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# The Necessity of a City Hall Plaza

## AN ARGUMENT

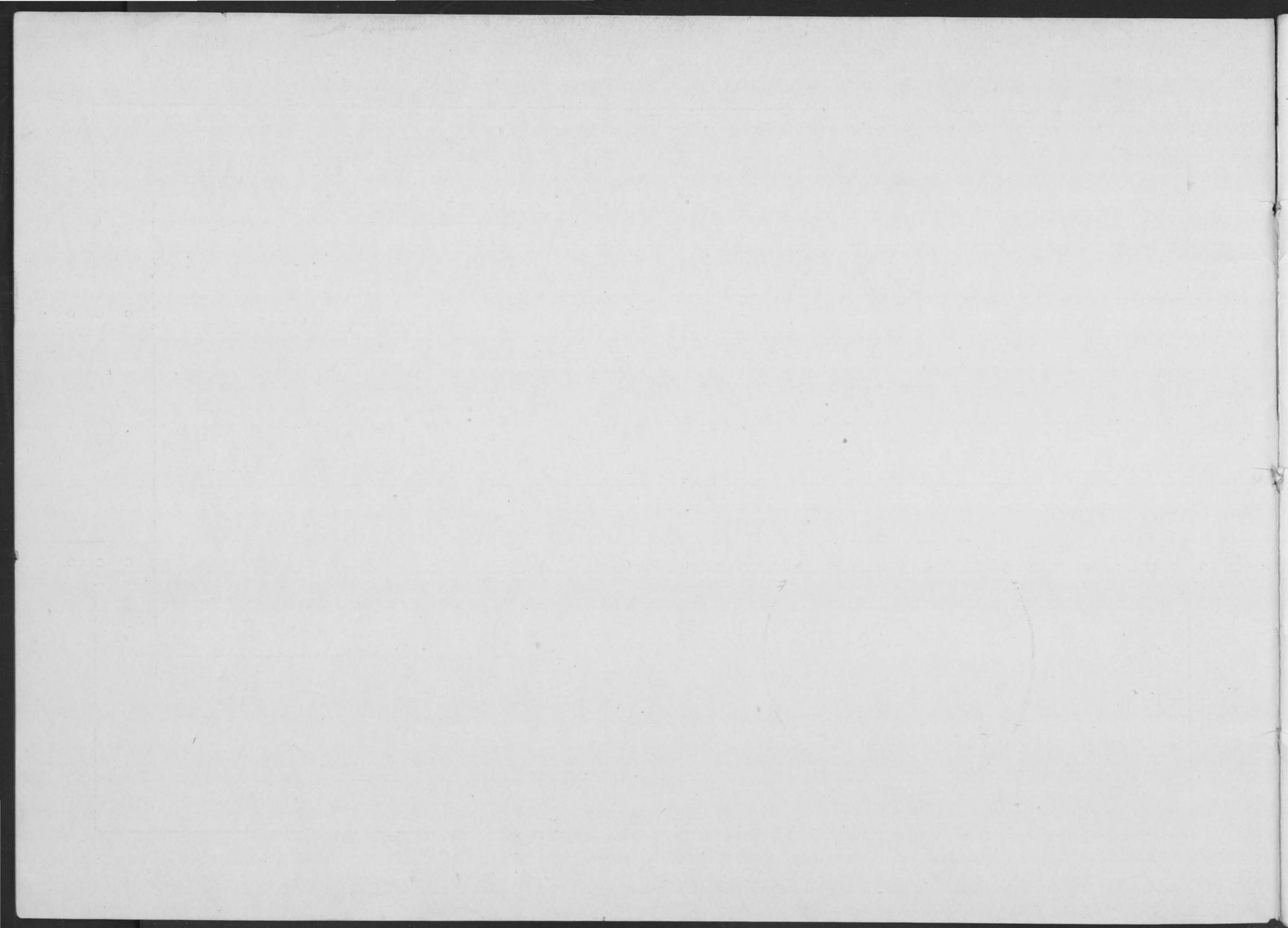
in behalf of the pending  
Ordinance to create on the  
North-west side of the City Hall  
a Public Park or Plaza, together  
with the comments of the press  
and prominent citizens.

By JAMES M. BECK,  
of the Philadelphia Bar.

"THE CITY HALL, which has cost in the neighborhood of \$16,000,000, is one of the finest buildings devoted exclusively to municipal purposes in the world. It unfortunately is now almost surrounded by tall buildings, and it is reasonable to suppose that like improvements will continue on all its sides, so that in a few years it will be completely shut in by high structures forming a wall around it and leaving no space where its architectural beauty may be seen and studied with advantage. It would be of immense importance to open, if possible, a space on one of its sides for the making of a park or plaza. In so far as the question of expense is concerned, now is the time to accomplish that result, for delay will only add to the value of adjoining property, and in a generation the increase in valuation will be so great that it will be next to impossible to secure the ground necessary for that purpose."—*From Mayor Warwick's Message.*



"IF IT WERE DONE, WHEN 'TIS DONE,  
THEN 'TWERE WELL IT WERE DONE QUICKLY."—*Macbeth.*







“America,” as her President said at the Chicago Exposition, “need ask no allowance on the score of youth.” In her Capitol and surrounding park she has one of the most beautiful buildings and plazas in the world. Both are worthy of the noblest republic of all time.

# THE NECESSITY OF A CITY HALL PLAZA.

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TOGETHER WITH

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## THE NECESSITY OF A CITY HALL PLAZA.

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An ordinance is now under consideration by the City Councils to create at the northwest side of the City Hall a public park or plaza, that will be a perpetual source of pleasure and comfort to all future generations of Philadelphians. This specific proposition has been before the public for about three months. The general idea, however, that the City Hall should have about it a greater open space has been in the public mind ever since the site of the building was determined. Time and again this need has been called to public attention.

The architect who designed this municipal palace, and whose monument it will ever be, again and again complained that his building could never be adequately judged until it could be seen in its due perspective. Citizens of prominence, and the newspaper press, the latter almost without exception, have called to the Councils' attention this crying need. I do not therefore claim the slightest originality for the general suggestion. But the particular proposition, with which my name has been modestly connected within the last few months, is a practical application of the idea, and contemplates the creation of a plaza on the true front of the building, and in the midst of lofty structures that would make it without further embellishment or ornament one of the greatest plazas of the world. This specific proposition has, I say, been under public consideration for about three months, and has met

with almost universal approval. Every newspaper that has commented upon it has heartily indorsed it; public citizens of prominence and influence have commended it with warmest approbation. The chief magistrate of the city in his recent message has not merely indorsed it with a vigor of expression that is characteristic of Mr. Warwick, but emphasized the fact that this work must be done now, if done at all. He says: "It would be of immense importance to open, if possible, on one of its (the City Hall) sides for the making of a park or plaza. *In so far as the question of expense is concerned, now is the time to accomplish that result, for delay will only add to the value of adjoining property, and in a generation the increase in valuation will be so great that it may be next to impossible to secure the ground necessary for the purpose.*" This project cannot safely wait another generation, nor even another year. Within six months a great office building may be constructed, whose cost will be such as to make the project impracticable. It can therefore be said in very truth that now is the accepted time, and that unless action be immediately taken the colossal mistake of this generation will have been made, which will make it the ridicule and wonder of future generations.

Let us dismiss the thought that this is a luxury which the city cannot afford at the present time. It is not a luxury; it is an absolute necessity. It is no more a luxury than was

the original construction of the building. Philadelphia could have erected a plain, large, brick building like a factory for its town hall, and this would have served every useful purpose of such a building. But Philadelphia, as the eighth city of the world, and the true second city of the American continent, could not afford to have as its town hall a factory building. It wisely decided to construct one that should be worthy of its dignity and renown. The building was no more of a necessity than was its beauty. The honor and the reputation of the city demanded both. It necessarily follows that a sufficient open space is a necessity equal with the building itself. To construct a veritable palace at the expense of sixteen millions of dollars, and then deny it a sufficient open space to properly see it, is a folly that is absolutely monumental.

Apart from this fact, on general principles, beauty is not a luxury. A city from a commercial standpoint is nothing but an aggregation of shops. It is true of the whole as it is true of each of its component parts, that it must be tastefully arranged and adorned. The comforts and the attractive features of our large stores are not luxuries; they are necessities. The taste of our people demands them, and without them commercial success would be impossible. Similarly a city, which is subjected under modern conditions to keenest competition with other cities, must be beautiful in order to gain business and attract the stranger within its gates. It is with a city as with a man, certain articles of adornment are necessities in the most literal sense of the word. Collars and cuffs add nothing to the comfort or physical well-being of a man, and yet without them no one could satisfactorily walk among his fellow men. A city must therefore make itself attractive at the peril of falling behind in the competition of modern life.

Every city which is to-day abreast with the times recognizes this important truth. Athens recognized it over two thousand years ago; Venice and Florence taught the same truth in the twilight of the Middle Ages. In our time Paris pre-eminently has illustrated the utility and economy of beauty. Thirty years ago she decided at considerable expense to widen her streets, create open places, rebuild her palaces, and construct noble boulevards. The result has been that she has become not merely the most beautiful, but relatively to her population the most opulent city of the world. The cost of her improvements has been repaid to her people a hundred times by the millions upon millions of strangers that have sojourned and spent their money within her gates.

