







*Washington Doorways*





# WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

BY

ANNABEL PAXTON

WITH SKETCHES BY

FREDERICK M. MOSS

NEWMAN S. SUDDUTH

JOSEPH E. BLANTON

HOWARD W. ARMSTRONG



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## Foreword

COLLECTIVELY, the doorways of Washington probably have more of interest to offer to more people than those of any other city in America. This is so because they not only record every important phase of architecture in this country during a period of approximately two hundred years, but are also intimately associated with the most colorful personalities and events in the nation's history.

In these days of progress buildings are transitory and our architectural heritage, unprotected, all too often passes without recording. It is therefore fitting to preserve at least the memory of a few of the doorways of the Nation's Capital and, insofar as possible, to recall the silent part some have played in American history.

To many people, a doorway is little more than a prosaic opening in a wall through which to hurry to and fro. Others associate this useful wall opening with romance, tragedy or comedy. Still others pick its architectural bones and wonder who prepared the dish—delectable or otherwise.

The historian revels in a knowledge of famous personages who crossed these Washington doorway thresholds. Incidents of long ago awaken interest in what, also, may have a beauty all its own. Events, significant and commonplace, and activities of social and political bigwigs are recalled. Permitting imagination to roam, the historically-minded are transported back to other days and scenes.

But to the architecturally-minded the proportions of the doorway and its relation to the composition of the façade are judged. The eye sees subtle refinements of surfaces and mouldings, recesses and reveals; *nuances*

## FOREWORD

in design and detail unnoticed except to the practiced eye. The initiated see in the doorway *motif* a record of society and testimony of the ever changing taste of a fickle public.

I am here reminded by the author of WASHINGTON DOORWAYS that the volume lays no claim to a recording of only the finest in architecture or the most important and interesting from an historical standpoint. She regrets that it is impractical to make complete mention of all individuals, documents, books and papers contributing to the historical notations. She also warns that human memory is not infallible and available data are often conflicting as to statement and detail. Earnest effort has been made, however, to avoid inaccuracies.

It was at the suggestion of Mr. Ben McKelway, Managing Editor, *The Washington Star*, that Washington Doorways was originally undertaken. The material was published as a feature in the Saturday edition of that newspaper. The author has asked me to express her appreciation of the permission of the *Washington Star* to publish the series in its entirety in a single volume and of the coöperation of the artists who undertook the task of recording the spirit and detail of the doorways in pen and ink. This I gladly do. I also express my own appreciation for having had an opportunity to assist in the production of this book, in an editorial capacity.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN BETTS,  
Former Editor, *American Architect*

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*Arts Club of Washington*



ARTS CLUB OF WASHINGTON, 2017 I STREET, N. W.

## Arts Club of Washington

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*The home of the Arts Club of Washington, more than a century old, rich in simple, dignified American tradition*

---

THE beauty of Washington's Arts Club doorway speaks for itself. Only the records tell of the statesmen, artists and socialites that have passed through it. It is said President Madison galloped through the doorway on horseback to escape capture from British troops while his cabinet were here in conference—the White House being in the process of rebuilding after destruction by the British in August, 1814. Another story declared the rider to be a British soldier in search of a spot of adventure.

Pre-eminent, the Arts Club house, with its semi-circular fanlight doorway flanked with narrow sidelights, is in a neighborhood of old houses. Fronting on a triangular park on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue, the site was originally part of a large farm known as Widow's Mite. It had been patented to Anthony Holmead, an Englishman. Before the cession to the United States by the State of Maryland of land for the site of the Capital City, the farm of Holmead had been divided. The part which included the site of the Arts Club was owned by James Macubbin Lingan. Lingan was an officer in the Maryland line during the War of the American Revolution, a captive on the prison ship *Jersey*, a friend of George Washington and collector of the port of Georgetown at the outbreak of the War of 1812.

On division between commissioners, appointed by President Washington for the purpose of laying out

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

the city of Washington, the Arts Club property was allotted in 1791 to Lingan, General Uriah Forrest and Benjamin Stoddart of Maryland, first Secretary of the United States Navy. All three were prominent investors in land in the Territory of Columbia, as the District was then called.

Lingan sold the west 25-foot front of the site for \$492.18 in 1802 to Timothy Caldwell of Philadelphia, who erected the building which now stands at the back of the main structure. In 1806 Caldwell purchased from Lingan for \$432.50, a small portion of land adjoining the 25 feet on the east and enlarged the house he had built by adding the front part of 2017 I Street. In 1808 Caldwell sold the building for \$10,000 to Postmaster-General Gideon Granger.

Granger held title to the property for five years, reconveying it in 1813 to Caldwell, who retained ownership until 1840 at which time Francis Markoe, Jr., of Pennsylvania, president of Columbia Institute, purchased it. He and his heirs lived in the building until it was disposed of by the latter in 1877 to Professor Cleveland Albee, who was practically the founder of the United States Weather Bureau. He owned the house at the time of his death, in 1916.

In its life of more than 100 years this house has been the property of only three families. It is now owned and occupied by the Arts Club of Washington.

Built in the early 1800s, the present home of the Arts Club is an excellent example of the late Georgian era of architecture in America—a period just previous to that of the Greek Revival. The house is two stories high and built of red brick, laid in Flemish bond, a favorite method at the time it was constructed. The façade is most simple, the beauty of its design being

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

due largely to its well-proportioned and well-located windows and wall areas, sparing use of stone trim, wooden shutters and the care and attention lavished upon the doorway as a center of interest.

The doorway has a finely molded achitrave and keystone. The solid paneled door is framed by delicately molded and ornamented mullions and transom bar. A well-proportioned fanlight with wooden muntins fills the arch above the door and narrow side-lights flank the sides. The workmanship is exceeded only by the dignified and stately classical character of its design.



*Blair House*



BLAIR HOUSE, 1651 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N. W.



## Blair House

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*Through the stately Ionic portico and doorway of the Blair House have passed the members and friends of one family for more than a hundred years*

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WITH all the repose and formal dignity of the early 19th century townhouse, the old Blair House, restored, is an impressive four-story brick building covered with light yellow stucco trimmed in white. Stone lintels span its broad, green-shuttered windows.

The simple, stately and dignified Ionic entrance portico is an example of the transitional architecture of the late Georgian and early classic revival periods. The mass and character of the portico make it a center of interest that never fails to attract the attention of passers-by. Its graceful Ionic columns are echoed in lower tone by similar but lesser columns on each side of the entrance door. These columns support a broad entablature forming the transom bar. A semi-circular fan-light of simple design completes the doorway composition.

Strong, yet refined and graceful, the present iron fence terminates in iron lamp standards of unusual and pleasing design, at either side of the entrance steps. Swinging on up the steps to the portico level, the iron handrail adds its decorative note to one of Washington's early and distinctive dwellings.

On Pennsylvania Avenue, directly across from the Department of State, and just around the corner and west of Lafayette Square, the Blair House has figured long and intimately in the official life of the Nation's Capital. Through its doorway have passed such great

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Americans as Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, Jefferson Davis, Henry Clay and George Bancroft. In this mansion Colonel Robert E. Lee was offered command of the Union Army at the outbreak of the Civil War.

Built between 1824 and 1827 by Dr. Joseph Lovell, this historic house has been in the possession of the Blair family since its purchase by Francis Preston Blair in 1836. Soon after purchasing the property, Francis Blair, friend of President Jackson and editor of the *Washington Globe*, enlarged the then two-story brick structure. At that time, too, a high board fence concealed from street view the hawthorne and crab apple hedge which bounded the grounds.

Upon retiring to his estate in Silver Springs, Maryland, the title of the property passed from Francis Blair to his son Montgomery, Postmaster-General in President Lincoln's cabinet. He, in turn, remodeled the house and added another story. From Montgomery Blair, ownership passed to Major Gist Blair.

*Tudor Place*



TUDOR PLACE  
1644 THIRTY-FIRST STREET, N. W., GEORGETOWN

## Tudor Place

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*North entrance of Tudor Place, Washington landmark, visited by Lafayette in 1824*

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SHORTLY after her marriage in 1805, Martha Parke Custis, granddaughter of Martha Washington, was carried—if old Southern custom was followed—by her husband, Thomas Peter, over the threshold of the mansion that tops Georgetown Heights. Francis Loundes built the two original wings of Tudor Place about 1794, intending to erect the main house between them. The family lived in the east wing during the erection of the central portion. From an upper window Mrs. Peter is said to have watched the burning of the Capitol in 1814. And according to further legend, Martha and Thomas Peter's daughters, Britannia and America, signaled their cousins at Arlington Mansion with bright colored petticoats hung from a window—to the chagrin of their dignified parents.

Occupying an entire city block, Tudor Place stands in clear view of the street. Box trees, old elms and maples add to its stateliness. Widely spreading vines on the façade contribute additional notes of mellowness.

Without doubt one of the finest early Federal houses in Washington, Tudor House was designed by Dr. William Thornton, who, in 1792, had won the competition for the design of the Capitol. Individual in charm and beauty, its most prominent feature is the "temple" porch of the south entrance—a circular portico two stories high, with domical ceiling. Extending in a graceful semi-circular colonade, half of this "tem-

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

ple" is in front of the building. The other half, forming a niche with triple French window, is recessed into the wide main hall.

Tudor Place has remained in the Peter family for more than a century and a quarter. Britannia, who inherited the place, married Commodore Beverly Kennon, killed in the *Princeton's* explosion. She died in 1911, at the age of 96. Martha Custis Kennon, her daughter, married a distant cousin, Dr. Armistead Peter, bringing the family name back to the old home.

Priceless notable family relics are to be found at Tudor House—Martha Washington's seed-pearl wedding dress and jewelry, a set of china made for President Washington by the French government, a bowl presented him by the Order of the Cincinnati, his camp trunk used during the Revolution and many paintings, miniatures and letters.

The exterior of the house as a whole is characterized by Thornton's skillful handling of form and detail shown in the flat treatment of the cornice, profile of finely turned members of the roof balustrade and the scale of the large windows, with narrow trim and wide panes of glass.

Overlooking the circular carriage drive and garden set with boxwoods, the north front—and main entrance of the building—is more severe than the south front. The entrance door here is the most conspicuous feature, surmounted with a delicate fan-light, untrimmed arch, and quaint wrought-iron lamp.

Opening into a central hallway and a transverse hall across the north side, the north entrance forms a T, with spacious living rooms having doors of curly maple. Delicate plaster friezes, marble mantelpieces,

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and the wide plank flooring of these rooms remain unchanged.

Following English precedent, Tudor Place is one of Washington's landmarks remaining from the Georgian period. The north entrance is seldom noticed by the average person, the more prominent south front being assumed to be the main entrance. While designed on a scale less grand, the north entrance is no less interesting in its design and detail.

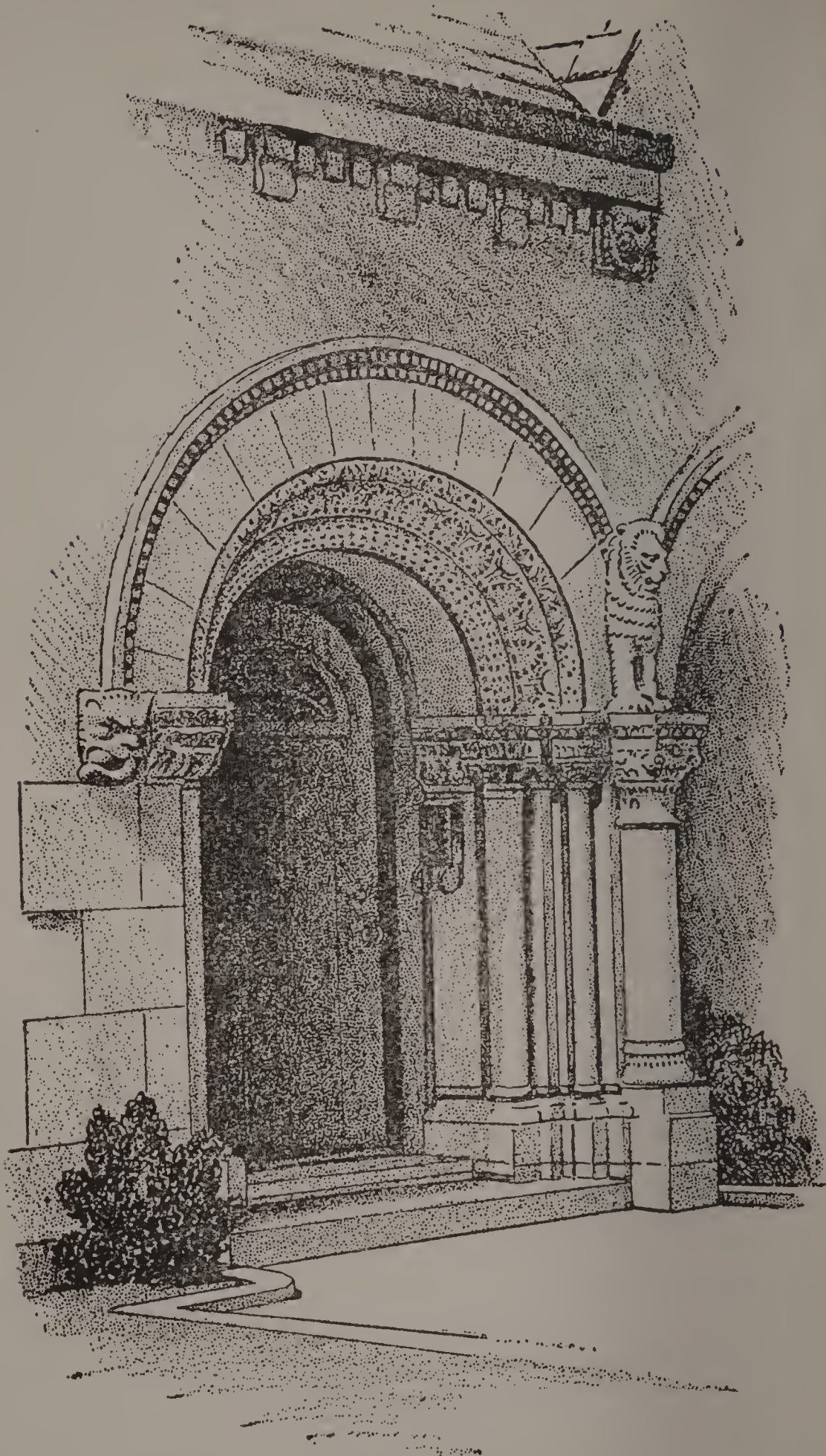
The north entrance is simple in the extreme. The door is deeply recessed between paneled jambs. A thin transom bar above the door extends across the jambs and on the face of the wall to form impost moldings at the spring of the arch. The lantern hung in the arch was a welcome beacon on winter nights.

The door is reached over a simple stone platform raised two or three steps above the ground. Iron foot scrapers with decorative scroll ends were placed conveniently at the first step. Curious circular iron stands were set on either side of the platform. Pseudo rustic cast-iron benches of the Victorian era on the platform and at either side of the door are resting spots placed there by a thoughtful owner.





*Henry Adams House*



HENRY ADAMS HOUSE, 2618 THIRTY-FIRST STREET, N.W.  
ORIGINAL LOCATION, H STREET, N.W., NEAR SIXTEENTH

## Henry Adams House

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*Diplomats, social leaders and patrons of the arts attending the famous Adams' breakfasts in the 80s passed through this doorway*

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IN 1927 the Henry Adams House, then standing on H Street N. W., near Sixteenth Street, facing Lafayette Square, was demolished to make way for the Hay-Adams Hotel. Its doorway, designed by H. H. Richardson, was preserved for posterity through its purchase and installation in a house at 2618 Thirty-first Street N. W.

The Adams House doorway shows the extent to which the Romanesque architecture of France had fascinated Richardson. Built of warm, gray limestone, its detail ranges from bold piers and smaller engaged columnettes with crisply carved caps, to more delicate and refined mouldings and ornament. Here one sees the study, care and handiwork of a master architect—the handling of architectural detail in a manner rarely if ever attained by Richardson's contemporaries.

As originally built in the Adams House, the larger of the two arches was the frame for a large bank of windows. In its new location the windows were omitted and the wide opening became a garage entrance. Since construction of the house on Thirty-first Street the garage has been converted into a library and the garage doors made a part of the library wall. The smaller opening has been somewhat modified by reducing the width from that of the original Adams House doorway and the voussoirs of the semi-circular arch reground to fit the new size.

