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Horace Trumbauer: A Life in Architecture

WITHIN MONTHS after reaching legal age, Horace Trumbauer opened his architectural office in Philadelphia. Before he died in his native city nearly half a century later, he had brought forth well over a thousand works. Remembered best for his mansions, he in fact devised buildings and alterations of virtually every size and purpose. Most stand in Philadelphia or its suburbs, although structures north to Maine and south to Florida, west to Colorado and east to England make him far from a local architect. While he had many gifted employees, their purpose was to carry out his intentions. Today he ranks as Philadelphia's representative among the top tier of American architects of the Gilded Age.

His life was closely interwoven with the opulent era of architecture through which he lived. Born soon after the Civil War, the boy grew up in a nation freshly emerged as a world power, whose architects cast aside regional customs in favor of historic styles firmly within the European mainstream. Europe's own use of such styles had grown overly mannered so that the United States now led in architecture no less than in industry. First fruits of this period were still arising when Horace quit school at age fourteen to apprentice at an architectural firm. Going on his own in 1890, the twenty-one-year-old won instant approval from prosperous clients. Chief

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celebrities of the era were its tycoons, and almost at once he began erecting immense residences for them. Yet this same era believed that public buildings—from libraries to railroad stations—must likewise be embellished, leading him to create many palaces for the people. World War I dampened the great epoch of mansions, whereupon he made an easy transition to the skyscrapers and other commercial structures of the 1920s, but once the Great Depression put a permanent end to his type of architecture, he soon vanished along with it.

Like most architects of his time, Horace Trumbauer bore no allegiance to one particular style, although his predilection for eighteenth-century France is unmistakable. More often he found himself working in the English styles preferred by his patrons. Here too he favored eighteenth-century classicism, yet Gothic and Elizabethan were also in demand. Georgian from the American colonies was often revived for smaller houses. On occasion he made forays into Italian and Spanish or ancient Greek and Roman. As with his contemporaries, Trumbauer felt no compunction about copying anything from a bracket to a facade. With benefit of hindsight he regularly improved on his prototypes. Essentially he did what everybody else was doing except that he did it better. His plans are always efficient and clear, his structures extraordinarily solid, and he made the largest edifice appear compact, the smallest imposing.

For a man who thought brilliantly in three dimensions, he lived in one alone: architecture. He had hobbies like gardening or collecting antiques but these proved variants on how he made his living. His position could have gained him access to the most elite of social and intellectual circles but he shied away from intimacy. Innately adept at his profession, he rather bumbled through the rest of his existence. Granting no interviews and writing letters that are strictly business, he might seem a difficult subject for biographers, yet his character reveals itself in the buildings that were his life (fig. 1).

Outside his work, his only true concern was his family, although even in their company he quickly grew anxious to get back to his office. During his final years he made some effort to search out his genealogy.[1] In figuring that

[1] Fred L. Nase (1902–1985), office assistant from 1924 to 1938, recalled when interviewed in 1974 that he had once been dispatched to Trumbauersville to borrow from Milton and Levi Trumbauer their family Bible so that the architect could clear up some points. Presumably this information made its way

Fig. 1. Horace Trumbauer ca. 1900. Photo, *Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biography* (New York, 1923), 14:282 (facing).

his paternal ancestors emigrated from Germany in 1682, he must have relied on a year he knew, that in which Philadelphia was laid out. More likely they arrived nearly half a century later from the Black Forest region where their name had been "Trum" or "Trump," his line descending from an eldest son

into posthumous articles in *Encyclopedia of American Biography* (New York, 1940), 11:90–93 with portrait facing p. 90 and *National Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York, 1940), 28:440–41 with portrait facing p. 440. Such background would earlier have been unavailable for the more perfunctory account in *Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biography* (New York, 1923), 14:282, with facing portrait (reproduced here as fig. 1).

who inherited the family farm or "Bauer." Within one generation they would found the Bucks County village still called Trumbauersville. For the requisite participant in the American Revolution, he discovered a great-granduncle, Philip Trombour, a lieutenant in the New Milford company from Bucks County.[2] His maternal forebears he put not unreasonably in Alsace-Lorraine, giving himself borderline roots in the France whose classical styles he adopted as his own.

Fleeing the farm for Philadelphia, Josiah Blyler Trumbauer found employment in the dry-goods trade. On May 6, 1852, the clerk, aged twenty-seven, married Mary Malvina Fable, whose twenty-two years had been lived in the city.[3] The couple gave birth to two sons followed by two daughters. Promotion to salesman enabled a move to what then was almost the countryside. Now deep inside the northeast thumb of the city, Frankford had become part of Philadelphia in the consolidation of 1854. Commuter trains on the Pennsylvania Railroad stopped there, but the father more likely rode home on the horsecars that in 1860 had added Sunday to their schedules over the objection of local clergy.[4] After a gap

[2] During a 1983 interview, genealogist Charles L. Price, Jr., whose wife was of this stock, suggested these corrections to the architect's suppositions. Thomas Lynch Montgomery, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. 5 (Harrisburg, 1906), 5:400, led Horace Trumbauer to the soldier known by one of several variants on a surname found throughout the region, where settled many Germans. Perennially the press has renamed the architect Thombauer, Thrumbauer, Trambaur, or Trumbar, not to mention changing his first name to Harold. Practicing simultaneously in Philadelphia was architect Werner Trumbower (1877–1931), much of whose time must have been spent in redirecting telephone calls. Contending for the most famous person sharing the name is Frankie Trumbauer (1901–1956), the jazz musician, whose roots were midwestern.

[3] Conducted "by the Rev. Dr. Berg," his wedding to Mary Malvina Fable (Jan. 15, 1830–April 17, 1901) had been announced in the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, May 10, 1852, 2. A brief obituary for Josiah Blyler Trumbauer (Feb. 18, 1825–July 5, 1908) is in the possession of Virginia Engels, granddaughter of the architect's youngest sister. Because its source remains unidentified (a Jenkintown newspaper?), the full article is reprinted here:

> Josiah Blyler Trumbauer died on Sunday last at his residence, 315 [soon renumbered 325] Hillside avenue, Jenkintown, after a protracted illness of several years' duration, in the eighty-fourth year of his age. His funeral was attended at 4 o'clock on Tuesday, 7th inst. The services and interment were private. Deceased was the father of Horace and Charles Q. Trumbauer, the former being the well-known Philadelphia architect, and three daughters, the Misses Clara and Elizabeth Trumbauer, of Jenkintown, and Mrs. J. B. Larzelere, Jr., of Norristown. Mr. Trumbauer was for years a member of the dry goods house of Hood, Bonbright & Co., of Philadelphia, and later a member of the firm of Young, Smith, Field & Co. He retired from business several years ago.

[4] Frankford during Horace's boyhood is described in James Price, "Recollections of Frankford, 1855–1873," *Papers Read Before the Historical Society of Frankford*, 1 (1908), no. 7, 13–37. Found on p. 30, the horsecars foreshadow the architect's two essential patrons.

longer than the span that had produced the previous four children, the parents introduced two more into this new setting. At the family home on Powder Mill Road (now Wingohocking Street) Horace was born on Wednesday, December 30, 1868. His younger sister arrived two years later minus one day. Perhaps the idea that he came before his sister led his family to imagine his birthday was the 28th, his lifelong belief until at last he checked a family Bible.[5]

Sharing the same parents were almost two distinct families. Evidently the first four children scarcely ventured into the outside world. Alfred Fable, the eldest, left no record of employment, but his health may have been poor for he died at age thirty-nine. Second son Charles Querville was a dwarf or at least of stature diminutive enough to curtail his career, although in city directories he occasionally shows up in some position and living away from home. Clara Virginia and Elizabeth were maiden sisters, those essential characters in Victorian sagas. Coming after so long an interval, Horace (who was given no middle name) must have seemed a fresh start, entitled to all the abilities that attend the oldest child. Certifiably active beyond the family circle, he would eventually marry and move away. Likewise his younger sister Marie Louise at age twenty-four made a good marriage to rising attorney Jeremiah B. Larzelere, Jr., with whom she would give her parents their only grandchildren.[6]

Maybe his family's tendency to keep to themselves can also be found in his later shunning of publicity or a social life. Architecture as the most

[5] His actual birth date is given in a family Bible owned by Mrs. Engels (not the same volume in note 1 but the Bible presented to the architect's parents at their wedding). The six Trumbauer siblings are recorded in this Bible as follows:

Alfred Fable	(27 August 1853–7 April 1893)
Charles Querville	(30 April 1855–5 October 1940)
Clara Virginia	(3 April 1858–22 July 1930)
Elizabeth	(13 October 1860–17 April 1936)
Horace	(30 December 1868–18 September 1938)
Marie Louise	(29 December 1870–11 April 1946)

[6] Jeremiah B. Larzelere, Jr., (1866–1917) grew up in Jenkintown, then settled in Norristown, seat of Montgomery County, of which he became district attorney for a four-year term starting in 1908. His marriage to Marie Louise took place on February 21, 1895, at Church of Our Savior (Episcopal), Jenkintown. As with her parents' wedding, the ceremony was held on a Thursday evening. The long description published next day in *Public Ledger*, p. 6, names Horace Trumbauer among the ushers and contains a guest list that includes several local citizens who were also his clients.

anonymous art could make an ideal profession for someone who on the surface disdained being the center of attention but at heart needed recognition as an achiever. The safest case for parental influence involves not heredity but environment because in 1878 they again moved up, an event that would prove vital to their son's success. Horace was nine years old when his family settled into the left half of a double house on Hillside Avenue in Jenkintown. Now they had arrived in an actual suburb, one of those places many natives consider more Philadelphia than the city itself. Romantics might picture him watching the new buildings arise in this concentrated half a square mile within Montgomery County. One relation's tale of a boy who drew incessantly may seem after the fact,[7] although it must have been while living in Jenkintown that he decided on his career. Still the principal significance to this move would be that it positioned the future architect at the center of the northern suburbs where rich men were already beginning to erect their mansions.

