Edward Lippincott Tilton
A Monograph on His Architectural Practice

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with

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for

The Currier Museum of Art

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EDWARD LIPPINCOTT TILTON
(1861-1933)

Noted as both an architect and classical scholar, Edward Tilton specialized in the design of library buildings and other public and educational buildings. At the time of his death, he was regarded as one of the foremost library architects in the country. He was a classicist, inspired in his early work by the Italian Renaissance and in his later work by ancient Greece and Rome, and synthesizing classical detail and modern needs. Over twenty years, Tilton designed at least seven structures in Manchester, New Hampshire, and these are the only known buildings that he designed in the state. The first building, the Carpenter Memorial Library, was begun in 1912; the last, the U.S. Post Office, was under construction at the time of his death in 1933.

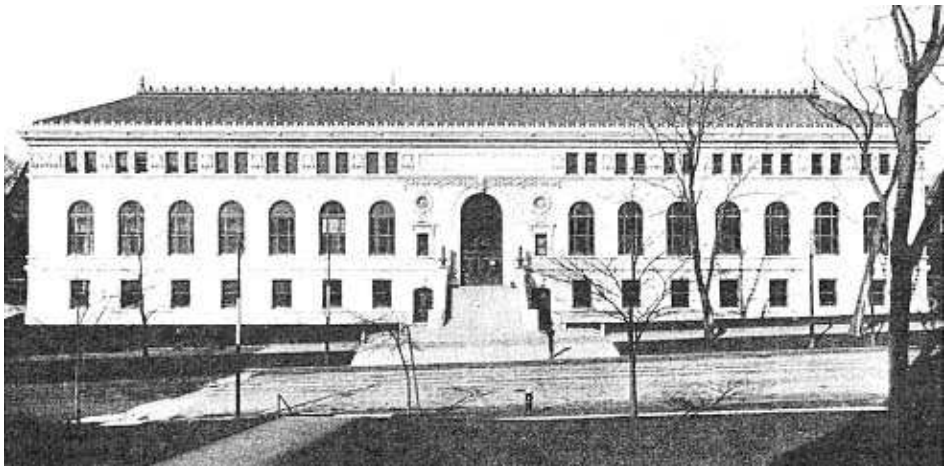
Born in New York City on October 19, 1861, Tilton was educated in New York City schools and attended the private Chappaqua Institute. At the age of eighteen he began working in the banking house of Corlies, Macy & Co. but soon changed professions. He studied architecture under a private tutor and began working as a draftsman in the office of McKim, Mead and White at the age of twenty. From 1887 to 1890 Tilton studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris along with his friend and future architectural partner, William A. Boring. After traveling in Europe, Boring and Tilton returned to New York in 1890 to the office of McKim, Mead and White. At the time, the firm was working on the plans for the Boston Public Library, which was to become a landmark in the history of American library design.

In 1891 Boring and Tilton formed their own firm. Nathan C. Mellen joined them in partnership until 1894. Their first assignment was to design a row house in New York, a job which Tilton's father had obtained. Their early designs included homes, schools and hotels. Among the larger commissions were the Casino in Belle Haven, Connecticut (1891-2) and the Hotel Colorado in the resort town of Glenwood Springs, Colorado (1891-3). They submitted designs for competitions for the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and the Milwaukee Public Library in 1892 and 1893 but were unsuccessful in these large, open competitions.

The firm's reputation was greatly elevated after Boring & Tilton won a competition in 1897 to design the first phase of new buildings for the U.S. Immigration Station on Ellis Island. The buildings constructed according to their designs included the Main Building (1897-1900), Kitchen and Laundry Building (1900-01), Main Powerhouse (1900-01), and the Main Hospital Building (1900-01). Boring & Tilton received additional publicity after being awarded a gold medal (one of two given to Americans) at the Exposition Universelle, Paris (1900); a gold medal at the Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo (1901); and a silver medal at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis (1904). The formal partnership of Boring & Tilton ended in 1904 although both men continued to share offices and equipment until 1915, while working independently. Boring went on to become the Dean of the School of Architecture at Columbia University.

