

A House of Stone for Dr. Mackenzie: Rebuilding Portland's Architectural History

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My presentation today surveys the work of three architects, William F. McCaw, Richard H. Martin, Jr., and Frederick Manson White whose work has not been substantially documented and whose published biographies are in need of revision. I would first like to thank the pioneering historians who laid the foundations for understanding the built environment of this state. Writing history is an iterative process in which we continually build upon past efforts, and revising the record reveals the importance of those who gave us the place to start.

Our story begins in Toronto where today one can still find the works of William McCaw. William Frederick McCaw was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1850, of Scottish parents. His father, John, was an architect-builder under whom William apprenticed in the city of Belfast. According to McCaw's biography in Hines History of Oregon, young William was an accomplished draftsman by the time he immigrated to Canada in 1872 with his wife and two daughters. In Toronto, McCaw apprenticed with architect William Irving along with Edward J. Lennox. In 1876, McCaw partnered with Lennox to form their own firm. According to Marilyn Litvak's *Edward J. Lennox, Builder of Toronto* (1995), McCaw & Lennox was a popular firm with commissions that included large churches, school houses, brick villas, commercial buildings. Very little of their collaborative work has been documented, but includes Bond Street Congregational Church and the Hotel Hanlan. In 1881, McCaw immigrated to the US, purportedly for health reasons. Lennox, by the way, went on to become one of Canada's most important architects, an interpreter of the Richardsonian Romanesque, best known perhaps for his Toronto City Hall.

In April 1882, McCaw was employed by architect Warren H. Williams with whom he worked until 1884 except for a brief partnership with architect E. M. Burton. Williams was a preeminent Portland architect, responsible for a variety of commercial, residential, and institutional structures throughout the Pacific Northwest. He had come to Portland from San Francisco in 1873, following the city's great fire of 1872. Williams's father, an architect from New York, had moved his family to San Francisco in the 1840s. Among his surviving early works is the Old Church (Portland).

While engaged with Williams, McCaw served as superintendent of construction the legendary R. B. Knapp House (1884). Val Ballestrem alerted me to an article that identified Williams as architect of the Knapp house, not Justus Krumbein as is commonly thought, and that article provides some detail about McCaw's introduction into the house of a kind of heating system McCaw knew in Canada.

In 1884, McCaw briefly partnered with Albert Wickersham who would eventually move to Seattle. In the OHS archives are rare drawings of one of their works, the United Presbyterian Chapel (1884) which was at SW 6th Avenue and Montgomery St. In 1884, McCaw started a solo practice, and among his known works are the first Portland National Guard Armory (1887) and the Commanding Officer's Quarters [now known as Marshall House], at Fort Vancouver (1886).

With his well-established credentials, it is not surprising that McCaw was selected in June 1886 to design the new First Presbyterian Church. His plans and specifications were ready in July 1886 and formed the foundation for building this structure over the next three years. The cornerstone of the new church was laid on May 2, 1887.

In 1888, McCaw designed another church, Grace Methodist Church, at 10th and Taylor streets, which reflected his growing interest in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, as did the hybrid Romanesque/Italianate Skidmore Block, designed for Charles E. Sitton, adjoined to the cast-iron Blagen Block (1888).

In January 1888, Warren Williams died. In his employment as a draftsman since 1882 was Richard H. Martin, Jr. Martin was born in 1858 in Penzance, England. In 1874 his father, a stonemason, moved the family to Portland. The death of Williams prompted Martin to seek other employment and for about a year he partnered with veteran architect/builder Alexander W. Millwain. While with the Millwain office, Martin took a trip to Chicago and saw

the impressive new buildings changing the city's skyline. In early 1889, he teamed up with William McCaw, whom he would have known in Williams office, to form McCaw & Martin.

One of the first works by this firm was New Market Annex (1889) on 2nd Ave., described as the first Richardsonian Romanesque building in the city. Romanesque features include the heavy rustication at the base, entrances recessed in arches, vertical arches that sweep several stories, varied brick treatments, and embedded architectural lettering.

McCaw & Martin expanded to accommodate a rise in commissions. In late 1889, Frederick Manson White was hired as a draftsman, purportedly to assist with interior details of the First Presbyterian Church. According to the standard biographical sources, White was born in Derby, England, in 1863. When he immigrated to America is not yet known. His biography states that he studied architecture at Cornell and MIT. In 1890, White became foreman of the firm and in the next two years McCaw & Martin, with the assistance of White, designed some of Portland's most distinctive and enduring buildings.

