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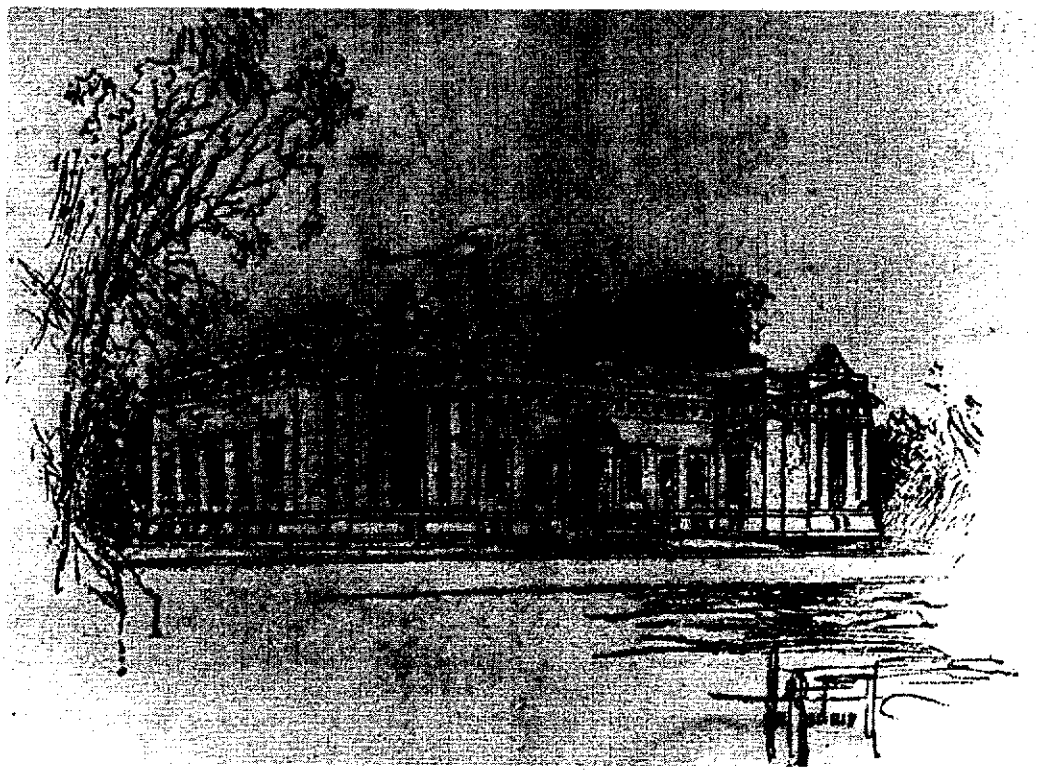
Cover Illustration: Focusing on the life and philanthropy of Edward Tuck (1842-1938), this issue of *Historical New Hampshire* celebrates the 150th anniversary of Tuck's birth in Exeter. Tuck is pictured here in April 1928 with his wife of fifty-six years, Julia Stell Tuck (1850-1928). Photograph by Desgranges of Nice, France, near the Tucks' winter home in Monte Carlo. NHHS Collections; gift of Miriam Gardner Dunnan.



The Creation of "New Hampshire's Temple of History," 1900-1911

James L. Garvin

The New Hampshire Historical Society building is one of the finest structures of its era in the United States. Designed by a prominent American architect, given a symbolic frontispiece by the foremost American sculptor of the early twentieth century, and constructed to specifications that often seemed impossibly strict even in an era noted for high architectural standards, the building remains one of the best small-scale examples of classical design and granite construction in the United States. Yet the ideal of Edward Tuck, the philanthropist, and the design of Guy Lowell, the architect, were not realized easily. The classical serenity of the building gives no hint of the toll that the structure exacted from its builders in time, labor, money, and patience.

From the outset, the New Hampshire Historical Society building was to be no ordinary structure. At the building's dedication, Edward Tuck recalled that from his earliest involvement with the idea of such a structure he had "decided to provide for the erection of something more monumental and ornate than a simple library building." From the first, Tuck had intended that the building "should be, in its perfection of artistic design and of material execution, a source of gratification and pride for all time to the people of New Hampshire."[1]

The Society's building could not have been constructed, or even

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1. *Dedication of the Building of the New Hampshire Historical Society, The Gift of Edward Tuck* (Concord, N.H.: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1912), p. 36.

contemplated, without Tuck's dedication to these ideals. But underlying Tuck's commitment to undertake so exacting a project were the strong wills of two other individuals. One of these men died before the cornerstone was laid; the other was destined to oversee the construction of the building to its completion.

In his *The Unwritten History of the New Hampshire Historical Society Building*, Charles R. Corning has related the story of the touching correspondence between Edward Tuck and the first of these men, William C. Todd of Atkinson, New Hampshire. Todd (1823-1903), a Dartmouth graduate, had spent his life as an educator, earning only a modest salary. By the careful investment of a small capital, however, Todd had gained a considerable fortune, most of which he had already given away by the turn of the century to aid public education and welfare.

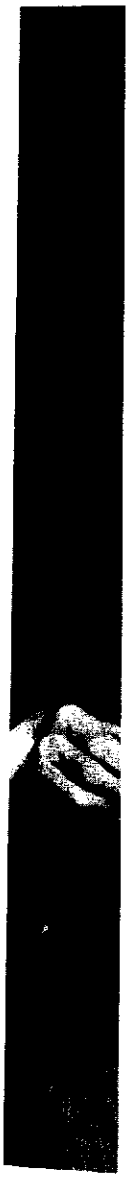
In 1900, serving as the Society's president and approaching the age of eighty, Todd pledged $5,000 toward a fireproof addition to the Society's old building on North Main Street if a like sum should be promised by others.[2] By this challenge, as Corning notes, Todd "cast a coin into the placid waters, creating the circle that, enlarging as it journeyed, finally touched the shores of France."[3] A year later, Todd wrote to Edward Tuck in Paris concerning the Society's hopes for a new addition, and received in turn an invitation to write "further in detail as to what you think needs to be done to relieve the Society from its present distress, to assure its further existence, and to provide comfortably for its installation in a suitable new building . . . ."[4]

Now gravely ill, Todd wrote again to Tuck in 1902, receiving from the philanthropist the encouraging reply that

2. "An Important Communication from the New Hampshire Historical Society," printed circular, July 16, 1900.

3. Charles Robert Corning, *The Unwritten History of the New Hampshire Historical Society Building* (Concord, N.H.: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1920), p. 6.

4. Ibid., p. 21; Edward Tuck to William C. Todd, September 18, 1901, Edward Tuck Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society, box 1, folder 3.



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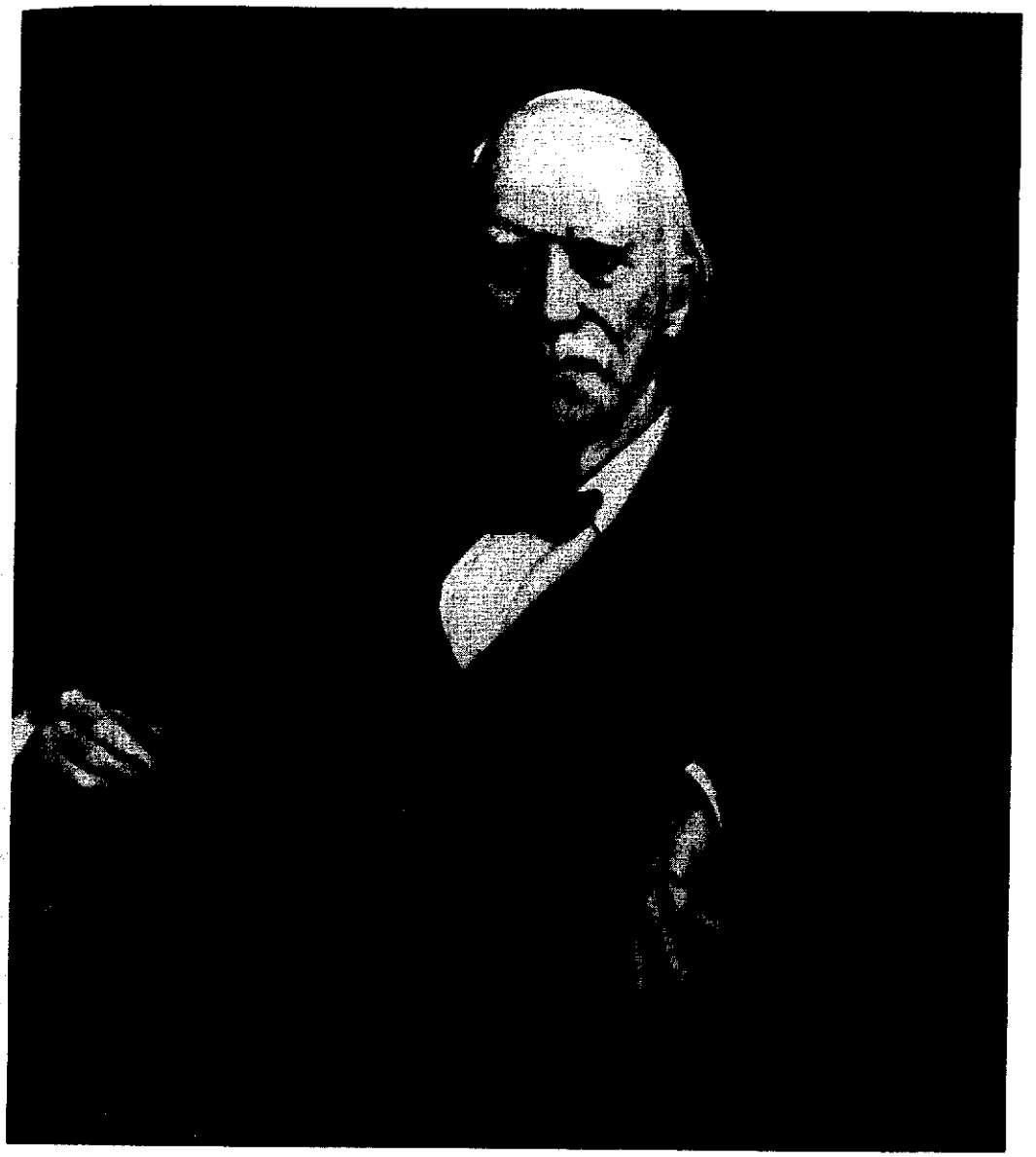


