

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

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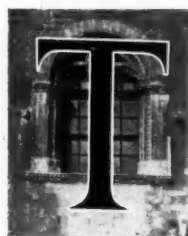
No. 1867



MONT S. MICHEL—VIEW FROM THE EAST

A MEDIÆVAL PILGRIMAGE

By FRANCIS PALMER SMITH, (Illustrated by Sketches by the Author)



THE traveler who leaves Paris from the Gare St. Lazare, and journeys northward will find much to detain him among the ancient cities and towns of Normandy and Brittany. Rouen, that city of churches and towers, with its ever present memories of the martyrdom of Jeanne d'Arc, will be left behind reluctantly. To the student of architecture, Caen will beckon alluringly with its two great abbeys of William

the Conqueror and his consort Matilda; but the climax of any such journey should be the fortified abbey of Mont S. Michel, a place absolutely unique. The peculiar island of Mont S. Michel is situated in the bay of the same name about a mile from the northern coast line of Normandy and Brittany.

If your travelers' check book has become sorely depleted, as mine had, you will shun the hotels on the island and will seek out a more modest auberge in the little village of Pontorson on the mainland some four or five miles from the bay. A little steam

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tramway makes three or four trips a day between Pontorson and the Mont, but if one can curb the impatience it is more pleasant to find the road and walk. You will easily make your way through the quiet

just now one has no time for such details. For some distance after leaving the town, the country is flat and monotonous. The kilometer stones seem very far apart and you wonder why the Mont does not appear.



THE ABBEY BUILDING—FROM THE TOUR DU NORD

little Norman village, past its twelfth century church where there is an interesting reredos in the style of Francis the First sculptured with scriptural scenes. You will discover all this some other day, but

But you are nearing the goal and will soon be in sight of the famous shrine of S. Michel, and presently when you reach the hamlet bearing the becoming name of Beauvoir, you catch the first glimpse of the mountain

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island through a gap in the trees, and you will never forget it. Its fascination over you grows as you approach. At last the wooded country is left behind and Mont S. Michel alone is before you. What a sight it is and how baffling when one attempts to describe it!

Le Mont S. Michel! Perhaps, you too, have dreamed as I had, of walking its mighty ramparts and looking up to its great abbey church far above, with the glittering figure of the archangel crowning the delicate flèche and nearly lost in the clouds! If you have may your dream be realized, for throughout all of Normandy and Brittany, those two powerful and often exceedingly troublesome provinces of old France, so rich in the picturesque and interesting, you will find nothing that can compare with this marvelous pyramid fashioned by God and man.

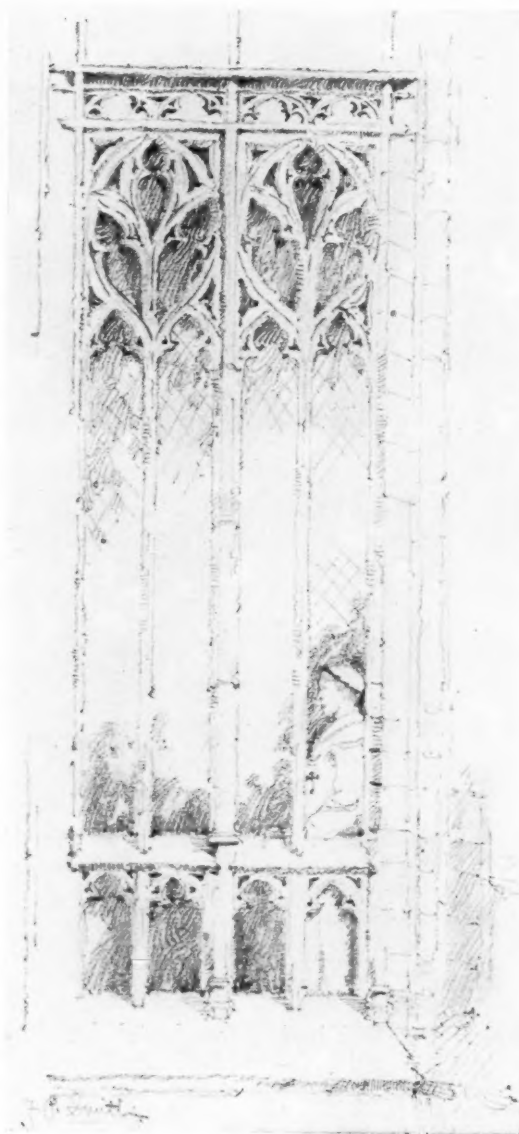
To me, Mont S. Michel is most impressive when the tide is out and it stands huge and lonely in the empty bay of moist, wrinkled sand, with only a glistening ribbon of sea far in the distance. One knows that this same water will soon come rolling in eager to surround the great Mont. There are few places in the world where one can witness this spectacle of the tide rushing

in from such a distance. Perhaps the guide books exaggerate somewhat when they tell us that the tide flows faster than a horse can gallop, but its inrush is none the less remarkable and impressive when seen.

But it is ebb tide now and the mountain island with its fortified abbey is standing proudly on the hard packed sand. Its base is bounded by the mediæval ramparts. Behind and above these cluster the little buildings of the town clinging to the steep sides of the rocky hill, while higher still, rising tier upon tier, stand the abbey buildings, and from their midst upon the very summit of this great natural pyramid seems to grow the monastic church fitly crowned by its tower and lofty flèche, lifting to the very heavens Fremiet's gilded bronze figure of the Saint. The unity of the composition is perfect, every element leading up to and culminating in the church.

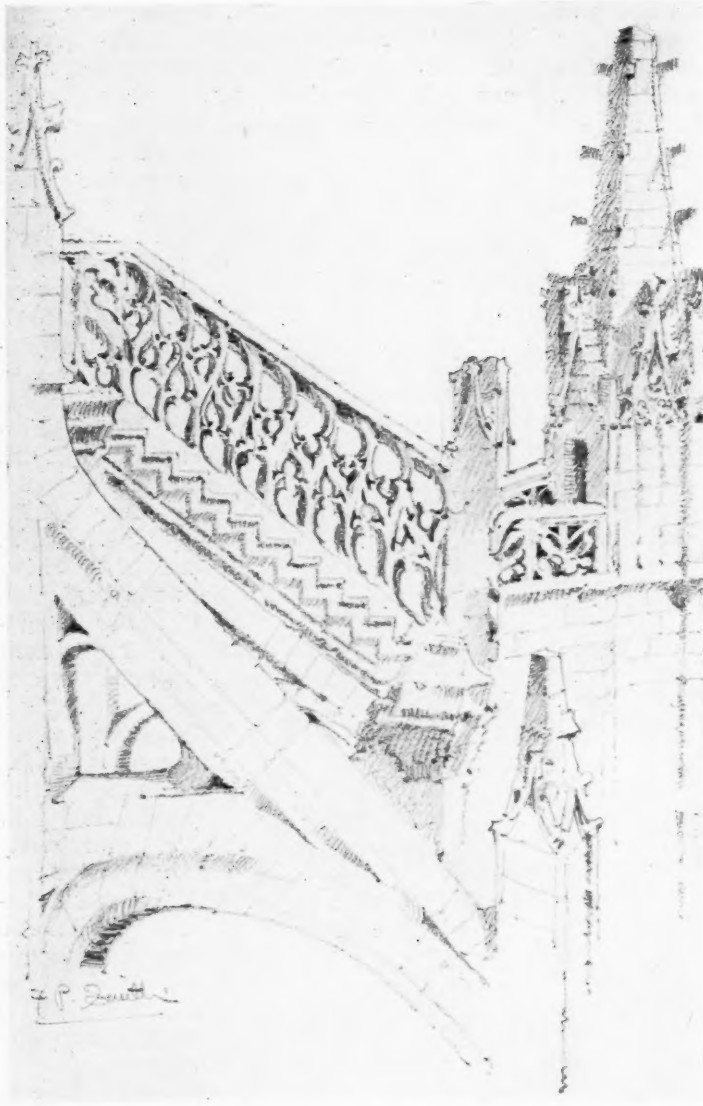
After Guy de Maupassant saw Mont S. Michel he wrote: "What a vision, this fairy château planted in the sea! I cried aloud in amazement. A vast bay

stretched away as far as the eye could see, between two distant shores that faded away in the haze. And in the center of that immense yellow bay, beneath a cloudless golden sky, a strange mountain rose, dark



THE CHOIR TRIFORIUM

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THE FLYING BUTTRESSES AND THE ESCALIER DE DENTELLE

and conical amid the sands. The sun had just disappeared, and against the still blazing horizon that fantastic rock which bears upon its peak a fantastic monument stood boldly. At daybreak I went to it. The tide was low as upon the previous evening, and I watched the amazing abbey rise higher and higher as I drew near. My eyes were fascinated by this monstrous jewel, chiseled like a cameo and airy as lace-work. The nearer I approached, the more profound became my admiration, for nothing in the world,

perhaps, is more astonishing or more perfect."

