The Cass Gilbert Lytchgate
St. Clement's Episcopal Church
St. Paul, Minnesota

Cass Gilbert was an architect most famous for designing the Woolworth Building in New York City—the tallest structure in the city when built. Before his New York career, he was the leading architect in Minnesota who designed the State Capital.

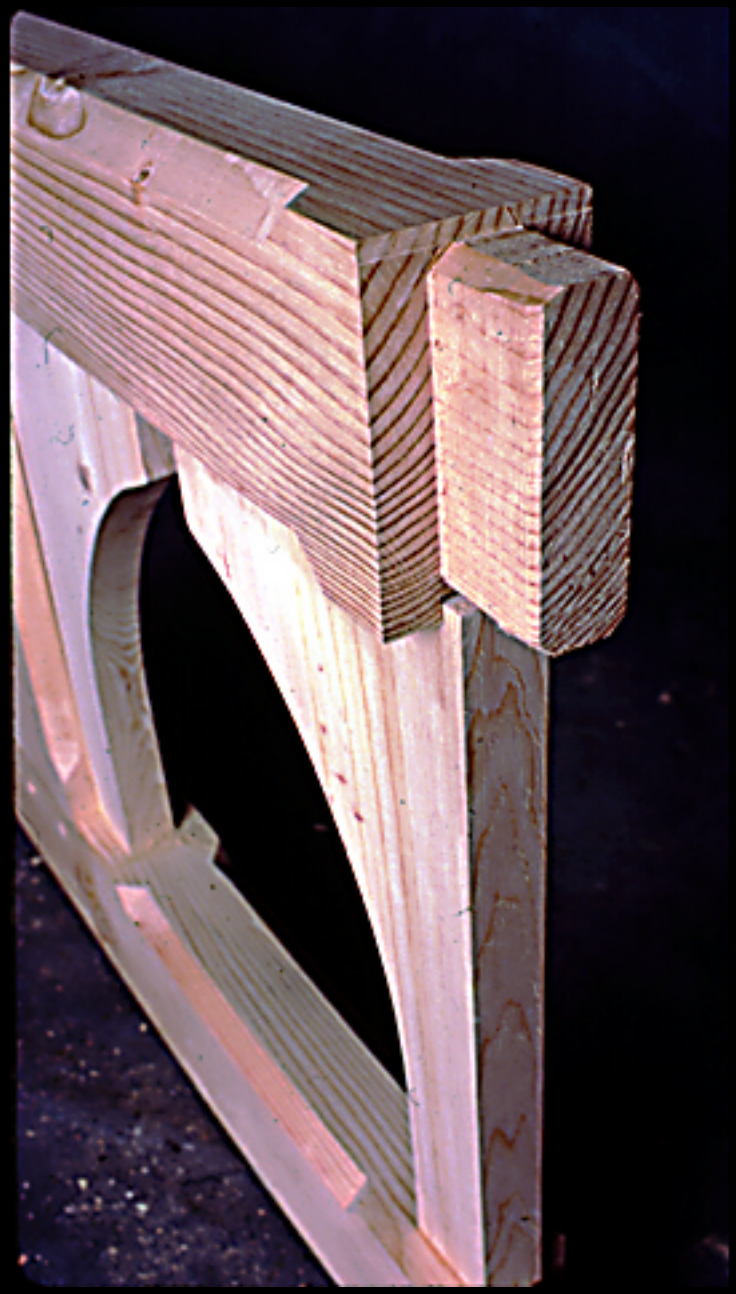
Lytchgates are extremely rare. Lytch is an Old English word for corpse and a lytchgate is an entrance to the church's graveyard. It is large enough to shelter a casket and the pallbearers.

St. Clement's never used its churchyard for graves. Nevertheless, their lytchgate was extremely popular with the parishioners—a drawing of it was used as the church logo and it was often used as a prop in wedding photos.

But 110 years of Minnesota weather had so thoroughly destroyed it that it had become a safety hazard. So the decision was reached that an exact replica should be crafted.

One of the least damaged parts of the original structure with its copy in the background.

Even the tenon depth was recreated.