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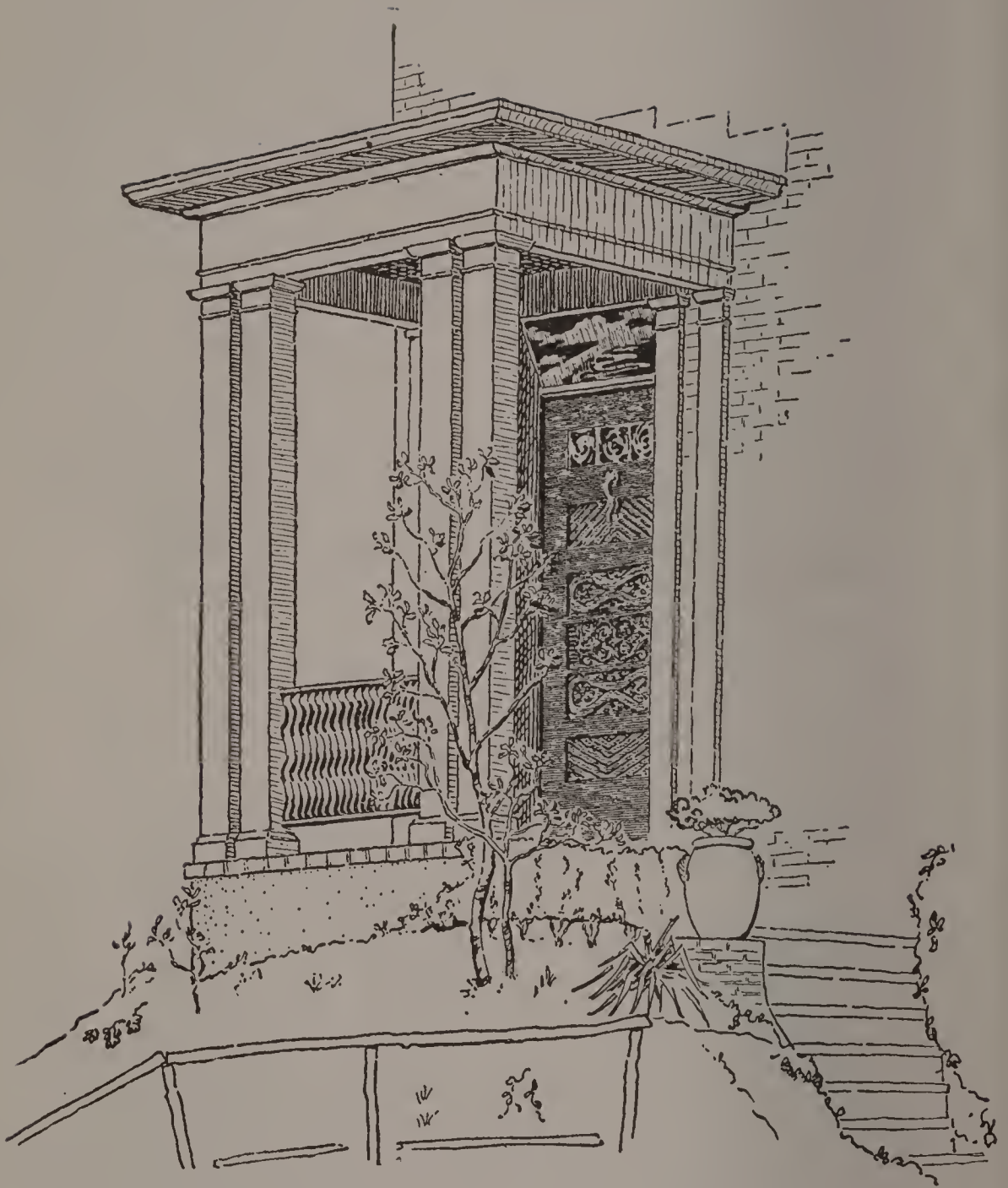
The lion between the arches, detailed in true Romanesque fashion, originally supported a peacock, symbol of immortality, richly carved in stone. The peacock found a resting place as an architectural feature in the garden of the home of Horace Peaslee, architect, on Nineteenth Street N. W. A long wrought-iron balcony railing which originally graced the bank of windows of the larger arched opening of the Adams House was divided and used on two second-story windows of the house on Thirty-first Street.

The home of Henry Adams was built in 1885 and immediately became a center of political and cultural life in Washington—the Adams' breakfasts being a local institution in the late 80s.

Henry Adams was a grandchild of John Quincy Adams. His father was elected to Congress in 1860 and, in 1861, was appointed Minister to England. Henry Adams, serving as his father's secretary, saw political life intimately, traveled extensively abroad and, for some years, was a newspaper correspondent. Many years of his life, however, were spent in Washington until his death in 1918.

A prolific writer, Henry Adams occasionally assumed the pen name of "Francis Snow Compton." He was a versatile writer, his works ranging through history, archæology, biography, novels, and that classic in American literature, "The Education of Henry Adams." His pen was not without wit, satire and irony, as indicated by his reference to the design of the Department of State Building as "Mr. Mullet's architectural infant asylum."

*1234 Nineteenth Street, N. W.*



1234 NINETEENTH STREET, N. W.

## 1234 Nineteenth Street, N. W.

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*Materials from Dinan, Brittany; Tokio, Japan; and America have contributed to this modest, but interesting doorway at 1234 Nineteenth Street, N. W.*

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FOR a convincing demonstration of how a combination of architectural skill and imagination can combine details of different architectural periods and from widely separated parts of the world, into a harmonious whole, there is no more interesting example than the doorway of the house at 1234 Nineteenth Street, N. W. In it is to be seen fragments from Japan, old Brittany and several eras of building in America.

A Japanese scenic design cut out of sandalwood serves as a grille over the glazed transom light above the door. This grille is a portion of a partition screen—one of several—brought from Japan. From its design one may assume that it dates from a period in Japanese art of about 75 or 100 years ago.

A Breton chest front of oak, two inches in thickness, has been converted into an entrance door. It was originally part of a horizontal chest, about three feet high and five feet long. The front was made of five carved decorative panels. Only after diligent search was the owner of the house able to find at Dinan, Brittany, a chest designed of panels that could be used either horizontally or vertically.

The five carved panels are of three patterns: two being of chevron design, two based upon a graceful figure 8 and one of scrolls forming a diamond shape. The delicate but vigorous carving, the fitting and wooden peg construction, proclaim this portion of the

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

present door to be the work of a craftsman expert in his art. The stiles and rails are wide, the construction strong, built to endure for generations. To venture a guess as to when the original chest was made would be purely a matter of speculation; a rash and meaningless guess at best. All that one can say is that it must be old—very old.

As a chest front it was too short for a man-size door, but the owner—an architect—had it skillfully extended in height with a top panel of glass. This panel he covered with a decorative and beautifully wrought iron grille designed by that famous Boston architect, H. H. Richardson, in 1885, and salvaged from the home of John Hay, one-time Secretary of State.

Below the glazed and iron grille-covered panel of the door there hangs a graceful dull brass door knocker, fashioned as a conventionalized ornamental dolphin. Opposite the middle wooden panel is a hand-wrought lever latch handle of iron and the original lock plate of the chest, the width of the door stile and the same height as the panel. The door sets in a heavy wooden frame between brick masonry jambs. To the left of the door there hangs, at convenient height, an iron bell pull of rare and unusual design. An entrance porch, salvaged from an old house, consisting of square posts, pilasters and cornice of American Colonial detail shelters the doorway.

The house stands virtually on a hillside, well back from the street, tucked away between modern structures. At the time its owner, Horace Peaslee, architect, acquired the property, it was just two little old brick houses. Before the Civil War they were conspicuous as being a “pair of houses standing on a high bank north of L Street.” Today they are one, rehabili-

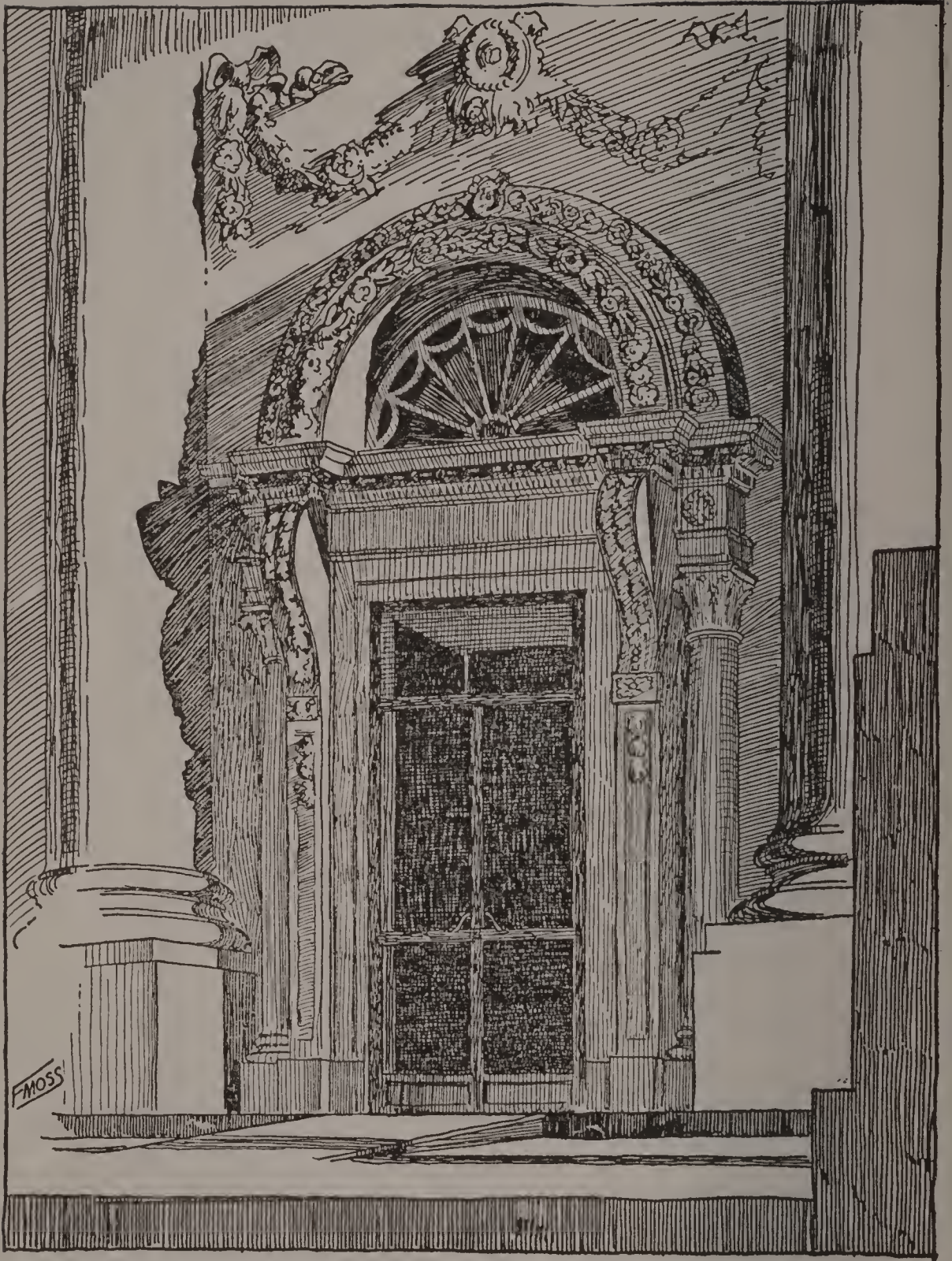


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tated, modernized, convenient and livable, conspicuous because of a small but charming and delightful front yard garden, well planted with flowers and shrubs of great variety and accented effectively with architectural fragments. A flight of seventeen brick steps afford easy ascent from street to doorway.



*The White House*



THE WHITE HOUSE, 1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N. W.

# The White House

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*Through this doorway have passed for more than 125 years Presidents of the United States, their families and friends, and citizens of the rank and file*

---

THE White House must impress all who see it by its quiet, simple and stately dignity. The design of the north façade, facing Pennsylvania Avenue, consists of a central feature comprising a classic pediment supported by Ionic columns, extending through two stories, and symmetrical wings on either side. The impressive and dominating central motif forms a frame for a more ornate center of interest—the principal doorway. From Lafayette Square the eyes of an observer thus logically travel from the restful, horizontal mass of the President's House to the colonnaded porte cochère and, finally, to the doorway itself.

The doorway dates from about 1815, though the building of the White House began nearly 25 years before. Its design—like that of the entire exterior of the house—is typical of contemporary English dwellings of its day and sounds the one highly decorative architectural note of the façade. As in other Renaissance structures, there is seen a revival of classic detail embellished with leaf, floral and animal forms and ornamental rosettes.

The classic entablature, supported by wall-engaged columns with capitals of Corinthian inspiration, is broken by large, projecting console brackets which support the more prominent arch of the doorway and become an important feature either side of the architrave surrounding the door opening. The entablature,

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classic in form and proportions, is well molded and simply decorated with modillions and closely spaced dentils. Within the arch above the entablature a simple, effective fan-light is divided by wooden members.

Natural forms ornamenting the arch surfaces and console brackets are modeled full and in high relief. Supplementing the decorative doorway, similarly ornamented festoons or swags, also full modeled and apparently fastened to the wall with a large rosette and flowing ribbons, are applied to the wall above. This festoon is the sole decoration of the plain wall areas of the entire façade.

Impressive because of its stately, generous scale, as well as ornate treatment, the doorway is a fitting principle entrance to the official home of the President and his family. Its designer, James Hoban, possibly had in mind that the public would ordinarily view it from a distance and proportioned the modeled ornament accordingly. Being on the north side, and further shaded by the massive portico, the ornamental and architectural forms, of necessity, had to be boldly conceived and the ornament boldly modeled to be significant in the absence of bright, direct sunlight.

From an architectural standpoint the problem was further complicated by the execution of the entire design in a single color. The use of colors or an exposure to direct sunlight would have created an entirely different effect from that which is now so satisfactory and so generally admired.

Actually of gray sandstone, quarried in nearby Virginia, the White House was evidently painted white at an early date for the term, "White House" was in popular—though not official—use before 1812. Cost and the difficulties of transportation of the times has

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been offered as an explanation of the use of sandstone instead of marble.

In planning "The city intended for permanent seat of the Government of the United States," in 1790, Major L'Enfant included a large area designated as the "President's house." In 1792 James Hoban, architect, won the \$500 prize offered by the Commissioners of the District for the design of the President's mansion, and while the cornerstone was laid that same year, it was not until eight years later that the house, even then said to be "scarcely habitable," was occupied by John and Abigail Adams. They spent a trying four years there, getting along without "bells in the house" and hanging the family wash in the famous east room.

Jefferson found the house in but slightly better condition and set about making various improvements, adding terraces to the grounds and building wings used as "offices, meat-house, wine cellar, coal and wood sheds and privies."

In 1814 the house was burned and little remained but the stone work of the outer walls, much of which had to be taken down and rebuilt. James Hoban again was called upon and assigned the task of reconstruction in 1815. In 1824 he built the semi-circular portico on the south, or garden front, and in 1829 added the colonnaded portico on the north front.

The story of the White House successively records nearly 150 years of progress. During that time water for household use has been pumped by hand from wells near the house, piped from a distant spring, and, finally, obtained from the city's water supply system. The interior has witnessed the passing of candles, oil and gas for illumination. In due time bathrooms were

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added. About 1881 a single telephone was installed, and, twenty years later, a telephone switchboard.

Theodore Roosevelt, in 1902, gave the executive mansion the official title of White House. During his administration Congress appropriated some \$500,000 for the alteration, repair and additions to the house and executive offices.



*Folger Shakespeare Library*



FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY  
201 E. CAPITAL STREET, S. E.

## Folger Shakespeare Library

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*The doorway of the Folger Library, in its dignity, simplicity and masterly handling of rich materials, reflects 20th Century trends in architecture. It gives access to the most comprehensive Shakespearean collection in the world*

---

AN Amherst College undergraduate with a good deal of vision plus the makings of a millionaire Standard Oil executive, heard Ralph Waldo Emerson lecture in 1879 on the high-sounding phrase, "Superlative of Mental Temperance." What Henry Clay Folger listened to was a eulogy of the life and work of Shakespeare. But it inspired the purchase of an inexpensive 13-volume edition of his plays and poems—and a life time devoted to the acquisition of Shakespearean material.

Relentless search resulted in the largest and finest Shakespearean collection in existence. It comprises some 85,000 volumes of books and manuscripts—together with objects of art relating to the dramatist. In addition, its scope includes the entire literature of the Elizabethan Age. As a fitting repository, and to make these documents available to students and others, the Folger Shakespeare Library was built between the years 1929 and 1932, at a cost of more than two millions of dollars.

Identical main entrances, approached by a flight of marble steps, are at both ends of the north façade. The steps rise between blocks of marble carved with figures of Pegasus, symbol of poetry. For emphasis in the composition, the doorways are recessed in the wall,

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

with the reveals softened and refined by a series of plain flat surfaces. The decorative quality of the doorways depends upon metal grilles of geometric design. The carved masks above the grilles are symbolic of comedy and tragedy.

Designed by Paul Philippe Cret, architect, the Folger Library is regarded as one of Washington's most beautiful semi-public buildings. Classic in character, it is devoid of classic forms so evident in other formal and monumental buildings of the National Capital. An architectural gem in its own right, it harmonizes with the traditional classic architecture all about it. At the same time, it preserves unto itself a distinctive quality—a quality that is imposing, dignified, quiet and refreshing to view.

In this outstanding structure are seen at work the hand and mind of a master designer using simple masses effectively, decoration with admirable restraint, and combinations of rich materials with understanding regard to their inherent structural and decorative possibilities. In it an orderly composition has been achieved in simple terms, frankly, and without straining for effect.

Between the two doorways of the north façade there is a rhythmic composition of high grilled windows separated by fluted piers. Decoration of the façade depends primarily upon sculptural panels beneath these windows so located that they are easily seen by all who pass. These panels, the work of John Gregory, sculptor, appropriately depict scenes from "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Romeo and Juliet," "The Merchant of Venice," "Macbeth," "Julius Cæsar," "King Lear," "Richard III," "Hamlet," and "Henry IV." The façade is crowned by a simple attic, ornamented with Shakespearean quotations.

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

On the west façade the windows overlook a small garden, fountains and a figure of Puck, modeled by Brenda Putnam. The walls of the east wing are broken only by an exit door, which opens on a terraced platform. This door is of aluminum, ornamented with floral bands in low relief.

The Elizabethan interior is a distinct contrast to the simple, straightforward classic character of the exterior. This decided difference between exterior and interior, ordinarily contrary to what is considered desirable to maintain unity of design, is not inappropriate since it serves to emphasize the historic character of this Elizabethan interior and the literary treasures it shelters.

Entirely in the style of 17th century England, the interior of the vaulted entrance halls on either side of the exhibition gallery are finished in rough plaster with flagstone floors and rich decorations in wood and stone.

