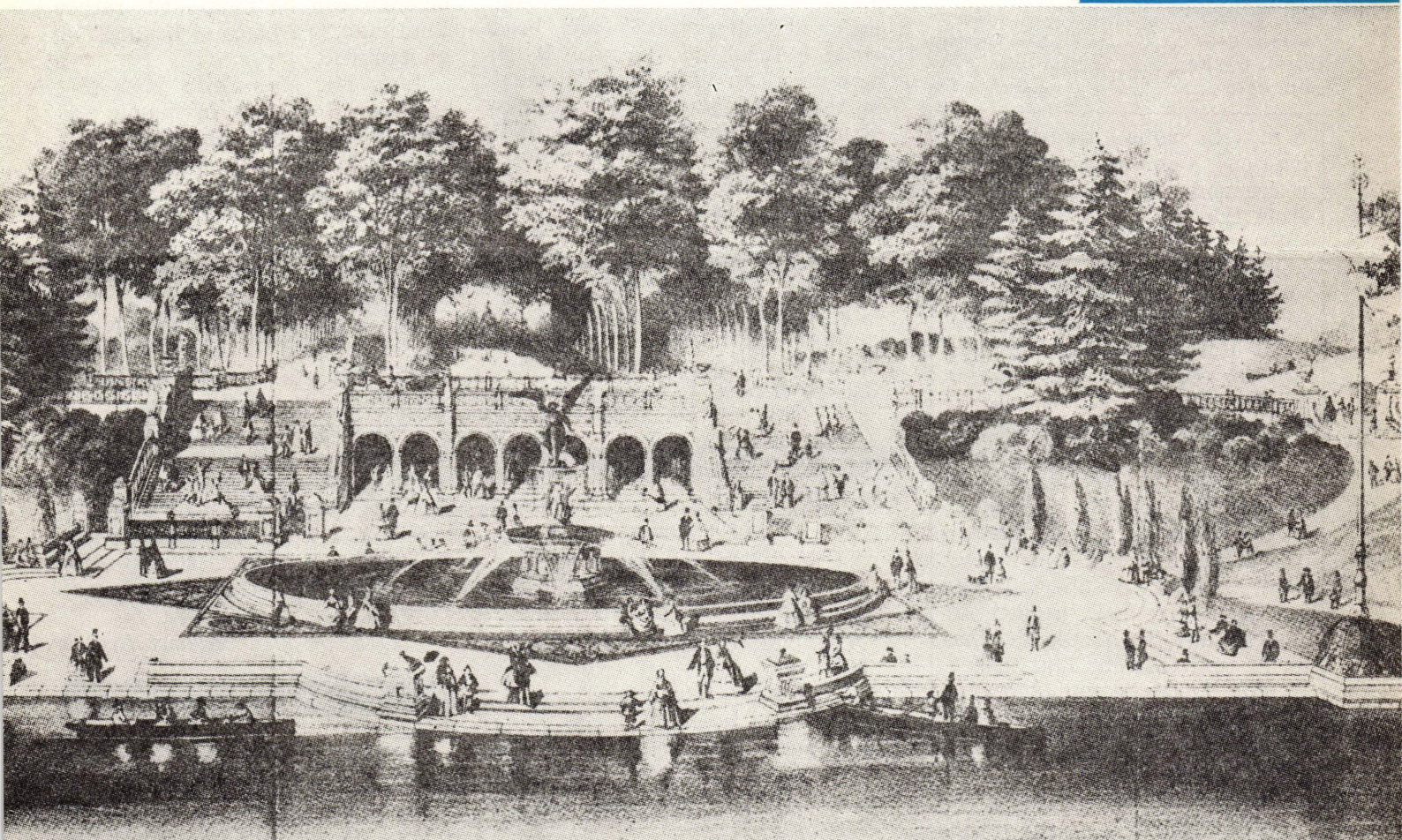


OCULUS

NEW YORK CHAPTER AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS



NOVEMBER 1961



Olmstead & Vaux's plan for elegance in the park: graceful traffic, flying banners, an angel-watched lake.

