

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS.

INCORPORATED 1857.

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

TWENTY-SECOND

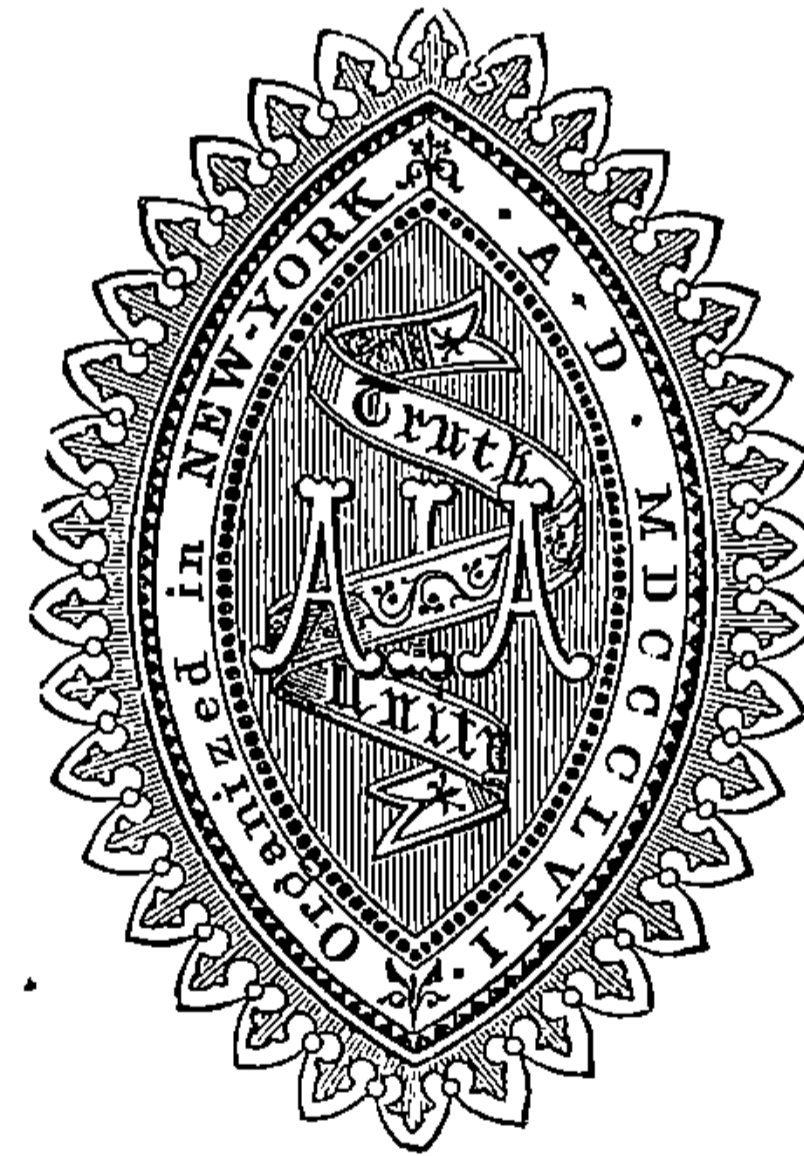
ANNUAL CONVENTION

OF THE

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS,

HELD IN

BUFFALO, OCTOBER 17-18-19, 1888.



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AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS.

A. J. BLOOR, Editor.

The Secretary—The two following reports have been submitted:

First—For President, R. M. Hunt; Treasurer, O. P. Hatfield; Secretary, A. J. Bloor; Secretary Foreign Correspondence, Adolf Cluss; Board of Trustees, Napoleon Le Brun, E. I. Nickerson, H. M. Congdon, George A. Frederick; Committee on Education, Prof. N. Clifford Ricker, Alfred Stone, Prof. William Rotch Ware, W. G. Preston, John Moser; Committee on Publications, W. R. Briggs, T. M. Clark, J. R. Willett, C. G. Mason Jr.

Second—President, R. M. Hunt; Treasurer, O. P. Hatfield; Secretary, A. J. Bloor; Secretary Foreign Correspondence, R. W. Gibson; Board of Trustees, E. T. Littell, W. W. Clay, L. T. Scofield, George C. Mason, Jr.; Committee on Education, N. Clifford Ricker, Alfred Stone, William Rotch Ware, J. W. McLaughlin, Henry Van Brunt; Committee on Publications, Charles Crapsey, T. M. Clark, S. V. Shipman, W. G. Preston.

