

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

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INTERIOR DECORATION

By M. STAPLEY

OF William Kent, the early Georgian architect, it was written, "Not only was he consulted for furniture, frames of pictures, tables, chairs, etc., but for plate; and so impetuous was fashion that two great ladies prevailed on him to design their gowns." All of which means that in Kent's day decoration, even to the minutest detail, was a branch of architecture. Then came a long period when the study of the inside of the house fell upon evil days. It finally got completely away from the architect and the fault was largely his own—for his tendency toward specializing meant proficiency in one thing to the exclusion of all else. But, fortunately for the profession, an occasional member rises above this modern tendency and brings decoration back under the wing of her elder sister. I mean not merely that kind of decoration which consists mostly of built-in architectural features, but also that in which the late Stanford White so conspicuously excelled—the assembling of old fabrics, mantel-pieces, gilded cornices and marble columns into an harmonious whole, often even in defiance of periods. Whether men of similar abilities are to become

more numerous depends on whether those about to enter the profession can be made to feel the necessity of bringing a broader culture to their work. And if general culture is too much to ask of the followers of Bramante, Peruzzi, Michelangelo and the other geniuses of the Renaissance, let them at least be equipped with some knowledge of commonplace things pertaining to the home. Furniture, for instance, is one of these commonplaces. So intimately is it connected with daily life that we have no thought of home or comfort apart from it; yet how many architects are well

informed on the subject? That the layman is not is explained (but not excused) by that ignoring of essentials that characterizes modern education. Even those great agencies for the dissemination of knowledge, the newspapers and popular magazines, never until recently paid attention to household arts and crafts, though other peaceful arts like music, literature and the drama received full attention. Yet bad art in home life is worse than bad art in theaters, books or exhibitions; for its influence is constant instead of merely for the passing hour. It tells for good or bad upon the



MANTEL IN THE BRADLEY RESIDENCE, WASHINGTON

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taste of the young long before the other agencies mentioned begin to affect them. Once in a while families aspired to something better than department store decoration; but their wants were not easy to satisfy for such opposition came from scattered individuals, while the manufacturers of poor household furnishings were a united body proclaiming their wares by means of specious advertising. Too many homemakers were ready to read and believe these advertisements, and, knowing nothing of the pranks wood can play after it has been hurried, unseasoned, into chairs and tables and then much varnished in the hope of keeping the air from affecting them, they bought copiously. Such people suffered for their lack of a little familiarity with commonplace subjects.

But the architect has had more than the layman's education. He has had special training. He ought to know the qualities of different woods and the best manner of constructing them into houses and the contents of houses. And when it is a question of buying new furniture, he should know that it is not so much a matter of a good Sheraton or Chippendale reproduction as it is of an object designed to embellish some definite place and executed in view of this special destination, in order that it may respect and serve the architectural ensemble of which it is a part. When the architect understands all this, why should he not have his daily consulting hours like a physician and charge a fee for advice on household problems? Clients could thus build new houses, or put their old ones in order, under the direction of an expert. The architect should be a connoisseur of decoration even where he himself does not practise it.

Meanwhile the fact remains that a great many in the profession (perhaps because constant dealing with

the sterner and more structural materials lessens their deftness in handling delicate ones) have not "the knack" of the decorator; and most decorators have not the training to do a really architectural piece of decoration. Said a prominent New York architect to one of the kindred profession the other day: "I wish you would come up and look at my studio. I have a splendid collection of old furniture and fabrics, but I seem to have made a fizzle of furnishing a room with them." And similarly a decorator who had created a beautiful

dining-room in a Fifth Avenue residence, on being asked to submit a design for a screen between this same room and the marble conservatory that the architect himself had done, admitted after several attempts: "I can't do that thing; it is too architectural for me." Here is proof that a certain discrimination is acknowledged by the men themselves.

As matters now stand there are phases of the decorator's business that the architect can hardly be expected to transact; and since the decorator is also in a sense a contractor receiving commissions on materials furnished, the architect-decorator who worked along the same lines would be denounced as unprofessional. Broadly speaking, a decorator runs a store. Most of his clients



MANTELPiece IN CARVED WOOD
Designed by William Kent, from *The Decoration of English Mansions*

expect him to have somewhere a showing of rugs, furniture, antiques or even perhaps a paneled room from some demolished castle, that they may get an idea of how their own rooms will look when furnished. The architect, whose profession ever since the good old days of William Kent has occupied itself principally with designing the building and then superintending its construction, all too readily remains within his prescribed limitations. Yet in truth the two matters are closely allied, and the architect, where he is not also the decorator, should have the other's closest co-operation.

Mr. Edwin H. Blashfield, in a plea for this, said recently: "The architect must always be looked up to as the commander-in-chief; but we (mural painters) ought to collaborate with him from the moment our part has been assigned to us. We should accompany him to the quarry and pick out the stone that is to form the background of our work. This would avoid many of those final disappointments due merely to the architect and artist not having been in touch with each other from the start."

If this is true of the mural painter's contribution to the interior of the building, how much more true is it of the general decorator's? Conditions at the building, the amount of furnishings previously owned by the client and the character of the room to be decorated will all, if jointly understood in the beginning, assign each party his definite field. Where certain styles are fixed upon and rigidly followed each man's path is comparatively clear; but so many American homes are furnished with the owners' collection of art objects, representing every period and nationality, that the wisest thing may be to show these objects to the architect and commission him to build the right background for them and rearrange them in their new quarters.

In considering even the smaller residence—anything say under fifty thousand dollars—it seems advisable that the architect should always be responsible for the inside as well as the outside of the house. In houses of this type the owner would not call in the services of



STUDIO OF MR. HORACE MANN

a decorator who had costly antiques to work into his schemes, nor of the dismantler of old châteaux who was prepared to re-install a Louis XV salon complete. The setting-off of the architect's work would therefore rest between his client and himself. Happily there is, with the former, a growing appreciation of the truth that he himself does not know *quite* as well as the architect what particular furnishings belong, by reason of their design, material and cost, to the house in question. Clients are slowly but surely realizing that even those interior features which are not in the nature of built-in accessories should be designed by an architect.

Indeed, they are going even farther; they ask him to undertake the planting of the grounds. To meet and encourage this desirable attitude on the part of the client the architect must get back what distinguished the great architects of earlier days—conversance with the several subjects kindred to his own.

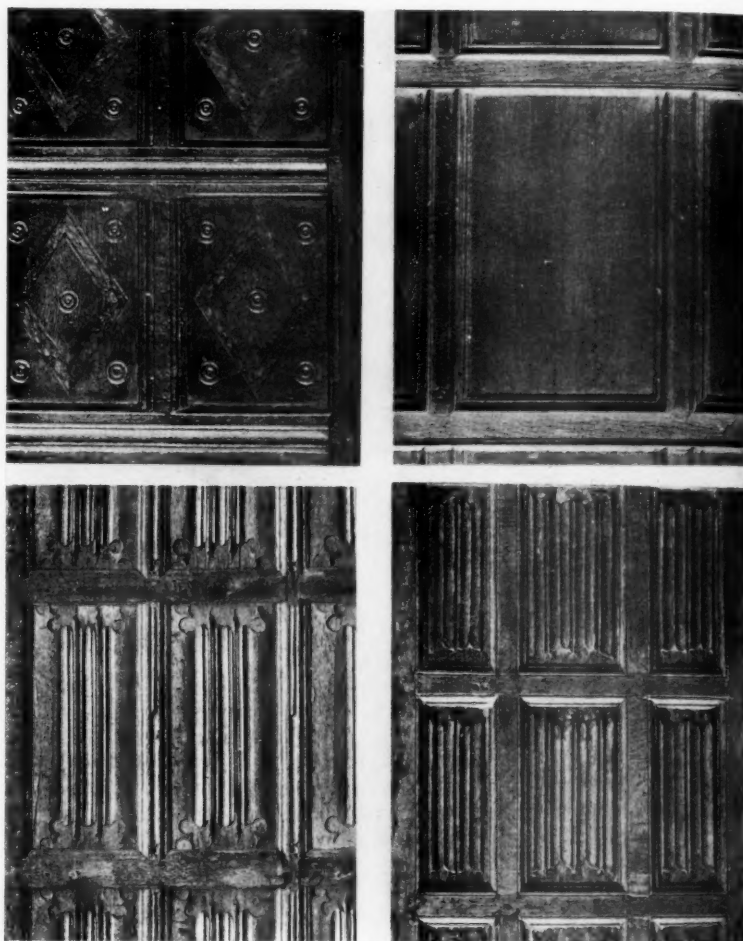
The recent establishment in this country of several English firms (or rather their agents) whose sole business is the dismantling of old English and French mansions and the putting into negotiable form of the woodwork, mantels, etc., contained in them, plays an important part. On the face of it the proceeding seems commercial, but to lovers of Elizabethan, say, it is far more satisfactory to buy a genuine old room complete than to give to a modern workman who never heard of Elizabethan traditions some antiquated tools and ask him



PLASTER CORNICE AND COLUMNS, PERIOD OF WREN
From The Decoration of English Mansions

to produce some inaccurate work in the hope that it may look like its prototype. One American who tried this ended by buying from one of these firms an entire sixteenth century half-timber dwelling which is being set up in Connecticut; and, incidentally, the architect who undertook its reconstruction is learning more about early English methods and materials than ever he was able to acquire during several months of study in England.

