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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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HAROLD R. SLEEPER, *President*  
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MORTIMER E. FREEHOF, *Editor*

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## OUR EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Fore score years ago our forefathers brought forth the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. During the intervening years it has become a tradition to celebrate this event in a manner befitting its importance and interest.

This year the celebration took place on March 4 at the Town Hall Club, a new departure in the history of the Chapter. In honor of the occasion the members set aside, pro tem, all consideration of technical matters, client problems, budget and other trespass on an architect's peace of mind. Gaiety reigned. During the cocktail hour, profundity was completely liquidated, and at dinner the members devastated large quantities of roast beef to the strains of incidental music by Meyer Davis.

Harold Sleeper started the post-prandial proceedings with presentation of the Chapter's Medal of Honor for 1949 to Louis Skidmore for "distinguished work and high professional standing." The citation accompanying the Medal named some of the distinguished pieces of architecture for which Mr. Skidmore was responsible and praised his versatility and skill as an architect as well as his achievements in furthering cooperation and coordination among the various elements of the building industry in New York.

In acknowledging the honor bestowed upon him, Mr. Skidmore traced the development of architecture from the earliest times to the present, showing not only a knowledge of the history of his profession but a clear understanding of the architect's function. Space does not permit comment on his keen appreciation of the Egyptian, the Greek, the Roman, the Gothic and the Renaissance forms, from all of which he has absorbed the lesson that architecture,

by serving the needs of the generation in which it is created, will produce monuments which express the spirit of the times.

Major General Thomas F. Farrell, Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority, was an honored guest at the dinner. He gave us a comprehensive outline of the projected housing program for this city. He spoke of a six-year plan of development which, if carried to fulfillment, will change the entire panoramic aspect of New York City.

The speeches were concise, just long enough and were received with a tremendous ovation by all fortunate enough to be present.

## PRE CONVENTION TALK

If contests indicate a healthy state, the Institute this year is abundantly healthy. At the coming A.I.A. elections to be held at Houston, there will be contests for nearly every post. (There are four contestants for one office.)

At our Chapter Pre-Convention meeting on March 8, speeches were made on behalf of the two candidates for the Presidency, with a word or two for several of the other contestants, but the members voted that our delegates go uninstructed.

The question of increased dues will also come up at the Convention. Two alternatives have been proposed: (1) a graduated scale based on office payrolls, and (2) a flat increase of \$10. per member. The Chapter vote was against the graduated scale proposed, although the need for increased revenue was recognized. One suggestion was that the graduated scale be based on number of years since registration rather than upon payroll. No vote was taken on the flat increase.

Among the resolutions offered and passed was one urging the A.I.A. to focus upon increasing the member-

ship; another complimenting the A.I.A. on the improved format and content of the *Journal*, and a third urging the delegates to oppose vigorously the plan to extend the East Front of the Capitol. This plan had been the subject of long and serious debate at the 1935, 1936 and 1937 Conventions of the Institute and after judicious and forceful opposition by the architects, had been defeated. This year it has been revived with, it is said, the blessing of the Administration. For further details on this, call Lorimer Rich who brought it to our attention.

A resolution submitted by Electus Litchfield on behalf of the Professional Forum Committee proposes a conference of all elements of the building industry with a view to analyzing and reducing current costs. After the deletion of a few stinging phrases, the resolution was passed as the sense of the meeting, with only one lone "nay."

Arthur Holden, Chairman of the Housing Committee, had no formal resolutions to present, his Committee having arranged a complete analysis and discussion of the current housing bill S-138 as the feature of a recent Chapter meeting. Mr. Holden instead made extemporaneous comments on the bill, calling attention again to some of the unsatisfactory provisions discussed at the former meeting. He commended the Urban Planning Committee's Statement of Principles, Parts III and IV, dealing respectively with the Emergency Program and Long Range Planning; also their recommendations for experiments to stimulate financing through the F.H.A. Mr. Holden will be at the Convention when this bill is discussed. His obvious grasp of the whole subject was reassuring and it was the sense of the meeting that his recommendations be approved.



