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BOOK PLATES

THEIR ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT WITH NOTES AS TO THEIR COLLECTING

BY HENRY BLACKWELL

THE designer of one of the most important modern examples of book plates, who made the wood cut with his own hands, is said to have incised on its border with much skill and elaborate detail the words, "A book plate is a foolish thing."

A writer, commenting on this, truthfully states, "One man's foolishness is another's wisdom." It all depends upon the point of view.

As to the origin of the book plate, it is certainly a fact that it dates from the inception of book making, more than 400 years ago, and it is equally true that many artists of high repute have not thought its possibilities beneath their best efforts in design.

In tracing the origin of book plates, writers have advanced many theories—for the basis of absolute fact is not established—and have set up many contentions to support their arguments. The most plausible is that book plates grew from the coats of arms that wealthy and well-born people in early feudal days caused to be stamped, painted or illuminated on the various articles in their possession in order to establish their right of ownership. When reading was a rare accomplishment, and even the churl could decipher and assign to its proper owners the armorial bearings everywhere displayed, this method of identifying one's property was the easiest that could be devised.

To-day, even the better informed would find it very

difficult to correctly fix the ownership of an heraldic device, no matter how ancient or well known it might be to a person versed in heraldry.

It is therefore easy to comprehend that during the transition from early days to the present, the book plate

has passed through many phases, but it may be said to have retained its purpose of representing its owner, not solely from the point of view of his ancestry, but more along lines of education, taste and occupation. In fact, heraldry has in the designing of the modern book plate been almost abandoned and the present style of design is but little more than a decorative "paster" or a name label.

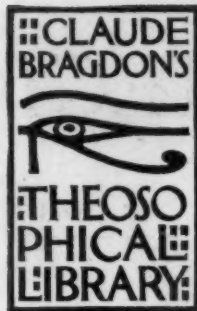
The earliest known book plates are said to be one by Jean Knaupensberg, now extant, dating 1450, and those in the monastery of Buxheim. The latter are inserted in certain books, the gift of Hildebrand Brandenburg, of Biberach, and date about 1480.

All writers on the subject of book plates are unanimous in ascribing their introduction to the Germans. Certain claims of priority by the Japanese have never been sustained.

From the simple labels which, without any attempt at decoration, merely set forth the fact of ownership, in exactly the same way that one may write his name on the fly leaf of a book, to the artistic forms of later periods have all been classified by Warren, in 1880, as to the varying armorial and heraldic types, as follows: Jaco-



DESIGNED BY FREDERICK JUNIUS STERNER



BY CLAUDE FAYETTE BRAGDON, ARCHITECT

bean, Gregorian, Chippendale or Rococo, Ribbon and Wreath, or festoon, the Celestial, Allegorical and, finally, the Pictorial. This latter type includes landscape architecture, portrait and other types not already classified.

Nationality in

book plates can be as easily traced as it can be in the owners of the books themselves.

When a man has the artistic ability to design his own book plate he will, of course, incorporate in his work much of his personality, his tastes and habits, his daily work and his aspirations. So a book plate will display traits of character to the collector in the same way one's handwriting will, to the expert in chirography, suggest the occupation of the owner.

It is difficult to define exactly what a book plate should be. It may be pedantic in its design and wording, in keeping with its company of abstruse and learned books, or it may be simple and unostentatious, with just enough added ornament to redeem it from being classed as a book label.

To the architect, the de-



OFFICE BOOK PLATE OF TRACY, SWARTWOUT & LITCHFIELD, ARCHITECTS

or other forms of plate can be made of the size desired.

The architect will find making his own plate, as well as design, an enjoyable occupation. They may be cut on the wood block or etched with the dry point on the metal plate. Etching



BY CLAUDE FAYETTE BRAGDON, ARCHITECT

with acids is another method easy of accomplishment after a little practice. The amateur etcher's inexperience sometimes leads to results that are more artistic than those secured by the skilled worker. Photography offers a method of reproducing plates that insures good results and can be easily and inexpensively used. A negative of the design can be printed on a good matte surface paper and the print pasted in the book. We have seen book plates printed on the ordinary blue print paper used by architects that were very satisfactory.

The book plate collector makes no apologies for exercising his fad. He does not believe it is any more necessary to present reasons why he should indulge in his hobby than the man who extra-illustrates or collects books, postage stamps, old



OFFICE BOOK PLATE OF MCKIM, MEAD & WHITE, ARCHITECTS



BY CLAUDE FAYETTE BRAGDON, ARCHITECT

signing of a book plate for his personal use offers a pleasant recreation. Like all professional men, they usually own two distinct collections of books, one at home, the other a technical collection at their offices. Each collection may well have its separate plate. It is usually the custom to make the original drawing to suit the designer's convenience, and from this wood cuts, copper plates

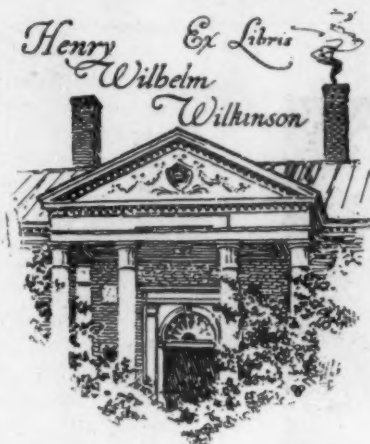
china, or any one of the numerous hobbies that even the wisest indulge in, in their moments of relaxation. The man who commences to-day to collect book plates will find himself confronted at the outset by the most discouraging conditions. The rarest and most desirable plates have all been secured, and the



[BY FRANK E. WALLIS, ARCHITECT

only way for him to do at the outset is to acquire a collection as a nucleus for his further quest.

The collector will find as he progresses that book plates have received the attention of the best artists in all countries in the world, and many prints are prized and collected because they are examples of the work of famous artists. Book plates are certainly "small pieces of paper," and yet, as the writer has previously written, Albrecht Dürer, Jost Amman, Bartolozzi, Hogarth, Bewick, Thackeray, and many others equally famous, did not consider it beneath the efforts



BY CLAUDE FAYETTE BRAGDON
ARCHITECT

plete collections in America are those of Frank E. Marshall, Philadelphia; Fred Libbie, Boston; H. E. Baille Bridgeport, Conn.; Miss Messenger, Chappaqua; Dr. Chas. E. Clark, of Lynn, Mass., and others. The author has in his collection more than ten thousand examples of old and new plates, a few of which are illustrated herewith. Many libraries have large collections, but probably the most notable, not owned by an individual, is that of the Grolier Club, of New York.

It may be truthfully said that a good fad, intelligently pursued, adds zest to life, and relieves the world



PLATE OF THE SWARTWOUT FAMILY
DRAWN BY P. MERZ, ARCHITECT



THE AUTHOR'S BOOK PLATE

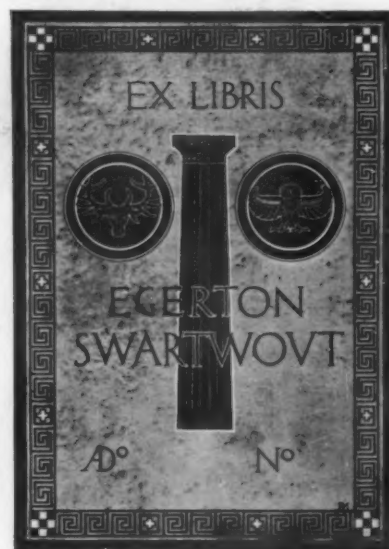


PLATE OF EGERTON SWARTWOUT,
ARCHITECT. DRAWN BY P. MERZ

of their art to design many book plates, copies of which are to be found in the greatest collections in existence.

