

CHAPTER II

THE COMPETITION 1920-1921

The process the movement for the Liberty Memorial had followed thus far was a model of efficiency. The general type of memorial had been chosen--a monument plus a building-- leaving untrammelled the imagination and inspiration of the architects who would compete for the commission. An outstandingly appropriate location had been selected--the craggy promontory facing the city's impressive Union Station--and the land was being secured. Next, a staggering sum deemed necessary for the great task--\$2 million--had been pledged in a swift, emotionally charged public subscription campaign in the fall of 1919. Liberty Memorial Association President R. A. Long provided resolute leadership. Board members capably undergirded their leader's efforts to attain his idealistic goal. The Liberty Memorial movement was early seen to have a twofold purpose. First, a memorial to be raised by "votive offerings of all the people." Second, the Liberty Memorial concept had grown to make the memorial a "gateway to a group of monumental buildings for an art, literary and musical center to be erected later by private generosity."¹

¹Henry J. Haskell, "A Notable Memorial," The World's Work 42 (September 1921): 489. The Art Center concept was fully covered in the report of J. C. Nichols, Chairman of the Committee on Location, "Minutes," 230-235; and in Liberty Memorial Association, "Program: Competition for the Selection of an Architect to design and supervise the construction of A Memorial at Kansas City, Missouri," Kansas City, Missouri, 1920, 1, 7-8, and 15.

This was not the first time that the area which lay south of the Union Station had been singled out for improvement. In 1914 R. A. Long and J. C. Nichols had been a part of the most recent unsuccessful effort to establish a civic center utilizing that rough and ungainly site. Civic leader J. C. Nichols, already well established in real estate, declared, ". . . the creation of a beautiful setting (for the Union Station) would do much to bring fresh capital here."² Historian William H. Wilson attributed the failure of that civic center effort chiefly to the absence of a "group of men of diverse talents who knew how to capture mass support." However, he saw the experience as a valuable one in equipping the two as leaders in the Liberty Memorial movement.³

The next step was the choice of an architect. Liberty Memorial Association leaders who had sought and listened to public opinion through numerous meetings in the spring of 1919, were sensitive to the public concern over the selection of the architect. This concern over the opinion of the public was expressed by Chairman R. A. Long in a confidential letter to the President of the Kansas City Chapter of the A.I.A., Henry F. Hoit, dated April 14, 1919. Mr. Long quite frankly asked the Kansas City architect whether

the large number of people to satisfy . . . [would] be satisfied except through the selection of an architect possessing the greatest known ability in this line of architecture living in the country? . . . even though one of our local architects might be able to perform this service as well as anybody else, will the people agree . . .⁴

²Kansas City Star, 2 March 1914, 2. ³Wilson, City Beautiful, 111.

⁴R. A. Long to H. F. Hoit, 14 April 1919.

The need to satisfy a large number of people in the selection of an architect no doubt led to the decision to seek professional advice from outside. The person chosen to be that advisor was Mr. Thomas R. Kimball of Omaha, past president of the American Institute of Architects and recommended by that organization. He was designated "to advise and confer with the Committee on Architect" March 3, 1920.⁵ After much deliberation, the Committee on Architect, with Mr. Kimball as Advisor, decided:

to hold a competition in which certain architects of the United States known for their ability and accomplishments in the line of memorials, should be invited to compete and in which all local architects should be invited to compete.⁶

The competition for the architect of the Liberty Memorial was the second competition program developed by Mr. Kimball. The first such competition had been the one a year earlier for the State Capitol of Nebraska in Lincoln. In that program Mr. Kimball had risen to a great height. The Journal of the American Institute of Architects, in an August, 1921, editorial, said:

The two competition programs developed by Mr. Kimball are conceived in terms of architecture,—they seek to discover and liberate all the architectural genius possessed by the competitors . . . It is ideal . . . a sincere effort to restore to architecture a part of the freedom once possessed by the master builders.⁷

To decide just which architects of national reputation should

⁵Liberty Memorial Association, "Program," 4.

⁶J. E. McPherson, "The Liberty Memorial: Kansas City Plans Biggest Project of Any City," The Kansas Citian, 30 August 1921, 660.

⁷[Charles Harris Whitaker], "Shadows and Straws," Journal of the American Institute of Architects 9 (August 1921): 259.

be invited to compete, sixty-three Kansas City architects were asked, during the summer of 1920, to make nominations. Only fifteen of the architects responded and among those, there were two who proposed only local architects. One Kansas City architect was all for turning the job over to Bertram G. Goodhue, the winner of the Nebraska State Capitol competition! When tallied, the suggestions submitted by local architects were very much in agreement with the tentative list of names which had already been discussed by the Committee on Architect.⁸ The invited architects were Bliss & Faville, San Francisco; Paul P. Cret, and Zantzinger, Borie & Medary, Philadelphia; Bertram G. Goodhue, New York; H. Van Buren Magonigle, New York; and York & Sawyer, New York.⁹

Correspondence of the summer of 1920 reveals that it had originally been planned to have a preliminary competition for the Kansas City architects. This was changed to holding only one final contest. Also it was agreed that the program would stipulate the funds to go into the structures should be limited to one-and-a-half million dollars.¹⁰

Meanwhile, J. C. Nichols, as the Liberty Memorial Association's conservative financial steward, pursued his role of monitoring the

⁸J. Burton to R. A. Long, 16 July 1920.

