

CHAPTER XXXIV.
PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

By act of Congress December 24th, 1863, the federal judicial Western District of Michigan was created, of which Grand Rapids became and remains the center. Soon after Michigan Senators and Congressmen began making efforts for an appropriation to construct a Government building at Grand Rapids. In 1873 a commission of nine members was appointed to select a site composed of S. L. Withey, C. C. Comstock, T. D. Gilbert, and Henry Fralick of Kent County, L. V. Harris of Ottawa, L. V. Townsend of Ionia, L. G. Mason of Muskegon, H. G. Wells of Kalamazoo and A. P. Alexander of Van Buren. The commission advertised for sites and prices, and received ten sealed proposals which were opened May 2, 1873, and were as follows: Corner of Monroe and Ottawa streets, where now is the Aldrich block, \$55,000; corner of Fountain and Ionia streets, where now is the Auditorium, \$27,500; corner of Pearl and Ottawa streets where now is the Waters Block, \$50,000; corner of Lyon and Ottawa, part of the present city hall site, \$39,250; corner of the same streets, where now is the Norris block, \$27,000; corner of Ottawa street and Crescent avenue part of the present court house site, \$15,000; corner of Division and East Fulton streets, where now is the Cody block, \$25,000, and three pieces of property at a distance from the business center of the city at nominal prices. The commission recommended the corner of Fountain and Ionia streets, the northeast corner of Lyon and Ottawa streets, and the corner of Pearl and Ottawa streets.

The Treasury Department rejected the report and ordered an examination by the supervising architect of the department. Upon his recommendation condemnation proceedings were commenced by the United States Attorney on February 13th, 1874, against the block of land bounded by Ionia, Pearl, North Division and Lyon streets, and now constituting the site of the Government building, by filing a petition in the Circuit Court of the United States for the Western District of Michigan. All persons having any interest in any lands of the block were made defendants. The following is the title of the case: