

THE RHODE ISLAND STATE HOUSE:

The Competition (1890-1892)

by

Hilary A. Lewis

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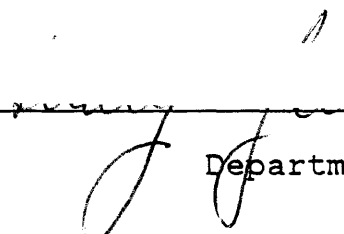
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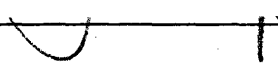
Signature of  
author

  
Hilary A. Lewis  
Department of Architecture  
January 15, 1988

Certified  
by

  
Stanford Anderson  
Professor of Architecture  
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted  
by

  
Julian Beinart  
Chairman  
Departmental Committee for Graduate Students

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H.A.L.  
Cambridge

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**ABSTRACT**

This is a study of the design competition for the new State House in Providence, Rhode Island, which began in 1890 and ended in 1892. The competition was supervised by the Rhode Island State House Commission, a body formed by the legislature and presided over by former Rhode Island Governor Herbert W. Ladd. The Commission was initiated in January 1890 and began meetings in May 1890. The competition ran in two parts. First local Rhode Island architects were invited to compete and then a group of nationally known architects were brought in to compete with three of the Rhode Island firms.

The interest in this building and the competition which led to its construction lies in the style of the completed building and in who was selected to design it. McKim, Mead & White were the winners of the competition and they produced a design (and eventually a building) which was a monument to the then new trend in American classicism which became popularized through the vehicle of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. This building represents the ideals of the "City Beautiful", or "White City", movement which grew out of the influence of the Fair on the American Public.

The study seeks to show how a small group of architects, which included McKim, Mead & White, had the correct social and professional connections to obtain such monumental projects as the Rhode Island State House. It is hoped that the story of the State House's competition will shed light on how the small elite which ruled American architecture in the 1890's was able to maintain their control.

Thesis Supervisor: Stanford Anderson  
Title: Professor of History and Architecture

## INTRODUCTION

This paper began as a study of the style of the Rhode Island State Capitol. As I became more involved with my research I began to focus on its main designer Charles Follen McKim. This led me to question the starting point of the project. Just how did McKim get the commission? Without doubt had the commission gone to another architect the building would have turned out quite differently. Also, I was curious where the impetus had come from to build at that particular time. There had been a need and a desire for a new State House for many years -- there are written statements from 1870 which support this. Why in 1890 were the wheels set in motion to actually get a project appropriated by the legislature?

These questions forced me to spend more time and energy on the period of the competition and its main actors rather than to analyze more design related issues in the course of the investigation. I strongly feel that the events leading to the selection of McKim (and of course his firm, McKim, Mead and White, Architects) are what determined what the State of Rhode Island eventually received as their new State House rather than any later influences which would have greatly affected

McKim and his work.

Therefore, the following is primarily an analysis of the competition for a Rhode Island State House. The interest in this lies in the way it may serve as an example of the way in which public works which were to represent the national style were assembled and determined by a small elite who had the good fortune to dominate American architecture at the turn of the century.

The documents used in this paper come from primarily two sources: The Archives of the State of Rhode Island (Office of the Secretary of State)<sup>1</sup> and the McKim, Mead and White Archives held in the New York Historical Society.<sup>2</sup> The drawings submitted for the competition were not held by the State House Commission except for the winning entry by McKim, Mead and White. In fact the archive of the State of Rhode Island has maintained twenty-two working drawings and presently has them framed in plexiglass and kept in the vault of the

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<sup>1</sup>The Archives of the State of Rhode Island are kept at the basement level of the State House in Providence, Room 43.

<sup>2</sup>Documents from this source all come from the file marked "M-10". The drawings are kept separately and can be requested by subject.

archives.<sup>3</sup> The only source we then have to view the other competitors' drawings are sketches which appeared in contemporary journals.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, there are working drawings in the McKim, Mead and White archives at the New York Historical Society.

The two best sources available are the official records of the State House Commission, and the assembled letters of McKim, Mead and White available at the New York Historical Society. The Commission, a body assembled in 1890, supervised the entire project from competition to the end of building. The records are primarily hand written and somewhat discontinuous. There are gaps of months in the record keeping though there was evidently activity taking place. For example, there are no recorded minutes of the meetings in which competing designs were assessed.

Additionally, throughout the paper there is notation citing both "Record" as well as "Report". The difference is simply that a printed "Report" was inserted into the official "Record". The written

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<sup>3</sup>My attempts to photograph these were thwarted for several reasons, the most difficult being the reflective qualities of the plexiglass.

<sup>4</sup>Additional depictions of the designs can be found in cited articles in The Evening Bulletin, AABN, etc.

"Record" should be treated as the primary source because the "Report" was obviously compiled at a later date. In fact it begins with a frontispiece depicting the McKim, Mead and White design.

The following pages chronicle the stages of the competition and attempt to shed light on the reasons for the selection of McKim, Mead and White as architects of the State House. The discussion of the design is kept to a minimum in order to focus on the history of the competition itself.



## THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COMMISSION

The State House Commission was appointed by resolution during the January Session, 1890 of the Rhode Island Legislature.<sup>5</sup> It was empowered to "to obtain plans for a new State house and to receive proposals for sites for the same and report their proceedings at the January Session of the General Assembly, A.D. 1891."<sup>6</sup> This Commission was headed by former Rhode Island Governor, Herbert W. Ladd and began meetings in May 1890.

Historically there had been clamoring by legislators and executives alike for a new building in which to conduct state business. The only documents available which clearly voice this need are statements made by Governors from 1870 to the time of the Commission.<sup>7</sup> The most articulate and persuasive of these are from none other than Ex-Governor Ladd, president of the Commission. In 1890 Ladd made a long statement in which he reiterated many of the concerns of

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<sup>5</sup> State House Commission Report, vol.I, p.28.

<sup>6</sup> Presented as quote from Resolution of the legislature, Report, p.28.

<sup>7</sup> Please refer to "Appendix B" of the State House Commission Report which is reprinted as an appendix to this paper.

the past governors and voiced some new ones of his own. He stressed in particular the need for a properly fire-proofed building in which state records could be safely stored. All of his predecessors had stressed this as well. Also the need for a central office area for the various departments of the State was underscored. There was again, nothing new here. The Commission was already appointed at the time of this statement so it can be assumed that something had transpired between the terms of Governors Bourn (1884) and Ladd (1890) which facilitated the formation of the Commission.

Other central issues raised by the Governors were the need for easy access to the downtown business district and also to the railroad station. It is somewhat ironic that the site chosen was considered to be especially attractive due to its proximity to the railroad; later, the railroad station was moved further downtown and away from the State House. It was not until 1986 that the railroad station was again moved to an area near the State House.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>There is now a new Amtrak railroad station placed at the foot of the State House's hill. It was completed in 1986 by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill and employs a central rotunda which can be supposedly attributed to the influence of the State House's rotunda. The presence of the railroad beneath the State House was deemed inappropriate as the freight yard's use and acreage grew and became unsightly. A report of the Providence City Plan Commission of 1915 remarks on this

The first mention of the style of the State House is found in a statement of Governor Davis (1891):

The building should be as far as practicable, of Rhode Island material, correct and commanding in its architectural proportions,<sup>9</sup> and ample to accommodate the legislative, executive and ministerial departments of the State government; but it need not necessarily be expensive in its elaborations or furnishing, and should be built within reasonable means of the State to afford for such purpose, due regard being had to an eligible site."<sup>10</sup>

The simple statement about "correct and commanding...architectural proportions" was a great change as the previous statements quickly show. It is my hypothesis that it was Governor Ladd who really pushed for a monumental building and made that aspect part of later executives' attitudes towards the State House.

Governor Ladd in 1890 remarks that he did not realize the severity of the problem until he became

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problem and states a program for solving the difficulty which would require curtailing part of the freight yard. For more information please see "Appendix -- City Plan Commission."

<sup>9</sup>This is the first mention in this record of quotes from the governors of Rhode Island of architectural style and monumentality. It should be noted that the building is surfaced with white Georgia marble.

<sup>10</sup> See "Appendix - Statements", from Report, p.84.

governor.<sup>11</sup> He applauds the beginning efforts of the State House Commission which had taken steps to secure land for the project on Smith's Hill. He describes the proposed project as a potential "ornament to the city and State"<sup>12</sup>, and praises the proposed sight in the following:

as if specially held for the purpose, there is a spot about to be made desirable where a new State House can be located that will be a credit and an ornament to the city and State. The new Union Passenger Station in the city of Providence, in its proposed position, will be about four hundred feet southwest of the present station, an elevated structure with a wide avenue under it, opening direct communications with Smith's Hill on the brow of which should stand a new State House. Here is everything that could be desired; a commanding position, ample room, and easy access from all parts of the city.<sup>13</sup>

The site referred to here is that of Smith's Hill. There had been other options for the site. The old State House's site was deemed too small and the "Old West Burying Ground" mentioned in Governor Ladd's statement was "now beyond purchasing" due to changes in land prices since the site was first suggested in 1873.<sup>14</sup> Later the reasons why Smith's Hill were deemed

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<sup>11</sup> See "Appendix B -- Statements".

<sup>12</sup> ibid, p.83

<sup>13</sup> ibid

<sup>14</sup> ibid

so appropriate will be examined more fully.

Governor Ladd points to the activities currently taking place in Boston on the Massachusetts State House. There is an air of competition in the way he compares Massachusetts and Rhode Island's respective State Houses. He uses this fact to exhort his colleagues to begin work immediately on a new Rhode Island State House:

The State of Massachusetts has just voted to expend two and a half million dollars on an addition to its State House, indicating the importance it attaches to the necessity and advantage of bringing under one roof departments that are now crowded out and to secure better accommodations for its legislative branches. Although possessed of one of the most elegant and commodious State buildings in the country, and the condition in no way comparable to that from which this State government suffers, it did not hesitate to make improvements where improvements were demanded. With our small debt already provided for, our finances on a sound and substantial basis, and according to the State Treasurer's estimate a surplus this year of over \$200,000, to say nothing of the possibilities of new sources of revenue, can we not enter upon this work without fear or hesitation and pay for it as we go along. No act you can perform will add more to your credit and continue longer as a monument to this legislature than to inaugurate this work.<sup>15</sup>

During the early days of the Commission, a committee was sent to examine examples of great public

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<sup>15</sup> ibid

architecture which included a visit to Boston to see working drawings of the Massachusetts State House's addition. In fact the Commission went to Hartford on September 6, 1890 to examine the State Capitol of Connecticut, "a handsome and substantial structure of marble and granite, situated on high ground."<sup>16</sup> The structure was noted for its situation amidst a public park of approximately forty acres.<sup>17</sup> The next day the Commission went to Boston to view the Public Library, built by McKim, Mead and White; the "new" Central Court House and then finally to the "Massachusetts Capitol" or State House to see plans for the addition. The Record clearly underscores the cost of this project -- two and a half million dollars. Obviously, this entry is meant to reinforce the feeling that Rhode Island should follow Massachusetts model.<sup>18</sup>

The Commission's sub-committee also travelled to New York as evidenced from part of a letter from E.K.

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<sup>16</sup> Report, vol. I, p.29.

<sup>17</sup> ibid

<sup>18</sup> ibid

The wording of the statement makes this more emphatic:

The Commission was also shown the plans for the addition which it is found necessary to make to the Massachusetts Capitol, to carry out which two and one-half million dollars have been appropriated.

Glezen, the Commission's secretary to the Commission remaining in Boston:

The committee appointed by you at the meeting held September 12, 1890 by leave to report that they met by appointment in New York on September 14, 1890, inspected the plans for the Grant Monument and had interviews with ex-Mayor A.I.<sup>19</sup> Hewitt and architect R.M. Hunt, J.C. Cady and Carrère<sup>20</sup> and Hastings. That they called upon McKim, Mead and White and Charles N. Clinton but were unable to see them, but that afterwards M[r]. McKim of the former firm came to Providence at the request of Governor Whitmore and was shown the proposed site by Governor Ladd,<sup>21</sup> but Mr. Stafford of Brigham and Stafford, Boston Architects of the addition to the Massachusetts State House came to Providence with a letter from Ex-Gov. Long in which was an invitation for the commission to visit Boston and see the plans for the new State House there.<sup>22</sup>

The Report shows that the Commission was extremely impressed with the new Boston Public Library. They described it as a "magnificent structure of marble and granite, a model of architectural beauty and simplicity".<sup>23</sup> A entry in the Record summarizes the feeling of the Commission after the sub-committee had returned with its findings from its trip:

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<sup>19</sup> This may read as "J.", unclear in document.

<sup>20</sup> Appears in letter as "Cariere".

<sup>21</sup> McKim was obviously well acquainted with Governor Ladd as can be inferred from the letter to McKim from Ladd, dated November 26th. (see Appendix -- Letters.)

<sup>22</sup> NYHS, M-10. See "Appendix - Letters".

<sup>23</sup> Records, op.cit., p.29.

A careful study of various public buildings of a similar character has resulted in making the Commission unanimous on the question of the general character of our own State Capitol.<sup>24</sup> That we should not be extravagant in the matter of construction is important. The State demands a substantial fire-proof building, simple in architectural design, of a size that shall give ample accommodation and preclude the possible necessity of enlargement for many years to come, and in all its appointments adequately designed for the purposes of the State Departments. It should be located in a commanding position;<sup>25</sup> convenient to the business centre [sic.] of Providence. Notwithstanding the greater cost of similar buildings in other commonwealths your Commission; supported by high authorities is of the opinion that land and such a building as our needs demand can be provided for a sum not exceeding one and one half million dollars....<sup>26</sup>

It is important to outline who the Commission really was and how this may have influenced their ultimate decisions. As already stated the Commission's President was [ex-]Governor Herbert W. Ladd. The Secretary was E.K. Glezen. The members of the Commission were originally (as of May 1890), William Ames of Providence, Olney Arnold of Pawtucket, Albert A. Sayles of Burrillville, John W. Davis of Pawtucket,

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<sup>24</sup> It can be assumed from later statements as well as the Commission's obvious pleasure with the Boston Public Library that this comment indicates a tendency towards classicism.

<sup>25</sup> Again we see the words of Governors Davis and Ladd.

<sup>26</sup> Records, op.cit., pp.30-31.



George Peabody Wetmore of Newport, Joshua Wilbour of Bristol, Enos Lapham of Warwick and Rowland G. Hazard of South Kingstown. In March 1891, Francis O'Reilly of Woonsocket and Nathaniel R. Church of Tiverton were added to the Commission.<sup>27</sup>

The Commission quickly decided to set forth rules for a competition in order to acquire designs as well as a team of supervising architects for the new State House. They decided that it would be most helpful to have the aid of consultants from the architectural community. They contacted Alfred Stone, President of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (henceforth referred to as the RIC of the AIA) who wrote a letter to the Commission which set forth the foundation for the rules of the competition.<sup>28</sup> Mr. Stone suggested remuneration for entries which was accepted by the Commission because they felt this would be the only way to encourage participation from "the most prominent architects of the country."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Records, p.32 and p.37.

<sup>28</sup> Please refer to the letter in "Appendix - Letters".

<sup>29</sup> Report, p.61. The amount finally settled on was the amount of \$1000 per entry. However this amount changed over the committee's discussions. Originally it was suggested that decreasing amounts would be awarded to competitors in order of rank (e.g. \$3000 for the first competitor, \$2500 to the second, and so on.) as

It was felt that Rhode Island architects should have the first chance to submit their work and should be encouraged to do so. The Commission selected Mr. A.C. Morse of Providence to preside as consulting architect to the Rhode Island competition where three entries would be selected for a second competition on the national level.<sup>30</sup> There is no commentary available as to how these designs were selected over the others who entered. We simply know that the local winners were: Messrs. Stone, Carpenter & Wilson, William R. Walker & Son and Messrs. Hoppin, Read & Hoppin, of Providence,<sup>31</sup> and that all of these competitors were awarded \$500 each for their efforts.

There are two official "Records" of the State House Commission. There is a completely hand written copy in the hand of E.K. Glezen and there is a smaller (abridged and edited) version (which I refer to here as the Report) which was pasted into the larger predominantly handwritten volumes. Sometimes these two Records give conflicting information. There is no doubt that the

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suggested by Mr. Stone's letter, clause 10. Please refer to letter.

