



# POTOMAC VALLEY ARCHITECT

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## THOUGHTS ON A FINE ARTS COMMISSION

by V. T. H. BIEN

*Many an architect and planner are concerned today with the hodge podge manner in which the main arteries of our communities are being developed. Streets and avenues which might be show cases of architectural endeavor for future generations seem destined for a doom of clutter and confusion. In this article by one of our chapter members, Mr. Bien advances the idea of a voluntary Fine Arts Commission as a possible means to improve the condition. The editors of PVA present this article in the hope that it will be provocative in generating further discussion on the subject.*

If we stand on any street corner in the business district of any of our suburban towns and examine what we see, we shall be shocked at the heterogeneous clutter of ugly buildings. Here and there we shall see substantial buildings of some size or importance which are a credit to the community. The rest, however, give the impression of a mushroom pioneer town, such as are portrayed in the "Westerns". A British architect, recently commenting on this situation in America, stated: "What makes the ugliness of most of our cities so alarming is not its hapless endlessness, nor the apathy of the citizens but the suspicion that here is the city of the future!"

Soon after the founding of our Republic, George Washington engaged L'enfant to work out a plan for the City of Washington. It was many years before the plan took shape, except for a few muddy streets. As time passed, the effect of that careful thought for a planned community has made Washington one of the most beautiful cities of the world. Why should not this beauty extend to our suburban areas? Why not have our own L'enfant Plan?

A number of our cities have set up such Commissions and have succeeded in arresting this deterioration. Detroit has encouraged private capital investment for large buildings such as the \$5,000,000 Ford Auditorium and the \$50,000,000 Convention Exhibit Hall and other similar undertakings. This, according to observers, was possible because there was a single Agency coordinating all planning—public, private, and urban remodeling in that city.

Philadelphia has an Arts Commission which has brought about tremendous improvement in

that City. A great deal of similar improvement has taken place in the New York Area. Also right here in Washington, do not we need such a coordinating agency—a Fine Arts Commission?

Could we not:

1. Make a study of the entire Metropolitan Area, especially in Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties.
2. Prepare maps envisioning an orderly expansion of the entire area.
3. Designate sites for local municipal centers, shopping centers, school and park locations, commercial and industrial areas. Some work along this line has already been done in connection with the highway plan, but little has been done to improve the design of buildings along these routes or in the commercial centers.
4. Set up procedures for encouraging good design along main highways leading into our suburbs.
5. Require that all new buildings proposed be submitted to this Fine Arts Commission for comment and approval before a permit is issued. I am told that none of the Fine Arts Commissions, of which I have spoken, require approval of plans before permits will be issued. They depend rather on the effect of their comments on public opinion which has in most cases been sufficient to bring about compliance with the Commission's suggestion. One has to be very careful that he does not infringe upon the rights of individuals which are so carefully guarded by our Constitution, but need we continue to live in ugly communities?

## The Architect in Civic Affairs

by DAVID H. MORGAN

*The following is a digest of an article by David H. Morgan, AIA, a past president of the Philadelphia Chapter, which recently appeared in the DELAWARE VALLEY ANNOUNCER. In addition to some well taken points, Mr. Morgan shows what architects are actually doing in many communities around the country.*

The architect's job is not just to design houses or individual buildings. His houses and buildings create the environment for just about every human activity. The homes, schools, office buildings, factories, churches, theaters, hospitals, stores, shopping centers, railroad stations and air terminals and other structures the architect creates on his drawing boards are not just an expression of our culture and civilization. They also help determine the way we act and live. They make up our communities.

Take city and community planning.

The architect's first duty is to his client, of course. But he also has his client in mind when he thinks beyond the client's building. The individual building in the community does not stand by itself. Its physical and human environment is vital. Its purpose is to serve people who require, light, clean air, green space for recreation, properly balanced traffic flow, playgrounds for their children, convenient services, and the myriad other things which come under the general heading of planning.

The job, it's true, must start on the drawing boards. But that is only a small part of the battle. To improve our cities and communities, to plan the revitalized cities and communities of tomorrow require citizen action of all kinds. Architects are in the vanguard of that action.

You find them talking about a better human environment in the service clubs and civic or-

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ganizations, on citizens' committees and government boards . . . wherever people join together to work for the common good.

In Baltimore, Maryland, for example, no less than seven members of the local chapter of The American Institute of Architects hold important municipal and civic posts:

The AIA chapter president is vice chairman of the Baltimore County Planning Board; the chapter vice president is a member of the Planning Council of the Greater Baltimore Committee. Other active AIA members serve on the City Zoning Committee, the City Art Commission, the Planning Council of the Greater Baltimore Committee and the Urban Renewal Committee. Another architect is the director of the Urban Renewal and Housing Agency.

