



The Plaza Hotel (1907) was so beloved by resident F. Scott Fitzgerald that Ernest Hemingway urged him to leave his liver to Princeton and his heart to this National Historic Landmark. Other devoted denizens: the Vanderbilts, the Beatles, and the fictitious Eloise of children's literature.

WHAT DO NEW BRUNSWICK'S *Geology Hall*
AND *Kirkpatrick Chapel* HAVE IN COMMON
WITH THE *Plaza*?



Henry Hardenbergh,

ONE OF THE GREATEST ARCHITECTS OF HIS TIME

Castles in the Air

BY BILL GLOVIN

IT WAS JUST PAST 9 A.M. ON OCTOBER 1, 1907, WHEN ALFRED GWYNNE Vanderbilt stepped from his limousine and walked into the great marble lobby of the Plaza in New York City. Hundreds of curious spectators stood behind barriers and gaped at the sight of the society types who were arriving for the hotel's opening. Alfred, the son of Cornelius Vanderbilt—the richest man in America—would be the first to sign the register. He had already committed to taking a permanent apartment in a building that many agreed couldn't be compared with anything on earth. ♦ The building's architect, Henry Janeway Hardenbergh, a slender, bald gentleman who favored a starched high collar and pearl stickpin, had arrived at 7 a.m. that morning with the horse-drawn fire engines in tow to observe a final fire drill. Rising at that hour hadn't been easy. He had been up late the previous evening, having attended a dinner for well-heeled tenants, the press, and public officials. He had been overwhelmed when glasses clinked to laud "the genius of Henry Hardenbergh and his great architectural triumph, the Plaza."

While Hardenbergh was accustomed to big openings for other projects—the Dakota Apartments, the Waldorf-Astoria, and the new Willard Hotel in Washington, DC—he had never seen such a parade of celebrities: famed actress Lillian Russell on the arm of “Diamond Jim” Brady, Mr. and Mrs. George Jay Gould, John Wanamaker of Philadelphia, Mark Twain, Oscar Hammerstein, and tobacco king Benjamin W. Duke.

He had devoted two full years to the project—about the same length of time it will take to transform the historic hotel into condominiums due to open later this year. After struggling to lay a new foundation where an older hotel had stood, Hardenbergh had spent what seemed like forever watching his balconies, loggias, and gables take shape above the three-story marble base. The developers had told him to spare no expense. He had even traveled to Europe for several weeks to outfit the building with Irish linens, French glassware, and British oak for the room that would become the famed Oak Bar.

For the 60-year-old architect at the height of his career, Rutgers College would have seemed very far away indeed. Family ties to Rutgers had led to his very first commission at age 22: a two-story addition to the Rutgers Preparatory School completed in 1870 and known today as Alexander Johnston Hall, an administrative building at the



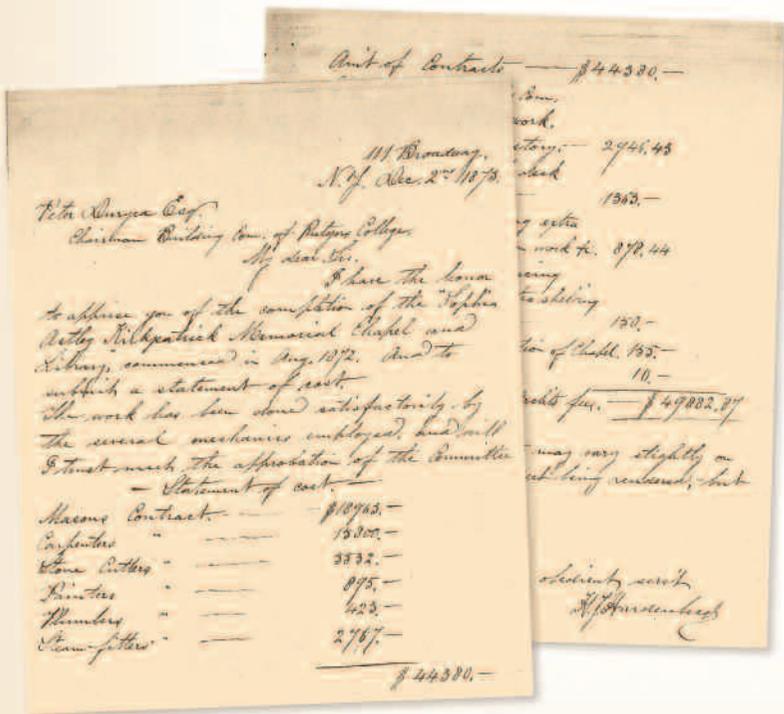
Geological Hall (1872), Hardenbergh's first complete commission, was built of stone rather than the expensive brick Hardenbergh had specified.