William Cleaves Todd (1823-1903) of Atkinson, president of the New Hampshire Historical Society from 1899 to 1903, actively promoted building expansion but did not live to see the cornerstone laid. Oil on canvas, by Marion Powers, 1907, after Robert Gordon Hardie, 1902. NHHS Collections; gift of Samuel C. Eastman.

It may be that I can some day make a contribution with others to aid in bringing together the necessary funds for the construction of the new building. . . . Not the least among the reasons which would impel me to make a liberal contribution [to the Society] for this good purpose is the fact that you yourself have labored so disinterestedly in its behalf, and at the present time, even on your sick bed, are

endeavoring to enlist the cooperation of myself and others in accomplishing the desired result.[5]

At the same time, Todd sought the aid of Benjamin Ames Kimball, the second man destined to inspire Tuck's support. Nearly seventy, nine years older than Tuck, Kimball had served as the Society's president between 1895 and 1897, but had been prevented by a strenuous business life from devoting his full energy to the institution even when he led it. A long career in railroading had endowed Kimball with a straightforward manner and a purposeful nature—attributes that Tuck respected and would soon rely heavily upon.

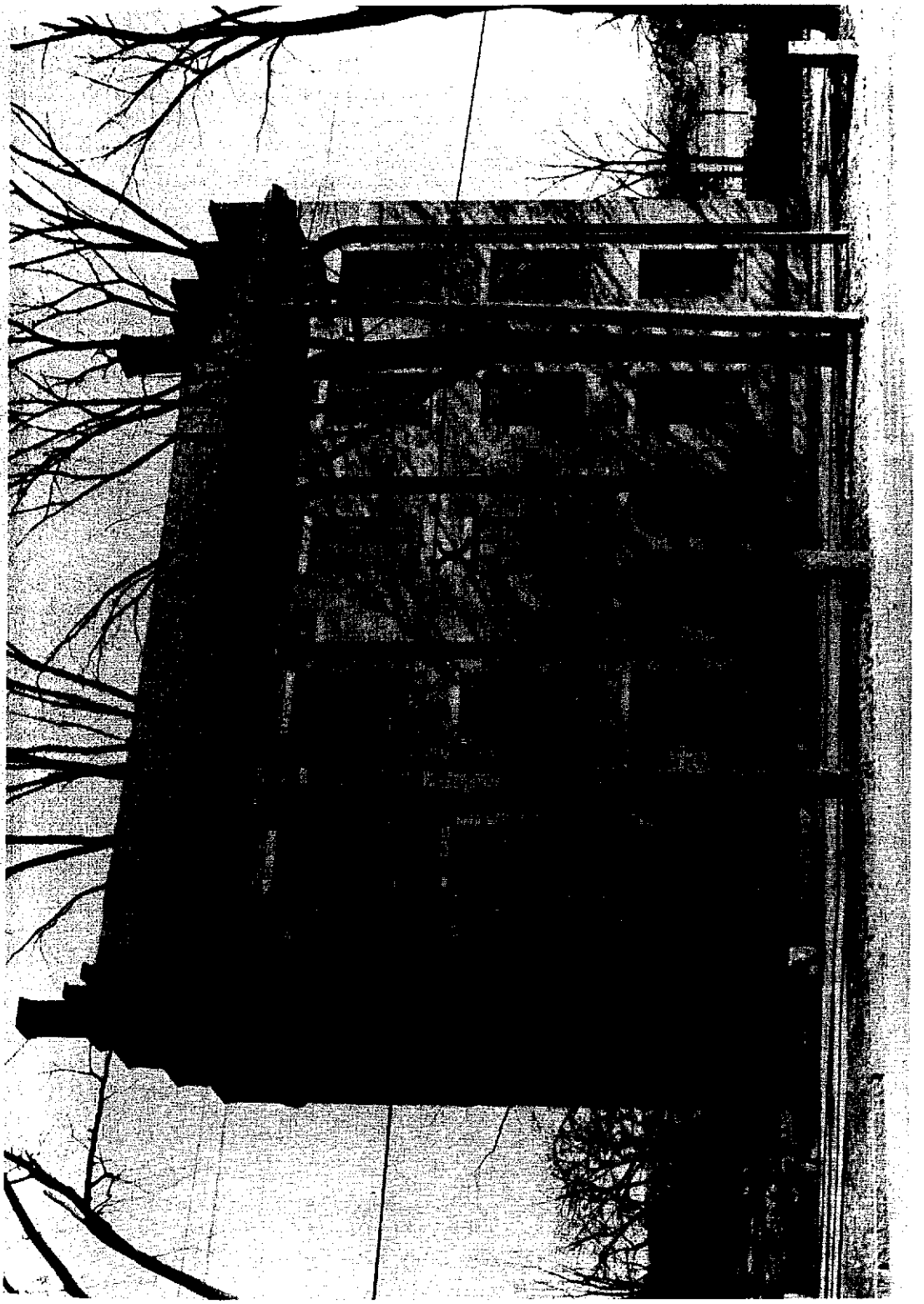
Tuck and Kimball had known of one another before the beginning of their common involvement with the Society's new building. Like most other prominent figures in the affairs of the Society at the turn of the century, both men were faithful alumni and strong supporters of Dartmouth College, and Kimball was a trustee of the institution and chairman of its finance committee. Despite this slight acquaintance with Tuck, however, even the fearless Kimball felt the need to rely upon a third party to ease his first communication with the philanthropist on the subject of a new building for the Society.

Kimball enlisted the aid of Society member Henry Webster Stevens, who had married a niece of Edward Tuck. In October, 1901, Kimball wrote Stevens a detailed six-page letter describing the history and prospects of the Society and strongly urging the abandonment of the old building and site:

> The Society has now reached another important turning point in its history. Its present building, seventy-five years old, is very antiquated, inadequate and unsafe, with but little basement room and that low and dark. Only one room in the building can be warmed and made habitable in cold weather. Its library is so crowded as to render some of its contents practically inaccessible, and the building is generally inadequate for the uses of the Society.[6]

5. Ibid., p. 27; Edward Tuck to William C. Todd, December 9, 1902, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 3.

6. Benjamin A. Kimball to Henry W. Stevens, October 19, 1901, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 3.



The New Hampshire Historical Society's home since the 1840s, this brick North Main Street building (erected in 1826 to house the Merrimack County Bank) was extremely overcrowded by 1900. Photographed by the Kimball Studio. NHHS Collections.

Although ostensibly sent to Stevens, Kimball's letter was clearly meant for Tuck's eyes. In a second letter of the same date, Kimball wrote to Stevens to reiterate his preference for a new site near the state house and to argue for a specific architectural style:

> I should like to see a building erected in Greek Architecture, if that were possible. My ideas may be pitched a little too high for our latitude, but hope not. I believe the best is none too good for New Hampshire.[7]

Three days later, Stevens dutifully wrote to his "Uncle Ned" in Paris, noting that "what [Kimball] says about the location of the library is correct . . . and when the Society builds, it should be in a more accessible place."[8] With Stevens' letter as an introduction, Kimball wrote directly to Tuck in the autumn of 1902, repeating his conviction that the Society should strive to construct an entirely new building rather than adding to the old one, and that this building should be located near the state capitol.[9] This was a point that meant much to Kimball, who had played an important role in locating the state library and the federal building close to the state house, and was one to which he would return again and again in letters and personal visits to Tuck.

