

The Society of Architectural Historians
Missouri Valley Chapter



News Letter

Volume III

Number 1

Spring 1997

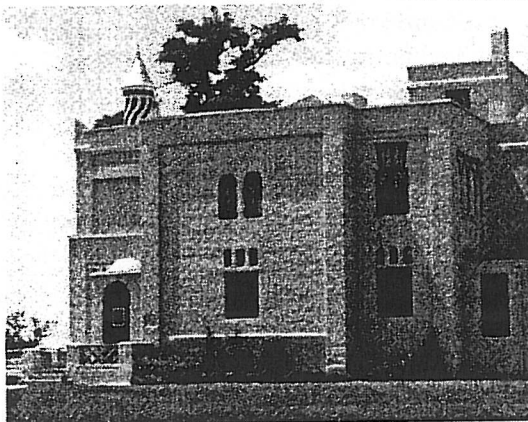
Quincy Architectural Tour April 5, 1997

A luxury coach will take us north to one of the Midwest's richest collections of 19th and early 20th-century architecture, complete with its own museum of architecture, the Gardner Museum. Quincy was named in 1825 and grew after the Civil War into the state's second largest city, in which St. Louis and Chicago architects vied with the strong local profession. Today Quincy has four large National Register districts encompassing every style from Greek Revival to Art Deco, with an unusual concentration of Prairie School designs by local architect Ernest Wood. Quincy's main street, Maine Street, is a parade of Victorian mansions, including the opulent Romanesque Newcomb-Stillwell House, now the Quincy Museum.



Quincy Museum

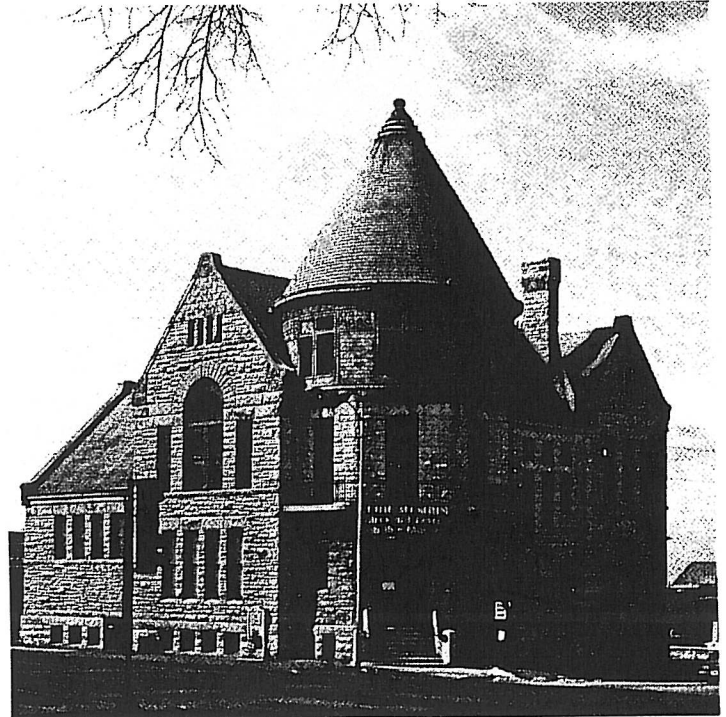
Villa Kathrine



The New Quincy Bridge

The tour will have special assistance from the staff of the Gardner Museum and the city's preservation office and will include looks on foot and by bus at all the historic districts. We shall be among the first to see the completed restoration of the unique Moorish interiors at the Villa Kathrine, now Quincy's visitors' center, and we may be invited into some private residences. The tour is timed to give the best view of the buildings before the foliage appears.

Gardner Museum of Architecture and Design



Divine Glass by Terri Gates

Editor's note: The following article is reprinted with permission from the December 1996 KETC Guide, the publication of the St. Louis public television station, Channel 9. It describes the current work of Mimi Stiritz, our chapter secretary, who was featured in December on the KETC show, *St. Louis Chronicles: Churches*.

