

MINUTES OF MEETING OF COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS  
HELD IN WASHINGTON, D. C., JUNE 17, 1926.

The ninth meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1926 was held in its office in the Interior Department Building on Thursday, June 17, 1926.

The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman,  
Mr. Mowbray,  
Mr. Medary,  
Mr. Delano,  
Mr. Garfield,

also Mr. H. P. Caemmerer, Secretary

and Executive Officer.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING: The minutes of the meeting held May 27, 1926, were approved.
2. PUBLIC BUILDINGS PROGRAM: The Commission considered the Public Buildings program generally. Mr. Moore said he had a talk with the Assistant Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Drake, recently about their building, from whom he learned that Secretary Hoover desires a six story building on the Mall to house all the bureaus and divisions of his Department, excepting the Bureau of Standards. The Commission felt that the proper place for the Department of Commerce is at the site along Fifteenth Street, north of B Street, for which plans have been made; and agreed with Mr. Moore that the Patent Office should remain in the building at Ninth and F Streets, and that an Aquarium be built some time in the future for the Bureau of Fisheries of their department, along the Mall. As to the Agricultural Department, Mr. Moore said that he had heard from the Supervising Architect's Office that if it is agreeable to the Secretary of the Treasury, the architects



of that building, Rankin, Kellogg and Crane, of Philadelphia, would be permitted to complete the building. The present space needs of the Department were set forth in a letter sent to Major Grant, Executive Officer of the Public Buildings Commission, by the Secretary of Agriculture, a copy of which he sent to this Commission for their information (Exhibit A). The Commission also considered briefly the Department of Justice building and the proposed building for the Department of State. Mr. Moore then called attention to a request received from Chief Justice Taft for a building for the Supreme Court of the United States, which they desire be built on the square north of the Congressional Library, facing the Capitol. Mr. Moore said this matter would be considered with the Public Buildings Commission

The Commission of Fine Arts met with the Public Buildings Commission at 10:00 o'clock in the Senate Office Building. Those present were Senator Smoot, Chairman; Senator Swanson, of Virginia; Representative Richard N. Elliott, Chairman of the House Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, Representative Fritz G. Lanham; Mr. James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect; Mr. David Lynn, Architect of the Capitol; Major U.S. Grant, Executive Officer of the Public Buildings Commission; and the following representing the Commission of Fine Arts: Mr. Moore, Mr. Mowbray, Mr. Medary, Mr. Delano, Mr. Garfield, and Mr. H. P. Caemmerer.

Public Buildings

Senator Smoot called the meeting to order. The/~~Commission~~ first took up questions pertaining to the location of bureaus and offices of the Government, and to the recommendations of that Commission, as set forth in a letter read by Senator Smoot, as to what is properly chargeable to the appropriation recently made for relocating Government offices, the Commission of Fine Arts concurred. A year to year lease, for a period of five years, for the



Department of Labor, was approved at \$68,000 a year, which Senator Smoot said was about \$30,000 a year less than the owners had asked for. The enlargement of the Government Printing Office, as desired by the Public Printer, Mr. George H. Carter, was approved.

The Commission thereupon took up the question of location of the proposed building for the Supreme Court of the United States, and heard Justice Willis VanDevanter, Justice Harlan Stone, and Justice Edward Terry Sanford explain the need of a building to house the Supreme Court. Justice VanDevanter spoke at length as to the great need for their building, especially office space for attorneys and clerks. He said at the present time the Solicitor General has space no larger than a hall room; there is no room for attorneys to meet, before appearing at the bar, and 12 clerks are crowded in a room about 20 feet square; the files he said are scattered, some in the Capitol, others in the Senate Office Building, and are difficult to reach.

