

**The original documents are located in Box J30, folder “West Front Extension: General, 1965-1973 (2)” of the Gerald R. Ford Congressional Papers, 1948-1973 at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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Press Release by the  
Architect of the Capitol,  
Washington, D. C.

November 21, 1967

*West Front*

EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE WORK, WEST CENTRAL FRONT,  
UNITED STATES CAPITOL



The most obviously dangerous and deteriorated sections of the old sandstone West Central Front of the Capitol were provided with temporary shoring in the summer of 1965. Since that time, personnel of the Office of the Architect of the Capitol have kept a close watch for further signs of failure in the structure.

On October 19, 1967, it was noticed that one section of the architrave on the portico (in one of the bays not previously requiring bracing) was sagging and cracked.

The Architect of the Capitol immediately brought the matter to the attention of the Congressional Commission on the Capitol and recommended that Dr. Miles N. Clair, President of Thompson and Lichtner Company, who made the earlier engineering study and supervised the placing of the shoring in 1965, be called on to again inspect the West Front and advise what action, if any, should be taken. The Commission approved the recommendation.

Dr. Clair inspected the West Front on October 23, 1967, and submitted his report of November 8, 1967. He recommended:

1. Putting temporary posts (heavy timbers) under the remaining unsupported architrave stones of the portico;

2. Installing additional shoring and bracing to the old Senate and House Sections;
3. Repointing joints, filling cracks, and repainting the stone masonry to protect it against weathering, and establishing points for observation of movement of the structure and recording the location of same.

The estimate of cost for this emergency work is \$135,000 and Dr.

Clair recommended that the work begin in the Spring of 1968.

Inasmuch as this work is of an urgent nature to protect the Capitol, pending final action on a permanent solution by the Congress, the Architect of the Capitol urged the Capitol Commission (1) to follow the advice of Dr. Clair and (2) to agree to request the \$135,000 required in the final supplemental appropriation bill this year so funds would be available to begin the work next Spring.

The Commission unanimously approved this course of action and the Architect is proceeding accordingly.



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ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

West Front

November 14, 1967

Honorable John W. McCormack, Chairman  
Commission for Extension of the  
United States Capitol  
Washington, D. C.



Dear Mr. Chairman:

Reference is made to memorandum of October 19, 1967, to you from Mr. Campioli, reporting additional cracking and sagging of certain portions of the West Central Front of the Capitol and requesting permission to obtain a further examination by and the advice of Dr. Clair.

You approved the request, with the understanding that other Members of the Commission also approved such action. All other Members of the Commission did approve the proposed action by the following morning and Dr. Clair examined the sandstone portion of the West Front on October 23, 1967. After returning to his office and reviewing his previous analysis and comparing the data with current conditions, he submitted letter of November 8, 1967, copy of which is enclosed.

Dr. Clair recommends (1) posting the remaining unsupported architrave stones of the portico of the central section; (2) installing additional shoring and bracing to the old Senate and House walls; and (3) repointing joints, filling cracks and repainting the stone masonry to protect it against weathering. He also recommends establishing points for observation of movement of the structure and recording location of same.



Dr. Clair estimates that this proposed temporary work will cost approximately \$125,000. I concur in this estimate, but would like \$10,000 added for supervision and administration by my office, making a total of \$135,000.

Dr. Clair recommends that this work begin in the spring of 1968. It would be necessary, therefore, that funds be requested in the final supplemental appropriation bill this year.

Inasmuch as this work is of an urgent nature to protect the Capitol pending final action by the Congress on a permanent solution, I urge your approval and the approval of other Members of the Commission, of (1) following Dr. Clair's advice and (2) requesting \$135,000 in the final supplemental for this purpose.

I am sending copies of this report to Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey, Honorable Everett M. Dirksen, and Honorable Gerald R. Ford.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

J. George Stewart  
Architect of the Capitol

# THE THOMPSON & LIGHTNER CO., INC.

## Engineers

8 ALTON PLACE, BROOKLINE, MASS. 02146



Telephone 232-2105  
Area Code 617

November 8, 1967

The Honorable J. George Stewart  
Architect of the Capitol  
United States Capitol  
Washington, D.C.



