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THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE COLLEGE

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE CAPITOL GROUNDS

A Plan for Development.

By

SARAH LEWIS PATTEE

Thesis for the degree of Master of Science



Approved

April 15 1918

By

Arthur H. Cowell

T2043.



CAPITOL BLDG

TERRACES FOURTH ST. TUNNEL

CROSS SECTION STATE STREET
SCALE 1 INCH = 60 FEET
BASE LINE: 313 FEET
ORIGINAL LEVEL

CROSS SECTION FOURTH STREET
SCALE 1 INCH = 60 FEET
BASE LINE: 341 FEET
TUNNEL 18 FEET HIGH

SCALE OF KEY MAP
1 INCH = 200 FEET

PENNSYLVANIA STATE CAPITOL

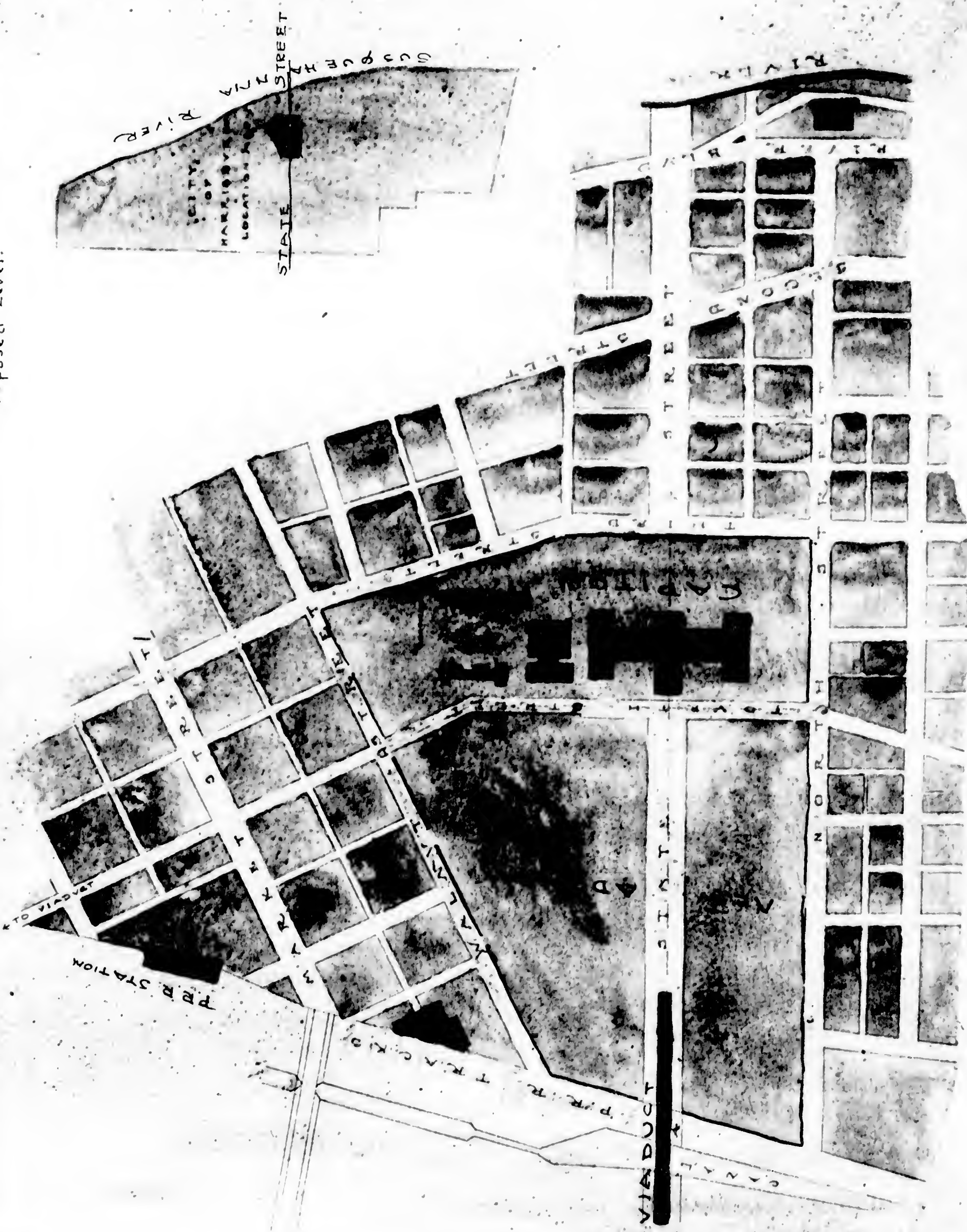
A STUDY FOR DEVELOPMENT

KEY MAPS AND
CROSS SECTIONS

PRESENTED FOR
MASTER'S DEGREE
PENNSYLVANIA
STATE COLLEGE

BY *David Louis Page*
DEPARTMENT OF
LANDSCAPE ART

Present Level
Proposed Level



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THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE CAPITOL GROUNDS

A Plan For Development.

