
Traditions in Conflict: The Philadelphia City Hall Site Controversy


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Philadelphia's early city halls were modest compared to today's massive building at the intersection of Broad and Market. The first (1710) even served as a market hall; stalls were on the ground floor and the meeting rooms above. It was located at Second and High (later Market).¹ The second (1791) was another small building, at Fifth and Chestnut on the northeast corner of Independence Square. Neither location was where the civic center was supposed to be, according to the plan prepared for the founder William Penn by his surveyor Thomas Holme in 1682. That was of course at Broad and Market, or Centre Square as it was called at the time, which was eight blocks west of Independence Square.² In the eighteenth century everyone recognized that Centre Square was not a practical site because the Delaware River was the city's main highway to the world, and most Philadelphians lived nearby, in the neighborhoods in the eastern half of Penn's grid.

Ironically, in the nineteenth century, when the population had moved westward and Centre Square had become the center that Penn had envisioned, relocating the city hall was debated for decades before it was finally approved in 1870. Historians have viewed the episode as a real estate squabble between rival property owners, with profit-seeking politicians on both sides.³ But the site controversy was far more complex in the sense that important planning questions were also raised. The center of the business district, for example, remained near the Delaware River, and city halls were seen by many as serving primarily the business community. Over the years Independence Square had also created a civic tradition of its own, and many felt it was the appropriate place for a new city hall. In short, nineteenth century realities provided legitimate challenges to Penn's seventeenth century vision. This essay takes another look at that complex story.⁴

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In the 1790s Independence Square was closer to the business district than Second and Market, but the city moved there for another reason. The state assembly, which had been meeting on the Square since the 1730s, had been courting the federal government (then meeting in New York) in the hope of making Philadelphia the nation's permanent capital. In 1790 Congress decided



instead to create the District of Columbia, but as a consolation prize it agreed to stay in Philadelphia for ten years while work began on the new capital.⁵

Unfortunately the State House was not large enough to accommodate all the federal officials, and this is why the assembly asked the city to move to the Square. The county officials were also willing to help out. They had been meeting at the old city hall, but they now added a new court house to the Square—or more precisely, the state assembly did since it appropriated the money. (The city paid for its building, largely from the proceeds of a lottery authorized by the assembly in 1789.)⁶

The city and county buildings flanked the State House on north end of the Square on Chestnut Street. The complex was called the “Public Buildings,” but in architectural terms they were thought of in the singular, as an integrated design. The new buildings shared the State House’s red brick and white trim Georgian style, and they were connected to the State House by arcades. With trees and other greenery in a park at the south end of the Square, it was undeniably the most impressive civic center in the new nation.⁷

But the Square was also in a period of transition. With population growing in the western parts of the state, the state assembly relocated to Lancaster in 1799 before settling permanently at Harrisburg. The following year the federal government moved to its new home on the Potomac River. Though anticipated, these departures were a bit of a blow to Philadelphia’s ego. On the positive side, the city and county now had Independence Square to themselves; or almost so, since the federal and state district courts did not move away.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the local governments managed to make do with their buildings and the space available in the State House, or Independence Hall as it was also being called.⁸ By July of 1837, however, the city’s committee on public property announced that it had “arrived at the conclusion that the building in which the Councils now sit cannot be so altered as to afford suitable accommodations to those officers whose duties require them to be near each other, and at the same time to admit of the sessions of the Councils.”⁹

Space was also a problem for the county commissioners. In January of 1838 they were thinking of moving, but only if the councils were willing to join them. Centre Square, or Penn Square, as it was then being more frequently, was the site they wanted. It was still public property. It was also available and open. Benjamin Henry Latrobe’s graceful Grecian temple that housed the first water works on that site had been torn down after becoming something of an eyesore through years of neglect.¹⁰

Many councilmen, however, were doubtful about Penn Square. Population was moving into that neighborhood and beyond, but downtown Philadelphia was still anchored in the blocks near the Delaware river.¹¹ “In a century or two”



A map of Philadelphia in 1800. The shaded area indicates where building has taken place. The built-up district extends as far west as Eleventh Street, but most is still east of Sixth.