In the early 20th century Tilton's general expertise in the design of classically-detailed public buildings increasingly developed into a more specific interest in library design. During

his career, Tilton is credited with more than one hundred libraries in the United States and Canada.[1] Many of these were Carnegie Libraries, public libraries built between 1886 and 1917 with funds provided by Andrew Carnegie or the Carnegie Corporation of New York. In all, Carnegie funding was provided for 1,681 public library buildings in 1,412 U.S. communities, with additional libraries abroad. Increasingly after 1908, Carnegie library commissions tended to be in the hands of a relatively small number of firms that specialized in library design. Tilton benefited from a friendship with James Bertram, Carnegie's personal secretary who was responsible for reviewing plans for Carnegie-financed library buildings. Although the Carnegie program left the hiring of an architect to local officials, Bertram's personal letters of introduction gave Tilton a distinct advantage. As a result, Tilton won a large number of comparatively modest Carnegie library commissions, primarily in the northeast. Typically, Tilton furnished all plans, working drawings, details and specifications and then associated with a local architect who would supervise construction and receive 5% of Tilton's commission.[2]



Springfield Central Library, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1912

Tilton's 1907 design for the public library in Springfield, Massachusetts, was a turning point in his career. For larger libraries such as Springfield's, Tilton was a pioneer in the use of the Open Plan, whereby a large proportion of the more popular books are located on open shelves on the main floor with less-used books stored in the stack area below. Interior partitions were eliminated where possible, leaving the library clear of unnecessary pier-masses, domes and other architectural forms.[3] On the exterior, the Italian Renaissance/Beaux Arts design of marble and granite was laden with classically-inspired ornamentation. After its completion in 1912 an editorial in *Library Journal* pronounced the Springfield Library "a new departure in library architecture".[4]

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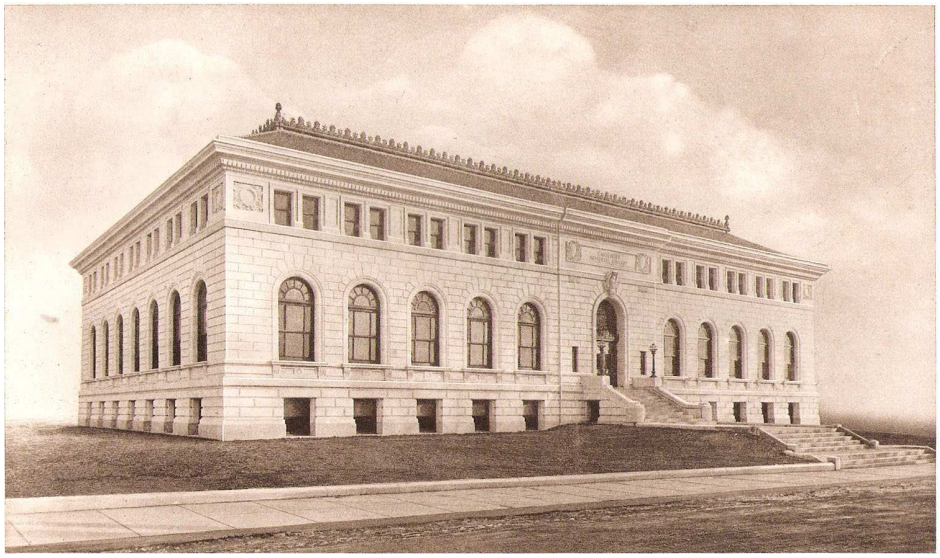
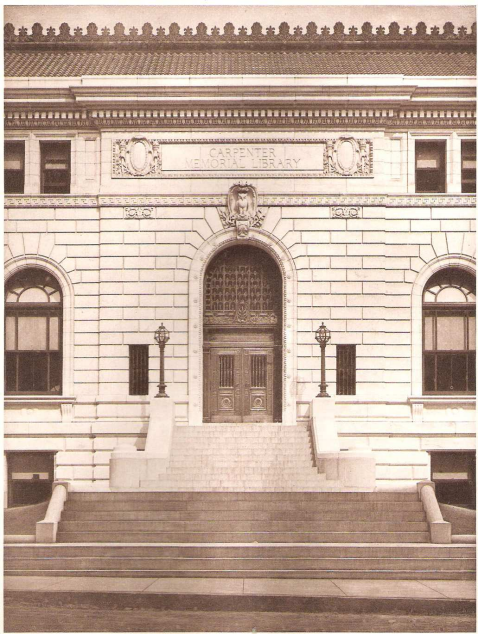
1 "Edward L. Tilton, Architect, Dead," *New York Times*, 6 January 1933, 19.
2 Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
3 Joseph L. Wheeler and Alfred Morton Githens, *The American Public Library Building: Its Planning and Design with Special Reference to Its Administration and Service* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), 320.
4 Donald E. Oehlerts, *Books and Blueprints: Building America's Public Libraries* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 73.



