

A GUIDEBOOK TO THE

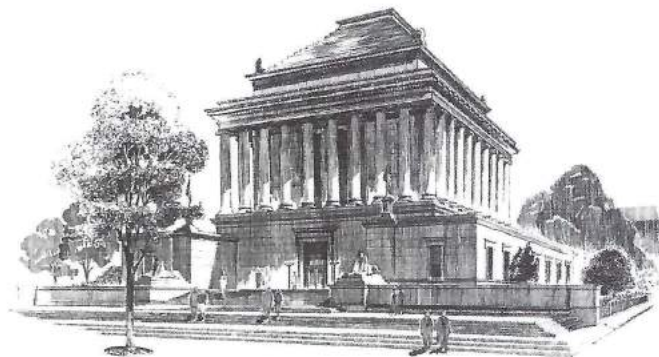
HOUSE OF THE TEMPLE

BY JERI E. WALKER

THE HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE & SYMBOLISM

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.20453
EXHIBIT NO.29C

*A Guidebook to the House of the Temple:
The History, Architecture & Symbolism*
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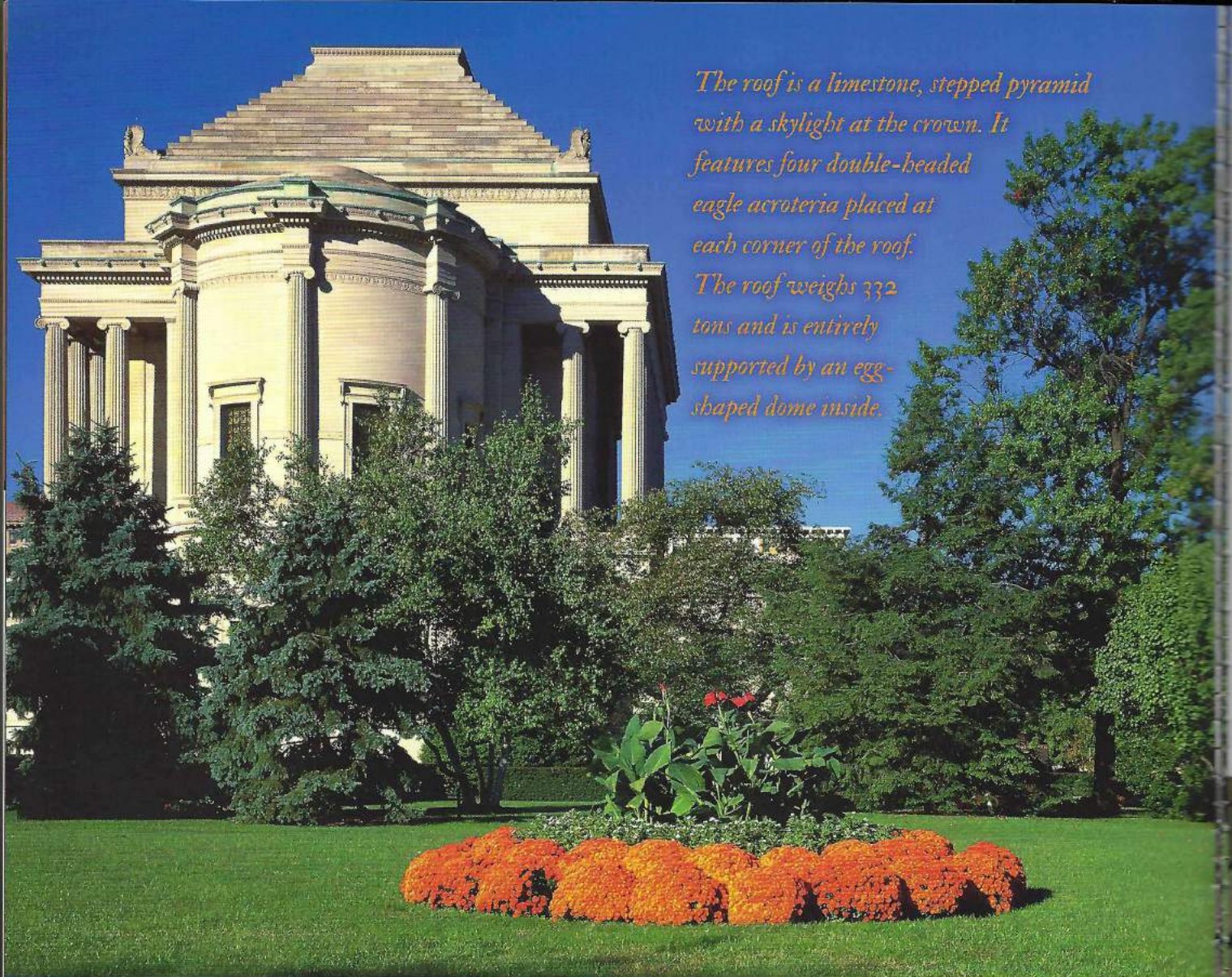
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AUTHOR AND DESIGNER:

