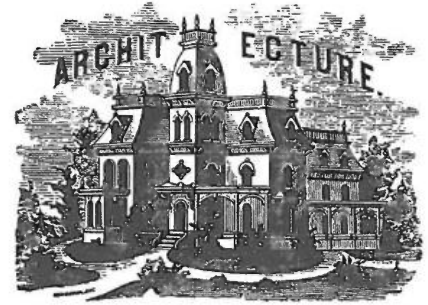


A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine



Mann & MacNeille

The New York architects Horace Mann (1863-1937) and Perry MacNeille (1872-1931) were prolific and influential designers, planning well over 1,600 buildings on 600 sites between 1902 and 1931.¹ By conventional standards, they were highly successful, as their practice included many commercial buildings, churches, and sophisticated country residences for affluent clients. They designed such New York landmarks as Barnard College and The Cloisters. Against this background Mann & MacNeille were also pioneer advocates of quality housing for the working class and were creative planners of some of the first "reform" architectural projects in the United States. In these pursuits, Mann & MacNeille worked after 1907 with the famed inventor Thomas Edison to design remarkable industrial housing villages. Two Maine projects, Library Hall and MacNeille's Cottage on Bailey Island, survive as some of the best preserved and most significant buildings for studying the evolution of Mann & MacNeille's "Edison" work and reform architecture from the early 20th century.

Junior partner Perry R. MacNeille was the firm's chief designer in Maine. MacNeille was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1872, the son of lawyer-turned-minister

Robert G. S. MacNeille. Perry MacNeille grew up in New Haven and Bridgeport, Connecticut and Brockton, Massachusetts. He traveled to England and Germany prior to entering the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1889. Like his father, MacNeille first trained for the legal profession. However, he decided to become an architect when he was 21 years old.²

In 1893, MacNeille moved to New York City to start his architectural career. He enrolled in graduate classes at Columbia University and began working for Rossiter & Wright, the first of six New York firms which would employ him. Rossiter & Wright were designing only residences, a significant beginning for a man who would later be described as the "New York housing expert". After Rossiter & Wright, MacNeille worked for Harding & Gouch, where he gained additional training planning office buildings. Both of these positions were volunteer, MacNeille working without wages to gain necessary experience.³

After Harding & Gouch, MacNeille joined the New York firm of Brunner & Tryon. Here he worked as construction supervisor on the Jewish Synagogue being built on Orange Street in New Haven, Connecticut. At Brunner & Tryon, MacNeille met a fellow draftsman named Harry W. Tuttle. MacNeille and Tuttle exercised their design skills by writing an architectural section in Charles T. Root's periodical "The Dry Goods Economist". Root later became a client of Mann & MacNeille in Maine (Figure 4), and Tuttle later helped MacNeille gain one of his most important positions, a place in the office of the prominent New York firm Carrere & Hastings.⁴

MacNeille and Tuttle both left Brunner & Tryon to work for Carrere & Hastings about 1898-99. In this office, MacNeille was exposed to many elegant presentation and working drawings of formal, symmetrical buildings with details closely patterned after the great landmarks of Europe. MacNeille also increased his technical knowledge of structural calculations, composition, and drafting.⁵

As the 20th century opened, MacNeille accepted an offer to become Chief Engineer in Richard Howland Hunt's New York architectural office. R. H. Hunt was the son of Richard Morris Hunt, one of America's most influential architects of the second half of the 19th century. In Hunt's office, MacNeille was put in charge of several major projects, including the East Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a Long Island resi-

dence for W. K. Vanderbilt, and a college dormitory in Nashville, Tennessee. When the pace of Hunt's work decreased, MacNeille traveled to Europe on an architectural study tour. Soon thereafter, he established the Mann & MacNeille partnership with New York architect Horace B. Mann.⁶