<sup>30</sup> ibid

<sup>31</sup> ibid

printed and abridged edition was produced at a later date. Due to the nature of handwritten documents from the 1890's I was often forced to rely on information from the printed copy though I feel more assured of the primary authenticity of the original handwritten copy.

An important example of this conflict is the following description of a clause contained in the rules, the clause which most disturbed Charles McKim.<sup>32</sup> The discussion of the clause as it appears on page 38 of the Record reads that "the plans furnished be the property of the State." This wording incensed McKim who wrote on August 8, 1891:

The stipulation that a nominal sum be paid each competitor only means that he shall be re-imbursed for the actual outlay made in preparing the competitive drawings and in many cases it will not so reimburse him. It certainly cannot in any way be considered as a remuneration for the time and thought he has given the problem, or for his ideas as expressed in the drawings and it is manifestly unfair that these ideas should become the property of the State of Rhode Island.

In all competitions in accordance with professional rules the drawings are returned to the unsuccessful competitors with a guarantee that no idea embodied in them shall be used without their consent or without proper remuneration.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Please refer to letter from McKim, Mead and White to Ladd, August 8, 1891.

<sup>33</sup> Please see letter, "Appendix - Letters".

In the published version of the competition rules in both the printed summary in the Report and in such journals as American Architect and Building News<sup>3 0</sup> the clause is reworded as follows:

**Eighthly.** The author or authors of each design conforming to these conditions shall receive, as a compensation therefor, the sum of one thousand dollars.

All drawings will be the property of the architects or firms submitting them and will only be used in whole or in part by agreement with and compensation to their authors....<sup>3 1</sup>

Not to confuse the chronology thus far I should restate that the Commission was announced by the legislature in January 1890, the Commission first met in May 1890 and then embarked on visits to other capital cities in the Northeast in September 1890. They announced the Rhode Island competition in November 1890 and closed it on March 1, 1891.<sup>3 2</sup> The Second (national) competition was announced on August 10, 1891 and was closed on January 14, 1892.

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<sup>3 0</sup> "Competition Design for the Rhode Island Statehouse, Providence, R.I.", American Architect and Building News, vol. XXXV, no. 842, February 13, 1892, p. 110. (ff.)

<sup>3 1</sup> Report, p. 71. For full copy of the competition rules please refer to the "Appendix -- Competition".

<sup>3 2</sup> Records, p. 21; Also, Wilson, Richard Guy, McKim, Mead & White, Architects, (New York: Rizzoli, 1983).

On July 27, 1891 the subcommittee reported that the following architects should be invited to participate in the competition: Richard Morris Hunt; McKim, Mead and White; J.C. Cady and Carrère and Hastings. The committee was to "be empowered to fill any vacancies in the number of architects so recommended and to add to it not...two more in their discretion."<sup>3 3</sup> It is then noted that later the firm of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge of Boston were invited as well.<sup>3 4</sup>

According to an article in The Evening Bulletin, Providence, R.I., in February 1892, there was also an entry from the firm of George C. Mason & Son "of Newport and Philadelphia".<sup>3 5</sup> The work of all these designers were then exhibited in Sayles Memorial Hall at Brown University in Providence. It was here that the "consulting architects" as well as the public would view the plans. However, the public saw the exhibition later, beginning on February 27, 1892.<sup>3 6</sup> They were not

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<sup>3 3</sup> Records, p.38.

<sup>3 4</sup> Records, p.39.

<sup>3 5</sup> "State House Plans; On Exhibition in Sayles Memorial Hall To-day. The Public to Assist in the Selection of the Design. Some of the Preliminary Sketches Offered by the Competing Architects.", The Evening Bulletin, Providence, R.I., January 27, 1892, p.3. [xerox available in R.I. State Archives, file on State House.]

<sup>3 6</sup> ibid

part of the acceptance process.

Richard Morris Hunt did not compete because he was invited to serve as a consultant. The minutes of the meeting of August 1891 suggested that consulting architects would be necessary to:

certify to Commission whether or not each competing architect shall have complied with these conditions and shall further assist the Commission in such a manner as the Commission may desire.<sup>37</sup>

Such consultants were not yet selected at the meeting of December 22, 1891. The committee cast votes which would have indicated that the consulting architects would be: R.M. Hunt, Edward C. Cabot and A.C. Morse (the consulting architect for the first competition.)<sup>38</sup> However, the Commission decided to consult with the competing architects before making a final decision and then came up with the names of:

Richard Morris Hunt of New York, member of the French Academy and Chief Consulting Architect of the World's Fair buildings in Chicago, Mr. A.D.F. Hamlin, Professor of Architecture in Columbia College, and Mr. A.C. Morse of

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<sup>37</sup> Record, p.45.

<sup>38</sup> The actual votes cast in the meeting of December 22, 1891 were: Richard M. Hunt, (6); Edward C. Cabot, (3); A.C. Morse, (3); Prof. A.D.F. Hamlin, (2); George B. Post (1); Professor Ware, (1); James H.J. Windham, (1); Professor Babcock, (1); Arthur Rotch, (1); Edward H. Kendall, (1); William M. Kendall, (1); [first name illegible] Peabody, (1). [Taken from Record, pp.52-53].

Providence.<sup>39</sup>

After the information on the vote is listed there is no more information in the handwritten volume number I [1890-92]. The aforementioned printed summary of the Commission's activities appears. There is no written discussion of what transpired during the meetings of the Commission or of the consulting architects. Volume II of the Record begins with an entry from September 1893 and runs through 1900.

What happened from the time of the solidification of the competition's rules and September 1893? All that is left to examine is correspondence and the printed summary of the Commission's activities which has been severely edited.

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<sup>39</sup>Report, p.63.

## THE SELECTION OF MCKIM, MEAD AND WHITE

The designs of six of the competing architects appeared in the aforementioned article in The Evening Bulletin, Providence, R.I. These were those of the firms: McKim, Mead and White,<sup>40</sup> J.C. Cady & Co., Carrere & Hastings, George C. Mason & Son, Shepley Rutan & Coolidge and finally Stone, Carpenter & Wilson. The designs of Hoppin, Read and Hoppin and of William R. Walker & Son were not presented. According to the article an entry in the first Rhode Island Competition also was made by Gould & Angell of Providence. There is no record of this in the Record of the State House Commission. Again according to the article the entries of Gould & Angell and of George C. Mason & Son were "thrown out and were not considered in the work of the Commission after the first competition."<sup>41</sup>

Of the six designs we have to view, four have similar compositions, offering central domes flanked by lower wings.<sup>42</sup> Only the designs of Carrere and Hastings

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<sup>40</sup> In the article the firm's name is misspelled as "McKinn, Mead and White". ["State House Plans on Exhibition...", op.cit.]

<sup>41</sup> ibid

<sup>42</sup> Please refer to illustrations in "Appendix - Competition Designs". Again, I would like to stress that there is no record of the competing entries in the Archives of the State of Rhode Island. The designs as represented in the articles of The Evening Bulletin and



and that of George C. Mason & Son did not have domes. Both of these designs have qualities of French "Francois Premier" style and that of the Richardsonian Romanesque. They bear great similarities to the then under construction State Capitol in Albany by H.H. Richardson.<sup>43</sup>

The design of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge was domed and fairly compact and unified. Its strict simplicity was extremely reminiscent of Bulfinch's Massachusetts State House which the Commission members had so admired, as mentioned earlier. The design had a clean colonial flavor and perhaps was considered to be a bit old fashioned, though very good looking.

The design of Stone, Carpenter and Wilson had great similarities with the design submitted by McKim, Mead

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in American Architect and Building News, are all that could be found to represent the entries. Additionally, I am sorry to report that though the AABN article states that it contains copies of the entries by W. Walker & Sons and by Hoppin, Read & Hoppin, these illustrations are not reproduced in the copy of this issue retained on microfiche at the Graduate School of Design of Harvard University where I conducted my research (other attempts at locating these illustrations proved equally fruitless.) [articles already cited in above footnotes.]

<sup>43</sup>The New York Capitol in Albany was constructed from 1871 to 1898 and was completed by Isaac Perry. [Hitchcock, Henry Russell, Seale, William, Temples of Democracy, (New York: Harcourt Brace Javonovich, 1976), p.203].

and White. Its central dome was to be surrounded by small tourelles. The legislative chambers flattened rotundas were to be topped by low domes and small cupolas. The dome was designed much more in Italian Renaissance style -- the dome was gored and the drum was articulated by bays divided by coupled columns -- which adumbrated the development of domes such as the one in Cass Gilbert's Minnesota Capitol. Circular windows beneath the dome refer back to such classical designs as that of Brunelleschi's great dome of Florence cathedral.

The J.C. Cady & Co. entry was highly Richardsonian in flavor. The central dome was flanked by four tourelles. Its entry was celebrated with a great porticoed temple front. Two flanking wings extend out from the central pavilion, which itself was highly additive in form. The side wings begin simply and then thrust forward with great rounded pavilions, which again are very Richardsonian in their design. The wings are then completed with tower like ends of Italian Renaissance design and capped with two tourelles a piece. It is my guess that this design was rejected for its obvious complexity. It lacks unity and definition and perhaps was considered to be too lacking in modern feeling in its extensive use of Richardsonian detail.

The design of McKim, Mead and White was similar to that of Stone, Carpenter & Wilson. However it differed in a few important qualities. Of all the domed entries, it was the most vertical and had the smoothest surface. It is known that McKim, Mead and White specified that marble be used for its surface. It is undeniably the most "French" of the domed designs. Its composition is highly unified and focused on the central pavilion, unlike that of J.C. Cady & Co. or even that of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge. However, its lines were not overly blocky and jagged like those of George C. Mason & Son's and Carrère & Hastings entries.

We know from the Record of the Commission, that great attention was paid to the plan of the building.<sup>44</sup> The competition stipulated that landscape not be considered in the designs and that only one perspective drawing be submitted.<sup>45</sup> Great concern was focused on accommodating the departmental offices of the State and while it can be assumed that the Commission was somewhat swayed by the beauty of a design, it cannot be ignored that they were looking for a practical plan which they could "sell" to the legislature as the appropriate

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<sup>44</sup>Please refer to "Conditions of Competition for the New State House", "Appendix A - Conditions", section marked "Secondly."

<sup>45</sup>ibid

solution to what basically boiled down to a space problem rather than an image problem.

After, as we have seen in the remarks of the governors, what was called for was a safe, fire-proofed area in which to store records, conduct business and carry on the legislative process. There are basically no statements (excluding those of Governor Ladd) which attest to the need for a new monumental image for the State of Rhode Island.

In a letter which clearly admits to being a response to the already referred to article in American Architect and Building News, Professor E. Letang of the Department of Architecture of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology wrote to McKim:

Allow me to congratulate you sincerely about the Rhode Island State House Competition. I was looking at the various designs lately published in the American Architect and a certain plan and section caught at once my eyes.<sup>46</sup> I even called along some of my best fellows at the Institute to explain [to] them the excellence of your design having not yet seen your name and later on when I heard that you was [sic.] the happy and successful winner I was mighty glad. Because in many competitions I have come to see I always thought that to [sic.] much indifference or

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<sup>46</sup> It can be assumed that Professor Letang is referring to the article in American Architect and Building News, "Competitive Designs for the Statehouse, Providence, R.I.", February 13, 1892, vol. XXXV, no.842, p.110. [Illustrations are found on later pages (not numbered).]

neglect or weakness was apparent in the planning. it [sic.] always give [sic.] me a greater pleasure to look upon a good plan well balanced meeting the requirements and plainly read than a beautiful elevation or perspective alone<sup>47</sup> -- I think in my opinion the task is just as arduous if not more -- in fact in the present competition I did not look much about elevations but plan -- I repeat that I am delighted as your success I do not doubt that with such plan as you have you will put on it a beautiful and noble building of which R.I. will be proud in general and lovers of architecture in particular....<sup>48</sup>

Since we have no true record of the meeting of the Commission with its consulting architects during the deciding of the winner of the competition we must refer to the comments later printed by the Commission. The State House Commission Report, describes the end of the competition as described in the following sections. First, the selection of McKim, Mead and White:

The Consulting Architects made a careful and thorough examination of the plans, occupying several days, and reported to the Commission that all the competitors had complied with the conditions, and that "much thought and careful study have been given to the subject, as is shown both in the drawings and their accompanying descriptions." They also unanimously recommended to the Commission the adoption of the plans furnished by Messrs. McKim, Mead & White, as being superior to the others in artistic effect and practical

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<sup>47</sup>The article in AABN showed both plans as well as elevations for the proposed design.

<sup>48</sup>Letter from Letang to McKim, NYHS, M-10, February 23, 1892. Please refer to "Appendix - Letters" to view full letter.

arrangement.\*<sup>49</sup>

Then there is commentary about the nature of the competition itself:

The exceptional quality of the designs submitted excited the greatest admiration in the architectural world. The method adopted to secure plans had been warmly approved and has since been frequently referred to as a "model competition;"[sic.] and the result was watched with keen interest all over the country. Although a fire-proof building was demanded, of which the cost was limited to one million dollars, the result of the competition, in respect to the lofty character and architectural beauty for which all the designs submitted were conspicuous, justified the high commendation which was accorded its plan and scope....<sup>50</sup>

The Commission provides us with very little other information concerning discussion during the

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<sup>49</sup>Here there is a footnote with comments from the Consulting Architects which will be printed later in this paper.

<sup>50</sup>Both selections from Report, pp.63-64. The rest of the statement continues:

It was the generally expressed opinion of those who viewed them, that a set of plans selected from such splendid specimens of modern architectural design could not fail to give complete satisfaction to the people of our State....

The bid for building the State House, accompanying the designs so recommended, from Norcross Brothers [the firm recommended by McKim, Mead and White], of Boston, is as follows: of Indiana limestone, \$984,000; of marble, \$1,083,000; of Westerly granite, \$1,175,000.

competition. As a footnote to the first statement [marked by a \*, above] which announced McKim, Mead and White as the winners, the Commission reproduced the following comments which are attributed to the consulting architects which shed a bit of light on the discussion which took place:

It should be stately and monumental. Ornamentation and enrichment should be soberly introduced, and should be of such character as to secure dignity and repose.

Such a building should be planned as compactly as possible. The principle rooms, viz. -- The Senate, the House, the Library, the Governor's room, etc. should occupy conspicuous positions, and, if possible, should form prominent features both in plan and in elevation. The entrance should be stately, the main stairs and the elevators should be ample and conspicuously placed, without being obtrusive.

Long and tortuous corridors should be avoided, while every portion of the building should be properly lighted.

The Senate and House preferably lighted from above, not only on account of the disagreeableness of side lights, but as thereby being more impressive in effect.

Many features more or less of a purely utilitarian character, which might be appropriate in other buildings, would be inappropriate in the State Capitol.<sup>51 52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>This last statement is particularly curious. It seems to point to a desire for an ornamental structure, but is obviously unclear in its intent.

<sup>52</sup>All statements from Report, p.63.

Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale in Temples of Democracy, describe the way the McKim, Mead and White entry stood out from the rest of the competitors' designs. The other designs were inferior in that:

Most entries were Renaissance -- five Italian, one Spanish. There was also a Richardsonian Romanesque one, and another that was Victorian Gothic. A Second Empire Scheme recalled Piquenard's Midwestern capitols. It can be supposed that it and the Gothic essay were passed over quickly; Perhaps a little more consideration was given the Spanish project with its tall, balconied central tower, for this was proffered by the local Providence firm of Stone & Carpenter and was intended to become the great landmark of the region.<sup>5 3</sup>

The entry from McKim, Mead and White was different and more modern. The assumption is made that it was lauded because:

McKim, Mead and White's Italian Renaissance elevation was the only design with any clear commitment to the new. The others lingered safely in the spirit of the 1880's, most of them picturesque compositions with their busy facades and clumsy silhouettes. McKim, Mead & White's scheme had the desired aura of the Boston Public Library,<sup>5 4</sup> expressed through the features that were expected in a state capitol: the prominent colonnaded dome, the portico -- though without pediment -- the matching wings, and the monumentality that

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<sup>5 3</sup> Hitchcock and Seale, Temples of Democracy, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), pp.213-14.

