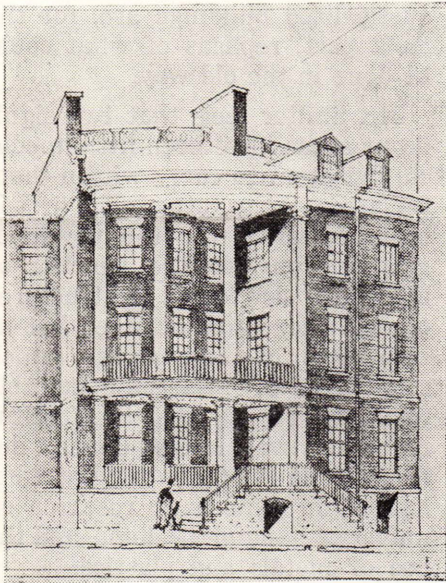


# OCULUS

NEW YORK CHAPTER AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS



MARCH, 1963



Sketch by P. Geiger

## NEW YORK LANDMARKS— No. 1

Oculus, with the help of the Chapter's Historical Buildings Committee, hopes to publish from time to time sketches and brief histories of some of the finer old structures which make up our city's architectural heritage. For this first sketch, and the notes below, we are indebted to Committee member W. Knight Sturges. It is hoped that many other Chapter members will join in sustaining the series.

### THE WATSON HOUSE—c. 1800

The only surviving bit of old New York on the Battery is the red brick colonnaded dwelling at No. 7 State Street. Known as the Watson house from the name of the original owner and builder, since

1883 it has also been known to New Yorkers as the Mission of Our Lady of the Rosary.

It was described in the 1830's in the pages of the *New York Daily Mirror* as having "an aristocratic, stately look that no one will object to in a dwelling, however much it might be censured in its occupants." It is difficult to understand why this house—so different from its neighbors with its deep loggia of attenuated proportion uniting a strange combination of straight and curved forms—has survived through all these years.

The editors of the *New York Daily Mirror* would have taken satisfaction, I am sure, if they could have known the fate in store for the Watson house. During the 1850's the stable at the rear was a stopping place for fugitive slaves. Later, during the Civil War, troops were quartered in its well lighted, high-ceilinged Federal parlors; even the Bureau of Internal Revenue made use of the old house before it was finally opened as a mission for immigrant Irish girls.

It is hard to imagine a building more unsuited to these varied uses. A semi-circular stair fragile in appearance and in fact; carved doorways, and mantelpieces in the Adam manner completed a setting in which up to 300 young girls fresh from the cramped quarters of a ship's steerage found a haven on reaching these shores. It is little wonder that today, after so varied an existence, the once handsome interiors have all but disappeared. A mantle here, a door frame there, a fragment of the semi-circular stair are all that recall the interiors whose aristocratic

and stately look gave moral qualms to the editors of the *Mirror*.

However, the exterior remains basically unchanged and is at present undergoing careful restoration. Most of the sash has been restored to the original six-over-six lights, brick and paint have been returned to their original state and color. With the restoration of the balustrade at the eave line, No. 7 State Street should appear virtually as it did in the first half of the 19th century.

For the foreseeable future the restored house will serve as rectory for a large downtown parish. A new and enlarged church will be built on the adjoining lot to the west.

W. Knight Sturges

## MEMBERS URGED TO JOIN "GOALS FOR REGION" STUDY

A private, tri-state program launched by the Regional Plan Association early this year to fix goals for the New York Metropolitan Region is already well under way. The program, "Goals for the Region", focuses on community response to a specially produced television series. Five short TV programs beginning April 2, 1963 will present the changes that are expected in housing, transportation, jobs and recreation in the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan region and how these changes will affect the lives of everyone in the area.

Hundreds of residents are organizing small groups to receive briefings by mail from the Regional Plan Association, sponsoring

CONTINUED ON P. 2



# OCULUS

VOL. 35, NO. 5

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
NEW YORK CHAPTER

MARGOT A. HENKEL, Executive Secretary  
115 East 40th Street  
New York 16, N. Y.  
MUrray Hill 9-7969

GEOFFRY NOEL LAWFORD ..... President  
LATHROP DOUGLASS ..... Vice President  
C. GATES BECKWITH ..... Secretary  
ALBERT H. SWANKE ..... Treasurer

## PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

PHILIP M. CHU ..... Chairman  
OGDEN TANNER ..... Vice Chairman and Editor  
JAN WHITE ..... Associate Editor  
JOHN DIXON ..... Associate Editor

CONTINUED FROM P. 1

organization; to watch the TV programs; and to reply to short questionnaires asking preferences and views.