Early biographies have him attending the Philadelphia public schools until age sixteen, yet repeatedly these articles prove inaccurate, the fault not of their compilers but the architect's haphazard recollections, passed along in turn by his family or his office.[8] Seceding from Abington Township late in 1874, the borough of Jenkintown had retained its own school, which at the time numbered sixty-two pupils versus two teachers. Until his move from Frankford, the boy would have been taught within Philadelphia, but once in Jenkintown, why would he have gone elsewhere than the school several blocks' walk from his home? Since this school went only to the eighth grade, his formal education must have ended in June 1863 when he was fourteen years old.[9] Horace Trumbauer was prevented from becoming a high-school dropout by never entering high school in the first place.

* * *

[7] James T. Maher, *The Twilight of Splendor* (Boston, 1975), 47. Perhaps the boy glimpsed some imposing figure who dreamt up buildings "out of his head" like the architect remembered by Louis H. Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York, 1924), 118–20.

[8] *Encyclopedia of American Art* (New York, 1981), 568. See also note 1.

[9] Central High, the lone public school available, was indeed back in Philadelphia but has no record of him; a letter from Howard Carlisle, president, Central High School, to author March 31, 1982. For local schooling, see Jenkintown Centennial Committee, *Official Souvenir Booklet* (Jenkintown, 1974), 12–14. History of the borough in Trumbauer's lifetime is traced by W. Berkeley MacKenney, Jr., in his entry to Jean Barth Toll and Michael J. Schwager, eds., *Montgomery County: The Second Hundred Years* (2 vols., Norristown, 1983), 1:249–64.

On average the self-made men who would become his clients shared his lack of formal education in an era that prided itself more on pluck than diplomas. High school then carried the aura of higher learning, while grammar school had already taught him skills he would use throughout his career like arithmetic, writing a business letter, and elegant penmanship. Yet architects of the first rank were even then following their years at American colleges with a stint in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. These students tended to spring from the intellectual elite whose tradition of protracted schooling the Trumbauer family did not share. He could have obtained instruction locally since the University of Pennsylvania had inaugurated its architectural curriculum in 1874, although its School of Architecture would not be founded until 1890.

Quitting school might suggest his financial help was needed at home, especially one with so many adult dependents. Indeed the architect throughout his life was unhesitating in his support of family members. Still, his rise cannot quite be classified among the rags-to-riches fables associated with the times. His father had a steady position that provided a middle-class life in a stone-and-brick house in a fine neighborhood. His mother seems to have brought money of her own into the marriage. Even had funds been scarce, a young man with such ambition could have completed high school at night. Opening his own office implies that he had been able to save surplus income sufficient for initial expenses. In this period, prior to required registration, a practitioner had only to call himself an architect to qualify as one. Clearly, the teenager saw no reason to endure side trips into history or Latin when he had already planned a direct route which, oddly enough, worked wonderfully well.

Promptly he entered the Philadelphia firm of G. W. and W. D. Hewitt, the only architectural office for which he ever worked except his own. Along with his father he commuted on the Reading Railroad, which made the trip from Jenkintown to center city in less than half an hour. For once the early narratives are correct in stating that he began as an errand boy, since for what other position would a fourteen-year-old have been qualified? Learning on the job, he advanced to draftsman, translating the designer's ideas into finished drawings from which the builders took their instructions. Hewitt Brothers not only taught him his trade but also gave him his first impression of an architectural office. Labor in this thriving operation was divided among specialized workers, but the ultimate authority lay squarely with the proprietors. While major structures brought fame, any building had to be

endowed with artistic merit. Devoted to no characteristic style, the firm was at the moment abandoning Victorianism for increased use of historic precedent. Druim Moir, their huge residence for railway director Henry H. Houston, became the forerunner of Trumbauer's country mansions, yet during these years the young man also helped with buildings of other types, such as St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, the Episcopal church that Houston erected near his new home in Chestnut Hill, a green corner of Philadelphia.[10]

Mastering his art and especially its historic styles called nonetheless for book learning. In an era when prospective attorneys "read law" and candidates for the clergy "read for orders," learning by reading books was still an esteemed endeavor. Future habits leave no doubt that his apprenticeship by day was reinforced by reading in the evening, indicative of the single-mindedness of this unschooled teenager. Since the posthumous auction of his architectural books held few he could have obtained in this period, the needed volumes must have been borrowed from libraries, acquaintances, and the office.[11]

Despite seven years of intense training, Horace Trumbauer in 1890 showed courage by founding his own architectural office at age twenty-one. For a young man who knew his own mind, the final impediment vanished once he was legally old enough to sign contracts. Presumably the change had the blessing of his former employers, since he rented an office in the same building, 310 Chestnut Street. The first edifice under his own name was a house of moderate size for Mrs. A. M. Walker, which must have arisen in the spring of 1890 because the first page of his first ledger reports that on July 21 he billed her $171.75 for his services plus $7 to cover twenty train trips to the site bordering Narberth on the Main Line west from Philadelphia.[12]

[10] Druim Moir (later converted to condominiums) is pictured in Moses King, *Philadelphia and Notable Philadelphians* (New York, 1902), sec. 2, 84, which translates the Welsh name as "great ridge." George Watson Hewitt (1841–1916) and William Dempster Hewitt (1847–1924) were partners 1878–1907. Their works are listed in Roger W. Moss and Sandra L. Tatman, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700–1930* (Boston, 1985), 367–77.

[11] Books acquired earliest would also have had the longest opportunity to disappear, precluding them from *The Architectural Library of the Late Horace Trumbauer* (Philadelphia, 1939), catalogue for the auction at Samuel T. Freeman and Co.

[12] His office was established too late to make the 1890 city directory, but it does appear in that for the following year. His office ledgers, preserved at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, waste no time in demonstrating their characteristic obscurity. His first work would seem the first entry in ledger A, the house for "Mrs. A. H. Walker," actually Mrs. A. M. Walker, whose dwelling has long ago vanished from

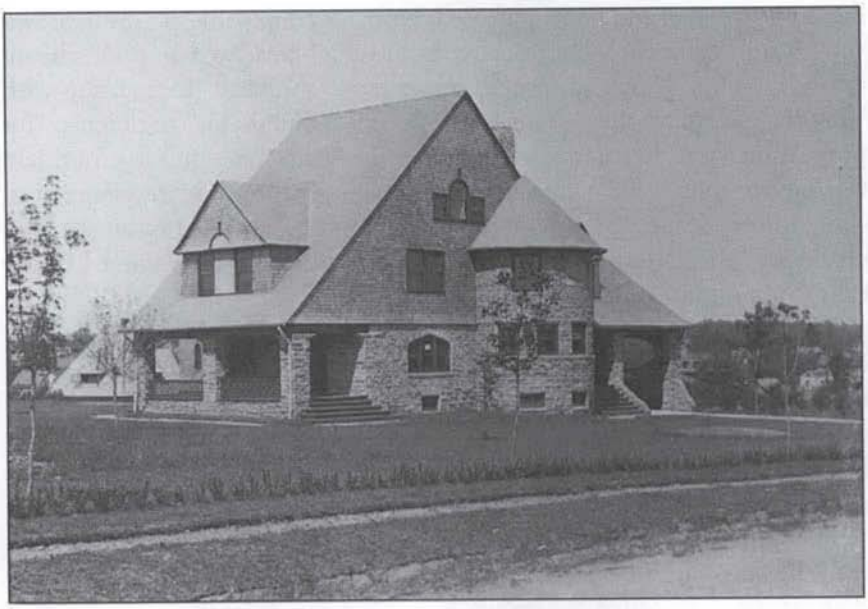

Fig. 2. House for Wendell and Smith, Wayne, Pennsylvania, 1892. From the earliest years of his office, this dwelling for a housing development exhibits the clear geometry that would mark Trumbauer's buildings throughout his career. Photo, Radnor Historical Society.

* * *

Right from the start his business was successful. Initial clients tended to be Jenkintown neighbors or their farther-flung referrals. Able to pay more than the city median, such patrons at once fixed his domestic practice among the well-to-do rather than average workers for whom row houses were under construction throughout Philadelphia. Typical of his earliest dwellings were

the north side of Montgomery Avenue at Gordon Avenue, just beyond the borough of Narberth. Yet its companion, just below on p. 1, a house that Harrison Woodward built to resell at Bethayres, north of Philadelphia, has a billing date one day earlier. While their positions suggest that Trumbauer considered the Walker house came first, some might wish the places were reversed, since the Woodward house continues to stand on the west side of Huntingdon Pike, where it is the fourth residence south from Wynkoop Avenue.

those for Wendell and Smith, whose housing developments at Germantown and Overbrook in the outer reaches of Philadelphia, as well as at Wayne on the Main Line, launched several prominent architects.[13] Dispensing with Victorian clutter, these free-form houses exhibit his preference for proportion over decoration, consistent with his no-nonsense outlook. Geometric shapes like conical roofs on cylindrical towers are wrapped in shingles and stone, the weight above the windows carried by unadorned blocks of limestone. Big windows admitting sun and air were a lifelong expression of his candor (fig. 2).

Not one year had passed before he set to work on the suburban estate of sugar refiner William Welsh Harrison. Constructed for the tycoons who typify the era, these palaces with their attendant buildings form an architectural genre unique to America. Generally smaller than their European counterparts, these residences were instead distributed more widely among a democratized nobility. While neither he nor any other architect specialized solely in such country houses, Trumbauer belonged to the few who showed a special understanding for them. Harrison, who ten years before had purchased a large property in Glenside, just west of Jenkintown, chose Trumbauer early in 1891 to encase the already sizable dwelling within a mansion on a scale in keeping with current expectations. By tradition Harrison had spotted some watercolor renderings of Trumbauer buildings in the window of a real-estate office, but in any event the architect was sufficiently established locally that any munificent client would find him.

