

BALTIMORE CHAPTER A. I. A.

ARCHITECTS' REPORT

PENCILLINGS BY THE WAY

Last month our President, Paul Gaudreau, was travelling extensively in Germany as guest of the West German Government while your editor was in Mexico, Peru and Brazil for one of the country's major manufacturing concerns. These trips could hardly have been more interesting and stimulating to their participants who hope through the notes printed below to pass on some of their enthusiasm to our readers.

Germany

Dominant among my impressions was the amazing amount of reconstruction that has taken place in the past thirteen years. Cities which had been practically leveled by bombs, except for the Cathedrals and occasional public buildings, were almost completely rebuilt. Architectural design and construction were of a high standard, incorporating the best principles of City planning.

In each of the main cities and many small towns, architects and planners are collaborating to bring about reconstruction programs in the best traditions of the past. These cities, known thru the ages for their charm and picturesque beauty are now facing the same problem as America, that of vehicular traffic. During the rush hours, in the capital city of Bonn, for example, certain narrow streets are closed to autos, motorcycles and bikes, to be used by pedestrians only.

A basic difference between most of our cities and those of West Germany, lies in their downtown areas. The public, the architect and the planners in Germany seem determined to retain the charm of the many small parks, pedestrian malls, open plazas with attractive sculpture, fountains and comfortable benches under shady trees. Laws have been passed to prevent overcrowding the land and the efforts to expand the "green areas" seem successful.

New housing, from two stories to six, and occasionally huge blocks of fifteen floor apartments, as in Hamburg, have risen in the downtown areas and suburbs. Featured are street-level stores in the multi-floor dwellings, and extensive use of open balconies, facing pleasant parks and sunny play areas. Even in the lowest income group housing, the landscaping and gardens seemed well maintained.

Our tour began in Bonn, with a three-day briefing session where officials explained the new Govern-

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Brazil

What would your reaction be if the long distance telephone should ring in your office and the voice at the other end wanted to know how quickly you could get to Sao Paulo, Brazil? A rather disconcerting question to say the least. Brazil, the fifth largest country in the world with the 7th largest population and Sao Paulo, the fastest growing city in the world with a current population of 4,500,000 that is expected to double in the next decade, yet both country and city are relatively unknown to North Americans. The answer was obvious and my partner has been suffering the consequences ever since.

Paulistas are optimistic, energetic and ambitious people. Their heritage, though basically Latin is, like ours, tempered by the influences of many other nationalities and their present ambitions are aimed at American and German standards.

Sao Paulo, a city that has already celebrated its 400th anniversary is well on its way to becoming the industrial center of Brazil and South America and has quadrupled in size during the last twenty years. Thus it is a city of great contrasts: lovely colonial baroque buildings surrounded by skyscrapers—a new one on every corner, some 45 stories high and yet built of hand-mixed, hand-tamped concrete and with an absolute minimum of mechanical equipment; a burgeoning automobile industry struggling to place its new models alongside the host of Detroit Vintage 1935 on the limited number of super-highways and miles of red dirt "roads" which are so inadequate that metropolitan development is definitely vertical and most travel is by air. But most of all it is the home of a gay, friendly and hospitable people with a flare for both working hard and enjoying life.

As in the U.S.A. a large proportion of the buildings are speculative ventures not distinguished for

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GERMANY (Continued from first page)

ment operation, the refugee problem, reconstruction and housing, the long-range program for the reunification of Germany, and their country's future development in close alliance with the U. S. and the NATO countries.

After visiting the City of Cologne, whose historic twin-towered Cathedral dominates the skyline, a five-day stop in the seaport town of Hamburg featured tours to see, in operation, the master plan which dictates that 20% of the city shall remain open "green space", including an inner harbor for small craft, restaurants and parks in the heart of downtown.

The national laws prohibiting road-side billboards, was evidenced on our remarkably comfortable 10-hour train ride south to Bavaria, where no signs interfered with the superlative view of precisely patterned farmland, villages nestled in the green valleys, the ever dominant church tower rising above the red tiled roofs of the pleasantly huddled houses.

In the cultural center of Munich, where the pace of reconstruction seemed slower than in the industrial north, it was exciting to see 14-year old apprentice artists and wood carvers working beside their masters in the restoration of medieval palaces and public buildings.