Questionnaires will inform regional planners of what residents want in this region now and in the future. Responses will then be considered in formulating planning recommendations for the coming decades. Views of the New York Chapter are considered of particular value to the project. Members are invited to provide leadership by organizing study groups in their neighborhoods or among professional colleagues. The coupon below may be filled out and returned to Regional Plan Association, 230 West 41st Street.

### GOALS FOR THE REGION PROJECT

Regional Plan Association  
230 West 41st Street  
New York 36, New York

Name of individual who will chair the study group.

Address to which correspondence should be sent.

Telephone number.

Name of organization (if any) of which study group is a part. (Please include full national and local titles.)

Number of participants expected.

## STEWARDSON REPORT ON INDUSTRIALIZED BUILDING

By Marietta Meyers

In a recent report Edward T. Shiffer, recipient of the Chapter's Stewardson Fellowship, summarized his research into the industrialization of the building industry abroad. Mr. Shiffer spent last summer in Europe talking to architects, engineers, contractors, manufacturers, and government officials, and seeing their work. He found that more and more buildings are being built with larger and larger elements, room-sized panels, and at times whole rooms.

After the war Western Europe was faced with a vast rebuilding task, and an acute labor shortage. This shortage was increased when younger men were attracted to offices and factories, where they found steady employment, better working conditions, and greater prestige. Building capital was limited, and speed of construction was of deep concern because of the critical shortages, particularly in housing and schools. Thus the industrialization of construction was undertaken, with hopes that: 1) better buildings would be produced, both in design and performance; 2) the cost of construction would be reduced; 3) less time would be required between the ordering of buildings and their occupancy; and 4) the building industry could produce more buildings with the same human resources. Mr. Shiffer found that the first three advantages were only marginal at best. As he stated in an article for the British magazine *Interbuild* last October, "The prefabricated buildings as a group are architecturally no more distinguished or exciting than contemporaneous traditional buildings. They certainly display no significantly greater refinement of finish or mechanical performance. In some cases the appearance and performance is inferior . . . costs are generally of an equal magnitude, sometimes more, and never greater than 10 percent less than conventional buildings. Although the actual construction time . . . is dramatically less than the normal, the overall time from order to completion is, in most cases, of the same magnitude . . ."

The chief success was realized in the area of the labor shortage:

industrialization produced more buildings with the same human resources, and for this reason is spreading in Western Europe. Shiffer contends, however, that the full advantages are not being realized, because industrialization "has been concerned with the development as it is . . . using the materials and many of the techniques of conventional building. The realized industrialized buildings are, for the most part, replicas of what could be done in the old way.

Mr. Shiffer feels that two significant areas have been little touched, but seem to carry within them the seeds of the future. The first is basic research into the psychological and physiological function of buildings, viewed not as structures of concrete, wood, or steel, but as appliances of human use which could be of any material in suitable form. He reports that the Institut für Industrialisiertes Bauen, der Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm, has begun some basic research on universal building systems, and the use of metals and plastics.

The second "untouched" area is design: "Real style has always flowed from the material used in the best and most natural way, through the hand of the workman sensitively shaping this material. Real style, even in its greatest richness, has always been utterly simple, stemming from one inner idea. The machine is the new workman. Using these intensely powerful and skillful fingers, the architect can create new style, no less enchanting to the eye of mankind than the styles of the past. A new lightness with materials of incredibly high strength and efficiency, a new scale with blocks the size of rooms or even larger, a new richness using the complex motions of power tools—all are inherent, necessary."

Mr. Shiffer is preparing other articles for *Progressive Architecture*, and is about to start a research study at Pratt Institute concerning the reduction of housing costs. Says Mr. Shiffer: "the Fellowship travel was a broadening and rewarding experience . . . I am grateful to the Committee, to the New York Chapter, and to the donor."



## COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

**Publication Committee:** A suggestion to the committee that *Oculus* include as a regular feature building department notices and code amendments was discussed. It was unanimously agreed that these items should not be a feature, but that *Oculus* might print a notice stating where these notices and amendments can be obtained, for any members who as yet do not have this information.

**Technical Committee:** This committee will assist in the booth being considered for the New York World's Fair, and is further willing to prepare a pamphlet on the technical aspects of architecture for limited distribution at the fair.

**School Committee:** Daniel Schwartzman was appointed chairman of the group's monthly informal discussion sessions. The Executive Committee approved a maximum expenditure of \$500 from the Chapter's coffers for the Spring Seminar on Schools.

**Hospital and Health Committee:** Chapter members will be invited to

contribute information to Robert Jacob's research study, "Obsolescence in Hospitals." The subcommittee on Related Health Facilities plans to prepare the draft of a paper outlining what facilities should and should not be included in nursing homes.

**Fees and Contracts Committee:** At a December hearing in Albany, architects, general contractors, and the N. Y. C. Board of Education presented their views before the Trustees of the State University Construction Fund. After all discussion, it was agreed that a single prime contract is most preferred. A questionnaire on "The Architect's Cost of Services during the Construction Phase" was distributed to members with a request for prompt filling-in and return.

**Office Practice Committee:** A paper, "Suggested Procedures — Material Samples System," has been prepared by H. Bourke Weigel. The 13-page report discusses phases, requirements, and control of samples in construction.

*James T. Burns, Jr.*

## STEWARDSON AWARD MADE

The third James Stewardson Traveling Fellowship, a \$2,000 grant presented annually by the Chapter, went last month to Richard Owen Abbott of the architectural firm of Victor A. Lundy.

Mr. Abbott plans to use the grant to study at first-hand the architecture of Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Bangkok, Rangoon, and India. Last year's recipient used the award to study the architecture of Greece, Egypt and Turkey.

The Fellowship, made possible through a bequest to the Chapter by James Stewardson, an architect and a citizen of England who spent most of his professional life in New York, is awarded each year "to a worthy architectural draftsman."

Mr. Abbott is a graduate of Cornell University. He resides with his wife at 35 East 82nd Street.

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE HOLDS COCKTAIL HOUR DISCUSSIONS

The School Committee held its first informal "Cocktail Hour" discussion on Wednesday, January 30th at 5:30 in the Pine Room at the Architectural League.

There was no formal agenda, but lively conversations on various school topics took place. These included: selection of artists, windowless schools, the role of architect in field supervision, and the inevitable subject of the adequacy of present architectural fees.

It was decided that due to the interest shown, these discussions will continue on the fourth Wednesday of every month, between 5:30 and 6:30, for the next four months, March 27, April 24, etc. All interested members are cordially invited to attend.

## FELLOWSHIP COMPETITION

The Material Service Foundation and the Chicago Chapter, AIA, have announced the opening of competition for the 4th annual Material Service Foundation Fellowship Award. The Fellowship yields a sum of \$2500, to be used toward research into new uses for concrete and masonry. Competition is open to graduates of all accredited schools of architecture and/or engineering in the U. S., and to members of the building profession. Award will be based upon academic achievement, seriousness of purpose, and proposed plan of study, and will be made by the Education Committee of the Chicago Chapter of the A.I.A. Place of study is to be the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago; the University of Illinois, Urbana; or Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill. Inquiries should be addressed to the Chicago Chapter, A.I.A., 221 North LaSalle St., Chicago 1, Illinois.

## N. Y. BUILDING CONGRESS TO ADVISE ON NEW CODE

The New York Building Congress has announced the organization of an Industry Advisory Committee to consult with and advise the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn in its writing of a new City Building Code. The committee was proposed by the Congress in consultation with the Investing Builders Association and the Building Trades Employers' Association, and has received the approval of Commissioner Harold Birns of the Department of Buildings.

The Building Code, last revised in 1937, is in the process of being entirely rewritten over a three-year period at a cost of \$700,000 under the supervision of a team of experts. Selection of the 20 organizations represented on the Committee was made to insure well-rounded representation of all primary elements of the construction industry, including associations of builders, architects, structural engineers, mechanical engineers and contractors. The committee expects to keep the industry informed by means of periodic releases on its activities. Suggestions from any society, association or individual will be welcomed.



