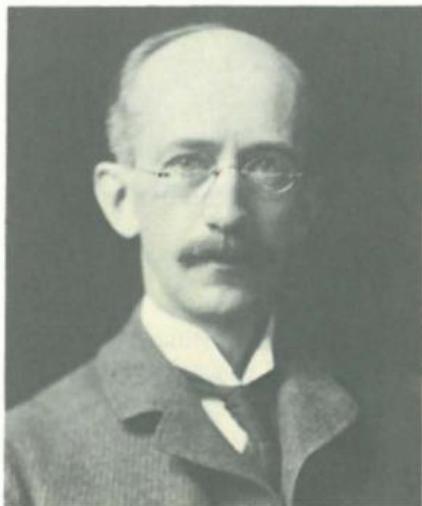


A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine



Edward B. Green



William S. Wicks

GREEN AND WICKS

“Fairfields,” the William Arthur Rogers estate in Kennebunk, was designed by Buffalo, New York, architects Edward Broadhead Green (1855-1950) and William Sydney Wicks (1854-1919). The architects, who were in partnership from 1881 until 1917, are perhaps the most prolific ever to have practiced in Buffalo and are responsible for some of the most significant residences and public buildings to be erected there in the prosperous decades at the turn of the century. Their residence for William Rogers, designed between 1906 and 1907 and completed in 1908, is among the most elaborate domestic works produced by the firm (Figures 1 and 2). The Rogers project is one of several commissions the architects executed for Buffalo-based clients who owned country or vacation homes outside the city.

Both Green and Wicks were born in the Utica, New York, area and both attended Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, during the 1870s for at least part of their academic architectural training. Wicks left Cornell after two years to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, from which he received a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1877. He served as an apprentice in the Boston office of architects Peabody and Stearns between 1876 and 1877 and subsequently returned to the central New York state region that had been his home, where he worked for Utica ar-

chitect Frederick H. Gouge. Green, who received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from Cornell in 1878, remained in Ithaca and was associated with architect William Henry Miller from 1880 until he left the area the following year.

Green and Wicks formed their partnership in Auburn, New York in 1881. While their office was located in that city, they obtained commissions for several residences and public buildings there and in the surrounding region. In 1884 Green opened an office in Buffalo, and Wicks joined him there the following year. Virtually from the time they established their Buffalo office, the architects commanded an impressive clientele, mainly composed of the community’s business and industrial leaders. During the firm’s tenure in Buffalo, the architects executed no less than eighty-five residences there and twenty-three in rural areas surrounding the city and outside New York state. Green and Wicks’ residential work covered a wide range of stylistic interpretations reflecting the eclectic nature of American architecture at the turn of century. The largest homes of the firm drew their inspiration from the Late Medieval and Renaissance periods in England and the Renaissance in France and generally displayed an adherence to academic, Beaux-Arts models.

William Rogers, a wealthy industrialist, exemplifies the type of client for whom Green and Wicks designed elegant, grand-scale residences. Rogers was born in



Figure 1. William A. Rogers House, Kennebunk, c. 1910 view (MHPC).



Figure 2. Rogers House, Kennebunk, c. 1910 view (MHPC).

Berkshire, New York in 1851 and graduated from Yale University in 1874. Following graduation, he joined the Cincinnati, Ohio firm of L. R. Hull and Company, which was involved in cotton, peanut, and pig iron investments. Beginning as an invoice clerk, Rogers was made a partner in the organization within three years. He became especially interested in the pig iron industry and in 1880 formed a separate partnership entitled Rogers, Brown and Company, which specialized in this product. In 1890, Rogers and several associates acquired the Tonawanda Iron and Steel Company in Buffalo, and Rogers moved there to oversee the company's operations. From the time of his arrival in Buffalo until his death in 1946, Rogers continued to be a dominant force in industrial circles in western New York and elsewhere, serving as the president or vice-president of a variety of iron companies and sitting on the Board of Directors of various Buffalo banks and civic organizations. He traveled extensively throughout his life, visiting such places as China, Siam, India, Siberia, and South America. Many of the artifacts Rogers collected during his travels were displayed in his Maine home.

Green and Wicks' initial association with Rogers occurred when they undertook alterations to the house he purchased after moving to Buffalo. The choice of Green and Wicks to carry out this work indicates the extent to which the architects had become the accepted designers for Buffalo's expanding industrialist class. The Rogers residence, now demolished, was located in a fashionable section of the city and had grounds landscaped by Frederick Law Olmsted and Associates.