No matter who embellishes the apartment the three most obvious considerations are floor, walls and ceiling. Of these the last is most important from the architectural standpoint, the second from the decorator's and the client's. The ceiling with a strongly architectural people like the Italians, was the climax—the *pièce de résistance* of the salon; but it is too often forgotten by those of to-day who would have this same magnificent feature, that the Italian room on which it looked down was almost empty of movable furniture—of the very things that the modern American aims to possess in such profusion that his room has no climax—no concentration. Furthermore, the Italian ceiling springs from comparatively plain walls—large restful surfaces whose occasional spot of applied decoration such as hangings or painting did not contend with the structural ornamentation above. With the less architectural early French and English mansion builders, the structure of the ceiling was left exposed, with oak beams painted and carved, while more attention was lavished on the walls; and this is the precedent for most of the work to-day, since we live under the same climatic conditions that forced the French and English to do



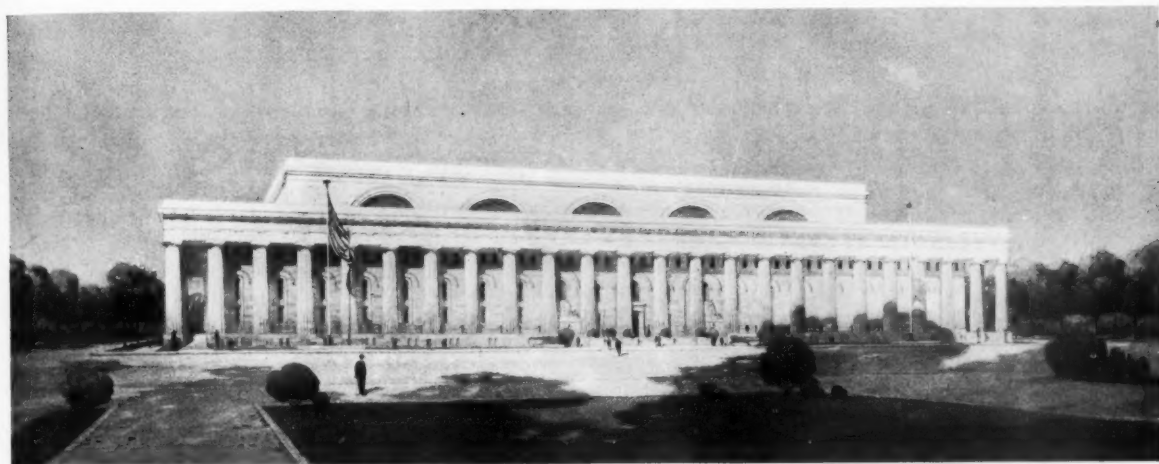
SIXTEENTH CENTURY OAK PANELLING
From The Decoration of English Mansions

what the Italians did not do—spend most of the day indoors with the walls of a room ever before our eyes. It is climate again, in part at least, that has relegated our floors to the third place since, not only for richness but also for warmth, we cover them with rugs, thus burying whatever mosaic, tile or inlay of wood they may boast.

THE WASHINGTON ARMORY DESIGN

SINCE our allusion in a late March issue to the design of an Armory Building by Tracy, Swartwout & Litchfield, to be erected in Washington, D. C., based upon a small scale reproduction of a water color perspective, we have had occasion to examine somewhat minutely the plans, some of which are presented herewith. As a result of this more extended study we find that there is much to commend the solution of the problem determined upon. As we were inclined to assume previously, the location of the building upon the Mall in close proximity to the National Museum predetermines its architecture to some extent, in that it must conform to the type adopted as a standard for all future govern-

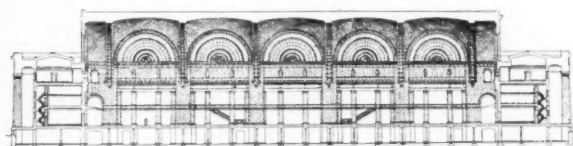
mental buildings in the city of Washington; in other words, an architecture the inspiration of which is taken from the historic Greek and Roman traditions developed in accordance with modern needs and present constructive knowledge. The proposition then narrows down to a question of whether the requirements of the location, which have undoubtedly been met in the design submitted, are inconsistent with the use to which the building will be put. When we come to consider the matter in the light of present-day requirements it is, perhaps, a little difficult to justify a retention of the style of architecture heretofore generally accepted for this class of building. It is not difficult to trace an



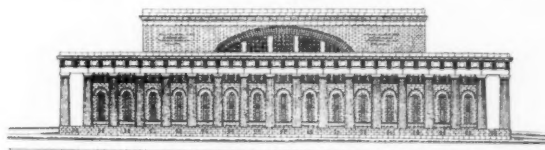
ARMORY FOR THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. TRACY, SWARTWOUT & LITCHFIELD, ARCHITECTS

analogy between the mediæval castle and a fortress erected for defensive purposes, but this is hardly the purpose, or least the principal purpose, of the modern armory. It is rather a building designed to accommo-

not, as seems probable, have been a wise solution of the problem under any circumstances. Whether indeed we would not do well to consider this solution somewhat in the nature of a precedent and abandon altogether



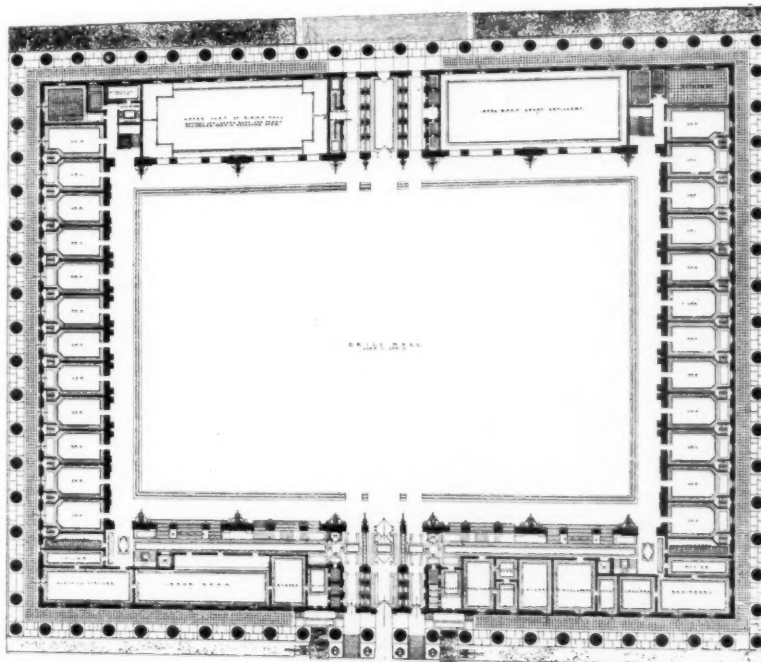
SECTION



SIDE ELEVATION

date the militia and afford a vast area for drills, quarters for officers, various rooms and accommodations for the transaction of the affairs of the company, and such other uses as may present themselves, not ordinarily including service as a fort. Of course, it is conceivable that in time of riot or insurrection the armory might be looked to as a place of refuge and defense, but if so, it would seem to answer such purpose practically as well, designed in the style selected, as in any other if all points of vantage, such as space under and above portico, were utilized by the defenders, and proper means of defense were provided in the equipment. Moreover, the likelihood of such use is so small, comparatively, that it would in no sense be justifiable to regard it as a dominating consideration. In fact, with the location of the building fixed upon the Mall, the requirement of architectural harmony should unquestionably outweigh that of possible greater utility in the remote contingency of a civil war or insurrection, even if it would

the mediæval style for armories is a question which this commendable type of building brings very much to the fore.



