



# OCULUS

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## HOUSING REPORT CRITIQUE

At a well attended evening meeting on October 25, members of the New York City Housing Authority, the State Division of Housing and the Chapter's Housing Committee attacked and defended, with varying degrees of asperity, parts of the Chapter's recently published monograph "The Significance of the Work of the New York City Housing Authority".

Much of the criticism revolved around the ever insoluble question of whether we shall have minimum housing for as many families as possible or better housing for fewer families, with emphasis on the fact that once people enjoy housing at a higher standard than they have been used to, their own standards rise and they ask for more extensive amenities, for something still nearer perfection.

In advocating less overlapping of controls by the various government agencies concerned, the report could not help but arouse some disagreement. This culminated in a motion made by Mr. Jones of the State Division of Housing that the report be withdrawn because of its many factual errors. However after discussion this was changed to read that the report be referred to the Executive Committee to investigate the alleged inaccuracies.

Doubtless many of the factual errors which were criticized could have been avoided if the Committee had had limitless time for the preparation of the report. A further mitigating circumstance would seem to be that the errors uncovered had to do primarily with matters of detail, or pertained to the functioning of agencies other than the New York City Housing Authority with which the report is primarily concerned.

It is only to be regretted that sufficient time was not available for a more comprehensive discussion of technical details of the report which it had been hoped would be the chief subject for the meeting.

## YOUTH EDUCATION

On October 11 the Chapter formally presented to the New York City Board of Education the Architectural Models prepared by Olindo Grossi under a Brunner Scholarship Award. These models which will be exhibited at each of the 54 High Schools of the New York area, demonstrate graphically why and how an architect plans a shopping center, a factory, a housing development, a community.

A vocational guidance brochure now being prepared by the Education Committee and entitled "So You Want To Be An Architect" will accompany the models to explain some of the intricacies, joys and sorrows of the profession.

A similar analysis of the profession's advantages and disadvantages was presented to a large number of high

school students assembled at a "Careers for Youth Forum", under the auspices of the State University of New York, the Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences and the Brooklyn Eagle. Leopold Arnaud served as moderator. Olindo Grossi described the educational aspects, Ben John Small the employment opportunities, and Harold R. Sleeper architecture as a career.

These two instances would indicate that vocational guidance concerning architecture is no longer being left to chance, and that the Chapter is taking an active part in this all-important field of activity.

## EAST MIDTOWN MANHATTAN

Through lack of vision and initiative on the part of public officials and agencies in the planning of the East Midtown Manhattan area, an opportunity for the redevelopment of the area adjacent to the United Nations Headquarters is being lost. This was pointed out to Mayor O'Dwyer by President Kilham in a letter referring to the East Midtown Manhattan report presented to the City Planning Commission in August, 1948, by the Chapter's Civic Design Committee.

As Chapter members will recall, the report was a study of the problem of further planning in the area adjacent to the United Nations site, with certain specific proposals made for the replanning of the area.

The program proposed by the Civic Design Committee did not involve or suggest any immediate outlay of public funds, but rather the official adoption of a general plan for the district, including zoning and mapping of the entire area—from the East Midtown Tunnel to the Queensboro Bridge, Park Avenue to the East River — that would attract large-scale private investment of benefit to the City. It also showed how major, city-financed projects, such as the Second Avenue Subway, could be related to other proposed public and private undertakings in the area, so that the City would realize savings in costs as well as creation of better conditions for living, working and transportation in this future world-center in the heart of New York.

While the Commission has indicated an interest in the proposals, to date no official reaction of any kind has been received.

The Committee feels that its report represents an effort to attack the problem on a scale commensurate with its scope and the opportunities it presents, as opposed to the plans now accepted for the area by the City, which while they do not conflict with the more comprehensive plans of the Committee, will be inadequate and futile if allowed to stand alone. Therefore the Committee hopes the report will receive the active support not only of our membership but also of all civic-minded citizens and organizations.



### MICROCLIMATOLOGY—GENUS NEW YORK

On October 13, members of the New York Chapter and the Producers' Council attended a most interesting discussion of climate in the Metropolitan area. The evening began with a general introduction to the subject by Elizabeth Gordon, editor of *House Beautiful* which is sponsoring a Climate Control Project covering all the major climates in the United States. This was followed by a detailed description of the New York climate by James M. Fitch, the architectural editor, who explained the results of the study by means of charts analyzing the temperature, sun, wind, precipitation and humidity throughout the year, and with the aid of which architects can design their buildings to be more comfortable. Mr. Fitch pointed out that this was considerably more difficult in the metropolitan region, which experiences extremes of temperature, than it would be in a place such as Oakland, California, where the temperature for 76% of the year varies between 45 and 65 degrees.

Among the many interesting details disclosed by the study of this region were the facts that:

The sun does not shine sufficiently in the winter months to be relied upon for solar heating, though good advantage can be taken of it in spring and fall.

A building should be designed to retain heat for 69% of the year and keep it out for 31%.

