New Hampshire Architect

Y.M.C.A. BUILDING - KEENE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION
New Hampshire Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

OCTOBER
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Y. M. C. A. Building at Keene, N. H.
— by John R. Holbrook Associates, A. I. A.

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THE CURTAIN WALL

Looking at the miles of curtain walls which now dot the countryside one wonders if the architect once again is becoming a master of pasting facades on the honest bones of his building. The ubiquitous curtain wall has crept into everything; in banks, in churches, in schools — in fact, into every conceivable type of building.

We see here standardization at its worst — the easy grid, which can be applied without thinking, which anyone can use in one easy lesson, and which can be used by the yard or by the mile. When the designer is finally forced to think, such as in the choice of color, see the awful results!

Now comes in the “grille facade” which so regularizes everything — everything is lost. At the very least a veiled Houri peeping out of the grille work should be supplied with every 100 square feet to give the matter interest, if not scale.

The modern movement fought hard to rid architecture of the cliches of the past. One wonders if now we are falling into the same trap — the cliche of the grid and the grille.

I suppose every architect is entitled to do one of these “grid-grille” buildings. But, one should be enough, then if he must use it again let it be used with imagination.

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This is the prediction of Housing Economist Miles Colean in his annual forecast in HOUSE & HOME, professional magazine of the home building industry. He expects nonfarm starts to reach 1,215,000 in 1959 — up about 90,000 from this year. This would make 1959 one of the biggest years in home building history, about equal to 1954 and exceeded only in the peak years 1950 and 1955. Chief reasons for home building's bright outlook are the improved economic climate and the return of an adequate supply of mortgage money, says Colean. He explains: "Incomes will be up. The recession will have run its course. The probable mood: optimistic — but not reckless."

On mortgage money, Colean notes that assets of savings institutions are rising, so they should have a healthy supply of funds for conventional mortgages. FHA financing should cover about 275,000 single-family starts — 55,000 more than this year and almost 119,000 more than 1957.

He adds: "That forecast is based on the assumption that the government will be wise enough to do two things: 1) not lower current FHA interest rates, 2) raise them if that's what is needed to let home building compete with other borrowers. Right now FHA's ceiling is barely high enough to meet non-housing competition for funds."

Two forces will spur house sales next year, Colean predicts: 1) higher incomes mean more families can afford to buy homes and 2) slowed housing output leaves the industry with no excess inventory of unsold homes. "Even after two years of recession, vacancies have increased only slightly. This means the new expansion will begin in a clean market that other industries must envy," he notes.
At the same time disaster, demolition, abandonment and conversion are taking up 500,000 units a year out of the housing market. Highway construction and urban renewal problems are sure to keep this rate high or push it even higher. Comments Colean: "The problem may be to build enough homes to avoid delays in urban renewal and highway construction."

Higher family incomes, the high rate of demolition and a low vacancy rate, Colean concludes, should offset the present low rate of family formations and should support a steady market of 1.2 or 1.3 million units a year.

TRENDS OF 1959

Five new trends will become more pronounced in 1959, Colean predicts. They are:

1. Merchant builders will get a larger share of the single-family house market. At least 80% of the professionally-built homes will be merchant-built, Colean forecasts. Reason: the revival of FHA activity.

2. Prices will be slightly lower, despite rising costs. Increased private apartment building will keep average prices down because most apartment units are smaller and cost less than a house. Many builders believe people want more lower priced houses — and so they will build them.

The down trend in prices will not last, Colean adds. "If a 24% fall in home building in two years (1955 to 1957) can't produce a real cost cut, it's doubtful that a two-year rise of the same size will do so . . . Although materials prices have eased off slightly, overall costs have resisted the recession and actually climbed a fraction of a percent."