The fact that these plates have been dignified by such great artists, in itself justifies their collection and preservation. But there are other equally important reasons why they should be collected and preserved. They are educators because they give the collector suggestions and insight into many branches of knowledge, particularly genealogy, biography, heraldry, geography, engraving and designing, and stimulate an inquiry into the lives of their makers, thus bringing to the collector a vast field of information.

Among the most com-

of the monotony of one's daily occupation. Collecting book plates leads one along the line of good books, and their makers, and opens up the possibility of mental recreation and improvement, bringing with it the satisfaction that always attaches to the acquirement of knowledge.

That the architect knows and appreciates the artistic and decorative qualities of the book plate is shown by the very interesting series of plates by members of the profession, reproduced with this article.

These present in a graphic way much that is best in book plate designing and will be prized by collectors as good examples.



BY JULIUS H. SCHWEINFURTH, ARCHITECT



BOOK PLATE OF JOHN SANBURN PHILLIPS
BY BERTRAM GOODHUE, ARCHITECT

THE CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE FINE ARTS, HELD AT WASH- INGTON, D. C.

The Conference of the National Federation of Fine Arts, the objects of which have been fully outlined in previous issues of *THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT*, was formally opened in Washington on May 11 by Vice-President Sherman, who in his welcoming speech to the delegates, expressed his hearty sympathy with the movement. The delegates represented the various professions included in the Fine Arts, and architects, artist painters, artist sculptors, landscape gardeners, and men eminent in the sciences and arts to the number of more than two hundred, were present.

The conference was addressed by Senator Root, of New York, who outlined the objects of the convention, and stated that as this was the age of concentration, co-operation and combination, team work was more essential and more effective than individual effort. It was his opinion that the movement would be promoted by uniting the many institutions and organizations formed for the purpose of cultivating artistic tastes.

Senator Newlands, of Nevada, who will be remembered by his very able addresses made before the convention of the A. I. A. held in Washington last December, and who has been prominently identified with the movement for good art in America, addressed the conference, and was listened to with much interest by the

delegates. He suggested that in the improvement of rivers and harbors there should also be an artistic development of the water front of every town upon a river or harbor. Senator Newlands closed his remarks by stating that it was his belief that the United States Government should lead in artistic development, while the States individually should follow; that there should be built up a strong public sentiment, which would have its effect on Congress, which, he asserted, very truthfully, seldom led, but always followed, sometimes rather reluctantly.

The convention was presided over by Mr. Charles L. Hutchinson, of Chicago, First Vice-President of the National Academy of Art.

The convention was adjourned during the first day to attend the reception by President and Mrs. Taft at the White House.

During the three days of the convention it was addressed by many speakers prominent in the movement for civic art in America, and many plans for the improvement of various cities were shown and described by their promoters in an interesting way. The place and date of the next convention has not been definitely fixed, but will be announced later.

This assemblage of delegates of societies engaged in



BOOK PLATE OF TRINITY PARISH, BOSTON
BY BERTRAM GOODHUE, ARCHITECT



A BOOK PLATE FROM THE COLLECTION OF
HENRY BLACKWELL

the artistic betterment of the country-at-large, while not loudly heralded, is nevertheless one of the most important that has been held during recent years. It has received the encouragement and support of representative men throughout the country, and the results accruing will, we are sure, be of the greatest value in securing for not only the large cities, but the smaller towns, as well, a well directed and artistic solution of the problems involved in the City Beautiful.

It is gratifying to know that in this movement the initiative was taken by the architects, in the person of their representative body, the American Institute of Architects. That this body will be largely represented in the high councils of the American Academy of Art is certain, and this valuable assistance will insure the best results.

The whole subject is a matter of education of the masses. As Senator Newlands very aptly stated in his address, Congress, "with its ear close to the ground," is always alive to the demands of the majority, and when the masses have become educated to the necessity for civic betterment we can confidently look to action by Congress that will give the people what they demand. The man who is fortunate enough to be familiar with the larger centers of Europe, and has studied the effect of good planning along artistic lines, knows what a valuable asset it is to the municipality in attracting visitors and holding them for different periods. While this has been the result of years of building and planning, this country should avail of the experience of European cities, and not proceed along ill-advised lines to a point where improvement is prohibited on account of the expense of razing buildings of considerable cost that obstruct the march of artistic development and thus leave them to inflict their unsightliness on their surroundings.

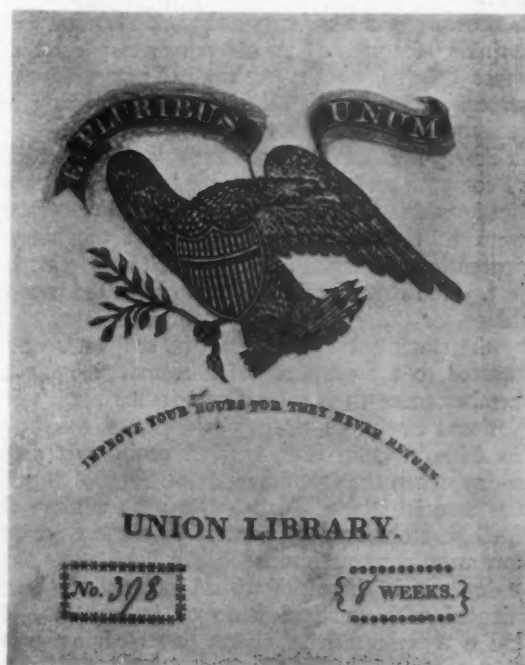
A CRITICISM OF MODERN SCULPTURE THAT IS UNFAIR TO THE ARTIST

It is with some surprise that we read in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, of London, a journal whose dignified attitude on art subjects has heretofore commanded our respect, the following statement as to what that newspaper believes to be the present condition in the field of sculpture:

"Sculpture can never become an actually popular subject of writing or discourse, because the art itself is, with the public, heavily handicapped by absence of color, by the absence of created background, by its relatively limited variety of composition, and by the fact that half its efforts are devoted to the melancholy purposes of a memorial—whether bust or gorgeous tomb."

To say that sculpture can never become a popular subject of writing or discussion because of its absence of color, would seem to indicate, on the part of the writer above quoted, an imperfect knowledge of the true definition of color. The suggestiveness of color in form has been recognized by the best writers on art subjects, and it is unfortunate if a writer is so destitute of appreciation of color in form that he cannot discover it in the modeled figure.

In referring to this subject, we stated in a previous article, "Appreciation of color in the highest and most technical use of the word is not born in every man, no more than is the ability to comprehend the higher class of music. To most of us the appreciation of color and of music are acquired tastes. Some of us reach this knowledge by education, directly pursued, while others from surroundings and association absorb a knowledge



BOOK PLATE FROM THE COLLECTION OF HENRY BLACKWELL



BOOK PLATE FROM THE COLLECTION OF HENRY BLACKWELL.

that we find the source of much satisfaction. * * * We do not need to be told when we view the carved marble figure of a Nubian or an African, that his skin is brown. The color suggests itself at once. So do the wrinkled features of an old person suggest the leaden tones of age, or the Aphrodite, emerging from the water, discloses the pink flesh tones sparkling with the moisture that envelops them."

