
A Classic in Marble: The Memorial Building

by Larry O. Jochims

THE first home of the Kansas State Historical Society was a bookcase in the corner of State Auditor Daniel W. Wilder's office in the statehouse. The Society grew quickly, and on December 23, 1876, the *Topeka Daily Blade* reported that it was located in a small room over the northwest staircase of the Capitol. The following year the attorney general offered the Society a portion of his quarters on the ground floor of the building, but it was not long before he, too, was looking for additional space. This room proved to be insufficient for the Society, which moved in 1881 into a room in the newly completed west wing. By 1893 the collections covered every nook and corner of the main room, and newspapers were being stored in the rat-infested basement. In that year, in an effort to alleviate the problem, the legislature voted by concurrent resolution to authorize the Society to use three rooms in the south wing of the statehouse which had been used by the Supreme Court commissioners.

By this time the Society occupied more space in the Capitol than any one department and could have used twice as much. Realizing this, the legislature in 1895 directed that two floors in the east wing be made available to the Society when they were vacated by the present occupants. This move caused a great deal of friction with other state bureaus and commissions and generated strong pressure for the Society to give up part of the east wing. At this time the first references were made to what would become the Memorial Building. On February 1, 1896, Society Secretary Franklin G. Adams wrote to A. R. Greene, a friend who was then secretary to Congressman R. W. Blue, discussing the pressure placed on the Society and referring to conversations that had been held on joining the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and Society museums, with an eye toward pushing jointly for the construction of a new building.

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The new building would serve both as a Society headquarters and a monument to the Kansas troops of the Civil War.

In November 1900, the executive council offered the Society the whole fourth floor of the south wing of the statehouse if it would give up the east wing offices. The Society agreed, for now everything would be on one floor. It was becoming apparent, however, that the Society could not continue to expand in the statehouse, as space simply was not available.

Concurrently, a movement to honor the state's Civil War veterans began to gain momentum. Capt. P. H. Coney of the GAR first suggested, in a *Topeka Daily Capital* article of January 26, 1906, that the state construct a combined peace-soldiers' memorial. This would take the form of a shaft, at least 155 feet high, crowned with a peace figure. By January of the following year, Coney had joined with Gov. J. D. Martin, according to a *Topeka Daily Herald* article, to suggest the erection of a "sailors' and soldiers' monument hall."

Former Gov. Samuel J. Crawford was a major proponent of the "Memorial Building" idea. In a *Topeka Daily Capital* article of April 16, 1908, he stated that a building would be "more in keeping with the well-known modesty of Kansas troops if it

should be...more useful than ornamental." The building movement was gathering momentum when in April 1908 word reached Kansas that a large sum of money would be available soon when the state's war claims debts were paid by the government.

The debts had originated when Kansas, a new state with little money, had issued bonds to pay for its major expenses such as outfitting troops. It was able to sell these war bonds, but only at a discount because of its unproven credit rating. In the mid-1880s the government had reimbursed Kansas for the principal it had expended in two payments totaling \$381,360.18 which were placed in the general fund. However, the state was unable to recover the interest and discount it had paid on the bonds, and in fact the interest continued to mount. As a general rule the federal government did not pay interest on any bonds except its own. Early in 1900, however, in a precedent-setting Indiana case, the government finally allowed interest payments as legitimate reimbursable expenses for the states. (The United States Constitution provides that only Congress has power over the army and navy and in return arranges to protect the states and their people. If the interest charges were legitimate the government had little choice but to pay them.) By early 1909 reimbursement for the interest and discount on the Kansas bonds had been ordered in the amount of \$522,530.45.

Once the matter of the claims had been settled, debate intensified over the use of the money. Placing it in the general fund, it was argued, would do no one any good. Gov. Edward Hoch was a strong advocate of a Grand Army of the Republic memorial. The *Topeka Daily Capital* of May 7, 1908, reported that he initially favored a memorial arch idea, but in the end decided the building was more practical. The National Guard of Kansas wanted the money to construct armories for the militia. The smaller towns with guard companies wanted the money divided equally among them; Topeka and Wichita wanted the entire amount. Republican leader J. N. Dolley, writing in the *Capital* of December 5, 1908, advocated three uses for the cash. He felt that the state should construct a memorial hall for the State Historical Society and a sanitarium for the treatment of tuberculosis patients and should also establish a state fair. Although the money might not be sufficient to accomplish all three objectives, it would act as a "nest egg."

As the discussions continued across the state it became increasingly apparent that public sentiment favored the construction of a memorial building. In 1908 the GAR Council of Administration adopted

a resolution approving "the erection of a building as a memorial to the memory of the soldiers of the war for the Union, a portion of said building to be used as a headquarters for the department of Kansas Grand Army of the Republic so long as the organization may exist, the rest of the building to be used by the Kansas State Historical Association, and the entire building to revert to the use of the Historical Association, with all Grand Army relics, souvenirs, etc., whenever the Grand Army may go out of existence."

The next year a bill was passed creating the Memorial Hall Building Commission consisting of the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the House of Representatives, commander of the GAR Department of Kansas, the secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, one commissioner elected by the Senate, and one commissioner elected by the House. The governor acted as chairman and the Historical Society secretary served as commission secretary.

The commission was given the authority to obtain a site for the building near the Capitol either by gift, purchase, or condemnation. In no circumstance could the cost exceed \$15,000. The state architect was charged with the duty of preparing the plans and specifications and supervising the construction, although the commission was given the right to employ a competent person as an on-site superintendent. It was directed to use native materials as much as possible and was authorized to requisition brick and other items from the warden of the State Penitentiary. The state heating and light plant would supply the requisite power.

A total of \$200,000 was appropriated for the construction of the building—\$15,000 for the actual site, \$135,000 construction money for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1910, and \$50,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1911. No contracts could be let, however, until a \$425,065.43 federal payment was in the state treasury.¹

The Memorial Hall Building Commission met for the first time on April 12, 1909, in Gov. Walter Stubbs' office.² The first order of business was to

Throughout this issue the abbreviation *KHQ* is used to refer to the *Kansas Historical Quarterly*. Publication information is omitted for the *Kansas Historical Collections* and the Society's *Biennial Reports*, which are cited by date, year, and volume as appropriate.

1. *Kansas Session Laws*, Chapter 15, "Creating a Commission for the Construction of a Memorial Hall," 1909, 35-38.

2. Commission Minutes, April 12, 1909, Box 3, Memorial Hall Building Commission Records, Archives Department, Kansas

locate a site for the new building. Shortly after passage of the bill, area landowners and realtors began contacting Governor Stubbs to lobby in favor of their parcels. The Washburn College board of trustees even offered free land as long as the building was constructed on the college campus.³ The commission visited several sites on the south and west sides of the Capitol square, but the Eliza Bowman property on the corner of Tenth and Van Buren was the favorite. Two members contacted Mrs. Bowman and offered her \$9,000 for the property, but she refused to see them and sent word that the land was not for sale at any price.⁴ The efforts to obtain the Bowman property provoked James H. Cary, a family friend, to write to Governor Stubbs on April 9, 1909, protesting that other lots were more suitable and that to take it by means other than a willing purchase would be "confiscation."⁵ The commission relented.

Amid rumors that Governor Stubbs was secretly in favor of a Lawrence site for the proposed museum, attention settled on the George Crane property at the corner of Ninth and Harrison. On May 3, 1909, the commission decided, on a vote of five to two, to purchase that property along with three adjacent lots belonging to John Elliott. The members understood that the purchase price would be well over the \$15,000 appropriated, but hoped that the Commercial Club, an organization of businessmen whose major goal was to improve the business climate of the city, would supply the difference. Crane agreed to submit the price to a board of arbitration. Before the commission adjourned, however, he returned to notify it that his wife would agree neither to the sale nor to the report of any arbitrators.⁶ In the days that followed Crane offered the commissioners \$500 toward the payment on any other property if they would leave his alone. Mrs. Crane even made a personal call on the governor, and as the *Topeka Daily Capital* of May 6, 1909, reported, her "appeal to the governor would move a heart of stone."

In each instance the commissioners decided against following the condemnation process which would create ill will and would be time-consuming; they

would have to prove also that the land they were attempting to condemn was necessary to the interest of the state.