THE SHRINKING OASIS: NEW YORK'S CENTRAL PARK

by JAMES CADY

Few New Yorkers these days are aware of the fact that almost every inch of earth within the limits of Central Park, every pond's border, virtually every tree and boulder, were carefully moved, shaped, and placed in calculated relationship to each other as well as to the paths, the fields, and the sky above. Certainly one would think that such a great city park could have only friends. Yet Central Park is always under threat. The words of its designer, Frederick Law Olmstead, were so prophetic and so valid that they can only serve to remind us, and to warn all for whom the bell tolls:

"The Park throughout is a single work of art, and as such subject to the primary law of every work of art, namely, that it shall be framed upon a single, noble motive, to which the design of all its parts, in some more or less subtle way, should be confluent and helpful . . . the whole of the island of New York would, but for such

a reservation, before many years be occupied by buildings and paved streets. . . . The very reason for being of the Park is the importance to the city's prosperity of offering to its population, as it enlarges and becomes more cramped for room, opportunity of pleasurable and soothing relief from building, without going too far

from the future centre (of the city). Building can be brought within the business of the Park proper only as it will aid *escape* from buildings. Where building for other purposes begins, there the Park ends. The reservoirs and the museum are not a part of the Park proper: they are deductions from it." (From Olmstead's papers, G. P. Putnam's Sons, publishers.)

On April 28, 1858 seven commissioners out of 11 voted in favor of the Olmsted and Vaux 'Greenward' Plan, the actual land having been acquired between 1853 and 1856 for some \$5 million. By

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OCULUS

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AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
NEW YORK CHAPTER

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PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

PHILIP M. CHU *Chairman*
JAMES L. CADY *Vice Chairman*
OGDEN TANNER *Associate Editor*
JAN WHITE *Associate Editor*

It is with sadness that the Publications Committee notes the retirement of **Paul Grayson** from the chair, and the editorship of OCULUS. Mr. Grayson will be busy on the West Coast working on the Seattle World's Fair. Secretary **Philip Chu** succeeds him as chairman. The new editors, **Ogden Tanner** and **Jan White**, will continue to welcome suggestions and contributions.

To defray the rising costs of publishing the OCULUS, the Executive Committee has given its blessings to the solicitation of written material and notices from sponsors. A sub-committee has been formed, headed by **James Cady**, to handle the material, contributions, and format. Building material suppliers, contractors, and other segments of the building industry are invited to participate.

IMPROVING NEW YORK

Great benefits for this city are implicit in Mayor Wagner's recent instructions to the Chairman of the City Planning Commission to collaborate with the Department of Real Estate in the establishing of a municipal land bank.

The purpose of this program would be to acquire and retain city-owned property wherever there are anticipated needs for schools, museums and transportation facilities as well as for parks and recreation areas. Where large undeveloped areas are held in a land bank they can be planned for residential development with well integrated sites for such municipal facilities. The Planning Commission has already taken such steps with certain city-owned tracts in

Staten Island. In those parts of the City already fully developed, it is hoped that this program will bring about the construction of small parks and plazas. The few neighborhood parks in Manhattan point up the need for many more of them.

This plan is a positive concept, and is intended to supplant the present negative procedure whereby city-owned land is sold after each city department has been given refusal on its use. It is, moreover, an important element in the development of a master plan, which Mr. Felt has promised as a corollary to the new zoning resolution. We hope that it will not falter because of penny-wise or politically motivated critics. Land banks are not a new idea; medieval towns held public tracts as a check on land speculation. It is high time that New York adopted a modern version of this historic element of town planning.

S. Hart Moore

BOOKS

The City In History: Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects — by Lewis Mumford
—Harcourt, Brace & World Inc.
657 pp. Illus. \$11.50

The bulk of Lewis Mumford's "The City in History" is in "Origins and Transformations"—a detailed study beginning with early man and the development of the village, through the ancient urban cultures of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome; into the Middle Ages, including its monasteries; through the Baroque stagery and the Industrial Revolution; and ending with the Nuclear Age. Well researched, (as the 55 pages of bibliography attest), excellently written, and highly informative, the many pages depict not only the history of the city, but also, by close association, the development of man.

