

JOHN GALEN HOWARD and the University of California

The Design of a Great
Public University Campus

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The University of California and the 1898–1899 International Competition for the Hearst Architectural Plan

For late-1890s California, which in 1900 would celebrate its fiftieth anniversary, the century ahead promised unlimited opportunity. The state's population had grown to almost one and a half million, and the economy, once based firmly in mining and agriculture, had grown to embrace large-scale commerce, transportation, and manufacturing. Although San Francisco dominated the Bay Area, other cities, such as Oakland, were taking shape. Berkeley had two foci: an industrial center on the western waterfront and a largely residential district with some commercial development to the east around the University of California, founded in 1868.

The university's location on the east side of the bay opposite San Francisco was somewhat fortuitous. The concept of a state institution of higher learning, embedded in the state constitution, had been discussed in and out of the legislature since the early days of statehood. Although various sites were promoted for the institution, none was backed by a strong commitment of money and energy. The income of state residents was not especially high, making the notion of taxation for higher education unpopular. Many citizens thought that the government was usurping new power in even considering the idea. Compulsory education even at the elementary level was not enacted until 1874; by 1879 the state had only sixteen high schools.

Publicly supported higher education had long been a missionary undertaking, espoused by Congregational and Presbyterian clergymen such as Horace Bushnell and Samuel H. Willey, chaplain to the state constitutional convention. They were joined in the cause by influential

lawyers and businessmen such as Frederick Billings, John W. Dwinelle, and John B. Geary. After several unsuccessful starts, this grassroots movement finally gained momentum and financial support in May 1853, when the Reverend Henry Durant, who was to be the first president of the new university, arrived in California and professed his goal of establishing a women’s seminary. Shortly thereafter, a joint meeting in Nevada City of the Congregational Association of California and the Presbytery of San Francisco resolved to open an academy called the Contra Costa College in rented space in Oakland. In 1855 this preparatory boarding school was incorporated as the College of California.

The college trustees, headed by Billings, acquired four blocks of land bounded by 12th, 14th, Franklin, and Harrison Streets in what was to become the downtown area of Oakland. Funds for the new “seminary of learning” would come from the sale of 46,000 acres of public lands granted in 1853 to the state by Congress. Buildings were constructed for residence and instruction, but the site soon proved problematic. The city was growing up around the campus, increasing the value of land beyond



View of the University of California campus from the east, ca. 1890.

the college’s means to acquire it and threatening the students—as the trustees saw it—with unwholesome influences. They therefore began to explore new sites in less populated, more pastoral areas. After acquiring several tracts and a ranch about four miles northwest of Oakland, the twelve trustees stood with friends of the college on a large rock (later named Founders’ Rock) that commanded a sweeping view of the area and dedicated the new grounds as a Seat of Learning. Although this event took place on April 16, 1860, financial instability postponed the college’s move to the new site for over a decade.



A view of the central campus from the north showing Bacon Hall on the left and North and South Halls on the right. The ca. 1885 photograph shows a loop road defining the grassy plot for the flagpole and footpaths crisscrossing the surrounding grounds.

In 1862, the Morrill Act gave each state 30,000 acres of surveyed public land for each of its U.S. senators and representatives for the establishment of a land-grant college. Four years later, the California legislature used the proceeds from the sale of its 150,000-acre grant to found an Agricultural, Mining, and Mechanic Arts College, to be located on land near the new College of California site.

During a meeting of the trustees that took place in 1866 at the base of Founders' Rock, Frederick Billings, surveying the grand view, quoted several lines from an essay, "On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America," by the eighteenth-century Englishman George Berkeley, bishop of Cloyne: "Westward the course of empire takes its way;/the first four acts already past,/A fifth shall close the drama with the day;/ Time's noblest offspring is the last." He suggested that the town in which the new college was located be named after the bishop, and at a later meeting, on May 24, 1866, the board of trustees of the college unanimously endorsed his proposal.

