

THE NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
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UT INFRA

(Continued)

We continue this column, just this once, to record several "gyp" schemes which have come to light following the J.T.H. article in our last issue. The Mr. G. T. Hamilton of that story has also called upon N.M. and favored him with a commission which was to be a project of the same Dr. Henry W. Manning.

This time Dr. Manning had a smaller building in mind, but it was all well thought out with plot plan, etc. The conversation was identical, even to the sudden request for a glass of water to ward off a feeling of faintness. This time the customary \$2 touch was not made. Reason unknown.

R.M.C. suspects that Mr. Hamilton is the same little man who enlightened his office for a few days several years ago with an ambitious scheme for remodeling a very well known inn in a Connecticut town. After several office visits, at which detailed plans of the existing inn and property were shown to the architect, the little man invited him to meet at the property on the very day the inn was to be bought.

The architect arrived at the appointed time but of course no client showed up. The owner of the inn was a bit baffled by it all, especially as no sale had been considered and no purchaser had even approached him. All the data about the inn, its property and financial setup checked with actual conditions.

Sadly, R.M.C. returned to New York empty-handed, but several weeks later was able to catch up with our friend. This time he was putting on his act in the office of a decorator, and by collaboration they landed him in jail. He was subsequently sentenced for petit larceny.

A rival of Mr. Hamilton's, at least in plausibility, is the unseen suburban lady who operates by telephone. This starts with a conversation of about one-half to three-quarters of an hour, during which the lady regrets that she is unable to get to town that day but gives exact information about the house she wants to build (even the placing of the towel bars in the bathroom is specified). An appointment is made to visit the architect's office to talk again over preliminary sketches.

The result is that hours are spent on sketches but the appointment is never kept. No money changes hands in this game, but apparently the lady likes to

play house and has discovered that architects are good listeners.

We print here several letters which have been sent to us on this subject:

"Your 'UT INFRA' article in the current OCULUS stirred very vivid memories. It must be four or five years since what surely must have been the same individual, with exactly the same tale, dropped in on me. The only differences were in the locale. That time the accident happened in Jersey coming up from the shore early on a Monday morning while the road was still wet and a truck was conveniently at hand to be skidded into; also, the carfare was wanted this time to go to Maplewood, N. J.

"I think he must have been finding it not so lucrative lately as he did not seem so greasy and dishevelled as the article seems to indicate.

"I had a feeling that he was an artist in his line and really might be considered to have earned the modest 'touch' he made. We are all taken in occasionally.

"Yours very truly, W.S.G."

"I read with interest the 'UT INFRA' signed by J.T.H. In answer to your query at the bottom, this has happened to me also. In fact, the very man mentioned by J.T.H. has been in my office. But I did not give him anything because I felt sure he was a phony.

"I have had some experience with a well-mannered colored fellow who I have seen subsequently circulating in this building. He claims to be a valet for a prominent gentleman in Europe who has left with him the selection of an architect for a sizable building on his estate.

"I have also been approached by a man claiming to be a trainer or groom for a very wealthy middle west lady with a string of race horses who is intending to build an elaborate stable in the metropolitan area. This individual claims to have the authority to line up an architect before the owner's arrival.

"There have been a number of others and while their stories differ, they generally end with a touch for carfare and I have often wondered at the considerable ingenuity and nerve displayed for such a small return.

"Sincerely, D"

NEXT MEETING

Time: Wednesday, June 4, 12:30 p.m.

Place: Architectural League.

Subject: Annual Meeting.

There will be no meeting in May. The next meeting will be the Annual Meeting which is specified in our By-Laws to take place the first Wednesday in June. Chapter officers will be elected and brief reports will be heard from outgoing officers and committees.

One item of the business meeting will be the discussion of a change in our By-Laws which has been recommended by the Executive Committee, making them correspond with similar provisions of the national body. The amended By-Law will read:

"Any member, not engaged in any other profession, business or trade, who has been a member in good standing of the Institute and the Chapter for a continuous period of 15 years immediately preceding his application for retirement, and who has either reached the age of 70 years, or has been compelled to retire from active practice because of physical disability, may be exempted from the payment of Chapter dues, but he shall retain all the privileges of membership."

APARTMENT HOUSE MEDAL

The business meeting will be followed by the presentation of the Apartment House Medal awards:

Medal in Group 1 (houses over six stories) to George F. Pelham, Jr., for the design of Castle Village.

Medal in Group 2 (houses six stories or under) to Horace Ginsbern for an apartment house at 252 East 61st St.

Medal in Group 3 (group housing) to Albert Mayer for Thorneycroft Homes in Forest Hills.

SPRING OUTINGS

The Chapter Recreation Committee, Charles C. Platt, Chairman, requests that the Chapter be canvassed regarding an outing in June. If you are in favor of—and will attend—an outing, you are requested to reply on card enclosed with this OCULUS.

The Producers' Council of New York has invited all Chapter members to attend their tenth annual golf outing Thursday, June 5, 1941. This will be held at Knollwood Country Club, White Plains, and will be followed by a dinner.

Call the office of the Producers' Council, Inc., MU 3-6308, and ask Miss Rountry for details.