Some of the best, most moving art in St. Louis isn't hanging in a museum gallery or hidden within a private home. You'll find hundreds of masterpieces scattered generously among the city's many historic churches and synagogues. Look at — not through — the windows.

Mary M. "Mimi" Stiritz of Clayton, a free-lance architectural historian, loves the art and culture represented by St. Louis' rich collection of stained glass. "All stained glass is significant," she says. Stiritz heads the local branch of a national organization dedicated to cataloging all architectural stained glass in the country. The group, called The Census of Stained Glass Windows in America, Inc. (CSGA), has already completed or begun window surveys in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, San Francisco, New Orleans and Michigan, among other locations. CSGA director Virginia Raguin, a professor of art history at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts,



The Good Shepherd photo by John Wm. Nagel

came to St. Louis last spring to hold a census workshop and, according to Stiritz, was excited by the bounty and quality of windows here.

Stiritz gained more than a passing familiarity with ecclesiastical stained glass windows when she conducted research for a 1995 book she wrote, *St. Louis: Historic Churches & Synagogues*, published by the St. Louis Public Library and Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. The book describes in detail the floor plans, style, decorations, renovations, significance and changing denominations of 77 church and synagogue buildings in St. Louis.

The stained glass window census gives Stiritz the opportunity to further explore one of her favorite arts. "Some is more important because it's rarer than others," she says. "It's hard to be too exclusive or selective in the process because the city is so rich in glass."

She began the St. Louis census this past summer, but the oppressive heat in un-air-conditioned city churches caused her to postpone work until the fall. So far, she's inventoried the stained glass windows on six churches in the city, and hopes to target a total of 50 within one year.

Stiritz wants to build a database of windows to discover whether particular denominations have common patterns, which might reveal the values and interests of a congregation at the time of construction. "For religious art in general, the idea of being original was not a high value," says Stiritz. "It was more instruction, what the beliefs of the church were, the values of the congregation." As an example, Stiritz cites windows in German, Irish and Czechoslovakian ethnic churches, which may have the usual denominational imagery, but also feature pictures of saints from the members' native country.

A window at Scruggs Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (originally Cook Avenue Methodist Episcopal, South) demonstrates the congregation's respect for a major donor. A portrait of Richard M. Scruggs, founder of Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney department store, is pictured on glass, "so that had a very personal reference to the members," says Stiritz. Scruggs also contains windows with an unusual floral pattern, one of Stiritz's favorites.

Stiritz explains that Catholic churches tend to have a greater number of surviving stained glass windows because, as congregations moved west, Protestant churches were sold and torn down, but new waves of immigrants from Catholic countries moved into the neighborhoods of older churches. Sometimes relocating congregations took along a window or two from their old building; one Unitar-



Charles Cottier Old Church of the Messiah

ian church moved all its windows to a new building designed for the old windows.

Part of the beauty of stained glass windows, says Stiritz, is in observing how they complement other elements of a building's architecture and how they complement the philosophy of a denomination. "Christian Science churches rarely have colored glass, or it's very lightly tinted glass," Stiritz explains. "They felt strongly the interiors of their edifices should be very well illuminated and not have this dark, mysterious atmosphere like a Medieval, Gothic church. When you look at them as a whole in St. Louis, we've got a great collection of early 20th century Christian Science churches... . Design features, glass one of them, conformed to a Christian Science system of belief based on rational thinking. Therefore, clarity was in a physical sense a clearly illuminated interior and was part of their belief of what a building should be."

The survey standards established by the CSGA require surveyors — who are all volunteers, including Stiritz — to draw a diagram of the church, numbering and noting the location of stained glass windows; to photograph every window; and to fill out a separate data sheet for each window that describes the subject and identifies the manufacturer. It takes Stiritz half a day just to take the photos —

slides and prints — using two or three cameras, a tripod, and 400-speed film. Overcast days, she says, produce the best light for capturing color and detail.