Mr. Mumford emphasizes again and again man's inhumanity to man, which began with the rise of kings and organized violence and recurs through each period of history up to the present day—where we find the city's as well as man's existence threatened with extinction.

At this point the author leaves his carefully documented research

work for a contrasting, opinionated solution to the city's and mankind's problems. The solution is basic and simple—but as bold as the effect of a 50-megaton bomb.

Civilization, he says, must eliminate war. Man must reawaken himself, overcome the forces that threaten him, and return to basic human morals. The city can then be a place where the highest ideals of man can be expressed, rather than mainly a place of business or government.

It is Mr. Mumford's hope that this moral change in man's personality may come about when his back is to the wall—then, he may summon together the knowledge and energy of the world to create a new Renaissance. Considering the news events of the last month or so, time is running out.

The book is timely and important not only in a total moral sense, but also in its individual parts, e.g., an excellent chapter on the suburbs. For the architect it is a history of architecture from a social point of view only. In reading Mr. Mumford's book and considering a world of death bombs, fallout, and fallout shelters the old forms do not seem as important as they once were.

Robert Beattie

LETTERS

Sirs:

I have read with interest and appreciation the article "See Mrs. Lyda Nelson" in the October issue of the "Oculus." It covers the subject very well.

Max H. Foley, Chairman
Board of Standards and Appeals
City of New York

Shrinking Oasis:

Continued from page 1
January 1858 Olmstead had 1000 men at work in the park, was receiving an annual salary of \$2,500, and had the title "Architect in Chief of the Central Park." At the outbreak of the Civil War all work was suspended. In 1863 Olmstead and Vaux resigned their positions because, among other things, they had not been paid and their names had been removed (as authors of the park plan) from the commissioners' annual report.

In 1865 Vaux came to the rescue of the Park, then threatened in its

PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY: ARCHITECTS NEED INSURANCE

by ROBERT DJEREJIAN



FREDERICK LAW OLNSTEAD, 1860

southern portion by the proposed enlargement of the Fifth Avenue entrance.

In 1870, though the Park was substantially completed, the authors had to resist a plan to build a Zoological Garden in the area known as 'the Meadows,' and a large building which was nearly completed in 1871 was removed and the ground restored to its former condition.

In 1886 the New York Tribune wrote: "Commissioners have been petitioned to throw open the Park as a parade ground for our citizen soldiery, circuses, shooting matches. . . . Eminent educators have urged that the Park should be planned on the model of a map of our native land, with miniature states, lakes, and rivers (Freedomland!) . . . It has been proposed that each religious sect should be invited to build places of worship there . . . that a section be set apart for a World's Fair . . . that the lake should be enlarged so as to float a full rigged ship . . . that the park should be transmuted into a burial-place for the country's distinguished dead," etc., ad infinitum. In 1918 the N. Y. Times published an imaginary bird's eye view of the Park showing how it would look if only 13 of the principal suggestions were carried out. It was pictured almost completely covered with buildings! In 1883 Olmsted wrote (to Vaux) "Experience indicates that it is only necessary to have public attention adequately called to this consideration, to compel all such projects to be relinquished."

Professional liability, a recent Chapter lecture sponsored by the Programs Committee and delivered by Victor Schinnerer of Victor Schinnerer & Co., presented a problem of concern to all practicing architects. The historical cycle from the Code of Hammurabi requiring death for the builder of a house so carelessly built as to cause death and injury, to the privity of contract enjoyed between owner and architect under English Law, to present day million-dollar litigations against the architect through third party claims, has established a need for insurance protection for architects.

People have become more "claims conscious" than they were in the past and all signs show that this trend is increasing with legal precedents being established at different judicial levels. When a person sustains real (or imagined) damages or injuries he may seek legal redress from anyone whom he conceives to be held accountable even in the remotest degree.