<sup>5 4</sup> The Commission's strongly favorable impression of the Boston Public Library has already been discussed.



befitted authority.<sup>5 5</sup>

Hitchcock and Seale applaud more than the elements and superficial style of the design. They continue in their laudatory description:

But it was more than that. The massing of its series of crisp rectangular blocks made it appear to have been sliced from the stone itself. Rows of tall French doors on the wings opened on to balconies lit by electric torches and overlooked expansive terraces with balustrades. In the center was a great cube weighted by the dome and lantern based on Christopher Wren's on St. Paul's, with domed **tourelles** at the corners. A loggia behind tall Corinthian columns formed a ceremonial gallery over the severe entrance doors. Wide flights of stairs ascended between bronze torcheres. Groups of sculpture were to stand at intervals on the projecting terrace below the loggia.<sup>5 6</sup>

I was disappointed during my research that no statements regarding style and ornament appeared in the official documents or in the few articles which were published during the competition. Thus, assumptions about the taste of the Commission is all that can be stated.

What can be supported through documentation are the relationships between the members of the firm of McKim, Mead and White and the members of the State House Commission. McKim, Mead and White did not enter the

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<sup>5 5</sup> ibid

<sup>5 6</sup> ibid

competition as unknowns. Far from that, they were known personally to Governor Ladd as well as to other members on the Commission.

In a letter marked "confidential" Governor Ladd wrote to McKim for advice on the competition on November 26, 1890. Other scholars working on this subject have come across this letter and mention it in their writings; however, with the exception of Richard G. Wilson in his book, McKim, Mead & White, not much is made of this letter.<sup>57</sup> However, I feel that it is the most concrete expression of the bond between McKim and the major voice of the Commission.

The letter appeared as follows:

Confidential  
Rhode Island State House

Mr. Charles F. McKim.

My Dear Sir,

Our commission decided to have a first competition, open to all R.I. architects, that three might be selected for a final competition when these three should compete with not more than six to be invited from outside the State.

Three architects were asked to make up

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<sup>57</sup> The letter is mentioned in the following places: Jordy and Monkhouse, Buildings on Paper, p.116 and Roth, Leland, McKim, Mead and White, Architects, p.154 (only alluded to here).

the conditions, and under another cover, I submit to you the result of their work, hoping that you will look it over, and advise me if you have any suggestions to make that such may have consideration before the Commission such to act upon it.

Hoping that I may hear from you within a few days, and wishing you a happy Thanksgiving, I remain

Very Truly Yours,

Herbert W. Ladd

Providence  
November 26th<sup>58</sup>

There is no doubt that the tone of the letter is not just professionally cordial, but outright friendly. It is a letter from one friend to another. McKim's social standing had been good even before he attended Harvard College as a boy. His parents were, though "martyrs for conscience sake"<sup>59</sup>, very well connected and introduced him to people well placed in society<sup>60</sup>. This is just another example of McKim's connections at work.

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<sup>58</sup> Letter found in New York Historical Society, McKim, Mead and White file, M-10.

<sup>59</sup> Moore, Charles, Daniel H. Burnham, Architect, Planner of Cities, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), p.66.

<sup>60</sup> Roth, Leland, McKim, Mead & White, Architects, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), p.13 ff.; Moore, Charles, The Life and Times of Charles Follen McKim, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929), p.5 ff.

Wilson in Jordy and Monkhouse in Buildings on Paper, describe other connections within the commission. Richard Morris Hunt, who was undeniably the chief among the consulting architects was well acquainted with McKim from their work at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.<sup>6 1</sup> Also, Rowland G. Hazard, a Commission member knew McKim because he had just commissioned McKim to design a house for himself.<sup>6 2</sup> From what we know of the project, it is obvious that McKim had known Hazard since at least 1886 and was personally working for him during the competition.<sup>6 3</sup>

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<sup>6 1</sup> Jordy and Monkhouse, Buildings on Paper, Rhode Island Architectural Drawings 1825-1945 (Providence: Brown University, the Rhode Island Historical Society and Rhode Island School of Design, 1982), p.116; Wilson, op.cit., chapter on R.I. State House, not paginated.

<sup>6 2</sup> ibid.

Hazard's house is mentioned in Leland Roth's, The Architecture of McKim, Mead & White, 1870-1920, a Building List, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), pp.74-5. The project(s) [unclear whether two separate projects or simply two entries for one.] are listed as nos. 387 and 388. The description is for a project for a house begun in November 1886 and also for "additions and alterations to existing house 'The Acorns', Peace Dale, R.I." in October 1891 (begun), [built: 1891-1893].

Also, please refer to a rather personal letter from Hazard to McKim from January 4, 1900 (dated Peace Dale, R.I.) which I have not included in the Appendix due to its subject matter. However, it is a friendly letter which praises McKim for his work and poetically speaks of the State House. [Available in NYHS, M-10].

<sup>6 3</sup> ibid

Wilson states that without doubt Hunt was the determining factor in the selection process. He quotes a letter from Rowland G. Hazard<sup>6 4</sup> which shows the supremacy of Hunt's opinion clearly:

The chief consulting architect, Mr. Richard Hunt of New York, was most highly entertaining in the way in which he handled the plans put into the competition. He has a way of whistling in his conversation which is very significant and impossible to write. He is also a remarkably fine looking man and can make more faces in the furtherance of his ideas than anybody I happen to have seen lately. It was better than a play to look at him and to see the petrified countenances of some of the country members of the commission. We all voted without any dissent in favor of McKim, and I confess to being greatly impressed with the stately classical lines of his plans. Besides having beauty of exterior, it is most skillfully managed as to its interior arrangements. In particular, the feature of the building being the main hall, which is splendidly lighted and would make a place fit for the names of our most celebrated men.<sup>6 5</sup>

If it is true that Hunt was the most influential actor during the selection process then it becomes evident that McKim had an edge from the start. It is interesting to note that the "Conditions of Competition"

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<sup>6 4</sup>Jordy and Monkhouse, op.cit., p.116. Entry written by Wilson.

<sup>6 5</sup>Jordy and Monkhouse, op.cit., p. 116. Wilson, op.cit. Hazard is quoted from Catherine Hazard, ed., Letters of Rowland Gibson Hazard, (Boston: D.B. Updike, 1922), no page cited.

clearly states that "a design shall be excluded from competition if any attempt is made by its author to influence the decision of the members of the Commission or their advisers...."<sup>66</sup> There is no evidence to support that McKim or his colleagues made any effort to inappropriately sway the members of the Commission, yet it is well supported that McKim was on close terms with Hunt as well as others such as Ladd and Hazard.

The fact that Hunt was the decisive factor aids in fitting the Rhode Island State House into a historical perspective. Hunt was the accepted "dean" of American architecture and played a leading role in the development of the program of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 (or the "Fair"). Another integral leader in the design of the Fair was Daniel H. Burnham. Again, McKim's connections show themselves strongly. Burnham and McKim were good friends as Charles Moore describes in his voluminous biography of Burnham, and were strong influences on each other.<sup>67</sup>

Unlike any other entry in the competition, the

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<sup>66</sup> Report, p.71. Clause 10.

<sup>67</sup> Please refer to "Appendix - Burnham and McKim". Moore, Charles, Daniel H. Burnham, Architect, Planner of Cities, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), p. 65-67

McKim, Mead & White design strongly resembled the design of the buildings which would take shape at the Fair. Its classical style, in pure white marble, was free from heavy Romanesque elements. There was no gothic here, nor any trace of French Baroque. Certainly there was the imprint of Beaux-Arts planning as seen in the central court and flanking subsidiary rooms. All of these qualities surely appealed to Hunt. Hunt was a product of the École; McKim was a product of the École. They both worked in New York and they both worked on the Fair. Without doubt there was a similarity of ideas at work in both men's styles, not to mention shared working experience.

## FOLLOWING THE COMPETITION

Before the design was declared the winner a few details were left to be settled. As a technicality the matter of the estimated bid by designated builders, Norcross Brothers of Boston, had to be cleared up. This matter was solved through correspondence between Glezen and the office of McKim, Mead and White.<sup>68</sup>

The McKim, Mead & White design was declared the winner of the competition at a meeting on February 10, 1892.<sup>69</sup> There was now a necessity for the Commission to stage a publicity campaign which would convince the public of the advantage of gaining such a special civic monument. An unsigned letter from someone who had attended a meeting of the Commission recounts Governor Ladd's adamantness that the public learn about the State House. As stated in the previously cited letter to McKim, Mead and White, the design had been accepted by the Commission but now had to be approved by the Legislature (the General Assembly) and thus required public support, after public funds were at issue. From the start the cost of the building was of main concern

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<sup>68</sup>Please refer to the letter of January 21, 1892, found in the "Appendix - Letters".

<sup>69</sup>Please refer to letter of February 12, 1892, Glezen to McKim, Mead & White, "Appendix - Letters".



to the Commission.

The letter quotes Governor Ladd as saying "that the State must simply be flooded -- not necessarily with literature concerning the scheme, but a pictorial idea of it -- to get every, man, woman and child used to the idea of a Statehouse [sic]." <sup>70</sup> The letter was perhaps intended to reach Hughson Hawley, "a noted architectural renderer" who was hired by McKim, Mead and White to produce a colored drawing of the project. <sup>71</sup> The letter continues to sketch out the game plan for enlisting support from the public:

...Governor Ladd says that it is imperative that a birds eye view of the whole city...laying out the whole scheme towards Smith's Hill -- with the State House on top -- roads, gardens to' [sic.] -- all worked in -- This is to be done in color and then a great many of lithographs to be made and sent all over the County to every Hotel -- Bar Room -- Country Store -- and farm House, this will appeal as nothing else can.... <sup>72</sup>

What remains to be examined is the question of the site, which was not chosen until 1894 though it had been

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<sup>70</sup> Letter undated and unsigned. Written on McKim, Mead and White stationery. NYHS, M-10, Please refer to "Appendix - Letters" for full copy.

<sup>71</sup> Jordy and Monkhouse, op.cit., p.116.

<sup>72</sup> Please refer just mentioned in footnote #70.

the favorite choice of Governor Ladd from the start.<sup>73</sup> Wilson discusses the selection of the Smith's Hill as the site in McKim, Mead & White, Architects and cites the one good source on this matter, the Public Park Association of Providence's pamphlet titled "Rhode Island State House on Smith's Hill, Grand Boulevard".<sup>74</sup>

This document bears the mark of the growing "City Beautiful Movement" which grew in strength with the development of the World's Columbian Exposition. It is unclear who was involved with this Association but it is clear that the group was familiar with the tenets of the Movement. Hitchcock and Seale quote from this pamphlet to prove that the Association, and those in the community of influence were "dedicated to all things new" meaning the burgeoning City Beautiful Movement.<sup>75</sup>

The pamphlet is deeply imbued with the rhetoric of supporters of the White City ideal. It was apparently prepared as a public relations piece which would garner support for the selection of Smith's Hill as the site.

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<sup>73</sup> Please refer to the Governor's statement of 1890. "Appendix B - Statements".

<sup>74</sup> Public Park Association of Providence, "Rhode Island State House on Smith's Hill. Grand Boulevard.", No. 10, (Providence: El Freeman & Son, undated but believed to be from 1892).

<sup>75</sup> Hitchcock and Seale, op.cit., p.212.

The major objection to the site was its proximity to the railroad station and yard. However, it was suggested that these unsightly objects could be moved and that the site would be a perfect setting for the "ornament to the State."<sup>76</sup>

The booklet must date from 1892, because, it too (like the State House Commission Report) contains a frontispiece which one can only assume is the rendering which had been commissioned to be done by Hawley as mentioned earlier. It proposes how "ample grounds and wide streets may be secured, gently rising from the passenger station, and how they can be beautified."<sup>77</sup> Grand boulevards are suggested which would be the "grandest...in the country."<sup>78</sup> The description of the resulting composition comes close to a report of a classical temple atop a hill combined with a contemporary French metropolis and of course visions of the World's Columbian Exposition:

It should be designed in the perfection of landscape architecture; with a wide avenue in the centre [sic.], extending from the depot to the Capitol, as suggested of Francis street,

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<sup>76</sup> Public Parks Association, op.cit., p.5. Also, please refer to the "Appendix -- City Plan Commission" for later discussion of the railroad yards and the State House.

<sup>77</sup> ibid, p.4.

<sup>78</sup> ibid, p.5.

to be traversed by electric cars and vehicles of every description, and the one hundred and ten feet on each side ornamented with foliage, lawns, promenades, beds of flowers, fountains, and other works of art....<sup>79</sup>

Unfortunately the plans for this Grand Boulevard never materialized. Wilson in Jordy and Monkhouse states that nothing resulted from several attempts to complete the impressive plans of the Public Parks Association. Wilson states that "consequently, the State House remained isolated from downtown by the railroad tracks, a temple in the railyard."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> ibid

<sup>80</sup> Wilson, in Jordy and Monkhouse, op.cit., p.117.

## CONCLUSION

Ground was broken for the State House in 1895 and the cornerstone was laid in October 1896, after the marble had been chosen following a laborious process involving Mead and the quarry.<sup>81</sup> Despite the efforts of those on the Commission and the Parks Association the full civic center never developed.<sup>82</sup> However, it is clear that with a Commission presided over by Governor Ladd and containing members such as R.G. Hazard that only a City Beautiful type of solution would have resulted from the competition.

Today it is still a very striking building, and has solved its worst difficulties with the railroad. However the proposed Grand Boulevard is certainly to be considered a very great loss. Presently one enters the State House from the back (street level) not from the more ceremonial stepped facade. This formal side is directed out over the city of Providence and is confronted by a blocked off avenue. The area around the

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<sup>81</sup>Letter from Hoffman to Mead, January 17, 1896, NYHS, M-10.

<sup>82</sup>Wilson in Jordy and Monkhouse, op. cit., p.117. He cites that McKim, Mead and White were asked to build two "flanking buildings" along the proposed Grand Boulevard but that this plan never materialized.

building is now used as a parking lot and very little of the proposed "public garden" remains. It is unclear how the City of Providence will work with this obvious inappropriate use of the grounds; however, the new railroad station is an indication of thoughtful planning and provides hope that efforts will be made to improve the conditions of the State House grounds.

The members were predisposed to select McKim, Mead and White in their deference to Richard Morris Hunt, their chief consulting architect. Hunt was not called in until January 1892 and was already well absorbed in the plans of the World's Columbian Exposition, as was McKim. Though the plan is attributed primarily to Mead, the elevation is McKim's.<sup>83</sup> Only a white, classical building could have fitted in so well with the prevailing taste of Hunt. According to Wilson the building "gleaming white and restrained, [it]...dominates Providence".<sup>84</sup> It stands out as an anomaly amidst the more restrained and colored colonial structures in Providence. However, Wilson states that:

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<sup>83</sup> ibid, p.117. McKim is supposedly to have been greatly influenced by two buildings: The City Hall in New York City and the dome of Saint Paul's in London. Wilson quotes McKim as saying that "it is a very fair specimen of the Renaissance of the time, and, on the whole, is the most admirable building in the city." [p.117].

<sup>84</sup> ibid

"It illuminates the aesthetic and historical goals of the American Renaissance, recalling the Rome of the emperors and the Renaissance, the England of Wren, and the American classical heritage."<sup>85</sup> Perhaps it is simply a tribute to a brief period in American design when the first men exposed to classical Beaux-Arts design began to exert their influence.

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<sup>85</sup> ibid

APPENDIX A<sup>86</sup> -- CONDITIONS

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION FOR THE NEW STATE HOUSE

The Commission appointed by the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island to obtain plans for a new State House submit the following conditions to the architects competing.

**First.** The building must be planned so that it can be properly built, with ample light and air, upon a lot surrounded by streets or open ground, --said lot to be substantially level across its front, but with a rise from front to rear of 30 feet in 300. The building must be supplied with proper heating, lighting and ventilating apparatus, and with the necessary sanitary arrangements.

**Secondly.** The drawings required in the competition will be as follows: --

1st. One plan of the cellar and of each of the

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<sup>86</sup>The following two Appendices appear as "Appendix A" and "Appendix B" in the State House Commission Records, January Session 1892, pages 70-87. Pages are pasted in from a separate pamphlet titled, "State House Commission, January Session 1892" with different pagination reading pp.13-30.



other floors.

2d. Three elevations of building -- front, one side and rear.

3d. One longitudinal and one transverse section.

4th. One perspective view on the scale of 1/4 inch to the foot, (with point of sight three hundred feet from nearest point to building,) which shall be rendered with cast shadows in brush wash in monotone, black or brown.

