

SECTIONAL VIEW OF THE NEW MUNICIPAL BUILDING

Intricacies of the Huge Structure Shown, and the Approaches to the Subways Connecting with the Bridges Plainly Indicated.

HARDLY will New York have had time to become accustomed to its new Public Library, which will be opened to the public this week, before it will be compelled to expend a fresh stock of "Ohs" and "Ahs" on another structure even more colossal. This is the new Municipal Building. For months after ground was broken for it two years ago this Summer, all that was visible of it was an immense hole in the ground, extending northward from the intersection of Park Row and Centre Street. But of late there has arisen out of this hole a dizzy tower of ironwork, from which something like a definite idea may be gained of how this unique structure will look when all the departments of our city's Government are housed in it.

A more definite idea may be gained by a study of the sectional view of the Municipal Building on this page.

It is to be noted, so to speak, uncovered an entire half of the structure, the northern half, lying above Chambers Street, which thoroughfare, as will be seen, pierces the building in the form of an arcade, thus becoming the only arched street in New York. All that is shown uncovered north of this arcade is duplicated in the southern half of the Municipal Building—the concourse, the entrance hall, the court, and the stairways leading to the Subway tracks situated below the street level in the building.

These Subway tracks, by the way, will be a revelation to many New Yorkers, who have either forgotten or have never quite digested the fact that, beneath the Municipal Building, it is planned to have one of the principal stations of the Subway connecting all the bridges between Manhattan Island and other points. As will be seen from the picture, only two of the tracks running under the building are duplicated in the southern half of the Municipal Building, lying beneath Centre Street. The other six tracks, directly under the building, will be used for the trains on this interbridge line, and for whatever further purposes future subway developments may make advisable.

Even in their present form these tracks, together with the platforms for incoming and outgoing passengers, and the stairways and other approaches to them, have a labyrinthine aspect to which only the maze of passageways beneath the Hudson Terminal Building bears a resemblance.

The new Municipal Building will be the largest and completest building ever constructed for housing the administrative and departmental offices of a single municipality. Furthermore, its general design, by McKim, Mead & White of this city, which was picked from a number of designs submitted to a committee of experts appointed by the Municipal Arts Commission, is recognized as one of the most artistic and suitable pieces of work of the kind ever turned out under the draughtsman's rule.

One of the principal difficulties which the designers had to surmount was the peculiar shape of the plot of ground on which the great Municipal Building stands—a plot of irregular shape flanked by Centre Street, Park Row, and Duane Street, just northeast of City Hall Park. In commenting on their design after its

acceptance the architects made this statement:

"The peculiar shape of the lot made the architectural problem as well as the problem of light and air an unusual one, the terms of the competition involving a solution of the problem of construction over the Subway without interfering with the passage of trains and also the provision of the uninterrupted passage through the buildings of Chambers Street. In the plan presented as much of the entire lot is covered as was possible consistently with the symmetry which would lend itself to architectural treatment.