Stiritz brings along binoculars to try to spot the one window in a church that might contain the manufacturer's signature. Sometimes, it's like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. The signature may have sunk into the frame at the bottom of a window, or be obscured by dirt. Pastors have joined in the hunt, often referring Stiritz to church archives where she must pore over newsletters and financial records. "An Evangelical church on North Grand had no signature on the windows, but had parish bulletins dating from the time of construction," Stiritz recalls. "I found the manufacturer, and the bulletins discussed what images the congregation had considered using. Really, it was pretty fruitful spending that time to get more information."

One reason St. Louis boasts so many spectacular windows is because two major stained glass manufacturers were based here: Jacoby Art Glass Co., established in the late 1890s, and Emil Frei Co., which is still in business on West Adams in Kirkwood. St. Alphonsus "Rock" Church on North Grand has windows installed by the prestigious German firm Mayer of Munich. Mayer had an exhibit at the 1904 World's Fair and sent fairgoers to the church to see an example of their installations.

Other famous window manufacturers represented in St. Louis include Daniel Cottier & Co., London, which created windows in 1880 for a Unitarian church on Locust (today the windows are in Parrish Temple C.M.E. on Union Boulevard), as well as the windows in Harvard University's Memorial Hall and Trinity Episcopal Church in Boston. The Tiffany Co., famous for lampshades and jewelry, created the windows at Second Presbyterian Church on Westminster Place. While other windows at the turn of the century were costing churches about \$300 per window, the 11 Tiffanies ran \$1,300 to \$3,500 each. Says Stiritz, "It's probably one of the largest collections of Tiffany windows in the Midwest."

Like any persistent detective pursuing a hot lead, several months ago Stiritz uncovered the signature of a Boston manufacturer previously unknown to her: the McPherson studio, dated 1877. She called the CSGA's Raguin, who was thrilled to hear the news.

Part of the value of the census itself (until permanent quarters are found, the St. Louis data is temporarily housed in Stiritz's own home), is to show the history of the craft, to help the public appreciate the role glass plays in buildings, and most importantly, to maintain a photographic record of

windows if repair is ever needed. Vandalism remains a problem for many churches. One church contacted Stirtz to inquire whether she had a photo of a window that had been damaged by a storm.

Stirtz attends two or three religious services every Sunday to check out windows and make arrangements for future survey visits. Ironically, she's not a member of any congregation. "I don't have time to go to just one church," she smiles, "but I probably am the most church-going person in the city."

Mimi Stirtz welcomes volunteers to work with her, or to organize their own teams of one to three people. To volunteer for The Census of Stained Glass Windows in America or to ask about adding any significant public or private stained glass to the census, contact Stirtz at (314) 721-6289.

New Funding Challenge For The Buildings of the United States Book Series

Those of you who can still remember when the first four volumes of the SAH's monumental publishing project, *The Buildings of the United States*, came out (1993), will be glad to know that the fifth volume, on Colorado, will appear early this year through Oxford University Press. The series has not moved as fast as once hoped, partly because of scholarly reasons, but largely because of the need to raise money to support the effort. With rare exceptions, architectural books are not money makers; they may earn back their cost of printing, but the cost of writing and designing them usually needs to be found elsewhere.

Fortunately, our SAH series, which is hoped to result in at least 58 volumes, is finding support from many sources large and small, totalling over half a million dollars in the past year. The National Endowment for the Humanities has been particularly helpful, offering four challenge grants over the past few years. The first two have already been successfully matched. The third challenge, still outstanding, will cover Louisiana, Wisconsin, Vermont, and our own state of Missouri, to be authored by Osmund Overby. The newest NEH challenge grant, awarded just a month ago, offers \$400,000 toward a \$2 million total. Work on twelve other states is under way.

