
The partnership of John Carrère (1858-1911) and Thomas Hastings (1860-1929) created many of the most significant examples of Beaux-Arts architecture in the United States. Trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, they joined the firm of McKim, Mead & White in New York in 1883 and established their own practice in 1885. Over the next forty-four years, the firm undertook more than 600 projects, including important private homes, commercial properties, parks, and civic structures – the New York Public Library at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue (1911) perhaps the best known of the last type – and participated in the planning of the World’s Columbian Exposition (Chicago, 1893), the Pan American Exposition (Buffalo, 1901) and the McMillan Plan for Washington, DC (1902). Their work represents the transitional period between the “City Beautiful” movement and the Art Deco and International styles, combining a thorough grounding in classical architecture, sensitivity to the requirements of the particular site, and engineering and construction technology that was advanced for the time.

Despite the firm’s extensive built legacy, there are relatively few publications documenting their complete oeuvre. In January 1910, Architectural Record published a survey of their work up to that date; Curtis C. Blake’s dissertation The Architecture of Carrère and Hastings (1976) and Lamia Doumato’s bibliographies on Carrère (1985) and Hastings (1988) updated the list of resources, but nearly two decades passed until the appearance of Carrère & Hastings Architects (Acanthus Press, 2006). This two-volume work was the first monograph to document the full scope of their accomplishments, providing black-and-white photographs, floor plans, a list of architects associated with the firm, a comprehensive list of projects (including parks, temporary exposition buildings, and unrealized projects), index, and a selected bibliography. The images are largely archival photographs of the structures, however; these are helpful, but they cannot fully convey the richness of the decorative details or show the buildings in their present-day environments.

In Carrère and Hastings: The Masterworks, architectural historians Laurie Ossman and Heather Ewing present twenty-seven extant projects (fourteen are private homes) organized chronologically in three phases (Early years, 1885-1896; New York Public Library years, 1897-1911, and Hastings after Carrère, 1911-1929). The essays discuss in detail the development of each design and the architects’ interaction with their clients as well as the social milieu in which the projects were conceived, executed, and occupied. The volume lacks a bibliography as well as plans and elevations, but the copious end notes include more recent sources and the new color photographs by Stephen Brooke are welcome additions to the literature.

The definitive scholarly work on Carrère and Hastings remains the Acanthus Press set, but Ossman and Ewing provide a valuable visual complement to the older catalogue raisonné. Recommended for libraries supporting programs in architecture, architectural history, and interior design.

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