

A CITY HALL
FOR
LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

by
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A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Committee
for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
ARCHITECTURE

Approved:

Head of Department

Dean of Engineering

Chairman, Graduate Committee

Virginia Polytechnic Institute

1943

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to acknowledge the helpful advice of Professor H. H. Waechter, Design Critic; Professor J. F. Poulton, Structural Design Critic; and the officials of the City of Lynchburg, Virginia, who so kindly forwarded information and suggestions for this thesis. Deep appreciation is given to Professor C. H. Cowgill, Head of the Department of Architecture, for the guidance received in the preparation of this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a City Hall for Lynchburg, Virginia. This problem was selected because it was realized that this city is in need of such a development; and it was felt by the student that a suitable design for such a building would be a small contribution toward the progress of his own community.

Interest in this problem was further stimulated after an investigation of the present situation. The city officials have their offices in a former United States Post Office. The staff has expanded so much that this building is no longer adequate for the efficient functioning of the city government. The old courthouse, built approximately a hundred years ago when the city had a population of only 10,000, still houses the courts of justice for the present city of forty five thousand persons. No buildings are available to house adequately the different departments of the city government, either to supply sufficient space or to fulfill the special requirements for the functions of these departments.

It is, therefore, the purpose of this thesis to develop a City Hall that will adequately care for an expanding city, as well as reflect the pride of the people of Lynchburg.



This is a historical map of a city, likely from the late 19th or early 20th century. The map features a grid of streets and various landmarks. A large, irregular black and white aerial photograph is pasted onto the upper portion of the map, showing a wooded area. A red rectangle is drawn on the map, corresponding to the area shown in the photograph. A red dot is placed on the photograph, marking a specific location. The text "THE SITE" is written in red capital letters on the map, near the bottom right. The map includes labels for "JAMES RIVER", "RAILWAY", "CITY LIMITS", and various street names. A red rectangle is also drawn on the map, near the bottom left, and a red dot is placed on the map, near the bottom right. The map is oriented with North at the top.

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Site Selection:

Three general requirements govern the selection of an ideal site. They are:

1. It has to be centrally placed in the town so that it is easily reached by all who wish to transact business there.

2. It has to be capable of containing suitable buildings.

3. It has to be in an area quiet enough for the town's business to be conducted efficiently.

Cramped and overflowing conditions in offices of old municipal departments are the result of not looking into the future. It is often impossible to enlarge or expand these buildings to any degree of satisfaction. It is, therefore, better to consider future expansion rather than to attempt to add on as time passes and more room is needed. The site selected, therefore, should be large enough to accommodate the buildings designed for present needs and half as much again.

The City of Lynchburg has developed generally in the shape of a horseshoe. The business district is located at the toe of this shoe and the suburban housing has developed out along the stems of the shoe. Generally, it can be said that most of the commercial and professional business is carried on in the concentrated downtown business area. That

is a primary factor in choosing a site for the City Hall, because most of the people doing business with the city will be in this area.

The area between Ninth Street and Eleventh Street from Church Street to Clay Street was considered by the designer to be ideal, on comparing it to other sites.

The site shows these characteristics:

1. It is within easy reach of the present business center by both pedestrians and vehicles.

2. The ground is ample to accomodate the needed buildings as well as future additions.

3. The topography is such that buildaings not only will command a high position above the surrounding area, but may be placed away from the disturbing noises of congested Church Street.

Other favorable features of the site are that:

4. The present courthouse borders the northwest side of the site. This building reflects the traditional history and justice of the city. Many people feel that it should be left standing as a memorial. The courthouse is reached by means of the famous Ninth Street Steps, that incorporate memorials of two wars. These elements reflect civic pride, and are worked into the planning of the site in order to add to the prestige of the City Hall.

5. The present city jail was recently built and is able to cope with the city's needs. It is also adjacent to and on the western corner of the site.

6. The site covers Tenth Street, which cannot be used by vehicular traffic, due to its steep grade and narrow width.

Zoning:

The area of the site, as well as the area southwest of this ground, has been zoned as apartment and boarding house district. However, office buildings are encouraged here also, for it is hoped that the business district will be able to expand up the hill to this area. The northeast edge of the site borders on the district zoned as concentrated business district.

Traffic:

The site covers the portion of Court Street between Ninth and Eleventh Streets, as well as Tenth Street between Church and Clay Streets. The traffic density of these streets was found to be relatively light, and parking space was used only by the people living in this area. No great problem of traffic circulation would arise by blocking these streets; for the main arteries of traffic flow are Church and Clay Streets. Eighth Street is used as an access to the downtown area from the southwest suburban district of Lynchburg.

This street, however, has a dead end at Court Street; and traffic is forced to route around through Court or Clay Streets in order to reach the business district. The topography of Eighth Street is such that this street could be tunneled from Harrison Street to Church Street; thus providing an artery straight through to the downtown area. The tunnel would then lessen the traffic density along Clay and Court Streets.

The only means by which the pedestrian in the area of the site is able to go from Church Street to Court Street is by climbing a series of steps. These steps are at the dead end of Eighth Street and the Ninth Street Memorial Steps. The ninety some risers in the Ninth Street Steps present a difficult task to many pedestrians who are forced to use them. The designer has, therefore, utilized an escalator system in his site plan by which the pedestrian is able to ride from Church Street up the grade to the proposed City Hall.

The Site Plan:

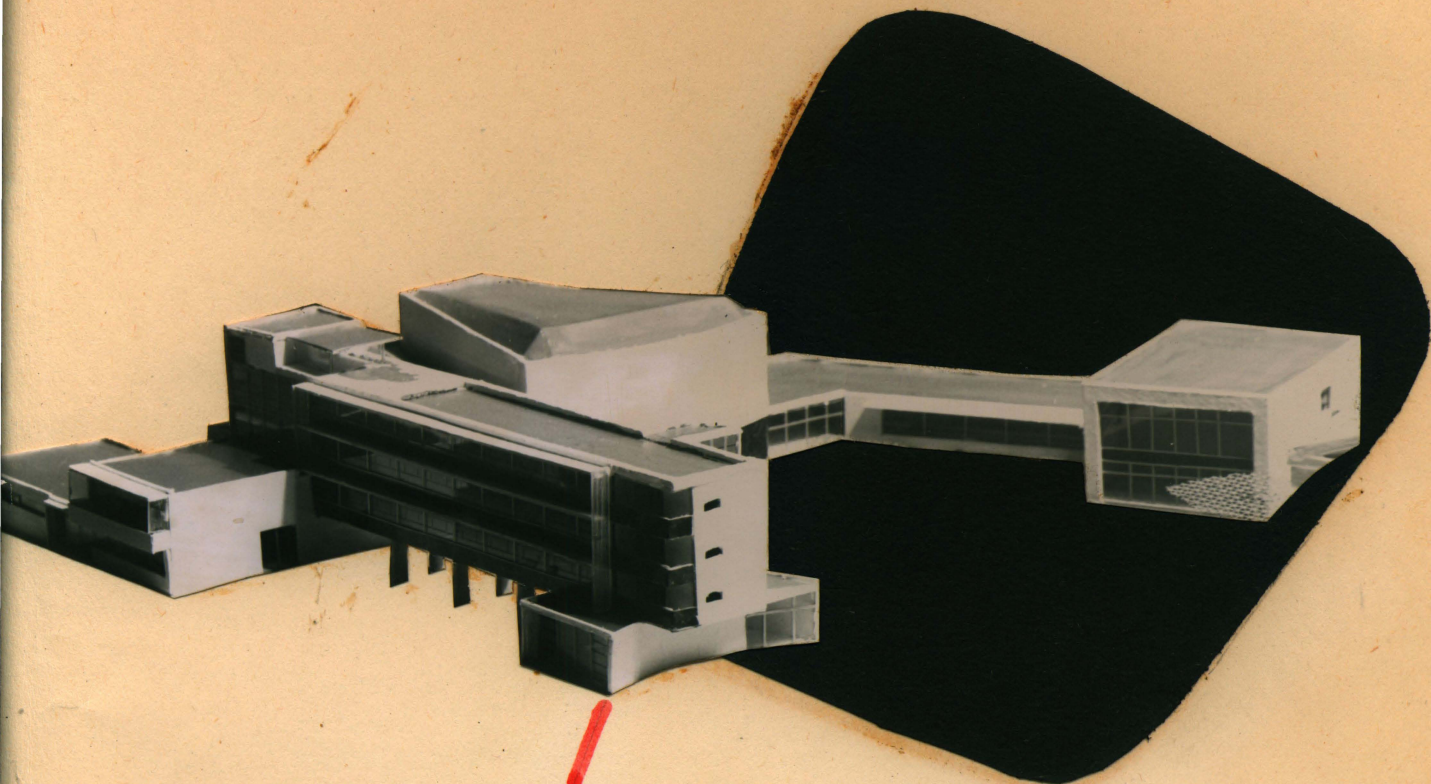
The high ground of the area falls on the northwest end of the site towards the old courthouse. Since the old courthouse, the city jail and the high ground are all on the northwest end of the site, the buildings of the proposed City Hall fall naturally in this area. The ground from Church Street to the midpoint of the site has such a steep grade that it is impractical to place buildings there. Since this

