

FIRST MUSEUM OF ART FOR TEXAS IS ASSURED HOUSTON

With Impressive Service Names of Donars Are Placed in Marker

DR. AXSON IS SPEAKER OF DAY

April 12, 1922

Impressive exercises held by the Houston Art league on the building site at Main street and Montrose boulevard at 5 p. m. Wednesday marked the beginning of the first art museum in Texas, the first unit of which is to be completed within a year. Dr. Stockton Axson was the principal speaker, explaining the value of the museum to the city.

Placing of records of the Houston Art league and of the steps leading to the construction of the first unit of the museum marked also the carrying out of plans made five years ago when the building was dedicated; but greatest of all, as was brought out by the speakers at the exercises, it marked the realization of a goal for which the league has worked 22 years.

Mrs. Henry B. Fall, president of the Art league, conducted the exercises which were attended by a representative gathering of Houston people. Automobiles almost surrounded the site. Invocation was given by Bishop Clinton S. Quin, followed by a Spring song number by the Girls' Glee club of the South End Junior High school.

Volunteer service that never wavered and such as has never been excelled is responsible for the art museum, Mrs. Fall declared in a short talk in which she paid tribute to the board of directors, the trustees, chair-

men of committees and members of the Art league. "Love of art has made the plans of this museum materialize. Love will lay the foundation, love will put on the roof and hang the pictures in this museum," Mrs. Fall said. "This museum will stand as a religious symbol, an appeal for art and religion to unite."

Mrs. Fall also explained that the exercises marked the carrying out of plans made five years ago. "At this very hour and day, five years ago we dedicated this building site, and made plans for this exercise held today. We are right on the date and hour," she said.

Dr. Joseph Mullen, chairman of the board of trustees, read the records, and Mrs. Fall placed them in the copper box together with a scroll of more than 3000 names of donors to the museum fund. The copper box was placed in the marble marker as a record for future generations. Mrs. Fall placing the first trowel of cement. Each director and charter member was called to come upon the platform and place a trowel of cement on the marker.

Following the impressive placing of records in the marker, Mayor Oscar Holcombe gave a short address. "We are on the threshold of a larger and better Houston. This occasion emphasizes the fact most strongly. Heretofore the citizens of Houston have paid too little attention to educational affairs, giving their attention to building Houston commercially," Mayor Holcombe said. "To make a citizenship a city must not be built on but one side. The city owes a debt of gratitude to you who have labored to see the accomplishment of this museum which marks the educational progress of Houston. The city rejoices with you, and on behalf of the city I want to extend to the Art league sincere appreciation of its splendid work."

The plan of the art museum and especially of the first unit was explained by William Ward Watkin, architect. The site of the museum is located in the center of development, at the intersection of two great boulevards, Mr. Watkin pointed out. It is surrounded by Rice Institute, a beautiful residential section, and Hermann park, and faces the city of Houston. When all units are completed, the museum will be adequate for the needs of a city of 600,000 people, he stated. The museum will have an entrance in Greek-Ionic style. Upon entering the building, visitors will face the grand stairway over which will hang a painting of General Sam Houston. On the first floor will be two large galleries and two smaller ones for exhibits, Mr. Watkin explained.

An appreciation of Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Cullinan, who by their large donations help to make the museum possible, was given by Colonel T. Lindsey Blayne.

"Value of a Fine Arts Museum to the City of Houston" was the subject of the principal address of the occasion given by Dr. Stockton Axson. He opened his address with the remark that on this occasion he found his mind shuttling forward and backward. Forward to the day within the next year which will mark the completion of the great building of Greek-Ionic architecture in the midst of the center of development; and backward to the first time he saw that section nine years ago. At that time the section was undeveloped except for Rice Institute. "As one meditates on the transformation, only a prophet and a good one at that, could have foretold of the building to be on this site, of Main street, spacious and well-lighted with its sunken gardens, of the residential section with its handsome mansions," he said.

"A great citizen thought in terms of education and the result was Rice Institute; another thought in terms of health, and the result is Hermann park as a playground; another in the beautification of this park, and the result is the Miller memorial. This museum is not like the other objects, a gift of individuals, but this is the result of hard work on the part of a group, with an appreciation of the value of art in life."

There is an instinct for art in some form or other, Dr. Axson continued, almost as deeply rooted in the race as hunger. One of the missions of the museum is to satisfy the craving, which is not artificial or secondary, but primary and fundamental, he pointed out. "Good art of its own force will oust bad art, and a second value of this museum is to acquaint us with that which is good."