Early in their efforts the commissioners had enlisted the aid of the Commercial Club to find a suitable site. The club continued to suggest the corner of Tenth and Jackson, which had been proposed as early as March 10, 1909, by the Topeka Railway Company.⁷ It became increasingly apparent that this was the only reasonable possibility. The commission, however, did not like the site for several reasons. The location was dirty and noisy because of the streetcars in the area and because the nearby state heating plant, which the *Capital* reported in 1909 produced "more smoke than it does heat," would soil a new building. Detractors also argued that a south front was undesirable for a library. The sun would always be shining in the windows, making it necessary to keep the blinds drawn most of the time. The two major commission proponents of the Tenth and Jackson site were Society Secretary George Martin and GAR Commander William Morgan. They did not especially favor this site above all others, but felt that if delays continued the momentum would be lost and there would be no Memorial Building.

The property belonged to the school board and the Topeka Railway Company. Through a series of negotiations with them, the Santa Fe (which agreed to vacate an alley between its building and the site when the lots proved to be too short), and an owner to the east, the land was acquired for the \$15,000 appropriation, with an additional \$10,000 in costs donated by the city, the school board, and the property owners in the block.⁸

Before construction could begin, however, a stone building known as the Jackson School had to be moved. Constructed in 1865 as Lincoln College, the forerunner of present Washburn University, it served as a college for five years before it was sold to the city for use as a public school. Although efforts were made to move the building to Washburn's campus, they failed and the building was razed.

In order to make plans for the new building, in 1909 the Society's executive committee sent longtime Society employee George Root east to study the libraries and museums of various other states. Accompanied by State Architect Charles H. Chandler, who later was given the ultimate responsibility for the building's design, Root left Topeka on July 26. The men traveled to Des Moines, Saint Paul, Madison,

State Historical Society, Topeka. This collection consists of three boxes of material generated by the commission. Box 1 contains correspondence for the period 1908-14 and Box 2, 1914-19. Box 3 contains the minutes of commission meetings, financial records, blueprints, contractors' bonds, and miscellaneous material. Footnotes hereinafter will simply state type of record, date, and box number.

3. G. H. Greenwood to Governor Stubbs, April 12, 1909, Box 1.

4. Commission Minutes, April 12, 1909, Box 3.

5. James H. Cary to Governor Stubbs, April 9, 1909, Box 1.

6. *Topeka State Journal*, May 4, 1909.

7. F. G. Kelley to Governor Stubbs, March 10, 1909, Box 1.

8. *Topeka Daily Capital*, May 29, 1910.

and Chicago, where they inspected the public library, the Library Bureau, the Art Institute, and the John Crerar and Newberry libraries. This was the first and only trip Root took for the Society, and his detailed diaries provide excellent descriptions of the cities he visited.

Public-spirited citizens also submitted ideas for the new structure. E. C. Manning of Winfield even sent blueprint drawings of the building he wished to see (two one-hundred-foot-long wings connected by a fifty-foot-wide memorial arch).⁹ Manning, who also happened to be the Society's second vice president, lobbied heavily for a private architect to design the building, and although he did not wish it advertised, he had someone in mind. It was his interpretation that the state architect, while the law made him responsible for building construction supervision, was not necessarily the exclusive judge as to how the building would be designed.¹⁰ In order not to make an "architectural blunder," Manning suggested that invitations be sent to noted architects around the country asking them to submit elevation sketches.¹¹

The commission did prepare such a form letter to be sent to architects as of April 15, 1909; however, the attorney general advised against sending it. A copy of this form letter on Society letterhead, dated April 15, 1909, with penciled additions exists in the Building Commission files. This lone copy contains a penciled address for George A. Berlinghof of Lincoln, Nebraska. The significance of this notation will become apparent later.

Architect Chandler was given the ultimate responsibility for designing the building. His plans were nearly complete and almost adopted by the commission at its September 10, 1909, meeting. The main features were agreed upon, but several issues were still in dispute. For example, GAR Commander J. H. Rickel, supported by Governor Stubbs, wanted the memorial idea to predominate, suggesting that twenty-five thousand marble tablets be placed on the walls of the huge memorial auditorium, each carved with the name and service record of a Kansas Civil War veteran. Questioning this proposal in an unsigned report, a Society officer (likely George Martin) pointed out that the information on such tablets could be only three-quarters of an inch high, meaning that the panels would be unreadable at a distance of more than three feet. Moreover, at a cost of \$1.50 to \$2.50 per panel, and with an estimated

completion rate of two panels per day, it would take a stonecutter forty-two years to complete the project.

Aside from the question of merging the GAR Museum with that of the Society, the most serious problem concerned space allocation. Commander Rickel summed up his position in an article in the October 2, 1909, *Topeka State Journal*, stating that he wanted the whole floor above the basement for offices for the Sons of Veterans and all auxiliary organizations. "The G.A.R. hall should be used by all patriotic organizations for their conventions and special occasions, then suitable rooms for a Grand Army museum, banquet and...committees," he concluded. "These in my judgment are equipments and conveniences that we are entitled to and I am assured that the patriotic sentiment of Kansas will favor such an arrangement."

Secretary Martin countered that the petitions he had been receiving in favor of keeping the two collections separate, as well as the sentiment in favor of giving the GAR the entire first floor, influenced him very little. To him, those writing "had no more idea of what they were doing than a chimpanzee has of the tariff."¹² In a letter to Clarence S. Paine, secretary of the Nebraska State Historical Society, dated November 6, he confided that "in the interior arrangement of the building, I am shoved back on the alley by the old soldier racket and the best part of the building given to waste—a big hall capable of seating 1,500 people, which will hardly be used once a year, then a space of 30 × 60 for a Grand Army museum, and they haven't as much as a lead pencil to put into it, a room 19 × 34 feet for a committee room, which they never had any use for, and never will, with headquarters for the Sons of Veterans, Ladies of the G.A.R. and Relief Corps, about 20 feet square each, they will never have use for on earth...." Martin had no real objections to any amount of space the GAR wanted provided that it did not interfere with the practical use of the building.

When emotions became as heated as they did communications between the two camps broke down. Martin told E. C. Manning a few months later that "since the last of November, the last meeting of the commission, I have not said a word about the building and do not intend to. Life's too short to keep up a wrangle with such a set of fellows, and I think surely there is enough taste and style and business sense left with the old soldiers of Kansas to get it somehow into

9. E. C. Manning to George Martin, February 7, 1909, February 8, 1909, Box 1.

10. E. C. Manning to George Martin, April 6, 1909, Box 1.

11. E. C. Manning to George Martin, April 10, 1909, Box 1.

12. *Topeka State Journal*, October 4, 1909.

13. Edgar Langsdorf, "The First Hundred Years of the Kansas State Historical Society," *KHQ* 41 (Autumn 1975):329-30.

the hands of the proper parties."¹³ On its side the GAR reported that it did not want such friends as the Historical Society and preferred to handle its own affairs. Old soldiers may not know "library science," C. C. Collins stated, "but common sense we had when as boys we answered our country's call..." "The Memorial Building," said Collins, "was more than a mere building," it was "a spiritual temple, a mighty cathedral of comradeship."¹⁴ Martin's pragmatic and utilitarian approach was fine for some matters, but not in this instance.

The furor finally died down and a mutual agreement was reached. The mutual animosity remained under the surface, however, and periodically expressed itself as it did in March 1910, when Martin announced the potential acquisition of a bust of former Sen. W. A. Harris. Harris served Kansas well and one finds few who had anything bad to say about him except perhaps that he served in the Confederate Army. The simple idea of a Confederate in the Memorial Building set the blood of Kansas patriots boiling. When it was discovered there were paintings already of Generals Robert E. Lee and Sterling Price in the collection threats of hatchet parties were bandied about. Cooler heads prevailed and this controversy was also forgotten. The painting of Lee was taken down.

