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THE OCULUS

NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

115 EAST 40th STREET

APRIL - MAY, 1943

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, May 20th, 6:30 p.m.
Subject: "Pre-Convention" Business.

All matters on which our Delegates are to speak for us in Cincinnati will be taken up at this meeting. Every Chapter member is invited, nay urged, to send in a suggestion, a proposal, even a grievance, for discussion at this meeting. Your President has already invited a number of our newly elected members to give us their ideas on what more the A.I.A. can do for the profession. The Agenda for this meeting will be made up from the answers to this appeal.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INSTITUTE

The next Annual Meeting of the Institute will soon be upon us. It is scheduled for May 26, 27 and 28 at Cincinnati. Since so many of our members are now in the Armed Forces and so many others are tied down to war work of one sort or another, it devolves all the more upon those of us whose time is still subject to our own control, to go this year to Cincinnati.

The old complaint "Architects are never vocal" is still true.

These yearly meetings of the leaders of the architectural profession in America are the opportunity—unfortunately not always looked upon as such by some members—to make our architectural voice heard. It is more-over the opportunity to learn and understand what the rest of the architectural profession is thinking and doing. Only by means of these meetings with their frank discussions and their ironing out of thoughts and ideas, can a national policy be established and a firm course laid for the future.

As one of our members has truly said, "The individual is helpless by himself in the face of world changes. It is only by cooperation, concerted and disinterested thinking and unified action that any impression can be made on the course of events. There is no better way of accomplishing these ends than by joining a professional society and taking an active, serious, unselfish and persevering part in its activities."

INFORMATION FOR DELEGATES:

Cincinnati is an overnight trip. You may board the B & O at 2:20 p.m., arriving in Cincinnati at 9:20 the next morning, going via Washington; or you may go by the New York Central leaving New York at 4 p.m., arriving at 8:45 the next morning, going via Albany. Round trip coach fare \$24.60. Round trip Pullman \$45.45. Lower berth \$5.80.

A new slate of Institute officers will be elected in Cincinnati. Nominations have been filed by a number of Chapters, including our own, for Raymond J. Ashton of Utah for President, James R. Edmunds, Jr. of Baltimore for Treasurer, and Ralph Walker of this Chapter for Secretary.

As voted at the last Chapter meeting, our own Edgar Williams is slated to be Regional Director for New York, and as such he will be a member of the A.I.A. Board.

Mutterings about making the "Octagon" a more vital, colorful and effective journal, and more truly representative of the architects of the country, have brought forth some excellent, broad and at the same time practical suggestions. Your Public Relations Committee is now taking these under advisement and will present some definite proposals to the next Chapter meeting for the information of our delegates.

MEMBERSHIP

CANDIDATES:

The following names have been submitted for Institute membership:

1. Herman Henry Bouman
Sponsors:
Antonin Raymond
Walter F. Anderson
2. Robert T. Handren
Sponsors:
Albert Schweizer
Morris Ketchum, Jr.
3. Sidney Leon Katz
Sponsors:
John Ebersson
Antonin Raymond
4. Herbert Arthur Magoon
Sponsors:
Matthew Del Gaudio
Elliott L. Chisling
5. Robert J. Reiley
Sponsors:
Arthur L. Harmon
Frederick G. Frost

THOUGHT FOR THE FUTURE

What is an Architect? Webster defines him as "one versed in the art of building."

The Statutes of New York State, however, define him as one able to "perform professional service such as consultation, investigation, evaluation, planning, design, including aesthetic and structural design . . . wherein the safeguarding of life, health or property is concerned, when such professional service requires the application of the art and science of construction based upon the principles of mathematics, aesthetics and the physical sciences."

Of the 48 States in the Union, 42 now require that a man must prove he has such qualifications as described above before he may practice architecture, and there is no doubt the time will soon come when the remaining six States will join with the rest.

However, until architectural registration becomes nation wide, the American Institute of Architects, which is national and whose by-laws cover all States, cannot require registration as a condition precedent to membership.

This leads to consideration of the eligibility of non-registered men. This Chapter has been faced with the problem of deciding whether or not to recommend for full membership men who are not registered, but who as employees in architects' offices have all of the desirable qualifications of experience, training and education.

One solution of course is to invite these men to apply for Associate membership in the Chapter, pending the time when registration is accomplished. One of the principal reasons for this is based upon the argument that if non-registered men were accepted as corporate members of the A.I.A., it might logically be assumed that the Institute recognizes these men as having the right and privilege of claiming their membership as an indication of architectural competence. This to some seems contrary to the spirit of the New York State Registration Law.

The Institute has always encouraged the registration of qualified architects by State Law, and it should therefore consider carefully any action on its part which might tend to weaken such legislation.

APPROPRIATIONS BY CONGRESS

The Chapter's Executive Committee has by formal resolution expressed its deep concern over the recent action in Congress eliminating the appropriations for the continuance of the National Resources Planning Board. This Board has acted as a research and advisory agency and an effective clearing house of information and there is a strong body of opinion that these functions of research and guidance are valuable and should be continued in some form.

