FATHER OF THE AMERICAN SKYSCRAPER

SOME WORLD FAMOUS ARCHITECTURE LOWER NEW YORK FROM THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE, SINGER BUILDING TOWERING OVER OTHER SKYSCRAPERS

Daniel H. Burnham of Chicago, Who Plans Not Merely Buildings, But Cities Also

Other Big Men Who Have Made the Architecture of America Famous

DANIEL HUDSON BURNHAM, BUILDER OF CITIES AS WELL AS BUILDINGS

ERNEST FLAGG, HATER OF SKYSCRAPERS AND ARCHITECT OF THE SINGER BUILDING, THE WORLD'S TALLEST OFFICE STRUCTURE

CHRISTOPHER GRANT LA FARGE, ARCHITECT OF THE CATHEDRAL OF ST JOHN THE DIVINE

TWO VERY FAMOUS AMERICAN ARCHITECTS, McKIM AND MEAD

CASS GILBERT AND THE MINNESOTA CAPITOL WHICH HE CONSIDERS HIS BEST WORK

BY DEXTER MARSHALL.

IT is said of many men that they are at the head of their professions, but it is true of few. One of the few is Daniel Hudson Burnham, of Chicago, certainly America's leading architect—using the word in the broadest sense—and, perhaps, greater in his line than any other living man. He does not plan buildings, merely; he is planning cities. And yet he said not so very long ago in answer to a request for some information about the work he has done:

"I haven't done much; I have just served on a few commissions."

Mr. Burnham's "not much" includes the creation of the famed "White City" of the Chicago World's Fair; the majesty and beauty of the buildings, which made the great exhibition an artist's vision of loveliness, were inspired by him. He is looked upon as the father of a business accessory peculiarly American—the skyscraper; in a score of great cities he has designed massive commercial structures in which delicacy of outline and skeletonlike construction have been combined with enduring strength. The Masonic Temple and nearly all the other famous skyscrapers of Chicago are his work, while the Flatiron building is among the big structures in New York for which he furnished the plans.

As a representative of his Government, he planned great sweeps of driveways and harbor lines and impressive public buildings in Manila. The architectural beauty of San Francisco, blotted out in the great earthquake, was due to him; and what architectural beauty the new San Francisco will have will be due almost solely to him also. He is chairman of the commission whose plans will eventually make Cleveland one of the most beautiful cities in the world. He is chairman of the National commission which has for its task the beautifying of Washington on a scale so vast that the improvements are estimated to cost between a half and three-quarters of a billion of dollars. And some of the things he has in mind for the beautifying of his home city are harbors, outer parks, great boulevards, widened streets and uniform architecture.

Truly, a man whose art is varied, whose imprint is almost indelibly shown in every type of structure that goes to make up architecture of the present generation; yet he himself says that he has not done much—only served on a few commissions.

Sixty-one years of age, and now in the prime of his achievement, Mr. Burnham's friends say, and his course in life quite bears the statement out, that the greatest luxury which his successful years have brought him is the fact that he need not work entirely for money. It is undoubtedly true that more commissions are waiting for him than wait for any other living architect, yet he gives a large portion of his time, to their exclusion, to labor along spirited lines. This is his great hobby—to make the great cities of America even more beautiful than their European rivals, and when he sees the remotest possibility of furthering his hobby he will not allow so little a thing as a fat commission to stand in the way of his schemes of beautification.

When Mr. Burnham works for private individuals his fees are probably larger than those ever paid to any other architect, but, now that he has plenty, when he works for the public his services are given gratis. This is a matter of pride and principle with him. He considers he is sufficiently rewarded in seeing the city beautiful brought a step nearer to realization.

Another matter of principle with Mr. Burnham is that he will take up no work in which there could be a suspicion of political jobbery. "Burnham," said one of his close friends, "has refused many a profitable commission simply because politics controlled the undertaking. You will not find his name upon the frontal of any Government building in the country. He even eschews courthouses and city halls!"

It was Burnham who, almost single-handed, made the Chicago World's Fair a memorable one, architecturally.