Two SAH chapters have already been active in raising money for *The Buildings of the United States*. Since Missouri will be one of the earliest beneficiaries of this series, with Kansas and Nebraska still to come, the Missouri

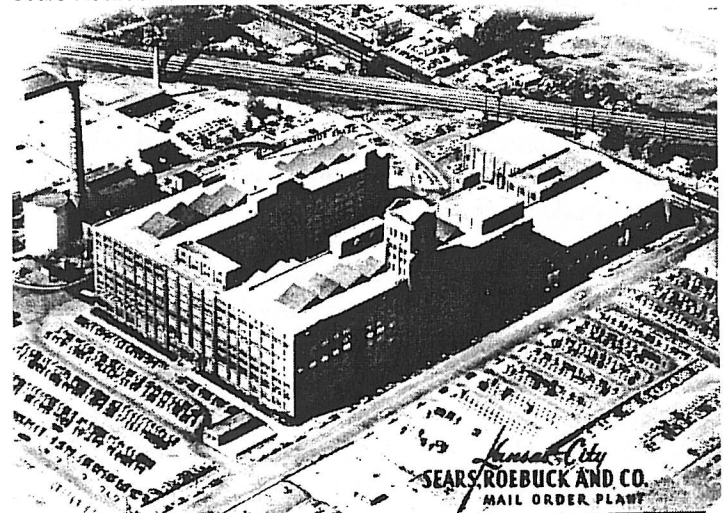
Valley Chapter should take a role in supporting this effort. Please contact the chapter president, Esley Hamilton, with your ideas for fund-raising events, mail appeals, or any other ways of adding our dollars to the total. Keep in mind that these volumes will be useful not just to architectural historians but to preservationists, educators, community planners, the heritage tourism industry, and the general public. Esley can be reached at 314/889-3357, FAX 314-889-3696, or e-mail pk0f29@co.st-louis.mo.us.

The Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Kansas City, Missouri by Cydney Millstein

The mammoth, 1# million-square-foot Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, located on Truman Road in Kansas City, Missouri, awaits demolition sometime in 1997. Completed in 1925, the reinforced concrete, brick and Bedford stone plant consists of a two-story L-shaped administration/retail wing and a nine-story U-shaped merchandise wing, and is one of 10 mail order plants operated by the nation's largest mail order and merchandise concern. The following are excerpts from the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) report on the Sears building, I wrote in 1995.

The design of the Kansas City, Missouri, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant by George C. Nimmons and Company has its roots in the Chicago School of Architecture and can be placed among the best of the industrial designs of the first decades of the twentieth century. The overall arrangement and design of the Kansas City Sears complex, along with other mail order house plants, demonstrate the efficiency of what has been called the American Industrial Style of architecture.

Sears Roebuck and Co. Mail Order Plant



Events Calendar

Quincy Architectural Tour Saint Louis • Saturday, April 5

The Kansas City Sears plant closely suggests the industrial designs of Chicago architects S. Scott Joy and Alfred S. Alschuler, and the work of Nimmons himself while he was practicing on his own. The form and vocabulary of the Sears buildings mirror those of Alschuler's John Sexton & Company Building (1916-1917) and Joy's Montgomery Ward and Company Freight Station and Loft Building (date unknown). Both of these formidable structures, constructed of reinforced concrete with brick veneer, employ enlarged piers and distinct spandrels which separate industrial sash windows. Stone detailing, shaped parapets, and projecting bays, which house the elevator and stairwell bays, add vigor to the vast exterior.

Also of influence was the Reid, Murdoch & Company Building by Nimmons, an office and warehouse structure that was planned to conform with Burnham's civic plan for Chicago. The scheme for this waterfront building, which called for a tower at the main facade's central bay, the separation of the end bays, more emphatic piers and wider spans of fenestration, is analogous to the design of the Kansas City, Missouri Sears plant. Overall ornamentation of the Reid, Murdoch & Company building, like that of the Sears plant, is mostly confined to the entrances and tower.

In the final form of the Kansas City Sears plant, the upper-level arcade and the wide cornice featured on the Reid, Murdoch building were abandoned. In addition, Gothic styled embellishment was now adhered to, instead of the Renaissance, which according to Nimmons was more costly and more confining.

Nimmons' progressive plan for the Kansas City Sears plant, like his many other warehouse and retail designs for Sears, is a representative example of American industrial design for the mail order trade. The form and grouping of the parts together express the original function of the building and secured the greatest convenience in the day-to-day operation of the mail order company.

