



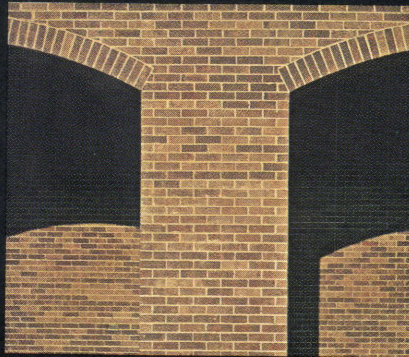
Changes

623

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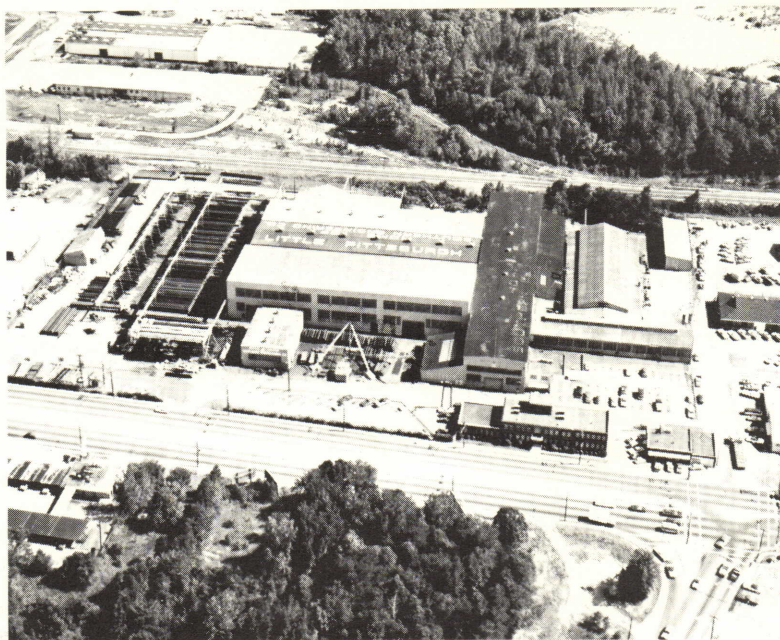
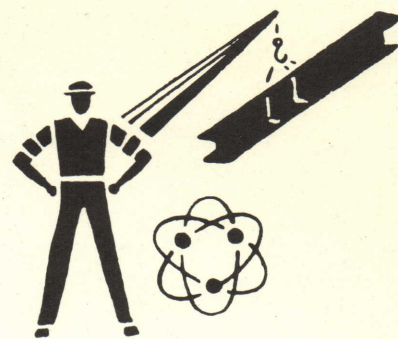
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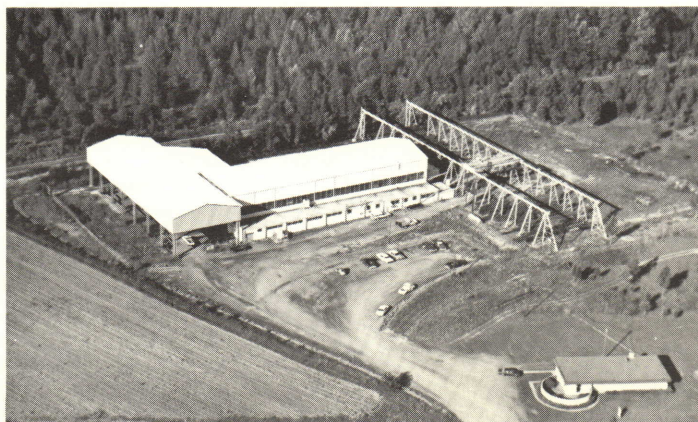
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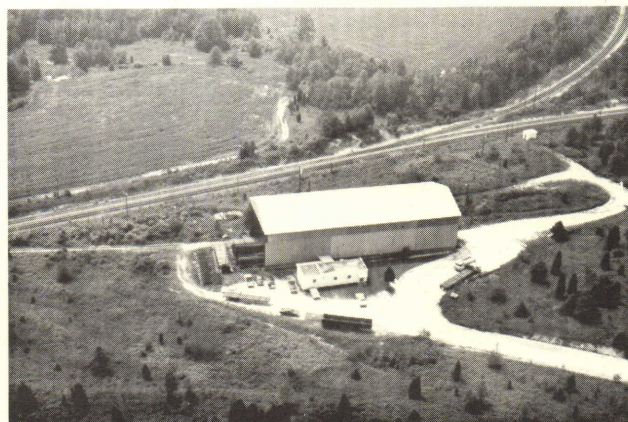
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Official Magazine of the
North Carolina Chapter
American Institute of Architects

May/June 1979

Editor **Ernest Wood**

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The American Institute of Architects**

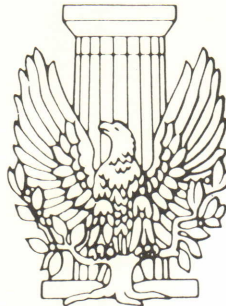
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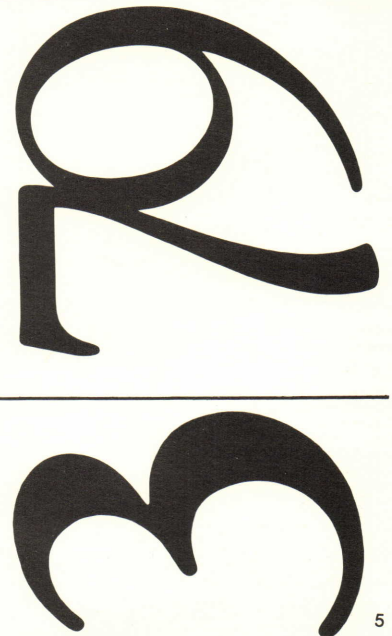
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Letters

Editor: As an eager young professional, I once vowed to Louis Graves that I would one day be a part of a new contemporary movement in the architecture of Chapel Hill. Louis and Mildred were visiting in our home in Edenton after their annual Christmas Vacation in Williamsburg. His comment was to the effect that "this movement would be over his dead body".

Reporting this encounter to my poetic associate, Vernon Harrison, inspired him to dash off the following lines:

*To Mr. Louis Graves, Distinguished Antiquarian
I think like the ancients: There's nothing finer
Than lots of axes—major and minor.
If you have an inquiring mind,
Explore the classics and you'll find
That, in a simply wonderful way,
Right and Left have equal poch'e.
I cannot imagine a mind so dense
That it doesn't thrill to a picket fence;
Dearer to me than bacon and lentils;
Is a cornice with lots of modillions and dentils;
The death of charm, absolute and utter,
Would be to eliminate the dark green shutter.
What tho the view be broad and green?
The proper way for it to be seen
Is thru several small-paned sash
Each covered with muntins like a rash.
The highest encomium is to be told
That one's newest building looks rather old.*

Your great issue of the *North Carolina Architect* (Old and New Together, 1/79) with its delightful article by Diane E. Lea reminded me of Louis—so the quoted verse was resurrected from my file "Poetry et al—Harrison"

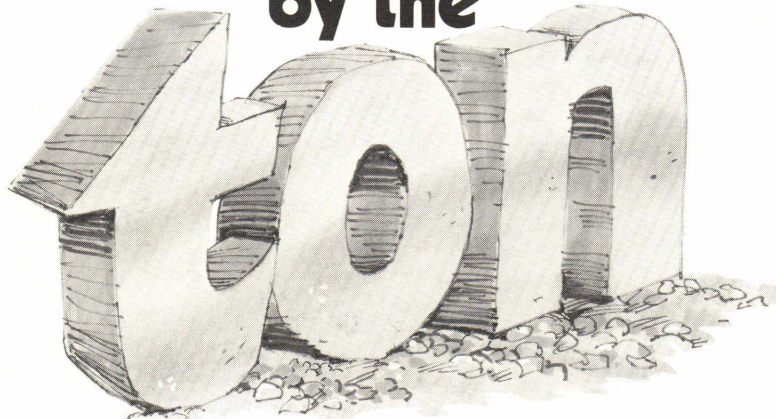
Jack McM. Pruden, AIA
Durham

Editor: "Old and New" as discussed in your January/February 1979 issue of *North Carolina Architect* is a contribution to an important, developing design awareness. As one of the oldest design review agencies, the Commission of Fine Arts finds the subject part of most new projects in the city of Washington. As your publication indicates, there is little new about building new and old in context. By reading between the lines one almost comes to the conclusion that post-modernism, when in context, is a strong part of what 40's-colonial was all about. The same holds true for the various forms of classical architecture here in the Capital. Perhaps the preservation movement happened at the same time as a new design movement. It does get credit for inventing parts of it and much of our design review and community control comes through preservation of ordinances. Your excellent issue pulls a few of these things apart and gives the reader a very close, regional view.

Donald B. Myer, AIA
Assistant Secretary

*The Commission of fine Arts
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Frontispiece

By Ernest Wood, Editor

Faithful readers of *North Carolina Architect* will have noted some changes in the publication over the years. First, there's the name. When the magazine started out 25 years ago, it was called *Southern Architect*, for besides its goals to communicate within the profession and, as then NCAIA president A. G. Odell, Jr. put it in that premiere issue, to "interpret the architectural field and architectural interests for groups who are closely associated with architects," the magazine had in the back of its mind to reach beyond the boundaries of North Carolina. By 1964, the magazine had settled down to concentrating on its home state, however, and the name was changed to *North Carolina Architect*. Then, there's the content—from the simple presentation of new buildings in early years to the discussion of issues more recently. And there's the magazine looks, a series of graphic designs for the package that may themselves be a commentary on the architecture inside.

But we're not here to talk about publishing. We're here to talk about design. And though we've taken this 25th anniversary issue—*Southern Architect's* first issue was exactly 25 years ago, May 1954—as an excuse to look back, we wanted that look somehow to reflect design. As the issue evolved, that "somehow" turned out to be a look not at changes in the design of buildings over the years (an approach for the historians to take) but a look at the changes that happen to buildings (an approach that has more to do with the living qualities of architecture). We thought that revisiting some of the buildings published over the years would be interesting. And informative.

In recent years, some architectural journals have taken to publishing lengthy

post-occupancy evaluations of buildings. AIA has begun a new category of awards for "Extended Use." But all too often, buildings are published and examined only once, when they are new. And all too often, a visitor, holding in mind the published photograph of a building, arrives to find the structure severely altered. Or even demolished.

Different things happen to different buildings as they age. Every building changes a little. But as we began putting together this issue, we found we could identify five categories of changes that are likely to occur. A major category, of course, is no significant change at all, those buildings that have been well maintained and which still function as they were originally designed. We skipped over the obvious opposite of that, the building that has been neglected and abused, as too vague, and we identified instead four more categories in which buildings sometimes are abused but sometimes are treated well: buildings that change their function, buildings whose surroundings change, buildings with additions put on them and (sadly) buildings that are demolished. (Another catch-all category, "renovation," also was bypassed, for renovation often falls into these other areas, such as adding to a building or changing its function, or into the gray area of general maintenance or the area of re-decoration. Nearly every building falls into the category "renovation" sooner or later.)

The selection of buildings both in the original publication and re-visit reflects an ever-present constraint of journalism—that one tends to write about what one is familiar with and one tends to be familiar with buildings that are close at hand. Every building constructed in the state has not been published.



On the Cover: The old student union at N.C.

State University (far left) has become

part of the library (center and right)

(Indeed, the magazine has been heavily weighted to Charlotte and Raleigh over the years.) And of those published, we could pick only buildings that obviously fit one of our categories—not buildings, for example, with only minor renovations, or a building with one new neighbor but not a whole flock of them or a building that is so new it had not stood any tests yet. But in the end, the selection came out to be pretty representative. We've tried to spread our selections around the state. And we've not been too worried by the fact that we have not written about some of the major buildings in the state. Some of our selections have won awards. Some have not. And by looking at buildings that, though often good design, are not always the sort of thing to be given national recognition or a place in the history books, we think we can make points

about changes that occur to all architecture, good, bad and indifferent, the architecture that is around us every day.

