

**William Ralph Emerson** (March 11, 1833 – November 23, 1917)

Emerson was born in [Alton, Illinois](#), a cousin of [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#), and trained in the office of Jonathan Preston (1801–1888), an architect–builder in [Boston, Massachusetts](#). He formed an architectural partnership with Preston (1857–1861), practiced alone for two years, then partnered with [Carl Fehmer](#) (1864–1873). On September 15, 1873 he married Sylvia Hathaway Watson.

He is best known for his [Shingle Style houses](#) and inns. He worked with fellow Boston designer [Frederick Law Olmsted](#) on the creation of the [National Zoological Park](#) in Washington, D.C., designing several of the zoo's first buildings.<sup>[1]</sup>

Emerson was a friend to the Boston painter [William Morris Hunt](#), who painted a portrait of Emerson's son Ralph, shown at an exhibition of Hunt's work at the [Boston Museum of Fine Arts](#) in 1880.<sup>[2]</sup>

Emerson died on November 23, 1917, in [Milton, Massachusetts](#).

## Selected works

- 1869 [Sanford-Covell Villa Marina \[1\]](#), 72 Washington Street, [Newport, Rhode Island](#)
- 1869 Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller Mansion renovation, [Woodstock, Vermont](#)
- 1875 [Massachusetts Homeopathic Hospital](#), Harrison Avenue, [Boston, Massachusetts](#)
- 1878 Summer cottage of [Boston](#) painter [William Morris Hunt](#), [Magnolia, Massachusetts](#)
- 1879 *Redwood*, C. J. Morrill House, [Bar Harbor, Maine](#)
- 1881 [Boston Art Club](#), 150 Newbury Street, [Boston, Massachusetts](#)
- 1887 Saint Jude's Episcopal Church, Seal Harbor, [Mount Desert, Maine](#)
- 1887 Saint Margaret's Roman Catholic Church, [Beverly Farms, Massachusetts](#)
- 1887 *Tianderah*, stone and shingle residence, [Gilbertsville, New York](#); Listed on the National Historic Register, November 2, 1978 #78001894
- 1888 Fitz Cottage, [Jackson, New Hampshire](#)
- 1889 [William James](#) House, 95 Irving Street, [Cambridge, Massachusetts](#)
- 1890 The Reading Room, now part of the [Bar Harbor Inn](#), Bar Harbor, Maine
- 1890–1892 The Hotel Claremont, [Claremont, New Hampshire](#)
- 1896 *Felsted*, a cottage for [Frederick Law Olmsted](#), [Deer Isle, Maine](#)

## References

1. Heather Ewing, 'The Architecture of the National Zoological Park,' in *New Worlds, New Animals: From Menagerie to Zoological Park in the Nineteenth Century*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
2. [Portrait of Master Ralph Emerson, Exhibition of the Works of William Morris Hunt, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Dec. 20, 1879-Jan. 31, 1880, Seventh Edition, Alfred Mudge & Son, Boston, 1880](#)
3. *The Architecture of William Ralph Emerson*, catalog by Cynthia Zaitzevsky with photography by Myron Miller, Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass. 1969.