

Tuckerman Hall in 1903 (Salisbury Street view)



Tuckerman Hall in 1997

Josephine Wright Chapman



and Tuckerman Hall

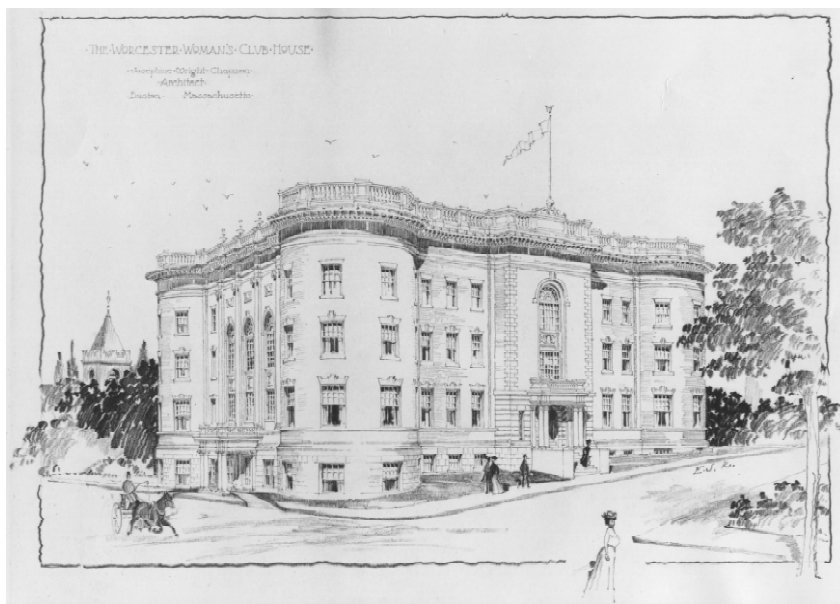
CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS
Symphony
ORCHESTRA

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Josephine Wright Chapman and Tuckerman Hall



I - Introduction

The Central Massachusetts Symphony Orchestra, Inc., a Massachusetts non-profit corporation, is the owner of Tuckerman Hall, 10 Tuckerman Street, Worcester, Massachusetts. Tuckerman Hall is a nationally significant building¹. Tuckerman Hall is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as one of the constituent buildings within a national historic district known as the Institutional District. This facility's national significance stems primarily from its architect, Josephine Wright Chapman, one of America's earliest and most successful female architects. Chapman and her work are tied to historical and social trends that mark the development of this nation as a whole. Chapman achieved an unusual level of success as an architect at a time when it was difficult for women to gain academic training, attain employment, advance in the field, and receive commissions themselves.

Chapman's success is measured in the quality of her designs, her engineering prowess, the variety and prestige of her commissions and clients, the length of her career, and the notice she received in the local, regional, and national press of her time. Chapman's persistence in the field of architecture contributed to the advancement of the women's movement in the United States.²

In her remarkable career, Josephine Wright Chapman (1867-date of death unknown) is known to have designed structures in Massachusetts, New York, and Washington, D.C.; was featured in some of the most prestigious journals of her time including the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *The American Architect and Building News*; received commissions to build a dormitory for Harvard University students as well as one of the largest private homes in Washington, D.C. from an heir to the Standard Oil fortune; and three of her outstanding architectural works are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, Tuckerman Hall, designed in 1902 by Chapman, was designated in October, 2000 as an Official Project of Save America's Treasures, a joint project of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the White House Millennium Council.³

The architectural significance of Tuckerman Hall is greatly enhanced by its unusually high degree of integrity on both interior and exterior. A planned exterior restoration will reinstate the few important elements that have been lost over time, like the roofline balustrade which is seen in historic views. In addition, its highly compatible reuse by a symphony orchestra for concerts, lectures, civic and social gatherings continues the tradition of meetings and cultural events that characterized the historic period of significance and provides public access on a regular basis.

Although a detailed national context has not yet been established

for evaluating the work of women architects, current levels of knowledge clearly establish Chapman's place among the first wave of female architects whose careers began in the late 19th century, and whose struggles and successes paved the way for others like Julia Morgan.

