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The American Renaissance in the West: Capital, Class and Culture Along the Northern Pacific Railroad

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ABSTRACT

Wealth from western investments lit up the Gilded Age. East and West, it financed the mansions, balls and philanthropy that were integral to upper-class culture. Historians of capitalism have argued that a national upper class coalesced during the late nineteenth century and that the development of a common culture was essential to its formation. Much of this work has focused on the Northeast. How did this play out in the Trans-Mississippi West? This article explores the roles that architects and the buildings they designed played in the intertwined processes of class formation, capitalist expansion and the advancement of white settler colonialism in the American West. It begins in the early 1880s, when Henry Villard (1835–1900), president of the Northern Pacific Railway, launched an ambitious plan to complete the transcontinental railroad and enlisted the architects McKim, Mead & White and their assistant, Cass Gilbert (1859–1934), to design buildings of all kinds along the line — an unprecedented move for a new western railroad. It then follows Gilbert back to St Paul to examine two major projects, one for local clients and one for Villard's colleague, the eastern capitalist William Endicott, Jr (1826–1914). As agents for eastern capitalists and their counterparts in the West, the architects and the buildings they designed activated in the West an elite aesthetic and professional culture initially generated in the Northeast. Operating across local, regional and national scales, they contributed to the expansion of capitalist markets, the formation of a national upper class and, more broadly, the processes of settler colonialism in a rapidly changing region.

In April 1883, Henry Villard (1835–1900), president of the Northern Pacific Railway, embarked on a 1916-mile trip along the company's still incomplete line from Portland, Oregon, to St Paul, Minnesota.[1] When completed, the Northern Pacific would be the first transcontinental railroad to reach across the northwestern tier of the United States. Villard's entourage included William R. Mead, a partner in the up-and-coming New York architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White. As they travelled east, they threaded through dense forests, skirted deep gorges and passed reservations, new white settlements and gangs of Chinese labourers toiling to complete the rail line.[2] After an arduous coach ride through the gap of more than a hundred miles between western and eastern tracks, Villard's party settled into a newly built Pullman Palace car fitted with plate glass, polished ebony and velvet plush. Skimming north of Yellowstone National

Park and the site of the Battle of Little Bighorn, they would have seen tiny depots — railroad stations — for new towns that were little more than dots on the map. But once they reached Mandan, Dakota Territory, they could hardly have missed its splendid new depot, a shingle-style apparition on the vast western plains (Fig. 1). The depot was part of a larger building campaign, by turns calculated and haphazard, which Villard was pushing forward as the rail line neared completion. To design this and other prominent buildings, he had enlisted McKim, Mead & White — hence Mead's weary presence on this long inspection tour. As they travelled from Mandan through Minnesota, signs of white settlement multiplied until the train reached the city of St Paul, a burgeoning rail hub and entrepôt that, as the Northern Pacific's eastern terminus, would soon become the gateway to the entire region. With the railroad's projected completion date only three months away, construction had accelerated and McKim, Mead & White found themselves designing buildings of all kinds for sites thousands of miles away. They needed an agent in the West. A young architect named Cass Gilbert (1859–1934), one of their former employees, lived in St Paul and was happy to oblige.[3]

Working for Villard and the Northern Pacific was the architects' first experience of designing western buildings for eastern investors. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, eastern and European investors directed huge infusions of capital into the American West. Their investments in railroads, buildings and infrastructure propelled and advanced white settler colonialism in the region, catalysing the forced displacement of indigenous people, the extraction of resources and revenue, and the expansion of eastern markets.[4] It was what William Robbins and others have termed the 'capitalist transformation of the American West'.[5] This was (and is) an ongoing and often brutal process and it produced a new 'geography of capital', in William Cronin's term, which expressed itself not just as 'physical structures but as the ways people lived, worked and traded within them'.[6]

This article is primarily concerned with how buildings in the Northwest commissioned by investors in the Northeast furthered these processes. In the annals of architectural history, perhaps the best-known examples of eastern investment in western architecture are the innovative tall buildings that the Massachusetts investors Peter and Shephard Brooks financed in Chicago.[7] There is more to be said about how these and other buildings — and those who financed, designed and constructed them — were engaged in broader systems of capital investment and western expansion. Paula Lupkin takes up this issue in her work on the Southwest, in which she focuses on the processes through which St Louis investors developed an 'architectural web' along railroad lines that linked St Louis with the cities of the Southwest in the early twentieth century, forming the 'Industrial Southwest' as a definable region.[8] Here I shift the focus to investments from the Northeast in the Northwest during the 1880s, when new networks were forming, conditions were unsettled and controversies were rife in a region that never attained the degree of integration Lupkin has revealed in the Southwest.[9] The article explores some of the ways that McKim, Mead & White, Gilbert and the buildings they designed contributed to processes of de- and re-territorialisation, disruption and coalescence. Focusing on their work for two eastern capitalists, Villard and his colleague, William Endicott, Jr (1826–1914), it considers buildings in two distinct sets of conditions: first, the railroad buildings erected for Villard to promote investment and Euro-American settlement along

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Fig. 1. *Bird's-eye view of Mandan, Dakota Territory, with inset view of the depot designed by McKim, Mead & White and completed in 1882, lithograph by Beck & Pauli, published by J. J. Stoner, 1883 (Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division)*

the Northern Pacific line in the early 1880s; then the more settled conditions of St Paul and the buildings financed by Endicott and the city's elite in the second half of the decade.

As the agents of eastern capitalists in the West, the architects worked across local, regional and national scales, mediating between eastern capital and changing conditions in the West.[10] The buildings they designed facilitated settlement and the expansion of eastern networks — social, cultural, religious, political and economic — in particular ways.[11] They produced practical and artistically designed buildings that were perceived as the measure of the progress of civilisation in the West. Their involvement elevated the status of the buildings they designed and they served as arbiters of taste. This contributed both to the conduct of business and to class formation. Sven Beckert and others have argued that the development of a common culture was essential to the formation of a national upper class during the late nineteenth century. Shared values, tastes and practices masked competition and difference, and enabled the communication, coordination and connection essential to the formation of a national economy.[12] As we will see, architects and the buildings they designed contributed to the formation of this common culture in important ways, braiding together capital, culture and class.