RECENT LEGAL DECISIONS

EVIDENCE OF VALUE OF ARCHITECTS' SERVICES IN SUIT BY THEM ON SPECIAL CONTRACT

A firm of architects sued for a balance due for drawing plans and specifications of a bank building and supervising the construction. They alleged an agreement to receive 5 per cent. of the gross cost of the building, which amounted to \$31,404.50. They had received \$1,000, leaving due \$571.22. The bank denied that any specific sum was agreed upon, and alleged that the plaintiffs promised to make the price satisfactory to it, that the work was performed in a dilatory and careless manner, and that it owed the plaintiffs nothing. A verdict and judgment for \$471 was affirmed on appeal. The question was presented whether the plaintiffs could introduce evidence as to what their services were reasonably worth, and as to what was paid in the same town about the same time for similar services. The court held that the evidence was admissible, not as a ground of recovery, if the plaintiffs had sued upon the special contract alone, since they could not in such a case recover upon a quantum meruit, but, as there was conflict as to the existence and terms of the special contract, for the purpose of showing which statement as to the special contract was probably correct. But the plaintiffs' complaint also alleged that their services were reasonably worth the 5 per cent. claimed, and the answer raised an issue on these matters. The evidence was therefore responsive to the issues and admissible on that ground. The defendant contended that the price was to be made satisfactory to him. The plaintiff could therefore show the reasonable value of the services and the usual price paid therefor, as tending to show a price which the defendant should have regarded as satisfactory.—*Edwards & Walter vs. Enterprise Bank*, South Carolina Supreme Court, 68 S. E. 961.

PLANS EXCEEDING COST OF SUM STIPULATED EVIDENCE OF LIMITATION

An architect was employed to prepare plans and specifications for the remodeling of a church building. He prepared them and delivered them to the church committee. In an action by him for compensation therefor, he declared upon a contract at an agreed price of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the cost of the work, less 20 per cent. The plans he prepared were for work which would cost about \$14,000. The question at issue was whether he was limited to plans for work which would cost not more than \$8,000. It was held that evidence of the fact that the church committee could not spend more than \$8,000 was admissible in determining whether the contract authorized the architect to prepare plans for improvements costing so much more, he having been informed at the time of making the contract of the committee's resources. Evidence of what occurred at the meeting of the church at the time of taking subscriptions for the improvement was also admissible. If the committee stated to the architect that they relied upon him to draw plans for improvements not to exceed \$8,000, he was under a legal obligation to inform them

as to the cost of the improvements for which he drew plans. If he was so informed it was not necessary that there should be any subsequent agreement as to the cost of the improvement. The fact that the architect delivered the plans to the committee did not prove a contract to receive and pay for them. And the fact that as drawn they were of no value to the church, was admissible to show that the committee did not contract for them. *Dudley v. Strain*, Texas Court of Civil Appeals, 130 S. W. 778.

SUB-CONTRACTS NOT LEGAL WITHOUT WRITTEN CONSENT OF ARCHITECT.

A building contractor has no authority to make alterations, except on a written order of the architect. The former, who was required to perform all the work and provide materials, employed a sub-contractor under a contract containing similar provisions. Held that the sub-contractor could not recover for alleged extra work without proving that he had received a written order therefor from the architect, or a waiver of that requirement. *McNulty versus K. O. B. Co.*, 76 Atlantic Reporter (Md.), 1113. H. C. L.

ARCHITECT WITHOUT AUTHORITY TO FIX THE AMOUNT FOR EXTRAS.

It was provided in a building contract that in case of disagreement between owner and contractor as to compensation for alterations, the determination of the amount should be referred to arbitrators. Held, the architect was without authority to fix the amounts for extras or for defective work. When he did so he acted as agent for the owner and the contractor, by making no objection, and, after suit, requiring the production of the architect's final certificate, showing that it was given on condition that he accept the bill for extras as allowed by the architect waived any objection to the allowance.

Dickerman versus Reeder, 109 Pacific Reporter (Wash.) 1060. H. C. L.

ARCHITECTS NOT BOUND TO COMPEL CONTRACTORS TO SAFEGUARD THEIR WORKMEN

A firm of architects sued for a balance of fees for services in preparing plans and specifications for and superintending the construction of a building for the owners, the defendants. The latter counter-claimed for damages due to the alleged negligence of the plaintiffs in the performance of their duties of superintendence. Their contract as to this matter was "to superintend the construction and erection of said building, and of the contractors and laborers engaged in constructing the said building." The negligence alleged was that they allowed the contractors to permit the openings and shafts through which the hoisting machines were operated to remain unguarded and without barrier or fence, as required by the New York labor law. In consequence of the lack of barriers a workman fell through one of

(Continued on page 200.)

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NEW YORK, MAY 31, 1911

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Havana Terminal Station. Demuth Residence, Lake George. House at Brookline, Mass. House at Jamaica Plains. Beaux-Arts Society Student Work.

FIRE LOSSES

THE National Fire Protection Association, whose avowed object and purpose would seem to entitle it to the fullest measure of support and co-operation on every hand, has recently held its fifteenth annual meeting in New York. In the course of his address delivered upon this occasion President W. H. Merrill, of the association, called attention to the appalling series of disasters caused by fire during the life of the organization. According to the statistics given, twenty thousand lives and two thousand million dollars' worth of property have been destroyed in this country within the past fifteen years by fires, the majority, if not all, of which might have been prevented by a thorough understanding and adoption of means and appliances readily available.

It would seem that such a record of death and destruction would be enough to discourage those who have been devoting their energies to this work of combating one of nature's greatest forces, allied with recklessness, ignorance and greed on the part of owners and builders, but Mr. Merrill finds much cause for satisfaction in the degree of accomplishment attained. In spite of the stupendous losses sustained, it is felt that the association has rendered services of inestimable value in prescribing methods of fireproof construction that, strictly adhered to, will result in buildings actually proof against fire. Means of effectually protecting vertical and horizontal openings against the assaults of draught-driven flames have been devised. Efficient automatic sprinklers have been recommended. Dependable fire hose and real first aid appliances, together with fire signaling systems that are not liable to derangement, have been brought to the attention of owners and designers of buildings and urged for adoption. Without this service the losses, great as they are, might have been infinitely greater.

But perhaps the most valuable feature of the work done by the National Fire Protection Association is the educational campaign that has been waged with unflag-

ging energy and persistence. It has resulted in general realization of the fire hazard and wide popular appreciation of the value of fire protection. Such knowledge and appreciation is a prerequisite to any permanent and widespread improvement.

The American Institute of Architects holds active membership in this organization, and presumably contributes to its effectiveness. Architects are probably in a position to wield a greater influence on the character and equipment of buildings than any other class, organization and body. Subject only to regulations of law, which are often lax and impotent, and certain underwriters' rules, the architect ordinarily determines the matter of construction, within certain limits of cost, and fixes upon the kind, arrangement and extent of fire protection to be included. This large measure of authority cannot be honorably accepted and exercised without a corresponding assumption of moral, if not strictly legal, responsibility. It behooves the conscientious architect to avail himself of all possible knowledge and means to enable him to meet this large responsibility. Perhaps Mr. Merrill's announcement that the National Fire Protection Association has the knowledge, equipment, the experience, the expert working committees, the records of work accomplished, the tools, the facilities, the men and the proven methods for alleviating the great national burden of fire losses will prove of peculiar and timely interest to a considerable number of architects in active practice.

INSURANCE

THE development or extension of the doctrine of insurance and the requirements promulgated by the Underwriters' Exchange in various cities have undoubtedly exercised a considerable influence over the methods and types of construction employed throughout the country. In theory the Underwriters' Exchange and the architect are working for the same results and there should be complete harmony of action between them. As an actual fact, there is not always the feeling of friendliness and harmony of interests which might be expected. Indeed, the architect frequently appears to regard the Underwriters' officers and inspectors somewhat in the nature of unfriendly critics, who, when making examination of buildings upon which insurance is desired, do not show the broadest sympathy for the architect in his attempt to meet both the exacting requirements of occupancy and reasonable requirements of safety from fire. It sometimes seems to him that underwriters even have difficulty in understanding that a building is erected primarily to provide certain accommodations for manufacturing or other purposes, and not simply to furnish a working illustration of the application of certain arbitrary rules and requirements determined upon by insurance interests.

