

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

VOLUME CIII.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1913

NUMBER 1936



BURG THEATRE VIENNA

AMERICAN CITY PLANNING—PART III

By FRANK KOESTER, *Consulting Engineer*

THE CIVIC CENTER



It is a recognized principle of design to begin at the center and work outwards, and of no subject is this so true as of city planning. In designing the plan of a city, a nucleus should be established and the remainder of the design worked

out from that point.

In a city plan, the civic center is the heart of the design. It gives the city its vital individuality, and imparts a sense of unity and cohesion which cannot be obtained in any other manner. A city with a suitable civic center, no longer gives the impression of being an accidental conglomeration

of buildings; it becomes an organized whole and gains a new dignity and a new meaning.

It is possible for every city to have a suitable plan, and every city, if it is not built on such a plan, should be replanned and rebuilt. The lack of design is generally the outcome of carelessness and ignorance on the part of the city authorities of earlier administrations.

In many cities, however, the legacy of carelessness and incompetency proves a blunder too costly to be corrected immediately, while in others, the development of an elaborate system is beyond their financial resources.

In every case, however, it is possible to adopt a plan which little by little may be



CIVIC CENTRE PROJECT FOR CITY OF SEATTLE. CENTRAL AVENUE LOOKING NORTH TO CENTRAL STATION

carried into execution, with ultimately the greatest beneficial results.

Not only motives of civic pride and patriotism go to make the civic center desirable but also the strongest motives of social and municipal economy and efficiency.

A civic center should contain, except in cities of large size where more than one center is required, the municipal and federal buildings, such as the city hall, court house, hall of records, post office, federal court building and various city departmental buildings.

The civic center should, of course, have a central location and be readily accessible from all parts of the city and surrounding suburban districts. Several main arteries

of traffic should radiate from this center, making it the hub of the city's street plan, the keystone in the arch of its design.

Such a civic center can scarcely be too large in area, and however expensive this may prove as an initial outlay, it will be of the greatest ultimate benefit.

The civic center should be large for several important reasons: The grouped buildings gain greatly in effect when seen from a proper distance, and this stimulates the imagination and impresses the observer with the power and dignity of the city, since, when so placed, they form a dignified and imposing whole. This is highly gratifying in a psychological sense, being the best expression of what a city is, the point at which man can get furthest away from the isolation of rural life. In a civic center, the spirit of collective life reaches its highest manifestations. It is thus far more than a mere collection of buildings around an open space, becoming a means of satisfying one of the strongest of human instincts, that of gregariousness.

A civic center of large extent, in addition to its artistic and psychological effect, is of great value as a place for the assembling of large numbers of people on great public occasions. It is a cen-



THE ZWINGER, BERLIN

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tral point for the reviewing of parades and for the reception of noted visitors to the city. The mistake most likely to be made in planning is to make it too small in area. The expense of a large center, though usually very great, is one that should be incurred as early as practicable in the existence of the city, for as the value of the ground increases constantly, it is an investment which never depreciates in value. It is a matter of wisdom for a city contemplating civic im-

from place to place in the city, as is the case when such buildings are located at haphazard.

There is, in fact, no valid argument against the formation of civic centers and everything is in their favor. The reason they exist in so few American cities is largely because of lack of education on the subject, and the consequent ignorance of the advantages arising from this form of design.

The proper location of the civic center is equally as important as its size and arrange-



ERNEST AUGUST PLACE, HANOVER. A WELL ARRANGED AND WELL KEPT SQUARE

provements to purchase the necessary land and lease it until the time comes for the actual rebuilding, ten or twenty years later.

With buildings grouped together in a civic center, a far more magnificent effect is produced than is possible with the same buildings isolated in different parts of the city.

It is also vastly more convenient to have the city administrative buildings grouped in one place, as those having business with the different departments, can transact it much more readily and without the waste of time that would be involved in travelling

ment; and in selecting its location, a long look into the future should be taken. Even at the expense of some present inconvenience it should be placed near what will be the center of the city when it reaches a certain growth. Its location may thus give direction to the growth of the city, which might otherwise develop along lines of least resistance or as encouraged by real estate speculation.

It should be so placed as to be easily accessible to all parts of the city, and if necessary, new avenues and streets should be cut through to afford the proper ap-



MARTIN'S CHURCH AND OLD CITY MARKET PLACE, BRAUNSCHWEIG

proach. It should be conveniently placed with reference to transportation lines but no transportation line should penetrate it, passing at most along the sides. Nor should traffic from bridges, elevated stations, subways, ferries or railway stations be discharged directly into the civic center, such terminals being more advantageously placed adjacent to it. It should not thus, be an artery of traffic, but, so to speak, the center of the whirlpool of the city's transportation.

The buildings to be included should be a city hall, court house, hall of records, post office and federal court, custom house, administrative buildings for the various city departments and possibly some buildings of a commercial character, either in the civic center or adjacent thereto and contributing to its general effect, such as a chamber of commerce, banks and life insurance buildings.

The leading principle of the design is that one of the buildings should dominate the rest. This should usually be the city hall or court house. The other buildings should be in character and style related

to the dominant building, but not of such size or outline as to detract from its importance, as it should be, in an artistic sense, protective of the others.

Another important principle is balance, the buildings being so proportioned and placed with reference to each other, that their masses and outlines produce a pleasing effect. The design of a civic center is indeed an artistic problem of the first magnitude, in which the principles of art are manifested on a great scale. It is a painting with the sky and the city as a background, a sculpture in masses, and it should have unity, strength, feeling, completeness, balance and splendor. The art of the civic architect is thus one in which the greatest talents may find opportunities for expression not obtainable on such a scale in any other art.

In cities of considerable size, it is advisable to have additional civic centers to supplement the principal center.

Such additional centers may be of a somewhat different character. For example, there might be a federal center containing the post office, custom house and federal

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court house. Other centers might be a traffic center, a social center, an educational center, an amusement center and a shipping center. In cities of very large size, a third class of centers, more numerous, and of a composite character should be provided.