As to location of the new building, Justice VanDevanter said the members of the Supreme Court favored the square to the north of the Library of Congress. This site had been asked for by Chief Justice Taft by letter of June 8th, to which Mr. Moore replied on June 10, 1926, as follows:

"My dear Mr. Chief Justice:

Replying to your letter of June 8, I would say that in the Report of the Senate Park Commission of 1901, page 38, is this statement: "It is contemplated that at no distant day the Supreme Court of the United States shall be accommodated in a building constructed for the exclusive use of that tribunal, on the square directly north of the Library". This statement was based on Senate Bill 4113, Fifty-seventh Congress, and others of like character. In the Public Buildings Commission Report of December 18, 1917 (Senate Document No. 155, 65th Congress), page 64, the Commission of Fine Arts say:

'Square 728, east of the Capitol Grounds, should be reserved for a building for the Supreme Court when the space exigencies either of the court or of Congress shall make imperative a removal from the Capitol. No building on this location should be so large as to close Maryland Avenue, one of the Capitol vistas.'



Thus you see that the recommendation in the Plan of 1901 for a Supreme Court Building on the square north of the Library of Congress has been adopted by the Commission of Fine Arts. Senator Smoot has called a meeting of the two Commissions on June 17th, and there is no question that the Commission of Fine Arts will stand by their recommendation."

Sincerely yours,  
Charles Moore,  
Chairman.

Senator Smoot raised the question whether, by building a structure for Congressional Committees, which would make it possible to give the Supreme Court additional office space in the Capitol, they would withdraw their request for a building. Justice VanDevanter replied that he was not prepared to answer this question, as his associates had not considered the problem from that standpoint. It was generally agreed that this in any event would be but a temporary arrangement, as the growth of the Judicial Branch of the Government and additional cases coming before the United States Supreme Court, would require a separate building in time. Senator Swanson asked if any other location had ever been considered other than the square to the north of the Library of Congress. Justice VanDevanter said that not so long ago someone suggested that the Supreme Court building be located south of the Washington Monument, which the Supreme Court justices regarded very inconvenient, and in preference to which they would rather remain even under crowded conditions in the United States Capitol. He said the Supreme Court handles 1300 cases a year and that there are less than 25 cases on file that have been there more than 15 months.

Senator Smoot said the only objection he had to building the Supreme Court building on the square proposed was the enormous increase in cost of the land, which had within the past few months increased about \$200,000, and





would require over a million dollars to purchase. It was noted that Henry Bacon had made a drawing for a building at this location to house the Supreme Court, and designed so as not to obstruct the vista of Maryland Avenue. Mr. Lanham raised the question whether the frontage on First Street thus available would be sufficient for a suitable building. He was informed by the architect members of the Commission that the building was specially designed for an irregular shaped square, and that it could be given a distinguished treatment by a skilled architect. In conclusion, it was generally agreed that the time had come for erecting a building for the Supreme Court of the United States, to be located on the square north of the Library of Congress.

Mr. J. Walter Drake, Assistant Secretary of Commerce, then proceeded to explain the need of a building for the Department of Commerce. Mr. Drake recommended a six-story building, to comprise one million square feet, to house all the bureaus of the Department of Commerce, excepting the Bureau of Standards. Mr. Drake said the building would take care of all automobiles of their employes. He said it had been suggested by some of their Department that the new building be located on the Mall, opposite the Agricultural Department Building.

The Commissions raised the question whether it was advisable to remove the Patent Office from its present building at Ninth and F Streets, since the Patent Office is large and important enough for a separate building and is well located in that building at the present time. The Commission of Fine Arts did not favor the erection of a six story building on the Mall, and also the Public Buildings Commission doubted the advisability of building such a large structure. Both Commissions called attention to the fact that the location which for years has been suggested for the Department of Commerce, and as



recommended in the Public Buildings Commission Report of 1917, is along Fifteenth Street north of B Street, and that plans had been prepared and an award made for a building at that site.

