

THE CITY HALL, BALTIMORE

By BENNARD B. PERLMAN

BALTIMORE'S City Hall, dwarfed by some of the larger downtown buildings, is the result of a struggle which extended over the first 75 years of the city's corporate existence and which involved scores of its most capable and energetic citizens. No longer surrounded by similar stylistic structures which have been destroyed or were burned in the Great Fire of 1904, the City Hall, as viewed from across the War Memorial Plaza, is a jewel of architectural ornateness which seems content to nestle in its 20th century surroundings.

Baltimore's fight for a city hall began almost immediately after its establishment as a city, more than 150 years ago. On December 31, 1796, the General Assembly of Maryland passed an act by which Baltimore-Town was erected into a city. Shortly thereafter, the subject of the construction of a city hall arose, and in 1801 the first of a long series of ordinances was passed. It conferred upon an appointed Board of Commissioners, which included such notables as Elias Ellicott and Nicholas Rogers, the authority to purchase a lot of ground and to erect upon it a suitable building for a city hall.¹ The sixth section of this ordinance authorized the board to procure an appropriate house to accommodate the city council and office of mayor until the new city hall could be completed. There is no evidence that the Commission ever submitted a report upon the subject of a new city hall; in any case, the building was not erected.²

Until that time—from 1797 to 1801—the city council had met at the house of James Long, on Front Street. Upon the failure

¹ *The City Hall Baltimore. History of Construction and Dedication* (Baltimore, 1877), p. 9.

² "The City Hall of Baltimore—Imposing Dedicatory Ceremonies," *The Sun*, October 26, 1875. From the Address by Mayor Joshua Vansant.

of the Commission to purchase a site and have a city hall constructed upon it, Mayor James Calhoun issued the following proclamation on September 24, 1801:

Whereas it appears to me that the public good of the citizens of Baltimore requires the deliberation of the city council at this time: I, therefore, in persuance of the power invested in me, summon the said council to meet at the buildings belonging to Maryland Insurance Company, on South Street, at three o'clock this afternoon. . . .³

The following year, the mayor and city council suspended all action under the original ordinance for a period of three years, and in 1806 the erection of a city hall was indefinitely postponed by passage of an act which repealed the Ordinance of 1801.⁴

The South Street building of the Maryland Insurance Company was occupied for municipal purposes until 1810 or 1812, at which time the mayor and city council purchased a building at the corner of Holliday Street and Orange Alley. This structure was used as a city hall until December, 1817, when the Baltimore Dancing Assembly Rooms, at the northeast corner of Holliday and East (now Fayette) Streets were acquired. The property was occupied in February, 1818, and was utilized by the city council and other municipal officers until March 20, 1823. At that time the city entered into an agreement with the Baltimore Exchange Company, leasing offices from it for a period of five years, at \$800 per annum. The lease was renewed and these offices were occupied until the year 1830.⁵

The Baltimore Exchange Company was located at the northwest corner of Gay and Water (now Lombard) Streets in a four-story edifice built in 1817. The building contained an attractive rotunda and dome designed by Benjamin H. Latrobe, architect of the U. S. Capitol. The remainder of the structure was planned by Colonel Jacob Small, a local architect, who became mayor of Baltimore a dozen years later.⁶

Having made no progress thus far in the direction of erecting a city hall, the idea was abandoned, and in 1830 the City of Baltimore purchased Peale's Museum and Gallery of Fine Arts to be

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *The City Hall Baltimore, op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁵ "The City Hall of Baltimore—Imposing Dedicatory Ceremonies," *op. cit.*

⁶ *Program of Exercises Incident to Closing Old Custom House Building, Baltimore, Md., December 29, 1900*, p. 5.

used for that purpose. The three-story structure on Holliday Street had been designed by Robert Cary Long, the elder, and built in 1813 at a cost of more than \$14,000. It was constructed for artist Rembrandt Peale as a museum devoted to the arts and sciences, even though Charles Willson Peale, his father, had advised against the undertaking, after having directed a similar venture in Philadelphia. In 1822 Rembrandt sold the museum to his brother, Rubens Peale, but because of continued financial losses, Rubens abandoned the project in 1830. In that year arrangements were concluded by Mayor Jacob Small to purchase the building for use as a city hall.⁷

The acquisition of Peale's Museum by the city only temporarily eliminated the necessity of building a city hall, for as Baltimore expanded geographically and commercially, the need for larger municipal quarters became apparent. In 1853, with interest renewed in the erection of a new structure, a committee was appointed to select a site for the proposed city hall.⁸ The following year a "very neat drawing" was submitted to the committee by Mr. Alexander Murdock, Treasurer of the First Presbyterian Church. Since the committee's instructions had been only to select a site for the building, they did not feel obliged to report on the merits of the plan submitted by Mr. Murdock.⁹ They did, however, investigate the site which he suggested, and it was the one eventually chosen.