HENRY VILLARD AND THE NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD

Henry Villard was a master of reinvention — of his own life and of the various enterprises he pursued. Born into a well-to-do family, he began his life in Speyer,

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Fig. 2. *Villard Houses, New York, McKim, Mead & White, 1882–84, photograph of 1890 (Historic American Building Survey, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)*

Bavaria, as Ferdinand Heinrich Gustav Hilgard. When he emigrated to the US in 1853, he assumed the name Henry Villard, an Anglo-French fabrication he held on to for the rest of his life. During his early years in the US, Villard worked for the abolition of slavery, became a journalist, travelled to Colorado to report on the gold rush, reported on Abraham Lincoln's activities and served as a correspondent during the civil war.[13]

After the war, Villard settled in Boston, where he worked his way into the midst of Boston's Anglo-American social, intellectual and business elite. In 1868, he was appointed secretary of the American Social Science Association (ASSA), founded three years earlier, which Richard White described as 'perhaps the most important liberal institution of the Gilded Age'.[14] With members that included intellectuals, journalists, professionals, reformers and cultural leaders, as well as investors and 'Boston Brahmins' (the city's Anglo-American elite), the goal of the ASSA was to provide the expertise that would shape the future of the nation according to its own priorities.[15]

Three ASSA initiatives had a bearing on Villard's eventual agenda for the Northern Pacific Railroad: the promotion of immigration to the West; the study of railroad securities; and education in the arts to improve American design. One of the ASSA's members, the architect William R. Ware (then partner of Henry Brunt), planned and directed the first systematic architectural programme in a US university, which opened at Boston's Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1868. Ware was also actively involved with the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Founded in 1857, the AIA promoted the distinction between architects and builders, the formation of a national architectural profession, and the elevation of American taste and design standards. In

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keeping with this objective, at MIT Ware recruited students nationally, some of whom brought professional standards of design and practice into the West — one of them being McKim, Mead & White's young assistant, Gilbert.[16]

In 1870, Villard left his position at the ASSA and repositioned himself as a transnational agent for investments in US railroad companies, beginning with his contacts in Germany. With the backing of trusting investors, he eventually acquired a controlling interest in the Northern Pacific Railway. To do this, in 1881 he organised a 'blind pool', inviting selected investors — including ASSA members — to sink eight million dollars into an unnamed proposition. In a testament to his reputation and persuasiveness, they did, and within a few hours Villard had raised twice as much.[17] By the fall of 1881, he had become president of the Northern Pacific.

Villard had a keen sense of the rhetorical power of buildings. Ever adept at personal publicity, he announced his new status in one of the most visible ways possible. In April 1882, he commissioned McKim, Mead & White to design a colossal residence on Madison Avenue in New York City, a block away from where the Vanderbilts (whose fortunes also derived from railroad profits) lived on Fifth Avenue.[18] The design of Villard's New York residence (Fig. 2), as outsized as his ambitions, echoed his architectural aspirations for the Northern Pacific. Rather than a single large residence, Villard asked the firm to design a set of six opulent town houses, five of which he planned to sell. Joseph Wells, who became the lead designer, took Italian Renaissance palaces as a precedent, integrating the six townhouses into one imposing urban residence that people would continue to associate with Villard alone after it was completed in 1885, even as other families moved in and even after he ceased to own any of the property.[19] Villard, somewhat of a snob, had a long-standing affinity for the fine arts and saw his houses as an exemplar. He would have been pleased when *Artistic Houses* commended the way they displayed 'good taste as understood by persons of refinement and education and experience'.[20]

Commissioning McKim, Mead & White — professional architects — to design buildings for the Northern Pacific carried their concept of good taste and refinement westward. This was an unusual decision in the autumn of 1881, the year Villard hired them, especially for a still-incomplete western railroad. Throughout the US, most railroad buildings were designed by company engineers. In the Northeast, there was a growing demand for architect-designed depots, large and small, by the 1880s. Frank Furness had just started working for the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad in 1880, designing everything from passenger stations to railcars; and a year later, H. H. Richardson began designing small commuter stations for the Boston & Albany line.[21] In Chicago, W. W. Boyington designed the new Union Station, completed in 1880. But west of the Mississippi, new transcontinental rail lines tended to build quickly and modestly to meet basic needs in towns that might not survive; more substantial buildings came later. In 1883, Burnham & Root of Chicago began to get commissions for depots in Illinois and Iowa along the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, which connected Chicago with St Paul. Further west, it was not until the mid-1880s that the Union Pacific, by then well established, hired Van Brunt & Howe to design grand depots for key cities. Villard, at the forefront of this trend, beat them to it. His mistake was to envision substantial, architect-designed buildings in advance of the settlers and tourists whose business would pay for them.

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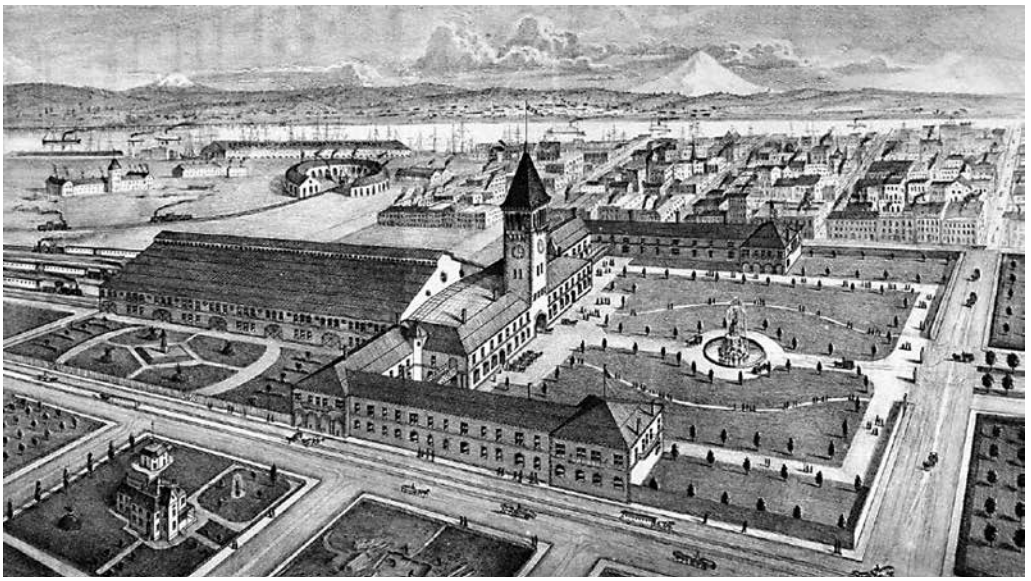

Fig. 3. *Charles McKim's design for the Grand Union Depot, Portland, Oregon, lithograph by Junius F. Whiting from the* West Shore, *1 April 1882 (courtesy of Alexander Benjamin Craghead)*

For Villard, urbanity and what Mead called 'architectural effect' — that is, the building's aesthetic qualities — appear to have been second only to the potential for publicity.[22] Nothing demonstrates this better than the buildings planned for Portland, Oregon.[23] In the late autumn of 1881, Villard whisked Charles McKim off to Portland to work on an immense Romanesque revival-style terminal. In April 1882, the magazine *West Shore*, which touted the glories of the Northwest, published an aerial view based on one of McKim's drawings (Fig. 3). It would be 'the largest structure of its kind in the world', the magazine boasted.[24] As envisioned, the depot's main building would measure 600 ft by 500 ft, embracing a courtyard of nearly 400 sq ft, rivalling New York's Grand Central Depot, which served a city of over a million people. Portland was well established, but such a depot was vastly beyond the needs of a western city with a population of 17,577.[25] The lithograph in the *West Shore* showed the court with pedestrians, a fountain and trees — inviting residents, settlers and potential investors to imagine themselves arriving in a city that lived up to the potential of its grandiose new depot.

