The Society of Architectural Historians
Missouri Valley Chapter

Volume V Number 2 Summer 1999

News Letter

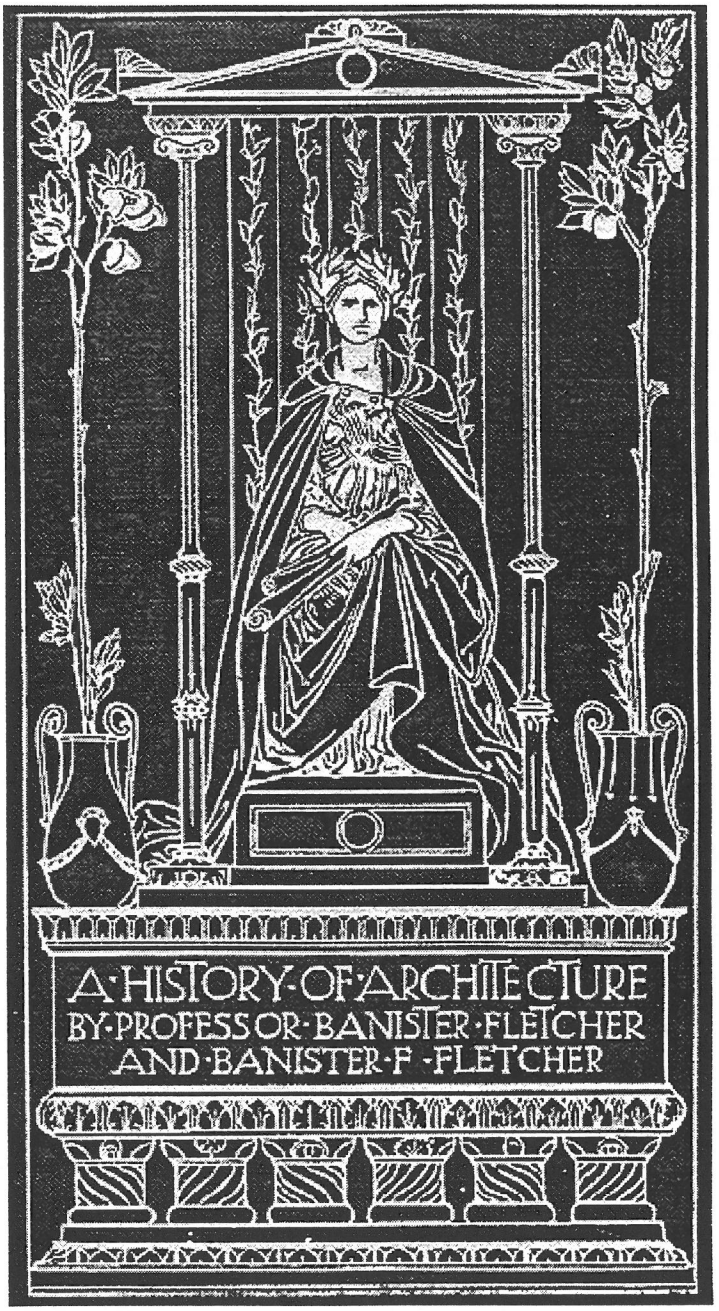
ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY TEXTS: A REVIEW

Diane Shaw of Carnegie Mellon University recently shared with the SAH-L Listserv a common dilemma for teachers of architectural history: "It is time to order textbooks for the fall, and I'm in my usual quandary about which text to use for the introductory survey to world architecture."

Twenty years ago, if an architectural history teacher didn't want to use the architecture chapters in a general art history book such as Helen Gardner's or Horst Janssen's, he or she had few choices. Most architecture schools used Sir Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, with its striking line drawings. Modernists preferred Nikolaus Pevsner's *Outline of European Architecture*, first published in 1943, while more conservative teachers such as Washington University's Lawrence Hill preferred Talbot Hamlin's *Architecture Through the Ages*, published in 1941 and revised in 1953.

