



Vol. I

OCULUS

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THE NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

115 EAST 40th STREET

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WARD W. FENNER, EDITOR

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Chapter was held at the League at a luncheon on Wednesday, June 7. Attendance, though not by any means phenomenal, was better than at most meetings this year, as eighty-five turned out.

Naturally the most important business to be transacted was the election of officers and committees for the year 1939-1940, and a large vote of 203 ballots was recorded. The announcement of the election results appears elsewhere in this issue. Due to the fact that there were two alternative slates in the field besides the slate of the nominating committee the vote tallying became somewhat complicated, and certainly a record time was consumed in counting them. Starting at something after two o'clock, the tellers completed their job at seven-thirty in the evening.

EXAMINERS' POSTS

At the request of Mr. A. C. Stern of the Municipal Civil Service Commission the Chapter is compiling a list of architects to serve as Civil Service Examiners. Their duties will be to prepare questions for architectural examinations held by the Civil Service Commission, to grade the papers when they are received, and to conduct the necessary oral examinations.

Applicants for this work must be residents of New York State; and they must not be holders of any City jobs, nor consultants for any City department.

The work is of a temporary nature and may all be done on the architect's own time except for the oral examinations which will be conducted in the offices of the Commission. The pay for this work will be fifteen dollars per day. Any members wishing to be placed on this list are requested to inform the Chapter office.

OUR COMPETITOR

A number of calls to our editorial sanctum were made recently about our new competitor the *Oculist*. This was not, as some supposed, a special election edition of *Oculus*, but a privately sponsored publication, in the editing of which we had no part.

ELECTIONS

The following officers and committees were elected at the annual meeting to hold office for the year 1939-1940:

President

Frederick G. Frost

Vice-President

Harvey Stevenson

Secretary

Charles C. Platt

Treasurer

Cornelius J. White

Recorder

Robert S. Hutchins

Executive Committee to 1942

William E. Lescaze

T. Merrill Prentice

Committee on Fellows

William F. Lamb

Frederick A. Godley

Jury for Medal of Honor

Frederick G. Frost

John W. Cross

Philip L. Goodwin

Otto Teegen

A. Stewart Walker

Committee on Nominations

Gerald A. Holmes

Robert B. O'Connor

L. Andrew Reinhard

Committee on Professional Practice

Leon N. Gillette

William Platt

Harvey Stevenson

ROGUES' GALLERY

Even in these days of poverty architects seem to be the prey of confidence games of one sort or another. To make it easier to check up on suspicious characters who come to your office with the promise of a job and then find they have to borrow carfare to Chicago, it has been suggested that the Chapter office keep a list of any known crooks of this type so that a telephone message to Miss Waters would be a quick and easy check. Any members who have been victimized or know of any such con games are requested to send the details in. Their names will, of course, be kept confidential.

VALEDICTORY

High lights from the retiring President Harmon's speech at the annual meeting follow:

"The most monumental and single handed accomplishment has been that on these By-Laws. Back about 1936 the Institute asked the Chapters to revise their By-Laws. For that purpose Chapter committee succeeded committee to the lullaby of Bye Baby By-Laws. So late this winter in desperation we persuaded Bob O'Connor to accept the onus of responsibility—with the result that the job is just about done—with the expenditure of innumerable hours by him for you.

"In the past few years laws have been enacted and rulings entered interpreting the attitude of the U. S. Government (and presumably that of the people) toward the relations of employer and employee. They are having a direct effect upon those engaged in the profession of architecture and upon their relations to the unions.

"The chief enactments are briefly as follows:

1. The labor law with the provisions for employees dealing with employer.
2. The housing law and the requirements for payments of prevailing wages to draftsmen.
3. The fair practices act. This may exempt technical employees such as architectural draftsmen.

"And, as you know, two associations of draftsmen were formed early in the depression, one fostered by the A.F.L. and one by the C.I.O.

"These two forces, the laws and the Unions, are closely interrelated. For example, the Housing Authorities, City and Federal, determine a prevailing wage and make it a part of every architect's contract for housing. At the same time, in these drafting rooms, the men organize and treat with their employers. This organization is normally instigated by men belonging to one or the other of the two Unions.

"Industries and shops are having their drafting rooms organized. In one highly socialized Western State the architects' offices just missed being unionized to the extent of issuing drawings under a union label, the same as for doors or

plumbing fixtures. I was told that disagreement in the Unions is what actually side-tracked it.

"The handwriting is large on the wall. We are being tried. The question now appears to be: will we be found wanting? Necessity as well as equity indicates that the architect-employer arrive at an amicable method of fair dealing with the employee on something broader than an individual basis.

"Winter before last the Chapter Executive Committee gave some time to the matter and the Committee on Industrial Relations held meetings with Union representatives with no action taken. Lately the Joint Committee has had some discussion and a meeting which I will speak of again.