Villard's memoirs reveal that, as the railroad was nearing completion, he became increasingly concerned about facilities for travellers, especially hotels, and he urged local investors to provide them. In his opinion, 'Portland did not have a single decent hotel', and he put McKim to work designing one.[26] An illustration in the *West Shore* in 1883 presented an optimistic view of the hotel at the centre of the city's urban life (Fig. 4).[27] Expected to cost $500,000, the hotel's steeply pitched roofs, dormers and towers alluded to French chateaux and the grandeur of British railway hotels, while anticipating later palace hotels in the US and Canada.[28] Eric Sandoval-Strausz has aptly described hotels like

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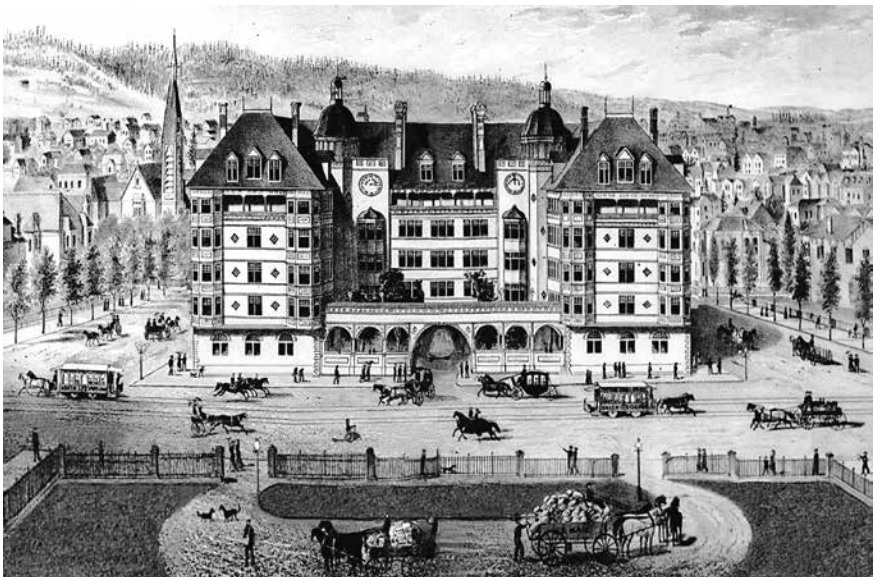

Fig. 4. *Charles McKim's design for the Northern Pacific Terminal Company's hotel, Portland, Oregon, lithograph by Henry Epting from the* West Shore, *1 March 1883*

these as 'imperial hotels' operating at the 'leading edge of urbanisation on the frontier'.[29] Their prominent presence in the urban landscape enhanced civic pride and their well-appointed facilities provided space for the interactions that produced local bonds and forged connections with regional and national networks.[30]

Villard's architectural vision for the Northern Pacific was system-wide and grew more ambitious during the spring and summer of 1883, even as the railroad's finances ran into difficulty. During the rush to complete the line, the Northern Pacific called for another large terminal for the eastern end of the line in St Paul, a similar but smaller building for Helena, Montana, and new hotels in both cities.[31] The company also constructed scores of smaller depots, a number of them designed by McKim, Mead & White (Fig. 5).[32] Planting depots was a strategic way to claim and mark contested territory. For example in 1882, after the Northern Pacific decided to erect depots on the Flathead Reservation near Missoula, Montana, Chief Eneas voiced his objection at a Congressional hearing: 'This reservation is a small country, and yet you want five depots upon it. These are the best spots on the reservation.'[33] The Northern Pacific built the depots nevertheless. In the summer of 1883, in the face of resistance, the railroad plunged through the Flathead Reservation before an agreement could be ratified by Congress.[34]

A depot's size, materials and degree of elaboration spoke volumes about a town's status, ambitions and prospects. Large or small, depots provided a gateway to the town and a link to the world beyond, via a vast interconnecting network of rails. Depots were the first places new arrivals experienced when they disembarked and they were one of most visible markers for those passing by on their way to other destinations. For those who lived nearby, they provided space for community purposes when nothing else was

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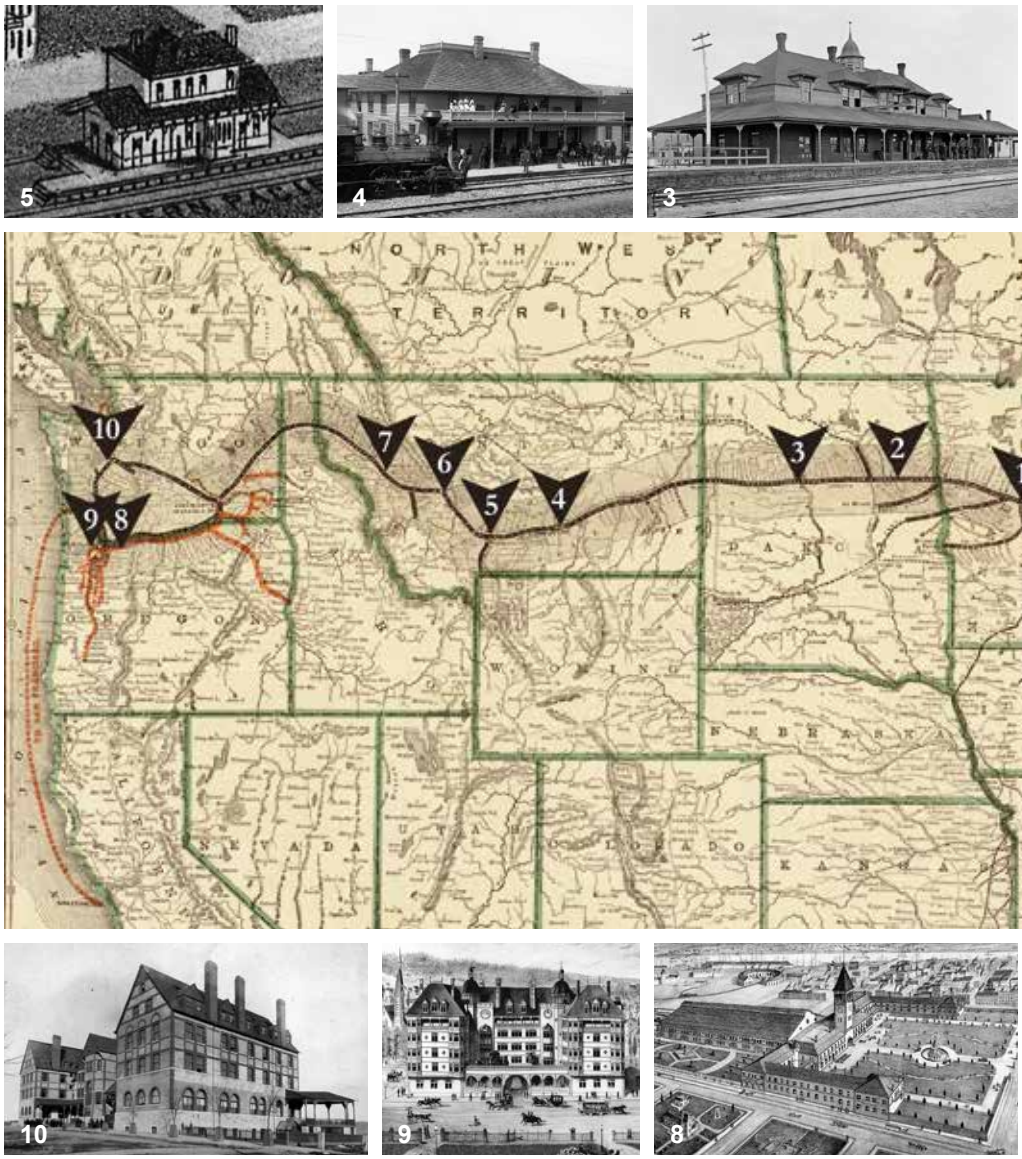