area faces the business district, it was developed into a green area and parkway. This green area serves a double purpose, for the trees and open space would absorb the noises of the congested business district. A small amphitheater, seating several hundred people, was placed in this green area at the southeastern end of the site. This was provided for the public to use in many stimulating community activities such as plays, concerts and open discussions.

Access by vehicle to the group itself is gained by a roadway which joins Eleventh and Clay Streets at the southern end of the site. Adjacent to this roadway, a parking lot was provided for employees and officials of the City of Lynchburg. Although the topography at this corner of the site was chosen as most suitable for the necessary parking lot, the area had to be terraced in order that vehicular circulation in and around the lot would be satisfactory. It has already been stated that an escalator system would be used in order to transport pedestrians from Church Street to the City Hall. The escalator is entered from Church Street halfway between Ninth and Eleventh Streets. A station shelter is provided here and houses space for various concessions and public toilets. The escalator operates underground and terminates at an underground lobby. From this lobby the pedestrian may walk directly to a flight of stairs leading to the main lobby of the building group, or may use a flight of stairs that leads to the open court of the building group.

The Old Courthouse:

It has already been thought by city officials that the present courthouse could be preserved as a memorial and used as a museum. This thought is used by the designer, and the courthouse stands as an integral part of the group. This building stands high, not only because of the topography, but also because of the difference in scale between traditional buildings and comparable contemporary ones. The designer, therefore, attempts to originate a memorial forum around the courthouse entrance in order to attach this building to the area of the City Hall buildings. This forum provides direct access to the old courthouse, as well as to the historical library and exhibit rooms. These rooms are a part of the proposed City Hall. Ninth Street Steps remain as a part of this memorial. They join the memorial terrace directly in front of the old courthouse.



THE CITY HALL

The City Hall:

At the time of the last election of city officials, only a small percentage of the registered voters of Lynchburg cast their vote. This is an alarming state of affairs, considering that the men in official positions in the government should represent the opinions of the majority of the registered voters.

Why?

This question is answered in "The Architectural Forum", May 1943, page 89, which gives several important reasons why, as well as reflecting the theme of this thesis.

Among the several important reasons:

"A lack of the facilities by which the people can educate themselves to the techniques of government.

A city government should- must - be housed as the center of a mutually cooperative enterprise in which:

THE GOVERNMENT TALKS TO THE PEOPLE AND THE
PEOPLE TALK TO THE GOVERNMENT.

The administration of government is the business of the people.

The obligations of the people in a democracy consist not only of an exercise of franchise, but participation in the active direction of the rules or laws by which government exists.

The City Hall must be considered the heart of any community, the house of government - a building in which provision is made, not only for the administration of rules and regulations, but one which must contain facilities for the expression of the idea of government, which is never static and which can never be complete without the direct participation of the people who create it.

The facts or the functions of the administration cannot properly be considered as existing independently of one another.

It should be impossible to think in terms of the juvenile court without thinking in terms of the children's clinic, or without thinking in terms of the board of education. Such a board of education can best function through activities within the house of government itself by active cooperation with all departments in presenting exhibitions, motion pictures, study and lecture groups and open forums.

TO THE END THAT:

WHEN THE GOVERNMENT TALKS TO THE PEOPLE AND THE
PEOPLE TALK TO THE GOVERNMENT - IT IS ONE AND
THE SAME VOICE."

Plan Evolution:

The City Hall itself is divided into seven main groups.
They are:

1. The Administrative "Bridge".

This unit contains the offices of the following departments:

- a. Commissioner of Revenue
- b. City Treasurer
- c. City Collector
- d. Water Department
- e. Public Works
- f. Custodian
- g. City Planning
- h. Recreation
- i. City Attorney
- j. Comptroller
- k. Purchasing Agent
2. Health Department and Board of Education
They contain offices and space for:
 - a. Clinic, waiting rooms
 - b. Office of Board of Education
 - c. Juvenile Court and parental conference room
3. Police Department
Contains area for:
 - a. Chief of Police
 - b. Traffic Bureau
 - c. Detective Division
 - d. Communication
 - e. Conference

- f. Assembly
- g. Records Bureau
- h. Police garage
- i. Locker, roll call room and shower
- j. Overnight lock-up
- 4. Courthouse
 - Contains:
 - a. Two court rooms
 - b. Anterooms for jurors and witnesses
 - c. Attorney conference rooms
 - d. Judges' chambers
- 5. City Manager's office and Council room
- 6. Auditorium
 - Contains:
 - a. Seating for approximately six hundred persons
 - b. Carpenters' shop for scenery construction
 - c. Actors' dressing rooms
 - d. Rehearsal and entertainment lobby
- 7. An exhibition room and historical library

It was decided by the designer that the group of buildings making up the City Hall would be located on the high ground at the northwest end of the site. The contours of the ground here generally follow the shape of a half ellipse. The ground slopes steadily away from a high point

near the old courthouse down to Eleventh Street, as well as sloping gradually to Clay Street, and sharply to Church Street. The designer, realizing that the most interesting view and the one most often seen would be from Church Street, decided to place the administrative unit on the high ridge of ground overlooking and parallel to this street. The police department, naturally, needed to be as near as possible to the jail; therefore, it was placed on the Clay Street side of the site. The courthouse was also placed here, for it was realized by the designer (and spoken of by a Judge in Lynchburg), that the handling of prisoners was a large factor in considering the location of the courts. The historical library and exhibit rooms were placed near the old courthouse.

Because of the topography, and the desire for a flexible group, the other units fell into place naturally. The whole group came to form the shape of a horseshoe with the open end toward the high ground at the courthouse. This formed a large open court around which the various units were grouped so that free circulation was offered through this court from any portion of the City Hall. The court was graded level so that all units on the court would be at the same level.

The Main Lobby:

The main lobby serves the basic function of intercepting pedestrians from their instinctive line of approach to the

building and directing their circulation to the various units of the group. It must be of ample size to promote circulation of the many people using the auditorium. The lobby, therefore, becomes more or less a focal center for the City Hall, It occupies the central position of the City Hall, with entrances from both the parking lot on the south side, and the court on the north side. There is also an underground access from the main lobby to the escalator.

The Administrative Unit:

This unit was placed on a bias to Church Street because of orientation. The designer desired to get the benefit of the southeastern sun for office light, but because of topography, the unit faces the east. However, the offices escape the brilliant light of the southern sun, as well as the heat of the western sun. This unit developed into a long block of three stories with offices on the eastern side of the block and a public corridor on the west side. The designer took into consideration the number of employees working for the administrative offices at present, storage area, vaults, drafting rooms, and toilets when determining the space requirements for this unit. Before the actual layout of areas was attempted, one half as much area again was added to account for expansion. In the event that future building area is needed, offices may be added to the west side of the block.

The feature of this unit is that temporary partitions are used to divide the various office areas. In the event that a larger office is needed or a combination of offices are made into a suite, partitions may be moved to satisfy the space requirement. The designer has suggested a typical office plan among the illustrations. A bank of elevators and a stairwell are at the south end, and both are entered or left from the main lobby. Another stairwell serving this unit is located at the north end. Lounges and toilets are on each floor and at the north end of the administrative unit.

