



# OCULUS

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

## MAY MEETING

*Time:* Tuesday, May 14, 12:30 p.m.

*Place:* Architectural League

*Subject:* Pre-Convention Meeting

As this will be a luncheon meeting, members are urged to be prompt. Our delegates must be instructed on how to vote for us at the Convention. Important amendments to the By-Laws will form a major part of the Convention business. The April issue of the *Octagon* gives these amendments in full. (What is your feeling about these proposed changes?):

The first proposal will reduce Institute dues, of incoming members only, to \$5.00 for the first year, \$10.00 for the second year, \$15.00 for the third and \$20.00 thereafter. What effect will this have on Chapter dues?

The next two proposed amendments relate to the property of the Institute. The first would divide the existing "Property Maintenance Fund" into two parts, one for the maintenance of the original Octagon building as a historic monument, the other for the maintenance of the Administration and Library Building. The second would set up a more permanent Investment Committee with broader powers.

An amendment with regard to unprofessional conduct proposes that a complainant, whose charges against a member have been dismissed by the Chairman of the Committee on Professional Practices, may have the right to appeal to the Judiciary Committee.

The amendment regarding State Associations should be familiar to all who attended the last Chapter meeting, as the Chapter approved at that meeting the New York State Association affiliating with the Institute.

Every member of this Chapter should read Page 20 of the April *Octagon*, second column, and come to the Pre-Convention lunch prepared for discussion. Suggestions for new business for the convention must be handed in at the Chapter office immediately in order to secure consideration for the agenda of our Pre-Convention lunch.

## AWARDS

This year the New York Chapter has had the busiest awarding season in its history. First there was the award of the Chapter's Medal of Honor to Raymond Hood, presented with ceremony at the Anniversary Dinner.

Then, the LeBrun Scholarship Committee announced an award for 1940 with interesting innovations. From the preliminary entries submitted, the Committee, under the Chairmanship of Francis Keally, selected six finalists and two alternates to take part in the competition itself. The six, who have now been selected, hail from Washington, D. C., Brooklyn and Flushing, N. Y., Virginia, Florida and Kansas. These six are to appear in person at the Chapter office on Monday morning, May 13, to receive their projects and then repair to the Beaux Arts Institute of Design where they will compete en loge during the week, their completed designs to be handed in the following Friday afternoon.

The first award of the Arnold W. Brunner Scholarship was announced in the January *OCULUS*. Many interesting proposals for architectural research have been submitted for the Committee's consideration. Announcement of the winner will be made at the next Chapter meeting.

The Chapter's Apartment House Medal which was abandoned during the lean years for obvious reasons, has now been revived, as we announced in the March number. All architects in the five boroughs were invited to submit photographs and floor plans. The awards will be made at the Annual Chapter meeting in June, when the winning architect in each class will be presented with a medal. An exhibition of the winning entries is scheduled to be held concurrently with the presentation.

Preliminary announcement is now made of a new award, being developed by three members of the Small House Committee: Herbert Lippmann, Miss Elisabeth Coit and Victor Civkin. Certificates of Merit for Small House Design will be given annually by the New York Chapter to architects in the Metropolitan Area.

## WHITHER

The final dinner meeting of the season was held by the Chapter at the Architectural League on Tuesday, April 23, with fifty-six members present.

President Frost reported the business to come before the meeting as follows: The Chapter's request of the A.I.A. that it consider the employment of an assistant to the Public Works Committee, made last autumn, has been the subject of considerable correspondence since that time. Now a final answer from President Bergstrom has been received to the effect that the Executive Committee of the A.I.A. feels unanimously that the Institute should not undertake such a responsibility and that such expense would not be justified at this time.

The Chapter, as one of the constituent members of the New York State Association of Architects, has been asked to state whether it is in favor of the Association's affiliating with the A.I.A., as provided in the A.I.A. By-Laws. The alternative to such affiliation would be to appoint a Joint Committee consisting of six members of the Associations and six members of the A.I.A., this Committee of 12 to decide on questions of national importance.

After a brief discussion, the following resolution was unanimously carried:

RESOLVED that the New York Chapter, A.I.A., approve the New York State Association's affiliating with the A.I.A. under the limited form of membership as provided in the By-Laws of the A.I.A.

The subject of the evening, "Whither," was then introduced. Under this intriguing title members were asked to talk upon some of the economic problems facing the architectural profession today. Questions from the floor were invited. To stimulate discussion Mr. Frost raised the following:

"Is the individual architect's practice in jeopardy? Are we all to be legislated out of business? Shall we all be working for the Government? Do the larger offices feel that any changes in our practice have come during the



past ten years? What is the prophecy for the practice in the future? Ought we to have a public relations counselor? Can we do this kind of work ourselves?"

Frederick J. Woodridge, who had conceived the idea of "Whither" to carry on the discussion of architecture in a more practical vein than at the last meeting, then enlarged somewhat on Mr. Frost's remarks.

Edgar Williams, our now famous keynoter, was asked to speak of the problem of the small architectural office. Although he granted the present situation to be very discouraging, he could not help but feel that the tide would turn, and soon.

