

Gatherings

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Blueprints of the Past — I

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In the lower level of the once elegant East Hall are magical windows into the architectural treasures of Kalamazoo and southwestern Michigan. The Regional History Collections holds hundreds of blueprints and drawings created by area architects, just waiting for anyone interested in architecture, art, or history to open these windows.

The ERNEST STARR BATTERSON collection of papers is highlighted by the original architectural drawings for the First United Methodist Church in downtown Kalamazoo. E. S. Batterson, a church member, presented his designs to the church building committee in 1925. He was ultimately chosen as the architect and supervised all building operations. The 42 linen pages of church design include beautiful hand colored front and side elevations. The neo-gothic church was dedicated on March 17, 1929 and was placed on the Michigan Register of Historic Sites in June of 1988.

Batterson's architectural education was acquired through the International Correspondence School of Architectures in the early 1900s. Among the Kalamazoo architects with whom he worked are Albert E. Rose, R.A. LeRoy, and Frank E. Ellsworth. After Batterson died in 1941, his widow Alice sold some of his drawings back to the people who had contracted for his work. However, many manuscripts remained with the family, and his son Miles and his family donated the first series of Batterson's papers and drawings to the Regional History Collections in 1979.

Additional materials were

donated in 1995, 1997, and 2000. This year, Mrs. Miles Batterson found more blueprints and they, too were added to the collection. These include the Dyckman Hotel in Paw Paw, the H.J. Cooper [automobile] garage on West Main in Kalamazoo, and the Turnbull residence on Oakland Drive. From ledgers, newspaper clippings and other materials in the collection, we know that Batterson also designed the First Baptist Church and the Douglass Community Center in Kalamazoo, as well as a number of schools throughout southern Michigan. During the First World War, Ernest Starr Batterson also had charge of the construction of buildings at Camp Custer near Battle Creek.

The Batterson Collection includes a number of black and white photographs of houses in the Hillcrest and Spruce Drive neighborhoods in Kalamazoo. Batterson served as consulting architect for the State of Michigan, especially in connection with the Department of Fisheries where he was in charge of building and development design for hatcheries throughout the

State, including the Wolf Lake Hatchery west of Kalamazoo on M-43.

WMU will, in the near future, also become the repository of additional Batterson material, a gift of his great grandson, Patrick Batterson, who has loaned blueprints for the "new" K-12 school in Paw Paw so that copies can be made. This school was one of the first training schools affiliated with Western State Normal in 1924. Michael and Ted Batterson, grandsons, have created a CD-ROM of the First Methodist Church drawings, which will be the first architectural documents in this format in the Regional History Collections. The collection clearly shows the influence of the Prairie School of Architecture that was very popular at the time. The inclusive dates for the architectural materials are circa 1919-1941.

In 1997, the Regional History Collections received the architectural drawings of NORMAN PORTER KELLOGG from his wife Nancy Kellogg. Kellogg lived in Richland most of his professional life, and designed buildings in the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo areas. In 1960, he began a partnership with Robert C. Kiefer with whom he graduated in 1955 from the University of Cincinnati.

Among Mr. Kellogg's principal works are the Kalamazoo School Employees Credit Union (1966), the Byron Center State Bank (1965), and Kalamazoo Firehouse No. 6 (1969). The Kellogg material also includes drawings for many churches, schools, and residences in the Kalamazoo, Richland, Portage, and Grand Rapids areas. Kellogg and Keifer gained a Western Michigan University connection when they designed the "improvement" of Waldo



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Stadium in 1972, the addition of the elevator in the Seibert Administration Building, and the remodeling of the old Health Services building on East Campus (both in 1971).

In addition to designing a number of homes in the Kalamazoo, Gull Lake, and Richland areas, Kellogg also prepared blueprints for the:

- Zion Evangelical Church, Kalamazoo (1955);
- Nazarene Church, Kalamazoo (1963);
- Unity Reformed Church, Grand Rapids (1965);
- The Upjohn Company firehouse (1968);
- North Avenue Church of God, Battle Creek (1961-1971);
- both office building and plant for Gibson Inc., Nashville, TN (1974); and
- An addition to and renovation of Buchanan Township Hall (1977).

The collection takes up approximately five cubic feet of space and covers the years from 1955-1990.

The GEORGE GILBERT WORDEN PAPERS are unique in that not only are there architectural drawings, but also site surveys for real estate developments, and for drains, bridges, and roadways. Worden was self-employed as a civil and

architectural engineer who specialized in paper mills. He received his degree in Civil Engineering in 1908 from the University of Michigan.

George Worden passed away in 1972, but his papers were only recently deposited at the Regional History Collections courtesy of his grandson, Douglas G. Worden. Local historical researchers and authors Pamela Hall O'Connor and Lynn Smith Houghton, who have just published a history of Kalamazoo's buildings titled *Kalamazoo Lost & Found*, discovered these drawings in their search for information for their book. Through their efforts, Douglas Worden decided to place his grandfather's papers with the Regional History Collections. The collection covers approximately 1913-1965.

As O'Connor and Houghton assisted in the preservation and inventory of this collection, they made an exciting discovery. Worden was the architect for the Gibson Mandolin & Guitar building on Gibson Street in Kalamazoo. Various groups have been interested in learning who the architect was in order to place the building on the National Historic Landmark Register. Now we not only know the architect, but have building plans as well.

George Worden also designed homes in Kalamazoo on Tipperary Road and Brentwood, Parkwood, Edgemoor, Alta Vista, and Grand Avenues, mostly during the 1920s when these neighborhoods

were developing. In 1924 he worked with Caroline Bartlett Crane on her design for the Better Homes in America contest, and "Everyman's House" is still found at 2026 South Westnedge. A model of this house can also be seen at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum. He also developed blueprints for several homes in the Gull Lake area, as well as the dining pavilion at the Bass Lake Boy Scout Camp, and the now renovated Home for the Aged on Douglas Avenue, Kalamazoo. Worden seemed to be at the forefront of designing filling stations as automobiles became more and more popular. There are drawings for Colonial Oil in Sturgis, and the Independent Oil Company Filling Station on the southwest corner of Michigan and Lovell in 1922. The collection also includes drawings for the Packard Auto Dealership on West Michigan in 1919, which is now Orrin B. Hays, Inc.

The Worden manuscripts constitute a major architectural collection filling seven map case drawers with additional specifications and related paper materials comprising approximately four cubic feet. At present there is only a rough inventory of the blueprints and drawings, but access can be provided to any interested researcher.

The significant collections just noted are matched by additional valuable "blueprints to the past" that will be described in the Spring 2002 issue of *Gatherings*.

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