A MEMORIAL TO THE COLONIAL SOUTH

Thesis

In Architectural Design

Consisting of the following original drawings

Plot Plan
First Floor Plan
Entrance Facade
Garden Facade
Side Elevation
Second Floor Plan
Section
Details

Photographs herewith submitted are from the original drawings.
A Thesis
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A MEMORIAL TO THE COLONIAL SOUTH

The architectural study submitted herewith is designed to record the qualities of the plantation and manor houses of the wealthy planters of the Colonial days preceding the American Revolution.

As a civic undertaking, its purpose is to overcome the losses which by the passing of years and of families are so rapidly removing many of the remains of our Colonial past. The enterprise would establish at an appropriate locality in the central area formed by the states of Virginia, Maryland, North and South Carolina and Georgia, a permanent collection of art objects and historical data of the South before they are entirely lost. Such a memorial building would preserve these documents and relics with a view to their being of valuable assistance to later historians and antiquarians who might choose the South as a subject of study.

It is fitting that the Memorial should be placed within this area since these states formed the cradle
of Colonial culture in the South. It is here that we had a section peopled by a race schooled in the English tradition, and possessing the desire for a gracious and luxurious manner of life. This fact was one of the dominating forces in the building of the types of houses which remain to us.

As a site for the erection of the building I have chosen that section of North Carolina along the Atlantic coast at Albemarle Sound as qualifying geographically for the style of architecture and climatically suited to a type of garden which prevailed at the time. It is here that a feeling for the period still exists in more or less diminishing force, and where the quiet and solitude, so much a part of the Old South tradition, has been relatively undisturbed.

In such a setting the building would be accessible to the tourist travel back and forth from North to South and would serve as a pilgrimage shrine throughout the year. Especially at one season each year it will be used as the headquarters of a festival deemed appropriate by the community. This season would be at
the time of year best calculated to view the gardens and homes to their greatest advantage.

The site chosen is a large tract of land within a state park area. It slopes gradually downward at the rear to a small stream. This land is made available to the civic foundation to erect the "Memorial to the Colonial South" because of the possibilities for developing the vast gardens to beautify the building.

The requirements of the problem indicate that there should be a large Assembly Room or Lecture Hall which will seat approximately one thousand people, where lectures will be given and historical papers read dealing with past and present problems of the country, and of the South in particular. Likewise there should be a Library of sufficient size to contain an important collection of books and manuscripts dealing solely with Southern Colonial history. Such a collection would gather in one place many documents now in private collections, in order to preserve them from loss or ruin and would place them at the disposal of students for research.

In addition to the Assembly Room and the Library
the building should possess a Museum planned to receive rare articles of furniture, glass, china and silver which are authentic antiques from Colonial days. They would be arranged and displayed permanently in a setting appropriate to their nature, and as they were used in the old homes from which they were taken.

The type of design, clinging to the spirit of the domestic style of architecture of the colonial days around the tidewater section of Virginia and Maryland, is found to carry over also into the few public structures built in the period from about 1730 to 1790. Since it is to represent the domestic qualities of the planter class, the expression of this side of their building activities was deemed the most worthy of adaptation.

While conforming to the scale of these buildings the "Memorial" must attract the attention of a nation. Therefore, arises the desire to make it a building large enough to fulfill the function for which it is intended and yet not to exceed in size an undertaking within the range of Colonial builders.

We may recall that the architecture of this period
from 1730-90 and a little later, represents a style in domestic establishments which is found in homes dotted along the banks of the navigable rivers in Virginia and Maryland. It contrasts sharply in its brick with the heavier wooden structures of a corresponding period in the North, and even in some of the types of wood houses built in Charleston. So all important a factor to the lives of these well-familied English settlers were these water-ways, that we can search in vain for similar examples in the inland districts. Each plantation had its own wharf to which the ships came. Sometimes these were placed a mile or more from the house depending upon how far back from the river it was thought most desirable to build the house. In their isolation, these old monarchs of brick stand as fitting tribute to the refined tastes and gracious living of the people who built them.

The type of plan selected for the building, both in the form and in the relation of the rooms one to another follows the usual disposition of the rooms in the home of the wealthy planter during the eighteenth century. Briefly it consisted of a five part composition contain-
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PL. 2
ing a central mass, two end wings and two connecting bays. In general the central block contained the living quarters of the planter and his family. The kitchen and dining room with lesser dependencies such as offices, overseer's house and the like, took over the spaces in the connecting bays and in the end wings. A great number of the famous old colonial mansions follow this scheme, among which we find, to mention but a few, the 1 Brice House at Annapolis, Maryland, Tulip Hill on the West River in Anne Arundel County, Virginia, and the beautiful home of William Byrd II, Westover, on the James River, in Charles City County, Virginia, which was built around 1730.

