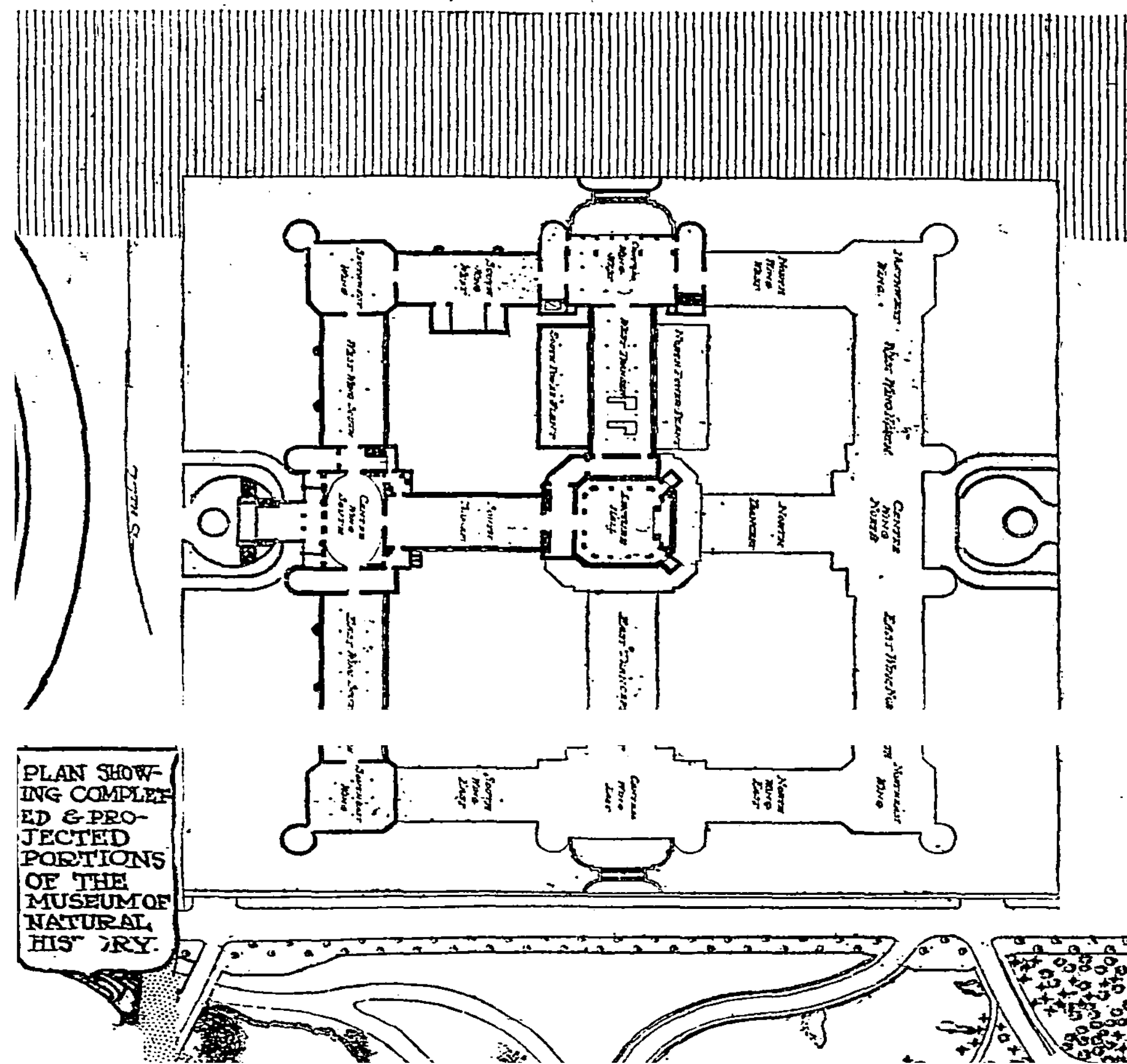


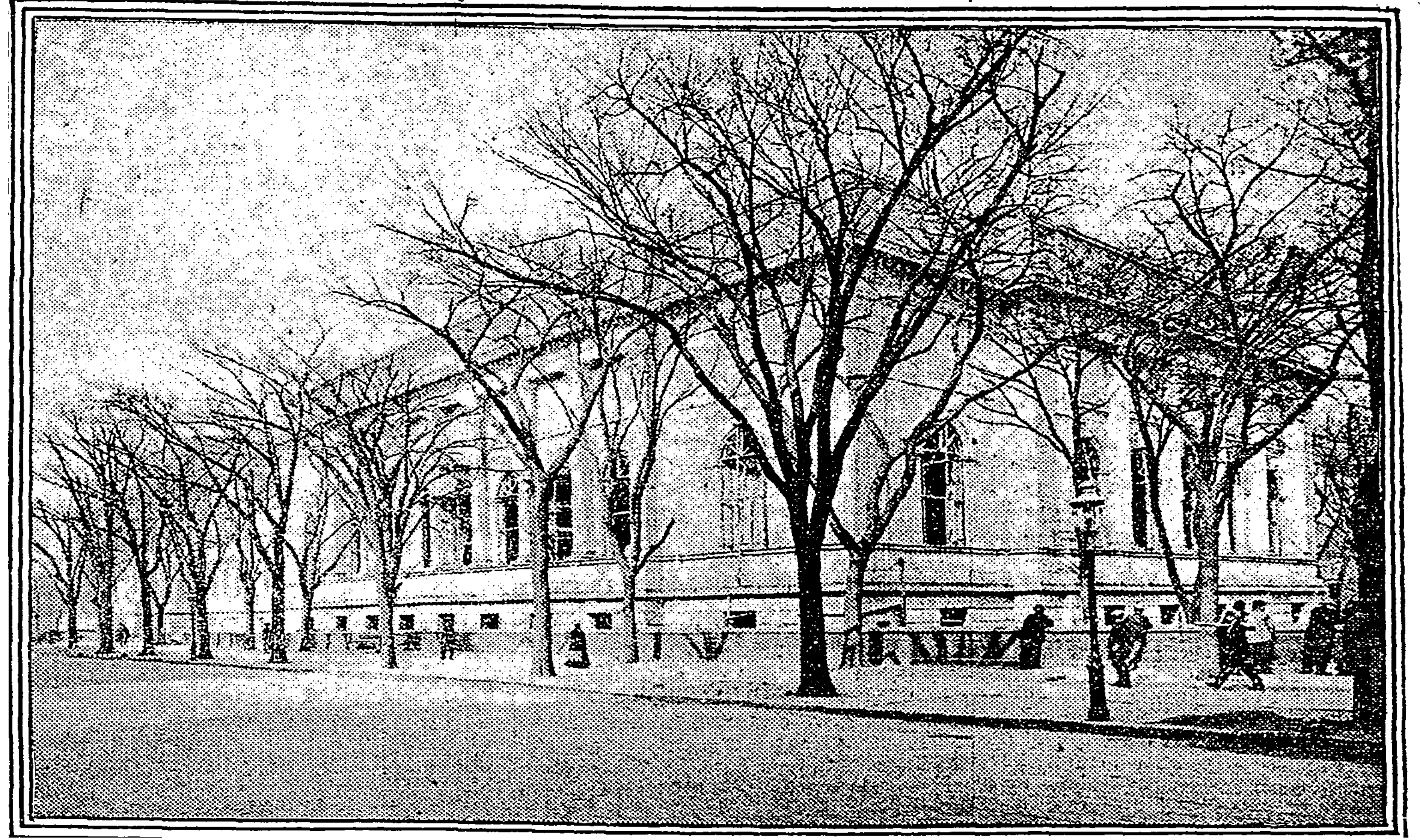
STOVER ADVOCATES PARK LINK BETWEEN BIG MUSEUMS



CHARLES E. STOVER, COMMISSIONER OF PARKS.