⁹Liberty Memorial Association, "Program," 2. According to the "Program," each of the outside competitors and the three highest ranking among local competitors was to receive \$2,000 excepting only the winning architect who would "be paid . . . \$5,000 as a first payment on account of his services." 22, 25.

¹⁰R. A. Long to H. M. Beardsley, 8 July 1920.

expenses involved. On July 12, 1920, he wrote to Mr. Long with reservations about the disproportionate cost "of this architects' competition . . . if we spend \$45,000 just to pick an architect, I feel we will come in for serious and, perhaps, just criticism." Mr. Nichols suggested "limiting the Kansas City architects to three and the others to five, and possibly reducing the number of judges to three." Apparently this advice was not considered significant for there was no real change in procedure. There were five judges as planned and, in the end, eleven architects competed, seven of them being from Kansas City.

The matter of architectural competitions was governed by the Competition Code of the American Institute of Architects and was the culmination of some fifty years of evolution.¹¹ There were mixed feelings about the validity of such competitions. In the case of the program for the Nebraska State Capitol Competition, it seemed to have been viewed as "a distinguished success . . . written in that humility which springs from a deep faith that men will respond nobly to a noble task" and a like feeling seems to have existed in most quarters about the program for Kansas City's Liberty Memorial.¹²

The cover of the thirty-page booklet bore the following title and charge:

¹¹[Charles Harris Whitaker], "Shadows and Straws," Journal of the American Institute of Architects 8 (July 1920): 247.

¹²Ibid., 247-248.

PROGRAM
 Competition for the Selection of an
 Architect to design and supervise
 the construction of

A MEMORIAL
 at
 Kansas City, Missouri

"To forever perpetuate the courage, loyalty, and sacrifice of the patriots who offered and who gave their services, their lives and their all, in defense of Liberty and the Nation's honor during the World War."

The program was adopted December 8, 1920, by the Liberty Memorial Association and approved December 27, 1920, by the Standing Committee on Competitions of the American Institute of Architects.¹³

The Statement by the Liberty Memorial Association, dated October 14, 1920, began:

THE OBJECT of this competition, and of the Association promulgating this program, is to secure to Kansas City a Memorial worthy to stand for the record made by her sons in the World War, and to provide the keynote to the ultimate development of the whole site, where it is earnestly hoped there may one day be an art, literary and music center, the architecture of which shall furnish an adequate setting for the Memorial contemplated herein.¹⁴

The Program specified that, "As to plan, style, type, or material, the Memorial Association will offer no suggestion" and summarized the aims,

First--An inspiring monument worthy of the record of which it is to be the messenger--a symbol not of War, but of Peace, and the dawn of an era of Peace.

Second--A focal keynote in the great architectural composition destined some day to occupy the whole site.

Third--The taking of the first step that shall grow into a comprehensive and general conception of the ultimate development of the

¹³Liberty Memorial Association, "Program," Cover page.

¹⁴Ibid., 7.

whole site--by the employment of an architect for the Memorial proper, who shall prove worthy to guide the whole enterprise to its complete fruition.¹⁵

Of particular significance in view of later events was the Liberty Memorial Association statement on the subject of "ALLIED ARTS."

The Liberty Memorial Association hopes to combine, under the direction of its Architect, the services of the ablest available talent in Sculpture, Painting and Landscape; the selection to be made by the Architect, but subject to approval by The Liberty Memorial Association.¹⁶

The two-page "Resumé" spelled out the aims of the Liberty Memorial Association.

IN THIS PROGRAM it is sought to avoid the cramping effect of competition and to provide for a franker, fairer, and more professional relationship between the owner and architect throughout the creative and constructive periods, and if possible, to recall those collaborative methods wherein a group of creative artists working under the leadership of an architect have been responsible for the creation of monumental masterpieces in the past.

This competition seeks a man, not a plan . . . Provision has been made for local participation in the competition on terms of equality with invited outside competitors. . . .

By substituting Fair Play and Sportsmanship for the usual mandatory restrictions, competitors are relieved from kindergarten control, and the jury left free to see to it that the best man wins.¹⁷

The Jury was selected according to the formula devised by Mr. Kimball. The first juror, W. R. B. Willcox of Seattle, was chosen by the Liberty Memorial Association at Mr. Kimball's suggestion. Of the next three members, John Gamble Rogers, New York, was chosen by local competitors; Louis Ayres, New York, was chosen by nonresident competitors and Henry Bacon, New York, was chosen by the three jurors already named. John M. Donaldson, Detroit, Michigan, was selected by

¹⁵Ibid., 8. ¹⁶Ibid., 9. ¹⁷Ibid., 27-28.

the Liberty Memorial Association to complete the five-member Jury.¹⁸ This Jury, at the time of their deliberations, in June, 1921, chose Mr. Donaldson as Chairman and Mr. Willcox as Secretary. It should be noted, however, that the identity of the jurors was not publicly known until the entries had been submitted by the architects so that known preferences of the jurors would not influence the competitors.¹⁹ Indeed, elaborate safeguards of anonymity for the architects' renderings were devised and maintained.

