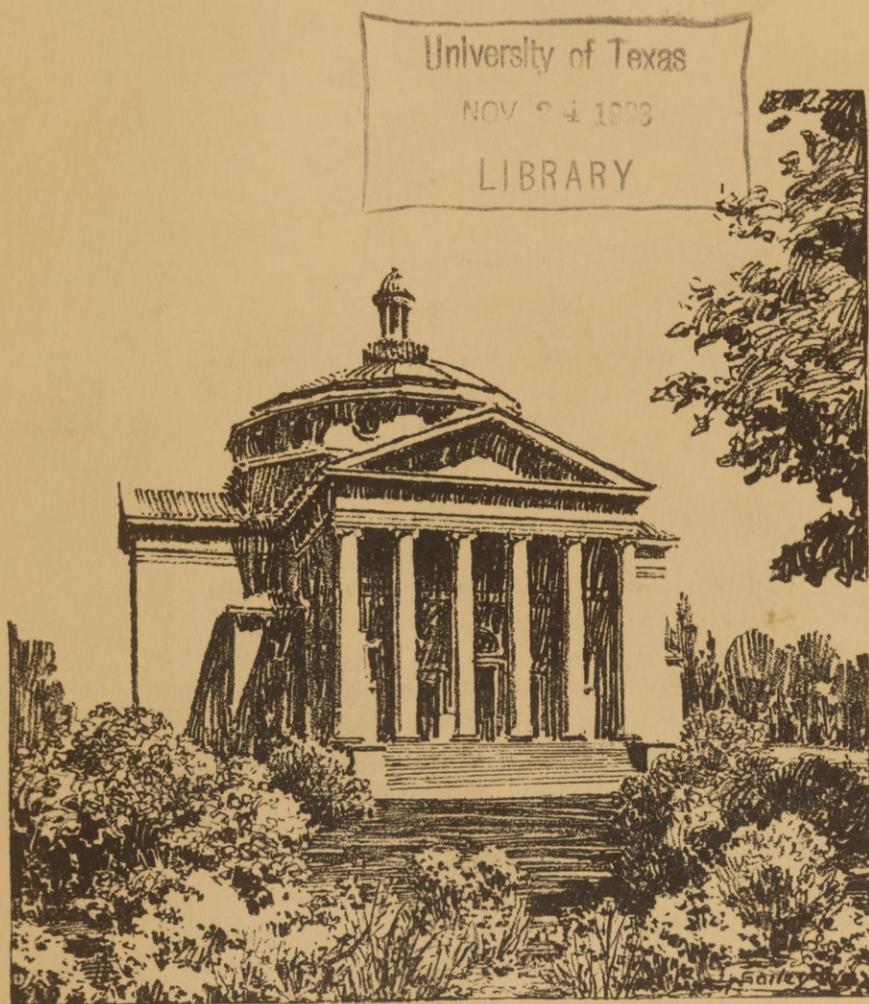


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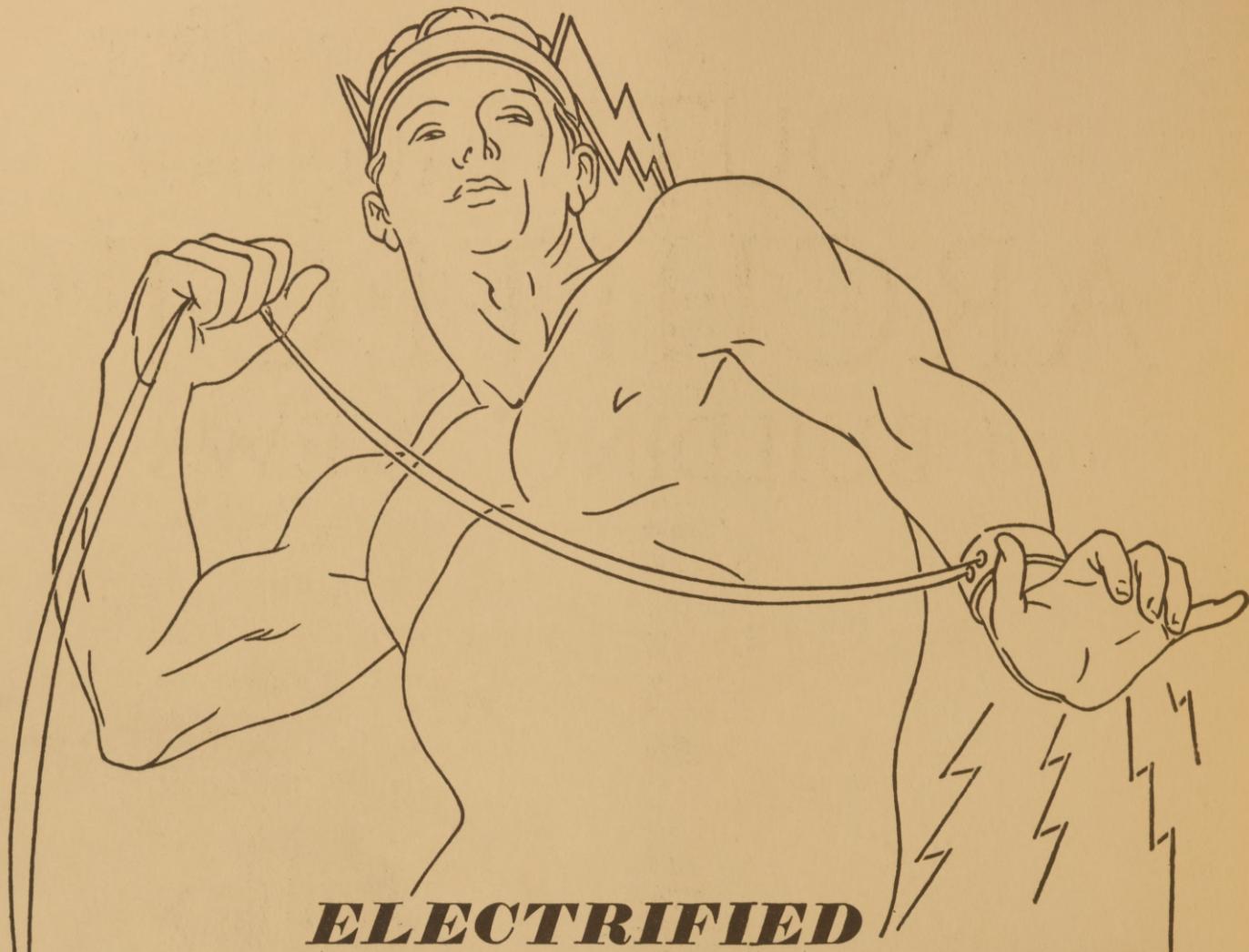
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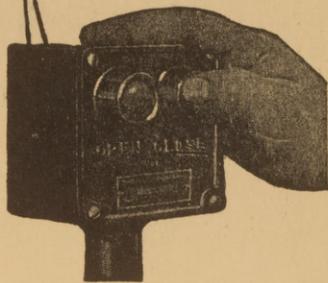
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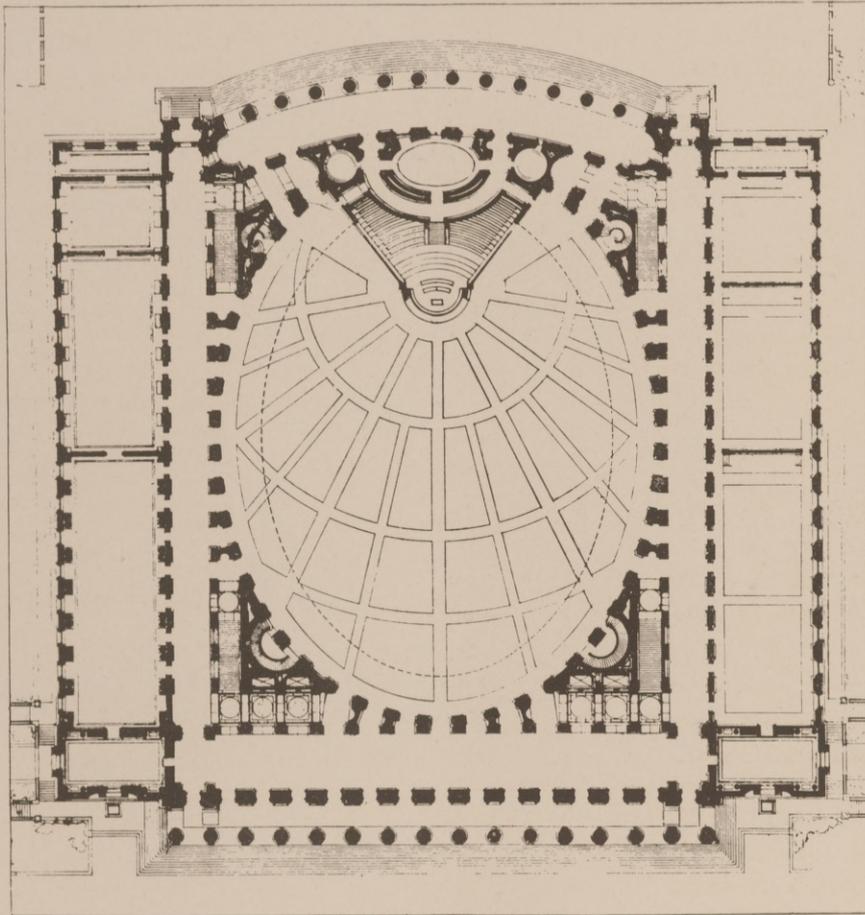
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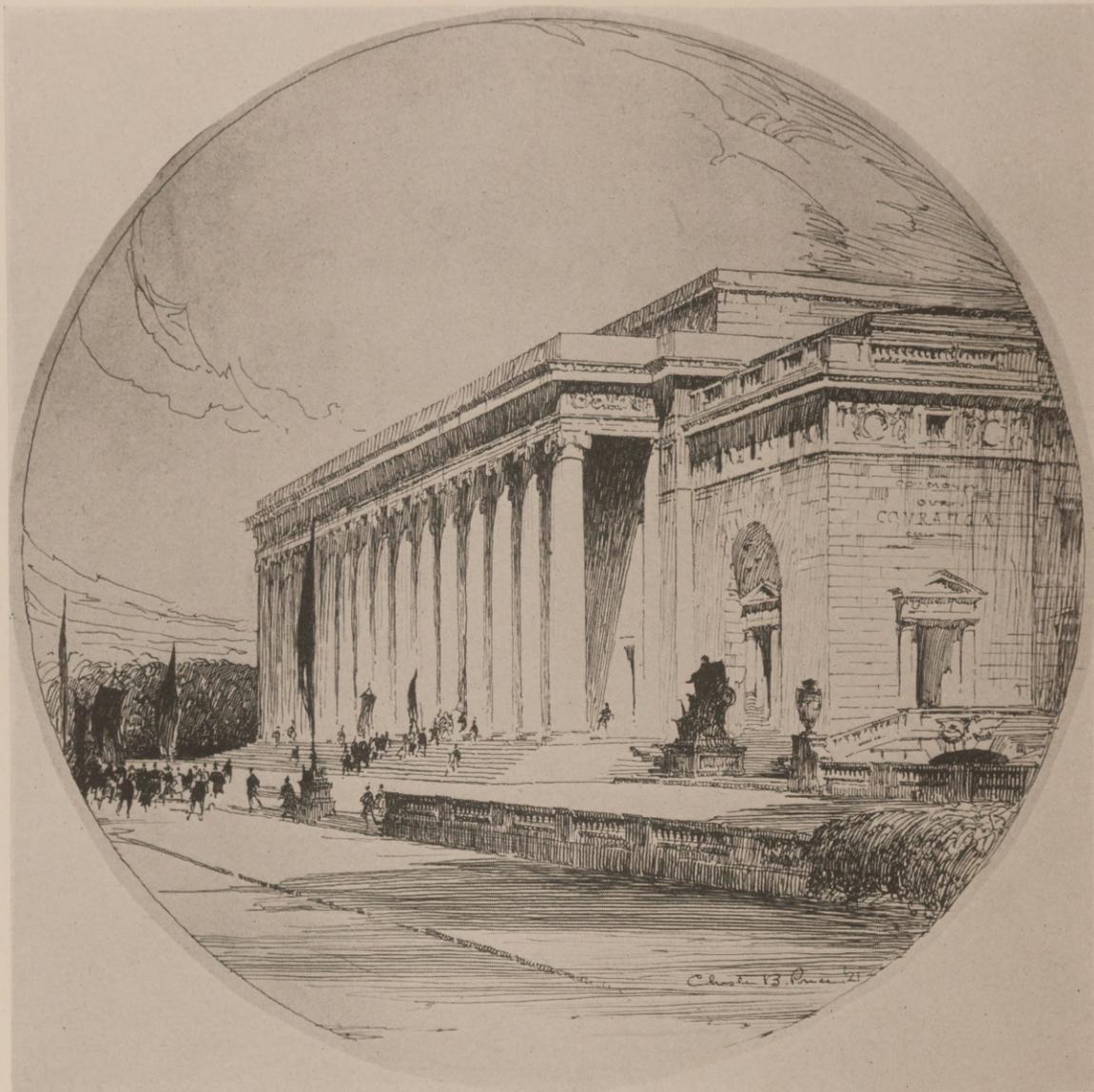
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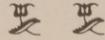
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FROM A PEN SKETCH BY CHESTER B. PRICE