The next year the trustees of the impoverished College of California offered its Berkeley and Oakland properties to the state on the condition that the humanities would be added to the state college to create "a complete university." The legislature then repealed the 1866 act founding the Agricultural, Mining, and Mechanic Arts College, and in its place passed a charter act establishing the University of California, signed by Governor H.H. Haight on March 23, 1868. A board of regents was appointed to govern the university, and Henry Durant was elected its first president. The University of California graduated its first class of twelve men—called the "Twelve Apostles"—in 1873, by which time 17 faculty members served 191 students.

In the expansive post-Civil War era, the country badly needed more educational institutions to create a skilled population for the development of the sparsely settled West. A postwar migration of people to cities had taken place on an unprecedented scale, creating chaotic social conditions along with new wealth. But while social and political reformers focused on the problems associated with urban growth, a growing number of civic-minded leaders were attracted to loftier projects, including the Beaux-Arts-inspired architectural visions that took shape during the 1880s.

A much published and discussed embodiment of these visions was the Boston Public Library (1887–95). Designed by Charles Follen McKim of McKim, Mead & White, the building drew inspiration from Italian Renaissance palaces and the Parisian Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève (1838–50), an internationally famous building designed by Henri Labrouste. As a publicly funded institution supported by Boston's wealthy and cultured citizens, the Boston library testified to the power of art and architecture to express civic pride.

Before its completion, however, a far grander expression of civic art took center stage: the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. An ensemble of monumental buildings, the "White City," as it was called, gave form to the aspirations of the civic-minded whether in government, business, or the arts. The Chicago event opened the way to a succession of expositions in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century: the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, 1901; the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, 1904; the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle, 1909; the Panama-California International Exposition in San Diego, 1915; and the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, 1915. Under the combined influence of the expos and various reform movements, municipal art leagues, civic improvement associations, and city art commissions were established in major cities. Such organizations provided a client base for architects associated with the *École des Beaux-Arts* who had been trained in the classical language of architecture.

Given the enthusiasm for civic-minded construction at the turn of the century and beyond, the idea of an international competition for a permanent architectural plan for the University of California campus was not surprising. By the end of the 1890s, the school was growing quickly, with the faculty numbering around one hundred, and student enrollment nearly two thousand. Within a few years it would rank among the nation's top ten in size. Although the university was nicknamed the "Athens of the West," the physical campus with its hodgepodge of buildings did not come close to matching its reputation. In addition, there was competition from the rival school to the south to consider: in the mid-1880s, Leland Stanford had attracted national attention by enlisting the talents of leading architects to design a master plan for the university he planned to build in Palo Alto as a memorial to his son. Stanford University opened in 1891.

In 1895 the prominent San Francisco lawyer Jacob B. Reinstein, one of the Twelve Apostles and newly appointed to the board of regents, asked his fellow regents, the faculty, and the alumni to suggest ways to improve the university. Bernard Maybeck, a mechanical drawing instructor in the engineering department and once a student at the *école*, proposed an architectural competition. At first Reinstein dismissed Maybeck's idea as unrealistic, even calling Maybeck "a freak," whom he and his fellow regents did not take seriously. But soon he was won over—possibly by Maybeck's infectious enthusiasm for the grand vision—and endorsed the proposal, saying that state legislators and private individuals would give more to the university if they could see an "actual picture" of the architecture that would perpetuate their names in stone. In December 1895 Reinstein publicized his views in a newspaper article, stating, "Let us build, not rapidly, not lavishly, but slowly, yet grandly, that there may greet the commerce which shall whiten the Golden Gate and the civilization which shall



*A portrait of Phoebe Apperson Hearst
in the Trustees Publication of the
International Competition of 1899.*

grace this western shore an architectural pile of stately and glorious buildings which shall rival the dreams of the builders of the Columbian Exposition, which shall do honor and justice to a superb Republic and to its most favored State, and which, even in their ruins, shall strike the beholder with wonder and rapture.”⁵

Following the regents’ approval of the competition in May 1896, a campaign to raise funds received such enthusiastic support that within a few months \$4 million had been pledged. The major donor was Phoebe Apperson Hearst, widow of Senator George R. Hearst, who, in a letter to the regents dated October 22, 1896, offered to pay both for the competition and for two buildings of the accepted plan.⁶ One building was to be a memorial to her late husband, who had made his fortune in mining. “I desire to say,” wrote Mrs. Hearst, “that the success of this enterprise shall not be hampered in any way by a money consideration.” (Mrs. Hearst had approached then President Martin Kellogg in late 1895 with the intention of funding a building for the College of Mining in memory of her husband. News of Maybeck’s proposal may have caused her to see her building project as an appropriate part of a grander scheme.)