That the Exchanges exercise an almost autocratic authority over the construction and equipment of certain classes of buildings there is not a shadow of doubt. True, their rules are not mandatory, but they have all the force and effect of law even when administered impartially, for failure to comply with them either deprives the owner of protection or results in a rate of insurance in comparison with which the penalties in-

flicted for violation of a provision of municipal building law appear insignificant. Whether this large authority has sometimes been misused in either fixing a rate above or below that to which an applicant for insurance was justly entitled is not, perhaps, pertinent to this discussion. The principle involved is that of an open field with fair competition. It has commended itself in general to the framers of our laws and it is not apparent why it should not apply to insurance as well as to

other lines of endeavor. With an Underwriters' Exchange operating under present conditions the owner is practically left without recourse or remedy in case of discrimination, real or fancied.

Undeniably there is a growing feeling of dissatisfaction with conditions, which the Underwriters' Exchanges can only dispel by conducting the affairs of their departments with extreme care, rendering decisions only after fullest investigations have been made and verified.

RECENT LEGAL DECISIONS

(Continued from page 198.)

the shafts or openings and was killed. His administrator recovered a large judgment against the owners. For the amount of this and the expenses of defending the suit therefor, the owner counter-claimed.

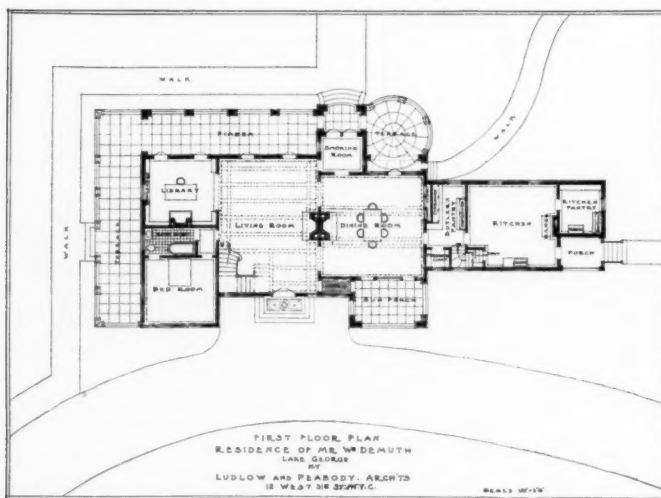
The question was one of first impression. Neither the judge of the court below, the counsel on appeal or the Court of Appeals were able to find any case precisely in point. The court came to the conclusion that the architects could not be held liable under their contract. The utmost obligation assumed by them was to see that the building was properly constructed, and if that result was achieved, they were not required to watch every means of procedure adopted by the contractors. If the architects were reasonably vigilant in seeing that the plans and specifications were followed, that proper material was used, that the building laws were complied with, and generally that the owner received such a building as he contracted for, he had performed his duty. Even for defects in these particulars an architect employed to superintend the construction of a building is not liable in damages if he exercises reasonable

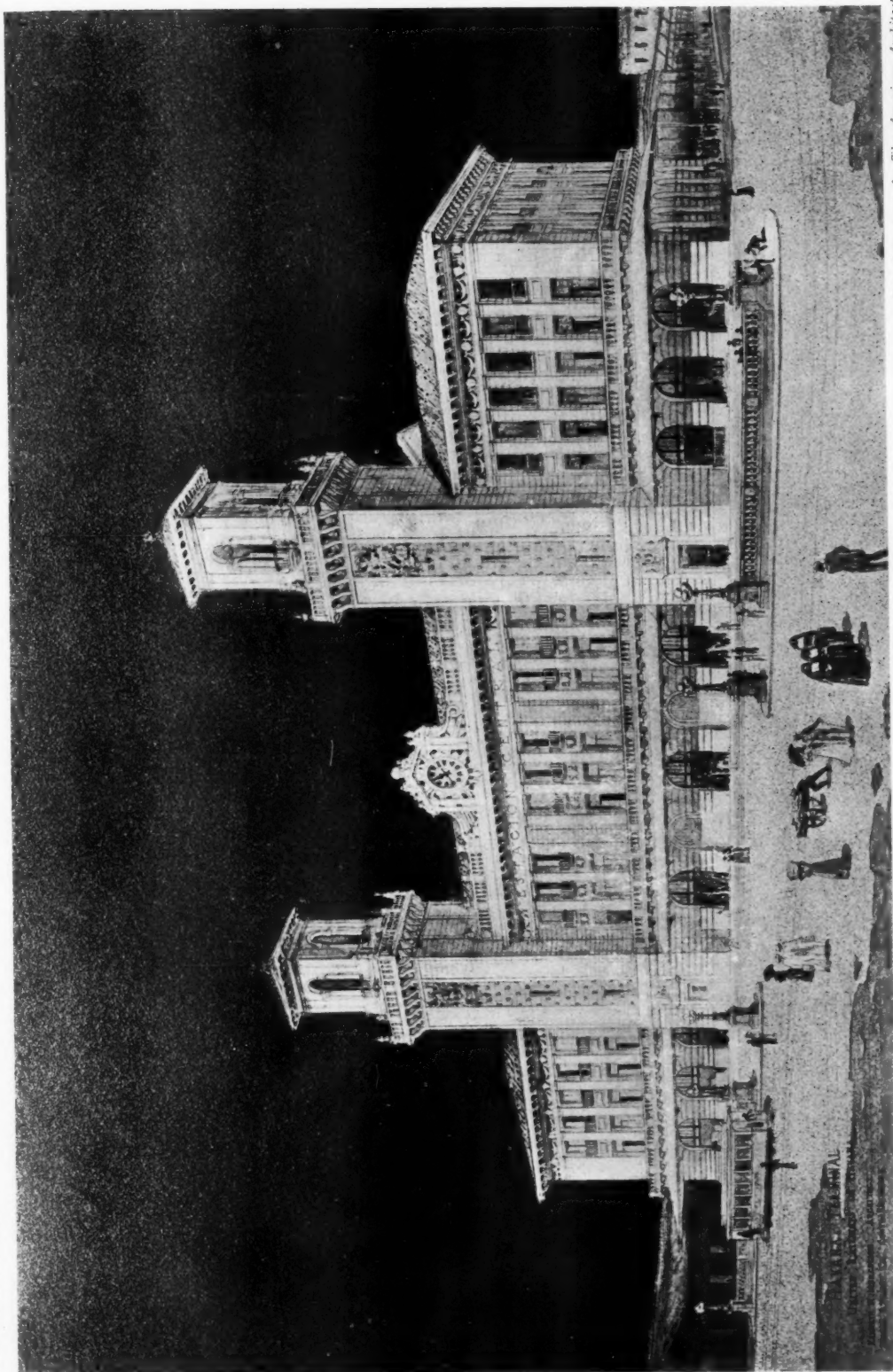
care and skill. The section of the labor law which was violated (New York Laws, 1909, c. 36 [Consol. Laws, c. 31] § 20) had nothing to do with the construction of the building. That could be as well constructed in conformity with the plans and specifications without barriers around the shafts and openings as with them. The sole object of the section was to protect the workmen employed upon the building from bodily injury. The architects were not obliged to compel its observance by the contractors. *Clinton v. Boehm*, New York Supreme Court, Appellate Division, 124 N. Y. Supp. 789.

CLAIMS MUST BE PRESENTED IN WRITING.

A contract in writing between owner and contractor provided that certain claims should be presented in writing to the architects within a specified time or they would not be allowed, that no alterations from the plans should be made other than upon the architect's written order fixing the sum due, that no extras should be supplied except upon like orders. Held, that if these and similar provisions were ignored by the parties to the contract they would be ignored by the court.

Campbell versus Kimball et al., 127 Northwestern Rep. (Neb.) 142. H. C. L.

