



Vol. II

# OCULUS

No. 6

THE NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
115 EAST 40th STREET • MARCH, 1940 • ALBERT G. CLAY, EDITOR

## NEXT MEETING

*Time:* 6 p. m., Tuesday, March 26.

*Place:* Architectural League.

*Subject:* "RE-VERSUS."

The present dual show at the Architectural League, "Versus," will be the subject of a Town Hall discussion at the next Chapter meeting. Do you belong to the tradition of the 1st Floor Exhibit with William Adams Delano who believes "that architecture is an art and not a business and that to express a function frankly does not of necessity create a pleasant emotion"?

Or do you belong to the school of thought dramatized in the 2nd Floor Exhibit about which George Howe says, "at various times its advocates have used new, living, functional, dynamic, organic and other similar adjectives to qualify it, its opponents every name but architecture. It has been called integrated building and the term seems to me more exact than any other"?

The Committee hopes for a vocal evening, and that usually reticent architects will be heard with or without a pediment in their speech (with apologies to H. W. C.). In order to insure discussion the usual agents provocateurs will be on hand.

## NOTORIETY

During January and February, twenty-eight newspaper articles, all concerning the New York Chapter, have come to the attention of the Chapter office and have been clipped by it for preservation. These articles have appeared not only in the Metropolitan dailies but in such papers as the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Washington Post, the Washington Times, the Detroit News and the Christian Science Monitor of Boston. The subjects include announcements of the Chapter's two scholarship awards, the activities of the Small House Committee and the Large Scale Housing Committee, the Anniversary Dinner with the Medal of Honor Award, the Employer-Employee agreement, and discussions on "rehousing."

This is an average of one article every two days, and there may be others which have gone unnoticed.

## APARTMENT HOUSE MEDAL

The Chapter announces that it will award in 1940 its Apartment House Medal, to cover the years 1933 to 1938.

Buildings erected within the five boroughs of New York City will be considered irrespective of cost, income-group to be housed or method of financing. After submission of plans and photographs by the competitors, the buildings will be classified by the Jury according to given types. One medal will be awarded in each classification, provided the building is found to have sufficient merit.

The Jury consists of the following New York Chapter members: President Frederick G. Frost and Secretary Charles C. Platt, ex-officio, Messrs. Leopold Arnaud, Chairman, Carl Feiss, Julius Gregory, Arthur Holden, Harry Milton Prince and Prentice Sanger, who will make the first selection for merit by inspection of the plans and photographs of the buildings; the premiated designs will be chosen after inspection of the buildings at the sites.

Photographs of the winning designs will be made a feature of an exhibition of apartment house work to be held at the Architectural League in the spring.

If you have completed an apartment house or housing group within the city limits, between January 1, 1933, and October 1, 1938, and if you wish to be considered for this award, kindly submit a photostatic copy of a typical floor plan and a photograph of your building to the Secretary of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 115 E. 40th Street, New York, on or before Monday, April 15, 1940.

## POEM

The lines "In Memoriam R.M.H." which appear in this *Oculus* were written by Eleanor Tillinghast. They were sent to Mr. Frost by her father, Frederick W. Tillinghast of Providence, R. I., a boyhood and lifelong friend of Hood. Mr. Tillinghast explained that the poem was written on August 15, 1934, when his daughter learned of Hood's death.

## ANNIVERSARY DINNER

One hundred and thirty-three Chapter members, their ladies and guests attended the Anniversary Dinner held on February 27. With a program which received widespread and favorable comment in the Metropolitan press, the Chapter celebrated its 73rd birthday, bestowed its highest award, the Medal of Honor, posthumously, upon Raymond M. Hood, and was addressed by the guest speaker of the occasion, Charles D. Maginnis of Boston.

President Frost gave an historical sketch of the early days of architectural societies: "The Institute was not the first architectural society in this country, for in 1803 the Brethren of the Workshop of Vitruvius was a going concern here in New York. Even in those days the profession was not a bed of roses, for Asher Benjamin had to run a paint business in order to make a living. Peter Harrison, the English architect who designed St. Paul's Chapel in Boston, ran a grocery in the back of which was his drafting room."

The dinner guests included: Edwin Bergstrom of Los Angeles, President of the A.I.A.; three members of the family of the Medalist—Mrs. Hood, her mother, Mrs. Schmidt, and her son, Raymond M. Hood, Jr.; and the presidents of the architectural societies which are members of the Joint Committee. Society presidents attending were:

Ralph M. Rice, Brooklyn Chapter.

Robert H. Scannell, Westchester Chapter.

Alfred E. Eccles, New York Society.

Martyn Weinstein, Brooklyn Society.

Simeon Heller, Queens Society.

The Medal of Honor was handed by President Frost to Mr. Hood's sixteen-year-old son, Raymond Jr., now an architectural student at Princeton. In reply young Hood said, "I can assure you that my father would be no more proud of this Medal than I am in receiving it for him." The citation accompanying the award was delivered by Harvey Wiley Corbett (for text see February *Oculus*).