Painting, sculpture and mosaic work, at the public's insistence, are given government support in Germany, by the law requiring that all public buildings, including schools, housing, government structures and park projects, have at least two percent of their construction cost budget allocated to fine arts.

Thru the famous university town of Heidelberg, we proceeded to the commercial center of Stuttgart where the German economy seems to be at an exceptionally high level, and the architectural design of the new city hall was outstanding.

The nearby city of Ulm, features a cathedral with the highest church tower in the world, 529 feet above the spacious pedestrian plaza at its entrance.

Hannover, the next major stop, is host each year to a 10-day industrial fair, rivalling the World's Fair in Brussels, for buyers and business men from all nations.

At the Interbau in West Berlin, is a new community for 10,000, designed by leading architects from Europe, South America and the United States. A symphony concert in the American designed Berlin Congress Hall was a memorable experience.

In a U. S. Army bus, we toured several miles inside Russian-controlled East Berlin to see the one short street of marble faced commercial and apartment buildings, only to be driven behind them to view the areas where reconstruction is practically non-existent.

Frankfurt, our last city, after flying back from West Berlin, offered us the opportunity to view the exceptionally charming housing and commercial

development, newly erected around the old cathedral, where cars park under the grassed terraces and each courtyard offers a new and exciting vista.

More than the amazing post-war reconstruction, the praise-worthy city planning, charming downtown parks and pedestrian malls, I felt that the German churches made the most significant impression on me during the entire tour.

As we visited scores of medieval Cathedrals and churches, from the Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque periods, spanning over a thousand years, it was relieving to observe that through the storms of warfare, these great German artistic achievements have remained relatively untouched and unharmed. To me they are symbols of the finest creative forces of that country.

And in the new towns and reconstructed areas where housing developments are being erected in a well designed and varied pattern, the church is still the center of the community, with its strikingly beautiful bell tower dominating the skyline. And the interiors of the churches of all faiths seem to follow the centuries old traditions of depicting the best artistic and architectural talent of which those industrious and charmingly hospitable people are capable.

PAUL L. GAUDREAU, *President*

BRAZIL (Continued from first page)

their architectural merit. However, the standard of design even in this field is considerably higher than in Baltimore. Although all multi-story buildings have an aura of regimentation and repetition, in Brazil each building will have its own personality, developed from modern concrete usage. No attempt is made to "colonialize" the entrance or to hoist details of yesteryear up to the 25th floor.

As the city has grown like topsy the work of such architects as Costa, Niemeyer, Mindlin, Castro Mello, Rino Levi, Cerqueira Cesar must be sought out, which was difficult to do in the short time available. However, from what I did see it is obvious that such men are not only highly competent architects but probably better artists than their North American counterparts. In fact, it would seem that their basic approach to design is that of a sculptor as they put tremendous emphasis first, on the composition and juxtaposition of masses and shapes and secondly, on external textures and color. To achieve the desired results they have become true masters of their favorite material—reinforced concrete. Ordinary rectangular framing has been refined beyond anything imagined here, cantilevers become fantastic and curves are almost more commonplace than straight lines. (To forestall any cynical criticism it should be pointed out that the highly publicized collapse of a building in Rio this year was due to bad soil conditions and lack of test boring data and not structural failure.)

Besides the universal use of concrete other trademarks of Brazilian architecture are the ever present

"pilotis" (stilts) that raise buildings off the ground, sometimes as much as 30 feet, the handsome murals in the lobbies of public and semi-public buildings and the "brise-soleil" which can be anything from a fixed louver to a delicate hollow tile grille pattern.

From Sao Paulo, a relatively ugly city with little planning and organization, we went to the really beautiful capital city of Rio. Just like any other capital its handsome buildings, both new and old, are quite evident and the old suffer by comparison to the new ones by LeCorbusier, the Roberts Brothers, Lucio Costa, Roza and Niemeyer, some of which, such as the famous Ministry of Education are already more than twenty years old! But nature is the chief architect of Rio as she forced it to string out along its five blue bays, backed it up by an almost vertical rise of 3000 feet only a half mile from the water and then added the 1200 foot high Sugar Loaf as an accent in the middle of the water and composition.

To the investor who wants to expand his already large empire, to the discouraged who wants to start over, to the tourist who wants, for a change, to visit a land with apparently unlimited future, we recommend a look at BRAZIL.

