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# THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

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## A FOREWORD

**T**HIS index is for the 119th volume of THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT. This series of volumes constitutes an encyclopaedia of architecture in America. They mark the progression from a time when our architecture was but a re-echo of classic precedent to the present day when architecture, as practiced in this country, sets a standard for emulation all over the world.

The development of architecture in America is a reflex of our great advancement as a nation. The progress of THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT has been in keeping with this great advancement. It mirrors today, as it has always done, the highest ideals of a profession that is the oldest of all the arts, and it has blazed the way to a better appreciation of the dignities and the responsibilities of architectural practice.

Its twenty-six issues each year, more than twice as many as any other architectural publication, form a compendium to architectural practice.

Its many illustrations—more than four hundred full page plates and approximately twice as many text illustrations—give to readers a larger volume of suggestive material on architectural subjects than is to be found elsewhere.

Its various departments of Architectural Engineering, Economics as applied to building, Specification and Cubage Costs, place in the hands of subscribers, a fund of material that makes the magazine indispensable to architects, engineers and students who are keenly interested in our architectural development.

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## War Memorials

Impressions of an Interview with Cass Gilbert, Jr. (Who Served As Second Lieutenant, 17th Field Artillery, 2d Division, A.E.F.), in Which Mr. Gilbert Comments on War Memorials Generally and the Proposed New York State Memorial Particularly

**W**HAT form should a war memorial take? In that question is summed up a vast amount of contention which has seriously affected a substantial portion of our population since the signing of the Armistice and which remains today as far from a satisfactory solution as it was at the very beginning of that period when war memorials came seriously to mind with so large a part of the nation's population. There appear to be two schools, the one believing purely in beauty which will inspire the ideals for which the Army and Navy fought, as opposed to utility; the other in a combination of the two. Both schools have in mind the commemoration of an ideal or ideals. Those who speak for utility do so in relation to the community as a whole, and usually have in mind such ideals as citizenship (Americanization programs, for example), fraternity, democracy and the benefits which are offered the living through such a medium as the proposed Victory Hall or similar types of community centers. They believe that the commemoration of ideals can go hand in hand with any sort of memorial designed primarily with a view to utility, and that the spirit with which the men fought and died can be most appropriately remembered and cherished through the medium of utility which seeks to benefit, and materially better, the citizenship of any community, large or small.

To these contentions serious objections were raised.

"A war memorial," Mr. Gilbert explained, "should be so designed and executed that it gives one impression only, and that impression should be one of sheer beauty, strongly suggestive of the ideals for which the memorial stands; namely, Courage, Bravery, Liberty and Victory. It should be thought of only in relation to those who were most actively and intimately engaged in the war. I am speaking of those who not only gave their lives on the field of battle, but of the men and women alike who gave

themselves entirely to the aid of the Government in helping the men on the battle line.

"With those basic principles in mind, it is difficult to understand how anything other than the strictest interpretation of a memorial would suffice. The so-called utility which has been spoken of is not at all fair to the men who fought. Think of a so-called Community Center, Public Hall or other utility which should perhaps, on its own merits, be provided by the community in the normal progress of its development as opposed to a magnificent monumental memorial, and analyze the value of the two. The community idea, expressed by such a structure, would not be used to any great degree by the men most concerned with it. It would not be enough merely to provide some sort of 'forum' where people could meet to further citizenship. Supposing even that the scheme worked as contemplated, and that the 'forum' proved its worth as anticipated. What of it? What would there be in that to remind people in future years of the ideals for which men fought and for which men and women alike gave their all?

"Practically nothing. A public gathering place in New York, regardless of its beauty, does not inspire much reverence, or idealism, or thoughts of the past as related to the future. The city is too huge. There are too many other buildings. Such a memorial would not stand out; it could hardly make itself felt so effectively as a detached memorial.