Perry MacNeille met the Mann family after finishing his first year of architectural studies at Columbia University in 1893. His aunt, Mary McGann, maintained a summer cottage on Bailey Island and invited MacNeille for a visit during his summer vacation. This was MacNeille's initial visit to coastal Maine, and he became enchanted with the region and its people. During his first night on Bailey Island, MacNeille was introduced to the McGann's neighbors, including Clausine Mann. Cousin Jack McGann introduced Perry to the Mann family with the statement, "Let's go over and call on Clausine Mann. She is a lovely girl, and we will take her for a walk down to the rocks." A romantic relationship soon developed between Perry and Clausine, which continued into the fall after the two returned to New Jersey, where they became engaged. In New Jersey, Perry was introduced to Horace Mann, Clausine's brother.⁷

Horace Mann, Perry's partner and brother-in-law, was, like MacNeille, a son of a Congregational minister, an accomplished young architect with European travel, and a New York-New Jersey resident with family connections on Bailey Island. When they met, Horace worked at Snelling & Potter's firm in New York. Following a brief period when MacNeille headed J. H. Friedlander's office in New York, Mann & MacNeille joined forces in October, 1902. Their first project was designing a country house in the Adirondacks for MacNeille's cousin, Mrs. George W. Rexsamer. The next year Mann & MacNeille opened a branch office in Chicago and designed eighteen houses for professors at the University of Chicago. Their later adoption of Prairie Style motifs, modern open plan elements, and Chicago School structural expression were derived from this Chicago experience.⁸

In May, 1907, Mann & MacNeille were chosen by the renowned inventor Thomas Edison to design low-budget houses for industrial workers. This commission helped the partnership become the premier designers of quality affordable and industrial housing in the United States. Edison was interested in revolutionizing housing production as extensively as his friend Henry Ford had transformed the automobile. Like Ford, Edison employed mass production techniques. The inventor cast buildings of concrete in large, complex molds. He poured concrete houses like candles, using a one-step process and large reusable molds. He engaged Mann & MacNeille to design prototypical houses using this novel construction system.⁹

Mann & MacNeille created two prototypes for Edison, a townhouse model used to make new neighborhoods in urban connected rowhouse fashion and a detached design for creating districts of suburban houses, all for the working class. Both designs were graced with

sophisticated cast ornament which recalled ornate French and American precedents, in part reflecting MacNeille's earlier experience in the offices of Carrere & Hastings and Hunt. Edison was delighted with Mann & MacNeille's drawings and large models and exhibited them to reporters from *Scientific American* and *The New York Times*. The Edison houses were conceived to be fireproof, durable, artistic, inexpensive, and ready for occupancy within twelve hours from the moment construction began. In 1907 Edison's biographer wrote, "In America today many houses are being erected according to Edison's plans, and are fulfilling all that was expected of them."¹⁰

However, Edison's construction system had certain limitations. Concrete by itself was a poor thermal insulator, and the complex metal molds were expensive, limiting the system to projects of large scale. During the ten years following the Edison commission, MacNeille continued on his own to search for better solutions to the problem of quality affordable mass-produced housing. These explorations led the Mann & MacNeille firm to pioneer new areas in the profession.¹¹

To become national leaders in the industrial housing field, Mann & MacNeille traveled to England to study the famous industrial village of Port Sunlight in Birkenhead, Cheshire. Port Sunlight was the creation of industrialist William H. Lever and translated the English concept of an "estate village as a model community for estate workers" into a utopian scheme for housing Lever's factory workers. Lever's "Sunlight Soap" had become the leading brand in England by 1887, and Port Sunlight village was begun the following year. When Mann & MacNeille visited Port Sunlight about 1907, it had over thirty cottage groups, designed in numerous styles by various architects. Many aspects of Port Sunlight's design philosophy greatly impressed Perry MacNeille. In England, MacNeille discovered the rudimentary forms and philosophies which helped him design one of his own masterpieces, Library Hall on Bailey Island¹² (Figure 1).

