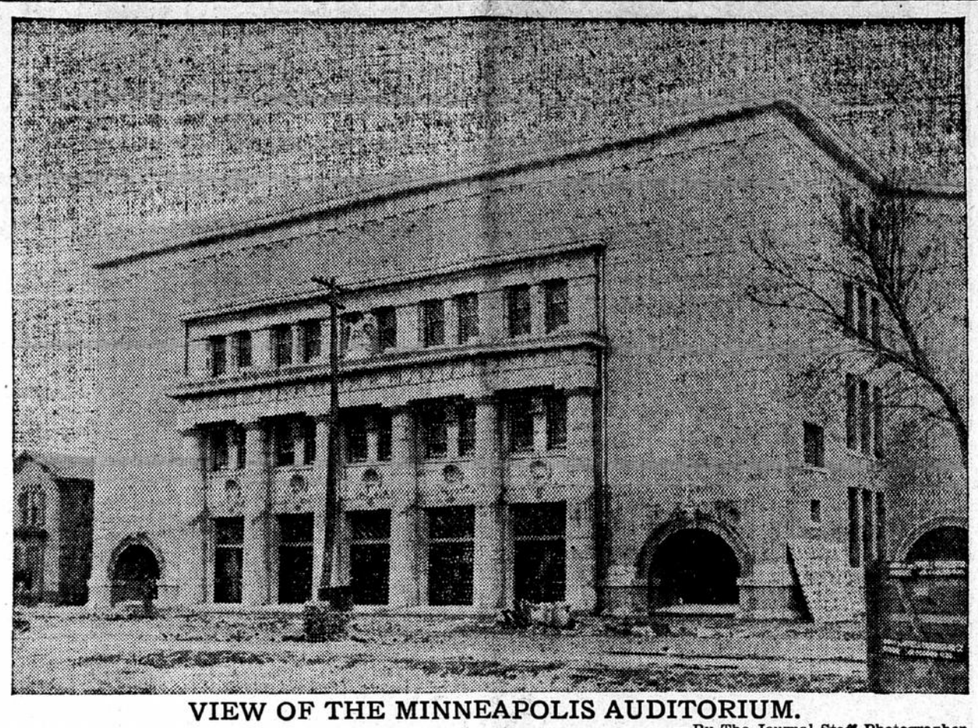
MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

MAGNIFICENT NEW AUDITORIUM MAKES ALL MINNEAPOLIS PROUD

A Description of the Finely Conceived and Wonderfully Executed Building---Its Simple Doric Grandeur—Its Fireproof Construction and Safety Devices—Its Convenience and Adaptability to All Sorts of Functions.



VIEW OF THE MINNEAPOLIS AUDITORIUM.
—By The Journal Staff Photographer.

How the Plan Was Originated---How It Took Form in the Northwestern National Life's Proposal---How the Insurance Was Solicited by Public-Spirited and Self-Sacrificing Men---How the Project Reached Full Fruition.

THERE is no fellow to the new Minneapolis Auditorium, either in ancient temple or modern theater. It is not a copy of any building that ever eixsted, and, ho of the classic style, is rather a consistent adaptation of the Grecian Doric style to modern requirements. Dignity and purity of style were considered by he architects as the best expression of he highest ideals in art, and the same feeling is carried thru all the details of he interior. It is pure Doric. The Doric is peculiarly adapted to the purpose because of its simplicity and dignity, where the Corinthean would be too ornate.

The main entrance consists of five sets of double doors between six massive columns. The three middle doors give access to the main floor and the first balcony, while the other two doors afford separate entrances to the second balcony. The stairways for the latter are inclosed in fireproof walls and have no entrances from the main floor or first balcony. By this arrangement there is no chance for a fatal congestion of people in the possible event of panic.

Passing thru the doors, one finds oneself in the main vestibule, in which is located the main ticket office. Still further on is found a spacious foyer, twenty feet wide and running the whole width of the building, 110 feet. On either side of the auditorium proper are corridors twelve feet wide, running back to the stage, a distance of 120 feet. It is expected that these corridors, with the foyer, will be used by the audience between acts for promenades and social intercourse. A similar arrangement is found on the first and second balcony floors. Besides giving an opportunity for social intercourse not possible within the main hall, the arrangement of the corridors and foyers isolates the auditorium. The latter really becomes a building within a building, and all outside noises tending to disturb the performance are thus quite excluded.

