

Augustus D. Shepard - Architect

1868-1955

Part I



"THE GABLES" FANWOOD, AUGUSTUS D. SHEPARD

Augustus Dennis Shepard was born on February 4, 1868 in Scotch Plains, Union County, New Jersey. He was the second eldest child born to Augustus Dennis (Gus) Shepard Sr. and his wife Joanna Elizabeth Mead Shepard. The family home in Plainfield, Fanwood Twp., Union County, New Jersey was known as The Gables.

Augustus D. Shepard Sr. (1836-1913) was a successful banker and President of the American Bank Note Company at the time of

his death in 1913. Augustus' mother Joanna Elizabeth Mead (1842-1914), was the sister of the well-known architect William Rutherford Mead of the McKim, Mead, and White firm in New York City. According to the 1895 New Jersey Census, the Shepard household had five servants including three maids, a butler and coachman. The Shepard family belonged to the Crescent Avenue Presbyterian Church in Plainfield. Augustus Sr. and his wife Joanna Mead Shepard are buried in the Hillside Cemetery in Scotch Plains, New Jersey.

The children of Augustus & Joanna Shepard were in order of birth were:

- Elinor (Eleanor) Matilda SHEPARD (b. Dec. 11, 1865-d. April 30, 1948) –married John Doull MILLER on April 1, 1891. Her husband was a textile importer/exporter. Eleanor died at her home at 1421 Madison Ave., NYC at the age of 82 in 1948. She was survived by her two brothers; Augustus and Burritt and her three children; Robert Murdock Miller, Mildred Howell Miller and Marguerite Winthrop Miller CRIM.¹
- Augustus Dennis SHEPARD Jr. (b. Feb. 4, 1868-d. Oct. 30, 1955) – Augustus maintained a residence in New York City most of his adult life. Just prior to his wife Marie's death, the Shepards lived in Hemstead, Long Island with their two children and three servants according to the 1920 Federal Census. Other references from the 1930s noted Augustus Shepard of New York City and the Adirondack League Club, Old Forge, NY. His obituary in 1955 listed his residence as Darien, Connecticut. His burial location is unknown.

¹ 1900 Census: Elinor Shepard Miller b. Dec. 1866; John Doull Miller b. Jan. 1864 (England); Mildred Howell b. March 1896; Marguerite Winthrop b. July 1898; Robert Murdock b. Nov. 1899. A fourth child died as an infant. The family lived on East 9th St., Plainfield, Union Co., New Jersey with two female servants, a nurse, and a coachman. John Doull Miller died in 1925. Daughter Marguerite married William D. Crim and lived in Birmingham, Michigan at the time of her mother's death in 1948. Son Dr. Robert M. Miller lived in Summit, NJ in 1948. Daughter Mildred was unmarried and lived in NYC with her mother. She worked in real estate according to the 1930 Census. At the time of Elinor Shepard Miller's death in 1948, she had eight grandchildren.

- Burritt Hamilton SHEPARD (b. Sept. 13, 1869-d. March 12, 1949) - never married. He traveled to Europe with his future brother-in-law Osborn W. Bright in 1895. Burritt belonged to the Harvard Club in 1897. He was listed as an architect on his passport application in 1895 and in the 1900 Federal Census when he lived in a Manhattan apartment with his brother Augustus. The 1920 census listed Burritt as age 49 and single, sharing an apartment with his brother Rutherford. Burritt worked as a commercial hardware merchant at that time. In the 1930 Census, Burritt was employed as a salesman for the Stedman Rubber Co. and he lived in a men's club on East 60th St., Manhattan.
- Rutherford Mead SHEPARD (b. Oct. 4, 1874-d. Sept. 2, 1933) graduated with the Harvard Class of 1898 and was a member of Squadron "A." He married Winifred Prentiss KAY Feb. 23, 1907 in Boston – no known children. He worked as a stock broker and lived with Winifred, according to the 1930 Federal Census, in an apartment they owned on East 68th St. in Manhattan. Winifred was of Canadian-English descent. Rutherford died in 1933 at the age of 59.²
- Joanna Hayes (Daisy) SHEPARD (b. Oct. 1, 1876-d. Nov. 5, 1952) – married Osborn Wyckoff BRIGHT December 8, 1900 at Plainfield, NJ. Joanna Shepard Bright was living on their farm near Gibsonville, North Carolina in 1914 where her mother died there of heart disease. Joanna and Osborn later lived in NYC and were the parents of two daughters; Elinor and Johanna.³
- Frederick SHEPARD (b. July 30, 1879-d. May 14, 1946) – Married Charlotte LOWE on January 10, 1906, Grace Church, Plainfield, NJ; no known children. Frederick was a Harvard graduate. According to his wedding announcement, they left the ceremony to reside in Madison, WI. Charlotte's father William Ebbets LOWE was a member of the Adirondack League Club and owned a cottage called "Justimere."⁴ Frederick was an electrical engineer with Cates and Shepard Co., of Philadelphia at the time of his death in 1946.

