Through a Glass Brightly: The American Pre-Raphaelites and Their Still Lifes and Nature Studies," in *The New Path: Ruskin and American Pre-Raphaelites* (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1985), 39-77; see notes 64, 66, 67, 69, 72, and 78.

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architecture. As one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1870, he helped establish the importance of art in the public sphere, and his advisory role in the establishment of the Avery Memorial Library at Columbia University in 1892 helped make it the foremost architectural library in the United States. In addition, both Sturgis and Wight were avid lecturers on artistic topics which often found their way into their writings.

When we see Sturgis and Wight together, we observe that their approaches varied. Nonetheless they shared a commonality of interests and intellectual ideas which reinforced and supported each other from their days as students together until Sturgis's death. Then Wight picked up the mantle, so to speak, and continued to promulgate those ideas in the major architectural publications to which Sturgis had been a contributor.

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Fig. 1

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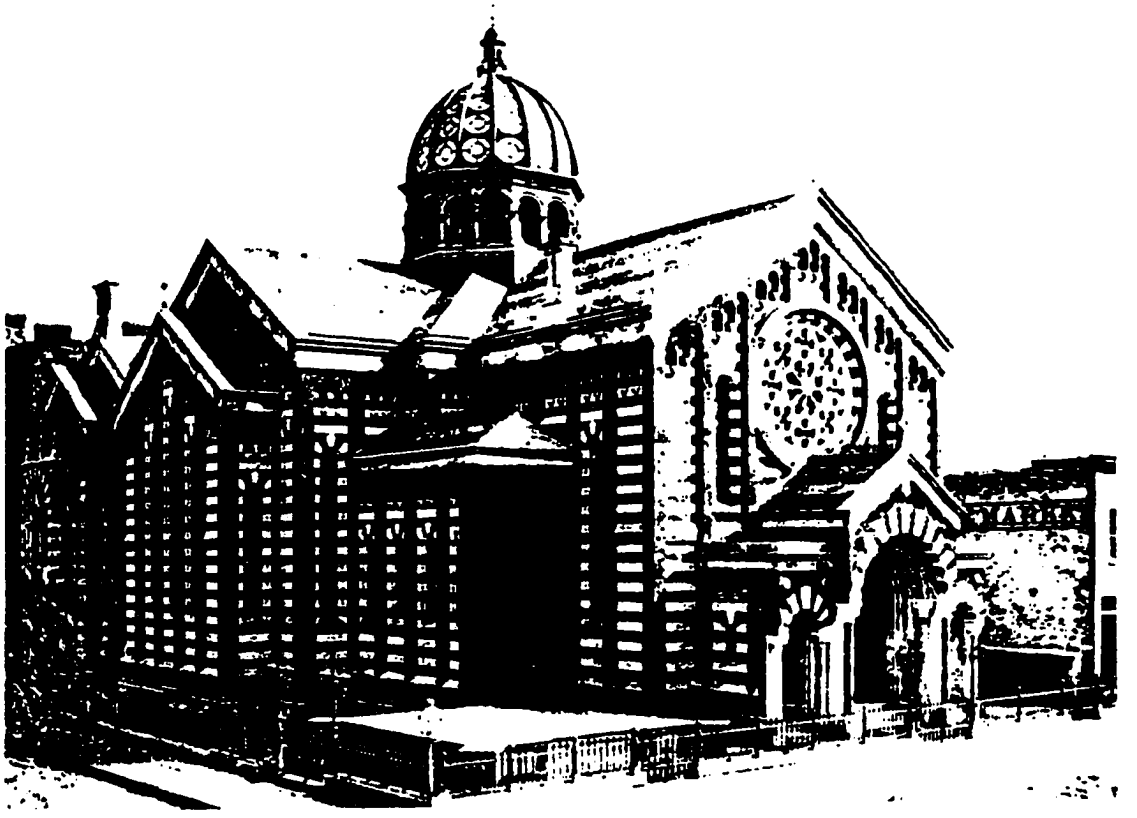

Fig. 2

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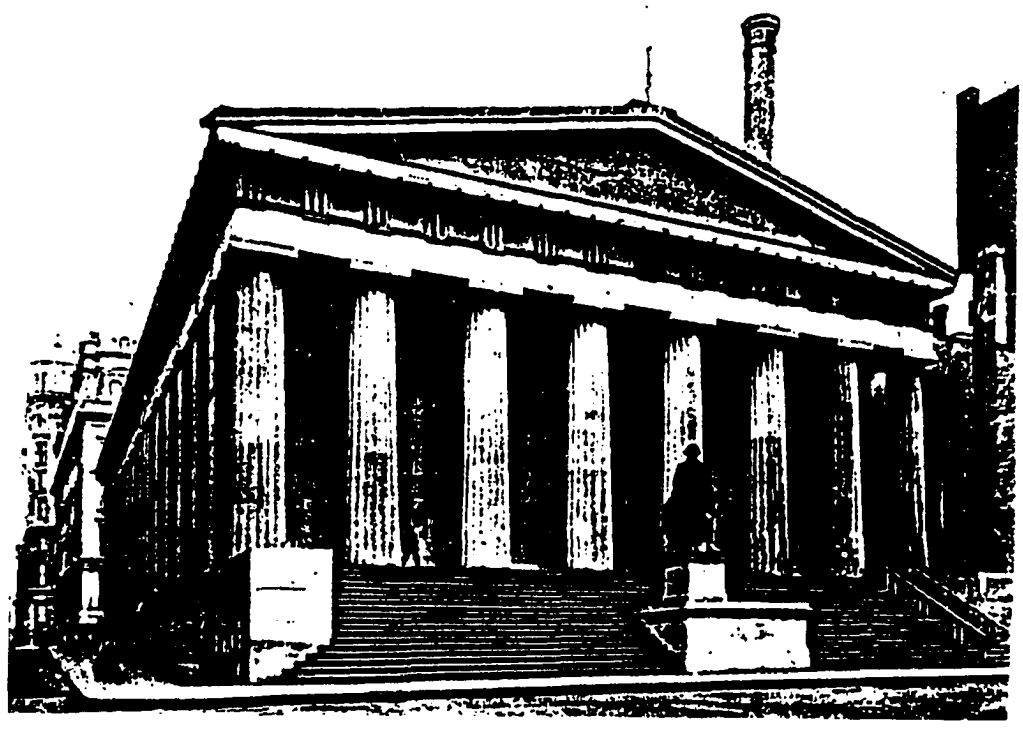

Fig. 3

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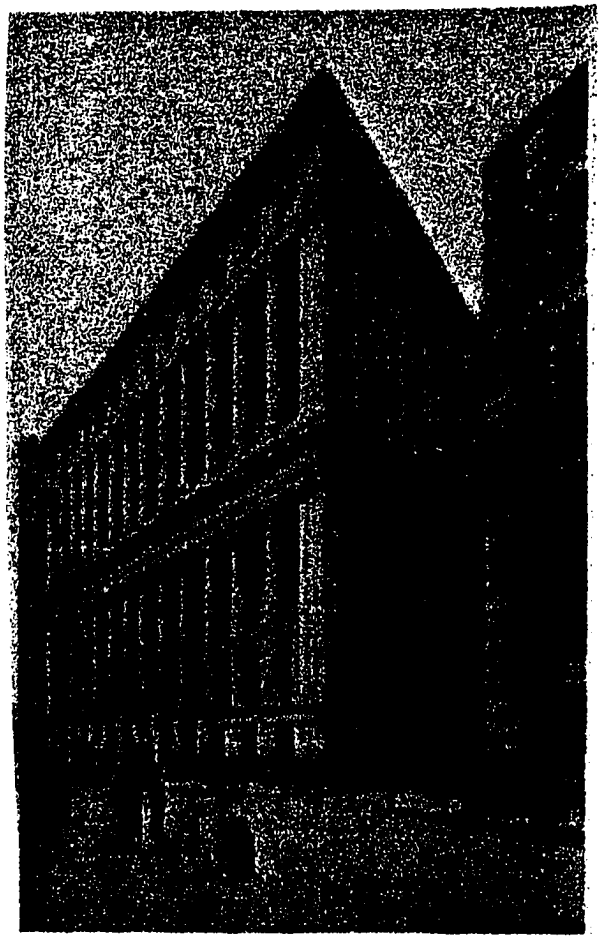

Fig. 4

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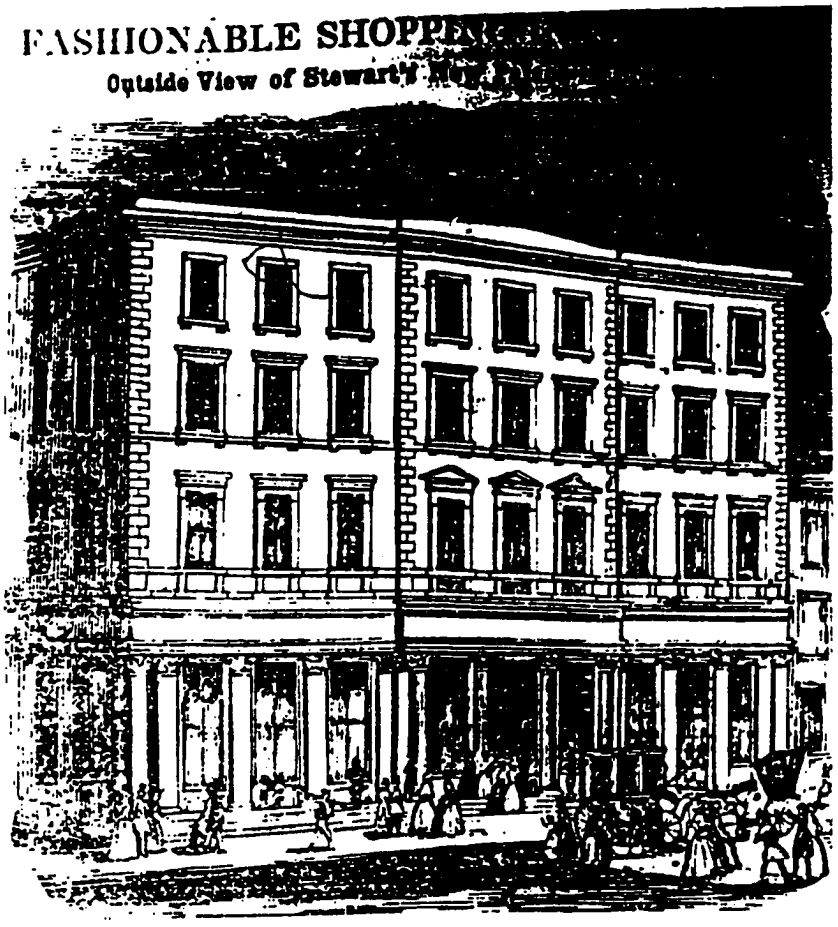

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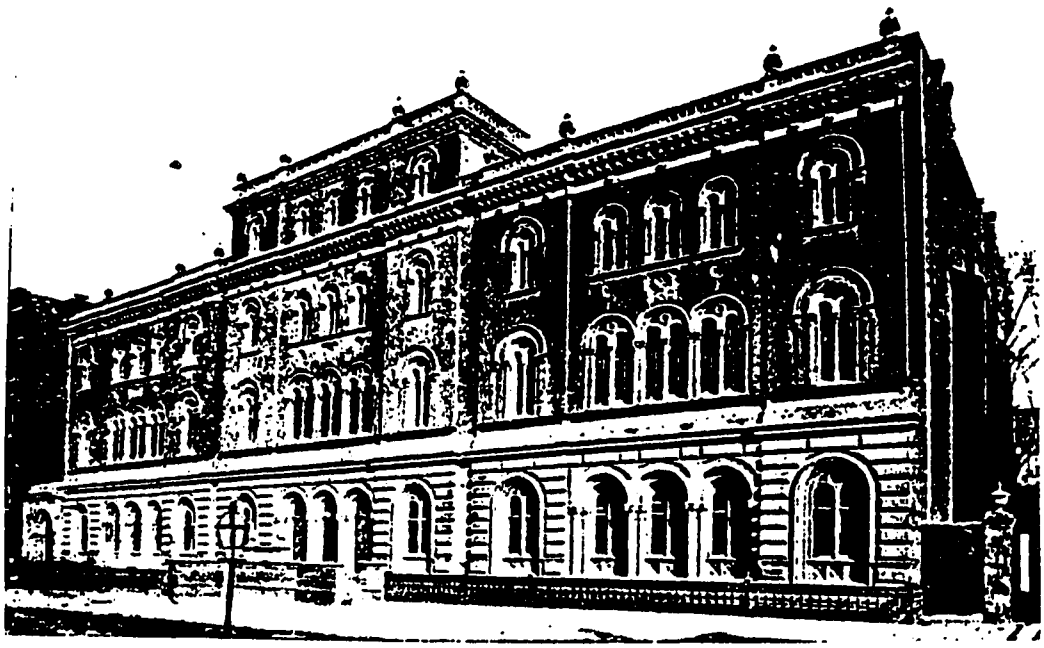

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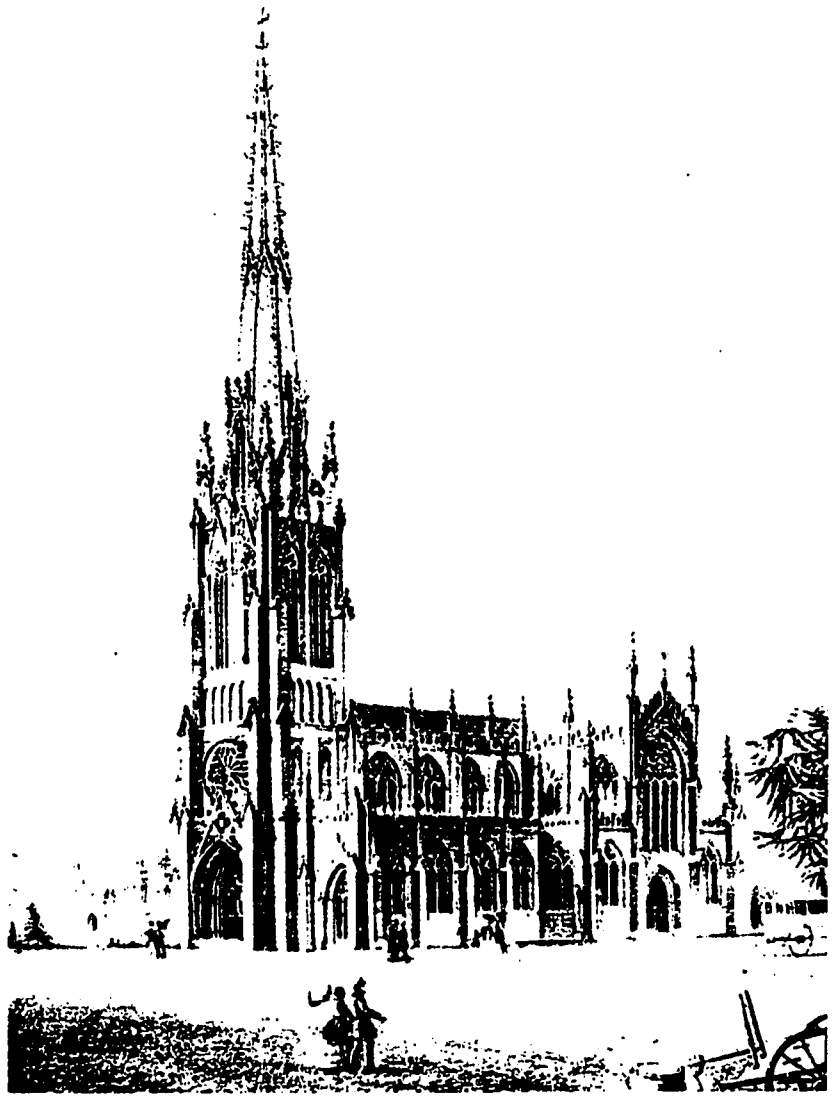

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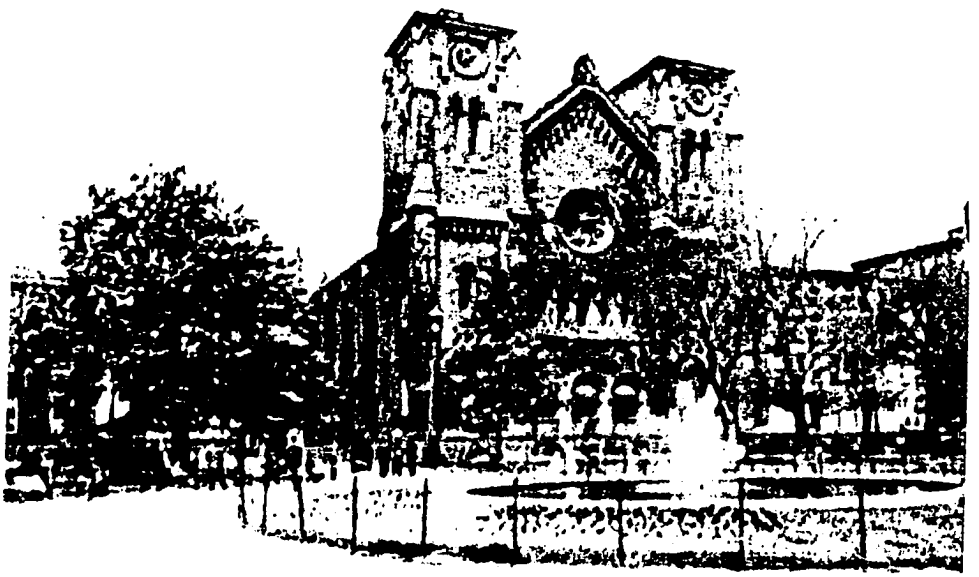