corner of College Avenue and Somerset Street in New Brunswick. His work, for which he charged \$312, received a very favorable review from the trustees and led to his next two Rutgers commissions, Geological Hall, known today as Geology Hall, and Kirkpatrick Chapel, bookends on either side of Old Queen's, the building where the president's office is located.

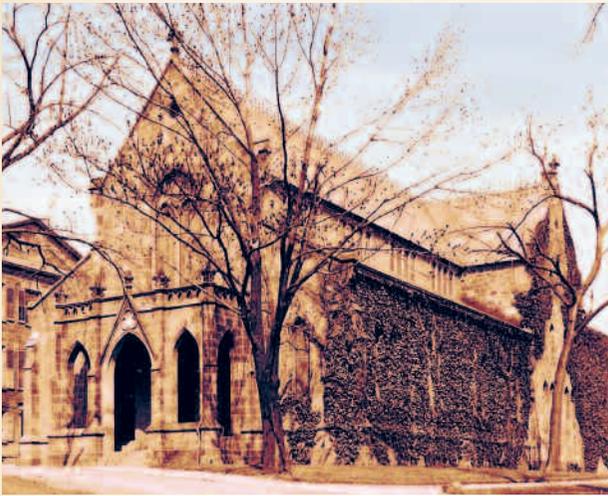
“Not many people realize that one of the most influential architects of his time and one of the great hotel architects in American history got his start at Rutgers,” says Elizabeth Reeves, an assistant planner in Rutgers' planning and development department. “Hardenbergh's buildings were proportioned to appear stately and monumental; the angular roofs, rich ornamentation, and stepped gables are all touches we first see at Rutgers. His Dutch heritage, a huge aesthetic influence in his early years, blended with his later use of other architectural styles, including Renaissance Revival, Beaux Arts, American Romanesque, and American High Victorian. One of the qualities that makes him so wonderful is that you can't really define his style as any one thing.”

Rutgers College, 1766–1916, a worn book with yellowed pages that sits in Alexander Library's Special Collections and University Archives, lists 12 Hardenberghs and 11 Janeways, two families that were instrumental to the very creation and survival of Rutgers. The Reverend Jacob Rutzen Hardenbergh, Henry's great-great-grandfather, became the college's first president in 1785. The Reverend Jacob Janeway, probably Henry's grandfather on his mother's side, was a Rutgers vice president who turned down the trustees' offer to become president in 1840.

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Kirkpatrick Chapel “will I trust meet the approbation of the Committee,” wrote the architect upon completion of the building.



With the **Sophia Astley Kirkpatrick Memorial Chapel (1873)**, the 26-year-old Hardenbergh dared to reject the fripperies of Victorian Gothic for a more restrained approach to Gothic architecture.

The Hardenbergh family farmhouse where the architect was born in 1847 still stands, a nondescript building clad with white aluminum siding on College Farm Road at Cook College. Two years later, Henry and his family—his father, John Pool Hardenbergh, a successful merchant and secretary of the Rutgers trustees; his mother, Frances Eliza; and four brothers and two sisters—moved to Jersey City, where he attended the Hasbrouck Institute, a local prep school. At 18, determined to become an architect, Hardenbergh apprenticed himself to Detlef Lienau, a well-known German architect based in New York City.