So satisfied was Harrison with his expanded home that he ordered further structures like a gate house. Early on January 14, 1893, the temperature read two degrees when the mansion burned down, forcing the Harrisons to flee in their nightclothes across the snow for shelter in their new stable. Little doubt the ashes were still warm when Trumbauer, the salesman's son, proposed a replacement built all of a piece. Thus the architect at age twenty-four got his "big break" via this roundabout route which saw some of the outbuildings finished before the residence was conceived. Until 1921 he kept adding to the estate.

Grey Towers, the new residence, took the form of a mediaeval castle, an

[13] Herman Wendell and Walter Bassett Smith derived financial backing from George W. Child, publisher of the *Public Ledger*, and banker Anthony J. Drexel. Among other young architects nurtured were David K. Boyd (1852–1944), William L. Price (1861–1916), and Francis Gugert (1873–1939).

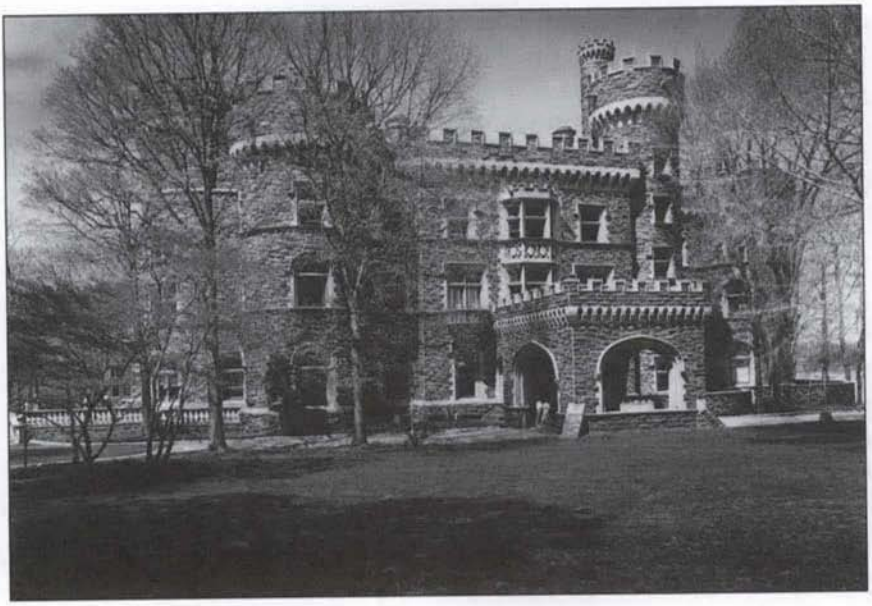

Fig. 3. Grey Towers, residence for William Welsh Harrison, Glenside, Pennsylvania, 1893. Horace Trumbauer was barely twenty-four years old when he began Grey Towers, the first of his immense mansions. Photo, Arcadia University.

appropriate start for the architect's journey through historic styles, which over the first decade of his practice led him to the most sophisticated classicism by what can be viewed as a very expensive learn-by-doing program (fig. 3). Alnwick Castle in northern England was its announced prototype, but comparisons to Windsor in the press must have reassured Harrison that he was making the right impression.[14] More practically its source was Druim Moir, the mansion on which Trumbauer had worked as a teenager. Its Victorian jaggedness gets smoothed into geometric forms to create a giant rendition of his houses for Wendell and Smith. Comforts no feudal lord ever dreamt of are contained in this castle because Trumbauer equipped his

[14] For instance, King notices a "suggestion of Windsor given by this view" in *Philadelphia and Notable Philadelphians*, sec. 2, 77. The estate survives intact as the campus of Arcadia University (formerly Beaver College).

dwellings with the latest conveniences. Interiors were fashioned by the Paris firm of Allard et Fils, the first of several decorators he would use. Normal procedure at the time was for an architect to dispose the rooms of a mansion but their paneling no less than their furnishings were supplied by one of these international concerns. Trumbauer kept tight rein on their work, often taking a hand in the grand hall, as must have happened here.

If all his chroniclers are correct, the young architect made these miraculous strides by a process even more so. One authority has him opening a one-man office while another quotes an assistant's reminiscence that the boss "never did a drawing after he set up the office."[15] Any architect who works alone, yet refuses to draw, can expect a limited future. The first year's output would already have called for extra hands. By "drawing" the assistant could have meant the finished kind that Trumbauer had turned out as a draftsman but now employed other people to prepare. From the beginning Trumbauer had been assembling a staff of more or less his own age to whom were entrusted enormous responsibilities, both financial and artistic. How young they all were!

"Who designed Trumbauer's buildings?" rivals the staying power of "Who wrote Shakespeare's plays?" Partly the problem is semantic, growing out of the job title "designer." Trained as architects, these employees can handle the design aspects of a building from its detailing to its overall concept. Since architects in everyday parlance are those who design buildings, the designers might seem the true architects, as if something secret were going on. Trumbauer respected his designers but their work was subjugated to his will, for he was the architect in its basic definition, the master builder, on whom rests responsibility at every stage.

With a design as with any other part of his business, he knew what he wanted. One of those pithy pronouncements ascribed to this man who kept his silence is "I hire my brains!"[16] This remark, if indeed he uttered it, would befit his self-effacement. Seemingly a family trait, his introversion kept him

[15] Quoted by Wayne Andrews in his entry on the architect in *Dictionary of American Biography*, suppl. 2 (New York, 1958), 667-68.

[16] So the architect told him directly, his former draftsman Valentine B. Lee, Jr., (1896–1992) claimed in a 1983 interview conducted by William E. King, later Duke University archivist. Not likely would Trumbauer have invented the vulgar comment recorded in Maher, *Twilight of Splendor*, 364, about one of his own buildings.

invisible, adding to doubt he fathered his buildings. While authorities conjecture, his employees entertained no such delusions. "Dad and the other men in the office always gave the credit to the Old Man," recalled the chief draftsman's son. "First of all he brought in the work, which was no mean feat in itself, then he decided how it would look and saw to it that the work got done right."[17]

As with Shakespeare, no one wants to admit that such sophisticated works came from an uneducated bumpkin—no matter if neither man fits that description. Nobody disputes that Iannis Xenakis was the designer for the Monastery of La Tourette, but everyone accepts his employer Le Corbusier as its architect because he seems suitably cultivated. Walter Gropius had an actual aversion to holding a pencil, still his name is eagerly attached to structures with which he was only vaguely connected.[18] Trumbauer's contribution may similarly have involved talking more than drawing, but he is granted scant claim to any building. Yet his first designs exhibit the same confident fenestration and balanced massing as do his last, conceived when the sole person remaining from the earliest days of his office was the architect himself. From his own era, the closest analogy to his firm may be the laboratory of Thomas Edison, whose formal education is measured in weeks. Although he employed many specialists, his inventions are consistently and correctly attributed to him. His staff developed the motion-picture camera in New Jersey while he traveled in Europe, but Edison is its inventor all the same.[19] Horace Trumbauer is likewise the legitimate architect of all his works.

Under his guidance the designers were nevertheless allowed freedom to such extent that occasionally the initials of a project leader appear on the blueprints, conferring recognition many architects are loath to grant. Some designers like Charles Z. Klauder stayed a few years before founding their own offices but others remained permanently, such as Frank B. Milnor and

[17] W. Edward Frank (1911–91) gave a series of interviews beginning in 1972. If his father William Ott Frank (1887–1968) entered the office in 1908 as surmised, he remained 60 years.

[18] On his own contribution, see Iannis Xenakis, "The Monastery of La Tourette" in H. Allen Brooks, ed., *Le Corbusier* (Princeton, 1987), 143–62. That same volume treats (esp. pp. 3–4) the architect's relationship with his staff in Jerzy Soltan, "Working with Le Corbusier," 1–16. Winfried Nerdinger, *Walter Gropius* (Berlin, 1986), 29–31, speaks of his drawing difficulties. It should be noted that among the primary founders of modern architecture the formal education of Gropius alone could be called thorough.

[19] Matthew Josephson, *Edison* (New York, 1959), 388.

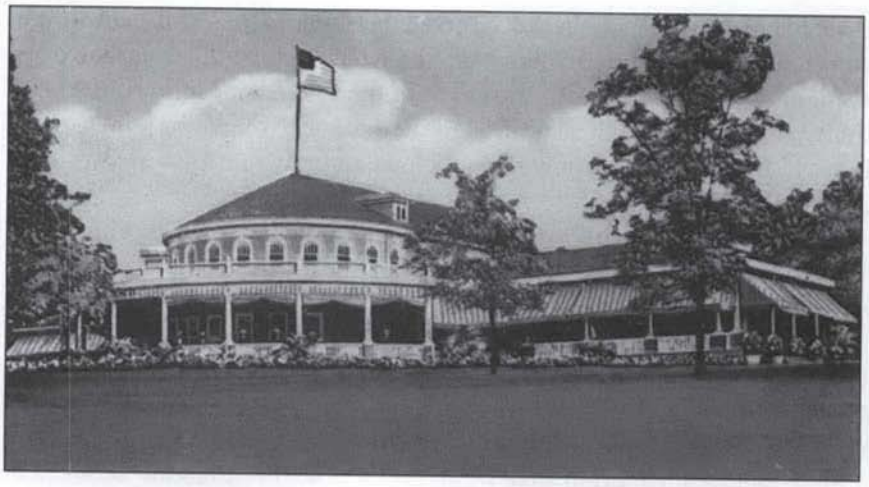

Fig. 4. Willow Grove Park, Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, 1895–96. An amusement park—albeit a famous and fashionable one—was Trumbauer's initial order from the Elkins and Widener families. Intended for dancing but soon dominated by its restaurant, the Casino pictured was destroyed by fire in 1974. The entire park was torn down six years later for a shopping mall. Photo, Collection of Anita R. Smiley.

