

Skylines



JUNE 1954



SKYLINES

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Skylines

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June, 1954

EACH YEAR, IN JUNE, on the occasion of the annual convention, the cycle of another year of AIAActivity takes another dip. Locally, too, the June program initiates the summer season while concluding the flourish of spring functions which features the annual Medal Awards. This year we had the added excitement of television programs and the establishment of the chapter executive offices.

COLOR, SOUND films will be featured at the June chapter meeting, Tuesday, the 15th, at 913 Baltimore Avenue, business session starting at 5:30 p.m. An exhibit of Medal Award winners of the St. Louis Chapter will be on display that night. A 28-minute film produced by Alcoa which features the all-aluminum skyscraper in Pittsburgh and a 10-minute movie called "Buma" featuring native African sculpture will be shown. Further details in regular chapter meeting notice.

PLAN NOW . . . REAL BIG PARTY . . . IN SEPTEMBER . . . the annual affair staged by the associate and junior associates members of the chapter.

IN OCTOBER . . . the 9th Conference of the Central States District AIA . . . Wichita . . . October 21, 22, 23.

THE SPIRIT OF

A year ago at Seattle at the 85th Convention AIA, Pietro Belluschi made a searching analysis of "new architecture." Later this address appeared in the **Architectural Record** and won the national AIA "First Award" for published articles on the subject of architecture. Excerpts from the **Record** are reproduced here.

IN SPEAKING OF NEW ARCHITECTURE, I shall not be satisfied to list recent buildings, or to argue on the Museum of Modern Art's selections, or to describe unfamiliar or fashionable externals which may have caught the eyes, fancy, or indignation of our magazines.

Nor shall I take the time to define the more obvious virtues of architecture, be it new or old, such as space, scale, divine proportions or color, textures, and ornament; because I take for granted that they form a permanent vocabulary without which architecture could not make itself manifest. Today I would rather like to point out to you what I believe to be the more fundamental attempts of our age to express itself through new forms and the process which we ourselves must undergo to allow such forms to be absorbed into our esthetic tradition.

In so doing I shall be careful not to assume that all changes are for the better or that all are worth being recorded and absorbed. I could, for instance, show photographs of prominent skyscrapers built 30 years ago or more and compare them with others of recent vintage and find little or no real advance. But I do not wish to be cynical or destructive because our general belief in ascending progress is one of the sources of our strength and vitality as a nation, and furthermore we need all the optimism we can muster to proceed in our work.

I have often said to anyone willing to listen that architecture must give satisfaction to the mind as well as to the senses in order to be of lasting significance, but we all have found that logic alone is not enough — like the virtue of simplicity, logic can be the last refuge of the dullard and of the ungifted; and he who has nothing but common sense will be apt to be moving within the limits of mediocrity, although conversely lack of logic and abuse of fantasy can also be the last refuge of the charlatan and the unsensitive.

by *PIETRO BELLUSCHI*

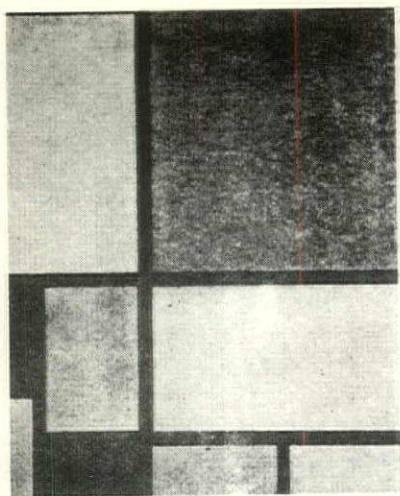
I have also repeatedly and rather belligerently stated my belief that Architecture is not a Pure Art since it has practical boundaries and duties which it must acknowledge, satisfy, and respect.

At the risk of appearing inconsistent, I shall say to you that Architecture could not long last as a non-pure Art if it did not forever tend to trespass into the preserves of Pure Art. So we must accept and record as one of the aspects of "New Architecture" the striving of a few great artist-architects towards new and valid esthetic symbols by which future generations may remember us.