Fig. 5. *Map of the Northern Pacific Railroad and Oregon Railway & Navigation Co., published by Rand McNally and Co., 1883 (Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division), with additions by the author of major buildings initiated under Henry Villard, 1881–83*

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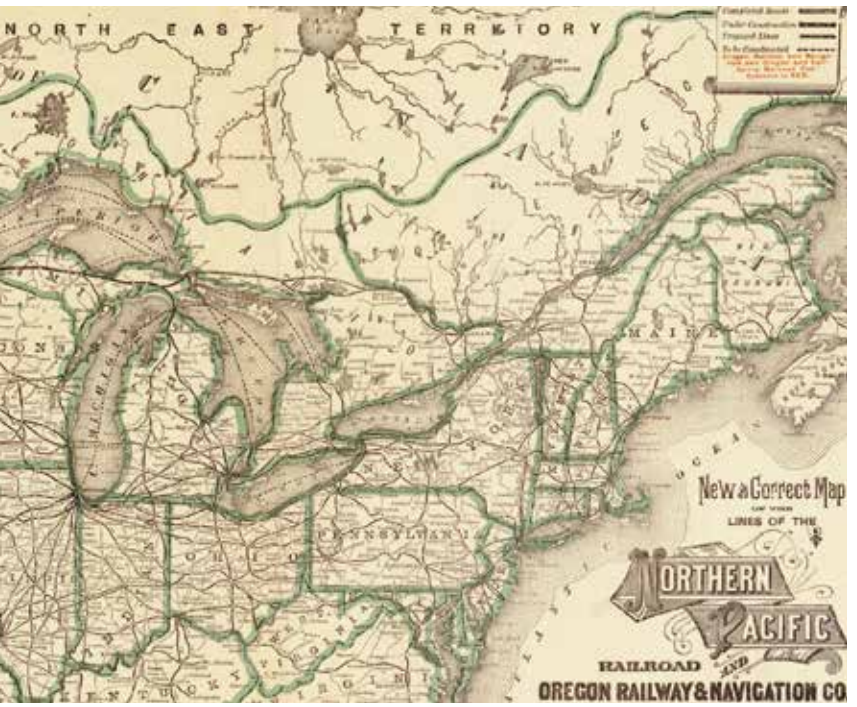

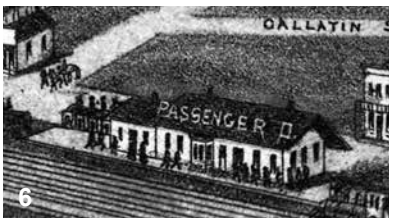

1) *Northern Pacific Benevolent Association Hospital, Brainerd, Minnesota, 1883 (Crow Wing County Historical Society)*

2) *Depot, Valley City, Dakota Territory,* c. *1882, photo by C. L. Judd, 1883 (Barnes County Historical Society)*

3) *Depot, Mandan, Dakota Territory,* c. *1882, photo by F. Jay Haynes, 1894 (Montana Historical Society Research Center, Photograph Archives)*

4) *Headquarters Hotel and Depot, Billings, Montana Territory,* c. *1882, photo by F. Jay Haynes, 1883 (Montana Historical Society Research Center)*

5) *Depot, Livingston, Montana Territory,* c. *1883, lithograph (detail) by Beck & Pauli, published by J. J. Stoner, 1884 (Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division)*

6) *Depot, Helena, Montana Territory, 1883, lithograph (detail) by Beck & Pauli, published by J. J. Stoner, 1883 (Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division)*

7) *Depot, Missoula, Montana Territory, photo by F. Jay Haynes, 1894 (Montana Historical Society Research Center)*

8) *Proposed Grand Union Depot, Portland, Oregon, lithograph by Junius F. Whiting, 1882 (*West Shore*; courtesy of Alexander Benjamin Craghead)*

9) *Proposed hotel, Portland, Oregon, lithograph by Henry Epting, 1883 (*West Shore*)*

10) *Hotel, Tacoma, Washington Territory, 1884, photo by McMurry (Tacoma Public Library)*

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Fig. 6. *Northern Pacific Depot, Mandan, North Dakota, McKim, Mead & White, completed in 1882, photograph by F. Jay Haynes, 1894 (Montana Historical Society Research Center, Photograph Archives)*

available. They also made tangible the ownership and authority of the remote railroad company, which sometimes conflicted with local concerns.[35]

One of the most impressive depots was the one that McKim, Mead & White designed for Mandan, Dakota Territory (Fig. 6).[36] Why Mandan? When the Northern Pacific established Mandan as a division headquarters, the railroad celebrated its expansion into new territory west of the Missouri River. Nearby were the Standing Rock Reservation and Fort Abraham Lincoln, from which General Custer had departed for the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876. Six years later, members of Sitting Bull's band were prisoners of war at Standing Rock (under the watchful eye of Cass Gilbert's uncle, Colonel Charles Champion Gilbert), and Mandan had become a booming town.[37] When completed in 1882, Mandan's new depot formed a gateway for people crossing the Missouri River to settle recently conquered lands, as well as serving the town and its investors, including a Boston-based syndicate with extensive holdings in the town.[38]

The *St Paul Globe* described Mandan's depot as being 'in the Queene [*sic*] Anne style'.[39] If so, it was a judiciously tamed Queen Anne, in accord with the architects' sensibility and most likely also with financial necessity. At one point, when Gilbert was assisting Mead with the design for a boarding house, Mead cautioned:

> Don't attempt to make it too architectural […] A little use of shingles on perpendicular sides is about all you can do. Corporations won't pay for architectural effect on the plains.[40]

For Mandan's depot, they contented themselves with bands of unpainted shingles in contrasting tones and, apart from the need to bring lumber all the way from Wisconsin or Minnesota, it seems likely that it was reasonably economical to build.[41]

In 1883, McKim, Mead & White, assisted by Gilbert, designed a large, shingle-clad building with a generous porch and three towers rising up from the banks of the Mississippi River (Fig. 7). Visible from westbound trains, it may have reminded some passengers of houses or hotels in fashionable resorts in the Northeast, but it was in fact a hospital for Northern Pacific workers and it was built at the edge of Brainerd, Minnesota,

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Fig. 7. *Northern Pacific Benevolent Association Hospital, Brainerd, Minnesota, McKim, Mead & White with Cass Gilbert, 1883, photograph after 1883 (Crow Wing County Historical Society)*

a rough western railroad town. For both this building and Mandan's depot, the architects brought to the western frontier the modernised colonial style which — as discussed by Richard Guy Wilson in his article in this issue — had its roots in New England's colonial architecture; the house McKim, Mead & White designed for Isaac and Jeannette Bell in the fashionable resort of Newport, Rhode Island, in the early 1880s is a good example.[42] Gilbert worked with Mead on the hospital's design, passing drawings back and forth, much as they would have done if Gilbert had still been in New York — except that the drawings travelled over a thousand miles by train and the two-way exchange took about a week.[43] As Mead's agent on the ground, Gilbert dealt with the increasing dissonance between Villard's demands and the railroad's finances, mediating between distant architects, Northern Pacific engineers and those who were cutting shingles into new shapes for a building the likes of which they would never have seen before.

