

PROPOSED COURT HOUSE BUILDING FOR DOUGLAS COUNTY

THE accompanying picture is a reproduction of the architect's perspective drawing for a new court house for Douglas county. The inadequacy of the present court house building, erected more than twenty-five years ago, to meet the enlarged needs of the county's business and the inconvenience attending the transaction of public business in it led the county commissioners a few months ago to engage Architect John Latenser to prepare plans for a new building to take its place with the purpose of submitting a court house bond proposition to the voters at the coming election, in case public sentiment appeared to favor the project.

The great problem presented to the architect was to provide for the erection of a new building on the present court house square without destroying the old building until after the new one should have been completed. The necessity of preserving the old building is due to the fact that no sufficient accommodations would be available to house the county offices and to protect against irreparable loss the valuable public records used in the various branches of the county administration.

The accompanying picture shows the new building as it would appear after the old building had been removed and gives an idea not only of the imposing character of the proposed structure, but also of the impressive beauty of the approaches and entrance across the open plot of ground extending along the whole north front, which would focus Omaha's civic center of the future. It also shows in the background in proper perspective the adjoining buildings, particularly the new Young Men's Christian association building, which would be greatly enhanced in artistic effect by the contrast with the classic lines of the new court house.

In grappling with the problem of utilizing to advantage the unoccupied space in the court house square the architect has worked out a scheme complying with the requirements of the situation. He declared that it should be a matter of congratulation that the old building was placed just where it is, close up to the Farnam street line, because for this reason alone is room left on the other side to erect the new building without injury to its design and without taking the old building away in the course of construction.

It is proposed to build around the present building in the shape almost of an "H." The excavations would be made so that the first floor of the new building would be about on the level of Farnam and Eighteenth streets. There is a fall of ten feet in Farnam street from Eighteenth to Seventeenth streets, which gives an elevation to the east end of the building and permits a basement entrance on Seventeenth street, through which a driveway could be laid out. The main entrance, of course, is on Farnam street, as shown in the picture, in the center, of the north front, with projecting wings on each side, the space between and in front of the wings being parked and ornamented to form a suitable approach for the building.

Monumental in Its Proportions

Something of an idea of the monumental size of the structure as planned may be had from a few figures. The length of the Farnam and Harney street fronts is 285 feet, the width of each pavilion at the side 33 feet and the width of the central portion is 169 feet. The east and west fronts of the building are each 160 feet long. This makes the approach 124 feet from the Farnam street lot line at the nearest point, while a ten-foot space intervenes between the building and the sidewalk on the east and west sides, and on Harney street the entrance is also about ten feet from the sidewalk line. The height of the building at the center of the main entrance is 113 feet and the top of the dome is 168 feet above the street level at the same point.

Eight huge columns form the supporting colonnade. These columns measure five feet in diameter and forty-two feet in height. No columns of such monumental size are to be found in any building in this section of the country and the columns form the best index to the architectural spirit of a great public building in which the evidence of multiplicity of small parts is said always to be one of the most solid merits of the design.

In technical terms the style of the building is neo-classic, but without slavish adherence to a distinct school, the aim being to strike a happy medium between a strictly monumental building and a modern office building, with abundant light and air. Although planned to be ample large for many years to come, if any future enlargement should be necessary it can easily be provided without marring the symmetry of the building or destroying its architectural effect by adding a central feature in the Farnam street side corresponding to the end pavilions and carrying the main entrance further forward.

The floor plans for the interior arrangement have been worked out by Mr. Latenser after suggestions by the various county officers with a view to meeting their ideas of the requirements of space, location, vault room and proximity to other offices. The main floor is to be devoted to those branches of the county business which have most to do with the public so that the people transacting business with them may make their entrance and exit without climbing the stairs or riding in the elevators.