In order that a better view of this unit may be obtained from Church Street, the whole block is elevated one story. Between the main lobby at the south end of the unit and the historical library at the north end, the administrative unit is supported by columns. This permits freer circulation from the court, and offers a fine view over the city and James River. The penthouse on this unit houses the elevator machinery, and space for the weather bureau. The penthouse is surrounded by a roof deck to aid the functioning of the weather station.

The Auditorium:

The auditorium was made an integral part of the City Hall, for it was felt by the designer that this unit would serve to encourage more community participation in the city

government activities. This unit was placed between the main lobby and the police department so that it would be near the parking lot and adjacent to the main lobby. From the main lobby, through circulation under the auditorium connects to the police department and courthouse unit. Also under the auditorium and off the main library, coat space is available for the auditorium audiences.

Entrances to the auditorium seating area are provided on either side of the auditorium. They are gained either by stairs at the front of the auditorium, or by ramps that lead to the stage end of the seating area. The fan shape gives excellent sight lines and acoustics.

In the event that entertaining is necessary for some activity within the auditorium or the City Hall, a large social room has been provided on the Clay Street side of the auditorium. This room can also be used for rehearsals by casts of stage productions. Adjacent to this room is a catering kitchen that is supplied by a pantry from the basement service area. The stage has ample room for productions, and is provided with a behind-stage work area. Because of topography and aesthetic considerations, the dressing rooms and toilets are located in the basement under the auditorium. A carpenters' shop for scenery construction is located directly under the stage area. The stage is trapped here so that

scenery may be lifted into place prior to the stage presentation, or while stage activity is in progress.

Health Department and Board of Education:

It is not hard to realize what an important part these two units play in everyday community life. They provide the public with an opportunity to gain necessary education, and offer service to those in need of clinical treatment or medical advice. They both work hand in hand in serving the community by caring for and educating the children.

These units are located on the Church Street side of City Hall, and just off the main lobby. The idea was expressed by the present Head Nurse of the Health Department of Lynchburg that it is necessary for this unit to be on the first floor. It has been made possible, therefore, to reach the health department from Church Street, seventy feet lower, by walking only a short distance to the elevators from the escalator, and then down the main lobby hall to the health clinic reception desk. The waiting room at the clinic is designed with full length windows that provide a restful view over the city.

The board of education is adjacent to the health department. Along with space for offices, it includes space for a small conference room. The room can be used for discussions between school principals

and parents, and play the important role of being used as an informal juvenile court.

City Manager's Office and Council Room:

The prestige that surrounds the office of City Manager of Lynchburg, Virginia, and the matters of importance discussed at meetings of the councilmen, demands that these units be given a prominent place in the City Hall. However prominent though, the office and council room should be in a quiet area, and off the circulation artery of everyday business.

The designer chose to place this unit on a second floor level overlooking the green area toward Church Street. The unit connects directly with the main lobby by either the elevators or stairs. The foyer of the unit and a public corridor of the administrative unit join together on a mezzanine overlooking the area of the main lobby. Off this mezzanine, the designer provided a smoking - waiting alcove.

Police Department:

The police department occupies office and work space on two floors. Topographical conditions warranted this situation. Offices that are more apt to deal directly with the public, such as the chief of police and traffic and detective bureaus are located on the first floor. This unit may be reached by an entrance directly off the court, or by a corridor from the main lobby.

The communications room, overnight lock-up, police garage, showers and locker room, and desk sergeant are located at the basement, or Clay Street level. The pedestrian and police vehicle entrance to this level is directly from Clay Street. This level naturally handles the functional activities of the police department, such as vehicle dispatch, roll call and change of shifts, and the handling of prisoners.

THE COURTHOUSE:

For many years the old courthouse has stood as a symbol of historic prestige and has served the City of Lynchburg. It is definitely a monument to the city. However, a personal interview with a judge who uses this building for his duties, and other investigations, have shown that the building serves its purpose poorly. It is surrounded on three sides by streets that are paved to the very foundation of the building. Court procedure is often halted because of traffic noise. There are no rooms to which members of the court may adjourn for council, or to confer on a point in question.

The new building faces its courtrooms on the open forum away from disturbing street noises. Anterooms separate this room from the public corridor, so that walking and talking noises from this corridor will not disturb court procedure. The lobby of the police department offers direct access to this unit.

Historical Library and Exhibit Room:

To provide the citizens with a means by which they can become acquainted with the history and activities of their city, a small library and exhibit room is included in the City Hall group. This unit is close to the old courthouse, and forms a support for the north end of the administrative bridge.

The Basement Level:

Topographical conditions provide a basement level that requires comparatively little excavation. A service drive is designed so that service vehicles are able to drive inside the building itself. There supplies and materials can be unloaded directly into the basement and carried to the elevators, or placed in the storage rooms. The heating rooms, electrical room, storage rooms, and offices for men in charge of this area are located on this level.

