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News Letter

SOLOMON JENKINS, MISSOURI ARCHITECT

by David Simmons

Prior to the Civil War Solomon Jenkins (1808-1858) became one of Missouri's most important architects. He designed at least a dozen public buildings for Missouri institutions, including courthouses, public and private educational facilities, and two state asylums. Since these have almost completely disappeared in the century and a half since his death, the impact Jenkins once had on Missouri has largely been forgotten.

A native of Virginia, probably from Gloucester County, Jenkins resided in Frankfort, Kentucky at the time of the 1830 census. Probably he received his architectural training during this period from an unknown source. It is tempting to suppose that he was associated with Gideon Shryock, the leading Greek Revival architect of that region, who completed the Kentucky State Capitol in 1829 and moved to Lexington to work on Morrison Hall on the campus of Transylvania University in 1830. Jenkins' own work in the Greek Revival style clearly demonstrated Shryock's influence over his creative process.

At the age of 27, Jenkins arrived in Missouri and established his architectural practice in St. Louis during the summer of 1835. On January 15, 1838, he married Jane S. Wells of St. Charles, Missouri. Although his offices were in St. Louis, most of his known commissions came from out-state Missouri institutions, causing him to travel extensively throughout the state. After twenty-two years of service, he died in Lincoln County at the age of 50.

During his career, Jenkins planned four county courthouses:

- Costing \$2,700, the modest Warren County Courthouse in Warrenton was built in 1838 and served until 1871. No pictorial representation of this building exists, but eyewitness accounts claim it was beautiful.
- Located at Main and Madison in the city of St. Charles, the Greek Revival St. Charles County Courthouse represented an investment of \$9,000. Started in 1846 and completed in 1849, this one-story structure of

brick, wood, and stone displayed a Doric portico of six columns with fluted shafts, pilasters on all four sides between shuttered windows, and a two-stage cupola perched on the ridge of the roof. It houses county functions until 1903.

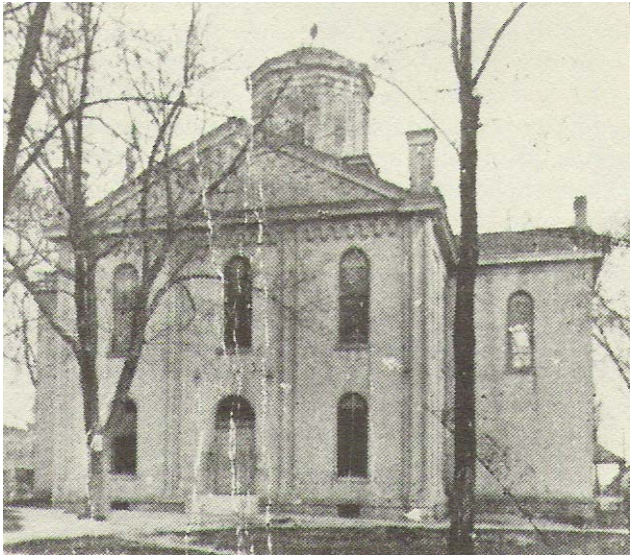


St. Charles County Courthouse, St. Charles, Missouri. From Marian M. Ohman, Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses, Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia, Extension Division, 1981.

- Situated in Fulton, the second courthouse for Callaway County expressed the Greek Revival style with its six-column portico. A tall octagon-shaped and domed clock tower dressed the roof of this two-story brick structure trimmed in stone and wood. Completed in 1856 at the contracted price of \$17,850, the building placed county offices on the first floor and the court space upstairs. The county razed the building in 1938.

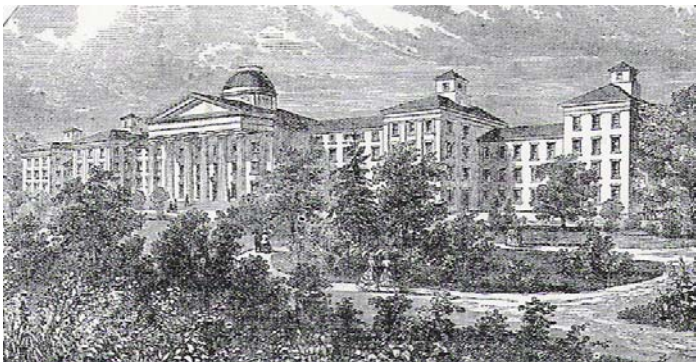


Callaway County Courthouse, Fulton, Missouri, 1856. From Ohman.