Attention was called to the fact that the building for the Department of Justice had been planned for the location at Pennsylvania Avenue and Fifteenth Street, and that it had been proposed to construct a building for the Department of Labor, along Fifteenth Street, between the Department of Justice and the Department of Commerce; but it was thought that the growth of these Departments during the past ten years made it necessary to provide a site for the Department of Labor elsewhere.

Senator Smoot advised that he expected an appropriation of about \$6,000,000 out of the first ten million dollars will be made in the Second Deficiency Bill, which is to be passed before the adjournment of Congress.

The meeting thereupon adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

3. LOCATION OF POWER PLANT FOR NEW MCKINLEY HIGH SCHOOL: A number of protests were received against the erection of the power plant of the new McKinley High School at Second and R Streets, N.E., including one from Hon. Arthur Capper, Chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, as follows:

June 16, 1926

"A delegation of property owners in the vicinity of the site for the new McKinley High School has protested strongly against the plan to erect the power house for the school at the corner of 2nd and R Streets, contending that it will seriously injure and depreciate their property, consisting of private homes. They have suggested, and the suggestion has the support of a member of our Committee who has made personal inspection of the area, that the power house, should be situated adjoining the present heating or power plant of the Langley Junior High School. It has been suggested that it might be economical, and at the same time less injurious to surrounding



property, and just as well from the standpoint of usefulness and efficiency, to enlarge or extend the present heating plant of the Langley school to include the power facilities required for the McKinley High School; and that it would be at least feasible and advisable to have one plant or building adjoin the other in the present location.

Inasmuch as I understand that your Commission approved the present plans, I submit the suggestion for consideration and investigation, if you deem this at all advisable. Col. Bell, the Engineer Commissioner, has indicated that he is willing to make some further investigation either personally or through one of his assistants, or with the architect; and I have designated Senators Sackett and Copeland to give the matter some study. Mr. Robert H. Alcorn of 1703 2nd Street, N.E., represents the protesting property owners. If you care to go over the ground with a view to further study of the situation, and will call the Resident Clerk of the Committee, Mr. Brinkman (Branch 113, Capitol), he will make arrangements to have the others who are interested, and who are named above, accompany you or such person as you may designate to represent the Fine Arts Commission.

I am sending this letter by special delivery because I understand that the Commission may have a meeting on Thursday and you may wish to take the matter up with the other members at that time."

Very respectfully,  
Arthur Capper,  
Chairman.

Mr. A. L. Harris, Municipal Architect, appeared before the Commission for consideration of the matter. There were also present Mr. Alcorn and a Mr. Minor, residents at Second and R Streets, N.E., who protested strongly against the erection of the power plant at the place proposed. Mr. Harris submitted a print of the approved plan, and said that the plan had been carefully studied and had been published some months ago, but no protest had been received by him about the power plant; that in the meantime the District Commissioners have prepared contracts and it was proposed to begin building the school very soon. Mr. Harris said in the location of the power house special consideration has been given to the handling of coal, ashes, tanks, stokers, etc., and to put the power plant in another location would involve restudy of the plans. He said the power plant could be combined with that



of the Langley Junior High School, but in that event should be maintained at the site in question; if it were located towards the center of the block it would entail increased expense by requiring the pumping of steam up grade and would take up playground space. To transfer the power plant from one end of the new McKinley High School to the other, as has also been suggested, would simply mean protests from another group of citizens.

Mr. Alcern said the citizens of the locality protested against the location of the power plant at Second and R Streets, N.E., because of their residences nearby, in which they take considerable pride, and which would be damaged by smoke and soot. Mr. Minor similarly protested against the location of the power plant at the site proposed. They urged that it be located adjacent to that of the Langley Junior High School.

Mr. Harris said the power plant would not be exactly at the corner, but would be 65 feet from Second Street and 150 feet from R Street. He said the school authorities objected to combining the two power plants for administrative reasons, but this objection was not regarded important, as it involved simply a matter of accounting.