On the first and second foyers are toilet rooms, smoking rooms for men, retiring rooms for ladies, checkrooms and other conveniences.

The Seating Arrangements.

There are no boxes or loges. The seating arrangement is quite democratic. However, at the ends of the first balcony nearest the stage there is an arrangement of seats somewhat after the fashion of loges. In these two sections there are three tiers of six seats each, which are separated from the remainder of the balcony and have separate entrances, from the corridor.

The main floor is simply an immense rectangle. It contains almost fifteen hundred seats, each one about as favorably placed for seating and hearing as any other. The floor space is divided into six sections by two main aisles from front to rear and a wide cross aisle leading to the side corridors and directly to the main side exits. Thus every row is easily accessible and contains just twelve chairs. These are of the conventional folding opera type, upholstered in green plush. Assurance is give nthat the seats are wide enough for the comfortably stout and the rows far enough apart to allow moderately tall persons to sit without being cramped.

For Great Social Functions, Too.

It is not merely for grand opera and symphony concerts that the auditorium will be available, as it is equally adapted for balls, receptions, fairs, and other social functions, and even for "shows" of various kinds. The main floor is perfectly level and, being laid with a hard maple, makes an ideal place for dancing. Probably five hundred couples would find ample room for treading a measure on social occasions. The seats are not fastened to the floor proper, but to a false one. This is constructed in sections so that when it is desired to transform the place from an operahouse to a ballroom, the false floor and seats can be removed and stored in the basement. To facilitate the task of removing the seats, two large trap-doors in the floor have been provided. These are covered with steel and in no wise hurt the floor for dancing purposes.

Facts in Figures.

The Auditorium has a frontage on Eleventh street of 110 feet and runs back to a depth of 220 feet. The facade has a height of 56 feet, but the trusses of the main roof are 75 feet above the ground and over the stage the roof is about 100 feet. The dimensions of the Auditorium are 75 by 125 feet in floor area, and the height to the ceiling is 55 feet. The stage, one of the largest in the country, is 84 feet wide, 50 feet deep and from the floor to the "gridiron, from which the ropes and other scenic appliances are worked, the distance is 84 feet. To the fly gallery is 31 feet. The proscenium arch is 40 feet high and 57 feet wide. The corridors surrounding the three floors are 12 feet wide and 120 feet long, connecting at the front of the building with foyers the full width of the building, and 20 feet wide.

The seating capacity figures up to 2,507 seats, of which 1418 are on the main floor, 535 in the first balcony, and 554 in the second. A rearrangement of the seats in the corners of the first balcony may cut out a few, so that the total will probably not exceed 2,500. So much for the statistics.

The building is plain, almost severely so, in form and general appearance, but nevertheless the effect is pleasing. The creamy buff color of the exterior, with trimmings of terra cotta in a lighter shade, is in complete harmony with the design. The terra cotta trimmings and ornaments are modeled after original designs by the architects, Bertrand & Chamberlin.

The Interior Arrangements.

In the inferior arrangements everything has been sacrificed to the convenience, comfort and safety of the audience.

The auditorium is so arranged as to shut out completely the noises of the streets.

The most modern and scientific system of heating and ventilation has been installed.

All the electric wires are buried in cement.

The heating plant is in another building.

The emergency exits, stairways and fire escapes are arranged so as to make a congestion of crowds in the event of a panic impossible.

The interior decoration is, of course, Grecian thruout. The coloring and design plain and simple, but refined and dignified. The "first nighters" may think the interior too bare, but the permanent decorations are not completed, as the concrete work has not dried out thoroly and the present tinting is only temporary. While the architect's plans do not call for anything elaborate, there is really no limit to what can be done should occasion arise for more elaborate ornamentation.

One of the notable features of the interior is the coffered ceiling of deeply recessed panels in rectangular form, one within the other, the center panels being the heat registers, which, instead of being obtrusively placed in a haphazard fashion, are arranged so as to harmonize with the general decorative scheme.

Partial tests of the acoustic properties of the hall promise that they will be almost perfect. There has been much scientific research in the direction of adapting auditoriums to obtaining perfect sound effects, but science has not yet solved all the problems, and the architects confess that they do not know exactly what they have until the hall has actually been used. However, the general dimensions of the Boston Symphony hall, which is known to be excellent in this respect, have been followed by the architects.