After crossing the modern dike which connects the Mont with the mainland even at high tide, and passing and forgetting the wretched little train which seems strangely incongruous with this masterpiece of mediæval architecture, you will skirt the great ramparts for a short distance and enter the town through an insignificant portal. Hardly will you be within the walls before you will be greeted by a garrulous old Breton dame who officiously points out various things which you are quite sure must be very interesting, but whose patois is almost as poor French as your own attempts in the language. Happily you are soon rid of her for a sou, and are free to make your way up a narrow granite stair to the top of the broad ramparts. From here the ascent is easy. As you follow the ramparts around and up, the silhouette of the abbatial buildings above you changes constantly. When you arrive at the Tour du Nord you will enjoy one of the finest architectural compositions imaginable. On the right is that

wonderful building justly known as "la Merveille," which contains in its three stories the Salle des Chevaliers, the Salle des Hotes, the Refectory, the Almonry and the Cellar, all vaulted halls, besides the magnificent sunlit Cloister. On the left is the Chatelet or fortified entrance to the abbey precincts, with its military round towers and projecting barbican. Between these rises the fine chevet of the church, surrounded by its graceful flying buttresses, and above all, high in the air, is the statue

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of S. Michel, his wings and sword blazing in the sunlight.

You will be conducted through the various monastic buildings and the church, but not as leisurely as you might desire, for the official guide is anxious to receive his *pourboir*, and it is all an old story to him. However, if you have the time, you will go through again and study it all more carefully. The vaulted halls and the Romanesque nave of the church are no longer peopled with cowed monks, for Mont S. Michel has been taken over by the Government and is now one of the "Monuments Historiques." It is being restored with the painstaking thoroughness usually practiced by French architects in such cases, but fortunately the work is being done by sympathetic hands and the new work does not clash with the old. The abbey had fallen upon evil days and restoration was in many cases a necessity if the buildings were to be preserved. It is true that the central tower over the crossing and its angel-bearing *flèche* are modern creations of M. Pettingrand, for the old engravings in the hotel at Pontorson show no such features; but to my mind he has added the final note to Mont S. Michel, and it is not at all improbable that something of the same sort had been at least projected by the monkish architects of the Middle Age.

But the sun is already at the zenith and it is time to repair to the Hotel Poulard where dinner is served on the ramparts. What a dining room and what a view! In spite of the amazing pile above you, or possibly because of it, you will thoroughly enjoy the omelettes for which the place is justly famed. From the little table you see the roofs of the town. Its steep and tortuous street is overhung with ancient wooden houses. Some of them were built to shelter the devout pilgrims who came from afar on foot or on horseback, to be healed or to do penance at the famous shrine, and today they minister to the wants of the latter-day pilgrim from the New World, who arrives in his luxurious motor-car, stays a few hours or more and departs, filled with wonder and perhaps profound respect for those mediæval builders.

As early as the eighth century, Aubert, bishop of the neighboring town of Avranches, saw S. Michel in a vision. The angel bade

him build a chapel on the desolate mountain island, but the good bishop seemed rather loath to comply with the wishes of the Saint, for it was only after two more visitations from the archangel that he obeyed, and taking a few monks with him, built a small chapel on the Mont. Gradually the fame of the shrine became noised abroad; many and wonderful miracles were performed through the patron saint, and thousands of pilgrims came to the lonely island. Not a few of these perished in the quicksands or were overtaken by the incoming tide, so that the place became known as "Mont S. Michel in the Peril of the Sea." Notwithstanding this the abbey became rich and powerful. In 1066 it aided William of Normandy by sending six ships to England. The buildings have been added to and rebuilt at various times but the existing fabric dates mainly from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. The buildings and their fortifications are constructed almost entirely of pale buff granite. To an architectural student fresh from Rouen and Caen with all their delicate carvings and lace-like details in fine-grained stone, Mont S. Michel in heavy granite presents a strong contrast. The architects and carvers at the Mont understood the material in which they worked and made the most of it. They showed once and for all what could be done in granite. The details of the flamboyant style of the fifteenth century, which we generally associate with a fine stone, are here worked out in granite without losing the spirit of the style in any degree. The flowing lines of the tracery are still graceful and full of charm and the architecture of Mont S. Michel remains today a splendid example of the adaptation of style to material.

In order to see this "monstrous jewel" from every point of view you must take one of the small boats on the beach and make the circuit of the island when the tide is in. The composition and silhouette change continually as the boat proceeds, but like a great piece of sculpture from the hand of a master artist, it will bear scrutiny from any side. On the south there are rugged granite cliffs with scarcely any vegetation, while on the north the slope is more gradual and is covered with a miniature forest, all that remains of the once great

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forest of Scissy, long since engulfed by a tidal wave. Above this thickly wooded slope rise the splendid walls of la Merveille, probably the finest specimen of military and monastic architecture in existence.

The charm of this mediæval wonder is so great that you will willingly let the last tram for Pontorson leave without you in the evening, so as to have another hour on the ramparts. These date from the reign of Louis the Ninth and were erected largely through the generosity of that canonized monarch. They are among the finest in France and are in excellent preservation. The holes may still be seen through which molten lead and burning oil might be poured on the unsuspecting heads of the unlucky besiegers. Mont S. Michel has not always been the peaceful spot that we visit today. Its abbot was clothed with all the military powers of a feudal chieftain, and more than once it has successfully withstood attack and siege. After the Revolution the old Abbey suffered many and grievous indignities, having been used as a prison by the Convention and as a House of Correction under the first Napoleon. But while leaning on the parapet of the

ramparts, it is easy to conjure up scenes that have long since passed. Monks in cassock and cowl and knights with sword and buckler have stood where you now are. These old walls have echoed to pious chants from the lofty choir above, and have responded to the surly clang of armor from below. Their mission is fulfilled:

"The knights are dust
And their good swords are rust,
Their souls are with the saints, we trust."

You turn away slowly; the sun is setting and it is time to return to Pontorson. It is hard to leave, even for a night. "What the Pyramid of Cheops is to the desert, Mont S. Michel is to the sea," wrote Victor Hugo, and indeed this most wonderful place would easily have held its own among the Seven Wonders of classic times. All of these were works of man, but here Nature and Art have been wedded, and the abbey buildings seem to grow out of the living rock itself, bounded by the great ramparts and finally blossoming into la Merveille and the Church. Who will say that Mont S. Michel is not the peer of Cheops and the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus?

THE DESIGNING OF SMALL RAILWAY STATIONS

IT is only in recent years that a well-designed railroad station has come to be looked upon by the people at large as an avowed asset to the small town or village seeking growth and development. The travelling public have come to recognize this and are naturally inclined to gather their impression of the importance of a community largely from the condition of the surroundings of its railroad center. That the railroads themselves are coming to realize the increased advantage to their business in having attractive and well planned stations is exemplified in the general reconstruction which is taking place of their smaller stations along carefully evolved ideas.

To follow into detail this development one cannot but realize that the need of every town must be considered as an individual problem to be solved only after a

thorough survey of the conditions and the nature of the environment. For this reason our small city or village railroad stations are coming to show a distinct character in design, and, although more or less general in arrangement, are bound to comply with the local requirements of the community in question. This has resulted in many instances in the general development of a style which, obviously lacking precedent, opens the way of opportunity for general conception.

In the design of the small railroad station the principal requirements are a main waiting room, smoking room, women's retiring room, lavatories, ticket office, baggage and express rooms; in addition to these appointments it is frequently found advisable to provide on the opposite side from station an enclosure and shelter

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HOUSES.