Sir Banister Fletcher (1866-1953) is so closely associated with his textbook that most people don't know that the first edition was actually by his father, Professor Banister Fletcher (1833-1899), an architect and surveyor who had been appointed to the faculty of King's College in London in 1890. The son trained in his father's office and, after collaborating on the first three editions of the history, took over with the fourth, published in 1901. It was the first to include non-western architectural traditions. The sixth edition of 1921 was the definitive one, with many new drawings and a largely new text. In his own active architectural practice, Sir Banister was an autocrat, according to the Dictionary of National Biography. "...patronizing even to his peers, he expected much of his staff and scenes were common" according to H. V. Molesworth Roberts, his biographer. So familiar was the book that there was even a parody, *A History of Architecture on the Disparative Method, With Apologies to Sir Banister Fletcher (All Eighteen Editions)*, by Forrest Wilson. Sir Banister bequeathed the copyright for his book jointly to the Royal Institute of British Architects and the University of London, and since then, it has undergone several revisions, most recently by Dan Cruickshank. It is still in print, although at the price of $149.95.

Talbot Hamlin (1889-1956) was best known as the historian of the Greek Revival. His *Greek Revival Architecture in America*, published in 1944, was highly regarded



Book cover: "*A History of Architecture*," 4th edition, 1901

even by Pevsner, and his 1955 biography of Benjamin Latrobe won the Pulitzer Prize. Pevsner (1902-1983), a German who settled in England, was perhaps most influential for defining, along with Siegfried Giedion, the line of development for Modernism. His *Pioneers of Modern Design*, helped set the agenda for the study of much of 19th and 20th century architecture. Pevsner's work coincided with the Modernist spirit of the times, although his own interests were much wider, as demonstrated by his monumental inventory in over fifty volumes, *The Buildings of England.* The style of Pevsner's *Outline* was sometimes daunting, however, with much name-dropping of unillustrated buildings. Last reprinted in 1991, it is currently out of stock.

The situation changed in the 1980s, when five new textbooks were published within the space of four years. Patrick Nuttgens, the director of Leeds Polytechnic, appeared in 1983 with *The Story of Architecture*, reasonably priced, with color illustrations throughout and short enough at 281 pages of text even for a one-semester course. A second edition came out in 1997.

Spiro Kostof's book, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals,* published in 1984, could scarcely have contrasted more with Nuttgens. A full-size quarto weighing five pounds, it had 761 pages of text covering not only architecture, but also urban design and including many less familiar examples as well as the so-called major monuments. Kostof was then a celebrated teacher among those in the know at Berkeley, and he became something of a national figure in 1987 when his book about U. S. architecture, *America by Design*, was made into a television series. He died of cancer in 1991, and the 1995 second edition of the book was revised by his former research assistant Gregory Castillo.

Dora Crouch of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute produced her *History of Architecture: Stonehenge to Skyscrapers* in 1985. It included five sections of review questions in its 360 pages of text, but its small, fuzzy black and white photos, set in black boxes, made it gloomy to read, and it seems to have gone out of print.

Marvin Trachtenberg and Isabelle Hyman published *Architecture: Prehistory to Post-Modernism* in 1986. Its 579 pages of text are the size of Kostof's and weigh even more, and the price is now up to $75. Both authors are scholars of the Renaissance at New York University, Hyman at the College of Arts & Sciences and Trachtenberg at the Institute of Fine Arts.

David Watkin is a British writer specializing in the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly the international Neoclassical movement. *A History of Western Architecture*, published in 1986, is bigger than Nuttgens at 576 pages, but like it has occasional color illustrations throughout. Watkin tends to focus on fewer examples in greater depth. A second edition appeared in 1996.