Scotland County Courthouse, Memphis, Missouri, 1856. From Ohman.

- Italianate design dictated the exterior of the Scotland County Courthouse at Memphis, Missouri. Measuring 40 feet by 70 feet, the two-story brick building had dressed Des Moines River limestone trim. County offices with cross halls were on the first floor and the courtroom with jury rooms on the second level. Another Jenkins cupola crowned the structure. His courthouse cost \$19,500 when he completed it in 1857. After 51 years of use, the courthouse was cleared away for a new building.

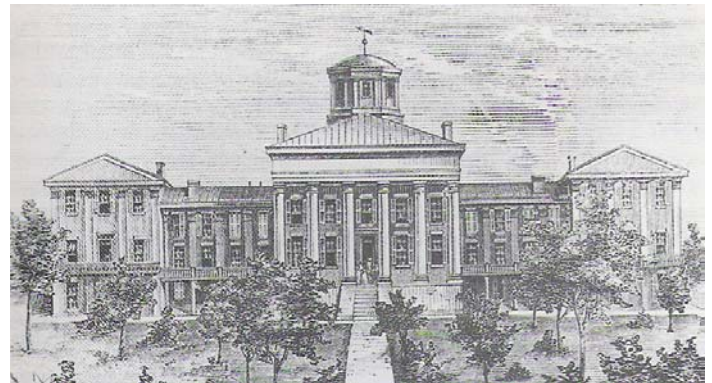


State of Missouri Lunatic Asylum, Fulton, 1850. From Richard L. Lael, et al, Evolution of a Missouri Asylum: Fulton State Hospital, 1851-2006, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007

On February 16, 1847, the Missouri legislature authorized the state to construct an asylum for the insane at public expense. Fulton, Missouri donated the site and pledged \$11,500 to help with the asylum's construction. The state commission supervising the project accepted the architectural plan Jenkins submitted and contracted him in April, 1849 to build the asylum at a cost of \$47,450. Influenced by the new asylum at Indianapolis costing \$60,000, Jenkins' original design used the Doric Greek Revival style complete with portico and entablature. A red brick superstructure with limestone trim rose to a height of four floors. Its frontage of 410 feet was divided into nine sections. The asylum contained a total

of 151 rooms, consisting of 88 dorm rooms, each housing up to four patients; 58 rooms for other purposes; and 15 smaller rooms. Construction commenced during the summer of 1849. After completing the main building, the plan called for the erection of south and north wings on the basis of space needs and funds available. The legislature had appropriated \$30,000 for the main building, but by January 1851, Jenkins had spent \$50,000. Several months later the legislature released an additional \$25,000 to complete it. To cut construction costs, the architect eliminated many of the Greek Revival elements from his design.

In 1854 the asylum added an \$80,000 south wing, doubling the institution's capacity to 200 patients. Jenkins planned and supervised the project. This addition consisted of a four-story south wing (60 by 40 feet) and a four-story pavilion (40 by 76), connecting the wing to the main building. A chapel seating 200, parlors, dining rooms, kitchen, clothes rooms, and dorms for suicide patients occupied space in the new addition. At the same time, the architect erected a two-story building linking the power plant to the main structure. Building of the addition relied on brick construction with limestone trim. About the time of Jenkins' death in 1858, the mental asylum enlarged its premises with the north wing and pavilion to provide lodging for violent patients. This addition increased the institution's capacity to 350.



State Deaf and Dumb Asylum, later Missouri School for the Deaf, Fulton, 1853. From Richard D. Reed, Historic MSD: The Story of the Missouri School for the Deaf, Fulton, MO: 2000.

