

FEBRUARY, 1963



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER OF MARYLAND

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- Washington In Transition Excerpts
  Downtown: Streets and Places Downtown Progress
- Washington as a Starting Point Fritz Gutheim

### POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER OF MARYLAND

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS Executive Secretary – 588-1125

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directed to: Mr. Joseph Dennison, 7705 Georgia Avenue, N.W., Washington 12, D.C.

### THIS MONTH'S COVER

The model is of the Harbour Square Development for Southwest Washington, Satterlee and Smith, AIA, Architects. It is one of the most impressive features of the current Octagon Exhibition. Photograph by Ezra Stoller.

#### COMMITTEES

The following members of the Potomac Valley Chapter have been appointed to serve on these committees of the Middle Atlantic Region.

STANLEY A. ARTHUR–Regional Judiciary Committee

PAUL H. KEA – Committee on Preservation of Historic Buildings RONALD S. SENSEMAN – Committee on Pan-American Congress for 1965

## MARCH MEETING

12 Noon, March 6 Sirloin Inn Wheaton Plaza Shopping Center

## **REGIONAL MEETING**

The Baltimore Chapter sponsored an A.I.A. Seminar on January 25, 1963 at the Sheraton Belvedere in Baltimore. Our Chapter was fairly well represented, and those of us in attendance can attest to a stimulating meeting on Comprehensive Architectural Services. The panel included Robert F. Hastings, F.A.I.A., William G. Lyles, A.I.A., Clinton E. Brush, III, A.I.A., and moderated by our Regional Director, Charles M. Nes, Jr., F.A.I.A. Mr. Hastings and Mr. Lyles spoke of the experiences of their own firms on the various aspects of the expanded practice. Mr. Brush, a former Regional Director from the Gulf States, reported on the proposed changes to the A.I.A. Mandatory Standards. All of the panelists agree the Architectural Profession must furnish competent cost estimates to their clients and no longer can we ignore our responsibility to design within the budget. This is our greatest weapon against the "package dealers" who do furnish reliable cost estimates. One of the revisions to the Mandatory Standards will include a provision that the Architect must be responsible for competent estimates.

The Seminar was followed by the Baltimore Chapter's Annual Banquet with Morris Ketchum, Jr., F.A.I.A., the guest speaker. Mr. Ketchum gave an outstanding address on "Quality in Design" in which he outlined the challenge and potential of the Architect today. He held his audience with a soft spoken, but firmly convincing thought that it is not enough to build a building that won't fall down, but to build it fine enough that no one will ever want to take it down.

Prior to the Seminar, there was a Middle Atlantic Regional Council Meeting attended by your President, Secretary Jack Moore, and our Executive Secretary, Mrs. Dobres. We would like to tell the Chapter what an outstanding job our Regional Director, Charlie Nes, is doing for us. Charlie had a full schedule that day and a long agenda for the meeting, but kept the meeting going without the

## EVENTS and EXHIBITIONS

AIA OCTAGON Through March 17 Washington In Transition NATIONAL HOUSING CENTER **Opening February 24** Achievement in the Building Arts NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART **Opening February 3** Callot Exhibition-Prints CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART Through March 3 The 28th Biennial Exhibition of **Contemporary American Painting** Through February 17 Work by Clare Ferriter **Opening February 26** Work by Jacob Kainen WASHINGTON GALLERY OF MODERN ART Through February 18 Sculpture by Reuben Nakian PHILLIPS COLLECTION Through March 4 Giacometti TEXTILE MUSEUM Permanent Collection SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION Through February 28 Model and Renderings of the National Cultural Center **Opening February** 1 Photos by Philippe Halsman **Opening** February 4 Woodcuts by Unichi Hiratsuka **Opening February** 9 Eskimo Carvings Eskimo Graphic Arts CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICATIONS INSTITUTE February 19, 8:00 p.m., National Housing Center Lighting Seminar PAN AMERICAN UNION **Opening** February 5 Work by Alfredo Sinclair **Opening February** 18 Work by Anatol Wladyslaw

usual digressions. We all came away well informed on the Institute's Programs and the topics to be voted on at the Miami Convention.