II - Institutional District

Tuckerman Hall is a multi-purpose assembly facility located at 10 Tuckerman Street in Worcester, Massachusetts. It is advantageously situated at the junction of Salisbury and Tuckerman Streets in the heart of Worcester's historic Institutional District⁴. This district features a high concentration of Revival-styled public buildings, many of which have been listed on the National Historic Register⁵. Tuckerman Hall contributes a graceful Neo-Classical façade to this streetscape and serves as a cultural memorial not only to the history of women in Worcester, but to the advancement of women nationally, as Tuckerman Hall was one of the earliest facilities in this country conceived, financed and designed solely by women. Serving as the headquarters of the Worcester Woman's Club from the time of its construction through the mid-20th century, it is currently home to the Central Massachusetts Symphony Orchestra, a regional symphony orchestra based in Worcester, Massachusetts.

III – Worcester

Long before Tuckerman Hall was constructed, a small farming community clustered around the banks of Quandisicamond Ponds in central Massachusetts. Following the arrival of the first permanent settlers, the Jonas Rice family in 1713⁶, the population in the area increased steadily. During the mid-19th century, a rise in immigration from Europe sent the population soaring and it seemed

that just over night Worcester became a bustling city of 16,000 people⁷. The city sustained this accelerated population growth throughout the following century, and surpassed 100,000 people by 1895⁸.

Newcomers were wise to choose Worcester as their home. Often referred to as ‘Railroad City’⁹, it was the unofficial center of the region’s stagecoach and railway lines. Its citizens were renowned for excellence in industry and innovation and its motto, the ‘City of Diversified Industries’¹⁰, reflected their pride in this reputation. Throughout the 19th century, manufacturers in Worcester produced farm implements, wire, looms, steam engines, skates and bicycles; many of which were newly patented designs. The strength of these industries and of Worcester’s system of transportation further encouraged its population to grow.

The majority of the city’s newcomers were immigrants who had escaped war-torn or famine-stricken countries in search of better living conditions and opportunity¹¹. Their ideals contributed to an atmosphere charged with religious passions to create a wave of social reform¹². Throughout the latter half of the 19th century, Worcester was a center for maelstroms of debate over the abolition of slavery, the issue of temperance which advised complete abstinence from alcohol, and the rise of woman’s rights.

IV – The Woman’s Movement

The woman’s movement in Worcester originated in the earliest assemblies of women who gathered for social, political and/or humanitarian reasons. In 1839 for example, the Worcester Anti-Slavery Sewing Circle was formed to raise money for the underground railway and to assist in the distribution of *The Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper published by William Lloyd

Garrison. The development of this type of assembly created a prototype for the women's organizations that were to come¹³.

Several milestones mark the history of the woman's movement in Worcester and on a national level as well. The Oread Collegiate Institute, founded in 1849, enabled women for the first time to have access to higher education. When its founder, the principal of Worcester Academy, Eli Thayer, opened the Institute's doors on the summit of Worcester's Goat Hill, it was the first school in the United States to provide a college-level education for women¹⁴. The Oread Collegiate Institute's four-year curriculum was based on Brown University's educational model and it attracted women from across the nation¹⁵.

In 1850 and 1851, the first national woman's rights conventions were held in Worcester¹⁶. Impetus from the renowned Seneca Falls convention of 1848 mobilized the local community of suffragists but women from across the country congregated in Worcester to hear prominent orators like Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, Ernestine Rose, Abbey Kelly Foster, and Angelina Grimké. The impact from the convention of 1850 was felt as far away as Britain where the *Westminster Review* published an account of the proceedings and gave momentum to the woman's movement in Britain¹⁷.

Issues of wage equality and the need to broaden women's employment opportunities were explored at the national conventions¹⁸. Before the Oread Collegiate Institute was opened in 1849, higher education was inaccessible to female citizens and in most situations, women were limited to domestic work. Modest advances were made between 1860 and 1880 when several manufacturing companies in Worcester started hiring women. Large numbers found employment at the Royal Worcester Corset Company and at two envelope companies: Hill Devoe and

Company and the Whitcomb Company. Although this was a novel development locally, it was a growing national trend for women to work outside the home¹⁹.