Jenkins designed and built his second state institution in 1853 and 1854. The Missouri School of the Deaf was situated on an eighteen-acre site in Fulton. Once again he turned to the Greek Revival vocabulary. With a combined frontage of 154 feet, the brick school on limestone foundation had three components: a four-story central section, 54 feet deep by 76 feet long; and two wings, each three floors high and 22 feet deep by 39 feet long. The wings were one room deep, and a central hall with rear staircase traversed the main component. The building accommodated dorms, classrooms, parlors, dining area, and utility spaces. On April 5, 1853, the supervising au-

thority contracted Jenkins to build the school for \$27,800. School officials laid the cornerstone on July 4 of the same year. During the summer of 1854 Jenkins completed the building at a cost of \$29,800, and the first class of forty students moved in for the fall term.



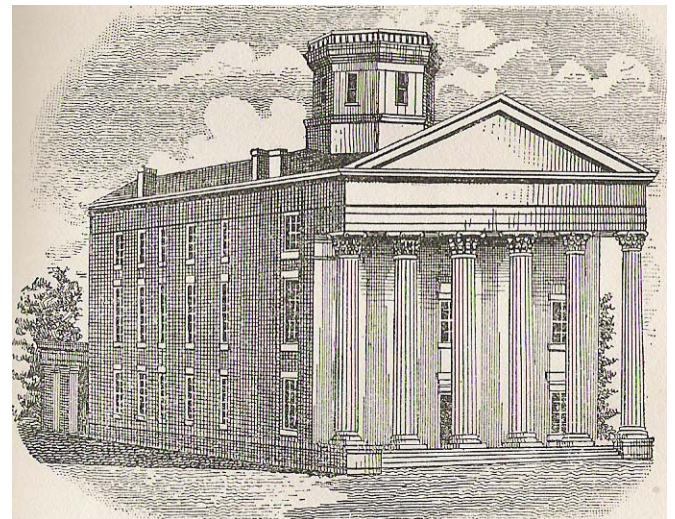
Lafayette School, St. Louis, 1852-1853, photo from St. Louis Public Library Special Collections.

The only commission Jenkins is known to have completed in St. Louis involved two public schools. In the fall of 1851, the St. Louis Board of Education asked Jenkins to design two St. Louis public schools. His plans for the Lafayette School at Ann and Decatur and the Webster School at Jefferson and Eleventh Street reflected a simple, somewhat austere interpretation of the American Federal style. Both schools utilized a limestone foundation, a cast iron frame, brick superstructure, limestone trim, and slate roof. Each three-story school measured 80 by 60 feet. Their interior arrangements followed the dictates of the monitoring method of education called the Lancaster system. Every floor had the same arrangement, more or less. A large study hall area 49 by 47 feet was surrounded by three connecting recitation rooms, each 11 by 23 feet. A staircase corridor accessed each floor. Construction continued from March 20, 1852 through March 2, 1853. School officials paid Jenkins \$800 for plans and supervision. The cash book for 1848-1855 of the St. Louis Board of Education lists the general expense of Lafayette School at \$13,683 and the Webster School at \$14,992.



Webster School, St. Louis, 1852-1853; photo from St. Louis Public Library Special Collections.

Jenkins' last architectural achievements dealt with educational buildings he created for four new private Christian colleges founded in Missouri during the 1850s:



College Building, Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, 1853. From M. M. Fisher and John J. Rice, History of Westminster College 1851-1903, Columbia, 1903.