The intention was to close what was then Orange Alley and extend Lexington Street through to Holliday Street. The building would form an oblong square measuring approximately 234 feet by 151 feet, bounded by Lexington, Holliday, Fayette, and North (now Guilford Avenue) Streets.¹⁰ The committee pointed out that a structure proposed for this site could only receive light from two sides and that an excavation of 12 feet would be necessary,¹¹ due to the fall of the land from the southwest to the northeast corner of the lot.¹² Despite these undesirable elements, an

⁷ Richard Carl Medford, "Baltimore's Municipal Museum," *The Municipal Museum Bulletin*, VI (February 1, 1945).

⁸ *The City Hall Baltimore, op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁹ Archives of the City of Baltimore, for the year 1854, document 707. Hereinafter referred to as City Hall Archives followed by year and document number.

¹⁰ *The City Hall Baltimore, op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹¹ City Hall Archives, 1854-707.

¹² *The City Hall Baltimore, op. cit.*, p. 126.

ordinance was passed on May 11, 1854, approving the purchase of this property as the site for the proposed city hall.

Following acquisition of the land, no further action was taken until April 13, 1860, when Mr. Edward Spedden introduced a resolution in the First Branch of the City Council. It directed the city commissioners to advertise in the daily newspapers of the city for a suitable city hall plan. The drawings and specifications were to be submitted on or before June 20 of that year, and the sum of \$400 paid to the architect or architects whose plan would be chosen by Mayor Swann and the City Council.

The day after the deadline for receiving the entries, Mayor Swann wrote to the City Council as follows:

I beg leave to transmit herewith four plans of a City Hall, prepared in accordance with a resolution of your honorable body, approved April 25th, 1860. The details and estimates of the several architects will be found to accompany these drawings.

Upon careful examination of these plans, I deem it my duty to suggest that such alteration in the details may be authorized by your honorable body as will dedicate the entire space of the third floor of the building to the purposes of a grand hall for the meeting of the people on occasions of great public interest. This can be done without interference with the accommodation of the various offices required for the use of the city, and perhaps with decided advantage in many respects.

The four plans which accompanied the Mayor's communication had been submitted by William T. Marshall, William T. Murdoch, John J. Husband, and Thomas and James M. Dixon.¹³ All of the plans proposed a basement story of stores or offices which would be rented, thus providing a source of income for the city, in addition to creating greater elevation for the building.¹⁴

On June 28, 1860, both Branches of the City Council adjourned "at an early hour" for the purpose of examining the plans for the new City Hall, and hearing explanations by the architects.¹⁵ The plans were then referred to the Joint Standing Committee, whose report the following month indicated that "the design, plan and specifications submitted by Mr. William T. Marshall are the best adapted for the wants of this community."¹⁶ The

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁴ "The New City Hall," *The Sun*, June 22, 1860.

¹⁵ "Proceedings of the City Council," *The Sun*, June 28, 1860.

¹⁶ Resolutions approved July 17 and July 20, 1860, by the First and Second Branches of the City Council, respectively. City Hall Archives, 1860-946.

resolution approved of the selection and provided, in addition to \$400 for Mr. Marshall, the sum of \$300 to each of the other three competitors as remuneration for their "considerable time and labor."¹⁷

The winning plan of William T. Marshall, as described in *The Sun* of July 18, 1860, specified that the building would be 242 feet 3 inches by 152 feet 4 inches, and would front on Holliday and North streets. The exterior order of architecture was to be pure Corinthian, placed upon a rustic basement which formed the ground story. The foundation was to be of granite and the rest of the building of brick, faced with polished white marble. The two main façades were to be adorned by a portico of six Corinthian columns, flanked by pilasters, two antae, and two columns.