While many struggled with the narrow definition of women's employment, several individuals made achievements in fields that were traditionally in the male domain. Inventor, Lavinia Foy for example, patented improvements to the design of corsets and corset shirt supporters in 1862 and Edna Tyler broke ground by establishing and running a typewriting office in 1885²⁰. In 1902, another individual would be added to their ranks, an architect by the name of Josephine Wright Chapman.

V – The Worcester Woman's Club

Woman's organizations across North America did much to further the cause of equality. In Worcester, the longest standing league of women, known as the Worcester Woman's Club, first assembled in 1880, on the thirtieth anniversary of Worcester's national woman's rights convention of 1850²¹. Frances M. Baker, the club's first President, and 22 founding members united with the intent to better the 'welfare of humanity'²² and aspirations to broaden their horizons. Like their predecessor, the Anti-Slavery Sewing Circle which was formed 41 years earlier, humanitarian goals were at the forefront of their mission. Among their many accomplishments were the establishment of kindergartens, a hospital for contagious diseases, schools for manual training, as well as the contribution of funds to the Rutland Sanitarium and books for traveling libraries. The Woman's Club supported a breadth of interests and encouraged members to explore the fields of art, science, literature, history and music.

As meetings were initially held in members' homes, it was a

measure of their success that a clubhouse was soon desperately needed. By 1900, the Worcester Woman's Club had grown 600 members strong and had numerous applicants on its waiting list²³. In search of a fixed meeting place, members approached a wealthy philanthropist by the name of Stephen Salisbury III with a proposal for rental accommodations. Salisbury declined their proposal but suggested that they accept a portion of land from his apple orchard instead.

Their benefactor was the sole descendent of Stephen Salisbury I (1746 – 1849)²⁴ who settled in Worcester in 1767. Salisbury I amassed a considerable fortune through mercantile successes in hardware and groceries. Two generations later his grandson, Stephen Salisbury III (1835 - 1905)²⁵, founded the Worcester Art Museum and bestowed to it both land and monies²⁶. Salisbury III is believed to have given land to the Worcester Armory and Worcester's North High School²⁷. In addition to the Worcester Woman's Club, the Worcester Society of Antiquity, the American Antiquarian Society and the Worcester Historical Museum were all recipients of his generosity²⁸.

Through the establishment of a corporation and the sale of stock to members and non-members alike, the Worcester Woman's Club secured financing to construct a permanent home on their newly acquired land. When completed, they decided they would name the building's main auditorium 'Tuckerman Hall' to honor Salisbury's grandmother, Elizabeth Tuckerman²⁹. The construction of their meeting place was the crowning achievement of a half-century in the history of women's work in Worcester.

Stephen Salisbury's gift of land and the emancipation of women in Worcester coincided to provide an early window of opportunity for the ambitious young architect, Josephine Wright Chapman

when she was invited by the Worcester Woman's Club to execute the design of Tuckerman Hall in 1901.

VI - Josephine Wright Chapman

Pioneering women architects who practiced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries have received little scholarly attention until quite recently, and information about their careers is hard to come by for several reasons. For example, *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective* (1977), states that

"Nineteenth and twentieth century women architects are obscure. Seldom mentioned in histories of American architecture or even local guides, their achievements are more nearly unknown than forgotten. Prejudice nourished anonymity. Denied advancement and frequent employment by established architectural firms, women usually practiced alone or in small offices. Either way, thorough records of clients and work rarely survived. Since their commissions tended to be private buildings for individuals of modest means rather than public projects for large institutions, relatively few designs were published."³⁰

A chapter on women architects in Spiro Kostoff's noted study of the architectural profession echoes this view, using Chapman as an example of the small handful of women who achieved success.

"Women did make contributions to domestic architecture and occasionally had successful practices of their own. But their names almost all dropped from the course of architectural history, even those like Josephine Wright Chapman, who received notice in the press of her time."³¹

As detailed below, the ambitious, hardworking Josephine Wright Chapman was one of the first women architects to break out of the established mold. She trained with an illustrious firm, secured notable commissions from important clients, and received notice in the local, regional, and national press. Much of this information

has recently come to light as scholars delve more deeply into the careers of women architects and as several of her most prominent structures have undergone multi-million dollar restorations.