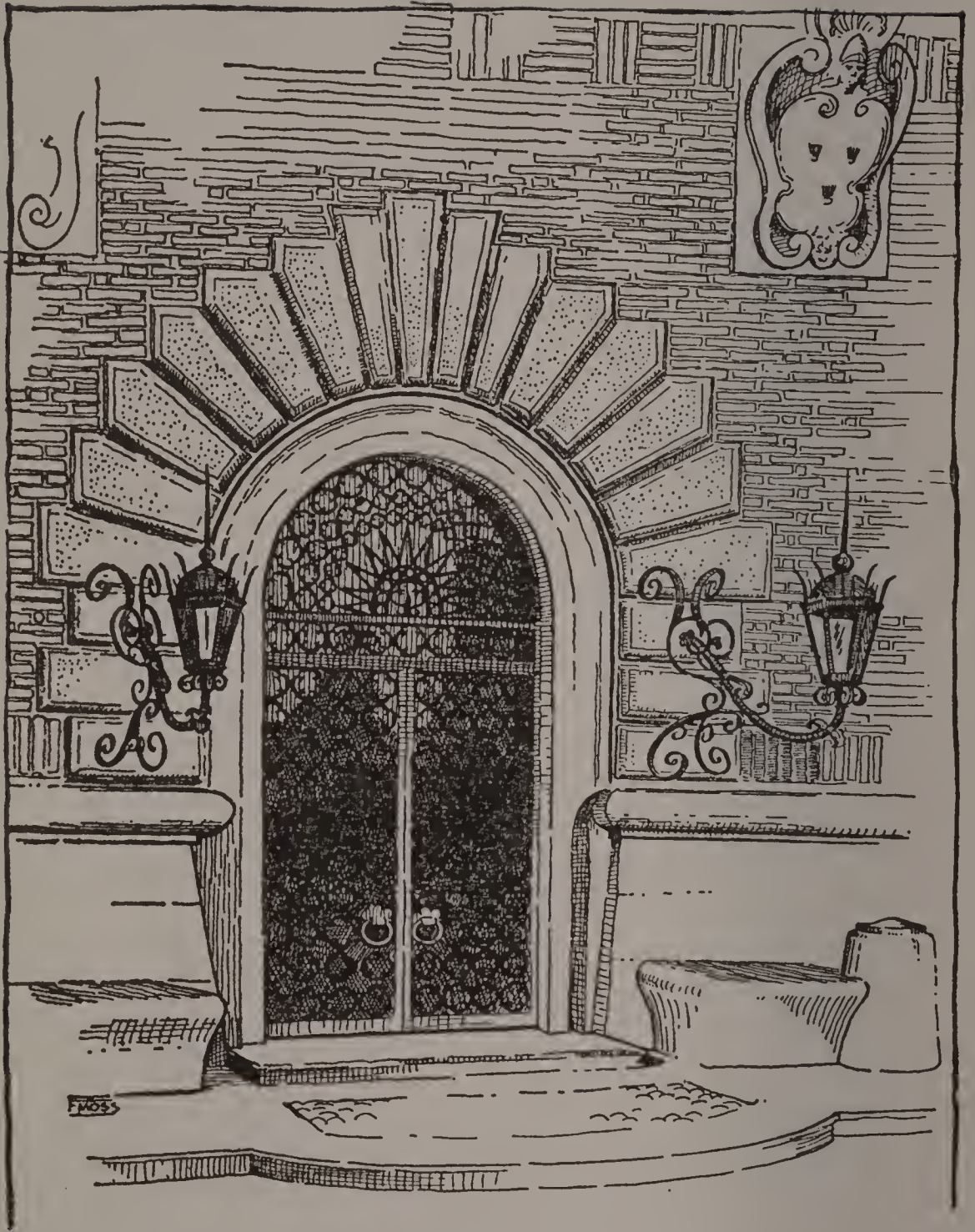
The exhibition gallery is a great paneled hall of rare dignity and scale. A reading room, entered from the exhibition gallery, is also designed in the manner of a traditional English great hall. Through the east lobby, entrance is gained to an Elizabethan theater.

Assembled from a number of small lots and tracts, fourteen years were spent in acquiring the land for the library. Two weeks after the cornerstone was laid, in 1930, Mr. Folger died. He bequeathed the library, with an endowment for its maintenance and growth, in trust, to the trustees of Amherst College, who administer it as an institution for advancing the study and appreciation of Shakespeare and his works.



A very faint pencil sketch of a house is visible in the background. The house has a chimney on the right side and a tree in front of it. The drawing is light and serves as a watermark or background illustration.

*John R. McLean House*



JOHN R. MCLEAN HOUSE, 1500 I STREET, N. W.  
DEMOLISHED IN 1939



## John R. McLean House

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*Doorway of the McLean mansion, for many years a center of social activity in the Capital*

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WHEN the late John R. McLean asked John Russell Pope to design him a house, he specified that it was to be "for entertaining—nothing else." So it is not surprising that Mr. Pope took as his inspiration the lavish but dignified Italian palaces and designed a structure typically Florentine. Rich in detail, its doorway was one of the finest examples of the Italian Renaissance to be found in this country. The wrought iron brackets and lamps were a copy of those used at the doorway of the Ricardi Palace in Florence.

Washingtonians are familiar with stories of the ornate interior of the McLean mansion—of its brocade-covered walls, elaborate chandeliers, fireplaces, intricately carved and painted ceilings, mahogany staircase, tremendous pipe organ and theater. Familiar are the stories of its heyday of social activities when invitations to the house were so coveted that, failing to receive one, disappointed social aspirants took short trips out of the city rather than face the kind of music that wasn't being played at 1500 I Street.

All sorts of mystery grew up about the place. Tunnels from its cellars were said to lead to the Executive dwelling, but these were never found. A secret staircase winding beneath one of the fireplaces is the only "mystery" ever to be actually discovered.

In 1939 the McLean doorway, along with the rest of the house was demolished to make way for an office building, more imposing because of its size. And to

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

the blows of the experienced wrecker it quickly passed on into Washington history.

Typically Florentine in architectural character, the entrance to the McLean house was impressive because of the heavy stone voussoirs of its arch and the use of wrought iron. The iron grille work which filled the opening was of Italian Renaissance tradition, interesting in pattern, excellent in scale, proportion and workmanship, an effective barrier to the uninvited. In harmony with the wrought-iron grille, rich, graceful wrought-iron lamps made in a masterly manner were used on either side of the entrance.

In the spirit of its Italian precedent, a strong, battered and heavily molded high base formed a fitting support for the massive brick walls above. Roman shaped brick—much longer and narrower in proportion than usual brick proportions—were used for the facing of the outside walls and were laid in mortar, forming unusually thick mortar joints. The shape and color of the brick combined with the color and thickness of the joints gave a distinctive and pleasing texture and pattern to the large wall areas. Rich materials combined with artistic skill served to produce a house whose architecture reflected the desire of its owner to have a place “for entertaining.”

*The Lindens*



THE LINDENS, 2401 KALORAMA ROAD, N. W.

## The Lindens

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*Built in 1754 by Robert (King) Hooper of Marblehead, the Lindens was torn down and moved from its setting in Danvers, Mass., to Washington*

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THE Lindens has an unusual history and its doorway, which is the center of interest of a prominent central architectural feature, has been described by at least one authority as "a unique treatment." The central feature consists of two engaged Corinthian columns which extend through two stories, support a steep-pitched pediment, and frame the doorway, a second-story hall window and an attic window.

Columns of the central feature are of wood painted white in contrast to the warm gray painted background of the wooden boarding of the walls. The cornice and entablature above the columns are finely molded and decorated with well-detailed modillions which produce a rhythmic play of light and shadow.

As in many other Georgian Colonial houses, the outside wall covering is of boards grooved to simulate stonework, the illusion being further produced by a texture secured by the use of sand. The character of stonework is consistently followed by grooving the boards adjacent to the doorway and above the heads of the doorway and windows in the manner of stone quoins and the voussoirs of flat-arch lintels. Like the columns, the quoins and arches are emphasized by the use of white paint in contrast with the gray background.

The doorway is reached by a flight of three stone steps with foot scrapers on either side of the door and the door, deeply recessed in the wall, is delicately

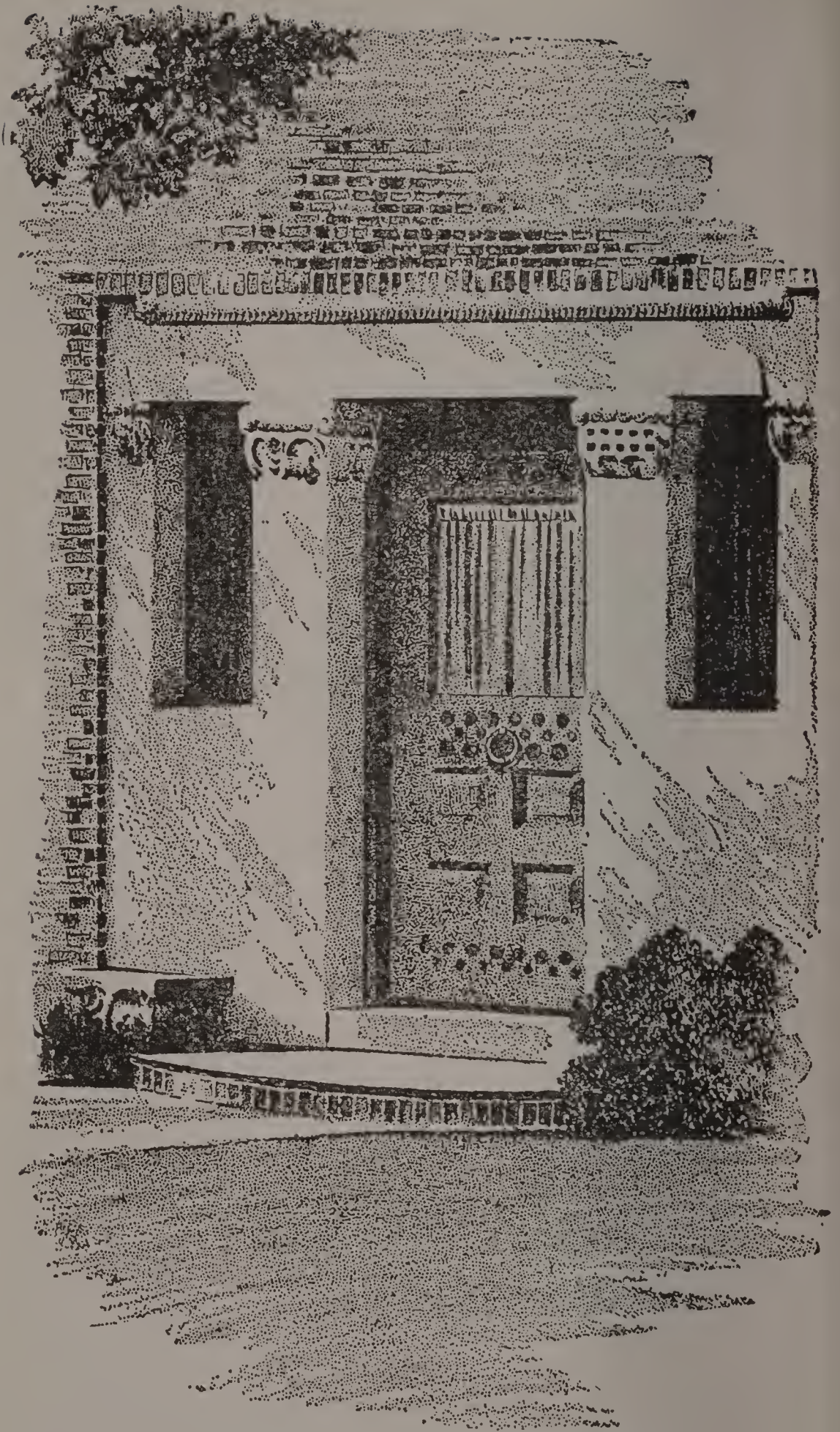
## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

molded and paneled. Top panels of the door are semi-circular and glazed. A large brass knocker forms a decorative feature and there is a reminder of Revolutionary War days in the way of a bullet hole through the lock rail.

The house is of the gambrel roof type and includes a decorative roof balustrade. Four richly molded dormers provide light for the attic and are decorative features of the unusual façade. The design of the Lindens is dignified and a notable example of a fine New England dwelling.

Originally built as a country place by Robert—better known as “King”—Hooper of Marblehead, Mass., the house originally stood in Danvers, Mass., in a garden setting with a linden-planted approach. During 1774, just previous to the Revolution, this stately mansion was occupied by General Thomas Gage, last provincial Governor of Massachusetts. Subsequently, it became known as the Lindens. In 1936 it was purchased, taken down in sections, removed from its former site and re-erected in Washington, at 2401 Kalorama Road.

*John Hay House*



JOHN HAY HOUSE, 3014 WOODLAND DRIVE, N. W.



## John Hay House

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*Forerunner of much 20th Century architecture, this doorway of a house built in 1885 became the entrance to another house erected in 1927*

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IT is unlikely that Henry H. Richardson, famous Boston architect of the early 80s, ever designed a simpler and more pleasing doorway for a house than that to be seen at 3014 Woodland Drive. This doorway was originally that of the John Hay House which stood at the corner of Sixteenth and H Streets, N. W., across from old St. John's Church. When the Hay House was demolished in 1927, the doorway was purchased for the house in which it has now found a home.

Warm gray limestone, hammer-dressed to a relatively smooth surface, was used for the stone work. In its plain surfaces, deep reveals and restrained ornament, is seen a forerunner of so-called "modern" architecture of the Twentieth Century, and Richardson at his best. The pier caps are decorated with crisp intertwining conventionalized, acute-pointed acanthus leaves of French-Romanesque inspiration. A vigorous label mold terminating in bulbous bosses forms a strong, pleasing cap for the doorway motif.

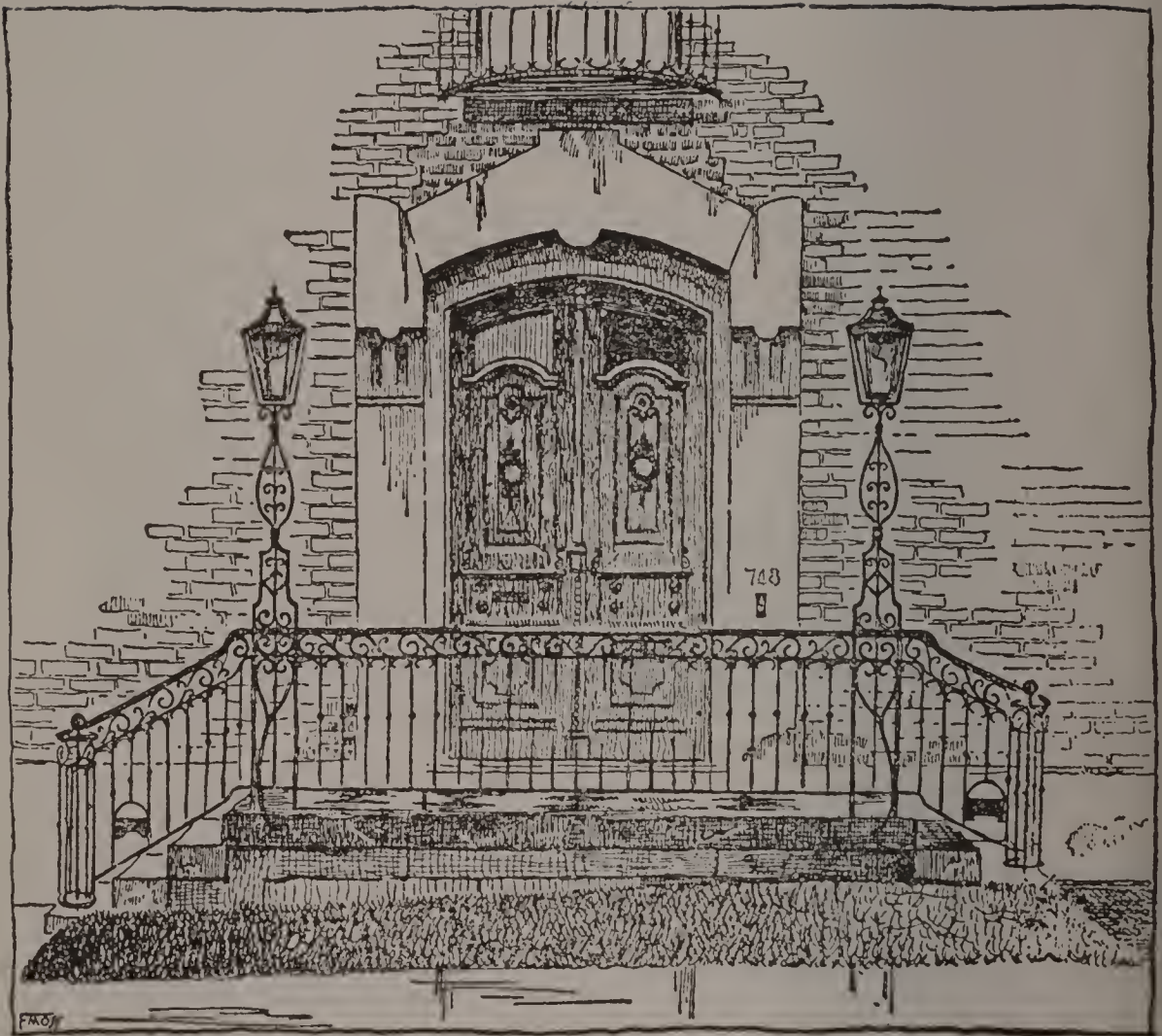
In the wide central opening, between the piers, is a heavy oak frame and door with ornamental strap hinges of iron. At either side are well-proportioned windows forming generous side lights. The low, carved stone pedestals, set on either side of the door on the entrance platform, were part of the original doorway in the John Hay house.