GWL, Editor

Walters Art Gallery

"Believing that such a commission as proposed by the Baltimore Chapter of the American Institute of Architects can render valuable service to the City of Baltimore in its efforts to preserve the beauty of Mount Vernon Place," Mayor D'Alesandro has, with the approval of the Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery, appointed the MOUNT VERNON PLACE ARCHITECTURAL ADVISORY COMMISSION to function with the following members:—Three Corporate members of the American Institute of Architects, Messrs. D. K. Este Fisher, Jr., Richard W. Ayers, and Francis Tallaferra; one member of the American Institute of Planners, Mr. Richard L. Steiner; and one member of the Society of Architectural Historians, Dr. Phoebe Stanton, Ph.D. (Mrs. Daniel J.). By the time you read this, the first meeting of the Commission will have been held, and a permanent Chairman appointed.

Chapter News

Members:—We are pleased to announce that two associate members have now advanced to Corporate Membership; viz., George C. Jacobs, of the firm of Weber and Jacobs; and Arthur G. Wildberger, Jr., who is associated with the firm of Turpin, Wachter & Associates. New Associate members are Alfred A. Calcagni, (Cochran, Stephenson & Wing); Richard C. Gay, (office of James R. Edmunds, Jr., and son of Richard B. Gay, of that same office); Calvin Kern Kobsa (Meyer & Ayers, and formerly assistant to Morris R. Baker of the Baltimore County Board of Education).

One of our members, J. Prentiss Browne, recently gave an illustrated talk on contemporary architecture to supplement the studies of art and architecture at the Roland Park Country School. Slides were obtained from the A. I. A. Library in Washington and were in color. The talk was confined to simple explanations of work done by some of the prominent practicing architects, and outlined some of the types of construction and materials used today. The students showed real interest and enthusiasm and asked many pertinent questions.

One of our Emeritus members, John H. Scarff, a Fellow in the AIA, is the co-author with Rosamond R. Belrne, of a

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book entitled "WILLIAM BUCKLAND 1733-1774—Architect of Virginia and Maryland", which will be ready for distribution this Fall. It is hoped that many of our members will wish to have a copy in their library, and that the Chapter office also may have one for display and reference.

The Chapter now has a membership in the N.C.A.R.B. If anyone has dealings with or difficulties in registering in another State, the Chapter may be able to assist.

Amended Building Regulations:—Mr. Raughley L. Porter, Building Inspection Engineer, Department of Public Works for Baltimore, has sent the Chapter Office copies on MASONRY VENEER ON NON-MASONRY WALLS—No. 10; and BONDING OF SOLID AND FACED MASONRY WALLS—No. 11; both dated June 6, 1958. A copy is available in the Chapter office or may be had direct from Mr. Porter's office.

Delegates to the National A.I.A. Convention to be held in Cleveland, in July, are as follows:—Messrs. Alexander S. Cochran, Paul L. Gaudreau, John C. Somers, Jr., Kenneth H. Schramm, Van Fossen Schwab and G. W. Locke.

We Shall Return . . .

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Having started six years ago as a mimeographed sheet we have now completed the second stage in our career as an accepted and, we are led to believe, much imitated monthly public relations editorial newspaper, we are now ready to blossom forth as a full fledged quarterly magazine in September attempting to show the public the high quality of work that is being done by the architects of the Baltimore-Washington area. This is a major effort for the benefit of the profession on the part of the Chapter and will entail considerable work on the part of our members, as it already has just to get it to the starting line. We wholeheartedly solicit your help and cooperation to make it a success.

Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond our control it will be impossible for us to continue with the printing house—FRENCH-BRAY—that has done such a good job of our printing heretofore. More often than not their cooperation has been beyond the call of duty and a great deal of the quality of our publication has been due to them. At this time it is very much in order for us to thank Messrs. Conkling and Depkin and Mrs. Wright for taking such a keen interest in the "Report" and to commend FRENCH-BRAY on their fine organization. We look forward to working with them again in the future.

URGENT . . . In order to have a complete set of all the issues of the ARCHITECTS' REPORT, we would appreciate a loan or gift of two missing issues—52-4 and 52-6 October and December, 1952, respectively. Our copies will be bound and placed in the Chapter Library for all to use. Can you locate them for us?

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