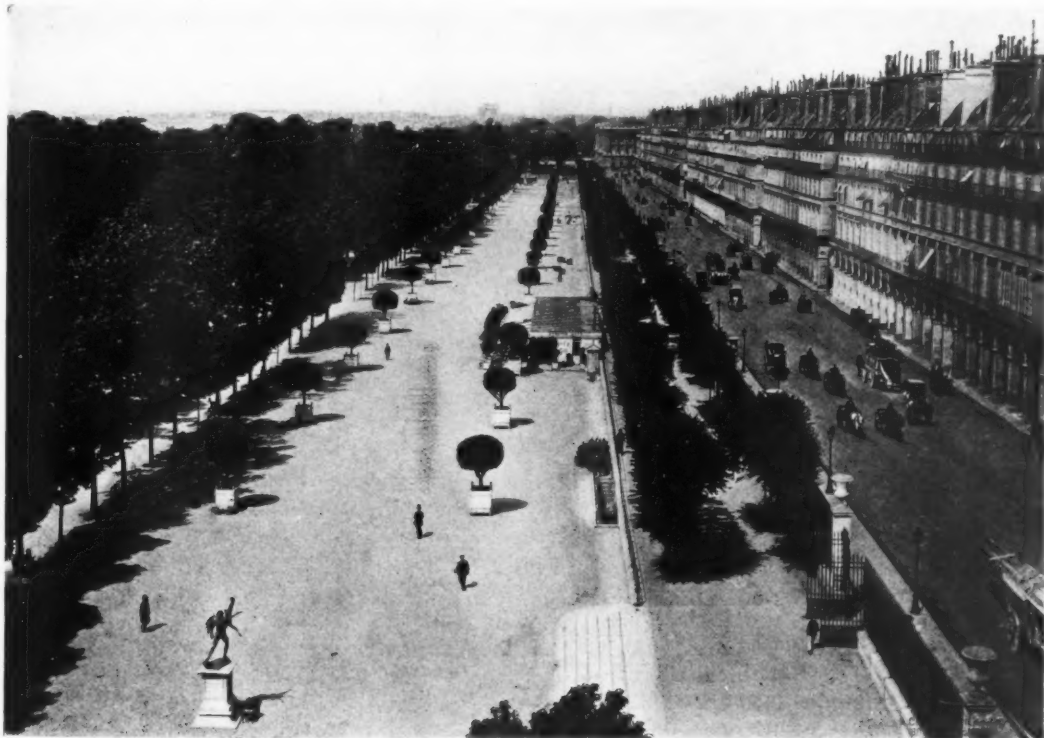
The traffic center should be composed of one or several of the railway terminals, and also the terminals of suburban and local street railways; the social center of museum buildings, art galleries, library, exhibition halls and churches; the amusement center of an opera house, concert hall and theatres; the educational center of a college or seminary, high school, library, medical college and in some cities, of the buildings of universities.

In addition to the principal centers thus outlined, another kind of center, referred to, is of great utility, and this may be termed the regional center, that is to say, the center of a certain district or region of a city. Such centers tend to develop themselves under normal conditions, but not being

planned in advance, their usefulness and attractiveness are far less than should be the case.

Such regional centers should be located at different points throughout the city, at some distance from the main centers and they should not be devoted to specific purposes, but should in effect be unified centers, containing for example, a court building, a bank, a high school, branch library, theatre, museum, concert hall and other similar structures, arranged with reference to each other and with due allowance made for the future growth of the city.

Civic centers with such additional regional centers serve to render knowledge of localities in a city, easy of acquisition. The child at school soon learns the location of the centers, and each center, having its own individuality is readily recalled. Strangers may similarly soon gain an acquaintance with the city. The psychological effect of civic centers is thus to give the city an individuality and to fix it in the mind as a well ordered whole, instead of as an



GARDEN OF THE TUILERIES AND THE RUE DE RIVOLI, PARIS
AN EXAMPLE OF A LONG, STRAIGHT STREET WITHOUT INTERRUPTIONS. CHARACTERISTIC OF HAUSSMANN'S LAYOUT

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accidental conglomeration of buildings.

The advantage of the planning of a city on the principle of civic centers is indeed so great, that no other kind of plan receives any consideration. The fundamental principle of city planning is the civic center, and when the center has been properly planned and placed, the remainder of the design is readily worked out.

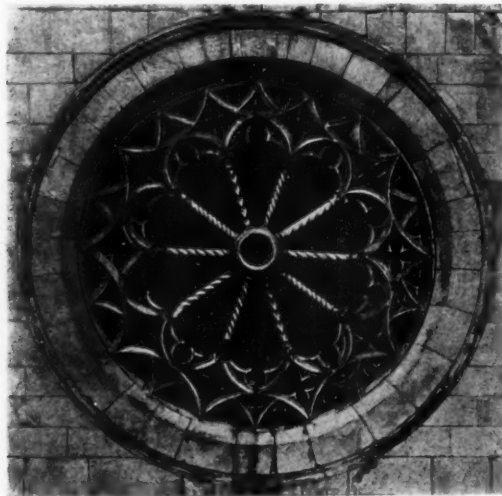
The enormous importance of city planning has not hitherto been realized in America as it should be. Abroad even the smallest places have their improvement societies, who devote their energies to improving the city, and also make these improvements known to the world at large. The city gains in self-respect as it gains in fame. One of the methods whereby fame is gained is through the elaboration of some special feature. Many of the famous European cities have some such dominant feature which is recalled immediately the name is mentioned, such as the canals of Venice, St. Peter's at Rome, the Kremlin at Moscow; Unter den Linden and the Brandenburgtor at Berlin, the Ring and Prater at Vienna, the Louvre and Notre Dame at Paris, the Jungfernstieg at Hamburg,

the Zeile at Frankfort and Westminster Abbey and Hyde Park at London, which are notable examples, crystallizing, so to speak, the fame of the city.

As in a civic center, some one structure should dominate, it is similarly desirable to have some such feature dominant, as the city will thus more readily gain fame than by diffusing its energies.

The civic center need not, necessarily, be the most noted feature, as such centers will be more or less similar in all cities, though some may make the civic center the leading feature. Among other single features which may be made distinctive are bridges, water and land approaches, embankments, drives, great avenues, promenades, monuments, squares, residential streets, parks, parkways, gardens, special styles of architecture followed throughout a district, museums, street outlays, theatres, churches, memorials, universities and the like.

By the elaboration of some such feature, every city can find some means of giving a special character to its plan, and by the utilization of natural and historical attractions, now so much neglected, can very readily increase its prestige and name.



THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

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Founded 1876

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY BY

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT (INC.)

No. 50 Union Square, New York
(Fourth Avenue and 17th Street)

G. E. SLY, PRESIDENT

E. J. ROSENCRANS, SECRETARY AND TREASURER

Address all communications to "THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT"

SUBSCRIBERS' RATES:

In the United States and Possessions (Porto Rico, Hawaii,
Philippine Islands and Canal Zone),
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TEN DOLLARS PER YEAR, POSTAGE PAID
ALL OTHER COUNTRIES . . . \$12.00 PER YEAR
SINGLE COPIES (Regular Issues), 25 CENTS

Entered at the Post-office, New York, as Second-class Matter

VOL. CIII JANUARY 29, 1913 No. 1936

NEW YORK'S NEED FOR A FINE ARTS BUILDING

A CORRESPONDENT to a New York daily paper, sums up in a few words the existing need of an adequate building in which to display our Fine Arts exhibitions when he writes:—"In the strange Babylon that has grown up around us there is a home for everything except the Nation's Art."

It is time that something decisive happened in the committee of the allied societies that has had for months this matter under consideration. With the exception of the National Academy, none of our Fine Arts Societies is in a position to assume any large obligations in the matter of a building, and if anything is to be accomplished the money necessary will have to be raised by private subscription, unless the city in the interest of art can lend a helping hand. Any reference to the enormous municipal waste of money and the squandering of the city's funds for purposes purely political, would be trite and useless. The large amounts expended each year in dubious and unnecessary undertakings would erect a building that would answer the city's needs as an exhibition place for the Fine Arts and a housing for the offices of their executive bodies for years to come.

As instancing the pressing need, it may be stated that the exhibition committee of the Architectural League finds that there has been sent for exhibition three times as much material as there is room to display in the Vanderbilt galleries. The result of such conditions can only be similar to those occurring during past years in the National Academy, when it will be remembered the rejected artists set up a rival exhibition, in protest of a condition for which the Academy could not be held responsible. It is nothing more or less than a disgrace to the cause of art in this country.