It is but fitting that the executive buildings of a great commonwealth should be stately and magnificent in character, for by this means wealth and achievement may best be shown. Many states have already recognized this fact, as is shown by such edifices as those of St. Paul, Des Moines, and other western capitals.

But it is not enough merely to erect a beautiful building, for no matter how costly and splendid may be the lines and decoration, the full effect is lost if site and surroundings be poor. A commanding site, beautiful surroundings, large open areas and park spaces, combined with judicious arrangement of planting and architectural features, are all necessary to lend dignity and effect to a building representing the state itself.

The city of Hartford, Connecticut, to cite but one example, shows a proper combination of buildings and surroundings. By means of well arranged vistas, and proper arrangement of parks, the Capitol dominates the city, and properly emphasises its character of public building.

The Pennsylvania State Capitol at Harrisburg, in spite of many undesirable features has the advantage

of a commanding site, and one capable of much artistic development . The buildings, of which there are at present two , stand on an artificial elevation fifteen feet above the surrounding streets, on one side of a small, irregularly shaped area, several acres in extent which is used as a park. This is located in the central part of the city territory, three blocks from the river and not far from the heart of the City itself. On the north and east, North and Fourth streets, each carrying single track street-car systems serve to bound the Capitol territory. From the river front the Capitol is usually approached by State street , a wide parkway, extending to the base of Capitol Hill, at right angles with Third street, planted with barberry and roses. No car tracks run here, and a very pleasing approach is gained. The view shown is taken from the dome of the Capitol, looking down State street to the river .



As it now stands, the Capitol has but this one

approach . On the east, the slums of the city come up to the very doors , and stretch from there away to the railroad property, which lies exposed to view from the Capitol, a maze of tracks and freight stations. State street is continued on this side of the Capitol, carried over the tracks by means of a concrete viaduct, both inadequate for all the traffic, and inartistic, to the residential section . From here it ascends a gentle rise to the city limits. The vistas given are unexcelled, but the main one lacks a proper terminus. Some imposing monument should be erected at the end, to crown the whole. The pictures show east State street, on north and south sides , with the viaduct in the middle distance, and the property directly abutting the Capitol.



It is easily seen, that with such magnificent opportunities for improvement , once the buildings back

of the Capitol are removed, and a proper east approach is provided, this section can be made part of a plan unrivalled by any other Capital city.

On the present property the main or Capitol building is the larger of the two edifices. This is crowned by a great gilded dome, visible all over the city. To the south is the State Library and Museum, while in front runs a wide walk or esplanade. From this access is gained to the Capitol on the one side by an extensive flight of steps, while on the other more steps, rather steep in character, lead down the knoll to Third street. The treatment of this knoll is unsatisfactory as it is rather trivial in character. On a platform in the steps stands an equestrian statue of General Hartranfft of Civil War fame, completely dwarfed by the bulk of the building behind it, and flanked by two round, leaky, concrete basins. The statue is shown in the view below, which is taken from State street (West)



The picture next shown is of the steps leading from the esplanade to the Capitol building. This also gives the treatment of the front.



From Third street two short, steep, driveways lead up to the esplanade , while at the corner of North and Third streets a path, with steps and inclined planes, leads to the same level. The whole is badly planted, thickly, and with little system . There are, however, several fine trees, Bald Cypress and Beech, which are well worth preserving.

On the east, the basement of the Capitol opens directly on Fourth street, as before stated, while a stone retaining wall, eight feet high, marks the boundary of the state property.

Capitol Park occupies the remaining portion of the Capitol area. This is shown in the view, taken from

the dome of the main building , looking toward the central part of the city and the river. Pedestrians are accomodated by two paths, one leading by easy grades to Third and Walnut streets, and the other, by steps and inclined planes to Fourth and Walnut streets. Near the intersection is erected a monument ,(shown in the center of the picture) to the Mexican War heroes. Owing to its poor location the full effect of this is lost, as one must go to the very base in order to see the entire structure.