Born in Fitchburg on August 20, 1867, Josephine was the only daughter in a family with four children³². Her parents were traditional. James Levi Chapman, her father, was the President of the Fitchburg Machine Works and a vestryman at the local Episcopalian church. Her mother, Mary E. Wright, was a dedicated member of the Fitchburg Women's Club. When Josephine decided to pursue a career in architecture they did not support her choice but not to be dissuaded, Chapman left her home at 24 years of age and set off for Boston to become an architect³³.

Her family's opposition was only the beginning of the challenges she would face. Society as a whole was not eager to accept women in 'masculine' lines of employment. In architecture, the bias against women reflected the prevailing belief that women were not capable of meeting the occupation's demands. Common claims were that the profession "would probably be found too laborious" or that it did not "suit the feminine habit of mind"³⁴.

Advocates of women in architecture maintained that there was a strong connection between women and the home. Having recognized women's skills in domestic décor and organization, champions of this view concluded that women architects should specialize in domestic design. Beliefs that "...their natural tastes and abilities incline them toward all that pertain(s) to household matters..."³⁵ formed the basis of their point of view. Although it was a liberal position to uphold, restricting women to the design of housing prevented them from working on larger, more lucrative projects, which was in keeping with the low wages women could expect if employed by an architectural firm.

When Chapman began her apprenticeship in 1892, architects were still striving to differentiate themselves from builders³⁶. Consequently, the American Institute of Architects (A. I. A.) which was established in 1857 and the first universities to offer programs in architectural studies were developed with this goal in mind (Massachusetts Institute of Technology: 1868; Cornell University: 1873)³⁷. Most excluded women or operated under policies or application procedures which discouraged their admittance³⁸. In 1880, the first American woman received a degree in architecture from Cornell University but by 1910, when fifty women had earned their degrees, only half of the existing architecture schools admitted women³⁹.

Fortunately there were other routes to architectural accreditation: one could take correspondence courses or if cost was no issue, as was the case for a slightly later woman architect, Theodate Pope Riddle (1868-1946), private tutors could be hired. Riddle's private studies enabled her to successfully register as an architect in 1910 and garner praise for her 1909 design of the Westover School in Connecticut⁴⁰.

The most common route to becoming an architect was to learn by the oldest and least costly of methods: the apprenticeship. Chapman chose this as her method of training, though to secure an apprenticeship at that time would have been especially trying. Unlike public institutions, private firms had no reason to hide a bias against women and could rely upon explanations that they were less reliable because of their responsibility to the home and family. That Chapman chose to undertake an apprenticeship is somewhat revealing. She might have respected the longstanding tradition of training by this route and the experience gained by working more directly with the building trades, but it is most likely that her choice was based on the fact that she could not afford a

formal education. In an interview for the *Buffalo Express* (1901), she disclosed that “though her people (were) well to do, she began her professional career without a cent”. Later in her career, Chapman would go to great lengths to overcome financial difficulty, selling her jewelry and clothing at one point, to create working funds for her office⁴¹.

Chapman proved her mettle from the first by securing employment with the illustrious firm of Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore in 1892. Her supervisor and the firm’s co-founder, Clarence H. Blackall, was born in New York and received his education at the Universities of Illinois and the internationally renowned Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Blackall was the first recipient of the prestigious Rotch Travelling Scholarship, which allowed him to study architecture in Europe. In Blackall, Chapman found a supervisor who was well connected and published. Throughout his career he was a member of the Boston Society of Architects, the American Institute of Architects, the first president of the Boston Architectural Club, and the founder and first secretary of the Architectural League of New York. Blackall published articles in the architectural and technical journals of the day and by the time Chapman began her apprenticeship, he had established his reputation as one of the leading talents in American theatre design⁴².

