

LeRoy S. Buffington and the Minneapolis Boom of the 1880's

Muriel B. Christison

WHOEVER SPEAKS of the "gay nineties" is mistaken, according to Mr. Edward C. Gale, at least so far as Minneapolis is concerned. In Minneapolis it was the "gay eighties" instead; those were the city's boom years. Other Midwestern cities were booming in the 1880's too, but in Minneapolis the tempo of expansion was faster, almost reckless. Statistics and the amazing architectural output of LeRoy S. Buffington corroborate Mr. Gale's memory. The census figures are typically impressive. By 1880 the population of Minneapolis had reached 46,887, and by 1890 it had jumped to 164,738, an increase of over two hundred and fifty per cent. This growing citizenry with its demand for housing facilities had, in turn, a dynamic effect upon the real-estate trade. There were 54 real-estate brokers or agencies in Minneapolis in 1880; just three years later, the *Minneapolis City Directory* listed 213! The consideration on real-estate transfers rose from \$4,500,000 in 1880 to the staggering amount of \$27,500,000 in 1883.¹

The decade from 1880 to 1890 was characterized by the "Minneapolis idea"; civic enterprise absorbed the boundless energies of the local businessman and served as an outlet for the rash optimism that attracted him to the West. The following excerpt from a report written in 1882 by the secretary of the Minneapolis Board of Trade expresses the wonderment and excitement felt by those who were taking part in this great development: "The extraordinary increase in its [*Minneapolis*'] population; the rapid advance in the value of its realty; the number and value of new buildings erected; the astonishing growth of both its retail and jobbing trade; the constant yet rapid extension of its manufacturing industries, and its marvelous progress in every department of business and social life, are facts

¹ *United States Census, 1890, Population*, part 1, p. 198; Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, *First Annual Report*, 1883, p. 115.

which, unsupported by the solid array of absolutely reliable statistics . . . might well challenge the credulity of those not personally familiar with the phenomenal growth and progress of Minneapolis.”²

In 1883 the man walking along one of the new stone sidewalks on Hennepin Avenue might well look up at the Boston Block or the rising West Hotel and reflect upon the grandeur of his city—and the genius of Buffington, the architect who designed these structures. It is doubtful if there could be more revealing testimony to the phenomenal character of those years than the work of this one man. Among his designs for Minneapolis buildings in the 1880's are competitive projects for the Exposition Building, the Hennepin County Courthouse, the Minneapolis Public Library, the Northwestern Storage Warehouse, a ten-story bank and office building, churches, flour mills, university buildings, and mansions for some of the city's first families.³

Such a list, partial though it may be, indicates that the citizens of Minneapolis in the 1880's had confidence in their city's future and surplus wealth which they were willing to invest in that future. In the ten years beginning in 1880, Minneapolis enjoyed a period of physical growth and civic improvement unparalleled in any other decade of its history. The increasing concentration of capital, the rise of the city to first rank as an industrial and commercial center, the expanding retail trade, and the general accessibility of the region, all combined to make Minneapolis capable of physical expansion to an unlimited degree. It was an ideal place for an ambitious, progressive young architect to settle.

Buffington was born on September 22, 1848, in Cincinnati. That city, known in the 1880's as the “Paris of America,” was a propitious spot for the future architect to form his early impressions and receive his education. After being trained in engineering, he joined the architectural firm of Anderson and Hannaford, first as a student, then as a delineator. There Buffington acquired a sound knowledge

² Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade, *Joint Annual Report*, 1882, p. 17.

³ Original drawings for these projects are preserved in the Buffington collection of the University of Minnesota Library.

of structural problems as well as of artistic styles. In 1869 he went to St. Anthony to marry Mary Eleanor Depew, the daughter of a former Cincinnati. They returned to Cincinnati immediately after their marriage, but they did not remain there long, for Buffington removed to St. Paul in 1871 and his wife followed him later in the same year.⁴ In St. Paul, he became associated with the architectural firm of A. M. Radcliffe, and attained prominence through his collaboration on the designs for the Kelly Block, the Plymouth Congregational Church, the First Methodist Episcopal Church, the residences of Maurice Auerbach, William R. Marshall, and Henry P. Upham, and other important structures.