Todd died in June, 1903, without ever knowing the eventual success of his early appeal. Yet Todd's struggle during his last illness to find help for the Society clearly touched Edward Tuck deeply, moving him to become the sole donor of the new building and to permit no financial involvement from others except in the purchase of the land for the structure. As Tuck later said, "I was much impressed with Mr. Todd's passion, as I might call it, for the Society, and I was inspired by his example . . . to accomplish on a grand scale what he had to leave undone at his death."[10]

7. Ibid.

8. Henry W. Stevens to Edward Tuck, October 22, 1901, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 3.

9. Benjamin A. Kimball to Edward Tuck, October 31, 1902, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 3. Also published in Corning, *Unwritten History*, pp. 29-30.

10. Edward Tuck to Charles R. Corning, July 30, 1918, quoted in Corning, *Unwritten History*, p. 32.

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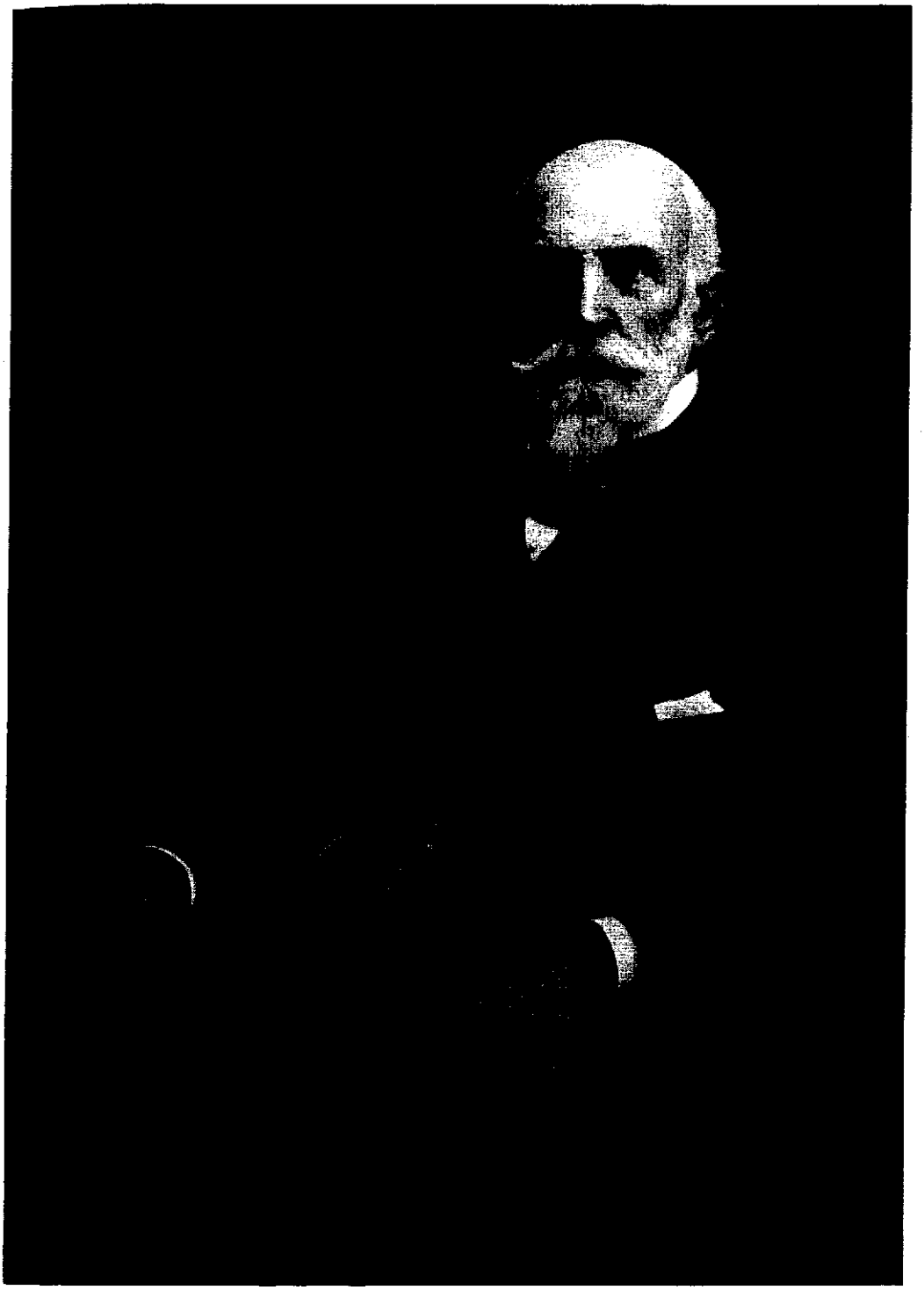


The chairman of the Society's building committee was Benjamin Ames Kimball (1833-1920), whose dedication, business sense, and uncompromising standards contributed immensely to the quality of the completed structure. Photographed by J. E. Purdy & Co., Boston, c. 1900. NHHS Collections.

By the annual meeting of 1905, Kimball had pursued the matter with Tuck so much further that he could report "a possibility of a large gift for building and endowment." Two years later, the essential details of the building program had been settled, and the annual meeting of 1907 confirmed the appointment of a building committee with Kimball as its chairman. Though in the eighth decade of his life, Kimball would labor as hard on the new building as any of his younger associates, giving generously of his energy and wealth to ensure that the Society's building would be as perfect as the art and technology of the time could make it.

Benjamin Ames Kimball (1833-1920) received his Bachelor of Science degree from Dartmouth in 1854. Following college, he rose from draftsman to superintendent of the mechanical department of the Concord Railroad, designing a number of advanced locomotives. Leaving after eleven years to establish a successful foundry business, Kimball returned to railroading as an executive, becoming president of the Concord and Montreal Railroad in 1895. Kimball's later career was filled with service as a director of many New Hampshire corporations, as the supporter of numerous civic improvements in Concord and Boscawen (chief among them being his superintendency of the building of the state library in 1894), and as a trustee of Dartmouth College. At the time of his supervision of the construction of the Society's new building, Kimball was simultaneously the president of a railroad, a bank, and an electric company; part owner of a foundry; a member of the board of directors of an insurance firm and a silverware company; and chairman of the finance committee of Dartmouth College.[11]

To such a man Tuck entrusted the completion of the Society's building. So great was the donor's faith in the integrity and high standards of the Society's representative that, as Corning pointed out, "from the beginning to the day of dedication no written promise, condition, contract or agreement ever passed between Edward Tuck and Benjamin A. Kimball."[12]

11. Ezra S. Stearns, ed., *Genealogical and Family History of the State of New Hampshire*, 4 vols. (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1908), 1:7-10.

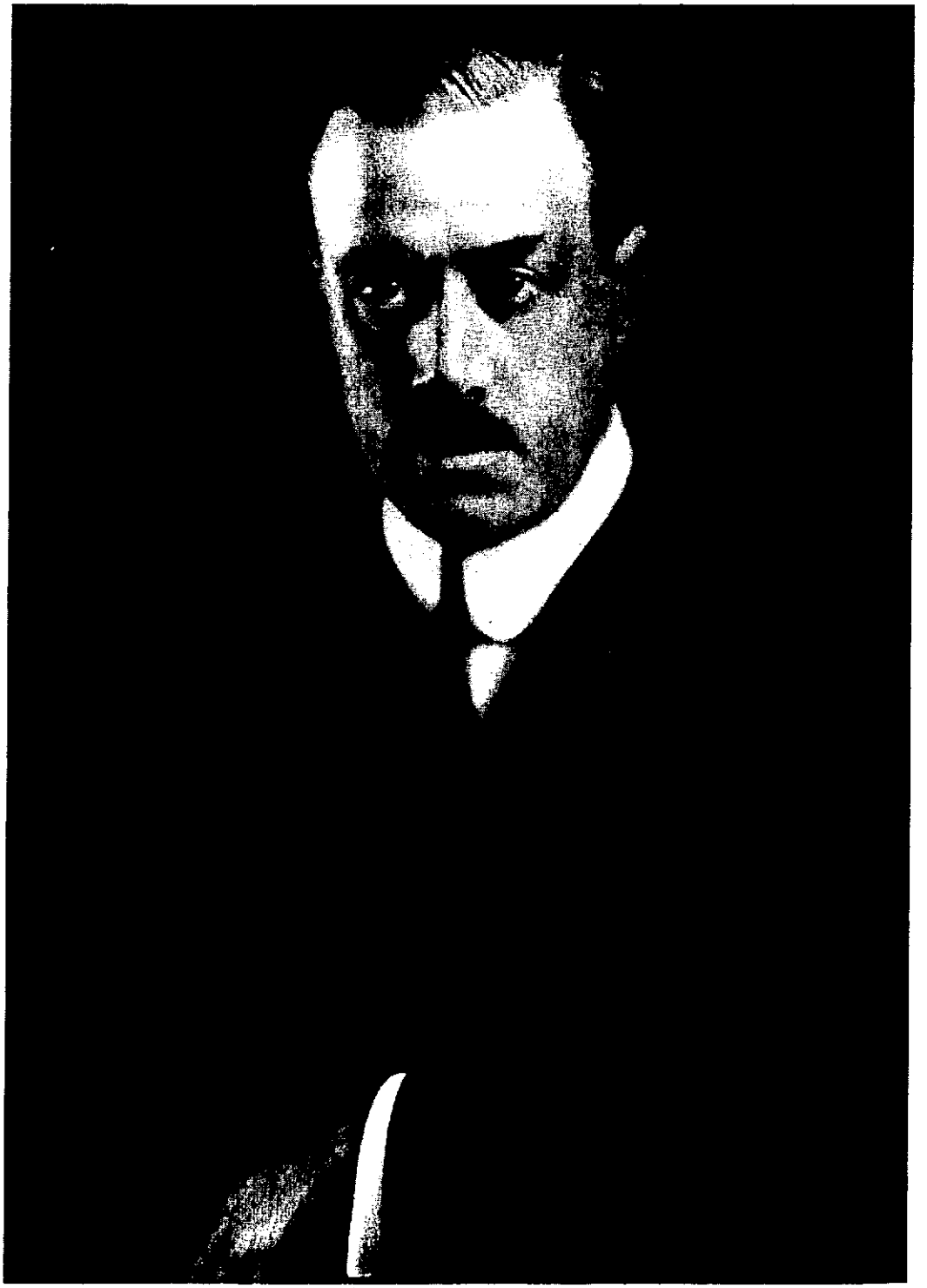
12. Corning, *Unwritten History*, p. 44.

