

NEW FEDERAL BUILDING AT ELMIRA, N. Y.

DIGNITY IN BUILDINGS.

The Ideal of Uncle Sam's Supervising Architect.

[From The Tribune Bureau.]

Washington, Sept. 30.—Progress is the keynote of all the scientific and professional bureaus of the government, and in no one has there been greater progress or more tangible results than in that of the supervising architect of the United States. Under the direction of James Knox Taylor, supervising architect, that office is constantly working to an ideal, a most admirable ideal, and this is the case, apparently, for the first time in the history of the United States.

"It is our aim to clothe every public building with a dignity and simplicity which shall at once impress the observer and appeal to him as appropriate to the seat of even a small portion of the authority of the nation," said Mr. Taylor, discussing the ideals of his office. "In other words, we are seeking to express in every public building something of the majesty of the great nation which it represents, and we hope that in time even the humblest and least costly of the government buildings will impress the most casual observer with the greatness, the solidity and the dignity of the government which owns it."

How well Mr. Taylor has succeeded in achieving his ideal may be judged from the illustrations here presented. In former days the supervising architect was prone to adopt each fad and fancy which swayed private architects, and the general result was that there was nothing characteristic, nothing individual, in the public buildings scattered throughout the country, nothing which served to distinguish them from the more pretentious tabernacle, market or railway station. There are standing to-day many government buildings which fall far short of impressing the stranger with the fact that they contain a constituent part of the federal government and which would never be recognized as government buildings were it not for the signs over their doors or the flags flying from the staffs on their roofs. That this is not true of the newer buildings, those designed since Mr. Taylor has been working to his ideal, is apparent.

When the supervising architect conceived the idea which now dominates his work he surveyed the field in Washington and determined that those buildings which invariably most impressed the visitor, whether native or foreigner, were the Capitol, the White House and the Treasury. Further observation developed the fact that these were the types which the visitor to the national capital carried home with him indelibly impressed on his memory, and years after an unlabelled picture of any of these buildings would be instantly recognized. They were typical of Washington, of the nation, even, to him who knew the national capital only through views and pictures.

Study of these buildings clearly demonstrated to Mr. Taylor that their satisfying qualities, their quiet dignity and impressiveness, were due to the fact that they were in each instance types of pure classic architecture, and arguing from these conclusions he determined that hereafter every public building erected throughout this broad land should be constructed along somewhat similar lines, should constitute a type of pure classic architecture; that no longer fads as changeable as fashion's fancies should control the national architecture, and the results of this determination have proved so satisfactory that rarely does the supervising architect's office

find itself in conflict with the ideas of members of Congress or local autocrats, even though these have previously determined to their own satisfaction the type of public building their city or town should have. Although in the old days there often developed violent friction between the supervising architect's office and the local authorities or influential citizens, each adhering strenuously to his own peculiar ideas, this is now a thing of the past, and rarely, if ever, do the residents or the members of Congress fail to express the utmost gratification with the showing the supervising architect is able to make with the appropriation allowed by Congress.

A notable feature of the new policy, the ideal policy, as the supervising architect believes it to be, is that it is equally as adaptable to buildings constructed at small cost as to those where the outlay is practically unlimited. In fact, it is in the buildings of lesser cost that its beauties are often most to be observed.