"In most of the offices of Chapter members questions of hours and wages would probably be adjusted with the Unions without great friction. But on arguments for classifications of employees, restrictions on employers' rights to hire and fire, use of Union label and other such features of Unionism as they might arise, the employer will undoubtedly be an unwilling and antagonistic participant. I believe that this is equally true for the large majority of the draftsmen themselves but have no data to prove it.

"Most of us, principals as well as employees, recognize the dire need of men in the architectural profession. It falls upon the architect as well as on the draftsman. Nor do we question the right of employees to organize for their self-protection and betterment. We do question the effect on the profession (both on the man and on his work) of the application to it of the principles and methods of normal Trade Unionism as it is applied in Industry.

"A few weeks ago the members of the Joint Society invited a group of draftsmen for an informal and unofficial discussion. This invitation included one officer of each Union who was asked to come as an individual. Actually one Union sent two officers and the other three.

"Four things seemed to me apparent as a result of this discussion. First that a Union representative could not appear as a draftsman divorced from his affiliation. Second, there was a strong divergence of opinion between the independent and the Union draftsmen. A third was that in such a three-cornered discussion it was impracticable to keep it from becoming a pro and anti Union debate. And the fourth was that we were not getting representation of a majority of the Unions. The independent element was not properly represented.

"The next generation of architects must come largely from that larger group of unaffiliated men. We owe it to them

as well as to ourselves to give this majority an opportunity of determining the conditions under which they are to carry on in our common profession.

"The Joint Committee—after the meeting referred to—determined to postpone, for the present any further discussion and to take no action. They left the Chapter free to take any action it desired.

"I am suggesting, therefore, that the Chapter do take action. If the Chapter finds that there is the need and if it finds that there are no legal restrictions, I suggest that action take the form of an approach to all the unaffiliated draftsmen in the Metropolitan Area, to the end that these men get together and formulate their ideas of a fair and proper relation between them and their employers.

"After all—freed of the controversy of Trade-Unionism—the difference between a draftsman and an architect is one of degree, which is frequently only a matter of years, and I believe the employees' ideas would appear fair and reasonable in most offices and if so be desirable in the others.

"Also, out of such a group—if we are smart and open minded—we should be able to gather a considerable proportion into some sort of an association with the Chapter, but this would have to be after we had proved ourselves to them. If we can do this we will have, not only an excellent body of Institute material, but a continuing contact between the young architects coming up and us oldsters, still holding on or going down."

GARDENER

Our scouts, who are ubiquitous, tell us that on the evening of the meeting at the Fair, one member of the Chapter was observed adding acid to the soil of one of the flowerbeds near the Communications Building. This was not so much an attempt to assist the growth of the flowers as it was a protest against the early (10 P.M.) closing hours of the exhibit buildings and their comfort stations. The gentleman in question being a man of mettle, boldly continued his horticultural pursuit in spite of the pained and vociferous protests of the Fair police force, and at the present writing he is still at liberty. For further details consult Ralph Walker.

YEAR BOOK

The Chapter will shortly go to press with a year book in which will be published the names and addresses of all members. It would be a great help if each member would send in immediately the listing of his name and address as he would like it to appear.

CANDIDATES

The names of the following men have been presented for membership:

FOR INSTITUTE MEMBERSHIP

1. Carroll Woodbury Harding

Sponsors:

Harvey Stevenson
Eastman Studds

2. Theodore J. Young

Sponsors:

Otto R. Eggers
Daniel P. Higgins

3. Harry Seckel

Sponsors:

James Stewardson
William A. Delano

FOR CHAPTER ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

1. Walter Frederick Noyes, Jr.

Sponsors:

William Emerson
H. W. Gardner

2. Spencer R. Smith

Sponsors:

Alfred Fellheimer
Steward Wagner

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.

WASTRELS

Recently a report was issued by the Bureau of Publications of Teachers College purporting to be the first scientific analysis of school construction costs ever made in New York. This report was based on a survey conducted by Mr. Nickolaus L. Engelhardt, Jr. According to the report, many architects are grossly incompetent if not worse, in that they design buildings with numerous unnecessary rooms which can not be used for educational purposes.

An interesting sidelight on the matter, and one which undoubtedly explains Mr. Engelhardt's ability to speak with such apparent authority though his name does not appear among the registered architects of the State, is that his father conducts a consulting service to advise architects how to plan schools. This service he has great success in selling to school boards. The architect usually foots the bill.

IRREGULAR

The Committee on Competitions has heard rumors that there is an irregular competition in progress, or about to be initiated, for a library in New Jersey. It is said that three architects are about to submit sketches. If they are members of the Institute they should, of course, withdraw.