In 1890, McCaw & Martin received commissions for three major works still extant: the Portland Armory Annex, West Hall of Portland University, and the Dekum Building. Construction on these projects began in 1891. Their chief competitor for commissions was the firm Whidden & Lewis. Beginning in about 1890 with the completion of the Portland Hotel, and for the next twenty years, Whidden and Lewis dominated Portland's architectural design with extensive output that included commercial, educational, public, and residential buildings.

An initial success for McCaw & Martin was the annex to the 1887 Portland Armory, designed in 1890 and built in the summer of 1891. We know this work today as the Girding Theater. In 1968, McCaw's original Armory was destroyed to make way for a parking lot and the annex was used by Blitz-Weinhard for bottling. In 2005, the annex was transformed into the theater and became in 2006 the first National Register building to achieve a platinum Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating.

In June 1891, Manson White became a full partner in the firm. Groundbreaking for West Hall for Portland University, a Methodist school took place in August 1891. That building is probably the only extant work that can properly be identified as by the firm, McCaw Martin & White, since it was completely designed and built during White's partnership. West Hall (now Waldschmidt Hall at the University of Portland) was inspired by H. H. Richardson's 1880 Sever Hall at Harvard.

McCaw & Martin reportedly designed many fine residences, but none have been part of the historical record, until my recent discovery of an Oregonian article from March 1891 that lists five houses. Two of these houses are existing National Register properties. The first is the Stratton-Cornelius House, built originally for Howard Stratton, a cashier at Frank Dekum's Portland Savings Bank. The Stratton-Cornelius house, near the corner of SW King Ave and SW Yamhill St., is a fine example of the fully developed Queen Anne style in Portland. An historic photo shows its neighborhood in about 1915, where one can identify the homes of William Honeyman (1900), by Whidden & Lewis, no longer standing, Adolph Wolfe home by Whidden & Lewis, and the still extant Edward King House (1911) by Lazarus, Whitehouse, and Foulhoux.

The other National Register property cited in the 1891 article is the house of Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie. The earliest known representation of the Mackenzie house is from the same book in the Ross archives that highlighted the McCaw & Martin churches. The Mackenzie house has long been considered a masterwork by the architectural firm Whidden & Lewis and is so identified in publications about Oregon architecture or specific building types, such as Leland Roth's 1999 book, *Shingle Styles*. As Roth accurately suggests in the book, the Mackenzie house is not characteristic of typical Whidden & Lewis homes.

Kenneth Alexander James Mackenzie is a figure of some prominence in Oregon history. Born in Saskatchewan, Mackenzie obtained his medical education at McGill University and the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh. He settled in Portland in 1883. Following an unsatisfactory teaching stint at Willamette University, in 1887 he joined a group that formed the University of Oregon's Medical School in Portland (now OHSU), and later, as dean of the school, he

played a major role in establishing a new campus on Marquam Hill. By late 1890, when Mackenzie was commissioning a new home, he was a successful surgeon known nationally for his publications and participation in professional organizations. His wife, Cora, was an artist, engaged in a variety of crafts. There are actually several contemporary citations in the *Morning Oregonian* that clearly establish the Mackenzie house as a design of McCaw & Martin.

“A Fine Residence”, in “Pencil and Notebook.” *Morning Oregonian*, February 20, 1891, p. 5.

Quoting the article: “Plans and specifications are being prepared by Messrs. McCaw & Martin for a very handsome stone residence for Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie, on the site of his present residence at Nineteenth and H streets. It will be a costly and handsome house, and the first residence built entirely of stone in the city.”

The Boom in Buildings. Fine Weather Having Desired Effect. Many New Contracts Awarded.” *Morning Oregonian*, March 4, 1891, p. 8.

Quoting from article: “Messrs. McCaw & Martin will soon ask for bids for the erection of Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie’s stone house.”

“The Building Boom. The Principal Improvements Now Being Made in the City. How the Work Is Progressing.” *Morning Oregonian*, March 14, 1891, p. 9.

Quoting the article: “Plans for the following residences have been prepared by Messrs. McCaw & Martin ... House of stone for Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie, at Nineteenth and H; cost unknown.”

“City News in Brief.” *Morning Oregonian*, August 20, 1892, p. 5.

Quoting from article: “Dr. Mackenzie has removed to his new residence, northwest corner of Twentieth and Hoyt (old Nineteenth and H streets).”

