

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

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THE ANAYA GRILLE, SALAMANCA, SPAIN

SPANISH GRILLES

By M. STAPLEY

SPAIN produced her share of skillful craftsmen in the Middle Ages, and among the industries they most excelled in was the working of iron. Anyone who has seen Spain with its grim, rugged, unyielding topography will agree that ironwork seems to have its right background there; that to tame and shape the hard menacing metal must have specially appealed to the indomitable temperament of the Spanish people.

The extent to which they did tame it was amazing. They fashioned objects whose variety and beauty seemed

to strain to their uttermost the possibilities of the metal. Yet Spanish ironwork is relatively little known outside of Spain. There, in spite of centuries of despoiling and of neglect, may still be seen a great number of iron grilles (called *rejas*), candelabras, knockers, firedogs, weather-vanes, etc., which are all wonderfully wrought. No master goldsmith ever put more pride and joy into the fashioning of his precious, shining, yielding metal than did the ironsmith into his inexpensive, dull-colored, stubborn one.

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EXTERIOR OF WINDOW, HOUSE OF THE SHELLS, SALAMANCA

It must be the weight and consequent difficulty of transportation that has saved most of these productions from the ravagers; for little else is left in what was once a rich treasure house of art. Certainly that must be what has saved the large, lofty *rejas* which in most of the cathedrals are the only survivors of the paintings, hangings and jeweled vestments that once made up the chapter's enormous wealth.

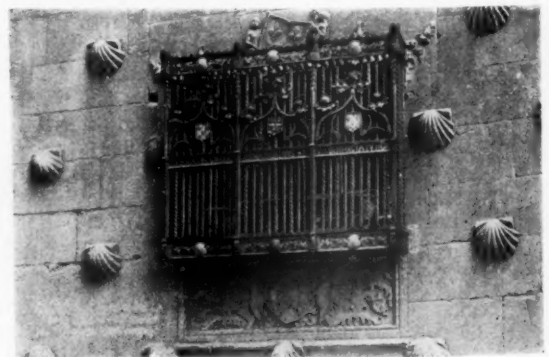
Spanish architecture more than any other used such grilles as an accessory—a remnant, probably, of Moorish influence. Taking the word grille in its first meaning of any iron railing, whether across a window, around a monument, between a chapel and the main church, or as a gate in a wall, it is safe to say that no country save Portugal possesses to-day the quantity of iron grilles that may be seen in Spain. A few of the most famous are in the cathedrals of Pampeluna, Burgos, Salamanca, Palencia, Zaragoza, Sevilla, and Granada. This last possesses, in the ironwork surrounding the tombs of Ferdinand and Isabella, the most famous specimen of all. In domestic architecture the best known examples are perhaps the window grilles on the House of the Shells in Salamanca and the House of Pilate in Seville (to give each building its popular name).

Mostly the creators of these works of art are unknown, or where their names have come down to us it is simply as *ironworkers*. In a few instances the ironworker is credited with being also a sculptor or architect; sometimes even all three designations appear after his name in the old building records. Known or un-

known, all these men were in reality supreme artists. They worked in the most difficult of metals and with the fewest and simplest tools. No effect was left to chance. A design had to be firmly fixed in the mind before it could be executed by well-directed blows delivered in the brief moments that the metal remained hot. It meant quick perception, good taste, and that indefinable something we call *touch*—a something nowhere more appreciated than in ironwork.

Sometimes the designs for grilles were furnished, but generally, in early Gothic days at least, the worker invented as he worked, content with straight lines and modest floral decorations. But then even straight lines meant a great deal, for a more difficult task than that of beating out iron into a long quadrilateral bar, with true angles, could hardly be set. To the early simplicity of straight lines there were, of course, exceptions, for an early elaborate piece is occasionally found. One such specimen, and really the most delicate Gothic piece in all Spain, is the grille around the tomb of Bishop de Anaya in the Old Cathedral of Salamanca. All its details are most unusual, particularly the cresting, with its pagan figures holding candelabras. These figures are of thin sheet-iron embossed in two convex halves and then riveted together to form the round—which was the method of making nearly all the larger figures that surmount such works. There is a profusion of plant forms and delicate tendrils in the Anaya railing, and the quaint Gothic lettering into which the solid horizontal band has been pierced is exquisite. The whole work is the most exuberant and fantastic Fifteenth century example. It is dated 1437.

But all such ambitious attempts to make iron take on the facile aspect that it here shows are not *chefs-d'œuvre*, and, generally speaking, the greatest charm lies in simpler things. Even of these not many antedate the Fifteenth Century—perhaps because the Moors had set the fashion for richer metals. Up in Northern, or Christian, Spain, however, where French and German architects were building the Gothic cathedrals of Leon, Burgos, Compostela, etc.; early *rejas* are met with, but they are identical with contemporaneous French and English ones. But in Barcelona, where the Spanish architect Jaime Fabre was building the cathedral during the greater part of the Fourteenth Century, may be found the earliest typically Spanish ones. Barcelona was then, as now, the capital of the province of



GRILLE, HOUSE OF THE SHELLS, SALAMANCA



IN THE CLOISTERS, BARCELONA

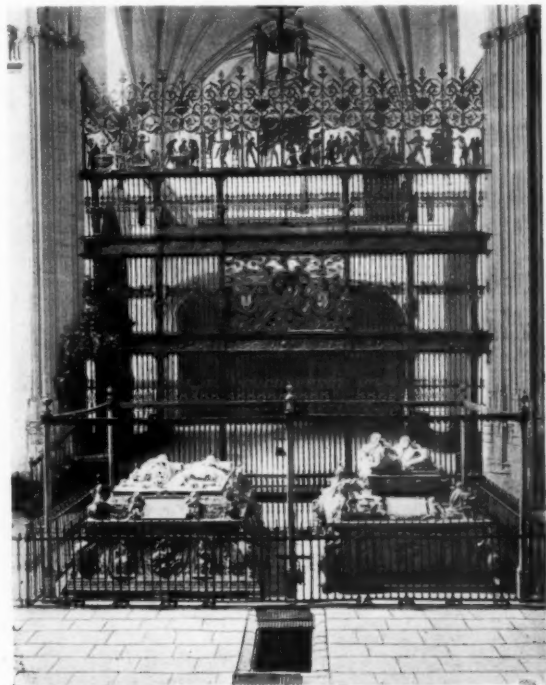
Cataluna, and Cataluna was from the earliest days celebrated for its ironwork. In fact the Catalan forge, that is the water-jet blower that furnished the blast for the iron furnace, was invented there and used all over southern Europe. Its intense heat almost liquefied the metal so that the Catalans handled it at its greatest point of malleability. On this soft substance, dealt feverishly while the iron was white hot, are plainly visible the marks of a huge mallet. It is by these that Catalan work can always be distinguished from other Spanish productions that were handled while the metal was colder and then tediously worked upon later with chisel, burin and file. Up in Pampeluna Cathedral the small statuettes of the Capilla Mayor grille have been modeled out of soft iron by nothing else than the blows of a surprisingly large hammer. This is the grille that George Street describes as thirty feet high with one-third of the height given over to the cresting; "and what the alternate plain and twisted bars of the lower part lack in ornament the cresting more than atones for, for its figures are all *most elaborately hammered up*."

But to return to Barcelona, where one need not go beyond the cathedral cloister to see a marvelous array of early grilles. These are all quite alike in general form, differing only in the details; and, to be sure, Toulouse in France has some very similar ones; but then the Toulouse ones are late fifteenth century, according to Viollet-le-Duc, while those at Barcelona are about a century older. Barcelona's, too, are higher than the others, or than any previous Spanish ones, and may be

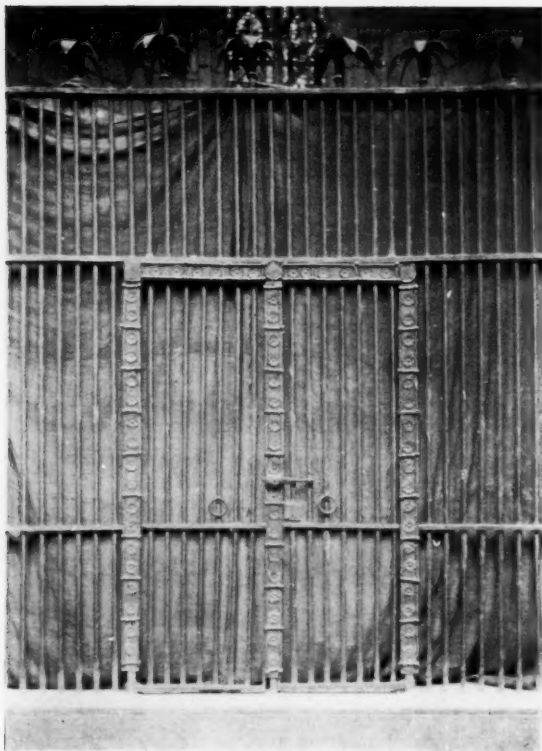
said to have introduced that *penchant* for loftiness that in the zenith of Spanish grandeur, reached the towering height of the Granada grille—forty feet excluding the topmost group above the cresting. The plainest in the cloisters have rectangular horizontal bars with round vertical ones close together, every fourth ending in a cluster resembling our century plant. It is just possible that this replaces some earlier decoration, for it was not until after the discovery of the New World that its indigenous yucca and agave (erroneously called American aloe) appear as a boastful cresting to Spanish grilles; it is possible, therefore, that the trident, spearpoint, or some abstract sort of lilaceous cluster with a central candle spike, previously terminated the bars of the oldest grilles.

Some of the Barcelona grilles hold to, in places, the old Moorish decoration of nail-heads. On the rosette door shown a few of the iron roses serve their original purpose of nails or rivets by holding the long, narrow strip of iron to the heavy round bar beneath; but most rosettes are purely decorative, being, with the lily torchère above, the only departure from severe dignity, like the suggestion of the deft embroiderer's touch to an exquisitely simple gown. Another manner of enrichment is shown in the broad horizontal band across the postern of one of the illustrations—where two sheets of iron are riveted together after one of them has been pierced with a pattern.

In construction grilles were generally divided into two tiers and a cresting. The lower tier held the postern door and was usually divided again at each side by another horizontal bar or strip. These simple parts became, as screens grew taller, three tiers with several subdivisions, rich cornices of cusped arches, and mar-



TOMB OF THE CATHOLIC KINGS, SALAMANCA



IN THE CLOISTERS, BARCELONA. GRILLE WITH ROSE NAIL HEADS

velously elaborate crestings wherein the human figure, (previously not attempted), was freely introduced; while the postern doors of later days were hinged on massive and architecturally designed buttresses with crochets, pinnacles and finials. These massive buttresses, as well as the pilasters of full Renaissance days, were in reality beams of wood covered with sheets of embossed iron—embossed with a perfection that showed how the extraordinary facility of the silversmiths was influencing the ironworkers. But such distinctively classic features as pilasters came late, for grilles continued to be made in *Gotico-florido* long after architecture had become Renaissance, or, as it was called in Spain, *Plateresque*.

In the transition to Plateresque, the tall vertical bars, originally round or four-sided and partially twisted, and with their hammer marks frankly showing, underwent perhaps the greatest change of all. They became full-fledged Renaissance spindle balustrades. Now an iron spindle of varying thickness was a true *tour de force* and, except in groups of two or three had rarely been attempted by Gothic smiths; yet, in ambitious Renaissance days it soon became commoner than its plain predecessors. It could be secured in only one way—by hammering and welding together and at highest heat, a lot of successive pieces of best wrought iron each thicker or thinner than the last. It was a process that required infinite skill and patience to avoid a ragged, visible joining. Add to this that whole rows of these spindles were embellished with foliage carved out of the solid and gilded for additional splendor, and

one realizes the extraordinary skill that the humble iron-worker had attained in the mere matter of an upright bar.

How he subdued the difficulties of the human figure was still more wonderful. The same epoch that saw the appearance of thousands of balustrades saw also the introduction of multitudes of figures into grille crestings—figures entirely forged, then finished with chisel and file. Some artists, indeed, attempted whole scenes, historical or biblical, as in the Granada grille.

Of this, Sir Digby Wyatt, an architect who traveled in Spain in the early seventies (a decade after George Street had discovered the country to the profession) says that it has more transparency and, in spite of its wealth of ornament, more subordination to the architectural features around it, than any other in Spain, and he further accords to it "stability without heaviness and a towering rectangularity that gives it great repose."