This form and space arrangement fitted appropriately a scheme in which the Museum takes one wing and the Library the other, freeing the central block for

1. The Brice House at Annapolis was built by Thomas Jennings in 1740. Unique in that the main facade is composed entirely of headers. Coffin and Holden, Brick Architecture. Plates 1 to 9.

2. Tulip Hill was built by Samuel Galloway in 1750. Coffin and Holden. Plates 27 to 31.
the Public Entrance and the Lecture Hall. The compelling beauty resulting from such a composition, as seen at Westover, aided by the high pitched roof and the bold height of the chimneys along with the well proportioned windows in relation to the wall surface is unexcelled anywhere.

But tradition does not confine itself to this one example. Many more exist and have an equal amount of worth with Westover though their state of repair is not often as complete as this example. Consequently in their ruin they do not call forth the romantic picture of the grace and charm of the lives of a people who occupied them in their prime loveliness. Many of these homes, have, in recent years, acquired new owners and have been or are being restored in some measure at least to a state of habitability. Some, are being converted into museums. Others, with not the same good fortune, must soon be doomed to absolute decay, the loss of which is to be regretted.

In every case these fine old homes were appointed with the best furnishings which could then be procured in
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any of the European markets. These often suffer more than the houses themselves, in their passage from generation to generation where abuse and constant use threatens their safety.

As a general thing many of the examples which we have left have been changed by later alternations and remodelling. Consequently on several of the houses we find porticoes which were not part of the original design at all but come as a fad inaugurated in the time of Thomas Jefferson and the ideals of the Greek Democracy shortly after the Revolution. Again we find that the cost was too great to complete the house at the beginning though the general scheme was kept in mind. Another generation would add the connecting wings and bays but invariably in the same style as the main mass of the house so as to make the whole appear as one unit. From time immemorial it has been the doorway that has received first and loving attention. The Colonials are no exception, though their care may vary according to degree.

By far the most usual treatment of the door was simple, and consisted of a wood frame with appropriate
columns and pediment. The whole was then painted white and formed a central point of interest quietly contrasting with the rich color of the brick. Again we can return to the famous door at Westover, which though it is quite possible was added at a date later than the time of the building, yet was not later than the third quarter of the eighteenth century and hence may be considered as typical. While the door of the Memorial does not follow the same form of this entrance door nor is it made of wood, the scale did afford ample inspiration. The door I chose to design is constructed of moulded brick, in color slightly lighter than the main body of brick in the building. Sufficient evidence was found to exist which indicated that the builders of these homes were capable of executing such a door, and combining this fact with a scale similar to the Westover entrance, I have used a door quite in character with the building which it is meant to adorn. We need only to look at the door

Domestic Architecture. p. 86 opp.

9.
on the Ball Room wing of the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg to be convinced of their ability, even though it be somewhat of a conjectural restoration. Other examples remain among which is Stratford, the ancestral home of the Lee Family, in Westmoreland County, Virginia, built in 1730 by Colonel Thomas Lee; York Hall, Yorktown, Virginia, built by Thomas Nelson in 1740; Carter's Grove built by Carter Burwell in 1751 and Claremont Manor, Claremont-on-the-James, Virginia. Each has a door enframement of moulded bricks consisting of pilasters and a pediment which was usually triangular.

Before describing the interior I will complete the explanation of the exterior. The brick used in most

4. A house for the Royal Governors of Virginia was ordered built in 1705. It was completed between 1713 and 1720. The Ball Room Wing was added probably before 1781.

5. Reproductions of plans, and photographs of the actual buildings may be found in Great Georgian Houses of America. Vol. 2. Very fine examples of this type of door may be seen on Vauter's Church, Essex County, Christ Church in Lancaster County, and St. John's Church, King William County. Brock. Colonial Churches, pp 44 - 48
of the houses of Tidewater Virginia varies from a salmon pink to a light red color. In parts of Maryland it is deeper red in tone and the headers are often deep purple to black due to the process of burning. The warm tone of the Virginia brick was selected and designed to be laid in the usual Flemish bond. The use of the deep flat arches is quite in conformity with the practice of the time, made in this case even deeper than was usual in order to give more pattern and texture to the walls.

Besides adding a certain amount of charm to the building, the use of the balustrade around the top of the steep slate roofs served the utilitarian purpose of preventing the roof from appearing too high, which would have often been the case were it continued to the point of intersection of the four planes of the roof. The relation of roof height to the mass of the building below was part of the consideration in the designs of these early builders and necessarily is one of the features that makes the proportion of their work so fine.