In 1874 Buffington opened an office in Minneapolis. During the 1870's his reputation grew steadily, and by 1877 he was commonly referred to as the best architect in the state. Buffington's success, though professionally deserved, was partly the result of his remarkable personality. The following quotation reflects the general esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries: "Personally, Mr. Buffington possesses in eminent degree those social qualities which are a necessary attendant upon commercial or artistic success. He is a brilliant conversationalist, and of a ready tact. . . . Herculean in his resources and ability, his own staying powers, coupled with indomitable courage, have placed him in the front rank of the profession to which he belongs. In fact, Mr. Buffington is an excellent example of what energy, enterprise and brains will accomplish when properly utilized."⁵

Buffington's role in the booming eighties is revealed somewhat by the remarks of a *Chicago Times* correspondent who, writing in 1884 of the architectural development of Minneapolis, said that he was "the one architect who more than any other has stamped the impress of his artistic personality upon the finest and most costly structures" and that "his own abilities . . . have pushed him to the front in the wild race of competition which is characteristic of the

⁴ *National Cyclopedia of American Biography*, 22:364 (New York, 1932); Isaac Atwater and John H. Stevens, *History of Minneapolis and Hennepin County*, 2:1022 (New York, 1895).

⁵ Minneapolis Board of Trade, *Minneapolis Illustrated*, 63 (Chicago, 1889).

great Northwest, particularly so in Minneapolis, the city whose fortunes and those of a few of her enterprising, hard working citizens, of which number Mr. Buffington is one, are so inseparably connected."⁶

Buffington's office in the 1880's was one of the busiest spots in town. His firm occupied a suite of rooms and employed some thirty draftsmen. So unusual was the size of the firm, and so impressive the decoration and furnishings of its offices, that they were regarded as show places and were frequently mentioned with wonderment and amazement by the press. People from out of town or new clients who visited the establishment were baffled by the youthful appearance of the man who greeted them when they asked for Buffington, for at the peak of his career he was only in his thirties.

Buffington's luxurious offices were in the new Boston Block at Third and Hennepin. The building was under construction in 1880, when Hennepin Avenue was hardly more than a muddy lane. Buffington, who was already interested in the structural use of iron, incorporated cast-iron columns in the walls of the Boston Block. The story goes that, one weekend in the fall, when building operations were suspended, an iron column weighing three thousand pounds, which was lying on the ground, sank from its own weight into the mire until it was completely obscured. No one could explain the disappearance of an object so difficult to move and to conceal until the wheel of a wagon running down Hennepin Avenue struck against it some six months later, after the ground thawed.⁷ Stylistically, the Boston Block belongs to the category of Victorian architecture with its typical liking for broken surfaces. The chastening influence of the Romanesque revival was beginning to appear, however, and it was evident in the moderately restrained design of the façade. Minneapolis was proud of the Boston Block; it was large, tall, stylish, and impressive. A few more such buildings would give the city a metropolitan air.

The cost of the Boston Block has been estimated at approximately five hundred thousand dollars. The Pillsbury A Mill cost over a

⁶ Quoted in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 12, 1884.

⁷ *Minneapolis Daily Star*, December 10, 1926.

million.⁸ Plans for this new mill, also under construction in 1880, called for the largest and most complete flour mill in the world. But more than that, the Pillsbury firm wanted to erect a mill of the best architectural design. To insure the accomplishment of these intentions, Buffington was engaged as architect. Charles A. Pillsbury made a careful study of the most famous European mills, especially those in Budapest, so that no desirable mechanical or architectural feature might be omitted from the new Minneapolis mill. The external appearance of the building was a credit to Buffington, as well as to the taste of the firm for whom it was designed. In planning the mill, Buffington was thinking primarily in terms of function. By so doing, he showed that he certainly was not provincial in taste, but definitely progressive. At so early a date he was able to side-step Victorianism and proceed in the direction of utilitarianism, a herald of the modern theory that form follows function. The mill looks today essentially the same as it did when it was completed in 1883. The interior has been rebuilt to meet the demands of modern production, but the exterior has not been changed. The massiveness and simplicity of its appearance suggest somewhat that landmark in the development of American commercial architecture, the Marshall Field Wholesale Store, built in Chicago from 1885 to 1887 by Henry Hobson Richardson.

