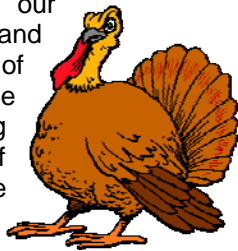




Thanksgiving Special

As a special treat for our American members, and hopefully for the rest of us too, we thought it would be nice to celebrate Thanksgiving with an all-American edition of the Bulletin. In doing so we are conscious that Canadians celebrate Thanksgiving in October, but we hope they will appreciate our thinking, even if it is a bit late.



Thanksgiving is a traditional North American holiday aimed at thanking God at the conclusion of the harvest season: in many respects it is similar to my own favourite religious celebration of Harvest Festival. In Canada it takes place on the second Monday in October, while in the United States it is on the fourth Thursday of November and is the first of a four-day holiday. For Americans the main focus of the weekend is the family meal of turkey, stuffing, mashed and sweet potatoes, turnips, corn, yams and cranberry sauce, followed by pumpkin pie. It also provides an excellent time for the family to visit some of its heritage, including its follies. So with a call of *Happy Thanksgiving*, I hope you will enjoy this detour into American architectural follies.

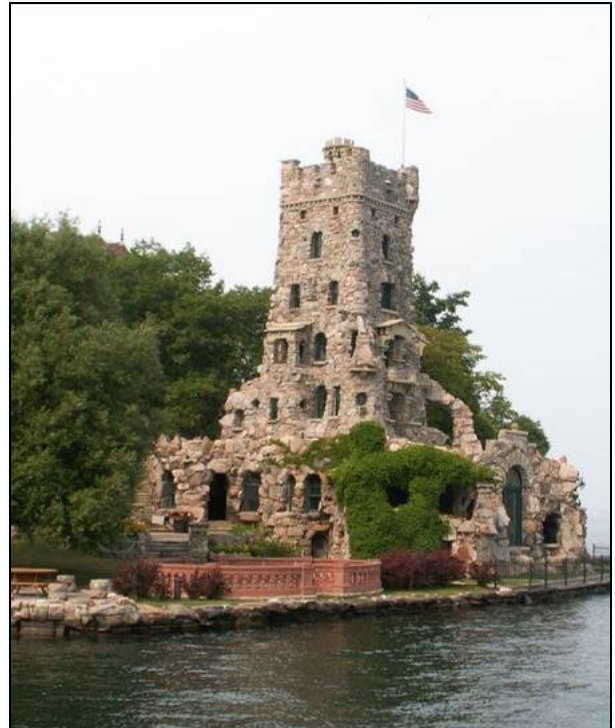
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Salad Days on the St. Lawrence

Set among the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence River in northern New York State is the fantasy castle of George Boldt, the proprietor of New York's great Waldorf-Astoria hotel.

Like many great men of his time, Boldt's passion was being able to do the biggest, boldest and most expensive everything, and it was no different when it came to building a weekend cottage for his family. In 1900 he started work on an ambitious project to build one of the largest private houses in America, and chose the architects G W and W D Hewitt to create an extraordinary six-storey 'Rhine-land Castle' as a symbol of his undying love for Louise, his wife.

For the first four years everything went well, and the family spent happy summers in the Alster Tower, while up to 300 stonemasons, carpenters and artists busied themselves fashioning the main castle with its 120 rooms, tunnels, a drawbridge, Italian gardens, gazebo and dovecote. In 1904, however, tragedy struck with the sudden death of Louise. The grief-stricken George Boldt could not bear to see his dream castle completed without her so ordered duly work to be brought to a stop.



Alster Tower, from the St. Lawrence River

During the following 73 years the castle was left to slowly collapse. In 1977 it was acquired for \$1 by the Thousand Islands Bridge Authority on condition that all income from the castle operation would be used to restore and maintain the property for the enjoyment of future generations. Since then several millions of dollars have been raised and been applied to this purpose.

In addition to the main castle, the island has a number of other structures, including a large stone triumphal arch which Boldt intended to be the entranceway for boats. The Power House has also been completed and now houses generators that are needed to power the island. Clearly the

best of the buildings, however, is the Alster Tower in which the Boldt family lived during their all-too-brief stay here.



The Power House at Boldt Castle [1]

Catch an Eiffel of this!

With the World's press following the Rugby World Cup Final in Paris last month, the image of Gustav Eiffel's iron masterpiece often filled our television screens. Finished in 1889 and at 1,063-feet tall, Eiffel's tower is regarded as the enduring icon of France, although they nearly lost it: Eiffel originally wanted it built for the *Universal Exposition* of 1888 in Ottawa but the Canadians rejected it. The tower is also the most copied building form anywhere in the World with replicas on every continent and in every country.

