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Article Summary: Privately financed memorial buildings are unusual, making the Hastings Victory Building unique in Nebraska's architectural history. Moreover, its design indicates the symbolic importance of architectural style.

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Photographs / Images: Advertisement for The Victory Building, *Hastings Daily Tribune*, April 19, 1919; Photo by David Murphy of the Victory Building illustrating pronounced vertical emphasis; Sullivanesque renaissance cartouches; David Murphy photograph of entrances showing the repetition of the pediment motifs at the base of the corner pavilions

THE HASTINGS VICTORY BUILDING: A PERSONAL COMMEMORATION

By David Murphy

Seldom does one person's patriotism lead to the construction of a war memorial, particularly one which is also a functioning commercial building. The erection of structures having a purely commemorative purpose often follows great wars, and public buildings that memorialize are not uncommon; Nebraska's Capitol and the University of Nebraska's Memorial Stadium are two examples. Privately financed memorial buildings are unusual, however, making the Hastings Victory Building unique in Nebraska's architectural history. Moreover, its design indicates the symbolic importance of architectural style.

The Victory Building was conceived by pioneer businessman William M. Dutton, Sr. A native of Oskaloosa, Iowa, Dutton was co-founder in 1886 of J.H. Haney & Company, a wholesale harness and saddlery concern located in Hastings and Omaha.¹ Incorporated in 1918 as the W. M. Dutton & Sons Company, the nationally recognized harness manufacturer soon expanded under the guidance of Harry A. Lainson into a hardware jobbing house. Growth of the hardware wholesale and manufacturing business and the acquisition of controlling interest by Lainson in 1930 led to renaming the company "Dutton-Lainson," by which it is known today.²

Shortly after the 1918 reorganization

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Fig. 1. Hastings Daily Tribune, April 19, 1919.

Buy Victory Bonds Buy Victory Bonds

THE Victory Building

Will Be Erected at Corner of 2nd Street and St. Joe Avenue



Gold Dollars or Gold Stars

The building shown on this page is our Victory Building. We will build it with Victory Bonds if you care to sell them for this purpose. We will take your Victory Bonds at face value and give you in exchange 6 per cent preferred stock in our business, interest payable every 6 months.

**YOUR
VICTORY
BONDS**

BUY VICTORY BONDS

Put Adams county "over the top." Put a building in Hastings that will be a credit to the city and country.

We buy Liberty Bonds. Buy of our merchandise whatever you need.
We pay you the difference in cash.

Will bring the boys home;
Will pay our national obligation;
Will make it possible for men to have work;
Will give to Hastings a building as fine as any in the state.

35 Years

in business recognized as one of the successful concerns in the United States is a record that speaks for itself.

WILLIAM M. DUTTON

and just prior to Lainson's arrival on the scene, the W. M. Dutton & Sons Company began planning a new factory and warehouse at its Second and St. Joseph's Avenue location. Preliminary plans were completed by the end of World War I. On the eve of the 1919 Victory Bond Campaign, William Dutton, a man of extraordinary patriotism, had the idea to promote the campaign by redeeming Victory Bonds for six percent preferred stock in his company and at the same time, finance construction of the new building (Fig. 1).³ An advertisement in the *Hastings Daily Tribune* on April 19, 1919, referred to his proposed warehouse as the "Victory Building," adding that the purchase of Victory Bonds "Will bring the boys home; Will pay our national obligation; Will make it possible for our men to have work; Will give Hastings a building as fine as any in the state."⁴ Dutton's promotion helped put Adams County "over the top" in bond subscriptions, but financed only about ten percent of the building's construction cost.⁵

The new building was thoroughly modern technically and structurally. The fireproof, reinforced concrete frame structure was equipped with an automatic sprinkler system, steel sash windows, and enclosed stairwells with fire doors. Steel office furniture was used throughout. In every respect, the building was an exemplary product of contemporary industrial building construction.

Stylistically, however, the building's design changed radically from its original conception to its completion in 1920. The change reflected Dutton's determination that the building should serve a symbolic, as well as a utilitarian purpose. The redesign demonstrates how architectural form and style were seen as conveyors of meaning.