It is, indeed, a surpassing production but, one has to admit, it almost dissociates itself from the very metal of which it is composed. It absolutely outstrips all the characteristics of ironwork. It suggests the swift tricks of the alchemist who has changed iron to the more tractable silver or gold, rather than the slow, patient labor of human hands. Made between 1520-30, it bears the modest inscription "Maestro Bartolome me fec." As has been said, it is over forty feet high and its three stories diminish from the base upwards, with two massive-looking friezes to divide them off. These are embossed sheets of iron, the lower with medallions, the upper with a honeysuckle design. Vertically the grille is separated into five parts by square pilasters—wood sheathed in iron and terminating in Corinthian capitals. Between the pilaster the uprights break into leaf work and open tracery in the first and third tiers, and into cherubim in the middle tier. Also in this tier and the

(Continued on page 102.)



AN EXAMPLE OF THE RENAISSANCE, LA LEO SARAGOSSA

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CONTENTS

SPANISH GRILLES.....	97
EDITORIAL COMMENT.....	101
VALUELESS BUILDINGS.....	103
RECENT LEGAL DECISIONS.....	104
ILLUSTRATIONS:	
Recent Competitions, viz.: Hartford (Conn.) Municipal Building, Department of Justice, Washington, D. C., Confederate Memorial, Richmond, Va.	
Frontispiece:	
Choir Stalls, Church of the Holy Spirit, Florence.	

THE NEW YORK BUILDING CODE

IN a somewhat extended communication printed in the New York *Sun* of February 17, Ernest Flagg attacks with much vigor New York's building code. He points out what he considers to be numerous absurd requirements of this antiquated instrument which apparently have the effect of placing a premium on the construction of temporary structures built largely of inflammable materials. The article refers particularly to the requirements of the code affecting the construction of tenements.

Of course many faults and deficiencies of the present code have long been recognized and admitted. The difficulty seems to lie not so much in difference of opinion regarding the old, but rather in agreeing upon an equitable and progressive set of building regulations to replace those now in force. No one will quarrel with Mr. Flagg's inference that it is much better to have the majority of buildings fireproof and only as strong as necessary than it is to have but a few buildings fireproof and that few excessively strong. At the same time it is well to bear in mind that few structures actually possess the factor of safety usually assumed when the strength of their various members is computed. Defective materials not infrequently find their way into the structural parts of a building. Careless or unskilful workmanship affects the strength of walls, whether of concrete or other masonry. Imperfect mixing of mortar and concrete, or connections of steel members that will not fully develop the strength of the parts connected,—all of these things tend to lower the theoretical strength of structures. In other words, while, for example, an allowable working stress of 16,000 pounds per square inch of section for medium steel is undoubtedly well on the side of safety, allowance must be made for imperfections of manufacture and the fallibility of workmen, both in the shop and in the field. Columns are not always perfectly plumb. Their ends are not invariably milled smooth at right angles to their axes, insuring perfect bearing. Eccentric loading is not always carefully considered and provided for. Rivets connecting beams and girders to

columns and to each other are not always driven completely filling the hole, and drawn down tight. Not a few architects and engineers can give instances from their experience where some accidental circumstance has disclosed a flaw in material or workmanship, which if undiscovered would have endangered the entire structure and these where the usual inspections and tests had been made. A needless use of materials is justly open to criticism and attack, but a suspected waste of property is preferable to a possible waste of life. The fact that some cities have adopted codes allowing higher unit stresses in building materials is not conclusive evidence of their superior enlightenment. Some of these same cities impose less stringent sanitary requirements also.

In any case, while there is no disposition to defend New York's building code (that there exists real need for revision is readily conceded), Mr. Flagg's demonstration that it is entirely possible to build a fireproof tenement under the law at less cost per square foot of floor area than would be required to construct one non-fireproof goes far toward quashing the strongest indictment that has ever been filed against it. In fact it would seem to indicate that the premium on the use of wood referred to by Mr. Flagg is not so great nor the handicap on the use of non-inflammable materials not so crushing after all. Indeed why should non-fireproof tenements be constructed under any circumstances when it is possible to build better, more permanent, less dangerous and in every way more sanitary and desirable buildings at less cost per square foot of available and rentable space?

GROWING APPRECIATION OF ARCHITECTURE

ONE of the most encouraging indications of increasing popular appreciation of and interest in architecture is the growing amount of space and attention accorded the subject in the popular press. While a few years since one might look in vain in the daily papers and monthly magazines for reference to anything more than the most important building operations (and these were generally treated from the point of number of persons employed by the new industry to be housed, or as indicating the material prosperity of some citizen, firm or institution) to-day there is scarcely a publication that does not constantly reflect the popular interest in architecture. The magazines have their home-builders' section and the daily papers issue Sunday supplements illustrated with buildings, real or imaginary, intended to add to the development and beauty of cities, towns and hamlets. Of course the character of work so shown ordinarily leaves much to be desired, for except in rare instances the material has apparently been collected with greater enthusiasm than discrimination. This may be attributable to the attitude of the profession toward advertising, which makes difficult under ordinary circumstances the procurement of plans or other illustrative material for publication in the popular or even semi-popular press, from architects who have regard for the higher ethics of the profession.

But in spite of its character, the attention now accorded the subject of architecture indicates its importance in the public mind and is most encouraging to those having its future welfare at heart.



A GOTHIC GRILLE WITH CENTURY PLANT CRESTING

(Continued from page 100.)

one above, the pilasters are furnished with canopies under which are iron statues of the apostles. Above the doors much fine work has been done in the large panel composed of the arms and insignia of the royal family buried within the chapel. But beautiful as all this is, it is the cresting that is the *pièce de resistance*. It is extremely lofty, its candelabra connected by rich arabesques that interlace to form canopies over the various scenes illustrating the life of Christ. Over thirty of these scriptural figures, half life size and beaten in the round, make up the scenes, in a variety of attitudes that are as facilely executed as if they had been clay in a modeler's hands. Besides being a most sumptuous piece of iron work, the Granada grille is an excellent piece of design. The proportions of its members answer every architectural requirement; vertical and horizontal divisions have just the right emphasis; while the ornament, profuse though it is, plays, after all, but the modest part of filling in the spaces between the structural members. It is one of Spain's glories, this grille, worthy to protect the tombs of the two greatest sovereigns Spain ever produced.

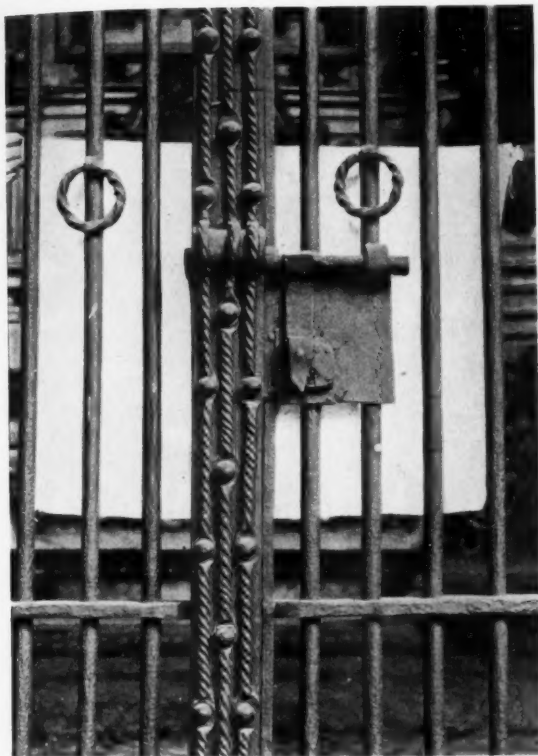
Besides those mentioned, the country may boast many more iron screens of surpassing magnificence; but the imposing church grille must not overwhelm the less pretentious ones found in domestic architecture. The simplest house has grilles at the ground floor at least, and at the upper windows iron railed balconies supported by brackets and scrolls of interesting design. It

is surprising the degree to which a window grille excludes the sun, in addition to its first purpose of protecting and screening the inmates. Sometimes it is a massive threaded lattice work of the Moors, but more often it is like the church examples—numerous uprights with top, bottom and central cross bars. The first examples that come to every one's mind are the two fine grilles on Salamanca's Casa de las Conchas, named from the shells that dot its façade. There are two very beautiful ones on the street and several in the patio. The building, dated 1514, is Renaissance but the iron is still Gothic in spirit. Plain and twisted bars alternate with pierced horizontals across them, in one of which an *Ave Maria* has been quaintly cut. The shell of the house front has been repeated here, the shell being the emblem of pilgrims to the shrine of Saint James, who took the long journey quite undisturbed by the fact that just across the Pyrenees another town claimed to possess the saint's body. The grille of three convex sections is the only one seen in the course of a long trip, yet its form is such an obvious deviation from the flat, and is so very beautiful, that one wonders why there are not more of them.

For a typically Renaissance example one always turns to the Casa de Pilatos in Seville, familiar to many through its frequent reproductions. Unlike the Conchas, this house of the Marquis de Tarifa is not Renaissance, but is a simple stucco house, built by Morisco architects, and containing a curious combination of Moorish, Gothic and Renaissance elements. The grille is



GRILLE, CHAPEL OF THE PRESENTATION, BURGOS CATHEDRAL



AN INTERESTING ROPE-IRON DECORATION, FLATTENED AT INTERVALS BY NAIL HEADS

probably a later addition for the Marquis' descendants, particularly his son who was viceroy at Naples, were adding to the place throughout the Sixteenth Century. The baluster-like bars and delicate Corinthian pilasters are surmounted by a circular cartouche surrounded by amorini and griffins that compose into a splendid piece of ornament.

The almost superhuman task which all this later iron grille making represents was, after all, simply patriotism—the exuberance of a people who suddenly found themselves masters of the world. The best smithery was done before 1520. Then the brilliant crown of Ferdinand and Isabella had just been placed on the head of their grandson Charles who, while he aggrandized Spain with one hand, ruined her with the other. "The decline of ironwork means the decline of national strength," says Mr. J. Starkie-Gardener, the well-known authority on ironwork. This was certainly true in Spain. Spanish ironwork declined with Spanish supremacy, immediately after its period of greatest glory.

RENTAL VALUES

The sky-scrapers rise to meet the pressure for space at a particular spot (not elsewhere). There the rental value per square foot for store, bank and office space advances from one dollar to two, three, four, eight, twelve, twenty, thirty and forty dollars per square foot per year according to the publicity of the location, that is, according to the number of people delivered at or passing the location per day, and according to the char-

acter of the business they come to transact.—*Building Management.*

VALUELESS BUILDINGS

It is becoming interesting to take note of the demolition of old buildings and the length of time they served their purpose. One of the important conclusions to be derived from the study is the average percentage for depreciation to be charged off annually irrespective of any change in the value of the land. There is an instance at the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-seventh street, New York, across the lateral street from Tiffany's. Here stood two houses which were formerly owned by Governor E. D. Morgan, and in the corner one he lived. He was governor of New York State in the years 1859 to 1862, a very trying period. The houses occupied land which has become too valuable for residential purposes. At least this is the opinion which the owner of the premises had. For a quarter of a century owners of residences on this fashionable avenue have been gradually coming to this opinion, and consequently there are at this date few private houses left on the avenue below where the Morgan house stands.

The corner lot (49.5 x 125 feet) with the house was valued last year by the tax department for assessment purposes at \$785,000, and the inside house and lot at \$298,000, as the frontage is only 24.8. Forty-five thousand dollars was estimated to be the value of the corner house alone, and \$23,000 as the value of the inside house alone, although each contains only three stories and basement. They are not elaborately constructed, judged by present-day standards, but they have that indefinable appearance of quality which the old master builders could give to a dwelling when they had a free hand.

The unusual thing about the operation as a whole is that it is not the present intention to improve the site, for the houses are being cleared simply to save the taxes on the buildings, which are no longer needed for residential purposes. The property is in the market, but the present owners may themselves conclude to improve it with a building. The interesting fact is that the houses have been able to hold on against the stream of commercial business for so many years and that the annual economical depreciation of the buildings has been only 1 2-3 per cent. annually.