Theodore R. Cromar, Jr. President

## **AREA ACTIVITY**

The exhibition "Washington in Transition" continues at the galleries of the Octagon through March 17. The material for the exhibition has been assembled by the A.I.A. with the help and cooperation of the National Capital Planning Commission. Keyed to the A.I.A. Journal devoted to Washington, the exhibition includes models and drawings of Watergate Development, Columbia Plaza, F.O.B. 5, Pennsylvania Avenue Study, Harbour Square, Tiber Island, Chalk House West, The S.W. Portal Site, Carrollsburg Square and many other projects.

Ground-breaking for the L'Enfant Plaza, a Webb & Knapp project, will take place April 15, 1963. The "center of gravity of the Southwest" will include controversial F. O. B. 5, a world communications building, a 1,000 room hotel, a pair of buildings bringing the aviation and space industries together, a shopping area and a parking garage below the plaza for 2,-000 cars. To be completed in 1964, it will be a great tribute to the man who conceived of the federal city master plan.

Frederick Gutheim spoke to the Washington-Metropolitan Chapter, A.I.A., at the first of a series of seminars on the subject of "Washington in Transition." The full text of his remarks appear elsewhere in this issue.

Paul Rudolph suggests many ambitious and thoughtful solutions for the Federal City in the current special Washington edition of Architectural Forum. A high density federal office area around the Capitol, a scheme to contain the mall so that the space does not leak out between buildings, a "clean-up" of the Washington Monument Grounds and relocation of the Supreme Court are some of his dramatic proposals.

It is significant that Washington be in the Planning limelight as the Federal City, the District and the Counties plunge into the Year



MEYERS RESIDENCE

WALTER BUCHER and ASSOCIATES, Architects

ALAN MEYERS, Project Designer

OWNER: Mr. & Mrs. Max Meyers

CONTRACTOR: Hub J. Garman

2,000 Plan with the accent on corridors, rapid transit, self-sustaining communities, and ambitious building programs. The present administration has to be given much credit for the new perspective on contemporary federal architecture, the study of Pennsylvania Avenue, the Cultural Center, the encouragement of a City College, a rapid transit program and a vastly enlarged District building program.

Neil R. Greene

### **NEW MEMBERS**

This month the Potomac Valley Chapter welcomes four new members.

EMIL JETTMAR, a native Washingtonian and cum laude graduate of Catholic University, has been with Johannes and Murray & Associates since 1953. Married, Mr. Jettmar has four children and more hobbies than we have room to list.

WILLIAM M. VAN LONKHUY-ZEN, an associate with Johannes and Murray, is a navy veteran, and a graduate of the University of Michigan. Married and the father of two children, his leisure activities include photography, landscaping, and PTA and garden club work.

ROBERT E. LORENZEN is also an associate with Johannes and Murray. An honor graduate of Carnegie Institute of Technology, he also attended George Washington and Catholic Universities. Mr. Lorenzen, his wife and three children live in Beltsville, where he is president of the Citizens' Association and editor of the local newspaper.

WILLIAM C. PERNA was born in Washington, D.C., attended high school locally, and graduated from Catholic University. Since 1957 he has been with the office of Ted Englehardt. He lives with his wife and four children in a house of his own design in Rockville.

## CHAPTER PARTY ON MARCH 1

Cocktails, buffet supper, and an unusual art show where members and their wives can test their critical prowess against the experts and each other. Gusti's Blair Mansion Inn, Silver Spring. Details by mail.



Some representative work from the Washington in Transition exhibition, at the Octagon through March 17. Practically all the local planning and large scale architectural projects featured in PVA over the last two years are included in the show -a fine capsule view of Washington's architectural future.

