
**CELEBRATING THE
ARCHITECTURAL ACHIEVEMENT
OF ST. LOUIS' CITY HALL**

by David J. Simmons

They call St. Louis City Hall a relic of the past. Some people believe it to be a dinosaur from another age in need of demolition and replacement. Ignored and forgotten, the architectural achievement of St. Louis' first and only permanent city hall has languished for generations in a sea of indifference. An unexpected choice, a contentious construction, and unusual architectural features make this building a unique experience worthy of a fresh evaluation. While it reflects on this city's French origin and golden age of expansion, city hall remains a symbol of local government, a source of pride for city residents, and a monument to the city's achievement.

Across six-and-one half decades local politicians struggled to find a permanent home for their activities. More than one hundred plans for a permanent city hall were created by at least five dozen different architects who attempted to fulfill this need. These plans resulted from either government requests, volunteer efforts, or three official architectural competitions (1858, 1870, and 1889). Only once, early in this quest, did city government attempt to erect a permanent home for its operations. During construction, city officials changed the plans designating the building exclusively for commercial use. In 1850, construction on the City Buildings commenced from the plans and under the supervision of the architectural firm of Peck and Barnett. Located on the eastern half of block 7, on the west side of Front Street between Market and Walnut, this five-story brick structure with limestone trim was composed of thirteen attached units in the Italianate style. Its original intention offered retail on the lower three floors and city offices above. Rising to a height of 76 feet, it measured 280 feet long and 89 feet deep. As a commercial venture, it cost \$151,000, financed by two bond issues and \$26,000 in cash. Eventually the city sold the units individually for an aggregate total of \$400,000. The private parties who purchased these properties rented them at handsome profits until fire destroyed the complex in 1856.

Faced with limited financial resources, city government in

1872 found it necessary to convert a city tobacco warehouse built in 1865 into a temporary city hall. City architect B.R. Singleton, son of courthouse architect Henry Singleton, handled the project, which cost \$109,622. Measuring 221 feet on the Eleventh Street front to a depth of 150 feet on both Market and Chestnut, this three-story red brick structure had thirteen-inch walls, eight entrances, and a classically inspired front façade. The interior arrangement featured ten-foot wide corridors, a fourteen-foot wide vestibule, two cast iron staircases, and a total of fifty rooms. Nicknamed the "Big Barn" after its no-frills approach, it housed city government from 1872 to 1898. It survived until 1921.



View of the temporary City Hall, Commercial and Architectural St. Louis, 1888, pg. 15

At various times in the nineteenth century, city government used space in the market building of block 7, the north wing of the county courthouse, and the third floor of the Four Courts Building. The two earlier city hall competitions were exercises in wishful thinking since the city lacked the funds to build this type of project. The real estate taxing authority (the main source of revenue) belonged to the county rather than the city until 1876.

During the 1850's, the first architectural competition fostered two contests – one for a permanent building without prize money and the other for a temporary structure with prize money in the amount of \$1,000. Neither contest resulted in the construction of a building. Architect William Rumbold won the permanent category. Winners in the temporary category were J.H. McClure – first place \$500, Patrick Walsh – second place \$300, and Koenig Brothers – third place \$200.

During St. Louis' business expansion and building boom following the end of the Civil War, city government conducted the second city hall competition at the close of 1870. The cost of the new building was to be capped at \$700,000, derived from the sale of surplus city real estate. The location of the new city hall was to be in block 489 at Market and Eleventh Street. With prize money of \$3,500, the contest attracted 14 participants, all local except one. All plans exceeded the budget constraints, some by large amounts. Subject to political intrigue and bribery during the selection process over a six-week period, the joint legislative city hall commission finally voted, after several ballots, to give Thomas Walsh the first prize of \$2,000.

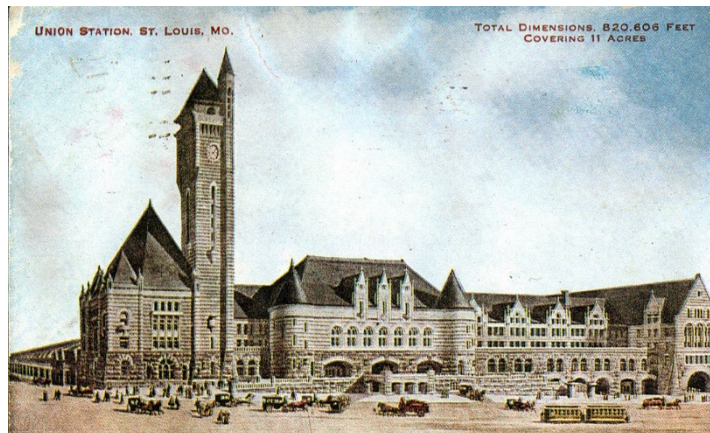


George I. Barnett's design for the St. Louis City Hall, second competition, St. Louis Republic, January 27, 1889

Walsh claimed his plan could be executed for the budgeted price, but every architect in the city not on Walsh's staff knew it would cost at least three times the fixed limit. Cognizant of the plan's real cost, Mayor Nathan Cole announced his intention to block the project's construction. Walsh's effort to save the project failed and the project died. Out of this upheaval came the birth of Singleton's temporary city hall project.

World's Fair fever first infected the St. Louis business community in the mid 1850's, culminating in the formation of the Missouri State Fair at Boonville and locally the annual Agriculture and Mechanics Fair. Leaders of the local merchant class formed a World's Fair committee in 1869 to promote St. Louis' bid to host the American Centennial Celebration of 1876. Congressman Thomas Allen's attempt to secure Congressional approval for this project in 1872 failed and the World's Fair dream seemed temporarily out of reach. But in the mid 1880's it was revived and the business community pledged an impressive six million dollars to make the dream a reality. To host a World's Fair, a city

must seek to be classified as one of the top cities of the world. To achieve this recognition, St. Louis had to make two important building improvements – a viable railroad station and an impressive local government center.