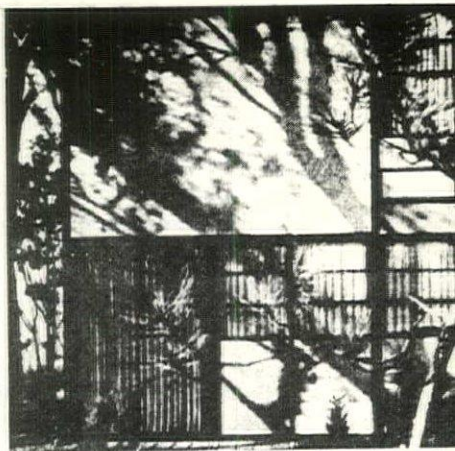
This search for symbolic expression has been an instinctive and universal urge of mankind from time immemorial, and has generally defied precedent and the limitations of daily practicality. In the past it has given us the dome, the spire, the colonnade, and all the other familiar appendages of the traditional city scape beautiful.

In its pure form, architecture is poetry, music, and imaginative release. We owe all creative artists and poets our deepest respect; we should forgive their protective arrogance and consider them the mirrors of the human spirit of our age, which as in other ages likes to reveal itself under a cloak of dissent.

On the other hand, it must be equally clear that if architecture were allowed to take permanent flight from the realities of life, it would not only soon become decadent for lack of the nourishment which its roots must have from life, but it would also leave a large void in the everyday physical environment of human society which is itself built of earthy motives



Composition by Piet Mondrian



House by Charles Eames

Some 90 years ago, upon founding the first School of Architecture in America at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, William Ware remarked that "architecture resembles literature in that both range all the way from mere work of necessity, such as shelter from the elements for one and communication for the other, up to pure form, such as the monument or the poem, at which level they may consort with the pure arts of music, sculpture, and painting; but they have an intermediate level above utility and still utilitarian, and below poetry but still artistic — the region of good sense, good taste, of knowledge, and skill — in literature as clear, graceful, and intellectual style — in building simplicity, elegance, and common sense — in both a work which cannot wait, but which must be done."

It seems to me that the test of greatness of any artist-architect is not that he be also practical but that he allow his inspiration never to be too far removed from the demands of his age, and the emotional needs of his contemporaries. There is no doubt in my mind that in the end the fruits of pure creativeness, to serve their full purpose, must filter down and fertilize the environment of our daily lives. Similarly the esthetic symbols of our age cannot aspire to be of enduring quality unless they grow from the earth and from man, from structure and from humanity.

- 1. SPEAKER'S BUREAU**
- 2. HONORARY MEMBERSHIPS AIA**
- 3. MEDAL AWARDS EXHIBIT**
- 4. TELEVISION**
- 5. PUBLIC SERVICE**

Item One. PR Committee Chairman Clarence Kivett has written a comprehensive letter to all chapter members concerning the speaker's bureau. This is one of the simplest and most effective facets of the committee's entire program. But it won't work without cooperation from individual architects in the chapter. Don't hide behind a cloak of modesty. This is actually a basic part of your architectural life. Fill in the speaker's bureau data sheet promptly. If you have misplaced it, call Clarence Kivett or Miss Martin at VI 9737.

Item Two. Robert S. Everitt has asked the members of his Committee for Collaboration with Design Professions to place in nomination for honorary memberships in the KC Chapter outstanding men who are serving the cause of better architecture through their services and cooperation with architects. Professions mentioned are: city planners, land planners, sculptors, painters, interior decorators, mechanical engineers, structural engineers and other engineering fields. Also mentioned is the teaching profession. The Board of Directors will act upon nominations. The chapter membership is asked to contact Mr. Everitt or a member of his committee at the first opportunity. This is a much deferred but vital public relations activity.