## THE CONVENTION

"American Life and Architecture in the Atomic Age" is the theme of the Eighty-First Convention of the American Institute of Architects at Houston, Texas, March 15-18.

The program calls for a series of seminars on this subject, intertwined with business sessions and social functions, and culminating in an address by Atomic Energy Commissioner Sumner T. Pike.

The highlight of the Convention will undoubtedly be the presentation of the Institute's Gold Medal to Frank Lloyd Wright at the Annual Dinner.

Ralph Walker and Matthew Del Gaudio, both distinguished members of our Chapter, have been nominated respectively for the Institute President and Second Vice-President. If elected, both will also be Directors of the A.I.A. Also Arthur C. Holden of this Chapter has been nominated for Regional Director for New York.

A large number of the delegates will avail themselves of the post Convention tour to Mexico City, Cuernavaca, Taxco and the pyramids of Teotihuacan, with a possible trip to Acapulco, "Riviera of the Americas."

## LEGAL LUNCHEON

The subject of the February 1 meeting was "The Law As It Affects Architects." Interest in the subject matter was evidenced by an unusually large attendance.

Before introducing the guest of honor, the Chairman called on Mortimer E. Freehof, Editor of the OCULUS, for comments on the Noonan Bill now pending in Albany, which proposes to lower the present requirements for architectural license. The wording of this bill appeared in the February OCULUS. After a brief discussion, a resolution was adopted to the effect that the chapter voice its disapproval in a letter to the proper authority, stating its reasons for such objection.

Our guest was Bernard Tomson, an attorney whose clients include a number of architects and engineers. Articles by Mr. Tomson on the subject at hand appear currently in *Progressive Architecture*.

Mr. Tomson began by comparing the architect and his client to two blind people, neither of whom sees the other's viewpoint nor realizes the other's blindness. He expressed the belief that many difficulties would never arise and much litigation could be avoided if the lay public were better informed as to the functions and obligations of an architect. You're

telling us, Mr. Tomson! This is what we've been telling ourselves for some time; hence our public relations program.

Mr. Tomson cautioned us about the dangers incident to quoting preliminary construction estimates, and cited several cases in point. He deplored our timidity in dealing with clients, also our reluctance to insist upon a clear, concise, written agreement. He criticized the documents of the A.I.A. in that they are lengthy and involved, making necessary the elimination of some of the printed wording and the addition of many typed inserts. This disfiguration of what purports to be a standard contract raises suspicion in the mind of the client that the agreement is no longer in such form as to carry the stamp of approval of the A.I.A. Mr. Tomson believes that new forms should be prepared in brief, simple terms for signature, details to be in a separate form, incorporated by reference. He did not favor the letter form of agreement and considered it inadequate.

After Mr. Tomson's talk, Thomas Creighton, who had been asked by Daniel Schwartzman to conduct the discussion, called for a show of hands on the following questions:

1. Are we entirely satisfied with the standard contract documents in their present form? To this the answer was a unanimous "No."

2. Should the Committee on Fees and Contracts be requested to recommend revisions in the standard contract documents? To this question the answer was a unanimous "Yes."

## HIGH SCHOOL EXHIBIT

Architects have long been concerned with ways and means of informing people of our functions, methods, problems and fees. The solution is education. The place to start is among the youth who will one day become our clients.

A short time ago, a notice was sent to all members advising that under the auspices of Eleanor Pepper, Chairman of the Committee on Exhibits, and with the cooperation of the Board of Education, a Chapter exhibit would be prepared for high school students in the Metropolitan area. Members were requested to send in constructive suggestions, but at this writing only two answers have been received.

The far-reaching implications of such an exhibit make this a most important undertaking. It is an unusual opportunity to peddle our wares. Members are urged to give this project the consideration it merits and to send suggestions to Eleanor Pepper, care of the Chapter Office.

## MEMBERSHIP

At the Annual Dinner on March 4, Harold Sleeper presented the first applicant for Student Associate Membership in the New York Chapter, Mr. Joseph A. Wilkes of Columbia University. This is an important milestone in the Chapter history for it signifies the growing interest of established architects in the education and development of the future members of the profession.