Leland M. Roth, a professor at the University of Oregon, was last in the lists with his history of Western architecture partly because he had been first in the long-vacant American field with *A Concise History of American Architecture,* 1979. That book restored a measure of respect to the more conservative contemporaries of Sullivan and Wright, growing out of Roth's dissertation on McKim, Mead & White. *Understanding Architecture: Its Elements, History and Meaning*, 1993, begins its 516 pages with an overview of architectural theory along the lines of Stein Eiler Rasmussen's classic *Experiencing Architecture.*

After her initial query, Diane Shaw reported back to the readership of the SAH-L Listserv that instructors seemed to agree that while Kostof and Nuttgens were more inclusive of non-western cultures than the others, Kostof seemed too complex for some students and Nuttgens too superficial. Watkins, Roth, and Trachtenberg & Hymen were being chosen about equally, often supplemented with extra readings on non-western topics. Kim Sexton wrote to suggest an often overlooked text, *A History of Western Architecture* by Lawrence Wodehouse and Marian Moffett of the University of Tennessee. Published in 1989 and with 511 text pages, it is well illustrated and sells in about the middle of the price range at $50.95 paperback.

Eileen Michels, a retired professor from the University of St. Thomas, may have the best solution. Over twelve years, she compiled a syllabus of about 125 pages for her one-semester survey of 19th and 20th century European and American architecture. For each day's subject, she wrote an expository statement, followed by a list of architects and dates, a list of monuments, and further readings, some required or recommended. The first year she tried this, she wrote, "I was one day ahead of the class and making early morning trips to the copy center. After that I revised it every summer.... It was a worthwhile investment of time. Wonderful way to clarify the structure of the course also. Good luck whatever path you follow!"

Esley Hamilton

MONTICELLO: A COMPARISON OF ARCHITECTURAL TEXTBOOKS

How can one fairly compare all the textbooks in world architecture that are currently on the market? One way would be to read them all cover to cover. Short of that, however, a comparison of one of the standard monuments would seem to have some validity. For a St. Louis journal, the Wainwright Building would be the monument of choice, but surprisingly, most of these books mention it only in passing if at all, favoring instead Louis Sullivan's slightly later and much more ornate Guaranty Building in Buffalo.

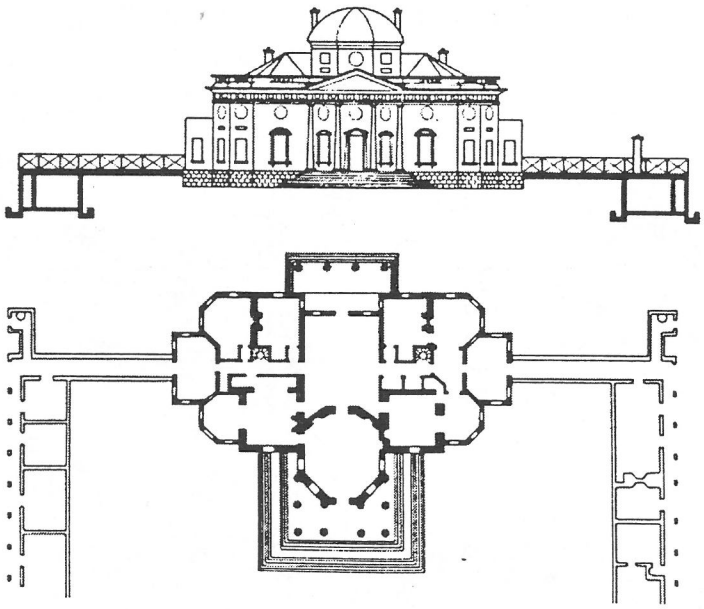
Monticello, however, that icon of American civilization, is mentioned by everyone. These descriptions follow below, arranged in order of length. A comparison shows a variety of shortcomings. Is Monticello on a small hill or a high mountain plateau? Only Watkin, the non-American, fully grasps the fact that Monticello's present appearance dates only from the last phase of its reconstruction. On the other hand, he illustrates the first plan instead of the last one, misunderstands the Honeymoon Cottage, and fails to include the building in the index. Trachtenberg and Hyman not only fail on the dates, but they attribute the final design to the sources for the first design, and they mislabeled the building's style in a way that Jefferson would have found insulting. Kostof's passage illustrates both his unusual skill with the language and the way his insights often depart from the design process.