Not so long ago we mentioned the predicament of the Boston Architectural Club, compelled to either abandon a proposed exhibition or accept the favors of a club of citizens who very generously offered the walls of their clubhouse whereon to display the architectural club's annual exhibition.

Smaller cities throughout the country, actuated by a feeling of proper municipal spirit, have erected art galleries that are the pride of citizens and have received the support of artists everywhere.

In fact, they seem to do these things much better in cities farther removed from the Atlantic seaboard. Eastern cities with a population largely foreign and of a character strongly imbued with commercialism, do not perhaps present in their citizenship those ideals of civic pride that a quarter of a century ago made New York a famous art center.

The conditions are not new; they have existed for a long time, but today they have attained a situation so acute, that unless New York is to become known henceforth as a sordid commercial city, it is high time that something be done to relieve us of the censure that is sure to be ours.

ARCHITECTURE'S INFLUENCE ON ENGINEERING WORK

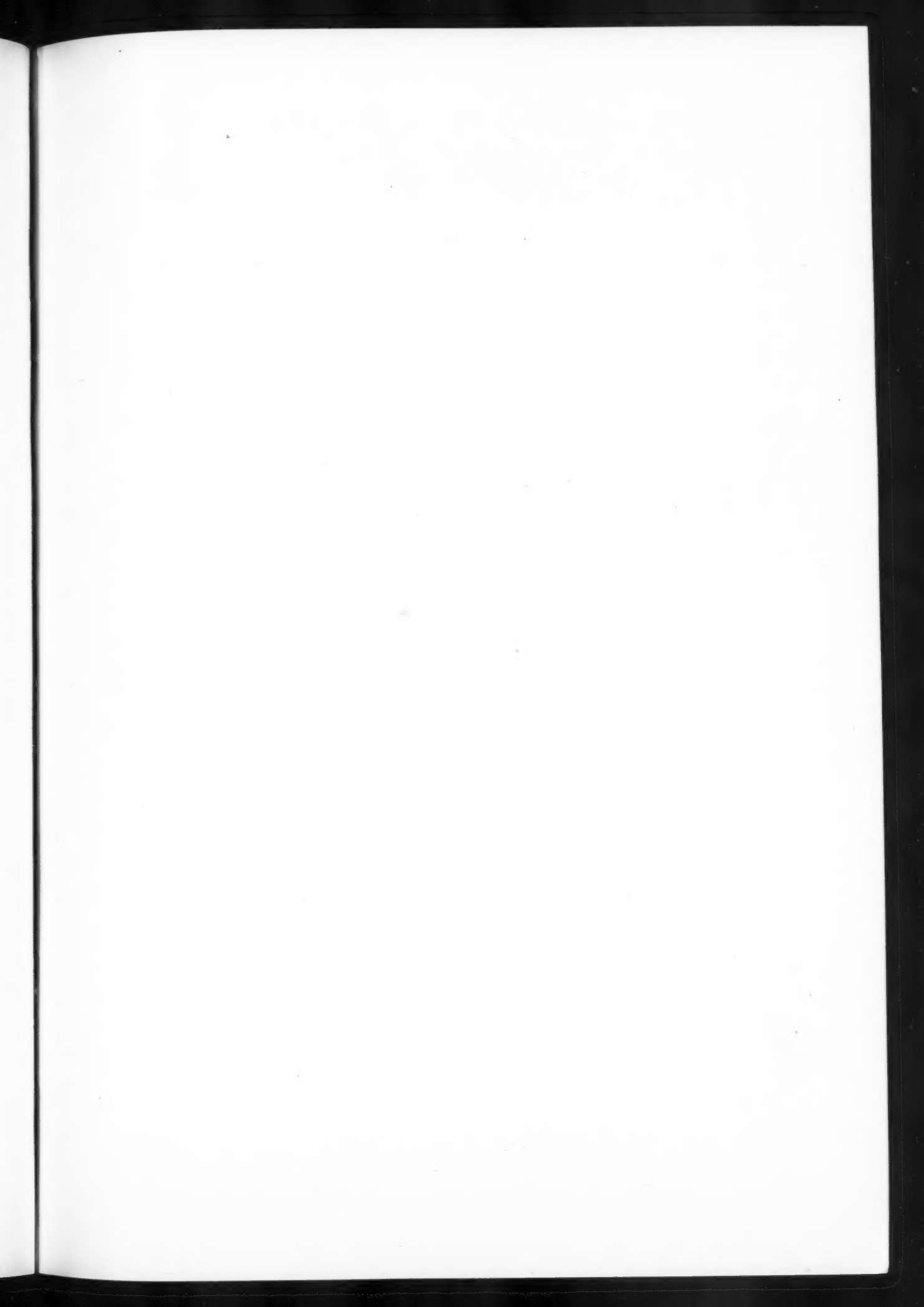
REPLYING recently to the toast, "Architecture's Influence On Engineering Work," Mr. G. R. G. Conway, an engineer of British Columbia, summed up the present relation between architects and engineers in a manner that is worthy of comment. Speaking with reference to the tendency that today exists towards specialization and the impossibility for any

