AN ARCHITECT FOR
THE BANK OF ILLINOIS
AT SHAWNEETOWN
by David J. Simmons

Editor's Note: The building now known as
Shawneetown Bank State Historic Site has long been
admired as one of the gems of the Greek Revival in
the Midwest, but its architect has never been identified
until now. Chapter member David J. Simmons
recently discovered evidence of its authorship through
the direct but arduous process of reading the
newspaper.

At the second Annual Mechanic's Fair conducted by
the St. Louis Mechanics Institute in November, 1842,
George Ingram Barnett, the English-born and professionally
trained architect, exhibited architectural drawings reflecting
some of his recent American commissions. Coverage of
this nine-day event, with a description of Barnett's exhibit,
can be found in three surviving local newspapers: Daily
Missouri Republican, dated November 4, 1842; New Era
(weekly), dated November 13, 1842; and People's Organ,
dated November 4, 1842. Included in Barnett's display was
a front elevation of the Bank of Illinois. This Greek Revival
banking temple located on the Ohio River at Shawneetown
in eastern Illinois had been constructed during 1839 and
1840.

The Bank of Illinois, originally a private financial
institution, could trace its origin to a charter granted by the
Illinois Territorial Legislature in 1816. Although the first
bank to utilize this charter failed in the early 1820s, the bank
under new leadership resumed operations in 1834 with a
combination of private and state capitalization. Fueled by
profits earned from land speculation and the salt mining
industry, the bank emerged within five years as a financial
powerhouse in the lower Ohio River Valley. Banking
branches of this institution could be found scattered across
Illinois in Alton, Galena, Jacksonville, Laurenceville, Pekin,
and Springfield.

As the bank's assets reached toward three million
dollars, its directors, anxious to celebrate their achievement
decided to build a new banking facility in the prevailing
Greek Revival architectural style. Most likely they adver-
tised in the newspapers of Cincinnati and Louisville for a
suitable architect.

Following his arrival in New York City during the
spring of 1839, George I. Barnett resolved to move to the
western frontier where an architect of his talent and
determination might find fame and fortune. He chose St.
Louis, known to be a developing metropolis at the
confluence of two great rivers.

While traveling down the Ohio River toward this
destination, Barnett must have stopped at Shawneetown,
Illinois and designed the building for the Bank of Illinois.
The bank directors would have paid Barnett for his plan,
and they may have offered him an additional fee for
supervision of the project. Once the contractor had been
hired, work on the new building commenced, with the
cornerstone being laid on August 3, 1839. The new bank
was completed two years later.

Sadly the bank enjoyed its new facilities for only a
short time. In 1842 a financial panic forced the bank to
close and to go into receivership. Eleven years would pass

Drawing by Carl Fischer Assoc. Inc.
before another bank would take possession of the premises. Through the years, various financial institutions used the building until 1942, when ownership of the property passed to the State of Illinois. Eventually the state made the bank a state historic site, and its restoration commenced in 1959.

Barnett’s four-story temple exudes strength and massiveness even though its actual size is quite modest. He achieves this result through the employment of a sandstone portico of five monumental Doric columns, decorated cornice, and protruding pediment, complete with a grand staircase running across the entire front elevation. The five-column arrangement, a rarity for the Greek Revival style, maintains the structure’s balance against the asymmetrical placement of the two main entrances with their twelve-foot doors.

Of equal interest are the building’s side elevations, each having three doorways, two of them located on the first floor, with a second-floor rear entrance reached by a staircase. Stone walls have been used for the lower floor on the side and rear areas, while upper stories are brick. The heavy stone cornice of the front is carried across the south elevation above three tiers of windows. On the north elevation, an additional tier of windows replaces the cornice. Security apparently dictated that the rear wall have neither windows nor doors.

All floors can be reached through a rear hall, and a front passageway connects the main floor with the floor above. Office and storage space occupy the ground floor. Features of the main level include two offices and a banking area, complete with vault. Living quarters and additional offices can be found on the third floor, while the top story has a large open area suitable for meetings or entertainments.

The Bank of Illinois building trumpets the arrival of civilization on the prairies of Illinois, symbolizes the American expression of liberty and freedom through the use of the Greek Revival architectural style, and signals the auspicious start of George I. Barnett’s American architectural career, which would span fifty years.