Roth: [in the context of the Virginia State Capitol] As a result of designing his own home, Monticello, beginning in 1770, Jefferson became known for his abilities in architectural design. [Roth discussed Monticello at greater length in his respected 1979 *Concise History of American Architecture*.]

Pevsner: Thomas Jefferson was enthusiastic about the Roman remains of Nîmes when he saw them in the 1780s, and the result was a style ranging from the imitation of that sober Palladianism which Paris at that moment was evolving from English precedent (Monticello, Capitol Richmond — cf. Clérisseau, and especially Ledoux and the group of French architects) to a much more naive imitation of Roman detail (University of Virginia).

Kostof: No one cared more about a national architecture than Thomas Jefferson; no one did more to direct and promote it. . . . In Monticello, his house outside Charlottesville, the Pantheon was domesticized in the great tradition of residential pantheons, which included Chiswick and Palladio's Villa Rotonda. Sitting on a hillcrest small enough to be echoed in the swell of its central dome, Monticello had a cross-axial plan like its predecessors, but unlike them it stretched itself horizontally, reaching up toward the sweep of its site, while service units were buried underground. So, fixed to the land with its domed core but acknowledging with its outstretched wings the open-ended expanse and filled with gadgets of all kinds, Monticello was like the primordial American home — seeking stability but also freedom, respectful of European tradition but insistent on comfort and effort-saving devices, both conventional and one of a kind.

Nuttgens [revisions in the 1997 edition are in italics]: Then classicism came to America through Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826). . . . Jefferson returned to America inspired *by Paris*, by Palladio and by the ancient Roman remains, particularly those at Nîmes, which he saw in the 1780s. He built himself a Palladian villa at Monticello near Charlottesville, Virginia, in 1770, which owed much to the Villa Rotunda *and in 1796 he made use of his French experience in remodeling it*. It had projecting bays and odd-shaped rooms such as he had seen in Parisian hotels. It stands on a small hill looking towards the Blue Ridge Mountains and to the site where he later built the University of Virginia, and is full of light. It is larger than it looks at first, with extensive domestic quarters, including wine-cellars and stables built into a basement. It is a treasure trove of quirky inventions — dumb waiters which swing out of sight, gadgets for opening shutters, beds that can be entered from two rooms — that testify to the genius of the man.

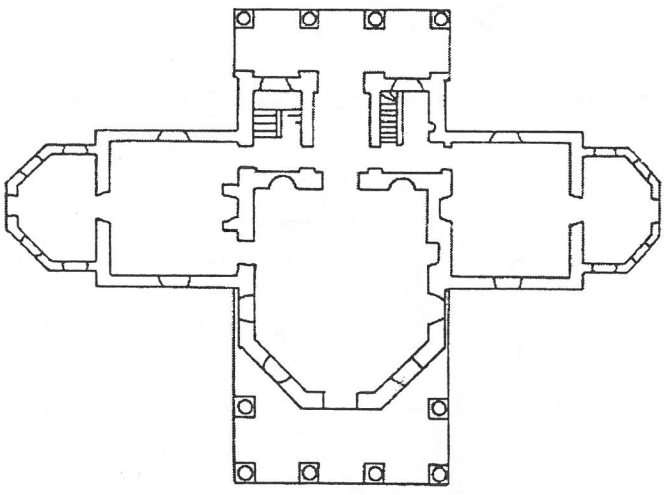


First Floor Plan and Elevation of Monticello, final version as illustrated in Wodehouse & Moffett, *A History of Western Architecture*

Trachtenberg and Hyman: It was only after 1865, when H. H. Richardson returned from Paris, that the United States became an active, rather than a passive, participant in world architectural history.