Meanwhile the value of the land has increased so rapidly as to make the economical depreciation of the buildings a matter of no importance. In 1885 the value of the corner house and lot, with an adjacent stable and lot included, was only \$385,000. This was the price which Mrs. George Lewis paid the Morgans. The adjoining house and lot, 24.8 x 125, were bought in the year 1889 for \$122,500. While carefully refraining from making an estimate of the present value of the combined plot, it is apparent from the figures given that the natural increment in less than one generation has been a total so large that the loss of the buildings is a matter of no consideration whatever, but by their removal a tax on an assessed valuation of \$68,000 is saved.—*Building Management.*

RECENT LEGAL DECISIONS

PUBLISHED ARTICLES AS EVIDENCE OF ARCHITECT'S CONTRACT

Action for breach of alleged contract to design and sketch a house for the defendant. The defendant claimed that the agreement was that he would not be liable unless plaintiff's sketches met with his approval, and that the latter would retire if his services were not satisfactory at any time before their approval. There was offered in evidence an article published in the *Scientific American*, describing a building theretofore erected at Newport, R. I., by the plaintiff, together with an editorial in the same issue, favorably commenting upon the plaintiff's professional services in connection therewith. It was held that the fact that the plaintiff had shown the journal to the defendant did not make it admissible in evidence, the house which the plaintiff was to sketch for the defendant not being like that described in the article, nor were letters whose sole effect would be to demonstrate the plaintiff's willingness to do anything within reason to meet the defendant's views or to amicably settle the matter in controversy admissible. *Haydel v. Gould*, New York Appellate Division, 121 New York Supplement 194.

STIPULATION FOR FOUNDATION BELOW GROUND

A building contract required the contractor to put a foundation wall under the building four feet below the ground. The grade sloped, being higher in the front than in the rear of the building. The contractor placed the foundation in the rear upon the surface of the ground and, by filling, increased the level of the ground two feet above the bottom of the foundation. It was held that this was not a compliance with the contract, the owner being entitled to have the foundation four

feet below the surface, in order to protect it from frost, etc. *Villhauer v. Gross*, N. Y. Supreme Court, Appellate Division, 122 New York Supplement 520.

WRITTEN ORDER FOR EXTRAS—WHEN NOT REQUIRED

A contract was entered into for the construction of a reinforced concrete garage according to plans and specifications under which the work was commenced. Subsequently a civil engineer was called in to supervise the work, and he ordered certain work to be done which was not included in the plans and specifications. New plans and specifications were prepared, incorporating these additional items, and were accepted and approved in writing. The new specifications provided that no payment should be made for extra work not ordered in writing.

It was held that the contractor could furnish the extras specified in the new specifications and recover compensation therefor, without their being expressly ordered in writing. The acceptance and approval in writing by the owner of the new specifications constituted these his written order for the doing of the work. *Hedden Construction*

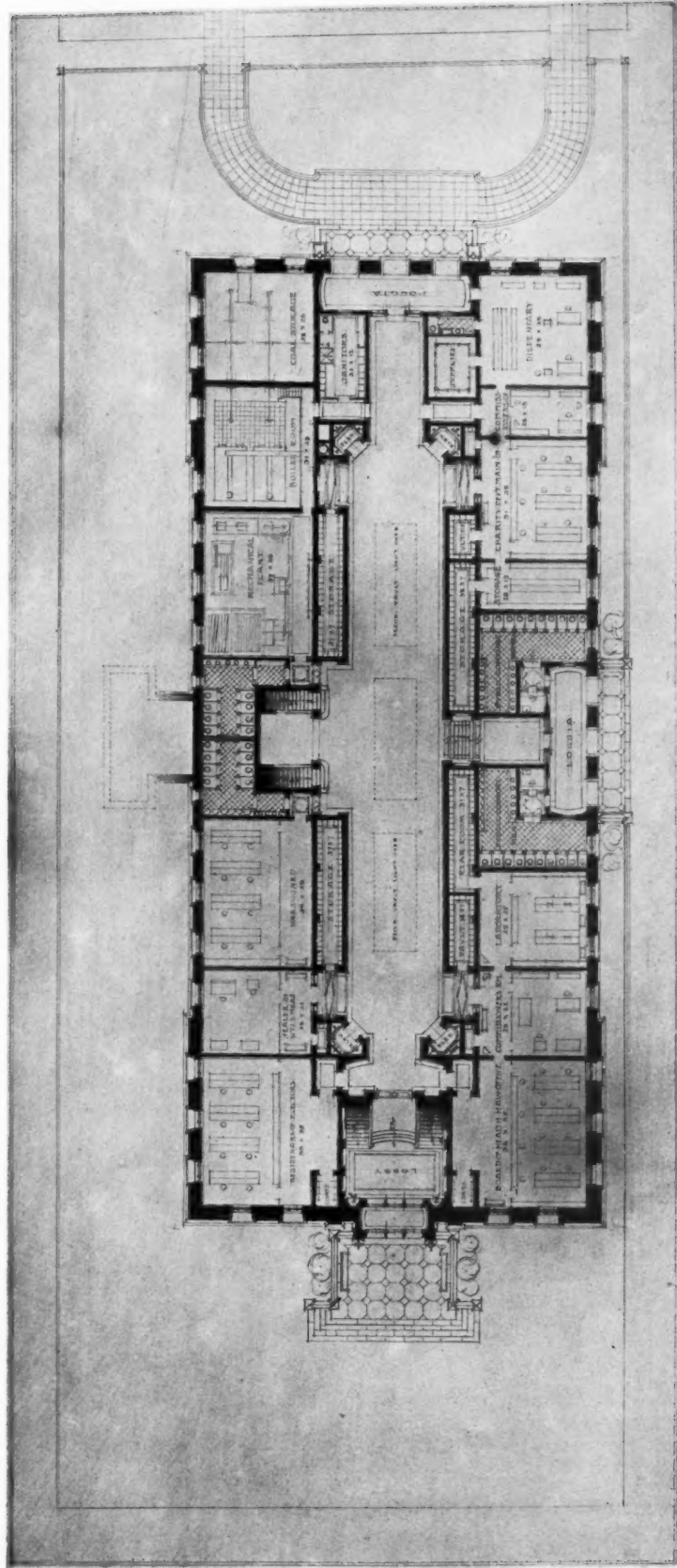
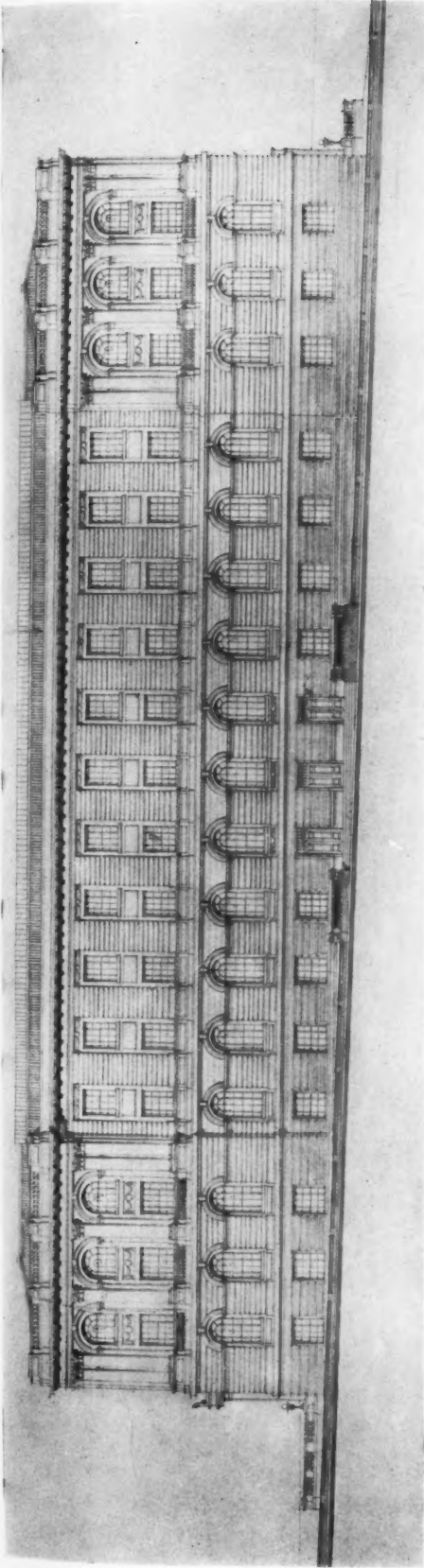
Co. v. Rossiter Realty Co., N. Y. Supreme Court, Appellate Division, 121 New York Supplement 64.

SUBSTANTIAL PERFORMANCE—DAMAGES FOR REMEDIAL DEFECTS

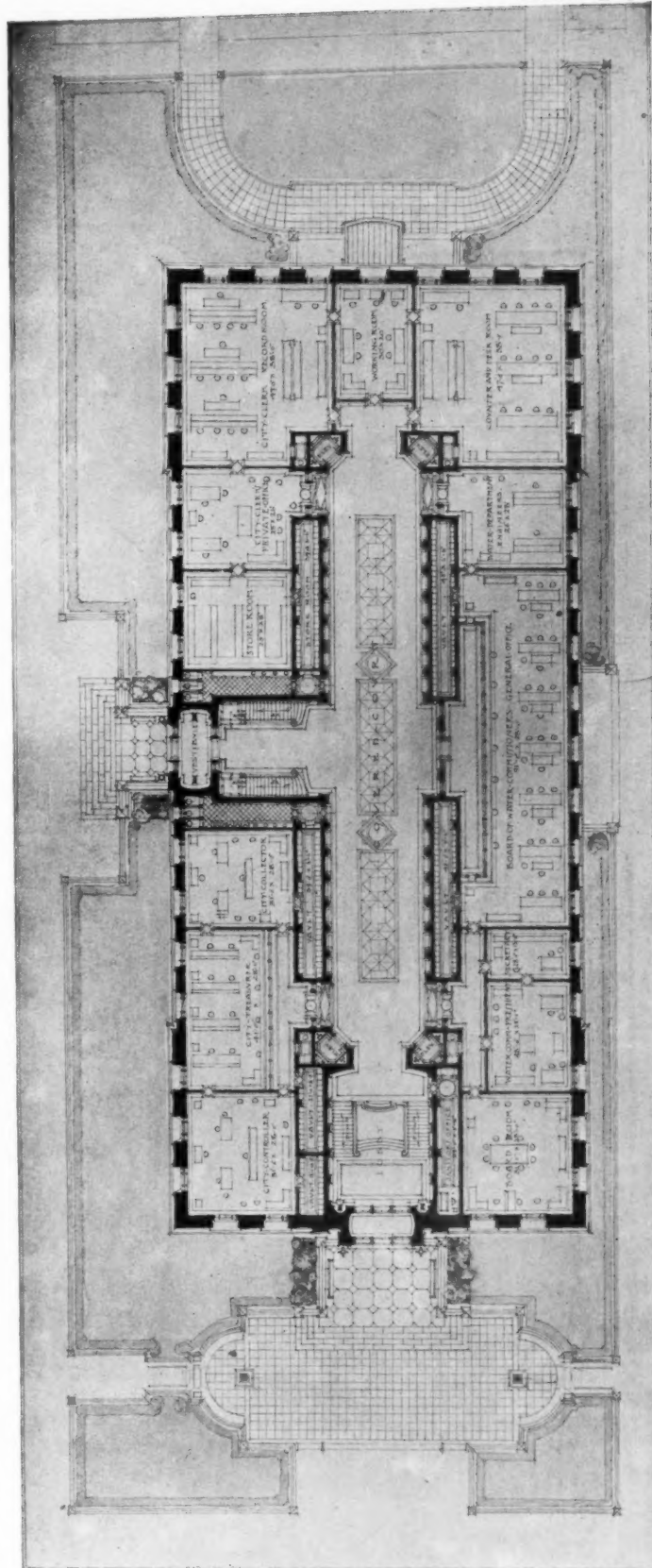
A subcontract for the plumbing and heating work in a school building amounted to \$7,000. It was performed except that the steam risers in the exhibition room were left out of plumb. It would cost only about \$300 to remedy the defects. It was held in an action against the owner for the contract price that the measure of damages was the reasonable expense necessary to make the work conform to the contract. *McCullough v. S. J. Hayde Contracting Co.*, Supreme Court of Kansas,