Her magnanimous offer accepted by the regents, Mrs. Hearst then appointed a board of trustees for the competition. J.B. Reinstein was the chairman; the members were California governor James H. Budd and William Carey Jones, professor of jurisprudence. As the coordinator of the competition, Maybeck seems to have been largely responsible for the prospectus, which outlined an unparalleled—indeed, scarcely believable—opportunity for architects:

The purpose is to secure a plan to which all the buildings that may be needed by the University in its future growth shall conform. All

the buildings that have been constructed up to the present time are to be ignored, and the grounds are to be treated as a blank space to be filled as a single beautiful and harmonious picture as a painter fills in his canvas.

The site of the University of California at Berkeley, California, comprises two hundred and forty-five acres of land, rising at first in a gentle and then in a bolder slope from a height of about two hundred feet above the sea level to one of over nine hundred.... It is thought that the advantages of the site, whose bold slope will enable the entire mass of buildings to be taken in at a single coup d'oeil, will permit that production of an effect unique in the world, and that the architect who can seize the opportunity it offers will immortalize himself.

It is seldom in any age that an artist has had a chance to express his thought so freely, on so large a scale, and with such entire exemption from the influence of discordant surroundings. Here there will be at least twenty-eight buildings, all mutually related and, at the same time, entirely cut off from anything that could mar the effect of the picture. In fact, it is a city that is to be created—a City of Learning—in which there is to be no sordid or inharmonious feature. There are to be no definite limitations of cost, materials, or style. All is to be left to the unfettered discretion of the designer. He is asked to record his conception of an ideal home for a University, assuming time and resources to be unlimited. He is to plan for centuries to come. There will doubtless be developments of science in the future that will impose new duties on the University, and require alterations in the detailed arrangement of its buildings, but it is believed to be possible to secure a comprehensive plan so in harmony with the universal principles of architectural art, that there will be no more necessity of remodelling its broad outlines a thousand years hence than there would be of remodelling the Parthenon, had it come down to us complete and uninjured.

In the great works of antiquity the designer came first, and it was the business of the financier to find the money to carry out his plans. In the new building scheme of the University of California, it is the intention to restore the artist and the art idea to their old pre-eminence. The architect will simply design; others must provide the cost.⁷

The plan was to provide buildings for administration, the library, a museum, auditoriums, gymnasia, areas for military exercises, habitations, clubhouses, an infirmary, general service buildings for such things as heat, power, and light, and the means of “approach and communication,” or

access roads and pathways. Fifteen departments were projected, within divisions classified as Higher Historical and Literary Instruction, Higher Scientific Instruction, and Higher Technical and Applied Instruction.

There was much to do to get the competition under way. Maybeck and Professor William Carey Jones spent several months seeking advice from presidents of large universities, leading educators, architects, painters, and sculptors. Meanwhile, Maybeck and Reinstein set out for Paris to consult eminent architects about the program for the competition.

Apparently Maybeck did not discuss the competition with the local architectural community, even though he certainly knew its leaders. The choice of Paris as the headquarters for his work on the competition reflects his devotion to the place where he had spent several memorable years studying. Having arrived in San Francisco in 1890 and settled in Berkeley, where he started an as yet very modest practice working in other architects' offices, he was aware of the region's provinciality regarding architecture. That many of those who entered the competition would have no real knowledge of the site and its geographic context was not a disadvantage, in Maybeck's judgment, for great art was universal. At the *école* students worked on projects for distant places they knew nothing about. Indeed, winners of the institution's highest award, the Grand Prix de Rome,⁸ often created buildings for fictitious sites: a hospital in the Alps, for example, or a government center for "a capital city."

