



COVER—A Water Color Drawing by Strand.	Page
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE By A. D. F. Hamlin.	1
CHURCH PLANNING IN THE UNITED STATES By Richard Franz Bach	15
THE HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, Esq., Monroe, N. Y.: Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect By John Taylor Boyd, Jr.	30
HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA: Albert Kelsey, Architect By G. Matlack Price	44
PORTFOLIO OF CURRENT ARCHITECTURE	63
THE ARCHITECT'S LIBRARY: Books on Colonial Architecture. Part III. Dwellings (Continued). By Richard Franz Bach	69
NOTES AND COMMENTS	93

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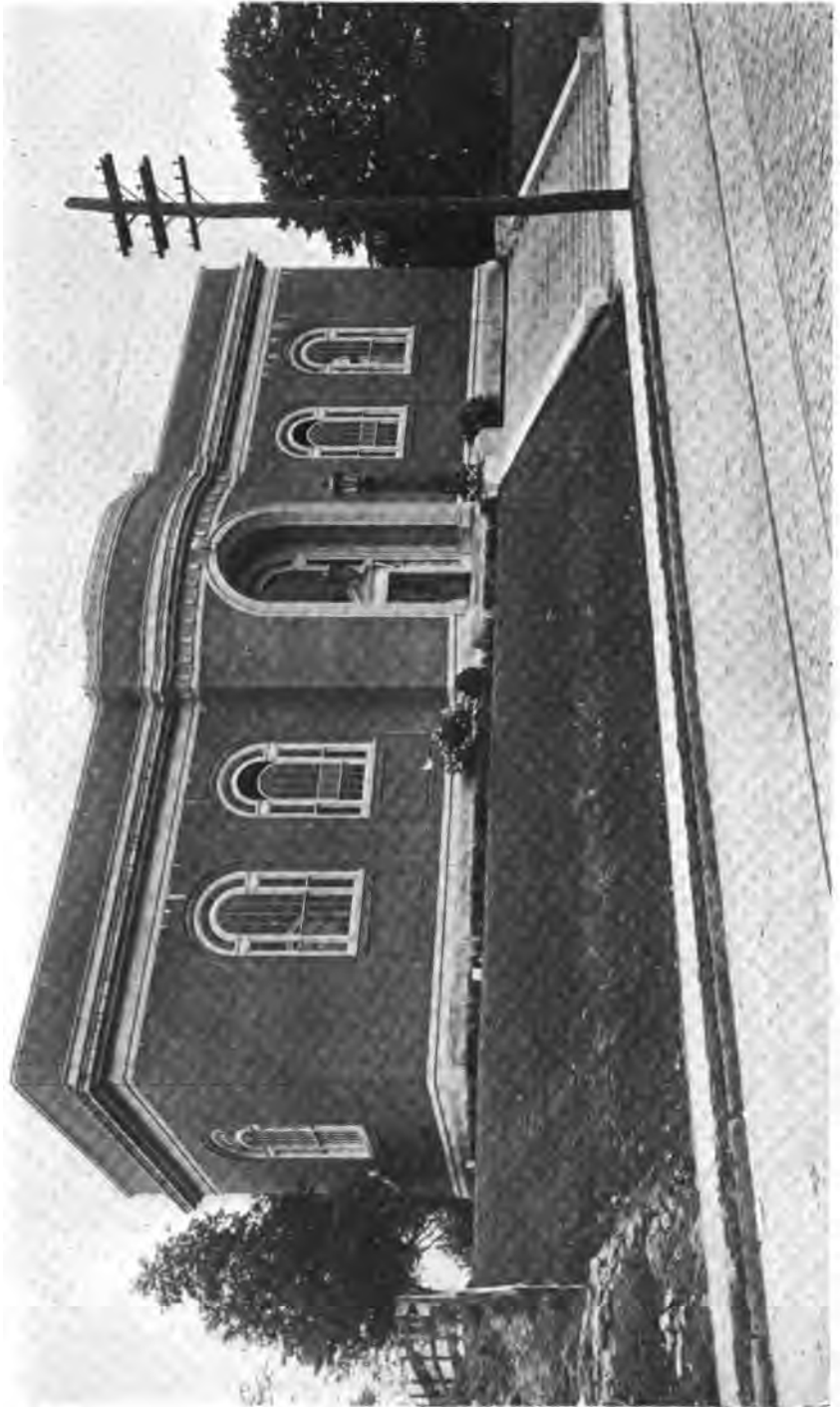
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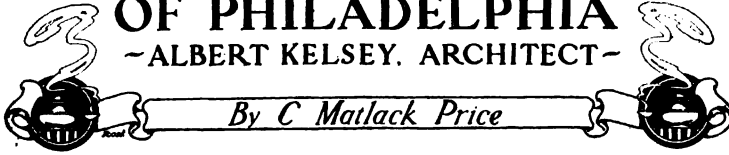
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HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA. ALBERT KELSEY, ARCHITECT.

# HADDINGTON BRANCH THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA

-ALBERT KELSEY. ARCHITECT-



ALL buildings of specific types, such as theatres, post-offices, banks, schools and court-houses, call to mind some familiar, or at least usual, manner of architectural treatment. This is particularly true of libraries.

It is not intended to imply that our familiarity with these architectural expressions is to be construed as an accusation that they are commonplace, or that our architects blindly follow a stereotyped formula. It would be more true to say that a certain architectural treatment is usually accorded to a specific type of building because that treatment has been found to be the best in the greatest number of ways.

For the most part, the first thought in connection with a public building (excepting the theatre) is that it should be dignified. Dignity is a safe ideal and a desirable one, and a public building possesses greater architectural merit if it be dignified, even if uninteresting, than if it be interesting and not dignified. In some cases qualities of both dignity and interest have been forcefully combined.

Adherence to type in the design of public buildings has had its advantages and its disadvantages—the one predominating over the other commensurately with the ability of the architect.