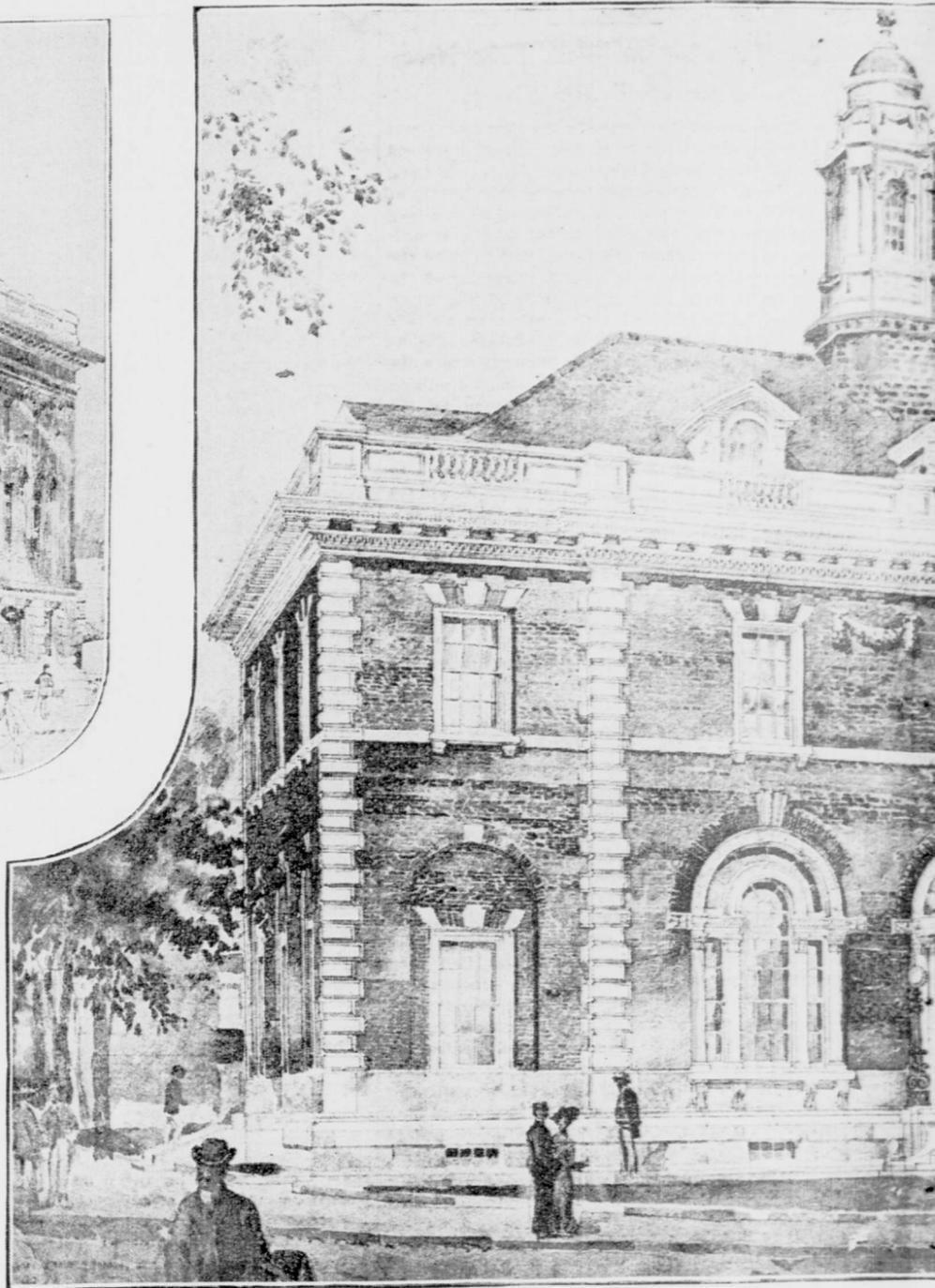
For Lawrence, Kan., the plans have been perfected for a postoffice which will cost not to exceed \$60,000, site included, in which the simple, impressive lines of the classic styles are as strikingly portrayed as they are in the San Francisco postoffice, which has cost \$2,500,000, exclusive of site. An excellent example of the new ideal applied to a New-York State building of moderate cost is to be found in the postoffice at Geneva, the total cost of which is placed at \$75,000, of which amount \$19,057 75 had to be paid for a site. Although comparatively small in proportions, its pillared portico will be strongly suggestive of the White House, while its low gable immediately recalls the United States Treasury.

Another building about to be erected is the Kingston (N. Y.) postoffice, which is to cost \$80,000, of which \$19,976 78 has already been paid for the site. Its tall, severe columns bring to mind the handsome columns which are the chief beauty of the east front of the Treasury Building. Another building which speaks elo-