PRESENTATION

PHOTOSTATS OF DRAWINGS

AND

PICTURES OF THE MODEL

CLAY STREET

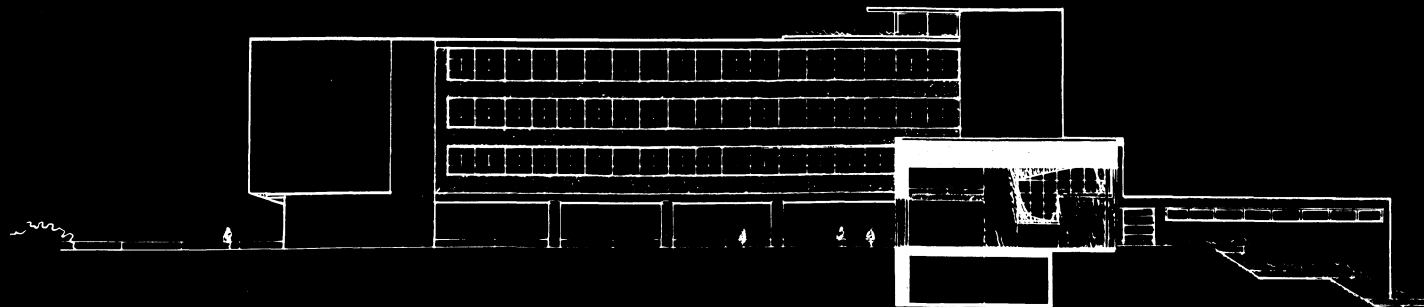
ELEVENTH STREET





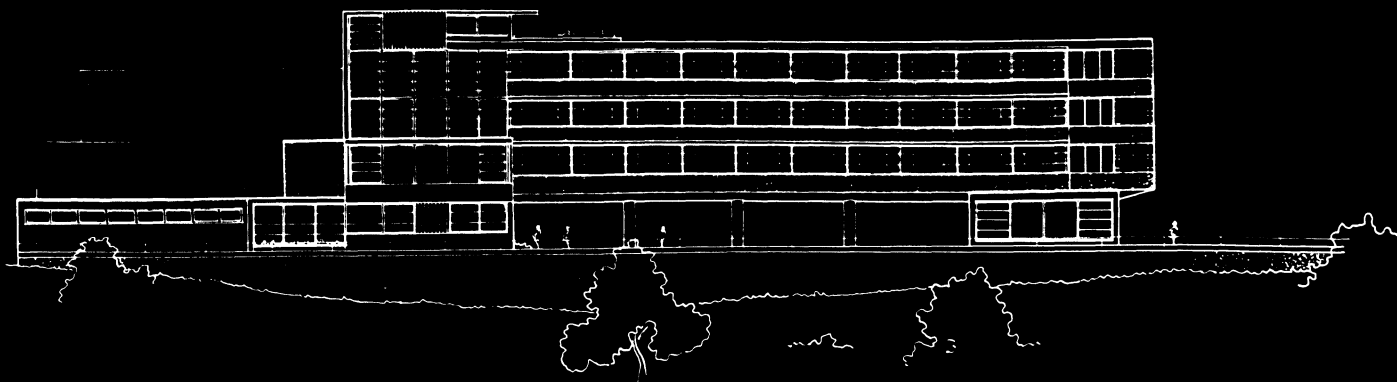
S O U T H E L E V A T I O N

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SCALE IN FEET



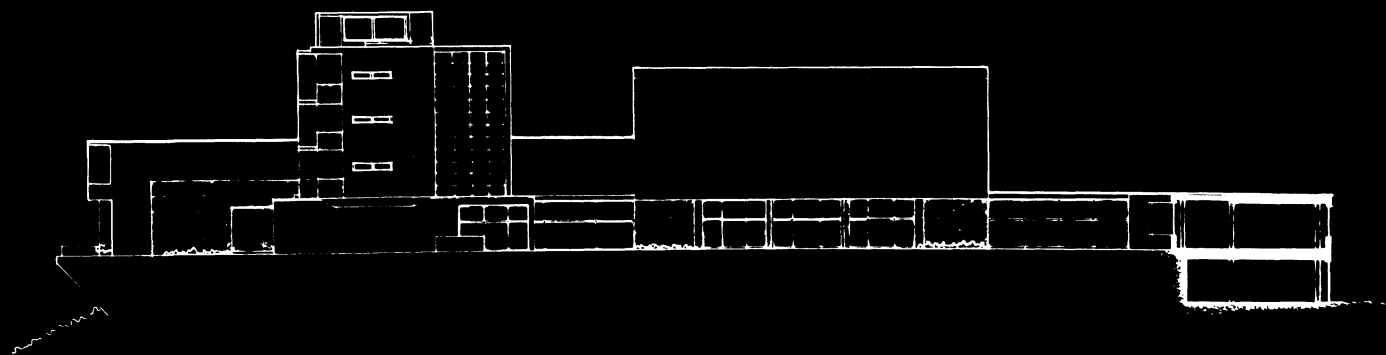
W E S T E L E V A T I O N

section thru lobby

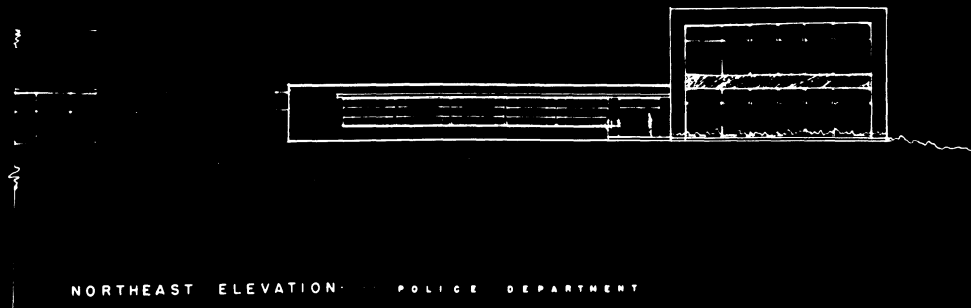


E A S T E L E V A T I O N

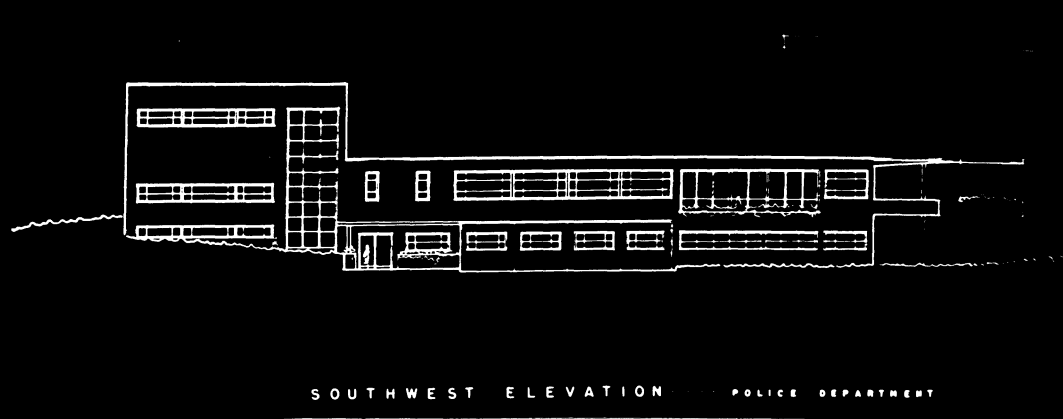
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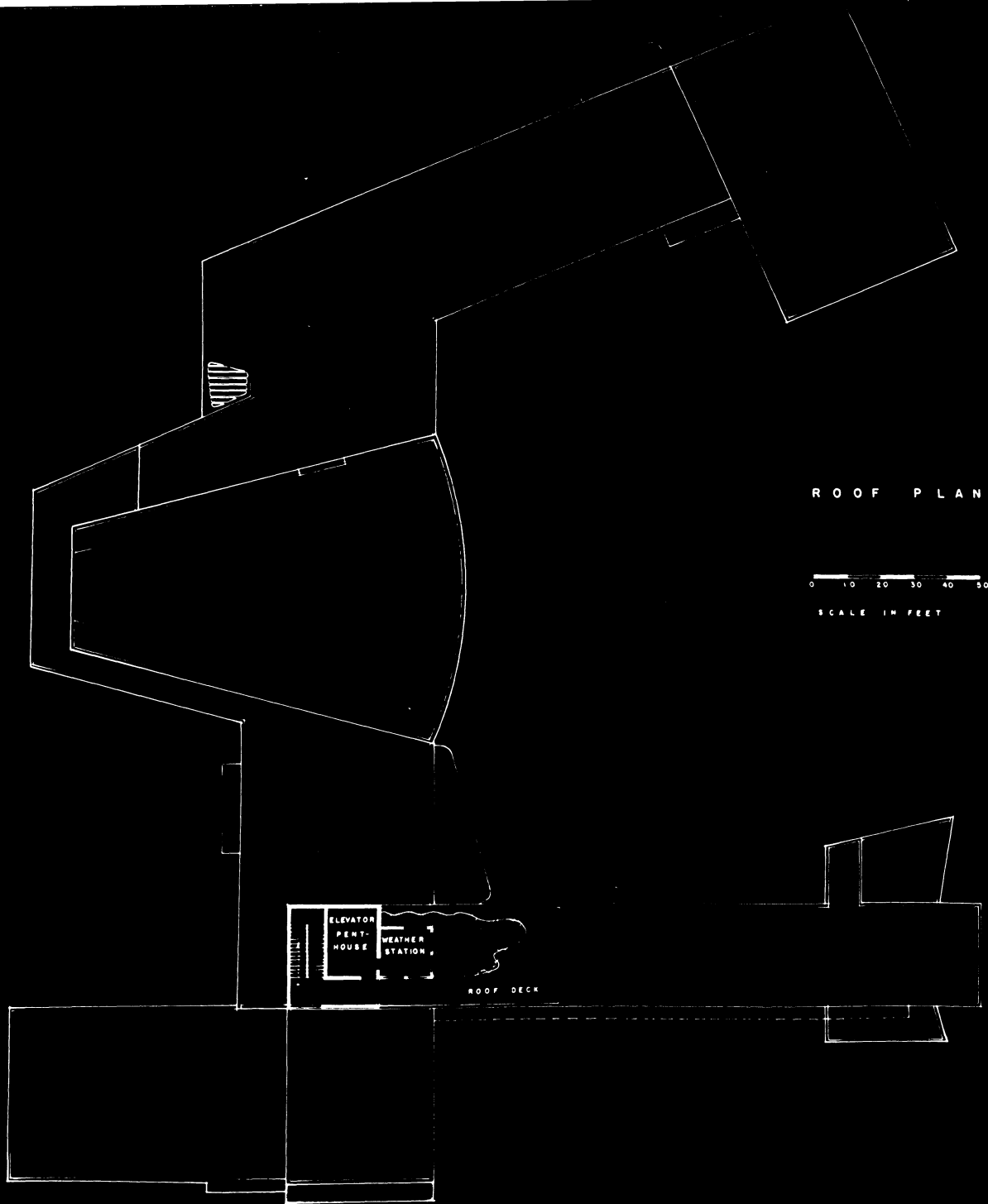