*St. Louis Union Station, postcard
St. Louis Union Station, 1893-94; Theodore C. Link, Architect*

The city's experience in building these two civic landmarks, just a few blocks apart, contrasted sharply. The Terminal Railroad Association was organized in 1889, and a year later conducted a limited architectural competition, by invitation only, to find the best design for a head-house in the new rail center. From seven participants, they chose Theodore Link. His head-house (620 feet long by 80 feet deep) contained both the terminal and a hotel, and reflected the ideas of the Richardsonian Romanesque and the French Chateau style of architecture. Covering a 42-acre site, the new rail center the facilities incorporated the head-house, midway, train shed, 31 miles of track, and six auxiliary buildings. Private capital financed this \$6.5 million project and private enterprise built it in just four years. The publicly funded and politically directed city hall project required fourteen years to complete, even though it cost only one quarter as much as the rail center.



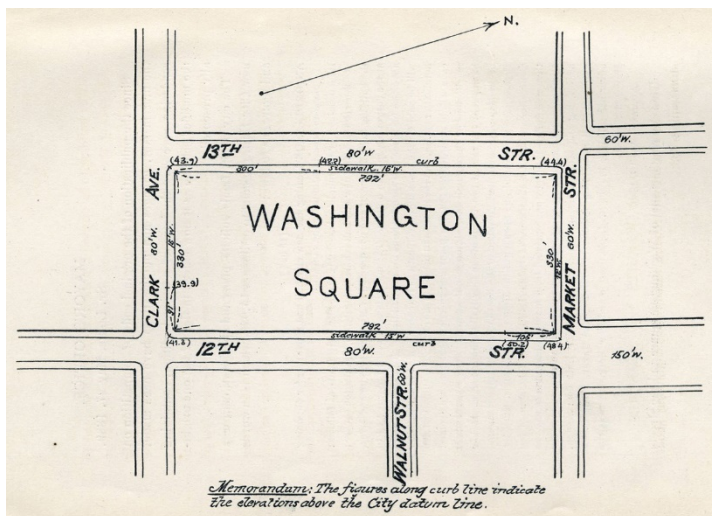
The Train Shed, designed by George H. Pegram, was the largest single-span train shed ever built, covering 32 tracks and over 12 acres with his patented truss.

As of May 1888, city government established the City Hall Commission, with broad powers to select the site, choose the

plan, and construct the building. The mayor, comptroller, city councilor, building commissioner, presidents of the Board of Public Improvement and the Council, and the Speaker of the House of Delegates served as members of the Commission. Project funding was to come from annual appropriations out of the general revenue rather than from a bond issue. While this method of funding eliminated the costs associated with borrowing money, it extended the period of construction by three or more years, as funds ran out between appropriations.

Two potential sites for the new city hall were proposed. One was Missouri Park between Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets from Olive to St. Charles. The other was Washington Park on the west side of Twelfth Street (Tucker Blvd.) between Market and Walnut. Believing both locations to be too far west, most citizens wanted a site near the courthouse. Eventually, politicians decided on the Washington Park location, with city hall to front on Twelfth Street. The six-acre Washington Park had been purchased in 1840 for \$25,000. To change the purpose of the property from a park to a city hall site cost \$20,000 in legal and processing fees.

On April 14, 1889 the legislative branch of city government passed City Ordinance 15028, which spelled out in detail the process to be used to achieve a city hall. The ordinance described building placement, structural requirements, rules for conducting an architectural competition, compensation to be paid to the selected architect, and limits on project spending. The ordinance dictated a modern, fireproof, four-story building with 45,000 square feet of space on each floor. The exterior had to be brick and/or stone, with copper gutters and a roof of either tile or copper. The cost of the building was not to exceed \$1,000,000, plus a margin of fifteen percent.



Project Site

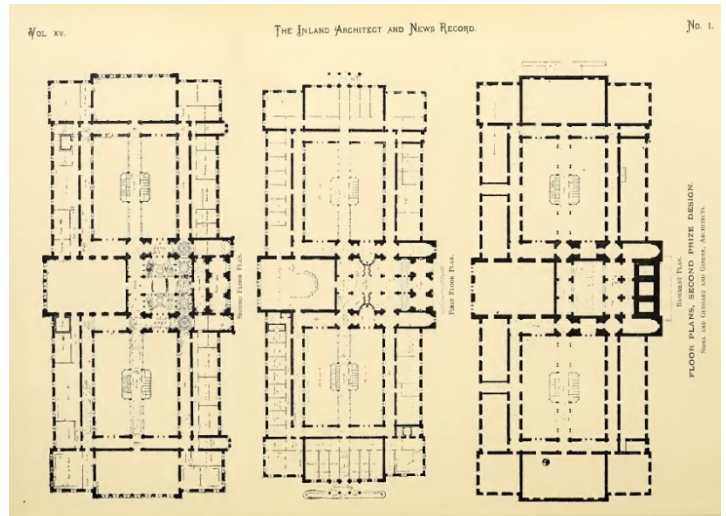
Code of Competition for the New City Hall in St. Louis, Issued by the City Hall Commission, Second Edition, Revised and Modified, May 27, 1889, page 2

The ordinance called for an architectural competition open to all qualified architects whose plans followed the contest’s rules. Plans had to be submitted prior to November 1, 1889. A first-prize winner receiving \$5,000 and the five runner-up prize winners, each to receive \$1,000, were to be selected by the commission, whose decision was final. Compensation for the architect whose plan was chosen was set at 2½% of the building’s construction cost and was to cover preparation of the plans and supervision of construction.

A number of objections were raised to the ordinance. City Building Commissioner Thomas Furlong complained that the competition was not needed. The City Building Department could design and construct a new city hall saving the tax payers at least \$40,000. The Commission ignored his suggestion. Mayor Noonan wanted the competition limited to local architects, but it was intended to attract national attention. In a prophetic statement, local architect Henry Isaac’s estimated the cost of the building described in the rules to be \$1,800,000. The building the Commission wanted could not be built for one million dollars unless serious changes were made, but none was forthcoming. Both the American Institute of Architects and the magazine Inland Architect demanded certain revisions to the rules to which the commission agreed. The two most important changes required an architectural expert to select the best designs and raised the winning architect’s compensation from 2 ½% to 5%.