Penn Square would make a fine site, one councilman said with a bit of hyperbole; but his remark reflected the view of many.¹²

Workers in the construction trades had an interest in the debate, particularly since the city had been hard hit by the national recession that followed the Panic of 1837. At a meeting on March 13 their leaders endorsed the plans for Penn Square. "The buildings now occupied are utterly insufficient for the transaction of accumulating public business of our increasing city," their resolution said. As Penn had envisioned, the city was growing westward, and it was Penn's "design and intention" that this "crowning Square" would become "the ultimate business centre of Philadelphia."¹³



A moonlit view of the public buildings in 1838. The city hall is to the left of Independence Hall; the county court house is on the right.

Jobs for workers, however, was the resolution's main concern. It asserted that city officials, as "appointed guardians of the welfare of the people," had a responsibility "to ward off and alleviate the distress that threatens these useful classes of citizens, by giving them employment in making needful public improvements."¹⁴

The joint committee on city property supported the workers in a report sent to the common and select councils on March 29. A new city hall would help ease the unemployment problem in the construction trades, the report said, and the committee recommended the northwest corner of Penn Square. It also submitted an ordinance to authorize spending \$100,000 to get the work underway.¹⁵

In the council debates that followed, the proposal seemed to gain approval when in May opponents introduced the idea of a referendum as a way of postponing action. Penn Square backers, and workers in particular, did not want this. At a rally a few days before, they had attacked the idea with another resolution that urged the council to act "without further delay" because there already was a "clear and unquestionable demonstration of the public will" in favor of the Penn Square plans.¹⁶

The councils decided against a referendum, but they could not come to any agreement on an ordinance to begin the work at Penn Square. The proposal was in effect raising the issue of whether or not the city should create jobs. The idea was tempting for the councils, but it meant asking for more tax dollars at a time the city's financial state was none too healthy. As for the county commissioners, they also hesitated to do anything, subject as they were to pressures similar to those on the city councilmen.

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In the 1840s Philadelphians in and out of government continued to discuss a new city hall, but the decision-making did not move ahead, in part because the riots of that turbulent decade brought more attention to concerns over the police and fire services, and in part because the city was increasingly preoccupied with the issue of whether or not it should join the suburbs in creating a metropolis that would encompass all of Philadelphia County.¹⁷ Consolidation finally took place in 1854, and this should have marked a turning point in the city hall debate in the sense that by joining its neighbors in the county, Philadelphia greatly increased its own government and exacerbated the space problem. In fact, there were so many new councilmen that they were forced to move next door to Independence Hall where two rooms were fitted up on the second floor.

In January of 1858 the committee on city property reported favorably on a resolution to put two new office buildings on Independence Square, at a cost not to exceed \$400,000. The select council approved the plan, but the common council did not act on it. The following year a similar resolution went through the committee, and again the select council approved it. This time the resolution included plans prepared by Samuel Sloan, a prominent architect who had done many office buildings but was best known for his designs for homes and his popular reference book, *The Model Architect* (1851).¹⁸ But once again the common council refused to act.

The impasse reflected the differences in the membership of the councils. At the time, every ward had one representative in the select council whereas the common council was based on population, with one for every 2,000 taxpayers. The select council favored Independence Square because more wards were closer to it than to Penn Square, and their residents did not want the civic center to move. The common council was dominated by friends of Penn Square because population was steadily marching westward, and the wards on the west side had more votes.¹⁹

The tug between east and west in the councils no doubt in part reflected the influence of property owners near Independence and Penn Squares. But the location of the civic center was also of interest to all Philadelphians, who in those days had to pay their taxes, and water and gas bills, in person; hundreds every year also served on juries.

In April of 1860, the state legislature tried to settle the dispute by passing a bill to create a commission which would take charge of the project. The members were to be the mayor, the presidents of the select and common councils, and the judges of the state and county courts that met in Philadelphia. Although the state had no explicit powers over the city in this instance, it was not unusual for the legislature to act as a third-party in settling disputes.²⁰ The councils also gave the bill their unofficial blessing since there had been no organized efforts to oppose the bill when it was being considered by the legislature. The Philadelphia press also seemed satisfied. The *North American* commented that the commission "will cut the gordian knot into which this business has long been tied."²¹

By the provisions of the bill, the commission was limited in its choice to Independence Square and Penn Square. In early July it made a decision by a 4-3 vote in favor of Penn Square. Independence Square had too little space for a city hall, the commission said, especially since plans were afoot to build a Revolutionary War memorial in the center of the Square.