Jeri E. Walker

EDITORS:

Dr. S. Brent Morris, 33°, G.C., Managing Editor of the *Scottish Rite Journal*
Arturo de Hoyos, 33°, G.C., Grand Archivist and Grand Historian
Mary Kay Lanzalotta, FAIA, Hartman-Cox Architects
Sean Graystone, 33°, G.C., Superintendent of the House of the Temple
Elizabeth A. W. McCarthy, Creative Director, Supreme Council, 33°



The roof is a limestone, stepped pyramid with a skylight at the crown. It features four double-headed eagle acroteria placed at each corner of the roof. The roof weighs 332 tons and is entirely supported by an egg-shaped dome inside.



PYRAMIDAL ROOF

Despite some “conspiracy theories” to the contrary, there is no Masonic significance to the number of steps on the roof. The pyramid is comprised of interlocking blocks that form into steps. Using Guastavino’s mathematical calculations of the inner dome, the builders determine the necessary height and width of the steps, which in turn dictated the number—either fourteen or fifteen depending on how you count.

Timeline

Resolution passes at the Supreme Council's Biennial Session to erect a new House of the Temple in Washington, D.C.

October 23, 1909



Supreme Council purchases property at 16th and S Streets, NW at a cost of \$164,333.85.

May 14, 1910

Grand Commander Richardson breaks ground for the new Temple.

May 31, 1911



Work is ongoing on the foundation and basement.



April 1, 1912

Famed sculptor Adolph Alexander Weinman receives commission to carve the two sphinxes for the Temple entrance.

July 10, 1912



April 16, 1910

Supreme Council hires Architect John Russell Pope to build the new House of the Temple.

May 9, 1911

Norcross Brothers of Worcester, Mass., win contract to construct the Temple.



October 18, 1911

A crowd of about 6,000 people attend the Cornerstone Ceremony.



Construction continues on the first floor.

May 27, 1912

Supreme Council hires R. Guastavino Company of New York hired to build their unique terra cotta dome above the Temple Room.

July 1912

August 19, 1912

First floor nears completion.



1909

Columns are set in place as construction of the Temple Room begins.

November 11, 1912



With the colonnade and walls complete, roof construction begins.

February 24, 1913



Pyramidal roof nears completion.

November 17, 1913



George F. Moore becomes Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, 33°.

October 7, 1914



The House of the Temple has served the Supreme Council since 1915.



January 12, 1913

Temple Room cella construction nears completion.

August 25, 1913



The pyramidal roof is under construction.



July 24, 1914

Grand Commander Richardson passes away at his home in Murfreesboro, Tenn. Lt. Grand Commander George F. Moore becomes acting Grand Commander.

October 18, 1915



Supreme Council conducts the Grand Opening Ceremony and Dedication of the new House of the Temple.

1915

John Russell Pope, Architect of the Temple

JOHAN RUSSELL POPE, architect of the House of the Temple in Washington, D.C., was a gifted American designer and is known for such notable architectural masterpieces in the District of Columbia as the National Archives Museum, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, National Gallery of Art West Building, and DAR Constitution Hall. American Classical design was his forté and monumental architecture his specialty.

Born in New York in 1874, Pope went to Columbia College, graduating in 1895. He won the prestigious Charles Follen McKim Fellowship in Architecture and the Rome Prize competition. He then went to Italy as an architectural fellow to attend the American Academy of Architecture in Rome. After three years of studying European and Greek architecture, Pope entered the École des Beaux Arts in Paris and won the school's annual Prix Jean Leclair (Bedford, p. 17). Pope was considered among the very best of the American Classical architects. Nine of his designs—five residences and four public buildings—are included in the National Register of Historic Places (*Historic Structures*, p. 9).

"the quintessential American classical architect of the first part of [the 20th Century]." *

Pope was commissioned on April 16, 1910, by Grand Commander James D. Richardson to build the new House of the Temple, which would become the new headquarters for the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite, 33°, Southern Jurisdiction. Richardson instructed Pope to make "the new Temple as magnificent as art and

money can make it" (Bedford, p. 123). Pope's vision for the new Temple brought his architectural influences together in a singular way with the Masonic symbols, many of which were derived from the same civilizations that inspired his architectural style.

Pope set out in earnest to create an elaborate masterpiece that would serve the Masonic ideal Richardson envisioned. He paid amazing attention to detail and utilized a great many symbols important to Masonry throughout the building, both inside and outside. He personally designed much of the furniture still used in the building today. French Architect Jacques Gréber described the building as "a monument of remarkable sumptuousness" (Bedford, p. 127).

