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ARCHITECTURE New Jersey

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IN THIS ISSUE

As I See It 5
Leaders of the Architectural Profession 6
The President's Page 7
For Your Information 8
Architectural Awards 1968 9
Bucclouc Mansion 14
Urban Design Assistance Teams Arouse Public Interest 15
Office Profiles 16
Your Building and Your Architect 18
Signs, Signs, Signs 22
Addenda 24

COVER: Gordon Large Residence, Princeton, N. J.
J. Robert Hillier, Architect
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HELP WANTED

Someone once told me that a large group of marriageable girls was asked what they would most like as their future husband's profession. According to my friend, the response came out first: neuro-surgeon, and second: architect.

That would seem to indicate a rather high status for our profession. But then I realized that status might also stem from scarcity. Look how high in esteem is the whooping crane, the curlew and the bison. High on the list because they're low in number, threatened by extinction. So like the architect.

Just review these startling factors stated in Bernard J. Grad's recent book *Adventure into Architecture*:

- There are only 30,000 registered architects in the United States, compared with 250,000 lawyers, 265,000 doctors, 430,000 accountants and 975,000 engineers. The number of architectural firms is about 10,000.

- The population of the United States is expected to reach 300,000,000 by the year 2000. To meet the physical demands of this expansion, during the next 32 years, architects will be called upon to design as many facilities as Americans have constructed in the 192 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

- Only one in every 100,000 people is being prepared to participate in the physical shaping of the nation's future. The 63 accredited colleges of architecture conferred 2,025 Bachelor of Architecture degrees, 417 Master of Architecture degrees and only 10 Doctorates—less than 2500 degrees in 1966. A pitifully small annual task force to meet the staggering challenge of the immediate future.

Let's look at the record in New Jersey. The only school of architecture in the State is Princeton University, a private institution. As a result, most of our high school students interested in architecture must go out of state for their training and in many instances they remain to practice out of state. Further, because of the inability of the State to reciprocate, there is fear that the availability of space for our students will become increasingly scarce. Since 1961 the New Jersey Society of Architects has been meeting with officials of Rutgers University, trying to stimulate their interest in establishing a school of architecture at Rutgers. Many of the facilities and courses required to initiate such a school are already in existence at Rutgers and the entire project should not be too difficult or expensive. However, so far their efforts have met with no success.

For people who are truly concerned with the future of our cities and who realize the need for skilled leadership in this rebuilding, this condition is totally unacceptable!

One possibility which should be explored is the establishment of a School of Architecture as the joint effort of the four contiguous Newark Colleges existing and under design: Rutgers-Newark, Newark College of Engineering, New Jersey College of Medicine & Dentistry and Essex County College. Each, in effect, could supply complementary faculty and facilities leading to a degree in architecture. This seems to me a unique opportunity to provide the architectural student with the full scope of knowledge, from the structure of the man to the structure of buildings so necessary for the complex role of the modern day architect. Such a joint undertaking would not only establish an outstanding architectural school but would also serve as a model for others to copy.

It's time for New Jersey to take the lead. It's time we had another School of Architecture in this State. It's time for everyone interested in seeing architecture survive and flourish in our state to stand up and declare himself.

How are you going to help?
BERNARD HERSH, AIA, of Fairlawn. President, Architects League of Northern New Jersey; B. Arch., M. Arch., University of Pennsylvania; Own practice since 1954.

RONALD E. VAUGHN, AIA, of Trenton. President, Capital Chapter; B. Arch., University of Pennsylvania; Own practice since 1957.

HARRY J. SPIES, AIA, of Cranford. President, Central Jersey Chapter; B. Arch., North Carolina State College; Partner, Van Der Clute & Spies.

DONALD PAULSEN, AIA, of Jersey City. President, Hudson Co. Chapter; Partner, Paulsen, Rivardo, Paulsen.

CALVIN M. COLABELLA, AIA, of Caldwell. President, Newark Chapter; B. Arch., Columbia University; Own practice since 1959.

JEROME MORLEY LARSON, AIA, of Spring Lake Heights. President, Shore Chapter; B. Arch., Cornell University; Own practice since 1961.

ROBERT J. BOOYE, AIA, of Atlantic City. President, South Jersey Chapter; B. Arch., University of Pennsylvania; Partner, Saseen & Booye.

ROBERT B. HEINTZ, AIA, of Short Hills. President, Suburban Society of Architects; B. Arch., University of Pennsylvania; Associate, Convery & Cueman of Summit.