From the beginning, the course of the Liberty Memorial's progress was far from smooth. The earliest rough spots can only be located by means of correspondence and not in the press. At first even Liberty Memorial Association minutes did not record much of the discord. One of the earliest problems seems to have been that Kansas City architects did not like the possibility that an outsider might get the job. They had begun to express these concerns (at least privately) almost from the inception of the Liberty Memorial idea, as early as spring of 1919. Their objections and protests took several tacks but throughout, Henry F. Hoit, President of the Kansas City Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, appears to have been their leader.

At first, it was Liberty Memorial Association President R. A. Long who received their complaints. Shortly after H. Van Buren Magonigle's presence in Kansas City as an invited consultant, Mr. Hoit wrote to the Liberty Memorial President and pointedly took exception

¹⁸Ibid., 19.

¹⁹Ibid., 20.

to what he saw as preferential treatment for the New Yorker. There could be no doubt that it was the articulate and eloquent speaker and writer, H. Van Buren Magonigle, whom he described although Magonigle was not named in Hoit's letter.

I believe that I have already mentioned to you the fact that the man who has the greatest knowledge of architectural history, and has great ability in architectural criticism, and the ability to express himself in a rhetorical manner, is very rarely the capable designer having the qualities to conceive and carry out in all its details a work of Art. In fact, our greatest architectural critics are not noted for their works but their words.²⁰

This early protest suggested that in the eyes of some Kansas City architects, the Competition itself was not a straightforward contest of equals.²¹

Another problem was the decision not to have a preliminary competition among Kansas City architects but to allow all who wished to enter to compete. While this might seem more democratic, it was not the usual course at that time. Such a procedure could have possibly allowed participation by those unqualified in skill and experience. It was on this point of "Open Competition" (versus "limited") that charges of Code Violation were eventually brought against Professional Advisor Thomas Kimball in disbarment proceedings. In the resulting litigation, there was a verdict of "absolute acquittal for

²⁰H. F. Hoit to R. A Long, 16 April 1919.

²¹Early correspondence and "Minutes" record Mr. Magonigle's early advice and involvement. T. R. Kimball to H. M. Beardsley, 18 January 1919 in "Minutes," 53-54; H. V. B. Magonigle to R. A. Long, 22 January 1919 and 2 February 1920.

Mr. Kimball on April 17, 1922.²²

Still another subject of controversy was Kansas City architect Edward Buehler Delk's association with the New York architects Armstrong and De Gelleke.²³ Theoretically, there was the possibility that should the entry of Mr. Delk and his non-Kansas City associates win or place, another local architect would lose out on one of the \$2000 awards for runners-up. There was the additional problem of an unofficial promise by a Liberty Memorial official to "make good" if this should happen. This was further compounded by an "illegal" conversation between a Liberty Memorial Association Board member and an entrant.²⁴

Thomas Kimball's letter, November 17, 1920, appealing to Henry Hoit to cease his obstructive maneuvers in order "to protect Mr. Long from criticism and stress" was ignored. At the conclusion of the disbarment proceedings in which Advisor Kimball had been acquitted, Henry Hoit's response to Kimball's conciliatory gesture was to declare that he "would shake hands only to fight!"²⁵

²²T. R. Kimball to R. A. Long, 17 April 1922. In his letter, Mr. Kimball "strongly" recommended abandonment of any sort of conference with H. F. Hoit, the foremost of the group "acting entirely in bad faith" and who had made the operation "at least twice as difficult for the Advisor." To Kimball, those efforts recorded "a bad loser's vicious efforts to 'get even'" and as such were best ignored. One can only wonder whether or not this altercation would have taken place had one of the Kansas City architects won!

²³"Minutes," 274, 289.

²⁴H. M. Beardsley to R. A. Long, 2 April 1922; T. R. Kimball to R. A. Long, 17 April 1922; "Minutes," 274.

²⁵J. Burton, Jr. to R. A. Long, 31 May 1922.

The result of this discord was a rift in Kansas City's A.I.A. The twenty-five members of the Kansas City Chapter of the A.I.A. who resigned to form the Kansas City Architects League included their President, Henry F. Hoit, along with Price and Barnes; third place winners, Greenebaum, Hardy and Schumacher; and Keene and Simpson.²⁶ Although the sparse remnant of Kansas City's Chapter of A.I.A. had reorganized by May 4, 1922, the schism resulting from the competition for the World War I memorial was deep and long lasting.²⁷

* * * * *

The competition began on February 1, 1921; on March 15, the Professional Advisor ceased answering questions; on June 15, competition showings were to be received, and from June 15 to July 1, 1921, judgement and announcement was to be made.²⁸ Competition renderings were exhibited in the gymnasium of Kansas City's Northeast High School.²⁹

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷C. Van Brunt to R. A. Long, 4 May 1922.

