

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

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EUROPEAN SKETCHING CENTERS

LOUVAIN

By G. A. T. MIDDLETON, A.R.I.B.A.

ILLUSTRATED BY SKETCHES AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR



LOUVAIN is now a small town, that is, in comparison with great places like Brussels, for it only contains some 40,000 inhabitants now, although there were three times that number resident within the walls in the 14th century. So greatly has it shrunk, indeed, that though the outline of the walls can still be traced by means of the boulevard which occupies the site of the old ramparts, a considerable space within them is occupied by arable land. Architecturally, the interest centres almost entirely in the Grande Place and the old streets and buildings close to it, where there are many remnants of its 14th century glory, with a considerable amount of later work interspersed, though this is of a smaller character, due to the fact that the town suffered much after the year 1378, when an insurrection

of the weavers — during which thirteen magistrates were thrown out of the windows of the Hotel de Ville on to the spears of the people below — was suppressed with a strong hand. That Hotel de Ville was replaced by another built about 1450 which still exists, though it has been renovated several times, and has been recently undergoing a very thorough restoration, the second within the writer's memory; for, unfortunately, weak and friable stone has

been consistently used, with the result that it soon decays. The building is of an exceedingly rich late Gothic character, similar in type to the Hotel de Ville at Brussels, but much smaller and without any central tower. It consists of a rectangular block having a turret at each of the four corners, and, as the photograph will show, its external architectural treatment is more horizontal than is often the case; in fact the outline would be quite a simple one but for the introduction of a large



LOUVAIN, ST. GERTRUDE

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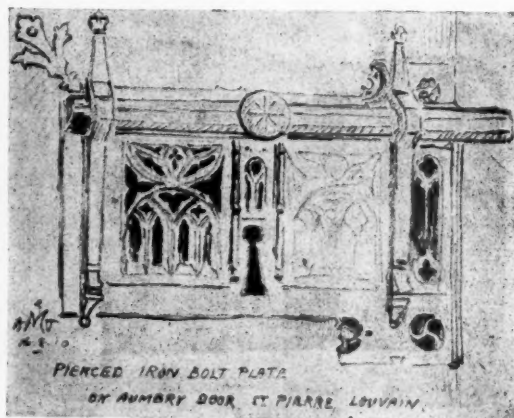
LOUVAIN. WINDOW IN N. W. TOWER OF CATHEDRAL

number of small dormer windows in the roof, which break its simplicity and replace it by fidgetiness. The terminations of the turrets are peculiar, being formed of open tracery with galleries round at two different levels, a similar gallery also occurring on a curious final termination to each gable, designed to correspond with the turret terminals. The effect is somewhat like that of the fighting top of a battleship, and is by no means satisfactory, except as viewed from one of the side streets, when the back instead of the front of the roof is seen where the builders omitted the unnecessary dormers. This view was even better when the photograph was taken, a good many years ago, than it is now, as what have just been called "fighting tops," had not then been added. The elaboration of the detail is excessive, the most beautiful fragment being the open-work crenellated parapet which is carried across each gable and along the eaves, designed with light flamboyant tracery. The canopy work which covers the front is also very beautiful when considered by itself, although there is too much of it, as also there are too many statues for the

effect to be properly reposeful. The double ogee arch is used considerably. The canopies overhang the statues and there is a large amount of late foliage and sculpture, all carved with extreme crispness; but the sections of the mouldings generally want richness, as they do in most Belgian work of the period.

A small 18th century iron grill is also well worth notice, and though when examined closely its detail is poor, its general effect is quite rich and good, due greatly to the use of heavy radiating bars to divide up the panels.

Opposite the Hotel de Ville, on the other side of the Grande Place, stands what is generally known as the Cathedral, though more properly speaking it is only the Church of St. Pierre. This also dates from a period subsequent to the great insurrection at the end of the 14th century, for it was only begun in 1425. It has become greatly dilapidated, but for all that has a considerable amount of beauty, largely due to its good outline and the discoloration of the stone, for it is not very elaborately embellished. Unfortunately restoration is commencing and a great deal of its present picturesqueness may be expected to disappear in the next few years. Already the houses shown in the general view of the East end



LOUVAIN

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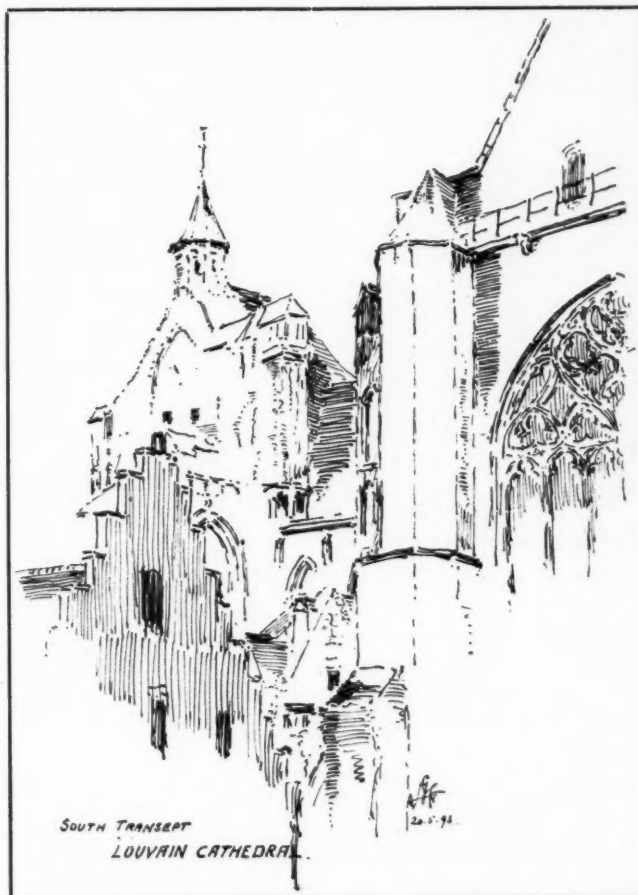
have been pulled down and the effect of scale which these tiny shops give to their great neighbor, has been lost. This East view is a particularly valuable one to the student of European Gothic architecture, for it displays with clearness the typical French and Belgian arrangement of a group of chapels round the apse, each occupying the whole space between a pair of buttresses and semi-octagonal in plan. The spaces between the chapels have been utilized at Louvain, one of them for a newspaper kiosk and that at the extreme East end by a small shrine to St. Margaret of Louvain, occupying thus what is usually the position of the Lady Chapel; for which no definite provision seems to have been made in the ordinary way, for a buttress projects directly eastwards where the chapel ordinarily occurs. Another French feature, which is well displayed here and often hidden in more elaborate examples, is the great depth of the outer buttresses, in order to provide resistance to the flying portion without introducing weights in the form of pinnacles as is commonly done in England. The tracery is generally thin and naturally of the flamboyant type, considering its date. The best examples occur at the West end, which is by no means so easy to be seen as is

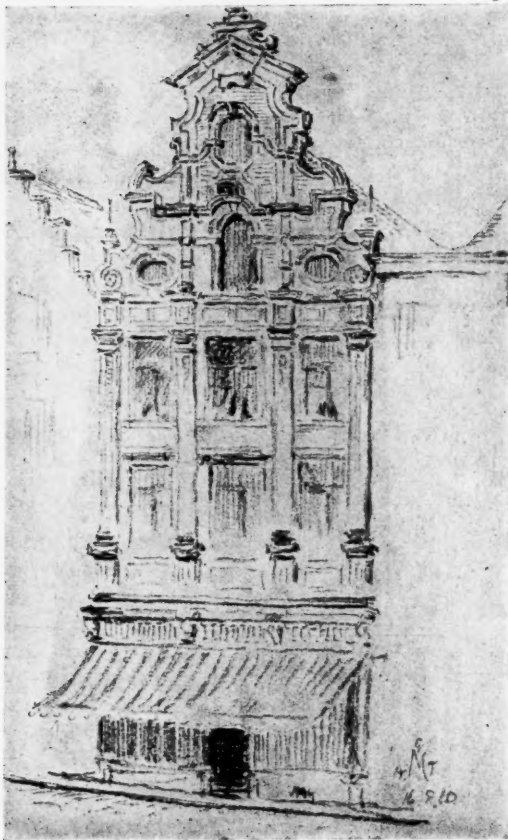
the chevet, for it can only be viewed from narrow streets which fall away rapidly from it. The vistas along these it closes up picturesquely, and the great West window, as well as the windows in the tower stumps in North and South which were never properly completed, have external cusping which almost goes so far as to form an external plane of tracery, entirely unusual and particularly beautiful, standing out against the shadow behind where the deeply recessed actual window tracery occurs.

The most picturesque view of the church at all is that from the steps of the Hotel de Ville looking towards the much dilapidated South transept and the South side of the nave.

Internally the church is somewhat bare and white. The principal feature is the extraordinary pulpit, as it seems to all who have not visited Bel-

gium, where, however, there are several others of a similar character. It stands in the nave and is of carved oak, most realistic in its conception; in front of it there is a representation of the conversion of St. Norbert, who is shown to have just fallen from his horse under the rocks, upon which a number of small angel figures gambol, while a Cross stands on the top. These rocks carry the pulpit proper, which





LOUVAIN. HOUSE DATED 1691. VIEUX MARCHE

has a sounding board above it representing curtains, again held up by little winged figures, and flanked on either side by great palm trees, now black with age. It was carved by Bergé in 1742.

Popularly the chancel screen attracts a good deal of attention, but it is a piece of indifferent modern Gothic work, which unfortunately replaced the handsome Renaissance screen some fifty years ago. To those who seek good detail there is much more interest in two fine gilt reliquaries, and in some small pieces of iron work to be found on aumbrey doors in some of the side chapels, consisting of locks, bolts and little ventilators, all to a tiny scale, the impression of rich Gothic tracery being given by superimposing extremely thin sheets of pierced metal so as to give the effect of mouldings.