"That, in a general way, is true of all cities. There is only this difference, that in New York it loses its purpose because of the city's hugeness, and in smaller cities or towns it becomes commonplace, regardless of its beauty. Commonplace because it is, after all, merely another building, another public gathering place. Sheer beauty of the structure cannot take away from the fact that it is designed primarily as a common meeting ground for the community; and there are few persons idealistic enough to detach



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST. CLARE, GREAT KILLS, STATEN ISLAND  
EGGERS & HIGGINS, ARCHITECTS

# The Roman Catholic Church of St. Clare

Great Kills, Staten Island, New York

EGGERS & HIGGINS, *Architects*

IN a western city there is now being brought to conclusion, under the direction of a large church organization, a scheme for an educational group of buildings. The promoters of this undertaking contemplate the adoption of a Georgian Colonial type of architecture and further propose to include in the group replicas of many of the structures that are to-day landmarks of our Colonial history. The idea is based on the complete Americanization of every student and incidentally to serve to inculcate a viewpoint of patriotism.

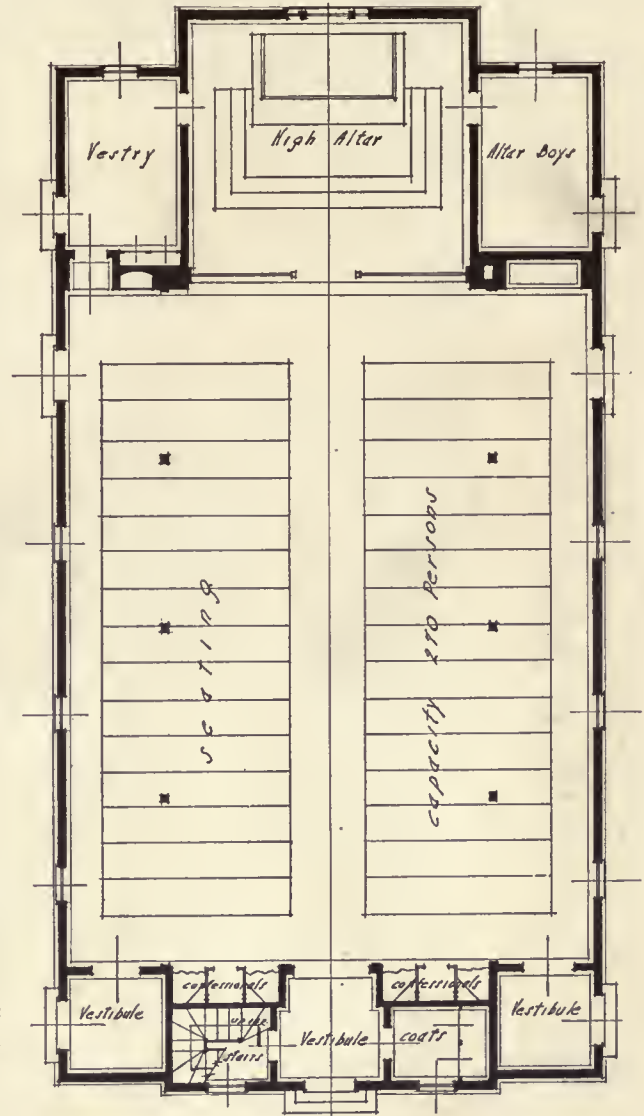
Methods of Americanization in this country have been carefully studied and important work is being done. The Catholic Church in the United States has undoubtedly largely aided in seeking to inculcate a correct attitude on the part of its members towards their duties as citizens. The small church now being erected at Great Kills on Staten Island shows on the part of its clergy and congregation a fine sense of the fitness of things, of the duty of the Church in the promotion of every patriotic impulse, and in a much to be commented appreciation of its neighborhood.

We do not recall, and we doubt if ever before there has been built in this country a Roman Catholic church of any size that took for its architectural expression a style so purely American. And we are sure that now so excellent an example has been set that there will follow a further building of Roman Catholic Churches that will express in the finest way the high ideals of the Church in the United States, both religious and civil. These things are the well placed milestones on our path as a nation toward our highest ideals.

