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THE EARLY WORK OF JOSEPH LYMAN SILSBEE

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Silsbee's name inevitably is associated with Frank Lloyd Wright and the other Prairie School architects who acquired their training in his Chicago office in the late 1890's. Because of Silsbee's influence on mid-western architecture, his name has been his

by

DONALD ROBERT PULFER

B. A. Syracuse University, 1978

B. Arch. Syracuse University, 1978

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in the Graduate School of Syracuse University

April 1981

MAY

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Approved May Ann Smith

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Date April 30, 1981

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THE EARLY WORK OF JOSEPH LYMAN SILSBEE

Silsbee's name inevitably is associated with Frank Lloyd Wright and the other Prairie School architects who acquired their training in his Chicago office in the late 1880's. Because of Silsbee's well-known influence on mid-western architecture the focus of attention has been his mature work. Before he moved to Chicago, Silsbee practiced architecture in Syracuse, New York for a decade. Study of this early work extends our knowledge of Silsbee's oeuvre and informs our understanding of his later architecture.

Silsbee was one of a new generation of thoroughly educated, professionally trained architects in late nineteenth century America. His High Victorian architectural ideals were tempered by innate ability and by the newly emergent interest in America's vernacular, colonial heritage. Early in his career he produced a body of commercial work in downtown Syracuse which continues to play a significant role in defining its urban character. He went on to design churches, houses, resorts and institutional buildings in a variety of styles. Most of his

work has been demolished; but old photographs and documentation in newspapers and the architectural press demonstrate a chronological development that parallels changes in American architectural theory. Behind Silsbee's eclecticism are a continuity of expression and a clarity of form which raise his work well above the level of the average architect in the last quarter of nineteenth century America.

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Architecture
in the Graduate School of Syracuse University

April 1981

MAJ

Approved John Paul Smith

Date April 30, 1981

THE EARLY WORK OF JOSEPH LYMAN SILSBEE

by

DONALD ROBERT PULFER

B. A. Syracuse University, 1978
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THESIS

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~~April~~ 1981

MAY

Approved Mary Ann Smith

Date April 30, 1981

Bird

PREFACE

The idea that Joseph Lyman Silas was a facile Eastern architect transferred to the mid-west where there was a ready market for his confused but fashionable eclecticism has puzzled me for some years. The clarity and strength of his commercial buildings in Syracuse did not merit that rather negative assessment, and it must have been something other than facility, confusion, or fashion which attracted the youthful Frank Lloyd Wright to his Chicago office. Silas's work in Chicago has been documented to some extent, but almost nothing has been written on his decade of practice in Syracuse (1875-1886). My purpose has been to discover this early work, to catalogue it and to suggest a new assessment of Silas based upon knowledge of his whole career.

Richard Wright and Violet Hooper of the Onondaga Historical Association have kindly supplied files from the Association's rich collection. They have helped immeasurably in deciphering notes, lending photographs, suggesting further research and untangling webs of seemingly contradictory details. The Onondaga Historical Association is the first source for research on Syracuse architecture. The Harley Wood Collection, Aronson Collection, and

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Stevenson Bird Library, Syracuse University, is another important resource. Most newspaper references to Silsbee's work were found in these two collections. Eugene Tarolli of Solvay graciously lent me his plans of the Hazard House. John D. Randall of the Louis Sullivan Museum oriented me in Buffalo, and he put me in touch with many people who expressed interest and support and who provided references which have helped greatly. Thomas J. McCormick of Wheaton College, Norton, Massachusetts worked on Silsbee thirty years ago in connection with his Master's degree. He generously supported my work and provided some references which had escaped my notice. Susan Karr supplied her Master's thesis on Silsbee in Chicago, and she encouraged me in my study of the Syracuse work. Finally I should like to thank my father-in-law, Dr. Anthony E. Terino, for his skillful suggestions for editing, and my wife, Dorothy Terino, for her work in the early stages of Silsbee documentation, her many penetrating and helpful suggestions, and her enduring patience.

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Henry-Bassett Hitchcock, in the *History of Architecture*
The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright 1887-1911 New York,
Doubleday, Silas and Barnes, 1971, pp. 1-2.

INTRODUCTION

When Joseph Lyman Silsbee gave Frank Lloyd Wright his first job, he ipso facto secured a place in the literature of architectural history. In one respect, Silsbee's employment of this young draftsman was unfortunate, for it has attracted our attention exclusively to the role he played in Wright's development. Consequently, our knowledge of Silsbee has been limited to his domestic work in Chicago around 1887, the year of Wright's move to Chicago.

Henry-Russell Hitchcock was the first architectural historian to mention the work of Joseph Lyman Silsbee. In his pioneering monograph on Wright, Hitchcock briefly noted Silsbee's Unity Chapel in Helena, Wisconsin and his houses in suburban Edgewater, Illinois. He commented on their clarity, simplicity and lack of ornamentation; however he quickly dismissed Silsbee's later buildings with their Colonial elements. Hitchcock claimed that Silsbee's earlier New York State work, "in no sense exceptional, is of a confused Queen Anne like that of his Chicago contemporaries."¹ In a later article Hitchcock pointed out the

¹Henry-Russell Hitchcock, In the Nature of Materials: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright 1887-1941 (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942), pp. 4-7.

influence of the "Silsbeean Colonial" on some early Wright work, a style "which amounted to an eclectic application of Colonial elements into his Suburban Richardsonian manner."¹ Still later, Hitchcock credited Silsbee with bringing the Shingle Style to Chicago.²

Later writers followed Hitchcock's lead in discussing Silsbee only briefly in terms of Wright's early training and in dismissing the work he did before 1885 and after 1888. Vincent Scully, in establishing Wright's connection with the Shingle Style, stated that Silsbee's work "was never very distinguished, but he may be considered as the architect who brought the mature shingle style to Chicago."³ Manson was kinder to Silsbee and to the American Queen Anne, but he too confined his short discussion to Silsbee's Chicago domestic work.⁴ In attempting to understand the nature of the early influences on Frank Lloyd Wright, Manson classified Silsbee's as the "conventional" influence as opposed to

¹Hitchcock, "Frank Lloyd Wright and the 'Academic Tradition' of the Early Eighteen-Nineties," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 7 (January-June 1944): 57, 58.

²Hitchcock, Architecture Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958), p. 269.

³Vincent Scully, The Shingle Style and the Stick Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Richardson to the Origins of Wright (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 158, n. 10.

⁴Grant C. Manson, Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910: The First Golden Age (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1958), pp. 14-21.

Sullivan's "unconventional." There is doubtless a great deal of truth in this assessment; nevertheless, Manson did not examine enough of Silsbee's work to make a convincing assessment.

Actually it was Frank Lloyd Wright himself who first drew attention to the work of Silsbee. In his autobiography he virtually demanded that we examine Silsbee's architecture when he stated, "I learned a good deal about a house from Silsbee..."⁶ Wright's assessment of Silsbee was far more positive than Hitchcock's. Wright's purpose in discussing Silsbee in An Autobiography was to contrast the philosophical emptiness of Silsbee's picturesque sensibility² with his own youthful and zealous search for meaning. In spite of this, however, he sincerely appreciated Silsbee and his work. Wright wrote:

His superior talent in design had made him respected in Chicago. His work was a picturesque combination of gable, turret and hip, with broad porches, quietly domestic and gracefully picturesque, a contrast to the awkward stupidities and brutalities of the period, elsewhere... Silsbee could draw with amazing ease. He drew with soft, deep lead-pencil strokes and he would make remarkable free-hand sketches of that type of dwelling peculiarly his own at the time...My God,...how that man can draw."³

¹ Frank Lloyd Wright, An Autobiography, 3rd ed. (New York: Horizon Press, 1977), p. 93.

² Ibid., pp. 92, 93, 104-115.

³ Ibid., pp. 92, 93.

Later in the book Wright said, "No matter what I thought of his shortcomings, I adored him just the same."¹ Considering the fact that Wright had a notoriously low opinion of almost every other architect in the world, this assessment of Silsbee reflects considerable respect.² It does seem strange, therefore, that Silsbee has been studied so little.

Our ignorance of Silsbee is the consequence of our seeing his work only through the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. It is difficult to dwell for long on Silsbee when our minds are turned to Wright's revolutionary re-thinking of the American house. The authority and prestige of the great architectural historian and critic Hitchcock has caused us to focus our attention solely on the work being done in Silsbee's office during Wright's tenure. Silsbee had recently moved to Chicago when Wright found employment in his office. Even if mid-westerners had wished to know more about Silsbee's earlier work, its geographical remoteness made it rather inaccessible. Although Silsbee had an obvious influence on Wright, Louis Sullivan's more fundamentally philosophical influence was by far the more profound.

¹ Ibid., p. 115.

² While it is true that Wright's disenfranchisement from the rest of the profession developed gradually, he retained his praise of Silsbee through all editions of the autobiography.

Susan Kay Correll, "Silsbee: The Evolution of a Personal Architectural Style," *Prairie School Review* 7 (Fourth Quarter 1970): 4.

Nevertheless the work of J. L. Silsbee has surfaced again in a slightly different context; namely in the more recent surge of interest in the domestic architecture of the Midwest from the turn of the century to the First World War. H. Allen Brooks, in his seminal work on this architecture, The Prairie School, pointed to Silsbee's importance in Chicago and noted that Silsbee "simultaneously - had [George W.] Maher, Frank Lloyd Wright, and George Grant Elmslie as his draftsmen, a fact which testifies to his status as a teacher, and to his influence on the Midwest scene."¹ Although Brooks did not make clear the precise nature of Silsbee's influence, he claimed that "the situation in Silsbee's office in 1887 recalls that of Peter Behrens' office in Berlin about 1910, when Mies, Gropius, and Le Corbusier were present."² Actually, though the comparison with Behrens' office might seem a bit strained, Silsbee's importance to the Prairie School was broader than Brooks indicated. As Susan Karr Sorell pointed out, "Serving apprenticeships under Silsbee in the late 1880's were Cecil Corwin, George Elmslie, H. G. Fiddelke, George W. Maher, Paul Mueller, Elbert F. Wilcox, [and] Frank Lloyd Wright..."³ It can be safely stated that through his

¹ H. Allen Brooks, The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and his Midwest Contemporaries (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 34.

² Ibid., n. 27.

³ Susan Karr Sorell, "Silsbee: The Evolution of a Personal Architectural Style," Prairie School Review 7 (Fourth Quarter 1970): 6.

teaching and his work Silsbee directly influenced an entire generation of young architects who went on to produce an important body of work, a body of work which represented a break with the tradition of designing in historic styles. The Prairie School architects¹ reacted against the work of Silsbee and his contemporaries and at the same time found something in his work from which they could grow.

In order to assess Silsbee's role, it is necessary first to catalog and study his work. To this end, Susan Karr Sorell in 1970 published an article which included a catalog of Silsbee's work between 1882 and 1897, the years of his active practice in Chicago.² Because of the absence of Silsbee documents - drawings, files, office records - the catalog was culled from contemporary periodical references to Silsbee's buildings. It is at present the most useful tool to researchers interested in Silsbee. Unfortunately, the ten years of Silsbee's practice in New York State were not included.

Residents of Syracuse are aware of the importance of Joseph Lyman Silsbee to their city, for two of its finest

¹At the time they were simply called the Chicago School. Later, to distinguish them from the urban commercial architects, they were called the Second Chicago School. Brooks, after Frank Lloyd Wright, called them the Prairie School, the name which has stuck.

¹⁵Sorell, 5-21.

buildings are his, namely the Syracuse Savings Bank (1875-76) and the White Memorial Building (1876-78). In fact, the Syracuse Savings Bank has become a canonical example of the High Victorian Gothic movement in America. Marcus Whiffen used it in his book on American styles. Wayne Andrews included it in Architecture in New York and American Gothic. More recently, Leland Roth illustrated it in his survey of American architectural history.¹ Silsbee is therefore well known at least for this one early building in New York State.

It is a pity that those who wrote about the Prairie School or about Frank Lloyd Wright did not take Silsbee's earlier work into account, for only by neglecting a large portion of Silsbee's architecture can we call him a Queen Anne or a Shingle Style architect. It is important that his New York work be incorporated into our conception of Silsbee, the architect, if for no other reason than for the light it sheds on Silsbee's role in Chicago. An aim

¹Marcus Whiffen, American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to the Styles (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), p. 93; Wayne Andrews, Architecture in New York: A Photographic Survey (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 65, American Gothic: Its Origins, Its Trials, Its Triumphs (New York: Random House, 1975), p. ; Leland Roth, A Concise History of American Architecture (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 134. Roth even uses the Syracuse Savings Bank on his dust jacket. Andrews and Roth make the common error of identifying the architect as James Lyman Silsbee. This mistake probably comes from Henry F. Withey and Elsie R. Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956), p. 554, "Silsbee, James Lyman."

of this thesis, therefore, is to extend the work of Susan Karr Sorell to include Silsbee's early work. As we shall see, his career before he moved to Chicago is very interesting in its own right for what it suggests about the practice of architecture in America in the late nineteenth century.

Silsbee was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on November 25, 1847. The Silsbees were a distinguished New England family who had been in Salem for generations. His mother, Charlotte Lyman Silsbee, died at the age of 34, only four days after Joseph's birth. Joseph seems to have been raised in Salem by members of the family until 1859, when he went to Northampton to live with his new step-mother and his father, the Reverend William Silsbee, who was the Unitarian minister there. In 1863 he entered Phillips Exeter Academy. Two years later he was admitted to Harvard College, the alma mater of almost every Silsbee male.

In 1869, after receiving the Bachelor of Arts degree, he enrolled in the first course in architectural education that America had to offer when he entered the third year class at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Until 1868, entry into the profession of architecture was gained either through apprenticeship in an office or through

¹William Silsbee was the pastor in Northampton from 1855-63 according to James A. Swerton, A Genealogical Account of Henry Silsbee and Some of his Descendants (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1880), p. 43. For a biographical note on J. L. Silsbee, see Appendix B.

SILSBEE'S BACKGROUND AND TRAINING

Joseph Lyman Silsbee was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on November 25, 1848. The Silsbees were a distinguished New England family who had been in Salem for generations. His mother, Charlotte Lyman Silsbee, died at the age of 34, only four days after Joseph's birth. Joseph seems to have been raised in Salem by members of the family until 1859, when he went to Northampton to be with his new step-mother and his father, the Reverend William Silsbee, who was the Unitarian minister there.¹ In 1863 he entered Phillips Exeter Academy. Two years later he was admitted into Harvard College, the alma mater of almost every Silsbee male.

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¹William Silsbee was the pastor in Northampton from 1855-63 according to James A. Emmerton, A Geneological Account of Henry Silsbee and Some of his Descendants (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1880), p. 45. For a biographical note on J. L. Silsbee, see Appendix B.

attendance at a school of civil engineering. Another alternative was to prepare for entry into the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. If fortunate enough to be accepted, one could obtain what was widely regarded as the premier architectural education available. Very few Americans were able to do this, though their numbers were increasing yearly. In 1868, William Robert Ware at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology opened the first college course in America in architecture.

Ware had had a liberal arts education and had completed two years of graduate study in civil engineering before working for two years with the Boston architect, Edward Clark Cabot.¹ Early in 1859 he entered the famous New York office-atelier of Richard Morris Hunt. The education he received there in the heady company of Hunt, Frank Furness, Henry Van Brunt, Charles Gambrill, and George B. Post certainly had its influence on Ware's educational ideas. Because of his own breadth of education and his careful analysis of American conditions, Ware did not model his program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on that of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The curriculum he established was remarkably broad and flexible. He made a point of accommodating the widely different needs of a heterogeneous student body within a course of study which stressed

¹Information on Ware is from J. A. Chewning, "William Robert Ware at MIT and Columbia," Journal of Architectural Education 33 (November 1979): 25-30.

both the design and the engineering aspects of the profession. ¹ Though Composition and Design, on Beaux-Arts principles, formed a third of his curriculum, the Beaux-Arts model was too limited for Ware's more general, liberal arts oriented approach to architectural education. It is important to remember that until the late 1870's drawing exercises were stressed much more than exercises in ² design.

Because he submitted no thesis, and because the nineteenth century records are inconsistent, it is not possible to determine what Silsbee studied. ³ We do know that Ware himself directed the design teaching in 1869-70. ⁴ It is safe to assume that Silsbee fell under his tutelage, for in 1870 he began working for Ware and Van Brunt.

¹Chewning, p. 25, states, "This curriculum was therefore notorious among his critics with strong Beaux-Arts leanings, for the insufficient grounding it gave in the principles and practice of design. But to place an exclusive emphasis on design, Ware insisted, would be to establish a type of technical training no more broadening than the education received by those who entered architecture by way of concentrated studies in engineering. What was required for the practice of architecture, Ware believed, was something beyond mere technical learning..." and p. 29, "The adaptation of technical and liberal arts studies to the special needs of architectural students, working within a professional curriculum itself analogous in its broadest outlines to a liberal arts curriculum, is the central issue in Ware's career."

² Ibid., pp. 26-27.

³Karen Lynch, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to Dorothy Terino, 7 November 1978.

⁴Chewning, p. 26.

The office of Ware and Van Brunt was run as an atelier modeled on Hunt's. Among those who received their early training there in the 1860's and 1870's were Peabody and Sterns, Rotch and Tilden, Charles B. Atwood, and Francis W. Chandler.¹ Probably Ware saw enough promise in Silsbee's work at Massachusetts Institute of Technology to offer him a job. This would explain why he never completed his degree program.

In the absence of office documents or other evidence, we are not able to tell what Silsbee did in Ware's office. Possibly he was set to work on the detailing of Harvard's Memorial Hall (1865-1871, finished 1878) [Fig. 1], which was then in the final stages of design. We can be certain that whatever work Silsbee was doing, he was being trained in the most popular style in Boston at the time,² the polychromatic High Victorian Gothic. Silsbee must surely have been exposed to the writings of John Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc. Ware's partner, Henry Van Brunt, was then in the

¹Ibid. See also William A. Coles, Introduction to Henry Van Brunt, Architecture and Society: Selected Essays of Henry Van Brunt, ed. William A. Coles (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 16. In fact it was news of this "educational enterprise" which attracted MIT officials to Ware.

²Douglas Shand Tucci, Built in Boston: City and Suburb 1800-1950 (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1978), pp. 45-55.

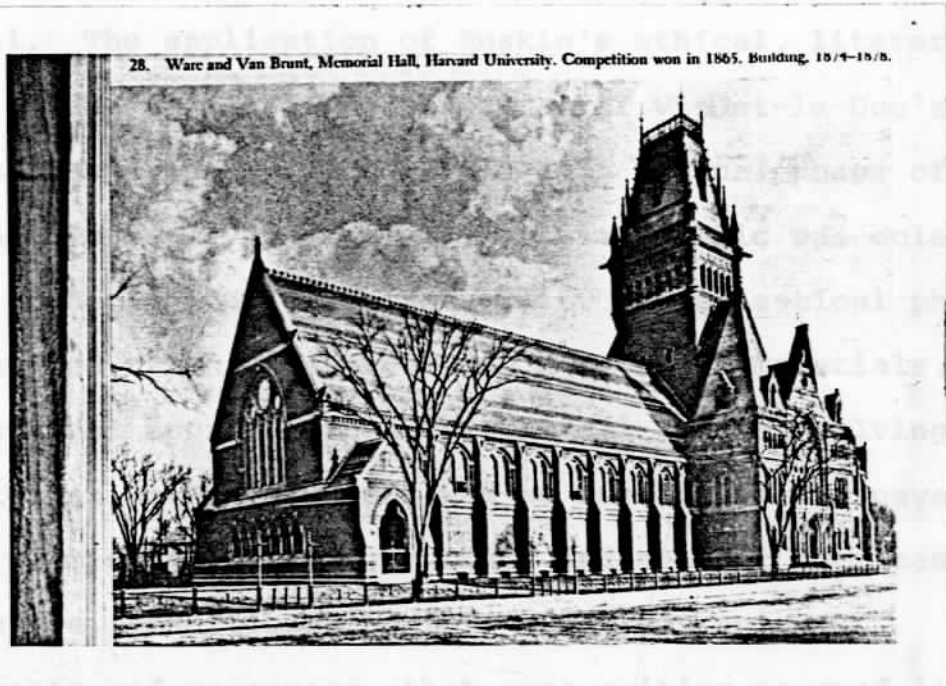


Fig. 1. Ware and Van Brunt, Memorial Hall, Harvard University, 1865-71, finished 1878 (Henry Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 1969).

Discourses on Architecture, trans. Henry Van Brunt, 1 (Boston, 1873) was his translation of Viollet-le-Duc's *Leçons d'architecture*, 1867. Van Brunt was planning the translation and working on it as early as 1866; Coloe, Introduction to Henry Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, p. 19.

Montgomery Schuyler, for example. See his *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William S. Jorcy and Ralph Coe, 2 vols. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), vol. 1, pp. 121-187.

process of translating the latter's Discourses.¹

In the 1870's Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc were the two poles of progressive architectural theory: from Ruskin came the ideal of morality in architecture and a picturesque, painterly vision; from Viollet-le-Duc came a structural rationalism with its apotheosis of the French Gothic cathedral. The application of Ruskin's ethical, literary message to the rational functionalism of Viollet-le-Duc's more architectonic approach resulted in a final phase of the Gothic Revival. The High Victorian Gothic was eclectic and not archeological like its earlier ecclesiastical phase. It emphasized truth of expression, honesty in materials, and a rational approach to architectural problem-solving. The Victorian Gothic movement was so successful and gave so much promise of becoming a truly independent American architecture, conditioned by this country's unique requirements and resources, that some critics mourned its passing decades after the arrival of the Richardsonian Romanesque² and the American Queen Anne.

¹ Discourses on Architecture, trans. Henry Van Brunt, I (Boston, 1875) was his translation of Viollet-le-Duc's Entretiens sur l'architecture, 1863. Van Brunt was planning the translation and working on it as early as 1866; Coles, Introduction to Henry Van Brunt, Architecture and Society, p. 19.

² Montgomery Schuyler, for example. See his American Architecture and Other Writings, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe, 2 vols. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), vol. 1, pp. 121-187.

The Architectural Sketchbook, published by the Portfolio Club in Boston from 1873-1876, is full of High Victorian Gothic designs, and the firm of Ware and Van Brunt is well represented in its pages. Silsbee worked for Ware and Van Brunt while they were under the spell of A. W. N. Pugin, Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc, G. E. Street and Alfred Waterhouse. In Hunt's atelier a catholic attitude toward historical styles and architectural education had prevailed. In his writings Van Brunt displayed an open and undogmatic mind.¹ From Ware and Van Brunt Silsbee very likely acquired a broad exposure to architectural practice and history.

During this period of 1870 to 1872, Silsbee worked also for William Ralph Emerson. We do not have any information on Silsbee's exact dates of employment, nor on his role in the Boston offices of either Ware and Van Brunt or of Emerson and Fehmer. We know only that he worked for both firms. The most likely speculation is that he worked for Ware and Van Brunt for about a year and then took a job with Emerson. We can only speculate about his reasons for leaving his first employers. Perhaps he had developed so rapidly that the atelier environment no longer seemed challenging enough, and he saw the opportunity for greater independence with Emerson. Or it may be simply that he was laid off and that he was fortunate enough to

¹All of his essays in Architecture and Society display these qualities. See Coles' Introduction, pp. 26-28.

find another job quickly. Certainly a young man with such a solid background as his would be desirable to other firms.

Houses formed the core of Emerson's practice. As Cynthia Zaitzevsky pointed out "...many of his contemporaries considered him the inventor of [the Shingle Style]."¹ The houses for which Emerson is best known, however, begin in the mid-1870's: in the early 1870's he was engaged in building houses in what can best be described as the Stick Style. The M. H. Sanford House in Newport, Rhode Island (1869), a Stick Style house with Mansard roof, is a representative example of the work of the firm of Emerson and Fehmer during this time.²

Frank Lloyd Wright, commenting on Silsbee's drawings, said that "Silsbee's way was magnificent, his strokes were like standing corn in the field waving in the breeze."³ Probably Silsbee's sketching was modeled on the technique of Emerson. In a lecture on draftsmanship, Emerson had stressed the value of sketching from nature. A broad lead pencil was his preferred medium,⁴ and it became Silsbee's as well.⁵ Vincent Scully described Emerson's

¹Cynthia Zaitzevsky, The Architecture of William Ralph Emerson 1833-1912 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 1. See also Scully, pp. 82-88, 108-110.

²Zaitzevsky, pp. 4-5, pls. 1, 2.

³Frank Lloyd Wright, Autobiography, p. 113.

⁴Zaitzevsky, pp. 27, 28.

⁵Frank Lloyd Wright, Autobiography, p. 92.

pictorial approach to design as "a sketching of elements which eventually develop into an architectural scheme for the whole." He also discussed at length Emerson's free and painterly drafting technique.¹ It should be pointed out too that Emerson was one of the first architects in America to express an appreciation of its Colonial buildings. In 1869 he gave a "sermon" on the destruction of old New England houses, which he called "the only true American architecture."² He maintained an interest in Colonial architecture and did a number of remodelings throughout his career.³

Thus Silsbee was trained in an atmosphere of the vigorously picturesque and determinedly moral and rational polychromatic Victorian Gothic. At the same time, his mentors encouraged a broad, undogmatic attitude which could discern the value in the architecture of the European past, as well as that of America's own. To the foundation in drawing which he had acquired at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and in the atelier of Ware and Van Brunt was added the personal and picturesque technique of sketching and seeing which he acquired from Emerson.

¹Scully, pp. 114, 85, 86.

²Zaitzevski, p. 3. See also Scully on the growing popularity of the colonial, 1869-1876, pp. 19-33.

³Scully, p. 59. Tucci, pp. 63, 65.

In 1872 Silsbee continued his education with a step that seemed nearly mandatory for the proper training of an architect; namely, a sojourn in Europe. Silsbee's daughter said that he travelled to Europe with the painter John Singer Sargent.¹ This is unlikely, for John Singer Sargent (born January 1856) was nearly eight years Silsbee's junior, had lived in Europe all his life, and he had never yet been to America. Sargent was just sixteen years old in 1872 and he had not yet begun his serious training in Paris.² Still, the suggestion that they travelled together does point to the possibility that Silsbee did meet the young Sargent. The Sargents were famous merchant shippers from Gloucester, just up the coast from Silsbee's Salem, and the families may have known one another. Perhaps Silsbee took the opportunity to call on the Sargents in Switzerland, Florence or Venice. If he did, then surely he would have found in John an amiable companion and guide to the sights. At any rate, Silsbee spent about a year in Europe, travelling and sketching, before he came to Syracuse.³

¹Mrs. Frank E. Wade to Thomas J. McCormick, 10 February 1950.

²Charles Merrill Mount, John Singer Sargent: A Biography (New York: W. W. Norton, 1955), pp. 28-29.

³Gardner Goodrich Willard, "Memorial," Eleventh Report of the Class of 1869 of Harvard College, June 1919: Fiftieth Anniversary (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1919), p. 252. See Appendix B.

On November 25, 1873 the following notice appeared in the University Herald of Syracuse:

Mr. J. L. Silsbee of Salem, Mass., has recently taken up residence in this city as partner of H. N. White, the architect, who is to leave in a few days for Europe. Mr. Silsbee is a gentleman of fine culture in his profession and has just returned from an extended architectural tour of England. The College of Fine Arts is very fortunate in receiving the services of Mr. Silsbee in the Faculty of architecture.

Silsbee took over the practice of Horatio Nelson White so that the latter could travel to Europe. He also filled White's position on the faculty of the University.¹

Silsbee maintained his teaching post for five years. In 1878 he resigned,² possibly because the pressures of his expanding practice left little time for this unpaid position.³

The reason why Silsbee left Boston to come to Syracuse is not known. To be sure, Syracuse was a growing city at that time, in spite of the Panic of 1873 that swept the country. But work opportunities for architects were

¹Alumni Record and General Catalogue of Syracuse University, 1872-1897 (Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1898), p. 27; January 7 1874, "Professor H. N. White resigned and Joseph L. Silsbee was elected Professor of Architecture." The Annual of the Syracuse University for the Collegiate Year, 1873-4 (Syracuse, 1873) lists "Joseph Lyman Silsbee, A. M. Professor of Architecture." This graduate degree seems to be a mistake. Perhaps it was conferred on him as an honorary title.

²Alumni Record, p. 122.

³William F. Galpin, Syracuse University, 2 vols. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1952-1960), vol. 1 (1952), p. 105.

certainly abundant in Boston, for the Great Fire of 1872 had left much of that city to be rebuilt. Perhaps Silsbee had friends in Syracuse who attracted him to the city, but it is more likely that he heard about the job in White's office through colleagues or family, and he sensed a good opportunity.¹ Acting as chief in a well-established firm was a no-risk proposition. It would give him the chance to get his feet wet in the waters of independent practice and would create contacts that would serve him well after White's return.

White (born 1814) was a generation older than Silsbee, and he was approaching the end of his professional career, although he practiced for about another decade. It may be that he was seeking a permanent partner when he hired

¹There are many ways in which Silsbee might have been in contact with Syracusans. His father, a Unitarian who had preached in Troy, New York, now lived in Trenton, New York. He might well have known the Unitarian Reverend Samuel J. May of Syracuse, a well known preacher and abolitionist. One member of the Syracuse group of abolitionists, a man who was indicted, but not arrested, in the famous Jerry rescue, was Charles G. Sedgwick [Franklin H. Chase, Syracuse and its Environs: A History, 3 vols. (New York and Chicago: Lewis Historical Publishing company, 1924), vol. I, p. 164]. Sedgwick would soon become Joseph Lyman Silsbee's father-in-law. Sedgwick's wife Deborah Gannett, was the daughter of a Unitarian clergyman from South Natick, Massachusetts [Dwight H. Bruce, ed., Memorial History of Syracuse, N.Y.: From its Settlement to the Present Time, 3 vols. (Syracuse: H. P. Smith and Co., 1891), vol. II, p. 110]. Also Frank A. Lyman, a lawyer who served a term as District Attorney for Onondaga County beginning in 1868, was a member of the Lyman family from Northampton, Massachusetts [Bruce, Memorial History, II, p. 75], and therefore might have been a relation to Joseph L. Silsbee's mother.

Silsbee. If so, he could hardly have found a better candidate. Silsbee's credentials as one of a new breed of thoroughly educated architects at the beginning of his career beautifully complemented White's background. White was a builder-architect who had arrived at a personal style that was generally based on Norman, Second Empire, or Italianate models. Although he did Gothic designs for ecclesiastical commissions, such as Grace Episcopal Church, Syracuse (1876), his work was a bit outdated. Thus, he may have had the foresight to look for a young man who had appropriate facility in more unconventional styles.

This is speculation of course, and we have no knowledge of the nature of Silsbee's work in the office of H. N. White, for White's work has never been adequately documented. He worked in a city that was provincial compared with the large urban centers, such as New York or Boston, and he did so at a time when there was no professional architectural press. All of his office records, papers, and books were destroyed in a fire in the Weiting Opera House (1856) in 1881.¹

¹Syracuse Daily Journal, 19 July 1881. Harley McKee wrote an article on White published in seven parts ["Horatio Nelson White," Empire State Architect 21 (January-February, March-April, May-June, July-August, November-December 1961), 22 (March-April, July-August 1962)], but there still are large gaps in our knowledge of his oeuvre.

By 1875 Silsbee had left White and had set up his own office. This he did probably on the strength of his having prepared the winning entry in the competition for the design of the Syracuse Savings Bank Building (1875) [Fig. 2]. This building was his first major commission.² His success in this situation brought him other commercial jobs. It also brought him ecclesiastical and domestic commissions as well.

Silsbee, like other architects of his period, was eclectic. Because of the mixtures and overlapping of motifs from one building to the next, the concept of style as an organizing principle for understanding Silsbee's development is not very helpful. It makes more sense to discuss his architecture by type, for Silsbee's buildings for commerce, his churches and his houses form distinct and separate groups. First the commercial, then the ecclesiastical, and finally the domestic work will be discussed. Buildings will be treated in chronological order within these typological groups. A catalogue, organized chronologically regardless of building type, is furnished at the end of this treatise (Appendix A).

¹Boyd's Syracuse Directory (New York: Directory Publishing Company, 1875), J. L. Silsbee, 16 and 17 Granger Block. The 1874 Directory lists Silsbee at 12 Weiting Block, White's office.

²The Syracuse Daily Journal, 25 February 1875, announced that his plans had been accepted, and the city Directory (see above, n. 1) was published in late May or early June. Thus in June 1874 he was in White's office, and probably he set up independently as soon as he knew that he had the commission.

SILSBEE'S COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

Although the Panic of 1873 had had its effect on Syracuse, the financial and industrial resources of the city had been growing for a decade and had been diversifying.¹ Though the crisis had an impact on new construction for a few years, the Syracuse Savings Bank had been "saving its money"² for a new headquarters. In 1862 the bank moved from the Noxon Block on North Salina Street into the old Star (or Exchange) Building on the corner of James and South Salina Streets [Fig. 3].³ The building was immediately remodeled for the bank's use. The local press, commenting on the remodeled Star Building, called it "a highly ornamental block of this previously uninviting

¹The New York Times had sent a reporter to Syracuse in November 1871, and a series of articles was printed which spoke in glowing terms of the expansion and health of Syracuse. Population had nearly doubled since 1860 and wealth had quadrupled. A thousand homes had been built in the past year (Chase, I, p. 469). There had been a run on the banks in Fall of 1872, but the Syracuse Savings Bank and the other established institutions suffered no financial impairment (Chase, I, p. 787).

²Harley McKee, "Some architects of Syracuse," Speech notes, Kiwanis Club of Dewitt, 27 February 1956, Harley McKee Papers, Arents Collection, Ernest Stevenson Bird Library, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.

³Chase, I, p. 787. The purchase price was \$15,500, Bruce, Memorial History, I, p. 376.

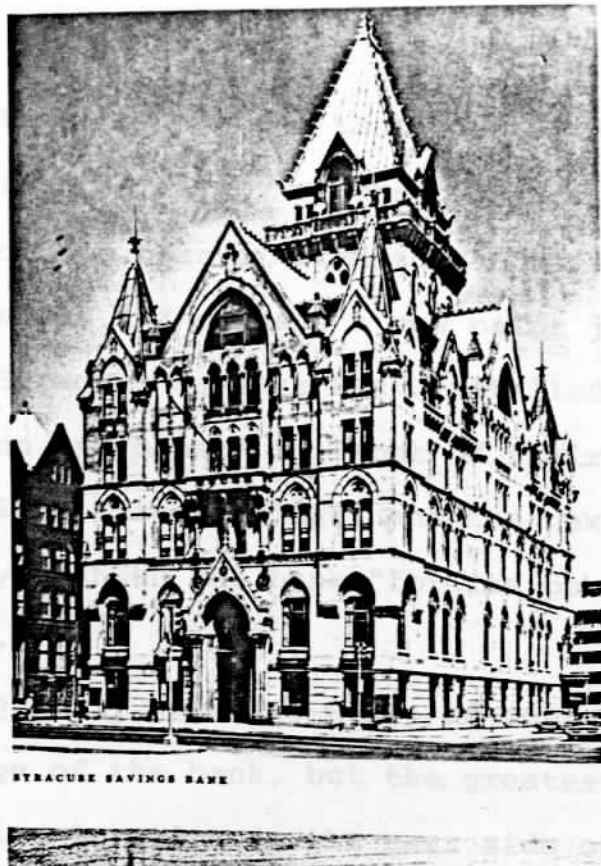
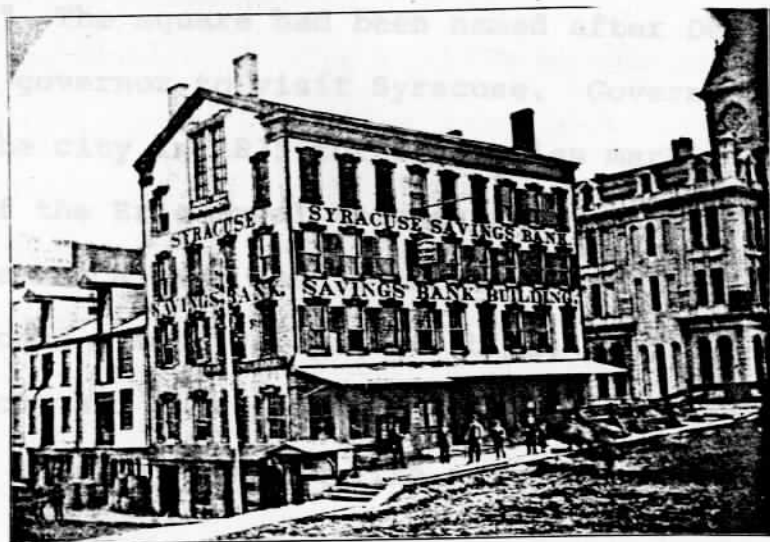


Fig. 2. Silsbee, Syracuse Savings Bank, 1875 (Architecture Worth Saving in Onondaga County, 1964).