*Southern Architect  
and Building News  
November, 1928*

# SOUTHERN ARCHITECT *and* BUILDING NEWS

NOVEMBER, 1928



VOLUME 54

NUMBER 11

## The Design and Plan of Auditoriums

BY EGERTON SWARTWOUT, *F.A.I.A.*

ACCORDING to the little dictionary which is, or should be, on the desk of my secretary; I say should be because it wasn't this Saturday afternoon and I spent a much needed quarter hour looking for it; according, I repeat, to this little vade mecum, an auditorium is the part of a public building occupied by the audience, and an inch or two up the page I find that an audience is an assembly of hearers. Hearers, mind you, not see-ers. This is not my definition; I hold no brief for this little treasure house of learning; I only own it. I never looked up this definition before, but now that I have, I'm very glad of it, because in the early days, way back before the war, I once built a part of a public building occupied by an audience that was evidently inspired, unintentionally to be sure, by this very definition. For an assembly of hearers it was all that an auditorium should be, but there were gallery seats, some gallery seats, in which the see-ers were out of luck; they could not see the speaker of the evening with a periscope, unless, mayhap, he stood on a ladder or doubled on the trapeze. It was a very nice auditorium, too; very architectural, and the committee were very proud of it, and they said, well, it's a mighty fine room, any way, and we'll save those seats for the people from up in the old ladies home, they can't see none too well anyhow, and shucks, they'll never notice it. Now, if I had only thought, then, to look up auditorium in this dictionary, I could have justified my design at once on the very highest authority, and proved that these seats were really the best in the house. Comforting as is this definition, I can't advise placing much dependence on it nowadays. People are becoming too exacting; they demand a room with a bath, and a seat where they can see. In point of fact I imagine the seeing is more important than the hearing, because they can hear well enough over the radio.

Now the arrangement of balcony seats so that a

good view of the speaker and the whole stage can be had from every seat, is quite a difficult matter. From a constructional point of view, it's not so hard; it's merely a mathematical adjustment of sight lines; but architecturally it's a complicated problem. If the balcony only extends over the rear of the hall it's simple enough; the rail can be horizontal and the seats stepped up so that each person has a clear view over the head of the person in front. But when the balcony extends down the sides, the balcony rail has to slope down toward the stage, or else the rake of the seats on the sides has to be much greater than is necessary on the rear. Neither of these alternatives is good architecturally. In a theater we are so used to the slope of the balcony rail that we don't notice it much, and any way most theatres are poor architecturally and depend for their effort on soft lights and draperies. In an auditorium with some pretense to architectural design, or in a church, a sloped balcony rail is most unfortunate. And that was the trouble with my Town Hall. It was a rectangular hall, not very big, about fifty by a hundred feet, and not very high. A sloping rail at the sides would have ruined it, and for architectural effect I didn't want to raise the slope of the side balconies too much. It really wasn't quite as bad as I made out, but a few of the seats weren't good, the upper seats farthest from the stage, because, from them the line of sight was on the longest diagonal.