Item Three. Medal Awards Committee Chairman David Mackie has announced a program to exhibit winning designs of all Medal Awards programs dating back to the 1920's when the idea originated. Offices which have won awards in the past are advised to have material ready for this exhibit in anticipation of a detailed announcement from Mr. Mackie.

Item Four. In addition to participation in the "House to Live In" show on Channel 9, the architects of Kansas City shared a salute with the engineering profession on Channel 4 the week of May 17. The First National Bank sponsored the show, a weather forecast, and devoted commercial time to the building professions. The final appearance of architects on the "House" show will be Sunday, June 20. The time is 4:00 p.m. The program will be shared with the landscape architects. The series will conclude on July 25. Details appeared in the May Skylines.

Item Five. Downstate chapter member C. Bates Manning of Joplin rivals the activity of big city architects in civic service. For the past six years he has been a member of the City Planning Commission and the Board of Adjustment. At the present time he is serving as Chairman of the City Planning Commission. We hope to get more reports from outstate members in regard to public relations activities.

.....In The News

MAY BOARD MEETING REPORT: After a review of the qualifications of a number of attorneys who have been contacted in regard to providing counsel to our chapter, it was moved, seconded and passed that the chapter employ Mr. Jack E. Smith to handle any legal work which might be required by the chapter. Other motions passed: a) that in the future only senior students of KU and K-State who are members of the student chapters be invited to attend one of our regular monthly meetings; b) that the chapter not send an associate member delegate to the national convention because of our very limited budget; c) that the four corporate delegates or their alternates receive \$100 allowance to attend the national convention.

NOTICE is hereby given that advertising space is available in this publication. **Skylines** each month reaches the desk of all architects and draftsmen in the Kansas City area and a large number of prominent regional and national AIA men. It is also mailed to AGC contractors, Producers Council members, numerous civic and business officials, public information channels, and various other selected individuals and businesses. Prospective advertisers are urged to contact any officer or director of the chapter in regard to advertising in **Skylines**.

CONGRATULATIONS to the Producers' Council for the terrific Caravan exhibition cannot be overstated. It was one of the most fabulous things ever put into one room. The beautifully executed displays were bright and colorful, booth after booth. Kansas City is fortunate to have merited a stop here by this portable exhibition of building products.

OVERLOAD FACILITIES for your office work is available at the chapter office, 1016 Baltimore. Call Miss Betty Martin, VI 9737, and give her a chance to help you get out that rush job, or ease the strain on your secretarial staff. The chapter office is now functioning smoothly and Miss Martin is anxious for overload work.

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REPORT OF THE JURY

KC CHAPTER AIA

ME

The Jury invited Kansas City to take part in the American Institute Medal Awards program met at the Bellerive Hotel, May 1 and 2. The assignment was completed May 3. The Jury consisted of the following persons: Dane David Morgan of Burlington, Iowa; Robert Elkington of St. Louis; and Linus Burr Smith of Lincoln. Smith served as secretary. The Jury was instructed to nominate awards in two classes: medals for complete buildings, special awards for details or portions of buildings. The Jury would have been pleased to have examined more than the fifteen entries by eleven firms which were submitted. Mounted and assembled photographs were much easier to discuss and evaluate than loose photographs without titles. If it could have been possible to submit sketch site plans indicating boundaries of property and contours, our judgment might have been based more upon fact. A submission of program or directive from the client might have been valuable and might have prevented the element of speculation.

The Jury visited the buildings that were available. The visits proved to us what everyone knows: that photographs are very beautiful in themselves but sometimes have little to do with the architecture depicted. The Jury tried to talk to several of the designers by telephone to clarify points which seemed explainable, but we were unable to find anyone at home when we were all together.

The Jury was delighted with the gracious hospitality of our hosts; their thoughtfulness made our stay extremely pleasant. We appreciated their punctiliousness in regard to the competition. The chairman of the committee and the chapter president gave our wishes their complete attention during our stay. In our minds Kansas City continues to be the warm and hospitable town it has been always.