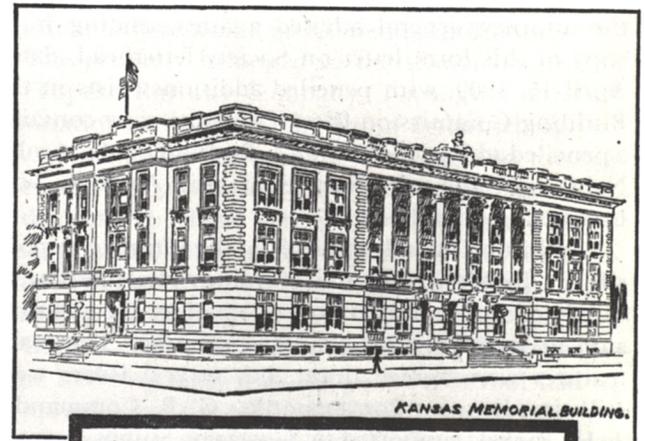
Finally the floor space was divided by a committee consisting of Governor Stubbs, J. H. Rickel, and George Martin. The impasse was broken and the *Topeka Daily Capital* of October 21, 1909, announced that the plans had been completed. The building would be classical in design and "plain in treatment." It would be 102 by 185 feet in dimension, four stories high and surfaced with white stone. The full basement would be used for storage purposes. It would be heated by steam taken from the state plant and have a ventilation system using electric fans and foul air ducts. The east wing would be used mostly as an area for stacks, which would begin in the basement and extend to the fourth floor.

The space allocation agreement divided the first floor between the Academy of Science and the Historical Society. The academy would have three rooms while the Society would take the remainder for the Kansas maps and manuscripts, an office for the catalog clerk, a vault, the archives and newspaper stacks, the newspaper filing and reading room, and toilet and cloak rooms. The Memorial Hall (62 by 84 feet) would be located on the second floor and would extend through the two stories. The floor

14. *Topeka State Journal*, October 9, 1909.

also was to be the home of the GAR, the Sons of Veterans, the Ladies of the GAR, and the Women's Relief Corps and would have council and committee rooms as well as cloak and toilet rooms. The third floor would house a gallery and the upper part of the Memorial Hall and two bookstack rooms. The fourth floor was to be devoted to museum and gallery purposes, and thus there would be no visible windows. Light would come from large skylights and from south windows that were located behind the parapet and therefore not visible from the street. Two passenger elevators as well as freight elevators and book lifts were included.

Within days of the disclosure of the plan architect W. T. Wellman of Lawrence charged that the building was so similar to the new Nebraska State Historical Society building that it appeared to have been designed from the blueprints and plans of that building. Wellman's interest had reportedly peaked after architect George A. Berlinghof sent him photos of the Nebraska building. The *Topeka State Journal* of November 3, 1909, carried cuts of both buildings for its readers' consideration. In advising that the



Kansas plans be redrawn the *Journal* stated, "Under a reform administration, if the desire for reform and economy were real, would it not be cheaper to have sent to the Nebraska architect and bought his plans at a second hand, bargain counter price, rather than to have hired and paid an expert to draw the same plans and furnish them to the state as original

work?" The paper also wondered whether Berlinghof would have cause for legal action against the state if the Kansas building were constructed using the existing plans.

In his reply, published in the *Capital* of November 6, 1909, Chandler suggested that Wellman's remarks were motivated out of animosity toward him as well as jealousy. Wellman and Chandler had competed for the position of state architect and Wellman had lost. Although Chandler admitted that there were similarities between the two buildings, he pointed out that the architectural styles were completely different. Nebraska's proposed museum was Doric while Kansas' was Corinthian. Even if there were a few similarities, Chandler claimed that no other building had the same interior space. In a November 12 *Kansas City Journal* article it was further shown that Berlinghof did not draw the Nebraska plans, but they had come from an eastern firm. The Kansas building would be built following Chandler's plans—and the Nebraska building, it should be pointed out, was *never* built.

At the November 29 meeting of the commission the contract for the excavation work was awarded to the Topeka firm of Douglas and Evans, general contractors, for \$17,031.85. The commissioners decided that concrete would be used throughout the foundation and the interior walls. As part of the agreement, signed December 2, the company pledged to protect the shade trees on the south and west sides of the building in a manner satisfactory to the state architect.

Governor Stubbs, Chandler, and Martin were designated as a committee charged with the responsibility of selecting a construction superintendent. Fred Lewis of Marion was the most active candidate, and several letters written by him as well as recommendations for him are in the Memorial Hall Building Commission records. In his letter of application

WOOD, STONE AND STEEL STRUCTURES		Plans of Up-to-Date Styles Furnished.
	FRED LEWIS,	
	General Contractor and Builder.	
Estimates and Specifications Furnished at Reasonable Rates		

Lewis reported that he was a former Union soldier and past post commander of the local GAR. He was not unfamiliar with the political process, having been sergeant-in-arms in the Senate. His best qualifications, however, came from the fact that he was a general contractor and had had experience in "wood, stone and steel construction."¹⁵ Lewis was appointed to the position February 27, 1910.

The Topeka Railway Company released its right to the ground on Tenth Street on February 4, and excavation work began immediately. Forty teams and fifty-four shovelers made up the work force. In twenty-five days the entire basement with the exception of the foundation pits was dug and the dirt hauled away. The eleven to twelve thousand cubic yards of earth were moved nine blocks, to lots at Seventeenth and Monroe, in record time. The contract was completed in one week less than the time specified, even though forty of the shovelers walked out on strike on the afternoon of February 10. The subcontractor handled the problem by firing all the

15. Fred Lewis to George Martin, April 3, 1909, Box 1.



By the time this picture was taken looking east toward the buildings fronting on Kansas Avenue, the excavation work for the Memorial Building was well under way.



By April 1910, the foundation walls were going up, as shown in this view looking north.



Various workers and officials stood proudly on the completed foundation walls on December 3, 1910.

strikers and hiring new men. Work continued the following day.¹⁶

On April 12, 1910, bids were opened for the construction of the superstructure of the building. Surprised at the number and complexity of the bids, the commission decided to adjourn to allow time to review them. The commissioners had allowed a great deal of latitude because they had yet to decide on a building material. The lowest bid was obviously that of the Topeka general contracting firm of Leeper and Smith at \$157,956. However, as with all the bids, it did not include plumbing, heating, and wiring. Also, there were serious questions as to whether the appropriation would be sufficient to finish the building. Even if Leeper and Smith's bid were accepted, it would leave only \$11,000 of the appropriation.¹⁷

The commission discussed the issue on April 20 and decided not to let a contract until after the annual reunion of the Kansas GAR at Hutchinson in May. Since the building was to be a memorial to soldiers it was thought best to let them decide the building material.

In addition to this question, the encampment would also have to wrestle with Rickel's attempt

16. *Topeka Daily Capital*, February 11, 1910.

17. *Topeka State Journal*, April 13, 1910.

to be elected to a second term as department commander. Only one commander, P. H. Coney, had ever been reelected. The fact that several leading members of the GAR were opposed to his interior building plans became a major issue in the election. Rickel lost the election to N. E. Harmon, and the department voted to ask for additional appropriations so that the building could be constructed out of marble or granite.¹⁸

As a result, the Memorial Hall Building Commission voted to postpone further activity until after the next session of the legislature. The remainder of the appropriation would then revert to the state general fund. The decision was reached only after a heated, three-hour exchange between Governor Stubbs and Lt. Gov. William J. Fitzgerald revolving around the legality of letting contracts for a building that would cost in excess of the appropriation and the suitability of using the various proposed materials.¹⁹

The suspension of construction caused a furor in the ranks of the Grand Army and the public in general. Many excuses were given for the delay, but the public suspected that the arguments and disagreements between commission members were the root of the problem. State Auditor J. M. Nation summed up the prevailing opinion when he stated, "It seems to me that it would not have required much ability to make a decision in a year's time as to whether the building should be built of stone or marble."²⁰

An appropriation bill was introduced on January 27, 1911, asking for \$250,000 to complete the building. Fifty thousand dollars was to be available in 1911, with the balance to be paid to the commission within the fiscal year ending June 30, 1912.²¹ The bill quickly passed.

On March 22 the commission met throughout the day reviewing the stone bids and the samples presented by the various stone companies. At 4:00 P.M. the bids were formally opened and rejected as being too high. It was decided to readvertise and reopen new bids on March 30, 1911.²²

At the second opening bids were considered from four companies. Those from the Vermont Marble Company of Rutland, the Georgia Marble Company, and the Colorado-Yule Marble Company were rejected. The Vermont Marble Company of Proctor and the Woodbury Granite Company of Hardwick, Vermont, were selected to do the work. Woodbury

18. *Kansas City Journal*, April 24, 1910.

19. *Topeka Daily Capital*, May 25, 1910.

20. *Topeka State Journal*, May 26, 1910.

21. *Ibid.*, January 27, 1911.