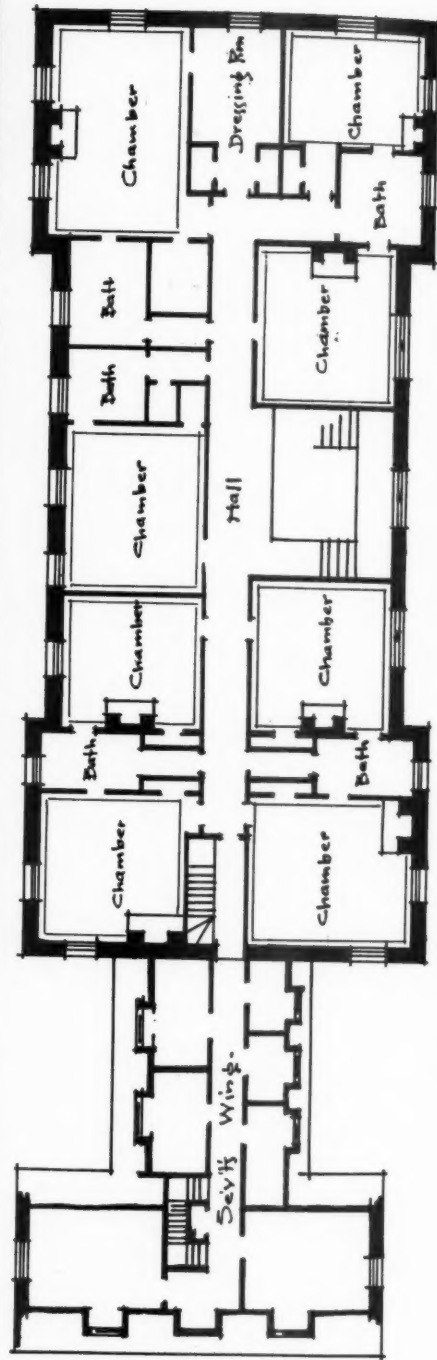
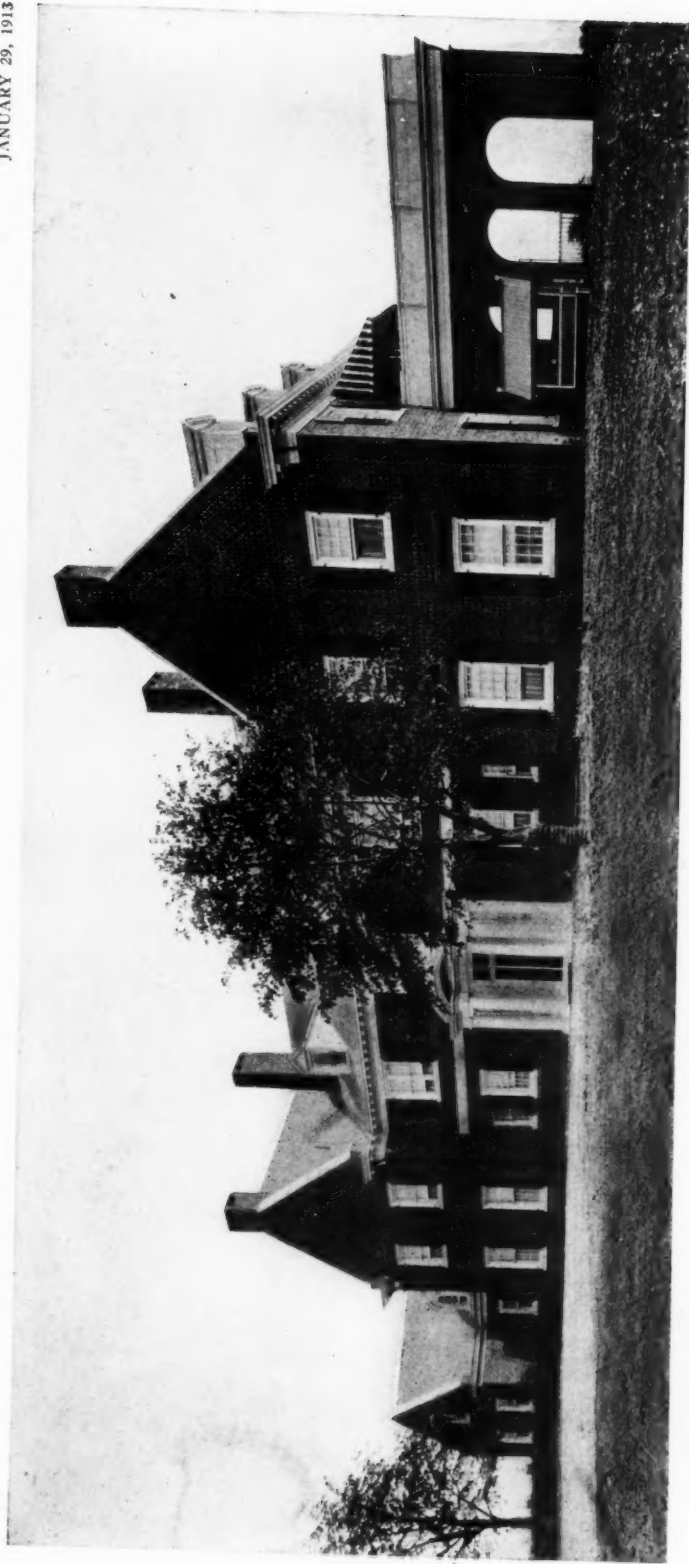
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man to cover the entire field in a chosen profession, Mr. Conway quotes Lord Bacon, who wrote: "I will take all knowledge to be my province," as illustrating how vastly wider is the field of knowledge today than it was during the Elizabethan period when it would be possible for a single man to master all that was known of any given art or science.

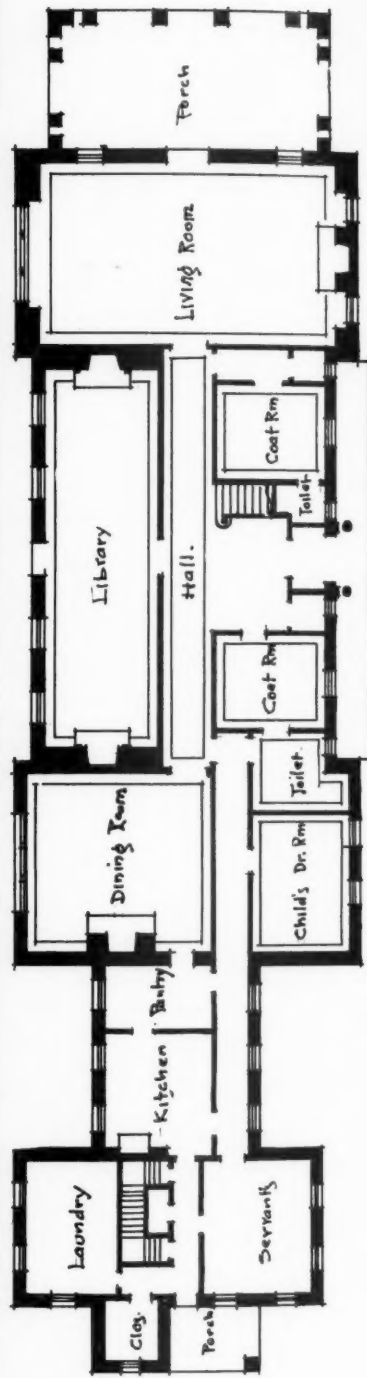
There can be no doubt that the engineer in the past has been a powerful and beneficent revolutionist and that by surmounting what were rightly considered stupendous obstacles has conferred inestimable boons on all mankind. Conceding this fact as acknowledged, Mr. Conway very sagely states that with the possibilities of engineering skill, it is well to pay due regard to the creation of the beautiful, that the engineer's work may become something more than a gaunt skeleton or at best a naked form. To clothe the work of the engineer with lines of beauty, is not to divest it of its interest nor detract from its merits. As we know, in earlier days engineering and architecture were practiced by the same individual, we also know that when the structure had received due care as to its engineering requirements, the man with loving solicitude added such architectural beauty as suggested itself. While the engineering skill enabled the building to stand for centuries, the beauty that enveloped it had much to do with making it famous. Mr. Conway very aptly states that modern engineering with all its great achievements is still in its pioneer state, "while the traditions in architecture are hoary with the experience of ages."

To effect the best results, the freest and most unselfish coöperation between the two professions is necessary,—a coöperation that is divested of all jealousy. It takes an engineer all his life to master even the larger details of his profession and the architect may go on to the end, striving to comprehend all that is vital in his art. To hope that a large work of engineering can receive from the engineer those refining touches that give a suggestion of something more than the rugged and utilitarian, is to hope for impossibilities. It, therefore, must be conceded that earnest coöperation between the two professions is necessary in the upbuilding of this country and when that coöperation is assured we will sooner arrive at the height of our artistic possibilities. One has but to look about to see what has been accomplished in this country by earnest and unselfish coöperation of these two professions. The great terminals of the Pennsylvania Railway in New York and Washington, that of the Central Railroad in New York, now nearing completion, and the towering Woolworth and the vast Municipal Buildings, as great examples of architectural design as they are epoch-making feats of the modern engineer, all proclaim the possibilities that exist in coöperation. In fact, the design and execution of the modern structure has so closely woven in its fabric the combined efforts of architects and engineers, that in the larger building, at least, the success of one depends on that of the other. The two professions must of a necessity go shoulder to shoulder in the upbuilding of the country.