Other professions have felt the impact—doctors, lawyers and accountants—and architects and engineers are in an equally vulnerable position. They may be held responsible not only for their own acts, but also for the acts, omissions, or errors of all those who work for them. Mr. Schinnerer cited many cases, one involving a secretary's typographical error that incurred serious loss. False charges and unfounded allegations may have to be disproved in court with resultant legal fees, investiga-

tions, court costs, expert testimony and appeals.

Lack of adequate professional liability insurance can mean serious financial loss. Protection as afforded by an A.I.A.-commended policy developed by the Victor Schinnerer Company was discussed in the meeting. This professional liability policy includes broad coverage liability, complete defense, fully retroactive option, definition of insured, liability provision, extensive service facilities, and special provisions, at a cost based upon the individual practice, number of employees and experience record of the architect.

Mr. Nathan Walker raised some questions from the floor that may find their way into the policies being written. In addition, Mr. Walker deplored the fact that architects have testified against each other and that they remain professionally unique in this respect.

USE OF WORD "SUPERVISION" CURRENTLY UNDER DEBATE

As many members realize, a sharp policy question exists within the profession regarding the use of the word "supervision" in contract documents. The national AIA has, after prolonged study, found it advisable to delete all references to "supervision" in Article 38 of AIA Document No. A-201 (General Conditions). This has been the result of certain court cases which have indicated a possible trend in judicial thinking away from traditional understandings of the word. Many members of the profession, however, feel that the word should remain, and that no threat to the meaning of the word "supervision" exists which did not previously exist.

All members are encouraged to read the recently distributed report of the Chapters Office Practice Committee on this subject.

The Fees and Contracts Committee will further study the question and in the meantime would welcome from Chapter members any expressions regarding the issues involved.

The Committee also recommends that members study carefully the document recently issued from Washington entitled "Legal Responsibilities in the Practice of Architecture and Engineering and Some Recent Changes in the Contract Documents." A contrary opinion has been expressed in a document prepared by William Stanley Parker, F.A.I.A., entitled "An Argument for the Use of the Word Supervision . . .". This has had a recent limited issue but is presumably available to anyone interested by writing directly to Mr. Parker, 120 Boylston Street, Boston 16, Massachusetts.

HOUSE DESIGN AWARDS

AIA President Philip Will, Jr. last month announced the seventh annual "Homes for Better Living" awards program, sponsored by AIA in cooperation with HOUSE & HOME and LIFE magazines. Any house designed by a registered architect in any of the 50 states, and completed since January 1, 1959, is eligible. All custom houses will be divided into three classes by floor area, and merchant-built houses will be divided into three classes by selling price. Each category will be judged separately. Again, this year there will be a third category for garden apartments. Rules and entry requirements are available from the Washington or Chapter offices.

ZONING LECTURES

Last spring, an eight-lecture technical course on the use of the 1960 New York City Zoning Resolution was sponsored by the Planning Department of the School of Architecture, Pratt Institute, and the Citizens' Housing and Planning Council of New York, Inc. in cooperation with all the architectural societies in the Metropolitan Area including the New York Chapter, AIA.

If any chapter member who was not able to attend those very helpful sessions should be interested in having another opportunity, he could write to Mr. Bruno Basil, in care of the Chapter Office. If there is sufficient demand, a similar series of lectures might be arranged in the near future.

NEW RENDERINGS GIVEN

The Chapter's art collection has been augmented by the recent acquisition of works by **Chester B. Price** and **George Cooper Rudolph**, donated by their authors at the request of Mrs. Henkel. Mr. Price's contribution is a handsome etching of the entrance to the Harvard Club; Mr. Rudolph's renderings are a spirited sketch of a proposed addition to the Buffalo Art Gallery, and a more formal water color of a proposed library in Caracas, Venezuela. The Chapter is grateful to Messrs. Price and Rudolph for their contributions. The pictures are already hung in the new Chapter office space, and members are urged to make a point of seeing them.

