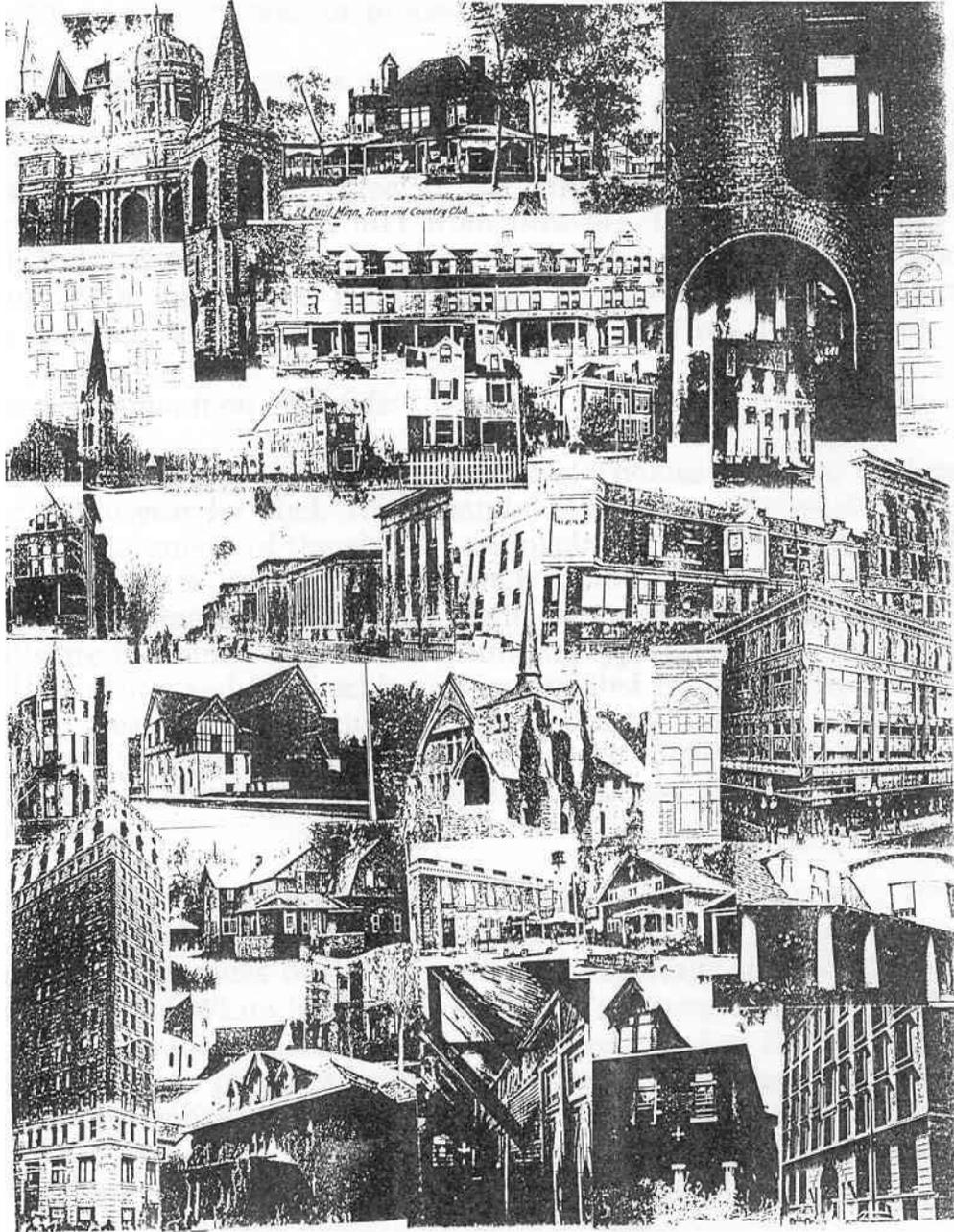


# Cass Gilbert Society Walking Tour



Fall 2004

# CASS GILBERT SOCIETY WALKING TOUR, FALL 2004

*This walking tour has been adapted by Marjorie Pearson from the tours prepared for the Cass Gilbert Society by Tom Blanck and Charles Locks in 1999 and 2000 and is based on their copyrighted material.*

This tour focuses on ten houses and two churches designed by Cass Gilbert. Also included are the home of his partner, James Knox Taylor, and the home of his chief draftsman and protege Thomas Holyoke. Several other buildings and sites that have personal or professional connections with Gilbert are noted.