The American city which first realizes this fact will hold the ultimate primacy on this continent. I am one of those who believe that the race for municipal importance in this country has only begun. It will not be determined by population alone, nor even necessarily by commercial importance; nor is the possession of a harbor close to the sea a vital matter. London, which is quite as far inland as Philadelphia, has had no difficulty in leaving Liverpool, which is blessed, like New York, with an unequaled harbor, in the rear. Paris, which has not one-half the population of London, and is equally inland from the sea, has made its city a greater centre of attraction than the metropolis of England. Similarly it will be possible for Philadelphia in the next century to make itself the most renowned city of the western continent, even if it have not the commercial importance or population of New York, provided that it shall make itself more beautiful and the centre of a higher culture. As I have had occasion to say elsewhere, its very name is an inspiration, because it suggests the Greek's passionate love of the beautiful. It is the only American city with a Grecian name.



Paris has set the pace for the civilized world. This Place de la Concorde is one of the most beautiful plazas in the world. It has paid its cost a hundred-fold by the uncounted millions of strangers which it has attracted to Paris. Beauty is wealth.

Boston and New York are English; Cincinnati, Roman; San Francisco, Spanish; Brooklyn, Dutch; St. Louis and New Orleans, French; Chicago, Indian; but the very name of Philadelphia suggests that "City of the Violet Crown," which though small in population became and remained the wonder and admiration of mankind, because she gave Phidias to the world and crowned her Acropolis with a Parthenon.

Apart from this consideration and from the standpoint of comfort only, there is real need of the City Hall plaza. We must build for the future. We have wondered at the changes that twenty-five years have wrought in Penn Square, and from them we can faintly imagine the changes which the next twenty-five years will bring. A quarter of a century hence our population will number one million five hundred thousand people. The City Hall Square will be the true hub of the city about which the varied spokes of its activity will revolve. No fact can be more certain than that about Penn Square will cluster the great hotels, theatres, business houses, museums, art galleries, and other public edifices. Around this great building will surge, for generations to come, an endless tide of humanity. This locality is destined to witness as certain a congestion of life as the City Hall Square in New York, for from every point of the compass the tide of travel will converge to this common centre. Even with its open space we know what discomfort and obstructions to travel exist in the New York City Hall Square. What it will be in Philadelphia without any open space can hardly be imagined. It is therefore of importance that a breathing spot should be constructed in the centre of the city for utilitarian reasons, if for no other. A century hence all that now live will be no more. Philadelphia will then be a city of at least two millions of people. What will not be their amazement and indignation at the folly of this generation if it miss the opportunity of relieving

travel and promoting the beauty of the city's centre by the construction of this plaza. Penn was more far-sighted than this. When the city was but a virgin forest, and had little existence save in his own noble and prophetic imagination, he planned an open place midway between its two rivers, and at the intersection of its two broadest avenues, and gave instruction to his surveyor to make provision for it. The plan of the city, as published in London in 1701, shows a central plot of ten acres. Thus was created Penn Square. It was a source of delight and pleasure for generations of Philadelphians, until, in 1873, it was selected to be the site of the new municipal building. It is now too late to argue whether the obliteration of this square was not a mistake. Had the city had the means to have purchased a sufficient site at the time it can hardly be questioned that the obstruction of its two principal avenues was a blunder. Considerations of economy may have required what was done, but the regret can be none the less universal at the destruction of Penn's open square. The fault can be in part remedied by the creation of the proposed plaza, which, with an avenue of two hundred feet already secured, will make an open space from the line of the City Hall to the north side of Arch Street of at least six hundred feet. Thus an open space can be secured which can be called Penn Square. If suitably ornamented no city will have a plaza of greater magnificence, because none will be flanked with buildings of such stupendous size and importance. The stranger who arrives at Broad Street Station will behold a scene that will make an indelible impression upon his mind of the beauty of Philadelphia. An open space will confront his view, flanked on one side by the magnificent Masonic Temple, to the southeast by the City Hall, one of the noblest buildings in the world; to the southwest by the Pennsylvania Railroad Depot, and to the north,



This noble avenue, leading to the Opera House, was constructed by demolishing rows of unsightly houses. Philadelphia came very near having such a Boulevard, which would have been "a thing of beauty and a joy forever." If that was too fair a dream, let us have in any event a plaza!

great buildings will doubtless arise, because of the favored character of the site, which would complete the beauty of the surroundings. Neither Princess Street in Edinburgh, Trafalgar Square in London, the Place de la Concorde in Paris, the Maximilien Platz in Vienna, or the Cathedral Square in Milan, present a view of more impressive magnificence than could this square be made to present. Strangers who once saw it would leave Philadelphia with a lasting impression of its magnificence and would carry its fame far and wide. To what wiser use or with what more lasting benefit could the money be expended? It is doubtless true that the largest portion of the city's money must be expended for direct and necessary uses. While not gainsaying the value of these, it should be remembered that the sewers that you construct will corrode, the gas works fall into decay or become obsolete, school houses must be built and rebuilt, water works require constant renovation and attention, the life of asphalt is short, and contracts for paving on a five-years' guarantee are resisted. The money expended, however, in a park never loses its advantages. A park remains from generation to generation, and does not share that common fate of gradual destruction which seems to visit other things. It carries with it a stream of richest benefaction as some unfailing river. "*Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*"

Could we but see ourselves in this respect "as others see us"! Every stranger who views the City Hall marvels at our apparent neglect in constructing a building at so great an expense and leaving it without any adequate site. The error is not unlike that which the keen satire of Wieland pictures as having been committed by the people of Abdera many centuries ago. The Abderites decided to erect a magnificent public fountain, and for once advanced beyond their provincial prejudices by selecting Phidias to design it. It represented

Neptune arising from the sea. On the day of the dedication of the monument it was discovered that it had been constructed without reference to the water supply, so that instead of jets of water springing from the nostrils of the horses and the dolphins, only a few drops trickled down, as though they had the influenza.

Philadelphia's folly seems hardly less ridiculous and much more serious. With great liberality (that has bordered on prodigality) it has for the last quarter of a century been constructing the most costly, elaborate, and ambitious structure for municipal purposes in this or any other country. Few buildings of a similar magnitude are now in process of construction in any part of the world. If the aim at lasting greatness be not wholly true, it is nevertheless high, and the conception of this magnificent building is worthy of a city of metropolitan rank. If it were a folly, it is of that class of follies that makes a city or an individual great. It is interesting to note that while the building has found its severest critics in our own city, it has won the admiration of almost every distinguished traveler from other lands. While the critics of Boston and New York, who believe that "nothing good can come out of Nazareth," have sneered at this building as indefensibly rococo, and while many of our own citizens ceaselessly lament what they regard as a wasted opportunity, yet distinguished men from the lands of great and classic structures, whose judgments are entitled to the greatest respect, have almost uniformly praised the building as admirable from either an æsthetic or utilitarian standpoint. History has thus again repeated itself, and poor John McArthur, who died before the completion of his great building, has not been without honor "save in his own country."

Thus Sir Edwin Arnold, in his recent book of travels, says of our City Hall that no city in Europe has a municipal



This picture inadequately shows the noble plaza which French enterprise has constructed in front of the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Paris has a dozen such open plazas to relieve the congestion of travel and show the beauty of its buildings. Cannot Philadelphia have one?

building that is comparable to it in beauty. Bartholdi and, I think, Edmund Gosse, spoke of it in similar terms, while Dr. Lutaud speaks of it as recalling "the most beautiful edifices of the French renaissance. The architectural motifs of the pavilions reproduce the motifs of certain pavilions of the Louvre." He further calls it "the most graceful edifice" in the Union, which statement can be commended to the snobbish critics of our own and other cities, who admire in the pavilions of the Louvre the identical architectural motif which they decry in our noble example of renaissance architecture. Mr. John Sartain has said that when he had charge of the Art Exhibit at the American Exposition, which was held in London some years ago, the model of our City Hall attracted considerable attention from distinguished men in London, and that the comments were, as a rule, favorable.

Almost every one of our foreign critics have, however, commented upon the folly of constructing so great a building at so great an expense, and then leaving it without any adequate space about it to see it in its true perspective. Dr. Lutaud (a French academician, and the author of *Aux Etats Unis*) is especially emphatic upon this point, and his words may be profitably quoted in order to show us how "others see us."

He says: "In fact, there is a rich German brewer, I was told, who has built at the extremity of Market Street, and just facing the City Hall, one of these grotesque buildings whose colossal height completely conceals the monument which, if it is not the most remarkable in the United States, is certainly the only edifice of the renaissance style to be found in America. How could the Philadelphia municipality let a monument which cost it nearly a hundred millions of francs be ruined in this way? How could it permit any one to efface by a barracks of twenty stories the

most graceful edifice in the Union? Some day it will certainly be necessary to demolish the German brewer's building, and it is quite time to prohibit in Philadelphia, as has been done in Chicago, the construction of individual buildings exceeding thirty to forty metres in height, especially on streets comparatively narrow and in the neighborhood of public buildings. In a word, there is needed in Philadelphia, as in many other cities of the States, a good inspection and laws regulating private structures in conformity with hygiene and aesthetics."

Making allowance for Dr. Lutaud's unnecessary and undeserved warmth of comment at the expense of Mr. Betz, yet future generations will certainly regard with amazement the fact that this generation should spend over sixteen million dollars in erecting a building and then permit its virtual destruction from an æsthetic standpoint by hemming it in by lofty and incongruous buildings. A building should presumably have about it an open space at least three times its height, and when Penn Square was selected sufficient property should have been condemned on all sides of the City Hall to make a suitable open plaza, like that which makes the Capitol at Washington so wonderfully beautiful.