AMALGAMATION

At the last Chapter meeting President Frost announced that a movement for the merger of various architectural organizations in the metropolitan area has been initiated. A small group has started gathering data in the hope that at some time in the not too distant future some scheme of combining our professional societies can be worked out.

This scheme is as yet in its infancy. It arises from the realization that the functions of several of our organizations so overlap that in many instances one individual is an officer in several societies.

Not only is the executive work duplicated but also the committee work, to say nothing of a pyramiding of dues (this is probably the main issue). For example, an architect who belongs to the National A.I.A., the New York Chapter which includes membership in the State Association, the New York Society, the B.A.I.D. and the Architectural League pays a total of practically \$125 in yearly dues.

Maybe something can be done about this—sometime.

NEW LAWS

Our Legislative Committee has asked the OCULUS to draw to the attention of Chapter members that now on file at our office are the official copies of some ten new laws passed in Albany this year. The majority of these are amendments to the Multiple Dwelling Law.

One of the most important permits mechanical ventilation for water closet compartments and bathrooms in fire-proof multiple dwellings hereafter erected. This will permit greater flexibility in design and reduce the cost of construction.

The law was suggested by the Housing Authority and the Merchants' Association of the City of New York and was endorsed by the Department of Housing and Buildings, because experience has shown that interior bathrooms provided with mechanical ventilation are entirely satisfactory. This system has been in operation and use in all first class hotels for a great number of years.

The Urban Redevelopment Bill noted in our March issue was signed by the Governor on May 1. The enactment of this bill brought to a successful conclusion a fine example of teamwork and cooperation on the part of civic organizations. Our Chapter has received congratulations for our part in this work from several sources, including Senator Thomas, Chairman of the Committee on Affairs of Cities, and the Merchants' Association.

APRIL MEETING

President Frost presided at the annual pre-convention meeting held Tuesday evening, April 29. The attendance was 44. The chair called upon William E. Lescage for the final report of the RIBA Fund.

Mr. Lescage reported that contributions had been received from approximately 400 architects and the total amount now on hand is \$2,616.50. He presented a check for this amount to Mr. Frost who received it as Honorary Chairman of the fund committee. Mr. Frost responded by introducing the guest of the evening, the Honorable Wilfred H. Gallienne, a British consul who was present to represent the British government on the occasion of our official announcement of this gift.

Mr. Frost stated that this small token from the architects of America is an expression of our sympathy and regard for the architects of England and is to be used for the relief of suffering caused them and their families by the war.

Mr. Gallienne expressed his appreciation of the opportunity to be present on this occasion. He then told of some of his experiences while in the diplomatic service and of some of his conversations with Germans, Russians and citizens of enemy countries while en route from his last European post to America. From all these experiences it appears that these people have no conception of the strength or tenacity of the British, or of the friendly relations which exist between Great Britain and America.

Geoffrey Platt, a member of the Civilian Protection Committee, was called upon to report committee activities. Mr. Platt reported that so far the work of this committee has been the gathering of data which is now being divided into appropriate categories such as housing, post emergency planning, etc. The committee feels that its objective is to organize and collaborate with other interested organizations, to develop and plan for the protection of existing and new buildings, to study the distribution of shelters in case of fire and congestion and eventually to set up an information center available to every member of the profession.

Certain specific studies are now being carried on, such as slum conditions in tenement house blocks undertaken by Charles C. Platt, shelter protection in office buildings, by J. André Fouilhoux, and evacuation, by F. J. Woodbridge.

The committee is gathering material for a pamphlet on the protection of the smaller communities outside of New York City which it is hoped the

Regional Plan will publish and distribute. Protection plans for the Lower East Side is another subject which is receiving attention.

Mr. Platt said that so far his committee has no official status and he finds that there are many other organizations and officials making similar studies without direction.

"If New York City had been more properly planned in the first place," said Mr. Platt, "the work of your committee would be much easier now."

President Frost spoke briefly of the National Technological Civilian Protection Committee of which he is the sole architect member. He feels that his committee has encountered many of the same difficulties mentioned in the Chapter committee's report.

Mr. Frost spoke of the fact that one difficulty encountered by our Chapter committee is the lack of funds and made a request for \$200 to cover their expenses from the time of their formation up to June 1 of this year. This request had been approved by the Executive Committee. Therefore, it was recommended to the Chapter that \$200 out of our contingent reserve fund be appropriated for this purpose. Motion was made and carried to this effect.

The remaining business meeting was taken up by the discussion of resolutions which it was proposed to bring up at the convention in California. This part of the meeting is not reported here but will be covered in a résumé of the convention proceedings in our next issue.

At the conclusion of the meeting a motion picture in color was shown through the courtesy of the Southern Pacific Company. This picture showed the splendors of the Yosemite Valley, which scenes have by this time become very realistic to those of our members who joined the Convention Special and arrived in California last week for the Annual Convention.

CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP CANDIDATES

The names of the following men have been presented:

For Institute Membership

1. Hunter McDonnell
Sponsors { Theodore John Young
Eugene J. Lang
2. Louis S. Weeks (for readmission)
Sponsors { William F. Lamb
S. Merrell Clement
3. Robert Charles Weinberg
Sponsors { Electus D. Litchfield
Arthur C. Holden
4. Mead Bolton
Sponsors { Richard W. Alger
Clifford S. Bernard
Francis R. Molther