Mr. Scofield said it would be impossible for him to incur the responsibilities of the Trusteeship for another year and declined a re-election.

President Hunt said that the confidence evinced in his re-nomination was very pleasant to him, but thought that some other member would make a better president and begged that such an one should be nominated in his place.

Mr. Briggs—As our President, Secretary and Treasurer are named on both tickets, I move that the Secretary be instructed to cast one ballot for those three officers. Carried.

The President appointed Mr. Moser and Mr. Kipp as tellers for the Board of Trustees.

The balloting was then proceeded with, and the following officers were duly declared elected: President, R. M. Hunt; Treasurer, O. P. Hatfield; Secretary, A. J. Bloor; Board of Trustees, Messrs. Littell, Le Brun, Frederick and Clay; Committee on Education, Messrs. Ware, Ricker,

Stone, Preston and McLaughlin; Committee on Publication, Messrs. Clark, Crapsey, Briggs, Mason and Preston; Secretary for Foreign Correspondence, Mr. Gibson.

The following paper, written by George C. Mason, Jr., F. A. I. A. was then read by Mr. Stone.

MEMOIR OF THOMAS USTICK WALTER, A. M., PH. D.,
LL. D., F. A. I. A.

Thomas Ustick Walter, second President of the American Institute of Architects, was born in the City of Philadelphia, September 4th, 1804, and died in the same city, October 30th, 1887, being at the time of his decease the oldest practicing architect in the United States.

He was the son of Joseph S. Walter, and of Deborah, his wife, and was named after the Rev. Thomas Ustick, a well-known divine during the early years of the present century.

In boyhood Mr. Walter displayed a predilection for mathematics. His education was liberal, but not scholastic. In 1819, being then fifteen years of age, he entered the office of William Strickland, the architect of the Custom House, the Mint, the Merchants' Exchange and Marine Asylum and other buildings in Philadelphia, and of the State Capitol of Tennessee, in Nashville, within which structure he is buried under a suitable monument. From his own writings it is learned that Mr. Walter remained with Strickland until he had acquired the art of linear drawing and a general knowledge of the profession of architecture, after which he resumed his general studies and went through an elaborate course of mathematics. During seven years he devoted himself to the study of physical sciences, to the cultivation of the arts of drawing and painting and to the attainment of practical knowledge of the several branches of mechanical construction, while at the same time, in his moments of leisure, he studied landscape painting in water colors under the direction of Wm. Mason, a celebrated teacher of that art in Philadelphia.

In 1828 he again entered Mr. Strickland's office, devoting himself exclusively to architectural study, the practice of which he

commenced in 1830, and in the following year designed the Philadelphia County Prison, which was his first important work, his plan for the same having been adopted and the construction of the work entrusted to his care.

In the year 1829, he was elected a member of the Franklin Institute of Pennsylvania and subsequently was elected one of its Board of Managers and in 1846 was Chairman of the Board. Mr. Walter's interest in the Franklin Institute was manifest from the first and he entered heartily into its councils and discussions. At this early date the public taste for correct architecture was wholly undeveloped, but he worked and argued for the advancement of his art. This enthusiasm bore fruit and in 1835 it was voted "That a course of lectures on architecture delivered annually before this Society is indispensable as well to accomplish the ends as to promote the prosperity of the Franklin Institute; and that it is hereby recommended to the Board of Managers to secure the delivery of such a course next winter." The times were not altogether propitious for the establishment of a regular professorship, but at the beginning of the next year Mr. Walter was requested to deliver voluntary lectures. These lectures he continued to give from time to time and his name appears in the Journal of the Institute to which he frequently contributed as "Professor of Architecture."

He fully appreciated the dignity of his art; and from the first, his pen and his public utterances all tended to one end—its elevation and the cultivation of high aspirations among its practitioners. Thus, in 1841, he writes: "If architects would oftener aim to think as the Greeks thought, than do as the Greeks did, columnar architecture would possess a higher degree of originality, and its character and expression would gradually become conformed to the local circumstances of the country and the republican spirit of its institutions." Among the articles in the journal, which appeared from his pen during these years may be enumerated the following: "Architecture in the Middle Ages," "Formation of an Artificial Specrum," "Orders of Architecture," and general articles under the head "Architecture," elaborate reports and descriptions of the designed constructions of the County Prison and of the Girard College (which he was then building from his own designs), besides numerous other articles.