Safeguarding the Audience.

The entire building is as nearly fireproof as it is possible to make it. The outside walls are of brick. The floors and balconies are of solid concrete. The supporting columns and beams of steel are covered with concrete, so that there is no exposed steel anywhere. The interior walls and partitions are of tile, the roof of fireproof tile, supported by steel trusses. All the doors between the stage and the auditorium and the stage and the dressingrooms are fireproof. All the electric wires are buried in concrete, and if the architects have not secured a building that is actually fireproof, they confess that they do not know how to build one.

Other devices for the protection of the audience have received careful attention, the lessons from the Iroquois theater catastrophe having been well learned. Building inspectors, fire department officials, insurance experts, theater managers and architects have been consulted at length. Mr. Chamberlin is himself an authority on safety in public auditoriums, having acted as chairman of the Commercial club committee which inspected the local theaters and public halls after the Iroquois fire and made a special study of safety appliances and arrangements.

The results of this solicitude for the safety of the audience are apparent everywhere. In addition to the regular entrances, there are a plentiful number of emergency exits. The entire building is surrounded by open ground, to which there are direct exits from the building. In front is Eleventh street with five sets of double doors forming the entrances and two wide passages from the first floor corridors. On the east side is a public alley and on the west a wide open court into which lead numerous wide exits. There are ten entrances to the corridors and foyer from the main floor and twelve from each of the balconies. There are eleven emergency exits leading to broad and easy stair fire escapes which run clear to the ground. The doors to the fire escapes have neither bolts nor locks and are opened from the inside by simply turning a large handle.

Heating and Ventilating.

Particular attention has been given to the heating and ventilating system, and it is safe to say that no such building anywhere is equipped with a more modern plant. The heating is done by direct radiation by the use of the so-called fan system. Two large fans on the fourth floor and two others in the basement, all operated by electric motors, do the work. The furnaces are in the building of the Northwestern National Life Insurance company, adjoining, so there will be no fires in the Auditorium building proper. It is one of the aims of architects in planning buildings of this character to have the heating plant in detached buildings, thus eliminating another source of danger.

By this system the heated fresh air is forced into the building thru evenly distributed openings in the ceiling. Ventilation is secured by exhaust registers at the floor thru which the vitiated air is drawn out continuously. The system will give a complete change of air every eight minutes. So adaptable is the system that the fans can be reversed in summer and cool, fresh air taken in below and drawn out at the ceiling, making the auditorium cool and comfortable even in the hottest weather. When one recalls the sweltering process to which theater-goers are subjected in summer, the innovation at the Auditorium will be appreciated as a public blessing.

Brilliantly Illuminated.

The building is lighted by electricity and gas, the installation embodying the most advanced ideas on the subject. There are five immense electroliers suspended from the ceiling, the balcony fronts are fairly studded with lights, and the stage has hundreds of lights. When the whole system is turned on, the illumination will be of the most brilliant order.

The Hidden Steel Work.

There are almost a hundred columns in the building, but very few of them are visible, as the aim has been to hide the steel work wherever possible. The strength and permanence of the structure lies in the steel frfamework, which is massive in size and computed according to the highest factors of safety. In all there are seventeen trusses of various sizes. Six of them, supporting the main roof, are 76 feet long and weigh almost four tons each—7,700 pounds, to be exact. The proscenium arch is a steel box girder 76 feet long and weighs more than ten tons. The balconies have no supporting columns except at the end farthest from the stage and stand out from the walls as if cut out from a solid block of stone. They have a framework of steel cantilever girders of original form covered with concrete.

The Well-Equipped Stage.

A detailed description of the stage and its arrangement and accessories would in itself make a small volume. Its immense size makes it equal to any demand for the most elaborate production of grand opera or oratorio. A chorus of 400 voices can be accommodated with ease and when the Philharmonics have a permanent chorus of that size, Minneapolis may justly claim a place among the musical centers of the world. An extended mention of the "gridiron," the "fly gallery," "rigging loft" and other arrangements would have little interest to the general public. Suffice it to say that every detail has been carefully planned and the stage accessories are second to none in completeness.