Hardenbergh's family ties to Henry Janeway RC'1844, a Rutgers trustee and building and grounds committee member who made his fortune in wallpaper, would soon become useful: Janeway helped Hardenbergh win the Rutgers Prep commission. It's also possible that assisting the young architect helped make up for the loss of Janeway's grandson, a Rutgers College sophomore who committed suicide in his grandfather's Livingston Avenue home in 1857.

The selection proved felicitous. The building committee's final report to the trustees, signed by Janeway on January 8, 1870, states: "[The prep school] has been erected in a most substantial manner, with all the modern improvements of Heating, Water, Gas, Ventilation, etc., under the plans and supervision of Henry J. Hardenbergh, Architect, who has performed his part to the entire satisfaction of the Committee."

Having earned the confidence of the trustees, Hardenbergh won another commission, this one sparked by the college's new federal land-grant status, a designation which mandated the teaching of agriculture, military tactics, and the mechanical arts. The trustees, using funds from Rutgers' first capital campaign, hired Hardenbergh to design one of the country's first geological halls, a building that would soon become commonplace at universities. His design provided for an armory in the basement, facilities

Big Man on Campus

RUTGERS IS HOPING TO USE HENRY HARDENBERGH'S
LINK TO THE UNIVERSITY TO PRESERVE ITS
ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

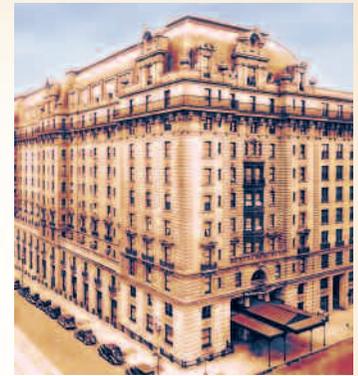
In 2000, Bill Selden, curator of the Geology Museum at Geology Hall, asked assistant planner Elizabeth Reeves for help in applying for a historical preservation grant to improve the museum's antiquated lighting and ventilation system. While researching the building, Reeves, who had just been hired, discovered that it had been designed by Henry Janeway Hardenbergh, a giant in the field of architecture and a name that she, as an architectural preservationist, knew well.

Geology Hall, Kirkpatrick Chapel (also a Hardenbergh design), and the four other buildings that make up the square block of Old Queen's campus, ringed by College Avenue and Somerset, George, and Hamilton streets, are considered among the country's best examples of 19th-century university architecture, says Reeves. John McComb, Jr., the architect of Manhattan's fabled City Hall, completed Old Queen's, the campus's oldest structure and a National Historic Landmark, in 1825. The block also includes Winants Hall, Rutgers' first dormitory; Van Nest Hall; and the Schanck Observatory. One of the original buildings, the President's House, no longer exists.

The New Brunswick/Piscataway campus has 12 buildings on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places; Camden has 16, and Newark 7. "The Old Queen's campus is already listed on the National Register; we want to try to elevate it to landmark status," says Peter Primavera LC'80, president of the Cultural Resource Consulting Group in Highland Park and cochair of the Alumni Advisory Committee for the College Avenue Redevelopment Project. "Landmark status, the highest ranking afforded a historical site, would open funding doors to help pay for the high maintenance costs of our many historic buildings."

In 2004, the university formed the Rutgers Heritage Preservation and Promotion Committee to find ways to promote its heritage. "When you hear William and Mary, you immediately think history," says Primavera. "We need to get people thinking that same way about Rutgers." Hardenbergh, he believes, is a link that might help the Old Queen's campus achieve National Landmark District status. The only institutions of higher learning that enjoy that status are the military academies in West Point, Annapolis, and Colorado Springs; the University of Virginia; Washington University in St. Louis; and Washington and Lee University in Virginia. If given the distinction, Rutgers would be the first of the eight colonial colleges on the list.





for physical sciences on the first floor, and a natural science museum on the second floor, which still exists today. Last-minute fiscal pressures forced Hardenbergh to use stone rather than brick as planned for the building, which was completed for \$63,000 and dedicated in June 1872.