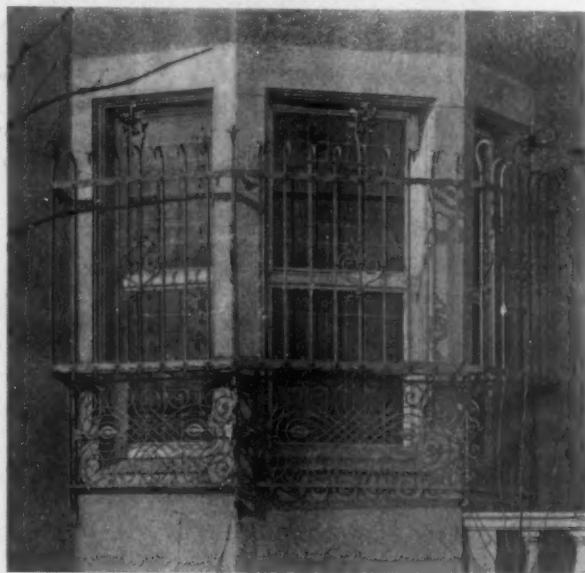
To say that sculptors are handicapped by a limitation of composition is to present a statement that is so manifestly wide of the facts as not to need refutation. The work of the modern sculptor, in this country alone, proves how little familiar this writer is with his subject. And that he is not familiar with the men who do things, or the reason they do them, is further proven by the statement that half of the sculptor's efforts are devoted to the purposes of a memorial. We can remember more than a quarter century ago, before the National Sculpture Society had placed this branch of the Fine Arts in the dignified position it commands to-day, when the ignorant idea of the sculptured figure was associated with death. But we supposed that the intelligent observer of matters in the art world knew how utterly preposterous such a contention would be to-day. It is therefore with a great deal of surprise, mingled with some measure of indignation, that we find a representative London paper giving expression to a series of statements that display such a lack of knowledge as to the conditions existing in the field of sculpture, not only in this country but in Europe as

well. The writer quoted does not seem to know or appreciate the fact that great works of the sculptor's art are not necessarily imposing in size; that the sculptured portrait need not be, nor is it, suggestive of the funereal, and that throughout this country to-day there are in many collections, both private and public, modeled portraits of men and women who are not dead, but are pursuing the even tenor of their useful lives in good health and strength.

More and more in this country to-day the use of the small sculptured figure in interior decorative treatment is appreciated; and in the recent exhibition of the National Sculpture Society held in New York City this fact was emphasized in a way that brought satisfaction to every one who understands the possibilities of the sculptured form in that field. From personal experience we know of the untiring efforts of sculptors as a body, not only in this country, but throughout Europe, to place their art, so long neglected by the general public but now better appreciated, in the place where it belongs, and we cannot allow such a distorted statement as the one first quoted to go uncorrected. A simple sense of justice to a body of men who are giving, and most unselfishly, their best efforts to the uplifting of their art, dictates this objection to what we feel is an unfortunate criticism of a noble profession.

A WROUGHT IRON WINDOW GRILLE

An interesting variation of a protective grille for lower windows is shown in the accompanying illustration from a German country house. It is probable that the grille was introduced into the design mainly to relieve the bareness of the bay, but the way in which



the upper part of the work has been lightened in order to leave more clear the view from inside at the level of the eyes is evidence of the architect's thoughtful adaptation of the iron work to its practical purpose. It seems unfortunate that the higher cost of iron working here in America has prevented to some extent its wider employment along such lines as are here indicated.

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President Taft's order revoking the appointment of a
Council of the Fine Arts.

ILLUSTRATIONS:

- Residence of Mrs. J. R. Dillon, Atlanta, Ga. (2 plates)—
Messrs. Morgan & Dillon, Architects.
Residence of J. L. Kaul, Esq., Birmingham, Ala. (2 plates)
—Mr. William C. Weston, Architect.
Residence of Mr. William C. Weston, Architect, Birmingham,
Ala. (1 plate.)
Residence of Joseph Norwood, Esq., Columbia, S. C. (3
plates)—Messrs. Edwards & Walter, Architects.

Frontispiece:

Bronze Gate, Paris, France.

IT would seem to the more or less casual observer, who read and pondered the many expressions of commendation and approval with which Ex-President Roosevelt's order, creating a Fine Arts Council was received, not only by architects who in their representative body initiated the movement, but by artists generally, and by practically all persons of intelligence and culture, that an astute politician, or even an average official, desiring the largest measure of success for his administration, would have hesitated long and considered earnestly before revoking so popular an order. That President Taft has seen fit to take such a step, is, we venture to assert, the cause of bitterest disappointment and regret to those who have the artistic well-being and future of this country at heart. If the abolition of this Council is intended to be permanent, the President's action can scarcely be considered otherwise than retrograde in its effect. In studying the stated objects and purposes of this now dispersed Council, having also in mind its personnel, we had been persuaded to expect large results of the most gratifying character when the Council had become organized on a working basis, and been given

an opportunity to exercise its functions. It is true that Congress looked with extreme disfavor upon the Council, and regarded it to some extent in the nature of a body usurping the prerogatives of Congress's high office; but viewed broadly it would appear to be a matter in which politics have no place.

ESPECIALLY do we feel that there is just cause for regret and disappointment in this destructive order since the President undoubtedly owes, in great measure, his election to his oft-reiterated and unequivocal assertions and promises during the late campaign, that he would continue the "Roosevelt Policies," one of which was undeniably the encouragement and fostering of an artistic appreciation throughout the country. Perhaps our disappointment and disgust in this action of the President has disqualified us to some extent to pass judgment on other events and happenings of national importance or significance, but if we are not misinterpreting "the signs of the times," there is cause for grave apprehension as to whether a number of campaign pledges are being fulfilled with utmost fidelity. One day's news brings us information of gigantic combinations of capital in half a dozen directions designed to control certain branches of industry or trade, of the dismissal, neglect or abandonment of suits which had been instituted or contemplated against illegal combinations or those suspected of pursuing their operations in an illegal manner, and of conciliatory messages from high places directed toward those who have not been regarded as public benefactors during recent years.

WE admit that the obvious and almost inevitable conclusion to be drawn from these reported movements may be inaccurate, may even be entirely unjustified. We admit that it is quite possible we had swung too far in the direction of primitive methods and first principles of business and government, and perhaps we are only regaining our normal position necessary to greatest development. In fact, we might become reconciled to this thought concerning the attitude taken in some instances regarding the business enterprises and industries of the country; but when we are confronted by the action taken abolishing the Fine Arts Council, whose services were given practically without cost to the country, and were yet above price, our confidence is severely shaken. Of course, it is possible that the President is simply justifying his wide reputation for diplomacy and tact, and only purposes a change in methods, and will, forthwith or shortly, recreate the Council in a less arbitrary and more regular way, overcoming, as far as possible, the objections of the Congress, and yet securing to the country the inestimable benefits sought. Perhaps it was in fact necessary to abolish a Council from which Congress had withdrawn all means of support, and the action taken is in the nature of a preliminary step toward the securing of a permanent and properly authorized organization. We shall look forward with eagerness and hope to such an outcome, but regret that no definite explanation as to the present action or statement as to future plans has been vouchsafed to that large number of persons throughout the country so deeply interested.