**The tour begins at the intersection of Summit Avenue and Portland Avenue by the statue of Nathan Hale.**

*Looking northeast from the statue of Nathan Hale is:*

**76 Western Avenue North, James Knox Taylor residence.** Taylor was Gilbert's partner from 1884 to 1892, served as Supervising Architect of the Treasury from 1898 to 1912, and was head of the Department of Architecture at MIT from 1912 to 1914. The house has been remodeled, and simplified since Taylor's residence. The Colonial Revival trim on the upper-level front windows and the Queen Anne sash on stairwell window on the north side are details indicative of Taylor's era.

*Walking east on Summit on the left is:*

**Cochran Park (1924).** Among the last works of Thomas Holyoke, Cochran Park was designed the year before he died. The fountain, landscaping materials, curving paths, and the placement of the shelter are inspired by the City Beautiful movement. The shelter, with its corner quoins, tracery, beamed ceiling, and slate roof, might be described as Beaux-Arts. The *Indian Boy and Dog* sculpture was created by Saint Paul native Paul Manship, who is best known for the sculpture of *Prometheus* for Rockefeller Center in New York City.

*Continuing east on Summit is:*

**365 Summit Avenue, Mrs. J. W. Bass residence (1891).** This design by Gilbert and Taylor is a fully developed example of the Colonial Revival style that became popular in the last decades of the nineteenth century, especially through the influence of the New York firm of McKim, Mead and White, Gilbert's employer between 1880 and 1882. Colonial details include: the center hall plan, classical moldings and trim, fully developed corner pilasters, transverse gable roof, chimney placement, and dormers. The 1891 construction date is visible in the center gable of the third floor. The porch was added later, probably after 1903, when Chauncey Griggs acquired the house.

*Crossing Summit at Virginia Street is:*

**344 Summit Avenue, Watson Davidson residence (1912).** This building is a notable achievement in the career of Thomas Holyoke, who worked as chief draftsman for Gilbert between 1884 and 1904. From the street, its size is deceptive. The building is 14,000 square feet. Many of the building's details are Gothic in inspiration--the door with its elaborately molded arch, the casement windows, the Tudor truss work in the porte-cochere, the shingles that decrease in size toward the ridge to exaggerate perspective--but the general shape and proportion of the house and the application of these details make it a Beaux-Arts design. Holyoke is one of the most important of several architects who worked in Gilbert's office and subsequently made significant contributions to Minnesota architecture. He shared equal billing with Gilbert for the Roselawn Cemetery Chapel (1904). Holyoke continued to practice architecture until his death in 1924. His obituary states that he was the draftsman for the Minnesota State Capitol.

*Continuing east on Summit to:*

**340 Summit Avenue, Thomas Scott residence (1894).** This Beaux-Arts residence was designed by Allen Stem of the Saint Paul firm of Reed and Stem. The window trim, porch columns, eave profile, and massing of this house are Italian Renaissance-inspired details. However, details like the carving in the cartouche on the front facade and the carving in the attic frieze are related to designs of the English architect, Robert Adam. Stem designed many Shingle Style houses. The firm of Reed and Stem designed over 100 railroad stations and depots throughout the country. In 1911 the firm had 61 depots under construction. Reed and Stem were the designers, along with the New York firm of Warren and Wetmore, of Grand Central Terminal (1903-1913) in New York City. To the west at the bend of Summit Avenue is the firm's design for the University Club (1912).

*Continuing east on Summit to:*

**332 Summit Avenue, Edgar Long residence (1889).** This building is an example of the Queen Anne style, reminiscent of the Winans house in Baltimore, Maryland (1882), designed by McKim, Mead and White. Gilbert was the construction superintendent as well as the designer of a garden fountain for that project. The romantic silhouette of the Long house and its prominent corner tower are Queen Anne features. The carved-brick details have both Queen Anne and Richardsonian Romanesque origins. An odd feature of this house is the location of a porch post that blocks the view of the front door. Also curious is the juxtaposition of the curved entry with the horizontal line of the porch. Next door at 322-324 Summit, Gilbert reverses the design: rounded arch, square door. The porte-cochere has been converted to a single-car garage. Long was the general manager of the Railway Supply Company.