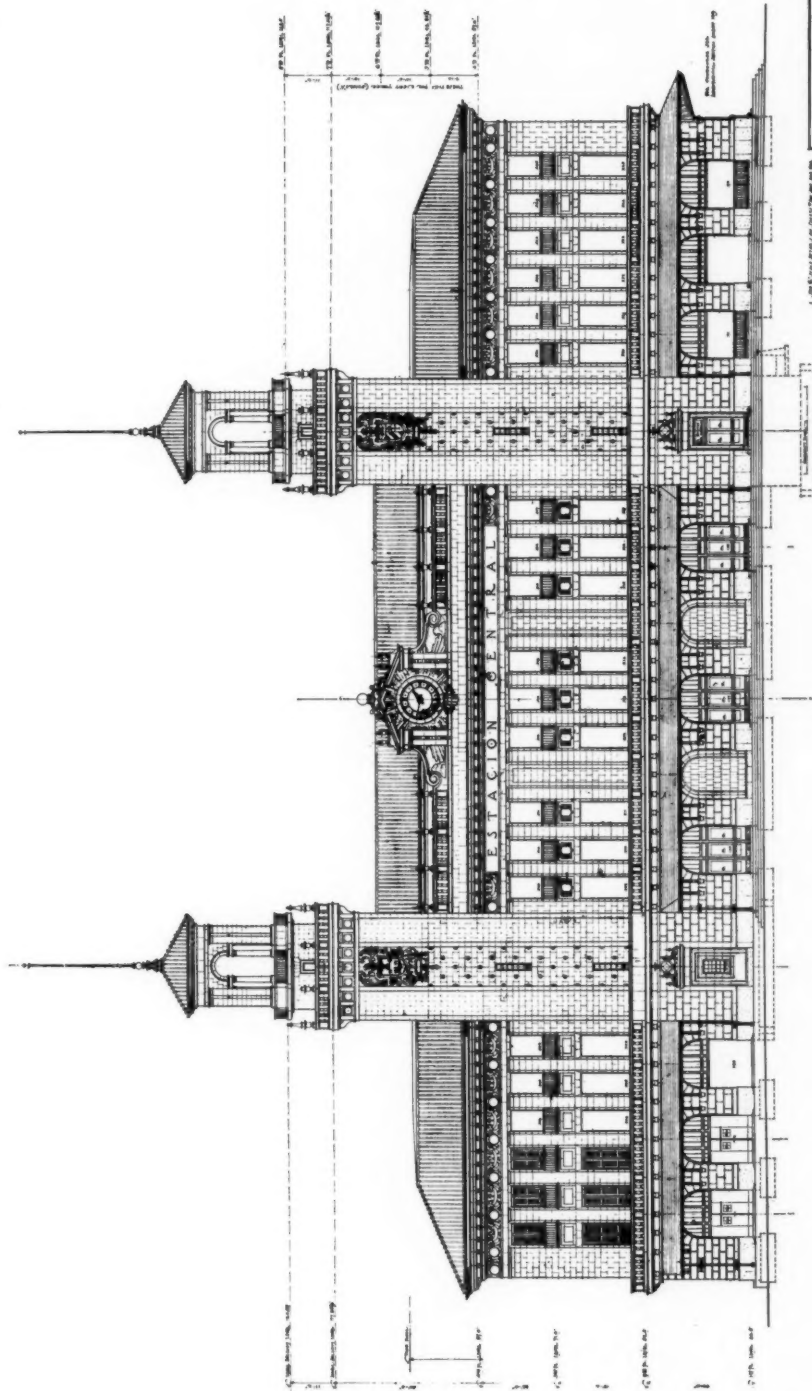




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THE HAVANA TERMINAL STATION, HAVANA, CUBA

KENNETH M. MURCHISON, *Architect*



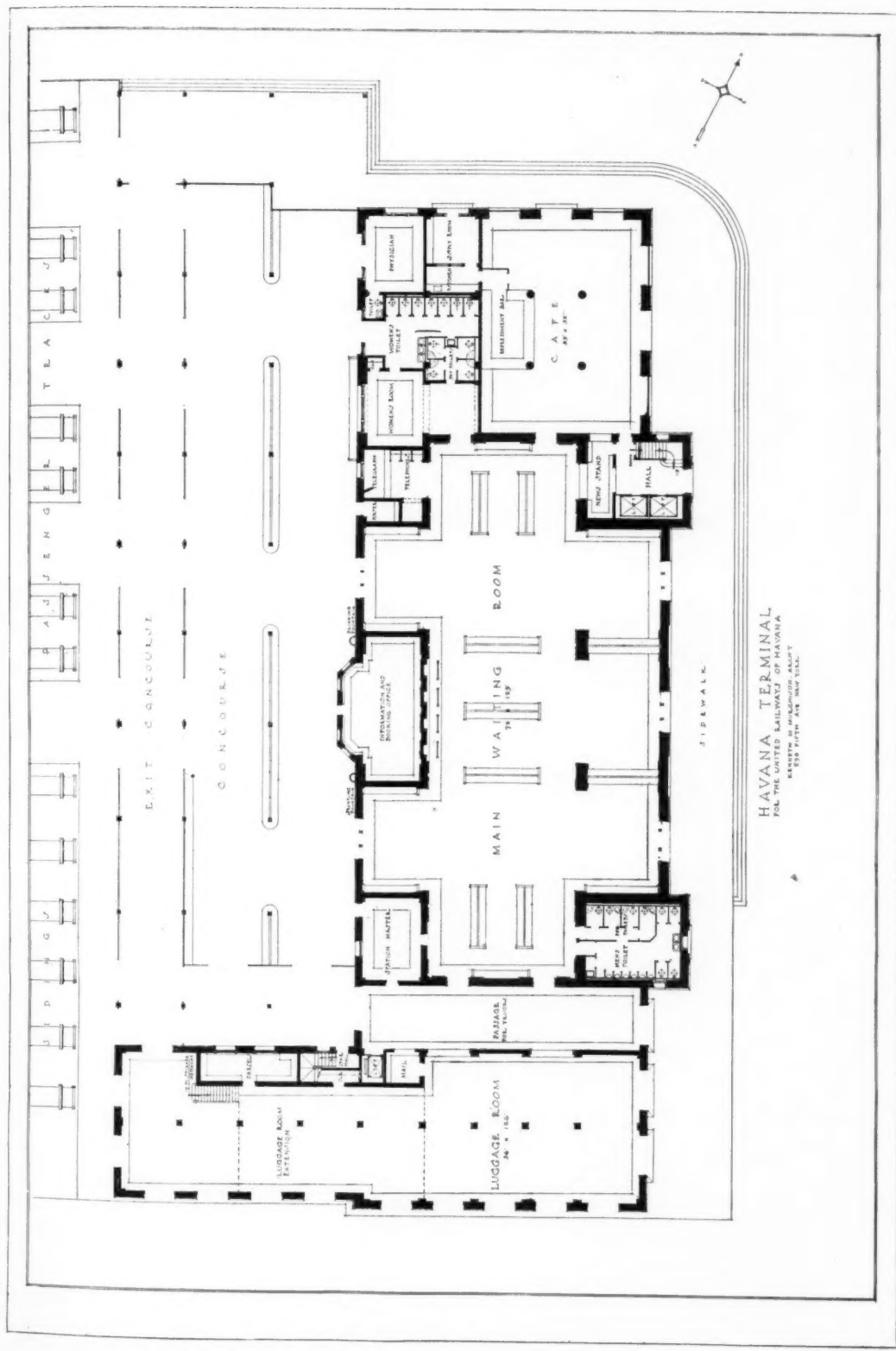
HAVANA, CUBA
UNITED RAILWAYS OF HAVANA
FRONT ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"
DRAWN BY: J. MURCHISON
CHECKED BY: J. MURCHISON
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FRONT ELEVATION