ORIGINAL SYRACUSE SAVINGS BANK BUILDING

Fig. 3. Original Syracuse Savings Bank Building, view from northwest (Syracuse Centennial, 1925)

structure."¹ It seems, though, that there was very little modification of the exterior of the building. Here remodeling seems to have been limited to the removal of a hodgepodge of signs and perhaps a new paint job. In the fall of 1871, Syracuse Savings Bank installed a "drinking fountain for man and beast" in front of their building next to the Salina Street bridge, and the next summer the city officially thanked the bank "for its public spirit and liberality."²

These neighborly gestures were, of course, good for the public image of the bank, but the greatest prize the bank held was its location on the east side of Clinton Square, which has been the heart of Syracuse from the early village days. As Franklin Chase pointed out, "the story of Clinton Square is pretty close to the story of the city."³ The square had been named after Dewitt Clinton, the first governor to visit Syracuse. Governor Clinton came to the city in 1825 for ceremonies marking the opening of the Erie Canal through the center of the square. The square had always been a market. With the new canal, it now became a dock for packet ships. Because of its convenience, and because of custom it continued to play a central role in Syracuse life as the city market.⁴ It also

¹ Syracuse Daily Journal, 11 October 1862.

² Ibid., 27 October 1871, 16 July 1872.

³ Chase, I, p. 359.

⁴ Ibid., p. 360.

was the scene of many of Syracuse's major historic events, such as the Jerry Rescue from the Raynor block on the southwest corner of the square (1851), and the great Greenway Barbecue (1870), and the fireworks lighted from the Clinton Street bridge every fourth of July.¹

On the south side of the square stood the famous Weiting Block, built by H. N. White in 1856. On the west side, north of the canal, stood the old four-story Clinton Block on the site of the present Post Office (1917) [Fig. 4]. The northeast corner was occupied by the Empire House hotel [Fig. 5]. White's Third Onondaga County Courthouse (1856-57) was sited on the northwest corner of the square [Fig. 6], and his new Onondaga County Savings Bank building had been completed in 1868 on the east side of the square, south of the canal [Fig. 7]. These individual monuments, representing the business, cultural and governmental functions of the city were linked on the uninterrupted north and south sides of Clinton Square by stores which were situated in four-story buildings built before the Civil War. Clinton Square was well defined by continuous four story buildings on the north and south

¹Jerry was a fugitive slave who was captured on the day of the anti-slavery convention and brought for indictment to the Raynor Block. His forceable rescue by a group of enraged citizens confirmed the strength of the abolitionist movement in Syracuse. See Chase, I, 160-163. John Greenway, the brewer, held an enormous barbecue on the square to feed the poor on New Year's Day. 15,000 to 20,000 people turned out to eat and to witness the event. See Chase, I, p. 385.

during the decade that preceded the Civil War



"JERRY RESCUE" BUILDING AT LEFT OF CANAL

Fig. 4. Clinton Square in 1870's, view from the east.
Clinton Block and 'Jerry Rescue' Building on the
Erie Canal (Syracuse Centennial, 1925)



Fig. 5. Clinton Square, the Empire House (McKee Collection,
from OHA woodcut neg. 35960)

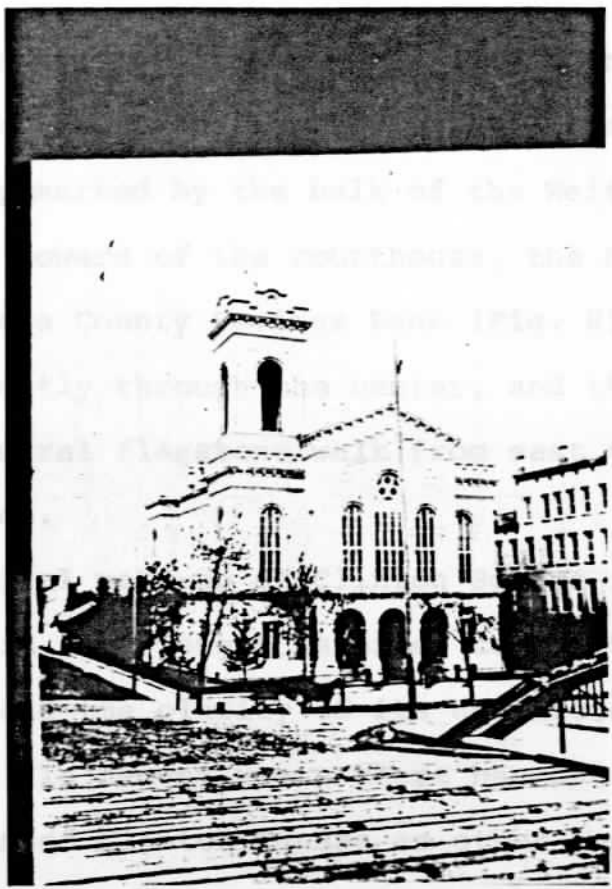


Fig. 6. H. N. White, Onondaga County Courthouse, 1856-7, view from Clinton Square bridge (McKee Collection, from OHA neg. 7226G).

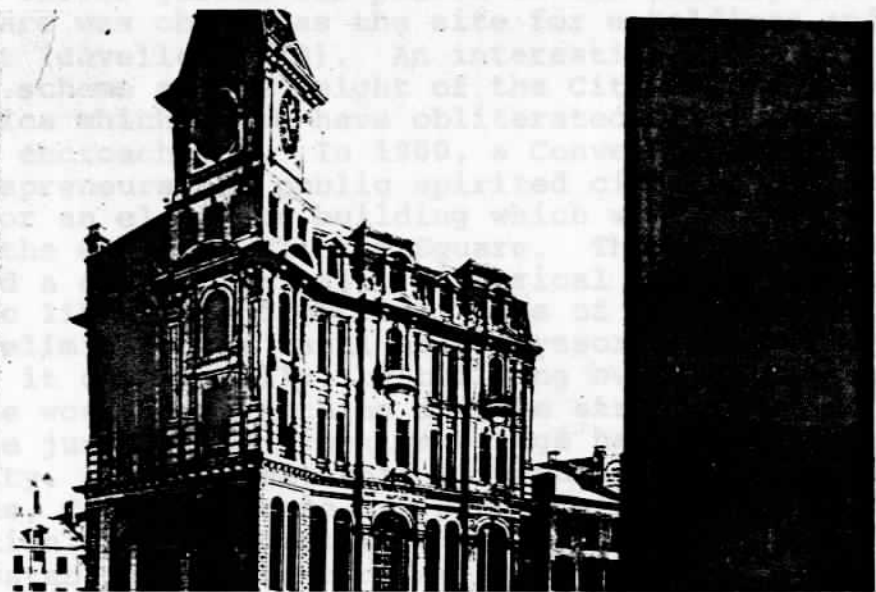


Fig. 7. H. N. White, Onondaga County Savings Bank, 1868, rendering of original portion (McKee Collection, from OHA photo)

flanks, interrupted by a few, more independent, monumental structures that had been recently built. Its corners were fairly clearly marked by the bulk of the Weiting Opera House and the towers of the courthouse, the Empire House and the Onondaga County Savings Bank [Fig. 8]. The Erie Canal ran directly through the center, and the square was paved by a central flagstone walk from east to west and by cobblestones.

The physical make-up of Clinton Square in the 1870's is discussed in some length in order to point out its significance and the clarity of its definition as the urban center. In recent years there has been a steady disintegration of Clinton Square as other centers of activity, such as Columbus Circle, South Salina Street and Warren Street, have been built up.¹

¹The market was legislated out of Clinton Square in 1899, a flower garden was placed in the center, and in 1906 the square was chosen as the site for a Soldiers and Sailors monument (unveiled 1910). An interesting sidelight was a grand scheme at the height of the City Beautiful movement in America which would have obliterated Clinton Square by massive encroachment. In 1900, a Convention Hall Committee of entrepreneurs and public spirited citizens unveiled plans for an elaborate building which would occupy nearly the whole of Clinton Square. Their grandiose plans included a convention hall, historical and art museums, a public library, and offices. One of their stated purposes was to eliminate the canal as an eyesore, while maintaining it commercially, by building over the canal. The site would cost nothing and the structure would advertise Syracuse just as the Brooklyn Bridge has advertised New York City. Fortunately this structure was never built. But alas, Clinton Square has been disintegrated by fire and demolition. More recent free-standing buildings, instead of re-establishing the boundaries of the square, have opened the north and south sides. The result is a loss of definition and coherence. See File "Clinton Square," Onondaga Historical Association, Syracuse, New York.

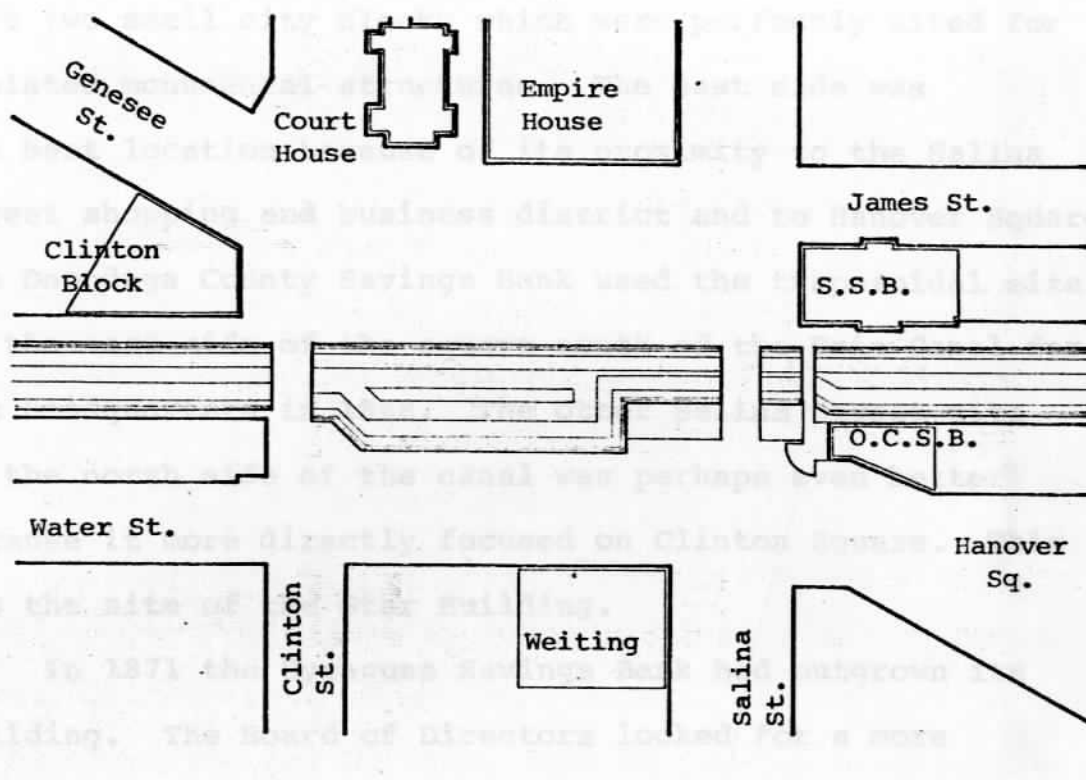


Fig. 8. Plan, Clinton Square in 1875

In 1871, three lots to the west were purchased for a total of \$30,000. In 1874 a lot and store further east were bought for \$14,000 (Bruce, Memorial History, p. 375).

The east and west sides of Clinton Square were interrupted by the canal, by Genesee Street, which enters on a diagonal through Hanover Square from the southeast and leaves the square on the northwest, by Water Street on the west, and by James Street on the east. These thoroughfares left two small city blocks which were perfectly sited for isolated monumental structures. The east side was the best location because of its proximity to the Salina Street shopping and business district and to Hanover Square. The Onondaga County Savings Bank used the trapezoidal site on the east side of the square south of the Erie Canal for its headquarters in 1868. The other Salina Street site on the north side of the canal was perhaps even better because it more directly focused on Clinton Square. This was the site of the Star Building.

In 1871 the Syracuse Savings Bank had outgrown its building. The Board of Directors looked for a more suitable site on which to build a new headquarters. None was to be found. They proceeded to assemble land to the east in order to provide an expanded site for a new building in the same location.¹ The bank's directors knew the value of their site, and they planned carefully. A building committee was formed consisting of E. W. Leavenworth, who

¹in 1871, three lots to the east were purchased for a total of \$30,000. In 1874 a lot and store further east were bought for \$14,000 (Bruce, Memorial History, I, p. 376).

was the bank president, and four trustees.¹ They decided to sponsor a competition for a design for the new edifice. That their decision was motivated by considerations other than political ones is evidenced in the care with which they went about their planning:

The committee devoted much of its time to obtaining a general idea to guide them in adopting a plan - taking the best points of various edifices and consolidating them.²

Another news article stated:

The committee was influenced in selecting the material and the style of architecture through their admiration for the city and county buildings in New Haven, Conn., and a large hotel then recently constructed by Charles Francis Adams near the S. E. corner of the Boston Common.³

The City Hall in New Haven [Fig. 9] was one of the first polychromatic Italian Gothic buildings in the country. It was built in 1861-62 by Henry Austin, who is said to have got his idea for the building from an English architecture publication, probably an illustration of the Parliament

¹Syracuse Daily Journal, 25 February 1875.

²Ibid.

³"Bank Building Art Retained," File "Syracuse Savings Bank," Onondaga Historical Association. This article is undated, but it concerns the reconstruction of the interior of the bank in 1929-30.



*Original Henry Austin Drawing for West Elevation, c. 1861
Courtesy of Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University Library*

NEW HAVEN CITY HALL

Fig. 9. Henry Austin, New Haven City Hall, c. 1861, original drawing for West Elevation (New Haven Architecture)

According to Carroll F. B. Weeks, cited in *New Haven Architecture, Selections from the Historic American Buildings Survey, Number Five* (Washington, D. C.: The Historic American Buildings Survey, 1970), p. 124, [DAOS No. CONN-381, p. 2]. The illustration to which Weeks refers must be the Fuller and Jones 1859 rendering of the Canadian Parliament, Ottawa, published in the *Building News*, 1859, 1063. See Stefan Muthesius, *The High Victorian Movement in Architecture 1850-1870* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 181, pl. 136.

²*New Haven Architecture*, pp. 123-124.

³*ibid.*, p. 98, fig. 51.

House in Ottawa, Canada.¹ A draftsman in Austin's office, David Russell Brown, may have designed the building. It was Brown who added the Courthouse in 1871-72 in the same material and style [Fig. 10].² The City Hall and Courthouse was therefore a rejuvenated, if not entirely new, building in 1874, and to the committee it must have seemed both dignified and up-to-date. The light sandstone with darker bands and the Gothic style clearly attracted their attention.

The Boston structure which the building committee admired must have been the Hotel Boylston (1870) by Cummings and Sears [Fig. 11]. It was located at Tremont and Boylston Streets³ southeast of the Common, and its colored stone facade is indeed very much like Silsbee's later Syracuse Savings Bank. The hotel was owned by Charles Francis Adams, and it was one of the early "French flats," or family hotels which were first introduced in Boston. They were the first apartment houses in this country. Probably the earliest was the Hotel Pelham (1857)

¹According to Carroll F. B. Meeks, cited in New Haven Architecture, Selections from the Historic American Buildings Survey, Number Nine (Washington, D. C.: The Historic American Buildings Survey, 1970), p. 124. [HABS No. CONN-381, p. 2]. The illustration to which Meeks refers must be the Fuller and Jones 1859 rendering of the Canadian Parliament, Ottawa, published in the Building News, 1859, 1063. See Stefan Muthesius, The High Victorian Movement in Architecture 1850-1870 (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 181, pl. 138.

²New Haven Architecture, pp. 123-124.

³Tucci, p. 48, fig. 51.

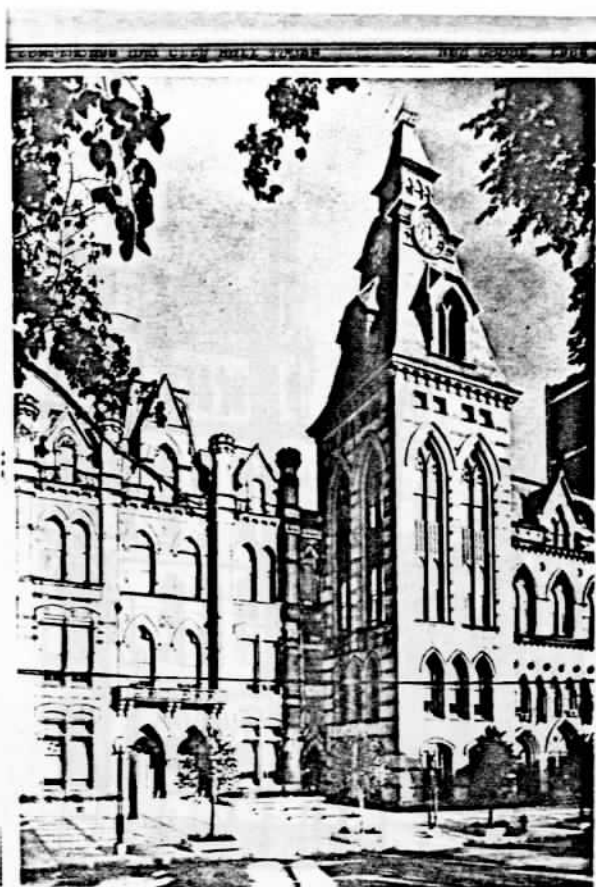


Fig. 10. Henry Austin, New Haven City Hall Tower, c. 1861,
and David Russell Brown, County Courthouse Addition,
1871-2 (New Haven Architecture)

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Fig. 11. Tremont and Boylston Streets, Boston, c. 1880; Cummings and Sears, Hotel Boylston, 1870, on the right (Douglas Shand Tucci, Built in Boston).

King, 1878, p. 44, and Tucci, p. 112.

The Young Men's Christian Union (1873), to the left of the Hotel Boylston in Fig. 11, might have been the inspiration for a tower on Syracuse Savings Bank, but this building probably was not standing when the commissioners visited Boston.

Tucci, p. 51.

by Arthur Gilman (?).¹ The flatness of the walls of the Hotel Boylston, the Venetian Gothic repetition of pointed arches across the facade, and its block-like mass seem to have been what the trustees desired.²

Cummings and Sears were well known and successful polychromatic Gothicists in Boston. Their New Old South Church (1872-74) on nearby Copley Square, a richer and more elaborate Ruskinian Gothic building, had just been completed, and Cummings' own house (1871) in the Back Bay³ was vigorously medieval and polychromatic. That the most subdued and elegant of this firm's new picturesque mode impressed the building committee of the Syracuse Savings Bank is understandable.

The building committee returned to Syracuse and invited submissions in a competition for the design of the new bank building. Probably the commissioners invited a select list of architects to enter, for no general announcement of

¹King's Handbook of Boston (Cambridge, Mass.: Moses King, 1878), p. 48, and Tucci, p. 112.

²The Young Men's Christian Union (1875), to the left of the Hotel Boylston in Fig. 11, might have been the inspiration for a tower on Syracuse Savings Bank, but this building probably was not standing when the commissioners visited Boston.

³Tucci, p. 51.

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the competition has been located. One of the entrants was Cummings and Sears, whose hotel had impressed the committee. Another was Archimedes Russell, the other architecture professor at Syracuse University. Russell worked in the High Victorian Gothic style, but it would be a mistake to label him a Gothicismist like Cummings and Sears, or Ware and Van Brunt. George Hathorn and Frederick Merry, both of New York City, also submitted designs. The one competition entry that has come down to us is from Andrew J. Warner and James G. Cutler of Rochester [Fig. 12]. Warner's Gothic pile, the old Buffalo City Hall (1872-75), later the County Building, had recently been constructed. His Powers Building in Rochester (1870) was the first fire-proof structure in that city and the first building

¹This is open to question however. The news article announcing the plans for a new bank and discussing the committee deliberations (Syracuse Journal 25 February 1875) stated: "After they had finished their investigations, they invited plans from architects, and six were submitted..." This could mean on the one hand, that they selected architects, and on the other hand, it implies that not everyone who was invited submitted plans. Also it should be noted that White did not submit plans. It is possible that he was not invited because his work was seen to be slightly out-of-date. Of the six entrants, the four whose work we know did designs in the High Victorian Gothic mode. See below.

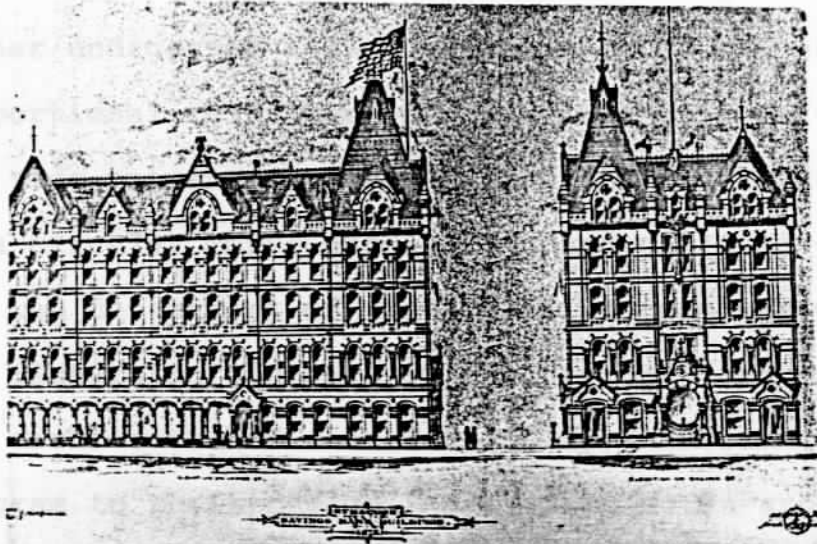


Fig. 12. Warner and Cutler, Syracuse Savings Bank competition entry, 1875 (from xerographic copy courtesy of Betsy Brayer)

Withey and Withey, p. 434. Warner practiced in Rochester until the mid-nineties. Warner and Cutler were partners only from 1875-77. Cutler invented a wall chub for the Second Building, Rochester, which became so popular that he retired from architecture to become a millionaire and later Mayor of Rochester (Betsy Brayer to Donald Halfon 24 June 1943). Warner is sometimes confused with his son J. Foster Warner, who had a long and successful career as an architect in Rochester (Withey and Withey, p. 434). The Warner/Cutler competition entry information is courtesy of Betsy Brayer, who wrote that it was rendered in Centennial red, white, and blue.

west of New York City to be equipped with elevators.¹

The Warner and Cutler rendering makes use of flat facades, dark stone voussours in the Gothic arches, and dark bands encircling the building. It reminds us of Venetian Gothic structures like the City Hall and County Building of New Haven. But the rendering is really a rather undigested and clumsy example of the style. The proportional relationship of the trefoils to the gables in the side entrances of the Salina Street elevation; the use of a circular motif under a pinched gable in the main porch, and the detachment of the roof line from the wall below are disturbing elements in the design. One suspects that the architects had some difficulty in accommodating the program to their design. For example, an arcade is introduced asymmetrically into the long James Street facade. The rhythm of the openings in the ground story has but a weak relationship to the wall above. In comparison with the other Gothic buildings we have seen, the Warner and Cutler entry seems rather stuffy in that it suggests

¹ Withey and Withey, p. 634. Warner practiced in Rochester until the mid-nineties. Warner and Cutler were partners only from 1875-77. Cutler invented a mail chute for the Elwood Building, Rochester, which became so popular that he retired from architecture to become a millionaire and later Mayor of Rochester (Betsy Brayer to Donald Pulfer, 29 June 1980). Warner is sometimes confused with his son J. Foster Warner, who had a long and successful career as an architect in Rochester (Withey and Withey, p. 634). The Warner/Cutler competition entry information is courtesy of Betsy Brayer, who wrote that it was rendered in Centennial red, white, and blue.

a Renaissance Revival commercial building of the 1860's dressed up in "Venetian" clothes.

Still, the material, style and general organization of the Warner and Cutler entry suggest that the competition brief was rather specific. The main entry on Salina Street, the secondary entries to other banks, the basement entry to the offices from James Street, the repetitive offices in the upper floors, the use of the entire site, as well as the building material and the style are elements that are similar to Silsbee's design. The site's proximity to the canal probably was a factor in the committee's adoption of the Venetian Gothic style inspired by Ruskin's passionate evocation of the primacy of Venetian architecture. Certainly the light stone and subdued polychrome colors which the committee seems to have specified were evocative of Venice, especially when reflected in the canal.

In the absence of the other designs it is impossible to tell whether Silsbee's entry deserved to win the competition. According to the Syracuse Journal, the plans:

presented by the architects residing in this city met with most favor from the first, and it was somewhat difficult to decide which was preferable. The plan submitted by Mr. Russell was looked upon with decided favor, but his estimate of cost exceeded the estimate submitted by Mr. Silsby (sic)...¹

¹Syracuse Journal, 25 February 1875

This news article's praise of local architects might have been hometown boosterism, or it may have been politically and socially a sensitive way of explaining why one local architect was chosen over another. The bank's decision to use local talent may have been merely good business sense. Still one wonders why the bank would entrust such a large undertaking to a young and untried architect who was new in town. The possibility that Silsbee met with favor because of his social connections cannot be discounted,¹ but there is reason to believe that the competition was won fairly and squarely.

In the first place, as we have pointed out, even though Silsbee seems not to have built a single independent commission, he was thoroughly trained. He was certainly a more sophisticated designer than Russell, who was trained as a builder and had been apprenticed to White. It may be that Silsbee had considerable experience on large commissions while working for Ware and Van Brunt. In the end, the committee's faith in Silsbee was well placed: he produced a handsome building.

¹His fiance's father, Charles B. Sedgwick, was a powerful and influential man, a distinguished lawyer, a noted abolitionist, Congressman and friend of Abraham Lincoln (Bruce, Memorial History, III, pp. 29, 110). In 1847 he was one of the committee which drafted a charter for incorporation of the city. E. W. Leavenworth, the president of Syracuse Savings Bank and the chairman of the building committee, had been instrumental too in gaining Syracuse a charter, and in 1849 he was elected Mayor [Bruce, Onondaga's Centennial: Gleanings of a Century, 2 vols. (Boston: The Boston History Publishers, 1896), I, pp. 458-9].

The Syracuse Savings Bank is a rectangular prism surmounted by a central tower. It fills the entire site: sixty feet on Salina Street and 127 feet on James Street [Fig. 13]. The entire exterior is of stone. The majority of the stone is a light sandstone from Berlin, Ohio, while the trimmings and basement are a darker sandstone from Bellevue, New Jersey. There are three facades: one on the north (James Street); one on the west (Salina Street and Clinton Square); and one on the south (Erie Canal). The east face as Silsbee designed it was a party wall. Today it is a blank wall facing a parking lot.

The composition of the facades is remarkably mature and sophisticated. Each is tripartite with a higher and dominant central section and flanking wings. Each long facade (north and south) has a central section which projects forward of the wall plane, making its organization comprehensible, emphasizing the central tower, and marking the main basement entry on James Street [Fig. 14]. Each section of the wall is three bays wide. The fenestration is compressed in the flanking sections and expanded in the center. The ends of the facades are clearly defined by corbelled turrets with high pyramidal roofs. The central section has its third and fourth stories united under a pointed arch and gable, an ensemble whose proportions are echoed in the dormers on either side. Repetition of forms serves as a unifying device. For example the

¹ Syracuse Journal, 15 July 1876



Fig. 13. Silsbee, Syracuse Savings Bank, 1875-6 (Art Work of Syracuse).



Fig. 14. Silsbee, Syracuse Savings Bank, 1875-6 (The Architectural Sketchbook).

repeated forms in the porch over the basement entrance, the large central gable, and the dormer in the tower unify the composition vertically. The similarity of the dormers in the turrets and flanking sections lends horizontal unity to the fourth floor, while the repetition of the form at a larger scale in the central gable emphasizes centrality and verticality. Furthermore, the plane of the wall is manipulated in the third and fourth floors in order further to stress the center of each section and its verticality. The sill between basement and first floor, the string courses, the continuous line of molding which wraps around each arch on the second floor, the horizontal repetition of window shapes and their differentiation from floor to floor unify the building horizontally and indicate clearly the organization of the block.

Silsbee built the basement and first story as banking floors. Originally the Syracuse Savings Bank used the first floor, while other banks rented space in the basement. The windows of both floors are united behind the plane of the heavy sill. But the floors are clearly separated by the sill, by the rustication of the basement, and by the increased height of the first story.

The second floor is differentiated from the others by window type, height, and string courses. This floor housed the bank offices. The third and fourth floors were rental offices, and the architect had his offices in the tower.

¹Ibid.

True to the principles of Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, color was used "honestly" and rationally to express the nature of the structure. Red sandstone bands separate floors and identify the springlines of the pointed arches, while alternating yellow and red voussoirs express the nature of the arches.

The entry facade on Clinton Square is similarly organized, with the central section more richly ornamented and flanked by the turrets. The main porch is here, its pointed arch and gable supported by polished granite columns. A balcony on the third floor is supported by brackets.

A lithograph of Silsbee's winning design appeared in The Architectural Sketchbook of Boston in January 1876 [Fig. 14]. Buildings illustrated in this periodical were almost all the works of Boston architects. That Silsbee's Syracuse Savings Bank appeared in this publication suggests that he had maintained his Boston contacts.¹ It is instructive to compare this competition entry with the completed building [Fig. 15]. To improve the exterior, Silsbee made some subtle changes. On the third story he changed the central windows of each section to blind openings. Whatever its functional reason might have been,

¹ It also appeared in the Syracuse Journal, 29 October 1875. A project of Archimedes Russell for a remodeling of Cazenovia Seminary was published in the same Boston periodical, 1876. It too was High Victorian Gothic, but in a more picturesque and colorful mode closer to the English Gothicists George Edmund Street and Alfred Waterhouse.

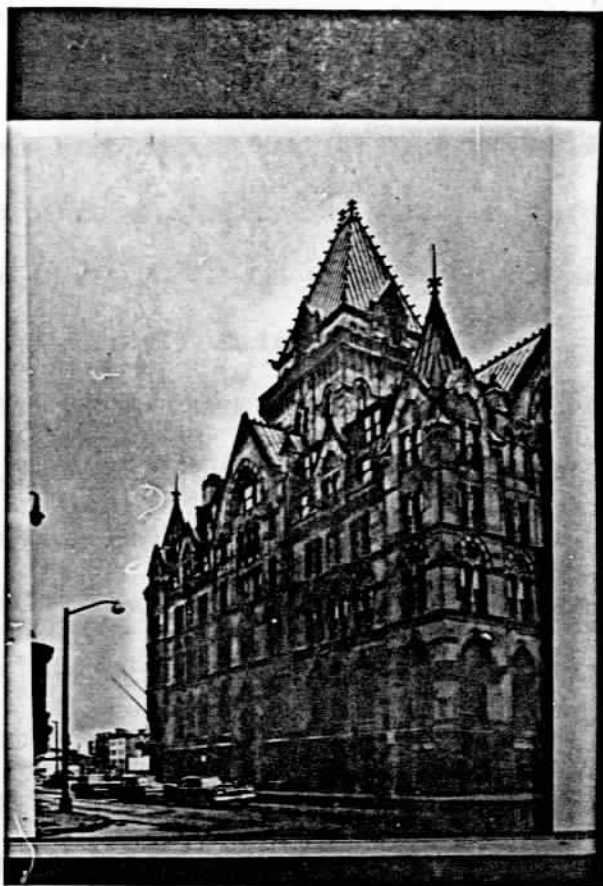


Fig. 15. Silsbee, Syracuse Savings Bank, 1875-6, north facade (Jack Boucher, HABS, January 1962),

this change served to emphasize the red columns in the center of the left and right sections by increasing the contrast with their lighter background. It also further stressed the triangular motifs and the verticality of each section. These blind openings enriched the wall and made rhythms more complex and subtle, like the silences in a syncopated piece of music. The pairs of windows in the Salina Street facade toward the ends of the gable on the fourth floor were filled in for the same purpose [Fig. 16]. Silsbee also changed the gables above the tower windows [Fig. 17]. Their compressed colonnettes resting on the balustrade were modified to square piers set back and engaged with the wall and supported by flying buttresses. While this change probably admitted a bit more light to the tower, it also gave it a greater solidity and plasticity. Finally, in the lithograph, Silsbee stepped forward the central sections of the gallery around the tower and supported each by three double-width brackets. By the time the tower was built, Silsbee had improved this solution by simply doubling the brackets under the buttresses. This matched his solution for the brackets which support the balcony over the main porch, and produced a more subtle central emphasis while adhering more closely to Victorian Gothic "truth" and rationalism. These changes, small as they were, were all moves to improve the design, to lend greater interest, plasticity, and honesty to a relatively planar block of a building.