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The name of John Hay recalls hectic days in Washington during the Civil War and the political and cultural life of the post-war period in the 70s and 80s. John Hay was one of President Lincoln's secretaries. Following the War Between the States, Hay served in various diplomatic posts and was a journalist of marked ability. In 1878 he became Assistant Secretary of State. During the following ten years he collaborated with John G. Nicolay in writing *Abraham Lincoln: A History*. At the time of his death in 1905, he was Secretary of State.

During his lifetime Hay achieved deserved recognition with his *Pike County Ballads*, *Castilian Days* and *The Bread Winners*. He was a close friend of Henry Cabot Lodge, Senator from Massachusetts; Augustus Saint-Gaudens, sculptor, and the painter, John La Farge. Henry Adams was probably his most intimate friend and, in 1885, both Hay and Adams commissioned Richardson to design their houses, which they built side by side.

*Decatur House*



DECATUR HOUSE, LAFAYETTE SQUARE, N. W.

## Decatur House

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*Doorway of the Decatur House in Lafayette Square, one of Washington's historic homes which still resists modern encroachment*

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COMMODORE STEPHEN DECATUR, returning from a brilliant and profitable campaign in the Mediterranean against the corsairs of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, wanted to enjoy life while he and his wife were still young. A series of brilliant successes had followed his entering the Navy at nineteen years of age. Setting fire to the United States frigate *Philadelphia* after she had been taken by pirates and escaping under heavy fire—his first exploit—brought a captain's commission and the sword of honor from Congress.

On an open common "called Lafayette Square" a private residence, designed by Benjamin H. Latrobe, was built in 1819. It was here that Commodore and Mrs. Decatur planned to entertain their many friends.

Scarcely a year passed when a duel with a fellow officer, Commodore Barron, resulted in Stephen Decatur's death. Mrs. Decatur then retired to Kalorama and the house was later occupied by several noted men of their day. About 1844 John Gadsby leased the property, turning the garden at the rear into a slave market—protected from sight by an 8-foot brick wall on the south and an ell adjoining the house on the H Street side. This ell, a long one-story brick building with windows barred with iron, was used as a corral for Negro slaves.

General Edward Fitzgerald Beale came into possession of the house after the Civil War. It was inherited

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

by his son, Truxtun Beale, formerly Minister to Persia and Greece. Until his death, in 1936, Truxtun Beale lived in the Decatur House, keeping its character and tradition intact.

Of somber reddish brown brick, the austere face of the house is relieved by tall windows, with long lintels of stone, slender mullions and delicate iron balconies at the second story. The structure is practically square, conveying dignity and solidity.

Contrasting with the severity of its exterior, the interior reproduces subtle proportions, carved moldings and other characteristics of the Adam style. Huge rooms, separated by graceful archways, are lighted by crystal chandeliers suspended from high, frescoed ceilings. A circular stairway leads to the second-floor salon. In the library—extending through two large rooms, with windows front and back—old and rare books line the walls. There is an abundance of fine wood carving here, as well as in the dining room. The house is lighted throughout by chandeliers and wall scones, the lamp and candle never having been displaced by electricity.

Aside from the Executive Mansion, Decatur House, the first dwelling to be built on Lafayette Square, like so many of the best preserved early Washington houses belongs to the late Georgian period. Built later than Octagon House and the house which now is the home of the Arts Club on I Street, it is more robust, severe and less refined and delicate in its detail than either of these.

Iron work, characteristic of the period, was used at windows and entrance steps in a simple, yet extremely graceful design. The wrought-iron railing at the entrance, with its foot scrapers—much needed at the time

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

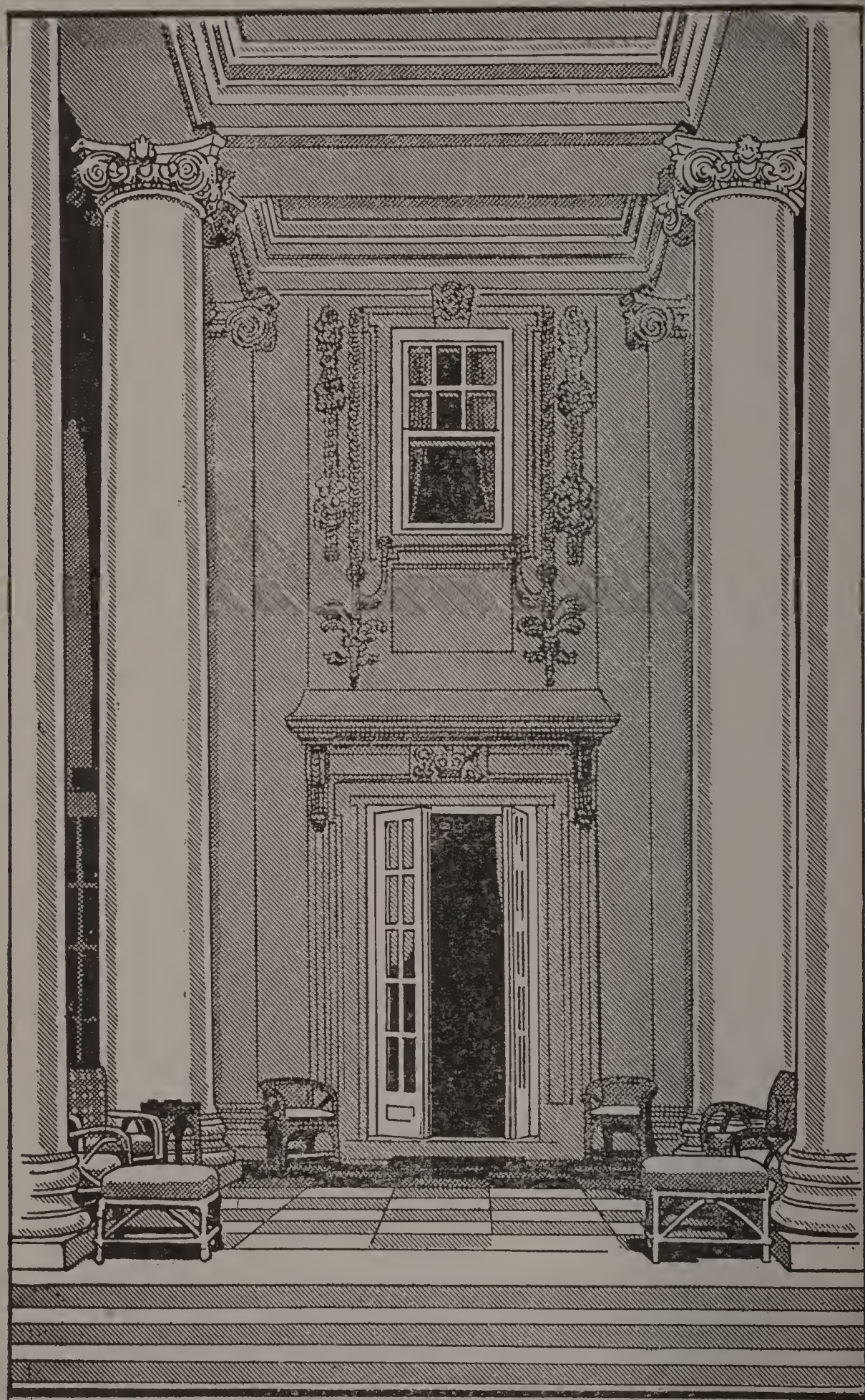
—and its lanterns to light the way, was as utilitarian as decorative.

The doorway seems to be of later date, for it lacks the refinement and characteristics of Colonial or Georgian architecture. It is severe, somewhat heavy, large in scale and a little out of keeping in its contrast with the mellow surrounding brickwork. The doors, too, seem of much later date than the structure of the house, being quite rococo in their heavy ornamental moldings that are a reminder more of the Mid-Victorian era of American architecture which followed some years later. However, in spite of changing ownerships and, possibly, minor alterations to the structure, it has always been known as the Stephen Decatur House.





*British Embassy*



BRITISH EMBASSY, 3100 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N. W.

## British Embassy

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*Seldom seen by the public, this door of the British Embassy is simple, dignified and imposing*

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SHELTERED by a great portico composed of tall Ionic columns of stone supporting a classic pediment, the main entrance of Great Britain's finest Embassy faces toward the White House two miles away. The doorway, in keeping with English tradition, while simple and dignified, is imposing because of its scale and chaste character.

Plain wooden doors with small glass panes fill the masonry opening, which is surrounded by a molded and broken architrave. Console brackets, simple in detail, and of slight projection, support a molded cornice. Below the cornice and above the architrave a panel contains the royal cipher—a crown and monogram G. V. R.—a reminder that the Embassy was built during the reign of George V.

The doorway motif is continued on up into the second story, forming a panel for a second-story window. This panel, projecting slightly from the main wall, is decorated with floral and leaf forms modeled in high relief; the carving, crisp and fresh; the detail more modern in spirit than traditional. Above the second story window a cherub's head forms a keystone. The entire doorway and its background are executed in Indiana limestone. The design of the doorway, extremely simple yet rich and domestic in character, depends for effect upon subtle differences in the stone surfaces, simple flat moldings, and restraint in decorative carving.

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A flight of stone steps leads from the great portico to terrace walks of black slate and the rolling green lawn flanked by beautiful rose gardens. In "typically British" manner, the main entrance is secluded from the street by the U-shaped chancery, or business office—a two-story, fifty-room building—and a forecourt. Behind the chancery is the four-story Embassy, containing reception rooms, living quarters of the Ambassador and his family, and guest rooms. An archway between supports the Ambassador's study, which connects the two buildings at the second floor level. The Embassy grounds on Massachusetts Avenue, with its gardens, swimming pool, tennis courts and garages, covers more than four and one-half acres.

The Embassy was built in 1930 to replace the outgrown headquarters at Connecticut Avenue and N Street. It was completed in 1931 at a cost of about \$1,000,000. The exterior of red brick, white stone trimming, with green shutters at the windows, is a typical 18th Century English manor house. The slate roofs are high and steep; the numerous chimneys of brick, tall and straight.

Sir Edwin Lutyens, London, architect of the Embassy, enjoys an enviable reputation in America and abroad. He is the designer of many of England's finest modern estates and public buildings. His government buildings in India and the War Memorial in Whitehall, near Westminster, London, are especially well known. In 1925 the American Institute of Architects, with impressive ceremonies, awarded him its coveted gold medal for outstanding achievement in architecture and the science of building.

*Highlands*



HIGHLANDS, 3825 WISCONSIN AVENUE, N. W.

## Highlands

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*Illuminated until recent years only by candlelight, Highlands was once the country estate of the Treasury's first register, Joseph J. Nourse*

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**B**OTH Thomas Jefferson and General Lafayette passed through the portal to this charming old house at 3825 Wisconsin Avenue. In fact Thomas Jefferson had the sweet shrubs on either side of the doorway brought from Monticello as a gift to Mme. Nourse. And the old stable where Jefferson and Lafayette rested their horses when visiting the Nourse family is still standing in the rear of the house.

A ship's lantern of interesting design hangs above the simple and modest, but also austere entrance, with its paneled door, semi-circular fanlight and narrow sidelights. Another lantern indicates a step between the red brick walk leading to the house and the driveway.

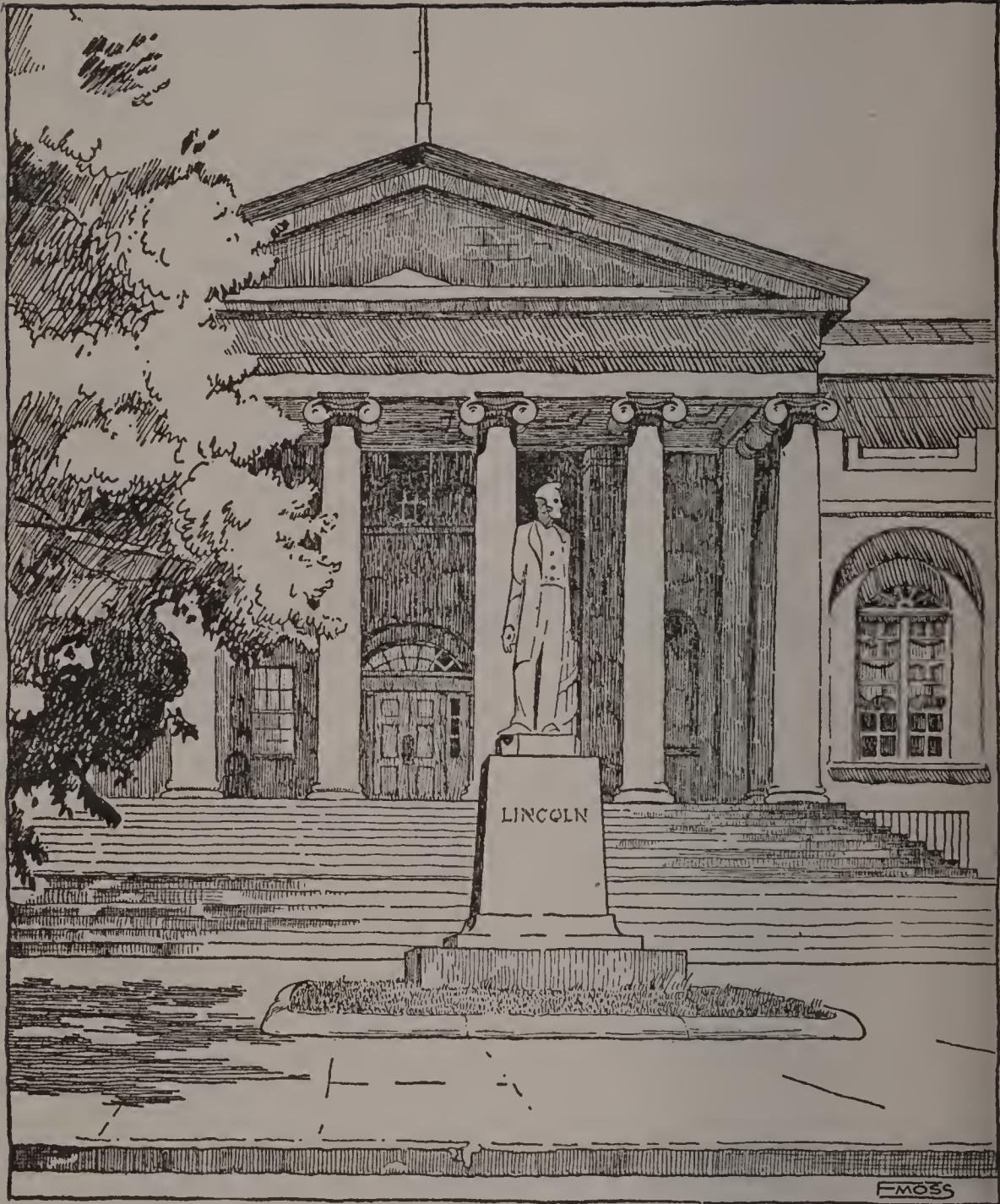
Four columns support a brick portico (not shown in the sketch), which lends distinction to this two-story, vine-covered manor house of amber or soft, warm, yellow-hued stone. It was built in 1815 by the Nourse family, who, previously living at Mount St. Albans, wanted a home farther "in the country." A portion of the estate—where the National Cathedral now stands—was presented to the church.

Various members of the Nourse family lived in the house until just prior to the World War. Later it was purchased from the descendants of the original owners by Admiral and Mrs. Cary T. Grayson.





*District of Columbia Court House*



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURT HOUSE  
D AND 4TH STREETS, N. W.

## District of Columbia Court House

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*Lottery in 1815, plans at \$300 in 1820, poor construction, difficulties of building a city hall, and ultimately faithful reproduction of the original design, in 1920, add colorful history to the Court House of the District of Columbia*

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THE design of the main doorway of the Court House of the District of Columbia dates from the flowering of the Greek Revival period of architecture in America—1820—though the actual date of the building as now seen, is one hundred years later. And, thereby hangs a tale, for the Court House is perhaps unparalleled in conception, building and rebuilding.

Classic simplicity marks even so important an entrance as that to the District courts. The wide masonry opening with its segmental arch frames a broad but simply treated Greek cornice forming a wide transom bar with simple fan-light above and an equally simple doorway below. Plain pilasters, Greek in character, form mullions separating the doors and the glass side-lights.

The doorway sets back some twenty-five feet or more from the face of the limestone columns of the generous and imposing classic portico forming the important central feature of the south front of the building. Between the sidewalk and the street curb stands a statue of Lincoln—the work of Lot Flannery, sculptor—“erected by the Citizens of the District of Columbia, April 15, 1868.”

The Court House had its origin as the District's City

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Hall—the first it could call its own. Unfortunate circumstances seem to have followed its inception in 1814 until its reconstruction in 1920.

For many years after the establishing of Washington as the seat of the Federal Government, no suitable building was available for the conduct of its administrative affairs. In the fall of 1814 the corporation decided that a City Hall was both desirable and necessary and, in February 1815, approved an act to raise \$40,000 by lottery. A grand capital prize of \$50,000, twelve prizes of \$1,000, eight prizes of \$100, and “besides a numerous quantity of smaller prizes,” were offered. This scheme for financing the City Hall—and along with it two school-houses and a penitentiary—came to naught due to the refusal of the States to permit the sale of lottery tickets—and because of the default of the lottery manager.

About four years later, George Hadfield, an architect who came to America from England in 1795 to serve as construction superintendent and assistant to William Thornton in the design and building of the Capitol, submitted plans for a City Hall to the Municipal authorities. Upon ascertaining from estimates that the structure would cost \$375,000, the plans were abandoned for the time being.

Two years later, July 14, 1820, the city authorities advertised for plans and specifications for a City Hall to cost \$100,000. The designer submitting the best plans was to be paid \$300 and the second best plans were to bring \$100. Apparently, George Hadfield had revised his plans prepared in 1818, for he was immediately given the winning award and the \$300, and the cornerstone of the building was laid about one

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month later—August 22, 1820. This was an event of high importance to the community and was accompanied by the discharging of guns from the Navy Yard and from Fort Washington “and excellent music was furnished by the Marine Band.”