THE HAVANA TERMINAL STATION, HAVANA, CUBA

KENNETH M. MURCHISON, Architect

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FLOOR PLAN

THE HAVANA TERMINAL STATION, HAVANA, CUBA

KENNETH M. MURCHISON, Architect



HOUSE BEFORE ALTERATIONS



HOUSE AFTER ALTERATIONS

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DEMUTH RESIDENCE

LUDLOW & PEABODY, Architects



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HOUSE AFTER ALTERATIONS

DEMUTH RESIDENCE

LUDLOW & PEABODY, *Architects*



HOUSE BEFORE ALTERATIONS

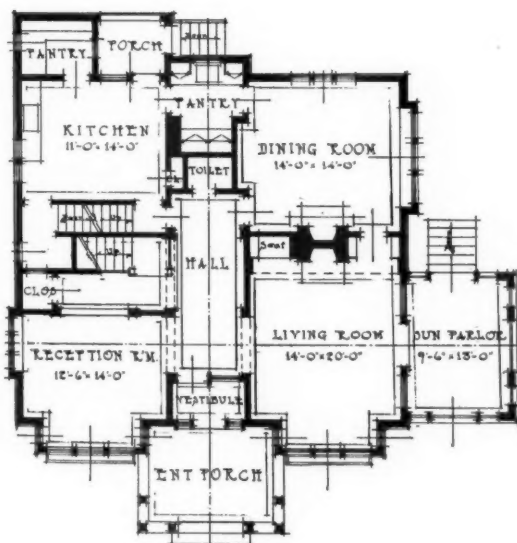


HOUSE AFTER ALTERATIONS

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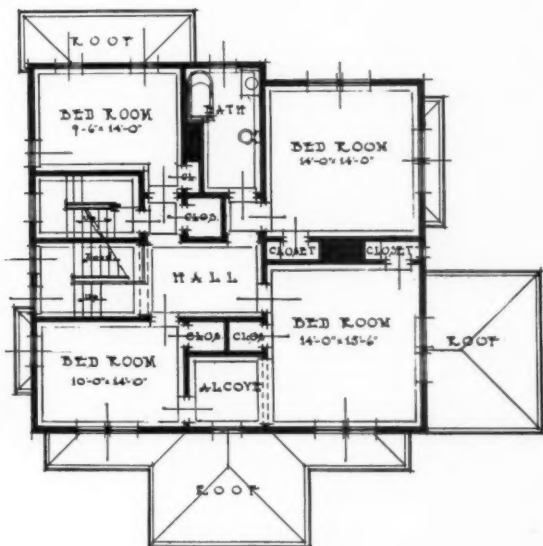
DEMUTH RESIDENCE

LUDLOW & PEABODY, Architects



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SCALE



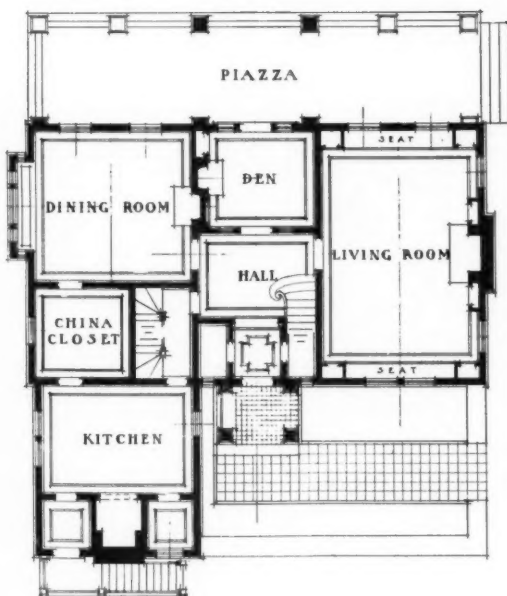
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE

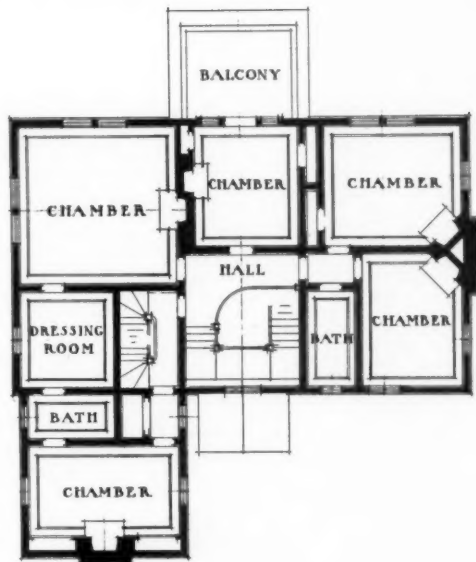
HOUSE IN BROOKLINE, MASS.

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DAVIS, McGRATH & KIESSLING, Architects



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

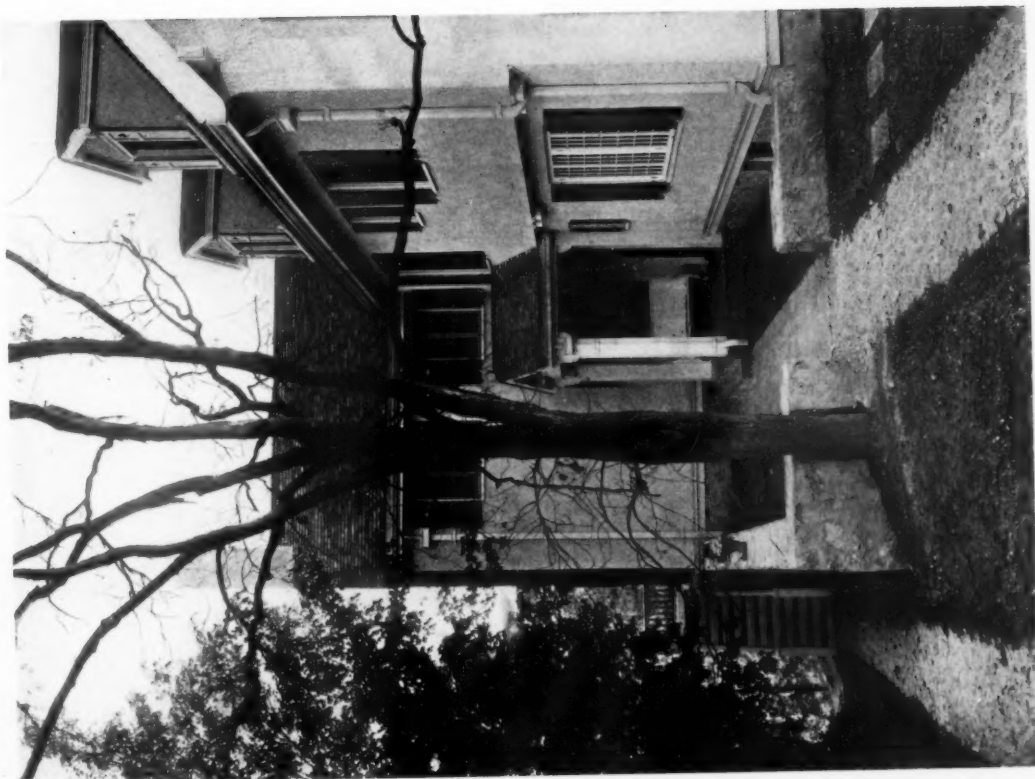


SECOND FLOOR PLAN

HOUSE AT JAMAICA PLAINS, MASS.