Great Kills, on Staten Island, formerly known as Giffords-by-the-Sea, was for many years a quaint old fishing village. The lives of the people were the lives of others in similar towns the length of our North Atlantic Coast. Its men were the sturdy element-braving type that fared forth at all seasons and at all hours. Its women, equally sturdy as a type, were of the quiet, reserved character that is bred in women who daily wait the uncertain return of their men folks from their fishing. The houses were the typical fishermen's cottages, with a sprinkling of the better type that showed the material prosperity of the village. The whole atmosphere of the town was purely American, the growth of American customs and the establishment of American ideals.

While no reasonable person will question those

matters of tradition that have for centuries caused the Roman Catholic Church to avail of a purely Roman type of architecture as an expression of its church edifices, yet, like all precedent it is but the acquirement of a habit based on a custom that no one has been disposed to question.



FLOOR PLAN

A church in this typically American town would naturally need to be of the town itself. It is therefore something worthy of mention when a commun-

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ity now largely composed of many different elements as to taste in art, in social ways and daily habits of living, so unanimously agree on establishing a precedent that one wonders has not heretofore been attempted.

The structure wanted had to be at least 40 by 80 feet to provide for its known requirements and to give room for normal expansion. A small fund of approximately \$25,000 was available, and the problem has been to provide an attractive, well constructed edifice that would meet requirements and which could be built within the money at hand. This the architects have accomplished in the most successful manner.

The feature of the plan is placing on either side of the main structure of extensions approximating twelve feet in width. This provides the additional space for the necessary seating and does not detract from the symmetry of the plan, which follows the best precedent of the Georgian.

Further, this arrangement of side extensions insures better interior lighting and also better circulation of air and natural ventilation. By introducing the side wings and confining the present main structure to a comparatively narrow plan (it is but 20 feet in width) the costly construction of a 40-foot span has been avoided, and a much more practical and better architectural result obtained.

The choir loft has been placed at the front of the church over the entrance. The organ will be of an early type, low in cost, but adding to the feeling that the architects have so successfully attained, of an early American church interior.

The low tower on this church with its balustrade and cupola further carries out the feeling of a fishing village church. It was in these cupola that was hung the bell that served many purposes besides that for which it was consecrated. Its notes announced the arrival of some long overdue fishing fleet, it called to council on occasions of public interest, and often when the church was used as a schoolhouse, hastened the lagging steps of school children.

Around this cupola is a narrow platform, which in earlier New England churches and in many pretentious houses, was built as a "Captain's walk." It was on these balconies that retired sea captains took exercise and scanned the horizon for a glimpse of some expected sail.

St. Clare's at Great Kills is an innovation in the architecture of Roman Catholic Churches that every

patriotic man will commend. We believe it is the forerunner of many such, or, at least we hope so.

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### Criticism and Comment

*The Editors, THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT:*

Your editorial in the Dec. 15 number has greatly interested me, as I believe the subject is one of vital importance in the development or even maintenance of architecture as a profession.

Architects are much inclined to consider architecture purely as a Fine Art, as something apart from the scientific features, or from the engineering involved in various forms. In this I believe the profession is making a serious error. The public taking the cue from the architect is naturally inclined to turn to the engineer or even to the contractor for advice which should come from the architect. Continued to its natural conclusion this leaves the architect in a position of being merely a planner who applies to his plan the purely artistic principles of form and detail on paper, and without assuming any responsibility whatever, and with little claim to knowledge of the scientific or engineering features involved in detail, undertakes to supervise the execution of the building, only so far as its artistic features are involved. Is this what the profession of architecture is leading to? Some, including many engineers, seem to think that this point has already been reached.

As stated in your excellent editorial, "engineering is (or should be) an essential element of architecture." The various forms of engineering, scientific in their nature, should be considered as highly specialized branches of architecture, not as something apart from it.

Architecture should be considered as the combined Art and Science of Building, and the practice of architecture conducted accordingly, co-operatively with engineering. The architect then might become the true Master Builder. The tendency of the schools, however, is to set up two distinct professions, one of which is Architecture or the Fine Art of Building, the other being Engineering, which so far as it applies to building refers to the Science of Building. The public it is hoped will continue to admire the Art, but it will undoubtedly pin its faith to the Science every time, and therein lies the danger.

VICTOR ANDRE MATTESON, Architect.

Chicago, Ill.