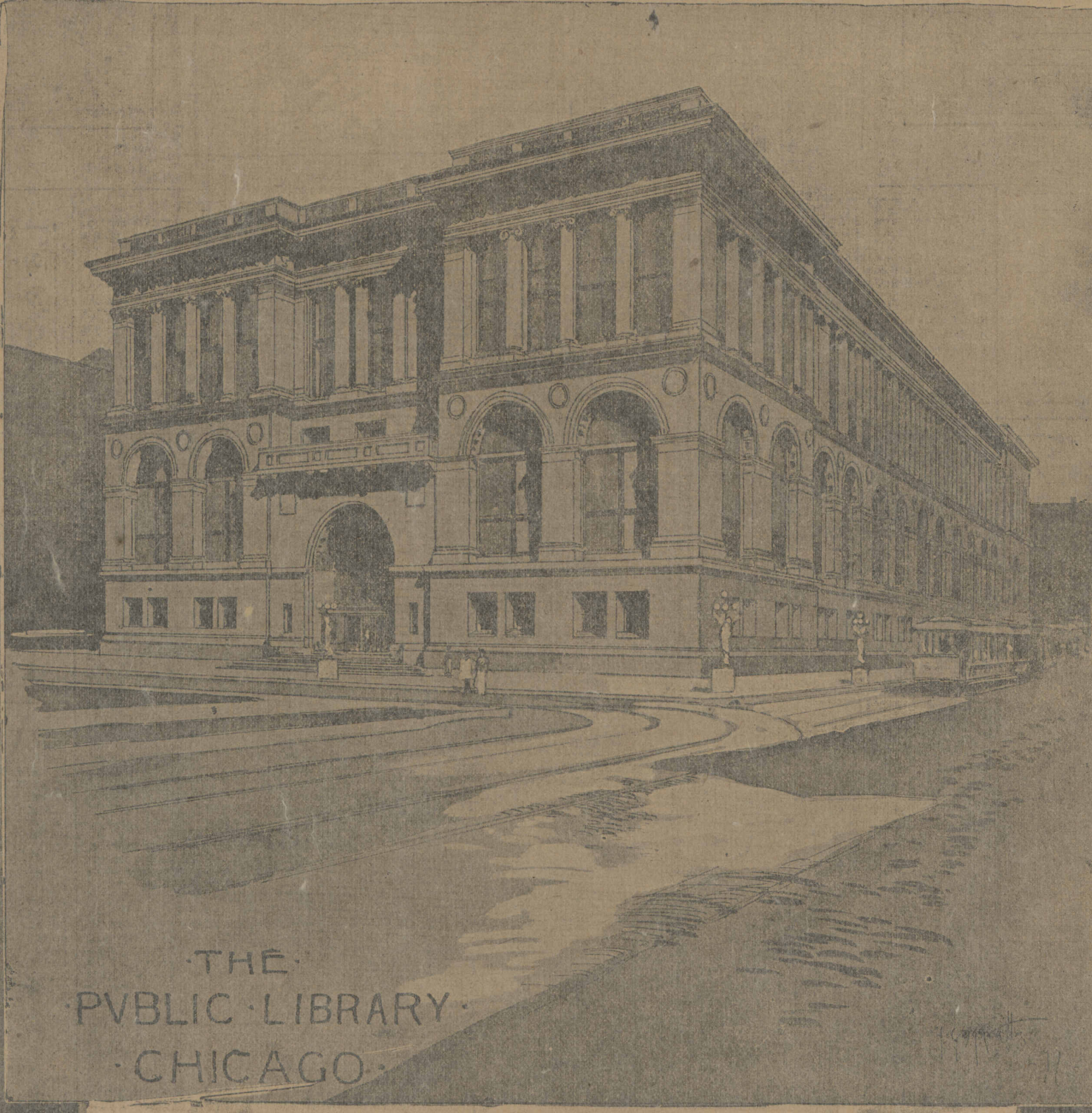


SEPTEMBER 12, 1897.