The Jury began its deliberation with a discussion of architectural philosophy. A building to be architecture should be something beyond mere construction. It may be almost anonymous in character, however, it should express some of the spirit, soul, character, sensitivity, and joy of the de-

L AWARDS

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signer. To express to the observer that it is the creation of the thoughtful and understanding man, it need not be exquisite or heroic, but simply the honest statement of itself. It may have an entity and personality of its own no matter how quiet or simple, gained from an elevated mind of its creator. After discussing each entry thoroughly, the photographs were laid aside representing those buildings which for one reason or another we no longer wished to consider. Of the group which remained we tried to analyze as carefully as possible with the evidence at hand. We made a tour of Kansas City to visit buildings that were accessible and other buildings by designers entered so that we might have some idea of the character of their work.

Two buildings were chosen to be recommended to your chapter as medal awards: The Meadow Lane Elementary School, Johnson County, Kansas, Don R. Hollis, architect, and the East Moreland School of Joplin, Missouri, by E. L. Peterson and H. A. Scharhag. For the special award we nominate the chancel of the Trinity Lutheran Church at Springfield, Missouri, by Richard P. Stahl, of Springfield, Missouri, and the living room and terrace of the home of David B. Runnells, architect, Kansas City, Missouri.

The Jury is aware that architects compare the work of others with perfection, and that if perfection is achieved once in a generation it may be fortunate. We hope that our comments are taken as constructive evaluation rather than criticism. We hope that the results of our efforts bring greater prestige and happier public relationships to the Kansas City chapter. We have been honored in being invited to make these recommendations to your Awards Committee. Our last act was to return to the hotel, search our souls, review our deliberations, reaffirm our opinions, and entrust to the secretary the expression of our thoughts.

Linus Burr Smith,
Secretary.

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MEADOW LANE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Johnson County, Kansas

Donald R. Hollis, *Architect*

The Jury was pleased with the simplicity and directness of the plan and the excellent use of space. The elements of the plan are disposed pleasantly, logically, and conveniently. The wing containing the three classrooms and the three activity areas provides interesting possibilities. With the combination of classroom, the activity area, and the multiple purpose room, the student would never grow tired of school activities because of variety of space. One of the points in question by the Jury was the multiple purpose room without a stage. Certain school authorities insist upon stages, however, other groups like complete flexibility and one of the methods of producing plays, etc. is by using a circle theater idea with the small stage in the center which can be moved at will. The size of the kitchen was discussed and especially the bar which may be in a bottleneck position. However, the Jury was not aware of the program which may have insisted on a sandwich and milk service, for which a small kitchen would be adequate. The plan was praised for its adaptability and the accessibility of the parts. The multiple use room may be used for such activities as an afternoon P.T.A. meeting, while the classes are in session on the other side of the building. The whole building is thoughtful and pleasant. The Jury visited another structure by this author and found that his details were carefully considered, the material well-handled, the physical building highly commendable. We were of the opinion that his working drawing details must have been concise. However, after this complete simplicity and cohesive unity, the front door seemed to be off-beat and somewhat too tricky. The building as a whole is pleasant environment; a larger budget might have been considered by landscaping which helps in creating and assisting the mood. In the Jury's opinion, this is a well-considered structure.

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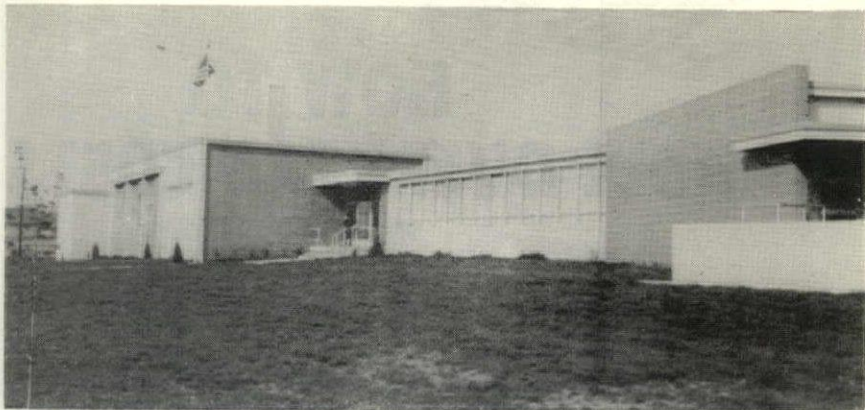
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EAST MORELAND SCHOOL

