

Theodore Wells Pietsch

Born 2 October 1869 at Chicago, died by suicide on 1 January 1930 at Baltimore; a well-known architect; graduate of MIT, class of 1889; began his career working for the architectural firms of Flanders & Zimmerman and Burnham & Root, both of Chicago; left the U.S. on 12 September 1891 for Paris and spent the next six years studying at the Ecole des Beaux Arts where he received the French Government Diploma for architecture in December 1897 (see *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 December 1897, p. 13), the ninth American to receive this award; honorary mention in the Salon (Paris) in 1898; after his return to the U.S. in 1898 he spent two years in New York offices, with competitive work; this was followed by three or four years in Washington, D.C., where for more than a year he was in the employ of Messrs. Hornblower & Marshall, and after that, for some two years, as Chief Designer in the Office of the Supervising Architect, Mr. James King Taylor; when the Great Baltimore Fire occurred in February 1904 he was called to help rebuild the city, where, in that same year, he entered into partnership with Otto G. Simonson (1862-1922), establishing the firm of Simonson and Pietsch, which lasted until about 1908; his principle works in Baltimore include Eastern High School, the Public Market, and Baths, the U.S. Fidelity & Guarantee Building, the Lanahan Warehouse, Broadway Pier (the City Pier or "Recreation Pier," located on Thames Street between Broadway and Ann Street, opened on 20 August 1914; built by the city at a cost of over \$1 million as a commercial pier with community facilities, including a ballroom, on the top floor), the Tin Decorating Company's Plant, Fallsway Viaduct, Zion Church, the Association of Commerce Building, Jackson Place School, the residence of Dr. E. G. Mars, 5 Blythewood Road, and his most famous contribution, the St. Philip & St. James Catholic Church, 2801 North Charles Street, a cruciform edifice of Roman classic design, constructed of Indiana limestone, completed in 1929; works outside Baltimore include the Maryland House of Correction, Jessup; he became a citizen and resident of the State of Maryland on 27 October 1908, at which time he gave his address as "Mt. Royal Apts.;" a poet of sorts, he published a number of his works in local newspapers; fluent in the French language, he was an instructor in French to officers of the 316th regiment at Camp Meade, Maryland, 1917-18; awarded two medals in architecture from the Ecole des Beaux Arts; associate of the American Institute of Architects; member of Friends of Art, Baltimore; a democrat; a Protestant who, despite encouragement from his catholic wife, never converted to Catholicism; clubs: University, Merchants, Jockey, Elkridge; residence at 27 Wickford Road (later changed to 4327), Roland Park, purchased in about 1913; his office was at 1210-11 American Building, Baltimore; on the morning of 1 January 1930 he committed suicide in his studio above the garage (which he himself designed) behind the Wickford Road house, some say because of worry over ill health and/or large loss of money during the stock market crash, but others believe that constant nagging from his wife to convert to Catholicism drove him to it; he is buried at the New Cathedral Cemetery, 4300 Old Frederick Road, Baltimore, in Lot 33, Section ZZ, Grave No. 2 (plans to move his remains to Lot 192, Section L, Grave No. 12, next to his wife, aborted). Married at the home of her parents, 1022 North Calvert Street, Baltimore, on 7 November 1911, the Rev. J. F. Quirk of Georgetown College, Washington, presiding, to Gertrude Carroll Zell (or "Gom" as she was later called by her daughters-in-law and grandchildren), "one of the most attractive girls in the younger set" (*Baltimore American*, Wednesday, 8 November 1911); Mrs. E. Bartlett Hayward was matron of honor; Miss Charlotte Smith, maid of honor; and Dr. John Ruhrah, best man; Gertrude was born 2 May 1888 at Baltimore, and died of a stroke on 5 May 1968 at Pipersville, Pennsylvania; she moved out of the Wickford Road house in about 1934 and moved first to 3507 North Charles Street, Baltimore, then to Lumberville, Pennsylvania, and finally to Cabin Run Farm (which she purchased in 1936 or 1937) in Pipersville (Bucks County), Pennsylvania, where she lived with her close friend and companion, Katharine Atkinson ("Aunt Kitty," born 2 January 1900, died 2 January 1991), until her death; Gertrude was buried on 8 May 1968 in the Zell lot (Lot 192, Section L, Grave No. 11), New Cathedral Cemetery, Baltimore.



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