Maybeck spent most of two years working on the competition in Paris. The "programme" (the French term was used, a nod to the *École des Beaux-Arts'* legacy of such competitions) was written mainly by Julien Guadet, professor of theory at the *école*, and William Ware, head of Columbia University's School of Architecture. In 1897, after the program was completed and the jurors selected, Maybeck visited various European cities to promote the competition. Sets of photographs of the campus, maps showing boundaries and indicating some of the topography, and copies of the programme in English, French, and German were deposited with architectural societies and with city officials at home and abroad. In addition to J.B. Reinstein, who represented the university, the jury was composed of eminent architects: Jean-Louis Pascal of Paris, Paul Wallot of Berlin, Norman Shaw of London, and Walter Cook of New York. The competition had two stages, judged, respectively, in Antwerp, Belgium, from September 30 to October 4, 1898, and in San Francisco from August 31 to September 7, 1899.

The published European responses to the news of the competition often alluded to the American disposition toward materialism. The *Spectator*, a London review, commented favorably that the projected "city of learning on the slopes of the Pacific" reflected "the desire to identify California in the thought of the world with something else than mines,

ranches, and newly enriched millionaires.” On a more envious note a speaker at Oxford said, “To us Oxonians who bear uncomplainingly our poverty and lessened revenues there is brought a report that in California there is a university furnished with so great resources that even to the architects (a lavish kind of men) full permission has been given to spare no expense.” In the United States, an 1898 issue of *Harper’s Weekly* exclaimed, “There has never been anything in the history of education or of architecture quite like the competition which the University of California owes to the munificence of Mrs. Hearst.” Linking the competition to Leland Stanford’s creation of the eponymous university down the peninsula from Berkeley, the article went on to state that “the multimillionaires of California have attested their interest in education on a scale which has excited the wonder of mankind.”⁹

By July 1, 1898, the deadline for the first round of the competition, 105 entries had been received in Antwerp, where they were displayed in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts. The jury met from September 30 to October 4 and awarded prizes to eleven plans, the authors of which were invited to compete in the second round. The finalists were also invited to make an all-expenses-paid visit to the site, of whom nine did so. Considering that three of the finalists were from France, one from Austria, one from Switzerland, and six from the eastern United States, the offer was indeed generous. Only three California firms entered the competition—B.J.S. Cahill, Alexander Oakey, and Coxhead & Coxhead—and none was among the finalists. Strangely enough, none of the architectural firms most prominently associated with the *École des Beaux-Arts*, such as McKim, Mead & White or Carrère & Hastings, submitted designs.

One of the finalists was the New York firm of Howard & Cauldwell, and in January 1899 John set off “to the Golden Gate,” arriving in San Francisco on January 29. His mission was to study the site and assess the strengths and weaknesses of his proposed scheme. In letters to his wife he reported that he had called on Regent Reinstein and then hurried to Berkeley to see the site: “and wonderfully beautiful it is!” he wrote, “the air is full of Spring.” After lunch at the Bohemian Club in San Francisco hosted by the mayor, the superintendent of the city’s parks, John McClaren, drove Howard around the city. That night he dined with Regent Reinstein and friends and later wrote Mary that he had many invitations to lunch and dinner. The following days were a whirlwind of activity, his visits to Berkeley alternating with social events in San Francisco, where, for example, he viewed the sunset from the Cliff House. Given the relatively slow pace of transportation at the time, his periods of rest and reflection were few and short.

On February 6 Howard described a strenuous day on the campus

talking to the heads of the Departments of Chemistry and Mechanical Engineering about their needs. The next day he wrote Mary that “the air in Berkeley is an elixir; the views are an inspiration. Tomorrow I go to Reinstein’s office for a consultation with Friedlander, Stokes and Maybeck.” Howard was also to have lunch with Professor George H. Howison of the Department of Philosophy, an eminent scholar, who had come from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and occupied the first endowed chair in the university.

