COLUMBUS, INDIANA: EERO SAARINEN’S LEGACY

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Introduction

Columbus, Indiana, a small city of only 44,000 people, reached world acclaim for its architectural and allied design excellence, particularly for its high concentration of modern and postmodern architecture, in the late third of the 20th century. The city, often referred to as the “Athens of the Prairie” or a “Modernist Mecca,” contains a vast and growing list of well-designed buildings and landscapes that have drastically improved the community’s quality of life. Attracting some of the nation’s premier firms and architects, the community features the works of sixteen American Institute of Architects (AIA) Architecture Firm Award winners, eight AIA Gold Medal winners, and four Pritzker Architecture Prize winners. The city also includes six buildings that have been designated National Historic Landmarks. The area’s collection of over 70 buildings has earned Columbus the sixth rank among American cities for architectural innovation and design by the AIA, following cities like New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Boston, and Washington, D.C.¹

Just as interesting and unique as the city’s architecture is the story behind how Columbus became the architectural gem of the Midwest. Although residents are aware of a few well-known details, the phenomenon that produced this “Modernist Mecca” has
been largely undocumented and unexplored. This graduate thesis will explain how Columbus’ built environment developed by focusing on the individuals most responsible for this achievement. Columbus’ excellence in design, which includes both private and public commissions, is often credited to J. Irwin Miller, an industrialist known for his local and national leadership. Miller’s financial and civic support for the design of many of Columbus’ buildings has led him to be hailed as one of the greatest architectural patrons of the 20th century. Although he certainly deserves credit for his leadership, advocacy, and investment, he is not the only individual responsible for the city’s extraordinary architectural feat. Eero Saarinen, one of the nation’s most famous modern architects, designed four buildings in the city, all of which are National Historic Landmarks. Although Saarinen played an integral role as architect in the city, this thesis will explore Eero Saarinen’s involvement in influencing the city’s architectural development.

Saarinen’s role in Columbus’ architectural development has been alluded to in previous publications. In “Modernism in Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Design and Art in Bartholomew County, Indiana, 1942-1965, National Historic Landmark Theme Study,” the authors reveal Saarinen provided the inspiration for Cummins Engine architecture program as well as served on the programs’ initial selection panels. Furthermore, Will Miller, son of J. Irwin Miller, briefly writes about Saarinen selecting architects and using his own reputation to secure interest in the program in “Eero and
Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One’s Ancestors, "a chapter in Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future." While both of these works recognize Saarinen’s role in Columbus’ quest for design excellence, this is not their primary focus. With this as its sole concentration; this graduate thesis will develop an entirely original perspective on Eero Saarinen’s legacy in Columbus, Indiana.

Scope

To fully understand Saarinen’s involvement, one must first understand Columbus’ architectural development. The majority of its modern and postmodern buildings were funded through three main sources: Irwin Union Bank and Trust, Cummins Engine Company, and Cummins Engine Foundation. Under the leadership of J. Irwin Miller, both Irwin Union Bank and Trust and Cummins Engine Company adapted a corporate design philosophy starting in the 1950’s. During the same time period, Miller established the Cummins Engine Foundation, the company’s corporate philanthropy arm, in 1954. Shortly after, the Cummins Engine Foundation launched its innovative architecture program to patron local public commissions. The program offered to pay design fees for all public buildings in Bartholomew County if the client selected from a list of recommended architects. Although not the first in Columbus to embrace modernism, these three organizations helped form the city’s identity and later inspired other local organizations to commission modern structures. Due to their volume, significance, and ties to J. Irwin Miller, the role of these organizations will define the scope of this thesis.

Columbus first embraced modernism in 1942 with the construction of First Christian Church, formerly Tabernacle Christian Church. Today, many in the community continue to promote design excellence as they add to Columbus’ growing
design reputation. In this seventy-year era, the bulk of projects were constructed between 1957 and 1973. This period has become known as the building boom due to the high consistency of projects, averaging over one per year. This period also represents the formative years for all three major Columbus patrons’ design philosophies. Furthermore, this period encompasses J. Irwin Miller’s corporate leadership as well as the years surrounding Eero’s Saarinen’s unexpected death in 1961. Although this thesis will cover all of Columbus’ architectural development history, the majority of it will focus on the building boom period due to the influence it had in the following decades.

**Methodology**

This thesis was undertaken in two parts. First, research was conducted to better understand the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program and Miller’s corporate design philosophy. This included an in-depth look at both J. Irwin Miller and Eero Saarinen’s lives, as well as their relationship. In tracking the developmental history of these initiatives, particular attention was paid to their origins and the designers selected for various key commissions. The most noteworthy information that came out of this research revolves around the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program’s selection process, which has remained largely a mystery for decades. In the early 1960’s, a number of reputable publications maintained that a disinterested panel of two anonymous and distinguished architects were responsible for compiling the list of three to six recommended architects for any one commission. This panel would then update this list for each new commission. Archival evidence proves at one time this was accurate, but an interview with Tracy Souza, former director of Cummins Foundation, reveals this method was not used from the mid-1970’s on. Souza stated that the selection process
following the building boom was much more informal due to the inconsistency of projects. Instead of a formal panel, the Cummins Foundation board compiled the list by asking for recommendations from interested or expert individuals, such as architects previously associated with one of the three organizations. Since the Cummins Foundation’s board kept no documentation, the only information regarding the selection process during the 1960’s and early 1970’s are the architects receiving commissions.

In order to discover Saarinen’s role in Columbus, this thesis will analyze his commissions prior to his death in 1961. In addition, this thesis investigates his and the selected architects’ educational, professional, and social backgrounds prior to their Columbus’ commission. This analysis resulted in the emergence of a number of similarities and patterns associated with the architects who worked in Columbus during the building boom. The thrust of this thesis is that the uniqueness of Columbus’ architectural development is due to the initial synergistic efforts of J. Irwin Miller and Eero Saarinen.

Resources

In the course of completing this thesis, a number of resources were referenced. The Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives and the Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology were particularly useful. The Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives provided valuable primary resources. This included personal correspondence from Eero Saarinen and Harry Weese, and Nancy Lickerman Haliks’s transcribed 1980 interviews with J. Irwin Miller and a number of Columbus architects. The Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology provided multiple National Historic Landmark nominations, a National Historic Landmark theme study, and
produced the *Bartholomew County Interim Report*. Other key resources include: *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, edited by Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen and Donald Albrecht; *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building American Embassies*, by Jane C. Loeffler; “The Spawn of Saarinen,” in *Inland Architect* (May 1981,) by Nancy Lickerman Halik; and the Columbus Indiana Convention and Visitors Bureau website. The Ball State University Digital Media Repository provided all figures for this document except where noted. Furthermore, a variety of other resources were utilized or consulted.

A number of resources had the potential for crucial information, but were not available to the author. This includes archives on Eero Saarinen at Yale University, on Pietro Belluschi at the Oregon Historical Society, and on Harry Weese at the Art Institute of Chicago. Additionally, the archives on J. Irwin Miller at the Indiana Historical Society, which will open to the public in fall of 2012, could yield valuable information. All of these resources would be a necessary next step for further research on topics related to this thesis.

**Document Description**

This graduate thesis is organized into seven chapters. Chapter one chronicles the context that helped lead to the development of the “Modernist Mecca” with a brief synopsis of Columbus history prior to the mid-20th century, a profile of J. Irwin Miller, and an introduction to Columbus’ first modern building, First Christian Church. Chapter two provides an in-depth portrait of Eero Saarinen’s life, his illustrious career, his personality, personal relationships, and firm management and dynamics. Chapter three records the professional and informal friendship between J. Irwin Miller and Eero Saarinen before Miller began his large-scale corporate and public patronage. Chapter four
and five are both dedicated to the development of the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program. Chapter four investigates the architecture program during the lifetime of Saarinen, while chapter five explores the program following his death until 1973. Chapter six records the development of Miller’s corporate design philosophy for Irwin Union Bank and Trust and Cummins Engine Company. Finally, chapter seven utilizes the evidence found in the previous chapters to form a logical conclusion about Eero Saarinen’s previously undocumented and absolutely essential involvement in Columbus’ architectural development.

3 Columbus Area Visitor Center, “Architecture and Public Art.”
6 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joiner, and Cairns, 22.
7 Tracy Souza (former Director of Cummins Foundation), phone interview with Amy Marisavljevic, January 24, 2012.
Chapter One:

The Context for Columbus’ Architectural Development

Columbus History (Founding to the mid-20th century)

After its February 1821 founding, Bartholomew County selected the town of Columbus, formerly Tiptonia, as its county seat. Columbus officially became incorporated as a city in 1824. In addition to being the headquarters of county government, Columbus has historically functioned as the center of commerce and industry in Bartholomew County. The Flat Rock and Driftwood Rivers, both tributaries of the East Fork of the White River, flow through rural Bartholomew County providing fresh water, power, and transportation. Downtown Columbus is located on the north and east banks of these rivers. As the city expanded, it was geographically forced in these two directions due to the rivers’ flood plains. The rivers and the area’s natural resources supported the county’s earliest industries: agriculture, saw mills, gristmills, and woolen mills. These goods could easily be transported on the river or by a major roadway that connected Louisville, Kentucky and Indianapolis, Indiana.¹

In 1844, transportation in Bartholomew County changed dramatically with the arrival of the railroad, which linked Columbus to Madison, Indiana and Indianapolis.
The railroad brought additional commerce to Columbus, including two banks: First National Bank in 1864 and Irwin Bank in 1871. Columbus’ banking industry, along with the county’s abundance of natural resources and a prominent location on the railroad, made it an ideal location for industry and commerce. An increase in population and commerce followed the industries to Columbus, spurring a building boom in the 1870’s. In the late 19th century, Columbus supported a variety of new businesses including the American Starch Company, Reeves Pulley Company, Orinoco Furniture, Fishel Poultry, and Ceraline Manufacturing. Furthermore, the city’s limits and resources expanded to accommodate Columbus’ growth.²

Despite the city’s rapid development in the late 19th century, Columbus experienced adversity at the turn of the century. The city’s economy began to struggle due to the nationwide depression of the 1890’s and an 1895 fire that destroyed the American Starch Company. As the economic slump continued into the early years of the 20th century, it stunted population growth in Columbus.³ Despite the economic downturn, the Irwin Bank continued to prosper in the 1910’s. Its wealth afforded W. G. Irwin, the president of Irwin Bank, the fortuitous opportunity to hire Clessie Cummins as the family chauffeur and mechanic. In 1919, Cummins improved the diesel engine, which was first invented in 1893 by German engineer Rudolf Diesel, in the Irwin garage. That same year, Cummins and Irwin founded the now Fortune 500 Cummins Engine Company, which changed the automotive industry and the future of Columbus.⁴ Later in 1925, Columbus’ stable economy attracted Noblitt-Spark Industries from Indianapolis. The company, now Arvin Industries, manufactured automobile parts.⁵
After surviving the Great Depression, both Cummins Engine Company and Noblitt-Spark Industries began to prosper during World War II due to government contracts and a high demand for their products. As America embraced the automobile culture and trucking surpassed freight trains to become the principle method for transporting goods, the demand for these companies’ products continued after World War II. This boom allowed Cummins Engine Company and Arvin Industries, renamed in 1950, to enjoy record profits. The high demand also forced the companies to expand and hire additional employees. The success of the companies brought prosperity and growth to Columbus as the population doubled from 9,935 in 1930 to over 18,000 in 1950. This increase resulted in the further expansion of the Columbus city limits, including the 1949 annex of the town of East Columbus, and a residential building boom. Despite these developments, Columbus’ bulging population in the 1940’s and 1950’s quickly outgrew the city’s infrastructure and resources, particularly its historic six-school system.6

**J. Irwin Miller**

J. Irwin Miller was born to Hugh Thomas Miller and Nettie Irwin Sweeney Miller, a prominent Columbus family, on May 26th, 1909 (fig. 1). Nettie Irwin Sweeney Miller was the daughter of Z.T. Sweeney, the pastor at Tabernacle Christian Church. Nettie’s uncle was prominent Columbus businessman and bachelor William G. Irwin. W. G. Irwin, the son of Irwin Bank founder Joseph I. Irwin, had a strong business sense. Not only did W.G. Irwin preside over the

*Figure 1.*
J. Irwin Miller (1909-2004), Columbus’ most accomplished resident. (reprinted from Will Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller”)
family banking business, he also founded Cummins Engine Company with Clessie Cummins, where he served as president, in 1919.7 Hugh Thomas Miller, J. Irwin Miller’s father, was a professor at Butler University and local politician. Hugh Miller later worked at his wife’s family businesses.8

The young J. Irwin Miller and his older sister, Elizabeth Clementine Miller Tangeman, grew up in a grand mansion on 5th Street in downtown Columbus. The Irwin mansion was located in close proximity to both family businesses and the family’s Tabernacle Christian Church. These organizations played an important role in J. Irwin Miller’s childhood as he realized at young age that he was heir to carrying on the family’s legacy.9 Miller attended Columbus schools before being sent to Taft School, a private prep school in Waterford, Connecticut. After graduating in 1929, Miller continued his education at Yale University,10 where he studied Greek and Latin. During his time at Yale, J. Irwin Miller developed a strong interest in architecture before graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1931.11 Shortly after, Miller received a Masters in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics from Oxford University in 1933, where he also competed on the crew team.12

In 1934, Miller returned to Columbus to work in the family’s business, Cummins Engine Company, as general manager at the age of only 24. Back in Columbus, Miller continued to attend his childhood church, Tabernacle Christian. Following the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Miller decided to leave his job at Cummins Engine Company to fight for his country in World War II. Stationed in the South Pacific, he served as a Lieutenant with the Navy aboard the U.S.S. Langley. Due to the death of his great-uncle W.G. Irwin in 1943, Miller’s service ended early. W.G. Miller left his estate
and business ventures to Hugh Miller. Hugh Miller immediately promoted his son to Vice President within Cummins Engine Company, who was in dire need of his leadership due to their war efforts.13