On the heels of Geological Hall, Hardenbergh designed his third and last project for Rutgers: the privately funded Kirkpatrick Chapel, which opened in 1873. A photo of the building, which originally housed a library and offices, launched a 41-page feature on Hardenbergh's career in the Winter 1897 issue of *Architectural Record*. The story—a sure sign that Hardenbergh, only halfway through his career, had already created a lasting legacy—describes Kirkpatrick as being “a creditable piece of work, which is so straightforwardly designed that it cannot conceivably become ridiculous with any change in its surroundings.” The story called the chapel's triple porch, with its tall pointed openings and buttresses, and gable moldings, “one of its most attractive features.”

Hardenbergh continued to work near campus, designing Suydam Hall on Seminary Place for the New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1873. “After he completed Suydam Hall, the seminary hired Lienau to design our Sage Library,” says Norman Kansfield, former director of the seminary. “While Hardenbergh was just starting out, Lienau—the more accomplished architect—fashioned his building after Hardenbergh's Suydam Hall. That seems odd, doesn't it?” The fact that the more experienced architect took his cues from his former apprentice might have been a sign of things to come.

With four New Brunswick commissions under his belt, Hardenbergh set up his own practice in New York City. Family connections continued to propel his career. His older brother, Thomas, who held a prominent position with the Singer Sewing Machine Company, introduced Hardenbergh to the company founder and president, Edward S. Clark. One of the wealthiest men in the country, Clark had extensive real estate holdings in Manhattan and Cooperstown, New York.

Clark first employed Hardenbergh to design a variety of structures outside the city, including a row of three

attached cottages that are now part of the Inn at Cooperstown. Clark then tapped him to design two of Manhattan's earliest apartment buildings, the majestic Vancorlear (now demolished) in 1879 and the Dakota Apartments in 1880. The name of the fortress-like nine-story Dakota, which opened in 1884 and introduced elevators to the city, allegedly referred to the fact that the building was so far removed from Manhattan's established luxury residential areas that it might as well be in the Dakota Territory. The *New York Times*, looking back in 1918, said, “When completed, it was the finest structure of its kind in the world.” New York City architectural historian John Tauranac says that the 100-apartment Dakota was “considered a masterpiece in style and vision, and made it socially acceptable for the upper middle class to live in a building and share a roof on a permanent basis with other families.” The building, he says, “changed the city's social structure.”

Hardenbergh's burgeoning reputation led to projects with such wealthy families as the Astors, the Goulds, the Schermerhorns, and the Rhinelanders and with such companies as Western Union, Con Edison, and London and Lancashire Insurance. The Astors hired Hardenbergh in the early 1890s to create the original Waldorf-Astoria, built as two separate hotels and later combined into one on the site where the Empire State Building now stands. “It became the city's unofficial palace and created a new level of hotel life,” says Tauranac. “One of its great attributes was Peacock Alley, which had great throne chairs lining a long corridor. People would dress up, come to sit on those chairs, and watch the passing throngs. When presidents and royalty came to the city, they all stayed at the Waldorf.” In 1905, *Architectural Record* referred to the hotel—a 13-story structure that dwarfed the buildings around it—as a “skyscraper.”