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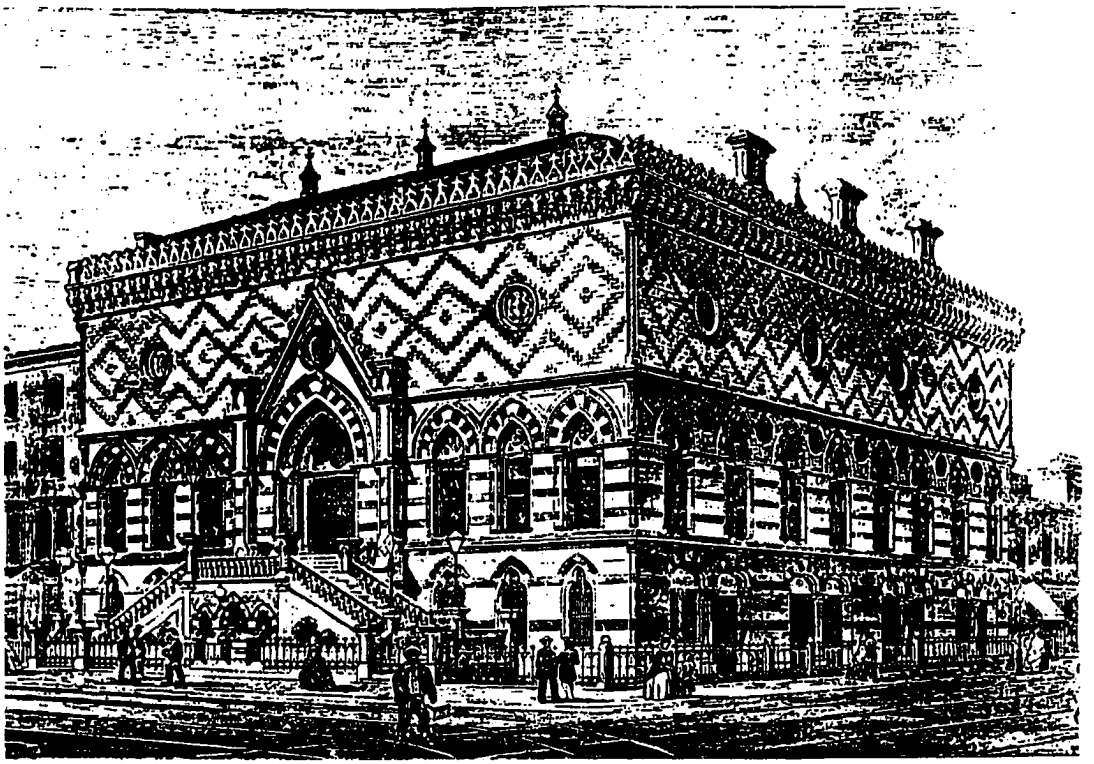

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN, NEW YORK, U.S.—Mr. P. B. Wight, Architect.

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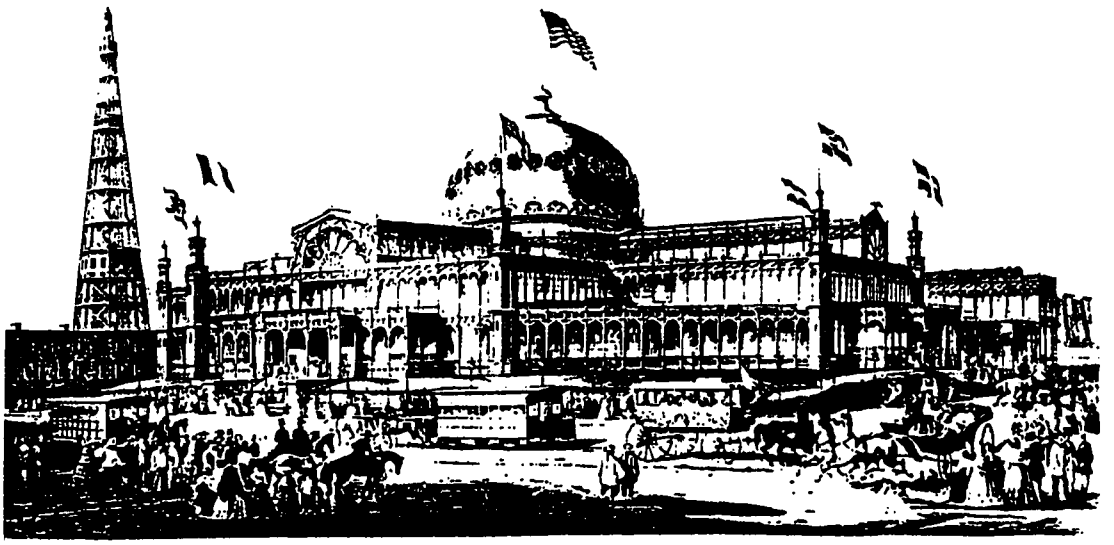

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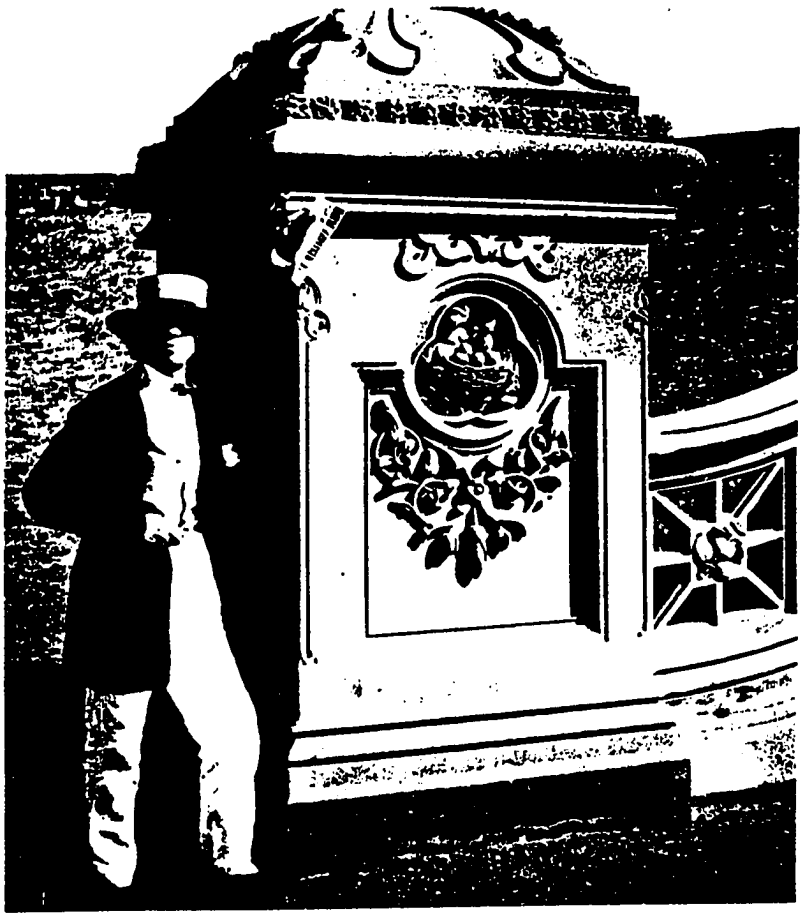

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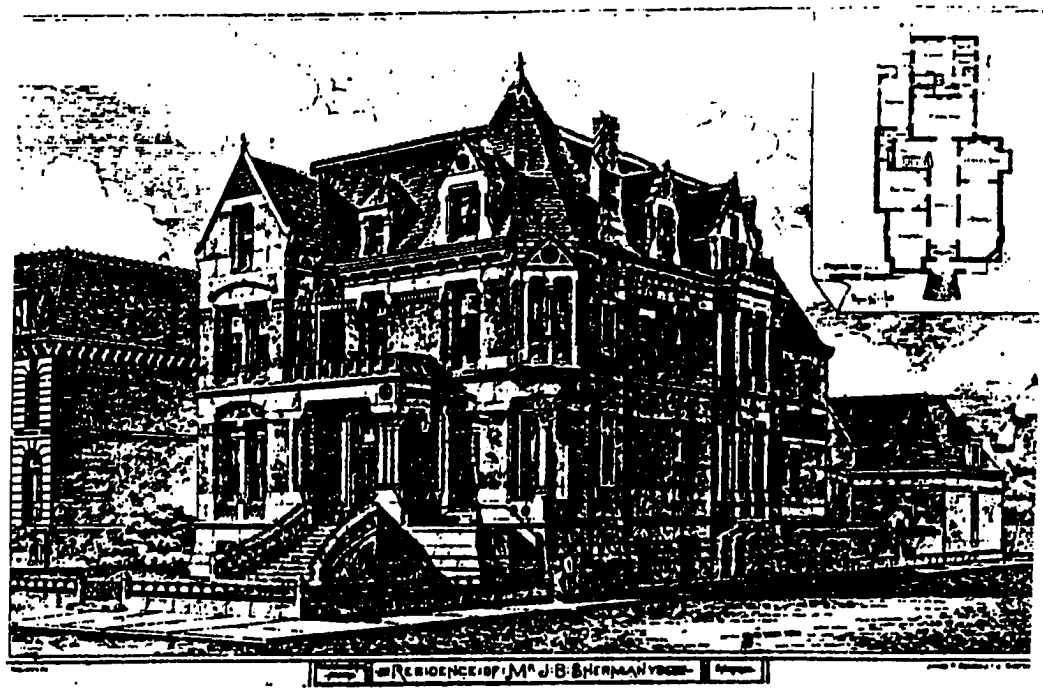

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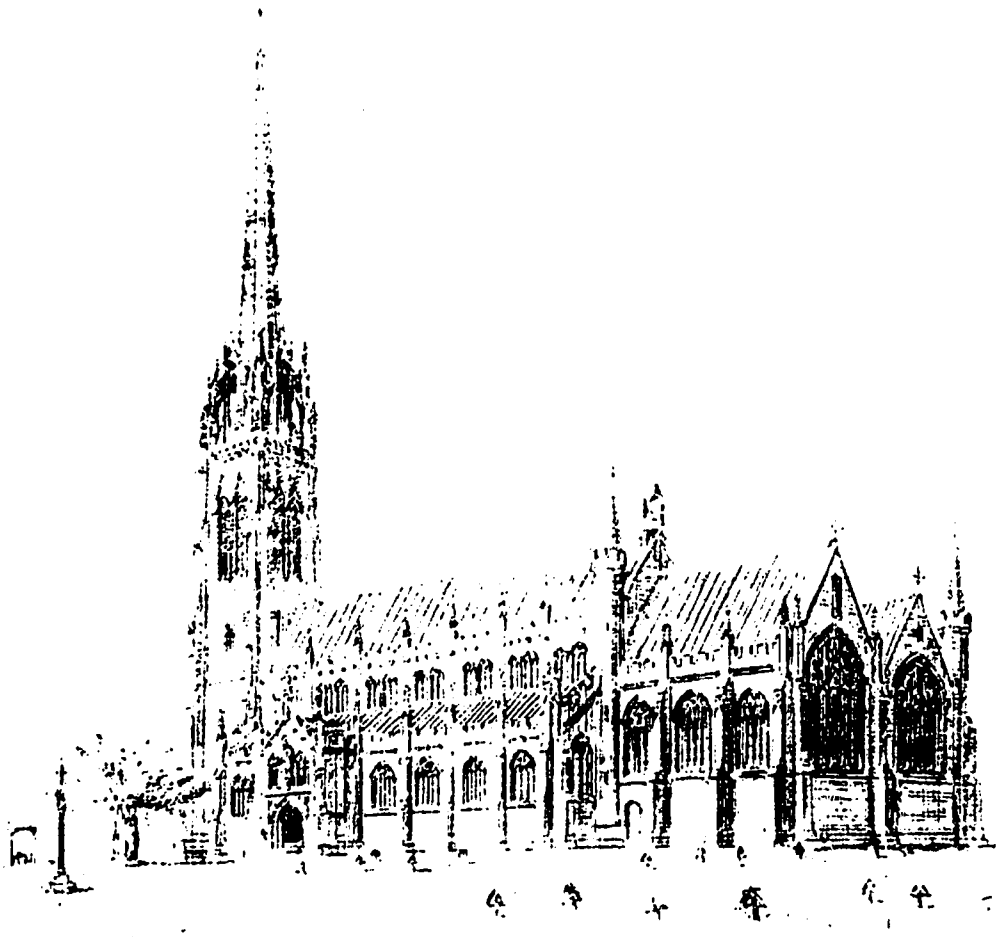

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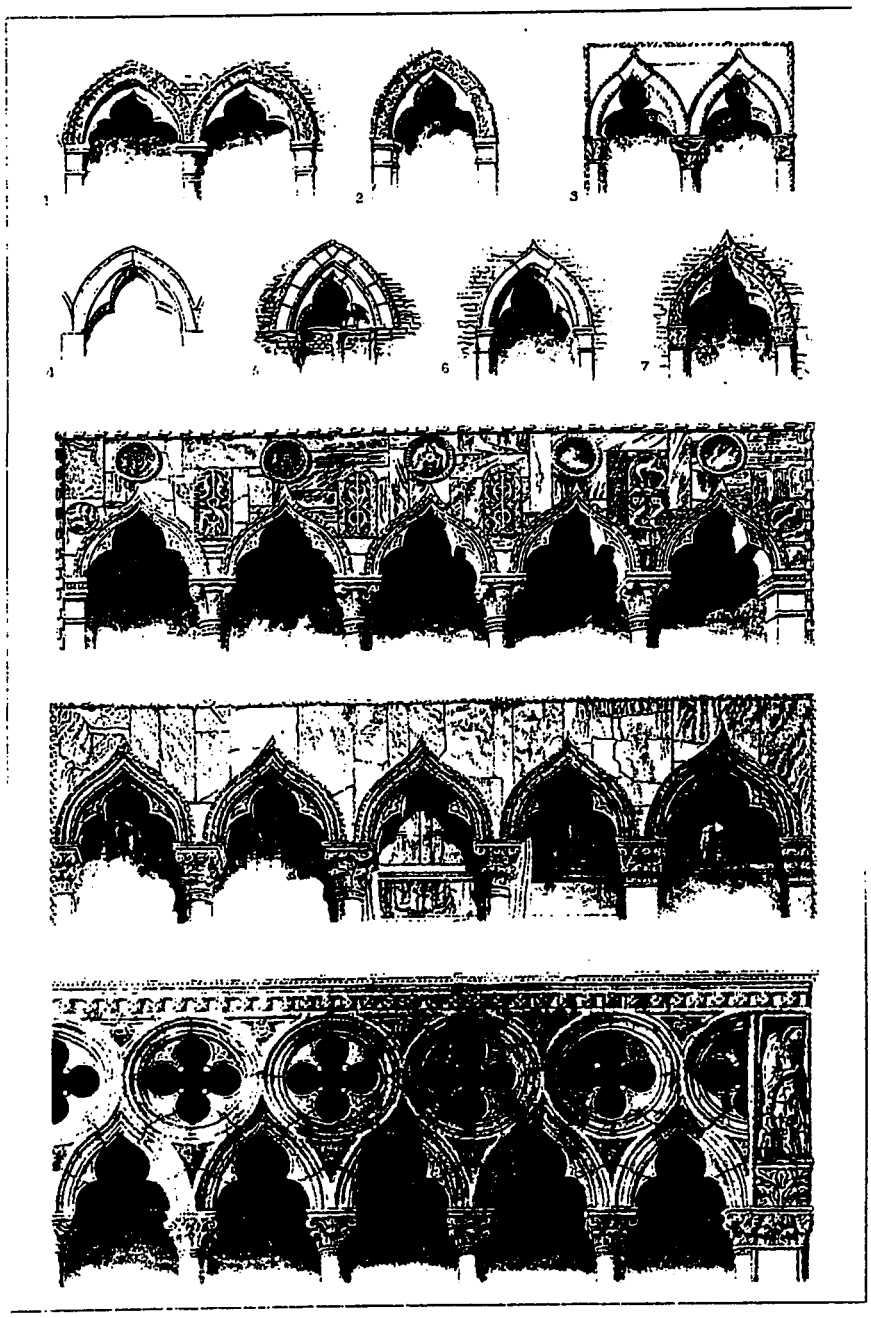