FRONTISPIECE:—

MONUMENT TO VICTOR EMANUEL II., ROME.

A WORTHY EXAMPLE

IT is with considerable satisfaction that we print on another page of this issue, an open letter written by Mr. D. Knickerbacker Boyd, President of the Pennsylvania State Association of Architects, to a citizen of Pottsville, Pa., protesting against the dissemination of misinformation reflecting upon the profession. Not only is the fact that these alleged erroneous statements which have been given wide publicity, are by this means corrected with dignity and force, gratifying to everyone, but the example set by this Association seems to point the course that might be followed by other organizations and Chapters with advantage. There can certainly be no loss of dignity sustained in offering formal official correction where mis-statements affecting the profession occur in the popular press, and

if this practice became general to such an extent that the officers of the various Chapters throughout the country considered it their duty to correct errors of statements affecting the profession made within their respective territories, the press and public alike would undoubtedly soon become informed upon a subject about which there appears to exist a surprising lack of knowledge.

Failure, heretofore, on the part of the Institute or other organizations in the profession to take cognizance of the grossest misrepresentations concerning the practice and profession of architecture in this country, seems to amount to little less than neglect to do what has at all times been possible toward safeguarding the professional good name. To judge from the many instances of misleading press reports constantly appearing in which the profession suffers, but which go unchallenged by anyone of recognized authority, it is time that the officers of the organizations in the profession recognize some measure for responsibility not alone for the conduct of affairs within their respective organizations but also for the light in which the profession at large appears before the public.

Until some more efficient means is suggested, it would seem that no Chapter would fail in rendering a real service to the profession by following the practical example set by the Pennsylvania State Association.

IN TOUCH WITH THE MANUFACTURER

THE futility of undertaking the practice of architecture in more than dilettante fashion without availing of the information contained in manufacturers' advertisements, announcements, catalogues and samples, is probably conceded by all architects of actual experience. It would doubtless be impracticable, if not impossible, to construct a building of any size or pretensions in general disregard of dimensions and character of materials, fixtures and fittings that have been manufactured and used until they have not only reached a high degree of perfection as to workmanship but are standard as to sizes. Familiarity as to procurable fittings and materials would seem to be quite as essential to the success of a building undertaking as ability to

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design. The manufacturers' contribution to the art of building must be studied by the architect who desires to keep fully abreast of the times and realizes that the practice of architecture is more than the simple drawing of plans.

With this idea in mind, THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT has established a Catalogue Department in the offices of the publication, where it is proposed to keep on file

catalogues and literature of representative manufacturers whose product enters into the construction, equipment or finish of buildings of various classes.

Architects are invited to make use of this Department whenever they can do so to advantage and any information which it is possible for us to give in answer to inquiries concerning building utilities or materials, will be promptly furnished.

THE DESIGNING OF SMALL RAILROAD STATIONS

(Continued from page 130)

reached from the main station by a tunnel underneath the tracks.

As to arrangement, the main waiting room should be provided with an ample entrance leading from the principal thoroughfare with an exit of like size toward the tracks or station concourse. These should be most conveniently related so as to permit easy access to the station and trains. Under certain conditions it is found to be an advantage to carry the main waiting room an additional story or half-story in height. This, in the case of the larger stations, not only lends a better proportion to the size of the room, but allows the introduction of clearstory openings giving direct light from the outside and not overshadowed by extending shelters. Thus better illumination of the interior is provided. In the absence of a signal tower the ticket office should be placed on the track side of station, with a projecting bay extending beyond the main line of the station wall, so as to allow the telegraph operator an uninterrupted view up and down the track in determining the movement of trains.

The floor of the main waiting room should be of ceramic tile or terrazzo or such material as will permit of constant wearing, yet clean readily.

The arrangement of ticket office is largely a matter of personal preference with the railroad company, yet a private lavatory should be included and an alcove for safe.

In the baggage room a large opening with direct frontage on service driveway is a necessity. Floors should be of cement with walls of wood sheathing or brick.

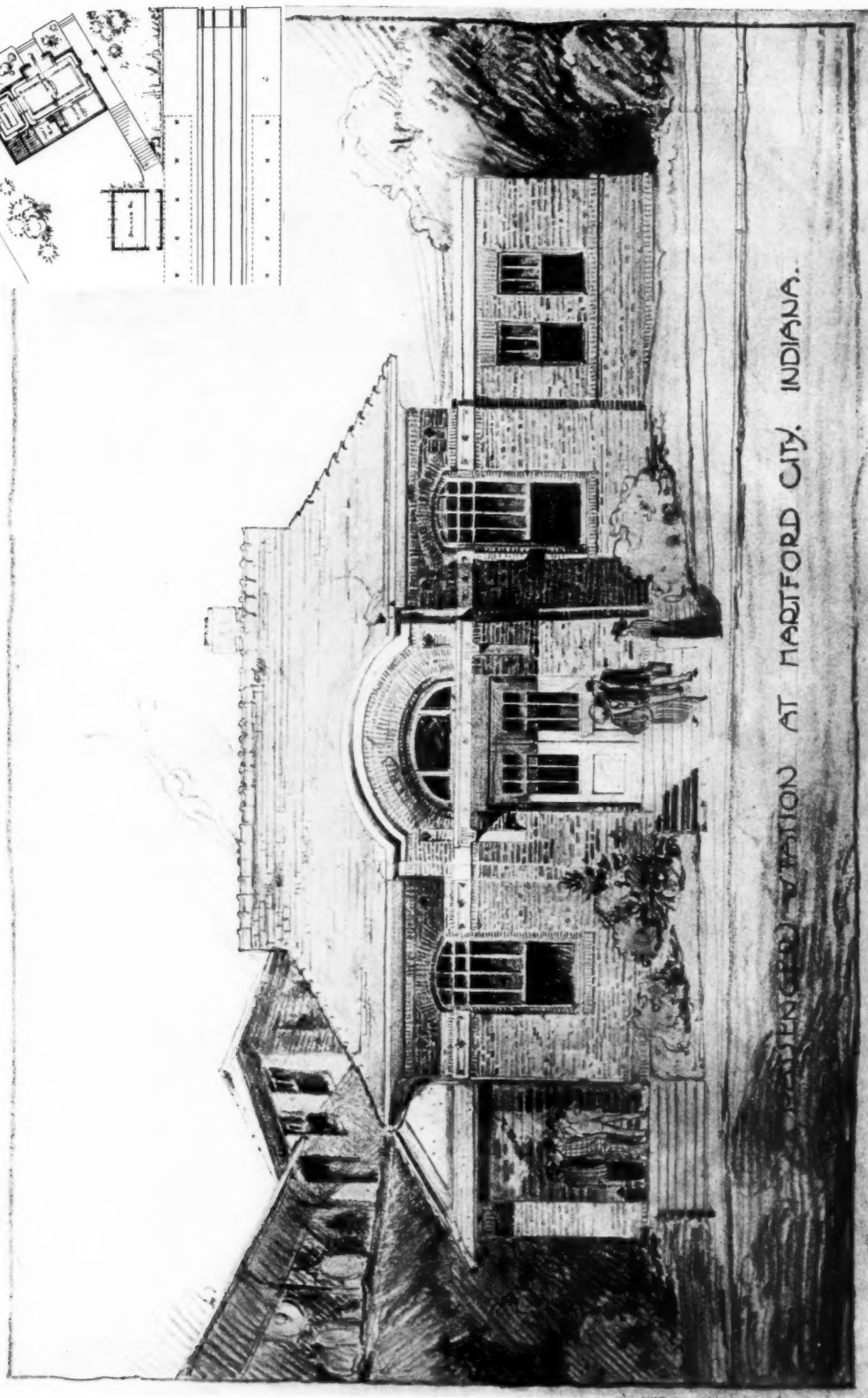
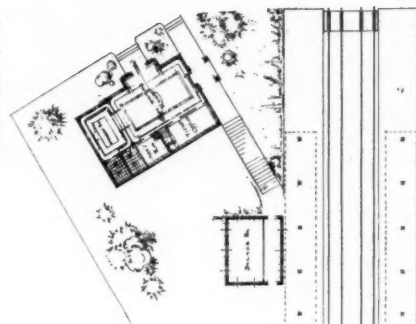
Where express room space is made a part of the general baggage room it is customary to enclose it in a wire cage extending from floor to ceiling.

