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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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## BRIEF COMMENTS ON THE CONVENTION

Houston has so far quashed successfully all attempts by well meaning architects and planners to introduce a zoning law. The city is large, sprawling, haphazard and easy-going. It is a package store town—no drinks sold over the bar, but every other store on the main street is a liquor store (the intermediate ones are shoe stores). Thus nearly every bedroom in the Rice Hotel was a potential bar equipped with scotch and bourbon. (If you took scotch you were a Yankee). The trick was to remember which room you had been invited to at which hour, but a knock at the wrong door made little difference.

Curiosity to see and hear Frank Lloyd Wright, coupled with a lively interest in the election contests, resulted in over 1000 delegates and guests taxing the hotel's capacity. During business sessions, microphones were scattered throughout the audience for the benefit of those who wished to be heard. Lively discussion on the matter of dues resulted in a vote permitting the A.I.A. Board of Directors, at their discretion, to increase dues up to \$35. a year, except that in the case of members whose professional income, salary or professional fees, is less than \$10,000 a year and who will so certify, dues shall remain at \$25. During this discussion one interesting opinion ventured was that probably  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the A.I.A. members were employed architects.

Results of the elections are now known to all though there were tense moments on both sides waiting for the returns to come in.

It was interesting to note that there was no contest for the Treasurership although there were at least 2 candidates for all other offices and 4 candidates for 2nd Vice President!

Just for the record: Mr. Walker won 4 to 1; Glenn Stanton, 1st Vice-Pres., 4 to 1; Kenneth Wischmeyer, 2nd Vice-Pres., 2 to 1 and Clair Ditchy, Secretary, 10 to 1. Arthur Holden won as Regional Director for N. Y. State both by popular vote throughout the State and by the delegate vote at the Convention.

On the whole the N. Y. Chapter's proposals fared well. Our resolution urging a larger and stronger membership was of course carried unanimously, as was our endorsement of the improved editorial policy and format of the A.I.A. Journal.

Our resolution opposing any change in the East Front of the Capitol was also carried.

The resolution that the A.I.A. request the President of the United States to call a meeting of all branches of the construction industry, with a view to raising standards and reducing costs, was voted down for the reason that the A.I.A. has already initiated such a study by other means.

Harold Sleeper, heading our delegation of 12 from this Chapter, was on hand at all sessions. 80 Chapters and 5 State Associations were represented at the Convention.

Twenty-eight Fellowships were conferred at the Annual Dinner (see current A.I.A. Journal for photographs and citations), following which the A.I.A. Gold Medal was conferred on Frank Lloyd Wright (*ibid.*) This affair was a sell-out and several hundred who were forced to dine in the several ante-rooms adjoining the ballroom crowded in later to the main room to hear and see the speakers. The attendant confusion, however, was as nothing compared to the previous night's party at the New Shamrock Hotel, where architects, townspeople, Hollywood stars and sundry others were wedged into a slow moving mass in the narrow

corridors of the Hotel. Some waited over an hour to get in to dinner; others gave up entirely. It was said that President Orr got in by way of the kitchen. For architectural comment on the new Shamrock, see Frank Lloyd Wright's speech, which was quoted in nearly all papers, or ask any architect who was there.

## POST CONVENTION TOUR TO MEXICO

Aboard 3 giant chartered planes nearly 200 architects from the Houston Convention flew to Mexico City. As we came down the gang-plank to terra firma at 7300 feet altitude in Mexico City, we were warmly greeted by a delegation of Mexican Architects. In nothing-flat we were whisked through Customs without ever seeing our bags and ushered into limousines. Then with an escort of 6 motorcycle police our 40 cars took the right of way into town.

On arrival at the new Del Prado Hotel our spirits rose. After the Shamrock in Houston we were ready for anything. This hotel, however, had charm, simplicity, and a restrained but colorful atmosphere which revived our faith in architects.

Awaiting each of us was a specially illustrated pamphlet prepared by our hosts, the Mexican Architects, welcoming us and telling us of our program. The schedule set forth was carefully adhered to and the North Americans proved their vitality by early rising, late retiring and staying upright throughout the tour. Also awaiting us was a handsome enameled metal badge making us honorary inspectors of the Federal police department. In our rooms were our bags.

That evening the U. S. architects invited our confreres to a reception at the hotel, and it turned out to be a good party.