The building of the Pillsbury A Mill was of great local significance. In 1883 it was estimated that the new mill had stepped up the daily producing capacity of the Minneapolis mills from 15,200 barrels to 20,400 barrels. It was symbolic of the economic development of Minneapolis and the concentration of capital that went hand in hand with this development. And the mill was of immeasurable artistic significance because of its influence upon public taste. The very importance of the building and the convincing suitability of its design prepared the way for a large-scale acceptance of Richardson's version of the Romanesque style, which characterized Minneapolis architecture between 1885 and 1893.⁹

⁸ *Minneapolis Illustrated*, 63; *Pioneer Press*, January 12, 1884.

⁹ *Tribune Hand-book of Minneapolis*, 70 (Minneapolis, 1884). Among Minneapolis buildings constructed in the same style in this period were the Masonic Temple, the

Before the Pillsbury A Mill was completed, Buffington had begun work for a Cincinnati capitalist whose belief in the future of the growing city of Minneapolis ultimately led him and his associates to invest over a million and a half dollars in the West Hotel. That building, which was hailed as the "Minneapolis Miracle," was a tangible acknowledgment of the city's greatness. Extravagant praises were written of the West. One commentator described it as: "The ne plus ultra of hotels . . . considered the finest hotel in the West." "The finest hotel building on the continent," wrote another.¹⁰ Visitors from far and near agreed that claims made for it were just, and Minneapolitans who toured England were proud to find a picture of the West Hotel hanging in the London agency of Thomas Cook and Son, an example of the wonders awaiting the lucky traveler in America.

Buffington proved himself progressive both in his design for the Pillsbury A Mill and in the structural features of the West Hotel. It was estimated that he used some 2,300,000 pounds of iron in the West's construction, at a time when conservative architects were neglecting this promising material. Furthermore, his use of the then new clay tile in the fire-resisting construction of the interior was probably the first example west of Chicago of modern fireproofing, certainly the first on a large scale. The traditional fame of the West was eloquently verified by nostalgic remarks in the press when the old hotel was torn down in 1940.¹¹ It can be said that its own grandeur destroyed it. Had the hotel been smaller and less expensive to operate, it might still have been standing, like many less significant but equally aged landmarks.

By the time that the West Hotel was completed in 1884, Buffington was a nationally known architect. While he was still at work on Lumber Exchange, the courthouse, and the Guaranty Loan, now the Metropolitan Life Building.

¹⁰ *Tribune Hand-book of Minneapolis*, 126; *Minneapolis Illustrated*, 7; *Pioneer Press*, October 25, 1883; Chamber of Commerce, *First Annual Report*, 108. Buffington later said that the cost of the West Hotel, including the furnishings, was \$900,000, and that the lot cost \$45,000. See *Minneapolis Journal*, February 23, 1908.

¹¹ Robert C. McLean, "LeRoy S. Buffington, F.A.I.A., An Obituary," in *Western Architect*, 40:9 (March, 1931); A. J. Russell, "The Long Bow," in *Minneapolis Times-Tribune*, March 18, 1940.

this gigantic project, his office was flooded with other commissions. With the incorporation of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and the assured rise of the city as an important grain market, much outside capital and many business firms were attracted to the city. Consequently, after 1881, commercial and residential building increased by leaps and bounds. In 1882 over nine million dollars were spent on building, and in 1883 some ten and a half million.¹²

Among the noteworthy commissions that Buffington handled in 1883 were the Sidle and the Eastman blocks. The Sidles were a banking family, having been connected with the oldest bank in Minneapolis, the First National, from its incorporation in 1857. W. W. Eastman, owner of the new Eastman Block, began his career in the 1850's in the flour milling business at St. Anthony. He had been one of the charter members of the Millers' National Association, and he was active in the lumber industry. Eastman also operated a woolen mill which later formed the nucleus of the North Star Woolen Mills. While his business block on Nicollet Avenue was in the process of erection, Eastman became one of the charter members of the first Minneapolis board of park commissioners. With the formation of the park board, a systematic plan for the beautification of Minneapolis was drawn up which included the laying out of public parks and parkways. The main areas and arteries to be developed in the 1880's, according to this plan, were Central Park, Lake Calhoun Boulevard, Minnehaha Falls, the East River Road, Lake Street, and Riverside Park.¹³ The year 1883 also saw the incorporation of another notable organization whose chief purpose was to "foster and promote educational, artistic and scientific interests"—the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts.¹⁴ With William Watts Folwell as its first president, the society sponsored the exhibition of works of art and conducted lecture courses on art. Both endeavors aided in the

¹² McLean, in *Western Architect*, 40:9; Chamber of Commerce, *First Annual Report*, 108.