Dear Mr. Stewart:

We visually examined, at your request, the architrave of the portico of the West Front of the Capitol on October 23, 1967 in order to advise you as to whether supports should be provided immediately in addition to those installed in 1965. Examination was made also of the walls of the old Senate and House wings that had been shored in 1965 at the Terrace level.

We found considerable new cracking and peeling of paint and deterioration of joints and some additional cracks in the stone masonry since the examination for our report of November 1, 1964. The end of the stone of the architrave, center bay, that showed 7/16" settlement (Sheet 26-6 of report of November 1, 1964) appears to have settled further. Cracks were noted in the plaster of the west side walls of rooms S-336, S-339, H-329-A and H-330. The posts under the architrave stones and the shoring for the walls of the Senate and House wings appeared to be in good condition, tight and to have performed as intended.

THE THOMPSON & LICHTNER CO., INC.



-2-

The Honorable J. George Stewart

November 8, 1967

We advised, when the emergency posting, shoring and bracing was done in 1965, that it was intended to take care of conditions for not over three years within which period it was expected that work would proceed on a permanent repair or reconstruction. Since no decision has been reached on this matter and there are indications of further deterioration and movement of the masonry we recommend that you plan for the spring of 1968 to (1) post the remaining unsupported architrave stones of the portico of the central section of the West Front (2) install additional shoring and bracing to the old Senate and House walls (3) repoint joints, fill cracks and repaint the stone masonry to protect it against weathering. In addition to the above the Recommendation #19 of Vol. 1 of our report of November 1, 1964 relative to obtaining a record of movement of the West Side of the Capitol should be immediately implemented so that there is available data on the basis of which an evaluation can be made of the movement of the structure and proper steps taken from time to time as needed to prevent failure.

The cost of work recommended above is estimated to be \$125,000.00.

THE THOMPSON & LICHTNER CO., INC.

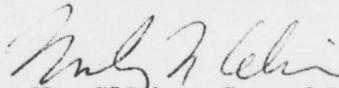
-3-

The Honorable J. George Stewart

November 8, 1967

Establishment of points for observation of movement of the structure and recording location of same	\$ 5,000.00
Post remaining stones of architrave (3 points) and shore old Senate and old House wings at Terrace level	49,000.00
Repoint, fill cracks and paint West Facade	66,000.00
Engineering Services - Design and Consultation	<u>5,000.00</u>
Total	\$ 125,000.00

Respectfully,



Miles N. Clair, President  
THE THOMPSON & LICHTNER CO. INC.



MNC:MK

West Front  
Commission

OK

October 19, 1967

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable John W. McCormack,  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

My attention was called this morning to a cracked and sagging piece of the architrave at the center of the old Central West Front of the Capitol. This is in a general area where certain temporary shoring was installed two years ago, but at that time this particular area did not show need for shoring.

This could develop into a very serious condition if immediate action is not taken.

I have discussed this matter by telephone with Mr. Stewart and we agree that we should attempt to get Dr. Clair down immediately and follow his advice. It is likely that he will recommend that shoring be placed under this sagging section of the architrave.

Mr. Stewart asked that I contact you and obtain your concurrence with the action proposed and then alert the other Members of the Commission.

We have no available balance in Extension of the Capitol funds, but with your approval, we can use our Contingency Funds since this is an emergency condition.

We would appreciate your immediate advice on this matter.

Mario E. Campioli  
Acting Architect of the Capitol

PLR/esb  
cc: Mr. Campioli  
Mr. Roof ✓  
Mr. Henlock

10-20-67 @ 1:20

was all

Told Mr. Clancy that this  
with Mr. Ford

West Front  
Commission

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cc: Mr. Campioli  
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Told Mr. Clancy that this  
with Mr. Ford

The Speaker's Rooms  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C.

June 21, 1967

Dear Colleague:

I am pleased to send you, herewith, for your information and files, report relating to the West Central Front of the Capitol, containing the following:

1. Report and recommendations of the Associate Architects, covering the preliminary plans and estimates of cost for the Extension of the West Central Front, in accordance with Plan II approved by the Commission for Extension of the United States Capitol.
2. Report of the Advisory Architects on Plan II.
3. Summary of the engineering study by The Thompson & Lichtner Co., Inc., dated November 1, 1964. This document has been published previously but is enclosed for your ready reference.