When Chicago secured the fair, Mr. Burnham was a member of the firm of Burnham & Root, which was among the first architectural firms called on to help build the "White City." The firm had gained an enviable reputation in Chicago, and Mr. Burnham was early made chief of construction and supervising architect of the exhibition. Later, he was given the additional power and title of Director of Works. This was subsequent to the death of his partner, Mr. Root, when the whole responsibility of the architectural success of the fair devolved upon his shoulders.

When he was made chief of construction wise men went about declaring that Burnham could never get the buildings completed in twice or thrice the time allowed him. When he became the one directing hand of the work his detractors were well-nigh legion, and not a few influential men went so far in their enmity of him as to throw all sorts of obstacles in his way. Burnham knew all this, yet not even to his closest friends did he make a remark that could be construed into a complaint or protest. The only notice he was ever known to take of the doubters and the opposition was embraced in a simple declaration which he was overheard to make to himself one day as he stood surveying the half-finished buildings of the fair:

"By heavens, I've undertaken to build this fair and I'm going to do it."

With the White City at last completed and its beauty apparent to every one, Mr. Burnham's detractors raised the cry that the result was not due to him, but to the plans of his dead partner, which he had simply followed. Again there was no public statement by Mr. Burnham, but to every one who talked with him about the architectural side of the fair he freely gave a large portion of the credit to Mr. Root. One of his strongest characteristics is to take no notice of cavillers. When he feels that he is right no amount of adverse criticism, no matter how stinging, can move him.

His World's Fair work revealed his eye for beauty on a grand scale, his wonderful executive ability and his shrewdness in surrounding himself with a corps of architects recognized as leaders of their profession in this country. His architectural daring was shown when, some years previously, he became the father, so-called, of the skyscraper.

Father of the Skyscraper.

The late W. L. B. Jenny, of Chicago, had erected an office building in Chicago on plans approximating the modern skeleton construction to the extent that some of the walls were carried on iron beams. A year or so later the idea was carried a little further in the Tacoma building in the same city. An architect noted for his progressive ideas from the time he began to practice his profession, when he was given, in 1889, the commission for the Rand-McNally building, Mr. Burnham dared to take a the step that brought the skyscraper into being—he used a steel frame throughout, carrying the walls for each story separately on beams, thus doing away entirely with the necessit yfor neavy masonry support at the base.

This was a veritable revolution in the building world. The enormous thickness of walls hitherto considered unnecessary in the construction of tall buildings, with attending contraction of valuable space, had long been a serious problem with property-owners. Then, too, the immense cost of stone and the slowness of erection had retarded building operations in every great city. But here was a building going up with a dead wall area one-eighth that of the all building preceding it; and the cost was tobe less tha half as much if erected under the old way. Small wonder that Mr. Burnham's experiment was watched with the kenest interest by architects throughout America and Europe. There were numerous predictions, of course, that the building would collapse and not all of them were made by laymen, gaping upward in astonishment at the skeleton frame and the walls being stuck on here and there in apparent haphazard fashion and without apparent means of support. Indeed, months after the building was occupied architects from all over the country traveled to Chicago especially to inspect it and incidentally to marvel at its failure to crumble into twisted beats and shattered masonry.

The Masonic Temple, which does not revolve at high noon on its axis, despite assertions to the contrary; the Rookery, the Monadnock, the Woman's Temple, the Railway Exchange—these are but a few of the many buildings which have made Chicago famous, architecturally, that are the handiwork of Mr. Burnham. Cleveland, Philadelphia, San Francisco and New York are some of the other large cities that number Burnham skyscrapers among their noted ones. In brief, nearly every city of the first and second class in this country can boast of towering specimens of Burnham architecture.