THE CONSTABLE'S CHAPEL, BURGO CATHEDRAL



PRIZE WINNING DESIGN, COMPETITION FOR A MUNICIPAL BUILDING FOR HARTFORD, CONN.
 DAVIS & BROOKS, Architects, PALMER & HORNBOSTEL, Consulting
 BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN
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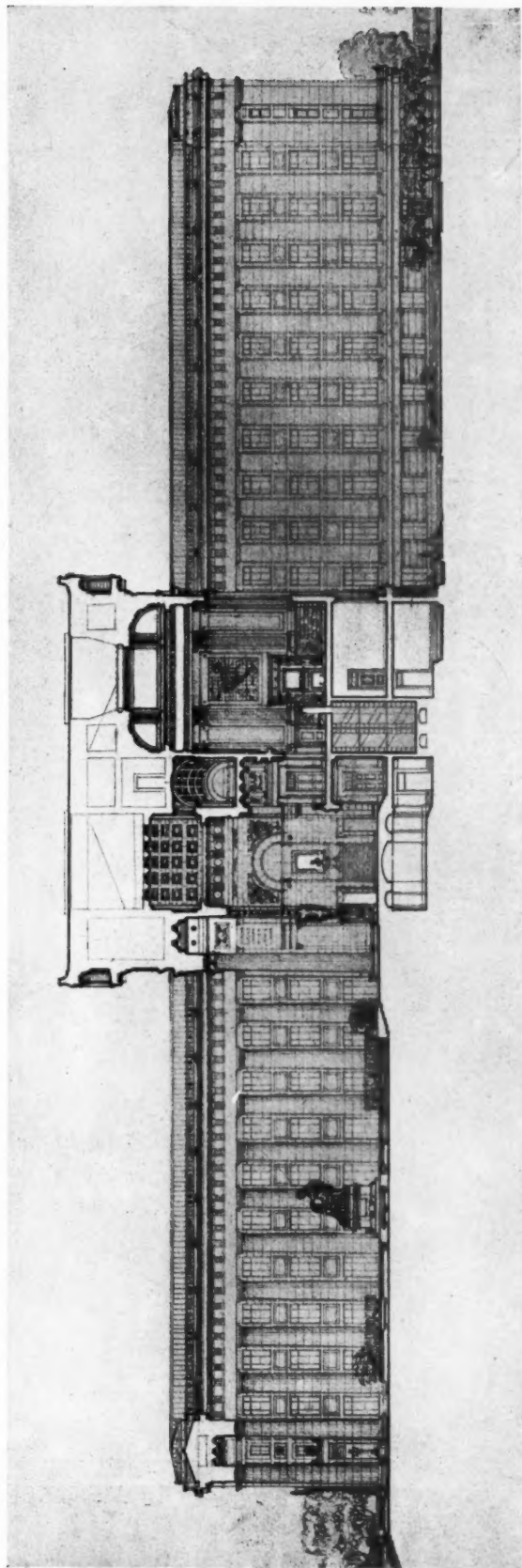
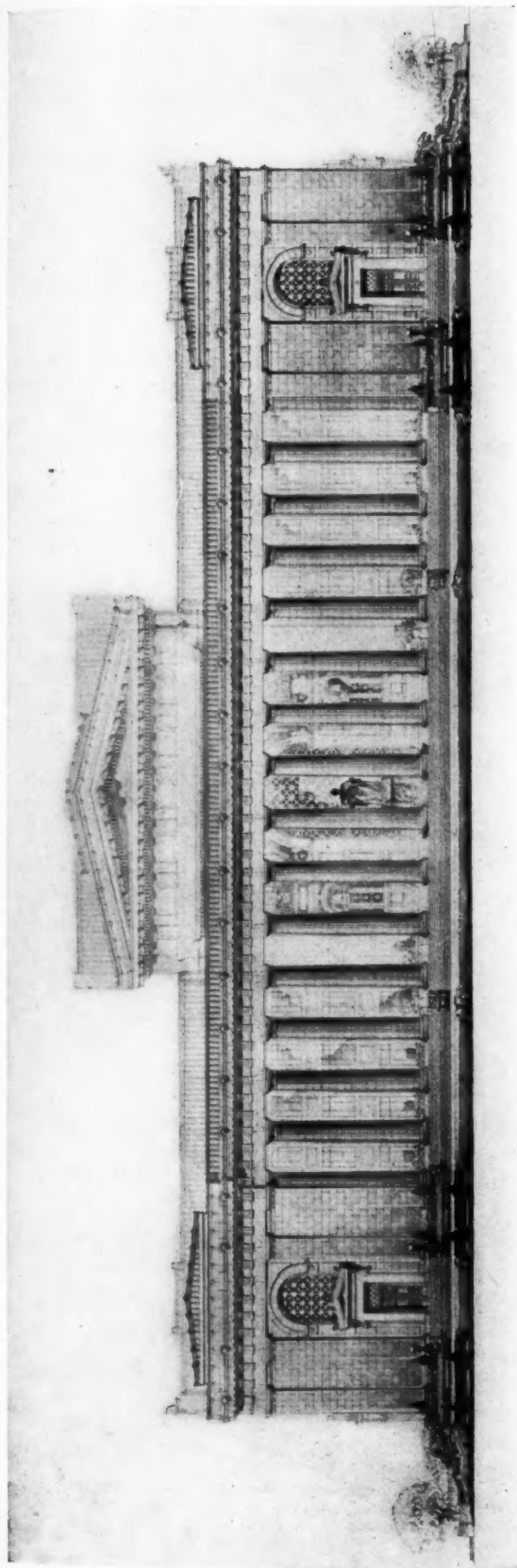
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MARCH 15, 1911

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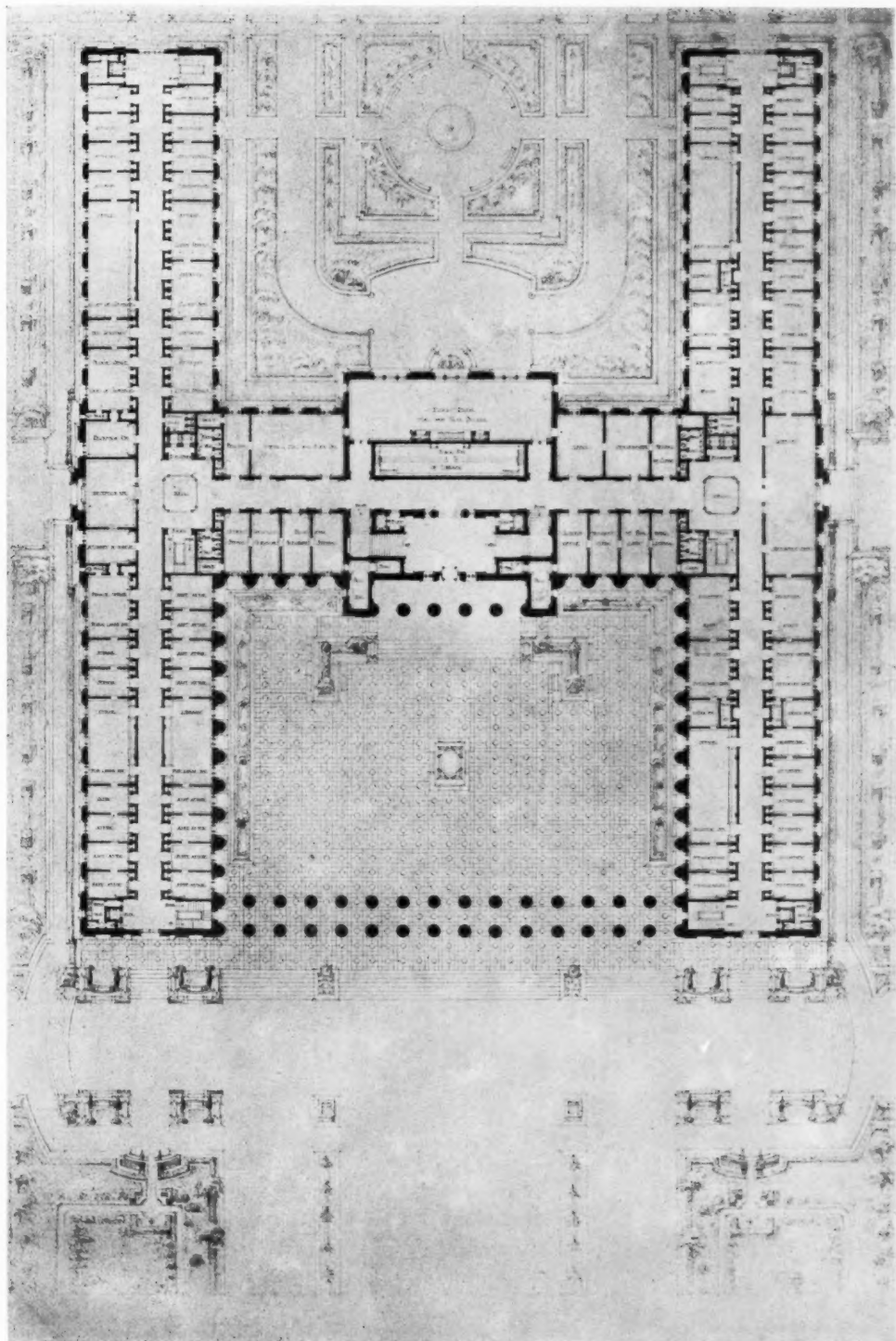
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COMPETITION FOR A BUILDING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

DESIGN SUBMITTED BY PALMER & HORNBOSTEL, Architects



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COMPETITION FOR A BUILDING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