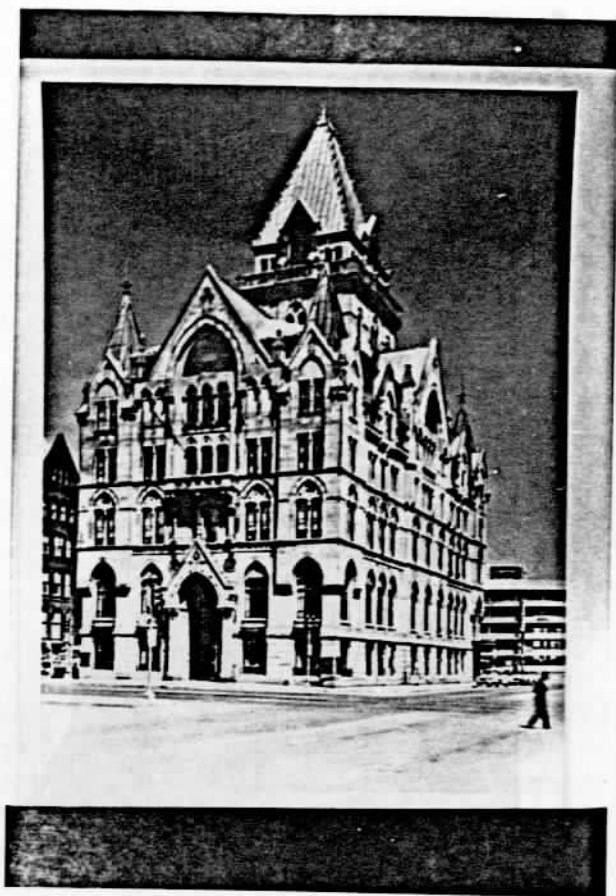


Fig. 16. Silsbee, Syracuse Savings Bank, 1875-6, view from southwest (Gilbert Ask, HABS, April 1963)

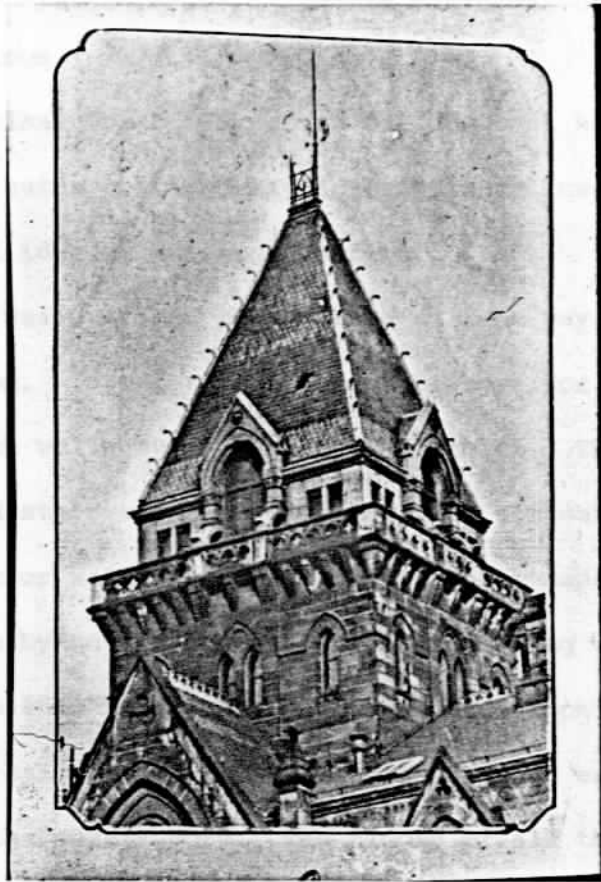


Fig. 17. Silsbee, Syracuse Savings Bank, 1875-6, detail of tower (OHA, 31 October 1927)

In 1879-80 the bank was completely renovated inside. All floors and partitions were removed and a steel structure was inserted inside the exterior walls.

Syracuse Journal, 15 July 1876.

It must be admitted that Silsbee's design is indeed an artful composition. A comparison with the similarly organized facades of A. J. Warner's design should make this obvious.

No plans for the Syracuse Savings Bank have been located,¹ but a contemporary description allows us to get a general idea of its organization.²

The walls of the tower rose all the way up from the foundation. This formed a fireproof core for the building with brick walls averaging two feet thick. This core protected stairways, the elevator, and the safety vaults. The exterior walls were backed with brick separated from the stone by an air space. Interior bearing walls were made from the "Fire Proof Company's partition blocks." The main hallways ran from front to rear on each floor through the square core. The floors of all the halls were supported by iron beams with interstices filled with concrete. All other floors were supported by wooden beams "covered with the patent ceiling blocks of the Fire Proof Building Co." There were degrees of fire protection, then, from the banking rooms and offices to the more protected halls to the security of the core.

¹In 1929-30 the bank was completely renovated inside. All floors and partitions were removed and a steel structure was inserted inside the exterior walls.

²Syracuse Journal, 15 July 1876.

The main portal on Salina Street led to the banking room [Fig. 18]. Five stone steps led up to the door, while the remainder of the steps led to a vestibule. A long hall stretched from the vestibule to the main banking room across the rear of the first story, the largest space in the building (58' X 27'). Two smaller banking rooms were in front. The entry to the banks in the basement was made directly from Salina Street; or alternately from the main basement entrance on James Street, which also gave access to the banking offices at the rear. The upper floors were used for offices which communicated with a central hallway, front to rear. Hallways were lit by windows in their sides and by lights in the stairwell. The main stairs were iron. They ran from the basement to the top of the tower.

The interior repeated the Gothic theme [Fig. 19]. The tellers' stations today remind us more of confessionals than of banking counters. Because the interior was entirely changed during the bank's remodeling in 1929-30, it is worthwhile to briefly discuss the original. The hierarchy among floors which we saw on the exterior is continued inside. Large clear pointed windows illuminated the first floor; on the second floor the smaller pointed windows had closed transoms, and on the third floor the windows were rectangular. Floor heights decrease from bottom to top. Cherry was used for woodwork in the basement. Black walnut, French walnut, and rosewood were used on the

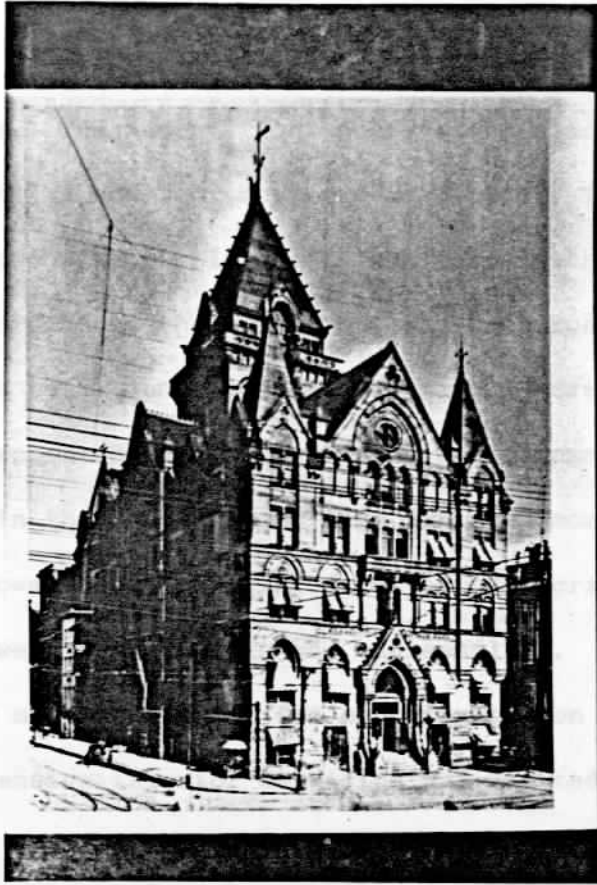


Fig. 18. Silsbee, Syracuse Savings Bank, 1875-6, view from northwest (HABS, photogopy from OHA).

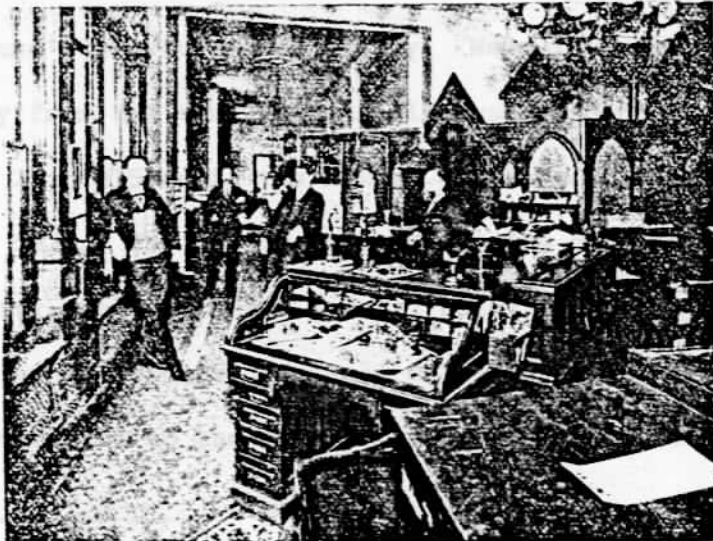


Fig. 19. Silsbee, Syracuse Savings Bank, 1875-6, interior view (OHA).

first floor. The second floor had ash and black walnut, while the third and fourth floors used pine. The vestibule was decorated with marble panels and carved stonework which, according to the newspaper, was "unsurpassed by anything in this country."¹ Hallway floors were tiled and were decorated with wainscotting and ornamental cornices, though again the upper floors were finished more simply than the lower ones. Judging from the photograph, the interiors were rather plain and businesslike. Just as carving on the exterior was concentrated on the entry porch, expensive interior detailing was limited to the vestibule.

The Syracuse Savings Bank building was important to Syracuse. The bank was the oldest in the city, located in the historic center, Clinton Square. The building's size and its bright magnificence were tangible evidence of Syracuse's growth and stability. News items appeared regularly from the time the building was announced on February 25, 1875 until the moment of its completion on July 15, 1876. The 170 feet tower was the highest point in the city, and it became a focal point for civic pride. Celebrities who visited Syracuse were inevitably taken for an elevator ride to the top of the Savings Bank tower,

¹ Ibid.

where an unsurpassed view of the countryside could be had.¹
 The viewing platform was open to the public, and it became
 a favored spot for watching the shooting off of the Fourth
 of July fireworks from the Clinton Street bridge across
 the square.² Passengers in the elevator were offered field
 glasses by the conductor; charge, 10¢. As the Syracuse
 newspaper put it, "More can be seen from this point in
 fifteen minutes than can be seen by walking or riding about
 town for a week."³ Probably only Professor Stone, who
 made a balloon ascension from Clinton Square while the
 bank was under construction,⁴ could see more of the
 countryside.

Syracuse Savings Bank was the first building in the
 city to be built with a passenger elevator. Evidently
 the value of this new device was understood immediately;
 only three months after the announcement that Syracuse
 Savings would build a new bank building, the Onondaga
 County Savings Bank across the canal announced a new
 addition of fifty feet long with a passenger elevator.⁵
 An electrically coordinated system of clocks was installed

¹"Among the notables who took the ride and view were
 Gen. U. S. Grant...Henry Ward Beecher...James A. Garfield...
 Jabes G. Blaine, Frederick Douglass, Benjamin Butler,
 Roscoe Conkling, Levi P. Morton, Schuyler Colfax..."
Syracuse Herald, 30 October 1927.

²Syracuse Journal, 26 October 1880.

³Syracuse Times 25 September 1881.

⁴Syracuse Journal, 23 August 1875

⁵Ibid., 27 May 1875. Contract let 28 May.

by Charles Fasoldt of Albany, who was famous for his work
 in buildings throughout New York State.¹

The Syracuse Savings Bank was certainly an up-to-date building. It was fireproof, electrically timed, and equipped with a steam elevator. It was admired too as a work of architecture: "The great variety, both in form and color, is one of its most attractive features, and is in striking contrast to the dull uniformity so generally observed in large public buildings in this country."² Its clarity of overall form and vivacity of color and detail are qualities for which we admire the bank today.³

¹Ibid., 6 June 1876, 23 June 1876.

²Ibid., 15 June 1876.

³It should be pointed out that the bank has undergone a number of renovations; the most important of which were made in 1930 [Architecture Worth Saving in Onondaga County. (Syracuse: State Council on the Arts, Syracuse University School of Architecture, 1964), p. 72]. A new steel structure was inserted inside the walls and beneath the tower. The entire interior was cleared and remodeled. Though the exterior was cleaned and few changes were made, these should be indicated. New windows were installed and tympana were added to the first floor arches, probably to cut glare and heat gain and loss [Figs. 13 and 16]. The main banking floor now is a two story space in the front of the building, entered on the basement floor. Therefore, the entry porch was modified considerably [Figs. 16 and 18]. Gone is the glass tympanum with its circular motif and the stone stairway. The new tympanum was extended and placed over a door head which is set below the springing of the arch. The granite columns of the porch were attenuated to bring them down to the sill. Thus the proportions are changed considerably. Extra fourth floor windows were inserted between dormers (Fig. 14 and 15), interrupting the procession of trefoils in the north and south cornices. A fifth floor was added in the attic, evidenced by additional dormers in the roof. Finally the large gables lost their stone tympana pierced by circular openings when the bank opened them to provide more light to the fifth floor [Fig. 16]. Later the bank placed in the tower a carillon which chimes daily downtown.

A happy peculiarity of the street pattern of the Clinton Square area resulted in a special prominence which the bank site might not otherwise have had. The diagonal street entering from Clinton Square created a trapezoidal site for the Onondaga County Savings Bank [Fig. 20]. Horatio Nelson White was obliged to pull his facade back from Clinton Square to obey building lines which had been well established, to provide an entry facing the square, and to accommodate a foot bridge which paralleled the Salina Street bridge on its east side. He cleverly designed his main entrance on the first floor with access from the bridge, and he marked the building and its entrance with a clock tower. The resulting gap in the continuous building line of Salina Street, widened still further by the voids of Genesee Street and the Erie Canal (now Erie Boulevard), isolates the Syracuse Savings Bank as a monument and a landmark even from the corridor of South Salina Street [Fig. 21].

Syracuse Savings Bank provided a monumental focus on the east side of Clinton Square [Figs. 22 and 23]. It immediately became a landmark in the city. It precisely located the point of exchange between the bankers and lawyers to the east up James Street hill and the merchants and canal men unloading their wares on the square to the west. On a Saturday evening when the market was most active,

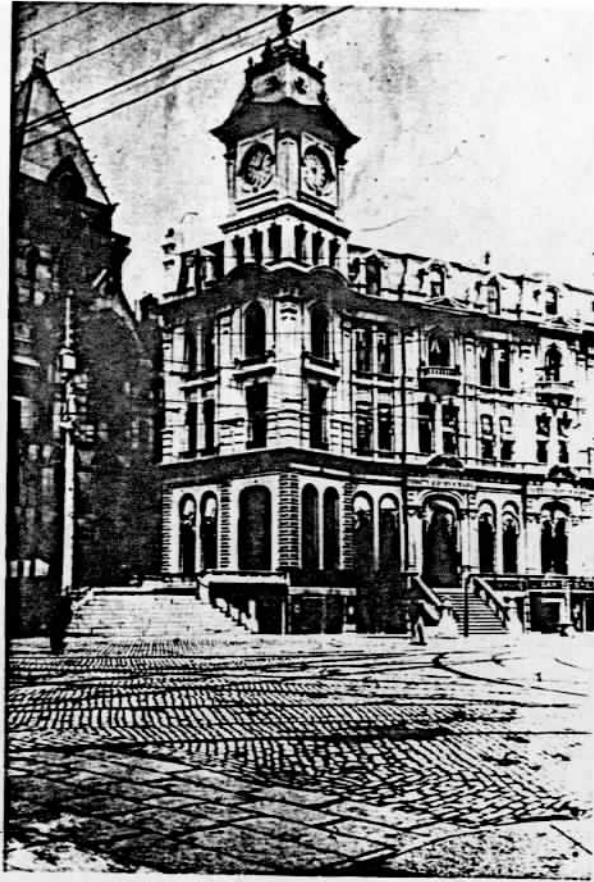


Fig. 20. H. N. White, Onondaga County Savings Bank, 1868, view from southwest showing portion of Syracuse Savings Bank (McKee from OHA).

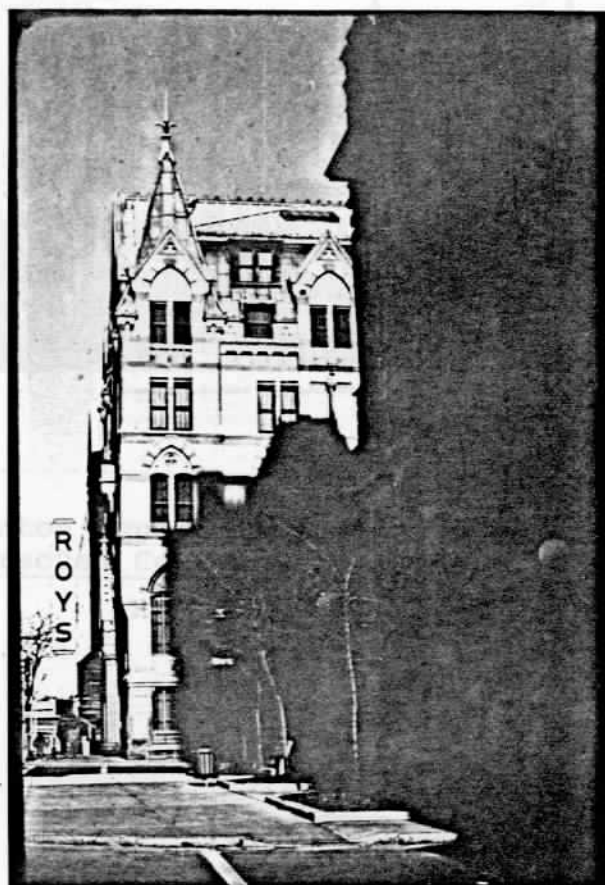
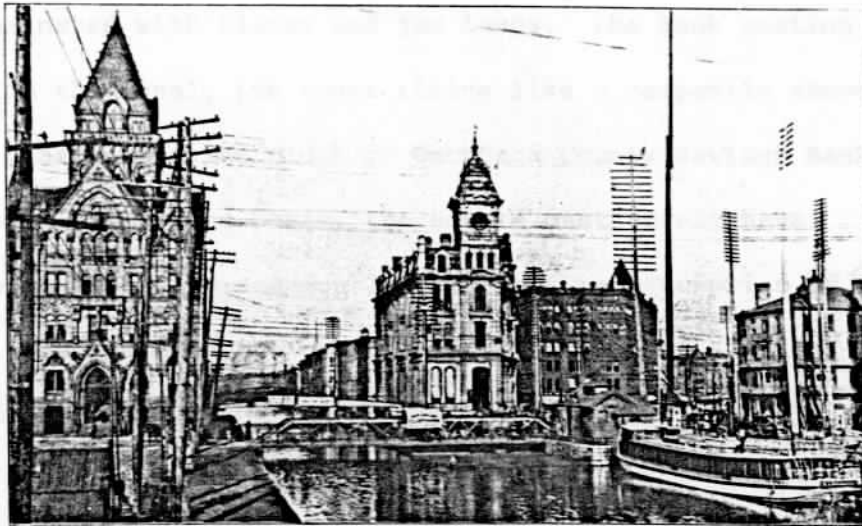


Fig. 21. Silsbee, Syracuse Savings Bank, 1875-6, view from South Salina Street (November 1978).

Fig. 22. Clinton Square before 1870. Not checked in winter (ORA)



CLINTON SQUARE SHOWING OLD SYRACUSE HOUSE AND OLD CANAL PACKET "SYRACUSE"

Fig. 22. Clinton Square in 1890's, view of southeast corner
(Syracuse Centennial, 1925)



Fig. 23. Clinton Square before 1890. Hot chestnuts in winter
(OHA)

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illuminated with flares and gas lamps,¹ the Bank resting beside the canal, its tower rising like a campanile above the piazza, and the clock of Onondaga County Savings Bank glowing across the basin, the square must surely have been an evocative scene. It would not be a surprise if the bank reminded the peripatetic Syracusan of his last trip to Venice.

The White Memorial Building (1876-77) was Silsbee's next major commission [Fig. 24]. It too was in the High Victorian Gothic style. Its location on Washington Street, corner of Salina Street [Fig. 25], was not so important a site as was that of the Syracuse Savings Bank. Washington Street was the location of the railroad line through Syracuse, and Salina Street was the shopping district and main north-south highway in the city. The space in front of the White Memorial Building on Washington Street from Salina to Warren was the site of the old depot. In 1839 a long wooden shed was built over the street in a simple Greek revival style [Fig. 26]. It contained a small waiting room and platforms. It functioned as a station until 1869 when the railroad tore it down. The location of the depot was responsible for causing some of the trade to shift from the Water Street-Clinton Square area to

¹Chase, I, p. 359.

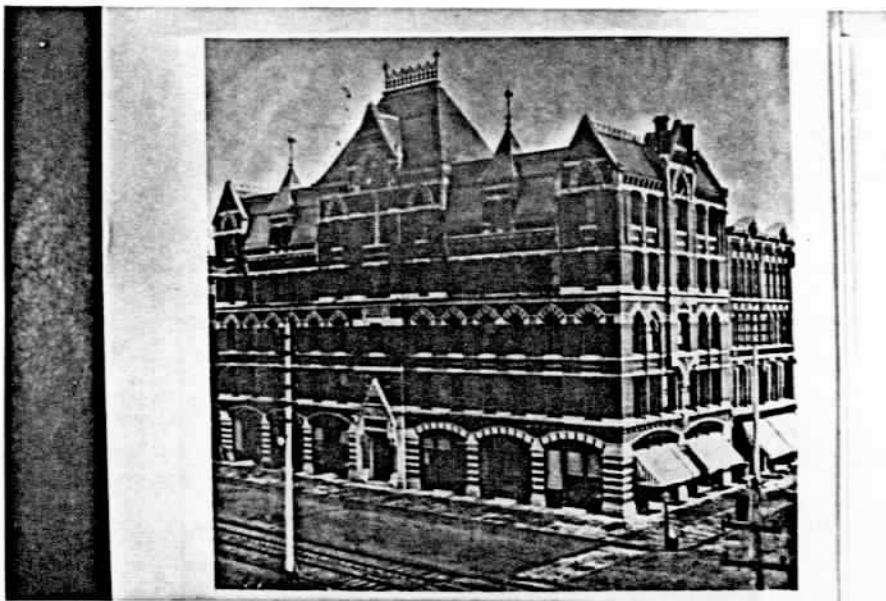


Fig. 24. Silsbee, White Memorial Building, 1876-8 (HABS Photocopy of OHA photo ca. 1878-1883).

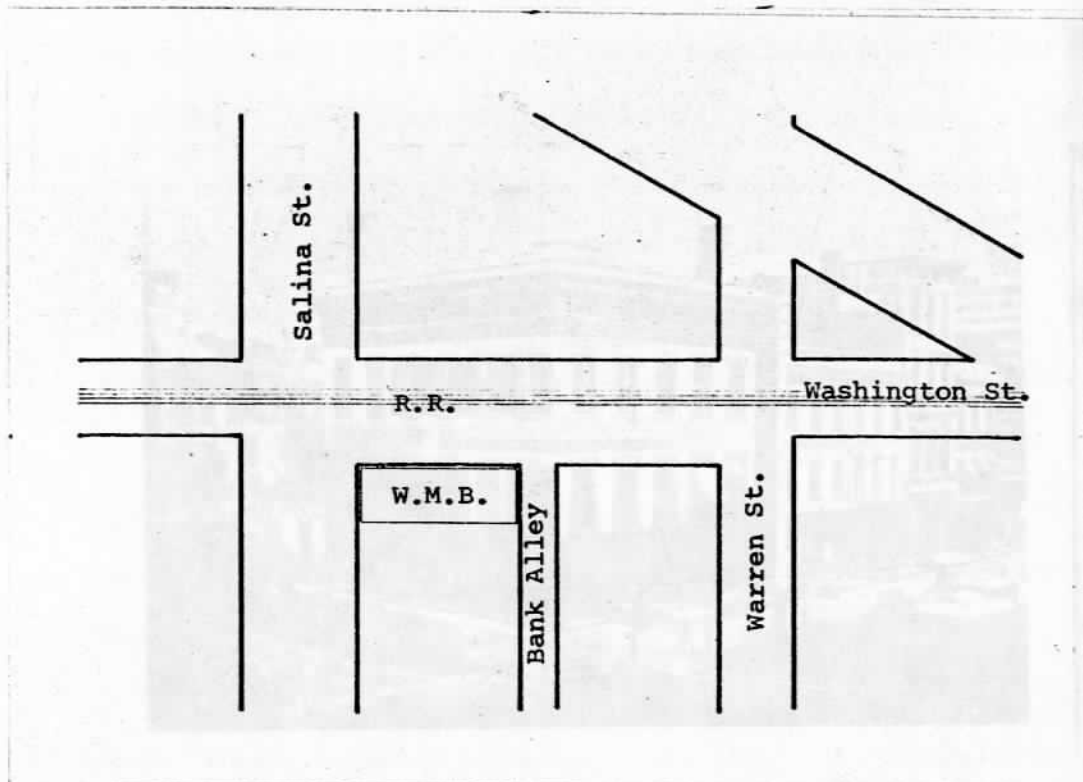


Fig. 25. Plan, Vanderbilt Square in 1875.



Fig. 26. Daniel Elliot, Syracuse & Utica Railroad Station, 1839 (Chase, Syracuse and its Environs, II),



Fig. 27. Daniel Elliot, Syracuse National Bank Building, 1839 (McKee Collection, from OHA).

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Salina Street. In 1838, when the Syracuse and Utica Railroad Company had petitioned Syracuse for permission to route its lines through Washington Street, the Village President, General E. W. Leavenworth, granted the land with provision that the railroad would plant shade trees along Washington Street and would construct Syracuse's first sewer. General Leavenworth also required the railroad to purchase twenty-six feet of land on the south side of the street and four feet on the north side from South Salina to Warren Streets, to be preserved for public use.

2

When the depot was finally demolished, the local authorities named the widened block of Washington Street "Vanderbilt Square" in the hope that this gesture would induce Commodore Vanderbilt, the owner of the railroad, to construct a large hotel nearby. The hope was not fulfilled. Nevertheless, the fears that retail business would move west with the new station proved to be unfounded. Business was too well entrenched in the area of the demolished depot.

The three-story building which stood on the southeast corner of South Salina and East Washington Streets [Fig. 27] was the old Onondaga County Bank Building built for Hamilton White and Horace White in 1839. Its designer was Daniel

¹Ibid., pp. 117, 131-135.

²Bruce, Memorial History, I, p. 143. E.W. Leavenworth was well known for his interest in things artistic, and his career was famous for his support of urban beautification projects like Oakwood Cemetery, tree planting, and the Syracuse Savings Bank.

³Chase, I, pp. 134, 135.

¹ Elliott, ² the architect of the old depot. The main entry was on Salina Street through the central bay. The trabeated windows with decorative lintels clearly indicated that this Salina Street facade was the front of the building. The Bank of Syracuse, located in the second story, was ³ reorganized in 1865 as the Syracuse National Bank. The American Express Company occupied the northern half of the building along the Washington Street rail lines, and a one-story addition was built to the east to accommodate the company's offices. Further east, on the corner of Bank Alley and Washington Street, was Engine House No. 3, ⁴ which Horace K. White purchased in 1863.

In the beginning of 1870 the Whites announced that they would demolish their building and construct "a new and elegant block of buildings in the Spring." An offer to ⁵ purchase half the necessary property had been made. The decision to construct a new building may have been stimulated by the demolition of the old depot, for the old depot for three decades had obstructed their building from view. The bank building must have seemed old and drab to the Whites in 1870. Land acquisition problems may have forced them to postpone their plans, for it was not until

¹ Hand, File "White Memorial Building," Onondaga Historical Association, Syracuse, New York.

² Chase, I, p. 132.

³ Chase, II, pp. 784, 785.

⁴ Syracuse Journal, 5 March 1863.

⁵ Ibid., 10 January 1870.

March 1876 that advertisements for rental offices in the
¹
 proposed building appeared. The new Syracuse Savings Bank,
 then nearing completion, must have influenced their plans.
 Probably it was the success of the Syracuse Savings Bank
 design that attracted the Whites to Joseph Lyman Silsbee.
 The contract was let to John Moore and William Dickenson.
 Moore had been the builder of the Syracuse Savings Bank,
 The buildings were demolished and the new foundation walls
 were commenced in May of 1876, just as the new bank on
²
 Clinton Square was beginning to operate. The new White
 Memorial Building was substantially completed by April of
³
 the following year.

The placement of the main entrance on Washington Street
 instead of Salina Street is one of the most obvious changes
 in the general planning of the new building [Fig. 28].
 The first thought was to place the entry to the upper
 stories on Salina Street, but that idea was rejected
 possibly because the stair would have occupied too much
⁴
 of the restricted space. Although a Salina Street

¹Ibid., 29 March 1876.

²Ibid., 8 May, 10 May, 31 May 1876.

³Ibid., 13 April 1877; opening of Valentine and
 Brumelkamp store: 17 April 1877; Third National Bank has
 moved in. Horace K. White to Andrew Dickson White,
 28 April 1877, Andrew Dickson White Papers, 1846-1919,
 John M. Olin Library Collection of Regional History
 and University Archives, Cornell University Libraries,
 Ithaca, New York, "We moved in yesterday..." See Appendix C.

⁴Syracuse Journal, 1 August 1876



Fig. 28. Silsbee, White Memorial Building, 1876-8, lithograph (OHA).

had to accept reduced rent from the Third National Bank.

Moreover, the fourth floor was vacant for some time,

probably until 1878. This may have been the reason

¹On 22 September 1876. *Chase*, II, p. 754.

²Charles Tucker to A. D. White, 1 March 1877, and 28 May, 21 May, 18 August 1877, A. D. White Papers, *ibidem*, New York. Charles Tucker, White's agent, apparently complained that he would never be able to rent the upper floors without an elevator. One finally was installed 18 June 1878 (*Syracuse Journal* 10 June 1878). See also Arthur K. White to A. D. White, 8 June 1878, A. D. White Papers, *ibidem*. New York accepted \$1800 year *rent* in 1878. See letters in appendix C.

entrance was sacrificed, there was much to favor a Washington Street entry. The broad and imposing facade that was now possible would act as a boundary and focus for Vanderbilt Square. The building inevitably would catch the eye of the rail traveller entering Syracuse as the train passed through Vanderbilt Square on its way to the new station on the west side.

Just as in the case of the Syracuse Savings Bank edifice, the rational, hierarchical organization of the stories in the White Memorial Building reflects internal function. Retail stores are located on the first floor. Banking rooms are on the second floor, and rental offices are above. Because of their compositional unity, we would expect both the second and third floors to be used by the bank, with the rental offices located on the fourth floor. If that was the original scheme, then the vagaries of business and the rental market interfered. While the building was under construction, the Whites' business, the Syracuse National Bank, was voluntarily liquidated.¹ The office rental market had grown very soft. The Whites had to accept reduced rent from the Third National Bank. Moreover, the fourth floor was vacant for some time,² probably until 1878. This may have been the reason

¹On 25 September 1876. Chase, II, p. 794.

²Charles Tucker to A. D. White, 1 March 1877, and . 26 May, 29 May, 18 August 1877, A. D. White Papers, Ithaca, New York. Charles Tucker, White's agent, constantly complained that he would never be able to rent the upper floors without an elevator. One finally was installed 10 June 1878 (Syracuse Journal 10 June 1878). See also Horace K. White to A. D. White, 6 June 1877, A. D. White Papers, Ithaca, New York: accepted \$1500 vice \$2000 in rent. See letters in Appendix C.

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why Silsbee's original design was reduced by one story. Or the decision may have been a reaction to the glut of available offices in Syracuse, to the financial problems of the early 1870's, or to some business difficulties specific to the Whites' banking operations. At any rate, until elevators were introduced, rents in office buildings declined with each higher story. Consequently, the less prosperous enterprises would occupy the higher floors. Silsbee took this into consideration in designing floor heights, glass areas, interior finishes, and the exterior expression for successive floors. This hierarchy of rental spaces was appropriate to general business conditions in spite of the specific changes which took place during planning and construction.

All the hallmarks of Silsbee's High Victorian Gothic appear again in the White Memorial Building. These features are exemplified in the pointed arches, polychromy, juxtaposition of similar formal elements at changed scales, three-part compositional motifs, dormers, gables, and slight variations in the wall plane to emphasize verticality and centrality.

As the contemporary papers pointed out, "the gothic style of architecture chosen gives Mr. Silsbee great advantages for exterior ornamentation which he has improved to the utmost."² The carved ornament is concentrated on

¹ Syracuse Journal, 1 August 1876.

² Ibid.

the center of each facade; at the entry porch on Washington Street, and on the center of the second floor on Salina Street. In keeping with the principles of the Victorian Gothic movement, the strong contrasts in color and the ornamental richness of the facades are the result of the use of a variety of materials to signify structure [Figs. 23, 27]. Polychrome voussoirs identify the spanning action of the various arches and illustrate their stereometric properties. The broad segmental arches which span the ground floor store fronts are broken into shallow pointed arches on the third story, and over the fifth floor these pointed arches are pushed higher and steeper. This progression of architectural shapes differentiates the building into retail floor, first class rental offices section, and other offices in the gables. At the same time it serves aesthetically to increase the sensation of movement and verticality. Likewise, the striations of the ground floor piers, red brick and light sandstone, demonstrate their construction and distinguish the retail floor from the offices above.

Bands of cream-colored brick, black brick, and sandstone move horizontally around the building to indicate floor levels, cornices, and the spring line of arches. Fancy brickwork is concentrated in the spandrels which separate the second story from the third story and the fourth from the fifth. These spandrels are set behind the plane of the wall to indicate further their non-structural

function. Similar non-bearing decorative panels are set behind the gable of the entry porch, between windows on the fourth floor, and in the tympana in the fifth floor arches. The design of the gables is differentiated from that of the walls, and they are further distinguished one from another according to their locations. Cornices over the first, fourth, and fifth floors are built of corbeled bricks, and the spaces between the corbeled brackets are filled with bright ceramic tiles. Even the modular assembly of bricks to form walls is demonstrated by the use of black mortar between the red bricks.

Every element in the facades has a meaning in terms of construction. But, lest the White Memorial be understood as a kind of didactic model of structure and building, like one of those see-through plastic internal combustion engines, we should remember that the aim of this "honest" use of materials and "truthful" construction was not merely demonstrative. Ruskin's "Lamp of Truth" was not only a moral imperative. It had as its ultimate aim the production of beauty. Ornament and form rooted in the nature of structure and materials would inevitably yield good architecture. This idea was fundamental to the Modern Movement in architecture. It had its basis not in a revolutionary rejection of the past, but in the writings

of Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc.

An interesting device on the Salina Street flank demonstrates once again Silsbee's sophistication [Fig. 29]. The forty-five foot length of this facade was too short to accommodate more than two stores facing Salina Street, but the organization of the facade into right and left halves would make a weak impression on this important thoroughfare. Silsbee solved the problem by the central tall tower-like plane which breaks through the cornice and ends in a gable. This device creates a dominant tripartite composition which provides the requisite focus, clarity, and strength of organization in the facade. A "concentrating arch" and a polished granite column modulate the wall to an even number of bays and close the center with a pier on the ground floor. This device, then, lends clarity to the facade, and at the same time it indicates that the main entry is elsewhere. The shiny grey shaft, the carved griffen, the capital, and the letter 'W' are

¹John Ruskin, "The Lamp of Truth," The Seven Lamps of Architecture [First published 1849] (New York: The Noonday Press, 1961), pp. 34-68. "...I would have the Spirit or Lamp of Truth clear in the hearts of our artists and handicraftsmen, not as if the truthful practice of handicrafts could far advance the cause of truth, but because I would fain see the handicrafts themselves urged by the spurs of chivalry: and it is, indeed, marvellous to see what power and universality there is in this single principle, and how in the consulting or forgetting of it lies half the dignity or decline of every art or act of man." p. 37. Ruskin was so popular that his ideas were common cultural currency in the late nineteenth century. Certainly Wright read him. Wright said, too, that Viollet-le-Duc's Entretiens was the only book necessary to his son's architectural training, (John Lloyd Wright, My Father Who Is On Earth (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1946), p. 136).