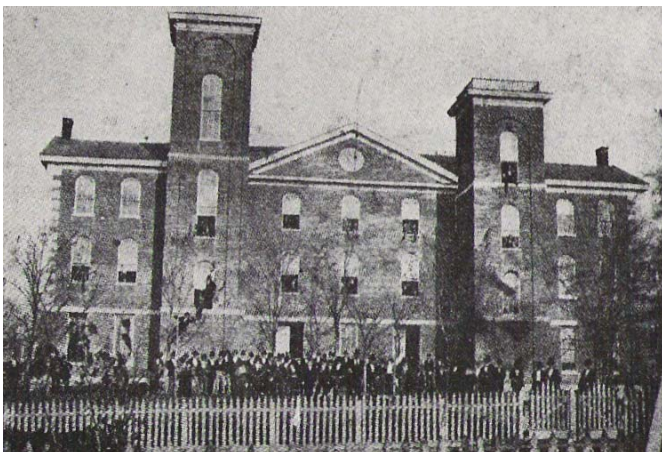
- Missouri Presbyterians established Westminster College on a twenty-acre site at Fulton in 1851. Westminster trustees engaged Jenkins to fashion a modified Greek temple for their new academic hall. They contracted him in March of 1853 to build it for \$15,000. On July 4, 1853, school officials laid the cornerstone. Measuring 60 by 90 feet, the three-story red brick building focused on its massive six-column portico in the Corinthian style and its beautiful cupola. Its interior arrangement placed a dining area on the first floor, a chapel seating 250 on the second story, and a library on the third level. The building depended on fireplace heating and high ceiling cooling. Under roof by December, 1853, the building received its first students three months later. Completion

occurred in 1855 at a cost of \$20,000. The building burned in 1909, but the six columns of the portico survived..



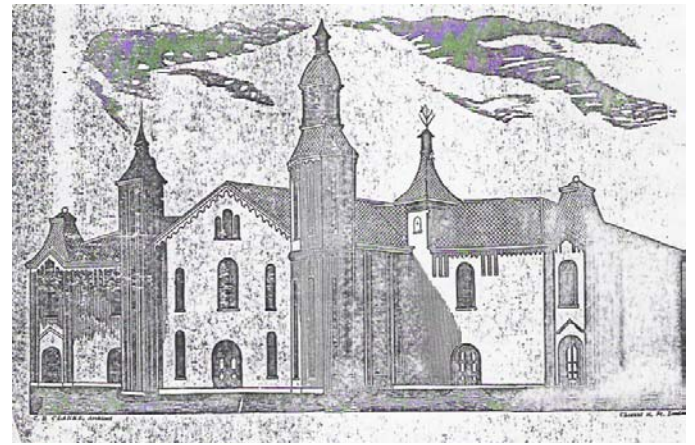
College Building, Christian College, later Culver-Stockton College, Canton, Missouri, 1852. From George R. Lee, Culver-Stockton College: The First 130 Years, Canton: MO, 1984.

- Next the Campbellites or Disciples of Christ sought to erect their Christian College on a 58-acre tract at Canton in Lewis County. At the beginning of the 20th century, they changed the name of the school to Culver-Stockton College. In St. Louis the *Missouri Republican* newspaper of December 19, 1852 announced the appointment of Solomon Jenkins as the architect of their new college building. At the behest of school officials, the architect replicated another version of the Greek Revival temple complete with dome and six-column portico. Contracted price for the new structure was \$24,900. Construction commenced in the spring of 1853, and the cornerstone was laid on September 14. With a combined frontage of 120 feet and a variation of depth from 43 feet to 108 feet, the three-story brick school consumed a total of 220,000 bricks during its construction. After four years of building, Jenkins completed the school in August of 1856.



Brannock Hall, Central Missouri Methodist College, Fayette, 1856. From Frank C. Tucker, Central Methodist College: One Hundred And Ten Years, "Produced for the College", 1967.

- Founded in 1853 and chartered in 1855, Central Methodist College selected Fayette in Howard County as its location. In 1856, Jenkins accepted the commission to design the college building to be called Brannock Hall. This Italianate structure displayed simple lines, varied shapes, and clever arrangement. Its most striking feature came from a pair of four-story towers of different heights, dividing the front into three parts, and framing the central component. Between the towers a one-story porch of three arched apertures concealed the building's main entrance and linked together the towers and unified the front. Completed in August, 1857, imaginative and beautiful Brannock Hall represented Jenkins' last major commission, costing college officials \$35,000.



Mount Pleasant College, Huntsville, Missouri. From cover of college catalog "for the Collegiate Year ending April, 1871" showing 1857 building as altered by C.B. Clarke in 1869.

