General Contractors Association

Who Is Wrong?

The Big Three Pioneers

Executive Board Meeting
General Contractors Association of Milwaukee

The General Contractors Association of Milwaukee was organized over 20 years ago. Its objective has been to promote better relations between private owners and public bodies, their architects or engineers on the one hand and contractors on the other and to maintain high professional standards and efficiency in the conduct of work, encouraging sound business methods, which relieve contractors of improper risks and protecting the best interests of the building owner.

**Quantity Survey Bureau**

In the beginning of its operations, in connection with association activities, a Quantity Survey Bureau has been established for the express purpose of properly designating the materials and positions which they occupy in construction projects. These quantity survey operations are wide in scope and include all types of structures, buildings, bridges, public work projects embracing practically all types (excepting highways) including projects in both the architectural and engineering fields.

The purpose of the quantity survey bureau is to serve as a check on materials and encourage proper methods of take off, correcting that phase of the construction industry, which will minimize to a large degree the question of gambling in quantities.

To carry this work through properly, committees on methods and rules have devoted years of service combining both theory and practice developing a complete and comprehensive quantity survey. National recognition was obtained from the American Institute of Quantity Surveyors resulting in the award of merit Quantity Survey on masonry in National Competition.

An important part of Quantity Survey operations, is to help correct amongst contractors, any misinterpretations of plans and specifications through cooperation with architects and engineers.

**Association Activities**

The General Contractors Association is the Milwaukee Chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America, cooperating with one-hundred and twenty-five chapters throughout the United States in bringing about corrections to abusive measures detrimental to the Construction Industry as a whole.

Achievements worthy of mention are:

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Who Is Wrong?

When reading articles for and against the Modern Style in architecture we cannot help classifying architects who indulge in these controversies into two groups. One the conservatives, the other the liberals, the first adheres to the accepted styles of architecture, the second discards them in its effort to develop a new style. Between them there is a continual controversy as to who is right and who is wrong. Time only will answer this question, today we can only guess as to what the answer will be.

It seems but logical that the increase in the height of buildings should force clear thinking architects to discard styles that were developed for low buildings for something more logical, in doing so they follow the course taken by the architects of the middle ages when the lofty churches of that period led to the development of the Gothic style. So at present the still loftier buildings are leading us to a further logical change of dress for these buildings, this new dress has for the present been named the modern style.

Considerable criticism is being aimed at the new style which is not so much the fault of the style as of the incompetence of the designers.

On the trail of the competent designer there follows a horde of incompetents who have no knowledge of the fundamental principles of art as applied to the design of buildings, it is the work of these imitators that draws the fire of criticism.

The incompetent designers are the strongest advocates of the new style which in its pioneer stage is not yet articulated thus there is no standard by which to guage their work. They can reap a harvest on their audacious bluffing before time can establish a correct measure of their ability.

The mass and proportions of buildings determines the proper style for their dress, any style including the modern, if correctly applied, will produce a pleasing building. Generally speaking the style of architecture merely fixes the character of the embellishments on a building and does not determine its architectural success or failure although one style is better adopted to a certain building than another. Good judgment is required to choose the correct one.

The factors that determine the architectural success or failure of a building are mass, proportion, fenestration, scale, texture and color. These factors are hidden behind the cloak of style consequently many persons credit the style for the architectural success of a building which is not necessarily a factor.

The judgment of the public has a considerable influence on the trend in building design both by the criticism of the man in the street and by that of the men who pay for the buildings. It is therefore important that the public have discriminating judgment in appraising the architectural merit of a building.

Courses on the appreciation of the arts and courses in various branches of art for the general public are now available in all the larger cities and are well attended, they are intended to develop a more discriminating public taste which is the foundation for the highest development in the arts. The immediate result of these educational efforts are not satisfactory because so many who develop a slight aptitude at drawing immediately consider themselves artists. In their conceit they pose as such, they are very bold and voluble, they keep themselves in the public eye and mould public opinion to accept the crude work of beginners as works of art. The next stage in the educational effort will advance the discernment of the general public to a stage where they can no longer be misled by commercial adventurers posing as artists.

In answer to the question "who is wrong" we can say the conservatives are, because they are not willing to accept a change from established customs and thus they hamper progress.

We can also say the liberals are wrong, because they expect to develop a new style by ignoring all precedent without which there can be no progress. Yes they both are wrong.

Is anybody right in this matter? Certainly, but they who are not belong to either of the two groups, they are an entirely different group who are masters of design in the accepted styles, when they accept a problem in the modern style they apply the same fundamental principles of design that have been handed down to us through the ages, the same principles that crown with success their efforts in other styles, also bring them success in the application of the new style. These are the men who contribute to the advancement in architecture regardless of style, they are the men who are right.

