



Vol. IX

# OCULUS

No. 5

NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
115 EAST 40th STREET

DECEMBER, 1947

## CONCERNING THE OCULUS AND ITS CATCH BASIN

The OCULUS is your Chapter publication. Except for the expensive and laborious expedient of mailing special announcements it is the only means the Chapter has for reaching the entire membership.

It is our policy to publish herein all available Chapter news and such additional items as we consider of interest and benefit. We should like to make these items comprehensive and informative. The personal contacts of the members of the Editorial Committee are necessarily limited. For example, the Chapter has some 25 committees. It is not possible for us to cover that much ground without contributions from representative of those committees. Also, we cannot, obviously, attend in person every meeting, dinner, exhibition or other activity. The result is that many desirable items are omitted from time to time.

Accordingly, we seek your cooperation in making the OCULUS more comprehensive, more informative, and more intimate. Members are requested to mail in or leave with Miss Waters reports of committee activities, suggestions, notices or comments concerning exhibits, special news of individuals, reports of publications, such architect-client experiences as may tend to guide others faced with similar situations, — in short, any and all items thought desirable for publication. Credit will be given to contributors for all items published.

The "Catch Basin" will be devoted henceforth to correspondence, personal opinions and suggestions of individual members. It will be a regular feature of each issue. Its purpose is to give you an opportunity to express your views on any topic of interest, whether or not it reflects the policies of the

## GOOD WILL TO MEN

1947 - 1948

Your clients who approach with clippings laden,  
To try us sore;  
Who ask equipment that will not be made in  
A year or more

You editors who slight the architect,  
Our ire arousing;  
You realtors who constantly object  
To Public Housing

You decorator ladies who have learned  
Of Louis Quinze;  
You engineers whose stubborn backs are turned  
On graceful spans

Stenographers whose commas don't occur  
In proper places;  
F. H. A. officials who demur  
At well planned spaces

Delegates who soldier with impunity  
On cushioned soffits;  
Builders who at every opportunity  
Seek extra profits

We specify a Merry Christmas to you,  
And as its sequel,  
A very Happy New Year will be due you, —  
Or equal.

M.E.F.

Chapter. If your contributions are well taken, they may serve to form or alter policy. If they are of controversial nature, we shall welcome rebuttal by members who disagree. Your contreres will be interested in what you have to say.

The following communication has been received from a modest member who prefers to remain incognito:

"At the dinner meeting on November 12th, the discussion revived one point which has long been on my mind. I refer to the reprehensible attitude of most newspapers in omitting the names of architects in connection with published construction items.

"Complaints from individuals on this score seem to carry little weight. I believe that concerted action by the Chapter would be effective. The expressed objection of a group of more than 600 men should tend to make

editors conscious of this shortcoming. I suggest that the Chapter take official action in this matter, and find some way of combatting and rectifying the condition."

The OCULUS staff is in entire agreement with the foregoing proposal and makes this suggestion for its execution. First, let us ask the Executive Committee to establish a policy of complaint against this newspaper practice. Then let each Chapter member constitute himself a clipping bureau. Cull every newspaper you read for omissions of this sort and mail the items to the OCULUS. The staff will then group them and once each month (or week) will write a letter of protest on Chapter stationery to each of the offending publications, enclosing the clippings. We believe editors will take cognizance, ultimately, of such concerted action.



## NOVEMBER MEETING

The monthly dinner meeting, on Nov. 12, gave members an opportunity to voice suggestions and complaints. Those present made up for lack of numbers by prolific enthusiasm, and many important items were discussed. President Harold Sleeper encouraged us to bring into the open the ranklings of our innards. If the curfew had not rung down the curtain, the meeting might still be in progress. Here are some of the highlights:

Malcolm Duncan spoke of the intricate requirements and the clerical, photographic and financial contortions involved in the process of licensing by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards.

Martin Lowenfish held forth on the trials and tribulations of the architect in dealing with the F. H. A. in regard to apartment developments. It would seem that this agency has become touched by the policy of standardization which characterizes all government procedure. The result is resistance to any attempt at originality, and insistence upon trite solutions. It is our understanding that this matter will be discussed in Washington by the Chapter's Housing Committee.

Harvey Wiley Corbett spoke of enlarging the Chapter membership. He feels that in approaching new candidates emphasis should be placed upon what they can contribute to the profession, rather than how the A. I. A. can benefit them. Mr. Corbett's talk reopened the moot question as to expansion without insistence upon special qualification. Opinion in general indicated a desire to take on organization stature by weight of numbers.

