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THE ARCHITECTURE OF JOSEPH LYMAN SILSBEE
Shingled Houses and the Colonial Revival

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アメリカ中西部、殊にシカゴ地区における住宅建築の展開において、相当な役割を果たしたであろうと推測されながらも、未だ評価の確立されていない、シルスビーによる中小規模住宅の建築的特質を、彼の事務所に所属していた次の世代の建築家への影響という観点からも、時期的に興味深い、1888年の実施例に関して検討する。一連の報告は、当学会学術講演梗概集(昭和56年度)、および近畿支部研究報告集(昭和56、57年度)に掲載されている。

SILSBEE'S OFFICE IN 1887 AND 1888

There were at least three future well-known architects in Silsbee's office in 1887, at about the time when the office was at its most productive stage: Frank Lloyd Wright, George Washington Mahr(1864-1926), and George Grant Elmslie (1871-1952).¹ Wright and Mahr seem to have joined Silsbee's staff when the office had reached its zenith, and left there at about the time when it began to be less productive. Elmslie remained with Silsbee one more year and afterward joined Sullivan's staff.

In Chicago, Silsbee's major concentration was on housing, particularly in connection with the development of the northern suburb of the city in the late 1880's. Between 1886 and 1889, Silsbee built more than twenty houses in Edgewater, a northern suburb of Chicago, mainly for developer John L. Cochran (or Cochrane). Many of them were relatively small, shingled detached houses.

SILSBEE'S OWN HOUSE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDGEWATER

In the course of his work on the Edgewater housing development, Silsbee also built his own house in the new suburb. Built probably in 1888, this was a fairly small wooden house of three stories including the attic. The upper stories and roofs were covered with shingles, but the foundation walls were of brick. The main exterior features of this house were simple gables and a two story high bay window of half elliptical plan, though they might not have been clearly visible from the street, but hidden by trees(Fig. 1). The plan was neither as freely flowing as the open plans of some shingle-style houses of the eastern seaboard nor as directionally flowing as the intersectional plans of F. L. Wright, who must have been one of Silsbee's staff when this house was built. Nonetheless, the plan did contain a few unique features (Fig.2).

The interesting features in this plan are the large staircase near the entrance, and the spatial relationship between the staircase hall and the sitting room. In the course of the growing academic influence in 18th century America, houses with more formal entryways were preferred over designs like this one, which had an entrance staircase hall on one side. Houses that contained transverse halls with stairs (which had been very common in colonial times), or front halls free from stairs, survived, and were even reinforced because of their symmetrical formality. In the mid-19th century, some varieties of entrance halls with stairs were favored by A. J. Downing and appeared in his influential pattern book.² However, he seems to have included these types, among others, mainly because of their economy of space. Most of his followers in the pattern book publishing world produced less interesting staircases which were sometimes just narrow, leftover spaces between rooms. Large staircase halls, especially those types with the staircase and fireplace placed side by side, became popular from the late 1870s onward, probably for visual and associational reasons rather than practical ones. In the case of Silsbee's house, though the staircase hall may look large in proportion to the relatively small plan, the hall is actually rather small, and only the staircase itself is fairly large. Closely connecting the staircase with the fireplace in the hall, and with the sitting room, Silsbee created a gradually shifting, continuous space in a house of limited size. As this space shows, the plan of this house was not based on such straightforward principles as flowing space or open planning, but on subtle modulation and reasonable openness.



Fig. 1
J. L. Silsbee house
Edgewater, Chicago, c. 1888.
From the *Inland Architect and News Record*, 1890.

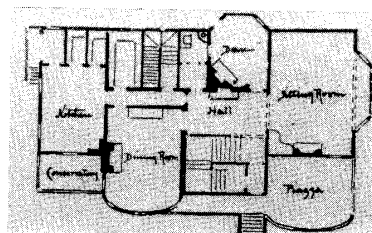


Fig. 2
J. L. Silsbee house, Plan.
From the *Inland Architect and News Record*.

1. Silsbee's office was at that time in the Lakeside Building at the southwest corner of Adams and Clark Streets. The six-story edifice had been designed by William Le Baron Jenney and built in 1873.

2. A. J. Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, New York, 1850.



Fig. 3
J. L. Silsbee house, Staircase hall.
From the *Inland Architect and News Record*.

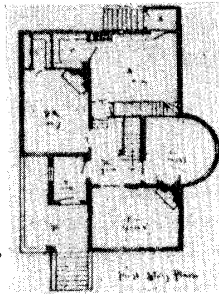


Fig. 4
J. L. Silsbee:
Plan of a house,
Edgewater,
Chicago, 1888.

