



Vol. IX

# OCULUS

No. 6

NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
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MORTIMER E. FREEHOF, Editor

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

On several occasions members have inquired about the propriety of using the letters "A. I. A." after their names in connection with any published work. This practice is not only proper but is to be encouraged. The A.I.A. is the national organization of our profession. It is hoped that in time it will become even more representative by its inclusion of all eligible architects. By reason of its standards, membership implies integrity and ability. Every dignified method possible should be employed to acquaint the public with its existence and its aims. We might almost adopt as a slogan the catch line "Help the Institute and you help the profession."

In the January issue, *THE OCULUS* suggested that Chapter members clip from newspapers and other publications pertinent items which omit mention of the architects' names. The intention is to send these clippings to the offending agencies with a letter pointing out the error of their ways. Our thanks go to Charles K. Hirzel, the first member to send in such clippings. Of late, the New York Times and the New York Herald-Tribune have shown improvement, but there is still much need for needling. All members are urged to follow Mr. Hirzel's lead.

Something over a year ago the Chapter office was requested by the *Yours Magazine* to recommend an architect to prepare data for a booklet on small houses. The membership was canvassed and John S. Burrows emerged as the candidate. The result is a fine brochure, just off the press, presenting beautifully executed sketches of homes of varied types. Mr. Burrows has augmented these sketches with text offering valuable advice to potential clients.

## RESOLUTIONS FOR 1948

At New Year's Day the custom is to make good resolutions  
And hope you'll find a method for their faithful executions.  
Unless to keep your failings under key and lock you meant  
Perhaps you'll take my schedule as a standard document.

No longer shall I start a job without a written contract,  
I'll want it down in black and white with signature thereon tacked.  
No longer shall I lecture clients or deliver homilies  
When their ideas on architecture bristle with anomalies.  
No longer with an optimistic guess I'll stick my neck out  
When clients ask for budgets long before they write a check out.  
No longer shall I let a job accelerate my pulse sirs,  
With burning of the midnight oil and cultivating ulcers.  
No longer shall I detail every door and mold and profile,  
I'll just refer the draftsmen to the good old status quo file.  
No longer shall I emulate the moron who relaxes  
In false financial smugness, with no residue for taxes.

But hold! These resolutions strike a reminiscent vein,  
I pause in my refrain of things from which I shall refrain,  
No longer, since in other years these same improvements beckoned,  
Shall I make pledges Jan the First which I'll bust on the Second.

## ADV.

We suggest you pick up your nearest Classified Telephone Directory and, starting on page 884, scan the pages devoted to practicing lawyers. Similar listings of practicing physicians and surgeons begin on page 1246. A uniform, impressive and dignified list of professional men with their addresses and telephone numbers!

A rude shock awaits you when you turn to page 59—Architects. Here dignity and professional ethics are thrown to the winds. Some names will be found in bold face, some boxed; some offer free sketches, some complete services.

Are we a trade or are we a profession?

The Joint Committee has undertaken to ask every architect in the Metropolitan Area to refrain from this and any similar type of paid advertising which takes architects out of the professional class.

The A.I.A., always jealous of professional standards, should be the first to support this clarification of ethics.

## INFORMATION PLEASE

Among other features at the Chapter's Anniversary Dinner to be held on Wednesday evening, February 25, will be our own presentation of "Information Please," with due apologies to the sponsors of the original.

All members are urged to send their questions to Miss Waters. If your question is used, you will receive a full set of Sweet's Catalogue for 1910, absolutely free except for the mailing charge of \$762.43. If your question is muffed you will receive a Flemish bond.

Polish up your professional queries and try to stump the experts!

## STABILIZATION

A tremendous stride toward stabilization of city building costs has been made in the recent agreement between the Building Trades Employers Association of N. Y. and the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater N. Y. plus certain non-member groups.

Under this agreement wages in



most trades will be frozen at approximately 1947 levels until June 30, 1950. Included in the contract is a provision for increase, not operative however until April, 1949, and then only if the Index of the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows an increase in living cost 15% above that of January, 1948.

At this writing some 20 trades have subscribed to the agreement, representing approximately 70% of the entire industry. Obviously the complete success of the arrangement will depend upon its unanimous acceptance.