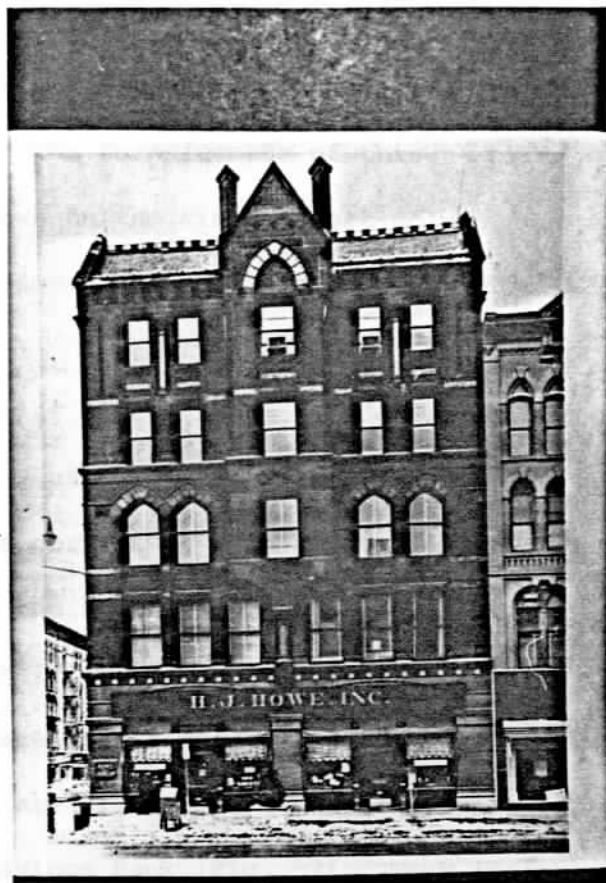


Fig. 29. Silsbee, White Memorial Building, 1876-8, west facade (Jack E. Boucher, HABS, January 1962).

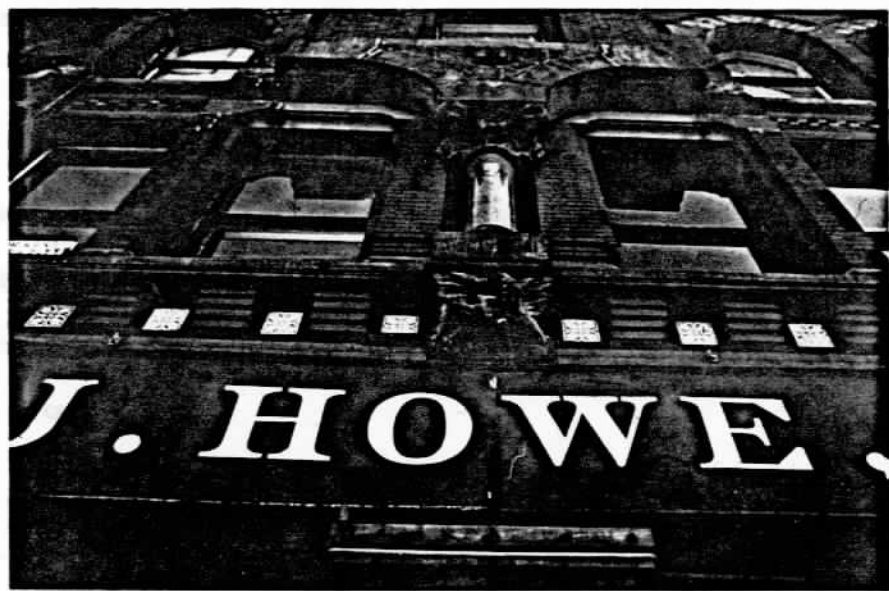


Fig. 30. Silsbee, White Memorial Building, 1876-8, detail, second story, west facade.

all decorative elements which appeal to the passersby [Fig. 30]. The forcefulness of this towering plane pressing down on the single short column adds a compelling, restless, almost palpable pressure and physicality to the wall.

A similar tower-like motif dominates the center of the Vanderbilt Square facade [Figs. 24 and 28]. It pushes through the cornice of a high pavilion which itself interrupts the cornice over the fourth story. Here it rests securely on the ground, framing an expertly carved and elaborate Gothic porch [Fig. 31]. The carvings in this gable are similar to those over the porch of the Syracuse Savings Bank [Fig. 32]. They indicate Silsbee's familiarity with post-Ruskinian attitudes toward nature and organic form. Rather than a direct imitation of plants, these reveal an interest in the underlying geometrical organization of natural form. This attitude probably had its origins for Silsbee in the Boston atelier of Ware and Van Brunt and in Viollet-le-Duc. Possibly Silsbee was familiar with Owen Jones' Grammar of Ornament (1856), a well known treatise which was concerned with these geometrical, conventionalized representations of natural form¹ and growth.

The plan of the White Memorial Building is clear and

¹ James F. O'Gorman discusses Furness' ornament, Owen Jones and Viollet-le-Duc in The Architecture of Frank Furness (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1973), pp. 35-38.

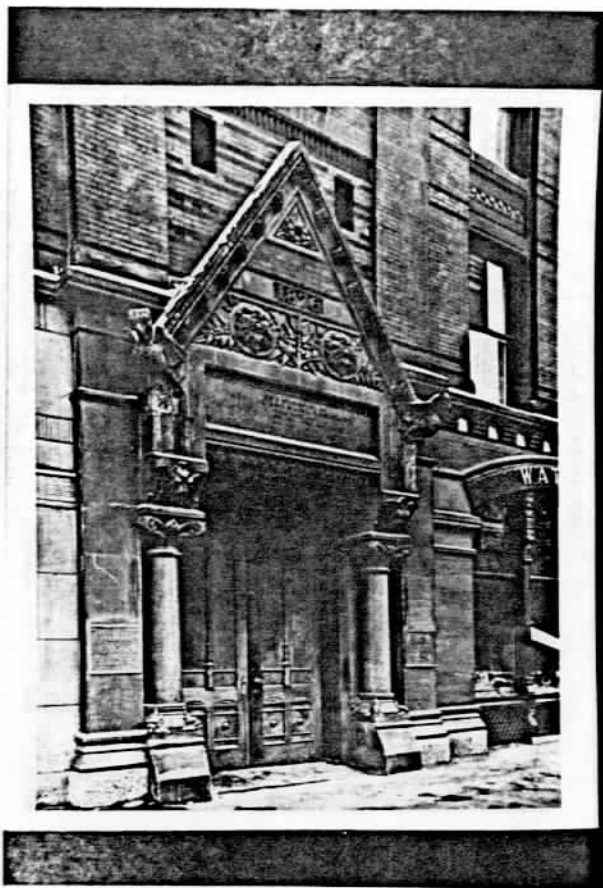


Fig. 31. Silsbee, White Memorial Building, 1876-8, detail,
main entry porch (Jack E. Boucher, HABS, January 1962)



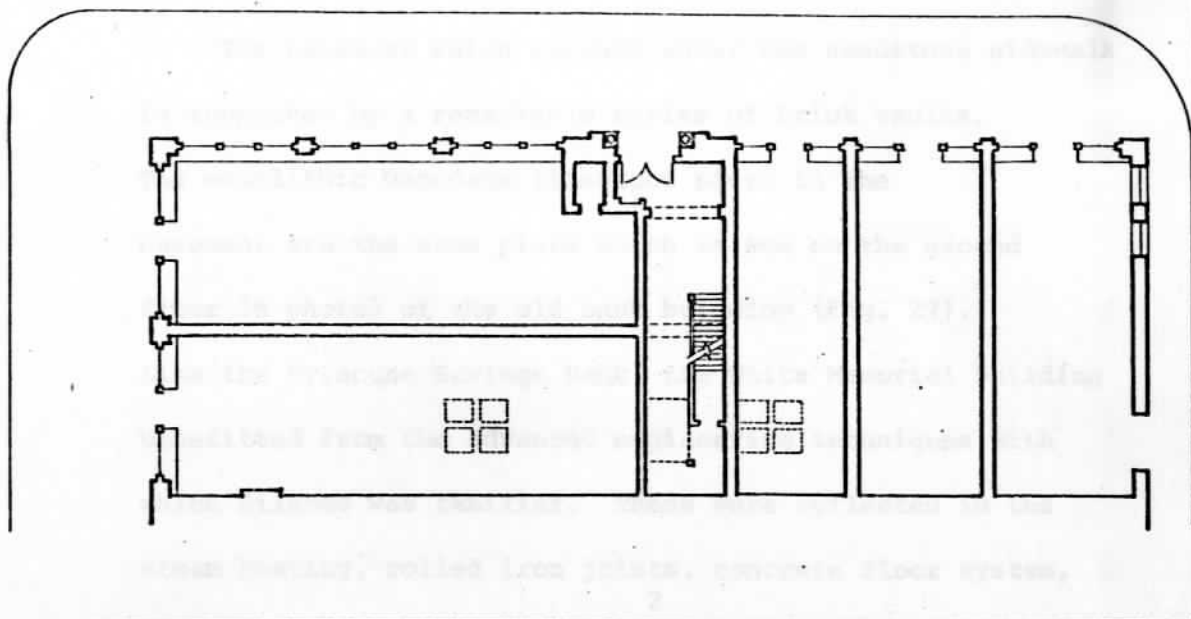
Fig. 32. Silsbee, Syracuse Savings Bank, 1875-6, detail,
main entry porch (Jack E. Boucher, HABS, January 1962)

straightforward [Fig. 33]. Entry to the second floor bank and to the upper floors was made via the iron stairway which rises from the vestibule of the Vanderbilt Square entrance. Bank vaults are located on the second floor over the vestibule, and a skylight illuminated the stair. Because the long south flank of the building was a party wall shared with the building next door, Silsbee opened two light wells, one on either side of the stair, through the building from the top of the retail stores to the roof. A glass block ceiling in the stores under these light wells admitted natural light to the rear of the building. The wells have windows on each floor for light and ventilation. Two stores, one bay wide and three bays long, face Salina Street, and three more stores are arranged north to south facing Washington Street. The private offices of the Messrs. White were on the second floor facing Salina Street. The fifth floor was occupied by a Masonic Lodge. The upper floor of the old bank building had also served as a meeting room,¹ probably because of the difficulty of renting upper stories.²

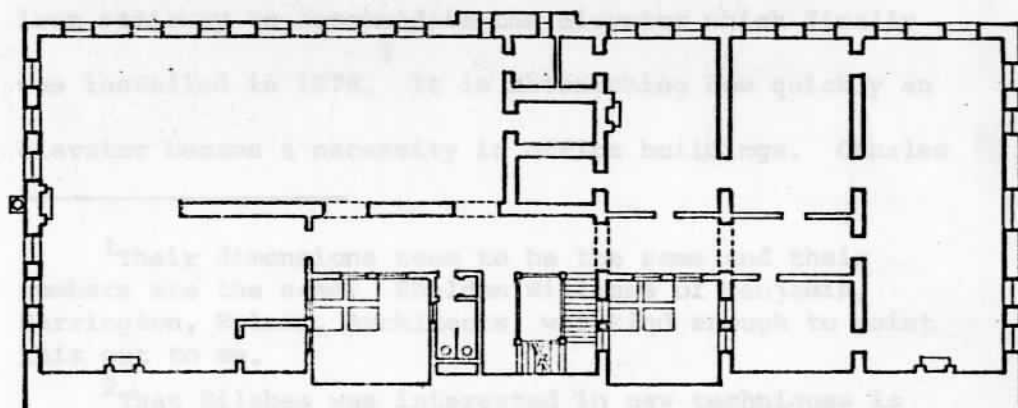
¹ Syracuse Journal, 11 May, 19 July 1841.

The old depot also had been the location of public meetings during the long periods between trains when the shed was empty (Chase, I, p. 132).

² The vestibule floor was covered with English tile, Syracuse Journal, 1 August 1876. Vestibule walls were buff brick with dark trim, walnut wainscotting. Entry doors, black walnut. Banking room walls, frescoed, blue and brown paint; furnishings and trim, cherry. See Appendix C, description of interior finishes, Charles Tucker to A. D. White, 29 May 1877, A. D. White Collection, Ithaca, New York. The tiles in the vestibule still exist under modern covering, although the doors have disappeared.



First Floor



Second Floor

Fig. 33. Silsbee, White Memorial Building, 1876-8, conjectural plans.

The basement which extends under the sandstone sidewalk is supported by a remarkable series of brick vaults.

The monolithic Onondaga limestone piers in the basement are the same piers which we see on the ground floor in photos of the old bank building [Fig. 27].¹

Like the Syracuse Savings Bank, the White Memorial Building benefitted from the advanced engineering techniques with which Silsbee was familiar. These were reflected in the steam heating, rolled iron joists, concrete floor system, and plaster block fireproofing.²

The one feature which the White Memorial Building unfortunately lacked was an elevator. That a lift was not originally planned is clear from letters to Andrew Dickson White from his agent and also from the cutting of the iron stairway to accommodate the elevator which finally was installed in 1878.³ It is astonishing how quickly an elevator became a necessity in office buildings. Charles

¹Their dimensions seem to be the same and their numbers are the same. Sheldon Williams of Benjamin, Harrington, Holmes, Architects, was kind enough to point this out to me.

²That Silsbee was interested in new techniques is illustrated by a news article of a loading test he made on a Portland cement vault, Syracuse Journal, 15 May 1876. The timing of this test and the dimensions of the vault, which were similar to those of the basement vaults of the White Memorial Building, suggest that Silsbee was considering Portland cement for his foundation.

³Syracuse Journal, 15 April 1878. See Appendix C, Charles Tucker to A. D. White, 1 March, 26 May, 29 May 1877. See also Syracuse Journal, 25 November 1878, "offices to rent...hydraulic elevator."

Tucker, White's agent, complained as early as May 1877, a month after the building was opened, that an elevator was needed in order to rent the upper floors. In August he claimed that even the tenants on the third floor were complaining that they were losing friends because of the climb.¹ This was only a year after the first passenger elevator in the city had begun to operate.

The fifth floor was changed to its present configuration² of offices probably around the year 1895 [Fig. 34]. The roof line was changed with the addition of four windows. It is possible that Silsbee was the architect for this change, for one of the owners, Andrew Dickson White,³ was a great admirer of Silsbee's work. Since White continued for many years to recommend Silsbee to others, it is entirely possible that he hired Silsbee for the addition. It was made sensitively and in keeping with the original building.

Andrew Dickson White was a famous scholar, professor, state senator, Ambassador to Germany, and the co-founder and first president of Cornell University. It was probably

¹Appendix C., Charles Tucker to A. D. White, 18 August 1877.

²In this year the Masonic lodge moved out and Howe Jewelers moved into the first and second floors (Onondaga Historical Association, File "White Memorial Building"). Later Chappell's Department Store expanded from next door through the party wall and drastically changed the eastern half of the Washington Street facade.

³The other Whites were the bankers, Horace K. and Hamilton S.



Fig. 34. Silsbee, White Memorial Building, 1876-8 (Jack E. Boucher, HABS, January 1962).

Result: *Journal of the Cornell Chapter of the History of the Planning and Development of the Cornell University Press, 1968*, pp. 156, 157.

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he who commissioned Silsbee to design the building.

White offered Silsbee a professorship at Cornell in 1875 and exercised his influence to secure a number of future commissions for Silsbee. When Cornell's president,² Charles Francis Adams, wrote to White in 1886 suggesting Van Brunt rather than Richardson for their library, White advised him to retain Silsbee from Syracuse as an associate architect.³

In spite of the fact that there were some problems on his own building, such as cost over-runs, incomplete specifications, and sewerage failures, White continued to think highly of Silsbee, and he continued to assist him

¹There are letters between Silsbee and A. D. White as early as October 1875, and the contracts were not let until the Spring of 1876. A. D. White's brother, Horace K., and the Whites' agent, Charles Tucker, kept him informed on the building's progress while he was in Europe (from October 1876). A personal letter from Charles B. Sedgwick, Silsbee's father-in-law, to A. D. White, 23 August 1874, indicates a close friendship (A. D. White Papers, Ithaca, New York). Thus it is possible that White first met Silsbee through his friend Sedgwick.

²I owe the suggestion that the Andrew Dickson White Papers at Cornell contain correspondence between White and Silsbee to Lawrence Wodehouse, whose letter concerning the matter appeared in Prairie School Review 8 (Second Quarter, 1971): 30. Wodehouse found several letters which suggested a continuing relationship. I have found several more, and there are likely to be more still in the collection of 100,000 items.

³Kermit Parsons, The Cornell Campus: A History of its Planning and Development (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), pp. 156, 157.

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with a reference or a recommendation whenever he could.

White was in Europe when the building was under construction. Perhaps from a distance A. D. White could see these problems as minor. After all, the walls were raised in little more than four months;² the building was opened on schedule, and as anyone would admit, it was indeed a handsome structure. As the newspaper had it,³ Silsbee's latest efforts [Syracuse Savings Bank and White Memorial Building]:

are exceedingly pleasing to cultivated taste; they serve as a means of comparison; they make uniformity even more beautiful by throwing in the necessary relieving figures. In a large and growing city like Syracuse we can hardly have too many buildings of this kind; they indicate financial prosperity; they mark greater breadth of artistic thought and endeavor, which cannot be too strongly commended.

¹These problems seem for the most part to be the kinds of troubles commonly associated with the architect-owner-contractor triangle. Silsbee does seem to be guilty of providing inadequate specifications and estimates lower than the actual cost. Horace White and Charles Tucker complained about Silsbee to A. D. White, but the architect seems to have been quite skilled at explaining himself. His statement to A. D. White, 30 June 1876, that "I care very little for what the general feeling is about my conduct...provided the men for whom I work [the owners] are satisfied..." was perfectly calculated to reassure his client. Joseph Lyman Silsbee to A. D. White, 30 June 1876, A. D. White Papers, Ithaca, New York. See Appendix C.

²Syracuse Journal, 31 May 1876, Walls commenced; 11 October 1876, scaffolding removed.

³Ibid., 1 August 1876.

The third commercial building in Syracuse which is known to have been designed by J. L. Silsbee is the Amos Block on West Water Street which was completed in September 1878 [Fig. 35].¹ This building too is still standing though its condition is rather seedy, and it has lost its context to progressive demolition of the buildings which surrounded it. At one time the Amos Block was part of an entire row of warehouses, mills, and wholesale buildings which lined West Water Street. The Erie Canal had stimulated the development along its banks of a linear district of these plain masonry buildings, usually four stories high. Canal men would unload their wares into the utilitarian rear sides [Fig. 36]. Any ornament would be confined to the street side where a row of storefronts usually constituted the ground floor.

Jacob Amos purchased three brick stores on West Water Street in 1862 for conversion to a flour mill.² Overflow from the canal was used for water power. In 1865 he purchased two more buildings adjoining his property on the west for use in connection with his business, the Empire State Mills.³ In 1878 the Empire State Mills were demolished to make way for a new building which⁴ was called the Amos Block. The Environmental Impact

¹ Ibid., 3 December 1878.

² Ibid., 27 May 1862

³ Ibid., 26 September 1865.

⁴ Ibid., 25 February 1878.

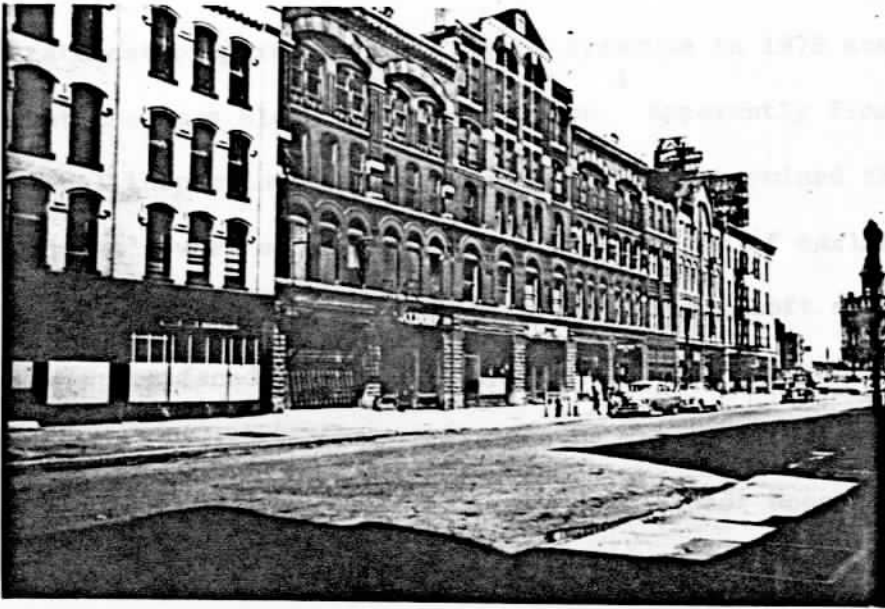
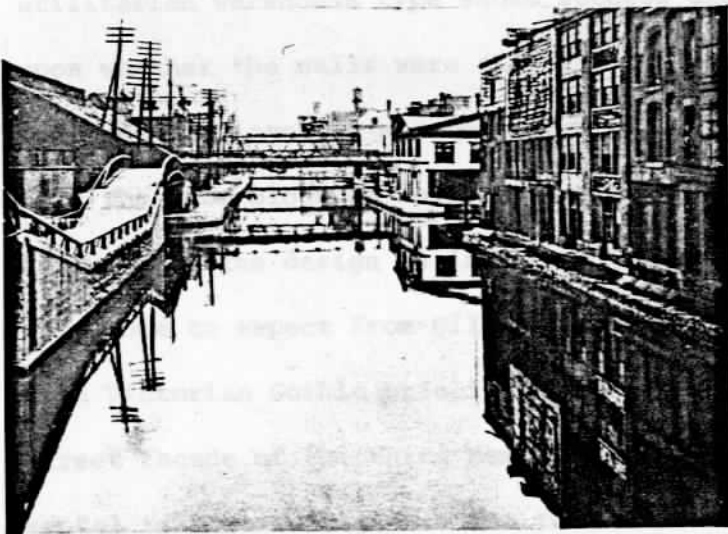


Fig. 35. Silsbee, Amos Block, 1878 (McKee Collection)



the Weighlock. Where the Oswego Canal Came In. Picture Made in 1911. Before
 Were Done Away With and Filled. To the Right, Buildings of the 'Forties and 'Fif-

Fig. 36. Erie Canal at the Weighlock Building, east of
 Clinton Square, showing typical canal buildings
 (Chase, Syracuse and its Environs, I).

Statement prepared by the City of Syracuse in 1978 stated that the Amos Block was a renovation.¹ Apparently from a visual inspection of the building it was determined that Silsbee's work amounted to the consolidation of earlier buildings, the construction of a fifth floor loft space, and a new facade. The discrepancy with the news notice of 1878 possibly can be explained by the imprecision of the newspaper account. The word "demolished" does not necessarily refer to complete destruction, and it was common enough in the nineteenth century to reuse old structures and elements of old structures. Whether the Amos Block is called a skillful consolidation or a new building is immaterial, because the plan was a simple utilitarian warehouse type whose success did not depend upon whether the walls were old or new. Whatever "architecture" was involved was concentrated on the facade.

The Amos Block is built of common brick with limestone trimmings. The design is in the polychromed style which we have come to expect from Silsbee, based clearly on the same High Victorian Gothic principles. As he did on the Salina Street facade of the White Memorial, Silsbee gave a monumental tripartite organization to a facade which had no central entrance. Amos had built this building for rental purposes, and every storefront was created equal. The

¹ Final Environmental Impact Statement, October 1, 1978, prepared by the Department of Community Development for the City of Syracuse, pp. 16, 17, 20.

first floor is separated from the upper stories by its material; square, rough, diamond-cut stone [Fig. 37]. It is also made independent by its form. On the street there is a simple repetition of piers which define large storefronts of glass with sheet metal frames. Above the ground floor a high four-bay central section organizes the building into a three-part facade with a dominant center and subsidiary wings. This helps to identify the six sections as a single work of architecture with a strong central emphasis despite the pier which rises through the middle of the facade.

Long segmental arches like the ones in the White Memorial Building appear here over the fourth story on the four large end bays. The continuity of window types and sizes diminishes as the central section rises up the facade. On the first floor all openings are identical. This is true also on the second floor, but their spacing is expanded in the central section: 3,3, 2,2, 3,3,; on the third story, 3,3, 1,2,2,1, 3,3,; on the fourth story, 2,2, 1,2',2',1, 2,2. There is a kind of mannered playfulness in which the central section displaces relationships which are established on the wings as it pushes through two cornices. Silsbee seems to have used the composition of the building adjacent to the Amos Block on the west [Fig. 38], increased its scale, and applied it to a building double its size. This clarity of general organization accommodates all the exuberant contrasts and movement in the facade.

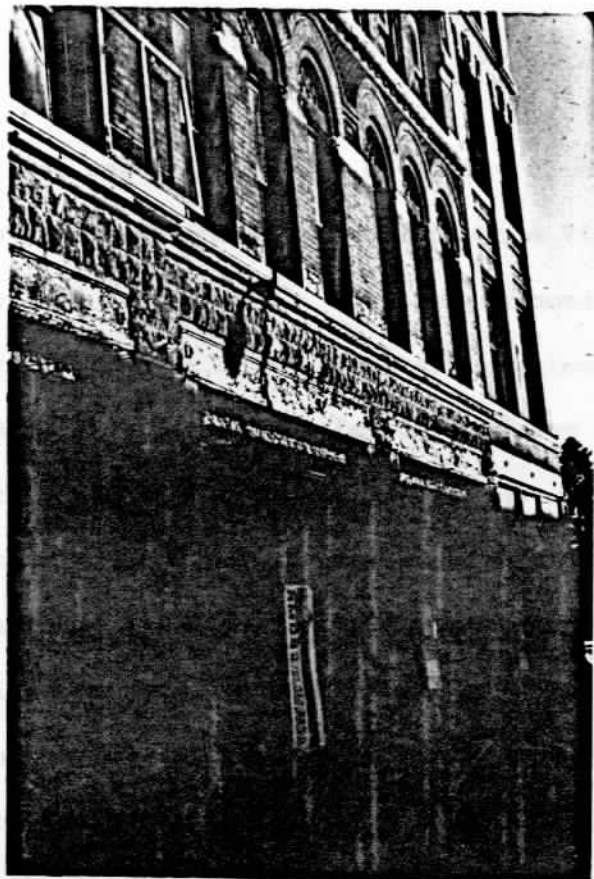


Fig. 37. Silsbee, Amos Block, 1878, facade detail.

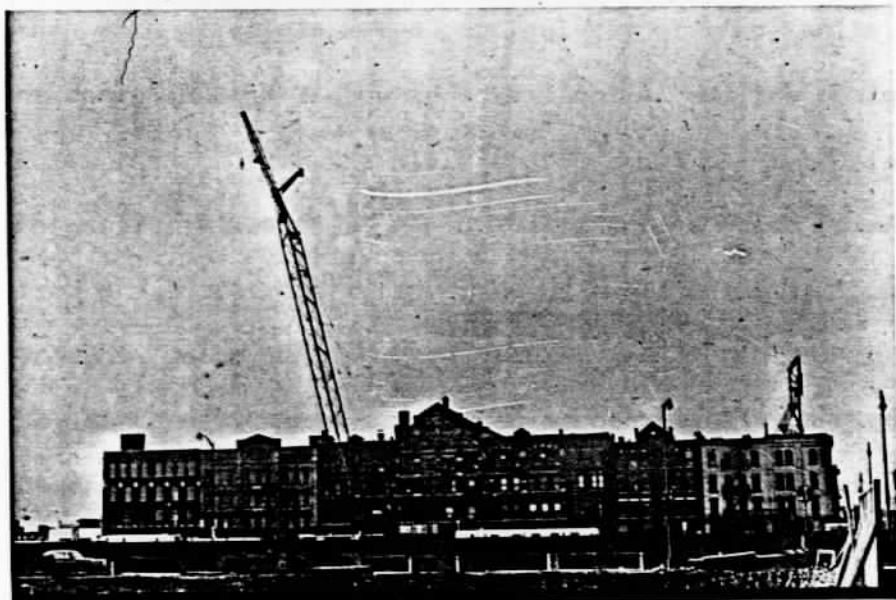


Fig. 38. West Water Street, view north, showing Amos Block as part of a row of buildings (OHA, photo by Lorenz, April 1973).

Silsbee was not the only Gothicist in town, but he seems to have been the first to apply the Victorian Gothic to commercial commissions. This polychromed Gothic style became quite popular in Syracuse and remained so well into the 1880's [Fig. 39]. The time lag between the advent of a new style and the demise of an old one was especially apparent in a place like Syracuse which did not have its first taste of the High Victorian Gothic until 1875.

Silsbee was the best Gothicist in Syracuse. His chief competitor was Archimedes Russell, who designed the Hickok building (1877) [Fig. 40]. It is interesting to examine the latter structure because in its general form it was so much like the White Memorial Building. Russell seems to have been more concerned with decorative detail than with principle. Two particularly glaring faults, at least in High Victorian Gothic terms, are the ambiguity which results from the piers rising above the roof line to become chimneys, and the visual weakness which comes from a massive corner supported by a slender cast iron column. Gargoyles, pointed arches, gables and polychromy do not in themselves constitute a successful High Victorian Gothic building. This building points to the difference between those who built "in the style" and those who adhered to its principles. In the Hickok Building, Russell has

Fig. 40. Archimedes Russell, Hickok Building, Syracuse, 1877
(Hardin, Archimedes Russell)



BELT LINE FIFTH WARD HORSE CAR TURNABLE AT SOUTH CLINTON AND WASHINGTON STREETS IN THE 1870s

Fig. 39. Clinton and Washington Streets, Syracuse, 1880's (Chase, Syracuse and its Environs, II).



Fig. 40. Archimedes Russell, Hickok Building, Syracuse, 1877 (Hardin, Archimedes Russell).

used elements of the style to make an up-to-date building,¹
 but he was more au courant than committed.

Silsbee had a peculiarly refined and elegant approach. His buildings do not display the three-dimensional formal variation of structures like Frederick Clarke Withers' Jefferson Market Courthouse (1874) in New York City [Fig. 41], or the institutional buildings of Frank Furness. This is due in part to the relative simplicity of the functions of Silsbee's buildings and the clear requirements of their sites, but it is also a result of Silsbee's background. He had not participated in the long growth of the Gothic movement. Unlike Leopold Eidlitz, Van Brunt, and Withers, he had not cultivated that zealous reforming spirit which so often is the mark of the Victorian Gothic architect. Moreover, unlike Furness, he did not yield to idiosyncratic personal impulses. On the other hand, Silsbee's High Victorian Gothic buildings were not archaeologically determined like Peter B. Wight's National Academy of Design (1862) in New York City [Fig. 42]. As tempting as the Doge's Palace might have been for Silsbee, he had been trained late enough in the movement by architects skilled enough in its expression to be able to design a "Venetian Gothic" building which was not at all like the buildings in Venice. The Syracuse Savings Bank's site,

¹To be fair, the White Memorial Building cost three times as much as the Hickok (est. \$30,000) [American Architect and Building News 2(1 October 1877): 320]. But this has no bearing on Russell's appropriation of formal devices and decorative elements without showing an understanding of rational principles.



Fig. 41. Frederick Clark Withers, Jefferson Market Courthouse, New York City, 1874 (Kowsky, Frederick Clark Withers).



Fig. 42. Peter B. Wight, National Academy of Design, New York City, 1862 (Schuyler, American Architecture and Other Writings).

its light color and its Gothic details were enough to conjure the obvious associations. Silsbee was an historicist but he was not an archaeologist.

Silsbee never did another High Victorian Gothic building. His Amos Block, with its horizontal series of round-headed arches and its grouping of four floors under single larger scaled arches, revealed already in 1878 that he would embrace the Romanesque. Yet the High Victorian Gothic movement did not die a sudden death with the influence of Richardson and of the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876. Jefferson Market Courthouse was voted one of the ten best buildings in America as late as 1885.¹ The long recession of the 1870's saw a decline in construction of buildings as inherently expensive as these masonry monuments. Silsbee did not get another commercial commission until the 1880's. By then new ways of building had evolved, based on Richardson's ideas. Creation based on esthetics would supplant expression founded upon morality.²

¹ American Architect and Building News 17 (13 June 1885): 282-283. See also Francis R. Kowsky, The Architecture of Francis Clarke Withers: and the Progress of the Gothic Revival in America after 1850 (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1980), pp. 108-118, 155.

² [Montgomery Schuyler], "Russell Sturgis' Architecture," Architectural Record 25 (June 1909): 405. See also William H. Jordy's Introduction to Schuyler, American Architecture and Other Writings, vol. I, pp. 36-47, and Schuyler, vol. II, p. 649.

We have seen that Silsbee's perceptive understanding of the requirements of a commission led to buildings of different aesthetic character. In the design of the Syracuse Savings Bank, the city's paramount financial institution located on its central urban space, Silsbee expressed monumental clarity and restrained elegance. Vivacious contrasts and self-assured ripeness characterized the White Memorial Building, stretching along Railroad Avenue and rising powerfully from South Salina Street. The Amos Block in the warehousing district along the canal reflected a raw, more violent toughness. That these three commissions resulted in such different expressions is a testament to Silsbee's aesthetic ability, especially in a style which could degenerate so easily into a patchwork of Gothic motifs. While recognizing Silsbee's artistic versatility, if we are to understand Silsbee's work as a whole, we must keep in mind his development in the atmosphere of High Victorian Gothic ideals. The rational outgrowth of elevation and mass from the requirements of the commission, the preference for natural materials used expressively and "realistically" and exhibited for what they were, and the picturesque approach which demanded clear sculptural forms so that the building could articulate its purpose: these are tenets of the High Victorian Gothic tradition which Silsbee never abandoned.

SILSBEE'S ECCLESIASTICAL WORK

Silsbee's first essay in the Romanesque was the First (Dutch) Reformed Church (1878-81) on the north side of James Street [Fig. 43]. The lecture room across the rear, later used for Sunday school and meeting rooms, was constructed first and used for services from October 1, 1878 until the church was finished. The church seems to have been completed by the fall of 1879, but it was not dedicated until February 1881, probably because the rose window did not arrive until late in 1880.¹ The building committee of the church had invited plans for a stone building inasmuch as their old wooden structure had burned down [Fig. 44]. A number of plans were submitted. Silsbee's was accepted, possibly because his allowed for the phased construction that took place.²

The plan was simple. The entrance to the auditorium was from a five-bay arcaded porch. The auditorium itself was sixty-five feet square. "The square form was the

¹Syracuse Courier, 20 April, 3 December 1878, 14 February 1879, 23 January 1880; Syracuse Journal 11 February 1881.

²Syracuse Journal, 4 February 1878, account of conflagration. The old church has been attributed to Minard Lefever (Chase, II, p. 713). Syracuse Journal 18 March 1878, committee has invited plans; 26 March 1878.