J. Irwin Miller married Xenia Simmons on February 5th, 1943. The couple exchanged vows in a small Washington, D.C. ceremony with Clessie Cummins serving as the best man.14 Xenia was a graduate of Columbus High School and Indiana Business College. She also worked in the purchasing department of Cummins Engine Company, where she first met Miller.15 The couple would go on to raise five children: Margaret, Catherine, Elizabeth, Hugh, and William. The family resided in Columbus, but spent many summers in the Muskoka region of Ontario, Canada.16

Hugh Miller died in 1947, leaving J. Irwin Miller in charge of both family businesses. Miller initially served as President of Cummins Engine Company, later renamed to Cummins Inc., until he was named Chairman in 1951. Miller led the company in this position until retiring in 1977. Under his leadership, the company dominated the diesel engine industry and became one of the most successful companies of the 20th century. In Miller’s twenty-six years in charge, Cummins Inc. became more than just an engine-manufacturer; the company expanded into other goods and service fields, such as power generation. Miller also played an instrumental role in the company’s emergence in global markets. He built new plants in a variety of foreign countries and strengthened business relations with China, India, and Brazil.17 In addition to growing the company, Miller’s other priorities included the treatment of his employees. Miller made it a point to provide excellent working conditions, great benefits, competitive salaries, increase diversity, and generally better his employees’ quality of life. At a time when unionization
began, Miller embraced it, unlike most corporate executives, because he believed unions kept companies honest. Miller’s support was so instrumental in the founding of the Diesel Workers Union that he was later made an honorary member.\textsuperscript{18} The year before he retired as Chairman, the company netted one billion dollars and had been listed annually as a Fortune 500 company since the recognition’s founding in 1955.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite his retirement as chairman, Miller remained active in the company. He later served as Chairman of the Board’s Executive and Finance Committees. He was also an Honorary Chairman at Cummins Inc. until his death.\textsuperscript{20} Much of the company’s success and growth is due to Miller’s strong leadership. In addition to leading the company, Miller and his family heavily invested in Cummins Inc., too. At one point, the Miller family owned about one third of the company’s stocks, contributing to the family’s wealth.\textsuperscript{21}

J. Irwin Miller also served as Chairman of Irwin Union Bank and Trust Company until 1976. Under him, the bank grew to 123 offices in 27 states with 1,800 employees. He also helped the company earn around $150 million in annual revenue. Later renamed Irwin Financial Corporation in 1990, the company expanded into other types of financial services. Even after he retired as Chairman, he served as Honorary Chairman until his death in 2004. Miller’s son, Will Miller, took over the business in 1998.\textsuperscript{22} In 2009, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation shut down Irwin Financial Corporation due to bad banking practices. First Financial Bank has since taken over operations.\textsuperscript{23}

J. Irwin Miller, a natural leader, brought success to both family businesses and Columbus. Miller also contributed his business savvy to a number of notable companies, such as American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T), Equitable Life Assurance Society,
and Chemical State Bank, by serving on their boards and committees.\textsuperscript{24} Miller’s success in the business world brought the industrialist great wealth and power, not only in his native Columbus, but also nationally.

Hugh and Nettie Irwin Sweeney Miller had always taught J. Irwin Miller and his sister that “great wealth carries even greater social responsibility.” In 1952, Nettie founded the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Foundation, a charitable organization, with her family.\textsuperscript{25} The family members have reportedly donated over $55 million to a variety of charities, institutions, and projects. Although the foundation supports numerous religious, educational, and art endeavors, the family focused their efforts primarily in Bartholomew County. Some of their major projects here include the Commons, Mill Race Park, the Visitor Center, and Lincoln-Central Neighborhood Family Center, to name just a few.\textsuperscript{26}

Following the lead of his family, Miller became one of the nation’s leading philanthropists while continuing to play a crucial role in the family’s Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Foundation. Miller believed that “the best response to the gifts we receive from previous generations is to create something of lasting value in our time and in our own way for future generations.” Miller exemplified this philosophy with an assortment of charitable contributions throughout his lifetime.\textsuperscript{27} Of the numerous local and national philanthropic endeavors he supported, Miller’s generosity can most visibly be seen in his community, education, and the arts. In addition to philanthropy, Miller also illustrated his philosophy through religious, social, and political activism.

J. Irwin Miller applied his mother’s teachings to corporate wealth, as well as his personal wealth, when he founded Cummins Engine Foundation, the non-profit charitable arm of Cummins Engine Company, in 1954. Under Miller, the company was at the
foreground of the corporate responsibility movement. The company not only practiced good business ethics, but they also contributed millions of dollars to a variety of national and local philanthropies through its foundation. Despite all of its charitable work, the organization, now simply Cummins Foundation, is most famous for its highly publicized architecture program. The program, which embraced modern architecture and design as a catalyst, was one the Cummins Foundation’s many efforts that focused on improving the quality of life in Columbus.\textsuperscript{28} Miller, who worked with the foundation’s board, highly encouraged these local initiatives not only because he thought a company was only as good as its community, but also due to his strong desire to better his hometown.\textsuperscript{29}

J. Irwin Miller chose to invest in education because he believed this was the key to benefiting the next generation. This belief led Miller to purposefully target the local school system in the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program. The program has resulted in 16 buildings in Bartholomew County, greatly affecting its quality of education. In order to further benefit the education local students received, Miller regularly encouraged his employees with strong leadership skills to participate in the local school organizations. A number of his Cummins Inc. executives served on the Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation (the local school board), and one on the Indiana State Board of Education.\textsuperscript{30} In addition to his role in local education, Miller financially supported the Emma Williard School, a leading girls’ prep school in Troy, New York. He also served as a member of Yale Corporation, his alma mater’s governing board, and Butler University’s Board of Trustees.\textsuperscript{31}

Known as a patron of the arts, Miller had a lifelong interest in music, art and architecture. Miller’s first love was music. He learned to play the violin as a boy and
developed into a talented amateur violinist. Miller later chaired the advisory panel for Indianapolis’ International Violin Competition.32

Miller’s interest in architecture began in his days at Yale and continued to grow when he traveled abroad in Europe. Miller’s interest led him to assist his Tabernacle Christian congregation in finding an architect. He later commissioned leading architects to design buildings for both of his businesses and his personal residences. Paired with his involvement with Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program, Miller has been renowned as one the greatest architectural patrons of the 20th century. In 1986, Miller received the first ever Honor Award from the National Building Museum for his leadership in advancing the building arts and sciences. He also served as a juror for the famed Pritzker Architecture Award, and was named an Honorary Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and Royal Institute of British Architects.33

Both Miller and his wife, Xenia, had a lifelong love for art, as well. The Miller’s have commissioned and donated a number of public art works to the community including “The Family,” by Harry Barron at Parkside Elementary School; “Large Arch,” by Henry Moore at Cleo Rogers Memorial Library; and “Chaos I,” by Jean Tinguely at The Commons.34 The couple’s personal art collection contained more than 17 works of mainly Impressionist and Modern Art. The collection featured works by Claude Monet, Henri Matisse, Camille Pissarro, Pablo Picasso, Wassily Kandisky, and Mark Rothko. Miller’s interest in Modern art earned him a trustee position at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Xenia also served as a Trustee-at-large at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, and played an instrumental role in bringing a branch of the museum to Columbus. After their deaths, many works from the Millers’ collection were auctioned and their 1957 Eero
Saarinen-designed Columbus residence was donated to the Indianapolis Museum of Art with an endowment.\textsuperscript{35}

Rounding out his charitable career, Miller lent his leadership to a number of philanthropic organizations and institutions. This includes terms as a trustee with the National Humanities Center, Carnegie Institute of Washington, and the legendary Ford Foundation. Miller’s generosity is estimated to have been over half of his personal earnings.\textsuperscript{36} He is often considered to be one of the greatest philanthropists of his generation, a more modern version of John D. Rockefeller or Andrew Carnegie.

Religion always played an important role in J. Irwin Miller’s life. Since childhood, Miller regularly attended his family’s Tabernacle Christian Church, now First Christian Church. Active in the church, Miller served as Sunday school teacher, on various committees, and Chairman of the Congregation. In 1955, some members of the congregation, led by Miller and others, left the church to found North Christian Church due to disagreements about doctrine. Miller later helped fund North Christian’s new church. In addition, Miller served as a life-long trustee of Christian Theological Seminary, an institution his family helped financially support, in nearby Indianapolis.\textsuperscript{37}

Miller was also involved in religion on a national level. He helped found the National Council of Churches (NCC), a multi-denominational organization, in 1950. As a founder, he served in numerous leadership positions within the organization. This included Denomination Representative, member of the Business and Finance Committee, member of Policy and Strategy Committee, chair of Message Committee, Vice Chair of United Christian Men, and lay President of the entire organization from 1960 to 1963. As President, Miller “sought to keep the church faithful, relevant and effective” stated NCC.
General Secretary Dr. Bob Edgar. Miller specifically used his power to address two issues, the underprivileged and civil rights.\(^3\)

Miller believed that “[t]he most important service to others is service to those not like yourself.” Miller practiced this throughout his life, donating and supporting a variety of charitable organizations. Many of these organizations, such as Sycamore Place, Foundation for Youth, and the local branch of the Salvation Army, were local to Bartholomew County.\(^3\) As NCC President, Miller brought poverty-related issues to the forefront of his agenda and encouraged his organization to help address these issues.\(^4\) In 1967, for example, Miller showed his dedication to the issue as chairman of an American Medical Association conference on health care for the poor.\(^4\)

Miller also used his power as NCC President and a successful businessman to address racial equality. At the height of the Civil Rights Movement in 1963, Miller founded the NCC’s Commission on Religion and Race. The commission encouraged interracial worship services and participated in anti-segregation demonstrations. Miller and the commission also helped sponsor and organize the 1963 March on Washington, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Furthermore, Miller and the commission were strong proponents for passing civil rights legislation.\(^4\) As NCC President, Miller was asked by President John F. Kennedy in June 1963 to consult on and chair a meeting on the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Following the assassination of President Kennedy, Miller also served as a consultant to Lyndon B. Johnson on additional civil right legislation.\(^4\)

A friend of Miller’s, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said that he was “the most socially responsible businessman in the country.”\(^4\) Miller, who always made a point to
hire and recruit minorities in both his companies, believed diversity enriched businesses and communities. He also believed that regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, or position that all of his employees should be treated equally. Although Miller practiced this in his business for years, it was perhaps his actions in 1986 that best illustrated King’s words. Protesting apartheid, Miller shut down his Cummins factory in South Africa and refused to do business there. He also was a crucial member of the team that wrote legislation proposing economic sanctions against the country. His leadership and involvement later led to a friendship with anti-apartheid activist and South African President Nelson Mandela.45

Miller’s work on socially responsible legislation was not his only involvement in politics. His first involvement with national politics came in the 1950’s when he advised President Harry Truman.46 Miller became particularly active in national politics during the 1960’s and early 1970’s. After advising on civil right legislation, President Johnson appointed him chair of the Special Committee on U.S. Trade with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Later in 1968, J. Irwin Miller directed the Rockefeller for President Committee, convincing New York Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller to run for the Republican nomination (he later lost to Richard Nixon). In 1972, Miller threw his support behind another presidential candidate, this time for newly registered Democrat and New York City Mayor John Lindsay. Miller’s backing was not enough and Lindsay dropped out of the Democratic Presidential Nomination race, which was eventually won by George McGovern.47 Miller remained active in politics in the early 1990’s, serving as an advisor to President George H. W. Bush.48
During retirement, Miller remained active in both Cummins Inc. and Irwin Union Bank as an Honorary Chairman. He also continued to participate in art, community, and philanthropic endeavors. After a brief bout with illness, Miller died at his Columbus home on August 19th, 2004. He was 95 years old. Following the 2008 death of his wife, the couple’s personal documents were donated to the Indiana Historical Society. The collection is currently being processed and will be open to the public in late 2012.

J. Irwin Miller’s diverse interests and abilities allowed him to meet and interact with some of the most talented and powerful individuals in their respective fields, making Miller one of the most socially connected men in the 20th century. Miller’s use of his wealth and power to better society led *Esquire* to publish his profile on their October 1967 cover under the headline: “This Man Ought to be the Next President” (fig. 2). Although Miller won many awards and achieved many things of national significance, residents in Columbus and critics alike feel that his biggest legacy lies within community he helped enrich.