Arthur Douglass Jr. called attention to the fact that it is not practicable for younger men to take sufficient time at noon to enable them to attend luncheon meetings. Daniel Schwartzman suggested that employers be requested to grant this additional time with the understanding that it be made up in corresponding overtime.

Mortimer E. Freehof spoke of the aspirations of the Editorial Committee on Public Relations in regard to a program calculated to bring prominence to the profession. He pointed out that there is wider information about other branches of the fine arts, despite the fact that the art of architecture touches more people intimately than all the others combined.

This problem is being studied with increased concentration, and a plan of procedure should evolve shortly. Details will then be published in the OCULUS. In this connection, it was mentioned that the OCULUS could be made more vital and interesting if members would

contribute more material. Request was made that each committee appoint one member to keep the editorial staff acquainted with its activities so that the entire Chapter can be advised of the work being done.

George Walling also spoke on Public Relations, especially in regard to the attitude of newspapers. A spirited discussion on various aspects of this topic culminated in a motion to refer to the Public Relations Committee a proposal that the A. I. A. publish in all leading newspapers throughout the country an open letter outlining the duties, services and obligations of an architect, such advertising to be financed by assessment upon each member group in proportion to its membership. The motion was carried and the Public Relations Committee was instructed to study the feasibility of the proposal on both national and state bases, and to report the findings to the Executive Committee.

Samuel Arlen spoke of the problems of the small practitioner. Among other speakers who provoked controversial discussion were Alonzo Clark and Louis Friedheim. Another subject presented was the pending increase in subway fare. A resolution was adopted to the effect that the Chapter approves an increase and that Mayor O'Dwyer be advised of our stand on the question.

The OCULUS staff congratulates the Program Committee on the success of this meeting and hopes there will be more of the same character.

## CONTEMPORISTS GET BUSY!

Men are frequently accused of being the more conservative half of the species. Not so in home design, however! According to leaders of the women's branch of the National Association of Real Estate Boards American women are clinging to their preference for traditional colonial or "Cape Cod." On the basis of a poll, furthermore, milady still prefers a separate dining room, preferably opening on a garden, and a fireplace on the long wall of the living room.

Corner windows, sinks and bathtubs still fail to get the approval of the average woman, though the wide social implications of this statement were not elaborated. Some development in the fair sex's approach to living may be discerned, however, in the statement that it frowned on such features as bathrooms opening into two rooms and "those small high windows on either side of a fireplace" — standards that were rejected by the architectural profession some twenty years ago!

Better sell that Lincoln and hitch old dobbin to the shay!

## NATIONAL REGISTRATION

Professor Clinton H. Cowgill, vice-president of the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, was the guest speaker at the Educational Committee's November 25th luncheon meeting. His brief and to-the-point discussion of national registration took into account the criticism that has been levelled at the procedure by disgruntled yet hopeful aspirants. Main points of talk were that state's rights being what they are, NCARB has no power, and can only serve to minimize the inconvenience of interstate practice. Architects who hold the NCARB certificate usually have little difficulty in securing registration in any state. A substitute for the NCARB would of necessity face the same problems, would require the same type of set-up.

Chief difficulties are that registration laws in some states cover so much ground they cannot be enforced and that personnel of registration boards in many states does not include leading architects. A more active leadership by A.I.A. is the best answer.

Charles Butler, for many years President of the New York State Board, assisted Professor Cowgill in answering questions from the floor, which brought out the fact that the NCARB had long operated in the red but now had funds which could be spent in enlisting aid of prominent architects, and in promoting national recognition.

## VISITING ARCHITECTS

Now that restrictions on travel have been eased, the Chapter Office is once more receiving guests from foreign shores. Hardly a week goes by but that a visiting architect from England, Australia or points between, seeks us out for one reason or another.

The purpose of these visits is usually to study American methods of construction and use of materials.

Among our recent visitors was Mr. John Buchan, Fellow of the RIBA and member of one of the largest architectural firms in Melbourne, specializing in governmental housing projects as well as hospital construction in Australia. Mr. A. B. Grayson, also a Fellow of the Royal Institute, has recently completed a comprehensive tour over this country studying hospitals, schools and town planning. Both at the beginning and end of his tour he "checked in" at the Chapter Office, first for advice and later to acknowledge the help he had received. Mr. Grayson, a resident of the Island of Jersey, has also an extensive practice in Bath where he settled during the German occupation of the Channel Islands. His



enthusiasm over the planning and design of our American schools was somewhat tempered by his disappointment at the dearth of good town planning which he had hoped to find during his tour of the country.