PLAN SHOWING COMPLETED & PROPOSED POSITIONS OF THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.



METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART SHOWING NEW WING.

Opposed to Building on the Receiving Reservoir Site, but Would Utilize It for Sunken Gardens or in Some Other Manner as Part of a Connection Between the Metropolitan and Natural History Museums—Gutzon Borglum's Plan.

IT LOOKS as if the great Morgan art collection, part of which has already arrived here from Europe, will have adequate housing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in view of the fact that the architects' plans for the new south wing of the building have been approved by Park Commissioner Stover. But, even if that wing should soon become a reality, the question of just what the museum will look like when completed and just what should be done to the portions of the park around it—questions that already have aroused excited discussion in many quarters—are far from solution.

If the Board of Estimate approves the plan of the Museum's Board of Trustees for the south wing, and grants \$750,000 to cover the cost of erecting the extension, the matter of providing accommodation for J. Pierpont Morgan's splendid treasures will be settled. But among those interested in the question—and Park Commissioner Stover is in their front rank—are persons who do not believe that the Museum should be increased in size in a haphazard manner, but rather with an eye to the future and a regard for the best interests of Central Park, of the museum itself, and of another institution which, if brought into proper relation with the art museum, should help to give New York the finest combination of park grounds and museum buildings to be found anywhere in the world.

This other institution is the Museum of Natural History, on West Seventy-seventh Street. Plans for the complete structure involve covering almost the entire lot between Columbus and Eighth Avenues, and West Seventy-seventh and Eighty-first Street. The east facade, fronting Central Park on Eighth Avenue, is to be the main front of the completed building.

Commissioner Stover and others—among them Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor—believe that something should be done to that portion of Central Park lying between the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History to bring these two buildings into closer relation with each other. Until recently plans toward this end seemed far from feasible, but since the small receiving reservoir in the Park, lying between the two museums, is soon to become useless as a reservoir owing to the opening of the new aqueduct system, it appears to those in favor of the plan that the area occupied now by the

reservoir might easily be utilized in some manner.

Several projects have been advocated. Some, involving the erection of additional buildings on Park territory, have aroused determined hostility. Commissioner Stover himself has pronounced views on the subject, but he takes care to point out that these views have not as yet taken definite form—that, in view of the fact that he is neither an architect nor an artist, he does not pretend to advance them except as suggestions. Mr. Borglum's scheme involves putting up more buildings on Park territory, but as the territory in question is the area now occupied by the reservoir soon to become useless his plan does not belong with those of persons advocating the deliberate appropriation of portions of the Park for building purposes.

As the Metropolitan Museum of Art now stands, it is far from a complete structure. The original plans for the building, made by Mr. McKim of the firm of McKim, Mead & White call for an enormous structure, square in shape, covering many times the area now occupied by the building as we know it, even when combined with the completed north wing and the contemplated wing extending southward along Fifth Avenue to Eighty-fourth Street.

Mr. McKim drew plans that included beautiful decorative facade on the south and west sides of the square. It is Commissioner Stover's belief that the main front of the building should be on the west instead of on the east, as at present—that the completed building should face toward the main front of the completed Museum of Natural History, diagonally opposite on Eighth Avenue across the Park, and that the intervening Park area, including a portion of the reservoir, should be devoted to a boulevard, sunken gardens, or some other connecting link between the two great structures.

"If that is done," the Commissioner declared to a Times man, "New York can have the grandest setting for its museums of any city in the world. I have seen all the capitals of the civilized world—Paris, London, Berlin, and St. Petersburg—and I say confidently, though I am no architect, that I see possibilities of so relating the two museums on either side that they will have a better foreground than any museum in any of the capitals of Europe."