A photograph of an architect's rendering, which accompanied the April 19 newspaper advertisement, shows that the building's original design was late Renaissance Revival with some Prairie Style influences, executed in dark brick

with light terra cotta trim (see inset photo, Fig. 1).⁶ Horizontal terra-cotta belt courses surrounding the building at the top of the first story, at the heads and sills of the second story windows, at the top and bottom of the wall cornice between the fifth and sixth stories, at the top of the sixth story windows, and along the coping of the parapet wall atop the building, were designed to reduce the visual perception of the six-story building's height. The heads and sills of the windows between the piers of the third, fourth, and fifth floors were also horizontal terra cotta bands, while the walls between the windows of the sixth floor displayed alternating horizontal bands of brick and terra cotta.⁷

After Dutton decided that the building should commemorate America's victory in World War I, Hastings architect C. W. Way redesigned the exterior in the Sullivan-esque style of architecture. Because the war increased nationalistic sentiment and created hostility to things European, Architect Way shunned traditional European sources for architectural design, choosing instead to follow America's own inventive leader, Chicago architect Louis Sullivan.

In his writings Sullivan argued for both a functional and a democratic expression in architecture, and thought that a truly American architecture would ultimately be a democratic one.⁸ Sullivan's three-part functional emphasis on a base, shaft, and cornice had already gained widespread acceptance in American commercial building design, but examples of his inventive ornamentation were unusual in Nebraska.⁹

Way's redesign gave the Victory Building a pronounced vertical emphasis (Fig. 2). At the corners, pavilions were designed to project slightly from the body of the building, while at the same time rising significantly above the adjacent parapet walls. These vertical pavilions were made more prominent by the addition of three-part terra cotta pediments

within which were placed Sullivan-esque renaissance cartouches (Fig. 3). The central panel of each cartouche displayed a prominent "V B" to denote "Victory Building." Virtually all horizontal emphasis was removed, except that which defined the traditional three-part composition for the whole of the building, the base, shaft, and cornice. While the piers between the windows remained flush with the main wall, they rose vertically through all six floors, accented by recessed wall panels (spandrels) below the windows.

The overall rising effect of the building was enhanced further by vertically divided transom glass above the ground story windows, and by vertically divided three-over-one windows instead of the original six-over-six sash in the stories above (current views show that several of the second story windows have been replaced). Finally, a rising effect was also given the entrances by repeating the pediment motifs at the base of the corner pavilions (Fig. 4). The terra cotta panels above the entrances received the letter "D," denoting the "Dutton" company.

These important changes in the form and articulation of the building, together with a change in the stylistic treatment, achieved Dutton's commemorative intent. The decidedly vertical or "aspiring" character of the new design, marked by the pronounced corner pavilions, was more characteristic of monumental rather than industrial buildings. This particular formal treatment has no clear precedent in traditional American architecture, and appears here to be the architect's method of reinforcing the Victory Building's commemorative character without resorting to forms that might have suggested a public or religious building. Use of the stylized Sullivan-esque floral patterns in the

Fig. 2. David Murphy Photo (7805-17)