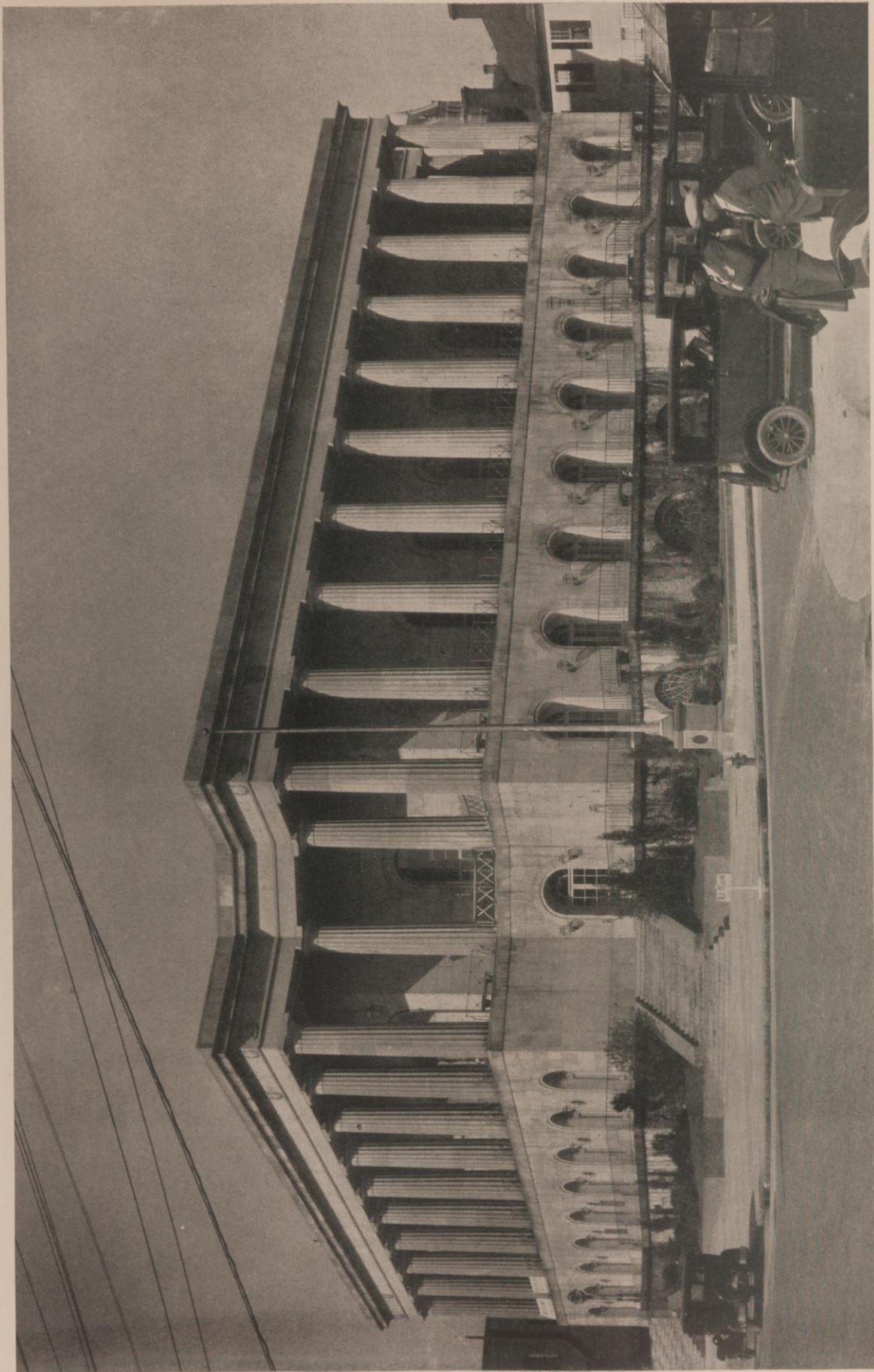
The scheme of an auditorium, that is to say, the plan of it, depends largely on the site and therefore no general rule can be laid down. The simplest form, and in some ways the best acoustically, is a rectangle with a rather low ceiling. The higher the ceiling, the more difficult it is to hear well. Cathedrals for example are notoriously bad. Circles or semi-circles and domed ceilings are rather frowned on by acoustical experts because of the chance for echoes, but nowadays this can be taken care of, if



MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM, MACON, GA.  
 EGERTON SWARTWOUT, ARCHITECT  
 DENNIS & DENNIS, ASSOCIATE ARCHITECTS

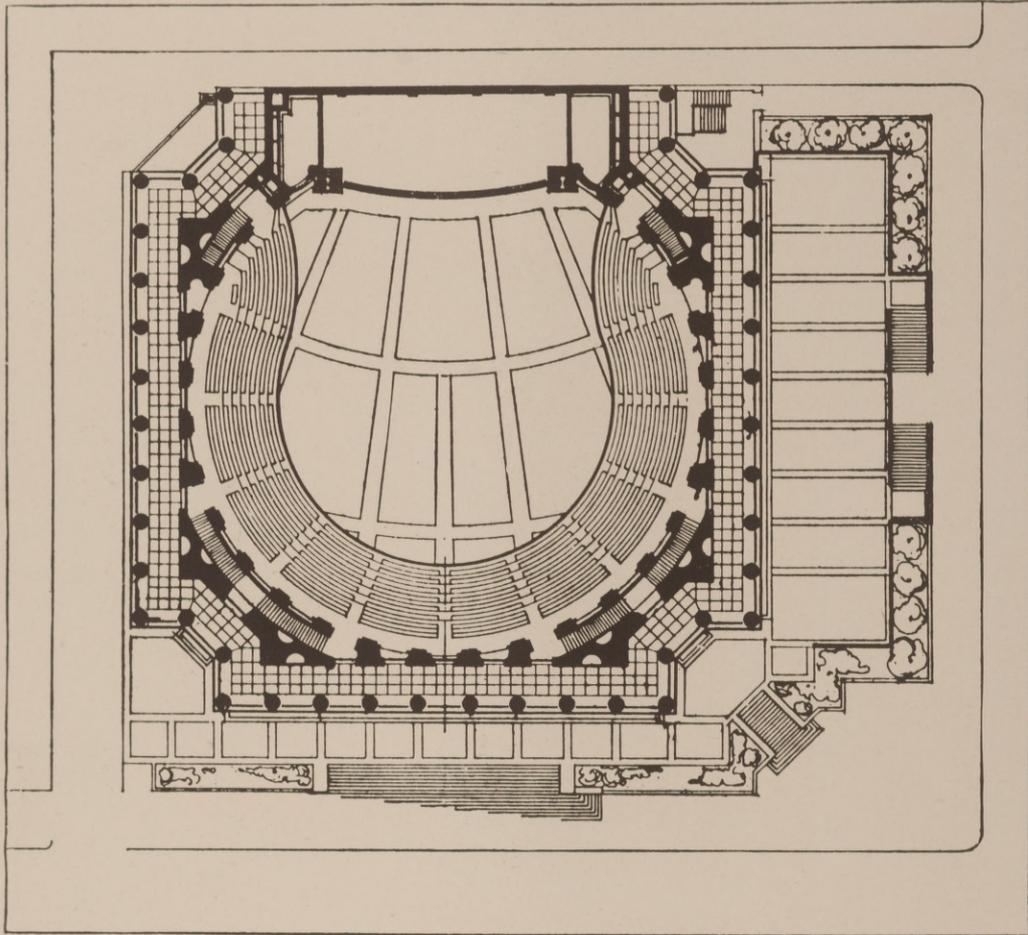
the curve in plan is broken up by piers, pilasters, alcoves, balconies or other means to break the sound, and by the use of absorbent material on the walls and ceilings, and by hangings and carpets. An audience is in itself a great sound absorber. There are now a number of patented absorbent materials in the market, felt, plaster of different sorts, acoustical tile and so on. These materials on curved ceilings

or domes will kill the echo, but it is advisable to have the center of curvation either well below, or well above, the ear level of the seated audience. These absorbent materials will also kill the reverberation, but they have to be used with some knowledge and experience, otherwise the sound will be too much muffled, and the building be unfit for musical productions.



Photos: By Tebbs & Knell, Inc.

MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM, MACON, GA.  
EGERTON SWARTWOUT, ARCHITECT  
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FLOOR PLAN  
MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM, MACON, GA.  
EGERTON SWARTWOUT, ARCHITECT  
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## MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM, MACON, GA.

EGERTON SWARTWOUT, ARCHITECT  
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But it is not my intention to go into the acoustic question in detail. A number of engineers now have taken up acoustics as a profession, and it has become as exact a science as heating or ventilation; quite a change from the old days when it was entirely a question of chance. Garnier, the architect of the Paris Opera House, records that he was much concerned about the acoustic possibilities of his

scheme, and spent much time investigating everything that had been written or done previously and came to the conclusion that no one really knew anything about it. "And so," he says, "I resolved to ignore it, and the result justifies my conclusions." And one of our own distinguished architects, the late Richard M. Hunt, when asked by a client what he knew about acoustics said, pounding his fist on



MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM, MACON, GA.

EGERTON SWARTWOUT, ARCHITECT

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the table, "Not an adjective substantive thing, nor anybody else." Acoustics as a science had its start at Harvard at the time it was decided to build an auditorium in the first Fogg Art Museum. There was an old building in Cambridge, Sanders Theater, which was noted for its acoustical qualities and it was reproduced in exact size and shape in the Fogg, but to President Elliott's horror the new was as bad acoustically as the other was good. Elliott in despair asked a young professor of physics if he would take the matter in hand, and naturally the professor, the late Wallace Sabine, did so, and after a long series of experiments came to the conclusion that it was wholly a question of absorption of sound. Sanders Theater was of pine and soft plaster, while the Fogg was marble and hard plaster. In the one the echoes and reverberation were absorbed, in the other, reflected. I have had the great pleasure of working with Professor Sabine on a number of operations. The first was the Denver Post Office, in which there were two federal court rooms. The then Architect of the Treasury, Oscar Wenderoth, a man with the most remarkable grasp of detail I have ever known, told me that he was tired of trying to correct the acoustics of federal court rooms and insisted that those in Denver should be made right from the start. We consulted Sabine, and the result was so highly successful that we induced him to take over the chambers of the Senate and House in the Missouri Capitol we were then starting. Here again the result was remarkable. The Senate was horseshoe shaped with a domed ceiling; dangerous shapes in themselves. The surrounding corridors and lobbies were of marble, with no acoustical treatment, and were very noisy; the footsteps of one man echoed and re-echoed for hundreds of feet, and when the lobbies were crowded the noise was deafening; and, yet, when you entered the empty Senate through the swinging leather covered doors you experienced the most remarkable sensation; you felt as if everything had suddenly stopped, and you were in another world. At first there was a sort of choking sensation—it was so still. I never tried dropping the traditional pin, but you could distinctly hear the ticking of the Senate clock. And with the aid of Sabine we did still more: we made the only whispering gallery ever purposely made. It was in the dome, in relatively the same location as the celebrated one in St. Paul's, London. People used to, and I assume still do, come from all over the state to try the echo. It is to them the most popular thing in the Capitol.