---

EAMES AT ST. LOUIS ART MUSEUM: HOMETOWN BOY MAKES GOOD

by Esley Hamilton

St. Louis native Charles Eames (1907-1978) and his second wife Ray (1912-1988) brought something new to the principles of modern design: joy. Their toys, films, multimedia presentations, exhibitions, books, and more than 50 projects for IBM — as well as in their famous chairs and other furniture – all conveyed their delight in the advances of modern technology and the world around them. The exhibit at the St. Louis Art Museum this spring presents these achievements in a format that recreates the excitement of the exhibits that Charles and Ray designed themselves. Originating at the Library of Congress, “A Legacy of Invention” takes advantage of two decades of scholarship since the previous Eames show in St. Louis, “Connections: The Work of Charles and Ray Eames,” which was seen at Steinberg Gallery and Laumeier Sculpture Park in 1977.

The work that made Charles and Ray Eames famous begins with their marriage and move to California in 1941, and architecture features in it only once, in their own remarkable house in Pacific Palisades. As Charles told reporter Saul Pett, “Designing a whole building is just too demanding of attention to keep the basic concept from disintegrating. Builders, prices, materials, so many things work toward lousing it up.”

But earlier in his career, Eames had designed several houses around St. Louis that still stand. Some were done between 1925 and 1928 during the time he worked in the office of Trueblood & Graf while studying at Washington University. In a later interview, he remembered in particular the Mission style house the firm designed in 1926 for Dr. Gustave Lippmann at 6307 Alexander in Clayton. Eames opened an office with Charles M. Gray in 1930, and the next year they designed a house for Ernest and Carrie Sweetser at 7145 Lindell, west of Big Bend. A year later, they did another University City house at 7470 Kingsbury for B. D. Nichols. Joined by Walter E. Pauley, the firm then became Gray, Eames and Pauley.

After an eight-month hiatus in Mexico, Eames returned to St. Louis in 1935 and formed a new partnership with Robert T. Walsh. Along with two churches in Arkansas, they designed two houses in Webster Groves, a “Williamsburg” one

Continued on back
**Exhibit: Allied Works:**
**Architecture by Brad Cloepfil**  
January 21 to March 18  
The Forum for Contemporary Art, 3540 Washington Blvd., Grand Center

The FCA is showing current projects by the Portland, Oregon-based architect chosen to design its own new building. The model on display shows that the new Forum at Washington & Spring will share a courtyard with Tadao Ando’s new Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts. Tuesday-Saturday 10 to 5; phone 535-4660.

---

**Exhibit: Winkle Terra Cotta Company**  
February 15 to May 15  
The Sheldon Art Galleries, 3648 Washington Blvd

This exhibition focuses on the Ambassador Theatre in St. Louis, one of hundreds of buildings for which the Winkle Company provided the architectural terra cotta. Recent watercolor renderings by Salvatore Ventura will be combined with historical photos and actual architectural details salvaged on the building’s recent demise by Larry Giles of the St. Louis Architectural Art Company. Tuesday and Saturday 10 to 2; phone 533-9900.

---

**Exhibit: The Work of Charles and Ray Eames:**  
a legacy of invention  
February 19 to May 14  
St. Louis Art Museum, Forest Park

For details, see adjacent article. Open Tuesday 1:30-8:30, Wed-Sun 10-5; phone 721-0072.

---

**Talk: “Architectural Art of the Winkle Terra Cotta Company in St. Louis: from the skyscraper to the movie palace, 1890-1940”**  
Tuesday, February 22, noon  
The Sheldon Concert Hall, 3648 Washington

Independent scholar (and chapter secretary) Mimi Stiritz, architectural authority and salvager Larry Giles of the St. Louis Architectural Art Company, watercolorist Salvatore Ventura, and ragtime musician Trebor Tichenor team up for another in the Sheldon’s popular Luncheon Lecture Series. The program is free; the gourmet box lunches cost $7 and must be reserved by February 18 at 533-9900, extension 31.

---

**Talk: “Form and Function in Early Buddhist Architecture in Japan”**  
Sunday, February 27, 2 p.m.  
Shoenberg Auditorium, Missouri Botanical Garden

Dr. Dean Eckert, a chapter member, is professor emeritus of art and architectural history at Lindenwood University. A distinguished authority on Japanese art and culture, he has lived in Japan and led the SAH study tour there. His talk is the second Elizabeth McIntire Memorial Lecture, honoring the late member of this chapter who was a professor of art history at Principia College. A reception will follow the talk.