While serving as a draftsman for Blackall between 1892 and 1896, Chapman was exposed to many of the firm’s designs for theatre and public buildings and to its familiarity with cutting-edge technologies. In 1893 for example, Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore designed Boston’s first steel-frame structure, the Carter building⁴³. Chapman’s early introduction to steel-frame construction enabled her to incorporate this method in buildings she designed later on in her career.

Chapman took full advantage of the opportunities offered by apprenticeship in a distinguished office and even turned her status as a single woman to her advantage. In later years her ambition and determination were described thus:

Before the boys who had entered the office with her were well away from the tracings she was ready to start in business for herself. She will tell you that she had many advantages that helped her make this progress. The boys in the office had much to occupy their evenings -- theaters, dances and the like. Being a girl, Miss Chapman could not run around at night. Her evenings went to perfecting her work. And so it was that before some of her colleagues had really learned to make a working plan, her small but independent-looking shingle hung out. She was ready for business.⁴⁴

During the last year of her apprenticeship she moved into a woman's artist collective named Grundman Studios⁴⁵. Located on Clarendon Street, the collective was the home of many of Boston's creative and independent women. As Chapman received the greatest support for her career from other women it is no surprise that in this exciting environment she secured her first independent architectural commission.

In 1897, she officially changed her title to 'architect' and completed her first known commission to design the 'Craigie Arms' a private dormitory for students at Harvard University⁴⁶. This was an unusually prestigious commission for a woman just starting on her own. Her design arranged five masonry and timber structures containing 36 apartments under a single flat expanse of roof. Turrets punctuate the corners of this building and its red brick cladding is offset by limestone trim. Recently renamed the 'Chapman Arms' in her honor⁴⁷, it is a simply detailed Georgian Revival style building which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Chapman's dormitory became a prototype for several of the buildings she would design in the early

stages of her career and in later years, she returned to design a swimming pool for its basement⁴⁸.

Completion of the 'Craigie Arms' dormitory provided Chapman with the means and stature to open an office outside her home, at 9 Park Street in Boston. She hired several draftsmen and one draftswoman, and set to work on projects in Leominster, Massachusetts, including several commercial buildings. Her largest commission in the area, the St. Mark's Episcopal Church, was financed by her first female patron, Minerva C. Crocker who was a wealthy and distinguished woman from Fitchburg, Chapman's hometown⁴⁹.

As the new century dawned, Chapman's career flourished. Against a number of male competitors Josephine Chapman won a competition for the design of the New England Building at the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo employing a strategy that illustrates her unusual self-confidence and boldness⁵⁰. Worried that she might not be invited to submit plans, she met with the jurors beforehand to convince them to let her enter the competition. At this meeting,

"She told the Governors just what New England needed at Buffalo -- she had it down in black and white, in pictures and in plans. That made the whole problem no problem at all for the Governors. They decided that the girl architect knew more than all the men architects put together, and so they went to the theatre for the evening. In the morning they sent for Miss Chapman and gave her the job."⁵¹

Chapman's winning design was the only structure on the exhibition grounds created by a woman. Even the women's pavilion was designed by a man.

Chapman interpreted the good press and new commissions she received as a sign of increasing confidence in woman architects. She

was so encouraged by her success that she sent in an application for a membership to the A. I. A. The application was recommended by six prominent, Boston men, at least three of whom were architects and A. I. A. members, but still it was denied⁵². Some speculate that she had had a falling out with Blackall who was not one of her sponsors. The Boston Architectural Club founded by Clarence Blackall also rejected an application she made by upholding a policy of excluding women from its club and programs⁵³.

Despite rejection by established male organizations, this was a groundbreaking period in Chapman's career. Julia Morgan, who was to become the most prolific woman architect in the U.S. (and renowned for her design of San Simeon, a residence for William Randolph Hearst), would not start to design buildings independently for several years to come. Close in age to Chapman, she had not yet graduated from her studies at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts⁵⁴. Chapman's early specialization in the design of public buildings was pioneering in a time when so many women were restricted to designing housing or to lackluster careers without public recognition. The National Register nomination form for 'Craigie Arms' describes this period in Chapman's career thus:

"From 1897-1905, she designed as an independent practitioner several notable buildings that establish her as one of the earliest successful women architects in New England."