Kimball's first action, even before assuming chairmanship of the building committee, was to ensure that the Society could acquire choice building lots that would give the new building a setting worthy of the organization. From the turn of the century, Kimball had envisioned the Society taking its place as an equal among the great institutions and buildings of Concord. The site he fixed upon was at the corner of Park and North State Streets, adjacent to the state library and supreme court building (1893-94), facing the United States courthouse and post office (1884-89), and diagonally behind the state capitol, which was destined to be doubled in size and given an impressive western front at the same time that the Society's building was rising. Early in his discussions with Tuck, Kimball pledged that the Society and its supporters would acquire this site.

Not surprisingly, the lots on this important corner were already occupied by a number of substantial houses; adjacent lots, filling out the city block, were occupied by a large brick dwelling that housed the Episcopal bishop, and by a small wooden church. To acquire enough land for the projected building, Kimball and his fellow trustee Samuel C. Eastman began quietly to purchase properties, pledging their personal credit to obtain a bank loan after the Society's available cash of $23,000 was used up.[13] In time, many others would contribute to the fund, foremost among them being Edward Tuck himself, who gave $10,000 to purchase one house near the corner of Park and Green Streets and another $14,000 to buy the small wooden Second Advent Christian Church at the corner of Green and Centre.

Meanwhile, in September, 1907, the Society's building committee had chosen Guy Lowell of Boston as its architect, and Kimball had asked Lowell to prepare preliminary sketches of a new building. Lowell (1870-1927) had opened his office only about seven years earlier, but was superbly educated and had already received many important commissions. A graduate of Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Lowell had spent an additional four years at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, then

13. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, undated memorandum on contributors' tablet, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 5.



Guy Lowell (1870-1927), the architect both of the New Hampshire Historical Society building (1907-11) and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1906-9). Photograph from The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, *1931.*

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the world's preeminent center for architectural training. Although he had designed buildings at Phillips Andover Academy, Harvard, and Brown before his connection with the Society, his greatest commission by far was the monumental Boston Museum of Fine Arts (1906-9), still rising as the architect began his plans for the Society's building.[14]

We cannot now know what form Lowell's initial sketches took, but Kimball's later reminiscences suggest that they depicted a dignified classical structure of brick, perhaps not unlike the building Tuck had already donated to Dartmouth for the Amos Tuck School of Business Administration. From 1901, Kimball had imagined a building of "Greek Architecture." Looking about the site he had selected for the new edifice, Kimball saw no public building of brick except the Concord City Hall; all the rest were built of granite.

After much thought, Kimball took advantage of one of his annual European vacations to present the idea of a more monumental building material to Tuck. According to Kimball's reminiscence,

> After a few days discussion with Mr. Tuck, Mrs. Tuck said, "I think we had better say to Mr. Kimball that the best construction and design is none too good. We ought to have the best." Mr. Tuck said, "All right, I agree." This important decision made it necessary to make changes in the design to a more permanent form both in construction and design. At this time it was decided that the building should be pure Greek in design. I informed Mr. and Mrs. Tuck that this would entail many more technical details not heretofore considered and could increase the cost very materially. They said, "Correct, we will build this building the best of its kind and you will proceed to erect it as suggested, avoiding publicity as much as possible."[15]

Architect Lowell now had the freedom to elaborate his earlier sketches. The building committee accepted the architect's final plans and elevations of the structure (except for the doorway, which

14. *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 32 vols. (New York: James T. White & Co., 1898-1945), 21:47-49.

15. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, July 16, 1917, page 5, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 5.

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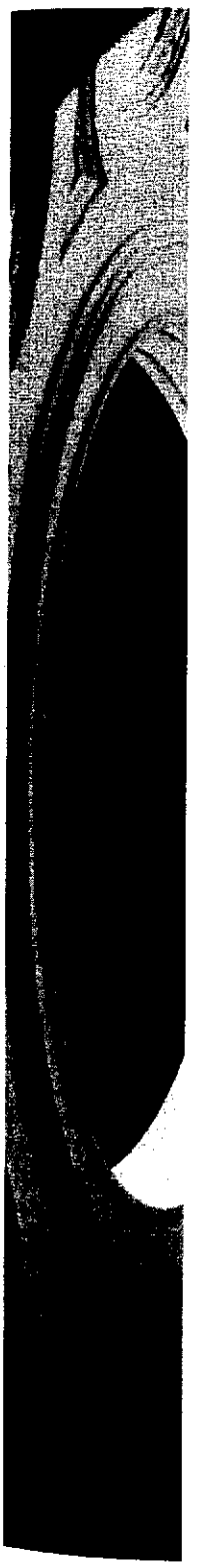
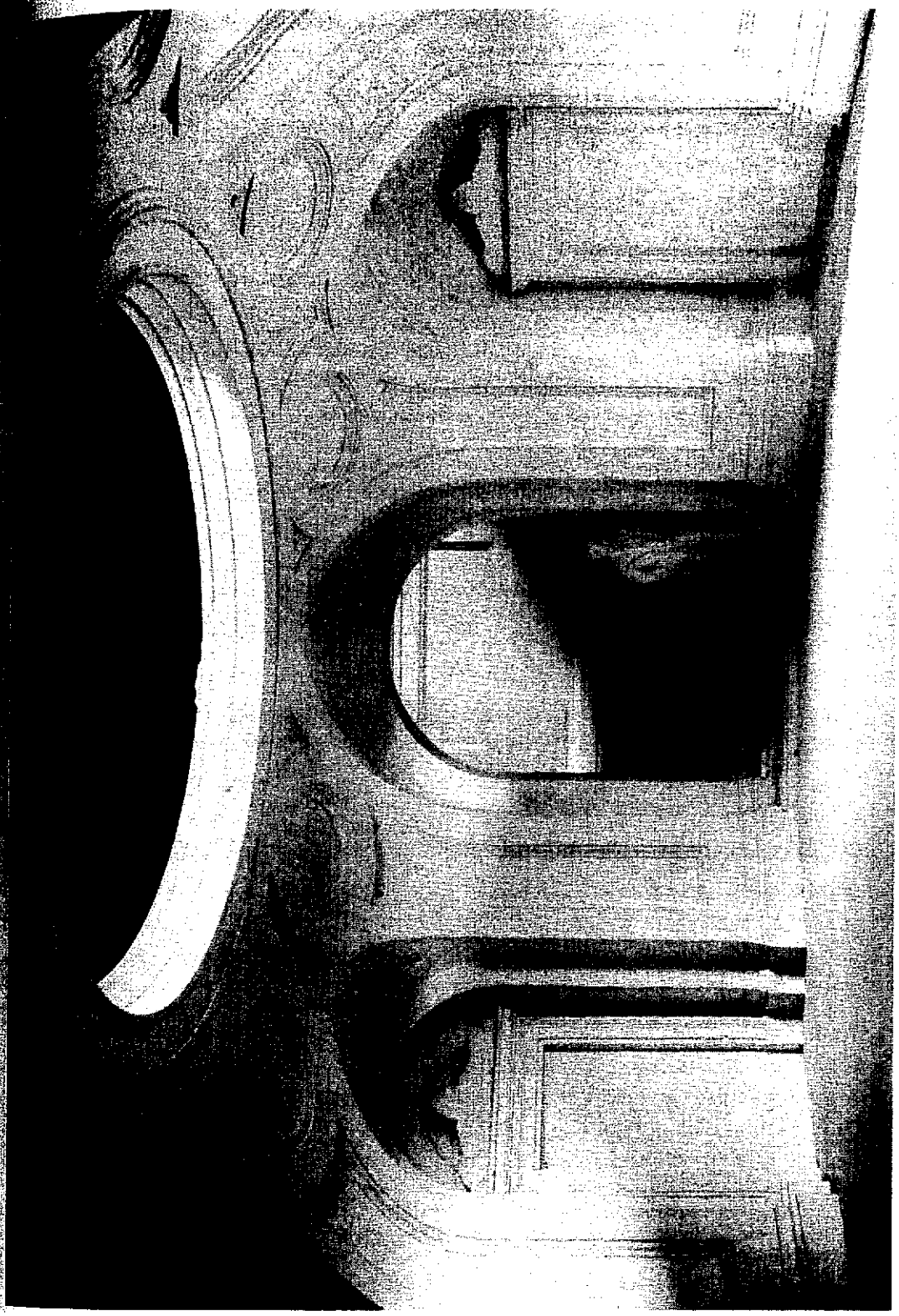
evolved separately in conjunction with sculptor Daniel Chester French's designs) on July 30, 1908. Lowell's designs called for a perfectly symmetrical building, not unlike the architect's Boston Museum of Fine Arts in concept, but much smaller in scale. Both buildings derive their proportions, symmetry, and bold facades from principles long taught at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Like the museum, the historical society building was designed to serve a particular purpose; only after that purpose was fulfilled through the provision of both ceremonial and utilitarian spaces was the building clothed in a specific architectural dress.