Dr. Axson expressed pleasure that the directors of the Art league had decided the house of art should be a work of art. He referred to national art galleries which are ugly structures, although they enclose art. He drew a vivid picture of the school

children filing into the art museum seeking education. A collection of paintings makes painters, he said, in stressing that innate talent in children will be aroused through the works of masters on exhibition in this museum. He expressed hope that the Art league would have instructors, teachers, possibly Rice students, to explain the pictures to school children. "There is education in appreciating and understanding the works of masters. To know great art is in itself an education," he said.

Dr. Axson closed with a glowing tribute to the members of the Art league.

Dr. William States Jacobs closed the exercises with the benediction. Not only did Houston people and organizations express appreciation of what the Art league has accomplished but the Texas Fine Arts association through its president, W. J. Battle wired congratulations to the Houston Art league through Mrs. Henry B. Fall. The message read: "What you are doing today will stand as a mile stone in the progress of art in Texas. Please accept heartiest congratulations from the Texas Fine Arts association."

The parchment comes in sections so that it may be easily handled in affixing signatures. The object of the Art League, in thus giving opportunity to all citizens to have a part in the building of the museum, is to emphasize the fact that the museum is for all Houston and that in sponsoring the building of a home for art treasures in Houston, the league intends that every man, woman and child in the city may have the opportunity to profit by the advantages an art museum provides.

minimum or minimum limit is set as to the amount that may be given. W. Lockett art, Joseph Thomas J. Hermann J. The scroll the late M his children ed; Henry son Jr., a ceased. M the organ and he an art treasu ing also a museum b The nam of the first Houston A it to hav of an art scroll. The ear almost w in connect art in the league too tion probl inevitable Houston. Importance

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Below: Ground floor plan of the museum as it will be when completed. It has been designed to conform to the triangular site on which the museum will be erected.

Work on the building is expected to begin within 60 days.

Ugliness as a retarding influence upon civilization is discussed by Dr. Ralph Adams Cram in a "foreword" written by Doctor Cram for a brochure entitled "The Houston Art Museum," which sets forth the building plan of the Houston Art League. Doctor Cram says:

"In his speech at Rice Institute, Houston, May 13, 1921, his excellency, the British ambassador, said: 'Ugliness, monotony, bad design, poor, material, hideous colors, those things you may think small and of light matter in connection with the maintenance of world peace. I used to, but I have studied this question as deeply as it is possible for me to plunge, and I am firmly convinced that the slum builder, the slum tol-

erator, and the man who likes hideous things perhaps because they are cheap, perhaps because he doesn't know how hideous they are, is just as great an enemy of world peace as any other that walks this earth. It is in connection with their own cities that the citizens can take the direct, practical lift with regard to establishing on a firm basis the peace of the world. It lies to your hand. The future is before you. What I have seen in Houston makes me realize that good work is being done. Do not let it be undone, and do not let it dwindle. Rather, seek to press forward.'

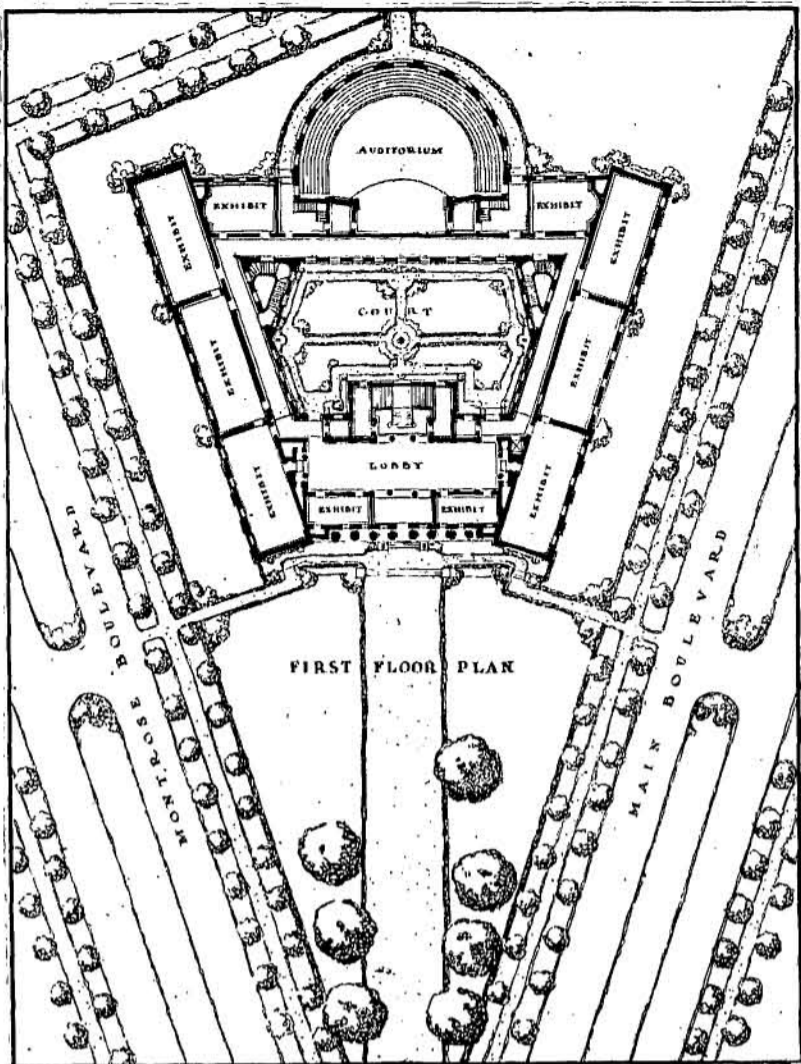
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Times Have Changed.