By the turn of the century the suffrage movement was in full swing and women's clubs across the United States had become well-established institutions. For Josephine Chapman and for women in all professions, the clubs became a point of departure for women to establish a career⁵⁵. In 1899, the Boston Woman's Club was the first such organization to engage Chapman's services in a collaborative effort to design a new building at 15 Beacon Street with Clarence Blackall. Although the plans for their building were

published in *American Architect and Building News*⁵⁶, the building itself was never realized⁵⁷. The Athenaeum Clubhouse, built in Milwaukee in 1887, was the first meeting place to be erected solely for women⁵⁸. Most women's clubs followed the traditions established by men's clubs; they rehabilitated old mansions to establish a meeting headquarters. Unlike the latter, women's clubs did not characteristically employ the same standard of interior decoration most men's clubs enjoyed. Chapman went on to design and build women's clubs in Worcester (1901-1902) and Lynn (1909), Mass.

VII - Tuckerman Hall

In 1901, the Worcester Woman's Club hired Chapman to design their new headquarters at 10 Tuckerman Street in Worcester, Massachusetts, choosing her over other architects including men whose plans were discarded as unsuitable⁵⁹. The resulting building, which was completed in 1902, was the only one of Chapman's solo designs to be published in *American Architect and Building News*, the premier turn-of-the-century publication of its type⁶⁰. It remains today the best extant example of Chapman's early work. Chapman's design employs the round corner towers of 'Craigie Arms' to anchor the building on a prominent but challenging site that was both triangular and sloping. In this case, the prominent towers create a visual distraction that makes a three-sided building appear to be square from all points of perspective. In addition, the massing echoes the Oread Collegiate Institute, thus providing a subtle reference to the history of women in Worcester⁶¹.

The building continues the classical vocabulary of the earlier 'Craigie Arms' but in a far richer and more fully developed composition. Designed in the spirit of the Neoclassical Revival,

Tuckerman Hall's elegant façade is constructed of the finest materials including light brick from Shawnee, Ohio and Indiana limestone trim⁶². Wreathes and swags pressed in metal and terra cotta mark the panels in its fenestration and at one time, a balustrade crowned the copper modillion cornice of the building. Other fine features include monumental pilasters, rustication, splayed lintels with keystones and endpieces, and windows with multi-pane double-hung sash. All remain intact except the balustrade.

As a triangular structure it is deceptively simple. To contend with the gradual descent of a northwest lying hill, the structure stands four stories tall on the east and three to the north and the west. A strong beltcourse sets the three primary stories and helps to tie the three elevations together. Circular bays pin each of its corners and create charming circular rooms within. The entrances at Tuckerman and Salisbury Streets are graced by Tuscan entry porches constructed of Tennessee marble⁶³ and on the opening day in 1902 a cobblestone drive ushered members of the Worcester Woman's Club into its portals. The interior, which remains almost entirely intact, surpasses that of most men's clubs in Massachusetts built at the same time.

Due to the population boom that preceded the building's completion, the demand for new housing in Worcester created a powerful, local construction industry. Notable firms, like the Norcross Brothers and the J.W. Bishop Company, had main offices in Worcester but the reputable firm of George H. Cutting & Company was chosen from the competitors to construct Tuckerman Hall. The principal of the firm, George Cutting, first entered the building trades as a carpenter after acquiring his education in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. He started a construction business late in life and merged with J.W. Bishop in 1879. In 1893, the Bishop and Cutting Company dissolved and each partner

formed an independent firm. Distinguished by his technological savvy, Cutting went on to build hundreds of structures in the states of Rhode Island, New York, Connecticut, Georgia, South Carolina and Massachusetts⁶⁴. Among the contractors that worked on Tuckerman Hall were John Bartlett, who was responsible for masonry; R.J. McGough, the Foreman for plaster and woodwork; and Alexander Cameron, who completed its finishes⁶⁵.