It was also with Sabine that I worked up the scheme of the George Washington Memorial. This was a competition held some years ago for a memorial building on the Mall in Washington, D. C., the feature of which was a great hall, or auditorium, seating about eight or nine thousand; this great hall

being surrounded on each side with smaller halls, accommodating eight hundred to two thousand each. After much study we decided to make the great hall elliptical, with a domed ceiling and a continuous elliptical gallery which broadened out at one end and continued down to the floor forming the speaker's platform, the speaker thus being pushed out nearly to one of the foci of the ellipse. The walls were to be of cast acoustical material made by Guastivino and the dome was of acoustical tile. The wall surfaces were broken up with a continuous row of openings into the corridors and stairs and all openings were draped. Sabine was much interested in this plan and told me repeatedly that in his opinion it would make the only perfect auditorium in the world. The ellipse is not new exactly, the celebrated temple at Salt Lake City is of that general type, but with no particular architectural treatment. The foundations of this great building are in place and I hope that next year will see a start in the superstructure.

Now there is one point in the building of auditoriums that I want to emphasize particularly, and that is the possibility, or rather the necessity, of introducing some sort of architectural treatment in the interior. Most auditoriums are treated architecturally on the exterior, and some are extremely good, but as a rule the interior is bare and barnlike, often with unsightly roof trusses showing, usually in effect like an oblong box with some applied architectural treatment on the side walls; and when the roof trusses are not in evidence, there is merely a great flat coffered ceiling. Practically they are satisfactory enough, but artistically or architecturally nil. Now, to my way of thinking, this is absolutely wrong. There is no reason whatever why an otherwise monumental building should have a plain, box-like, uninteresting interior. For a small auditorium, a rectangular room with a flat ceiling can be made effective enough, as it is merely a large room, but an auditorium with a capacity of some thousands is a very difficult proposition. A flat ceiling of a hundred feet span is depressing, no matter how elaborately treated, and a dinky little pilaster treatment on the side walls does not add dignity to a plain box. It was largely for architectural effect that an ellipse was chosen for the George Washington Memorial; we felt we could get a better and more monumental architectural effect at a much less cost in that way than with any other shape. And in the Macon example, the same principle was adopted. The site was practically square so we used a circle with one end cut off for the stage, as that shape fitted the site better, and brought the great body of the audience nearer the platform than would any other. It was our original intention to construct the dome entirely of Guastivino tile; it was to be a great masonry dome without any steel whatever. It was perfectly

feasible under this peculiar form of construction, a form which we had used in the Elks Memorial in Chicago for a hundred-foot dome and which had been used for the somewhat larger temporary covering of the crossing of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. We got preliminary estimates which were satisfactory, and looked forward to building the largest masonry dome in the world, but alas and also alack! The company refused to stand by their preliminary figures and in order to come within the appropriation we had to fall back on a cheaper steel construction. It was a blow to the commission and to me, as with a Guastivino dome the interior shell would have been of absorbent acoustic tile which would have insured a perfect auditorium, and by its texture would have forever done away with any painting or decoration of the dome.

A very important point in the plan of any auditorium is the question of circulation. When it is used for meetings, conventions and the like, there is apt to be almost constant motion of the audience, and to accommodate this motion there should be openings on the three sides of the Hall into a broad continuous corridor; and also the exit facilities must be so arranged that there will be no congestion; the gallery exits must be so arranged that there is no crossing of circulation, and no interference with the exits from the main floor, and the gallery stairs must be easy and ample and not located at one end of the

gallery, but so distributed that there will be no jamming in the aisles. A circular or elliptical form is good for this purpose as there is space in the corners for the stairs, as can be seen from an examination of the plans herewith shown. In the George Washington Memorial practically all the people in the gallery can be accommodated on the stairs at one time, and almost the same condition obtains at Macon. In each case there is a wide corridor surrounding the hall and, from this corridor, a number of exit doors lead directly to the open air. In case of fire either hall could be emptied in a very few minutes.

In the design of the George Washington Memorial we have tried to express that monumental classic which for the last hundred years has been typical of our national capitol, and in the Macon Auditorium we have tried to retain the old simplified classic so often found in the South. We have tried to make a building that would look as if it had been built long ago in Macon, an old resident as it were.

I can not leave the Macon Auditorium without mention of the co-operation and assistance given us by the building commission, by our architectural associates, and by the contractors. From first to last the work was a distinct pleasure and the City of Macon is to be congratulated for its foresight in obtaining the wholehearted and devoted service of all these gentlemen.



GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D. C.

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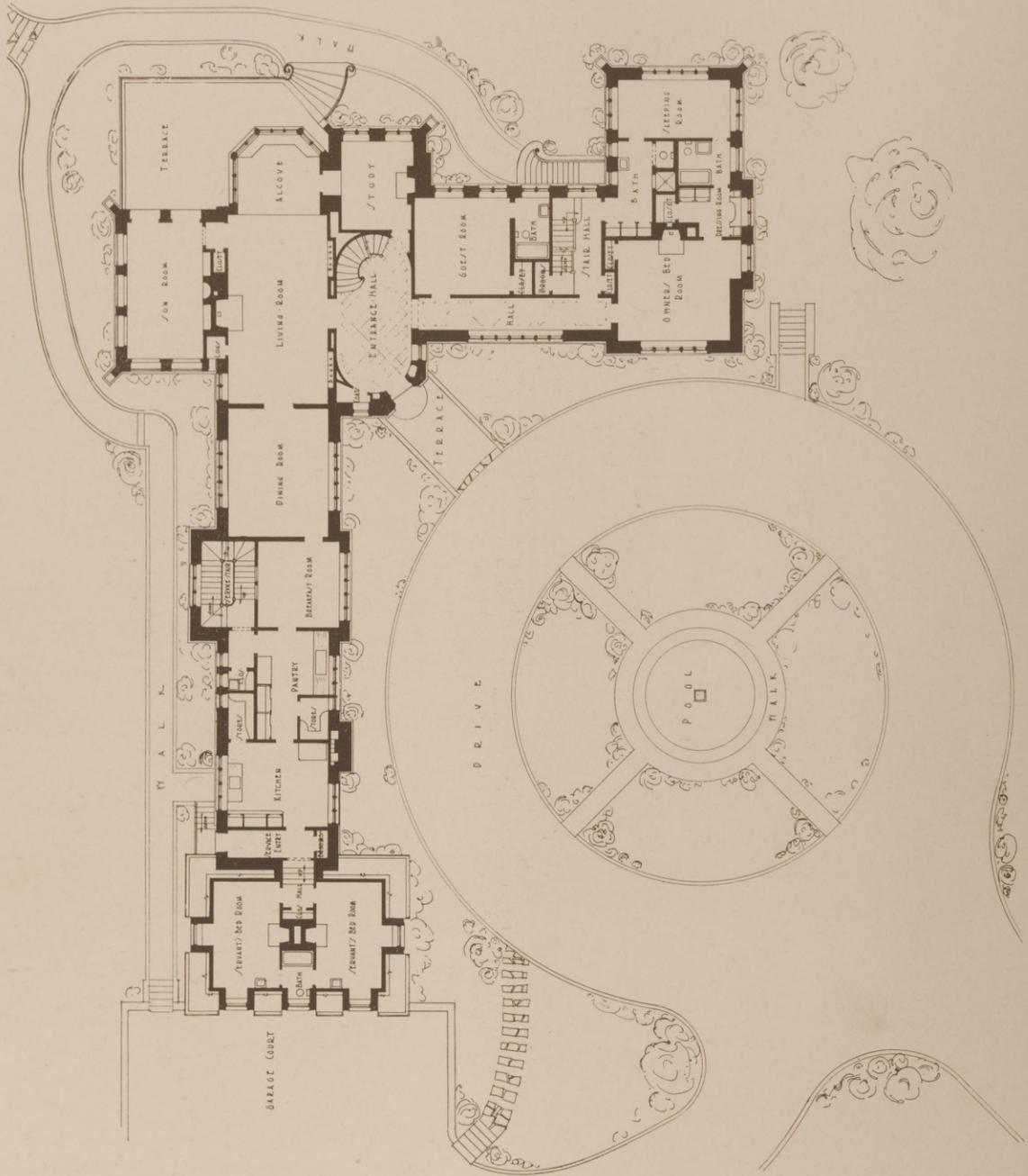


*Photos: By Tetts & Knell, Inc.*

FRONT ELEVATION

HOUSE OF WALTER CANDLER, ESQ., ATLANTA, GA.