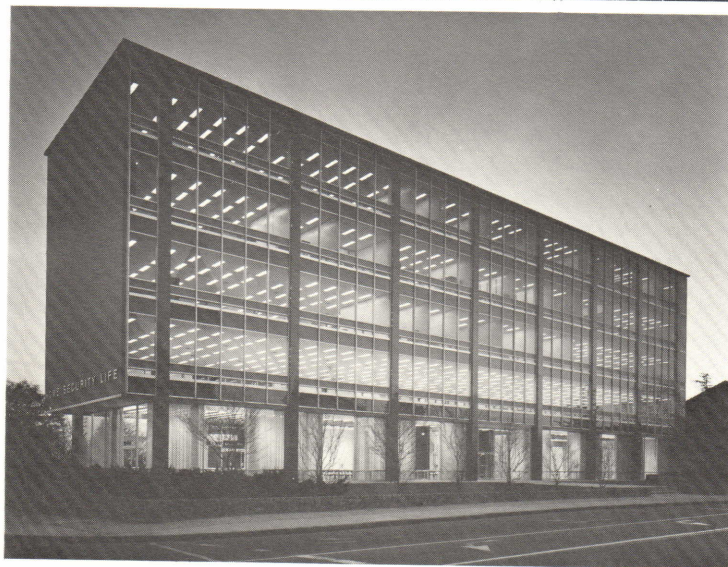
The magazine, too, has published more than simply pictures of new buildings. There have been some excellent articles, most, unfortunately, too long to reprint. So we've taken another tack. As in our decision to look at changes to buildings instead of change in design, our decision to reprint certain articles from back issues reflects a certain concern with design—and publishing—today: an article on criticism, a 14 year old article that anticipates post-modernism and a novelist's plea for regionalism and integrity in building. This isn't an anniversary issue called "The Best of *North Carolina Architect*." But we think we've dug up some pretty interesting stuff. ■

Ernest Wood

1959

Preserved

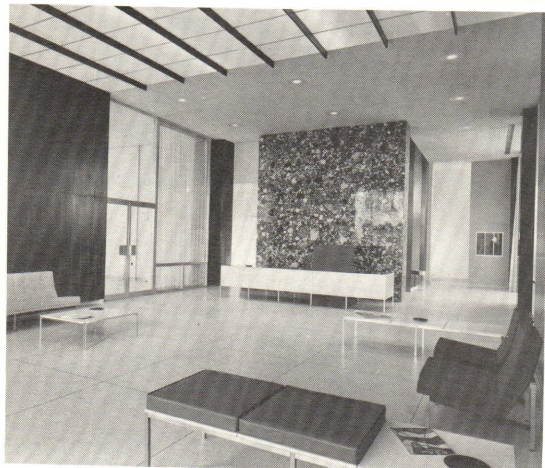
An office building remains in near mint condition thanks to loving care



If North Carolina's preservation community is looking for an example of the International Style from the 1950's to save, the search is over. The Home Security Life Insurance Building in Durham is so true to its original design that the customary painful and expensive restoration process would be completely unnecessary. To be sure, there have been a few changes: a new chiller for the air conditioner, new office cubicles, some energy conservation measures. But the building still has its original furniture throughout. It has its original ebony veneer paneling (with extra paneling in storage in case of damage or the need to expand) in the executive office corridor and board room. It even has — and this is truly remarkable for a 21 year old office building — its original vinyl tile floor in the work-a-day areas that still shines like it's new.

The secret? A company management that takes pride in its building (the present chairman of the board was head of the building department when the building went up) and which still calls on the original architect, G. Milton Small and Associates of Raleigh for everything from moving the computer operation to buying furniture.

Maybe the answer is not so much one of preserving a building exactly as it was built as it is one of continuity and care in the changes that have been made to it. When the company first occupied the building in 1958, for example, it had about 115 employees and most of the work areas were open with no partitions at all. It has twice that number of

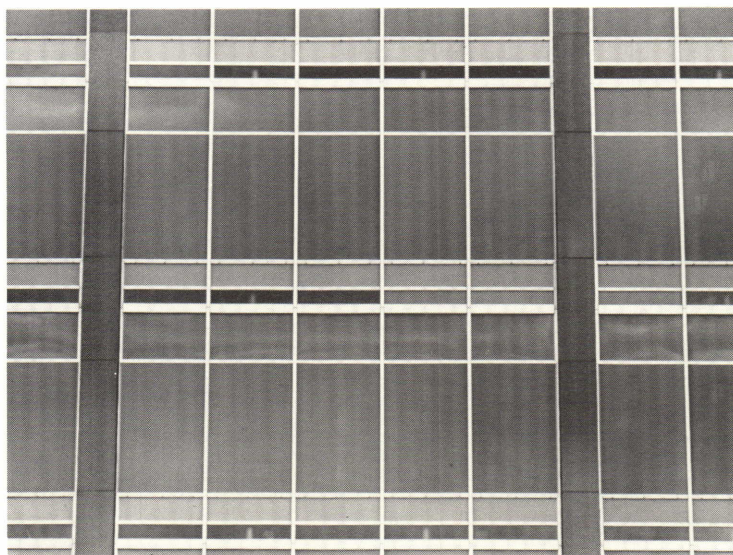


employees today and many more private offices or subdivisions of large clerical areas. The building was designed so partitions could be moved and added, however, (only the executive suites have permanent walls) and the architect has followed his own plans and added on exactly as he originally intended.

One major problem, that of energy conservation in a glass curtain-wall building, was even successfully met. To avoid excessive heat gain in the summer, screening was put on the south side of the building to cut down sunlight that reaches the windows. But the architects were consulted on the installation and they went about the job slowly and carefully. The screens were installed only on one floor first to investigate their effectiveness. When the results proved that screens should be added over the entire southern side, the screens were positioned over the glass, leaving mullions and solid panels — and the patterns they create in the building — exposed. The result is that passersby (and there are many, since the building is on a prominent site on a major thoroughfare in downtown Durham) hardly notice the difference.

In 1959, in presenting an Award of Merit to Small and partner Joseph N. Boaz for the building, the awards jury praised Home Security Life as "A commercial building of exceptional clarity and consistently careful handling of proportion and detail."

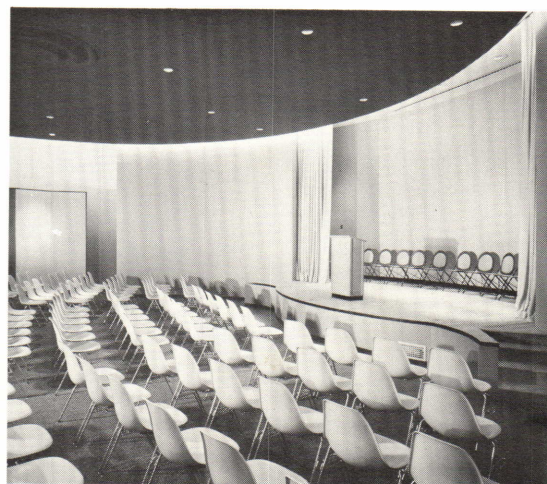
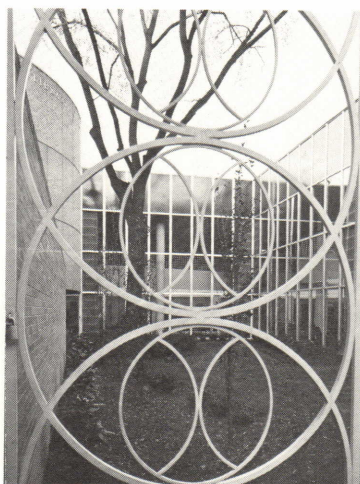
The same could be said of the building today.



1957

Preserved

A city library actually improves as it loses two close neighbors



Some years ago, a television advertisement told middle-aged women, "You're not getting older, you're getting better." Well, buildings age, too—sometimes gracefully, sometimes not so well. But mostly, they change a little for the better, a little for the worse and, just as with people, the overall beauty often lies in the eye of the beholder. An improvement here may make up for a failure there. Or a failure

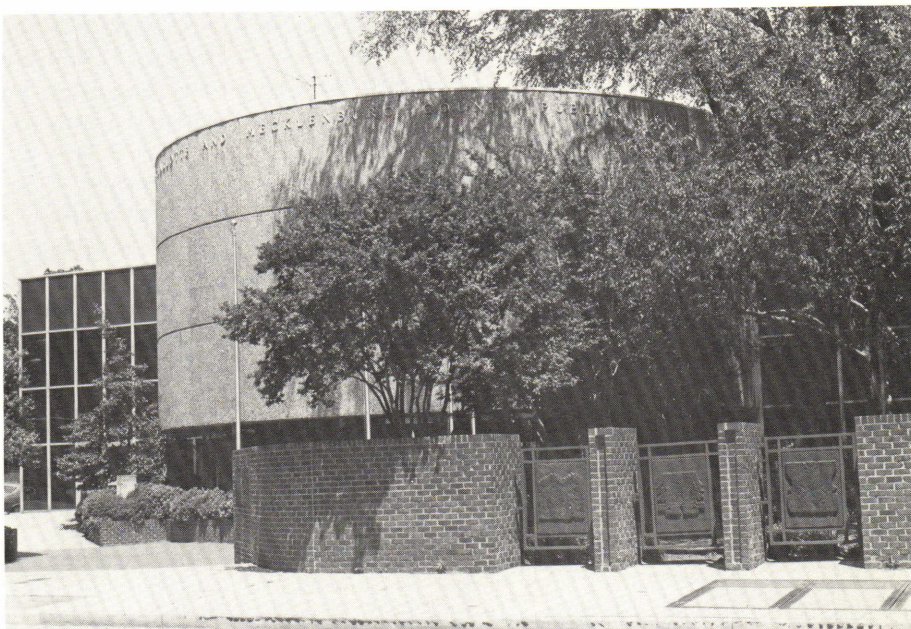
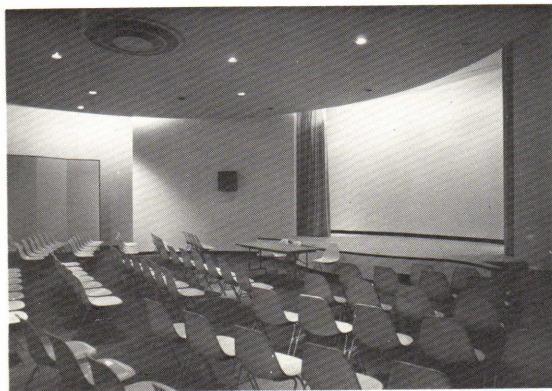
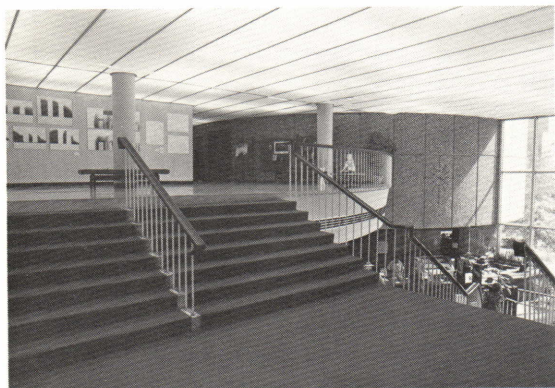
might cancel out an improvement. It's a matter of priorities.

One such building—and one which comes out, after all things are considered, on the side of improvement—is the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library by Odell Associates of Charlotte, which first appeared in *Southern Architect* in February 1957 after winning an Honor Award from NCAIA.

After 22 years, any building is bound to have been changed some and is bound to show signs of use. A central city branch of a public library system may show even more than most. But here, thanks to the construction of branch libraries throughout the city that took much of the growth from the main library, the structure has not been altered significantly. To be sure, some changes have been made: an electronic

security system has been installed to prevent the theft of books, for example, and the three doors at the front entrance have been changed to a wider two to permit access by wheelchair. The library, in fact, has proven quite adaptable, as a meeting room has become a computer center, the children's area has moved from downstairs in front to another former meeting room upstairs in back and the periodicals

... and today



Ernest Wood

section has become the reference department. The basement, with its 18 foot ceiling, has been divided into two floors with nine foot ceilings, as originally intended in the design. And while a street widening took the driveway for the library's auto book drop, a pedestrian book drop remains. None of these, however, is a change that significantly alters the quality of the building. Neither do shortcomings in

maintenance—new carpeting on the stairway that does not extend between the spindles of the railing, for example, and fluorescent light diffusers that sag and buckle—although they dull the building temporarily, at least.

But one significant—and permanent—change affects the quality of the building in such a positive way that it makes up for other short-

comings. When the library was first built, it shared its site with two commercial buildings. These structures occupied the most prominent corner of the lot, forcing the library to have an "L" shape and to wrap around behind them. It was therefore impossible to see the entire library at one time, though its two ends emerged on two different streets. In 1971, the buildings were demolished (declared *The Charlotte*

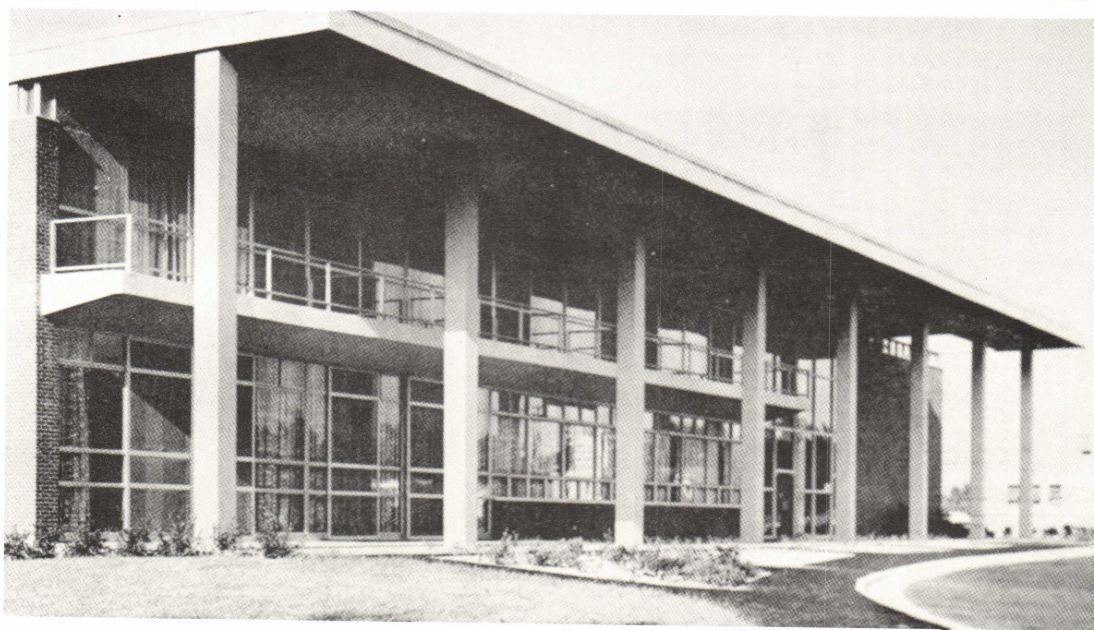
Observer, "Library is Visible, Finally") and the city purchased the site and erected a small plaza and fountain, designed by Raleigh landscape architect Lewis Clarke.