For one reason or another the planters often found it necessary to have some point of vantage from which they
could command a view of the country-side or the ships approaching along the rivers and bays. Many of the same group who were engaged in the production of tobacco and rice were also engaged in shipping and wanted to be able to see their ships approaching or departing. On the plantation they perhaps wanted to know in advance just when the ship would reach their own wharf either to pick up the cargo of tobacco to be shipped to England or to leave articles ordered from their agents in London. So, in order to obtain this point of vantage they usually provided means of reaching the roof either by stairs close to the chimney, as at Stratford, if it were in the home, or by means of a sort of cupola as exemplified by any found on the public buildings in Williamsburg. Combining this latter with a clock which would be visible for some distance they have given to their architecture a boldness and frankness which is refreshing in its utter simplicity. The cupola arrangement was confined chiefly to the public building. In Williamsburg at the restored Governor's Palace, the Capitol, the College of William and Mary, the Court House, it received an expression, to my mind, as fine as
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any of the more famous Wren spires in London. The daring and frank simplicity give a feeling of boldness which cannot be divorced from the style. In order to combine this same spirit into the Memorial I have used such a spire feature on the central mass of the building.

There is one more feature of the exterior worthy of mention. This is the use of the dormer window. The original purpose of these seems obscured in uncertainty. The attic seems to have enjoyed the same use then as it does now, in that it was a place ready to receive all objects discarded from the everyday usage of the family. Were the dormers placed in the houses merely to light this space or to give ventilation, then they were used in numbers far in excess of the requirement. The most reasonable theory seems to be that they were used more for their decorative quality than for any utilitarian purpose. Whatever the reason for their presence, they undeniably contribute much to the character of the style.

Entering the building we come into a large area designed to allow the gathering of people attending the lectures, ample room in which to move around and to appreciate the dignity and reserve of a style of architecture employed in the early days of our country. Here we find impressive curved stairways leading to the balcony overlooking the lecture room. They recall any of the fine old walnut and mahogany stairs found in practically every house with any claim at all to an origin in the Colonial era. The wall treatment of this Entrance Hall is quite simple. It is panelled in wood to a point well over half the height of the room and plastered from there up, the whole being finished off with a cornice treatment similar to the cornice in the Chapel and the Great Hall of the College of William and Mary, often attributed to the genius of Sir. Christopher Wren. The wood work is painted a subdued grey green. In the slightly curved recess to receive the stairway is to be placed a large block of scenic wallpaper of Chippendale design in which the predominating colors of green and grey will conform with the general color scheme of the whole room.
Passing from this into the museum wing we find three rooms which can be controlled by one clerk in charge, and, which by their arrangement afford easy and direct circulation so that visitors may leisurely view the objects on display. We do not find the usual museum arrangement of works of art. They are not stuffed away into glass cases but rather relate in their arrangement to the disposition of the whole room. Along with the best examples of furniture it is planned to gather together numerous portraits of famous people. Carefully chosen specimens of silver, china, pewter, rugs, and tapestries are to be given a setting where all who are desirous of knowing something about the methods of decorations used, and the manner of living enjoyed by the early colonials, can learn of these at the Memorial.

The walls of these rooms are entirely panelled after the fashion of any number of homes. The type of work done whether it be in Virginia, Maryland or Georgia was more or less the same and we have selected examples from all parts so as to form a composite of all types.

At Kenmore in Fredericksburg, Virginia, the decorative
plaster ceilings are very rich and beautiful, and are considered as fine as any found in any of these old manor houses. While it would be impossible to take them bodily and place them in the Memorial the design was thought worthy of preservation and has therefore been incorporated in the plaster work of the ceilings of these rooms. Not all the river homes could afford such elaborate work due mostly to the inability of the owners to secure the skilled workmen necessary for the work. It is in the towns and settled sections that most of such work is to be found as exemplified by the ceilings and plaster work of the Charleston, Annapolis, or Boston houses.

The treatment of the side walls follows the traditional type of panelling of the period. They are simple in concept and design, and consist of a dado with simple rectangular wood panels above. There is no ornate pilaster treatment or heavy scrolls or cartouche. The only richness in the walls comes from the patterns of the panels themselves and in the mouldings used as door and window trim and at the junction of the
The elaborate plaster work of the ceiling and the cornice adds what ornamentation would be needed to create the proper atmosphere of luxury and wealth. We can refer to plate 9 for the type of panelling intended and to plate 10 for the general pattern of the ceilings.

In designing a semi-public library, such as the one in the Memorial would be, there are several problems to be dealt with. No such type could be found in any of the homes, and libraries of a public nature did not exist in the early colonies. However, a library was nearly always a feature in the plantation houses. By nature they were just another room in the general scheme of the house, furnished in about the same manner as the other rooms, with the addition of book cases. The collection was hardly more than a few hundred volumes and could easily be placed in cabinets without crowding the room.