In light of this breach, the enthusiastic letter to the Kansas City Star two and a half years later, 2 November 1924, from the Kansas City Chapter of the A.I.A. at the time of the cornerstone laying, is interesting. Writers of the letter which was headed "Architects See in Mr. Magonigle's Work an Expression of Democracy of the Nation and an Inspiration," included Ernest O. Brostrom, Selby H. Kurfiss, and Edward Buehler Delk, who had been competitors, although the architect Walter Root seems to have been the chief author. The letter ended, "Our Memorial stands, with all the refinements of Greece, with the spirit expressed of order and of organization of Rome but with the free spirit of America typified in eternal stone."

²⁸Liberty Memorial Association, "Program," 4-5.

²⁹McPherson, "Plans Biggest Project," Kansas Citian, 30 August 1921, 660. According to the Kansas City Star, 29 June 1921, all drawings submitted were put on "public exhibition for several weeks" at the [Kansas City] Art Institute, Armour and Warwick Boulevards.

Fifteen architectural firms were listed as participants in the competition. The Liberty Memorial "Program" noted that:

COMPETITORS

This Competition is limited to five invited competitors from outside the state of Missouri, and to any bona-fide practicing architect, or firm of architects, resident and doing business in Kansas City, Missouri and whose professional standing is above reproach. Local competitors may enter this Competition by written notification to the Professional Adviser any time up to February 15, 1921.

The competitors named were:

BLISS & FAVILLE	Balboa Building, San Francisco
PAUL P. CRET, and ZANTZINGER, BORIE & MEDARY	112 So. 16th St., Philadelphia
BERTRAM G. GOODHUE	2 West 47th St., New York
H. VAN BUREN MAGONIGLE	101 Park Ave., New York
YORK & SAWYER	50 East 41st St., New York
A. B. ANDERSON	818 N. Y. Life Bldg.
BROSTROM & DROTTS	402 Reliance Bldg.
EDWARD BUEHLER DELK	59th & Ward Parkway
GREENEBAUM, HARDY & SCHUMACHER	216 Scarritt Bldg.
SAMUEL M. HITT	516 Sheidley Bldg.
HOIT, PRICE & BARNES	607 Reliance Bldg.
KEENE & SIMPSON	401 Reliance Bldg.
SELBY H. KURFISS	1202 Scarritt Bldg.
WIGHT & WIGHT	First National Bank Bldg.
C. M. WILLIAMS	404 Grand Avenue Temple ³⁰

³⁰Liberty Memorial Association, "Program," 2.

Of the five invited "from outside of the State of Missouri," York and Sawyer, New York, withdrew because of the press of business.³¹ Three Kansas City architects, A. B. Anderson, Samuel M. Hitt and C. M. Williams, also withdrew reducing the total number of entrants to eleven.

On Tuesday, June 28, 1921, at 4:00 P.M., a special meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Liberty Memorial Association was held at the Hotel Muehlebach to hear the Jury's report of the decision resulting from their deliberations. First, Mr. H. M. Beardsley, Chairman of the Committee on Architect, explained the necessity for the competition. Then, Mr. Thomas R. Kimball, Professional Advisor, spoke "at considerable length" on details of the program. Following these presentations, Mr. John D. Donaldson, Chairman of the Jury, read the report prepared by Mr. W. R. B. Willcox, Secretary, in which the "Submission marked (A) clearly and unmistakably showed the capabilities of its authors, which entitles them to first place."³²

When Federal Judge Arba S. VanValkenburgh opened the identifying envelopes in the order of standing, the winner was found to be Harold Van Buren Magonigle.³³ A resolution ratifying the decision of the Jury was unanimously carried and Mr. Kimball was requested to advise Mr. Magonigle by wire that he had been formally appointed the

³¹York & Sawyer to T. R. Kimball, 6 April 1921. "Minutes," 274.

³²"Minutes," 285-289.

³³Ibid., 289. According to the Liberty Memorial Association, "Program," 20, Judge VanValkenburgh was a U. S. District Judge at Kansas City.

architect for the Liberty Memorial Association, Kansas City, Missouri.³⁴

The next morning the Kansas City Times carried not only the news of the selection of H. Van Buren Magonigle as the Liberty Memorial architect but also named those who

will be Magonigle's aides, George E. Kessler, landscape architect, who laid out Cliff Drive and to whom much of the beauty of Kansas City's park and boulevard system is attributed will attend to the landscaping features . . . Mrs. Edith Magonigle . . . according to Thomas R. Kimball . . . one of the most competent artists in the country . . . will be in charge of the painting . . . Robert Aitken . . . of international fame is the memorial sculptor.³⁵

The man who had been selected to be the architect for Kansas City's Liberty Memorial was described in the press as a "self-made man" who had not attended one of the usual American colleges.³⁶ Born in 1867 at Bergen Heights, New Jersey, he had received a public school education. He began his career in architecture as a youth being employed successively in the New York offices of Vaux & Bradford; Charles S. Haight; and McKim, Mead & White. While with the latter firm, he won the Rotch Traveling Scholarship in 1904 which made possible three years of European travel and study. He had attended the Academie des Beaux Arts in Paris.³⁷

³⁴"Minutes," 289. ³⁵Kansas City Times, 29 June 1921.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (deceased), 1970 ed., s. v. "Magonigle, H. Van Buren." Who Was Who in America, 1942 ed., s. v. "Magonigle, H(arold) Van Buren." For further information concerning Magonigle's career, see Francis S. Swales, "Master Draftsman X: H. Van Buren Magonigle," Pencil Points 6 (March 1925):44-66.