On the interior there were two open courts situated on either side of the rotunda basement. A dome, 36 feet in diameter and raised to the height of 154 feet, was to have capped the rotunda. The lantern was surmounted by a personification of Peace, who held in her hand the laurels of victory and who wore the liberty cap. At each of the four corners of the building were octagonal cupolas measuring 18 feet in diameter, each one being crowned by a flag-staff.

The dome was graced by a colonnade 50 feet in diameter, formed of iron Corinthian columns, supporting a light entablature. Above the colonnade was a balustrade, upheld by iron brackets over a paneled attic. Another balustrade was planned for the top of the dome, so that from either vantage point an observer could view the city and surrounding countryside. The dome itself was fluted, and in the alternate spaces between the ribs there were windows which opened to a bell story.

The first floor was designed as a series of fireproof rooms and vaults for the mayor, various other city officials, and boards. The other rooms on the first floor, as well as the entire sub-basement, were designed as private offices to be rented. One large apartment was to be set aside for the city library.

On the second floor were rooms which housed the two branches of the City Council, the entire wing on Fayette Street being appropriated for their use. In each of the Council Chambers there was a gallery which could be entered from the floor above. The re-

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

mainder of the second floor, except for that portion occupied by the city commissioners, afforded additional office space.

The third floor, at the Mayor's suggestion, was designed as a general armory and large hall. The armory consisted of six double and two single rooms. The hall, having a capacity of four or five thousand people, was to be used for conventions and town meetings. The two apartments were connected, so that when the need arose for additional space for drilling, benches which filled the hall could be hoisted up to the ceiling and stored in a room above.

The rotunda under the dome rose from the second floor to a height of 75 feet. Light would pierce the rotunda through large windows in each of the open courts, and through 12 smaller windows in the drum of the dome. The drum and peristyle was situated above the roof of the building. The rotunda contained eight Corinthian pilasters, which were of the same height and supported an entablature similar to that which appeared on the exterior of the structure. Between the dome of the rotunda and the outer dome there was a large room designed to house a massive alarm bell. Beneath the crypt of the dome was to be located the apparatus for supplying either steam or hot-water heat to the new city hall building.¹⁸

On July 23, 1860, the City Council authorized the building of a city hall to cover the block-square site which had earlier been proposed. The ordinance stipulated that the structure had to be fireproof and faced with white marble. No limit was set as to the cost, although it was estimated at \$1,000,000, half of which was to be borrowed from the McDonough Fund.¹⁹

The McDonough Educational Fund had been left by John McDonough "for the establishment of an institute for the education and maintenance of poor boys." In order to facilitate the erection of a new city hall, the ordinance called for a loan of these funds, rather than their permanent investment in securities. The amount of the loan was not to exceed \$500,000, it being secured by a mortgage upon the ground and building to be constructed.²⁰

Although the ordinance was passed, a question arose concerning the issuing of City Hall stock for the money borrowed from

¹⁸ "Local Matters—The New City Hall Project," *The Sun*, July 18, 1860.

¹⁹ City Hall Archives, 1861-286.

²⁰ *The Sun*, July 12, 1860.

the McDonough Fund. Two months earlier Mayor Swann had appointed a commission to select and purchase the site for a proposed public park.²¹ The McDonough Fund was also to have been used to enable the issuance of park stock. If authority were claimed under the ordinance to arrange for financing the City Hall with the amount borrowed from the McDonough Fund, what became of the right to issue stock for a public park?²²

The controversy over use of the McDonough Fund was short-lived, for in Mayor George William Brown's annual communication to the City Council on January 7, 1861, he revealed that the lowest bid received for the construction of the entire City Hall building was \$648,693.58, almost \$150,000 more than appropriated by the ordinance. Separate bids had also been submitted for the various parts of the work. Since these did not include the marble, the architect's estimate was used for this, but the total still exceeded the appropriation.

For this and other reasons, [wrote the Mayor], no contract has been made by the Commissioners, and in the present condition of the affairs of the city, I recommend that the erection of a City Hall be postponed, and that the ordinance creating the Board, and the supplement thereto, be repealed.²³

Although Mayor Brown might not have shared his predecessor's enthusiasm for erecting a new building, certainly the impending conflict between the North and South had some influence upon his decision.

In accordance with the Mayor's recommendation, the City Council repealed the act which had provided for a new City Hall and also the borrowing from the McDonough Fund. The repeal ordinance was approved by Mayor Brown on April 18, 1861,²⁴ just six days after the attack on Fort Sumter had touched off the Civil War.