A greenhouse, located on the retaining wall above
Fourth street within the park area (at the ^{left} ~~margin~~ of
the monument in the view) is the only other building
on the grounds.

Trees are thickly planted along the walls and seats
provided - always well filled, for the famous park

squirrels and doves are a constant source of delight to passers-by. These squirrels, however, might almost be regarded as a menace to the park as they have ruined the tops of all the trees and are slowly destroying their beauty. They also discourage beneficial birds.

Recently, feeling that more room was needed for development, and that the territory facing the east side of the Capitol was a great detriment to the state property, this closely built up area was purchased and the buildings removed. Now the Capitol Commission has at its disposal over twenty acres of land, bounded on the north and south by North and Walnut streets, on the west by Capitol Park, and on the east by the Pennsylvania Railroad yards. The whole tract slopes gradually from the Capitol to the railroad, having a total drop of 28 feet in 1710 or a $1\frac{1}{2}\%$ grade. It is the desire of the Capitol Commission to harmonize the two park areas, locate new administration buildings, and erect such architectural features as may be necessary under the following provisions:

1. Two state buildings, each to cover 18,000 square feet must be provided, one for "Printing " and one for "Education." Also there must be a large increase in office space for administration purposes in connection with those now housed within the Capitol.

2. Convenient streets must cross the new tract from north to south which will adequately serve the large City traffic now passing through the existing minor streets.

3. A plaza or park must be arranged to provide a place for a concourse for large gatherings.

4. A bridge, viaduct or tunnel must be provided to connect the park with the residential section east of the tracks, to replace the present inadequate viaduct. Provision must be made for two lines of street cars, two of vehicles and two columns of pedestrians. \$250,000 may be spent on the project.

5. Provision must be made for the widening of Third street to accomodate its ever increasing traffic. From this front adequate driveways must be carried to the Capitol Hill terrace.

In considering the problem the designer has taken the above features into consideration, and in working out a solution has attempted to combine them into a harmonious plan.

The accompanying plans show the aim of the designer.

The first is a key map . (Frontispiece) showing the location of the park area in the city , the relation of the park area to the surrounding districts, and two

cross-sections of important parts of the plan, showing both old and new elevations.

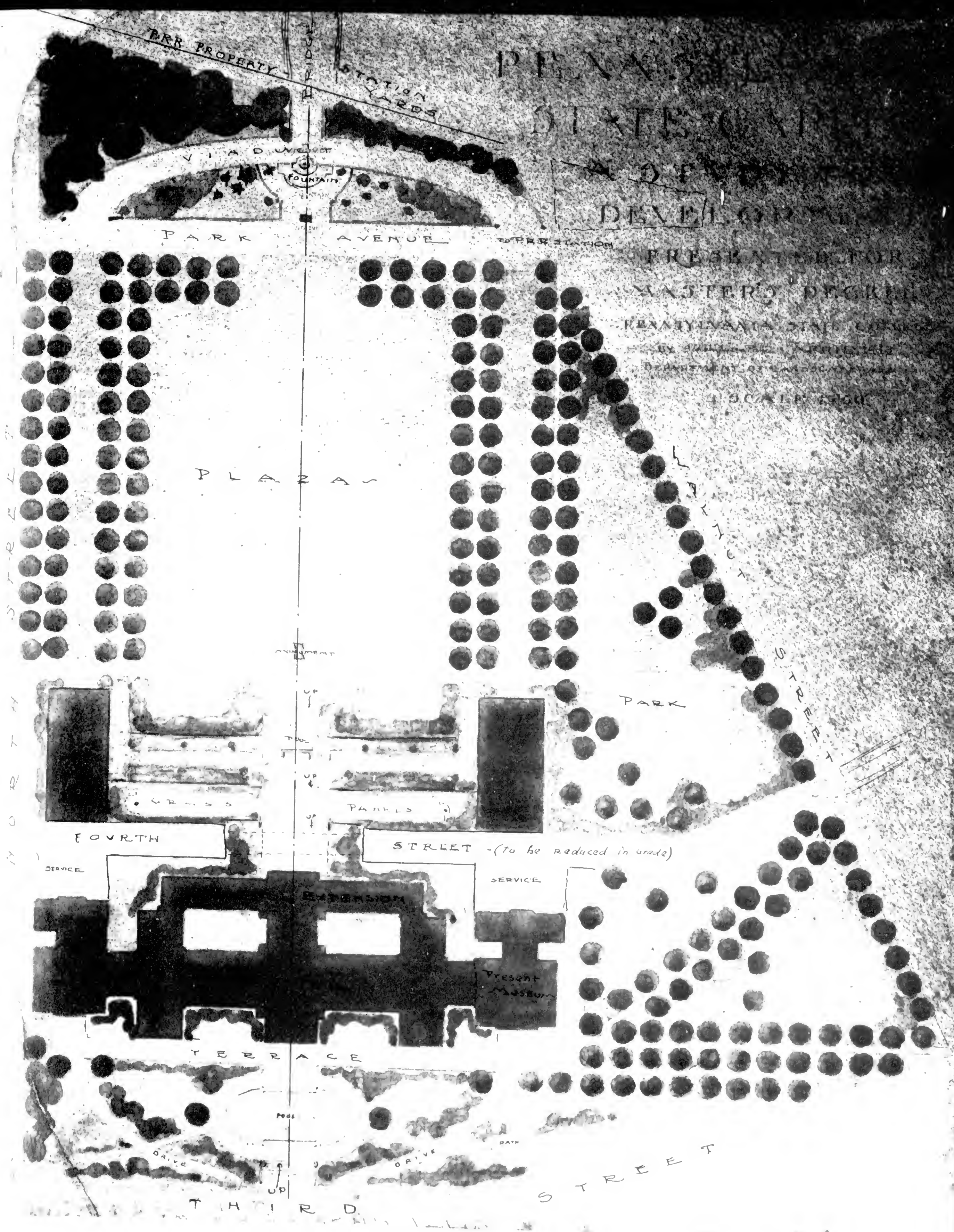
The second (next page) is a complete design for the improvement of the Capitol territory, showing the relationships of the various portions and the features introduced.