In America there are fifteen towns named 'Paris', most of which have found it too irresistible to erect a replica of the Eiffel Tower in homage to their French namesake. One such example stands in the centre of Paris, Texas and is a symbol to that most bizarre of phenomena – Civic Pride!

In 1993 Paris in Tennessee and Paris in Texas both unveiled their copies of the iron tower:

the one in the picture, built by the local Iron Worker's Union, and the one erected in Memorial Park at Paris, Tennessee, built at Christian Brothers University in Memphis. To their dismay, however, the authorities in Tennessee found that the Texan tower stood 5 feet taller than theirs, so they commissioned an extension to raise theirs to 70 feet and allow them to claim it as the tallest replica in the World, by which the



Americans mean America. Not to be beaten, and knowing that claims to have the 'second largest replica' made the town sound feeble, the Texan

authorities decided in 1998 to adorn theirs with a ruby red Stetson, thus raising it the few feet needed to rescue the title. Many thought it was an especially dumb idea, although it fitted with a theme that ran through other local attractions, including a grave-stone with an image of Jesus wearing cowboy boots!

It is difficult to imagine what response might have been made in Tennessee, but it was in any event eclipsed in 1999 with the building of the 540-foot tall true-to-life replica on the Boulevard in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The World loves Lucy

Facing the mighty Atlantic Ocean at Margate, New Jersey, as if pining for a return home, Lucy is arguably the best known folly in America, and at a mere 125 years of age, she is doing remarkably well for a girl of her age.

Lucy was created as the centrepiece of a beach-front real estate venture by James V. Lafferty Esq., who was by all accounts a brash, 25-year-old engineer and would-be entrepreneur. With new-found wealth from his family, and driven by a vision for a new kind of housing that would lure people to buy holiday homes on his otherwise desolate stretch of sand and scrub pine dunes, he needed something that would compete with the Absecon Lighthouse around which Atlantic City was fast growing. He hit on the idea of building a huge elephant, which in 1880s America was something of a revelation. He even had the foresight to apply for a patent so that anyone else who wanted to build houses in the shape of animals had to pay him a royalty. The U.S. Patent Office eventually agreed that his idea was sufficiently novel, new and technologically significant to grant the Patent in 1882, but only for the limited period of 17 years.



Victorian postcard of the Elephant Folly

Formed around a complex wooden frame and covered with tin sheets, Lucy weighs 90 tons. She was finished in 1882 and achieved exactly what Lafferty hoped for, raising nationwide publicity for his development. In fact it was so successful that he built two more, the largest of which was built on Coney Island, New York, and was twelve storeys tall. His third one formed the centrepiece of

a land sale programme in South Cape May (New Jersey): both have subsequently been lost.



The restored Lucy as she is today [2]

By the late 1880s, Lafferty's business was over-extended and he was losing money. Lucy and his surrounding Absecon Island holdings were sold to John and Sophie Gertzen, who ran the elephant as a tourist attraction, miniature hotel, a beach cottage and a tavern. Bizarrely, Lucy found herself closed in 1920 as a result of Prohibition, but she opened again when the Act was repealed in 1933. By 1960 she had become dilapidated and a public safety hazard, and was due to be demolished.

The 'Save Lucy Committee' formed in 1969 by the Margate Civic Association, rescued Lucy just ahead of her demolition, thus starting a 20-year struggle to move the old girl to her present beachfront site and raise the funds necessary to complete her restoration. Today her well-being is secured as a National Monument.

Where's Old Ma Hubberd then?

Hellam in Pennsylvania is home to the Shoe House built by the shoe magnate Mahlon N. Haines who had earned millions selling shoes in Pennsylvania and Maryland, and was known across the US as *The Shoe Wizard*.



The Haines Shoe House at Hellam, PA [3]

In 1948, at the age of 73, Haines started work building a 25-foot tall stuccoed replica of his high-top work boot and furnished it with three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen and a living room. In the beginning he invited elderly couples to spend the weekend at the shoe and live like 'kings

and queens' at his expense. As a publicity stunt in 1950, he let honeymooners stay there for free but only if they came from a town that contained a Haines shoe store. When he died in 1962, Haines left the house to his employees who duly sold it two years later to a local dentist.

Located on R.30 in York County, the Haines Shoe House continues to provide pleasure to the many, having been converted to an ice-cream parlour by the dentist who bought it in 1964. It presumably drummed up trade for his surgery too!

The World's Best Corporate HQ

When the Longerberger Basket Company wanted to build its company headquarters in Newark, Ohio, its founder, Dave Longerberger, wanted something that would salute the Market Basket on which his company had made its fortune: during the 1930s and 1940s, any decent American housewife owned a Longerberger Market Basket and was proud of the fact. It was with this in mind that he invited Architects and Engineers to start work, the result being a stunning corporate headquarters formed in concrete with massive steel handles that cross the roof of the office in an exact replica of his famous product.