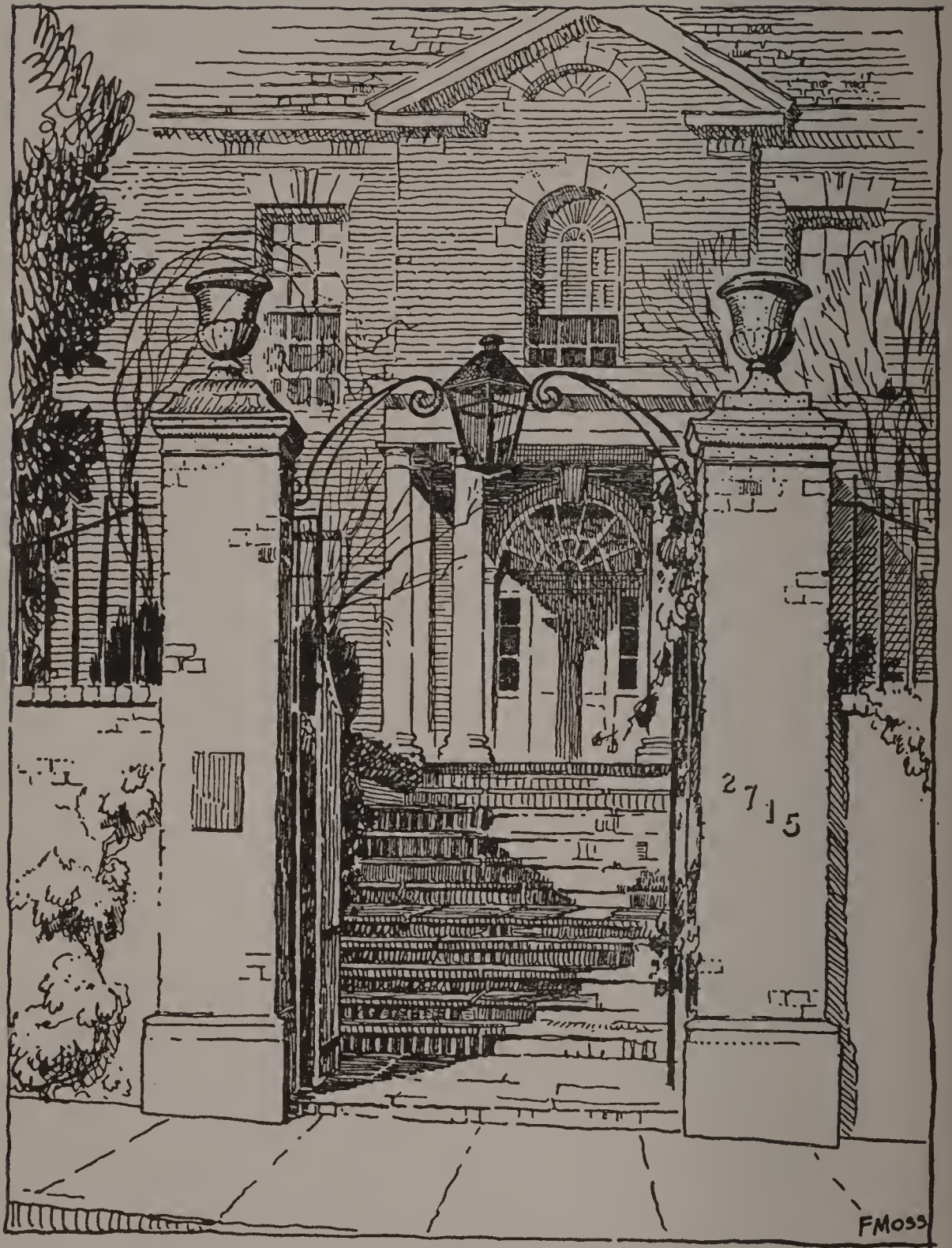
Hadfield died in 1826, with the City Hall barely two-thirds completed. Thereafter the Mayor and his councils went through a titanic struggle in an effort to meet payments on the structure, and to secure its completion, at times advertising for tenants to occupy the unfinished rooms. For years the building, intended to be finished on the outside in stucco, stood with rough unfinished brick walls and temporary wooden steps. As the building aged, it was not unusual for a loose “stone or brick to fall perilously near someone’s head.”

During the same period the District courts were equally hard pressed for suitable quarters. The courts and offices of the Federal Government gradually began to acquire space in the City Hall, and by 1873 the District officials found themselves without administrative offices. In due course, the one-time City Hall became more and more dilapidated and inconvenient, its original construction not having been of the best and the plan ill adapted to its new purposes.

Fortunately, Congress came to the rescue in 1916 with an appropriation for the restoration and reconstruction of the Court House. More than \$800,000 was spent on the work which has made possible the preservation of Hadfield’s original design of one of the fine examples of Greek Revival architecture applied to a public building to be found in the United States.



*Dumbarton House*



DUMBARTON HOUSE, 2715 Q STREET, N. W.



## Dumbarton House

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*Known successively as Dumbarton and Dunbarton, Bellevue, Rittenhouse Place and finally Dumbarton again, this historic house has retained its identity for more than 150 years*

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WITH a dearth of fact regarding its early architectural history, restorations and alterations that have taken place, strict adherence to any architectural period cannot be claimed for Dumbarton House. However, interior and exterior reveal excellent examples of the Georgian and Federal periods.

A fine brick mansion trimmed in white, standing on a rise of ground well above the sidewalk, its main entrance is approached by a long flight of steps cut back through the high retaining wall. Accentuated by a pillared porch, the doorway has a well-shaped architrave and keystone. Framed by finely molded and embellished mullions and transom bar, the heavy paneled door is surmounted by a wooden muntin divided fanlight and flanked by narrow side-lights.

The entrance from the street is emphasized by sturdy brick piers, refined in detail and capped by stone finials in the form of urns of bold design. The gateway and flight of entrance steps are lighted by a wrought-iron lantern which, with its iron brackets, forms a graceful, delicate arch, and a frame for the entrance doorway in the background.

Although not on its original site, Dumbarton House is one of the oldest houses in the District. It blocked the way from Q Street to Rock Creek—the path from Washington proper to Georgetown—for more than a

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

century. John Newbold, the owner, had the old house moved to its present location, 2715 Q Street, when plans were made to open Q Street and span Rock Creek Park with a bridge in 1915.

Ninian Beall, first owner of the site, came to this country in the 17th century as an indentured servant. Working for and winning his freedom he became one of the most colorful figures in the community. Renowned as an Indian fighter, it was probably for this service that he was granted a tract of 795 acres on Rock Creek in 1703. There has been a good deal of speculation as to why he should have called the site the "Rock of Dunbarton." One explanation is that the elevation of land may have suggested to the exiled Scot the Rock of Dumbarton, of his native land. Another is that he paraphrased the name in commemoration of the Battle of Dunbar, in which the Scotch were defeated and in which he was believed to have fought.

Reputed to be Georgetown's first settler, George Beall, son of Ninian, inherited "the plantation" in 1717 and the property remained in the Beall family until 1796, when it was purchased by Peter Casanave, while Mayor of Georgetown. The sale price of approximately \$600 would indicate either that the house was not elaborate at that time, or that it was sold at a sacrifice. Samuel Jackson, whose ownership came several years later, after the property had changed hands many times, is credited as being the builder of the original Dumbarton House. There is evidence that extensive remodeling occurred during the time when it was owned by Joseph Nourse, first register of the Treasury and, later, by Charles Carroll, grandson of a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

*Alva Belmont House*



ALVA BELMONT HOUSE, SECOND AND B STREETS, N. E.

## Alva Belmont House

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*Numerous changes have not entirely destroyed the Georgian-Colonial character of the doorway to Alva Belmont House, national headquarters of the National Woman's Party*

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THERE have been many remodelings since the Alva Belmont House was partially destroyed by British troops in 1814. Even the principal entrance on B Street has not escaped alteration. Within the masonry opening of the doorway, only the door, wood frame and paneling give evidence, through characteristic moldings, of dating, probably, from 1820. To what extent the entire house retains original portions of the early structure is a matter of speculation.

The design of the doorway follows a pattern typical of Georgian Colonial in America. The wood frame, transom bar, and mullions separating the door from the side-lights are all finely molded in the manner of their day. The glass of what was once a beautiful Georgian fanlight above the door is now of *art glass* quite out of harmony with the architecture of the house. Even the double flight of steps with wrought-iron hand-rails leading to the entrance, which is practically a whole story above the street, plainly show the marks of remodeling without kind regard for maintenance of the architectural character of the façade.

It is unfortunate that alterations to the exterior of one of the oldest houses in the District have not carried out the spirit of the original mansion as well as does the interior. Within, the house contains numerous fire-places with elaborately molded mantels, typical of their

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period. Ceilings are high, many have well-proportioned cornices; the rooms stately and dignified, with much furniture of a glorious past in American history. Doors are high, thick and massive, well paneled, hung on silver-plated hinges and fitted with silver knobs.

The history of the Alva Belmont House has its variations. The best account and the one usually accepted begins with the granting of a parcel of land by the British crown to Sir George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore. About 1793 Robert and Henry Sewall—or Sewell—acquired a large part of this grant, known as *Capitol Hill*. The widow of Henry Sewall became the second wife of the third Lord Baltimore and the building of the house has been attributed to him. Certain accounts, however, state that Robert Sewall purchased the house and site in 1799. Other accounts credit the building of the house to *Robert Sewell* some time after that date.

Historians generally agree that the Sewall family left the house prior to the coming of the British, en route from Bladensburg, in the summer of 1814. American forces under Commodore Barney fortified themselves in the Sewall house and from the upper stories made an attack on the advancing party of the British under the command of General Ross. At least two men were killed and several wounded. General Ross, incensed by the killing of his horse, ordered the house burned.

The extent to which the house was destroyed by the British is problematical. Some claim is made that only the B Street façade was seriously damaged. Numerous remodelings since 1820, however, effectively conceal the evidence. During the following 100 years the house passed through various ownerships, among

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others that of John Strode Barbour, one-time Governor of Virginia, Secretary of War and Minister to Great Britain. Aaron Burr, lawyer, statesman and one-time vice-president, is said to have occupied the house for a time.

Senator Porter H. Dale of Vermont purchased the property in 1922. In 1929 it was bought by the National Woman's Party, becoming in 1931 its national headquarters and named the Alva Belmont House in honor of Mrs. Oliver H. P. Belmont, staunch supporter of the feminist movement in the United States.





*Federal Reserve Building*



FEDERAL RESERVE BUILDING  
CONSTITUTION AVENUE AND 20TH STREET, N. W.

## Federal Reserve Building

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*Broad steps and terraces, formal gardens and fountains of black Cooperburg granite provide a fitting setting for the entrance of the Federal Reserve Building*

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THE entrance doorway of the Federal Reserve Building on Constitution Avenue is the central feature of the monumental portico of the façade. The portico, in turn, is the dominating central feature of the single composition formed by the National Academy of Sciences, the Public Health Service and the Federal Reserve buildings. While differing in design and details the three buildings are harmonious, all being classic in character and originating from the same Greek root.

The doorway of white Georgian marble snugly fills the lower portion of the space between two white marble piers of the portico. The upper portion of the space is filled by a window and bold grille of bronze. The doorway, in harmony with the entire façade, is of excellent proportion and pure in line. A simple marble architrave with molded edges supports an equally simple pediment and frames the massive bronze doors. The doors are made with plain panels formed between borders of conventionalized floral decoration. On each door is a lion's head firmly gripping a large bronze pull ring.

The windows on either side of the doorway extend through two stories. Protecting the glass windows are large bronze grilles of geometric pattern, accented with conventionalized floral ornament, enduring in material, workmanship and design. Blue-gray polished Swedish

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marble fills the spandrels of the windows behind the decorative bronze grilles.

The four piers of the portico are slightly curved from base to cap, having what is known in the architectural world as an entasis, a refinement introduced by the Greeks to correct an otherwise unfortunate optical illusion. The piers rise from the terrace platform without the usual molded base, but terminate below the entablature with molded caps. The entablature consists of a plain, broad frieze and a typically Greek classic cornice. Above the entablature rises an American eagle, carved from a block of white marble by Sidney Waugh, sculptor. The eagle, in excellent scale with the building, strikes a happy medium in its execution, between realism and the blocky planes of much modern sculpture. The glass panels in the soffit under the entablature and between the piers conceal the light source which casts a soft glow of illumination at night.

The Constitution Avenue entrance opens into a lobby having walls faced with Kansas Lesina stone and ceiling of plaster decorated with motifs of Greek coins and a relief of Cybele. In the center of the marble floor is a bronze plaque reproducing the seal of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve. From the entrance lobby a corridor extends back to the C Street entrance. This entrance is flanked by two pylons supporting bas-relief figures symbolic of the United States and the Federal Reserve System, executed in white marble and designed by John Gregory.

Interesting features of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Street façades are the bronze balcony railings, which are reproductions of those of a Philadelphia residence of the early 19th century. These railings are among the sparingly used ornamental details of the

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

exterior. Otherwise the building is severely simple, depending for its architectural effect upon nature's variations in color of the marble, simple moldings suited to marble technique, excellence in proportions and relationship of wall areas and window openings and the effective use of large building masses.

The Federal Reserve Board was organized in 1914. Twenty years later it was authorized by Congress to acquire a site. In 1935 title was obtained to the present location. For the design of the building and the selection of its architect, nine prominent architects were invited to submit competitive drawings. The design placed first was that of Paul P. Cret, architect.

The competition program called for a building in harmony with the Lincoln Memorial and the permanent buildings adjacent to that of the Federal Reserve. It was emphasized that esthetic appeal of the exterior design was to be obtained "through dignity of conception, purity of line, proportion and scale rather than stressing decoration and monumental features," and that "it must seem at home in the city." The Commission of Fine Arts also prescribed white marble for the exterior to conform to other buildings along this portion of Constitution Avenue and an "architectural concept of dignity and permanence" to conform to the functions performed by the Federal Reserve Board.

Plans and specifications for the building were approved in January, 1936, and the construction contract for \$3,484,000 let in February. The structure was officially opened October 20, 1937.

The 25th anniversary of the signing of the Federal Reserve Act was celebrated on December 23, 1938. At that time a bas-relief, designed by Herbert Adams, sculptor, in honor of Senator Carter Glass, "defender

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

of the Federal Reserve System," was unveiled. The tablet contains a bas-relief of Senator Glass and the inscription: "In the Federal Reserve Act we instituted a great and vital banking system—to give vision and scope and security to commerce and—to increase the capabilities of our industrial life at home and among foreign nations."

*Hiram Johnson House*



HIRAM JOHNSON HOUSE  
2ND STREET AND MARYLAND AVENUE. N. E.



## Hiram Johnson House

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*A house, stately, yet unpretentious, which presents striking contrast with the classic magnificence and grandeur of the Supreme Court, which it faces*

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IN the triangle formed by Second Street and Maryland Avenue N. E., there stands a cream-colored stucco house suggestive of the prim, domestic architecture of the French Renaissance. While formality and dignity aptly describe its doorway, the qualities of hospitality and friendly welcome have been preserved. The doorway motif is simple, stately, definitely domestic in its detail and proportions, recalling architectural detail current during the reign of Louis XVI. Built of wood, its moldings and carved console brackets, which support the curved pediments, are characteristic of that material. The transom, above the six-panel door, is of leaded glass reminiscent of Georgian Colonial.

Approach to the doorway is by steps, from two opposite directions, which meet on a common landing. Steps and landing are protected by a graceful, wrought-iron hand rail. Large urns adorn the landing on either side of the door. Convenient foot-scrapers have been placed near the lowest steps and the triangular area, formed by the walk, planted with shrubs and flowers is a fitting setting for the entranceway.

Either side of the doorway long windows, divided into eight panes, extend to the floor. The lintels above the windows are ornamented with floral swags and rosettes. Wrought-iron railings, the design of which is characteristic of the French Empire period, protect the lower portion of the first-story windows. The sec-

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

ond-story windows, divided into four panes, have lintels ornamented only by flat keystones, and wrought-iron balconies, or guard railings, of slight projection.

The slate-covered mansard roof and dormers, the iron railings at windows and steps, the tall first-story windows, and the design of the doorway give the house the air of eighteenth century French Renaissance. This is further conveyed by the high garden wall with its decorative urns terminating the wall piers. From the street, trees, whose branches overhang the walls, suggest a shady garden retreat within the inclosure.

The house was built in 1899 for C. B. Pickford. Senator Hiram Johnson purchased it in 1929.

*Alexander Bell House*



ALEXANDER BELL HOUSE  
1525 THIRTY-FIFTH STREET, N. W.

## Alexander Bell House

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*A reminder of New Orleans or Charleston is seen in this pre-Civil War house, once the home of Alexander Melville Bell, father of Alexander Graham Bell*

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THE iron entrance porch of the Alexander Bell House is the dominating and most interesting feature of the street façade. Essentially a covered balcony, this porch is narrow and is supported by cast-iron brackets of ornate vine and leaf design. Its ironwork, also of cast iron, is a combination of geometric pattern and conventionalized natural forms. The design of the iron porch is somewhat reminiscent of the ironwork of New Orleans and Charleston and is characteristic of the ornamentation to be seen on numerous other Washington houses of the same era.

Well above the street, the porch level is reached by three flights of brownstone steps guarded by iron handrails which terminate in castiron newels, probably of a somewhat later period than the porch. The door, with an iron grille of simple pattern framing the glass, is insignificant beside the two adjacent windows. These windows, extending to the floor and each divided into fifteen glass panes, at once suggest the high-ceilinged rooms behind them.