The Kansas City Times, 29 June 1921, reported that Mr. Magonigle's sister, Mrs. F. D. Laughlin, lived at 4215 Locust, Kansas City, Mo.

He had been the designer of the Maine memorial at 59th Street and Central Park West in New York; the McKinley monument in Canton, Ohio; and a brilliant design for the Fulton Memorial for New York's North River, which was never built because of financial problems.³⁸ He was an outstanding painter, especially in watercolors, many of which had been widely exhibited. Mr. Magonigle's talents were by no means limited to the visual arts. He was an established writer of articles on art and architecture and architectural criticism. (He was to complete a sizeable volume, The Nature, Practice and History of Art which was published by Scribners in 1924.) He, moreover, had a flair for writing pantomimes and sang! That he was an eloquent public speaker is evident from published texts of his speeches as well as verbatim records in the Minutes of the Liberty Memorial Association. Now, more than sixty years later, one wonders if he might have fared better in matters concerning the Liberty Memorial, had he been less of a "stem-winder."

When the results were announced and Magonigle's winning design and the three placing designs were published, the A.I.A.'s prestigious Architecture editorially commented that:

. . . the competition . . . [had] brought forth a number of notably distinguished and original designs They all show a new wholesome, vital tendency to get away from purely traditional forms and styles to make architecture more an expression of our own times, of American ideals, of the noble purposes the memorial commemorates.³⁹

³⁸Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (deceased), s. v. "Magonigle," 386.

³⁹"The Liberty Memorial at Kansas City," Architecture 44 (August 1921): 241.

Notwithstanding these comments, study of the Liberty Memorial competition entries seems to show some very traditional elements among them. In general, the designs submitted by the eleven architects had a similarity in their Ecole des Beaux Arts look. This was especially so in their treatment of plans for the surrounding cultural center and its buildings. In proposals for the memorial itself there was some variety, but even with the several centerpieces there was a marked likeness of monumental ideas. Influences of the Washington Mall, Worlds Fairs -- Chicago, 1893 and St. Louis, 1904 -- and the City Beautiful movement are evident.

An example of this kind of thinking had shown up early in the Liberty Memorial story with a drawing in the newspaper, October 1919 showing a Columbian Exposition-type Court of Honor and a soaring Washington Monument-like shaft. (Fig. 2)⁴⁰ Such ideas were especially evident with Liberty Memorial "runners-up." Architectural historian, Elizabeth Grossman, has recently noted that first-placed Magonigle, second-placed Cret, and Goodhue in fourth place were also alike in taking advantage of the striking topography. Each placed his monument on the crest of the bluff, art center buildings on the open hilltop, and utilized the slope rising from the Union Station level "as a preamble to the memorial complex."⁴¹

A study of the competition entries is possible by means of a

⁴⁰Kansas City Times, 22 October 1919.

⁴¹Elizabeth G. Grossman, "Two Postwar Competitions: The Nebraska State Capitol and the Kansas City Liberty Memorial," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 45 (September 1986): 261.

photographic record of the designs by the eleven architects.⁴² It is also possible to compare the entries of the four top-ranked competitors by means of reproductions of their renderings published in architectural journals along with interpretation of the plans by their architects.⁴³

First Place -- H. Van Buren Magonigle

H. Van Buren Magonigle's renderings and design for "an altar high erected in the skies" with their great buttressed walls and enormous pavilion-flanked citadel were magnificent (Frontispiece, Figs. 3, 4). The faceted shaft topped by an Old Testament cloud by day and flame by night truly spoke to people eager for the "dawn of Peace." The enigmatic sphinxes originally on the north, heroic urns,

⁴²One set of forty photographs of the entries taken at the time of the competition is in the Liberty Memorial Museum Library and Archives. Another set is in the Missouri Valley Room, Public Library, Kansas City, Mo. (Incorrectly dated 1919.)

⁴³"The Competition for the Liberty Memorial at Kansas City, Missouri," Architecture 44 (August 1921): 235-242, Plates CIX-CXIV; H. Van Buren Magonigle, "A Memorial at Kansas City, Missouri," Journal of the American Institute of Architects 9 (August 1921): 258, 266-270; and also "The Competition for a Memorial for Kansas City," Western Architect 30 (July 1921): 69-71 and 30 (August 1921): 89, Plates 1-10.

Even now, sixty-six years later, the experience of viewing assembled competition renderings in the gymnasium at Northeast High School remains memorable for two Kansas City architects. Elizabeth Evans Rivard, then a University of Kansas student architect, recalls her preference for Goodhue's Gothic design. To her, the later-day Crown Center complex reflects something of Goodhue's 1921 ideas.