Library Hall was designed in 1909. In its one-and-a-half story pitched roof massing, front under-the-eaves full length colonnade, crisp regular rhythm of rounded dormer windows, and extensive use of paired French glazed casement doors, this 42 by 52 foot building recalls one segment of a rowhouse design that was built in Lever's industrial village in England. The extent to which Library Hall was conceived as a philanthropic project to benefit a laboring class and the degree to which it was built as a local replica of a national architectural landmark also derive from the same English origin. Where Lever reproduced such English architectural icons as Anne Hathaway's Cottage and Kenyon Hall in Birkenhead, MacNeille replicated George Washington's residence, Mount Vernon, on Bailey Island.¹³ However, whereas Port Sunlight met initial resistance from organized labor, Library Hall and Mann & MacNeille's own industrial villages received only widespread support.



Figure 1. Library Hall, Bailey Island, 1988 view by Richard W. Cheek.

Library Hall is a particularly significant structure because, in addition to demonstrating Mann & MacNeille's familiarity with earlier English reform projects, the building reflects good site response and a mastery of Ecole des Beaux-Arts design principles. Conceived as a public cultural center, the structure was located adjacent to the principal road on Bailey Island, midway between the old Portland steamboat dock and the harbor at Mackerel Cove. Here the geography is a gentle sloped hill, with views across Mackerel Cove and Casco Bay. Library Hall responds to both the street and the views by being parallel to the road, with a full width front porch and large glazed doors to make maximum use of the view. Library Hall is a product of MacNeille's training in its extensive use of axial symmetries, tripartite compositions, arrangement of dominant center and subordinate sides in plan, and in its carefully studied details.¹⁴

The Colonial Revival style gained popularity in the United States in the final quarter of the nineteenth century as a reaction against architectural eclecticism and a manifestation of United States nationalism. Early seventeenth and eighteenth century forms were used in the design of many buildings in the Colonial Revival era, developing new architecture which replicated valued American landmarks. Mann and MacNeille were both advocates of the Colonial Revival style. Mann published essays promoting the "New Style Created in America", and MacNeille designed buildings such as Library Hall and the MacNeille Cottage which expressed in physical form the same Colonial sentiment verbalized by Mann.¹⁵

Through Mann & MacNeille's design skills, Library Hall became an architectural ideal, which went beyond its several precedents to inspire numerous other community centers and landmark buildings across the United States. In most of its key features—its prominent central cupola, roof with three dormers on each side, gable end walls with large Palladian windows, and seven-bay portico on the front—Library Hall was designed to recall George Washington's famous eighteenth century residence. However, miniaturizing the building to the size of a Port Sunlight worker's cottage allowed each element to achieve greater relative effect. Careful coordination of all the parts allowed the building to become tightly integrated and monumental, despite its small size. Openings in the principal facade were designed to coordinate with the column rhythm of the portico. Rounded dormer windows were borrowed from Port Sunlight, and ornamental panels on each face of the octagonal cupola repeated the Palladian motif. These eclectic features were combined in a fashion no less graceful and dignified than Mount Vernon.¹⁶

Given Library Hall's symbolic importance, it is hardly surprising that the Maine building served as a model for later community centers designed by Mann & MacNeille. The Soldiers' and Sailors' Community House on Riverside Drive in New York, built in 1918, was clearly patterned after Bailey Island's Library Hall. The "Mount Vernonesque" Community Center for the industrial village at Perryville, Maryland, and the four-family cottages in the industrial village of Bristol, Pennsylvania, were other later MacNeille designs which derived from Library Hall. Architect H. T. Lindeberg's



Figure 2. Ocean facade of the Perry R. MacNeille Cottage, Bailey Island, 1988 view by Richard W. Cheek.

famed residence in Princeton, New Jersey, was also developed from Library Hall and MacNeille's influence. Lindeberg was a partner at Mann & MacNeille in the late 1910s and 1920s.¹⁷