During the question period Mr. Williams was asked by Don Hatch for his definition of success in architecture. Without hesitation he replied, "It is to have created at least one beautiful and lasting thing."

Max Foley, speaking on the problem of the large architectural office, said he would base his remarks on personal experience in his own office, and from an entirely practical view. Ten years ago his office budgeted its work for two years in advance. Today they are budgeting for three months in advance. Ten years ago his firm's practice was exclusively large buildings; today the list of work in his office includes a row of toilets in Rivington Street.

The answer is simply that he and his firm have adopted the principle that if architects wish to claim all work that is rightfully theirs, they must be ready to do that work. Some years ago when the orders for the larger and more lucrative buildings ceased, Mr. Foley and his partners set out to get all the small jobs they could. In this way they have kept going and have not been forced to dismiss large numbers of draftsmen, as has been the case with many of the large firms during recent years.

As to business trends, his accounts for the first three months of 1940, Mr. Foley said, had run practically the same as for the corresponding period of 1939.

A guest speaker, George Denniston, recently made a business associate of Eggers & Higgins, said that not being an architect he would speak from the layman's point of view.

It is not through numbers alone that architects are to advance, but through the quality of their leadership. "In practically every leading industry in the country," Mr. Denniston said, "we automatically associate certain leading names, as for instance in speaking of automobiles one always thinks of Ford. A survey has shown that the building industry is our No. 1 indus-

try and yet no outstanding names are connected with it in the public mind.

D. Knickerbacker Boyd, member of the Philadelphia Chapter, said that in the matter of educating the public as to the architect's functions the surface had not even been scratched. He cited instances where supposedly intelligent people had shown a woeful ignorance of the architect's duties and functions.

He exhibited a number of pamphlets published by various organizations on different aspects of building and architectural work, but he pointed out that nothing along these lines had been published by the Institute. He felt that there is a definite need of some small leaflet which would explain in simple terms to the general public what an architect has to offer. (See digest of Mr. Boyd's public relations program in this OCULUS.)

William Wilson, Commissioner of Housing and Buildings, called to the attention of the meeting a fertile field for architects "if they will only avail themselves of it." There are in New York City 50,000 old law tenements and 450,000 vacant buildings, which sooner or later will be rehabilitated. This work has been done largely by contractors but recently a committee of architects has been formed called the Mayor's Committee on Property Improvement, and Mr. Wilson urged the architects to avail themselves of this opportunity.

Among the other members to address the meeting was Julian Clarence Levi who suggested that architects talk less and do more. He urged that the Chapter make a survey of the status of architects, say 50 years ago, again 25 years ago and again today, for we cannot hope to improve our present situation or make any plans for the future until we have thoroughly studied the changing conditions which have brought us to the position we are in today.

Greville Rickard presented several difficulties encountered by architects who, eager for publicity, give away what they have to sell. He cited the habit of pushing plans which are so detailed they are copied by builders.

Richard S. McCaffery, Jr., stated that architects were apt to be concerned with their own immediate problems and fail to look at their questions broadly. He enlarged upon this lack of perspective.

Lorimer Rich, who had been scheduled to speak at this time upon the subject of "Partial Services," graciously conceded to a postponement on account of the lateness of the hour. It is understood that several others who also came prepared to air views on this growing problem.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

At our last Chapter meeting I deplored the lack of questions from the floor. Some of the speakers raised questions which really needed to be answered: Are we a profession? Are we a business?—are two which were brought up and not answered.

First of all, we are not running businesses because we do not make or sell merchandise for profit. Second, we are not merely a profession because we are much more than what that word implies.

Every Architect's office should be a complete building service organization, offering to its clients complete information and advice on all points which enter into the design, mechanical equipment and construction of buildings. It should direct the whole operation from design to the most insignificant gadget which is to be installed in the building for its perfect functioning and supervise the construction of the entire project, and stay with it until it is operating successfully.

By this I do not minimize design, for good design will be recognized by the public. But to have a satisfied client the building must in addition be a success in its interior arrangements, its proper lighting, heating, ventilating, cooling and all other points which these terms imply.

In order that the Architect may furnish all these services to his client it does not necessarily mean that he has on his staff men expert in all these subjects. In fact, in most cases it is more desirable to have them furnished by the most able engineers specializing in these different fields, for in this way the Architect is able to offer his clients the best and latest in mechanical arrangements.

Our connection with the Fine Arts springs primarily from our function of design. And that in turn has sharpened our attitude toward the ethical.

I think we all agree that the monuments—and by that I do not mean so-called monumental buildings such as government offices, etc.—really require fewer of the other elements of service than any other type of building. They call only for ability in design and structure. Therefore it is, a much more simplified task to design monuments than other types of buildings, provided one has the ability to meet these two requirements. 99% of our practice is with other types of buildings, and therefore all of the outlined services are generally required.

This being the case, let us declare ourselves to be renderers of expert services on every phase of building.

FREDERICK G. FROST



## A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM

D. Knickerbacker Boyd has prepared in outline form a suggested program for Public Relations Activities for Architects. This was presented to the Philadelphia Chapter, A.I.A., and the T Square Club at a joint meeting on November 15, 1939, and has since been widely distributed in the profession. Favorable comments have been received from individuals, organizations and architectural publications.