The schedule arranged was well balanced. We spent our first day



visiting historical buildings within the City, and Mexican architects gave us interesting talks in English at each stop. The evening was spent as guests of our host architects in their several homes. In addition some of us were taken to see the amazing game of Jai-alai.

The next two days were devoted to a trip to Cuernavaca and Taxco. The residents of Cuernavaca entertained us in their homes with native orchestras and dances, as well as refreshments.

The ride through the mountainous country to Taxco was comparable to a roller-coaster. At one crest our car overheated but the ever ready natives were immediately on hand with the necessary pails of water to cool our engine. In fact, at the top of every hill Mexican children with small tins of water called "Agua-Agua"! as we drove by.

The most astonishing part of this ride was that the scenery shifted so radically within a few minutes. Palm trees to evergreens; rice paddies and mango trees to a desert-like stretch with cactus and magueys, cliffs with goats jumping about to lush prairie with grazing cattle.

We finally reached quaint Taxco, the celebrated hill town of silver mines, and now bristling with a handmade silver industry that kept us busy shopping.

On our return to Mexico City we were picked up by our alert police escort and taken to the hotel. That evening the Minister of Foreign Relations gave us a reception in the Ministry where we again met our new friends, the Mexican Architects. The following day was spent seeing the outlying monuments such as the Shrine of Guadalupe, the San Agustín Acolman Monastery and the Teotihuacan temples and pyramids.

The Mayor of Mexico City tendered us a royal luncheon in the grotto near the pyramids, complete with drinks, orchestra and the typical Mexican singers known as Mariaches. On the way back we boarded boats for a trip through the Xochimilco floating gardens. Here Indians selling flowers, postcards, and beer, each in his own small dugout, surrounded our boats to such an extent that it was hard to see the gardens. Some boats floated whole orchestras.

Next, about half of the architects took the trip by air to Acapulco. This place lived up to the publicity notices. Swimming was excellent, scenery lovely, water warm but not hot. Our group stayed at the Casablanca and enjoyed a party at Ciro's roof atop the hotel. Here the architects' wives pre-

sented a memento to Mrs. Sid Nyhus (whose husband was U. S. Travel Bureau representative of Tour B), in appreciation of the fine trip.

After two days we were back in Mexico City and taken on the most interesting tour of the trip, to see the buildings under construction. These were explained by the architects who were doing the work. Full of imagination, using materials new to us, these structures were an inspiration.

I am sure that those members of the New York Chapter who enjoyed the unstinted hospitality of the Mexican Government and the Mexican Architects are all united in expressing their gratitude to El Colegio Nacional de Arquitectos de Mexico and to La Sociedad de Arquitectos Mexicanos. To Arquitectos Zaragga (Pres. of La Sociedad), Carlos Contreras, Federico Mariscal, Mario Pani, Roberto Alvarez Espinosa and Carlos Obregon Santacilia, to mention only a few, we are deeply grateful.

HAROLD R. SLEEPER

### BEWARE OF THE LAW!

The practice of architecture is fraught with legal pitfalls. Some of them, together with valuable advice on how to avoid them, were ably set forth at the luncheon meeting on April 5, by Nathan Walker, legal counsel for the Chapter. There was general agreement by the large number present that this was one of the best presentations we have had on the subject of the law.

Mr. Walker predicated his talk upon the premise that the architect has certain definite legal responsibilities to his client and it therefore behooves him to familiarize himself with the law as it affects architectural practice.

Following is a résumé of some of the specific recommendations made by Mr. Walker:

The Mechanics Lien Law was first intended to protect workmen's rights. Later, its scope was extended to include architects' services. There is marked variation in its interpretation and application among the different States. In New York State, it applies even to the preparation of drawings alone. In some States, it protects the architect only if construction supervision has been done. In still other States it is held that since an architect is not a mechanic, he has no right of lien under this law. Because of this lack of consistency, Mr. Walker recommended that architects investigate the interpretation of the law in the particular State in which work is to be done. He also urged that the

profession as a group do whatever it can toward achieving a uniform interpretation and application.

A situation which often arises, when work is to be done in another State, is that only one member of a partnership is licensed to practice in that State. In case of litigation such condition may result in failure to collect unpaid claims. Mr. Walker recommends either that the contract be made with the individual member of the firm licensed in the particular State, or that all members of the firm be licensed there, prior to entering into the contract.