In some respects the mistake is irreparable; in others it is still possible to do something. No extension of space can be expected on the northeast, as the costly and beautiful Masonic Hall forbids it. To the east it is hardly desirable, as the true front of the building is north. To the south costly office buildings and the great value of real estate make impracticable any future extension of space, and the western side is for like reasons unavailable. One outlet still remains, upon which no costly structure is at present erected, and which affords an opportunity for a plaza of exceptional beauty and value. If the city should condemn for park purposes the



This is the Paris Palace of Justice. How beautifully this queen city of the world has utilized its river banks for beauty! What an opportunity did not Philadelphia lose in the banks of her two noble rivers, either of which is as beautiful as the Seine.

block of ground between Broad and Fifteenth and Filbert and Cuthbert it will afford sufficient space to properly see the City Hall, and at the same time relieve the great congestion of life and business that is inevitable in this locality before another generation. This would have three advantages already suggested:—

First, that it would be on the true front of the building, which faces north;

Second, that it could be opened at comparatively little expense as compared with the other sides of the building; and,

Third, because it would afford not merely a fine perspective view of the City Hall, but would likewise enhance that of the Masonic Temple and the Pennsylvania Railroad Building. Flanked with these three buildings, and suitably improved, the plaza thus constructed would be one of the most beautiful in the world. It would have a width from the building to Cuthbert Street, which at this point could be vacated, of over 400 feet.

I do not believe that the comparatively small expense of such a public work is entirely appreciated. The entire assessed values of the whole block aggregate \$868,000. If property were only condemned as far as the line of the Pennsylvania Railroad building—that is, to the Hotel Scott property—this amount would be reduced by \$350,000, making the net assessed value a little over \$500,000. The properties are practically in the same condition as they were twenty-five years ago, and as the great retail and wholesale business centres have not as yet reached this side of the City Hall, the properties are not as yet valued at much above the assessed valuations. Thus, one of the properties mentioned, which is assessed at \$50,000, sold about a year ago for about \$52,000. Allowing a liberal advance above assessed values, the entire

condemnation proceedings should not cost the city more than \$1,000,000, if the plaza were only constructed to the Hotel Scott, and not more than \$1,200,000 if it were constructed to Fifteenth Street.

If it were decided, as seems preferable, to go to Arch on the north and to the line of the Pennsylvania Railroad on the west, the assessed valuations are \$1,016,500, and the cost of condemnation should not exceed \$1,500,000.

In addition to this the work of paying for this important public improvement is facilitated by our procedure in condemnation cases. No appropriation would have to be made except for the physical act of removing the buildings and turning it into a park. Juries would be appointed to assess values, and it is wholly probable that in nearly every case the property owners would appeal to a common-law jury of twelve. Thus the trials would run over a length of time approximating three or four years, and the verdicts would be rendered and payable by *mandamus* separately. For at least a year or two nothing would have to be paid, and the ultimate expense would probably not require from the city in any one year more than \$300,000, as the thirty or forty odd cases could not be tried within one year. But whether the money is paid separately or in a bulk, it would be practical to pay it in two annual payments of, say, \$500,000, by paying the more moderate awards and appealing the higher, and this is certainly within the financial means of the city. The enhancement of values by this public work would in a short time pay for the outlay. It should be remembered also that in this way Penn Square, as planned by Penn and so dear to our forefathers, could be practically restored.

It may be asked, what would be done with the City Hall plaza if the city decided upon its construction. If it should be constructed, “a consummation most devoutly to be wished,”



From this noblest arch of triumph in the world, which is situated on a gently rising hill, twelve magnificent avenues radiate like the spokes of a wheel. How pitiful in comparison are our monotonously rectangular streets. Let us have at least one plaza to redeem this want of variety and beauty.

it could be treated either as an urban park, with trees, grass plots, and flower beds, or as an open plaza with statuary and fountains. The wisdom and experience of older and greater cities would seem to suggest the second method for any park that is in the very heart of a city. While London has in the vicinity of its courts of justice a large square of trees and grass known as Lincoln's Inn Fields, yet this spot of green seems an incongruity amongst the smoke-begrimed inns of court, and justifies its description by Dickens as that "perplexed and troublous valley of the shadow of the law." Trafalgar Square seems to me to be far preferable as a model of what our City Hall plaza should be. It and the Place de la Concorde in Paris are probably the most beautiful and magnificent plazas in the world. In the centre of the former Nelson's monument rises to a stately height; at its feet are the four majestic lions which Landseer designed. On two sides of the monument are fountains, whose splashing waters add a music to the dull roar of the great streets that empty their endless tide of humanity into the square. At the four corners of the square stand appropriate statues to some of England's mighty dead—General Gordon, Sir C. J. Napier, Sir Henry Havelock, and George IV. The greatness of London, with its six million people and its thousand years of glorious history, seems to be focused in this square. Here is that "full tide of existence" of which Dr. Johnson spoke and which he located at Charing Cross.

Even more beautiful is the Place de la Concorde. In its centre rises the obelisk of Luxor, a monolith of red granite, which connects the great city of antiquity, "hundred-gated Thebes," with, in some respects, the greatest of modern times, incomparable Paris. On either side are magnificent fountains, while in an august circle about the square stand in marble effigy the eight cities of France—Lille, Bordeaux,

Nantes, Rouen, Marseilles, Lyons, and Strasburg. In the lap of the last-named statue are ever to be seen those mourning wreaths, which suggest the unquenchable patriotism of France.

Such a plaza as these ours should be. In its centre should stand some magnificent monument. Had it been constructed a year ago it would probably have been chosen as the site of the Washington monument of the Cincinnati Society. No more appropriate site could have been selected. Indeed it is possible that if the City Councils act promptly in the matter of this plaza that the Washington monument, whose construction has not yet been commenced, could be obtained as its central feature. Fountains should add the gladdening melody of their falling waters, while on the outer circle worthy statues of the founders of the Republic should be placed from time to time. Trees, grass, and flowers could be added, but they should be subordinated to the general treatment of the plaza. I have ventured to include in this pamphlet pictures of these two plazas and some other similar open spaces in the world's great cities.

All this is feasible. Let once the plaza be created and this intelligent and opulent city will not let its great central square lack appropriate treatment. A recent testator has given \$500,000 for a monument for Fairmount Park. Another has devoted a fortune, aggregating \$200,000, to the construction of eight statues for Independence Square. Another has given pictures and an endowment for an art gallery in our noble park of the value of \$700,000, and our Academy of Fine Arts will soon be enriched by the gift of a collection of pictures which is easily worth \$200,000. The Society of the Cincinnati is now ready to present the city a monument which will cost \$250,000. No city is receiving more munificent gifts of this character than Philadelphia, and



London has shown us how to create a plaza in Trafalgar Square. She has also shown how not to do it by allowing St. Paul's to be buried by surrounding buildings.  
"Of two such lessons, why forget  
The nobler and the manlier one?"

it cannot be doubted that if this plaza were constructed, the opportunity would be welcomed by public men to make it the site of an appropriate monument. Let the plaza be constructed, and then we can

“satisfy our eyes  
With the memorials, and the things of fame,  
That do renown this city.”

The chief argument that will be addressed to public consideration against this project is that it is too magnificent and expensive for adoption by this city. It is difficult to patiently treat this objection, and yet this feeling of civic self-depreciation, often unconscious and unexpressed, is the most serious obstacle to this or any plan for the advancement of our city. Civic pride has made Chicago what she is; the lack of it has prevented Philadelphia from remaining in the beginning of the second century of our republic as she was at the commencement of the first, the metropolis of the western hemisphere. Philadelphia always reminds me of a sleeping giant, unconscious of its strength and capability, or, rather, it is a Gulliver, bound hand and foot by men of Lilliputian ideas, who ever let “‘I dare not’ wait upon ‘I would.’” This class of pull-backs, who destroy, but never create, who tear down, but never build up, greet every new idea with the hoarse croaking of the ravens that welcomed Duncan beneath the battlements of Macbeth.

Let us never forget that Philadelphia is the eighth city of the world and the true second city of America (for only by a stretch of the imagination can Chicago claim one hundred and fifty square miles of adjacent prairies as within her urban limits). With a million and a quarter of people, with a latent wealth that is incalculable, with a proud and glorious history, whose every page is the glory of the republic, nothing is too good for Philadelphia or beyond her capacity of achieve-

ment. She *must* have as every great city a central plaza, and truly

“If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
It were done quickly.”

London has its Trafalgar Square, Paris, its Place de la Concorde, Edinburgh, its Princess Street, Vienna, its Volksgarten, Venice, its Piazza of St. Mark, Madrid, its Puerta del Sol, Florence, its Square of the Senate, Brussels, its Royal Palace Esplanade, Milan, its Cathedral Square, and Philadelphia must have a plaza, whose surroundings will reflect her historic renown, her present and future importance.

Let the Councils of our city in this and every matter pertaining to the common weal plan in the spirit of those councilors of Florence, who, desiring six centuries ago to rebuild their Cathedral, made this noble decree:—

“Since the highest mark of human prudence in a people of noble origin is to proceed in the management of their affairs so that their magnanimity and wisdom may be evinced in their outward acts, we order Arnolfo, head master of our commune, to make a design for the renovation of Sta. Reparata in a style of magnificence which neither the industry nor power of man can surpass, that it may harmonize with the opinion of many wise persons in this city and state, who think that this commune should not engage in any enterprise unless its intention be to make the result correspond with that noblest sort of heart which is composed of the united will of many citizens.”

*James M. Beck*



London has constructed an extended open space on three sides of its Houses of Parliament, and on the fourth provided a fine perspective view of its towers by utilizing the Thames. Shall not our City Hall have at least one side thus opened?