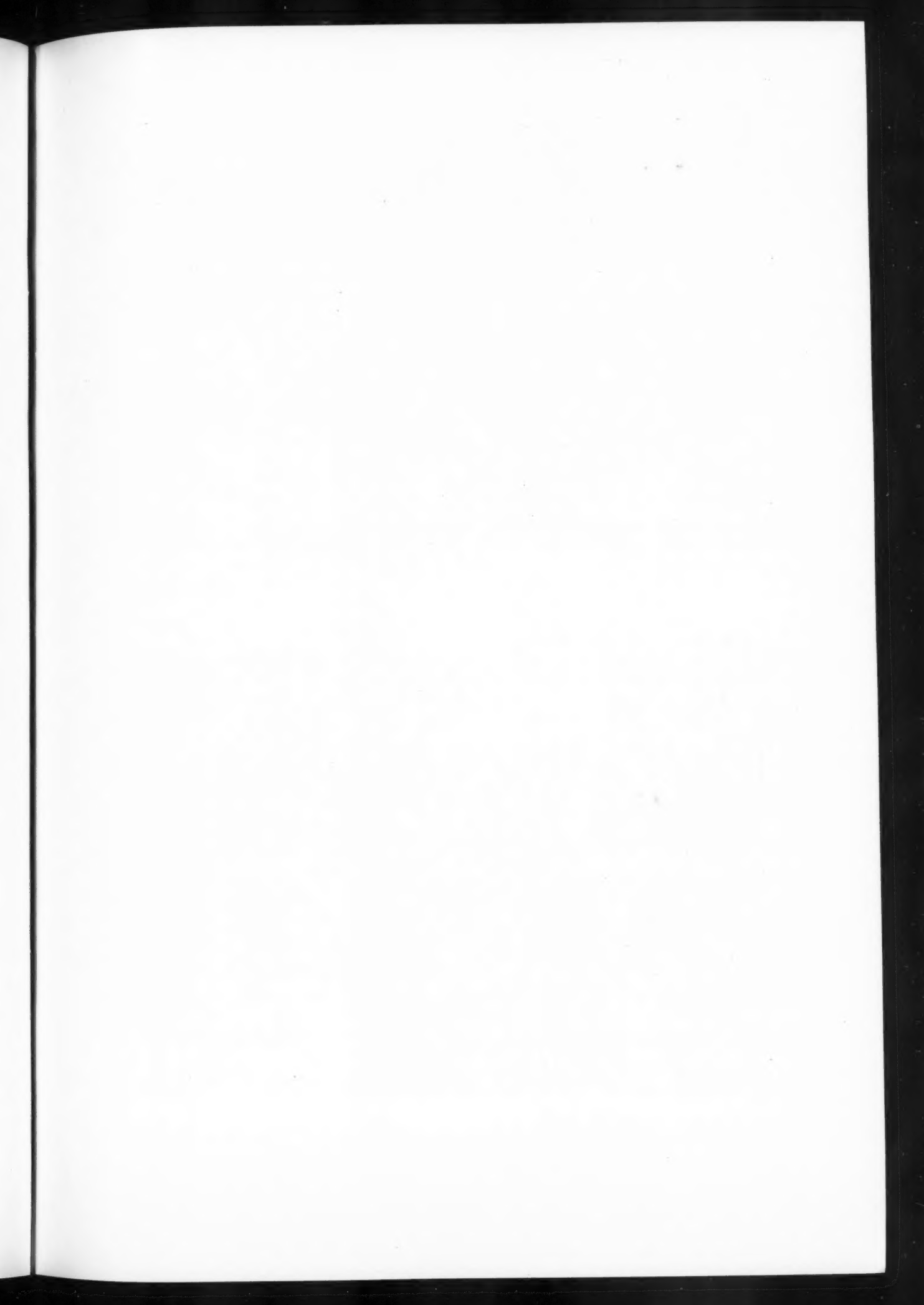




HOUSE OF J. P. GRACE, ESQ., GLEN COVE, L. I., N. Y.
MR. JAMES W. O'CONNOR, ARCHITECT



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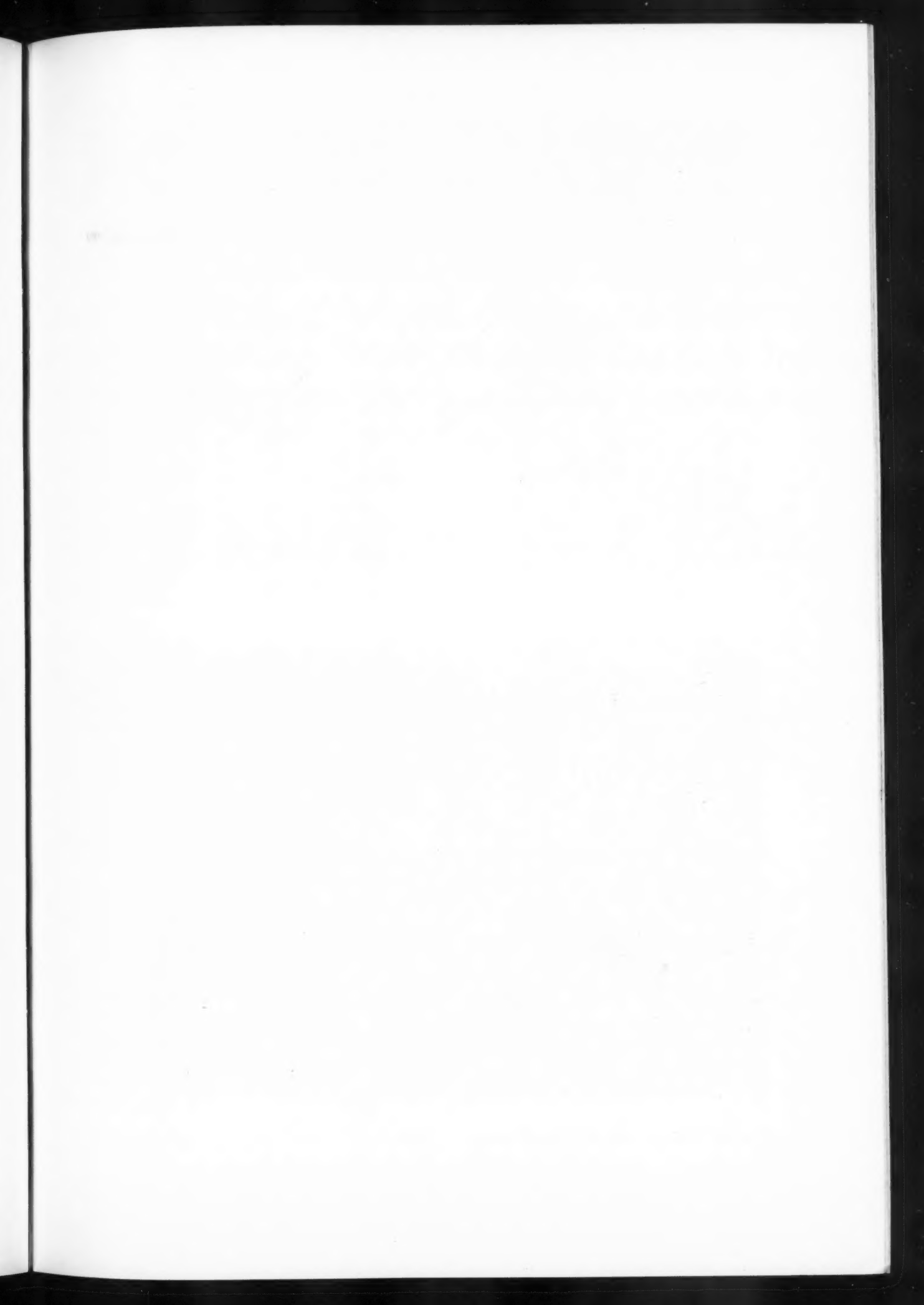




THE ENTRANCE HALL AND ENTRANCE DOORWAY

HOUSE OF J. P. GRACE, ESQ., GLEN COVE, L. I., N. Y.