With kind regards, I am

Sincerely yours

A large, handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read "John W. McCormack". The signature is written over the typed name and title.

John W. McCormack, Chairman  
Commission for Extension of the  
United States Capitol

ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

May 8, 1967

*Volume IV is  
behind Sarathy's  
desk.*

Honorable Gerald R. Ford, Member  
Commission for Extension of the United States Capitol  
Congress of the United States  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Congressman Ford:

I am forwarding, herewith, the following documents:

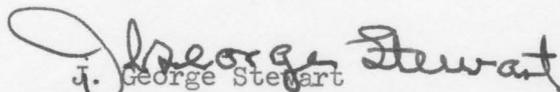
- (1) Report and recommendations of the Associate Architects, covering the preliminary plans and estimates of cost for the Extension of the West Central Front of the United States Capitol, in accordance with Plan II approved by your Commission at meeting of June 17, 1966.
- (2) Report of the Advisory Architects on Plan II.

These are the preliminary plans and estimates of cost which the Commission approved at meeting of June 17, 1966, and directed that they be completed and perfected.

I strongly endorse the plans and recommendations of the Associate and Advisory Architects.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

  
J. George Stewart  
Architect of the Capitol

Enclosures



4/17/67 - 3:50 p.m.

Mr. Ford

Webb  
Frank

Mr. Stewart would like to have you look this over and make suggestions and recommendations before his meeting with Appropriations Committee on Thursday morning.

4-20-67

proceed in town



West Front of Capitol

We are scheduled to appear before the House Legislative Subcommittee (Appropriations) next Thursday, 10 A.M., April 20, 1967, on our regular budget requests.

We will have to submit a summary of the present status of the project, including a statement on the plans for which Congress appropriated \$300,000.

The Commission approved the tentative Plans known as SCHEME 2 in June, 1966 and directed that the plans be perfected, the model completed, and the estimates completed.

The model is on display in Statuary Hall. The plans and estimated have been completed, but have NOT been submitted to the Commission.

Question is -- what to say at hearings or what procedure to follow?

Possibilities

1. Submit plans to Commission now and tell the Appropriations Committee that such plans have been submitted, but no further instructions have been received.
2. Submit plans to Commission now and attempt to obtain approval by signature of each Member of Commission.
3. Hold plans and state that they will be submitted as soon as the Commission holds its next meeting.

We must keep in mind that regardless of what is done, the Appro. Committees might ask for full hearings on the plans (the Senate subcommittee did this last year to some extent).





THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
*The Octagon, 1735 New York Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20006*

*Charles M. Nes, Jr., FAIA  
President  
2120 North Charles Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21218*

April 3, 1967

Honorable Gerald R. Ford  
Minority Leader  
House of Representatives  
United States Capitol  
Washington, D. C.



Dear Congressman Ford:

Last year I appointed a five-member Task Force to restudy the condition of the West Front and the Institute's position with regard to the Capitol extension.

A Report, based upon the findings and recommendations of the Task Force, is enclosed.

Tomorrow, this material will be sent to other interested parties and the press.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss our Report with you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles M. Nes, Jr.".

Charles M. Nes, Jr. FAIA

CMN:rdci  
Enclosure

*Save*



...possible Task? - The West Front of  
...ed and its structural weaknesses  
...table risk.

**REPORT**

**ON CONDITIONS OF**

**THE WEST FRONT OF THE CAPITOL**

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...len an  
...ice



THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

A

REPORT

ON CONDITIONS OF

THE WEST FRONT OF THE CAPITOL



"In every part of the country, citizens are rallying to save landmarks of beauty and history. The government must also do its share to assist the local efforts."