In at least four of our cities—Louisville, Ky.; Kansas City, Mo.; Little Rock, Ark.; and Nashville, Tenn.—architects have joined in a voluntary effort to work out plans for proper city planning and urban renewal. They are devoting their talents and thousands of manhours to the public interest.

Elsewhere architects, like most professions, organize to protect their professional status and continually strive within the AIA for ever higher ethical and professional standards.

In California, architects lent a new dimension to a governmental campaign. To win the understanding and support of the State Legislature, they have mapped out a program to tell their story to the harassed and busy Legislators on a continuing basis, particularly when the Legislature is not in session.

They know it pays off—not just in new contracts which may lead to commissions or improved public relations for themselves and

## Committee News

Chairman MacIntire of the Education Committee has reported that his committee would continue to pursue the matter of Maryland University and an architectural school.

Liaison with the Baltimore Chapter would be maintained on this project and all developments recorded for the use of future committees because of the long range nature of the understaking.

Chairman Bartley of the Home Building Industry Committee reported the following program for his committee:

1. Change the name to the National designation.
2. Continue as a one man committee until such a time as more representatives are required.
3. Generally follow the outline of the national committee to: "Promote the utilization of (Professional) Architectural services by merchant builders; and to collaborate with associations in the home building field."
4. More specifically to meet with AIA, Montgomery County and Prince Georges County, Park and Planning Commission and Industry representatives in joint effort to produce a clearer picture of the present and future of this industry in the Potomac Valley area.
5. To work with other chapter committee on Codes, Registration and other allied programs.

Chairman Bartley intends to meet soon with Mr. Morris at the Octagon so as get the program underway.

Public Relations and Publications Committee Chairman Elliott discussed the question of retaining public relations counsel (see page 3 story on Burke appointment.) Chairman Elliott also recommended that his committee be split into sub-committees as follows: (1) PVA Subcommittee — (a) Advertising, (b) Publication. (2) Public Relations and Speakers Bureau (3) Public Information. Ted Englehardt recommended Public Relations Counselor report to Executive Committee.

*The officers of the Potomac Valley Chapter join with the editors and the Public Relations and Publications Committee in wishing you, our dear readers, a very*

*MERRY CHRISTMAS!*

their profession, but in the better communities, the improved human environment which the architect envisions as providing, for his fellow man, better places in which to live, raise families, and have more enjoyable leisure hours.

For architecture is not just a profession—it's a mission.

## COUNTY ARCHITECT ADDRESSES SILVER SPRING LIONS CLUB

"The Architect's Place in the Community" was the general subject of an address by John Blake Murphy, A.I.A., Architect for Montgomery County, to the Lions' Club of Silver Spring at dinner at the Indian Spring Country Club on November 3rd, election night. In an audience of over 100 professional and business men were Architects of the Potomac Valley A.I.A. Chapter Trad Thomen and Ted Cromar, as well as Dana Johannes and Loren Murray.

After a brief description of the value of the "Collective Genius" of Architects upon the projects entrusted to their care, the County Architect, taking his key-note from the elections of the day, further urged the businessmen to prevail upon their practicing architect neighbors to partake, by more direct action, in the affairs of their communities.

Among the areas cited by the County Architect that would benefit immeasurably by the presence of professional planners were the State Legislature, Planning Commissions, School Boards, and Town or County Councils, with specific recommendations that the Architects be urged to accept leading positions in the civic associations and PTA's, where often community planning is first initiated.

"It IS the responsibility of one generation to plan for the benefit of the next" stated Mr. Murphy, and he pointed out that the expanding County requires the assistance of experienced planners, if the next ten to twenty years is to produce an orderly and logical area growth which will accommodate at least double our present population. "There is a Centennial of such experience now at hand—we are derelict in our responsibilities if we fail to use it!" was the summation of the remarks given by the County Architect.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SEEKS MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITIES DATA

ATTENTION CHAPTER MEMBERS: Included with your December copy of PVA is a post card which we hope you will quickly fill out and drop in the mail. Here's what it's all about: (1) It will give the Public Relations Committee a handy census of the varied activities of our membership which will be helpful in formulating a long range public relations program; (2) It will give the committee some idea of those members whom we might call to represent the architect's viewpoint to local groups when the occasion demands; (3) The information should be of interest to all the members since from it we will be able to determine a composite member with relation to his community and social interest.

We made the questionnaire short and sweet. It should take about sixty seconds to fill it out and put it in with your outgoing mail.

PLEASE DO IT NOW — TODAY — IT WILL BE MOST HELPFUL — THANK YOU.

## High School Construction Budget Asked By Superintendent of Schools Whittier

A \$17.7 million school budget, 44% higher than the current capital budget of \$12.3 million has been requested for the 1959-1960 fiscal year by Montgomery County School Superintendent C. Taylor Whittier. Public Hearing on the budget will take place at Broome Junior High School in Rockville on December 4 at 8:00 P.M.