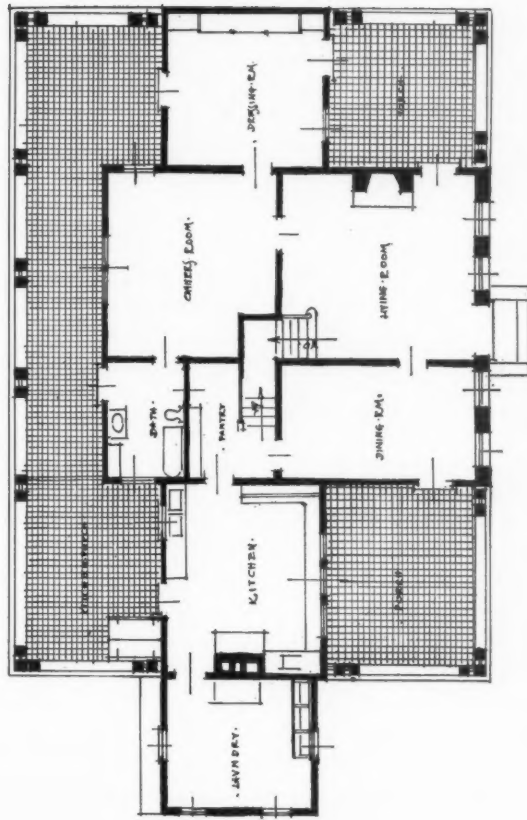
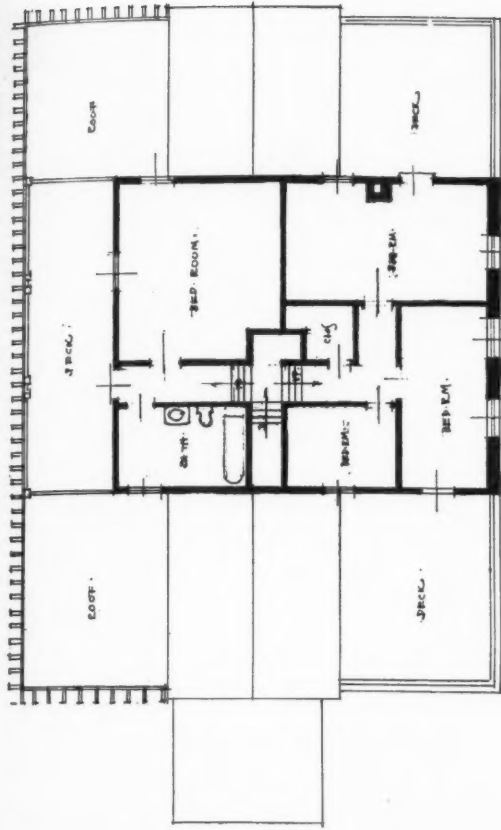
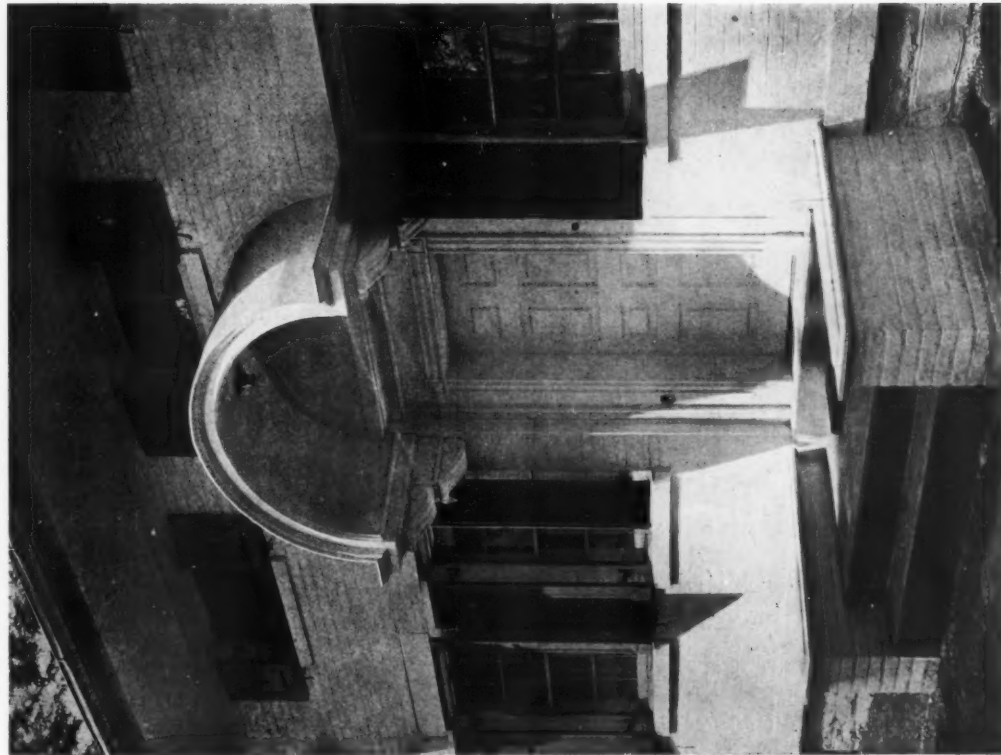
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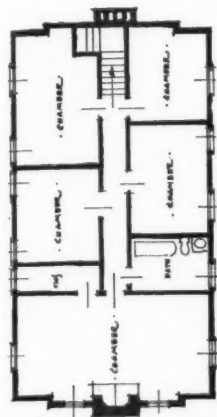
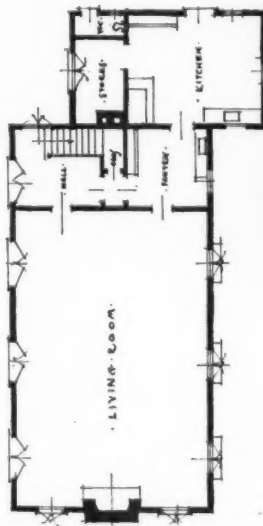


ALTERATIONS TO COTTAGE OF CLARENCE McK. LEWIS, ESQ.,
MAHWAH, N. J.

