



# POTOMAC VALLEY ARCHITECT

JAN 1959  
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January 1, 1959

Official Publication, Potomac Valley Chapter of Maryland, AIA

Vol. 3, No. 5

## ARCHITECTURAL NEEDS OF THE MODERN SCHOOL

By C. Taylor Whittier, Superintendent, Montgomery County Schools

A school building should be built to endure for this generation and perhaps the next. It must be built to absorb the punishment of the elements year after year as well as the wear and tear of hundreds of pairs of hands and feet. At the same time the school must meet the present and future needs of teachers and their pupils.

The choice of materials used in school construction is the barometer of the school's future. This choice is one of the major contributions of the architect. He must choose wisely (which includes an eye to costs) not only to meet the above mentioned physical deterioration but also the needs of the instructional program and the factors of safety, comfort and light as well as minimizing maintenance costs. Montgomery County schools are being built in large numbers. If, for no other reason, they should be simple in design and structure; but, regardless of numbers, the structure should be sound and the design of such nature that it will not become out-moded in a single generation.

This may seem a large order but in this ever-changing world proper education is a large order. For best results the school architect and representatives of the school system must work closely together. The basic educational needs should be developed by the instructional staff and reduced to written form. This guide together with cost allowance sets the framework within which the architect must work. It is his responsibility to plan a building to meet the requirements within the funds available.

The architect needs to take into account the changing technical and scientific developments which affect our life, thus, maximum safety must be considered so that children will be protected from attack by all types of weapons. This may mean the development of a safe shelter area for emergency use which also will be of value in the daily school program. We cannot afford to build areas for exceptional



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*Dr. Whittier was born in Illinois, and received his educational training at the University of Chicago, where he received his Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor's Degrees. His Ph.D. degree, taken in 1948, was in the field of Administration, Curriculum, and Finance.*

*Dr. Whittier began his teaching career in the Chicago area, and later was an instructor at the Iowa State Teachers' College. His administrative work began when he was Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools in Oak Park, Illinois. He was later Principal of elementary and secondary schools in Davenport, Iowa; Gary, Indiana; and St. Petersburg, Florida. In 1953, he became Director of Instruction in Pinellas County, Florida, after which he was appointed Assistant Superintendent in Charge of the Instructional Program in that system. He served as visiting professor for summer terms at Florida State University and Stetson University. On August 1, 1957, he took over the administration of the Montgomery County School System.*

needs that are dead areas in the day-to-day operation of the school, yet safety of our pupils during a major catastrophe is a matter of serious concern today.

There are also types of construction and kinds of materials which can be selected to take into account the need to withstand extra pressures and yet serve satisfactorily for conventional school use.

The responsibility to meet these new demands is a real challenge to the creative talents of the architect. Another long-range demand on his creativity is to provide for expansion of the building designs so that the final product is as functional as the first unit of the building. Plans must take into account the maximum possible effective use of the site available and also provide flexibility within the building to allow for changes in spacing according to the needs of a changing instructional program.

Design which is theoretical should give evidence of creativity. The designer may have his mental picture before he puts his first line on paper. From this mental picture the physical layout emerges as it is transmitted to paper. Then the proving period commences; theory sometimes gives way to basic reason or theory and reason merge to produce a new concept which is beneficial.

As the residential, commercial and industrial development of Montgomery County continues at a rapid pace, the availability of low cost school sites is diminishing. The purchase of school sites is often contingent upon availability rather than physical attributes.

If the architect is not presented with an ideal site it puts the burden on him to adapt the building to the site. This is part of the accepted responsibility of the architect. Whenever feasible the architect should be consulted on the problems which may develop in using a given site.

His responsibility also includes a wise choice of landscape, mechanical and structural engi-

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neers. Other consultive service should be secured by him to supplement and strengthen the product of his work. One evidence of an effective architect in his ability to marshal all of the specialized services which he needs to develop his plan to its fullest. On the recommendation of the engineers the architect's plan must be coordinated. In the mechanical and structural engineering phase of the work the choice of materials must be sound and based on physical testing in a live plant rather than in a laboratory. Experience within the school system with materials should be constantly evaluated.

For example, construction material that can be safely and satisfactorily employed in one type of climate may prove unsafe and unsatisfactory in another type of climate.

Experimental use of new materials such as plastics, certain types of wall panels in lieu of wood and masonry, and various types of composition flooring and ceiling materials may lead to their employment in our structures when experience upholds their performance under physical use and climatical conditions. The true test of all of the architect's engineering is how well it works under classroom conditions. For instance, it is the electrical engineer's function to provide proper illumination and not just "electric lights".

Another example of this broad concept of the architect's responsibility can be found in the mechanical engineer's contribution to the job. He must take into account human failure to understand fully the operation of a complex heating system with all of its valves, controls, switches and thermostats. He must design a heating and ventilating system that is both simple and effective.

