

# SOCIETY & CULTURE



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS. PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHY DIVISION, MMS PA, 3/1/1911, 1:50.

The Fisher Fine Arts Library at the University of Pennsylvania is just one of many bold designs by architect Frank Furness.

**BRASH VISIONARY** If you've ever thought Philadelphia was a second-class city, think again. Cultural and architectural historian George E. Thomas' engrossing new book, *Frank Furness: Architecture in the Age of the Great Machines* (\$59.95, University of Pennsylvania Press), overturns the standard narrative in the author's exploration of this Victorian-era star architect and the forces that allowed him to thrive. Thomas makes a compelling case for Philadelphia as the center of applied science and its critical impact on architectural design thanks to native son Furness as its visionary architect. Furness designed buildings that reflected the commitment to innovative design that both he and his clients had. Furness, who is buried at Laurel Hill Cemetery, shaped the look of the city with hundreds of buildings in his distinctive bold style. The stunning Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and University of Pennsylvania's Fisher Fine Arts Library are two vivid examples of his originality. "Furness was working for industrialists who had a different worldview," says Thomas. "They asked how do you do things better, not how did people do things in the past. Great design comes out of looking to the future and not to the past." —Sarah Jordan