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Creators: Dole, C. Russell

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THE PROPOSED STATE OFFICE BUILDING

By C. RUSSELL DOLE, '27

These are all familiar with the present State Capitol Building of Ohio, and are impressed with the dignified, historic governmental architecture of the building. This building was begun in 1838, but was not finished until 1861. Every change in the politics of the governing body meant a change in the architect, with the result that the building was not finished as originally planned. The present dome or "cheese box" is an outward indication of the change in policy, for it was originally planned to have a dome similar to the dome on the National Capitol at Washington.

In 1898 the number and size of the state offices had increased to such a degree as to necessitate the construction of a building to relieve the congestion in the State House. Many plans were suggested at this time as possible solutions to the problem. Among them was the erection of four smaller buildings of cognate architecture, one in each corner of the park. Another suggestion was that the state purchase the block, or the major portion thereof, between third and Fourth Streets and Broad and State Streets and erect a suitable building on this property with provision for enlargement in the future. The plan adopted, however, as we all know, was the erection of the Annex or, as one historian has called it, the "Laundry" of the State Mansion. This building does not harmonize with the original building and detracts from the beauty of the State Capitol and grounds. The problem of erecting a building on the present grounds is largely a question of whether we can erect a building that will add rather than detract from the beauty of the State House.

In 1920 a report on Superintendent of Buildings was made by Mr. Gaylord R. Cummins to "The Joint Legislative Committee on Administrative Reorganization," in which the recommendation was made, "That immediate steps be taken to design and construct a state office building to house all state departments." This report, with the agitation among the members of the State Legislature and state officials, was the beginning of the bill passed in the last session of the Legislature providing three million dollars and the proceeds from the sale of the Wyandotte Building and the lease on the Hartman Hotel Building, for the acquirement of the necessary land contiguous to the State House, and erect thereon a suitable office building, in which to house the various departments, boards and commissions of the state government and the State Library.

The loss, due to the fact the state departments are scattered over a large area in a number of different buildings, is difficult to estimate, but is undoubtedly of importance. The inconvenience to the public is great and the cost of maintenance is excessive. Thus it will be seen that there is a real need for the building under consideration.

Since the enactment of the law providing for the erection of this building, the commission created therein, composed of Governor Donahey, State Auditor Tracy and Attorney General Crabbe, has been working on the problems of the best location and type of building consistent with the dignity of the state. In the mind of the commission it has seemed desirable to erect the proposed building on the present site, thus eliminating the cost of more land and allowing the use of the money which would otherwise have purchased the site in the erection of the building. To assist them in making their decision they have appointed a committee of architects to serve in an advisory capacity. The members of the committee are Herbert B. Briggs, State Architect, chairman; Joseph N. Bradford, University Architect at Ohio State University; Professor Charles St. John Chubb, Professor of Architecture at Ohio State University; Robert S. Harsh, former State Architect, and Fred W. Elliott, Architect for the Adjutant General. This committee was instructed to make a study of the possibilities of constructing a building or buildings on the present site.

The requirements of the building as presented to them will be of interest to us as students in Engineering, because they are typical of the requirements often met in actual practice. The building must contain, it is estimated, 180,000 square feet of adequately lighted floor space. A maximum of usable office space with flexibility of office arrangement. Proper division and separation of offices must be possible, so that there will be orderly and convenient facilities for the transaction of business with the public. Adequate circulation to provide for the orderly handling of traffic at congested periods must be provided. The building must also provide accessible vault and storage facilities. The construction, materials and location must be such as to reduce interior and exterior fire hazards to a minimum. The cost must be based on good business principles. The building, buildings or additions shall be built without marring the present State Capitol.

With these requirements in mind, the committee has made a report to the commission and has based its work on the assumption that the words, "without marring the State Capitol," mean that the dignified, historic governmental architecture of the State House shall not be injured, disfigured, minimized, damaged or in any manner impaired.