Above and below right: Carpenter Library, Manchester, New Hampshire, 1912-1914 (*from* The Carpenter Memorial Library Dedication Exercises, November 18, 1914. *Concord: Rumford Press, 1916*)



Clearly, it was Tilton's reputation in library design and his recent Springfield Library that first brought him to the attention of local philanthropist Frank Carpenter who engaged him to come to Manchester. Soon after the death of his wife, Elenora Blood Carpenter, in January 1910, Carpenter offered to construct a public library for the City of Manchester in her memory. Ground was broken in September, 1912, and the building was completed in 1914. Collaborating with Tilton on the project was architect Edgar Allan Poe Newcomb of Honolulu, a friend of Carpenter's, who spent at least six months in New York City working with Tilton on the plans.[5] Newcomb had drawn the plans for Carpenter's Manchester residence in 1891 and that of Carpenter's daughter, Mrs. Charles B. Manning, nearby in 1907.[6] There can be no doubt as to Tilton's lead involvement on

[5] "Proposed New Public Library: A Memorial from Mr. Frank P. Carpenter," *Manchester Daily Mirror and American*, n.d.

[6] "New Carpenter Memorial Library Building Now Being Erected," *Manchester Union*, November 1912. It is not known what initially brought Carpenter and Newcomb together. He designed Frank Carpenter's house at 1800 Elm Street in 1891, and the Manning House was constructed in 1907. Edgar Allen Poe Newcomb (1846-1924) was born in Boston and maintained an architectural practice in Boston from 1868 until about 1900. In 1901 he and his sister moved to Honolulu, Hawaii, where he continued his architectural practice. Even after moving to Hawaii, Newcomb returned to the east coast for various projects, including the design of several mansions in New York and apparently the Carpenter Library. He also supervised renovations at Trinity Church in Boston. See Elizabeth Durfee Hengen, National Register Nomination for Frank Carpenter House, 1993.

the project as the design for the Carpenter Library is a smaller version of the Springfield City Library and the buildings display striking similarities. Above the rusticated basement level, each is dominated by a series of arched openings on the main floor and is capped by a low hip roof covered with tiles. Various classically-inspired moldings wrap around the buildings, which also incorporate allegorical and symbolic details.

Over the next several years, Tilton maintained a strong presence in Manchester. In 1912 work began on the Carpenter Mausoleum in Pine Grove Cemetery, according to his designs.[7] The simple stone tomb is modeled after a porticoed Greek temple with four Ionic columns supporting the pediment, which is topped by acroterion. In 1913 Tilton prepared plans for a new hotel to be built at the corner of Vine and Concord Streets.[8] Ultimately, the building (known as the Hotel Carpenter) was not constructed until the 1920s and then was built according to plans by Boston architects Hutchins & French. Why the decision was made to change architects is not known. Similarly, the local paper reported in October 1914 that Tilton and Boston architect W.G. Rantoul were both under consideration to design a building for the Manchester Institute of Arts and Sciences.[9] In the end, it was Rantoul who received the commission.[10]

Tilton's next major local commission was a building for the New Hampshire Fire Insurance Company on Hanover Street. Frank Carpenter served on the company's board of directors and likely influenced their choice of architect. The classical ornamentation was typical of Tilton's designs. The building is dominated by a portico of two-story Ionic columns. Plans and photos of the completed structure received national exposure after they were published in the *Architects and Builders Journal* in 1916. Yet this is one of the few commercial-type structures Tilton was ever known to design.[11]

Although his architectural office was headquartered in New York City, for several years Tilton also maintained office space in Manchester. The 1916 Manchester City Directory includes a listing for Tilton, whose office was located at 8 Harrison Street (his home address is listed as New York City). Another architect, Alpheus Pelletier, is listed at the same address. The 1917 and 1918 directories list Tilton as having an office in Rm. 605 of the Amoskeag Bank Building at 875 Elm Street, again along with Alpheus Pelletier. By 1919 Tilton had apparently given up his Manchester office space.[12]

At about this time, Tilton was working on an unusual assignment. In 1917 Tilton had to briefly suspend library planning because of the First World War. That same year, the American Library Association was asked to furnish library buildings and provide books for libraries at all the Army camps. Tilton was asked to contribute his services to the program and designed a standard plan for an open interior that could be readily supervised by one