## THE PROPERTIES CONCERNED.

The following is a list of the properties included in the area proposed to be taken for the purpose described in Mr. Beck's communication, with the dimensions of each lot and the assessed valuation:—

### ON FILBERT AND BROAD STREETS.

1401 Filbert Street, 18.9 by 101.2 feet . . . . .	\$50,000
1403 Filbert Street, 18.9 by 104 feet . . . . .	30,000
1405 Filbert Street, 18.9 by 104 feet . . . . .	30,000
1407 Filbert Street, 18.9 by 103.3 feet . . . . .	30,000
1409 Filbert Street, 29.6 by 144 feet . . . . .	60,000
1411 Filbert Street, 22 by 144 feet . . . . .	44,000
1413 Filbert Street, 25 by 144 feet . . . . .	38,000
1415 Filbert Street, 22 by 144 feet . . . . .	44,000
1417-19 Filbert St., 50 by 144 feet . . . . .	100,000
1421 Filbert Street, 25 by 144 feet . . . . .	50,000
1423 Filbert Street, 25 by 144 feet . . . . .	50,000
1425 Filbert Street, 16.8 by 144 feet . . . . .	30,000
1427 Filbert Street, 16.8 by 144 feet . . . . .	35,000
1429 Filbert Street, 16.8 by 144 feet . . . . .	35,000
1431 Filbert Street, 18.8 by 76 feet . . . . .	25,000
1433 Filbert Street, 18 by 73 feet . . . . .	22,000
1435-37 Filbert Street, 36.6 by 73 feet . . . . .	60,000
38-40 North Broad, 40 by 75 feet . . . . .	60,000
31-3-5 North Fifteenth, 51 by 72.6 feet . . . . .	60,000
37 North Fifteenth, 17 by 72.6 feet . . . . .	15,000

\$868,000

### ON ARCH STREET.

Southwest Corner Broad and Arch Streets, Evangelical Lutheran	
Church, 74.3 by 139 feet . . . . .	(exempt) \$200,000
1406 Arch Street, 24.9 by 139 feet . . . . .	29,000
1408 Arch Street, 24.9 by 139 feet . . . . .	29,000
1410 Arch Street, 24.9 by 139 feet . . . . .	29,000
1412 Arch Street, 24.9 by 139 feet . . . . .	29,000
1414 Arch Street, 24.9 by 139 feet . . . . .	29,000
1416 Arch Street, 22 by 139 feet . . . . .	27,000
1418 Arch Street, 31.9 by 139 feet . . . . .	31,500
1420 Arch Street, 23 by 139 feet . . . . .	27,000
1422 Arch Street, 23.3 by 139 feet . . . . .	27,000
1424 Arch Street, 23.6 by 139 feet . . . . .	27,000
1426 Arch Street, 24.9 by 139 feet . . . . .	28,000
Corner 1428 Arch Street, 49.6 by 139 feet . . . . .	63,000

\$575,500

Total valuation for entire block . . . . . \$1,243,500



Observe this beautiful plaza, which, with Castle Rock in the background, makes Edinburgh and Princess Street worthy of Athens itself. Scott's magnificent memorial is in the centre. A Washington or Franklin memorial should grace our plaza.

## EDITORIAL COMMENTS OF THE PRESS.

[*Evening Bulletin.*]

### PLAN FOR THE FUTURE!

Mr. James M. Beck is doing a good service by trying to start again an agitation for the opening of a plaza at the City Hall before that great building shall be hemmed in forever by still taller piles of masonry. The Hall has come to be recognized as one of the finest pieces of architecture in the United States. Frenchmen, as qualified to pass judgment as the late Comte de Paris, and Englishmen, of as delicate a taste as Sir Edwin Arnold, have extolled it as one of the triumphs of American construction, and not unworthy of comparison with the noblest edifices in Europe that have been built in modern times for public or official uses. But no European visitor has looked upon it without a feeling of ineffable disgust as he contemplated the surroundings. If it had been the deliberate purpose of the Public Building Commission to clear away and occupy just about enough ground for piling up \$20,000,000 worth of marble and then concealing it lest the winds of heaven might visit it too roughly, they could not have succeeded more effectually than they have thus far done. To the stranger it looks as if it had been set down in the centre of a huge bowl; he may approach it from either side of Market Street, for example, and come within a few feet of it before he realizes that he is within the shadow of the costliest building on the continent; he may ascend the upper stories of the Pennsylvania Railroad Building and look down upon its roof as if it were an annex to the station. And every year it becomes more dwarfed. The railroad station, the cloud-piercing Betz Building, the steady ascension of Wanamaker's, and the Masonic Temple, together with

new schemes of "improvement," will soon surround it as with lofty walls of brick and granite.

More than twenty years ago the people at an election decided by a vote—in round numbers, I think, it was fifty-one thousand to thirty-two thousand—that the City Hall should be built on what were then the four Penn Squares. The thirty-two thousand had voted for Washington Square, on which the present building could have really been situated with better effect than it has now. The original intention was that each of the quartette of squares should have a separate building, and it was expressly provided by law that if another site should be chosen, the Academy of Fine Arts, the Academy of Sciences, the Philadelphia Library, and the Franklin Institute should occupy the angles free in a grand group of temples of science and learning. But the majority voted in favor of locating the Public Buildings—mark the plural then used in describing the work in the Act of Assembly and the title of the Commission—and then the Commission calmly proceeded to block the two widest avenues of the city with a single great structure.

At that time probably \$1,000,000, or one-twentieth of the money which the city has since given the Commission, would have bought all the principal pieces of property between Juniper and Fifteenth and Chestnut and Arch that would have been needed for a plaza. The stupidity that could not foresee the inevitable consequences of not making such a clearance is beyond comprehension. John McArthur, the architect, pointed it out time and again. But the fact that such a structure as the City Hall ought to be situated on a hill or an eminence, as the Capitol at Washington is, or



The King's Palace, at Brussels, has a broad avenue in front of it, which gives an extended view of its facade. That of our City Hall will never be appreciated without such an extension of the view. If it were worth \$16,000,000 to build, is it not worth an additional million to preserve?

in the middle of a spacious plot, like the old City Hall in New York, or the great Opera House in Paris, or the new Free Library in Boston's Copley Square, was too much for the crass intellects of Councils and the Commission. Even little Johnny Hill, who with all his faults and illiteracy, was the most far-sighted and broad-minded man in the Commission, in looking ahead as to the future of the building, used to say that at least ten acres around it ought to have been opened and leveled, but that he was confronted with the howl of a "job" whenever he proposed the idea. And, indeed, whenever it has been proposed by anybody, the possibility that the Pennsylvania Railroad, or John Wanamaker, or somebody else might derive benefit from it, or was trying to "line his pockets," was usually the weightiest argument against it. There is no other town where so many good enterprises are knocked in the head or continually bedeviled because, forsooth, they chance to throw a few shekels into the hands of some one who may happen to be on the tailboard of the wagon. It is too much the practice here, not only to shout to the driver to "cut whip," but to upset the whole team as well in the nearest gutter.

Without any regard at all to the question of æsthetics and proportions, we must consider that the marvelous change which has been wrought at and around Penn Square since 1870 will be certain to be succeeded by equally great changes in the course of another twenty-six years. By that time, if not before, with a population as great as Paris, and with the tides of travel, traffic, and promenade which will then sweep around the buildings, the present spaces will be almost as crowded as the Strand in London at high noon or the purlieus of the Grand Opera House of Paris by night. Market Street west of the building will undergo the transformation which Market Street east of it has undergone in only the

past decade, and Broad Street north of it, from the new Odd Fellows' Temple to the Park Theatre, is probably destined to a great future.

That is one of the practical reasons why the City Hall should have ample space for the local activities of the next generation. There is no longer, of course, any possible opportunity for making such a plaza as could have been easily and cheaply laid out by the original members of the Commission. But something may yet be done to prevent the Hall from being hidden some of these days almost as effectually as Carpenters' Hall, for example, now is. The north side of the Hall, which is generally agreed to be its true front, can be saved permanently from being dwarfed if the property north of it and west of Broad Street can be taken before it, too, falls into the hands of another Betz with an ambition to put up a heaven-kissing hive of traffic. Probably not much more than \$1,000,000 would enable the city to turn it into a noble concourse. Then, again, when the Mint shall be erected by the Government, which is not likely to be for three or four years, there will be a splendid chance to redeem the blunder of 1870 in part and to open a fine section of plaza to Chestnut Street. The idea that the Government might part with it on easy terms, or even make a gift of it to the city in return for our gift of League Island to the navy, is worth keeping in mind, especially if Pennsylvania shall be the big factor in affairs at Washington after 1896 she is now likely to be.

For a good many years it was the habit to sneer at and deride the architecture and the work on the City Hall. Much of this habit was due to the disappointments of contractors, to the unforgivingness of the old Washington Square clique, to the belief that John L. Hill was a sort of Tweed, and more than all to a resentment against the extraordinary power of the Commission. These things have nearly died



Brussels has not one-fifth the population of Philadelphia. She has, however, demolished blocks of buildings to create an open space about her new Palace of Justice. Observe also in this picture the fine plaza in front of the Bourse.

out; the Commissioners will be allowed to finish the building in peace so long as they behave themselves reasonably, and it is now pretty generally the opinion that John McArthur was something of an architect after all—one of that considerable tribe of worthies in Philadelphia who never get the credit due them until they are consigned to Woodlands or to Laurel Hill. It is time that this justice was done to him, and that the city recognized fully the grandeur of the municipal palace which sprung from his brain.