The first scheme presented is the erection of a tower on the central part of the State House. This plan has possibilities of design not found in any other scheme. A photograph of the tower as conceived by Thomas D. McLaughlin and Associates, Architects, of Lima, Ohio, is printed herein. Mr. McLaughlin suggests that the tower be twenty-three stories high and that it can be built around the present rotunda. This scheme is in accord with the modern trend in State Capi-

tols, for we now have the new Nebraska State Capitol, with its tower extending upward nearly four hundred feet. This plan would finish, in a way that cannot be excelled, the present unfinished Capitol, and make for the State of Ohio a Capitol of which its citizens could be justly proud. This plan is structurally possible and the cost would be the lowest possible consistent with the dignity of the State of Ohio. The operating cost would be lower, as it is always found that one building can be operated for less than two or more. The plan also affords protection from fire hazards, especially outside hazards, as it would not be in close proximity to any other buildings. The best possible lighting could be obtained and there is no opportunity to lessen it by the construction of adjoining buildings, as would be the case if the building is built on some other site. Some architects have expressed the belief that the lighting of the interior rooms or parts from natural sources would be very poor. This is not as serious, however, as might be thought, for every tall building has a problem similar, and from the number of tall buildings placed side by side it would appear that this matter was not given much consideration. Other objections to this plan are that only fifty to sixty per cent of floor space would be available as practical working space and that many changes would be necessary to provide proper entrances and exits.

The second scheme suggested is that wings be built on the north and south ends of the present buildings and connected thereto. The fourth, which is in some respects similar to the second, is that two buildings, one in the northeast and the other in the southeast corners of the State House grounds, and connected to the respective corners of the State House. These schemes, while practical from the standpoint of construction and reasonably practical in working space, would be inefficient on account of the separation of the buildings, which would mean added cost of maintenance and would produce a crowded effect on the State House grounds. Either of these schemes would cost approximately five million dollars.

The third scheme suggested by the committee is that of constructing two buildings of campanile or tower form, to be placed in the northeast and southeast parts of the grounds. These would not be connected to the State House or "Annex." This scheme is not practical because of the floor space available and difficulty of producing a satisfactory design.

The committee's last suggestion is that a building of the usual office type be constructed on the eastern part of the State House grounds. This plan is very practical in that the working space available would be about seventy per cent of the total area. The circulation would be primarily horizontal, which is considered by the committee to be the most practical. It is well known, however, that in this day of high speed elevators that vertical circulation is much more rapid than horizontal circulation, which produces the congested elevators and stairways found in many low buildings. This plan would include the Annex, or, if possible, the Annex would be removed and the new building built in its place.

The advisory committee recommends the last as the most practical solution of the problem. They are of the opinion, however, that none of the foregoing suggested schemes are suitable and deem it inadvisable to erect any additional building or buildings on the State House grounds. They also believe that a practical, economical and utilitarian building on the State House grounds is impossible without in some measure marring the State Capitol and its dignified architecture.

The commission has also investigated to some extent the possibility of purchasing other sites for the location of the proposed building. The sites under consideration have been the old Columbus City Hall site and the old Y. M. C. A. site, the former on East State Street and the latter on South Third Street. It has also been suggested that a site in the Civic Center on the Scioto River be considered, but this is too far from the present Capitol and would not therefore meet the chief requisite, that of being close to the present building. The Y. M. C. A. site is a practical one and would allow room for a building of ample size if it is desired to construct this building along the same lines as other office buildings used for commercial purposes. This site has been purchased by the Columbus Dispatch recently, but the sale was with the understanding that if the state desires the property it can have the same.

The site that has received the most consideration is the old City Hall site, which has been offered the state at a price of \$575,000. This is the best location outside the State House grounds and would provide ample space for present and future needs, as the building could be built to any height necessary. The factor of expansion is not great in the minds of some officials, who believe that the chief desire of today is to concentrate rather than expand our state offices.

Attorney General Crabbe in a recent ruling said that, since the law provides for the purchase of a site contiguous to the present State House and the erection of a building thereon, he believed that it would be impossible to erect a building legally on the State House grounds without the consent of the Legislature. This ruling may have changed the legal atmosphere, but does not change the practicability of the erection of a building on the present grounds.

Do we want a real Capitol or just an office building? is the question to be decided. If it is a Capitol building that is desired, in keeping with the dignity of this great State of Ohio, and that does not have the unfinished appearance of the "cheese box," we would say, "Build the towers and finish this great structure so nobly begun, and have a monument indicative of the integrity of the state." If it is a mere office building, based solely upon an economic, utilitarian and efficiency basis, we would say build some place where it will not be conspicuous and leave the State House as it is.

Let us build for future generations, and protect ourselves from the embarrassment caused the passing generation by the erection of the "Annex," by selecting a scheme that will be appreciated in the future as the original building has been appreciated in the past.