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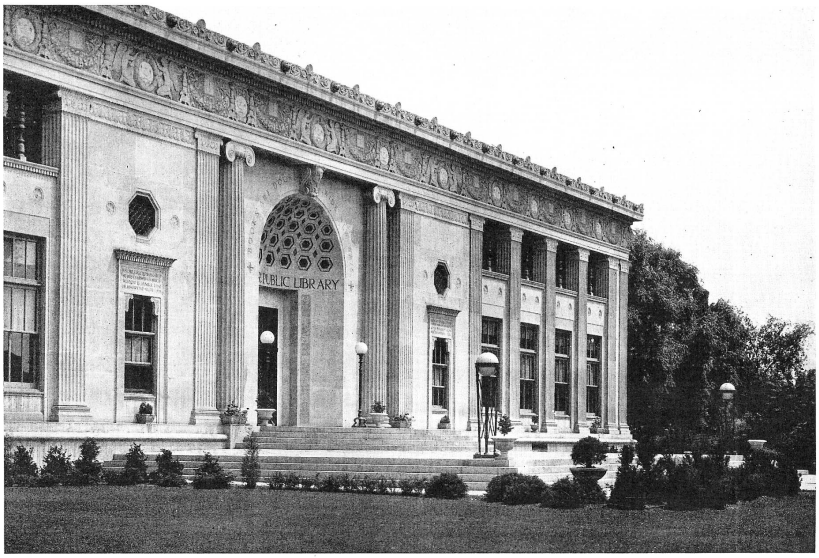
[7] "Hotel Plans are Drawn," *Manchester Union*, 24 May 1913, 5.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Unidentified Manchester newspaper, October 15, 1914 [Manchester City Library Scrapbook microfilm].
[10] Lisa Mausolf, National Register Nomination for Victory Park, Manchester, New Hampshire.
[11] His later designs included the East River Savings Bank in New York and the American National Bank in Mount Vernon, New York, published in *Architect and Building*, v. 59, in Sept. 1927.
[12] Manchester City Directories.

person at a central desk. The building also incorporated a small living area for the librarian at one end of the building. The Carnegie Corporation provided $320,000 to construct thirty-two library buildings.[13] Tilton's design was used for more than sixty libraries. He was also asked to design a camp theater capable of holding about 2,500 soldiers. Reportedly thirty of these Liberty Theaters were constructed at camps and cantonments throughout the United States before the war ended in 1918.[14]

By 1920 Tilton had formed a new partnership with Alfred Morton Githens (1876-1973). Githens had partnered with Charles C. Haight in New York City for more than a decade before joining forces with Tilton. Tilton & Githens specialized in the design of libraries and institutional buildings. After designing the Riley Hall of Art at the University of Notre Dame in 1920, their list of commissions consists almost entirely of libraries, mostly in the eastern United States. Tilton remained a member of the firm for the rest of his life. After Githens left the firm in 1932, he practiced alone for five years and then with Francis Keally, under the name of Githens & Keally in New York City, until 1942. Githens continued to act as a consultant on library buildings until his retirement in 1955.



McGregor Public Library, in Highland Park, Michigan, built in 1925-26, is one of twenty-one libraries designed by Tilton & Githens.

In Manchester the trustees of the Currier Museum of Art began planning the construction of a museum building in 1919. After earlier proposals by Ralph Adams Cram and R. Clipston Sturgis were rejected, Tilton & Githens was approached in 1925 and awarded the commission in May 1926. Having worked with Tilton on the Carpenter Memorial Library, trustee and chairman of the building committee Frank Carpenter no doubt influenced his fellow board members on the decision. It is curious that Carpenter did not approach Tilton earlier, although Tilton's limited experience in museum design or his busy schedule may have precluded his participation.