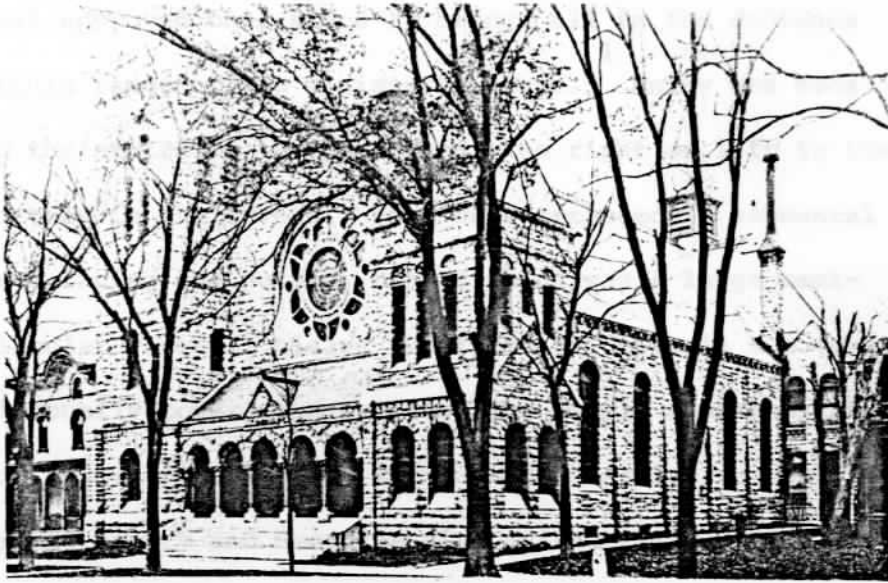


Fig. 43. Silsbee, First (Dutch) Reformed Church, 1878-81
(Art Work of Syracuse).

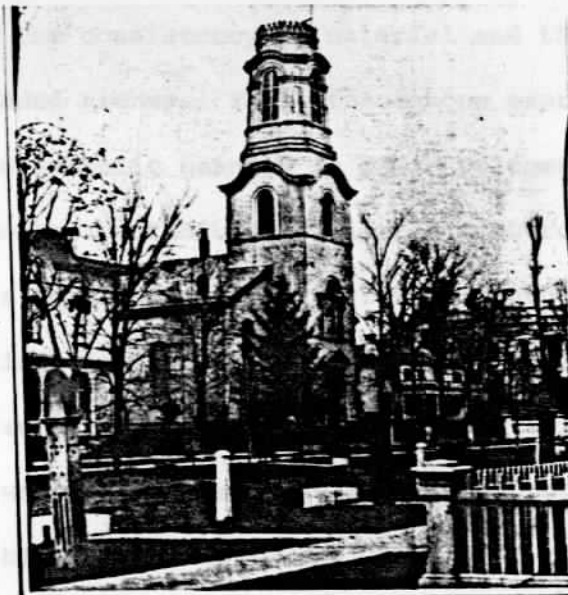


Fig. 44. Minard Lefever (?), Old First Reformed Church,
1850, destroyed by fire 1878 (OHA).

most approved one, since it brings all in the audience within range of the minister's voice."¹ Entry was made up the stairs to the porch and then right or left to the portals in the towers. Pews were arranged in segmental arcs facing the pulpit, behind which was a large semi-circular recess. Aisles ran from the doors in the towers diagonally toward the pulpit. The simply finished interior [Fig. 45] had walls tinted and stenciled in dark brown, cherry and Georgian pine wainscotting, and a white pine ceiling with Georgian pine trusses. Each part of this church was very clearly distinguished from the others [Fig. 43]. The two towers, the porch, assembly hall, and the Sunday school section each had distinct prismatic forms that were attached to make up a whole. Unity was achieved by the consistency of material and the repetition of round-headed arches. This picturesque expression of function and symbolic meaning in cubic volumes held apart from one another distinguished Silsbee's church from Richardson's Romanesque with its formal synthesis of clearly defined parts into one indivisible whole. Silsbee's approach here is more in tune with the Victorian Gothicists, especially when we realize that the larger tower, seventy-eight feet high on the southwest, was never completed. If it had risen to the one hundred eighty-five foot height of Silsbee's design, the similarity to Richardsonian architecture would have been even less.

¹Syracuse Journal, 11 February 1881.

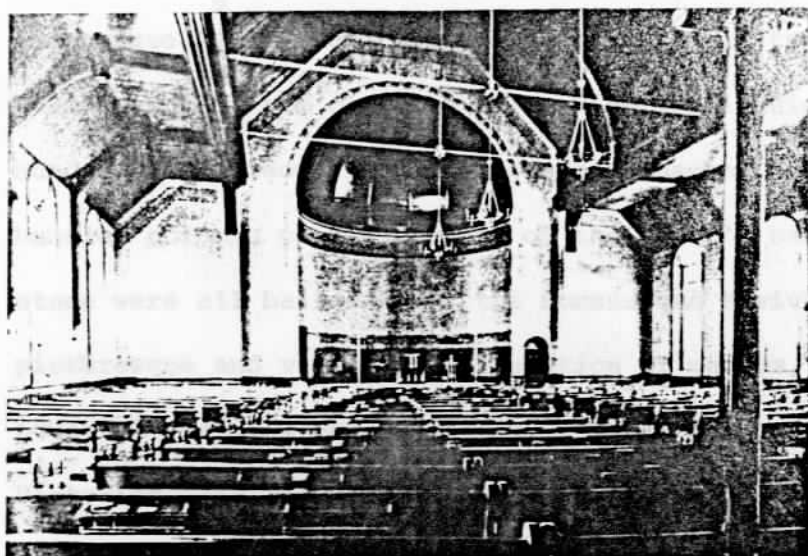


Fig. 45. Silsbee, First Reformed Church, 1878-81, interior view toward pulpit (Dedication of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, February 10, 1881)

Joseph Lyon Silsbee to G. B. White, 25 February 1878, A. N. White Papers, Ithaca, New York. "You will be glad to learn that I have been fortunate enough to secure the Albany church. Please let me thank you very sincerely for the trouble you have taken in this matter for me." Journal of Architecture, Architect of the Grand Reformed Church, Albany, New York (Albany: Spelt, Barnes and Company, 1881), p. 2. It is possible that Silsbee submitted a design as early as 1875, when the trustees first purchased the site (ibid., p. 7).

Syracuse Journal, 21 May 1878.

Silsbee's next ecclesiastical building was the Second Reformed Church (1879-80) at the corner of Madison and Swan Streets in Albany, New York [Figs. 46 and 47]. Andrew Dickson White's recommendation surely helped Silsbee to gain the commission for this church which was started in the spring of 1879.¹ The building was described in the Syracuse newspapers as "a combination of Gothic and Romanesque."² Its rock-faced blue limestone, its round-headed arches, the circular wall which distinguished the Sunday school rooms from the assembly chamber, and the bundled columns on the corners of the tower's second stage were all hallmarks of the Romanesque Revival. The picturesque and vigorous articulation of masses, and the powerful vertical emphasis, however, are ideas rooted in Victorian Gothicism. A strong vertical motif begins at the Sunday school entrance on Swan Street toward the rear of the church [Figs. 47 and 48], rises through the long horizontal plane established by the repetitive windows grouped between string courses, and ends in the gable. To the southwest a chimney pushes through a smaller gable

¹Joseph Lyman Silsbee to A. D. White, 26 February 1879, A. D. White Papers, Ithaca, New York: "You will be glad to learn that I have been fortunate enough to secure the Albany church. Please let me thank you very sincerely for the trouble you have taken in this matter for me." Date of commencement, Memorial of the Second Reformed Church, Albany, New York (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1881), p. 8. It is possible that Silsbee submitted a design as early as 1875, when the trustees first procured plans (Ibid., p. 7).

²Syracuse Journal, 21 May 1879.

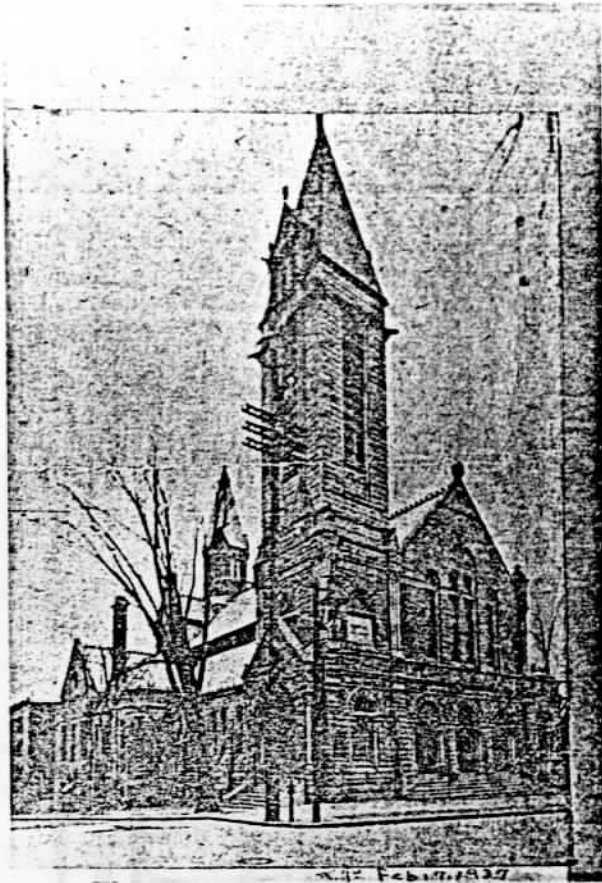


Fig. 46. Silsbee, Second Reformed Church, Madison Avenue at Swan Street, Albany, New York, 1879-80, destroyed by fire 1936 (Albany Knickerbocker Press).

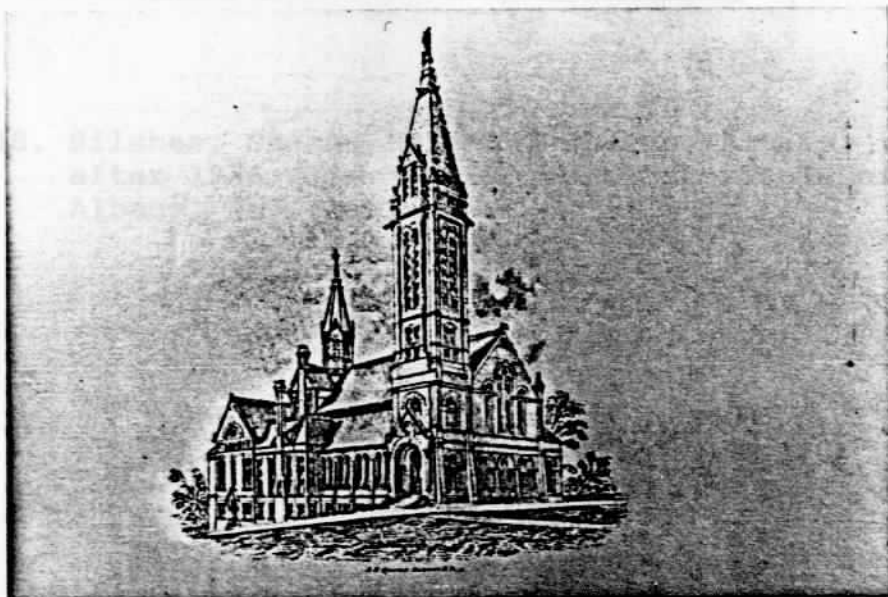


Fig. 47. Silsbee, Second Reformed Church, Albany, 1879-80 (Memorial of the Second Reformed Church).

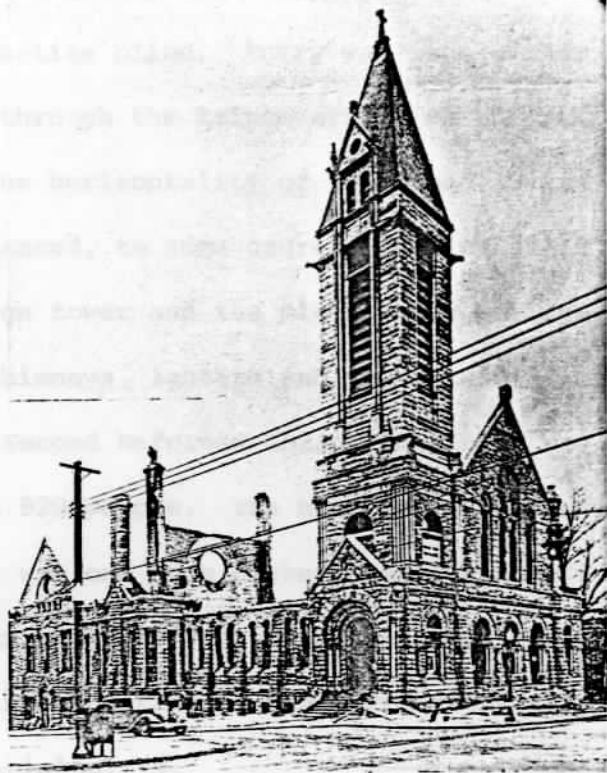


Fig. 48. Silsbee, Second Reformed Church, Albany, 1879-80, after 1936 fire (Bureau for Historical Services, Albany, New York).

²For the ecclesiological movement, see Frank Stanton, The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture: An Episode in Faith, 1820-1860 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958). See also references, pp. 1-20; 29-34.

to rise high above the wall. Tall shallow buttresses support the church flank and identify the assembly hall proper. The tower dormers are set on extraordinarily attenuated colonnettes, as if the tower had been physically stretched skyward, dropping louvers one after another like a Venetian blind. Entry was made either under the tower or through the triple arches on the Madison Avenue front. The horizontality of the broad stairs and the long flank balanced, to some degree, the insistent verticality of the huge tower and the picturesque outline of roofs, gables, chimneys, lantern and tower.

The Second Reformed Church in Albany was quite large; it seated 920 people. The newspapers commented that each seat was one inch higher than the one in front.¹ This arrangement indicates how flexible church design had become since the time of the rigid rubrics laid down by the Ecclesiologists.²

¹ Ibid.

² For the Ecclesiological movement, see Phoebe Stanton, The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste, 1840-1856 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968). See also Muthesius, pp. 1-25, 39-54.

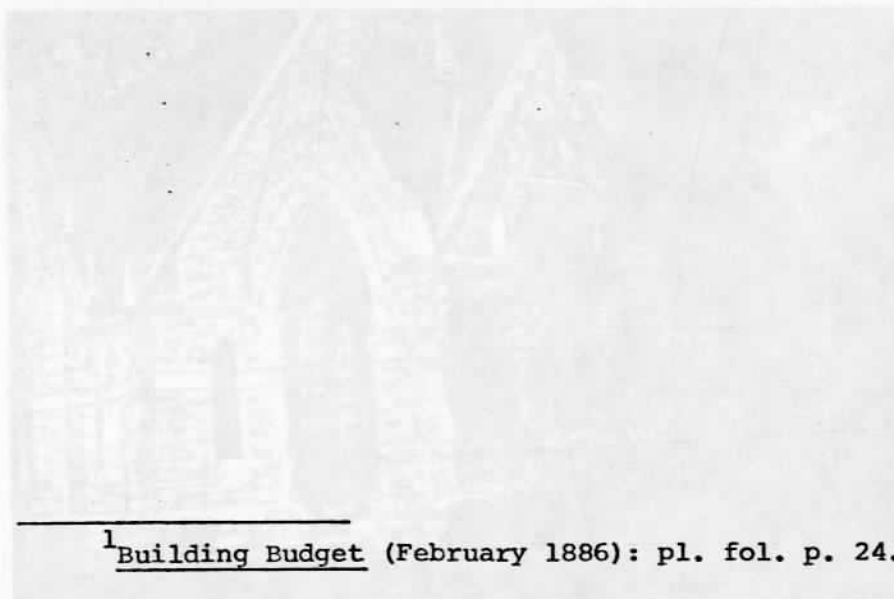
During the years he practiced in Syracuse, Silsbee also completed two smaller ecclesiastical commissions. The first of these was the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel and Receiving Vault (1879-80) [Fig. 49].¹ This building is as much funereal as it is ecclesiastical. The chapel is backed into a steep hill. Two stone smokestacks rise from the top. These mark the location of the buried, barrel-vaulted catacombs. The diminutive chapel seems even smaller in contrast with its porch, really a porte-cochere for funeral processions. The large rock-faced Onondaga limestone blocks are disquieting in such a small structure. The porch front [Fig. 50], with its openings defined by massive stones and granite columns, produces an uneasy vacillation between the trabeated and the mural. Strange too, and oppressive, is the stone roof atop the central tower [Fig. 51]. Silsbee firmly embraced the freedom afforded by funerary architecture. With purely architectural means, morbidly inverting our normal expectations, he created an unsettling and lacrimose atmosphere in a gentle cemetery chapel.

The little parish church (1880) in a coal mining region of Pennsylvania was one of five which were to be erected around Tioga county. It is possible that Silsbee

¹ Among the founders and first board of trustees of Oakwood Cemetery were E. W. Leavenworth, Hamilton and Horace White, and Robert G. Wynkoop, of the Dutch Reformed Church (Chase, I, p, 299). It is probable that Silsbee's commission was gained once more through the help of powerful friends.

designed some of the others. The church at Antrim, Pennsylvania [Fig. 52], is a simple Gothic memorial church, more like the chapels of the sixties. Perhaps the church mandated adherence to a correct ecclesiological approach. Still, with its rectangular openings, hood-like bracketed gable, and diagonal lantern, Silsbee's church was a work of individuality and originality. That Silsbee could still be proud of this Gothic church as late as 1886 is evidenced by its publication in the Building Budget¹ in Chicago in that year.

Fig. 49. Silsbee, Oakwood Cemetery Chapel and Receiving Vault, 1879-80 (OAA, George K. Collins, 1886).



¹Building Budget (February 1886): pl. fol. p. 24.

Fig. 50. Silsbee, Oakwood Cemetery Chapel, 1879-80, detail of entry porch.



Fig. 49. Silsbee, Oakwood Cemetary Chapel and Receiving Vault, 1879-80 (OHA, George K. Collins, 1885).

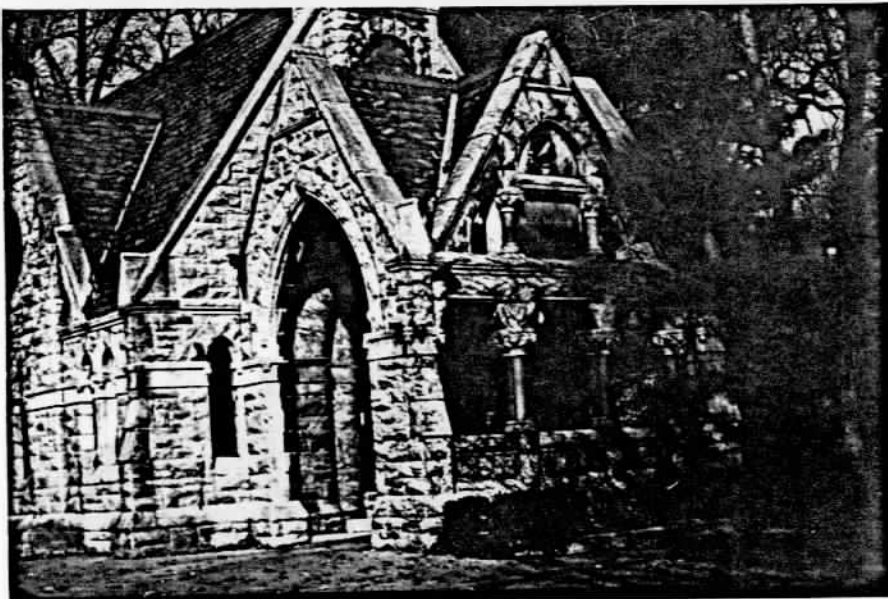


Fig. 50. Silsbee, Oakwood Cemetary Chapel, 1879-80, detail of entry porch.

Fig. 51. Silsbee, Church at Antrim, Pennsylvania, 1880, lithograph (Building Subject 1886)



Fig. 51. Silsbee, Oakwood Cemetery Chapel, 1879-80, entrance facade.



Fig. 52. Silsbee, Church at Antrim, Pennsylvania, 1880, lithograph (Building Budget 1886)

SILSBEE'S DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

The High Victorian Gothic style was rarely used for domestic architecture. It had been used originally for ecclesiastical buildings. That it could later be used effectively for commercial and institutional structures was in itself surprising. The leap to domestic construction, however, could never be successfully made. Houses had few functions which could be expressed with the principled fervor of the High Victorian Gothic. Furthermore, there was a well-established tradition in American domestic architecture and theory extending back to A. J. Downing and A. J. Davis. Many of its principles were similar to those of the High Victorian Gothic, for the roots of the tradition lay in the Gothic revival. For example, rational building, frank expression of materials in their natural states, earthy organic color, and structural expression were ideals explicitly stated by the domestic theorists and developed in pattern books and in buildings in the 1850's and 1860's. Coupled with this structural and functional "reality" was a picturesque approach which called for variety and an organic relationship with the landscape. By the 1870's, these ideas had reached a culmination in the Stick Style, a fresh and peculiarly American synthesis of the rational and the picturesque.

The promise and popularity of the Stick Style for architects lay in its freedom from eclectic historicism.

Silsbee had worked for William Ralph Emerson while the latter was in the Stick Style phase of his career in the early 1870's. As we have seen, Emerson already was interested in American Colonial buildings. By 1876, as the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition demonstrated, interest in America's past had reached the level of the popular culture. The great popularity of the English Queen Anne style of Richard Norman Shaw was also manifest at the Centennial Exposition. Richardson had already introduced his version of the Queen Anne style in the Watts-Sherman house in 1874. Richardson's introduction of the Queen Anne living hall, with its stairway and fireplace as the central space in the house, and his use of vernacular colonial materials, shingles, clapboard and diamond-paned windows, were pregnant with possibility. Two parallel developments in the 1870's, then, were the interest in the picturesque Colonial and the interest in the Queen Anne. The use of forms from America's own past demonstrated a new self-confidence, and the Queen Anne style provided great opportunity for invention. These two developments reached a powerful synthesis in Richardson's Shingle Style houses in the early 1880's. Although houses like the Stoughton House (1882-83) or the Paine House (1884-86) were neither Colonial nor Queen Anne in detail, they evolved from the planning principles and freedom of

invention which grew out of the Queen Anne and out of the adjustment to site, material simplicity, and functional expression of the picturesque vernacular.¹

Though he began working in the Stick Style, Silsbee did not fit precisely into this progression to the Shingle Style. The freedom implicit in the Queen Anne style allowed so much variety and invention that the term has little descriptive value. Silsbee's Queen Anne, as we shall see, was often a masonry variety which owed as much to High Victorian Gothic as it did to Norman Shaw. It was not until the late 1880's, when the style became popular, that Silsbee came to the suburban Richardsonian Romanesque or to the Shingle Style for which he is known.

Silsbee's first known house was the Edward Noyes Westcott House (1877) on James Street [Fig. 53]. Westcott was a banker and an unsuccessful financier, as well as the author of a best-selling novel entitled David Harum.² Chase considered the Westcott House the first Queen Anne house in Syracuse,³ but in spite of its shingled, overhanging upper story, the Westcott House can best be described as Stick Style. Its verticality and its use of horizontal and vertical "sticks" to symbolize its frame

¹For a detailed discussion of this development of American domestic architecture, see Scully, the authority upon which this very brief discussion depends.

²Syracuse Herald American, 22 June 1947; Chase, I, p. 501. David Harum was a success posthumously.

³Chase, I, p. 346. posthumously.



Fig. 53. Silsbee, Edward Noyes Westcott House, 1877, demolished (OHA).

The house was enlarged at the rear to nearly double its original size, possibly by Silsbee. The windows have been stripped of some trim, and a new "Colonial" door has been installed.

structure are elements which he brought from his tenure with Emerson. The articulation of volumes into clear blocks based on function is a continuing trait in Silsbee's work.

Another of Silsbee's houses, the Theodore Voorhees¹ Residence in Ballston Spa, New York (1878) [Fig. 54], shows that when the commission warranted it, he could design in a style which we associate with the 1860's. Silsbee might have learned this Second Empire idiom while working in H. N. White's office, but of course the style was a familiar one. If it seemed rather stuffy and old-fashioned, it was sanctioned by precedent and convention. Theodore Voorhees was the town supervisor in Ballston Spa. Perhaps he had asked for just such a conventional house. The marks of real vitality and originality are the large windows which push through the cornice to become half dormer and half second floor [Fig. 55]. Silsbee continued to work in the Stick Style for some years. The Voorhees Residence is an anomaly in an otherwise consistent group of houses.

The Hotel Wentworth (1878) [Fig. 56] was a resort hotel of a special kind. Round Lake, New York, was a Methodist camp-meeting ground [Fig. 57] which was modeled on the successful Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. Soon after permanent frame cottages had begun to spring

¹The house was enlarged at the rear to nearly double its original size, possibly by Silsbee. The cornices have been stripped of some trim, and a new "Colonial" door has been installed.



Fig. 54. Silsbee, Theodore Voorhees Residence, Ballston Spa, New York, 1878.

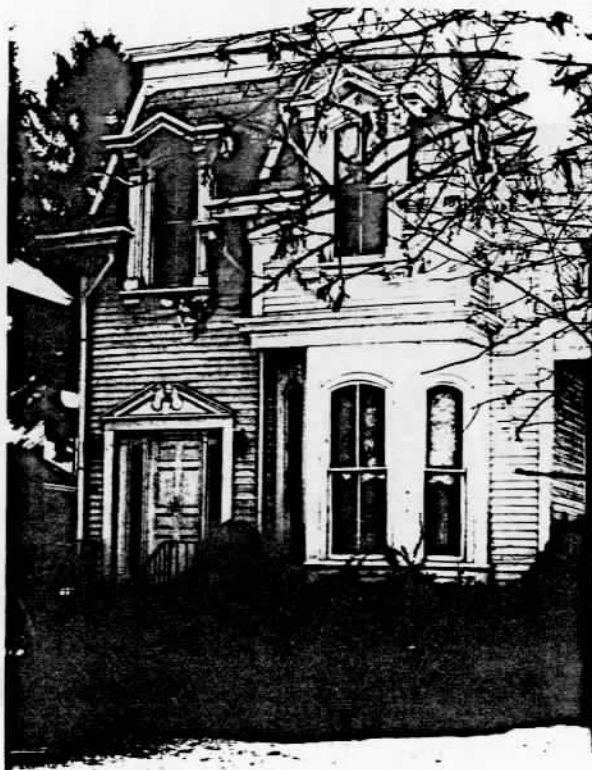


Fig. 55. Silsbee, Theodore Voorhees Residence, Ballston Spa, New York, 1878, entrance facade.



Fig. 56. Silsbee, Hotel Wentworth, Round Lake, New York, 1878, demolished (History of the Round Lake Association).

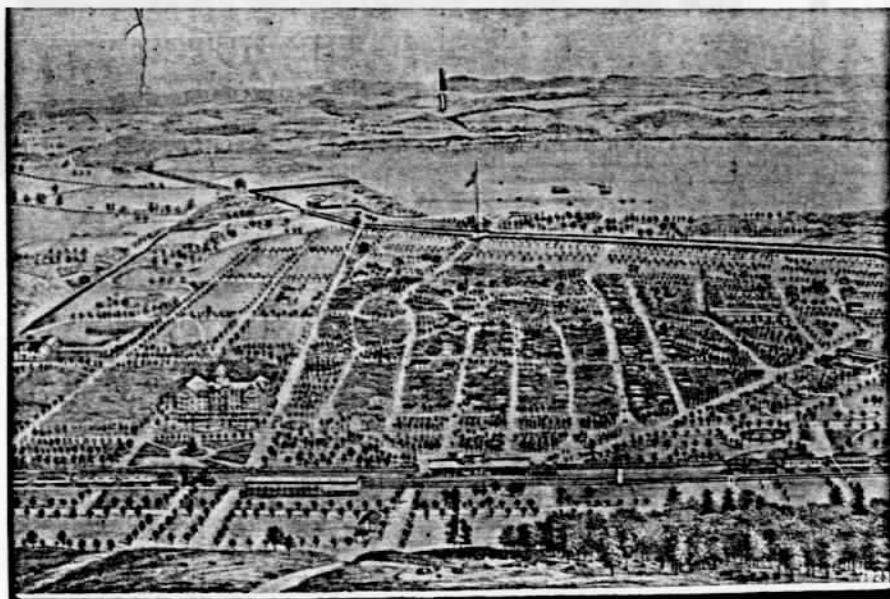


Fig. 57. Round Lake, New York, aerial view, lithograph (History of the Round Lake Association).

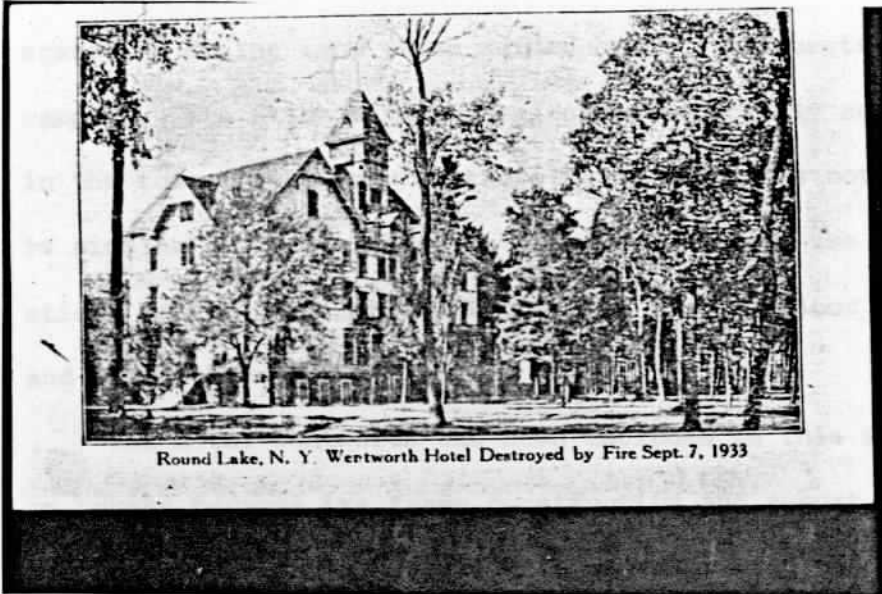


Fig. 58. Silsbee, Hotel Wentworth, Round Lake, New York, 1878 (Postcard view).

A History of the Round Lake Association, comp. the Women's Round Lake Improvement Society for the Centennial Celebration, August 11-17, 1900, unpublished.

Syracuse Journal, 26 February 1880.
 Destruction was delayed. Once again it is interesting to note the association of the archaic system with Silsbee's friends, E. W. Lawrence and A. B. White (ibid., p. 144).

up, the Hotel Wentworth was built. It was a private enterprise owned by the Lisk Brothers of Troy, New York. A wood frame, three-story building with basement, attic and central tower, it seems never to have been completed to the original plans. All of the pictures show the tower and only one of the wings [Fig. 58]. It contained fifty to sixty rooms and, since camp cooking facilities were scarce, a dining room which served both hotel guests and campers.¹ Its Stick Style genealogy is especially apparent in the tower. The body of the simple, no-frills hotel is similar to that of the Westcott house in its use of sticks to symbolize the structure and to mark floor levels and window frames.

The Hotel Wentworth has been included in this section on houses because its frame construction and resort nature led to its design in a style that was primarily domestic. Another domestic building which was not really a house was the Onondaga County Orphan Asylum in Syracuse [Fig. 59], built in 1884 but designed before February 1880.² The central overhanging third-story section had diagonal, horizontal, vertical, and curved boards, and scalloped shingles acting as a ground for the three small gables.

¹ A History of the Round Lake Association, comp. the Women's Round Lake Improvement Society for the Centennial Celebration, August 11-17, 1968, unpaginated.

² Syracuse Journal, 26 February 1880. Construction was delayed. Once again it is interesting to note the association of the orphan asylum with Silsbee's friends, E. W. Leavenworth and A. D. White (Chase, I, p. 144).



Fig. 59. Silsbee, Onondaga County Orphan Asylum, 1884-5,
demolished (OHA).



ONONDAGA COUNTY ORPHAN ASYLUM.

Fig. 60. Silsbee, Onondaga County Orphan Asylum, 1884-5,
demolished (OHA).

These wooden elements gave the building an air of domesticity in the Shingle Style-Queen Anne tradition, while the planar severity of the brick walls lent a properly institutional character to the structure. The Orphan Asylum was made of two similar blocks joined by a two-story transverse section [Fig. 60].

The composition of the facade is an instructive example of how logical and satisfying eclecticism can be when tempered by restraint and simplicity. The dormers are united with the second floor openings and are pushed through the roof behind the cornice. This arrangement reinforces the verticality established by the large central gable and the chimneys. These dormers are repeated horizontally across the roof and through the central gable. The large gables on the front and sides and the small gables on the dormers are similar isosceles triangles identically divided by a vertical line; flagpole, chimney, board. Silsbee created an interesting and beautifully balanced design with commandingly simple means. The use of formal elements at radically altered scales and the vertical movement of the dormers behind the cornice remind one of Silsbee's High Victorian Gothic designs. Severe as it is, however, the design is a rather serene one, incorporating devices from the American domestic Stick Style-Queen Anne idiom. The similarity of the Onondaga County Orphan Asylum design to Emerson's work of that period [Fig. 61] suggests that Silsbee may well have borrowed some of the latter's ideas.



Fig. 61. William Ralph Emerson, Residence, Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts, standing (American Victorian Architecture).

A Fine American Home and Clippings, vol. 7, p. 3.
 Scrantom, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library.

ibid., and "Tourists Come and Go, But For the
 Grand Island to be Farther." *Times*, 18 July 1925.
Grand Island Clippings, vol 1, p. 154.

The hotel model on Grand Island was a strict style
 building very similar to the hotel mentioned in Grand Lake.
 Another Grand Island hotel, the McCook (opened 1897)
 shared the same style, a tall central tower flanked by
 two wings and anchored by porches. Strict Style hotels like
 these were common but the possibility remains that they
 also were by Salts.

Another resort building which Silsbee designed was the Falconwood Club (1882) on Grand Island, near Buffalo [Fig. 62]. It would be difficult to imagine a commission better calculated to introduce an architect to those who hired architects. The Falconwood Club included about ¹ seventy members of Buffalo's social and business elite. Lewis F. Allen had bought 16,000 acres on the island for its timber. He soon saw the value of Grand Island for recreational purposes. Around the year 1870 the first Falconwood Club house was built on Allen's property on the southwest shore. After a fire had destroyed the first ² club house, Silsbee was hired to design a new one.

Silsbee's Falconwood Club was an exuberant wood frame building which is immediately remindful of the cottages built in the late 1870's and 1880's in Newport, Rhode ³ Island, and up and down the Atlantic coast. A veranda extended across the front and wrapped around the polygonal end to encircle the entire building [Fig. 63]. This horizontality is reinforced by the large unifying volume of

¹"The Falconwood Club House," Buffalo Express, 5 June 1887, Grand Island Clippings, vol. 2, p. 9, Scrapbooks, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library.

²Ibid., and "Tourists Come and Go, but Stolid Grand Islanders Go On Forever," Times, 16 July 1935, Grand Island Clippings, vol 1, p. 269.

³The Hotel Bedell on Grand Island was a Stick Style building very similar to the Hotel Wentworth in Round Lake. Another Grand Island hotel, the McComb (opened 1887) shared the same parti, a tall central tower flanked by two wings and encircled by porches. Stick Style hotels like these were common but the possibility remains that they also were by Silsbee.