THE R. S. REYNOLDS MEMORIAL AWARD

Nominations are now being received for the 1962 R. S. Reynolds Memorial Award.

The Award is conferred annually on an architect who, in the judgment of his profession, has designed a significant work of architecture, in the creation of which aluminum has been an important contributing factor. An honorarium of \$25,000, and an emblem will be awarded to the architect or architects of the winning project. Certificates of honor will be presented to the architect and to the owner of the selected

project. An aluminum plaque suitable for affixing to the structure also will be presented to the owner.

To be considered for the Award, an architect need simply notify The American Institute of Architects, or be nominated by others, using the prescribed nomination form, before December 18, 1961.

Complete program and information has been mailed out to all AIA members. Additional copies are available by writing to The American Institute of Architects, 1735 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, D. C.

BRI SETS STAGE FOR '61 FALL CONFERENCES

Seven timely topics make up the program for the Building Research Institute's 1961 Fall Conferences at the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D. C., Nov. 28 to 30: Prefinishing of Exterior Components, the Performance of Plastics in Building, Mechanical Fasteners for Wood Design for the Nuclear Age, Identification of Colors for Building, and Methods of Building Cost Analysis. Attendance is not limited to BRI members. Non-members wishing to participate may write the Institute at 2101 Constitution Ave., Washington 25.

STEWARDSON TRAVELING FELLOWSHIP ANNOUNCED

The Chapter is now accepting applications for its 1962 James Stewardson Traveling Fellowship, a \$2,000 grant made possible through a bequest by James Stewardson, architect and citizen of England, who specified that the Fellowship be awarded annually "to a worthy architectural draftsman."

The 1961 award, the first one to be made under the endowment, has gone to Edward T. Schiffer of New York City. Mr. Schiffer is presently employed with the firm of Carson, Lundin and Shaw, Architects, as an architectural de-

signer. He formerly was with the San Francisco office of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill.

From 27 applicants, six finalists were chosen whose statements of purpose seemed outstanding even in a generally strong group. Mr. Schiffer, with a fine educational record and excellent work in architecture has selected as his program, "A Study of Prefabrication Techniques in Europe."

A graduate of the Yale School of Architecture, Mr. Schiffer is married, and has one child. He resides in Riverdale, N. Y.

COMPETITION—NEW CITY HALL FOR BOSTON

A major competition open to all American architects has been announced by the Government Center Commission of the city of Boston. Conducted in two stages, the competition will select the architect for a new City Hall, the most important building in the Government Center Development.

The preliminary stage of the competition will close on January 17, 1962. At that time, eight finalists will be selected and paid \$5,000 each to prepare final entries which will be due April 25.

Program and entry forms are

available by writing Lawrence B. Anderson, Government Center Commission of the City of Boston, One Court Street, Boston.

Architects serving on the jury will include Pietro Belluschi, Walter A. Netsch, Ralph Rapson, and William W. Wurster.

THE BUILDING BOOM: ARCHITECTURE IN DECLINE

Five public forums presented by The Architectural League of New York and the Museum of Modern Art will be held starting Nov. 16 at 8:30 p.m. in the Museum of Modern Art Auditorium (see schedule below). Speakers for the first meeting are: Vincent Scully, Jr., Author and noted Art Historian; James Felt, Chairman of the Planning Commission of the City of New York; Richard Roth, A.I.A., Architect; Peter Blake, A.I.A., Moderator, Author, Architect, and Managing Editor of Architectural FORUM.

The possibility of architecture as an art is now more than ever determined by the interaction of economics, politics and law. The present architectural transformation of our cities is not guided by aesthetic and sociological considerations: it is rather the product of uncontrolled speculative building.

In this situation modern architecture as an art must be examined against the practices which threaten its destruction. If our cities are to remain inhabitable the art of architecture must prevail, and it is with a sense of great urgency that this series of discussions is convened.