With the Waldorf finished, the 46-year-old Hardenbergh's thoughts turned to matrimony. His bride, Emily Leeds Keene, was a divorcée and the daughter of John Leeds of Stamford, Connecticut, a direct descendant of Miles Standish. A small wedding announcement in the *New York Times* on June 29, 1893, reported that “no cards were sent out” and that “the couple left town immediately after the ceremony.” The couple had no children and lived



One contemporary architecture critic marveled that Hardenbergh had taken “his life in his hand” when he built the Dakota Apartments (far left) in 1884—at nine stories it was the first tall building along Central Park and was thought to “tower” over the even-then much-treasured urban retreat. But Hardenbergh survived to design another day: among the landmarks to spring from his drafting table are (from second left to right) Manhattan’s original Waldorf-Astoria (1893), the Willard Hotel (1901) in Washington, DC, and Boston’s Copley Plaza (1912).

at two Hardenbergh-designed residences: a big town house at 12 East 56th Street in Manhattan and at the Renemedé estate in Bernardsville’s Mountain Colony. They were married just six years when Emily died in 1899.

His wife’s death may have prompted Hardenbergh to take commissions farther afield. That year he traveled to Billings, Montana, to design a mansion for Preston Moss, one of the state’s wealthiest residents. Between 1901 and 1912, he designed the Raleigh and the Willard hotels in Washington, DC, the Windsor Hotel in Montreal, the Hotel Oakland in California, and the Copley Plaza in Boston. He periodically returned to New York and, in 1905, began work on the 815-room Plaza at an unprecedented cost of \$12 million. “For the Plaza, Hardenbergh reached into his bag of magic tricks and created his version of an overblown Loire Valley chateau,” says Tauranac. “The Plaza’s site allows the building to be viewed in its entirety from many points of view and considerable distances. It took over where the Waldorf left off.”

Hardenbergh’s life has gone largely undocumented; he left no memoir and no one has yet ventured to write his biography, but references from a variety of sources hint at his character. A 1931 letter to the *New York Times* lamenting the demise of the Waldorf recounted Hardenbergh’s “charming personality, which made him friends to all with whom he became associated in the arts.” At a dinner in Hardenbergh’s honor, a close associate revealed that the architect “was once a tragedian, and I am told he has sometimes regretted that he ever forsook the footlights.” In a 1906 *Architectural Record* interview at his office adjacent to the Waldorf, Hardenbergh is described as “Napoleonic in stature, but of wiry build, with a shrewd, worldly-wise expression in his eyes.” Hardenbergh sat at a desk perched on an elevated platform, which, the writer recounts, “obliged me to look up at him. To every 10 words I muttered, Mr. Hardenbergh had, at least, 200 to his credit.”

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A year later, Hardenbergh turned his gaze back to New Jersey when his younger brother, William, who was president of the New Jersey Zinc Company, introduced him to the Palmers, the company’s owners and Princeton University alumni. The Palmers hired Hardenbergh to design a physics laboratory, which was used during World War II for weapons research as part of the Manhattan Project and renovated into the Frist Campus Center in 2000. Hardenbergh also designed the U-shaped Palmer Stadium, completed in 1914 and demolished in 1997.

Still, Rutgers always remained close to his heart. In 1910, Hardenbergh helped Rutgers trustees choose an architect for the new Chemistry Building, known today as Milledoler Hall, on Voorhees Mall and donated his design skills six years later when his brother William gave \$10,000 toward extensive renovations to Kirkpatrick’s interior. The brothers, in memory of their great-great-grandfather, also gave the chapel a much-admired stained glass window, “Jesus, the Teacher of the Ages.” A grateful Rutgers president, William H.S. Demarest, presented Henry with an honorary degree in the newly renovated chapel later that year.

World War I and the resulting dip in new construction slowed Hardenbergh’s career. The Con Edison building at East 14th Street and Irving Place in Manhattan would be his last project. Hardenbergh, the architect who single-handedly defined the American luxury hotel, died in his Manhattan home on March 13, 1918, at the age of 71. He left Rutgers the equivalent today of almost \$300,000, plus his collection of family papers and books. Soon after, *Architectural Record* called Hardenbergh “one of the most august and inspiring figures that American architecture has produced.” □

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