In deference to the wishes of Kimball and Tuck, Lowell gave the Society's building a Greek character, but this character was not achieved through the creation of a classic Greek temple. Rather, the building expresses its nature through architectural orders, sculptural devices and moulding profiles that are unique to Greek architecture.

Lowell, Kimball, and Tuck gave special consideration to the interiors of the building. As it stands, the structure reveals careful thought, fluent design, and unwavering adherence to the finest of materials in every public space. But no other part of the building can match the great central rotunda and its adjoining staircase for dramatic geometry and richness of materials. Lacking Lowell's original sketches of the building, we can only guess at the more modest design the architect at first offered the building committee. According to Kimball's reminiscences, this space had originally been far more contracted in design, its walls finished with Keene's cement (a hard wall plaster, used elsewhere in the building) and limestone rather than marble. As Kimball later related,

> I suggested to Mr. Lowell the idea of enlarging the dome and the rotunda by making an extension to the north, which would make it possible for the enlargement of the rotunda and [would] increase the importance of the grand staircase, together with a dome that would be beautiful and grand. . . . After long study, I made up my mind that the rotunda and the grand staircase and gallery should all be of marble, supported by marble arches; their greatness would add to the beauty and grandeur of the building. To which Mr. Lowell





A plaster model of the proposed rotunda, constructed in preparation for one of Benjamin Kimball's visits to Edward Tuck in Paris. Photographed by Thomas E. Marr, Boston, probably 1909. NHHS Collections.

said, "Yes, they would be grand, but do you understand, Mr. Kimball, all of this will cost money, and are you prepared to pay the difference in cost?"[16]

Kimball could give no answer to Lowell's question without a visit to Paris. In preparation for his trip, Kimball and Lowell had a plaster model of the proposed rotunda prepared, with electric illumination to illustrate the effects of changing light. Probably at Lowell's suggestion, Kimball settled upon old convent grey Siena marble, quarried for centuries by Italian monks and always in limited supply, as the proper sheathing for the vaulting of the rotunda. Acting with his usual decisiveness, Kimball promptly "secured an option on all of the blocks of [this] marble that the agents in this country had on hand, for this job, in case Mr. Tuck should authorize it . . . ."[17] As in the decision to use granite for the exterior of the building, Julia Tuck seems to have settled the question of marble for the rotunda when she said, "Edward, let's have this the best."[18]

The building committee, the architect, and the donor considered several types of granite for the exterior of the building, including the coarse pink pegmatite from Milford, Massachusetts, used on the adjacent state library, and a dark Maine stone. Finally, under the influence of local quarryman Timothy P. Sullivan, all parties agreed on Concord granite, the same stone that had been used for the state house and the federal building across the street.

The exceptional quality of the exterior of the Society's building derives from two features of the stonework, both of them essential to the realization of Lowell's design yet destined to cause great difficulty between the Society and its contractors. The first is the unusual fineness and perfection of the smoothing of the

16. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, undated memorandum on the rotunda, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 5.

17. Ibid.

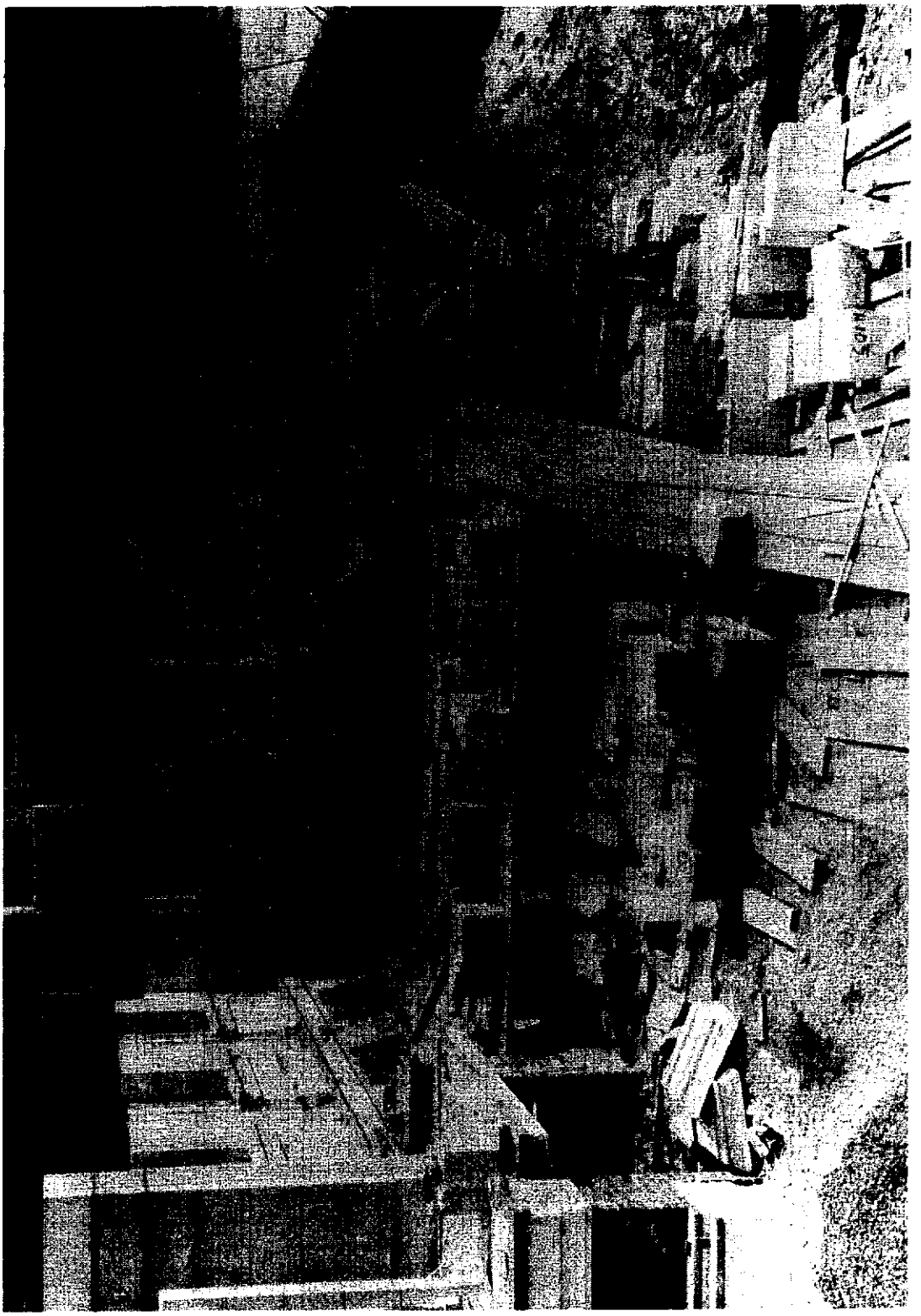
18. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, July 16, 1917, page 8, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 5.

plain granite walls, necessary for the full expression of the blue-white color and fine grain of the Concord stone. The second is the delicacy and complexity of certain parts of the Greek Doric order that encircles the building; these details taxed the skill of stonecutters and sometimes exceeded the cohesive strength of the granite.