G. Clarence Johnson, two more members of the young team hired before century's end. Chief designer for almost twenty years was Frank Seeburger, a few months the boss's junior, known to have worked on Grey Towers, although his austere influence is visible even earlier. Trumbauer took no partners, only salaried employees, and as long as he lived the name of his firm was plain "Horace Trumbauer" with no mention of "& Co." Seeburger, however, had special privileges. Soon after the new century began, most of the designers were earning $25 for a week's work but Seeburger received $50, even when he went on vacation.[20]

Trumbauer could have had no better chief designer, especially during

[20] Frank Seeburger (1869–1942) is acknowledged as "one of the planners" of Grey Towers in his obituary, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 4, 1942, 12B. Once owned by W. Edward Frank but now lost, a time log for 1902–08 registers the hours each employee spent on each work. Weekly salaries are entered in this mysterious ledger which furthermore identifies some unexecuted projects from that period. On its front endpaper are written the names of the staff with their dates of employment.

the formative years. Frank Seeburger possessed a natural sense of monumentality that coincided with the most imposing period in this architectural era, producing in particular a series of mansions that, rising from the designer's characteristic terraces, have ever since represented the firm in the public mind. Why would anyone so talented let not only his labor but also his identity be swallowed up by another architect? Apart from an assured income with little concern about the business end of the office, he worked on jobs he could not have gotten by himself. More importantly, Trumbauer led his designers to results beyond those attainable on their own.

In 1895 contractors Wendell and Smith hired Trumbauer for an unusual assignment in what was then the northern rim of suburban Philadelphia. When workers still rode streetcars to their jobs, the traction companies sought off-hour revenue by putting amusement parks at the outer ends of their lines. Queen of these "trolley parks" was by right Willow Grove Park (fig. 4), perhaps because nearby dwelt William L. Elkins and P. A. B. Widener whose partnership controlled public transit in America's biggest cities. Horace Trumbauer the mansion builder might scarcely be suspected as the creator of amusement parks, but he went on to devise two more plus individual structures for several others as far west as Topeka, Kansas. Yet for the architect the chief importance of Willow Grove Park was that it marked the first of his many works for the Elkins and Widener families whose patronage, together with their referrals to friends and business associates, became the foundation of his success.

Next he set about replacing the country homes these two clans maintained between Jenkintown and northern Philadelphia in the town soon renamed Elkins Park, the suburb that would hold the densest concentration of his work. Chelten House, his 1896 mansion for George W. Elkins, advanced his trek through architectural history to Elizabethan, of which this particular rendition would henceforth be reconfigured into diverse shapes whenever a half-timber structure was desired. Of course the patriarch required a dwelling grander than his son's, so that within two years Trumbauer commenced Elstowe, the new house next door for William L. Elkins, an Italian palazzo descended primarily from sixteenth-century Genoa. (Georgian Terrace, a brick Georgian abode for George Elkins's daughter Stella and her husband

George F. Tyler, would by 1905 leave Trumbauer the architect of three mansions on one block.)

Across the street arose the pivotal work of his career. P. A. B. Widener shared Lynnewood Hall with his two sons and their families plus a fabled art collection. Designed in 1897 and erected over the next three years, the 110-room mansion is modeled on Prior Park, a Palladian palace from eighteenth-century Bath, England (fig. 5). Trumbauer produced nearly fifty additional structures for the 300-acre estate including a horse farm. Perfecting the residence by frequent alterations across three decades, he put more effort into Lynnewood Hall than into any other edifice.[21]

Big buildings form the landmarks of Trumbauer's corpus, but he also produced a ceaseless stream of more modest works, each given its share of the architect's scrutiny. Few had specific antecedents but their styles remained traditional. Colonial America had all along provided a source for smaller dwellings, but in 1898 a housing tract in Elkins Park received one residence that with Georgian symmetry beneath gable roof proved as wholly classical as the mansions simultaneously materializing on the other side of town.[22] From now on, his buildings of any size went beyond antique trimmings to integral historicism.

Even among those not insisting he began with a one-man office, some authorities claim he had opened a one-room office.[23] While this too seems untrue, architectural firms traditionally handled most of their labors in one large room, so that Trumbauer and staff would not have grown claustrophobic fulfilling their many contracts over the first eight years. When in 1898 the bumper crop of mansions demanded more

[21] Chelten House, residence for George W. Elkins, Elkins Park, Pa., 1896, burned down in 1908, but the architect rebuilt it the following year in even more luxurious form. Both this mansion and Elstowe, residence for William L. Elkins, 1898–1900, today hold a Dominican retreat. (Georgian Terrace, residence for George F. Tyler, 1905–06, enlarged 1911, became the Stella Elkins Tyler School of Art, Temple University.) Lynnewood Hall, residence for P. A. B. Widener, 1897–1900, spent the second half of its first century as a fundamentalist Christian seminary. Its current dilapidated condition is a disgrace even to a wasteful society. Most of the farm buildings have given way to a noteworthy expanse of garden apartments.

[22] Ogontz Park, the housing tract that William T. B. Roberts developed for the Elkins family, craftily set Trumbauer houses where they would impress passersby on trolley or train. Diagonal from the railroad station, the orange-brick residence ordered by George W. Elkins became the design that Trumbauer repeated most often.

[23] Maher, *Twilight of Splendor*, 48.

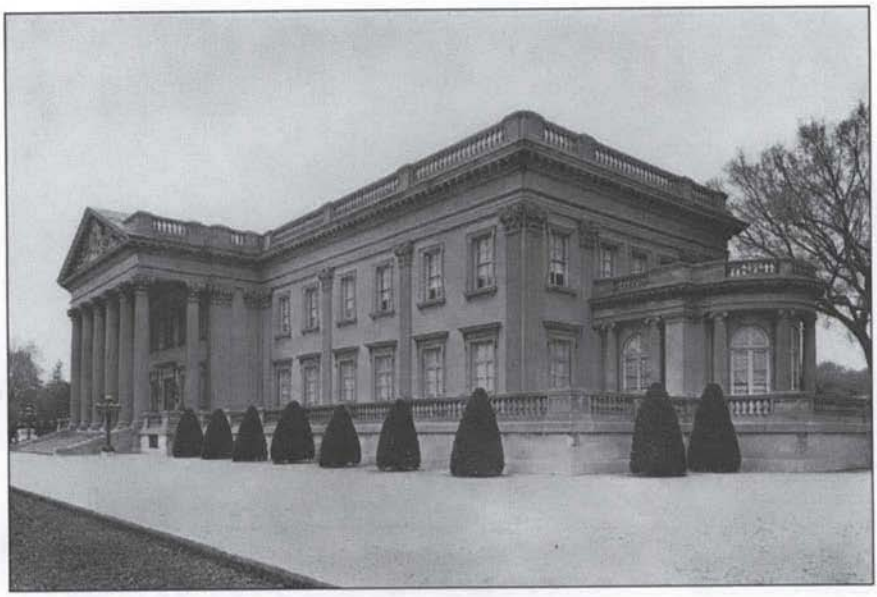

Fig. 5. Lynnewood Hall, residence for P. A. B. Widener, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, 1897–1900. Altered almost annually until 1926, the mansion can be watched growing ever more refined along with its architect. Fame, wealth, and artistic maturity flowed from Lynnewood Hall, so that the house created Horace Trumbauer no less than the other way round. Photo, Collection of the author.

space, he must have been glad to move from the stodgy financial district to the more progressive area around City Hall.[24] Brand-new when he moved in, the Land Title Building on South Broad Street is typical of office towers by Chicago architect Daniel H. Burnham, but the tenant who settled permanently into the several rooms comprising Suite 1408—later expanded into 1406—would in time make innumerable alterations throughout the building until it was almost his own.

Like a present for his thirtieth birthday came the request for Trumbauer's first major work far distant from Philadelphia. For his summer residence in

[24] Moving the office was announced in *Philadelphia Real Estate Record & Builders' Guide*, 13 (1898), 287.

Fig. 6. The Elms, Newport, Rhode Island, 1899–1902. Creating this "cottage" for Edward J. Berwind, Trumbauer in fact improved upon his model, the 1750 chateau by Jacques Hardouin-Mansart de Sagonne (1703–58), which still stands in Asnières, a suburb of Paris. Photo, Preservation Society of Newport County.

Newport, coal magnate Edward J. Berwind engaged the architect on advice from P. A. B. Widener, a fellow financier of the New York City transit system. The Elms took Trumbauer's time travel to its final destination: eighteenth-century French classicism (fig. 6). His emergence as a mansion builder had coincided with the death of Richard Morris Hunt so that Trumbauer may well have viewed himself as successor to the architect who first brought period styles home from Europe. Noted for his Newport dwellings, Hunt preferred French sources, although his florid renditions tended to earlier epochs. In taking up where his exemplar left off, Trumbauer forswore the ostentation of Hunt's palaces. With this design based on a chateau on the outskirts of Paris, the young architect conveyed

grand elegance to the clientele he was teaching how to live.[25]

When the new century arrived, Horace Trumbauer had achieved greater success than he could have envisioned upon opening his office a decade earlier. His frame of medium height was already gaining the girth his era expected of its successful personages. All this time he had dwelt in his bedroom at home, but at age thirty-four the bachelor wed a forty-two-year-old divorcée. Reared on her parents' farm in Bucks County, Sara Thomson Williams had family links to Jenkintown, where the architect had coincidentally done work for her relatives.[26] First husband C. Comly Smith, an iron dealer, came from a locally prominent family, so that Trumbauer must have met his future bride near his home. Tempting though it might be to make him the cause of the breakup, no evidence to that effect has been found. How this unusual romance came about seems destined to remain in obscurity. Maybe his advanced position made him seek a properly mature wife. An outsider in character and career, he may have been drawn all the closer to Mrs. Smith in a period when none but a slim percentage of women exercised the shocking option of divorce.

On April 25, 1903, the wedding took place in New York City. Her divorce and his dread of attention led to a civil ceremony performed by an alderman at or near City Hall and witnessed by her sixteen-year-old daughter Agnes Helena together with a public employee who happened to be on hand.[27] Choosing to wed in Manhattan assured the absence of guests, but the location was close enough for the architect to have checked in at the office that morning. A total lack of newspaper announcements leaves unanswered whether the three got away for a honeymoon.