# Washington in Transition



TOWN HOUSES – TIBER ISLAND DEVELOPMENT KEYES, LETHBRIDGE & CONDON, ACHITECTS One of the components in the Redevelopment Land Agency's Ambitious Southwest Undertaking.

CARROLL APARTMENTS DEIGERT and YERKES and ASSOCIATES, ARCHITECTS

ALBERT G. MUMMA, JR., ASSOCIATE Sixty unit housing for the elderly development for the National Capital Housing Authority.

EASTGATE GARDENS BROWN CHAPMAN MILLER WRIGHT, ARCHITECTS

A 230 unit NCHA development of row houses and community center, designed for large families.



Remarks to the Washington Chapter, American Institute of Architects, at a luncheon meeting January 15, 1963, The Mayflower Hotel by Frederick Gutheim, Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies.

## WASHINGTON AS A STARTING POINT

Change is an opportunity to progress, to improve, to perfect. Of itself it is neither good nor bad. The addition of new architecture, whether in a crowded city center or in the suburbs on vacant land, changes what we have now. If it does not actually destroy existing buildings, it modifies them. Let us commence, then by recognizing that we are concerned with the city as a whole, with recognizing the values it now has, and with preserving and enhancing these values. The problem is one of urban continuity.

The nature of the city of Washington is specifically responsive to such regional factors as climate and geography, to a long and distinguished history as the capital of a large and growing nation, and the national cultural heritage expressed here in terms of architecture and monuments. We have today, as throughout the past, two Washingtons. They may be characterized as a Washington expressive of the nation and its interest, a white and monumental city, a city reflecting government functions and Federal affluence. The other Washington is the local river town on the Potomac, the vernacular city, with its slums and parking lots, its drab strings of shops along thoroughfares, its monotonous suburban housing developments and its unimaginative and depressingly ordinary commercial buildings.

As a start, then, I offer the idea that we cannot talk about Washington, even the image of Washington the nation sees, simply in terms of Federal buildings, Federal activities, Federal interests or Federal decisions. We must consider the whole Washington, vernacular as well as formal, local as well as national, metropolitan as well as District. We must consider how the two Washingtons relate and interact, how one needs the other and can strengthen the other, and how these relationships should inform our city planning, our urban design and the design of individual buildings.

To those of us who have lived here a long time it may appear that Washington is losing its individuality among cities. But this distinctive identity is too fundamentally established, in the very plan of the city, in the national expectation of it, and in its architectural heritage to be easily lost. Like Paris, it abounds in oddshaped sites for buildings, not only shaped in curves or like pairs of pants, but facing open spaces, and inviting reciprocal relations with other buildings. In the architecture we have inherited you can find one

example at least of every past style and revival from the earliest days, and there would have been more had we not torn down so many of them. Some are of great national value, like Renwick's design for the old Smithsonian building, which started the Gothic revival; like that pinnacle of the Egyptian revival, the Washington obelisk; like the Lincoln Memorial, the apogee of academic classicism; or, one predicts, Dulles Airport, the purest example of structural expressionism. But many others illustrate merely the contemporary architectural idiom, especially in residential and commercial building, those categories of architecture in which originality is most cheaply bought and least durably maintained. It is these in which Washington seems a more typical American city although there are few cities in which our architectural past is so evenly and so profusely illustrated and none in which the challenge to do the fashionable thing in an exemplary way has been so persistent. As a national showcase Washington has had for nearly the whole of its history the power more briefly possessed by New York's successively abandoned commercial districts, residential Nob Hill or Chicago's Gold Coast in the period before the adoption of the graduated income tax ended ostentation, or even today's midtown office building boom in Manhattan: the power of arousing a higher expectation of quality in design because it was subject to higher critical standards as a national and international center of attraction. Finally, we must recognize as a source of individuality in Washington building design today its heritage of past architecture which steadily challenges us today. If we criticize the new Senate and House office buildings, it is in terms of the earlier design of the Capitol. The design of Lafayette Square must be measured by no less a standard than the White House itself.