¹³ Chamber of Commerce, *First Annual Report*, 84; Horace W. S. Cleveland, *The Aesthetic Development of the United Cities, Saint Paul and Minneapolis* (1888), and *Suggestions for a System of Parks and Parkways for the City of Minneapolis* (Minneapolis, 1888).

¹⁴ See the "Articles of Incorporation," in a booklet on the *Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts* (Minneapolis, 1922).

maturing and improving of public taste, a development which was to find an expression in the handsome buildings erected in Minneapolis in the last half of the 1880's.

Buffington's new Tribune Building on Fourth Street and First Avenue South was completed in 1884. The occupation of the new structure was announced in the *Minneapolis Tribune* for July 19 of that year: "The new Tribune Building is one of the most handsome and substantial business structures in the northwest, besides being the most complete and best arranged building for newspaper purposes west of Philadelphia." In praise of the location and the architect, the article goes on to say: "The location is one of the very best in the heart of the city. It could not be more central, allowance being made for the rapid development and extension of the business quarter. . . . Whatever credit results from the elegance of the design and the thoroughness with which every detail of the immense structure has been carried out, belongs to Mr. L. S. Buffington of this city, one of the most experienced and competent architects in the country." The *Tribune's* admiration for the architect of its new building is understandable. Evidence that he was being recognized elsewhere appeared in a St. Louis paper for 1885, when Buffington attended the meeting of the Western Association of Architects in that city. The *St. Louis Daily Globe Democrat*, in its issue for November 21, remarked that he had "more buildings standing to his credit than any architect" in the Northwest.

When Buffington returned from St. Louis, talk of the Minneapolis Exposition was in the air. The idea, which had its birth in an editorial appearing in the *Tribune* in the fall of 1885, was fostered by W. M. Regan of a firm of bakers and restaurant proprietors. Regan Brothers was a phenomenal establishment, catering to hungry business and professional men. The restaurant, which started in 1882, was soon forced to expand until it could serve on an average of fifteen hundred people daily. It was said that the businessmen who assembled there consumed a hundred and thirty pounds of roast beef, sixty gallons of milk, and twelve bushels of cantaloupes at a single noonday meal. The restaurant was important as a gather-

ing place where ideas were exchanged across the tables. Among those who met there each day were many who thought that Minneapolis had been cheated in losing the Midway district and the State Fair to St. Paul. They were particularly receptive to Regan's idea of a great exposition. Plans grew, money was raised, a site was chosen, and a competition for an architectural award was opened. Buffington, at this date filled with dreams of iron construction, designed a building modeled on the Exposition Building for the New York World's Fair of 1853, a metal frame with a screen of glass. He lost out in the competition.¹⁵ Was his design too ornate, or was it too expensive? Probably both.

Another competitive design that Buffington prepared in 1886 was that for a public library building. Again he was a loser, though his design bears a strangely close resemblance to the building actually erected. The state legislature passed an act in 1885 authorizing an issue of a hundred thousand dollars in bonds for the building of a public library in Minneapolis, providing an additional fifty thousand dollars be raised by private subscription. By the fall of 1886 the necessary sum was available, and work on the foundation had begun. When Buffington's competitive sketch for the public library was drawn up, he was working in the Romanesque style, and he produced a number of Romanesque designs after 1885 which are masterpieces of architectural composition.¹⁶

In the 1880's a number of charitable and private hospitals were opened in Minneapolis. Buffington had his hand in planning a number of hospital buildings, just as he had it in the building of mills, office blocks, retail blocks, hotels, and other public buildings. In 1886 he supervised the rebuilding of a mansion for use by St. Mary's

¹⁵ *Minneapolis Illustrated*, 28, 77. A preliminary sketch for the Exposition Building is in the Buffington collection of the University of Minnesota Library.

¹⁶ *Minneapolis Illustrated*, 20. Buffington's design for the library is reproduced in the *Northwestern Architect*, 6:994 (November, 1888). Critics have tended to give credit for the excellence of Buffington's designs in the late 1880's to the influence of Harvey Ellis, an artist in his own right, who was working for Buffington at the time. The evolution of Buffington's work, however, seems to have been fairly consistent, and he adopted the Romanesque style before Ellis, who had known Richardson in Albany, joined the Minneapolis office as a draftsman. But it must be said that the sketches of Ellis showed an understanding of the Richardsonian Romanesque and possessed a distinction and beauty of design which surpassed the work of many of his contemporaries.