Shingled or modernised colonial buildings were associated with a nationalist narrative that positioned New England as the true font of US culture.[44] For Mandan's depot and Brainerd's hospital, McKim, Mead & White transplanted the style without its roots. It is tempting to see the depot and hospital as emissaries of Anglo-American taste and culture in the West, and to some extent they were. Considering how many investors in western railroads and real estate hailed from New England, not to mention tourists and settlers, some may have perceived them this way. It would also not be surprising if Villard, and perhaps his architects as well, had architectural evangelism in mind when they planned tasteful modernised colonial buildings on the western frontier, given the commitment of both the ASSA and AIA to educating public taste. But what did it mean to import a style associated with leisured resort life and an idealised Anglo-American past into newly settled areas where people from many places and cultures were working hard to make their way? The buildings' meanings were contingent of course and many, if not most, people who encountered them might have responded to

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their scale and elaboration but would have had little frame of reference for interpreting stylistic nuances.

Most people, however, were not Villard's primary audience. While Gilbert was working with Mead on Brainerd's hospital, Villard was preoccupied with orchestrating a grand celebration of the completion of the railway line in early September 1883. He was assembling a party of some three hundred statesmen, aristocrats, capitalists and other luminaries from England, Europe and the US, and he wanted to impress them with the glories of the Northwest and the results of their investments.[45]

The celebratory journey across the Northwest began on 3 September 1883 in the Northern Pacific's eastern terminus at St Paul — the first of many cities and towns decked out to welcome Villard and his guests. There they paraded through streets streaming with flags and bunting, complete with triumphal arches decorated with an assortment of pork barrels, sheaves of wheat and railroad trestles, celebrating the Northwest's progress and bounty. The star of the show, besides Villard, was the enormous arch representing the city of St Paul —Gilbert's first constructed, albeit ephemeral, work of public architecture (Fig. 8). The *St Paul Globe* described it as 'oriental, being copied from the Moorish, or Saracenic arches forming the gateways of cities', but said nothing about why this was particularly appropriate for St Paul.[46] Then, forming 'a royal railroad procession', the company packed into four trains and travelled across the Northwest. At Gold Creek, Montana, a ceremony simulated driving the last spike in the road (they had even removed track already in place so that it could be relaid for the event).[47] All of this was staged for Villard's eminent guests.

The hype generated by Villard's excursion prompted *Puck* magazine to publish a cartoon showing a man beating a drum labelled 'Great Northern Pacific R.R. show patronized by the European aristocracy', while Villard pulls back a curtain to reveal — nothing (Fig. 9). This was all too apt. According to one observer, when they

> arrived on the Western Plain, and the foreign capitalists saw the wide expanse of bleak and barren prairie lands of Dakota Territory, no fertile fields and cultivated farms, no prosperous cities [… they] realized there would be little or no revenue from freight and passenger service for their property for years to come.[48]

In reality, the Northern Pacific was far from the stable system that its publicity had suggested and the rhythm of substantial buildings at key points along the line could not hide this. Richard White has shown just how precarious western railroad financing and management were in the late nineteenth century.[49] The Northern Pacific certainly exemplified this. Even as Villard and his excursion party celebrated, the company was faltering financially and his guests were racing to telegraph offices to sell their holdings.[50]

Within a few months, both the company and Villard were insolvent.[51] Working at transcontinental and transnational scales, Villard had used architecture as a means to promote himself, seed settlement and create an illusion of settled prosperity to shore up an unstable enterprise. Plans for the grand stations in St Paul and Helena were abandoned, Portland's terminal was never constructed, and the Portland hotel's empty foundations became known as Villard's ruins.[52] In December 1893, Villard asked William Endicott, Jr, one of his most stalwart investors, to investigate his shaky

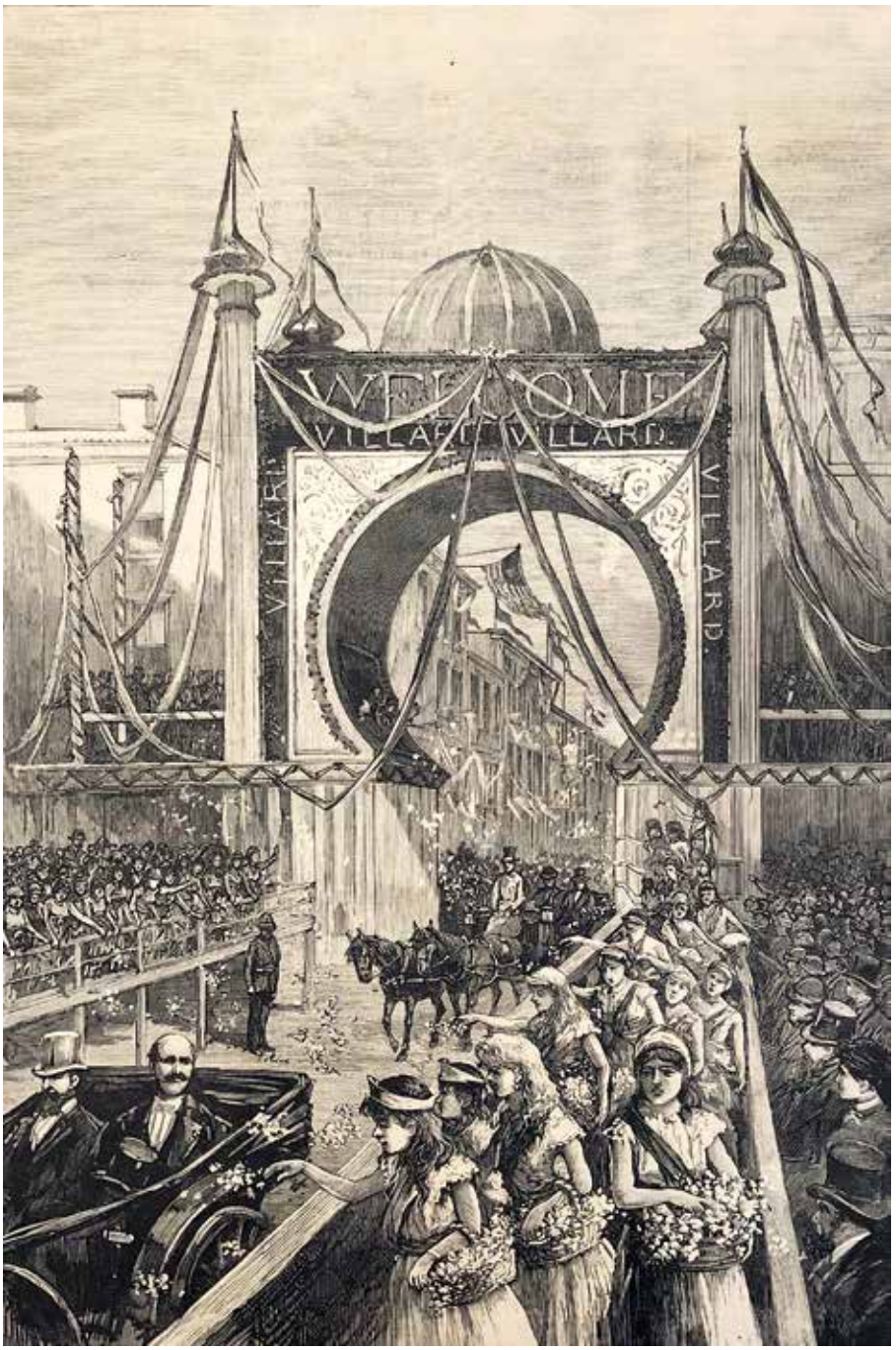

Fig. 8. Northern Pacific Jubilee — the Triumphal Arch at St Paul, Minnesota, *after a drawing by Charles Graham, from* Harper's Weekly, *15 September 1883*

