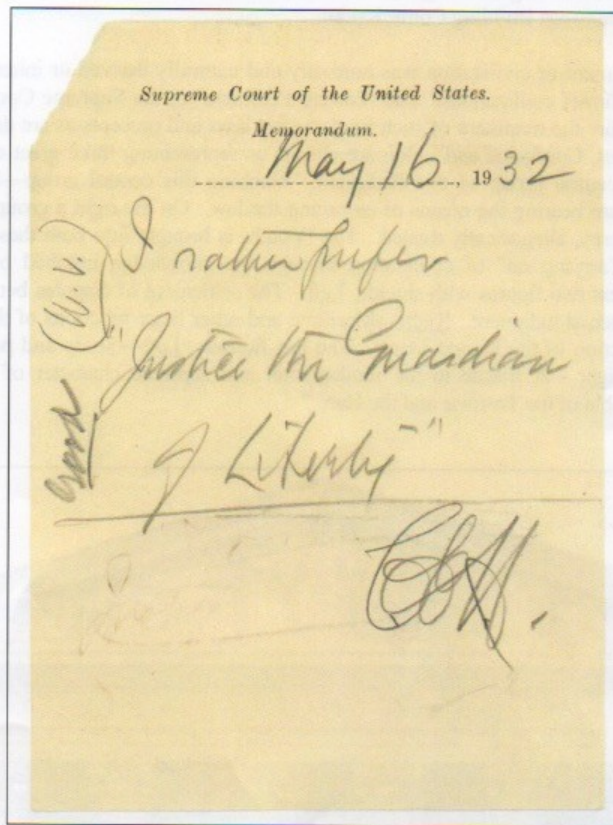




The East Pediment

The inscription on the East Pediment—'Justice the Guardian of Liberty'—is one of the few decisions regarding the architecture of the building that was made directly by one of the Justices. On May 2, 1932, David Lynn, the Architect of the Capitol, sent Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes a letter with Cass Gilbert's suggestions for the East and West Pediment inscriptions. The Chief Justice agreed with the suggested inscription for the West Pediment, 'Equal Justice Under Law' but did not like the one proposed for the East Pediment, 'Equal Justice is the Foundation of Liberty.' Chief Justice Hughes sent a note (*below*) with a suggestion for a different inscription to Justice Willis Van Devanter, the only Justice beside Hughes and his predecessor, Chief Justice William Howard Taft, to serve on the Supreme Court Building Commission. Justice Van Devanter responded with a succinct reply: "Good." A few days later, the Chief Justice formally answered Lynn's request by providing the alternate inscription, stating simply "We think that the inscription for the East Portico can be improved."



May 16, 1932 note regarding the East Pediment inscription.
The text, in the hand of Charles Evans Hughes, reads,
"I rather prefer 'Justice the Guardian of Liberty'"