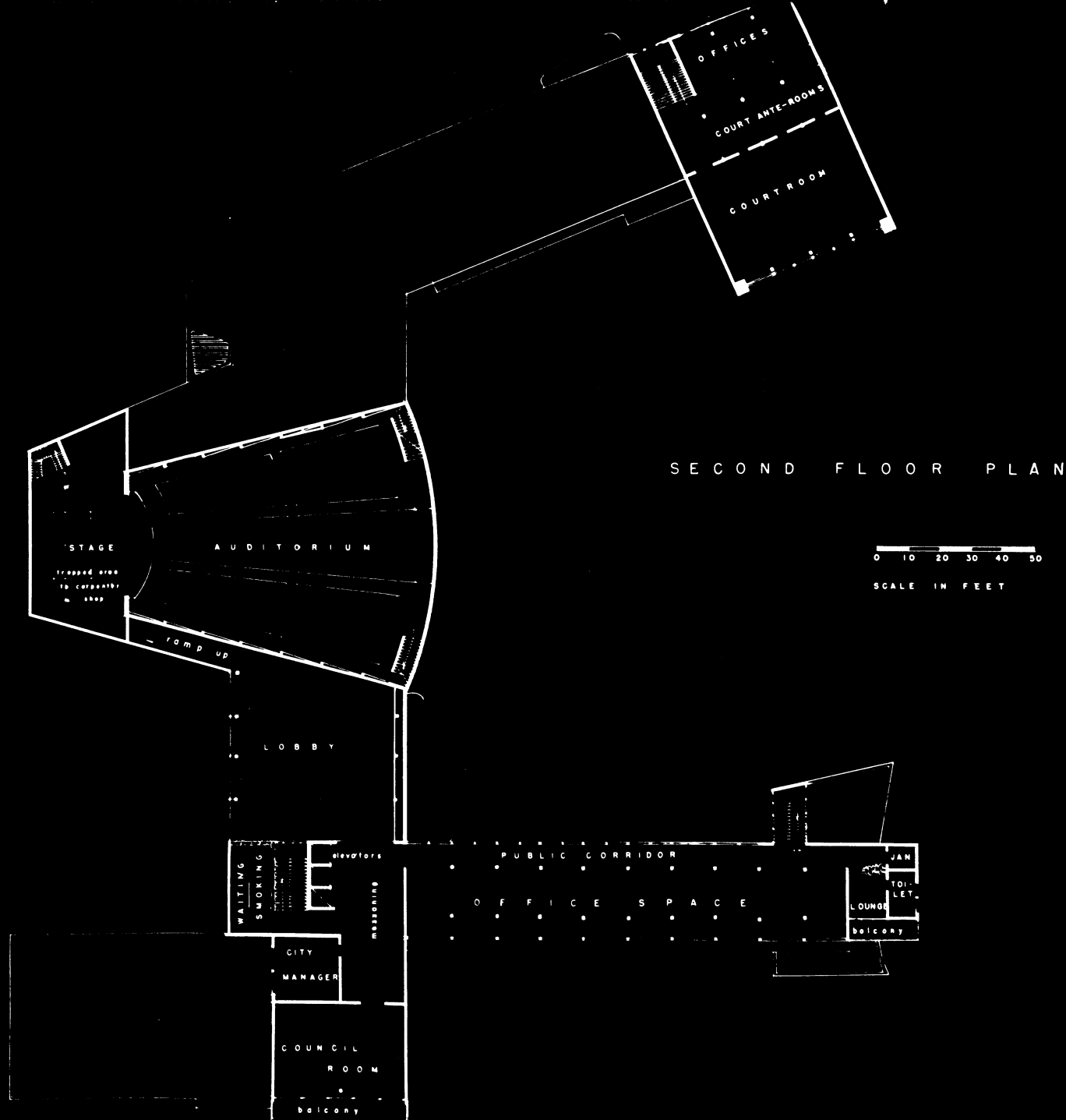
N O R T H E L E V A T I O N

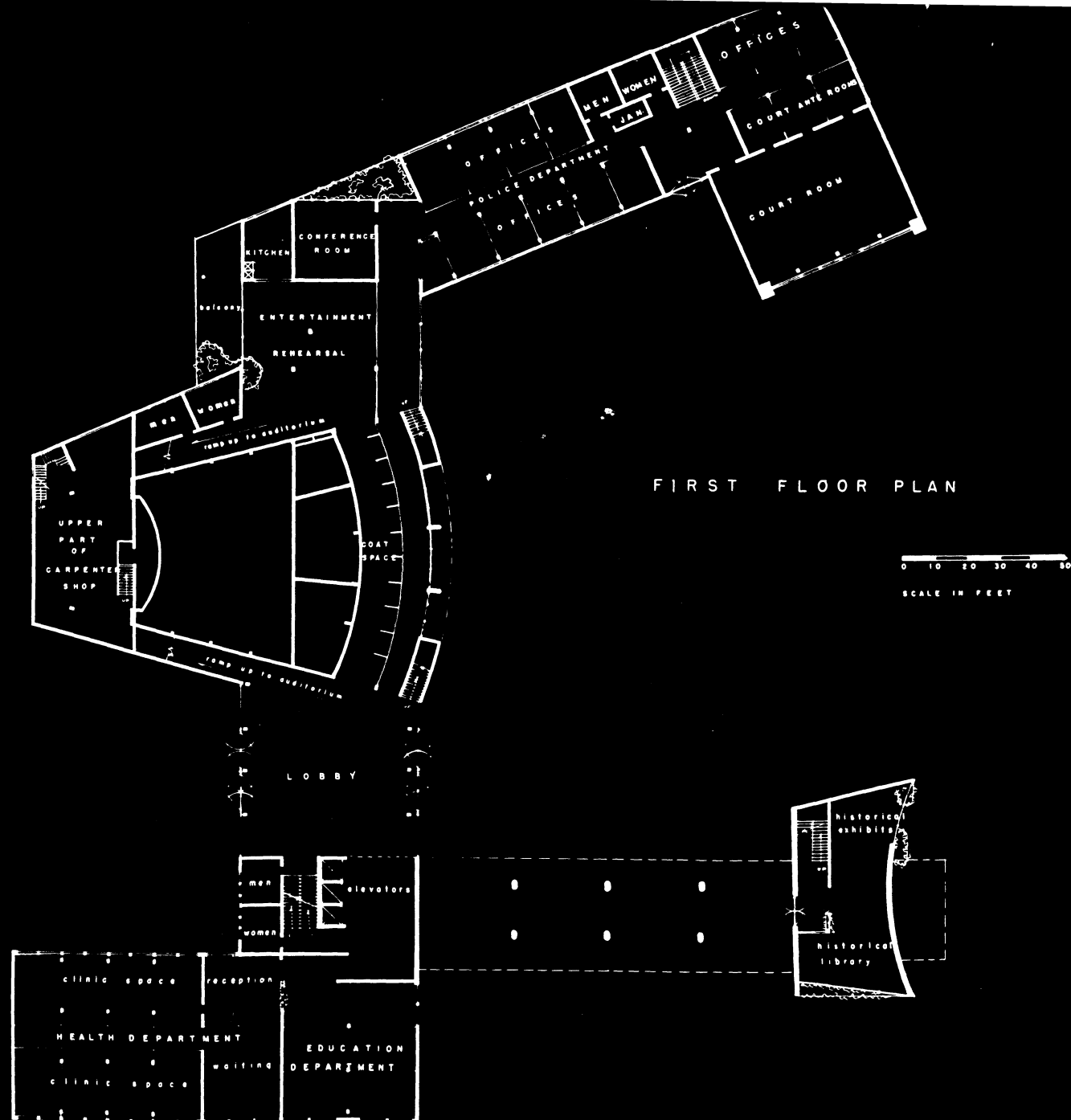


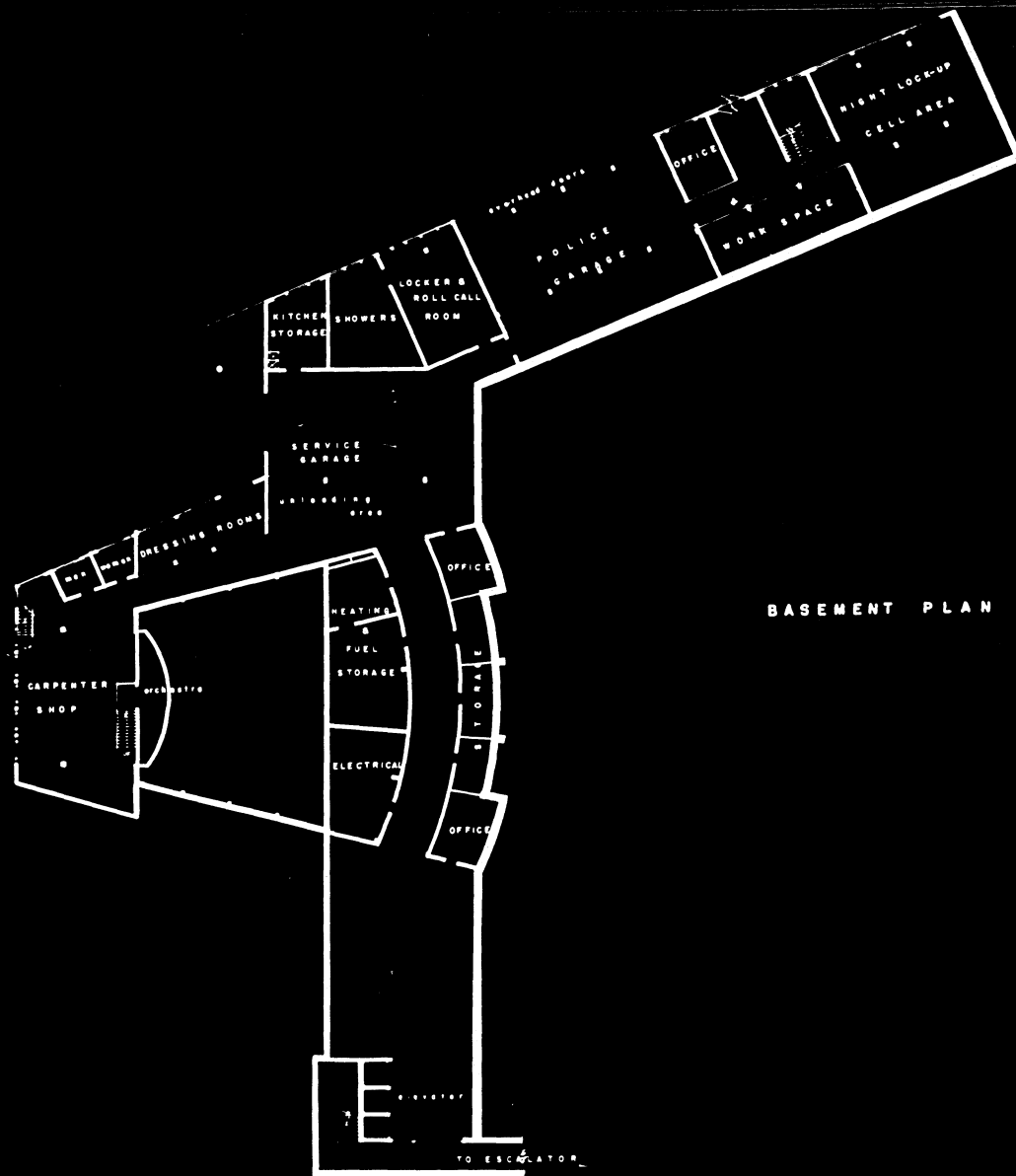
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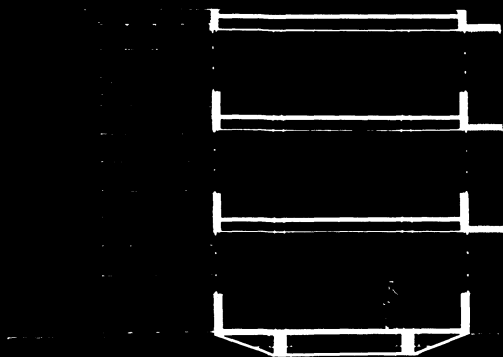




