



**State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives**

**William Strickland Drawings,
approximately 1800-1850s**

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator:

Strickland, Francis W., 1818-1895
Strickland, Jesse Hartley, 1827-1899
Strickland, William, 1788-1854

Inclusive Dates:

approximately 1800-1850s

Scope & Content:

Contains original drawings, elevations, and ground plans, attributed to famed architect William Strickland and his sons, Francis W. and J. Hartley Strickland. A few items are either signed by or noted as being drawn by Benjamin Latrobe, William Camerer, John Haviland, D. H. Mahan, and Andrew J. Binny. (*The Egyptian Revival: Its Sources, Monuments, and Meanings, 1808-1858*, by Richard G. Carrott, presumes that Binny was a “draughtsman-student in William Strickland’s office.”) The collection includes plans for the Tennessee State Capitol as well as various other buildings including churches, houses, and banks. Examples of Italianate as well as Greek Revival and Egyptian architecture may be seen in the materials.

Physical Description/Extent:

12 linear feet

Accession/Record Group Number:

2019-017

Language:

English

Permanent Location:

M-18-14, M-18-15, M-18-16, XI-C-1v

Repository:

Tennessee State Library and Archives, 403 Seventh Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243-0312

Administrative/Biographical History

William Strickland holds an important place in the history of Greek Revival architecture in America. Talbot Hamlin refers to “that extraordinary man, William Strickland, engineer and architect, painter and engraver, one of the most interesting personalities, as he was one of the most brilliant and original designers of the entire Greek Revival movement.”

Strickland was a pupil of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, and two of his own pupils, Gideon Shryock (architect of the Kentucky State Capitol) and Thomas Ustick Walter, became leaders of the architectural profession. During his career as an architect, from 1810 until his death in 1854, Strickland designed a substantial number of important public buildings, many in Philadelphia, upon which his reputation rests.

Strickland was an engineer as well as an architect, and he was always interested in structural as well as aesthetic problems. His style ran the gamut of the various revival styles popular during his time, from the Gothic to the Egyptian, but he always held to the basic principle of neo-classical design which he learned from Latrobe.

Strickland was born in 1788 at Navesink, New Jersey, the son of John and Elizabeth Strickland. In 1801, he entered Latrobe’s office as a draftsman. Hamlin describes the young student at this time: “William Strickland was the youngest and the most brilliant, the one for whom Latrobe had the most admiration, but he was also the most ebullient, and the most intractable, so finally he had to be discharged.” During his apprenticeship, Strickland worked on plans for the United States Capitol.

Strickland’s first major commission came in 1818 when he won the competition for the Second Bank of the United States in Philadelphia. This building is considered the first major example of the Greek Revival movement in the United States. After his success with the Bank of the United States, Strickland became one of the most successful and respected architects in that city. During the early years of his career he designed the United States Mint, the Naval Asylum in Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Exchange built between 1832 and 1834. Because of diminishing commissions and a financial panic, Strickland and his family traveled to Europe in 1838.

In 1844, the committee in charge of building a capitol for Tennessee in Nashville approached Strickland asking if he might be interested in designing it. In 1845, as work began, Strickland identified the sources for his design: “The architecture of the building consists of a Doric basement, four Ionic porticos, surmounted by a

Corinthian tower. The porticos are after the order of the Erechtheum, and the tower from the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates at Athens.” Because the elevated site suggested the Acropolis in Athens, Strickland chose the Ionic order of the Erechtheum, as Thomas Jefferson had done at Richmond. The nineteenth-century Neoclassical aesthetic maintained a subtle distinction among the orders, the Doric as signifying strength; the Ionic, wisdom; and the Corinthian, beauty. Whereas the conventional format at the time combined a pedimented facade, a central dome, and flanking wings, Strickland designed a simple rectangular structure with pedimented porticos at both ends, and colonnades with entablatures but no pediments along the sides.