The city had first involved itself with the proposed memorial in July of 1852 when it invited each of the state legislatures of the thirteen original state to send a representative to discuss a monument to the founding fathers. Delegates from ten of the states attended and approved the idea, which the councils formally endorsed.²² Unfortunately there were no funds available, and the participating states were expected to provide the \$150,000 needed for the project. They proved reluctant to act. But the project was still very much alive. In fact, state representatives met again in Philadelphia in June shortly before the commissioners made their decision.

During the summer the commissioners held a competition for new buildings on Penn Square. The winner was John McArthur, Jr., a respected Philadelphia architect then in his late 30s. McArthur had come to Philadelphia from Scotland as a boy and began work as an apprentice carpenter for his uncle. He attended evening classes in drawing and design at the Franklin Institute where he studied under Thomas U. Walter, one of the city's leading architects.²³ In 1848 McArthur won his first commission, the design of a building at the Philadelphia House of Refuge where he was working as superintendent of works with his uncle. By the 1850s he had a wide variety of commissions, including churches, hospitals, college and office buildings, hotels and private homes.²⁴

McArthur's plans called for two, two-storied "U" shaped buildings facing each other on opposite sides of Broad Street north of Market Street. The buildings were in classical design, one with a dome and the other with a steeple, with broad fronts and wings on each side, to be finished with Pennsylvania marble. The new buildings were to cost the city \$1,300,000.²⁵

Almost from the beginning, the project faced stiff criticism, particularly from lawyers, who were frequent visitors to Independence Square. Most had

their offices on Chestnut and Walnut west of Sixth Street. As the *Sunday Dispatch* noted, moving the government buildings meant that the lawyers would "be ousted from their ancient quarters and compelled to follow the courts." Yet the paper felt the move might be a blessing in disguise for lawyers who owned their offices because insurance companies, banks, wholesalers and brokers were moving from their old location near Front into the neighborhood west of Sixth Street, and rent no doubt would be rising there.²⁶

Possible financial benefits notwithstanding, the lawyers were still critical of the commission's decision. At a special meeting of bar association held a special meeting on July 16, Eli Price, a prominent Philadelphian who played an important role in the consolidation campaign, urged his fellow lawyers not to complain too loudly about the personal inconveniences because "the community would perceive, or suspect, that the members of the bar are very much influenced by their own selfish interests in this matter." The law creating the commission was a bad one, he said, and the commissioners had powers that should rightfully belong to the city.²⁷

A few spoke in favor of the Penn Square site, but the majority were opposed. They adopted a resolution against the move to Penn Square and challenged the legality of the commission. They also filed a suit that went promptly to the state supreme court. In August the court ruled that the commission was legal. This was not what the lawyers wanted to hear, but they must have been cheered by another part of the judicial ruling.

The court said the councils must approve the commission's budget, which meant that the project could still be challenged—and it was in the fall when the councils met. The main debate centered around the claims of Thomas Ketchem, a contractor who had begun court action to stop the project. The commissioners were angry at Ketchem, and most particularly select councilman Theodore Cuyler, who opposed the Penn Square site but felt the commission had done a responsible job in picking a contractor.

Cuyler dismissed Ketchem's claims that he was blocked from the bidding because of a legal technicality. The real reason, he said, was that Ketchem could not find financial backers in time to put up the bond for him. Cuyler admitted that Ketchem's bid was lower, but he said the bid was unrealistic if the job was to be done properly. A bad low bid, claimed Cuyler, was against "the public interest," since it might result "in defective material," or "slighted workmanship," or "the total failure of the unhappy contractor to complete his contract."²⁸

Unfortunately the controversy continued, because in many respects the real problem was John Rice, the contractor that the commission had approved. Rice was experienced and competent, but he was also strong-willed politico who made his share of enemies. Rival contractors were happy to keep the criticism going if it meant that he would not get the contract.

