

Bauer, Adolphus Gustavus ^[1]

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by Beth Crabtree, 1979; Revised by Andrea Smythe, SLNC Government and Heritage Library, December 2023

December 4, 1858–May 14, 1898

See also: [Bauer, Rachael Blythe](#) ^[2]



Governor's Mansion, Raleigh, North Carolina, ca. 1980. Photo by Carol Highsmith. Image courtesy of Library of Congress.

^[3]

Adolphus Gustavus Bauer, architect, was born in Martinsburg, West Virginia. His parents were Frederick and Sophia Bauer, immigrants from Hanover and Brunswick, Germany. He was the youngest of nine children. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from [Bethany College](#) ^[4], West Virginia, in June 1879. In his memoirs, Bauer states that his parents moved to Bellaire, Ohio, when he was ten years old. However, census records for 1870 list the Bauer family, including eleven-year-old Adolphus, as still living in West Virginia. By the 1880 Census, the family had relocated to Bellaire, Ohio. Bauer was apprenticed in the tinners' trade from age thirteen and he learned the trade for four years. His memoirs claim that at some point he ran away from home to join the circus because he was an "accomplished gymnast."

Bauer moved to Pennsylvania where he worked as a tinsmith while studying "business at Iron City Business College." In 1881, he entered the Philadelphia School of Fine Arts. The same year, he met [Samuel Sloan](#) ^[5], a well-known Philadelphia architect, and began working for him as a draftsman. Bauer went to Raleigh, N.C., to work with Sloan in 1883.

Sloan designed some of the finest public buildings in the country and was particularly noted for his work on mental hospitals. Bauer worked with him on numerous projects, including the state hospitals at Morganton and at Columbia, S.C. One of the most distinctive buildings designed by Sloan and Bauer was the [Governor's Mansion](#) ^[6] in Raleigh. Sloan died in 1884 before completion of the house. Bauer, along with established and well-known architect [William Jackson Hicks](#) ^[7], continued to work on the mansion and other existing commissions such as the [Memorial Hall](#) ^[8] at UNC Chapel Hill. However, Bauer struggled to find new

commissions while living in Raleigh. He advertised as draftsman and consulting architect for “cottages, villas, city dwellings, churches, schools, banks, hotels, railroad depots, county jails and court houses, stores, opera houses, farm houses, factories, and model barns and stables—from the most artistic and costly to the plainest and cheapest—of stone, brick or frame construction.” His advertisements also stated he would provide plans for machinery, bridges, monuments, furniture, and landscape architecture.

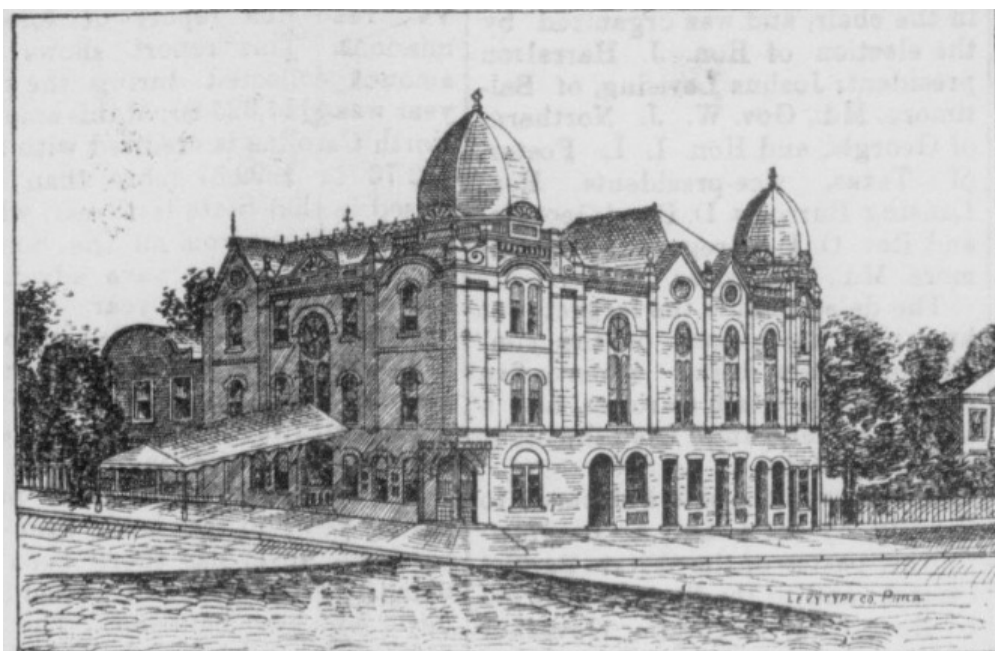
Bauer moved to Wilmington in 1887 where he designed several buildings. A design project for Rufus Hicks exceeded the estimated cost and created a dispute between Hicks and Bauer. Bauer left Wilmington to avoid paying to complete the project at his own expense. On October 13, 1889, Bauer boarded a steamer in New York and traveled abroad for several months, visiting Scotland, England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the northern coast of Africa.