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Fig. 9. The Great Rival Advertising Shows to 'Boom Up' Stocks, *lithograph (detail) by Bernhard Gillam, from* Puck, *5 September 1883*

finances. Waking him up in the middle of the night, Endicott informed Villard that he was bankrupt and must resign his presidency of the Northern Pacific. To economise, the Villard family moved into their unfinished house in New York City, where they would live for only four and a half months. Angry crowds gathered to heckle the man who ruined the railroad while living in luxury.[53] A few months earlier, Endicott had written to Villard, 'I cannot quite make up my mind whether it is you or [P. T.] Barnum […] that has the greatest show on earth'.[54] For Villard, the value of his houses would turn out to be as illusory as his grand schemes for the railroad.

CASS GILBERT IN ST PAUL

With the collapse of the Northern Pacific's finances, McKim, Mead & White's engagement with Villard came to an end. So did Gilbert's ambition of managing a branch office for the firm in St Paul.[55] Gilbert had served as McKim, Mead & White's agent in the Northwest, mediating between Villard's schemes, the firm's designs and those on the ground who were charged with making them a reality. This introduced him, and McKim, Mead & White, to what it meant to work on large-scale projects involving a complex organisation and multiple (and at times conflicting) agents, all at a distance of more than a thousand miles. The skills Gilbert developed in the process would benefit him, especially a few years later when Endicott, Jr — whose fortunes

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rebounded — joined other eastern capitalists in investments that restructured St Paul's business district and led to one of Gilbert's first big commissions.[56]

In late 1883, however, Gilbert was still struggling to get established. A number of commissions for modernised colonial houses came his way, some for people who valued their New England roots. Those in St Paul included one for his mother, Elizabeth Gilbert (1883), and another for John Quincy Adams (1884), a grain dealer who bore the name of the sixth president of the US.[57] For A. Kirby Barnum — a real estate speculator who was not related to P. T. 'greatest show on earth' Barnum, but might as well have been — Gilbert designed a showplace (1884) at nearby White Bear Lake to launch a new resort area that Barnum was developing (Fig. 10).

St Paul was fertile ground for investors. European and US immigration to the Northwest surged during the 1880s and St Paul experienced unprecedented growth.[58] Between 1880 and 1885, the city's population bounced from 41,473 to 111,397, and in 1890 to 133,156, while few Dakota people remained.[59] Wholesale houses that supplied settlers throughout the Northwest burgeoned near the river and tracks, new office buildings and department stores expanded the business district, and architects, builders and investors could barely keep up with housing for new arrivals and the newly rich.

In this context, in 1886, Gilbert formed a partnership with James Knox Taylor. The two had grown up together in St Paul and had both studied architecture at MIT. Most of their clients were transplanted from the Northeast. The work they did for them facilitated the processes of settling in a distant western city, forming a local upper class linked with its eastern counterparts and expanding markets across the Northwest. Their credentials and skills meshed well with their clients' needs. To cultivate a receptive clientele, Gilbert and Taylor joined prominent social clubs and circulated in St Paul 'society'. They also joined others to create an aesthetic culture that would provide a context for their work.

Villard's grand architectural vision had involved introducing into the Northwest the aesthetic culture that professional architects were shaping in the Northeast. This was largely a failure in the unsettled conditions along the Northern Pacific line, especially where there was no established Euro-American elite to sustain it. St Paul's more settled elite was receptive. Gilbert positioned himself as a cultural purveyor, giving public lectures on the arts (something he dreaded) and educating his clients individually. In a letter to his fiancée Julia Finch, Gilbert described a meeting with a client that involved 'a little talk, a reference to the principles of good taste. An anecdote of Alma Tadema, a discussion of some recent magazine articles.' In a missive meant to impress, this became a performance of masculine aesthetic authority, insider knowledge and the ability to interpret and enlarge on what he thought his client could grasp on her own.[60]

Gilbert also appears to have cultivated his own aesthetic persona. Profiling St Paul's men about town, a local newspaper characterised him as a 'dandy dude', commented on his middle-parted hair and British affectations ('Anglomaniacal' was a popular word for such tendencies) and suggested that his coat of arms should be a 'sunflower rampant in a Queen Anne cupola'.[61] This was a reference to well-known attributes of Oscar Wilde, the 'apostle of aestheticism', who had packed St Paul's opera house during his western lecture tour in 1882, the year before Gilbert opened his St Paul office (Fig. 11). It may also have enhanced his value to clients, some of whom had Anglomaniacal tendencies of their own.

Fig. 10. House at 'Dell-Wood' Built for Mr. A. Kirby Barnum of St Paul, Minnesota, *after a drawing by Cass Gilbert, 1884, from the* American Architect and Building News, *17 January 1885*

Fig. 11. Wilde on US. Something to 'Live Up' To in America, *lithograph by Thomas Nast, from* Harper's Bazaar, *10 June 1882*

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A case in point is St Paul's Town and Country Club overlooking the Mississippi River, one of the earliest purpose-built country clubhouses in the US (Fig. 12). In 1889, when Gilbert & Taylor received the commission, country clubs — established by wealthy men and women who enjoyed retreating to the country for sports, relaxation and sociability — were still a new phenomenon.[62] The club produced, affirmed and conveyed its members' elite status in several ways. One was its association with English country estates and its members with the English aristocracy — a common trope in articles on country clubs nationally. A *St Paul Globe* reporter explained that in 'Merrie h'old Hengland' members of the aristocracy keep country houses for various 'English sports and entertainments. And now St. Paul has something similar.'[63] The club assembled its members, who at first were overwhelmingly Anglo-American, in leisured pursuits that strengthened local bonds. At the same time, the club also paralleled elites' activities in similar settings elsewhere — something they would have been aware of through local newspaper reports on resort life in the East.