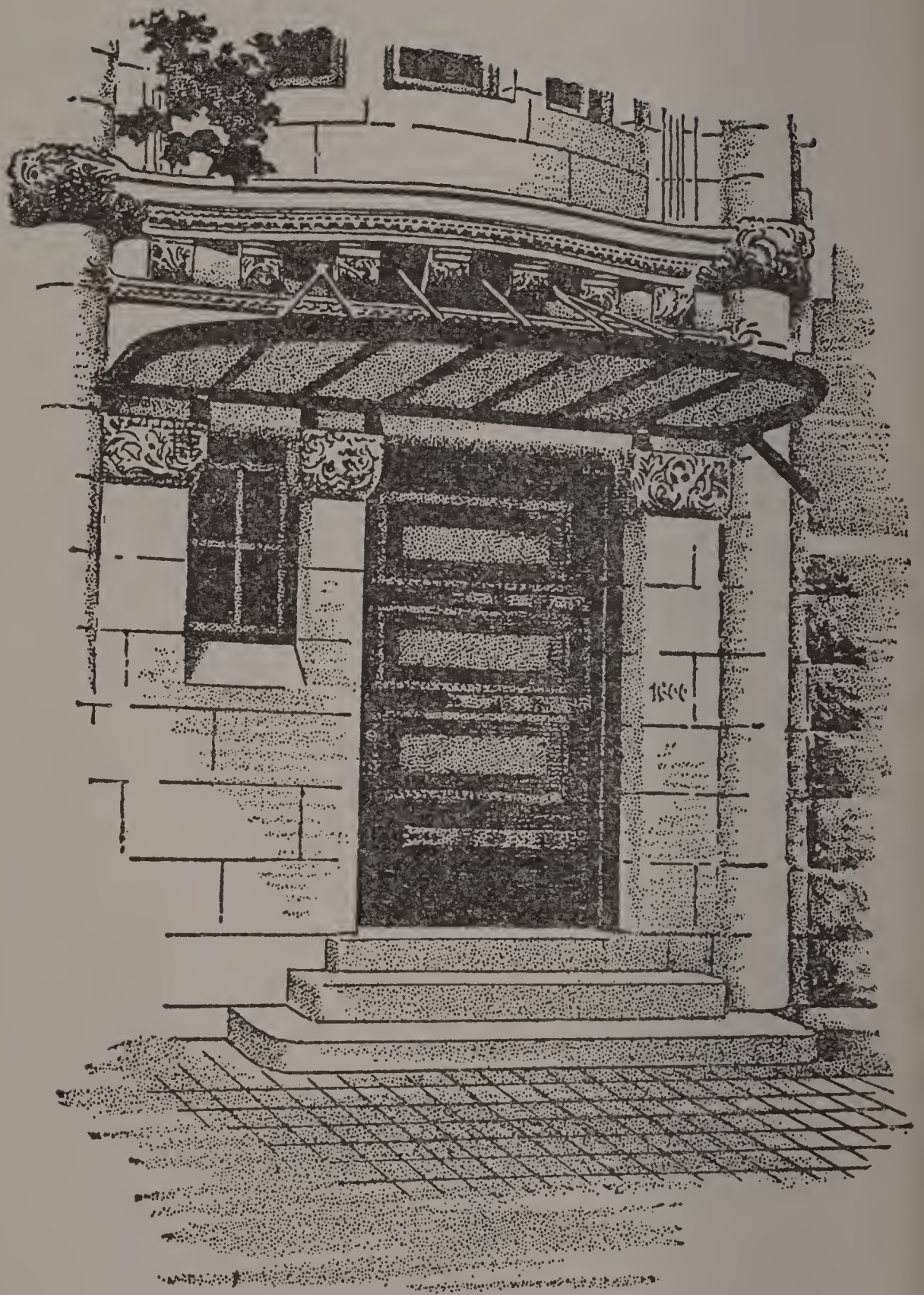
The house is three stories in height and built of brick covered with stucco. Once a dull gray, the stucco has been painted a warm yellow. Second and third story windows are divided into twelve lights, have stone sills and decorative lintels painted white. The roof is flat and the wooden cornice also painted white, is ornamented with brackets of a type favored in the Victorian

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

era. Evidence of numerous additions, probably the alterations of successive owners, appears in the exterior of the house.

Built about 1845 and at one time the home of Alexander Melville Bell, the inventor's father, this house stands on the southeast corner of Thirty-fifth Street and Volta Place N. W., Georgetown. At the rear there is a pleasant garden and a building which at one time served as an experimental laboratory for Alexander Graham Bell. Here, it is said, he perfected the disk-record graphophone. Just east of the former laboratory on an adjacent property are two small wooden cottages—former slave quarters—now converted into one dwelling. On the other corner of Volta Place is the Volta Bureau, "For Increase and Diffusion of Knowledge Relating to the Deaf," built in 1893 and established in 1880 by Alexander Graham Bell with \$10,000 he had been awarded as winner of the Volta Prize created by Napoleon I in honor of Alessandro Volta, inventor of the electric battery.

*Lucius Tuckerman House*



LUCIUS TUCKERMAN HOUSE, 1600 I STREET, N. W.



## Lucius Tuckerman House

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*The doorway of the house at 1600 I Street, N. W. recalls the Washington scene of the Gay Nineties*

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IN the doorway of 1600 I Street, N. W. is to be seen one of the few remaining documents of the Richardsonian period of architecture in Washington. Its detail and composition are of Romanesque origin, adapted to modern use in the western world. The doorway is part of an asymmetrical composition forming the lower portion of the central dominating feature of the I Street façade, a feature which extends through the cornice at the roof line.

The door is of massive construction, nearly five feet wide and about eight feet high. There are three horizontal panels with raised center surfaces, and egg and dart mouldings forming their frame. The massive door swings on four hand-forged ornamental strap hinges having a length nearly equal to the width of the door itself. The doorknob is of hammered iron, oval in shape, of ample size to be firmly grasped by the hand. The escutcheon, or key plate, also of iron, is of pierced design and secured by spike-headed bolts or studs. To the right of the door and inserted in the heavy wooden frame is an iron bell-pull.

Just to the left of the door opening there is a small window set in deep stone jambs with a steep, sloping sill. The window opening is protected by a wrought-iron grille composed of a series of 32 scrolls arranged in units of four, eight units to a section, and four sections. The design of the grille is executed with precision, but with the subtle variations found in handi-

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

craft. Above the doorway and the window a glass and metal *marquise* shelters the door and steps, and, with other features of the design, tie the elements of the composition together as one unit.

The principal central feature of the house and the masonry surrounding the doorway is built of hammer-dressed red sandstone which, in color and texture, affords a harmonious contrast with the rock-faced masonry which forms the high base of the façade and with the dull red face brick of the walls above the base. The lines of the door and window jambs are softened by gently rounded corners. The design of the doorway motif is such that the masonry around and between the door and window have the effect of being stone piers having caps which, in decorative detail and form, are decidedly Romanesque. Corbels, bosses and moldings above the doorway are ornamented with the same type of entwined leaf forms.

The house was built for Lucius Tuckerman, in 1886. Before the erection of the Hay-Adams House, a modern hotel, the Tuckerman House was separated only by a garden inclosed by high brick walls, from the John Hay House, which had been designed by H. H. Richardson and built in 1885. At the same time Richardson also designed a house, adjoining the Hay House, for Henry Adams. The houses of Hay and Adams were of a style, based upon the Romanesque, developed by Richardson, an architect who was seeking to break away from the mid-Victorian period in which he had grown up as a youngster.

Richardson's break with the architectural taste of the day had a profound effect on the development of architecture in America. Being a capable and talented architect, he met with considerable success in Boston,

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

and elsewhere. As a result, he had many followers and admirers.

In the Tuckerman House is seen a dwelling of the Richardsonian period of architecture in America which was designed by Hornblower & Marshall, architects, contemporary with Richardson. Without question they had been inspired by the houses which he had designed in 1885 for Hay and Adams and that of H. H. Warner, on K Street, near Sixteenth.

All who see the house at 1600 I Street must be impressed by the fact that it was designed, supervised and built by men thoroughly versed in the principles of good construction. Among other features of the house are the design of the copper cornice formed by the facing of the built-in roof gutter, the rain-water leaders of copper with ornamental heads and decorative spiral lines, the massive brick chimney, and the architectural treatment of the bay windows on the Sixteenth Street side. On the I Street side a beautiful and large ginkgo tree, brought from Japan as a seedling many years ago, extends its branches well beyond the garden wall, and to it clings a tenacious wistaria vine, in the spring heavy with blossoms and delicate perfume.

In 1939 Annie-May Hegeman, stepdaughter of the late Representative Henry Kirke Porter, who had purchased the house in 1907, presented the property to the Smithsonian Institution.



*Friendship House*



FRIENDSHIP HOUSE, 630 SO. CAROLINA AVENUE, S. E.

## Friendship House

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*The doorway of 630 South Carolina Avenue, S. E., known as Friendship House, was visited by George Washington, General Lafayette and President Lincoln*

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IT would be difficult to find a more inviting doorway than the one which marks the south entrance to a house known for a great many years as *the Maples*. Outliving the trees for which it was named, surviving many remodelings and ownerships, the original part, now the central portion of a rambling house, is little changed. Of simple Early American design, its brickwork painted white, this dignified, homelike house is set well back from the street and is now appropriately known as Friendship House.

The south doorway is typically Georgian Colonial, stately and classic in character and simple in its detail. A thin, refined pediment surmounts the semi-circular fan-light and six-paneled door. Broad fluted pilasters frame the doorway and support the broken entablature, bare of ornament except for the reeded panels and well-proportioned moldings. The design of the doorway and its material provides restrained contrast with the surrounding surface of brick.

An open portico or veranda originally extended beyond the south doorway which opened on a brick courtyard to the rear of the house. The upper portion of the portico provided a smoking gallery for men addicted to *the weed*, to avoid conteminating the house with the odor of burning tobacco.

The first house erected on the site was a pioneer's cabin. The cabin, with a large surrounding acreage,

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was purchased by William Duncanson, a British Army officer from India, as a tobacco plantation. Here he built a large frame house which he enlarged in 1796. George Washington described it as "a fine house in the woods between Capitol Hill and the Navy Yard." Extravagance was responsible for the downfall of Duncanson and in 1809 the property was placed in the hands of a group of trustees. A few years later it became a hospital for soldiers wounded in the battle of Bladensburg.

Francis Scott Key—author of *The Star Spangled Banner*—purchased the house in 1815. After a few years of occupancy by Key, the property passed through a varied series of ownerships. In 1838 it acquired the reputation of being haunted, following the suicide of the wife of one of its owners.

In 1856 Senator John M. Clayton obtained title to the estate and made extensive alterations to the old house. It is believed that the original frame house is inclosed by the present brick walls. One may assume that the south doorway dates from the alterations made by Senator Clayton. At that time an east wing was added as a ballroom—now the Little Theater—with walls and ceiling decorated by Constantino Brumidi, an Italian artist, who also painted the frescoes in the Capitol.

The next occupant of the house was Louis Pourtales, son of a German count. He added a large wine cellar forty-two feet below ground, said to be patterned after a similar one in his German ancestral home.

Mrs. Emily Edson Briggs, who, as "Olivia," a journalist, covered the Civil War for *Forney's Philadelphia Press*, bought the Maples in 1871. She added more rooms, bringing the total to twenty-one. During



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her ownership the original carved wooden Colonial fireplace mantels were replaced with marble and the house largely furnished with furniture imported from France. Mrs. J. Edson Briggs, daughter-in-law of "Olivia," occupied the house until an "anonymous" friend, in 1937, purchased and presented the property to Friendship House Association. Here the association maintains a settlement house, providing educational and recreational facilities for children of the neighborhood.



*Pan-American Union Annex*



PAN-AMERICAN UNION ANNEX  
201 EIGHTEENTH STREET, N. W.

## Pan-American Union Annex

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*Spanish in character, the doorway of the Pan-American Union Annex lends a contrasting and pleasing note to the architecture of the Nation's Capital*

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THE street entrance of the Pan-American Union Annex is the dominating feature of a façade of balanced but asymmetrical composition. While harmonious with the architecture of surrounding buildings, it partakes of the unusual because of its Spanish character in a city of essentially classic Greek and Roman architecture.

The proportions, color and texture of the materials of the doorway are sufficient to lend it desirable emphasis and contrast with the plain, white-stuccoed wall surface which forms its background. The strong but simple white marble frame surrounding the door opening has the effect of being a continuation of the relatively high marble base of the building. This frame is simply molded to soften otherwise harsh edges and is capped by a bold mold of considerable but well-proportioned projection in the spirit of Spanish architecture found in Mexico and throughout South America.

A projecting hood supported by wooden brackets painted dark blue and roof covering of red mission tile protects the entrance. Access to the door, which is quite close to the street, is by a semi-circular driveway or through a wide passageway between low hedges of well-trimmed boxwood.

Within the marble opening are recessed generously proportioned double doors of wood. The doors and their wooden frame are painted a rich blue. Upper

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

panels are glazed, divided by wooden muntins and protected by grilles of turned iron spindels. Below these panels are rectangular panels, treated in simple manner by a series of flat surfaces. A large ring-pull of iron is secured at the top and center of each panel. The bottom rails of both doors are ornamented by five decorative iron studs.

To the left of the doorway is a small window protected by a highly decorative iron grille, characteristically Spanish in design. At the right of the entrance, appears the inscription cut into the marble base of the annex: "Erected 1912 by Andrew Carnegie for the Pan-American Union. John Barrett, Director General; Albert Kelsey and Paul P. Cret, Architects."

The Pan-American Union Annex, with its plain white walls, well-spaced window openings, colorful decorative cornice and squat dominating doorway is a decidedly interesting note in Washington's architecture. While its design reflects the spirit of a semi-public Spanish building to a degree, its domestic quality predominates. As such, it proclaims its purpose, for it is the residence of the Director General of the Pan-American Union.

Largely concealed from public view, the Annex connects with the main building of the Pan-American Union by the Blue Aztec Garden. In this garden is a quiet pool, lined with tile mosaic of blue, reflecting the east loggia of the annex and the planting and trees of the garden. At the west end of the pool is a reproduction of an ancient Aztec figure.

The Pan-American Union was proposed by James G. Blaine while Secretary of State, in 1881. As the International Bureau of American Republics, it held its first conference in Washington in 1889-90. In 1903 the bureau approved a plan to erect a building in

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Washington. Andrew Carnegie contributed \$850,000 toward the construction of the building, which, with its grounds, cost more than \$1,000,000. The structure was dedicated in 1910, at which time the name of the bureau was changed to the Pan-American Union. Here is carried on the work of developing closer cultural, commercial and financial relations among twenty-one American republics to promote friendly intercourse and peace.





*National Academy of Sciences*



NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
CONSTITUTION AVENUE AND 21ST STREET, N. W.

# National Academy of Sciences

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*Established in 1863, the National Academy of Sciences was housed by the Smithsonian Institution until dedication of its own building by President Coolidge in April, 1924*

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**E**PISODES in the progress of science from Aristotle to Pasteur are depicted in eight panels of the bronze entrance doors of the National Academy of Science. These doors slide back into pockets at either side of the entrance and are too rarely seen by the public, which ordinarily passes through swinging glass doors. The doors are deeply recessed in a strong and imposing frame, of white Dover marble, whose design is of Greek inspiration, freely interpreted by a master designer and architect.

The entire entrance motif is severely simple and dignified and at the same time exceedingly refined and bold in its execution. A series of raised rosettes, so delicately carved that they are barely more than discs, cast scalloped shadows and form a decorative band at either side and across the top. A single Greek molding casts a strong shadow across the whole. The entrance motif terminates in a highly decorative pediment, symbolic of the evolution of man. In the pediment various forms of early life are shown, while conventionalized owls at either end typify the knowledge and wisdom of scientists throughout the ages. At either side of the entrance pierced marble grilles screen two windows and form interesting decorative features of the façade.

The entrance to the building is emphasized by a broad, pyramidal flight of steps, flanked with decora-

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

tive lighting pylons. Well-conceived landscaping, additional flights of steps and a reflecting pool, lined with blue-green tile made under direction of the architect, add to the dignified setting of the academy.

Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, architect of the National Academy of Sciences, wanted the building erected on a hilltop on Sixteenth Street, opposite the French Embassy to avoid a hampering effect by proximity to the classic buildings on the Mall. His first sketches were made with the former location in mind. It was too far out to meet with the approval of the National Commission of Fine Arts, however, and a block was purchased on Constitution Avenue between Twenty-first and Twenty-second Streets, almost directly across from the Lincoln Memorial. So keen was Goodhue's disappointment over the final selection of the site, coupled with his "deeply rooted dislike of rigorous symmetry and cold formality in classic styles" that only the greatest amount of persuasion resulted in new sketches for the building.

Discarding the customary long row of columns "supporting nothing but the cornice," Goodhue undertook the development of a façade of extreme simplicity and refinement. For effect its design depends upon a delicate cornice above the frieze containing, in Greek, the following quotation from Aristotle, "The search for truth is in one way hard and in another easy. For it is evident that no one can master it fully nor miss it wholly. But each adds a little to our knowledge of nature, and from all the facts assembled there arises a certain grandeur."