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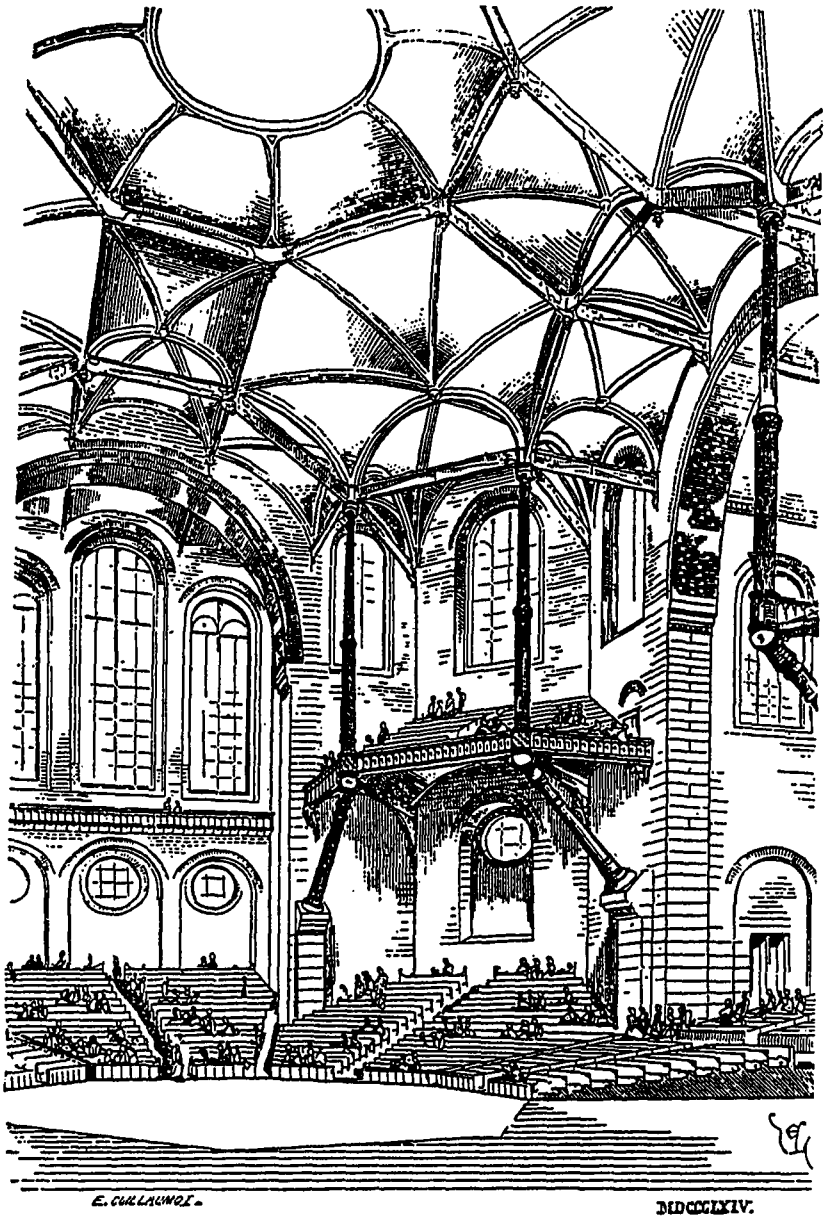

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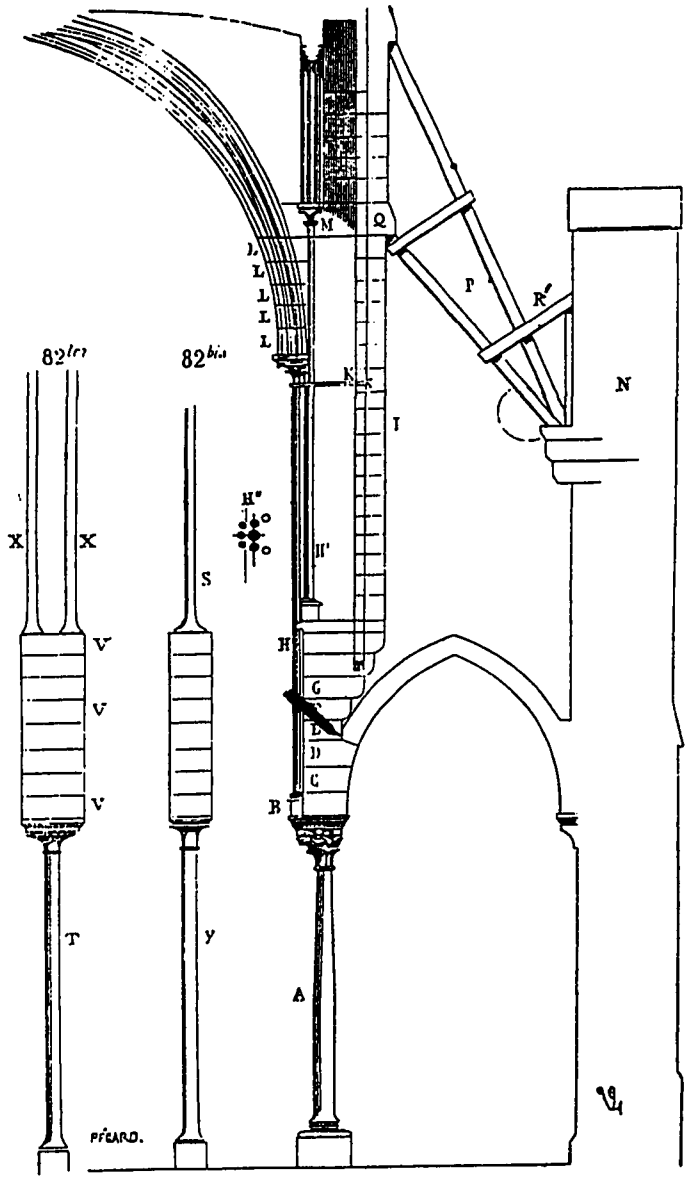

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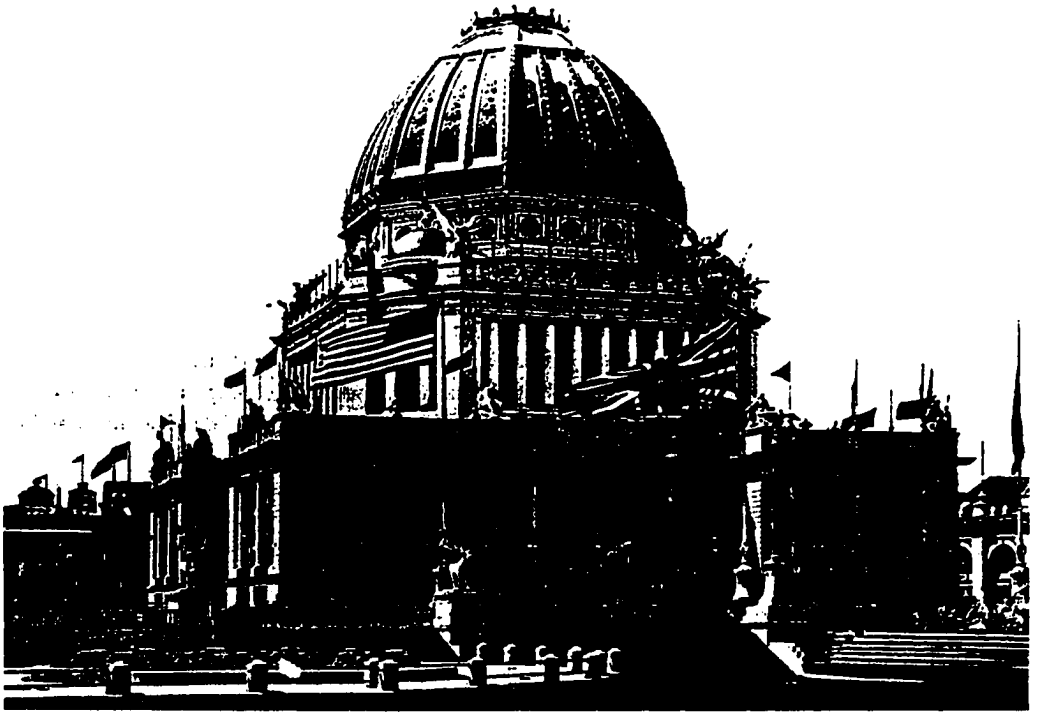

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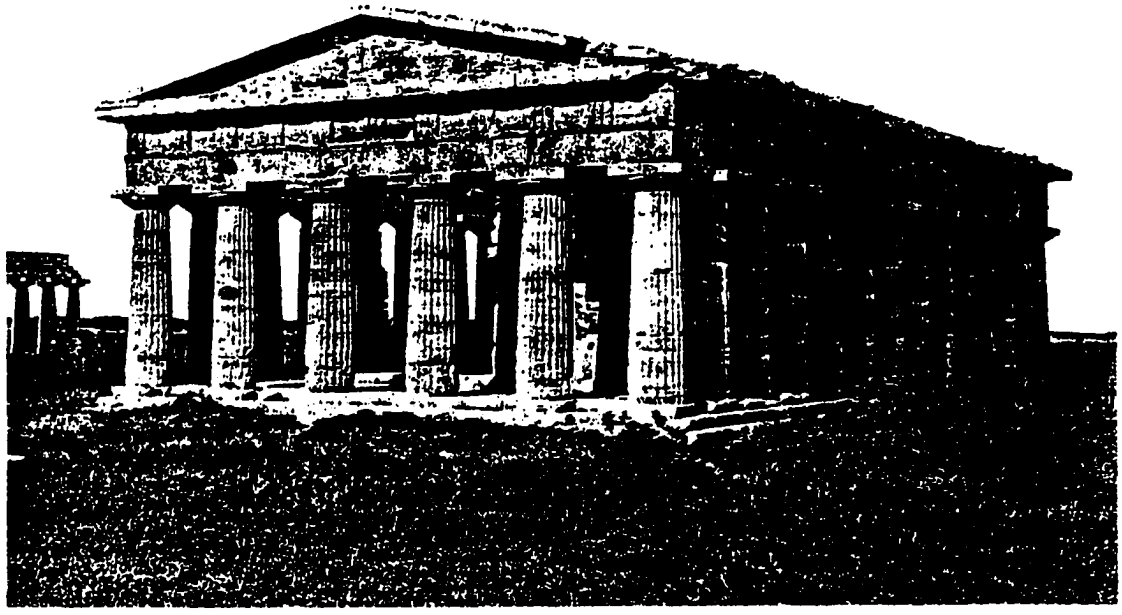

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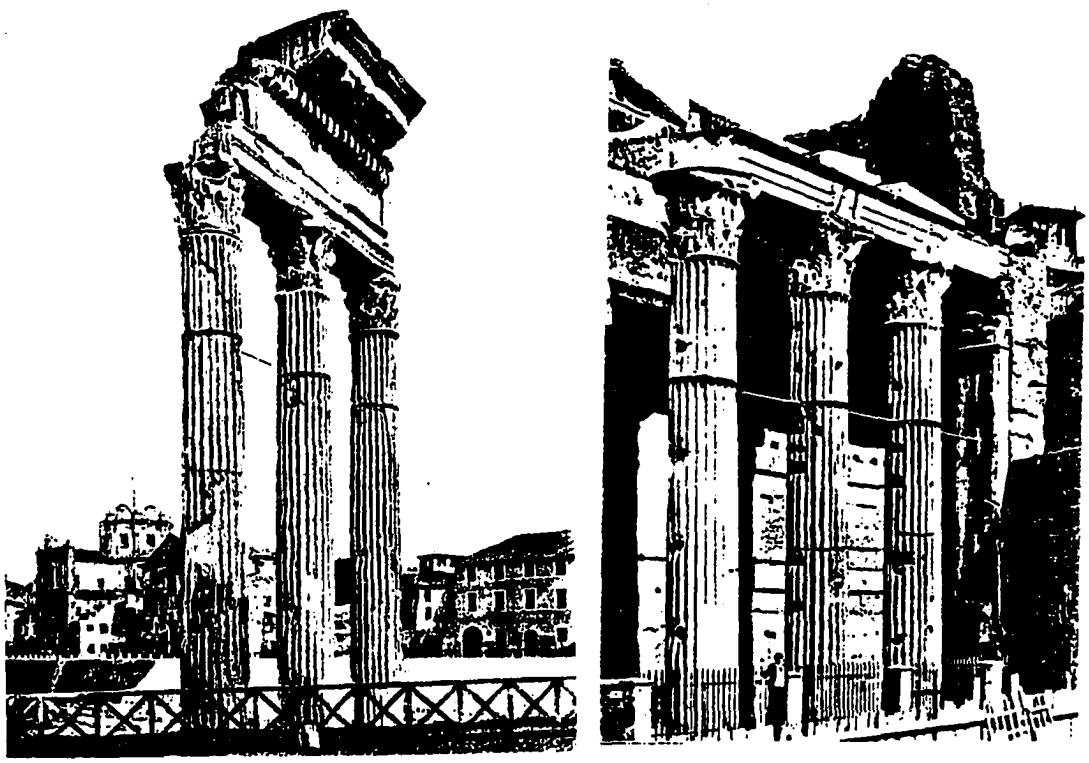

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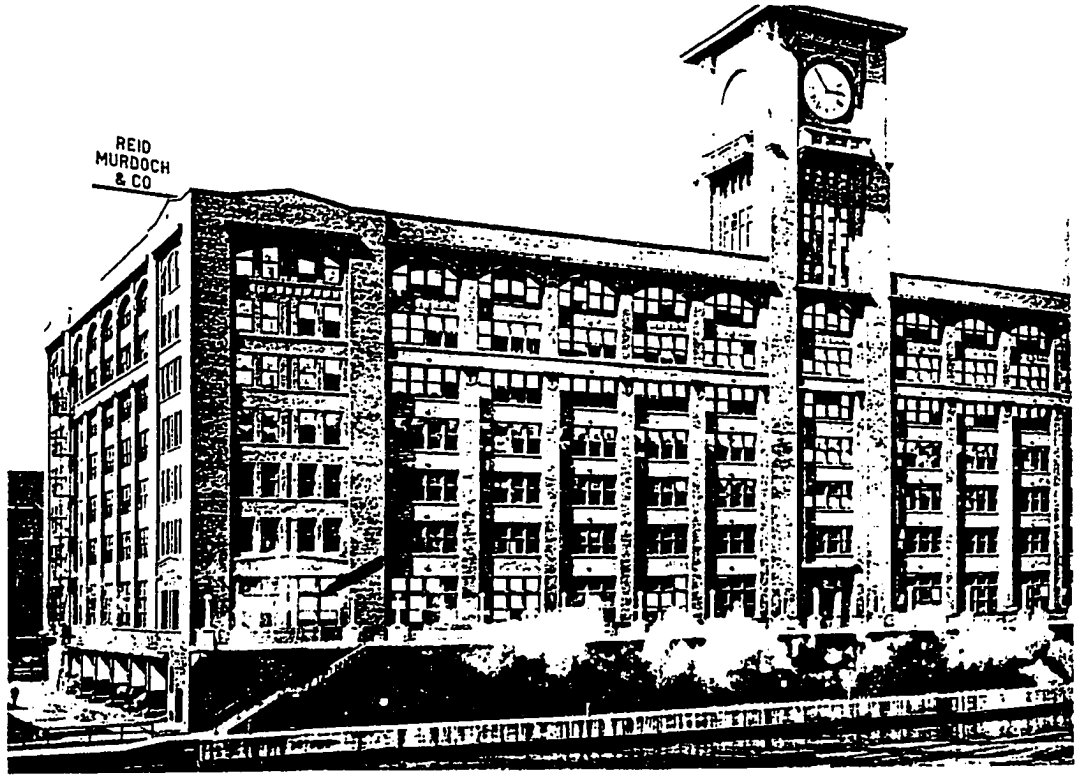

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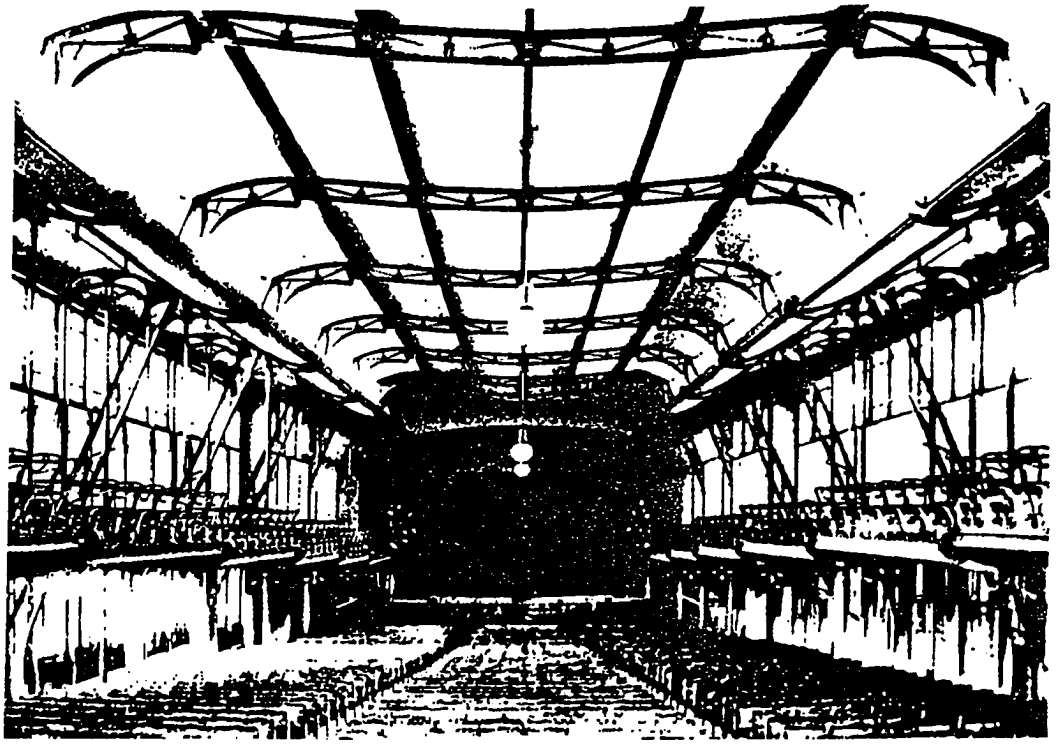