REFLECTING EFFICIENCY OF COLORS

In the April issue of *Light* appeared an article by Mr. William J. Clark. The article gives the different light reflecting abilities of various colors. These facts, the writer points out, should be kept in mind when one is furnishing the home, as considerable difference in the light bills will be experienced with the different colors.

Both the color and the kind of surface chosen are important factors in the economy of light diffusion, and in these days of high power radiants, brilliantly lighted shops, shop windows and theatres, when there is a constant demand for more light everywhere, the problem of economical and useful light diffusion becomes an important matter, and one that should be universally considered, as there is no commodity bought or sold that enters more largely in the comfort of living than artificial light, nor, unfortunately, one of which the fundamental laws governing its advantageous distribution are so little understood.

The table given below is taken from the article and shows what a wide range of reflecting efficiency exists between the different colors.

Kind.	Color.	Reflecting Efficiency.
Plain Ceiling	Faint gray cream.....	.64
"	" Faint greenish.....	.53
"	" Light yellow.....	.49
"	" Faint pinkish.....	.43
Cartridge	Medium light buff.....	.44
"	Salmon buff.....	.33
"	Pale gray.....	.27
"	Light blue.....	.20
"	Light green.....	.18
"	Light red.....	.10
"	Dull green.....	.07
Crêpe	Medium green.....	.19
"	Coffee brown.....	.06
"	Deep red.....	.05

UTILIZING AIR SPACE FOR VENTILATION

Last season in erecting a building with hollow blocks the idea of ventilating the basement or cellar by means of the air spaces in the blocks was attempted. The results after twelve months' test have proven very satisfactory, especially during the rainy season last spring, it carrying off moisture not only from the cellar, but from the concrete wall as well, writes F. W. Haglock, in the *National Builder*.

The blocks used were of the plain single air space type, laid with mortar on the sides only, care being taken to leave horizontal air connections between the vertical openings. About a foot above the cellar floor a four by six-inch opening protected with a bronze wire fly-screen was inserted, connecting the cellar with the dead air space, and about one foot below the roof an insertion was made on the outside of the wall. These openings were placed about six feet apart around the entire building. Lids were placed at each opening in the basement, and during high winter winds it would be found necessary to close them.

That damp and musty air is impossible in this cellar is a certainty, also these walls, while not waterproofed, have little dampness to penetrate to the interior plaster.

The cost is but a few dollars when done while the building is erected and but little more to place these vents on hollow block buildings already erected. On the latter the improvement is noticeable; it draws the dampness from the cellar and the exterior surface of the walls after a rain speedily and efficiently.

Let it be understood that this method is not damp-proofing or damp-resisting, but simply a damp-remover, in which its results are all that could be desired.

BALANCE

If we turn to the subject of balance as distinct from pure symmetry, we open up an easy field for dissertation. Here, in the organic world, we see everywhere a balance of parts. The leaf or flower may not of itself be perfectly symmetrical, but it will be in more or less perfect balance. A tree is perhaps very unsymmetrical, but the arrangement of component masses gives a balance of parts that equally satisfies the eye.

Symmetry may be termed rigid justice—conformable to the principle of an eye for an eye. Balance, rather that of an eye for *x* pounds. In symmetry the scale will be equally loaded—the pound of gold on either side; whereas the idea of balance—in art matters—might be expressed by an arrangement whereby there is a sovereign's worth either side, but on the one side it is gold, and on the other silver or copper. "Symmetry" understands exact equality—substance, shape, and size.

Thus, in architectural matters we may balance a plain mass with one that is smaller but worth more by reason of the labor bestowed on its enrichment. No balance can result in two similar things, the one smaller than the other. Of two western towers, if one were smaller than the other we would not have any sense of balance or justice, but the arrangement and form and enrichment of the smaller may make up for its lack in bulk.

Symmetry appeals to the eye, balance to the understanding, the two terms being used in the art sense. Symmetry supposes—indeed, necessitates—an actual, supposed or imagined, axis or central point—that is, an axis or center mathematically equal in distance from all corresponding parts of the two halves. If the symmetrical object has not a visible axial line or point, it has an imaginary one, such as in a vase, and generally such as may be produced by the revolution of outline round an axis. The eye must seek an axis, as in the case of a composition having wings, the centre by the eye is sought; for, as we have endeavored to show, two objects, unless connected by a third, cannot form anything but two individual, unrelated units.—R. Owen Allsop, in *The Architect and Contract Reporter*.

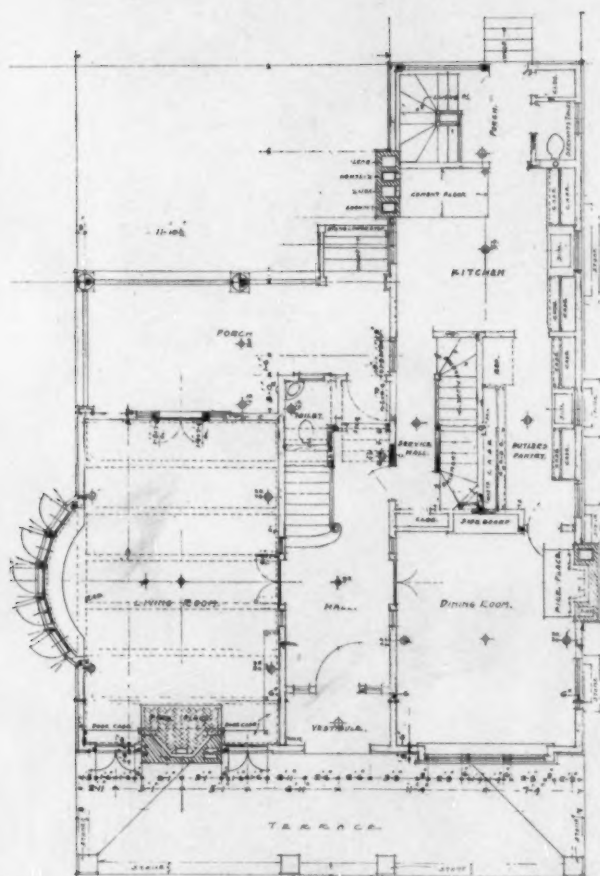
THE PASSING OF COLOGNE CATHEDRAL

The architect of the Cologne Cathedral states that the condition of the building is unsatisfactory, although there is no immediate danger. The necessary repairs will cost many millions and take years to carry out. It is said that the stone is crumbling very rapidly.