Layout of the Main Floor

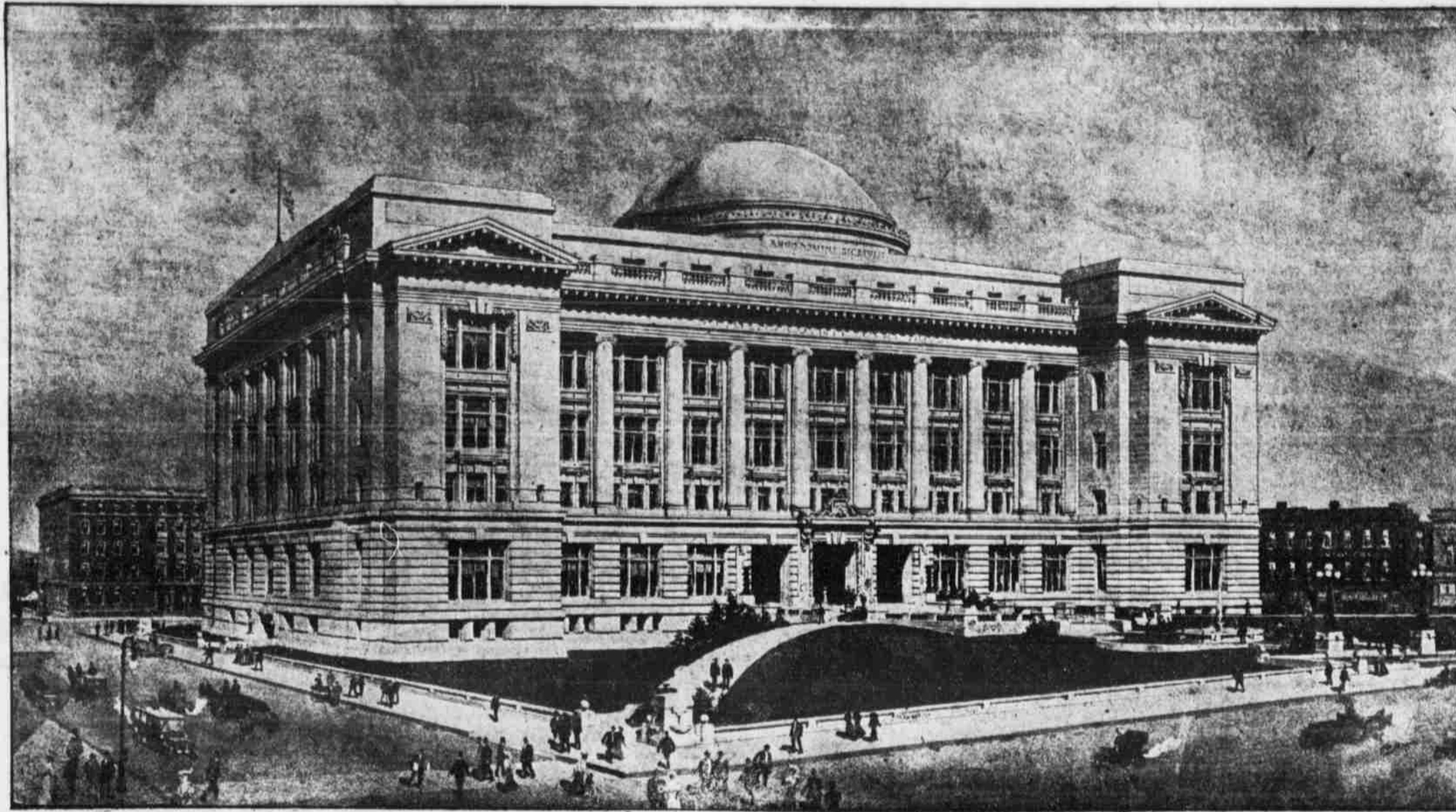
Coming in the front entrance the office of the treasurer is at the left and of the county clerk at the right, the quarters of the county clerk connecting with those of the tax commissioner, which are closely allied. In corresponding rooms on the other side is the space allotted to the controller on the left and to the register of deeds on the right. Each of these offices have ample lobby room in front of the counters for the public and large vault spaces to house the records and other documents of value. The counter line for the treasurer measures over 100 feet. The elevators are straight ahead of the entrance across the court, lighted from the dome.

The second floor plan shows the accommodations for the county commissioners, with a public meeting room and adjoining committee room, and a small office room for each member of the county board. The county court is located on this floor with a commodious court room, office room and vault and a private room for the judge and another reception room especially adapted to the purpose of solemnizing marriage services. The county superintendent is provided with a public and private office and a large teachers' examination room. The county surveyor secures offices with north lights for blue print and draughting rooms, with a private office and vault for his records. The clerk of the district court is established on this floor immediately above the county treasurer, with ample space for accommodating the public and private rooms for his recording and copying force, as well as for himself. A small space is also devoted to a desk for a public stenographer for the accommodation of lawyers who may want to copy records or dictate legal documents in haste.