MR. JAMES W. O'CONNOR, ARCHITECT

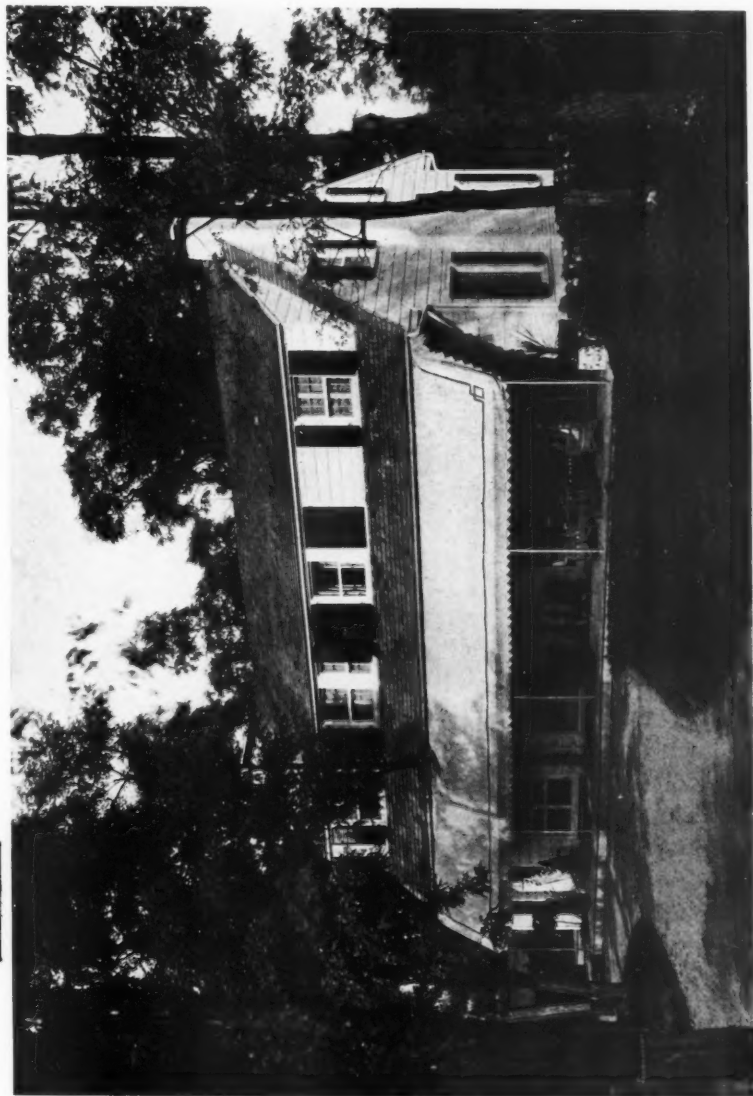


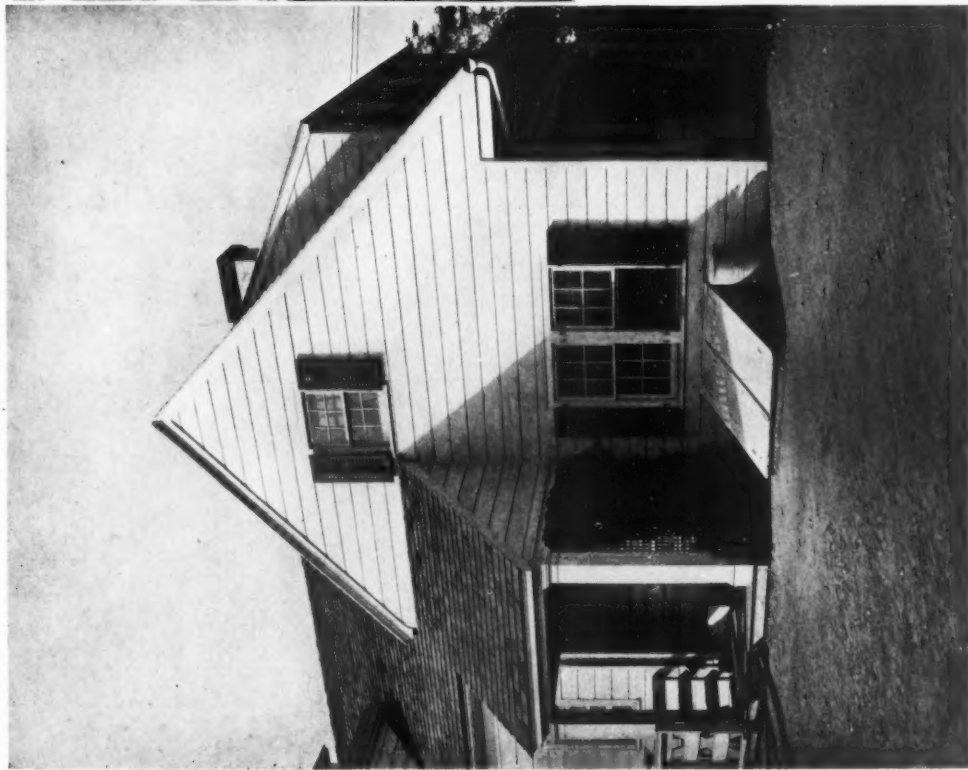
ALTERATIONS TO COTTAGE OF CLARENCE MCK. LEWIS, ESQ., MAHWAH, N. J.
MR. JAMES W. O'CONNOR, ARCHITECT



COTTAGE ON ESTATE OF
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LOCUST VALLEY, L. I., N. Y.