**First Christian Church**

In 1942, Columbus’ first modern building, First Christian Church, was constructed. This specific project would go on to have major implications for Columbus as it inspired J. Irwin Miller’s vision for a modern Columbus and introduced him to Eero Saarinen. The project would go on to be the first of many Eero Saarinen would complete.
in Columbus. It also serves as the unofficial starting point to Columbus’ modern architectural development.\(^5^2\)

In the late 1930’s, the Tabernacle Christian Church, now First Christian Church, began to outgrow its original 1878 building. With the decision to build a new church, the congregation formed a building committee led by Hugh Miller. The wealthy Irwin-Sweeny-Miller family donated the land and a substantial amount of money to the congregation for the new church. The building committee originally hired an architect with plans for a Neo-Gothic church, but after he fell ill the committee was forced to search for a new architect. As the committee continued their search, J. Irwin Miller, who had developed an interest in architecture in his studies at Yale, suggested looking into more modern architects. The congregation’s search committee initially considered Frank Lloyd Wright, but quickly ruled him out due to his controversial personal life.\(^5^3\)

The committee then focused their attention on Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen (1876-1950), of Saarinen and Saarinen in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. A congregation member familiar with the prestigious Cranbrook Academy of Arts suggested the architect, who was also director of the school. Hugh Miller quickly pursued Eliel Saarinen, but he initially declined the project. Despite this, Hugh Miller persuaded the architect to meet with his mother-in-law Mrs. Sweeney, widow of former pastor Z.T. Sweeney, and her brother W.G. Irwin. Eliel Saarinen originally voiced concerns that American churches were “too theoretical,” but Mrs. Sweeney rebutted this claim by explaining that the congregation only desired a welcoming church that would make the poorest woman in town feel comfortable. After Mrs. Sweeney and Irwin convinced him
that the congregation would trust his judgment and give him artistic freedom, Eliel Saarinen agreed to design the church.\textsuperscript{54}

Eliel Saarinen worked with his son, Eero, to develop a design that pleased both the building committee and congregation. The modern building, the first in Columbus, featured an innovative plan, strong building composition, and Eliel’s signature romantic nationalist aesthetic (fig. 3). Beyond its seemingly simple appearance, the building was designed down to the last detail. The comprehensive building and site included a peaceful landscape, furniture by Charles Eames, and a large tapestry in the sanctuary done by Loja and Eliel Saarinen. Eliel served as the principle architect by developing the Church’s larger concept whereas his son, Eero, focused primarily on the building’s rich interior. Appearing in \textit{Time} magazine’s January 27th, 1941 issue, the uniqueness of the church garnered national attention even before its completion. The church opened to its first sermon in March 1942.\textsuperscript{55}

In just six short weeks following its opening, the church guestbook contained over 10,000 signatures. A May 1942 \textit{Newsweek} article stated “[i]n style, the new Tabernacle is utterly unlike the 17 other churches in Columbus or, for that matter, in almost any other city in the world.” Having a large impact on future church design, critics have uniformly called Tabernacle Christian Church one of the first modern churches in the United States.
The Tabernacle Christian Church also won rave reviews from both the Columbus community and the congregation. The architectural significance of the church, a pristine example of a modern church and the work of Eliel Saarinen, has made it a National Historic Landmark (2001). As Columbus’ first modern building, the church is also often credited for spurring the patronage of modern architecture in the city due to its positive reception from the community.

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1 Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology, comp., *Bartholomew County Interim Report* (Indianapolis, IN: Division of Historic Preservation, Indiana State Museum, June 1980) 6, 50-51.
2 Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology, 6, 50-51.
3 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joyner, and Cairns, 3-4.

5. Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joyner, and Cairns, 3-4.


9. Land.

10. Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller.”

11. Pace.

12. Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller.”

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.


17. Land.

18. Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller.”

19. Pace.

20. Ibid.


25. Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller.”


27. Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller.”


Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller.”

Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joyner, and Cairns, 4-25.


Indianapolis Museum Of Art.

Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller.”

Ibid.


Miller, “J. Irwin Miller.”

National Council of Churches.

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Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller.”

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Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller.”


Pace.

Cummins, Inc.

Pace.

Indiana Historical Society, “Extensive…”

Land.

Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joyner, and Cairns, 4-25.


Ibid, 10-14.

Ibid, 4-14.

Ibid, 11-14.

Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joyner, and Cairns, 25.
Chapter Two

Eero Saarinen: the Man Behind the Architecture

Eero Saarinen was born on August 20th, 1910 to Eliel and Louise ‘Loja’ Saarinen in Kirkkonummi, Finland (fig. 4). Eliel (1873-1950), a planner and architect, and his second wife Louise Gesellius (1879-1968), a sculptor, photographer and textile artist, also had a daughter Eva-Lisa (1905-1979). Eero spent his childhood with his family at Hvittrask, the family home in Kirkkonummi. Designed by Eliel in 1902, the home, 30 kilometers west of Helsinki, exposed Eero to design and architecture at a young age. In 1922, Eliel entered the Tribune Tower competition in Chicago with an elegant and modern scheme. Although he finished in second place, the significance of his design immediately resonated in the United States. A harsh economic climate in Finland paired with the potential for a promising career in Chicago led Eliel to move his family to Evanston, Illinois in 1923, when Eero was only 13.¹
Then in 1925, George Gough Booth, a wealthy publisher and philanthropist, hired Eliel to design the campus of Cranbrook Educational Community in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Influenced greatly by the Bauhaus, Cranbrook’s Academy of Arts served as a design school that integrated both fine art and crafts. With both Eliel and Louise teaching at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in the architecture and weaving departments respectively, the Saarinen family put down roots in Bloomfield Hills. Eliel later became President of the Academy in 1931. He also taught architecture at the University of Michigan from 1923 until his death in 1950. Eero attended the nearby Baldwin High School, a public school in nearby Birmingham, Michigan, and graduated in 1929.2

Eliel and Louise’s interests in design had a profound affect on both Eva-Lisa, affectionately known as Pipsan, and Eero. Pipsan, who studied at Cranbrook, went on to become an artist and furniture designer. She married J. Robert F. Swanson, a former architecture student of Eliel’s at the University of Michigan and later a business partner.3 Also drawn to the arts, Eero set off to study sculpture in September 1929 at the Academie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris, France.4

After completing the sculptural program, Eero decided to follow in the footsteps of his father and become an architect. He returned to the United States to study architecture at Yale University. Saarinen finished the traditional Beaux-Arts curriculum in 1934, after only three years, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Architecture. Saarinen then received the Charles O. Marcham Traveling Fellowship in 1935. Traveling to Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, he documented architectural sites through photographs, watercolors, and detailed drawings. While in Europe, Saarinen briefly lived in his native Finland and worked in the office of Jarl Ecklund in Helsinki. Under
Ecklund, Saarinen worked on his first architectural project, the Swedish Theatre (1935) in Helsinki. In 1936, he returned to Michigan to form a professional partnership, Saarinen and Saarinen, with his father and teach design at Cranbrook Academy of Arts.\(^5\)

While teaching at Cranbrook, Eero Saarien met a number of talented, young designers such as Harry Weese, Ralph Rapson, Florence Knoll, Alexander Girard, Ray Eames, and Charles Eames. Saarinen and these individuals shared design ideas, influenced one another, and often collaborated on projects at Cranbrook and throughout their careers.\(^6\) In particular, Saarinen and Charles Eames worked together to develop a variety of furniture designs. In 1940, the pair took first place in the Museum of Modern Art’s (MoMA) “Organic Design in Home Furnishing” exhibit curated by Elliot Noyes. The pair continued to actively collaborate in furniture, industrial, and interior design until 1946, when Charles took a position at Herman Miller Furniture. That same year, Saarinen began designing furniture for Knoll Associates, Florence Knoll’s furniture design company. Knoll Associates produced some Eero’s best furniture designs, including his Womb Chair (1946), Grasshopper Chair (1946), Side Chair (1948), Tulip Chair (1955), and Executive Chair (1957) (fig. 5).\(^7\) Saarinen would also collaborate on architectural projects later in his career with Ralph Rapson, Alexander Girard, and Charles Eames. In addition to professional collaboration, the relationships

Figure 5. Saarinen’s Tulip Chair produced by Knoll Associates.
developed here at Cranbrook provided Saarinen with lifelong professional advice and opportunities, networking connections, and friendship.  

These designers were not the only intriguing people Saarinen met at Cranbrook; he was also introduced to Lillian Swann (1913-1995), a sculptor. Swann, who was both a former Olympic skier and children’s author, quickly captured Saarinen’s attention. The two fell in love and married in 1939. Lillian was an award-winning sculptor and received a number of public commissions. In addition to teaching at Cranbrook for a short period, she also collaborated with Saarinen on many of his architectural projects. The couple’s marriage lasted until 1953 and resulted in two children, Eric (1942-) and Susan (1945-).

Father and son started their firm, Saarinen and Saarinen, in 1936. Eliel acted as the principle architect coming up with the firm’s major concepts, while Eero played a more supportive role. In this role, Eero often focused on interior finishes and began to develop his own architectural style. The two worked well together and received a number of major commissions. This included the Koussevitsky Shed (1937-1939) in Lenox, Massachusetts; Finlandia University National Theatre (1938) in Hancock, Michigan; Kleinhans Music Hall (1938-1940) in Buffalo, New York; and Crow Island School (1938-1940) in Winnetka, Illinois, with Perkins Wheeler & Will (fig. 6).
Although Eero had begun to develop an interest in modern architecture, materials, and technology, the firm’s work typically exemplified the elder Saarinen’s love for the Romantic Nationalist aesthetic, which emphasized a monumental use of traditional building materials and construction. In addition to his father, Eero often worked with Ralph Rapson, a Cranbrook student working for Saarinen and Saarinen from 1938-41, on many of the firm’s projects. As the firm became more successful, the Saarniens partnered with Eero’s brother-in-law, J. Robert F. Swanson, in 1939. The three later developed a design for the Smithsonian Art Gallery competition (1939), in which they won first place.15

Recruited by Donal McLaughlin, a friend from Yale, Eero Saarinen joined the Office of Strategic Services in 1942. The Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.), predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency, developed as the United State intelligence service during the U.S. involvement in World War II. Saarinen worked with the O.S.S. from 1942 to 1945. Here he had two major projects: illustrating bomb disassembly manuals and providing designs for the White House’s Situation Room.16 At the O.S.S., Saarinen worked with a team of elite artists, architects, designers and filmmakers. This included John Ford, Raymond Loewy, Walter Teague, Henry Dreyfuss, Norman Bel Geddes, Buckminster Fuller, Louis Kahn, Bertrand Goldberg, Dan Kiley, Lewis Mumford, Walt Disney, Oliver Lundquist, Jo Mielziner, Edna Andrande, Benjamin Thompson, and George Olden.17 Many of the individuals Saarinen met during the program, such as Fuller, Kahn, and Kiley, became his good friends. In addition to his later collaborations with Kiley, Saarinen also worked with Lindquist to design a house for the “Post War Living” competition sponsored by Art and Architecture. After winning the
competition, Saarinen met the legendary John Entenza, editor of the magazine that would later sponsor the innovative Case Study House program (1945-1966). \(^{18}\)

Following his service, Eero rejoined his father’s firm, which changed its name from Saarinen Swanson and Associates to Saarinen Swanson and Saarinen. The family firm continued until 1947 when Swanson left to develop his own firm, returning the name to Saarinen and Saarinen. Although the firm name was the same, the role of father and son had evolved. Eliel, now in his 70’s, began to slow down some, while Eero began to take a more active role in the firm. The pair continued to collaborate on certain projects, such as their General Motors Technical Center (1947) in Warren, Michigan, the Drake University Master Plan (1945), and the Des Moines Art Center (1947). At the same time, they often worked independently on separate buildings, concepts, or in competitions. \(^{19}\)

Another big change during the late 1940’s was the early development of Eero Saarinen’s signature regionalist approach to architecture. Eero’s strong belief that each building should be unique due to function, location, and client needs can be traced back to this period. His interest in modernism, which continued to grow during his time with the OSS, also began to manifest itself in his work. In particular, he integrated more modern materials, such as glass, concrete, and synthetics, into his projects. This was a departure from the traditional building materials found in Eero’s early works with Eliel. Finally, it was during this period that Eero strayed from his father’s strong sense of monumentality and began experimenting with new, often sculptural, forms. \(^{20}\)

The two architects’ independent and contrasting styles are highly visible in their 1949 work. Eliel’s Christ Church Lutheran in Minneapolis, Minnesota is reminiscent of the firm’s earlier Crow Island School and First Christian Church. Conversely, that same
year, Eero collaborated with his friend Charles Eames on the Entenza House, or Case Study House #9, in Pacific Palisades, California. The modern house featured a cubist form with large expanses of concrete and glass. Like their Cranbrook friend Ralph Rapson’s Case Study House #4, the pair’s house for John Entenza appeared in *Art and Architecture* (July 1950).\(^{21}\)

Perhaps the best example of the firm’s differences can be found in the 1947 Jefferson National Expansion Memorial competition, which Eliel and Eero entered separately. Both father and son lead their own team in their designs for the memorial in St. Louis, Missouri. Eero’s team of associate designer J. Henderson Barr, landscape architect Dan Kiley, sculptor and wife Lillian Swann Saarinen, and painter Alexander Girard produced the unique Gateway Arch concept (fig. 7).\(^{22}\) The parabolic arch clad in stainless steel panels stood over an underground Visitor Center and was surrounded by a tranquil park on the Mississippi River. Hannskarl Bandel, a German structural engineer, joined the team to ensure the feasibility of the 630 foot-high Gateway Arch.\(^{23}\) Out of the 172 submissions, both Eliel and Eero placed among the five finalists, but it was Eero who eventually won the competition. Due partially to the Korean War, the National Park Service could not get the funds together to start the project until

![Figure 7.](image)

*The Gateway Arch was Saarinen’s first major independent commission without his father and one of the last of his projects to be built.*
1959. The Gateway Arch was completed in 1965 and opened in 1967. Although this is one of the last of Eero Saarinen’s projects to be built, it marks the first time in which he received a major commission without the aid of his father.

Despite still actively practicing, the 76-year-old Eliel died on July 1st, 1950. Eero laid his father and business partner to rest at Hvittrask, the family home in Finland. Eero then completed his father’s remaining projects before renaming the firm Eero Saarinen and Associates. Eero had a great respect for his father, and his death devastated him. At the same time, he saw his death as an opportunity to step out of Eliel’s shadow and fully pursue his own design ambitions.

