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Archives of American Art

Jacques Seligmann & Co. records, General Correspondence: Mellon, Andrew W., 1924-1928

Extracted on Apr-19-2024 07:38:53

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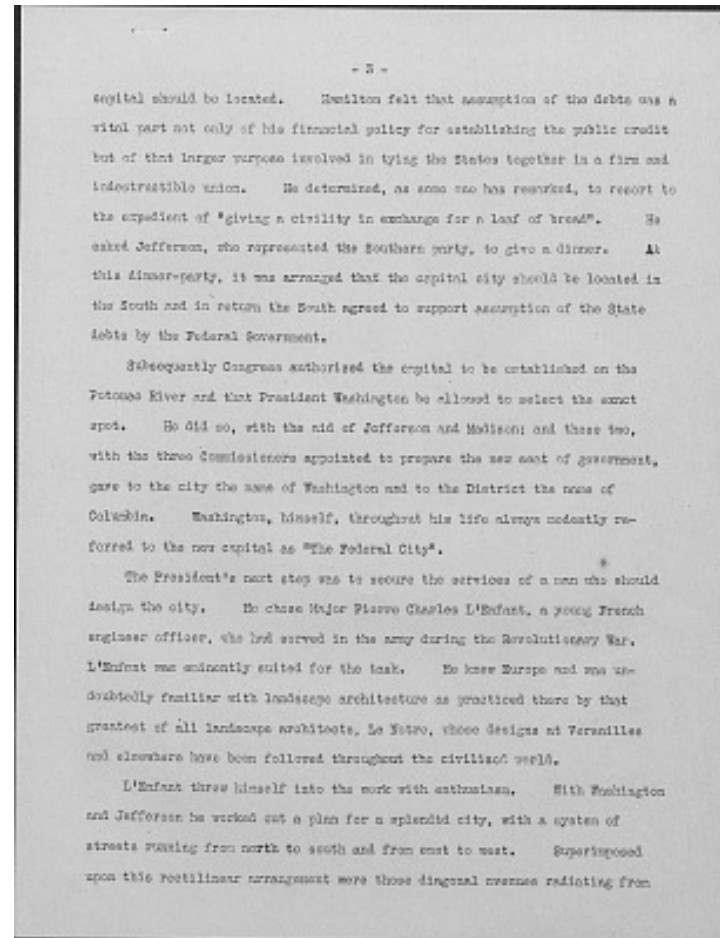
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capital should be located. Hamilton felt that assumption of the debts was a vital part not only of his financial policy for establishing the public credit but of that larger purpose involved in tying the States together in a firm and indestructible union. He determined, as some one has remarked, to resort to the expedient of "giving a civility in exchange for a loaf of bread". He asked Jefferson, who represented the Southern party, to give a dinner. At this dinner-party, it was arranged that the capital city should be located in the South and in return the South agreed to support assumption of the State debts by the Federal Government.

Subsequently Congress authorized the capital to be established on the Potomac River and that President Washington be allowed to select the exact spot. He did so, with the aid of Jefferson and Madison; and these two, with the three Commissioners appointed to prepare the new seat of government, gave to the city the name of Washington and to the District the name of Columbia. Washington, himself, throughout his life always modestly referred to the new capital as "The Federal City".

The President's next step was to secure the services of a man who should design the city. He chose Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant, a young French engineer officer, who had served in the army during the Revolutionary War. L'Enfant was eminently suited for the task. He knew Europe and was undoubtedly familiar with landscape architecture as practiced there by that greatest of all landscape architects, Le Notre, whose designs at Versailles and elsewhere have been followed throughout the civilized world.

L'Enfant threw himself into the work with enthusiasm. With Washington and Jefferson he worked out a plan for a splendid city, with a system of streets running from north to south and from east to west. Superimposed upon this rectilinear arrangement were those diagonal avenues radiating from



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