**Thirdly.** All drawings submitted, excepting the perspective, must be drawn on a uniform scale of 1/8 inch to the foot; all must be executed in India ink on heavy white paper without shading or shadows. Door and window openings may be tinted in India ink to show glass. Walls and partitions may be filled in solid with India ink. No landscape nor figures shall be drawn on either elevations, excepting one figure to indicate scale.

**Fourthly.** All drawings submitted shall be either mounted on stretchers or heavy book boards with white or

tinted paper boarders, and no border lines nor other framing will be allowed.

**Fifthly.** It is necessary that the designs submitted should be for a fire-proof building, and one that can be completed at a cost not exceeding one million dollars, on a good average foundation.

**Sixthly.** Each design shall be marked with the name of the architect or firm of architects submitting the same.

**Seventhly.** There shall also be a type-written description designating the materials the author proposes using in the construction of building, and such other general information as cannot be shown on the several drawings herein called for, as may be necessary to accurately determine the cost of the building. No drawings nor documents other than those herein called for will be received.

**Eighthly.** The author or authors of each design conforming to these conditions shall receive, as a compensation therefor, the sum of one thousand dollars.

All drawings will be the property of the architects

or firms submitting them and will only be used in whole or in part by agreement with and compensation to their authors.<sup>87</sup>

All rejected drawings shall be called for within thirty days after the decision of the competition, after which time the Commission will no longer be responsible for them.

Ninthly. The Commission shall appoint[sic.] two or more architects of reputation, who shall not be competitors, to assist them. Such consulting architects shall certify to the Commission whether or not each competing architect shall have complied with these conditions, and shall further assist the Commission in such manner as the Commission may desire.<sup>88</sup>

Each competitor shall submit a reliable bid from some known builder for the building of the State House,

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87. This statement indicates that this proposal must be the one designed for the national competition (second). Originally, it was assumed that the drawings would remain the property of the State House Commission. When McKim learned of this, he objected and it appears that his opinion carried enough weight to affect the rules of the competition. Please refer to McKim letter of objection in "Appendix -- Letters".

<sup>88</sup>The consulting architects were: Richard M. Hunt of New York, A.D.F. Hamlin, Professor of Architecture, Columbia College and A.C. Morse of Providence. [State House Commission report, vol. I. January 1892, pp.62-63.]

the Commission reserving the right to select a practical builder to check such bids.

**Tenthly.** A design shall be excluded from competition if any attempt is made by its author to influence the decision of the members of the Commission or their advisers;<sup>89</sup> or if, in the opinion of the consulting architect, it in any particular violates the conditions herein stated; or if it shall be found that its probable cost will exceed the limits herein stated; or if it shall be found that its probable cost will exceed the limits herein named by more than twenty-five per cent. The author or authors of an excluded design shall receive no compensation therefor.

**Eleventhly.** No design shall be received after the date fixed, unless the time is extended by the Commission, in which case timely notice shall be sent to all competitors of such extension of time.

**Twelfthly.** The arrangement and area of the rooms and spaces shall be as far as possible as follows: --

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<sup>89</sup> It is interesting to note the relationship between Herbert W. Ladd, Chairman of the Commission and former Governor of Rhode Island and McKim. Please refer to letter in "Appendix -- Letters".

**Governor.**

Suite of three rooms	400 sq. ft.	
	600 "	
	375 "	1200

**Secretary of State.**

Main office	600 sq. ft.	
Clerk's office	225 "	
Private office	375 "	1200
Store rooms for books connecting or near at hand.		

**Treasurer.**

Main office	400 sq. ft.	
Private office	250 "	
Large vault	250 "	900

**Auditor.**

Main office	400 sq. ft.	
Book Keeper's office	350 "	
Private office	250 "	1200
Connecting or near Treasurer.		

**Adjutant General.**

Main Office	600 sq. ft.	
Private Office	150 "	
Board Room	300 "	
Vault	150 "	1200

**Quartermaster General.**

Office	400 sq. ft.	400
Connecting with Adjutant General.		

**Insurance Office.**

Main office	300 sq. ft.	
Private office	150 sq. ft.	300

**Board of Agriculture.**

Office	300 sq. ft.	300
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**Board of Pharmacy.**

Office	300 sq. ft.	300
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**Board of Charities and Corrections**

Main Office	400	sq. ft.	
Private Office	250	"	
Board room	300	"	
Waiting room	250	"	1200

**Board of Education.**

Main Office	400	sq. ft.	
Private office	250	"	
Board room	300	"	
State room	250	"	1200

**Board of Health.**

Main office	300	sq. ft.	
Board room	300	"	
Private office	225	"	825

**Board of Dentistry.**

Main office	300	sq. ft.	
Experiment room	300	"	
Sink room or closet	200	"	800

**Board of Inland Fisheries.**

[note large parentheses on document]

Office	300	sq. ft.	
Board room	300	"	

**Board of Shell Fisheries.**

Office	300	sq. ft.	900
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**Pilot Commissioners.**

Office	300	sq. ft.	
Board room	300	"	

**Harbor Commissioners.**

Office	300	sq. ft.	900
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**Commissioner of Railroads.**

Office	150	sq. ft.	
Board room	300	"	450

**Commissioner of Dams.**

Office	150	sq. ft.	150
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**Commissioner of Industrial Statistics.**

Office	300 sq. ft.	
Private office	150 "	450

**Board of Soldiers' Relief.**

Main office	300 sq. ft.	
Board room	300 "	
Private office or store room	150 "	750

**Senate.**

A chamber accommodating 36 Senators, Officers, Reporters,  
Clerks  
and Spectators.

Private office of Speaker	300 sq. ft.	300
" " " Clerks	300 "	300
Two Retiring rooms, (each)	300 "	600
Coat room	400 "	400
House Judiciary Committee room	300 "	300
" Corporations "	300 "	300
" Finance " "	300 "	300
Senate Judiciary " "	300 "	300
" Corporations " "	300 "	300
" Finance " "	300 "	300

(Above Committee Rooms to be situated near their chambers.)

House Committee on State Property		
Real Estate	300 sq. ft.	300
Agriculture		
House Committee on Printing	300 sq. ft.	300
Rules and Orders		
House Committee on Engrossed Acts	300 sq. ft.	300
House Committee on Elections	300 sq. ft.	300
Special Legislation	300 sq. ft.	300
Senate Committee on State Property		
Real Estate	300 sq. ft.	300
Agriculture		
Senate Committee on Printing	300 sq. ft.	300
Rules and Orders		

Senate Committee on Engrossed Acts	300 sq. ft.	300
Senate Committee on Elections	300 sq. ft.	300
Special Legislation		

**Library.**

(Near Secretary of State's Office.)	1200 sq. ft.	
1200		

In addition to the above, provision must be made for the corridors, elevators, stair-ways, vaults, lavatories, engine, heaters, coal vent shafts, extra committee rooms, store-rooms, etc., necessary for a building of this character.

**Thirteenthly.** From the designs furnished which conform to these conditions the Commission shall select one to be presented to the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island as the design for the new State House. This design shall be in the possession of the State, but shall remain the property of the architect or firm who made it, and shall not be used in whole or in part except said architect or firm is employed as architect and superintendent of the building according to the rules of the American Institute of Architects.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>This section bears the mark of change from the original stipulations also. In McKim's aforementioned letter, he objected to ambiguous wording which implied that designs became the property of the Commission and that the thousand dollar fee was to be considered as remuneration.



Fourteenthly. All designs must be received by the Commission on or before 12 M. of January 14, 1892, care of

E.K. Glezen, Secretary,  
4 Market Square, Providence, R.I.

Herbert W. Ladd, Chairman  
William Ames,  
Olney Arnold,  
Albert L. Sayles,  
Francis L. O'Reilley,  
John W. Davis,  
George Peabody Wetmore,  
Nathaniel B. Church,  
Joshua Wilbour,  
Enos Lapham,  
Rowland G. Hazard.

Providence, R.I. August 10, 1891.

## APPENDIX B -- STATEMENTS

### EXTRACTS FROM EXECUTIVE MESSAGES, RELATING TO THE MATTER OF A NEW STATE HOUSE.

GOVERNOR PADELDFORD -- 1870

During the past year my attention has frequently been called to the want of proper accommodations in the State House for the General Assembly, the Courts, the State Archives, the State and Bar Libraries, and for its public offices. The present State House was erected more than an[sic.] hundred years ago, when Rhode Island was one of the smallest, and I may add, least populated, of any of the then British Colonies on the American continent. With its greatly extended interests, its industry, its wealth, and its increasing population, the present building is quite inadequate to its wants. When it was erected, Providence was but a village with a population of 3,200 and the entire colony with but 40,000. The village has increased twenty-fold, and become the second city in New England; while the State has multiplied its population nearly five times. The lot on which this building stands, with the adjacent grounds, cost \$1,000. It does not seem extravagant therefore, with so small an outlay for the lot, and a building of moderate cost which has answered for the General Assembly, for the Courts, and for the Clerk's Offices for one hundred and ten years, in asserting that

it is time for a more capacious edifice, and one too, that shall have accommodations for all the State Officers."

"The whole of the present building including the recent additions, is required for the Courts, Clerks' Offices, Judges' Room, Jury Rooms and the Bar Library. The basement now used for the Clerks' Offices being partly below the surface of the ground, is exceedingly damp, so that the valuable records kept there, are fast becoming obliterated, and will soon be past recovery unless a better and drier place is provided for them."

GOVERNOR PADELFORD -- 1871

"In my message last year, I called attention of the General Assembly to the necessity of having a new State House, which it appeared to me the growing population and business of the State demands. The insecurity of the present building, where the valuable archives of the State are preserved, is an additional reason why a larger and safer edifice should be provided. I am induced to bring this subject to your notice again, in consequence of a fire which broke out in the present building a few weeks since, while the Courts were in

session. had it occurred at night, or even a few hours later, when the offices were closed, its total destruction would have been inevitable."<sup>9 1</sup>

#### GOVERNOR PADELFORD --1873

"In accordance with a resolution passed by the General Assembly at the last May Session, I took a lease of the whole of the second story, and one room in the third story, in the so-called 'Elizabeth Building' on North Main street, Providence, belonging to Rufus Waterman, Esq., for the sum of \$2,400 per annum. These rooms are for accommodations of certain State officers, whose offices had previously been in different parts of the city and the State House, and which it was thought desirable for the better accommodation of persons having business with the State, should be in the same building. They include the General Treasurer, the State Auditor, the Sheriff of Providence County, the Commissioner of Public Schools, the Board of Education, the Trustees of the State Normal School, the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General. It was found necessary that the Sheriff should have a private consulting room, for which

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<sup>9 1</sup>Fire-proofing is stressed in part five of the competition rules. See "Appendix A -- Conditions".

purpose no apartment remained but one which had been assigned to the Board of State Charities and Corrections. As the whole of the second floor was thus occupied for the purposes stated, it became necessary to lease a room in the third story for the use of this Board, which will also be occupied by the Board of Valuation, for which accommodations are absolutely necessary. The annual rent of this room is \$300 per annum, subject to the approval of the General Assembly.

"I have caused the several offices mentioned to be furnished with suitable furniture, in selecting which, I have chosen such as may be transferred to, and used in a new State House, should one be erected.

"The Assembly further instructed me to fit up the room formerly used by the Supreme Court in Chambers, for the State Law Library, and to take the room which had been occupied by the General Treasurer and State Auditor for the General State Library, both to be suitably fitted and furnished. These changes have been made agreeably to the resolutions passed by the General Assembly, and the bills of expenses attending the same have been paid by the State Auditor, as far as they have been presented for payment, in conformity with the resolution providing therefor.

"The room to which reference has been made in the Elizabeth Building, accommodates the State officers, except the Court of Magistrates, which Court has long occupied a spacious and convenient room in a building belonging to the City of Providence, also used by the City Police Court. I should also except the Attorney General, which officer has always occupied his own private office from preference. The room on the lower floor of the State House formerly occupied by the State Bar Library. I caused to be fitted up for a jury room, which has been found very convenient and useful by the courts."

GOVERNOR HOWARD -- 1875

In view of the flattering condition of our finances, the depressed price of building materials, and the great abundance of laborers, it would seem to be a fitting time to enter upon the work erecting a new State House. Surely the necessity of it is sufficiently apparent. The present structure is in no respect suitable for the purposes to which it is devoted, no is it in keeping with the character of the prosperous community in which it is situated. When compared with

edifices devoted to similar uses in other states, it is altogether discreditable to us.

"What we need is an edifice of sufficient capacity, to accommodate all the various departments of State, and to afford the General Assembly not only proper halls for the Two Houses, but suitable rooms for the principal committees. Whether or not arrangements should be made for the accommodations of the Courts of the County of Providence is the same building, is a question deserving of consideration. It is clear there should be some other provision made for the holding of these Courts, and for the Clerks' offices. A proper respect for the judiciary, a just care for the preservation of these important records, and a decent regard for all compelled to attend on the administration of justice, alike demand it. The Court rooms are insufficient in number, inconvenient in arrangement, and defective in ventilation. The Clerks' offices are damp and unhealthy, and the papers liable at any time to be destroyed by fire or impaired by moisture. I invite your early attention to the matter."

GOVERNOR LIPPITT -- 1876

"The Law Library, collected at great expense by the State, has now attained a size and importance that entitled it to the ample accommodations provided in the new Court House. The advantages to be derived by the judiciary are not, however, the only benefits to obtained from this outlay. The rooms they now occupy will be then available for other purposes. In times of such general business depression, it is well to hesitate before incurring the large outlay demanded by a new State House. Cannot the present edifice be made to answer the requirements of the Legislature for several years? It is true that the same care is demanded for the archives of the legislative as of the judicial branch of the Government. Perhaps even more extended accommodations would be advantageous. The present building, however, has for a long time answered the purposes of both State House and Court House. By extending to the west, changing the arrangement of the interior, and constructing in the basement fire-proof vaults for the most valuable papers, it can be made to fulfill all the requirements of a State House for the present, if not for the next generation. Its position is central. The railroad stations, the principal



hotels, the post office, the Courts, and the most active business section of Providence are in its immediate vicinity.<sup>92</sup> No other site proposed, having equal advantages, can be procured without a large expenditure, which neither the State nor the people are ready to authorize. In comparison with the cost of a new building and the necessary land, the outlay for the proposed alterations would be small. Certainly not more than one-tenth of the amount required for the new, would put the old edifice in excellent order for all present needs. That this subject may have the necessary examination, I suggest that a committee of the two Houses be appointed to consider the plan, and to report, if possible, at the present session of the Legislature, upon the advisability of undertaking the proposed improvements."

GOVERNOR LIPPITT -- 1877

"As the Court House will probably be finished and ready for occupation before another winter, the rooms

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<sup>92</sup> It is interesting to note that no mention of siting for visual impact is here. The new State House gave up all of the aforementioned advantages for a rather majestic site. It has only been recently that the railroad station was relocated to be convenient to the State House. Presently, the building has access to the downtown business district primarily by automobile.

new occupied by the Courts in the State House will be available for other purposes. I therefore again call your attention to the necessity of providing for such changes and repairs upon the State House, as will render it more suitable and convenient for transacting the public business. A moderate sum laid out in enlarging the building and changing the interior, would furnish ample accommodation for all the State Officers, and save the rent now paid for other premises. Committee rooms are required for both houses. The present Senate Chamber is entirely too small and should be enlarged so as to afford reasonable accommodation to the citizens who wish to be present to listen to debates upon topics which affect their interests, a privilege which they have a right to demand of their public servants. The necessity of providing, without further delay, for the security and safety of the valuable public documents, which have been accumulating for two centuries or more, must be apparent to all. They are now subject to destruction any day, be even a slight fire, and their loss would be irreparable.<sup>93</sup> I trust this matter will receive your careful consideration before the end of the session."

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<sup>93</sup> Again, the importance of fire-proofing is stressed.

"The necessity of making some alterations in the State House in Providence, to better adapt it to the convenience and comfort of the two Houses of the General Assembly, has frequently been brought to your attention. The report of the joint special committee on that subject, submitted at the May session contains suggestions of such importance, that I have deemed it advisable to print the report entire in the appendix of this Message.