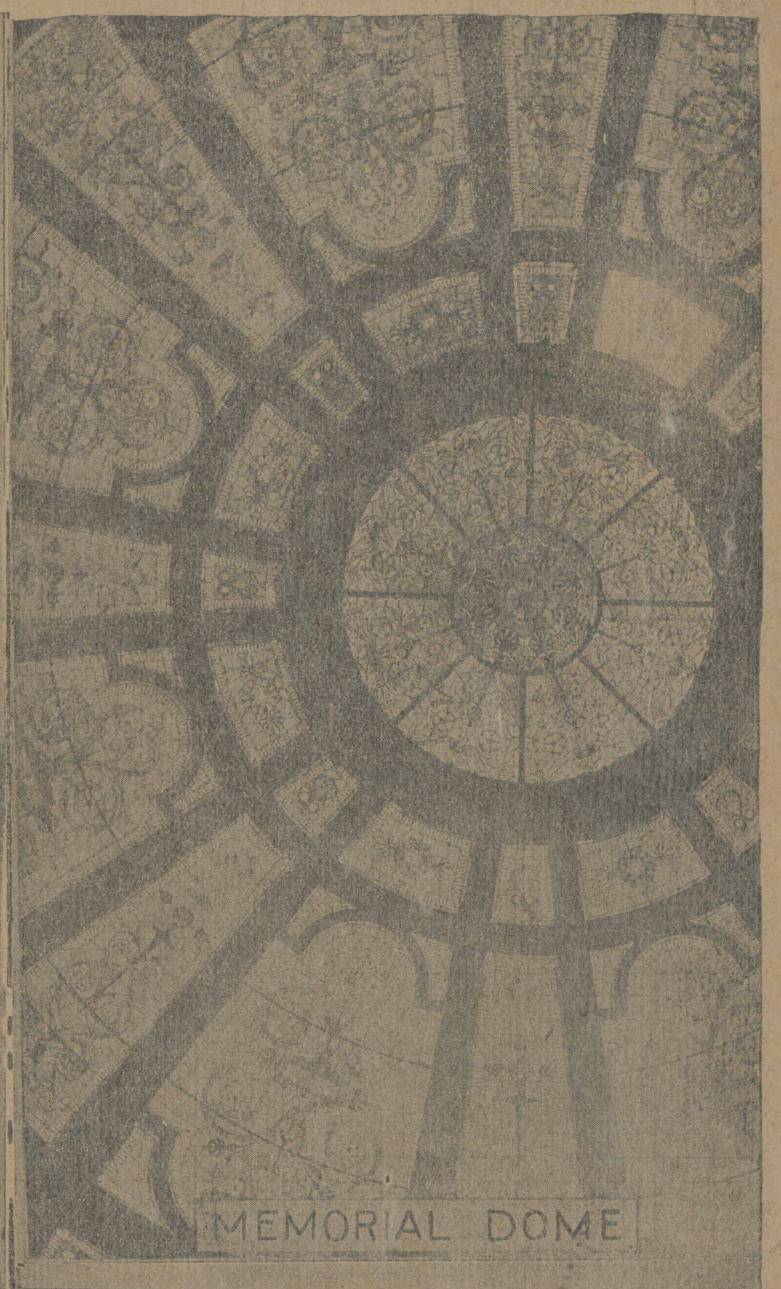
DECORATIVE FEATURES OF CHICAGO'S NEW PUBLIC LIBRARY



BULLETIN BOARDS IN MAIN DELIVERY HALL



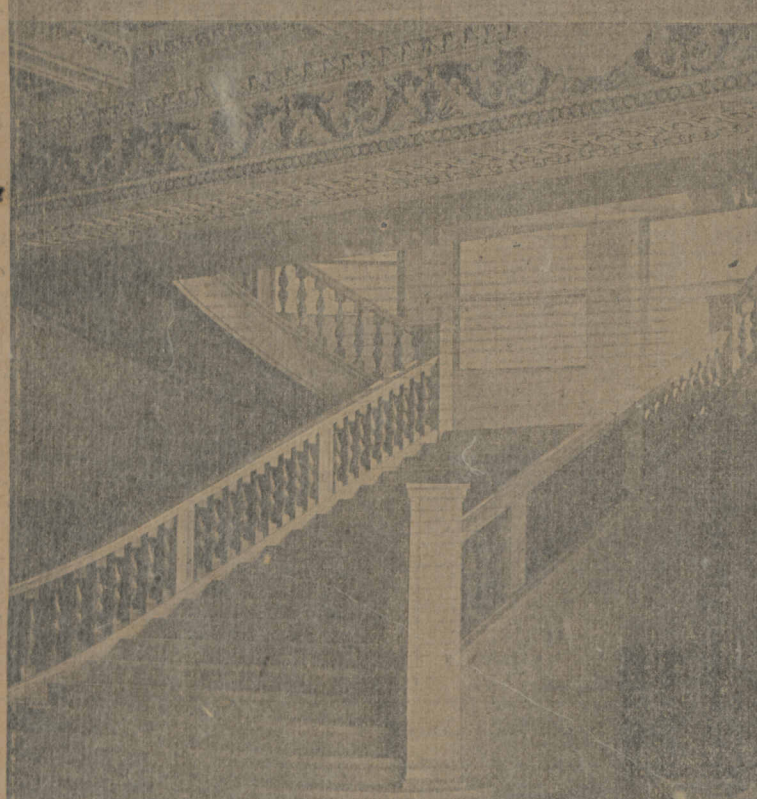
THE PUBLIC LIBRARY CHICAGO



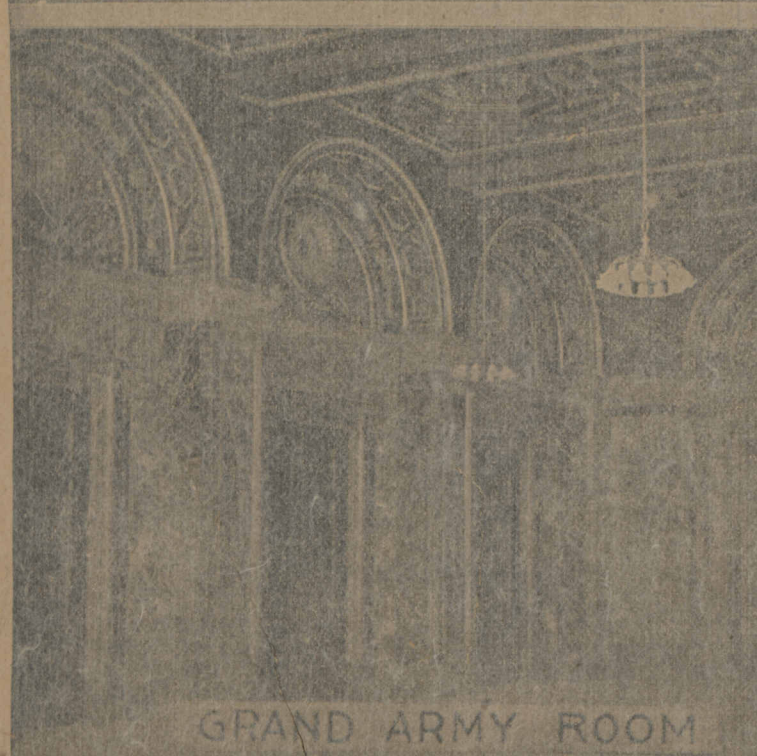
MEMORIAL DOME



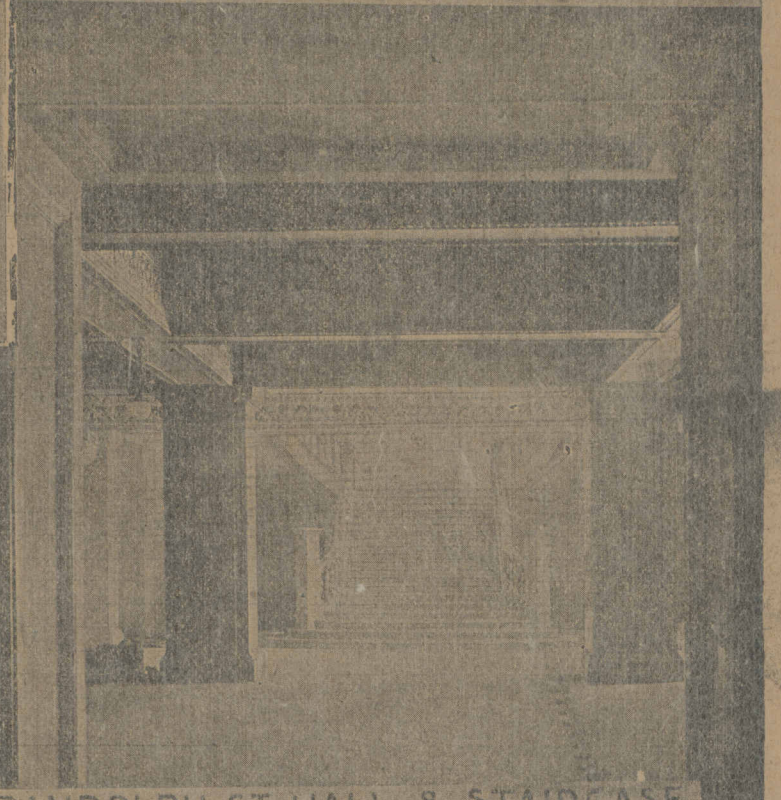
ENTRANCE TO MEMORIAL HALL



RANDOLPH ST. STAIRWAY



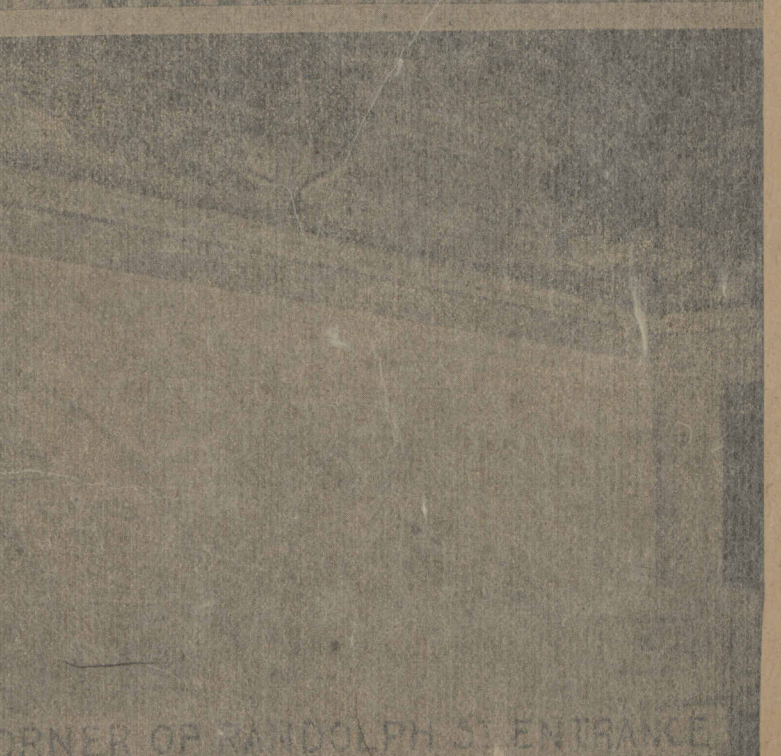
GRAND ARMY ROOM



RANDOLPH ST. HALL & STAIRCASE



GENERAL DELIVERY HALL



CORNER OF RANDOLPH ST. ENTRANCE

ART FEATURES OF CHICAGO'S NEW PUBLIC LIBRARY.

WHILE ITS DECORATIVE SPLENDOR IS SURPASSED BY OTHER NOTABLE LIBRARIES, PARTICULARLY THE NEW STRUCTURES IN WASHINGTON AND BOSTON, ITS TASTEFULNESS AND FITNESS LEAVE LITTLE TO BE DESIRED—DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERIOR IN DETAIL.

WHILE decorative splendor has not been made so much a feature of Chicago's new Public Library as in Boston or the new Congressional Library in Washington, what ornamentation has been given the interior of the building has richness, elegance, and generally appropriateness. There is nothing which bespeaks cheap makeshifts or imitation. There is genuineness throughout. Things are what they appear to be, and the decoration is adapted to the construction of the