Additional features of the agreement are recognition of the need for extension of the apprenticeship system, in order to provide more skilled labor; efforts at greater production per man hour; and the encouragement of all possible use of modern appliances and methods.

## MAKING OUR FAIR CITY FAIR

At a special luncheon meeting held Jan. 6, the Chapter approved the new fee schedule for City work, as presented by Clarence B. Litchfield, Chairman of the Committee on Fees and Contracts. The suggested revisions had already been approved tentatively by the Joint Committee of Architectural Societies in the Metropolitan Area. When all constituent members of this Joint Committee are in official agreement, the new schedule will be presented to City officials with a plea for its adoption.

The proposed changes affect mostly the fees for smaller jobs, but also provide for more equitable adjustments in some of the details of the standard contract. The discussion from the floor brought forth several suggested improvements, including the desirability of having at least partial supervision by the architect, additional fees for special installations, and more precise definition as to the status of consulting engineers and their fees in relation to the total fees paid.

In the notice sent to members, stress was laid upon the importance of substantiating the merits of our case by statements from those who have had actual experiences with City work. Several such communications have already been received, but our appeals will be strengthened materially by adding to the weight of evidence. Members are urged to send in brief accounts of any unprofitable experiences in connection with a City contract.

## THE CATCH BASIN

The following letter to the Editor presents a specific case of the tendency on the part of certain loan institutions to consider as a poor risk any house which cannot be labelled by some traditional title. There have been several such instances. What can be done about it?

Dear Oculus:

A certain type of backward thinking which directly affects the architect's work was brought forcibly to my attention not long ago.

My associate and I recently took a photographer to a residence in the country we had just completed and of which we were rather proud. We were welcomed by the owner who warmed our hearts by his praise of our work. The house by way of description is of masonry and wood with flat roofs and large glass areas, not extremely modern and in no sense fantastic, but, we felt, a common sense and timely solution of the family's living requirements.

Suddenly there appeared on the scene the "man from the bank," with pad and pencil in hand. By some coincidence, the lending institution, to which the owner had applied for a small mortgage, had sent its agent around the very day of our visit. He gazed about in bewilderment. No Colonial mantle over the fireplace. No rose garlanded wallpaper. Windows about twice the usual size. Obviously his training and experience were not sufficient to encompass what he saw. A few words with him confirmed my instinctive feeling that because he could not write down on his report Colonial this, Tudor that or English something else, he was at a complete loss for words.

Aftermath: The loan was refused in jig time.

My question: How long must highly trained professional men be penalized in loss of future commissions and in prestige by the prejudices of someone unqualified by education or experience to form an opinion and who, God knows, has no qualifications of personal taste?

Lester H. Maxon

## THERE OUGHT TO BE A LAW

At the Dec. 9 lunch the Legislative Committee conducted an interesting program devoted to a discussion of State legislation. The several speakers described the various stages through which all bills must pass and were unanimous in making a plea for cooperation.

It appears that as an organized group we have been singularly remiss in a matter which concerns the profession vitally. Many of the bills proposed from time to time have important bearing upon design, use of materials and regulation of building construction. These bills involve technical and other specialized knowledge and often need clarification by experts in the field. One important source of such information should be the architects themselves. Legislators need our help urgently and our guests were frank in asking for it.

The meeting was conducted by Samuel Kurtz, of our Legislative Committee, acting for Chairman Aaron N. Kiff. The speakers were Assemblywoman Maude Ten Eyck of this district, Gordon Leland, Administrative Assistant to Senator MacNeil Mitchell, also of this district, and Harry M. Prince A.I.A., Technical Consultant to the Joint Legislative Committee on the State Multiple Dwelling Law. Senator Mitchell is Chairman of this committee. Additional guests present were Maxwell Shapiro, counsel, and Andrew Allen, a member of the committee representing the State Department of Health. An interesting side light was the announcement that this same group will meet shortly with a similar committee of the State of Massachusetts to compare notes and exchange ideas.

One topic mentioned was the activity of the Condon Committee in drafting a State Building Code, with special provisions to apply only to New York City. One of the bills pending proposes a review of the Multiple Dwelling Law of 1929. It is still an open question as to what body or group of individuals will be designated to make this review. Suggestions from the Chapter will be welcomed by our legislators.