In October the select council refused to approve the contract. In commenting on the events, *The Press* said

We have mighty influences to prevent the accomplishments of important projects, but little efficient power to promote them. The interests of real estate owners, the prejudices for or against particular locations, the jealousies and antagonisms of rival architects and contractors, conspire to prevent the consummation of the improvements which the public welfare demands, and which any or all of these parties would be most clamorous advocates of if their private views and purposes could be served.²⁹

The project ended officially in April of 1861 when the commission expired, it having no further authorization from the state. Mayor Alexander Henry said "in all probability a long period must lapse before it will be revived," a prediction that proved accurate. The Civil War brought new concerns.³⁰

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For years the councils had temporized by renting office space in the neighborhood of Independence Square. This was not a popular policy, particularly with the Penn Square backers, who in 1867 made up the majority of the joint committee on city property. When asked to approve rental of the Adelphi Building, the committee not only refused—it returned to the councils an ordinance for a new civic center at Penn Square. Renting the Adelphi Building "could only mitigate the existing evils and inconveniences." As for the intersection of Broad and Market, it was "very nearly the center of population and very nearly the geographical center," the committee said.³¹

The streets are wide, and the architecture would be more imposing, and would appear to better advantage than upon a narrow street. Broad Street must ultimately be the great avenue of the city. . . . Let us commence the work NOW, and let the buildings to be erected be commensurate with the dignity and position of a city with its million of inhabitants, the seat of manufactures and wealth, and which is justly regarded as the fountain head of literature, medical lore and jurisprudence.³²

Once again the Independence Square backers managed to defeat the proposal. The *Public Ledger*, which also opposed the Penn Square site in 1860, said of the committee report that what started out "as a simple affair" of leasing a small building had turned into "a grand project for creating an extensive and expensive pile of public buildings, and for removing the court houses and public offices from the situation they have so long occupied and where the public have been accustomed to visit them."³³

Why does the location of our public buildings have to be changed?, the paper asked. It admitted that the city's population and some of its business were moving westward to new neighborhoods, "but the same thing has happened in other cities, both in this country and abroad, and yet elsewhere we hear of none of these feverish and fidgety periodical spasms about changing the sites of their public offices." New York, Boston, and London had all built new government building in recent years, it said, but the new structures were near the old.³⁴

The *Public Ledger* also argued that neighborhoods like Independence Square, which had developed special functions over the years, should be treated very carefully, so far as city planning was concerned: "By changing the uses of property, the values of property itself is subjected to fluctuations. Relations that ought to be permanent, or at least not subject to unnecessary changes, become unsettled, and there is no end to the circle of disturbing influences."³⁵

A new twist in the debate took place in the fall of 1867 when a proposal was offered to make Penn Square a cultural center. Apparently it was an attempt at cooptation by the Independence Square lobby, for if a cultural center occupied Penn Square, the government buildings would no doubt stay where they were. A cultural center was not quite the same as having city Hall, but the papers that wanted to keep the government buildings at Independence Square made it sound very attractive. The *Public Ledger* said the proposal "would create a centre of science, literature, and art very analogous to the British Museum."³⁶ The *North American* predicted that theaters, music halls and other amusements

would naturally seek to preserve their popularity by obtaining locations in close proximity to the great museum, so that besides being the focus of literature, science and art, this section would soon become the centre of amusement as well, and would likewise attract to itself the great hotels, and in a short time the tradesmen would follow with their jobbing and commission and importing houses.³⁷

The proposal was approved by both councils and then sent to Harrisburg. Specifically the bill asked for the right to permit the Academy of Natural Sciences, the Library Company, the American Philosophical Society, the Academy of Fine Arts and the Franklin Institute, "or other kindred or like associations" to build on Penn Square.³⁸

The lawyer Eli Price added some arguments supporting the request in a brief report that was sent to Harrisburg along with the bill. Price said that when Penn dedicated the Square, buildings there should be, in Penn's words, "for public concerns," such as "a meeting house, assembly or state-house, market-house, school-house." Price felt the buildings in the city's proposal fitted Penn's requirements. The cultural institutions would be in the spirit of Penn's "school-house" dedication, he said, since they met the dictionary definitions of a school

as " 'a place or establishment in which persons are instructed in arts, sciences, languages or any species of learning.' " ³⁹

However imaginative Price's reasoning, the legislators rejected the bill during the 1867-1868 session, in large part because they had doubts about the propriety of permitting private societies to build on public property. But the project stayed alive indirectly in December of 1868 when the councils authorized a new city hall on Independence Square. The Penn Square supporters had offered amendments to name their site instead, but they did not block the bill by delaying tactics, which suggests that they were willing to let the civic center stay at Independence Square because they still had hopes for a cultural center for Penn Square.