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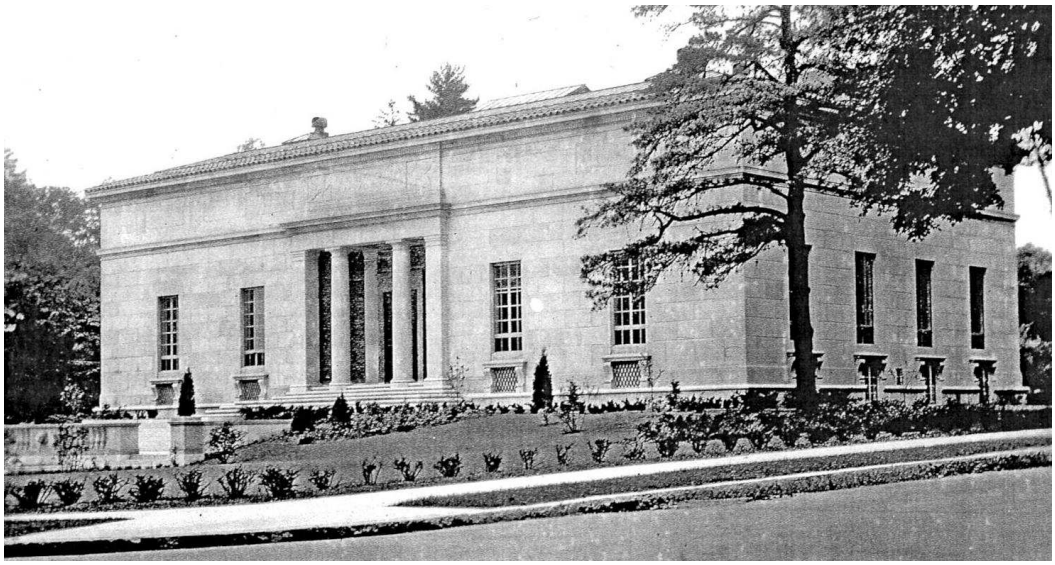
[13] Oehlerts, *Books and Blueprints*, 74-5.
[14] *New York Times*, 6 January 1933, 19.



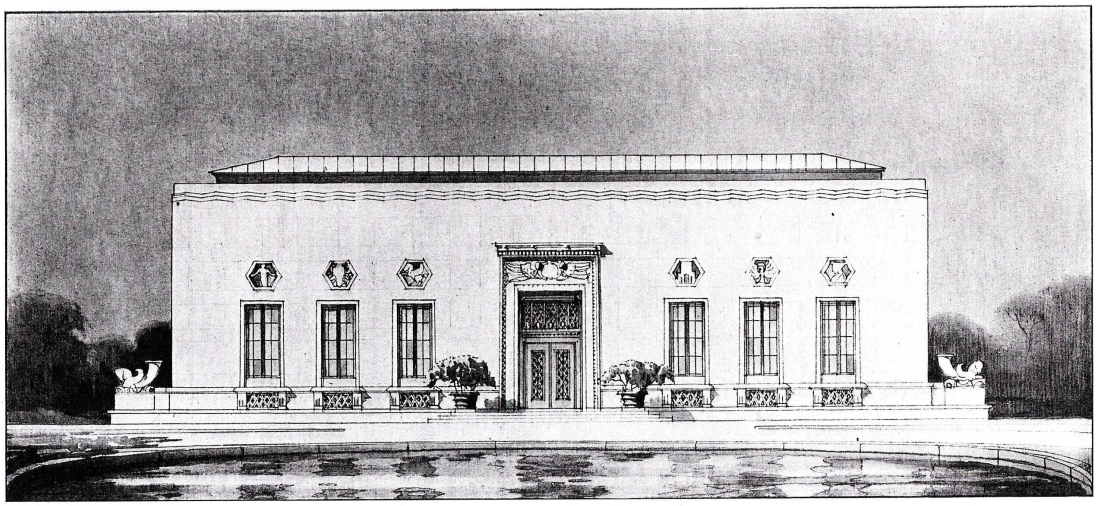
Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire, 1927-1929 (*Courtesy of Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire, Gift of Mrs. Thomas Putnam, 1983.92.2*)

In contrast to Tilton's earlier designs, the Currier is more simplified and restrained in its detailing. On the façade, Tuscan columns and antae support a flat entablature and bas reliefs and mosaics designed by Italian artist Salvatore Lascari provide decorative accents.[15] Plain casement windows punctuate the limestone walls and the building is capped by a barrel-tile roof. Inside there is a two-story, indoor, atrium-lit court inspired by an Italian Renaissance palazzo.

The Manchester Historic Association, Manchester, New Hampshire, 1931 (*Photographed in 1991 by Ernest Gould, courtesy of the Manchester (N.H.) Historic Association*)