[25] The Elms, residence for Edward J. Berwind, Newport, R.I., 1899–1902, has become Trumbauer's most well-known residence since opening to the public in 1962.

[26] Clarence V. Roberts, *Early Friends Families of Upper Bucks* (Philadelphia, 1925), esp. 567 and 570, gives the genealogy of Sara Thomson Williams (Jan. 7, 1861–March 27, 1935), daughter of Edward Hicks Williams of Buckingham (in Bucks County) and Emma Cottman of Abington. During 1897 the architect erected a double house in the borough for Emma S. Cottman, who with husband Charles owned Cottman House, the venerable hotel that Trumbauer tore down for his Jenkintown Bank and Trust Co., 1924–25.

[27] All the early biographies give the previous year, typical of a mistaken date handed out by Trumbauer then repeated unchecked. Besides the date, certificate #9107 identifies alderman John H. Behrmann from Knightsbridge in the Bronx and Patrick Paul who must have been a stock witness since his name appears on neighboring certificates. First husband Charles Comly Smith (1863–ca. 1953) would in 1915 wed Christianna Cowperthwaite (1869–1947).

Sara Trumbauer must have realized in advance that she would always be subordinate to her husband's job. The couple erected a modest house at 5122 Wynnefield Avenue, within the western limit of Philadelphia in the neighborhood where they would reside for the remainder of their lives.[28] He proved tolerably domestic, all the more because he had little interest in stepping out after work, despite membership in several clubs.[29] Genuine fondness for his stepdaughter was safeguarded when after two years she wed and moved out. Together the Trumbauers would have no children. Ties to his own family remained unshaken by his marriage; in time he bought them the other half of their double house in Jenkintown where his maiden sisters and surviving brother lived out their days supported by his liberality.

Horace Trumbauer made sure that his works escaped the confines of Philadelphia. Within one year of founding his firm, he had crossed the Delaware River to build in southern New Jersey. By mid-decade he entered New York State by way of Poughkeepsie. Soon after reaching Newport he extended his territory south to Washington, D.C. Before making even an alteration in Manhattan, he joined the Architectural League of New York in 1899, although he would not become a member of its Philadelphia equivalent, the T-Square Club, until 1906. At last in 1893 he began his first Manhattan townhouse, for John R. and Alice T. Drexel.[30] Most of the architect's New York commissions grew similarly out of his Philadelphia connections, but even back home his were the clients who transcended their city's rigid society. Overall his buildings are steeped in modest Philadelphia virtues, yet his grandest designs belong firmly to the more international New York school. Briefly he maintained an office on Fifth Avenue from which his

[28] Perhaps his fiancée suggested Wynnefield since the city directory for 1902 shows that just prior to their marriage she had been living not far away at 5014 Arch Street. Their lot, along the south side of Wynnefield Avenue, ran from North 51st Street the entire front to North 52nd. Since the architect was his own client, the house (now demolished) does not receive the customary entries in his records, but during 1903–05 appears in the time log mentioned in note 20. His home was yet another version of his Ogontz Park design which he frequently reused.

[29] Spending time in clubs for the customary cause of gaining clients was unnecessary because Elkins's and Widener's referrals did that for him. Clubs he did join included the Art Club; Bala Golf Club, which he made plans to alter, 1917; Downtown Club; Merion Cricket Club, located in Haverford, Pa.; Racquet Club, whose clubhouse he built, 1906–08; and Union League Club, which made him a life member for erecting its annex, 1909–11. Fittingly he was also a Mason.

[30] Residence for Alice T. Drexel, 1 East 62nd Street, New York, N.Y., 1903–04 (now converted to apartments). Despite unusual numbering, this is the first house off Fifth Avenue. Apart from plentiful alterations, Trumbauer built fourteen new works in Manhattan of which seven survive.

superintendents guided construction in New York and New England, but this outpost proved more an ornament than a necessity.[31]

Architectural Record for February 1904 published his principal works so far, but the anonymous article tying the many photographs together contains no quotation from Trumbauer, fueling the later consensus that his refusal ever to grant interviews was due to ignorance of craft and propriety.[32] Of course he commanded both, still the cigar-chomping pragmatist can scarcely be imagined speaking effetely of "interior space" either in print or at the professional meetings he likewise skipped. Wittingly he used his lack of formal education as an excuse to avoid those who knew less. Now his trappings of success included a national reputation as well as a wife, but right away he pulled back into his self-sufficient nature. Items on individual buildings continued to appear, although a comprehensive article was never again allowed during his lifetime. Yet this essay was accurate, praising him for rescuing Philadelphia from its idiosyncratic designs and leading it to the traditional styles already welcomed by other cities. Viewed amid his Philadelphia milieu, he is revealed as a pioneer in his own way.

During the era of tycoons, Horace Trumbauer was one as well, honing the process of architecture until he could turn out an average of one work every two weeks over the course of his career. The ability to do this required a staff organized along the lines of the emerging corporations and a system of interchangeable parts. At discreet distances Trumbauer repeated smaller residences, earning him multiple fees for a single design.[33] Nothing sinister can be read into this widespread practice, which in any case was impossible

[31] When the Fifth Avenue Building by architects Maynicke and Franke opened in 1909, Trumbauer leased room 1152. This listing at 200 Fifth Avenue appears in city directories from 1910 to 1915 only. In charge of the New York office was Alphonsus H. Bieler (1862–1951).

[32] *Architectural Record* 15 (1904), 93–121. As close as he came to a publication of his own are seven issues of *National Architect*, all from 1914: vol. 3, no. 1 (Jan.), no. 2 (Feb.), no. 3 (April), no. 4 (May), no. 5 (June); vol. 4, no. 1 (July), and no. 2 (Aug.). Their mastheads proclaim him "consulting editor," plausibly an honorary title since nearly every prominent architect in the city can be found at least on its editorial board at some time during that Philadelphia journal's brief run from 1912 to 1916.

[33] Adopted by the American Institute of Architects during 1886, the standard fees that Horace Trumbauer charged were an added percentage figured on construction cost, or its estimate in the case of unexecuted projects, as follows: 1 percent for preliminary studies; 2½ percent for studies, drawings, and specifications; 3½ percent for these plus detailed working drawings; and 5 percent for these plus superintendence. Later he followed the AIA's decision of 1909 to raise the top charge to 6 percent with proportional increases for fewer services. For interior decoration Trumbauer ultimately asked 10 percent.

to conceal. Timid clients got to see the results in advance and to do otherwise would have been a waste of creativity. Demand for midsize mansions became so great that he developed a standard model to be coated and detailed in keeping with the situation. Even for the largest houses he re-used plans or porches.

Calling at his office, most clients expected to deal with the head man, at least initially. When wealthy patrons summoned him to their own offices or parlors, he unapologetically stank up their rooms with his cheap cigars, normally Bering panatelas. His crusty attitude was in part a means of keeping the customers focused and the job moving along, for he knew what they wanted better than they did.[34] Too much like a movie scene, the report by some authorities that the architect sat drawing sketches during the first meeting cannot be trusted, especially if the final design would be based on some historic source.[35] Even in a day that cast women as homemakers, the architect at work on a residence conferred almost exclusively with their husbands. A big house was one reason the tycoons fought for wealth, although a few dwellings might for love or taxes be in the wife's name. The men were not too preoccupied with their businesses or clubs to oversee this sign of success. When the client was a woman, Trumbauer may have curbed his gruffness but still refused to play the artist.

The total number of his employees seems barely to have exceeded thirty during the most active periods.[36] Landscape designers, like interior decorators, had their own firms. Structural engineer Percival M. Sax was consulted so often that he seemed almost a staff member. Whether independent or from the office, the site superintendent was visited regularly by architect or project leader to inspect construction, which was handled by a builder along with subcontractors for such things as plumbing or roofing. Rarely did Trumbauer seek bids because experience had taught him which

[34] Witness the case of Dr. Norton Downs who wistfully imagined he should have some say concerning his new residence in Ambler, Pa., 1906–07 (now Horsham Hospital), merely because he was paying for it. After Trumbauer ignored his pleas, Downs (so recounted his daughter, Elizabeth Wharton Downs Evans, in a 1979 interview by the author) turned to builder John Cornell, but he—foreseeing more business from the architect than from the gynaecologist—proved equally stubborn. Purchasing two new mules for his surrounding farm, Downs took his revenge by naming them Trumbauer and Cornell, according to his daughter.

[35] Alfred S. Branam, Jr., *Newport's Favorite Architects* (Long Island City, N.Y., 1976), n.p.

[36] For random date January 1, 1907, the 1902–08 chronicle of employees (note 20) puts the number of office workers at sixteen including the boss.

companies would be best in each circumstance. Picking up their copies of the plans, contractors could examine them and ask questions but then were expected to complete the job on their own. Whoever kept coming back for further instructions had little prospect of future work. Fabled for his ability to part clients from their money, Trumbauer was by no means unconcerned with costs. Obligated to put up sufficient money to erect first-rate buildings, his customers got what they paid for. "Madame, if money bothers you, then I'm not your architect," his supposed statement, sounds suspiciously like J. P. Morgan's famous remark that whoever has to ask the cost of a yacht cannot afford one.[37] Time after time Trumbauer adamantly refused clients' suggestions that would have increased his commission but proven unaesthetic.[38]

Journeys to distant sites were about all that could cause the architect to miss a day at his office. Trumbauer never went to Europe, which so disturbed the commentators that a trip was invented and for some reason set in 1909, although he can be proven safe at home.[39] Escaping the Grand Tour was part of the abbreviated education his mind was now turning into a virtue. Always at the ready, he considered his growing library better than marching once through some ancient edifice. Steamship passage devoured nearly a week on either side of a languorous stay, all of which would have frustrated a worker not made for vacations.

Routine was disrupted toward the close of 1909 by the resignation of Frank Seeburger. After nearly two decades under Trumbauer's protection,

[37] Quotation attributed to Trumbauer in Branam, *Newport's Favorite Architects*, n.p. Among many other places, the proverb by J. P. Morgan appears in Frederick Lewis Allen, *The Great Pierpont Morgan* (New York, 1949), 192.