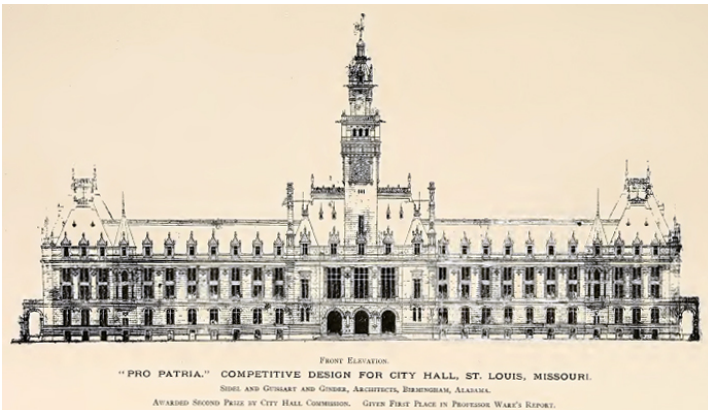
A national competition for an important building with generous prize money and ample compensation for the winning architect was expected to attract the best architectural talent both locally and nationally, but the St. Louis City Hall competition did not. Many architects declined to participate because they believed the building as described could not be erected for \$1,000,000. Before the competition deadline, thirty-five architects submitted thirty-seven plans, including, nine local architects with ten plans. Two of the local firms – Link and E. Jungenfeld and Co. (Widmann, Walsh & Bosselier) were considered to be top tier. Other local participants were Cairnes, Foster and Ittner, Furlong, Hunker, Knell, Stewart & Co., and Tully & Clark. Some of St. Louis’ best architectural talent such as Eames & Young, Grable & Weber, and Isaac Taylor refused to participate, as did the two Boston firms with St. Louis offices: Peabody & Stearns and Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge. Carrere & Hastings of New York was the only out-of-town participant with something of a national reputation. St. Louis’ art community viewed the competition as a “contest of nobodies.” Many of the participants were fledgling architects at the start of their careers trying to make a name for themselves. One of these was Bernard Maybeck; then based in Kansas City, he later would become a major American architect practicing in California, receiving the

The Commission selected Professor William Ware of Columbia College, New York to adjudicate the competition plans. He received \$1,000 for his efforts. Ware had established the first American architectural education program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology between 1867 and 1881. Considered to be the leading American expert on architecture, he had written the competition code of conduct for the American Institute of Architects and had conducted numerous competitions across the country. After spending two weeks examining all the competition plans, he chose and ranked the six best plans predicated on exterior beauty, interior arrangement, and compliance with requirements. The Commission wanted him to assess the financial cost of each plan, but he failed to perform this duty. His rankings for the competition were as follows: (1) "Pro Patria" – Sidel, Guissart, and Ginder of Birmingham, Alabama; (2) "Faith" – Carrere and Hastings of New York City; (3) "Civic" – E.F. Fassett and A.J. Russell of Kansas City Missouri; (4) "Star and Crescent" – W.H. Dennis of Minneapolis, Minnesota; (5) "St. Louis 1892" – Eckel and Mann of St. Joseph, Missouri; (6) "Unity" – James and James of New York City. Highest rankings for local architects went to Theodore Link at number eight and Albert Knell at ten. Of note, (7) "Draeq" – Fassett, Russell and Maybeck of Kansas City and New York received a special honorable mention.



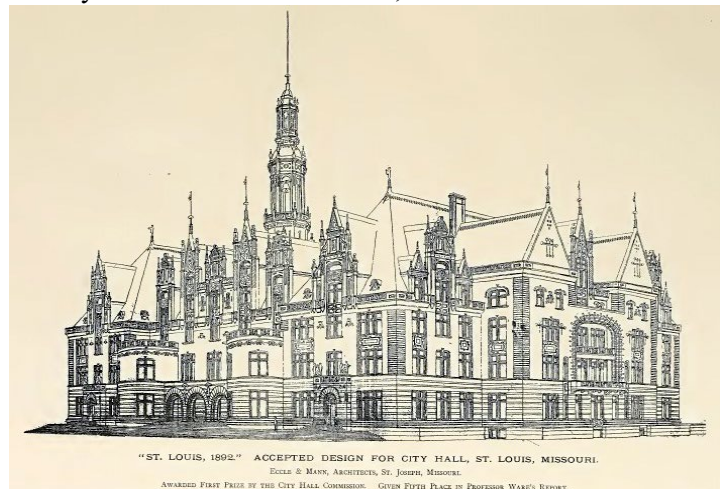
"Pro Patria" – Sidel, Guissart, and Ginder of Birmingham, Alabama, *The Inland Architect and News Record*, Vol. XV, March, 1890, No. 2, *Building Plans*

Ware's evaluation failed to resolve the Commission's fear that none of the plans met the project's financial requirements. Some Commission members wanted to declare the current competition void and start over again, but the prospect of added costs and diminished competition participation ruled this option out. From Ware's six selections the Commission picked three plans it believed to be the least expensive to build. Then they paid local architect James McGrath \$500 to evaluate these plans and determine if any one of them could be built for the budgeted price. McGrath's career covered the period from the close of the Civil War to the 1890's. Early in his career, he had been associated with the building efforts of James H. Lucas, St. Louis' richest businessman. Later he worked with several of Lucas's sons. His most important designs included the morgue at the Four Courts complex, Christian Brothers College at Easton (M. L. King) and Kingshighway, a large addition to the Planter's Hotel, and the Randolph County Courthouse at Huntsville, Missouri.