Coincident with the design and construction of Library Hall, Perry MacNeille founded an ambitious company called Standard Buildings, Inc., which assisted Mann & MacNeille in the construction of large villages for industrial workers. MacNeille explained that the function of his 1911 company was to "design and build the streets, the water supply, the sanitary installation and the houses" on any site in the eastern United States "so that the factory manager (would be) relieved of all labor and annoyance in the creation of one of these villages."¹⁸ Working together, Mann & MacNeille and Standard Buildings, Inc., designed and built thousands of structures for the communities of Sheffield, Alabama; Bristol, Pennsylvania; and Perryville, Maryland. In addition, Mann & MacNeille designed "many smaller groups of houses scattered across the country" with the assistance of the Standard Buildings company. Standard Buildings also published a catalogue that popularized small house and bungalow designs for a national audience. MacNeille's creation of Standard Buildings, Inc., gave Mann & MacNeille the powerful effectiveness of a design-build firm, capable of building and publishing the best of its own designs. In these villages, Mann & MacNeille also experimented with condominium-type ownership and creative financing



Figure 3. Land elevation of the MacNeille Cottage, Bailey Island, 1931 view (Courtesy of Robert MacNeille).



Figure 4. Charles T. Root Cottage, Bailey Island, showing the 1903 connected addition at the right by Mann & MacNeille, 1907 view (Courtesy of Diana W. Mann, Brunswick).

plans that allowed laborers to suspend payments should they become ill.¹⁹ Mann & MacNeille's model industrial villages proved to be progressive and valuable innovations, especially during the World War I period. Comprised of schools, churches, apartment buildings, and superintendents' cottages, Bristol, Pennsylvania, was considered to be "America's Greatest Single Housing Project" in 1917. The cottages at Bristol and several of Standard Buildings' company house types were pioneered with MacNeille's summer cottage, built behind the Library Hall site in 1908.²⁰

MacNeille's summer cottage on Bailey Island was built to be a seasonal adjunct to the architect's year-round residence in Summit, New Jersey (Figures 2 & 3). MacNeille is known to have resided here every summer between 1908 and 1931, except for those periods when he was in Europe. MacNeille painted a personal, nautical monogram on the ceiling in a portion of this cottage, and the structure reflects the architect's identity in other design aspects as well. In its excellent site response, English precedents, and Colonial Revival details, the cottage characterizes MacNeille's thinking in the early twentieth century. The MacNeille Cottage pioneered several features which were adopted in Mann & MacNeille's later works. Double layered shingle coursing, first seen on this house, was later used on Library Hall and several of the Bristol buildings. The massing of the MacNeille Cottage became the model for later Standard Buildings' designs, such as cottages 361 and 367. Both Library Hall and the MacNeille Cottage served as important design precedents for community buildings in many progressive industrial villages in the early twentieth century.²¹

Mann & MacNeille's reform work of the early 1900s reflected a sensitive and pragmatic design response to

the economic plight of thousands of industrial laborers, during a period when the needs of the many were often overlooked in order to provide luxury for a few. Through their numerous experiments and developments, Mann & MacNeille proved that careful building could be both affordable and humanly satisfying, modest yet enriching. Although the firm ceased designing buildings in the early 1930s following the Great Depression and MacNeille's death in 1931, Mann & MacNeille's work will continue to have national significance as long as quality design and affordable housing challenge the architectural profession.²²