Education:

Augustus D. Shepard graduated from school in Lawrenceville, NJ in 1889. According to his 1955 obituary, he studied architecture in the United States and abroad. He became a member of the Architectural League of New York in 1894.

Military Service:

Augustus served as an active member from 1894-1908 with Squadron "A" – an historic cavalry unit of New York City's Upper East Side. Shepard, a Quartermaster Sergeant, was known as a "crack-shot" who won several Squadron cups as a member of the revolver and rifle teams. He was a frequent "whip" for the Squadron's coaching team. In November of

² Obituary notice for Rutherford Mead Shepard in the NY Times, Sept. 4, 1933, p. 11. Winifred died in NYC in 1969. They are buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn, NY.

³ Obituary notice for Osborn Wyckoff Bright in the NY Times, April 16, 1933, p. 28. He died suddenly on April 15, 1933 and was the son of Osborn E. and Maria Wyckoff Bright.

⁴ Utica Daily Press, "Adirondack League Club," July 6, 1920, p. 12; Frederick's obituary listed in the NY Times, May 16, 1946. Wm. S. Wicks built a cottage for William E. Lowe on Lot #9, Little Moose Lake, in 1893.

1898, the New York Times noted Augustus was a member of the "Squadron A" new Armory committee.⁵

Marriage in 1908

Augustus D. Shepard was forty years of age when he married Marie Baxter Rees (1875-1921) in Asheville, North Carolina. Marie was born in New York City on April 23, 1875 and died of pneumonia, March 6, 1921 at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur F. Rees, Kenilworth Lodge, Biltmore, NC. She was buried at Riverside Cemetery in Asheville, North Carolina. Her parents were Arthur Frithyoff Rees (1847-1926) and Martha Elvira Baxter Rees (1850-1930).

Augustus & Marie's engagement was announced in the New York Times in October of 1907.

"Both Miss Rees and Mr. Shepard are well known in society and are popular among the younger set here and in Tuxedo and Long Island. Miss Rees is the great-granddaughter of Horace Baxter, who was Chief Justice of Vermont and granddaughter of Hans Rees of New York and Gen. Algernon Sidney Baxter, who served with distinction on Gen. Grant's staff and was a prominent figure in Wall Street in the late sixties. . . Mr. Shepard is an architect, a member of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the Architectural League and of several clubs. He has just returned from Jamestown as a member of Squadron A which escorted the Governor, and has been a member of its carbine and revolver teams for years. He is a keen sportsman, and has for years driven squadron coach on its daily runs. He is the nephew of William Rutherford Mead, the architect; Larkin G. Mead, the sculptor; W. D. Howells, the author, and Mrs. Elliott F. Shepard."