The third (page 13) is the west elevation of the proposed viaduct, viewed from the east front of the Capitol, showing the general aspect of the approaches, and indicating planting and various architectural features.

Perhaps the clearest understanding of these plans may be gained if the various features are examined in the following order, according to their importance.

BUILDINGS. The present Library and Museum is not attached to the main Capitol building. The new plan provides for a wide connecting link, making the Library a wing of the Capitol. Also, at the north end of the Capitol a wing, of approximately the same dimensions as the Library is proposed, giving a uniformity of treatment to the front and providing an increase in office and museum space which is greatly needed. This is shown on plan 2.

The east front, facing the railroad, is not at present in keeping with the rest of the building, having but one small doorway, opening directly onto the



PLAN NO. 2.
THE GENERAL PLAN.

street. It is proposed that a shallow addition be erected, extending the length of the east side of the building, providing an entirely new facade. The treatment of the front should be similar to that of the west side of the building. Two small interior courts are formed by this extension, giving light and air to the surrounding offices. By these additions the Capitol not only secures sufficient office space but the whole building is made symmetrical and complete.

The two new buildings called for in the specifications have been located by the plan on axis with the two wings of the Capitol, on the east side of Fourth street. (See plan 2)

Streets. Owing to the fact that a large park area is desired, the present system of minor streets should be discontinued. Also east State street, which bisects the new area should be removed , in order that the tract may present a large, unbroken park space. As a large amount of traffic now runs through the existing streets some provision must be made to care for it. This is best done in the following way:

The present railroad station is not centrally located, and it has been proposed that the Pennsylvania Railroad company acquire a section of land bordering on their tracks and on Walnut street, triangular in shape , part of which they already own, and place the

passenger station there. This will serve the town better on all sides and will also centralize traffic at that point. A wide through avenue from this point, across the new Capitol area, connecting with Seventh street on the north will help in the distribution of traffic from the station without greatly cutting up the Capitol area. This might, for convenience, be designated as Park Avenue. (See key map)

In order to accomodate the traffic from the central portion of the city it has been thought best to retain Fourth street across the Capitol area, as it affords a direct means of access to all parts of the city and leads directly to the Mulberry street viaduct. Also, by retaining Fourth street, the Capitol and other state buildings will have adequate provision made for service, the street communicating directly with the basements, thus facilitating the delivery of supplies. This is accomplished in the case of the Capitol by excavating the banks at the north and south wings, forming two service courts 70x120 and 70x150 feet, the earth being kept in place by a stone retaining wall. The "Printing" and "Education" buildings are on line with the street and direct access is thus obtained.