In the choice of material for exterior treatment it is best to depend whenever possible on the manufactured products of the locality. Besides the lending of a local interest the cost of construction can thereby be considerably reduced. Most districts have been found to manufacture brick of a pleasing character, the use of which has established this material as the usual wall surface for work of this kind.

It is advisable to heat the small railroad station with direct steam or hot water, these being more satisfactory mediums than hot air to offset the frequent and sudden changes in temperature. The enclosures are generally heated with pipe lines carried underground in conduits from the main station.

Naturally the location of the station is a matter of supreme importance and should relate particularly to the principal thoroughfares of the city. Easy access from these, either by vehicle or by foot, should be provided. Referring to the stations illustrated in this article it will be noted that in the case of Hartford City, Ind., on account of the abolition of grade crossing the station proper has been placed on the lower level adjacent to street while the baggage room and waiting rooms are at track level with direct access by carriage from and adjoining street.

The station at Ridgeville, Ind., is located at the junction of two railroads crossing one another at right angles and is operated as a station for both lines. Thus each individual station has its own mission to fulfill.

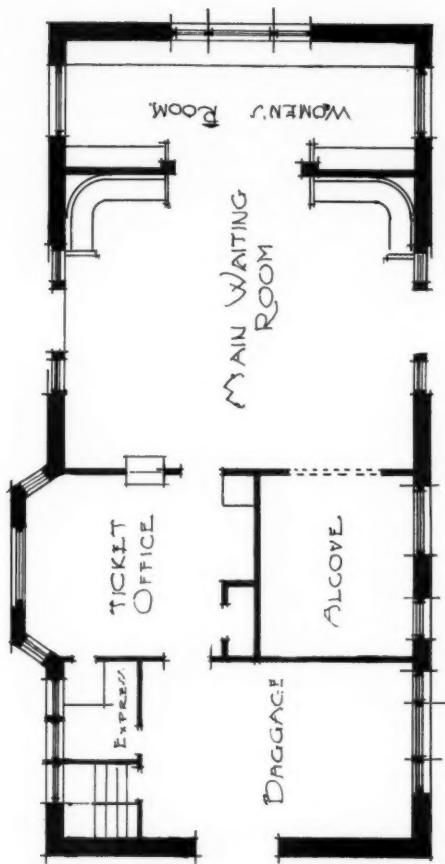


RENDERING OF THE NEW CITY HALL AT HARTFORD CITY, INDIANA.

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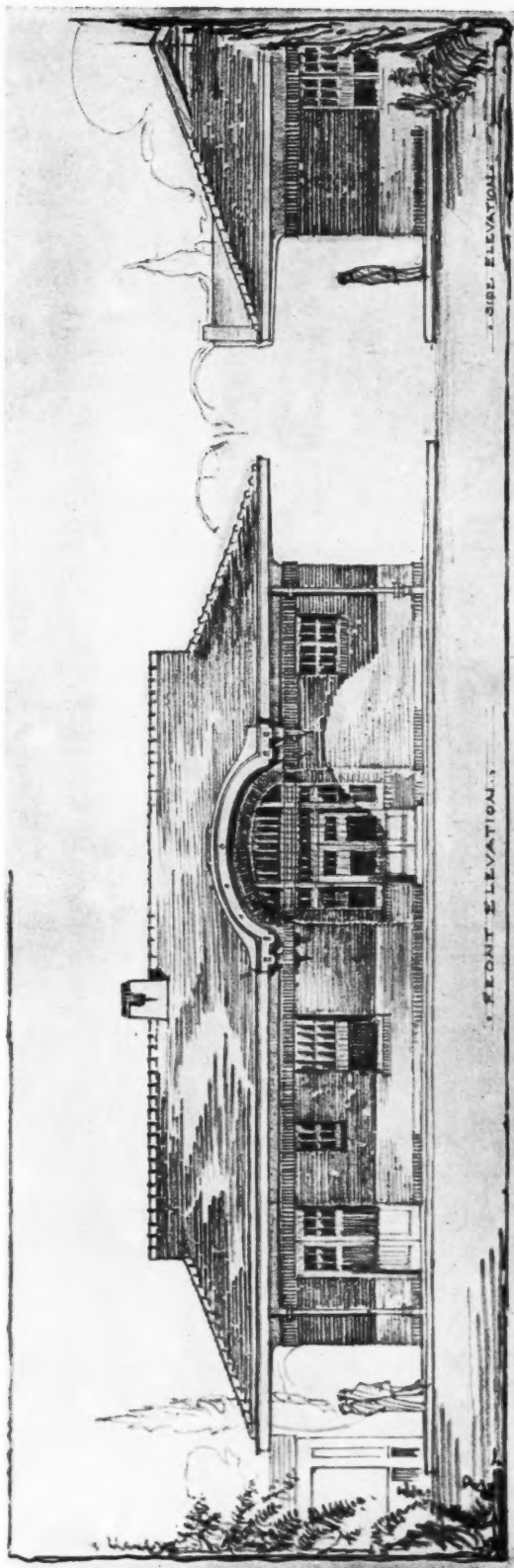
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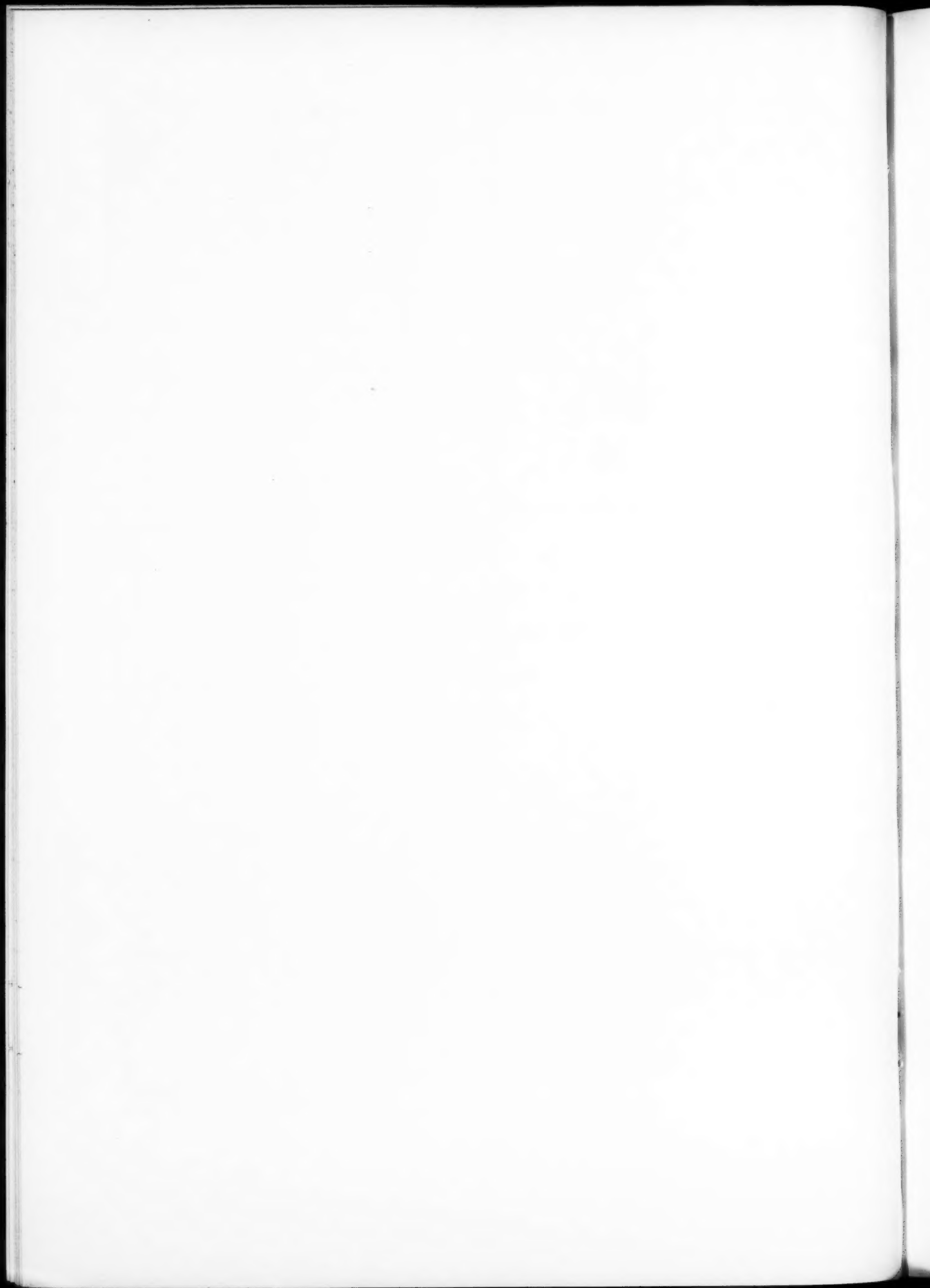
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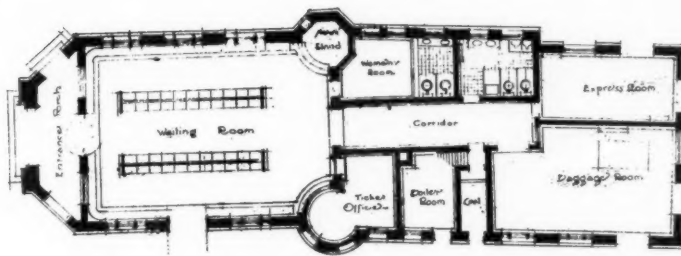


