

CITY'S NEW ART MUSEUM TO BE AMERICAS' FINEST

Artistic Beauty, Utility and Site to Be Unrivaled in Hemisphere, Says McCain

PLOT ON IMPOSING BLUFF AT UPPER END OF PARKWAY

\$1,800,000 Appropriated for Structure—Will House Elkins and Johnson Collections

By GEORGE NOX MCCAIN

THE enterprise that will reflect the greatest glory upon the city of Philadelphia, from the standpoint of architectural and artistic beauty, combined with utility, is the magnificent Museum of Art that is now under construction on the cliff facing the Parkway at its upper end.

It will not only be the finest art palace in this country, but in point of beauty and suitability of location it will be the most imposing art center in this hemisphere. When the question "What is the matter with Philadelphia?" is asked in the future, the reply, so far as its art and art collections are concerned, must be emphatically, "Nothing."

It is impossible in the scope of an article such as the present one to convey an adequate idea of the structure itself and what it will mean to the Philadelphia of the future. Only a study of ensemble of buildings, approaches and remarkable topographical features, can give a correct idea of the beautiful and unique conception.

Work upon the Art Museum, which will be the main structure, is progressing rapidly. Under the terms of the contract the foundations must be level with the terrace upon which the structure will stand by the 1st of the coming July.

The terrace itself is 650 feet long by 550 feet wide. The museum building will be 550 feet by 200 feet.

The structure will be in the shape of a gigantic letter "E". The upper and lower arms will take the form of colonnades with a space of 200 feet between their walls on the inside. The center bar of the letter will be represented by a magnificent pillared entrance approached by a wide flight of steps.

rows of columns in harmony with the design of the main entrance.

Issue Handsome Monograph

During the last year a handsome monograph, consisting exclusively of photographs and chromatic engravings of the new art center, was issued by the Fairmount Park Commission. The brief introductory preface tells that the Parkway and the Philadelphia Museum of Art to be erected on the height of Fairmount is the "result of the study of more than twenty-five years of architects and city planners."

This remarkable building, the Art Museum, is the principal unit in the general design of the entire Parkway scheme, including the improvement of Logan square and the adjacent thoroughfares. It will be the architectural background of the Parkway itself.

Thus far \$1,800,000 has been appropriated for the Museum of Art, but the commission is authorized to make contracts for a further \$2,000,000. The new city loan, which will be voted upon the coming November, will doubtless include an item of two or three million dollars additional to permit the commission to continue the work to completion.

It is not the purpose of the Fairmount Park commissioners to ask an appropri-

ation in lump sum to complete the plan.

It was not considered a fundamentally sound financial proposition to borrow money in the aggregate and permit it to lie idle during the progress of the work. For that reason expenditure will be made and appropriations asked for as the work proceeds in accordance with the accepted plans of the architects, thus achieving the purpose of extending the loans over a period of years.

A certain amount of careful expedition is necessary in prosecuting the building contract, which is held by a Philadelphia firm.

The great Elkins art collection is to be housed in the museum. Under the terms of Mr. Elkins' will, within five years from his death the city must provide an adequate building for the safety and display of the collection. This, it would seem, would virtually guarantee the completion of the structure during the term of the present city administration.

Will Not Unduly Rush Work

Yet it is not the purpose, either of the commissioners or the architects, to rush the work in any unseasonable manner. It is a building to last for ages, and

not only the structure itself, but the entire scheme of avenues, parkways and associated buildings must be considered in connection with the completion of the museum proper.

Within this building the great John G. Johnston art collection will also find a home. This collection, with the exception of a certain portion of it, which is on exhibition, is in a storage warehouse in this city. There is no specified time for the final hanging of the collection for the benefit of the public. The great lawyer wrote in his will: "I care nothing whatever for architectural effects. What I want erected is a building constructed in the best way properly to exhibit the pictures."

He still further set forth that this art collection, which has been variously appraised at from \$2,000,000 to \$4,000,000, shall not be removed to any other place unless some extraordinary situation shall arise.

It is understood that the reason for removing the collection from the former Johnston home at 510 South Broad street to a fireproof storage warehouse was the danger of fire.

In spite of the rival claims of New York and Boston, Philadelphia remains today, as she has always been, the art

center of the western world. The completion of the new museum of art and its associated buildings will still further emphasize this fact, for in addition will also become the home of the Willstach pictures, or what remains of them, when the structure is completed.

The Academy of the Fine Arts and the School of Industrial Art, which includes also the Philadelphia Textile School, are to be maintained in separate buildings, part of the group system, the whole forming one superb art center. Tentative plans have been prepared for both these buildings, which will occupy sites on the opposite side of the Fairmount plaza from the museum proper.

The area of ground allotted to each is triangular in shape and will be about 600 feet on its longest axis.

To preserve the general harmony, and in accordance with the regulations established by the Park Commission, the Pennsylvania School of Industrial Art will be enabled to erect a structure four stories in height, with sufficient accommodations for its schools for years to come.

It is proposed to sell the present buildings on South Broad street. In the meantime the alumni association of the Textile School, which is a part of the School of Industrial Art, has undertaken to raise a fund of \$2,000,000, which can be used in the erection of the new buildings. On the sale of the pres-

ent building the association is to be reimbursed and the fund thereafter administered solely for the maintenance and development of the Textile School.

It is difficult to say how far recent criticism of the conduct and affairs of the Academy of the Fine Arts will influence harmonious progress toward the erection of its new building as a part of this art center scheme. The splendid work accomplished in all its past years, this institution, however, is a guarantee that its future is assured.

When the plans for this achievement of a distinctive art center reach completion Philadelphia will stand pre-eminently the art center of the western world.

"What's the Matter With Philadelphia?"

THE Elkins and Johnson collections of paintings will be a nucleus for the splendid new art museum which is now under construction on its cliff, at the end of the Parkway.

As Colonel McCain points out in this article, the Museum, the finest in the country, will further emphasize Philadelphia's claim to be the art center of the western world.

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