ROBERT C. THOMAS, AIA, of Cherry Hill. President, West Jersey Society of Architects; Partner, Thomas, Kolbe, Thomas, Poponi.
It is the inherent right of every individual to voice an opinion about any subject, at any time, under any circumstances and in whatever manner he may deem expeditious for the particular occasion. Even our Constitution under the broad scope of its “Freedom of Speech” provision, guarantees that right to speak out, whether it be pro or con. There has never been a reluctance on the part of our profession and those affiliated with it to publicly speak their objections to the work of their fellow practitioners, as evidenced by articles in daily papers, technical and professional publications, other news media and by Design Review Boards pronouncements.

Does such public criticism improve the quality of our Architecture or does it merely have a detrimental effect by undermining the morale of the Architect while shattering the public image of the entire discipline? Fundamentally, is this criticism necessary?

We think yes; provided that it is presented professionally and knowledgeably, and in a manner that will not “knowingly injure or attempt to insure falsely or maliciously the professional reputation, prospects or practice of another architect.” (AIA Standards of Professional Practice).

Esthetics have no measuring stick nor has there ever been a positive definition for beauty. To the eye of each viewer comes his own personal image and to the mind his personal reaction. Never will one object be pleasing to all.

Yet criticism is certainly justified, when looking upon our present environment, we wonder how and why it ever happened. Perhaps, had more professionals expressed their objections in the past, today's results would not have been so negative.

Criticize when criticism is warranted, but do so knowledgeably, professionally and without malice.

Harold D. Glucksman, AIA
President
In the last issue we initiated this column with a review of our professional society's activities in behalf of the architectural profession and the general public. Since we only got half way through, we'd like to finish before we go on to current programs.

A Directory of Architectural Offices in New Jersey—members of NJSA—is published periodically and distributed to those who might have need for architectural services.

Our Referral Service handles a couple hundred calls a year from prospective clients in need of architectural services. These calls cover a wide range of requests—all the way from an architect to do a school—to an architect to do an outdoor patio. Our Architectural Consultation Service which offers the services of an architect on an hourly basis takes care of the "small" requests. A pamphlet, specially prepared for this purpose, is available at our office.

We have a Travelling Exhibit which makes its way around the State each year. The designs shown are those chosen by an outside-New Jersey impartial jury, of buildings designed by our members which are thought to be architecturally significant.

Our Film Library is always being updated. Three new films produced by the AIA are excellent and free (for showing) for the asking. RIGHT OF WAY shows how highways can ruin cities and how, through good design and relation to other elements, they can be used to improve urban areas. THE BEST WE CAN DO zeroes in on the large housing developments which have created wastelands of ugliness around most cities—and how good design can create new towns and villages. THE NOISY LANDSCAPE enlightens viewers about the jungle of signs obliterating everything around them at the approaches to cities and in most business districts. These films are constantly making their way around the state.

One of our main concerns is the "care and feeding" of future architects. We constantly send career information to interested students and service Guidance Counsellors of secondary schools all over the state, supplying them with literature on careers in architecture, films, speakers, etc. We have a Summer Student Employment Service—but we always have more students than we can place. We compile and publish annually a Directory of Schools of Architecture in the U. S. and Canada, containing information on courses, degrees and costs. Architectural Record called this "the most useful reference ever published in the field of architectural education."

We have a Scholarship Foundation administered by a Board of Governors, which solicits and distributes financial assistance to promising architectural students. There is also a Loan Fund. Another Scholarship Fund has recently been set up by our Regional Director, Robert R. Cueman, AIA, for the specific purpose of providing assistance to members of minority groups in our Architectural Training Program.

These, then, are some of the things which keep us moving. Any questions?

P.S. And if you're still with us, we'd like to tell you about two up-dated publications just off the press: The Directory of Architectural Offices in New Jersey whose principals are members of NJSA, (complimentary copy on request), and the Directory of Schools of Architecture throughout the U. S. and Canada ($2). Would you like a copy?
Architectural Awards 1968

We are pleased to present in this issue the award winning projects in the "preliminary" category, selected by the Awards Jury at our 1968 Convention.

This fine plan results in a simple dignified solution. The student traffic is especially well handled. The architect's proposed use of black steel and aluminum, dark brick and bronze should result in a strikingly handsome addition to the campus.

The Jury

Student Dining & Activities Building
Fairleigh Dickinson University, Florham Park, N.J.

Architect: J. Robert Hillier, AIA, Princeton, N.J.

The building is situated on a rolling, well landscaped campus, formerly an estate. The location of the building on a flat field surrounded by an existing brick wall was determined by student traffic patterns between the academic and residential sectors of the campus. The main concourse of the building carries the traffic through the building.

To minimize student circulation and maximize kitchen and dishwashing efficiencies, the dining hall bridges the concourse with the main stairways delivering the diners at the beginning of serving lines.

The elevated dining room has both short-range views overlooking the campus and long-range views to the far-off mountains.