22. Commission Minutes, March 22, 1911, Box 3.

bid Hardwick gray granite for the foundation from the grade line to the top of the molded water table, set in place for \$11,100; for area coping set in place, \$2,300; and for entrance steps set in place, \$1,500. The Vermont Marble Company bid for all exterior facing above the water table, except the main cornice, loggia beams, and face material in the north bay from the top of the water table to the skyline at a price of \$84,600. Both contracts included the actual placement of the stone. Leeper and Smith's proposal to substitute terra cotta from the main cornice and loggia ceiling beams and north bay for marble was accepted at a projected cost of \$14,740. Its proposal for the general construction at a cost of \$89,240 also was accepted. A decision on the type of building stone was finally made. It would be gray granite and "Mountain White" marble from Vermont.²³

Once the commission resolved the main contract hurdles the construction of the exterior moved along rapidly. The first granite arrived on July 6, the contractor began setting it July 8, and the work was completed by October 8. The first marble arrived October 13 and setting was begun on October 27. By the first of September Leeper and Smith had the interior walls up one story, which was as far as they could go without the exterior facing, as well as the first concrete floor poured and the structural iron work up.²⁴

On July 11, 1911, bids were received for the heating, plumbing, and electrical work. Salina Plumbing was given the contract for plumbing and heating and the Arcade Electrical Construction Company of Kansas City received the electrical contract. On



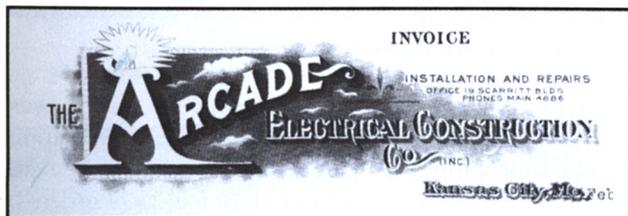
Architect Charles Chandler, second from left; construction superintendent Fred Lewis, third from left; and Society Secretary George Martin, far right, were among those inspecting the work in October 1911.

and found everything acceptable. The company was instructed to proceed.²⁵

The cornerstone laying was set for September 27, 1911. After much discussion it was decided that the stone should read "Erected by the State of Kansas as a Memorial to the Union Soldiers and Sailors of the War of the Rebellion." The stone would be carved in Vermont and shipped as soon as available.²⁶

With the aid of Sen. Charles Curtis, the commission managed to arrange a visit from President Taft on September 27, and this date was set for the actual cornerstone laying. In conjunction with the ceremony and the state's semicentennial observance the GAR planned a three-day reunion, to begin on September 26.²⁷

President Taft spent several days in Kansas but only five hours in Topeka. On Sunday, September 24, he spoke at the University of Kansas and the Haskell Institute in Lawrence as well as at the inauguration of Dr. Wilbur Mason as president of Baker University in Baldwin. On Monday he visited Coffeyville, Independence, Cherryvale, Chanute, Ottawa, Kansas City, and Hutchinson and spoke briefly at each place.



July 19, an agreement was reached whereby Salina Plumbing would do the heating portion and W. F. Sheahan, Topeka, would take care of the plumbing portion.

On July 26, several commission members journeyed to the Vermont rock quarries to inspect the models for the ornamental marble carvings. They met with company representatives on July 31 and August 1

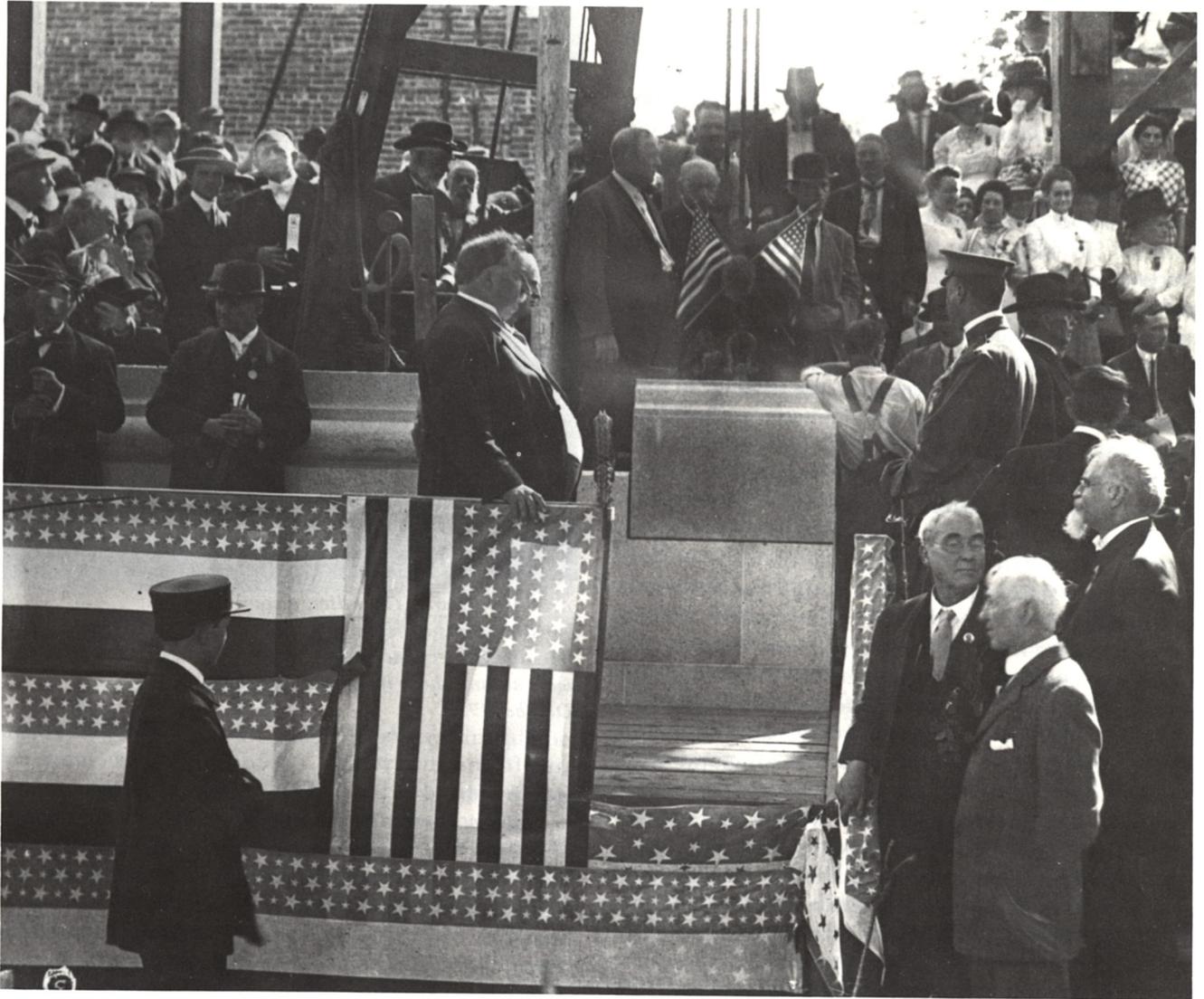
23. Commission Minutes, March 30, 1911, Box 3.

24. *Eighteenth Biennial Report, 1910-1912*, 10.

25. Commission Minutes, August 1, 1911, Box 3.

26. Commission Minutes, July 19, 1911, Box 3.

27. Commission Minutes, September 28, 1911, Box 3.



President William Howard Taft laid the cornerstone of the Memorial Building on September 27, 1911.

