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OCULUS

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THE NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
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FEBRUARY MEETING

The annual evening of frivolity was held February 21 and an attendance of eighty-five greeted with a wild spontaneous uproar of applause the appearance of an all-star cast in the stirring five-act drama, "WHO KILLED COCK ROBIN, or THE ADMIRAL'S REVENGE," by W. H. Bessellfenner-saylor.

This first play by the gifted young author shows immaturity in parts, but its ambitious social theme might well test the powers of an older and more experienced playwright. On the other hand, there are certain passages of sublime power, which held the audience spellbound. Unfortunately the best of these were inadvertently omitted due to a lack of time for the somewhat inexperienced cast fully to memorize their parts.

That grand old thespian, Harvey Wiley Corbett, with his incomparable rendition of the part of Admiral Wimples, brought tears to this reviewer's eyes, and took him back to the days of Drew and Mansfield. His powerful clear baritone rang out to full advantage in the tuneful "Admiral's Song," and his equitation in the last scene left nothing to be desired.

Walter Konrady, a new find, played extremely well the difficult part of the office boy, and brought to it a verve and enthusiasm that will long be remembered, particularly by those in the front row who were allergic to talcum powder.

Perhaps the high point of the performance was the stirring rendition of the famous telephone chorus in the second scene, written by Gerald Houdini Kaufman. Messrs. Williams, Holmes and Saylor, representing three architects, gave the song every delicate nuance and shade of meaning that the author could have wished, though perhaps Mr. Saylor's "hello" in the second line was a trifle lacking in simpatie.

Walter A. Taylor's "Milk N. Roast" was a masterpiece of sympathetic portrayal. It would almost seem that Mr. Taylor had had some actual experience himself in the rôle of taxpayer.

Space prevents our handing out all the bouquets that should be delivered,

NEXT MEETING

MARCH 21

SYMPOSIUM ON PARTIAL SERVICES

Architectural League at 6:30
The retaining of architects for partial services only has been gaining during the past few years, not only in government work, but in some private work also. How has this actually worked out so far? Has the resultant architecture been as good as it should be? Should the method be encouraged? What are the facts of the case, pro and con? What have been the actual experiences of architects who have worked in this way? What should we do about it?

but it is only fair to mention the fact that the chorus of government workers played their parts very convincingly, with exactly the proper amount of lackadaisical "who cares."

QUESTIONNAIRE

Enclosed with this issue of *Oculus* is a questionnaire dealing with the subject of the March meeting. It has been made as simple as possible in the hope that every member of the Chapter who has had any government work will answer it completely. Add any remarks you wish. They will be most welcome. Sign it or not, as you like. The important thing is to send in the answers so that we may have some definite facts on which to base our discussions.

LAWSUIT INSURANCE

President Maginnis has sent the Chapter a copy of a letter from a firm of insurance brokers soliciting group insurance for architects in connection with lawsuits, etc. The Executive Committee questions the interest of the Chapter members in such insurance, but will investigate the matter further if sufficient members indicate that they are interested.

BATTERING THE BATTERY

The one sight that never fails to impress transatlantic visitors to New York and Americans returning home, is the first glimpse of the City from a ship coming up the bay. New York City is unique among all cities in the world because of the skyline of the lower end of the island.

It is now proposed radically to change the appearance of the Battery by the erection of the Battery-to-Brooklyn bridge whose approach, as presently planned, would sweep across the southern and western sides of the park.

Our energetic and eloquent Park Commissioner Moses, chief proponent of the bridge scheme as opposed to a tunnel, won the first round of the battle last week when the City Planning Commission voted 4 to 2 to approve the bridge as part of the City's master plan which they are required to prepare.

This action by the Commission would seem, by their own statement, to be opportunistic: "While there are certain valid objections to a bridge at this location, the Commission is not at this time called upon to choose between a tunnel and a bridge, but rather to consider the harm that would result from an indefinite postponement of such an essential connection, and to weigh the possible disadvantage of a bridge against the positive advantages that would come from its construction in the near future."

The Chapter went on record with the following resolution which was presented to the Planning Commission:

"WHEREAS a proposal has been made to erect a structure which would materially and permanently alter the physical aspect of the lower end of Manhattan Island, namely the so-called Battery-Brooklyn Bridge; and

WHEREAS such physical alteration would involve (a) encroachment upon a public park of extremely limited area for anchorage, ramps, and elevated roadways; (b) the alterations of a considerable quantity of neighboring property values; (c) the solution, to all intents and purposes for all time, of the problem of connecting the west side and east side highways around the south-

ern tip of Manhattan; and (d) the creation of a traffic stream of vast proportions with its attendant effects on human eyes and ears and the problem of its immediate disposal; and

WHEREAS other solutions of the problem whether by means of a tunnel or other location of bridge terminal, may prove to be more satisfactory; and

WHEREAS considerations of initial cost should not weigh too heavily when the welfare of one of the most important sites in the greatest city of the Western Hemisphere is in the balance;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Planning Commission of the City of New York be urged to take sufficient time to give this matter its most serious and thoughtful consideration before making any recommendation to the Executive Authority."