To oversee this exacting work, the Society turned to Timothy P. Sullivan. A native of Ireland, Sullivan (1844-1926) had come to the United States at about sixteen and learned granite cutting at Quincy, Massachusetts. Soon moving to Concord and becoming an expert stone carver, Sullivan sought partners and opened a small granite business. Securing the granite contract for the United States courthouse and post office in Concord, Sullivan's firm soon began to supply stone for similar buildings and to purchase several quarries. In the 1880s, Sullivan became the agent of New England Granite Works of Westerly, Rhode Island, to quarry Concord granite for the Library of Congress. Upon completion, the library was the largest granite building in the world, establishing the national reputation of Concord granite as a material and of Sullivan as an expert on stone. Sullivan was later employed as inspector for the massive dry dock at the Portsmouth Navy Yard and for the Senate Office Building in Washington. In January, 1909, Sullivan agreed to work for the Society as its inspector at $5.00 per day; within a month, an engineer at the Brooklyn Navy Yard tried in vain to entice the quarryman to New York at $14.00 a day.[19]

In March, 1909, with the new building's foundations well underway, the contract for erecting the remainder of the structure was awarded to the Central Building Company of Worcester, Massachusetts, as general contractors, for a total price of $204,740. The New England Granite Works of Rhode Island was chosen as the supplier of granite. This firm owned a Concord quarry that it had purchased from Timothy Sullivan in preparation for the

19. "Timothy P. Sullivan, A Modest Citizen of Concord, Who Has Done Things," *Granite Monthly* 54 (September 1922), pp. 306-16.



Timothy P. Sullivan (1844-1926) of Concord, noted granite contractor and overseer of the Society's construction, inspecting the granite work of the partly completed first story (top center), 1909. This photograph is one of a series taken by the Kimball Studio to keep Edward Tuck informed of progress. NHHS Collections.

Timothy P. Sullivan (1844-1926) of Concord, noted granite contractor and overseer of the Society's construction, inspecting the granite work of the partly completed first story (top center), 1909. This photograph is one of a series taken by the Kimball Studio to keep Edward Tuck informed of progress. NHHS Collections.

Library of Congress job, and its president, James G. Batterson, was a recognized expert on the New England granites. The Lautz Company of Buffalo, New York, was selected to supply and set the marble for the interior.

It was not long before tensions began to develop, centering mainly on the Society's strict interpretation of architect Lowell's granite specifications. These had called for all exterior ashlar to be "ten cut work," with a surface finish achieved through the cutting of ten fine striations per inch across the surface of the stone. This treatment produced a virtually smooth but unpolished texture when viewed from a distance of more than a few feet. The specifications permitted no stone to reveal the slightest cupping, depression, or unevenness on its face. Lowell arranged to have a stone with the required finish available for all bidders to examine; when the contract was awarded, half of this sample was kept on the job and half was taken by the stone supplier to the quarries as a standard of workmanship.

In June, 1909, with the walls of the building laid only up to the first floor level, Edward Miner, president of the Central Building Company, and James Batterson, president of the New England Granite Works, travelled to Concord to complain personally to Benjamin Kimball about Timothy Sullivan's strict oversight of the granite cutters and setters. Batterson brought with him new samples of finished stone, requesting that these be substituted for the original sample as a new standard of workmanship.

Lowell would have none of it, noting that "it would be distinctly inadvisable to accept any new standard for the granite cutting or surfacing," and reiterating Timothy Sullivan's authority to reject any stones that did not conform strictly to the established standard.[20] Within days, fifteen stonecutters had picked up their tools and quit, stating that "they could not and would not try to cut the work as called for by Inspector Sullivan." Batterson,

20. Guy Lowell to Benjamin A. Kimball, June 25, 1909, New Hampshire Historical Society Archives, Series 3, "New Hampshire Historical Society Building." Unless otherwise cited, the following correspondence is from the same collection.

Presiding over the laying of the cornerstone on June 9, 1909, Benjamin Kimball expressed the hope that "this building of granite, marble, steel and bronze [may] exist forever." NHHS Collections.

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Presiding over the laying of the cornerstone on June 9, 1909, Benjamin Kimball expressed the hope that "this building of granite, marble, steel and bronze [may] exist forever." NHHS Collections.

who had employed Sullivan years earlier to superintend the cutting of granite for the Library of Congress and to inspect the stone for the Senate Office Building, now found himself lamenting to Kimball that "we are up against it if we are to be held up on inspections on the rest of the building as we have been on the [work up to the] water table."[21]

An uneasy truce was arranged, with Batterson agreeing to send four huge blocks of stone from Concord to Westerly so that the company's best men could be employed in cutting them into monolithic Doric columns for the two front pavilions of the building. In turn, Lowell instructed Sullivan to allow the contractors to set certain stones in the building's walls and to do "very slight surface trimming" later.

These adjustments allowed the walls to continue to rise, but the exacting work proceeded slowly and cold weather loomed long before the building was ready to receive its roof. Central Building Company also held the contract for the western addition to the state house, which was rising at the same time as the Society's building. From the Society's perspective, the firm seemed to give preference to that job, which was completed by the autumn of 1910. New England Granite Works continued to lag in supplying cut stone that would pass Sullivan's rigorous inspection.

In September, 1909, Lowell formally notified the Central Building Company that a breach of contract would occur if the building were not roofed before winter. By early December, with the walls only four feet above the second floor level, Sullivan discovered the masons laying granite when the temperature stood at only twenty-two degrees, and setting blocks without the support of a proper backing of brickwork, in clear violation of specifications. When, at the middle of the month, Sullivan saw the contractors "putting lumps of frozen sand, unmixed, as large or larger than your fist, into the [concrete] mixer," Lowell ordered all work halted and the building's uncapped walls protected by tarpaulins for the duration of the winter.[22]

21. James G. Batterson to Benjamin A. Kimball, July 6, 1909.

22. Guy Lowell to Central Building Company, December 4, 1909; Timothy

The winter of 1909-10 halted work before the roof could be capped; in the spring the tarpaulins were thrown aside and the walls again began to rise toward the cornice. NHHS Collections.

The winter of 1909-10 halted work before the roof could be capped; in the spring the tarpaulins were thrown aside and the walls again began to rise toward the cornice. NHHS Collections.

The Society's granite problems were far from over. With the return of mild weather in the spring of 1910, the walls again began to rise toward the cornice of the building. Among the characteristic elements of the Doric cornice are square projecting blocks called *mutules*; the bottoms of these are studded with a multitude of discs called *guttae*. In the cornice of the Society's building, each mutule has eighteen guttae, which are spaced closely and are only about an inch in diameter. Each of the massive stones of the cornice includes one full mutule, two half mutules, and the heavy crown moulding above them.

The stonecutters quickly discovered that the guttae were inclined to shear off after being cut, spoiling otherwise perfect cornice stones. In some instances, the cutters proceeded to reattach the broken discs with brass screws. The lynx-eyed Sullivan identified and condemned thirty-three stones with mended guttae, scornfully denouncing the patching technique as "done after the dentist's trade." Admitting that the New England Granite Works was likely to lose from ten to fifteen thousand dollars on the strictly-enforced stonecutting contract, Sullivan nevertheless advised Kimball that "if the bars are let down on this item, every other sub-contractor and the general contractor will take it as an excuse to try and cheapen the remaining work."[23]

In the end, the problem was solved through Edward Tuck's generosity. In order to maintain the highest of standards while easing the contractor's distress, Tuck agreed to contribute a certain proportion of the value of the labor entailed in recutting most of the imperfect stones. New England Granite Works calculated the cost of replacing twenty-nine of the cornice pieces at $2,100; Tuck eventually paid $1,300, or $50 for each of twenty-six stones that were re-cut.[24]

P. Sullivan to Guy Lowell, December 6, 1909; Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell, December 17, 1909; Guy Lowell to Central Building Company, December 21, 1909.

23. Timothy P. Sullivan to Benjamin A. Kimball, March 17, 1910.

24. New England Granite Works to Guy Lowell, May 16, 1910; Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell, October 14, 1910; New England Granite Works to Henry W. Stevens, October 27, 1910.

Meanwhile, comparable problems had emerged with the vaulting and marble sheathing of the building's lower rotunda. The design of the lower rotunda called for the pouring of a concrete dome, to be covered with a heavy veneer of Siena marble. In May of 1910, the results of the contractor's having mixed and placed concrete in freezing weather became apparent. As Sullivan reported,

> The contractors have commenced to pick away the loose concrete of the dome work done last December, and I find in some places after going through the top surface, that the stuff is nearly all loose sand and stone with here and there a piece of solid concrete about three or four inches through, and the frost not quite out yet, as it gets damp in the sun. These few pieces lay like boulders in a bank. I am afraid that a large part of this dome concrete . . . would be unfit to do the work the concrete dome is expected to do.[25]

Sullivan further recalled that as the dome was being poured the previous December, "almost the entire cement in this part of the dome was allowed to run through the dome to the basement. . . . The clear cement ran all day into the floor beneath and from there down the basement stairs, so that I think that there is no cement left in a large mass of this stuff . . . ."

The defective dome was only part of the problem. By the late fall of 1910, the windows of the building, not yet glazed, were covered with cloth screens and the boilers fired up to provide heat for the marble setters and plasterers. Marble for the rotunda, floors, and trim of the building was being cut in the Buffalo shops of Lautz Company. But it quickly became apparent that only a fraction of the needed marble was being prepared, and in late October Lowell threatened to exercise his contractual right to discharge the marble contractor and substitute another in his place.