A much smaller but beautiful church is that of St. Gertrude, which is of an earlier date than St. Pierre, having been mostly

built in the 14th century, but the tower and spire were erected simultaneously with the Hotel de Ville, the spire being of much the same type as the terminals of the Hotel de Ville turrets. It is, in fact, one of the few examples in Europe of pierced tracery spires, a feature which will always be well worth introducing where there is no lack of funds, and where the mason possessed the necessary skill and the architects the requisite taste.

Of the really earlier Louvain there are but few remnants, but one Romanesque doorway at least still stands, now blocked up, in one of the small streets. It was apparently built about the year 1200, for the broad leaves of the capital are beginning to curl over and open as the hart's tongue fern would do in early Spring, and the nail head



LOUVAIN. THE PULPIT. EGLISE DE ST. PIERRE

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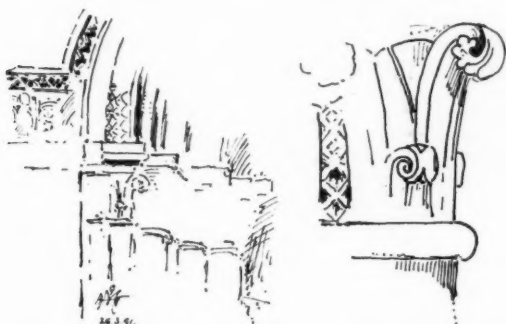
ornament beside it has a certain rude resemblance to the dog-tooth which is characteristic of 13th century work in England. There are suggestions also of figure carving about it, but it is in a bad state of disrepair.

Another and unique relic of a somewhat



LOUVAIN CATHEDRAL, EAST END

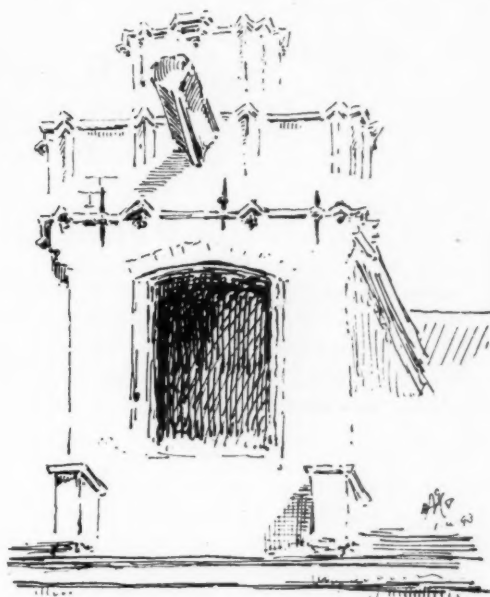
later time, that of Louvain's greatest prosperity, is to be found in a stepped gable in the Rue de Namur which is covered with 14th century geometric tracery of cut brick work. There is nothing like it anywhere else except upon an exceedingly small scale



LOUVAIN. ROMANESQUE ARCH AND CAPITAL

and generally of a later date. It is such a thing as could hardly be done except with quite tiny bricks of a peculiar character which would enable them to be cut and rubbed, and yet resist the action of the atmosphere for a long period. It evidently fronted the house of a wealthy man, possibly one of the thirteen who were thrown out of the window during the émeute of 1382.

Yet another reminiscence of Gothic Louvain is to be found in a small series of stepped dormers in one of the side streets, built of stone and with curious little V-shaped projections to the vertical portions of the steps, round which horizontal mouldings break in what appears like picturesque confusion. These probably belong to the 15th century, but no definite date can be ascribed to them. The most perfect of them is illustrated, and indicates that it was used as a means of admitting goods to a roof loft, the over-hanging beam having at one time having a pulley suspended from it. This was quite the usual thing in mediæval com-



LOUVAIN. DORMER

mercial towns, the ground floor being given up to the shop, the general body of the house to residential purposes, and the roof to storage.

There are a good many quaint architectural remnants in the form of broken-down houses of the 17th century, the most elaborate of all being in the Vieux Marché. In all cases they have fallen from their old high estate, for Louvain, once wealthy, has now every sign of poverty in its older portions, though there is obviously considerable wealth in the newer. During the 17th century there must have been a considerable amount of building in progress. Amongst

other places, the great Gothic "Halles" was taken in hand. It was originally erected as a warehouse for the cloth-makers guild in 1317, and is now in a greatly dilapidated condition, but an oak door, dated 1636, is one of several indications that a good deal of care was lavished upon it at that later period. Double doors of this character are quite common in Belgium even at the present day, having a centre post attached to one of the leaves to cover the joint, this post being richly carved. It must be remembered that these doors were, and still are, generally large enough to drive a horse and

carriage through, as they generally even now give access to an internal court yard, entered through a tunnel which passes from front to back of the building.

In the same Rue de la Namur which contains the Halles and the brick tracery house already referred to, there is an old long-handled pump, probably put up at the beginning of the 18th century if one may judge from the character both of the iron and stone work, and this is still in use, or was, a short while since, as a reminder of the time when even great cities obtained their water supply from wells and springs.

THE SAN FRANCISCO CITY HALL COMPETITION

By JOHN BAKEWELL, JR.

IN the solution of an architectural problem it is necessary, first to study the uses to which the building is to be put, and then to find that arrangement of plan which meets the requirements in the most simple and direct manner; a plan that is organic, in which the component parts are tied together by the simplest possible system of circulation.

These component parts should be put in their proper relation both as to location, and as to size and at the same time the problems of lighting, of grouping into departments, etc., should be taken care of.

Then above all the plan should express some real architectural idea, and it is very difficult to achieve the other qualities such as simplicity, directness and clarity, without this unifying idea or feature.

When this idea to be expressed is finally selected it can by study be made more and more lucid and apparent, so that it is evident to any one at first glance.

The study of the program comes first, then the unifying idea and then the study of the elements.

To the layman the only thing in a set of drawings that really catches the eye is the outward expression of the plan in the elevations. Here again the idea which grows out of the plan must dominate to such an

extent as to give beauty and interest to the whole composition. Here, too, a study of the proportions of the various parts as units and their proper relation to each other will express the original idea more and more clearly until it at last is easily apparent.

Now, so far, we have merely tried to analyze the process of reasoning and composing that every competitor has gone through in arriving at his final result.

In the recent competition there were a great many different schemes or ideas—some of them very clearly and beautifully expressed. The first thing that struck one in looking at the different sets of drawings was the idea. Then a study of the plans would show whether the scheme was based upon a proper interpretation of the program. In other words the spectator takes just the opposite method of reasoning from the author. He sees the result and then gradually works backward to the original program.

We have been asked to give a description of the winning design for the City Hall, and the simplest way to do this is to first explain the process of evolution through which all designs must pass before completion.

(Continued on page 72)

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A FRENCH SOLUTION OF THE BILL-BOARD NUISANCE

THE French Chamber of Deputies has recently enacted a measure intended to restrain, if not entirely abate, the bill-board nuisance. From a casual reading of the measure we are inclined to commend this enactment as possessing much merit and would regard with favor similar action in this country.

We have referred so many times in these columns to the bill-board nuisance, particularly those flaring signs which line the right of way of our railroads and other arteries of travel, that further specific statement of our opinion in regard to this subject does not seem necessary. The bill passed by the French Chamber provides a tax on large sign boards (six yards or under in length) of approximately \$10 per square yard, the tax rising in proportion as the size of the sign is increased.

A similar tax in this country would not only tend to materially decrease the size of signs in general, but would in all probability entirely do away with the present custom of covering the roofs and sides of farm buildings with unsightly blotches of color chosen for their brilliancy from among all the varying shades obtainable in paint or ink and contrived into advertising devices of fearful and wonderful aspect.

GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS IN WASHINGTON GREATLY NEEDED

THE announcement in the daily press of Washington, D. C., that certain of the Federal buildings in the Capital are in an extremely unsanitary condition will not be regarded with surprise by those familiar with the overcrowding of many of the older buildings now used to house various departments of the Government. Many of these departments are located in buildings that ten years ago were considered inadequate. The very rapid growth and the consequent overcrowding has resulted in conditions always present where there is insufficient working space for employees and the storage of supplies and records.

The fault lies directly with Congress. Heads of departments have from time to time called the attention of that body to the existing needs of the Government. No relief has been afforded, although it is now some time since land adjoining Potomac Park was condemned to be used as sites for the proposed buildings for the departments of State, Justice and Commerce and Labor. Competitions to secure plans for these buildings were held and architects chosen, but the actual work of construction still awaits necessary appropriations by Congress. In the meantime we have before us criticism by members of Congress who seek to halt the erection of further government buildings throughout the country.

It would seem that the people would be much better served if Congress could be prevailed upon to promptly act on these important matters.

THE ARTISTIC USE OF MATERIAL

CLOSE scrutiny of examples of recent domestic architecture illustrated in the English architectural press will convince the unprejudiced observer that, while here in America we may perhaps have evolved what might be considered higher standards of planning, our English brethren excel in the selection and handling of exterior materials.

The modern English country house as shown in the work of representative architects who have specialized in domestic work, even when viewed through the me-

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dium of a photograph, suggests color and texture as well as correctness of design, to a degree that usually elicits unqualified approval. Moreover, that this fact is appreciated in America is clearly indicated by the many so-called "English type"

houses that are being erected, in this country, but which in many instances do not possess the artistic charm of their English prototypes through failure to avail of the artistic possibilities of material when skilfully handled.

THE SAN FRANCISCO CITY HALL COMPETITION

(Continued from page 70)

The central feature was clearly indicated by the program, whether it be adome or tower. And not only by the program of this building itself but by the larger program of the whole civic center. This group of buildings should be crowned by a dominating central feature, and the importance of the City Hall as well as of the buildings that will flank it seems to call for the noblest of all architectural forms, the dome.