Mr. Nejat Gokbelen called one day to obtain a set of AIA contract forms for use of the Turkish Architectural League. Sir Thomas Bennett, FRIBA, recently sent one of his associates, W. Bonham Galloway, B.A., A. R. I. B. A., to study American methods of design and planning of department and retail stores. Dan Ben-Dor whose office address is "Street of the Prophets, Jerusalem" arrived not long ago to study the American approach to public health services.

During the summer we were able to find quarters for a young lad from Leeds, who was looking for a suitable "rooming house" within his limited budget. He was here on a Victory Scholarship.

A number of our members may recall Spyros Bonanos, who with his English wife, attended our Spring Cocktail Party. Shortly thereafter, Mr. and Mrs. Bonanos started off in a jeep station wagon for Boston, Chicago, the T.V.A. and way stations. An economist as well as an architect Mr. Bonanos had carefully weighed the price of a jeep against the cost of railway fares, plus tips, plus taxis. He has now returned and reports that only one flat tire marred an otherwise perfect trip.

Two men from that mysterious unconquered country atop the Pyrenees recently paid their respects to the Chapter; Mr. Ynchausti, a Basque now residing in Scarsdale, brought us his friend Pablo Zabalo, a fellow Basque, who for the past six months has been working on architectural projects in Chile and has now come to North America to learn more about prefabrication.

Quite recently we had the pleasure of entertaining at lunch Mr. Juan Arellano, President of the Philippine Institute of Architects. Mr. Arellano headed a commission sent here by our gallant allies in search of ideas for the new State Capitol which his liberated nation is about to build in Manila. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and one-time draftsman in the office of Paul Cret, Mr. Arellano found here many old friends to chat with and many changes to marvel at. Pleasant, quick-witted and delightful, he and his nephew, Otillio Arellano, also an architect and also a member of the Commission, brought greetings from the Philippine Institute, which recently held its first post-war Convention. The Convention program written in English, now on view at the Chapter Office, has an all too familiar ring.

## GILLROY IS HERE

### AN ACCOLADE

Seldom has an appointment given us more pleasure and satisfaction than the recent naming of Bernard J. Gillroy as Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Buildings in New York.

Here is an appointment based 100% on merit. Mr. Gillroy's early experience in architectural offices, his knowledge of the building law which he helped to draft, his understanding of the architect's point of view as well as his sympathetic approach to the larger questions of public interest, together with his many years in the Department as Deputy Commissioner make him a "natural" for the job.

Mayor O'Dwyer is to be congratulated for having made a choice which has the unanimous approval of the architectural profession.

Plans are already under way for a testimonial dinner to be tendered the new Commissioner jointly by the architects and engineers of the five boroughs which constitute his bailiwick.

## COMING EVENTS

*Tuesday, December 9—Lunch*  
Committee on Education will present: "The Albany Picture".

*Tuesday, December 16—Dinner*  
An Evening In South America  
Ladies' Night — replete with Christmas gaiety.

## CANDIDATES

The following have applied for institute membership:

1. Harvey D. Cahn  
Sponsors: Henry S. Churchill  
Othmar Kraus
2. William Herman Fuhrer  
Sponsors: Abram Bastow  
George H. Ferrenz

and for Associate membership:

1. Gardiner Angell  
Sponsors: Malcolm Duncan  
William J. Jensen

## REGISTER OF MEMBERS

The Committee on the Register announces that before the next issue of the OCULUS, copies of the new Chapter Year Book and Register in printed form will be in the hands of every member. Additional copies will be available to members at \$2.00 each and to all non-members at \$5.00.

The editing of this book, collating of material and checking of statistics was an undertaking of considerable magnitude. Your Committee has given a great deal of time and thought to establishing the style and format of this, the first of a series of annual publications. Practical use may suggest

modifications in the format. Constructive comments from members interested in making this a book of real value will be welcome.

## WHAT PRICE SERVICES

Your Chairman of the Contracts and Fees Committee is receiving many telephone calls from both clients and architects pertaining to problems that are taking a rather consistent pattern of misunderstandings between architect and client. Most of the queries have to do with the payment of the architect's fees for service for which no contract had been made between the architect and the client. The client invariably states that the architect was advised to design a project within a definite budget figure. Bids were received showing that the cost of the work would be materially more than the client desired. Often the client claims the architect's drawings and specifications are inadequate. The question invariably is, how to make a fair settlement of fee payment.

