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O C U L U S

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NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
115 EAST 40th STREET, NEW YORK 16, N. Y.

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APARTMENT HOUSE MEDAL

For the first time since 1940 the New York Chapter is offering to the architects of the Metropolitan Area its Apartment House Medal. The Committee in charge, consisting of Francis Keally, Chairman, Willis Mills and Mott B. Schmidt, is inviting submissions of multiple dwellings erected within the five boroughs between October 1, 1940, and October 1, 1947, irrespective of cost, method of financing or income-group to be housed.

Submissions will be divided into three classifications: (1) apartments over six stories, (2) apartments of six stories and under, and (3) housing groups. One medal will be awarded in each classification, provided the submissions have sufficient merit.

Each entry should be limited to one typical bedroom floor plan and two photographs (at least one of the exterior), and should be accompanied by a sealed envelope containing the name and address of the architect. The architect's name should not appear on the drawings or photographs. The location of the project should be clearly indicated.

All entries should reach the Chapter Office on or before April 15, 1948.

FEES ENCORE

A committee of three, representing the architects of the Metropolitan Area, called the other day on Commissioner Zurmuhlen to urge the adoption of a revised rate of fees on City work.

A proposed new schedule had been approved by the Chapter, you will remember, at the January 6 lunch, and had likewise been approved by all the other groups in this area represented on the Joint Committee of Architectural Societies.

The new Commissioner was definitely interested and showed an understanding of the architect's position.

Our new telephone number

MURRAY HILL 5
6034

Further factual data to bolster our argument for more equitable fees will help to push the matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

In most of the statements sent in by members, relating their experiences with City jobs, the fees were based on 1939 costs. However, if information is available on City contracts in which the fees are based on current costs, say of the last two or possibly three years, our Committee will be able to present a more realistic picture to the Commissioner in their next conference with him.

If you have had such a contract which resulted in a loss to you, or which present indications show will result in a loss, please send the details without delay to the Chapter Office.

ARCHITECTS SPONSOR ALUMNI DAY AT COLUMBIA

The annual alumni day at Columbia University on February 12th was sponsored this year by alumni of the School of Architecture. At a luncheon arranged by a committee headed by Frederick J. Woodbridge, Dean Leopold Arnaud spoke on the developments in the School of Architecture during the past ten years. Howard P. Vermilya, formerly Technical Director of the Federal Housing Administration, and now Vice-President of American Houses, Inc., reviewed the progress that had been made in the field of housing. The closing address was made by Max Abramovitz who, as Deputy Director of the United Nations Planning Committee, gave his listeners an excellent picture of how the architects of many nations were combining their talents in the design of the "Workshop for Peace."

PUBLIC RELATIONS

On February 3, a letter was sent to Stephen G. Thompson, Real Estate Editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, protesting the omission of architects' names in connection with publication of their work. Mr. Thompson's answer is reassuring and gratifying. Here is an extract from his letter:

"May I assure you the *Herald Tribune*, and especially its real estate section, has the highest regard for architects and architecture. It is our rule throughout all sections of the paper to give credit to the architect when printing stories or renderings of new buildings.

"Please believe me, it is not our intention to slight architects. (Good Lord, I even used to think of being one myself.) May I say then, that I appreciate the pride that inspired your letter of the 3rd — that I hope we may do better in the future whenever circumstances warrant — and that you will never feel that we deliberately withhold credit to the architect in a story or picture in which credit is due."

To date, Mr. Thompson has been as good as his word. Improvement has also been noted in the *New York Times*. Keep your clippings coming, and we'll get somewhere with this campaign. In this connection, our thanks go to Lessing Williams, who has been diligent in sending in offending items. One of these was a copy of *Steam Talk*, a publication of the New York Steam Corporation. We also have

a letter from that company, promising that credit will be given to architects in future issues.

There has been a fine response to the questionnaire sent out in February, asking for volunteers to write or speak on the list of subjects made up by our public relations consultants.

WHEN IS A CONTRACT NOT A CONTRACT?

The luncheon meeting on March 9th was devoted to a discussion of the standard contract between architect and client. The talk revolved around the complex question as to whether the contract in its present form protects the architect and/or the client, from whom and from what, and how the building contractor is affected in the process.

The meeting was conducted by Thomas Creighton, on behalf of the Professional Forum Committee. The speakers were all attorneys who have had considerable experience in this field. Each was allotted ten minutes to present his views as to the adequacy of the contract form and to make recommendations for improvement. While opinions were somewhat divided, the composite of deficiencies mentioned indicated that we may have a bad case of corpus delicti.

