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[Report, Harris Armstrong on his submission for the Jefferson Memorial Expansion competition. Harris Armstrong Collection (WUA00372), Series 11, Box 4, folder 5.]

Report of work on the St. Louis Riverfront

By Harris Armstrong, Architect

Since architecture is primarily a creative activity of the mind, to arbitrarily set February 2, 1944 as the beginning of my work on the riverfront is erroneous, as it has been among the most important architectural problems in Saint Louis throughout my entire professional life. (I became an architectural draughtsman in 1925.) Much study by many minds has gone into the various proposals for the solution of the problem, and a great deal of very fruitful consideration and discussion has resulted from this study. When I was invited by the "ARCHITECTURAL FORUM" magazine to prepare a major project in the Saint Louis area for publication, I associated myself with two younger men and we selected the riverfront as the most challenging subject possible for our project. A study of the published drawings and a comparison of these drawings with the first stage of the JEFFERSON NATIONAL EXPANSION MEMORIAL three years later will make it apparent that many of the features first presented in our "FORUM" proposal were retained in many of the other architects' solutions submitted for judging, as well of course, as my own, due to the fact that our ideas for the "FORUM" were partly incorporated in the official program of the competition.

Immediately after publication of the article in the "ARCHITECTURAL FORUM" in April, 1944, there was a considerable amount of newspaper publicity, as well as conferences with Mayor A.P. Kaufman, Mr. Luther Ely Smith, Mr. Julian Spotts and Mr. Charles Peterson the two latter of the National Park Service, as well as the editors of local newspapers (see attached material). These conferences resulted in a better understanding of the difficulties inherent in the problem, as well as a very real interest in the historic architecture of the Mississippi Valley and a study of historic buildings in Sainte Genevieve and on down the river as far as New Orleans.

[p. 2]

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Page 2

If creative architecture is an activity of the mind, there would be no significance to the fact that no final drawings of other proposed solutions of the riverfront were made in the interim. If it is felt to be important, we can obtain by going through news-paper files, the published solution to

the disposition of the railroad tracks of the terminal railroad, made by Mr. Milton Kinsey while he was president of the Board of Public Service of the city of St. Louis, which follows closely our proposal in the "FORUM" magazine, both in time and in thinking.

Mr. George Howe, professional adviser to the JEFFERSON NATIONAL EXPANSION MEMORIAL COMPETITION made the statement to me that he had studied every previous study of the riverfront problem, including our ARCHITECTURAL FORUM" presentation very carefully before writing the program which was used as the basis of the COMPETITION. I therefore think that this opportunity I had for analysis through the rather long period of time was largely responsible for the fact that I, the only finalist in the Unites States who entered as an individual (rather than as a member of a team) was able to place among the winners in the competition. Had I not been in St. Louis, and had I not had the benefit of the long and careful study of the problem, and repeated visits to the site, the chances of having so placed would have been very small indeed.

May 23, 1949