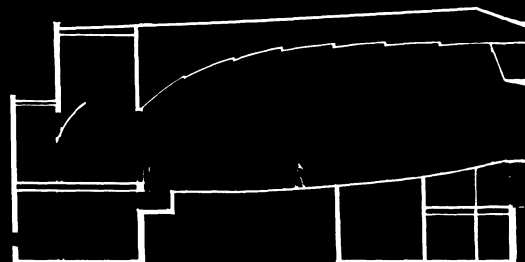


BASEMENT PLAN

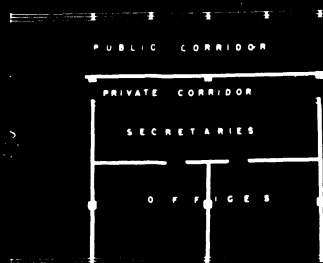
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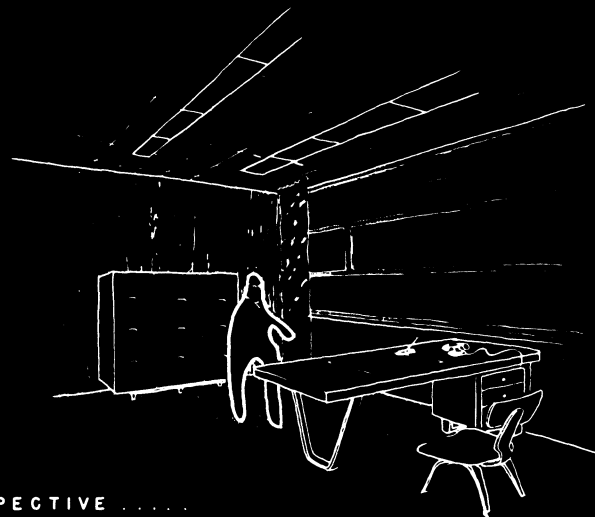
SECTION
THRU BRIDGE



