

Foreword

CONCEPTION AND PURPOSE OF THE BUILDING

NINETEEN seventeen! What memories of momentous events the mention of that year brings to mind. It recalls the headlong plunge of our country from the pursuits of peace into world conflict, the stirring scenes of preparation for War, and the development of an intense patriotism which swept every citizen along toward the attainment of a common national purpose.

Every resource of our great country was mobilized in the short space of a few months and dedicated to the cause we as a nation believed to be right. Each citizen made his contribution in the hour of his Country's need. For many this contribution was in the realm of finance. For some it was ceaseless labor. For others it was undying courage and anxious waiting. For the flower of our manhood, numbering 9000, it was active service in the military and naval establishments, with its consequential sacrifice. For 355 it meant the supreme sacrifice.

1917

But 1917 has still another significance for the citizens of Worcester. For it was on January 8th, 1917, that the then Mayor Pehr G. Holmes stated in his inaugural address:

"I believe that Worcester needs an Auditorium. That is undoubtedly one of the next large activities toward which public sentiment should direct itself."

The Purpose

It is fitting that the first important steps toward the erection of an Auditorium should have their genesis during the year in which Worcester's sons and daughters in every walk of life wrote such glorious pages into her history. For as the plans for the new Auditorium began to take definite form it was conceived that the great structure should be dedicated as a memorial to the men and women of the city who had served the nation in War. The ultimate decision was to erect the Auditorium as a memorial not alone to those who participated in the World War but as an expression of civic gratitude to all those who had, since the founda-

tion of the republic, responded when the Government called out its legions to engage in armed combat.

TO HONOR THE
SERVICES IN WAR
OF HER SONS
AND DAUGHTERS
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IN PEACE
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OF SACRIFICE
A GRATEFUL CITY
ERECTED
THIS BUILDING

The above legend, phrased by Chief Justice Arthur P. Rugg of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, is engraved in the imperishable stone on the North and South walls of the Auditorium. Through this device, the present and coming generations, as they enter or pass it by, shall learn the motive of its builders.

Special provisions to honor those who gave their lives in the World War were incorporated in the plans for the Auditorium. Above the main lobby a Memorial Chamber, which is in truth a Memorial Shrine, stands as the City's tribute to those who gave their all in the gigantic conflict of 1917-1918. The walls are finished in marble. Upon the marble, engraved in gold, are the names of those who died. The passage from the Memorial Shrine to the Auditorium proper is through three pairs of wrought iron gates, symbolic of Valor, Victory and Peace respectively. At either end stand electroliers, one emblematic of the Army and the other of the Navy. Upon the walls are to appear in due time mural paintings symbolic of the sacrifice made by the sons and daughters of Worcester. At least two more years of study and work will be required to finish these murals.

At the front are enormous windows, extending the full height of the chamber, shielded by bronze grilles. Through these grilles can be viewed, directly across Salisbury Street, the impressive flagstaff, rising from a

magnificently conceived and executed bronze and granite pedestal and base, which is in process of erection by the Worcester War Memorial Commission from funds raised by public subscription. From the seats at the base of the flagstaff can be viewed through the Auditorium windows the principal mural painting, when completed, which is to measure 38 by 60 feet, one of the largest murals in the Country.

The completion of this chamber, undecorated, was made possible by the contribution of \$40,000 from the surplus collections for the State of Massachusetts World War Fund which was returned to the City. The beautiful scheme of decoration of this Shrine was carried out by the War Memorial Commission in conjunction with the erection of the Memorial Flagstaff.

Sixteen years have now elapsed since the World War, and time has healed animosities engendered by that conflict. We are now able to view the stirring events of 1917-1918 in their proper perspective. Our Country has returned to the pursuits of peace in which civic, social and economic affairs are foremost. A new generation that played no part in the War is about to take its place in history.

The Need

The Municipal Memorial Auditorium, while it serves to perpetuate the memory of Worcester's soldiers, living and dead, fills a long-felt need in the civic, social and cultural life of the City. Worcester had long since outgrown its largest meeting place, and as the City prospered and increased steadily in population, there was definite need for a larger auditorium.

The utilitarian advantages of the building are self-evident. Carefully planned, of adequate proportions and provided with the last word in equipment, the Auditorium forms a happy combination of a civic monument, a meeting place for gatherings of all sizes and a structure of beautiful and harmonious design.