The Commission felt that judging from the plans the point indicated is the logical place for the power plant, and inasmuch as there must be a heating plant it can be treated there as well as anywhere else. However, the Commission decided to visit the locality to determine the matter finally.

Upon inspection of the site, in the afternoon, the Commission concluded that it would be uneconomical to maintain two power plants in the same square, - that the power plant of the new McKinley High School should be combined with that of the Langley Junior High School; and recommended that Mr. Harris make a study of the problem with a view to combining them. (Exhibit B).





4. VERMONT SESQUICENTENNIAL COIN: On June 5, 1926, the Director of the Mint resubmitted the models for the Vermont Sesquicentennial Coin, with letter as follows:

"I am forwarding by messenger plaster casts for the models of the obverse and reverse of the Bennington coin. These are the perfected models of Mr. Charles Keck's design upon which your Commission has already passed; however, as changes have been made since your Commission passed on the first model, I would appreciate your comment or approval of the models now being sent".

The models were inspected and approved. (Exhibit C).

5. UNIFORM FLAG DISPLAY, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: Mr. Norman B. Landreau, Chairman, Joint Committee American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, accompanied by Mr. . . . Riley, of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, submitted a new flagpole made by the National Flag Manufacturing Company, at Waterbury, Connecticut. The flagpole, 12 feet in height, had been specially made, with nickel plate surface, and consisted of two parts,-a rod about an inch in diameter inserted into the main part of the pole, 7 feet in length and about 1 3/4 inches in diameter. The Commission regarded this flagpole an improvement over those formerly submitted, but felt that before deciding definitely in the matter it should be tested, and so as to determine the proper proportion of the flag to the pole (Exhibit D).

6. MEMORIAL CHAPEL, PLATTSBURG, NEW YORK: On June 8th the Quartermaster General of the War Department submitted plans for a memorial chapel to be erected at the Plattsburg Barracks, New York, for the use of the garrison, by the Churchwomen's League for Patriotic Service. The design had been made by the Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue Associates, of New York City; the chapel is to be of Gothic style, and to cost approximately \$200,000; it is described briefly as follows:

"The plan of the building is in the form of a large central square with four adjoining arms, three of which are the individual chapels while the fourth forms the entrance to the



main seating area. Each chapel, though facing toward the main floor area, is distinct in itself, having its own chancel, sanctuary or apse, as the case may be. Adjoining the chapels are the necessary vestries, sacristies and robing rooms. The organ and choir will be immediately over the narthex. The seating capacity of the chapel will be approximately 300. Underneath the chapel proper it is planned to have adequate Sunday School rooms which can be entered either from the narthex of the chapel or from a separate lower entrance.

The exterior is Gothic in spirit and design, and expresses frankly the plan and general purpose of the building. The central area dominates the plan and is very distinctly expressed in the same manner on the exterior. At the top of each of the four tower buttresses it is planned to have figures symbolizing the four branches of military service, on land and sea, in the air and the ministry of mercy. At the apex of the tower roof will be a bronze weather-vane incorporating in design the national shield."

The architect members of the Commission inspected the design, and upon their recommendation the Commission approved the composition, subject to the submission of an elevation showing its true scale. (Exhibit E)

7. MEMORIAL TO THE OSAGE INDIANS: Under date of May 29, 1926, the following letter was received from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, with request for advice as to a design for a World War Memorial to the Osage Indians, as follows:

"In the Interior Department appropriation act of May 3, 1925, Congress authorized \$25,000 for the erection of a monument from tribal funds as a memorial to Indians of the Osage Tribe who gave up their lives in the recent war with Germany.

The Superintendent of the Osage Agency was accordingly requested to submit plans and recommendations relative to the erection of the monument. The matter was taken up with the Indians by the Superintendent and after careful consideration, a design proposed by the architectural firm of Tonini and Bramblett of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, was recommended for acceptance by a committee of Indians designated to make a selection. A drawing of the plans is herewith submitted with a copy of the committee's recommendation. There is also enclosed correspondence on this subject submitted to this Office by the Superintendent.