Mayor Morton McMichael signed the bill on his last day in office. He was the publisher of the *North American*, whose offices were at Fifth and Chestnut, and therefore he may not have been an impartial participant in the decision. ⁴⁰ McMichael did not advocate the bill in public addresses, but he had supported the cultural project for Penn Square and his paper supported Independence Square as the site for the government buildings. It seems likely that McMichael worked out some agreement behind the scenes with the Penn Square backers.

The councils also approved a commission to oversee the preliminary planning for the new city hall. The councils had not been happy with having a commission when the state had created one for them in 1860. But this was going to be their own commission, run by the councils who named all twenty-six members, who included private citizens, councilmen (the heads of both chambers among them) and the mayor and other city officials.

A subcommittee headed by Thomas U. Walter oversaw the design competition. This time there were seventeen entries compared with three in 1860. Once again John McArthur was named the winner. No doubt as his mentor in earlier years, Walter must have had some special feelings toward McArthur, but it is doubtful that this had anything to do with the outcome. If anything, McArthur's reputation as an architect was higher at the time than it was in the earlier competition. He had been busy with many government commissions during the war. ⁴¹

McArthur proposed a U-shaped complex of classical design, with the main building on Walnut Street on the south side of Independence Square and office wings extending up Fifth and Sixth Streets to Chestnut Street. To provide room for the wings, the county court house and the city hall would be demolished, as well as the hall of the American Philosophical Society, which had been built in the late 1780s. ⁴² Although they were all sites of importance in the city's earlier history, the buildings were not considered historic enough at the time to be worth saving. Independence Hall, however, was recognized even then as a national shrine. McArthur left the hall intact between the wings at the top on

Chestnut Street—overshadowed to be sure, but nevertheless an honored centerpiece of his plan.⁴³

In the early months of 1869, McArthur's plans became increasingly irrelevant because once again the councils were disagreeing; new members who were not happy about the deal made the previous month had entered the common council in January of 1869. On January 28, the common council replaced Independence Square with Penn Square in a substitute measure for the ordinance approved in December. The select council rebuffed the move by voting to postpone any action on the bill.

In March the common council passed a resolution which asked the state legislature to permit a referendum regarding the site, but the select council again voted to postpone any action. On April 1 the select council voted down the council bill that was passed in January. A week later the common council passed a resolution insisting that the select council go along with Penn Square. Once again, the select council refused, and this killed the project.

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In October of 1870, a referendum finally settled the site debate. It was authorized by state legislators, who argued that the voters deserved the right to make the decision for themselves, given the deadlock in the councils. This was the same solution proposed by the common council the year before, and Philadelphia legislators who favored the Penn Square site played an influential role in persuading their colleagues in Harrisburg to support the measure.

As for the site choices, Independence Square could no longer be used. Voters would have to pick between Penn Square and Washington Square, the latter a block south and west of Independence Square. Given the decades of debate that focused on Independence Square as a possible site, this was a major change, but the news did not come as a surprise. In fact the city councils had been suggesting Washington Square as a possible alternate site.

At that time the city and state were lobbying in Washington for Philadelphia as the site for the 1876 Centennial Exposition, and there was growing concern that digging up the square might have a negative effect on the public relations campaign. Not surprisingly the papers that favored Penn Square as the site for the new city hall had been particularly eloquent in their support of Independence Square. The *Sunday Dispatch* observed: "Let not Philadelphia ask that she shall receive special favors from the nation," if she "deliberately destroys the only spot of ground which binds her to the history of the country."⁴⁴

The legislature also created a commission to oversee the construction of the new building. It consisted of appointed private citizens; the only elected officials who served were the mayor and heads of the two councils. At the time this decision was not controversial, but there was debate over another provision of



The new city hall at Broad and Market. The French Renaissance style was popular in the 1870s when the building was designed. The tower is forty stories high.

the referendum bill: if voters chose Washington Square, Penn Square would be reserved for a cultural complex like the one proposed in 1867.