Then, too, the interior effect of a monumental dome running up through the various stories serves to unify the whole building.

On the ground floor this is made the center of circulation from which one passes directly into the large departments of the ground floor. These departments have been simplified to two immense spaces, the subdivisions being arranged just as those of a large banking establishment, or of a large corporation would be, by means of glass partitions and counters.

In this way the plan is simplified to the last degree, and the central feature becomes strongly emphasized.

On the upper floors the two side courts flank and light the dome, and the circulation divides itself into two continuous corridors tied together again by the central feature.

In the study of the exterior the two story order of the wings gives good scale and makes it possible to get a central dominating facade feature. Then in turn the dome dominates the whole.

The order is of such scale as to give a practical working unit of bays for subdivision into offices. At the same time it is not so large as to affect the lighting.

To sum up, the feature of the plan is an

interior dome or rotunda forming a center of circulation, while the feature of a facade is a gradual building up of the architectural interest from the smaller order of the wings to the larger central order and pediment, and finally, to the culminating dome. Both plan and facade emphasize and point to the dome, the crowning center of interest.—(From *The Architect & Engineer* of California.)

RECENT LEGAL DECISIONS

LIABILITY OF MEMBER OF CONTRACTING FIRM ON INDEMNITY BOND

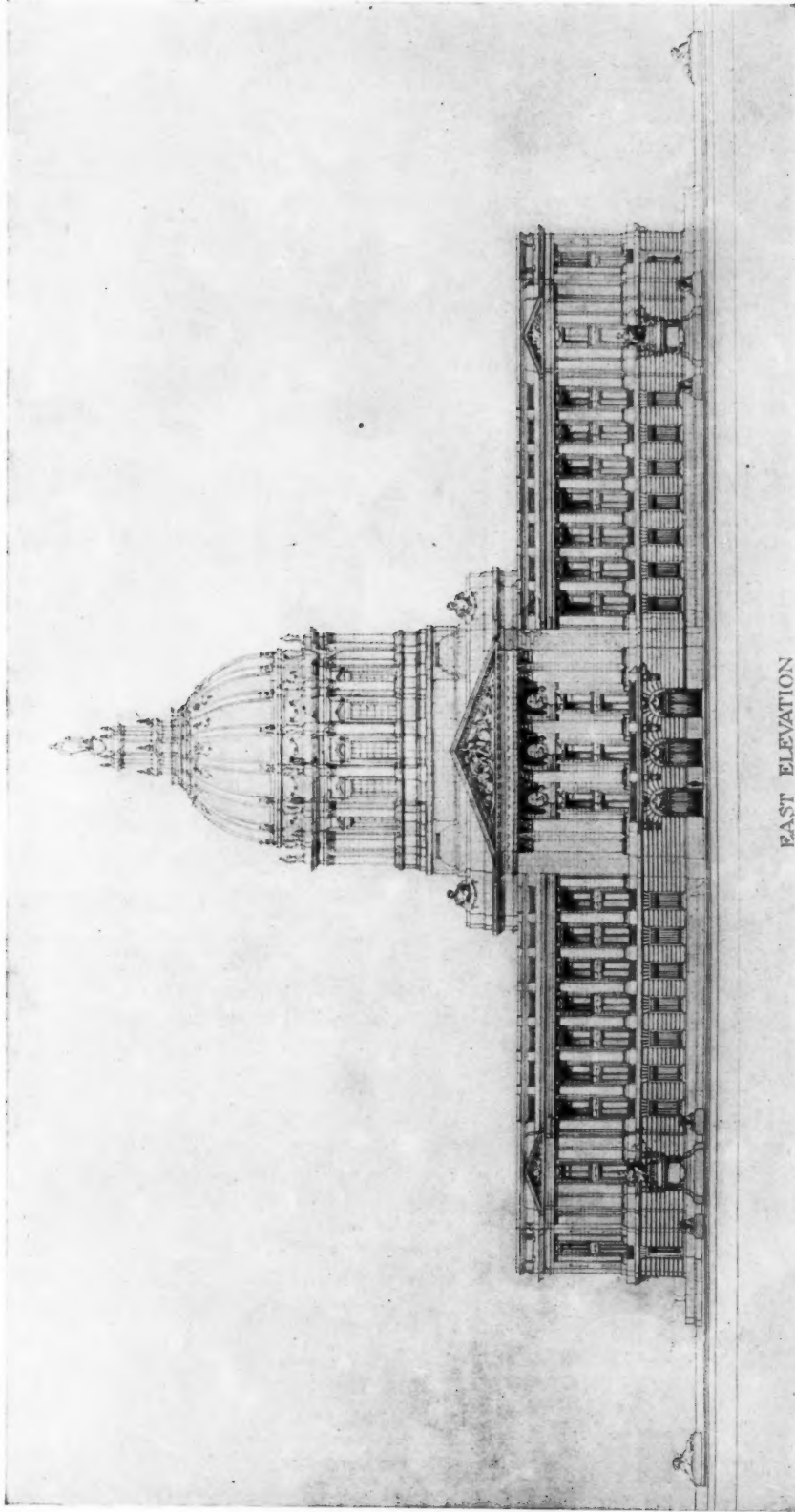
A firm of contractors gave a surety company an indemnity bond to secure a bond for their performance of a contract. One of the partners of the firm, as further indemnity, deposited a sum of money with the surety company. The surety company was subsequently called upon to pay a loss. It was held that the liability of the partner making the deposit was not limited to the amount thereof, but extended to the whole loss.

Empire State Surety Co. v. Ballou, Washington Supreme Court, 118 Pac. 923.

DISMISSAL OF SUPERINTENDENT OF WORK NO DEFENSE TO ACTION ON CONTRACTOR'S BOND

The contract for the construction of a school house provided that the town should furnish a superintendent to superintend the work for the town. It was held that the fact that the town, during the continuance of the work, dismissed the superintendent and did not employ another was no defense to an action on the contractor's bond, where no injury resulted from the town's action.

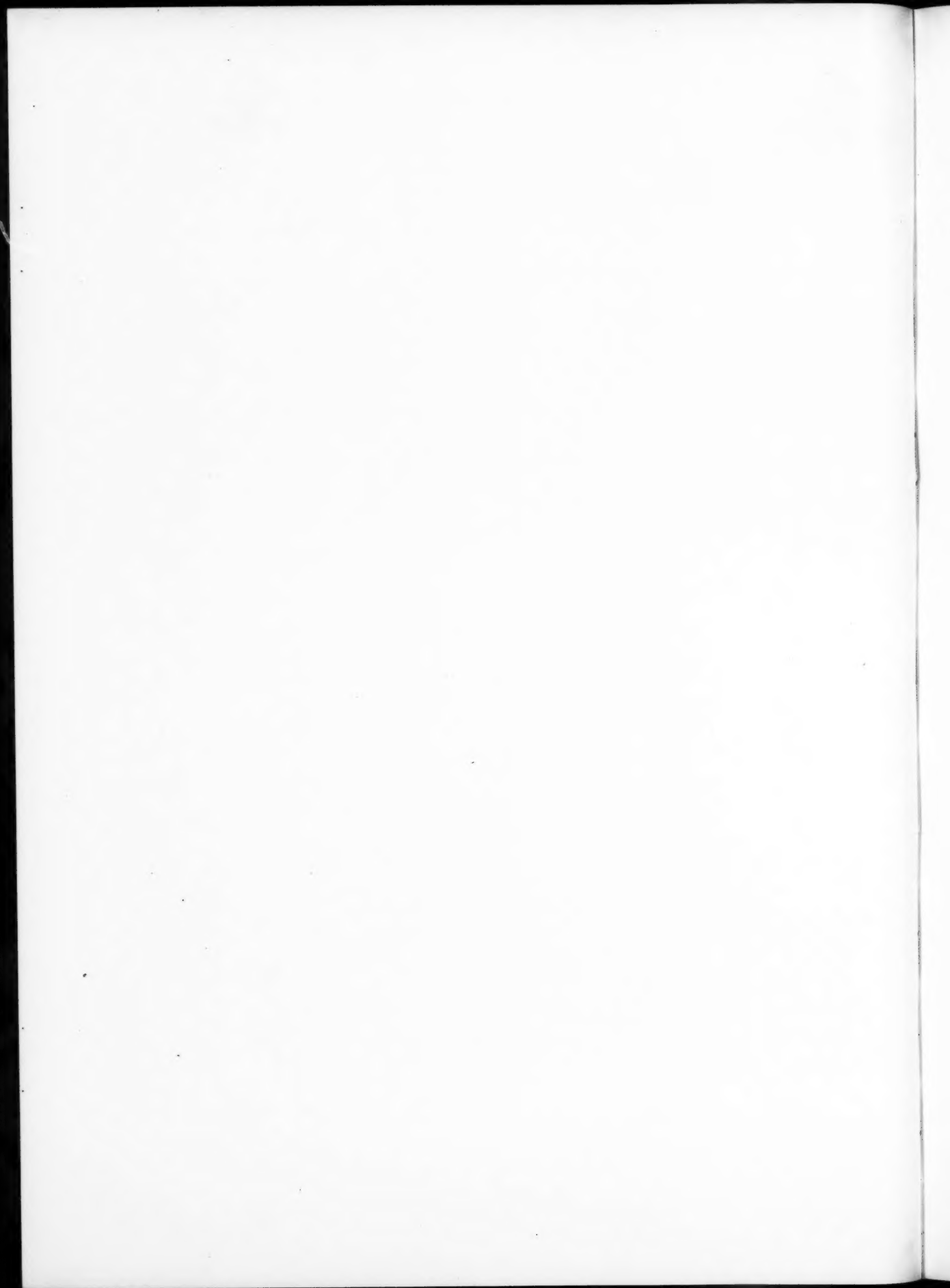
U. S. Fidelity etc. Co. v. Town of Durham, Alabama Supreme Court, 56 So. 953.