Robert B. Bloomgarten, however, was struck by Magonigle's design, "a true memorial" -- nonutilitarian and noble. To him, also a University of Kansas student, Magonigle's was majestic beyond belief -- an inspiration still bright in memory. Having seen the New Yorker's beautiful renderings myself, I can completely understand Mr. Bloomgarten's enthusiasm.

ramparts and a serene reflecting pool, as well as the ingenious tunnel for a non-existent 25th Street, though they never materialized in what was built, had terrific visual impact. Magonigle's renderings themselves are gorgeous—real show stoppers—the ideas expressed in the verticals and horizontals of stone are noble.⁴⁴ The architect's accompanying description, "The Flame of Inspiration, guarded by the Spirits of Courage, Honor, Patriotism, and Sacrifice . . ." is eloquent.⁴⁵

It is important to distinguish between the rather complicated Liberty Memorial of Mr. Magonigle's competition renderings and the severely reduced structure finally built. In the description which accompanied his winning entry the architect pointed out:

The uncertainty as to the function, size, and number of the buildings which may ultimately be placed upon this hill has determined a composition that shall not depend for any of its present effect upon the relation of any of these future structures to the memorial, which is the subject of this composition.⁴⁶

It is well that this was so, for the Liberty Memorial has stood quite alone for sixty years on the commanding hilltop south of the Station Plaza, an isolated architectural statement.

⁴⁴Magonigle's Liberty Memorial renderings and a sphinx model are in the Archives of the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York, presented along with other architectural drawings, sketches, and materials by Mrs. H. Van Buren Magonigle, January 1939.

⁴⁵"The Competition for the Liberty Memorial," Architecture 44 (August 1921): 235; also H. Van Buren Magonigle, "A Memorial at Kansas City, Missouri," Journal of the American Institute of Architects 9 (August 1921): 266; and "The Competition for a Memorial of Kansas City," Western Architect 30 (July 1921): 70.

⁴⁶"Competition," Architecture 44, 235.

Second Place -- Paul P. Cret and Zantzinger, Borie & Medary

The competition design conceived by Frenchman Paul Philippe Cret associated with Zantzinger, Borie and Medary, Philadelphia, is distinguished as a whole plan rather than its pedestrian Statue of Liberty centerpiece. (Fig. 5, 6) His proposal no doubt received high marks on integration of the area between the Union Station and the complex on the plateau. His reference to the terraces of Rome's Piazza del Popolo underlines the architect's European inclination.⁴⁷ In comparison with H. Van Buren Magonigle's dramatic concept, Paul P. Cret's design must have appeared staid. Cret, himself a veteran of trench warfare, in his written presentation, may have seemed somewhat somber when he described his memorial design as being "by its restraint appropriate in character to the ideals it is proposed to commemorate."⁴⁸

Third Place -- Greenebaum, Hardy & Schumacher

The design by Samuel Greenebaum, Arthur R. Hardy and Ramon Schumacher, the only Kansas City firm to place, (Figs. 7,8) is interesting in that this design, too, featured a soaring column, colossal and fluted. The Greenebaum plan isolated the memorial building, with its twenty-eight flanking columns standing for the same number of Allied countries, from the veteran's structure designed for more practical

⁴⁷Ibid., 238. Paul Philippe Cret, "Liberty Memorial Competition Renderings, 1921," Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota.

⁴⁸Elizabeth G. Grossman, "Paul P. Cret 1876-1945: Rationalism and Imagery in American Architecture" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1980), 72.

purposes. Although the whole plan was asymmetrical and conformed to the irregular topography of the site, its classical style was static. Like the others, Greenebaum's was planned to accommodate the cultural center buildings as they might be added.

The architects noted in their written presentation that "The memorial building is placed on the existing promontory, and the retaining walls are almost exactly coincident with the present formations of property."⁴⁹ This feature would have been an economic asset.

Fourth Place -- Bertram G. Goodhue

In architectural journals and books on American architecture Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue's design (Figs. 9, 10) received much attention and was almost as fully recorded as the competition's winning entry.⁵⁰ Goodhue's design differed from the top three in its orientation. It faced south to better highlight the sculpture and

⁴⁹"Competition," Architecture 44, 238.

⁵⁰Ibid., 235, 238, and Plates CIX-CXI. It is interesting that here illustrations of Goodhue's fourth place entries preceded the third place entries of Greenebaum, Hardy & Schumacher. In "Competition," Western Architect 30, Plates 5-8, Goodhue's preceded both Cret's and Greenebaum's, each of whom was illustrated with one example only. Such unusual attention to the architect awarded fourth place would seem yet another indication of Goodhue's lofty professional position.

In The American Spirit in Architecture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 220, Talbot Faulkner Hamlin commented that the competition was "notable . . . also on account of another of the designs submitted," that by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue having "a true epic character" and showed two views of Goodhue's plan.