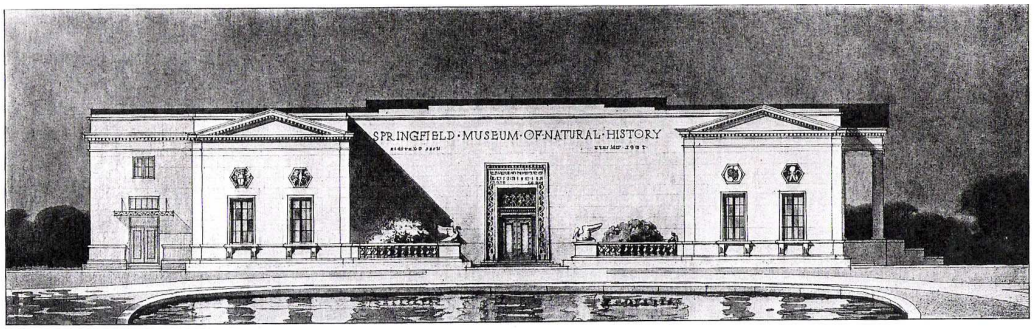
[15] Tilton brought Salvatore Lascari in on another project he designed—the William H. Welch Medical Library at John Hopkins University, dedicated the same year as the Currier Museum. For the medical library, Lascari painted ceiling panels. (He executed a fair amount of interior decorative painting at the Currier, as well.)

The Currier was the first of four museum buildings which the firm was to design. The Manchester Historic Association, designed in 1931, incorporated both museum and library functions.[16] Here, Tilton & Githens' design pays respect to the nearby Carpenter Memorial Library, which also faces Victory Park and echoes its three-level, box-like design and arched central entrance. Yet, the restrained detailing is clearly evocative of the evolution in American architecture from the ornate Beaux Arts to a stripped Classicism.



Springfield Museum of Fine Arts (Gray Museum of Art), Springfield, Massachusetts, 1933

The firm's last two museum designs, the Gray Museum of Art (Springfield Museum of Fine Arts) and the Springfield Museum of Natural History (both 1933) are located opposite each other in a cultural quadrangle and display a similar minimalistic classicism with an Art Deco influence. In 1931 Alfred Githens penned a chapter on "The Trend of the Museum" for the book *American Public Buildings of Today,* which showcases the firm's designs for the Manchester and Springfield museums.[17]



Springfield Museum of Natural History, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1933

Tilton's last two designs in Manchester both occurred late in his career and are outside the bounds of his usual work. Both were apparently completed as favors for his

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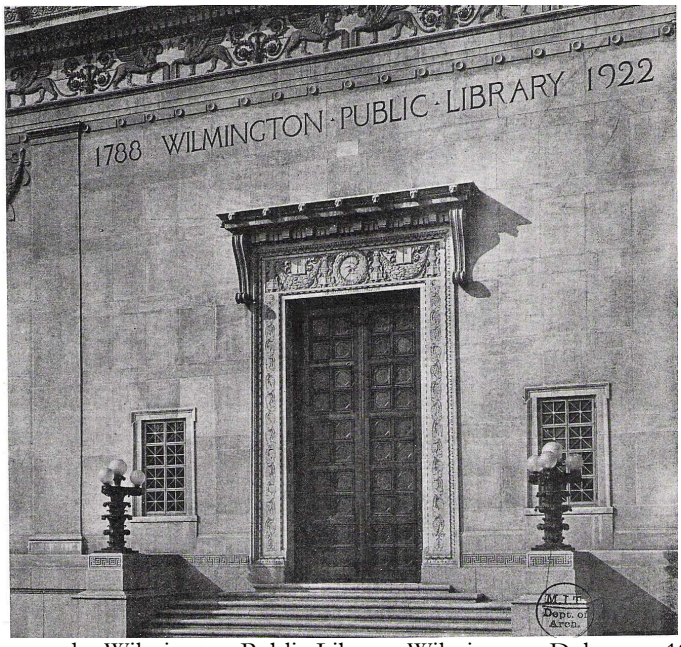
[16] Frank Carpenter was serving as president of the Historic Association when Tilton was selected to design the Historic Association building.

[17] Alfred Morton Githens, "The Trend of the Museum," in R.W. Sexton, ed., *American Public Buildings of Today* (New York: Architectural Book Pub. Co., 1931).

friend, Frank Carpenter. It is not known how much personal involvement Tilton actually had in either project. Dedicated in January 1931, the Franklin Street Church Parish House is a brick, Georgian Revival structure which needed to blend with the earlier, adjacent brick church. The parish house was donated by Frank P. Carpenter and his sister-in-law, Mrs. Emma Blood French. In 1932, Tilton & Githens prepared a design for a new Manchester Post Office which was intended to complement the adjacent New Hampshire Fire Insurance Company, which Tilton had designed earlier in his career. In an unusual chain of events the drawings for the building were developed at Carpenter's own expense in a successful attempt to dissuade the U.S. Government from building an addition to the old post office that previously stood on the site. The design typifies the stripped-down classical revival style which was used for government buildings during the period.

