Popularizing the Profession with the Public and Itself

An Address by Mr. D. Knickerbacker Boyd

On the occasion of Mr. Boyd's attendance at the recent Convention of the National Educational Association in Detroit he addressed the Detroit Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Other guest present were Mr. F. A. Narrimore of Seattle, Mr. Frank Irving Cooper of Boston, Mr. Harry D. Payne of Houston, Mr. J. C. Llewellyn of Chicago, Mr. Ralph C. Llewellyn of Chicago, Mr. J. R. Veddor of Syracuse, Mr. Murray Dalman of Chicago, Mr. H. H. Thayer of Newcastle, Pa.; Mr. H. A. Harrington of the Detroit Board of Commerce, and Mr. Frank A. Gorman of the Detroit Board of Education.

In opening his address Mr. Boyd said that his subject might as well have been stated as "The Architect's Responsibility to the Community," or any other title bearing on the possibilities of service in the profession.

He paid tribute to those Architects who have made Detroit famous and those things Detroit has done to make them famous. The noted Architect took occasion to express his enjoyment at being in Detroit, the city he said he had learned to love from the character of men who came from it.

"Year after year," said Mr. Boyd, "I have met at A. I. A. Conventions such men as Mason, Grylls, Kahn, Snyder, Stratton, Malcomson, Donaldson, and some others who are not here tonight.

"I certainly welcome also the opportunity of meeting with you in such an interesting and human way, in so fitting a surrounding as this, where we have the Detroit Institute of Arts designed by Paul P. Cret of Philadelphia."

The work of the Thumb Tack Club was on exhibition at the Scarab Galleries was praised by the speaker, who stated the Thumb Tack was looked upon in his city as second only to their own T-Square Club, and that was because of the age of the latter.

"Fra Elbert Hubbard said," said Mr. Boyd, "That people who say that things can not be done are constantly interrupted by some one doing them, and after I got here I found that some of these remarks I was going to make about collaboration and operation do not apply to Detroit at all because they are doing them."

As a member of the Institute's Committee on Public Information the speaker stated that the committee hears much about advertising the profession. Mr. Boyd said that he shared the belief of others on the committee that many Architects are overlooking the greatest opportunity in this direction by not making themselves a part of their community's life.

"We must realize," he said, "that today architecture is a combination of profession and business and if we will get into the many affairs that we are fitted for we will find we don't need to advertise. The public will know us by our works.

"How can we be 'of ever-increasing service to society,'" asks Mr. Boyd. Let us see. "If you pick up a newspaper and read where a delegation of 100 citizens has been appointed to meet a distinguished visitor you will find there about every other profession represented, but seldom an Architect. If we look about for these opportunities we will be drafted into service and thus become a part of the community life."

As suggested by Mr. Boyd we should seek to collaborate with our city, State and National Governments in any matters bearing on our work. That would identify us with building codes, zoning acts, city planning, the regulation of traffic as controlled by buildings, and so on. In that way the administrative bodies would soon come to look to the Architects for help in these matters, which are after all largely architectural problems.

"I understand that you are doing many of these things in Detroit now, and doing them well," Mr. Boyd continued. "Mr. Harrington tells me the Board of Commerce here gets splendid co-operation from the Architects, and that is more than can be said for some other cities that we know."

As a means of co-operating with the Board of Commerce the speaker suggested the preparation of
a plan of the city by the Architects, showing at large scale the layout of the city with important buildings marked. These could be distributed at the terminals. An excellent opportunity would be afforded to mention the Architects of buildings and publicity be gained for the Chapter or Society. It is common practice, he stated, for convention bureaus to send out folders showing buildings of our cities. Too often the Architect is not mentioned, because the Architects are not fully awake to these possibilities.

The schools afford a splendid field for co-operation by the Architects, according to Mr. Boyd. In Philadelphia, he stated, there is a regularly constituted committee to see that the public schools receive exhibitions of the best work done in the local offices and Architects are selected to go around at regular intervals and lecture to the children while these drawings are hung. Mr. Grady, the publicist of the Institute, has highly commended this and has advised that more Chapters should do the same thing.

"Without the owner and financier, we would not be practicing architecture," said Mr. Boyd. "Therefore, we should take advantage of every opportunity to know them better as well as the other groups allied with the building industry such as the real estate boards, the builders' exchanges, the engineers and many others. By meeting with these men and also through the service clubs such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Exchange and others, we could do a great deal more to impress upon them the manifold duties of the Architect and the broad interest which he has.

"We should not neglect the 'operative' builders. Some are called 'speculative' builders. I am not now referring to the group known as 'Jerry' builders, but the legitimate operative builders who build buildings unmolested and unadvised. Why shouldn't we try to cooperate with him and endeavor to better the type of every-day homes, the garden variety?"

Mr. Boyd touched upon the system in Washington, D. C., which gives some architectural criticism through the building department. He commended this most highly and stated that architecture was consistently improving under the system. The same thing is being introduced in Cincinnati.

"The question of credit to the Architect is being neglected," said Mr. Boyd, "because we are not systematically going after these things in the right way. If a committee be appointed whose business it is to see that whenever a picture of a building appears the name of the Architect is mentioned, they would soon find ways and means of doing it. The picture post cards that are sent out in such numbers could easily be controlled," said Mr. Boyd.