While the wind blows uniformly from the northwest from October through April, it may come from the east, south, southwest or southeast in the summer.

The precipitation is quite uniform throughout the year.

The humidity is above the comfort point over 50% of the time.

The city is 10% warmer than the surrounding countryside all year round.

Mr. Fitch also showed several ways in which advantage could be taken of the study without increasing the cost of building. One of these was painting the exterior white in order to use reflected sunlight to melt the snow on a terrace, thereby increasing its useful period. Another was the use of deciduous vines as sunshades over large windows, thereby automatically permitting the rays of the sun to enter in the winter. A third was the use of water trickling down a wall to carry off the radiant heat which might otherwise incommode persons say on an adjoining terrace.

The Bulletin of the A.I.A. is publishing the regional studies together with interpretive design data. *House Beautiful*, which deserves great credit for a thorough job, is publishing houses for each region, the November issue being devoted to the Metropolitan New York area.

### POSITIONS OPEN

A few appointments on Chapter Committees are still available. Mr. Kilham will be glad to hear from members interested.

### NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION

Among the manifold accomplishments of the Association's Annual Meeting, held at Rochester, October 20, 21 and 22, the following items are of special interest to New York Chapter members:

The unification program, whereby the State Association of Architects will be recognized by the A.I.A. as the sole State-wide Association, was accepted. This in no way affects the rights of the individual chapters. The Convention accepted all of the conditions set forth by the A.I.A. as part of this unification program.

The Convention rejected this Chapter's recommendation that the proposed slate of officers prepared by the Nominating Committee be returned to the Committee for re-study before submission to the Convention for action. The New York Chapter's feeling was that the proposed slate was top heavy in nominees from one area, and that the interests of the State Association would be better served by a wider geographical distribution of officers.

The Convention likewise rejected this Chapter's recommendation that the annual meeting of the Association be held in November rather than October. Our purpose in making this recommendation was to allow the various member organizations in the State (most of whom adjourn for the summer months) more time to prepare for the Annual Convention.

Approval was given our resolution that the Convention go on record in favor of the objectives of the proposed State-wide Multiple Residence Law, as prepared by the Joint State Legislative Committee on Housing and Multiple Dwellings, of which the Hon. MacNeil Mitchell is Chairman. The State Association will appoint a committee to consult with the Mitchell committee on technical matters contained within the bill. The New York Chapter is to submit its comments thereon through its own Legislative Committee.

The New York delegates joined in approving the designees of the Governor as members of the State-wide Building Code Commission, one of whom is William Lescaze of this Chapter.

The question of the proposed schedule of fees for housing projects under the State Division of Housing was touched upon, and it was the opinion of the Convention that a special committee should be set up to work with the Committee on Fees of the New York Chapter towards an equitable fee schedule.

The new State officers are:

President, Henry V. Murphy of Brooklyn  
First Vice Pres., Irving Seelig of Brooklyn  
Second Vice Pres., George B. Cummings of Binghamton  
Third Vice Pres., Morton Wolfe of Buffalo  
Secretary, John W. Briggs of Rochester  
Treasurer, Maxwell Cantor of Brooklyn

A complete report of the Convention will appear in the *Empire State Architect*.



### SIGNS AND CORNERSTONES

Should the professional delicacy which has hitherto restrained architects from displaying their names on construction jobs continue to deprive us of much public recognition? Comparable diffidence exists in the fields, for instance, of law and medicine, but in those cases the public is fully aware of the functions and duties involved and recognizes the fact that certain matters cannot be properly handled without specifically-trained and experienced personnel. Architecture, as applied to other than monumental structures, is a younger profession and should permit itself to adopt a code suited to its needs.

In recent years it has occasionally happened that, on such government sponsored projects as post offices, the public agency concerned has erected signs giving credit to the architectural firms engaged to design the structures. We suggest that firms or individual architects post their names in clearly-visible but modest lettering in the vicinity of all buildings under construction. We further recommend that the custom of inscribing the names of architects on plaques or cornerstones of buildings which they have designed be more generally observed, and that architects insist that their clients, whether individuals, institutions, or government agencies, permit this form of credit.

Temporary signs or permanent plaques inscribed with the architects' names do not suggest competitive commercialism. The distinction between the propriety of such strictly-limited recognition and that of the publicity obtained by architects whose work is illustrated and discussed in the press appears slight. The question which the observer must frequently ask himself concerning the identity of the designers of a building would be automatically answered, and if all projects, both while under construction and after completion, clearly proclaimed the names of the architects who created them, much might be accomplished toward restraining the activities of persons not authorized to practice architecture.

### ETHICS, OR GOOD BUSINESS?

One of our Chapter members reports an incident which shows again that adherence to A.I.A. Standards and schedules of fees is good business as well as good ethics.