IVEY & CROOK, ARCHITECTS



HOUSE OF WALTER CANDLER, ESQ., ATLANTA, GA.

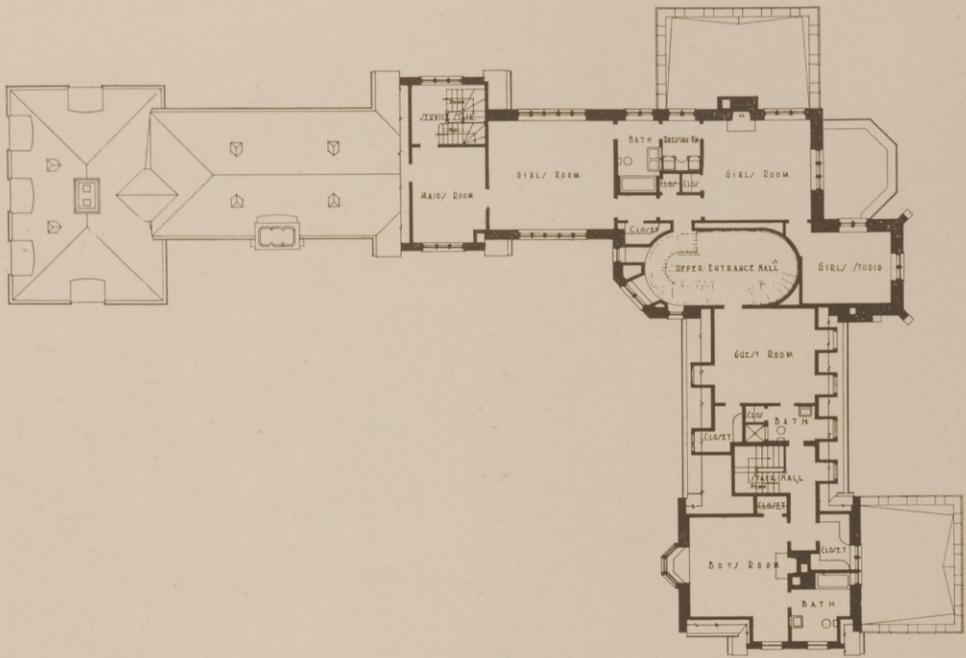
IVEY & CROOK, ARCHITECTS



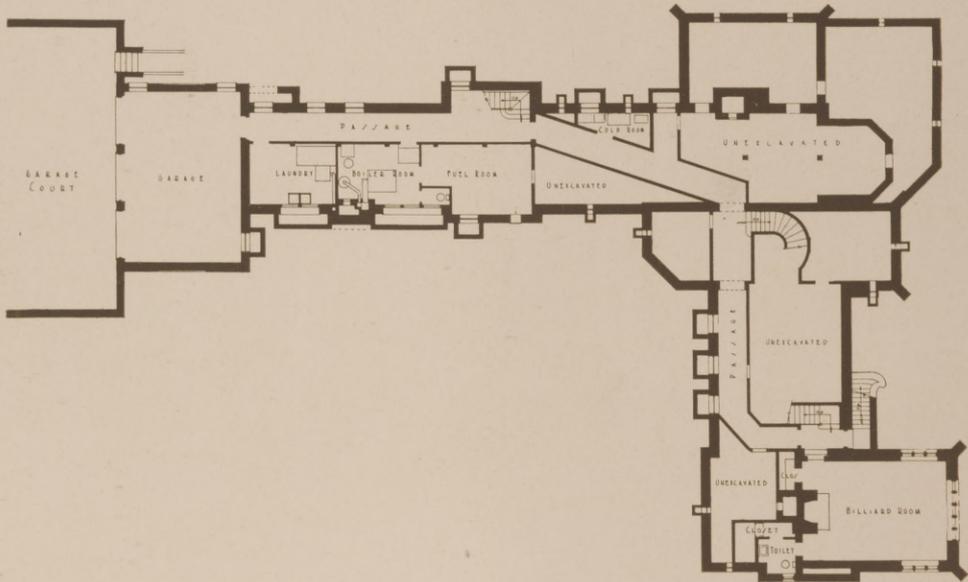
FRONT ENTRANCE DETAIL

HOUSE OF WALTER CANDLER, ESQ., ATLANTA, GA.

IVEY & CROOK, ARCHITECTS



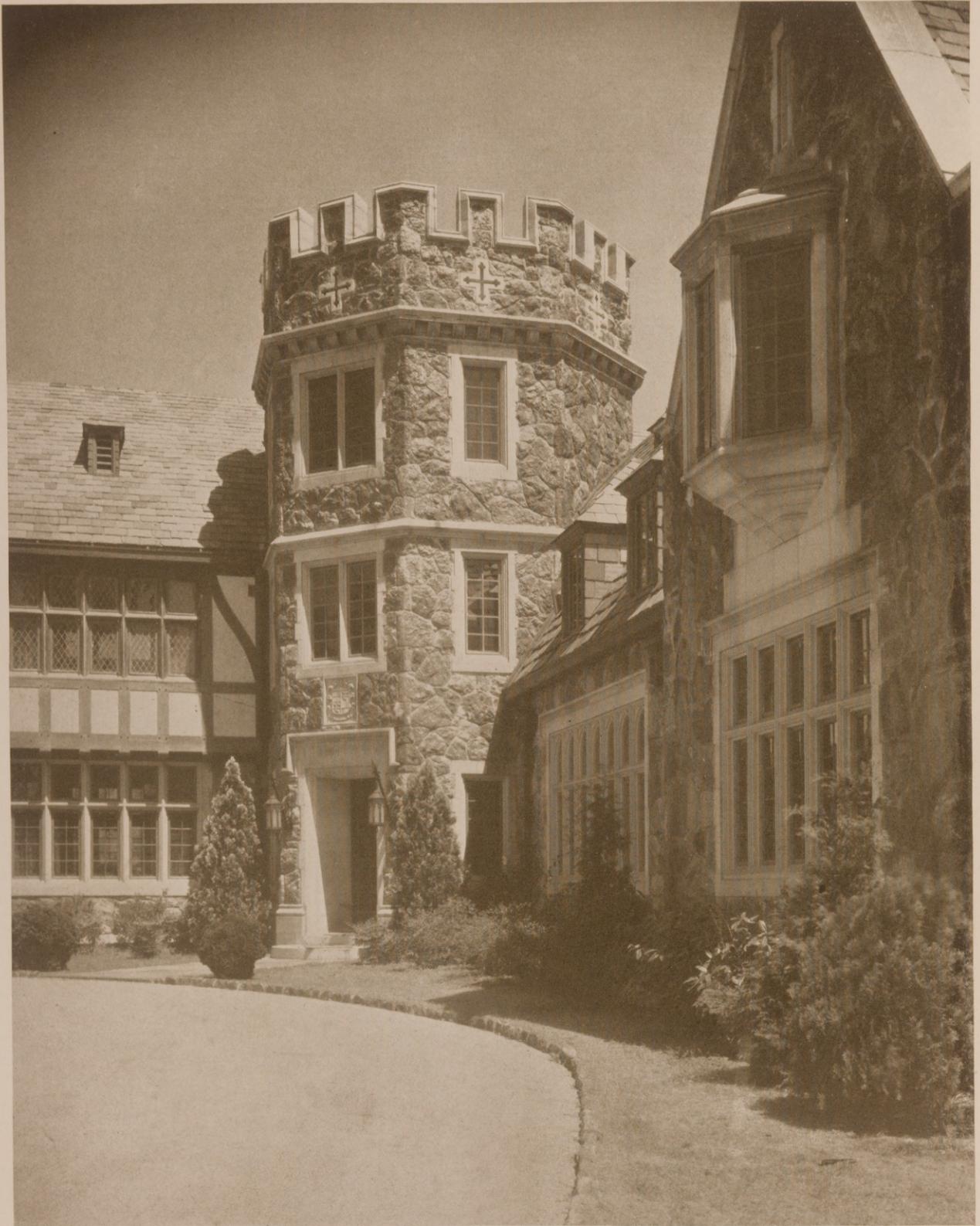
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



BASEMENT FLOOR PLANS

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IVEY & CROOK, ARCHITECTS



FRONT ENTRANCE DETAIL

HOUSE OF WALTER CANDLER, ESQ., ATLANTA, GA.

IVEY & CROOK, ARCHITECTS





DETAIL LOOKING TOWARDS ENTRANCE

HOUSE OF WALTER CANDLER, ESQ., ATLANTA, GA.