The capacity of the building is 1,200 students with expansion up to 2,400 by future conversion of the multi-purpose room and snack bar.

The materials are exposed black steel, black aluminum, bronze-tinted glass, and dark brown brick.
Proposed Park
Broad Street Extension
Red Bank, N. J.

Architect:
Gary Y. Kaplan, AIA,
Red Bank, N. J.

The proposed park is an axial plan evolving from the extension of the center line of Broad Street (main street) and is designed to, once again, provide the hearth of Red Bank's shopping district with a picturesque view of the Navesink River. As you enter the park at the north end of Broad Street, there is a two-foot elevation change, negotiated by steps and a ramp. This upper level is aesthetically encompassed by an eight-foot high masonry wall creating a complete environmental space, surrounded by foliage and flowers, set in defined planting areas. Intimately dispersed about the area are congenial seating provisions.

At mid-park, located on Broad Street's axis, is a large reflecting pool, embracing a series of vertical sculptural planes and falling water. Many an adventurous youngster would take delight in sailing his model boat in this pool.

Proceeding through the park, one encounters two minor ramps, which cradles the reflecting pool, again making an elevation change to the lower seating and exhibition area. This area is delicately sheltered from the sun by closely planted Honey Locust trees with their light, lacy intertwined branches providing a balance of shade. This area will also provide an "overlook" area giving the beholder an overall view of Marine Park and the picturesque Navesink River, some twenty feet below.

To complete the stroll through the park, a series of steps is located at the north end, exiting to Union Street and the facilities of Marine Park.

The intended materials for the park are chosen for their ease of maintenance and aesthetic sensitivity and textures. The paving material consists of exposed aggregate, concrete for the major portion of the areas and a textured surface of cobblestone in the exhibition area. The proposed park also provides flexibility in its design for the future secondary approaches for the east and west axis as the adjacent areas develop.

The park will not only provide a delightful personal experience, but also a major focal point for Broad Street.

Small intimate parks such as this are badly needed in the centers of our cities.

The major spaces and circulation are made interesting by the careful placing, shapes and planting of the secondary areas, resulting in a diversity of interesting views within a small area.

The Jury
The site is a heavily wooded, rock-strewn hill marked by an abandoned quarry on the adjoining property. Many huge boulders dot the site and there is a spectacular "tumble" of these rocks to the west.

The program called for a home for a young active family with three small children with ample entertainment areas. The parents desired isolated areas for themselves.

The house is oriented with most living areas having a southerly exposure. Due to the inherent dangers of the site to children, protected play decks and a courtyard were developed with the kitchen at the command and control center. The children's living, sleeping, and playing areas are separated from the entertainment functions of the house.

The master bedroom suite is isolated yet has a commanding view down through the entire house. The family room and dining room views penetrate the living room space to the rock falls to the south and west. The guest room is purposely isolated to assure privacy for the family and the guests while exposing the guests to the full impact of the site.

The large scale of the north elevation evolved from the scale of the site and the automobile approach. Like the site and the approach, this side of the house is remote and cold. On the other hand, the south side is open and warm with a variety of small intimate spaces allowing the sun to penetrate.

The "tumble" of the house down the rock face is intended to allow the interior spaces to flow with the topography.

The materials are bleached heart-grain cedar vertical siding, cedar shingle roofing, and bronze-tinted glass.
Roger Cook  
Residence  
Upper Makefield, Pa.

Architect:  
Valk & Keown,  
Upper Montclair, N. J.

This proposed residence has an almost classic organization in its plan, its simple form and its careful and sparing use of diverse materials. The large site permits the very open glass perimeter — with the major rooms opening outward yet still retaining privacy. The Jury

To provide the necessary living requirements for a very talented advertising designer and his family, special design attention to details, spatial relationships and orientation to the exterior was to receive highest priority. A large stone fireplace should be the focal point of the living room and still not compete with the view.

A beautiful, heavy-wooded, eight-acre site in the Bucks County countryside. The property has a meaningful rise in the terrain giving the house a substantial elevation with a view either into the trees or through the trees toward the distant countryside.

The house is designed to be oriented outward on all sides. The use of stone, wood and glass gives a natural quality to the house, yet its disciplined form provides an identity of its own. The Family Room at the center of the house gives a cave-like relief to the open, outward orientation of all the other rooms. Its ceiling is 12 feet high with only narrow slits of glass at the ceiling line. The fireplace becomes the dominant feature of the Living-Dining Room. It functions as a walk-in, sit-around fireplace, set between two stone walls, yet does not obstruct the view, or turn the attention inward, away from the view. Wood decks, roof overhangs and projecting stone walls, all serve to extend the living areas out into the beauty of the surrounding woods.
Bonaire Co-operative Apartments

Architects:
Kuhn & Drake,
Summit, N. J.