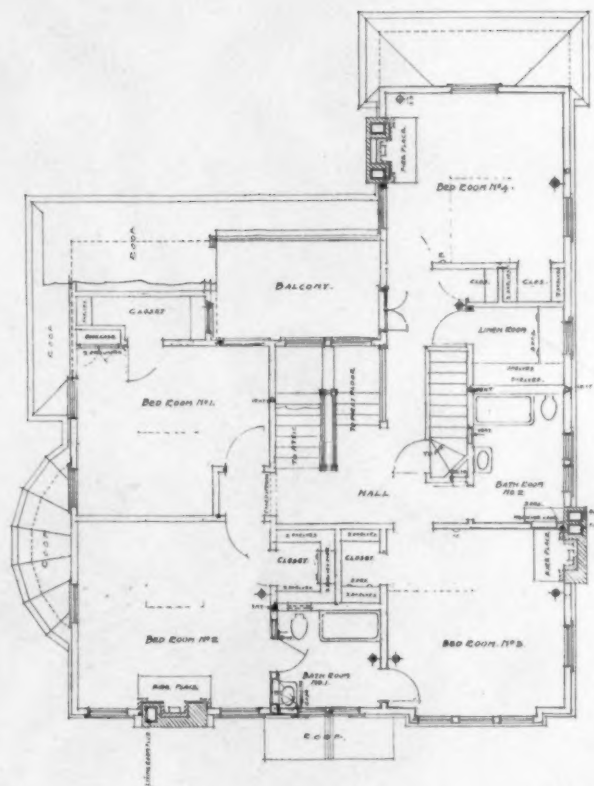


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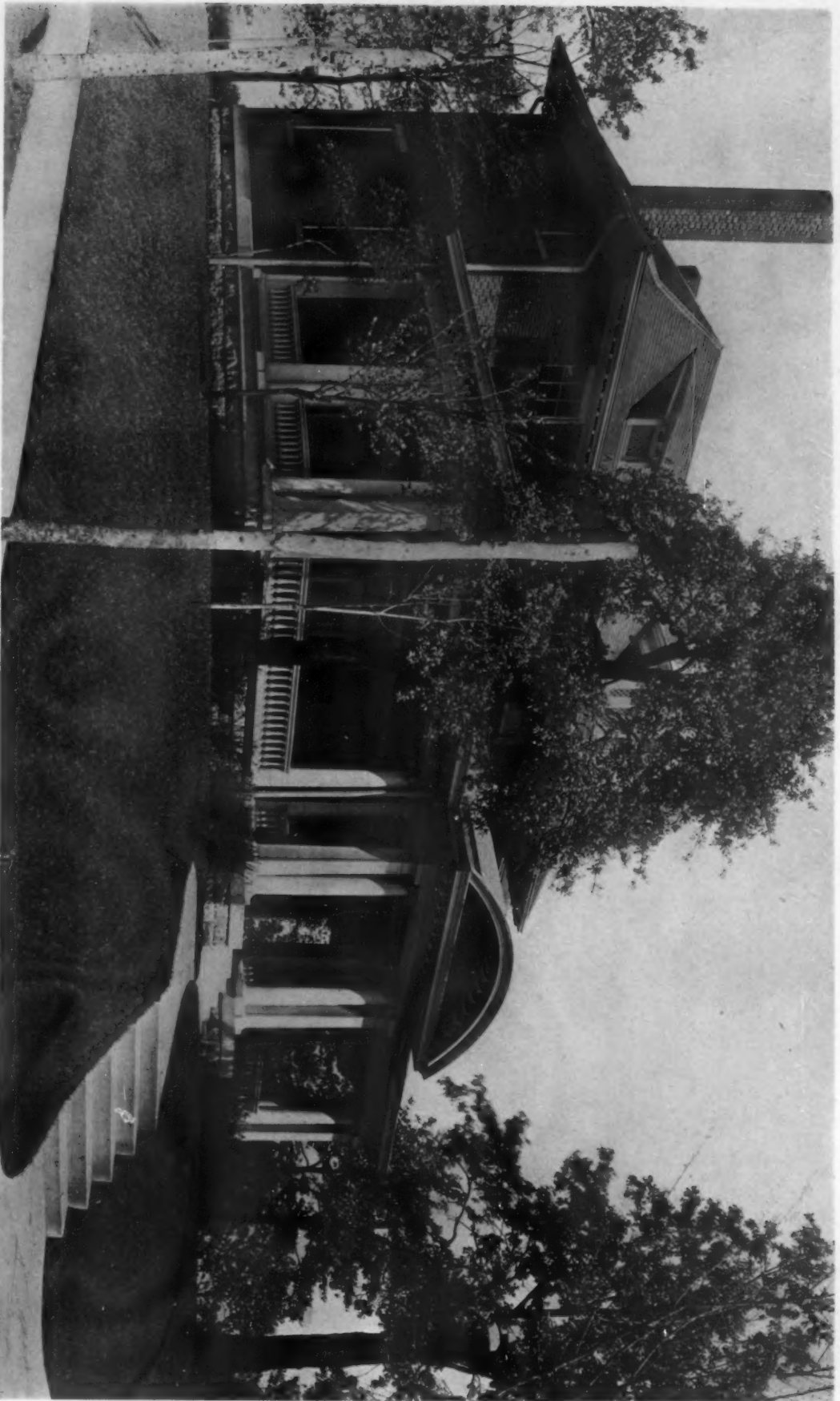
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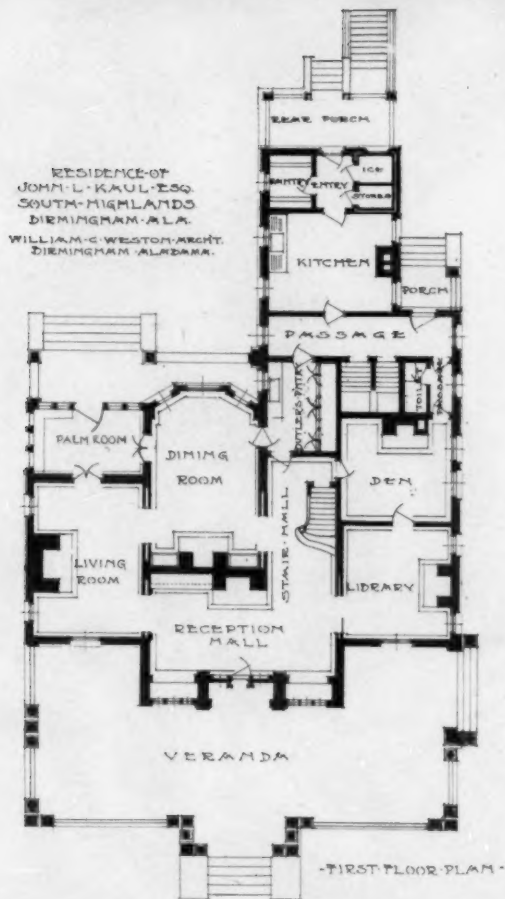
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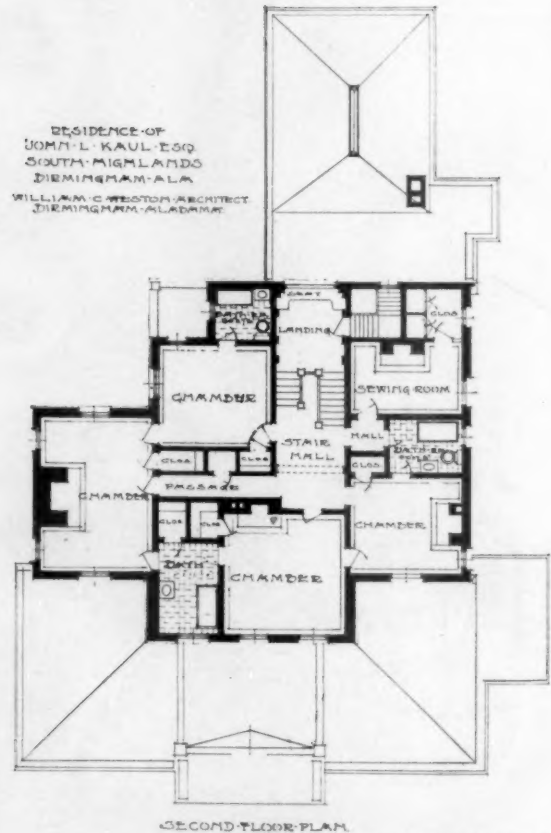