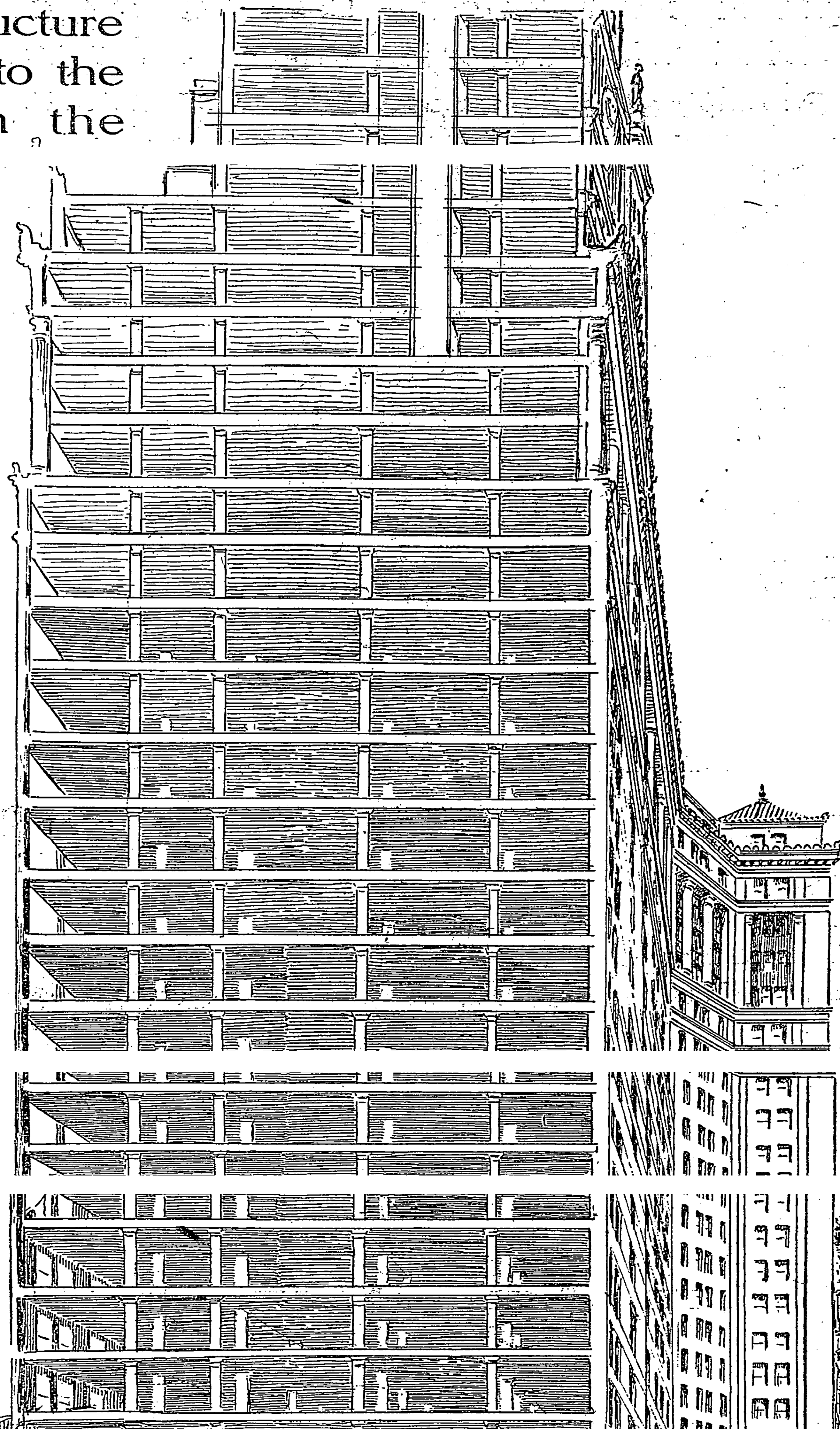
"It was believed that all interior courts in a building of that height would become simple air shafts, affording no light to the lower stories. Accordingly the plan is so arranged that all the light is direct and no interior courts occur whatever.

"The open court facing the west (shown in the foreground of the picture on this page) not only secures uninterrupted light but is valuable from an architectural point of view in that it recognizes by its shape and position the approach and absorption of a great thoroughfare.

"That part of the first floor devoted to the Subway stations is accessible directly to a large number of entrances unnumbered with steps, the plans of the floor being coincident with that of the sidewalk. The corridors containing the staircases and elevators for the office floors are also directly accessible both on the eastern and western sides and form thoroughfares through the building.

"In studying the problem it was the aim of the architects, while keeping in mind the practical uses of the building, to give it the municipal character which such a building should possess. The classic style was chosen, both as following the accepted traditions of buildings of a civic character throughout the country from the earliest times down, as well as on account of the proximity of the Hall of Records, the Court House, and the City Hall, all of them classic, or in styles derived therefrom.

"McKim, Mead & White won the competition for the Municipal Building, in spite of the fact that other architects in their designs planned a more elaborate facade for the building than that in the design chosen. This, in the eyes of the judges, was more than offset by the fact that the winning competitors made a far better use of all the available space in the irregular lot destined for the structure. They provided more floor space



and other advantages, which in the Judges' verdict made their design the best adapted for the purposes of a public building.

There will be in all thirty-four stories in the big building. Of these, however, eight will be in the tower overtopping the main structure, so that there will actually be only twenty-six floors given over to municipal offices.

The total height of the building, from the sidewalk to the top of the tower, including a 24-foot figure surmounting the latter, will be 630 feet—the tower alone, from the twenty-sixth story up, will be 210 feet high. If the floor of the Subway station is taken as the base of the building, instead of the sidewalk level, the total height will be 530 feet, as that station will be 20 feet below the street. On the tower will be a clock 25 feet in diameter.

There will be 651,000 square feet of office space in the building, a total of which few buildings in the world can boast. In so far as New York is concerned, the Hudson Terminal, at Cortlandt, Dey, and Church Streets, comes nearest to this figure.