The site is located on Bonaire, an island fifty miles off the coast of Venezuela in the Caribbean Sea. The project is a resort colony of sixteen private apartments grouped around an existing residence which will be altered to serve as a clubhouse. Off street parking is provided adjacent to the main road, which is lightly travelled.

The form, color and grouping of the unit is typical of Dutch town-houses on this and other islands of the Antilles. The buildings focus inward to form a secluded community, without excluding the surroundings entirely. This is achieved, not only with massing, but also with a systematic use of color and enclosing walls. The whole project, in turn, is oriented toward the Caribbean Sea.
Buccleuch Mansion

There's something awesome in antiquity. It's a look into yesterday of course, but even more, into the lives and the manner of living of people who make up the historic past. This can be seen today in New Brunswick, a bustling university town known for its seasoned architecture, where the Buccleuch Mansion has stood since 1734. No longer is it surrounded with wilderness populated by Indians, but instead stands a symbol for the industrious residents of this Central Jersey town.

The mansion is located on land bought in 1681 by the JohnInians Company. Originally called the White House Farm, after its builder, Col. Anthony White, it was sold to an English officer in 1774 in the first of many changes in ownership. It was later inhabited by the commissary general of Washington's forces, was an intellectual haven, and finally in 1820 was purchased by Col. Joseph Warren Scott who changed the name to Buccleuch Mansion in honor of a distant kin.

Colonel Scott's descendants transferred ownership of the house to the City of New Brunswick in 1911. It was stipulated that the historic residence should be used as a "resting place for the weary, a lifelong health resort for all."

The mansion is now a museum and categorizes through its furnishings the different people who have lived in it. The restored wallpaper, for instance, was hung in 1819. The Victorian Parlor typifies that period of furnishings, yet a few steps away in the North Drawing Room is the more delicate style of the Queen Ann period of the 1740's. Other rooms bear the imprint of Colonial furnishings and the Federal period.

As an historic piece of architecture, the mansion is cared for by the New Jersey Blue Chapter of the D.A.R. It is open to visitors on weekends from spring through fall for viewing of this fragment of Americana more than 200-years old.
Urban Design Assistance Teams Arouse Public Interest Answers to Jersey's Urban Problems?

It's just possible that too many cooks DON'T spoil the broth when you're brewing up solutions to the country's many urban problems.

According to members of the National Committee on Urban Design for the American Institute of Architects, one of the best ways to improve living conditions in the cities is to get a dialog going among interested and involved persons in those cities.

Architects have contributed greatly to this "dialog" idea through urban design assistance teams sponsored by the national committee and initiated through local AIA chapters throughout the country.

In less than two years, these teams have gone to several cities in the country, stirring up interest in good urban renewal planning and offering new and detached perspectives on each city's special problems.

According to the co-ordinator of the teams, Robert S. Sturgis, AIA, of Cambridge, Mass.:

"Although no instant solutions are produced as a result of our visit, we are able to give the city planners suggested directions for their political and planning efforts—sort of a plan for planning."

"As neutral references from outside the city, we're able to get groups in the community together who may not have been getting together previously—even though they SHOULD have been getting together."

Sturgis pointed out that the teams usually stir up press and public interest when they visit a city, thus spurring community and political action.

"The teams always draw headlines," he said. "This is good because it also identifies the local architects and others who are interested in problems of the city."

One of the latest cities the urban design assistance team visited was Flint, Michigan. The invitation to study urban problems in that city came from the local AIA chapter, the city manager and the local Model Cities administration.

The team went into Flint on October 19 last year and in two days brought more public attention to the Model Cities program than had been given it for years.

"We didn't go to Flint to make definitive proposals, nor even to comment on the progress made so far," said Sturgis. "We went in hopes that the team members of various experience could give the city a new and detached perspective on their special problems."

"Although we understood in advance that the problems included many social and economic factors beyond the special competence of our profession, we hoped to find some ways in which the principles of urban design could be applied usefully."

After touring the entire Model Cities area and talking with the Model Cities staff, citizens of the area, public officials, planning officials and civic leaders, the assistance team offered urban design recommendations to their hosts.

"We can't do anymore than advise," noted Sturgis.

Good for New Jersey

What's good for Flint and other cities in the country should be good for New Jersey's cities where urban problems are as great if not greater than anywhere else.

"There's been a good deal of talk about bringing a team to New Jersey," said John Diehl of Princeton, a member of the national committee on urban design for the AIA and a member of the design assistance team which went to Flint.

"The difficulty lies in finding local persons who are willing to set up meetings, press conferences and so on," he said.

Not all cities who request a visit from the team will receive one, said Sturgis. An invitation from a group of merchants from Princeton was turned down because it wasn't a representation of the community.

