

NEW YORK CHAPTER

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AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

# OCULUS

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## TECHNICAL AND CIVIL DEFENSE COMMITTEE MEETING

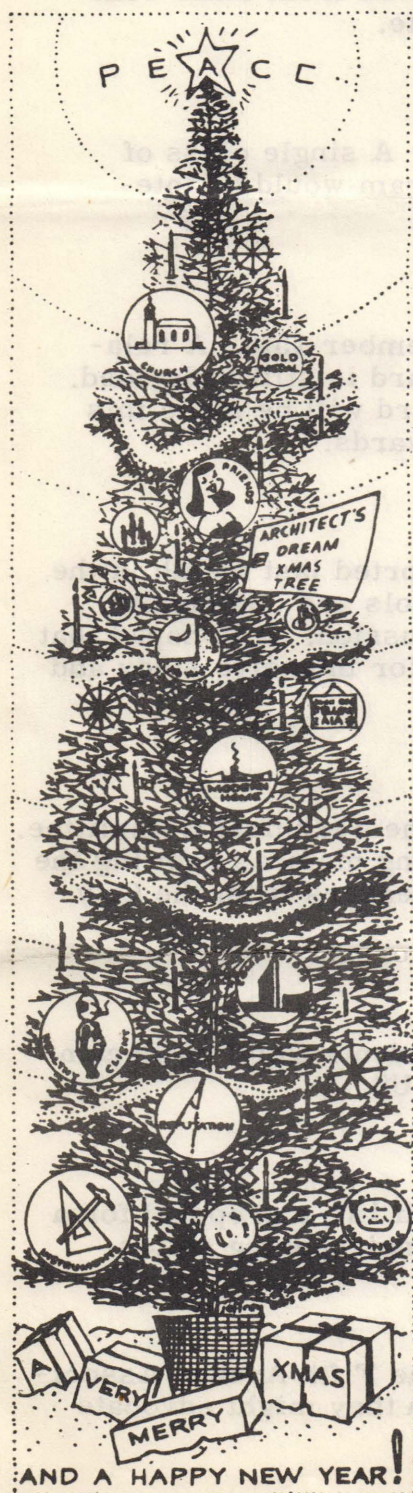
On December 2nd, the Technical and Civil Defense Committees jointly sponsored a Round Table Discussion on the subject "Atomic Blast Protection Need Cost No More".

Abe Neiman of Federal Civil Defense spoke on the advantages of dispersal and protective construction in the planning of new industrial plants. He indicated that his agency is preparing a series of standards for protection to be applied where dispersal is not possible. Tax amortization will be granted to new plants using these standards.

Boyd Anderson and Fred Severud discussed the engineering problems of rendering buildings as safe as possible against atomic bombing. Mr. Anderson presented the idea that blast protection need not be prohibitively costly if the building is designed in a suitably strong type of construction. It has been learned from the Japanese experience that bearing walls are subject to collapse, steel frame construction is much more durable and cellular construction is most impervious to blast, and also that windowless exterior walls are much stronger from this point of view.

Mr. Severud told the meeting that he had seen studies made from records and photographs of buildings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki which had reconstructed graphically the effect of the two blasts. The effective blast force is horizontal and so a strong concrete floor slab constitutes an excellent stiffening element.

Mr. Severud most strongly made the point that it is the Architect who must always be responsible for selecting the structural system for his building. It may be true that a windowless structure is safer, but with certain exceptions, of what use is such a building in peacetime? The Architect must decide just how much safety he or his client is willing to exchange for greater usefulness, perhaps blastproofing only a portion of the building and concentrating on the safety of the occupants. In every instance the problem will be different. It was also mentioned that there exist many relatively simple expedients for the protection of old buildings. For instance, brick walls may be reinforced by means of cables stretched across the surface and floor slabs may be strengthened. This type of alteration may be in most immediate demand.



## ROUND-UP

Membership on a committee can mean anything from a chance for seeing your name in print to an opportunity for real work and thought. A.I.A. committees, as a glance through the following paragraphs will confirm, are manned by thinkers and workers. Some committees function close to Chapter headquarters, their work predictable, well understood and appreciated by the members. They keep the machine running. In this category might be placed the Admissions, Finance, Meetings, Fellows, Medal of Honor and Nominating Committees. The first three are already functioning in our daily interest and the others are organized to utter their swan-song notes at the proper time. Based on reports recently received from other committee chairmen, the following precis should bring you up to date.

### AWARDS

The Committee is studying an annual "Honor Award". A single class of buildings would be considered each year, and the program would be integrated with the National Program of Honor Awards.

### BRUNNER SCHOLARSHIP

Seven applications were received by the deadline, November 15th. A relatively low number, but high in quality, as choice of award is still undecided. Two or three are extremely interesting. Only one award will be made this year in order that more funds will accrue for future awards.