In the next 10 years of his independent practice, the architect designed over 40 projects and became one of the United States’ leading architects. Following the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Competition, the architecture world began to see Eero Saarinen as a rising architect and not just a furniture and interior designer. Saarinen earned a number of regional commissions in the early 1950’s, including the University of Michigan North Campus (1951-54) in Ann Arbor, Michigan; the Milwaukee War Memorial (1952-57) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; a variety of buildings on the Drake University Campus (1954-55) in Des Moines Iowa; and Concordia Senior College (1953-58) in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Also regularly employing Saarinen in the early 1950’s was friend and businessman J. Irwin Miller. Miller hired him to design his family’s cottage Llanwrst (1950-52) in Muskoka, Canada, Irwin Union Bank (1954), and the Miller House (1953-57), both in Columbus, Indiana. Saarinen also received one major commission outside the Midwest in the early 1950’s. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where his longtime friend Ralph
Rapson was teaching at the time, hired him to design the Kresge Auditorium and Chapel (1950-55) (fig. 8). During this project, Saarinen met and became friends with Pietro Belluschi, dean of the MIT School of Architecture and Planning. Saarinen’s early 1950’s projects displayed the strong architectural influence of his father, and of Mies van der Rohe. Attracting awards and press coverage, these early commission thrust Saarinen from a regional arena to the national stage. Also further solidifying Saarinen’s career during this period was his election to fellowship in the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1952, one of the organization’s most prestigious honors.30

Saarinen’s career was not the only thing that changed in the early 1950’s. His private life also took a drastic turn. Eero and Lillian divorced in 1953 after fourteen years of marriage.31 Saarinen had a difficult time dealing with the divorce and relied heavily on friends from Cranbrook to recover.32 The following year Saarinen married Aline Bernstein Loucheim, a journalist and art critic for the New York Times. The couple had met during an interview in 1953 and had instant chemistry. The marriage resulted in son Eames, named after Eero’s good friend Charles Eames, in December of 1954.33

Eero capitalized on his popularity in the mid 1950’s with a number of prominent projects. After a recommendation by friend Ralph Rapson, the State Department hired Saarinen to design an addition to the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki, Finland. Although the project was never realized, Saarinen received two more commissions from the State...
Department: the United State Embassy in London, England (1955-56) and the United States Embassy in Oslo, Norway (1955-59) (fig. 9). These buildings brought Saarinen international fame while recognizing him as one of the great American architects with the likes of Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer, Richard Nuetra and Robert E. Alexander, and Paul Rudolph, all of whom received State Department commissions.\textsuperscript{34}

Later in 1956, Elliot Noyes recommended Saarinen for the inaugural project in the International Business Machines’ (IBM) design program for its administrative and manufacturing facility in Rochester, Minnesota. Noyes, who had been a big fan of Saarinen’s work since his days at MoMA, was the head of IBM’s new corporate design program. Saarinen went on to later design IBM Thomas Watson Jr. Research Center (1956-61) in Yorktown, NY.\textsuperscript{35} These commissions showed his strength as a corporate architect and further solidified his position as a leading American architect.

During the second half of the decade, Saarinen reached maturity, particularly in the development of his sculptural-based style. Saarinen’s IBM commissions led him to additional corporate commission such as the John Deere Administration Center (1957-63) in Moline, Illinois; Bell Lab Holmodel Complex (1957-62) in Holmodel, New Jersey; and the CBS Building (1960-65) in New York City. Saarinen also continued to cement his career with a number of collegiate commissions, including the Emma Hartman Noyes
House (1954-58) at Vassar College; a women’s dormitory (1955-58) and the Law School (1955-60) at the University of Chicago; Hill House College (1957-60) at University of Pennsylvania; and Ingalls Rink (1956-58), Morse College (1956-58), and Ezra Stiles College (1956-58) at his alma mater, Yale University. Highlighting Saarinen’s illustrious career were a handful of large national and international projects, including the TWA Terminal (1956-62) at Idlewild, now John F. Kennedy, Airport in New York City; Dulles International Airport (1958-63) near Washington, D.C.; Athens International Airport (1960-69) in Athens Greece; and the Vivian Beaumont Theater (1965) at Lincoln Center in New York City (fig. 10). Finally, one of the last buildings Saarinen designed was North Christian Church (1959-64) in Columbus, Indiana, which he did as a personal favor for his good friend, J. Irwin Miller.37

In 1961, Saarinen decided to move his firm from Bloomfield Hills, Michigan to Hamden, Connecticut. The new office was just miles north of Yale University, an ideal location for its proximity to friends, fellow architects, clients, and top architectural schools to recruit upcoming talent from. Saarinen moved his wife, Aline, and son, Eames, to a 1906 mansion in Hamden. As the firm began to slowly relocate, doctors discovered Saarinen’s brain tumor in July 1961. On September 1st, 1961, Eero Saarinen died in surgery at the age of 50 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The sudden death
of the architect shocked not only his family, friends, and firm, but also the architectural world. 38

A memorial service for Saarinen was held at Kresge Chapel at MIT on September 9th. In addition to family and firm members, a number of Saarinen’s friends, such as Charles and Ray Eames, Alexander Girard, Dan Kiley, Pietro Belluschi, Louis Kahn, William Wurster, and Jo Mielziner, attended. Additionally, J. Irwin Miller, Saarinen’s favorite client, spoke at the service. Saarinen was buried in White Chapel Memorial Park Cemetery in Troy, Michigan, near his lifelong home in Bloomfield Hills. Following his death, Kevin Roche, Saarinen’s principle design associate, took over his remaining projects and finished relocating the office to Hamden. Roche partnered with fellow firm member and engineer, John Dinkeloo, in 1966 and renamed the firm Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates. 39

In addition to celebrating and emphasizing sculptural elements, Saarinen’s later projects featured designs that utilized the latest building technologies. Throughout his independent career, Saarinen focused on a building’s site and context, specific purpose(s), and the satisfaction of the user and client. Although critics often called attention to Saarinen’s lack of style, most could not simply grasp his regionalist approach to architecture. Unlike globalists, Saarinen was “guided by a strong belief that each project was unique, studying and developing each one as [a singular] entity” explained architect and author Nancy Lickerman Halik. 40 Saarinen “never seemed interested in developing a [consistent] style in his work, unless it was style of treating each new problem as if there new no precedents for its solution” agreed architectural historians in the Encyclopedia of American Architecture. 41 Despite his critics, this approach
impressed his clients and made him one of the top architects at the time of his death. Eero Saarinen’s diverse and prominent works earned a number of major design awards, including an AIA Gold Medal, the organization’s most prestigious individual honor, in 1962.

Although remembered for his extraordinary body of work and unique design approach, these are just two aspects of Eero Saarinen’s life as a designer. Despite architectural historians focusing primarily on these two elements, the success of Eero Saarinen’s career actually depended on a combination of factors. In May of 1981, Nancy Lickerman Halik published “The Eero Saarinen Spawn” in *Inland Architect* to prove the profound effect Saarinen had on the next generation of architects. The basis for her argument is a number of interviews with some of the people who knew Saarinen best. This included members of his office, clients, and professional friends such as Bruce Adams, Edmund Bacon, Charles Bassett, Gunnar Birkerts, Gordon Bunshaft, John Dinkeloo, Ray Eames, William Hewitt, Phillip Johnson, Paul Kennon, Tony Lumsden, J, Irwin Miller, Jill Mitchell, Glen Paulsen, Cesar Pelli, Kevin Roche, Robert Venturi, and Harry Weese. Her research not only substantiates her claim that Eero mentored the next generation, but along with Kevin Roche, Robert Venturi, Cesar Pelli, Harry Weese, and Baltazar Korab’s published memories of the architect, creates a complete, more human profile of the celebrated designer.

Eero Saarinen’s successful career stemmed from a large, talented firm with a notable work ethic. Due to his perfectionism, Saarinen would often miss deadlines. This fault actually caused Swanson to leave the family firm in 1947. In his later years, he remedied this perfectionism by becoming a workaholic. The left-handed architect also
demanded this type of dedication from his employees, who worked beside him seven 
days a week, ten hours a day. Saarinen fostered a collaborative environment, like that of 
Cranbrook, in both his firm and other projects. He always encouraged fellow designers to 
work together and learn from each other. Despite serving as a mentor, Saarinen believed 
he grew and learned just as much as his employees. Many of Saarinen’s employees also 
felt they learned equally as many lessons from their colleagues as from their master. Like 
his father, Eero Saarinen made all the final design decisions, but was open to ideas and 
suggestion. Saarinen always asked his employees to produce multiple options for one 
commission and to hold design discussions in order to pursue the best solution. Although 
members of the firm rarely took their vacation time, they all made time for fun as 
Saarinen encouraged socializing outside the office. Saarinen hosted a number of regular 
social events, including his legendary Christmas parties, for his office. Members of the 
firm agree that despite their hard work, the office had a family-like, casual atmosphere 
with Eero Saarinen taking the role of the strong, quiet patriarch.47

Eero Saarinen and Associates employed some of the most talented architects in 
the industry, including Bruce Adams, J. Henderson Barr, Edward Charles Bassett, 
Gunnar Birkerts, John Buenz, Robert Burley, John Dinkeloo, Paul Kennon, Balthazar 
Korab, Joe Lacy, Anthony Lumsden, Leonard Parker, Glen Paulsen, Cesar Pelli, Warren 
Platner, Kevin Roche, and Robert Venturi. In addition to a good work ethic, Saarinen 
valued strong drawing skills and a sense of inventiveness, something he personally prided 
himself on, in all his employees. Some employees, such as J. Henderson Barr and Edward 
Charles Bassett, were inherited from the older Saarinen and Saarinen firm, while others,
like Gunnar Birkerts, Paull Kennon, Tony Lumsden, and Balthazar Korab, sought out the prolific architect for a job.  

This, however, is not the case for many other employees, as most of the architects were recommended to or recruited by Saarinen himself. During his peak period, Saarinen, known as an outstanding judge of talent, was considered the top recruiter in the architecture field. Saarinen would not only ask deans and faculty to supply him with list of their best students, but he would also actively scout upcoming talent by volunteering to serve on design juries or making frequent, informal visits to top architecture schools. Saarinen’s excellent recruiting skills rewarded him with architects such as Leonard Parker, Glen Paulson, Cesar Pelli, and Robert Venturi.  

In order to build a stable of young architects and a leading architectural firm, Saarinen was forced to become one of the best networkers in the profession. Growing up at Cranbrook, Saarinen understood that rising design talent is often recognized first at the collegiate level. Knowing this, he reached out to the faculty and deans of the leading universities, in addition to maintaining strong relations with educators at Cranbrook and the University of Michigan. Saarinen considered deans Pietro Bellusci (MIT), Marcel Breuer (Harvard), and Louis Kahn (University of Pennsylvania) to be not only personal friends, but also key resources. 

Saarinen “held great respect for fellow architects and they had it for him” writes Halik. He also relied heavily on his friends in the profession for recommendations of young talent. This included people like Alex Kouzmanhoff, Buckminster Fuller, and, especially, Harry Weese, his Cranbrook colleague in Chicago. His friends in the profession also served as sounding boards; Saarinen would often call someone, like
Charles Eames, in the middle of the night just to discuss a possible design idea. Saarinen not only sought design advice from them, but professional advice and opportunities as well. Saarinen’s architect friends also shared network connections, particularly among patrons. Saarinen’s respect for his colleagues led him to help them out as well. Furthermore, Saarinen enjoyed bonding with his peers as well. He frequently hosted dinner parties for them or went on vacations with his closest friends and their families. Harry Weese, described Eero Saarinen as “a brilliant man, a great friend.”

Eero Saarinen’s ability to jump from regional commissions to major national and international projects stems not only from the architect’s and his talented firm’s inventiveness, but also from his personality. Although not always eloquent, Saarinen was an extremely personable individual. This quality, along with his overall genuine nature, allowed Saarinen to instantly win over critics and clients alike. Saarinen personally and professionally impressed many critics, architectural historians, and journalists with his designs and charm, including Aline Bernstein Loucheim, his second wife and critic at the New York Times; Peter Blake, an independent critic; Phillip Johnson, a former architectural historian and chief architectural curator at MOMA; Henry-Russell Hitchcock, an influential architectural historian; John Entenza, editor of Art and Architecture; and Doug Haskell, editor of Architectural Forum.

Saarinen’s charisma was also well suited for his approach of involving clients in the design process, something he felt especially important to instill in the members of his office. In order to create a personal and effective design, Saarinen developed a special relationship with each one of his clients. This special relationship assisted him in communicating with his client in a more informal way, which allowed him to gauge their
needs, wants, and tastes. Miller claims that Saarinen would “pick your mind completely to learn what you really wanted.” These relationships not only led to satisfied customers such as William Hewitt of John Deere and Frank Stanton of CBS, but also to repeat customers like Thomas Watson Jr. of IBM and J. Irwin Miller.

Factors like personality, firm dynamics, and professional relationships provide a more complete view of the architect and further explain how Eero Saarinen rose to great architectural success in his short 51 years. These less documented and often ignored aspects of Saarinen’s life prove just as interesting because they add additional layers of significance to the architect’s life. They also force architectural historians to reevaluate Saarinen’s current legacy and expose other ways the architect impacted the architectural world around him.