Mrs. Ten Eyck volunteered to keep the Chapter informed of all new bills introduced. Mr. Prince, one of our own members, offered to act as liaison between the Chapter and the Joint Legislative Committee. He urged, furthermore, that we designate representatives to attend hearings at the Board of Estimate and the City Planning Commission when those bodies discuss matters pertinent to the profession.

President Harold Sleeper stated he would be glad at any time to call a special Executive Committee meeting when prompt action on pending bills may be required.



## GROUP INSURANCE COMING UP

The New York State Association of Architects has announced and endorsed an attractive Group Plan of Accident and Sickness Insurance for its members. The plan was evolved by the Association's Insurance Committee, consisting of George J. Cavalieri, Chairman, Frederick G. Frost, Sr., Adolph Mertin and Ward W. Fennner. This committee spent months of investigation and study with many insurance companies and considers that the ultimate plan offers maximum benefits at minimum rates. It will be underwritten by the Continental Casualty Company of Chicago, and administered by Ter, Bush & Powell, Inc., of 19 East 47th Street, New York City. These administrative agents will be happy to answer inquiries.

The operation of the plan is predicated upon the enrollment of 50% or more of the Chapter membership. By such unity of action broader coverage is made possible at lower cost. In addition to this economic feature the plan affords such advantages as unrestricted date of origin of disability, no medical examination, eligibility up to the age of 70, and others. An additional feature is the possible inclusion of key personnel within the firms of member architects.

Since we can take advantage of this opportunity only if at least one half of the membership enrolls, it is important that each Chapter member become familiar with the details of the policy offered and give it careful consideration.

## FIRST FIELD TRIP

About 35 members of the Chapter visited the Benjamin Moore & Co. plant last month on the first field trip arranged by the Technical Committee. Members were taken by bus to the factory where lunch was served. They were then escorted through the plant in three groups, each of which was led by a company representative who explained the manufacturing processes and answered questions.

Of particular interest was the method by which the paint materials were taken by elevator directly from the unloading platform to the top floor where they were mixed mechanically in various sized "batches". Following the mixing process, the paint flowed by gravity to the second floor where it was "ground" on large rollers. It then flowed by gravity again to the first floor where it was packaged. Members were especially fascinated by a device which precisely filled each can and by

a second which attached the labels. In another building they saw how the color cards were produced.

Following the plant inspection, Benjamin Moore & Co.'s chief chemist described some of the fine points of paint manufacture and answered many interesting and informative questions. A more detailed report of the trip will be contained in the next Technical Committee Bulletin.

## CANDIDATES

The following have applied for Institute membership:

1. John H. Bennett  
Sponsors: Benjamin Lane Smith  
Max H. Foley
2. Amos E. Gloster  
Sponsors: Matthew W. Del Gaudio  
Gilbert I. Prowler
3. Almeron Wallace McCrea  
Sponsors: Eugene J. Lang  
Archie Protopapas
4. Selig Whinston  
Sponsors: Jose A. Fernandez  
Benjamin Schlanger

and for Associate membership:

1. Irene K. Ames  
Sponsors: Charles G. Ramsey  
W. Stuart Thompson
2. Alan Burnham  
Sponsors: Leopold Arnaud  
Bro. Cajetan Baumann
3. Robert Saunier Lundberg  
Sponsors: Otto Teegen  
Benjamin Lane Smith

## SCHOOLS OF ARCHITECTURE

Through the commendable efforts of Harry B. Brainerd of the Chapter Committee on Education, there is now in the Chapter Library a very complete collection of catalogues from all schools of architecture throughout the country. The list is available to members for reference.

## EXPERIENCE WANTED

Due to current restrictions on building in England, Mr. G. D. Sykes, M.A., a young unmarried British architect and surveyor, is anxious to come to New York in June for a year in order to gain practical experience of modern building methods. Mr. Sykes is particularly interested in large steel and reinforced concrete construction, and will provide references and full details of his education and professional training. Any member interested in employing Mr. Sykes is requested to notify the Chapter office.