It is respectfully requested that this matter be given your careful consideration and that you advise this Office of your opinion of the proposed design. Please return the enclosure with your reply."

Mr. J. George Wright, Superintendent of the Osage Indian Agency, and



Mr. A. A. Middleton, architect in the Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, were present, and the Commission discussed the design with them. Mr. Wright said he was not at all satisfied with the design, and felt that this was an opportunity to produce a good memorial. He said he had been paying the Osage Indians at the rate of \$8,000 to \$10,000 each a year, as royalties from coal and oil-fields, during the past 12 years, -in all about \$200,000,000 or \$68,000 per capita, there being about 2,200 of them. He said these Indians bought a large number of Liberty Bonds, and that quite a number of their young men were drafted in the Army; two were killed in action, and the proposed memorial is to be especially for them.

The Commission regarded the design, which was intended to be a Memorial Building, crude, inappropriate and impossible, and disapproved it. The Commission recommended that this matter be placed in the hands of someone who has feeling for the tradition and the history of the Indians, and who could put that into a design for the memorial. (Exhibit F).

8. NEW POLICE COURT BUILDING. Mr. Moore stated that in accordance with the request of the Senate District Committee, he was in conference with Chief Justice McCoy of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia and with Judges Schuldt and Hitt, of the Police Court, in regard to a new building (as provided for in Bill H.R.11943, 69th Congress, which passed the House of Representatives on May 24, 1926, and that on June 12, 1926, he forwarded the following letter to Hon. Arthur Capper, Chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia:

"Complying with the request contained in your letter of June 11, I had a talk with Chief Justice McCoy of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia and Judges Schuldt and Hitt of the Police Court. The present Police Court is badly planned, inadequate and dirty.



It cannot be kept clean. I know from personal experience that the conditions in the Traffic Court are disgraceful and unspeakably bad. A court should stand for the orderly administration of justice. At present there is no way to prevent the herding of all sorts and conditions of people. These conditions have been set forth in the Washington newspapers.

The Plan of 1901 contemplates assembling all the courts of the District of Columbia in Judiciary Square. Chief Justice McCoy, when asked if he considered the municipal court one of the courts which should go into that square, replied that he did so consider it. With him and Judge Schuldt I went over the ground in Judiciary Square and we were all agreed that the most convenient location for the building would be in the space between E and F Streets as prolonged into the Square. The building should stand on a line with the building of the Court of Appeals and should be of the same character architecturally and structurally. This does not mean that the building will not be larger than that of the Court of Appeals, but it should have a family likeness to that building and should be one of the group.

The District Supreme Court Building, while very simple in its design, is considered by architects one of the best buildings in Washington. Within the past few years it was restored and put in absolutely good order in the Office of the Architect of the Capitol. Also a new building for the Court of Appeals was constructed in harmony with the District Supreme Court Building. The proposed Police Court building would be another element in the quadrangle. The cost of the building should be \$1,000,000. All of this money will go into actual construction. No ornamental features are contemplated. It would be impossible to design a more simple building than the Commission contemplate.

The location of the building on a line with the Court of Appeals as proposed would save the very beautiful elms which extend along Fifth Street in Judiciary Square. A number of trees would be displaced, but the best of these trees can be moved.

The Commission of Fine Arts will meet Thursday next and the report I am making to you is in line with the ideas of the Commission as already expressed. I am writing to you in advance of their meeting because of the urgency expressed in your letter, which letter I will bring before the Commission at their meeting."

The building asked for is to comprise 66,899 square feet. Mr. Moore said that if possible the Municipal Court, which is in a rented building on John Marshall Place, should be housed in the same building.