PASSENGER STATION, RIDGEVILLE, INDIANA

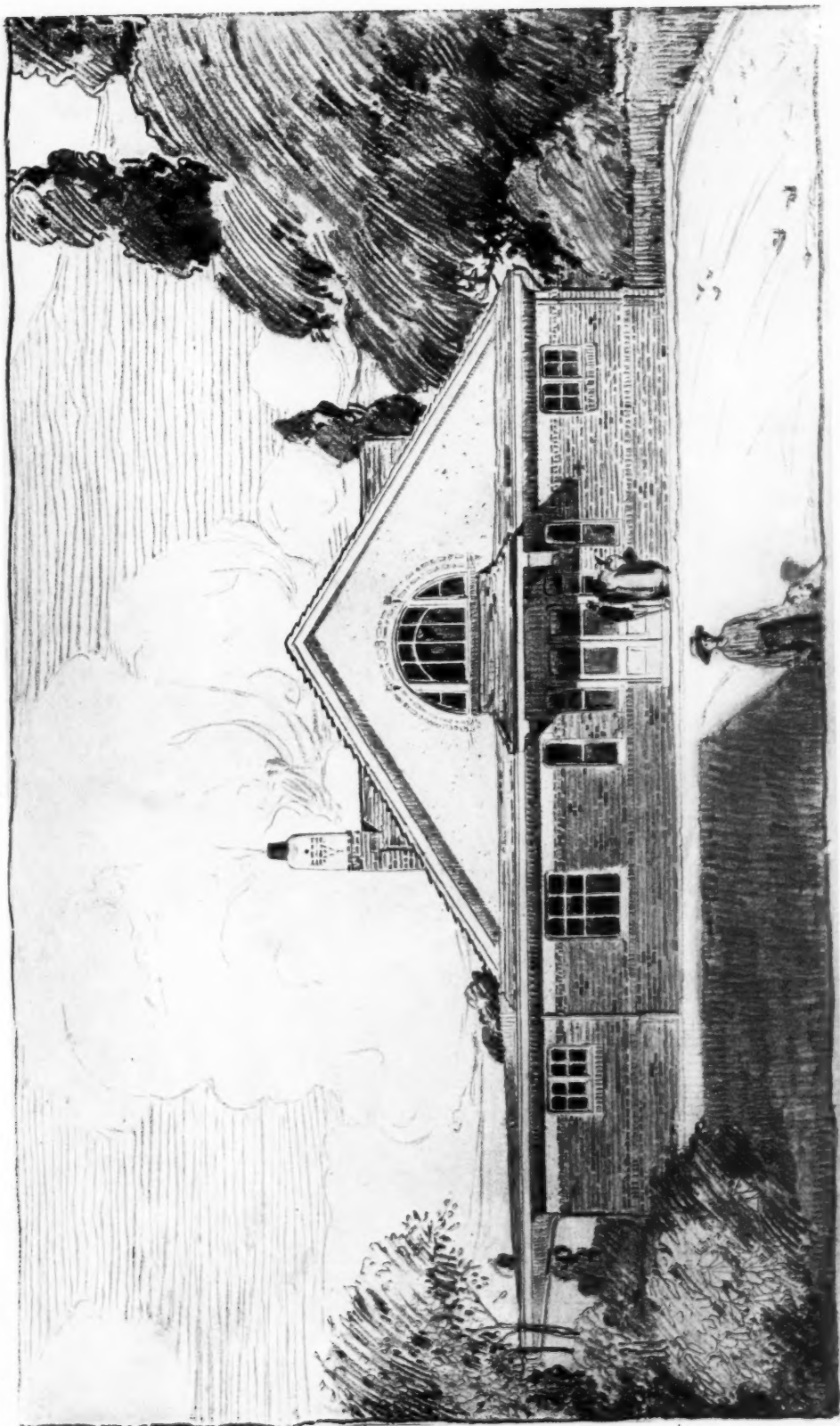
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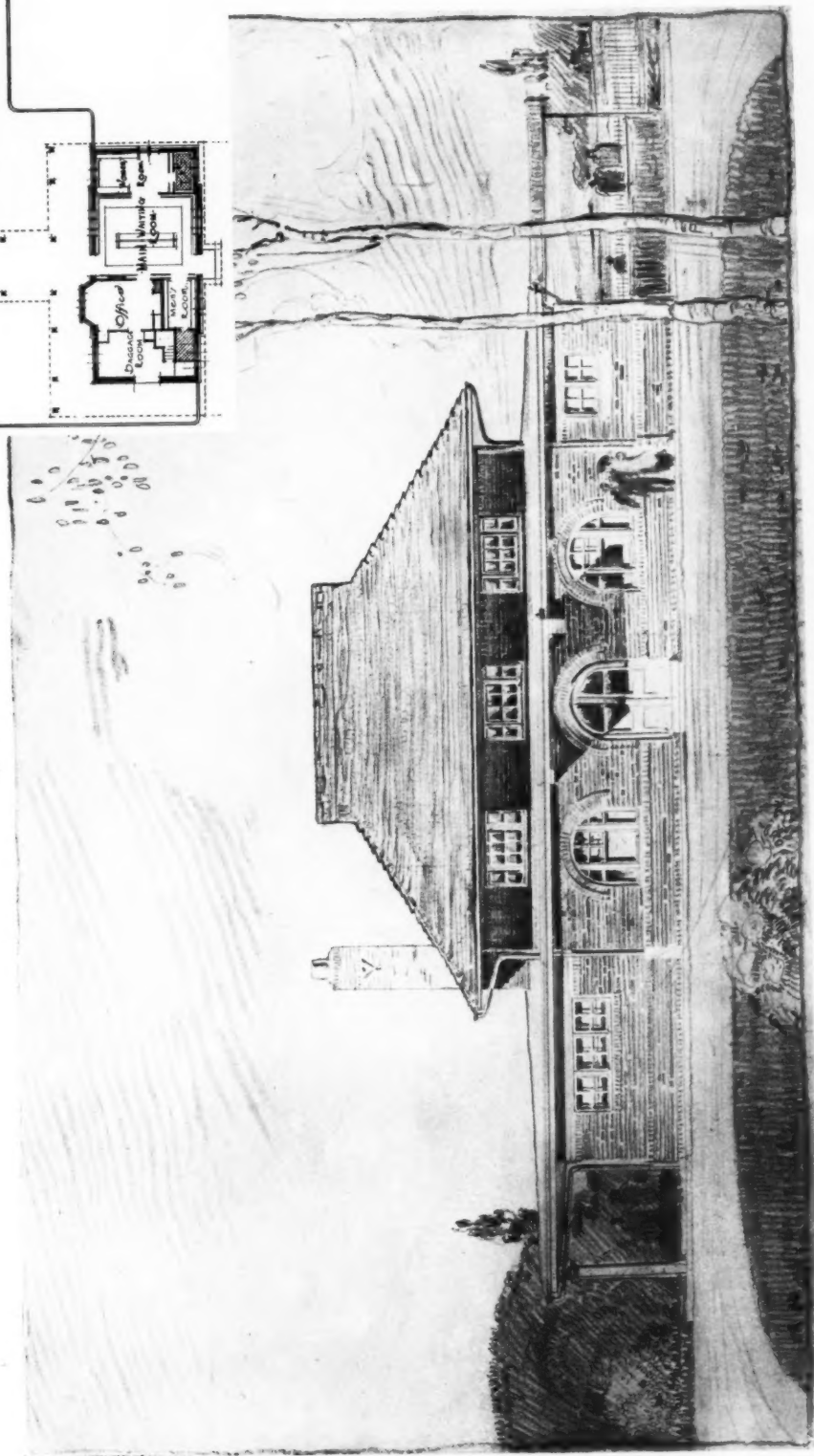
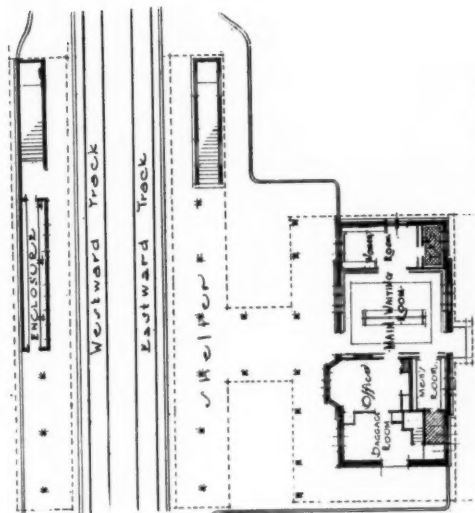