Mr. Bernard Tomson approached the subject from the point of view of the Architect. He said he had discerned a certain professional reticence on the part of architects to the use of long forms, complex legal verbiage, and insistence upon more specific protection. He felt that the contract in its present form satisfies this psychological aspect as a gentleman's agreement, but is inadequate on a strictly business basis. He made the following recommendations:

(1) Changes to include provision for a retainer fee, (2) Clarification as to the basis for extra services, (3) Specific provision for periodic payments during construction, (4) Provision that the basis for the fee be made upon the cost estimate established by the architect and not by the client, and (5) Embellishment of the arbitration clauses. Mr. Tomson also suggested that in place of a printed form which might require modifications by hand, it might be better to use a letter form based upon a list of established provisions. In conclusion he stated that regardless of the form the contract took, both sides would gain materially by the retention of attorneys.

Mr. Joseph Fink opened fire with vitriolic humor from the contractor's point of view. He attacked the standard form on all fronts, lowering its standard and leaving it formless. His estimate of the contract documents is that they constitute an invitation to litigation. Here are a few of his criticisms: 1-Percentages stated are vague as to specific nature of the respective bases to which they apply. 2-Definition of the term *supervision* is in ambig-

uous language. 3-In cases where an additional fee is charged for handling separate sub-contracts, the intent is clouded. 4-Engineering services are not defined. 5-Amount of fee to be charged is nebulous for services on work not consummated. Mr. Fink believes that the main factor in reducing the amount of potential litigation arising out of use of the standard form is the tendency of architects to yield to clients instead of insisting on their rights. He, along with Mr. Tomson, feels that architects should employ legal counsel in the preparation of their contracts. Also, he maintained that the same sort of fuzziness is found in the standard documents of construction contracts and leads to flagrant injustices.

The last scheduled speaker was Mr. Thomas Green, whose legal experience in department store work qualified him to present the client's point of view. It is Mr. Green's contention that while the standard form may prove adequate for the architect, it does not sufficiently protect the client. His objections were aimed largely at the percentage type of agreement, which he held is unsound, due to fluctuation in construction costs.

It is his opinion that the architect should discover a way to establish a firm target price both for construction and professional costs, so that the client can establish a realistic budget. He admitted to the inevitable elasticity indigenous to construction projects, and did not divulge how his suggestion could be made to operate.

After the scheduled speakers had finished, two other lawyers took part in the discussion from the floor. One was Mr. Nathan Walker, who maintained that the standard form has been used successfully for many years. He held that all of the provisions criticized as being vague had already been clarified and interpreted in court decisions which established the intent. Mr. Maxwell Tretter, formerly counsel to the New York City Housing Authority, steered a midway course by stating that from the standpoint of hard business, the standard form is unsatisfactory, but that it is generally adequate from the professional aspect.

Clarence Litchfield, Chairman of the Committee on Fees and Contracts, stated that the form had been reviewed and approved by legal counsel. He also said that studies are now in process for establishing definite fee schedules with the local Housing Authority for multiple dwelling work. A motion was made by Maxfield Vogel, and passed, proposing that the Committee on Fees and Contracts take into consideration in their studies the various criticisms and suggestions made by the speakers.

WHAT WILL IT COST?

One of the architect's current difficulties is to furnish clients with realistic cost estimates. These can be obtained from contractors, of course, on the basis of preliminary drawings and outline specifications, but too often the final bids show that such estimates were far too low. Furthermore, many clients want to know the approximate cost of a proposed building before they authorize the architect to make preliminary studies.

For a time one of the architectural magazines published current cost information on typical buildings, but since the discontinuance of that service, information of this sort has not been readily available.

The Oculus, therefore, proposes to publish the cubic foot cost of various types of buildings based upon actual bids received, providing Chapter members will cooperate by sending in the following information:

- Cubage
- Cubic foot cost
- Type of building (residence, school, office building, etc.)
- Number of stories
- Type of construction (frame, masonry, semi-fireproof or fireproof)
- Location
- Date when bids received

"Masonry construction" means masonry walls with frame floors and roof; "semi-fireproof construction" means masonry walls with steel joist floor and roof construction.

Cubic foot costs should be computed either on the AIA system or on that given in Architectural Graphic Standards. In the case of cost-plus work, the cubic foot cost should be based upon the completed job, and the date given should be that of completion rather than that on which bids were received.

This information, to be of value, should appear in these columns without delay. We ask you therefore to submit cubic foot costs as quickly as possible after bids are received or construction completed. No costs over three months old are desired.

While we are fully aware that the cubic foot costs for various types of buildings will vary considerably, depending upon the specifications and details, we believe that publication of these figures will be a service to our members in helping to keep them posted on current costs.

JOHN BULL'S BOY

The Chapter is receiving and will probably continue to receive letters asking for assistance in finding temporary (or permanent) employment for foreign architects and students of architecture. We now have on file several requests from England and one from Sweden.