In honoring the building in 1957, the awards jury praised its "excellent use of a restricted downtown site." The site is no longer restricted. The building's design can now stand on its own. Finally.

1954

Transformed

A university student union easily adapts to part of the library



When first published in November 1954, the North Carolina State College Union was praised as a structure that would provide for “a phase of youth’s education that cannot come from the classroom.” Today, the college has grown into a university and the union has become part of the library, an adjunct of that same classroom that the building originally was supposed to complement. But it has made the transformation well. The

exterior, which on the front was designed to evoke the Southern ante-bellum classical revival style with its columns, remains unchanged. Inside, an open plan allowed a renovation that while adding partitions left much of the original intact. And though students now are studying instead of relaxing there, the building remains a focus of campus life.

Designed by Matthew No-

wicki and completed by William Henley Dietrick of Raleigh after Nowicki’s death, the student union was constructed in 1952. The following year, the university library moved from Brooks Hall to a new structure east of the union designed by Odell Associates of Charlotte. By the late 1960’s, plans were underway for both a new student union and for an expanded library to serve the growing university. In 1969, the new

student center, designed by G. Milton Small and Associates of Raleigh, was constructed; in 1973, a library tower was completed linking the 1953 library to the union; renovations of the union by the Odell office followed.

Though the renovation is a largely successful one, the transformation of the union into a library has eliminated several details that were considered unique and origi-

North Carolina Architect

... and today



Ernest Wood



nal in their day. The lounge and its fireplace that hung a metal chimney and hood over an open hearth have given way to book stacks; an art gallery has given way to group study rooms; and a ballroom designed to accommodate 1,400 dancing couples, 550 persons seated for a banquet or 700 for a concert and fitted with colored lights "which wash the ballroom from the ceiling and give the facility a hundred personalities," as described in 1954,

has given way to a reserve book room. On the second floor, a small theater has remained, but guest rooms on the building's north side and meeting rooms elsewhere have become offices and study rooms.

The ground floor, which leads to one of the campus's main open spaces, is the one area that has remained most like the original building. Since the beginning, it has housed a snack bar, barber

shop and game room and although decorations have changed, the spaces have remained virtually intact. (A major element, a colored plaster mural by Manuel Bromberg, then of the School of Design faculty, also remains intact in the snack bar.) With the move of most other union facilities to the south campus near the residence halls, these areas today provide necessary food and recreation services for the north campus, which

contains classroom buildings and the library.

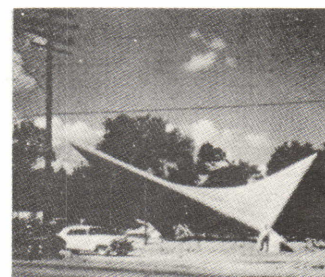
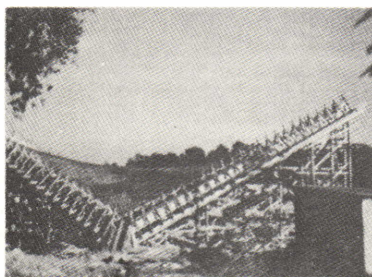
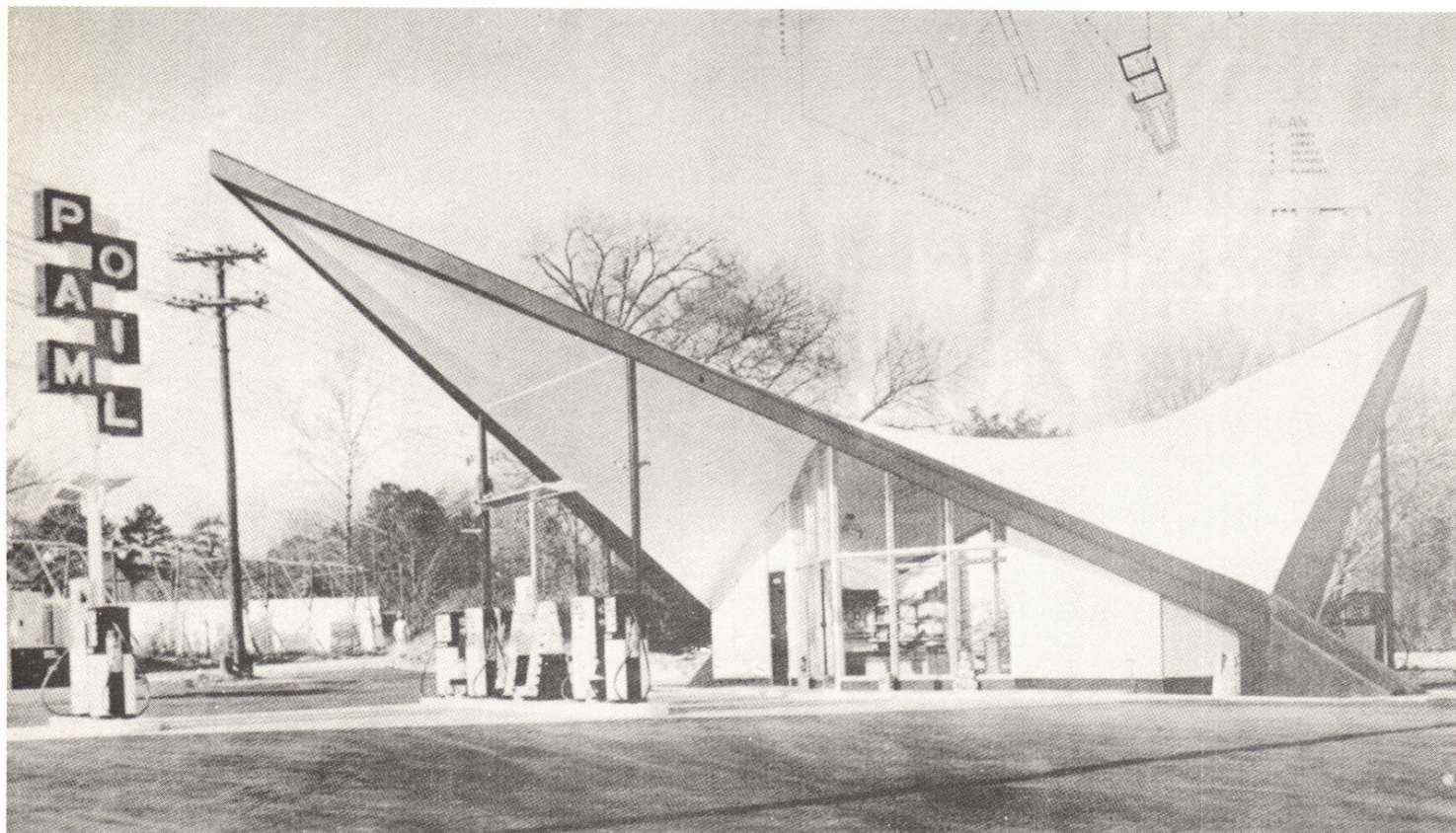
"One of the primary purposes of the College Union," noted the article 25 years ago, "is to blend the spokes of divided loyalty of the students by departments and schools into the greater hub of college loyalty."

Today, that statement seems a bit overblown. But if the building ever worked that way, it still does — even though it is no longer serving its original function.

1957

Transformed

A service station becomes an auto dealership in one more step of a long decline



Bragg Boulevard in Fayetteville is one of North Carolina's quintessential strip developments, a broad highway lined with auto dealerships, fast food restaurants and other enterprises hoping to snare that ultimate passerby with money burning a hole in his pocket, The U. S. Soldier. It is not surprising, therefore, that in between the signs, some of the architecture reaches out to grab the motorist's attention. And it is not really surprising, either, that only

20 years or so since its construction, some of it is already beginning to go to seed.

In June 1957, *Southern Architect* published an attempt by Croft and Hammond, architects from Asheboro, "to create something attractive and different for owners Enterprise Oil Company" along that strip. What it was was a hyperbolic paraboloid that canted out to cover pumps on

each side of the building. It was a concrete structure with tension bars running from foundation to foundation and steel columns doing double duty as light posts and supports for the roof.

What it is today is a used car dealership that from the highway continues to compete successfully for attention, but which on closer inspection has deteriorated badly. The present tenant, one Bobby Brown, a former stock car racer and operator

of "Bobby Brown's Auto Sales," has lined the office with auto racing trophies and photographs of his car. He's got an old, frayed couch, a few plants, a spindly legged table for a desk and an oil-on-black-velvet painting of a Mexican bandit on the wall. But Brown's personal touches are not the significant changes. Brown only rents the building. Besides, his touches are, if anything, exactly what one would expect of a service station turned used



Ernest Wood



car dealership in the South.

The significant changes lie in poorly executed alterations to the building and in general neglect, alterations and neglect that have crept up on the building over the years. Until about a year ago, when it became a car rental agency and then Bobby Brown's Auto Sales, the building continued to serve as a service station. Weeds grow today in the holes that remain where the

pumps were removed in front. But around back, the pumps came out long ago and a cinder block service bay, just large enough to accommodate one car, was added. The bay not only closes off the area and makes auto access to the rear of the building impossible, but it visually disrupts the sailing roof, destroying the symmetry of the paraboloid and creating a one sided canopy that projects to the front like the bill on a baseball cap. Other signifi-

cant changes include the replacement of portions of original porcelain exterior panels with coarse stucco. Chimneys and pipes now stick up through the roof.

In the final analysis, the building seems not to suffer so much from its change of use—it is, after all, still serving the auto industry—as from other changes.

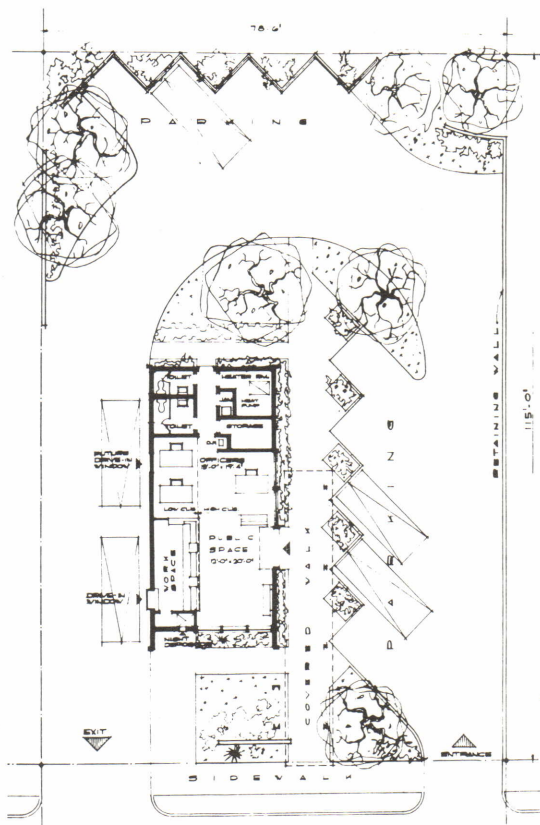
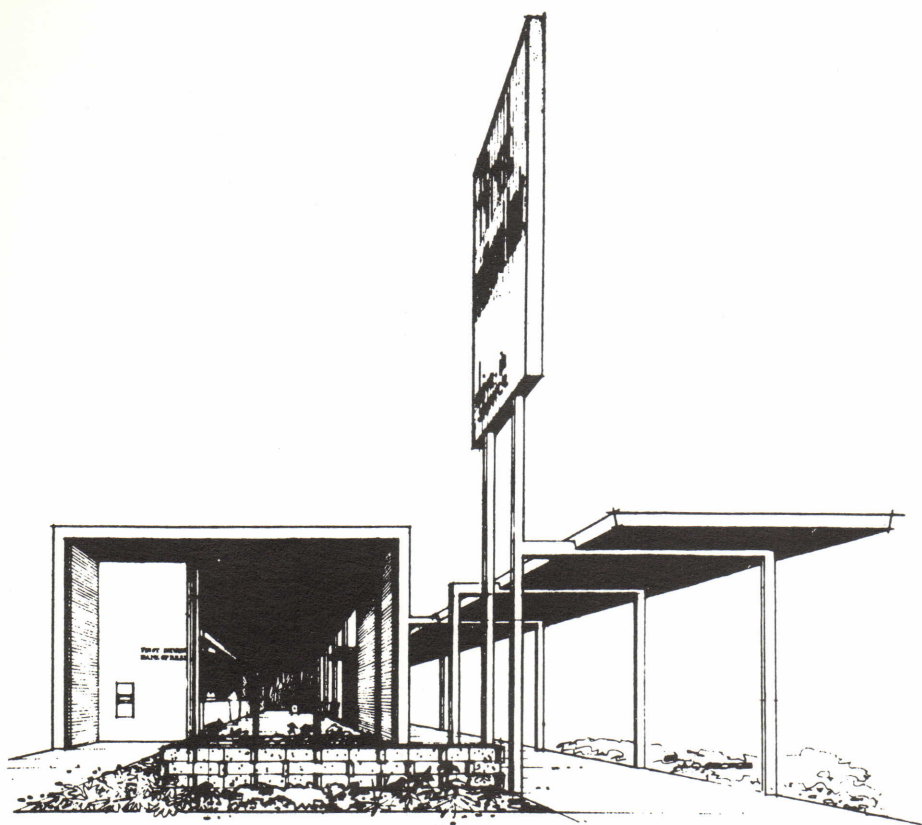
Gone is the image of the

gleaming service station that through structural technology celebrated automotive technology and a decade's optimistic image of science of all kinds. (It must have been the sort of place where attendants smiled and wore white uniforms with little bow ties.) The change of function, however, does seem to be a natural step in the deterioration of the building. And it most likely indicates a lack of concern for the building that will lead to even further deterioration.