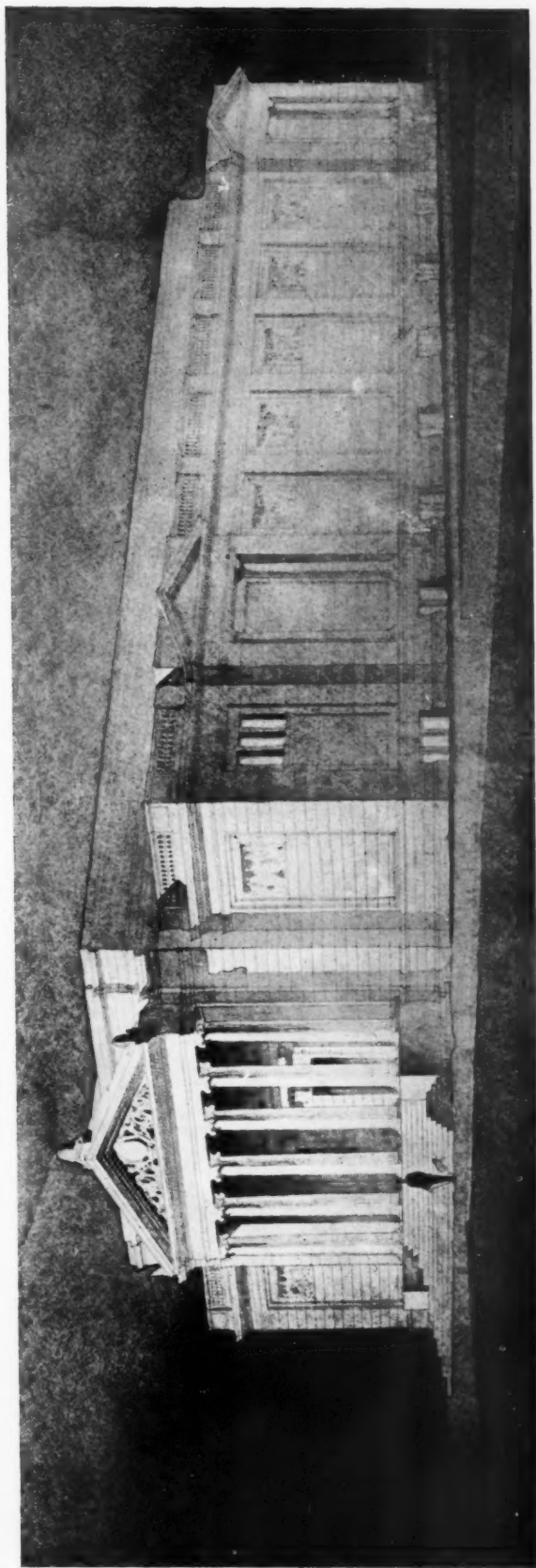
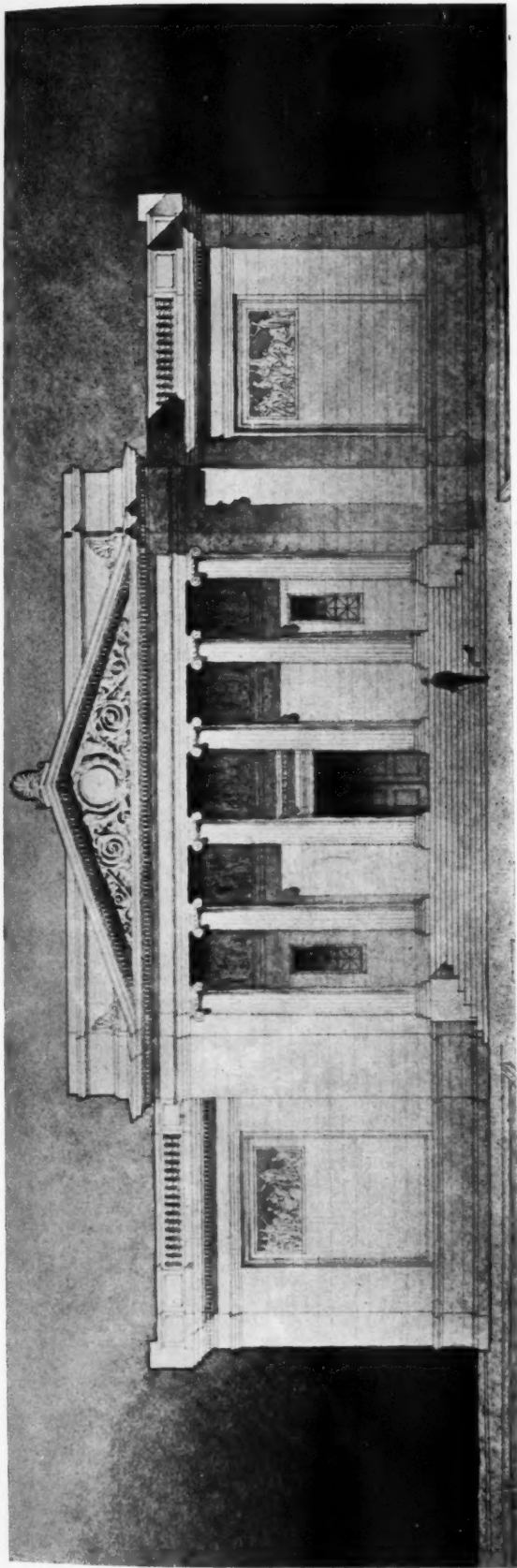
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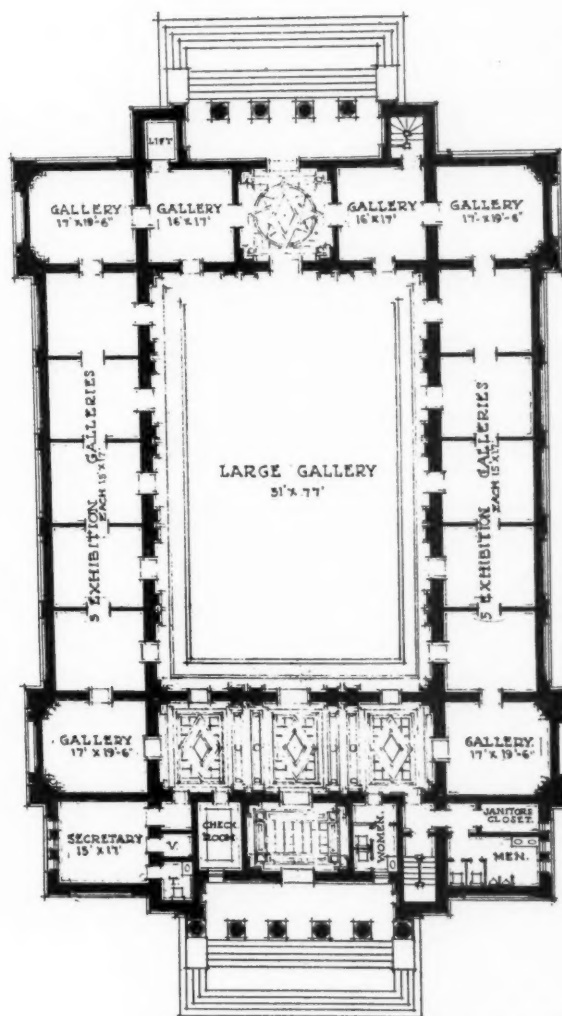
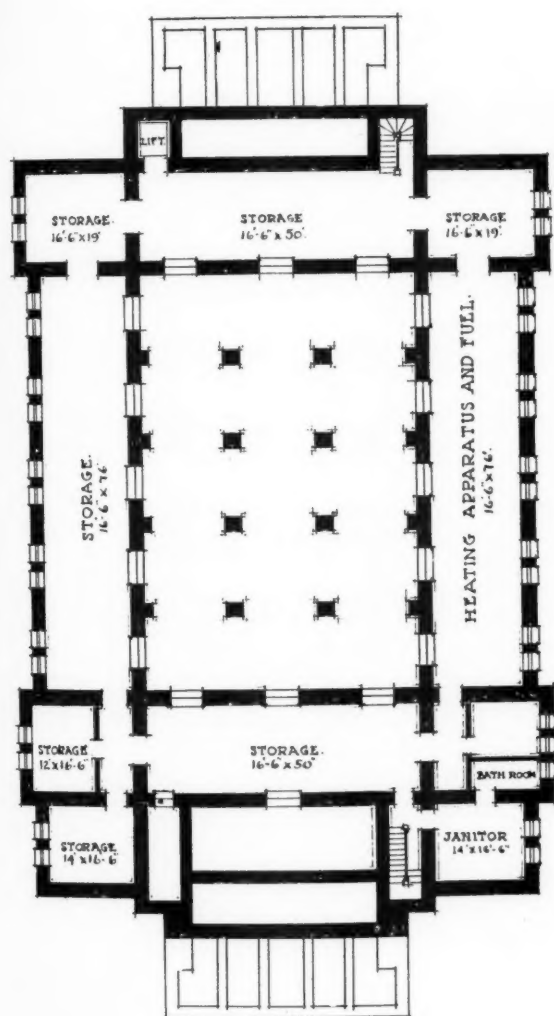
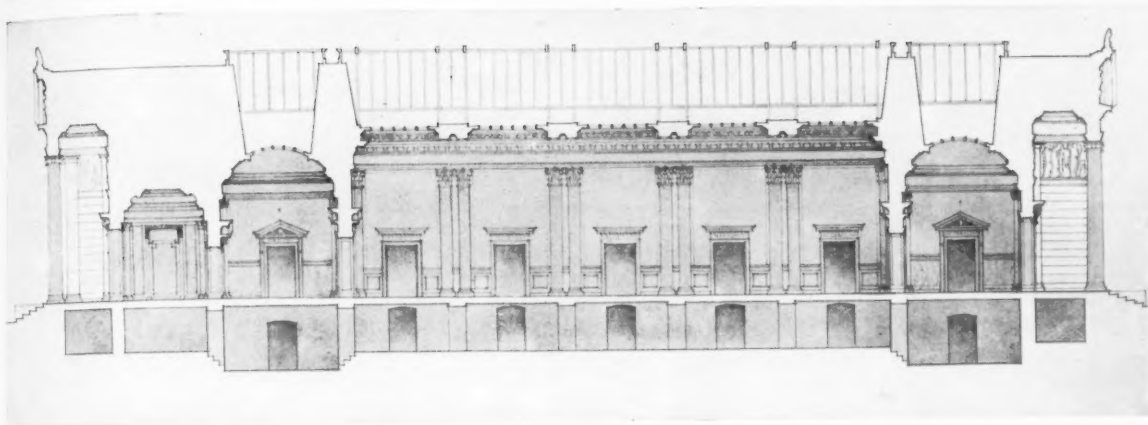
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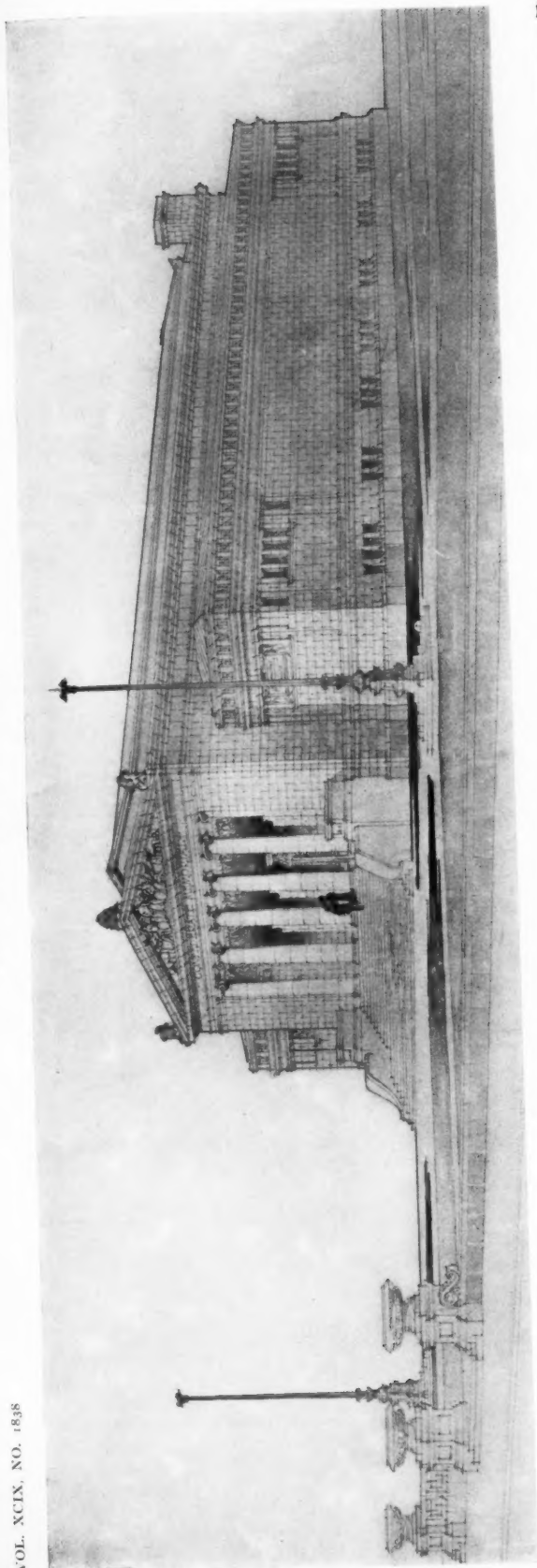


