

## CASS GILBERT PORTRAIT UNVEILING

February 22, 2005

I am going to speak loudly because of the background noise. I choose to view the background noise not as an impediment, but as a celebration of this capitol building—the people’s house. This building is where the people come to see and participate in their government at work and we are witnesses to that function today.

It is a great pleasure to be here today with my Supreme Court colleagues, Russell Anderson, Helen Meyer, and Sam Hanson. It is an awesome—truly awesome—experience to work in this building. I have been in awe of this building ever since I first saw it as an elementary school child, and later, when I came here as a Boys’ Stater. Then when I was a student at Macalester, I frequently rode my bicycle to the capitol just to absorb the magnificence of this building. And now I work here. Every time I come up those steps, I still get goose bumps to think that I have the privilege of working in such a marvelous building.

It is appropriate that today we honor the architect of this building by having the portraits of Cass Gilbert and his wife, Julia, publicly displayed outside our Supreme Court room. I want to thank Governor Pawlenty, Lt. Governor Molnau, the Minnesota Historical Society, and the Cass Gilbert Society for their efforts to obtain the portraits from the Smithsonian Institution.

Some time ago, Professor Daniel Farber gave a lecture which he entitled “The Dead Hand of the Architect.” He began his lecture by saying:

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once said that continuity with the past is a necessity rather than a virtue. In reality, as we look around us, the hand of our predecessors is essentially everywhere. Our lives are ruled by past decisions in a variety of ways, many of which are quite humble, and many of which, in fact, escape our notice.

**Today, the hand of the architect of this building, Cass Gilbert, cannot escape our notice.**

**In his article, Farber talked about how in the courts the dead hand of the architect is represented by those justices and judges who went before us and who, through their writings, formed the law that guides us today. Just as long-deceased judges and justices can mold the law we live by, the architect of a building can mold our culture. A design can either constrain or unrestrain our culture. Cass Gilbert, by the design of this building, has molded our culture and it is an unrestrained building. It opens out to the public. It is welcoming to the public and it informs them. Thus, by its design it molds our present day culture. When you come into this building, you can see where the three branches of government—the executive, the legislative, and the judicial—work. Hundreds of thousands of students come here and leave with a visual image of how our system of separation of powers functions. We owe this continuing message to the hand of Cass Gilbert, the architect of this building.**

**Please take the time to look at the sayings here on the wall above us. Gilbert wanted those who came to this building to understand what the law is. When you come here, you are able to look at the quotations from legal philosophers and scholars that he has placed on the building's wall. The building is alive with education. In the rotunda, we have the North Star, the symbol of our state; but it is only one of many symbols of our state that are placed throughout the capitol building.**

**I want to conclude my remarks by welcoming the people of Minnesota to come to this building, their capitol. I had the privilege of being here at the open house the Centennial Committee hosted the first weekend of January. Over six thousand people visited the capitol that day. I think about four thousand of them came to our courtroom. These visitors experienced and enjoyed this building. It was a marvelous experience to say**

**to the people of Minnesota—you are welcome; come in here; see this marvelous building; see this courtroom where your government, your supreme court, works for you.**

**So I send the message to all the citizens of the state of Minnesota—this is your building—come here, enjoy it, become educated, and see the work of the hand of its architect—Cass Gilbert.**

**Thank you very much.**