Highlighting the new budget request is a large scale school construction program covering 15 large projects. In citing reasons for the increased request, Dr. Whittier points to mushrooming school enrollment expected to reach 100,000 in 1964 from its present mark of 68,133; rising building costs; projects previously postponed which are now urgently needed; and the expected surge of war baby students into the secondary schools.

Projects proposed are:

West Bethesda High School  
1500 capacity, \$4,187,400

West Rockville Junior High School  
800 capacity, \$1,954,650

A new administration building to headquarter the Board of Education, \$1,500,000

Gymnasium for Wheaton High School  
\$1,227,900

Gymnasium for Montgomery Junior College,  
\$807,500

Replacement of 18 classrooms at Bethesda Elementary, \$697,550

Replacement of 10 rooms at Gaithersburg Elementary, \$694,550

Addition to the new Sligo Junior High to increase capacity by 400 students, \$568,990

Replacement of 16 rooms at Silver Spring Intermediate, \$508,340

Replacement of 10 rooms at Kensington Elementary, \$452,900

A new East Wheaton Elementary  
350 capacity, \$440,450

A new Cedar Grove Elementary  
for 240 students, \$375,250

Eight-classroom addition to Aspen Hill Road Elementary, \$365,600

A new Hungerford Elementary  
for 240 Rockville area students, \$365,550

Twelve-classroom addition to Burning Tree Elementary, \$340,100

## Public Relations Aide Hopes for Member Participation in Civic and PR Program

Our new public relations counsel, Don Burke, a ten-year resident of Montgomery County, has been in the public relations business in Maryland for the past two years. Prior to this time he spent eight years in the Washington area as a Congressional correspondent and associate editor of Public Utilities Fortnightly, a national utility magazine, and as a representative of the National Association of Electric Companies in public relations and congressional liaison work.

A native of Madison, Wisconsin, prior to five years service during World War II in the United States Navy in the Pacific, Burke spent three years in the national advertising department of the Wisconsin State Journal. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin.

Burke, who is executive director of the Rockville Chamber of Commerce, has recently published a brochure for the City of Rockville which was designed to attract research and development industry to the area. He is active in civic affairs, having been the Publicity Chairman of the West Montgomery County Citizens Association for a number of years, and is currently a vice president of that association. Recently he was a member of a county-wide committee which selected the Montgomery County Policeman of the Year. He is a member of the National Press Club and an immediate past commander of American Legion Post No. 20 of the same club. With wife, Mellen, and three children, Burke lives on the Falls Road in Potomac, Maryland.

In addition to publishing and editing PVA, Burke will organize a long-range public relations program in consultation with the Executive Committee and the Public Relations and Publications Committee. Keystone of such a program, Burke maintains, is the individual chapter member's willingness to apply public relations techniques in his own practice and participate in public activities.



## HERE and ELSEWHERE

### Washington Chapter Has New President

John Stenhouse has taken over the reins of the Washington Metropolitan Chapter as a result of the recent resignation of Rowland Snyder.

Snyder's resignation resulted when he accepted the post of Director of the Architectural and Structural Division of the Public Building Service. Acceptance of the position required Mr. Snyder to divest himself of important officer-ships in non-government organizations.

Potomac Valley members extend heartiest best wishes to both of these gentlemen in their new posts.

### VIRGINIA NEWS

Falls Church City Fathers seem aware of the need for a long range program of sound architectural development of the area in and around City Hall. They have requested and local architects have agreed to make recommendations to assist in the future aesthetic development of that area.

In other Virginia developments it was recently reported that the Virginia Division has retained an attorney to investigate the Registration Law in that state.

### Baltimore Chapter Has New Publication

"Architects' Report" is the name of the Baltimore Chapter's new seasonal publication. The first issue, a handsome 32-page slick paper job, was dedicated to school construction.

According to Chapter President Paul L. Gaudreau, the venture has three purposes: (1) To recognize top quality architecture; (2) To bring top quality architecture to the attention of community leaders in the Washington-Baltimore area; and (3) To stimulate architects to create better architecture.

The Baltimore Chapter has announced plans for the remaining three issues of the year with the Winter issue featuring Religious Architecture; the Spring issue, residential architecture, and the Summer issue, commercial and recreational buildings.

The publication is a welcome addition to the growing list of quality architectural publications and the Baltimore Chapter is to be congratulated for this major undertaking.

### TWO MEMBERS TO FLORIDA

We'll miss our two friends, George Haddox and Dana B. Johannes who have transferred to the Florida Chapter. Our best wishes in their new locations go with them.

Dana Johannes' move creates a vacancy in the post of chairman of our School Buildings Committee.

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