Architecture in Washington, I suggest, owes its individuality to the powerful and controlling influence of a distinctive plan, rooted in the architecture of illusion, and the sites it offers today's designers; in the national expectation that buildings in Washington must be measured not alone against the best in town, but against the best anywhere; and the expectation that what we here build takes its place in history, and will be measured against not only the heritage of a notable past but against the best the future holds. We are called upon to excel as are the architects of no other American city. The pursuit of excellence is perhaps too demanding. Certainly in reviewing that special issue on Washington of the Journal of the A.I.A. it is hard to be impressed by the buildings of Washington today. More to the point of these remarks, they do not add up to an impressive architectural image of a great city, one that projects a contemporary architecture across the land as powerfully as it does the image of the monumental traditional city. Yet that is our task; to make a Washington that satisfies more than the tourist's expectation.

Two aspects of the contemporary city may be distinguished. In the congested center, redevelopment provides one set of opportunities. In the suburbs other steps may be taken to redeem the newly built areas from the humdrum character they so readily assume. Let me discuss each very briefly.

Central city change is inevitable as the city's central functions change to accommodate a vastly larger population. Given our height limits, which I believe should be retained; and assuming, as I do, continued centrality; then we must count on a rather larger area into which the new white collar industry and its office building must be located, the so-called "confrontation industry" which cannot move to the suburbs. The services of the central city are required by this office building population, by the specialized requirements of the entire metropolitan area, and by the rapidly increasing number of visitors; and this is the aggregate population which supports the cultural activity of the central city. If this city is different from midtown Manhattan, the Loop in Chicago, or other "downtowns" I suggest it is because of the individualizing influences I have earlier mentioned, together with the combination of Federal and private office buildings (and they have grown almost indistinguishable), and the intermixture of the open spaces of monuments and parks with their tourists with the daily life of the city. These ingredients we must organize in larger and more significant units of design. The rebuilding opportunity created by slum clearance and urban renewal, by the construction of new expressways and transit facilities, the replacement of obsolescent commercial buildings by new and more efficient offices and stores - these are the elements at our disposal. They are also the forces of vitality for the future city, which will generate still further changes. Yet as I look at such districts as H Street in the vicinity of 17th, or lower Connecticut Avenue, or K Street west of 15th, or 17th Street below M, districts in which there are many excellent individual buildings, it is clear we are building buildings, not cities. Each building has its own parking facility, to take one instance, when planning might have saved thousands of dollars and provided far greater efficiency by encouraging collective provision of parking. With so much uniformity and monotony of facades, surely there is a case for architectural design control that would be absent in areas of less building activity. The relations between individual buildings, their recognition of each other, the use of minor open space to punctuate uniform facades, arcades, even the setbacks which those skyscrapers of soap and whiskey empires have made famous, are lacking. The public space itself must respond to the higher densities, building heights, new functions and other changes in such areas as around Farragut or McPherson squares. But these changes are only a start, and I cannot linger to discuss what I hope you will consider more fully later in this series of talks.

In the suburbs the uniformity of residential subdivisions, schools and shopping centers is still the curse. Nothing is large enough, high enough, or important enough to create a focal point. It is still a bleary picture where, as Gertrude Stein said of Oakland, "there is no there there." A church, a library, a school never achieves the status of a community institution. It always seems a branch of something else - somewhere. It seems most comfortable when alone in a quiet wood, like Keyes and Belluschi's Cedar Lane Unitarian Church, one of our best suburban buildings. In the commercial strips provided by our county planners, the shopping centers are hardly more than neon-lit gasoline alleys set back a bit from the highways. Again, it is not the individual buildings that invite criticism but their failure to add up, to form larger and more coherent aggregations, to express the strength of community, to stand out from the overwhelming monotony and drabness of suburbia everywhere. I do not think the designers of the new Arlington library, or its YMCA could do much about Arlington itself with their individual buildings, any more than the architects of the new county buildings in Rockville or Hyattsville could. A larger effort of a different sort is needed. The principal hope for the larger suburban package is the diversified free-standing community on the Reston model, supported by variable density zoning, and expressing the clearly stated requirements of 75,000 people or more. This idea is now pretty well established and I think we have seen the last of the wholly residential developments like Belair, but we have not yet resolved the new design problems, either as planning or as architecture.

