

April 6, 1923

The Rev. Harris Masterson, Jr.,
Autry House,
Houston, Texas

Dear Mr. Masterson:

There are two points amongst others in connection with the Library that we have never understood. Sometimes you speak of "music collection" then of "music museum". What is the nature of this music department? Is it scores, manuscripts, etc. or is it musical instruments?

In addition to the "music museum" you refer frequently to a general "museum", speaking of your "collections", but you do not indicate anywhere the nature of these. What are they? That is to say, what are the nature, size of exhibits etc.? Is it furniture and pictures and that sort of thing, or cases with small articles? Must these "collections" be kept in one place or may they be scattered in different places?

The more we study the plan, the more convinced we are that we should send you a rather radical suggestion. Sometime ago you placed the children's wing to the left, with the auditorium on the right, the first under the reference library, the second under the general reading room. You have also indicated as a first construction this left-hand wing including the central feature, which is nothing but the entrance hall on the lower floor and the delivery room above. Now it seems to us that you will get very little for your money if this is your first construction. You will have simply, the children's department, one reading room, the medical library and the Texas collection, together with the entrance hall and delivery room. As the plans now stand, this is exactly the most expensive portion of the building to construct, for, as you say, following the Spanish precedent, we have concentrated the ornament in one place, and all this ornament appears on what you are now contemplating as your first construction. This will of course be very expensive, and it seems to us you will get a very small portion of the library for the amount of money involved.

What we are disposed to suggest is the reversal of the auditorium and the children's room and the construction at first of the right hand wing of the main building together with the ell, but leaving out altogether the expensive delivery hall and the rich facade that takes in this hall and the staircase. If you did this you would need to add a one-story wing at the rear for the story hour room, but this would not be expensive. The advantage you would gain would be almost twice as much working area in your first construction. You would have on the ground floor the children's room and story hour, newspaper room and the room

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now assigned to Government documents etc. This latter room might be made the temporary delivery room with enough stacks to hold your present book collection. On the second floor you would get one big reading room and all the other rooms now shown in the ell, and on the third floor you would get the medical library and Texas collection, if you once more reverse the position of these and the training school.

We are pretty well convinced that this would be a very economic thing to do, particularly if you made this first construction one in which the outer walls and floors would be the permanent factors, while the interior partitions might be temporary. Perhaps a better thing would be to use the Government document room as a story-hour room and make the one-story annex for the ultimate children's hour into administrative offices.

We have not worked out this idea in detail, and are writing solely for the purpose of bringing the thing to your attention. If it comes out as well as we think we shall send you some very simple sketches showing just what would happen if you followed this plan, and give you at the same time comparative cubes that will indicate cost.

The general plan is now all determined, and in our opinion it works out extremely well. We are hoping to get these drawings off to you on Saturday, but there is a good deal to be done and they may not be shipped before the early part of next week.

Very truly yours,

(sgd) Gram & Ferguson

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