President Johnson, 1966

## SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

- I. Introduction - Task Force organized by The American Institute of Architects to restudy the proposed extension of the West Front of the Capitol.
- II. Conditions of the West Front - The wall is in need of structural repair but collapse is not imminent.
- III. Space Requirements - Before new space is added to the Capitol a survey should be made to determine the space needs of the Congress.
- IV. Restoration: An Impossible Task? - The West Front of the Capitol can be restored and its structural weaknesses corrected without unacceptable risk.
- V. Architecture and Planning on Capitol Hill - Congress should develop a master plan and authorize a Commission of experts to review and advise on new construction.
- VI. Conclusion: Restore the West Front - Since a decision will eventually be made not to make further extensions of the Capitol, Congress should make the decision now while the one original wall can be saved.
- VII. Appendix: AIA Task Force Report



## I. INTRODUCTION

In September 1966, when it became apparent that the 89th Congress would not appropriate funds for the proposed extension of the West Front, AIA President Charles Nes appointed a five-member Task Force of outstanding and highly respected architects to re-study the condition of the West Front and the Institute's position with regard to the Capitol extension. Those selected to serve on the Task Force were: Samuel E. Homsey FAIA of Wilmington, Delaware; Francis D. Lethbridge FAIA and John W. Stenhouse AIA, both of Washington, D. C.; Louis Rossetti FAIA of Detroit, Michigan; and Norman Fletcher FAIA of Boston, Massachusetts.



The Task Force was instructed to study the engineering reports and the extension plans, meet with and review the arguments of the architects for the project, and inspect the Capitol from attic to basement.

The Task Force was to be completely objective in making this study and was to arrive at its own recommendations, without regard to any statements previously made by the Institute. Indeed, in a letter inviting Norman Fletcher FAIA, to become a Task Force member, Charles Nes wrote:

"If this committee finds that restoration is impractical or too expensive or that in the opinion of the Task Force the proposed plans have validity, I think we are big enough to change our position. I hope, therefore, you will agree to serve on this committee."

On November 16 and 17 the Task Force met in Washington, having previously studied the Thompson and Lichtner engineering report and related material, individually. Task Force members visited the Capitol on November 16, where they heard the project

analyzed by the architects for the extension project, and were taken on a tour of the Capitol building. On the following day they continued their study of the facts. Throughout its review, the Task Force was advised by a prominent and experienced structural engineer. Their report to the AIA Board of Directors is included herewith as an Appendix.



The Institute believes that Capitol Hill is the single most important land development in our Nation. We also believe that history will hold the architectural profession accountable for development of the Capitol and of Capitol Hill. Therefore, in the findings and recommendations of the American Institute of Architects which follow, we have attempted to be objective and constructive.

## II. CONDITIONS OF THE WEST FRONT

The West Front of the Capitol is in a state of disrepair. Numerous cracks are in evidence on the exterior of the building. Some window lintels and keystones have cracked and slipped. Several of the architrave stones have sagged. The foundations, at some points, are not far enough below the finish grade to escape frost damage. However, none of the defects appears to indicate that danger of collapse is imminent or that correction is impracticable.

### Sandstone

There is some professional opinion that the sandstone facing used on the West Front was inferior to begin with and its deterioration when exposed to the weather was predictable. Though this stone is obviously inferior to some other stones for exterior use, the same can be said of marble. In the Old Patent Office, for example, there is no serious deterioration of the sandstone facing of the first wing. Yet the adjoining wings of marble are badly deteriorated. The example is pertinent since the facing for the

Capitol's West Front and the Old Patent Office building come from the same sandstone quarry. This suggests that the condition of the sandstone on the West Front may be partly due to causes other than the quality of the stone.

#### Cracks

Several of the architrave stones of the portico are definitely sagging and have been shored. Some window lintels and keystones have both cracked and slipped. The foundations, although below the finish grade, are subject to frost damage at several points. The basement wall of the center part of the SW corner in the court has also been shored. When the grade was lowered in this court the foundations thus exposed were veneered and it is this unbonded stone covering that has come loose from its back-up and required shoring. No cracks are in evidence on the interior but this is explained by the fact that constant repairs have kept pace with the cracks. The explanation given by the Assistant Architect of the Capitol that visible exterior cracks are due to settlement and expansion of the wall appears reasonable. However, no visible effort has been made recently to fill these cracks in order at least to deter the penetration of moisture. Had this been done as the cracks appeared it is likely that the disgraceful appearance of the exterior surface due to scaling paint could have been avoided.

#### Vertical Settlement - Lateral Thrust

There is no direct evidence that lateral thrust in the present West Front has caused problems. The Capitol Architect's staff engineer reports that the building is not out of plumb. Thus while



the Capitol is experiencing some vertical settlement it is not slipping down the hill.