3 Coir, 29-41.


5 Ibid, 325-327.

6 Coir, 29-41


8 Coir, 32-41.

9 Ibid, 33.


11 Coir, 33-41.


13 Coir, 32-41.


15 Coir, 34-41.


19 Coir, 34-41.


21 Coir, 39-41.


26 Miller, “Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One’s Ancestors,” 57-58.
27 Scully, 13-25.
29 Miller, “Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One’s Ancestors,” 57-66.
32 Coir, 41.
37 Miller, “Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One’s Ancestors,” 64-67.
44 Halik, 15-41.
46 Coir, 39.
47 Halik, 15-41.
48 Ibid, 15-17.
49 Ibid, 15-23.
50 Ibid, 15-41.
51 Ibid, 17-41.
52 Ibid, 31-41.
54 Albrecht, 45-52.
Chapter Three:
Origins of Columbus’ Architectural Development

J. Irwin Miller and Eero Saarinen first met during the design and construction of First Christian Church, formerly Tabernacle Christian Church, in 1942. When Saarinen and Saarinen came to Columbus to work on the project, neither Miller nor Eero Saarinen were allowed to attend design meetings. While Eliel met with the building committee, Miller offered to take Saarinen and Charles Eames, a Cranbrook student hired by the firm to design furniture, to Zaharako’s, the local soda fountain and ice cream shop. As Saarinen and Miller got to know each other, the two men discovered they had many similarities, such as their proximity in age (they were just over a year apart), their education at Yale, and their studies in Europe. As First Christian Church progressed, the two men grew from friendly acquaintances to good friends.¹

In 1950, Miller contacted Saarinen, the friend and architect he had met eight years earlier, to design two buildings: a personal summer cottage for his family in the Muskoka region of Ontario, Canada, and a new main branch in downtown Columbus for
his banking business. Saarinen, who disliked designing residential structures, agreed to both projects due to the men’s friendship. Saarinen’s design for Llanwrst (1950-52), the family’s summer cottage, featured a mixture of modern and traditional building materials. In addition, Saarinen studied the cottage’s lakefront site before locating the structure upon a rock outcrop to capitalize on the majestic site while still blending the residence into the natural landscape. He then designed a Miesian-inspired pavilion in landscape designed by Dan Kiley for the downtown Irwin Union Bank (1950-54) (fig. 11). Using an open nine-square plan and a one-story rectangular form with glass and steel curtain wall construction, Saarinen developed a visually warm and inviting space for a new banking experience.²

![Figure 11. Saarinen’s Irwin Union Bank and Trust in downtown Columbus, Indiana became a precedent for modern banks.](image)

Thrilled with the cottage and the plans for the bank, Miller asked Saarinen to design a new residence in Columbus for his growing family in 1953. Saarinen collaborated with his friends, Alexander Girard (interior designer), Dan Kiley (landscape architect), and Charles and Ray Eames (furniture and industrial designers), for the total design of the project. Similar to the Irwin Union Bank, the Miller House (1953-57) was again a curtain-wall glass pavilion in a Dan Kiley-designed landscape. The house centers on an open living core that featured a “conversation pit,” Saarinen’s design solution for
more intimate entertaining (fig. 13). Every detail of the house’s interior and exterior was expertly designed from the patio furniture to the textiles rugs. The house, which appeared in *Architectural Forum* and *House and Garden* following its construction, pleased both Miller and his family. Impressed with his buildings and desire to involve the client in the design process, Miller recommended Saarinen to colleagues and friends. Although it is unclear if they directly resulted in commissions, recommendations from the well-respected businessman could only improve the architect’s reputation. Miller also asked for recommendations from Saarinen as well. In the early 1950’s, Columbus Mayor Robert Stevenson appointed Miller to chair the local housing committee due to the post-war housing shortage. Miller, who greatly respected Saarinen’s professional opinion, asked him to recommend an architect for an upcoming apartment project. Saarinen recommended his good friend from Cranbrook, Harry Weese, whose office was in Chicago. The committee eventually hired Weese to design Columbus Village (1951), a project partially subsidized by Cummins Engine Company. Thoroughly pleased with Saarinen’s recommendation, Miller later hired Weese for a number of corporate commissions in the 1950’s and 1960’s.
In 1959, Miller urged his new North Christian congregation to consider Saarinen for their new church. With Miller funding some of the bill, providing the land for the church and leading the building committee, Saarinen was unanimously hired. Saarinen teamed up with Dan Kiley once more to design the unique North Christina Church (1959-64) and landscape its large site (fig. 13). Following Saarinen’s sudden death in 1961, his office, led by his senior designer Kevin Roche, completed the project. All three of Saarinen’s buildings in Columbus plus the First Christian Church, done with his father, were designated National Historic Landmarks in 2001.

Saarinen visited Columbus on and off throughout the 1950’s to consult with Miller on various designs there. With his belief in collaboration, Saarinen frequently brought members of his firm with him. Over the ten years the pair worked together, Miller met and became familiar with many of Saarinen’s employees and spent a significant amount of time with Saarinen himself. The two not only formally and informally discussed projects and architecture, but also many other aspects of life. During these years, the men became even closer friends and their respect for one another continued to grow. The two were frequently seen chatting and laughing at Zaharako’s, their favorite local hangout. It was perhaps at one of these gatherings that Saarinen may have told Miller about a few of his recent projects with the State Department and IBM.
This information would later influence Miller as he helped transform Columbus into a “Modernist Mecca”.

At the time of Saarinen’s projects in the mid-1950’s, both of these organizations were in the formative period of their recently launched architecture programs. The State Department’s Foreign Building Operations (FBO) first began constructing modern embassies in 1948 with architects Harrison and Abramovitz in Latin America and Ralph Rapson and John van der Meulen in Scandinavia. Through his connection to longtime friend Ralph Rapson, the FBO hired Saarinen in 1952 to design an addition to the U.S. Embassy in his native Helsinki, Finland. That same year, a controversy struck the FBO over leadership, budget, and the use of the International style, so Saarinen’s plans for Helsinki’s embassy were never realized. Despite not being constructed, *Architectural Forum* published his plans in its March 1953 issue. Later in 1953, leadership of the FBO transferred from Leland King to Nelson Kenworthy. Kenworthy, who was only temporarily director of the FBO, drafted his first architectural policy for the FBO in October 1953. The policy created a stylistically and geographically diverse three-member advisory panel featuring architects Rudolf M. Schindler, Bruce Goff, and Pietro Belluschi. Belluschi later finished the draft that established the foreign building program and outlined its philosophy in 1954. In this draft, he also described how the Architectural Advisory Committee (AAC) and its advisor would rotate every several years to attract new and diverse talent. Following this draft, Belluschi compiled a list of recommended architects for each upcoming project.¹⁰

The new federal building program strived to use top American architects to
build world-class modern facilities that were both functional and economical. With a dire need for embassies, the FBO hired Edward Durell Stone to design the embassy in New Delhi, India (1954-59); Richard Neutra & Robert E. Alexander to design the embassy in Karachi, Pakistan (1955-59); Eero Saarinen to design the embassies in Oslo, Norway (1955-59) and London, England (1956-60); Walter Gropius to design the embassy in Athens, Greece (1956-59); and Marcel Breuer to design the embassy in The Hague, Netherlands (1956-59). All of these architects were recommended by Belluschi in 1954.\textsuperscript{11} The FBO’s foreign building program, which continues to operate today, is responsible for the patronage of world-class architecture. Although it has undergone some changes, such as the establishment of architectural competitions, the program has consistently attracted top American architects. A project with the FBO instantly solidifies the chosen architect’s career and garners great respect from those in the architecture field.\textsuperscript{12}

Another one of Saarinen’s recent projects was his IBM Manufacturing and Administration Center in Rochester, Minnesota, which he designed in 1956. Earlier that year, Thomas Watson Jr., President of IBM, selected architect and industrial designer Elliot Noyes to direct his corporate image. The two developed the idea of a program that would hire the nation’s top designers to work for the company. The objective of the program was to improve the technology company’s corporate image while also projecting a sense of forward thinking through all types of modern design. Noyes, who had been a fan of Saarinen since his days at the MoMA, selected him to design the inaugural project. Shortly after, Watson hired Saarinen again through the program to design the IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Center (1955-61) in Yorktown, New York. The program
went on to attract the nation’s leading designers in their respective field, such as Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer, Paul Rand, and Ray and Charles Eames.\textsuperscript{13}

As one of the first commissioned architects for each organization, Saarinen understood the vision for the architectural programs. With his two commissions for each program, he also developed a thorough understanding for the inner workings of the programs while observing how quickly they were able to establish success. Saarinen passed along this information to Miller, who discovered he could apply similar strategies in Columbus.\textsuperscript{14}

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Miller, “Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One’s Ancestors,” 57-59.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Ibid, 59-62.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Ibid, 62-64.
  \item \textsuperscript{5} Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joiner, and Cairns. 4-27.
  \item \textsuperscript{6} Miller, “Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One’s Ancestors,” 64-66.
  \item \textsuperscript{7} Pelkonen, comp., “Chronology,” 338-339.
  \item \textsuperscript{8} Columbus Area Visitor Center, “National Historic Landmark,” Columbus, Indiana Convention and Visitors Bureau, \texttt{http://www.columbus.in.us/listings/index.cfm?action=showSub&catID=336&subcatID=2928&startrange=All&endrange=All&substart=M&subend=S&notify=1} (accessed March 20, 2012).
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Miller, “Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One’s Ancestors, 57-67.
  \item \textsuperscript{10} Loeffler, 101-125.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid, 107-125.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 260-281.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Bednarz.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joiner, and Cairns, 5.
\end{itemize}
Columbus’ influx in population, particularly among school age children, caused the historic six-school system to become seriously overcrowded.\(^1\) It was estimated during the early 1950’s that ten new schools would be needed over the following years to accommodate the city’s rapidly growing population. In dire need of new and larger schools, the Columbus City School Board decided to start by replacing Jefferson Elementary School. The newly formed Cummins Engine Foundation financially contributed to the construction of the 1954 Jefferson Elementary School, the community’s first new school in over 50 years, with a $100,000 gift. Miller established the Cummins Engine Foundation in 1954 as a corporate philanthropy designed to promote humane living, particularly in Bartholomew County, Indiana. Miller thought the design of the new Jefferson Elementary School was simply mediocre despite its functionality.\(^2\) With his belief that “nothing is more expensive than mediocrity,”\(^3\) Miller
saw an opportunity to create well-designed schools that would add to Columbus’ built environment and quality of life.⁴

Miller understood that over the next couple of years many buildings would need to be built in Columbus. He also believed that well-deigned buildings would have a positive impact on the community and its quality of life, but knew those buildings would require additional finances and effort in the selection of an architect. Putting these fundamental concepts together, Miller used his resources to launch an architecture program through Cummins Engine Foundation. The architecture program revolved around the central idea that the foundation would pay the design fees for a new school building if the school board selected from a list of recommended architects. In a 1981 interview with James Michener, Miller confirmed that the idea for the architecture program stemmed from his conversations with Saarinen about his work with the State Department.⁵

Using the State Department as both inspiration and model, Miller and Saarinen laid the groundwork for the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program. Relying heavily on Saarinen’s extensive knowledge of the State Department program’s inner workings, the architecture program mimicked the State Department’s three-member advisory panel to create a list of about three to six talented architects. The original three-person panel included Saarinen, Pietro Belluschi, dean at MIT and current head of the
State Department’s advisory panel, and Douglas Haskell, editor of *Architectural Forum*. Saarinen selected the other two men, who were both friends of his, because of their intimate knowledge of the State Department’s policy. This was particularly true of Belluschi. Moreover, both men had broad experience and high status in their respective profession, and excelled at identifying rising architectural talent. Saarinen also felt all three of them had great professional connections. All things considered, the men could attract talented architects to the newly-formed program.

In the summer of 1955, the Cummins Engine Foundation approached Columbus City Schools with their offer to pay the design fees for Lillian Schmitt Elementary School. The school board agreed and formally invited Harry Weese, one of the recommended architects on the list, to apply on August 24th, 1955. In his application, Weese listed Haskell and Saarinen, both members of the selection panel, as two of his four references. Weese’s other references included William Wurster, the dean at MIT when Weese was student there, and George Newlin, J. Irwin Miller’s assistant and family friend. Newlin was particularly familiar with Weese’s prior works in Columbus, and would later hire the architect to build his own home. After meeting the other candidates (whose identities were never revealed to the public) for an interview in the fall of 1955, the school board unanimously decided to hire Weese on November 23, 1955. Weese particularly impressed the board with his regionalist approach and willingness to work with the school district.

Weese was an obvious choice for the inaugural panel to place on the list. Not only was Weese very good friends with Eero Saarinen from their days at Cranbrook,
but the other panelist were also familiar with him. Haskell had covered Weese’s work previously in *Architectural Forum*, while Belluschi had selected Weese in 1954 for the State Department foreign building program for an upcoming project in Ghana. In addition to Cranbrook, Weese was also a graduate of MIT, the same place where Belluschi was now dean of the architecture school. In addition to this, Weese had done a number of works already in Columbus such as the Columbus Village Apartments (1951) and the Boys and Girls Club (1954). These projects showed his willingness to work in the community and helped build his good reputation locally. All of these factors combined made hiring Weese an easy selection for the school board.

Weese, like his good friend Saarinen, took a collaborative approach to architecture. While working on Lillian Schmitt Elementary, Weese involved a committee of teachers and administrators in the design process. Taking their advice, Weese designed a one-story school that mimicked the surrounding residential neighborhood (fig. 14). The twelve-classroom Lillian Schmitt Elementary School, which used the familiar residential form for each classroom, welcomed young students in 1957. The school received positive remarks from both the school board and the community.
Pleased with the new Lillian Schmitt Elementary School, Columbus City Schools approached the Cummins Engine Foundation to see if they would again offer the program. The Cummins Engine Foundation not only agreed, but reached a long-standing agreement with the Columbus City School for all future schools. This agreement led to the official founding of the architecture program. With an increase in frequency in the number of upcoming projects, Saarinen, Belluschi, and Miller formalized the architecture program to include the following criteria:

- “The architect must be selected by the governing body for the proposed building from a list of at least four first-rank American architects submitted by a disinterested panel of two of the country’s most distinguished architects.