Previous to the repeal, William T. Marshall, the architect, had made additional drawings and estimates. For his services and for money expended by him, a resolution was approved on March 21, 1862, stipulating that he be paid the sum of \$5,000, on the condition that he deliver all of his detailed drawings, specifica-

²¹ J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County from the Earliest Period to the Present Day* (Philadelphia, 1881), p. 273.

²² City Hall Archives, 1861-286.

²³ *The City Hall Baltimore, op. cit.*, p. 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

tions, and estimates to the Mayor. In a letter under the same date, Mayor John Lee Chapman certified that he had received from the architect the material that was in question.²⁵

It seems doubtful that the city hall project received any consideration by the City Council during the early, chaotic months of the War. William T. Marshall, the winning architect, who had come to Baltimore in the late 1850s,²⁶ evidently left the city sometime during 1862 or 1863. Although he is not listed as a member of the Union or Confederate Army during the great conflict, his name no longer appears in the Baltimore city directories, after its initial insertion in the year 1860.²⁷

The inability of the winning architect to carry out his City Hall plan by acting as Consulting Architect during the building's construction would appear to be the most plausible reason for a second City Hall competition to be held in 1863. On June 15 of that year, a resolution was adopted authorizing the city commissioners to advertise in the daily newspapers for a suitable plan. The drawings had to be submitted by September 1, and \$400 was to be paid to the architect or architects whose plan was accepted.²⁸

This second city hall competition was proposed during Baltimore's darkest hours. At this time, the city was threatened with invasion by Confederate troops, and the ensuing weeks were filled with the tense aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg. The movement of armies through the state during these months must have been the underlying reason for the failure of the second City Hall competition, for apparently not a single plan was submitted.

In Mayor Chapman's annual communication to the City Council, in 1864, he recommended that a third competition be held. The stipulations of his proposal, including the amount of money to be paid to the winning architect, were identical with the previous competitions. The deadline for entries was July 1, 1864.²⁹

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Paper delivered by George A. Frederick, Fellow and Associate Member of the American Institute of Architects, to the Baltimore Chapter, p. 29. His notes of the talk are dated October 10, 1912, and the reference states that "Marshall (first name forgotten) established himself here about 1861 or 2." In view of the fact that William T. Marshall is listed in the City Directory in 1860, one assumes that Mr. Frederick's dating should be several years previous.

Frederick's notes are in the possession of Mr. Laurence Hall Fowler, of this city.

²⁷ *Wood's Baltimore City Directory* (Baltimore, 1860), p. 247.

²⁸ *The City Hall Baltimore, op. cit.*, p. 28.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

His proposals, in the form of an ordinance, were passed but not fully carried out, so on January 3 of the following year Mayor Chapman firmly set the subject of erecting a city hall before the City Council. He mentioned the immediate need for the structure, and the fact that the architects' plans had been submitted and were awaiting selection.

A Joint Special Committee from both Branches of the City Council met for the purpose of choosing the winning design. Two plans had been submitted by architects Thomas S. Goodwin and G. A. Frederick and the Committee selected Frederick's design as being best suited for the proposed city hall. A resolution which would have paid Mr. Goodwin \$200 "in consideration of the labor bestowed upon [his drawings]," was not acted upon.³⁰

In June, 1865, the city commissioners were requested to advertise for sealed proposals in accordance with the plans and specifications furnished by Frederick. The contracts would be awarded to the lowest bidders of known integrity. The measure also provided for the appointment of an architect who would furnish all of the general and detailed working drawings required for the building's construction. He was to receive two percent of the cost of the work as it progressed, payable monthly.³¹

On September 18, 1865, Mayor Chapman was requested to send Frederick's drawings to the City Council, and the architect was summoned to explain and correct his plans.³² The changes were apparently made, for on October 7 the Registrar was directed to pay to Frederick the sum of \$400 for his plans and drawings of a new city hall. The \$200 for Thomas S. Goodwin, the unsuccessful competitor, was also appropriated at this time.³³

The winning architect in the third city hall contest, George Aloysius Frederick, then 22, was born in Baltimore on December 16, 1842. His primary education had been received at the School of the Christian Brothers in Baltimore. In 1858, when 16, he entered the architectural firm of Edmund George Lind and William T. Murdoch, where he received his early training.³⁴ The partnership of Lind and Murdoch, which had begun about 1856,³⁵

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³⁴ *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* IX (New York, 1899), p. 334.