As a competition finalist, Howard was guaranteed access to powerful figures in the university. He also knew the architects Willis Polk and Ernest Coxhead from his year in Los Angeles in 1887, both of whom had by now made names for themselves in San Francisco. Although Polk was ambitious by nature, he did not enter the competition. Coxhead did enter with an interesting scheme that, unlike those of the finalists, did not display a strong Beaux-Arts bias.

Alas, Howard’s letters from San Francisco contain no reflection on his triumphant return to San Francisco in 1899 relative to his disdainful dismissal of the city eleven years earlier. After an extended stay marked by congenial meetings with university figures and new acquaintances on both sides of the bay, Howard returned to New York.

For those finalists who chose to visit the site the main revelation lay in its topography. The competition prospectus noted the 700-foot change in elevation from sea level to the range of hills to the east but did not describe how hilly the land designated for the campus buildings was. Since preliminary site visits had been out of the question for distant competitors, the assumption followed in the winning designs of a uniform flat or sloping site for ensembles of buildings was logical. Further, the combination of increasing elevation and an obvious westward orientation to the “Golden Gate” made tiers of buildings rising from west to east only natural. True to the prospectus, the finalists’ competition boards presented the “entire mass of buildings” so that they might be taken in “at a single coup d’oeil.”

The programme for the second stage of the competition was substantially the same as that for the first. However, on behalf of the competition trustees J.B. Reinstein clarified certain of the competition guidelines. The first concerned student housing. Although the number of students was projected to be 1,500, he now qualified the question of how they were to be housed with the statement, “Whether or not dormitories will be necessary for the students will not be decided for many years,” thereby diminishing the importance of the dormitories to the composition as a whole. He also lowered the space requirements for military exercises and a botanical garden; both elements, said to have been exaggerated in the first-



phase submissions, were now to be located away from the campus.¹⁰

A more important issue was the treatment of the existing landscape: “Some competitors have, in their arrangement of their plans, almost entirely covered up the water courses and conducted them in subterranean conduits under different parts of their plans. We again call attention to the great importance attached to these water courses and to the more important groups of trees on the grounds.” He referred specifically to the hilly nature of the site, stating the university’s “wishes to reserve, for the construction of its edifices, all the resources at its disposal.... It cannot devote them to costly remodeling of the grounds, such as would necessitate extensive or deep excavations or fillings, or any considerable work in erecting embankments, which, besides the disadvantage of excessive expense, would cause preliminary delay and inconvenience.” The competitors were expected to “respect the general topography of the grounds and to follow it as closely as possible ...and to permit only such remodelings and gradings as might be necessary for a general system of roads and means of communication.”

The final submissions did not reveal serious consideration of these amendments to the guidelines. Dormitories still contributed importantly to the plans, although they often seem to have been used as compositional pawns. Some of the finalists made a feature of the south fork of Strawberry Creek and its wooded environs, along with other wooded areas. Most of the building groups still appeared to rest on graded land. This apparent lack of concern for the last and most emphasized of the trustees’ points is not surprising, since even those who visited the site would not have had time to study the lay of the land in great detail. Nor would the surveys provided them have been adequate to the task of making the architectural forms reflect the site with any accuracy. In any case, this was the kind of issue usually addressed once the competition winner had been declared.

Then too, Mrs. Hearst’s munificence doubtless raised false expectations of the university’s wealth. In fact, the university was far from financially secure.¹¹ In 1887 the legislature had imposed a one-cent tax on every \$100 of taxable property in the state; a decade later this ad valorem tax was raised to two cents. Little of this money went to the new university, however: powerful interest groups, notably in agriculture, generally opposed legislative support for development of the campus, perceiving the university as elitist. Thus, it was only with the help of such donors as Mrs. Hearst that the university president at the conclusion of the competition, Benjamin Ide Wheeler, was gradually able to build a roster of wealthy donors who would fund the campus buildings erected during his administration (1899–1919).