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LIVING ROOM

HOUSE OF WALTER CANDLER, ESQ., ATLANTA, GA.

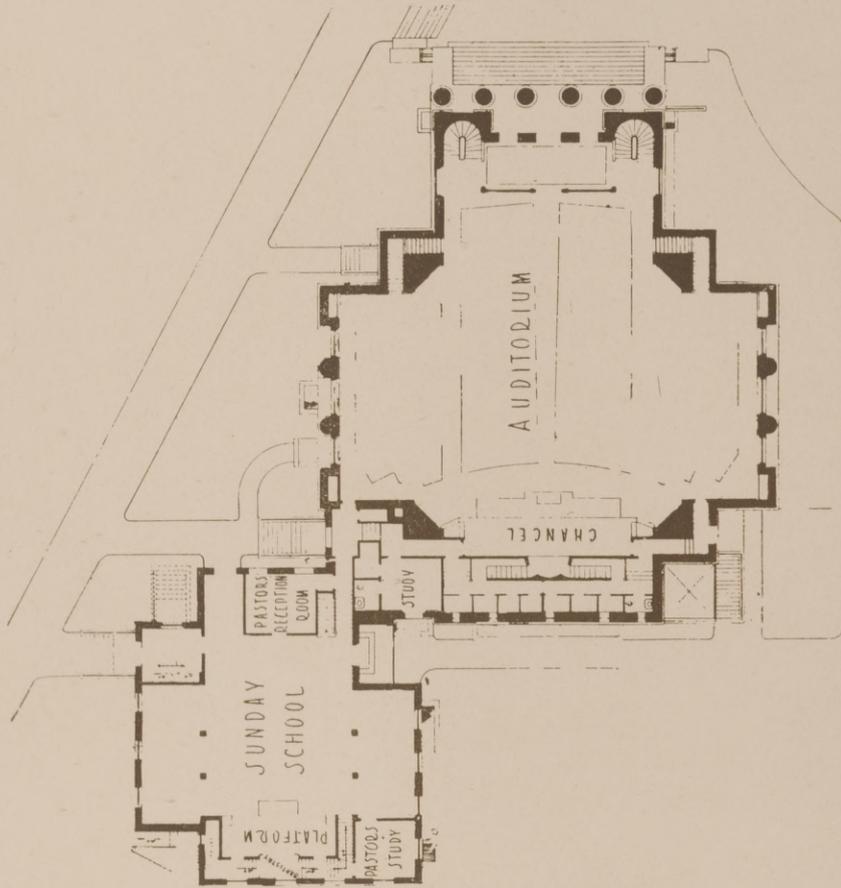
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FLOOR PLAN

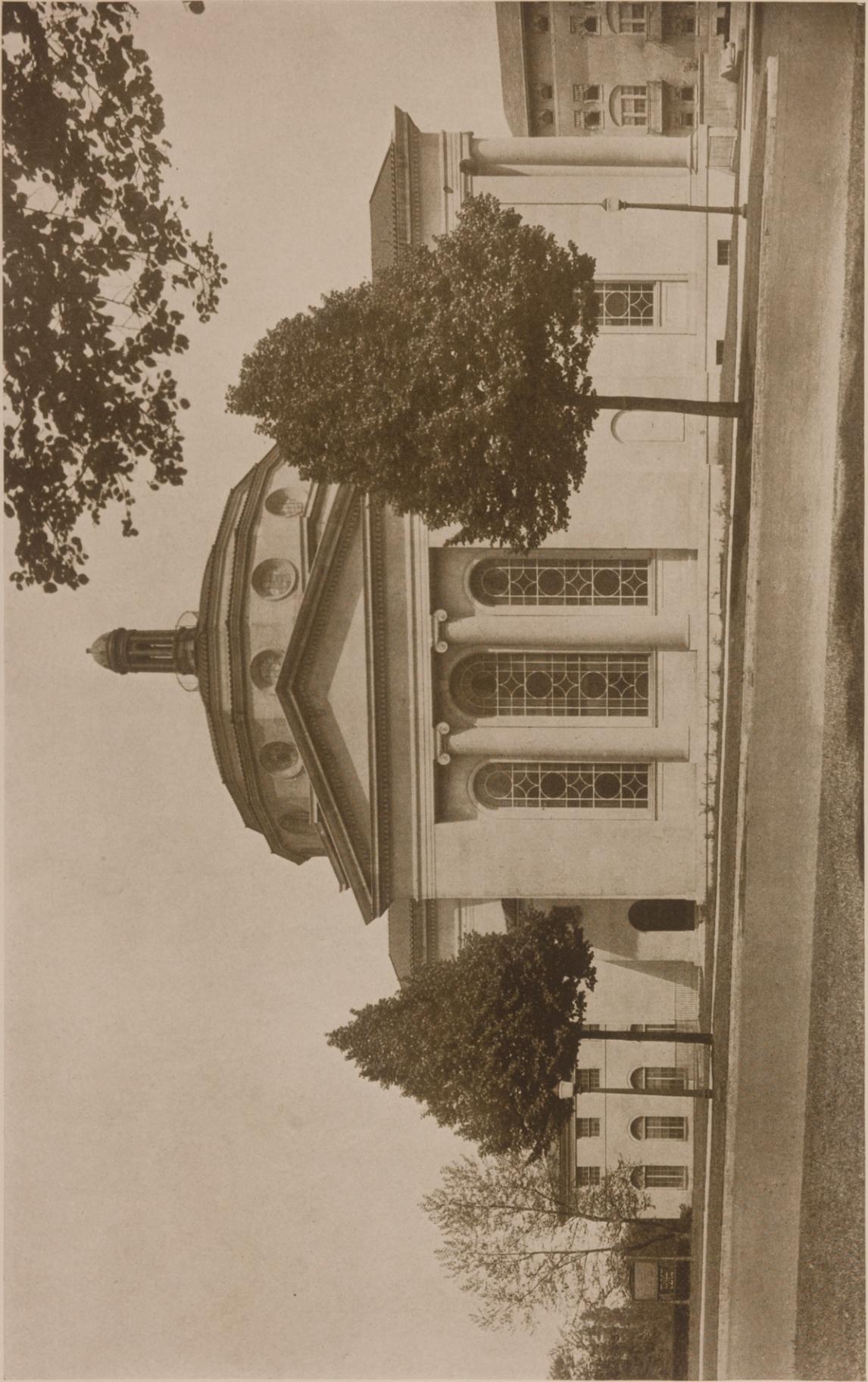
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SIDE ELEVATION

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# Some Thoughts On Small House Design

BY ERNEST RAY DENMARK

SMALL houses of architectural merit to be found in this country remain an exception rather than a rule. Though it might be said that this phase of our Domestic Architecture is greatly improved over that of a decade ago. There are signs at present that lead us to believe that the public conscience in the matter of good taste will in the near future be fruitful for our minor domestic architecture.

The problem of the small house even when reduced to its simplest terms still remains a difficult one. Most clients who come to the architect for assistance in planning their small home are at the outset confronted with the lack of financial backing or funds commensurate with the home building undertaking. The architect's problem, of course, becomes that of his client in this respect. Without a reasonable amount from the family exchequer it is a clever architect who can design a house, especially in this day when the client always demands every convenience usually found in the more expensive houses, that will embody the refined characteristics we asso-

ciate with outstanding architecture.

In spite of the difficulty involved there is really no excuse for much of the mediocre work we find at every turn, and that done by some architects is no exception. If we can, I mean both architects and the public, for once conceive of beauty as a simple expression of function and apply this to our small house design we will have accomplished much for our minor domestic work. This is not a new thought and I do not take any credit for its advancement here. I simply at this time recall to mind many of those delightful little cottages along the New England Coast which after more than a hundred years remain the very essence of good taste.

There are several architects in this country who have successfully applied this theory, if you wish to call it such, to their more pretentious country houses. These houses are a study in mass composition—a combining of well chosen materials that is effective and pleasing. What Peabody, Wilson & Brown, Delano & Aldrich and Harrie T. Lindberg have



RESIDENCE OF MR. BUFORD, ROANOKE, VA.