Large, plain wall surfaces are used in the façade and they are relieved only by Lee Lawrie's fine bronzes and by spare and delicate stone carving in the form of flat

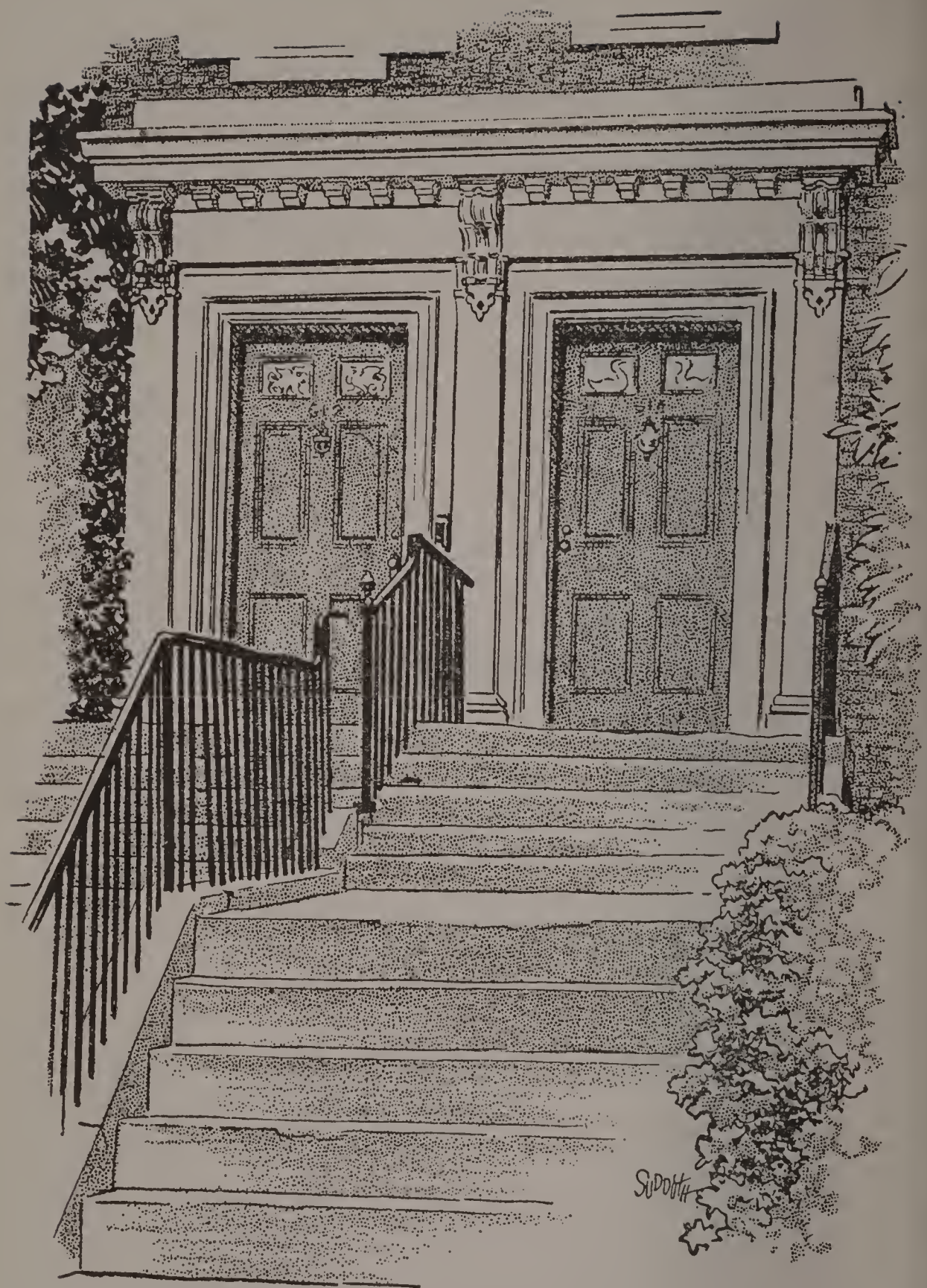
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pilasters and pierced grilles. The beauty of the design is enhanced by the judicious use of rich materials—white marble and bronze with its patina of green.

Lawrie's contribution to the façade included the bronze *cheneau*, or cresting at the roofline, composed of owls and lynx, symbolic of wisdom and observation. Bronze panels above the first story windows, also by Lee Lawrie, depict a procession of outstanding scientists from ancient to modern times.



*Lenthall Houses*



LENTHALL HOUSES  
612-614 NINETEENTH STREET, N. W.



## Lenthall Houses

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*Built about 1800, these twin doorways recall a tragic incident in the building of the Capitol*

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FROM a distance the doorways to Nos. 612 and 614 Nineteenth Street, N. W. might readily be mistaken for a broad, generous entrance to a simple house of Georgian architecture. Closer inspection would disclose that there are really two houses having separate doors which, through their architectural treatment, appear to be one.

The houses were quite likely built about 1800—or possibly a few years before. The doorways, however, show unmistakable evidence of remodeling at a later date, since the detail of their cornice and the supporting brackets border on mid-Victorian character. At the same time the door frames and pilasters are more nearly those of the Georgian era.

The doors are probably those of the original houses, being well molded and paneled in typically Georgian manner. The upper panels are glazed and at present filled with matching lace panels of interesting pattern, probably hand-made to fill the openings. The doors are painted blue-green and trimmed with hardware of brass. They are approached by a long flight of stone steps leading from the sidewalk and protected by wrought-iron handrails.

Ample evidence supports the fact that the two houses were built at the same time. However, one is led to speculate as to the reason why certain details of the exterior are not the same. Alterations by various individualistic owners are a ready explanation of differ-

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ence in treatment above the window heads and the use and omission of shutters, but do not explain other minor differences. Roofs, cornice, dormers, brickwork and the detail of the two doorways, however, are the same. The high terrace in front effectively reduces the apparent height of the houses, adding to their restful horizontal proportions and architectural lines.

While these houses are generally known as the *Lenthall* houses, it is unlikely that the Lenthalls ever lived in them for any length of time, if at all. However, Lenthall being an architect of considerable ability, no doubt designed the houses and supervised their construction.

The site is of historic interest as being the approximate location selected by Thomas Jefferson for the Capitol Building in what was known as "Hamburg" or "Funkstown," a 130-acre development laid out by Jacob Funk in 1768 into building lots and streets.

In the early 1790s, the lots were disposed of through the sale of lottery tickets. In 1800, John Lenthall obtained title to the property on which the two houses at 612-614 Nineteenth Street now stand. In 1808 Lenthall and his wife Jane conveyed the southermost of the two houses to William Francis, who promptly deeded the property away on the following day.

No. 612 continued to change ownership every few years and has undergone numerous changes, especially as respects the interior. Much has been done in recent years to restore the house to its original character.

No. 614 remained in possession of the Lenthall family or its direct descendants until 1902. The house has since been restored and modernized, but its original architectural features largely preserved.

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According to Maude Burr Morris, in the records of the Columbia Historical Society, John Lenthall, born in England in 1762, came from a line of distinguished ancestors, his father being Speaker in the House of Commons. He had been trained as a carpenter and when he came to Washington in 1792 at the age of 30, was recognized as a superior draftsman and an architect of ability. When Latrobe was placed in charge of the construction of the Capitol in 1803, he selected Lenthall to be "clerk of works and principal surveyor."

In anticipation of the trial of Aaron Burr for conspiracy, orders were given to open the Supreme Court room in the north wing of the Capitol. The masonry of the vaults above the courtroom had not had time to set and Lenthall seriously objected to the removal of the wooden centering supporting them. He was overruled and on September 19, 1808, the centering was removed, Lenthall himself lowering the last middle support. There was a loud crack, workmen escaped out of the windows or under the adjoining vault, but Lenthall, who apparently by a single step could have saved himself, was buried under many tons of brick and instantly killed.

John Lenthall, buried with military honors, left behind him a widow and three small children—Mary, Elizabeth and John. Some fifty-five years later, during the Civil War, the son John became head of the Bureau of Construction, United States Navy.

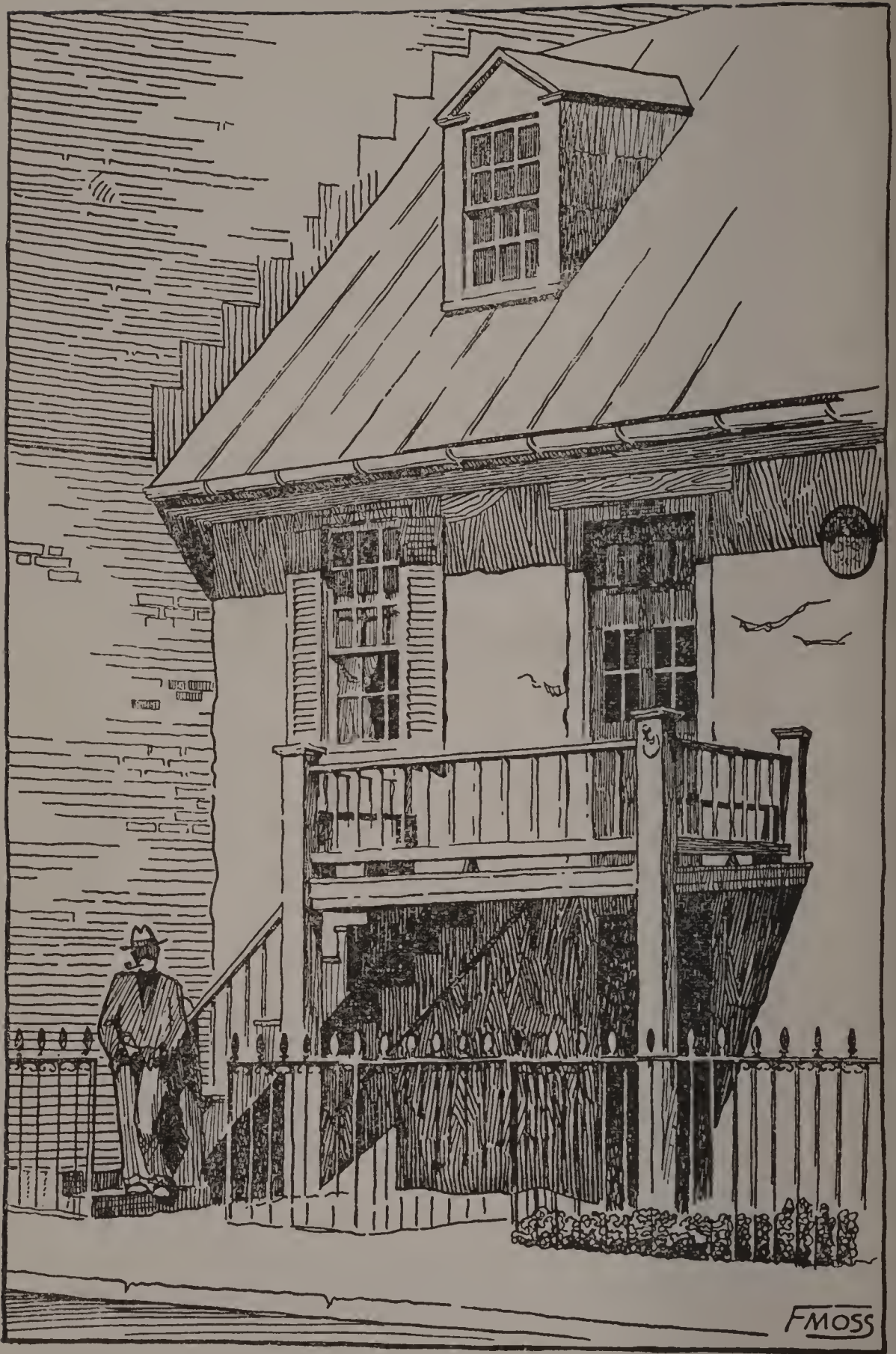
In 1821 Elizabeth Lenthall married William James Stone, an engraver, who in 1823 was commissioned by John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State, to engrave a copper facsimile of the original Declaration of Independence. Stone retired from the engraving business in 1840 and later achieved great success as a sculptor.

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Mary Lenthall is said to have been a talented artist, accomplished in drawing, painting and music. At eighty years of age she learned to use her left hand for the exquisite painting of flowers in oil and water colors. She passed away shortly before her ninetieth birthday anniversary. In 1853 Mary Lenthall had acquired the property at 614 Nineteenth Street, N. W. By her will, made in 1889, the property passed to her brother's grandson, John Lenthall Waggaman, who retained ownership until 1902, at which time it passed out of the Lenthall family for the first time in 100 years.

The site of the "John Lenthall Home for Widows," which adjoins No. 614, was the portion of the estate inherited by Elizabeth Lenthall. The Home was a joint gift of the two sisters as a memorial to their father—killed in the building of the Capitol.

*Christopher Lehman House*



CHRISTOPHER LEHMAN HOUSE, 3049 M STREET, N. W.

## Christopher Lehman House

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*John Boone, relative of Daniel Boone, once owned the property on which this house was built by Christopher Lehman in 1764*

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THE doorway to this quaint house is as unpretentious as the house itself. In fact, it would scarcely be noticed except for its prominent approach in the form of a high wooden stoop. Distinction is assured this little house, however, by its decidedly domestic character, its stonework painted yellow, and its sloping roof painted red and accented by two narrow simple dormer windows painted white. One end of the house now abuts a brick building; the other end is exposed to view and boasts a massive chimney.

On an alignment almost with the sidewalk, entrance to the house is protected by a simple and finely wrought iron fence of slender design. Steps, with balustrade of homelike appearance lead to a rail enclosed landing. To the right of the upper entrance a cast-iron disk, bearing the figure of a hand-pumper, indicates to the observant passerby that the owner of the house was at one time protected by a bona-fide fire insurance company. These fire insurance markers, now extremely rare, are greatly coveted by antique collectors.

A sturdy flagpole bracket on the right hand newel post of the landing leading to the upper entrance is a most appropriate bit of detail.

Washington's town house in Alexandria—demolished some years ago—is said to have been patterned after this typically pre-Revolutionary building. This is largely conjecture since it is a type of story-and-a-half

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house—with entrances from both the street level and from an elevated stoop, windows divided in small panes, low eave lines and steep-pitched roof—much in favor with builders of that period.

Referred to as “Washington’s engineering headquarters,” it is believed that plans for the “Federal City nearby” were made by him here. It is reputed that it served as headquarters for Pierre L’Enfant when making surveys and drawing plans for the future Capitol. Also, Major Elicott is thought to have carried on here the work that L’Enfant, in indignation, is said to have left unfinished.

Fact and fiction regarding the old stone house in the 3000 block of Georgetown’s M Street have been weighed but never balanced. Even Congress couldn’t agree that the nuggets which seeped through its fact-finding sieve were of sufficient value to warrant dedication of this house as a national monument. However, the Goddard family, owners of the property for more than fifty years, have preserved it as an historic shrine.



*White Horse Tavern*



WHITE HORSE TAVERN  
1524 THIRTY-THIRD STREET, N. W.

## White Horse Tavern

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*Built about 1771 when "George Town" was an important commercial center on the "Potomak," the old White Horse Tavern, now a private residence, retains much of its original quaintness*

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**B**EFORE the Revolution, tobacco and cotton drays rumbled through this one-time driveway entrance to the rear courtyard of the White Horse Tavern. Footweary horses were rested while teamsters imbibed the spirits and conviviality of the taproom to the left of the entrance. Since then, the old tavern has become a private dwelling and the brick archway entrance, now a doorway, has been filled in with woodwork of an old door transplanted from Alexandria.

On a level with the brick sidewalk this door is a harmonious addition to the simple but picturesque exterior of the house. Above the door is a rowlock brick arch, partly vine-covered. The delicately molded wood trim around the masonry opening, refined in detail, is painted white. A small wooden keystone, part of the wood trim, is centered in the arch above the fan-light. An interesting bit of detail is noted in the reed and bead mold used between the wood trim and brick arch. So delicately is the woodwork of the trim in the arch paneled that the panels are almost flush with the surrounding surface.

Carried down the sides of the opening in the shape of two small modified Doric columns, the trim within the arch is supported on waist-high pedestals, paneled and beautifully molded—likely molded and turned by hand. The fluted columns, standing free from the

## WASHINGTON DOORWAYS

masonry, also are separated from the wood frame of the door proper.

Included in the door frame are an elliptical fanlight divided by wooden muntins, narrow transom bar, side lights divided into four panes each, and wooden panels below. Each of the pair of wooden doors has six panels. Small vines trail leisurely over the doorway, from earth pockets in the sidewalk on either side of the doorway.

Of brick laid Flemish bond, the house is painted a good dull brick-red and built out to the street line. Wood trim and shutters are painted white and window sash divided into twelve small panes. The tin roof, painted red, is pitched and the eaves are simply, though no less interestingly, finished. The cornice is formed by brick of slight projection and a row of brick set at an angle and, being partially concealed by the gutter, escapes the notice of those who hurry by too quickly. A down-spout head collects water from two roofs of different height, lending a further picturesque note to the street front.

*Octagon House*



OCTAGON HOUSE, 1741 NEW YORK AVENUE, N. W.

## Octagon House

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*Octagon House, home of the American Institute of Architects, once served as a temporary White House*

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PARADOXICALLY, Octagon House is hexagonal—its doorway built in a circular tower, its door surmounted by a circular fanlight, and its history surrounded by more ghost stories than, perhaps, any other house in Washington. The ghost of Colonel Tayloe's daughter, who according to legend, threw herself down the great stairway because of thwarted love, is said to be still wandering about in the candlelight; to say nothing of the ghosts who convene in the now walled-up underground passages to the White House and the Potomac River. For the ghost-conscious, there's the gossip that Dolly Madison still holds court in the garden at midnight.

With a keynote of lavishness, official society was entertained at Octagon House from 1800 to 1828. It took charming Dolly Madison, as hostess, however, to bring social power to its most glamorous heights after President Madison was asked to use Octagon House as a temporary White House after the burning of the Executive Mansion by the British in 1814.

President Madison signed the proclamation giving the terms of the treaty of Ghent—which ended the War of 1812—in an upper room of Octagon House. Following the Civil War, it was used as a military hospital. Business was pressing uptown and the fashionable old house, after occupancy by a succession of tenants, stood a rather decrepit reminder of better days.

In 1902 the American Institute of Architects came

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to the rescue—purchasing, restoring Octagon House, and making it a suitable place for the Institute's headquarters, Stanford White, famous architect, helped instigate the movement to restore the house.