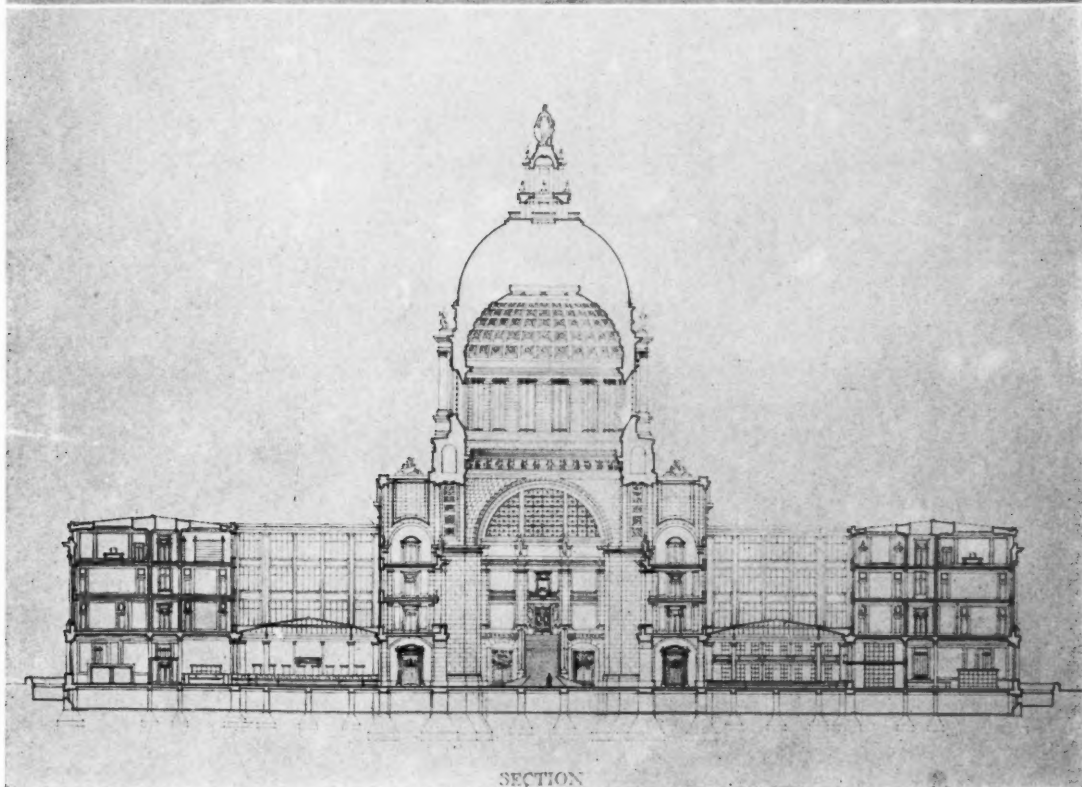


EAST ELEVATION

FIRST PRIZE DESIGN

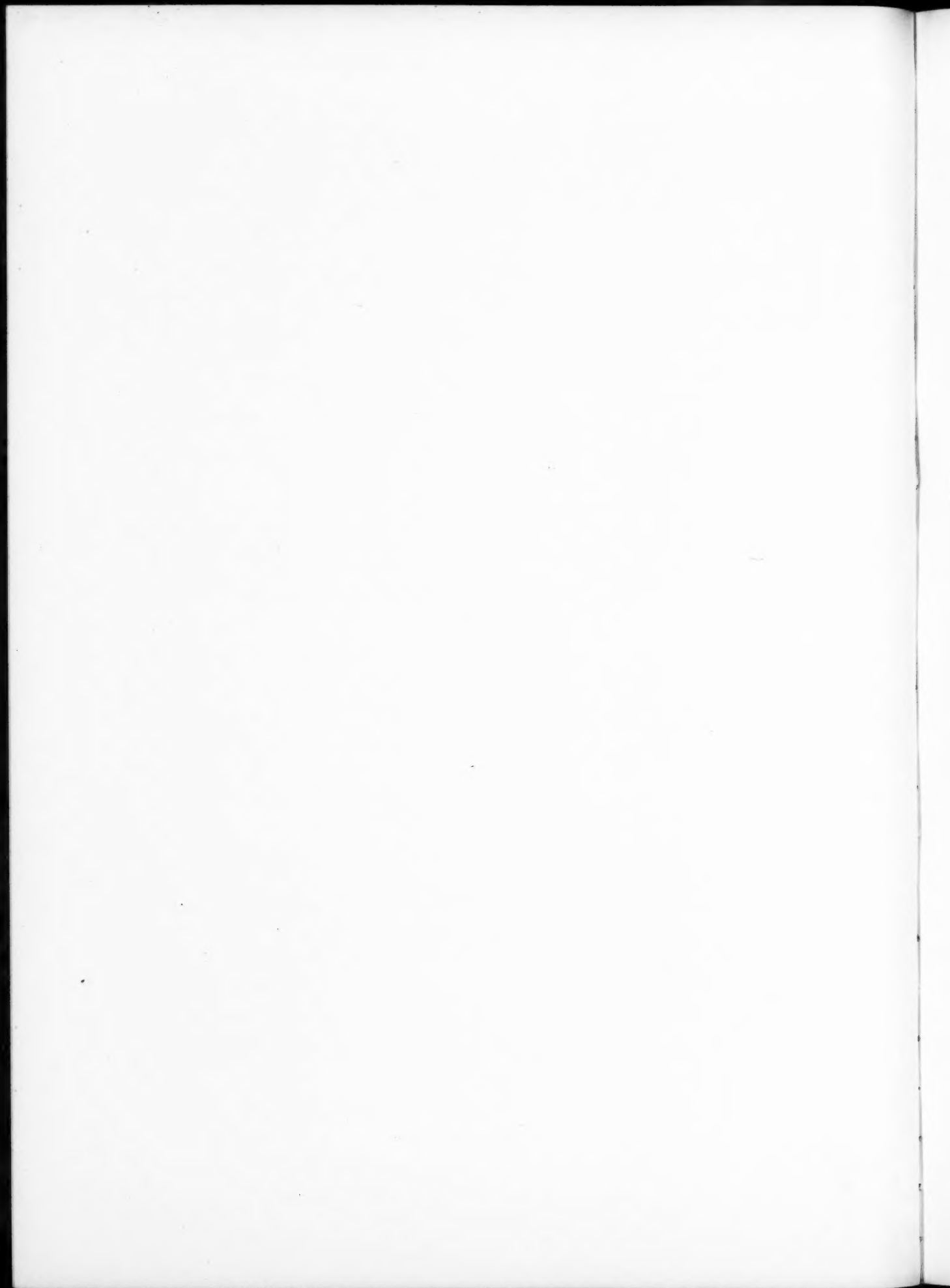
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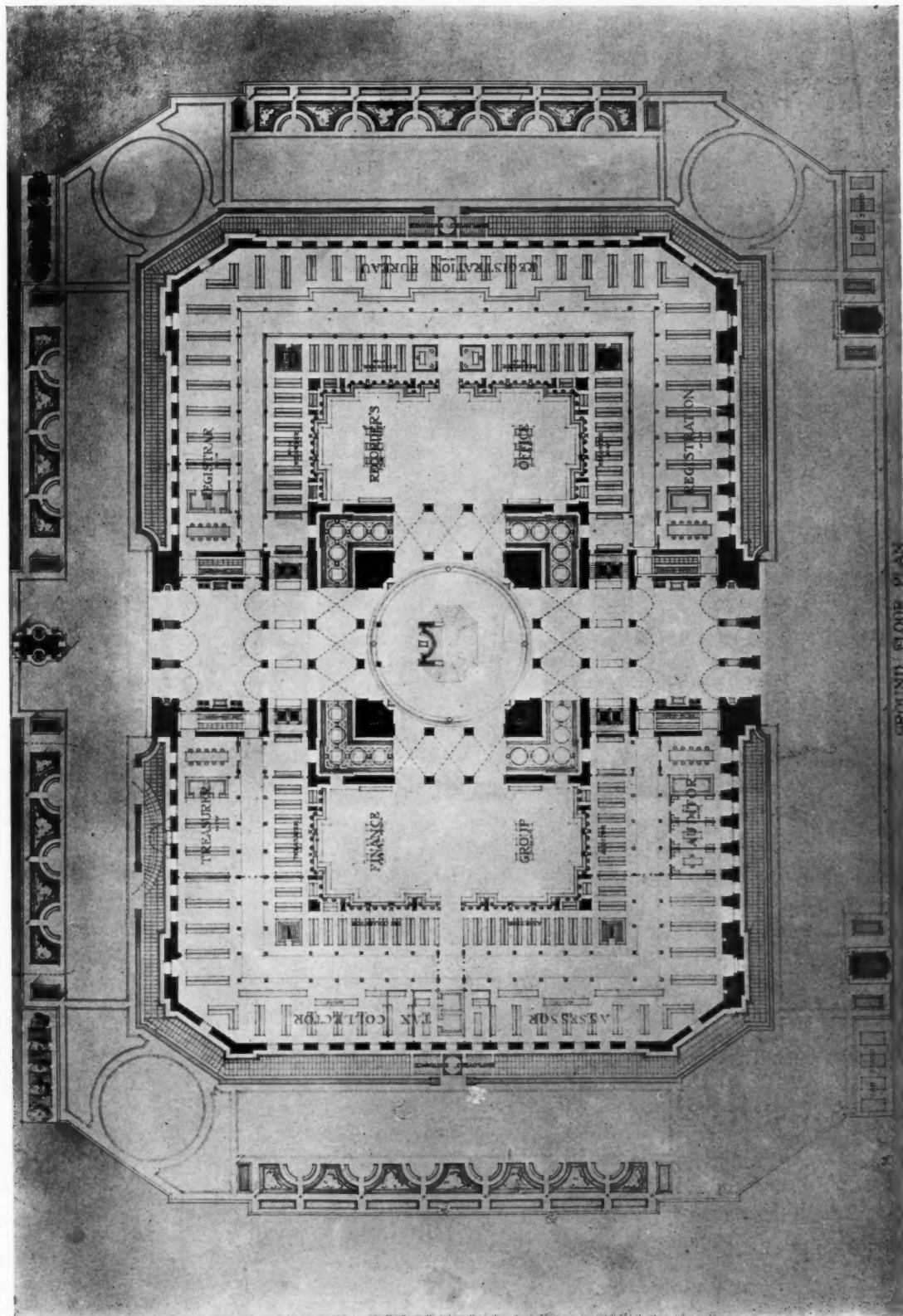