SMITH & TARDY, ARCHITECTS



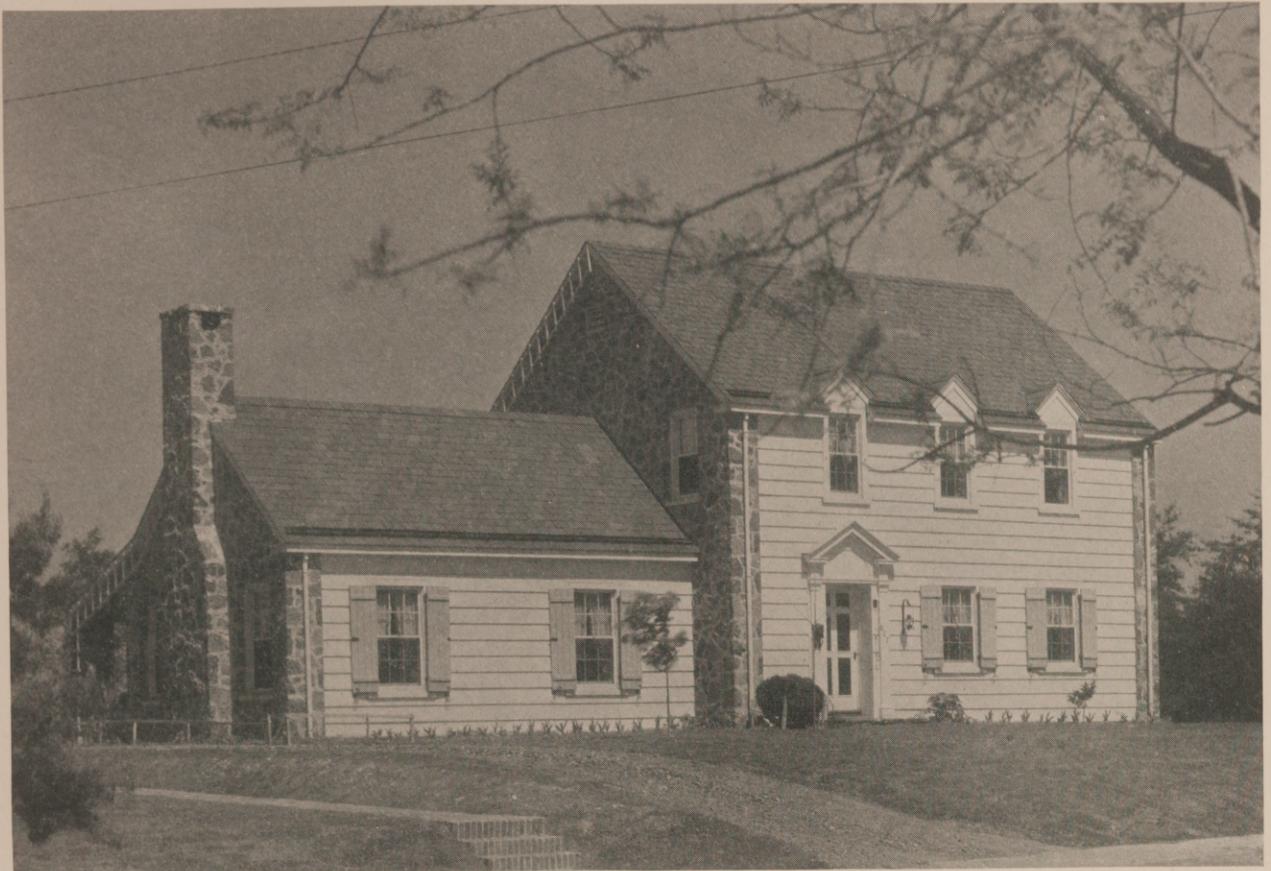
ENTRANCE DETAIL



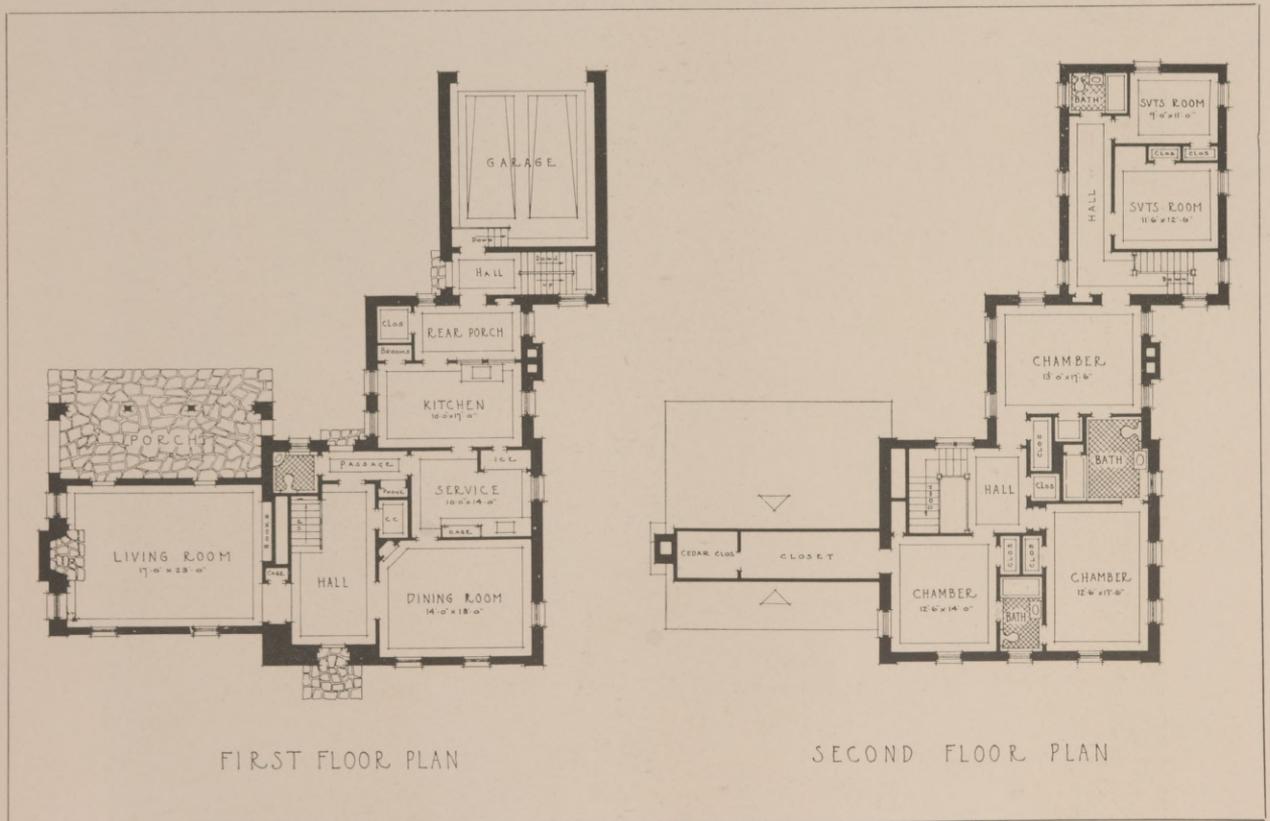
SIDE ELEVATION

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RESIDENCE OF J. CALDWELL ALBERGOTTI, ROANOKE, VA.  
SMITH & TARDY, ARCHITECTS