A typical letter is from a Third Year Student at The University of Liverpool's School of Architecture; it is accompanied by a letter of strong recommendation of this student by the Head of the School.

This student seeks five or six months' employment in the office of a good American Architect — starting this coming Summer of '48. He is described by the School's Head as "keen, intelligent, and hard working — and who can be relied upon to give the best service in his power, and to prove a likeable and loyal temporary member of any office."

One of the requirements of the University of Liverpool is that students have some practical experience in an architect's office.

Why not try to give one of these lads a chance in your office? Not only would you be doing a pleasant service, but in a larger sense you would be performing a personal service to the post-war reconstruction of England, since you would be helping one Englishman to help himself.

—Francis W. Roudebush

BETTER COMMUNITIES FOR NEW YORK CITY

Seven city-wide civic organizations will sponsor an all-day Citizens Conference on City Planning April 8 at the Hotel Roosevelt for individual citizens and representatives of neighborhood civic and business groups in the five boroughs of Greater New York.

Letters have been sent, together with a preliminary program, to about 150 local community groups inviting them to become co-sponsors of the conference, the purpose of which is to stimulate citizens to participate in the development of their respective neighborhoods and sections of the city.

The seven sponsoring organizations are the Regional Plan Association, the Citizens Union, New York City League of Women Voters, New York Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Municipal Art Society, Citizens' Housing Council of New York, Inc., and the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Two members of this Chapter are serving on the executive committee of the conference, Robert C. Weinberg and Frederick J. Woodbridge. A descriptive folder is enclosed.

THE ARCHITECT AND THE HOME BUILDER

"Meet The Men Who Build Them" was the title of the discussion at a Chapter luncheon sponsored by the Professional Forum Committee on February 10. At the outset, Mr. Otto Hartwig, Executive Secretary of the Long Island Home Builders Institute, stated that when the operative builder had to cut his costs to meet competition, the first item that he eliminated was the architect's services. This was not due, he said, to any lack of appreciation of the architect's services but because it was one of the few things that could be dispensed with. Materials and labor were necessary to build a house; so were the land and the plans. But the plans could be purchased for a small amount, even though the houses built from such plans might not be as attractive as those constructed from an architect's drawings. Mr. Hartwig pointed out that many of the home magazines sold sets of plans and specifications.

On the other hand, it was brought out that more home builders were using architects than before the war, and that this tendency would probably increase as the supply of homes caught up with the demand. Some architects had been able to sense the operative builder's merchandising problem and to establish the value of their services by giving their designs the character which the public was seeking. This was an important factor in such a competitive industry. The operative builder was in very close touch with the public's needs and desires and the architect seeking that type of work would have to satisfy the demand.

With respect to the architect's compensation for his services it was pointed out that while the architect usually did not receive as high a rate of compensation for this type of work as for private house work, his total compensation might be more if the builder erected many houses from the same basic plans. In this connection, the opinion was expressed that the builder could well afford to pay the architect more without seriously affecting his profit.

At the close of the meeting a resolution was adopted as the sense of the meeting that a liaison committee of architects and home builders be appointed to explore the topic further.

ANNIVERSARY DINNER

The New York Chapter held its 79th Anniversary Dinner on February 25th, with 170 members, wives, and guests joining the festivities. Guests included the presidents of most of the chapters and architectural societies in the metropolitan area, and also John J. White Jr., field secretary of the A.I.A.

The Certificate of Merit of the New York State Association of Architects was presented to the Chapter Committee on Housing for Paraplegic War Veterans, and accepted by the Chairman of the Committee, William Potter.

President Sleeper then read the citation awarding the New York Chapter Medal of Honor to Wallace K. Harrison. The Jury of Award, composed of Francis Keally, Theodor Muller, Louis Skidmore, and Otto Teegen, took part in the presentation of the medal to Mrs. Harrison, who accepted it on behalf of her husband, unfortunately ill at the time. (We are pleased to report that he is now well on the way to recovery.)

Following these ceremonies, the party continued in the Exhibition Hall upstairs, where Mortimer E. Freehof had arranged an INFORMATION PLEASE entertainment, with script, wise-cracks, questions to stump the experts, and a series of lantern slides collected and exhibited by Daniel Schwartzman. After introducing Harvey W. Corbett, who took the stand as Moderator, Mort Freehof seated the "experts": Mrs. Mary Roche of the *N. Y. Times*, Frederick Gutheim of the *Herald Tribune*, Thomas Creighton of *Progressive Architecture*, Douglas Haskell of the *Architectural Record*, and Theodor Muller of *Living*; and then the real fun began.

Space does not permit a review of this clever, amusing and entertaining show, but all present took part and many were the winners of appropriate scale-prizes presented by Miss Waters to those who succeeded where the experts failed.

COMING EVENTS

Mar. 23, Tuesday, Lunch 12:30

Motion Picture on tilt-up method of building in concrete.