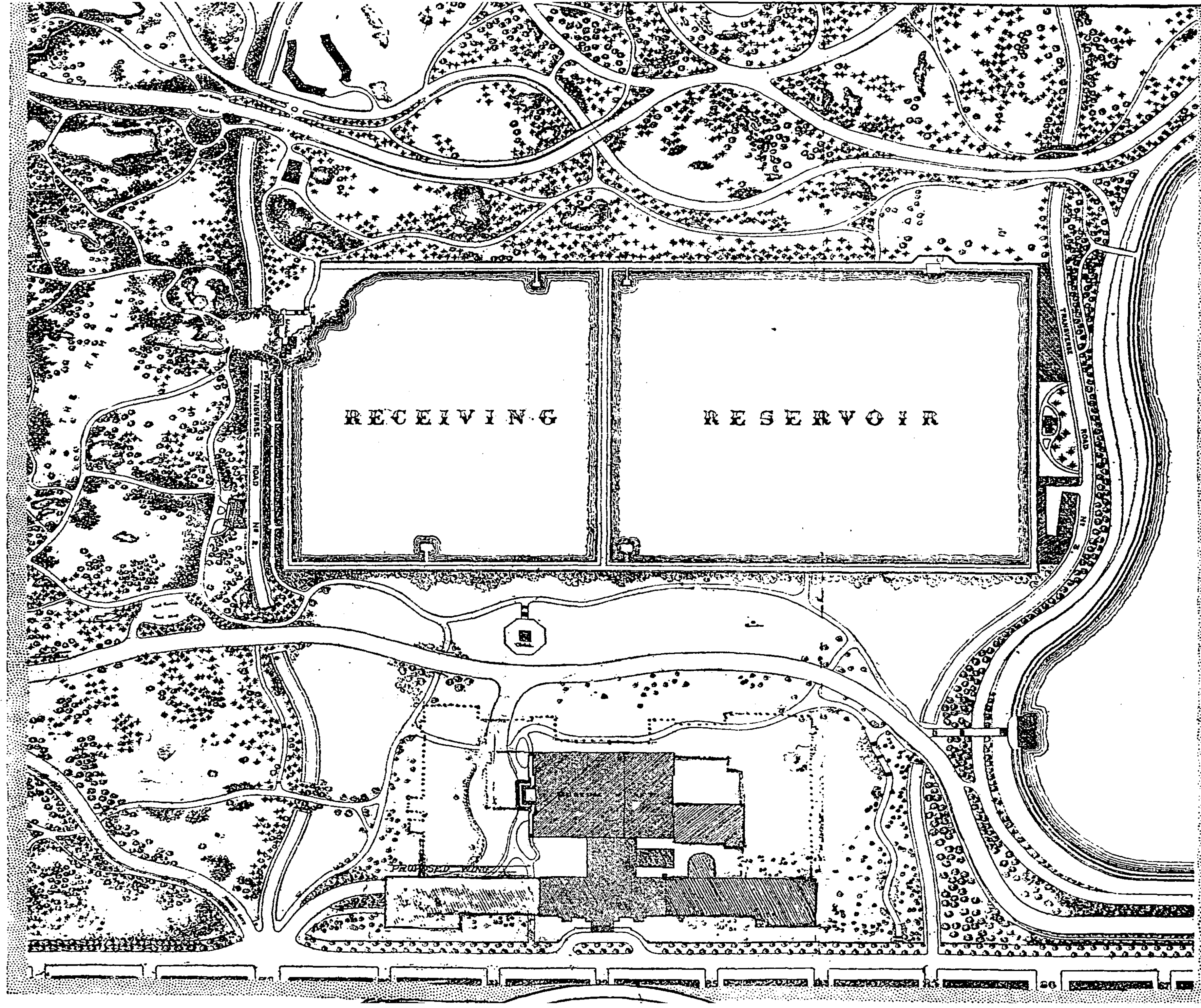
He went on to give in detail his ideas of eliminating the useless reservoir and connecting the two museums in these words:

"I know well that my plan will ruffle the feathers of all those who resent change. There are many who, being accustomed to that reservoir sheet of water, even though it is square and ugly, don't want it removed from the landscape. These people should bear in mind that, even if it should be removed, there will be plenty of water surface left in the Park.