A photograph of the N.C. School for the Deaf and Dumb located in Morganton in 1896.

^[9]Upon returning to the United States, Bauer worked at architectural firms in New York, Chicago, Atlanta, and Lexington, Kentucky before opening his own firm in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Bauer returned to Raleigh in 1891 after North Carolina's governor, Daniel G. Fowler, requested that he submit design plans for new state buildings. His work after his return “established him as one of the state's most important nineteenth-century architects.” Bauer's design for the Western School for the Deaf and Dumb (now the North Carolina School for the Deaf ^[10]) in Morganton was modeled after one of Sloan's designs in Philadelphia. Bauer designed and oversaw additions to the Western Insane Asylum (now Broughton Hospital ^[11]) and Dorothea Dix Hospital ^[12]. Bauer also received several commissions for private work which included the Academy of Music, the Pullen Building, the Park Hotel, the Baptist Female Seminary (now Meredith College ^[13]), and the Lucy Capehart House ^[14].

In June 1895, Bauer married a Cherokee woman named Rachel Johnson Blythe ^[2]. The marriage took place in the home of Rachel's former professor, J.P. Matheny, in Washington, D.C. on June 18, 1895. Newspaper announcements shared that the marriage was performed in D.C. due to North Carolina's miscegenation laws ^[15]. Miscegenation laws prohibited the marriage between a white person and anyone of Black or American Indian descent. Rachel was educated at Oxford Orphan's Asylum and later studied stenography at the Raleigh Business College. She completed her studies in 1891 and began working as a stenographer and typewriter at the insurance office of R.D. Robinson. Rachel joined the First Presbyterian Church, and the couple lived near the corner of North Wilmington and Jones streets. The Bauers had two children, a daughter, Owena(h), and a son, Fred ^[16].



An architectural sketch of the Academy of Music. Image courtesy of DigitalNC.org.

^[17]In May 1896, A.G. Bauer was struck by a train while traveling in an open buggy. Newspaper accounts ^[18] of the incident state that “the vehicle and occupants were carried nearly a hundred feet down the track.” Bauer received a head injury from the accident that left him unconscious and hospitalized for weeks. After regaining consciousness, Bauer was moved to the State Insane Asylum (now Dorothea Dix Hospital) for further treatment as he was having episodes of violence. Bauer continued to suffer from headaches, dizziness, and depression for the remainder of his life due to the traumatic brain injury. Bauer was also unable to work and became financially distressed. Bauer sued the railroad company for \$20,000, but ultimately settled for the much smaller amount of \$2,500. In one letter to his sister, Bauer stated that “physically there is no damage apparent. All the damage is in my mind, and not revealed to view and justice would have been withheld for this cause, so to avoid worry (?), I compromised.” Commissions for Bauer’s services significantly declined after the accident in part due to his lengthy recovery and ongoing physical problems. Bauer himself stated, “when people read from the papers that I was dying, or if I did not die, I would never be able to do work again, they all went to other Architects, and so when I got well enough to get out and try to work, there was nothing to do but a couple of jobs. If I had them on hand, however, I [would] not feel competent or able to attend to them.”

Bauer’s wife, Rachel, died in January 1897, just a year and a half after she and Bauer were married. Owena was 15 months old and Fred was just two weeks old. After Rachel’s death, Owena and Fred were sent to live with extended family as Bauer was in poor health due to his traumatic brain injury. Owena may have split her time between her family in Ohio and Qualla Township, N.C. Census records list her as the ward of James Blythe, but also show her as living in Ohio in the home of John and Augusta Schick, Bauer’s brother-in-law and sister. Owena later married Roy Frye of Ohio. The 1898 census records reveal that Fred lived with his great-half-uncle, James Blythe. He attended the Carlisle Indian School ^[19], a “government run boarding school for Native Americans... with the goal of forced assimilation,” in Pennsylvania from 1911 until the school closed in 1918. Fred married Catherine A. Dotterwick in 1927. He served as the vice-chief of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian tribe from 1935 to 1939.

On May 12, 1898, A.G. Bauer died by suicide. He left a note that stated “that if I, by violence to myself should die, I wish to be buried by the side of my wife, in Raleigh, N.C., where I have so long sojourned and among the Southern people I have liked so well.” He was buried in Oakwood Cemetery ^[20] next to the monument erected to Rachel Blythe Bauer.

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Additional Resources:

A.G. Bauer in Rare & Unique Collections, NCSU Libreres: [http://d.lib.ncsu.edu/collections/catalog?f\[names_facet\]\[\]=Bauer%2C+Gustavus+Adolphus](http://d.lib.ncsu.edu/collections/catalog?f[names_facet][]=Bauer%2C+Gustavus+Adolphus) ^[34]

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