The Commission inspected the location proposed for the Police Court Building and unanimously approved its location in Judiciary Square, along Fifth Street, between E and F Streets prolonged into that Square (Exhibit G). The Commission also concurred in the statement above quoted that Judiciary





Square be a center for tribunals of justice in the District of Columbia.

The Commission noted that there are a number of locations in the Square for additional buildings. Attention was called to the fact that another building proposed for this group in the immediate future is one for the Recorder of Deeds.

9. APARTMENT HOUSE, MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE AND SECOND STREET, N.E.: Under date of June 12, 1926, the Commission received the following letter from Major R. W. Wheeler, Executive Officer of the Zoning Commission, requesting the advice of this Commission as to the height of an Apartment House, to be erected at Massachusetts Avenue and Second Street, N.E.:

"I was directed by the Zoning Commission to request your opinion of a requested change in the height zoning of Massachusetts Avenue, North-east, east of Second Street.

When the zoning plan of the District of Columbia was adopted on August 30, 1920, Maryland Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue, east of Second Street were zoned for eight-story buildings. The balance of the area in this vicinity was zoned for five-story buildings. About two years later, the Zoning Commission, on its own initiative, reduced the height limit on these two avenues to sixty feet or five stories. The property west of North Capitol Street and north of D Street, Northwest, and the property west of New Jersey Avenue, Northwest, was zoned for eight-story buildings.

Petition was submitted for an increase in the height limit on Massachusetts Avenue between Second and Third Streets to permit the erection of eight-story buildings. The Zoning Commission held a public hearing, at which time the proposed change was endorsed by the interested citizens' association, and the property owners in that area. The front elevation of the proposed building to be erected in that square was submitted at the hearing, and accompanies this letter.

In view of the width of these avenues and in view of the commercial zoning of Massachusetts Avenue, the Zoning Commission determined to take no action until it had secured your opinion, both as to the general plan of increasing the height limit of this Avenue and as to the proposed building plans. The Commission is advised that your next meeting is to be held on June 17th, and would greatly appreciate your views in this matter."

Mr. Moore said the matter of height of buildings adjacent to Union Station Plaza was considered by Mr. Burnham at the time the Union Station was built, and that at that time it was agreed that these buildings should be of uniform height and should frame the plaza; therefore, there is no reason



why the buildings on the east side of the plaza should be permitted to be any higher than those on the west.

The plan submitted suggested an eight story building 92 feet in height. Major Grant, who was present at the session later in the afternoon, and who is a member of the Zoning Commission, said that it seemed to him that the architect had added to the height since the plan was submitted to them.

The Commission advised that the regulations pertaining to the height of buildings adjacent to Union Station Plaza should be upheld, that the buildings should be of uniform height adjacent to the plaza; and that an exception is not warranted. (Exhibit H).

10. COLOR SCHEME FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: Mr. Medary called attention to a letter which he had received from Mr. Edward Donn, Chairman of the Architects' Advisory Council, requesting advice from the Commission of Fine Arts and also from the National Capital Park and Planning Commission as to a color scheme for buildings of this city; it was stated that there was a time when red buildings seemed to predominate and that now there seems to be a tendency to gray buildings.

The Commission considered the matter informally and decided that to limit the color scheme of the city would tend to limit action on the part of individuals more than would be wise. The Commission felt there should be no objection to buildings of different colors, but that it is desirable that the colors be properly blended.

11. FORT LINCOLN CEMETERY: The Commission made a trip of inspection to Fort Lincoln Cemetery, in company with Mr. Horace W. Peaslee, architect. The Commission concurred in the general scheme of development, as explained by Mr. Peaslee, and expressed great interest in the proposed boulevard connection from the Anacostia Park by way of Fort Lincoln to connect with the Fort Drive, and which is to avoid a cut along Eastern Avenue near Fort Lincoln.

-----  
The Commission had as their guest at luncheon Miss Violet Oakley, painter, of Philadelphia. The Commission adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

*The Exhibits precede the minutes to page 17*