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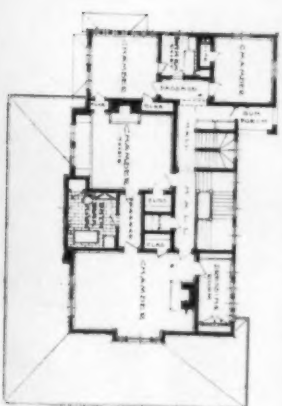
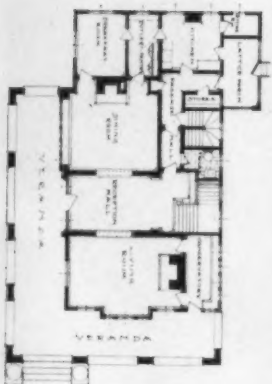
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MR. WILLIAM C. WESTON
ARCHITECT

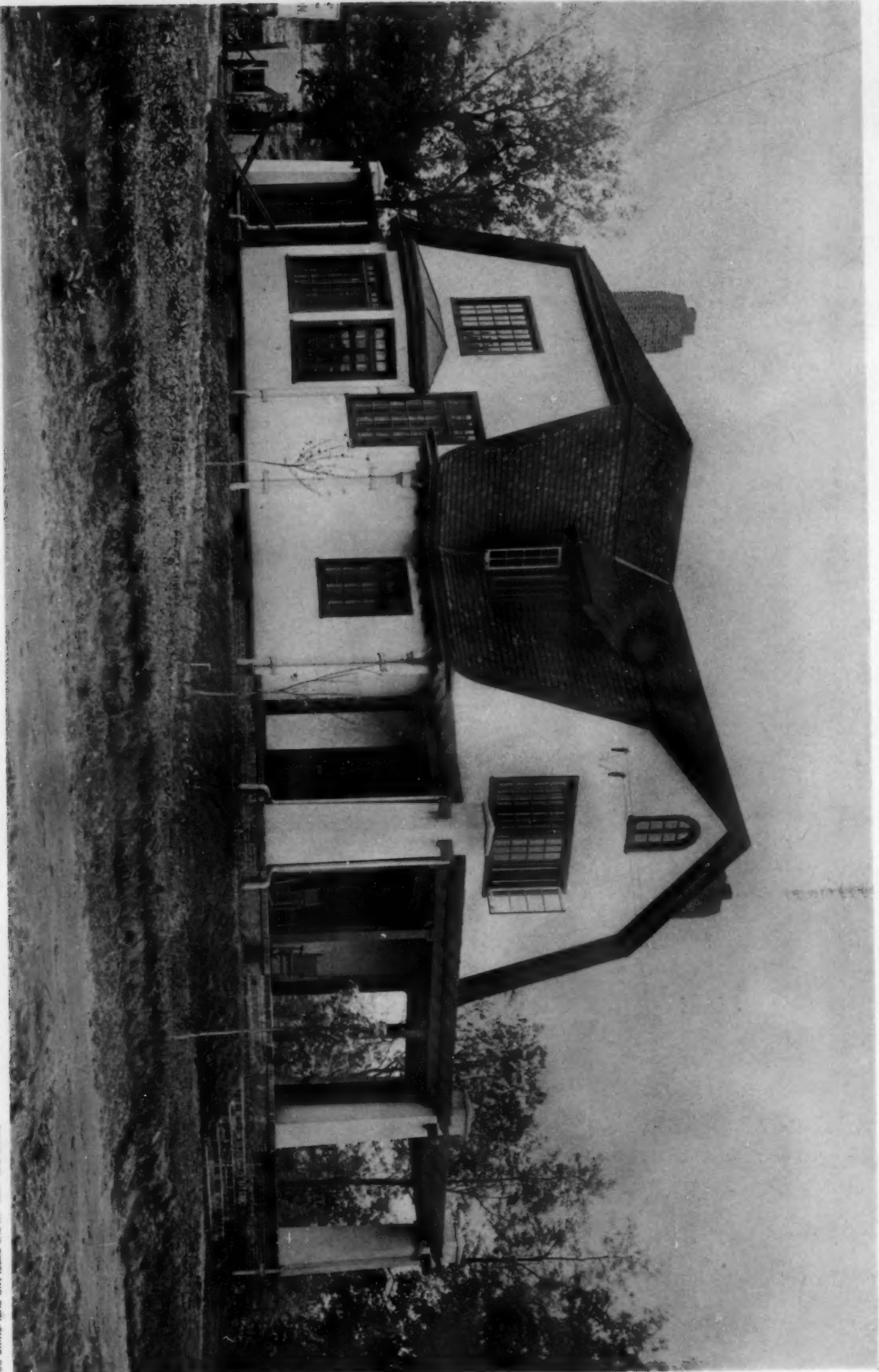


RESIDENCE OF MR. WILLIAM C. WESTON, ARCHITECT
BIRMINGHAM, ALA.



THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

JUNE 2, 1909



RESIDENCE OF JOSEPH NORWOOD, ESQ.
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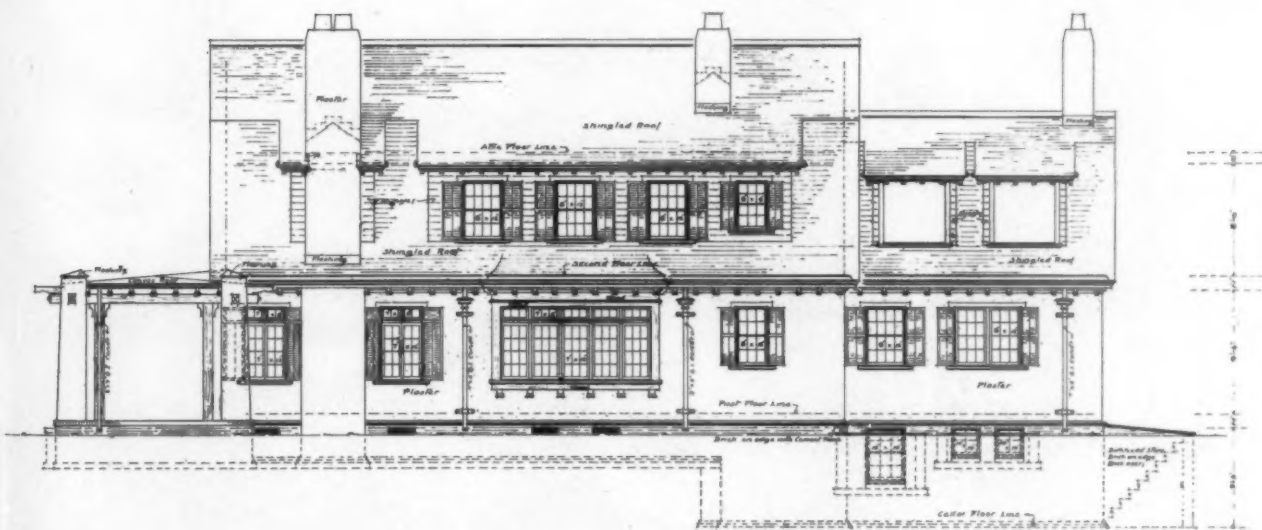
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WEST SIDE ELEVATION