The fireproof asbestos curtain is naturally of immense size. It is so unusual in this respect that the house having the contract had to secure by special order an extra heavy quality of firecloth for the curtain. It will be run in grooves and operated by wire rope, and will be as complete a fire protection between the stage and the auditorium as a solid brick wall.

Walter W. Burridge has been commissioned to paint the scenic curtain, and has appropriately selected the famous Acropolis at Athens for the scene. The proscenium arch, which is eighteen feet thick, gives the effect of a massive picture frame.

Immediately in front, on the right side, facing the stage, will be the mammoth organ, which is to be the pride of the west. To maintain symmetry, there will be a sham organ on the opposite side.

A dainty little theater has been provided by utilizing some of the surplus space on the fourth floor over the main entrance. It has a stage with footlights and dressing room and some stationary scenery. It can be reached by the separate entrances to the second balcony or by elevator from the insurance company's building adjoining, with which there is a connecting corridor on the fourth floor. The corridor is cut off by a fireproof door, which ordinarily will remain closed. The theater will accommodate 500 persons and is adapted for lectures, musical recitals, small plays and similar functions. It will also be a valuable adjunct to the auditorium for rehearsals.

Fine Stage Equipment.

The people of Minneapolis will be greatly pleased with the curtain and stage settings at the opening next Wednesday. All the stage equipments were furnished by the Twin City Scenic Studio of Minneapolis and St. Paul. All of the curtains, scenery, stage traps and stage equipment were furnished by this company, as well as the asbestos curtain, and all of the equipment is of a very high grade. This company was organized but four years ago and has developed a scenic business that will compare favorably in quantity and quality with any similar company in the country.

The company is composed of Theodore L. Hays, manager, W. P. Davis, chief artist, and W. K. Brown, chief mechanic. Mr. Davis was formerly chief artist of the Auditorium theater, Chicago, and is a veteraff in the scenic art. Under his direction the scenery for the Auditorium will be painted. Mr. Brown is conceded to be one of the ablest stage mechanics in the country and under his direction the auditorium scenery will be built and the mechanical appliances and apparatus installed.

The Marble Work.

The marble work, which is a model of its kind, has been done by the Drake Tile & Marble company of 518 Second avenue S. Considerable marble has been used, the office, toilet rooms, corridor and entrance all showing the general utility and simple beauty of the company's work. The entrance is particularly handsome from a marble standpoint. Although plain, it gives the appearance of solidity and permanence.

MINNEAPOLIS has its music hall at last. In the imposing building at Nicollet avenue and Eleventh street, the city has an institution which is the peer of any such building in America. It is in the same class as the Boston Symphony hall, the Carnegie Music hall in New York, the Odeon in St. Louis, or the recently completed Thomas Music hall in Chicago. As the Minneapolis Auditorium is classed with the famous halls in the country, Minneapolis at once gains recognition as one of the centers of musical culture. With the Auditorium always ready for use, the city need have no hesitancy in calling upon the proudest artists of the old world, the greatest conductors or the most famous impresarios to come to Minneapolis.

"Anything from a horse show or a political convention to grand opera or a court ball can be royally accommodated," say Messrs. Bertrand & Chamberlin, the architects. As the Auditorium is studied, it becomes more and more evident that they are right.

Stage Equal to Any Demand.

The stage will accommodate any production that can be staged anywhere in America. It is not as large as that of the Chicago Auditorium, but the proscenium arch is wider than that of the famous Metropolitan operahouse of New York. By means of a cleverly devised false proscenium, the opening can be reduced so as to adapt the place to an ordinary theatrical performance with the customary scenery. By the use of a removable floor the auditorium proper may be quickly converted into a spacious hall adapted for receptions, balls, fairs and bazars or like functions. Connected with the hall is a large supper-room supplied with the conveniencies for serving anything from luncheon to a course dinner.

It is usually complained that architects ignore the artists in planning an operahouse or theater and make little provision for their comfort. No one will thus criticize the architects of the Auditorium, which has numerous small dressingrooms, two large ones for the chorus, and two special rooms for stars.

Heating, ventilation, lighting, fire protection, acoustics, comfort and convenience of patrons and performers, architecture, interior decorating, everything, has had the most painstaking care from the outset. Every one is immediately interested and completely satisfied. The verdict of the public is awaited in the complete confidence that it will be "Well done."