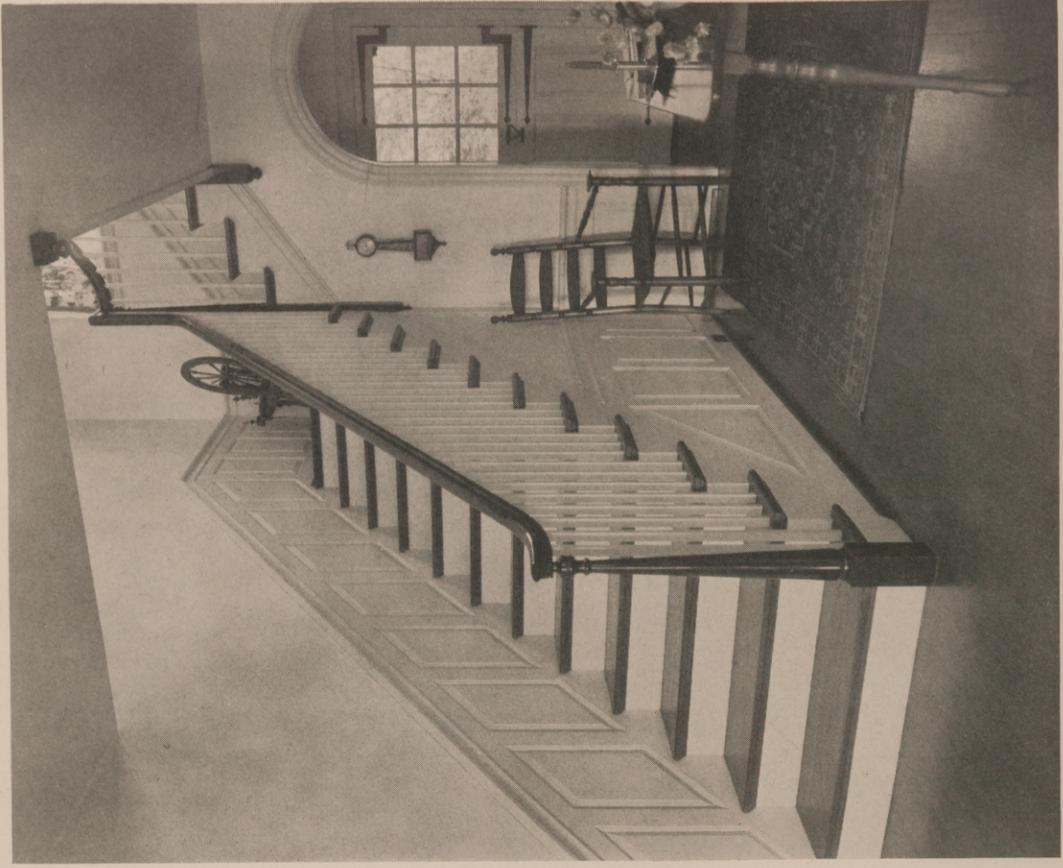


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SECOND FLOOR PLAN



ENTRANCE DETAIL



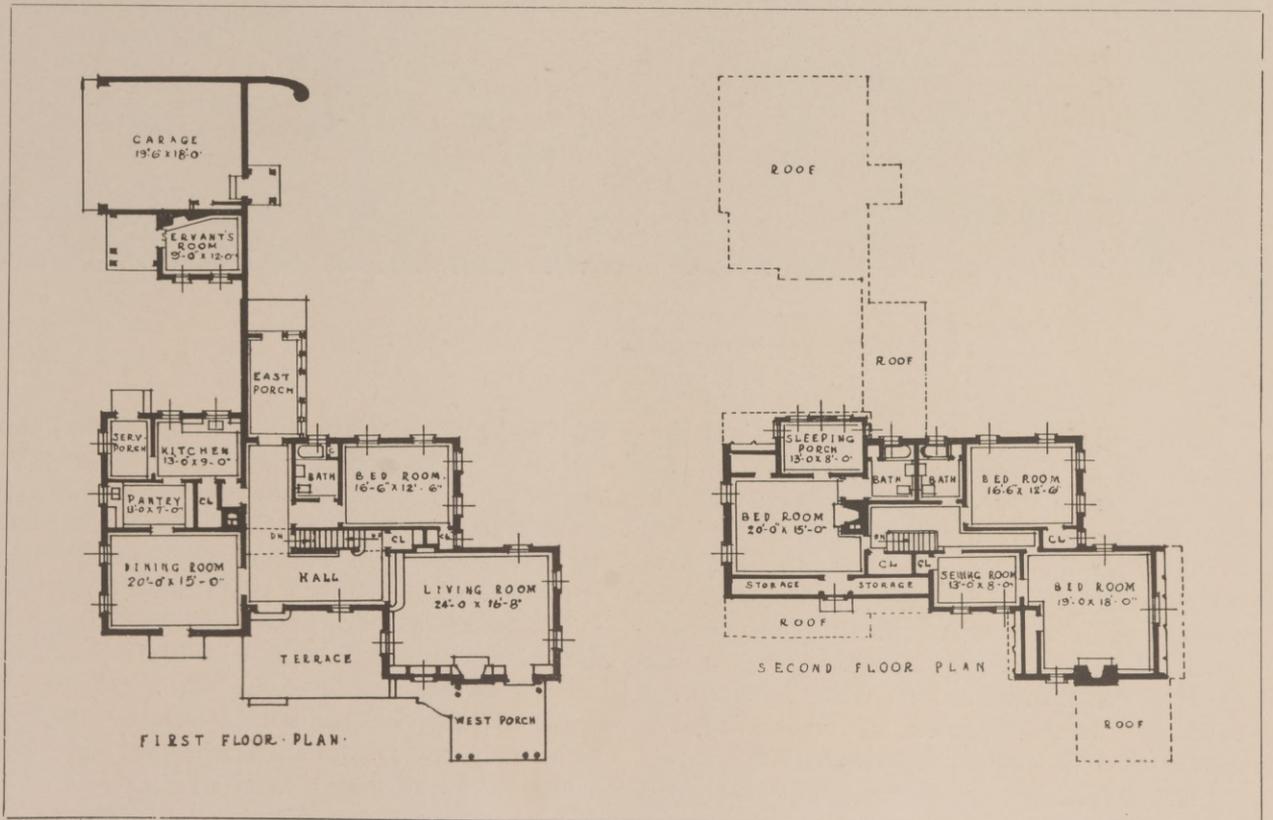
DETAIL STAIRHALL

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M. E. BOYER, JR., ARCHITECT





ENTRANCE DETAIL

RESIDENCE OF MOREHEAD JONES, CHARLOTTE, N. C.

M. E. BOYER, JR., ARCHITECT

accomplished along this line should furnish inspiration for architects who are doing small houses. The sooner we learn that decorative detail can not be successfully applied without great expense the better it will be for the client and for architecture. Why not acknowledge the limitation and go forward with a simple well studied composition relying upon materials, brick, concrete, stucco, wood and even limestone, in combination and interesting wall surface effects for life and character. If ornament must be applied let it be simple and well studied.

I had the pleasure not so long ago of observing a

small caddy house in connection with a country club—a simple square building of brick painted white, and yet in these four walls there was a wealth of architectural character embodied in the effective wall surface, placement of windows, an unusual but interesting cornice—a simple expression of function.

The three small houses here illustrated done in the Colonial manner are expressive of the good taste of their owners and the skill of their designers. I can hardly understand why the layman will continue to have the usual monstrosities imposed upon him when he can have such houses as these.

## A MEANS TO A GREAT END

OUR editorial in the August number on "A Southern Architectural Exhibition" has attracted such attention, evidence of which was forcefully given by Mr. F. H. Furbringer's, President of the Tennessee Chapter American Institute of Architects, article appearing in our October number, as to prompt us to go further into a discussion of this matter.

We have watched patiently the growth of architecture in the South for two decades, hoping against hope, it seemed at times, when architecture as an art in the South would reach a standard as high as that which has predominated in the larger eastern centers since the day when McKim, Mead & White were doing country houses. That the South has "arrived" in the art to a point comparing most favorable to every other section of the country is not a "cigarette dream" it is an actuality, especially when the dollar value of building is considered.

The SOUTHERN ARCHITECT AND BUILDING NEWS has been illustrating what its editors considered the best in Southern Architecture for a great many years. That even eastern architects are recognizing the quality of the work now being done in the South can not be more forcefully put than the following quotation from Mr. D. P. Higgins of the office of John Russell Pope, Architect, New York City: "*Please allow us to congratulate you on your publication. We are subscribers and have been watching with a great deal of interest the tremendous improvement in the general character of the paper. We really feel that it is second to none.*" We feel that the compliment paid us by one of America's foremost architects is a compliment to Southern Architecture and Southern Architects, and is set forth here simply to prove our contention that in the South there is at the present time enough good work that could be shown in an architectural exhibition to attract attention beyond even our fondest hope.

Mr. Aymer Embury, II, writing in the September number of *The Architectural Forum*, expresses a thought that is most timely—we can not resist quoting such a well informed author. "Of one thing we may be sure,—that the general public understanding and appreciation of good architecture are growing in leaps and bounds. People are demanding today, as they have never consciously demanded in all the history of the world, beautiful buildings (or what they believe to be beautiful) for their offices, for their civic structures, and above all for their homes. So wide spread is this demand that architects in-

stead of leading their clients are in many cases led by them, and while this great mass of unformed and to some extent ignorant desire for beautiful things is in the long run sure to be of great public benefit, it is not only possible that it does occasional and temporary harm to the development of sound architecture, but it is from time to time evident that it actually does work in a harmful way."

The lay mind in the South is acute to the general awakening for things beautiful and only needs the guiding hand of some one to point out the correct interpretation that should be placed upon that which is really worthwhile to follow. The architects of the South have up to this time led their clients and the results are most gratifying. An architectural exhibition—a bringing together, or whatever you choose to call it, of the best works of current architecture and that which is on the way to being erected, as selected by the architects themselves would go a long way towards fulfilling a real duty that the architects of the South owe to the public, outside of designing appropriate buildings when called upon to do so.

To our mind this is a movement that should be of vital interest to every chapter of the American Institute of Architects in the South, a movement that should have the co-operation and support of every practising architect. The Tennessee Chapter, A. I. A. at its recent meeting endorsed the idea of an architectural exhibition covering the work in the South and has suggested as a starting point the meeting of the presidents of each A. I. A. chapter to discuss the matter. The scope of this undertaking is of such proportions that it should become a matter of united effort on the part of every state chapter of the A. I. A. The SOUTHERN ARCHITECT AND BUILDING NEWS, in the South to serve in any way possible the best interest of Southern Architecture and Southern Architects.



## A CORRECTION

IN AN advertisement of the May Oil Burner Corporation, which appeared in the July issue of SOUTHERN ARCHITECT AND BUILDING NEWS there appeared a photograph of Mr. Paul M. Hesser, Jr. Mr. Hesser was referred to as Chief of the Bureau of Design, Bureau of City Architect, Philadelphia, Pa. This statement was in error, inasmuch as Mr. Hesser was formerly the Chief of the Bureau of Design, but has been practicing architecture from his own office in Philadelphia for the past three years.

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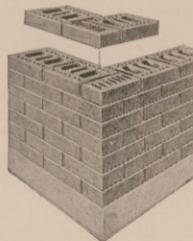
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