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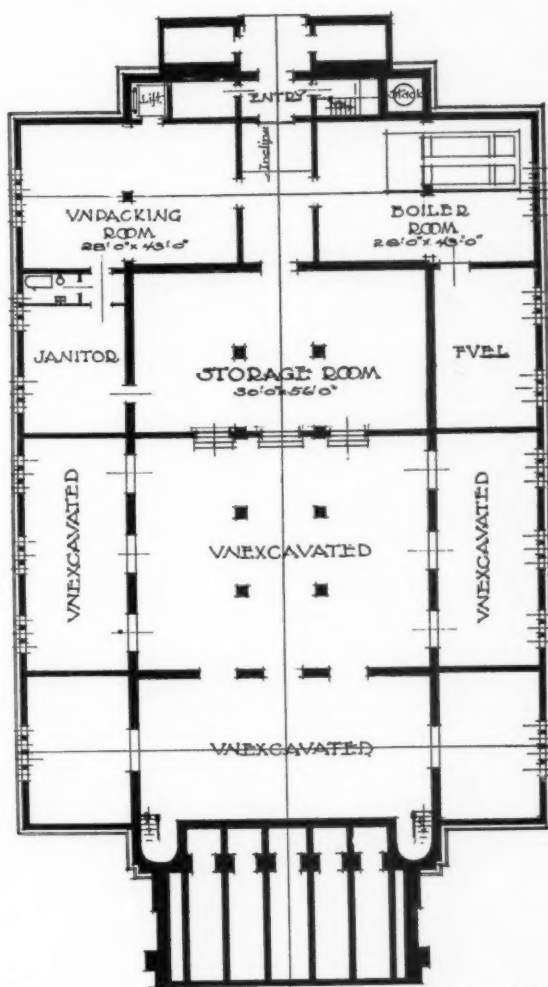
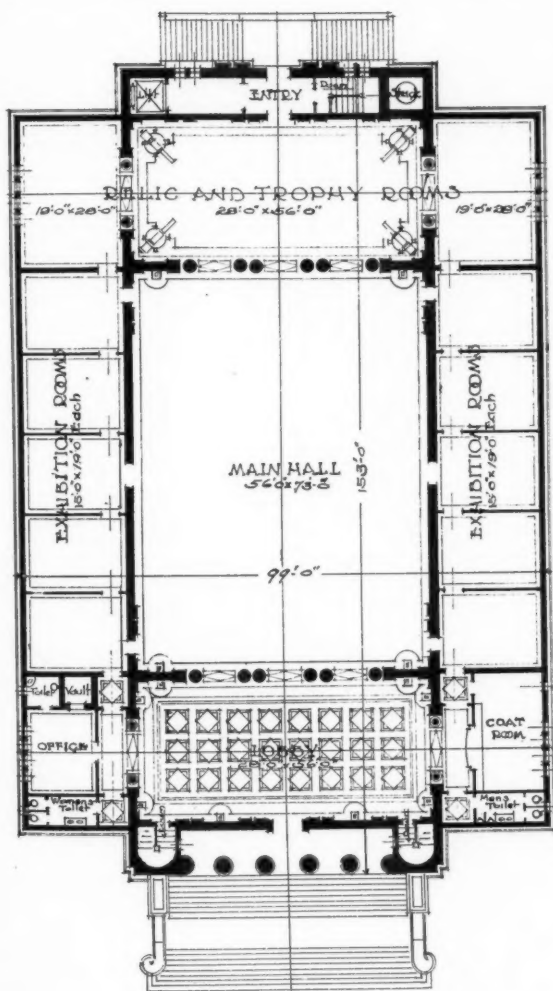
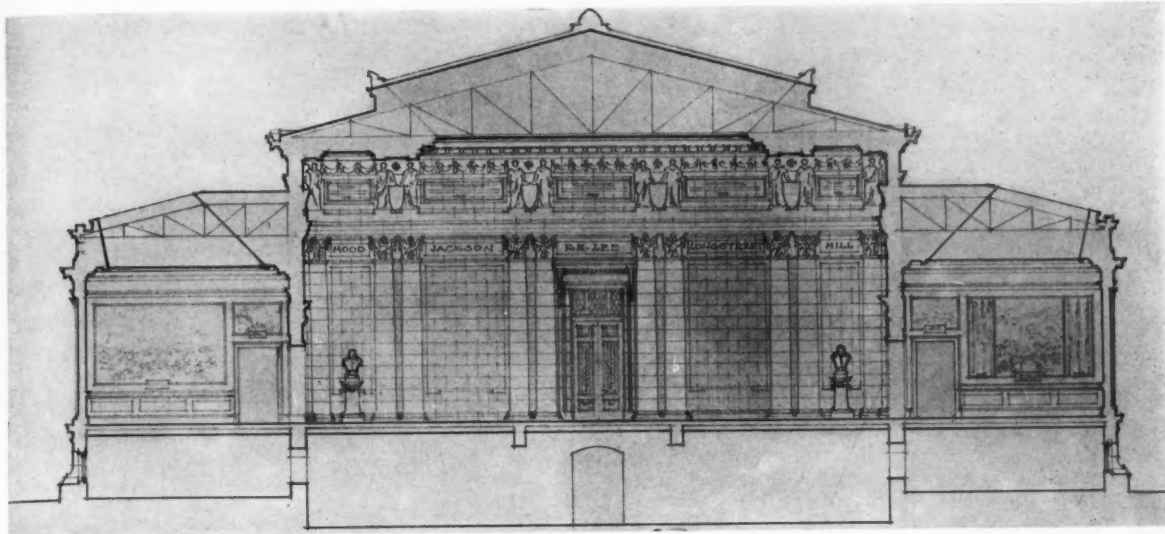


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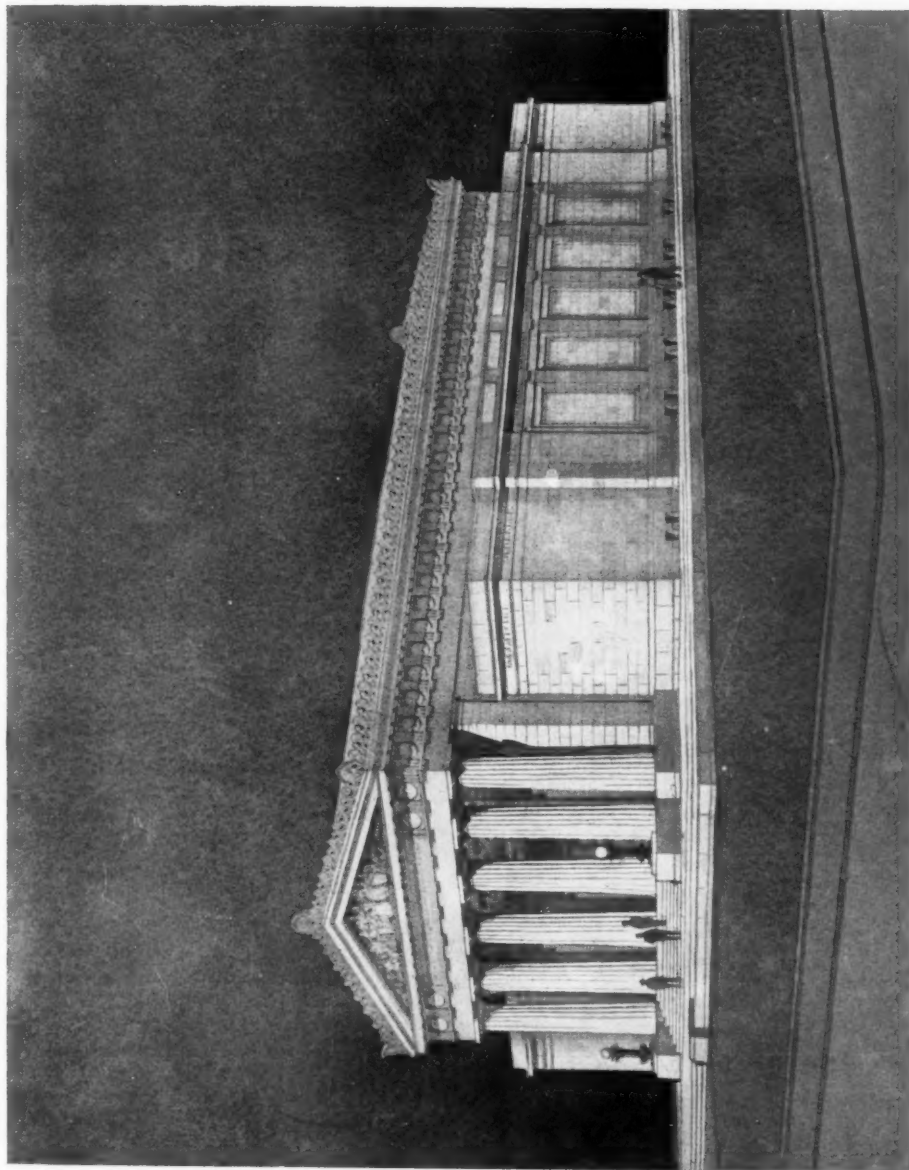


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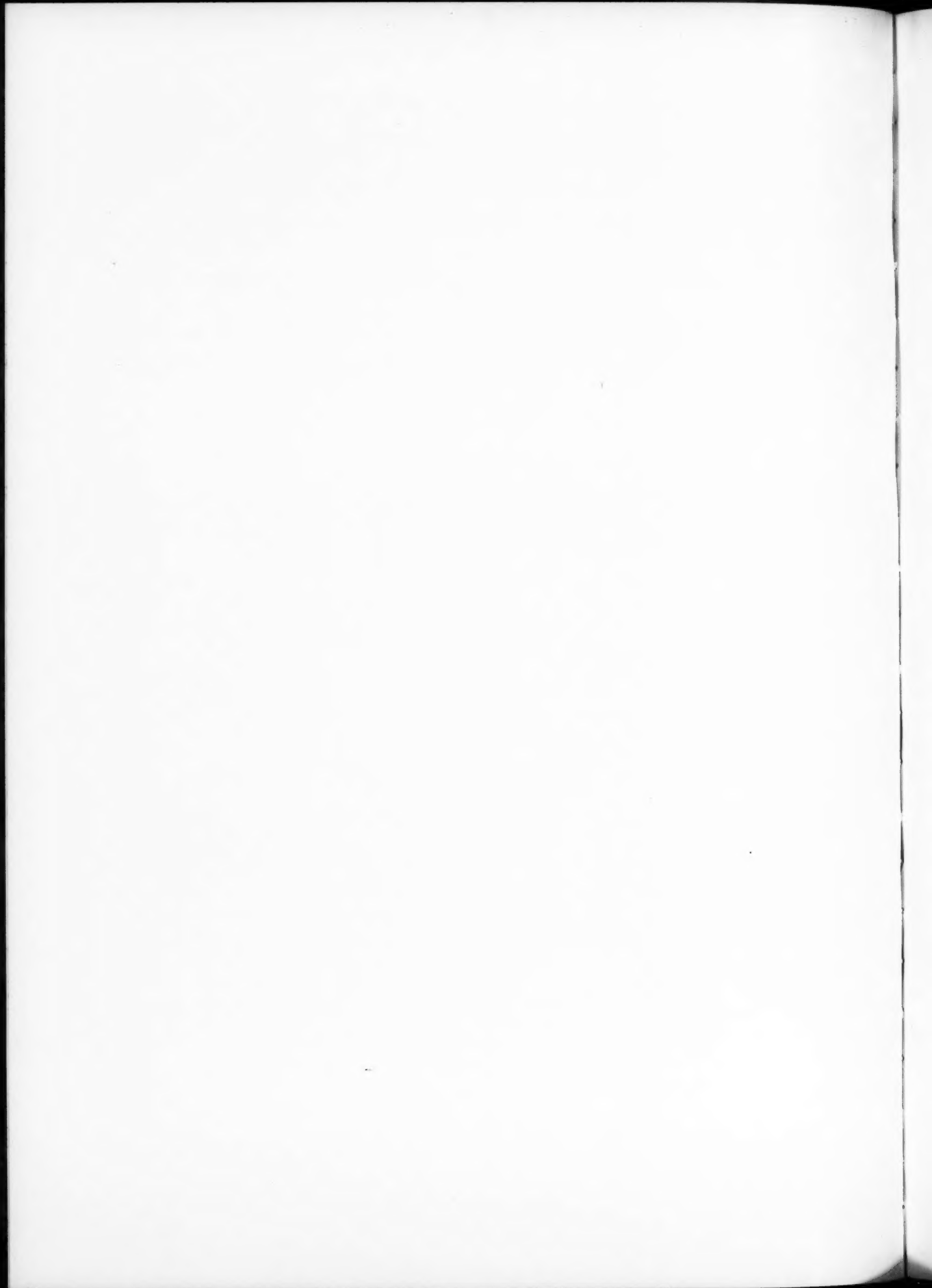