"It is significant and encouraging that Sir Auckland Geddes, educator, statesman and diplomatist, should emphasize so strongly the question of vital beauty in social affairs and in those matters which touch on the peace of the world. The time has gone by (it was only a brief interval of ignorance after all) when it was customary to look on art and beauty as possible amenities of life; as activities and interests of no essential value except to a few specially trained individuals or sentimental amateurs. Once more the world is coming back to the conviction that art and beauty are inseparable from life and that their elimination means incalculable loss; indeed, the conviction grows that no problems, industrial, social, political, can justly be solved without a new reference to those qualities which always in the past have been immediately associated with life.

"This recovered conviction gives increased justification to the art museum; but it also works toward modifying and regenerating the idea as to its nature and function which, unfortunately, obtained during the last two generations. The art museum, a shrine wherein are gathered together and exposed to public view the records of the art work of a great past, is one of the first steps toward bringing back to the consciousness of the people the value, the importance and the joy of the arts. Always in the past, true civilization has expressed itself through its arts, architecture, painting and sculpture, music, ceremonial and all the handicrafts; and we test and evaluate a past civilization by the record it has left in its art productions. The art of a people is the expression of its joy in a sane, wholesome and happy life, and it is not too much to say that the art of a period or a people is a better revelation of its quality than are written histories, or even what are known as 'original documents.'

"A well chosen, well displayed and comprehensive collection of works of art is in itself a thing that adds to the joy of life, but it has even greater value and power in that it is, or may be made, both a criticism of existing social conditions and a stimulus to a better living and a more vital and righteous activity. We can not (fortunately) all be architects, painters, sculptors or musicians, but the great majority can be, and some day will be again, workers in one or more of the artistic crafts. The whole tendency today, as the result of the revelations of the war and 'after war,' is toward a control and curbing of machinery and the greater elimination of division of labor. The 'arts and crafts' movement was an early evidence of this, and increasingly the tendency will be to bring back to man, and to the hand



of man, the artist-crafts and the handicrafts that for a time were destroyed through the intervention and usurpation of machinery. In the furtherance of this end an art museum may be made a powerful factor, for it can not be too strongly emphasized that such a museum is not solely a place where pictures and statues are exhibited, but should be rather a shrine where are gathered together all the varied works of the many crafts; embroidery and wood-carving, falence and metal work, tiles and tapestries and illuminated books, indeed, examples of all the endless productions that have manifested man's delight in beauty, in the creation of beauty, and in the self expression that comes therefrom.

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Not Mausoleum of Dead Arts.

"An art museum is not a mausoleum of dead arts. It should be rather a center of inspiration and of stimulus. There are no 'dead arts.' Each is, or may be made, as living today as ever in the past. None of the arts is exclusively the property of some highly trained specialist. All of them are available to all men and women, and in a museum of fine arts this revelation is made to the people of any community, and from such an institution flows, and will flow increasingly, the stimulus toward better living and more beautiful action.

"Sir Auckland Geddes was right. The greatest peril of a city is ugliness, and this is a danger which reaches further than the mere presentment of the city itself or even the quality of the environment it offers for housing and working. It touches even on questions of world peace and social regeneration. For these reasons the art museum in Houston must be looked on not as a graceful addition to its cultural elements, but as a living force operating in all citizens and urging them on toward a better and more beautiful scheme of life."