[38] When, for instance, the thorough alterations to St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Elkins Park, Pa., 1922–24, were to include a vestibule, the visit by Daniel B. Wentz to Trumbauer's office found the architect "violently opposed to its construction. He says that it will really look like a wart on the front of the church, and will ruin the whole appearance of the building." From the church archives, the vestryman's letter of July 2, 1923, to the rector assumes that no one would "act in the matter against Mr. Trumbauer's advice and expert opinion." Still the architect knew when to acquiesce, as with the solarium incident chronicled in Maher, *Twilight of Splendor*, 361–62.

[39] Furthermore, the trip took three months, according to a notation in the Baldwin Memorial Archive of American Architects at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. In connection with the residence for James B. Duke, 1 East 78th Street, New York, N.Y., 1909–11 (now Institute of Fine Arts, New York University), Duke's letter books in the archives of Duke University record his dispatches from New York to Trumbauer in Philadelphia for March, June, August, September, and October 1909. Asked if he knew of such a trip abroad, W. Edward Frank replied, "No, the old-timers in the office would have talked about something like that but I don't remember their ever mentioning it."

his chief designer was set to go on his own. For another twenty years until his retirement, Seeburger would concentrate on suburban residences for the prosperous, showing forth his same stripped-down succinctness, although no longer on the same scale nor with the same opulence to which Trumbauer had impelled him. In 1914 Seeburger took into partnership Charles F. Rabenold who had joined Trumbauer's office in 1905. Both partings seem amicable if scarcely absolute. Rabenold shared a double house (and its design) with Frank Milnor, where each no doubt kept the other informed of goings-on at the two offices.[40]

Seeburger's departure initiated a long period with no chief designer, although Trumbauer continued to assign project leaders for individual works. Some authorities make Julian F. Abele the chief designer with Seeburger barely out the door.[41] This error results from ignorance concerning the remaining members of the staff. Seeburger left behind a number of designers with more experience and seniority than Abele, hired in 1906. Especially imposing was Joseph F. Lowery whose understanding of what Trumbauer wanted in a mansion brought forth such splendid machines for entertaining as the 1911–13 residence Ardrossan (fig. 7).[42] Abele was given big and

[40] Since 1907, Frank Bruce Milnor (1872–1947) had dwelt at 2343 and Charles Folk Rabenold (1883–1968) at 2345 Oakdale Avenue in their twin house still standing in Glenside, Pa.

[41] Andrew and Burnham advance to 1908 the supposed switch from Seeburger to Abele. For all his training and talent, the first fact perennially pointed out about Julian Francis Abele (1881–1950) is that he was black. His uniqueness for his day makes him the most attractive candidate to be the hidden author of Trumbauer's buildings. The cult of Abele credits him alone with all works after he entered the firm on March 5, 1906, and often those beforehand. Race is clearly the reason; had he been white, Abele would remain in undeserved obscurity with Seeburger. Whatever its usefulness, this alternative truth violates the steadfast desire of Abele, who to the end of his life refused to list as his own any work the office produced prior to Trumbauer's death.

Viewed as snaring someone with no chance to escape his shadow, Trumbauer is assigned motives for hiring Abele no less dastardly than if he had not. In fact, Trumbauer performed a courageous act almost four decades before Philadelphia blacks staged protests even to be allowed to drive the streetcars. As usual he was searching for the best when approached by a young man with excellent portfolio who came highly recommended by his professors at the University of Pennsylvania, from whose School of Architecture he was the first African American to graduate. (No stock, however, can be put in the oft-repeated legend that Trumbauer paid for Abele during student days to enroll at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, for Abele appears nowhere on its register.) Surely the deciding factor was the odd-man-out sensibility that Trumbauer felt about himself. Far from keeping him under wraps, Trumbauer introduced Abele to clients, sent him out as his representative, and in time elevated him to chief designer.

[42] Ardrossan, residence for Robert L. Montgomery, Villanova, Pa., 1911–13, is a rarity among mansions in that it remains in its original family. Typical for a Trumbauer work, however, is its sinuous connection to either the Wideners or in this case the Elkinses. Robert Montgomery's wife Charlotte was the daughter of Sidney F. Tyler who built a Trumbauer house simultaneously in Wyncote, Pa., and was

Fig. 7. Ardrossan, residence for Robert L. Montgomery, Villanova, Pennsylvania, 1911–13. Horace Trumbauer copied not only historic structures but also some by contemporaries. Ardrossan, an important mansion from his middle period, was based upon a five-year-old house by English architect Ernest Newton (1856–1922) which Trumbauer spotted in the January 21, 1911, issue of *Country Life*. Photo, *American Country Houses of To-Day* (New York, 1913), 188.

important jobs but could hardly have officially assumed the revived role of chief designer at least until Lowery decided in the 1920s to spend the final years of his career in his own practice.

Changes were underway not only in staff but also in the architecture required of Horace Trumbauer. Livability was increasingly preferred to formality, although a stilted specimen like Whitemarsh Hall, the Edward T.

the father of George F. Tyler, who was the son-in-law of George W. Elkins, who was the son of William L. Elkins, for all three of whom (note 21) the architect produced residences.

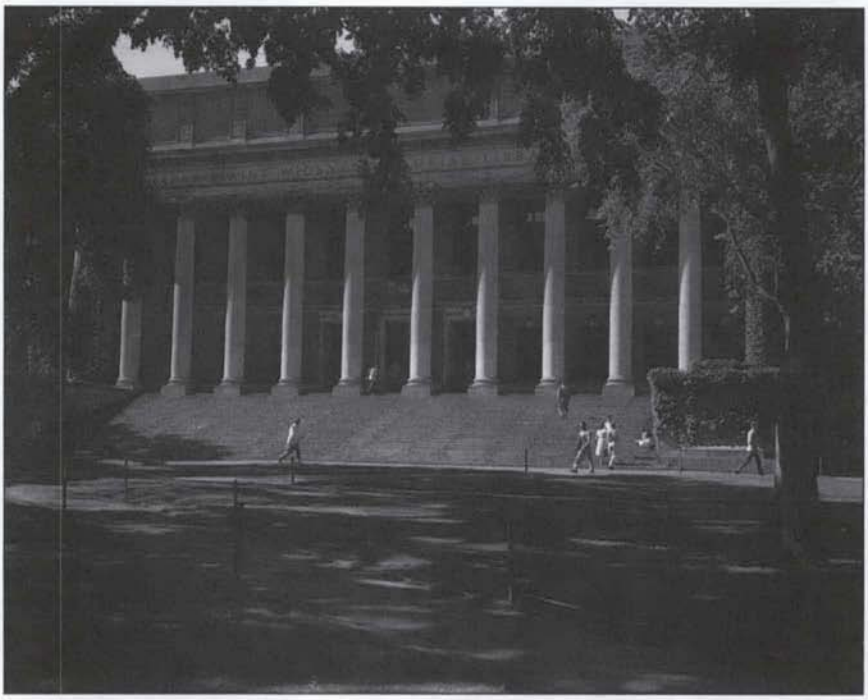

Fig. 8. Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1912–14. Built simultaneously, America's most famous post office inspired one of its largest libraries. William Mitchell Kendall (1856–1941) of the New York firm McKim, Mead and White had published his deisgn for the city's General Post Office in *Architecture* for May 15, 1908. Trumbauer soon cut its colonnade in half to form this monument to the recent graduate lost on the *Titanic*. Photo, Harvard University News Office.

Stotesbury palace of 1916–20, could dutifully be cranked out. Old-school Philadelphians balked at its excess,[43] but they too are numbered among Trumbauer's patrons. If he is cast as an architect for the nouveaux riches,

[43] Among their number was the patrician Stotesbury himself who reportedly paced the grounds and muttered about the cost while his mansion was being assembled at Wyndmoor, Pa. The house was his wife's idea.

that is because there simply was more new money than old. From time to time he took on special interiors such as the J. E. Caldwell jewelry store installed during 1916 in the architect's own Widener Building.[44] With mammoth mansions now coming intermittently, his large works would more and more be office buildings, hotels, schools, hospitals, or civic structures.

Orders from the Widener and Elkins families and their friends dominate these categories too.[45] Named for a scion of both households, the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library—presented by the young bibliophile's mother to his alma mater, Harvard University, after he perished aboard the *Titanic*—earned the architect an honorary Master of Arts degree in 1915 (fig. 8). Considering his lack of formal education, Trumbauer might have been expected to rejoice when Harvard, of all colleges, made such an offer, but by this time his deficit had in his eyes became a badge of independence, so that his patroness had to coerce him into leaving his office long enough to go to Cambridge to accept it. During construction, though, he was spotted on site cavorting uncharacteristically for the press like someone at ease in scholarly surroundings.[46]

[44] Widener [office] Building, Philadelphia, Pa., 1914–16. Most ambitious of his inside jobs was the total relining of 640 Fifth Avenue, the brownstone behemoth from which Grace Wilson Vanderbilt presided over the last years of high society. The exterior remained unchanged, yet revisions to the residence of Cornelius Vanderbilt, New York, N.Y., 1915–17 (demolished), filled 206 drawings and cost $550,829.57 before the architect added his 10 percent fee. Trumbauer's diligence with interiors equaled his efforts with every other aspect of architecture, as Martin Becker, former head of the New York branch of the decorating firm L. Alavoine et Cie., would testify in Maher, *Twilight of Splendor*, 366–67: "He knew what he wanted, just as Julian Abele did later on after Trumbauer's death. Our designers spent a lot of time on detail drawings for him. He wanted everything done with great care—the designs, the models, the drawings for the clients to look at. He even used to ask us to do full-scale plaster mock-ups of certain details. Things like a section of a cornice, or the capital of a pilaster. We would take them to the site, mount them in the room they were designed for, and study them under different light conditions. With Trumbauer, nothing was left to chance."