### CIVIC DESIGN

The fine early season work of this Committee was reported last month in the OCULUS. Broad aspects of urban redevelopment, schools and community districts are now the subject of general study and discussion. It is hoped that a specific project will be developed in the near future for intensive study and report.

### CIVIL DEFENSE

This Committee is working in close cooperation with the Technical Committee. There will be an evening meeting in January with moving pictures showing the latest U. S. and British experience in this field, and speakers from the City Office of Civil Defense.

### EDUCATION

This Committee arranged the evening meeting 'For Students Only' on December 15th, which will be reported in next month's OCULUS.

### FEES AND CONTRACTS

Is working hard to present to the Chapter around March 1st, a proposal for a graduated scale of fees such as is in use in almost all neighboring states.

### FIFTH AVENUE ASSOCIATION

Is considering the possibility of making a survey for the Fifth Avenue Association which would outline the improvements in the area they might advocate during the coming year.

## ROUND-UP (Continued)

### HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The Committee is seeking to preserve No. 4, Gramercy Park and has brought the matter to the attention of the National Council of Historic Sites and Buildings which has taken action. The Committee is also concerned with an effort to forestall possible destruction of a portion of St. Luke's Chapel block.

### HOUSING

The Committee has held many meetings during the year working towards its report made possible by the Lavanburg Foundation, which deals with the movement of population in New York City. The work is progressing and will be reported upon fully in the Spring of 1953.

### LE BRUN

The Committee is planning to approach the membership for their approval to change the rules of the Deed of Gift and meanwhile will postpone the competition and the award until next year.

### LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Has been cooperating with the Architects Council in regard to a suggested alteration to the City Charter, which concerns the Fire Department's role in examining plans at the Building Department.

### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Discretion is basic in the functioning of the Professional Practice Committee, and it has been meeting discreetly and successfully. In most cases, it has so successfully resolved the differences it has had to consider that no charges have been pressed.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

At a recent meeting of the Public Relations Committee it was generally concluded that the Chapter should retain a professional Public Relations firm for a period of seven months; that the idea of temporary and permanent signs for buildings are excellent media for establishing the work of architects; that members' work be publicized in magazines. Regarding the signs -- it was felt that the sign should be made available to the member architects throughout the Chapter and that they be of a uniform design which would begin to bring more dignity to our publicity attempts by their uniformity. Considerable thought must be given to the problem of publicity without overlapping the work of The Institute, the State Association and the Architects Council of New York. This seems a particularly difficult problem. There is no cut and dried answer, as good public relations for any architect acts for all.

### PUBLICATIONS

This is the third OCULUS published under this committee. The Editor publicly expresses appreciation for the excellent and always prompt work of Messrs. Aronin, McKenna and Wall. (Adv't.)

## ROUND-UP (Continued)

### SMALL HOUSE

It is intended to subdivide the panel into smaller groups to consider the following: A series of newspaper articles advising prospective purchasers of what to look for in buying a house; advertising the services rendered by the Chapter; an exhibition of residential work by Chapter members; stimulating the merchant builder to strive for better houses through an award of merit.

### TECHNICAL

On January 13th a meeting will be held in one of the conference rooms in the UN building between 5 and 7 P.M. A discussion with members of the designing board will take place. At 4 P.M. there will be a guided tour of the building.

### VISITING ARCHITECTS

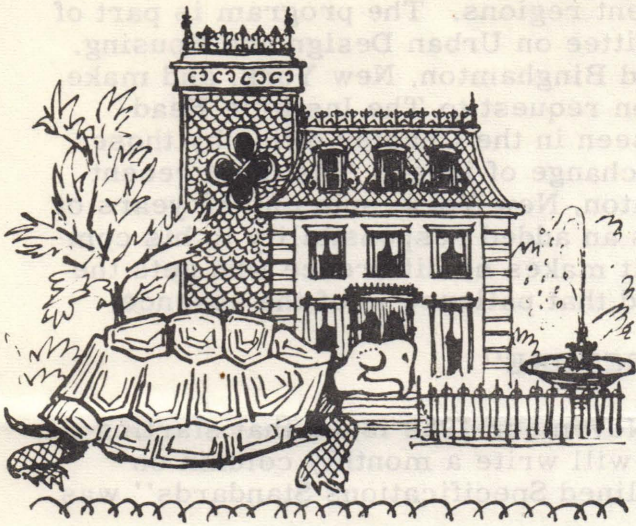
This committee represents the Chapter in offering hospitality to visiting foreign architects, arranging for them to meet the people and see the buildings that interest them. It has already greeted several architects from Germany, South America and France.

May we remind the membership that the names of Committee Chairmen and almost complete listings of their personnel were printed in the October OCULUS. It may be convenient for reference.