FRONT (SOUTH) ELEVATION

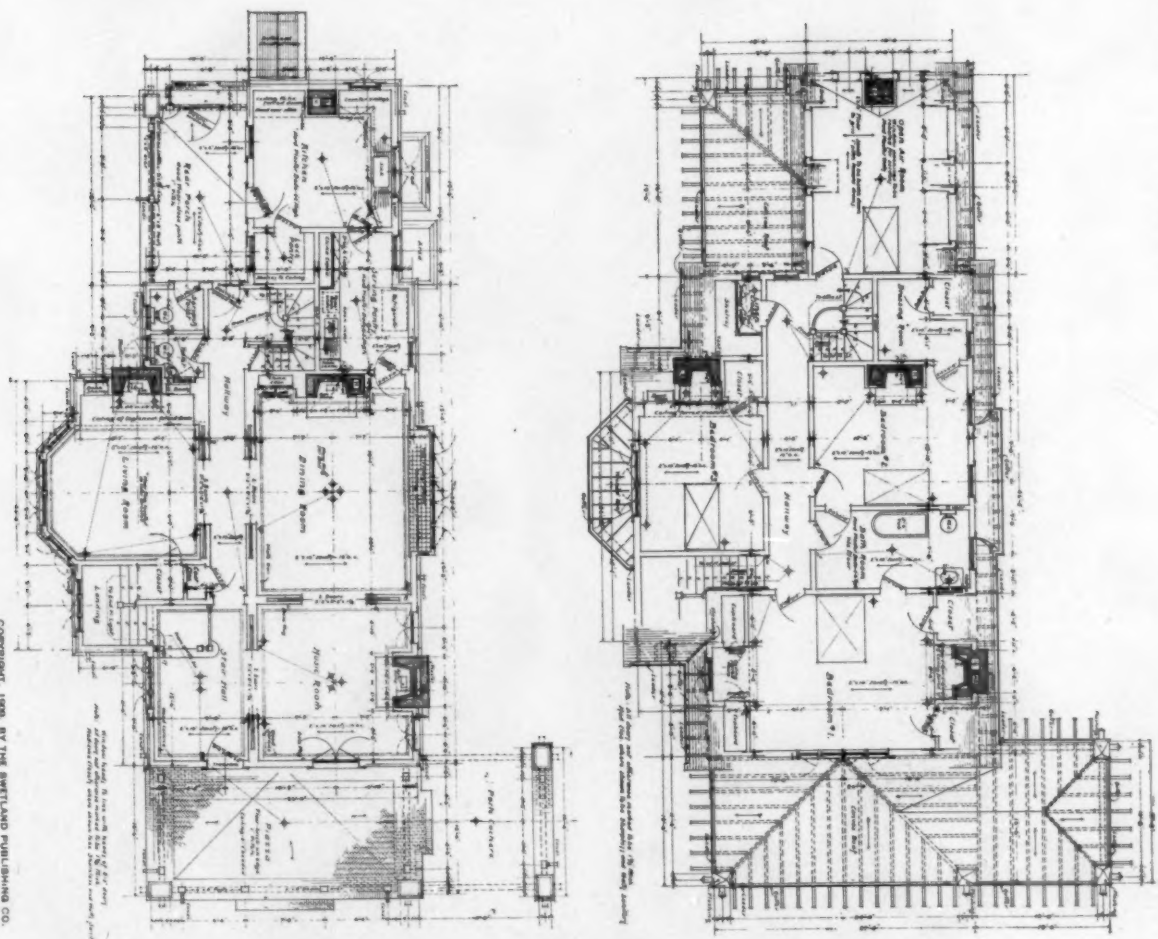
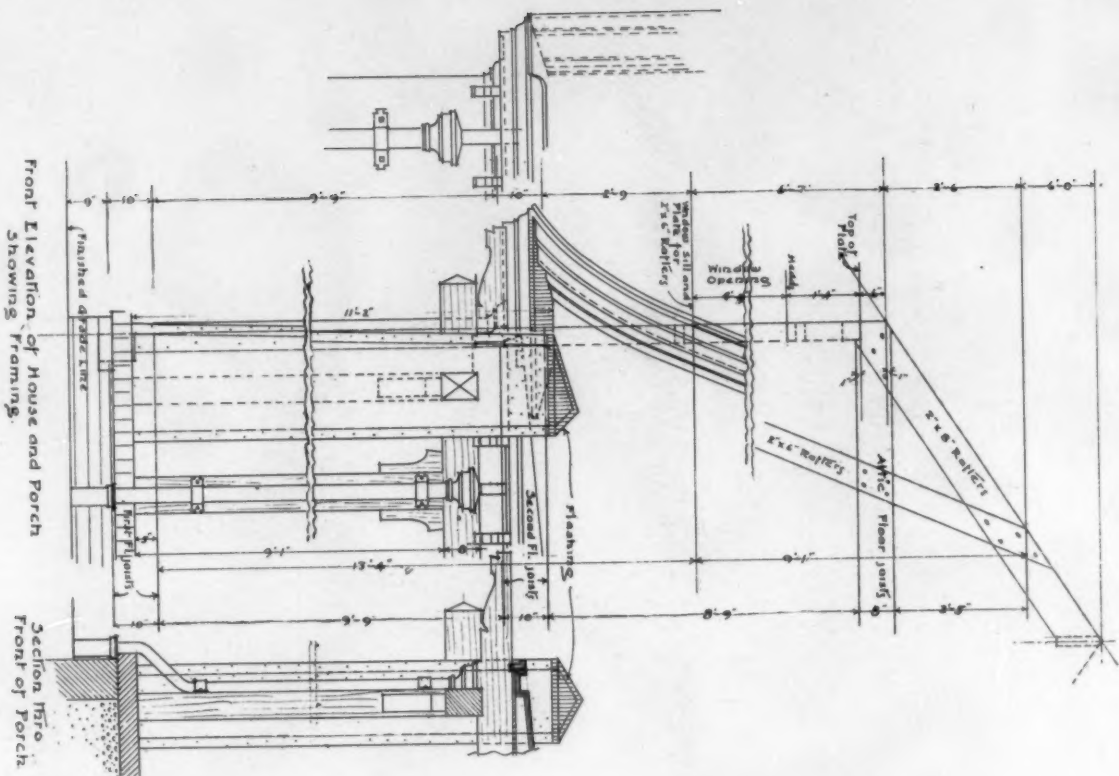