1957

Built Up

A small bank stands alone—but not as alone as it used to



For a building whose context has changed as much as this one's has, *Southern Architect's* original presentation in June 1957 may have been prophetic. The building by F. Carter Williams of Raleigh, still under construction at the time of publication, was presented only in drawings, one a front-on perspective, the other a floor and plot plan. The description of the building told of a small (957 square feet inside, 199 square feet of covered walkway) facility for First National Bank of Raleigh that was the first building to use a new red clay brick that could be fired to colors other than red (in this case, a brownish gray). As for the rest of the building, the description noted: "Interior partitions

are wood paneling, floors concrete slab on grade, ceiling acoustical tile and roof built-up flat on rigid insulation under steel deck supported by steel beams and columns." It was a short and sweet description of a pleasant little modernist building that, aside from becoming a branch of North Carolina National Bank, itself has been virtually unchanged over the years.

A black ink drawing on white background, however, only intensifies the fact that, true to the modernist concern with the building itself and not its surroundings, this little bank always has sat alone and apart from its neighbors.

For in reality, this crisp,

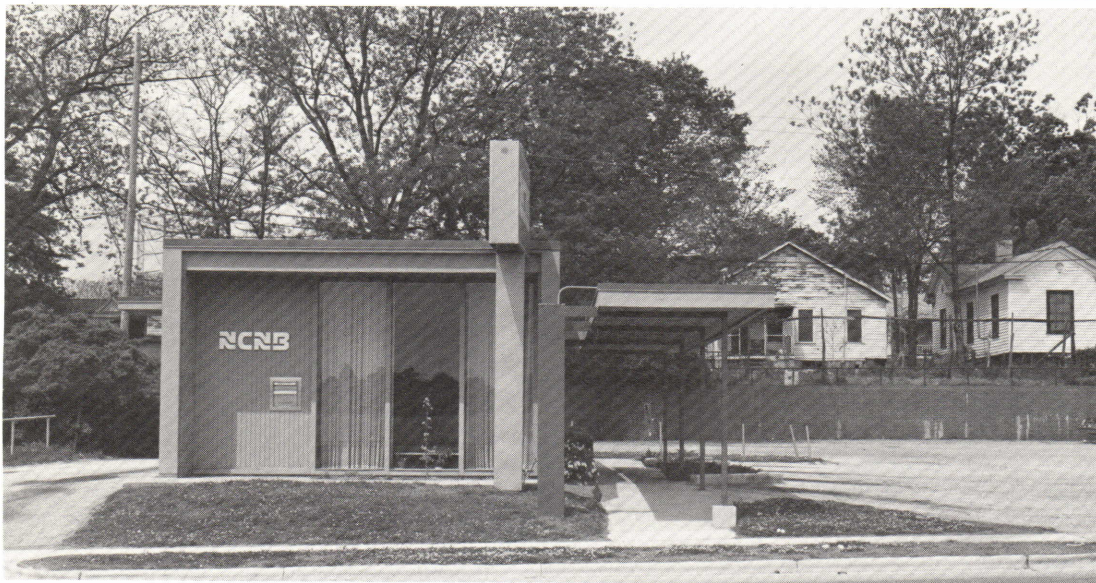
modern little branch bank was on the fringe of one of Raleigh's worst slums, an area called Southside that when the bank was new was populated by the poor and built up in dilapidated shotgun type houses.

In the early 1970's, under an urban renewal program, Southside was completely razed, rebuilt as a low-rise public housing project and renamed Heritage Park. It was the city's most recent and probably its last major renewal project of the type that has come to be known as "urban removal." Attention is now turning to improving or replacing individual units, rather than clearing entire neighborhoods.

Today, beside the bank to the west is a service station (there when the bank was new), to the east are the bank parking lot and a convenience store (a recent addition) and across the street stands the new housing project. The area has indeed cleaned up. With the upgrading of its surroundings, the bank may not even be as much of a loner as it was 22 years ago when it was new.

But up on a hill behind the bank, with their backsides showing themselves in full view, stand a row of run-down wooden houses, one recently burned out, reminders of what the neighborhood used to be. And how much it has changed.

... and today

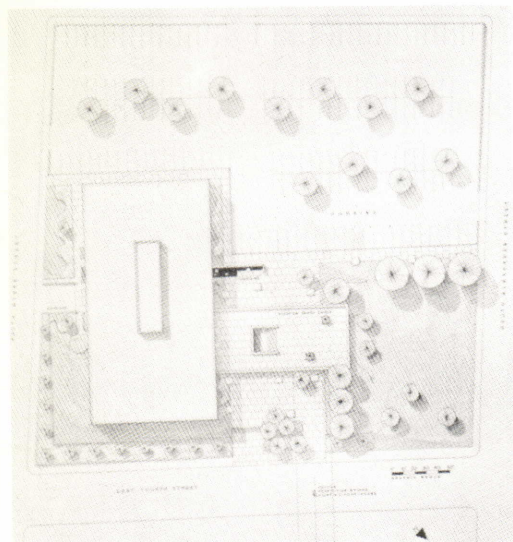


Ernest Wood

1962

Built Up

A government building sets the tone for a remarkable collection of new neighbors



A visitor to Charlotte in town for the first time in 20 years would never recognize the place. No more a sleepy Southern City, Charlotte now has the most ambitious architectural development in the state. And nowhere is the change more noticeable than in the old Brooklyn slum neighborhood. Street after street of substandard frame houses, crowded together, were simply obliterated. In their places are wide open grassy spaces and new

government and institutional structures.

A visitor who had seen the first of those government buildings and studied the way it was to fit into the master plan for the area, however, might not be quite as surprised with how things have turned out. For while that building, the Mecklenburg County Office Building by Sloan and Wheatley, now Wheatley Associates of Charlotte, did

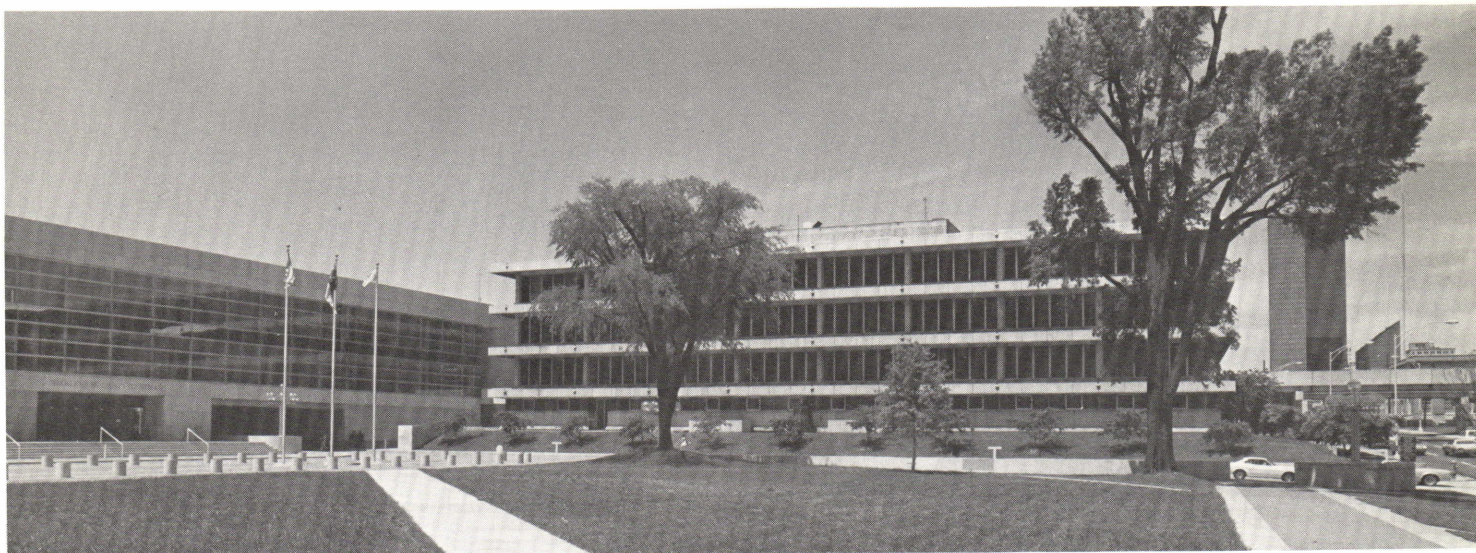
not actually cause change in the area (urban renewal programs and the county government's need for more space did that) it defined architectural detailing and set the tone for other buildings to follow.

And what has followed has been an exemplary group of buildings. The office building itself won an honor award from NCAIA in 1962. The Mecklenburg County Courthouse next door won an

Honor Award in 1978. The county Parking Structure across the courthouse plaza won an honor award in 1979.

When first constructed, the county office building was a large, modern structure in a sea of small run-down houses, but it did have one other county structure nearby from which it could design cues. That building was the County Courthouse, classical in design, but nevertheless a building that





influenced its new neighbor. The office building would, its architects decided, be clad in precast exposed aggregate panels that would match the color of the stone courthouse. As *Southern Architect* noted in May 1962, when the structure first was published, the office building was “designed to reflect the masonry quality, symmetry and repose of its partner.”

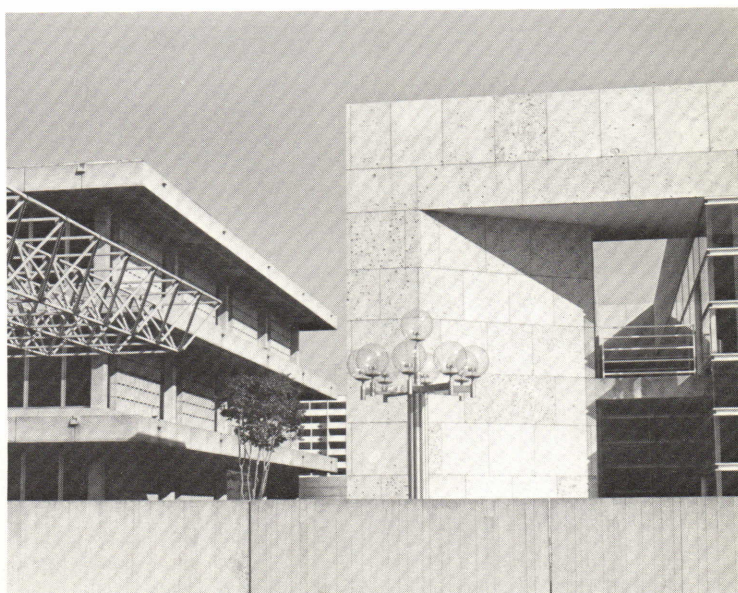
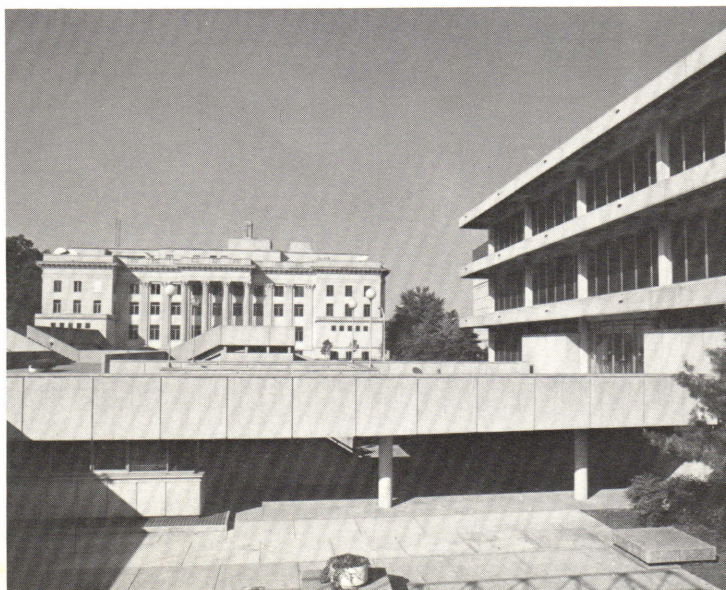
This building was early graphic evidence of the

growth of government in Mecklenburg County. Before it was built, most county functions were crowded into the courthouse and a few adjacent rental properties. Into this new building went the welfare department, elections board, tax and administrative offices and board of education. But in recent years, the county has built even more, even faster: a new jail, a city and county police building, an office building for the schools, a

social services building, plus the adjacent courthouse and parking structure.