The second stage of the competition was judged in September 1899,

OPPOSITE, TOP

Émile Bénard’s first-prize entry in the 1899 International Competition for the Phoebe A. Hearst Architectural Plan for the University of California. The cohesiveness of the plan derived from courtyards around the major buildings that were tied together with covered walkways. Strawberry Creek meandered through a parklike setting in the southwest campus corner. The gymnasium complex occupied the Hillegass Tract to the north.

BOTTOM

Howard and Cauldwell’s fourth-prize entry for the international competition showed a composition for the central campus that differed from Bénard’s in its use of individual buildings set in two descending tiers flanking a central open space with a cascade and terraced stairways. A domed auditorium building dominated the axis.

in San Francisco. Submissions were to be deposited at a post office or railway or steamship company office having regular mail service to New York; the parcels would then be sent by fast train to the secretary of the University of California in Berkeley. These instructions call attention to the fact that nearly half of the eleven entries came from Europe; the rest would travel from the northeastern United States: five from New York City and one from Boston. The finalists, notably, were from those areas most in the shadow of the *École des Beaux-Arts*.

The four jurors—Pascal, Wallot, and Cook, plus John Belcher from London, replacing Shaw, who was ill—met from September 1 to 7 to make their judgments. They visited the site twice to verify compliance with the program, the second time using photographs of the drawings to assess the adaptability of each submission to the local topography. As anticipated, the jury members found the quality of the final entries to be of “high character” and to bear evidence that their authors had expended “great thought and study” on their presentations.¹²

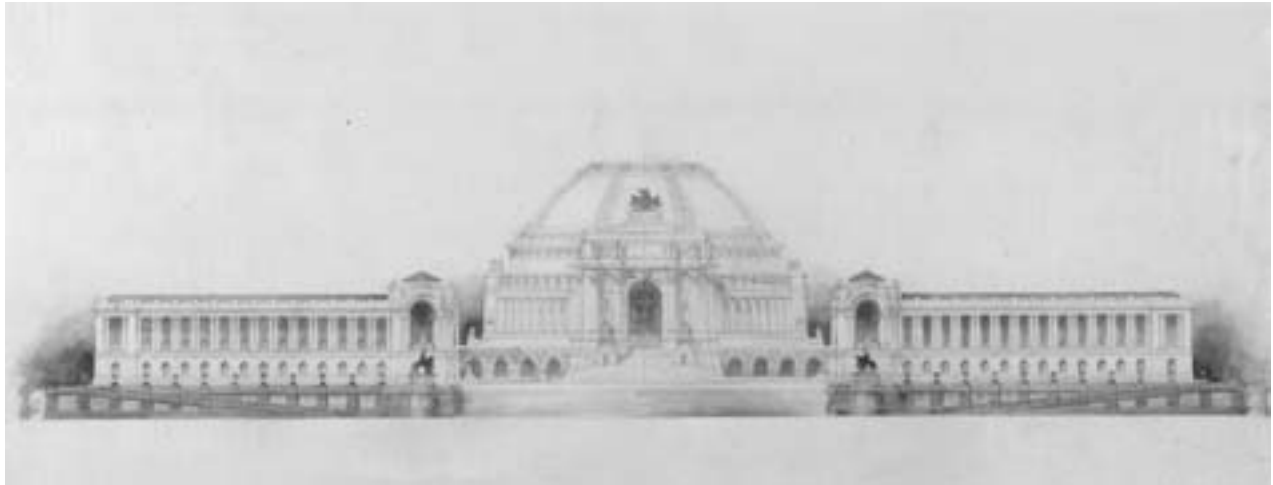
The jury listed several points that they considered of particular importance in their deliberations. First was whether the submission represented a university as opposed to a mere architectural composition. Second, it was critical that the grouping of buildings would allow future expansion without crowding. Third, the purpose of several departments had to be apparent from their building’s design. And finally, the architectural forms were to fit the configuration of the grounds and preserve their natural beauty.