EAST SIDE ELEVATION

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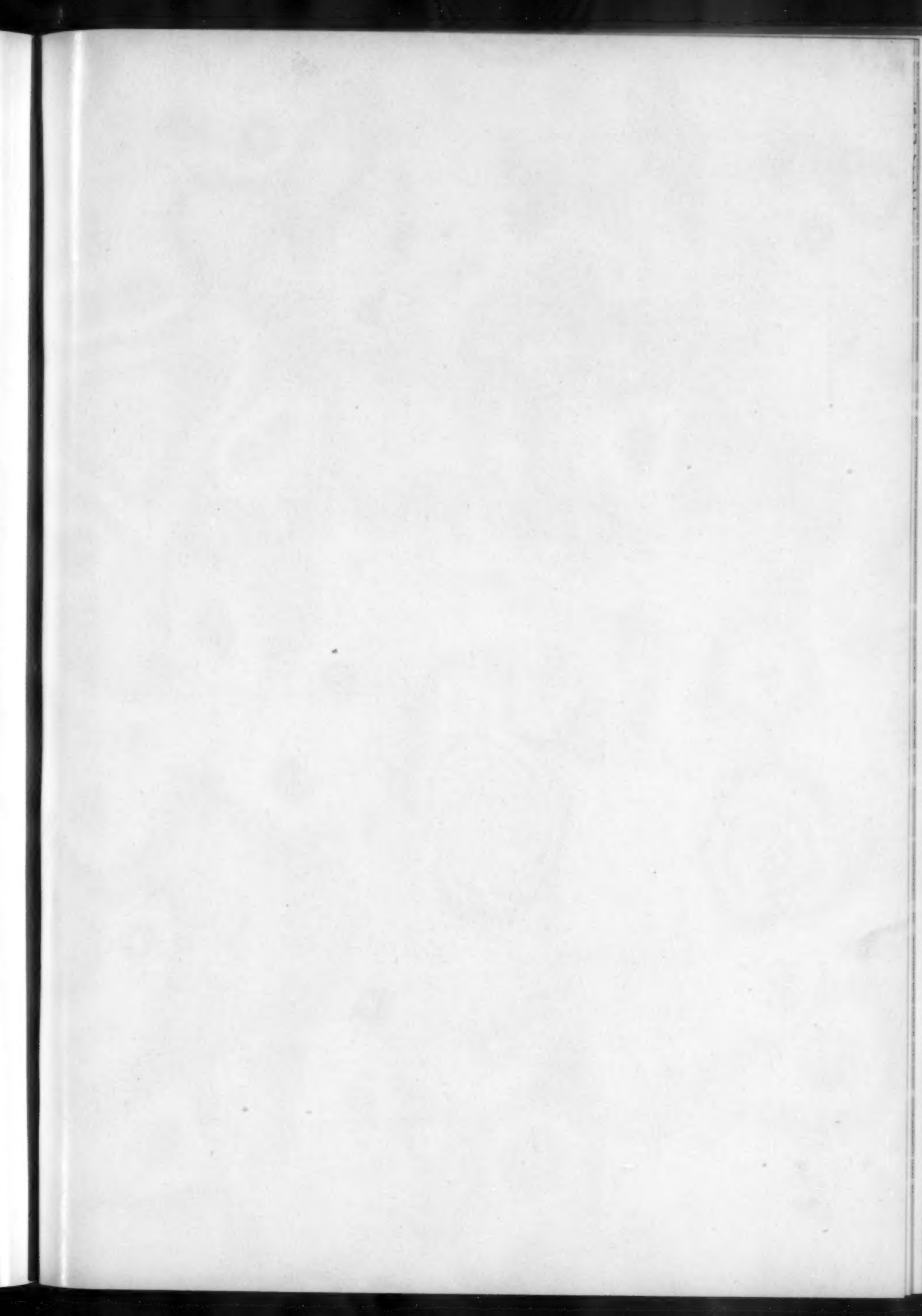
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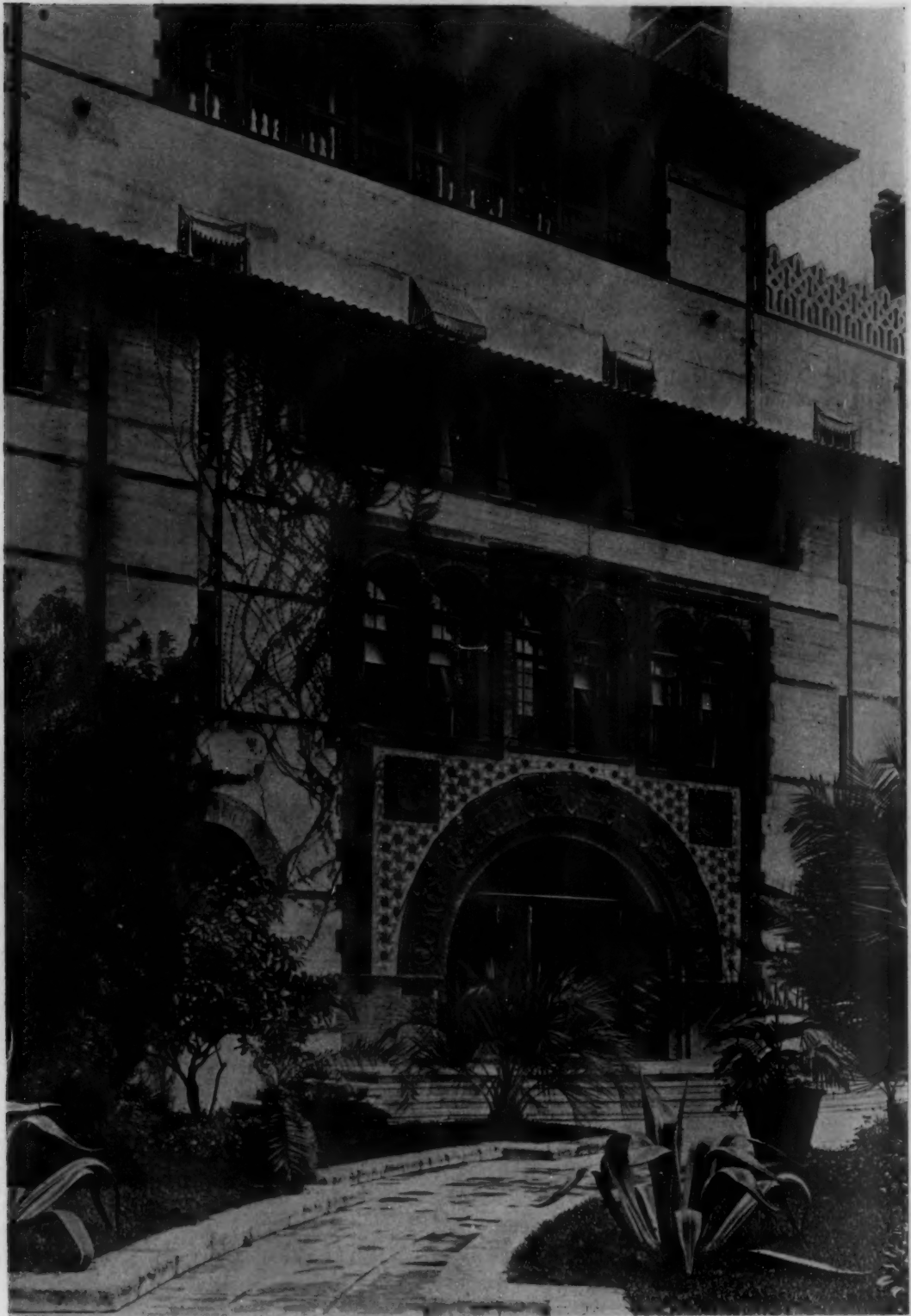


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