## COMING EVENTS

- MARCH 12** Technical Committee Lecture  
Gallery A, Tues., 5:30 P.M.  
Topic: Critical Paths Method  
Speaker: Dwight A. Zink
- MARCH 23** Hospital & Health Field Trip  
Blickman Co., Saturday 10 A.M.
- APRIL 9** Technical Committee Lecture  
Gallery A, Tues., 5:30 P.M.  
Topic: A Philosophy of Lighting  
Speaker: R. Kelly
- APRIL 16** Pre-Convention Luncheon  
Gallery A, Tues., 12:30 P.M.
- APRIL 27** Hospital & Health Field Trip  
N. Y. U. Teaching Hospital  
Saturday, 10:00 A.M.
- MAY 1** Hospital & Health Lecture  
Gallery A, Wed., 5:15 P.M.
- MAY 5-9** A.I.A. Convention  
Miami, Florida (Hotel Americana)

## OCULUS DIRECTORY

OCULUS is grateful to the following contributors who helped sustain the costs of this issue.

**HERBERT HELMUS**

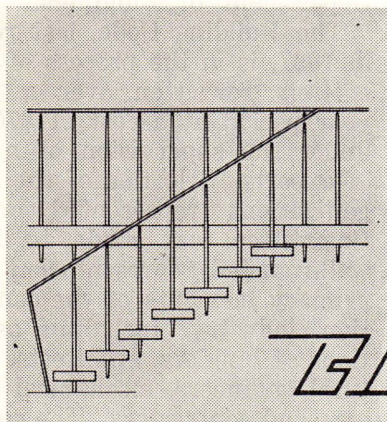
*Architectural Hardware Consultants*  
Allowances and Specifications

1069 Rogers Ave. Brooklyn 26, N. Y.  
IN 9-5000

**Severud-Elstad-Krueger-  
Associates**

*Consulting Engineers*

Reports - Buildings - Airports  
Special Structures  
Structural Design - Supervision



**Glumcraft**  
OF PITTSBURGH

460 MELWOOD STREET  
PITTSBURGH 13, PENNA  
PERMANENT DISPLAY  
101 PARK AVE., NEW YORK, N.Y.

**Women's Architectural Auxiliary**

Circling back around the world, our President, Mrs. Max O. Urbahn, lost no time in calling a meeting of the Executive Board. The many decisions made, plus the names of the new members of the Board will be disclosed at a luncheon meeting May 1st at the Architectural League as near 12:30 as you can make it! Please come, bring your husband, and a prospective member and her husband.

We can't withhold until then the good news that the unprecedented sum of \$5,000 was granted the colleges to be selected by the A.I.A. Scholarship committee and our liaison member Mrs. Dorothy C. Scott. The presentations will be made at the W.A.A. luncheon May 1st. These funds were raised by our successful House Tour and Doric Cotillion.

Those going to the Annual A.I.A. convention in Miami will be interested to note that our traditional "Coffee" will be held the morning of May 6th directly after The Woman's Forum is over. We hope all will feel welcome.

*Hildegard Sleeper*

## MEMBERSHIP

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

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

**Corporate**

Thomas C. Lehrecke  
Istvan Botond  
Rosario D'Agrosa  
Harry R. de Polo  
George T. Frank

Dan Paver  
Joseph L. Russo  
Frederick B. Wildfoerster  
Stanley M. Wolf

**Associate**

D. N. Blauvelt

R. N. Schofield

**CANDIDATES**

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

**Corporate**

Joseph A. Daidone  
Joseph M. Judge  
John Henry King

Thomas Stahl Marvel  
William Tashlick

**Associate**

Edward Warren Dickman

Sponsors:  
Irving P. Marks  
& Joseph J. Oshiver

Marvin Herbert Mills

Sponsors:  
H. Creighton Jones  
& Saul Ellenbogen

Gerald C. Whiteford

Sponsors:  
Robert L. Bien  
& William R. Tappan

**OLKO ENGINEERS**

*Consultants — Designers*

Structural and Civil Engineering

50 East 42 St., N. Y. C. 17 - OX 7-1686