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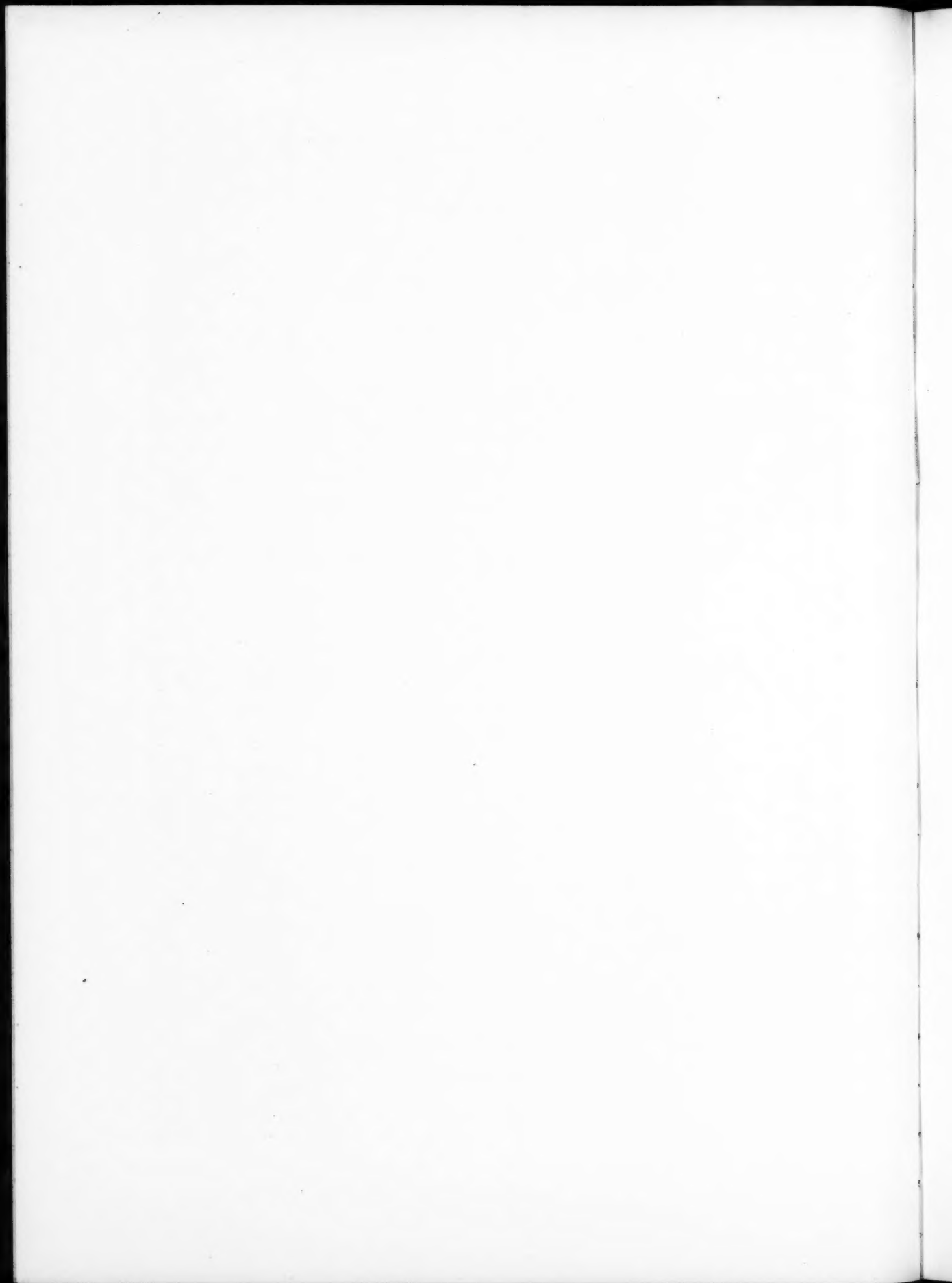


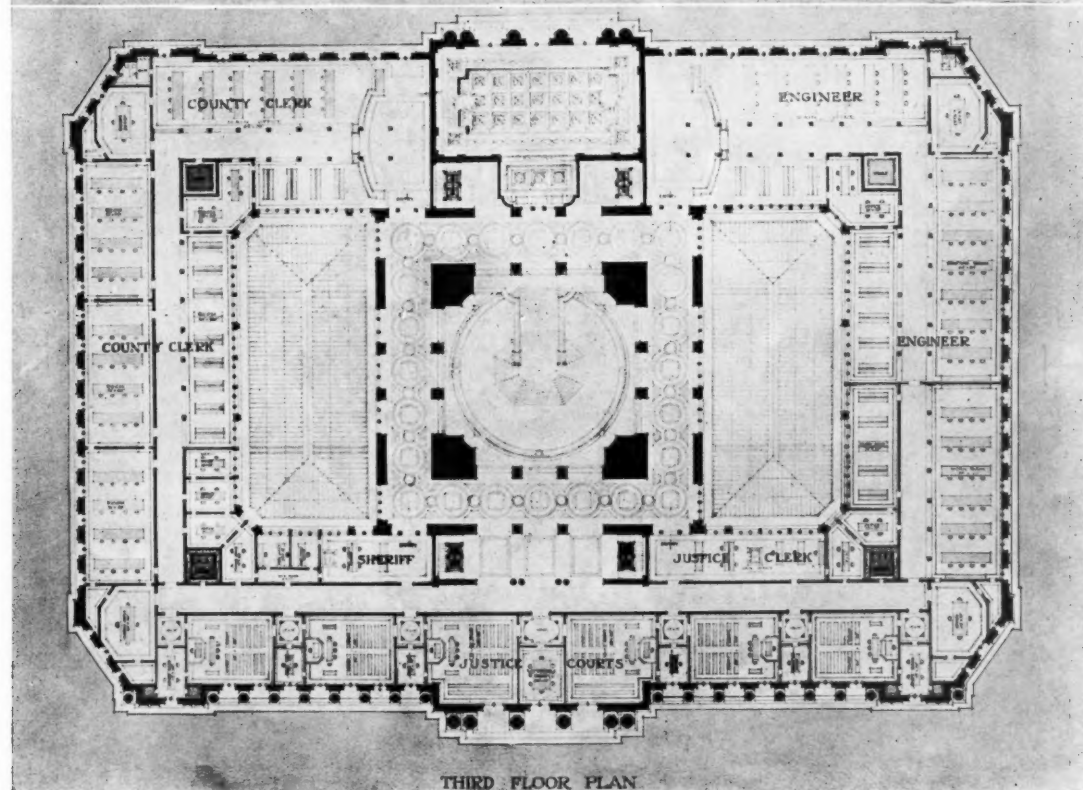
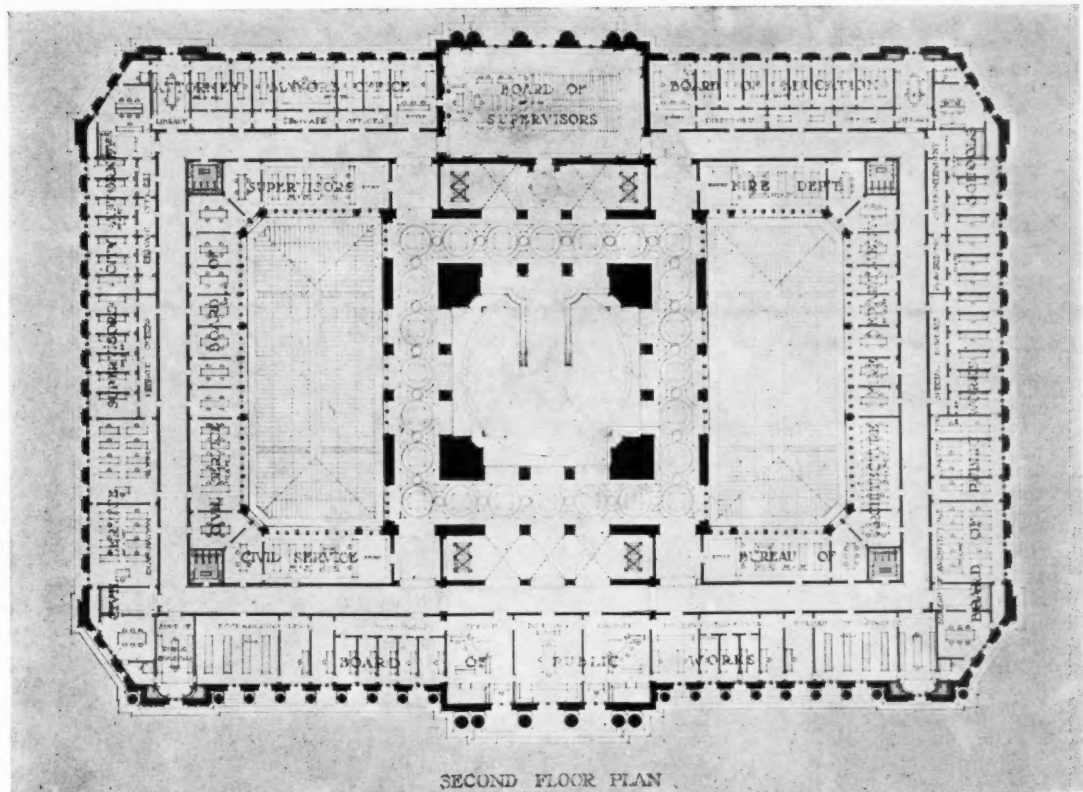