Peter Brust.
Notes on the February Meeting of the State Executive Board

ARTHUR SEIDENSCHWARTZ, Secretary

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Executive Board of the State Association of Wisconsin Architects, held at the City Club, Milwaukee, February 21, 1936.

Meeting was called to order by President T. L. Eschweiler at 1 P. M.

The following members were present: Messrs. Eschweiler, Auiler, Buemming, Scott, Brielmaier, Herbst, Hunt, Tullgren, Berners and Seidenschwartz. Represented by proxy were Messrs. Peacock, Stubenrauch, Potter and Lippert. Mr. Roger Kirchhoff was absent.

The reading of the minutes of the January meeting was dispensed with, being approved as printed.

The Minimum Requirements for Plans and Specifications was again brought before the meeting by the special committee in charge for discussion and final adoption. Copies were sent to all the members of the Board several days previous to the meeting so they could familiarize themselves with the requirements and be prepared to adopt same.

Paul Brust wrote to the several National Associations whose symbols for plans are considered as national standards and ask for permission to use same. The requests were granted in all cases.

After considerable discussion and the adoption of several minor changes, a motion was offered by Herman Buemming and seconded by Wm. G. Herbst that the committee secure bids for the printing of the minimum requirements. Motion was adopted.

It was suggested that the Building Congress have a booth at the Home Show, possibly showing photographs, models, drawings, etc., and that they carry a message to the public, showing the value of good construction, design, plan, selection of property and financing. The booth to be manned by the Architects. The Architects' representatives present at this meeting, were Ed. Kuenzli for the A. I. A. and Al Seidenschwartz for the S. A. W. A., stated that it would be necessary for them to place this proposal before their respective Boards before they could express themselves. Due to time being so short and the Architects not being prepared to make a good display and the fact that it would be necessary for the Architects to have proper representatives at this display throughout the entire Home Show, a motion was offered by Leigh Hunt and seconded by Peter Brust that the idea be abandoned. Motion was adopted.

Mr. Buemming suggested that the Architects of Wisconsin use a rubber stamp on their plans instead of a seal, this method would save time and expense. A motion was offered by Mr. Brielmaier and seconded by Mr. Brust that Mr. Buemming write to Mr. Peabody, Secretary of the Board of Examiners, in regard to the possibility of such a change. Motion was adopted.

For the Profession

It is with appreciation that we note the advertising policy of The American Rolling Mill Co.

On Wednesday night, February 19, during the Armco Radio Broadcast over N. B. C., The Armco Ironmaster talked briefly on the importance of the architect and what he has contributed to comfort, convenience and the joy of living.
The Big Three Pioneers

During the late 80's and immediately preceding and following the turn of the century, Milwaukee could boast of three exceptionally well known (nationally) architectural firms. These did not only land the largest and most prominent commissions of that decade, but they were also the training school for a large group of young men who today are (or have been) Milwaukee's leading architects and who are carrying on the traditions of the older firms.

The firm of E. T. Mix and Company was the first architectural firm to win recognition either locally or outside of the city and state. E. Townsend Mix headed up this firm. He was a native of Connecticut and came to Milwaukee in 1856 as the local representative of a Chicago architect. He soon however hung out his own shingle. Mix was the first trained architect to practice in Milwaukee. For six years previous to his coming to Milwaukee he had diligently pursued his studies in the office of Richard M. Upjohn, the renowned New York architect. He often recalled that he had to pay Upjohn $500.00 for this privilege. His business associates over a period of years were W. A. Holbrook and H. W. Guthrie who became a junior partner in 1898. The number of commissions which were turned out by this office seemed without number. The list included the largest and most prominent structures of that day. Many are still standing as monuments to this firm's ability, resourcefulness and ingenuity. Amongst these buildings may be listed the following:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Mitchell Building
- Union Depot
- Old Exposition Bldg.
- Iron Block
- National Soldiers Home
- Colby & Abbott Building
- Mack Block
- Loan & Trust Building
- Boston Store (first unit)
- Espenhain Store (recently remodeled)
- National Insurance Bldg.
- Bldgs. (Broadway & Wisconsin)

Colby & Abbott Building and that fine beautiful ecclesiastical structure—St. Paul's church. There was also designed by this firm (as another writer puts it) "at least not less than three-fourths of the most costly and ornate private residences in Milwaukee."

It is erroneous to classify the Layton Art Gallery as being a product of the Mix office. This building was designed by a London architect named Ardsley. Mix was the associate architect and did the superintending. Mr. Mix died in 1890 and the work of the firm was carried on by his late business associates, namely W. A. Holbrook and H. W. Guthrie.

Many of the older architects of Milwaukee today found employment or served their apprenticeship in the Mix office. Charles Fink was Mix's protege. The chief draftsman was Carl Barkhausen and there were employed in this office at one time or another Messrs. C. D. Crane, C. Leenhouts, Hugh W. Guthrie, Harry A. Betts, H. J. Van Ryn and F. W. Andre.

