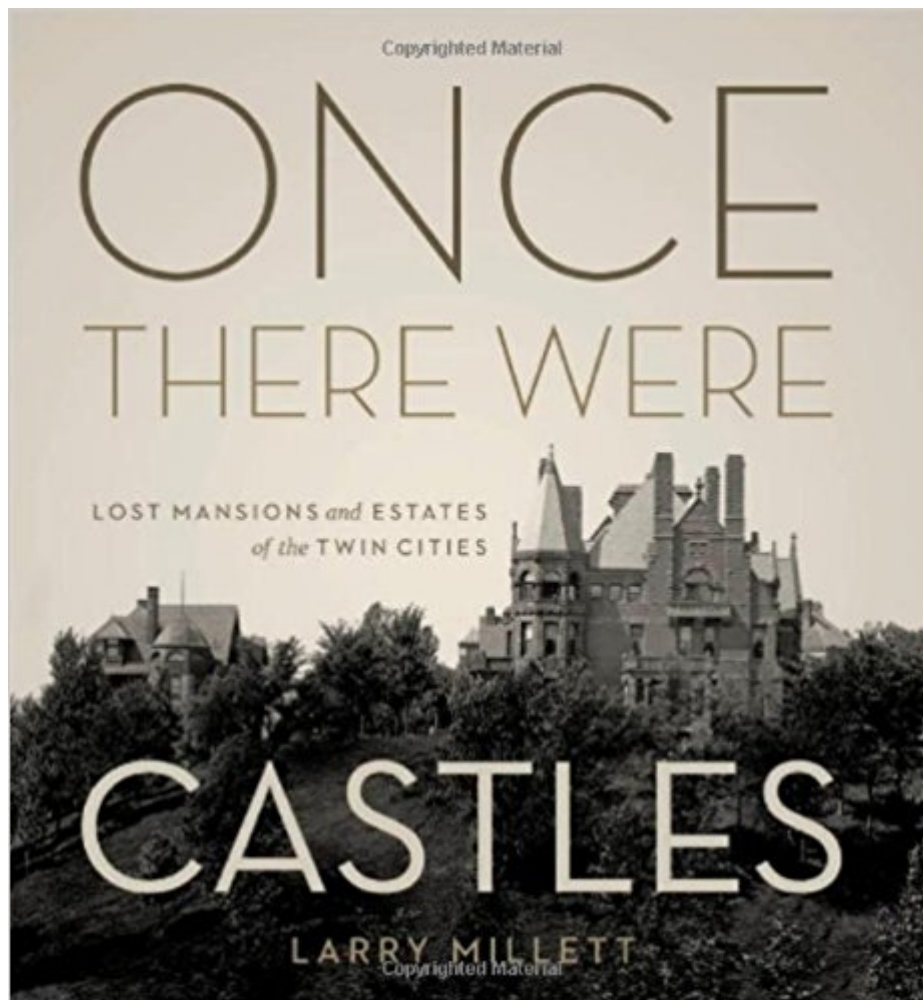




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# **Once There Were Castles: Lost Mansions And Estates Of The Twin Cities**



## Synopsis

In *Lost Twin Cities*, Larry Millett brought to life the vanished architecture of downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul. Now, in *Once There Were Castles*, he offers a richly illustrated look at another world of ghosts in our midst: the lost mansions and estates of the Twin Cities. Nobody can say for sure how many lost mansions haunt the Twin Cities, but at least five hundred can be accounted for in public records and archives. In Minneapolis and St. Paul, entire neighborhoods of luxurious homes have disappeared, virtually without a trace. Many grand estates that once spread out over hundreds of acres along the shores of Lake Minnetonka are also gone. The greatest of these lost houses often had astonishingly short lives: the lavish Charles Gates mansion in Minneapolis survived only nineteen years, and Norman Kittson's sprawling castle on the site of the St. Paul Cathedral stood for barely more than two decades. Railroad and freeway building, commercial and institutional expansion, fires, and financial disasters all claimed their share of mansions; others succumbed to their own extravagance, becoming too costly to maintain once their original owners died. The stories of these grand houses are, above all else, the stories of those who built and lived in them—from the fantastic saga of Marion Savage to the continent-spanning conquests of James J. Hill, to the all-but-forgotten tragedy of Olaf Searle, a poor immigrant turned millionaire who found and lost a dream in the middle of Lake Minnetonka. These and many other mansion builders poured all their dreams, desires, and obsessions into extravagant homes designed to display wealth and solidify social status in a culture of ever-fluctuating class distinctions. The first book to take an in-depth look at the history of the Twin Cities' mansions, *Once There Were Castles* presents ninety lost mansions and estates, organized by neighborhood and illustrated with photographs and drawings. An absorbing read for Twin Cities residents and a crucial addition to the body of work on the region's history, *Once There Were Castles* brings these "ghost mansions" back to life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Larry Millett has found more ghosts. In *Once There Were Castles*, the historian and author of *Lost Twin Cities* digs up images and stories that paint a picture of 90 long-gone buildings. The photographs of their unabashed luxury are stunning; the stories of their demise, laden with hubris, are irresistible." —Minnesota Monthly "With page after page of weathered photographs and captivating stories, Millett wends his way through tales of Minneapolis and St. Paul's lost castles. Whether you've got a Gilded Age fantasy or just an appreciation for architecture, this book deserves a spot on your coffee table." —Midwest Home

Larry Millett is an architectural historian and the author of *Lost Twin Cities*, *Twin Cities Then and Now*, and *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities*. He has also written six mystery novels featuring Sherlock Holmes, all but one of them set in Minnesota. He lives in St. Paul.

This one of the saddest books ever written. You will agree when you realize each structure highlighted within these pages is now merely a photographic memory. As a preservationist I feel this book should be sitting on the desk of city planners nationwide as an example of how we haphazardly destroy the very elements of our cities that make them unique. It should also be on a reading list for any course dealing with the growth and demise of American cities. This is an exceptional work in a field which is full of volumes like this. You need not be a native of, or even interested in the twin cities to enjoy this book. This is a work detailing the worst of our American architectural heritage, in that we destroy practically everything around us.

Larry Millett did an excellent job of researching the 19th century homes that have been torn down in Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN. The photographs are wonderful and the descriptions clear and entertaining. If you have any interest in the history of the Twin Cities, Historic Architecture, Victorian Homes, or the 19th century, this book is definitely a worthwhile purchase! This is a book you can use for references, historic trivia games, or just a way to spend a few hours entertaining yourself.

My brother in law saw an article about this book in our local news paper. It was on his Christmas wish list so I bought it for him. When it came in the mail, I couldn't put it down. I ended up ordering another to keep for myself. A wonderful coffee table book, for sure.

I got this book for a family christmas party...where you randomly get a wrapped gift. We open the gifts one by one so everyone can see who got what...this book was the hit of the party...everyone was jealous of the person who received the book. Also, we do live in the twin cities, which I'm sure added to the appeal of the book. It's nice to get some local history.

A teaching tool which is too beautiful to put down. Wonderful photos great bits of days gone by. Books such as these remind us of what we have lost by foolish decisions. This is a beautiful book with many memories for my parents and a few for me, too. I love Larry Millett's novels, too. :)

As expected

I love this book. I saw it on KARE 11 news and then one of my friends purchased one. It's great to look through and see how much things have changed. The book is well laid out, and has great pictures.

You will cherish this book!

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