

Harry Wild Jones: American Architect Elizabeth Vandam

(Minneapolis: Nodin Press, 2008. 143 p. Cloth, \$39.00.)

In his long professional life, Harry Wild Jones (1859–1935) became one of Minneapolis’s best-known architects. His career spanned six decades, during which he produced designs for more than 300 buildings, most of them in Minnesota and more than half in Minneapolis. His career is worthy of a biography, and Elizabeth Vandam’s *Harry Wild Jones* attempts to fill this gap.

Rather than specializing in a single building type, Jones ranged widely from business and commercial spaces to public facilities such as schools and recreation buildings to the residences and churches that comprised the majority of his portfolio. He designed mansions around the Minneapolis lakes, “cottages” at Lake Minnetonka, and slightly more modest homes in Tangletown and other Mill City neighborhoods. Although Jones began building churches in Minneapolis in the late 1880s, the 1910s saw his career shift from primarily residential design for a local market to church design for a wider clientele, with structures proposed or built in 17 other states as well as for Baptist missionaries in Asia. His continuing work with the Minneapolis Park Board resulted in pavilions and park buildings around the city. He designed the renovated exterior of Nicollet Park (1912), home of baseball’s Minneapolis Millers. His best-known surviving buildings are the now-renovated Butler Square (1906–08) and the beautiful Lakewood Cemetery Chapel (1910).

Many of Jones’s designs were standard forms that he developed and reused, with or without variation. English parish churches inspired Jones counterparts, with squat, square towers and stone or brick walls pierced by medieval-inspired stained glass windows. His residence styles were more varied, not surprising given the length and timing of his career. Early on, Jones attempted some Richardsonian Romanesques, as one might expect from a former H. H. Richardson employee. He created homes in Shingle, Queen Anne, Classical Revival, Renaissance Revival, and Tudor Revival styles, among others, often combining elements of these varied modes in unusual and unexpected ways.

Accompanying the design skills necessary for such work, Jones had a knack for self-promotion, useful in establishing a career in the hurly-burly competition of Minneapolis’s

building booms. As a result, he earned some of his fame by quality and creativity, some by volume, and much by active promotion. The bulk of his career consisted of small projects, although his ambition stretched to larger-scale, high-visibility commissions. He entered competitions for Minneapolis’s Great Northern Depot and its Gateway project and, most notably, the third Minnesota State Capitol, for which he was awarded fifth prize in the competition won by Cass Gilbert.

Vandam’s biography follows Jones’s own approach, actively promoting the architect and listing his works. This well-illustrated coffee-table book helpfully assembles a large amount of material—especially images—from the abundant Jones resources scattered around the Twin Cities, including information, pictures, and documents in the private family collection. About half of the book’s architecture images are drawings of realized and unrealized projects, providing an interesting counterpoint to the historical photographs.

Many of the book’s images depict the dapper architect and his family (ancestors and descendants), reflecting the author’s perspective: Jones, not his architecture, is at the center of this study. In nearly all cases, the buildings are slighted in favor of the person who designed them and the people who commissioned them. Indicating Vandam’s fascination with Jones rather than his work, the book devotes a full page to his *Mayflower* pedigree chart and includes an image of Jones’s grandfather’s handwritten copy of “My Country ’Tis of Thee,” emphasizing these elements over images of Jones’s designs.

Some buildings do get significant attention. The success of the Lakewood Cemetery Chapel is discussed quite thoroughly, as is appropriate for one of Jones’s best and best-known buildings. There is, however, no discussion of the origin of his use of the Byzantine style, even though the book’s illustrations indicate that Jones was exploring this mode both before and after the Lakewood project, using large central domes in religious spaces like the Universalist Church in Owatonna (1905) and in proposals for later churches. One wonders what the Baptists in Pittsburgh (1909) and St. Louis (1924) thought of these designs, and how Jones would have explained or sold his architectural vocabulary for these Protestant spaces.

The book includes a lengthy excerpt from Jones’s travel journal written during a voyage to Asia in 1907. Running nearly 20 pages, it contains little of architectural significance. Most surprising, in fact, is Jones’s apparent lack of interest in the Asian architecture he was encountering. One might assume that he would be interested in the design of sacred space; instead, he was taken with religious practices and frequently described them in a decidedly unsympathetic tone.



The book concludes with a thorough catalog of Jones's work, both built and unrealized. Assembling such a resource must have been a time-consuming task, and its creation is one of the book's major contributions in advancing scholarship on the architect.

Given the abundance of material and the architect's own tendency toward self-congratulation, a significant responsibility of any Jones biographer is to question and critique. He merits such analysis, and his buildings can withstand such inquiry. While this book provides much information, it fails to be a persuasive interpretive tool to help us understand Jones's work and its significance.

Reviewed by Kristin M. Anderson, professor of art at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, whose article including Wild's work on Nicollet Park appeared in the Fall 2003 issue of this magazine.

Wood + Concrete + Stone + Steel: Minnesota's Historic Bridges

Denis P. Gardner

*(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
221 p. Cloth, \$39.95.)*

Perhaps no other structure from our built environment tells us more about human progress than a bridge. Each bridge is the visible story of the advancement of engineering, craftsmanship, and technology—and also the development of the community where it is located. In this book, historian Denis P. Gardner provides us with the story of Minnesota's historic bridges through illustrative samples of some of the state's most remarkable spans.