In these modern times when there are so many automobile casualties it is interesting to note that Holbrook, Mix's partner, came to his untimely death by falling from a bicycle.

The firm of H. C. Koch was founded in 1868 by Henry C. Koch. Preceding this date Mr. Koch had worked for L. A. Schmidtner, the architect for the old Court House. It is surmised that he had something to do with this project as he was in Schmidtner's office when the drawings were made. Schmidtner did not maintain a large corps of draftsmen. Mr. Koch was a Civil war veteran, having served under Gen. Phil Sheridan as a topographical engineer. The firm of H. C. Koch and Co. at various times consisted of Henry P. Schnetzky and Herman J. Esse. Following the death of Mr. Koch in 1900 the business was carried on by his son, Armand D. Koch.

Amongst the larger and more prominent buildings which were designed by the Koch firm were the present City Hall, the Pfister Hotel, the Wells Building, the Gesu Church and the South Side High School.

The office of H. C. Koch and Co. is also credited with being the training school for many draftsmen who later became prominent architects in the annals of the city. The chief draftsman at one period of the firm's work was George B. Ferry. And employed there at different times were Messrs. E. R. Liebert, A. C. Esche­weiler, Sr., Edward V. Koch, Gustave A. Dick, Henry Hensel, Henry Lotter, and John H. Leenhouts.

The third firm to play an important part in the building of Milwaukee was Ferry and Clas. This firm was composed of George B. Ferry and Alfred C. Clas. Mr. Ferry was a New Englander by birth and came to Milwaukee in the early 80's. He was Milwaukee's first college trained architect, having been graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Mr. Clas, a native son of Wisconsin, came to Milwaukee at an early age and apprenticed himself to an architect named Landguth. For this privilege he paid the magnificent amount...
of $300.00. The arrangement proved unsatisfactory so Mr. Clas left before his time was up. Later Mr. Clas was with James Douglas, one of Milwaukee's early day architects. One of these partners recalled in later years that they (Ferry and Clas) met in the old Kuenstler Heim on North Plankinton Avenue and Wells Street. Over a glass of Milwaukee's well known product they tossed a coin to see what the name of the new firm would be. This happened in 1889.

No Milwaukee architectural firm was responsible for the design of more prominent and outstanding buildings than Ferry and Clas. In due time and order there came from this office the beautiful Italian Renaissance Public Library in Milwaukee and shortly thereafter the State Historical Library at Madison. Then there was the tower of St. John's Cathedral, the Masonic Temple on Jefferson Street (now the Court House annex), the famous and short lived Gargoyle, the Northwestern National Insurance Building, the Milwaukee Auditorium, the Cudahy apartments, the Unitarian church, the Archbishop's residence on Wisconsin Avenue (then the Frederick Pabst residence) and the Wisconsin State Buildings at the World Fairs held in the cities of Buffalo and St. Louis. The quality of design at these representative buildings brought this firm national recognition. This was an admirable team with Ferry the designer and Clas the business man. Mr. Clas was active in many of the civic functions of the city and here his talent and ability were quickly recognized and put to good use. As a result when the carnivals were held in the city in days of yore, the firm of Ferry and Clas played a prominent part in the designing of the decorations. The beautiful plaster arch which stood on Wisconsin Avenue near the Pfister Hotel in the days of the carnival of 1900 was a product of their skill and ingenuity, as well as the Carnival Column which now stands in the Court of Honor.

The base for the Schiller and Goethe monument in Washington Park was designed in this office, as well as many other civic schemes in which Mr. Clas was interested. His long record for service on the Milwaukee Park Board, were his sincere appreciation and insistence of the true and pure in art, gained for him wide and lasting recognition.

The Ferry and Clas office proved to be the training school for many a successful architect of today. Amongst those who found employment and inspiration here were:

- Peter Brust
- Julius Heimerl
- Frank Bader
- Hugo C. Haeuser
- William C. Herbst
- William L. Klussendorf
- Arthur Memmler
- Frank Voigt
- William H. Schuchardt
- as well as Elmer Grey and Gerrit Van Pelt of California. This is indeed a remarkable record for one office.

Many of these men later attained national renown as architects.

The epitaph on Sir Christopher Wren’s tomb in St. Paul’s Cathedral again comes to mind. “If you would see their monuments look about you.” A. C. GUTH.
Depreciation, overhauling, major repairs, interest, taxes, storage insurance, etc., showing annual expense percent of capital investment are included in it and through this schedule a monthly or daily fair rental basis can be set up.

Briefs have been written on this subject citing statistical data showing great economy and savings which are effected when construction operations are performed by the firm competitive contract method and awarded to the low responsible bidder.

Legislative activities, appearances before public bodies and committees have been carried forward. Cooperation with the various branches in the construction industry has resulted in preventing public bodies from doing some construction operations without competitive contract.

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