On the first score, the country has been spared many unsightly "architectural aberrations," (to use the late Mr. Schuyler's apt term), and classic traditions, even Beaux-Arts traditions, have preserved in our public buildings. For the most part, a certain quality of dignity, fitness and propriety. On the other score, adherence to type has reiterated a good many details, excellent in themselves, but tiresome when used without

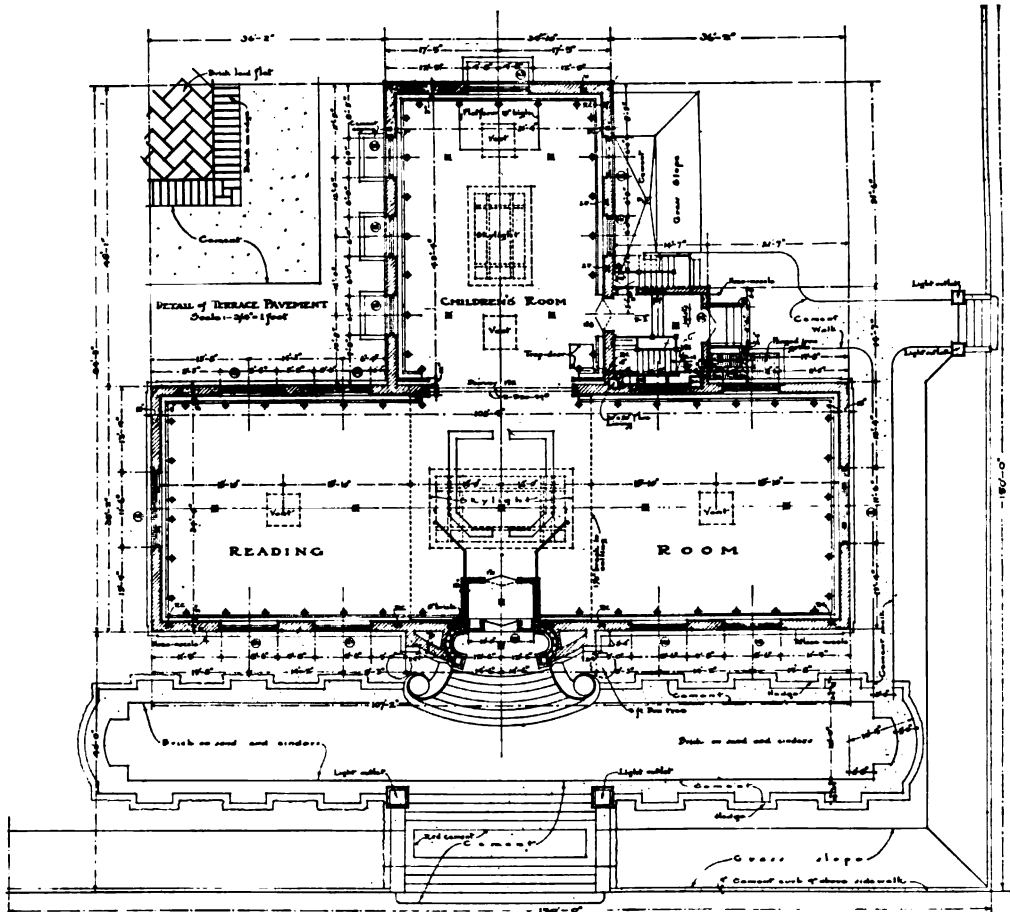
imagination. The vicissitudes, in this connection, through which the classic orders have been driven must be accepted as proof complete of the eternal merits of Greek architecture. Used and misused without respite for centuries, classic forms are no less the basis of architectural design than ever, and we can feel safe in assuming that this will remain true so long as there is any architecture.

That classic architecture forms the basis of a design for a public building should, however, not be hastily accepted as a reason why many public buildings have proved to be conspicuous architectural failures. The reason for the failure or for the stigma of "commonplace" will be found to lie with the misunderstanding or misuse of the classic idea, or with its use when some other architectural treatment might have been more effectively employed.

Much has been written and said concerning Greek architecture, from Vignola to date; yet no critic, perhaps, has descended to such colloquialism, or risen to such truth, as to say that Greek architecture, among its other gifts, has saved a great deal of thinking on the part of latter-day architects.

And in no type of public building have classic forms been more often called into service than in library buildings. This, in many ways, is fortunate, for we instinctively feel that, in all propriety, the repository for a valuable collection of books should be dignified.

In pursuit of the ideal of dignity many architects have overlooked the element of humor in architecture and have forgotten that with qualities of dignity in a library building it is desirable also to



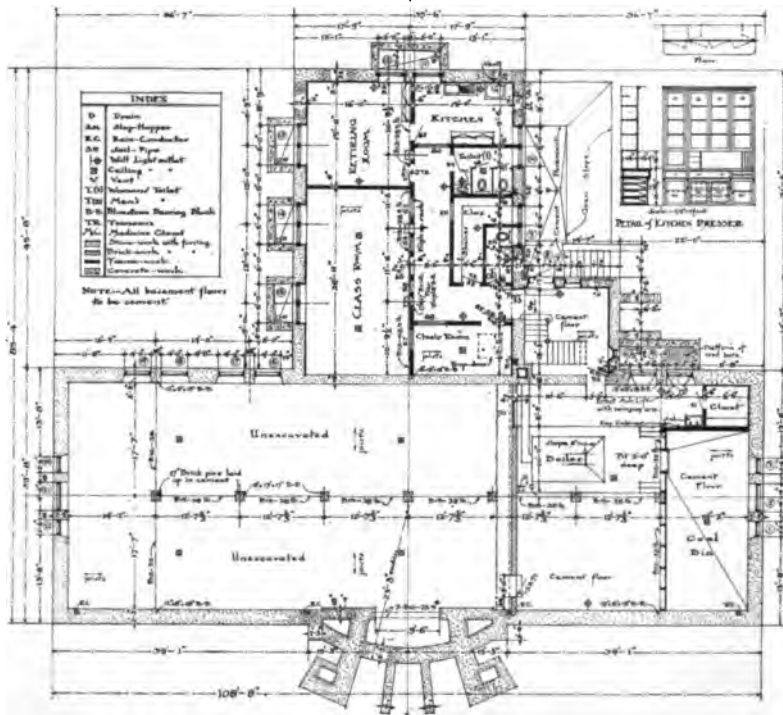
FIRST FLOOR PLAN—HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA.  
Albert Kelsey, Architect.

combine in as strong a degree as possible qualities of an inviting character. The library which is dignified to the point of resembling a palatial mausoleum is not a well-designed library. It has sacrificed one idea in one-sided expression of another. If we were to deal in architectural formulae (which heaven forbid!) we might say that the ideal library is one in which a fine degree of dignity and a human amount of freedom and invitation are rendered in architectural terms combining propriety, interest and attractiveness.

With these thoughts in mind, it is interesting to study in plan and detail a recently completed branch library building in Philadelphia—the work of Albert Kelsey, F. A. I. A., who will be remem-

bered as the architect (then in association with Paul P. Cret) of the Pan-American Union Building, in Washington, D. C. This building embodied many unusual and excellent features in plan, as well as in disposition of the façade, and is a building exceptional for the ingenuity and conscientiousness of its detail. The Pan-American building is notable, also, as a result of adherence to a clear idea and to a belief in the value of architectural study and imagination combined.

