

Thesis



A Chapter House for a
Greek Letter Fraternity.

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A. Chapter House for a Greek Letter Fraternity.

The wealthy alumni of a certain college fraternity have subscribed a large sum of money to be expended in the erection of a chapter house. This house will be located in the college town, and in it will reside about twenty four undergraduate members of the fraternity.

The Alumni being conversant both with architecture and the undergraduate life at the college, have stipulated the following conditions.

The first Requisite shall be large and well lighted

rooms for the purpose of study. Closely connected with each study shall be a bathroom and bed room. These rooms shall all be placed on the second floor.

On the first floor should be a large reception hall, library, billiard room, parlor, den and music room.

In the basement, space shall be provided for ^{the} laundry, kitchen pantry, servants quarters etc.

Placed in the most secluded portion of the building and entered by a secret passage shall be the Chapter or lodge room. A safety vault for the preservation of Chapter records shall also be considered a part of the Chapter room.

The style of the building is left to the discretion of the architect.

The Architect's Solution.

To more fully grasp the problem let us consider the difficulties with which the Architect "had to contend.

Since the Greek Letter Fraternity is more or less classic in its origin the architect must endeavor to embody in his design, the principles of classic art, architecture and solidity. At first glance one might suppose that by studying the temples of ancient Greece and Rome, the inspiration resulting from such a study would lead to an easy solution. Here arises the first difficulty. The ancient temples were not homes. The Fraternity Chapter House must be a home. The ancient temples were the abiding places of gods & goddesses, who had no

no physical wants. The Chapter House is to be the dwelling place of strong, healthy, active men.

The problem therefore resolves itself into an attempt on the part of the designer, to combine in pleasing proportions, the solidity and impressiveness of classic architecture with our ideal of the home, a place well lighted, sociable, tenable in all seasons and possessing an interior as well as an exterior charm. The logical conclusion therefore is that the plan must be the expression of the homelike quality whilst the elevation may take on more of the impressiveness of the classical style.

The first necessity of any home should be abundant light. Couple with this the college students

demand for plenty of room and you have the beginning the germ of your design. A central court extending from the first floor to the roof and covered by a skylight is taken as the most salient feature of the plan. About this are grouped the various rooms and since the expression of the home quality is of first importance let us consider the plan and the manner in which the architect has grouped the rooms around the court.

Upon entering the building from the western side, through the broad doorway the first striking entrance impression is one of light and cheeriness. Through a large opening directly in line with entrance you gain a pleasing view of the broad ^{well lighted} court. The student

whom you are visiting and who is to show you about the House is seen descending the broad staircase on the right. He greets you in the reception hall; the large room which precedes the court and in which you have waited since you sent up your card.

Your guide motions you towards the left and you enter the music room, with its broad window overlooking the campus and its air of restful seclusion.

Leaving the ^{music} room and passing through the reception hall, again, you start towards the rear of the house. Upon entering the central court, the eye instinctively looks upwards to take note of the balcony which completely encircles the court, and off from which open the studios on the second floor.

The student points out to you the advantages of such an arrange-

ment. He points to the windows which afford a great amount of light for the studies and bedrooms and tells of the windows placed on the outside of the building as well. The skylight over the court is a point of interest, having enflagoned upon it in stained glass the escutcheon and open motto of the fraternity.

To the right is the library. A large room facing the south and having ample book room as well as niches for busts and statues. A side porch opens from this room and give a quiet secluded place for lounging during the warm spring evenings.

On the left of the court is the billiard room and opening from it, that place dear to every college man - The Den. A doorway conspicuous by its central location leads to

a counterpart of the side porch
 off from the library and ^{mapeda} ~~pleasing~~ its
 entrance way from the side street.

At the other end of the court we
 enter what seems to be a passage
 way flanked on either side by
 columns and terminating in a small
 conservatory. Upon examination
 the partitions between the columns
 are seen to be of the portable
 variety. When removed, the parlor
 on the right, the passage way
 itself and the dining room on the
 left are all thrown into one, large
 assembly hall. This arrangement
 was made necessary by the constant
 need of a large room suitable for
 dances, receptions, banquets etc.

The small conservatory forms an
 interesting feature on the eastern side
 of the room and is also intended for
 the use of the musicians needed
 at the various entertainments.

During your visit to the studies and bedrooms on the second floor you are told that the kitchen, servants quarters, laundry etc are in the basement. Then it occurs to you that you have not been informed as to the location of the chapter room.

The student seems loath to talk on the subject and after much urging discloses the fact that the architect divulged his secret only to the members of the fraternity.

His little air of mystery makes you realize that this is a Fraternity Chapter house. Although it was designed as a home still like all homes there is probably one closet that contains a skeleton.

Let us step outside and for a few moments examine the exterior with more care than we did upon

entering. Four massive Corinthian columns mark the entrance, emphasizing and expressing upon the exterior the central interior motive. These great monoliths also give a dignity and impressive charm to the facade.

The second story windows are plain and small enough to give contrast to the three large, more highly decorative central motives on the first floor. The windows on the first floor to the right and left of the central motive are strong, subdued, and carefully studied, eminently classic in their simplicity and restraint and proportions.

The smaller side porches, dome which you may enter the library or billiard room are in a more severe style than the larger western portico and entrance.

The plain feeling of the smaller Doric columns, pilasters and

Cornices, contrasting strongly with the rich and more brilliant Corinthian columns, pilasters and Cornices of the main building.

As you turn to go away after a visit to the building the architect hopes that you will more fully appreciate his attempted architectural expression and emphasis and that you will applaud his effort to ~~conserve~~ the carefully studied art and architecture of the Classic part in making this student home more impressive more homelike and more beautiful.