Original plans for Octagon House were made by Dr. William Thornton, designer of the Capitol, in 1799-1800. Of English brick, it is in excellent state of preservation and the exterior has had but one important change—a sloping roof and cornice replacing the original flat deck roof and attic parapet. Delicate handrails and newel-post lamps enhance a well-worn flight of steps leading to the doorway.

Large wall areas, curves of elliptical rooms, and spiral stairways emphasize the spaciousness of the house. Opposite the entrance door a delicate archway opens into the wide stair hall that gives access to what was the dining room on the left and drawing room on the right. A spiral stairway leads to the two floors above. From a large Palladian window on the stair-landing the site of slave quarters and rear kitchens can be seen. Directly beneath the stairs a door leads into a walled garden with brick walks and old boxwoods.

Simple white plaster cornices decorate the interior walls—of either buff or gray. Brass trim is used for knobs and locks on mahogany doors.

In designing the mantels, Coade, famous London decorator, made elaborate use of white putty-stucco. In the original drawing room, a panel decoration in bas-relief depicts the Feast of Bacchus. The former dining-room mantel is far less ornate.

As in other houses of the late Georgian period of architecture in America, the attractiveness of the design of Octagon House rests largely on the proportion and spacing of its windows and wall areas. Further inter-



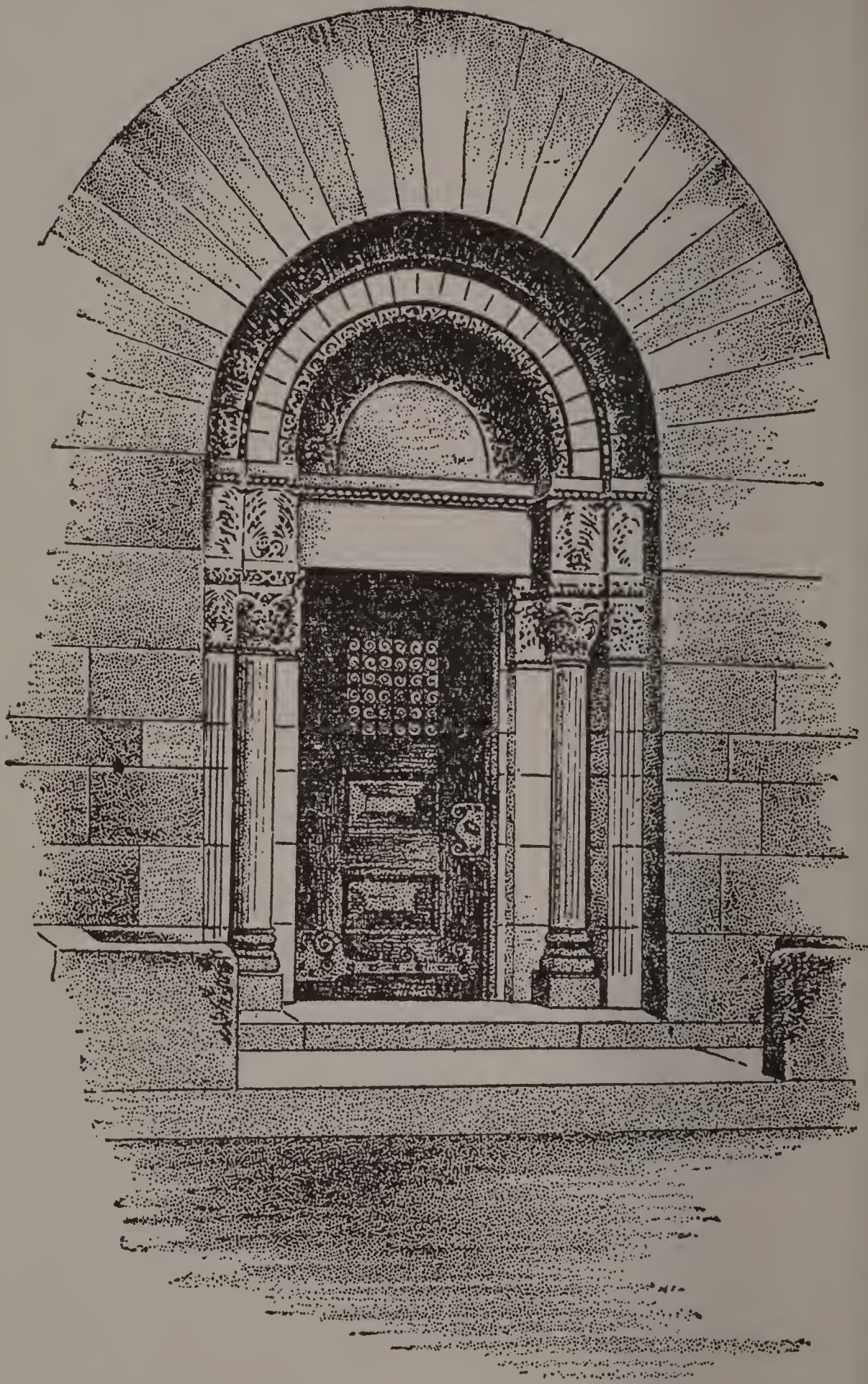
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est was achieved by the use of delicate and finely wrought and graceful railings at the second story windows and porch steps, of restrained design, characteristic of the style of the Brothers Adam.

The entrance porch and doorway are noted for the excellence of their proportions and refinement of detail. Ionic columns and pilasters of wood support the full Ionic entablature of the entrance porch. The door is deeply recessed between paneled jambs of exquisite proportion, detail and workmanship. A semicircular fanlight over the door served, not only as an interesting architectural feature of the exterior, but also to admit soft diffused light into the entrance hall.



*H. B. Warder House*



H. B. WARDER HOUSE, NATIONAL MUSEUM

## H. B. Warder House

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*H. H. Richardson, one of America's great architects, designed the Warder House in 1885*

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**I**N the west courtyard of the National Museum, and preserved for all time, is to be seen the doorway of one of the last buildings to be designed by H. H. Richardson, famous architect of the 70s and early 80s. This doorway was removed from the house of B. H. Warder, built in 1885, which formerly stood on K Street, N. W. near Sixteenth.

In 1902 George Oakley Totten, architect and pupil of Richardson, purchased the material used in the Warder House from a wrecking company. With the exception of the doorway, this material he used for the façade of an apartment house at 2633 Sixteenth Street, reproducing the original façade of the Warder House.

The great expanse of limestone which framed the doorway of the old Warder House was heavily tooled to provide a rough contrasting surface for the more finely dressed and highly ornamented doorway within the massive archway. As usual in Richardson's heyday, the detail is Romanesque. The columns are sturdy, bases heavy, caps richly ornamented with sharp, crisp carving and the reveals deep and impressive. Rich, interlacing and intertwining decoration, with telling effect, ornaments the mouldings and surfaces of the arch in strong contrast to the simple, plain surfaces. It was the work of a master and not to be copied by amateurs in the art.

The Warder House doorway must make all who view it wonder as to what manner of man this fellow

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Richardson could have been. Born on a plantation in Louisiana in 1838, he was a descendant of one of Bermuda's early settlers. His father was a cotton broker in New Orleans and Henry Hobson Richardson was named for the senior partner of his father's firm, Henry Hobson & Co.

Educated in both public and private schools in New Orleans, the University of Louisiana, and Harvard, Richardson's decision to become an architect was made after entrance to the latter school. Early adept in both mathematics and drawing, he had intended to become a civil engineer. With the reversal of his plans came study at the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris, and not until Civil War days did grim reality cast a shadow over the heretofore carefree existence of the gay, popular and affluent young student from New Orleans.

In 1862, less secure in finance than fortitude, he returned to Boston, only to decide that Paris held the best opportunities for the launching of an architectural practice. In the office of Theodore Labrouste, he came under the influence of French architects thoroughly imbued with the doctrines of Neo-Grec rationalism. During this time his school work suffered and he was never awarded the coveted diploma. The intervening years of hard work were believed to have been a contributing cause to the invalidism that afflicted him the rest of his life.

Returning again to Boston in 1866, two competitions for churches in New England were promptly won, and Richardson's reputation grew. From 1870, after two successful partnerships, his practice increased with great rapidity throughout the East.

It was not surprising that he should win the Brattle Street Church (Boston) competition in 1870, nor the

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Trinity Church competition, which made his reputation Nation-wide two years later. With Leopold Eidlitz and Frederick Law Olmstead, this genius, who was fast setting the architectural fashion that prevailed in the Eastern States from 1880 until the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, was appointed, in 1870, to finish the building and grounds for New York State's Capitol, begun some years before.

Swerving more and more from ecclesiastical architecture and turning increasingly to modern problems, Richardson was once heard to say, "The things I want most to design are a grain elevator and the interior of a great river steamboat."

Curiously, it was during his lifetime that Richardson was acclaimed and admired as a genius. Violent reaction, however, followed his death, in 1886. By many his work was thought to be "unsuited" to America. Others termed it "too expensive," "too personal." The "Richardsonian" style failed to survive the conquering renaissance of classicism that came after the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. However, his influence on architecture in America had telling effect.

Charles F. McKim and Stanford White worked in Richardson's office for several years and his influence in the handling of materials, the brilliance of his plans and his rationalism were apparent in the early work of the firm of McKim, Mead & White.

Many of Richardson's houses reflect a conflict between fashion and a desire to be strikingly different, resulting in a gay, but, at the same time, often depressing heaviness. The Marshall Field Building in Chicago and the Pittsburgh Court House and Jail, designed by Richardson, are said to have been his favorites. That he sought always to achieve picturesqueness even

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in monumental work is seen in the City Hall, Albany, New York, built in 1880.

Richardson lived gayly and well and enjoyed champagne and the wearing of bright yellow vests. He was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Archæological Institute of America and, just before his death, was elected honorary and corresponding member of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

One writer has said of him, "To a generation interested in romance, Richardson was the great romanticist; to wartime America interested primarily in individual revolt and individual creation, he was the first American architectural rebel; to critics who seek for rationalism and functional honesty he is the first American functionalist. Perhaps this is the greatest and truest criterion of the depth and power of his genius—that to successive groups, with varying demands, he has seemed to be the first great American example of the qualities that they seek."



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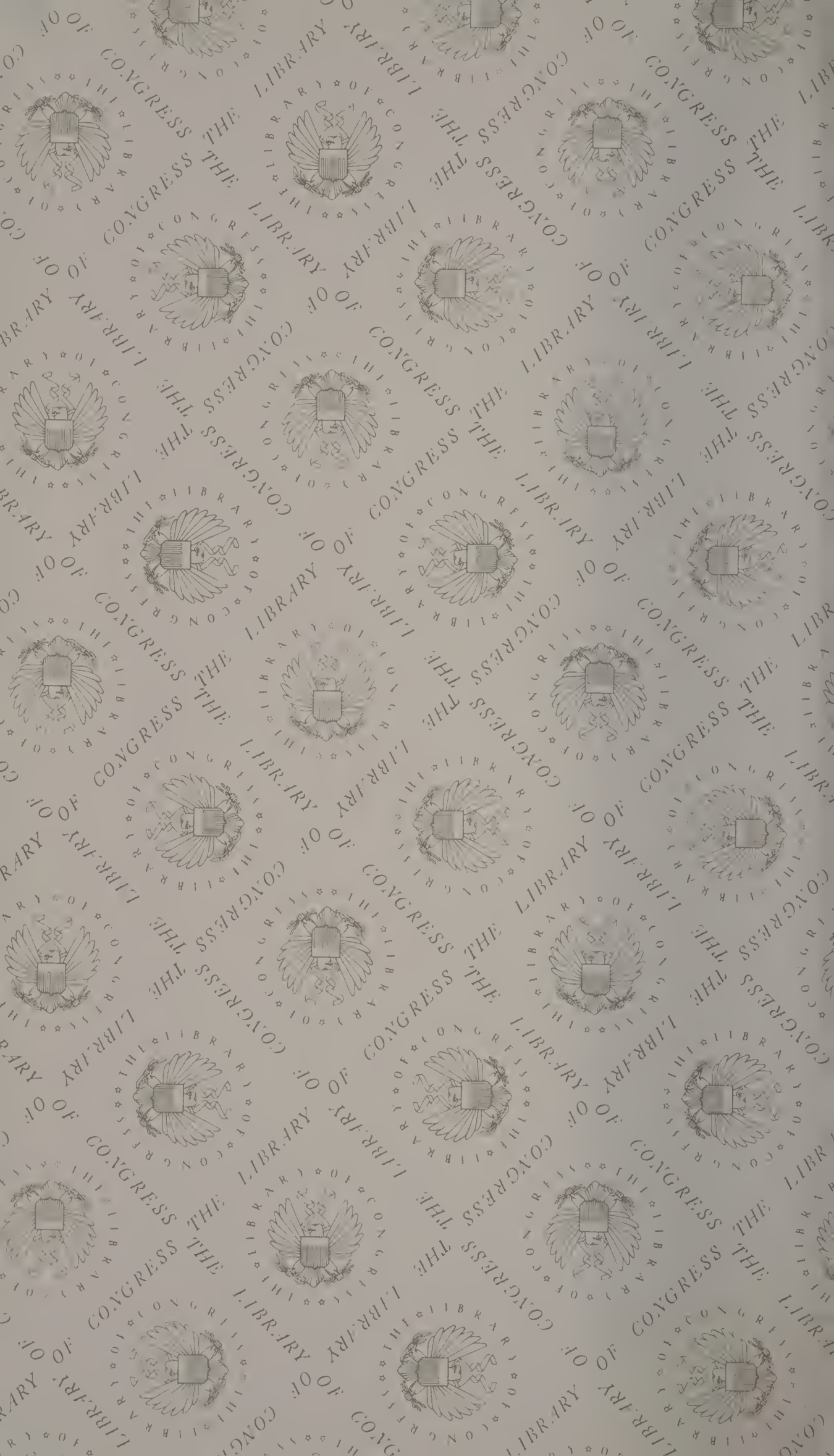
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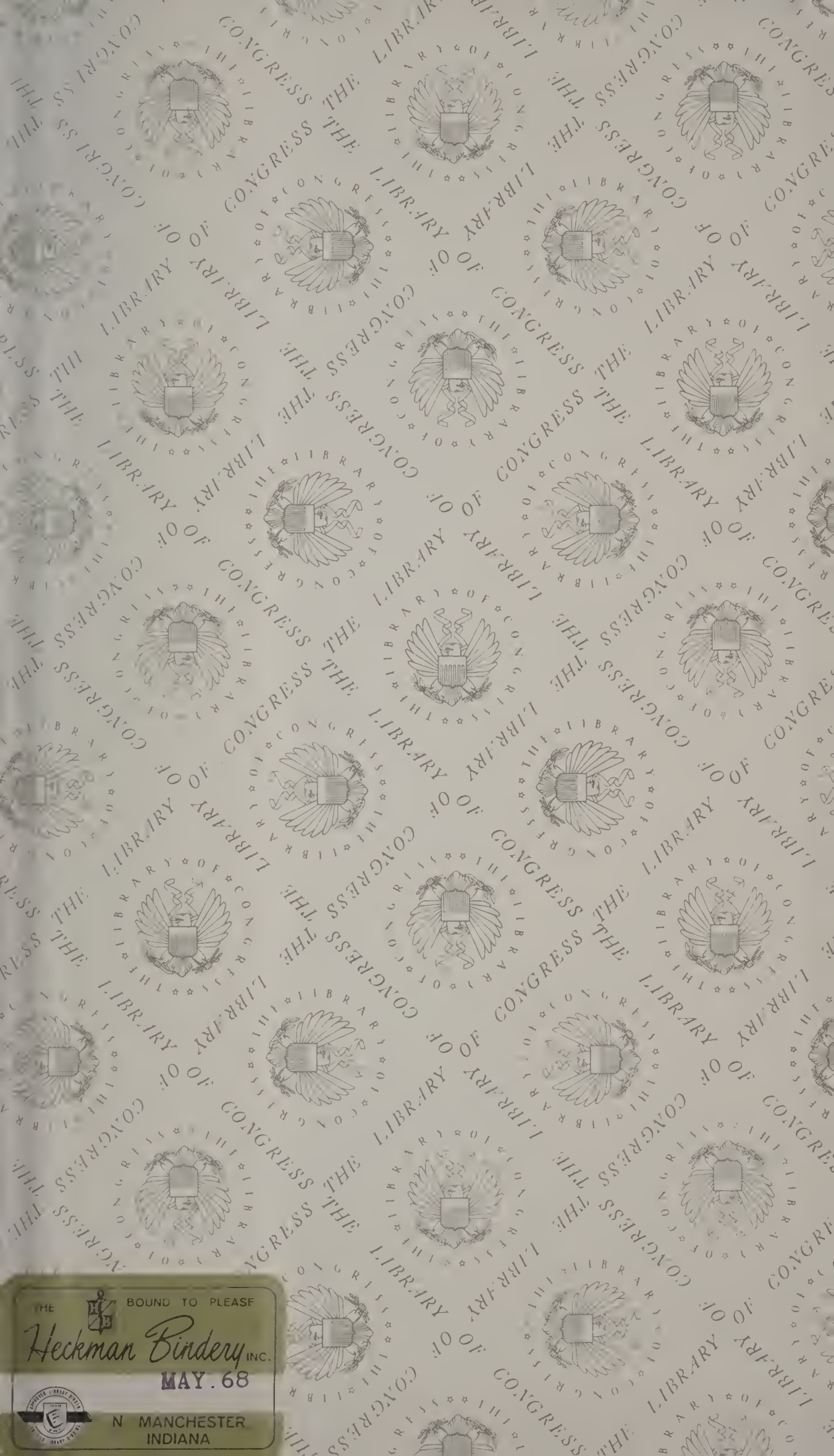
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