Apparently the legislature made this deal to insure the support of the referendum by Philadelphians who wanted the public buildings at Washington

Square. It was seen as helping their cause because influential museum elites, some of whom might otherwise prefer city hall at Penn Square, would now push for Washington Square because they would have Penn Square for themselves.

In the editorial debate in the weeks preceding the referendum, the deal drew heavy fire from the press favoring Penn Square, especially from the *Sunday Dispatch*, which had been an outspoken opponent when plans for a cultural complex had been first raised. The paper called it a "contemptible log-rolling arrangement" which supporters of Washington Square had pushed because they were fearful that their project "could not succeed on its own merit."⁴⁵ The legality of using of Washington Square was also questioned, the papers saying that Penn had intended it to be forever an open park. They noted also that Washington Square had been used as a potter's field in the eighteenth century and as a military burial ground during the American Revolution. Digging up the Square would violate all those graves, they said.

The papers favoring Washington Square skirted these touchy subjects and concentrated on the theme that the city hall should stay where the business district was located. This was not an issue that the Penn Square papers could easily dismiss. The *Evening Telegram* admitted that Washington Square was the business center, but it was confident that

it cannot long remain so in this progressive age; and if business moves westward as rapidly during the next twenty-five years as it has during the last quarter of a century, by the time the proposed new public buildings are erected, Broad and Market will be as near to the business center as Washington Square.⁴⁶

It is impossible to say what influence, if any, the editorials had on voters, but in the referendum, the Penn Square site for the new public buildings won by a decisive majority, 51,625 to 32,825. In his analysis of the vote, Howard Gillette, Jr. says it followed Democratic-Republican party lines, "with the totals for the Penn Square comparable, by percentage, to the totals for the Republican candidates for office." But the parties had stayed away from the referendum controversy, neither endorsing a site; party affiliation does not seem to have been a particularly significant factor.⁴⁷

Where the voters lived, however, apparently *was* important. If we exclude four wards: 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 22nd wards, where neighborhoods were more or less equally divided in distance from the two Squares (and the vote by ward was also divided 2-2), we find one hundred percent correlation between proximity and ward vote, all the wards closer to Penn Square giving a majority for that site and all the wards closer to Washington Square doing the same for the site nearest to them. The 1870 census figures show that some 343,000 Philadelphians lived in the wards closer to Penn Square, compared to 234,000 in the wards nearer to

Washington Square. This helps to explain why the vote was so lop-sided, and why the Penn Square boosters pushed for a referendum.

The subsequent history of the construction of the new city hall in many respects reflected the bitterness of the site debate. Many of the opponents never gave up hope that the project would be halted and the site changed to Washington Square, and they tried to get the commission abolished. It survived, however, with McArthur once again chosen as the architect.⁴⁸ The work began in August of 1871, but it did not start in earnest until the following year and was not officially finished until 1901, the long construction time in part the result of niggardly funding by the hostile councils who were unhappy with the commission because it controlled the contracts.

In retrospect, it is not surprising that there was so much controversy. As the *Public Ledger* pointed out in 1867, New York, Boston, and London had added buildings or constructed new city halls near the original sites. They were all close to the business and financial districts, and it was unusual to move government buildings to a new neighborhood. Philadelphia's case was special in the sense that it had a plan of a revered founder. New traditions had grown at Independence Square, but they were not strong enough to match the founder's vision—or the westward march of population.

As for the business district, a new one was growing near Broad and Market by the time the city hall was completed, fulfilling the prophesy of Penn Square backers who said business would move westward. Although the older business district showed remarkable resilience, Broad and Market became the focal point for downtown Philadelphia in the twentieth century, and it seemed apt when the city council passed ordinances in the late 1980s to preserve a few of the remaining sight lines of William Penn atop the city hall tower.⁴⁹ Demographic, economic and political factors all played a role, but it was still Penn's plan that shaped the city.

Notes

1. The city rented the market stalls to raise revenue; see Ellis Paxton Oberholtzer, *Philadelphia: A History of the City and its People*, I (Philadelphia, 1912), 103; and J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia 1609-1884*, I (Philadelphia, 1884), 187. Before the city hall (or town hall or court house as it was called in those days) was built, Second and High Street had been the site of the town bell, and official proclamations were read there; John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1887), 350.