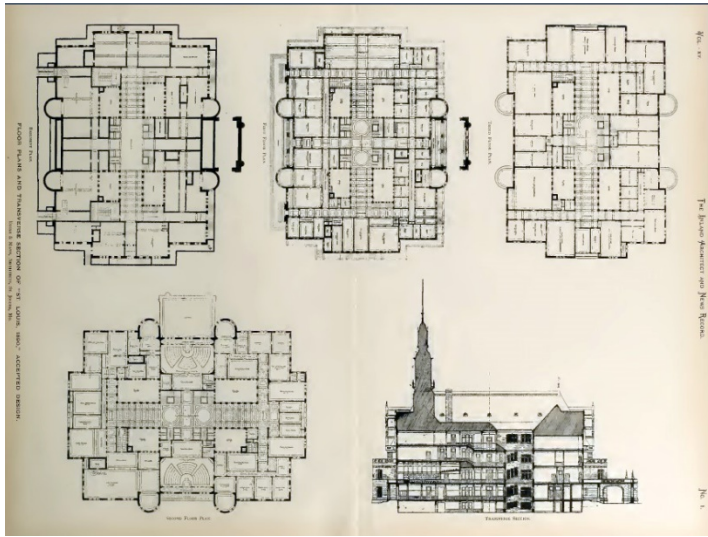
"Pro Patria" – Sidel, Guissart, and Ginder of Birmingham, Alabama, *The Inland Architect and News Record*, Vol. XV, March, 1890, No. 2, *Building Elevation*

"Pro Patria," the first-place winner, constituted a long narrow rectangular four-story building (500 feet long by 200 feet deep). Ware described its three merits as having a simple exterior, a basic interior arrangement, and ease of erection without serious modification. Its defects consisted of a narrow center clock tower out of proportion to the rest of the building, too much space assigned to the corridors and lobby areas, legislative chambers too far apart, poor ventilation, narrow staircases, and elevators difficult to locate. Lacking architectural interest, its Italian Renaissance stone exterior appeared monotonous and non-descript.



"St. Louis, 1892" – Eckel & Mann of St. Joseph, Missouri, *The Inland Architect and News Record*, Vol. XV, March, 1890, No. 1, *Perspective Rendering*

After examining the three plans, he concluded that only “St. Louis 1892” met the project’s financial requirements. He placed its construction cost at \$1,099,000. He convinced the Commission to award the first prize of \$5,000 to “St. Louis 1892” and to appoint the firm of Eckel and Mann to supervise construction.



“St. Louis, 1892” – Eckel & Mann of St. Joseph, Missouri, *The Inland Architect and News Record*, Vol. XV, March, 1890, No. 1, *Building Plans and Building Section*

Born in Strasbourg, France and educated at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, Edmond J. Eckel (1845 to 1934) arrived in America as of 1868 and started his architectural practice in St. Joseph, Missouri one year later. George R. Mann was born in Syracuse, Indiana, and trained at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He began his architectural career in St. Joseph, Missouri in 1879 and formed his first partnership with Eckel in 1880. Over the next twenty-five years they associated together in three partnerships (1880 to 1885, 1887 to 1891, and 1902 to 1905). Between these periods they maintained their own practices but remained in close contact with each other. Their partnerships enjoyed great success during the period of St. Joseph’s greatest prosperity. During the 1880’s they created four county courthouses in Missouri and two in Iowa. These commissions helped prepare them for their most important undertaking – the St. Louis City Hall project.

The execution of the City Hall project depended on a team effort from the partners and three delineators – Harvey Ellis, Ben Trunk, and John Richmond. Contributions from the delineators ranged from modest to important. Ellis, the most talented of the three, worked as a designer for Eckel and Mann in St. Joseph and later in St. Louis from 1889 to 1891 and then with Mann alone from 1891 to 1893.

Once the “St. Louis 1892” plan was adopted for the new city hall and Eckel and Mann appointed to be project

architects, they opened a branch location in St. Louis under the management of Mann, with support from Harvey Ellis.

The Commission insisted the architects completely revise their plan’s interior arrangement, eliminating the interior row of offices and replacing them with office space around the perimeter of the building. In addition, they added two light courts near the center of the building and a large open space for public gatherings just inside the structure’s main entrance. To accomplish this task, the building’s shape had to be altered, increasing its length by 52 feet to 380 feet and decreasing its depth by 23 feet to 205 feet, making it more of a rectangle. To accommodate the building’s new shape, the architectural team simplified its exterior design, strengthened its basic outline, and reduced the amount of ornament decorating its outside walls. The partnership’s new interior arrangement appears to borrow certain elements from the “Pro Patria” plan. In reality, these ideas were common to more than a dozen competition plans. But to avoid controversy and an accusation of theft, Mann purchased the “Pro Patria” plan from its architects for \$5,000, giving him the right to use its ideas.

Harvey Ellis transformed the Eckel and Mann competition design for the St. Louis City Hall into an eloquent composition incorporating Loire Valley chateaux elements with an abundance of dormers, gables, finials, extended pyramidal spires on towers, clock and finials above a two-story podium with loggias and heavily scaled columns flanking the entrance arches.



St Louis City Hall, perspective rendering (1890; Harvey Ellis for Eckel & Mann)
George R. Mann, *Selections from an Architect’s Portfolio*
Courtesy of the *Fine Arts Library, St. Louis Public Library*

When the contractor began to clear the site in preparation for construction, he discovered a slough in the center of the park area known as the frog pond. To stabilize the ground beneath the building’s foundation, this area required pilings at a cost of \$15,000.

Construction commenced on July 19, 1890 and city officials laid the structure's cornerstone on June 6 a year later. During the structure's construction, the city hall commission approved a number of building upgrades to improve the look of the structure.

By 1891, the Eckel and Mann partnership had dissolved and Mann had assumed control of the city hall project. As the commission made these upgrades, project costs escalated dramatically. Instead of criticizing the commission for these increases, the people and the newspapers blamed Mann. The first change came when the building began to appear too low to the ground – flat and squatty. To resolve the problem, the Commission elevated the ground floor another five feet at a cost of \$50,000. A second building upgrade replaced the terra cotta trim with beige colored Kentucky sandstone at an extra cost of \$100,000. Some Commission members disliked the building's interior wood finish. It looked cheap, like a tenement rather than a million-dollar city hall. Substitution of marble for the wood raised the building's cost another \$200,000. Fearful of more cost escalations, city legislators capped the structure's cost at two million dollars in September of 1893.

Without the support of a bond issue, the project progressed at a very slow pace. The annual appropriations varied from year to year, and some years failed to meet project needs. Mann struggled to make, enforce, and complete project contracts because of the funding problem. Contracts required as many as four rounds of bidding before a price was obtained close to the estimate. Profit margins were so low that several contractors found it difficult to break even. As a result of Mann's diligence, construction costs remained within reason.