Special Scheme for the Court Rooms

The third and fourth floors are essentially the court room floors and bring into play the strong feature of the building as designed in the two lateral pavilions extending along the east and west ends. Each of these are divided so as to contain two sets of court rooms, with accessory offices for judges, court reporters, witnesses and juries. The space is so divided as to draw the court rooms toward the center, with light and ventilation from the side streets and in-

Perspective view from the Farnam Street Side of the magnificent New Building proposed to be substituted for the present Inadequate and Antiquated Court House



PERSPECTIVE DRAWING OF PROPOSED DOUGLAS COUNTY COURT HOUSE—FROM PLANS PREPARED BY JOHN LATENSER, ARCHITECT.

terior light walls. Thus they are removed from the noise of passing street cars and other vehicles on Farnam and Harney streets. There are eight court rooms, including that assigned to the juvenile court, really one more than is at present required.

The arrangement of the space for the juvenile court has been made to conform largely with suggestions based upon the experience of the judges who have had personal charge of the juvenile court work. It enables the judge to keep the children and the witnesses in different cases separated from one another and likewise to separate the boys and the girls, assuring them of the utmost privacy consistent with appearance in a public court.

The law courts have attached to them quarters for the juries, each including a lounging room with a small consultation room and smoking compartment. Each is also provided with coat and hat closets and toilets. The lounging room is large enough to permit of the introduction of cots to take care of a jury that might be confined pending trial for any length of time.

On the third floor the north front opening on the colonnade is

given to the county attorney and his assistants and on the fourth floor it is assigned to the sheriff and his deputies. The criminal court room on the fourth floor is considerably larger than the other court rooms and is entered directly from a special corridor opening on the sheriff's offices, into which also goes a private sheriff's elevator to bring prisoners from the jail without exposing them either to the danger of escape or to the public view in transit.

While the detailed plan has not been drawn for the top floor, the purpose is to place the jail there and make it conform in every respect to the most modern requirements of jail architecture, especially for keeping different classes of prisoners separated and also for providing lighting, ventilating and plumbing accessories. The private sheriff's elevator, already referred to, leads from the jail floor with only one stop at the sheriff's office down to the basement floor, opening on the court there and approaching by a drive through the Seventeenth street arch. Prisoners brought in from outside would therefore come in in patrol wagons from the street, to be unloaded directly into the waiting room at the foot of this elevator and taken

either directly to the jail or stopped at the sheriff's office to go through the necessary forms of registering and recording.

The interior corridor arrangement is governed by the requirements for light and air. The dome, visible from the outside, surmounts a circular light well reaching the entire height of the building. There are also four smaller light wells, two of them forming the cores of two sets of stairways, conveniently located for movement from floor to floor without making use of the elevators. The street entrances are through three large double doors on each of the two sides of the building facing north and south. This gives the Harney street side almost equal access and prominence as the Farnam street side and makes a straight thoroughfare through the center of the building between these two entrances.

The old court house, which would be supplanted by the new one should it be erected, has been occupied since the early '80s, and although when built it was regarded as one of the finest structures of its kind in this part of the country, it has long since been outgrown. The foundation for the old court house was originally laid in an excavation far below the street level in anticipation of further grading of Farnam street. This grading was later done, leaving it on a high hill, and then again still later the street was cut some fifteen feet more, making necessary the high and steep steps by which the court house is now reached. The absence of elevators and the inability to install elevators because of the peculiar construction of the building has made it particularly burdensome to the people who are compelled to climb the stairs day in and day out, and many serious accidents have been the result.

Old Court House Outgrown

At first the accommodations in the court house appeared to be sufficient for the business of the county, but with the increase of the number of courts and the expansion of the work of the different offices the offices had to be transferred from one room to another and the basement, which was never intended for anything but storage purposes, had to be used for office accommodations. There are now many rooms in the building constantly occupied where it is necessary to have artificial light almost all the time in order to permit of clerical work. In addition to this a number of county offices have been crowded out of the building altogether. For many years three court rooms were maintained in the Bee building and one of them is still there. The county attorney's offices are located in the New York Life building and the county treasurer's office has been removed since its merger with the city treasury into the city hall, across the street. The jail and jailer's quarters are in a separate building on one corner of the court house grounds, and this building, too, has become unserviceable and overcrowded.