In 1900, Rogers purchased the tract of land which was to become the site of "Fairfields," his summer home. The tract, consisting of 60 acres on the Kennebunk River and 90 acres of adjoining pine forest, was originally part of the estate of John Mitchell, who had

acquired the land from Sir William Pepperrell around 1736. The site remained in possession of the Mitchell family until Rogers purchased it. When it was completed in 1908 at a cost of over \$150,000, the Rogers complex consisted of the main house overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, a gardener's cottage, garage, stable, greenhouse, and boathouse. The estate, described by a contemporary account as "one of the most distinguished on the Atlantic Coast," featured extensive grounds landscaped in the English garden tradition by the Olmsted Brothers firm. The English theme was consistent with the architectural style of the house and was characterized by wide lawns bordered by ornamental shrubbery and a variety of evergreen trees. The native growth of bayberry, wild rose, juniper, and spirea was preserved on the south, or ocean, side of the residence. Rogers, who maintained an avid interest in horticulture throughout his life, cultivated a rare plant and shrub collection which complemented the professional landscaping.

Green and Wicks chose a fairly free interpretation of the Tudor mode for the Rogers residence, employing such elements as an asymmetrical, multi-gabled facade and oceanfront elevation, massive corbelled chimneys with diapering, a brick first story, and a stuccoed second story with half-timbering. The stable, garage, and gardener's cottage were conceived as a single U-shaped unit (Figure 3). Its stuccoed walls, randomly-coursed stone foundation, and decorative brackets under the eaves were inspired by English Arts and Crafts designs. Although the architects produced a number of domestic designs with stylistic attributes similar to those of the Rogers home, the use of stucco and half-timbering for a structure of this magnitude is unique among their known work. Despite its grand scale, the Rogers house has a somewhat less formal aspect than Green and Wicks' other major projects in-



Figure 3. Gardener's Cottage and Garage, Rogers House, Kennebunk, Plate 1775, *The American Architect*, December 29, 1909 (Boston Public Library).

spired by English examples. These other residences were executed entirely in brick or stone and, because they were mainly intended for urban settings, they lacked the rambling quality of the Rogers design which is in keeping with the home's purpose as a country retreat.

The 6,306 square foot interior, which has been greatly altered, featured fine woodwork and was almost entirely furnished with pieces designed and built for the house by the A. H. Davenport Company of Boston. The original first floor plan followed the design program seen in Green and Wicks' most elaborate residential works, whereby a hierarchical relationship was maintained between the amount of space designated for the formal and service activities within the house. The spacious oak-paneled entrance hall (Figure 4), dramatic stair hall, and reception room clearly indicate that the home was intended to be used for entertaining, while the massive living room and flanking flower and writing rooms reinforce Rogers' penchant for gracious living. The service wing, located at the eastern end of the structure, was effectively separated from the more formal part of the house. The hierarchical relationship was continued on the second floor, where the nine bedrooms and seven baths for the Rogers family were separated from the six servants' rooms.

"Fairfields" remained in Rogers' ownership until 1936, at which time it was sold, completely furnished,

to Colonel William Neal Campbell, head of the Goodall Worsted Company of Sanford. The Lithuanian Franciscan Fathers, current owners of the estate, purchased it in 1947 and converted it into a monastery. Interior renovations were undertaken to adapt the home to its present use, and a chapel was added to the eastern elevation.

Although no longer a private home, "Fairfields" epitomizes the elegant country residence considered *de rigueur* for the wealthy in the early 1900s. In designing the Rogers complex, Green and Wicks furthered their reputation as Buffalo's most sought-after architects and demonstrated their adept handling of a stylistic form recalling English country houses of the Late Medieval period. By creating a house similar to those belonging to the privileged class in England during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the architects effectively allied their client with the equivalent of this class in America at the turn of the century.

Dana Mintzer
 Preservation League of New York State
 January, 1986



Figure 4. Entrance Hall, Rogers House, Kennebunk, 1927 view (Library of Congress).

NOTES

The material in this article is based upon a master's thesis entitled "Green and Wicks, Architects: Residential Designs 1881-1913", prepared by the author in 1983 for the Cornell University Program in Historic Preservation Planning. Information concerning the Rogers commission was received through Kim Lovejoy, who compiled an extensive file on the estate for the Brick Store Museum in Kennebunk.

LIST OF KNOWN COMMISSIONS IN MAINE BY GREEN AND WICKS

William A. Rogers Estate, Kennebunk, 1906-08, Extant.

ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

Elevations and floor plans on linen for the Rogers House are in the collection of The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, Buffalo, New York.

Picture of Edward B. Green
Courtesy of The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.

Picture of William S. Wicks
from *The Architectural Era*, December 1890.

Volume III, Number 4, 1986

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.*