Most of these new buildings in the governmental complex take their cue office building's example and are soft brown in color. (An exception is the jail, which is white.) Height, massing, scale—all are similar, especially in the three grouped together around the courthouse square. The result is an unusual harmony.

The success of these three buildings is indeed unusual—despite the time lag from the first, finished nearly 20 years ago, to the most recent, finished the year before last. The success, however, can at least in part be attributed to the patterns the county office building set in leading the way for its future neighbors.

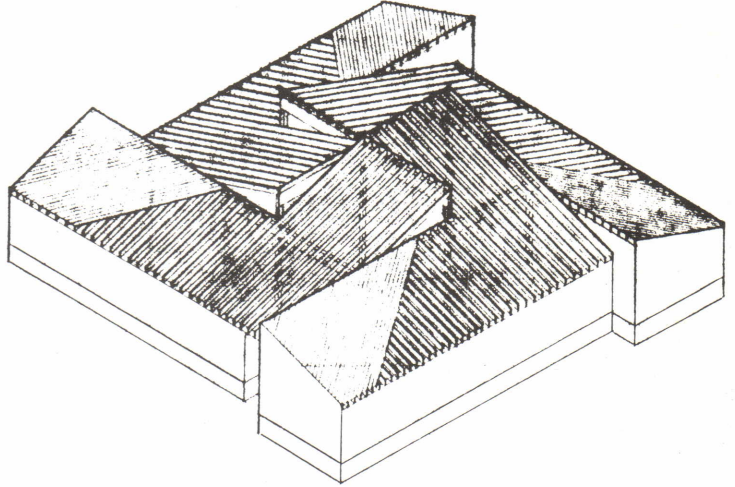


Ernest Wood

1972

Expanded

A school struggles
to grow gracefully for
new students and
new needs

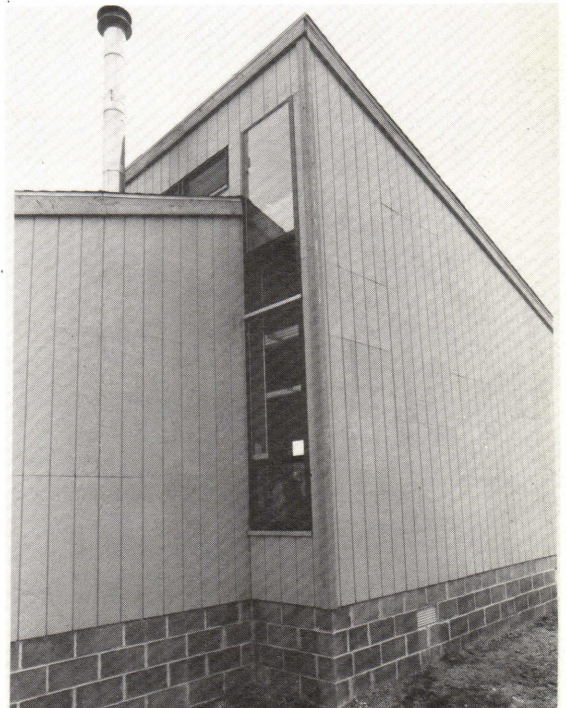


... and today

Isolated Ocracoke Island has long been a special place in North Carolina. And special places often get special architecture, as the island did in 1971 in its school. Architect James B. Willis, Jr., of Morehead City designed a pinwheel plan to provide a major space in the center surrounded by smaller specialized areas to accommodate the island's 70 students in grades one through 12, and, as *North Carolina Architect* noted in September/October 1972, he worked to achieve "harmony with existing structures in this quaint community."

But even special buildings sometimes must undergo familiar changes, and, as with many schools, this one not long ago needed an addition. School enrollment actually is declining on Ocracoke. But the initiation of kindergartens statewide presented an architectural program so different that administrators decided the class at Ocracoke should not be mixed with other students. Besides, the school had long needed a gymnasium and a shop. So the three new uses were put in the addition.

The final design links the new building with the old by a covered walkway in an attempt to make two distinct buildings that stand on their own. Materials, too, are somewhat different—cedar plywood instead of juniper siding and asphalt shingles instead of wood—giving the building a different character still. But because of its size and its prominent location, the addition, completed in 1978, somewhat overpowers the original school. (The site was too small to locate the addition in a less conspicuous place without taking land needed for recreation.) The complex remains a unique grouping of buildings. The commonplace constraints of school construction, however, do show through.



John Loving

1969

Expanded

A hospital grows without disrupting service—or its own appearance



For the patient, visiting a hospital usually is traumatic enough. But when the patient arrives to find the admitting office, the emergency room, the labs or any other department relocated due to new construction, the visit can be particularly difficult.

Here, however, is a hospital that has successfully avoided the chaotic growth that plagues so many of its sister institutions. It's a little taller now and a little wider than it used to be, but the New Hanover Memorial Hospital in Wilmington, designed by Leslie N. Boney Architect, has grown in such an orderly fashion that the changes may not even be noticeable

at first glance. The photos here, from its original April 1969 publication in *North Carolina Architect* and from May of this year show a remarkable likeness.

What is also remarkable is that here is a building that was designed to be expanded and which has been expanded precisely according to that design. When new, the building was praised for that allowance for growth. So it is interesting to note that the plan was not chopped up or redesigned as the years passed.

The expansion was a relatively simple one. When built in 1967, the hospital was an eight story structure that placed a bed tower atop



William J. Boney

a broad platform containing medical service departments and administrative areas. The plan was to expand the bed tower upward and the platform outward, providing in each case growth at the perimeter of the existing building that would minimally disrupt hospital services. The lower level, for example, was simply extended along the straight corridors. By this method every department except administration—among them, x-ray, pathology, emergency, out-patient, even storage space—was provided with more room. In the tower, with three floors added for more bed space, the only major alteration was to

relocate intensive care into the lower level. On the hospital grounds, other buildings projected in the original planning such as an education center and staff quarters have been added. Even the parking areas were expanded according to the architects' original plans.

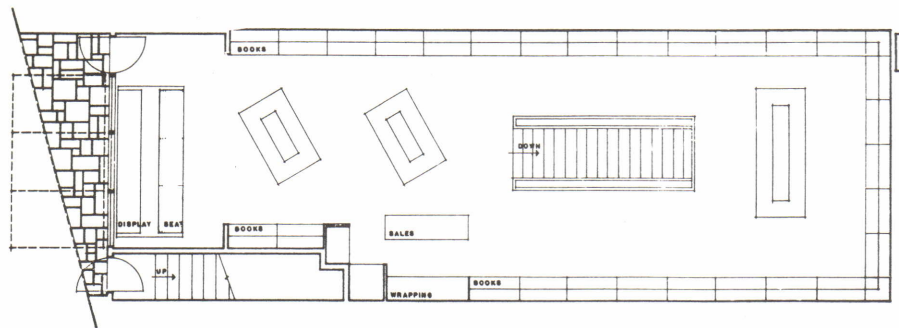
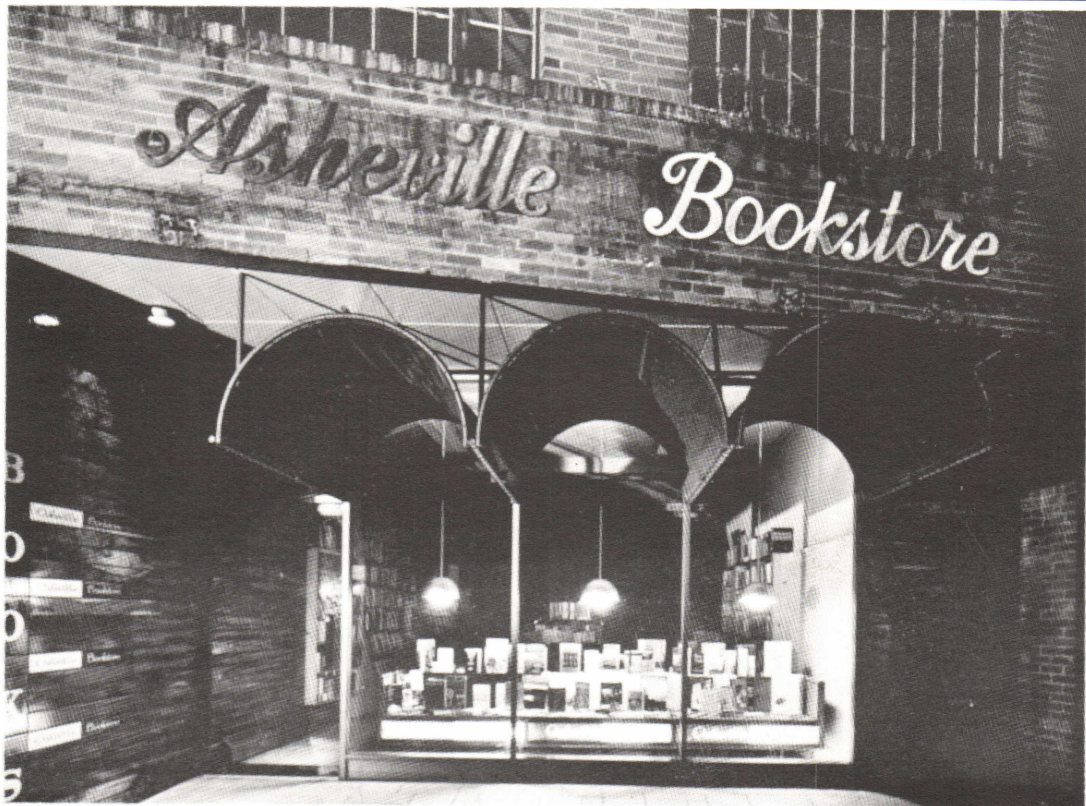
The additions were completed just this spring, and a new clinical therapy building recently went out for bids. Clearly, this is not a static project, but, like most hospitals, a project that constantly is evolving. What's different here is that the building has grown just as the doctor—and the architect—ordered.