Wedding story from the Washington Post, "Social and Personal," April 18, 1908, p. 11;

"The New York guests will arrive at Asheville on Saturday in a special car to attend the wedding of Miss Marie E. Baxter Rees, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur W. Rees, and Mr. Augustus D. Shepard Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Augustus D. Shepard of the Gables, Fanwood, N. J. and nephew of Mrs. Elliot F. Shepard of New York, which takes place in All Souls' Church, Biltmore on Thursday, April 23, at 12 o'clock. Miss Rees will have as her attendants Mrs. Osborn W. Bright and Miss Edith Smalley of Netherwood, N. J., Miss Henrietta B. Rees, the sister of the bride, will be her maid of honor. After the ceremony, for which a beautiful music service has been specially arranged, a wedding breakfast will be served at Kenilworth Lodge, the home of the bride's parents. Mr. Burritt H. Shepard, a brother of the bridegroom, will be his best man. The ushers are to be Messrs. Rutherford M. Shepard, Osborn W. Bright, D. H. Morris, Col. Joseph Frelinghuysen, Col. John M. Stearnes Jr., Maj. Alfred R. Whitney Jr., Henry S. Thompson, and Harold B. Rees, of Biltmore. The parent of the bridegroom and Mr. and Mrs. John Miller, Mr. and Mrs. Osborn W. Bright, Mr. and Mrs. D. H. Morris, and Mr. and Mrs. Pierre A. Mall will be the guests of Mr. and Mrs. George W. Vanderbilt until after the wedding."

The children of Augustus & Marie Shepard were in order of birth were:

- Augustus D. Shepard III – listed in the 1910 Federal Census as approximately 1 ½ years old. The family lived on Park Ave. in Manhattan with two female servants. Augustus III is not mentioned in another other census records and appears to have died young.
- Marie Beatrice Shepard – (1910-1992) – "Beatrice" was only 11 years old when her mother died. She graduated from the all-girls private boarding Spence School in New York City, attended Vassar College and was introduced to society in 1929. She

⁵ Although his obituary stated he served in the Spanish American War, an 1899 anthology of Squadron "A" – renamed Troop "A" - New York Volunteer Cavalry during the war, did not list him as one of the members selected by lottery for service from this military organization.

married (1) Edward H. WRIGHT 3rd on October 5, 1933 in New York City. They had one daughter Sandra, born in January of 1939. Edward died at the age of 46 June 4, 1952, South Orange, New Jersey. Beatrice Shepard Wright married (2) Dave H. Coddington in the chapel of the Brick Presbyterian Church, South Orange, New Jersey on November 21, 1956. A divorce was granted in Miami, Dade Co. Florida in May of 1960. According to her obituary, Marie Beatrice Shepard Wright died December 4, 1992 at her home in Pompano Beach, Florida.

- William Bradford Shepard (1912-1981) – William was about eight years of age when his mother Marie Baxter Rees Shepard died in 1921. He attended the Berkshire School and graduated from Princeton University in the Class of 1936. William, like his father Augustus, was a member of Squadron "A." He served in the Navy during WW II and spent two years in the China-Burma-India theatre as a squadron commander of PT boats. William married Anthea Joy Layard Allen in 1947. Prior to her marriage, "Joy" lived for eight years in Ceylon where she was a volunteer aid with the St. John's Ambulance Corps and a welfare officer traveling with entertainment groups that performed for the Allied Forces. William and Joy had three known children: Penelope Gay, Melani Ann, and William Bradford L. Shepard. The family lived in Darien, Connecticut in 1955 at the time of his father Augustus' death. William B. Shepard died in June of 1981 in Miami, Dade Co., Florida as did his wife Joy on September 13, 2004.

Early Architectural Work:

Haydel & Shepard Architectural Firm

The pretty Westchester Co. village of Scarborough, NY along the Hudson River in the early 20th century was the site of several Vanderbilt, Astor, and Rockefeller family owned "country estates." In 1894, Margaret Vanderbilt Shepard commissioned the architectural firm of Haydel & Shepard to design a memorial to her husband Elliott F. Shepard. The chapel, known today as the Scarborough Presbyterian Church, was dedicated in May of 1895. The 42x168 ft. chapel was built of pink granite rubble trimmed with Indiana limestone and three nineteen foot stained-glass windows dominating the front façade. The granite was quarried from Col. Shepard's estate "Woodlea," a short distance south of the edifice. The interior included carved wooden pews for 350 people, mosaic tiled flooring, and a California redwood-paneled ceiling with carved wooden rosettes in the center along with a large skylight & electrical lights for evening services.