The two exceptions to this generalization in the final analysis are the exceptions that prove the rule, for neither the great American patriot Thomas Jefferson, nor the English immigrant Benjamin Henry Latrobe were the Olympian architects that they are often made out to be. . . . Jefferson remained, for all his inventiveness, an amateur whose buildings lack cohesiveness and finesse. . .His works documented and were instrumental in the shift from the Colonial to the Federal style. The former is found at Monticello, Jefferson's own estate in the hills outside Charlottesville, Virginia, built in 1771-82 (with some later changes). Full of personal touches and pervaded with Jefferson's eccentric detailing, the house is quintessentially Georgian, combining a plan adopted from Robert Morris's *Select Architecture* of 1755 with a facade from Palladio's *Quattro Libri* (of which Jefferson reputedly owned the only copy in the colonies).

Wodehouse and Moffett: The only other American architect who was as versatile and talented as Latrobe was the Roman-Revivalist Thomas Jefferson. . . . Over a longer period of time Jefferson revised his designs for his own home, Monticello, which was begun in 1770. His early sketches indicate the strong influence of Palladio's architecture on his thinking, but the final realization also shows the overriding effect of Jefferson's own fertile mind. The central block of the house is crowned by an octagonal dome and connected to the landscape by two wings that extend to enclose the front lawn. Service functions — kitchens, storage, the icehouse, stables, and so on — were deftly placed in these wings below the grade of the lawn, so they remained close at hand yet out of sight. A promenade atop their roofs allows access to the end pavilions, the Honeymoon Cottage and Jefferson's law office. Details inside the house testify to the inventiveness of the owner. A clock in the entrance hall operates all week on a mechanism driven by cannonball weights. Wind direction can be found from a weather vane atop the cupola that can be read from indoors. Double doors to the public rooms open together if only one is pushed because of an interlocked mechanism beneath the floor. Jefferson's bed separates his study and sleeping quarters so that the narrowing of space between the two rooms gives greater velocity to summer breezes passing through the house.



First Floor Plan of Monticello, original c. 1770 version as illustrated by David Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture*

Watkin: Jefferson's own house, Monticello, near Charlottesville, Virginia, was begun in 1771 on a plan based on one in Robert Morris's *Select Architecture* (1755) and adapted to a façade in Palladio's *Quattro Libri*; it was conceived as a modest version of a French *pavillon*. However, in 1793-1809, he extended and remodelled it into a complex villa with an octagonal domed centre and low wings on both fronts. It is subtly linked to its setting by means of elegant service buildings which form a large U, not in front of the house as in Palladian precedent, but flanking the garden at the rear. Terminating in pavilions containing Jefferson's law office and estate office, the long low service wings are set into the side of the hill so as not to interfere with the view. They are connected to the house with semi-subterranean passages recalling the crypto-porticus of Roman buildings such as Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli and Pliny's Laurentine Villa.

The remodeling of Monticello, completed during Jefferson's term as third President of the United States from 1801 to 1809, gave it the effect of a one-storeyed building like the villas of ancient Rome or modern neo-antique houses such as Rousseau's Hotel de Salm in Paris (1783), with which Jefferson, in his own words, "was violently smitten." The intricate planning, with its clear separation between public and private rooms, derived from contemporary Paris, is asymmetrical and provided Jefferson with a remarkable L-shaped suite of bedroom, cabinet and bookroom, forming what is virtually one continuous space. The unprecedented novelty, at least in American terms, of the interior distribution is paralleled in numerous gadgets which have always attracted the attention of visitors: double doors contrived so that when one is opened the other opens automatically; Venetian blinds round the bed; the entrance porch with a weather-vane on the ceiling and, on the wall below, a clock which has a second face in the hall; and the dumb waiter concealed in the side of the dining-room chimneypiece for bringing wine from the cellar. These remind one of the eccentricity of an experimental scientist like the young Christopher Wren, deter-

mined to think things out for himself.