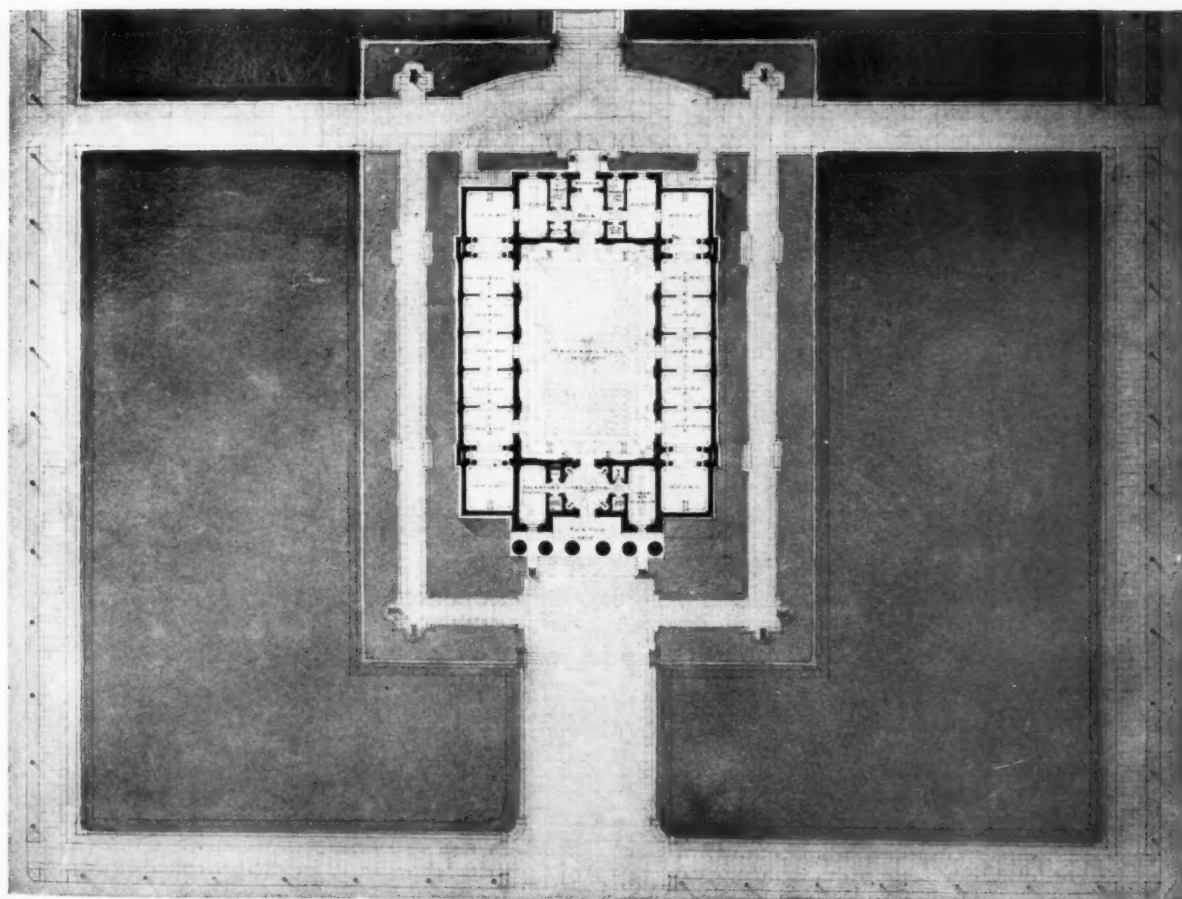
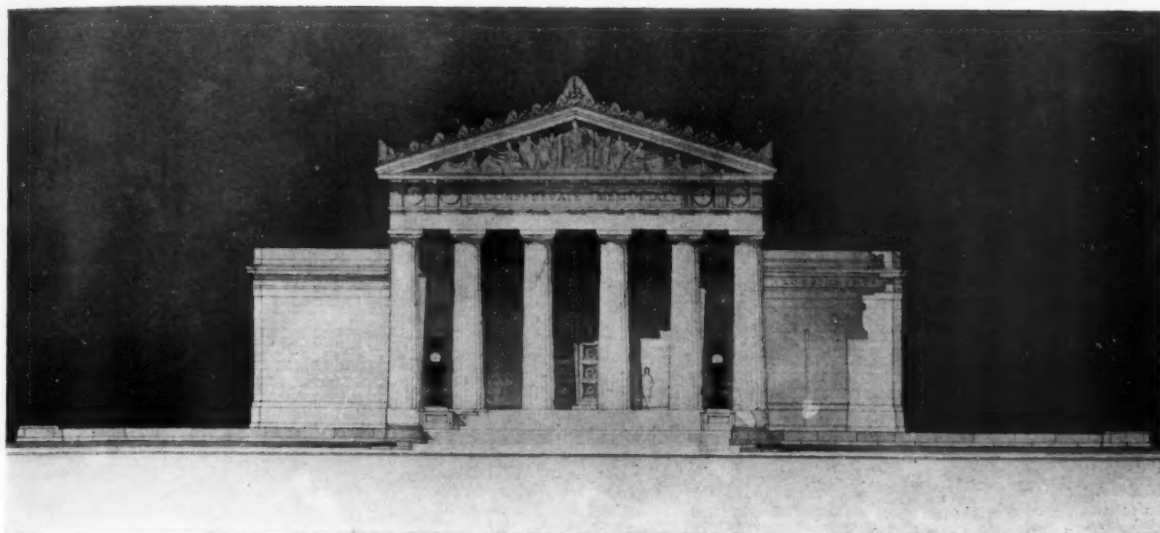
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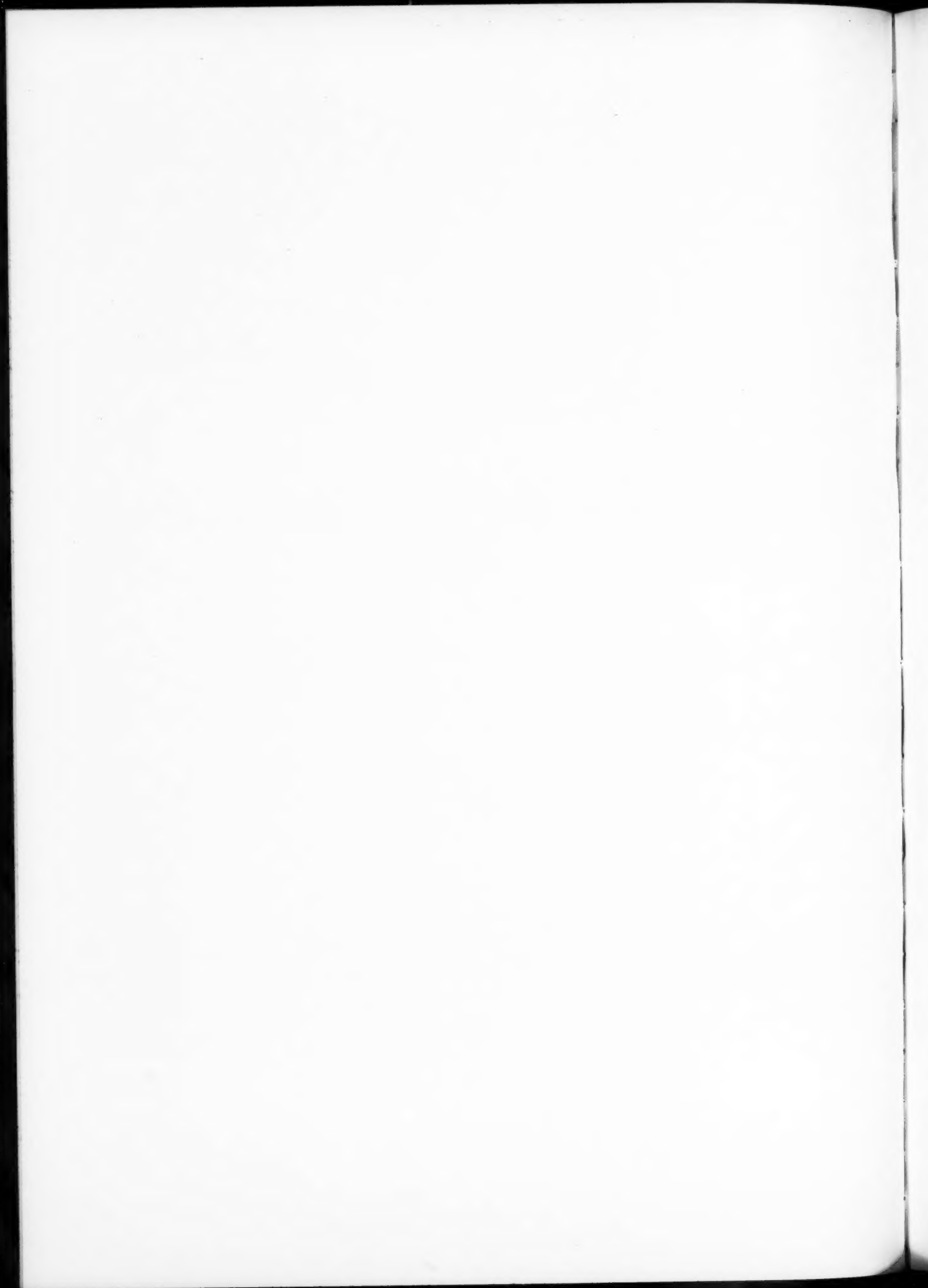