Washington as a national capital has its distinctive image, and it is a unique one. But as the fastest growing large city in eastern United States it should be offering suggestions and receiving them from Texas and California, Florida and the Northwest coast, and the sun country of the southwest. These other rapidly growing areas are making their own mistakes, but development requirements have made them realize more clearly than I believe we do yet the need to project a clear, individual urban image to the nation as a whole.

That image of the city, when we get it and project it, cannot be that merely of the better American city; and I hope it will not be the Federal image of a city of bureaucracy, impersonal, ordinary and timid. It must be the more ideal image of the City of Man, the city of opportunity, the city which having devastated the countryside, having attracted its population from the nation and the world, has made good its pledge to provide the good life. DOWNTOWN PROGRESS has just issued a handsome and comprehensive brochure outlining their plans for the revitalization of the central business district. The best possible summary of their aims is included in the foreward to the report.

Like the downtown areas of most major American cities, Downtown Washington suffers from problems of traffic congestion, conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, inadequate mass transportation, inadequate parking, obsolete structures, and shabby appearance. Downtown Washington also lacks identity. Visitors, foreign and domestic, have difficulty in locating the "main street," and even residents are often confused by the undistinguished similarity of most of its streets. Moreover, the area does not have a character appropriate to the center of the Capital of the United States of America.

Since April 1960, when DOWNTOWN PROGRESS began to develop the Action Plan for revitalizing Downtown Washington, there has been a marked increase in development interest east of 15th Street. At this writing, 6 major buildings are under construction and at least 8 more should get under way by 1964.

The revitalization of Downtown will continue along withs improvements in transportation access by subways, rapid transit buses, and freeways; improved parking; an internal circulation system of small vehicles or minibuses to make it easier for people to get around within Downtown; and the utilization of the urban renewal process in Downtown under a new concept that will encourage maximum development by private initiative with minimum public acquisition.

Improvements in the appearance of Downtown should accompany these functional improvements.

To a great extent, this appearance will be determined by the quality of the public rights-of-way: the circles, the squares, the tree lined streets, and the grand diagonal avenues which are the visible reminders of The L'Enfant Plan commissioned by President Washington in 1791. As the city has grown and changed over the years, many of the special streets and places designated by L'Enfant have not developed, or have been eliminated, or have become indistinct. The drawings on the following pages illustrate recommendations for the design and treatment of the streets and places of Downtown Washington to evoke the heritage of The L'Enfant Plan, and to provide identities for all of the streets and places in Downtown consistent with their functions.

On the following five pages we have excerpted some of the proposals for various classifications of streets in the new plan, and proposals for two of the new squares or places created. Next month PVA will examine the proposals for a new F Street, and some of the details for streetscape elements.



A typical section is shown to illustrate the treatment proposed for the grand avenues. Groups of permanent flagpoles, 60 feet high, are proposed to mark special places such as squares and important intersections. For ceremonial occasions, the avenues could be lined with temporary flagpoles 12 feet high set in sockets permanently installed in the sidewalks.

SCALE

Pavement Glack asphaltic concrete, granite curb, ----red brick gutter,

5" granite block -

<u>Sidewalk</u> concrete, scored 5 ft square — 5' exposed aggregate border -

Trees

Northern red oak, 40' on center

Lighting 21 It high incandescent double globe light fixtures (similar to existing with globes turned perpendicular to the curb) 80'on center /

sockets for Temporary flag poles







An illustration of the treatment proposed for the major streets. These streets will carry relatively high volumes of vehicular traffic and will require good visibility by day and by night.