### THE BOOKSHELF

A very delightful book has just been issued. It is **ROOTS OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE**, a collection of distinguished essays, edited by Honorary A.I.A. member Lewis Mumford. Included in its pages are some enlightening comments by such noted personages as Horatio Greenough, Louis Sullivan, Montgomery Schuyler, Sigfried Giedion, Frank Lloyd Wright, Dankmar Adler, Clarence Stein and others. This volume does not attempt to survey all the beginnings of building in America. Mumford selected his material on two criteria: "Does this contribution illuminate contemporary architecture? Has it still something to say to us? If not every page, perhaps, meets these criteria, I still trust that the reader will be astonished and as pleased as I have have been over the large amount of historic writing that is still alive."

What is particularly interesting is the fact that the dates the essays were written are not boldly set in the titles; one must look for them. In this way, if one is not familiar with the work or the author, one is kept guessing at the date and is thus constantly reminded of the timelessness of the remarks. It is like looking at a painting in the Museum of Non-Objective Art, speculating what its title, date and artist might be -- then regarding the little card (down near the floor) to learn of one's error!



Why should, of all things, man unrul'd  
Such unproportion'd dwellings build?  
The beasts are by their dens express'd,  
And birds contrive an equal nest;  
The low-roof'd tortoises do dwell  
In cases fit of tortoise-shell:  
No creature loves an empty space;  
Their bodies measure out their place.  
But he, superfluously spread,  
Demands more room alive than dead  
And in his hollow palace goes,  
Where winds, as he, themselves may lose.  
What need of all this marble crust  
T' impark the wanton mote of dust?

--Andrew Marvell  
(1621 - 1678)

And incidentally, the charming verse in  
last month's OCULUS was by Lois Forsch  
(1929 - )

## CONTEST

When Soames Forsyte undertook to impark his wanton mote of dust in a spacious residence the immediate sequalia were an ugly suit at law, the permanent estrangement of his wife and the untimely death of his architect. Persons engaging the services of a member of the A.I.A. (New York Chapter) can in most cases expect less serious consequences.

Fenwick Wall maintains that in spite of professional qualifications he has always been unable to visualize the court of the house Bosinney produced for his stiff-necked client. You all remember its detailed description in Chapter VIII of the first Book of "The Forsyte Saga". For our big Mid-Winter Contest the Editors of the OCULUS offer a pint of champagne (domestic) to the contestant who submits by January 20th the most revealing sketch of this momentous interior. And what's more, we'll print the drawing.

## BEAUX-ARTS INSTITUTE OF DESIGN

The Beaux-Arts Institute of Design announces a Competition open to all students in accredited architectural schools or recognized architectural design workshops. The BAID feels that "The true import and significance of this Competition is that it presents a much needed medium for comparing each year the character and quality of the designs resulting from divergent and perhaps isolated teaching techniques. It is an opportunity for each school and each participant to learn what the other schools and other designers are achieving."

The details of the competition and the methods of its publication and exhibition are incorporated in a more detailed announcement which will be issued about February 1, 1953.

## EXPERIENCE IN URBAN DESIGN AND HOUSING

Three letters have been received at the Chapter office from The Octagon as part of an Institute program of public letters exchanging professional experiences which may be of interest to other architects in different regions. The program is part of the work of the Members of the national Committee on Urban Design and Housing. So far, the letters are from New York, Utah and Binghamton, New York, and make for interesting reading. Copies are available on request to The Institute Headquarters in Washington, and they may also be seen in the Chapter office by those who are interested in this effective regional exchange of ideas. The most recent letter from George Bain Cummings of Binghamton, New York, sums up 32 years of experience there as follows: The architect has an added responsibility to his community due to his organizational training; that it makes no difference who gets the credit so long as the planning job gets done; and that patience is of the essence.

## A NEW COLUMN IN "PROGRESSIVE ARCHITECTURE"

"Progressive Architecture" announced in its November 1952 issue that starting January 1953 Chapter member Ben John Small will write a monthly column on specifications. Mr. Small's new book "Streamlined Specifications Standards" was reviewed in the November issue of the Oculus.

## SENIOR ARCHITECTS WANTED

There are in the Technical Bureau of the State Division of Housing, three vacancies for the position of Senior Architect. The jobs have a civil service status, and the salary ranges from \$6,088 to \$7,422 per annum. The requirements are that the candidates be residents of the State of New York, have an Architect's license and have a reasonable amount of experience in large-scale housing. Candidates should write to Charles L. Jones, Director of the Bureau of Technical Development & Construction, Executive Department, Division of Housing, 270 Broadway, New York 7, N.Y., stating their education and experience.

## CANDIDATES

Information regarding the qualifications of the following candidates for membership will be considered confidential by the Admissions Committee:

### Corporate Membership

Eugene V. Meroni      Sponsors: James J. Bevan & Lloyd Morgan

### Associate Membership

Miss Linn Ericson      Sponsors: Willis N. Mills and Eustis Dearborn  
William E. Lowry      Sponsors: James M. Chase and Edward R. Tauch, Jr.