Hospital. Churches did not lag behind hospitals. So many new religious structures appeared in Minneapolis in the 1880's that it was called the "City of Churches." Through the interest of one of his most enthusiastic clients, Samuel C. Gale, Buffington designed and supervised the construction of the First Unitarian Church on Eighth Street and Mary Place. This, too, was completed in 1886.

By 1886 Samuel Gale was well aware of Buffington's versatility, knowledge of his profession, and foresight. As far back as 1876 Buffington had worked for Harlow Gale on the new City Market; he had built tenements for Samuel Gale, who furnished housing for some of the city's swelling population. It was not surprising, then, that Samuel Gale chose Buffington to build a house for him on Sixteenth Street and Harmon Place. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* for September 16, 1888, published a description of the residence which assures one of its astounding richness and makes its estimated cost, a hundred thousand dollars, seem not unreasonable. Parts of the description are worth quoting, since they picture the type of house prominent Minneapolitans were building in the 1880's.

"The style of the architecture is the Romanesque. . . . The roof will be of red slate. . . . The stone in the building is almost entirely rock-faced. . . . The archway of the entrance is not a complete one, but dies away into the tower. . . . The barn is connected with the residence by an arch which forms a porte cochere. The barn is about as handsome as the residence itself. . . . To return to the residence. Passing under the heavy arch of the entrance the stone niche in the wall commands attention. Within the niche will be a life size bronze statue. . . . Off from the hall and partially separated by Moorish screen work is an alcove divan. On one side of the hall is an alabaster and mosaic mantel extending from the floor to the wooden-beamed ceiling. At the central point of the mantel is a beautiful silver plaque. The stair case will be . . . elaborate in construction. About two feet from the floor is a newell post terminating in a three-fourths life size statue. The entire hall will be wainscoted to the ceiling in oak, stained and finished to a pale amber green. . . . It will be the most imposing room in the house. . . . Opening from the hall is the draw-

ing room, library, morning room and dining room. . . . The library and morning room are finished in mahogany with elaborate plaster ceilings. The dining room . . . is elaborately finished in antique oak, and has at one end a buffet and breakfast alcove and at the other end a mantel. . . . The conservatory opens from the dining room. . . . In the center . . . is to be a marble fountain. The drawing room is finished in white and gold, with a ceiling of pale yellow silk with a pattern in plush of a pale blue appliqued thereon, the pattern emphasized with silver-headed nails of a hemispherical shape. . . . The floors of all the above mentioned rooms will be of hard wood, except that of the conservatory, which will be of mosaic of a more or less emblematic nature. . . . The heating is to be by hot water and the apparatus will be located in the barn."

It is significant that Gale's residence, while it was admired, apparently was not considered extraordinary. Probably this was because a good number of imposing residences were arising at about the same time, many of them shaped by the careful genius of the same architect. There was the residence of Fred C. Pillsbury on the corner of Tenth Street and Third Avenue, just across the street from the George A. Pillsbury house. There was a new house for Francis B. Hart on Clifton Place, another for Frank E. Little on Harmon Place, and many more. The domestic architecture of L. S. Buffington has been overlooked in the past because of its private character and because of the great amount of publicity given to his commercial and public buildings. It would seem, however, that many of Buffington's best and most original designs were for dwellings. Even a cursory examination of these houses of the 1880's explains the frequent references to Buffington's "exquisite taste" by his contemporaries.

While Buffington had been engaged on these many commissions, a momentous project had been taking shape in his mind. In the middle eighties he began to work out the technicalities of the problem, and finally, in 1888, he patented a system of construction which earned for him the title of "Father of the Skyscraper." His patent provided for a braced skeleton of metal with masonry veneer supported on shelves fastened to the skeleton at each story. If Buffington

had not been so occupied with other buildings in the eighties, he might have patented his invention at an earlier date and, in that case, his claim to the title of "inventor of the skyscraper" would have been more secure.¹⁷ It is certain that he was thinking in terms of iron construction before 1888, and it is now generally acknowledged that he was the first to think out systematically the details and ultimate possibilities of this method of building.