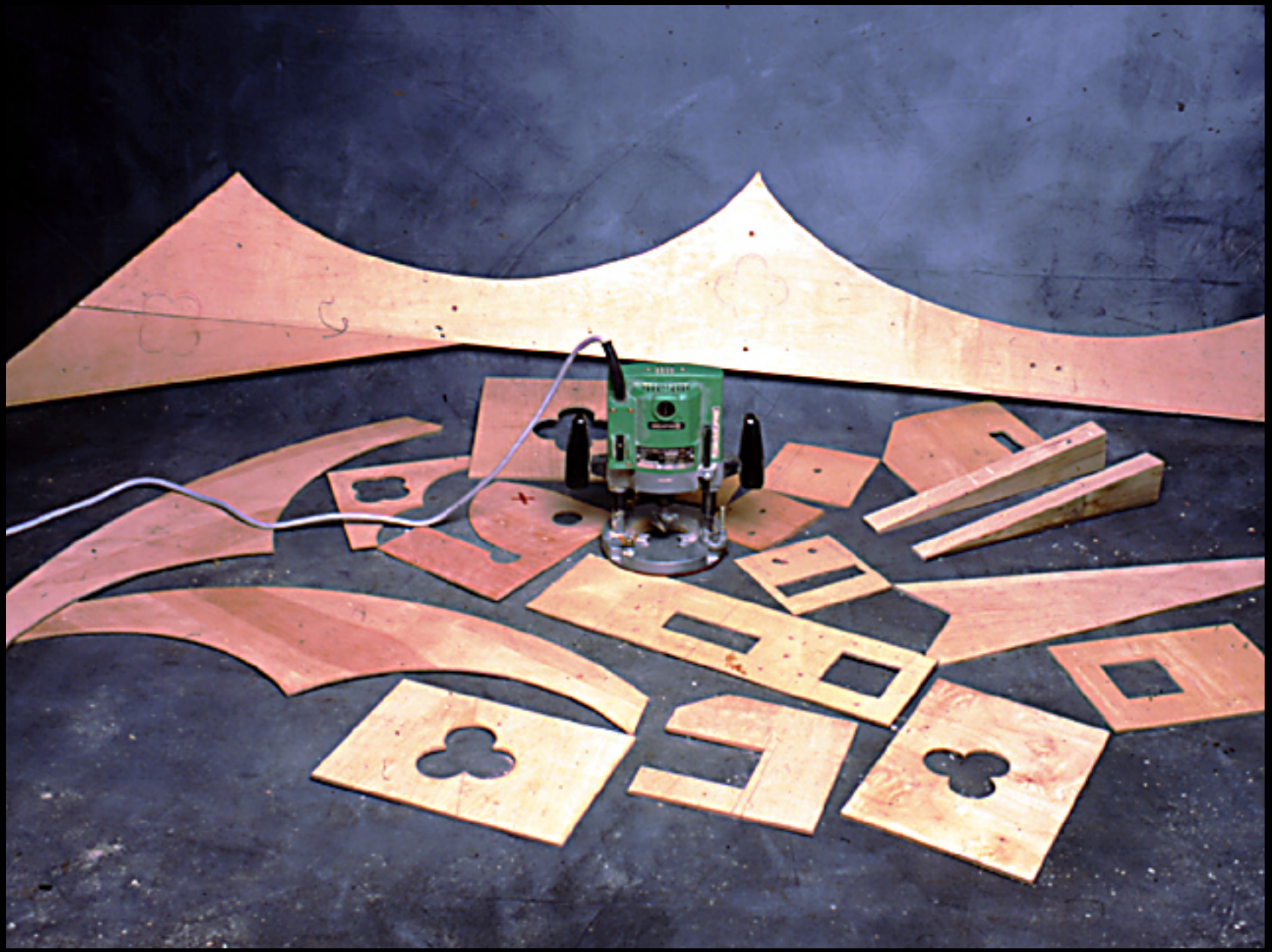


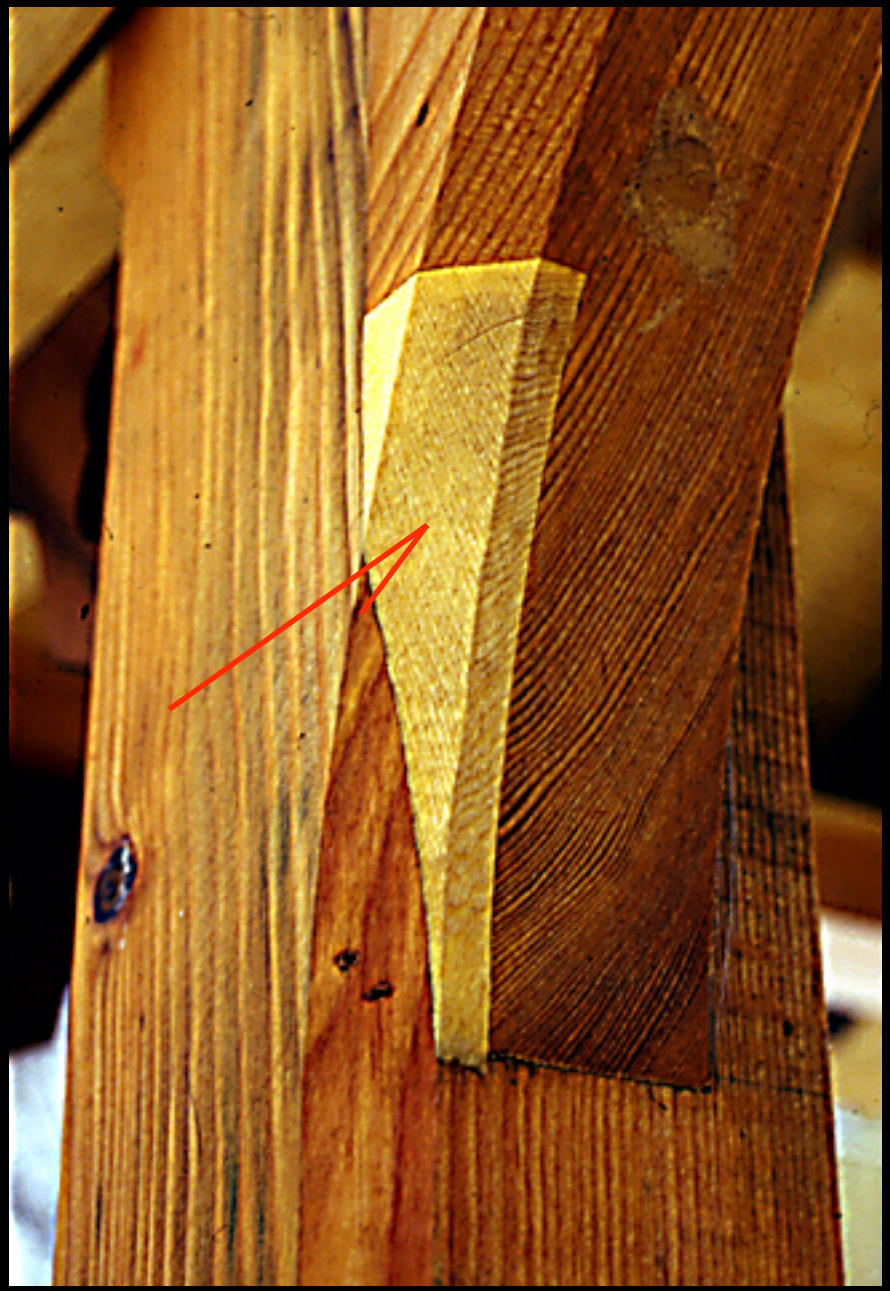
Trefoils and quatrefoils on the vergeboards were simple details that required exact placement.

Because the final structure would be painted, both fir and pine were used when availability of materials in correct dimensions became an issue.

Portions of the roof truss were pre-assembled for extra durability

The original structure was built with hand tools. The copy was crafted using patterns taken from the best available remaining parts and shaped using that 3.5 hp router in the center.





The pine detail on a fir part is also a copy of original practice.

The rebuilt lytchgate awaiting its coat of paint.

Note the precise symmetry of the structure. Milling parts to patterns using a big nasty router is one of a very few ways to accomplish this.