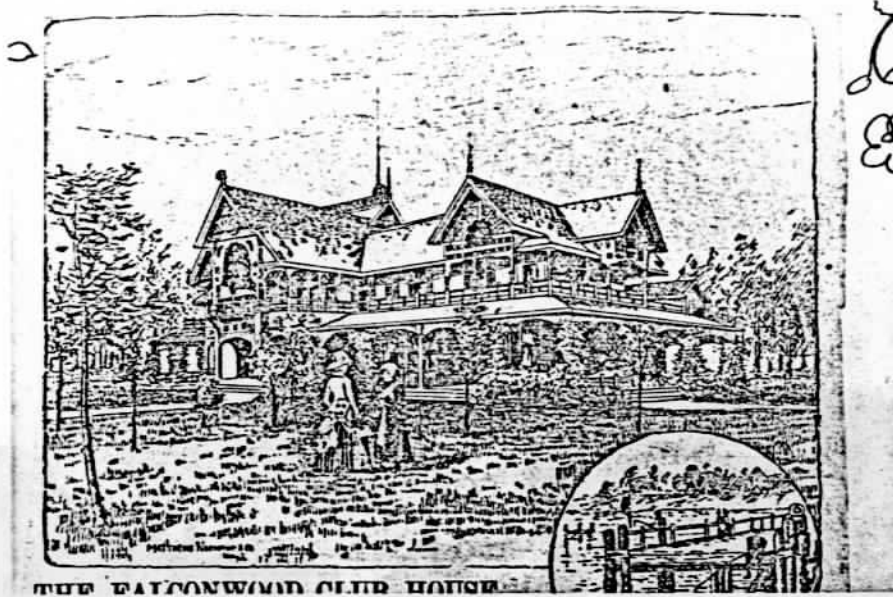


Fig. 62. Silsbee, Falconwood Club House, Grand Island, New York, 1882, demolished (Buffalo Express).

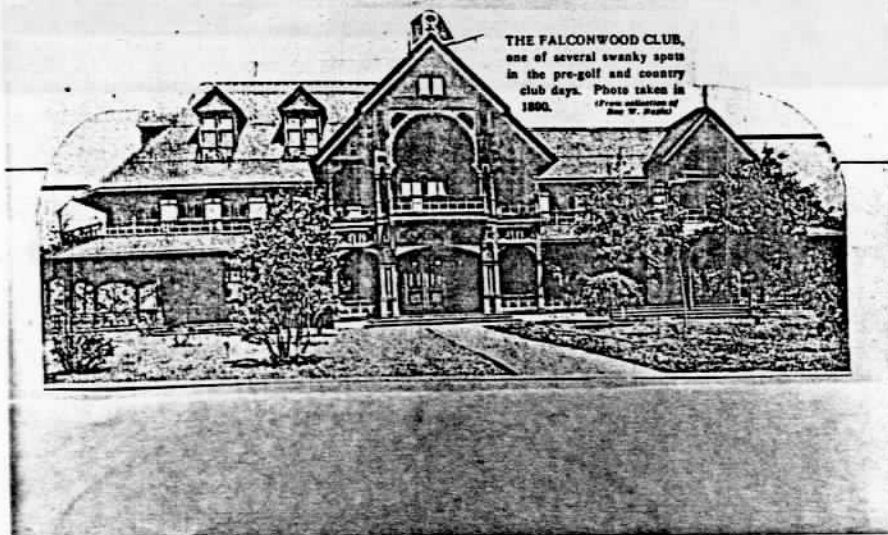


Fig. 63. Silsbee, Falconwood Club House, Grand Island, New York, demolished (Buffalo Courier).



Fig. 64. Silsbee, General Dwight Bruce House, Syracuse, 1878, demolished (McKee Collection).

the sheltering roof. The festive stick work which formed the porch had a modular Japanese flavor. The light wooden arch framing the center on the second story may be Syrian or Moorish in inspiration. Japanese influence was apparent in Silsbee's work as early as the 1878 Bruce House [Fig. 64]. The Bruce House entry porch and its roof are clearly Japanese inspired, and they are used not only decoratively, but in an architectonic way to maintain the horizontal line between stories. Silsbee returned to Oriental motifs in a more obviously eclectic and less integrated way later in his career.¹

Paul Baker has demonstrated that the first designs for a house for the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher in Peekskill, New York (1878) [Fig. 65] came from Richard Morris Hunt, but he had doubts about its final authorship. Hunt caught pneumonia after a trip to the site in the winter of 1874, and he was incapacitated for three months.² Either because of Hunt's illness or for some other reason, Beecher hired J. L. Silsbee, who became the architect of record for his house. Whatever Hunt's contribution to the initial planning, the design was Silsbee's. As the latter wrote to Andrew Dickson White:

¹ Sorell, p. 13. Manson, p. 35, believes that Wright's love of things Japanese may have been inspired by Silsbee's.

² Paul Baker, Richard Morris Hunt (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980), pp. 247-248.



Fig. 65. Silsbee, Reverend Henry Ward Beecher House, Peekskill, New York, 1878, lithograph (St. Peter's Episcopal School).



Fig. 66. R. M. Hunt, T. G. Appleton House, Newport, Rhode Island, 1875-6, demolished (Scully, The Stick Style and the Shingle Style).

I can't thank you sufficiently for your kindness in getting me Mr. Beecher's job. I saw him here. I have just sent plans to him - which I trust will please him.¹

Once again Silsbee's friend had helped him to secure an important commission.

Henry Ward Beecher visited the Syracuse Savings Bank and took the trip to the tower of the building. He expressed his admiration for Silsbee's work to the newspapers.² His pronouncement that Silsbee was "a young man of promise, who has done excellent work in Massachusetts as well as the city of his adoption"³ indicates that Beecher was familiar with some of Silsbee's work before 1875.

The Reverend Beecher had been impressed with Hunt's architecture, and he may have told Silsbee of his desire for a house like Hunt's cottages [Fig. 66]. The house [Fig. 65] rose from a granite base to a high and picturesque assortment of gables, roofs, chimneys and dormers. The jagged verticality of the house was subdued a bit by its Stick Style porch which ran around the first story. That it had "less coherence than most of Hunt's

¹ Joseph Lyman Silsbee to A. D. White, 3 June 1876, A. D. White Papers, Ithaca, New York.

² Syracuse Herald, 30 October 1927.

³ Syracuse Journal, 19 April 1877.

⁴ New York Tribune, 9 July 1878.

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domestic designs of the 1870's,"¹ could be said of Silsbee's work, too. The unrestrained exuberance of this house [Fig. 67] is not the result of Silsbee's working in a new idiom. The unity that characterizes Silsbee's work was lacking in this building probably because Beecher had ideas of his own, such as that a house should be full of "variety," "intricacy," and "diversity," that it "should grow piecemeal, reflecting the changes in the life of the owner and his family."²

There is a certain sense of propriety in the six houses just described. In each case the design of the building was adjusted to the nature of the commission. Silsbee used a chastened Stick Style for a house for a modest banker and also for an inexpensive hotel at a Methodist campground. In an orphan asylum, he was able to suggest both institutional and domestic associations. An exclusive club on a resort island became a rich and festive expression of the good life. There was enormous room for variety in the Stick Style-Queen Anne idiom, and within the bounds of appropriateness, Silsbee relished the opportunities. Certainly the budgets and the clients' desires and preconceptions were important elements in Silsbee's approach. This was especially evident in the

¹Baker, pp. 247-248.

²Ibid. The New York Tribune, 9 July 1878, said of Beecher, "it has long been his dream to build a dwelling that in every detail should fitly embody his ideas of a home."

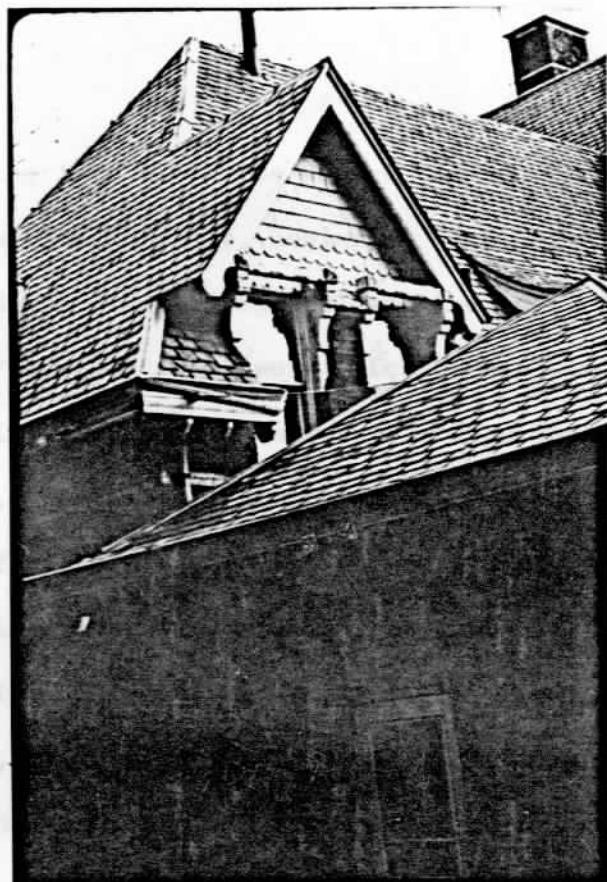


Fig. 67. Silsbee, Reverend Henry Ward Beecher House, Peekskill, New York, 1878, detail of a rear dormer which has not been remodeled.

Beecher House and in the old-fashioned Voorhees Residence, the two least successful of Silsbee's early houses.

In the 1880's Silsbee worked out his personal version of the Queen Anne style, beginning with houses like the Dissell House (1881) [Fig. 68] and the Loyal Taber Residence (1881) [Fig. 69]. They were brick houses with terracotta trim, and their massiveness and permanence were striking. The Dissell House, in its massing, its repetition of pilasters, and its use of string courses to identify horizontal divisions, was very much like the Westcott House [Fig. 53] remade in brick. The proportions are expanded, decreasing the verticality seen in the Westcott House and increasing its substantive impact.

A favorite motif of Silsbee's, which he had used in the tower of the Albany church, is the extension of pilasters from the second floor into the gable, and the coupling of these pilasters by an entablature. This breaks up the plane of the gable into smaller forms and links it to the body of the house below. Silsbee further reduced the large gable area of the Dissell House into separate planes by the use of diagonal and curved shadow lines, as he did in wood on the Orphan Asylum. These diagonals also serve to stabilize visually the pilaster-framed opening. There is a vigor and sense of physical



Fig. 68. Silsbee, Theodore Dissell House, Syracuse, 1881, demolished (McKee Collection).



RESIDENCE OF MRS. L. C. TABER.

Fig. 69. Silsbee, Loyal Taber House, Syracuse, 1881, demolished (Art Work of Syracuse).

force in this large frame pushing into the gable. It is like Silsbee's use of similar elements in his Victorian Gothic buildings and in the Orphan Asylum. This two-story pilaster and entablature motif was used even more forcefully on the grander Taber House, where it framed a semi-circular opening to a second floor porch. Here, with its surrounding fenestration, it looked almost like a diagrammatic version of a Palladian motif broken into its component parts.

In the Dissell and Taber houses, Silsbee was experimenting in a masonry architecture with the freedom of invention and loose eclecticism that the Queen Anne style encouraged. Elements of these houses, such as the flat wooden rafters exposed in the gables, the large one-story wooden porches which wrapped around corners, and the reticulated composition of the walls, recall the earlier Stick Style houses. Other elements, however, such as the free variations on classical orders in the pilaster capitals and the rich terra-cotta ornament, are clearly derived from Norman Shaw and the American Queen Anne.

In 1882 Silsbee extended his practice to Buffalo, where from 1883 to 1886 he was in partnership with J. Herbert Marling. In fact, from 1882 to 1886 he maintained offices in Syracuse, Buffalo and Chicago. By 1886 he had closed his offices in Buffalo and Syracuse

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and moved permanently to Chicago. In the early 1880's Silsbee seems to have had little work in Syracuse. He therefore began to concentrate more and more on Chicago. But the Buffalo houses which we know, and the fact that he stayed there four years indicate that he did quite a few houses in Buffalo. One of these, the Bemis House, is still standing. Photographs of two others appeared in a French publication entitled L'architecture americaine² in 1886.

Silsbee seems to have progressively incorporated into his designs more and more classical and colonial elements, such as fan windows, Palladian motifs, Ionic capitals, shingles, overhanging gables, and leaded glass windows. In the early 1880's his was a very free and individual use of these motifs. The more archeological phase of his Colonial Revival did not take place until the Columbian International Exposition in 1893.³ This free and imagin-

¹See Appendix D.

²Republished as Arnold Lewis and Keith Morgan, eds., American Victorian Architecture: A Survey of the 70's and 80's in Contemporary Photographs (New York: Dover Publications, 1975), pp. 25-27, pls. III 23-25. One of these, III pl. 27, had been published in American Architect and Building News 15(12 April 1884). Sorell, pp. 6-7, stated that this house had been designed after Silsbee had settled in Chicago. The American Architect illustration is clearly labeled "Syracuse, NY". It must have been designed from the Syracuse office. Therefore, Marling, Silsbee's partner in Buffalo, does not seem to have had a hand in its design.

³Sorell, pp. 12, 13.

ative use of Colonial and Queen Anne elements paralleled the impulse toward individuality of expression in the 1880's.

In general Silsbee's Queen Anne houses did not degenerate into a profusion of meaningless detail. Each facade was carefully and artfully composed of elements which served more than a decorative purpose. In the House in Buffalo of 1884 [Fig. 70], for example, panels of terracotta over the first story windows were arranged in a horizontal strip which marked the springline of the arches and the ceiling of the first floor. These panels made the transition from smooth brick to rough shingles and provided needed relief from the planar quality of the brick wall. The circular forms of the brick arches which proceeded around the first floor were repeated at the same scale in wood on the porch over the entry and at a larger scale in the gable. The facade stepped progressively outward as it rose to the gable, creating pronounced lines of shadow and recalling colonial precedent. Silsbee used ornament purposefully to distinguish functional parts, to illustrate structural characteristics, to ennoble special spaces inside the facade and to unify the building either through continuity or through repetition of a particular set of forms.

Silsbee's Queen Anne seems to have developed in part from his earlier association with Emerson. Another House in Buffalo [Fig. 71], in its formal expression of functional



Fig. 70. Silsbee, House in Buffalo, New York, 1884,
demolished (American Victorian Architecture).

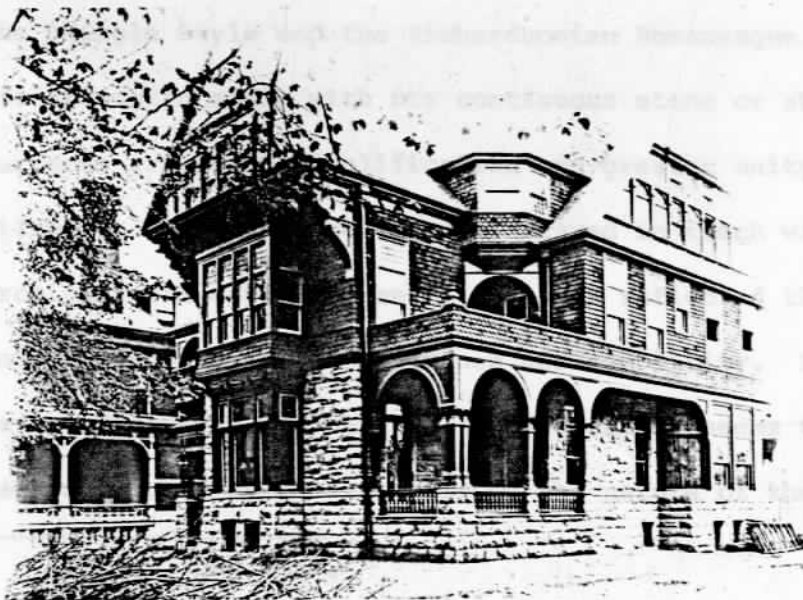


Fig. 71. Silsbee, House in Buffalo, New York, c. 1885,
demolished (American Victorian Architecture).

parts, its picturesque composition, and its horizontally unifying wooden porch, is as much a descendant of the American domestic tradition embraced by Emerson as it is of Shavian eclecticism.

It was during this Queen Anne phase of his development¹ that Silsbee began to practice in Chicago. He did produce one tall commercial building in the city, the Chicago Telephone Building,² but his practice was mainly domestic. The brash, untutored, swaggering Chicago which comes to mind when we think of the city in the 1880's was not Silsbee's Chicago. He found his place in the domestic sphere, supplying "culture" to the businessmen who worked in the new steel-framed efficiencies downtown.

Gradually Silsbee's houses took on characteristics of the Shingle Style and the Richardsonian Romanesque. The Richardsonian style with its continuous stone or shingled surfaces brought a simplification and greater unity to Silsbee's work.³ Silsbee clearly stayed in touch with architectural currents, and his houses reflected the movement toward formal coherence and simplicity. It should be noted, however, that this simplification seems to have been motivated at least partly by the nature of the

¹Ibid., pp. 6, 7.

²Frank A. Randall, The Development of Chicago Building Construction (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 115. Sorell, p. 11, and 1887 sketch by George Maher, p. 10.

commissions, and Silsbee's Chicago houses are similar in many ways to earlier buildings he designed in Syracuse. The George W. Hale House (1886) [Fig. 72], in brick and terra-cotta, with its pilaster strips rising into the gable, its horizontal banding of ornament and its rectilinear planarity, has its parentage in the Dissell House (1881) in Syracuse. The facade of the H. B. Stone House (1888) [Fig. 73] is related to the Hale House. To meet the requirement for restraint on a constricted row house site, however, Silsbee nearly eliminated ornament and depended upon consistency of material and on simplified composition. This is a beautifully composed facade, but stylistically it should be seen not as a new direction but rather as a continuation of earlier Silsbee ideas manifest in the Dutch Reformed Church in Syracuse. In the H. B. Stone House we can see that basic principles of Silsbee's High Victorian Gothicism were retained; functional articulation, repetition of forms at different scales, and honest expression of materials.

When Frank Lloyd Wright found employment in his office, 1887, Silsbee had turned to the Shingle Style for a series of houses in Edgewater. Once again, this more unified and restrained approach to design, while it had its roots in Eastern domestic architectural developments, was also a result of the conditions of the commissions. Edgewater was a suburban housing development built by the real estate speculator J. L. Cochrane on the lakeshore, seven miles

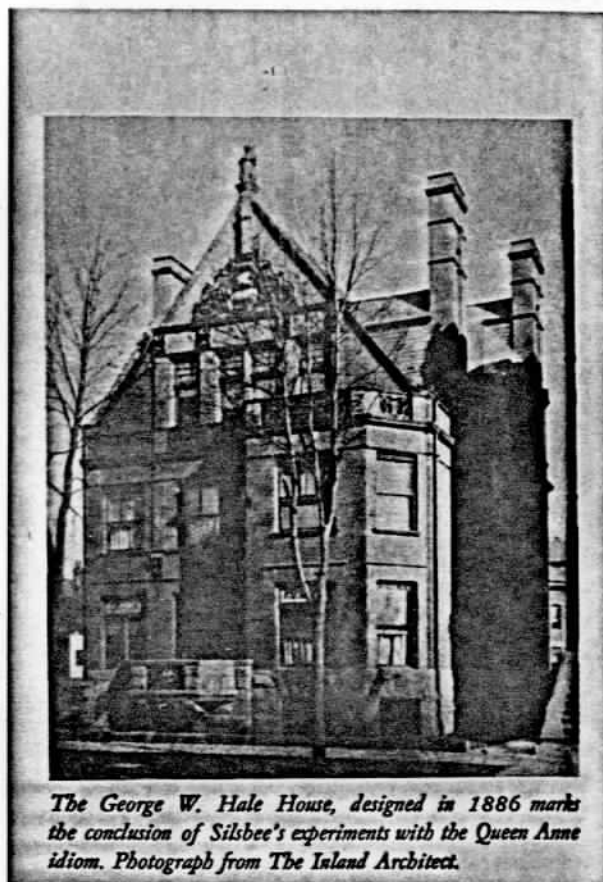


Fig. 72. Silsbee, George W. Hale House, Chicago, 1886, demolished (Sorell, "Silsbee: Evolution of a Personal Architectural Style").

of 1888 at 78 Bellevue Place
 is a surviving example of Silsbee's masonry building style
 inspired by Richardson. Photograph by Thomas Yanul.

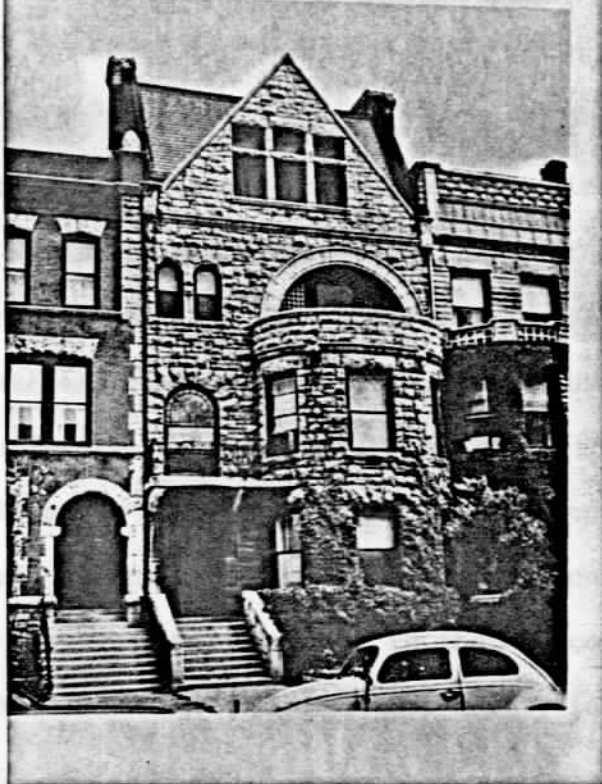


Fig. 73. Silsbee, H. B. Stone House, Chicago, 1888 (Sorell, "Silsbee: Evolution of a Personal Architectural Style").

A Biographical History with Portraits of Prominent
 Men of the Great West (Chicago: Manhattan Publishing Company,
 1924), pp. 434-435.

north of Michigan Avenue.

From the inception of the undertaking the object in view was to make Edgewater a model and ideal place of residence, within the reach of families of moderate income, and to establish a suburb to which Chicagoans could point with pride. ...the Edison incandescent light is used in the houses. The avenues are broad and macadamized, properly chained, with well kept stone sidewalks, everywhere shaded by trees at regular intervals.¹

An idyllic escape from the more brutal urban environment, calculated to appeal to the middle class, Edgewater was a place not for ostentatious show but for peaceful living and the moderate exercise of good taste. The houses Wright rendered while in Silsbee's employ [Figs. 74 and 75] were not so distantly removed from the E. N. Westcott House of 1877. Indeed in their composition and functional articulation, they were very similar to the Westcott House. In terms of their massing, they were new mainly in the use of single large unifying roofs.

The development of Silsbee's planning is impossible to discuss. Few plans were published, and these were in the late 1880's. From the plans that were published, however, it is clear that Silsbee's were well conceived [Fig. 76]. Their large open halls and spaces which moved out toward the landscape had much to offer the apprentices.

¹A Biographical History with Portraits of Prominent Men of the Great West (Chicago: Manhattan Publishing Company, 1894), pp. 439-439.



Fig. 74. Silsbee, J. L. Cochrane House, Edgewater, Illinois (Chicago), 1888, drawing by F. Ll. Wright (Manson, Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910).



Fig. 75. Silsbee, House in Edgewater, Illinois (Chicago), 1888, Sketch by F. Ll. Wright (Sorell, "Silsbee: Evolution of a Personal Architectural Style").

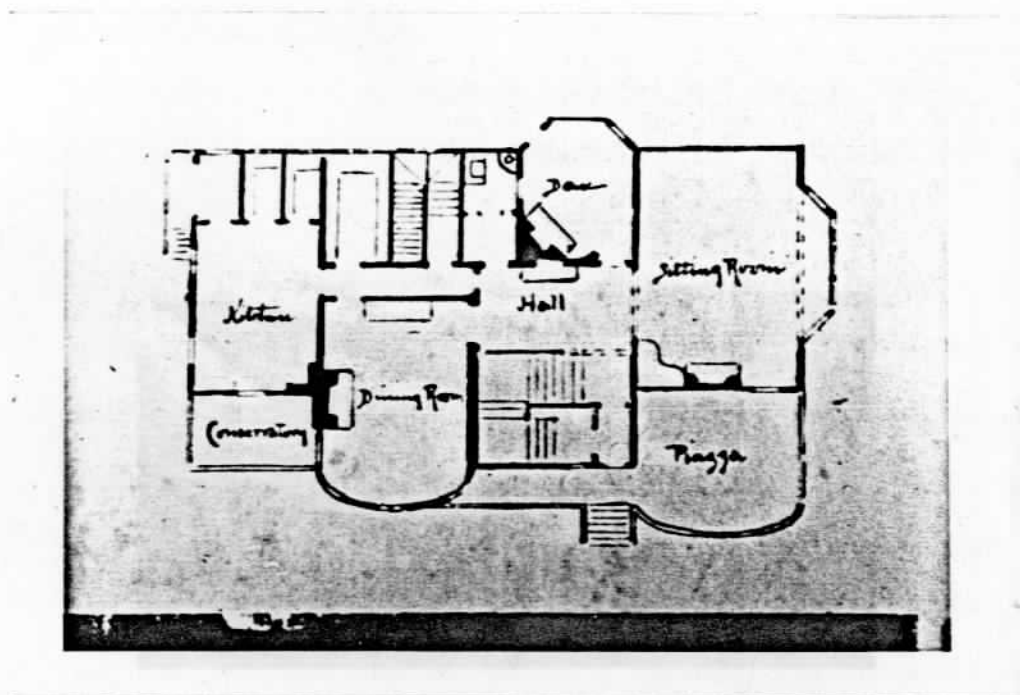


Fig. 76. Silsbee, J. L. Silsbee House, Edgewater, Illinois (Chicago), 1888, plan, ground floor (Inland Architect).

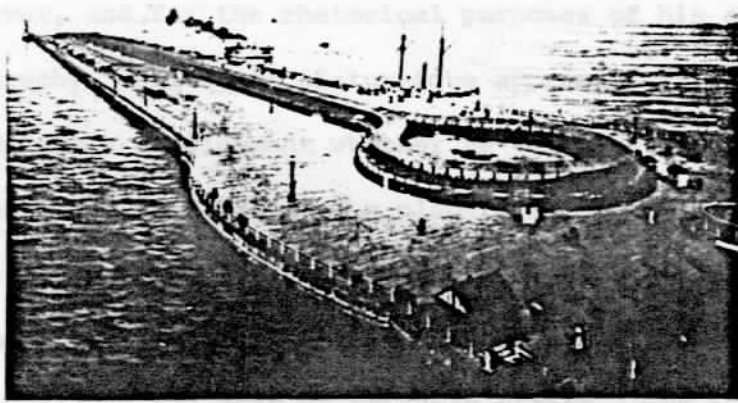


Fig. 77. Silsbee, Moveable Sidewalk, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893 (Shepp's World's Fair Photographed).

CONCLUSIONS

Wright criticized Silsbee's design method by stating, "Silsbee...made his pretty sketch...Then the sketch would come out into the draughting room to be fixed up into a building, keeping the floor-plan near the sketch if possible."¹ Wright made this criticism later in life, however, and for the rhetorical purposes of his autobiography. Silsbee's picturesque approach was important to Wright's development whether he was first getting the picture and then adapting a plan to it or whether he was reacting against its lack of rigor. Silsbee's connection through the Victorian Gothic to Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc was basic to the rest of Wright's career. The ideas which Silsbee digested in his studenthood and his apprenticeship were the ideas from which Wright was able to grow. There was a foundation of picturesque rationalist thought even in Silsbee's richest Queen Anne. To ignore Silsbee's pre-Chicago work is to misunderstand Silsbee. To treat the Queen Anne as an aberration, an interruption of the main line of American development, is a mistake. As

¹Frank Lloyd Wright, Autobiography, p. 93.

Scully has shown, the American Queen Anne was an important part of domestic design theory and an integral element of Richardson's synthesis of divergent strains in American thought.¹ Wright may have seen this developmental continuum in Silsbee's work and in his attitudes.

In spite of the overwhelming diversity of architecture in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there is a continuity in Silsbee's career.² This continuity is aesthetic rather than philosophical. He was never an architectural moralist. He wrote no books and developed no theories. Even his High Victorian Gothic was a rather subdued variety when compared with the work of the previous generation. He was drawn to the Gothic by training and because it offered scope for invention within a fundamentally rational set of criteria. He approached the new styles for what they could offer in aesthetic or architectonic terms rather than for what they could add in the way of embellishment.

¹In The Stick Style and the Shingle Style.

²This is true not only in his domestic work, but also in other phases of his career. As we have seen, he was testing Portland cement vaults as early as 1876. His moveable sidewalk for the Columbian International Exposition [Fig. 77] was an engineering invention of which he was proud [Report of the Secretary of the Class of 1869 of Harvard College (Boston, 1894), p. 78. I am grateful to Thomas J. McCormick for bringing this source to my attention]. Like his fellow eastern High Victorian Gothicist, Peter B. Wight, who came to Chicago and perfected a system of plaster block fireproofing, Silsbee maintained an interest in the practical and technical aspects of his profession.

There was a personal style to his work which raised it above the level of the average practicing architect. As Wright said, when asked about Silsbee, "He was a born¹ artist."

Silsbee's approach to architecture reminds us of Ruskin's description of the wise architect, in a section on originality:

A man who has the gift, will take up any style that is going, the style of his day, and will work in that, and be great in that, and make everything that he does in it look as fresh as if every thought of it had just come down from heaven.²

That Silsbee designed in terms of convention and propriety rather than in terms of revolutionary forms and precedent shattering ideas should not blind us to his real accomplishments. His commercial structures in Syracuse are buildings of high merit. They represented a new era of vitality and growth, and for more than a century they have contributed greatly to our perceptions of the city. Because of his background and his excellent training Silsbee was able to respond intelligibly to the welter of new stylistic impulses of late nineteenth century America.

¹Related to me by Thomas McCormick, who asked Wright about Silsbee on the one occasion on which they met. Wright had no other response.

²Ruskin, "The Lamp of Obedience," IV, p. 192, Seven Lamps. Ruskin of course, was dismayed by the multiplication of "styles" in which his contemporaries designed. He wanted architects to "choose a style, and to use it universally," p. 195, preferably "The English earliest decorated," the "most natural, perhaps the safest choice" among his four acceptable styles, p. 197.

It is only in light of the goals of the Prairie School architects, many of whom had acquired their training in Silsbee's office, that Wright's succinct assessment is comprehensible: "He was an architectural genius spoiled¹ by way of the aristocrat." Silsbee was well connected, thoroughly educated, a representative of a new generation of professionally trained architects who sought, in a vibrant, confusing period of history, a contemporary American architecture. Sorrell's catalogue was compiled mostly from announcements in the architectural press, and the concentration was on Chicago. Most of the following works were designed in Silsbee's Syracuse office, but a few were produced in Buffalo and in Chicago. There occurs between 1882 and 1888 some chronological overlap with Sorrell's catalogue. A few of the buildings from Sorrell's list also appear here because of additional information that merits their repetition. Two late buildings which Sorrell did not list are also included.

The format for this catalogue is similar to Sorrell's to facilitate comparison. In order to compare a listing of Silsbee's work from 1872-1911. Sorrell dated Silsbee's buildings according to their first publication in the architectural press. Since most of the following work did not appear in architectural periodicals, and since more accurate dates could be determined, entries here are arranged chronologically according to their dates of

¹ Frank Lloyd Wright, Autobiography, p. 93.

APPENDIX A

A CATALOGUE OF WORK BY JOSEPH LYMAN SILSBEE

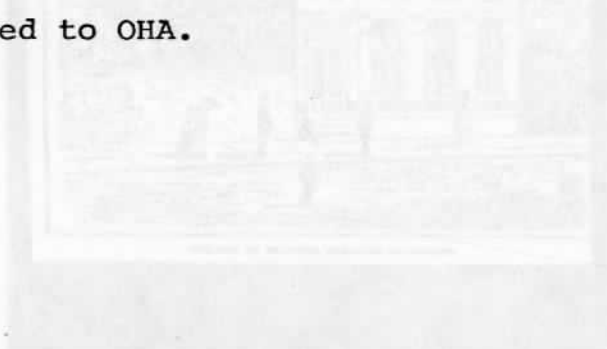
This catalogue is limited to the architecture not listed by Susan Karr Sorell, "A Catalogue of Work by J. L. Silsbee," Prairie School Review 7 (Fourth Quarter 1970): 17-21. Sorell's catalogue was compiled mostly from announcements in the architectural press, and the concentration was on Chicago. Most of the following works were designed in Silsbee's Syracuse office, but a few were produced in Buffalo and in Chicago. There occurs between 1883 and 1888 some chronological overlap with Sorell's catalogue. A few of the buildings from Sorell's list also appear here because of additional information that merits their repetition. Two late buildings which Sorell did not list are also included.

The format for this catalogue is similar to Sorell's to facilitate their use together to compose a listing of Silsbee work from 1875-1914. Sorell dated Silsbee's buildings according to their first publication in the architectural press. Since most of the following work did not appear in architectural periodicals, and since more accurate dates could be determined, entries here are arranged chronologically according to their dates of

construction. Unbuilt projects are dated according to their dates of design. Where a picture of the building has been found, it is included in the catalogue.

The following form is used: 1) name of the building and date; 2) address; 3) sources for dating and attribution; 4) notes. In the few cases where a work has not been demolished, the present state is noted.

Onondaga Historical Association will hereafter be abbreviated to OHA.

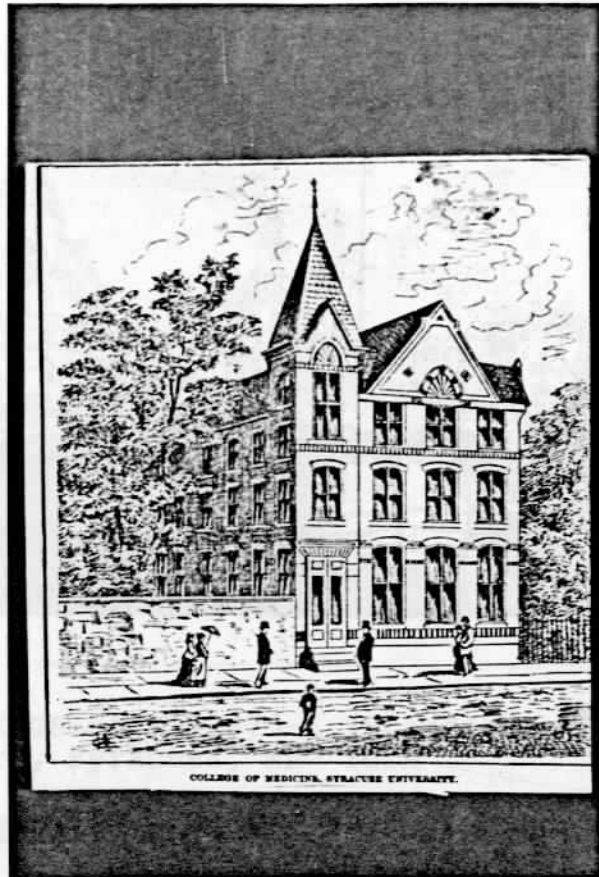


MEDICAL COLLEGE, Addition, 1875
 Orange Street (now McBride + on present site of University
 College)
 Syracuse New York

Syracuse Journal 30 June, 9 July, 8 October, 1875
 New York Daily Graphic 28 July 1875, illustrations
 OHA File "Silster"

Note: OHA File "Block 10" has a copy of a photograph of
 the building from the Syracuse University Alumni
 Record, 1899, p. 166.
 A utilitarian Gothic facade. Changed a great deal
 in construction. Windows were made to small heights,
 gable was built wider, tower at right either was not
 built or it was obliterated by additions, steps missing
 in later photo, pyramidal roof lower.