Arbitration and filing of mechanic's lien are both remedies which the architect may invoke, and resorting to one does not waive right to the other. If, however, action is brought to foreclose a lien, such action does waive the right of arbitration.

In cases where services are performed for a tenant, claims for payment may be made only against the tenant, unless the consent of the owner is included, authorizing the specific work involved.

When liens are filed, the liability of the owner is limited to the amount of the unpaid balance up to the time of such filing. A release signed by the general contractor does not protect the owner against claims by subcontractors or material concerns. Mr. Walker recommends that architects establish a list of all contractors and others involved in a building operation, and obtain releases from all interested parties.

Damages can be collected, with proper proof, both by the owner and by the contractor by reason of delay caused by either party. The validity of a clause providing liquidated damages depends largely upon whether the rate set seems logical in proportion to the size of the contract. If the rate appears excessive, proof is required, and may be difficult to establish. In the case of an architect's claim for damages or losses occasioned by delay, such claim is considered valid only if the contract stipulates a date limiting period of services.

All those present at this meeting regretted the 2 P.M. curfew which cut short the many questions evoked by Mr. Walker's talk.

### EVENTS OF INTEREST

The New York State Society of Professional Engineers will hold its 22nd Convention at the Hotel New Yorker April 21, 22 & 23. Architects are welcome at any and all sessions. For further information, tickets, etc., communicate with N. C. Saxe, Chairman, MU 6-8668.



## LIGHTING STANDARDS

The determination of proper lighting standards was the subject of the dinner meeting March 29. Lessing W. Williams, Chairman of the Technical Committee, in introducing the guest speaker, Professor M. E. Bitterman of the Department of Psychology at Cornell University, pointed out that, while in the past decisions on lighting had been made almost entirely by engineers, much research had recently been undertaken by architects and psychologists. Although the original belief that a certain quantity of light was sufficient for any given purpose has been superseded by the realization that quality is equally important, much conflict still exists between various theories and satisfactory conclusions are only beginning to be reached.

Professor Bitterman said he would devote his talk to an inquiry into the reasons for the contradictions of different authorities. He indicated that, since the subject is new and consequently not supported by extensive documentation, the approach must be experimental. He proposed to examine the various methods currently in use.

He referred first to what he called the school of expert opinion, composed of those who belittle theorists and arbitrarily arrive at conclusions by throwing together the casual preferences of individuals. Such findings, says Professor Bitterman, are of no value. If any standards of general usefulness to architects are to be set up, they must be based on demonstrable scientific theories. The only conclusions worthy of respect are drawn from performance records of subjects working under varied lighting conditions.

The simplest laboratory investigations have been those of Professor Miles A. Tinker of the University of Minnesota. By recording comparative reading speeds and rates of production under lighting conditions begun at low levels and gradually intensified, he noted that performance at first improved with increase of light. But since the point at which efficiency ceased to rise was soon reached, he advocates the theory that the amount of light required for best production is relatively low, and that indefinite increase of intensity fails to result in continued benefit.

Matthew Luckiesch of the General Electric Company, on the other hand, contends that mere performance records are insufficient and that expenditure of physical resources must be taken into consideration. In experiments otherwise similar to those of Professor Tinker, he measured heart

rate, frequency of blinking, and nervous muscular tension, and noted that these factors were most pronounced at low levels of illumination. He therefore believes that very strong lighting not only increases production but results in reduced physical and nervous strain.

The Luckiesch findings have not been substantiated by subsequent investigation. It was later determined that factory production could be temporarily improved by any lighting change, whether toward a greater or a lesser intensity. The conclusion was drawn that human effort is based on the goal, and that an individual will generally complete his task under any conditions. It remained to establish the degree of illumination which would result in the greatest production with the least waste of physical effort.

Professor Bitterman is conducting at Cornell research designed to eliminate certain shortcomings in the experiments discussed. Feeling that the Luckiesch data reflected a subconscious attempt of the subjects to produce the results anticipated by the investigator, he has developed a system for electric recording of muscle tension not connected with the task in hand. Thus the reaction is a trustworthy indication of physical effort uninfluenced by extraneous psychological factors. From a series of subjects Professor Bitterman draws an average production and efficiency curve to illustrate the optimum lighting conditions for any stated purpose.