Other opponents of the proposal were: Commissioners Salmon and Sheridan, Borough President Isaacs, The Regional Plan Association, and the West Side Association.

CANDIDATES

The names of the following candidates have been presented for membership in the Institute:

1. Frederic W. Mellor

Sponsors:

Wesley S. Bessell
Maurice Gauthier

2. Laurence Scacchetti

Sponsors:

Wm. Lawrence Bottomley
L. Andrew Reinhard

3. Seth Talcott

Sponsors:

Joseph Freedlander
Lewis G. Adams

Associates:

1. Logan Stanley Chappell

Sponsors:

Arthur Loomis Harmon
Graham Erskine

2. Robert H. McKay

Sponsors:

Richard S. McCaffery, Jr.
Maurice Gauthier

3. Arthur W. Wareham

Sponsors:

Richard S. McCaffery, Jr.
Maurice Gauthier

Pursuant to Section 6, Paragraph 3, of the Chapter By-Laws, members are requested to submit within ten days for the information and guidance of the Committee on Admissions, privileged communications relative to the eligibility of the above-mentioned candidates.

COMPETITIONS

Many competitions originating in New York City are on the whole usually interesting mainly to draftsmen.

The Committee on Competitions of the Institute, convinced that these competitions, as well as the major and important ones which are held for actual building enterprises, should be subject to the approval of the Institute, have, in close collaboration with the sub-committee for the New York Chapter and with the representatives of important architectural magazines, established a code for secondary competitions. The sub-committee of the Chapter, Egerton Swartwout, Chairman, Alfred Morton Githens and James K. Smith, have appointed and hereby announce the committee to whom all secondary competitions held in the New York district will be referred and whose approval will hereafter become necessary. The following are the members of the committee:

Geoffrey Platt, *Chairman*
John Ambrose Thompson
Kenneth Reid
Kenneth Stowell
Henry H. Saylor
Russell Whitehead

CAPITOL EXTENSION

News has just filtered through from Washington that the old bill for the "Extension and completion of the United States Capitol" will be introduced again at this session of Congress. This or similar bills have been before Congress for many years in one form or another.

Two years ago at the American Institute of Architects Convention in Boston the Institute went on record opposing this bill. Last year the New York Chapter opposed it as did many other chapters.

CONCRETE INSTITUTE

On Friday, March 3, the Joint Meeting of the American Concrete Institute and the New York Chapter of the A. I. A. took place. Papers by Ely Jacques Kahn and Leopold Arnaud pointed out structural and esthetic defects of concrete as used up to the present.

S. 1265, A BILL

On February 9 Mr. Byrnes presented to the Congress a bill to establish a Department of Public Works. Among other interesting provisions is the following: "The Secretary of Public Works shall advise the President with respect to the design, construction and maintenance of public works, *SHALL DESIGN*, construct and maintain public works which *ARE NOT INCIDENTAL TO THE NORMAL WORK OF OTHER DEPARTMENTS OR AGENCIES*. . . ."

NULLIFICATION

Last year at the convention the Institute resolved to "increase its prestige by so changing its form as to represent, organize and unite in fellowship all qualified architects. . . ." The Southern California Chapter in June resolved: "We urge the Institute Board and all members who value their membership to resist the 'unification' movement. . . ." The Board of Directors then resolved: ". . . while recognizing the value of independent thought, deplors this action on the part of the Southern California Chapter in an attempt to nullify or contravene an established policy of the Institute, adopted in convention."

This resolution having been sent to all Chapters, the following reply has been made by the New Jersey Chapter in a resolution:

"Whereas, the New Jersey Chapter is quite sure that the Board of Directors of the National Body in ordering the resolutions sent to all Chapters, and to others, had no thought of acting in an arbitrary manner or of imposing its will upon the Chapters, and that it will give consideration to the views of the Chapters upon the issues covered by the resolutions, be it hereby RESOLVED, that while the New Jersey Chapter is without prejudice as to the action of the Southern California Chapter, it feels that the By-Laws should be clarified to make it clear that while no Chapter should undermine the broad general purposes of the Institute, that the action taken at any convention does not have to be regarded as sacred or sacrosanct and that any Chapter may properly organize repeal of any convention action of which it disapproves and that the Board be urged to consider that without prejudice to the unification issue (on which issue the New Jersey Chapter takes no stand in these resolutions) this By-Law, if enforced, would mean that any convention action, however ill-advised, would become a permanent matter of Institute policy virtually immune from attack (or at least subject only to such attack as might occur spontaneously at succeeding conventions), and for that reason the New Jersey Chapter urges the Board to prepare amendments to the By-Laws which will return to the Chapters their right of free action and initiative in such matters and restore to the Chapters their right of free speech. . . ."

JOINT LUNCH

Don't forget to attend the Chapter-League joint lunch, Tuesday, March 14, to discuss the proposed Brooklyn-Battery Bridge plan.