1963

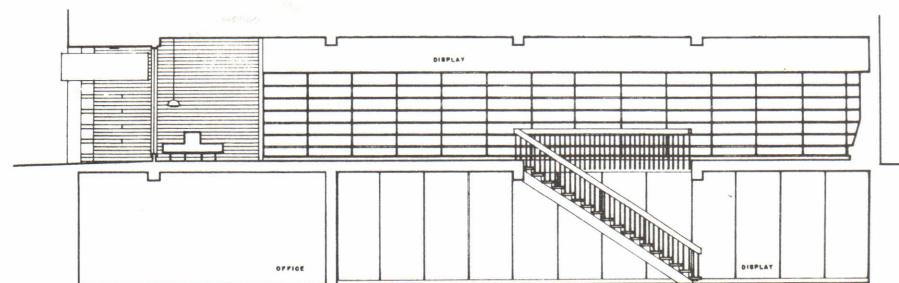
Demolished

A bookstore moves and
a library takes its place



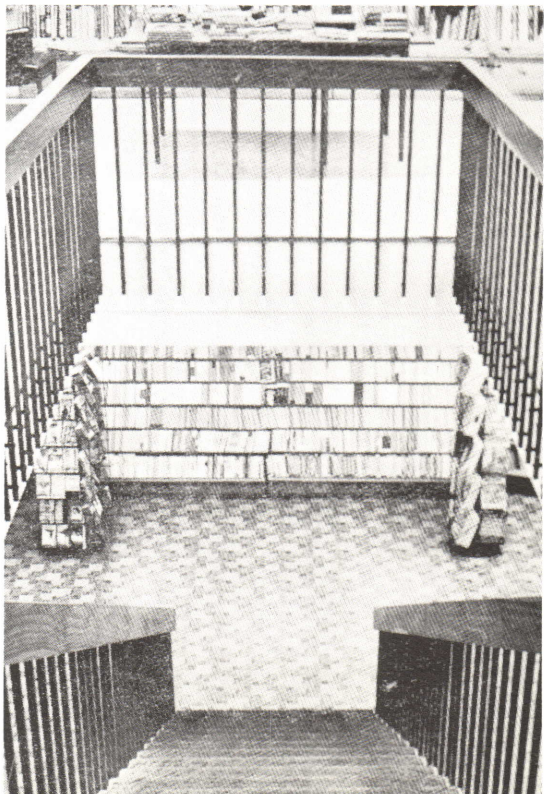
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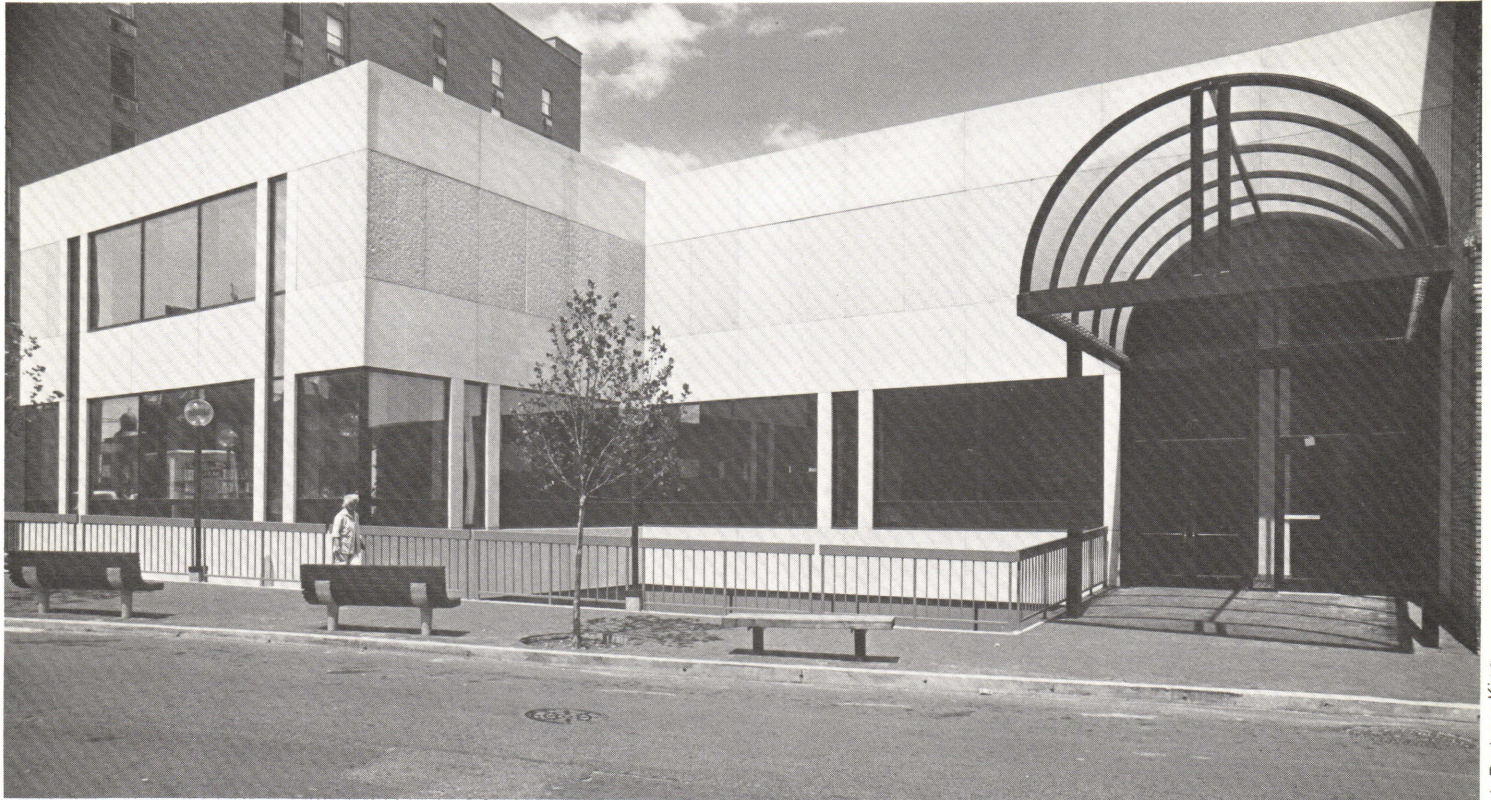
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SECTION

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J. Bertram King

There's an irony in the demolition of the Asheville Bookstore building. Not only did the new Pack Memorial Library go in on the same city block that had contained the store, but the library's entrance is on nearly the exact spot as the bookstore's. So a building for borrowing books replaces a building for buying books.

The library, however, is no villain. And the bookstore has not died—it has just moved away. This is a story whose ending may not be entirely happy, for the now demolished bookstore was an award winning project. But everyone appears to be living reasonably well ever after.

In the early 1960's, the Asheville Bookstore, a business well known for a wide selection of volumes and for its art book department, was

forced to move from its location on Pack Square when Northwestern Bank acquired the property for a new office building. Moving to a nearby building also in downtown Asheville that had previously housed a jewelry store, the bookstore was faced with the need to remodel. Charles M. Sappenfield, a local architect who since has become dean of the College of Architecture and Planning at Ball State University, was the architect for the job.

The bookstore owners, Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Gilbert, requested a modern building, but similar in character to their previous location: stained wood, shuttered doors, a bay window for exhibiting with a built-in seat, a brown awning and a color scheme related to their brown-paper-gold-ribbon

packaging theme. What Sappenfield provided was a new facade design featuring dark beige brick, walnut paneling, gold anodized aluminum mullions, glass windows, gold suspended lights, a Vermont slate floor and a brown canvas canopy suspended from a steel pipe framework. Inside, the architect provided new offices upstairs, a new stairway (consisting of cantilevered steel channel treads on a single steel stringer, steel pickets and a laminated walnut railing) and a reworking of existing book cases and display table. The project won an NCAIA award of merit in 1965 and was published in *North Carolina Architect*.

In an earlier article in December 1963, *Southern Architect* had reported that as a result of the move and

renovation, sales had risen 25 per cent. But ten years later when the city announced plans for a civic center downtown, the owners, fearing a new downtown traffic of tourists and sports-minded people not interested in books, decided to move again. The bookstore relocated on Merrimon Avenue in North Asheville and renovated an old service station (this time, without employing an architect) for its new shop.

Shortly after the bookstore's move, the Pack Memorial Library acquired the site for its new facility and the bookstore building stood empty until it was demolished to make way for the new structure. The library, by Asheville architect J. Bertram King, was completed late in 1978.

1955

Demolished

A drive-in restaurant disappears without a trace



Those who live by the sword die by the sword. Or, in contemporary America, those who live by the automobile die by the automobile. It happened to the Catawba Dairy Bar in Conover, built to serve the motoring public, now torn down for a shopping center parking lot.

Designed by Clemmer and Horton (now Clemmer, Bush, Sills and Abernathy) of Hickory for the Catawba Dairy, the building was a tiny one, approximately 30 by 40 feet — including rest rooms, storage and mechanical equipment areas. It nevertheless came up with an award of merit in NCAIA's 1955 design competition and was published in *Southern Architect* in July of that year. It had a low pitch shed roof, brick side and back walls, a glass front and an exposed wood post and beam roof support system. There was a walk-up curb service window. Inside, the counter snaked around for maximum seating capacity.

But the Catawba Dairy was bought out by Pet Dairies and about 1963, the dairy bar closed. Later incarnations were as other eating establishments and as a used car dealership. The original sign came down; the paint colors changed periodically.

Then in the early 1970's, a shopping center found the location, on N. C. 64-70 where motorists turn off the highway to go into downtown Conover, as good a location for its business as the Dairy Bar had for its use. The Villa Park Shopping Center went up and the Dairy Bar came down. And today, there is not a trace of the building having been there at all.

... and today



Ernest K. Sillis

1965

Designing for People

A plea for those things
in life that have little
to do with logic

Lately, those architects dubbed "post-modernists" have been getting a lot of credit for debunking modernism. But they weren't the first—not by a long shot. The public beat them to it. And so did designers who aim their work at the public through the retail marketplace. In this article, a transcript of an address to the Charlotte Section, NCAIA, which appeared under the headline "Architect, Have a Heart!" in North Carolina Architect's September 1965 issue, furniture designer Milo Baughman of North Carolina's Thayer Coggin raises some of the same points that the post-modernists have raised. We were intrigued by this commentary from 14 years ago, especially in light of recent trends toward decoration, symbolism, attention to what makes people feel comfortable about a building and all the other ideas that have come to be known as "post-modern."

By Milo Baughman

My family and I vacationed in my home country, Southern California, two summers ago and we discovered a new architectural phenomenon there that I shall label The Hansel and Gretel Architecture. We saw unfolding before us tract after tract of houses that looked as I remember fairy tale houses looked in my childhood books. They were decorated with, among other surprising things, a cluster of phony bird holes painted up under the eaves. There must be whole flocks of neurotic birds flying around Southern California, poor frustrated creatures, who at one time or another tried to poke their heads into these painted holes.

But Ah!, you say, this could only happen in kooky Southern California, and what relevance does it all have to us sober folk here in Charlotte? But there is a relevance. The Hansel and Gretel architecture does not merely reflect the bizarre taste Southern California is notorious for, it suggests something more than this, something that has a universal meaning.

Life in this sprawling Los Angeles area, like most such urban-suburban areas in the United States, is a fast, pressured, crowded life. It's a life that can perhaps best be described as too damned 20th Century! And I think it is precisely this that drives these people through their quaint little gates and into their quaint little Mother Goose houses. Not to live in this century, but to get the heck out of it! Who wants to be so darned contemporary? Being modern is an exhausting business. Let's find a little respite at least at home. So in this pressure-cooker life we live, home becomes an all important sanctuary. Or, as a friend of mine puts it, home is where you can assume a prenatal position and turn the blanket up to Very Warm. Home, in short, is escape. Home is protection, privacy, and emotional shelter, a place where you can take your shoes off. To the architecturally unenlightened public, what better form can all this take but the cozy cottage look of Hansel and Gretel (or Grand Southern Colonial)?

I go into all this because I believe it brings to light two things. The first is the vital consideration that should be given to the emotional or if you will, the psychological needs of people in relation to their architectural environment—the interior spaces of their home in which they live their truest lives. The second thing that is brought painfully to light is how gross our failure has been to meet these needs within the framework of sound contemporary design. Nothing could be further removed from good contemporary

architecture than these Hansel and Gretel houses or, for that matter, the phony colonial confections of New England and its equivalent in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Where did we go wrong? In a sense we went wrong by becoming modernists in the first place and leaving the rest of humanity behind. We went wrong by too quickly swallowing all the party line thinking without enough heartfelt questioning. We accepted the definition, for example, the Form Must Follow Function without really understanding the total meaning of *function*. We accepted the slogan, "A House is a Machine for Living" without fully grasping what really *living* in a house should mean. In short, we put design principles before our people, and somewhat misunderstood principles at that. We intellectualized our own humanness, and our client's emotional needs right out the plate glass window. Our concern for attaining the right identity in our field—of gaining the approval of the critics and of our fellow designers—got in the way. We built cold monuments to ourselves rather than warm homes for our clients.

How are we to understand "function?" However exactly we may define this term it must be understood in its broadest and certainly its deepest sense. To talk only about the mechanical or physical workability, or utility does not get at the meaning of function. These are necessary ingredients but more significant to our discussion is how an object, or a space environment functions in terms of eliciting the right kind of emotional response. The question: Does this chair, or this room in this house really work? can only be answered in terms of the kind of deeper responses the chair or the room have evoked. If these responses are not the right ones, no amount of logical rationalization will make any difference. Such rational thought comes from the level of reason and the conscious and does not reach down to the level where we really live. Think for a moment how little to do with logic the things in life that matter most have to do: Falling in love, religious beliefs, loyalty to causes, and so on. It is difficult to be entirely rational in explaining these most crucial phenomena. Should, then, criteria for the kind of house we should be designing be framed in essentially logical terms? We leave out the heart of the matter, and of the house, if we do.

Let me tell you now about a specific house that pinpoints, somewhat in the extreme, this failure of ours to consider carefully enough the more human requirements. It is a house much publicized in the best magazines—a magnificent glass box sitting on concrete stilts overlooking a Connecticut woods. Or at least this is the part one sees in the photograph.

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Actually there's more to this house, a kind of stepchild lower level called the Family Wing. We'll go into this in a moment. But up in the glass box we find a kitchen, but it isn't really a kitchen, or it doesn't look like it. It's all concealed behind flush mitered rosewood cabinetry—very sheer, one catsup bottle left out, however, tends to spoil the whole effect. The rest of the glass box is devoted to what's designated on the plan as Reception Area (something that used to be known as the "Living Room"). Here we find the formula of two Mies van der Rohe chairs, his glass topped table and his chaise—that's a sofa without a back or arms—again very sheer. Now when this reception area is the scene of the almost monthly cocktail party, it is very exhilarating indeed. People seem more clever, or at least they try harder to be in this snazzy environment. It does something to you.

In the meantime, the children are all downstairs in the combination laundry and playroom huddled before the television set. This is the "heart" of the so-called Family Wing and is at best an after thought. The family, incidentally, who lives in this house is composed of a mother and father, five children, a grandmother and assorted dogs, cats and turtles. But between cocktail parties for the mother and father, and for practically all the time for the rest, this dugout with little tiny windows that hides itself underneath the magnificent glass box is where life goes on. The little kids seem to sense the inappropriateness of their scale in the high ceilinged glass box upstairs, and certainly everyone can see how incongruous their comic books look on the chaste Mies glass topped coffee table. This downstairs catacomb is admittedly a bachelor architect's idea of a good place to hide the family. After all, the kids and grandma may be just as happy to watch TV amongst the laundry baskets—or they could always go to bed. But for \$100,000 one can't help but expect something more. Now why does the family hide away in this dugout below? The architect wasn't being deliberately mean, he thought he was doing right: Give this perfectly average, though rich, American family an aesthetic experience they will never forget. Lift them off the level of the ordinary. Instead he drove them underground. What important ingredient did he leave out?