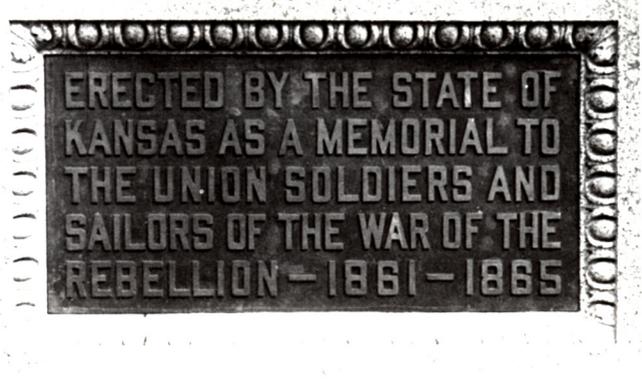
On Tuesday he closed the state fair in Hutchinson and laid the cornerstone for a municipal building. He arrived in Topeka about 5:00 A.M. Wednesday and breakfasted at the country club. From there it was off to a flagpole dedication at Washburn University and back to the Memorial Building at 9:50 A.M. At 10:00 A.M. Governor Stubbs presented the building to the assembled throng. Fifteen minutes later President Taft stepped forward, smoothed the mortar, and guided the stone into place. After announcing "I have the honor to advise you that the cornerstone is well and properly laid," the president made his way across the statehouse grounds to a platform where he delivered his address. By noon he had left Topeka for a round of speeches in Atchison and Leavenworth.²⁸

Although the cornerstone was well laid it was impossible to read from "any distance." Therefore, cornerstone tablets with lettering that could be read at a distance of fifty to seventy-five feet were ordered. The new west plaque was to show two military figures flanking the state seal. The cornerstone lettering and panel on the south side would have to be cut out and sunk one-eighth inch deeper to receive the tablet, while the west side of the cornerstone would have to be cut and "egg and dart" molding added to receive the second tablet. (The egg and dart molding was never cut on the west side for the sake of economy.)²⁹

Construction during the remainder of 1911 was

28. *Eighteenth Biennial Report, 1910-1912*, 3.

29. Charles H. Chandler to Fred P. Forman, December 18, 1912, Box 1.



uneventful except for a minor controversy over the fact that the windows being installed on the north and west were copper, while those on the east and south were wooden. Responding to allegations that the building thus would look “cheap,” the commissioners explained that such economizing was necessary. As the building was to be fireproof, copper, supplied by the Henry Weis Cornice Company, was used on the exposed sides, but the appropriation would not allow its use on all sides.³⁰

On October 20 the commission directed that all the trees they had earlier ordered the contractors to protect, with the exception of the “one on the corner,” be cut down. The larger branches were overhanging the walls and it was felt that they would stain the marble.³¹ Most of the old elms had been planted in the spring of 1871 by H. W. Moore, the janitor of the old Lincoln College.³²

In September 1911, Woodbury offered to place the buttresses at the west and south entrances for an

additional \$3,500. The commission decided that it would be wise to have Chandler check with other contractors for comparable prices.³³ It advertised for bids, and those of Woodbury Granite at \$3,050 and the J. Swanson Company at \$2,482 were received. The \$568 cost difference did not seem significant since Woodbury was already on the site and the Swanson granite would be of a different color and texture from the foundation stone.³⁴ Granted the contract, Woodbury promised an early completion date. Chandler ordered the remaining portion of the retaining wall facings in December 1912. Because of a change in the size of the Santa Fe office building, also under construction, there was a change in the north end of the wall facing on the west side of the Memorial Building. As this reduced the amount of granite needed for the wall, it was hoped that this circumstance would make up for the extra step that was needed on the west side.³⁵

30. *Eighteenth Biennial Report, 1910-1912*, 11.

31. Commission Minutes, October 20, 1911, Box 3.

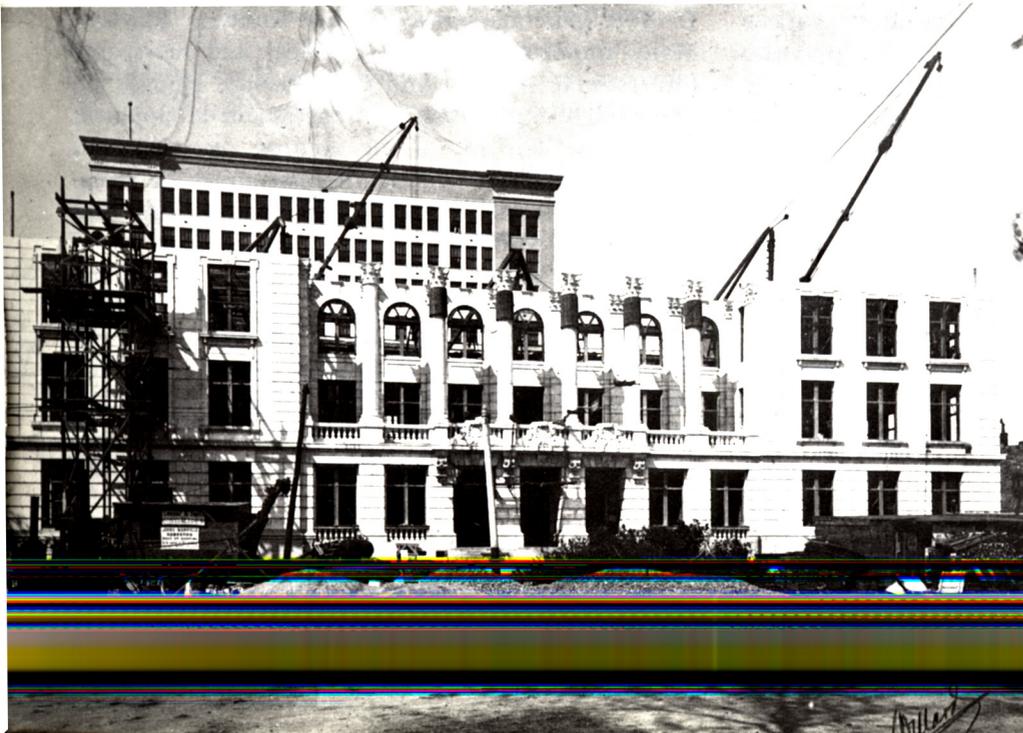
32. *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 21, 1911.

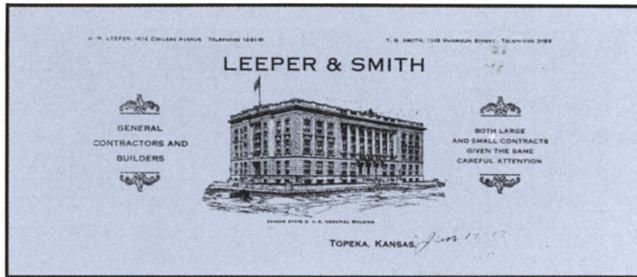
33. Commission Minutes, September 28, 1911, Box 3.

34. Commission Minutes, July 29, 1912, Box 3.

35. Commission Minutes, December 18, 1912, Box 3.

By May 1912, the third floor of the Memorial Building was almost completed.





The only remaining major contracts let during 1912 were given to Leeper and Smith for cementing the basement floors, partitions, and plastering and to C. F. Gustafson and Company for connecting the building to the sanitary sewer south on Tenth Street. With the 1913 appropriation of \$175,000, contracts were let that would allow the bookstacks to be built up to the deck on the second floor. Leeper and Smith won the contracts for the structural steelwork and glass floors involved in this construction.

By March 1913, construction had progressed to the point that specifications could be prepared for interior plastering, marble, woodwork, and ornamental ironwork. Bids for these items were opened in the governor's office during the commission meeting of April 29. The marble contract was given to the George B. Sickels Marble Company of Georgia for \$23,286, whereupon the representative invited the commissioners to visit the quarry as guests of the company to select the proper color. Perceiving no conflict of interest, the commissioners voted to do so at the first opportunity.

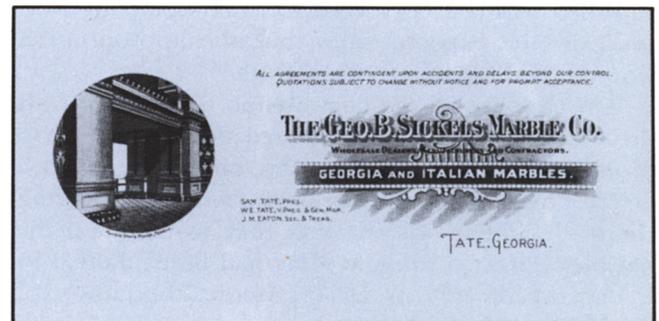
Leeper and Smith was given the contract for the ornamental ironwork as well as the general contract to complete the interior of the building. It was decided to use quarter-sawed red oak finish rather than white oak as originally specified as the grain was much richer.

The May 16, 1913, commission meeting was spent considering the sidewalks. Determining that the walks would be of the same width on Tenth Street as on Jackson in front of the Santa Fe building, the commissioners awarded the contract to Leeper and Smith for \$901. They also decided to arrange the Georgia trip with the Santa Fe because of all the favors the company had given them.