Fiske Kimball, in American Architecture (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1928), 207-208, pointed out similarities between Goodhue's and Magonigle's designs in their "vast blocklike masses." Kimball commented that Magonigle's was "simpler and more impressive" than Goodhue's which recalled "the massive German monuments of the Imperial period."

thus turned its back on the Union Station.

It commanded the promontory like a stark fortress surmounted by a great pylon of heroic sculpture modelled by Lee Lawrie in association with the architect. The central sculptural figure, "Civilization," was cloaked in bronze with flesh of creamy marble and crowned Athena-like with gold. One attractive innovation was that Mr. Goodhue's design bridged the Main Street cut and extended the austere plan to the rocky hill on the east. Perhaps the judges saw that B. G. Goodhue's conception did have a serious fault which Richard Oliver later noted when he wrote that the memorial monument alone without the projected cultural buildings "might have seemed merely ponderous" and an incomplete idea.⁵¹

It should be remembered that elaborate measures had been taken to assure that the identity of the architects would be unknown to the judges. Each set of renderings was marked only with a letter while they were displayed and judged in the Northeast High School Gymnasium.⁵² However, it would seem likely that styles of at least

⁵¹Richard Oliver, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1983; Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 219-220.

The striking similarity between Goodhue's Liberty Memorial competition design and the buildings designed by him for the United States Military Academy has been called to my attention by Professor George Ehrlich. (Goodhue was the winning architect for West Point in 1903.) Comparison may be made by comparing illustrations in Charles Harris Whitaker's Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue - Architect and Master of Many Arts (New York City: Press of the American Institute of Architects, 1925), Plates XIII - XVIII of West Point and Plates CCXXVI - CCXXIX of the Liberty Memorial drawings.

⁵²Liberty Memorial Association, "Program," 17-20.

Goodhue, Cret, and Magonigle would have been identifiable by the judges, themselves architects of outstanding stature.

The remaining seven Liberty Memorial competition entries must be studied through the collection of photographs of 1921 which recorded only the principal renderings in the several submissions.

Fifth Place -- Keene & Simpson

In the submission by Arthur S. Keene and Leslie Simpson (Fig. 11) the memorial itself took the form of a classical square court of twenty-eight Doric fluted columns on a stepped base. Relief seals ornamented the frieze and on the interior monument there appear to have been modest relief sculptural panels showing marching men and flags. The plan as a whole was not dramatic. It was one of balance and serenity.

Sixth Place -- Edward Buehler Delk with Armstrong & De Gelleke

The entry of Edward Buehler Delk of Kansas City who was associated with the New Yorkers Armstrong and De Gelleke (Figs. 12, 13) was an elaborate one with something for every taste--eclectic! The centerpiece memorial was a soaring Gothic-style tower similar to Yale's Harkness Tower. However, this one was to have been surmounted with a winged female colossus. The whole thing was to be approached from the north by rank after rank of steps. Other buildings were in an elegant classical style with an Italian Renaissance admixture. In some ways this presentation seems to have had something of the drama of Magonigle's prize winner and probably the astronomical costs, as well.

Seventh Place -- Wight & Wight

In the orthodox plan by Thomas Wight and William Drewin Wight

of Kansas City (Fig. 14) the memorial monument, rather like the Lincoln Tomb in Springfield, was an obelisk mounted on a cube-shaped building, four columns inset on each side. Six look-alike cultural center buildings in the classical style were placed symmetrically around the memorial on a rectangular field. Although unsuccessful in the Liberty Memorial competition, this sort of conservative Neo-classical design was characteristic of the firm, appearing in Kansas City as early as the First National Bank of 1906 (Wilder & Wight) and also in the Kansas City Life Insurance Building of 1923 and the 1933 Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

Eighth Place -- Hoit, Price & Barnes

In the entry by Henry F. Hoit, and his associates Edwin M. Price and Alfred E. Barnes (Fig. 15) the memorial monument was almost a mirror image of Wight & Wight's, only bigger, with the obelisk supported on a square building with fully articulated columns. Rather than being centered, this memorial was placed at the south end of the field with the Neo-classical buildings of the cultural center forming sides and facing it on the north.⁵³

Ninth Place -- Brostrom & Drotts

The entry by Kansas Citians Ernest O. Brostrom and Phillip Drotts (Fig. 16) also featured an obelisk as the memorial's monument. In this version the shaft is supported and flanked by an arcade of Doric columns. There would seem to have been some sort of sculptural

⁵³Henry F. Hoit, Edwin M. Price, and Alfred E. Barnes, "Liberty Memorial Competition Plans, 1921," Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri, Kansas City, Mo.

group on the supporting base. The buildings for the arts center were grouped at the far south end of a mall beyond a reflecting pool. There was an oval esplanade on the north at the Station Plaza level.

Tenth Place -- Bliss & Faville

The plan of San Francisco architects, Walter D. Bliss and William B. Faville (Fig. 17) had the distinction of not having a shaft or other soaring element. In the plan of these invited architects the memorial was a large circular court of concentrically paired Doric columns. Within the court a flame appears to rise from a monolithic dais. The total plan was simpler than the others and buildings were set asymmetrically at the ends of axes that crossed at the circular court. As in other plans, groups of steps were important.