Invited to submit a proposal for a project in an out-of-town location, and learning that a number of non A.I.A. architects were being considered, our fellow member realized that he was up against people who would doubtless offer to take the job for 5% or 6%, whereas the A.I.A. fee for full services of the kind that a conscientious architect should render would be 8%.

He decided to meet this challenge with an educational but businesslike approach. He explained to the committee just what complete services consist of, why they are worth the full fee, and how less conscientious architects can easily do a job for a much lower fee by providing a less studied basic plan, and less complete drawings

and specifications; also by having suppliers of such items as structural steel, mechanical equipment, etc., do much of the work,—and how this results in a final cost to the owner that is many times greater than the difference between the cut-rate fee and the standard fee.

To illustrate the completeness of full services, he showed the committee a set of drawings and specifications for another job. The value of such completeness in obtaining close bids and insuring the desired quality was attested to by one of the committee members, the head of the local building department, who stated that they were well worth the difference in fee as contrasted with drawings filed with his department by less conscientious architects.

As a result of this presentation, the job was awarded to our fellow member at the 8% rate, despite the fact that other architects had actually offered their services at much lower rates.

The above story should encourage members who stand by Institute standards. It should also show those who are tempted to underbid other architects that this unethical practice is not only bad for the profession as a whole, but is stupid and needless from a business point of view.

Let's have members contribute more such examples which emphasize positive advantages of American Institute of Architects standards, and which tell how these can be sold to the public,—and perhaps we shall have a more enlightened, and more ethical, profession.

### POSITIONS WANTED

The Navy is seeking help from private industry to find jobs in this area for the 2500 civilian employees at the Navy Yard who were laid off November 1 following the recent economy cut by Defense Secretary Louis Johnson.

These employees, being under Civil Service, are not eligible for social security or unemployment compensation.

The jobs range from clerical (typists, stenographers, office appliance operators) to trades (electricians, masons, roofers) and even include an architect and a naval architect. The complete list is available at the Chapter Office.

### REGISTRATION LECTURES

A series of lectures covering the subjects required for the architectural registration examinations is again to be conducted by the Education Committee. The large and enthusiastic attendance at last year's similar series is indicative of the interest in this approach to the examinations. The lectures, which start in November and continue through January, are free and no advance registration is required.

Members are urged to post in their drafting rooms the notices and schedules sent under separate cover, and to call these to the attention of all unregistered draftsmen.



*SPECIFICATIONS COMMITTEE*

The Chapter is interested in determining how many members think that a Specifications Committee would be useful. It would be the function of such a committee to conduct discussions pertinent to the improvement of specifications. Possible subjects would include: Traditional vs. Streamlined Specifications; Is the Scope-of-Work Section Necessary? How Useful Is a Masonry Material Section? Standard Specifications; Restrictive Trade Practices; Options, Alternates, and Allowances.

Members who are in favor of the formation of a Specifications Committee and who would like to attend the discussions should notify the Chapter before November 22, stating whether or not they wish to serve on the Committee.

*FELLOWSHIPS*

This year the Executive Committee has nominated five Chapter members for advancement to Fellowship in the A.I.A.

Leopold Arnaud

Hugh Ferriss

Talbot F. Hamlin

Perry Coke Smith

Harvey Stevenson

While the Executive Committee believes that these men are well qualified for the honor and that their records should prove it, the fact remains that supporting letters from the nominees' colleagues are a definite factor in assuring their election.

If you are familiar with the achievements of one or more of the above men and believe he or they should be made Fellows, will you say so?

Your letter should be addressed to the "Jury of Fellows, Octagon Building, Washington, D. C."

*PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS*

Your new Membership Committee has a job to do—a job that it cannot do alone. Last year the New York Chapter increased its membership by twenty per cent. This fine record was accomplished largely because of the splendid support given by the members of the A.I.A.

We ask this support again in an effort to equal or better last year's record. In order that an interest in the A.I.A. and a desire to become either a corporate member or an associate member of this organization be stimulated, it is suggested that prospective members attend one or more of our Chapter meetings or participate in our informal discussion groups, held in the evenings periodically during the year. If you are unable personally to introduce your prospective member to one or both of these functions, please just fill out a penny postcard with his or her name and address and mail it to the Membership Committee at the A.I.A. office and we will see that they are invited.

*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*

Robert Matthew Beder

Sponsors: E. James Gambaro & Charles H. Koop

John Philip Jansson (former Associate)

Sponsors: Vincent Furno & Ferdinand A. Loebach  
(Western Mich.)

*Associate Membership*

Vincent Caruso

Sponsors: John P. Jansson & Edward W. Slater

Michael Colli

Sponsors: Vincent Furno & John P. Jansson

S. Robert Greenstein

Sponsors: Olindo Grossi & Paul Schulz

John Haftor Husby

Sponsors: John P. Jansson & Edward W. Slater

Judith Beth Turner

Sponsors: Robert Woods Kennedy & William W. Wurster (both Boston Chapter)

Samuel Ratensky

Sponsors: William F. R. Ballard & F. G. Frost, Jr.