GROUND FLOOR PLAN

FIRST PRIZE DESIGN

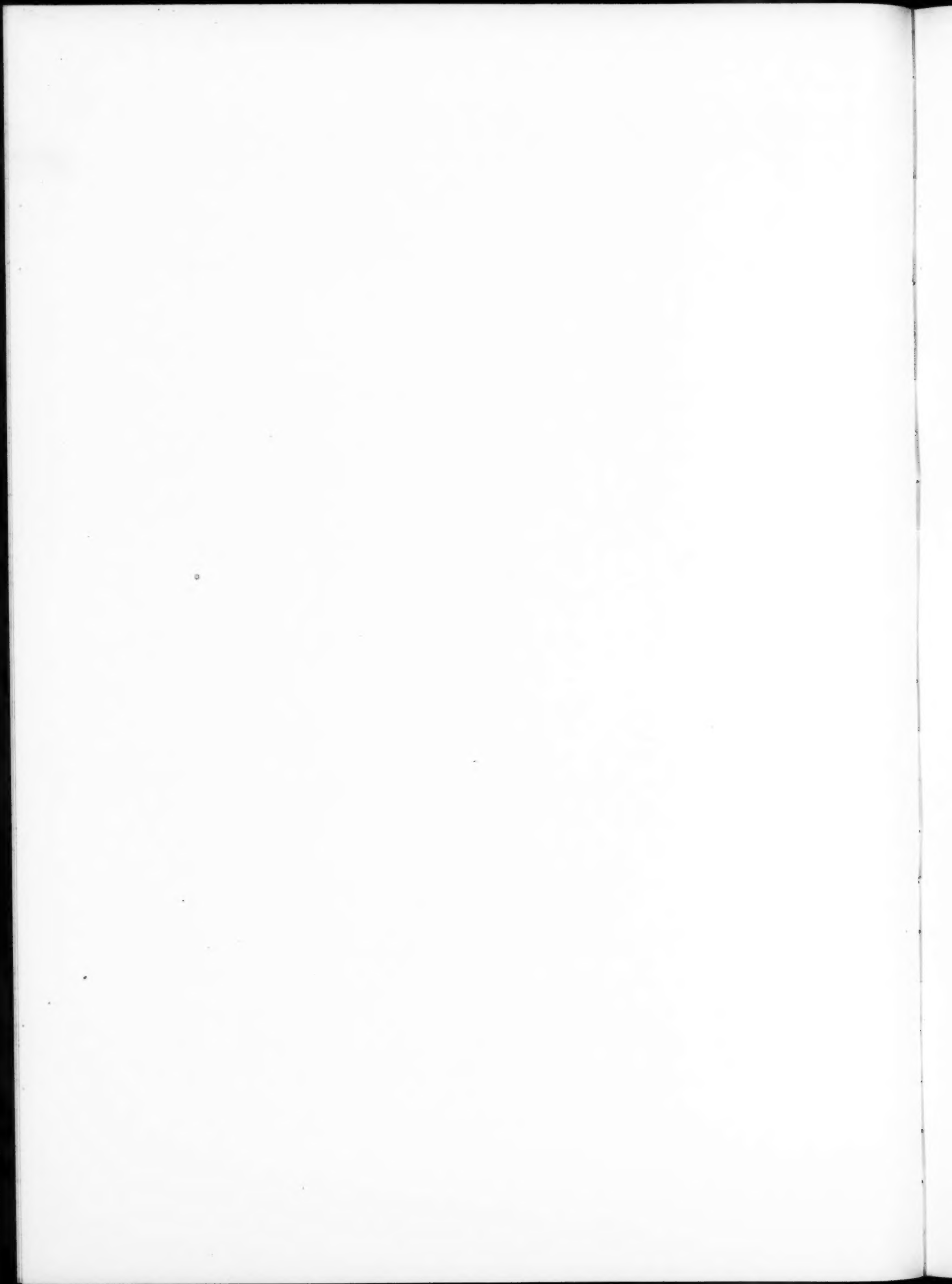
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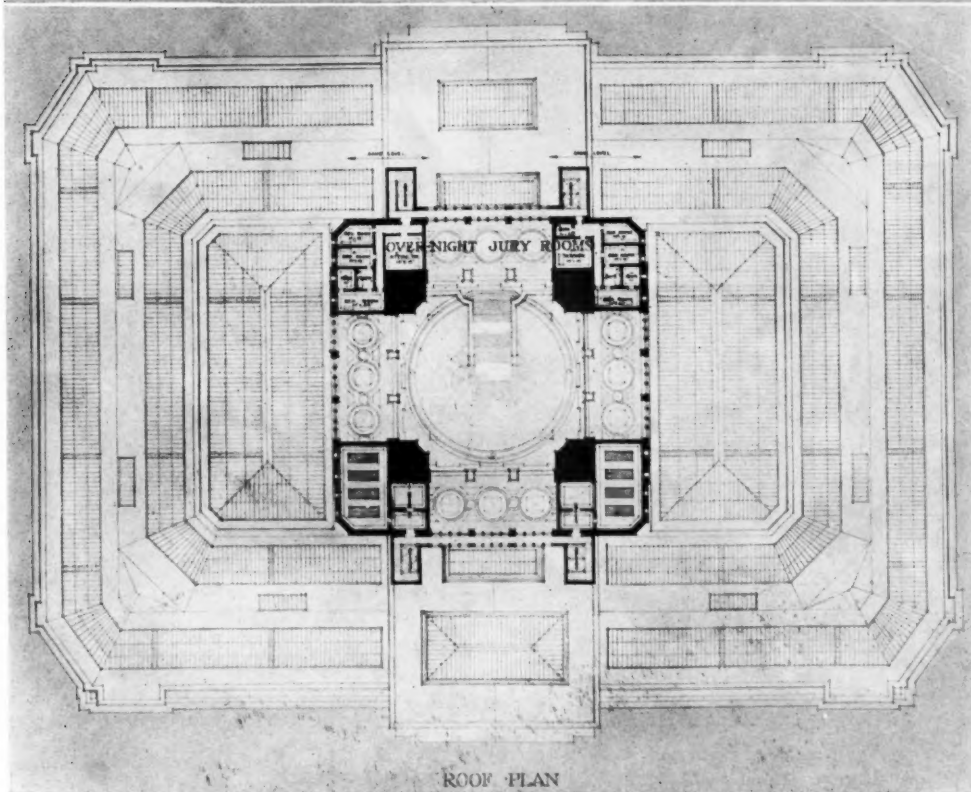
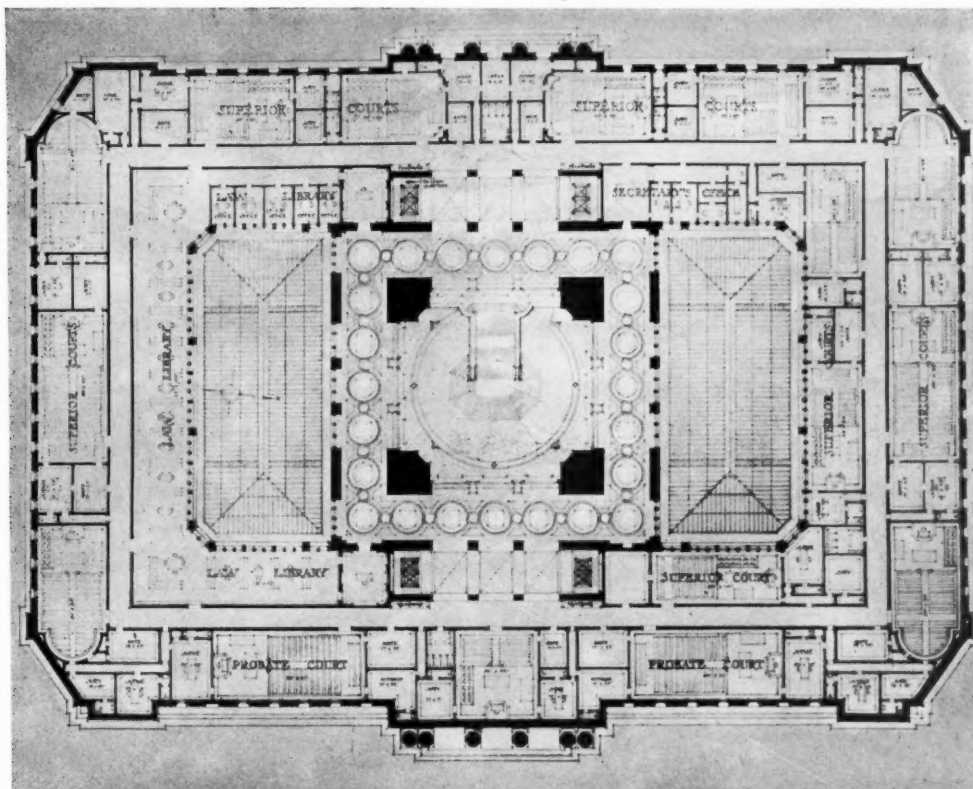