These two streets , wide, and conveniently located, will adequately care for all traffic previously accomo-

dated by the many minor streets.

Fourth street crosses directly in front of the Capitol, and owing to the elevation at that point is obtrusively visible, but by depressing the street here and bridging over that portion directly in front this may be avoided. The position of the various buildings gives a space well adapted to terrace treatment, a treatment which will further shut out the street by means of the necessary retaining walls. Fourth street, so arranged, need not be dark. The retaining walls are ten feet high on either side, but top light is not excluded there, and the tunnel, 225 feet long, may be artificially lighted, although the wide end openings admit plenty of light. Section C-D on plan 1 shows a cross-section of Fourth street, with the amount of cut necessary, and the position of the covered portion.

This covered portion mentioned is in the form of a terrace, externally, pierced at the street level with the tunnel portions, three in number, for traffic and street-cars. The terrace level has a paved walk down the center and is heavily planted at the sides. Three feet lower is placed another terrace, access being gained from the upper level by means of steps. This second terrace, 65 feet wide, extends from the "Printing" building to the "Education" building and is bounded on the street side by a stone retaining wall. Heavy plant-

ing against this wall on the east side, harmonizing with the planting against the Capitol itself across the street, helps effectually to mask all signs of traffic on Fourth street. The rest of the level is laid out in a simple form of parterre.

The paved walk is continued in the second level which in turn gives onto the ~~second~~ lowest, three feet from the second, held by a retaining wall 10 feet above the normal ground level. This terrace, 80 feet wide, communicates at the ends with the entrances to the two buildings by means of a paved walk, running its entire length and terminating in steps leading to the two entrances. The terrace continues at right angles to itself, to the east ends of the buildings, ending flush with the east walls on each side in retaining walls which have a sheer drop of ten feet to the ground below. A complete plan of the terrace system may be found in plan 2.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES. The main park is reached from the terraces by means of an ornamental stairway. In the center of the lowest terrace there is a projecting balcony, flanked on either side by a short flight of steps which lead to a platform, six feet below. This platform is also reached by steps within the retaining wall. The level is occupied by a pool of water, projecting from the balcony wall, surrounded by a two foot coping. A grotto, containing marble figures, is



PLATE NO. 3- VIADUCT-

placed under the balcony, forming a fountain from which a pool is fed. This pool is rounded on the east end, the retaining wall and coping dropping down to the next level, several feet below. This is reached by curved steps from the upper platform, and in turn gives, by means of ellipse shaped steps onto an open plaza at the normal ground level. This place is graveled, ^{near the steps} and is a good location for the equestrian statue now on the west front. The plaza forms a focal point for gatherings.

The reason for the adoption of a stairway and water design for the termination of the terrace system is that such a treatment affords a gradual grade between the two levels, as well as providing a magnificent background or stage for the participants in any public celebration or meeting.

VIADUCT. Provision must, as stated, be made to carry traffic across the railroad tracks, and that has been done in the plan by means of a viaduct, built of stone. This means of communication has been preferred for several reasons: a tunnel could not be employed successfully owing to the fact that the ground is here at its lowest level; a grade crossing is unsafe, and a bridge unsightly. A viaduct can be made architecturally beautiful, and with the aid of planting form a decided addition to the grounds. The type chosen has two approaches at each end, extending at right angles to

the main body of the structure, as this form is more economical of space and better adapted to the general form of the Capitol grounds than is the present structure. (See ^{Plan} ~~plan~~ 2) Standing at the lower end of the park area, its two approaches, 600 feet apart, open, one near Walnut street and the other near North street directly onto Park Avenue. The two roadways continue to the main structure, 90 feet from Park Avenue and 30 feet above the ground level, effecting a very easy and gradual rise. The road width of 50 feet affords plenty of room for all traffic to and from the east section of the city, to which the viaduct runs, supported on arches across the tracks.

At the west end the sheer wall between the approaches is relieved by a water treatment, such being employed to harmonise with the treatment of the terraces at the other end of the main axis of the park. This axis, on the site of east State street, is shown in this section only by these two points of emphasis,

The wall treatment of the viaduct includes a marble fountain in a niche in the central portion, the water playing from it into a succession of shallow pools. Planting breaks the monotony of the plain stonework. The space directly in front of the fountains is left open, and communicates directly with Park Avenue. All these and other details are shown in the plan (no. 2) and in the elevation of the viaduct itself.

