

WILFRED ELIZUR GRIGGS

"Many of the beautiful homes and buildings in the City were planned by architect Griggs. Many monuments to his genius still exist."

— Waterbury Republican, July 25, 1918

Wilfred Elizur Griggs was born in Waterbury on May 2, 1866, a descendent of a family that settled in New England in 1635.

He attended the Waterbury English and Classical School and then worked at the Waterbury Clock Company for two years. In 1884, he enrolled at the Sheffield School of Yale University and subsequently went to Columbia University School of Mines where he studied architecture.

He returned to Waterbury in 1891 and worked with Robert Wakeman Hill, the dean of the city's local architects. The works of Hill included the old Waterbury City Hall, which burned down in 1912, the Trinity Episcopal Church and the Hall Memorial Chapel in Riverside Cemetery.

It was Griggs who created the city center of sophisticated and beautiful architecture. A walk around the Waterbury Green shows the Griggs skill in developing a lively streetscape of varying architectural styles which never compete with one another but present a joyful harmony. The Elton Hotel, the Masonic Temple (now part of the Mattatuck Museum), the Northrup and Hitchcock Apartments next door, the Odd Fellows Building on North Main Street, the Lilley Building and the original Mattatuck Museum show off his facility and knowledge of architectural history.

The Kendrick Avenue Court House, Howland-Hughes, the Seminary at Fiske University in Tennessee, and several schools in the city including Kingsbury, Hopeville, and Webster, are products of his masterful art.

Griggs was also a designer of factories and office buildings. This work included the plans for the Bristol Company, Farrell Foundry, American Brass and the Waterbury Clock Company offices on Cherry Street.

Griggs designed homes of classical stateliness and English country coziness. The former is apparent in the Tudor Revival home on Woodlawn Terrace which he created for Truman Lewis and the latter is reflected in the Georgian Revival house on Prospect Street that he did for Henry Wade, the President of the Waterbury Clock Company.

Griggs died on June 24, 1918. His legacy is Waterbury's core of civic and commercial architecture. Waterbury has many buildings produced by world-renowned architects, but it was Wilfred Griggs who created the setting which complements them.