The interiors of Tuckerman Hall demonstrate the skillful hand of the firm Schupbach & Zeller. Practiced in the art of ‘decorating and painting,’ between 1888 and 1947 this firm maintained an office at Park Square in Boston⁶⁶. In 1902, the *Worcester Magazine* described them as the firm “whose work affords (an) unqualified delight to every beholder.”⁶⁷ When the main auditorium in Tuckerman Hall first opened, resplendent in blue and gold, it was



proof of the firm’s artistry. Comprised of an intimately scaled concert hall, gallery and stage, the auditorium has the capacity to seat 521 people. Plaster details of wreaths, swags and acanthus leaves decorate the ceiling, its central rosette, proscenium and the balcony fascia. Sunlight streams through the room from generous two-story round-arched windows, which alternate between pilasters to divide the balcony from the stage.

Modest in character but able to accommodate 300 people, Dean Hall is the second auditorium in the building. Located on the ground floor, it derives its name from the Worcester Woman’s Club who named it to honor Stephen Salisbury III’s mother, Rebekah Scott

Dean⁶⁸. Like the main auditorium, decorative plaster highlights the room's architectural details and a 17-foot ceiling bestows it with uncommon spaciousness.



Four suites in the building add a whimsical touch to its overall design. In the circular bays at the corners of Tuckerman Hall, Josephine Chapman designed rooms with identical layouts, featuring fireplaces and an ample number of windows. Two of the rooms are decorated in the Colonial Revival style, the third has a Moorish motif and the last, which was once fitted with Mission oak furniture, is referred to as the 'Dutch suite'. In 1902, the Moorish room had the most exotic décor. Dark lattice-pattern stenciling, ornamental tiles and an overmantel with blind cusped arches were a few of the features that created the breathtaking atmosphere in this room.

VIII - Relocation to New York

While Tuckerman Hall was in the final phases of its construction, Chapman's design for the Burbank Hospital Nurses Residence was shown at the Boston Architectural Club's Annual Exhibition⁶⁹. Despite the recognition she received from this showing and the success of her previous works, Chapman was not immune to the effects of a recession that hit Boston a few years later. When commissions became scarce, she moved to New York City and eventually settled into a section of Greenwich Village known as Washington Square.



“I had determined that having proven myself [as a designer of large public buildings, apartments, churches, and woman's clubs] I would henceforth give all of my attention over to designing houses -- Georgian, Colonial, Spanish, and especially English houses.”
(*Ladies Home Journal*: 1914)

While living in New York, Chapman reversed the direction of her career. She was described in an interview in the *Ladies Home Journal* as the ‘architect who gave up her commercial career at its

most promising point to be a creator of homes...”⁷⁰. Having proven herself as an established designer of public buildings she took on a new personal ambition: housing. “...Colonial houses, Spanish houses, houses of the Italian villa type... (And) best of all... the English type of house, long, low, rambling, with great overhanging roofs, innumerable gables and fascinating details of timber and plaster and mullioned windows” were the styles and details that she preferred⁷¹. The Arts & Crafts movement had spread throughout North America rousing great interest in housing design, and ‘villas’ surrounded by lawns and lush foliage were favored as they adapted well to the landscape of the newly developing suburbs. When Chapman moved to New York City, a home in the country was the ideal place to live and transportation by rail provided a viable alternative to city life. New suburbs constructed along the perimeter of New York City provided ample opportunity for homeowners and a source of employment for architects, builders and planners alike.

Between 1908 and 1917, Josephine Chapman designed houses in the suburb of Douglas Manor, a newly divided waterfront estate at the northern edge of Queens, New York⁷². She collaborated with Alice Foster, a woman who was her equal in unconventional employment due to her occupation as a builder. Foster hired Chapman to design her family home on Kenmore Road but upon its completion they continued to work together on five additional housing projects. Their structures can be described using the same characterization the *Ladies Home Journal* gave Chapman, as ‘modest, direct, (and) simple’⁷³. In terms of siting, Foster and Chapman ensured that each house was placed advantageously on large but challengingly odd-shaped lots⁷⁴. Josephine Chapman designed three homes independently in Douglas Manor, but each of her designs (including those constructed by Foster) employed picturesque rooflines and a distinctive entry according to the

vocabulary of the Colonial Revival or English Cottage styles popular in the area at the time⁷⁵.