3. Private apartment building will maintain its comeback and should climb to a level near its postwar peak. Next year's total should hit 150,000 units — only about 10,000 short of the peak years of 1949 and 1950 when the ill-fated FHA Sec. 608 program produced a boom. Unlike 1949 and 1950, today's apartment boom shapes up as one financed 70% by conventional mortgages, Colean.

(Continued on Page 10)
writes. Reasons: today's FHA regulations, unlike those under Sec. 608, put tight restrictions on profits via cost certification; FHA's 4½% interest rate on Sec. 207 apartment mortgages is too low to attract funds; much of today's demand is for luxury apartments which are financed conventionally.

4. Public housing will continue to swing to single-family dwellings. About two-thirds of it will be for military personnel, mainly financed through FHA's Title VIII Capehart program (which government statisticians classify as public housing despite FHA mortgages). Already in 1957 and this year, no more than one-third of all public housing was in buildings of more than three units. Local public housing authorities are also turning to one-family units.

5. Prefabbers will keep moving ahead, should mark up another good year. They did surprisingly well during the recession. Last year, they shipped 94,000 units and they count on reaching 105,000 units this year. Next year they should do still better.

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CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS IN AUGUST 23 PER CENT ABOVE LAST YEAR

NEW YORK — August construction contracts in the United States totalled $3,466,576,000, an increase of 23 per cent above the same month of last year, according to F. W. Dodge Corporation.

Large increases occurred in nearly all the major classes of construction, the construction news and marketing firm reported, with the only sizable exception occurring in manufacturing buildings.

According to Dodge vice chairman Thomas S. Holden, the past four months have been the highest ever reported. "These recent record volumes of contracts," he said, "accent in very positive terms the resumption of the nation's postwar growth trend. Growth potentials are strong, indicating continuing construction demand for some time to come. Recent improvement in private construction activity is a particularly favorable factor."

Contracts for privately owned projects in August, according to the Dodge figures, were 11 per cent above August, 1957, although declines earlier in the year have kept the total for the eight months to date 3 per cent below the corresponding period of 1957. Public ownership contracts were up 54 per cent in August and 19 per cent for the eight-month period.

Contracts for non-residential building in August totalled $1,078,938,000, an increase of 7 per cent over August, 1957.

August residential building contracts amounted to $1,450,576,000, a gain of 11 per cent over the corresponding month of last year. The August contracts covered 113,460 dwelling units, a gain of 17 per cent over the year-ago figure.

(Continued on Page 17)
CINCINNATI — A Catholic bishop has called for a change in the thinking of church architects and declared the cathedral as a symbol “is dead and better be buried.”

The Most Rev. Robert J. Dwyer of Reno, Nev., said the church’s most positive symbol is the altar which is the focal point of the liturgy.

Bishop Dwyer’s statements were made recently before an art study group at the 19th annual North American Liturgical Week, which attracted thousands of Catholic clergy and laymen.

During his talk, Bishop Dwyer took a particular poke at the architecture of New York’s famed St. Patrick’s Cathedral. He called it “lacy frivolity.”

“The view of it from atop Rockefeller Center suggests nothing so much as an outsized Victorian toy anchored in the heart of modern commerce,” he said, adding, “we have to think of a structure designed for the altar, rather than the altar designed for the structure.”

Asserting that there is an “inertia of custom” in contemporary church design, Bishop Dwyer said: “My thesis quite simply stated, is that the cathedral symbol which has dominated our thinking and imagination for so long and has dictated the forms and concepts of our building and decoration, from actual cathedral to country parish churches, is dead and better be buried.

“The sooner we get it out of the system the better it will be for the ultimate development of living art and architecture in the service of religion,” Bishop Dwyer concluded.

Editor’s Note: The above story was circulated at the New England Regional Council fall meeting at Bar Harbor, Maine, last month. The theme of the meeting was “Religious Buildings” and Bishop Dwyer’s comments were part of the discussions.
The Keene Y.M.C.A. purchased the I.O.O.F. building on Roxbury Street and the Architect, in conjunction with the Y.M.C.A. Building and Furnishing Department of The National Council, designed the addition of a swimming pool with the required locker rooms and showers for women and girls, boys and men, and a gymnasium with tote basket storage area, adult and youth lobbies, instructor’s room and a general Exercise Room.