[45] So many were these commissions that rival architectural firms spread the word that Horace Trumbauer was the illegitimate son of P. A. B. Widener, a groundless rumor that somehow persists to this day.

[46] Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 1912–14, came midway through the architect's career. William Bentinck-Smith, *Building a Great Library* (Cambridge, 1976), 80, quotes assistant librarian Alfred C. Potter writing on February 14, 1913, to library director Archibald C. Coolidge, "Your friend Trumbauer was very much in evidence . . . jollying the newspapermen and posing for their cameras." Snobbery over Trumbauer's qualifications is highlighted on page 67 where architect R. Clipston Sturgis in his letter of September 17, 1912, complains to A. Lawrence Lowell that the library ought not be entrusted to a man not even a member of the American Institute of Architects, let alone a Fellow. Preemptively the college president replies that the architect came with the gift. Apart from this degree, Trumbauer's only other award was first prize at the Pan-

Once the Widener library had given him a connection with books for their own sake, his wood-paneled library became the heart of his office suite. Accelerated accession added books for their beauty as well as their usefulness until by his death the collection numbered nearly 800 titles in over 1,200 volumes. Reflecting this double appeal, the auction catalogue recalls in its preface a library "treasured by its owner and used constantly as reference." How this uneducated man turned out so cultured a procession of buildings grows at last apparent: not at all uneducated, he was thoroughly learned in architecture and its history. He may have gotten his education unconventionally, but he got it just the same.

In the 1920s Trumbauer completed that most acclaimed of urban vistas, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Close to its center stands his Free Library of Philadelphia, and looking down from its far end his Philadelphia Museum of Art, which has become a symbol of the city. Done in association with Zantzinger and Borie, the museum was among his occasional collaborations.[47] Most others were owing to distance but in all cases he seized control. Repeatedly he oversaw construction when French architects built in the United States; his foreign associates had only to submit a few sheets from which Trumbauer's office would prepare scores of thorough blueprints. On the other hand, he provided drawings aplenty for American firms shepherding his designs in remote cities.[48] Such dominance was natural since every Trumbauer product was in essence a collaboration.

Yet at the same time as Trumbauer delivered buildings so beloved by the public, his work came increasingly under critical attack. A latecomer among Gilded Age architects, he kept on perfecting historic styles while some Philadelphia contemporaries experimented with modern modes. Transitional

American Congress of Architects, held at Buenos Aires in 1927.

[47] Free Library of Philadelphia, 1912–27, was a beneficence of the Elkins family. (So indeed was Widener Library, a fact its donor, née Eleanor Elkins, wanted made clear, as shown in Bentinck-Smith, *Building a Great Library*, 66, n. 82. Reuse of the lobby layout is among other links between the two libraries.) Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1911-31, caused Horace Trumbauer to form a special partnership with Philadelphia architects Charles L. Borie, Jr., (1870–1943) and Clarence C. Zantzinger (1872–1954) which went by their full names in alphabetical order.

[48] Translating meters into feet called for entirely new drawings based on those few by, e.g., René Sergent (1865–1927) but the total set of 127 that Trumbauer made depicting the office building for Duveen Brothers, 720 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y., 1910–12 (demolished), gives details beyond the French architect's devising. Hewitt and Emerson, the Peoria, Ill., firm that in 1925 became associated architects for the Père Marquette Hotel (now the Peoria Hilton), would receive forty-four drawings.

figure Paul Cret sought to be more than "a simple Trumbauer,"[49] while George Howe, himself the creator of many a country estate on traditional lines, would join with Swiss architect William Lescaze to give the United States its first modernist monument in the PSFS Building. Having undertaken the first of his skyscrapers when in 1907 he added the annex to the headquarters of the New York *World*,[50] Trumbauer had no reservations about new forms of construction, although stylistically he would advance no further than up-to-date interpretations of historic styles. Had he survived long enough for modernism to have established a tradition, he might have copied it.

Still his Philadelphia office remained the place where recent graduates in architecture wanted most to work. Top salaries went to the chosen. On impulse the architect might even slip favored draftsmen a $100 bill at Christmas. Overtime was almost unheard of, though; clients were simply made to wait until the design was right. Six-day workweeks eventually ceded their Saturday afternoons. No confirmation survives for the frequent claim that employees punched a timeclock,[51] but his longtime secretary Clarence L. Freeman kept close track of everyone's hours. While the designers came and went individually with an aloof air, camaraderie existed between the draftsmen. Presiding over them was William O. Frank who, one apprentice reflected, "must have been the greatest draftsman that ever lived. In no time at all he could turn out a drawing as beautiful as it was clear."[52]

Come the dawn of the 1920s, Mr. and Mrs. Trumbauer moved around the corner and across the street. An existing house at 2246 North 52nd Street had undergone extensive alterations to assure reasonable grandeur.[53] Stained glass

[49] Letter from Paul Cret to his wife Marguerite, July 24, 1917, quoted in David B. Brownlee, *Building the City Beautiful* (Philadelphia, 1989), 23. Trumbauer retains at least fictional éclat in Louis Auchincloss, *The Partners* (Boston, 1974), 236.

[50] His addition vanished from Park Row along with the office tower that publisher Joseph Pulitzer erected in 1889. An original work created also for a newspaper but now converted to apartments, Trumbauer's other tall structure in Manhattan remains: the New York *Evening Post* Building, 75 West Street, 1925–28.

[51] Branam, *Newport's Favorite Architects*, n.p.

[52] From a 1974 interview with Joseph Praissman (1902–83). Among other architects who shared recollections of starting their successful careers at the office was Charles M. Talley (1894–1979) who in 1978 recalled the firm as "one of the nicest places I ever worked." Of course its unhurried atmosphere had practical limits as when young Ed Frank, hoping to impress, put excessive care into a drawing only to hear Trumbauer growl behind him, "We're not making any steel engravings here."

[53] No fewer than seventy drawings were expended in 1919–20 to make the dwelling his own, plus three more to rework the garage. Both his house and that of his stepdaughter still stand. Entered ca. 1934 in his ledger are four drawings for a "Residence for Mr. Horace Trumbauer" but this is one of those

that lights the staircase depicts tools of the building trades together with Grey Towers, the mansion that enabled his career. Outside he practiced his professed hobby of gardening which—since his gardener James P. Leaming did the actual labor—consisted of making plans just like at work. (Trumbauer's talent seldom carried over to landscapes. Those few he devised on commission tended to be shaggy and overly architectural.) Inside he displayed the tapestries and antiques he collected, but these had a way of getting sold to furnish the homes of clients. Evidently the cause for the couple's minimal move had been that their backyard would now adjoin that of Sara Trumbauer's daughter at 2253 North 53rd Street. In deference to his Francophilia, his fond stepdaughter[54] addressed the architect as "Père" while her daughter Sally[55] less reverentially called him "Boy," the nickname she invented as a child. At mid-decade his wife had him build her a rustic cottage alongside Watchic Pond in Maine but he went there next to never.[56]

Only a career spent juggling several large and complicated works simultaneously could have prepared Horace Trumbauer for the commission he now received. Patronage from James B. Duke, who with help from P. A. B. Widener had founded the American Tobacco Company, stretched back into the Seeburger era when the tycoon ordered his mansion on Fifth Avenue. Deciding how to aid the interminably troubled Trinity College in his North Carolina hometown of Durham, he did so to such extent that the new university took on his name. Within a year he died, yet construction continued until Trumbauer had provided nearly fifty buildings on two campuses, the eastern for women, the western for men. Retaining a few structures from the old college, the east campus added brick Georgian edifices to form an allée closed only at one end by a domed building, an

unbuilt projects he devised to keep his employees busy during the depths of the Great Depression.

[54] Agnes Helena Smith (Dec. 6, 1886–April 24, 1974), daughter of C. Comly Smith and Sara T. Williams, married in 1905 banker Edward Morris Lara (1881–1948), with whom she had one daughter. After divorce, Helena Smith wed Edward Henry Fennessy (1873–1951), manufacturer of iron products, with whom she had no issue. In preparation for his book, Maher interviewed her on audiotape, now at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

[55] Sara Lara (Oct. 15, 1916–Jan. 8, 1997), usually called "Sally," daughter of Edward Morris Lara and Agnes Helena Smith, married Nathan Grier Parke III (1912–90), with whom she had two sons, Nathan G. Parke IV (born 1941) and Jonathan L. Parke (born 1945). After divorce, Sara Lara wed Mark Mara (1906–85), with whom she had no issue.

[56] Built 1925, the seven-bedroom house with freestanding garage survives down Watchic Terrace from Route 113 in Standish but the boathouse long ago fell victim to Maine winters. None of these works appears in Trumbauer's ledgers.