The House of the Temple "established his reputation for great skill in design of monumental buildings" (Bedford, p. 123). Pope received the prestigious Gold Medal of the Architectural League New York for the design among many other accolades from the architectural community.



(*Block quote source: Bedford, p. 224)

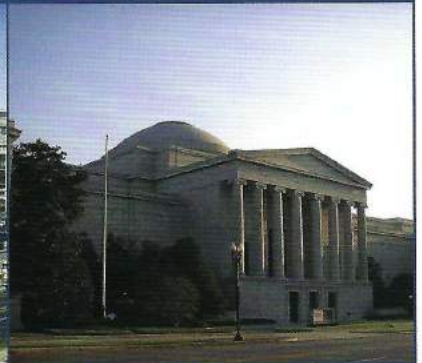
OTHER FAMOUS BUILDINGS BY JOHN RUSSELL POPE



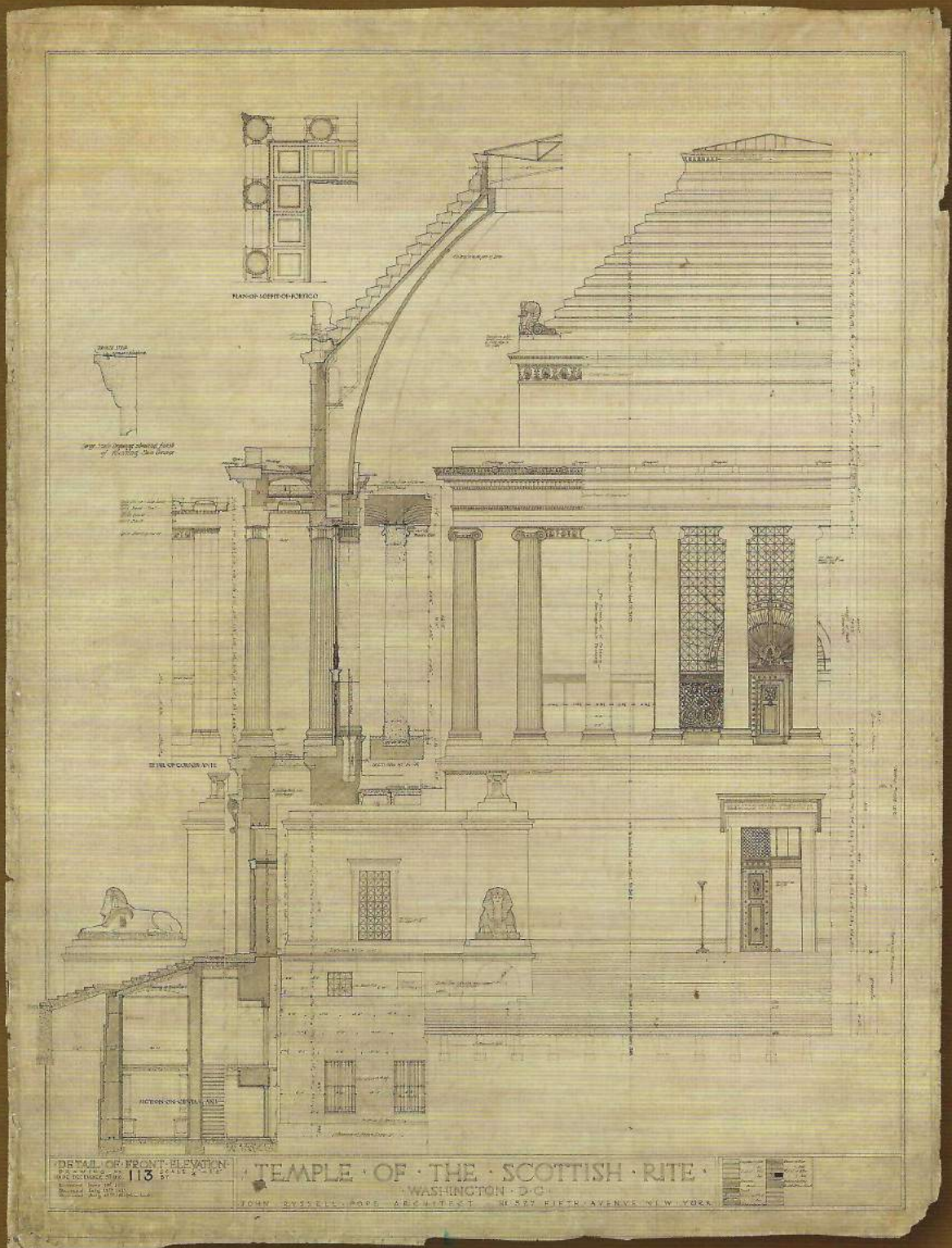
THOMAS JEFFERSON
MEMORIAL



NATIONAL ARCHIVES
MUSEUM

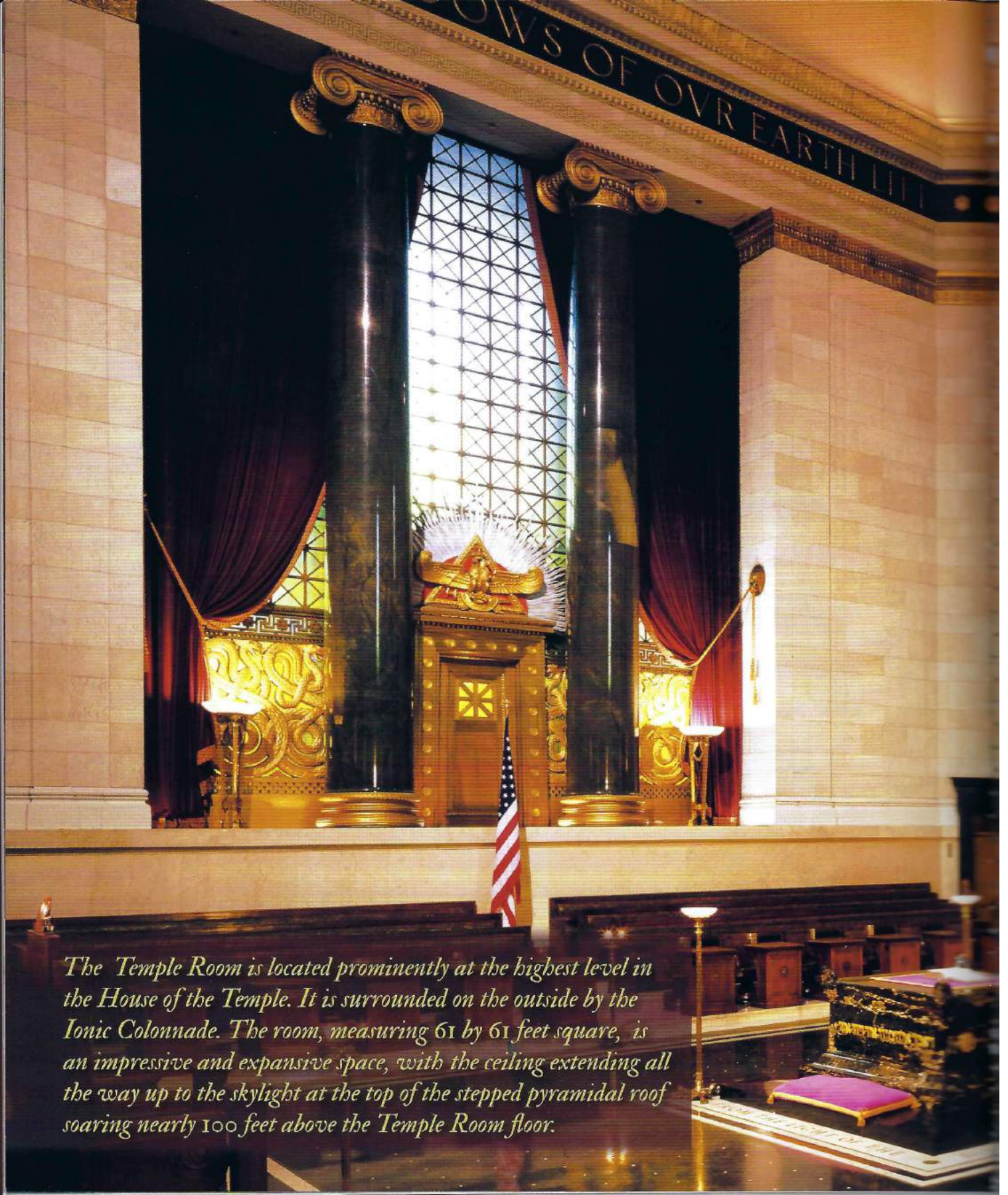


NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
WEST BUILDING



DETAIL OF FRONT ELEVATION

According to John G. Colby, AIA Emeritus, "...this is in my opinion the best drawn and most detailed of the three, exhibiting superb draftsmanship." Dated December 5, 1910, with three revisions, the last being July 19, 1911. It includes the west elevation and both side and frontal renderings of one sphinx.



The Temple Room is located prominently at the highest level in the House of the Temple. It is surrounded on the outside by the Ionic Colonnade. The room, measuring 61 by 61 feet square, is an impressive and expansive space, with the ceiling extending all the way up to the skylight at the top of the stepped pyramidal roof soaring nearly 100 feet above the Temple Room floor.