- Competition among architects is encouraged by using a variety of firms. A new or revised list will be submitted for each new building.

- Additions to buildings erected under this program must be designed by the architect of the original structure, but the fee for this must be paid for by the governing body.

- Each architect is required to work within the total budget agreed upon by the governing body.

- The architect selected must have the responsibility for planning and designing the total building. This includes recommending landscaping,
assisting in site selection, location of the building on the site, and recommending all colors and interior furnishings so that the building inside and out is planned and designed in aesthetic harmony.

- The architect selected should have responsibilities for designing outside areas beyond the normal landscaping to maximize site usage.
- Each architect must be given at least twelve months to plan, design, and prepare working drawings.
- The governing body and the architect chosen must execute a standard American Institute of Architects contract form.
- The maximum base architectural fee paid for by the Foundation shall be determined by a sliding scale established by the A.I.A. ranging from a maximum of 9.7 percent for $1,000,000 project to maximum of 8.3 percent for $5,000,000 project. In addition, the Foundation will also contribute 1.5 percent of construction costs for the architect’s reimbursable expenses if the firm is east of Denver and 2 percent if the firm is west of Denver.”

A letter from Saarinen to John Carl Warnecke on March 21, 1958 confirms that the Cummins Engine Foundation clearly adopted these rules prior to the commission of the second school (fig. 15). The letter also documents the roles of both Miller and Saarinen in the establishment and early development of the architecture program.
March 21, 1958

Mr. John Carl Warnecke
111 New Montgomery St.
San Francisco 5, Calif.

Dear Mr. Warnecke:

You will be receiving an inquiry from the Board of Education of Columbus, Indiana, to which you would be interested and in a position to do an elementary school for that town.

I would like to give you a little bit of background on this, so that you will realize this is not a completely routine request.

A client and a very good friend of mine, Irwin Miller, who is the owner of the Cummins Diesel Engine Factory in that town, and for whom we have built several things, is very interested in the architectural future of the town as a whole. (For background on Miller, you can read a FORTUNE Magazine article that appeared about four years ago—"Middle in the Diesel Industry"). He has convinced the Board of Education of the importance of good architecture and has asked Eero Saarinen and me to select a panel of a few architects from which the Board of Education will select the one to do the next school. This is part of a continuing program.

Harry Nazi has done our initial, and whatever does the most one will be disqualified for future schools—(a little bit like the State Department program); however, written into the agreement will be that any additions to any school will be made by the original architect.

All this is quite well thought out and, therefore, I hope you will give it your serious consideration. If, however, you are so filled up with work that you could not possibly give this kind of a project the attention it deserves, I would appreciate it if you let me know even before you receive the request from the School Board.

Yours,

[Signature]

Eero Saarinen

Figure 15
A letter from Eero Saarinen to John Carl Warnecke, informing him about the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program (previously unpublished material).
Furthermore, the letter shows the transition from the three-person panel to the disinterested panel of two anonymous and distinguished architects, which began appearing in national publications, particularly in Haskell’s *Architectural Forum*, in the early 1960’s. Although it is unclear why the panel changed its composition, the letter proves that Saarinen and Belluschi were the two panelists for at minimum the next project.

After receiving this letter, Warnecke heeded the advice of Saarinen and applied to design Columbus’ new Mabel McDowell Elementary School. Columbus City Schools went on to interview and later hire the architect. Like Weese, Warnecke also worked with a committee comprised of teachers and administrators. Warnecke’s design for the school centered on the concept of a small city, especially in organization, scale, and massing (fig. 16). Warnecke also used familiar residential forms to convey this concept as well as provide a welcoming environment for young students. Warnecke’s design also featured courtyards, large central communal pavilions, and four classroom clusters. Set in a larger Dan Kiley-designed park, Mable McDowell was the first Columbus school to utilize the school-park concept that utilized one site for both public education and recreation.

*Figure 16.*
Warnecke’s Mabel McDowell Elementary School centers around a large communal courtyard.
Neither the board of education nor the panel ever disclosed the list of architects invited to interview for this project or any other. Although there was no formal agreement to keep the architects of the list from the public, this is what happened in all, but one of the Cummins Engine Foundation funded projects.\textsuperscript{23} Despite not knowing the remainder of the list, it is quite clear why Warnecke’s name appeared on the list. Like Weese, Warnecke had experience with the State Department’s architecture program. Though his embassy in Thailand was never built, he managed to make a lasting impression on panelist Pietro Belluschi.\textsuperscript{24} Warnecke was also most likely selected for the list and later hired due to his experience in school design. In particular, Warnecke had previously designed the Mira Vista Elementary School (1951) in Richmond Heights, California, and the White Oaks Elementary School annex (1951) in San Carlos, California. Both of these schools had garnered national attention for their innovative and modern design.\textsuperscript{25}

In the following years, but before Saarinen died on September 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1961, two more school projects were initiated: Northside Middle School (1961) designed by Harry Weese and Parkside Elementary School (1962) designed by Norman Fletcher of The Architects Collaborative (TAC) (fig. 17).\textsuperscript{26} Although there is no archival evidence tying Saarinen to these projects, the simple fact of the one-year planning process would most

\textbf{Figure 17.} Parkside Elementary School designed by Norman Fletcher of TAC was the fourth school to be built under the architecture program.
likely indicate that Saarinen was a member of the panel during the time that these architects were selected. Despite Saarinen’s earlier statement to Warnecke about architects receiving only one commission, both Weese and Fletcher received multiple architecture program commissions. The justification for Weese’s two school commissions is the fact that Northside Middle School sits on the same site as his earlier Lillian Schmitt Elementary School; therefore, he was responsible for any new buildings on the site. Despite their separate sites, it appears that the Board of Education hired Fletcher to complete both Parkside Elementary, another school in the school-park concept, and the Administration Building (1963) as part of the same commission.

Like Warnecke and Weese, Norman Fletcher was also very familiar with the State Department’s foreign building program. Fletcher and TAC helped fellow member Walter Gropius with his U.S. Embassy in Athens, Greece. The firm later designed an unbuilt project for the FOB in Cuba. Belluschi would have been familiar with the young architect through his work with State Department. Saarinen also personally knew Fletcher, who worked for Saarinen, Swanson, & Associates from 1944-1945. Although Saarinen returned to the firm in 1945, it is unclear if the two architects ever worked together. However, both panelists knew Fletcher and his work. The pair was also most likely familiar with TAC’s specialization and experience in school design. This included a reputation for excellent modern schools in New England, such as the critically acclaimed Thatcher Junior High (1948) in Attleboro, Massachusetts, and Northeast Elementary School (1953) in Waltham, Massachusetts.

Though credit is most frequently given solely to J. Irwin Miller, in reality, the
Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program was a collaboration between Miller and Eero Saarinen. It appears that Miller utilized his power to convince the local Board of Education to participate in the program while leveraging the financial resources for the program through the Cummins Engine Foundation. Given the archival evidence, it is clear that Saarinen played an integral role in the idea of the program. In particular, his details of the State Department’s FOB program proved extremely helpful in compiling formal requirements and processes for the program. Furthermore, Saarinen helped develop the Cummins Engine Foundation’s architecture program through his own outstanding reputation and his wealth of connections, especially with Belluschi, in the architectural field. Without these resources, the Cummins Engine Foundation may not have been able to attract top talent in the early stage of the architecture program.

2 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsella, Joyner, and Cairns, 3-4.
3 Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller.”
4 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsella, Joyner, and Cairns, 3-4.
5 Ibid, 4-5.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid, 4.
8 Columbus City School, Letter to Harry Weese, August 24, 1955, Lillian Schmitt Elementary School Folder, Columbus, Indiana Architectural Archives, Cleo Roger Memorial Library, Columbus, Indiana.
9 Harry Weese, Application to Columbus City Schools, August 1955, Lillian Schmitt Elementary School Folder, Columbus, Indiana Architectural Archives, Cleo Roger Memorial Library, Columbus, Indiana.
10 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsella, Joyner, and Cairns, 12.
12 Halik, 41.
13 Loeffler, 282.
21 Saarinen.
22 Thayer, Joyner, and Cairns, “National Historic Landmark Nomination for First Christian Church.”
24 Loeffler, 158.
26 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsella, Joyner, and Cairns, 5.
27 Ibid, 4-5.
28 Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, Inc., 52-55.
29 Loeffler, 284-286.
31 Hille, 154-57.
After the death of Saarinen, the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program not only continued, but flourished. In 1965, a number of schools in Bartholomew County consolidated into one school district known as the Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation (BCSC). To accommodate this change, the architecture program expanded in 1966 to include all public or non-for-profit entities in Bartholomew County. The first non-educational building constructed with support of the foundation was Robert Venturi’s Fire Station Number 4 in 1967. With the BCSC and a number of public entities taking advantage of it, the architecture program saw its peak in the 1960’s and early 1970’s, a period when it averaged a project a year.¹

Figure 18.
Venturi’s Fire Station No. 4 was the Cummins Engine Foundation’s first non-educational building.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Architect/Designer</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lillian Schmitt Elementary School</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Harry Weese</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mabel McDowell Elementary School</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>John Carl Warnecke</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northside Junior High School</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Harry Weese</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkside Elementary School</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Norman Fletcher of The Architects Collaborative (TAC)</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Building</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Norman Fletcher of TAC</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.D. Richards Elementary School</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Edward Larrabee Barnes</td>
<td>1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln Elementary School</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Gunnar Birkerts</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Station No. 4</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Robert Venturi</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Seasons Retirement Center</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Norman Fletcher of TAC</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleo Rogers Memorial Library</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>I.M. Pei</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Plan</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Skidmore Owings &amp; Merrill (SOM)</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southside Junior High School</td>
<td>Garden City, Indiana</td>
<td>Eliot Noyes</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Frances Smith Elementary School</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>John Johansen</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus Post Office</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Healthy Elementary School</td>
<td>Mt. Healthy, Indiana</td>
<td>Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer (Hugh Hardy principle)</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus East High School</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Romaldo Giurgola of Mitchell-Giurgola</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par 3 Golf Course Clubhouse</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Brewster (Bruce) Adams</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus Regional Hospital Mental Health Center (Quinco Consulting Center)</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>James Stewart Polshek</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commons</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Cesar Pelli</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fodrea Community School</td>
<td>Columbus, Indiana</td>
<td>Paul Kennon of Claudill Rowlett Scott</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing Cs (logo for the Columbus Visitor Center)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paul Rand</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.
Cummins Engine Foundation Supported Projects, 1957-197.
Although it is known how the architecture program selected their list prior to Saarinen’s death in 1961 and after the mid-1970’s, the selection process for the list of architects in between these periods of time remains largely undocumented. However, a helpful perspective is provided by the identities of the architects and designers who received commissions during the height of the program (table 1). Through a thorough examination of these individuals and their educational, professional, and social backgrounds prior to their Columbus commission, a number of patterns emerge that potentially explain the architecture program’s selection process.

Perhaps the most notable similarity between the architects is that of geography (fig. 19). With the exception of John Carl Warnecke who primarily practiced in San Francisco, the remainder of the selected architects practiced a significant portion of their careers before their Columbus commissions on the East Coast or in the Mid-West. Most the architects were centered in the greater Boston- New York-Philadelphia area or the Chicago-Detroit areas. This comes as no surprise because practices often sprang up near the best architectural schools with Modern curriculums. This included Harvard, MIT, Yale, the University of

**Figure 19.**
Locations of Designers Professional Experience Prior to their Columbus Commissions, 1957-1973
Pennsylvania, Columbia, Princeton, Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), Cranbrook, the University of Michigan, and the University of Illinois.³

This pattern is noticeable and perhaps due to the fact that those who made up the list of recommended architects were more familiar with architects, firms, and schools in these areas. The reason behind this may also have to do with the criteria of the Cummins Engine Foundation’s architecture program and the architects’ location east or west of Denver.⁴ This pattern suggest bias against the Modern architecture movement in both northern and southern California. The exceptions are Warnecke and Cesar Pelli, who had moved to Los Angeles after his time at Eero Saarinen and Associates.⁵ Although this geographical pattern is noticeable, it seems highly unlikely that it was intentional, but rather dependent on the familiarity of those making the recommendations.

Another identifiable pattern is the number of architects that worked at Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM), mainly in the Chicago office, either before or during their project in Columbus. This includes Harry Weese, Norman Fletcher, Bruce Adams, John Dinkeloo, and John Johansen. Outside of Eero Saarinen and Associates, SOM employed a larger number of selected architects than of any other firm. In addition, the Cummins Engine Foundation hired SOM in 1968 and 1984 to develop a comprehensive plan for the city, one of their first non-architectural commissions. Later, SOM’s Myron Goldsmith designed The Republic building in 1971, a private commission for the local newspaper.⁶ Beluschi also has ties to SOM, transferring his Portland office to SOM in Chicago when
he got hired as MIT Dean.\(^7\) Despite this evidence, the multiple connections to SOM seem more like a coincidence and not a plausible pattern. Although SOM started out as a three-man firm in 1939, it grew much larger during World War II and continued to grow through the second half of the 20\(^{th}\) century. As one of the biggest firms in the United States during the building boom, it employed a number of notable architects who did not receive Cummins Engine Foundation commissions in the 1960’s and 1970’s. In addition, of these architects receiving Columbus commissions, none had a prominent position within the firm. This makes it doubtful that this distinction contributed to the recommendation of architects to the list.\(^8\) However, some of the SOM connections mentioned above may play a part in another pattern discussed later in this chapter.

