

ADDRESS GIVEN BY DR. CHAS. H. ARNOLD AT THE LAYING OF THE
CORNER-STONE OF THE PERSHING MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM AT FIFTEENTH AND
M STREETS AT 2 P.M. MONDAY, APRIL 23, 1956.

Master of Ceremonies National Representative Legionnaire John E. Curtis,
Honorable Mayor Clark Jeary, Distinguished Guests, Legionnaires, Ladies and
Gentlemen:

Exactly seventeen years ago, in the month of April 1939, Colonel Rolla Van Kirk
Commander of American Legion Post # 3, of Lincoln, Nebraska, asked me to
serve as General Chairman to provide ways and means of erecting a much
needed City Auditorium.

Before the campaign got thoroughly under way, Mayor Orin S. Copeland requested
that the project of opening Fifteenth Street from O to R Streets be combined
with the Auditorium proposition. The Legion granted his request, and
Commander Van Kirk composed the memorable petition which was circulated and
later placed on the ballot for the decision of the voters. I say memorable,
because it has withstood the test of time and was twice sustained by the
Supreme Court.

A search for workers to promote the Legion's undertaking was not necessary.
Legionnaires volunteered enthusiastically and I regret that I cannot remember
the names of all of them, and I apologize now for any omissions inadvertently
made. It is recalled, however, that the following Service Men helped to
constitute a most effective organization; A. C. Eichberg, the Executive
Assistant to our present Governor Victor E. Anderson, served as newspaper
publicity Chairman and as Coordinator of Sub-committees. Today's Master of
Ceremonies John E. Curtis organized a speakers bureau, the members of which,
together with himself, addressed dozens of meetings, pointing out most
effectively, the need for and the logic of the Legion's undertaking.
Ving Kittnell, Harry Ball and George Santo with many Legionnaires circulated
the petitions that brought in, in record time, more than the required number
of names necessary to place the proposition on the ballot the following month.
C. L. Clark and Assistants solicited and collected funds from generous civic-
minded citizens to defray expenses of advertising, printing, etc.,
Vice-Commander Ray Elam and Myron D. (Mike) Noble assisted Commander Van Kirk
and the Chairman in many ways, as did Chas. Elce in organizing the Northeast
section of the City.

The newspapers were kind in their Editorials, and other Veteran Organizations
cooperated and worked faithfully with the Legion.

After the election the next month, in May 1939, the Legionnaires were jubilant
and expressed their gratitude to the voters for authorizing the Council to
issue bonds to open Fifteenth Street and to build a City Auditorium.

The City Council appointed an Auditorium Advisory Committee to study the
specific needs and to lay plans for the building. Meanwhile the opening
of Fifteenth Street was completed.

The Advisory Committee counselled with the representatives of over thirty
Organizations, as well as with The Capitol Environs Committee, The City
Planning Board and others and invited any individual to submit any suggestions.
The Members of this Advisory Committee travelled far and wide, at their own
expense, to inspect Auditoriums in Cities comparable in size to ours.

All of the information gathered from all sources was crystalized and the City Council employed The Associated Architects, under the Chairmanship of Legionnaire Walter Wilson to design the building. Unfortunately, before a building of such size could be completed, prices had advanced and another campaign was instituted for more money under the strong leadership of Legionnaire John F. Lawlor, which was successfully consummated at the polls.

Then World War Two, and all building and contemplation of building ceased and then the Korean conflict caused further delay.

This being a Democratic country, every citizen has a right to speak. Many exercised this prerogative thoroughly. The City Council was very patient and invited public hearings. Some citizens were so convinced of the justice of their thinking regarding location, type of building etc., that they carried the matter to the Supreme Court twice, which Body sustained Commander Van Kirk's and his Assistants' legal verbage of the original petition and ballot.

During all of this time such representative citizens as the late Frank H. Woods the late and former Councilman James Kinsinger, T. B. Strain, John Selleck, Charles Elce, Jess Faes, C. L. Clark, Mike Noble, Chancellor Fornest, Arch Bailey, Flay Wright, Miss Grace Trott, and others have served on the Advisory Committee to the City Council at a tremendous sacrifice of time and in some cases, a loss in business. Also during all of this ~~time~~ period of years of waiting, unfortunately, the building costs have advanced unbelievably, and as a result plans had to be changed from the original ones, but under the excellent leadership of our Honorable Mayor Clark Jeary and through his co-workers in the City Hall, particularly City Clerk Theo. H. Berg, and the many thousands who have contributed in some way, together with the persistent efforts of the American Legion, this practical and much needed City Auditorium is about to be completed.

It is fitting that this building should be known as a memorial to General-of-The Armies, John J. Pershing, located on the mall leading from the State Capitol to The State Historical Society Building on the University Campus, where he spent many years as Commandant, and where he organized the Pershing Rifles.

Since these projects have finally been consummated, through the initiative of the Legion, aided by Veterans of all Societies, and sympathetically assisted by patriotic citizens, then it would seem appropriate ---- and I speak now, not as a veteran, but as a citizen, and most reverently --- it would seem appropriate to change the name of Fifteenth Street to Veterans Memorial Avenue in honor of those men and women of all wars, who made the supreme sacrifice in the defense of their country.

Master of Ceremonies National Representative Legionnaire John E. Curtiss.
Honorable Mayor Clark Jeary, Distinguished Guests, Legionnaires, Ladies and
Gentlemen:

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^{CHANCELLOR FORREST ARCH BAILEY, SENATOR}
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Thanks you