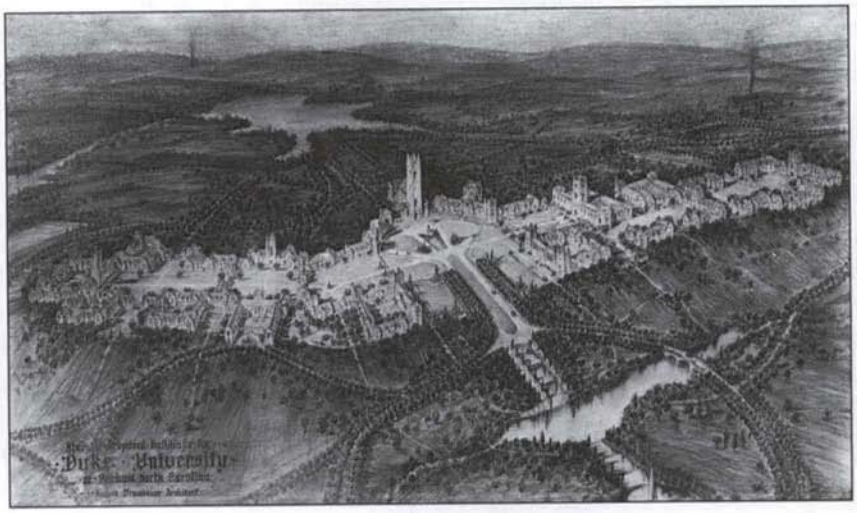

Fig. 9. Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, east campus 1925–27; west campus 1926–39 and thereafter. Climaxing his late works are Trumbauer's twin campuses for Duke University, the eastern in brick Georgian for women, the western in "collegiate Gothic" for men, which here is seen in a rendering by Eugene Gilbert of the architect's staff. Photo, Duke University Archives.

arrangement drawn from Thomas Jefferson's design for the University of Virginia. For the all-new west campus he chose "collegiate Gothic" which lent instant venerability to the institution (fig. 9). Local quarries gave up bright, multihued stone thrilling to an architect passionate for color. Duke University, his most extensive work, would also remain his favorite.[57]

Above the west campus—where in addition to liberal-arts facilities are the schools of law, medicine, and religion—rises the 210-foot tower of the university chapel whose likeness to a cathedral leaves its denomination hard to recognize as Methodist. Creator of a dozen churches, Trumbauer himself

[57] As usual his staff performed overlapping duties so that a blanket attribution can be awarded to none but the master chef who oversaw everything prepared in his architectural kitchen. Contributors abounded, such as Clement "Pop" Remington (1859–1940) who, according to his obituary in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 2, 1940, 5, had "designed many large private homes, college buildings, and dormitories."

seems to have been devoid of religious affiliation. Possibly this was a purposeful rejection instilled by his father, leading each family member to be buried from home except the architect's mother whose funeral had taken place at the close-by Episcopal church in Jenkintown where his sister had married. His emotional attachment to churches was no stronger than to mansions; his interest was in building well.

Merciless on many architectural firms, the Great Depression mostly bypassed his office, thanks to Duke University plus a surprising number of new commissions. One last suburban mansion, Rose Terrace, was carried out amid the nation's economic distress. Only in a few such instances did Abele rival Seeburger's ability with country houses of great size, a building type that had grown outdated anyway. Instead he excelled at townhouses with French facades, exemplified by Trumbauer's final building in New York, not an actual home but the Wildenstein Gallery (fig. 10).[58] Despite discounts on his fees, in time even Trumbauer's business grew sparse, leaving him unaccustomed freedom. Now was when he began tracing his ancestry and at last discovered his birthday. After years of inverse snobbery, he deigned in 1931 to join the American Institute of Architects.

Without architecture Horace Trumbauer came to little, so that diminished projects diminished him too. Back when the Twenties roared about him, he celebrated his success by increased consumption of alcohol which, because he seldom socialized, was all the more dangerous for being solitary. Most likely his long-term condition has been overstated, since numerous interviews found but one person who remembered seeing him drunk.[59] Alcoholism was then considered not a disease but a disgrace, so he must have made every effort to conceal his problem. Comparative idleness now gave him added time for drinking, which in turn led to womanizing. With much of his wealth in her name, his wife had been able to exert some

[58] Rose Terrace, residence for Mrs. Horace E. Dodge, Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich., 1931–32 (demolished), is recorded under Hugh Dillman, an actor who wed the automobile maker's widow, but the new marriage did not last and she took back her former name. Office building for Wildenstein and Co., Inc., 19 East 64th Street, New York, N.Y., 1932.

[59] One draftsman had the intoxicated architect point to a drawing in progress and bluster at him to move a window. Since the command made no sense, the draftsman afterward asked Julian Abele if it should be carried out. Diplomatically the designer answered, "Leave it alone for now and I'll talk to him about it."

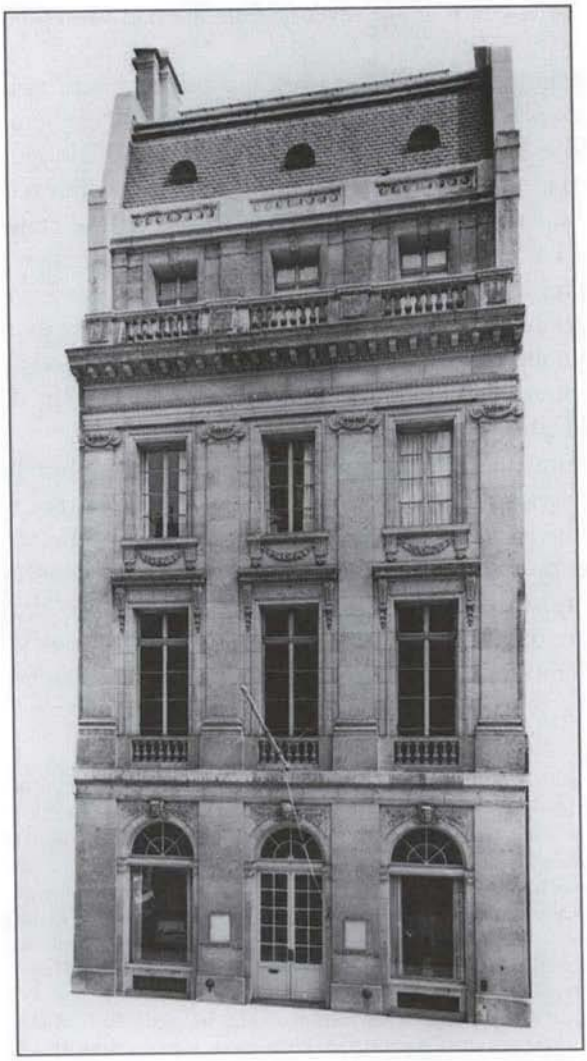

Fig. 10. Office Building for Wildenstein and Co., New York, New York, 1932. Erected during the Great Depression, this art gallery at 19 East 64th Street raises to its most sophisticated the French classicism that the Philadelphia architect had lavished on his many Manhattan townhouses. Photo, Wildenstein and Co., Inc.

control, yet by her death at age seventy-four she had been poised to file for divorce.

Every morning upon arrival at work the architect kept to his routine of saying hello to each employee, then consulting with Abele before retiring to his private office. Unless meeting with a client, he still left open his door to the main workroom. In 1937 he undertook his sole work executed outside the United States, a thorough alteration to one of the stately homes of England, which of course he never saw. Although an operation in early 1938 forced his involuntary absence from the office, he was back as soon as possible conferring about buildings yet to come. Lean years continued to bring orders enough to satisfy some other firms during good times, such as further structures for Hahnemann Hospital in center-city Philadelphia, which would be his last works.[60]

Horace Trumbauer died at home on Sunday, September 18, 1938, succumbing to cirrhosis at age sixty-nine. This news made the front page in Philadelphia the next day, together with the English and French attempt to appease Hitler by sacrificing the Sudetenland. A viewing was held Tuesday evening downtown at undertakers Oliver H. Bair Co., then a private funeral the next afternoon at the architect's residence.[61] Burial took place at West Laurel Hill Cemetery, not far across the city limits from his house. He had

[60] He altered St. Leonard's, Windsor, England (now "Mansion House" at Legoland Windsor Park), when the ancient residence was bought by Mrs. Horace E. Dodge, who would lend it to Joseph P. Kennedy and family while he was ambassador to Britain, 1938–40. Two earlier projects beyond the U.S. mainland went unbuilt. His prison design from 1908 won its competition but proved too expensive—a frequent problem with his proposals—so that the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico waited nearly two more decades for a new penitentiary by an island architect. Likewise he took first place in the previous year for the Seddon Memorial Technical College, which an Auckland architect soon afterward erected along similar lines. Four works that Trumbauer built in 1903–05 for Hahnemann Hospital, Philadelphia, would be joined by two more in 1938.

[61] Honorary pallbearers numbered few friends among an august body of clients and business associates, many of whom probably did not attend. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 21, 1938, 36, lists them as: George G. Allen, New York, chairman of the Duke Endowment; Charles L. Borie, Jr., Philadelphia, architect; Frank C. Brown, Durham, controller of Duke University; André Carlhian, Paris, interior decorator; Herbert Carpenter, Philadelphia, physician; Joseph Duveen, London, art dealer; William P. Few, Durham, president of Duke University; Robert Lee Flowers, Durham, treasurer of Duke University; A. Carl Lee, Charlotte, N.C., engineer (whose firm constructed Duke University); John C. Martin, Philadelphia, publisher; William B. Perkins, New York, trustee of the Duke Endowment; Alexander Hamilton Rice, New York, explorer; L. Carbery Ritchie, Spring Lake, N.J., banker; Alexander H. Sands, New York, trustee of the Duke Endowment; Charles A. Tyler, Philadelphia, publisher; Charles G. Wetter, Philadelphia, builder; George D. Widener II, Philadelphia, financier; and Joseph E. Widener, Philadelphia, financier.

erected three mausoleums there for rich clients, but his tombstone is simply an upright block of marble uncarved on its face save for his last name.

Following his death came the discovery that his fortune was nearly nil because just as he had signed over checks to his wife, so too had he put his earnings into trust funds for his stepdaughter and her daughter, for his surviving brother and sister, and for her descendants to the third generation. When an investigation failed to prove he had done so to evade taxes, he was allowed to continue providing for his beloved family even as he had in life. Too modest to memorialize his career, he left behind scant documents except his vague ledgers, where must begin the excruciating effort of cataloguing his works.

Chief designer Julian P. Abele and chief draftsman William O. Frank took over what their letterhead terms "The Office of Horace Trumbauer" with both their names underneath. Newer employees were let go, the library was auctioned off, but the firm endured in the same increasingly ghostly quarters. Continuing to work in traditional styles, the office relied on earlier clients or alterations to previous works. In 1950 Abele died after reaching the same age as his former boss, then his partner's gifted son Edward W. Frank took over the design side of the business, which would include two final buildings for Duke University. Once the elder Frank died in 1968, his son closed the office a few months shy of the one-hundredth anniversary of its founder's birth. Although the posthumous firm had prospered, its output never attained the extent nor grandeur nor ebullience of former times. Something had gone out of the office and that irreplaceable something was Horace Trumbauer.

Forest Hills, N.Y. FREDERICK PLATT