Although he feels that his experiments are highly significant, he emphasizes the fact that they are not final as to results. Comprehensive, reliable lighting tables can only be assembled after long-continued study. He endorses the far-sighted policy of the United States Navy in promoting in colleges courses of further research.

It was a privilege and pleasure to hear a talk as logically, effortlessly and entertainingly delivered as Professor Bitterman's.

## FOREIGN STUDENTS

In the interest of improved foreign relations, firms willing to give summer jobs to visiting students should notify Walter H. Kilham, Jr., 101 Park Avenue, MU 5-5320, as soon as possible. The salary paid is usually \$50 per week and a procedure has been established for taking care of the legal difficulties of the employment of foreigners. The students are frequently from England and are generally qualified to do productive work. They ordinarily come in July.

## ARCHITECT AND ENGINEER

The increasing complexity of mechanical provisions and modern emphasis on structure as an intrinsic element in aesthetics stress the importance of the consulting engineer in architecture. To achieve best results, close coordination is essential between the two professions. Also involved is the matter of fees sufficient to include capable engineering services.

Based upon these considerations, Clarence Litchfield's Committee on Fees and Contracts arranged a luncheon meeting on March 22, to discuss the relationship between architect and engineer. Interest in the subject brought an unusually large attendance. The guest speakers were John F. Hennessy, President of Syska & Hennessy, Mechanical Engineers, and William Eipel, President of Tuck & Eipel, Structural Engineers. Daniel Schwartzman acted as Moderator.

Mr. Hennessy said that architects and engineers are partners on a building project and should work together closely in the interest of proper design provisions, economy and speed. Accordingly, it is most important that the mechanical engineer be consulted at an early date. Due to increase in modern mechanical requirements, adequate fees should be included in the architect-client contract to provide for proper services. A practical schedule should be arranged for coordination.

Mr. Eipel said that the N. Y. Association of Consulting Engineers is establishing a standard set of documents for fees and contracts with architects. He, too, stressed the importance of the structural engineer's entry at the inception of a project. Because of the proportion of architectural problems to the structural work, he believed that in most projects the ratio of the architectural staff to the structural engineering staff is about 8 to 1. Also, this proportion must be a factor in the time schedule, since delays might occur in the preparation of drawings to be submitted to the engineer.

Albert Butt, who is associated with the firm of Syska & Hennessy, stated that in his liaison capacity he had often noted delays, revisions and waste resulting from waiting too long to call in the engineers.

Frank Lopez suggested that the subject of architect-engineer relationship be further pursued at an evening meeting when more time could be devoted to the topic. He suggested inviting a number of engineers for adequate representation.

During the course of the meeting Ralph Walker, newly elected A.I.A. President, was given a warm ovation.



## SEX IN ARCHITECTURE

To many of our members it will be a surprise to learn of the existence of a national group called The Women's Architectural Association. Its members are the women architects of the country. Our own Eleanor Pepper is President of the New York Chapter. Meetings are held once each month and men are welcome. At each meeting a speaker of note discusses some aspect of the profession and several of our members have made such presentations.

Recently an exhibit in the Pine Room of The Architectural League depicted the work of some of these women. Included were photographs of completed buildings, sketch studies, water colors, renderings, and school work of women students. Those who viewed this showing were much impressed by the ability of those represented.

## 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. Frank Anthony Faillace  
Sponsors: William S. Brown  
Gordon Bunshaft
2. Nathan R. Ginsburg  
Sponsors: Matthew Del Gaudio  
Fred L. Liebman

### Associate Membership:

1. Joseph Batka  
Sponsors: Lester LaPierre  
Ben John Small
2. Joseph A. Cashdan  
Sponsors: B. Summer Gruzen  
Electus D. Litchfield
3. Bradford Norman Clark  
Sponsors: Otto R. Eggers  
Daniel P. Higgins
4. Vincent Roland De Stefano  
Sponsors: Joachim C. Accurso  
Kenneth V. Wagenbach
5. Leon Albert Gehorsam  
Sponsors: Arthur S. Douglass, Jr.  
Edward W. Slater
6. Arthur Kennedy Goehring  
Sponsors: Mortimer E. Freehof  
Herbert Lippmann
7. William Rogers Hegeman  
Sponsors: Joachim C. Accurso  
Perry Coke Smith
8. Burton Harley Holmes  
Sponsors: Edward D. Stone  
Thomas H. Creighton
9. John Joseph Pfingst  
Sponsors: Nicol Bissell  
Serge Petroff
10. George Gentoku Shimamoto  
Sponsors: B. Summer Gruzen  
Electus D. Litchfield

## COMPETITIONS

Servel, Inc., and General Portland Cement Company are sponsoring a competition for the design of a building in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to house the national headquarters of the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce with special attention to the provision of a prominently placed War Memorial to honor Jay-Cee World War II heroes.