As a result of the efforts of Harvey Clarkson and Nicol Bissell of the Membership Committee 9 Student Associate applications have been received from Columbia University. Many others are expected to follow. This program is being extended to other schools in the city.

The cooperation of every Chapter member is needed to make these new Student Associates feel at home. They look to us for advice and inspiration. The least we can do is to welcome them with genuine enthusiasm.

## RADIANT HEATING SEMINAR

On Saturday, January 29, four carloads of members careened around the State of New Jersey, inspecting installations of radiant heating. The places visited included several houses, a garage, an industrial school, and a furniture show room, as well as a plant where heating pipe is bent and prepared for installation. The various buildings were in different stages, giving opportunity to note conditions from early steps of installation to completion and operation. Engineers of the Byers Pipe Company were at hand to answer the many questions raised. The trip proved to be well worth braving the rigors of a chilly day in the country.

A further session on February 25 concluded this very successful seminar. Herbert Wheeler, Chairman, reports a highly interested attendance at all sessions, and hopes that seminars on other subjects may be planned in the near future.

## USUS LOQUENDI

The Empire State Architect published in the January-February issue an article titled "The Efficient Architect is a Specialist," by Chapter member Richard Roth.

Richard Boring Snow is addressing the Plainfield Art Association at its March meeting. His subject, as suggested by the Association's Program Chairman, Mrs. Alfred Williams, is "Modern Architecture in the Residential Field."



## ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

Prevalent interest and wide discussion concerning the proper scholastic preparation of an architectural student led us to request the educators to give us their points of view. We are fortunate in being able to submit the following from one of our own Chapter members, an authority on the subject.

Somebody is always writing about the education of the architect, which is proof that this is a subject of enduring importance. And so it is a subject that is always new, even though Vitruvius and many of his successors through the ages have specified quite the same requirements that we find necessary today.

If architecture takes form according to the needs and ideals of society, as we believe it does, it is essential for an architect to have a broad, general education upon which to develop his professional training. This general knowledge will enable him to understand the needs and ideals of the society for which he designs buildings. If he understands these conditions thoroughly, he will be able to translate them into the physical attributes of structure. However indispensable technical knowledge may be, the architect must first *create*, and he can do so successfully only insofar as he can understand and interpret the enduring problems of humanity as well as the characteristics of his own time. He must realize the paradox that change and changelessness are both permanent factors of life. He will then be able to distinguish between fundamentals and fashions.

Education cannot be broad and general if it does not include history. Having a knowledge of the past and of the present, the architect will be prepared to cope with drastic changes that are still before him, and to produce designs that will have both aesthetic value and practical conformity to the needs of the day.

The specifically professional training of an architect should be about equally divided between subjects pertaining to design, history and theory, and subjects pertaining to the structural requirements of building. In other words, the student's time and talents should be devoted in about equal measure to aesthetic and scientific subjects. A sound technical knowledge is absolutely essential; yet it is only the tool and material with which the architect works. If he does not add aesthetic value he has produced structure, not architecture.

Training in school should be punctuated with practical experience by work in architectural offices during vacations. Graduation must be followed by an apprenticeship in an office where the novice must apply his school training to actual problems. The office should, if possible, be chosen with care, for it is important that these first practical experiences should be had under the guidance of a competent and sympathetic practitioner.

With this background of instruction and application, the young architect should be prepared to proceed independently to practice his complicated profession, and to be of real service to the society in which he lives.

LEOPOLD ARNAUD, DEAN,  
School of Architecture,  
Columbia University

## COST DATA

One of our most important problems is to discover a method of obtaining realistic cost data.

Cubage, area, and other rules of thumb have led most of us astray and on many occasions have resulted in laborious and often futile compromise.

Endless revisions and cutting of corners in attempting economies usually lead either to unhappy solutions, unhappy clients, or both. As often as not, the constricting process squeezes the job right out of existence. It seems evident that some practical method is needed to determine preliminary costs.

In an attempt to solve this problem, the Technical Committee made it the subject of the luncheon meeting on March 1. Stuart Thompson reviewed established methods and their shortcomings. Since mechanical installations have become more elaborate and varied, he believes they should be considered apart from cost computations based upon bulk or area.