In the Haddington Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia, Mr. Kelsey has produced a building of unusual interest and distinction, in planning, general character, and in details of form, color and symbolism. In planning this branch



BASEMENT PLAN—HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA.  
Albert Kelsey, Architect.

library, it was decided to depart from both the usual types of plan—the “stack-room” and the “alcove” plan—and to throw the space into one great room, so that every visitor might at all times be within sight of the central desk. The decision of the library authorities on this open type of library naturally simplified the plan to some extent. Another feature, followed out in conformity with the other branch libraries, was the provision of a detached juvenile department, so designed as to be readily convertible into an auditorium.

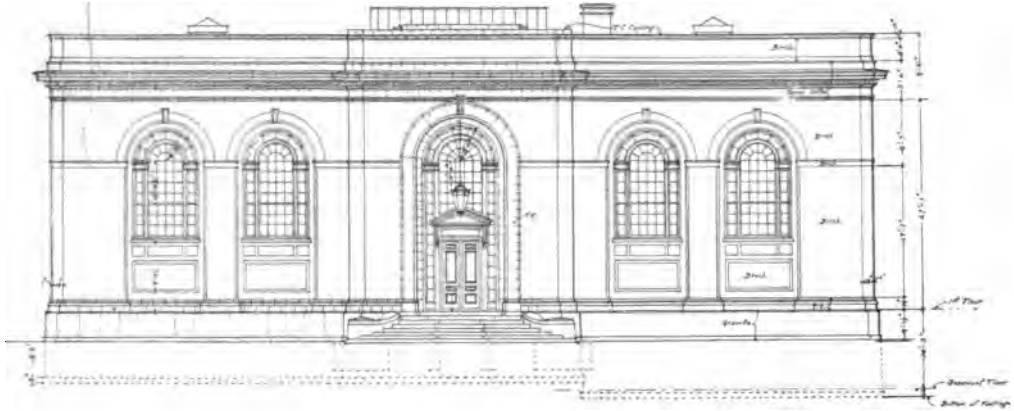
Mr. Kelsey introduced a simple and practical device in this connection which might well be borne in mind in the layout of many school, town-hall, and Sunday school plans, the idea being to avoid the unnecessary labor and defacement of woodwork usually entailed by carrying hundreds of folding chairs from one part of the building to another. Space is provided in a room in the basement where the chairs may be stored, and by means of a trap-door and a half-way

scaffold, two or three men can pass up two or three hundred chairs directly into the room with great celerity.

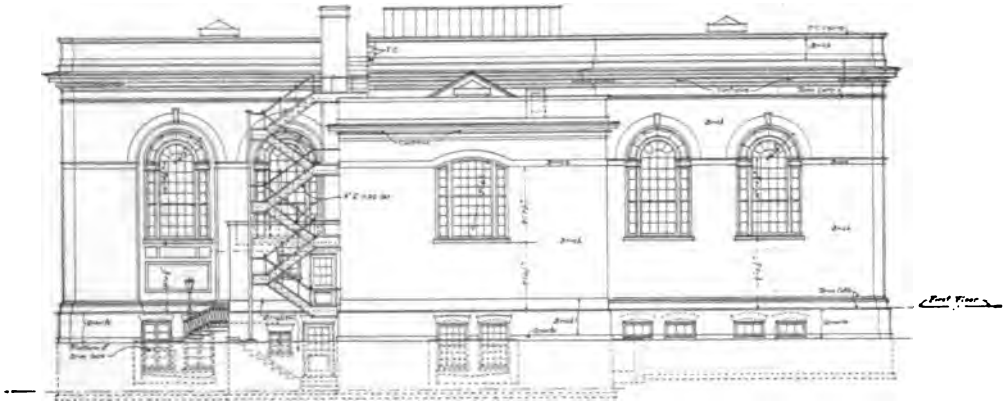
A study of the plan will reveal distinct economy of space in the layout of the children's entrance and the basement beneath the juvenile department, which bears an interesting relation to the side and rear elevations, as will be seen later.

One of the sectional drawings carries an indication of a new and practical expedient in the planning of the heating, devised to prevent the usual streaking of dust on walls above radiators, where the constant flow of heat draws it upward. In this building each radiator is placed under a slate shelf, directly under the bookcases, but the heat is brought up behind the bookcases and let out directly under the windows, so that it is discharged at the proper place to counteract the cold, and also passes upward over the face of the window instead of over a plain wall surface.

A successful effort was made in the elevations to keep the windows of the



FRONT ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION

HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA.  
Albert Kelsey, Architect.

main building uniform, to effect which the vestibule into the juvenile department was kept low, while the main building is lofty. Careful study in such matters is repaid by the resulting nicety of symmetry and alignment in a building of this sort.

As a radical departure from the usual classic character of library buildings with columns and portico, Mr. Kelsey elected to design this building in the "Architecture of Humanism"—the style of the Renaissance, modified to conform also with the characteristic local Philadelphia architecture of red brick and white trim, the style so successfully followed by Edgar V. Seeler in his great Georgian colonial building for the Curtis Publishing Company.

This Georgian colonial feeling is ex-

pressed in the design of the windows, as well, so that even the distinctly Italian treatment of the entrance feature does not constitute the building a piece of "transplanted design," alien to its locality. The Italian doorway, on the contrary, lends that potent quality of historic interest which should always characterize a library building. Nor is the Italian quality in any sense a copy of any works of the Renaissance, but a skillful use of the Italian manner of expression in the telling of a story particularly intended for this building, in terms of literary symbolism.

This element of symbolism in architectural design deserves more than passing attention, nor has Mr. Kelsey's belief in the value of architectural symbolism been confined to this building. It