Joplin, Missouri

E. L. Peterson & H. A. Scharhag, *Architects*

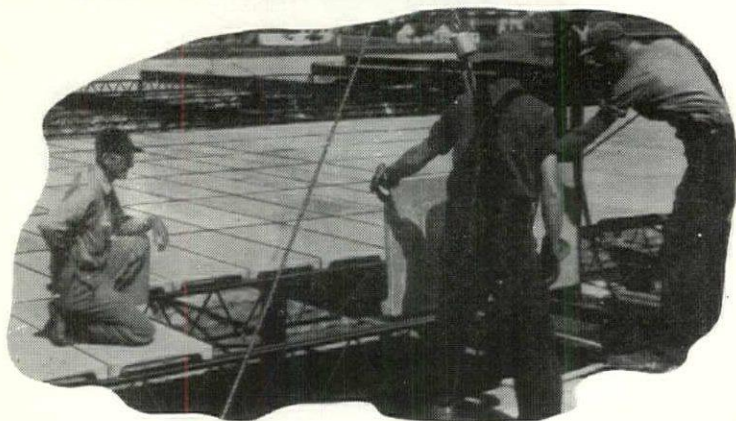
It is a fine plan, and we were well aware that the architects had studied the circulation of the students and had accommodated their needs with skill. One juror felt that the "V" shape of the two wings is slightly forced and their connections with the facade block of the structure somewhat too tricky and expensive. The kindergarten and its adjacent outside play area received much praise. We were delighted with its location and the disposition of its garden. The areas for play of various age groups of students seemed well-contrived. Because there was no site plan we were unable to come to a conclusion about better arrangement of classroom blocks.

The exhibit with its concentration of drawings, accurate explanations, and arrows indicating the location of the camera shots for the illustrations was most helpful. This sheet is an example of good public relationship.

It took the Jury some time to find the blue-colored section. We had studied the construction some time before we became aware of it. The architects are to be commended for the courageous and bold steel framing, and we were pleased with the photograph. The clere-story experiment, although not entirely new, shows a searching for a better solution to the architect's problem. This may not be highly adventurous, but it shows the designers are not fearful of new ideas. The least attractive view is the service area. The Jury realizes that color photographs are always pleasant, but somewhat beguiling. The display indicates that the architectural firm is proud of its work. The organization of structure is knowing and calm, the plan is more clever than simple, but the activities of the occupants are well-understood and various parts of the building are so disposed that economy of motion is possible as well as speed of egress. The multiple purpose room provides well for its services and is in a good location. The double-loaded corridor in the classroom wing saves money and space.