The Longerberger Headquarters stands by the side of State Route 16. It is difficult to miss.

Gillette Castle, Connecticut

William Hooker Gillette (1853-1937) was a stage and screen superstar who was best known for his on-stage portrayal of Sherlock Holmes, although he starred in thousands of productions and wrote dozens of plays and adaptations. He also had 17 cats, which makes him a star in my house.

In line with other famous people of the time, Gillette decided to build himself a pleasure castle and selected a site on the peak of the southernmost hill (known as the Seventh Sister) overlooking the landing point of the Hadlyme to Chester ferry. There he built between 1914 and 1919 a 24-room Medieval Fortress within a 184-acre parkland. With the help of 20 workers, Gillette designed the castle himself using stage-set design skills to great effect.

Inside he included 47 doors (no two being the same) with clever locks, internal windows and a range of other theatrical tricks.



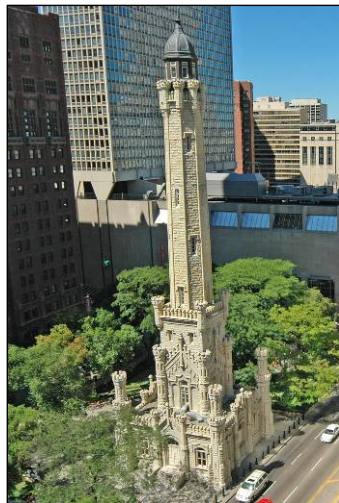
Gillette Castle, Connecticut

A tour of the grounds must have been as much fun as the house because Gillette installed a miniature steam train complete with three miles of track running along the granite edges of the waterfront, over bridges and through tunnels, and arriving eventually at a Grand Central Station adorned with two sculptures of cats.

A Bit of a Splash in Chicago

Taking a drink in Chicago has always been a risky business, but at least the water was a safe option. It was also supplied through one of the most ornate pumping stations anywhere in the World.

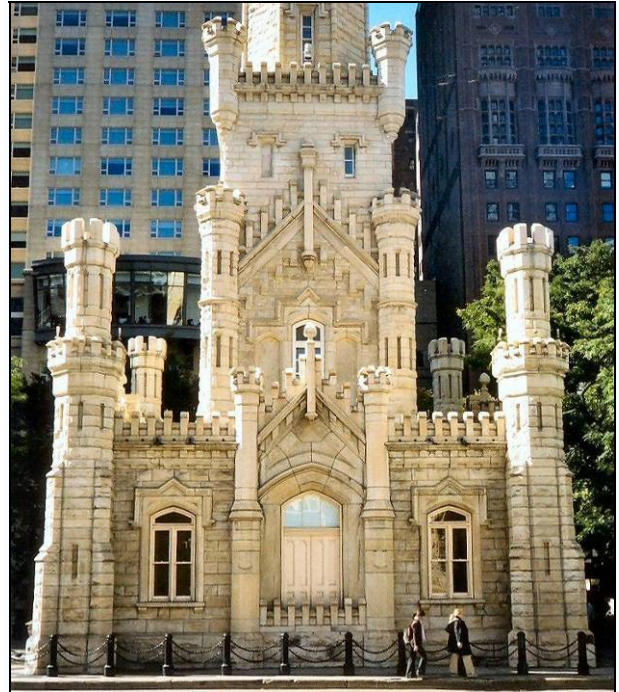
In 1869 the City commissioned the architect William Boyington to design for them a Water Tower and Pumping Station. His design followed the popular Gothic-Revival style and placed a huge central tower at the heart of it. To some it is like a medieval fortress, but Oscar Wilde was less than impressed, calling it a "monstrosity with pepper boxes stuck all over it."



In fact while the building is all of these things, the design is a clever technological solution to the water pressure requirement for fire fighting in high-rise buildings. The centre tower, which stands 145 feet tall, contains a 138 feet tall standpipe that maintained water pressure for the Fire Department. As if to reinforce its importance in fire defence, it also contained a small fire station, something that was ironically needed only two years after the building was completed: although not the sole

survivor in the Old City, the watertower was the only public building to survive the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

Today, set among the tall office blocks and glass-walled skyscrapers of central Chicago the building seems somewhat out of place, and far too similar to a Disneyland Castle to receive the architectural credit that it duly deserves.



The base section of the Chicago Water Tower [4]

Carhenge in Alliance

Much like the Eiffel Tower, there are many henges in the World, all based on England's Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain. In America the equivalent stands on the High Plains near the City of Alliance in Nebraska, where Jim Reinders built his Carhenge in June 1987 using vintage American automobiles. Thirty-eight were used in all and set in a circle of 29 metres (96 feet) diameter.



Picture credits: [1] = Ronald P. Vullo; [2] = The Atlantic City Convention & Visitors Authority; [3] = Pieter and Rita Boogaart; [4] = Paul Townend.

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