"The best requests come from local AIA chapters who have defined a city's problem well enough for us to put together a qualified, experienced team," said Sturgis. "We ask the chapter to present evidence of community support—from the city manager, chamber of commerce, model cities administration and so forth. We feel it is very important to have everyone looking forward to having the team visit."

The expenses for a team's visit is arranged for by the local AIA chapter and the national AIA.

Sturgis said the advantage of having a team visit a New Jersey city is that there are so many good people available who have easy access to the Garden State's cities.

"Team members could be selected from nearby areas," he said. "The cost wouldn't have to exceed the $600 expenses amount."

Anyone interested in bringing an assistance team to New Jersey, said Sturgis, can write the Director of Urban Programs, AIA, 1735 New York Ave., N. W., Washington, D. C. 20006.
Valk and Keown, AIA
41 Upper Montclair Plaza
Upper Montclair, N. J.

"As individuals and as partners we are particularly concerned with the necessity to maintain a high standard of design. We place great stress on the importance of detail in design to complement and strengthen the desired aesthetic effect of our buildings. Architecture is a three-dimensional art and most of our designs are studied and analyzed in model form," state Gerard J. Valk and C. Ray Keown, whose partnership was just formed on January 1, 1968, after 2½ years of association on various projects.

They continue: "Our philosophy of design is best stated by jury comments on our work, using such phrases as 'classic simplicity of plan,' 'formal effects' and 'elegance.' We strive to create architecture that has strength and clarity of statement. Our forms are simple, strong, clearly defined and honest. We participate as actively as possible in the interiors of our buildings. Our color schemes and furniture selections are handled with the same criteria as the buildings themselves."

For the two partners, the architectural experience is a continuum: "As our designs develop, we attempt to create a series of experiences that are enjoyed as one would arrive, enter and pass through the building. Each space is handled individually to achieve the desired effect and to act as an introduction to the next experience."
Mr. Gilchrist describes his approach to the profession:

It is incumbent upon the maker of architectural forms to employ imagination, ingenuity, skill and sympathetic understanding in assembling a proper solution to each object of his endeavor. Each work must be evaluated in the complete text of circumstances that influence its raison d'être, and each solution should be a forthright statement respecting these influences. The spirit of a form is its function but it is the expression of this spirit in an imaginatively made form that produces not only utilitarian but permanently gratifying and delightful results.

Exploration and experimentation in form and materials must occur on every project but within the limits of good judgment and within the stated text of circumstances.

The dollar bears heavily upon design and its influence must be recognized. A continuing dialogue between designer and manufacturing and building technology must be maintained in order for him to work within the guidelines of economic feasibility and reality.

This office is engaged in a sincere and continuing effort to recognize honest demands, to seek truthful expression and to achieve excellence.
There is no easy way to pick an architect. True, there are some general rules that can be stated, pitfalls that can be warned against, pointers that can be offered about what to look for in an architect and his work—and all of these things are done in the following pages.

But there is no magic formula for selection. "Listen," said a man in charge of building some $10 million in retail stores a year when asked how he does it, "if you come up with a good system, let me know."

In reality, systems and procedures are less important in this perilous quest than is the disposition of the client. To the task he must bring good intentions, an open mind, a hardy sales resistance and a willingness to take the time and trouble to learn something of what architects and architecture are all about.

To some clients, used to making clear-cut decisions about clear-cut problems, all of this seems impossibly hazy and imprecise. They seek an easy way out, turning to acquaintances, to brothers-in-law, to big, briskly businesslike architectural firms, or to the even bigger organizations, which offer a neat package of construction services. Sometimes they get fairly good buildings, but they do not often get architecture.

Hence the stress on good intentions. All things being equal, the client gets about as good a building as he wants. To achieve architecture—a building which is soundly put together, which works well and which is an ornament to its surroundings and a source of deep satisfaction to its occupants—the client must have a strong drive to do so. His motivation may be simple pride, public relations, a feeling of responsibility to the community and the building's ultimate users. Whatever the reason, he must actively want the building to be something far more than mere shelter.

And then he must try to select the right architect. Otherwise, the best of intentions are wasted. Many a client who starts out with a desire to be a party to greatness winds up a patron of mediocrity, all through making the wrong choice. Selecting an architect is by no means the only decision the client has to make during the building process, but it is far and away the most crucial.

Formal competition: it may be worth the trouble

There does exist one cut-and-dried method of making the choice, which perhaps should be dealt with first. It is the formal architectural competition, held under the code for architectural competitions (AIA Document B451), established by The American Institute of Architects, in which the client hires a professional adviser, sets up a jury and invites architects to submit designs based on a common program.