Mr. Walter's professional practice rapidly increased after his design for the "Girard College for Orphans" was adopted in 1833, the corner-stone of which building was laid on July 4th, of that year. When the structure was complete in 1847 he was elected one of the Board of Directors of the College and served in that capacity for three years. In 1838 the Building Committee of the College sent Mr. Walter to Europe for the purpose of "Examining the practical workings of the various devices and appointments for health, convenience and comfort, in the principal seats of learning in Great Britain and the Continent," with a view to derive such information on these subjects as would be likely to prove useful in fitting up and furnishing the building of the college.

We must now refer to an event which advanced architectural development and was the beginning of systematic and united methods of architectural practice in the United States, viz: the attempt in 1836 to found an "American Institution of Architects." At that time there were only a little over half a score of properly trained architects in the country. These gentlemen met in the City of New York, on December 7th, 1836. Mr. Walter was one of the pioneers and most active promoters of the movement, and of the group of architects who met on that day, one alone remains, Alexander J. Davis, the architect of the University of the City of New York and of many other important edifices and now a Corresponding Member of this Institute. A draught of a constitution was formulated and the members adjourned to meet in Philadelphia on the first Tuesday of May, 1837. The circular calling for this meeting, dated March 23d, 1837, (a copy of which interesting document hangs in the office of the Institute in New York), was signed by Thomas U. Walter, Secretary.

The meeting took place at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, but it embraced only a handful of members and it was found that they were too much scattered for mutual sustenance and the strength necessary for a brotherhood.*

* As a matter of history, it may be here stated that the persons who attended this meeting consisted of the following named architects, viz.: Wm. Strickland, Chairman, Thos. U. Walter, Secretary, and Messrs. Davis, Rogers, Kramp and Reichardt. This was the representation out of twenty professional members or professors as they were called of the Institution. The only Associates ever admitted were William Kelly and John D. Jones, both graduates from Mr. Walter's office, and the name of Napoleon Le Brun, then a student in his office, was recorded as such, in conformity with the By-laws.

The "Institution" struggled for a while, flickered, and was apparently quite extinguished, though it was really from its ashes that our present Institute, Phoenix-like, sprung.

Mr. Walter's position was soon assured, as his merits were appreciated by numbers of influential citizens, who rewarded him with their patronage by confiding to him the designing and construction of noble works built in the pure classic style of which he was the most strenuous advocate and enthusiastic student.

In the early days of his successful practice, it was generally the custom in Philadelphia to have the dwelling and office of architects in the same building or adjoining each other, and thus there was a more intimate and friendly acquaintance between the students and the preceptor's households than in these times. Mr. Walter was always affable and kind towards his students, and always took pleasure, during his leisure moments in the office, in lectures to them and imparting knowledge in practical and æsthetic subjects; but, although he had many during his early career, most of them lacked the patience and perseverance necessary to acquire the requisite knowledge to become successful practitioners, and eventually drifted into other pursuits.

Among Mr. Walter's works of private practice may be enumerated the St. George's Hall, the Preston Retreat, the Debtor's Apartment, the Philadelphia Savings Bank and several churches in Philadelphia, the Chester County Bank, the Biddle and Cowperthwaite villas on the Delaware River and other buildings in the country.

But all these creditable labors were but the training and leading up, as it were, to the one great work with which his name must ever be associated—the extension of the National Capitol at Washington, together with the noble dome which surmounts and dignifies its mass.

The appointment of Mr. Walter as architect to execute his design for the extension of that truly noble building, was made by President Fillmore, in 1857. It was well merited, for, of all American architects of that date, Mr. Walter was the best fitted by steady and innate love for the purest types of classic architecture to grasp successfully the problem of the Capitol extension and to design the dome with which he later glorified and crowned his work. The boldness of his composition evinces his skill as a de-

signer and his confidence in himself. The vast wings forming the extension are of white marble of great hardness and durability. They have taken upon them with years a delicate pearly color, which as it shows itself in the long colonnades, gives them an effect of purity and beauty.