What especially remains in the mind about Monticello is the astonishing poetry of its natural setting on a high sunlit plateau in the mountains, a choice which surprised Jefferson's contemporaries. Monticello, which was the centre of a working farm and estate, recalls the life of ancient Roman farms or villas as evoked in the writings of Virgil, Cicero, Horace, Varro or Pliny the younger. Jefferson evidently conceived Monticello as a symbol of order, harmony and industry, an institution at once poetic and functional, classical and modern, Roman and American. It was, nonetheless, a private creation.

THE FARMERS STATE BANK OF CHESTERFIELD AND THE FINE ART OF ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH

Architect Lauren Strutman is currently completing her outstanding renovation of the old Farmers State Bank of Chesterfield, located at 16672 Chesterfield Airport Road. Now that the building looks much as it did when new, one can hardly imagine its forlorn appearance when she bought it in the summer of 1998, in residential use, with its storefronts replaced by aluminum siding.

At that time, the only available record of the building's history was an entry in the Watchman-Advocate *History of St. Louis County* of 1920 (page 185), which includes a photograph but gives no dates. The bank, it says, "since its organization has made rapid strides," and "it occupies handsome and modern quarters...." The bank was the most important business in the tiny whistlestop community of Chesterfield.

Many small towns in Missouri have buildings with pressed metal facades similar to Chesterfield's old bank, but there is only one other example in St. Louis County, the present Harster Heating at 9900 Gravois Road in Affton, rebuilt about 1911. Unlike the cast iron storefronts of the mid 19th century, these buildings were fitted with sheet metal shaped to architectural forms that were ornamental but not structural. Their heyday was 1890 to 1910, so 1900 seemed fairly safe as an approximate date. Since St. Louis County began to issue building permits only in 1907, it seemed unlikely that a more accurate date could be found.

Strutman, however, wanted to do better. She located an advertisement for her storefront in a 1903 catalog from

The Farmers State Bank of Chesterfield Circa 1914

Mesker Brothers. The Meskers, whose factory was in Evansville, Indiana but who lived in St. Louis, were the leading manufacturers of these storefronts, including the wooden doors and window frames of the ground floors.

Other available records, however, seemed to point to a date that was too late for the style of the building. Edward Burkhardt, the bank president and the man who in 1918 laid out the row of twelve bungalows that extends east of the bank, didn't buy this property until 1907, and the price he paid then, $2,100 for 7.46 acres, seemed to reflect undeveloped land. The county directories, not known for their accuracy in those years, failed to list the bank until 1920.

Then, by a coincidence of the kind that usually happens only in fiction, a whole group of photos and documents relating to the bank appeared in the hands of Don Hoffmann, a resident of Union, Missouri. He had found them in the attic of his mother's home in Ballwin, probably assembled by a great uncle, who had worked for Ed Burkhardt. Hoffmann contacted Jane Durrell of the Historic Commission of Chesterfield.

One of the pictures was detailed enough to permit a full restoration of the store windows, while another showed Burkhardt and his wife Lena standing at the at the side entrance to the building. Most intriguing, however, was a general view of the store with three early automobiles parked in front. Strutman hired Mary Somogyi of S. and S. Services to investigate these pictures further.

In her report, Somogyi summarized the earliest appearances of some automobile features.

First windshield — 1903, optional equipment
First folding windshield — 1904, optional equipment
Demountable tire rims — 1904
Steering wheel replaces tiller — 1900
Running Boards — 1902
Closed Body Sedans — 1904
Left-handed steering wheel — 1908
Front bumper — 1906, optional equipment

Using this data, Somogyi suggested that the car on the right was a 1904 Studebaker (see rounded "snout" form for engine and radiator), while the two cars on the left, which appear to be identical, were Model T's of about 1908. "They have all the characteristics of the other car," she wrote, "except that they have a closed body sedan, and the 'snout' is more geometric than round."