- Situated in Huntsville, Missouri, Mount Pleasant College hired Solomon Jenkins in 1855 to design and construct their new school. Founded by Missouri Baptists, Mount Pleasant offered a four-year coeducational experience. The building was completed in 1857 at a cost of \$12,500, and school opened to 170 students a year later. Fashioned in the Italianate manner, the two-story rectangular brick building featured two towers of different height and shape (square and octagonal) to frame its front façade. Arched openings, a steep pitched roof, and a side entrance enclosed in a modified tower completed the exterior design. A large chapel, eight spacious classrooms, several smaller rooms, and a system of connecting corridors with a staircase defined its interior. Unfortunately, no drawing or picture of Jenkins' building has been uncovered. St. Louis architect Charles B. Clarke added two wings to the original building in 1869, and a photo with a glimpse of that remodeling does exist. An arsonist from Mexico, Missouri, torched the school in 1882, and it was not rebuilt.

Prior to his death in 1858, Jenkins partnered with Solomon Woolfolk and James Britton in a general contracting

firm that also provided architectural services, Jenkins, Woolfolk and Britton. At times he speculated in various land ventures. For instance, Henry Taylor Blow purchased two adjoining lots on Lucas Place from Jenkins in 1852 for \$12,500. Probated in Lincoln County, Missouri, Jenkins' estate records confirmed his ownership of three properties – a tract of 373 acres in Lincoln County near Troy; a lot at the southeast corner of Jefferson and Kingsbury in St. Louis, and Lot 5 of O'Rear's Division in Freeman's Tract in St. Charles. The inventory also listed personal property including seven adult slaves.

Little has been written about Missouri architecture outside St. Louis prior to the Civil War. Solomon Jenkins emerged as a major Missouri architect during this period, initially as a champion of the Greek Revival style. Late in life he turned to the Italianate style for inspiration and greater freedom. Judging from the two Italianate examples seen here, his design work became more imaginative and picturesque.

BUILDINGS BY SOLOMON JENKINS IN MISSOURI

arranged by date. with sources

- 1838 Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton
Withey
- 1849 St. Charles County Courthouse, St. Charles
Withey
- 1850 Missouri Lunatic Asylum, Fulton
Missouri Republican, Jan 23, 1851
- 1852 College Building, Christian College, Canton
Missouri Republican, Aug. 29, 1852
- 1852 Lafayette School, Ann & Decatur, St. Louis
Board of Ed.
- 1852 Webster School, Eleventh & Jefferson, St. Louis
Board of Ed.
- 1853 College Building, Westminster College, Fulton
Missouri Republican, July 11, 1853
- 1853 Missouri Deaf & Dumb Asylum, Fulton
Missouri Republican, July 11, 1853
- 1853 Addition to Missouri Lunatic Asylum, Fulton
Lael
- 1856 Callaway County Courthouse, Fulton
Withey
- 1856 Scotland County Courthouse, Memphis
Withey
- 1856 Bannock Hall, Central Methodist College,
Fayette Bryan
- 1857 Mount Pleasant College, Huntsville
Jenkins will
- 1858 Residence for E. W. Downing, Memphis
attributed by Bryan, p. 43

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SYMBOLS OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY: PHOTOGRAPHS OF MISSOURI COURTHOUSE ARCHITECTURE

by Carol Grove

Architectural historian Spiro Kostof described courthouses as the “monumental gestures that commemorate heroes and mark the passage of our history.” Whether set on the town square or on a hillside overlooking the Mississippi River, the courthouse is most often a county’s most impressive public building, one that represents the values and beliefs of the community. Former Governor Roger Wilson called them “the visible reminders of the will and desire” of the citizens of Missouri. In more practical terms, these historic structures are the home of a county’s legal and administrative life, they serve as repositories for county documents and records, and often house historical societies and university extension staff.

The current exhibition at the Sheldon Galleries is a photographic survey of 40 of Missouri’s 114 county courthouses as illustrated in the publication *Missouri Courthouses: Building Memories on the Square*, with photographs and text by Dennis Weiser (Donning Company Publishers, 2007). Mr. Weiser, who is a 1964 graduate of the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri, has also written the text panels for the show.