(Photo, OHA)



MEDICAL COLLEGE, Addition, 1875

Orange Street (now McBride - on present site of University
College)

Syracuse New York

Syracuse Journal 30 June, 9 July, 8 October, 1875

New York Daily Graphic 28 July 1875, illustration

OHA File "Silsbee"

Note: OHA File "Block 60" has a copy of a photograph of
the building from the Syracuse University Alumni
Record, 1899, p. 160.

A utilitarian Gothic facade. Changed a great deal
in execution. Windows were made to equal heights,
gable was built wider, dormer at right either was not
built or it was obliterated by additions, steps missing
in later photo, pyramidal roof lower.

(Photo, OHA)

OHA Files "Silsbee" and "Syracuse Savings Bank."

(Photo, Chase, 1, p. 177)



SYRACUSE SAVINGS BANK, 1875-6 (Standing)
Clinton Square, Syracuse, New York

<u>Syracuse Journal</u> 25 February 1875	Announcement of new building. To cost \$275,000, including land. Est. completion May 1877. John Moore, builder. J. L. Silsbee, architect.
12 April 1875	Bank removed to Empire House.
22 April 1875	Progress in demolition.
4 May 1875	Foundation commenced.
29 October 1875	Lithograph provided by Silsbee.
18 May 1876	Bank business commenced. Timbers for tower being placed.
31 May 1876	Finials placed on tower.
7 June 1876	Clock installation commenced.
10 June 1876	Salt Springs Bank moved in.
15 July 1876	Substantial completion. Detailed description.
15 August 1876	Placing marble tablets at main entrance.

See also Syracuse Journal 1 May, 2 June, 31 June, 15 October, 26 October, 1 November, 5 November, 10 November 1875; 28 March, 17 April, 20 May, 13 June, 22 June, 23 June, 7 October 1876.

OHA Files "Silsbee" and "Syracuse Savings Bank."

(Photo, Chase, I, p. 177)

HOUSES FOR JOHN MOORE, 1876
Syracuse, New York

J. L. Silsbee to A. D. White, 30 June 1876, Andrew Dickson White Papers, Ithaca, New York:

"...Moore has several times employed me to get up plans for him - & even this Spring I was engaged on a plan for his own house...I doubt now if he employs me at all on the job..."

Note: No further documentation has been located for these houses.



WHITE MEMORIAL BUILDING, 1876-7 (Standing)
East Washington Street at South Salina Street
Vanderbilt Square
Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Journal 8 May 1876

Contract let. Moore and Dickinson Builders. Est. \$81,000. Design divested of upper story.

10 May 1876

Demolition.

31 May 1876

Commenced foundation.

1 August 1876

Description, architect Silsbee.

11 September 1876

Walls complete to 5th story.

11 October 1876

Removal of scaffolding.

16 February 1877

Placing memorial tablet.

13 April 1877

Opening of stores, Valentine and Brumelkamp's.

WHITE MEMORIAL BUILDING (continued)

<u>Syracuse Journal</u>	17 April 1877	Bank moved in.
	10 June 1877	Contract to C. U. Kasson of Buffalo for hydraulic elevator.
	21 October 1877	Elevator commenced operation.
	5 April 1877	H. S. White sells 1/10 interest in building to H. K. White for \$17,000. Thus, est. value at \$170,000.

OHA File "White Memorial Building."
(Photo, Jack E. Boucher, HABS, January 1962)



REVEREND HENRY WARD BEECHER RESIDENCE, 1876-78 (Standing, Peekskill, New York but radically altered)

<u>Syracuse Journal</u>	4 June 1878	Excerpts from <u>Boston Daily Advertiser</u> . Description.
	5 July 1878	Description.
<u>New York Tribune</u>	9 July 1878	"House in Peekskill for Rev. Henry Ward Beecher."

J. L. Silsbee to A. D. White, 3 June 1876, Andrew Dickson White Papers, Ithaca, New York.

OHA File "Silsbee."

Note: Completely remodeled in a "Stockbroker Tudor" style in 1929, obliterating most of Silsbee's architecture. Now St. Peter's Episcopal School.

PROFESSOR JOHN H. DURSTON RESIDENCE, 1876-7
 33/77/601 University Avenue
 Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Journal 2 April, 10 November 1876.

University Herald 12 March 1877, wood, "cottage gothic."

Note: Durston was a professor at Syracuse University in 1876 and 1877. He later became editor of the Syracuse Standard.



EDWARD NOYES WESTCOTT HOUSE, 1877
 172/826/990 James Street (near Oak)
 Syracuse, New York

Maj. Durston to Thomas McCormick, 6 February 1950, OHA
 File "Silsbee," dates house.

Boyd's Syracuse City Directory, 1877, confirms date.

Syracuse Post Standard 25 December 1927

Syracuse Herald American 22 June 1947

University Herald 12 March 1877

(Photo, Harley McKee Collection)

Note: This notable house was built for a Professor of
 History and Logic at Syracuse University

(Photo, McKee Collection)



REVEREND CHARLES W. BENNETT RESIDENCE, 1877
 729 Irving Avenue
 Syracuse, New York

University Herald 12 March 1877

Note: This modest house was built for a Professor of
 History and Logic at Syracuse University

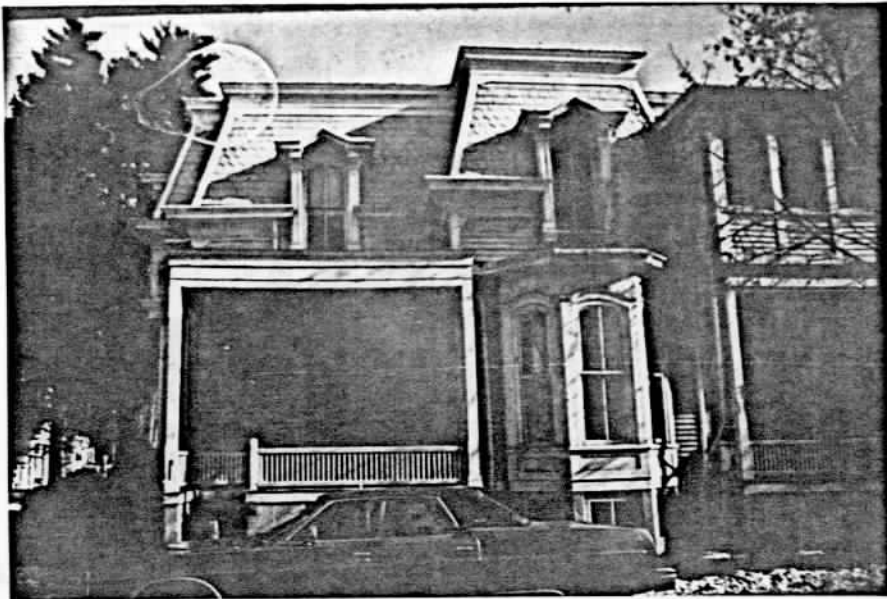
(Photos, McKee Collection)



DR. JOHN J. FRENCH HOUSE, 1877
 728 Chestnut Street (became 714 S. Crouse)
 Syracuse, New York

University Herald 12 March 1877

Note: Dr. French was a professor of mathematics at Syracuse University. He later became Dean of the College of Liberal Arts.
 The only photograph which has been found is this view down Crouse Avenue in which the gable can be seen above the Varsity Coffee Shop.
 (Photo, OHA)

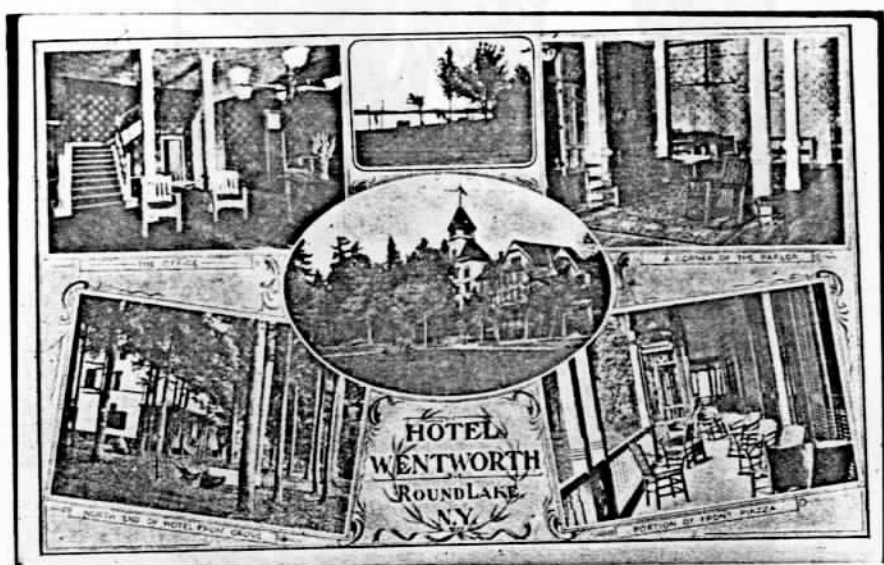


THEODORE VOORHEES RESIDENCE, 1877-78 (Standing)
 49 West High Street (Corner of Remson)
 Ballston Spa, New York

Syracuse Journal 28 September 1877 Contract let. Est.
 completion May 1, 1878.

Albany Argus 28 September 1877

Note: Modifications - Addition on rear doubled size of the original house. Some trim has been removed, and a new "Colonial" front door has been installed. Evidence that an opening has been closed on east flank.



WENTWORTH HOTEL, 1878
Round Lake, New York

Syracuse Journal 2 March 1878
Albany Argus 23 March 1878

Architect Silsbee.
Contract let to J. W.
Osborn of Albany. Silsbee
prepared plans.
Opening tomorrow.

Syracuse Journal 15 July 1878
A History of the Round Lake Association, 1968.

(Photo, Postcard)

Syracuse Journal 26 March 1878
Syracuse Courier 20 April 1878

Silsbee architect
Contract let Sat Sunday
School room to Phillip
Gottel & Co.

Syracuse Journal 27 July 1878
10 October 1878
Syracuse Courier 1 December 1878

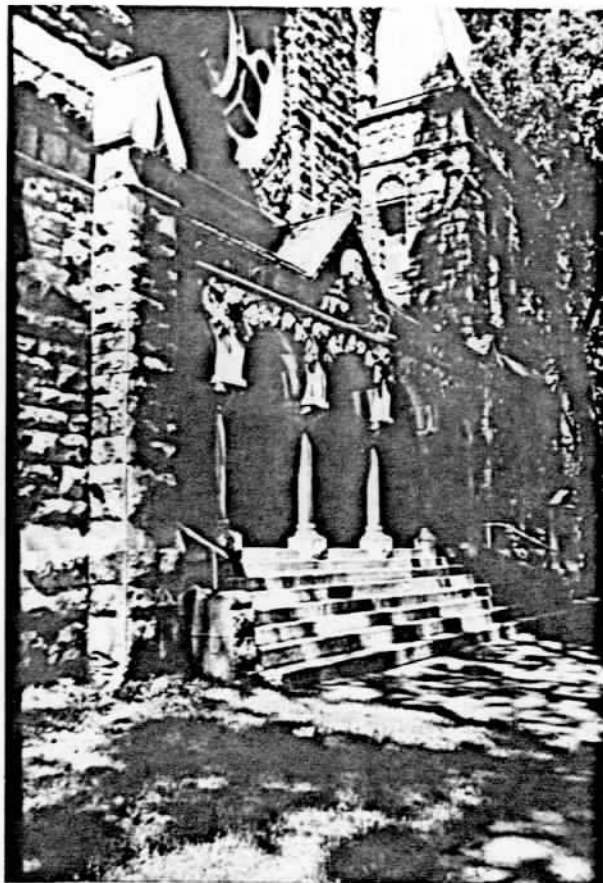
Cornerstone.
Chapel complete.
Lecture room in rear begun
1 April, finished around
1 October. Church begins
in July. Expected ready
next fall.

18 November 1880 Your window has been placed.
Syracuse Journal 11 February 1881 Dedication, description,
DMA File "Block 30."

(Photo, McKee Collection)

PUBLIC CONVENTIONS, 1878
Clinton Square
Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Journal 12 November 1878



FIRST (DUTCH) REFORMED CHURCH, 1878-81
James Street
Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Journal 26 March 1878
Syracuse Courier 20 April 1878

Silsbee architect
Contract let for Sunday
School room to Phillip
Goettel & Co.

Syracuse Journal 22 July 1878
10 October 1878
Syracuse Courier 3 December 1878

Cornerstone.
Chapel complete.
Lecture room in rear begun
1 April, finished around
1 October. Church begins
in July. Expected ready
next Fall.

23 November 1880
Syracuse Journal 11 February 1881
OHA File "Block 30."

Rose window has been placed.
Dedication, description.

(Photo, McKee Collection)

PUBLIC CONVENIENCE, 1878
Clinton Square
Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Journal 12 November 1878

Blk 400



GEORGE BARNES RESIDENCE (Continued)

Syracuse Courier Early 1860's and before

Syracuse Herald 28 May 1862

OMA file "Block 400"

OMA

Description

that Silsbee

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DR. THOMAS SMITH RESIDENCE, Dining room addition, 1878

18/600

Syracuse, New York

Between 1878 and 1893

GEORGE BARNES RESIDENCE, Additions and renovations 1878, 1882
 160/808/930 James Street (Standing, but radically altered)
 Syracuse, New York

the

the

the

the

the

the



GEORGE BARNES RESIDENCE (Continued)

Syracuse Courier 3 December 1878 Addition to study, wide piazza on two sides, bookcases and mantelpieces in library. Silsbee.

Syracuse Herald 28 May 1882 Dining room remodeling. Silsbee, Description.

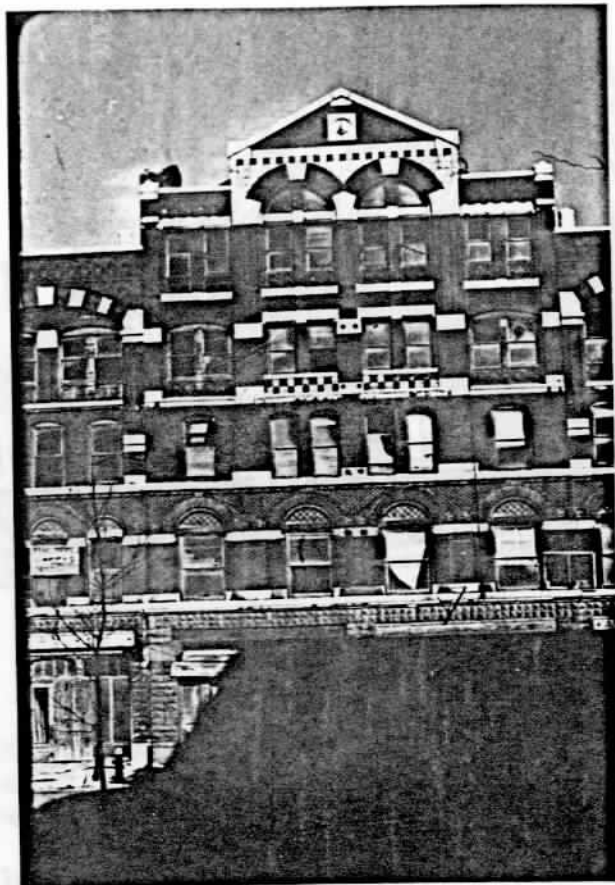
OHA File "Block 400"

Note: Comparison with earlier illustrations (OHA) indicates that Silsbee added two second story bays, a dormer, an ornamental iron porte-cochere, and another ironwork porch over a secondary entrance. He also enclosed the wide porch (on the right in the photo). The dining room renovation, done in 1882 for the new owner, Frank Hiscock, remains today, essentially unchanged, as the barroom of the Corinthian Club. The remainder of the house was radically altered in a complete remodeling, 1893-4.

(Photos, OHA)

DR. THOMAS EMORY RESIDENCE, Dining room addition, 1878
80/600 East Fayette Street
Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Courier 3 December 1878 "...probably the most elegant and attractive room of the kind in the city, or indeed the state...cherry wainscot, fireplace, stained glass...Silsbee."



AMOS BLOCK, 1878 (Standing)
 41-51/210-220 West Water Street
 Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Journal 25 February 1878 Demolition.
 3 December 1878 Has been completed. Silsbee.
 OHA Note, File "Amos Block," Completed September 1878.



COL. E. S. JENNY HOUSE, 1878
150 Lodi Street (Corner of Wayne)
Syracuse, New York

Attribution by Harley McKee.

(Photo, McKee Collection, August 1956)



GENERAL DWIGHT H. BRUCE HOUSE, 1878
 144/718 James Street
 Syracuse, New York

Maj. Durston to Thomas McCormick, 14 February 1950, OHA
 File "Silsbee."

(Photo, McKee Collection)



OAKWOOD CEMETARY CHAPEL AND RECEIVING VAULT, 1879-80
Syracuse, New York (Standing)

Syracuse Journal 12 March 1880

Silsbee. Completed January
1880. Description.

Note: Original stained glass is gone.

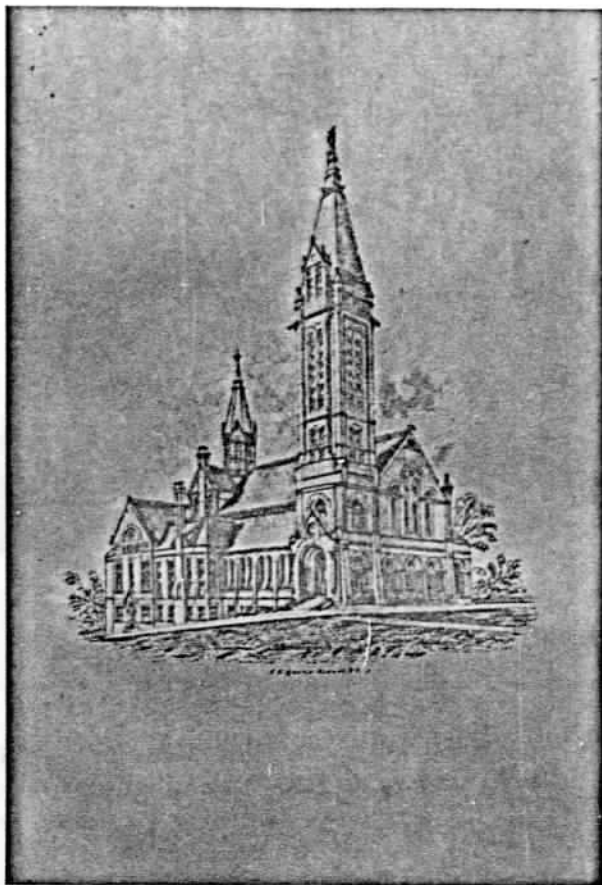
Notes: Original stained glass is gone.
100 Madison Avenue (opposite of South Street)
Albany, New York

Syracuse Journal 11 May 1879
Merrick's Church, Albany, New York
Albany, 1879, February 2, 24, 1880.
Syracuse, 11 May 1880; Contractors 1879, 24 April 1879;
Syracuse, 11 May 1879; Contractors 1879, 24 April 1879;
Syracuse, 11 May 1879; Contractors 1879, 24 April 1879;
Albany, 1879, February 2, 24, 1880.
Albany, 1879, February 2, 24, 1880. Photographs
taken 2000-2001.

Notes: site was occupied by a portion of Perry's South Hill
project. The architect is John A. Beckwith's class.
(Photo, copyright of the author, 2000-2001)

Notes: site was occupied by a portion of Perry's South Hill
project. The architect is John A. Beckwith's class.

Syracuse Journal 11 May 1880. H. B. Smith, architect.
Syracuse, 11 May 1880. Silsbee, and Cotton and Kirby
submitted plans. Merrick's Church



SECOND REFORMED CHURCH, 1879-81
321 Madison Avenue (Corner of Swan Street)
Albany, New York

Syracuse Journal 21 May 1879

Memorial of the Second Reformed Church, Albany, New York
(Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1881).

Cornerstone, 14 July 1879; Contracts let, 25 April 1879;
Exterior complete, December 1879; Interior complete,
Fall 1880; Dedication, 8 March 1881.

Albany Knickerbocker Press 17 February 1937. Photographs
before and after 1936 fire.

Note: Site now occupied by a portion of Albany's South Mall
Project, the Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Plaza.

(Photo, Memorial of the Second Reformed Church)

FOURTH WARD SCHOOLHOUSE, PRESCOTT SCHOOL, Competition entry
Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Journal 21 May 1880. H. N. White, Archimedes
Russell, Asa Merrick, Silsbee, and Colton and Kirby
submitted plans. Merrick's chosen.



ONONDAGA COUNTY ORPHAN ASYLUM, 1884-85
 East Genesee Street (Near University Avenue)
 Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Journal 29 January 1880 Advertise for bids. Silsbee architect.
 26 February 1880 Silsbee received bids. Undecided whether to begin construction or to delay.
Syracuse Courier 30 November 1880 Land purchased "...for the future."
 OHA File "Block 221" Lithograph opening ceremonies 3 December 1885.

(Photo, OHA)

JAMES STREET SCHOOL, 1880
 Utica, New York

Syracuse Courier 2 July 1880, 16 June 1880.
Syracuse Journal 18 July 1880, 21 December 1880
Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools of the City of Utica for the School Year Ending October 1, 1880
 (Utica: Ellis H. Roberts, 1880), pp. 16-18.
 Description.

Note: From the description - A grammar school, irregular in plan, brick first floor, red Ohio tile second floor, slate roof, picturesque outline.



TRINITY CHURCH, 1880 (Standing)
Antrim, Pennsylvania

Syracuse Courier 17 July 1880 "...one of five churches to be erected in different places in the county."

Building Budget February 1886, pl. following p. 24.
"A memorial church."

(Photo, Building Budget)



THEODORE DISSELL HOUSE, 1881-2
119/701 James Street (at Lodi)
Syracuse, New York

Maj. Durston to Thomas McCormick, 14 February 1950, OHA
File "Silsbee," attribution by Silsbee's daughter.
OHA File "Block 1009," Syracuse Post Standard 20 February 1936.

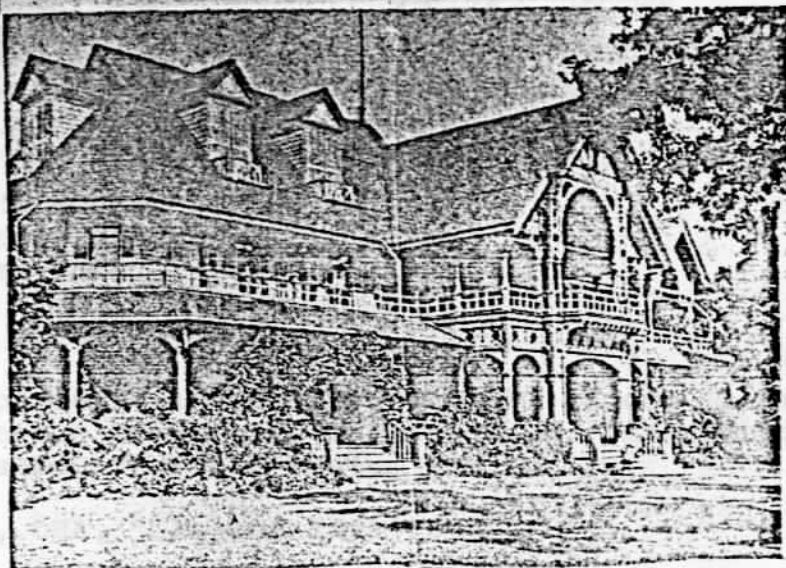


LOYAL TABER HOUSE, 1881
1140 South Salina Street (Corner of West Kennedy)
Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Post Standard 20 February 1936
OHA File "Block 1009" photograph.
(Photo, Art Work of Syracuse)

A. F. LEWIS HOUSE, 1882
 142/712 James Street
 Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Herald 26 March 1882.
American Architect and Building News 8(13 January 1883).



FALCONWOOD CLUB HOUSE, 1882
 Grand Island, New York

Syracuse Journal 24 July 1882
 Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Scrapbooks,
 "Grand Island Clippings," 2 vols.
 "The City of Buffalo," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 81
 (July 1885): 206, 207-208.



PATRICK LYNCH HOUSE, Remodeling, 1882
James and State Streets
Syracuse, New York

Attribution by Harley McKee.

Note: Cannot determine Silsbee's work. House later became the Everson Museum and was enlarged. Abandoned and demolished after new museum was built.

(Photo, OHA, "Clayton 1898")

Buffalo, 1884
Buffalo, New York

Syracuse Standard 15 April 1884
American Architect and Building News 9 (12 April 1884)
perspective.
American Historical Architecture, eds. Lewis and Morgan,
photograph, p. 125.



J. M. BEMIS HOUSE, 1883 (Standing)
267 North Street
Buffalo, New York

Building Structure Inventory Form prepared by Buffalo Landmark
and Preservation Board, 23 January 1979.
Real Estate and Builders Monthly, March 1886, p. 5.

Note: Francis R. Kowsky, Chairman of the Fine Arts Department,
State University College at Buffalo, provided a copy
of the Building Structure Inventory Form and notes
from the Real Estate and Builders' Monthly. Bemis
was a lumber baron, and he had installed ten fireplaces
with carved wood mantelpieces. Each room in the
main part of the house is decorated in a different
wood.

American Victorian Architecture, ed. Lewis and Morgan,
photograph, p. 121.

Note: This photograph was published originally in 1886.
Sibley and Marling, Architects.

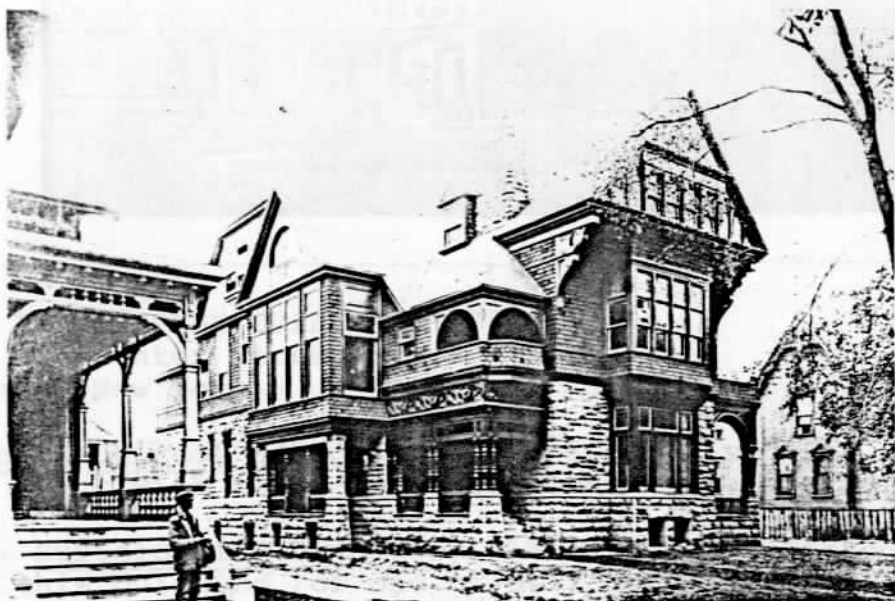
RESIDENCE, 1884
Buffalo, New York

Syracuse Standard 16 April 1884
American Architect and Building News 9 (12 April 1884)
perspective.
American Victorian Architecture, eds. Lewis and Morgan.
photograph, p. 125.

WILLIAM DICKINSON HOUSE, 1884
 110/521 West Onondaga Street
 Syracuse, New York

Syracuse Herald 13 July 1884

Note: Dickinson was one of the contractors for the White Memorial Building.



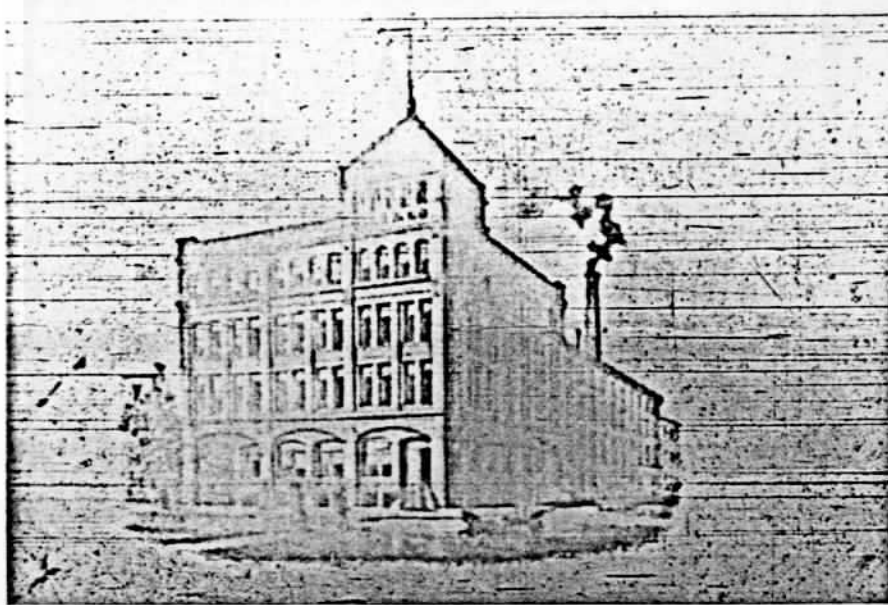
RESIDENCE, c. 1885
 Buffalo, New York

American Victorian Architecture, ed. Lewis and Morgan,
 photograph, p. 123.

Note: This photograph was published originally in 1896.
 Silsbee and Marling, architects.

FRANCIS HOUSE, 1885
 Buffalo, New York

Inland Architect 6 (August 1885):8.



GIES AND COMPANY BUILDING, 1886
 Swan and Center Streets
 Buffalo, New York

Inland Architect 6 (August 1885): 8. five stories, pressed brick with terra-cotta ornamentation. Est. \$25,000.

Note: Buffalo City Directory, 1886, p. 469. Lithograph of this building for one of Buffalo's leading lithographers. Stripped commercial factory building with corner tower.

(Photo, Buffalo City Directory)

Marling and Burdette 1887

INCENSOILL MEMORIAL CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, Project, 1888(?)
 56 Jewett Parkway (at Summit)
 Buffalo, New York

Buffalo Express Yearbook 1887, p. 13. Silas and Marling.
 1888, p. 28. Marling and Burdette.



Silsbee and Marling 1886(?)



Marling and Burdette 1887

INGERSOLL MEMORIAL CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, Project, 1886(?)
 96 Jewett Parkway (at Summit)
 Buffalo, New York

Buffalo Express Yearbook 1887, p. 19. Silsbee and Marling.
 1888, p. 28. Marling and Burdette.

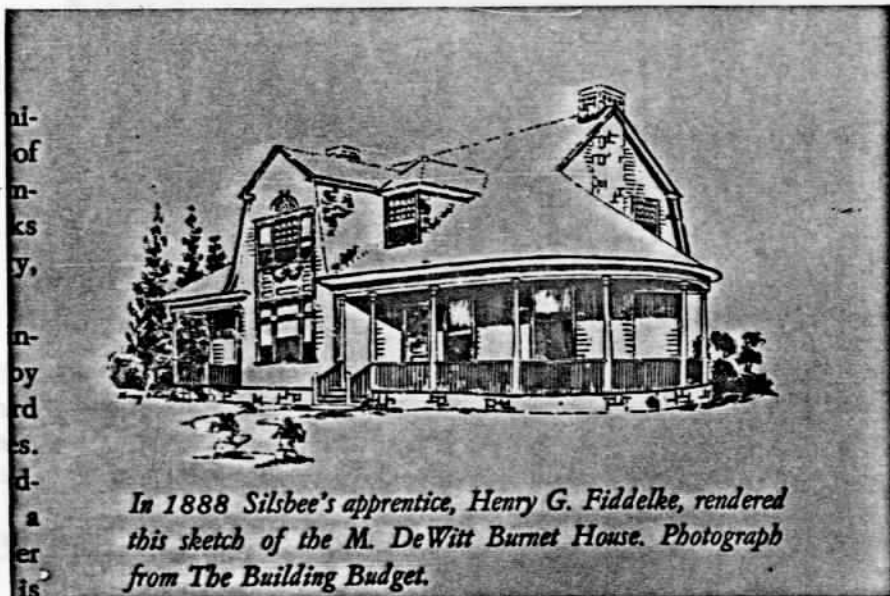
INGERSOLL MEMORIAL CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (continued)

Note: Silsbee and Marling did the original scheme. After Silsbee left for Chicago, Marling went into partnership with Burdette. The church was built from their reworked 1887 design. Standing.

GEORGE R. HOWARD HOUSE, 1888
249 Summer Street
Buffalo, New York

Building Budget 4 (29 February 1888): 24.
Real Estate & Builders' Monthly (July 1887): 3.

Note: Later called the Charles Weston House. Demolished in 1932. Copy of Real Estate & Builders' Monthly from Francis Kowsky, State University College at Buffalo, "The first story is to be of Philadelphia brick, with terra-cotta ornaments; the upper stories will be of ornamental shingle work..."

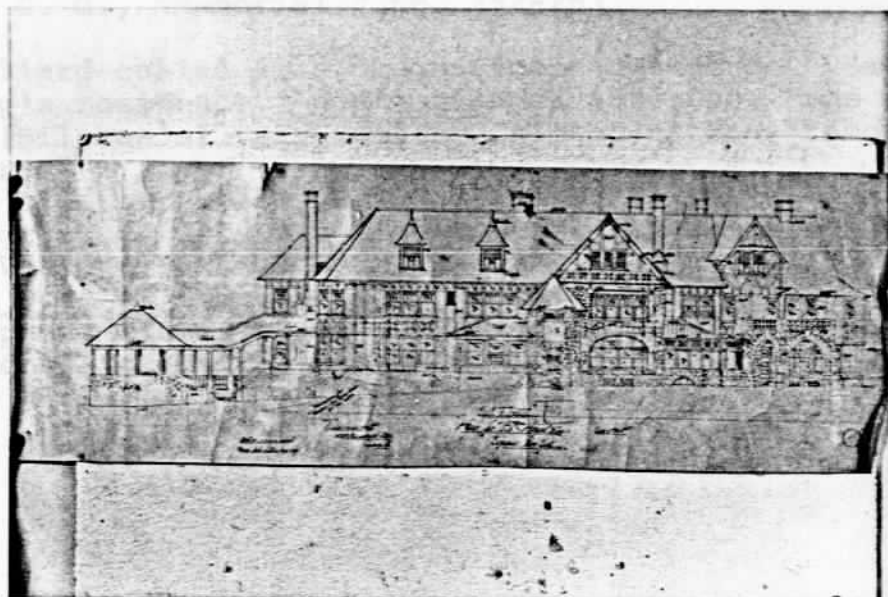


M. DEWITT BURNET HOUSE, Project, 1888
Burnet Park
Syracuse, New York

Building Budget 4 (31 October 1888).

M. DeWITT BURNET HOUSE (continued)

Note: Susan Karr Sorell, "Silsbee: The Evolution...", p. 13, illustrated this house, which seems never to have been built. Burnet Park was a gift from Major John B. Burnet of 135 acres west of the city. It was to be used as a public park (Bruce, Memorial History, 248). Moses DeWitt Burnet was one of the men who incorporated the Syracuse Savings Bank (Bruce, Onondaga Centennial, I, 581). He lived in the Hine Apartments on James Street from 1888-93.