The description of architect's services and explanations of how the architect's fees can be determined are official documents of the New York Chapter which architects will find beneficial for discussions with clients. Contract document forms are published by the Institute to assist architects in making simple and clear contracts with their clients. The client should always have a clear understanding of the architect's services and a written contract should always be prepared.

During this period of high construction costs, architects should now, more than ever, be aware that under no circumstances should they guarantee a construction cost. The cost is always determined by the client's program and by labor and material markets. All architects should realize that the courts have ruled if the client engages an architect to design a project with a certain fixed cost amount and the architect designs a project which will cost substantially more than that fixed sum, the client will not have to pay the architect's fee unless the architect's drawings and specifications are actually used for the construction.

Every commission an architect undertakes is an acceptance of a vital dual responsibility; first, to design a project that will fulfill the needs of the client, and secondly to recognize that each architect is an ambassador from the profession to each client. If his work is done well the profession as a whole is helped. If he does his work poorly and unconscientiously, the profession as a whole is harmed.

Clarence B. Litchfield



## PUBLICITY

The following announcement will be released to the press January 1st: "The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects announces the first postwar LeBrun Competition. This travelling scholarship, founded in 1910 by Pierre LeBrun, was of necessity suspended during the war. In former years the amount offered was \$1400. The 1948 scholarship will carry a stipend of \$2800. to cover a minimum of six months' travel outside the United States.

"The subject of this year's competition concerns public health services. Harvey Stevenson, Chairman of the committee in charge, in announcing the scholarship expressed the hope that the winner will engage in a certain amount of public health research in this country to supplement his travels abroad.

"Competitors must be nominated by members of the American Institute of Architects who must certify that the nominee is a resident citizen of the United States not under 23 or over 37 years of age at the date of issuance of the program, that he has had at least three years of active practice as an architect or architectural draftsman and that he has not been the recipient of any other traveling scholarship.

"Nomination blanks may be obtained from the New York Chapter of the Institute at 115 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. and must be on file before January 26, 1948. The program of the competition will be available on January 15th and will be issued to qualified nominees up to and including February 2nd. The closing date

for shipment of competition drawings is March 31st.

"Serving with Mr. Stevenson on the committee are Jack Bruno Basil, Harvey Clarkson and William Potter.

"Announcement of the award may be expected on or about April 21st."

## ARCHITECTS' LIABILITY INSURANCE

Architects may be liable for errors of commission or omission in plans and specifications. In one recent case an architect was sued for \$25,000 due to an allegedly missing handrail nearly fifteen years after completion of his work.

Adequate insurance against such errors was described in the December, 1946, OCULUS and a number of members have taken policies which provide exceedingly broad coverage including negligent acts on the part of the firm, its predecessors or any person employed by the Assured during the term of the policy including sub-contractors employed by the Assured for whose work the Assured may be liable. A fifty percent saving may be had through a group rate, and further savings are possible as the number of policy holders increases.

To obtain the benefit of such savings, applications for the insurance must be made directly to the American Agent for Lloyd's—Philvar Agency, 210 East Lexington St., Baltimore 2, Md.—and must state that you are applying as a member of the New York Chapter, A. I. A. More detailed information may be obtained from the chapter office.

## UNIQUE?

In the November issue we stated that the A.I.A. is taking steps to acquaint our lawmakers with the importance of the architectural profession. In this connection we asked how many members know their Senators, Congressmen or Assemblymen, — and vice versa.

Behold! According to advice received, one member has such relationship. Charles Butler has written to say that he is well acquainted with his Congressman and his State Senator, and hopes soon to meet his Assemblyman. He says, furthermore, that he does not hesitate to make known to these representatives matters of benefit to the profession. Does Mr. Butler stand alone in this position?

## BOOKS RECEIVED

Our appeal for additions to the Chapter Library is bearing fruit. Two handsome books on early New England houses, *The Architectural Heritage of the Merrimac* and *The Architectural Heritage of the Piscataqua*, were recently presented by the author, John Mead Howells. Both are volumes of excellent photographs showing the early houses and gardens of the towns bordering those two New England rivers.

Another recent gift of a radically different nature but of equal interest is *Architectural Practice* by Ben John Small and Clinton H. Cowgill, a comprehensive book of reference covering every aspect of architectural training and practice.

These gifts are most gratefully acknowledged by the Chapter.

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