Secretary Martin's health would not allow him to make the journey, and thus Connelley, his future successor, was chosen to go. The governor and the commissioners left Topeka June 5 and arrived in Atlanta on the evening of June 7. On June 8 they left to visit the quarries at Tate. Along the way they passed several Civil War battle sites, whereupon

GAR Commander J. N. "Curly" Harrison regaled the visitors with his earlier experiences in the area. At the quarry they were met by Maj. Sam Tate, president of the George B. Sickels Marble Company, who claimed his quarry was one of the largest in the country at that time. He controlled a total of twelve thousand acres in the area. The marble from this site was among the strongest known. Its large granular surface, when polished, was superior in appearance to other marbles with a dead mass or smaller granular surface, while there were all colors to choose from—even a rainbow variety.

At a luncheon the members were informed about the industrial progress of the state and the development of its quarries. Many important buildings, such as the Minnesota State Capitol, had been constructed using Georgia marble. George Sickels' letterhead carried an interior view of the Kansas statehouse where it was also used. The commissioners announced that they had selected Creole marble for the interior



of the Memorial Building. Creole was described as a "fine white marble with dark lines and clouds throughout."

The commissioners returned to Atlanta where they were entertained at the country club by John L. Tye, general counsel of the Southern Railway. Many important Georgia political and newspaper figures were present, and Gov. George Hodges did a fine job of explaining the progress and development of Kansas. The hit of the evening, however, was Colonel Harrison, who again entertained the group with his war stories and jokes. The Georgians promised him the governorship within two years if he would but move to the state. Curly had to decline the offer. Sunday was spent with Wilbur C. Hawk, a former Kansan and deputy warden of the federal prison. Monday and Tuesday were spent visiting the Civil War battlefield sites of Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge, and Lookout Mountain. After a short visit in Nashville with the governor's secretary, the com-

missioners returned to Topeka happy with Georgia and the selection they had made.

The interior marble work would be the most frustrating part of construction for the commission. The George B. Sickels Marble Company generally obtained its marble in blocks from the Georgia Marble Company and then fabricated it into the final form. The actual setting of the stone was subcontracted to Interstate Marble and Tile of Topeka. On August 27, 1913, Connelley wrote to the Georgia Marble Company to inform it that the measurers were procrastinating and were "slower than the Wrath of God." If the firm had not received any measurements to date he would "inject some dynamite" into the workers. He also expressed his fears that the men would "soldier" on the setting job as well. The sales manager, William Jessop, responded on August 29 that he would send Connelley's letter to the proper persons and label it "ginger to be taken in generous doses." Part of the delay, as Jessop explained, was because the company had to quarry a large amount of stone before it could get to the proper color the commission desired. Sickels had about half the stone, and the remainder would be sent shortly.

On October 6, 1913, the company was informed that the plastering was almost completed and that it could start setting stone in any part of the building. However, Connelley had also expressed concern about W. H. Fernald, who was in charge of the work. The other contractors and architects believed that he was "incapacitated and unfit" for the work. If the commissioners had known he would supervise the work, Sickels never would have been given the contract. The company responded on October 9 that it had been shipping Fernald marble for ten or twelve years and had no previous complaints. Moreover, so far there was no real reason for taking the job away from Fernald or asking him to give it up. If he did give cause in the future the firm promised to reconsider its stand. The commission was also advised that the first marble was shipped on or about October 18 and would be traced as Connelley suggested.

On November 12 the Sickels firm told Connelley that it was very surprised that the marble setters had not begun work and promised to pressure them. The strategy evidently worked, as Connelley informed the company on December 4 that the setters were making good progress, so good, in fact, that Sickels could not produce enough finished marble to keep up with the setters. The commission no longer believed the company's stories that the stone had been shipped. Tracers were sent repeatedly attempting

to locate the lost cars with varying degrees of success. Connelley wired the company on January 23, 1914, that a shipment supposedly sent January 12 had not arrived and that the workmen were off for a week. The tone of the telegrams had changed from a terse "you must get a move on or take the consequences" on January 20 to a pleading "can't you and will you do something to help us out in this matter" on January 23.

Hoping that he could lend his influence, Connelley contacted Sam Tate himself and enclosed a copy of his letter of complaint to Sickels. As the situation now stood, Fernald was doing a fine job but was losing his workers because they had nothing to do. One of the shipping problems was the quality of the railroad cars used by Sickels. Two had broken down en route. Connelley advised that "cars that will carry coon skins and turpentine won't carry marble." He had become quite knowledgeable about the differences between doing business with Georgia as compared with Vermont.³⁶

The company responded to Connelley's charges and Tate's request for an investigation on January 29. The disposition of the various cars was given, and tracers were placed for those that had been lost. The company promised to have the last of the marble in Topeka no later than March 3 or 4. It did not take Connelley's charges of incompetency too seriously. Marble, it explained, was a skilled business and could not be rushed. There were a limited number of cutters, carvers, and polishers, and it was impossible to increase the work force quickly to finish a job.

The final marble shipment was made on March 5, 1914, but the commission refused to pay for it until the setters had completed their work. This time the complaint was with Fernald. There were no rooms that were finished, portions of the work were improperly done and might have to be reset, and no effort was being made to complete the work on time.³⁷ The company replied that it would expect to be reimbursed for any damages or delays it might suffer.³⁸ In April, Sickels sent a representative named Pendley to investigate, and everything went well for a brief time until Pendley returned to Georgia and the ranks of setters again began to thin. Those remaining reportedly were difficult to deal with, as Connelley proclaimed. "If there ever was a set of aggravating

36. William Connelley to the George B. Sickels Marble Company, January 28, 1914, Box 1.

37. William Connelley to the George B. Sickels Marble Company, March 18, 1914, Box 1.

38. The George B. Sickels Marble Company to William Connelley, March 24, 1914, Box 1.

people on earth," he wrote, "it is this outfit that you have now setting this marble." He advised Sickels to withhold final payment to them until all of the additional charges had been assessed. The commission was compiling claims against Interstate Marble to cover cleanup costs. The company responded that it had already paid Interstate more than the total amount of the contract.³⁹ Not until the commission meeting of January 7, 1915, did the Sickels company agree to certain claims against it and receive final payment.

Bids were reviewed for the installation of elevators at the June 28, 1913, meeting of the commission. On July 5 the commission voted to award the elevator contract to Kimball Brothers of Council Bluffs for one passenger and one freight elevator with an option to purchase an additional passenger elevator later at the same price when further appropriations were available. After some discussion a figure of \$4,600 was negotiated.⁴⁰

On October 6, 1913, Connelley asked the company to install the freight elevator as soon as possible. It was operable during the second week of November but would lift only fourteen hundred pounds, although it was rated to lift a maximum of two thousand pounds.⁴¹ The problem was diagnosed eventually as insufficient current. In January the passenger elevator arrived, and the company requested the agreed-upon fifty percent payment on delivery. The commission refused to allocate the money, greatly upsetting the elevator firm, although it began installation.

Neither elevator could be tested, a factor that resulted in the commission holding up final payment until sufficient electricity was supplied. The commission contacted the Arcade Electrical Construction Company on February 2, asking it to complete the necessary wiring. On February 12 G. S. Montgomery of Kimball Brothers informed Connelley that the firm "could not go further with the work until suitable electrical power has been supplied. . . ." The voucher for the first payment of the elevator bill was turned over to the state auditor on February 21, and little was heard about the problem for several months thereafter. In early June, Montgomery replaced a sheave which was burned out, reportedly because of improper oiling. The commission met on June 18,

39. The George B. Sickels Marble Company to William Connelley, March 27, 1914, Box 1.

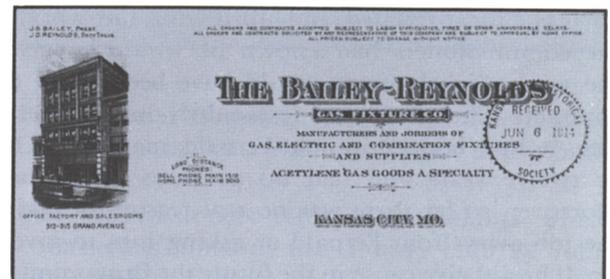
40. Commission Minutes (Executive Committee), July 10, 1913, Box 3.

