

Mr. Watterson goes on to say that "although by now many of the buildings on the square may be of a nondescript architectural character, the flavor and charm of the square have not been destroyed. It is still a fitting forecourt to the White House—which it must always be. This fitness would be lost with marble monumentality flanking the square—east and west."

Mr. Watterson makes, I think, a major contribution to the current consideration of the famed Lafayette Square when he adds that "since the Decatur House, on the northwest corner of the square, and the Blair and Lee Houses, on Pennsylvania Avenue, are to be preserved, and the new Executive Office Building designed to surround them with low wings and courts, it would seem that the same approach could be taken on the east side of the square. The Madison House, on the northeast corner, and the Tayloe House, in the middle of the block, are worthy of preservation and restoration, both historically and architecturally. Rather than preserve them purely as monuments, suitable uses can be found for these buildings, as is done in so many of the old cities of Europe. It is a brash generation, indeed, which will destroy all physical evidences of its great heritage."

(I include herewith as part of my remarks the letter I have received from Mr. Watterson, as well as an excerpt from a brilliant article by L. Morris Leisenring, FAIA, which was published in the February 1961 issue of the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*.)

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS,
OFFICE OF THE JOURNAL,
Washington, D.C., February 28, 1961.

Representative CARROLL D. KEARNS,
New House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN KEARNS: I am sorry that you were unable to see me last week, for we have noted with great interest the bill (H.R. 3982) which you introduced in the House February 7.

The American Institute of Architects is of course a strong supporter of any proposed legislation which would strengthen and improve the cultural opportunities here in Washington—or anywhere in the Nation, for that matter. But at the moment it is the last part (section 3) of this bill which prompts me to write you. The AIA has always had an active interest in the planning and architecture of the city of Washington, ever since its part in the inception of the McMillan plan of 1901, in the formation of the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission, etc. Consequently, the institute deplores the apparently impending destruction of certain buildings fronting on Lafayette Square and the construction of large Federal buildings in their place. Although by now many of the buildings on the square may be of a nondescript architectural character, the flavor and charm of the square have not been destroyed. It is still a fitting forecourt to the White House—which it must always be. This fitness would be lost with marble monumentality flanking the square—east and west.

Since the Decatur House, on the northwest corner of the square, and the Blair and Lee Houses on Pennsylvania Avenue, are to be preserved, and the new Executive Office Building designed to surround them with low wings and courts, it would seem that the same approach could be taken on the east side of the square. The Madison House, on the northeast corner, and the Tayloe House in the middle of the block, are worthy of preservation and restoration, both historically and architecturally. Rather than preserve them purely as monuments, suitable uses can be found for these buildings, as is done in so many of the old cities of Europe. It is a brash generation indeed which will destroy all physical evidences of its great heritage.

I enclose for your interest and information a copy of the February issue of the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, which contains an article on Lafayette Square. Its author makes no plea for preservation of buildings on the square, for the article was commenced months ago, when their destruction seemed inevitable. It is rather a somewhat nostalgic lament for their passing. However, with the interest displayed in the square by the President, and by the introduction of bills in the Congress, new hope has been aroused that perhaps the square is not doomed after all. This article has been widely circulated in Washington and has aroused considerable interest and comment in the newspapers as well as in Government circles. I hope you will find something of value in it.