Mar. 30, Tuesday, 12:00 Noon

Second Field Trip — this time to General Bronze at Farmingdale.

April 6, Tuesday, Lunch 12:30

A discussion of the Industry Engineered house.

SYMPOSIUM ON MODERN ARCHITECTURE

On February 11, at the Museum of Modern Art, a distinguished array of speakers participated in a symposium on the subject "What is Happening to Modern Architecture." The presentation was extremely interesting, informative and amusing, but when the curtain fell, the question posed remained unanswered.

Philip C. Johnson introduced Lewis Mumford, who acted as moderator. Opening speeches were made by Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and Henry Russell Hitchcock. Mr. Barr described the development of the International Style stemming from Europe, and discussed its influence in the United States. Mr. Hitchcock stated that this style can be considered synonymous with modern architecture, and that its development into expressive forms is still in the process of evolution. He compared Michelangelo with Frank Lloyd Wright in that both were designing for the future, rather than for the present.

Walter Gropius spoke of the influence of the machine on architecture, and the emphasis of its use in modern life. He feels that we should seek a new approach to our problem and forget about labelling it as a style. Also, he considers that this approach should be regional, rather than international.

George Nelson stressed the importance of home design as a national backbone stemming from love of family and harmonious human relationships.

Ralph Walker maintained that humanism is the basis of all architecture. He said that all design should relate to human needs and should not be limited or determined by the function of materials. His dictum is to make the future more acceptable.

Christopher Tunnard held that architecture should not be derived from materials alone and that structures should have a style in addition to function. He considered it a mistake to scrap history, and advocated careful consideration of traditional buildings which people through the ages have found practical and pleasant.

Frederick Gutheim mentioned the importance of opinions of architectural critics. He said that the modern con-

cept should be based upon contemporary life and not upon the past.

Marcel Breuer placed humanism first and all considerations of style and esthetics as incidental corollaries. He stated that all of the requirements of a problem should be solved in the design study, letting the ultimate form or appearance result in what it will.

Peter Blake's idea was that the industrial revolution in architecture has not yet materialized and is being delayed by the stylists. Eero Saarinen's opinion was that there is too much talk of style. He felt that appearance should be simply a reflection of the designer's thinking.

CANDIDATES

The following have applied for Institute membership:

1. Robbins Lewis Conn
Sponsors: Lorimer Rich
Charles G. Ramsey
2. William E. Delehanty
Sponsors: Henry Otis Chapman
Randolph Evans
3. Albert Lee Hawes
Sponsors: Henry Otis Chapman
Randolph Evans
4. Filomeno Alvares Olivares
Sponsors: Charles G. Ramsey
Frederick L. Ackerman
5. Michael L. Radoslovich
Sponsors: Ely J. Kahn
James B. Newman
6. Frank Coolidge Shattuck
Sponsors: Walter H. Kilham, Jr.
Charles H. Koop
7. Edward Reinhold Tauch, Jr.
Sponsors: Richard Boring Snow
Ronald Allwork

and for Associate membership:

1. Richard Christopher Clark
Sponsors: Alfred Fellheimer
Adolph Witschard
2. Winold Tjark Reiss
Sponsors: Francis Keally
J. Davidson Stephen

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY ESTABLISHES AN ARTS CENTER

Columbia University announced on February 15th the establishment of an Arts Center, which will bring together for the first time students, teachers and practitioners of Architecture, Dramatic Arts, Music, Painting and Sculpture. As part of this plan, two new schools have been formed at the University; The School of Dramatic Arts, and The School of Painting and Sculpture. These newly created schools will accept students next September. Already in existence are the long established and highly regarded School of Architecture and Department of Music.

It is intended that the new center will provide for the nation a gathering place for the promotion of mutual interests of the Drama, Music, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture and the allied arts. Courses will be coordinated to provide breadth of viewpoint as well as professional artistic competence.

Leopold Arnaud, Dean of the School of Architecture, and a member of this Chapter, has been named acting director of the new schools. Admission to the schools will be based upon previously completed academic requirements at the University level. The schools will grant the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts.

The University believes that the Arts Center, because it is situated in New York City, will have a unique opportunity to use the unsurpassed cultural facilities of the city—its museums, theatres, concert halls and opera. The great artists of the day will be available as instructors. In turn, the University will be able to provide for the practicing professionals a laboratory where experiments can be attempted within minutes of the Manhattan studios and stages.

It is hoped to house all the schools of the Arts Center in one building as soon as possible. A site on Amsterdam Avenue, between 116th and 117th Streets, has been provisionally allocated for this purpose. The building will include small and large theatres, rehearsal rooms, workshops, studios, libraries and classrooms. Its construction must await new gifts of benefactors who see here an opportunity to advance the arts in America.