³⁵ Paper delivered by George A. Frederick to the American Institute of Architects, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³² City Hall Archives, 1865-761.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1865-762.

was dissolved two years after Frederick began his apprenticeship. At that time Mr. Murdoch formed the firm of Murdoch and Richards with William T. Richards, the chief draftsman of the old firm, and E. G. Lind continued on by himself.³⁶ Frederick furthered his study with one of the two new firms during the period from 1860 to 1862.³⁷

The city hall plan of William T. Murdoch, with whom Frederick was associated until 1860 or later, was one of the four submitted in the first city hall competition. Whether Murdoch's unsuccessful attempt, or the nature of his plan, in any way influenced George A. Frederick in his drawings, is not known.

The winning design of architect Frederick called for a building fronting on Holliday and North Streets, 238 feet by 149 feet, just slightly smaller than the earlier proposed structure by William T. Marshall. The style of architecture is French Renaissance of the Second Empire rather than Classical, but the characteristics of the building do not appear to have any exact European prototypes. Although the structure is stylistically similar to the contemporary parts of the Tuileries, the Louvre, and the Hôtel de Ville, all in Paris, it seems to be more directly related to some of the first American examples in this style.

The façade of the City Hall closely resembles the central section of a proposed building for Vassar College, designed by James Renwick, Jr., about 1860 and executed with slight modification the following year.³⁸ Minor similarities are also found in the Boston City Hall of 1862.³⁹ Neither of these buildings, however, is capped by a cupola. For this detail it seems likely that the dome of the United States Capitol served as a model for the smaller, more elongated example on the City Hall. Construction of the Capitol dome had begun in 1856,⁴⁰ just eight years prior to the final city hall competition. The 30 cast-iron columns of the Capitol dome, like the 12 on the City Hall, were made in Baltimore.⁴¹

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³⁷ *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

³⁸ McKenna, Rosalie Thorne, "James Renwick, Jr. and the Second Empire Style in the United States," *Magazine of Art* (March, 1951), p. 100.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁴⁰ Bannister, Turpin C., "The Genealogy of the Dome of the United States Capitol," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (January-June, 1948), p. 8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

The design for the City Hall consists of a center structure four stories high, surmounted by a dome and flanked by three-story wings connected laterally to the main element. The center is finished with a plain pediment, originally designed to contain a frieze representing Trade, Commerce, and the Arts, but never executed.⁴² The other portions of the building are capped by a mansard roof. Each story is well marked by strong projecting cornices, as well as a broken balustrade, which forms horizontal divisions between the stories and at the base of the roof.

The exterior foundation walls, which are five feet six inches thick, are built of Falls Road bluestone to within 18 inches of the ground. All of the interior walls are of dark red or arch brick, varying in thickness from two feet six inches to seven feet. The widest dimension occurs at the base of the dome where the foundation walls support the central mass.

Above ground, all of the exterior walls are faced with Baltimore County marble, a type of white magnesia limestone referred to as Beaver Dam Marble.⁴³ The stone was obtained from the John B. Connolly quarries, located near Cockeysville. The basement story is heavily rusticated, and contains four sets of four double-recessed, arched windows. The center section was designed to include five doorways, but at present only the middle one is in use. Bronze doors had been planned by the architect, but the building committee decided upon the use of less-expensive mahogany.⁴⁴ The doors were designed and carved by J. M. Sudsberg,⁴⁵ with the center one bearing the seal of Baltimore and the Battle Monument. The bronze doorknobs also feature the city seal.

The first, second, and third stories are relieved by projecting pilasters, and fully-detached columns which flank each of the deeply recessed windows. The windows are surmounted by semi-circular archivolt and elaborate keystones. The mansard roof, which is of slate secured by iron purlins,⁴⁶ contains dormer windows constructed of marble. Three dormers are grouped on each wing of the main façade, the larger central ones having

⁴² *The City Hall Baltimore, op. cit.*, p. 128.

⁴³ "Exterior Walls of City Hall Have Been Neglected," *Municipal Journal*, July 28, 1928. The report of H. F. Lucke, Jr., Supervising Engineer, to Charles F. Goob, Chief Engineer, dated July 17, 1928.

