

Congress, so has influence with both the White House and congressional Republicans.

So, although every civic-minded organization in the Nation's Capital went to bat for the preservation of Lafayette Square, these two Texans plus one Taft Republican proceeded to get their way.

At first, however, the White House balked. Conscientious Franklin Floete, head of General Services and in charge of public building, testified that he had an alternate site in Southwest Washington. Furthermore, Floete said the new site would hold three courts instead of two. At Lafayette Square site it would mean an uncomfortable squeeze to include the U.S. Tax Court, which has to move anyway. The two Texas judges aren't interested in it, however. The head of the Tax Court, Judge Edgar Murlock, isn't from Texas; has no political pull.

Immediately after Floete urged another site, the two Texas judges got panicky. Judge Jones phoned Carl Levin, head of the Citizens' Committee To Save Lafayette Square, offered to make a deal.

"You can keep the Belasco Theater," he proposed, "but let us take the Dolly Madison House and the Benjamin Tayloe House." Levin rejected the deal.

"The people of Washington aren't interested in a barter deal," Levin replied. "We're interested in preserving the most historic square in America." Levin later explained to friends.

At this point the Republican judge, Jack Martin, began pulling wires with old friends in the White House. Suddenly Floete found the ground being cut from under him.

"You'll have to get a lot of support to make my proposal stick," he confided to civic leaders.

They got a lot of support—from 30 top civic organizations. But Judge Martin got more from the White House. Floete, a Republican, was told to reverse himself. Ike, he was told, favored the demolition of the historic buildings on Lafayette Square.

MORE TEXANS

Last week another Texan, Sam Rayburn, pushed a \$5 million appropriation through the House to buy up two city blocks to make room for an expansion of congressional buildings. Simultaneously the House Appropriations Committee told the District of Columbia, in effect, to jump in the Potomac when it came to building four badly needed schools. On the same day, Senator Dennis Chavez, of New Mexico, put through an appropriation of \$40,000 to build a new swimming pool for Senators. Chavez is the chairman of the Public Works Committee, who is helping his neighbors from Texas to raze the historic buildings on Lafayette Square. On the same day, another Texan, charming Albert Thomas, of Houston, knocked \$2.8 million off the cost of building a sewer from the new Dulles Airport. At the same time, the same Congressman Thomas was angling with the Interior Department to turn part of Normanstone Park, which is National Capital Parks land opposite the British Embassy, over to the ladies of Congress and their Congressional Club. These wives of Congressmen would not have to pay for the Government land.

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THE BEAUTIFUL BELASCO RATES PROMPT ATTENTION

(By Paul Hume)

Although it has been known as the Belasco Theater for many years, there are letters carved in stone over the door of the building that stands on the east side of Lafayette Square that read "Lafayette Square Opera House."

One of the extremely rare errors I have ever found in my favorite reference book, Oscar Thompson's edition of the "International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians," the Belasco Theater is named as the scene of the first American performance of an opera you have all heard of, "Madam Butterfly." Actually that premiere took place over on F Street, in the Columbia Theater.

Quite possibly the reason for the error can be found in the review which appeared in the Washington Post of October 16, 1906, the day after the premiere. In the first paragraph of the review the writer correctly locates the opera in