*Continuing east on Summit to:*

**322-324 Summit Avenue, Lightner-Young residences (1886).** This Richardsonian Romanesque building was built for law partners William H. Lightner and George B. Young in the year of Henry Hobson Richardson's death. Richardson's influence on an entire generation of architects was profound. Both Charles McKim and Stanford White got their start in his office,

and in 1885 Richardson's peers ranked five of his buildings among the ten best in America. On the east facade of this brownstone building, Gilbert has introduced a massive shingled dormer that carries two of his favorite details--a sawtooth edge on the lowest row of shingles and a raised, curvilinear hood over the window.

*Further east on Summit to:*

**318 Summit Avenue, W.H. Lightner residence (1893).** This house is the most Richardsonian of Gilbert's efforts and one of the most poetic. Its great success is the integration of every element of the facade into the whole. The purple Sioux quartzite is banded with Kettle River sandstone. The detailing, including the brick pattern work under the eaves, layered masonry and moldings, and bands of windows between columns, is exquisite. The design of the arched door entry, while providing little protection from the weather, is the height of elegance. Built for one of the same clients as 322-324 Summit and after the heyday of Richardsonian Romanesque design, it illustrates Gilbert's dictum that with regard to style, he favored "beauty over originality."

*Crossing Summit to:*

**301 Summit Avenue, George W. Gardner residence (1905).** Thomas Holyoke created this Beaux-Arts-inspired Georgian house the year after he left Gilbert's office. It is a clear continuation of the work he had done with Gilbert. "Church blend" masonry combined with Georgian details, such as muntin bar divisions in the dormer windows, the projected middle gable in the center of the house, and the porch, were prominent features of Holyoke's work. In 1904, while Holyoke was still in Gilbert's office, the firm designed the Ives residence at 625 Marshall Avenue, a more modest but similar house.

*Moving west on Summit is:*

**339 Summit Avenue, Crawford Livingston residence (1897).** This house draws its inspiration from Venetian Renaissance villas with its recessed loggia, brick details, slightly pointed arches, casement windows, and leaded glass of the third-floor windows. Gilbert treats Summit Avenue as if it were a Venetian canal. In Venice the loggia is a landing for the gondola; on Summit the loggia becomes an entrance porch. One of Gilbert's strongest talents was his facility to borrow (or often appropriate entire pieces of buildings) from European designs and give them new use and new life in America. The front dormer has an Elizabethan character, but it also has Italian precedents. Livingston was the president of the Saint Paul Gas Light Company, the forerunner of Northern States Power. He lived for eight years in the James Burbank House (1862) at 432 Summit prior to his move here.

*Next door at Summit and Virginia is:*

**345 Summit Avenue, A. W. Lindeke residence (1910).** This Tudor-inspired house, typical of the high fashion of the era, was designed by Clarence Johnston, Gilbert's boyhood friend. They attended MIT together and each set up his own practice in Saint Paul. While the latter half of Gilbert's career was centered in New York, Johnston continued practicing in Minnesota and

created 3500 buildings. At the time this house was built, Johnston was busy designing the first buildings for the mall Gilbert had laid out at the University of Minnesota. The original house on this site belonged to A.K. Barnum, a client for whom Gilbert built a summer cottage on White Bear Lake (1884). Lindeke was a partner with his father A. H. Lindeke in the wholesale dry goods firm of Lindeke, Warner, and Schurmeier.

*Turning the corner and proceeding north on Virginia Street is:*

**89 Virginia Street, Charles P. and Emily Noyes residence (1887).** Noyes, a partner in the wholesale drug firm of Noyes Brothers and Cutler, was an important Gilbert client. Gilbert built a cottage for him at Manitou Island (1884), and Noyes largely funded the German Presbyterian Bethlehem Church (1890) that Gilbert designed at 311 Ramsey. The Noyes house is one of the earliest examples in Saint Paul of Georgian-inspired Colonial Revival. The design incorporates a central hall plan. Details include corner pilasters, window trim, and a Palladian window in the second floor hall. All facades (though the rear less so) are treated equally. Incorporating the kitchen under the main roof and the addition of central heating reduced the necessity for extensions on the rear of the building. Particularly important in the Noyes house is Gilbert's use of clear leaded glass except for the sparse use of color in the main windows. Derived from the austerity of American Colonial architecture, it is a feature common to many of Gilbert's houses. At first glance, except for the porte-cochere, the front facade appears symmetrical, but the entry door is a couple of feet north of center, presumably to balance the porte-cochere.