The first-place winner, *Émile Bénard* of Paris, had submitted one alternate to his final scheme (he had submitted two schemes in Antwerp) and had added three drawings to the plan, section, and elevation requested for the study of one of the building groups. *Bénard* had won second place in the 1866 competition for the *Grand Prix de Rome*; in 1867 he was the first-place winner. Entering competitions was a staple of his career, as indeed it was of many outstanding graduates of the *école*. His drawing skills were exceptional, as the plates for this competition demonstrate (of particular note are the perspective view of the gymnasium, the interior of the gymnasium vestibule, and the gratuitous detail of a sculptural group on the capital of a pilaster supporting part of a balustrade).

Bénard’s scheme won unanimous praise for having successfully addressed all of the jury’s concerns. The elevations were judged to be “excellent in scale, character and nicety of proportion,” and the drawings “beautifully rendered.” The only weakness noted was that some of the buildings in the upper part of the plan were too far from those with related departments, making some rearrangement perhaps necessary. In the end, “The jury, after an examination of the references and certificates submitted by *M. Bénard*, declare that this architect offers the guarantees

which justify his being entrusted with the execution of the work.”

The second- and third-place winners, Howells, Stokes & Hornbostel of New York and Constant Désiré Despradelle and Stephen Codman of Boston, were criticized politely, with their strong and weak points noted. The fifth-place submission by Lord, Hewlett & Hull of New York was all but dismissed for requiring an “immense expenditure for retaining walls, grades, etc.” and for being more of an “interesting study than a practicable plan for a university.”



Howard & Cauldwell placed fourth. Their plan had changed significantly from the one submitted for the first phase, the tightly organized, more or less equilateral composition having been drawn out along an east-west axis and embellished with landscaped terraces. Rows of nearly identical rectangular buildings flanked the central element, and two main cross axes connected to the gymnasium complex on the south as well as to the city blocks and other building groups on the north. At the west end, streets radiated from a grand plaza out into the still sparsely developed city of Berkeley. At the east end a domed auditorium building flanked by large halls (of as yet undetermined use) provided a focal point for the terraced central element. On the hillside above the auditorium were rows of dormitories and a domed, basilica-like building, serving as a coda to the composition. The use of individual buildings rather than building complexes minimized the amount of grading needed for foundations and made incremental development of the plan possible.

The jury noted that the design had a general reasonableness, but that the author (the use of the singular acknowledges Howard's responsibility for the design) had not “taken advantage of the possibilities of his scheme.

Howard's auditorium building, while modest compared to the gymnasium depicted in Bénard's entry, was still at odds with the reality of the university's prospects. The domed building recalls McKim, Mead & White's library at Columbia University as well as other versions of the Roman Pantheon. In this rendering from Howard and Cauldwell's submission to the 1899 international competition, the white building and its subsidiary structures appear to hover above an undefined landscape. The unreal effect was prophetic; the auditorium was never built.

The disposition of his buildings on a long avenue facing the Golden Gate is somewhat monotonous. He has preserved the woods and placed his athletic fields in a good position. The dormitories as placed radiating on the hillside appear better on the plan than they would in execution. The group shown in detail [the auditorium complex], though fine in many respects, is not the jury's idea of a University." The negative tone of these comments suggests the unlikelihood that Howard would ever be considered for the position of supervising architect for the Phoebe Apperson

Émile Bénard's rendering of a longitudinal section of the gymnasium.



Hearst Architectural Plan. But as events unfolded over the following year, the jury's remarks—and even the competition itself—became irrelevant to the situation at hand.

Competitions were a legacy of the *École des Beaux-Arts* system. The presentation requirements for a general plan, a general elevation, a general longitudinal section following the longest dimension of the grounds, and a general perspective of the scheme were familiar to those who had either attended the *école* themselves or worked in offices run by men who had. The dominant impression the array of presentation drawings makes on today's viewers is one of grandiosity. The plans were visionary—as in impracticable, speculative, fanciful. None of them could have been readily implemented. Their only practical value, perhaps, lay in projecting a picture that would bring gifts of money to the needy university.