During the later half of her career, Chapman's hard-earned reputation secured several select contracts. While designing a prominent residence for the Combs family in Douglas Manor she worked on plans for a 16-storey apartment building slated to overlook Park Avenue in New York City⁷⁶. To suit the building's enviable location it was to be outfitted with the luxury of a fireplace in every suite. Although the apartment building was never constructed, plans for both structures illustrate her approach to kitchen design. Chapman's specifications for the Park Avenue apartments called for electrical wiring throughout the building and white porcelain kitchens in every unit. When interviewed by the *Southern Architect and Building News* she extolled the quick and clean nature of electricity⁷⁷. The time-saving appliances she chose for the Comb's family home and those she envisioned for the Park Avenue apartments could be set to work with 'a twist of the wrist'⁷⁸ and like magic, dishes were cleaned, dinner heated or a dessert could be frozen. In 1916, her kitchen designs kept pace with the principles of scientific home management espoused in the eastern United States. One of the earliest advocates of this science was Catherine Beecher who rallied for convenient kitchens and the use of mechanical equipment in the upkeep of the home. Beecher's centralized mechanical water closets, heating and ventilating equipment and her concept of a single surface workspace soon became standard design practice⁷⁹. Work by Christine McGaffey Frederick followed Beecher's footsteps. Frederick adapted the principles of factory standardization to the home and popularized 'efficient' home management in her book, *Household Engineering: Scientific Management of the Home*⁸⁰. In 1916, when Chapman planned the Comb's family residence and the Park Avenue apartments she was well informed of the revolutionary changes

taking place in the kitchen.



In 1921, Chapman filed a passport application for an extensive European vacation⁸¹. Her father had passed away in 1914⁸² and left her with a portion of his estate. With this increase in income she was afforded the freedom to travel and on May 24, 1921, she set sail on the *Panhandle State* for a trip which allowed her to study European architecture firsthand⁸³.

IX - Hillandale

The tour must have been a source of inspiration for Chapman's last known architectural work, 'Hillandale', an estate for the Standard Oil heir, Anne Archbold. Chapman was commissioned to design her Washington estate in a manner reminiscent of the structures in Italy, Archbold's first home. The Jazz Era villa that was completed in 1925, is an interpretation of an Italian Renaissance Rural-styled villa. Its austere stucco walls are broken only by balconies and loggias, and decorative chimney pots provide relief for its simple

terra cotta roofline. When designing Hillandale, Chapman drew from the publication titled *Smaller Italian Villas and Farmhouses*, which was written in 1916 by the prominent Bostonian architect, Guy Lowell. Currently the villa is protected by the covenants of the Historic Landmark commission for the rarity of its architectural style on the east coast, the fame of the villa's first occupant and the execution of its accomplished design by one of North America's first women architects⁸⁴. In 1995, Hillandale became listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In its summary comments, Hillandale's nomination to the National Register observes that it was "designed by the noted architect Josephine Wright Chapman and is associated with a period of development of large estates in early 20th century Washington, D.C."

X - Conclusion

Josephine Wright Chapman's whereabouts are unknown after the year 1927. Having distinguished herself as one of America's earliest successful female architects, gained acceptance from her peers and become a member of the Architectural League of New York⁸⁵, Ms. Chapman made contributions significant not only to the field of architecture but to the women's movement in the United States.



ENDNOTES

1. Tuckerman Hall, the former Worcester Woman's Club, as a contributing building within the Institutional District in Worcester, MA, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in March, 1980.
2. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Hillandale, 3905 Mansion Court, N.W., Washington, D.C., December 22, 1994, entered January 31, 1995, Section 8, Page 5.
3. White House Millennium Council Final Report, January, 2001, U.S. Government Printing Office, ISBN 0-16-050655-7, p. 38.
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6. *Heart of the Commonwealth; Worcester An Illustrated History* by Margaret A. Erskine. Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Pub., 1981 p.19.
7. *150 Years of Worcester; 1848-1998* by Albert B. Southwick. Worcester, MA: Chandler House Press, 1998 p.38.
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