

PREFACE

Several years ago, in my studies of American culture in the latter half of the nineteenth century, I became interested in Richard Morris Hunt, whose name frequently appears in accounts of the artistic life of the Gilded Age. I quickly discovered, however, that little detailed information could easily be found on his life and his architectural works and that what was available often was manifestly biased and inaccurate. As I began to study Hunt, I became aware of the great diversity of his activities and the immense variety of his creative work. The trail of research I followed involved many paths into libraries, archives, and manuscript collections and brought several unexpected discoveries as I became intimately acquainted with the architect, his family, and his friends. My investigations, moreover, led to new friendships for me and numerous debts to those who helped me. The Acknowledgments at the end of this volume include the names of many people to whom I am grateful for assistance.

This study is based on both a large body of unpublished manuscript materials and a large number of contemporary published sources, as well as on-site visits to many Hunt buildings. Especially useful for this book have been the available resources of the Hunt Collection (denoted as "HC" in the endnotes), at the American Institute of Architects Foundation, The Octagon, Washington, D.C., and the Hunt Papers (denoted in the endnotes as "HP"), relating to the Hunt family and privately held by descendants of Richard Morris Hunt. Both collections are rich in journals, letters, and financial accounts, while the Hunt Collection contains as well a wealth of drawings and photographs of Hunt's buildings. A description of the materials used from these two collections, as well as from other archival and manuscript sources, is to be found in the note on Selected Sources.

Of particular importance for this study has been the manuscript biography of Richard Morris Hunt, written by his widow, Catharine Clinton Howland Hunt, and completed about 1907. In 1940, Mr. Alan Burnham transcribed and edited this biography from the original manuscript, and his typed and edited version is included in the Richard Morris Hunt Papers in the American Architectural Archive. Mr. Burnham was most generous in giving me access to this transcription early in my researches. A second copy of the typed transcript of the Catharine Hunt biography, located in the Hunt (family) Papers, with some annotations by family members, has been used for this present study; it is denoted in the endnotes as "CCHH, HP." The original manuscript is now in the Hunt Collection. The Catharine Hunt work, chatty and

adulatory, is a valuable source of information about Hunt's activities and his architectural work, but it must be used with caution, for it is sometimes inaccurate. Specific corrections are indicated in some end-notes.