"The Park's area is 843 acres. The reservoir that may be eliminated covers thirty-five acres; the larger reservoir north of it is 107 acres in extent. The other sheets of water in the Park—the Lake, Harlem Mere, Fifty-ninth Street pond, Conservatory Lake, Pool and Loch—cover, in all, forty-three acres.

"Therefore, if the small reservoir is taken away, there will still be 150 acres covered by water—nearly one-fifth of the total area.

"I mention this in reply to the protest of those who declare that there is beauty in sheets of water, and that



DOTTED LINE SHOWING FINAL EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM OF ART, AS PROPOSED BY THE ARCHITECTS.



GUTZON BORGLUM.

they should not be touched. Some people are ready to kick against anything—they even kicked recently when I had some dead trees in the park cut down.

"We all have the sentiment of preservation of beautiful things, so when a suggestion is made like that of mine for connecting the museums by means of a plaza or boulevard, it is sure to outrage the feelings of conservatives. "But that reservoir will soon be useless—what shall we do with it?"

"I am supposed to be daft on the subject of playgrounds, but nevertheless I think it would be better to devote the space now occupied by the reservoir to the two museums—that is, to bring them into relation with each other.

"It is to be regretted that the city spent so much already on the architecture of the Fifth Avenue front of the art museum. That wealth of design and decoration should have been expended on the south or west front. I think that the south and west facades in the McKim plan for the whole building are better than the present main facade to the eastward. The latter has not frontage enough to be properly viewed.

"Working along the lines already laid down for the building, the Trustees and

I decided that the next wing to build was the south one, on Fifth Avenue, in order to complete the present frontage. Notwithstanding that, since the question has been forced on me of considering what should be done with the reservoir, I dare to say to architects and Trustees that, although we have agreed that the south wing is the next one to build, we ought to decide, since the plans are not yet ready, whether some other shape should not be given to the completed building.

"Would it not be better to place the chief facade on the west side, making some use of the reservoir—not for building purposes, but for formal gardens—and would it not be better to have the two museums face each other?"

"I do not pretend to say how they should do it. For one thing, any connection between them would have to be made in a diagonal line across the Park, taking in the southern end of the present reservoir area, owing to the fact that the completed Natural History Museum building will extend from Seventy-seventh to Eighty-first Street, whereas the Metropolitan Museum of Art will extend from Eightieth to Eighty-fourth Street. It is too bad, by the way, that the Art Museum has ex-

tended north away from the Natural History Museum. I would have suggested that it be built southward so as to get nearer the other museum building. However, the diagonal connection may, after all, be an advantage; that will be a question of how skillfully those who design it do their work.

"I don't say that there should be a wide promenade between the two buildings, or a boulevard, or a sunken garden. But I do believe that the grand fronts of the two museums, in their completed states, should both face the Park and be opposite to each other.

"It seems inevitable that the Art Museum will eventually occupy eighteen acres of Park ground. Now, there are people who think that a great mistake was made in putting the Art Museum in Central Park at all. I agree with them. It would have been better to put the museum on the other side of Fifth Avenue, outside of the Park.

"But now that the building is, once for all, inside the Park, I do not think that additions to it should be placed elsewhere. I think such a scheme is utterly preposterous. The Metropolitan is our great museum of art, and it must be in one place, not scattered over the city.

"In view of the fact that it is definitely located in the Park and that there are thirty-five acres available, if the reservoir is condemned, which is to be more important—that useless water surface or the Art Museum?"

"Let us increase the acreage of the Park by taking the area now occupied by the reservoir, and at the same time give the museum the additional space it requires for its treasures.