The Tennessee State Capitol was the culmination of Strickland’s career, but during the time he was overseeing its construction, he was busy working on other projects in Nashville, including the design of the tomb of President James Knox Polk, and two downtown Nashville churches, St. Mary’s Catholic Church and the First Presbyterian Church (now Downtown Presbyterian Church). The First Presbyterian Church (1848-1851) is considered to be the finest surviving example of Egyptian Revival architecture in the United States, although a Nashville newspaper admitted to bewilderment over a church “constructed (it is said) chiefly according to the Egyptian style of architecture.”

William Strickland became ill in 1851 because of the strain of overwork and pressure, and from then on he relied more and more on his son, Francis Strickland. In 1854, Strickland tried to have him appointed assistant architect. The legislature would not grant this and attempted to dismiss Strickland himself, or at least cut his salary.

These were but a few of the difficulties which beset Strickland during his tenure as state architect. He was criticized for the slowness of the work, but the legislature would not allot sufficient funds to continue more rapidly. The acoustics in the Senate chamber were found to be poor when the hall was first used in 1853. The design of the building was always admired, however, and Strickland’s ability as an architect was never questioned.

On April 6, 1854, William Strickland died in Nashville. He was interred in a niche in the north portico of the Capitol after the legislature had passed a resolution that he should be so honored.

During his long architectural career, Strickland enjoyed considerable success, although his career was occasionally interrupted by periods when work was scarce. In his designs, Strickland exemplified the best in American architecture, for he observed the three basic principles of architectural practice: the fitness of the plan, the solidity of the construction, and the proportion of the design. He is known today primarily as the architect of several great public buildings in the Greek Revival style. His Bank of the United States and Exchange in Philadelphia

and the Tennessee State Capitol both stand as classic examples of antebellum architecture.

Dekle, Clayton B. "The Tennessee State Capitol," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 25 (Fall 1996), pp. 213-238.

Gilchrist, Agnes Addison *William Strickland, Architect and Engineer*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950.

Gilchrist, Agnes Addison "Additions to William Strickland, Architect and Engineer," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 13 (October 1954).

Hamlin, Talbot *Greek Revival Architecture in America: Being an Account of Important Trends in American Architecture and America Life Prior to the War Between the States*. New York: Dover, 1964.

McNabb, William Ross *Another Look at William Strickland*, Master of Arts Thesis, Nashville, Vanderbilt University, 1971.

Mahoney, Nell Savage "William Strickland and the Building of Tennessee's Capitol, 1845-1854," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 4 (1945), pp. 99-111.

Pierson, William Harvey *American Buildings and Their Architects* Garden City. New Jersey: Anchor Books, 1976.

Severens, Kenneth *Southern Architecture: 350 Years of Distinctive American Buildings*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981.

"William Strickland," Obituary, *Nashville Daily Union and American*, April 8, 1854.

"William Strickland," Obituary, *Republican Banner and Nashville Whig*, April 8, 1854.

Wills, Jesse E. "An Echo from Egypt: A History of the Building Occupied by the First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 11 (1952), pp. 63-77.

Organization/Arrangement of Materials

The original arrangement of the collection maintained by the library has been retained. Items are ordered by "plate" number.

Conditions of Access and Use

Restrictions on Access:

No restrictions.

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:

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Index Terms

Personal/Family Names:

Binny, Andrew J., active 1830s-1840s
Camerer, Wm.
Haviland, John, 1792-1852
Latrobe, Benjamin Henry, 1764-1820
Mahan, D. H. (Dennis Hart), 1802-1871
Strickland, Francis W., 1818-1895
Strickland, Jesse Hartley, 1827-1899
Strickland, William, 1788-1854

Corporate Names/Organizations/Government Bodies:

Bank of the United States (1816-1836) -- Buildings
Blockley Almshouse
Broad Street Station Building (Philadelphia, Pa.)
Church of the Messiah (Baltimore, Md.)
Downtown Presbyterian Church (Nashville, Tenn.)
First Presbyterian Church (Nashville, Tenn.)
Halls of Justice (New York, N.Y.)
St. Andrew's Church (Philadelphia, Pa.)
St. James Church (Richmond, Va.)
Tennessee State Capitol (Nashville, Tenn.)
Trinity Church (West Chester, Pa.)
Washington Navy Yard

Subjects:

