

NEW YORK CHAPTER

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AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

O C U L U S

COMING EVENTS

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- April 21, Thursday, Gallery A - 12:30 P.M. Technical Luncheon. The Producers Council, Co-Sponsors. A discussion and question and answer period on SWEET'S CATALOG.
- May 5, Thursday, Pine Room - 12:30 P.M. Hospital Discussion Group
(See page 3)
- May 10, Tuesday, Gallery A - 6:30 P.M. Civic Design Committee
(See page 6)
- May 17, Tuesday, Gallery A - 12:30 P.M. Pre-Convention Luncheon
- June 1, Wednesday, Gallery A - 12:30 P.M. Annual Luncheon

THE 86th ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Members of the Chapter gathered in the auditorium of the Museum of Modern Art on the evening of March 23rd for the 86th Anniversary Meeting and presentation of the annual Chapter awards. The Medal of Honor was given to Edward D. Stone who was cited as "distinguished designer of buildings and inspiring teacher". Robert S. Hutchins presented the Medal and the citation. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., founding Director of the Museum of Modern Art, was made an Honorary Associate Member of the Chapter in recognition of his contributions to the understanding of architecture and the arts.

Awards were made to the New York winners of the National A.I.A.'s 1954 Architectural Journalism Competition which recognize significant contributions to the public understanding of architecture.

Lewis Mumford received the \$250 First Award and Certificate for his articles on Matthew Nowicki in Architectural Record. John Knox Shear, the Editor-in-Chief received the Certificate. Other awards and certificates went to the editors of Architectural Forum for the article on "Kitimat: A New City", to J. Alex Langley for architectural photography, and to Progressive Architecture in which the photographs appeared. Clarence W. Hall was awarded \$250 First Award for the best popular magazine story, "The Churches Rise Again", which appeared in McCall's. Edmund R. Purves, Executive Director of the National A.I.A., made the presentations.

The speaker of the evening was Russell Lynes, author of "Taste Makers" and Managing Editor of Harper's Magazine, who gave a thoroughly engaging and witty talk on the ups and downs of taste in architecture in the past and where we stand at present. Following the meeting the members and their guests passed through the sculpture gallery of the Whitney Museum, finally arriving for supper at the University Club where the exhibition of "Monuments of Manhattan", sponsored by the Club and Municipal Art Society, was to be seen.

EDUCATOR STONE

The once copious stream of reminiscences of the Atelier days in Paris is running a little thin nowadays. But the pattern is well remembered, and among the items which always figured in the standard recollections was the visit of the patron to the atelier: the bated breath of the students, the hawk-like glance from board to board of M. Grand, his ominous silences, curt comments which set the axes right with a word, and generally Napoleonic behavior which was presumed to conceal a heart as large as the Etoile. With the passing years, educators of a different stripe are developing, and many Chapter members were gladdened to see Edward D. Stone cited, not only as a "distinguished designer of buildings", but as an "inspiring teacher" as well.

Now Edward Stone's pattern as a teacher varies in several particulars from the classic norm. For one thing, he never frightens anybody. He may sometimes generate feelings of bewilderment, of doubt, perhaps, but not of fear. With him the process of education is one of collaboration, of search, and this process cannot thrive in an atmosphere of constraint. The curt phrase putting things to right with surgical precision is also absent from his professional demeanor -- the solutions he works for are too subtle and imaginative to be called forth with a peremptory word. To see Mr. Stone at work organizing a plan (and how beautifully his plans are organized) is an education and a delight, but it never looks like prestidigitation.

No, his activities as an educator will have to be described in other than the classic terms. Indeed, although official appointments as critic and professor have always played a part in his life, they tell only half the story. For the long and short of it is that Edward Stone is one of those rare persons who educates by mere proximity. He educates just by coming into the drafting room and going to work. Few people have worked with him who have not come away better architects, happier ones; and are not some of the finest offices in the country peopled by partners who bear this witness?

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

As Vice President and member of the Executive Committee of the Union Internationale des Architectes Ralph Walker is anxious to have a large representation from the United States at the forthcoming Congress of the U.I.A. to be held at the Hague in Holland from July 11 to 16, 1955.

The main theme of the Congress is Housing From 1945 to 1955: Program, Projects, Production. In addition to the proceedings of the Congress, there will be excursions and entertainments, a Ladies program, and probably several tours after the Congress. Examine a program at the Chapter office. The plage of Scheveningen looks very continental and inviting.

CHAPTER MEMBERS IN THE NATIONAL SCENE

On April 5th at the American Association of School Administrators Convention, J. Stanley Sharp was one of the participants in a joint AASA-AIA meeting on "Beauty and Function in School Building Design".

On April 11, at the Construction Conference, Cleveland Engineering Society, Morris Ketchum, Jr. spoke on "Building a Shopping Center". Richard G. Stein summarized the Conference with a talk on "Teamwork in Today's Construction".