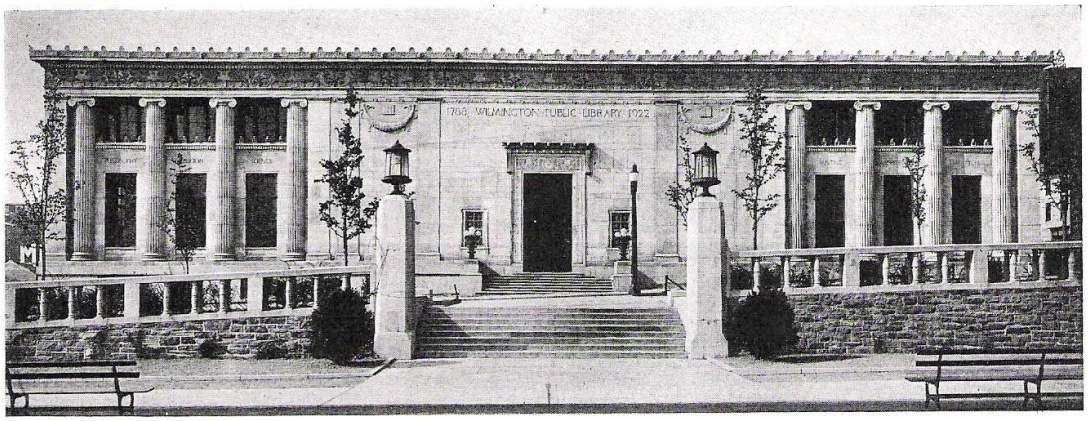
During his career Tilton was a recognized authority in the field of library planning, writing articles for both library and architectural journals. As early as 1907 he penned a series of short articles on small library construction for the *Inland Architect*. In 1927 Tilton wrote an article on "Library Planning" for the *Architectural Forum* publication. In 1929 the American Library Association published Tilton's *Essentials in Library Planning* as a reference text for librarians. His work was also included with some frequency in the publication *Library Journal*. In 1930 Tilton & Githens was awarded the gold medal of the American Institute of Architects for excellence in public work for its design of the Wilmington Public Library in Wilmington, Delaware. In addition to its importance in library design, the building is notable for its original handling of classic motifs.



Entrance to the Wilmington Public Library, Wilmington, Delaware, 1922-23

Tilton's interest in the classics was interwoven in various activities throughout his life and career. He was a founder of the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects and treasurer of its Paris Prize Committee for twenty-five years. He also served as president of the American Institute of Architects and was made a fellow in 1900. In addition to his architectural career, Tilton also had a keen interest in archaeology. As a result of his archaeological knowledge,

Tilton spent a year in Argos, Greece, sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America in 1894-5. There he served as the architect of the scientific group that restored the site of the *Argive Heraeum*. In 1901 he authored an article on the Architecture of Greece for Russell Sturgis' *Dictionary of Architecture*. In the credits, Sturgis describes Tilton as an architect and late student and explorer at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, Greece.[18] Tilton retained an interest in archaeology his entire life. At the time of his death he was serving as treasurer of the New York Society of the Archaeological Institute of America.[19]



Wilmington Public Library, Wilmington, Delaware, 1922-23

After the death of his partner, Alfred Morton Githens continued to specialize in the design of libraries and specifically in the open plan library. In 1939-40 Githens, in association with Francis Keally, designed the Concord (NH) Public Library. There are no other known designs by Githens in the state, other than the Manchester structures he designed during his partnership with Tilton.

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[18] Russell Sturgis, *A Dictionary of Architecture and Building* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1901).
[19] *New York Times*, 6 January 1933.

KNOWN DESIGNS BY EDWARD LIPPINCOTT TILTON (1861-1933)

Firm History

1890-1904	Boring & Tilton (with Nathan Mellen until 1894)
1904-20	Practiced alone
1920-33	Partnership with Alfred M. Githens

Designs by Boring & Tilton

1891	Casino, Belle Haven, CT
1892	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh competition
1891-93	Hotel Colorado, Glenwood Springs, CO
1893	Milwaukee Public Library competition
1897-1901	U.S. Immigration Station, Ellis Island
1899	Town Hall, East Orange, NJ
1902-03	Astor Warehouse, 29-35 Ninth Avenue, New York, NY
1900-05	Tome School for Boys, Port Deposit, MD
1904-05	Brooklyn Heights Casino, Fort Hill Estate, New York