The competition is open to all architects from 21 through 35 years of age as of March 1, 1949, and to designers, draftsmen and architectural students in the same age group when associated with an architect of any age. First prize—Architect's commission to design and build the building; second prize \$1500; third \$1000; fourth \$500; 20 honorable mentions of \$100 each; and 10 special prizes of \$200 each for best use of sponsors' products.

The competition will close at midnight, May 16. Programs may be obtained from Progressive Architecture. Chapter member Jedd Stow Reisner is the Professional Adviser and the jury is composed of A.I.A. members Pietro Belluschi, Karl Fred Kamrath, Hugh Stubbins, J. Robert F. Swanson, and Robert Law Weed.

The National Catholic Building Convention and Exposition, to be held June 14-16 at Saint Joseph's College, Collegeville, Indiana, is sponsoring a competition for a small Mission Church with emphasis on economy.

The competition is open to practicing architects, draftsmen and architectural students and is approved by the A.I.A., Alvin M. Strauss of Indiana being the Professional Adviser.

Awards of the following face values will be made in U. S. Govt. E bonds: 1st prize \$1000; second \$500; third \$200; 3 honorable mentions of \$100 each. The competition closes May 10.

It will be interesting to see how the results of this competition compare with the recently published design of the Episcopalians' engineered church.

## SOUND ABSORPTION

In the March issue we asked for volunteers for a Chapter Glee Club. A few have indicated (timidly) a degree of interest. Ruskin said architecture is frozen music. A slight thaw among 740 architects should produce at least a few audible tinkles. Your promissory note will be acceptable.

## UPS AND DOWNS

The intricacies of providing vertical transportation became apparent at the technical luncheon on March 15. Lesing Williams, who presided, introduced Mr. W. W. Bryant of Westinghouse Electric Co. and Mr. Seth French, Jr., of Otis Elevator Co. These guest speakers with the aid of carefully prepared movies and graphic charts, described the many problems involved in handling constantly varying traffic conditions, and the methods used to achieve maximum efficiency. Electronic controls provide uniform service by zoning above and below the "load line of equalization". Westinghouse terms its system "Selectomatic"; Otis, "Autotronic".

## COST DATA

Brownsville Health Center  
Brooklyn, N. Y.  
Bid Opening Oct. 15, 1947  
Construction Cost (All Contracts)  
\$667,000.

Volume Approx. 406,000 cu. ft.  
Gross Area Approx. 34,000 sq. ft.  
Unit Cost @ \$1.65 per cu. ft.  
Description of Building:

Steel skeleton construction, brick exterior with granite base and limestone window sills and coping, with steel fenestration. Interior contains demountable type steel partitions with plaster walls and ceilings. One elevator is provided and structural and mechanical provisions have been made for two future stories.

Architects: Chapman & Evans  
Under Supervision of Dept. of Public Works, New York City

Riverside Health Sub-Station  
Manhattan  
Bid Opening Jan. 20, 1949  
Construction Cost (All Contracts)  
\$414,707.

Volume Approx. 185,000 cu. ft.  
Gross Area Approx. 17,000 sq. ft.  
Unit Cost @ \$2.24 per cu. ft.  
Building Description:

One and half story and basement. Steel skeleton frame, concrete arch and rib joists supported by steel beams and girders. Brick exterior with ribbon type steel casements. Interior contains demountable type steel partitions with plaster walls and ceilings. Architects: Magoon and Salo  
Under Supervision of Dept. of Public Works, New York City.

The two projects are essentially similar in character of services, choice of materials and construction. The disparity indicated in the unit costs is partly due to rise in cost of construction between Oct. 15, 1947 and January 1949, the respective bid opening dates of the two projects. It is also indicative of the great differential in bids received on some types of building.