building, and not a mass of constructed ornament concealing it; and, with the exception of the Washington street entrance, the gorgeous delivery room and the stairways and corridors leading to it, it is the richness of the materials used rather than elaborateness of design which gives the effect of dignity and elegance to the decoration.

Marble, bronze, and glass mosaic are the chief elements which contribute to this, for painting has not been used except for the flat tones on the walls and some color applied to accentuate relief ornaments. The only sculpture other than ornamental designs is found in the tablets for the clock dials in the reference room, which embody two figures in low relief.

Owing to the various uses to which different portions of the building are to be put, there has been no attempt at unity in the decorative scheme of the building, although this might have been done with good effect.

The Washington street entrance, the south stairway, and the delivery room are treated in the same general style—a style which is based upon the elements of Greek ornament. The walls and stairways are of grained Italian marble, decorated with mosaics of glass, mother-of-pearl, and discs of green Connemara marble. The greens, blues, purples, and gold of the mosaic ornamentation are used sparingly in the vestibule, but the decoration becomes more elaborate as the stairways are ascended, until a climax of richness is reached in the delivery room, which is the most splendid of the building. On entering at the southern end of the building, through the studded doors beneath the Roman arch, the visitor finds himself in a white marble vestibule with a mosaic floor, in which there is embedded a bronze medallion bearing the arms of the City of Chicago, and on the walls on either side of the doorway are bronze tablets, that on the right bearing the names of the officers of the Library board, the librarian, the superintendent of the building, and the architects; and the other the names of the members of the board. On the arch above are names of classic writers, alternating with ornamental designs. On either side of the stairway are bronze grills of a Roman geometric pattern, ornamented with the Aline dolphin and trident, and the elevator shafts on either side of the vestibule are inclosed in grills of similar design.

The stairway is broken by frequent landings, and on the face of the bridge at the second landing is the new design for a seal of the library, a Y shaped design similar to that adopted as the arms of Chicago.