"In addition to the suggestions of the committee, due consideration should also be given to the subject of providing a safer place of deposit for the State Records in the office of the Secretary of State. The surroundings of the State House, as well as its interior arrangement, are such that a fire once getting under way would probably cause irreparable injury to these records, if not their total destruction. Apart from the intrinsic value of much of the property in the State House, which is considerable, there is of course, a value beyond estimate in the records of the State extending back as they do to the earliest settlements of the colony. The mere statement of the dangers to which they are exposed would suggest to a prudent mind the

necessity of immediate precautions against their loss or injury from this source.

"The time has not yet come for the erection of a new State House. By some changes, the present structure will be adequate for legislative purposes for many years to come. It is, however, worthy of your consideration whether by a comparatively small expenditure a suitable building cannot be erected, which will not only afford protection to the records, but also ample accommodations for the State officers. The location of these officers in various parts of the city of Providence; not only causes inconvenience to the public and to the officers themselves, but seems inconsistent with the dignity of the State. A building affording ample accommodations could be erected on the front of the State House lot, a short distance removed from North Main street. A portion of the building should be fire-proof, containing safe depositories for the records of the secretary and the financial officers of the State. Its cost, estimated from \$50,000 to \$75,000 according to the architectural design and finish of the building, could not be considered burdensome; while the interest on the expenditure would be little more than the sum now paid by the State for rents. In such a case there would be little use for the State House during the recess of the

General Assembly and much of the expense for the care and heating of that building could be avoided. By converting the upper portion of the State House into a tenement for the janitor, that building could be under his constant care, thereby saving the expense of a watchman; and the services of the janitor could be utilized in the care of the building proposed for the State officers."

GOVERNOR LITTLEFIELD -- 1883

"The leases of the offices in the Elizabeth building and in buildings on College street and Market square, occupied by various State officers, will expire in the course of a few months. I recommend that the matter of renewing these leases, or of making new leases, be referred to a suitable committee, with authority to arrange, if deemed advisable, to have all the offices hired by the State, located, so far as possible, in the same building, an arrangement which I believe will be a saving of money to the State, and suit the convenience of the public better than the present."

"At the last session an appropriation was made for repairs to the office of the Secretary of State. The committee appointed have caused the room to be thoroughly repaired. A new floor has been laid, the panels restored, the room repainted and carpeted, and the old fire-place reopened. The floor to this room, as well as the ceiling underneath was found to be in a highly dangerous condition. The chimney also required to be partly taken down and rebuilt to ensure safety from fire. Two posts in the Hall of the House of Representatives under the Secretary of State's office were found to sustain nothing, both being placed between the timbers of the floor above. The timbers themselves were improperly supported, were not bridged and were not securely attached to the plastering underneath. A large amount of useless lumber was removed, the timbers remaining properly bridged, the truss supporting the timbers strengthened, and the ceiling underneath properly attached. In consequence of these necessary and unexpected repairs the appropriation has been slightly exceeded and you will be asked to make a small additional appropriation to cover the increased expenditure."

"Several of my predecessors have called attention to the necessity of a new and properly appointed State House, and I feel that I should be derelict in my duty to the interests of the State did I not urge this necessity upon you, as the one thing above all others that you should act upon at once. The present building was erected one hundred and thirty years ago. Then Providence was a village and the total population of the State only 40,000.<sup>94</sup> The State's departments are everywhere cramped[sic.] for room, its valuable documents have no adequate place for their storage or for ready reference, and are utterly unprotected from destruction by fire. Its offices and officers are scattered in at least five different buildings outside the State House, sot that close relations between them and the Executive of the State cannot be had frequently and intimately, as is essential for the successful conduct of the affairs of State upon business principles. The situation is prejudicial to the State's business, and is responsible for many annoyances and costly faults in the management of departmental affairs.

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<sup>94</sup> Governor Ladd here makes reference to the statements of Governor Paddleford of 1870. [Appendix B]

Moreover information which business men constantly require is not at hand without the expenditure of labor and time, running over town to get it; accordingly the functions of usefulness to the citizens of the State which the departments are designed to fulfill are not fulfilled.<sup>95</sup> Until I took the office of Governor and became responsible before the people for so much of the interests of the State, I had failed entirely to appreciate the significance of the situation and the awkwardness resulting from the fact that everything was being done at arm's length. The situation would stagger any man if confronted with it in his own business. And not only is it a bad business system, but like every bad business system it is the practising[sic.] of an extravagant economy.

"Not only are the departments awkwardly situated and inadequate to the business to be done to them, but the State is obliged to keep therein property of great value, over which it can exercise only the slightest guardianship, while its loss would be irreparable. We cannot regard too seriously this matter of the insecure storage of the State's valuable records, documents,

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<sup>95</sup> Again, Governor Ladd restates the ideas of Governor Padelford. This time from his address of 1873 where he discusses the problems of the scattering of offices throughout Providence.[Appendix B, p.9]



trophies, pictures and material of various kinds. Our State House, though by no means a fire-proof building, is entirely under the control of the State's officers, and may accordingly be fairly well guarded; but the other buildings used in part for State purposes, are occupied in common with other business and are controlled by parties who owe no more responsibility to the State than to other of their tenants, and the State cannot place the necessary safeguards about its property contained therein. The destruction by fire of much of this property would be a loss beyond our power to conceive -- a loss that would be keenly felt for generations to come, whom it would disconnect from all history of the past; and it would be a loss that could never be made up. We should not suffer this neglect of the State's property further, even if there were no other reason for this demand for a new State House. It is our imperative duty to see that this property is in quarters as safe as human skill can make them. The State of Massachusetts has just voted to expend two and a half million dollars on an addition to its State House, indicating the importance it attaches to the necessity and advantage of bringing under one roof departments that are now crowded out and to secure better accommodations for its legislative branches. Although possessed of one of the most elegant and

commodious State buildings in the country, and the condition in no way comparable to that from which this State government suffers, it did not hesitate to make improvements where improvements were demanded.<sup>96</sup> With our small debt already provided for, our finances on a sound and substantial basis, and according to the State Treasurer's estimate a surplus this year of over \$200,000, to say nothing of the possibilities of new sources of revenue, can we not enter upon this work without fear or hesitation and pay for it as we go along. No act you can perform will add more to your credit and continue longer as a monument to this legislature than to inaugurate this work.

"This matter is of almost annual recurrence in the minds of legislators and the public, but since 1873 no active effort has been made to give it practical effect. The joint special committee appointed at the May session, 1872, reported elaborately on the site, but no steps were taken to purchase the land so selected. That proposed site, the "Old West Burying Ground," is now beyond purchasing, but, as if specially held for the purpose, there is a spot about to be made desirable where a new State House can be located that will be a

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<sup>96</sup>The State House Commission made a visit to the grounds of the Massachusetts State House in Boston to view the work being done on the addition.

credit and an ornament to the city and State. The new Union Passenger Station in the city of Providence, in its proposed position, will be about four hundred feet southwest of the present station, an elevated structure with a wide avenue under it, opening direct communications with Smith's Hill on the brow of which should stand a new State House. Here is everything that could be desired; a commanding position, ample room, and easy access from all parts of the city.<sup>97</sup>

"It is now sixteen years since the last serious undertaking was made to secure a proper edifice for the State government. It is therefore high time that the matter be taken up with a promptness and interest proportionate to its importance and urgency. The State is prosperous, and it can, without placing any undue burden upon its citizens, undertake this work.

"Twenty-five years ago the State has a debt of some four million dollars, which has all been paid or provided for; meanwhile we have grown in population and wealth. No State can better afford to give its people public buildings that will answer the best requirements

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<sup>97</sup> It has been in the past two years that the Providence railroad station has once again been placed at the foot of the State House. Formerly, the station had moved further downtown and away from the State House.

of to-day[sic.] than Rhode Island. I therefore advocate and earnestly ask your immediate action in this direction."

GOVERNOR DAVIS -- 1891.

"The commission appointed to procure plans for a new State House, and proposals for a site for the same, under the able chairmanship of Ex-Governor Ladd, have given due consideration to the subject, and will report their doings to you for further instructions. The present is thought an opportune time to discuss the subject. That we need a more commodious State House, is admitted by all acquainted with the State's service. The location, and the ways and means of construction are questions demanding deliberate consideration; and I may be allowed to respectfully submit that the building should be located in the city of Providence, and if not upon the present State House site or near thereto, it should be equally as convenient to railway accommodations.<sup>98</sup> The building should be as far as practicable, of Rhode Island material, correct and

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<sup>98</sup> Once again the railway's proximity is stressed.

commanding in its architectural proportions,<sup>99</sup> and ample to accommodate the legislative, executive and ministerial departments of the State government; but it need not necessarily be expensive in its elaborations or furnishing, and should be built within reasonable means of the State to afford for such purpose, due regard being had to an eligible site."

GOVERNOR LADD -- 1892.

"The Commission appointed under resolution of the General Assembly to obtain plans for a new State House and to receive proposals for sites for the same, will probably report at the present session. The Commission have endeavored to proceed with the utmost care to the end that the plans they present shall be, so far as can be foreseen, adequate in every particular to the needs of the State and for many years to come. Consultations were had with State officials and ex-officials as to the needs of the various administrative departments, and correspondence was had with members of the Legislature, and chairmen of committees with a view to the

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<sup>99</sup>This is the first mention in this record of quotes from the governors of Rhode Island of architectural style and monumentality. It should be noted that the building is surfaced with white Georgia marble.

requirements for the work of the General Assembly. Seven architects were invited in competition, including three from Rhode Island, all representing the highest professional talent in the country. Messrs. Alfred Stone, William R. Walker and Howard Hoppin of Providence were the committee selected to prepare the conditions, a printed copy of which in all its details was presented to the last General Assembly, that the Assembly and the people might be fully informed as to what the Commission were doing, and for criticism and suggestion.

"Fifty years ago the necessity was felt for better accommodations and a safe depository for the valuable archives and other property which the State had accumulated, and plans were made at that time for a new State House, to cost half a million of dollars. Recommendations and legislation looking to this same end have been frequent since then, especially within the past twenty years, and have had the endorsement of State officials and prominent citizens who have realized that it was not to our credit that Rhode Island did not provide for even one of its administrative departments under its own roof. The present Commission in determining the cost for a building for which they should invite competition, took the lowest figure that in the opinion of the consulting architects would cover

the erection of a structure adequate to the demands of the State; and an important factor of the conditions is to the effect that each architect competing shall give assurance to the State in the form of a **bona fide** proposition from a responsible contractor that the building may be built within the limit of cost fixed by the Commission.

## APPENDIX - LETTERS

The collection of letters on the following pages are referred to individually in the text. Here they are provided in full and as a group give a strong idea of the chronology of the competition, in addition to the relationship between McKim, Mead and White, Architects and the State House Commission.

The letters are all from the McKim, Mead and White file at the New York Historical Society [file M-10]. Subsequent footnotes refer to this source simply as "NYHS, M-10".



The following letter is handwritten and appears to be in the hand of E.K. Glezen, Secretary of the State House Commission. It discusses the travels of the Commission (or parts of the Commission) to New York to meet with architects as well as to view various built works. It is undated but indicates that it was written soon after the visit to New York in September 1890:<sup>100</sup>

To the State House Commission  
Gentlemen:

The committee appointed by you at the meeting held September 12, 1890 by leave to report that they met by appointment in New York on September 14, 1890, inspected the plans for the Grant Monument and had interviews with ex-Mayor A.I.<sup>101</sup> Hewitt and architect R.M. Hunt, J.C. Cady and Carrère<sup>102</sup> and Hastings. That they called upon McKim, Mead and White and Charles N. Clinton but were unable to see them, but that afterwards M[r]. McKim of the former firm came to Providence at the request of Governor Whitmore and was shown the proposed site by Governor Ladd,<sup>103</sup> but Mr. Stafford of Brigham and Stafford, Boston Architects of the addition to the Massachusetts State House came to Providence with a letter from Ex-Gov. Long in which was an invitation for the commission to visit Boston and see the plans for the new State

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<sup>100</sup> The Commission visited Boston to view the work being done on the State House (plans) on September 7, 1890. They went to New York the following week.

<sup>101</sup> This may be a "J.". Unclear in notes.

<sup>102</sup> Appears in letter as "Cariere".

<sup>103</sup> McKim was obviously well acquainted with Governor Ladd as can be inferred from the letter to McKim from Ladd, dated November 26th. See "Appendix -- Letters".

House there. That they communicated with the RIC of the AIA [Rhode Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects] and received from them valuable suggestions. That from all the information obtained they arrived at the conclusion that more money than the commission had at their disposal was needed to obtain proper places [or "plans"?] and that therefor two causes only were open one to wait until the General Assembly met and get a further appropriation and the other to proceed immediately to offer prizes and trust to the General Assembly to ratify the action. That they conferred with the Chairman and members of the Finance Committee of both houses of the Assembly and with leading members of both political parties in and out of the Assembly and found these of the unanimous opinion that the Assembly would ratify any reasonable action of the Commission specially in view of the fact that many months would be saved by immediate action on the part of the Commission. Your committee therefor in view of the foregoing recommend:<sup>104</sup>

First. That prizes be offered for plans for an new State House, for the State of R.I. That such prizes consist of first prize of two thousand dollars and six other prizes of one thousand dollars each.<sup>105</sup> That if the State House shall be built the Architect obtaining first prize shall have charge of the building with the regular commission therefor established by the AIA but that the prize so to him awarded shall be considered as payment on account of such commission.

Second. That such competition shall be open to all and that at least six architects from out of the State shall be specially invited to

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<sup>104</sup>This represents the earliest version of the rules for the competition.

<sup>105</sup>Eventually this will become a prize of one thousand dollars a piece.

compete.

Third. That the conditions for the competition shall be made up by a committee of six of whom three shall be selected from architects out of the state, and three from architects in the state and that such conditions shall be submitted to the commission for approval.

Fourth. That all architects shall be given until February 1, 1891 to present their plans.<sup>106</sup>

All of which is respectfully submitted.

End. (no signature --  
copy in NYHS, M-10)

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<sup>106</sup>This was later changed to March 1, 1891.

The following is a letter from Alfred Stone, President of Rhode Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, to Governor Ladd and the State House Commission. There is no date, but from its contents it can be inferred that it was written in 1890 and became the foundation of the rules for the competition:

To the Honorable H.M. Ladd  
President, State House Commission

Dear Sir:

Being informed that the State House Commission had practically fixed upon a lot which they propose to recommend for the site of a new State House. And that it is proposed to ask for Competition plans of the same the RIC[Rhode Island Chapter] of the AIA[American Institute of Architects] respectfully suggest that in order to reduce the best talent to enter the competition the following code for conducting the same should be adopted.

First. That the Competition be open to all the practising [sic.] architects in Rhode Island and that such others out of the state as the commission may choose to select be invited under the same conditions as are imposed upon the architects residing in the state.

Second. That to each competitor should be given a printed statement of the requirements of the building the conditions upon which the competition will be conducted and a plot of the site with comparative levels of the lot taking mean high water as the base line.

Third. That all plans submitted shall be drawn on a scale of one-eighth of an inch to a foot.

Fourth. That all drawings shall be rendered in black ink lines without shading or shadows. That solid partitions may be filled in solid in black and that windows may be tinted to show glass.

Fifth. That the plans submitted shall exhibit only each floor plan, each elevation and two cross sections. Additional cross sections not in perspective may be made of parts of the building that cannot be shown in the two sections mentioned. Also, one perspective drawing of the exterior may be submitted on white paper in pen and ink, drawn to the same scale as the plans and elevations from a stand point distant -- hundred feet from the nearest part of the building. The [formats]<sup>107</sup> shown to make equal angles with the plane of the ---  
--<sup>108</sup> and the horizon to be \_\_\_\_\_ feet<sup>109</sup> from the principle floor of the building. The perspectives to be without shading or landscape or other [accents]<sup>110</sup> except a single human figure six feet high to give the scale.

Sixth. That a type written description of the building should accompany each set of drawings giving as clearly as possible such information as cannot be shown in the drawings concerning materials, methods of construction and decoration.

Seventh. That each drawing and the description must be distinguished only by a motto or devise which should be repeated on the outside of a sealed envelope containing the author's name and address.

Eighth. That a design shall be excluded from the competition if any attempt is made by its author directly or indirectly to disclose his identity or to influence the decision of the members of the Commission or their

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<sup>107</sup> Word unclear.

<sup>108</sup> Word illegible.