But if we don't act on Mr. Beck's revival of the idea of letting it be seen from the surface it will not be seen at all in a few years unless we have a few more stories added to it and the tower shot up to the dizzy heights of Eiffel.

[*The Press.*]

PENN.

#### IT WILL NOT STAND DELAY.

Ever since Philadelphia's great City Hall was projected the desirability of an open space around it has been recognized and discussed. As its walls grew in the building and its magnificent proportions came into visual evidence, the demand that the structure be given more room found voice and has never wholly ceased.

The demolition of the slight fabrics around the City Hall revealing for a few days the advantages of an unobstructed vista has given for a time new vitality to the plea for a City Hall plaza. As nothing was done, and sky-scraping buildings began to shut in the costly City Hall the regret and disappointment has been deeply felt and freely exhibited. At one time the land around the City Hall could have been purchased very cheaply. It is now relatively high, but ten years hence it will assuredly be very much higher. The best opportunity is gone, but something can be done. A park plaza is

still a possible feature, and if at only one corner that is so much better than none at all, it would be supreme folly to let the opportunity to realize it go by.

Mayor Warwick, in his last annual message, made an earnest appeal for the protection of our costly City Hall from total eclipse by a wall of lofty buildings. It has cost the city \$16,000,000. Whatever may be thought of its design or the error of its original location, it is here to stay, and should be made the best of and the most of.

What such a plaza as the Mayor describes would do for the City Hall if constructed at the northwest angle of the building, where the Boulevard was to begin, may be gathered from the illustration of the same on page 46 of to-day's issue of *The Press*. The need of such a point of view in order that the great architectural pile may be understood and appreciated is well set forth by Prof. Warren P. Laird. The argument in favor of the proposition is presented with eloquence and force by United States District Attorney James M. Beck. *The Press* heartily approves the suggestion, and commends the considerations set forth in its behalf to the careful attention of its readers.

To miss the present opportunity to get more open space around the City Hall while comparatively inexpensive buildings occupy the ground would not be only an irreparable misfortune but a standing reproach to the present generation. It is a matter that will not stand delay. While Councils wait the cost of the land increases, the available space decreases, and the difficulties in the way multiply. If it was ever worth while for Philadelphia to pay \$16,000,000 for a City Hall it is assuredly worth its while to pay a little more to prevent it from being obliterated as an architectural monument and dwarfed by the too close proximity of high office buildings.



Antwerp is much smaller and less important than Philadelphia. Shall she have a plaza for her City Hall and Philadelphia none?

[*North American.*]

#### NEED OF A CITY HALL PARK.

The movement inaugurated by James M. Beck, Esq., of this city, looking to the saving of the new City Hall from annihilation from an æsthetic standpoint by razing to the ground the undesirable buildings surrounding the Hall, and laying out a public park on the ground thus secured, is one that recommends itself to all who cherish a desire that the beauty of the great marble pile be fully exposed to the beholder. At present the City Hall is hidden away among a group of tall buildings, which stand so close to the really beautiful structure that one is not aware of its presence until he happens upon it suddenly and almost by accident, and then he fails to get a proper idea of its magnificence because of the impossibility of viewing it at the proper perspective.

The plan proposed by Mr. Beck, and which is embraced in the ordinance introduced in Select Council by Mr. Harris last Thursday, advocates the condemnation of the block from Broad to Fifteenth and from Filbert to Cuthbert Streets, or one-half of the block running through to Arch Street, for a public park, to be laid out and maintained by the city and ornamented in such manner as may seem advisable. This plan, it will be seen, is entirely feasible, and needs but a reasonable effort to secure its accomplishment. It is likewise thoroughly desirable, as any one who will take the trouble to look carefully at the Hall as it stands to-day will see. A great mistake was made when provision was not made for such a park on all sides when the plans for the Hall were first drawn up; but failing in this, it is the duty of the city to remedy the evil as best it can, and this is possible under the plan proposed.

[*North American.*]

#### POSSIBLE, PRACTICABLE, AND URGENT.

The plan of United States District Attorney Beck to extend the City Hall plaza, and thereby save the big edifice from being wholly buried among a mass of tall buildings, is happily receiving such warm approval on all sides that there are bright prospects of it being finally carried out. The step cannot be taken too soon. Delay will encourage further big building operations in the neighborhood of Broad and Market Streets, and each tall structure that is erected further hides the beauties of the City Hall from public view. That the plan is a good one is shown by the fact that it has been heartily and universally approved. The general sentiment is that the plaza should be extended, and at once. Some admit that it would be a good thing, but doubt if it is possible or practicable. It is both possible and practicable, and more so now than it ever will be. By the expenditure of about \$1,000,000 the plaza can be so extended as to preserve the view of the Hall forever. The value of the surrounding property is growing larger daily, and in five years it will be worth much more than now. Then the expense of carrying out this plan will be correspondingly larger. As to its practicability, this has been well thought out by Mr. Beck, and there is no man conversant with such things who will gainsay his opinion that the plan can be carried out easily and with great profit to the city. Councils should without delay take the matter up and authorize the extension at once.



Leipzig is closely built and densely populated, but it has surrounded this public building, the Pleissenburg, with an adequate open space. Shall Philadelphia, a larger and more opulent city, do less?

[*The Times.*]

#### PUBLIC SENTIMENT APPROVES THE PLAZA.

A great many prominent and influential citizens, whose opinions have been gathered by the *Evening Bulletin*, express themselves most warmly in approval of the plan to extend the City Hall Plaza, so well advocated by Mr. Beck in a recent communication in *The Times*. Indeed, we have yet to hear of any one who did not look with favor on this plan. Some take the familiarly discouraging view that it would be a good thing if it were possible, but the much more general sentiment is that it not only is possible but ought to be done, and at once.

And certainly it is possible if we make up our minds to it. Every one agrees that greater space ought to have been reserved about the City Hall in the first place, and the only question now concerns the space that it is still practicable to reserve. Even the vision of opening Penn Square out to Chestnut Street might not be all a vision. But these larger dreams need not obscure the perfectly simple proposition to reserve for public use, as an open square, the still unimproved and comparatively low-priced property north of Filbert and west of Broad Streets.

Whether the space should have its greater length on Broad Street or on Filbert Street is a secondary question, though the most attractive plan is to extend it all the way to Arch Street and to the west line of Penn Square. All of this property can be secured now at a moderate cost, and if the opportunity be lost it is certain that in a very few years we shall regret it bitterly. Considering all the millions spent on the City Hall, it would be a small thing to spend a million more to open it to view, and considering what a gain it would be in every way to the city, we believe that this would prove a really profitable investment.

[*The Times.*]

#### SAVE THE CITY HALL.

The original blunder of building the City Hall on the intersection of Broad and Market Streets without sufficient space surrounding it, has been intensified by the new sky-scraping architecture. It is evidently but a matter of a few years when the great building will be completely concealed, at least upon three sides, as it is already upon the southeast, and we shall have spent some twenty millions of dollars in blocking up our two greatest streets without any compensating æsthetic advantage whatever.

This waste, not only of money, but of architectural opportunity, excites the wonder of every visitor to Philadelphia, and must even arouse the attention of residents if we had not fallen into the habit of passive acquiescence in municipal blundering. It is only upon the north front that the great building can be seen to any advantage and even this view would be spoiled by the very probable erection of another tall barracks at Broad and Filbert Streets.

It was one of the most important advantages expected from the proposed Fairmount Boulevard, which was to start at this point, that it would open up a vista of the City Hall from the northwest. Since the Boulevard plan has been dropped, it becomes important to secure an open view of the building in some other way, and to this end the project described by Mr. Beck, in a communication printed elsewhere, will command public attention and should lead to official action.

This is simply to extend the City Hall Plaza in the only direction in which this is now practicable, by adding to it the still unimproved block on the north side of Filbert Street west of Broad. On the east of Broad Street there is the fine Masonic Temple, with the pretty marble church next to it, and these would be an ornament to that side of the square.



This Royal Palace in Berlin is somewhat similar in dimensions to our City Hall. Note the ample and beautifully ornamented space about it. Berlin has advanced greatly in the past twenty-five years, because she has used the spoils of war in part in self-adornment.

On the west side the open space should be extended at least to Cuthbert Street and to the line of Merrick Street. No buildings of any value would be destroyed, while the new fronts thus given on the open square would tempt immediately to fine improvements.

Another mode of accomplishing the same result might be to widen Broad Street from Filbert to Arch, taking in the church property, which has been advertised for sale, and giving a new front to the properties on Fifteenth Street that would fit them finely for public buildings. In either way the gain would be enormous. It would give to the city what is one of our greatest needs, a central square, that with its fine surroundings would become at once the most distinguished and attractive feature. It would secure what is otherwise almost certain to be lost, an effective view of the imposing facade of the City Hall, as well as of the surrounding buildings, and it would also furnish a most suitable site for the great Washington Monument. And all this could be done now at comparatively little cost.