I want you to answer this question for yourself; but to suggest part of the answer, certainly it can be questioned whether people want to be so exposed as they are in this magnificent glass box. In the laundry room there were at least three solid walls enclosing them. The ceiling is not dramatically high. A few scattered comic books do not create visual devastation. A chair canted out of place does not upset the aesthetic balance of things. In short, this room truly shelters and makes few demands on its occupants. It serves its occupants and not the other way around. This particular architect failed, though this house, as most of his houses, was heralded as terribly important. But perhaps that's what's wrong with it, its importance. A house that is too important a piece of architecture may actually inhibit the life therein. A good house must include, not preclude the ordinariness of living. If it does not, the house exerts

a tyrannically stifling influence over its captive occupants. The moral responsibility the designer has to his client's family is clear.

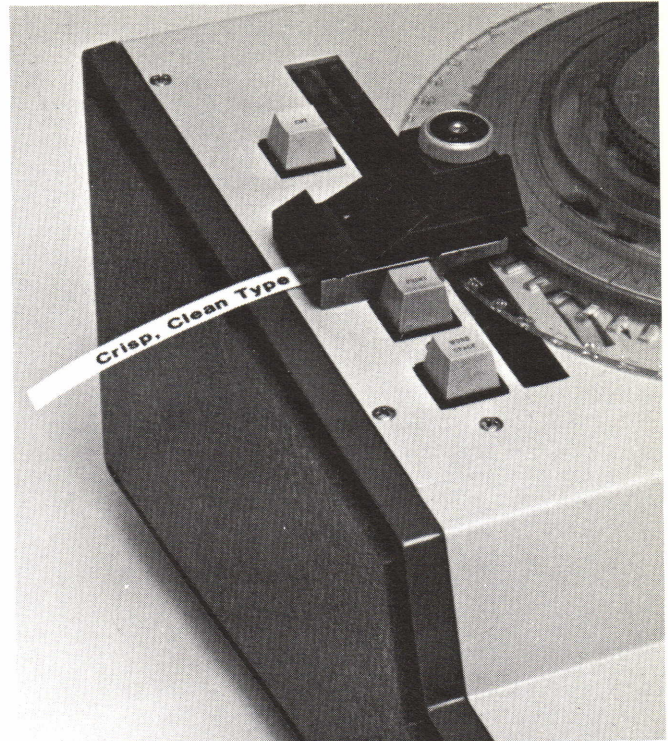
But to bring this down to the concrete, what are some possible solutions? To begin with we must look, as I have suggested, much more closely at our slogans. Let us take the one already mentioned, "Form Follows Function."

On the one hand we have this: The Bauhaus architect Hannes Meyer is reported to have said that "it is an absurdity to talk about the modern style in terms of aesthetics at all. If a building provides adequately, completely and without compromise for its purpose it is ... a good building, regardless of its appearance." (Lewis Mumford, *Roots of Contemporary American Architecture*.)

To balance this we have the following comment by the architect Walter Gropius: "The slogan fitness for purpose (that is, form evolved from function) equals beauty is only half true. When do we call a human face beautiful? Every face is fit for its purpose in its parts, but only perfect proportions and colors in a well-balanced harmony deserve that title of honor: beautiful." (Gropius, *Scope of Total Architecture*.)

We can understand this principle to include, within the scope of the total meaning of function, the purpose to please. This is accomplished in various ways. To take but one example, the emotional need for certain decorative refinements, even pure ornamentation, and sometimes even a frank look of richness should be met. Occasionally, the very structure can supply this need, and thus, ornamentation is achieved directly and integrally. But this is not always possible—and here is where the purist designer must unlimber some of his more rigid attitudes. Sometimes the form must become *more* ornamental, rather than less, for this might be the more appropriate and more deeply satisfying note to strike. Such a decision must not be arrived at too easily. Ornamentation must never be superficially applied to disguise a basic poverty in the form. It must always be valid and necessary to the purpose of the design. Thus, seen in this more total way, "Function" encompasses far more than mere utility. This broader understanding of function, or purpose—from which form is evolved—can be seen, if you will, even to include accommodation of at least some of the minor needs of the soul.

I would like to add this comment by Rudolph Arnheim, "The endeavor of an architect and his clients must indeed start with a commitment to the purposes of the building—but not just as a useful object whose usefulness deserves to be shown, but as an object whose function translated into a corresponding pattern of visual behavior will enhance the spirit of our existence and conduct as human beings." A building, a house, in other words, that brings out the best in us, that does not overawe us and does not starve us emotionally, a house in short that does not leave us cowering in the corner, but makes us feel at home. ■



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1954

Designing for the Weather

A comment on old
fashioned coastal
construction and the
ever present hazard
of hurricanes

This is a reprint of a reprint. In 1954, after Hurricane Hazel blew across the North Carolina coast and plowed up into the Piedmont, The Charlotte News printed this article by Tar Heel novelist Robert C. Ruark. In December 1954, the article appeared

again in Southern Architect under the headline "Old Carolina 'Stilt Houses' Sneer at Hurricane Winds." We liked it so much—because of its good ol' approach to writing about architecture and because it contains an important lesson about the

need to pay attention to local conditions when building—that we thought we'd give it another whirl in this anniversary issue of North Carolina Architect. Good writing and good lessons never die.

By Robert C. Ruark

My Grandpa builded a house upon the sands some 75 years ago, and he builded it in a little town called Southport, in North Carolina, which took the full force of the last hurricane. I have just received some pictures of what the gale did to some other houses in the town, which was plenty. But Grandpa's house is still there, solid on its stilts.

The old place shed a shingle or so, I believe, but otherwise went scatheless. Hazel messed up the waterfront considerable, but in the pictures of the wreckage, I notice that all the old widow's-walk houses of the same vintage as my house, which I remember from my childhood, still sit square and firm amidst a sea jetsam. They look like stern old ladies surrounded by riffraff.

Southport, being on the hurricane course as the high winds sweep along the Carolina coast, has seen its share of big gales. I can remember a few as a boy when the river walked a block into town, and when some roofs skidded gaily along like scrap paper. But the biggest blows never succeeded in knocking loose the old tough houses.

I notice in this one that one huge beach development lost all its houses—new houses,

constructed since the war, save a few, and houses which figured to hold. But in the pictures I've got, the old Stewart House and the old hotel and the old—was it Bussels or Doshier—house ain't turned a hair.

These old houses were all built on legs. Maybe there is such a thing as a cellar and a solid concrete foundation in Southport now, but before the war I doubt if there was any such newfangled foolishness. Houses were stuck on pilings, of brick and tarred wood, and looked like the same stern old ladies, raising their skirts against a mouse.

This raised-skirt construction served several purposes. It kept the house bone dry, for one thing, and it discouraged the bugs, for another. And it made a fine haven for the storage of boats, tents, fish nets, lawn mowers, old sidesaddles, and delightful junk for young males to peruse on rainy days. I reckon I spent more time under Grandpa's house than in it.

These houses were largely constructed of Carolina fat pine, which will flare like tinder at first, but if it survives half a century it turns into a kind of iron. I bought the old man's house back some years ago, and the electricity was a sight to behold. Why it didn't burn up

nobody'll know, because the wiring hung in festoons against the naked wood, with no sign of insulation.

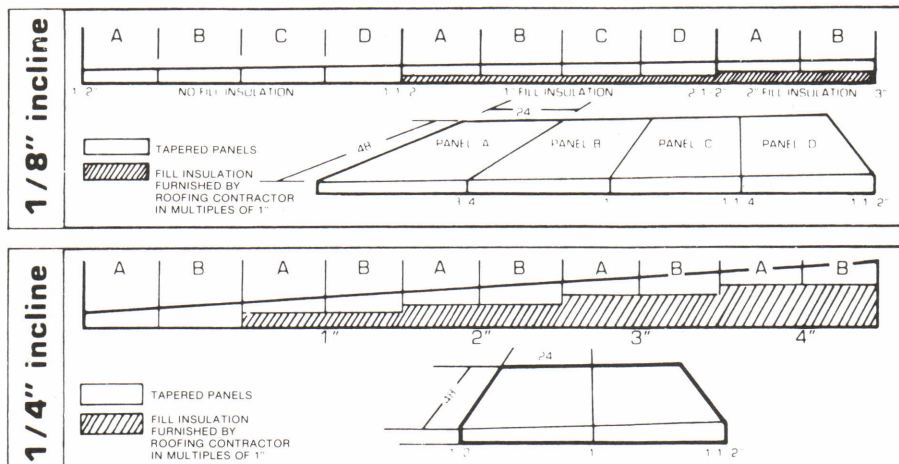
But that wood itself, was so hard, so nearly petrified, that the remodelers had a time getting a modern nail into it. Nor was there a sprung beam or sagged joist. The back steps, being of inferior wood, had rotted off, but the porch where the washbasin used to sit was firm and stout. The same rugged beam bore the same augur holes from which depended a swing on which my mother and her sister swung as kids.

They must have built them differently in those days, with a measure of honest labor, only the best of seasoned materials and some pride of craftsmanship which eludes the modern builder. You expect a floor to sag and the plaster to crack in the new ones before you get the fireplace to working, if it draws at all. The shoddiness of modern workmanship, as I've observed it, is appalling, when you consider that an old fat-pine house on stilts can sneer at a hurricane while the contemporary dwellings cartwheel off into the sea. Grandpa may have builded his house upon the sands, but Grandpa's sands seem to be a sight better than the modern man's rock. ■

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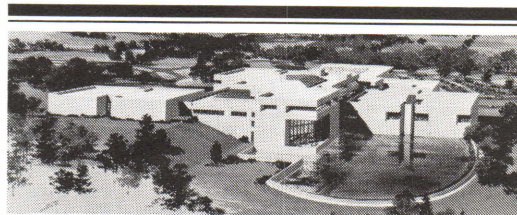
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1964;1976

Writing about Designing

A few words on the art
of architectural
criticism

Over the years, this journal has published several articles on its own business, that is, on architectural criticism and architectural journalism. Just in 1964, there were two articles: one in February, a transcript of an address by Henry A. Millon of the MIT faculty, (who recently was named head of the National Gallery of Art's Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts in Washington, D. C.) the other in April, a transcript of an address by Douglass Haskell, FAIA, then editor of the now defunct Architectural Forum. In September/October 1976, an article appeared on criticism by Ernest Wood, then a writer for the News and Observer of Raleigh, now editor of this magazine. Though each presented a different view of criticism, there was significant agreement between the three. We wondered what it would be like—since we are still in the business of architectural journalism—to have the three authors together, discussing their various points. That was impossible. But a quick cut and paste job later, we had the next best thing, a combination of the articles into one which resembles a conversation and one which, we think, hits the highlights of their articles and introduces what architectural journalism is all about.

Wood: On the highest level, to turn philosophical for a moment, criticism is an exploration into the nature of "art" and an examination of whether a particular play or musical performance or painting or sculpture or building qualifies. On a more immediate level, criticism examines whether a work of art succeeds in what it sets out to do. Criticism, at any rate, is not "The Last Word," laid down by a critic who has assumed authority to make or break a work of art. (Anyone who thinks it is either cannot think for himself or is looking on the critic as some kind of scapegoat.) Criticism is quite the opposite. Criticism should be "The First Word," the beginning of a dialogue, a process which helps the public to itself become a body of critics who analyze the art presented to it and who learn to demand a higher standard. Therein lies the reason for criticism's existence.

Nowhere does all of this seem more applicable than in architecture. Architecture is the art form which affects everyone every day. Architecture is at least supposed to mirror society's aspirations and values. Yet architecture probably receives less criticism than any other art ...

Why?

Are writers, fearing that architecture is too technical or commercial a subject, afraid to venture into the field? Are editors, preoccupied with reaching a wide audience and selling their publications, afraid that architecture is too specialized a subject? Are architects, wary of losing clients due to unfavorable reviews, afraid to ask for more criticism?

I think we can give at least a qualified "yes" to each of these questions.

Millon: It is my belief architecture will flourish as a mature intellectual profession only if architects themselves encourage, require, even demand criticism of the most acute kind. Self-criticism, acknowledgment of limitations, admission of faults, courageous acceptance of adverse criticism, and recognition of error are hallmarks of maturity. The wounded ego, the self-conscious, petulant lamenter, be he architect or client, does the profession no good for he is seen to be childish, with enough idle time to spend writing answers to criticism ...

The response of the public to criticism is another thing. Naturally, the public has little interest in what we call criticism today because it has such little intellectual content. Reading the architecture section of *Time* magazine, or reading most of what is written in the professional journals by professionals (the *Forum* is of course the one possible exception but even some of their writing is pretty vapid) is like reading *Variety* about the theater (WHAM, WHOPPO, Smashing are some of the words) or any of the Hollywood magazines about the movies. The jargon employed by architectural critics is just as peculiar to the architectural press and the paeans just as frequent. See for example the recent words about Paul Rudolph's Yale Art and Architecture Building in all the magazines ...