"A few years ago," he stated, "the Philadelphia Chapter considered the proposition of preparing a list of the ancient, historic monuments of the section, such as Independence Hall, Christ Church and St. Peter's Church and the old Carpenters' Hall. The Rapid Transit Company welcomed the suggestion and agreed to print 1,000,000 copies in which the Chapter was to be given due credit. They were to distribute them on their lines without cost to the Chapter. The Chapter turned it down on the ground that it would be too much notoriety for the architectural profession. A few years later the Chapter became interested again and found that the Rapid Transit Company had gone ahead and done it themselves and did not mention the Architects or the Philadelphia Chapter, so we were not inflicted with the notoriety.

"Some time ago I attended a convention of the brick industry in New Orleans and saw the opportunity to get from the New Orleans Chapter a list of buildings there which were built of brick. I had an agreement with the sight-seeing buses that if they were furnished with a brief description of some of these most interesting old structures they would use these citations on the tours that week. The brick manufacturers got behind the idea and for a week in New Orleans everybody was getting the name of the Architect and salient architectural features of these interesting buildings from the rubber neck wags. This could easily be made a regular feature."

In speaking of the newspaper "Morque" Mr. Boyd stated that the Chapter should co-operate in keeping these records up to date.

The Honor Awards movement is doing a great deal of good all over the country, Mr. Boyd said. He complimented Detroit Chapter, particularly, on the excellence of its designs and the manner in which they were presented. Such an exhibition, he stated, could better be held in a department store or other place where large numbers of people are likely to be, stating that you have to take the exhibit to the people.

The producers can help to popularize the profession, he stated, and many of them are. The Westinghouse Company and the American Rolling Mills Company have had national hook-ups on the radio for broadcasting the story of architecture. At the last meeting of the Board of the Institute, held in Detroit, the idea of manufacturers of building materials in their advertising making reference to the desirability of employing an Architect was approved, Mr. Boyd pointed out.
Mr. Boyd stated that the fullest co-operation with manufacturers of materials should be fostered by the Architects and touched upon the craftsmanship awards as a most noble endeavor. He stated that we should give our draftsmen more chance to get out on the jobs to see what happens to their drawings; we should give more consideration to the salesmen of building materials—indeed, establish a short-cut course in architecture to better equip them to meet and talk with us.

And last, but not least, we should get to know each other better, get together more often in meetings and talk things over. Thus propounded the great Architect of Philadelphia—and we heartily agree.

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John L. Popkin Meets with Accident

John L. Popkin, prominent Detroit Architect and equestrian extraordinaire, met with a painful accident while horseback riding on Belle Isle Sunday morning, March 15. His story is that his horse shied in a most inadvertent manner and at a most inopportune time. As a matter of fact, he probably was emulating the Prince of Wales and didn't make a very good job of it. The Prince falls off but doesn't get hurt. Believe it or not, Jack stayed on but sustained a broken leg.

When the steed decided to cut this caper the rider was flanked on one side by his companion and on the other by an immovable object which he designated as "not stage scenery, but an honest-to-goodness tree." It seems that the member, figured as a simple beam, or even for a concentrated load was ample, but the engineer had neglected to take into account impact. Result—something had to give way, and it wasn't the tree.

At any rate, there always seems to be something to compensate for these misfortunes. Jack states that, with the aid of a pair of substantial crutches and a roving instinct fostered by a wheelchair, he is now in a position to study the latest developments in hospital design. In accordance with our newly avowed policy of recognition to the Architect, the patient says, "I do believe that Derrick, who is responsible for this Charles Godwin Jennings Hospital, has certainly done a most thorough and creditable job."

Jack, who is one of our most loyal and interested members, says he regrets his inability to attend the meetings this month.

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Publicity for Architects in Indiana

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L. W. Ramsey Company of 230 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago. In a letter to the Bulletin Mr. A. C. Naackel of the Ramsey Company says:

"I want to take this opportunity of thanking you for continuing us on the list for the Weekly Bulletin of the Michigan Society of Architects. Because of our constant interest over the past eight years in the Architects' position in the building industry, we naturally look forward to receiving your interesting Bulletin.

"In your March 24th issue I read with interest your reprint of the article "Architect Puts Value in Home—Indiana Banker Advises Employment of Capable Architect. It might interest you to know that this article was edited and sent out to all newspapers in Indiana by our Publicity Bureau, a branch of the State-wide publicity campaign being sponsored by the Indiana Society of Architects and supported by all branches of the building industry. Although the campaign started only January 29th, we have already received thousands and thousands of lines of free newspaper columns, that should have their material effect in swinging work to the capable members of the building industry.

"It is also of interest to us to watch the aggressive activities of many of the members of the Michigan Society, and if we can ever be of service to you, please do not hesitate to call on us."

* * *

This Week

A letter from William H. Reid, our newest member in Jackson, Mich., which was very easy to read. Bill says he enjoyed the convention immensely and especially making so many splendid new acquaintances.

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The bronze illustrated above is issued by the Detroit Brick Manufacturers’ Association through its local office. It is given, with a signed and sealed certificate for installation in brick masonry walls whose materials and workmanship pass the Association inspection. It is at once a cornerstone and a hallmark of sound brick construction. The furtherance of better building is its sole aim and purpose. Your co-operation will assist its success.

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