THREE SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

On March 10th Arthur J. Benline, Technical Director of the New York State Building Code Commission addressed a luncheon meeting sponsored by the Technical Committee on various aspects of the State Codes.

The third in a series of symposia sponsored jointly by Columbia, Cooper, Pratt and the New York and Brooklyn Chapters of the A.I.A. was held before a large and responsive audience in the Brooklyn Museum on March 24th. The speakers were Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, Robert A. Kölli and Philip C. Johnson. Olindo Grossi presided.

The Brunner Scholarship Committee was host to the Chapter on April 5th. At this luncheon meeting was shown the film strip "Architecture -- U.S.A." conceived and executed by Ralph E. Myers, under a Brunner Scholarship. The commentary was prepared by the A.I.A. Public Relations Counsel -- Ketchum, Inc.

LEWIS MUMFORD IN THE NEW YORKER

In the March 19 issue of the New Yorker, Lewis Mumford began a series of articles, "The Roaring Traffic's Boom". Mr. Mumford looks upon the proposals to demolish the two great New York terminals, replacing them with giant skyscrapers, and finds them full of danger. Handsome tribute is paid to both buildings as architectural monuments, and to their present utility as civic features. He points out the undesirability of adding congestion to areas that are, especially in the instance of Grand Central, taxed to the limit already. The problems of overbuilding in central areas and their relation to traffic and transportation are discussed in a most provocative manner. These articles should be of very great interest to anyone concerned with the future of the city.

THE SCHOOL DISCUSSION GROUP

The School Discussion Group of the Chapter met March 17th to crystallize final thoughts on the preparation of "A Standard Working Manual on School Building Procedure", J. Stanley Sharp, chairman of the group, presiding. Archibald Shaw, Superintendent of Schools at Scarsdale, New York, was the guest speaker. He offered objective criticisms, taken from the point of view of the educator, of the thoughts and findings of the Discussion Group.

The report of the Group is presently being prepared for submission to the official committee of the Chapter. This report in its final form should be of great value to all school board personnel, school executives and architects.

HOSPITAL DISCUSSION GROUP

A small but enthusiastic group of members interested in hospitals have been holding informal discussions at monthly luncheon meetings on various phases of hospital design. Guest consultants have been invited to the meetings to provide expert advice and information. In addition to these luncheons, an inspection trip has been made each month to one of the newer metropolitan hospitals.

The eighth of the series will be held in the Pine Room of the Architectural League Tuesday, May 5th, at 12:30 P.M.; the subject: "Post Operative Recovery Rooms". A color film showing Recovery Rooms in various hospitals will be shown through the courtesy of E. R. Squibb & Sons. Call the Chapter office for reservations.

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

The new Membership Directory is a most attractive reference volume. Everyone feels the enthusiasm so well expressed by Leo Arnaud in a generous and unsolicited letter: "Whoever is responsible should be most highly congratulated on the extremely clear, straightforward, modern and fine appearance of our new Directory. It is a delight to the eye, extremely easy to read, gives all information at fingertips and should serve as a model for such directories, not only for our own future directories, but for those of the Institute as a whole."

The people responsible are C 1953 DOUGLASS, Arthur S. Jr., to whose skilled eye and tireless efforts we owe the beautiful format, and Margot Henkel, whose accuracy and efficiency in a long exacting chore of this sort are legendary.

Mrs. Henkel requests that each member check his own listing, and report any errors by May 16th. A supplement listing errata and addenda will be issued soon after that date. Additional copies of this beautiful little reference work are available at \$4.00 plus 12¢ sales tax.

FELLOWSHIPS

Members who may be advising younger men on the next step in their educational pattern will do well to keep posted on the opportunities offered by the metropolitan schools. Pratt Institute is offering two graduate assistantships, covering tuition and providing a stipend of \$1,500.00 each. Columbia offers a number of graduate fellowships (it may be too late to apply this year), and in addition approximately eight William Kinney Fellows travelling fellowships each year. This is the era of the Student Prince.

INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM THE CITY'S CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Five high-paying positions are available with the City of New York. Three of them are for engineers or architects with eight and ten years' experience. Two are for property management people with similar years of experience plus construction and alteration know-how. (Their phraseology).

The positions pay from \$7,900 to \$12,000, four of them with the Board of Education and one with the Department of Housing and Buildings. Only the last one of these has a New York City residence requirement, and all carry retirement rights. Application forms available at the Chapter office.

SWEEPS WINNER

The Architectural League of New York has awarded its 1955 Gold Medal for Architecture to Skidmore, Owings and Merrill for the Manufacturers Trust Company building on Fifth Avenue. In design and craftsmanship, the Gold Medal was awarded to Harry Bertoia for his sculptural metal screen in that building. Only through having neglected to commission a mural for its distinguished building, did this corporate Maecenas fail to make a clean sweep of the board. Congratulations to all.