---

**Talk: “Patron and Participant: Henry Shaw’s Contribution to the Architecture of St. Louis”**  
Sunday, March 5, 2 p.m.  
Stupp Center, Tower Grove Park

The second in this year’s Tower Grove Park Lecture Series features Dr. Carol Grove, visiting professor of American art and architecture at the University of Missouri, Columbia. She will focus on Shaw’s building patronage. Phone 771-2679.

---

**Tour: Home Spring Home!**  
Saturday, March 18, 9 to 4

All six of the house museums within the city of St. Louis feature special exhibit during this special drive-yourself tour, which includes a box lunch. Cupples House will show Steuben glass, the Chatillon-DeMenil quilts, Eugene Field tin toys, and Scott Joplin fashions circa 1900. Also on the itinerary are the Robert Campbell House and Tower Grove House. For information and advance tickets (a must), phone 771-5828.

---

**Talk: Solomon’s Temple in America, 1865-1930:**  
The Masonic Architectural Tradition  
Sunday, April 2, 3 p.m.  
Tuscan Temple, 5015 Westminster at Kingshighway  
Park in Christian Science and Unitarian lots to south

Dr. William D. Moore, formerly director of the Chancellor Robert R. Livingston Masonic Library in New York City, is an authority on the architecture and symbolism of Masonic temples and Shrine mosques. Currently he directs the Enfield Shaker Museum in New Hampshire. The St. Louis Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians is sponsoring Mr. Moore’s talk in one of the architecturally significant Masonic Temples in St. Louis, built in 1907-08 to designs by Albert B. Groves. Our host is Tuscan Lodge No. 360 A. F. & A. M. For more information, contact Mimi Stiritz at 721-6289.

---

**THREE PRESERVATION WORKSHOPS**  
**Friday, May 19:** Masonry Restoration  
Wednesday, June 7: National Register Nominations  
**Thursday, June 8:** Section 106 Review

For more information phone Karen Grace, Historic Preservation Program, Department of Natural Resources, 573-751-7959.

---

**LOST AND FOUND**

Did you leave your red tartan blazer or furry cap at the 1999 SAH Holiday Gathering at Mimi Stiritz’s house? If so, call Esley Hamilton at 615-0357.

---

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE**

It’s that time of year again. Please complete the enclosed form and mail it to our official address for another year of talks, tours, articles and other celebrations of the art of architecture.
at 335 Bristol Road for Daniel and Jean Dinsmoor, and the other, with modernistic detailing, at 101 Mason Avenue for Carleton M. Dean. The biggest commission of that period was the house for John P. and Alice Meyer at 4 Deacon Drive in Huntleigh. Eames conferred with Eliel Saarinen on the design, and the house reflects the distinctive brand of modernism that Saarinen was teaching at Cranbrook. The Cranbrook look continued inside with tapestries by Loja Saarinen and sculpture by Carl Milles. Mrs. Meyer, now Mrs. Leigh Gerdine, still has several pieces of furniture Eames designed for the house, and they are illustrated by Pat Kirkham in Charles & Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century (MIT, 1995).

Charles was a member of Pilgrim Congregational Church at 826 Union Boulevard, and he designed several notable modifications to the 1906 building by Mauran, Russell & Garden. In 1932 he designed new swinging doors and stained glass transoms to separate the auditorium from the lobby. That project was postponed for a year, and in the meantime, Eames designed a large chandelier for the chancel, basing it on a famous one in the Basilica of San Marco in Venice. On July 12, 1935, the tower of the church was struck and badly damaged by lightning, and Charles rebuilt the tower roof to a lower profile in less flammable material, with a new cross and lightning rod.

The contractor for that project was Fred Woermann, president of Woermann Construction, whose daughter Catherine had married Eames in 1929. Probably Eames and Woermann collaborated on other projects, and a good opportunity for further research into Eames’ years in St. Louis has been opened by the recent gift of the Woermann company’s files to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

The Art Museum hopes to show some of the pieces that Charles designed during his early career in St. Louis. Eames Demetrios, son of Charles’ and Katherine’s daughter Lucia, will present the opening lecture twice at the member preview Friday, February 18. “Eames: A St. Louis Connection” will be at 2:30 and 6:30 in the auditorium, with tickets distributed in the Great Hall beginning at 10 a.m. Other museum events open to the public include the film, “Art & Science: Charles and Ray Eames Captured on Film” to be shown on Sunday, March 12, at 3 p.m. and a talk by Victor Simmons, head of adult programs at the museum, “The Work of Charles and Ray Eames,” to be given in the special exhibition galleries on Tuesday, March 28, at 6:30 p.m. and on Thursday, March 30, at 11 a.m.