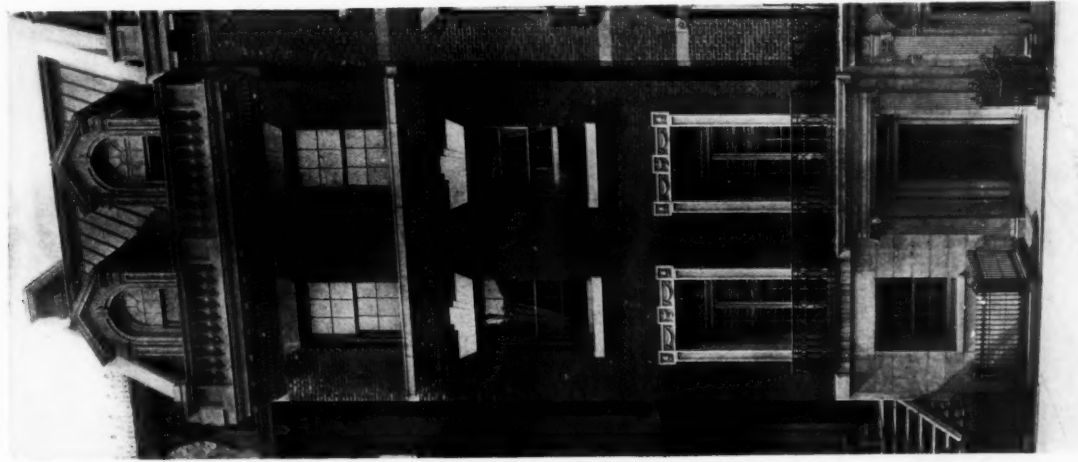
PASSENGER STATION AT CONVERSE, INDIANA

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PASSENGER STATION AT DUNKIRK, NEW YORK

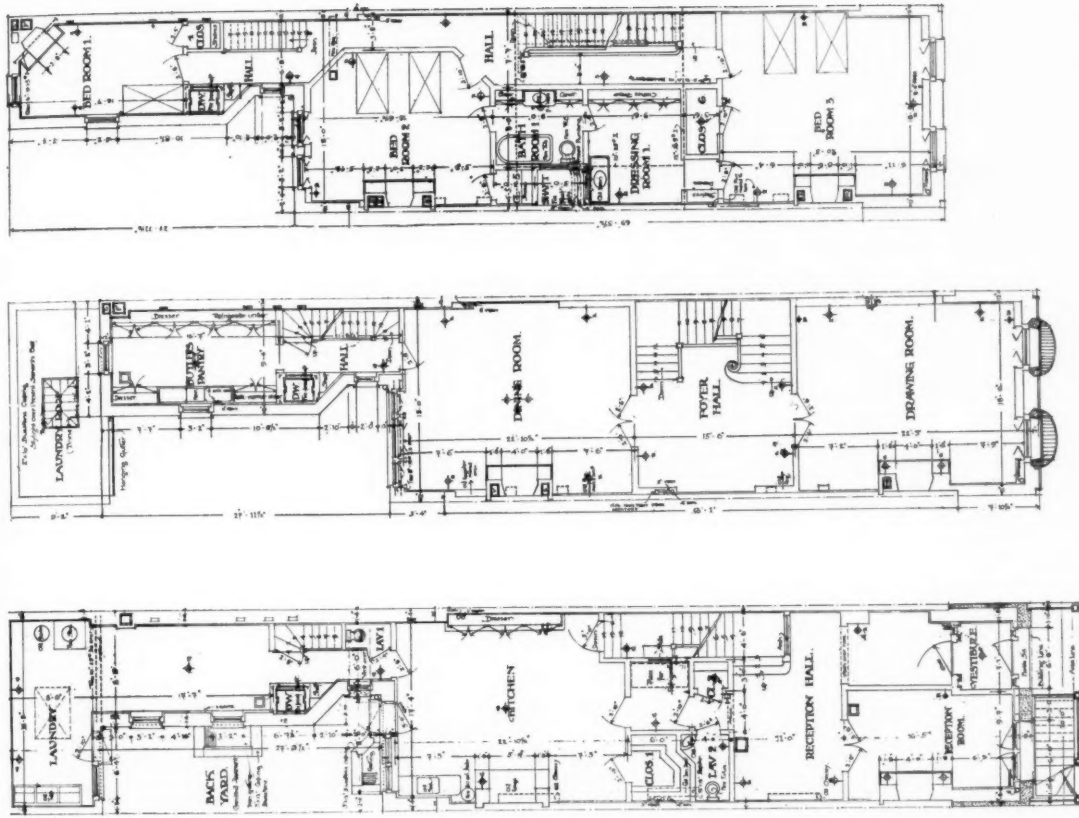
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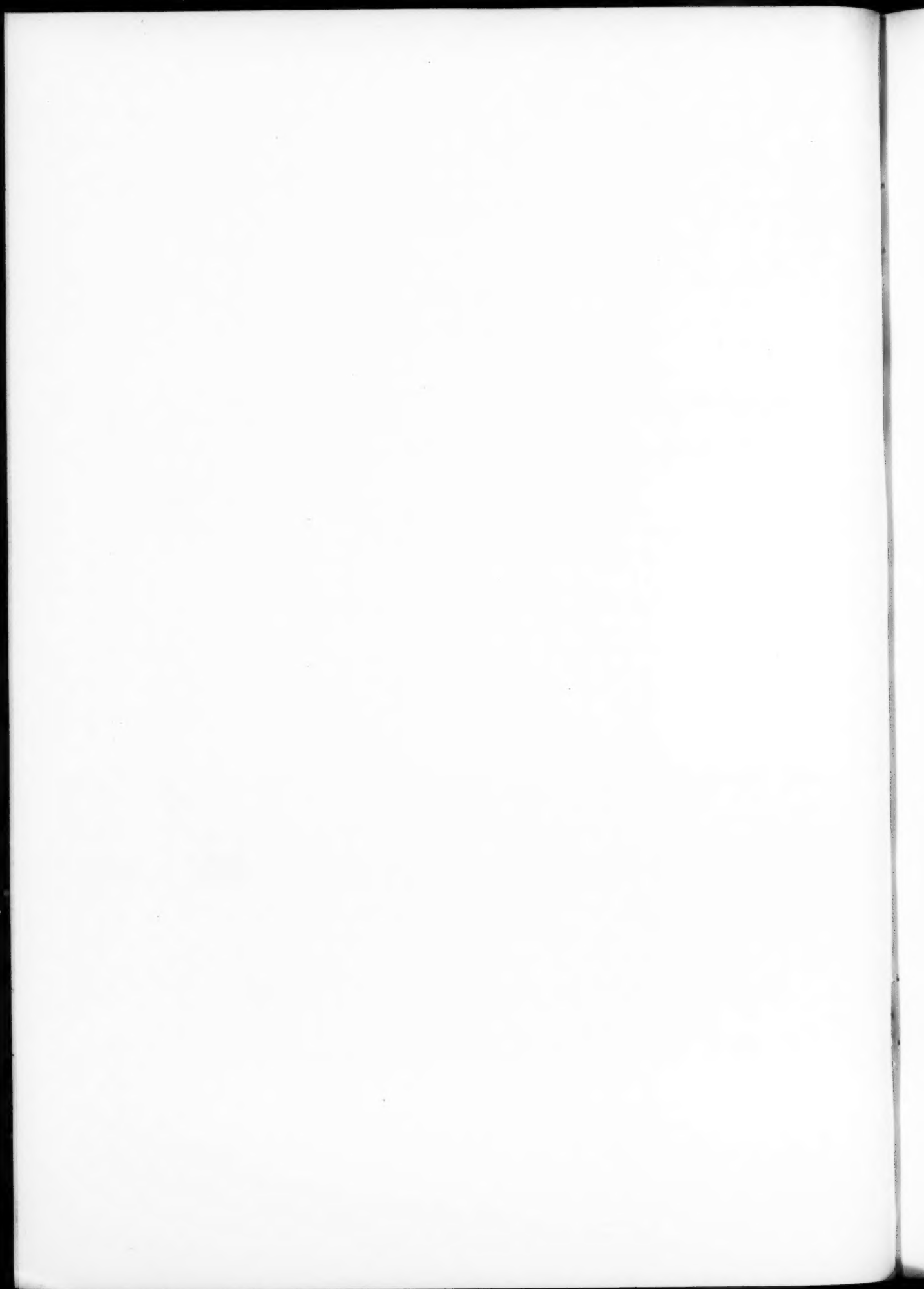