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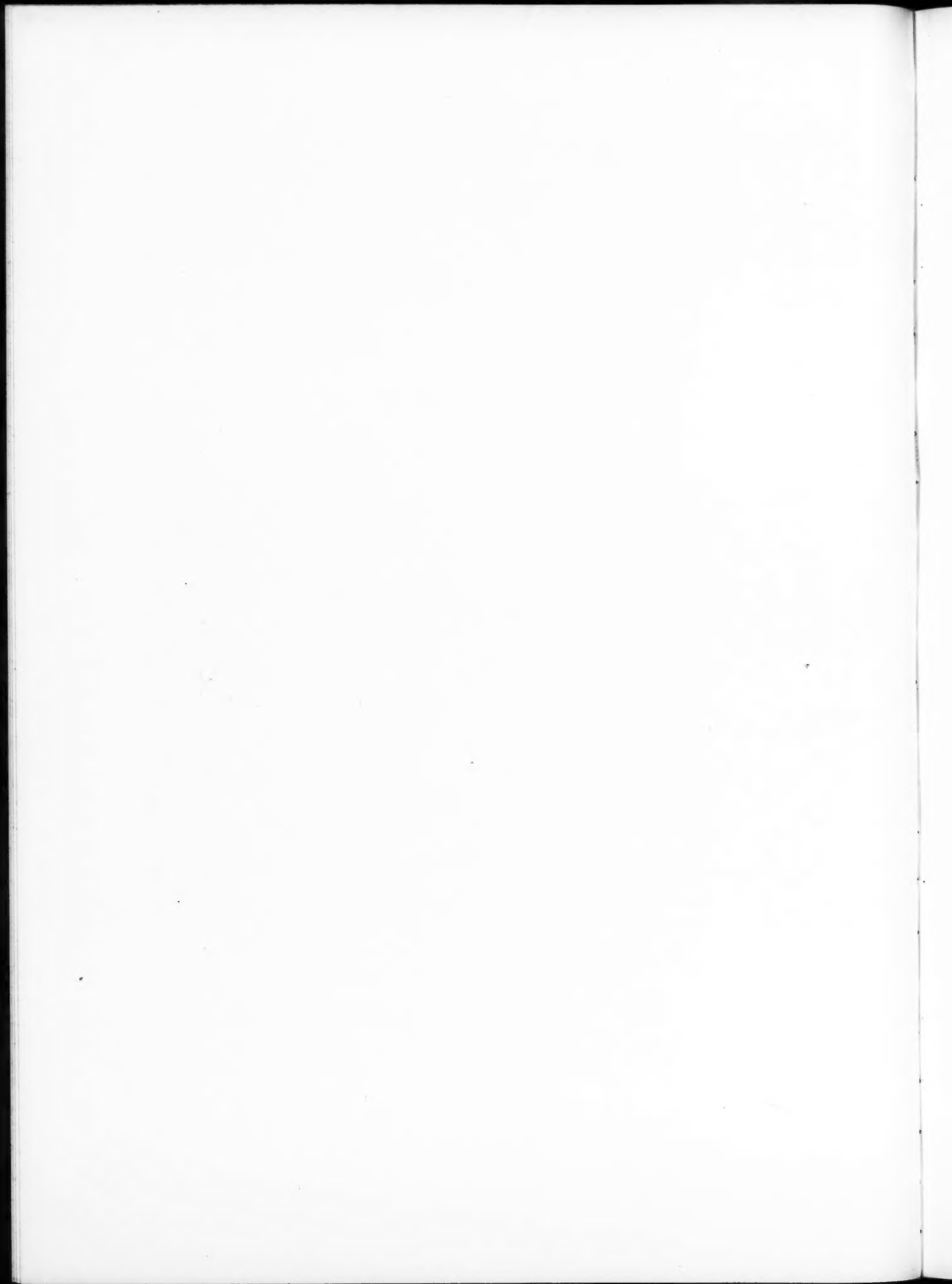
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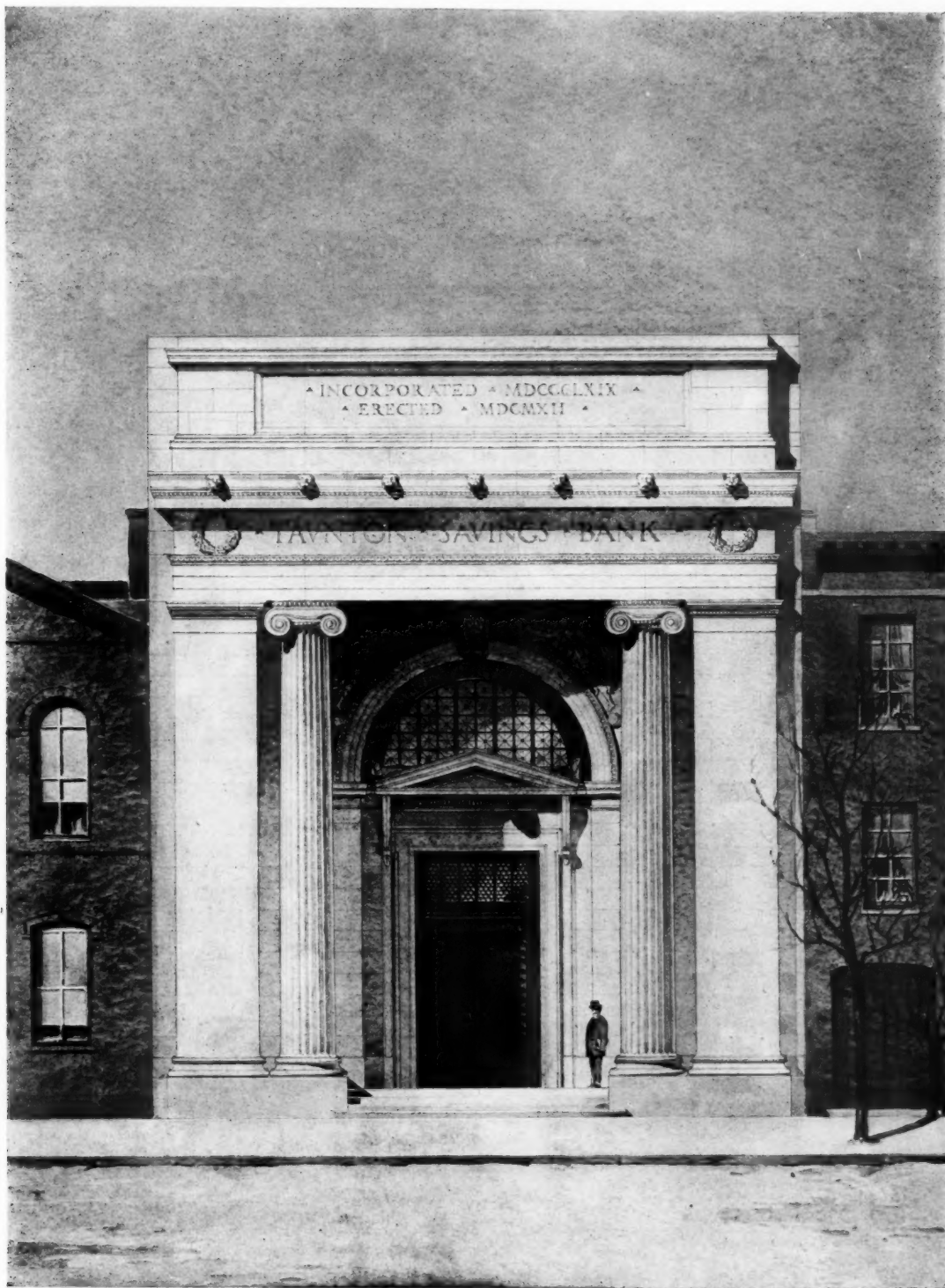




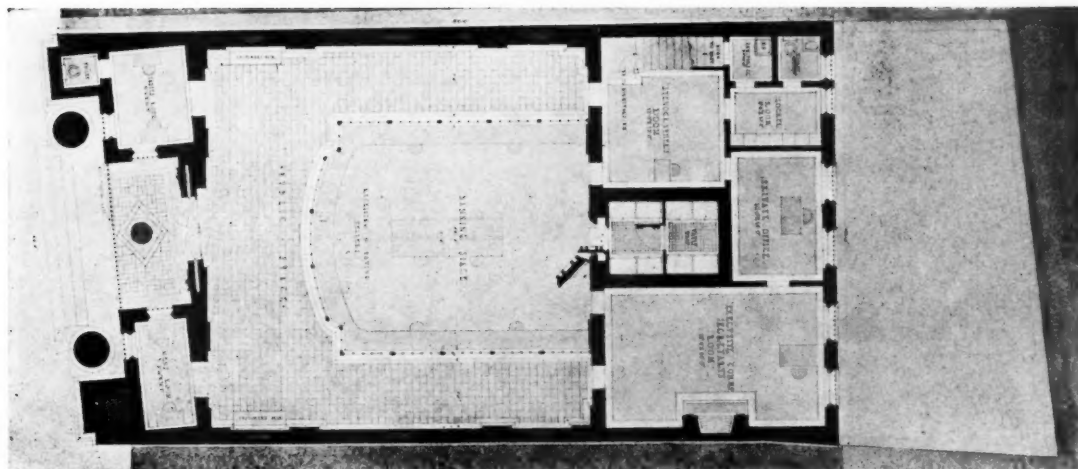
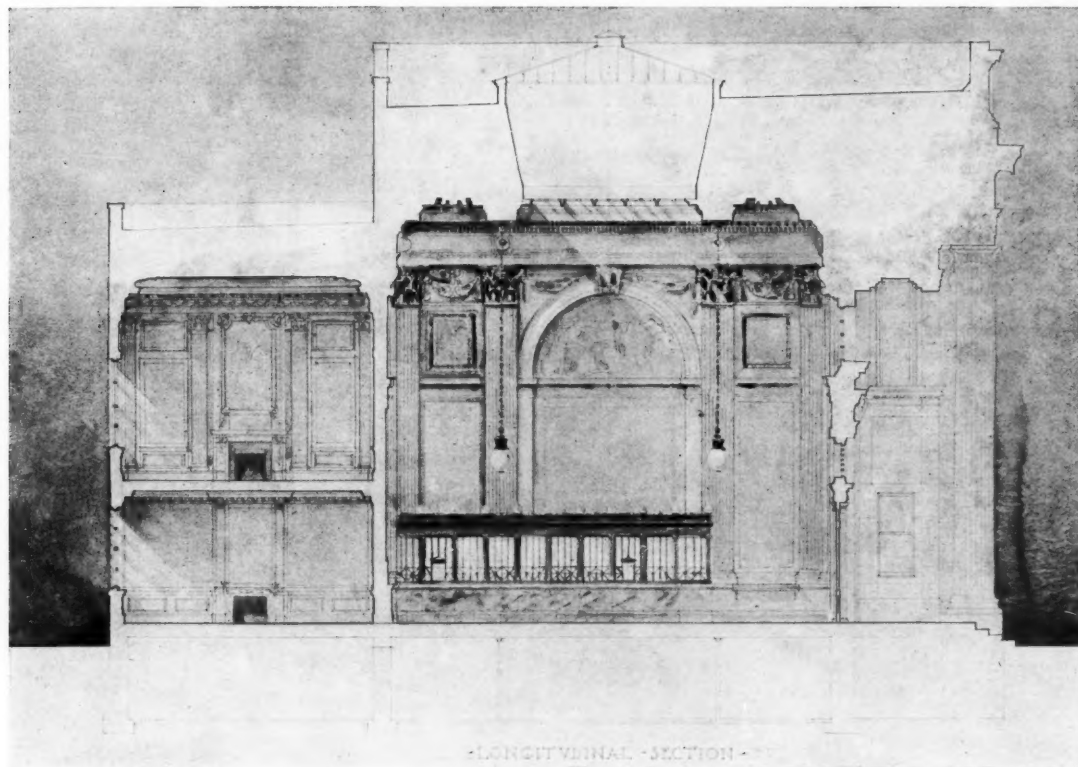
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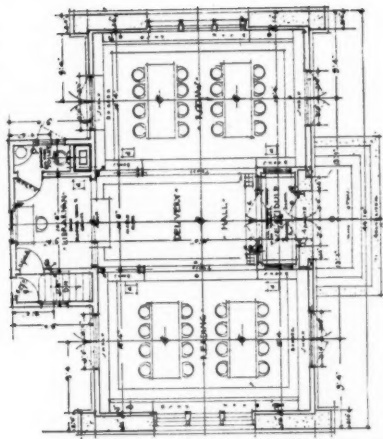
TAUNTON, MASS., SAVINGS BANK
MR. MARCUS T. REYNOLDS, ARCHITECT