2. For the making of the plan, see Sylvia Doughty Fries, *The Urban Idea in Colonial America* (Philadelphia, 1977), 79-107; also Mary Maples Dunn and Richard S. Dunn, "The Founding, 1681-1701," in Russell F. Weigley, ed., *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York, 1982), 4-10.

3. See Howard Gillette, Jr., "Philadelphia's City Hall: Monument to a New Political Machine," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 97 (April 1973), 234-37; also John Maass, "Philadelphia City Hall: Monster or Master-

piece?" *AIA Journal*, 57 (February 1965), 27. Other accounts include Dorothy Gondos Beers, "The Centennial City, 1865-1876," in Weigley, ed., *Philadelphia*, 425-26; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, III, 1772-73. Like Gillette and Maas, these authors focus on the final stages of the controversy, 1868-70.

4. Plans for the Benjamin Franklin Parkway created another major dispute in nineteenth century Philadelphia. They were discussed for more than twenty years before gaining official approval in the early 1900s. See David B. Brownlee, *Building the City Beautiful: The Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia, 1989).

5. For the lobbying politics, see Kenneth R. Bowling, *Creating the Federal City, 1774-1800: Potomac Fever* (Washington, D.C., 1988).

6. The county moved before the city, in 1789 when the lobbying effort was underway. Construction financial details are from Edward R. Riley, "The Independence Hall Group," in *Historic Philadelphia; from the Founding until the Early Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1953), 7-42.

7. The Virginia capital at Williamsburg also had impressive buildings, but they were not close together in an integrated complex.

8. The local governments made most use of the State House offices in the wings, which were remodeled and enlarged in 1812-15. The second floor of the main building was used as a museum between 1802 and 1827 under the direction of Charles Willson Peale, the noted artist and naturalist; Riley, "The Independence Hall Group," in *Historic Philadelphia*, 30-33. For the museum story, see also Charles Coleman Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum* (New York, 1980).

9. Appendix of the Journal of the Select Council (1836-37), 74. Philadelphia had a bicameral system with a common and select council until 1919.

10. The Centre square waterworks served the city from 1801 until the 1820s when a larger works at Fairmount was completed.

11. In the early nineteenth century Seventh Street was the dividing line between the older wards along the Delaware and the newer ones

on the west side. Many of the latter went all the way to the Schuylkill River, as did the North and Middle wards that included the Penn Square district. As a result, it is difficult to use ward census figures to say exactly how many were living near Broad and Market. By 1830, there were approximately 37,400 Philadelphians living west of Seventh Street compared to 42,900 in the wards along the Delaware River; figures from John Daley and Allen Weinstein, *Genealogy of Philadelphia County Subdivisions* (Philadelphia, 1966).

12. *National Gazette and Literary Register*, January 10, 1838.

13. *Inquirer*, March 16, 1838.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Appendix of the Journal of the Select Council (1837-38), 51-55.

16. *Public Ledger*, May 24, 1838.

17. Sam Bass Warner, Jr. in his *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968) suggests that consolidation was the result of social control motives of elites who saw a bigger city providing a bigger police force. But there were many other factors, among them old-fashioned boosterism as Philadelphia sought its suburbs to increase its size and population. See my article, "The Philadelphia Consolidation of 1854: A Reappraisal," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 110 (October 1986), 531-48.

18. See Harold N. Coolidge, Jr., *Samuel Sloan: Architect of Philadelphia, 1815-1884* (Philadelphia, 1986).

19. In 1858 there were twenty-four wards, six of which were between Vine and South Streets or the old city limits before consolidation. Four of these wards were west of Seventh Street; they had thirteen members in the common council compared to six for the two wards along the Delaware. The west side wards in the former suburbs that were close to Penn Square also had more councilmen than the new wards on the east side that were near Independence Square. The 14th and 15th wards in the Spring Garden, for example, had nine councilmen compared to six in the 11th and 12th wards, in the Northern Liberties north of Vine Street near the Delaware River.