In October of 1896, Margaret Vanderbilt Shepard's daughter Edith was married at the chapel to Ernesto Fabbri before a gathering of many of the Fortune 500 Gilded Age society people. Augustus Dennis Shepard was an usher along with George W. Vanderbilt, the bride's uncle. The couple spent the first part of their honeymoon at Uncle George Vanderbilt's estate at Biltmore near Asheville, North Carolina before an extended trip to Europe.

In 1900, Shepard and partner Abner Haydel were credited with the design of his cousin Edith Shepard Fabbri's Beaux-Arts townhouse at 11 East 62nd St., Manhattan. It was commissioned by Edith's mother Margaret Vanderbilt Shepard, the widow of Elliott F. Shepard. The mansion's facade was framed by large pilasters, French windows with wrought-iron balconies, & a roofline topped by elaborate chimney stacks. It contained seven principle bedrooms and nine bedrooms for servants.



Ernesto Fabbri was the head of the Society of Italian Immigrants and the son of an Italian immigrant New York merchant. Edith and Ernest spent much of their married lives abroad but the 1910 Federal Census recorded them at 11 East 62nd Street along with their daughter, Ernesto's brother, and 11 servants including 2 Swedish cooks, an English butler, 2 English footmen, a Finnish lady's maid, and an Italian valet. A year after moving to Paris in 1911, the mansion was sold. In 1999, the NY Times reported the mansion was purchased for \$21 million to serve as a residence for the United Nation's Japanese Ambassador.

Augustus Shepard was a member of the Architectural League of New York in 1894 about the same time the Haydel partnership formed. Abner J. Haydel (1868-1941) was the son of a Louisiana farmer. Haydel & Shepard plans were noted in several 1890s Architectural League catalogues for their annual exhibits held in New York City. The 1898 catalogue listed five Haydel & Shepard architectural competition drawings for the New York Public Library. The Fabbri townhouse was likely one of the last joint ventures for Haydel & Shepard. By 1902, both architects were listed independently in the Architectural League's annual catalogue. Abner J. Haydel was a bachelor until 1911 when he married his wife Sophie who was born in Holland. Shortly afterwards, the couple moved to Los Angeles where Haydel died in 1941.

Augustus D. Shepard's obituary in the New York Times, October 2, 1955 described him as an architect who specialized in planning and designing country estates, mountain lodges, and a specialist in farm designs. His other works included office buildings, urban residences and churches. One of the country estates credited to Shepard is the Alfred Whitney Church residence called "The Chieftans" in Greenwich, Connecticut.

A brief summary of the 1988 *Ridgefield Press* article written by Peggie A. Carroll:

"Chieftans was named and originally developed between 1907 and 1911 by Alfred Whitney Church, heir to the Borden Milk fortune. It was to be a working farm as well as a home for the Church family."

"The name Chieftans was inspired by an old and completely self-sufficient town in Georgia called Chief Town, near the birthplace of Mrs. Church. Augustus Shepard, a New York architect of the Gilded Age, designed for the Churches, this rambling country manor home in the Adirondack cottage style."

"In 1925, Isaac Gimbel, a budding retail industry magnate, purchased the estate and eventually turned it over to his son Bernard in 1932. For six decades, the three-story mansion housed three generations of the Gimbel family."



The Chieftans

Two views featured in the *Ridgefield Press*, Nov. 16-18, 1988, Section B

Adirondack League Club:

In 1982, the [Adirondack Museum](#) in Blue Mountain, New York purchased a major collection of some 500 plans and drawings, primarily designed by Augustus D. Shepard. Many of the plans were for Shepard's commissions for lodges, cottages, and boathouses at the Adirondack League Club, established near Old Forge, NY in 1890 as a private preserve for sportsmen. A highlight of his work at the Club continues in Part II.

April 2009 - by Town of Webb Historian Peg Masters – historian@masterpieces.com