[*North American.*]

#### NOW IS THE TIME.

The great necessity for prompt measures to prevent the crowding of the new City Hall by tall buildings, and thereby shutting out forever an adequate view of its architectural beauties, is a sufficient reason for urging this question unceasingly upon City Councils. Over \$16,000,000 have already been spent on the City Hall, and it is one of the finest buildings devoted exclusively to municipal purposes in the world. Unfortunately, when the building was planned no steps were taken to surround it with a park appropriate to its massiveness and beauty, and the result is that to-day it is almost

surrounded by tall buildings. It is reasonable to suppose that similar improvements will continue on all sides of the Hall, so that in a few years it will be completely walled in by high structures, with no space left from which its architectural beauty may be seen and studied to advantage. The immense importance, therefore, of opening a space on one of its sides for the laying out of a park or plaza, becomes immediately apparent. And this necessity recognized, as it will be by all thinking men, the only question remaining is that of expense, which can be better settled now than at any other time. The plaza can be constructed now cheaper than at any other time in the future. Delay will add to the value of adjoining property, and in a generation the increase in valuation will be so great as to make the improvement practically impossible. Now is the time to set about remedying the defect, and Councils will neglect a great public duty if they do not authorize the improvement at the session which has just convened.

[*Evening Bulletin.*]

#### TAKE IT UP AT ONCE.

The City Hall Plaza idea should not be set down as one of the good things which may be taken up at some indefinite time in the future. The more it is postponed, the more difficult it will be to realize.

At the present rate of taking up the old properties surrounding the City Hall, or in its vicinity, it will be only a very few years before all the sites which are now available will be occupied by sky-scraping buildings.

There was nothing more short-sighted in the planning and construction of the Public Buildings than the failure to take advantage of the opportunities for acquiring ground which would enable the great pile to appear to advantage



Berlin has caught the art impulse from Paris. No city has made more material progress than she in the last quarter of a century. Her consequent growth in wealth and population rivals that of any American city.

architecturally, and which would save it from being hidden or hemmed in on all sides. It would be not less short-sighted if the city were now to let slip the opportunities remaining of saving the Hall from being inclosed forever by great walls of edifices from twelve to twenty stories high.

Take up the proposition for a City Hall Plaza at once. If this is not done soon, it will never be done at all.

[*The Inquirer.*]

#### MAYOR WARWICK'S MESSAGE.

Mayor Warwick in his first message to Councils makes some sensible suggestions. He sums them up in this manner: An adequate supply of pure water, the construction of the Reading Subway, the improvement of the gas works, the further extension of paving, the widening of Delaware Avenue, the deepening of the channel in the river, the opening of public parks, the generous support of the Free Library and Commercial Museum, ample accommodations for the school children, and the creation of a plaza opposite City Hall.

We are glad to say that the Mayor has given his indorsement to the proposition to condemn for park purposes a portion of the square at Broad and Filbert Streets, so that the City Hall may be saved from visual obliteration. This is a project which the new Councils ought to take hold of with zeal.

[*The Inquirer.*]

#### THE CONSTRUCTION NOW IS TRUE ECONOMY.

The defeat of this scheme (referring to another ordinance) makes it possible to adopt the plan so ably presented by the new United States District Attorney, Mr. Beck, for saving the City Hall from visual obliteration. The Betz

Building and the Broad Street Station show what is going to happen to the City Hall in the ordinary course of events. With other high buildings, which must inevitably come, the \$20,000,000 pile of folly and extravagance will be penned in and from no point can a view of it be obtained. There is but one possible opening left, and that is at the corner of Broad and Filbert Streets.

Mr. Beck's idea is to condemn a half a square for park purposes and to plant the space with trees and shrubbery. Open this space to the public and a view of the City Hall can be forever preserved, but build it up with high buildings and the great structure will be almost lost sight of. The property can be obtained now for a much less sum than a few years hence. All that is necessary is to condemn it. The payment would extend over some years and could be easily met.

[*The Inquirer.*]

#### UNIVERSALLY APPROVED.

The Philadelphians of the future will owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Beck for his efforts to make the most of the City Hall. He has, fortunately, been successful in persuading the authorities to adorn the interior walls of some of the chambers with mural paintings, and he is the most active advocate of the long-discussed proposition to open a plaza on at least one side of the City Hall, in order that the building may not be entirely buried from sight. It is to be hoped that he will succeed also in this where so many before him have failed, and if so he will be the instrument of relieving the present generation of Philadelphians from the criticism of future Philadelphians through all time.

Mr. Beck's wise suggestion has been indorsed by nearly every newspaper in the city, and it must commend itself to



Milan has one-third of the population of Philadelphia, but she has built this noble Cathedral and constructed in front of it as the centre of its commercial and public life this magnificent plaza. Shall the present generation of Philadelphians lastingly impeach its taste and culture by neglecting a like need?

every person who will give the subject a moment's thought. The indifference which has prevailed to the obvious need of surrounding at least some portions of the City Hall with open ground seems at least to be changing to a wholesome and public-spirited interest. It is fortunate that this is so. A similar indifference in earlier times would have prevented the city from acquiring Fairmount Park. Who now regrets the expense or fails to commend the wisdom of the city

fathers of the earlier time, who had the courage to face temporary opposition and to confer upon the city for all time so great a blessing as is afforded in Philadelphia's great park?

There is but one corner that the city can procure at a moderate price, that at Broad and Filbert Streets. From this point the City Hall can be seen at its best, and by making a park here the building will be rescued from a complete hemming in by tall structures.

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## THE PROPOSED CITY HALL PARK IS INDORSED BY MANY CITIZENS OF LOCAL PROMINENCE.

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[The *Bulletin* obtained the views of a number of prominent Philadelphians regarding the proposed City Hall Park on the ground bounded by Broad, Fifteenth, Filbert, and Cuthbert Streets. Not only is the contemplated improvement cordially indorsed, but as a general thing the suggestion is so much admired that an extension of the idea is advised. The views expressed below will be read with interest, not because of the sentiment of approval regarding the City Hall Plaza alone, but for the various hints and valuable thoughts contained in them in connection with further adornments of a similar character. The problem of placing the City Hall in a position where its beauty and architectural worth may be admired and appreciated is all but solved in these remarks, and much light is thrown upon the long-debated question of property demolition in connection with the enhancement of valuations. Those whose views are given in connection with this important subject include Hampton L. Carson, William

Platt Pepper, Thomas Meehan, George D. McCreary, Colonel Charles H. Banes, P. A. B. Widener, Thomas Dolan, W. L. Elkins, Senator Charles A. Porter, George Bartol, W. T. R. Roberts, Allen Evens, and Leslie W. Miller.]

### P. A. B. WIDENER.

"It ought to have been done when the building was projected. I almost despair of results now. However, it is worth trying for. I am heartily in favor of it."

### HAMPTON L. CARSON.

"I am heartily in favor of the proposition to make an open public park of the ground in question, and I think great advantages to the public would flow from it. It must not be forgotten that this is the point of convergence of our municipal life, owing to the presence of the City Hall, the public offices,



Venice needed little but its canals and water spaces. Nevertheless, observe this ample space in front of the Cathedral of St. Mark and the Ducal Palace,

the proximity of the great railway depots and of important business houses. If we are now suffering from a want of space with a population of a million and a quarter, within twenty years the density of population will obstruct locomotion as well as business if some proper outlet is not provided.

Owing to the fact that the City Hall now stands at the intersection of our two great highways, there is an undoubted obstruction, and vehicles are compelled to turn to right or left in a manner which is unusual in cities of this size. To open up a large public space to the northwest of the City Hall would afford not only a convenient relief from pressure, but would also serve as a needed breathing space, to say nothing of the opportunities for observing the fine architecture of the City Hall and the handsome buildings of the Masonic Temple and the Pennsylvania Railroad Depot.

It is only a question of time when the three churches at Broad and Arch Streets will be removed. They have long since ceased to be a centre of the daily walks of the members of the congregations. Two of them are now for sale, and should they in time be removed we could establish on the north side of the City Hall a sort of Place de la Concorde, where the statues of great men could be placed, with fountains and beds of flowers, together with clumps of shrubbery and trees. Trees have disappeared from our highways, but no one who has admired Dupont Square, McPherson Square, Lafayette Square, and Farragut Square, in the city of Washington, can fail to see what an attractive spot Broad and Market Streets would become with the expenditure of a comparatively small sum of money and the pursuit of a definite policy in public improvements, looking wisely to the future.