The worst feature of the old court house is its utter lack of facilities to take care of juries both during the trial of cases and when the jurors are out deliberating on their verdicts. In some instances the juries have been sent to hotels in order to provide decent quarters for them. In others they have been confined in small rooms, according to them no better treatment than is enjoyed by the prisoners who are awaiting punishment for their crimes.

The agitation for a new court house has arisen periodically and the pressure for action from these sources, particularly from the lawyers and jurymen compelled to wait on the courts, is what finally induced the commissioners to take steps for the drawing of plans looking toward relief of the existing situation in case the project meets with popular approval.

Searching for Fossils in Nebraska and Wyoming

THE members of the expedition sent out from Amherst college last June in search of fossils in certain sections of Nebraska and Wyoming have returned to the college laden with valuable finds. The expedition consisted of Prof. F. B. Loomis and two classmates, John Hubbard and W. J. Palmalee. Outfitting at Rapid City, S. D., the party proceeded south about 150 miles to Agate, on the Wyoming-Nebraska line, where the principal fossils were found. Speaking of the work there, Prof. Loomis said:

"The fossils were what we went for essentially, and we prospected the country about Agate for several days, and finally found the fossil camel. We were prospecting about two miles east of Agate and four miles down stream—I am giving these exact locations so that anyone who wishes may be able to find it—when we came to a hill at the base of which there were numerous sprinklings of camel bones. These bones also appeared on the slope of the hill, and they were pretty good evidence to us that there was something else to be found above. So we went to work and carefully examined the hillside, climbing all the time, until we came, about half way up the slope, to a place where the bones no longer showed on the slope, and we then decided that it was time to dig into the bank, for the fossils were evidently in the strata at that point."

Prof. Loomis then described the process of extracting the fossils from the sandstone in which they were found. They had nothing to cut with but large jackknives, which were sufficient for the work, however, as the sandstone formation was not very hard and did not make the work very hard, although it was rather hard on the knives. After a fossil had been discovered the men set to work to cut away the stone about it, leaving the bones embedded in a large block, which was taken out entire. The size of these blocks containing the fossils differed in size according to the size of the animal, and some of them were rather weighty. After a groove, or ditch, had been cut around the whole fossil, in the rock to a depth which would be below the bottom of the fossil, gum arabic was brought into action and the whole block was soaked in it. This hardened the sandstone. Common flour paste was the next thing used for treatment, and cloths saturated in it were laid on the top and wrapped on the sides of the block of stone, until the whole exposed surface of the block was entirely covered with them. This, after hardening, forms a very excellent covering and protection for the block, and is left on until the work of dissection is taken up in the laboratory. After the top and sides of the block had been covered and made

impervious the work of cutting the bottom away was started, and everything was cut away with the exception of a small pillar of stone in the center of the bottom, on which the whole thing rested.

The members of the party worked on this hill near Agate for about a week and got the remains of twelve numbered camels, all of a new species. This species of camel stood about four feet high and were very slender animals, about as slender as a gazelle. Sheep bones are heavy and stubby in comparison with them. The remains of both old and young animals were found, and the finds were all made at the base of the miocene strata, which would indicate, conservatively, an age of about 1,500,000 years at the least. The sandstone in which they were found is a flood plain deposit, and in it were also found the ankle bones and other remains of forty-three camels in addition to the numbered ones taken out, so that indications of at least fifty-five animals were found at that one point. The supposition is that they were surrounded by water on the point of land at that point and drowned, but this theory is mere conjecture. The formation is just such a one as the Hadley meadows would show if excavated. After the work at this point had been finished the remains found were taken in the wagon to the railroad station some miles distant and shipped to Amherst.

Bones of Rhinoceros Found

It was just after this that the party ran into a man named James Cook, a rancher, who told them of two small hills in his pasture, where the expedition from the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh had discovered several remains, but had not exhausted the place. The party therefore went with him to the spot and stayed there two weeks. The discoveries there were also somewhat unusual, for the skulls of seven rhinoceros were found, together with the limb bones of many others. These bones indicated four different species of rhinoceros. One species had a perfectly smooth nose, on which there were no horns at all. Then there were the remains of a large animal, with the nasal bones very close together, and on which the horns were also close together. The third, which was a smaller animal, had the nasal bones diverging, and the horns also diverged. The fourth, which is, so far as is known, a new species, was of a small animal, with the nasal bones together. There was a great deal of incidental material at this place, and ten days were spent there in interesting work. The species of rhinoceros found is not a large one, but the animals were evidently about the size of a yearling calf, but shorter and fatter than the calf. The

animal must also have weighed more. It is distinctly of the upland type of the rhinoceros and probably lived on grass and such food. It had much longer legs than the lowland rhinoceros.