The Lautz Company promised to speed its work without compromising quality. In January, 1911, Lowell traveled to Buffalo to inspect the marble being prepared for the lower rotunda and found the stone "excellent." Within a month, however, Kimball was forced to telegraph Lowell, "Lautz

25. Timothy P. Sullivan to Guy Lowell, May 16, 1910.

Company foreman has set this morning a patched stone that was rejected by . . . Sullivan."[26] This was followed by a flurry of disputes over patched marble, with Lowell sending an assistant to Concord to try to mediate between the contractors and the ever-alert Kimball and Sullivan.

The battle over patched marble continued for several months. Because the variegated nature of Siena marble creates a tendency for pieces to break during final finishing, Lowell finally agreed to permit certain stones, properly patched at the marble works, to be set in the walls, but only when approved by Sullivan. Even this concession did not solve the problem, and by early March of 1911 there was a possibility that the Lautz Company was "prepared to throw up the work and enter into a legal battle on the point."[27] The marble subcontractor continued to set condemned stones in defiance of Sullivan's inspections and Lowell's orders. Finally, on March 21, Lowell ordered all marble work on the building halted. Within a week, Lautz Company had sent representatives from Buffalo to the job, ordered all condemned pieces of stone removed, and begun to comply fully with Lowell's specifications.

New marble problems emerged during the summer of 1911, and Kimball's continuing frustration in dealing with recalcitrant contractors evolved into a well-founded anxiety that the structure would not be finished in time for Edward Tuck's long anticipated trip from Paris to dedicate the building in the autumn. By August, Kimball noticed a hollow sound as he walked over some of the marble floor tiles then being set. Kimball sent Sullivan to Boston to compare this work with the tiling at the Museum of Fine Arts, reporting to Lowell that when Sullivan returned and "walked over our floors which are like a sounding board, he came to me full of wrath."[28]

Fully exasperated with the Central Building Company and their

26. Guy Lowell to Benjamin A. Kimball, January 2, 1911; Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell (telegram), February 9, 1911.

27. Guy Lowell to Benjamin A. Kimball, March 8, 1911.

28. Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell, August 1, 1911.

marble subcontractor, Lowell and Kimball decided on a radical course of action. The original contract had called for the building to be completed by May 1, 1910. Now, there was serious question whether the structure could be completed even a year and a half after that date. Knowing that the Central Building Company was facing financial difficulties, the two proposed that the New Hampshire Historical Society would discharge the company, paying it a small profit. The Society would assume full control of the job and deal directly with those subcontractors or individual craftsmen who could be trusted to meet the highest standards of workmanship. Having already lost much money on the job due to the Society's unwavering adherence to Lowell's specifications, Central Building Company agreed to relinquish their contract in return for payment of outstanding charges for completed work, plus a $500 profit.[29]

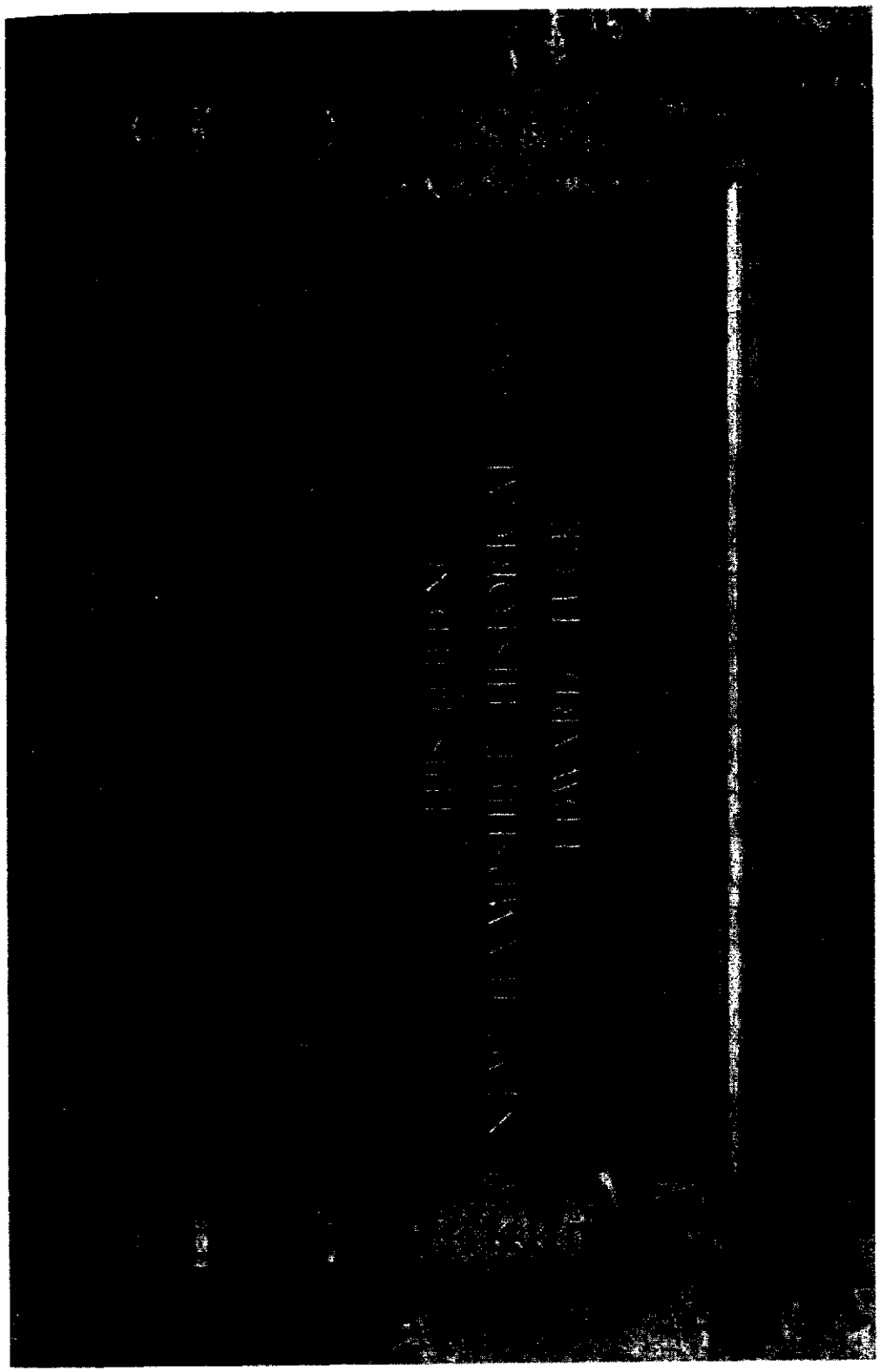
The Society now had a little over two months to complete the building before the Tucks, whose ship was expected at the end of September, would be obliged to take return passage to Paris. The full burden of overseeing the work fell upon the shoulders of the seventy-eight-year-old Kimball.

Still greatly vexed over the hollow-sounding floor tiles that Lautz Company had set, Kimball had a marble setter lift some of the tiles. Beneath the bedding mortar, Kimball found "half to three-quarters of an inch of spent lime dust where all those hollow tile appear." Lowell had officially condemned only fifteen of these improperly-set tiles during final settlement with Central Building Company. With no other recourse, Kimball agreed to pay from his own pocket the cost of re-setting the remainder — 1,200 in the auditorium alone.[30]

Nor was this Kimball's only contribution in money to the perfect completion of the building. Early in 1909, Kimball had begun

29. Agreement between the Central Building Company and the New Hampshire Historical Society, September 1, 1911.

30. Guy Lowell to Benjamin A. Kimball, September 9, 1911; Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell, September 11, 1911; "Timothy P. Sullivan," *Granite Monthly* 54 (September 1922), p. 314.



Benjamin Kimball personally commissioned this bronze tablet, set within a marble enframement, from the Gorham Company of Providence in honor of Edward Tuck. From Dedication of the Building of the New Hampshire Historical Society, *1912.*

arrangements to obtain a monumental bronze tablet that would commemorate Edward Tuck's generosity. Seeking the advice of Lowell and of the Gorham Company of Providence, Kimball at length chose a composition supplied by Gorham and had the tablet cast at his own expense. Lowell designed an elaborately carved marble enframement at the landing of the grand staircase, where the tribute is seen through the massive vaulting and illuminated by a skylight above.