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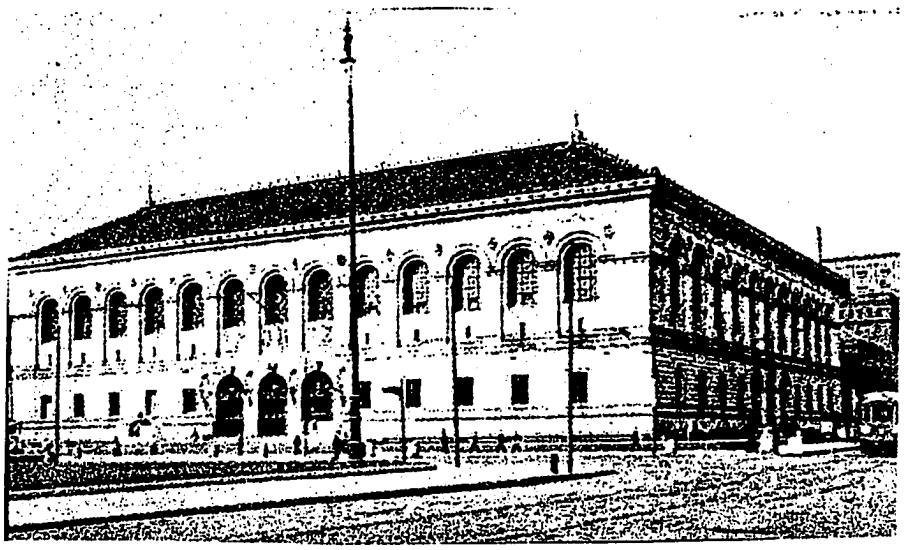

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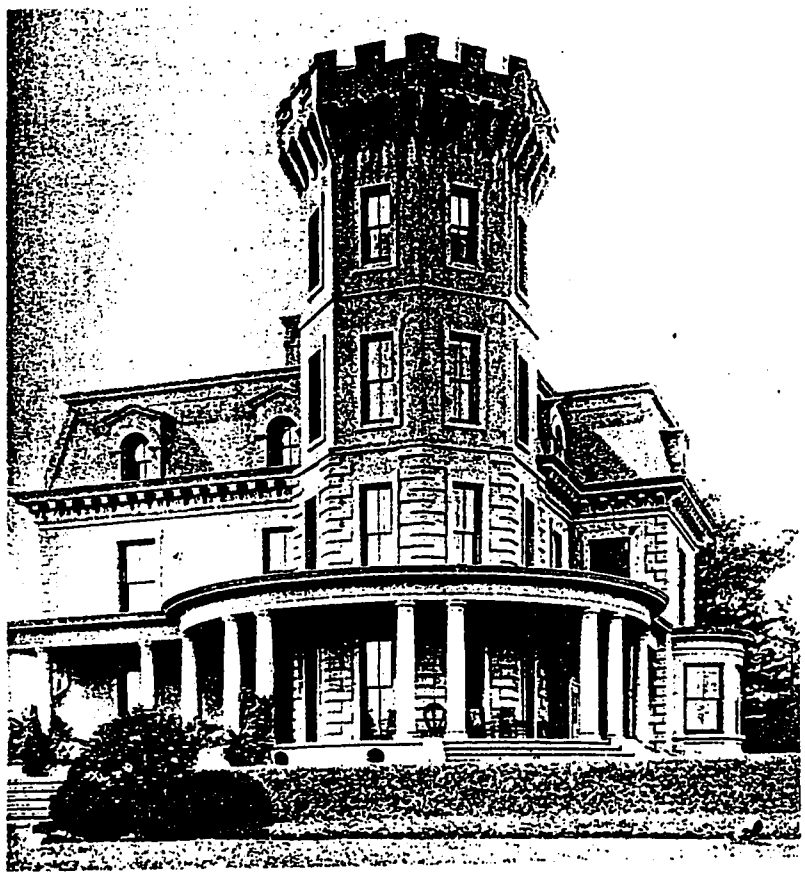

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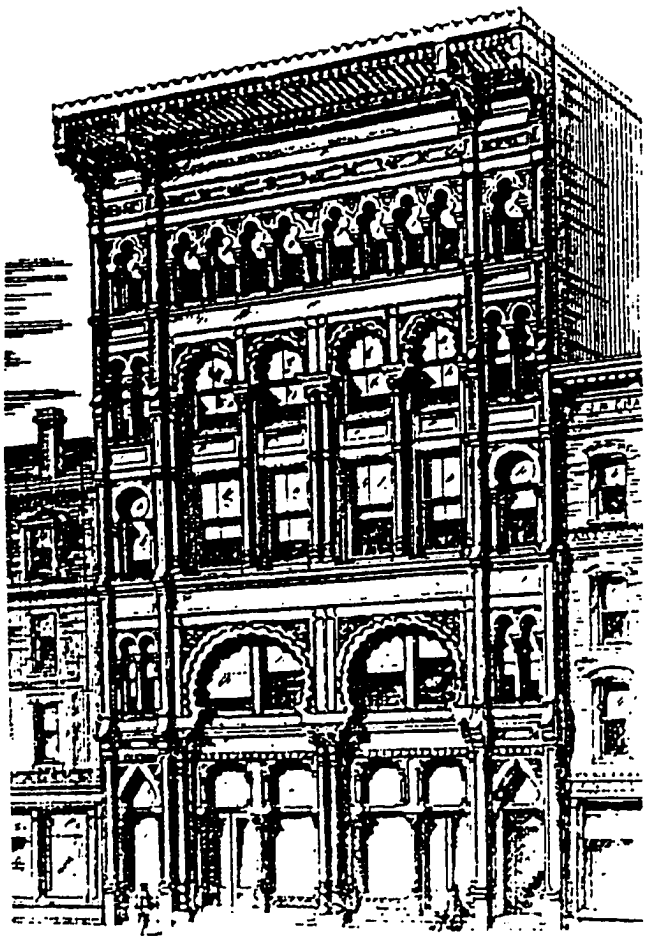

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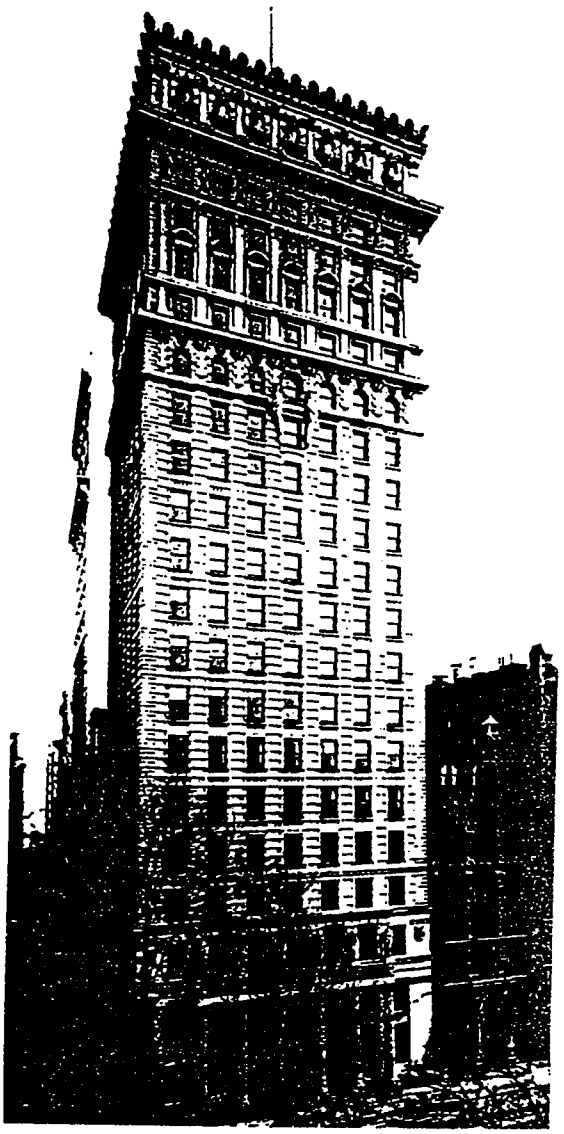

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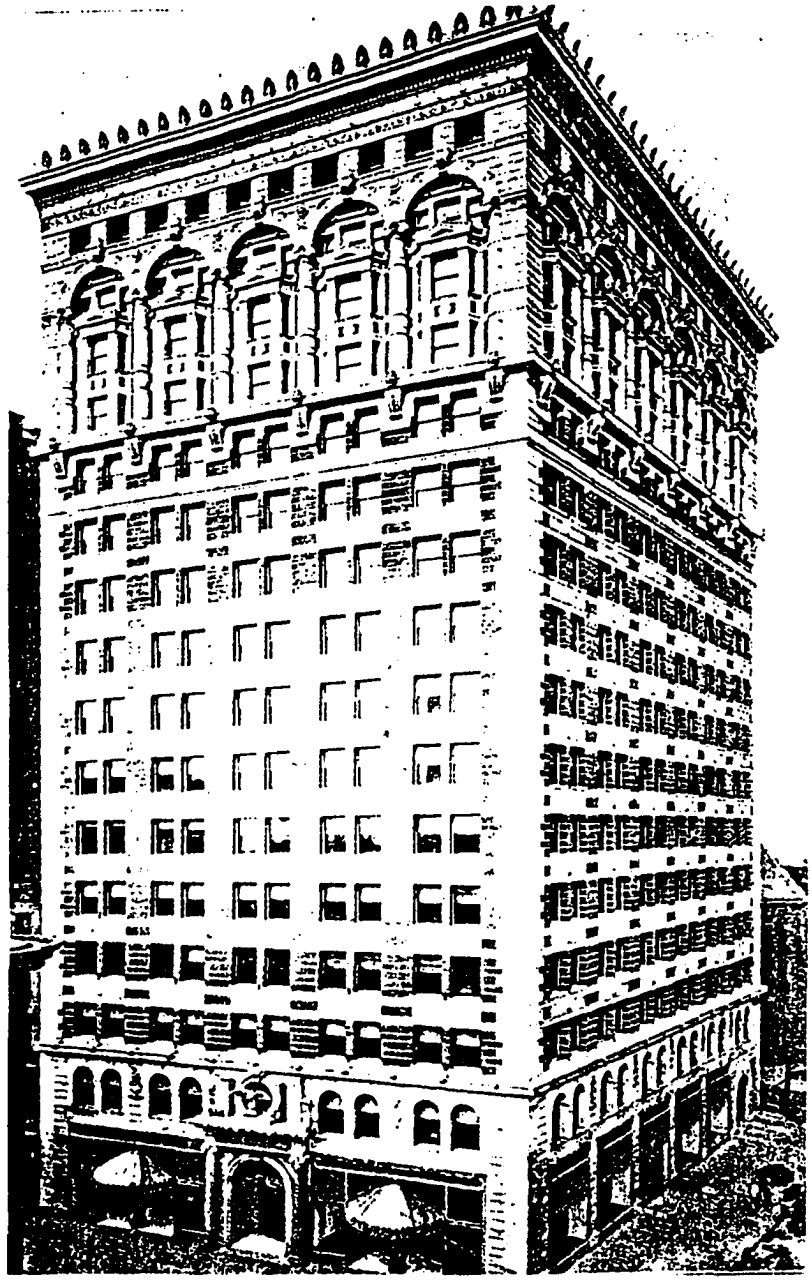

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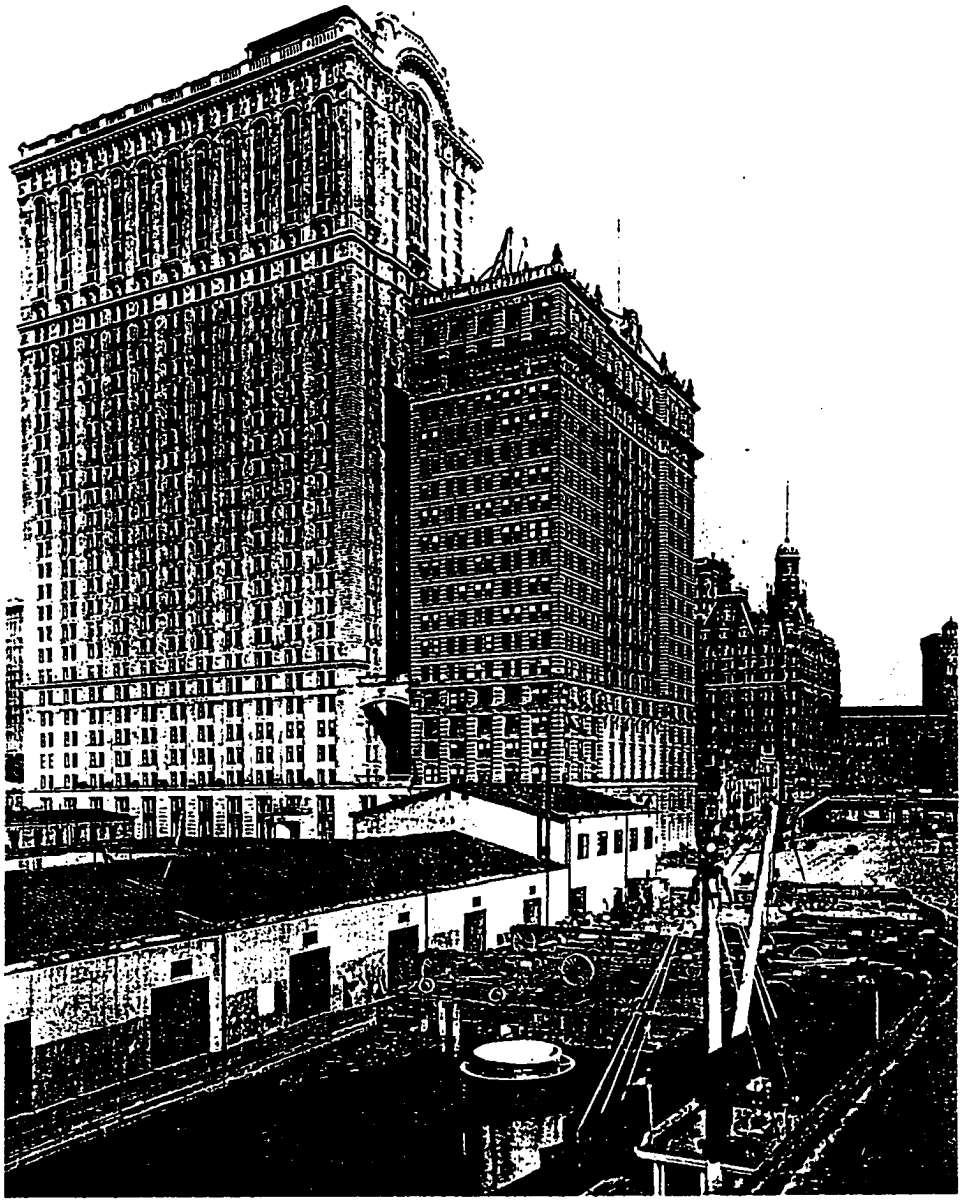

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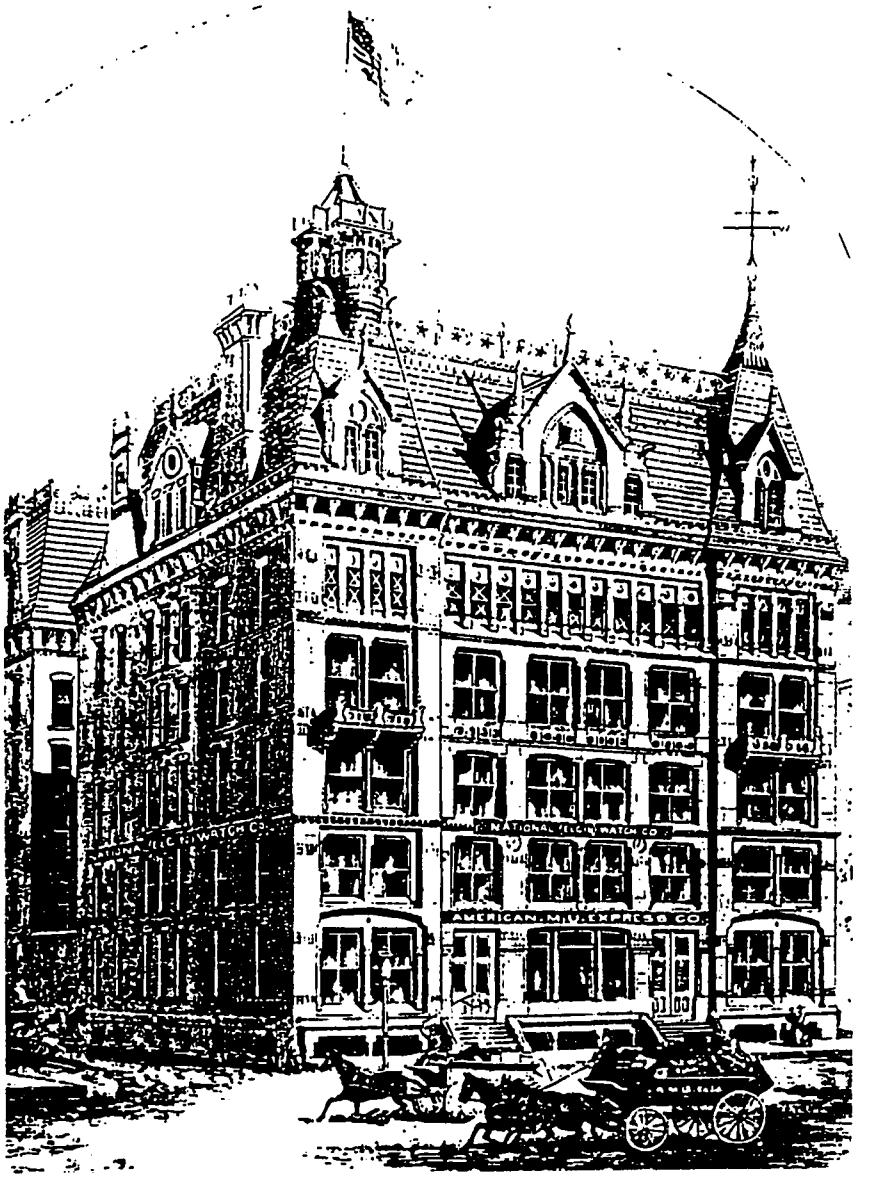