By the spring of 1893, the building had been roofed. As of July 1, however, the project ran out of money. Seven hundred project workers were laid off, and 720 openings in the building were boarded up. The site remained idle for more than eighteen months. Newspapers vehemently attacked the city government, the Commission, the project, and above all architect Mann. A headline in the *St. Louis Republic* of November 20, 1894 told the story "Ruins of the City Hall; Squandered Funds of the Taxpayer." This parody followed:

*And still they gazed and still the wonder grew,
That a one million dollar city hall should cost them two.*

The article described the abandoned ruin as a playground for the street boys, a resort for bats and sparrows, and a dance hall for rats and mice.

A short time later Mann responded publicly to the waves of criticism directed toward him. "Construction costs for St.

Louis' city hall were very cheap in contrast to similar projects in other American cities. These government centers cost between 35 and 108 percent more than St. Louis' city hall. Examples cited included the new city halls in Richmond, Virginia (one third size of our building) at \$1,500,000; Minneapolis, Minnesota (one third the size) at \$5,000,000; and San Francisco, California (the same size) at \$3,000,000. Unforeseen costs beyond my control and extras mandated by the City Hall Commission drove up the building's costs. Most of the building's contracts followed my estimates with a few of them being slightly higher. My five percent commission had to cover the costs of my support staff and office expenses over an extended period of time leaving me a modest remuneration."

Late in the spring of 1893, Republican Robert E. McMath was elected President of the Board of Public Improvements and joined the City Hall Commission. Recommended by Col. Henry Flad, the respected former president, McMath was a civil engineer who had been for ten years the Sewer Commissioner of the city. Indolent, quarrelsome and a propagator of untruth, McMath appointed himself in charge of the city hall project as of July 29, 1893. He knew nothing about architecture or building construction and made no effort to learn even though he pretended to be an expert in these areas. Serving as Mann's nemesis, he wanted to destroy Mann's architectural reputation and remove him from his position as project architect. During the two-and-a-half year association with Mann, McMath tried to give official credence to every account of the *St. Louis Republic* claiming Mann's wrongdoing. Yet, never once during this challenge did McMath examine Mann's building plans or inspect the construction site. This harassment failed to force Mann's resignation or dismissal.

Eventually criticism of Mann resulted in the formation of a committee of investigation in the fall of 1895. They scrutinized every aspect of the project for wrong doing and mistakes. After three months, the committee reported its findings on February 8, 1896. To the surprise of McMath, they blamed him for most of the project problems.

He was not trained to render judgment on architectural matters, therefore, he was incapable of having unlimited charge. McMath is mainly responsible for whatever complications have arisen, whereby reasons of insufficient or inefficient inspection, the blunderings and unwarranted delays were caused.

In addition, the report cited the City Hall Commission for the escalating construction costs resulting from project upgrades. Exonerated from any major wrongdoing, Mann was cited for certain minor infractions.

Even before the committee report was made public, Mann

had decided to resign his position as project architect effective March, 1896. He wanted to pursue a new direction in his architectural career. His final remuneration for project supervision and other duties came close to \$70,000. A month later, city government appointed architect Theodore Link to replace him. They supplied him with a full-time staff and a salary of \$3,000 annually. Project construction continued until the spring of 1898. City employees occupied the building as of April 8 of that year. Although the building was not completely finished, city government occupied the premises for several years before construction resumed in fall of 1903 at the behest of Mayor Rolla Wells. The architectural firm of Weber and Groves supervised the completion of the building at a cost of \$200,000. In most instances following the plans of Eckel and Mann, Albert Groves added six offices to the top floor, finished the atrium, and completed the front entrance and vestibule.

Construction ended at the beginning of October, 1904, and the city celebrated on November 5. The project's final cost was \$1,787,159.



St. Louis City Hall
Missouri's Contribution to American Architecture (1928)
John Aubury Bryan, President St. Louis Architectural Club

Expressed in the French Renaissance style from the period of Francis the First, the design for St. Louis' city hall drew its inspiration from the city hall of Paris, known as the Hotel de Ville. Built between 1533 and 1628, the Hotel de Ville followed the plan created by Italian architect Domenico da Cortona, called Boccador (c. 1465-c. 1549). It burned on May 24, 1871. Reconstructed in the French Neo-Renaissance style between 1874 and 1882, the new Hotel de Ville was designed by Theodore Ballu (1817 to 1885) and Edouard De Perthes (1833 to 1898). Chief contributions from this building to the St. Louis version included similar massing and certain ornamental details. French Renaissance ideas shaped the exterior plan for the local version with towers, tall dormers and a high-pitched roof. Rather than a copy, the St. Louis building was an American interpretation of its French counterpart.

Fronting for 380 feet on the west side of Tucker Blvd., the four-story-over-basement building divides into a five-part arrangement consisting of a central focus, two connecting areas, and a pair of wings. Both the north and south facades employ a three-part arrangement. At street level, a three arched porch in the center of the east façade protects the building's main entrance. A main recessed entrance can be found on both the north and south façades.



St. Louis City Hall, East Entrance
photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP

Framed with a pair of towers, the east façade's central focus area features an open-faced clock dial on the fourth floor. Other special exterior features included the fancy second floor fenestration of the central focus area and the first floor open colonnaded and roofed porch for each of the connecting areas. To counter balance the structure's horizontal plane, a steep pitched roof, tall dormers and three towers (removed in 1936) give the building its vertical lift. With a lantern and spire, the missing central tower rose to a height of eighty feet. The other two towers each lost twenty feet of their original height and now more closely reflect Ellis' original design. Exterior building materials offer a dramatic contrast of color. Pink granite for the basement and first floor walls contrast sharply with the orange pigment Roman brick trimmed with beige sandstone of the walls for the upper floors. A dark red tiled roof and oxidized green copper gutters add to the color scheme.