Meet:  
MR. PVA

Mr. Potomac Valley Architect, that mythical fellow who has emerged as a result of our recent activities survey, is a very interesting and active gentleman.

First of all, he's co-operative and obliging judging by the fine response we received on our census. The percentage of returns was 35 percent, which is considered very high for any kind of a survey.

Secondly, and perhaps most important, he wishes to tell the architect's story far and wide and create the best possible public relations climate for his chosen profession. This is noted in the fact that a great majority of the members responding, almost two to one, have indicated their willingness to appear before local groups, schools, youth clubs and the like.

That Mr. PVA is not willing to sit around and let the other fellow shape the course of civic and social events is indicated by the number of organizations in which our members are active. The survey points up that the average member belongs to at least three organizations and not necessarily those connected with his profession.

For instance, Mr. PVA sacrifices his precious time to attend civic association meetings and find out what's going on in his community. He's aware of the importance of his children's education and gets out to the PTA.

Further, he takes time to participate in church activities and in some cases helps out the other kids by serving on YMCA boards, etc. He mingles with his fellow business and professional man at the Board of Trade, the Chamber of Commerce and various service clubs. And last but not least, he has not forgotten the old school tie judging by his membership and activity in his school alumni association.

Yes, Mr. PVA has come through the public relations test with flying colors. The architectural profession can well be proud of him.

In short the architect is the coordinator for all the requirements of a safe, sound, economical and modern school building where today's, and possibly tomorrow's children may be educated. He must realize that the staff of the school has to live with the building for many years and that an otherwise fine school may become a source of constant worry because certain details were not properly planned or executed in the design or construction stages.

Thus the broad strokes of creativity which were satisfactory for the preliminary layout must give way to the most minute detail in the final drawing and during the construction of the building. The architect who provides supervision assumes responsibility for the proper execution of his plans.

N.Y. Chapter Takes Strong  
Stand in School Hassle

The New York Chapter has recently demonstrated the value of a strong factual position when loose charges are made concerning the expenditure of public funds in a school building program. The result has been wide public support of the architect's position.

The New York City Board of Education recently came under attack by the City Controller with charges that \$100 million had been wasted on school construction during the last eight years on what was described as "lavish embellishments" and needless fees paid to private architects for individually designed buildings.

New York Chapter President L. Fancel LaFarge hastened to point out in a press conference that:

- Architects, too, are citizens and parents whose main concern is seeing that all children get the best possible education and that as taxpayers and professionals they are just as sensitive to costs and pledged to serve the public with integrity;
- Architects called in by the Board of Education have delivered the goods and broken out of "a strait jacket of dull, drab, and mediocre design";
- The use of "stock plans" often entails far greater costs than the fee to an architect for an individual plan designed for a particular site; and
- Actual figures show that school cost rises really lagged behind the general building cost increases.

The result of the Chapter's action has been gratifying in that the press, labor leaders and other prominent groups have taken strong positions opposing the charges with statements such as "reckless and unfounded", a "disservice to education" and rejection of "bar-racks and educational slums" for the city's school children.

MORRIS SELECTED

E. M. Morris, Sr., has been selected to make studies for a Friends School in the Sandy Spring area. The school will also have dormitory and recreational facilities.

He will be assisted by Laurance Shuman, Mechanical Engineer and C. Thornton Brown, Civil Engineer.

We are glad to know that Ebie is resuming the active practice of his art.

EDITORS ALERTED

Local newspaper and magazine architectural editors should note January 30, 1959 on their calendars. That's the final date for filing eligible material for AIA's 6th Annual Architectural Journalism Awards. Purpose of the competition is to encourage good writing on architectural subjects in the press and in popular magazines.

## Chapter Committee Work Cited Nationally by AIA

Chosen as Document of the Month for December is "Reports 1-5 prepared for the Board of Education of Montgomery County, Maryland" by the Potomac Valley and Washington-Metropolitan Chapters. The Document of the Month program, an activity of the Chapter Affairs Committee of AIA, recognizes a chapter or state publication of unusual merit and calls it to the attention of all chapter and state organizations. Copies of the publication are sent to all chapter presidents and executive secretaries and the entire AIA membership alerted to their availability.

"Reports 1-5", termed by the AIA as "an excellent exposition of the services of an architect in school building projects", is the end product of months of work by the Joint Architectural Advisory Committee of the Potomac

Valley and the Washington Metropolitan Chapters, AIA. Subjects covered in the five reports are:

- Criteria for selection of an architect
- The services of the architect in site selection
- Report on proposals to add to Montgomery County Board of Education a staff architect and an architectural review board
- The services of an architect
- Evaluation of the Board of Education construction standards

Members of the Joint Committee who are to be congratulated for their excellent presentation are: William N. Denton, Jr., AIA; Dana B. Johannes, AIA; Paul H. Kea, AIA; John W. McCloud, AIA; Joseph Miller, AIA; and Ronald S. Sensenman, AIA.