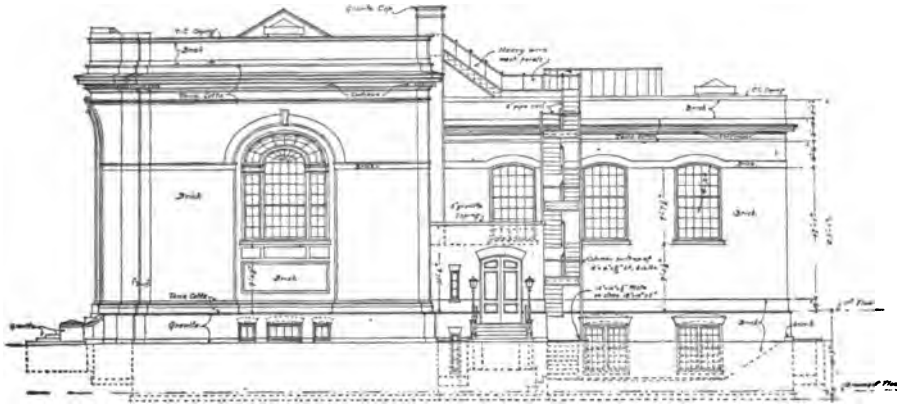
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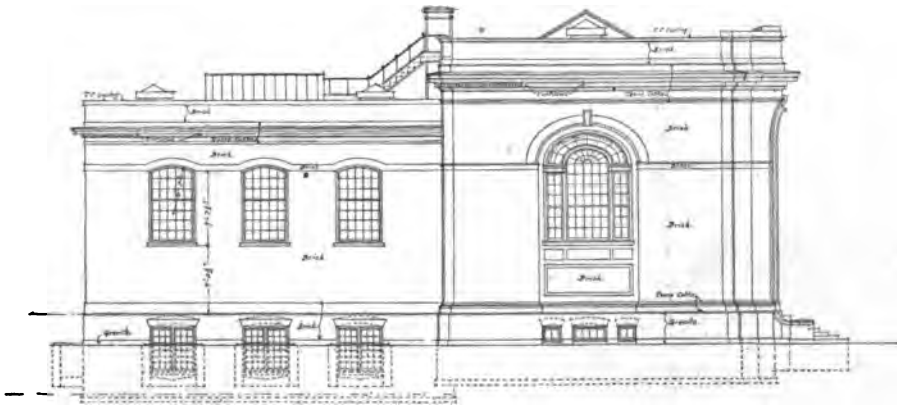








NORTH ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION

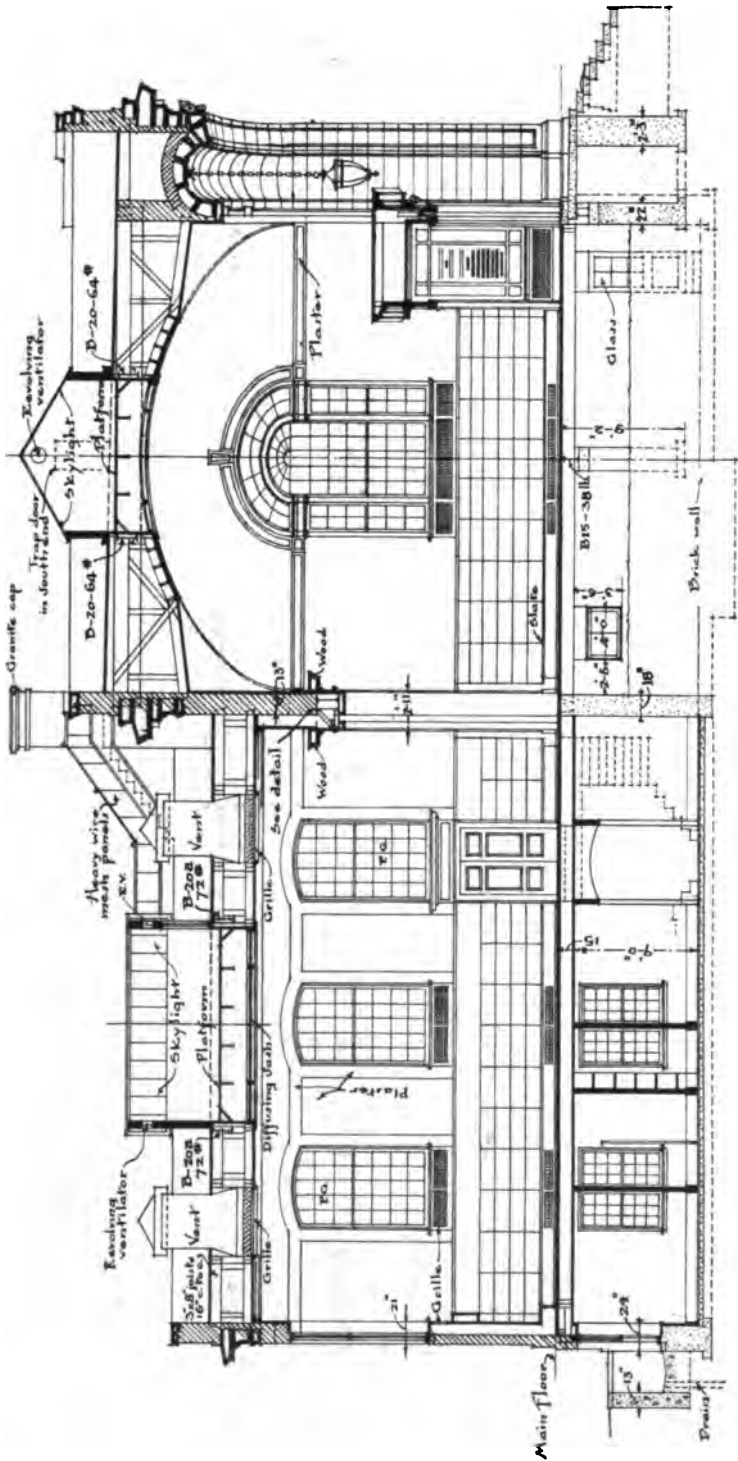
HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA.

Albert Kelsey, Architect.