The approaches to the viaduct are directly in line with the east entrances to the new buildings, so avenues composed of double rows of elm trees make fitting connection between the two. These avenues are 85 feet wide in the center and 50 feet across in each of the smaller alleys. This tree arrangement forms the principle planting motif of the central park area.

To accomodate foot passengers a path is lead from Walnut to North streets, passing directly in front of the "Printing " and "Education" buildings , and through the plaza. This is not noticeable and does not break the view in the park, as no planting is carried along the borders, and the turf edges are keep closely trimmed.

PLANTING. Planting in the new park area is restricted to the base of buildings. The viaduct has a screen planting of quick growing materials to shut out the freight yards and a more formal growth in front, while a box hedge, very low, marks the enclosure between the approaches. (See elevation of viaduct. Plan 3.)

The park space between the two avenues, as before mentioned, is left entirely open to accomodate the crowds at public gatherings. The planting in front of the Capitol (east) is heavy along the retaining walls, but sparce and formal elsewhere.

Thw whole effect gained from the lower end of the park is truly fine, for by means of the terraces the

eye is led up to the main building in a gradual and pleasing manner, the surroundings being an adequate setting.

WEST FRONT. On the west front an esplanade, 35 feet wide runs across the entire front of the Capitol, and is finished by a low coping. From this, in the center, a short, broad flight of steps leads downward to a balcony overlooking a long, oval pool of water, ten feet below. This pool, roughly 45x190 feet, has its longest axis parallel to the esplanade. The paths to Third street wind down from the platform on either side of the pool, with steps at stated intervals, to a platform at the foot of the pool. From here steps lead directly to Third street.

On either side of the steps is a roadway, sixteen feet wide, winding up the bank to the esplanade, opening on it directly in front of the wings. On the major axis of the pool itself are two fine Bald Cypresses, which the plan had emphasised and preserved, one on each side of the pool. From these paths lead off, one on the south leading off across the driveway and following the contour of the hill to Capitol Park, the other, on the north passing to the corner of North and Third streets.

THIRD STREET. This street is widened five feet by removing earth from the Capitol territory for that depth and building a retaining wall to hold the bank in place.

This provides for the sidewalk along the base of the wall and permits more space open to traffic. Section A-B, plan 1, shows the cross-section of the west front and part of Third street.

PARK AREA. The old park area is left much as originally but a few changes have been made. The green house has been removed as no real need for it exists and the Mexican War monument is also removed. This is a more fitting monument for a public square than for a hillside park and should be so placed. Now the whole area is an open park, traversed by paths, one a double path, carried through three rows of trees, extends from the southern corner of the esplanade to the park limits - one of the paths meeting third street and the parallel one opening on Third street alone. Another path leads from the same corner of the esplanade to Fourth and Walnut streets, taking approximately the same course as the path previously so placed. From the west front a path, before mentioned, leads around from the pool, crossing the double walk and circling around to the south wing of the Capitol. The development is best shown in plan 2.

The strip of land on the south side of the new park area, fronting on Walnut street is developed in the same manner as the old park, as a continuation of the same. Tree masses and plantings are arranged to break up the

stiff shape of the tract, and a single row of trees borders on Walnut street. Several perennial borders are employed near the path leading across the park, but apart from this no attempt is made at elaboration.

GRADING. The amount of grading to be done, although at first glance seeming large, is really not of great extent. On Fourth street about 1000 cubic yards of earth must be removed. The deepest excavation is 10 feet, but the ground slopes from here up to a point about 500 feet away on either side so that the average depth is not great. (See cross-section C-D) The service courts on each side also require some excavation, but this is not great and can be done at the same times as the buildings.

For the terraces over 30,000 cubic yards of material is required but this can in large part be provided by the excavations made on Fourth and Third streets. The foundations of the two state buildings require a level area, and this can be obtained by cut and fill with materials directly on the spot, as the ground is exceedingly uneven, taking the average as the new level.

On the west front little grading will be needed. Some slight excavation is necessary for the pool, but there will be no other changes.

GENERAL STATEMENTS, Planting as a whole is simple and in mass, few specimens being desired as the whole plan is on

large scale and small plantings would be out of proportion. Trees of long lived character are planted wherever possible to give permanency to the plan.

Architectural features are plain and massive wherever used. Pools and fountains are embellished with sculpture and statuary but harmoniously placed and simple in design. Simplicity and massiveness and unity of treatment have been the designer's aim throughout the whole plan.

**End of
Title**