Containing 150 rooms, the interior arrangement places the office space around the perimeter of the building. Two main corridors run east and west and one principal hallway north and south. Covered with walls of white glazed brick, two light courts near the center of the building rise from the

ground level upward. On an east-west axis, each light court measures 80 feet by 50 feet.



St. Louis City Hall, Aerial View
photo courtesy of Google Earth

Interior vertical movement depends on four staircases and eight elevators. Oak doors and window facings, marble floors and wainscoting, plaster moldings, frescoed ceilings and wall murals contribute to the building's decorations.



St. Louis City Hall, Atrium
photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP

City hall houses four very special areas – the atrium, the former council chamber, the former House of Delegates chamber, and the mayor's office. Surrounded with balconies on the three upper floors, the four-story atrium connects to the vestibule main entrance. White marble floor, grand staircase and arcaded walls decorate the 65 foot square atrium. Its ceiling used stained glass in an obscured gilt design framed by fancy plastered panels with gilt highlights. Fresco work in the atrium consists of early St. Louis scenes painted on the spandrels between the arches at the top of the fourth floor.

On the second floor, the council chamber (63 feet by 38 feet) displays a half-domed ceiling rising to a height of thirty feet. Enclosed in one wall eight feet above the room's floor, the visitor's gallery measures 66 feet by 8 feet. The room décor reflects the Neoclassical style. Five murals on the ceiling radiate from the dome's center portraying symbols for Time, Victory, and Justice plus the Seals of Missouri and St. Louis. The Davis Art Glass Company did the murals. In 1914, the council was abolished and now the Board of Public Service uses the space. Down the hall, on the same floor, the House of Delegates' room (63 feet by 43 feet) has a similar visitor's gallery (66 feet by 8 feet). The Neoclassical style dictates the rooms' elliptical ceiling enhanced with a decorative border plus a portrait of a prominent citizen in each of its four corners. Its walls employ a segmented arcade complete with fine lunettes interspersed with citizen portraits and scagliola wainscoting. These frescoed lunettes depict symbolic representations of Art, Agriculture, Education and Industry plus the founding of St. Louis. The House of Delegates name was changed in 1914 to the Board of Alderman which continues to occupy this space. Located at the northeast corner of the second floor, the mayor's office covers 56 feet long to 19 feet/29 feet deep. This office displays five decorative panels of which four are allegorical representations of the Louisiana Purchase and St. Louis. A painting of early St. Louis appears on the west wall of the room.

Both Eckel and Mann believed the St. Louis City Hall project to be their most important achievement together. Following the break-up of their second partnership in 1891, Eckel practiced alone in St. Joseph, except for a brief association with John Van Brunt in 1892. When his third partnership with Mann dissolved in 1905, Eckel practiced alone in St. Joseph until 1908. He then associated with Walter Boschen for two years. Succeeding this arrangement, Eckel, his son Charles, and William S. Aldrich formed a new firm in 1910 which continued until Eckel's death in 1934. Throughout his career, Eckel maintained a reputation for excellent design work.

Eckel and Mann established a branch location in St. Louis as of 1890 for the purpose of completing the design work and

supervising the construction of the City Hall. Placed in charge of this branch, Mann viewed the situation as an opportunity to eventually create his own firm and to use St. Louis as its home base. Expecting the City Hall commission to act as a catalyst to bring in additional local architectural work, he aggressively pursued new opportunities. He participated in local architectural competitions with Harvey Ellis for Union Station, the Mercantile Club Building, St. Vincent Asylum, and the Columbia Club.



ASYLUM ST. VINCENT INSTITUTION, ST. LOUIS, MO.—Geo. R. Mann, Architect.

Insane Asylum for the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul (1891; Harvey Ellis for George R. Mann)
 George R. Mann, Selections from an Architect's Portfolio
 Courtesy of the Fine Arts Library, St. Louis Public Library

Winning the St. Vincent Asylum commission, he and Harvey Ellis planned a four-story brick and stone structure for the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, with a total frontage of 633 feet and space for 430 rooms. Located on a 93-acre tract in Normandy, Missouri, it cost a half million dollars. Accommodating one thousand patients, it had a romantic Chateausque skyline.

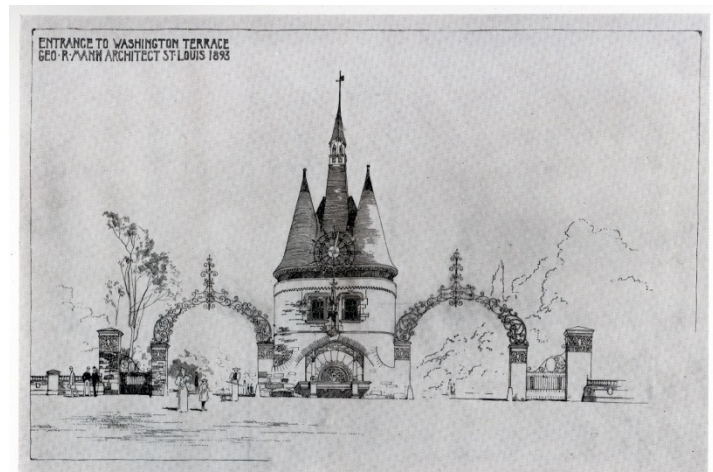


EDWARD MARTIN BUILDING, ST. LOUIS, MO.
 Geo. R. Mann, Architect.

Edward Martin Building, perspective rendering (1892; Harvey Ellis for George R. Mann)
 George R. Mann, Selections from an Architect's Portfolio
 Courtesy of the Fine Arts Library, St. Louis Public Library

The firm supplied designs for three tall commercial buildings, but only the eight-story Martin Building (70 feet by 225 feet) at 923 Washington was erected. Constructed for one to three wholesale businesses, this Modern classically styled Ellis designed structure used limestone for its two-story exterior base and beige Roman brick trimmed with brown terra cotta for the upper floors.

The other two designs for commercial structures were lavish interpretations of the Chicago School of commercial architecture. The ten-story Meramec Building design (a masterpiece by Harvey Ellis) for James Gleason reflected the work of the Chicago firm of Adler and Sullivan. The ten-story Traveler Protective Association building design by Ellis emulated the work of the Chicago architects Burham and Root.