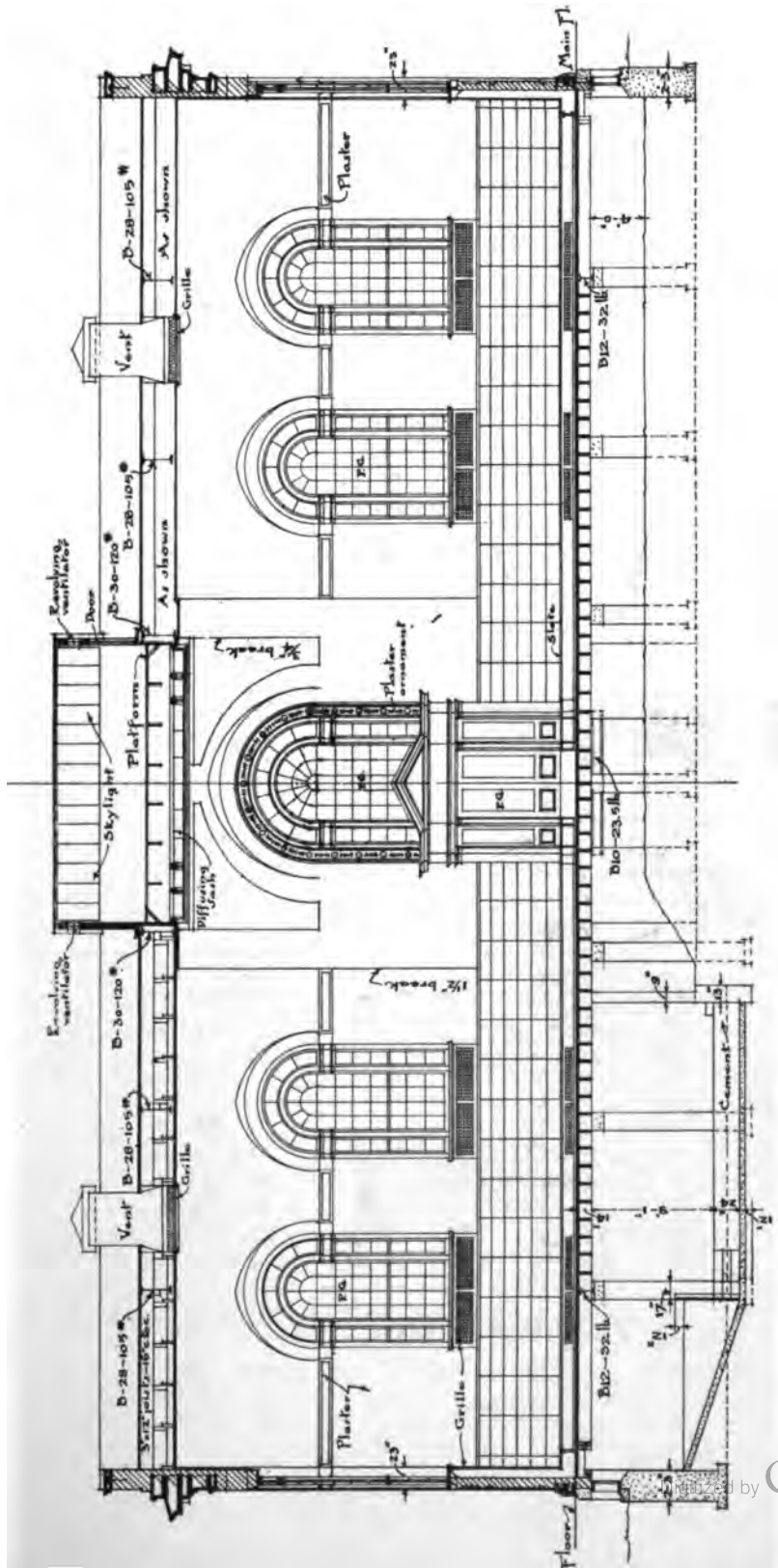
will be remembered that one of the peculiar charms of the Pan-American Building in Washington, as distinguishing it from virtually all other monumental buildings, was the remarkable introduction of symbolic interest without loss of dignity. In its detailing Mr. Kelsey and Mr. Cret were at great pains to delve in the lore of ancient South American archaeology to discover symbols which should be at once decorative and full of special meaning, so that ancient Aztec ornaments and characters took the place of ancient Greek ornaments and characters, while the proportions remained within the confines of classic precedent. In this way there was created a building which will speak to every visitor and to all posterity of the purpose for which it was built.

There is, in architecture, an unrealized and unappreciated field for the introduction of symbolic ornaments and symbolic forms. We have, for the most part, forgotten one of the most appealing and personal, as well as the most decorative details of Gothic architecture, for example—the grotesque. There are a few instances to be found at West Point, at Princeton and in the lobby of the Woolworth Building and elsewhere, which have shown the peculiar humanizing link with which symbolic detail may bind the architectural design with its purpose and with the human beings who evolved it.

While grotesques are not suitable, even in a modified form, in many instances, symbolic ornament may be introduced in nearly any type of building, from the dwelling to the church, and it



TRANSVERSE SECTION—HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA. ALBERT KELSEY, ARCHITECT.



LONGITUDINAL SECTION—HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA. ALBERT KELSEY, ARCHITECT.



MODEL OF OLD PRINTERS' MARKS ADORNING THE FRIEZE OF THE CENTRAL FEATURE.

is this kind of architectural detail of which we find Mr. Kelsey an ardent advocate. Nor does he confine symbolism to form alone, but in this instance the polychrome terra-cotta of the arched main vestibule is carried out in blue and yellow, the civic colors of Philadelphia.

This vestibule is, in many respects, an unusually interesting piece of detailing, reflecting not only technical ability, but ingenious and sympathetic thought. Its color is visible from a considerable distance, and as the site of the building is on a garden terrace, the view from below is the only one possible. The elevation of the terrace, indeed, was such that no altogether satisfactory photograph of the building could be obtained.

The design of the central vestibule will repay detailed study in several particulars. It is intentionally the only feature of interest in an otherwise plain and dignified building, and is intended, by virtue of its values of color and symbolism, to take the place of the usual colonnaded portico.

With a portico, furthermore, the interior of any building is usually most poorly lighted at that point, whereas this tall arch (thirty feet in height) admits more light at the entrance than is admitted even by the tall windows occupying the rest of the wall space.

In this relation, therefore, as well as in its axial location, this great portal is not only an integral part of the building, but a dominant feature of the terrace and garden approach as well, so that it is eminently fitting that all the color and detail of the façade should have been concentrated at this point.

