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VOLUME VIII, NO. 1/JAN.-FEB., 1969

Contents:
8 Arnold M. Judd, AIA
9 Lloyd G. Schleicher, AIA
Frederick G. St. Clair, AIA
K. Norman Berry, AIA
10 1969 Roster
14 Carl C. Bankemper, AIA
New West Kentucky
Chapter Officers
15 A. Bailey Ryan, AIA

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Jerry Looney

Cover Photograph: John Beckman
NEW CHAPTER FORMED IN KENTUCKY

A new AIA chapter has been formed in Kentucky. Architects from the western Kentucky cities of Paducah, Madisonville, Henderson, and Owensboro are now members of the new West Kentucky Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Their chapter will be presented in the near future. The “former” West Kentucky Chapter now becomes the Central Kentucky Chapter, and is made up of architects and firms primarily from the Greater Louisville area. This new arrangement will provide for more balanced geographic representation in KSA as well as adding strength to the statewide goals and objectives of the Society.

A four-part program is visualized this year for the Kentucky Society of Architects.

The program will emphasize 1) improving the KENTUCKY ARCHITECT and making it solvent, 2) increased public relations activities, 3) greater community involvement on the part of individual architects and the Society, and 4) greater student involvement in KSA activities.

Toward achieving the first goal, the KSA board of directors has decided to issue the magazine once every two months, rather than monthly, this year. In this manner we expect to reduce the expense of publishing the magazine while maintaining our present advertising revenues.

Our editorial planning and advertising sales policies will all be geared to making the magazine solvent. We will put renewed effort into selling space in the publication both to local and national advertisers.

At the same time, under the editorship of our executive director Charles Hellmann, we have revised the format of the magazine both from the standpoint of design and editorial coverage.

We have utilized the services of a magazine design consultant to improve the publication’s appearance and readability. We have changed paper and type faces and many favorable comments followed the new format introduced with the October-November 1968 issue.

This year, each issue of KENTUCKY ARCHITECT, will focus on a single aspect of architecture such as hospitals, colleges, residences, etc. This should enable us to give more advanced planning to each issue, to obtain more contributed articles and better case histories, print more chapter news, and to generally improve the magazine’s editorial quality. We also believe the use of special issues will make the publication more attractive to some advertisers.

Our second objective—that of making the public more aware of the vital role architects can and do play in designing not only buildings but neighborhoods, communities, cities, and highway systems—is more complex.

We view this as a public relations problem that affects every architect but begins with each architect in his own office. While the professional architect enjoys great stature in many countries, he is sometimes looked on in the United States as a kind of glorified artist in charge of frills and details.

So widespread is this mistaken impression of architects that we have hardly a community of any size that doesn’t hold at least one recently constructed insult to good taste or pragmatic planning.

If our communities are to benefit from functional, economical and tasteful design; then the voice of the architect must be heard loud and clear.

Too often decisions the architect is prepared to make on the basis of years of experience and training and the kind of sensitivity that caused him to study architecture to start with are made by a grossly unqualified individual or committee. The owner, the architect and the community are all losers.

There are several rationales that can be applied in situations such as these. But none of them really contribute to a solution to the problem.

We could say it is the responsibility of the architect to sell his client on good, practical design. He must insist on at least minimum design standards. If the client steadfastly refuses the architect’s advice then the architect should resign.

Thus we have created two scapegoats—the client and the architect whose experience is in design rather than salesmanship. But we still haven’t solved the problem nor identified the real culprit—public relations.

All we architects have to sell is our judgment. Sometimes it is a personal, subjective judgement. We can’t always prove conclusively, before the fact, that alternative A is better than alternative B.

So we have to rely on a client’s respect for our judgment. This means having the kind of relationships with our clients and those who will hire us in the future that will cause them to seek and utilize our judgement even when it runs contrary to their own.

This is the essence of good public relations. We must command respect because of what we are and what we do, not because we get adamant and pound on the conference table or because we are super salesmen.

One reason we sometimes find local organizations or companies going out-of-state for their architectural services is that these firms sometimes have better public relations in our own communities than we have. Architectural Firm A enjoys a national reputation. Its judgements are respected. It has good public relations.

We surely don’t quarrel with the best work of many of the large national firms. But an incontrovertible fact is that some of the finest architecture in Kentucky has been and continues to be produced by Kentucky architects.

Many times firms that enjoy outstanding public relations may be analogous to a “Peanuts” comic strip that appeared awhile back in which Linus says, “Why does everyone believe in Santa Claus when hardly anyone believes in the Great Pumpkin that comes to the sincere pumpkin patch on Hallowe’en?” Good Ol’ Charlie Brown replies, “Because Santa Claus gets better publicity.”

We can’t very well go around telling people how great we are as individuals. But we can tell the public just what it is that an architect does that a doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief, engineer, contractor, or draftsman doesn’t do as well.

This is what we intend to do. AIA has an extensive program underway to define for the general public just what it is that an architect does. The program includes printed materials and films available to state and local chapters as well as individual architects.

The Kentucky Society has just purchased three of the AIA films and will soon announce plans for their use. We also plan to make available printed materials and speakers and to assist the individual architect in any way we can to tell the public in his community what architecture is and is not. We urge each architect to speak out individually and in consort on the indispensability of the professional architect.
Community involvement and student involvement are tied in very closely with public relations. As individuals and as a professional society we must speak out on the need for orderly, attractive development of buildings, communities, transportation systems, and pollution control.

The other professions and trades we work with are interested in parts of buildings or complexes or communities. As architects we must be interested in the total environment and as this environment becomes increasingly complex, the architect's role becomes more crucial.

The Kentucky Society of Architects goes on record here and now to urge all architects to participate fully and forcefully in affairs of the community which effect physical or esthetic environment.