In short, none of the above mentioned defects appears to indicate that danger of collapse is imminent or that correction is not practicable. Furthermore, since lateral thrust is not presenting major structural problems, doubt is cast on the need for a buttress, although this is one of the arguments made by those who favor an extension.

### III. SPACE REQUIREMENTS

The recommendation to extend the West Front of the Capitol, to provide Members of Congress and visitors with additional space and facilities, was made without first conducting an adequate survey to illustrate the use of present space and the need for additional space, according to recent testimony by a Member of Congress. If modern facilities and office space are critical necessities, should a 19th century building be reshaped to meet 20th century needs?



#### Space Survey

One argument made by those who recommend a 4.5 acre extension to the Capitol is that such an extension will provide much needed office space and added facilities for visitors. But, according to recent testimony by a Member of Congress, no accurate survey has been conducted to predict Capitol space needs.

Apparently, the only space survey which has been made was done in 1957 when various occupants were asked: "What additional space do you anticipate needing within the next 25 years?" The findings, based upon the wishes of selected occupants, was that "139,000 additional square feet of useable space are needed to fulfill the needs of the Capitol for the present and for 25 years in

the future." Subsequent events have proved the 1957 survey unreliable. This is emphasized by the fact that over 200,000 square feet would be added by the combined East and West Front extensions -- 61,000 more square feet of space than the Capitol Architect's survey found would be necessary to satisfy Congress' needs in the Capitol building until 1982.

A survey of Capitol space needs should also be made to determine what functions are now being carried on in the building which could be accomplished elsewhere just as effectively. It is quite possible that some of the functions now housed in the Capitol building could be moved to other new or existing buildings with no loss of efficiency.

If a space survey had been made and the need for more generous accommodations clearly documented, the Congress would then be faced with the question: Can present facilities be remodeled or must new space be constructed? Certainly, if one is to provide the most up-to-date and advanced, flexible, functional and handsome space, one would not normally start with the restricting envelope of a building conceived a century-and-a-half ago.

That a survey of immediate and long-term space needs is a valuable and recognized first step in planning any new construction has been consistently recognized by both Congress and the Executive Branch. For example, in 1961 the President directed that a survey of Federal office space be made to eliminate disorderly, inefficient and wasteful utilization of space. The report of the President's Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space has been the bench mark for constructing new Federal facilities since that time.



### The Functions of the Capitol

Floor consideration of legislation and the work closely related thereto are the principal activities which must be carried on in the Capitol. We question whether it is necessary or prudent to try to accommodate in the Capitol constantly growing activities not directly related to the work of Senate and House Chambers.

There is obviously a limit to the amount of space which can be added to the Capitol if it is to retain any resemblance to its original form--or even to the present building. Congress will presumably decide at some point not to make any more additions to the Capitol. We believe the Congress should make that decision now while the one remaining original wall can be saved as visible evidence of our heritage.



#### IV. RESTORATION: AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK?

The West Front of the Capitol can be restored and its structural weaknesses corrected. Admittedly, it will be a job requiring skill and patience. But if the decision to restore the Capitol is made, our building technology is certainly adequate to meet the challenge. Restoration would be, however, a costly undertaking and would entail some inconvenience.

#### Restoration Techniques

The walls and foundations of the West Front of the Capitol are structurally inferior when tested by today's standards. However, retention and repair of the existing walls is not infeasible. No authority, including the Architect of the Capitol, contends that restoration is impossible. It would, of course, be a delicate and time consuming proposition. But our technology is up to the task.

Restoration work done on historic buildings in Europe indicates that walls and columns which have deteriorated have been reinforced effectively by a system of drilling diagonal holes through the masonry, inserting reinforcing rods, and forcing grout under pressure into the holes. Another successful technique called "needling" involves the use of temporary steel beams to take the load off parts of the wall while other areas of the wall are being repaired. Similar or even more innovative methods could be applied to the West Front.



Inconvenience

If restoration is undertaken, Congressional leaders with offices located on the West Front would have to move and this certainly would be an inconvenience. But this inconvenience would occur even if the West Front were extended.