BRUNNER AWARD

President Hutchins announces that in addition to the Brunner award to Ralph E. Myers, a grant of \$500.00 has been awarded to Addison Erdman, Chapter member, for completing his book "Hospital Planning" soon to be published. L. Bancel LaFarge is Chairman of the Brunner Committee which recommended the awards.

MATERIALS AND METHODS IN ARCHITECTURE

Selected by Burton H. Holmes

Reinhold Publishing Corp. 412 p. \$10.00

The last decade has probably seen more architectural books published than the preceding half century. This is as it should be. There have been great changes in the nature and technology of architecture in these years. Most of the forms anticipated in the early works of Gropius and LeCorbusier have become common-places. The mechanical plant, the structural knowledge necessary to build them have been rapidly developing.

The bulk of the literature produced has been for the most part reporting on one or another aspect of this growing field of architectural knowledge. Our professional magazines record all new developments and buildings, and periodically when enough material has appeared, collate it either according to building types or under some other aegis and publish it as a fresh book. While this saves a great deal of the trouble of clipping and filing, is this the literature that answers the needs of our building problems?

We still lack a literature that is as broad in its evaluation of the new developments as "Toward a New Architecture" was in stimulating them. There has been no ethical evaluation of the architect's position in the troubled world whose physical aspect he helps shape. Aesthetic criticism is still undeveloped. Our literature must help to unify, evaluate and direct the technical excellence we are nearing.

All this is to introduce Mr. Holmes' compilation of technical articles. Much of the material is fascinating and useful. All of it has appeared previously in Progressive Architecture.

GRASS ROOTS AND THE NEW YORK CHAPTER

"Only through a 'grass roots' response to this survey" said Edwin S. Burdell in discussing the report "The Architect at Mid-Century" with Stamford architects, " — only through the understanding and support of the local chapters — can the architectural profession advance to its manifest obligation to provide the dwellings, factories and offices that a dynamic society will require."

New York not being essentially a grass roots area, we must accept a response that pushes through the cinder fill. Nevertheless it should have a most vigorous growth between now and Convention time and under proper cultivation might show first flowers by then.

Since the review of "The Architect of Mid-Century" which appeared in the November 1954 OCULUS, and the publication of the Institute's Special Report No. 2, Jan. 5, 1955, the recommendations of the Commission are being discussed in a number of our Chapter committees, and resolution for Chapter consideration at the Pre-Convention luncheon can be confidently anticipated. That vibration you feel under foot walking up Park Avenue is not, as many people erroneously believe, the New York Central trains; it is the first stirring of the response from the cinder fill.

AGENDA FOR MINNEAPOLIS

The Executive Committee requests Chapter members to submit resolutions for the National Convention in Minneapolis at our (New York Chapter) Pre-Convention luncheon meeting on May 17th, 1955.

CIVIC DESIGN

The Civic Design Committee during the current Chapter year has been investigating the subject of the "Appearance of Our City". This important topic was the subject of meetings with City officials at the home of Arthur Holden in December and at Lorimer Rich's home in March. The success of these has led the Committee, under the Chairmanship of Robert C. Weinberg to schedule the first of a series of open meetings jointly sponsored by the Chapter, The Architectural League and The Municipal Art Society. This is announced for May 10th at 6:30 P.M.

Among many pressing city planning problems — proper housing, transportation, traffic control — remains that of the appearance of certain important municipal areas such as Foley Square or the Brooklyn civic center, areas so important to the life of our city that their beauty and dignity should be a matter of public concern. To deal with these questions fruitfully, the Committee plans to invite two high ranking City officials whose duties are concerned with municipal art and civic design and two or more architects experienced in this sort of planning and construction. Edwin S. Burdell, President of the Cooper Union, wise in the ways of architects and city officials no less than in those of deans and students, has consented to preside. The Cooper Union has offered to devote the first meeting in its Fall Forum Series to the subject "The Appearance of Our City".

CANDIDATES

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

Corporate Membership

Edward Larrabee Barnes
Sylvan Bien
George Henry Buterbaugh
Allen Ramsdell Congden
C. Woodford Dayton
Leonard Brooks Freeman
Carlisle H. Johnson
Benjamin Markowitz
Ralston William Newsam
Douglas J. Bersich
Louis Scesa
Elmar O. Schniewind
Louis Walter Scholl
Eliot Butler Willauer

Note: Under the most recent rules of procedure, sponsorship of applications for corporate membership has been discontinued. Instead, each candidate gives references, whose views are solicited by the Committee on Admissions.

Associate Membership

Henry Adolph Petter, II

Edward Przybylak
Aristotle Taktikos
Sidney Wright Toman
Conrad Wroblewski

Sponsors: H. Dickson McKenna and
Harold F. Kellogg, Jr.

Sponsors: Gilbert L. Seltzer and William Gehron

Sponsors: Percy E. Isbell and Alonzo Clark

Sponsors: Louis Bubeck and George H. Cooley

Sponsors: Roger G. Spross and Fritz Steffens