Eleventh Place -- Selby H. Kurfiss

In the rather innovative design of Kansas Citian, Selby H. Kurfiss (Fig. 18) the central element was a huge cenotaph with a panel of relief sculpture. This monumental block formed the center and stage backdrop, so to speak, of a shell-shaped amphitheater. On the reverse side of the cenotaph facing the Union Station was an elaborate figural grouping of sculpture. One in the pyramid of allegorical figures pointed toward the relief panel which would seem to represent marching soldiers. In the existing photographs, Mr. Kurfiss' main emphasis was on the memorial itself. The buildings for the cultural center do not appear in any detail.

* * * * *

It is difficult now to understand just how and why the judges

rated the very similar "also rans" as they did. The photographs show very little to choose between. The nearly euphoric response to the judges' choice of the first-place winner, however, still comes through clearly across the years.

The design by H. Van Buren Magonigle and the talent of the architect himself elicited words of enthusiastic praise and approval. Professional Advisor Thomas Kimball said:

No greater single conception is to be found in the world today. One must seek in the ruins of ancient Rome, a relic from the time when the appeal of splendid monuments was better understood and oftener used . . .⁵⁴

The winning Liberty Memorial concept sparked yet another reference to ancient monuments in the pages of The American Stone Trade and reprinted in the Kansas City Star.

About twenty-five centuries have elapsed since Dinocrates designed and built the Pharos of Alexandria of Macedonia. Since that time nothing to compare with it has ever been attempted. Comes now Magonigle to Kansas City with a total eclipse of the ancient Grecian master and his work, with a greater design all his own, one that is to inspire this and future generations of Americans with the noblest sentiments of loyal patriotism. While all the elements of art, balance, proportion and appropriate ornamentation are present, there is no slavish adherence to any school of the past. Perhaps it will be the first worthy model of the new American type that has been prophesied from time to time.⁵⁵

The lofty ideas and ingenious plans of the ten other competitors, whether or not they placed and received the promised \$2,000 rewards, remained on paper. Only Magonigle's first place design was required to undergo the rigors of metamorphosis into concrete and

⁵⁴McPherson, "Plans Biggest Project," Kansas Citian, 30 August 1921, 668.

⁵⁵Fred K. Irvine, editor American Stone Trade to J. E. McPherson, reprinted in the Kansas City Star, 22 October 1921.

stone. That inspiration of "noblest sentiments" had first to rise above encumbrances of financial restraints, geological imperfections and labor disputes. Perhaps the greatest of the arduous requirements for realization of the Liberty Memorial's completion was that of communication between architect and owner. The New Yorker "risen to heights of genius" would have to communicate with the businessmen leaders of Kansas City. Those men, also, cherished lofty ideals but they had the job of coping with the finiteness of two million dollars.

* * * * *

In an elaborate spectacle, the site for the memorial was dedicated on November 1, 1921. It was a remarkable event of worldwide interest. At the time of the third national convention of the American Legion, five famous Allied commanders of the "war to end war" assembled in Kansas City for the dedication: French Marshal Ferdinand Foch, American General John J. Pershing, Admiral Lord Earl Beatty of Great Britain, Belgian Lieutenant General Baron Jacques and General Armando Diaz of Italy, along with Vice President Calvin Coolidge. In this single event, a number of aspirations and motives came together.

It was a solemn and moving occasion of remembrance and honor to those who had given their lives for an ideal. There was a preamble of cannon fire at minute intervals. A crowd of more than 100,000 was massed before the great altar and rostrum erected for the occasion. Beginning at 11:00 A.M., Liberty Memorial Association Vice President J. C. Nichols escorted Bishop Thomas F. Lillis to the rostrum for the invocation. Then Mayor James Cowgill eloquently introduced Liberty

Memorial Association President R. A. Long, who, turning toward the Gold Star Mothers, spoke of the day's "sacred privilege." Then Missouri Governor William Hyde introduced Vice President Coolidge. After the Vice President, the military leaders added moving tributes.⁵⁶

Following the presentation of the Commander of the American Legion, John G. Emery, a great roar arose. Then came pageantry--ten young women white-robed, sandaled, representing Vestal Virgins, brought forward laurel wreaths, emblems of the city's honor, love, and sorrow, laying them at the foot of the altar. The five military leaders, too, bore wreaths and as the Ararat Shrine band played "America," R. A. Long lighted the ritual fire. Rabbi H. H. Mayer delivered the benediction.⁵⁷

It was a day, too, of civic and national pride. American Legion marchers, some 60,000 of them, paraded along Grand Avenue past the reviewing stand at the Kansas City Star building. The site dedication marked the beginning of the realization of the city's dream and drew the world's attention to the place where it was anticipated a distinguished cultural center would one day stand to be not only a memorial but a magnet. The vision of the Liberty Memorial embodied the "Kansas City Spirit," progressive, forward-looking, and optimistic. It was a popular movement, enthusiastically supported by Kansas Citians.

⁵⁶Kansas City Journal, 1 November 1921.

⁵⁷Ibid.