On the second landing are six arched windows surrounded by a mosaic border. In the mosaic pavement is the design of an open book with a banderole and the word "Literis." On the landing above is a design of two dolphins in the mosaic flooring.

The oblong panels at the side of the stairway are decorated with alternating designs and throughout this part of the building bands of mosaic are used to mark the joints in the marble piers and wainscoting. The soffits of the bridge and stairs are incrustated with names of authors, ornaments, and symbols in mosaic.

On the delivery room floor the lobby or vestibule above the line of the marble impost is a broad frieze of mosaic in which alternating ornament and inscriptions appear. This is broken only by three arches giving entrance to the delivery room. This room, the gem of the whole building, is divided by a rotunda into three parts. From the four corners elliptical arches spring from marble piers, above which the walls are completely covered with elaborate designs in mosaic reaching to the dome of light glass of kaleidoscopic hues. In the pediments of the arches are the emblems of the library and those used by the early printers of books. In the east and west divisions of this room there is a broad frieze ornamented with inscriptions in various languages and more emblems of early printers.

The ceiling of these rooms is of stucco in the forms of caissons. The delivery desk is of white mahogany or prima vera and the

bronze grill and the electric light standards were adapted from the reproductions of Pompeian antiquities and the Hildesheim treasure preserved in the Art Institute.

The stained glass of the dome is of light green, rose, and yellow, becoming deeper and richer toward the crest, around which are shown the signs of the zodiac.

The librarian's suite in the southeast corner of the building is richly finished with mahogany wainscoting and furniture, and in his office is an imposing chimney piece of very antique marble. On the mezzanine floor above on the west side of the building are the directors' and committee rooms, finished in English pollard oak and red.

The reference-room is wainscoted with sienna marble and the walls are painted the color of pantelle marble. The spaces between the windows are treated as pilasters, supporting the entablature from which spring the girders, giving the motive for the ceiling decoration. On each of the end walls of this room are tablets containing clock dials, supported by two life-sized figures of boys, one personifying "Day," holding a lighted torch, and the other holding a standard, on which a bat is resting, personifying "Night."

The decoration of the reading-room, extending across the north end of the building, is in the style of the Italian renaissance of the period of Sansovino. There are no supporting columns to mar the effect of this immense room, and there is an ornate casseton ceiling, yet this is the only room devoted to library purposes in which the taste displayed in the decoration is open to criticism. The red walls and the green pilasters with tinsel-like gilt are somewhat garish and scarcely quiet enough for a reading-room, even though most of the reading is of light literature.

Below these rooms is the portion of the building to be used by the Grand Army of the Republic, which is best reached from the Randolph street entrance. This entrance is unlike that of the southern end of the building, in severe Doric style, which suggests a certain martial spirit in the place, fittingly carried out by the decoration of the rooms above. The doors at this entrance are of richly carved East India mahogany. The vestibule is lined with blue Bedford stone, and the floors are of encaustic tile, laid in simple mosaic pattern, while the coffered ceiling is of terra-cotta. The lobby is lined with veined Vermont marble and the same material is used, outlined with bands of pink Knoxville marble, in the hall. Pink Knoxville pilasters in this part of the building are of a richness approaching onyx.

From the end of the hall the stairway leading to the rooms above ascends in a broad flight to intermediate landings, which are continued by curving flights to the main landings.

The entrance to the G. A. R. rooms is through doors of rich mahogany, reinforced with a gilded bronze frame. The lobby is beneath a dome of stained glass, made by a Chicago firm, similar to that in the delivery room at the opposite end of the building. Around this room is a frieze, broken by tympani, inclosing trophies of Roman and Greek armor. The main or Memorial Hall is decorated in renaissance style, with rich and antique marble walls, with the lines emphasized by bronze.

In the tympani, breaking the brown and red walls above, is a shell design intended as a background for the busts of heroes of the civil war. On all sides of the room are bronze and plate-glass flag cases, and, later, cases for relics will be placed in the center of the room. The coffered ceiling is of stucco.

The badge of the Grand Army appears at one end of the building, and the badges of the various army corps are also to form a part of the decoration of the upper part of the walls.

The decoration of this room is the most imposing and gives an effect of grandeur which balances the beauty and splendor of the delivery room of the library.

The G. A. R. assembly-room is simply and richly decorated in red and American oak with a frieze of ocher, relieved with brown and yellow, with names of battles inscribed in the panels over the doors.

This completes the list of rooms in which decoration has been made a feature. The bronze work throughout the building displays tasteful designs, many of which are adapted or reproduced from veritable antiques. The green bronze hanging lamps in the delivery rooms, the wall brackets, the dolphins on the water fountains, and the grill work are particularly tasteful.