Architectural competitions are popular sport in Europe, but they have never really caught on in the United States. Indeed, it is not difficult to make a case against them: they can be expensive to stage (the AIA code requires compensation to the professional adviser, the jury and the finalists). They sometimes tend to drive out the busier, better-known firms who simply don't have time to take a flyer. They can deprive the client of the chance to closely investigate the extra-design abilities of the firm that gets the jury's nod.

And yet the formal competition is the nearest thing to a sure-fire system for attaining superior architecture—a system that lets the client see a facsimile of the product before a designer is selected and provides a panel of experts to guide the choice. It is especially well-suited to public projects: it is, after all, a particularly democratic way to pick architects, and it also takes some of the political pressure off the public client. Most important, it often leads to a freshness and excitement not often found in public buildings. There is reason to question, for example, whether Boston would have the prospect of such a vigorous new city hall had the architects been selected and retained directly by the city government.

The first list: where to go from the yellow pages

For the majority of clients, who don't feel a full-scale competition to be feasible, the search for an
architect begins with a list of names. If they are habitual clients or long-time architecture buffs, they probably start with some names in mind. If not, however, they are likely to be seen staring at the yellow pages of the telephone book and wondering where to turn.

Some turn to the local chapter of the AIA, but more often than not come away disappointed. The AIA is a membership organization, and in prudence cannot be expected to make qualitative distinctions among those who pay its dues. Many architects, moreover, stoutly resist classification as specialists, and in some localities the AIA office is forbidden even to suggest architects who have done a great many buildings of one type or another.

The best advice that can be offered the bewildered client at this point is to enter into a crash program of self-education and to pick the brains of all accessible experts shamelessly. Architectural buff, or no, if he has the firm intention to achieve a good building, he probably has some standard of what a good building is. The goals of the education program are to develop these standards further and to find some architects who seem to offer promise of meeting them.

One starting point is in the pages of the architectural magazines, which convey a feeling of what is currently being built and may even contain work by architects in the client's own locale. The AIA chapter may conduct an awards program or have available a guidebook, both of which give some indication (though far from an infallible one) of the practitioners whom the architectural community considers its leaders. But the most instructive procedure of all is for the client to visit new buildings, to get their "feel," and then to find out who designed those to which he responds most positively.

As for the expert counsel, it should be sought on both sides of the fence, among clients as well as architects. Acquaintances or colleagues who have gone through the process of selection recently are rich sources. It is harder on the architects' side: who could summon the nerve to ask Macy's to recommend a good department store? Good prospects here are architect friends who are employees of large offices, architectural journalists and architectural educators. Journalists and educators are often chary about recommendations however.

The matters of chauvinism, size and specialization

The making of the first list of potential candidates involves more than knowledge. It also involves some tough decisions about matters on which even the most expert disagree. Among them, in fact, are perhaps the three most hotly debated questions about the selection of architects.

The first is whether the client should consider only local firms. If he is a staunch member of the shop at Home Committee of the chamber of commerce, the question may well answer itself. National concerns who want to become "part of the community" also may find it prudent to use only home-grown talent. Local public agencies, notably school boards, often are subject to some rather unsubtle pressure from the architectural fraternity not to look too far afield. And even beyond such considerations, there are good reasons to have the architect close at hand during the design and construction process.

Unhappily, however, some communities are not rich in the kind of talent required to produce superior work. The client who wants a building of genuine quality may be forced to look elsewhere. After all, the desire to give the community such a building is local pride of an admirable sort. The hometown architects should understand: they are professionals, not juvenile gang leaders carving an area into unimpregnable turfs. As for the convenience of having the architect nearby, it can often be attained through an association between the out-of-town architect and a local firm.

The second knotty question involves the project's size. If it is a large and complex job, should only big firms be considered? The big firm, of course, will answer yes. It will claim, with a good deal of justification, to offer a wider range of services than a small office. The big firm will also point out that it takes both manpower and experience to manage the myriad details involved in a sizable project.

These are compelling arguments—if the client is satisfied that the big firm will also deliver quality. Some do, but here another harsh fact must be faced: there are enormous architectural offices,
turning out enormous quantities of work, which have yet to do a good building. What may be a large job to the client, moreover, may be run-of-the-mill to the big firm and may wind up in the hands of a 22-year-old designer in one corner of its huge drafting room.

There are two alternatives. One is to engage a medium-sized firm with a hard core of superior personnel which is willing to expand its production staff for the job. The client must balance the risks involved against the likelihood that the firm will throw all of its talents unstintingly into his building. The other is, again, an association, this time of a small design office with a big firm to handle production and perhaps construction contract administration.

A word about such associations: they are a little like shot-gun weddings, particularly if the two firms have both been contenders for the commission. There should be a precise understanding about who is in charge of what; otherwise, design ideas can be lost in endless bickering and compromise. Also, even though the two firms share the fee, the client should understand that he will be putting out a little more in expenses. Whether the association is worth it is his decision.