The collection intended for the Memorial will likewise not be extremely large, nor is it a type of collection that is liable to grow to any extent over a period of years.
Typical Paneling in Museum Rooms G. 1. 0.
On the other hand there are a great many books dealing with Southern history, and a likewise large number of valuable manuscripts. When they are gathered up they would probably increase the total to a thousand or more, a figure which can be accommodated easily in the space allowed. For very rare books and papers additional space is provided in vults in the basement. The control is such that one centrally located desk will be able to manage the whole library.

In all the rooms reading tables have been provided. Low stacks are intended in the middle of the rooms while much higher cabinets have been placed against the walls. The design of these is in the period style of the day. A further grouping of furniture around the fireplace invites more comfortable and enjoyable study.

In dealing with the Lecture Hall I was faced with the double problem of function and authenticity. The room must serve a modern purpose of a gathering place for a large crowd and yet had to be in conformity with something that had gone before. Research produced nothing of these early days of exactly the same nature.
Other than the court rooms and the rooms for the General Assembly, there was nothing which would house such a number with the exception of the Church, which had from the earliest days been an integral part of the Colonial life. So with numerous examples of charming old churches, and especially a small one at Alexandria Virginia as a basis I sought to solve the problem. It is not intended that it should be a church, and only with association with some of the existing examples will it be confused.

In order to keep the spirit of the room more in character with the period, and also to prevent its becoming too large in area, it was thought best to use the pew type of seating arrangement instead of the usual auditorium type. I went even further. I selected as a style more indigenous to the period the closed-in pew similar to those in the Alexandria Church, in which the ends are closed with a small door.

S. Christ Church was completed in 1773 Brock. Colonial Churches, p 82
There was the further problem of fulfilling the present day fire law requirements by having sufficient exits. To place doors on either of the sides would have been undesirable since there were no transepts planned in the room, and the most usual treatment of the pulpit end of the church was such as not to warrant doors. The facades of the churches were almost invariably found to have either one large central door, or a central door with two smaller doors on each side. However, there is a small church in Fairfax County, Virginia, called Pohick Parish Church which has two entrances placed on the front with the space between them unadorned except for a very insignificant window. It was from this church that I adopted the treatment of the two entrances of the Lecture Hall from the garden side of the building. Here, too, I have employed a brick treatment in the design of the doors.

Without going into a detailed account of the lesser

9. Pohick Parish Church was designed by Daniel French and cost originally $70 pounds. George Washington selected the site, placing it half way between Mt. Vernon and Gunston Hall, the famous home of George Mason. Brock. Colonial Churches, page 84.
rooms in the building, suffice it to say that they all follow the characteristic style of decoration of the times.

The Librarian's and the Curator's offices each have their own stairway leading to the necessary clerical and work space immediately above.

To trace the history of the development of the gardens is not my intention. I seek merely to give some idea of the types of gardens used by the Colonials either on their plantations or town houses, and hence the reason for the type used.

At the time that these Georgian homes were being built in America the pattern type of garden was in vogue in England and on the Continent. They were architectural in that they reflected the architectural formality of the building which they surrounded. At first, such gardens were found chiefly in conjunction with some of the larger estates but by the middle of the 18th century patterned gardens could be found both on large places and small.

This taste is reflected in any number of gardens among which are those of Hampton, Baltimore, Maryland.
Doughoregan Manor, Howard County, Maryland and Sabine
Hall, Richmond County, Virginia.

The more formal planting seems to be confined to
the areas most intimately connected with and adjacent to
the house. Occasionally a secluded spot may have small
gardens tucked away for private retreat. Usually, how¬
ever, the further one goes from the house the less formal
do they become. This is quite natural since the holdings
were often so vast that labor was needed for more press¬
ing matters other than keeping the flower garden in order.

Box gardens, or green gardens, seem to be the most
usual type of patterned gardening used. Carefully laid
out along walks in geometric designs, they afford a suit¬
able type for any style of architecture. A minimum amount
of care can be expended on them and yet they always have
a feeling of being well groomed. Such has been the case
in designing the gardens for the Memorial.

The building is reached by a broad avenue which
has been treated formally in the planing adjacent to the
approach. In the rear the formal gardens are those close
to the building and reflect the form of the plan. They
consist of clipped box-hedge, cedar and jupon. This part is separated from the lower gardens by a low retaining wall. Beyond this the ground slopes gradually to the stream which is reached by formally planted walks bordered by willow trees and clipped shrubs. To either side beds in which blooming shrubs or perennials can be placed.

The small garden just at the end of the Lecture Room is intended as a recess garden to which a few of the members attending the lecture may adjourn between sessions. The planting here consists of the box type for the beds in the central portion with blooming flowers and shrubs confined to the beds next the walls. The flowers are employed in order to lend some color contrast to such a field of green.

The far end of the plot is to be left in a semi natural state in that the trees will remain as they are found. Azalias and like flowering shrubs will take the place of the thick underbrush, being planted in an informal fashion amid the trees, a setting in which they appear to their best advantage and grow most successfully.
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