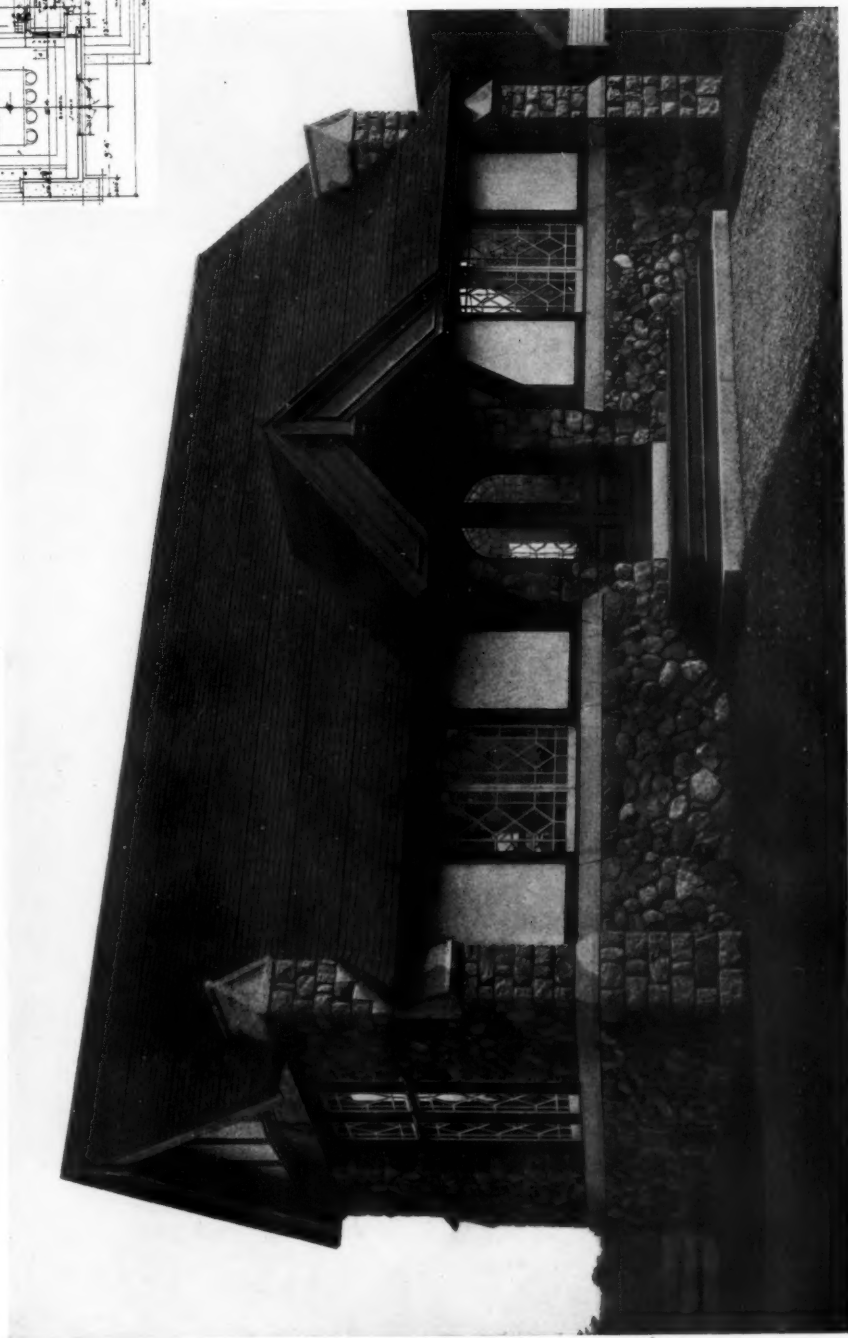
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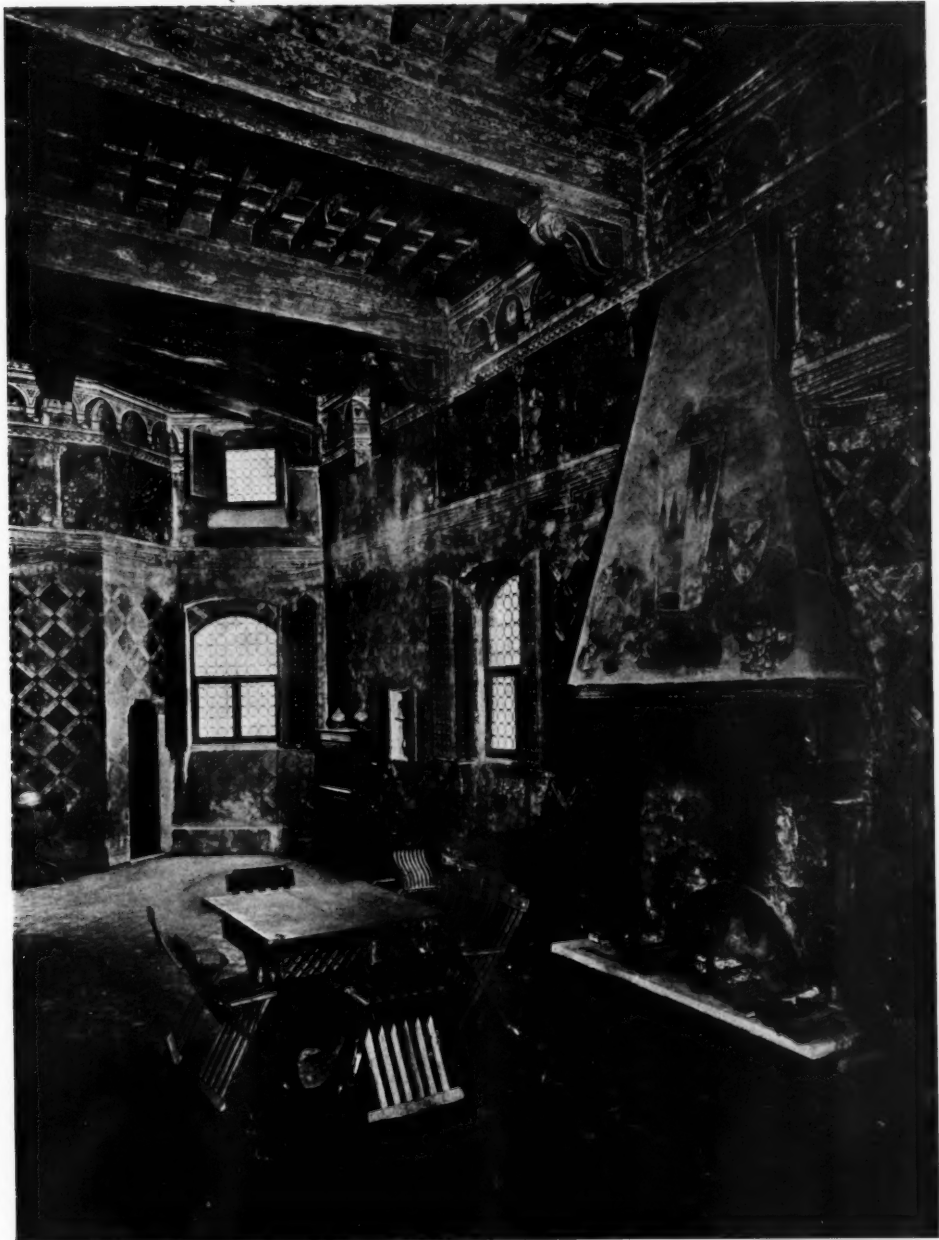
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