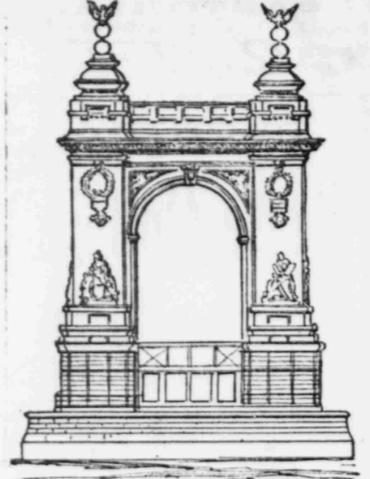


THE MEMORIAL BRIDGE PROJECT

Residents of National Capital Hopeful of Its Construction. Special correspondence of The Florida Star.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 9.—About this season of the year—six or eight weeks before the opening of the winter session of congress—there is pretty apt to be a revival of the much discussed project for the building of the Memorial bridge which one day, and that a not far distant day, all Washingtonians hope to see span the Potomac.



TRANSVERSE SECTION SHOWING BASCULE, PIER AND TOWER.

last session and that a like resolution only lacked a very few votes of passing the house. The matter, however, was agitated in the closing days of congress, when there was not sufficient time or opportunity to bring before all members of the house either the propriety of erecting a suitable memorial to American patriotism at the national capital, the necessity of such a structure or the adaptability of the proposed plans.

Some changes have been made in the plans recommended and approved by the chief engineers of the United States army and by the secretary of war. The width of the bridge has been made 84 feet, thus providing a roadway 60 feet wide and promenades on either side each 12 feet in width. There has also been some change in the detail of the bascule span, between the memorial towers, which furnishes the movable part of the structure for the accommodation of navigation.

In the revised plans the lower chords or lower lines of the bascule opening are made curved, closely resembling an arch. This curvature, although somewhat similar to that of the arches, is yet made of different degree so as to involve the element of truth that the bascule is, strictly speaking, not an arch, but the treatment is such as to give an agreeable and harmonious effect in its relation to the entire structure.

Speaking of the location of the memorial towers and bascule, Engineer Burr of the board of award says: "It has been suggested in some quarters that it would have been more appropriate and advisable to place the memorial towers, the most prominent features of the entire work, at either end of the structure. This suggestion, however, arises from a very serious if not complete misconception as to the character and purposes of the work. The bascule, or movable part of the bridge, is by the imperative necessity of the situation a distinct and pronounced structural feature, having its own functions radically different from those of the adjoining spans, and arising from the necessary demands of navigation. It would therefore be a violation, both of the structural ele-

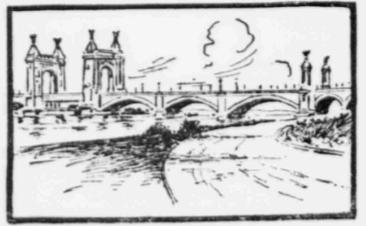
ments of the composition and those which relate exclusively to aesthetic motives, to ignore such a feature of the work. Indeed, to have ignored it would have been to incorporate in the composition a direct untruth. Having given, therefore, the imperative condition of a distinct structural feature at the most prominent portion of the entire construction—namely, in the center of the river—the correct principles of art require that it should be utilized for such praiseworthy expression as the motive of the whole work is intended to give."

The Memorial bridge, as indicated by the plans, will be almost three-quarters of a mile between the abutment walls and composed of six arch spans over the river proper and 27 approach spans. The roadway surface will be 65 feet above the water. The span of each river arch will be nearly as long as the longest arch span of any bridge in the world. Speaking of the magnitude of the proposed bridge, it may be interesting to compare it with some other famous bridges. The Alexander III bridge, in Paris, an arch formed of steel castings thrown across the Seine in the exposition grounds and about which much has been written in admiration, is really a toy structure in comparison to the Memorial bridge in Washington. So, too, is the historic Tower bridge, in London. The Alexander III bridge has a clear span of only a little more than 1 1/2 spans of any single river arch of our bridge. In other words, the arched portion of the Memorial bridge will be more than ten times as long as the span of the great Paris bridge.

As designed the Memorial bridge will be a decidedly ornate structure, yet some of the chief elements of its composition will be simplicity and grandeur. There will be a vast amount of statuary and carving on and about it. The great river arches, with all their impressiveness, and the long series of beautiful approach arches will be admirably adapted for the reception of such emblematic figures, statuary and carvings as may be suitable to give it any desired intensity of expression as a memorial of American patriotism. These embellishments need not necessarily be given to the bridge at the time of its construction, but could be added from time to time in the future as historical events and epochs in the history of the country might require. The plans provide for many pedestals along the entire course of the structure, where could be placed from time to time statues of patriotic Americans whose deeds of valor shall deserve recognition.

An examination of the entire design shows that the composition of the bridge as a whole and in its several parts is dictated by the requirements of the situation and that it possesses the essential qualities of good engineering and attractive and substantial architecture. Masonry construction has been chosen on account of its more monumental and enduring qualities. The cost, it is asserted, will be no more than if steel were used for the superstructure. The portion over the river proper, requiring free passage for the current and for ice in winter, will be of comparatively open construction, consisting of graceful segmental arches of long span.

The most impressive feature of the bridge and that which will be most expressive of its memorial character will be the towers at the central span or bascule. These pierced towers or arches, transverse to the bridge, will admit of a very monumental treatment. They will form two triumphant archways, elaborately ornamented and



RIVER SPANS AND TOWERS OF MEMORIAL BRIDGE.

rich in detail, although in harmony with the severity and grandeur of the great bridge structure of which they form a part. Eight heroic groups are to be placed against these archways, emblematic of such subjects as patriotism, valor, concord, unity, etc. These will be of great size and elaborate composition and are to be executed in stone. The spandrels of the arches will be fitted with subjects emblematic of the army and the navy. On the sides of the towers will be placed shields and plaques inscribed with the names of battles where American soldiers have distinguished themselves, and the whole will be crowned with bronze figures of Victory heroic in size.

The monumental and memorial character of the bridge will be further carried out along the entire length of the roadway, where bronze statues of celebrated Americans are to be placed on either side. The sculpture and ornaments will, if the plans are carried out, be placed where the artistic requirements call for them without regard to expense. It is gratifying that in the preparation of the design the high character of the structure has always been kept in mind and vulgar over-ornamentation avoided as being worse than useless.

Whether the nation's solons, when they reassemble here in December, will be inclined to favor this great undertaking upon which residential Washington has set its heart I am unable to say, but apparently the prospects are more favorable than they have ever been before. The construction of a bridge across the Potomac extending from the Naval observatory grounds to some point in Arlington would open up a much needed line of communication between the city of Washington and the National cemetery and the adjacent country, while nothing could more fittingly as a memorial to the lofty sentiment American patriotism than the erection of such a magnificent structure as is outlined in the plans of the Memorial bridge between the capital of the nation and the city of its heroic dead. Its broad roadway and spacious promenades would constitute, with the tributary avenues at either end, one of the most beautiful and impressive boulevards in the world.

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