At that time, the most talked-about country club was the Tuxedo Club, which had opened in 1886 (Fig. 13). Designed by Bruce Price, the club was the social centre of the exclusive planned community of Tuxedo Park, north of New York, known for its concentration of millionaires and as the origin of the eponymous dress suit. Elements of the Tuxedo clubhouse reappear, albeit at reduced scale, at the Town and Country Club, including the picturesque massing, high hipped roofs and rounded porches. The connection was not lost on local reporters: 'New York has its Tuxedo; and so, as a […] logical consequence, St Paul has its Town and Country club.'[64] It was a suitable setting for the railroad magnate James J. Hill to raise capital for the Great Northern Railroad and for attorney Louis K. Hull to woo the powerful New York financier J. P. Morgan, one of the millionaires who had a home in Tuxedo Park.[65]

Upper-class formation was an ongoing and continuously negotiated process, and at times it was unclear what it meant to belong — or not. Gilbert's letters make it clear that he considered himself a member of the city's elite. Although he was not a member of the Town and Country Club at the time, he socialised with club members, including people who served on the clubhouse building committee. When Gilbert & Taylor asked to be paid for their work, committee members baulked, for they thought of their arrangement as an extension of their social relationship. Gilbert was affronted by this, both because he felt it negated their professional standing and because it was awkward to explain that he could not afford to maintain a membership.[66] Often Gilbert's and Taylor's abundance of cultural and social capital was sufficient for inclusion in St Paul 'society', much as it was for McKim, who belonged to numerous elite social clubs in New York and designed the first Harvard clubhouse there without compensation.[67] Eventually Gilbert & Taylor were paid. At that point in his life, Gilbert needed his commission more than the membership fee. In a few years, that would change and he would stand among his friends and clients as a member.[68]

In the late 1880s, eastern capital poured into St Paul and other western cities. Speculation surged, peaking in 1887 with reportedly 85 per cent of St Paul's real estate changing hands.[69] That year, the *St Paul Globe* declared: 'At present the call is generally for business property, which is bought readily and much sought after especially by people from the outside.'[70] St Paul's business leaders courted outside investors whose

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Fig. 12. *Town and Country Club, St Paul, Minnesota, Gilbert & Taylor, commissioned in 1889, postcard*, c. *1903*

capital (along with that of local investors) produced the immense new office buildings, department stores and warehouses that changed the scale and configuration of the city's business district.[71] Boston capitalists were particularly active in this process, none more visibly than Endicott, Jr, Villard's former associate. In 1888, he and his brother Henry commissioned Gilbert & Taylor to design one of the most opulent office buildings in the Northwest.[72]

This time around, Gilbert's experience of working with an eastern capitalist turned out to be significantly more successful. In personality, Endicott and Villard could not have been more different. Endicott was known for being dependable, honest and prudent, as well as for his extensive philanthropy. His interests extended through an array of businesses and organisations that placed him among Boston's elite. He was a partner in an international dry goods business, the president of two banks that managed the trusts of some of the city's wealthiest families, and he handled bonds and securities for western railroads.[73] By the time he began working with Gilbert & Taylor, Endicott and his co-investors already had an extensive portfolio of western investments, including an Endicott Building in Mandan.[74]

The firm of Gilbert & Taylor was a fitting choice. Not only had Gilbert worked on Villard's railroad, but he and Taylor had also been educated in a milieu that Endicott helped to shape. As a member of the Boston moneyed elite, Endicott was among the founders of both MIT, where Gilbert and Taylor had studied, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where they had spent many hours. Their training in Boston and New

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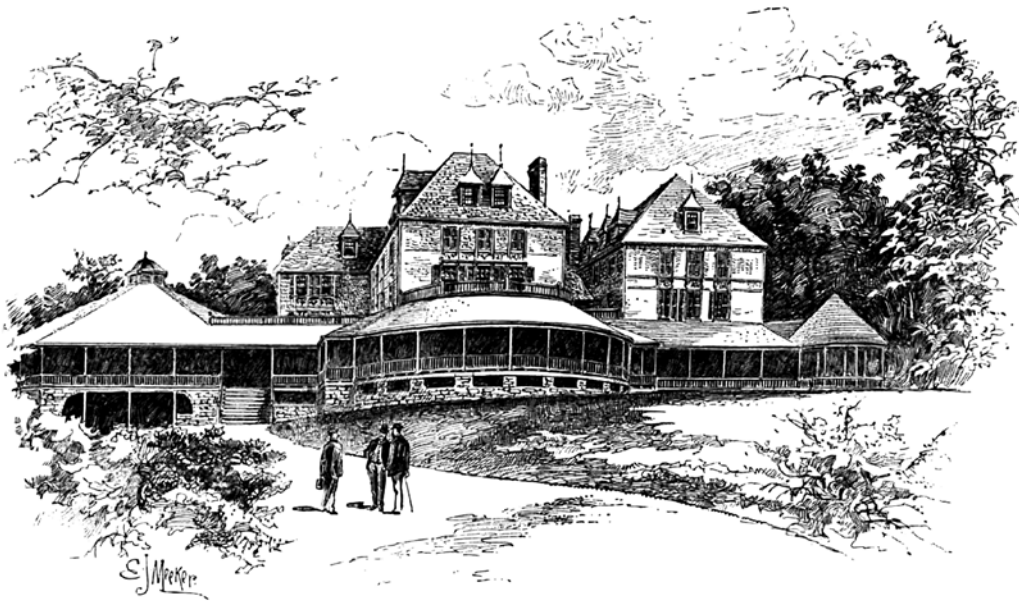

Fig. 13. *Clubhouse at Tuxedo Park, New York, Bruce Price, 1886, after a drawing by E. Meeker, from the* Sanitary Engineer, *22 July 1886*

York equipped them with the cultural capital and comportment they needed to serve upper-class clients such as Endicott, who invited them to stay with him in Beverly, Massachusetts, to work on the building's design.[75] Endicott kept a close watch on the evolution of the design to make sure it would result in office and retail spaces that would appeal to tenants. He also kept an eye on costs, yet was willing to pay for the best local craftsmanship, opulent materials and lavish interiors.

The Endicott brothers had acquired an unusual site. The corner of Fourth and Robert Streets, a premier location, was already occupied by the Romanesque revival-style Pioneer Press Building (Solon S. Beman, 1889), so the Endicotts acquired the land behind and on either side of it. To make the most of this, Gilbert & Taylor designed two distinct structures, the Endicott and Arcade Buildings. One faced on to Fourth Street, the other on to Robert Street, with an L-shaped, Parisian-style arcade connecting them. Departing from the Romanesque revival that was having its day in the West, Gilbert (the lead designer) devised a design that celebrated the 'purity' of Italian Renaissance architecture (Figs 14 and 15). He drew elements from a number of Italian Renaissance palazzos, but his greatest inspiration was the Villard Houses (Fig. 2). Gilbert was well acquainted with their design, for the project was under way while he was in McKim, Mead & White's office.[76] Endicott also knew the Villard Houses: when Villard lost his fortune, Endicott eventually stepped in to oversee the houses' completion and sale to settle Villard's debts.[77] But it was an unusual precedent for an office building. With rectangular windows punched into thick masonry walls, the design was out of step

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Fig. 14. *Endicott Building, St Paul, Minnesota, Gilbert & Taylor, 1889–90, Fourth Street facade, photograph by David Enblom, 2012*

Fig. 15. *Endicott Building, St Paul, Minnesota, Gilbert & Taylor, 1889–90, Fourth Street entrance lobby, photograph by Dana Wheelock, 2016*

with the current trend in commercial buildings towards sets of larger windows nearly filling each bay. Nonetheless, when completed in 1890, it was one of the premier business addresses in St Paul. The offices on the upper floors housed professionals, managers, manufacturers' agents, and entrepreneurs whose work facilitated the capitalist transformation of the Northwest.[78] Gilbert & Taylor moved into the top floor and took their place among them.