Prices of series tickets for either League or Museum of Modern Art Members are \$10.00 each or \$13.50 for non-members. They may be obtained by sending checks payable to the Museum of Modern Art or to the League.

Nov. 16—The Transformation of Park Avenue

Dec. 7—How Money Designs the City

Feb. 8—The Laws of the Asphalt Jungle

Mar. 15—The Present Without Past or Future

Apr. 19—The Ideal City

COURSES AVAILABLE IN FALLOUT SHELTER ANALYSIS

Fallout shelter analysis courses for architects and engineers are now proceeding at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, Mass. Personnel selected by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Navy Bureau of Yards and Docks to meet the requirements for conducting the nation-wide shelter survey are presently taking the two-week course.

In addition to those directly involved in the shelter survey program, it is most necessary to train other architects and engineers. Possible starting dates for courses are: December 4, 1961; January 2, 15, 25; February 12 and 26, 1962.

Only a limited number of architects and engineers can be trained under this program. Every effort will be made to select individuals of high professional

capability engaged by firms that can give the most support to the national shelter program.

There will be no fee or tuition charges. However, the government cannot pay any other expenses for attendance at this course. An appropriate certificate of proficiency in Fallout Shelter Analysis will be issued by the Department of Defense upon successful completion of the course.

Applications will be processed through the State Civil Defense Director, Lt. Gen. F. W. Farrell. It is requested that those interested write directly to the State Civil Defense Commission, 162 Washington Ave., Albany 1, N. Y., submitting: name, title, firm, business and home address and telephones, professional branch and license designation, and names of states in which licensed.

COMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER 21, 1961	Tuesday, 11 a.m. Exhibition: Stained Glass Windows by Chagall. Museum of Modern Art
DECEMBER 4, 1961	Monday, 5:30 p.m. The Drawing Society: Illustrated Lecture by Jacob Bean Metropolitan Museum of Art Auditorium
DECEMBER 6, 1961	Wednesday, 7 p.m., Room 371e Pratt Institute, School of Architecture Victor Gruen, Architect and Planner The City as Designed Structure
DECEMBER 7, 1961	Thursday, 12:30 p.m. (lunch meeting) Gallery "A" Mr. John F. Sayres The State Education Department, Albany, New York Topic: Fall-Out Protection in School Planning and Design
DECEMBER 7, 1961	Thursday, 8:30 p.m. The Building Boom: Architecture in Decline Museum of Modern Art Auditorium
JANUARY 25, 1962	Thursday, 12:30 p.m., Gallery A Nominating Committee Luncheon
FEBRUARY 14, 1962	Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. Anniversary Dinner
APRIL 10, 1962	Tuesday, 12:30 p.m., Gallery A National AIA, Pre-Convention Luncheon
MAY 7-11, 1962	Monday through Friday National Convention, Dallas, Texas
JUNE 6, 1962	Wednesday, 12:30 p.m., Dining Room Annual Luncheon

Fees and Contracts

Mr. Ballard, chairman, had a meeting with the members of the New York City Housing Authority and with Mr. William Eipel, who represented the engineering profession. They are reported to be looking forward to an improvement in fees and contract clauses in NYCHA contracts. The architects and the engineers will be setting their fee data in a parallel fashion.

A stalemate with the revision of the City Mitchell-Lama fees was reported. It has been thought that the fees should be revised to conform with the State fees.

Historical Buildings

The Historical Buildings Committee, under the chairmanship of Otto J. Teegen, discussed the recent formation by Mayor Wagner of a committee for the preservation of buildings. It was the opinion of Geoffrey Platt, chairman of the Mayor's committee, that the chief function of his committee was to prepare legislation relative to buildings that were to be saved. In this respect, the two committees complement each other. The A.I.A. committee's major function is to determine which threatened buildings should be saved.