He has been the father of more famous skyscrapers than any other architect. And yet, from his point of view, he hasn't done much. His friends say that he will probably go to his grave set in the belief that he hasn't done much, unless he can be assured beforehand that his plans for beautiful Cleveland, or beautiful Chicago or beautiful Washington, or beautiful San Francisco will ultimately be carried to completion in whole or large part. So wrapped up is he in the idea of the city beautiful that it is the one subject on which he will talk to any great extent with a stranger or an acquaintance. Of late years he has spent a good-sized fortune studying the cities of Europe famed for their beauty, and in collecting data on his favorite subject. He is, beyond peradventure of a doubt, the country's leading authority on the city beautiful, and his collection of data cannot be equaled in this country or abroad. His fellow members of the National Commission for beautifying Washington freely admit that his was the master mind in the preparation of the plans which, if carried out, will make Washington a city of greater beauty, even, than Paris. These plans were much written up in the newspapers about four years ago.

Whenever any one has the temerity to mention to Mr. Burnham that he may have a personality other than that of a boss architect he shies like a scared colt. A Chicago interviewer once called on him by appointment. Mr. Burnham answered politely enough all queries put to him regarding architecture. Then the interviewer worked the old gag of asking him who some of his friends were. Burnham looked the caller in the eye and said accusingly:

"You are after funny stories, aren't you?"

The other didn't answer.

"I haven't any friends who will tell you any," he declared, and, rising, bowed the other out.

One of the man's dominating traits is his wish to be taken seriously, and to this end he has succeeded admirably in hiding his strictly personal side behind his professional one.

To those who have met all three, Mr. Burnham at first sight inevitably suggests two other notable men in lines not far divergent from his own. One of these was Stanford White; the other is that poet-novelist-architect-engineer whose genius is equally at home when he sits before his easel with his water-color brushes poised, when he stands upon the rocks of famous Diamond Shoal directing the construction of the most difficult lighthouse on the American coast, and when he sits in silent study, pen in hand, producing notable works of fiction—F. Hopkinson Smith. The men can scarcely be said to resemble one another facially, but the resemblance is at once apparent. Both Stanford White and F. Hopkinson Smith came instantly to my mind when I entered Mr. Burnham's office and saw him for the first time.

Mr. Burnham's voice is pleasant and reverberant, as is Smith's and as was White's; he has a habit of the other two in studying habitually some small object on his table as he talks; like both other men, he is very loath to speak about himself. It is conceivable that Hopkinson Smith might tell a good story on himself, even to a stranger; Stanford White would have been almost sure to do it. Daniel Hudson Burnham is quite incapable of it.

If his surroundings are to judge him, he is simpler in his tastes than either White or Smith. His offices in the Railway Exchange building, one of his late skyscraping children, are purely business; handsome enough, but severely plain. Smith's are more elaborate. White's were elegant, luxurious. Burnham's office windows command a splendid view of Lake Michigan; it is one of his delights to have a few minutes of spare time to gaze out over the panorama of water and study it with the eye of an artist. He frequently becomes absorbed as deeply in this pleasure as he does in his other still more delightful recreation of planning cities beautiful.

Born in 1846, Burnham is eight years younger than Smith. A native of New York, he was taken to Chicago by his parents when he was 10 years old. He received his preparatory education there. After getting his collegiate and technical education in the East he returned to Chicago and began the practice of his profession. He was burned out in the fire. You already know how he has helped to build the new Chicago, and to him Chicago is the choicest spot on God's footstool.

Mr. Burnham is more than medium in height, gently inclined toward portliness, with a complexion bright and clear as a boy's, and hair and heavy mustache in which gray has not by any means entirely overcome the natural brown.

Cass Gilbert, famous in the Northwest as the architect of the Minnesota Capitol and in New York as the architect of the new Custom-House, has felt the hardships that come from lack of money, something that Mr. Burnham, whose father was fairly wealthy, has never experienced.

Perhaps his "leanest" days came to him when he was studying abroad and paying his way with work. While he was in London he engaged in newspaper work to get his daily bread, and, truth to tell, he made such a poor newsgatherer that he was often compelled to subsist on one meal a day, and that not a very satisfying one at times. He and a companion, like himself a newspaper worker, often lessened the importunities of hunger by remaining in bed most of the day.

Before going abroad he had been a student of architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he had won various prizes in scholarship. One day, while he was wandering about the London streets and wondering where his next meal was to come from, he fell in with other former students of his college. They soon made themselves acquainted with Gilbert's state. Through their influence he gave up the London struggle, returned to America and secured employment with McKim, Mead & White.