A newspaper clipping reporting the removal of the bank in 1954 seemed to suggest that the building had already been standing when the bank was founded. But when Debbie Shields of Columbia visited the building in March to prepare a National Register nomination for it, she observed that the bank vault was sitting on its own foundation, which would have been difficult to insert into an existing building. Strutman then turned to another document that had come along with the photos, a statement of specifications for the bank vault, which was to cost $835. It was dated April 30, 1914.

That date made possible a search of the *St. Louis Daily Record*, the legal newspaper that reported county building permits. And there it was on May 5, 1914, permit #9209 to Ed Burkhardt of Chesterfield for a tile (large-scale building block) building measuring 40 by 42 feet.

Conclusions: (1) Pressed metal storefronts were still popular after 1910; (2) County farmers did not drive late-model cars.

SOCRATES: ARCHITECTURAL CRITIC

Socrates, the gadfly philosopher of 5th century b.c. Athens, is best remembered as the mentor of Plato and as the man who drank the fatal cup of hemlock. Charles Burroughs of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Binghamton University pointed out recently, on the SAH Listserv, that Socrates also had opinions on the contemporary residential architecture of his time, damning it for being ostentatious, and praising environmentally responsive housing, designed to ensure "natural" heating and cooling through orientation.

Burroughs' colleague Tony Preus, of the Classics Department at Binghamton, subsequently came up with full quotation, from Xenophon's *Memorabilia,* passage III, 8. As translated by Hugh Tredennick in the 1970 Penguin edition, it is as follows:

Similarly in maintaining that a beautiful house is one that serves its purpose well Socrates seemed to me to be teaching the principle that building should satisfy practical requirements. He approached the question in this way: "If a man is to have the sort of house that he needs, ought he to contrive to make is as pleasant and convenient as possible to live in?" When this was admitted, "Isn't it pleasant to have a house which is cool in summer and

warm in winter?" When they agreed to this too: "Well, in houses that have a south aspect in winter, the sun shines into the veranda, while in summer it passes over our heads and over the roof and casts a shade. So, if this is the desired effect, one should build the south side higher, so as not to shut off the winter sun, and the north side lower, to avoid exposure to cold winds. In short, the most pleasant and most beautiful residence is likely to be that which offers at all seasons the most agreeable retreat for the owner and the safest repository for his possessions. Frescoes and decorations deprive us of more amenities than they supply." As for temples and altars, he said that the most suitable site for them was one that was at once conspicuous and off the beaten track; it was pleasant for passers-by to say their prayers at the sight of a shrine, but it was also pleasant to approach it in a reverent state of mind.