The third and final point of controversy is whether the client should seek only those architects who have solid experience in the type of building at hand. Phalanxes of specialists have grown up around those types which are especially complicated in program or function, such as schools, hospitals, laboratories and factories. Often these specialists know the client's problems better than he does. They can make his life a great deal easier.

But sometimes the specialist becomes so steeped in the client's problems that the process of design becomes automatic—and the building looks it. His expertise is not to be dismissed lightly, but it should not be overweighted. Often a fresh solution comes from the application of a fresh talent, even a young talent. A good many outstanding buildings have resulted from the encounter between an imaginative architect and a new problem complex enough to be challenging.

The interview: the selection process gets personal

The client now has his preliminary list. It is not too long, and nicely assorted among architects far and near, big and small, experienced and untrammled. The next step is an entertaining one. He should contact each of the candidates, explain the nature of his project and invite them to submit information on their offices and their past work. The next few days' mail will bring him an amazing variety of missives, ranging from chaste professional communications to thick, multicolor brochures. Careful study, culling fact from fancy, should enable him to further trim the list to those he wants to interview.

"In the end," an Architectural Forum editorial once said, "a client has to trust two people: himself and his architect." The interview is generally the first face-to-face encounter between the two. One of its principal functions is to give an indication whether their coming together produces that special chemistry required for joint participation in creative effort. The reaction is indefinable—it is more than a matter of mere compatibility—but it must be real if something of worth is to result from the association.

An important corollary of the statement just quoted is that architecture is, in the final analysis, a personal matter, whose creation is best not left to committees. Until now, we have used the word client in the singular. Something in the nature of modern institutions, however, seems to require the setting up of committees for tasks like choosing architects. It is probably unavoidable, and it can turn out all right if one condition is met: that a single, strong individual on the committee be given prime responsibility for the screening process of voices and ideas that will produce only contradictions, confusion and, in the end, mediocrity.

No two architect-client interviews are quite alike. Some clients like to visit the architect in his natural habitat; some feel safer meeting the architect on their own home grounds. Some architects appear wreathed in smiles and flanked by vice presidents in charge of client development (salesmen); some come alone and sit quietly, willing to let their work speak for them. In the normal course of the interview, the client explains his project in more detail and asks the architect about his office and his experience. The architect attempts to relate his capabilities to what seem to be the client's needs. Somewhere along the line, each forms the important first impression of what the other would be like to work with.
There are, of course, a few general types the client should be warned away from: the architect who shows more interest in the smoothness of his pitch than in the specifics of the job at hand; the architect who claims to have developed startling, cost-cutting innovations; the architect who comes to the interview already bearing a sketch of what the building might look like and, most sinister of all, the architect who hints that he might be able to shave the fee a bit. The AIA chapters put out schedules of recommended fees which have met the tests of fairness to both sides. The architect can suggest that the fees be higher than the schedule if extra services are required, but beware if he offers to make them lower.

The client will not work solely with the architect himself, and so should get to know the others in the office who will be importantly involved in the project (a step which can be accomplished either in the initial interview or as a follow-up). Included here are the structural, mechanical, electrical and acoustical engineers, whether they are on the architect's staff or are to be engaged by him as consultants.

The client is now almost ready to make the choice, but not quite. The final proof of an architect is in his buildings. The client's final step, then, is a careful investigation of each surviving candidate's past work.

The tour: what to look for in the architect's work

The operative word is investigation. This does not mean turning again to the magazines, nor driving by the architect's buildings, nor even walking through them with him and saying periodically, "Isn't that nice?" (If it really isn't very nice, the client's best line is, "Say, this is a building"). It means finding out how expeditiously the buildings were built, how much they cost, how well they work and, once again, how they feel as human environment. Advice on procedure would go something like this:

First of all, give the architect a fair shake: let him suggest which of his buildings you should look into. Then steel yourself not to look for the shadow of your building in them. Your building, influenced by your own needs and nature, may turn out to be quite different, even in the hands of this architect.

Next, ask for an advance look at the program for the building you are studying (or a verbal summary if the program does not exist on paper). This way you will have an idea of what the architect was expected to deliver.

Approaching the building, look to see how well it fits into its immediate surrounding, particularly if it is in a key location or a neighborhood whose character demands particular respect. Case the exterior, weighing your reaction to the use of materials, the general scale, the proportion of one part to another.

Once inside, do the same and also take note of the handling of light, both natural and artificial. (But don't blame the architect for the furnishings without checking who chose them.) Think back to the program and try to form some impression of how well the building fulfills its function. During the tour, don't hesitate to ask the architect about any aspect of the building you find questionable.