MR. JAMES W. O'CONNOR, ARCHITECT

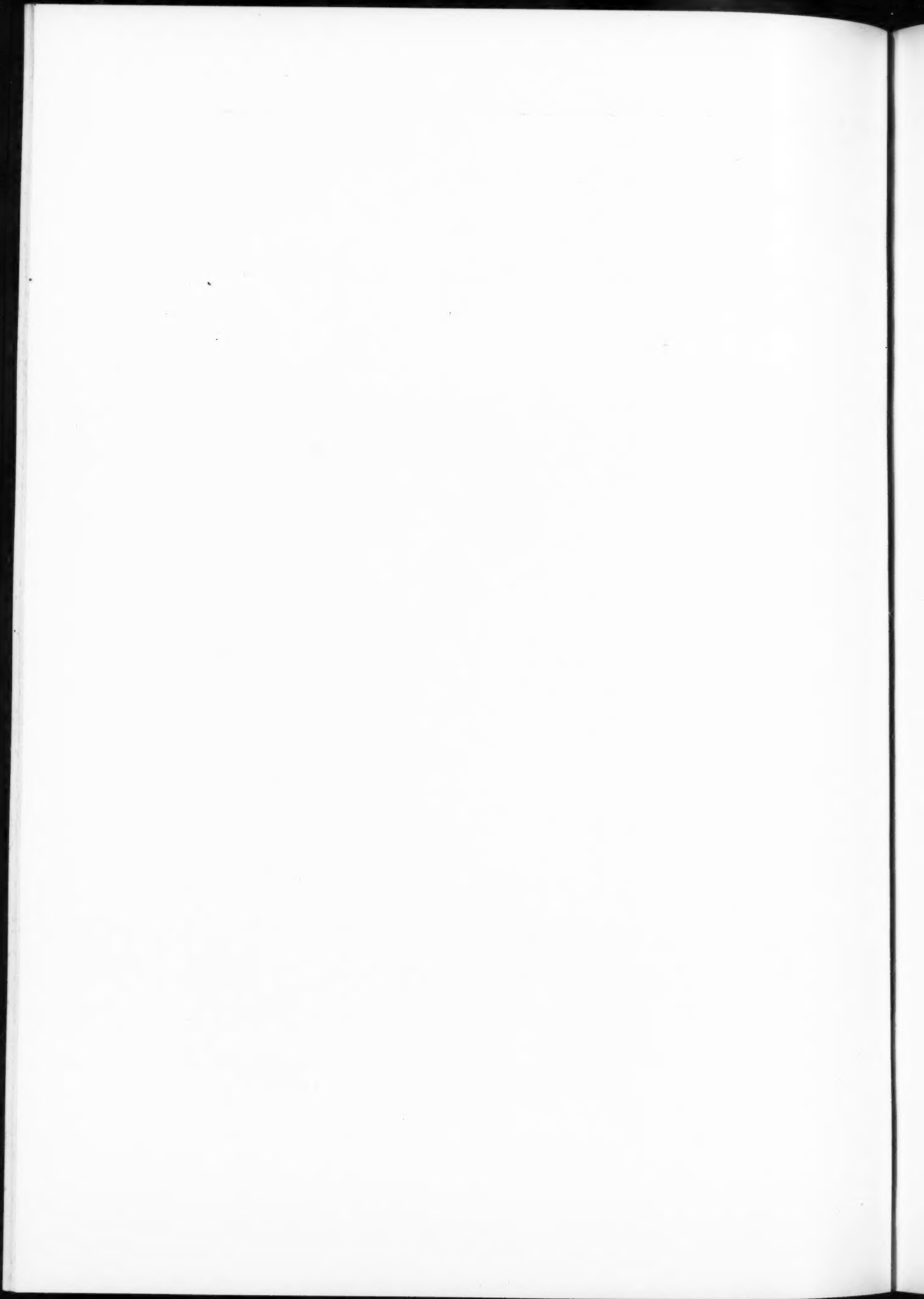




ESTATE OF GEORGE E. FAHYS, ESQ.,
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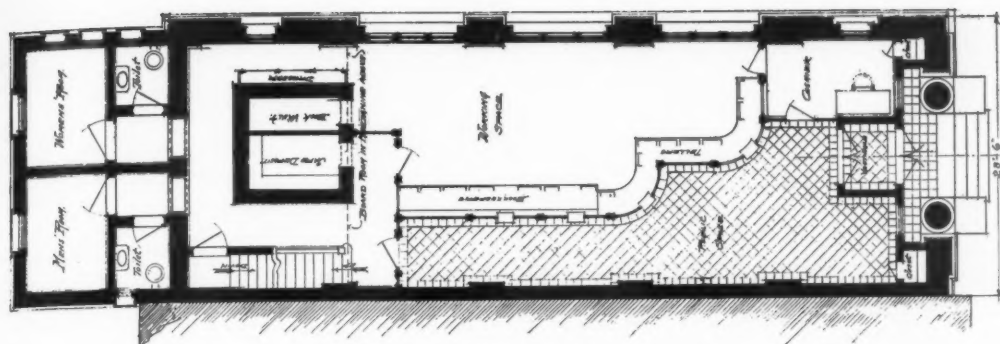
AT LEFT, A FARM BUILDING
ABOVE, REAR VIEW OF COTTAGE



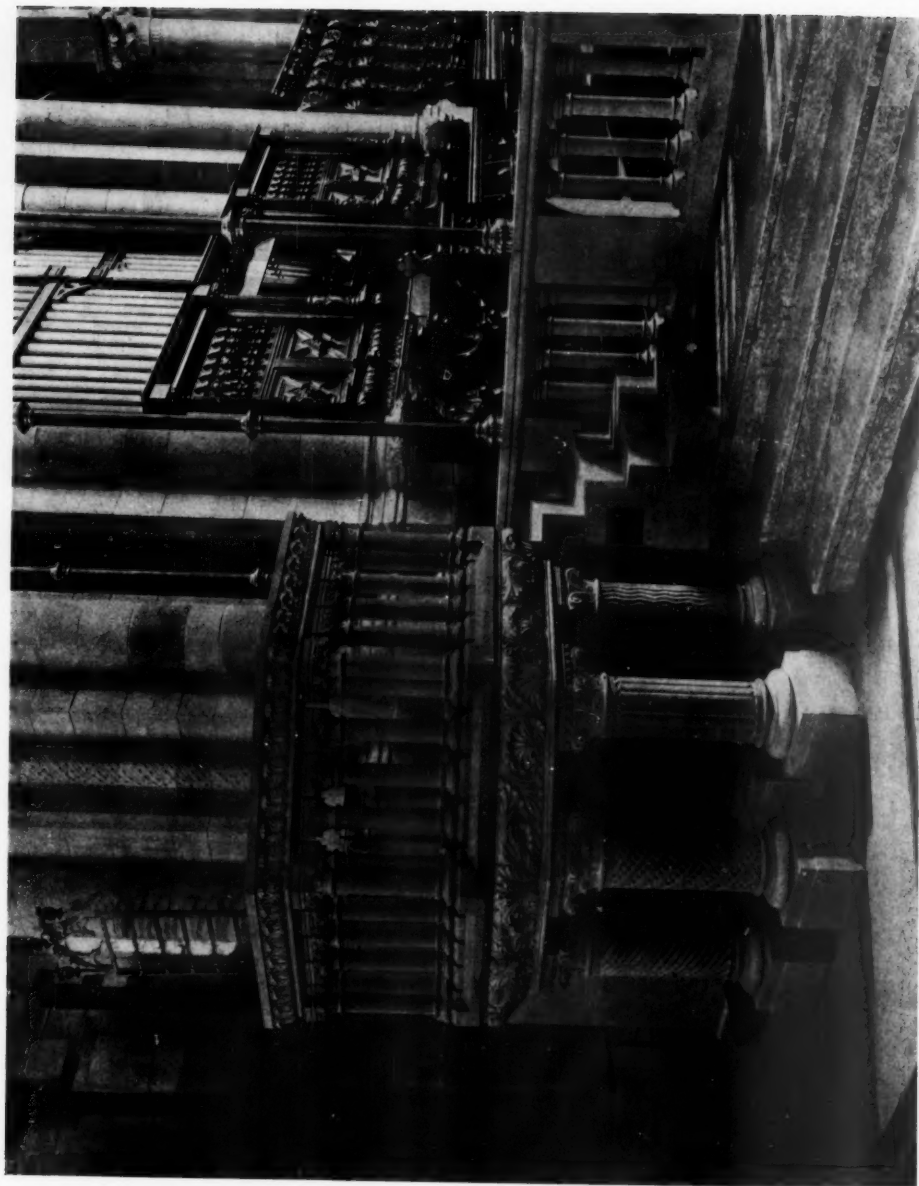
JANUARY 29, 1913



FIRST NATIONAL BANK, SPRING VALLEY, N. Y.
MR. A. DURANT SNEDEN, ARCHITECT



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THE PULPIT, ALBANY CATHEDRAL, ENGLAND