<sup>109</sup> blank intentional.

<sup>110</sup> Word unclear, possibly "accentries"[sic.]

[advisers]<sup>111</sup> or if it in any particular violates the conditions herein stated, or if it shall be found that its probable cost will exceed the limits herein named by more than fifteen percent.

Nineth[sic.]. That an expert adviser will be employed by the Commission to advise the members as to the merits of the plans submitted and the AIC<sup>112</sup> respectfully recommend Edward C. Cabot of Boston, Professor Frank [W.]<sup>113</sup> Chandler of the Institute of Tech[nology] of Boston and Professor William R. Ware of the School of Sciences, Columbia College, New York.

Tenth. That six premiums be awarded to the designs selected in order of their merit. Namely: one of three thousand, one of two thousand five hundred; one of two thousand, one of one thousand five hundred; one of one thousand; and one of five hundred dollars.<sup>114</sup>

Eleventh. That the successful competitor will, if the work is carried out and he so desires be employed to furnish the detailed and working drawings and superintend and supervise the execution of the building at the rate of compensation established by the schedule of the American Institute of Architects of which in such event the three thousand dollars paid for the best design shall form a part. But if on disclosure of the names the successful competitor shall prove to have had slight experience in building the right is reserved to associate with him as constructing architect to whom a proper proportion shall be assigned.

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<sup>111</sup> Word unclear.

<sup>112</sup> Notation not defined. Possibly variation on RIC of AIA [Rhode Island Chapter of American Institute of Architects].

<sup>113</sup> or "N."

<sup>114</sup> The official rules of the competition stayed very close to these conditions except for this declining order of remuneration. All competitors were later to receive one thousand dollars each.

Twelfth. That the drawings shall be made on sheets of white paper of a uniform size of \_\_\_ x \_\_\_<sup>115</sup> without borders; border lines or mats, and that they should not be mounted or framed.

Thirteenth. At least three months should be allowed for the preparation of plans. And no plans should be received after the date fixed unless the time is extended by the Commission, in which case timely nature should be sent to all competitors, of such extension of time.

Fourteenth. That drawings shall be returned within the weeks after decision of the Commission without expense to the authors of the same.

Alfred Stone (signed)  
President,  
RIC of the AIA

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<sup>115</sup> These blanks were left intentionally.

In a letter dated "Providence, November 26th", Ladd writes the following to McKim:

Confidential  
Rhode Island State House

Mr. Charles F. McKim.

My Dear Sir,

Our commission decided to have a first competition, open to all R.I. architects, that three might be selected for a final competition when these three should compete with not more than six to be invited from outside the State.

Three architects were asked to make up the conditions, and under another cover, I submit to you the result of their work, hoping that you will look it over, and advise me if you have any suggestions to make that such may have consideration before the Commission such to act upon it.

Hoping that I may hear from you within[sic.] a few days, and wishing you a happy Thanksgiving, I remain

Very Truly Yours,

Herbert W. Ladd

Providence  
November 26th

Letter found in New York Historical Society, McKim, Mead and White file, M-10.



State House Commission

Providence, R.I., July 29,

1891

Messrs. McKim, Mead & White,

Gentlemen:

I have the honor to inform you that at a meeting of the Commission appointed by the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island "to obtain plans for a new State House" it was voted to invite you to submit designs for that building in Competition with other architects invited by the Commission. The number of architects competing will not exceed nine. Each architect conforming to the conditions of the competition will receive the sum of one thousand dollars for his plans.

Kindly notify me of your acceptance that I may appoint a meeting of the architects with the sub-committee of the Commission for the purpose of preparing the conditions of the competition.

Very truly yours,

E.K. Glezen, Secretary

August 8th, 1891.<sup>116</sup>

Hon. Herbert W. Ladd,

Chairman, R.I. State House Commission.

Dear Sir:-

Clause eight of the conditions of Competition is so directly at variance with professional practice that we beg to hope that by some means it may be properly modified.

The clause states as follows:-

"The author or authors of each design conforming to these conditions shall receive, as a compensation therefor, the sum of one thousand dollars; and such design shall become the property of the State of Rhode Island."

The stipulation that a nominal sum be paid each competitor only means that he shall be re-imbursed for the actual outlay made in preparing the competitive drawings and in many cases it will not so reimburse him. It certainly cannot in any way be considered as a remuneration for the time and thought he has given the problem, or for his ideas as expressed in the drawings and it is manifestly unfair that these ideas should become the property of the State of Rhode Island.

In all competitions in accordance with professional rules the drawings are returned to the unsuccessful competitors with a guarantee that no idea embodied in them shall be used without their consent or without proper remuneration.

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<sup>116</sup> Typed copy in NYHS, unsigned and assumed to be from McKim.

The whole attitude of the Commission has been so remarkable in its desire to arrive at the best result possible that we trust this clause can be stricken out or modified in some way, as we feel certain that other architects will feel as strongly about the matter as we do.<sup>117</sup>

Respectfully yours,  
[assumed to be McKim or  
Mead.]

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<sup>117</sup> The official rules for the competition as of August 10, 1891, as reprinted in AABN in February 1892, show a significant change in clause thirteen. However, there is no record of the original rules which McKim so objected to.

The Commission from the beginning was very concerned with funding for the project. The following letter discusses a technicality in the wording of the bid submitted by McKim, Mead and White.

Hope Club<sup>118</sup>  
Providence

January 21, 1892

Messrs. McKim, Mead and White

Gentlemen:

I am very sorry to trouble you yet further about what you may consider a technicality -- but the opinion of the consulting architects compels one to call your attention again to the matter of the required bid. The letter, which you sent with your description, from Norcross Bros., reads: "we estimate -- the cost of the proposed State House for Rhode Island according to plans and explanations as follows." The itemized list was duly received today but that also was in the same form. In your telegrams you say that the "estimate" is a bid but the statement is yours and not Norcross Bros; and the conditions call for a "reliable bid from a known builder." Your letter received today says: "our letter contained a bid under Norcross Bros. signature agreeing to erect the building for so much money and this we supposed was all that was required." It certainly would have been if the letter in question said so but as I have before written it only says "we estimate" not "we agree to such." The consulting architects do not construe these two to be the same thing hence my writing to you that you may put the matter in another form to satisfy all possible criticism. it is a simple matter

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<sup>118</sup> From the McKim, Mead & White file, NYHS, M-10.

to send me a statement over Norcross Bros.' signature saying "we agree to erect " or "we make the following bid for the building" and to rectify all the trouble. I am sure the Commission would feel regret should the consulting architects finally certify to them that you had not complied with the conditions and so prevent the consideration of your charming design.

Very truly yours,

E.K. Glezen

State House Commission

Providence R.I., Feby[sic.] 12, 1892

Messrs. McKim Mead and White

Gentlemen:

I have the honor of informing you that at a meeting of the Commission held February 10, 1892 the design for a new State House submitted by you was selected to be presented to the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island as the design for the new State House in accordance with Section 13 of the conditions.

Enclosed please find check for one thousand dollars. Please return receipt for the General -----<sup>119</sup> State of Rhode Island.

Yours truly,

E.K. Glezen, Secretary

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<sup>119</sup> Word illegible

Department of Architecture  
M.I.T.

February 23, 1892

Dear Mr. McKim,

Allow me to congratulate you sincerely about the Rhode Island State House Competition. I was looking at the various designs lately published in the American Architect and a certain plan and section caught at once my eyes.<sup>120</sup> I even called along some of my best fellows at the Institute to explain them the excellence of your design having not yet seen your name and later on when I heard that you was [sic.] the happy and successful winner I was mighty glad. Because in many competitions I have come to see I always thought that to [sic.] much indifference or neglect or weakness was apparent in the planning. it [sic.] always give [sic.] me a greater pleasure to look upon a good plan well balanced meeting the requirements and plainly read than a beautiful elevation or perspective alone<sup>121</sup> -- I think in my opinion the task is just as arduous if not more -- in fact in the present competition I did not look much about elevations but plan -- I repeat that I am delighted as your success I do not doubt that with such plan as you have you will put on it a beautiful an noble building of which R.I. will be proud in general and lovers of architecture in particular....

Yours very truly,

E. Letang

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<sup>120</sup> It can be assumed that Professor Letang is referring to the article in American Architect and Building News, "Competitive Designs for the Statehouse, Providence, R.I.", February 13, 1892, vol. XXXV, no.842, p.110. [Illustrations are found on later pages (not numbered).]

<sup>121</sup> The article in AABN showed both plans as well as elevations for the proposed design.

The following is from an undated letter whose copy in the NYHS archives appears on McKim, Mead and White, Architects stationery and seems to be written by someone who sat in on the Commission's hearings and then desired to inform the McKim, Mead and White office of what had transpired. It was perhaps designated for the artist who was to render new colored drawings of the State House. The letter describes a meeting with Governor Ladd concerning the State House competition and mentions that "others [are] disgruntled over loss of commission." Also, it is felt that they "must convince people". In order to do this:

Governor Ladd said -- that the State must simply be flooded -- not necessarily with literature concerning the scheme, but a pictorial idea of it -- to get every man, woman and child used to the idea of Statehouse -- and when it comes to vote they will vote for it (the men) as a matter of course -- to do this Governor Ladd says that it is imperative that a birds eye view of the whole city -- that is the part [let us] say from the top of the [Butler]<sup>122</sup> Exchange showing the City Hall -- the new proposed -----<sup>123</sup> -- the State Prison and all such buildings that the inhabitants are familiar with -- then laying out the whole scheme towards Smith's Hill -- with the State House on top -- roads, gardens to' [sic.] -- all worked in -- This is be done in color and then a great many of lithographs to be made and sent all over the County to every Hotel -- Bar Room -- Country Store -- and farm House, this will appeal as nothing

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<sup>122</sup> Word is unclear. It appears to read as "Butler".

<sup>123</sup> Word illegible.



else can --Governor Ladd also says that if  
this is done it will not fail to tho --  
[sic.]<sup>124</sup> He even went so far as to say that  
he was not going to run for Governor in order  
to surely put this thing thro'[sic.]

[Unsigned.]

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<sup>124</sup>Probably should read as "through".

July 10, 1892

Mr. Charles F. McKim,

The Commission on the Rhode Island State House met today and on the unanimous recommendation of the consulting architect -- voted unanimously to recommend the design presented by the firm of McKim, Mead and White to the General Assembly. Please accept my congratulations. Formal notice will follow.

Yours truly,

E.K. Glezen

The following is a letter from Glezen to Mead. It is undated and must have been written during construction of the State house:<sup>1 2 5</sup>

Hope Club  
Providence

My dear Mead:

To show you...an enclosed clipping from the Providence Journal of today. A suggestion was made by some...it would be very attractive if there could be a drive way around the State House so that people in carriages could see all sides of it....

There is nothing now but praise for the State House outside and in -- The Legislature are happy and the new appropriations will go through like oil.

Sincerely,

E.K. Glezen

Sunday<sup>1 2 6</sup>

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<sup>1 2 5</sup> In MMW file, NYHS, M-10.

<sup>1 2 6</sup> No date recorded, but it must date from at least after ground breaking (1895) but probably it is of an even later time.

December 10, 1894<sup>127</sup>

McKim, Mead and White

Gentlemen:

December 8, 1894 -- following vote was unanimously passed by the Board of State House Commission.

"Voted that the colored perspective design of the State House submitted by the architects framed and in the office this day be approved and adopted by the Board as the design from which the structure shall be built."

E.K. Glezen

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<sup>127</sup> NYHS, M-10.

BOARD OF STATE HOUSE COMMISSIONERS<sup>1 2 8</sup>

306, 307, 308 Industrial Trust Co., Building.

Hon. Herbert W. Ladd, President,  
Telephone 2130.  
E.K. Glezen, Secretary

Providence, R.I., April 19, 1900

THE BOARD OF STATE HOUSE COMMISSIONERS extends an invitation to meet the GENERAL ASSEMBLY and others at the new State House on Tuesday, April 24th.

A collation will be served at 12 o'clock M., in the new House of Representatives.

E.K. Glezen,

Secretary.

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<sup>1 2 8</sup> NYHS, M-10.

BOARD OF STATE HOUSE COMMISSIONERS<sup>129</sup>

306, 307, 308 Industrial Trust Co., Building.

Hon. Herbert W. Ladd, President,  
Telephone 2130.  
E.K. Glezen, Secretary

Providence, R.I., Dec. 27, 1900

Messrs McKim Mead & White,

Gentlemen:

The Hon. Frank E. Holden, Speaker of the House of Representatives extends to the architects of the State House an invitation to be present on the floor of the House upon the opening of the adjourned session of the General Assembly in the new State House Tuesday January 1, 1901 at eleven o'clock --

Yours truly,

E.K. Glezen  
Secretary

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<sup>129</sup> NYHS, M-10.

APPENDIX -- MCKIM AND BURNHAM<sup>130</sup>

"Of all the friendships that grew out of these mind-expanding days, the one which had the greatest influence on Mr. Burnham's after work and achievement was the companionship of Charles F. McKim. One trait was common to the two men -- an indomitable will. Burnham demanded perfection; McKim furnished it. McKim could and often did change Burnham's mind. No one ever changed McKim's mind; because he never expressed it until he had got at the essence of his problem. That being settled there could be no change. Constantly he would say, "You can compromise anything but the essence."<sup>131</sup> To him an architectural problem was a statement to be expressed clearly, simply, directly, with every sentence grammatical in form, and the whole infused with the charm that comes from nice choice of words, balance of phrases, and only such ornament as is necessary to give grace as well as force.

"McKim was not only unchangeable, but he was also insistent and persistent. Once his mind was made up as to the course to be pursued, he bent every energy to attain this object -- and did not rest until his warfare was accomplished. Saint-Gaudens speaks<sup>132</sup> of his "rodent-like determination." So quiet, so persuasive, so seemingly yielding, so courteous to suggestion was he that one was often deceived into thinking he was about to surrender, when in truth he was simply gathering his forces for a new attack. "Charles the Charmer" and "Blarney Charles" Saint-Gaudens called him, and rightly, for with clients he was the gentlest revolutionist that ever overthrew a dynasty of pretentious mediocrity and bad taste. His startling innovations were supported by apt illustration, pertinent smiles and quiet wit; executed work always left his client convinced. He was an expensive man to deal with; but the money went into the work, very little of it getting into his own pockets.<sup>133</sup> Whatever his hands turned out proved to be a work of art possessed of

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<sup>130</sup> Moore, Charles, Daniel H. Burnham Architect Planner of Cities, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), vol. I., pp. 65-67.

<sup>131</sup> Footnoted by Moore.

<sup>132</sup> Footnoted by Moore, "Reminiscences, vol. II, p. 284."

<sup>133</sup> Footnote by Moore.

immortal charm. He had the gift of taking his conceptions out of the category of time and placing them among the words that belong to the ages. To know him, to be associated with him in daily intercourse over a common work of the largest, finest scope and character was a liberal education.

"Into Burnham's life McKim came to fill the void left by John Root's death. Burnham was ready to for the advance. Root was romantic, versatile, impressionable. He could never become a great musician, his teacher said, because he had too ready an ear. So in architecture he lacked discipline and conviction. He had never thought things through. On the contrary, McKim, born of martyrs for conscience' sake<sup>134</sup>, educated in the best schools of the world<sup>135</sup>, on money taken out of the meagre [sic.] means of his self-denying father, fighting his way to success, not by yielding to popular fancy, but by bringing men of means to realize the value of the things that endure, McKim came as an answer to all those strivings and longings which were latent in Burnham's nature.

"Burnham was a Roman of the Augustinian age -- a great builder, seeking self-expression in works of power and dignity and grandeur. So it was that when McKim, putting aside all other work, gave himself completely to the Fair, he worked so quietly, so persuasively, so insistently, that he became the guiding and controlling force. "He was my right-hand man," said Burnham years later. Probably no one -- not even McKim himself -- realized at that time that the unobtrusive, modest, hesitant man had begun to build a firm foundation under the structure of American architecture, a foundation made up of materials gathered from the best of all ages, suited to the needs of a rich and powerful nation, and, best of all, used by the fathers of the Republic and so made a part of our great inheritance from them.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> McKim's parents were avid abolitionists.