Another pattern that emerges is that of educational background (table 2). A majority of the selected architects trained at Harvard. This includes six of the architects, three of which were members of the class of 1942 at the Graduate School of Design. Since Harvard, with Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer as lead faculty, had perhaps one of the best architecture schools following World War II,\(^9\) it is likely that this pattern is simply a reflection of the architectural talent filtering through the university. Saarinen was an acquaintance of Walter Gropius, the dean at Harvard Graduate School of Design when most architects studied here. Gropius was also a founding member of TAC, leaving a chance he may have recommended architects for Cummins Engine Foundation. However, his death in 1969 would have limited his potential influence to less than a decade.\(^10\)

Another possibility is that Marcel Breuer, a good friend of Saarinen’s,\(^11\) may have
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designer</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry Weese</td>
<td>MIT (1938), Yale (one year)</td>
<td>Cranbrook (1939)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Kiley</td>
<td>Harvard (1938- did not graduate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Carl Wamecke</td>
<td>Stanford (1941)</td>
<td>Harvard (1942)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman Fletcher</td>
<td>Yale (1940)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Larrabee Barnes</td>
<td>Harvard (1941)</td>
<td>Harvard (1942)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunnar Birkerts</td>
<td>Technische Hochschule Stuttgart, Germany (1949)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.O.M.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliot Noyes</td>
<td>Harvard (1932)</td>
<td>Harvard (1938)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. M. Pei</td>
<td>University of Pennsylvania (transferred) &lt;br&gt; MIT (1940)</td>
<td>Harvard (1946)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Roche</td>
<td>University of Dublin (1945)</td>
<td>Illinois Institute of Technology (1949)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Dinkeloo</td>
<td>University of Michigan (1942)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Adams</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh Hardy</td>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>Princeton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romaldo Giurgola</td>
<td>Sapienza University of Rome</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Stewart Polshek</td>
<td>Case Western Reserve (1972*&lt;br&gt;Received honorary degree after failing to complete 8 credits in the 1950’s)</td>
<td>Yale (1955)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cesar Pelli</td>
<td>University of Tucuman</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Kennon</td>
<td>Texas A&amp;M (1957)</td>
<td>Cranbrook (1958)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Rand</td>
<td>Pratt (1932)</td>
<td>Parsons the New School for Design (1933), Art Students League (1934)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
had some sort of connection to the architecture program. Breuer taught all the architects receiving Cummins Engine Foundation projects, either faculty or Dean at Harvard. Breuer also worked closely with Noyes and Johansen in a group called the Harvard Five out of New Haven, Connecticut. Belluschi, dean at the neighboring MIT, had a high respect for both Gropius and Breuer. Along with Saarinen, he had recommended them for State Department projects. Furthermore, Emery Roth & Sons hired Belluschi, Gropius and Breuer to help with the design of the PanAm (now MetLife) Building from the mid-1950’s to the late 1960’s. This suggests that if still involved in the program, Belluschi may have consulted either man to help out with the program at one point.

Another avenue worth exploring is the influence of Philip Johnson, a friend of Saarinen from his days as director at MoMA. At MoMA, Johanson developed a friendship with fellow curator Eliot Noyes, who later designed Southside Junior High School (1969). Here, he also meet and networked with some of the top modern architects of the time. Johnson was a 1943 graduate of Harvard and later taught there, where he continued to meet rising talent. Although there was a strong connection between Johnson and Saarinen, it has been revealed that Johnson interviewed for the Columbus City Hall commission in 1981. This evidence makes it unlikely that Johnson was involved in the selection process due to his inability to recommend himself. Instead, these connections may point to a selection process like that at the State Department, where some previously selected architects made recommendations.

In addition to connections to Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and Phillip Johnson, a number of the selected architects had ties to Louis Kahn. Kahn was another close friend...
of Saarinen’s and one of his main resources for recruiting talent. Kahn had educational, professional, and social relationship with many of the architects. This included a lifelong friendship with Dan Kiley after the two worked together at the United Stated Housing Authority and the O.S.S. Both John Johansen and Norman Fletcher, along with Saarinen, joined Kahn as he led an effort to establish the American Society of Planners and Architects, a failed attempt to organize the two modern design professions. Kahn spent much of his life educating the next generation of architects. He taught at: Yale University from 1947-1957; MIT in 1962; as visiting lecturer at Princeton University from 1961 until 1967; and later Dean of University of Pennsylvania from 1957 until his death in 1975. As an educator, Kahn met, mentored, and identified rising architectural talent like Robert Venturi, I.M. Pei, Romaldo Giurgola, and James Stewart Polshek. These men considered him to be extremely influential in their own approach to architecture. In addition, he helped many of them get commissions and jobs. Kahn remained good friends with these men throughout their careers. Since Kahn was both a close friend of Saarinen’s and a highly respected educator in architecture, it is reasonable to speculate that he might have been asked to recommend architects following Saarinen’s death.

One of Saarinen’s closest friends was Harry Weese. From their days at Cranbrook to their vacation to Greece in 1960, the men remained close friends throughout their life. At the height of his popularity in the 1950’s, Saarinen and his firm were often too busy to accept all their offers. Rather than just turning down projects, Saarinen would often recommend Weese for the job. Weese received many commission through Saarinen’s
recommendations, including his work for Miller at Cummins Engine Company and Irwin Union Bank and Trust. Weese became Miller’s favorite architect after Saarinen’s death. This led to Weese receiving multiple commissions in Columbus. As the two grew into good friends, Miller would often look to Weese for architectural advice in his corporate commissions.

Following Saarinen’s death, Weese’s commissions for the Cummins Engine Foundation halted, which suggests he might have served as a panelist. As the inaugural and a repeat architect for the foundation, Weese thoroughly understood the objectives and criteria for Cummins Engine Foundation. He was also very familiar with both Belluschi and the State Department’s foreign building program, the model for the architecture program. Weese would later serve as architectural advisor, like Belluschi and Saarinen, to the State Department’s Architectural Advisory Committee (AAC) from 1973 to 1977. In addition to screening talent here, Weese had a network of his own professional connections he could potentially tap. This includes Edward Larrabee Barnes, a friend and colleague in Chicago; I.M. Pei, an undergraduate student he met at MIT; SOM, his former employer; and Bruce Adams, a fellow employee at SOM and later employee at his office. With his wealth of resources and the respect of Miller, Weese seems the strongest of the individuals mentioned to have possibly taken Saarinen’s seat on the panel.

Although all of these patterns contain some plausibility, they are by no means certain explanations of how or why the selected architects were actually recommended. Even though a strong case may be made for Harry Weese’s involvement, all of the above
possible explanations are still speculative and partial. Of the many patterns that have emerged in the search to explain the Cummins Engine Foundation’s architecture selection process from 1961-1973, two have more validity than the others. These include involvement in the State Department’s foreign building program and a professional connection to Eero Saarinen.

Of the sixteen architects constructing projects in the sixties and early seventies, twelve had previously participated in State Department’s foreign building program in some extent (table 3). This previous experience includes both built and unbuilt projects, ranging from U.S. embassies to staff housing, as either the primary architect or contributing member in a firm or office.\(^{26}\) With more than half of the architects falling into this pattern, it strongly suggest that this characteristic is a serious factor in the selection process. As previously discussed, and also stated by Saarinen himself, many aspects of the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture, such as objective and organization, were modeled after the State Department’s foreign building program. Saarinen also marketed the architecture programs as “similar to the State Department’s” in order to appeal to the same group of talented, rising architects.\(^{27}\)

Although the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program did not have competitions, it modeled its original panel on the State Department’s AAC. This originally included Saarinen, an AAC advisor from 1957 to 1960, and Pietro Belluschi, the founder and advisor from 1954-57. Other AAC advisors during the 1950’s and 1960’s that would be familiar with the architects Saarinen wanted to recruit include: Henry Shepley (1954-57), Ralph Walker (1954-56), Richard M. Bennett
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Project Location</th>
<th>Built or Unbuilt</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry Weese</td>
<td>Accra, Ghana</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Carl Warnecke</td>
<td>Bangkok, Thailand</td>
<td>Unbuilt</td>
<td>1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman Fletcher* (apart of The Architects</td>
<td>Athens, Greece</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative with Walter Gropius)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Larrabee Barnes</td>
<td>Tabriz, Iran</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunnar Birkerts* (apart of Eero Saarinen and</td>
<td>Oslo, Norway and London, England</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1955</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.O.M. ** (before foreign building program)</td>
<td>Multiple on Germany</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.M. Pei</td>
<td>Montevideo, Uruguay</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliot Noyes</td>
<td>Phnom Penh, Cambodia</td>
<td>Unbuilt</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Johanson</td>
<td>Dublin, Ireland</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Roche* (apart of Eero Saarinen and</td>
<td>Oslo, Norway and London, England</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1955</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romaldo Giurgola (Mitchell-Giurgola)</td>
<td>Bogota, Colombia</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cesar Pelli (Cesar Pelli and Guen Associates)</td>
<td>Tokoyo, Japan</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Stewart Polshek* (apart of I.M Pei’s</td>
<td>Montevideo, Uruguay</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>office)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3**
Cummins Engine Foundation Architects (1957-1973) with Previous Projects for the State Department Foreign Building Program
(1956-58), William Wurster (1958-63), Roy F. Larson (1959-64), Lawrence B. Anderson (1960-1970), Joseph R. Passoneau (1963-70), and John Lyon Reid (1964-1967). A logical conclusion could be that Saarinen, familiar with many of the later selected architects, placed them on a longer list of recommended architects before their commission selection. It is also extremely plausible that Belluschi, who selected a number of these architects for FOB projects, continued to assist in the selection of the list following Saarinen’s death. This pattern also could suggest that the architectural panel rotated like the AAC, hence hiring many of the same architects.

The second solid pattern to emerge is the professional connection many architects had to Eero Saarinen (table 4). This

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Worked in Office</th>
<th>Other Connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry Weese</td>
<td></td>
<td>Friends from Cranbrook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Kiley</td>
<td></td>
<td>Worked together on a variety of projects after they met at the OSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Carl Warnecke</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman Fletcher</td>
<td></td>
<td>Worked for Saarinen, Swanson, and Associates in 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Larrabee Barnes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunnar Birkerts</td>
<td>1951-1955</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Venturi</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.M. Pei</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliot Noyes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Curated Eero’s Furniture Exhibit at MoMA, Commissioned Eero for IBM design program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Johanson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Roche</td>
<td>1950-1966, renamed firm Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates in 1966</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh Hardy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Worked for Eero at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronaldo Giurgola</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Adams</td>
<td>1951-1954</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Stewart Polstiek</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cesar Pelli</td>
<td>1954-1964</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Kenna</td>
<td>1957-67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.** Cummins Engine Foundation Architects (1957-73) with a Personal or Professional Connection to Eero Saarinen.
included a total of eleven architects. Of them Gunnar Birkerts, Robert Venturi, Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo, Bruce Adams, Cesar Pelli, Paul Kennon, and later Charles Bassett (Columbus City Hall, 1981) all worked under Saarinen at Eero Saarinen and Associates.\(^{29}\)

Although he never worked at the firm, Dan Kiley continuously worked with Saarinen on a variety of projects since their first project of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.\(^{30}\) Other designers who have less obvious connections to Saarinen were Hugh Hardy, of Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer, and Eliot Noyes. Hardy collaborated with Saarinen on the Vivian Beaumont Theatre,\(^{31}\) while Elliot Noyes met Saarinen when he worked at MoMA and later, hired him for two projects at IBM.\(^{32}\)

Over half the architects had some type of professional relationship, and often a personal friendship, with Eero Saarinen during the building boom period. However the selection process worked and whoever was drawing up the list of recommended architects, the one constant factor was that so many of the selected architects had earned the respect of Saarinen. Since his days at Cranbrook, Saarinen had openly embraced collaborative design process and fully respected his fellow designers. Saarinen also prided himself on his ability to recognize and recruit the best architectural talent available.\(^{33}\) It is clear that their connections to and approval by Eero Saarinen landed many architects their spot of the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture list. It appears that whoever drew up the list of recommended architects not only respected Saarinen, but knew him personally. This suggests that the selector was either a member of Eero Saarinen and Associates or a close friend of the architect. This may indicate J. Irwin Miller, who clearly played a significant role in selection process from the 1970’s on,\(^{34}\)
Harry Weese, Louis Kahn, or another one of his friends previously mentioned. All of whom were familiar with the members of Saarinen’s office and his other professional relationships.

Since both patterns contain more than half of the selected architects and together account for all the architects selected during the building boom, these two seem to be the most likely factors in the formation of the architecture program’s list of recommended architects. Although neither pattern explains how the selection process functioned in detail; together they do tell us a lot about the individuals making the recommendations for the list. These individuals had a thorough understanding of the State Department’s foreign building program and the architects associated with it. The pattern of professional and personal relationships with Eero Saarinen also displays the individuals’ knowledge of and respect for Saarinen as a recruiter and developer of, and collaborator with great architectural talent. Without documentation there in no absolute certainty, but it seems that all evidence indicates that Belluschi’s continued involvement with the program. This may have been as panelist himself or simply communicating Saarinen’s vision for the architectural program to the next generation of list selectors. These two patterns strongly suggest that the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program continued to rely on the wealth of Saarinen’s professional connections in order to thrive after the architect’s death.

Former Cummins Foundation President Tracy Souza revealed that after the initial building boom, the selection process became much less formal as projects became scarcer.35 In the last couple of decades, the architecture program has seen waves of
activity in the early 1980’s, early 1990’s, and now again in the last five years.\textsuperscript{36} As the program continued, Eero’s influence began to wane, yet the program still managed to attract top architects. The ability to attract these rising designers may have well derived from Columbus’ outstanding reputation, a reputation that Eero Saarinen established through his work and the influence he exercised after his death.
Thayer, Storrow, Kinsella, Joyner, and Cairns, 8-81.


“Cummins Engine Foundation: Architecture Program Criteria.”