The local population received the competition with enthusiasm; many architects supported it. In an approving article titled "The University Competition" in the November 7, 1896, issue of *Wave*, a journal devoted to art and architecture, for example, Willis Polk noted that "all localism in

the project will tend to render the results local in effect,” and he commended the international nature of the competition. But in a second article with the same title, published also in *Wave* on January 29, 1898, he denounced the procedure as absurd and too beholden to the *École des Beaux-Arts*. “The teachings of the Beaux-Arts and the influence of its precepts have robbed the endeavor of all individuality. Expression of character is minimized by artificial standards, arbitrarily set, and slavishly followed.... It is doubtful whether any but the Beaux-Arts students or graduates...will be in the running in this competition.... The trustees have gone forth to seek mediocrity, and have made elaborate preparations to get it. The entire programme breathes the very air of the Beaux-Arts. Ideal expression or original conception of architecture suitable to California must lose its significance when poured through the academic sieve of the Beaux-Arts.”

Polk was not alone in thinking thus. Among like-minded men of some influence was the Reverend Joseph Worcester, pastor of the Swedenborgian Church in San Francisco. Although Worcester had no architectural training, he had considered becoming an architect in his youth and remained passionately interested in the field, subscribing to professional journals and keeping articles on buildings and architectural ideas he liked in large scrapbooks. His opinions on matters of taste were valued by a small but influential group of artists, architects, and intellectuals who constituted the city’s avant-garde. Worcester was also a patron. The modest church built under his direction in the fashionable western part of San Francisco was designed—as was the Ferry Building—in the prestigious office of A. Page Brown. A. C. Schweinfurth in Brown’s office was the main designer of the church, and others in Worcester’s circle participated. Bruce Porter designed one of the stained-glass windows and probably did the garden, which was an important component of the project. William Keith painted murals, and Bernard Maybeck may have played a small part as well. The church testified to Worcester’s belief, rooted in Swedenborgian mysticism, in the harmony of art and nature. The expressiveness of materials in their natural state—unfinished redwood boards on interior walls, for example—and simple detail rather than the complicated jigsaw ornament typical of late-nineteenth-century buildings were important to this harmony.¹³

In a letter to Howard (whom he apparently had met, though it is not clear how) written on October 13, 1899, the Reverend Worcester expressed his indignation at the awarding of first prize to a Frenchman. He also mentioned the local professional community’s generally great disappointment with the competition. “A group of us—Polk, Coxhead, Porter, Faville, and Bliss,” he wrote, wished that Howard would come and study the site with them. A letter of November 14 stated further that

Bénard not only should visit the site (something he had not yet done) but that he should also tell Mrs. Hearst and the regents that “the Americans are quite competent to do the work. He might express a preference for one or more Americans and offer to advise them, but he should retire.” Worcester reported that Polk was also “politiking [*sic*] and rallying the troops for local boys”—a “politiking” that included arranging meetings between Howard and the locals. The small but influential group around Worcester opposed giving the competition winner a chance, despite the

A view of the exhibition of the international competition entries in the corridors of the Ferry Building in San Francisco in 1899.



fact that, in the jury’s opinion and even based on impartial review of the entries, Bénard’s plan was the most sophisticated, yet at the same time most workmanlike, of the lot. Worcester’s letters suggest that among those whose opinions on issues of art and taste were most valued, Howard was not considered a “foreigner,” as were the other competitors. He had at least lived and worked in California, if not in the San Francisco Bay Area, and was personally acquainted with local architects.

And what did the general public make of the competition drawings that were displayed, decorated with palm branches, in one of the long corridors of the Ferry Building’s top floor for eleven days after the final judgment? The drawings were certainly eye-catchers; many were five feet long by over two feet wide, and technically they were handsome, even spectacular. Yet their meaning must have escaped most of the thousands who passed daily through what was the busiest terminal on the bay. No one was on hand to explain the graphic conventions of the site plans and section drawings of the buildings and the landscape. Except for those who had seen the Columbian exposition in Chicago six years earlier, few would have been able to bridge the gap between what was on view in the Ferry Building and what was physically on the campus grounds in Berkeley.