Our appeal to Mr. D. K. E. Fisher, A.I.A. Washington Representative, has brought out the fact that other Chapters are similarly concerned, and the A.I.A. has in consequence authorized the issuance to the Acting Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee of a comprehensive statement on behalf of the profession in this country.

Briefly, the A.I.A. feels that the amassing of technical data, exchange of information and broad research, are essential requisites to planning and should not be allowed to lapse at this critical time; if the continuance of the National Resources Planning Board is not at the moment feasible, due to political considerations which apparently exist—and in which the A.I.A. has no interest—its functions should be continued in some other form, and preferably independent of any agency or department so that they may be free of the special interests of any one Federal activity and may operate with unbiased judgment.

CITY PLANNING MEDAL

This year's award goes to Edward Murray Bassett, known as the "Father of Zoning." Presentation of the award will be made at a lunch at the Architectural League on Friday, May 14th, at one o'clock. All members of the New York Chapter are cordially invited to be present.

The principal speaker at the lunch will be the Hon. George McAneny, first recipient of the City Planning Medal and an Honorary Associate Member of this Chapter.

Mr. Bassett, now in his 81st year, was largely responsible for the enactment of New York's first zoning ordinance of 1916. As head of legal research for "The Regional Plan of New York," he drafted the State Planning Laws, adopted in 1926 and 1927, which give every municipality the right to establish an official Planning Commission.

The Medal of Honor is awarded jointly by four professional organizations of the Metropolitan Area, including the New York Chapter.

ANNIVERSARY, AWARDS AND URBANISM

This Chapter celebrated its 76th birthday on March 13th last. As it is customary on these occasions to present the yearly awards of the Chapter, two were scheduled for this year's Anniversary.

Honorary Associate Membership in the Chapter was presented to William Church Osborn, President of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and member of the Art Commission of New York City. Archibald Brown, representing the Chapter Committee on Awards, in reading the citation, said: "Other recognitions of honor and esteem have been deservedly bestowed upon him, but not the least of these is the inarticulate feeling of affection and trust of younger generations, engendered by the inspiration of his full life of service to humanity and the arts."

Mr. Osborn promised to do his best to be a credit to the organization of which he was now a member. His thoughts, however, soon very naturally turned to the Museum of Art, that repository of the "peculiar treasures of kings." In the thought that more opportunity should be given for the understanding and appreciation of these treasures, he has proposed that the Museum provide study rooms adjacent to the display rooms. Another idea, so far only an ambition for the future, is to bring art nearer the people by means of neighborhood branches of the Museum. This plan, which he hopes some day may be put into execution, is one he feels might have a particular appeal to architects. Their life work is to create for their fellow-men a better environment and it is through architects, he said, that the taste of the City will be developed.

Announcement was made in the last OCULUS that the Chapter's Medal of Honor this year would be awarded to Harvey Wiley Corbett. A last minute check-up of the records, however, disclosed that this Medal had already been awarded to Mr. Corbett far back in the days when many of those at the dinner were about to choose architecture as a profession and others were still in swaddling clothes. Unfortunately the By-Laws prohibit the awarding of this honor more than once to the same person.

The Committee, while chagrined

that the events of 1908 had at first escaped their attention, nevertheless were proud that the Chapter can boast a member who after 35 years is still held in such high esteem by his fellow professionals that he is again their choice for the highest honor the Chapter can bestow.

Mr. Corbett, in acknowledging these sentiments, said his only regret was that 35 years ago he also had not been in swaddling clothes.

Hobart B. Upjohn, past President of the Chapter, now engaged in writing the history of the Institute from its formation to 1900, touched briefly on the early days of architecture in this country and the formation of this, the oldest of the Institute's Chapters. The original society was known as the "American Institution of Architects." It is of interest to note that between 1862 and 1864, the period of the War Between the States, the group was disbanded because of so little available architectural work at that time.

Grosvenor Atterbury, Chairman of the Civic Design Committee, described some of the thoughts which have moved the small group of architects who meet every fortnight to further their ideas for urban redevelopment in this area. These men are eager to carry forward their plans even though there are no fees involved and no contracts in prospect. They believe, said Mr. Atterbury, that Main Street is again coming into its own, and will take its place in the city of tomorrow as a neighborhood. They are hoping for the return of that leaven of human and friendly kindness which has so long been stifled in the mammoth city. They have shown not only a capacity but a willingness to learn, to study, and to collaborate. This is a good omen.

In the future, Mr. Atterbury said, we will not build big houses, but groups of houses, and following Mr. Osborn's thought for the future of our City's art treasures, he hoped that the Metropolitan Museum of Art will some day come into these neighborhood developments.

Arthur Holden, as Secretary of the Civic Design Committee which is conducting these discussions on urban redevelopment, then briefly outlined each of the proposals now being developed. Mr. Holden's comprehensive report did not, however, divulge the great amount of time and effort which he as Secretary of the Committee has put into the advancement of this work.

It is the Civic Design Committee's plan to cast these recommendations into a form suitable for publication in the not too distant future.