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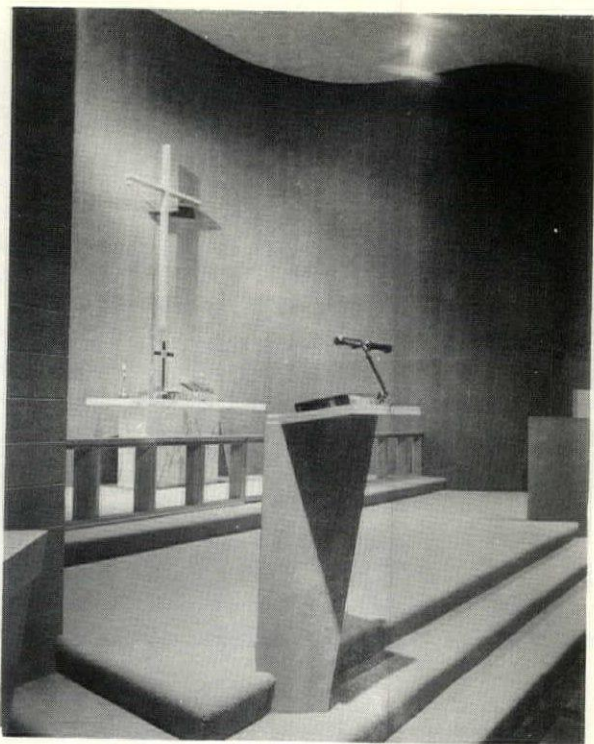
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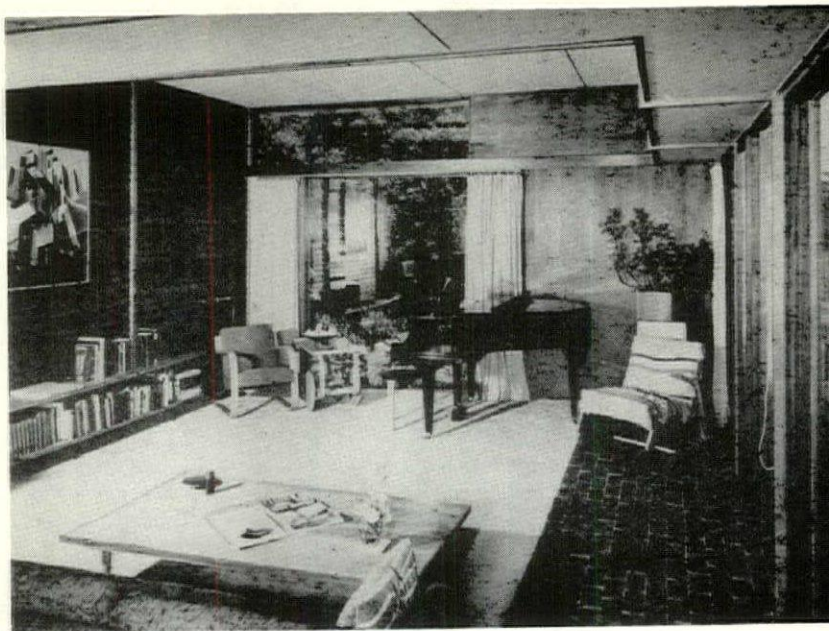


CHANCEL OF THE TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Springfield, Missouri

Richard P. Stahl, *Architect*

The Jury was attracted by the original sweep of the wall from the nave to the chancel. It carries a compelling suggestion of man's relationship to higher things. It is a bold, simple statement of purpose; a dynamic pattern carries the word back from the chancel to the nave. The materials are simple and used forcefully. The lighting possibilities are dramatic and might have been more fully utilized. It is a good strong thought without hesitation. It has dignity and power and expresses well the idea of faith in modern materials. The design is somewhat more anonymous than personal, eliminating quirks and idiosyncracies that some times clutter modern buildings. The Jury wishes we could have seen this detail in relationship to the whole of the building, that we could have had a plan of the structure, and of its site. Although we are pleased with this detail, it is somewhat like hearing the score of an opera without being aware of the libretto. Of a necessity, this was evaluated from photographs alone. We would like to have some hint concerning color.



LIVING ROOM AND TERRACE of the home of David B. Runnells, *Architect*

This is a pleasant and exciting example of the interrelationship of exterior and interior space combined with gracious living. In the modern manner ingeniously contrived to take advantage of an irregular site. This area was partially built by the family and the close relationship of man to shelter and to controlled nature has been achieved. The low budget was made to yield its utmost, while all age groups find space for characteristic active and passive moods. The area is sheltered from public gaze. The living room based upon the principles of modern art is the work of an understanding designer who interprets the flow of space by effortless transition, based on a modular distribution of materials and volumes. The living room for a particular family unit, arranged to fulfill individual requirements, surrounding itself with a minimum of barriers. This is thoughtful and considered detail.

nineteen fifty-four committee assignments

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