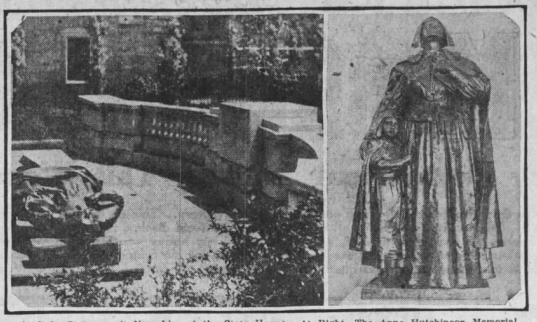
Boston Globe
https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/image/430604639

Downloaded on Feb 9, 2022

E BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE–JUNE 25, 1922

ANNE HUTCHINSON, DEAD NEARLY 300 YEARS, IS TODAY CENTER OF LIVELY CONTROVERSY

Governor and Council Have Not Yet Made Their Decision as to Site For Statue In Front of West Wing of State House—Work of Art Lying For Weeks on Balcony There



At Left—Statue as it Now Lies at the State House. At Right—The Anne Hutchinson Memorial.

What is to be done with the statue of Anne Hutchinson?

This is a problem that is vexing the Governor and Executive Council, on whom the Legislature imposed the duty of selecting a site in front of the west wing of the State House.

For six weeks the statue, sculptured by Cyrus E. Dallin, a member of the State Art Commission, has lain on a State House balcony, exposed to wind and weather, waiting for some one to give her a lift. But Anne's fate is shrouded in mystery, as her body is shrouded in burlap bagging.

Last Wednesday the Council failed to take action on the site urged by members of the commission. The matter was tabled, but Anne kept the floor.

Yesterday a member of the Council admitted to a Globe reporter that there is opposition to placing any statue of Anne Hutchinson in front of the State House. He further stated that had it not been for a misunderstanding by some of the original donors, members of old Boston families, the statue would probably never have been accepted by the Commonwealth.

Just why is a question on which the Globe sought opinion yesterday.

Walter Kendall Watkins, Boston's historical authority, who made the formal presentation of the plaster model two years ago, stated that there has been criticism of the Dallin statue because of its conception, but declared that it ought to have its place above the State House lawn.

Miss Ellen Mudge Burrill, secretary in the sergeant-at-arms' office, said that she has heard some objection to it because of Anne's disputed claims to immortality and her banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony on religious grounds. A member of the Council denied that their hesitation has anything to do with the fact that it is the statue of a woman.

Still a Controversialist

In religion Anne was a controversialist and in the politics of today she is the same. Passers into the west wing of the State House of late have seen her sculptured figure stretched out on a hard tile bed in the same posture in which her body was laid to rest nearly 300 years ago. But the history of the memorial itself dates back many years. It is a story that retails historical incidents, including orions of the oldest families, brought forward a plaster model of the Hutchinson statute which, when finished in bronze, they proposed to give to the State. The members of the original committee were Erving Winslow, Arthur Winslow, Gen Francis H. Appleton, Mrs Margaret Deland, Rev Dr James De Normandie, Joseph Lee, John T. Morse Jr and Joseph Grafton Minot.

The sculptor represents Mrs Hutchinson as an idealized exemplification of the Puritan character. She holds a Bible clasped to her side and her right arm is thrown protectingly over the shoulders of her little daughter, while her face is uplifted in an appeal to Heaven. The posture is, ideally, that of the woman when she heard pronouncement of the sentence that banished her from the colony because of her religious views and her activity in challenging the orthodoxy of her church.

Two years ago the plaster figure, "received" by Mr Watkins, secretary of the Society of Colonial Wars, in behalf of the committee, Walter Gilman Page, chairman of the Art Commission, "received" it for the State.

This ceremony, according to Mr Watkins, was the starting point of many difficulties for the Anne Hutchinson statue. The plaster model was placed near a stairway, on the second floor, north of the Hall of Flags, where it was expected to stimulate subscription for a permanent bronze figure. For some time it was displayed there and on the grounds of the Art Museum. When, after more than a year, sufficient funds were obtained for the bronze piece, it was completed by Mr Dallin and taken to the State House, where the donors, the Anne Hutchinson Memorial Association and the Massachusetts Federation of Women's Clubs, anticipated a joyous and happy reception. To their surprise, a hitch developed.

"Received," Not "Accepted"

It seems that the State had merely "received" the original plaster model on June 17, 1920, and had not "accepted" it or agreed to "accept" any other model of Anne Hutchinson. The distinction apparently is this: You can present something to the State and if the State "receives" it, the officials are at liberty to throw it out the window or hide it in a basement closet; whereas, "acceptance" implies an obligation to handle with care and show to your friends.

Mr Winslow and his organization came forward joyously with the bronze statue and discovered that there was a misunderstanding.

Said Mr Watkins to the Globe reporter:

"Of course I understood that when the plaster was presented two years ago, under Gov Coolidge's administration, it was merely to be left there for exhibit. Mr Winslow, however, thought that this implied that the State would accept the finished product, and it was on this basis that the memorial association came forward with the bronze statue last Spring."