Some years later, when that firm secured the contract for constructing all the stations and other buildings of importance on the Northern Pacific Railroad, Gilbert had risen so high in the estimation of his employers that he was sent West to handle all this work under Henry Villard, who had obtained control of the road. Everything looked rosy. Gilbert was in the seventh heaven, or fast nearing it, when Villard fell from power, the Northern Pacific passed into the hands of receivers, and the architect, stranded in St. Paul, was left to his own devices.

It turned out all right in the end. Being a little shy of money, and also because his widowed mother was living in St. Paul, Gilbert decided to open up an office in that city. Three years later consistent, hard plugging had made him one of the city's leading architects. That was in 1886, when he formed a partnership with James Knox Taylor, now supervising architect of the Treasury Department. Quite a few years later, when his plan for the Capitol of Minnesota was accepted, Mr. Gilbert had cause to thank his star fervently that on a day way back in the early '80s he had been stranded in the city of his boyhood, his parents, when he was 5, having moved to St. Paul from Ohio, where he was born. St. Paul is full of Gilbert's work, just as Chicago is of Burnham's.

When Gilbert went into partnership with James Knox Taylor the latter was the big man of the firm. A few years later it was really the other way about, though Taylor was still looked upon by laymen as the brains of the combination. According to a story of wide circulation in St. Paul, Gilbert stood for being the second man for some months; then, one day he went to Taylor and in the friendliest spirit actually talked him into the belief that he was the one to leave the firm. At any rate, the partnership was dissolved by Taylor pulling out. This occurred in 1891, quite some time before Gilbert received the commission to build the New York Custom-House, recently occupied by the Government.

In certain quarters the opinion has been held that Gilbert got the big job because he and Taylor were still partners at the time it was handed out. As a matter of fact, Gilbert had no thought of entering a design in the competition for the Custom-House until he was urged to do so by the Boston capitalist for whom he planned the famous New York skyscraper known as the Broadway Chambers. Then he turned out his design under high pressure, partly because other work was pressing, and partly because he believes that he does his best work when so keyed up.

Gilbert's first training in his profession was acquired several years before he went to college, when he helped to build a church at Red Wing, Minn., under the eye of one Radcliff, a curious character who combined the callings of architect and patent medicine seller. Radcliff was forever preaching attention to the slightest detail, and practicing his preaching, too. Gilbert has been known to throw over remunerative prospective business that he might have time to look after the details of work in hand. He is a phenomenally rapid worker. Were it not for this fact, he would be compelled, doubtless, to leave the oversight of detail to assistants, as other big men of his calling do.

Gilbert has a remarkable memory. Let him catch a fleeting glimpse from a railroad train of a building with some novelty of construction, and days later he can reproduce it "true to life" in a sketch of water colors, in which he is fond of working. He has found this power of memory of such great help to him that he drills his assistants with the persistence of an old-time schoolmaster in the same methods of quick comprehension and retentiveness.

As a devotee of the sport made famous by Izaak Walton, Mr. Gilbert has whipped many a stream in the Northwest. When he was a resident of St. Paul he also got from under business cares by helping to row the shells of the Minnesota Boat Club to victory. He has a great reputation in St. Paul for sociability, which he has not dimmed as a resident of New York. He delights in the company of artists, sculptors, musicians and the like, and his friends say that he ever stands ready to assist any such deserving it. By way of illustration they tell the story of a young Norwegian sculptor who, penniless and stricken with consumption in Minneapolis, longed to see his old home again before he died. Gilbert having accidentally become acquainted with the sufferer and incidentally learning of his wish, promptly supplied the necessary funds for the voyage home.

Small and stooped, with an extremely prominent forehead, a clean shaven face, prematurely gray hair, the chin of a doer and the eyes of a dreamer—this is Ernest Flagg, hater of the skyscraper and yet the father of the Singer building, the loftiest business building in the world today.

Fifteen years ago Flagg was writing vigorously against the skyscraper and doing all else in his power to arrest the

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