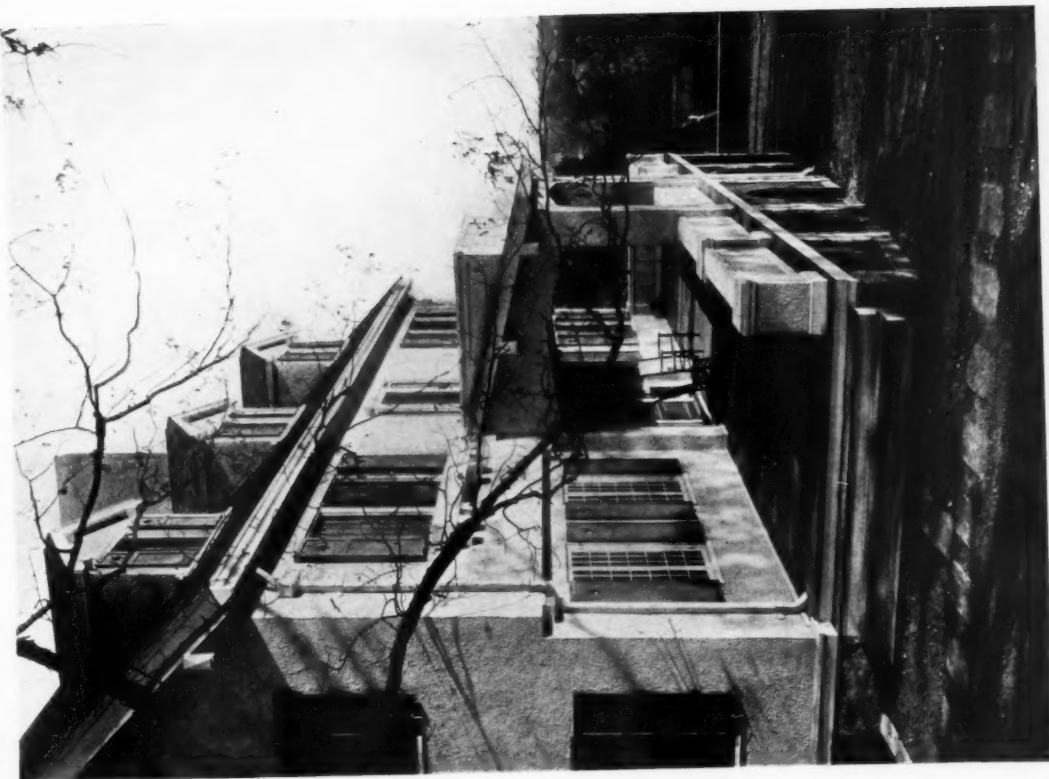
JAMES PURDEN, Architect

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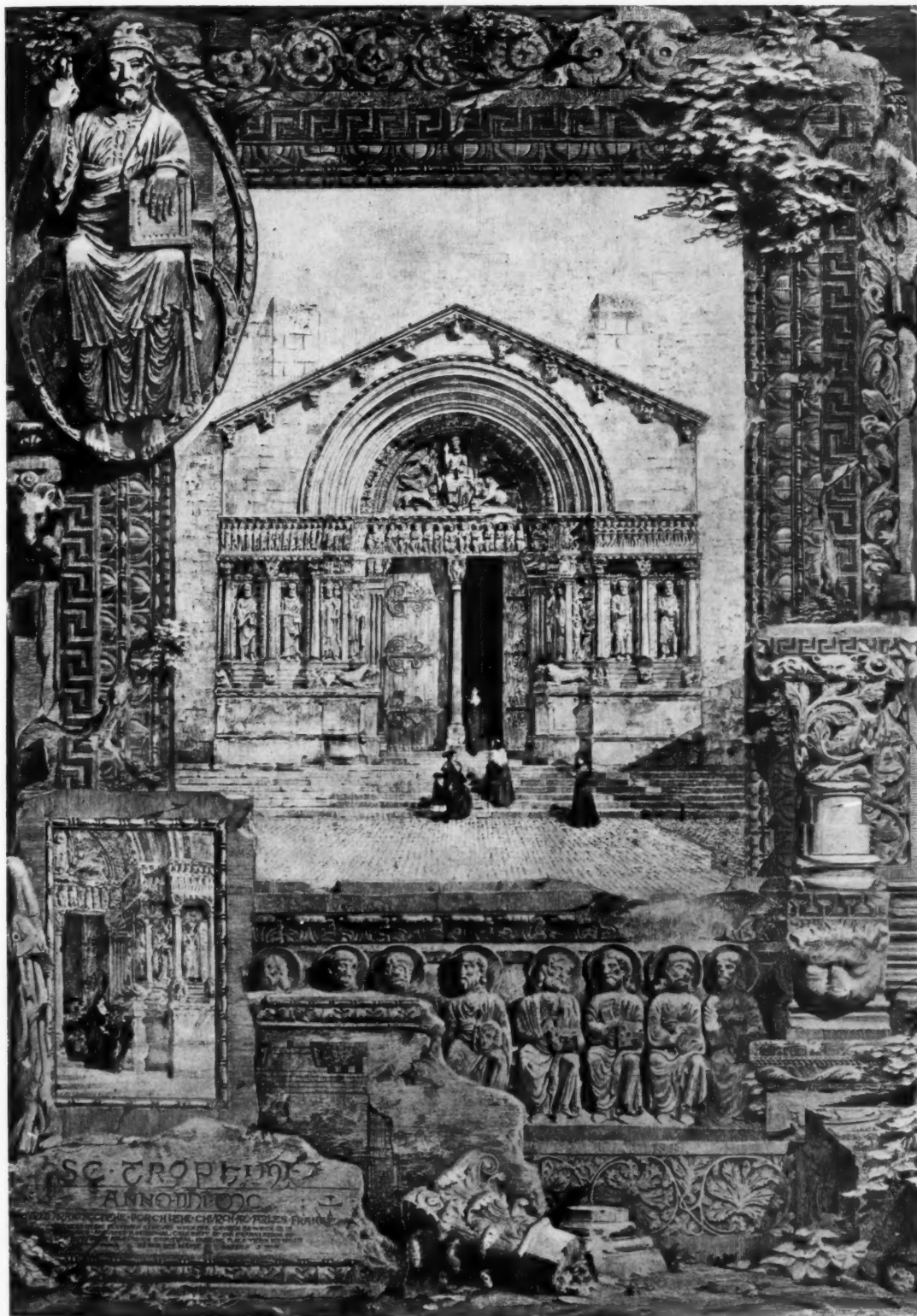


HOUSE AT JAMAICA PLAINS, MASS.