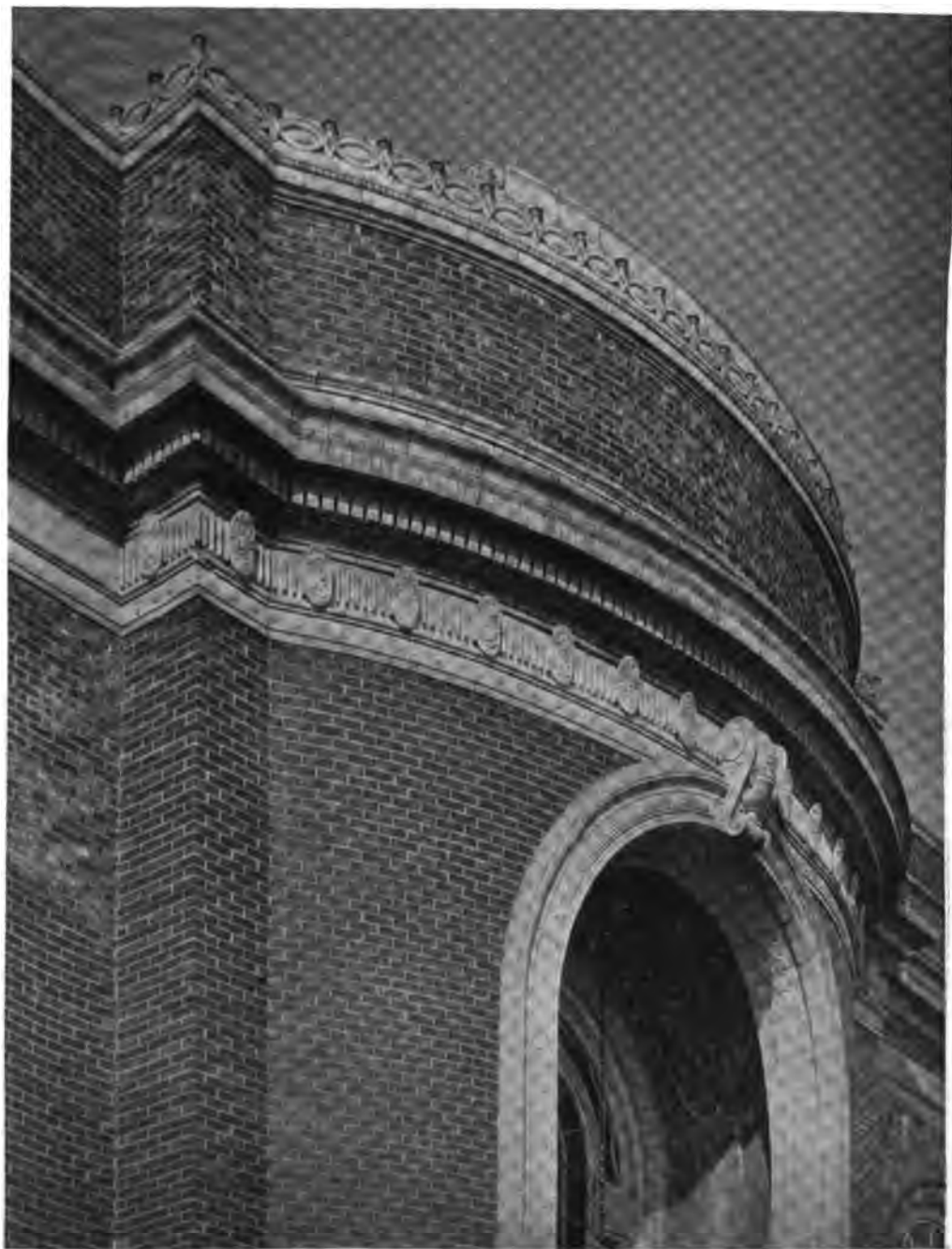
In the design of the warped reveal of the portal, Mr. Kelsey's idea was to express in symbolic forms the thought that

a library is a treasure-house of books and a place in which to acquire knowledge, and thus the highly decorative allegorical composition shows trees of knowledge, with branches meeting overhead, through which are intertwined books, manuscripts, owls and lamps, with balancing cartouches showing the triple-headed classic Owl of Wisdom and the Pegasus of poetry, both cartouches surmounted by old-fashioned ink-horns and quill pens.

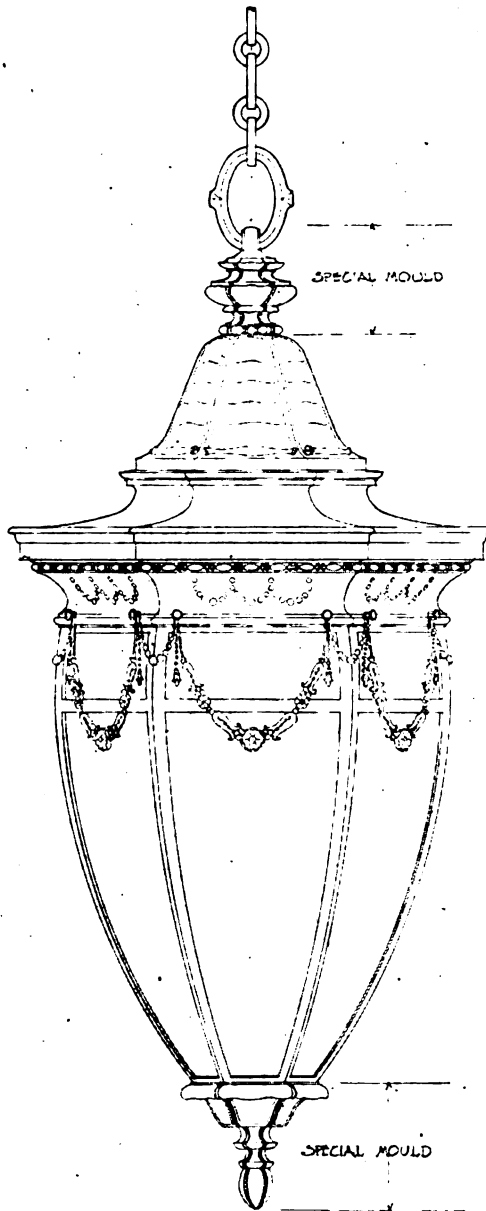
It is seldom, indeed, that an architectural feature so conspicuously a part of the exterior of a building can also be enjoyed from within, but this decoration of the soffit of the portal may be seen both by day and night from the great reading-room, which measures 104 feet in length, by 35 in width and height.

Such an incorporation of architectural symbolism in the fabric of a public building (to express the earnest hope of the architect) should go far toward developing in the public mind some appreciation of the vital but unheeded fact that architecture is a living art, and may (if we will understand its message) play as great and as interesting a part in our lives as it did in the days of Gothic cathedral building, or in the golden age of the Italian Renaissance. Architecture is not a lifeless engineering problem or an equally lifeless academic formula—it has a thousand intimate and interesting points of contact with the life of every one of us—if we will but allow ourselves to develop even a slight personal acquaintance.

Considering, further, the detailing of the portico, the Renaissance lantern is an agreeable incident, and the reveal and mouldings of the outer arch are remarkably adequately treated in points of scale



DETAIL OF CENTRAL FEATURE—HADDINGTON  
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DELPHIA. ALBERT KELSEY, ARCHITECT.



ELEVATION ACROSS CORNERS

DRAWING FOR LANTERN IN MAIN ENTRANCE—  
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PHILADELPHIA. ALBERT KELSEY, ARCHITECT.