Weiser’s photos display the architectural variety of courthouses across the state, from the early spare brick four-square and the classical temple-front style to the eclectic and ornate expressions representative of the late nineteenth century and streamlined Work Projects Administration projects of the 1930s. These structures were designed and built by a range of self-taught local builders and professionally trained architects, all documented, along with relevant dates, in *Missouri Courthouses*.

Although a number of historic Missouri courthouses are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, many are currently threatened by lack of funding and the availability of sufficient maintenance budgets. The inability to make repairs, coupled with the demand for more space, has compelled some communities to abandon these buildings and relocate county business in new structures, which leaves the historic courthouse unused and further endangered.

In 2008, the Missouri Alliance for Historic Preservation included “Courthouses across Missouri” as a category on their “Most Endangered Properties” list. For the past two years, the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office has issued grants through its Missouri Historic Preservation Revolving Fund to help fund brick-and-mortar rehabilitation project, but much more funding is needed to ensure long-term preservation. Proceeds from the sale of this

publication assist the Missouri Alliance for Historic Preservation and its mission to promote and support preservation activities across the State.

The exhibition was made possible by Joan and Mitchell Markow.

A NOTE ON THE TORNADO OF 1927 AND ST. LOUIS BRICKWORK

by Michael Allen

In September 2007 Lynn Josse and I drove the path of the tornado that devastated a large part of central and northeastern St. Louis in 1927. We wanted to see what had become of the wrecked buildings shown in the subsequent publication, *Report of the St. Louis Tornado of September 28, 1927, by the Joint Committee of the Engineers’ Club of St. Louis and St. Louis Chapter, American Institute of Architects, 1928*. Many still stand, with lopped rooflines, missing stories, modern brickwork, and similar alterations.

The Leonardo apartment building at 4166 Lindell opposite Whittier, next door to Walgreens, was at dead center of the tornado’s path and survived without much of a scratch. The report cites its superior construction as reason for its survival and blamed the collapse of many buildings in the city on their two-to-three wythe brick walls with inadequate ties between wythes. The tornado seems to have spurred the use of metal ties between wythes in St. Louis masonry, still a common practice on true masonry walls – and one that makes the classic wall ties with elaborate anchors unnecessary.

ERIC MUMFORD’S NEW BOOK

Josep Lluís Sert: The Architect of Urban Design, 1953-1969 was published in 2008 by Yale University Press, in association with the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. Eric Mumford, associate professor of architecture and art history at Washington University, edited the book along with Hashim Sarkis of Harvard University. The dates in the title refer to the years in which Sert headed Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, where he created the first professional degree program in urban design.

In those years, Americans knew him as José Luis Sert, because dictator Francisco Franco had banned the Catalan language. Historians have now reverted to the form which reflects Sert’s cultural heritage. Born in Barcelona, he was the nephew of painter Josep Maria Sert, who along with Antoni Gaudi played an important part in the Catalan artistic revival of the late 19th century.

(continued on page 8)

HISTORY HIKES, SPRING 2009

The St. Louis Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians sponsors this series of walking tours of historic neighborhoods of St. Louis County for the County Department of Parks and Recreation. Your guide is Esley Hamilton, preservation historian for the County. All walks are on Saturday mornings from 9 to 11 a.m. \$3 per person, payable at the event. Phone Mr. Hamilton at 314-615-0357 for information. Reservations are essential.

Webster Groves, the Ridge at Rock Hill Rd.
Saturday, April 4, 9 to 11 a.m.
Meet on Lockwood Avenue at Gray,
opposite Straubs

The area south of Lockwood along Rock Hill Road was one of the first to be settled after the railroad came to Webster in 1853. Today it is a virtual museum of American house styles.

Oakland and East Kirkwood
Saturday, April 11, 9 to 11 a.m.
Meet in the parking lot of Ursuline Academy, 341 S.
Sappington Road; enter from East Monroe

The small City of Oakland is one of the most active in St. Louis County in identifying and working to preserve its historic buildings, which range from 19th-century country houses to outstanding Mid-Century Modern designs.