The program is divided between suggestions for national and local activities. We summarize the local activities:

Arrange for talks by professional men, builders and material manufacturers before Rotary, Exchange and other Service Clubs. Also before Women's Club and other Organizations. Arrange wherever possible for radio talks about the professions and the building industry.

In cooperation with building materials exhibits, wherever they exist, assist in maintaining a Bureau of Information on architectural and technical subjects and keep such a bureau supplied with literature on the Services of the Architect.

Maintain an Informational Exchange to keep members of all organizations allied with architecture and construction advised as to meetings and speakers, where the subject may be of interest to others than the immediate membership.

Chapters or Societies could prepare maps showing locations of buildings in each city or community, for display in railroad and bus stations and all other prominent places, with the names of the organizations conspicuously displayed.

Arrange for periodic exhibits of architecture and allied arts. Preferably to be held in conveniently conspicuous places and accompanied by campaigns of publicity and promotions in the press and by posters, radio and otherwise, including addresses in the schools, notices in motion picture shows, etc.

Where Home Shows are held, if possible exert architectural influence and direction, include architectural exhibits and arrange for distribution of specialized brochure intended for guidance of prospective home owners.

Wherever Better Homes Committees exist in communities, it is suggested that Architects, producers and builders should collaborate with the public spirited citizens who are functioning to arouse public interest in better homes and more of them.

Cooperate with Chambers of Commerce, touring agencies and conductors of "rubber-neck" vehicles. They

should be furnished as to noteworthy places of architectural, structural or historic interest, and information furnished as to the general type of design, materials used, Architects', Engineers' and Builders' names, etc.

In communities where lists of principle buildings, together with the names of owners, Architects, Engineers, Builders and general characteristics are not obtainable, newspapers will welcome such authoritative information for prompt use in preparing description or news items, especially in the case of accidents, fires or other casualties.

In some cities local organizations of Architects make honor awards to owners of buildings, and sometimes Architects, for excellence of design and construction, which activity assists in attracting public attention to architectures and the building industry.

## WITHOUT ARCHITECTS?

We print a letter which Mr. Frost has written to Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, under date of May 1, 1940, treating with the subject of Columbia University's undertaking the planning and erection of an important theatre arts building for their campus without benefit of Architect:

"Dear President Butler:

"Several of the members of this Chapter have called to my attention your announcement in the New York Times of April 29, regarding Columbia's new theatre arts building, which according to the newspaper report is to be built from plans drawn up in the University's Department of Building and Grounds.

"The members of this Chapter deplore the fact that Columbia is apparently departing from its usual custom of engaging architects for its buildings, the more so since Columbia maintains a School of Architecture which holds an enviable reputation throughout the country. Any failure to retain an architect in one of Columbia's own building projects is bound to militate against the profession and jeopardize the prospects and expectations of its own students, the architects of the future.

Yours very sincerely,

(Sgd.) FREDERICK G. FROST

## CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP CANDIDATE

The name of the following man has been presented:

*For Institute Membership*

1. George J. Cavalieri

Sponsors { Matthew W. Del Gaudio  
                  { Maxwell A. Cantor

## PAN-AMERICAN CONGRESS

Our good friend and much honored member, Julian Clarence Levi, has just returned from South America where he attended the Fifth Pan-American Congress of Architects at Montevideo as official representative of the Department of State as well as of the Institute.

Mr. Levi returns filled with enthusiasm for the hospitality of the South Americans, the extraordinarily beautiful scenery, the fact that South America is an architect's paradise (the President of the Republic of Uruguay, the Ex-Minister of War, the Mayor of Montevideo and some dozen public officials and ex-public officials are all practicing architects!), and the efficient and effective manner in which the program of the Congress was conceived and carried out.

Eleven countries were represented by 270 delegates. After three short speeches of welcome at the opening, Committees were appointed to study and report on the six themes for discussion, of which all delegates had been notified in advance.

These themes were: 1. Growth of Cities. 2. Housing. (The Committee on both of these recommended the formation of national institutes.) 3. Competitions. Here the Committee recommended that national codes be set up; that no architect be allowed to compete who was not the holder of a degree; that the Jury be composed entirely of architects and that all competitions be done in two stages. A further amusing suggestion which, however, was not adopted, was a third stage in which a Committee of two architects and one lawyer should pass upon the legality of the decision! 4. Relation of Experts to Architects. 5. Study of Specialties. 6. History of Architecture and Protection of Art Heritages. Here again a national institute was recommended. A seventh committee was appointed to take care of anything not covered in the six themes.

As a gesture from North to South America, Mr. Levi presented two volumes of Great Georgian Houses to the Mayor of Montevideo and two volumes to the President of the Congress. At an appropriate ceremony at which the ladies were present he presented one of the tea sets of the Architects Emergency Committee to the President of the Republic.

In his travels Mr. Levi found no evidences of professional jealousy, nor did he find any ultra-modern architecture, very few glass fronts and no buildings that "looked like bureaus with the drawers pulled out."