Cost

No estimate has been made by the Capitol Architect to determine the cost of restoring the West Wall in its present location on the grounds that restoration was not the best solution and there were too many unknowns to arrive at a reasonable estimate. The American Institute of Architects does not know what the cost of restoration would be. However, it is unlikely that the cost of restoration would approach the total cost of extension. Furthermore, since no recent survey has been made to determine the space needs of Congress and no master plan has been developed for the Capitol Hill area, it is our opinion that extension of the West Front may prove much more costly, due to misdirected effort, than the immediate value of dollars spent on the extension project.

## V. ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING ON CAPITOL HILL

We move from crisis to crisis under present procedures for approval and construction of Capitol Hill buildings. Unlike other parts of the Capitol City, neither the Fine Arts Commission nor the National Capitol Planning Commission has authority over Capitol Hill architecture and development. A Congressional inquiry in 1965 brought out the fact that there had been no planning for Hill development during the past eight years. And today, no long-range master plan exists to guide development of Capitol grounds and contiguous areas.

### Master Planning

Construction on Capitol Hill seems inextricably steeped in controversy. Much of the blame for this situation can be attributed to Congress which, apparently through indifference, has allowed procedures to develop which are not in the best interest of the Capitol Hill area.

For example, most universities, towns and cities of consequence have recognized the benefit of a master plan. And Congress has insisted that comprehensive master planning be accomplished before Federal funds are granted for interstate highways, model cities and other development programs. Yet no such plan exists for Capitol Hill.

"Why," one Congressman recently asked "should this 131 acres known as Capitol Hill be excluded and denied the benefits of comprehensive master planning which Congress in its wisdom...felt was an indispensable condition to their spending a dime of Federal funds to help any city?" Why indeed!

Congress owes it to the people of the United States to have orderly plan for the development of the Capitol grounds and contiguous areas. The cost of creating an excellent plan would be far less than the amount which will be spent unnecessarily without one.



A Commission on Architecture and Planning

The 89th Congress considered legislation to establish a Commission on Architecture and Planning. The Commission, to be composed of highly experienced professionals, would supervise the implementation of a master plan and would pass on the design of buildings on Capitol Hill. We believe the legislation has a great deal of merit. Accordingly, we strongly urge that the many members who introduced the legislation in the 89th Congress reintroduce the Commission on Architecture and Planning bill and press for its enactment.

Congress called for the establishment of a Fine Arts Commission and National Capitol Planning Commission to assure the orderly and artistic development of the Capitol City. The Capitol grounds are a part of the city and should no longer be excluded from the accepted process of examination and review. Indeed, Capitol Hill is so important as to merit its own review body.



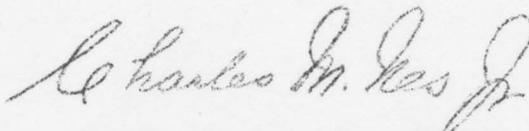
VI. CONCLUSION: RESTORE THE WEST FRONT

The American Institute of Architects recommends that the West Front of the Capitol be restored and that Congress establish a permanent policy prohibiting any further major alteration to the Capitol other than that absolutely necessary for structural and safety reasons.

No evidence has been produced that would make impracticable the restoration of the West Wall in its present form. The encrustations of paint should be taken off and only those parts of the original facade that are dangerously damaged or deteriorated should be removed to be replaced with the same material as that of the

original walls. The more aged, eroded condition of the stone of the West Front should be considered honorable evidence of its survival as one of the earliest of our major public buildings. It is a condition that does not detract from the beauty of the building when viewed from a distance, and it is one which adds considerably to its interest and historic significance when examined close-at-hand.

The American Institute of Architects believes it would be a mistake to cover up the last remaining exterior portion of the original Capitol. We strongly urge that the greatest symbol of our country be preserved.



Charles M. Nes, Jr. FAIA  
President  
The American Institute of Architects



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March 24, 1967

VII. APPENDIX: AIA TASK FORCE REPORT

March 24, 1967

STATEMENT OF THE FINDINGS OF THE AIA TASK FORCE ON THE WEST  
FRONT OF THE CAPITOL

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The members of the AIA Task Force on the West Front of the U. S. Capitol met in Washington November 16th and 17th, 1966. They were Messrs. F. D. Lethbridge, Norman Fletcher, J. Stenhouse, L. Rossetti, architects; C. Hansen, engineer; Samuel E. Homsey, Chairman; T. R. Hollenbach and P. Hutchinson, AIA Staff.