There is considerable discussion by laymen and professionals of what is said

by that arch-reactionary art critic, John Canaday, or Leo Steinberg or Harold Rosenberg about painting and sculpture. Why? Because there is intellectual content in the writing, because it is specific, well organized and comprehensible. Because their ideas represent the ideas of men who have thought long and deeply about the subject—have developed clear uncompromising points of view and are willing to express them strongly. They are individuals bound to become the centers of controversy and to be influential in the development of art—for painters, dramatists, writers, all read, smile or fume over the ideas and criticisms expressed. The public is fascinated by such a vital discourse.

The public will, however, never be interested in architecture nor follow its ups and downs and never enter into a dialogue with architects as they do with those in the other arts until architects themselves demand quality in criticism and accept it unflinchingly or if not that at least gracefully. If architects encourage controversy, encourage diversity, encourage opposition, and show an eagerness to hear and to make intelligent discourse about what they are doing, the public may see that there is intellectual life, vivacity, spirit, and candor among architects.

Then, and only then, will there be a possibility for a fruitful and interesting dialogue between the professional, or the client and the intelligent, interested layman.

Wood: One root of the problem is the basic difference between the kind of coverage that architects want and the kind of coverage that most journalists provide.

With the physical decay of American cities today, the concerns over how much cities should be allowed to grow, the housing shortage, the energy crisis and other issues that arise directly from the man-made environ-

ment, it would seem that publications would want to write about architecture. It would seem that they would realize the importance of the man-made environment. And they do—to a certain extent.

They cover the politics of the zoning board, the Chamber of Commerce's complaints about "no growth" policies, the high cost of fuels for heating. But they seldom talk about the quality of the man-made environment. And it is precisely that quality, I suspect, that most architects would want to see emphasized ...

There are so many ways to write about the subject that the fledgling critic can easily become confused, bogged down in technicalities and details. But there are so many ways to write about the subject that it is a wonder journalists do not stumble over them even by accident more often than they do.

I see some encouraging signs, however, some subjects that are hard not to stumble over.

First comes the nation's sudden interest in historic preservation. It always did seem strange that Americans trooped off to admire Europe's architectural heritage and then ignored their own man-made environment. Maybe all our eyes will be opened to the architecture we have at home. Some of this interest in old architecture is sure to spur interest in contemporary design issues.

The energy crisis, decaying cities and urban sprawl also should bring more attention to architecture. It is too bad that people always wait for a crisis to correct mistakes. Bad news makes good reading, however, and the press has made us well aware of these problems. Again, interest in design should grow as a result.

Haskell: First of all, I think that the architects are the ones that create the critics and have to create the critics, and not vice versa. Some of

the critics are architects, some are not. Mr. Lewis Mumford is not trained as an architect and has certainly gone far in repute in the field of criticism. Secondly, the critic's appropriate function as a daily role should be to assist in the creation of architecture, and the primary way in which he would do this would be to help to disseminate knowledge and appreciation on a broad front, and especially on those fronts that create clients ... Now I think this architect creating critics takes place often down the road, from the bottom where appreciation should begin to be taught to school children who will ultimately grow into clients; then the middle where we must try to train up some good newspaper reviewers in place of the usual run of real estate writers (I've deleted the word from my text there); and then to the top, which I suppose means historically broadly grounded and philosophical thinking people like Mumford ...

This always seemed to be occurring in the company of a certain group of excellently top-notch architects. They were men like Clarence Stein, Henry Lord, Adolph Meyer, Frederic Eckerman, Whitaker Lewis, and the editor of the *AIA Journal*, and the likes of those. They were the garden city architects, the social conscience architects, the men who finally did see to it that America did get housing and an attempt at better cities.

Now, just in case you may not be aware of it, the work of a brilliant young critic like Mumford was two-fold. On the one side, he wrote books like "Sticks and Stones" which fired up other young men like myself with a lifelong enthusiasm for architecture and society. On the other hand, the group I spoke of used him to put eloquence and organization and also to document special government reports and other literature that went out to the public. This was a potent crowd; they were potent in working with a

strong group of liberal businessmen, and they were potent with a string of remarkable New York state governors. And the training of this kind of a critic was in the direction of a feed-back assisting action. I like to emphasize this view of a critic because I think that it is lost track of so often on all sides.

Millon: I had for six months been writing a weekly column on architecture for the *Boston Globe* — and I suppose it was about time to begin thinking about what I was doing. After a while it became clear there were two fundamentally different functions in question. Informing the public about new (and old) works of architecture, (what the drama critics call reviewing) and the criticizing of architecture, I found I had been reviewing architecture while I thought I had been criticizing it.

What are the differences between reviewing and criticizing? Reviewing is important, it serves a vital function even if the reviewer is primarily the purveyor of good news about architecture. The reviewer can be really influential where it hurts — in the pocketbook.

The reviewer's primary aim is dissemination.

Critics aims are somewhat different — he is less of a reporter and more of a policeman. There is only one justification for criticism — i.e., to criticize architecture, not introduce it, nor apologize for it. As Shaw said of drama criticism "it is the critic's express business to denounce any delinquencies."

The critic has in mind what the aim of architecture in his own time and place must be, and he examines, weighs, and judges my work considered insofar as it conforms or does not conform to architectural aims as he sees them. His position is hopefully, logically and philosophically unassailable — for he has a coherent system of values.

When the critic does not find

architecture then he must condemn what he does see mercilessly and explain why the building in one or more of its aspects has failed to achieve its goal ... Thus the overwhelming preponderance of what a critic will say is destructive — his duty is to recognize excellence and condemn the fake, showy, vulgar, or the naive.

Criticism must be destructive of the ephemeral and shallow for the critic is there to preserve the art ... The real critic, the architect, and, eventually the art historian, when he comes along to make up the totals and sub-totals, have the last word though it may take years for the public to weary of that which the reviewers have accorded fulsome praise.

Haskell: There are many, many different games that get played as architecture, and I don't know of any one critic adequate to say that only one or two or three of these games are legitimate. There is a certain workman-like level at which there should be a fair amount of agreement and criticism. A corner is skillfully turned or it is not skillfully turned; a building is properly set on its base or it is not properly set on its base; things like that. But when you get beyond that, you are in a place where purposes are widely divergent in a rich society, and I think that the beginnings of criticism probably are that you try to take the man's own word, as Pope did in literature, as to what he was trying to do and first follow through there. See how well he did within his own terms, after that you are entitled to say whether you think that those purposes were worthy purposes in your opinion. This seems to me a fair procedure in criticism ...

Now, in saying that architects produce critics and that critics should be frequent participants in the creative process, perhaps I am really distinguishing between two roles of the critic and perhaps two kinds of critic where we have been lumping them together as one.

Perhaps the critic whose primary objective is to write history has to be entirely cold, aloof, disinterested, and bent only on appraisal.

Now as to the workaday critic, the other kind, foe or friend, he is a man of his time rather than an historian, keen judgment is not enough, because he is living at a time when ideas are developing, and I think that he has a sufficient store of knowledge and philosophy to judge without examining the program and the thought process of the architect, is presumptive. In an area of developing thought and feeling and readiness to learn from architects who work with reality at first hand, it is essential not to stand back and pretend to be a know-it-all ...

Busy with producing, the architect himself has not always time enough and sometimes he has not word ability enough to do all this on his own behalf. And besides, when he does it, he is subject to some accusation of self pleading. The critic here has a role of interpreter, but that interpretative role should be that of a participant in the overall strategy of architectural statesmanship. It may be that we need different names for these two different aspects of architectural comment. In the matter of training of critics, I think a substantial part of the responsibility for the profession lies with the daily press. Rare indeed are the Grady Clays, the Ada Louise Huxtables, the George McCue's, and others on newspapers giving warm support for architecture with understanding.

Wood: The critic himself will have to be part historian, part sociologist, part urban planner, part aesthetician. He will have to discover the ways a building relates to its community and ask what its long-range implications are. He will have to avoid being carried away with the bizarre and see, instead, the meaning in the typical. Yet he must see the art in a building and recognize the

validity of new forms. He will have to juggle and arrange a system of complicated forces just the way an architect does. Then, he will have to translate a visual medium into a verbal one.

Millon: But what must all critics do, regardless of their individual prejudices or beliefs? Part of it is precisely what the FORUM publisher said — seek the architect's aim, look — judge the forms in relation to aim and achievement of aim — how the aims and realization are reconciled. But in addition he must judge whether the aim of the architect is in fact one good for architecture as a whole as the critic sees it. The ultimate purpose of architecture and its effect on mankind must be faced. The critic can't escape it through artful tightrope walking. He goes out on a limb, identifies his own bases and premises and straightforwardly assesses the building relative to his own value system. Only then may what he says be of real value to the architect and interested public.

Of what value is this type of criticism to the architect or to the public? Only value lies in sharp delineation of issues and possible examination of philosophical problems involved to the end that the architect may see a possible effect his work has on a trained carefully observant contemporary who is equally but differently concerned with the enlargement and advancement of visual knowledge and human visual perception. To return to our opening statements, the public might then see a deep and serious concern on the part of all connected with architecture that it enrich, enlarge, and deepen our knowledge, perception and understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live. The public has always been concerned with large important issues. Architects and their critics must also see architecture as a large important issue worthy of the most tough-minded thinking and exchange of ideas. Then we shall have a dialogue indeed. ■

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Critique

Recollections of a 40 year architectural practice

By James A. Stenhouse, FAIA

When I graduated from Georgia Tech in 1933 and began my career, the Great Depression was at its worst. Little was being built and jobs were scarce. Fortunately, I found a drafting job at \$5 a week with Steve Marsh, a Charlotte architect who was doing a few residences and public schools.

I was his only employee, and he turned the office over to me and spent the better part of each day playing golf. A concerned man, Marsh used to call in from the 9th hole every day to see how things were going. Being left to swim for myself proved to be a valuable experience. In addition to my architectural duties, I did all the engineering design as well.

In those days, architectural and engineering design was much simpler than it is today—especially engineering. The heating system for

the schools, for example, consisted of a standard two pipe steam system, with cast iron radiators under the windows. Of course, there was no air conditioning and lighting consisted of four incandescent bulbs in each room. Structural work was quite simple also.

Little time was given to design. I did the original 12 room Eastover Elementary School (which is still in use) in three weeks, including design, approvals, all working drawings (architectural, structural, heating, plumbing and electrical) and all specifications. The plans consisted of four sheets and the specs were six pages (with four carbon copies). Total labor cost for this project was \$15, plus a dollar for specifications typing by a public stenographer. The architect's fee was six per cent—the same as today.

The advent of air conditioning and fluorescent lighting changed engineering drastically. Buildings became complex structures, and the combination architectural-engineering office became a necessity, especially for large projects. Colonel Pease and I were among the first to see this change coming, and ours was one of the first architectural-engineering firms in the state.

Changes, especially in air conditioning, have made buildings more comfortable. Looking back on the architect's office of the 30's, it is evident that no place has benefitted more from a comfort standpoint than the A-E's office itself.

In the old days, during the summer, perspiration would drip from a draftsman's

forehead onto his tracing and his wet arms would cause the paper to wrinkle. Having the seat of his pants stick to a varnished wooden stool was a comparatively minor problem, provided he didn't move around much.

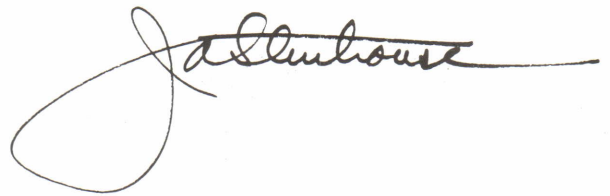
On humid days, tracing paper would expand and thumbtacks had to be removed while the tracing paper was restretched. Accurate scaling was difficult. Day-to-day variations in the size of the drawing was a constant problem, inasmuch as the length of the scale remained constant.

We tried to place each drawing board by a window for natural lighting and for a possible breeze. Incandescent desk lights made summer temperatures insufferable. A breeze was always welcomed, but often caused a tracing to sail out the window like a magic carpet. I have seen traffic held up on Trade

Street while a tracing was recovered from the middle of the street. Dust was a problem, too, but it was a good check to see what was moving and what wasn't.

Winter offered more comfort, but a drawing board beside a cast iron radiator was too hot, and one that wasn't too cold. All boards cracked from dryness.

The many changes that have taken place in 40 years have not been all for the better for architects and engineers. Required design time is at least five times greater. On some buildings, such as schools and hospitals, it is ten to 15 times more. This has got to put the squeeze on profit margins, but, still, I wouldn't want to go back to those hot, humid, dark, traditional days of architecture in the 30's. Besides, having to call in from the 9th hole must have been such a bother.



These recollections cover a longer period than the 25 year history of North Carolina Architect, but they provide an interesting look at a changing profession nevertheless.

James A. Stenhouse, now retired from architectural practice, is a founding partner of J. N. Pease Associates in Charlotte. His comments appeared in a recent issue of the firm's Newsletter "Pease Profiles" commemorating the firm's fortieth anniversary.



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