⁴⁴ Carroll Dulaney, *Baltimore News-Post*, June 4, 1936.

⁴⁵ "Made City Hall Doors," *Baltimore News-Post*, June 12, 1936.

⁴⁶ "Exterior Walls of City Hall Have Been Neglected," *op. cit.*

arched windows, while the others form the shape of elongated ovoids. The corners of the roof on the projecting wings are crowned with ornamental posts which emphasize the vertical element in the structure.

The basement floor of the central section of the façade contains a portico, above which are six fluted composite columns with pilasters of the same order behind them. The columns on the Holliday Street façade are monoliths⁴⁷ and support a cornice and balustraded parapet, which forms a spacious balcony on the second story.

The base of the tower, which rises behind the central section of the main façade, is constructed of marble to the height of the colonnade. From this point to the finial of the dome iron was employed, and 12 cast iron columns support the dome on the interior. Housed within the uppermost portion of the dome is a massive alarm bell. The first one, nicknamed "Big Sam," weighed 6,000 pounds,⁴⁸ but in 1889 it developed a crack and was replaced in September of that year by "Lord Baltimore," the present 7,403 pound bell.⁴⁹

On the interior of the building all of the first floor offices are designed with lofty ceilings, giving the illusion that they are two stories in height. The second floor, rather than the third as in Mr. Marshall's plan, was designated as a grand hall, later becoming an armory for the National Guard.⁵⁰ Rising through the center of the structure, the rotunda has a diameter of 44 feet at its base and a height of 119 feet three inches. In its uppermost portion, four figures representing Commerce, Agriculture, Manufactures, and the Arts are colored on glass which fits into the interior dome.⁵¹ Horizontal divisions of the rotunda agree with the heights of the different stories, with walls on each floor being divided into eight parts. The architectural order of the first story is Roman Doric; of the second, Roman Ionic; and of the third, Roman Corinthian. The rotunda is made of Scagliola, a type of hard, polished plaster work imitating marble. It is also of different

⁴⁷ Carroll Dulany, *Baltimore News-Post*, June 8, 1938.

⁴⁸ Hans Marx, "Baltimore's Big Ben," *The Sun*, April 28, 1946.

⁴⁹ "Caster Settles Old Dispute Over Name of City Hall Bell," *The Sun*, September 18, 1929.

⁵⁰ *The Sun*, November 14, 1944.

⁵¹ "Cleaning of City Hall Dome Reveals Art Glass Window," *The Sun*, October 25, 1928.

varieties, with that of the first floor simulating marble from Tennessee; the second, Lisbon; and the third, Siena.⁵²

After the city hall design had been approved, and bids based on these plans had been advertised, a Building Committee was appointed by Mayor Chapman in the spring of 1867.⁵³ One of the first acts of the Committee was the selection of Frederick as Consulting Architect, to assist in carrying out his own plans. On October 18, 1867, the cornerstone was laid with elaborate ceremonies, and during the following year the cellar was excavated, some of the foundation walls erected,⁵⁴ and the new City Hall seemed well on its way to completion.

But in the summer of 1869, the ugly charge of "fraud" was publicly hurled at the Building Committee, and on September 28 of that year the members of the committee were asked to resign their positions.⁵⁵ This action followed a thorough investigation of the charges, which had to do with the awarding of the building material contracts for marble, brick, lumber, and cement.⁵⁶

In at least one case the architect was consulted, and found partially to blame for confusion in the contract awarding. The investigating committee determined that the firm of F. and H. Wehn, with whom arrangements had been made to supply bricks at \$12.26 per thousand, was not the lowest bidder.

The difficulty arose through Frederick's erroneous use of the term "common red" brick, when he was actually referring to arch or hard brick. The contract was awarded for red brick, although according to the testimony of the superintendent and head bricklayer, not a single red brick was used or intended for use in the structure. When the bids were compared with estimates on arch or hard brick, which was the type really employed, the bid of Mr. John A. Allens was \$1.20 less per thousand than the contract awarded, the total overpayment for the bricks alone being \$8,188.

The Building Committee against which the fraud charges had been placed was unable to account for the mistake, except upon the theory that they were misled by the incorrect designation of

⁵² *The City Hall Baltimore, op. cit.*, pp. 125-135.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵⁴ "The City Hall Baltimore—Imposing Dedicatory Ceremonies," *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ City Hall Archives, 1869-941.