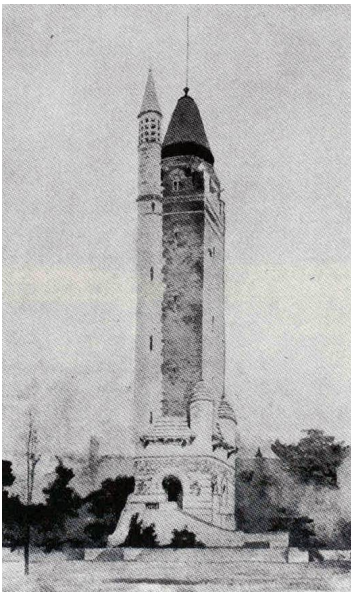
GATE LODGE—Geo. R. Mann, Architect.

Entrance to Washington Terrace, perspective rendering (1893; Harvey Ellis for George R. Mann),
 George R. Mann, Selections from an Architect's Portfolio
 Courtesy of the Fine Arts Library, St. Louis Public Library

Mann's most picturesque efforts included the Romanesque clock tower entrance to Washington Terrace and the Shaw Avenue Water Tower at the Compton Hill Reservoir, both designed by Ellis.

Soaring to a height of 179 feet, this brick and stone tower cleverly concealed two stand pipes – the main pipe six feet in diameter and the overflow pipe two feet in diameter. A thirty-foot square base with limestone exterior extended upward forty feet. Its superstructure used beige Roman brick with limestone trim. Limestone and copper covered its roof.

Most work from Mann's firm clearly demonstrated the influence of Harvey Ellis until he departed in the spring of 1893. A year earlier, Mann had prepared a monograph of his work in both St. Joseph and St. Louis for the purpose of attracting new clients, but this effort failed.



Compton Hill Water Tower (1893-98; Harvey Ellis for George R. Mann)



photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP

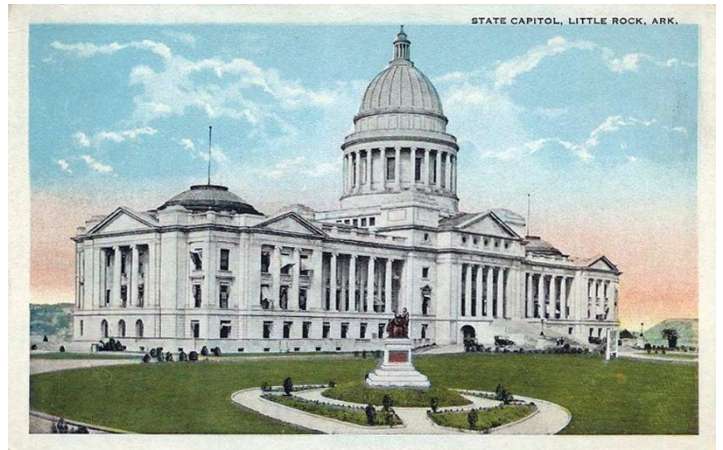
Few clients, a financial panic and a damaged reputation from constant public criticism of his City Hall supervision convinced Mann to seek a new career direction.

Between 1893 and 1899 Mann participated in four state capitol competitions. He wanted to relocate his base of operations and jumpstart his architectural career. In the Washington State Capitol competition, he placed third in a field of 184. Next, he finished second among 56 entries in the two-tiered, but flawed, Minnesota State Capital competition (1893-1895).



Montana State Capitol competition (1896), first prize

At the Montana State Capitol competition in 1896, he received first prize and the appointment to be project architect. Before the project could begin, however, the state legislature cancelled the undertaking because of its estimated high cost. They later hired a local architect to build a smaller and cheaper government building. At last, in 1899, the Arkansas State Capitol Commission awarded him top prize in their competition and appointed him capitol architect. He continued in that capacity until 1909.



Arkansas State Capitol, postcard (1899-1915) George R. Mann, Architect

By 1905, Mann had moved his offices to Little Rock, where he worked on a steady flow of important commissions. In a decade of effort, he populated Little Rock, Fort Smith, Pine Bluff and Hot Springs with many major buildings. He prepared the beautification plan for Hot Springs, where he also erected the Thompson and Fordyce Buildings, the Hale Bath House, and the Arlington Hotel. His commissions in this city had an aggregate value exceeding fifteen million dollars. From 1914, onward he transitioned through a series of architectural partnerships – Mann and Stern; Mann, Wagner, and King; and Mann and Wagner. These firms specialized in hotels, banks and office buildings. When he retired in the 1930's, he was considered to be one of Arkansas' most important architects.



St. Louis City Hall, photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP

Unique and picturesque, the St. Louis City Hall reminds us of the city's French origin and proclaims the city's golden age of wealth, power, and architecture. A brightly colored exterior, elegant ornamentation and a practical interior arrangement set this building apart from other government structures erected during the same period.

Let us praise the contributions responsible for city hall's architectural achievement:

- To the World's Fair Dream for starting the process;
- To the talented architectural firm of Eckel and Mann for preparing the design and making adjustments to it;
- To the City Hall Commission for selecting the plan and demanding it be beautiful;
- To the architect George Mann for supervising the project's construction in an efficient manner without the taint of corruption;
- To the people of St. Louis for their continuing use of the building during the last 116 years without major structural damage from alterations, additions or demolition.

As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of St. Louis, let us not forget the importance of our City Hall. It stands as the Holy Grail of St. Louis' heritage where many important leaders, events, and decisions played out their existence within its hallowed walls.