41. G. S. Montgomery to Charles H. Chandler, October 7, 1913; Montgomery to William Connelley, November 20, 1913, Box 1.

1914, for a final inspection of the elevators. After Montgomery agreed to make certain minor adjustments, it voted to order final payment.⁴²

The elevators continued to cause Connelley problems, however, and rather than contact Montgomery in Kansas City, he wrote directly to the company headquarters in Council Bluffs. This naturally upset Montgomery a great deal. Whenever Montgomery sent representatives to look at the elevators they worked perfectly. The company told Connelley there was little it could do unless it knew the problem. Apparently low voltage was the culprit, for on May 17, 1915, Connelley again wrote to Kimball in Council Bluffs informing the firm that the legislature had adjourned, and that when the load had been removed from the state power plant the elevator service had improved greatly. The operation of the freight elevator was important to the commission beyond the fact that the elevator facilitated the movement of material about the building. The commissioners charged each contractor seventy-five cents per hour for its use. The freight elevator is still in operation today.

The Bailey-Reynolds Gas Fixture Company received the contract for furnishing and installing electric light fixtures. In addition to the relatively normal wall bracket fixtures, its bid provided for "Marbo" sphere fixtures in the halls and corridors.⁴³ These beautiful fixtures remain in use today.



Shelving was added to the building as funding permitted, and portions were moved from the old statehouse quarters. On June 28, 1915, bids were opened for one deck of steel shelving in the library and one deck in the newspaper section together with stairways and glass floors, as well as steel shelving in the duplicate room, which was located in the west wing of the basement. Henry Bennett and Sons was given the bid. The remaining decking, glass floors, steel shelving, flag cases, steel counters and

42. G. S. Montgomery to Charles H. Chandler, June 12, 1914, Box 2.

43. Commission Minutes, November 21, 1913, Box 3.

railings, stack lighting, and steps were completed under several contracts by the Steel Fixture Manufacturing Company of Topeka. It also supplied many of the filing cases, tables, book trucks, and special order file units for the Society, GAR, and other allied organizations using the building.



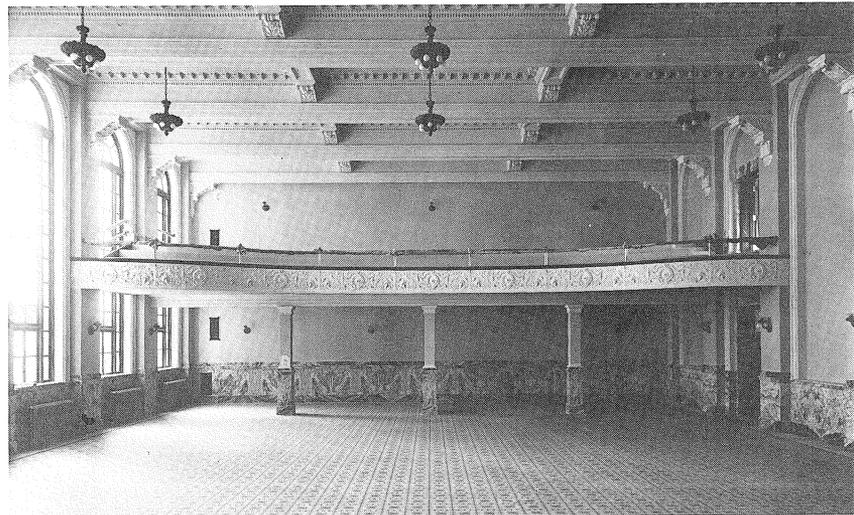
The old furniture was deemed inappropriate for the new building and, in fact, much of it was discarded from other state departments. The various pieces of movable furniture were obtained from three major local sources: the C. A. Karlan Furniture Company, the Hall Stationery Company, and the Crosby Brothers Company. For example, ten dozen oak chairs for the assembly room were acquired at \$2.05 each from Karlan in June 1915; a rolltop desk from Hall was purchased for \$70.00 in December 1915; and three oak office tables were bought from Crosby Brothers in 1914 at \$34.50 each. Several pieces of the original furniture are in use today.

The commission also felt it necessary to acquire new "showcases" for the museum artifacts. Bids for these cases were opened December 17, 1915. The cabinets would be forty inches high and constructed of plate glass, except that the doors would be one-eighth-inch chipped glass. They would have a ten-inch base topped with Georgia Creole marble. Each cabinet would have two polished glass shelves, one ten inches and the other fourteen inches wide. The front and two ends would be ground and polished, while the back edge would be clean-cut and seamed. This would all be held together with "patent" nickel-plated corners. Hall's bid of \$85.90 each was accepted and twenty-eight cabinets were ordered. The commission also voted to buy the sample submitted by Steel Fixture for \$50.00 and place it in the library reading room.

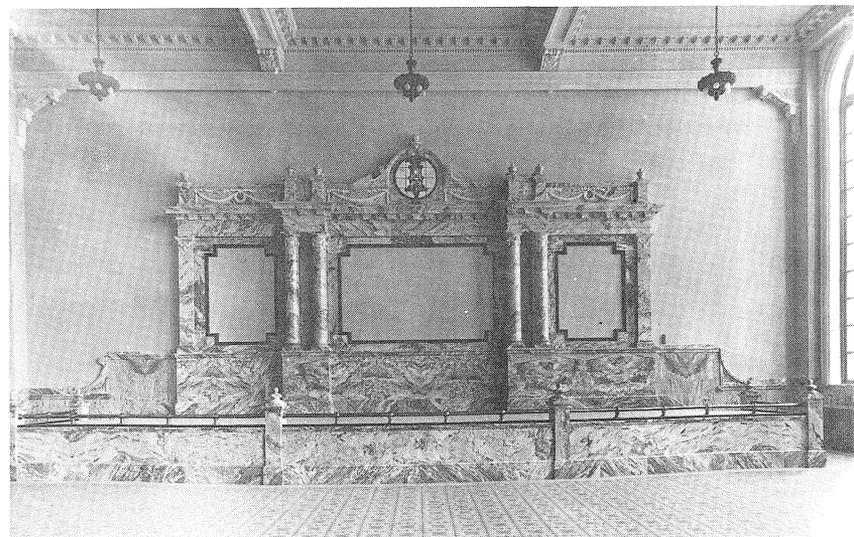
On June 28, 1915, the commission selected the seating for the Memorial Hall. After receiving several samples and options, the bid from Hall's was accepted at a price of \$5.85 per chair. Made by the American Seating Company in Chicago, each had an imitation

leather mattress spring seat. The commission decided to opt for a box spring and frame back with a dull rubbed finish at a cost of \$4.20 for each seat. At the same meeting C. A. Karlan was requested to supply the platform furniture, all to be covered with the best quality black leather. Two eleven-foot-long settees and six heavy chairs of the same design and quality were also ordered for the hall foyer.

According to the contract the seating had to be installed by September 1, 1915, as the auditorium was scheduled for use on September 10. When the company later protested that this was not enough time, Connelley insisted that the work be completed



The east end and balcony of the auditorium before the seats were installed.



The ornate marble stage at the west end of the auditorium.

by September 5 at the latest. The seating arrived on August 27, 1915, and the custodial staff was hired to unload the railroad car. The company installation superintendent had the seating in place prior to the September 1 deadline.

On December 15, 1915, draperies were purchased for the hall foyer door and windows. C. A. Karlan supplied the adjustable curtain with over draperies and valance with all rods and brackets, as well as an embroidered panel above each window, for \$14.65 each.

Two days later the commission ordered five plaster eagles, with bronze finish, from the W. H. Jennens Manufacturing Company of Kansas City. These eagles, no two of which were alike, were placed over the regimental flag cases. One of the more expensive items ordered, each eagle cost the commission \$160.00.

As the Memorial Building neared completion it contained several unique features. The temperature was controlled by the Powers Heat Regulation System, and ventilation was provided by Dunham

Vacuum Equipment. All stack stairs were the patented Rex Ferro Concrete Steel Stairs, and all rooms featured Hampton office locks on the doors. The "egg and dart" molding design was used on everything from ornamental plaster to the woodwork, file cases, and cornerstone. Outside, E. F. A. Reinisch planted fourteen globe elm trees around the building in April 1915 at a cost of \$2.50 each.

One of the most beautiful features of the building was and is the woodwork. The flush veneered or slab doors were built of quarter-sawed red oak inlaid with ebonized wood and white holly. Each door consisted of a white pine core, built up of narrow strips dovetailed and glued together. All woodwork received an initial coat of tinted paste filler which was rubbed down and over which a coat of shellac, cut with grain alcohol, was applied. Once this coating dried, it was sandpapered and two coats of varnish were applied, sandpapered between each coat. The last coat of varnish was rubbed to an "eggshell"

Thousands of spectators thronged Jackson Street and the Capitol grounds in an effort to catch a glimpse of the dedication ceremonies.