*At the corner of Virginia and Laurel is:*

**130 Virginia Street, Theodore Schurmeier residence (1883).** This house originally stood at 189 Virginia and was relocated to this site in 1887. Theodore Schurmeier was a partner in the dry goods firm of Lindeke, Warner and Schurmeier and was married to Caroline Gotzian, daughter of Conrad Gotzian. Shingle Style details include rather severe porch posts, diamond and other shingle patterns on the north facade, "cottage windows" on the first and second floors with single-pane lower sash and multi-pane upper sash, and decorative Queen Anne window muntins on the third floor. Remnants of half timbering are visible on the west gable. Imbedded patterns of river gravel--a detail Gilbert had seen in the work of McKim, Mead and White in the Samuel Tilton house at Newport, R.I. (1880-82)--can still be seen over the front entry. The eave on the front gable was added. Some interior details are clearly in the Colonial idiom.

*One block north at Selby and Virginia is:*

**170 Virginia Street, Virginia Street Church (1886).** One of six wood churches designed by Gilbert, this Shingle Style building is a nationally important example of his work. The foundation is constructed of fieldstone. Exterior wood details, most notably the doors and charming tower, are taken from medieval architecture. The wood arches are Richardsonian Romanesque in inspiration. The leaded-glass windows in the side walls are original. The social hall to the east was added by Thomas Holyoke. The church was built for the Saint Paul Swedenborgian congregation.

*Looking east down Selby to:*

**Saint Paul Cathedral (1906-1915).** Gilbert twice turned down this commission. Emmanuel Masqueray, the architect of the cathedral, was Gilbert's friend and colleague at the 1904 Saint Louis World's Fair, and Gilbert may have been influential in introducing Archbishop John Ireland to Masqueray. Masqueray produced for the exposition a Beaux-Arts central building with a main portal similar to that of the cathedral. The details of the cathedral are clearly Beaux-Arts, and the design of the rose windows are unique to the cathedral. Masqueray's building for the World's Fair was razed, and the only surviving building from the fair is Gilbert's Art Building (now the Saint Louis Art Museum).

*Walking west on Selby to Western:*

**165 Western Avenue North, Albion Hotel (Blair House) (1887 and later).** The year following their marriage (1887), Cass and Julia Gilbert lived in one of the corner units. In an effort to save money, they simply had the apartment painted white, an effect in keeping with the contemporary Aesthetic Movement in interior design. Designed by Herman Kretz the year he arrived in Saint Paul, the Blair is a neighborhood landmark but not one of Kretz's better designs. Flaws include: the poor relationship between the first and upper floors, the small (seven foot) light shafts, and the huge interior area (40 percent) devoted to hallways. In his correspondence with Kretz, Gilbert always addressed him as "Mr. Kretz," not "Herman Kretz, architect."

*Walking south on Western and west on Laurel to:*

**411 [409] Laurel Avenue, William Davis residence (1883).** This early Gilbert and Taylor Shingle Style design was for a client who became the Gilbert family physician. Gilbert also hired Davis's brother-in-law, eighteen-year old Thomas Holyoke, in 1884. The exposed chimney on the front facade is an unusual detail in buildings of that era. The strongly asymmetrical composition and the shingled arched gabled dormer are attempts to create a romantic profile, but the effect is reduced by the narrowness of the front facade and the corresponding depth of the building, a problem East Coast architects had to deal with because of scarcity of land but not usually a significant consideration in Saint Paul. Thomas Holyoke lived in this house with his sister and brother-in-law from 1885 until his death in 1925.

*Walking west on Laurel to Arundel, three houses beyond the intersection is:*

**458 Laurel Avenue, J. Walter Stevens residence.** The residence of J. Walter Stevens has a powerful romantic profile characteristic of the Queen Anne style. The porch is a rebuilding of the central portion of the much larger original porch. Stevens designed the majority of warehouse buildings in the Mears Park area in downtown Saint Paul. He also designed the commercial building at 191 Western (1888), and it is possible that he designed the Dacotah Building at Selby and Western. Stevens was Gilbert's strongest competitor in the design of commercial buildings in St. Paul. In size and number of buildings, Stevens was clearly the winner. Gilbert produced the Endicott Building and four other smaller warehouse buildings in the Lowertown area.

**481 Ashland Avenue.** This six-flat building was the birthplace of F. Scott Fitzgerald on September 24, 1896.

*South on Arundel and west on Ashland to:*

**453 Ashland Avenue, Channing Seabury residence.** Designed by Mould and McNicol, this was the residence of Channing Seabury. The Gilberts were social friends of Seabury, vice president of the Board of Capitol Commissioners, the governmental body that organized the competition for the Minnesota State Capitol building. Seabury encouraged Archbishop Ireland to seek out Gilbert to design the cathedral.