"Returning to the subject of the connecting link between the two museums, would it not be fine, for instance, if Cleopatra's Needle were relocated at the middle point between the two buildings—that is, at a middle point on the straight line between one facade and the other? In addition to that possibility, it must be borne in mind that one of the greatest natural beauties of the Park—the rocky eminence on the southwest side of the small reservoir, with its natural rock bridge—will lie between the two museums.

Just as the advent of the Morgan art treasures has been used as a lever for making possible the increasing of available space in the Art Museum, Commissioner Stover believes that the imper-

ative necessity for doing something to stop the congestion of traffic on Central Park West should be put to use for furthering the interests of the new Natural History Museum and the matter of connecting it with the completed Art Museum structure.

"Traffic on Eighth Avenue has become so dangerous and congested, what with trucks, trolleys, and other vehicles," he said, "that there is a strong consensus of opinion expressed not only by individuals, but by bodies like the Harlem Board of Commerce, that something should be done to counteract it. In order to get more room for this traffic they urge that a slice of 25, 50, or 100 feet be taken away from the Park where it fronts Eighth Avenue.

"I am opposed to any such sacrifice of Park land. What I propose is this: To widen the sidewalks on each side of Eighth Avenue to 15 feet, taking a small portion of the Park for the purpose, and have the trolley tracks move so that they will be in the center of the roadway, instead of on one side as at present. The roadway should be 70 feet wide.

"Now, if the tracks are to be moved, all advantage should be taken of their removal to depress that part of the street in front of the proposed west front of the Natural History Museum—between Seventy-seventh and Eighty-first Streets—and have all cars and other vehicles run past it below the present street level. As for the sidewalks, they should stay at the present level, though they might have to be rearranged.

"Over the depressed street there should be some connection between the facade of the Natural History Museum and the Park—a majestic bridge or something similar—over which not only pedestrians, but pleasure vehicles coming from the Park might travel. I think that the connecting link in the Park between the two Museums should provide in some way for such pleasure vehicle traffic, so that they might go easily from one Museum to the other.

"But, as I said, north and south traffic on Eighth Avenue—trolleys, trucks, and everything—should be obliged to use the depressed roadway.

"If the old reservoir is removed I think that the Park stables, situated at its north end, should go with it. Do you know that, though the horses used in Park work are stabled north of this reservoir, all trucks and other vehicles are either to the southward, at Seventy-ninth Street, or to the northward, at Ninety-sixth Street. Therefore, the men who work with horses and carts in the Park have to go to the reservoir stables, ride the horse they need to one or the other of the cart stables, and there hitch the animal up. Incidentally, the stables, which were built something like fifty years ago, are not only in bad shape, but would soon burn up if they ever got on fire.

"My idea would be to destroy them along with the reservoir and transfer all the horses now in the stables to a central stable both for vehicles and horses either north or south of the present location. By eliminating the old stables still another tract of land, in addition to that now occupied by the reservoir, would be available for improvements, such as sunken gardens, recreation grounds, etc."

Mr. Gutzon Borglum objects, first of all, to the Art Museum as it stands. He advocates putting it into the space now occupied by the reservoir.

"The Metropolitan Museum," he said to a Times man, "is at present a stone fence cutting off Fifth Avenue from the Park. For a long time there was nothing to be done about it. But suddenly the possibility that the reservoir will be abandoned has changed the situation completely.

"The sixteen-foot wall of the reservoir should be allowed to remain as it is, except that entrances should be cut into it as needed. The Museum buildings should be placed in the area where the reservoir is. Then, if shrubs are planted around the top, nothing would be visible but handsome roofs.

"In addition, there should be a promenade 100 feet wide directly into the gardens surrounding the Museum, and a parkway between the Art Museum and the Museum of Natural History—a natural connection across the Park between the east and west sides.

"I understand that 15 acres—the area of the lower part of the reservoir—are available for use, and they should certainly be taken. Nowhere else in the world—not even in the famous Luxembourg and Tuileries Gardens of Paris—are there such advantages."