Here are some more figures which will tend to give an idea of the building's dimensions and the difficulties confronting those engaged in putting it up:

The contract for its foundations was the biggest ever awarded in this country for a single building, not only in estimated cost, but in amount of earth to be excavated and of concrete to be used.

The estimated cost of the foundation was \$1,500,000.

The total to be excavated was 140,000 cubic yards, of which 50,000 cubic yards was under water level.

The total concrete found necessary for piers was 50,000 cubic yards.

Seventy thousand barrels of cement were needed for use on the foundations of the building alone.

The depth of the foundation was approximately 130 feet, of this 90 feet was below water level.

The area of the basement is over two acres. The area of the building at the first floor is 45,000 square feet.

There will be 32 elevators in the building.

Its frontage on Centre Street will be 448 feet; on Park Row, 331 feet; on Duane Street, 230 feet, and on Tryon Row, 71 feet.

The cost was originally estimated at \$7,000,000. What it will be by the time the building is ready for occupancy is problematical. It will, in all probability, be nearer \$10,000,000 than the original estimate.

The estimated cost for labor on the foundation work alone was \$800,000.

Since McKim, Mead & White won the award for the building an additional \$30,000 has been voted in order that they may make a careful study of the best

apportionment of the floors among the many city departments that will occupy the new building. It is intended that these departments, hitherto so widely scattered over the city, shall not only be housed in one building, but that they shall be grouped in the most advantageous manner possible. By careful planning of the interior of the new building it is expected that the architects will be able to achieve such a result.

The construction of the Municipal Building was by no means an easy task. Right at the start difficulties were encountered, owing to the sandy soil of the site. It was at first believed that the foundations could be laid on piles, but after preliminary tests, it was learned that the supports would have to be run down to rock level.

Later, when the work was well under way, an injunction was got out against the awarding of the contract for making the superstructure of the building. This was at the beginning of Mayor Gaynor's régime in December, 1903, shortly before the laying of the corner stone by Mayor McClellan.

But nothing much came of this, and soon those who had been accustomed for months to see nothing on the cat-cornered plot close beside the Brooklyn Bridge terminal except a gigantic hole had the satisfaction of watching the superstructure rise ever higher, until now the mighty skeleton has reached its full height.

How advantageous it will be for the various city departments to be housed at last in one place may be gained by a cursory glance over the situation of those departments now.

The Board of Elections is in Forty-second Street, between Broadway and Sixth Avenue. The Tenement House and Charities Departments are also far uptown.

All the various subdivisions of the Department of Finance, as well as the City Chamberlain and the Commissioner of Jurors, are in the old A. T. Stewart Building, at the corner of Broadway and Chambers Street. So greatly have the staffs of these various departments increased during the last few years that the city has taken over, little by little, practically the entire building. Even as it is the number of city employes in it is so great as to make the quarters inadequate.

Across Broadway, in the Broadway-Chambers and the Barclay Building, are the offices of the Sheriff, the Municipal Clerk, the Board of Estimate, the Commissioner of Licenses, and at 123 Broadway is the Board of Water Supply.

In the Park Row Building are housed the Department of Bridges, the Department of Street Cleaning, the Water Department, the Bureau of Incubation, the executive offices of the Public Baths, the Bureau of Public Buildings and Offices, and the Commissioner of Public Works; and the Supervisor of the City Record. For many years the file rooms of the City Record were kept at the City Hall, but space there became so valuable, eventually that the city was forced not long ago to lease an outside building for the files. Into the file rooms as soon as they were vacated stepped the Marriage License Bureau, whose active business had so crowded the City Clerk's office, where it was transacted, that other branches of activity scarcely had a chance there.