"A Provincial Muses on the Metropolis" was the theme chosen by Mr. Maginnis for an address full of thrusts at the city, its art and its architecture. He asserted his belief that "New York architecture was more intelligent than New York" and that "few New Yorkers are as witty as the *New Yorker*."

"Beautification of the ugly city," continued Mr. Maginnis, "declared to be the first artistic problem of America, awaits the greater participation of the architect in government." The commercial violation of landscapes he denounced as a national scandal. New York, he held, can become the most beautiful city in the world.

"Almost nowhere has opportunity yet been offered the architect to extend his skill to the whole organism. In a day when the ugly and undisciplined city has become the first artistic problem of America, the enterprise of the architect is still limited to the unit of his community. We shall never have beautiful cities until the architect is given a more responsible place in the official scheme."

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

The duties of the Membership Committee have been outlined for the *Oculus* by Maurice Gauthier, Chairman:

The members of this Committee are in effect the public relations counsel to the Chapter. They must sell the idea of joining the Institute and the Chapter to the young men who are about to enter the profession and to those architects who are not already members. They must be able to explain the objects and program of the Institute, the qualifications for membership, its benefits and the procedure of joining.

The by-laws provide that this Committee shall be three or more in number, one of whom shall be a member of the Executive Committee, and that the Chairman of the Admissions Committee shall be a member ex-officio. The present committee is composed of ten members.

Arthur L. Harmon suggested last year that a series of lunches, sponsored by some of the firms within the Chapter, be held in order to give likely candidates an opportunity to meet officers of the Chapter and members of the various architectural firms. Shreve, Lamb and Harmon volunteered to give the first one, at which eighteen guests were present. Later Voorhees, Walker, Foley and Smith followed suit and entertained for about the same number. All the guests expressed interest and a number have since become members.

Lists of recent architectural school graduates who reside in the New York area have been obtained by the Com-

mittee and an attempt is being made to interest these young men in associate membership.

This committee suggests that a member of the graduating class of each architectural school in the neighborhood of New York be elected by his classmates or chosen by the dean of the school to attend the dinners and meetings of the Chapter. It is our idea that these men would become the liaison agents between the Chapter and the members of each graduating class, familiarize them with the aims of the Institute, and help to promote better understanding of the functions of the Institute in the minds of younger men.

## CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP CANDIDATE

The name of the following man has been presented:

*For Institute Membership*

1. Thomas Adrian Fransioli, Jr.

Sponsors { Otto Eggers  
                  { John C. B. Moore

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 candidate.

## NEW MEMBERS

The following Associates were elected on February 6th:

John Shober Burrows, Jr.

Charles P. Donnelly

Benjamin John Rabe

The following Institute member was elected on February 15th:

Richard Roth

Elected to unassigned membership in the Chapter on March 5th:

Robert D. Kohn

## LOSS

Ward W. Fenner transferred to the Central New York Chapter.

## FINNISH RELIEF FUND

The Institute is cooperating with the Civic Service Organizations Division of the Finnish Relief Fund, Inc., of which the Honorable Herbert Hoover is Chairman. Information and coin mailing envelopes and contribution boxes can be obtained at the Chapter office.

President Bergstrom has asked the president of each Chapter and each association member to carry the appeal of the Finnish Relief Fund directly to the members and associates of their organization. No contribution is too small to make.

Speaking of this appeal President Bergstrom said in the February *Octagon*: "Finland is a tiny northern country which has won the admiration and affection of our people for the faithfulness with which it has met all its promises to us and for the courage and determination with which it has repelled invasion that would destroy its independence and its institutions. Its entire manpower is engaged in that defense, and the women and children and the aged and infirm of that country are suffering for food and clothing and shelter.

"To ease the civilian suffering was a burden too great and a need too urgent for the Red Cross to undertake. So The Finnish Relief Fund was founded and is dedicated to that purpose. Our fellow architects of that country need our help for their families. Those of them who happen to be resident here are devoting themselves to give that aid, and they need our help.

"Frederick G. Frost, 144 E. 30th Street, New York, has undertaken to handle this appeal for me, at a great sacrifice of his time and in spite of his many duties as president of the New York Chapter."

## IN MEMORIAM R.M.H.

No monument with florid script and scroll

Should mark your grave,

You need no angel's folded wings

Or praying hands.

And if they give you such, in their blind love,

You can but smile and grieve their loneliness.

Across the narrow, teeming island at the great sea's edge

You raised your own memorial in your swift time—

Black brick and steel,

Gold spire and blue-green shaft

To complement the sky.

The chattering drill must be your elegy,

The hiss and grind of giant shovel claws

Your loudest mourner's cry.

No monument, forgotten in the hush

Of thousand other tombs, can signify

You, dead but ever fortunate,

In that you lived to dream your dreams

And make them live,

Incarnated in shining metal and dark stone,

Which cannot die.



## BILLBOARD BILLS

The Chapter has been advised by the New York State Roadside Council that bills have again been introduced into both Houses of the Legislature to regulate billboards in rural districts. These bills are essentially the same as the unsuccessful bills which were introduced last year. The one in the Senate was presented by Senator Desmond, that in the Assembly by Mr. Peterson.