Packard, Korab, and Hunt Jr., 475-477.

Thayer, Storrow, Kinsella, Joyner, and Cairns, 9-11.

Packard, Korab, and Hunt Jr., 41-43.

Ibid, 583-584.


Packard, Korab, and Hunt Jr., 281-284.

Halik, 19.

Loeffler, 271.


Halik, 18-19.

Packard, Korab, and Hunt Jr., 353-357.

Freeman, 65.

Halik, 15-19.

Thayer, Storrow, Kinsella, Joyner, and Cairns, 49-51.


Packard, Korab, and Hunt Jr., 365-369.


Harry Weese “…if Eero were alive today,” Inland Architect, June 1981, 52.

Halik, 47-41.

Loeffler, 271-274.

Bruegmann and Skolnik, 79-152.

Loeffler, 271-276.

Saarinen.

Loeffler, 272.

Halik, 14-15.

Thayer, Storrow, Kinsella, Joyner, and Cairns, 49.
32 Bednarz.
33 Halik 15-41.
34 Souza.
35 Ibid.
Chapter Six:

Corporate Architecture in Bartholomew County

The Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program was not the only means by which Eero Saarinen and his connections were able to influence the quality of design in Columbus. The architect also played a large role in Columbus’ corporate architecture, particularly with the Irwin Union Bank and Trust and the Cummins Engine Company. As corporate architecture began to become popular during the 1940’s and 1950’s, Saarinen became known as one of the premier, corporate architects in the United States.¹ This reputation led J. Irwin Miller to not only ask him to design the Irwin Union Bank (1954), but also to recommend an architect for a new Cummins Engine Company plant. Saarinen recommended Weese, who went on to design Cummins Engine Plant One (1953).²

Shortly after these two projects in 1956, Saarinen told Miller about his projects with the IBM corporate design program. Like Thomas J. Watson Jr., Miller understood that modern buildings could not only provide the most efficient environment for employees and clients, but could also project a forward-thinking corporate image.³
Miller also knew that well-designed, comfortable facilities would help him attract and retain good employees. Hearing about the IBM design program and the rise of corporate architecture reinforced Miller’s earlier decision to hire talented architects, like Saarinen and Weese, and encouraged him to commission rising designers for future corporate design projects.

As chairman of Irwin Union Bank and Trust and Cummins Engine Company, Miller made a very conscious decision to use his position to promote high quality corporate design. Though he never created an official design program, Miller applied a very concerted design philosophy to both companies during his tenure. Similar to IBM, Miller applied a comprehensive design approach in his businesses that included architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, and graphic design projects.

Under Miller’s leadership, the two companies added ten more well-designed buildings to the Saarinen-designed bank and the Weese-designed plant. Of these ten new buildings in Bartholomew County, the Irwin Union Bank and Trust commissioned five new buildings: Irwin Union Bank and Trust: Hope Branch (1958) designed by Harry Weese; Irwin Union Bank and Trust: Eastbrook Plaza (1961) designed by Harry Weese; the original Irwin Union Bank and Trust: State and Mapelton Streets (1961) designed by Harry Weese; Irwin Union Bank and Trust: Taylorsville Branch (1966) designed by Fisher and Spillman; and a new Irwin Union Bank and Trust: State and Mapelton Streets (1974) designed by Paul Kennon. Also under Miller’s chairmanship, Irwin Union Bank and Trust added three additional projects: a new landscape for the bank drive-through on an adjacent lot to Irwin Union Bank and Trust (1966) designed by Dan Kiley; an addition
to Saarinen’s Irwin Union Bank and Trust (1973) designed by Kevin Roche; and a renovation of the historic Irwin Bank and Miller’s office at 301 Washington Street (1973) designed by Alexander Girard (fig. 20).⁶

Cummins Engine Company commissioned the remaining four buildings built under Miller’s leadership: Cummins Engine Technical Center (1968) designed by Harry Weese; Cummins Engine Company Warehouse (1970) designed by Bruce Adams; Cummins Midrange Engine Plant-Walesboro (1973) designed by Kevin Roche, and Cummins Occupational Health Association (1973) designed by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer (fig. 21).⁷ Miller understood that his businesses’ corporate images went beyond the built environment, so he hired Paul Rand in 1962 to redesign the companies’ logo. Rand, who began to make a name for himself as a graphic designer during the 1950’s, had famously designed IBM’s logo a few years earlier. In addition to the logos, Rand attended to the companies’ other graphic design needs to help brand Miller’s emerging
businesses. Miller would later commission him to do work for the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Foundation and Columbus Visitor Center.⁸

Of the designers that Miller’s businesses employed, all, but Fisher and Spillman were in some way connected to Saarinen, whether as friends, business partners, or collaborators. The lone exception was Pat Y. Spillman, a former employee and recommendation of Weese’s, of Fisher and Spillman.⁹ Although many of these men would go on to become friends of the Millers themselves, most would have never met Miller or won their corporate commissions without their connection to Saarinen. It is evident through projects at both Irwin Union Bank and Trust and Cummins Engine Foundation that Miller was not only influenced by IBM, but perhaps even more strongly by Saarinen. Saarinen not only helped introduce Miller to the world of corporate design, but he also provided him with the talent and connections to pursue it successfully.

After Miller’s retirement, both Irwin Union Bank and Trust and Cummins Engine Company continued the corporate design philosophy established by the former chairman. The business’ and the city’s high-design status allowed for the companies to continue to attract such top design talents such as Carlos Jiminez, Deborah Berke, and Roth and Moore Architects.¹⁰ This ability directly resulted from Saarinen’s initial vision in the 1950’s and his professional connections that gave the businesses’ a reputation for design excellence.
1 Albrecht, 45-55.
2 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joyner, and Cairns, 3-24.
3 Bednarz.
4 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joyner, and Cairns, 4.
5 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joyner, and Cairns, 9-10.
6 Columbus Area Visitors Center, “Architecture and Public Art.”
7 Ibid.
10 Columbus Area Visitors Center, “Architecture and Public Art.”
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

As the Cummins Engine Foundation, Cummins Engine Company, and Irwin Union Bank and Trust continued to sponsor excellence in design, many people took notice of Columbus’ exceptional built environment. This encouraged a number of organizations in Bartholomew County, inspired by their neighbors’ quest for quality design and quality of life, to privately commission projects. Those included First Baptist Church, The Republic (the local Columbus newspaper), AT&T, Indiana University Purdue University-Columbus, St. Peter’s Lutheran Church, Ivy Tech Community College, Breeden Inc., and St. Bartholomew Roman Catholic Church (fig. 22).¹ In addition to these buildings, a variety of works of public art and the

Figure 22.
Paul Kennon’s AT&T Switching Station’s in one of Columbus’ most photographed buildings.
Public Sculpture Invitational, a semi-regular event hosted by the Columbus Area Arts Council, has also added to Columbus’ unique built environment over the years.2 Additional initiatives that thrust Columbus into the national spotlight and solidified its reputation for architectural excellence included the work of two of Saarinen’s close friends, Doug Haskell and Balthazar Korab. Haskell, who had been covering Saarinen’s works since the 1940’s, was editor of *Architectural Forum*, a leading national architectural publication, during the architecture program’s building boom. Since Saarinen included him in the initial panel, Haskell had a firm understanding and a vested interest in both the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program and Columbus. Haskell thus repeatedly covered Columbus projects in *Architectural Forum* throughout the 1960’s and 1970’s. Although other magazines such as *Architectural Record* mentioned Columbus projects, no other national magazine consistently documented the city in the early 1960’s.3 Through his journalism, Haskell exposed the world to Columbus’s extraordinary architectural projects while leading the way for later, more in depth media coverage.

Balthazar Korab also added to Columbus’ publicity through his renowned photography. Korab worked at Eero Saarinen and Associates from 1955 until 1958, where he developed a strong relationship with the architect and the rest of the firm. While at the office, Saarinen encouraged Korab to photograph models to gain perspective into the design process. With his encouragement, Korab grew to become one of the best independent architectural photographers of the 20th century. Korab first captured the architecture of Columbus for magazines like *Architectural Forum* and *Architectural Record* in the early 1960’s. During his long career, Korab documented the works of the
best 20th century architects, but has retained a special interest in Columbus (fig. 22). Korab has published various books of his architectural photographs, including some on Columbus and Eero Saarinen. In his book *Eero Saarinen: Buildings from the Balthazar Korab Archives* edited by David G. De Long and C. Ford Peatross, Korab exclaims “[i]t was the Saarinen role in the remarkable patronage of architecture in Columbus, Indiana that made me part of the town’s history as their favored reporter.”

Through their respective work, both Korab and Haskell have helped popularize Columbus while perpetrating the city’s ability to attract top design talent since the 1970’s.

Columbus, and Cummins Foundation in particular, have continued with their commitment to design excellence in the community with several new projects. The most recent completed project, in fact, is the new Commons (Kotter Kim and Associates, 2011) funded by the
Cummins Foundation (fig. 24). Furthermore a variety of projects in downtown are currently under construction such as The Cole Apartments, Cummins Office Building expansion, and a new First Financial Bank (the new owner of Irwin Union Bank and Trust).\(^5\) As the city’s reputation continues to expand, tourists have begun to flock to the destination that contains over 80 sites designed by leading modern and postmodern designers. Also the recent opening of the Miller House and Gardens (Eero Saarinen, 1957) for architectural tours sponsored by the Indianapolis Museum of Art has generated a spike in curiosity about the city’s unique built environment.\(^6\) To accommodate all this interest, the Columbus Indiana Visitors Center has rapidly expanded since opening in 1973 and the city established the Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives in 2004.\(^7\)

Although Columbus remains very much a living city, it also has become one of the world’s premier museums for modern architecture.

For decades now, Columbus has received national and international recognition for its exceptional collection of modern and post-modern architecture. This recognition includes appearances in a variety of publications from *National Geographic* and *The New York Times* to educational textbooks such as *American Architecture: A History*. Additionally, the city’s design programs and initiatives have accrued a variety of honors; perhaps its most prestigious was placing sixth in the rankings by the AIA for architectural innovation and design.\(^8\)

Columbus has also received some criticisms. Among the most common critiques, is the lack of connectedness between its resources and visual clutter taking away from these resources’ significance. Taking this into consideration, the community has recently undertaken efforts to improve urban planning and design.\(^9\)
As significant as the city’s architecture, is this small community’s ability to produce it. Though not the first architectural program, Cummins Engine Foundation was the first to support public design projects on a local level. The success of the architecture program has gone on to inspire other communities such as Flint, Michigan; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Celebration, Florida. The combination of the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program and private patronage has created a synergy and large-scale successful results that have yet to be attained anywhere else in the world.

J. Irwin Miller has received credit, often individually, for this distinction. Miller has won numerous accolades for his patronage of the arts and leadership in Columbus’ larger design movement. Of the numerous awards he has received, winning the inaugural National Building Museum’s Honor Award in 1986 and initiating their yearlong exhibit, “Good Design and the Community,” is perhaps the most notable. Miller impressed the organization with his ability to advance the building arts and sciences while also benefiting his own community with his patronage and leadership within the Cummins Engine Foundation architecture program. There is no doubt that Miller’s money and power played a significant role in the development of Columbus. Without him and his perseverance following the death of Eero Saarinen, the city would have never reached architectural greatness.

However, Saarinen played an equally crucial role in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Saarinen is often remembered in Columbus for his four buildings that helped spark the Modern movement in Columbus. These four National Historic Landmarks are quite the prize for any community, but this thesis shows that these were not Saarinen’s only contributions to Columbus. Although Miller certainly deserves the credit he has received,
Columbus’ design success cannot be chalked up to just one individual. In reality, the “Modernist Mecca” is instead a result of a collaboration of numerous individuals’ resources. Of these individuals, Saarinen played just as significant a role as, if not a greater one than, Miller himself in the synergy that created Columbus.

It was Saarinen who initially recommended Harry Weese, who has a total of 18 built projects in Bartholomew County, to Miller. It was Saarinen who told Miller of his works with the State Department’s foreign building program and IBM design program, which inspired and influenced the businessman. It was Saarinen who helped develop the Cummins Engine Foundation’s architecture program criteria and used his own architectural connections to recruit Belluchi for the panel. It was Saarinen who served on those first panels and used his architectural reputation to attract top designers to Columbus. It was the unique professional and personal relationships that Saarinen made with modern designers that later resulted in their tapping for both public and private commissions in Columbus. It was an entire fraternity of designers that Saarinen collaborated with, mentored, and influenced that helped transform Columbus. It was Saarinen’s friends, Doug Haskell and Balthazar Korab, who documented Columbus’ success and helped solidify its reputation. It is only because of Eero Saarinen’s initial vision and effort that the community has been able to continue to build its reputation for design excellence.

Often architectural historians look at architects as just that, architects. They focus on their works, writings, and design philosophy. Eero Saarinen was much more than an architect; he was a businessman, a mentor, a friend, a visionary. Saarinen provided the initial inspiration and vision for Columbus, as well as the personal and professional
connections to make that vision a reality. Without Eero Saarinen, Columbus would be a drastically different place both physically and culturally. The city’s design accomplishments owe so much to J. Irwin Miller, but Columbus, Indiana will always be just as much Eero Saarinen’s legacy.

1 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joyner, and Cairns, 9-10.
2 Columbus Area Visitors Center, “Architecture and Public Art.”
3 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joyner, and Cairns, 54-60.
6 Columbus Area Visitors Center, “Architecture and Public Art.”
8 Columbus Area Visitors Center, “Architecture and Public Art.”
9 Thayer, Storrow, Kinsell, Joyner, and Cairns, 39-41.
10 Miller, “Joseph Irwin Miller.”
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