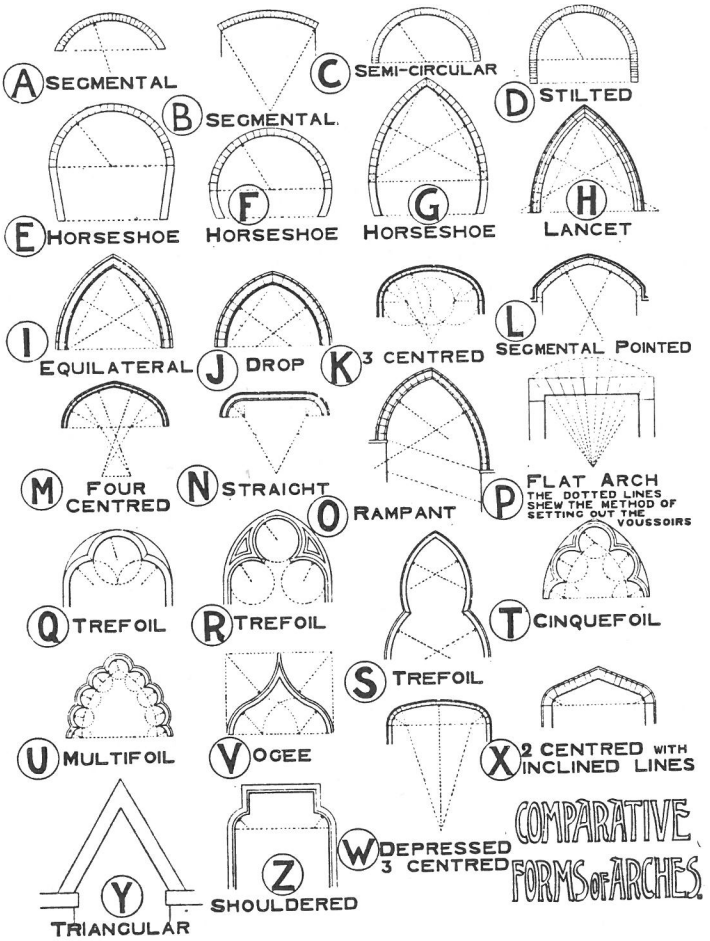


Illustration from "*A History of Architecture*"
by Professor Banister Fletcher and Banister F. Fletcher,
4th edition, 1901.

Events Calendar

Annual Meeting
& Tour of the Lamella Barn
Tuesday, June 29, 6:30 p.m.
Faust Park, 15185 Olive Boulevard, Chesterfield

We're sweetening the brief annual meeting required by our bylaws by inviting Hal Olson, staff architect for the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation, to explain the newly completed renovation of the 1925 lamella barn (prototype for the Arena) at Faust Park, which was described in our Winter issue. The barn is located in the eastern portion of the park near the Pueblo Revival-style Faust House and its picturesque outbuildings. Originally designed by Tom Barnett in 1919 and modified by Maritz & Young about 1936, the house has recently been modified by Jeff Brambilla to serve as the West County home of the St. Louis Symphony Music School.

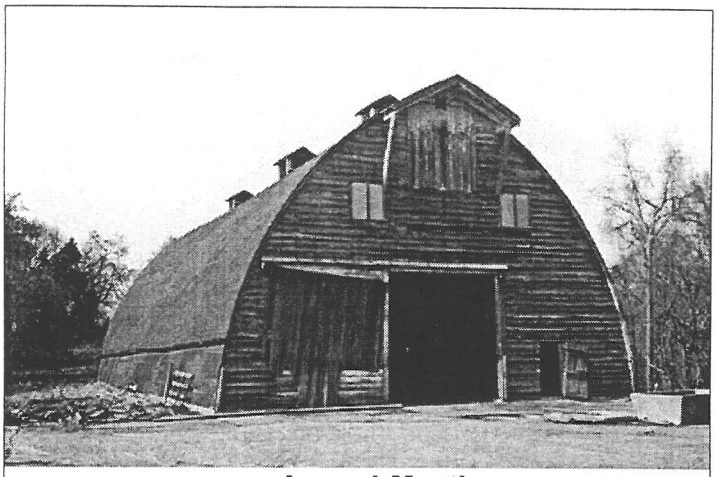
"Isaac Taylor:
Chief Architect of the St. Louis World's Fair"
Saturday, July 10, 2 p.m.
Chatillon-DeMenil House
Cherokee at DeMenil, one block west of Broadway

Chapter member David J. Simmons shares some of his extensive research by focusing on one of the city's greatest unsung architects. The talk is one in a series held in conjunction with an exhibition of World's Fair memorabilia currently on view at the Chatillon-DeMenil House. Reservations are required; phone 314-771-5828.

"House vs. Home"
A new permanent exhibit at the Amoureux House
Ste. Genevieve

Chapter member Anne Woodhouse headed the committee which developed the new exhibit at the Amoureux House, which explains and demonstrates French Colonial building techniques still visible today in Ste. Genevieve. Wall-mounted panels supplement full-size examples of carpenter joinery and models designed to illustrate differences in framing and structural technique. The exhibit opened May 30 along with a second one on the genealogy of the Amoureux family.

Errata: *Last month's newsletter was mistakenly labeled Volume 1 Number 5 and it should have been Volume V Number 1*



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News Letter

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Fall issue	15 August
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