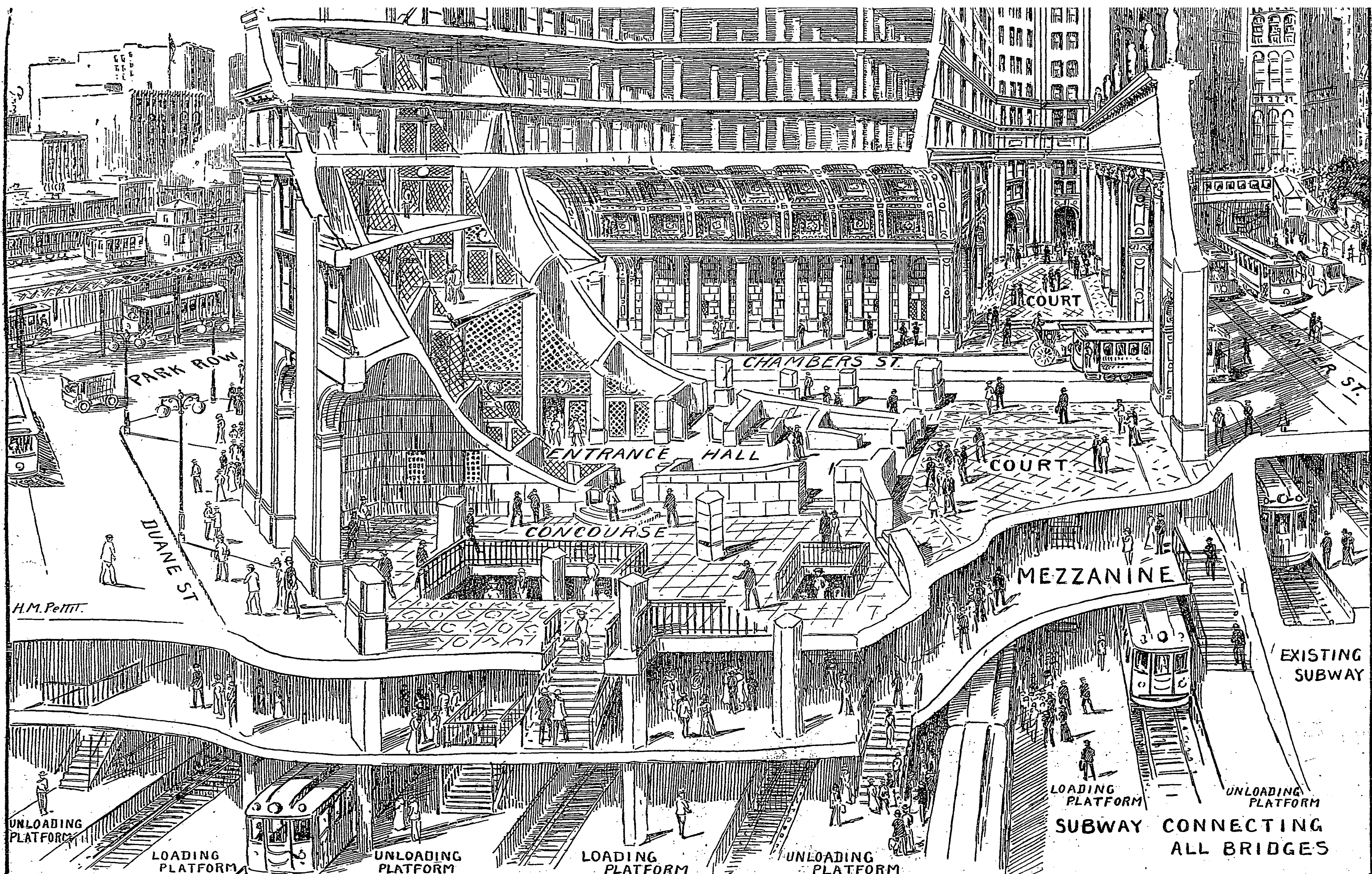
The Public Service Commission, which, like the Sheriff's office and the Board of Elections, is in effect a municipal department, is in the Tribune Building on Park Row. It leases three entire floors, but its clerical and administrative business have increased so steadily that even more room is wanted.

All the above mentioned departments, now so hopelessly spread over the map of Manhattan, will be quartered in the new Municipal Building. It is planned also to accommodate in it the Coroner's office, now located in the Criminal Courts Building on Centre Street.

The Criminal Courts Building, whose walls have been literally bulging outward for years on account of the horde cooped up within it, may be relieved eventually of still more of its occupants by the spacious new building. This may also be true of the County Court House, which shelters far more than it can conveniently stand. Already space there has grown so limited that some Magistrates have been forced to sit in outside courtrooms.

It was thought that the completion of the Hall of Records would mean relief of this congestion in officialdom, but even after the housing therein of the Tax Board, the Law Department, the Surrogates' office and the Armory Board, those in older buildings still complained of lack of elbow room.

But all that is drawing to an end. Any one who casts an eye over the gigantic structure, rising out of the ground at the end of Centre Street will doubtless be convinced that it will be capable of providing much more than elbow room, for the city officials of to-day, to-morrow, and many days to come.



Sectional View of the New Municipal Building, Showing the Maze of Courts and Stairways That Lead to the Subways Beneath.