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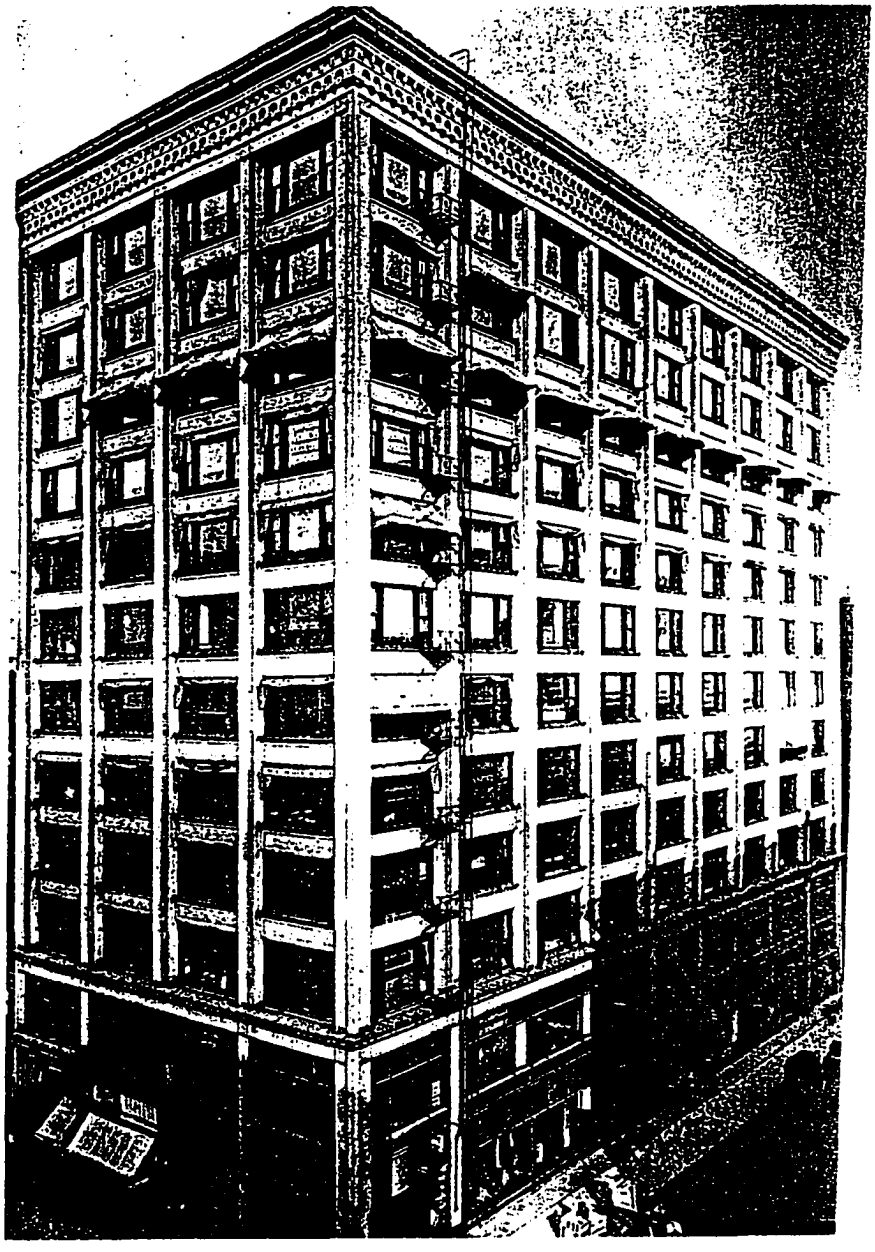

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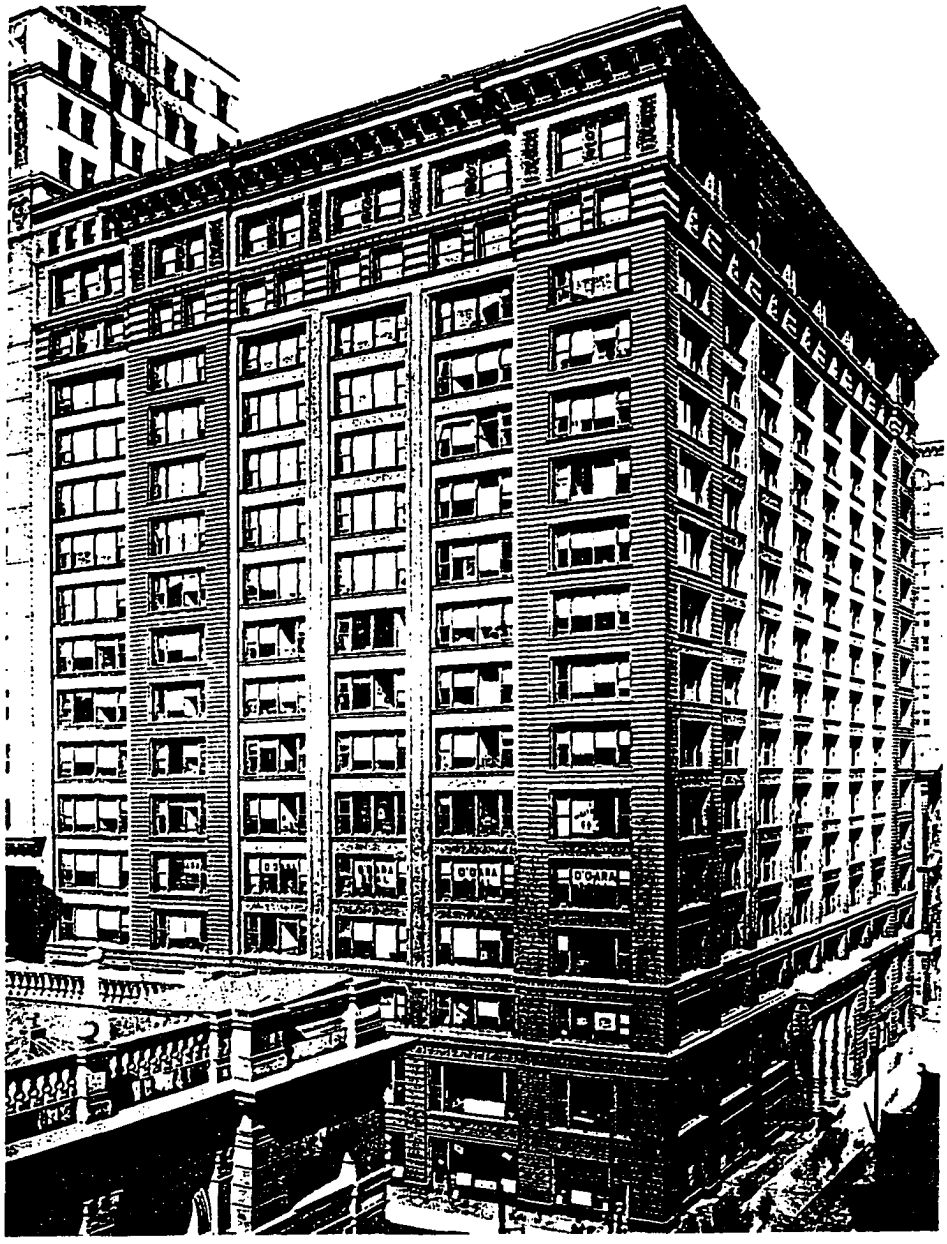

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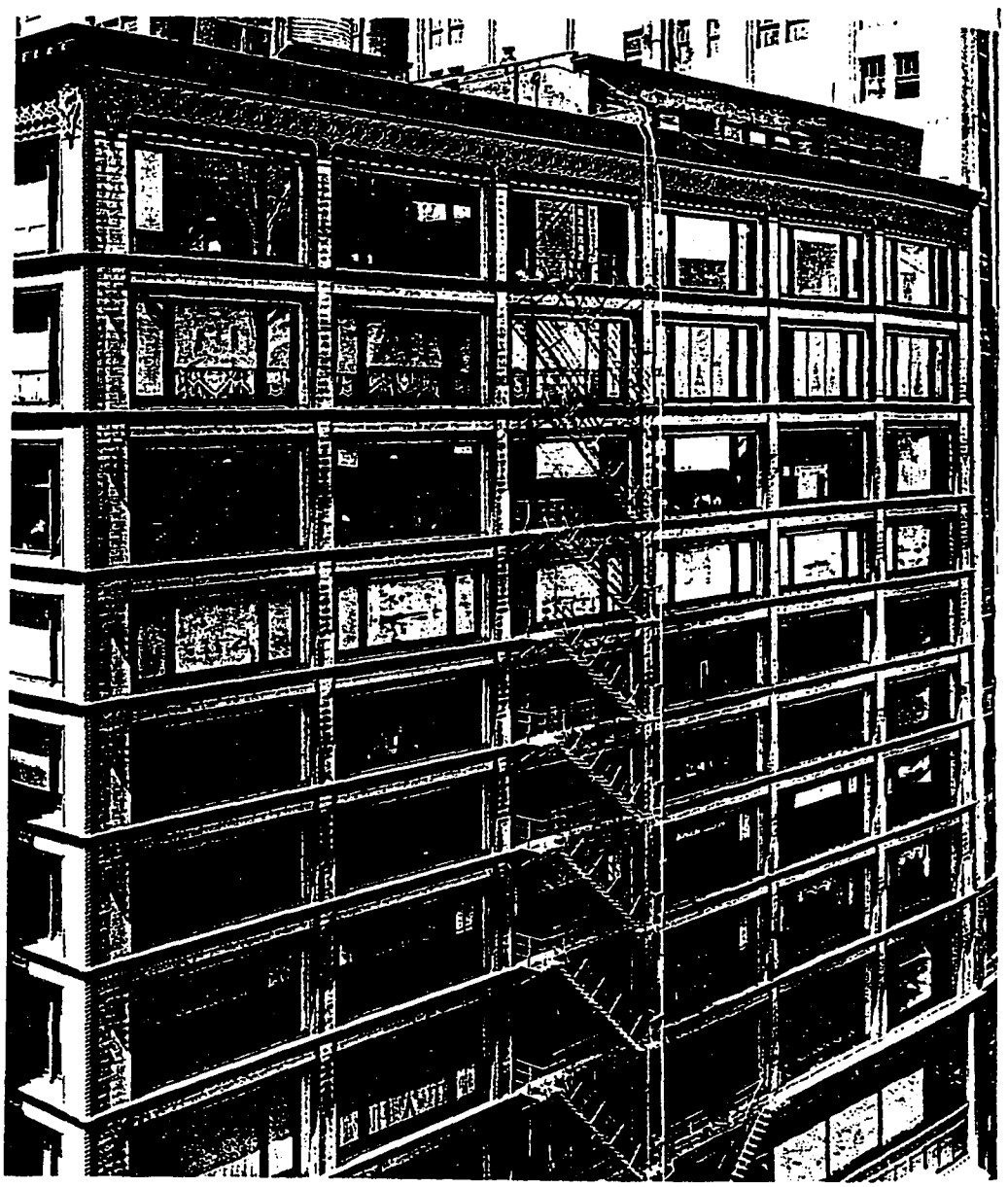

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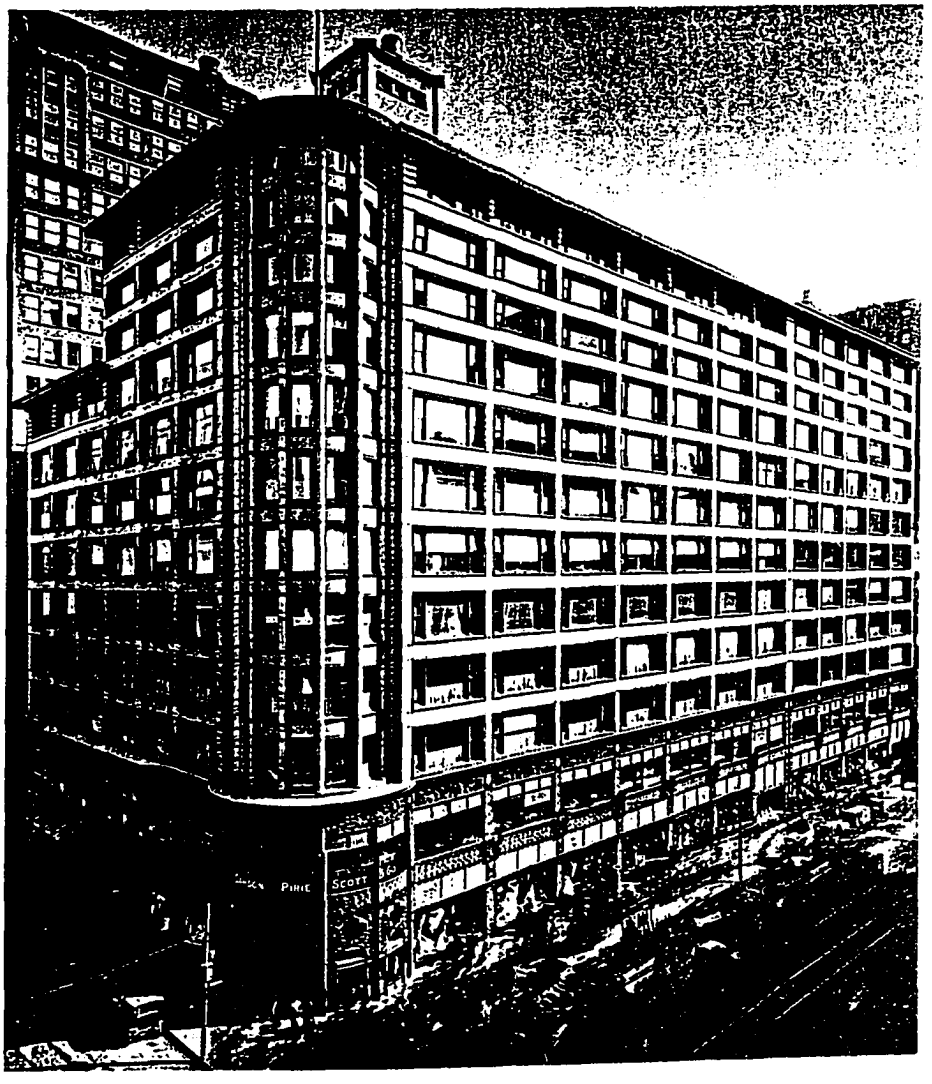

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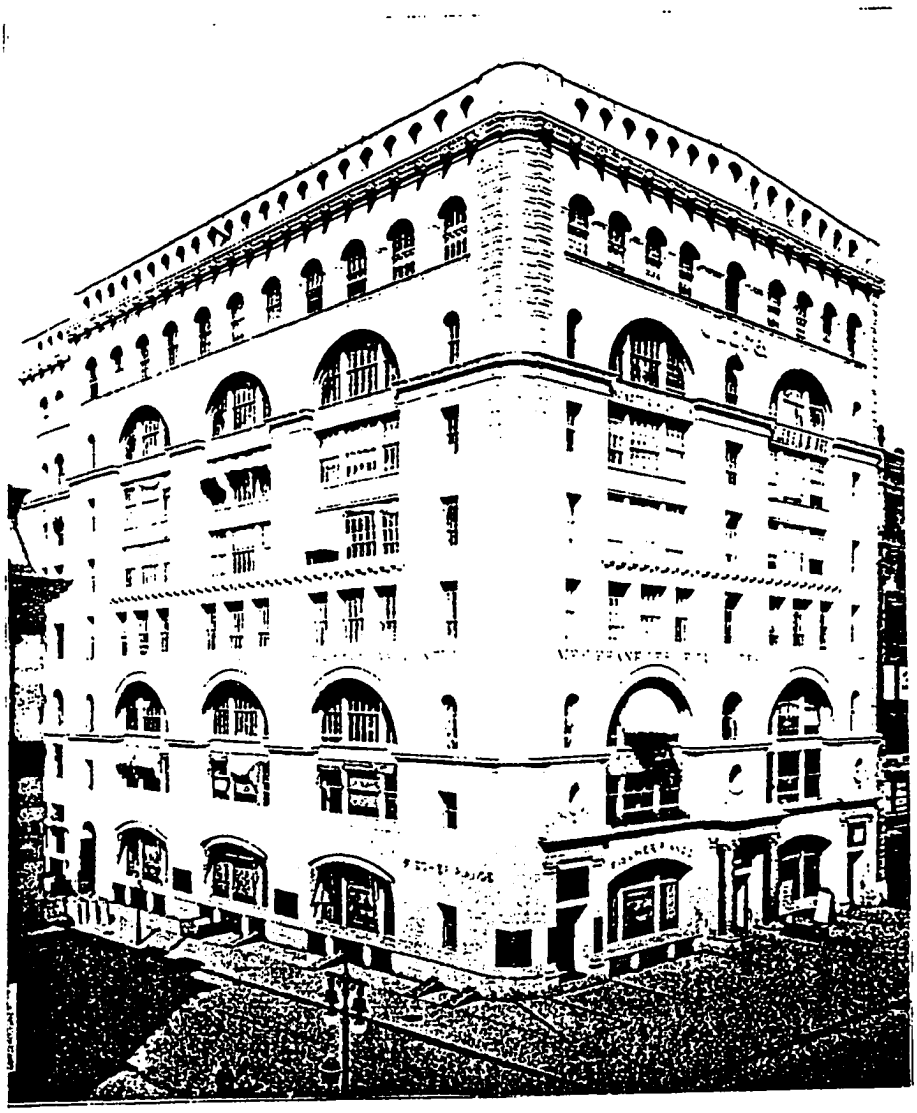