The existing building is to be remodeled, as required, to contain the administrative area, Youth and Adult lounges, club rooms and all purpose rooms. New floors and ceilings are to be installed in most areas. New plastic wall coverings will be used in corridors and lounges.
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BASEMENT PLAN
Heavy engineering contracts in August were $937,082,000, up 78 per cent from August, 1957.

Totals for the first eight months of 1958, with percentage changes from the corresponding period of last year, are: non-residential, $7,624,337,000, down 4 per cent; residential, $9,500,035,000, up 5 per cent; heavy engineering, $6,674,136,000, up 17 per cent; total construction, $23,498,508,000, up 5 per cent.

MAGENAU CLOSES OFFICE . . . GOES TO WASHINGTON

Eugene F. Magenau, A. I. A., announces the closing of his office in Concord and his retirement from the practice of architecture in New Hampshire.

At the same time, Mr. Magenau stated, he is to take a new post in the Department of Education and Research at the Octagon headquarters of the American Institute of Architects in Washington, where he is to work under Walter Taylor and Ned Purves.

HEATING AND PLUMBING COMPANY HAS NEW BUILDING

On or about November first Northern Heating and Plumbing Co. Inc., Laconia, N. H. will be located at 91 Bisson Ave., Laconia.

Arthur C. Trombly, president, working with W. M. Bisson and Son, general contractors of Laconia, have come up with a modern concrete block building which will include general offices, plans and estimating rooms, stock area and fabricating shop.

A huge parking area, loading platform and modern lighting complete the new facilities.

NEW LOCATION FOR GLASS COMPANY

Howard Lapp, owner of Indian Head Plate Glass Co., Nashua, N. H. has moved his glass company to 25 Main street in Nashua.

Continuing in the glass contracting business, the company has added glass accessories.

The new location affords more space for stock, display, and customer convenience in parking and shopping.

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“Serving Northern New England since 1920”
The Role of the Architect: By definition an Architect is: “A Master-Builder ... who professionally plans buildings and supervises their construction ...” To the durability, adequacy and convenience of a building, he adds that intangible ingredient—good design. He has undergone years of special and arduous training to develop talent, imagination and sensitivity, to learn the engineering of construction, obtain practical knowledge of materials and their use. He must analyze and interpret the requirements of a prospective client and translate them into a building—all within the reasonable limits imposed by the budget available for the project, all in accord with the local building code. He is an ally of those who promote public health and safety through better construction.

Engaging an Architect is the same as retaining a lawyer or putting yourself in the hands of a doctor. Training and ability are important—worth considering, too, is personality, as the client is going to spend a great deal of time with his Architect.

The following methods of procedure for the selection of an Architect are customary:

DIRECT SELECTION. Selection by the Owner through personal knowledge on the basis of reputation, demonstrated ability, and the recommendations of others for whom the Architect has rendered his service.

COMPARATIVE SELECTION. Selection from a group of Architects given opportunity to present evidence of their qualifications, the Owner acting with or without the advice of an Architect serving as a professional advisor.

DESIGN COMPETITION SELECTION. Selection according to the Architectural Competition Code Procedure of The American Institute of Architects (Information on the Procedure may be had by writing AIA headquarters in Washington, D. C.)

Nature of His Work: Essentially, an Architect seeks to achieve for his client a building which satisfies that old Roman definition of Vitruvius, “Well building hath three conditions: firmness, commodity and delight.”

1. His first job is to understand purpose, requirements and limitations of structure which the client has in mind, then combine those ideas with his own professional experience in planning and building. If the Architect is consulted on a remodeling job, he inspects the building to be remodeled and advises as to the approximate
realty value; practicality of making changes; present condition and quality of construction.