Rich with over 200 photographs, this impressive volume explores the evolution of bridge building in Minnesota in its first four chapters by chronicling construction materials and how the development of new building materials led to the progression of new bridge types. But Gardner enlarges the story of wood, stone, steel, and concrete by also introducing readers to some of our nation's most notable bridge designs and designers as he explores Minnesota's rich bridge heritage. Not only do we learn about the construction history of the Northern Pacific Railway across Minnesota, but we also learn about the Howe truss, the most popular truss design for railroad bridges in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and its creator, William Howe. And in the history of the Kern bridge, a wrought-iron bowstring-arch built in 1873, Gardner documents the story of Squire Whipple, one of our nation's most important inventors of bridge trusses,

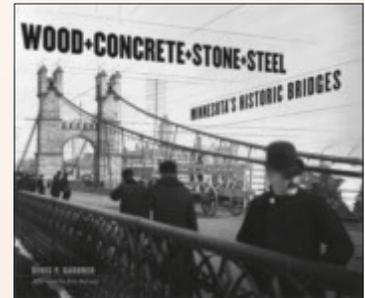
including the Whipple truss. Through these narratives, Gardner captures the interest of both the historian and the engineer as he allows us to look back in time and appreciate the extensive role bridges have played in the history of Minnesota.

Gardner has another story for his readers as well: the value of preserving our historic bridges. In a chapter on preservation, he sends a call to his readers that when

historic bridges are torn down or allowed to deteriorate, a part of our past disappears forever—we lose history that helps us know who we are and where we are going. It is no small fact, as Gardner notes, that over the past two decades our nation has lost more than half of its historic bridges. This wake-up call is not just to preservationists or engineers and historians. It urges all of us to work with our local, state, and federal governments to view historic bridges and bridge preservation in a new light.

Minnesota is richly endowed with notable bridges. Perhaps Gardner's most important message is that these bridges deserve not only recognition but also gratitude and respect for their part in the story that is Minnesota.

Reviewed by Kitty Henderson, executive director of the Historic Bridge Foundation, a national advocacy organization for the preservation of historic bridges in the United States. For more information, visit www.historicbridgefoundation.com or call 512/407-8898.



Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know about the Civil War

Gary W. Gallagher

*(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
274 p. Cloth, \$28.00.)*

Twenty-five years of teaching has provided me with countless pedagogical insights, and one of the most notable is that students love to watch movies. I teach history and I know that my students will remember more about the Civil War from watching *Glory* than they will from all my lectures.

In this book, Gary Gallagher, John L. Nau III Professor of History at the University of Virginia, examines Civil War narratives in film and art. These stories reflect four major

themes that historians have utilized to interpret the war. The first, “The Lost Cause,” argues that the South’s goal of building an independent nation was admirable and its soldiers were gallant warriors. There is little, if any, discussion of slavery. “The Union Cause” touts the North’s efforts to maintain the republic and uphold the dream of the Founding Fathers. The third interpretation, “The Emancipation Cause,” explains the war as a struggle to free the slaves. And last, “The Reconciliation Cause” is best summed up in words used to advertise the film *Gettysburg*: “Same Land. Same God. Different Dreams.”

Gallagher chose films and art from the last 20 years, because of the rebirth of interest in the Civil War as illustrated by expanding magazine subscriptions, book sales, television specials—most recently and notably, Ken Burns’s hugely popular PBS documentary—and interest in battlefield preservation. Gallagher selected 14 movies, including *Glory*, *Gettysburg*, *Gods and Generals*, and *Dances with Wolves*, each of which is explained in context of the four interpretive themes. His study revealed that Hollywood in this era most often embraced “The Emancipation Cause”—after the popularity of *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Gone With The Wind* (1939), which praised the Confederacy.

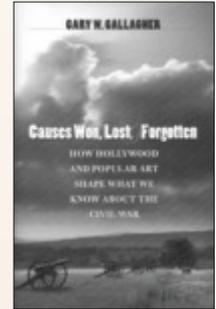
To study art, Gallagher sampled advertisements in three magazines devoted to the Civil War. Again utilizing the four themes, he was able to discern the topics and individuals most popular with the public. Buyers prefer “The Lost Cause” theme and especially favor art featuring Robert E. Lee or Stonewall Jackson.

Gallagher elucidates each of the interpretative themes in a clear, concise, easy-to-understand manner, and his application of the historical context to the selected films makes

for a fascinating read, especially for the layperson. Black-and-white photographs illustrate his discussion of artwork. Extensive notes complete the book. During the bicentennial of Lincoln’s birth, this is a welcome addition to the shelf of Civil War books, offering readers a new perspective for thinking about film and art and their own views of the Civil War.

Readers come away with the realization that films are more than mere entertainment or the re-creation of a particular period in America’s history. Writers and directors produce movies and documentaries to advocate one particular version of the Civil War story, whether to glorify a mythical vision of Southern society where happy, contented slaves serve kind white masters or to portray the war through the lives of ordinary individuals like Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, who rose to meet the extraordinary challenges of the times. Buyers of art prefer the Confederate generals rather than Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan. I wonder what goes through the minds of my students, how much they actually retain, and how *Glory* influences everything else they see and read about the Civil War. And through it all, my question is: What would Lincoln think?

Reviewed by Patricia Ann Owens, who teaches history, government, and geography at Wabash Valley College in Mt. Carmel, Illinois. Her research interests are Lincoln, the Civil War, and the nineteenth-century American West. She is author of several articles.





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