In this same neighborhood there were found large numbers of the so-called "devil's corkscrews," which resemble nothing more than large holes in the ground, which seem to have been made by large corkscrews, as there are spirals on the sides of the hole, running down to the bottom, which in many cases is as much as six feet from the surface of the ground. It has been claimed by some that these formations were made by plants, which grew in this manner, but the members of the Amherst expedition have decided that they were made by a species of rodents, some of which were very small, smaller than a mouse in many cases. Later other finds were made which bore out this theory.

A New Species of Horse

At this time a two-days' side trip was made, which was extremely profitable. The finds, which were made on the ranch of a Mr. Betcher, who lived comparatively nearby, consisted of the remains of a "new" horse, which it is thought fills in the gap between the upper algoncine period and the middle miocene, and in addition to the one whole horse uncovered another fragmentary jaw was found. This horse is one of a species which had three toes, and there is but one other specimen, it is thought. The horse was about the size of a well known Virginia deer, and very slender for a horse. It was also very light in weight. The jaw of the animal was not nearly so deep as in the modern horse, and the teeth were about a half-inch deep, instead of about three inches, as in the modern horse. When the crown wore off, therefore, this horse had no more teeth to depend upon, and it is probable that the life of the animal was about five years in length. There were no deep pits of cement in the teeth, and the cement pits were then just beginning. The front tooth of a modern horse also has a mark on it, while the tooth of the horse found did not. The horse was evidently short-lived, therefore. This skeleton of the horse was taken out in a block of sandstone, and beyond the skull, and some of the skeleton, including the pelvis and some of the limb bones, little has yet been decided about it.

Indian Flint Diggings

From there the party was guided by Harold Cook, the son of James Cook, who had helped the party before, to the Indian flint diggings, familiarly known in the vicinity as "Spanish diggings." There is no connection with the Spanish,

however, but years ago there was a story that these diggings were the remains of Spanish gold mines, and some misguided people have even dug in them for the yellow metal. These diggings are twenty-five miles west of Spring butte, and due west of Mr. Black's ranch, whose place is the post-office at Willow, Wyo. The spring at which the party pitched its camp is at the head of Spanish creek and several of the diggings are at that point. The diggings are two miles east of the Muddy river, on the south border of Converse county, Wyo. After camp was made the members of the party located several small springs and several of the diggings, each of which was at a spring and the scene of an ancient encampment of the people who made the diggings. That the diggings are ancient there is no doubt, for the formation in which the diggings were made in the native flint and the loose stones left are now all covered with lichens, which indicates a very long weathering process. The flint is very hard and it takes a lot of weathering for it to soften to such an extent that the lichens can get a hold and make any headway.

Strange Ceremonial Emblem

The ground in this whole area is covered to a depth of from one to three feet with flints. Of three diggings at this place that at the central spring is the oldest, judging from the lichens and other indications. In these diggings there is absolutely no tract of contact with the modern Indian, and the diggings are at least 200 years old, for it takes a long time to produce lichens on flint. The largest of the three quarries is about one and a half acres in area, and at the base of the slope on which it is there is a strange formation, the significance of which has not yet been ascertained. It is evidently a ceremonial emblem of some kind. It consists of the outline, made of small rocks, of a huge man, with a topknot on his head. The slope from his head to the point where his feet once were is very gentle. His body runs almost due north and south, with the head to the south and the feet to the north. The body of the figure is fifty-four feet long and twelve feet wide, while the whole figure as it now is measures eighty-four feet. The neck is three feet long and the head is six feet across and eight feet high. The topknot is four feet high. The arm measures to the elbow six feet and from the elbow to the hand is nine feet. The legs have been cut off by the action of a small stream, which has been formed long ago, but since the building of the figure, and it is impossible to tell how long the legs were originally. —Springfield (Mass.) Republican.