*Two houses beyond is:*

**471 Ashland Avenue, Elizabeth Gilbert residence (1882-1883).** Commissioned by his mother, this is Gilbert's first independent work, and many features of the design are original. The porch details are from the Richardsonian Romanesque, especially the capitals. Queen Anne windows in the attic provide important geometric accents to the shingle surfaces. This house appropriately inaugurated Gilbert's career. Interestingly, the large gable on the west facade with its Palladian window is similar to the gable on the front facade of the home that Frank Lloyd Wright built for himself in Oak Park (1891). Wright is believed to have derived his form from the Chanler house, designed by Bruce Price and built in 1885, in Tuxedo Park, New York. Gilbert lived in the house until he married in 1887. He let the property after his mother's death in 1897 and sold it several years later.

*At the end of the block at Mackubin is:*

**495 Ashland Avenue, Saint John the Evangelist Episcopal Church (ca. 1885).** All that remains of Gilbert's work is the guildhall at the north end of the building. The large bay window of Tudor origin--common to gathering rooms of English country houses--and its glass are original. The three-cusped window above the bay is Gothic, as is the fleche (slender spire). The entry doors are also Gothic and appear to be original. A fire destroyed the sanctuary, and it was rebuilt by Thomas Holyoke after he left Gilbert's practice. The building has served several congregations, and during the Depression it housed a "Russian Theater." It was converted to four residential units in 1981. The present St. John the Evangelist Congregation is located two blocks away at the northeast corner of Portland and Kent.

*South on Mackubin to Portland and east to:*

**460 Portland Avenue, John White residence (1885).** Gilbert and Taylor's eclectic design for this house incorporates windows from both Renaissance and Romanesque sources. The cornice is Classic Revival. Some of the general proportions of the facade relate to Italian Renaissance villas. The Queen Anne porch has Tudor framing in the porch gable and Romanesque porch posts, each with a unique carved capital. While this facade may not hold together as well as the facades of some of his Colonial Revival and Romanesque Revival houses, it is daring in its design, an affect that was not something that Gilbert generally aspired to. The client, an attorney, initially had reservations about the design, although not his wife, who liked it from the beginning.

*East on Portland to Nathan Hale Park and west on Summit to:*

**415 Summit Avenue, E.W. Winter residence (1884).** This house started its life as an Italianate relative to the Burbank-Livingston-Griggs house across the street at 432 Summit. Though no original photos of it are known to exist, it probably had a low sloping hip roof and a belvedere and its exterior was austere and blocky. In 1884 the Gilbert and Taylor firm was hired to remodel the house. Gilbert raised the roof to create a mansard (the only one he is known to have built), leaving the eaves, siding, and brackets. He added Renaissance-inspired bay windows, a Queen Anne porch, and Colonial Revival entry. Inside, he completely reworked the trim and decor to give it a Victorian Renaissance character and added a magnificent stairwell. Despite the diversity of the design, the house possesses pleasant proportions. The client, E. W. Winter, later became the president of the Northern Pacific Railway. Additional work was carried out during the ownership of William Dean, who was related to Winter by marriage.

*Looking across Summit Avenue is:*

**Summit Outlook Park and the Eagle statue.** Summit Outlook Park, acquired in 1887 by the Saint Paul Board of Park Commissioners, provides a view from the ridge of Summit Avenue and Ramsey Hill to downtown Saint Paul and the Mississippi River. Gilbert was appointed advisory architect to the park board in 1903. The Eagle, sculpted by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, stood over the entrance of the New York Life Insurance Company Building, designed by the New York firm of Babb, Cook, and Willard. Cass Gilbert served as the local superintendent for the construction of the building between 1887 and 1889. It stood at Minnesota and East 6<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Saint Paul until its demolition in 1967.

**For more information see:**

Thomas R. Blanck and Charles Locks, "Launching a Career: Residential and Ecclesiastical Work from the St. Paul Office," in *Cass Gilbert: Life and Work: Architect of the Public Domain*, eds. Barbara S. Christen and Steven Flanders (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001).

Geoffrey Blodgett, *Cass Gilbert: The Early Years* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001).