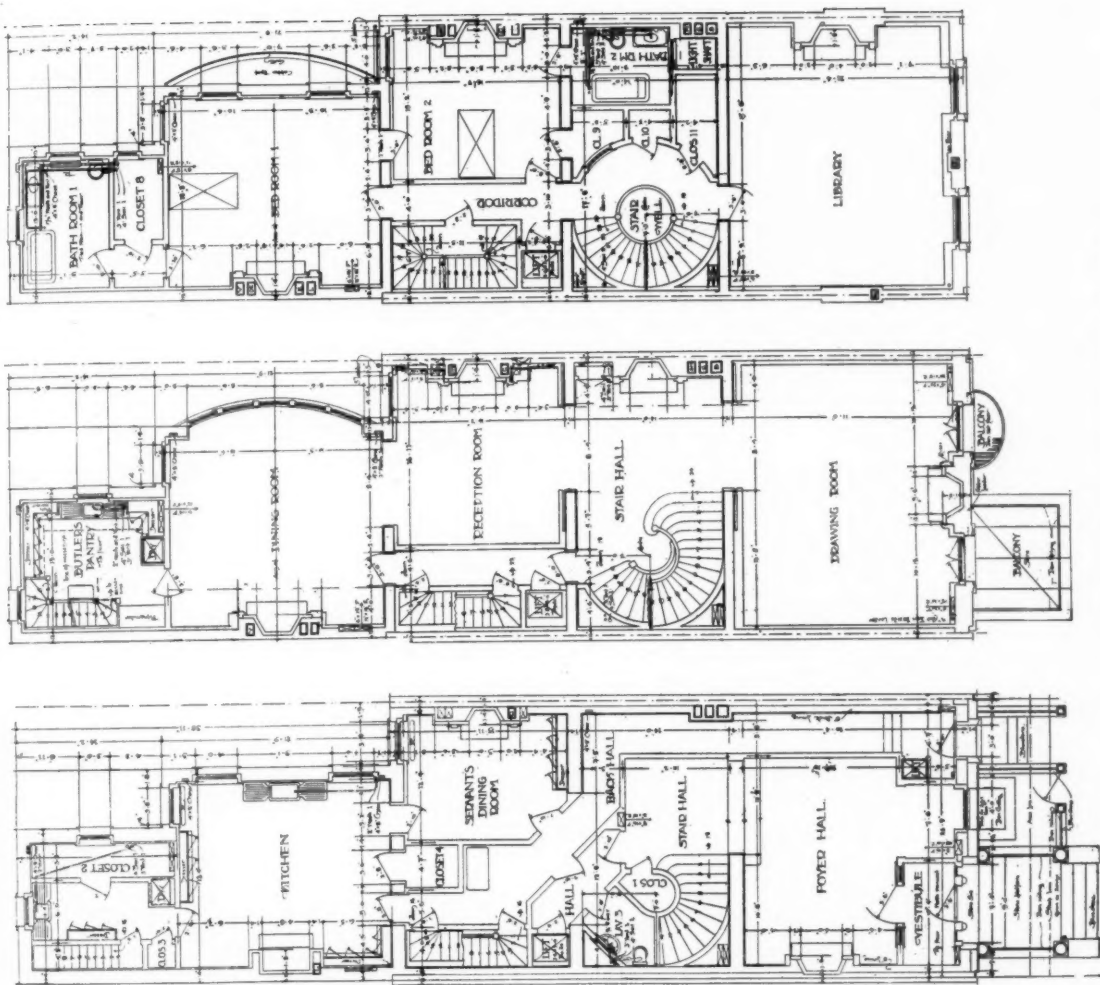
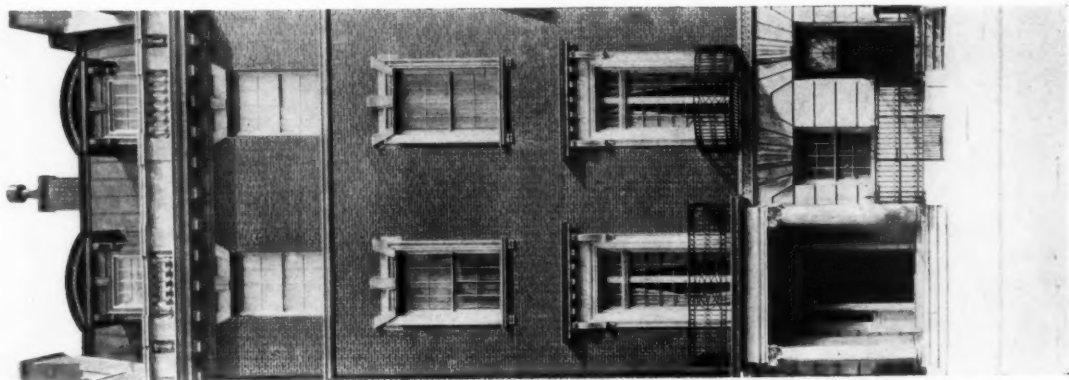