Hospitals and Health

The Chapter Hospital and Health Committee, represented by its chairman, Alonzo Clark, III, as well as James J. Souder and Isaiah Ehrlich, met with Deputy Commissioner of Hospitals, Robert J. Mangum, on October 5th. The conference was arranged by Commissioner Mangum in response to the Committee's letter sent last spring to the Department criticizing the Hospital Code and Regulations and the manner in which they are being administered. Commissioner Mangum indicated his department's general agreement with the criticisms and reported that steps have already been initiated to re-examine the Code which applies to Proprietary Hospitals and Nursing Homes. The Committee offered its cooperation in an advisory capacity.

The Sub-Committee on Education and Training recently discussed the possibility of early evening

lecture meetings, on such subjects as: Efficient Planning for the Nursing Unit, Acoustics, Casework and Cabinets, Automation Systems for Supply Distribution, Lighting in Hospital Design, Experimental Nurseries, and New Potentials in Hospital Design. The Sub-Committee also is looking forward to the possibilities of field trips. Some of the tentative suggestions: the Rockefeller Institute Labs, the new Animal Hospital at 61st Street, and a manufacturing plant doing case work and other equipment.

The Sub-Committee on Public Agencies reports it is now compiling a list of agencies with which the New York architect must deal in hospital planning. This list may be expanded to cover the neighboring states. An attempt will be made to get the various authorities together to coordinate regulations.

Public Affairs

Of major concern to the committee has been the haphazard destruction of the city's landmarks without regard to their architectural or historic merit. The proposed replacement of Penn Station with a new Madison Square Garden is a case in point. It was felt since this was an "improvement" of private property not in violation of any city ordinances, that the Chapter would be ill advised to oppose it unless we had a financially feasible substitute. However, the Public Affairs Committee is working closely with the Civic Design Committee with the idea of promoting a plan leading to a more orderly development of the city, and to preserving monuments and buildings of historical and architectural importance.

Working with President Woodbridge, Chapter's public relations counsel prepared a letter to Mayor Wagner suggesting the appointment of an architect to fill the vacancy on the Planning Commission. A release based on the letter was sent to the press and this inspired a very favorable editorial in the New York Times backing up the idea.

A letter, also from President Woodbridge, was sent to Max J. Rubin, President of the Board of Education, suggesting the forma-

tion of an architectural advisory committee to assist the new Board in its Construction programs. It was decided not to dignify the Caristo economy proposals with an answer. The committee worked closely with the School Committee.

Schools

The School Committee, under the chairmanship of Gates Beckwith, now is formulating a letter which will offer the Committee's help in solving the various problems in constructing and maintaining New York City schools. The committee may suggest collaboration between architects, builders, and engineers to explore economical methods, which could be of vast help to the new Board of Education.

The New York City School Construction Program Executive Committee has requested a report in collaboration with the Fees and Contract Committee and various engineering societies. Consensus of this committee was that efforts be focused on the inclusion of architects supervision and control during the construction phase.

MEMBERSHIP

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The New York Chapter extends its warmest welcome to the following new members:

Corporate

Morris Abraham
Wallace B. Berger
Leon Brand
Lowell Brody
Roberts M. Bujac
Robert A. Djerejian
Clovie B. Heimsath
Henry A. Petter II

CANDIDATES

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

Corporate

Sheldon Fox
Bernard Rothzeit
Gabriel Sedlis
Irving Fred Sokol
Edward G. Van Valen
Herbert W. Riemer
Elliot Willensky

Associate

Bolivar Antonio Suere

Sponsors:

{ William V. Reed
{ William M. Roig

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE

APPOINTMENTS

Brunner Scholarship Committee.....Dean McClure
Civic Design Committee.....Raphael Courland
Hospital & Health Committee.....
Fees & Contracts Committee.....Curtis R. Fremond
House Fees & Contracts Committee.....
Ralph Pomerance
(Simon Bréines has resigned from the
Housing Fees & Contracts Committee)
Publications Committee.....Allen J. Harmon
Visiting Architects Committee.....
Curtis R. Fremond, Boris Riaboff
Younger Architects Committee.....Jay Fleishman
Sheldon Licht, Herbert B. Oppenheimer
Jan C. Rowan, Sherman Schneider