Much as we pride ourselves upon the advances made in architectural design, we have nothing to show more nobly simple and well studied than this, the grandest of Mr. Walter's works. Such is the verdict of the architect and the critic.

Fergusson, the historian of architecture and often a severe censor, writes: "Taking it all in all, however, there are few buildings erected in modern times which possess to a greater extent than the Capitol at Washington appropriateness of purpose combined with the dignity necessary for the Senate House of a great nation. It has not the variety and richness of detail of our Parliament House, but it is a far statelier building, and its faults are those of the age in which it was commenced, and which here tied the hands of subsequent architects, and prevented them from using the improvements that have since been introduced in the arts of design; but it wants but very little to enable it to attain to very high rank amongst the buildings of its class in other parts of the world."

The Hon. J. H. B. Latrobe, son of the architect of the original Capitol at Washington, Benjamin W. Latrobe, thus eulogized Mr. Walter, in an address before the American Institute of Architects in the City of Washington, at its Fifteenth Convention in 1881. Speaking of the extension of the Capitol he said, "I can scarcely speak in his presence" (President Walter being in the chair at the time) "as I would like to speak, could I find words to do justice to the last architect of the vast pile that now looks down upon the Federal City. The pupil of Strickland, as Strickland was the pupil of my father, it has been with me a pleasing fancy for more than a quarter of a century to believe that there was, in some faint way, a law of descent, applicable under the circumstances, which connected the architect who clothed Thornton's skeleton with sinew and muscle and beauty, until the whole creature became his own, with his brilliant, refined and accomplished successor, who, at the head of a profession socially, to-day, without a superior, has absorbed all that has been done before in what is

now the Capitol; who, making the magnificent dome—on whose iron sheets the hammer never ceased to ring during the war that threatened to make the whole structure worthless—the controlling feature of the design, has screened with it all the exterior littlenesses “of a vitiated taste,” and made even the incongruities of the Italian Renaissance subserve the purposes of genius.”

Ill health compelled Mr. Walter to resign from the service of the government on June 1st, 1865, and he then returned to Philadelphia.

Among the important works that Mr. Walter executed in Washington for the government between 1865 and 1875, are: The extension of the Patent Office; the repairs of the Congressional Library; the extension of the Treasury Building; the General Post Office extension; the Government Hospital for the Insane.

In 1849 the honorary degree of Master of Arts was conferred upon Mr. Walter by Madison University, N. Y.; in 1853, the University of Lewisburg, Penn., conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy; and in 1857, Harvard University gave him the degree of Doctor of Laws. He also became a member of the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia. In 1860 he delivered a course of lectures on Architecture at Columbian College, D. C., and also in Philadelphia and vicinity.

Dr. Walter was now well advanced in years and full of honors. After his return from Washington he engaged in but little private practice. When the erection of the new City Hall in Philadelphia was commenced he became connected with Mr. John McArthur, Jr., the designer and architect of that building, and continued to assist him on its work until a short time before his death.

Of Dr. Walter's connection with the American Institute of Architects, the profession may well be proud. The original “Institution of Architects” had slumbered for nearly twenty years when the present Institute was founded in 1857, and on February 23d of that year, Dr. Walter was elected a Fellow. On the retirement of its first president, Richard Upjohn, in 1876, he was elected its President, which office he filled continuously until his death.

At his last election to the presidency, on December 2d, 1886, he thus expressed his thanks to the convention; the words, simple

and touching, are not to be forgotten by those among his active associates in Institute work who heard them, and seemed to them prophetic of the great change so soon to come upon him:

“I return you my thanks, gentlemen, for your kindness—and for your forgiveness. You might have done better all the time; but I began with you almost at the beginning and have been in my place as often as it was possible, and have done the best I could; and I intended when I came here to decline a re-election, but my friends have been very kind, and have asked me to agree to it if I were re-elected and I have agreed to it for another year. After that, if I live that long, I will ask you to allow me to take a rest. As to the year before us, I promise you to do all I can for the promotion of the prosperity of our profession, here and everywhere—for the promotion of the interests of our Institute. Everywhere and at all times I am yours, asking you to look over my imperfections and to enable me to feel still further that I have your assistance in all matters connected with our profession. I am deeply interested in them and have been so for nearly sixty years. I shall not be troubled that way sixty years longer. Accept my thanks, I pray you.”