2. The Architect visits the property, or, if it has not been purchased yet, helps select it, budgets the cost.

3. Then he develops sketches of the structure, in rough form, showing size and arrangement of the rooms and general characteristics of the building. These preliminary drawings are examined and re-examined to be sure that the client understands what he is getting—in appearance and function.

4. Next, the Architect prepares the working drawing of plans, elevations, sections and details which show construction and kind of material, together with notes and schedules. Drawings are also made of the plumbing, heating, air conditioning and electrical installations, of structural steel and reinforced concrete work. An Architect's legal knowledge comes into play, for building codes must be considered, as well as other ordinances and regulations. He also writes the complementary specifications which establishes the quality and assembly of every item going into the construction of the building, from foundation concrete to hardware. These drawings and specifications are the builder's guide, and when they are correctly followed, the building will be as the client and the Architect planned it.

5. The Architect then helps choose contractors who bid on the work and who have made cost estimates from the Architect's plans and specifications. The Architect recommends the final selection of a contractor; assists in preparation of contract agreements which define general conditions, contract price, time limitations, manner of payment to the contractor, etc.

6. As construction proceeds, the Architect makes periodic inspections of the work to see if it is being erected in full compliance with drawings and specifications. As the contractor sends in his bills, the Architect keeps a running account of the cost of the building and certifies payments to the contractor.

When the project is finished, all required tests made, and the usual guaranties received from contractors, his normal services as Architect have been completed.

Throughout planning and execution of the structure, it is the Architect's obligation to know the intricacies of approximately 125 trades which confront him daily. Particularly on large projects he coordinates the techniques of other specialists and consultants: the Structural Engineer, Mechanical Engineer, Electrical Engineer, Acoustical Engineer, Civil Engineer, Landscape Architect, Kitchen, Hardware and Laboratory Equipment Consultant, Lighting Consultant, Color Consultant. Many members of these related fields devote their entire professional lives to cooperation with Architects. Although he shares his work with so many, the Architect carries by far the greatest part of the responsibility; he is indeed "The Master Builder."
REASONS FOR ENGAGING AN ARCHITECT

An Architect’s services insure good design and good construction ... convenience and comfort because of careful planning ... ease in securing a mortgage loan at a good rate ... money’s worth in material and labor ... low operating and maintenance cost.

- A building designed and constructed under the supervision of an Architect is created to meet the special desires and particular needs of the Owner. The Architect gives to it the benefit of years of intensive training and experience in a specialized profession.

- The Architect supervises the entire construction to assure that all provisions of working drawings and specifications are faithfully and properly carried out.

- He is coordinator on lighting, heating, plumbing, decorating, air conditioning and other specialties.

- As a businessman, he administers construction and financing details, guards against over-stepping on cost limitations, obtains estimates and advice on contractors.

- From start to finish of a building operation, he is the Owner’s professional adviser and representative in assisting in drawing contracts, clearing with building codes and lien laws, certifying construction charges, and seeing throughout that the Owner gets what he pays for.

- Architectural services are a small fraction of the total cost of the building. A good Architect often saves the Owner a sum much larger than his fee; even more often his contribution to the work enhances the value many times more than the amount of his charges.

Fees: As in any other profession, fees for architectural services vary, and depend on an Architect’s standing in his field, geographic location of office, size and kind of job to be done. An Architect’s fee often is less than the total of miscellaneous charges paid as part of the cost of a ready-made house; i.e., speculator’s profit, commissions, financing charges and in some instances, taxes which may have accumulated before purchase. The Architect, in accord with his code of ethics, does not accept discounts or commissions; his only remuneration is that received from his client. The Architect’s fee is settled at an early conference with final arrangements stated in a formal contract or by letter, countersigned by Owner and Architect. The fee varies with individual cases—depending on amount of services required. The contract may provide for a consultation for architectural advice on buying and remodeling an old house or on the selection of a lot and complete architectural services to be rendered from beginning to end.