Without the advantage of the online version of the *Oregonian*, it is understandable how these references remained hidden from discovery. What is intriguing is why Whidden & Lewis became so firmly established as the designers of this major Portland landmark. In compiling *Matters of Proportion The Portland Residential Architecture of Whidden and Lewis* (OHS, 1989), author Richard Marlitt states that he used Whidden & Lewis archives and inventories as sources. The archives have disappeared. But thanks to Jim Heuer and Bob Mercer, I was able to get a copy of the inventories.

There are actually two inventories. One, compiled by Herb Frederick, appears to be an authoritative compilation because of the amount of descriptive detail provided for each work that includes square footage, cubic square footage, and cost per cubic foot, in addition to basic building information, such as client and address. The second inventory -- in two parts, one residential, and one non-residential -- was compiled by George McMath in the 1980s. McMath employed information from Frederick enhanced with information provided by Marlitt.

My own research confirms that Herbert Wal Frederick (1895-1976) had the requisite background to form an authoritative inventory. In the 1915 city directory he is listed as a draftsman for Whidden and Lewis. In the 1920s, he worked for P. T. Ainge Company, a firm that specialized in the design of bank interiors. One can surmise that that at some point Frederick had access to the actual Whidden and Lewis archives.

Of great significance is that the 1892 house for Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie does not appear on Frederick's list. The list does have an entry for “Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie” but that item describes a 1902 mixed-use building on Sixth and Davis streets, Portland. The inventory compiled by McMath omits the 1902 store and adds the Mackenzie house of 1892. It appears that a switch has taken place.

That the Mackenzie House would be inserted into record is perhaps not surprising since architectural folklore assumed it to be a Whidden & Lewis work. The first published attribution of the Mackenzie House as a Whidden and Lewis is probably in the 1967 guidebook, *A Century of Portland Architecture* (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society, 1967), by Thomas Vaughan and George A. McMath. The book's entry for the house cites as source, “The Oregon Historical Society archives” and Nancy Raymond is cited as the recorder of the entry.

However, other than the usual newspaper clippings, the only documentation as OHS is an eleven-page student paper by Ms. Raymond entitled "Mackenzie House," dated 1965. This paper includes information from interviews with the Mackenzie granddaughters who believed the house was designed by Whidden & Lewis or Stanford White. In Ms. Raymond paper, she states bluntly: "The architects of the Mackenzie House are not known."

By 1892, the First Presbyterian Church was completed developed from McCaw's initial plans of 1886. By October 1890 the sanctuary was ready enough for service although the pulpit was not yet complete. The finished chapel had been used for services in the meantime. In 1891 and 1892, the balcony and stairs were added to the main auditorium.

In June, 1892, F. Manson White separated from McCaw & Martin. In August, Dr. Mackenzie moved into his new house of stone. In November, the Dekum Building opened, and McCaw and Martin, Manson White, and Dr. Mackenzie all set up offices there.

McCaw & Martin's plans for Frank Dekum's new eight story building were ready in January 1891. A native German, Frank Dekum arrive in Portland in 1852 and opened the city's first bakery. He became a successful realtor, banker, and insurance and railway executive, and was responsible for the construction of many buildings. He planned for the Dekum Building to be his crowning achievement. Today, the Dekum, with its varied, exuberant detail and colorful textures still delights the eye.

Working solo, Manson White had strong start in the late 1890s, but endured some shaky years thereafter. The first major work attributed to him is the Imperial Hotel now known as the Hotel Vintage Plaza. Since its construction began in October 1892, it was likely designed while White was still employed with McCaw & Martin. However, the author of its National Register nomination notes that the architect of this building is not factually known, and he suggests that that the hotel's owner and builder, George F. Wells, was the actual designer, as some newspaper accounts indicate.

Another work commonly attributed to White is the 1893 Forbes & Breeden (commonly known as the Sherlock Building), at 309 SW 3rd Ave. There is no contemporary documentation that verifies that White designed this work in entirety. The National Register nomination author argues that Isaac Hodgson, Jr., is the architect. A newspaper article does verify that White designed the building's Hoffman Refectory, an elegant men's club.

In 1894, White unambiguously achieved success with his design for the Auditorium and Music Hall, 920-928 SW 3rd Ave., designed for a liquor wholesaler. The first floor was where the liquor was maintained, the second floor was a dance hall, and the third floor was a concert hall with balcony. The building was modified early in its history to accommodate housing. The front elevation exhibits a variety of decorative detail.