The committee for the Council feels that in order to push this legislation through this year a superlative effort is absolutely necessary and requests all Chapter members to write to their Senators and Assemblymen asking for their individual support.

Statewide control of outdoor advertising is accomplished primarily by the establishment of four types of areas along the highway to which outdoor advertising is prohibited. These areas are:

1. Within 500 feet of public parks or reservations.
2. At highway intersections and within 300 feet thereof.
3. In residential areas where 60% of the land is devoted to residential or farm uses.
4. In rural areas.

The Roadside Council maintains that "these four areas are most in need of protection since they are especially hazardous or affect especially the investment of the public in the highways or the attractiveness of the highways for tourist travel. The act has no application to outdoor advertising located within the corporate limits of a city or incorporated village. There is no purpose to damage the outdoor advertising industry or cut down the volume of its signs, and that will not be the result of the operation of the act."

## PAN AMERICAN CONGRESS

Chapter member Julian Clarence Levi was one of the three members of the Institute whose names were submitted by President Bergstrom for appointment by the State Department as delegates to the Fifth Pan American Congress of Architects, which was held March 4 to 9, 1940, in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Through the active interest of Mr. Levi the exhibition of post war architecture which was shown at the 1939 A.I.A. convention was forwarded to Uruguay free of transportation charges, by courtesy of the Department of State, and formed a principal attraction of the Congress.

## HOUSING FEES

The following statement from our fellow member, Henry S. Churchill, is published in order that the Chapter may know of his recent activities in connection with USHA fees, and to stimulate comment which will be welcomed (if brief). For further remarks by Mr. Churchill on this same subject, see the February *Octagon*, Page 16.

THE EDITOR

The matter of the revised schedule of fees for low-rent housing projects has apparently been the subject of serious misconception. As one who had a very considerable part in the revision I would like to clarify it.

Last May the USHA decided to look into the question of professional fees with a view to revising the schedule contained in the original agreement between a committee of the A.I.A. and representatives of the Authority. I was asked to take part in this study and resulting negotiations, as Consultant to the Administrator.

A preliminary investigation indicated that the ratio of fee to drafting cost was very high—six, eight times, frequently more than that. The total fees for professional services—architects, engineers, landscapers—were running between  $5\frac{1}{2}\%$  and 6%, and averaging around \$210 per dwelling unit. The Authority felt this was out of line with costs for public housing.

I showed the USHA data to William Stanley Parker of the Committee on Housing, and he offered to send a questionnaire to all Institute members engaged on projects. This was done, and the collected data substantiated that of the USHA.

During the summer USHA made further studies. Consideration was also given to the many complaints of local authorities about the size of fees, mostly based on comparison with fees paid by local operators and builders. I requested the field investigator of the National Association of Housing Officials to report reactions from the authorities and architects he visited. A surprising number of the former expressed the hope of setting up their own staffs and saving money; more than a few architects remarked that "housing was a good thing"—financially, and that they thought the fees were unduly high.

My own reaction was that fees might be somewhat reduced, for several reasons: First, since in the great majority of cases profits seemed out of proportion to the work involved, a reasonable reduction was permissible; it

would be sound public policy, for the USHA; it should be sound policy for the Institute to sanction such a step. If USHA insisted on revision, my job was to see that it was reasonable, and to find compensating provisions in procedure.

My efforts were, therefore, concentrated on: 1. Making the reduction reasonable. 2. Convincing the USHA that instead of merely suggesting these fees be paid, it should recommend that they be paid. 3. Making certain equitable changes in the manner of calculating the fee, such as including payment for professional engineering services for plumbing in the fee. 4. Seeing that the rights of the engineers and landscapers were safeguarded (there were many complaints from them of "chiseling" by the architects), by providing a sound schedule of fees for such services and for the filing of contracts with the Authority. 5. Wording the contract to protect the architect, in so far as possible, from kick-backs.

A drastic cut was made in the extra fee for "supervision," but for the first time that word was absolutely clarified to mean the personal supervision of the architect himself or his appointed delegate. All other costs of supervision are paid for by the local authority—field men, checkers, in effect, any increase over the architect's normal staff.

If anyone will trouble to read the USHA documents, I think they will agree this is the first time a government agency has attempted to really safeguard professional practices and standing.

It may be that the very large projects now carry a fee that is pretty tight, particularly for New York City conditions. The vastly greater part of the USHA program consists of fairly simple structures, mostly row houses, occasionally three-story apartments. New York City is almost alone in its use of six-story (or higher) multiple dwellings, with their resultant complication of plan and higher cost of production.

The old scale seemed to work very well, but the Authority felt that it could not, at this time, exempt New York City from the revision, although it agreed that the curve should rise in the larger project brackets. If experience shows hardship, I feel confident that presentation of facts will justify revision upwards at the end of the year—sooner if need be. This will be facilitated by the practice of the New York City Housing Authority of making cost-plus-fee contracts, which demand accurate bookkeeping and cost-accounting.

HENRY S. CHURCHILL