

HOUSE No. 756.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

VIEWS OF A MINORITY OF THE COMMITTEE ON STATE HOUSE ON THE PRESERVATION OF THE STATE HOUSE.

We, the undersigned, members of the Committee on State House, in dissenting from the majority report of the Committee desire to set forth briefly the reasons which compel us to differ from our associates.

The general subject of the preservation or destruction of the State House was brought before the Committee by the annual report of the State House Construction Commissioners. It was stated in that report that, as the annex approached completion and the time for its connection with the original State House became near at hand, the Commissioners had given attention to the condition of the older building and had reached the conclusion that the problem would be best solved by its complete destruction and its rebuilding in new material on the same lines. It is to be observed, however, that they have not as yet determined upon any one plan for reconstruction.

Shortly after the above report was referred to the Committee there was also presented a petition from Henry H. Sprague and others, praying for such legislation as would ensure the preservation of the State House, and for its connection with the annex in the rear by inconspicuous passages, or bridges, as was originally planned. Great

numbers of remonstrances from all parts of the State against the destruction of the State House were likewise presented, while not a single petition has appeared favoring destruction.

The case was carefully and thoroughly considered by the Committee, and we believe that there can be no dispute as to the main facts. It was made clear to us that the present State House is in a condition where thorough and systematic repair and renovation are necessary. But it was made still clearer to us that there is an overwhelming feeling among the people of the Commonwealth that the way to preserve the State House is to preserve it, and that this end cannot be reached by spending over a million dollars and a half in tearing it down and putting it up again.

When the building of the annex was authorized by the Legislature of 1889, the position taken by those who favored the proposition was that the Bulfinch State House was to be preserved as a landmark for the people, but the practical needs of the growing Commonwealth must be provided for by means of an extension. The extension was to be so constructed as to harmonize with the State House, and it was to be built to save the State House. This fact is not seriously disputed and is known to be true by every person who was then in the Legislature. Except for that understanding, no bill allowing the construction of the new building could possibly have been enacted, as has recently been stated by the Governor of Massachusetts, at that time. The annex was built to preserve the State House and to harmonize with it. We are told, now, that the State House must be destroyed and rebuilt so that it may harmonize with the annex. We believe that this kind of reasoning in public affairs is mischievous, and that the faith of the Commonwealth has long been pledged to the retention of the older building.

When the wishes of the people have been strongly expressed in behalf of the preservation of any historical building, their desire should be respected by their representatives, unless there are insurmountable practical difficulties in the way of their fulfilment. In the case before us, the considerations of good faith, practical business, architectural beauty and historical memories all point in the same direction. In the bill reported by the majority of the Committee,

\$1,500,000 are appropriated to preserve the "idea" of the State House by destroying the State House itself. Under the bill which we commend to the consideration of the Legislature less than one-third of that amount will ensure so thorough a repairing and fireproofing of the present structure that the question of its preservation will be permanently solved. Our plan will at the same time save more than a million dollars to the tax-payers and save the State House.

It should be clearly understood that the appropriation recommended in our bill is not the result of guess-work, but it is based upon the careful, itemized estimates of Mr. Brigham, the architect of the Commissioners, upon whose estimates for the plan favored by the majority of the Committee their appropriation of \$1,500,000 is based. By reading the bill it will be seen that the genuine preservation of the exterior of the State House is provided for and that the chief features of the interior as designed by Bulfinch will be restored, and the Senate Chamber, Doric Hall, the House of Representatives and Council Chamber will be actually retained, while the plan which provides that the House shall sit in the new hall in the annex is, of course, left unchanged. At the same time the renovation will be so thorough that the building will be, as testified by Mr. Brigham, "practically fireproof." We have no hesitation in declaring that the State House can thus be put into a condition almost unexampled among historic buildings for safety and solidity, and we desire to repeat that this is the only kind of preservation that is worthy of the name. Reproduction of colonial architecture never can retain the quaintness and beauty of the original. If the State House is once destroyed it is destroyed forever, and putting up a new building of stone and iron does not put it back again.

We regret that plans already made and partly carried out will result in bringing the annex into too close connection with the old building. While this work has so far progressed that we doubt the wisdom of changing the present law, we feel that the result would have been better if a more complete separation of the old and new buildings had been provided for. We believe, however, that the retention of the present State House will minimize any architectural in-

congruity which may result, since it will serve to emphasize the fact that the State House and annex are in reality two buildings, the former having been specially preserved for the people, and the union of the two will not be subject to the strict criticism to which one modern building would be exposed. For the reasons given the bill which we submit makes no change in the present law for connecting the annex.

This bill we offer to the consideration of the Legislature with confidence in its favorable judgment. We feel that, at a time when a wasteful expenditure of public money is more than ever to be avoided, our bill provides for doing the necessary work in a prompt, conservative, economical and thorough way; and that, at a time when popular affection for the historic landmarks of Massachusetts ought especially to be respected and not rebuffed, the bill will meet and gratify the wishes of an overwhelming majority of the people of the Commonwealth.

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E. G. FROTHINGHAM,

of the Senate.

ROYAL ROBBINS,
F. H. BRADFORD,
HENRY A. WHITNEY,

of the House.