## Architects Urged To Publicize Works

An architect has a duty to publicize his own work not only for his own benefit but for the good of the profession, according to the building editor of Better Homes and Gardens.

In a recent article entitled: Legitimate Publicity—A Duty for Architects, John Normile, AIA, sees architects, by the nature of their professional status and tradition, as having done very little in comparison with other creative people to exploit either themselves personally or the profession as a whole. He does see some results from the recently inaugurated publicity program of the A.I.A.

"It is only rarely that individual architects bestir themselves," according to Normile, "to employ the most effective publicity tool of all—the consumer magazines—whose vast circulation and prestige is unquestionably the most powerful of all media for gaining widespread, favorable attention."

Citing the "indifference" and in some cases a "negative" attitude of the architect toward publication of his work, Normile continues: "This is a puzzling reaction, as the value and

place of the architect in the custom house field, not to mention the commercial house builders' field, has been fostered and developed largely by the consumer magazines, particularly in the home service group. My feeling is that any contribution to this building up of the profession that can be made by an individual should be assumed as a duty to his fellow architects."

The writer can understand the professional pride the architect must experience from publication of his work in the professional journals but points out they are by their very nature read exclusively by professionals.

In a strong plea for architects' action, the editor concluded: "I am sure I speak for every editor in this field when I urge architects interested in residential work to send photographs and floor plans of jobs they feel are good examples of their current work. It will raise the level of design in their territory, help them as individuals and all other of their colleagues to seek the kind of publicity we can give them."

## Our Friend, Gene Glasgow

A good friend of the Potomac Valley Chapter, Gene Glasgow, passed away during the last month.

The head of a public relations and advertising firm bearing his name, Gene had represented the Chapter in a public relations capacity until recently. For a year, Gene had known that he was suffering from leukemia, but in the end it was a heart attack which felled him. He was 60 this past October.

A native of Kirksville, Mo., Gene moved with his father and mother to Sioux Falls, S.D., when he was two years old. He was an only child.

He was a graduate of the journalism school of the University of Minnesota and was a member of Sigma Delta Chi, journalism fraternity, and Alpha Tau Omega. He also was

a member of Kensington Masonic Lodge and a past president of the Maryland Press Association.

Following his graduation from the University of Minnesota, Gene went to work with the Minneapolis Northwestern Bank. He later became a reporter, feature writer and editor for several midwestern papers.

He joined the Maryland News in the late '40s and established that paper's business and real estate section. He later joined the Bethesda Record as advertising director.

Gene next became real estate editor for the old Washington Times-Herald and finally moved to Kensington where he founded his own firm. Besides his wife, Clara S., Gene is survived by two children of a former marriage and his father, Dr. Allah M.

## MEMBER'S CHURCH LAUDED

Secretary Mill Prassas' Shaler Methodist Church has recently received favorable comment in the Montgomery County Sentinel.

A Sentinel columnist for the Cabin John area says: "The Shaler Methodist Church's new sanctuary on MacArthur Blvd. is an attractive little building. The architect has been very creative in fitting it in with the old building behind it. Between the two structures he has developed a courtyard space and marked it off with brick walls and loggias that make it most appealing. Even in the midst of construction and disorder, the courtyard makes a charming impression. We take our hat off to architect and to the church laymen who had the eye to recognize and accept the unusual and gratifying concept."

## CHURCH ARCHITECTURE MEETING COMING SOON

January 15, 1959 is the deadline for submitting entry plans for the 1959 Conference on Church Architecture to be held February 17, 18, 19, 20, 1959 at the Statler Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles, California.

Aim of the Conference is: (1) To bring to Architects and Churchmen the latest information on church architecture and building and (2) The promotion of better church architecture through lecture, discussion, workshops and exhibits.

## FEBRUARY DEADLINE ON AIA HONOR AWARDS

Entry slips and fees should be submitted to AIA by February 1 by those intending to enter the National Honor Awards competition. Entries will be judged at the Octagon from March 30 to April 1 and winners' mounts will be displayed at the AIA Convention in New Orleans June 22-26.

## AN INVITATION

All Chapter members take note. Eddie Morris has sent the Chapter the following announcement:

"Eddie Morris takes this occasion to offer his best wishes to the Chapter and to ask the members and wives to dinner at Olney Inn at 6:30 P.M., Wednesday, January 28th. Please inform the program chairman, David N. Daumit, 137 Kennedy St., N.W. (Tel. RA. 6-3215) if you will come, as soon as may be convenient, so arrangements can be made."

The officers and directors would like to take this opportunity to thank Eddie for this very kind invitation to the Chapter.

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