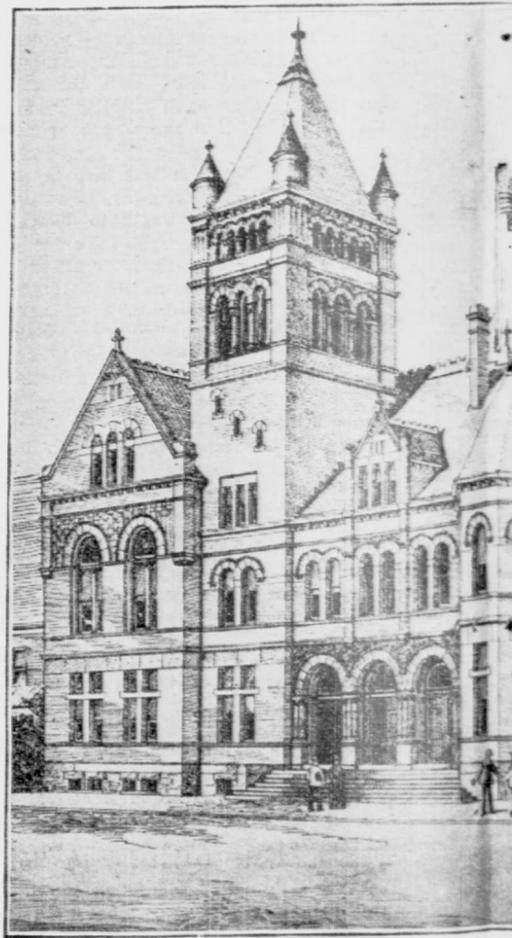
quently of the dignity and authority which it represents is the postoffice at Jamestown, N. Y., which is now rapidly nearing completion. Its massive walls and general strength and simplicity suggest Washington's best types of architecture.

Elmira, N. Y., also possesses one of the handsomest of the recently erected public buildings. Its postoffice, which was completed and occupied last year, is not dissimilar to the federal building at Jamestown, although it is considerably larger and accommodates the United States Court as well. Its cost, when the interior decorations are completed, will aggregate \$239,000, including upward of \$30,000 invested in the site.

One of the handsomest of the recently constructed federal buildings is the postoffice constructed a few years ago in Annapolis, Md., which cost approximately \$100,000, including \$20,000 paid for the site. It is of pure Colonial architecture, like the White House, and is in harmony with the State House and with other buildings in the quaint city, which is not only the capital of Maryland, but which is the home of the United States Naval Academy. The

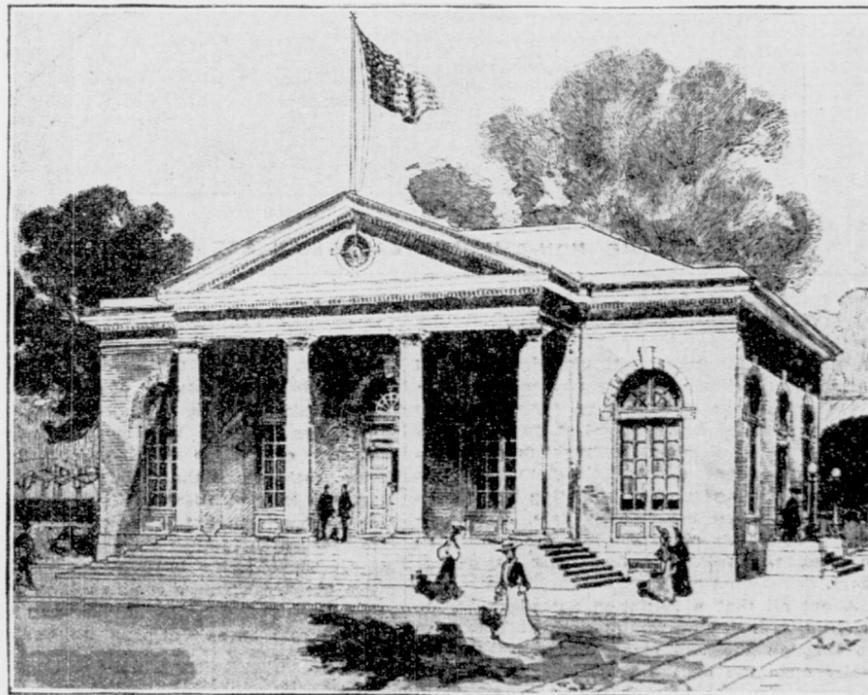


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Annapolis postoffice is regarded by architects as one of the most beautiful specimens of Colonial architecture recently erected in this country. An excellent example of the style of architecture which prevailed in the construction of government buildings before James Knox Taylor conceived the idea now followed is found in the federal building at Bay City, Mich. This structure accommodates the postoffice, the United States Court and the United States Custom House, but it is lacking in that dignity and simplicity which characterize the more recent designs. Handsome structure though it is, it lacks distinctive character, and might easily be mistaken for a railway station, a somewhat ornate



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