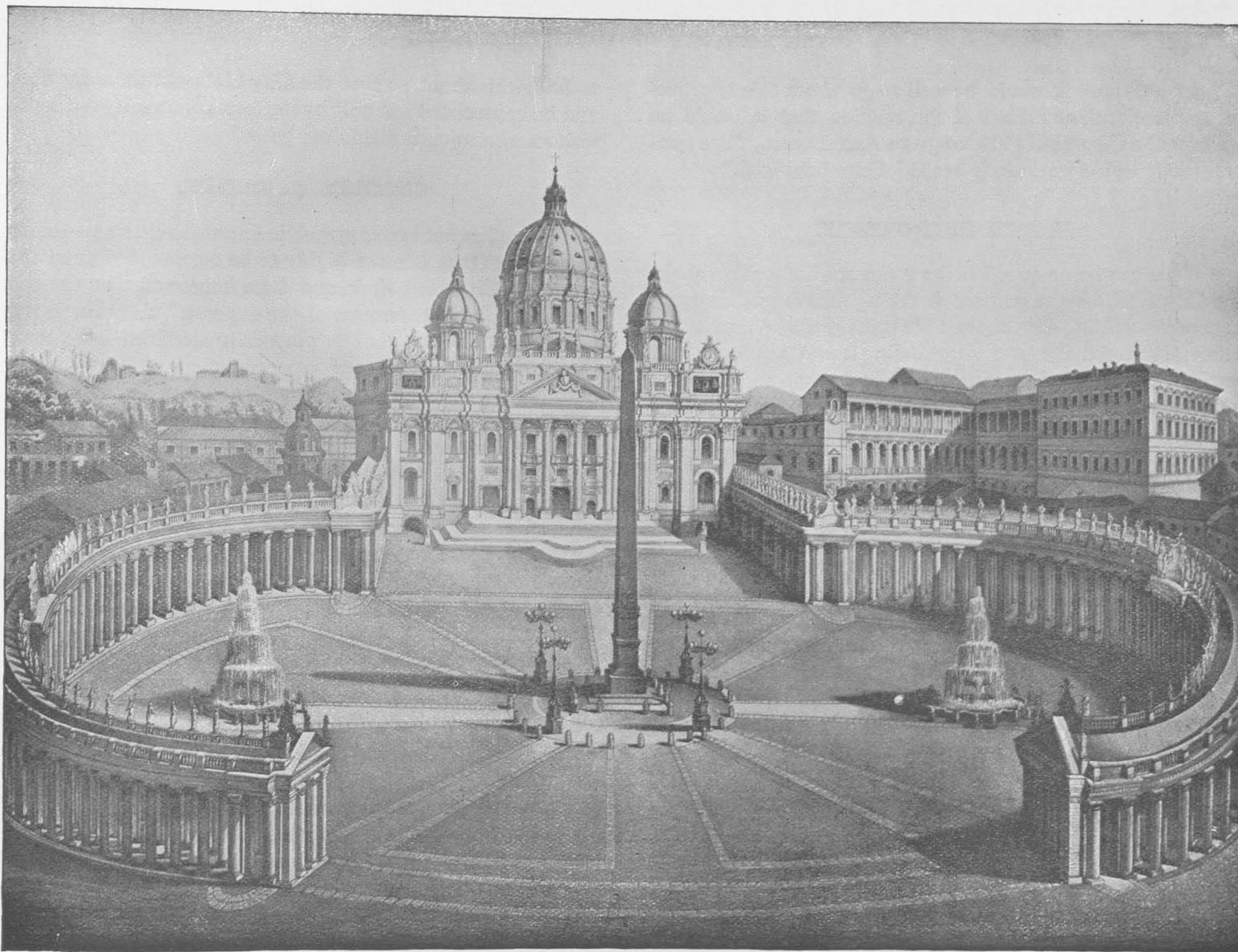
Another improvement in the immediate neighborhood might be suggested, and that is the opening of what was

formerly Merrick Street, directly through the livery stable on the south side of Penn Square, so as to give a continuous drive and walk in a straight line from the Broad Street Station into Chestnut Street. This would greatly relieve pressure, as the present buildings act as a dam, so to speak. Extensive buildings and improvements would necessarily follow, as handsome buildings in rectangular blocks would take the place of the present small and inferior ones. Chestnut Street itself would be improved as a highway by this additional avenue open between Broad and Fifteenth Streets, and the opportunities for the growth of public pride in developing our City Hall Park would naturally follow.

I would not confine the statues about the City Hall to military heroes. The statues of men like Franklin, Robert Morris, James Wilson, and Anthony Wayne might very well be placed there, with the equestrian statues already on the north side of the City Hall. In fact, it would relieve the eye and greatly add to the interest of the collection if a few civilians were introduced in the peculiar dress appropriate to colonial and revolutionary days."

**COL. CHARLES H. BANES.**

"Generally speaking, I favor the City Hall Park suggestion, but I think the improvement should not stop there. To a certain extent the real estate glut of value all centres at that point because people are not in the habit of going west of Broad Street. If the city would extend the suggestion, taking in the property north of Chestnut Street from Broad to Fifteenth, and then run up to Cuthbert, opening up all this area, the increased valuation in west Chestnut Street and west Market Street would soon recompense the city for the outlay.



Observe this elliptical plaza, or, as the Italians say, piazza, in front of St. Peter's. A race, at which we Americans sometimes sneer, built this Cathedral and plaza at a cost of \$50,000,000.

I do not think it would be well to go about this improvement piecemeal, and I am of the opinion that it would be well for the City Hall Park to go to Arch Street. The general result would be entirely healthful and beneficial."

**GEORGE D. McCREARY.**

"There can be no question about the need of a plaza about the City Hall, for the purpose of taking that magnificent and expensive building out of the hole it is in, as also preventing other large buildings from surrounding it and putting it still further in a hole, and to that end I think that the proposed plaza will be an advantageous improvement to the City Hall as well as to the city itself.

Perhaps every-day association with a building of such magnitude as City Hall brings about a familiarity which does not carry with it the appreciation that it would do if, as visitors in other cities and other lands, we were to see a building of that kind which would itself command our admiration and wonder.

The question of the plaza should not be confined simply to a narrow strip, but should be extended so as to include that area running through to Fifteenth Street and Chestnut Streets, as also from Filbert Street north to Arch, so that the City Hall would then loom up in its magnitude and the value of the plaza be made apparent by the reason of the enlarged perspective.

There is no city in the United States that has such a building, and if there was it would be advertised and considered one of the show sights of the city, attracting visitors and spreading the fame of the same as possessing one of the most remarkable edifices in the country, if not in the world. Civic pride should make us willing to expend the necessary money

to bring this about, so that the City Hall will show for itself and be appreciated not only by the local community but by all visitors who sojourn within our gates."

**CHARLES A. PORTER.**

"There has not been any public improvement suggested in recent years that is more highly to be commended than the proposed City Hall Park, and I am impressed that the city should not hesitate because of the expense. At present the beauty of the City Hall is practically sacrificed because of the nondescript character of its surroundings. The buildings north, south, east, and west of it are good, bad, and indifferent, and the opening of a park in the space suggested is a step in the right direction.

I do not think, however, that the idea should stop there, but that gradually it should be extended. Once the public realized the advantages and attractiveness of the proposed park, they will, I am convinced, be clamorous to have other parks around the hall. I should like to see the proposition consummated. It is like every other public improvement. Once it is obtained, and the people realize its value, they won't be able to get enough of it."

**THOMAS DOLAN.**

"It ought to have been done long ago. It was a great mistake to erect so magnificent a building—the finest of its kind in the world—and permit it to be hemmed in from sight. A large open square or plaza should have been created on every side. Let Councils make some amends before it is too late. If it is put off the property will either become too valuable for the purpose or will be built up. The idea is a good one. I would take the entire square from Broad to Fifteenth and



Athens placed her crowning glory, the Parthenon, on her central summit, the Acropolis, with a large open space about it. Shall Philadelphia, with twenty-three hundred years of added human experience, refuse to provide the latter for her City Hall?

from Filbert to Arch Streets. That's little enough. Nor would I erect upon it a public library or any other building. Let the space be kept open and laid out in a beautiful flower garden. It might be found desirable to add some statues or other works of art. Such an addition to the Public Buildings would so increase the value of the surrounding property as to give the city in new taxes full return for the outlay. This is the time to do it. Delay will only increase the expense."

**WILLIAM PLATT PEPPER.**

"I am decidedly in favor of having a City Hall Plaza, and I think that the members of the Park Commission would also look kindly on the scheme. My idea is to get as many of these 'breathing spots' in the city as possible. We already have a number, but we need more, especially in the heart of the city. It would be a grand adornment and a pleasant view for visitors to the city as they came out from the Pennsylvania Railroad Depot. I shall be pleased to lend my name and influence toward the consummation of the desired project.

There is one thing that will be hard to do, and that is to get Councils to make the desired appropriation to purchase the property. We have just got the Bartram Park ordinance through Councils, and as they were to act favorably on that, they may do the same with the plaza. The amount involved is so small in comparison to the great good that will accrue from having the square at that place."

**WILLIAM L. ELKINS.**

"It's the city's last chance to make something of a structure that has cost the taxpayers millions, and which is now invisible at the distance of a block. But it is not necessary

to take the entire square from Broad to Fifteenth Streets. I would draw the line northward to Arch Street on a level with the City Hall front of the Pennsylvania Railroad Building. That would give all the space that is necessary for the purpose.