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As the lead designer, Gilbert had high aspirations for his modern Renaissance palazzo. In a letter to his mother, he explained his desire to produce a design of unsurpassed beauty and stylistic purity in the Italian Renaissance style. The result, he said, was his 'chef d'oeuvre':

> And Mother if I am not a fool I think it will be generally considered one of the fine things in this country. I believe that the style is so pure and so simple and so carefully carried out that it will be considered a scholarly piece of work.[79]

The year after completion, a celebratory book was published, for which Gilbert drafted most of the text. He noted the harmonious proportions, but warned that its 'subdued elegance' might disappoint someone 'who likes loud architecture of the slap-bang kind'. Only those with an educated eye that is 'keenly alive to symmetry' would recognise its superiority.[80] Stopping short of suggesting that the Endicotts' buildings had been planted among slap-bang philistines, the book presented the buildings as an aesthetic education for those open to their message, and an affirmation of superior taste for those equipped to perceive the building's exceptional merits. That such education might be needed was suggested by the appraisal that the building had received in the regional periodical *Building Budget*:

> For purity of style, the Endicott building stands alone in the architecture of the city. It is built in the Italian Renaisance [*sic*], and its simple grace and quiet beauty is [*sic*] charming in itself, for it is so seldom that we, in the West, see an architect, who will honestly and truthfully adhere to a style for its own sake, and the good he knows he is doing […] regardless of the lack of appreciation, and ignorance of the value of the work, that surrounds him.[81]

The letters Gilbert received from colleagues in other cities, however, were uniformly enthusiastic. One wrote: 'I always knew you'd show them in the West.'[82]

CONCLUSION

McKim, Mead & White, Gilbert and other professionals introduced into the rapidly changing Northwest concepts of design and professional practice developed in the Northeast. But rather than thinking of influences as travelling from one direction or another, it is worth considering how design, culture and class were co-produced simultaneously by many people across different regions. It is noteworthy that there was little or no time lag between most of the buildings mentioned here and their counterparts in the East, and in some cases westerners were in the lead. The first country clubs may have developed in the East, but Gilbert & Taylor — well aware of recent trends — designed one of the first purpose-built country clubhouses in the nation.

Equally important is the role buildings played in facilitating the practices that produced and sustained national networks of capital and culture. The buildings that McKim, Mead & White and Gilbert & Taylor designed in the Northwest served as forms of fixed capital that facilitated the production and circulation of other forms of capital — financial, social and cultural.[83] The Endicott and Arcade Buildings generated revenue for the investors; they (at least by intention) served as conduits of elevated

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aesthetic taste; and they were instrumental in conducting the business of those engaged in investment and resource extraction in more distant western lands. The Town and Country clubhouse served as a site where identities and connections were forged and reinforced. Architects were important agents in this process. Spatially and symbolically, the buildings they designed facilitated capital investment, the expansion of markets and the development of social bonds that made this possible.

Whether designing buildings or assessing possible real-estate investments, architects became caught up in the volatile economic conditions of the West, and directly or indirectly their work also contributed to the advancement of white settler colonialism. Although Villard's architectural vision for the Northern Pacific failed along with his financing, the buildings that McKim, Mead & White, Gilbert and the railroad's engineers designed — including those that never went beyond the pages of the *West Shore* — played a role in mobilising Villard's agenda for the railroad and the Northwest. Depots, hospitals, hotels and boarding houses claimed territory and facilitated investment, displacement and settlement. They introduced into the West design and taste shaped in the East. They advanced civilisation — from white settlers' perspectives — and they exposed failure and loss.

In Mandan, disparate lives and landscapes coincided: a booming town with a modernised colonial depot, bison hides on the platform waiting for shipment east, settlers passing through on the way to stake their claims, and the disruption of indigenous people's lands and lives — all visible, active and connected. While the material processes of settler colonialism were more starkly visible further west along the rail line, those who lived and worked at a remove in a more settled city like St Paul were no less implicated in these processes, whether as catalysts or as beneficiaries.

McKim, Mead & White and Gilbert were among the first professional architects to design buildings for a transcontinental railroad. Soon other western railroads would build grander depots and hire professional architects to design them, some of them from the Northeast. Van Brunt & Howe in Kansas City and Peabody, Stearns & Furber in St Louis are just two examples.[84] As the nineteenth century came to a close, architects increasingly needed to operate at the intersection of complex, geographically distributed systems — professional, technological, economic, social and cultural — whether working for local clients or for distant investors. The modern architectural profession, capital investment and white settler colonialism advanced hand in hand.

The historian Noam Maggor's work on Boston capitalists' investments in the West argues for the importance of incorporating western history more fully into broader narratives of American history.[85] I would say much the same about our own field. The American Renaissance looks quite different when viewed from Mandan.

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BIOGRAPHY

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66 MNHS, Cass Gilbert Papers, box 16, folder 110, memo by Gilbert, [n.d.]; letter from A. H. Paget to Gilbert and Taylor, 23 September 1890; letter from E. W. Peet to Gilbert and Taylor, 13 October 1890.

67 H. Horatio Joyce, 'New York's Harvard House and the Origins of an Alumni Culture in America', in *Experiencing Architecture in the Nineteenth Century: Buildings and Society in the Modern Age*, ed. by Edward Gillin and H. Horatio Joyce (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).

68 Cass Gilbert does not appear in the membership list: 'Swell Town and Country Club', *St Paul Globe*, 7 June 1891, pp. 1–2. He became an active member by 1896: for example, *St Paul Globe*, 8 March 1896, p. 16.

69 Castle, *History of St Paul and Vicinity*, p. 444.

70 'St Paul Real Estate', *St Paul Globe*, 16 January 1887, p. 15.

71 'St Paul Real Estate', *St Paul Globe*, 22 January 1888, p. 15.

72 On the Endicott Building, see Sharon Irish, 'West Hails East: Cass Gilbert in Minnesota', *Minnesota History*, 53, no. 5 (1993), pp. 197–207 (pp. 201–04). Larry Millett, *Heart of St Paul: A History of the Pioneer and Endicott Buildings* (St Paul, MN: Minnesota Museum of American Art, 2016). Endicott had previously commissioned Gilbert & Taylor to design the more austere Endicott-Rantoul warehouse.

73 *The History of the House of Hovey: Containing Some Interesting Reminiscences of Almost Three Quarters of a Century* (Boston, MA: C. F. Hovey Co., 1919), [unpaginated].

74 'Mandan', *St Paul Globe*, 19 June 1886, p. 9.

75 NYHS, Cass Gilbert Collection, Letterbook 1, letter from William Endicott, Jr to Cass Gilbert and James Knox Taylor, 4 July 1888.

76 See LOC, Cass Gilbert Papers, box 29, Francis S. Swales, 'Mr Cass Gilbert of New York and St Paul', *Builder*, 12 January 1912, p. 32. In handwritten annotations to this article, Gilbert noted that the Villard Houses informed the design of the Endicott Building.

77 'A Fair Eastern Account of Henry Villard's Retirement', *Daily Morning Astorian*, 13 January 1884, p. 3.

78 *R. L. Polk & Co's St Paul City Directory 1892* (St Paul, MN: 1891), *passim.*

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80 E. R. Garczynski, *A Description with Illustrations of the Endicott and Arcade Buildings* (New York: Exhibit. Publishing Co., 1891), [unpaginated].

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