While the 1893 depression affected everyone's productivity, McCaw & Martin managed to find work beyond Oregon, as evidenced in their Falk-Bloch Mercantile Building, Boise Idaho, of 1896, which was destroyed in 1982.

In 1897, the firm McCaw & Martin dissolved, somewhat mysteriously. McCaw disappears from the record and at this time and several writers suspect that he either moved out of state, or died.

On his own, Richard Martin commenced to establish a successful and stable career. In 1903, Portland began planning in earnest the Lewis and Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition and Oriental Fair to be held in the city from June 1 -October 15, 1905. Martin was on the initial committee of architects charged with planning the buildings, along with Emil Schacht, Henry Hefty, Justus Krumbein, David C. Lewis, and Edgar Lazarus. In 1904, Martin first conception of the bridge across Guild Lake is a grandiose scheme that was substantially pared down. Over 1,500,000 paying visitors would attend the exposition, a major boost to the regional economy, and trod across Martin's bridge.

Martin's work in these early years showed his versatility as a designer. Examples include the 1906 Martin Banfield House in Portland Heights, which I've recently identified as a Martin work, the 1904 Columbia Theater, no longer

extant, the Olds & King Store [Exchange Bldg.], 6th Avenue, also from 1904, which employed Portland's first use of on-site steel frame construction, the Scottish Rite Cathedral (1903), and the Masonic Temple (1906-07). This 1906 building for John Carlisle, constructed from the wreckage from the Lewis & Clark Fair, featured a grand colonnaded façade, the first of its kind for a Portland apartment building. Known as The Washington, and still standing at 2219 Northrup, its appearance has changed over time.

Manson White apparently left Portland after 1903 to find work elsewhere. We know that he was in San Francisco at about the time of the earthquake. In fact, he made the local headlines on July 18, 1906: "Forgery charged to architect. F. Manson White, prominent in his profession is in the toils of law. Drink the cause." We learn from this article, besides the forgery charge, that White was known to have a drinking problem, that he had offices in Spokane, but Portland isn't mentioned.

Richard Martin, meanwhile, continued to move ahead with such solid works as the Buckman Sisters Building, nearby at the corner of E. Burnside and M L King, a work not previously attributed to him.

In 1907, Martin designed his most impressive residential work since his partnership with McCaw. And that is the house for Dr. Henry Waldo Coe, which some have erroneously attributed to Whidden and Lewis. Dr. Coe, who specialized in mental health, is best known today as the individual who moved the Massachusetts Building from the Lewis & Clark fair to the Mt. Tabor area to create a sanatorium. It eventually became a private residence. He is also remembered as the philanthropist who gave to the city four expensive statues: Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln in the Park Blocks, Joan of Arc in Laurelhurst, and George Washington in the Rose City Park neighborhood. The house, described as one of the most beautiful and costly in the city, was reported as a gift from the doctor to his wife on the occasion of their 25th wedding anniversary. Six years later, Dr. Coe won a divorce settlement from his wife on the grounds that she was cruel and inhumane. His wife, Viola Coe, was also a doctor, and a leader of Oregon's suffragist movement and other social causes. The home is now the site of Lovejoy Medical Center.

After his Bay Area experience, Manson White returned to Portland in 1908, but had a difficult period of adjustment. Once again he was arrested for bouncing checks and jailed for drunkenness.

While White's fate during 1909 isn't clear, Martin continued to enrich his portfolio with distinctive designs for important clients in the next few years. Examples include the H. P. Palmer House (1909), the residence for William J. Hawkins (1909), the Harry C. Ewing House (1911), and the C. W. King House (1911). In Cornelius, he designed the Albert Sholes House (1909), another one of his works listed on the National Register.

The first Oregon armory built after Portland's 1890 annex was designed by Martin: the Albany Armory (1910), completed by December 1910, said to copy Portland's.

As for Manson White, the year 1910 did not start out so well. He had recently divorced. And on January 20, he was once again arrested for forging a check. He was sentenced to one year in county jail, paroled under the care of the Prisoners Aid Society. The headlines read, "Stanford White's Relative Paroled." This might have been the first published association of White with the famous Stanford White, a partner in the firm McKim Mead and White who had been murdered in connection with a scandalous love affair in 1906. The article also includes the apt description of Manson White as an architect as o

In July 1912, the successful Martin took time off for a year to visit Europe with his family. And finally, at this time, Manson White's life and career took a turn for the better. He remarried and perhaps his second wife helped achieve some stability. He also learned the art of self-promotion. In 1913, he was one of the few architects with biographies in the book, *Who's Who on the Pacific Coast: A Biographical Compilation of Notable Living Contemporaries West of the Rocky Mountains* (Harper, 1913). As author Franklin Harper explained, the book which included 3,700 entries was compiled from information submitted by respondents to a broad survey. White's entry was no doubt among those included because of the impressive credentials described. *Who's Who* was

basically a vanity piece published in an era when fact-checking was not necessarily a common practice and White's entry has some interesting elaborations.