<sup>135</sup> McKim attended Harvard and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

<sup>136</sup> Moore quotes a letter from W.R. Mead of April 11, 1918. He cites:

"As a firm I am sure we were about the earliest exponents of the renaissance of the Colonial. In 1876, before Bigelow left the firm and while Stanford White was still with



Small wonder is it that McKim from then on exercised a dominant influence on the career of Burnham, always avid for the enduring things.<sup>137</sup>

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Richardson, we four men, McKim, Mead, Bigelow and White, made what we always called our celebrated trip to New England, for the purpose of seeing and making drawings of the best examples of Colonial work. This trip included Marblehead, Salem, Newburyport and Portsmouth; and there are still in existence, in our scrapbook, drawings made on that trip. I from that date we may be said to have been launched on our classic renaissance course, from which we have never swerved."

[p.67, Moore.]

<sup>137</sup> Footnote by Moore.

APPENDIX -- CITY PLAN

PROVIDENCE CITY PLAN COMMISSION REPORT<sup>138</sup>

THE PUBLIC GARDEN AND WEST FREIGHT YARD PROBLEM.

The preliminary report of the sub-committee which was received and unanimously adopted by the City Plan Commission, was in part as follows:

TO THE CITY PLAN COMMISSION,

GENTLEMEN:

Your sub-committee, to which was referred the especial consideration of the Public Garden and the West Freight Yard Problem, begs to report as follows:

We believe that not argument is necessary to convince the average citizen that urgent need exists for the city to regain its self respect and the good opinion of visitors by some harmonious, convenient and attractive treatment of the large, open and barren space existing between the Union Passenger Station, the State House and State Normal School. That the present appearance is unsightly and the present layout of streets awkward and inefficient is fully admitted and that the problem presents some complications is not remarkable.

Much more remarkable is it that this city, the ownership and public dedication of most of the land involved, has retained so splendid an opportunity to accomplish a work of rare distinction within its very civic centre at what must seem to be a small expense if one compares it with the cost of the public buildings, grounds and construction work already completed in that vicinity, or compares the situation with that of almost any other large city which might attempt to secure such an adornment and useful open space within its central area.

That the matter is one of commanding interest and unusual possibility is well evidenced from the attention

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<sup>138</sup>The following appeared as "Appendix -- Section B" in the First Annual Report of The City Plan Commission, Providence, Rhode Island, January 4, 1915, (Providence: Providence Printing Company, Inc., 1915), pp.26-31.

it has received by a very great number of the foremost city planners and civic architects is this and other countries, who as a matter of personal or scientific interest have examined into its details at one time or another, and who have very generally agreed that in this present barren and forbidding expanse Providence has a most enviable chance to acquire a public garden which by its situation will be of incalculable value and the like of which would ordinarily cost many millions of dollars to secure.

Among these expert inspectors may be mentioned Messrs. F.L. Olmsted and Arnold W. Brunner, who have more recently consulted with our Commission in this regard; Jules Vacherot, the distinguished architect of the Paris Parks, John Nolen, George E. Kessler, Charles Mulford Robinson, Warren S. Manning, Brinley and Holbrook of New York, McKim, Mead and White, Architects of the State House, and many others of foremost prominence.

From such men as these there is always the decided expression that as a preliminary move to the creditable and practical arrangement of this officially designated "Public Garden Area" there must be a rearrangement of present street lines to secure a more symmetrical public property and to eliminate the awkward angles and the waste of energy that even now hamper traffic movements in a provoking manner.

About the first requirement that is almost invariably regarded as essential and obvious is that a certain portion of the West Freight Yard, so-called, at the corner of Gaspee and Promenade streets be abolished and added to the public area.

Your committee are fully assured that most of the foremost of civic authorities agree with their own belief that any attempted embellishments of the city property as at present laid out, in three irregular and awkwardly dispersed parcels, would involve an unwarranted waste of money and would be a most unfortunate violation of the well established principle that "nothing is ever finally done until it is done right." In other words, any work of this kind would inevitably have to be undone at much greater expense in future years and with the loss of such years of tree growth as might intervene.

It has seemed to your committee desirable, therefore, to present suggestions that might lead to the adoption of a permanent plan which, with a minimum of

disturbance of present conditions, would lend itself to such extension as might at any time in the future become feasible.

Any such plan apparently involves the taking of a certain portion of the corner of the freight yard for the purpose of bringing Gaspee street directly down from Smith street to the Francis Street Bridge, and also the acquirement of a small additional portion on Promenade street, necessary to do away with a corner inconvenient to traffic and obtrusive to the view, just north of the viaduct at the east end of the station.

This involves the removal of about twenty per cent...of the present trackage of the yard and would allow a rearrangement of the highways that might reasonably be believed to be permanent. The remaining portion of the freight yard area might then be continued for its present purposes until such time as it appeared to be of greater value or necessity for some other use, possibly the erection of various public buildings, the provision for which would not involve any further change either in the established streets or the plan of the Public Garden.

The principal interests involved in the replanning of this territory are those of the State of Rhode Island, as represented by the State House Commission, and the State Board of Education who have the State Normal School Grounds in their keeping, the City of Providence and the Railroad Company. Between them cooperation is required. The interests of the State and the City are practically identical. Regardless of the relative areas of their ownership, it is equally desirable to them that the public area be so laid out that the public buildings, already established at such great cost, shall have an environment in some degree appropriate and in harmony with their importance and that the grounds surrounding these buildings shall be properly related to each other and to the present very valuable city property in their foreground. The city, also, profits to the utmost by the attractive completion of the entire area and long ago recognized the importance of the matter by purchasing and presenting to the State a large and costly portion of the State House Grounds in order that the building might have a fitting environment.<sup>139</sup>

Unfortunately its generosity which involved an

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<sup>139</sup> Emphasis added.

outlay of almost enough money to produce an ideal result, stopped just a little short of that point, allowing the perpetuation of present conditions that have ever since been a source of general regret.

Your committee have given very earnest study to the various suggestions and plans that have been proposed by those who have considered the problems relating to this area, and believing that the basic principle of the removal of the corner of the freight yard was one upon which there was general agreement, have prepared a tentative plan which appears to be wholly practical to meet the various requirements of architectural design, civic embellishment and traffic efficiency at a cost which would appear not to be at all prohibitive. This plan they have submitted to the State House Commission and to the State Board of Education, both of which bodies have, after due consideration, fully approved it in its essential features. They have also held several consultations with officials of the Railroad Company, including Vice-President Whaley, Local Attorney Col. N.W. Smith, and Division Engineer W.T. Spencer and have secured from all these representatives the opinion that this particular portion of freight yard is not of any unusual advantage, either to the Company or to the business interests of the city, in this especial location to a greater extent than the same amount of trackage might be in some other location. Accordingly the statement which has previously been made at various times during the last decade has been reiterated to this committee that the Railroad Company would look with friendliness upon a proposition to exchange with the city this area desired, for some other area, properly shaped to furnish an equal amount of accessible trackage, located elsewhere.

Far from cherishing this site as the one and only place in Providence required for the storage of freight cars and the handling of merchandise, it is becoming increasingly evident to the officials of the consolidated railroads that this yard is rapidly becoming wholly inadequate for the purposes to which it has been devoted, and that a wholesale rearrangement of local facilities is to be called for to meet modern requirements. It is believed also, that some shifting of trade centres must inevitably come to pass within a very few years, that will make this particular "West Yard", wither in part or as a whole, of relatively less value than at present, and that the great transportation problem of the city which relates to the handling of incoming and outgoing freight, and the reception of food and produce supplies, more expeditiously and

economically, calls for the extension of yards and buildings on a comprehensive scale both for the railroads and for the dealers, in other locations. At present the possibilities of such increased facilities in the Woonasquatucket Valley between the west end of the Union Station, Kinsley avenue and Olneyville district are being carefully considered and the cooperation of the city will doubtless be called for in this connection.

We find, however, that this corner of the railroad property is of slight extent as compared with the area already being developed by the company and that it plays a very minor part in the provision of local facilities, while we are encouraged to believe that its permanent retention is not of anything like as great usefulness as some of our citizens have imagined. We have, therefore, much reason to believe that a way to its removal either by purchase or exchange, and one which will be of mutual advantage to all interests concerned, may easily be devised.

Your committee believes that the careful working out of this plan will produce an adequate and harmonious development of this important area that will be creditable both to the State of Rhode Island and the City of Providence.

In the meantime we strongly recommend that no work of laying out or embellishing the public garden area be undertaken until the possibilities of a comprehensive arrangement be fully determined.

ELEAZER B. HOMER,  
WALTER F. SLADE,  
HENRY A. BARKER,

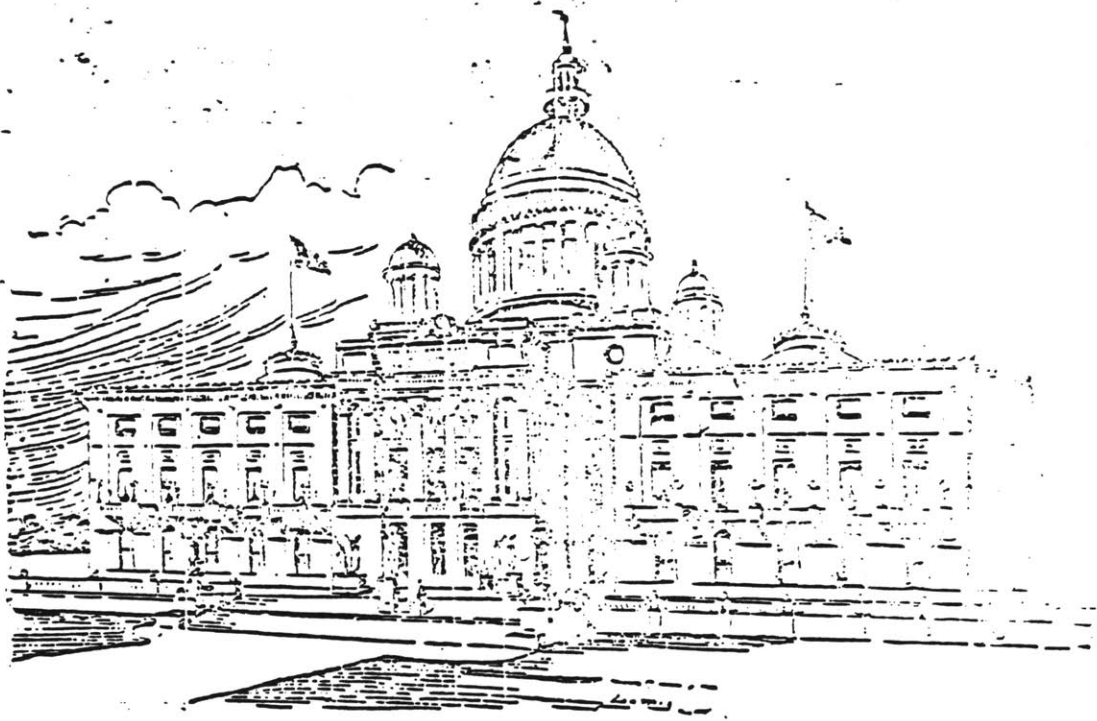
Committee on Public  
Garden Area.

July 8th, 1914.

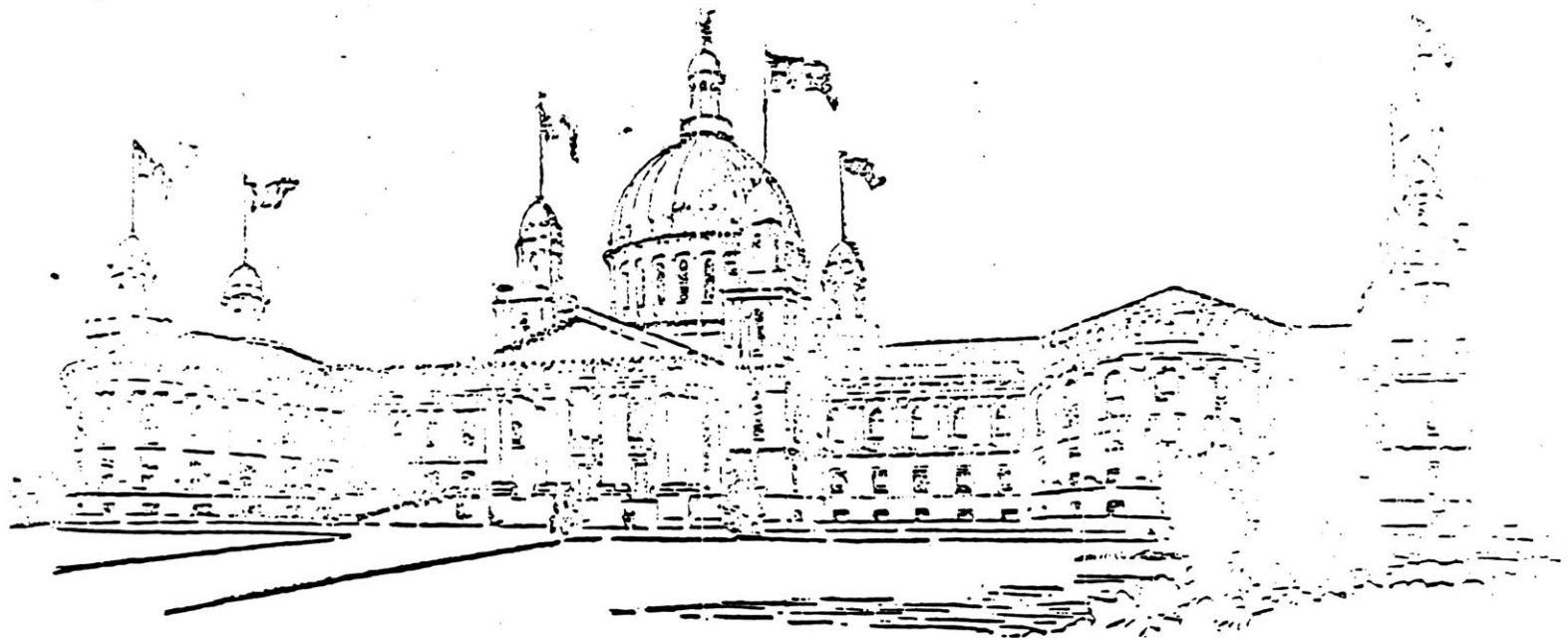
APPENDIX -- ILLUSTRATIONS OF COMPETING DESIGNS

The following are reproductions of the sketches which appeared in The Evening Bulletin, Providence, R.I., February 27, 1892. [Article entitled "State House Plans", p.3. ff.]