The Task Force met in the morning of November 16, having previously studied the engineering reports individually. Carl Hansen, prominent structural engineer, discussed the reports and helped analyze the various structural problems. The afternoon of November 16th was spent at the Capitol building with Mr. Campioli, the Assistant Architect of the Capitol, and the associated architects for the extension of the Capitol project, together with certain of their engineers.

The presentation of the engineering reports by the associated architects for the extension is based largely on the theory of lateral bracing against lateral thrust of the brick arches, although there was no direct evidence that lateral thrust in the present west front was causing problems. There was evidence to show that cracks were due to vertical settlement.



Even if the present facade is covered by an extension, it would appear that new underpinning of the present foundations will be necessary.

Several of the architrave stones of the portico by inspection indicated a definite sag and were shored up. Some window lintels and keystones had both cracked and slipped. The foundations at some points were reported to be well below the finish grade and at others unacceptably close. The basement wall of the center part at the SW corner in the court had also been shored. It was explained that when the grade was lowered in this court the foundations thus exposed were veneered and it was this unbonded stone covering that had come loose from its back-up and required shoring. No cracks were in evidence on the interior, but this was explained by the fact that constant repairs kept pace with their occurrence. The explanation that visible exterior cracks were due to movement of the wall by settlement and expansion appeared reasonable; however, no visible effort had been made recently to fill these cracks in approved fashion in order to at least deter the penetration of moisture. Had this been done, it is possible that the disgraceful appearance of the exterior surface due to scaling paint might have been ameliorated.

After a study of drawings of building sections and on-site observations, none of the defects appear to indicate that danger



of collapse is imminent or that correction is not practicable though it might be time consuming and relatively expensive.

It would seem, however, improbable that the cost of preservation would approach the total cost of extension. Some more research could be done by the AIA on the probable range of cost for the restoration. This could be done by getting opinions from contractors in this country, experienced European contractors who have been dealing with this kind of construction -- for example, Fondedile S.P.A. in Rome. Techniques used in Europe for restoring facades include one called "needling," in which steel beams are placed through the wall at intervals for scaffolding, while certain portions of the building are worked on. There is also a possibility of using temporary tie rod techniques on the inside to hold the wall in place while the outside surface is worked on. Restoration work done on historic buildings in Europe indicates that walls and columns have been reinforced effectively by a system of drilling diagonal holes, inserting reinforcing rods and forcing in grout under pressure. This method seems very promising as one of a number of techniques which can almost certainly be used to preserve the West Front with no major change in its appearance. Foundation underpinning is well within the range of familiar techniques in this country.

The inconvenience factor has been strongly developed by the associated architects. If the extension is built, the



Congressional leaders using the offices on the west side will be inconvenienced at least part of the time as the building is joined on through construction, and all of the time because of lack of natural light. It is true that if a project for preservation of the present west front is carried forward, then the Congressional leaders in that area would have to move elsewhere during that time, and this certainly would be an inconvenience. However, if extra space, such as is now proposed by an extension, is an absolute necessity, separate quarters could be planned as a Phase I development of a total program, and they could move into the new quarters after it was finished occasioning no inconvenience except for moving. In this version, Phase II would be restoring the west facade after additional space was built. In all parts of the world we see scaffolds and other protective measures used for preservation of historic monuments; they are there for years at a time. They are worth the effort and patience. They remind us of the dimension of time. We cannot go back and rebuild the past.

At a hearing before the Commission for Extension of the U. S. Capitol in 1965 some opinion was expressed that the sandstone facing used was quite inferior for use when exposed to the weather and unless painted would go to pieces. Though this stone is obviously inferior to some other stones for exterior use, so is marble. The difference is relative. The same quarry from which came the facing for the Capitol furnished



the facing for the first wing of the old Patent Office. There is no serious deterioration of that surface, however, the adjoining wings of marble are badly deteriorated. There is good reason to feel that inferior construction methods - penetration of the weather to the inner core of the exterior walls and sealing of the surface with paint - contributed considerably more to deterioration than the facing material itself.