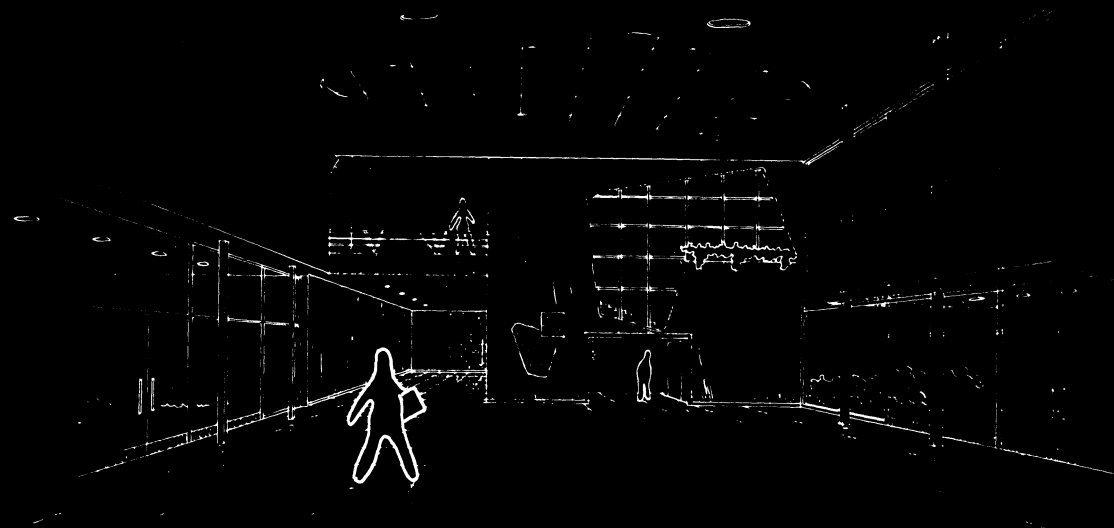
SECTION
THRU AUDITORIUM



PLAN
SUGGESTED OFFICE ARRANGEMENT



PERSPECTIVE
OFFICE CORNER



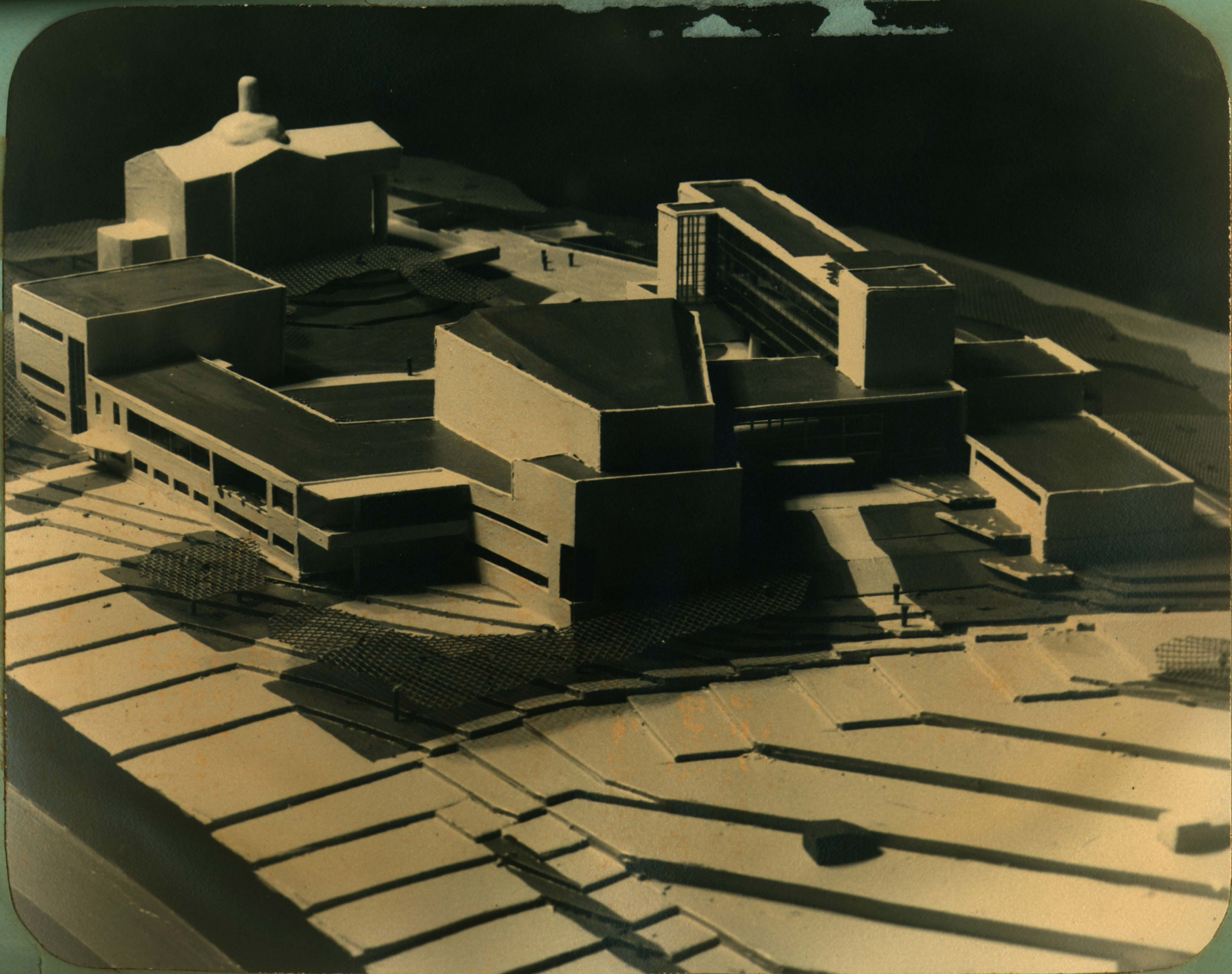
INTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

OF LOBBY

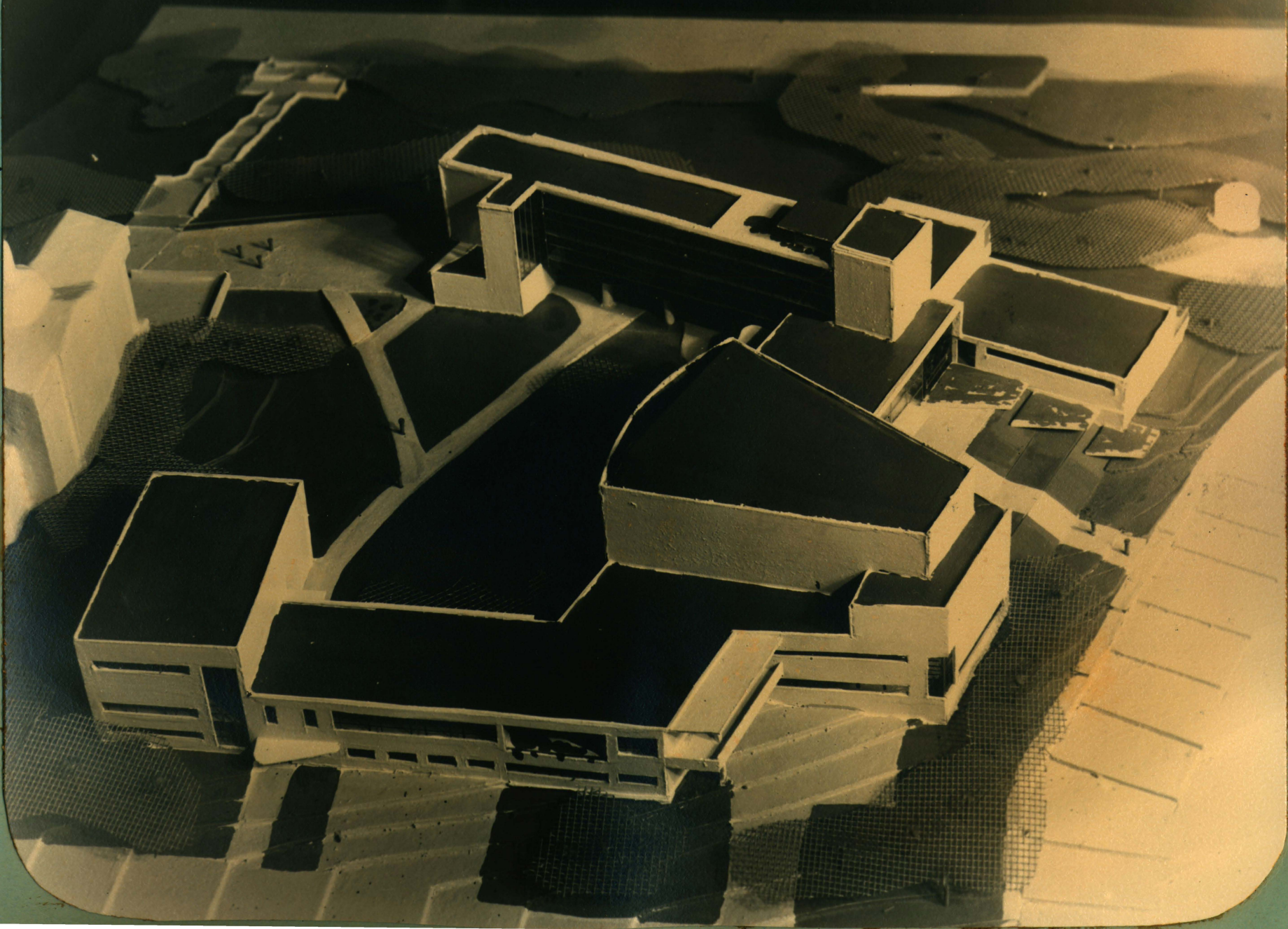
VIEW OF MODEL FROM CHURCH ST.