⁵⁶ Report of the Joint Special Committee of the City Council, Appointed to Investigate Certain Charges of Fraud, September 29, 1869, p. 15, City Hall Archives.

terms by the architect.⁵⁷ In an attempt to avoid such difficulties in the future, the new Building Committee was to include three members who were practical mechanics.⁵⁸

Under the new committee work progressed without interruption, and the dedicatory ceremonies were held on October 26, 1875. Speaking for the people of Baltimore, John H. B. Latrobe, eminent citizen, declared: "We now have an absolutely fire-proof City Hall, whose architecture while ornate, offends no canon of good taste, and which in all its detail corresponds with those models whose beauty has made them classic."⁵⁹ Praise for the new structure was not limited to the taste of the local citizenry, for an article in *Harper's Weekly*, prior to the building's completion, referred to it as "the finest municipal structure in the United States."⁶⁰

Most impressive of all the statements made on the day of its dedication was the one concerning the cost of the City Hall. The total expenditure, including ground and furnishings, had been \$2,271,135.64 out of an appropriation of \$2,500,000. This left a surplus in excess of \$200,000 for the city,⁶¹ and gave Baltimore the distinction of having the only public building of comparative size ever to be erected within its appropriation.⁶²

During the 75 years since its completion, the appearance of the City Hall has remained relatively unchanged. The only extensive repairs were executed in 1928,⁶³ after an inspection of the building had disclosed the total disintegration of a number of marble balusters, dentils, and other small ornamental pieces. The damage was attributed to a strong cleaning acid which had been used on the exterior of the building some years before.⁶⁴

The City Hall's existence was endangered in 1904, when the Great Fire came to within a block of the building. It was threatened even more recently when the City Comptroller, in 1944, suggested that a new City Hall be erected on the same site.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵⁸ City Hall Archives, 1869-941.

⁵⁹ "City Hall: Tastes Change," *The Sun*, December 10, 1939.

⁶⁰ "New City Hall, Baltimore," *Harper's Weekly* (May 1, [1869?]).

⁶¹ "The City Hall Baltimore—Imposing Dedicatory Ceremonies," *op. cit.*

⁶² *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

⁶³ "Cleaning of City Hall Dome Reveals Art Glass Window," *The Sun*, October 25, 1928.

⁶⁴ "Exterior Walls of City Hall Have Been Neglected," *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ *The Sun*, November 14, 1944.

However, it seems likely that the present City Hall building will remain in use, and as a Baltimore landmark, for some years to come just as it exists today—a monumental tribute to the persistence that gave it form, after a struggle which lasted three-quarters of a century.

Since this article was set in type, announcement has been made in the daily press that the Baltimore Planning Commission, in its long-range capital improvements for the city, has proposed the construction of a modern city hall to be erected on the site of the present structure. Persons interested may refer to "Modern City Hall Proposed by Planning Commission," *Evening Sun*, January 21, 1952.

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THE MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

H. IRVINE KEYSER MEMORIAL BUILDINGS

201 W. MONUMENT STREET, BALTIMORE 1

GEORGE L. RADCLIFFE, *President*; JAMES W. FOSTER, *Director*

The Maryland Historical Society, incorporated in 1844, was organized to collect, preserve and spread information relating to the history of Maryland and of the United States. Its threefold program includes

1. Collection of manuscript and printed materials, maps, prints, paintings, furniture, silver, fabrics and other objects of interest;
2. Preservation of these materials for the benefit of all who care to enjoy them, and exhibition of items which will encourage an understanding of State and National history; and
3. Spread of historical information relating to Maryland and the rest of the country by means of addresses at the Society's home by authorities in various fields; addresses to outside groups by officers and staff of the Society; publication of the *Maryland Historical Magazine*, a quarterly containing original articles about State history; *Maryland History Notes*, a quarterly bulletin of news of the Society and other local historical items, and of the *Archives of Maryland* under the authority of the State.

The annual dues of the Society are \$5.00, life membership \$100.00. Subscription to the *Magazine* and to the quarterly news bulletin, *Maryland History Notes*, is included in the membership fee as well as use of the collections and admission to the lectures. The library, portrait gallery and museum rooms, are open daily except Sunday, 9 to 5, Saturday, 9 to 4. *June 15 to Sept. 15*, daily 9 to 4, Saturday, 9 to 2.