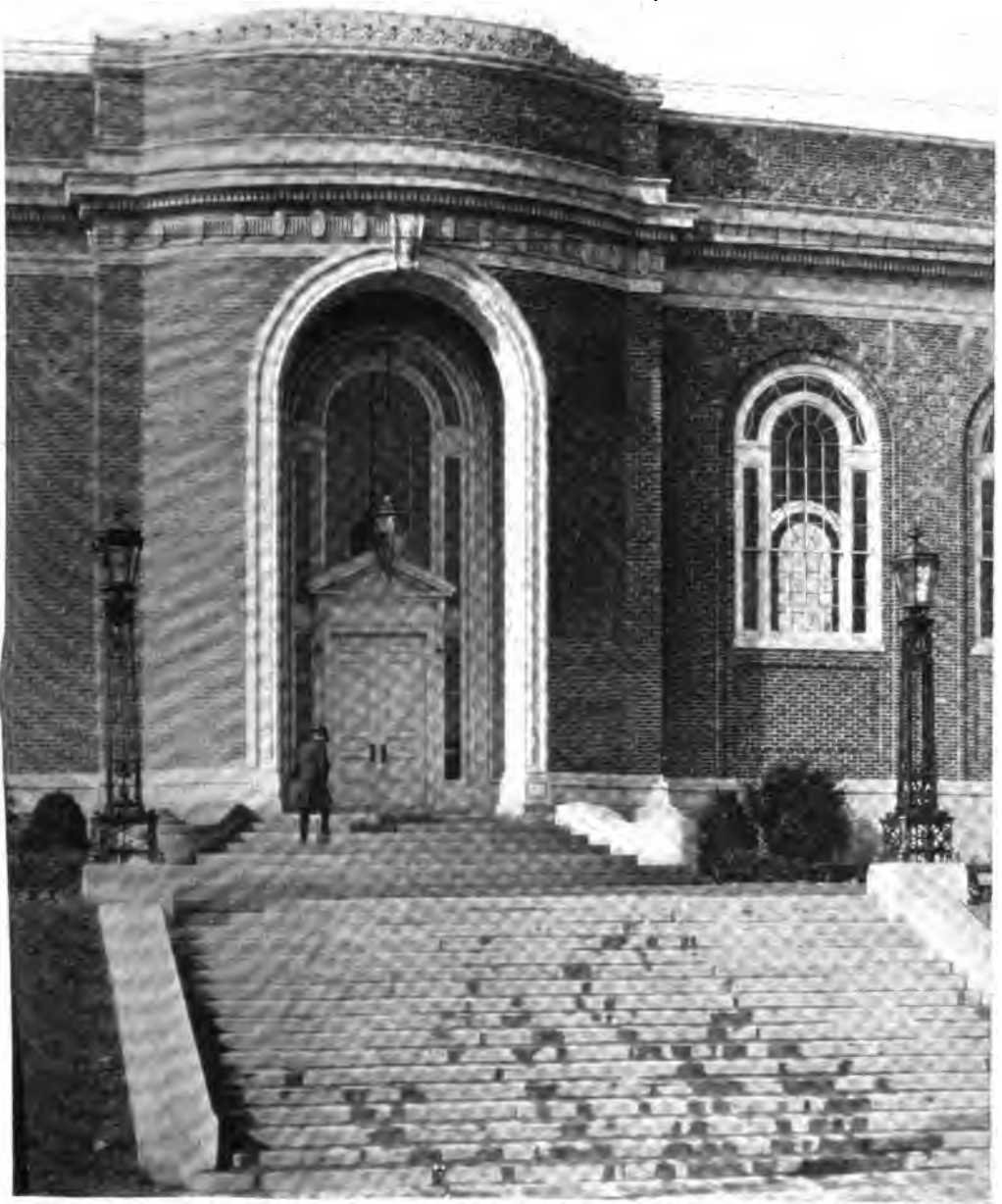




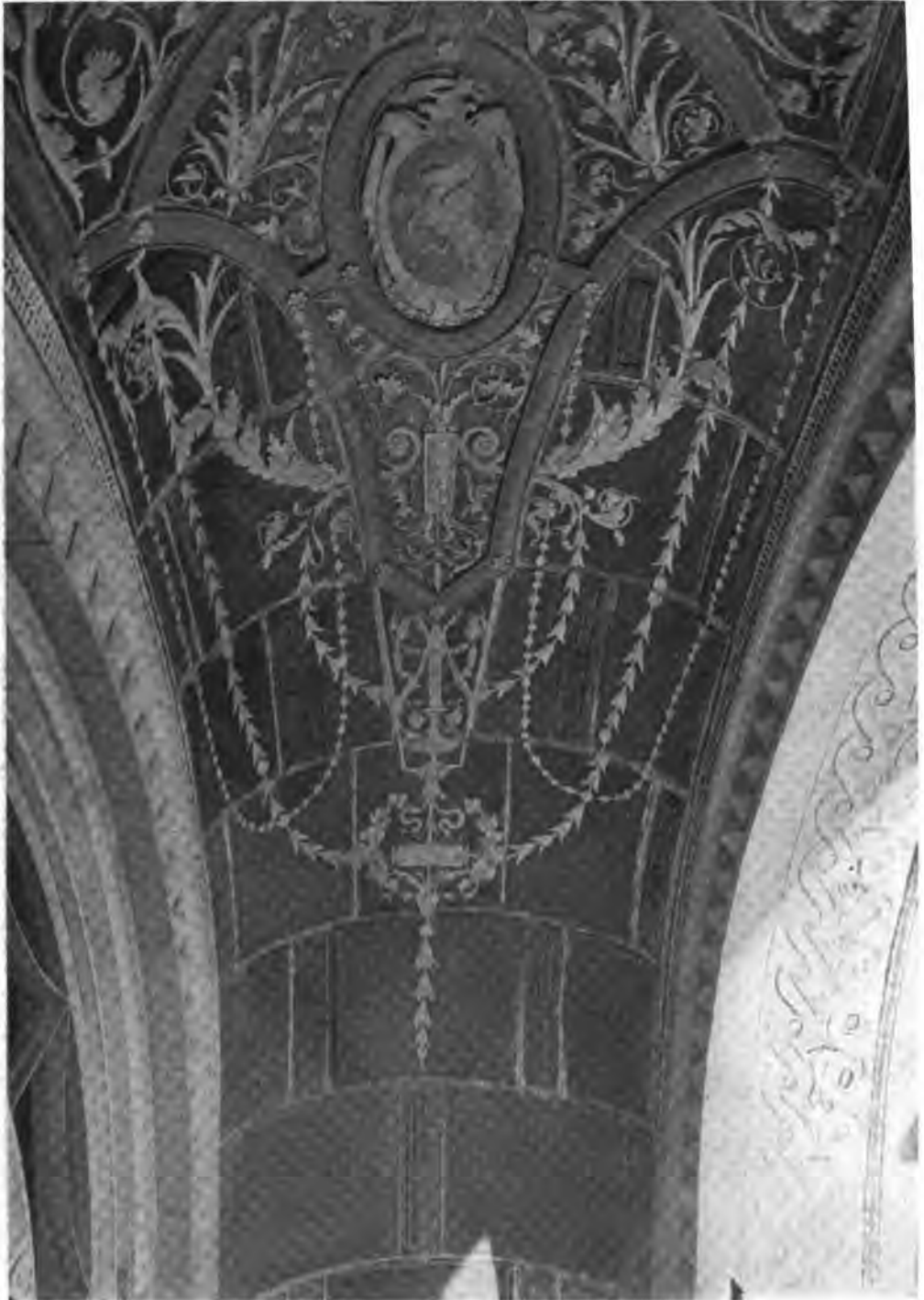
LANTERN AND DOOR-HEAD IN MAIN ENTRANCE  
—HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY  
OF PHILADELPHIA. ALBERT KELSEY, ARCHITECT.