McKim, Mead and White:



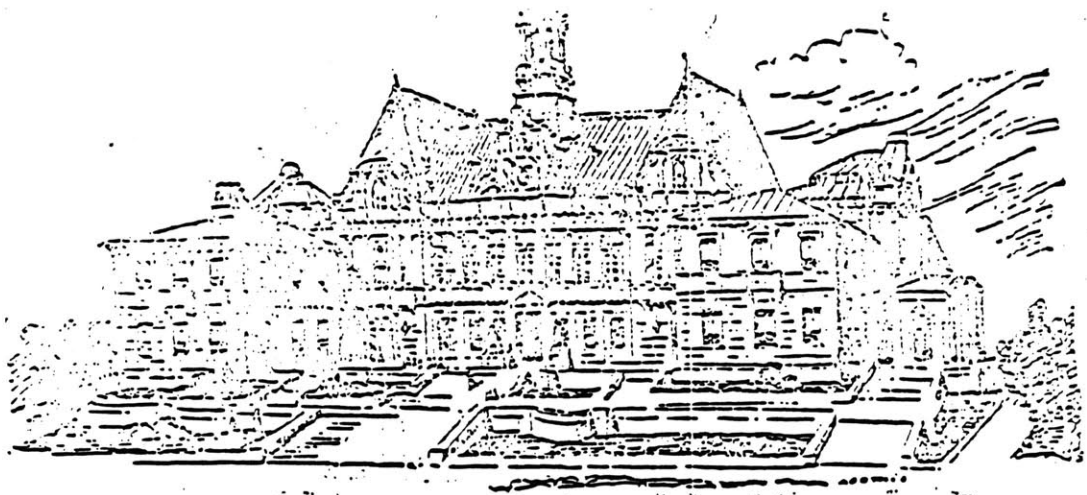
McKIM, MEAD & WHITE



J. C. CADY & CO.

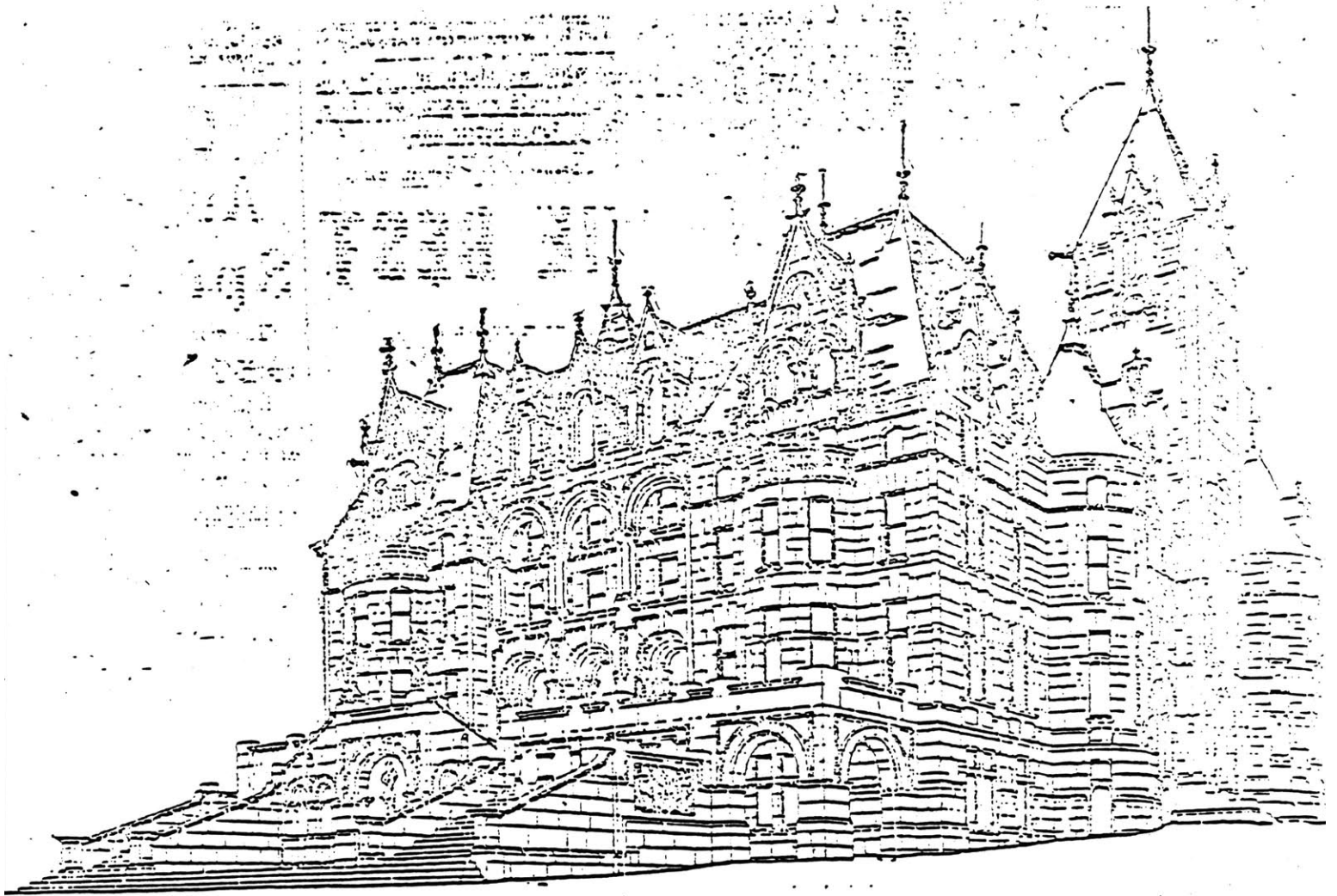


Carrère and Hastings:



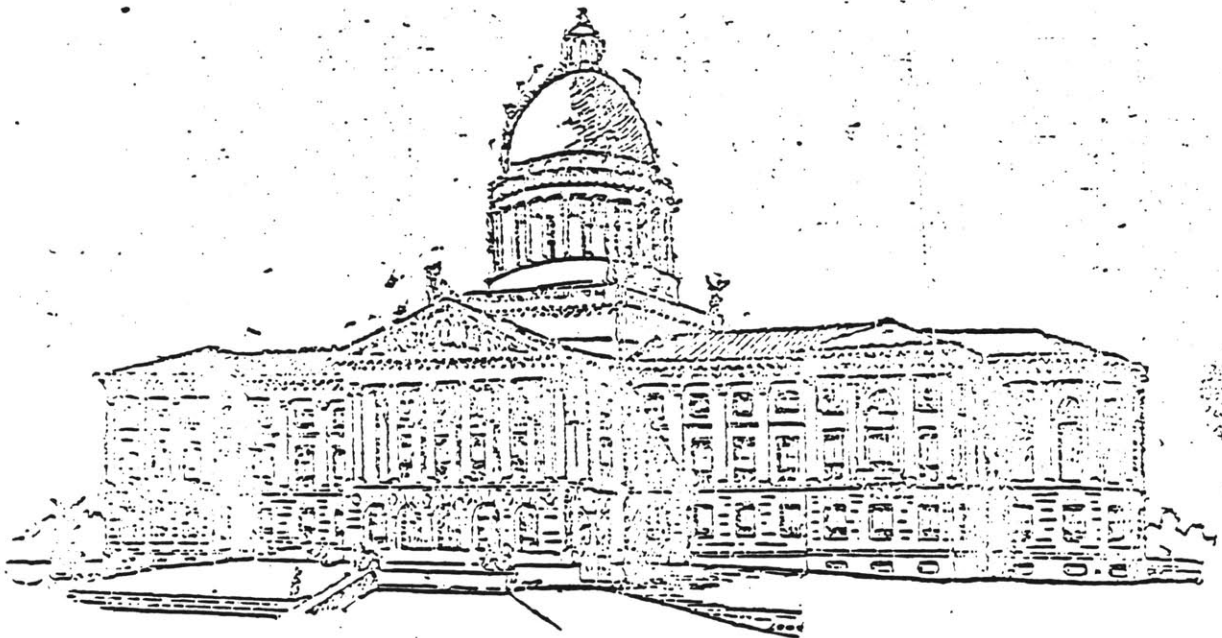
CARRÈRE & HASTINGS.

George C. Mason & Son:



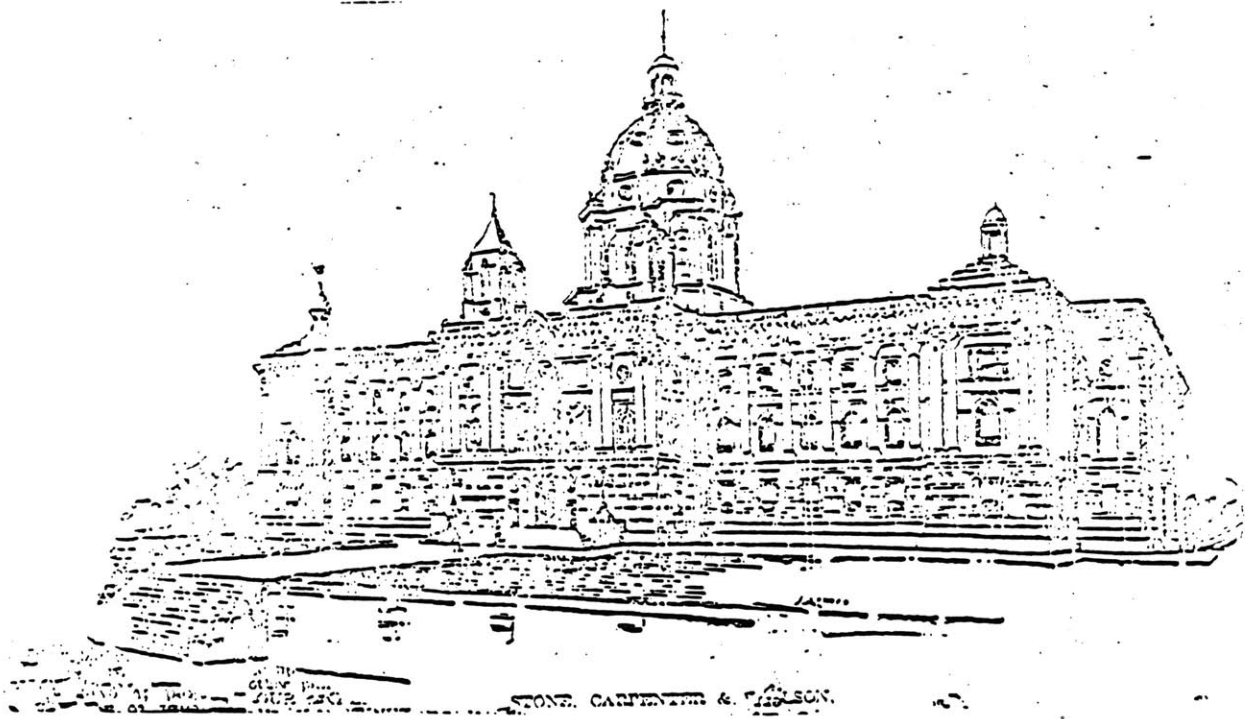
GEORGE C. MASON & SON.

Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge:

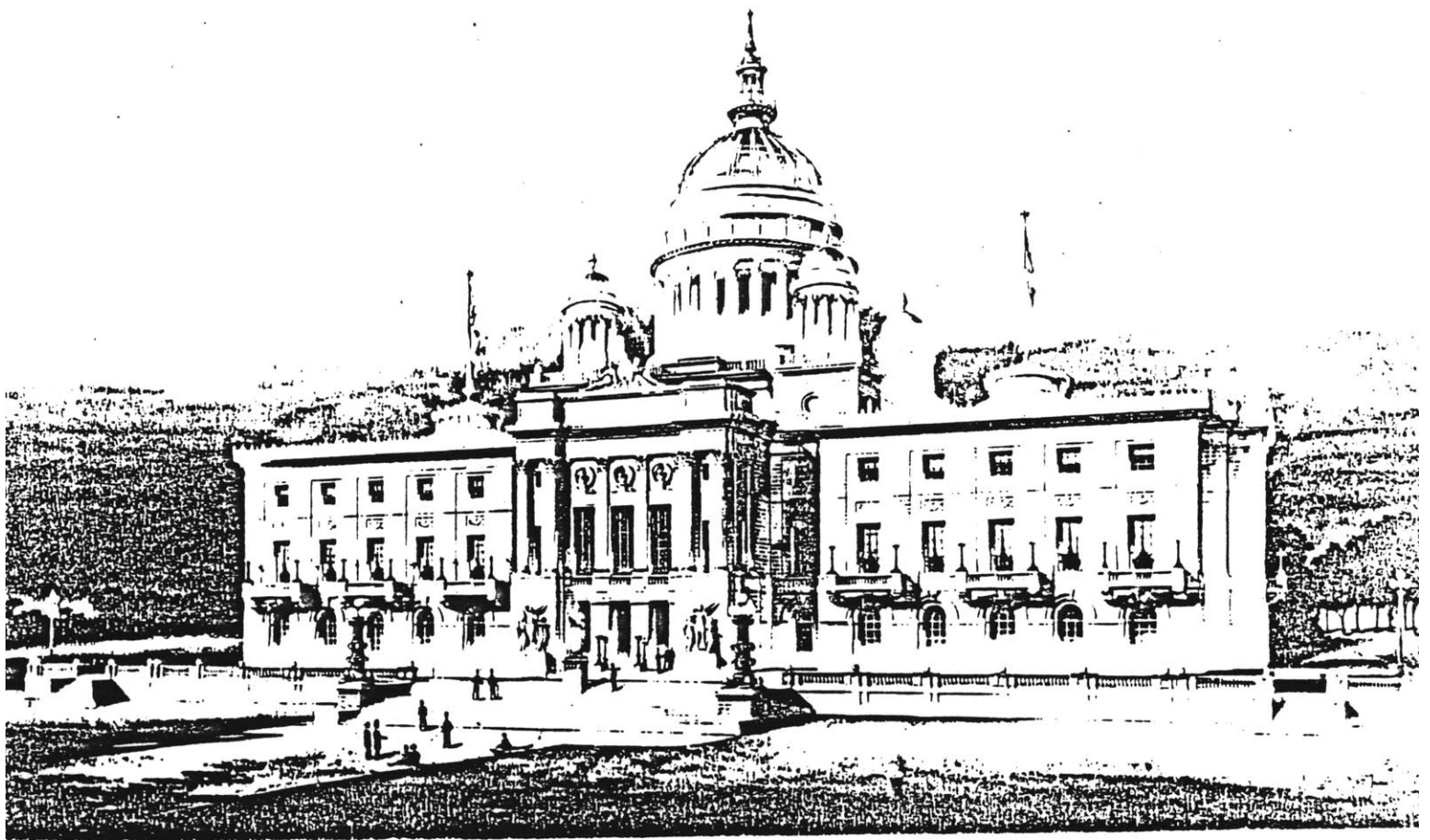


SHEPLEY, RUTAN & COOLIDGE

Stone, Carpenter & Wilson:



Frontispiece from State House Commission Report:



ACCEPTED DESIGN FOR THE RHODE ISLAND STATE HOUSE.

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Please note that most references refer to vol.I, 1890-1892, which includes a printed copy of the "Report of the State House Commission, January 1892" which appears under both its own pagination as well as under that of the official record. Additionally, there are citations from Vol.II, 1893-1900, in particular pages: 184-192.

Note: The Report appears on pages 28-32; pp.58-87 of vol. I of the Records.

State House Commission Records, (Providence, 1890-1911), vols.I-VI.

### Letters

**Note:** The notation "NYHS" refers to the collections of the New York Historical Society. "M-10" refers to the NYHS's file reference.

Letter from [Ex-Governor] Herbert W. Ladd to Charles F. McKim, dated "Providence, November 26th".(no year),

NYHS, M-10. Governor Ladd asks McKim for advice with the competition.

Letter from Alfred Stone, RIC, AIA to Commission outlining rules for a competition, undated, assumed 1890, NYHS, M-10.

Letter from Glezen for sub-committee to full Commission, September 1890 describing visit of Committee to Boston, NYHS, M-10, (undated.)

Letter from E.K. Glezen, Secretary of State House Commission, to Messrs. McKim, Mead and White, dated Providence, July 29, 1891. NYHS, M-10. This letter invites the firm to enter the competition for a new State House.

Letter from McKim, Mead and White's office (assumed, unsigned) to Herbert A. Ladd, Chairman of State House Commission, dated August 8th, 1891. NYHS, M-10. The letter states dissatisfaction with several clauses in the official rules of the competition. A request is made to modify the rules so that ambiguity over ownership of design and remuneration is clarified.

Letter from E. Letang of MIT to McKim, February 23, 1892, NYHS, M-10.

Letter from E.K. Glezen to McKim, Mead and White, dated July 12, 1892, NYHS, M-10. Glezen announces that the firm's design has been selected to be presented to the General Assembly for acceptance as the winning entry.

Letter to MMW discussing the need for a colored birds-eye view drawing, NYHS, M-10.

Letter from Glezen to McKim asking for clarification of bid estimate, January 21, 1892, NYHS, M-10.

Letter from Glezen to Mead discussing a driveway around State House, undated, NYHS, M-10.

Letter from Glezen to MMW, announcing full appropriation by legislature for design, December 10, 1894, NYHS, M-10.

Letter from W.H. Hoffman to W.R. Mead, dated January 17, 1896., NYHS, M-10. Letter discusses difficulties in quarrying marble according to Mead's tough standards.

Letter from R.Z. Hazard to Charles McKim, dated Peace Dale, R.I., January 4, 1900. NYHS, M-10. Hazard discusses the lantern of the State House.

Letter from E.K. Glezen which announces a meeting with the General Assembly, dated April 19, 1900, (presumably to McKim, Mead and White.), NYHS, M-10.

Memo discussing "Colors, Etc. for the State House, Providence, R. I., dated July 13, 1900. NYHS, M-10.

Letter from E.K. Glezen to McKim, Mead and White, dated December 27, 1900, NYHS, M-10. Glezen invites the designers to a reception at the General Assembly on January 1, 1901.

Memo from Joan Slafsky, Rhode Island School of Design, dated 1979, R.I. State Archives file. Memorandum announces the exhibition of working drawings by McKim, Mead and White for the State House.