



Edward Bates Franzheim – *Business, Industry and Professions*

Edward Bates Franzheim was one of Wheeling's preeminent architects of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One of seven children and the youngest son of a prominent Wheeling family, he was born on July 20, 1866. He was educated at Linsly Institute (now Linsly School), then attended classes at Chauncey Hall in Boston, a preparatory school for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was among the first Wheeling architects to procure a formal academic training in his profession. Then he benefited from a six-year apprenticeship with noted Boston architect John H. Sturgis and subsequently studied abroad, which greatly expanded his knowledge of the architectural trends of the time.

Edward Franzheim returned to Wheeling in 1890 to open his own office. He soon developed a thriving practice, as Wheeling's economy was booming. Among his most famous works in the city is Vance Memorial Presbyterian Church, completed 1896, which demonstrates his love for and mastery of the Richardsonian Romanesque style of design. Patterned after the Trinity Church in Boston, Vance Church is an exuberant masonry building with a cylindrical bell tower, rows of columns connected by rounded arches, and roofed with red terra cotta tiles hinting of a Spanish influence. Another such example of the Richardsonian style is the City Bank of Wheeling, now the Professional Building located at 1300 Market Street, completed in 1891.

Franzheim also loved the neo-classical style, as exhibited in the homes he designed for various local wealthy patrons, such as the Joseph Schenk Mansion known as "Uplands" (now Altenheim at 1387 National Road); the Henry Stifel home known as "Shadow Knoll"; and the neoclassical portico of the Oglebay Mansion Museum (former home of Earl Oglebay). The striking "Blue Church" at the corner of 12th and Jacob Streets resembles a Doric temple. The public has long enjoyed the Wheeling Park White Palace and the ornate neoclassical stone gates gracing the entrance to Wheeling Park.

By 1902, Franzheim was one of the most successful architects in the state. In that year he designed the Board of Trade Building at the corner of 12th and Chapline Streets, which also contained the spacious Court Theatre. He incorporated Palladian and Neo-Renaissance elements in the YWCA building at the corner of 10th and Chapline Streets, the Hazel-Atlas Glass Building on 14th Street, and the former headquarters of Sterling Products in East Wheeling. Other similar notable designs included the headquarters of the Schmulbach Brewing Company (later the headquarters of Wheeling Steel Corporation, Wheeling's tallest building); the former Ohio Valley General Hospital (Ohio Valley Medical Center); as well as the Rex Theatre, the Rogers Hotel, and the Fort Henry Club, all in downtown Wheeling. He is remembered for several apartment buildings still used as such, including the Virginia Apartments on Main Street near the Fort Henry Bridge; and the beautiful Spanish Mission style design of the El Villa Apartments at 1153 National Road, Wheeling. Lastly, the mansions of several oil barons in Sistersville are a tribute to Franzheim's prodigious design skills.

He loved the theatre, managing the Court Theatre for five years. As a founder of the local Players Club, he enjoyed authoring plays and often starred in their productions. Known as a "bon vivant", Franzheim was very stylish. He carried a yellow cane and gloves, wore spats in season, and served on many civic boards around town. The onset of the 1929 Great Depression put a severe dent in his architectural practice, however, which never fully recovered.

Franzheim died on May 11, 1942, at age 75 after a period of declining health, but his many surviving works in the local area attest to his enduring legacy.