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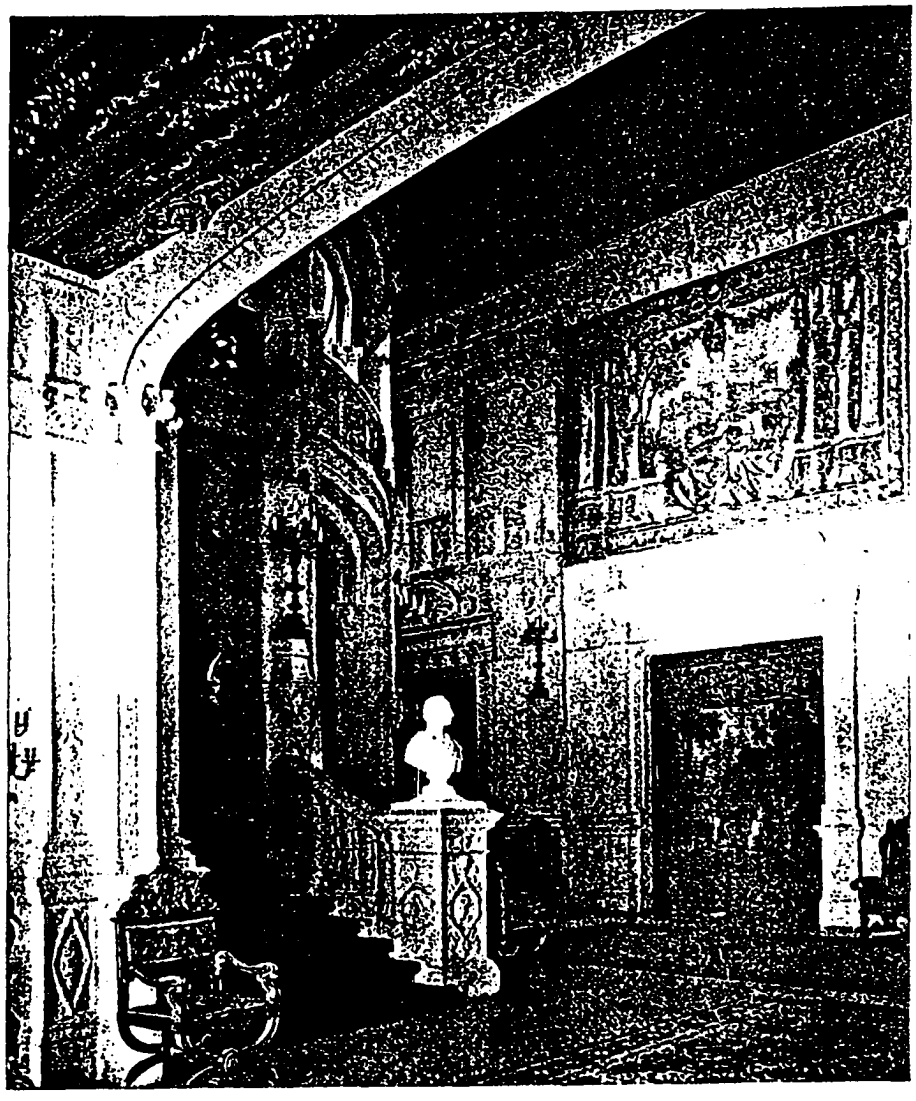

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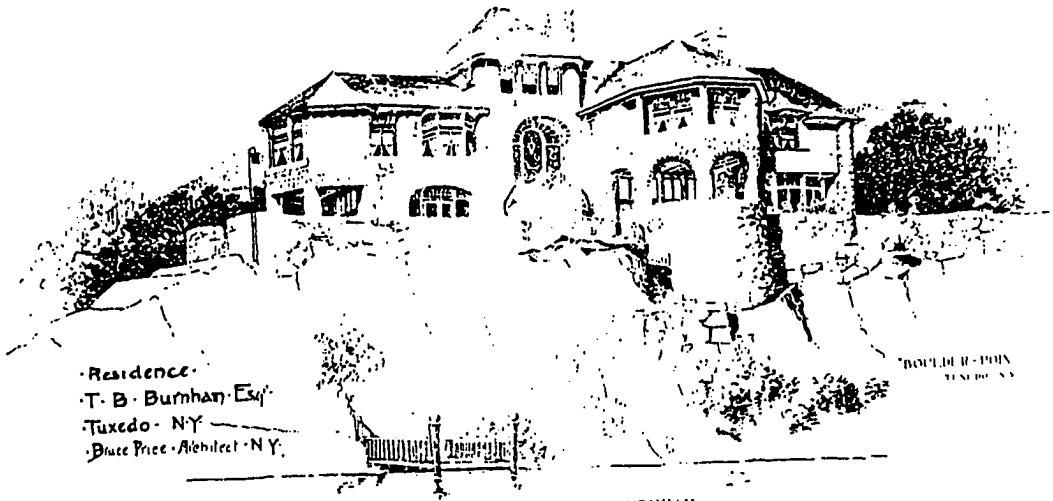

Tuxedo Park, New York. FIG. 12 RESIDENCE OF T. B. BURNHAM

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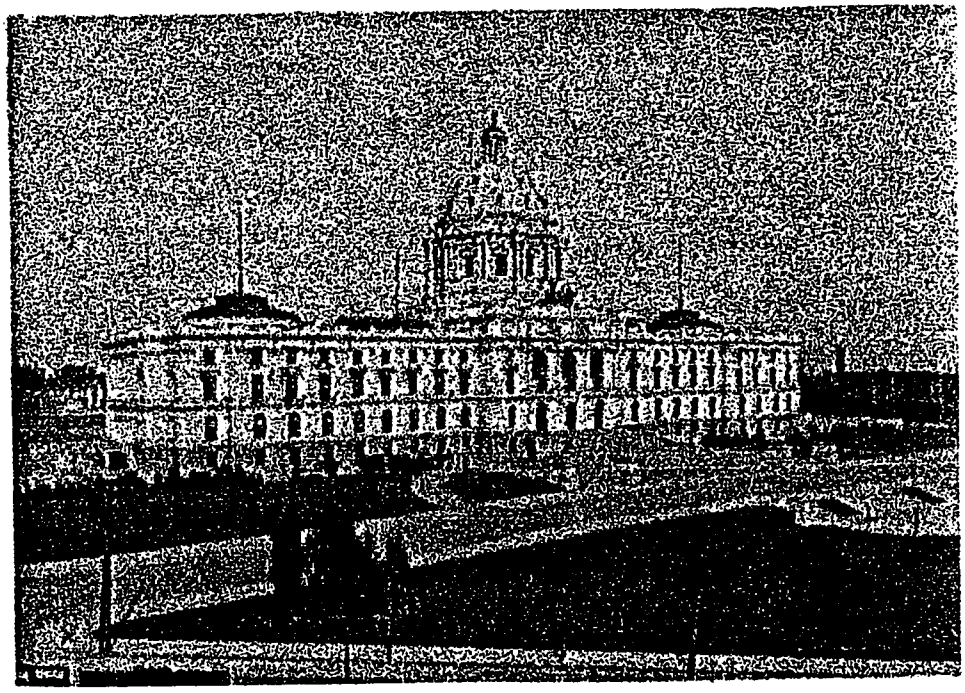

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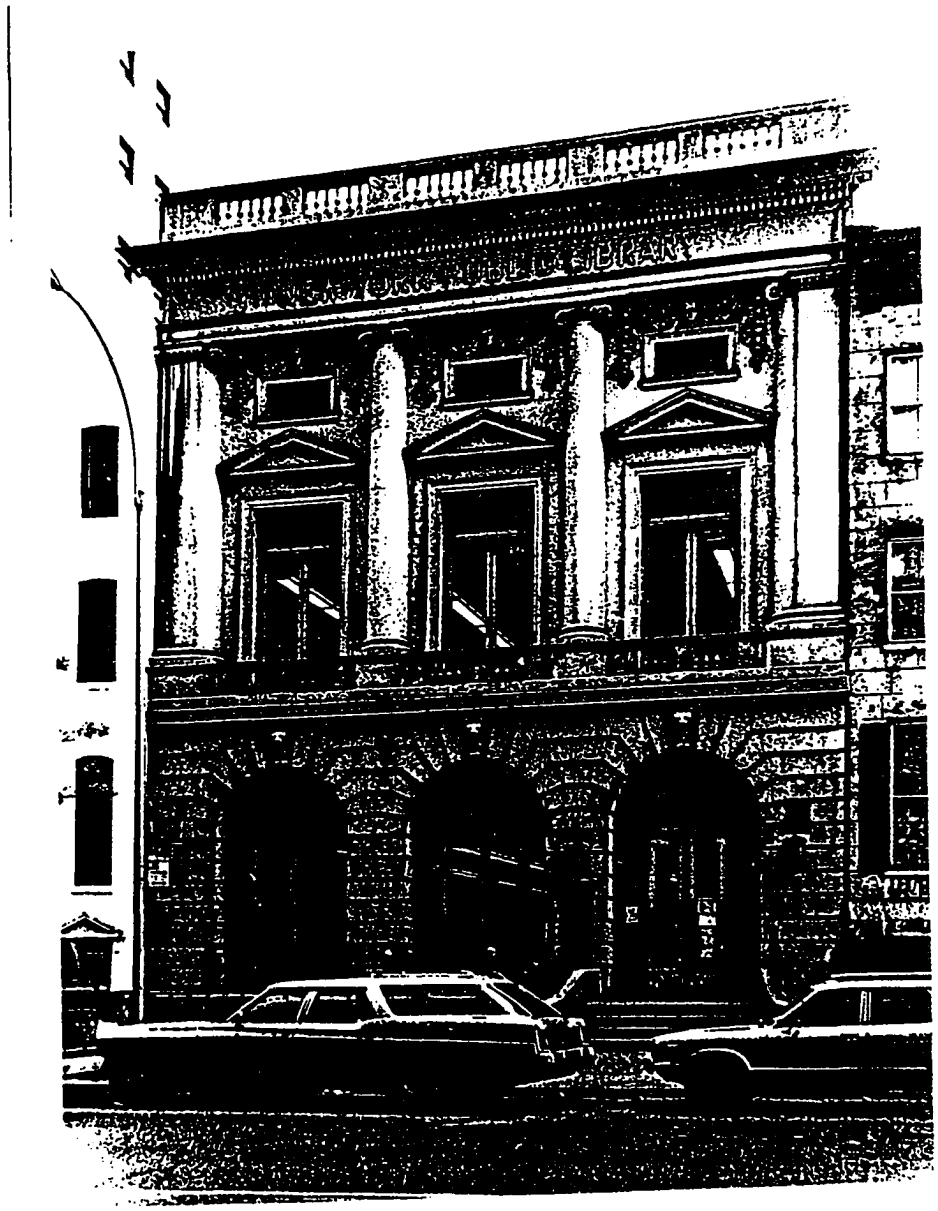

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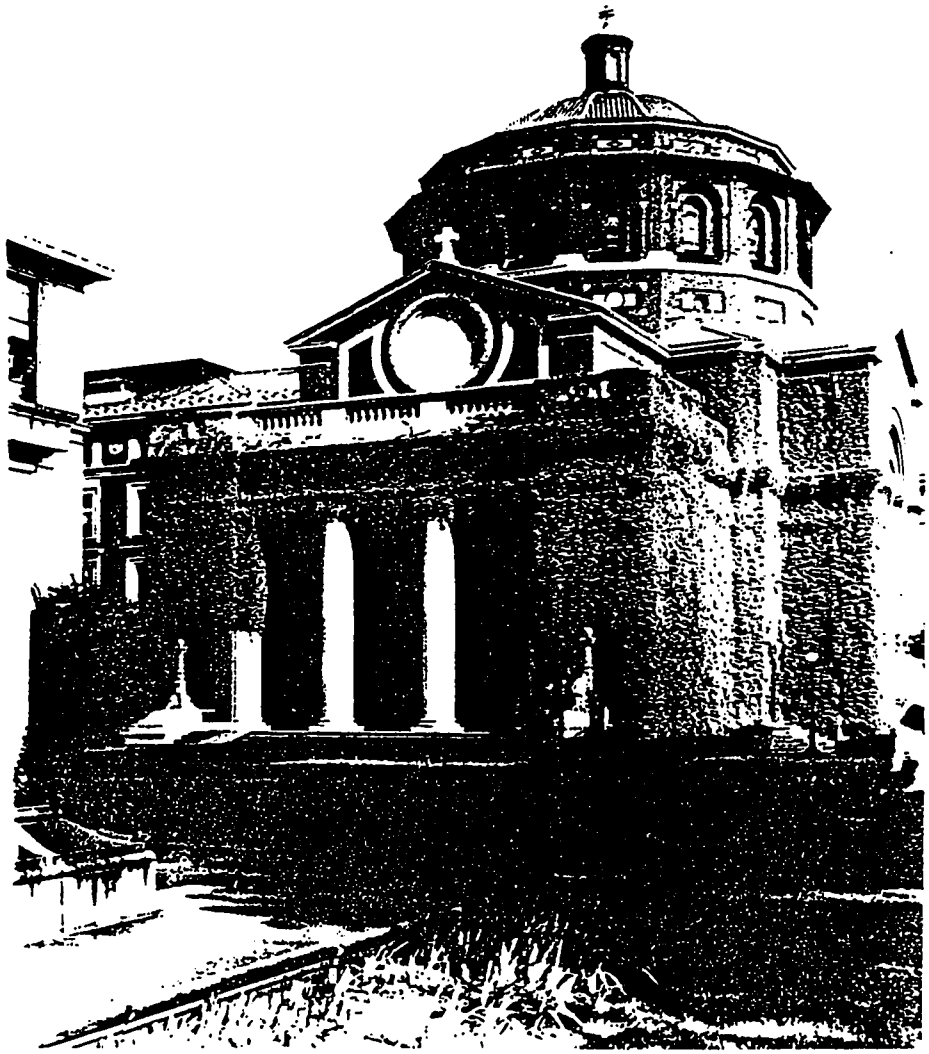

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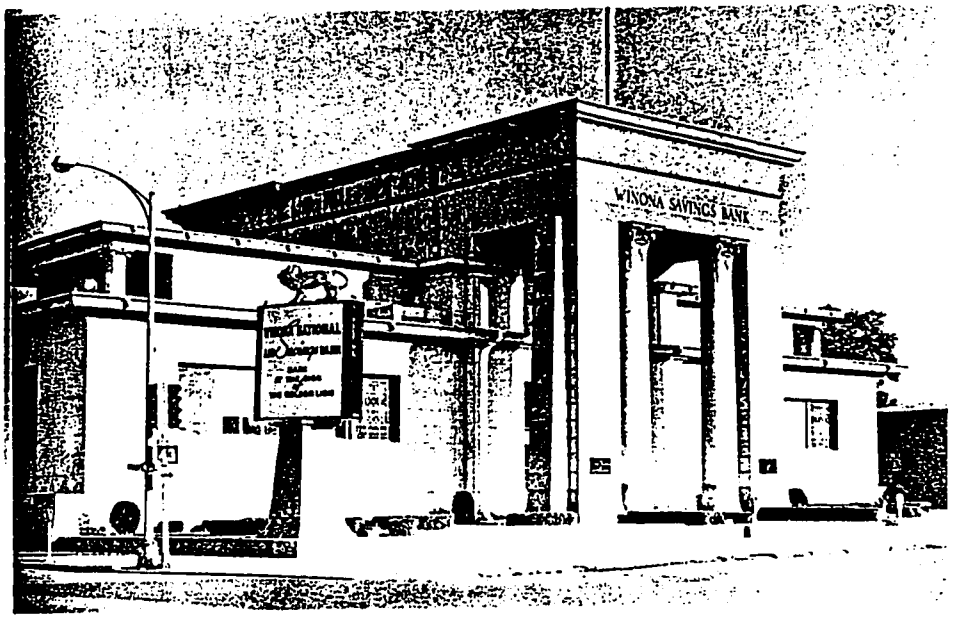