While the public is familiar with the story of the movement that resulted in giving to the city an institution which means so much to its artistic development and its prestige in the musical world, the story will bear repetition on the eve of the dedication of this temple of the muses.

Minneapolis has long felt the need of a music hall and almost numberless were the plans proposed at one time or another. It was a public want and the sentiment in favor of a hall adapted for the highest class of musical festivals was so general that the city was authorized by the legislature of 1903 to issue bonds in the sum of $150,000 for a music hall and auditorium. On account of the school, armory, permanent improvement, and city hall bonds aggregating more than one and one-half millions, it was deemed inadvisable to take advantage of the legislative permission and the plan fell thru.

The movement was not long dormant. The Philharmonic club, forced to choose between the Swedish Tabernacle with its limited seating capacity and other restrictions and the huge International auditorium with its poor arrangements for oratorio and grand choral work, continued the agitation.

How the Idea Originated.

Fred G. Smith, one of the two organizers of the club and a member of its music hall committee, conceived the idea which resulted in the unique public-spirited movement that led to the completion of the Auditorium.

One day in the fall of 1903, while meeting in the Commercial club with the ways and means committee of the Philharmonic club, Mr. Smith suggested to Frederick Fayram and C. E. Fisher that if a responsible insurance company could be guaranteed $2,000,000 of insurance it would be glad to put up a music hall in return. Just about this time W. F. Bechtel, president of the Northwestern National Life Insurance company, came in and took a seat at another table. Mr. Smith went over to Mr. Bechtel and said:

"If your company was given $2,000,000 worth of business in this city would it build a public music hall?"

"How much will a music hall cost?" inquired Mr. Bechtel.

"Approximately $150,000."

"We will build it on the conditions you name," was the reply.

Delighted by this prompt answer, Mr. Smith invited Mr. Bechtel to a discussion of the subject with Messrs. Fayram and Fisher, and at this chance meeting the main points of the plan which was later carried to a successful termination were agreed upon.

Among the first men seen was W. L. Harris, president of the Minneapolis Retail Dealers' association, who, altho carrying all the life insurance he needed, promptly agreed to take $20,000 in the Northwestern and to help the movement. Colonel F. M. Joyce, president of the Apollo club, was greatly interested. A. C. Paul, president of the Commercial club, added his hearty indorsement of the plan, and everyone approached only added more encouragement.

The Formal Offer Made.

When it became evident that the public would support the plan by something more substantial than promises, Mr. Bechtel, on behalf of his company, addressed a communication to Messrs. Smith, Harris and Joyce as the representatives of their respective organizations, outlining the conditions of the agreement. He formally proposed to erect, on the vacant block at Nicollet and Eleventh street, a building suitable as an auditorium, music and convention hall, to cost not less than $150,000, in consideration of his company

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SOME OF THE MEN WHO MADE THE MINNEAPOLIS AUDITORIUM POSSIBLE.

FREDERICK FAYRAM,
President of the Philharmonic Club, and Largely Instrumental in the Organization of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra.
—Photo by Opsahl.

C. E. FISHER,
Director of Philharmonic Club, Intimately Connected with the Beginnings of the Auditorium Movement.

W. L. SHEPHERD,
Able Assistant of A. C. Paul in Securing Insurance, Representing the Commercial and Philharmonic Clubs.
—Photo by Brush.

A. C. PAUL,
Chairman of the Commercial Club Committee, Who Secured Life Insurance Enough to Make the Auditorium Possible.
—Photo by Brush.

FREDERICK G. SMITH,
First Suggested the Auditorium Idea, Organizer of the Philharmonic Club and Still a Director.

WALLACE G. NYE,
In Charge of the Auditorium Campaign for the Commercial Club, and Personally Active in Securing Insurance.
—Photo by Stafford.

W. L. HARRIS,
Music Lover, Who Made the Festival Opening of the Auditorium a Possibility This Year.

THE ARCHITECTS WHO DESIGNED THE AUDITORIUM

GEORGE E. BERTRAND.

ARTHUR B. CHAMBERLIN.
—Photo by Brush.

W. F. BECHTEL,
President of the Northwestern National Life, Who Personally Gave $10,000 Towards the Great Organ.

THE EFFICIENT MANAGERS OF THE NEW AUDITORIUM

J. F. CONKLIN.

A. E. ZONNE.

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