Later, arrange to see the building's owner. Tactfully probe further into the building's function; try to determine how the job went; get as much information as you can about costs. If the owner is reluctant to give you specific figures, at least find out how close the final cost was to the architect's estimate. But do not necessarily take all the owner says at face value. If the building came in high, it could have been because he insisted on changes, or simply because building costs in general rose between estimating and bidding.

Finally, if possible, talk to the contractor. Try to find out from him how complete the plans and specifications were, whether they came in on time and generally how the architect performed as construction administrator. But, again, beware. There is a continual cold war of sorts between contractors and architects, so carry an ample supply of salt.

Such a procedure may seem tedious, but nobody said it wouldn't be. The more time and thought the client puts in, the less likely he is to make a mistake in his choice of an architect, the results of which can only be a building that neither looks, feels, nor works well. And that is a terribly prominent, terribly permanent, kind of mistake to make.

(To be continued next issue)
A street sign can kill you. We do not mean that one might fall on your head. We mean that some kind of sign will be in the wrong place at the wrong time for you, when you can least afford it, and cause you to make a bad error in judgment on a public thoroughfare. We do not mean traffic signs, although they are guilty of a peculiar confusion of their own. We mean advertising signs all-inclusively. According to the Model Sign Control Ordinance of the AIA: "Lack of control has caused dangerous conflicts between advertising signs on the one hand and traffic control signs and signals on the other, thus destroying the effectiveness of both. A great increase in automotive traffic has greatly aggravated this danger. There should be no dispute over the priority in importance as between traffic controls and advertising signs."

A sign can just hurt without killing. In fact, signs just hurt all the time. And there is the rub. Psychologists tell us that environment molds the mind. Advertising experts, those psychologists of the market place, strive to mold our minds (our "opinions," if you will) in many ways to suit their purposes. What they want to do and what we want to do with our minds are always on a collision course. Signs are a part of this attack and counterattack. Their over-insistence, their overpowering number, their bad locations, their bad design and their conflicting nature are some of their objectionable characteristics. They argue not only with us—they argue and compete with each other. But, with all this, caution is necessary because some of the information carried by signs is of value to us.

Since signs are designed to attract our attention, even when we are not looking for them, they frequently succeed in getting it. And since many of them clamor for our attention simultaneously, there is chaos. It follows that any effort to improve our visual environment must deal with signs. Indeed, if you could remove every sign of any nature from a city street and put back only what is absolutely necessary to both the advertiser and the viewer and do it in a "designed" way, with order, compatibility, common sense and the other obvious considerations, you would change the appearance of that street greatly and for the better.

Of course our environment is sick with more than
signs. The ailments include decay, congestion and many kinds of pollution. It will need much intelligent corrective treatment and surgery before it is healthy, if it ever will be that entirely. Granted that one situation may be more serious than another, this should not argue in favor of neglect of any one of them, particularly when corrective activity can proceed simultaneously.

To quote the AIA model ordinance further: "In order to maintain the same level of attention, signs have had to become more aggressive, more numerous and more expensive. In some areas they threaten to go out of control and in other areas they already have, thus defeating the very purpose for which they were created. Accordingly, it becomes necessary to reduce destructive competition between signs." To quote still further: "The uncontrolled use of signs and of their shapes, motion, colors, illumination and their insistent and distracting demand for attention can be injurious to the mental and physical well-being of the public and can be destructive to adjacent property values and to natural beauty."

The model ordinance combines a distillation of about 20 ordinances with the author's experience as architect, industrial designer and planning board chairman. It sets forth restrictions different for each zone and prescribes size, location, content, illumination and similar considerations. It covers temporary signs, exemptions, non-conforming signs, prohibited signs, permits and fees, inspection, removal, safety, administration and penalties, and provides for a sign code board of appeals.

The NJSA has some other material which may be useful in emphasizing the need for sign control. The award-winning film, "No Time for Ugliness" clearly shows how much uncontrolled signs can contribute to the ugliness of both our urban centers and our countryside. Another useful and pertinent film is "The Noisy Landscape."

Many of our urban commercial centers look as though they have been struck by a peculiarly whimsical hurricane which scattered everything about but still left everything vertical and horizontal—almost. Until recently there has been very little control over the location, extent, or character of advertising signs. The AIA, with commendable public spirit on behalf of a better visual environment, is partly responsible for the present activity to control signs. Many municipalities now are enacting sign control ordinances. Many municipalities, according to the AIA, the model ordinance is much in demand.

One of the causes of today's generation gap is defined by some college students as the neglect of their elders to become "involved." Why not get "involved" here? You do not have to have much expertise to promote a sign control ordinance although it helps to have some, particularly if tailoring to local conditions is required. Architects in general should have this expertise.
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