While we inspect the new Auditorium, marvel at its beautiful proportions and enjoy its utilitarian features, it is well to reflect upon the magnitude of the task which has been completed so successfully by public spirited citizens and officials of the City who have served us well.

From the inception of the plan the City has been eminently fortunate in the calibre of the men who have participated in bringing the project to fruition.

Following the original suggestion made by the Mayor, the City Council ordered that a non-partisan Commission be created to have

charge of the project, to consist of the Mayor, one member from each branch of the City Council and four citizens at large. The Worcester Chamber of Commerce promptly endorsed this action and lent its support. Definite action upon this order was wisely suspended, however, by the Mayor for the duration of the War.

1918

On November 18, 1918, a week following the signing of the Armistice, the following men were named to the Auditorium Commission by Mayor Holmes:

CHARLES L. ALLEN
CHARLES G. WASHBURN
MATTHEW J. WHITTALL
WILLIAM F. BRENNAN
FRED A. MINOR
FRANK M. McGAULEY } of the City Council

The City was most fortunate that Mr. Allen consented to act as Chairman, a position he has filled with distinction for 15 years of untiring effort. In the death of Messrs. Washburn, Whittall, and Brennan, the City lost the services of three citizens who had rendered distinguished service. During the life of the Commission the following men served as members. The asterisks (*) indicate the present personnel of the board.

PETER F. SULLIVAN, *Mayor*
MICHAEL J. O'HARA, *Mayor*
*JOHN C. MAHONEY, *Mayor*
CARL R. BROWNELL
*THOMAS F. DEAN
*HAROLD D. DONAHUE
ROLAND S. G. FRODIGH
GEORGE W. GRANT
*WILLARD HEDLUND
VICTOR E. HILLMAN
*RALPH G. LINGLEY
EDWARD B. MOOR
PAUL P. SPAULDING
*HARRY G. STODDARD
EDWARD E. STONE
*MATTHEW P. WHITTALL
*HAMILTON B. WOOD

The Site

The selection of a site presented difficult problems. The first site to be given serious consideration was the eastern end of the Common facing Salem Square. To offset the obvious injury to the Common, it was proposed to purchase, clear and use for park purposes the block bounded by Salem Square, Front, Trumbull and Franklin Streets. This plan met opposition from citizens who believed that the Common should not be trespassed upon, and was further made impractical by the high cost of taking the private property referred to. A subsequent plan of combining the Auditorium with a Public Library and placing the building in the above mentioned block east of Salem Square was subject to the same obstacle of excessive cost.

There followed a period of inactivity from 1921 to 1925. In June of 1925 the City Council recommended to the Commission by resolution, that it consider the site upon which the building now stands.

Gift of Site

The period from 1926 to 1929 was occupied by further study of the entire project, preparation of cost estimates and attempts to bring the matter of a site to a head. Finally on November 14, 1929 came the report of the generous action of a group of public spirited citizens and Trustees of the Worcester Art Museum, contained in the following letter from Charles L. Allen to the Mayor and City Council:

“Worcester, Mass.
November 14, 1929

The Mayor and the City Council of the City of Worcester

SITE FOR A MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

The following group of representative citizens of the City of Worcester, namely:

GEORGE S. BARTON
GEORGE F. BOOTH
FRANCIS H. DEWEY
GEORGE F. FULLER
HOMER GAGE
ALDUS C. HIGGINS
JOHN W. HIGGINS

ALBERT S. HEYWOOD
GEORGE N. JEPSSON
PAUL B. MORGAN
GEORGE I. ROCKWOOD
HARRY G. STODDARD
FORREST W. TAYLOR
MATTHEW P. WHITTALL

CHARLES L. ALLEN

have raised by subscription a fund sufficient to purchase from the Worcester Art Museum the land in the City of Worcester (approximately 100,000 square feet), bounded by Salisbury Street, Institute Road, Highland Street and Harvard Street extended north to Tuckerman Street, as a site for a Memorial Auditorium.

This land is hereby offered to the City of Worcester upon certain conditions and if within a reasonable time, not exceeding one year from date, the City of Worcester shall take the proper action to accept this gift as offered, this site will be conveyed to the City of Worcester for this purpose forthwith.

Very truly yours,

(s) CHARLES L. ALLEN
Chairman, Auditorium Commission”

Plans

The response to this offer was prompt and effective, since it solved the difficult problem of the site. The various legal matters having to do with legislative sanction for borrowing outside the debt limit were attended to, and the Commission began in earnest to prepare building plans.