New Mount Sinai Cemetery
Saturday, April 18, 9 to 11 a.m.
Meet at the office inside the main gate, 8430
Gravois

Founded by B'nai El Synagogue in 1850, New Mount Sinai has become one of St. Louis's most important cultural treasures, both for its design and monuments and for the contributions its permanent residents have made to business, culture, and philanthropy in St. Louis. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005.

**Exhibition: "Symbols of Collective Memory:
Missouri Courthouse Architecture"**
through Saturday, May 30
The Sheldon Galleries, 3648 Washington Avenue

Missouri's 114 counties have courthouse buildings representing every architectural period from the Greek Revival to the present. Some of the best are included in these photos taken by Dennis Weiser for the book *Missouri Courthouses*, published by the Missouri Alliance for Historic Preservation in 2007.

New hours for the Sheldon Galleries are Tuesday noon to 8; Wednesday, Thursday and Friday noon to 5, Saturday 10 to 2, and one prior to Sheldon concerts & during intermission.

**Exhibition: "Eero Saarinen:
Shaping the Future"**
Friday, January 30 to Monday, April 27, 2009
Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum,
Off Skinker, near Forsyth, Washington University

See the accompanying article for more on this international traveling exhibition, which brings the whole range of Saarinen's work to life. The Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum is open free to the public Monday, Wednesday, & Thursday 11-6, Friday 11-8, Saturday & Sunday: 11-6. Closed Tuesday.

**Talk: "Frank Lloyd Wright, St. Louis,
and Organic Architecture"**
Friday, April 3, 7 p.m.
St. Louis Art Museum Auditorium

Anthony Alofsin, professor of architecture, art and art history at the University of Texas at Austin and a leading authority about the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, has been invited to St. Louis by the Frank Lloyd Wright House in Ebsworth Park. This is the latest in the outstanding series of talks by noted experts that they have sponsored. Alofsin received the Wright Spirit Award from the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy in 2006 and has written eight books, including *The Lost Years* about Wright's work from 1910 to 1927 and another about the Price Tower. His 2006 book, *When Buildings Speak*, deals with architecture in the Habsburg Empire from 1967 to 1933.

(from page 6)

Barcelona's planning tradition, going back to Ildefons Cerdà's plan of 1859, also formed a strong background for Sert's interests. He became an early disciple of Le Corbusier in 1929 and in the 1930s founded the Spanish branch of the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), the subject of Eric's previous book, *The CIAM Discourse on Modernism, 1928-1960* (MIT Press, 2000, now available in paperback).

After the fall of the Republic, Sert left Spain for New York, where his design firm, Town Planning Associates, provided urban planning services, primarily for Latin American cities. In 1958 he organized a new office, Sert, Jackson & Gourley, which designed several conspicuous projects in the Boston area, including the Holyoke Center, Harvard Science Center, and Peabody Terrace in Cambridge and the complex of buildings along the Charles River for Boston University. Sert's gallery for the Maeght Foundation opened to acclaim in 1964 in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France, and his Miró Foundation (Fundació Joan Miró) opened in Barcelona in 1975.

The new book grew out of two exhibitions and a symposium held at Harvard in 2003, timed to mark the 50th anniversary of Sert's appointment there. It includes nine essays related to the diverse aspects of Sert's career, plus an interview with Sert by *Boston Globe* architectural critic Robert Campbell and a commentary on

some of the projects that were featured in the exhibitions. Eric's own contribution is the essay, "From the Heart of the City to Holyoke Center: CIAM Ideas in Sert's Definition of Urban Design."



Corbu comes to Cambridge: Harvard's Holyoke Center by Sert, Jackson & Gourley, 1960-64. Photo by G. E. Kidder Smith, MIT Rotch Visual Collections. Along with this tribute to Le Corbusier's Unité, Sert also brought the master to Harvard to design the Carpenter Center, his only building in the United States.

News Letter

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