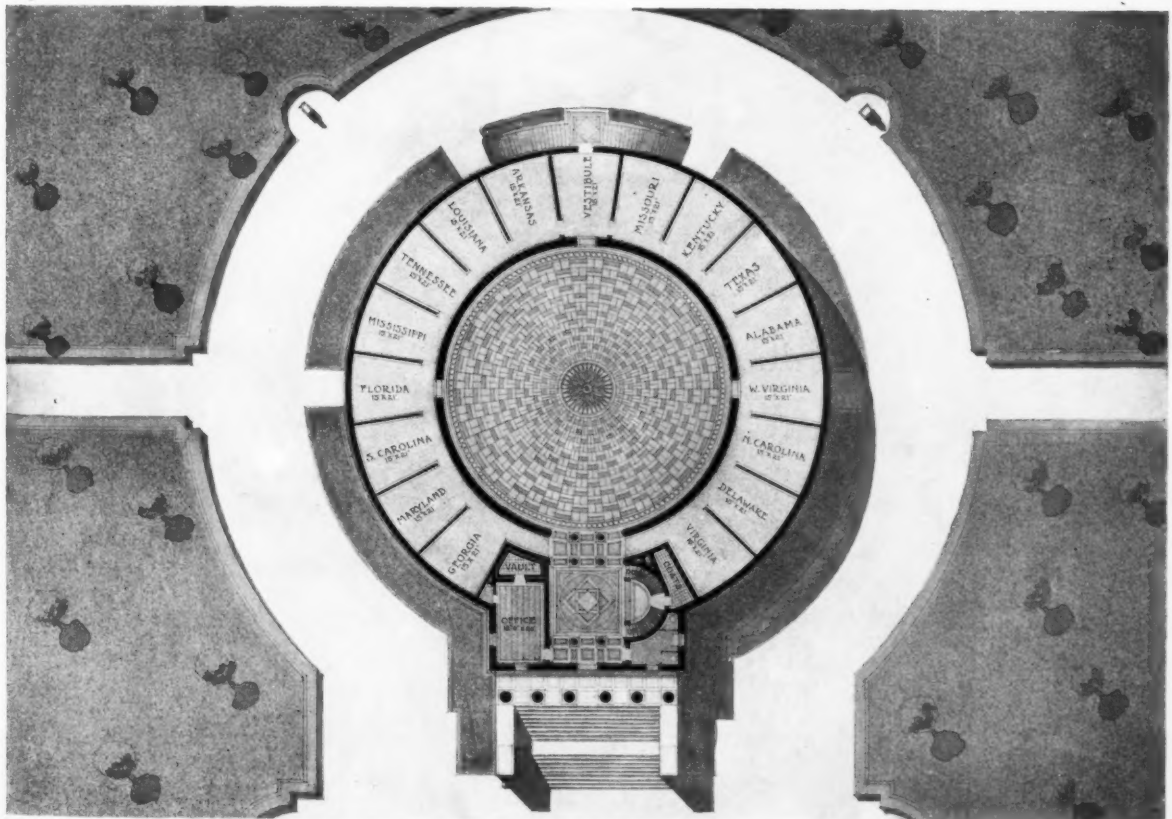
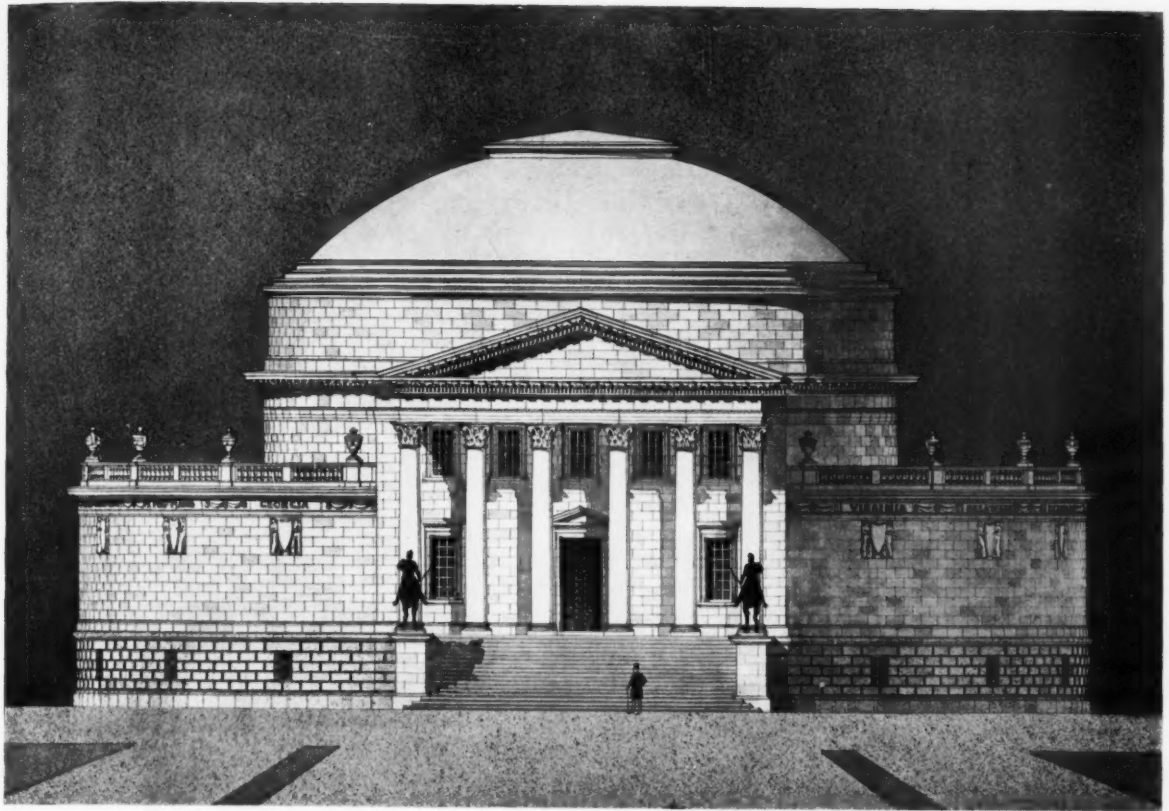
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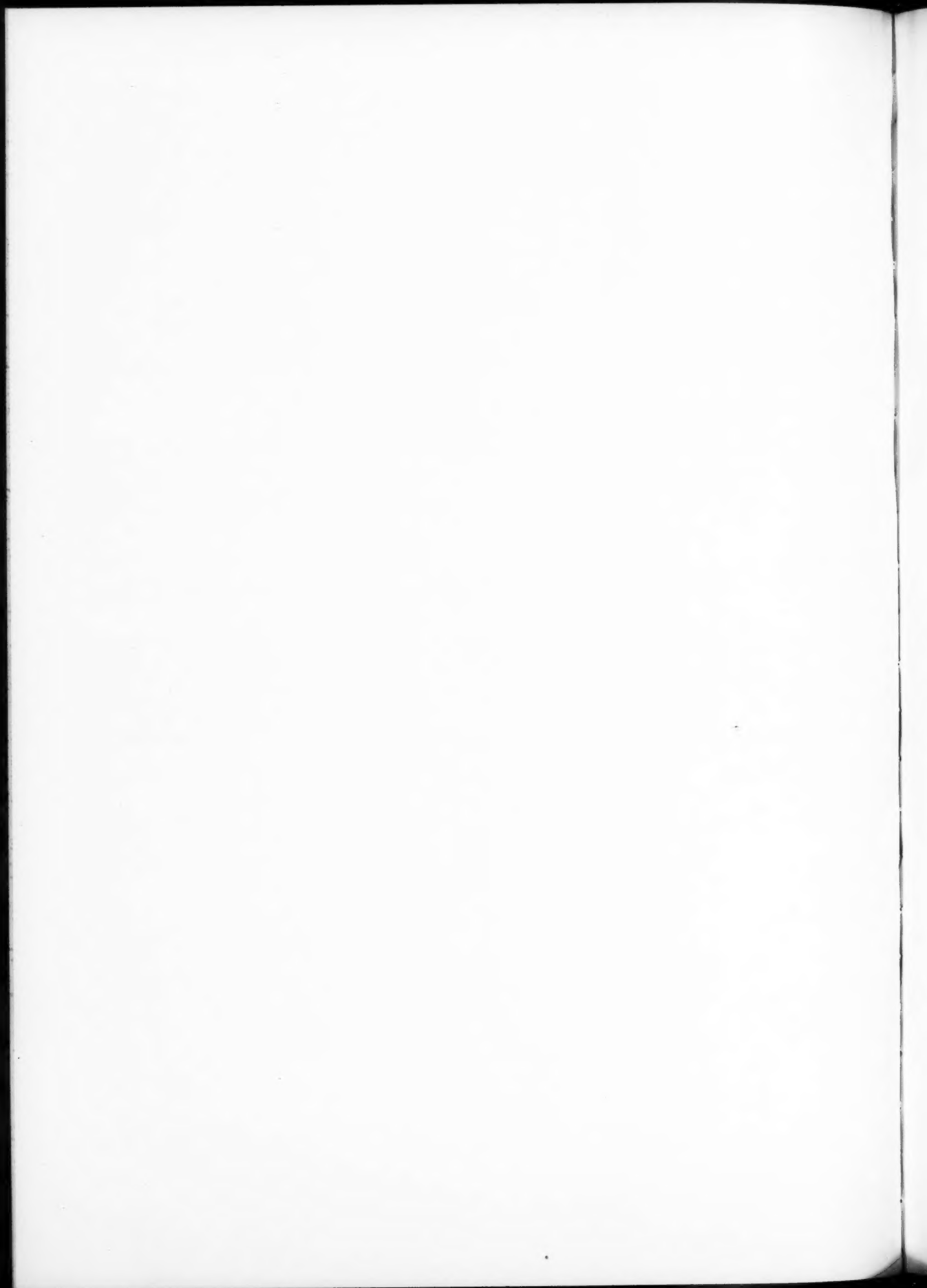


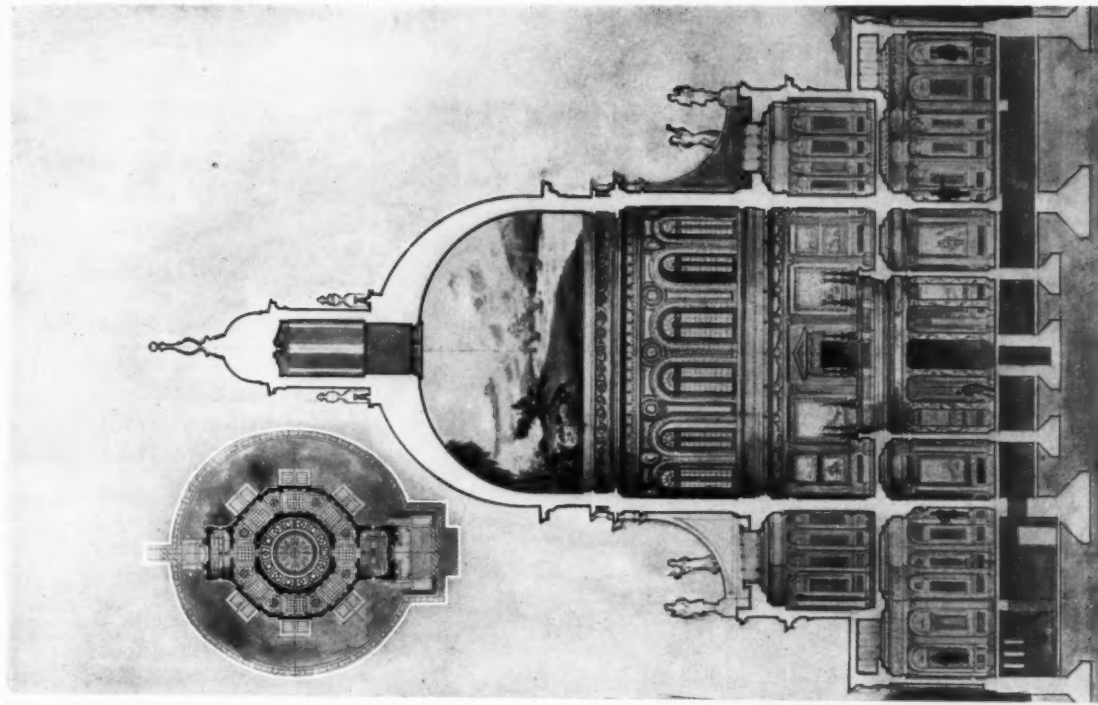
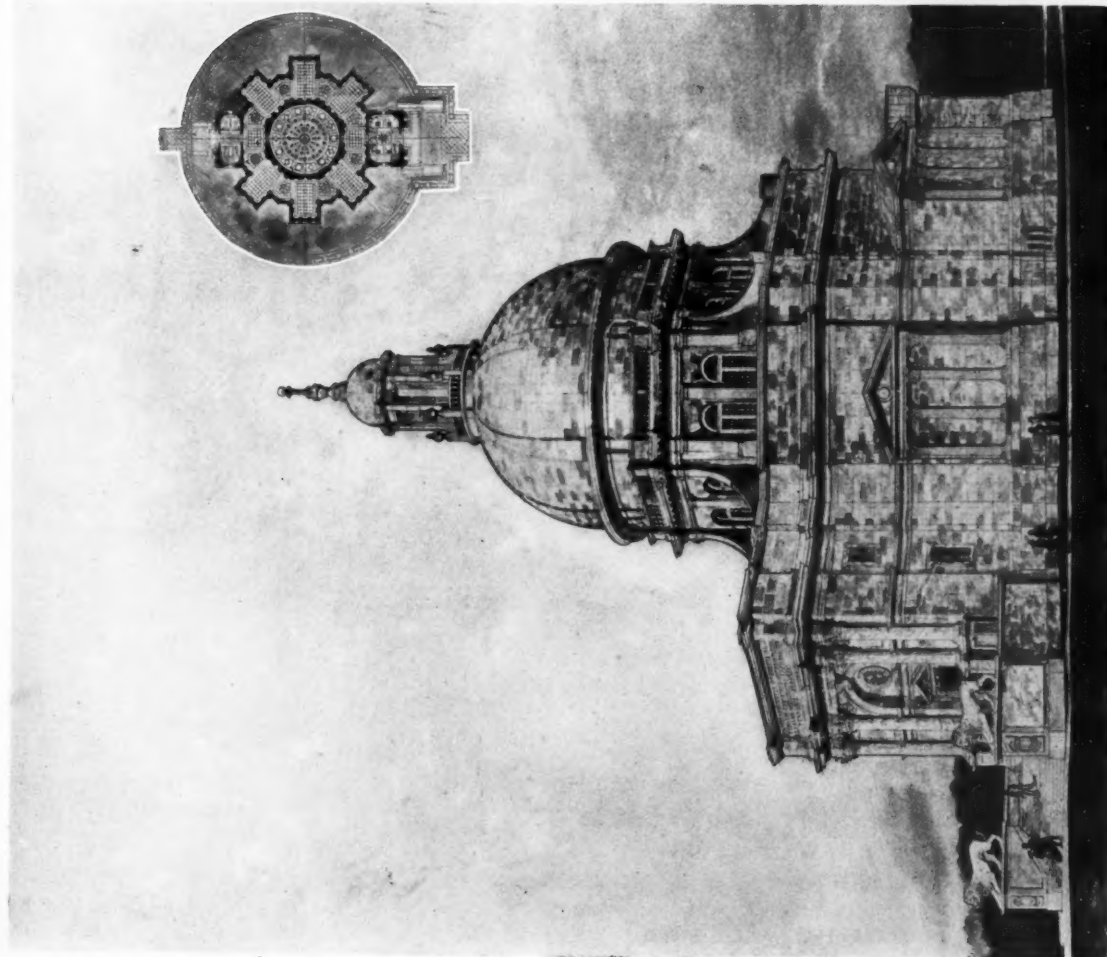


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THE SEBASTIAN CHAPEL, BUILT IN 1474, NEAR THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH,
TAUBERBESCHOFSEIM, GERMANY