As part of the Memorial Building dedication the battle flags of Kansas Civil War regiments were transferred with great ceremony from the Capitol.



Old and young joined in placing one of the flags in a Memorial Building vault.

gloss with crude oil, water, and a pumice stone.⁴⁴

One of the main decorative elements of the building was never added due to cost considerations. It was planned to place four bronze figures of soldiers and sailors on the pedestals at the entrances to the building. The projected cost of \$5,000 seemed much too extravagant for government officials of the day to consider.

Inevitably, a few problems had to be solved in the new building. The ventilation system broke down completely during the summer of 1916. Window shades were purchased for the fourth-floor skylights, but even when they were in place the temperature was 110 degrees day after day. The roof was defective and leaked badly, and the basement also leaked. In June 1915 the freight elevator pit had to be repaired, along with part of the machinery, because it was always full of water.⁴⁵ Connelley had complained to Mayor Roswell Cofran on July 14, 1914, that the fire cistern in the middle of Tenth and Kansas was leaking and flooding every basement in the vicinity.⁴⁶ George Root noted in his diary on September 21, 1914, that he came to work one day after one and one-half inches

of rain to find the workroom flooded. He and janitor Tom Sneed swept water down the drain for two and one-half hours. Considering the financial problems with which the commission wrestled, however, the construction was completed relatively smoothly.

The Memorial Building was dedicated on May 27, 1914, before a crowd estimated at twenty-five thousand. Three thousand were local schoolchildren. The day began rather ominously with rain clouds threatening. No rain fell, however, until after the ceremony. The first event consisted of "one of the greatest military parades in the state's history." It was followed by addresses by Governor Hodges, GAR Commander Harrison, who had been elected to a rare second term in appreciation for his efforts on the building, and GAR Commander-in-Chief Washington Gardner. In the afternoon the regimental battle flags were transferred from the Capitol to their new home and placed in the special cases that had been built for them. Later, A. K. Longren flew over the building in his airplane, and a grand concert was held on the statehouse square.

Division of space and offices caused a certain amount of tension among the contending groups. The building had not been designed for general offices, and no offices were provided except for the GAR, the Historical Society, the Goss bird collection, and

44. Charles H. Chandler, *Specifications of Materials and Workmanship for Completion of Interior of the State G.A.R. Memorial Building* (Topeka: State Printer, 1913).

45. Commission Records, June 28, 1915, Box 3.

46. William Connelley to Mayor Cofran, July 14, 1914.

the Academy of Science. The basement was set aside for machinery and storage. The first floor was allotted to the Historical Society except for two rooms in the southwest portion. The larger room was to be made into an assembly hall, while the smaller room was set aside initially for GAR offices. Later, the Academy of Science was given the space, later sharing it with the United Spanish War Veterans. The Boards of Managers of the State Soldiers Home at Dodge City and the Bickerdyke Home were eventually given quarters in the assembly room for a brief time. The Historical Society secretary's office and reception room were located on the northwest corner of the first floor. The second floor contained the Memorial Hall, the library, and offices for the GAR and its allied societies. The third floor was allocated to the Historical Society. The fourth floor initially was set aside for the museum and its offices, the curator of the Goss collection, and offices of the Academy of Science. The academy offices were later given to the Historical Society, while the academy museum had space in the north room of the west wing of the fourth floor.

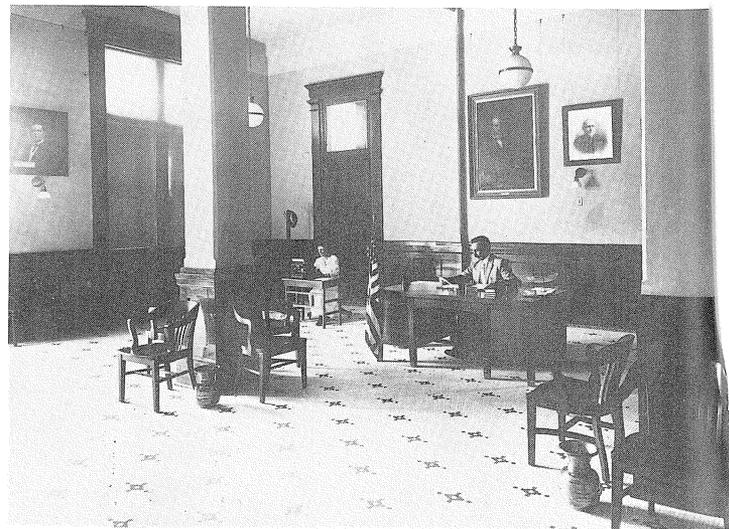
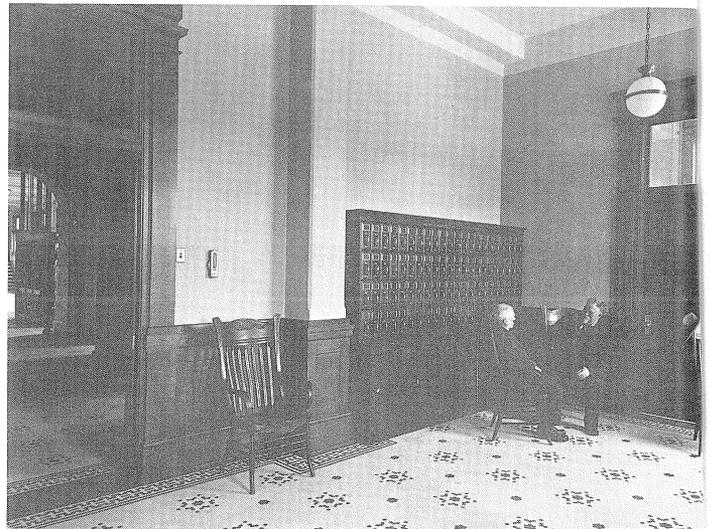
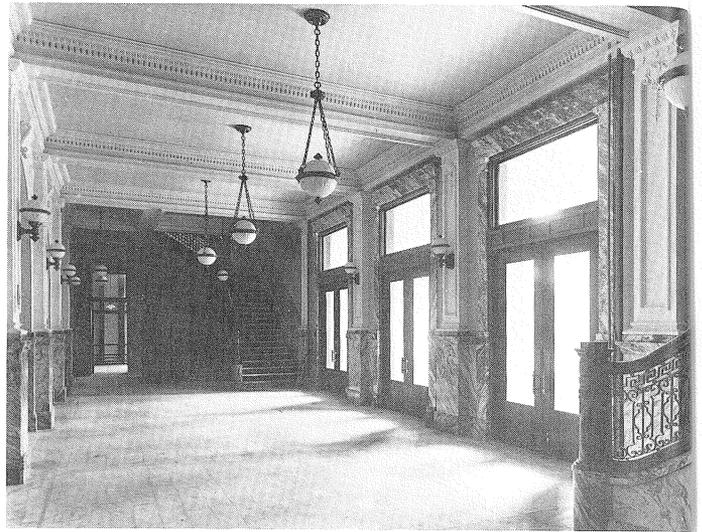
In 1919 the building was turned over to the executive council of the state and the Memorial Hall Building Commission ceased to exist as a policy-making group. The building it had managed to plan and construct, however, continues to provide a shelter for the state's historical collections in a useful and dignified manner. Those directly involved with the conception and development of the building felt very strongly about what it represented for them and for future Kansans. It was dedicated as a memorial to peace, not as a memorial to war. Colonel Harrison summed up the building philosophy in words still appropriate today at the dedication in 1914:

Its magnificent walls of pure white marble are more eloquent than articulate speech—its very silence is impressive far beyond and above the words of man, for it assures my comrades living, that my comrades living and dead, are held in sacred memory by the great, patriotic liberty-loving people of Kansas. KH

ABOVE RIGHT: *The first-floor lobby of the Memorial Building.*

CENTER RIGHT: *One of the Memorial Building offices. GAR Commander J. N. "Curly" Harrison is shown at right.*

BOTTOM RIGHT: *The offices of the Kansas Academy of Science in the Memorial Building.*





Their work completed, Fred Lewis, Charles Chandler, "Curly" Harrison, and William Connelley, left to right, surveyed the results on the Memorial Building balcony.