20. At the time it was pointed out that Dauphin county had recently asked the legislature to create a commission to settle a similar dispute over new buildings.
21. *North American*, April 4, 1860.
22. In a resolution passed in October of 1852, the councils said the space was not to exceed sixty feet in diameter, but that was a generous size in a relatively small park; see Appendix of the Journal of the Select Council (1851-52), 225-27. See also *Proceedings of a Convention relative to a National Monument in Independence Square* (Philadelphia, 1852).
23. Walter is best known for his design of the dome and wings of the Capitol building in Washington, a commission of the 1850s. Walter first gained national prominence in the 1830s with his Greek Revival design for Founder's Hall at Girard College in Philadelphia.
24. Sandra Tatman and Roger W. Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930*. (Boston, 1985), 510-11.
25. *Memorandum of Drawings of John McArthur, Jr.* [1860], Philadelphia City Archives; also Philadelphia Common Council, *New Buildings* (Philadelphia, 1860), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
26. *Sunday Dispatch*, July 8, 1860.
27. *Public Ledger*, July 17, 1860.
28. *Sunday Dispatch*, September 30, 1860.
29. *Press*, Oct. 15, 1860. The mention of rivalries between architects in the editorial alludes to some maneuvering by Samuel Sloan during the council debates in October. He lobbied with members of the select council to offer his designs as an alternative to McArthur's. This raised eyebrows because Sloan had been one of the unsuccessful contestants in the competition.
30. *Fourth Annual Message of Alexander Henry* (1862), 16.
31. Journal of the Select Council (1866-67), 243-246.
32. Ibid.
33. *Public Ledger*, February 16, 1867. The newspaper owned a building near Independence Square, and this may have influenced its views.
- But nearly all papers were near the square, and many supported the move to Penn Square. So the relationship between editorial views and real estate ownership is not altogether clear.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. *Public Ledger*, October 2, 1867.
37. *North American*, October 17, 1867.
38. Journal of the Select Council (1867-68), 70-73.
39. Ibid.
40. See my comments in note 33.
41. McArthur was architect for the Quartermaster General's Department in Philadelphia. He designed and supervised the construction of twenty-four temporary hospitals; Tatman and Moss, *Biographical Dictionary*, 511.
42. Apparently the members of the American Philosophical Society were willing to go along with the idea. They had been planning a move for years, in order to build a bigger hall. In fact in 1859 the members had even sold the hall to the U.S. government, which needed more room for its courts. The deal fell through, however, as did another plan to sell to the city in the same year. In 1863 the city agreed to buy the hall within five years, at a sale price of not more than \$78,000. But the city changed its mind, and the society gave up an option to buy property near Penn square; William E. Lingelbach, "Philosophical Hall," in *Historic Philadelphia*, 52-53.
43. The main building of Independence Hall never seems to have been in danger of being torn down, but Philadelphians did not treat it with much reverence until a visit by the Marquis de Lafayette in 1824; see Riley, "The Independence Hall Group," in *Historic Philadelphia*, 33-34. In 1849 John Haviland proposed a plan similar to McArthur's for the square. In discussing Independence Hall, Haviland said, "I start with the supposition that we are not such Vandals as to destroy this Temple of Liberty, or even to disfigure it;" Haviland, *Communications to the County Commissioners, City Councils, and County Board on the Subject of New Public Buildings for the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1849), 4-5.

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44. *Sunday Dispatch*, April 17, 1870. The accounts of the controversy cited in note 3 mention the shift to Washington Square but not the reason why.
45. *Sunday Dispatch*, September 25, 1870.
46. *Evening Telegram*, October 10, 1870.
47. Gillette, "Philadelphia's City Hall," 237. Analyzing the vote by party has many problems. Many Democrats, for example, lived in the working-class neighborhoods near the Delaware River. They no doubt voted for Washington Square; but so would have Republican businessmen and lawyers whose offices were nearby.
48. Thomas U. Walter was not on the selection committee, but he continued to show an interest in his former pupil by acting as a consultant to McArthur during the construction phase. Walter died in 1887. McArthur died in 1890 when the building was nearing completion.
49. For years there was an unofficial "gentlemen's agreement" that no building in Philadelphia would be higher than the statue, which was approximately forty stories high. In 1984, after much soul-searching, the city approved construction of the sixty-story One Liberty Place on West Market. This triggered the construction of more new skyscrapers near City Hall.
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