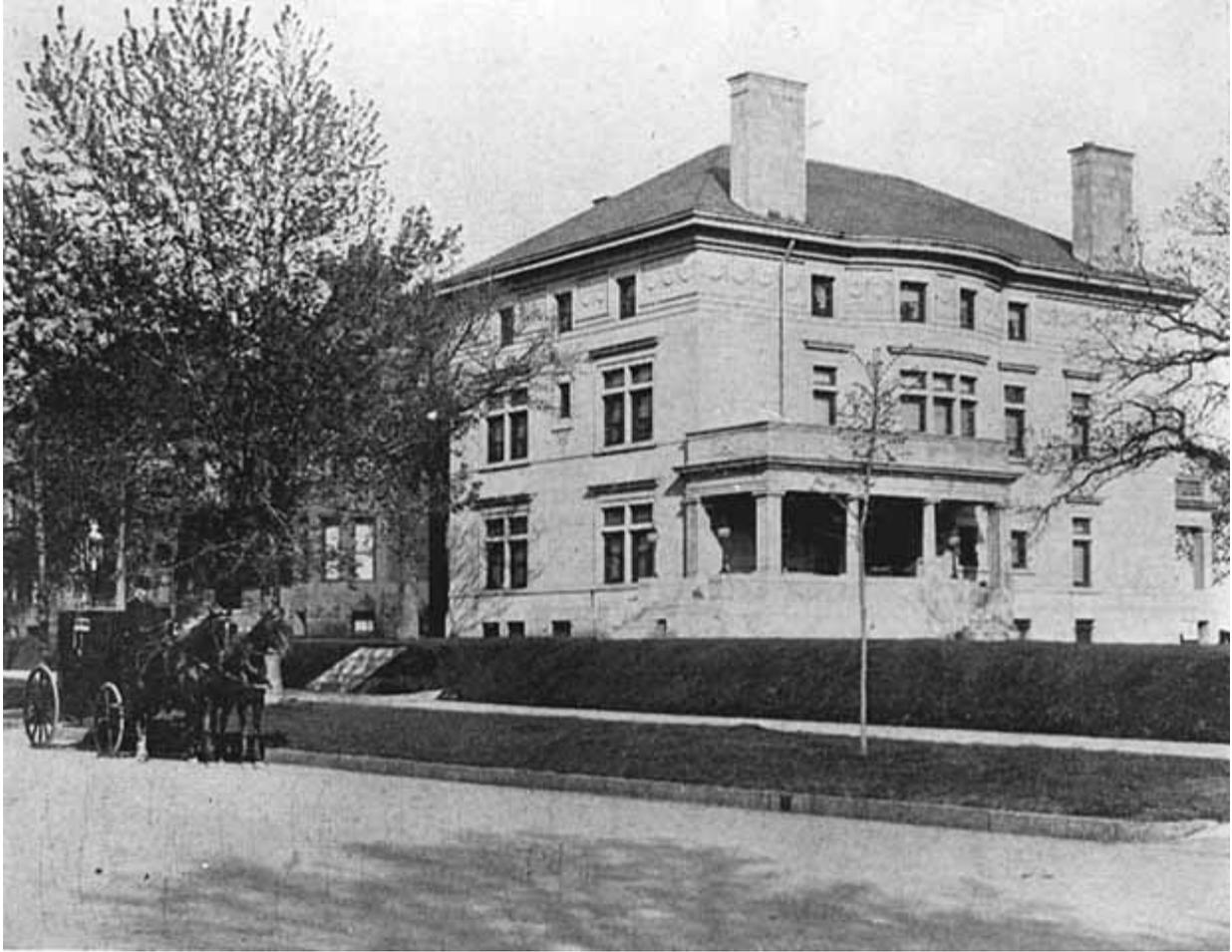
Ernest R. Sandeen, *St. Paul's Historic Summit Avenue* (St. Paul: Living History Museum, 1978).



*The Indian Boy and the Dog, Cochran Park*



Watson Davidson Residence, 344 Summit



Thomas Scott Residence, 340 Summit



Edgar Long Residence, 332 Summit



William Lightner and George Young Residences, 322-324 Summit



William H. Lightner Residence, 318 Summit



George W. Gardner Residence, 301 Summit



Crawford Livingston Residence, 339 Summit, and A. K. Barnum Residence, 345 Summit



Charles P. and Emily Noyes Residence, 89 Virginia



Albion Hotel (Blair House), 165 Western



William Davis Residence, 411 [409] Laurel, at left



Channing Seabury Residence, 453 Ashland