Architecture -- United States -- History -- 19th century
Bank buildings -- United States -- 19th century -- Designs and plans
Church buildings -- United States -- 19th century -- Designs and plans
Public buildings -- United States -- 19th century -- Designs and plans

Geographic Names:

Baltimore (Md.) -- History -- Sources
Blockley (Pa. : Township) -- History -- Sources
Burlington (N.J.) -- History -- Sources
Cairo (Ill.) -- History -- Sources
Delaware -- History -- Sources
Nashville (Tenn.) -- History -- Sources
New York (N.Y.) -- History -- Sources
Philadelphia (Pa.) -- History -- Sources
Washington (D.C.) -- History -- Sources
West Chester (Pa.) -- History -- Sources

Document Types:

Architectural drawings (visual works)
Conceptual drawings
Design development drawings
Preliminary sketches (sketches)

Acquisition and Appraisal**Provenance and Acquisition:**

Transferred from Library Technical Services on March 7, 2019.

Processing and Administrative Information**Preferred Citation:**

William Strickland Drawings, approximately 1800-1850s, Tennessee State Library and Archives

Processing Information:

Processing was completed by Lori D. Lockhart in March 2019.

Publication Note:

Carrott, Richard G. *The Egyptian Revival: Its Sources, Monuments, and Meanings, 1808-1858*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1978.

Gilchrist, Agnes Addison. *William Strickland: Architect and Engineer, 1788-1854*. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950.

DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

CONTAINER LIST

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Columned church façade, signed William Strickland, archt. [db# 42712]	undated	14	4
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Elevation, side and façade, and plan of second floor of town house [Neg. # 6327-X]	undated	15	44
Plan of Church of the Messiah, Baltimore, signed William Strickland, archt. (See Reese, Leah M. Hughes. <i>A History of Messiah, 1872-1972</i> . Baltimore, Md.: Church of the Messiah, 1972. See also correspondence in Strickland vertical file.) [Neg. # 6328-A]	undated	15	45
Architecture, parallel of the five orders, signed D. H. Mahan, Prof. Engr.	undated	15	46
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United States Bank, Philadelphia, signed Francis W. Strickland, archt. [Neg. # 6333]	April 20, 1833	15	48
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Floor plan, hall with galleries having seven 5x7 feet rooms on eight bays	undated	16	51
Plan of Broad Street Station for Columbia and Philadelphia Railroad, Philadelphia (See Gilchrist, <i>William Strickland</i> , p. 122)	undated	16	52
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Plan and longitudinal section of a light house to be constructed on the western end of the Delaware Breakwater, signed W. Strickland, Engr. [Neg. #s 6339, 6330-C; db# 44435]	circa 1823	16	56
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Design for a fort drawn by Wm. Camerer	undated	16	62
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Survey of prison lot and adjoining area in Philadelphia	undated	16	66
Survey of land for Blockley Township almshouse, protracted from the deeds by William Strickland, archt. and engr., Philadelphia [Neg. # 6327-D]	August 1, 1831	16	67
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2nd story plan for hotel [Neg. # 6330-D]	undated	16	69
Diagram of metal construction, signed F. W. Strickland, archt.	undated	16	70
Elevation of house and plan of first story, elevation to be drawn over again, Mr. Martin will please draw this plan over again and put the pyramid in the centre of the room--Take a fresh piece of paper, W. Sd. [Neg. # 6327-G]	undated	16	71
Fireplace, signed Francis W. Strickland, archt. "Evidently for fireplaces in Senate Room, Tennessee State Capital [sic]." (Gilchrist, William Strickland, architect, p. 121) This is believed to be one of the fireplaces formerly in the Senate Chamber of the capitol. (See <i>Tennessee State Capitol: Historic Structure Report</i> . Nashville, Tenn.: Tennessee Department of General Services, 1986, p. 20.) [db# 42719]	circa 1850s	16	72
Corinthian order, signed Andrew J. Binny (Missing as of July 1976)	undated	N/A	73
Contents/Item Title	Date	Box	Plate
[Plan for Tennessee State Capitol building by William Strickland], approximately 8 feet long, the drawing has a scale of $\frac{3}{4}$ an inch to the foot	circa 1844	1	74
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