FREDERICK R. HAZARD HOUSE, 1892

Upland Farms
Orchard Road
Solvay, New York

Inland Architect 19 (March 1892).

Note: Discussed by Susan Karr Sorell, "Silsbee: The Evolution...", p. 13.

A large rambling concoction of Richardsonian, Queen Anne and classical motifs, built for the President of Solvay Process Company. Silsbee's son, Ralph Sedgwick Silsbee, worked for Solvay Process as a draftsman and assistant construction superintendent from 1902-1905 (Princeton University, Class of 1903, Statistics for Decennial Record, Ralph Sedgwick Silsbee, August 5, 1913). Silsbee's sister-in-law, Dora Sedgwick, married Hazard in 1886 (Bruce, Memorial History, II, p. 58). This house was designed in Silsbee's Chicago office. A set of blue line prints from Silsbee's

FREDERICK R. HAZARD HOUSE (continued)

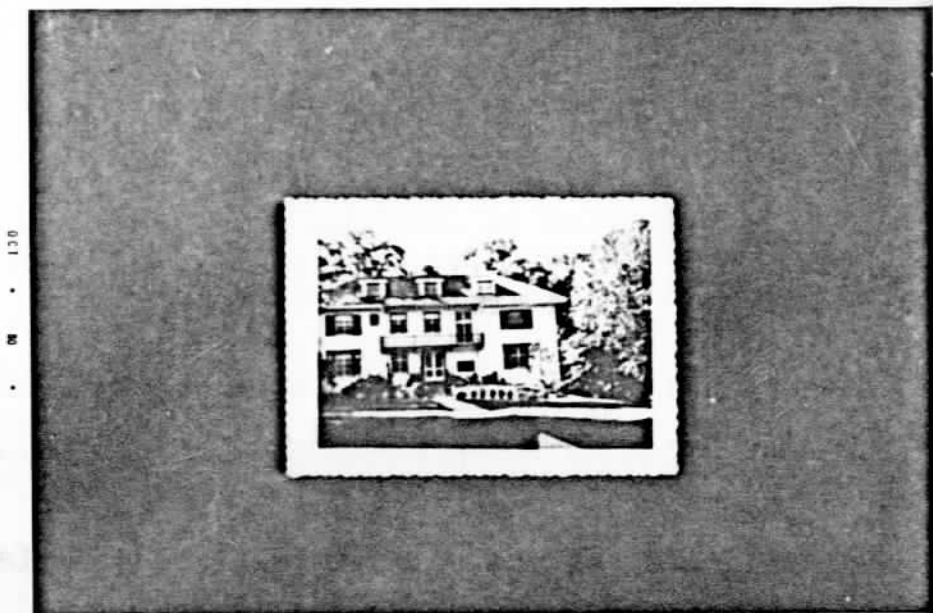
office, used as basic construction documents in 1892, is in a private collection. It consists of basement and attic plans (ground and second floors are missing), four elevations on three sheets, and two transverse sections on one sheet, 1/4 scale.

HOUSE IN VERMEJO PARK, 1913
Near Trinidad, New Mexico

Willard, G. G., "Memorial," pp. 252-253

Note: Willard called it a "magnificent residence," "a king's residence," costing about \$500,000, "for one of [Silsbee's] very wealthy Chicago patrons removed there."

The client probably was William H. Bartlett, a broker of grain, stocks and bonds. Bartlett spent summers in Vermejo Park [John W. Leonard, Who's Who in Chicago: The Book of Chicagoans (Chicago: A. N. Marquis and Company, 1905), p. 46]. Earlier Silsbee had built a house for Bartlett in Evanston, 1891 (Sorell, p. 21, no. 83).



FRANK E. WADE HOUSE, 1914
7 Brattle Road
Syracuse, New York

Attribution by Mrs. Soule, a neighbor at 2 Brattle Road,
to Harley McKee, McKee Collection.

Note: Frank Wade married Silsbee's daughter, Margaret B.,
in 1904 at Edgewater, Illinois. This house, if it
is Silsbee's, was designed at the end of his career.

BORN in Salem, Mass., November 25, 1848. Son of
William and Charlotte (Lyman) Silsbee.

MARRIED June 5, 1875, at Syracuse, N.Y., to Anna E.,
daughter of Charles E. and Deborah W. (Gannett)
Sedgwick.

CHILDREN:

Charlotte, F. April 9, 1878; m. Francis
Brazel Smith, June 30, 1906.

Child: Joseph Lyman, b. June 18, 1908

Margaret, b. October 19, 1877; Smith College;
m. Frank E. Wade, June 4, 1904.

Child: Anna Sedgwick, b. October 4, 1907.

Joseph Lyman, b. June 18, 1878; A.B.
Harvard, 1902.

Ralph, b. January 7, 1881; Princeton.

Cladya, b. October 8, 1885.

Anna, b. August 7, 1887; m. Edward A.
Spoonfield, November 25, 1907.

Deborah, b. November 18, 1890.

DIED January 31, 1913.

The following Memorial by Willard was presented
at the Class meeting on Commencement Day,
1913:

APPENDIX B

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Biographical information may be found in Withey and Withey, pp. 554-555; The Chicago Daily News, 1 February 1913; and Emmerton, p. 52. The most useful source is the memorial written by a Harvard College classmate and life-long friend, Gardner Goodrich Willard; for convenience it is re-printed below.

JOSEPH LYMAN SILSBEE.

BORN in Salem, Mass., November 25, 1848. Son of William and Charlotte (Lyman) Silsbee.
MARRIED June 5, 1875, at Syracuse, N.Y., to Anna B., daughter of Charles B. and Deborah W. (Gannet) Sedgwick.

CHILDREN:

Charlotte, b. April 9, 1876; m. Francis Drexel Smith, June 30, 1900.

Child: Joseph Lyman, b. June 10, 1908

Margaret, b. October 19, 1877; Smith College; m. Frank E. Wade, June 4, 1904.

Child: Anna Sedgwick, b. October 4, 1907.

Joseph Lyman, b. June 16, 1879; A.B. Harvard, 1902.

Ralph, b. January 7, 1881; Princeton.

Gladys, b. October 9, 1885.

Anne, b. August 7, 1887; m. Edward A.

Rosenfeld, November 25, 1907.

Deborah, b. November 10, 1890.

DIED January 31, 1913.

The following Memorial by Willard was presented at the Class meeting on Commencement Day, June 19, 1913:-

Very unexpectedly, after a brief illness of only three weeks, our classmate, Joseph Lyman Silsbee, died January 31, 1913, at his home in Edgewater, a suburb and part of Chicago, in his sixty-fifth year. According to his physician's diagnosis, the cause was a malignant growth on the liver. His illness was attended by very little pain, but toward the last a rapid weakening. I say "unexpectedly" because for years he had seemed in

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excellent health and excellent spirits, out much in the open, playing golf and the like, travelling widely in professional matters, and seemingly finding life pleasant and worrying little.

His ancestral stock on both sides was throughout that fine old Puritan stock, as we speak of the type a century back and more. His father was the Reverend William Silsbee, Harvard, 1832, whose family, generations from the first early coming to this country, had lived in and about Salem, Mass. His mother was Charlotte Lyman, from Northampton, Mass., with his father, who was in charge of the Unitarian Church there. In 1863 he entered the Middle Class at the Phillips Exeter Academy and in June, 1865, our Class.

His College life, as I remember it, and as I think most of the Class will remember it, was as to his studies that of a creditable, but not an especially hard-working student; for he enjoyed its social and athletic side too much really to dig and grind for student rank and honors. In his studies his preference was rather for the things tending to cultivate the amenities of life than preparation for the hurly-burly of its battles. He was fond of athletics, in which rowing was his favorite, and the spare time he had for them was given chiefly to rowing on the Charles. While in College he had neither the natural or acquired physique and ruggedness to excel particularly in the College sports of his time, and I really do not think he very much cared to, though during all of 1868 and some of 1869 before we graduated he took part in numerous of the local Class boat races. He did enjoy walking, and in the vacations had several long and interesting tramps in the New England States and New York with various of our classmates. He was very likeable and approachable; he liked all of us, and so he was liked by us all.

After graduation from Harvard he completed the archi-

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tectural course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was for a time after that in the offices of Ware & Van Brunt, and later of Ralph Emerson, of Boston, all architects of high repute in those days. Then he made a trip to Europe, passing upwards of a year there, mostly in travel and sketching. In the fall of 1873, he went to Syracuse, N.Y., where he remained for about nine years practising his profession with fairly good success.

The lure of rapidly growing Chicago called him thither in late 1883, where he has since lived and remained in the continuous practice of his profession until his going.

In Chicago, his agreeable and cultured personality, combined with an advanced knowledge of his profession and his membership in several of the more desirable clubs, brought him desirable patronage from the start. Since in Chicago he has always been a member of its University, Harvard and Literary Clubs, of late years of the Glenview Golf Club, Cliff Dwellers, - and at times of various other clubs.

He soon acquired a high reputation, particularly in the line of high-class and artistic residence work. I have in mind a \$50,000 residence planned and erected over twenty years ago by him for a very dear personal friend of mine, which I have visited many times. My friend died many years ago, and this home has been in the possession of several others since, people of means I have known fairly well. The praise my friend and the owners following him gave of it, and its present owners give of it now, its completeness, inside and outside charm and comfort, have been unstinted and unceasing to the present. Not far from this home is another of his planning, perhaps twice as expensive, but equally inviting and beautiful.

At the time of his death he had designed and was in charge of the building of a magnificent residence - a king's palace it may properly be called - at Vermejo Park, Near Trinidad, N.M., not far from the southwestern Colorado State line, to

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cost, when all completed, with its extensions, additions, and outhouses, in the neighborhood of half a million dollars, for one of his very wealthy Chicago patrons removed there. This, he used to say to me, was to be his architectural monument of triumph. Not long before Frank Millet's death he had arranged with Frank for a month to six weeks of Frank's company there in the summer of 1912, in a kind of joint half vacation for them both; Frank, too, through Joe, having

some professional work to do there. He was the architect of the Chicago Telephone Building, Chicago's first steel-skeleton building. He planned and erected many, perhaps a majority, of the residences in Edgewater, where he lived. The appearance of these was always artistic, and the homes in themselves suitable and comfortable inside. No doubt it was largely due to them that Edgewater has from the beginning been a popular residence location of a well-to-do class of Chicagoans. Generally it may be said of his professional work, it was always excellent, always up to a high standard, and so appreciated by his patrons.

In 1875 he married Miss Anna B. Sedgwick of Syracuse. Mrs. Silsbee survives her husband. There were born to them seven children, five girls and two boys, four of them now married. There also survive him seven grandchildren. Silsbee's home in Edgewater was perhaps seven or eight miles north of the centre of the city, on the Lake shore; mine nearly that distance south. On account of this distance I did not see him at his home as often as I should have liked but often enough to know and appreciate the rare charm attaching to it, no less owing, it is to be said, to the gracious hospitality of his charming wife and perfect helpmeet than to himself. There was the fine atmosphere of good breeding when you entered it, the ease one felt in the genial welcome and the way of doing things just right without ostentation and without constraint.

The thirty years past he and I were often together, back and forth at each other's offices, meeting in the clubs, playing golf

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together, and the like. All this got for me a deep insight, as I believe, into his essential characteristics which I didn't get in College. It came very soon upon me he was a born gentleman, so just naturally had to be one all his life. He couldn't be anything else. I do not think he could have been deliberately unfair to, or inconsiderate of, anybody, I doubt if even to an enemy, of whom he thought he had a few. He was open-hearted and generous, optimistic as a boy, indeed beautifully retaining much of a boy's buoyant disposition and lively exuberance to the last. I think there were few things he would have enjoyed so much as sufficient to enable him to do in unstinted generosity those things for his family and friends we call princely. To round him out according to his natural leanings he should have possessed immense broad acres, and an

immense annual income. I suspect he could have found without much effort abundant use of a yearly million, disposed of it all gracefully and beautifully, and noted regretfully many avenues in life where a quarter of a million additional could have been most easily and satisfactorily disposed of to the great advantage and happiness of his friends.

And yet during an adverse and rather dismal several years of his life financially, when it required much careful figuring and self-denial to make both ends meet, there was never any repining nor envy of others, nor even great diminution of his constitutionally buoyant temperament. To him it was rather a humorous situation that one so naturally well qualified as we to exercise and enjoy the choicest amenities of social life should, by the rulings of the powers that be, whoever and whatever they were, be compelled to an exclusive consideration for a time of only the dull and dry necessities.

There is no question but that he possessed in an eminent degree, like Nat Smith, the saving grace of humor. He knew wherein the humor of things lay. He had a happy way of pointing it out from very dry and sometimes very harsh facts.

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Yet he could be impatient enough on the proper occasion to suit anybody, and a little more than that. I think it is no reflection on him, but merely to say he is human, that I have known of several occasions wherein he was relentlessly gripped by the resistless force of towering rages.

From the standpoint of material success, financial success, he needed a little more aggressiveness, which is usually dependent on a fairly good degree of confidence in one's self, whether a proper confidence or not. But he was innately modest about the merit of the things he did. With him it was not "This is fine, couldn't be better," but "I hope it will be thought fairly good; of course there are many ways in which it could be improved."

In his own Class History he writes: "I received a (school) prize at Northampton, but I don't believe I deserved it." "I wasn't anything of an oarsman, but I liked it." While this lack of self-assertiveness in a man has its drawbacks, it carries with it, we will all admit, something of compensation to a man in the increased loveliness it seems to get for him if he is lovable at all.

As he was a born gentleman, so was he a born artist. Of this I am sure, he would have attained

not merely a good, but a very, very high reputation as a landscape painter had he chosen to follow this line in art. I used often to notice an especial absent-minded peculiarity of his. When we were alone together at our respective offices, or elsewhere, in conference over say legal matters important to him, or other serious matters, it was a habit of his to pull to him a sheet or a scrap of blank paper and while we were talking most earnestly, and he unquestionably giving the utmost attention as he listened, or thoroughly in earnest in his own talking, his pencil would be in his hand over that sheet or scrap, and delineating some sketch of something or other, a tower, a window, a monogram, a face, a figure, a distant view, absolutely automatically, his

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mind apparently without the least thought of what his fingers were doing so far as any indications of it he gave to me. And often after our talks I would gather up these ephemeral things and would be surprised at the strength or the daintiness and the life of them, and the finish and artistic merit, whether it was a sketch as large as a plate or as small as a button. I used to ask him afterwards how he could do these things, and apparently be so absorbed in the matters of our talks. He had no explanation except to laugh and say, "Oh, I don't know, it just came, merely fingers, I suppose."

As a Harvard man, he was a patriot, if ever there was one, to the innermost fibre of his being, true and enthusiastic in Her name to the limit. A duty to Her, a call in Her name was, let me go to Harry Pickering for the works, a "Royal Command."

And, anyhow you think of him, he was a good fellow through and through, of fine mentality, of honorable and honest as well as advanced ideals, of an exact probity, of an affectionate and generous disposition, and of a clean family and personal life. He had his full share of that stuff in him that has always been essential to the weaving and the strengthening of the superb warp and woof which has made splendid, and will keep it so, the royal Class of Harvard '69. We have had to say "goodbye" to him, but it has been with great regret.

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Yours in haste -
Very respectfully.

APPENDIX C

LETTERS PERTAINING TO THE WHITE MEMORIAL BUILDING

The Andrew Dickson White Papers, on microfilm, contain correspondence between White and Silsbee. There also are letters to White from his brothers and from his agent. The following letters and excerpts from letters, since they bear directly on the construction of the White Memorial Building, are worth printing as a group.

J. L. Silsbee to A. D. White, 3 June 1876

[Stationary "16 Granger Block, East End" here crossed out and "Syracuse Savings Bank Building" inked in Silsbee's hand]

Hinton and Richardson are anxious to know if they are to have the job for carving on your building. The stone will be here soon and they must commence directly to carve in order to have it done in time for setting. Their offer is \$650. for the job - a very reasonable one I think. Mr. Horace White wished to have the matter left with you.

I can't thank you sufficiently for your kindness in getting me Mr. Beecher's job. I saw him here. I have just sent plans to him - which I trust will please him.

We have begun work in the foundations of the Building - & Stewart is on Superintending the work.

Yours in haste -
Very respectfully,

Horace K. White to A. D. White, 28 June 1876

...The Building is going on splendidly, & all said it is the best work that has ever been done in Syr. ...

J. L. Silsbee to A. D. White, 30 June 1876

Yours of (n. d.) received. I have anticipated your warning. Stewart was told some three days ago to condemn the bricks you refer to. I had already taken the bull by the horns however - & Moore had given me formal notice that he would leave the job entirely because I insisted that he should use Natl. pressed brick for basement story throughout - But he finally cooled down - when he found I was determined they should go in - and went on with his work as usual.

The rows I am continually having with the man have almost sickened me of my work. I would willingly have given a hundred dollars to have had Mason on the job - instead of Moore.

I am perfectly aware that a man in my position can scarcely avoid being suspected at times of complicity with builders & know also that an outsider might think there was more than ordinary ground for it in the present case - because Moore has several times employed me to get up plans for him - & even this Spring I was engaged for a time on a plan for his own house but nothing has been said between us about this since I had my first row with him over your building - & I doubt now if he employs me at all on the job - The fact of the matter is I care very little what the general feeling is about my conduct in these matters: provided the men for whom I work are satisfied that all is right - - & I do not believe you will have any reason to doubt me.

I am very much obliged for your kind advice on the subject which I am well aware is an important one. I trust you will be on here before long to inspect the work -

Charles Tucker (White's agent) to A. D. White, 1 March 1877

...The new building seems to be progressing satisfactorily and will be finished on time. The stores are all rented & bring \$7500. There has been but one office rented & that on the 3rd floor 5 rooms for \$800 - The offices do not rent as fast as was expected but when the stairs are up so one can see then without ladders - more may come to look and perhaps rent. ...

Horace K. White to A. D. White, 28 April 1877

...We moved in yesterday & are now settled in own room just East of the Bank rooms...You are aware we have rented the

Banking rooms to the Third National Bank for 5 years @ 1500 per year - Our Ballard will take the room in front to finish up the Bank matters. This is the little room we called Barry's - ...

...The building is now being cleaned down on the outside. When all the stores are lighted up at night it presents a very fine business like specimen - I think it is more admired than the new Savings Bank. I like it better - It has been a big job and we are very glad it is completed...

Horace K. White to A. D. White [early Spring 1877], Reel 128, Undated correspondence, Segment 1, Frame 099530 and 099531.

...The Wooden mantels throughout, and the Door & windows inside casings will probably be finished in a few days. When the heavy snows went off lately...

The Gas Fixtures...intended for Mr. Valentine's & Mr. Brumelkamp's stores will be somewhat nicer than the rest - those gentlemen having made personal contributions towards same to have them to better suit their tastes.

The stone pavement around the building is a most excellent one, being of large sized Pottsdam sandstone, and squarely & substantially laid...

Mr. Silsbee, the architect, tells Mr. Chas. Tucker that Mess. Moore & Dickison will probably have "extras" enough on the Building to swell the figures to about \$95,000. - including their contract of 81,300 - This does not include all the "extras" that will be necessary to complete the Building, as intended.

... I notice all you say about conversations with Moore on Silsbee. Now let me tell you right here, that I shall sware (sic) that I never have had any talk with Moore - Never have used the terms you mention as regards architect, but I have done what I could through Tucker to have something like justice & fair dealing done us.

Charles Tucker to A. D. White, 26 May 1877

...We are all installed in the new office in the new building - but have not yet had a final settlement w/John Moore - Silsbee has given him a certificate and Horace K. has appointed next Monday to settle. There are some things about the building that do not merit the wishes of the owners - some things that will have to be done that do not appear to form any part in the specifications. I cannot go on and describe them. I will mention one thing that seems like making trouble & expense in the future, and that is

drainage - The drain lays too flat - the sewer in the street not being deep enough to give sufficient fall to your pipes to carry off all collections from the Water Closets. As matters now stand the new building has cost a little over one hundred thousand dollars. The present rentals amount to only \$10,400 - and there are so many offices in town to rent - that it will be some time before the 2nd & 3rd floor will be full - and the 4th floor will wait sometime for tenants, without an elevator is put in & it is questionable whether it would then rent for enough to pay the expenses...

Charles Tucker to A. D. White, 29 May 1877

The Tenants of the "White Building" are as follows,

on 1st Floor D. Valentine, Occupying Corner Store fronting
on S. Salina St.
P. J. Brumelkamp, " next store south of D.
Valentine on S. Salina St.
Brooks & Miller, " first store east of
Entrance on Vanderbilt
Square.
Calvin S. Bull, " Second " " " " "
Davis Bardeen & Co., " third " " " " "
on 2nd Floor Third Nat. Bank, " rooms 1&2 in northeast
corner of Second floor.
The J.M. Bradstreet & Son Co., " " 4&5 " southeast " " " "
on 3rd Floor Markham, Hoyt &
Smith " " 12, 13, 14&15 in
Northeast corner of 3rd
Floor.
on 4th Floor No Tenants as yet.
on 5th Floor Salt Spg's Masonic Lodge, occupying rooms in
N. West corner of 5th
Floor.
Brooks & Miller (workshop), " 1 room in south
west corner of 5th
Floor.

Room #10 on Second Floor and being directly over Brooks & Millers Store, is the one occupied by the Messrs. White's and C. Tucker, agent. Room #3 on same Floor and being the middle front room on that Floor at west end of Building is temporarily being occupied by O. Ballard, Esq. Cash'r and which will eventually be taken by Mr. Hamilton S. White, on his return from Ithaca. This room #3 is the one as was selected by the late Barrett R. White, Esq. for his own use.

...gross income...
D. Valentine pays \$2500 - per annum - Has lease for 5 years.
P.J. Brumelkamp 1800 5
Brooks & Miller (Store & Workshop) 1000 3
Calvin S. Ball, Jr. 1100 5
Davis, Bardeen & Co. 1200 5

Third Nat. Bank [pays]	1500	[per annum-Has lease for]	5	[years.]
The J. M. Bradstreet & son Co.	500			1
Markham, Hoyt & Smith	800			5
Salt Spg's Masonic Lodge	250			10
Making Total of	10,650			

[Discusses difficulty renting upper rooms. Elevator perhaps in the future]...The whole cost of the Construction of the "White Building", outside of the building site, including all contracts and extras on Building to date, will foot up about \$102,000 - or \$103,000. - which added to the valuation of the building site say at 60.000...

[Buldge in east wall of stairway - not affected by the heavy vault above (by Herring & Co. of N.Y.). Steam heating apparatus works well. Tenants are to be supplied heat, also gas and city water.]

The hallway...presents a very fine appearance, with the Buff Brick & Dark trimmings in the walls on 1st floor, together with the contrasting massive and ornamented Black Walnut Doors to the Entrance. Is well lighted fm. skylight in Roof directly over area of stairway. The stairs have a very easy ascent and have wooden treads on them. The Iron framework to the stairs is tastily designed and has a substantial look to it also. The Banking Rooms... are being painted on the walls & ceilings with different tints of Blue & Brown and are to have some Frescoing on them...counters, desks, &c. made to order of cherry wood, at (occupants) expense, to fit up the room in harmony with the inside trimmings,...

The inside walls throughout the Building, excepting those in the stores where they are hard finished, have had a coat of Kalsomime which makes them very white and holds the sand finish tight to the walls so it won't rub off.

[Defective sewerage to be corrected. White scum on ceilings supposed to originate from salt in the ashes used in the fireproof cement between floors. Stone walls on areaways under the sidewalk leak - will be remedied.]

Horace K. White to A. D. White, 6 June 1877

...Sought diligently to find a tenant for the Banking Rooms...the only good tangible offer for them was made by the 3rd Nat. Bank (Frank Hiscock's Bank) Tried hard to get \$2000 per annum for them...but none would pay it. ...the supply of this class of rooms just now is in excess of the demand for them.

[Discusses sewerage problem] Mr. Silsbee contends that it must be the fault of Mr. Bates, the Steam Heater Supt.

who made holes into the sewer for connecting pipes from boiler of heater with same and that he (Silsbee) wanted Iron pipes used instead of cement ones but you selected the kind that should be used, and if Mr. Bates has broken into the Sewer he cannot help it.

[Moore & Dickison will try filling sewer joint with portland cement - if this is insufficient they advise using iron pipes]

The papers were all sent you with your letter to S. M. Rust. The comments were very flattering & it was well received by most everybody. ...there had been so much more trouble about this building than pleasure...All I have got to say is that I never want anything more to do with Mr. Silsbee. After paying John Moore Some \$7000 and the architects commission of 3% on over 100,000 we are still in trouble & paying for extras that come up in all shapes -

Mother to Andrew Dickson White, 4 July 1877

...

[Huge Easter rain storm which flooded houses, ruined buildings, etc...]

Horace expected so much to hear that the White Building was ruined that he did not dare to go down in the morning until late - But everything was safe there except some water in the cellar.

Charles Tucker to A. D. White, 18 August 1877

...John Moore - His contract was \$81,300 & we paid him 86,722. If there is any blame or fault to be found anywhere I think it will fall on the Architect for not getting enough in the specifications and contract. The new building has cost including office expenses to July 11726 + 1500 paid to the Syr. Nat. Bank \$108,212. ...The bldg makes a fine appearance and apparently all are pleased with it.

...sewerage...defects remedied...

...nothing more is needed but an elevator. The rooms on the fourth floor will never rent without one, and the tenants on the 3rd floor are beginning to complain - that their friends are deserting them because of the number of stairs they have to ascend.

Charles Tucker to A. D. White, 24 August 1877

...it was all left to the decision of Mr. Silsbee the Architect to decide on all questions of difference between

the owners and the contractors & he decided the contract as fulfilled on May last and we settled with John Moore June 2nd. There was no disturbance as Moore performed all that Silsbee required of him & perhaps some little things that could not strictly be called for. He was paid on extras a little over \$5,000. There was once a question in relation to the filling in between the Iron beams with cement, but Silsbee made him put in extra irons so as to make it secure. Moore claimed all the time that the mistake was Silsbee's but he went on with the work & in the final settlement he did not present any bill for extra in this regard and the settlement was pleasant all around.

A NOTE ON SILSBEE IN CHICAGO

As Sorrell pointed out, Joseph Dyson Silsbee established his practice in Chicago before mid-1882, the date of publication of the Lakeside Directory which first listed his office there (Sorrell, p. 5, n. 1). The implication was that Silsbee had left Syracuse to establish his new practice in Chicago. In fact, while in the city he lived in the Palmer House hotel (Frank L. Davis, "The Potter Palmer Mansion on Chicago's Lake Shore," Illinois Society of Architects Monthly Bulletin 18 (January-February 1946): 2), and he did not move permanently to Chicago until mid-1884. His practice in Syracuse fell off gradually as Silsbee worked more and more in Chicago. On 1 January 1884, the Syracuse Herald Journal stated that "the idea that Mr. Silsbee has left Syracuse permanently is incorrect..." By 1 May 1884, the Syracuse Journal could announce that Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Silsbee have returned from Chicago and now at the residence of Mrs. C. S. Sedgwick, Mrs. Silsbee's mother. Finally on 13 July 1884 the Journal published a notice that Silsbee was in town for two or three days and that he reported great success in

APPENDIX D

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As Sorell pointed out, Joseph Lyman Silsbee established his practice in Chicago before mid-1882, the date of publication of the Lakeside Directory which first listed his office there (Sorell, p. 5, n. 1). The implication was that Silsbee had left Syracuse to establish his new practice in Chicago. In fact, while in the city he lived in the Palmer House hotel (Frank L. Davis, "The Potter Palmer Mansion on Chicago's Lake Shore," Illinois Society of Architects Monthly Bulletin 30 (January-February 1946): 2), and he did not move permanently to Chicago until mid-1884. His practice in Syracuse fell off gradually as Silsbee worked more and more in Chicago. On 1 January 1884, the Syracuse Herald Journal stated that "the idea that Mr. Silsbee has left Syracuse permanently is incorrect..." By 2 May 1884, the Syracuse Journal could announce that "Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Silsbee have returned from Chicago and are at the residence of Mrs. C. B. Sedgwick," Mrs. Silsbee's mother. Finally on 13 July 1884 the Journal published a notice that Silsbee was in town for two or three days and that he reported great success in

Chicago and a promising future in that city. Silsbee's daughter wrote that he moved to Chicago in 1884 (Mrs. Frank Wade to Thomas J. McCormick, 10 February 1950).

Between 1882 and 1885 he kept offices in three cities; Syracuse, Buffalo and Chicago. By mid-1885 Silsbee had closed his Syracuse office (Boyd's Syracuse City Directory 1884 and 1885), and by 1887 he had closed his Buffalo office (Buffalo City Directory 1886 and 1887). In Buffalo he had formed a partnership with Joseph H. Marling. The firm became Marling and (H. C.) Burdette in 1887 after Silsbee left. In Chicago, Silsbee established a practice with Edward A. Kent, a draftsman from his Syracuse office (Withey and Withey, p. 340). Kent had been educated at Sheffield in engineering, at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and at South Kensington. He began working for Silsbee in 1877, left in 1880 for Washington, D. C., and returned to Silsbee in Chicago in 1882 (Davis, p. 2). In 1885 Kent established an independent practice in Buffalo where he designed a number of notable buildings. In 1912 he died on the Titanic (Withey and Withey, p. 341).

Silsbee's refined background and aristocratic bearing apparently served him well in Chicago society. Andrew Dickson White provided him with a reference - this time to some bankers in Chicago who were in the market for an architect (J. L. Silsbee to A. D. White, 22 January 1883, A. D. White Papers). The most important of Silsbee's early connections in Chicago, though, was surely Potter Palmer.

Palmer made a fortune as a dry goods merchant during

the Civil War. He sold his store to Marshall Field and Levi Z. Leiter and began to invest heavily in real estate. When he began building structures on the new State Street, Palmer set back his buildings, among them the famous Palmer House, from the street line. After the 1871 fire, the City Council forced other merchants to build back to his lines. Thus it was Potter Palmer's pioneering real estate ideas which accounted for the very dimensions of State Street (Winslow, Biographical Sketches of Chicagoans, (Chicago, 1948), IV, pp. 1958-1975). Palmer also pioneered development of Lakeshore Drive when he began in 1882 to build a home there on the marshy, windy dunes.

Henry Ives Cobb and Charles Sumner Frost were the architects for the huge Potter Palmer mansion. They were responsible for its exterior, castellated and turreted in limestone with sandstone trim, and for its plan. Entry was made from a large vestibule to the octagonal hall which formed the heart of the plan and communicated directly with all the main spaces. Apparently Cobb and Frost had been commissioned to produce an unfinished building, for Silsbee and Kent were hired to design the interiors. By January 1884 they had finished the drawings (Davis, p. 10), and the house was completed to Silsbee's designs. There is some confusion, however, about precisely what Silsbee and Kent designed, because Palmer hired the famous New York decorating firm, the Herter Brothers, to decorate the hall, dining room, and library (Davis, p. 10).

The Potter Palmer Papers in the Manuscript Collection of the Chicago Historical Society do not help us much.

Their only record of transactions for the interior is an agreement (Folder 17) of April 9, 1884 with the Western Electric Company for bells, speaking tubes, wiring and a burglar alarm. This agreement indicates Silsbee and Kent, architects. Probably Silsbee worked closely with the Herter Brothers to produce the interiors, but it is not known if the decorators' responsibility extended beyond furnishings.



(Lowe, Chicago Interiors)

The interiors were a great success for the Palmers and for Silsbee. Henry Hobson Richardson particularly remarked on the quality of the hall when he toured the building (Davis, p. 10). A good description of the sump-

tuous interior was published by Frank Davis ("Potter Palmer Mansion"), and a detailed contemporary description of Silsbee's work was printed in Syracuse's Herald Journal 6 January 1884 (see also George William Sheldon, "Artistic Country Seats: Types of recent American villas and cottage architecture, with instances of country club-houses", vol. 1, pt. 3, pp. 195-199.). Silsbee never took credit for the "castle." As his daughter pointed out, "He thought it was an architectural monstrosity and always explained that it was only the interior that he worked on." (Mrs. Frank Wade to Thomas J. McCormick, 10 February 1950).

Potter Palmer was one of the wealthiest men in Chicago. He owned about 3000 feet of lake frontage on the north side, and he began quickly to develop it. Some of Silsbee's commissions in the mid-1880's were houses Palmer built as speculative investments near his "castle." The William Waller House, 47 Bank Street (1884) (Sorell, "Catalogue," p. 17, no. 16) was one of these (5 May 1884, Bill of Labor and Material for house on Bank Street, sold to Mr. Waller, Folder 17, Potter Palmer Papers). Potter Palmer sold at least one other Silsbee house to William Waller (27 May 1884 Real Estate Contract, Bank Street and Ritchie Place, Folder 17, Palmer Papers): this may be the house listed by Sorell as catalogue entry 18 (p. 18). Silsbee built at least five more houses in the area for Palmer (Sorell Catalogue entries 7 - for two houses, 14, 15, 17), and he designed a group of five more houses for William Waller in 1886 (Sorell catalogue entry 35 and 51).

Potter Palmer's influence surely helped Silsbee acquire further commissions. Palmer had financial dealings with John L. Cochrane (Note on a loan to be paid by Cochrane, Folder 17, Palmer Papers), and he might have introduced Silsbee to the developer of Edgewater. Palmer also worked to expand Chicago's park system (Winslow, IV, p. 1966), for which Silsbee built a number of structures (Sorell catalogue entries 57, 80, 104, 106). Further Potter Palmer was one of the leaders for having the world's fair in Chicago. He was Vice President of the Exposition Company and a member of the Board of Directors for the World's Columbian Exposition. He may have been influential in gaining commissions there for Silsbee. The moveable sidewalk, the Hagenbeck Geological Arena Building (Sorell catalogue entry 98), and the West Virginia and North Dakota Buildings (Sorell catalogue entries 91 and 92) were by Silsbee.

There were others besides Palmer whom Silsbee met as he established a successful practice in Chicago. Robert A. Waller, for example, was one of the directors and Second Vice President of the World's Columbian Exposition. He also was a Lincoln Park commissioner (Leonard, p. 592). He hired Silsbee to build three houses in Buena Park in 1889 (Sorell catalogue entry 66), and he was in a position to direct other commissions to Silsbee's office, one of the largest in the city in the late 1880's and early 1890's (Jean F. Black, Hyde Park Houses (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 98).

Silsbee's success in Chicago followed a similar pattern to his success in Syracuse. He found himself naturally in a social position which benefitted his practice. He joined the right clubs and met the right people. In Chicago, Potter Palmer helped Silsbee with commissions and references just as A. D. White had done in Syracuse.

Silsbee's practice fell off in the 1890's. We can only speculate as to the reasons. It may be that the fast-changing world of architecture had passed him by, that in trying to keep up with current styles his work degenerated into an undigested eclecticism. An architect whose work is mainly domestic would be most vulnerable to changes in fashion. But we know little about his practice from 1892 to 1914. That he was little published does not mean that his work was not good. As Willard suggested ("Memorial," p. 255) Silsbee lacked the kind of aggressiveness which is so often the mark of the financially successful man. It may be this modesty which had earlier kept Silsbee out of the commercial building sphere and which now was responsible partly for the demise of his practice.

Surely Silsbee had not lost interest in architecture, for at the time of his death he was involved in the completion of a huge and costly house in New Mexico, a house which he hoped would be his architectural monument. This is hardly a sign of boredom or indolence. Rather it suggests a continuing excitement over architecture as an act of individual expression.

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