Buffington's patent was regarded with anything but complacency in 1888. By some it was ridiculed; others were not so ready to deny its logic. One of the more favorable notices asserted that "Architect L. S. Buffington, of Minneapolis, has brought forward an invention which he thinks will revolutionize the world of building. . . . By it buildings can be constructed of any desired height. A 'syndicate of capitalists' is also backing his system, and will erect in Minneapolis a building . . . twenty-eight stories high. Architect Buffington says: 'The syndicate which is backing me includes some of the best men of the city, who control plenty of capital, and as soon as a few details are settled we shall publish our plans'. . . . The land at the corner of Wall and Broad Sts. is worth somewhat more than \$30,000,000 per acre. . . . It will be seen that at these prices a landlord might welcome even twenty-eight stories to keep down his ground rent. . . . The highest buildings now in New York are about thirteen stories, which is about the limit of the rational use of brick and stone walls." Buffington later admitted that he never really intended to put up the twenty-eight story building, but was using it only as a publicity device. Minneapolis had to wait for its first skyscraper. A recent writer asserts that "it was the publicity given to his twenty-eight story building which was responsible in large part for the spread of the knowledge of this form of construction in the architectural world."¹⁸

¹⁷ Buffington applied for his patent on November 14, 1887, and it was granted as patent number 383,170 on May 22, 1888. His work on the skyscraper is discussed in the *Minneapolis Journal* for December 30, 1928, and in the "Memories of LeRoy S. Buffington," a manuscript owned by his daughter, Miss Ella D. Buffington of Minneapolis. A copy, which has been edited and annotated by the present writer, is in the University of Minnesota Library.

¹⁸ *Engineering News* (New York), March 31, 1888; *Chicago Tribune*, December 4, 1892; E. M. Upjohn, "Buffington and the Skyscraper," in *Art Bulletin*, 17:70 (March, 1935).

Another project that occupied much of Buffington's attention during the 1880's was the erection of buildings for the University of Minnesota. Several of his buildings still are standing on the campus. He designed the university Coliseum, which was used both for military drill and for concerts, and a farmhouse and barn for the agricultural school, all built in 1884; the Mechanic Arts Building, now Eddy Hall, erected in 1886; and the farm Home Building, completed in 1888.¹⁹ His work for the university was closely associated with the regency of John S. Pillsbury, another pioneer business leader whose vision and indefatigable energy did so much to shape the course of the business, municipal, and educational development of Minneapolis. For many years Pillsbury was engaged in the local milling industry and the hardware trade, and he was also associated with two Western railroads, the First National Bank, and other business and financial organizations. He still found time to devote to public duty and was perhaps more closely connected with the growth of the University of Minnesota than any other one man. His most generous act in the closing years of the 1880's was the contribution of over \$150,000 for the completion of a science building, now known as Pillsbury Hall.²⁰ This, too, was designed by Buffington, although his scheme for the building was drawn up by his assistant, Harvey Ellis. This may account for its marked similarity to Austin Hall on the campus of Harvard University, which was built after a design by Richardson between 1881 and 1883.

By 1890 the boom had spent its force. The financial surplus available for building in the 1880's was frozen or drained away. The ominous cloud of the oncoming panic of 1893 was already beginning to cast its shadow on the spreading city beside the Falls of St. Anthony. In the ten years that elapsed from 1880 to 1890, Minneapolis had changed from a sprawling frontier town to an integrated metropolitan center, ready to assume the burdens of civic maturity. The harvest festival of 1891 was just an echo of the earlier optimism, which disappeared in the quietude of gloom.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the Coliseum, see William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 4:103-108 (St. Paul, 1930).

²⁰ Isaac Atwater, *History of the City of Minneapolis*, 2:593 (New York, 1893).

Buffington lived until 1931. He continued his work for many years, following the changing currents of architectural taste. With a few exceptions, it seems fair to state that he never surpassed the excellence he had displayed in his work of the late 1880's. The spirit of that decade seemed to call forth the best from all who participated in its surging activity.²¹

²¹ In 1889 it was estimated that Buffington had erected buildings valued at more than twenty million dollars in Minneapolis and its vicinity. See *Minneapolis Illustrated*, 20. Over half of Buffington's commissions were for buildings outside Minneapolis. The writer is compiling a catalogue of his work.



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, or email articles, however, for individual use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#).