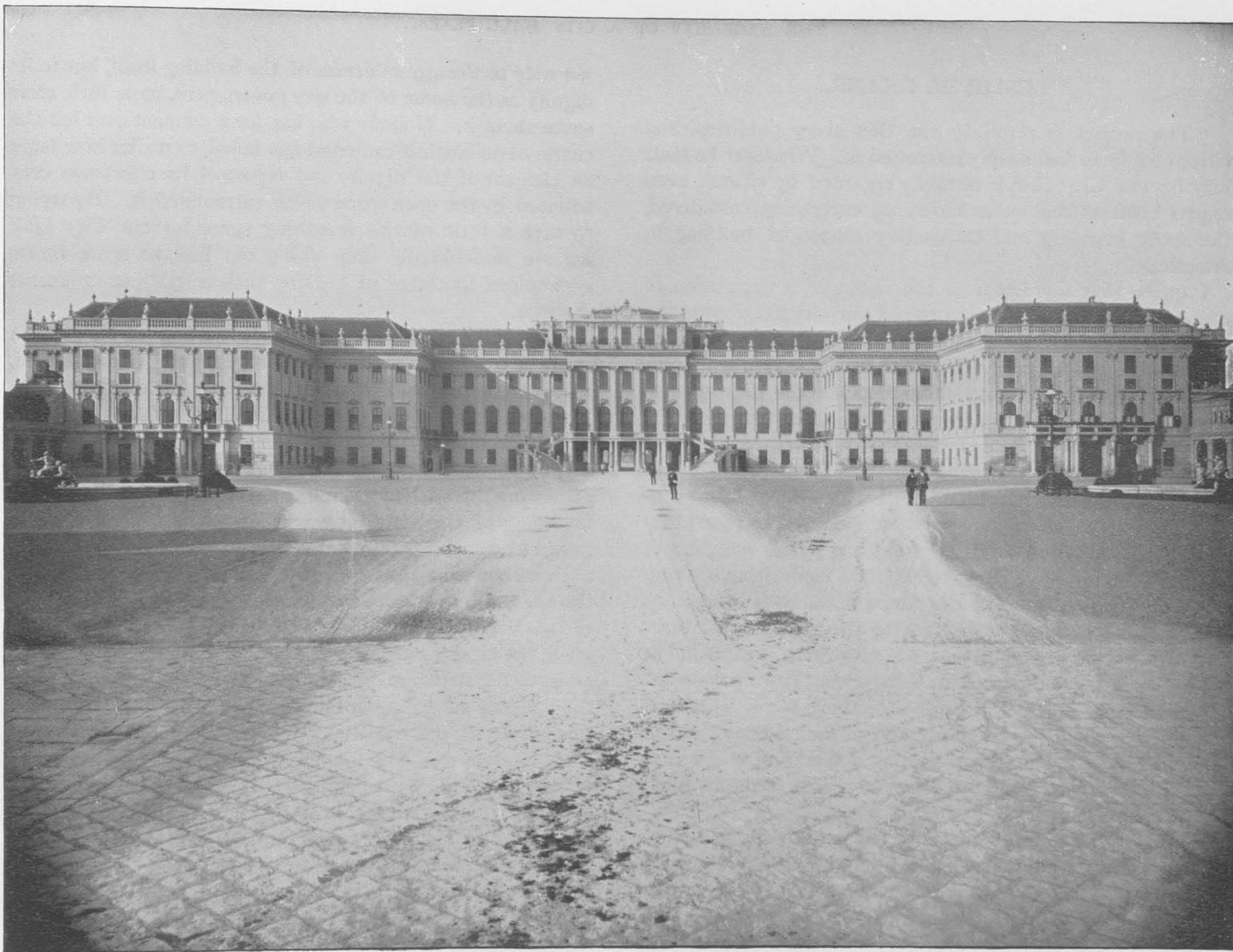
The city could well afford to make the outlay, as the increased value of the surrounding property and the consequent gains in taxes would more than pay for the improvement. The beautifying effects of an open square at that point are not to be measured by dollars and cents. They would be incalculable. This is the only open space left for the purpose, as I understand that a fourteen-story building is soon to go upon the corner opposite the Betz Building.

It is a chance that ought not to be wasted. Let Councils, before it is too late, make provision for properly showing the building that has cost the city and the taxpayers so vast an amount of money.

And while we are on the subject, it seems to me that the middle of the proposed square would make a splendid site for the Public Library. We should provide for that, and what better place could be chosen? It is central and always will be. The idea is at least worth considering."

**GEORGE E. BARTOL.**

"We should by all means have such an improvement as the plaza would be. The lot is not a costly one considering the size and location, but it should have been bought when the Public Buildings were started and the property was cheaper. It would take the place of Penn Square, which was taken in by the City Hall. Such a plaza as is contemplated would add greatly to the attractiveness of the Public Buildings, whose beauty is now hidden by the tall buildings surrounding it."



On all sides of this palace of Schoenbrunn, in Vienna, are open spaces and beautiful parks. It is the abode of monarchy. Shall not our palace of democracy have at least one open space about it?

**LESLIE W. MILLER.**

"The project is certainly one that every public-spirited citizen ought to feel deeply interested in. Whatever its fault may be, our City Hall is certainly regarded by visitors, even expert visitors from other cities, as, everything considered, the most imposing and satisfactory municipal building in America.

I quote that opinion from the report of a deputation of councilmen from Boston, who visited our city a few years ago with the express purpose of examining this building, along with similar buildings in other cities, in connection with proposed enlargement of accommodations for the city government of Boston. This being the case, it is clear that the building deserves to be treated with more respect than has been shown for it hitherto.

That the hideous office buildings which have been constructed in its neighborhood have been allowed to practically bury it, without even a protest from any public man, is not only unfortunate—it is disgraceful. If I could have my way I would have the Betz Building torn down to-morrow. Its ugliness alone makes it a disgrace to the city, and whatever its character, it has no business to stand where it does and at the height it has reached. But if we cannot tear down existing structures, we can at least do something to prevent their indefinite multiplication, and preserve at least a corner of the remaining space from a corresponding desecration, and secure one point from which light and air and a view of the building can be obtained.

Everybody who knows anything about such things knows that the effect of all important buildings is mainly one of a reasonable distance from which the structure is to be regarded. Moreover, nothing could be done that would add so much,

not only to the attractiveness of the building itself, but to its dignity as the home of the city government, as a little clear space about it. Nobody who has for a moment ever felt the charm of an English cathedral has failed to realize how large an element of the dignity and repose of its effect was contributed by the open space which surrounded it. By trying to save a little of this breathing space for our City Hall we are undoubtedly only doing our best to spare future generations the labor of clearing such a space at enormous expense.

They will certainly do it, just as it has had to be done in many a town of Continental Europe, where the cathedral, which is the centre of municipal architectural effect at least, has often been buried as our City Hall is fast being buried by ugly and commonplace structures which have had to be bought up and cleared away. Shall we not try to do our part of this good work? If we had a site like that of the Capitol at Washington, or of the State Houses at Boston or Albany, the case would be somewhat different.

In each of these cases a great deal of dignity attaches to the site itself, irrespective of the clear space around or in front of it. But here in Philadelphia, where everything is on a level, the clear space is absolutely our only means of giving effect to the structure. Seen from Arch Street, across a park, the faults of design in our City Hall, which are mainly questions of detail, the trivialness and commonplace character of its decoration would be forgotten, and only the impressiveness of its mass would be remembered. Considered in this way it is really, with the exception of the roof, a very majestic building, and it would be a great pity if we do not, among the many millions which we spend on it, expend at least one in the only way that can make its good qualities really effective.



The Canadians have built better than we. They have not committed the monumental, almost incredible, folly of constructing their \$4,000,000 Parliament building without leaving sufficient open space to see it.

Of the two propositions that have been made, namely, to secure either the space from Filbert to Cuthbert and from Broad to Fifteenth, or from Filbert to Arch and taking the strip which would extend as far west as the line of the front of the Pennsylvania Railroad Station, the last is clearly the best. The main thing is to get distance from the front of the building."

**W. BLEDDYN POWELL.**

(Present Architect of the City Hall.)

"I hope the scheme for a plaza about the new City Hall will find many and powerful advocates. It is a matter of surprise to me, speaking as a citizen, that our municipal buildings should be permitted to be hemmed in and dwarfed by taller structures. I am sure an open square, or as much of it as may now be had, will commend itself to all our citizens, and their only regret will be that it was so long delayed as to prevent the embracing of more territory."

**PROF. WARREN P. LAIRD.**

(In charge School of Architecture of the University of Pennsylvania.)

"The Public Buildings of Philadelphia are at once among the most ambitious and the least effective of all structures yet erected for the purposes of municipal government.

Planned on a vast scale, of unusual breadth and height, the proportions of this structure can be realized only if seen in their entirety and at a proper distance. As seen from any point of view at present available the building entirely lacks that impressiveness which should belong to it. This is because a full view can be had only from points so near the structure that an impression is given of overpowering bigness without sense of the relation of municipal parts to one another and the whole, the eye being incapable of taking in at so short

a range the entire design. Moreover, when the observer stands at a distance in which details are lost and the building as a whole should be easily judged the street openings reveal little else than a single motif—central pavilion or tower, as the case may be.

Thus it has come about that we know and remember our City Hall chiefly for its imposing size, and, secondarily, for those isolated portions we may have seen most often in passing. But we neither understand nor appreciate it as a great public monument, a complete and harmonious whole, and it can never be so understood or appreciated until it may be viewed, as a whole, from a suitable point of view.

Such a point of view will be provided if the suggestion is carried out to convert to an open space that territory touching the northwest corner of City Hall Square. This will be especially advantageous in giving a sufficient range of view of the tower facade, the natural front of the building.

So important is this matter of open space and approach for public buildings that throughout Europe it is considered a vital part of the general scheme of study for the building, and it is often realized at great cost by the opening of squares and broad avenues through built-up districts of the city.

Every consideration that demanded and justified the elaborate architectural treatment of this great edifice is equally strong as a reason for giving it at least some portion of that architectural advantage of open space to which it is entitled, and without which no public monument should be erected."

**THE T-SQUARE CLUB INDORSEMENT.**

The T-Square Club, composed of the leading architects and artists of our city, unanimously passed the following resolutions :—

"WHEREAS, The suggestion having been made that the



A faint suggestion of the improvement which the plaza would be. It is dwarfed in this sketch. Give the idea its true dimensions, and what a contribution it would be to the beauty of Philadelphia.

ground immediately to the northwest of the Public Buildings be converted into a park or open square ;

AND WHEREAS, The said Public Buildings are now nearly inclosed by tall buildings of prominent character, thus rendering an adequate and favorable view of the entire structure an impossibility ;

AND WHEREAS, The carrying out of said proposition will provide an extremely favorable point of view of the buildings upon their principal frontage ; be it

*Resolved*, That the T-Square Club heartily indorses this measure as one calculated to greatly enhance the architectural effect of the building."



This is our City Hall as it now looks on one side, and will soon look on every side, if the plaza is not constructed. What a commentary on our want of foresight.

FEB 27 1906