Edwin A. Horner followed with the suggestion that some central clearing house of information be established. This would require cooperation of manufacturers and contractors. A committee might be appointed to draw up a questionnaire covering various types of building and materials and thus gather periodically sufficient data to form cost bases. All such data would need co-ordinating and averaging by the committee, which in turn would need the help of consulting estimators.

Our guest speaker was Charles M. Chuckrow, chief estimator of the Fred. T. Ley Corporation. Mr. Chuck-

row stressed the importance of careful analysis of all factors involved in a building before a realistic rate could be determined for cubage or area. He recommended establishing an agency with a competent staff to compile data and keep it up to date. The best method would be to have such agency list computations by trades on unit price bases, as obtained from manufacturers and sub-contractors.

After a short discussion, Herbert Lippmann suggested that the Chapter take some action regarding the proposal. It was voted to pursue investigation of this subject, the method of carrying it out to be left to the Executive Committee of the Chapter.

## NO EXTRA CHARGE

In the last two issues, we submitted to referendum the proposal to tax the membership in order to defray the cost of publishing the OCULUS. Reaction has gathered momentum. It is gratifying to note that while opinion was almost unanimous in objection to the charge, it was actually unanimous in voicing approval of the publication. Typical of the communications received is the following letter:

Dear Miss Waters:

I wholeheartedly agree with Mr. Frost's point of view, as expressed by him in the February issue of OCULUS on charging for the publication.

OCULUS is a very interesting and important paper to the members of the Chapter and deserves full distribution, which, as pointed out by Mr. Frost, probably would not be so if there were to be a charge made. If it should become a selective item with Chapter members, the Chapter as a whole would lose thereby.

If you must raise our dues, raise our dues, but give us OCULUS for free.

Sincerely,

RICHARD ROTH.

Our thanks go to all who have been articulate. The Chapter will respect the wishes of the membership, and no further action will be taken in the matter at this time.

## COMING EVENTS

Mar. 22, Tuesday Lunch 12:30

Architect - Engineer Relationship from one engineer's point of view.

Mar. 29 Tuesday Dinner 6:30

Scientific Standards of Illumination  
Speaker: Prof. Bitterman of Cornell  
Department of Psychology.

Apr. 5 Tuesday Lunch 12:30

Some Legal Pitfalls Which Can and Should be Avoided, as told by Nathan Walker, Attorney.



## CANDIDATES

According to the By-Laws of the Chapter, names of candidates for membership shall be submitted to all members before consideration by the Committee on Admissions. Information received regarding the qualifications of the following candidates will be considered confidential:

### *Corporate Membership:*

1. Joseph M. Berlinger  
Sponsors: Mortimer E. Freehof  
Jacob Moscovitz
2. Walker O. Cain  
Sponsors: Edward J. Mathews  
William Platt
3. Paul Stanley Dod  
Sponsors: Harvey P. Clarkson  
Serge P. Petroff
4. Ambrose V. Eagan  
Sponsors: E. James Gambaro  
Henry F. Seitz
5. Earnest M. Fuller  
Sponsors: Harry R. Dowswell  
William F. Lamb
6. William H. Hayes  
Sponsors: Leopold Arnaud  
Harvey Clarkson
7. Hugh Derby McClellan  
Sponsors: N. Norman Ovodow  
Elisabeth Coit
8. John J. McNamara  
Sponsors: George H. Cooley  
Perry Coke Smith
9. Angelo S. Mongiello  
Sponsors: Leonard Schultze  
Harry M. Prince
10. Edwin Avery Park  
Sponsors: Mortimer E. Freehof  
Philip G. Bartlett
11. Abraham Sperling  
Sponsors: Olindo Grossi  
Mortimer E. Freehof
12. Oscar Lockwood Vaughan  
Sponsors: George H. Ferrenz  
Maurice E. Witmer  
(New Hampshire)
13. William Wiegand  
Sponsors: Henry C. Hahn  
James Otis Post

### *Associate Membership:*

1. Peter S. Hopf  
Sponsors: Charles G. Ramsey  
Max Wechsler  
(Bronx)
2. Joseph Christopher Razza  
Sponsors: Russell Colean  
Edgar Albright
3. Ralph Thomas Rowland  
Sponsors: Thomas Christiano  
Perry Coke Smith
4. Augur Towne  
Sponsors: Jonathan F. Butler  
Nicol Bissell
5. Francis M. Tucci  
Sponsors: Olindo Grossi  
Herbert Lippmann

## BALANCING THE BUDGET

Chapter dues were raised \$5. per annum by vote at the Chapter meeting on February 8.