JAMES PURDEN, *Architect*



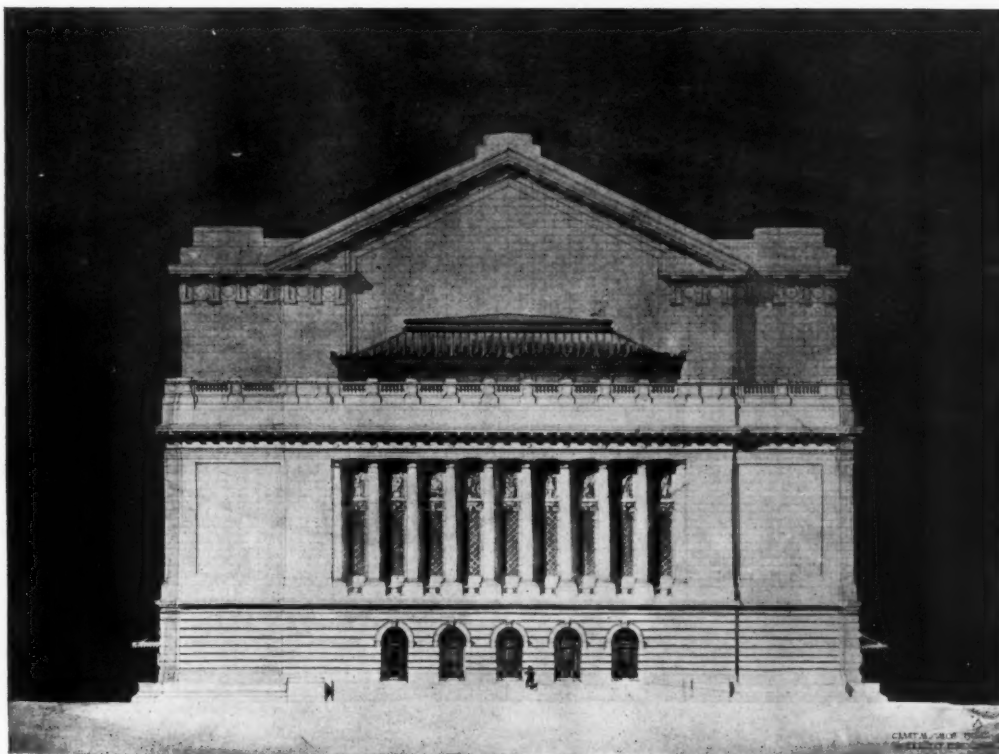
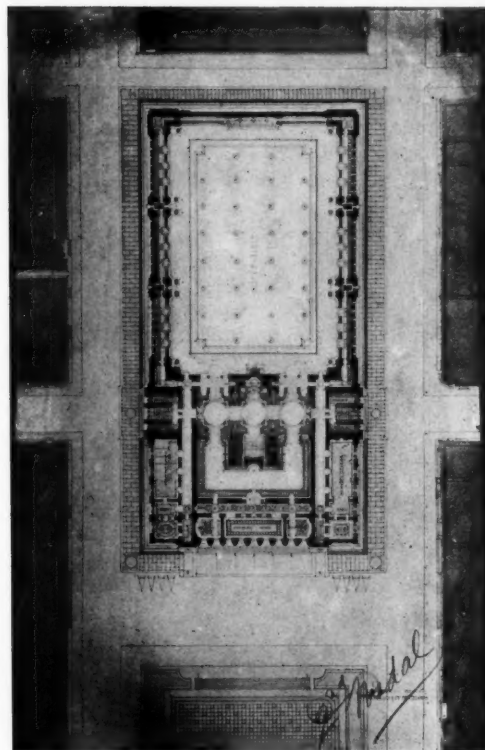
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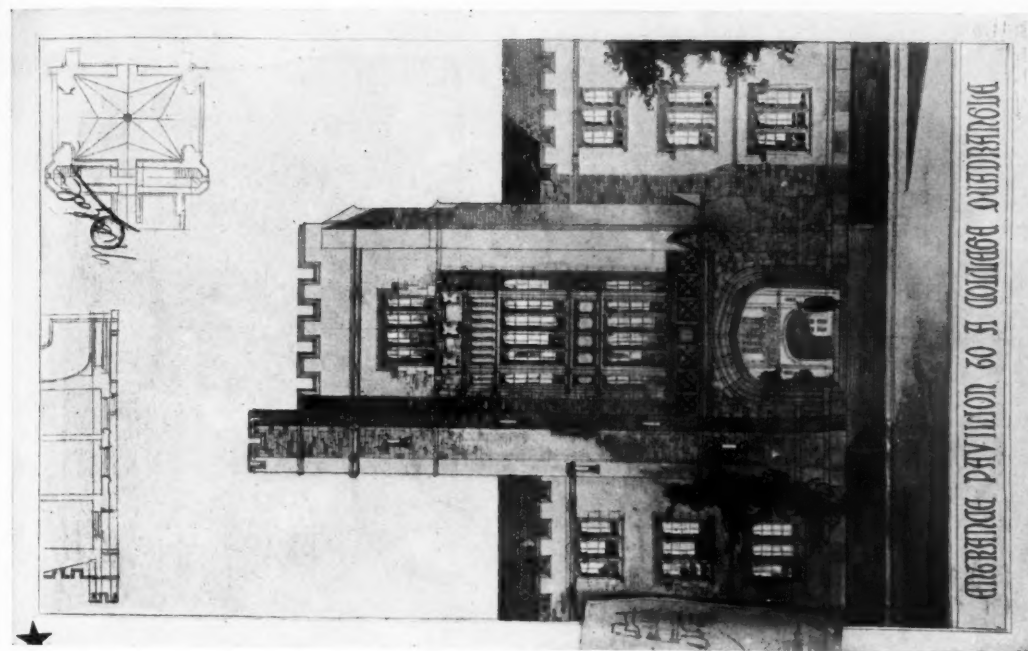
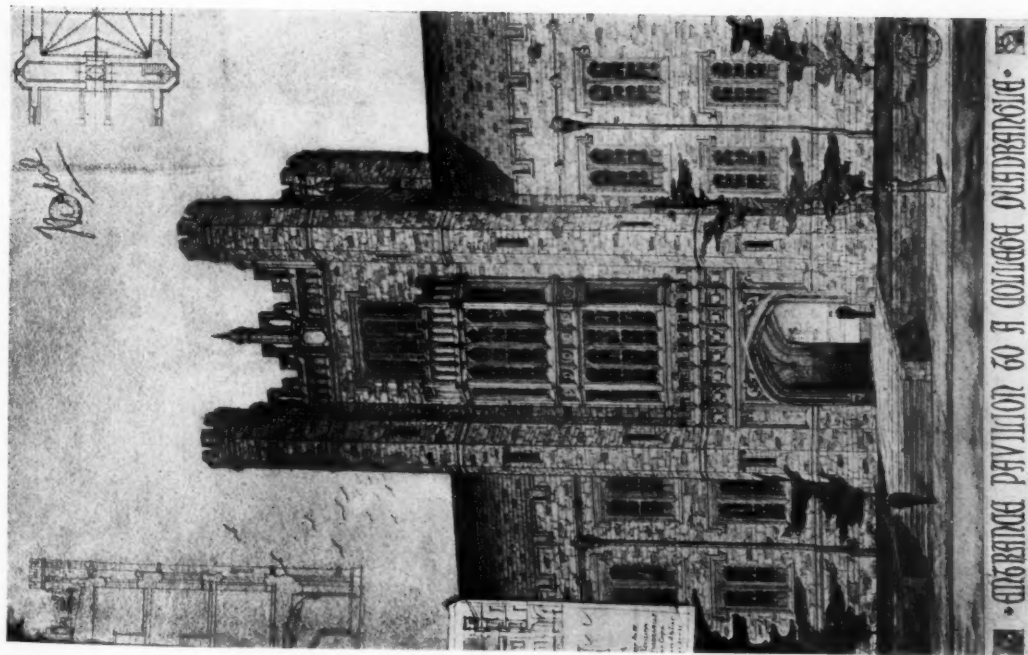
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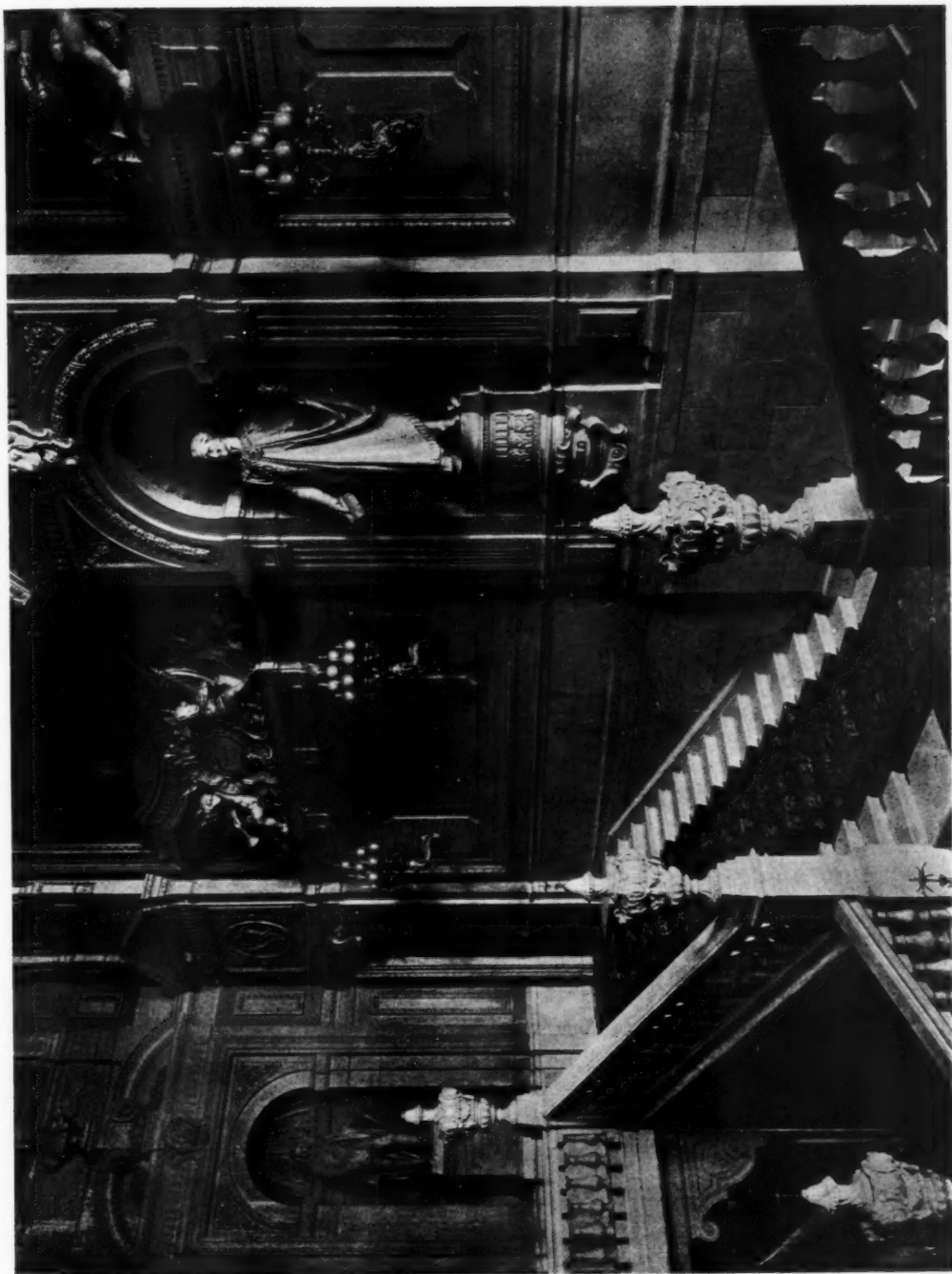
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