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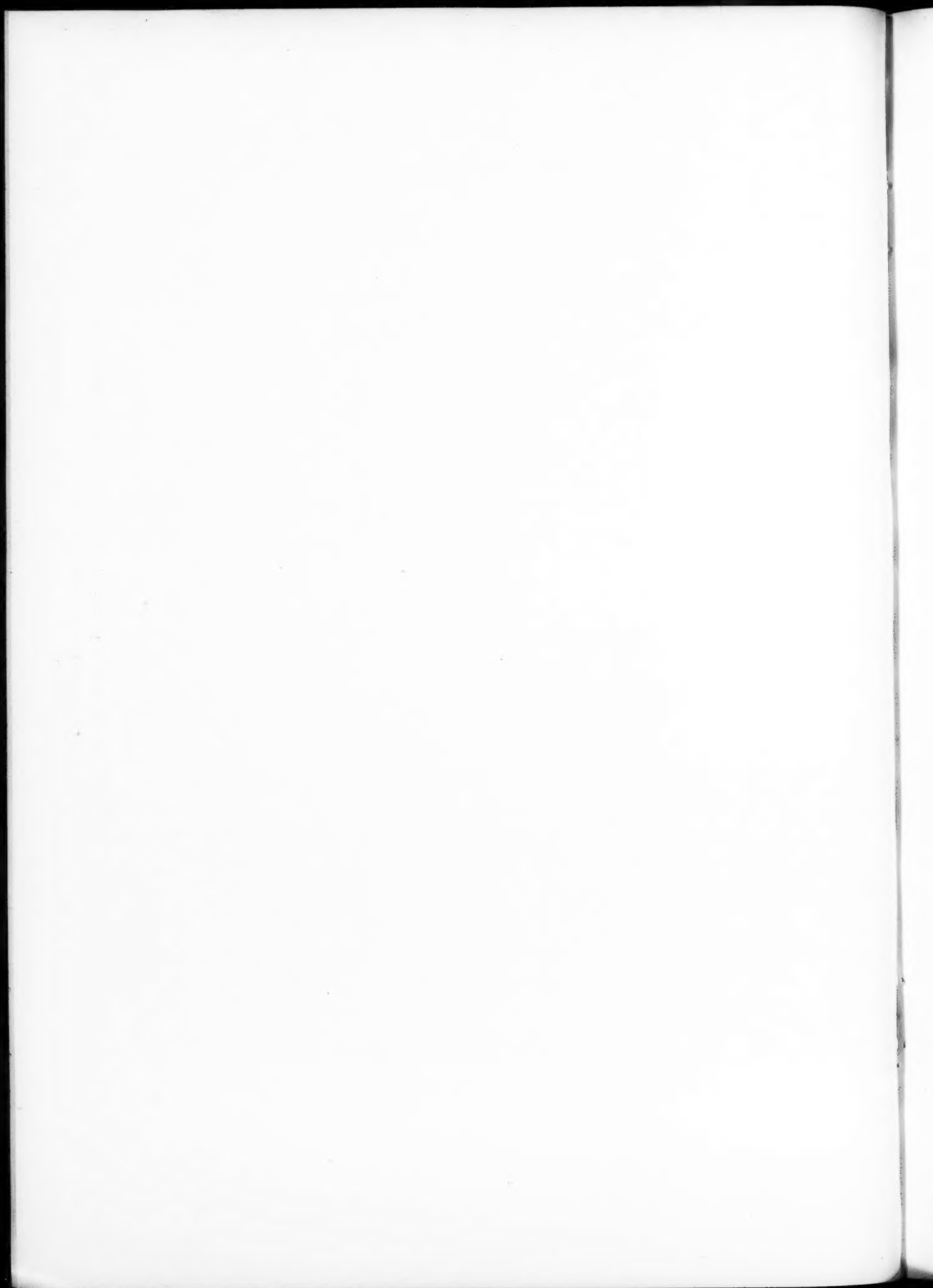


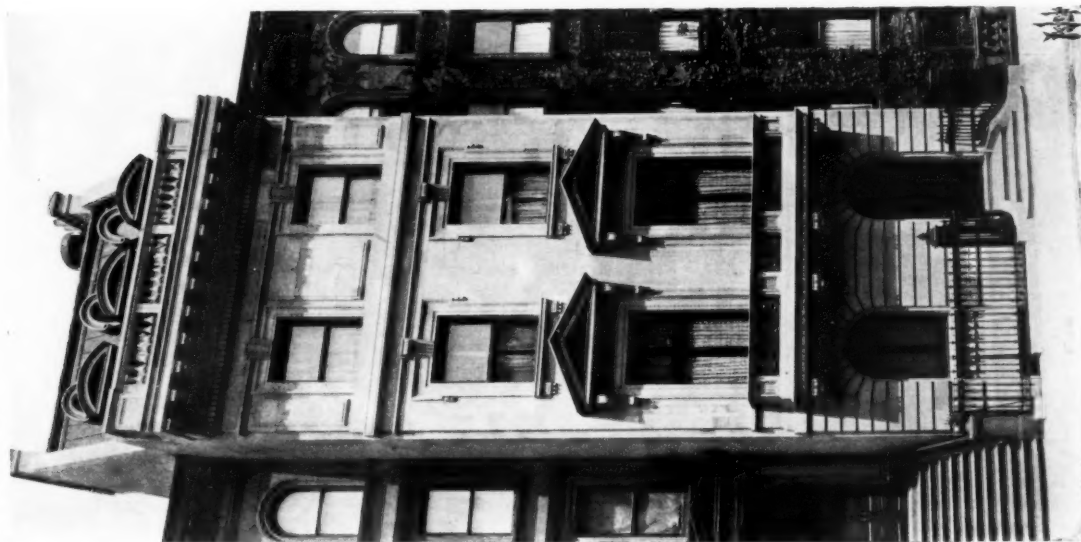




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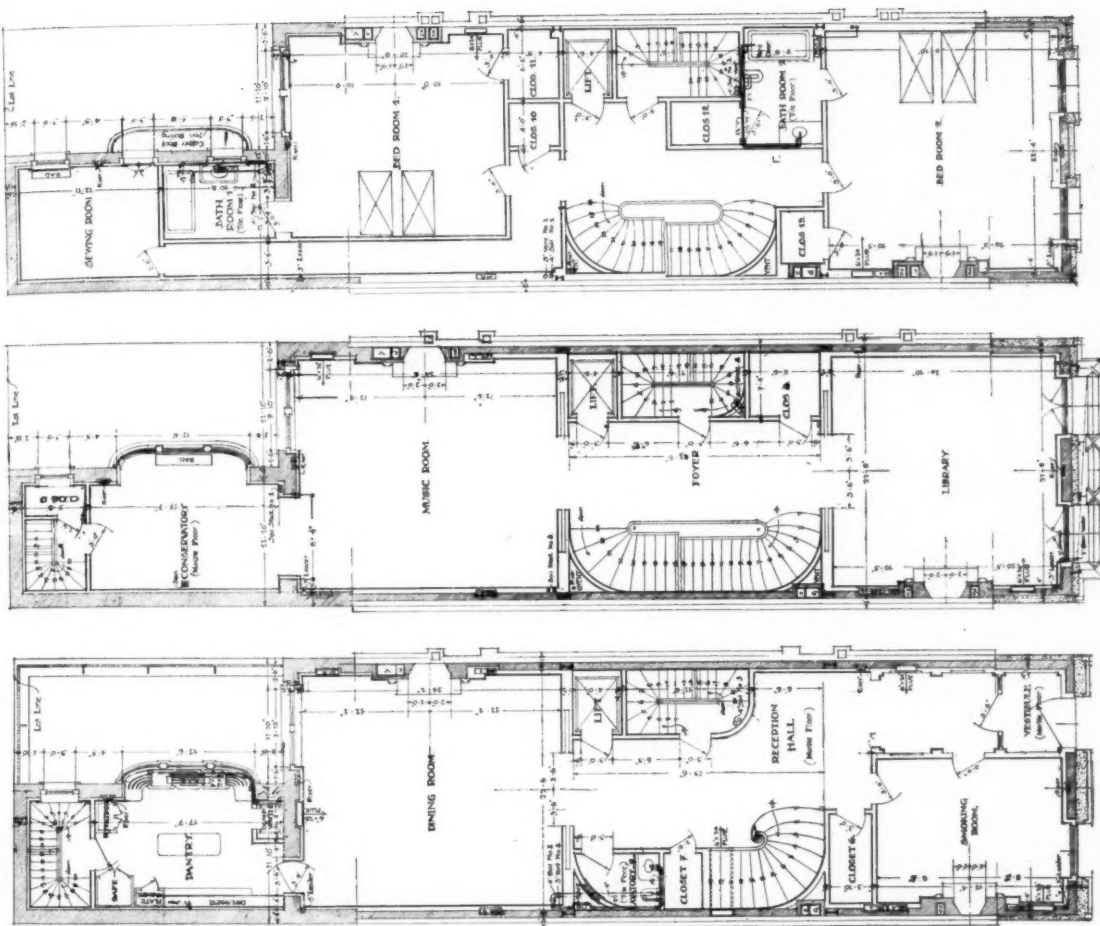
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GOETHE MONUMENT IN ROME, ITALY