The role of the architect has to be greater in the future than it has been in the past. We cannot go on acting as if the things that effect the beauty and functioning of our cities and countryside are somebody else's problem.

While the need for community involvement and public relations is immediate and compelling, we must not overlook the longer range factors involving architects of the future. Architects more than any other segment of the public must understand and appreciate present and impending changes in the profession in keeping with rapidly changing technology and sociology.

In keeping with this philosophy the Kentucky Society will continue the annual design seminar and the honors award program. Additionally we hope to announce a scholarship this year sponsored by the society to be worked out in conjunction with the University of Kentucky's Department of Architecture.

The board of directors of KSA has already agreed to ask the president of the student chapter to become a non-voting member of the executive committee. We also are urging members of KSA to work out summer employment and student intern programs with their own firms.

When asked to write the following article for publication in K.A. I was tempted to send the same article I wrote a year ago. Our goals are virtually the same.

Two things were accomplished last year about which I am very happy, the formation of a new chapter in the western part of the Commonwealth and the formation of a community service center headed by W. C. Harrison, AIA. This center is located on the 16th floor of the Heyburn Building in Louisville, and is devoted to assisting those individuals and organizations which cannot afford to pay for architectural services.

The services this center performs are primarily in the form of advice on whether to build or remodel, what and where to build, and ways to finance the project. Most of these clients will eventually qualify for federal funds under one of the several programs of the 1968 Housing Law. At the time there are funds available, the client is advised to employ an architect to provide the usual professional services. There are still several firms not represented on the team. I urge everyone to spend some time with this group. There is a tremendous amount of social good that can be derived from these efforts. The team has presently undertaken the outlining of several projects in the Old Louisville area which could be accomplished by a non-profit corporation made up of approximately ten church groups. These possible projects range from rehabilitating a few old homes to construction of new highrise multi use facilities. The team desperately needs drafting equipment and furniture. Should anyone happen to have spare equipment, please contact Carlton Godsey or yours truly. The team meets each Monday for a brown bag lunch and Wednesday evenings at 7:30 for a work session. It is hoped that enough members will volunteer so this schedule can be expanded to a full time schedule.

The next step in conjunction with the Service Center, is to establish an on the job training program for disadvantaged youths who, after an appropriate period of training, can qualify for a technicians job in one of our member's offices. This is a big step, and will take time to accomplish, but we are working on it. This training program will probably require us to find larger and more permanent quarters for the Center. Possibly, a chapter home where regular and committee meetings can be held; where executive secretary can be housed; a good architectural library can be established and so on and on.

Our chapter has been in existence for over 50 years, and what do we really have to show for it?
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Northern Kentucky, with its 250,000 population is probably one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the State. Not only can this be measured in population growth over the past few years, but also in industrial and commercial growth as well. Industrial parks have sprung up in Kenton, Campbell and Boone Counties during the past 10 years and much industry therefore has been attracted from out of state. Add to this the huge recreational center “Frontier World” planned by Fess Parker and it is easy to appreciate that we are truly an “area on the move.” While it is true the architects of our area belong to a Section of the Eastern Kentucky Chapter, it can only be a matter of short time before we become a Chapter of our own, and through it become more mutually effective and helpful to the Kentucky Society of Architects.

NEW WEST KENTUCKY CHAPTER ELECTS OFFICERS FOR 1969

The new chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the West Kentucky Chapter, has elected its officers for the year 1969. The new officers are: President, Fred St. Clair of Johnson-St. Clair, Owensboro; Vice-President, Don O. Peck of Peck Associates, Inc., Paducah; Secretary, James “Bob” Gresham of Gresham Associates, Paducah; Treasurer, Boyce D. Ross of Lee Potter Smith & Associates of Paducah; and Director, Curtis Flannery of Peck Associates, Inc., Paducah. The new chapter has a charter membership of 15 corporate members, representing nine architectural firms from Henderson, Madisonville, Owensboro and Paducah. There are 16 associate members in the new chapter.
A. Bailey Ryan, AIA, of Ryan Associated Architects, Inc., Louisville. Mr. Ryan is director of the East Central Region, AIA. The region consists of AIA chapters in Kentucky and Indiana. He is chairman of the Public Relations committee for the AIA. Mr. Ryan reports on vital national AIA activities that are geared to advance the profession, its client relations and the building and construction industry.

PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM: Through its growing program of public relations and advertising the AIA seeks to create a strong public awareness of the nation's environment and a resultant demand for its improvement and for good architecture. To accomplish this the accelerated PR programs in 1968 led to the production of three motion pictures, filmed TV announcements and radio spots, a comprehensive PR kit for components, PR material for member architects, the launching of a national advertising campaign, and establishment of a formal publications unit. The objective of the AIA public relations program is to perform an important public service and at the same time help create a more productive climate in which an architect can practice. The PR committee, in conjunction with PR counsel and staff, is responsible for planning, organizing, and implementing PR projects, as well as handling a large segment of AIA's internal communications.

COMPUTERIZATION: In a field as big and as complex as this we only have our toes in the water. But there is a task force of AIA working on a program for a computerized specification. We are shooting for the end of 1969 to have this in operation.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: We realize that a group of old men like our Board (past 35 years of age) and an institution like AIA might never get a medal from the younger generation. But we can at least listen to them . . . and we are. We hope to get students involved in some national committee work. However, we feel it is more important that each AIA chapter encourage student participation on the local level. We do not have to do everything the students ask but they are idealistic at a time when a few new ideals would not hurt . . . and they are sincere. They deserve to be heard.

CONCLUSION: Let me conclude by stating that the American Institute of Architects has shifted gears from a Gentlemen's Club to a vital, active, participating organization, tending to push the profession, like it or not, to the front of the stage. Our individual architects must either perform or retire to the wings.

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