

PHILADELPHIA PARISIENNE

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

One influence which exudes from Philadelphia's very center and bursts out to its furthest reaches is that of the French. That influence can be seen especially in several notable architectural achievements. Aside from once being the biggest building in America, Philadelphia's City Hall today exemplifies the ornate 19th century French "esprit de corps". Its design was influenced by the then-new Louvre in Paris. The exact number of statues on the building is unknown, but any of the 14 entrances will take you to and through the richly detailed French-influenced interior. One of the fine views afforded atop City Hall is that of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, often called Philadelphia's Champs Elysee. The Parkway's symetric beauty is attributed to Jacques Greber, the French architect who designed Paris' Place de la Concorde. Several of the buildings along the Parkway owe their design to the Parisian buildings, particularly the Chateau de Crillon and the Marine Ministry. But beyond all else, it is the Philadelphia Rodin Museum along the Parkway which presents the French scene at its fullest. The Rodin Museum has been hailed as an architectural and artistic monument. It pays tribute to the French sculptor and the collection contained therein--95 bronzes, marbles and works in other substances, 38 original plasters, 64 drawings-- is not to be found anywhere in the world outside of Paris.

The two million dollar structure was a gift to the citizenry of Philadelphia from theatre financier Jules B. Mastbaum. The piece de resistance is the herculian figure of Rodin's "Thinker" steeped in thought, which looms over the entrance to the Museum as if it were about to spring into action. Originally intended to be a portrayal of Dante contemplating his creation, Rodin later changed his mind and chose an anonymous nude man, sitting on a rock, thinking not only with his brain but with every muscle of his arms, back and legs. I rank "Thinker" second only to Michaelangelo's "Moses"-- because it seems to have sprung out of the natural materials with which Rodin worked. There is at the Museum a garden, beautiful in all seasons--a miniature Versailles, and also Rodin's "Gates of Hell" with 186 figures all writhing in agony, a magnificent bronze monument. Such a collection you'll see nowhere else. I can't begin to tell you of the beauty of the Rodin Museum here, but with the French influence in that one area of Philadelphia--Paris must blush at this flattery which Philadelphia has accorded it.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.