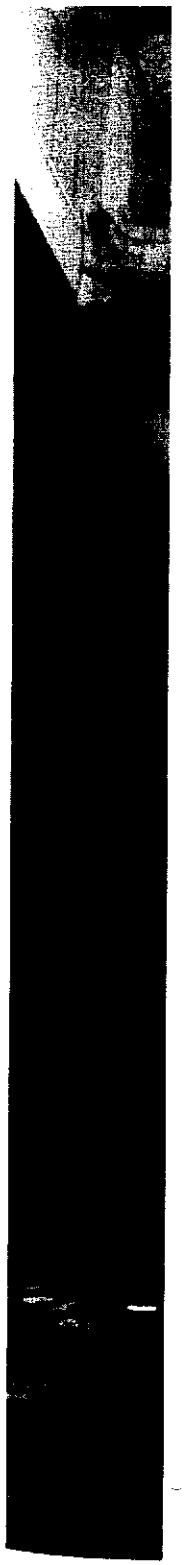
As the day of the building's dedication neared, the William H. Jackson Company of New York, bronze subcontractors for the building, offered to set Kimball's tablet free of charge. Kimball found himself unprepared for this kindness, almost unique in the troubled three years since construction had begun. "It has been so unusual for any contractors to offer to do any little extra work gratuitously," wrote Kimball, "that I hardly know how to express myself for this act of courtesy on your part."[31]

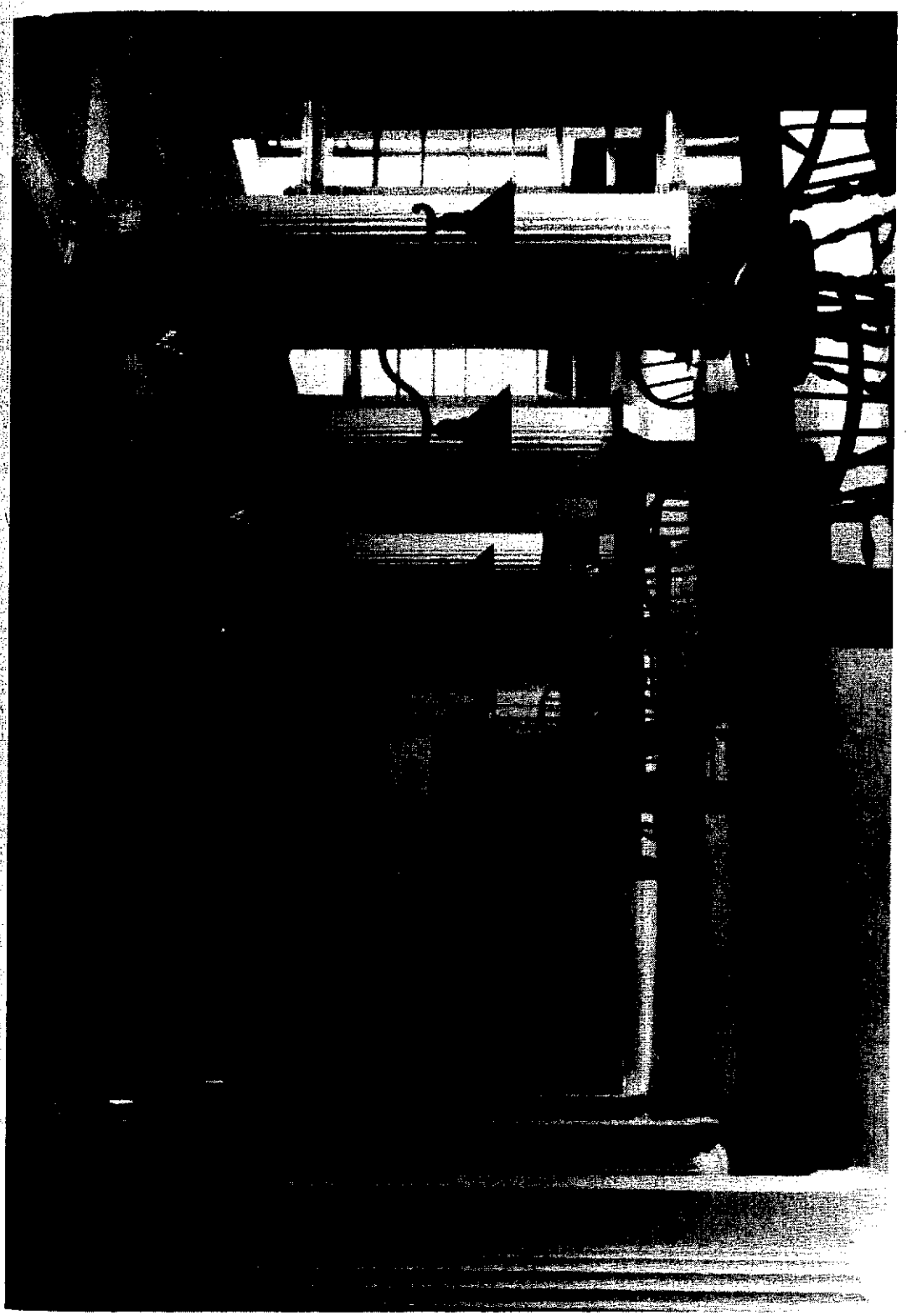
Above the fireplace in the Society's reading room is a marble tablet bearing a somewhat cryptic dedication to the "Contributors in Historical Research for the Maintenance of this Building and the Purchase of the Land Upon Which It Stands." Easily overlooked by users of the library, this tablet cost much in time, trouble, and money. Kimball went so far as to describe the stone as "one of the finest individual pieces of art construction in the building, and perhaps next in importance to the Daniel Chester French design over the entrance."[32]

The tablet resulted from Kimball's long campaign to obtain contributions for the purchase of the several properties that made up the Society's lot. In order to interest potential donors, Kimball had Lowell draw up a design for the tablet, then had that design reduced to pocket size so that it could be shown to

31. Gorham Manufacturing Company to Benjamin A. Kimball, February 16, 1909; Gorham Manufacturing Company to Benjamin A. Kimball, July 15, 1909; Gorham Manufacturing Company to Benjamin A. Kimball, March 3, 1910; William H. Jackson Company to Benjamin A. Kimball, November 18, 1911; Benjamin A. Kimball to William H. Jackson Company, November 21, 1911.

32. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, July 16, 1917, p. 7.





The library reading room, as photographed in 1911 by the Kimball Studio before the books had been brought from the North Main Street building. Problems involving the production of the stone tablet over the fireplace, with its inlaid bronze lettering, were among the last of many faced by the building committee as dedication day drew near. NHHS Collections.

prospective contributors at any opportunity. Eventually, Kimball obtained pledges of at least a thousand dollars each from more than thirty donors.

Lowell's concept for the contributors' tablet called for a single piece of flawless stone to be bordered by a marble architrave above the library fireplace. Set into this stone would be letters of cast bronze, each requiring a precisely cut recess. As late as the summer of 1911, only four months before the dedication of the building, no appropriate stone had been found. When one promising type of Vermont marble proved to have too greenish a cast, Lowell suggested to Kimball that the tablet would probably have to be fashioned from three separate pieces of foreign statuary marble of the proper color. Kimball resigned himself to the situation with a phrase that had become his virtual motto through years of tribulation: "What cannot be helped must be endured."[33]

At the last possible moment, however, Timothy Sullivan located a perfect piece of marble in New York. Kimball had the stone rushed to Boston for the inlaying of the letters by bronze specialists T. F. McGann and Sons. But a new problem loomed. As Kimball later recalled,

> When the work was one-half finished, the workmen wanted to give up the job on account of their eyes failing. I got in communication with them and offered them a few days off every week and full pay to rest their eyes so they could go on to completion. The men accepted my offer and after some weeks the tablet was finished.[34]

Now, all was ready for the official opening of the building. On November 23, 1911, at the last possible moment before the Tucks had to meet their ship for the return to France, the New Hampshire Historical Society building was dedicated with impressive orations and ceremonies that were memorialized in a book-length publication. That publication, like the building itself, is a polished

33. Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell, August 1, 1911; see also, *Historical New Hampshire* 28 (Fall 1973), pp. 219-20.

34. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, undated memorandum on contributors' tablet, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 5.

and perfect product of its era. Neither edifice nor book betrays the slightest hint of the long-sustained struggle embodied in the Society's home. In completion, as Edward Tuck said, the New Hampshire Historical Society's building stood "in its perfection of artistic design and of material execution, [as] a source of gratification and pride for all time to the people of New Hampshire."[35]

The symbolic key to the building was passed from the hand of Edward Tuck to that of Benjamin Kimball. Kimball delivered the token of "New Hampshire's Temple of History" to president Daniel Hall. Tuck then turned the eyes of the Society away from the trials of the past and to a bright future. "It is my expectation," said the philanthropist, "that the Historical Society, in its home which we are dedicating today, will take on new life and usefulness, that an awakened interest in it throughout the State will be made manifest by an increasing membership, and that its precious possessions will be largely added to now that their security and preservation are permanently assured."[36]

Some years later, when Judge Corning asked for Kimball's and Tuck's memories of the "unwritten history" of the Society's building, Tuck paid tribute to Kimball's essential role in the creation of the structure:

> It was only my faith in your wonderful taste and knowledge in artistic and architectural matters, and in your fidelity and zeal, heart and soul, in the work, that made me willing to place such a great sum of money in such an object. I can truly say that I consider it perhaps the happiest inspiration of my life to have gone into this enterprise, and to have brought it with you to so magnificent a conclusion, of which we and our successors will never cease to be proud.[37]

35. *Dedication of the Building of the New Hampshire Historical Society*, p. 36.

36. Ibid., p. 37.

37. Corning, *Unwritten History*, p. 14.