The Missouri Valley Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians publishes this events Calander as a service to our members and associates. If you would like to have your event included, please send advance notice to:

Cydney Millstein, Editor
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Missouri Valley Chapter
Post Office Box 22551
Kansas City, Missouri 64113

Telephone/Facsimile: 816.363.0567

Further information regarding 1997 Calender Events will be included in the summer **NewsLetter**.

Historic Architecture of Quincy, Illinois Bus Tour, departing from St. Louis Community College at Forest Park at 8 a.m., returning by 9 p.m. Cost of \$45 includes lunch at The Pier overlooking the Mississippi, admissions to the Gardner Museum, the Quincy Museum, and Villa Kathrine, and box supper. Reservations must be confirmed by Friday, March 21. Call 314-727-0428.

Conference Columbia • Friday through Sunday, April 18-20

Annual Statewide Conference on Historic Preservation, sponsored by the Missouri Alliance for Historic Preservation, Columbia, Missouri. Focusing on preservation at the local level, the conference will feature Nellie Longworth, Executive Director of Preservation Action in Washington, who has been instrumental in developing the proposed state tax credits for historic preservation. Educational sessions, tours of Columbia's historic places, and opportunities to learn more about current issues in preservation in Missouri and the nation will highlight the conference. Chapter members will be receiving invitations from MAHP. For more information, contact the Alliance at 573-635-6877.

Annual Meeting Columbia • Saturday, April 19

Annual meeting of Missouri Valley Chapter, SAH. The state preservation conference will include an opportunity for the chapter to hold its annual meeting at a time and room to be announced.

Eleni Bastea Saint Louis • Thursday, May 15

Lecture: Eleni Bastea, "Modern Athens: Planning The Myth." 7:30 p.m., Room 116, Givens Hall, Washington University. Eleni Bastea, assistant professor of architectural history at Washington University's School of Architecture (and former chapter treasurer) is currently completing a book on the 19th-century recreation of Athens as a modern capital, and her talk will preview her work. Free. For more information, phone Esley Hamilton at 314-727-0428.

Jean Zarucchi Saint Louis • Thursday, May 29

Lecture: Jean Zarucchi, "European Castles." 7:30 p.m., Room 116, Givens Hall, Washington University. Jean Zarucchi has branched out from Modern Foreign Languages at the University of Missouri-St. Louis to teach a course this spring on castles in Western culture. From Roman fortifications to Medieval chateaux to modern manifestations, castles uniquely blend practical considerations with symbolic imagery. This talk will highlight her findings. Free. For more information, phone Esley Hamilton at 314-727-0428.

Support our growing organization by mailing your 1997 dues today.

To renew your membership for 1997, or to join our organization, please fill out the coupon at the right and mail it with your check to the address below. Your contribution is essential to help defray printing, postage, and program costs.

The Missouri Valley Chapter of the SAH is a regional organization comprised of members in Missouri, eastern Kansas, and western Iowa with an interest in architecture – past, present, and future. Currently both Saint Louis and Kansas City have component organizations which sponsor lectures, tours, and hold meetings on a regular basis.

All memberships are for the calendar year. Membership privileges include:

- **NewsLetter** (quarterly)
- **Directory** (annually)
- Participation in annual meeting and tours, programs and special events

Membership Categories

Student	\$ 5.00
Individual	\$ 10.00
Joint	\$ 15.00
Organization	\$ 25.00
Supporting	\$ 25.00+

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News Letter

NewsLetter is published quarterly by the Missouri Valley Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians. To contact the Chapter at Epperson House by telephone, call 816/235-1725 or by facsimile, dial 816/235-5191.

Please mail editorial correspondence and submissions for publication to "Esley Hamilton, Editor". Deadlines for submission of material for publication in **NewsLetter** are as follows:

Spring issue	15 February
Summer issue	15 May
Fall issue	15 August
Winter issue	15 November

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