We have thus followed the career of Dr. Walter from youth to revered old age. His position in American architecture is a proud one. As he modestly puts it himself in the above address, “I began with you almost at the beginning and have done the best I could.”

As an architect and scholar, Dr. Walter's professional learning was deep and well digested. In style of architectural composition, pure, artistic and dignified. In social life he was ever the cultured gentleman. In personal appearance, venerable and commanding. “Truth in Art” was the keynote in his professional career—the fundamental law which he laid down for himself and the burden of all his writings and public utterances. “Let us live,” he once said, “for the promotion of our art. Let us leave no stone unturned to devise throughout the world the elements of a pure and correct taste.”

One more quotation from Dr. Walter's address to the Institute of Architects and I will close this memoir. The last words of his annual address of 1880 speak the whole life of the man—no

stronger or more heartfelt words could come from the lips of the Nestor of American Architects.

"We owe to our country, to the age in which we live, to our families, to ourselves, to devote the rapidly fleeting hours of our lives to the accomplishment of the greatest possible good in our vocation; ever seeking to discharge our duties in all good conscience towards those whose interests are intrusted to our care, towards co-workers in the realm of art, and towards Him in Whom we live, and move and have our being."

GEORGE C. MASON, JR., F. A. I. A.

The Convention then adjourned to the next morning.

AFTERNOON.

The architects in attendance at the Convention were taken for a drive about the city and its suburbs, the most notable examples of public and domestic architecture being included in the route. The Park and the Crematory were also visited.

EVENING.

In the the evening most of the members of the Convention were entertained by the Buffalo Architects at a sumptuous dinner (covers being laid for sixty) in the Niagara Hotel. The Hon. E. C. Sprague, of Buffalo, presided, and toward the close of the entertainment, said:

Gentlemen of the American Institute of Architects.

It was a favorite axiom of an old acquaintance of mine that "it is difficult to impart unto others those ideas which we ourselves are not possessed of," and I am therefore very glad that I am not called upon to say anything to-night about architecture; but I think I have some knowledge of the elements at least of hospitality and good fellowship, and I certainly feel it to be one of the greatest honors as well as one of the greatest pleasures that I have enjoyed for many years that your hosts have selected me to express a few words of welcome to their guests upon this most pleasant occasion. And gentlemen let us assure you, and I say us for I speak on behalf of our hosts to-night, that we heartily welcome you to this delightful entertainment, one of the very

best public dinners that I ever sat down to. Let me say also on behalf of all our people, that they are much gratified and greatly honored by the fact that that your society has selected Buffalo as a place for holding its convention this fall. I think the citizens of Buffalo appreciate the honor of your company, because we all know the qualities and accomplishments which go to make up a master in the art which you profess. We all know that to constitute an architect in a high sense a man must possess much artistic sense and culture, he must know something at least of mathematics, he must be learned in mechanics and other branches of natural philosophy, he must be a good business man and competent to deal with men and affairs, and he must above all possess those qualities which go to make up what we call character; he must be an honest man, and a truthful man; and I think an architect, so far as I know anything of the profession, has got to possess in an eminent degree that self-control and self-discipline which enables him to endure with equanimity a great many vexations, a great many troubles, a great many disappointments, and he must endure and be able to sustain with equanimity a great many heavy responsibilities. Seeing then that the pursuit of your calling calls for such a combination of qualities as this, it deserves to hold, as it does hold, in the minds of all thoughtful and intelligent men, a front rank in the liberal professions.

Now my friends I am not going to spend much time in talking about Buffalo; we are a very modest people here and never say anything about ourselves. You have been riding about and you probably have seen what there is to see and I won't dwell upon it except to say this, speaking of its architecture, whatever there is of it, that twenty years ago Buffalo was one of the shabbiest cities I think architecturally on this continent. It is now in certain portions of it at least, a handsome city and we owe that fact to the architects of Buffalo and their friends who have come to help them.

Mr. Sprague then called attention to the fine scenery of Portage, sixty miles from Buffalo on the Erie road, indicating as the best way to take in all its beauties, a route first to the Upper Fall, then to the Middle Fall, and finally to the Lower Falls, where, he said "there is nearly 400 feet in height and precipitous declivity which you can descend by steps arranged for the pur-