Pavenuet black asphaltic concrete, -

Concrete curb & gutter

Sidevalk

5' granite block .

Trees Northern red oak, 40' on center

Lighting. 25' high color improved mercury vapor fixtures, 80' staggered



The treatment proposed for local streets carrying slow-moving vehicles in the business and residential areas.

Parement black asphattic concrete, ~ Concrete curb & gutter \_

Sidewalk

concrete, scored 2% squares 2% ft. exposed aggregate border 5" granute block

Trees

littleleaf linden Or honeyboust 30' on center

> Lighting 18' high incondiscent glote light, 60'on center





## LINCOLN PLACE

This area has been designed to enhance the existing visitor attractions of the Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre, and Petersen House, where Lincoln died, for the benefit of the increased number of visitors to Washington forecast in the *Action Plan*. Plans have already been drawn by the National Park Service to restore the interior of Ford's Theatre. The restoration of 10th Street between the theatre and Petersen House is proposed to provide a period setting for these historic buildings.

Taking advantage of the drop in grade from F to E Street, a new development of 10th Street is proposed which would have three levels: a gently sloping pavement southward from F Street, a brick or cobblestone level place joining Ford's Theatre and Petersen House, and a third level leading to E Street. At E Street, a pullout bay is proposed for the unloading and loading of visitor buses.

The area between F Street and Lincoln Place provides a particularly delightful space for sidewalk cafes, band concerts, and other activities appropriate to Downtown.



E STREET



View North toward F Street



## OFFICE SQUARE



The Action Plan proposes the development of public and private office buildings around this new square. The diagonal sightline of New York Avenue has been maintained through the space, with a fountain proposed as a focal point to provide visual connections with a focal element to be placed in the new square at New York Avenue and 13th Street, and with the building in Mount Vernon Square. The changes in grade through the site provide opportunities for the development of terraces at several levels, and the creation of pleasant sitting areas for office workers at lunch time, shoppers during the day and visitors at any time.

One of the most important lessons of the Swedish schools — as with much of their architecture — can be found in the relation of building to site. First of all, only sites with plentiful natural planting are chosen; secondly, these areas are then scrupulously maintained and preserved.

The conscious choosing of only those locations with trees and/or view is an integral part of the entire school building philosophy and one which pays increasingly handsome dividends with each year. It is a further reflection as well of the benefits of the Swedish policy of municipal land ownership.

## G. E. Kidder Smith in SWEDEN BUILDS

An executive once complained to me that it is easy to stand outside and criticize. It is easy to brush your teeth, too, I replied, but that doesn't make it any less desirable.

Ralph Caplan in INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

The crystalline forms of all folded structures are very exacting. They are difficult to integrate in the general design. They exert a powerful and obstinate influence on their surroundings. These characteristics will often constitute a temptation to try a folded plate for the sake of the "architectural effect," in defiance of functional and structural principles. Moreover, the detailing of a folded plate structure is very delicate work, and the difficulties are easily underestimated. More than almost any other structure, the folded plate derives its vitality from clarity of expression. It will tolerate no disguising. If we recall the virtually unavoidable density of modern mechanical installations, pipes, ducts and conduits, the need to insulate and drain the roof, to waterproof the valleys, to provide gutters and rainleaders, we shall have no difficulty in appreciating that, though a design may look very convincing as a model, it may easily fail when it comes to hard realities. Who ever balks at following the spartan road to large, bare, crystal-clear structural forms, as exemplified by the Unesco Hall, would do better to forego the folded plate and its tricky detail altogether.

> Curt Siegel – STRUCTURE AND FORM IN MODERN ARCHITECTURE (Reinhold)

.... in New York the approach is at the same time more functional and more drastic. There, if they see a dirty old building (like Pennsylvania Station) they do not clean it, they flatten it.

Stephen A. Kliment in ARCHITECTURAL & ENGINEERING NEWS



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