DETAIL OF MAIN ENTRANCE—HADDINGTON  
BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILA-  
DELPHIA. ALBERT KELSEY, ARCHITECT.



MAIN ENTRANCE—HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA. ALBERT KELSEY, ARCHITECT.



DETAIL OF CEILING IN MAIN ENTRANCE—HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA. ALBERT KELSEY, ARCHITECT.



DETAIL OF CEILING IN MAIN ENTRANCE—HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA. ALBERT KELSEY, ARCHITECT.



ARCH OVER MAIN ENTRANCE—HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA.

Albert Kelsey, Architect.

and decorative interest. The key-block, running up into the frieze, admirably ties the arch and the crowning member of the building, but the warped vase, agreeable in elevation, seems a trifle incomfortable in profile, and one is inclined to remember, in preference, a splendid Italian Renaissance key-block with a head of Minerva, designed by Charles A. Platt for the Cleveland Leader Building.

The frieze of the central portico, where the design of the vestibule below swells it outward, echoes the symbolism of the warped soffit below by the application of cartouches bearing the devices of the famous printers of the past—such as Aldus Manutius, before whose time a

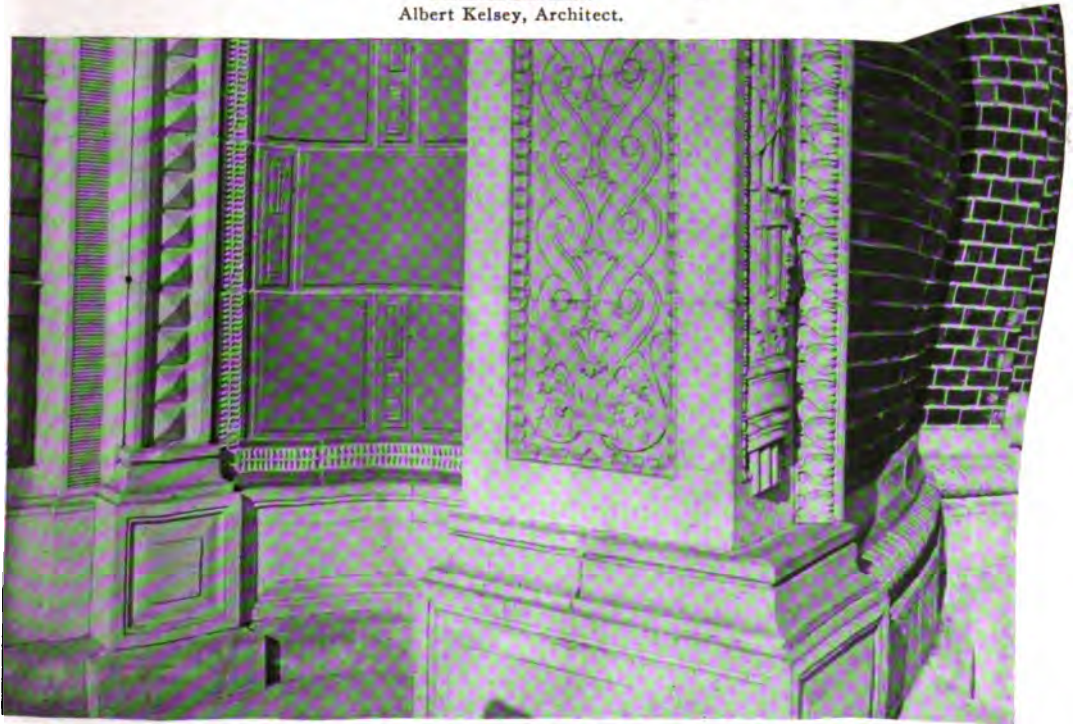
public library was unheard of and the written word, in hand-illuminated manuscript books, was jealously guarded from the lay student in monastic libraries.

In the frieze, in the mouldings of the great portal, and in the polychrome detailing of the warped reveal Mr. Kelsey has shown a remarkably skilful and imaginative handling of l.'s material. Terra-cotta, susceptible as it is to the effective rendering of either lithic or plastic forms, is naturally at its best in the latter, though many designers have endeavored to execute stone details, essentially derived from hammer and chisel, in this material, essentially expressive of modeled details.

A limitless opportunity for the intro-



DETAIL AT MAIN ENTRANCE—HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA.  
Albert Kelsey, Architect.



DETAIL AT MAIN ENTRANCE—HADDINGTON BRANCH OF THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA.  
Albert Kelsey, Architect.

duction of color in architecture has been laid open to the architect in the recent development of polychrome terra-cotta, and the designer of discrimination will be the one who realizes that its most telling effect will come with its most sparing or concentrated use.

Thus, had Mr. Kelsey designed a polychrome terra-cotta frieze and arch (an easy, entertaining, and tempting thing to do) he had robbed the reveal in the portal of its peculiar and unique quality of preciousness. Color in architecture is a dangerous element, because it may so readily fascinate the designer, until of a dignified building he has made an exposition temple or a moving picture theatre. There was a great deal of color in the architecture of the Italian Renaissance, but its beauty resulted from its skilful disposition.

Since this Haddington Branch Library is, in many respects, distinctly a "modern" type of building, it may not be without interest to "file for reference" its cost data, in view of the fact that it is the least expensive of any of the nineteen library buildings so far erected by the city of Philadelphia. The entire cost, including lighting fixtures, gardening, etc., and the architect's and engineer's fees, was approximately \$50,000, or a fraction over twenty cents per cubic foot.

Its architectural significance, however, lies in the fact that it represents a sincere and successful effort to produce a building at once appropriate, pleasing, historical yet colloquial—a building affording practical provision for specific needs and uses, in terms of agreeable, sane, interesting and symbolic architectural design.



CARTOUCHES IN COFFERS OF THE GREAT WARPED VAULT, ONE DISPLAYING PEGASUS FOR POETRY, THE OTHER A TRIPLE-HEADED BIRD OF WISDOM, AND BOTH SURMOUNTED BY OLD-FASHIONED INK HORNS AND QUILL PENS.