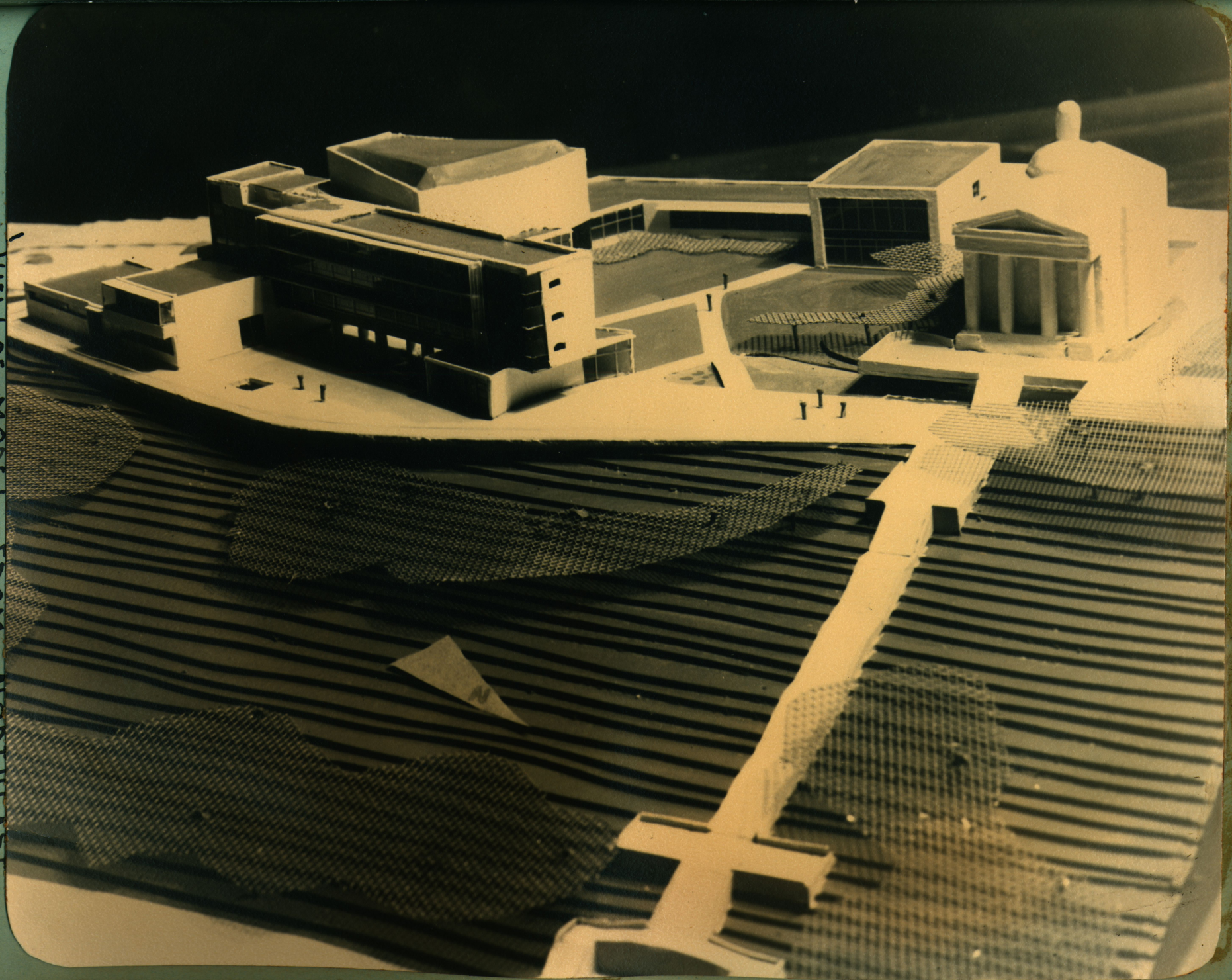
VIEW OF MODEL FROM SOUTH-SOUTHWEST



VIEW OF MODEL FROM SOUTH WEST



VIEW OF MODEL FROM NORTHEAST



VIEW OF MODEL FROM SOUTHEAST



Construction:

With the exception of the auditorium, the main lobby, and the courthouse, all units of the City Hall will use the reinforced concrete frame construction. The other units, because of column lengths and beam spans, will use steel frame construction.

All exterior walls are faced with Indiana limestone veneer, except the darker areas indicated on the elevations. These areas are faced with a polished Virginia greenstone veneer. All veneers are backed by a structural clay tile, upon which the finished inside wall is applied. The interior wall and ceiling finishes are plaster, acoustical material, and wood paneling.

All concrete floor slabs are finished with a composition flooring. The roof is a twenty year bonded five ply composition roof.

Conclusion:

All persons should take an active interest in the affairs of our method of government, for a fair democratic form of government can exist only through the wholehearted effort of all.

Without a symbol of government to respect and work with, the interest of the people in governmental activities may tend to die.

The author feels that he has developed a City Hall that will adequately satisfy the present and forthcoming needs of the City of Lynchburg, as well as attract the interest and participation of the population in governmental activities.

APPENDIX

DESIGN DATA:

Primary Aims and Considerations:

A building of contemporary architectural design whose character will reflect the dignity of its function.

Floor plans of maximum flexibility that will satisfy present and assumed future space requirements.

Assumptions:

The designer assumed the seating capacity of the auditorium to be around six hundred. This was arrived at by observing the attendance at various functions in auditoriums around the City of Lynchburg.

The courtrooms were assumed to be a little larger than the ones used at present.

Population trends of Lynchburg have shown a steady increase; it has been assumed that the city will continue to grow.

Space Requirements:

An auditorium of the fan shape has been found to be most satisfactory. Walls are broken for better acoustics. Seats are placed radially to the stage with a thirty-six inch back-to-back spacing. The auditorium floor slope is arranged to provide the best possible sight lines. Front and rear exits are provided.

The majority of the offices have been located in the administrative bridge and in the police department. The designer has compiled tables to show how space requirements for these two units were developed. One hundred and twenty square feet of area per person was used as a basis for area determination. This included space for corridors, toilets, and storage.

Wherever possible, strip windows were provided for offices in order to give maximum light. Window sill heights were determined by furniture heights. A sill three feet-six inches from the floor was used. Average floor heights were found to be twelve feet for office buildings. Average corridor widths were found to be six feet.

Columns were spaced so that temporary partitions could be used to segregate office space. Average column spacing was found to be twenty by twenty feet, but due to the desired shape of the administrative unit, the designer used a spacing of fourteen by eighteen feet. It will be a job of the building manager to allocate office space.

Major streets run in a northwest-southeast direction. Topographical conditions of the site were found by taking water main and fire hydrant levels at various corners of the site, and then constructing a contour map from this information.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMINISTRATION UNIT

Offices	Personnel		Office Space	Meeting Rooms	Other Services	Total
	Present	Future Est.	Sq.Ft.	Sq.Ft.	Sq.Ft.	Sq.Ft.
Commissioner of Revenue	6	9	Vault 1080	Vault 200		1280
City Treasurer	5	8	960	Vault 200		1160
City Collector	5	10	1200	Vault 200		1400
City Water Dept.	6	9	1080			1080
Probation Office	5	7	840			840
Council Room	7	9	1080			1080
Park and Forestry	3	5	600			600
Public Works	10	20	2400	Storage 200	Draft ing 600	3200
Custodian	4	6	720			720
City Planning	1	4	480	Display 150	Draft ing 200	830
Recreation	4	6	720			720
City Attorney	2	4	480			480
Comptroller	3	6	720			720
Purchasing Agent	2	3	360			360
City Manager	2	3	360			<u>360</u>
TOTAL						14,960
						(15,000)

SPACE REQUIREMENTS FOR POLICE DEPARTMENT

Offices	Personnel		Space Require- ments	Meet- ing Rooms	Other Services	Total
	Present	Future Est.	Sq. Ft.	Sq. Ft.	Sq. Ft.	Sq. Ft.
Chief	3	5	600			600
Traffic	1	3	360			360
Detective	5	10	1200			1200
Conference	20	40	200			200
Communication	4	8	600			600
Locker Room	70	100	400		Showers 300	700
Roll Call Rm.	70	100	600			600
Assembly Room	70	100	600			600
Records Bureau	1	3	600			600
Lock-up	75	150	1500			1500
Garage	10 cars 7 cycles 2 wagons	20 cars 10 cycles 4 wagons	2900			2900
TOTAL						9860 (10,000)

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