It is obvious in these days of high costs that to balance our budget it is necessary either to increase revenue or curtail activities. The consensus of the Chapter members seems to be against curtailment, and the Executive Committee had therefore recommended an increase of \$5. in annual dues. This recommendation, which all things considered, seems a modest one, is not to apply to newly elected members, in order that our plans for enlarging the membership will not be adversely affected.

The feasibility of a graduated scale of dues is being investigated but meantime the suggested increase was put to vote and carried.

## IGNORANCE OF THE LAW EXCUSES NO ONE

No member of the Chapter can plead ignorance of what is going on in Albany in view of the opportunity we had on February 8 of hearing Harry M. Prince on the subject of pending legislation.

Mr. Prince is not only a member of our Executive Committee but is also Technical Advisor to the State Joint Legislative Committee, and as such is well qualified to speak on the subject. He gave a concise and most illuminating resume of the bills now pending.

Two of these bills were discussed in the February OCULUS; A. Int. No. 98, which would lower registration requirements, and A. Int. No. 972 which would restrict the use of private architects on all Public Works in the City. Those present at the meeting voted unanimously to oppose these two bills and members were urged to object individually.

A uniform State Multiple Dwelling Law is proposed to apply to all cities, towns and hamlets with a population under 500,000. Also under consideration is an amendment to the M.D.L. omitting the second required exit from each apartment. Mr. Prince referred members to Julian Whittlesey's article in the *Architectural Record* for details of this amendment.

Important changes in Section 33 of the M.D.L. would permit cooking spaces to be of any shape and located anywhere in an apartment. Changes in Section 60 would permit garages in Class B dwellings. Other revisions respecting garage requirements would permit party walls, wood doors, and omit the 20' separation formerly required from building entrance. An-

other bill would require an attendant for each self service elevator. This would have an important bearing on maintenance cost and rent. An amendment to Section 213 would outlaw a second interior room in old law tenements.

James B. Newman, Chairman of the Codes Committee, described minor changes in sprinkler provisions for multiple dwellings and said that a manufacturer's affidavit would be required as to satisfactory testing where new steel fibre stresses were to be used.

Louis Ordwein, Chairman of the Legislative Committee, joined Harry Prince in urging Chapter members to acquaint themselves with details of all pending legislation and to express their opinions to their legislators. Details and reference numbers of these bills may be obtained from Mr. Ordwein.

Harold Sleeper gave a brief account of a day recently spent in Albany at the invitation of Governor Dewey, who had asked 150 architects and engineers throughout the State to meet with him to discuss ways and means of reducing building costs. Mr. Sleeper considered it significant that the Governor of the State is seeking suggestions from the architects.

## SCALE IN ARCHITECTURE

It is our conviction that sympathetic relationship exists among the arts. Having the courage of this conviction, a few symphonic souls have attempted to organize a Chapter quartet. Anyone who has tried to get four architects to convene regularly will understand the difficulties encountered. On the day set, some one of the group calls in to say that he must go to Hohokus because a contractor has started the superstructure before laying the footings. It now becomes evident that the embryonic quartet must be expanded to the proportions of a glee club. To obtain something concrete we must have sufficient aggregate.

We believe such an organization will be a source of pleasure to the group itself, and an asset to the Chapter. An occasional offering should add a new note of interest to meetings. When sufficient progress has been made, the group might well become an important instrument for advancing public relations.

All members who have had experience in glee clubs or who have improvised an obligato in close-order harmony are urged to send their names to Mortimer E. Freehof, at the Chapter office. Please indicate whether you are a baritone, basso, or tenor.