Milburn, Frank Pierce [1]

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by Lawrence Wodehouse, 1991

12 Dec. 1868–22 Sept. 1926

See also: Independence Building [2]

Frank Pierce Milburn, architect and designer of numerous structures in most states south of the Mason-Dixon Line, was born in Bowling Green, Ky. His father, Thomas Thurmond Milburn, was a building contractor who emigrated from Scotland just after the Civil War.

Educated at Arkansas University and the Arkansas Industrial University at Fayetteville, Ark., Milburn lived from 1884 to 1889 in Louisville, Ky., where, in association with his father, he offered the services of architect and builder. In this manner Milburn and his father built the Clay County Courthouse at Manchester, Ky. From 1890 to 1893 Milburn worked in and around Kenovia, W.Va., and then moved to Winston, N.C., where he designed the Forsyth County Courthouse and Wachovia Bank building and the Mecklenburg County Courthouse at Charlotte. During the first fifteen years of practice, he designed nineteen railroad stations, including Union Station, Durham, in 1901 (demolished 1967); twenty-six county courthouses; fifteen residences; nine college buildings, of which five were for The University of North Carolina [3] (Milburn ultimately designed thirteen halls on the campus); and churches, offices, banks, schools, and jails.

Stylistically, he was eclectic, as were his contemporaries, using one of the classic styles for governmental and college buildings and Gothic for religious structures; for other buildings, he employed a mixture of styles usually termed Queen Anne [4], the composition and arrangement of parts being the architect's artistic expression. He also followed in the footsteps of such nationally famed architects as H. H. Richardson [5], Louis Sullivan [6], Richard Morris Hunt, McKim, Mead, and White, and Frank Lloyd Wright [7].

Milburn enlarged the state capitols of Tallahassee, Fla., and Columbia, S.C., and projected another at Frankfurt, Ky., and the enlargement of the North Carolina capitol at Raleigh; neither of the latter proposals was accepted. Cities in North Carolina containing Milburn buildings include Asheville (Buncombe County Courthouse, thought by Milburn's son to be his best design), Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Durham, Elizabeth City, Gastonia, Goldsboro, Greensboro, Henderson, Oak Ridge, Raleigh, Salisbury, and Winston-Salem. Many of his designs were published in a series of books, copies of which are in the Library of Congress and at The University of North Carolina. Entitled *Designs from the Work of Frank P. Milburn*, editions date from 1901, 1903, and 1905; some are undated and one dates as late as 1922 in association with Michael Heister, each publication adding information, illustrating more designs, and invariably containing a portrait. Heister joined Milburn as a partner when he moved to Washington, D.C., in 1902 to become architect of the Southern Railway Company [8]; Milburn's son, Thomas Yancey, who was graduated from The University of North Carolina [3] in 1915 and studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, joined the firm sometime before 1920.

During thirty-six years of practice, Milburn designed at least 250 major structures in addition to domestic architecture of a residential scale. He died in Asheville, N.C. Obituaries appeared in the 23 Sept. 1926 editions of the Washington *Evening Star* and the *Charlotte Observer* [9].

In 1890 Milburn married Lenora Lyttle, the daughter of Judge David Yancey Lyttle. They had two children. Thomas Yancey, born in Staunton, Ky., became president of the architectural firm after his father's death; the firm had an office in Durham, where he retired in 1952. The second child, Fay C., born in Barbourville, Ky., in 1896, lived in St. Petersburg, Fla.

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