NOTES

1. St. Louis City Ordinances
Index to St. Louis City Ordinances 1909
W.H. O'Brien (1825-1903)
#68 (3-13-1827); #85 (1-24-1828); #134 (10-31-1829); #759 (5-24-1841); #787 (6-19-1841); #2282 (8-22-1849); #2594 (3-20-1851); #3805 (3-9-1857); #3914 (7-15-1857); #3970 (9-15-1857); #4871 (6-28-1861); #6097 (3.27.1867); #6439 (3-9-1868); #7349 (7-13-1870); #7396 (7-21-1870); #7963 (2-15-1872); #8090 (7-12-1872); #8341 (6-18-1873); #8679 (12.24.1873); #15028 (4-4-1889); #15558 (3-29-1890); #15872 (9-30-1890); #16375 (8-21-1891); #17217 (6-29-1893); #17218 (6-29-1893); #17310 (9-30-1893); #17414 (3-20-1894); #17477 (3-28-1894); #17648 (7-3-1894); #18376 (3-18-1896); #18414 (4-6-1896); #19282 (3-15-1898); #19355 (4-16-1898); #19868 (10.31.1899)
#20837 (11.7.1903)
2. Inland Architect
Volume 17, No. 1, February 1890
Volume 15, No. 2, March 1890, p.35; St. Louis City Hall Competition
Volume 17, No. 6, July 1891, p.74; St. Louis Union Station Depot Competition
Volume 26, No. 4, November 1895, p.4; Minnesota State Capitol Competition
Volume 28, No. 5, December 1896; Montana State Capitol Competition
3. Prawl, Toni, Ph.D. Dissertation: E. J. Eckel (1845-1934)
The Education of a Beaux Arts Architect and His Missouri Practice
4. American Architect
Issue Dates: 1-7-1905, 2-3-1906, 6-1-1907, 3-18-1908, 10-14-1914, 4-17-1918, 3-13-1918, 8-17-1921
5. Bryan, John A., Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Papers, pages 22 to 24 and 85 to 86

6. Darrs, Victor, Notes on Block Seven: The Disappearance of St. Louis Place Publique
7. Mann, George R., Selections from the Architectural Portfolio of George R. Mann
8. Orear, G. W., Commercial and Architectural St. Louis, 1888

St. Louis City Hall Sources

Newspapers:

1. Missouri St. Louis Republican
3-29-1849, 8-18-1849, 2-10-1851, 2-15-1851, 12-2-1851, 10-18-1853, 12-14-1856, 8-19-1857, 7-9-1870, 12-15-1870, 1-2-1871, 1-5-1871, 1-6-1871, 7-3-1872, 7-30-1873
2. St. Louis Republic
12-17-1889, 2-16-1890, 8-16-1892, 11-13-1892, 6-5-1893, 8-20-1893, 8-17-1893, 11-20-1894, 12-9-1894, 10-29-1895, 11-5-1895, 11-27-1895, 11-29-1895, 2-8-1896, 3-4-1896, 3-14-1896, 3-21-1896, 4-3-1896, 1-20-1898, 4-30-1899, 4-28-1903, 8-6-1903, 10-20-1904
3. St. Louis Times
7-27-1870, 10-21-1870, 12-3-1870, 11-30-1870, 12-13-1870, 12-16-1870, 1-4-1871, 1-6-1870, 1-18-1871, 2-3-1871, 1-14-1872, 5-21-1872, 7-4-1872, 7-13-1873, 9-25-1873, 5-18-1894, 5-19-1874, 5-27-1874, 5-30-1874
4. St. Louis Post Dispatch
4-13-1885, 4-1-1888, 5-15-1889 11-16-1889, 12-9-1889 3-1-1890, 6-12-1891, 6-25-1891, 7-7-1891, 9-20-1891, 11-29-1894, 10-28-1895
5. Missouri Democrat
1-13-1853, 11-11-1853, 5-13-1866, 8-16-1870, 9-8-1870, 9-9-1870, 9-13-1870, 12-3-1870, 12-14-1870

EVENTS CALENDAR

2021 Annual Gathering Society of Architectural Historians St. Louis Chapter

Virtual Gathering via Zoom
Sunday, February 14, 2021
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Free event. (Limited to 100 registrations).

We appreciate you sending in your 2021 SAH STL memberships dues to:

St. Louis Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians
Post Office Box 23110, St. Louis, Missouri 63108

Please RSVP no later than Monday, February 8, 2020 to Esley Hamilton at ehamilton@stlouisco.com.

In keeping with our tradition, member presentations of a favorite building or place are welcome. Please email presentations to John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP at john.c.guenther@gmail.com by Monday, February 8, 2020.

Your presentations will be integrated into the overall slide show. Please use PowerPoint with a Widescreen 16:9 ratio slide size so that all presentations are consistent in size and format. Please include a title slide with your name and your topic. Please limit presentations to 5 minutes maximum.

Society of Architectural Historians St. Louis Chapter/St. Louis Public Library – Central Library 2021 Lecture Series

St. Louis Public Library – Central Library
1301 Olive St, St. Louis, MO 63103
Zoom webinar
fourth Tuesday of the month
(except for Thanksgiving week)
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

2021 Spring

Esley Hamilton
Past Preservation Historian, St. Louis County Parks
“The Architecture of Oscar Niemeyer”
February 23, 2021

Robert McCarter
Ruth and Norman Moore Professor of Architecture,
Washington University in St. Louis
“The Architecture of Carlo Scarpa: Recomposing Place,
Intertwining Time, Transforming Reality”
March 23, 2021

John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP
Principal, John C. Guenther Architect LLC
President, Society of Architectural Historians St. Louis Chapter
“Antonio Barluzzi – A Roman Architect in the Holy Land”
April 27, 2021

<https://slpl.bibliocommons.com/events/search/q=architecture%20SAH>
registration link for Spring lectures

2021 Fall

Peter Wollenberg
Architectural Conservator
Wollenberg Building Conservation, LLC
“Lustron Homes, St. Louis and Beyond”
September 28, 2021

Karen Bode Baxter
Architectural Historian and Preservation Specialist
“St. Louis Globe Democrat Building/St. Louis Post-Dispatch Building”
October 26, 2021

Aaron Frei
Craftsman and President
Emil Frei & Associates
“The Art and History of Stain Glass”
November 16, 2021

The Society of Architectural Historians
St. Louis and Missouri Valley Chapters
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The Society of Architectural Historians
St. Louis and Missouri Valley Chapters

News Letter

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- Spring Issue 15 February
- Summer Issue 15 May
- Fall Issue 15 August
- Winter Issue 15 November

St. Louis and Missouri Valley Chapters, SAH 2019 – 2020 Board of Directors

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