There are three principal methods under which Architects ordinarily are compensated. Under the first, the Architect is paid a percentage of final cost of the work executed from his designs and is reimbursed certain expenses. Under the second he is paid a fee for his services and is reimbursed all his expenses. Under the third he receives a salary.

To be continued in November Issue
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Q. I understand that the bronze Sea­
gram Building in New York City is
going to have to be rubbed all over
once a year with lemon oil to keep
it from turning black. Where will all
this lemon oil come from?
A. It is being donated by Bricklayers,
Masons & Plasterers Local 460.
Q. They scoffed when Frank Lloyd
Wright came to Pittsburgh in the
early '40's and advised tearing the
Gram Building in New York City is
early '40's and advised tearing the
building?
A. There is great distinction, why not
to have his particular kind of house.
Q. What is the essential difference be­
tween an architect-designed house
and a minimum-standard conven­
tional house?
A. The difference, says Shepard Vogel­
gesang, AIA, is like that between a
sun-suit and an overcoat. In a sun­
suit you partake of the environment,
and in an overcoat you exclude it.
Q. Why are most architectural partner­
ships made up of men so different
in temperament and philosophy?
A. Since architecture is an art, a pro­
fession and a business and since the
qualifications for these three disci­
pilines are so divergent you will
usually find three dissimilar men
involved in a partnership because
one had a commission, another had
some money, and the third was good­
natured.
Q. Our office’s coffee break is being
undermined by the Boss who wants
to pay for the coffee, furnish dough­
nuts and discuss office problems dur­
ing this time. He calls it a “Coffee
Conference.” What can we do?
Q. Is it really true that one picture is
worth 10,000 words like the Chinese
say?
A. Yes. Especially when you can’t read
Chinese.
Q. Can you name some Architects who
were stubborn and unbending in their
determination to design their
building envelope?
A. Gaudi, Sullivan, Nervi, Le Corbusier.
Q. What is an “Architect’s Architect”?
A. An “Architect’s Architect” (AA) is
like an Alcoholic Anonymous — he
prefers to remain anonymous and
no one had a commission, another had
one had a commission, another had
some money, and the third was good­
natured.
Q. Our office’s coffee break is being
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like an Alcoholic Anonymous — he
prefers to remain anonymous and
he is willing to admit that only God
(or some other Architect) can help
him.
Q. Please define the following term
which I see over and over again in
architectural magazines and can’t
make heads or tails of — “allowable
building envelope.”
A. See Henry Saylor’s Dictionary of
Architecture, first published in 1963
by John Wiley & Sons and still in
print. $5.00 — (order from The
Charette).
Q. Sometimes when a Client seems
lukewarm about all the ideas I have
dreamed up for him, I begin to
doubt whether I even have any
talent or not. Is this normal?
A. If you have genius, said the great
painter Sir Joshua Reynolds, indus­
trial will improve it. If you have
none, industry will supply its place.
Keep busy.
Q. I am an estimator employed by one
of the larger industries producing
building materials. Time and again
I am given Specifications which in­
clude the term “et cetera.” What
does this mean? I have written to
Yul Brynner (who ever he is — my
wife suggested this) but received
no reply.
A. This Latin term is used when the
Specifications Writer feels vaguely
that something else should be added
but isn’t sure just what. Always just
double the prices on the ecteternas
in your estimating and you’ll be safe.
Q. In my spare time from the office,
I have been designing a house for a
lady. It is under construction now
but the client wants all the clap­
boards changed to stand vertical
just like on her sister’s house. My
problem is threefold: I don’t like
designing clapboard houses, I don’t
like women and I don’t want to lose
this client who is a bigwig in the
church. What do you advise?
A. Why not prevail upon the sister to
switch her clapboards around? Good
luck.

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