The Task Force supports a program of preservation in the purest sense of the word. First of all, every bit of exterior paint should be carefully removed and the original stone exposed. Only those stones that are structurally unsound should be replaced and these stones should be replaced with the same material as that of the original walls.

It is not felt that a restoration of the West Front for "cosmetic" reasons is either necessary or desirable. The more aged, eroded condition of the stones of the West Front should be considered honorable evidence of its survival as one of the earliest of our major public buildings. It is a condition that does not detract from the beauty of the building when viewed from a distance, and is one that adds considerably to its interest and historic significance when examined close at hand. After removal of the existing layers of paint and replacement of damaged stones, it will then be possible to determine whether the wall should remain exposed or should for



aesthetic or protective reasons receive a coating that will not entrap moisture as before, i. e. will allow the stone to breathe.

It has been stated in support of an extension that no restoration of the existing building would be permanent. Very little is permanent, not even the proposed extension. Constant maintenance is the only safeguard against failure of any construction - just as constant vigilance is essential to the preservation of our form of government.

Were the primary objective one of preservation rather than additional space, our technology, wealth, and will would be adequate to meet the challenge.



If the extension is carried out, the work of important early American architects and landscape architects would be lost forever - namely, Thornton, Latrobe, Bulfinch, and Olmstead. The work of these significant American architects would seem important to keep in a world in which we are losing many of our original resources in buildings and nature. It seems all the more essential to hold on to this last remaining, important symbol embodied in our Capitol. Should we not follow the example of such attempts at restoration as the Adler-Sullivan Auditorium Building in Chicago and the effort given to restoring New York City Hall recently? Certainly now is the time when Americans are becoming conscious of their heritage in building and in nature.

Now is the time when Americans may be developing the self-confidence to solve their functional problems in an aggressive, growing, and modern approach, still keeping their historic monuments inviolate. These people have a right to be heard. The landmark under discussion is number one on the list - the Capitol of the United States. If this landmark is not worth the effort to save - what is?

The whole problem of the extension points to the necessity for master planning on Capitol Hill. In this connection, it would seem an underground development for the east plaza side of the Capitol should be explored for the possible use of multi-level parking and visitor's facilities. The whole idea for visitors' facilities incorporating cafeteria, specialized auditoria with advanced audio-visual techniques, the use of free and flexible areas and orientation would be part of the overall program. Certainly this type of new 20th century facility can best be solved in structures and materials less inhibited by the classic framework. The matter of additional office space may be subject to some debate as to its critical necessity, but if one is to provide the most up-to-date and advanced, flexible, functional, handsome office space, one would not start with the restricting envelope of a building conceived a century and a half ago. The one advantage of proximity of offices to legislative chambers could be answered by well-designed motorized connections.



The Task Force recommends preservation, but would put a strong plea for a master plan, providing for office space, visitors' facilities and parking, all with possibilities for expansion. It would seem then that the AIA's position, if the Board follows the recommendation of the Task Force, would be very much in concert with the President's program for natural beauty, which would include preservation, and also that of the many governors' councils on the same subject. We are already identified with this movement and are not alone in defending this position. Moreover, there are hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of people who are shocked at the prospect of extending the west front of the Capitol and who would support preservation. The fact that the east front has been more or less successfully added to should argue more strongly for the preservation of the west front as the only remaining historic facade of the Capitol.

President Johnson has said:

"Among the most cherished of a nation's treasures are the monuments of its past. Each contributes to the historic texture of society. We look back with reverence to lasting reminders of a vital past. We look forward with confidence to achievements which will enhance our future with accomplishments to match our monumental past. In every part of the country citizens are



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rallying to save landmarks of beauty and history. The Govern-  
ment must also do its share to assist the local efforts."

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Samuel E. Homsey, FAIA, Chairman  
2003 Scott Street  
Wilmington, Delaware 19806

Francis D. Lethbridge, FAIA  
1300 Connecticut Avenue, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20036

John W. Stenhouse, AIA  
1710 H Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20006

Louis Rossetti, FAIA  
Marquette Building  
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Norman C. Fletcher, FAIA  
36 Moon Hill Road  
Lexington, Massachusetts 02173