John V. Goff

NOTES

- ¹ Six hundred eighty-two of Mann & MacNeille's projects were listed on pages 56-64 of Perry R. MacNeille's, *The MacNeille Saga*, New York, 1931, privately printed. Mann & MacNeille's industrial villages contained at least 1,000 additional buildings. See C. Stanley Taylor, "Bristol, America's Greatest Single Housing Development", *American Architect*, May 15, 1918, pp. 599-615.
- ² MacNeille, *Saga*, op. cit., pp. 12-13, 42-45, 51-52.
- ³ MacNeille, *Saga*, op. cit., pp. 52-53. Taylor, op. cit., p. 603.
- ⁴ MacNeille, *Saga*, op. cit., p. 53. Harpswell Architectural Survey card for Charles T. Root Cottage, U-28-7, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta.
- ⁵ MacNeille, *Saga*, op. cit., p. 53. For a detailed account of Carrere & Hastings's pre-1910 work, see "The Work of Carrere & Hastings", *Architectural Record*, January, 1910, pp. 1-120.
- ⁶ Paul R. Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt*, Cambridge, 1980, pp. 453-454. MacNeille, *Saga*, op. cit., p. 53.
- ⁷ MacNeille, *Saga*, op. cit., pp. 29, 48.
- ⁸ Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects Deceased*, Los Angeles, 1970, p. 389. Mann obituary, *Architectural Forum*, September, 1937, p. 86. MacNeille, *Saga*, op. cit., p. 54. For an illustration of "Chicago School" Mann & MacNeille work, see *Architectural Record*, May, 1912, p. 465.
- ⁹ *Scientific American*, November 16, 1907, p. 356. MacNeille, *Saga*, op. cit., p. 58. Udo Kulterman, "T. A. Edison e la Prefabbricazione", *Domus*, May, 1979, cover and pp. 9-11.
- ¹⁰ *Scientific American*, op. cit., p. 356. *New York Times*, October 19, 1907, p. 1. F. A. Jones, *Thomas Edison*, 1907, p. 174. Kulterman, op. cit.
- ¹¹ MacNeille discussed these and other drawbacks of the Edison system on page 7 of his book *The Industrial Village*, which was published by Standard Buildings, Inc., in 1913. His winter home in Summit, New Jersey was constructed of hollow clay tiles, one alternative system for low-cost, high quality housing.
- ¹² MacNeille, *Village*, op. cit., p. 4. Tony Evans and Candida Lycett Green, *English Cottages*, London, 1982, pp. 116-117.
- ¹³ Evans & Green, op. cit., pp. 116-117. Harpswell Architectural Survey card for Library Hall, U-28-8, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta.
- ¹⁴ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 35, 229.

- ¹⁵ William Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism", *Society of Architectural Historians Journal*, December, 1976, pp. 241-243. Horace B. Mann, "The Style Created in America", *Country Life in America*, May, 1913, p. 37.
- ¹⁶ Mount Vernon's architectural features are illustrated in William Rotch Ware, *The Georgian Period*, New York. The convex cupola roof profile with Palladian panels was associated with several 18th century buildings in Philadelphia, including Carpenters Hall and Congress Hall. See Martin P. Snyder, *City of Independence: Views of Philadelphia Before 1800*, New York, 1975, Figure 68 and Colorplate 10.
- ¹⁷ *American Architect*, October 9, 1918, Soldiers' and Sailors' Community House; October 30, 1918, Perryville, Maryland housing development. Taylor, op. cit., pp. 599-615. Talbot Hamlin, *The American Spirit in Architecture*, New York, 1926, p. 267. MacNeille, *Saga*, op. cit., p. 47.
- ¹⁸ MacNeille, *Village*, op. cit., p. 4. MacNeille, *Saga*, op. cit., pp. 65-69.
- ¹⁹ MacNeille, *Village*, op. cit., pp. 3, 6.
- ²⁰ Taylor, op. cit., pp. 599-615.
- ²¹ Interview with Robert MacNeille, architect and grandson of Perry MacNeille, June, 1988. MacNeille, *Village*, op. cit., p. 8 and inside rear cover.
- ²² MacNeille, *Saga*, op. cit., p. 65. MacNeille obituary in *Pencil Points*, November, 1931.

LIST OF KNOWN COMMISSIONS IN MAINE BY MANN & MacNEILLE

Charles T. Root Cottage, Bailey Island, 1903, Alterations and Addition, Altered.
 Perry R. MacNeille Cottage, Bailey Island, 1908-09, Extant.
 Mrs. L. B. Monroe (later Horace B. Mann) Cottage, Bailey Island, 1908-09, Altered.
 Dr. B. F. Lucky Cottage, Bailey Island, 1909, Alterations, Extant.
 Library Hall, Bailey Island, Designed 1909, Built 1912, Extant.

Photograph of Horace B. Mann and Perry R. MacNeille
 Courtesy of Robert MacNeille

Volume V, Number 12, 1988

Published by the
 Maine Historic Preservation Commission
 55 Capitol Street, Augusta, Maine 04333

Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Editor
 Roger G. Reed, Associate Editor

*This publication has been financed in part with federal funds from
 the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.*