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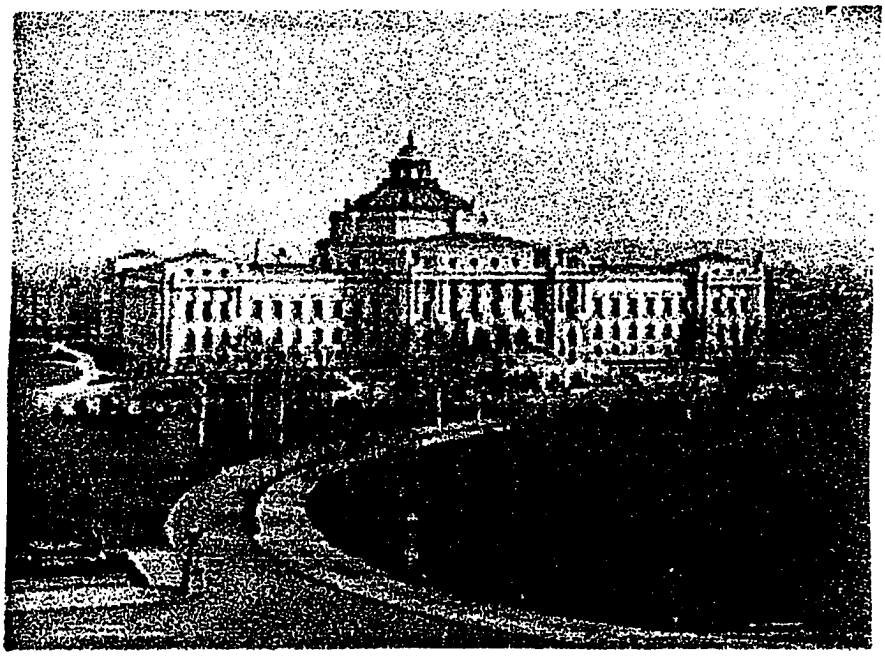

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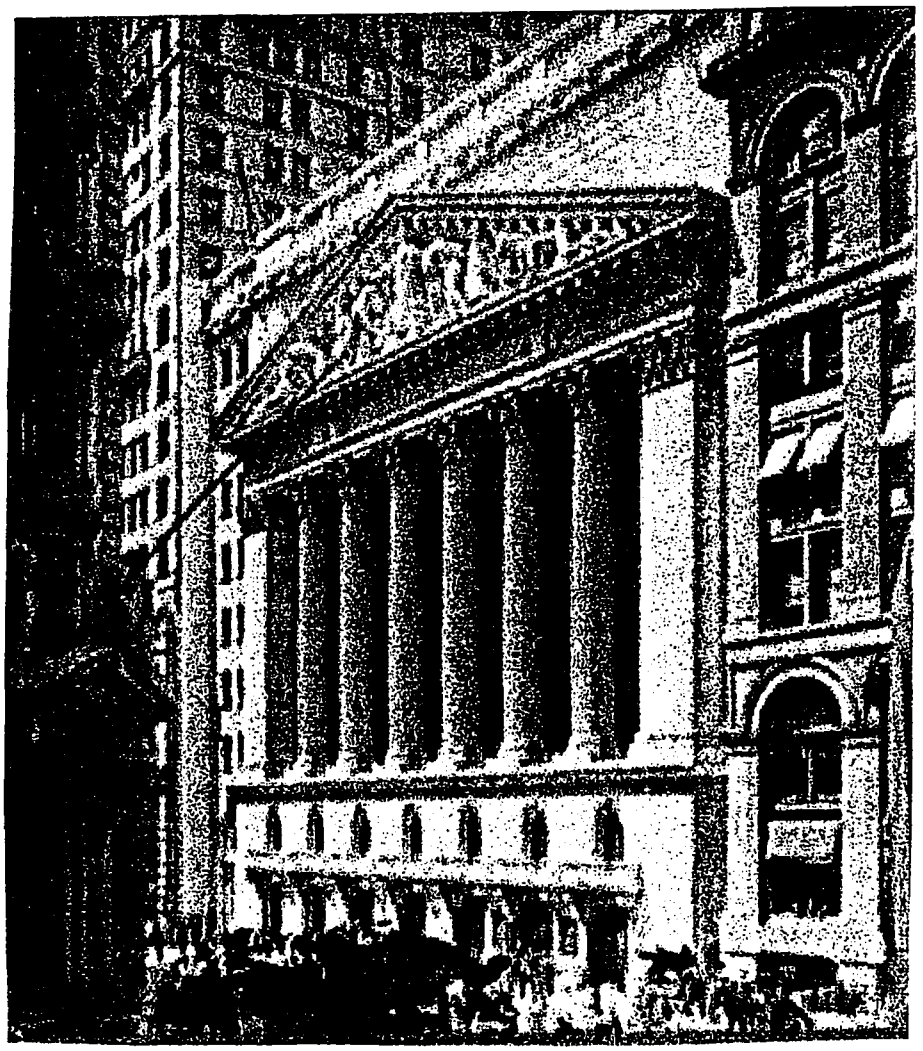

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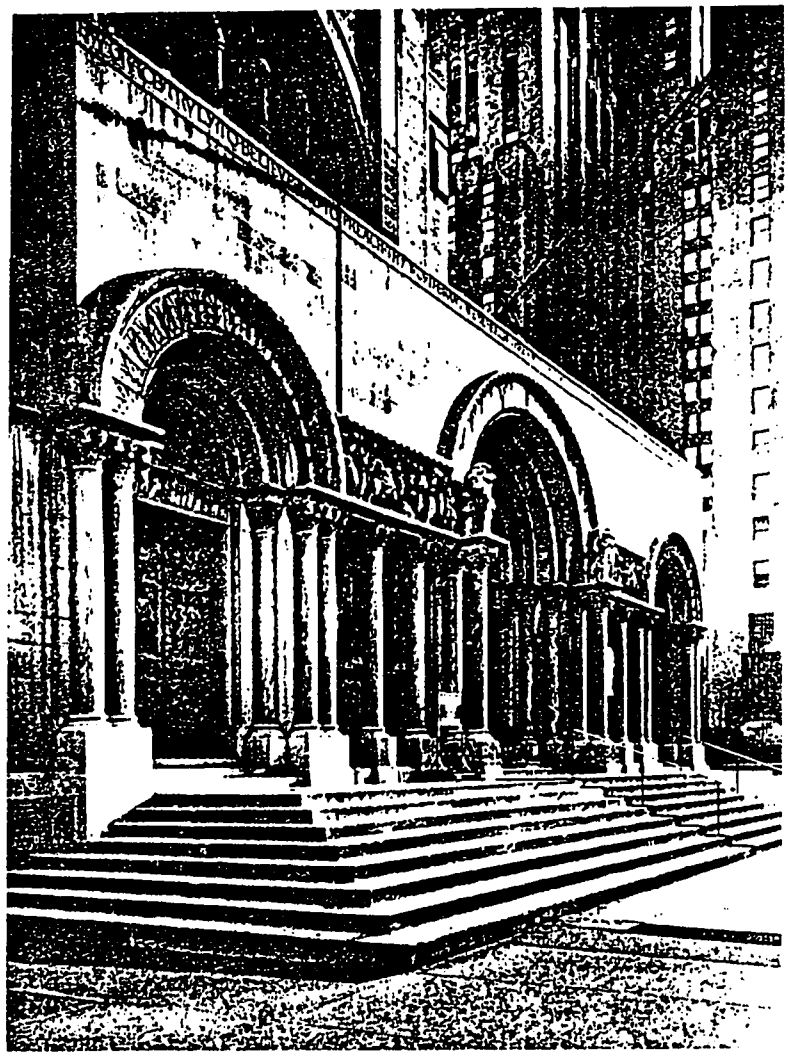

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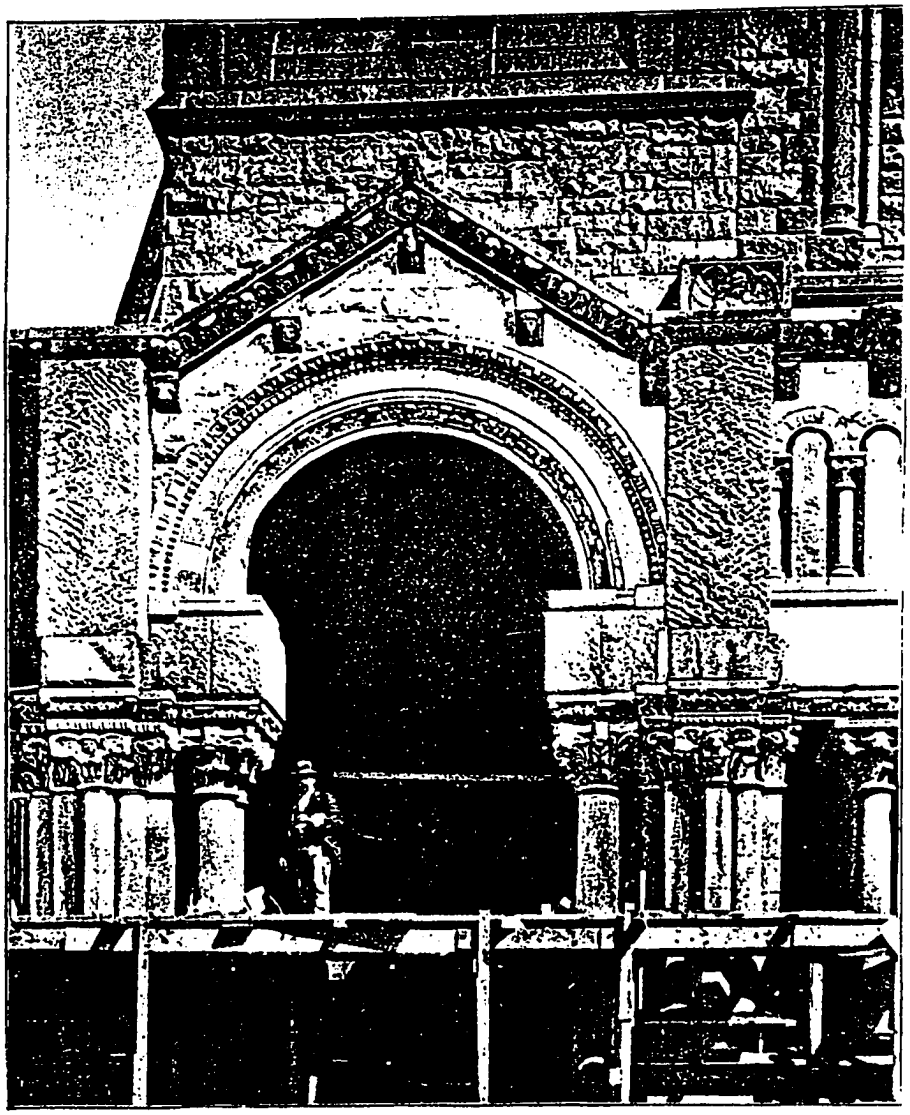

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CONTRACTORS FOR ALL KINDS OF FIRE-PROOF WORK IN
Porous Terra-Cotta and Hollow Fire-Clay Tiles
IN ALL PARTS OF THE UNITED STATES.
Offices: 73 Dearborn St., Chicago, and 60 William St., New York.

The above illustration shows a section of our PATENT HOLLOW FLOOR ARCH WITH PROTECTING SOFFITS for the under-sides of the beams, forming a protection for the beams, and a uniform ceiling for plastering, such as we are now putting in the new building of the MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY of N. Y., on Nassau, Cedar and Liberty Sts., New York.
All forms of constructive Iron-Work, such as COLUMNS, GIRDERS, and ROOF TRUSSES covered with POROUS TERRA-COTTA and left ready for plastering.
Partitions, Furring and Roofing Furnished and Set.

Fig. 65

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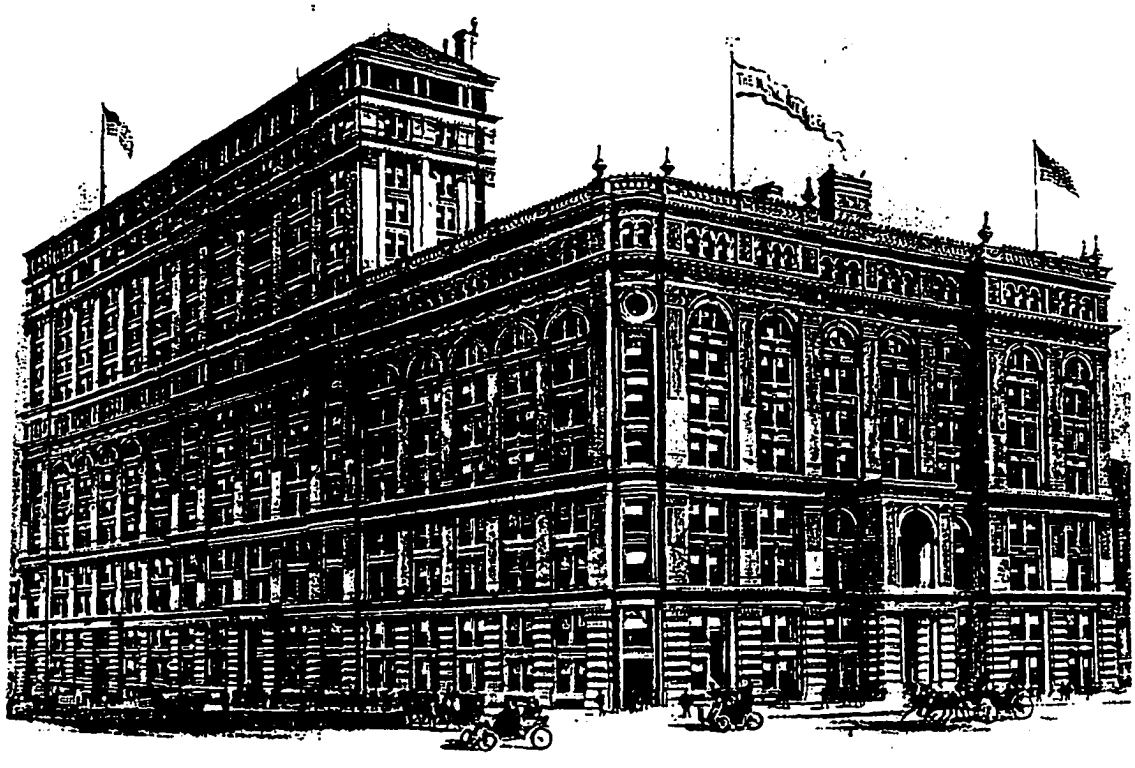

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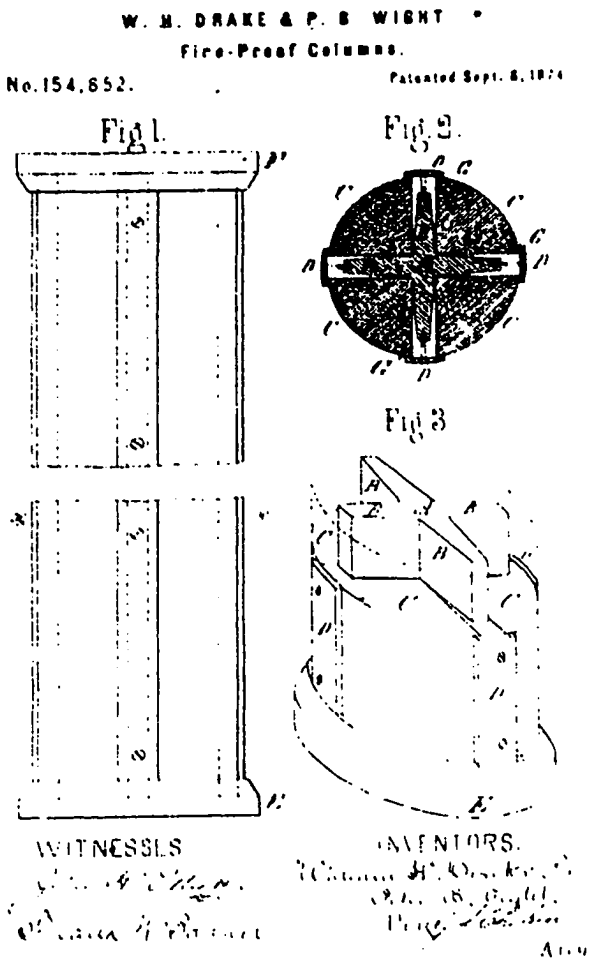

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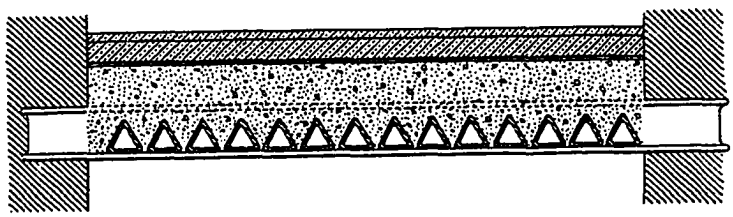

G. H. Johnson & B. Kreischer's.

Imp^d Hollow Tile Floor.

112926 PATENTED MAR. 21 1871.

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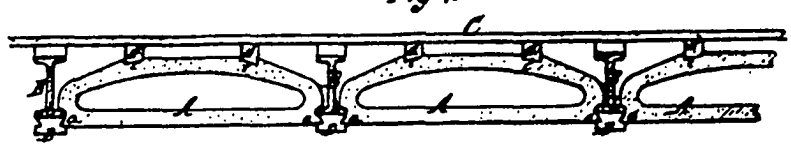
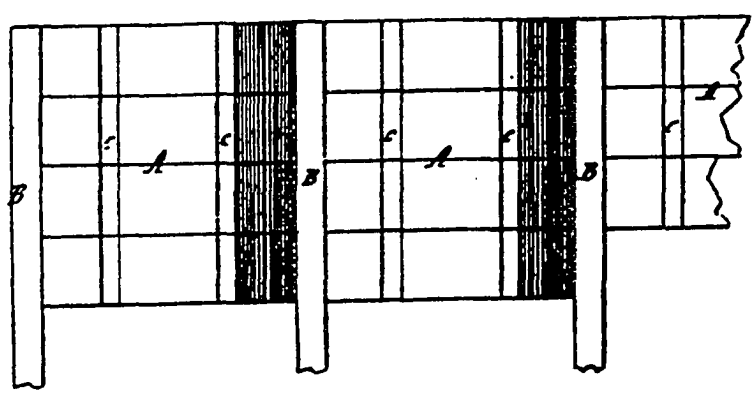


Fig. 2.