White commenced to design work all over the state, with efforts such as the C. F. Burton House (1913), Tillamook, a National Register, and Seaside City Hall (1914). In 1916 he designed Portland's Flatiron Building, so named its design alludes to the triangular 22-story Flatiron Building in New York City built in 1902. In 1917 and 1918 he designed two apartment buildings that function successfully today, the Volheim Apartments, 2943-2945 SE Alder St., and the Silver Court Apartments. 2170 NE Hancock, Irvington.

In the 1920s, Martin and White were in their sixties, and while Martin slowed down in his output, White was at his zenith. Martin's designs include the 1924 Craftsman Club (a Masonic lodge), 850 E. 14th Ave., in Eugene, and the 1922 Gregory Heights School, 7334 NE Siskiyou St.

In the last decades of his career, Manson White designed many commercial, educational, and religious buildings many of which exist today, sometimes repurposed for other uses -- a testament to their solid design and construction.

White designs include Binford Graphic Arts Building (1921), originally the home of Binford & Mort publishing. His many schools include the Portland's Chapman School (1923), and in Eugene, the Woodrow Wilson Junior School [now Lincoln Condominiums] (1926), and the Theodore Roosevelt Jr. High (now UO's Agate Hall) (1924).

Larger residential works include Portland's Cordova Hotel annex and expansion (1923), home to the Jefferson Theater, and the Hotel Corvallis (1927), a National Register site. A future AHC program will feature White's Salvation Army building of (1930).

Manson White became highly acclaimed as a designer of churches. Among them: Arieta Baptist Church (1922); Central Presbyterian Church (1924); the First Baptist Church (1926) in Eugene (now the Shed Institute for the Performing Arts); the First Baptist Church (1926-27) in McMinnville; the First Presbyterian Church (1926-27), Medford; and the First Presbyterian Church (1930), in Centralia, Washington.

In November, 1950, Richard Martin died at the age of 92. Two years later, in April 1952, Manson White died at the age of 89. Three years later, Marion Dean Ross included their early Romanesque works in his pioneering article, "Architecture in Oregon, 1845-1895," in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, and set the stage for their later preservation.

And what actually was the fate of their one-time partner William F. McCaw? I discovered an interesting news item from August 1897 with the headline, "Architect McCaw Gone"

The family of W. F. McCaw, of the firm of McCaw & Martin, architects, has been at a loss to account for Mr. McCaw's absence during the past month. Mr. McCaw left his home, at the corner of 11th and Burnside streets, without announcing to his wife his destination, and since has not communicated with her in regard to where he is stopping. Friends of Mr. McCaw express no apprehension for his safety, which is taken as evidence that no harm has befallen him, and that his whereabouts is known to some. While his unannounced departure seems a little strange, acquaintances of the family do not regard his absence as serious, and believe he will shortly return.

As it turns out, McCaw moved to San Francisco, and started a new career, married again, and had another child. He joined the distinguished architect William Curlett, architect of mansions such as the infamous 1888 Charles Crocker House, and many office buildings. The firm Curlett & McCaw's works that appear in publications include buildings for UC-Berkeley, the Stevenson Block, San Francisco, the San Jose Theater, and a branch of the San Francisco Public Library. McCaw's tenure with Curlett was brief, but he remained in the Bay Area as an architect. By 1900, his ex-wife and one daughter from Oregon were also living in San Francisco, and one daughter was at the State Insane Asylum in Napa. For a brief period, he was associated with architect C. S. McNally in San Francisco. My last account of McCaw is his listing in the USC 1920 as living with his second wife in Berkeley. He still surfaces in

the news. In 2007, McCaw's house in Toronto was added the city's listed of protected properties because of McCaw's association with E.J. Lennox.

Thank you for your indulgence in hearing my review of the work of McCaw Martin & White whose achievement certainly deserves more recognition and research, especially since we can add to their achievements one of Portland's favorite landmarks, the house of stone for Dr. Mackenzie.