From the calibre of men on the Commission and in the City Government, it was soon evident that the City's interests were in excellent hands. It was determined that the building should be worthy of the City in every way. Due attention was paid to aesthetic and artistic values as well as utilitarian considerations. Too much time and effort through a long period of years had been spent upon the project to permit hasty action which would be regretted later.

A prize was posted by the Commission for a design which would best express in steel and stone the City's common purpose, harmonize with its surroundings and forever be a credit to the community. Thus was the present design evolved.

Outstanding architects of the nation were invited to participate and submit plans. Many entered the competition. A jury was chosen to determine the winning plan consisting of the following:

CHARLES DONAGH MAGINNIS,
F. ELLIS JACKSON,
J. FREDERICK LARSON,

GEORGE F. BOOTH,
GEORGE N. JEPSSON,

*Architect, of Boston
Architect, of Providence
Professor of Architecture
at Dartmouth College
Worcester
Worcester*

With the aid and assistance of William D. Austin, noted Architect of Boston, as professional adviser, the various plans as submitted were studied.

First award was given to Lucius Briggs of Worcester, whose plan was devised in collaboration with Frederick C. Hirons, eminent Architect of New York City.

A second award was given to Joseph B. Leland, Architect of Worcester and Boston.

Third award went to G. Adolph Johnson of Worcester.

From that point onward the Auditorium Commission began the careful working out, in infinite detail, of the winning plan as submitted by Messrs. Briggs and Hirons, who have supervised the entire work of construction.

Breaking Ground and Laying Corner Stone

Ground was broken for the Auditorium on September 10, 1931. From that time on work has proceeded on schedule, with the Commission, various branches of the City Government, builders and architects working in unison in the City's interest. The corner stone was laid at 12:15 p.m. on April 14, 1932 with appropriate ceremony and for record purposes the following contents were deposited in the corner stone.

LIST OF DATA IN CORNER STONE

Corner Stone Laid April 14, 1932

Photograph of Jury.

Photograph of Commission.

Photographs of Progress of Construction.

Photograph of Future Development of Lincoln Square.

Copies of Latest Daily Papers.

Copy of Magazine, "Pencil Points," January, 1931 (Competition Drawings).

Newspaper Clippings referring to Progress of Auditorium during past two years.

Statement of Commission before Finance Committee of Worcester City Council.

Program of Competition to select an Architect.

Record of Commission's Actions from January 8, 1917.

Miscellaneous Reports and Records.

Names of Architects and Builders.

1932 City Government Committees.

Names of Original and Present Auditorium Commission.

List of Donors of the Land.

Report of Welfare Federation Activities.

City Document No. 85.

Program and Remarks by Mr. Harry G. Stoddard at the Ceremony, "Laying of the Corner Stone."

Nutt's History of Worcester and Its People.

General Specification of Worcester Memorial Auditorium.

Current Silver Coins.

Realization

Today the Worcester Memorial Auditorium stands completed, a fitting tribute to the City's War Dead and to all her citizens who have served their country at the time of war emergency. Although many years have elapsed since the building was first conceived the City has kept to its original purpose. The numerous interruptions have but served to test the worthiness of the multitude of elements which necessarily go into a project of such size and importance. There has been abundant opportunity for the exercise of mature judgment and it has been wisely exercised.

The Auditorium was erected for the use and benefit of the people of the City. Its location insures easy access. Lincoln Square is rapidly becoming a beautiful civic section. The proximity of the other structures such as the County Court House, Boy's Club, Art Museum, Women's Club, North High School, Wesley Church, the First Unitarian Church, the State Armory and Trade School enhance the beauty of the setting for the Auditorium. The city has truly builded for the future.

Finally the Auditorium stands as a fitting symbol of the part Worcester has played in civic, cultural, educational and economic life of the Nation. Liberally has Worcester contributed to every field of activity. Her sons and daughters have played their parts well in war and peace. They have been worthy of the best traditions of the City.

By joining wholeheartedly in the carefully planned events of the dedication ceremony, the citizens of Worcester exemplify again the unanimity of purpose which has prompted them in this great undertaking which is one of the outstanding events in the history of the City's municipal progress.

The Municipal Memorial Auditorium stands in simple grandeur, an enduring tribute to those whose sacrifice was sublime, a majestic memorial for the use and benefit of many generations.