## THE SOUTH AMERICAN WEIGH

Against a backdrop of towering peaks and flower-scented air, punctuated by the rhythm of the rumba, Julian Clarence Levi and Ralph Walker, at a dinner meeting of the Chapter held on December 16, told us about the 6th Pan American Congress of Architects held recently in Lima, Peru. Mr. Levi was Chairman of the delegation of 9 from the U.S.A., and Mr. Walker was a member of that delegation. In all, 355 delegates represented the various countries of North and South America.

The last such Congress was held 7 years ago. The next session is scheduled to take place 2 years hence, probably in Cuba. Interest during the current session was focused largely upon architectural education. Apparently, much more importance is attached locally to the field of architecture and its exponents than is the case in the United States. This impression was strengthened by the personal presence and interest of the President of Peru and many high dignitaries, raising the occasion to a position not matched at our own conventions.

Our representatives observed evidence everywhere of the meeting of Inca and Spanish civilizations. Native influence was stronger in painting and sculpture than in architecture. It was regretted that the many diversified interests, administered by 7 different committees, limited the interchange of ideas among various groups. Themes and expositions were unrelated, and there was inadequate discussion of such matters as city planning and housing. To some extent this was due to the extreme provisions made for hospitality and elaborate entertainment. Most of the discussion was based upon the past and too little upon current or future architecture.

Apparently our delegates found or made opportunity to note housing conditions for themselves in Chile and neighboring countries. Mr. Walker's impression was that Chile is making an earnest effort to improve its housing facilities, while Brazil is inclined to present a well developed outer curtain which shields the poor living conditions of the interior.

The talks of Messrs. Levi and Walker were augmented by movies and stills photographed by Mrs. Hildreth Meiere and her daughter. These projections depicted life and architecture in color, set in scenes of rare beauty, and gave us a vivid impression of the country in which the Congress was held.



## HONORS

The OCULUS records with pleasure that the National Institute of Arts and Letters elected on December 29, 1947, two of our members, James Kellum Smith, F.A.I.A. and Harrie T. Lindeberg. Such honors to individual members honor the Chapter.

## RETURN ENGAGEMENT

Once again our torch bearers, Harold Sleeper and Frederick Woodbridge, have been invited by Columbia University to present their "Course for the Home Builder." This is a series of ten weekly talks, on Thursday evenings, beginning February 5, open to the public, in which Messrs. Sleeper and Woodbridge offer advice on avoiding many of the "pitfalls that Mr. Blandings fell into when he set out to build his Dream Home" — to quote from the University bulletin.

We congratulate Columbia University for setting up this course, and our two protagonists for having proven their worth by securing a third engagement.

## GILLROY DINNER

Wednesday evening, January 28, is the date and the St. George Hotel is the place.

As announced in our January issue this will be a testimonial to the new Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Buildings in New York tendered by the architects and engineers of the five boroughs.

This Chapter's representative on the Dinner Committee is Carl Vollmer who is now busy taking reservations. Better mail your check (\$8.00 a plate) to Mr. Vollmer, 155 East 42nd Street, right away.

## SMALL

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ben John Small, Chairman of the Education Committee, wishes to thank the Chapter membership for its splendid response to the recent questionnaire concerning local drafting school students. The survey clearly indicates the necessity for Chapter action in this vital matter. An effort to meet with State authorities will be initiated immediately.

## BRAZIL BUILDS

We are indebted to Philip L. Goodwin for another and a very welcome addition to our library: *Brazil Builds*, the combined work of Mr. Goodwin and G. E. Kidder Smith. In a series of excellent photographs, some in color, the architectural art of Brazil is traced from the Colonial and Imperial periods to the very modern structures of today. An informative and interesting text in Portuguese and English accompanies the illustrations.

## OUR HOUSE EXHIBIT

Under the auspices of the New Jersey State Museum at Trenton, the New York and the New Jersey Chapters of the A.I.A. will hold a combined exhibit on the Contemporary House and its Neighborhood. This will be on view from March 7 through April 16, 1948.

Notices will be sent out shortly giving details and requesting material.

Invitations to submit samples of student work are to be sent to Columbia, Cornell, Pennsylvania, Rensselaer and Syracuse.

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