Had it not been for this understanding, according to a member of the Council, Anne would never had a chance of gaining access to the sacred precincts of the State administration. And there was no record that the Council ever obligated the State to give Anne shelter in the public halls of the very community which once had given her the "KO."

In the meantime other developments had made the path thorny for the Dallin sculpture. Last Fall, Supt of Buildings Fred Kimball began chiseling away the marble wall in the Hall of Flags for a bronze entablature to Norman Prince, air hero of the Great War, donated by his father, Frederick H. Prince, the banker. Members of the Legislature, chancing to idle by, scratched their heads and wondered what was coming.

Legislature Reserved Right

"Some of the legislators," explained Miss Burrill, "claimed that there had been an unwritten rule that the Legislature would have a voice in accepting any public gift of art, and in this case the Legislature had not been consulted by Gov Cox. The result was that the Legislature this Spring passed a bill reserving this right distinctly to itself."

Senator John F. Cronin of Roxbury filed a petition for a law "better regulating the establishment of permanent memorials in the State House," and the matter was referred to the Great and General Court.

Meanwhile the donors of the Anne Hutchinson statue arrived with the bronze figure on their backs, so to speak. They were told to wait outside. Whatever obligation there may have been for the State to accept it, they learned that the Legislature alone had power.

This was an official embarrassment. Something had to be done with the statue, so it was put to bed on the tiled rock floor of the State House balcony. And something had to be done about it, also, as the sculptor was none other than Cyrus Dallin of the Art Commission and the donors were persons of wealth and position. Chairman Page's portrait of Gov Winslow was recently taken by the State. So Secretary Charles H. Grey of the Art Commission filed a report with the Legislature, recommending its acceptance and saying:

"It was understood two years ago by vote of this commission receiving the statue in plaster and giving it a place in the State House, that the finished result in bronze would be accepted by the Governor and Council, if such bronze was completed and presented inside of two years. Therefore, the Anne Hutchinson Memorial Association raised the necessary funds to complete the work, which it would not have done, had any doubt existed as to the final acceptance of its gift on the part of the Commonwealth.

"The proposed site is in front of the westerly wing of the State House."

Site Put Up to Council

The Legislature promptly voted to accept the statue, "the same to be placed on a site approved by the Governor and Council in front of the westerly wing of the State House." This was the status the matter had reached last Wednesday when Lieut Gov Alvan T. Fuller and the Councilors filed on to the rain-soaked State House lawn and discussed the plans with Mr Page, Mr Dallin and Herman Dudley Murphy of the Art Commission. The commission favored the placing of the statue on the granite block which surmounts the middle of the balustrade, above the ground floor balcony.

Members of the Council assume a "don't-quote-me" air of fright and trembling when approached on the subject, but one of them said:

"Some of us think that this is not the proper place for the statue, but the Legislature said it was to go in front of the westerly wing, so what are we going to do?"

"Do they object because it is the statue of a woman?" was asked.

"O, no, no, no, no. But Anne Hutchinson, so far as I have read of her in history, was a controversialist in religion, though she may also be regarded as an idealization of woman's later development.

"The point is this statue was presented by branches of the Hutchinson family and her admirers and we think if it is to be placed in front of the State House with Daniel Webster, Horace Mann and Gen Hooker, then it may set a precedent and there is no reason why some other family may not come along and buy a statue of some woman and force us to place it there."

Well, says historian Watkins, "if they aren't going to put it in front of the State House I don't know what they are going to do with it. It isn't suitable for the interior; it is heroic in size.

"There has been some trouble and opposition to it, but I don't see why there should be. Anne Hutchinson's morals were free from smirch. She stands as a great American woman who stood for freedom in religion.

"I have heard some criticism of the statuesque conception of her because it represents her as an idealist while many think she was aggressive. But it's only opinion. The woman has been dead nearly 300 years."

Echoes of the opposition have also sifted through to Miss Burrill, who as an employe in the Sergeant-at-Arms' office, has been frequently consulted by the parties but takes no sides.

"I have heard some opposition to picking Anne Hutchinson out as the woman to be memorialized at the State House," said she. "At the present time the only statue of a woman is that of a war nurse ministering to a soldier, a memorial to the nurses of the Civil War brought in during Gov Walsh's administration.

"Anne Hutchinson lived in the days when women were not allowed to have a hand in public affairs. But she insisted on holding her religious meetings in opposition to Gov Winthrop and the established leaders and was ultimately banished, and died at the hands of the Indians."

Secretary Greco of the Art Commission says:

"I don't know anything about it. See Mr Page or Mr Dallin or Mr Murphy."

Messrs Page, Dallin and Murphy are all reported out or town. Meanwhile, according to Supt Kimball's office, Anne's statue will stay where it is until the Governor and Council tell him what to do with it. This may be next Wednesday, according to Charles Southworth, executive secretary.

"Last Wednesday the Councilors were in a hurry to leave and the Governor was absent and they didn't see any reason for immediate action in the matter," said he. "They will probably act next week."

"You mean they will decide to place it on the balustrade?"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that—I don't know," was the reply.

Who does?

Copyright © 2022 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.