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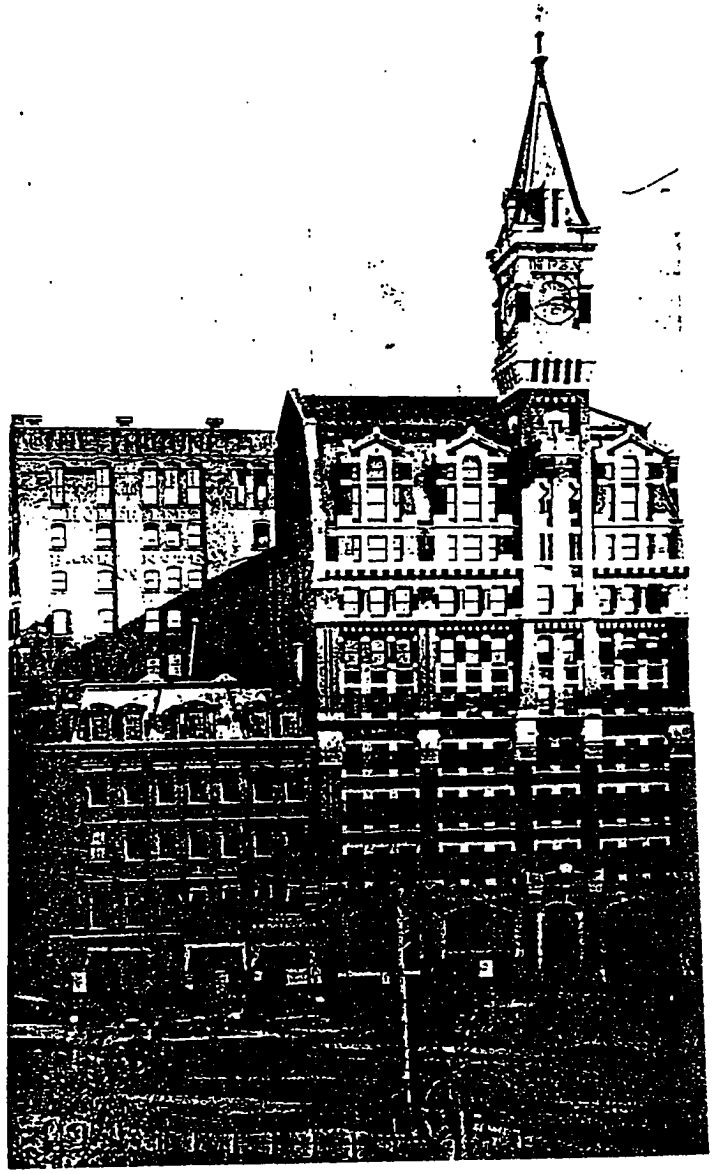

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Fig. 70

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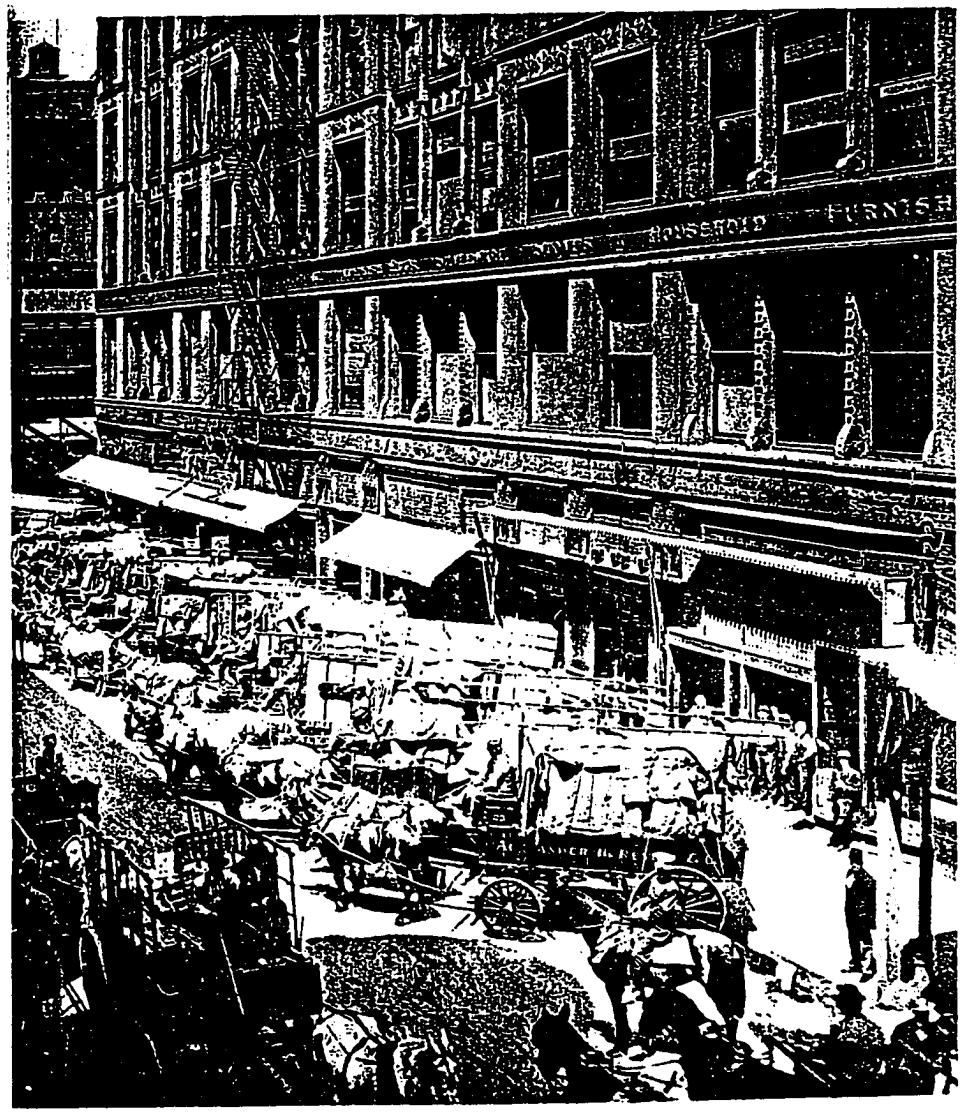

Fig. 71

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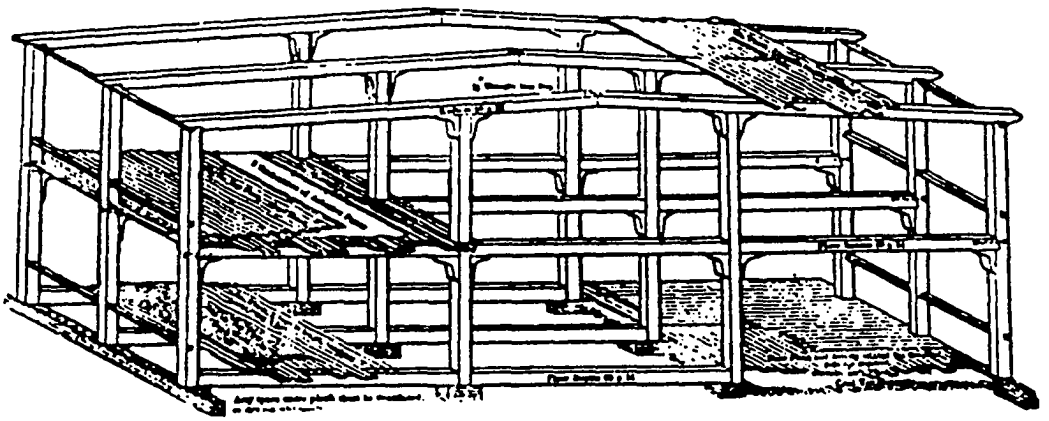

Fig. 72

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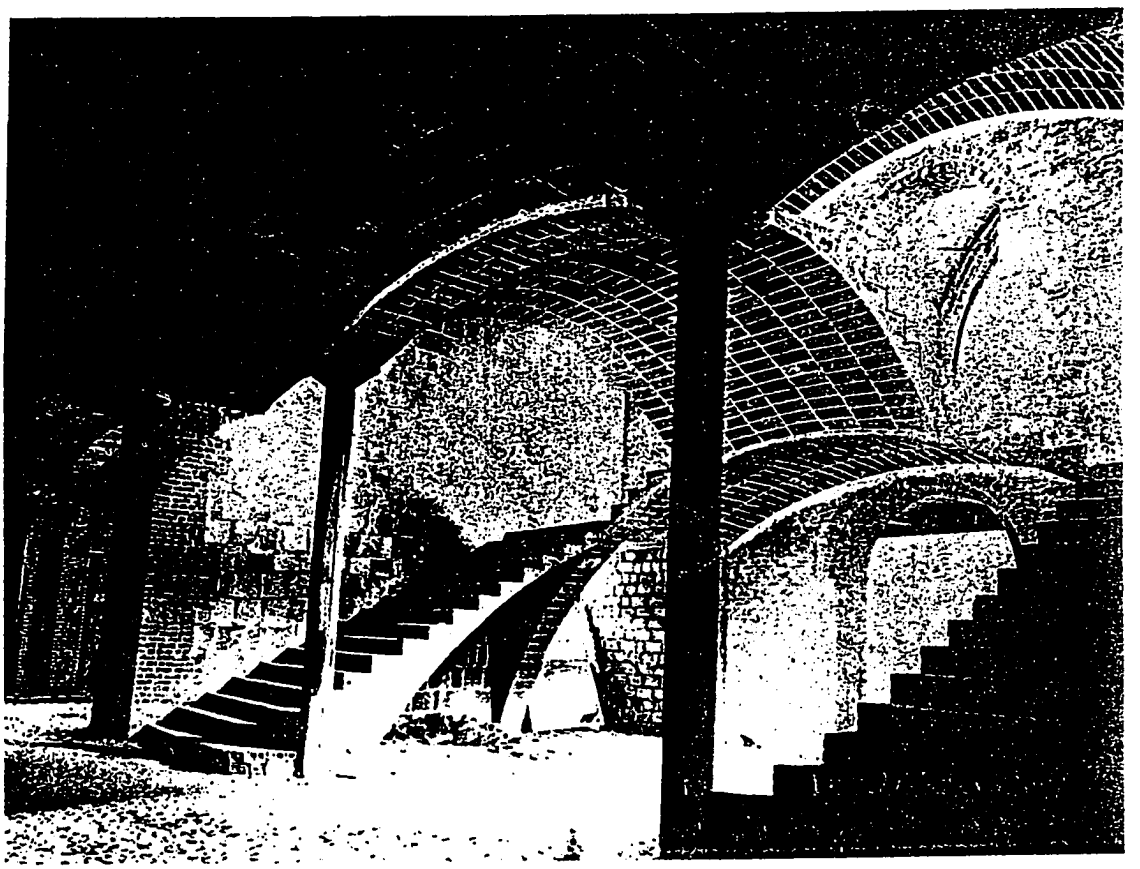

Fig. 73

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Fig. 74

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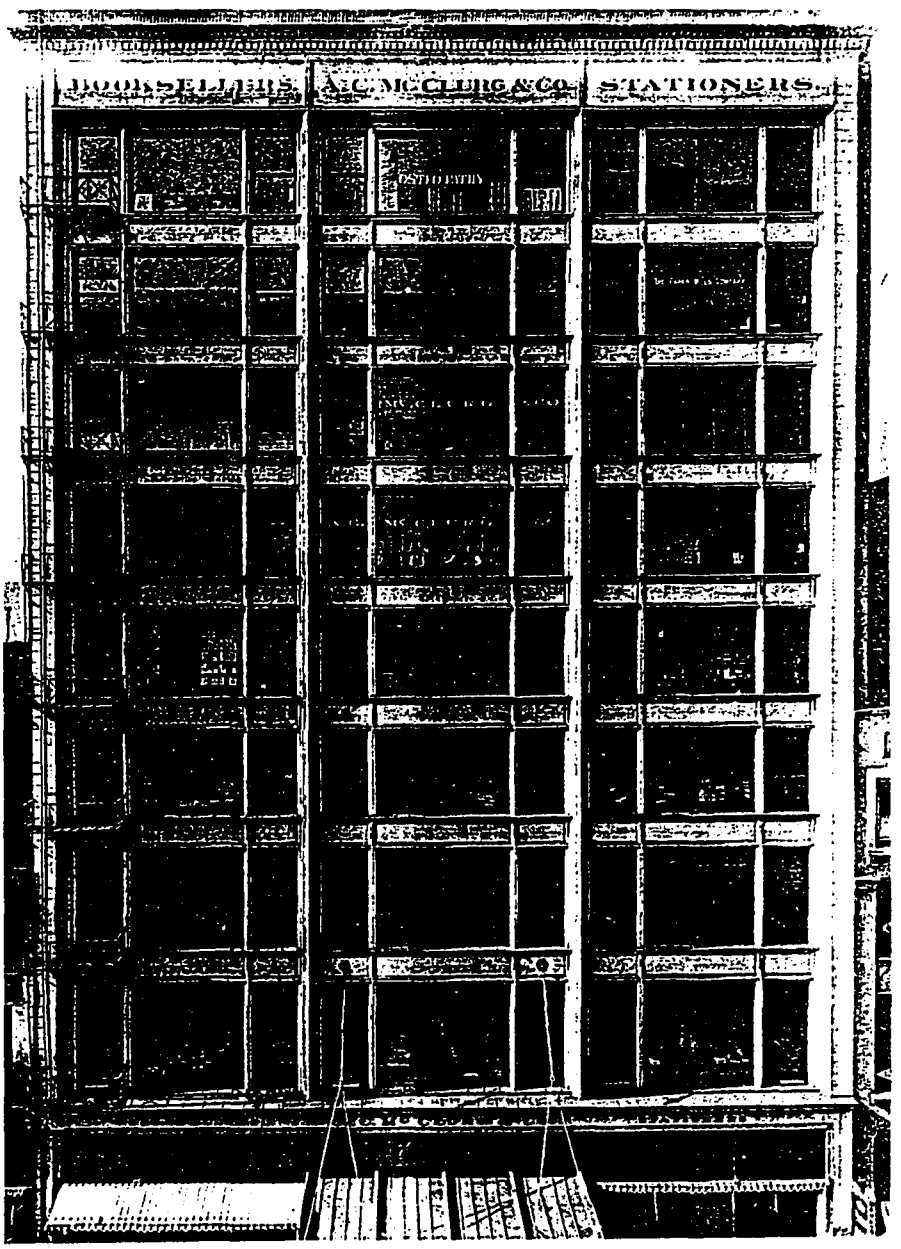

Fig. 75

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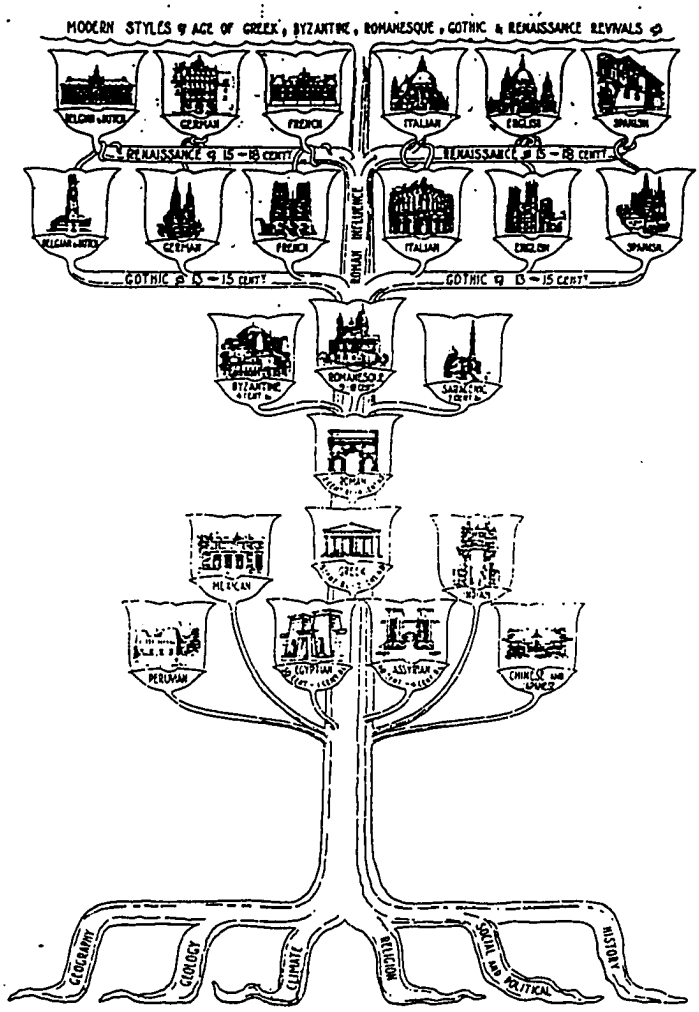

THE TREE OF ARCHITECTURE,

Showing the main growth or evolution of the various styles.

The Tree must be taken as suggestive only, for minor influences cannot be indicated in a diagram of this kind.

Fig. 76

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Note: Many of the articles listed below are unsigned or are signed only with initials. Attribution of these articles to Wight is based on *Poole's Index*, Landau, *P.B. Wight*, and my analysis of style, subject, and place.

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