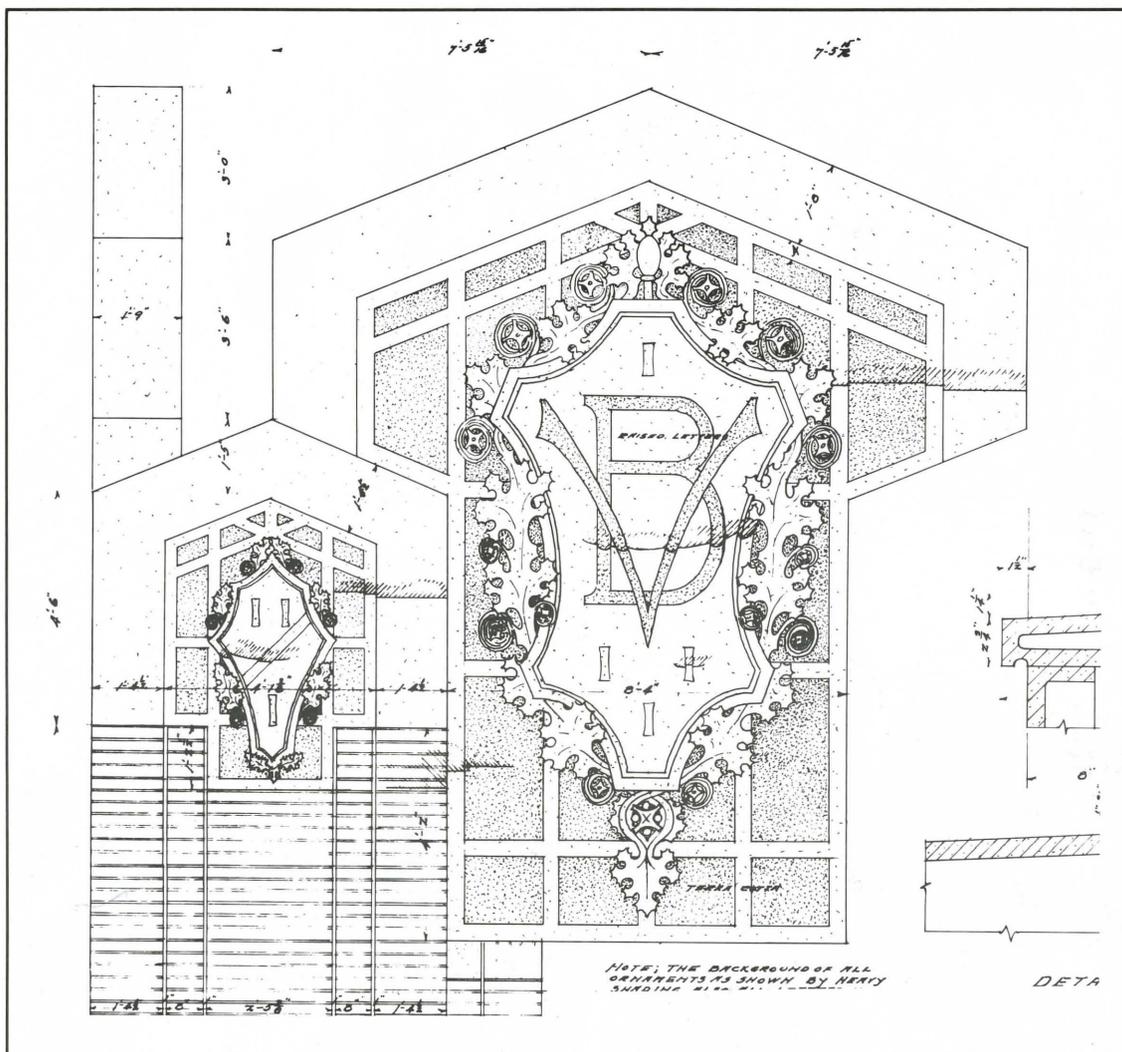


Fig. 3 (NSHS-H67.5-241)

pediments above the doors and atop the corner pavilions, and the medallions placed in the pavilions themselves, is unique in Nebraska and highly appropriate for the Victory Building's memorial purpose.

Architect C. W. Way's choice of Sullivan's "democratic" design principles as the starting point for the design of the Victory Building suited the situation. The Sullivanesque ornamentation, combined with the building's distinctive form, produced a structure explicitly American in style, com-

memorative in form, and in perfect harmony with William M. Dutton's intent.

NOTES

¹Dorothy Weyer Creigh, ed., *Adams County: The People, 1872-1972* (Hastings, Nebraska: Adams County-Hastings Centennial Commission, 1971), 66.

²Dorothy Weyer Creigh, *Adams County: The Story, 1872-1972* (Hastings, Nebraska: Adams County - Hastings Centennial Commission, 1972), 824-26.

³John J. Lainsion commented on Dutton's patriotism in an interview with the author, September 18, 1986.

⁴*Hastings Daily Tribune*, April 19, 1919.

⁵Creigh, *Adams County: The Story*, 103; Lainsion interview.

⁶The newspaper photograph of the architect's rendering is the only known record of the original proposal.

⁷Terra cotta was typically used during this period, often to give the appearance of stone trim. The specific material selection cannot be determined from the newspaper photograph.

⁸John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, *The Architecture of America: A Social and Cultural History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961) 204-5; Henry Russell Hitchcock, *Architecture; Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), 196-97, 241, 243.

⁹Burchard and Brown, *Architecture of America*, 256, 258-59.

Hastings Victory Building



Fig. 4. David Murphy Photo (7805-18)