3. *The Inland Architect and News Record*, Vol. XVI, No. 5 (1890).

4. See V. Scully's, for example, *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style* (1955, 1971) about the significance of the "Fairbanks House" in the colonial revival movement in the early 1880s.

5. H.-R. Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials*, New York, 1942, 19.



Fig. 5
J. L. Silsbee:
Egbert Jamieson house
Lakeview, Chicago, 1888.

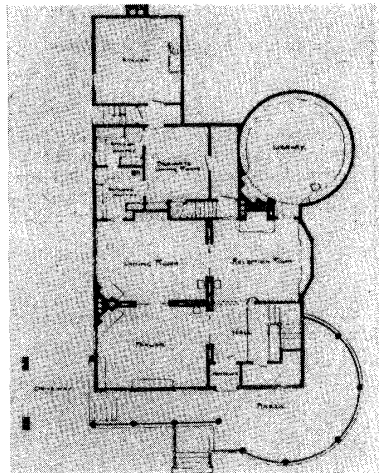


Fig. 6
Egbert Jamieson house, Plan.

エール大学V. スカーリ教授の研究指導、なら
びに旧フルブライト在日合衆国教育委員会(現
日米教育委員会) および国際教育協会(ニュー
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The first story of the house consists of the hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, den, and conservatory. Photographs of this house appeared in the *Inland Architect and News Record* of 1890³, showing interiors that were rather simple or even commonplace. The photographs show a Buddhist statue on the fireplace of the hall, and an Oriental picture scroll on a wall of the dining room. (Fig. 3)

Although the Edgewater houses varied in appearance, many of them may not have been very different from Silsbee's own house in plan. (Fig. 4) However, this plan contains a few characteristics of conventional speculative houses, such as the vestibule fairly large in relation to the size of the house, and the staircase hall that is more enclosed than that of Silsbee's own house.

THE EGBERT JAMIESON HOUSE AND COLONIAL REVIVAL IN THE MIDWEST

Interest in colonial heritage had gradually begun to grow amongst American architects since the 1870s. The gambrel roofed addition to the historic "Fairbanks House", built and added to in the mid-17th century and published in the *American Architect and Building News* of 1881, might have been one of the causes of the so-called "Dutch Colonial" revival, though the gambrel roof was English rather than Dutch.⁴ This roof type began to appear in Newport, Rhode Island, the next year, through designs by McKim, Mead and White, the exponent firm of the whole colonial revival. Smaller houses with gambrel roofs, which were closer to the original gambrel roofed farmhouses than to the Newport type, were produced in Maine by John Calvin Stevens in following years.

In the Midwest, small gambrel roofed houses seem to have been initiated mainly by Silsbee. Around the time when Wright and Mahr were in his office, Silsbee built several gambrel roofed houses. In 1888 for example, he produced varieties of this mode for houses in Chicago and Winnetka, Illinois, and Syracuse, New York. Hitchcock pointed out that Wright's Warren McArthur house (Chicago, c. 1892) was very similar to Silsbee's Arthur Orr house (Evanston, c. 1889).⁵ The Egbert Jamieson house of Lakeview (Chicago, 1888) was a larger example of this mode, and the model for Wright's Frederick Bagley house (Hinsdale, 1894) and Mahr's Mrs. A.D. Wheeler house (Edgewater, 1894). These three houses shared more than a few features: a quite steep gambrel roof covering the upper stories, large pedimented dormers, and an extensive porch or piazza across the front. Moreover, the first two houses shared the same type of library and even Ionic columns. Although the gambrel roof is generally associated with New England, or the Hudson River Valley in the case of the flared Dutch type, the Jamieson house also has some aspects of the Southern Colonial "T" or "L" shaped plan, with its distinct servant wing and classical detailing. Silsbee might have referred to this type as the owner of the new house planned to keep servants. The main area of the first floor was simply divided into four: parlor, dining room, reception room, and a hall which developed the concept of the staircase hall of Silsbee's own house. (Figs. 5 and 6)

Silsbee's house plans in the late 1880s were often not very different from those of later local builders, whose major concerns were economy and convention, but in many cases Silsbee was able to introduce subtle improvements in houses of modest size. Though his designs generally became less original as his interest in colonial modes grew, his best houses in the late 1880s had richly textured surfaces of natural materials and showed efforts to incorporate once parvenu facilities, like the carriage porch, into a more simple and agreeable whole.