Designs by Tilton alone

1902	Juniata College Library, Huntingdon, PA
1903	Mount Vernon Public Library, Mount Vernon, NY
1904	Bayonne Public Library, Bayonne, NJ
1904	Winston-Salem Public Library, Winston-Salem, NC
1905	Warren Public Library, Warren, OH
1905	Smith College Library, Northhampton, MA
1906	Miles Park Carnegie Library, Cleveland, Ohio
1907	North Cincinnati Branch Library, Cincinnati, OH
1907	Olean Public Library, Olean, NY
1908	Mount Vernon Public Library addition, Mount Vernon, NY
1909	Little Rock Public Library, Little Rock, AR
1909	Sulphur Springs Public Library, Sulphur Springs, TX
1909	Philadelphia Branch Libraries, Philadelphia, PA
1910	Carnegie West Library, Cleveland, Ohio
1910	Chelsea Public Library, Chelsea, MA
1911	Consultant to Dayton Public Library, Dayton, OH
1910-11	J.C. Blair Memorial Hospital, Huntingdon County, PA
1911	Valpariso Public Library, Valpariso, IN
1912	Elizabeth Public Library, Elizabeth, NJ
1912	Sioux City Free Public Library, Sioux City, Iowa
1912	Springfield Central Library, Springfield, MA
1912-14	Carpenter Library, Manchester, NH
1913	Carpenter Mausoleum, Manchester, NH
1913	Somerville Public Library, Somerville, MA
1914	NH Fire Insurance Company, Manchester, NH
1914	Minneapolis Branch Libraries, Minneapolis, MN
1914	Belmar Public Library, Belmar, NJ
1914	Memorial Square Library, Springfield, MA
1914	Bradford Public Library, Bradford, PA

1914	Consultant to San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, CA
1915	West Springfield Public Library, West Springfield, MA
1915	Old Vicksburg Public Library, Vicksburg, MS
1915	University of Notre Dame Library, South Bend, IN
1916	Lakewood Public Library, Lakewood, OH
1917	West End Library, Unionville, CT
1917	Masonic Home, Wichita, Kansas
1917	Consultant to Santa Barbara Public Library, Santa Barbara, IL
1917	Somerville Branch Library, Somerville, MA
1918	George Peabody College Library, Nashville, TN
1918	Camp Merritt Inn, Dumont, NJ
1918	More than 60 libraries and 30 theaters built at various Army Camps and Cantonments during World War I

Designs by Tilton & Githens

1920	Riley Hall of Art, Notre Dame University, South Bend, Indiana
1921	Chester C. Corbin Public Library, Webster, MA
1921	Durham Public Library, Durham, NC
1921	Hoyt Library Addition, Saginaw, MI
1922	Morristown Free Library, Morristown, NJ
1922	Library, Bay County, Michigan
1922	Southeast Library, Washington, D.C.
1922-23	Wilmington Public Library, Wilmington, DE
1923	Washington Irving Branch Library, Brooklyn, NY
1924	Knight Memorial Library, Providence, RI
1925	Mount Pleasant Library, Washington, D.C.
1925	Mount Vernon Library, addition, Mount Vernon, NY
1925	Dearborn Public Library, Dearborn, MI
1925	Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC
1925-26	McGregor Public Library, Highland Park, MI
1926	Meadville Public Library, Meadville, PA
1926	Candler Library, Emory University
1926	St. Luke's German Evangelical Lutheran Church, New York, NY
1926	Johns Hopkins Medical Library, Baltimore, MD
1927-29	Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, NH
1928-29	William H. Welch Medical Library, Baltimore, MD
1927	East River Savings Bank, New York, NY
1927	American National Bank, Mount Vernon, NY
1929	Phi Delta Theta Fraternity, Swarthmore, PA
1929	Consultant, Randolph-Macon College, VA
1930	Richmond Public Library, Richmond, VA (consulting architect)
1930	Queens Branch Library, Queens, NY
1931	Franklin Street Church Parish House, Manchester, NH
1931	Manchester Historic Association, Manchester, NH
1932	U.S. Post Office, Manchester, NH
1932	Girard College Library, Philadelphia, PA
1933	Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA
1933	Springfield Museum of Natural History, Springfield, MA

1933 Bergen County Administrative Building, Hackensack, NJ
1933 Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, MD (consulting architect)

Undated Designs

Central High School, Johnstown, PA
West End Library, Hartford, CT
Seamen's Institute, New York, NY
Concordia College, Bronxville, NY
Canajoharie Public Library, Canajoharie, NY
Edmonton Public Library, Alberta, Canada

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